



ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SRIRANGAM SRI RANGANATHA SWAMI TEMPLE: GLEENED FROM INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract:

Srirangam was called Vellithirumutha Gramam, in ancient times. At present, it is called Srirangam and Thiruvaramam in Tamil. Srirangam is located in Srirangam Taluk and Tiruchirapalli District, in Tamil Nadu. It is an island, bounded by Cauvery River on one side, and Kollidam (Coleroon) on the other side. This Island is called *Thirunavelantheevu*, also called *Antharangam*, meaning the last part of the heaven. The Government Epigraphist describes the temple as, "architecturally, the Srirangam Temple offers many interesting points to the students of Indian Art. It belongs to the *uttamottama* class of temples, as it has full complement of seven *prakaras*, running around the *garbhagraha* and in additions, has separate subsidiary shrines, for all the minor *parivaradevatas*, as prescribed in the agamas". Inscriptions, pertaining to the rule of different dynasties, available at various shrines of the Temple, proclaim the past civilization, trusts, culture and land donation and even flood relief measures in the form of land reclamation. These inscriptions relate to the period of Aditya-I; Parantakan-I; Parantakan -II also known as Sundara Chola; Rajathirajan - I; Athi Rajendran; Kulothungan - I; Vikrama Chola; Kulothungan - II; Rajarajan II; Rajathirajan - II; Kulothungan - III; Rajathirajan - III; and Rajendran - III. The oldest inscription pertains to the period of the Aditya-I, who was also popularly known as Rajakesarivarman. The Vijayanagara Section contains 254 inscriptions and all of them are arranged, in the order of their date, based on the *Saka* year. The continuous control of the Tamil country, by the Vijayanagara rulers, not only gave it political stability but also guaranteed a steady growth and expansion of the Temple, at Srirangam, in all aspects.

Architectural Significance of Srirangam Sri Ranganatha Swami Temple: Gleened from Inscriptions:

Srirangam was called Vellithirumutha Gramam, in ancient times. At present, it is called Srirangam and Thiruvaramam in Tamil. Srirangam is located in Srirangam Taluk and Tiruchirapalli District, in Tamil Nadu. It is an island, bounded by Cauvery River on one side, and Kollidam (Coleroon) on the other side. This Island is called *Thirunavelantheevu*, also called *Antharangam*, meaning the last part of the heaven.¹

Sri Ranganathaswami Temple:

The Temple of Sri Ranganathaswami is located at five km. north of Srirangam. This Temple is also known as *Thiruvarama Tirupati*, *Periyakoil*, *Bhoologa Vaikundam*, *Bhogamandabam*. It is one of the eight *Swayambu Kshetras* of Lord Vishnu, where the presiding deity is believed to have self-manifested. The Temple is one of the *Pancharanga Kshetrams*, which means, group of five sacred Hindu Temples, dedicated to Ranganatha, a form of the Lord Vishnu, on the banks of the Cauvery River. It is also considered the first and foremost among the 108 Divya Desams. It was sanctified by eleven of the twelve Alwars with the exception of Madurakavi Alwar, with 247 *pasurams*, sung in praise of Sri Ranganathar. A number of them lived here and worshipped at the feet of the Lord and among them Kulasekhara Alwar, Tirumangai Mannan or Alinadan and Andal were prominent. Ramanuja was the spiritual and administrative head of this Temple, for a number of years. It was constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture.

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The Temple is situated in an area of 156 acres, with a perimeter of 4116m. It comprises 3072 X 2520 feet length and breadth. It is one of the largest temples in India and the largest religious edifice in the world. It is enclosed with seven *prakaras* and the outermost *Prakara* is known as *Adaiavalainjan*. It takes a functional name, an encircling space. These *prakaras* are formed by thick and huge rampart walls, with a total length of 32,952 feet or over six miles, which run round the *garbhagraha*. The space within the outer two *prakarams* (outer courtyard) is occupied by several shops, restaurants and flower stalls. It has 21 magnificent *gopurams*, in all *prakaras*, among which 236 feet of *Rajagopuram* (the main gateway) is the second largest temple *gopuram* (Temple Tower) in Asia. 39 pavilions, fifty five shrines and *Ayiram kaal mandapam* are its other features. *Chandra Pushkarni* is the temple tirtha (holy water) and *Punnai Tree* is its *Talavriksha*.

Legend of Ranganatha:

According to the legend, Vibhishana was the younger brother of Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka. After the battle of Lanka, Vibhishana who supported Rama, accompanied Rama back to Ayodhya, for his coronation.

Rama rewarded him with the Vimana, or Shrine, with the reclining Vishnu image. While returning to Sri Lanka with this Vimana, Vibhishana rested on Srirangam Island for a while and left the image there while he visited his friend, the Chola King. When he attempted to proceed on his journey, he found that the image could not be moved, and the deity informed him that he wished to remain on this Island but would face south so that Vibhishana could worship him from Sri Lanka.³

However, archaeological inscriptions are available only from the 10th century AD. The inscriptions in the Temple belong to the Chola, Pandya, Hoysala and Vijayanagar Dynasties, who successively swayed the destinies of the Tiruchirappalli District. They range in date between the 9th and 16th centuries and they are registered by the Epigraphical Society.

Inscriptions:

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is a veritable treasure trove for epigraphists. Over 640 inscriptions have been copied and published from the Temple. The Archaeological Survey of India has devoted an entire volume, in its South Indian Inscriptions Series, to record the inscriptions copied from the Temple.⁴ The inscriptions throw up interesting and valuable light on the history, culture and economy, during a period of over a thousand years. The Temple abounds in inscriptions, dating between the early Chola and late Nayak periods. The documents, while mentioning the boundaries of the lands, provide useful information on irrigation facilities, land measures, tax structure and the names provided for the lands in the particular village.

A considerable number of structures were also put up, resulting in the expansion of the Temple proper, with its seven *prakaras*. A summary of that constructional activities, as evidenced by the inscriptions, are given as follows.

The construction of *Vimana, gopura and mandapa*, for the Chakratthalvar, the deity symbolic of the disc in one of the hands of Vishnu, by Virupaksha, son of Harihara and Grandson of Bukka, who commenced to rule as one of the Viceroys in the South from 1383 A.D. The inscription is engraved on the vitals of two pillars in the *mandapa*, in front of the Chakratthalwar Shrine, in the fifth *prakara*.⁷ Since an inscription of the Pandya times,⁵ engraved on the south wall of this Shrine, refers to Tiruvalialwar i.e., Chakratthalwar, the construction recorded in this inscription was evidently improvements, made upon a small Shrine that was already existing.

Another inscription, pertaining to Vijayanagara, refers to the installation of an image of Vittahalanatha, by Annappa Chaundappar of Belvoledesa, a *shaniika* of the Temple, sometimes before 1396 A.D. He is also stated to have gilded the *vimana (koyilalwar)* and to have repaired the Thousand – Pillared *Mandapa*.⁶

The installation of an image of Garuda, by Chakararaya, the brother of Uttamanambi, is recorded in the inscriptions.¹⁰ Apart from this, the constructions, made by the Vijayanagara Ruler, Chakararaya, are as follows:⁷

- ✓ A passage with nine pillars to the south of *perumal-tolan-tirumandapam* was constructed.
- ✓ The *tirukkavanapatti* (ornamental roof) in the big *mandapa* was built by Uttamaraya (Uttamanambi)
- ✓ A temple for Singar, that is Narasimha after clearing the forest and colonizing the area was erected
- ✓ A *mandapa* in front of the shrine of *Annadi-emperuman*, in which he consecrated Maruti that is Hanuman.
- ✓ A *mandapa* at the entrance of the kitchen of the temple, in which he consecrated Lakshmi.

Annadi-emperuman is evidently identical with Annamurti, the presiding deity of the kitchen. Annamurti is represented in the Temple by a two armed stone image, holding a bowl of curd rice in one hand and *kalasa* containing *payasa* in the other. In the *prabha-mandapa*, behind the head, the emblems of *Sankha* and *Chakra* are carved. This image is placed in the *unjal-mandapa*, near the *Aryabhattachavasal*, close to the passage leading into the kitchen. The inscription engraved in the proper right of this image, dated 1588 A.D., records the endowment for conducting worship of this deity.⁸

Chakararaya also installed the Dasavatara images, apparently in a shrine, in 1439 A.D. An inscription, dated in 1567 A.D., contains Sanskrit verses, in praise of these images and it records also an endowment for their worship, by Kumara Achyuta, son of Achyuttappanayaka of Nedungunram, the Viceroy of Vijayanagara, in Thanjavur.⁹ The consecration of the image of Dhanvantari is another unique feature in this Temple.¹⁰ Garudavahana-Bhatta, the hereditary physician of the Temple, is described.

While endowments, providing for the recitation of the *Diviyaprabandham*, are not unknown in the early period, Vijayanagara inscription, from Srirangam provides evidence, regarding this aspect. The *Vedaparayana* has also been given prominence. Endowments, pertaining to the recitation of *Tiruvaymoli*, *Thiruppavai* and *Iyarpa*, are recorded in the same inscription.¹¹

Fresco and Mural Paintings:

The walls of the Temple Complex are painted with exquisite paintings, using herbal and vegetable dyes. They speak volumes about the culture and tradition followed in those times. The figures of gods and goddesses tell us stories and teach us morals. The high end technologies, used in these paintings, ensured a long life for these paintings and they pose a tough challenge to reproduce them in these modern days.¹²

History:

The location, where the Ranganathan idol was placed, was later covered by an overgrowth of deep forests, due to disuse. After a very long time, a Chola King, chasing a parrot, accidentally found the idol. He

then established the Ranganathaswamy Temple. According to historians, many dynasties that ruled the South like Cholas, Pandyas, Vijayanagara, Hoysalas, Nayaks, assisted the work of renovation and in the observance of traditional customs. Even during periods of internal conflicts amongst these dynasties, utter importance was given to the safety and maintenance of these temples. It is said that a Chola King presented the Temple, with a golden serpent couch. Some historians identify this King with Rajamahendra Chola, supposedly the son of Rajendra Chola II. The Pandya Ruler, Sundara Pandya, who overthrew Cholas in 1251 A.D.,¹³ gave Srirangam a temporary spurt of royal support by covering the Vimana with a golden roof. Shortly after the Hoysala Kings, who were allies of Cholas, were allowed to set up a military base just outside Srirangam, they too made additions to the Srirangam Temple.

During the invasion by Malik Kafur and his forces in 1310–1311, the idol of the deity was stolen and taken to Delhi. In a daring exploit, devotees of Srirangam ventured to Delhi and enthralled the Emperor with their histrionics. Moved by their talent, the Emperor was pleased to gift them the presiding deity of Srirangam, which was requested by the performers. Things took a drastic turn immediately. Surathani, his daughter, had fallen in love with the deity and followed him to Srirangam. She prostrated herself to the God in front of the *garbhagraha* and she is believed to have attained the heavenly abode immediately. Even today, a painting of “Surathani” (known as *Thulukha Nachiyar* in Tamil) can be seen in her shrine, near the Arjuna Mandapa, adjacent to the *garbhagraha*, for whom, Chappathis (wheat bread) are made daily. The Kalyana Uthsavam or wedding of Lord Ranganathar, with Surathani, is performed with great ceremony every year. Having assumed that the magical power of the deity had killed his daughter, there was a more severe second invasion to Srirangam in 1323 AD. Hence presiding deity was taken away even before the Muslim troops reached Srirangam, by a group led by the *Vaishnavite* Acharaya (Guru), Pillai Lokacharyar, who died enroute to Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. The Goddess Ranganayaki was taken in another separate procession. 13,000 Sri Vaishnavas, the people of Srirangam, laid down their lives in the fierce battle to ensure that the institution was protected. In the end, *Devadasis*, the dancers of Srirangam, seduced the army chief, to save the Temple.¹⁴

After nearly six decades, the presiding deity returned to Srirangam and the same Swami Vedanta Desika, who had built a brick wall in front of the *garbhagraha*, broke it open. The deity and the priestly wardens wandered southwards towards Madurai, then northeast towards Kerala, Mysore, Tirunaryanapuram, and finally towards the Hills of Tirumala Tirupati, where they remained until their reinstatement in 1371.¹⁵ Majority of present structure dates from the period the Temple was reopened, with the help of the Hindu Rulers of Vijayanagara, who came to power in the Fourteenth Century. During the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, there was major building activity at Srirangam and the Temple seems to have served as one of the important cultural ties the Vijayanagara Rulers maintained with the civilization of the former Chola Empire on the Cauvery River bank. During the period of British Rule, different priestly groups in the Temple took their quarrels to the British courts but a few thousand priests, musicians and temple officials were still associated with the Temple and carried on the elaborate daily rituals and festivals.

At present, the Temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Architecture:

The *garbhagraha* measures 240 feet in length and 180 feet in breadth. It is circular in shape and it is surmounted by the “*Sriranga Vimana*”, with the representation of *Para-vasudeva*, which is gold plated. It has been recently renovated.¹⁶ The presiding deity, Sri Ranganatha Perumal, reclines on Adishesha (the coiled serpent), facing towards south, in *pujanga sayana* posture. Images of Vibhishana, Brahma, Hanuman, Garuda, the symbols of Vishnu—conch and discus, are seen inside the *garbhagraha*. The *garbhagraha* is followed by *mukhamandapa* and it is preceded by *mahamandapa*. There is a circumambulatory passage, around the *garbhagraha*. The image of Chakrathalwar is sculpted with Narasimha on the rear side and can be viewed from the passage around the *garbhagraha*. The Vimana (shrine over the *garbhagraha*) called the *Ranga vimana*, is shaped like omkara (om symbol) and it is plated with gold. The outer portion of the *vimana* and attached *mandapa* (hall), have finely worked pilasters, with fluted shafts, double capitals and pendant lotus brackets. Sculptures are placed in the niches of three sides of the sanctuary walls and maidens embellish the walls in between. The elevation is punctuated with secondary set of pilasters that support shallow eaves, at different levels, to cap larger and smaller recesses. The *garbhagraha* is crowned in the traditional fashion, with a hemispherical roof. The double-curved eaves of the entrance porch on the east side, are concealed in a later columned hall. The Temple in the present form and structure, belongs to the reign of Kulottunga – I.¹⁷

There is a separate shrine dedicated to Ranganayaki Amman in the second precinct of the Temple. The common reference to the goddess is *padi thaanda pathni*, meaning lady who did not cross the boundaries of ethics. Literally, the festival deity of Ranganayaki also never comes out of the Shrine and it is Ranganthar who visits Ranganayaki. There are three images of Ranganayaki, within the *garbhagraha*.

Shrines of Srirangam Temple:

Apart from the presiding deity, Lord Ranganathar, the Temple complex comprises of many other shrines and sub-shrines, embellished with different incarnations of Vishnu, including Chakkarathalwar,

Narashima, Rama, Haygriva and Golapa Krishna. The Chakrathazhwar Shrine is in the East, facing on the south side of Akalanka precinct. Dhanvantri, a great physician of Ancient India, is considered to be an avatar of Vishnu and there is a separate Shrine of Dhanvantari, within the Temple. The Venugopala Shrine, in the south-west corner of the Fourth *Prakara* of the Temple, is the work of Chokkanatha Nayak.

Mandapas:

Thousand Pillared Mandapa:

There are many *mandapams* in Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple. One of the finest is Thousand Pillared *Mandapa* and it is a fine example of a planned theatre-like structure. In front of the Thousand Pillared *Mandapa* is a smaller hall called “Seshagiri Mandapa” in which there are some fine carvings in stone. The 1000 Pillared Hall is made of granite and constructed in the Vijayanagar period (1336–1565), on the site of the old temple. Actually, there are only 953 pillars. The pillars are of different shapes like cylindrical shape pillar, with *pushpa pothigai* which belongs to the Vijayanagara Period. The pillars consist of sculptures of wildly rearing horses, bearing riders on their backs and trampling with their hoofs the heads of rampant tigers, seem only natural and congruous among such weird surroundings. The great hall is traversed by one wide aisle in the centre for the whole of its great length, and intersected by transepts of like dimension, running across at right angles. There are seven side aisles on each side, in which all the pillars are equally spaced out. It is the Darbar Hall of the Deity during the annual Vaikunda Ekadasi Festival, which takes place in December or January. Some pillars of the Thousand Pillared *Mandapa* contain Tamil inscriptions. Namperumal Thirumani Mandapam is the special miniature *mandapa*, located in the majestic hall (thousand pillared *mandapa*) carved with chariots drawn by riding horse on either side. The Hall is supported by many pillars of different styles.¹⁸

In the year 2014-15, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeological have excavated the north western corner of the Thousand Pillared *Mandapa* that exposes the *adhithana* portion (basement) of the *mandapa*. *Adistana* portion consists of *kapota*, *padma*, *kanta*, *virutha*, *kumuda* and *upana*. The *adistana* portion is embellished with sculptures in dancing posture, musicians and war scenes. The northwestern corner of the thousand pillared *mandapa* has an entrance, decorated with elephants on either side. Elephants are carved with beautiful ornamentation. Two human sculptures are seen at front and back of elephants, riding the horses. The man at front holds the tusk of the elephant while the man at the back, pushes the elephant with *ankusha*.

Sesharayar or Seshagiri Mandapam (Horse Court):

The “horse-court” of the Ranganatha Temple, at Srirangam, belongs to the Late Vijayanagara Period, representing the culmination of this extravagant style in the Sixteenth Century. It is a case of perfect specimen of the rearing horse motif. The steeds, nearly nine feet high, are ferocious beasts, rearing aggressively and beneath their raised hoofs is a composite statutory of soldiers, with swords and extended shields. Pillars exhibit the skill of the Dravidian craftsman, turning fantastic and bizarre statuary. The technique of chiseling employed on the pillars of the horse-court is remarkable, for the metallic finish it has given them.¹⁹

The Hall is celebrated for the 40 leaping animals, carved on to the piers, at its northern end. The Sesharayar *mandapa* consists of monolithic pillars, with sculptures of wild horses, bearing riders on their backs, trampling with their hoofs, heads of rampant tigers.

Garuda Mandapa:

The Hall of the legendary bird deity of Vishnu, (*Garuda*) located on the south side of the third *Prakara*, is another Vijayanagara addition. Courtly portrait sculptures, reused from an earlier structure, are fixed to the piers lining the central aisle. A free-standing shrine inside the hall contains a large seated figure of *garuda* and the eagle-headed god faces north towards the principal *garbhagraha*.

Kili Mandapa (Hall of Parrot):

The *Kili mandapa* is located, next to the Ranganatha Shrine, in the First *Prakara* of the Temple. Elephant balustrades skirt the access steps that ascend to a spacious open area. This is bounded by decorated piers with rearing animals and attached colonists, in the finest 17th century manner. Four columns in the middle define a raised dais and their shafts are embellished with undulating stalks.²⁰

The Ranga Vilasa Mandapam:

The *Ranga Vilasa mandapam* is a huge one, where the weary devotee may rest for a while and watch others haggle and purchase items for rituals. The *Ranga Vilasa mandapa* carries the sculptures of Ramayana and exquisite murals.

Prakar:

First Prakara:

The devotees at last reach the First *Prakara* (Isthayalogam) called Dharmavarama *Prakara*, which is decorated with Thiruanugan Thiruvasal (*gopura*).²¹ There is only one entry, guarded by *dwarapalakas*, named Iyyan and Vijayan, by a gate in its southern part. The southwest is packed with storerooms. Large mirrors have been placed in the corners, to reflect the statue of the god when it is reflected from the sanctum. Adhivara Shrine, Visvasena Shrine, Yoga Narashima Shrine, Durgai Shrine are located in this *prakara*.

Second Prakara:

The Second Prakara (Thapologam), also called Rajamahendran Prakara, is adorned with Nazhikettan Vassal (*gopura*) and either side is guarded by two *dwarapalakans*, such as Pathran and Subathran. The images of Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi, Yagasala and the Tondaiman Mandapa, whose ceiling is decorated with paintings of figures, are featured in this *mandapa*. Apart from these, it also contains two Mandapas-Revathi Mandapa and Kili Mandapa. Shrines of Senai Mudaliyar, Chera Kula Valli Shrine, Thulukku Nachchiyar Shrine are also accommodated in this *prakara*.

Third Prakara:

The Third Prakara (Janalogam), also called the Kulasekara *prakara*, is guarded on either side by *dwarapalakans*. It has the Karthikai Vasal (*gopura*). Pavithrothsava *mandapa* and Dolosthawa *mandapa* are found in this *prakara*. Shrines dedicated to Haygriva, Sarawathi, Dasamurthi, Kali Devi and Varahamurthi are parked in this *prakara*. Apart from these shrines and mandapas, the third *prakara* also contains images of Anjaneya, *balipitha*, *dwajasthamba* and *paramapathavasal*.²²

Fourth Prakara:

The Fourth *Prakara* (Maharlogam), also known as the Aalinattan *prakara*, is decorated with Karthigaigopura vaasal (*gopura*). *Dwarapalakis* such as Ganga and Yamuna adorn the entrance. This *prakara* has enshrined Venukannan Shrine, Melapattabiraman Shrine, Nammalwar Shrine, Mathurakavialwar Shrine, Thirumangaialwar Shrine, Danvantri Shrine, Sandana Gopalakrishnan Shrine, Vasudevaperumal Shrine, Vyasa Maharishi Shrine, Varaha Perumal Shrine, Varadharaja Perumal Shrine, Kothanda Perumal Shrine, Paramapathanathan Shrine, Keelapattabiramar Shrine, Sreenivasar Bojaramar Shrine, Kannan Shrine, Thirumalzhisai Alwar, Srikachchi Nambi Shrine, Alavanthar Shrine, Srivarathar Shrine, Garudalwar Shrine and Paraman Mandapa.

Sacred tanks like Chandrapushkarani, Suriya Pushkarni and Sthalaviriksha Tree, named Punnai Tree, are seen in this *prakara*.

Fifth Prakara:

The Fifth Prakara (Sarvalogam), also named the Akalangan *prakara*, is guarded on either by Darmaathyashan and Neeyantha *dwarapalakas*. The Fifth Prakara features shrines dedicated for Andal, Shrine of Venu Gopalan, Shrine of Chakarathalwar, Shrine of Sriranganachchiyar, Amudhakalasa Garudan, Kamparamayana Aranketra *mandapa*, Shrine of Alakiya Singaperumal, Shrine of Vasudeva Perumal, Thousand Pillared Mandapa, Sheshya Mandapa, shrine of Kothandaraman, Shrine of Pillai Lokachariyar, Parthasarathy, Shrine of Udaiyavar, Shrine of Thirupanthalar, Shrine of Vittal Krishnan, Shrine of Thondaradipodi Alwar, Shrine of Kurathalwar, Thiruvanthikappumandapam, *balipitha*, Dwajasthampam and Anjaneya Mandapa.²³

Sixth Prakara:

The Sixth Prakara (Poovarlogam), called the Thiruvikraman *prakara*, is embellished with *dwarapalakans*, on either side named as Chakaram and Sangam. It contains Manavala Mamunigal Shrine in the Chola Style. It also houses Uttamanambi Shrine, Budhakottam Swami Shrine, Embar Shrine, Sri Ranga Swamy Iyyar Mutt, Bhattar Shrine, Ahabila Mutt, Anjaneya Temple and Ananswami Shrine.

Seventh Prakara:

This *prakara* is called the Adaiyavalaintan *prakara* because it is enclosed itself with another *prakara*. This *prakara* is connected with the *Raja Gopuram*.

The Rajagopuram (the main *gopuram*) stood as a Mottai *gopuram* (unfinished), in the early period, for over 400 years and did not reach its current height, until 1987. It was started during the reign of Achyuta Deva Raya of Vijayanagar and the construction was given up after the King's death. It was not resumed owing to some political preoccupations. It attained its full structure only when the forty-fourth Jeer of Ahobila Mutt initiated the process, with the help of philanthropists and others. The whole structure was constructed in a span of eight years. The Rajagopuram was consecrated on 25 March 1987. The length and breadth, at the base of the Rajagopuram, is 166 feet by 97 feet while the length and breadth, at the top is 98 feet by 32 feet. On the whole, it is 236 feet high, with 13 tiers and 13 glistening copper 'kalasams' on the top of the *gopura*, weighing 135 kg and measuring 3.12m (height) by 1.56m (diameter). As the entrance of the *gopura* is embellished with Sreenivasa Perumal who is the father of Munni and hence this *gopura* entrance is also called the "*Munniappan Kottai Vasal*".²⁴

The Seventh *Prakara* also known by the name of Chithirai Thiruveethi, Rajaveethi, Therodum Veethi is protected by *dwarapalakans*, named, Pooranan and Pushkarnan. The south west corner is adorned with Andal Shrine, also called Veliandal Shrine, built by King Vallabha Deva. This *prakara* also has Srivanamamalai Mutt and Mathvaal Mutt. It also embellished with shrines and halls like Anjaneya Shrine, Haygriva Shrine, Thirumaligai of Pavanasar, Thaathachchar, Iyyanar, Chithiraidevar, Periyambai and Kuathalwar etc.

Temple Tirtha:

Water Harvesting Systems (Temple Tanks): The Temple Complex has two large temple tanks, called Chandra *Pushkarini* and Surya *Pushkarini*.²⁵ The Complex has been built in such a way that all the water collected, flows into the tanks. The capacity of each *Pushkarini* is around two million litres and the water is

cleaned by the action of fishes floating in it. Apart from these tanks, there are 10 more temple tanks, around Srirangam, that come under the control and management of the Temple. Open sand beds and *Nandavanams* (Flower Gardens) help in absorbing the rain water.

Conclusion:

Inscriptions, pertaining to the rule of different dynasties, available at various shrines of the Temple, proclaim the past civilization, trusts, culture and land donation and even flood relief measures in the form of land reclamation. These inscriptions relate to the period of Aditya-I; Parantakan-I; Parantakan -II also known as Sundara Chola; Rajathirajan - I; Athi Rajendran; Kulothungan - I; Vikrama Chola; Kulothungan - II; Rajarajan II; Rajathirajan - II; Kulothungan - III; Rajathirajan - III; and Rajendran - III. The oldest inscription pertains to the period of the Aditya-I, who was also popularly known as Rajakesarivarman. The Vijayanagara Section contains 254 inscriptions and all of them are arranged, in the order of their date, based on the *Saka* year. The continuous control of the Tamil country, by the Vijayanagara rulers, not only gave it political stability but also guaranteed a steady growth and expansion of the Temple, at Srirangam, in all aspects.

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