

**ECONOMY AS A DRIVER OF FUNCTIONAL CONTINUITY OF LIVING  
RELIGIOUS HERITAGE: THE CASE OF SRI RANGANATHASWAMY  
TEMPLE AT SRIRANGAM.**

A THESIS

Submitted By

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Under the guidance of

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## DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Economy as a driver of functional continuity of living religious heritage: the case of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam” is written and submitted by me to Saurashtra University, Rajkot in partial fulfilment for the award of Degree of Master of Science in Heritage Conservation and Management. This is my original work and the conclusions drawn are based on the material collected by me.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Temples are important heritage assets to which several economies, or in simpler terms, livelihoods, are linked. They can be directly linked to the temple, or occur around the temple, while some may not be directly linked to the temple but are dependent on the temple for livelihood, while others may be linked but occur far away from the temple. In most cases, the temple is the leading economy in the area. Temples are also living that is, they have an element of continuity in terms of original use/function, community associations, cultural expressions, and care/maintenance through established or traditional means. Continuity is also maintained through the core economies directly or indirectly linked to the temple, thereby ensuring the conservation of the temple's tangible and intangible elements. Hence, the temple is a heritage asset, capable of giving rise to a flow of goods/services that sustain itself and the core economy. On the other hand, the core economy supports/enables cultural expressions integral to the temples' character.

The study was carried out in the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, India. The rationale behind this choice is that the temple is its historical prominence and continuity as a living heritage site. A core community exists around the temple with strong cultural connections. Apart from the resident core community, the temple is also a primary pilgrimage site and attracts many visitors from other regions. The temple is a major economy and contributes to the socio-economic development of the region. It is also listed on the Tentative Lists of World Heritage for the state party

India. The researcher used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in analysing the data collected. The reason is that some findings needed to be described due to the nature of information, while some could be analysed using quantitative tools resulting in tabulations and graphs.

The results outline the living heritage of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam. They make up the cultural values that the temple possesses, and this is listed out in the subsequent section. The Temple is primarily administered by the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments (H.R.&C.E.) Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, along with a Board of Trustees. The Temple's financial administration has not changed over the years, and it continues to receive funds from traditional sources such as temple lands, donations from devotees, and hundial collections. However, most rituals and festivals are carried out through offerings by donors to the Temple. Most donors are also hereditary, i.e., they have an obligation to donate to the Temple. Hence, a change in the structure of the financial administration of the Temple will significantly alter the cultural values as they are linked together. On the other hand, through interviews with local shopkeepers, it was evidenced that the Temple has helped business establishments to flourish due to its significance as a pilgrimage site attracting several devotees and tourists alike.

The Srirangam Temple exhibits numerous cultural values, among which, the most prominent, important, and high are the religious, socio-economic, and associational values of the community. As heritage professionals, it is a given that the architectural value of the Temple, especially sculptures, is very high and has great economic significance in the art market. Hence, from the perspective of a professional not

associated with the faith, it is the architectural value that is most important for the Temple.

However, for the community, it is the religious, social, symbolic, bequest and existence value that is very high, due to which they donate to the Temple. The faith and belief in the Lord and continuity of the same provokes people to donate to the Temple. It is these values that people associate with the Temple and donate accordingly, due to which an economy is generated for the temple. These values are also very high that they help conserve the architectural attributes of the Temple. Hence, these cultural values help sustain the Temple's economy which in turn drives the functional continuity in the Temple. If the cultural values are diminished, then it would reflect in the economy of the Temple, and subsequently in its continuity as a living heritage site.

Temples have a unique economic model that can also be considered as heritage. The financial transaction of the temple remains similar to past generations and continues to function in a similar fashion. The allegiance of people previously associated with the temple may change, but the model remains as long as the community adopts it. A change in the Temple's economy will also significantly alter the cultural values of the Temple. It is a sign in many temples in Tamil Nadu today. The lack of an economy has resulted in temples turning into abandoned sites. Hence, economy is a driver of functional continuity of living religious heritage as evidenced from the case of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.

## CHAPTER 2

### INTRODUCTION

#### 2.1. Living Religious Heritage

Living Heritage has been in the spotlight for the past few decades. It gained traction in the heritage conservation discourse when ICCROM launched a programme on Living Heritage Sites in 2003. The goal was to promote the concept of living heritage and to develop the approach to conservation and management of heritage sites. Parallely, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2003. It integrated the concept of 'living heritage' into its activities. In both the terms—living heritage and intangible heritage—the community plays a central role in their management. The ICCROM Summary on the Living Heritage Approach highlights that the living heritage approach is not a substitute but complementary to the fabric-based and value-based approaches (Wijesuriya, 2015).

The concepts of continuity and change characterise living heritage. Although all heritage places have survived and changed, some have retained the functions (use) for which they were created. Continuity in living heritage is defined through the original function for which the site was intended. Other elements of continuity include the connections of the core community with the heritage, the tangible and intangible expressions that the core community associates with the site, and the long-term care for the heritage by the core community through established or traditional means (Wijesuriya, 2015).

The continuity of original function has enabled the past to flow into the present without getting disconnected. It is different from conventional conservation approaches that failed to consider three critical elements of heritage: diversity, continuity, and community (Wijesuriya, 2010). It is reflected in the concept of time, which varies from society to society. In western societies, time is a linear concept that has influenced conservation approaches where the past, present, and future were disconnected entities. However, in most non-western societies, time is considered cyclical, and the past, present and future are linked in many ways. (Wijesuriya, 2010). Therefore, the living heritage approach takes this into account while talking about heritage conservation and management.

In terms of continuity of an original function, while all heritage places have some form of function for the present society, many heritage places have retained the original function for which they were established. New functions have been introduced, but the original function has also been re-introduced in heritage sites. It is happening in many heritage sites in Sri Lanka, the most prominent example being the Temple of The Tooth Relic. Buddhist statues in many museums are allowed to be worshipped by the people. (Wijesuriya, 2005).

Continuity of original function is the principal element of living heritage. Where this is present, other elements of continuity can also be observed. A specific community associates with the site and has established roles in maintaining the original function. Otherwise called a core community, they have more power in the decision-making process than others. The core community continues to influence the heritage and vice versa at present. The Nara Document on Authenticity reflects this when it states that

the “responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently, to that which cares for it.’

The original function of the heritage place continues to change since the community changes or adds tangible and intangible components to it. Intangible elements such as festivals and customs may also change, or new elements may be added. Hence, change is inevitable and is embraced in the living heritage discourse. Communities can influence and be influenced by the heritage space without necessarily isolating the tangible and intangible. Core communities have well-established means to care for their heritage. These include traditions, skills, techniques, and materials that continue to be used and provide people livelihood (Poulios, 2010).

Living religious sites have retained their religious tradition throughout time (since their creation to date). Temples are living heritage since they have retained their original function as religious sites. Their religious tradition’s continuity is because of a core community involved in performing rituals and taking care of the temple’s operations. The religious community defines and arranges the temple’s space and cares for the same through traditional and established means (Poulios, 2010). South Indian temples are public places that are eventful and offer sociability. A Hindu temple is different from a mosque or church. It encourages ‘economic transaction’ as a ritual act in the form of offerings and redistribution of the offerings. Economic activity naturally occurs next to a temple in the form of religious commodities (Srirangam, 2012).

## **2.2. Temple and the Economy**

The temple was an economically important institution in the agrarian economy of southern India until the British colonial period in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Stein, 1960). Distinctive settlements surfaced around prominent temples, with residential areas, shops and markets located in the temple's streets. Most temples have endowments in the form of land, money, and valuables that are used to maintain the temple premises, perform rituals and festivals, and carry out welfare activities (Hancock, 2002; Kavitha, 2017). In the sanctum sanctorum (innermost shrine), the priests offer prayer, foods, and valuables to the deities, and worshippers seek the deities' blessings.

Temples were vital storehouses of surplus wealth. During the Vijayanagar period, temples were central to money flow for agricultural development, irrigation facilities, and temple functions (Stein, 1960; Kennedy, 1974). The temple as an economic institution sustained through the continuous endowments from the royals, chieftains, and the wider community and the society could seek help from the temple when in need of economic support. Many temple festivals were conducted based on the resources provided by those who cultivated land and traditionally supported the temple's activities. The temples at Tirupati, Madurai, Chidambaram, Srirangam and Rameswaram received such support, which resulted in their growth as prominent temples (Kennedy, 1974).

Citing the Tirupati Temple at Tirumala as a case study, Stein (1960) highlights how monetary endowments helped carry out ritual services in the temple. The endowments were used for agricultural development, which in turn contributed to the

resources of the temple. Land endowments during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries were common. They were primarily used for two functions: (1) to yield an income to maintain a specific ritual service in the land donor's name (2) to provide a place to invest funds granted to the temple for performing ritual services in the monetary donor's name.

However, the economic function of a temple went beyond the development of land and included varied economic activities. In the medieval period from 11<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Hindu temples were wealthy institutions that played a multifunctional role as a) employer to architects, artisans, priests, musicians, dancers, florists, cooks, and many others, b) facilitator of cultivation and agricultural production, c) landholder and d) banker (Subramaniam, 2014; Kavitha, 2017; Trouillet, 2017). Inscriptional records from the Sri Venkateswara Temple at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh provide information on the endowments of land and money given to the temple for religious purposes (Stein, 1960).

Temples regularly consumed local products which were purchased and used for ritual performance (Stein, 1961). They significantly consumed milk products, flowers, coconuts, rice, sandalwood, and other items for ritual services to the main deity (Subramaniam, 2014). They developed strong ties with local institutions that contributed resources in the form of religious endowments to the temple. These endowments were generally in the form of land and money. Trouillet (2017) states that “land endowments included plots of cultivated land, portions of villages or entire villages, and became the primary resources of the temples. These temple lands could be located inside or outside the temple village, which could create extended networks

of temple landholdings in many villages.” Monetary endowments replaced land endowments with time due to the difficulty for the temple managers in administering far-off villages. Monetary endowments were invested in temple lands. The income from the land was used to carry out the ritual service in the donor’s name. (Stein, 1960).

Several families were dependent upon the temple for a living. Mainly, agricultural families cultivated temple lands to earn an income. Temple also appointed many people for looking after its assets. Workers were employed to maintain the temple’s accounts, receive grants in cash and kind, disburse employees’ salaries, finance worship and services, and conduct cultural activities. Subramaniam (2014) lists out the different employees of a temple—priests, scholars, reciters, managers, treasurers, superintendents, accountants, cooks, musicians, singers, gardeners, florists, artisans, dancers, security guards, and many other servants. Temple construction and maintenance was also a source of employment to many architects, artisans and crafts persons who competed for the opportunity to showcase their skills.

Temples also served as banks and received deposits through donations, usually made for a specific purpose. The depositor was not entitled to the donated money. However, the temples could use the money only for the purpose specified by the donor. Hence, temples loaned the money on an interest basis, with the condition that interest is paid back in cash or kind. The interest paid back was used to fulfil the donor’s purpose of donating the money. Predominantly, village assemblies borrowed from the temple and, in return, expanded cultivation and paid back the interest from the produce of the land (Kavitha, 2017).

Due to the multifunctional role of temples, settlements grew around them. As an employment generator, the temple motivated people to settle around its premises and enjoy the necessary capital inputs in the form of donations. Agricultural development, particularly during the Chola and Vijayanagara periods (900-1610 AD), grew mainly due to the temple's involvement in providing agricultural inputs and irrigation facilities. Lending money to village assemblies helped in rural development and commerce (Trouillet, 2017).

Kamat (2013) had probed the economic profile of Shantadurga Temple in Kavle (Goa) and notes that the most fertile lands were donated to the temple by the *gramasamstha* (village body) for its maintenance. Certain religious ceremonies and observations were possible due to the contribution of the *gramasamstha*. Many communities made different contributions towards the remuneration of priests, *mutts* (monasteries), *jyotishis* (astrologers), and others. The villagers also donated land to the temple and made payments during harvest time. The temples rarely bought the property, but the income from the land was used for conducting ceremonies and festivals. The temple also earned revenue by leasing out its premises to small vendors who dealt with worship articles. Many seasonal vendors put up stalls during annual festivals within the temple premises, for which they pay a nominal rent to the temple. The temple is also a prime agent in redistributing economic resources.

Subramaniam (2014) highlights the socio-economic profile of the Nageshwaraswamy Temple in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu. People made different contributions to the temple in the form of land and monetary endowments, gifts such as lamps, pooja articles, and voluntary service. The temple was a significant

landholder, consumer, employer, and banker. Inscriptions from the temple cite the land purchases, irrigation facilities, pujas and festivals, maintenance of temple premises, and building constructions. The temple was integral to the social and economic lives of people since it engaged in economic production and was the centre of the economy of Kumbakonam.

Alongside exhibiting religious, architectural, aesthetic, and historical values, temples also possess a significant economic value. Historically, temples had an essential economic function that has continued to the present. Many temples continue to be a major economy in the area they are located. Hence, temples are significant heritage assets that possess both cultural and economic values. They are considered living heritage with a community that cares for them through traditional means and adds to their tangible and intangible expressions.

### **2.3. Cultural and Economic Values**

There have been discussions regarding the links between heritage conservation and economic development as early as the 1970s (Throsby, 2012). Many different criteria exist for considering something as cultural heritage. In some cases, the building should be a certain number of years old. In the 1972 World Heritage Convention, monuments, groups of buildings and sites must be of Outstanding Universal Value to qualify for 'World Heritage' status. In the Burra Charter, the 'cultural significance' of a building, site or place defines heritage. Heritage generally includes objects, structures, and other products of cultures and individuals that have been passed on

since generations having a specific value and representative of a particular culture.

The value of heritage generally means its significance and what it means to people.

Throsby (2012) points out that the World Bank often describes heritage as an asset, tangible, or intangible, while seen through the lens of capital theory since it contributes to producing more cultural goods and services. From the economic perspective, cultural heritage is defined in terms of cultural capital. Placing heritage in cultural capital is due to both market and non-market values exhibited by the heritage asset. The cultural worth of heritage assets expressed in terms of values will influence its economic value. The concept of cultural capital is borrowed from environmental economics, where natural resources are considered to be natural capital. Cultural capital as defined for immovable heritage means the additional value imputed to a building or precinct apart from the real estate value of the same. This additional value could have a historical, social, or cultural dimension.

The economic value of heritage assets can be classified as market, and non-market referred to as use and non-use value or direct and indirect value. Use value is the direct benefit to consumers of the heritage as a private good. Often, cultural heritage values may arise outside the market. Non-use value is the experience of the heritage's benefits as a public good. It is classified as existence value (benefit from the knowledge that the heritage exists), bequest value (desire to bequeath the asset to future generations) and option value (option to preserve heritage for future consumption) (Throsby, 2012).

Methodologies developed for assessing non-use values of environmental assets can be used to evaluate the non-market benefits of cultural heritage assets (Throsby,

2012). Non-use values can be measured using contingent valuation methods (CVM) or choice modelling. Contingent valuation includes asking people their willingness to pay for heritage or their willingness to accept compensation for losing the heritage. It is most often sought under hypothetical conditions from a sample of potential beneficiaries. Direct referenda are another method used to evaluate cultural heritage value wherein heritage decisions are taken by the people directly.

However, cultural values do not have units similar to economic value; hence they are difficult to measure. However, they can be deconstructed as aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, social, historic, authentic, educational, environmental, and scientific. These values can be identified based on revealed and stated preferences of individuals (Throsby, 2012; Rypkema, 2008). In the long run, these values are more important than the economic value. In the short run, however, the economic value of heritage buildings or sites matter.

Kiamer A., Zuidhof P. W. (1999) talk about finding common ground between heritage conservation and the economics of heritage. From an economic standpoint, they stress on three aspects that matter—scarcity, the public nature of cultural heritage, and incentives. There is a scarcity in terms of time, money, and effort, thus making preservation of heritage expensive. Hence, choices need to be made. From the cultural standpoint, two aspects matter the most—values and culture. Market valuation might help understand the worth of heritage. The price of a historic building, when sold, might reflect both its physical and cultural value. This could have positive and negative consequences. The cultural value might increase the price of the building. However, suppose there is a restriction in the usage of the building

due to its cultural value. In that case, the price might be lower than typical structures in the area.

Rypkema (2008) points to studies over the last few decades, highlighting the economic impacts of heritage conservation. The impacts include creating jobs and increasing household income, revitalising historic city centres, heritage tourism, property values in historic districts, and small business incubation. Conserving heritage structures or precincts help create jobs and increase local household income. Conservation also brings new businesses and cultural activities to the area; property values and investments increase. In terms of tourism, heritage visitors spend more time in the area, contributing more to the local economy. It renews pride and appreciation among the residents for their history and culture.

The economic significance of a heritage asset is assessed through impact studies by measuring the income generated directly and indirectly by it. Direct impact can be measured easily by adding all income of those directly employed in the operations of the heritage asset. Measuring indirect impact is more problematic as it is scattered around the heritage asset and may or may not be connected to the heritage asset. The effect of complementary goods such as travel costs, food costs, hiring of guides, souvenir purchases, and donations for the building or site may be used to measure the economic value of the heritage asset. This is known as hedonic pricing, in which one good is considered a compound of several sub goods.

Ost (2012) outlines the mapping process for identifying economic values using heritage indicators. For example, non-use values may be identified using indicators such as willingness-to-pay, awareness of the heritage's significance, and visitors'

preferences to the heritage site. Use values related to impacts on the local economy may be identified using indicators such as jobs existing/created in the cultural sector, events related to the heritage site, socio-economic development, and others. There could also be externalities in terms of benefits or costs that are not accounted for in market transactions. Koboldt (1997) talks about “production externalities”, wherein local businesses benefit when a site draws large crowds. These could be tourist expenditures or jobs generated locally. On the other hand, “consumption externalities” are realised when there is an increased sense of identity, more educational benefits, and benefits for future generations.

The value-based approach to heritage conservation has been used to determine the impact of heritage conservation on the local economy. This approach can also assess the impact of living heritage sites on the area’s socio-economic development. Religious heritage structures that are primarily living heritage, such as temples, are an economy in themselves. By being one, they promote the socio-economic development of the area. It has been highlighted by many scholars who have studied the economic function of temples from medieval to present times. However, by supporting cultural activities inside the temple, the core economy ensures that the temple’s heritage character is preserved. Hence, the transaction is cyclic, and it applies to more than 90% of India’s heritage, which is religious and living in nature. This aspect has seldom been studied in heritage conservation, which is the aim of the current study.

## 2.4. Topic and Context

The thesis is titled 'Economy as a driver of functional continuity of living religious heritage: the case of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam.' Living heritage is a concept that includes the tangible and intangible elements of heritage. The concept of continuity and change characterizes it. The continuity of original function in living heritage is also referred to as functional continuity. Living heritage could be found in most religious sites, such as places of worship and ritual and historic towns and cities. Religious heritage sites often have an element of continuity that is intrinsic to the living religious tradition passed on from generation to generation.

Temples are important heritage assets to which several economies, or in simpler terms, livelihoods, are linked. They can be directly linked to the temple, or occur around the temple, while some may not be directly linked to the temple but are dependent on the temple for livelihood, while others may be linked but occur far away from the temple. In most cases, the temple is the leading economy in the area. Temples are also living: that is, they have an element of continuity in terms of original use/function, community associations, cultural expressions, and care/maintenance through established or traditional means. Continuity is also maintained through the core economies directly or indirectly linked to the temple, thereby ensuring the conservation of the temple's tangible and intangible elements. Hence, the temple is a heritage asset, capable of giving rise to a flow of goods/services that sustain itself and the core economy. On the other hand, the core economy supports/enables cultural expressions integral to the temples' character.

The temple is more than a mere place of worship and serves people in many ways. It embodies cultural values that integrate devotion, history, and society. Temples have been wealthy institutions, particularly in Tamil Nadu. They continue to be visited daily by thousands of pilgrims and tourists. They are not only viewed as religious shrines but as cultural centres with different functions. Temples have transcended time and space to become the structures they stand for today. They are a symbol of motivation for man's thoughts and actions. Hariharan (1993) points out that "the deity in the sanctum sanctorum is the nucleus that powers human beings into a dynamic force." The temple is where religious, historical, artistic, social, and economic streams meet. India is a country that is blessed with temples, big and small. They are a frequent occurrence in the southern Indian landscape. Temples were constructed, for it was believed that God would bestow people with peace and prosperity. Whatever the size of the temple, it was an institution that generated economic and commercial activities alongside religious and social harmony.

Rulers built temples as a symbol of power and strength. The import of these ambitions was the creation of human and financial resources for managing the temple. Each temple is a testimony to the devotion and artistry of the people involved in its construction and maintenance. The reasons for building temples may differ, but it is no doubt that the temple has been the centre of activities influencing human life from ancient times to the present day. In ancient times, the village was an economic unit, and the temple became the hub of activities. The temple has often been referred to as a major consumer of goods and services (Hariharan, 1993). It efficiently employs and manages human resources and therefore preserves and promotes skills in various disciplines. Temples have also been centres of learning,

with schools being opened in their vicinity using temple funds. They offered courses in traditional subjects, hosted musicians and dancers, and even operated hospitals (Hariharan, 1993).

Temples still dominate the southern Indian landscape and are a frequent occurrence, especially in Tamil Nadu. They have been studied for their many qualities—religious, historical, artistic, architectural, social, and economic. The State of Tamil Nadu has been bestowed with more than thirty-six thousand temples, and many more are constructed every day. Although they have been studied for their historical, religious, and financial aspects, this study attempts to throw light on temples as living heritage assets by understanding the cyclical nature of managing their functional continuity.

## **2.5. Focus and Scope**

The research focuses on temples, notably the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam, Tamil Nadu. It explores the theme of living heritage with temples as the backdrop. The research tries to trace the historical prominence of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam as an economic institution and the continuity of this function to this day. It also throws light on how functional continuity in the temple has been maintained by not only religious but also economic participation from devotees, visitors, and the management. The research also briefly studies the socio-economic facilitation by the temple's presence in the town of Srirangam.

### *Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam*

In Tamil Nadu, the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam is an important place known for its historical, religious, social, and economic significance. Occupying a total area of 156 acres of land, it is the largest functioning temple in the world and the largest such site in India (Sridharan S., 2012). The temple's historical origin is attributed to 800 CE, known from deciphered inscriptions. However, the temple finds mention in the Puranas going back to the time of Lord Sri Rama, which is in the Dvapara Yuga according to the Hindu calendar. The temple is a *swayam-vyaktha kshetra* (self-manifested shrine) and was originally a small shrine.

It developed with time into its present form and has several construction phases, with continuous support from the royal families, court nobles, and wealthy merchants. The town of Srirangam has originated and developed around the temple. The temple-town has a concentric layout with seven walls (*prakaram*) that form 7 streets around it. Four streets are inside the temple complex, and three of them (*Uthara street, Chitra street, Adayavalanjaan street*) are located outside the temple complex. They are predominantly occupied by people who work in the temple. The vast walls, measuring 758 metres by 878 metres of the temple-town, encloses all seven streets.

Apart from the seven *prakarams* with massive walls, the temple-town has 21 colourful sculpted *gopurams* (consecrated gateways with towers), 50 sub-shrines, nine *kulam* (sacred pools), gilded *Vimana* (dome) over the sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity, and mini-*Mandapams* (halls) housing the blessed feet of the Lord in collinear formation around the seven enclosures. Today, the temple is an active religious, social, and economic centre for the local community and an important

pilgrimage site for Hindu devotees, especially the Vaishnava cultural tradition. The temple complex is replete with rituals and festivals throughout the year. The unique prominence of the 20-day long festival of *Vaikunta Ekadashi* in Srirangam is a testimony to this.

Srirangam has seen immense growth due to the presence of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple. The temple possessed acres of land, and these are in the hands of the temple administration even today. Rulers and devotees have generously donated property and valuables like gold, silver, and cash to the temple. They continue to shower their wealth on the temple and offer it to Lord Ranganatha, the principal deity. Due to the vastness of its functions, the temple has assumed administrative responsibilities and financial dealings over the years.

The temple is situated in a significant economic location, on the island formed by the rivers Kaveri and Kollidam, and only 3 km north of the city of Tiruchirappalli. It shares the island with another temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Jambukeshwarar Temple at Tiruvanaikoil. On the other bank of Kaveri, in Tiruchirappalli, is the famous Rockfort Temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha. Srirangam has found its place on the tourist map since it is well connected by rail and road with other parts of the State and country. The entire area has become a self-sufficient commercial unit.

## **2.6. Relevance and Importance**

Many temples dedicated to Vishnu are present in the sub-continent. However, the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam is a paradigm in living heritage due to its

unbroken activity from the past to the present. The temple played a prominent role in India's medieval and post-medieval periods. It continues to play a crucial role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a centre of religious activity in the subcontinent.

The temple is prominent for Lord Ranganatha, seen in a lying posture, on Adishesha, the great python coiled to form a bed, with His Divine Consort, Goddess Lakshmi, by his side. Local people are frequent visitors to the temple who come to have the darshan of Lord Ranganatha. The temple is also a marvel in terms of its architectural and sculptural excellence. Its architectural and sculptural excellence has attracted pilgrims from India and abroad.

The temple gained its wealth primarily from two sources: donations and land and village grants. Inscriptions in the temple talk about gifts of ivory, jewels, gold ornaments for God, pearls and precious stones, statues made of precious metals, gold vessels and other types of equipment. Villages, agricultural fields, and herds of cattle helped the temple flourish by providing essential resources in the form of money and materials. The temple purchased land that helped pay employees and priests and provided food for the Gods and daily worship rituals—inscriptions in the temple point to such donations made by kings, queens, nobles, and devotees.

In Srirangam, the temple was constantly added to and repaired multiple times. The revenues of the temple, although not comparable to former times, is still considerable. Several estates belonging to the temple were confiscated during the invasions in Srirangam, and others were paid substantial compensation. The properties went to the East India Company and the Government at the advent of British rule in 1842.

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Presently, the Government of Tamil Nadu provides an annual grant to the temple, which has replaced the revenue earned by the temple from the villages and land handed over to it throughout centuries. From the study by Hariharan (1993), it can be known that the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, owned ornaments worth more than one lakh rupees. The landed properties of the principal and sub-temples attached to Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, totalled 1223.74 acres of dry land and 351.90 acres of wet land.

Other revenue sources for the temple include land and buildings, ticket sales, donations in cash and kind, and revenue from sub-temples. The Srirangam temple has five sub-temples under its control, namely.

- a) Sri Pundarikaksha Perumal Temple, Thiruvellarai
- b) Sri Kaattazhagiya Singer Temple, Srirangam
- c) Nachiyar Temple, Uraiyur.
- d) Sri Brahmasureeswarar Temple, Anbil
- e) Sri Sundararaja Perumal Temple, Anbil

The basis for selecting the temple as a study area is its historical prominence and continuity as a living heritage site. A core community exists around the temple with strong cultural connections. Apart from the resident core community, the temple is also a primary pilgrimage site and attracts many visitors from other regions. The temple is a major economy and contributes to the socio-economic development of the region. It is also listed on the Tentative Lists of World Heritage at UNESCO for the state party India. Hence, it is a worthy contestant for research.

## 2.7. Questions and Objectives

The research aims to showcase that the temple and the economy are interlinked and losing one would mean losing the other.

The objectives of the research are,

- (1) to understand the balance between cultural and economic values of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.
- (2) to map the core economies linked (directly or indirectly) to Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, and.
- (3) to assess the importance of the core economy in retaining the cultural values of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.

The questions being asked are: What core economies run because of the temple's presence? How important is the temple for their survival? How important is the core economy for the preservation of the temple's cultural values? How does the core economy balance the cultural values?

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods would be used to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions. Interviews with temple authorities will be conducted to understand the functioning of the temple at present. Books and other secondary literature will be used to understand the historical value of the temple for the town of Srirangam.

## CHAPTER 3

### STUDY AREA

#### 3.1. Introduction to the Study Area

Srirangam is a temple town in southern India, located on an islet formed by the Kaveri and Kollidam rivers. Occupying a total area of 156 acres of land, it is the largest functioning temple in the world and the largest such site in India. The temple is a self-manifested one and was originally a small shrine. It developed with time into its present form and has several construction phases, with continuous support from the royal families, court nobles, and wealthy merchants. The town of Srirangam has originated and developed around the temple. The temple-town has a concentric layout with seven walls (*prakaram*) that form 7 streets around it. Four streets are inside the temple complex, and three of them (*Uthara street*, *Chitra street*, *Adayavalanjaan street*) are outside the temple complex. They are predominantly occupied by people who work in the temple. The vast wall of the temple-town encloses all seven streets.

Apart from the seven *prakarams* with massive walls, the temple-town has 21 colourful sculpted *gopurams* (consecrated gateways with towers), 50 sub-shrines, nine *kulam* (sacred pools), gilded *Vimana* (dome) over the sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity, and mini-*Mandapams* (halls) housing the blessed feet of the Lord in collinear formation around the seven enclosures. Today, the temple is an active religious, social, and economic centre for the local community and an important

pilgrimage site for Hindu devotees, especially the Vaishnava cultural tradition. The temple complex is replete with rituals and festivals throughout the year. The unique prominence of the 20-day long festival of *Vaikunta Ekadashi* in Srirangam is a testimony to this.

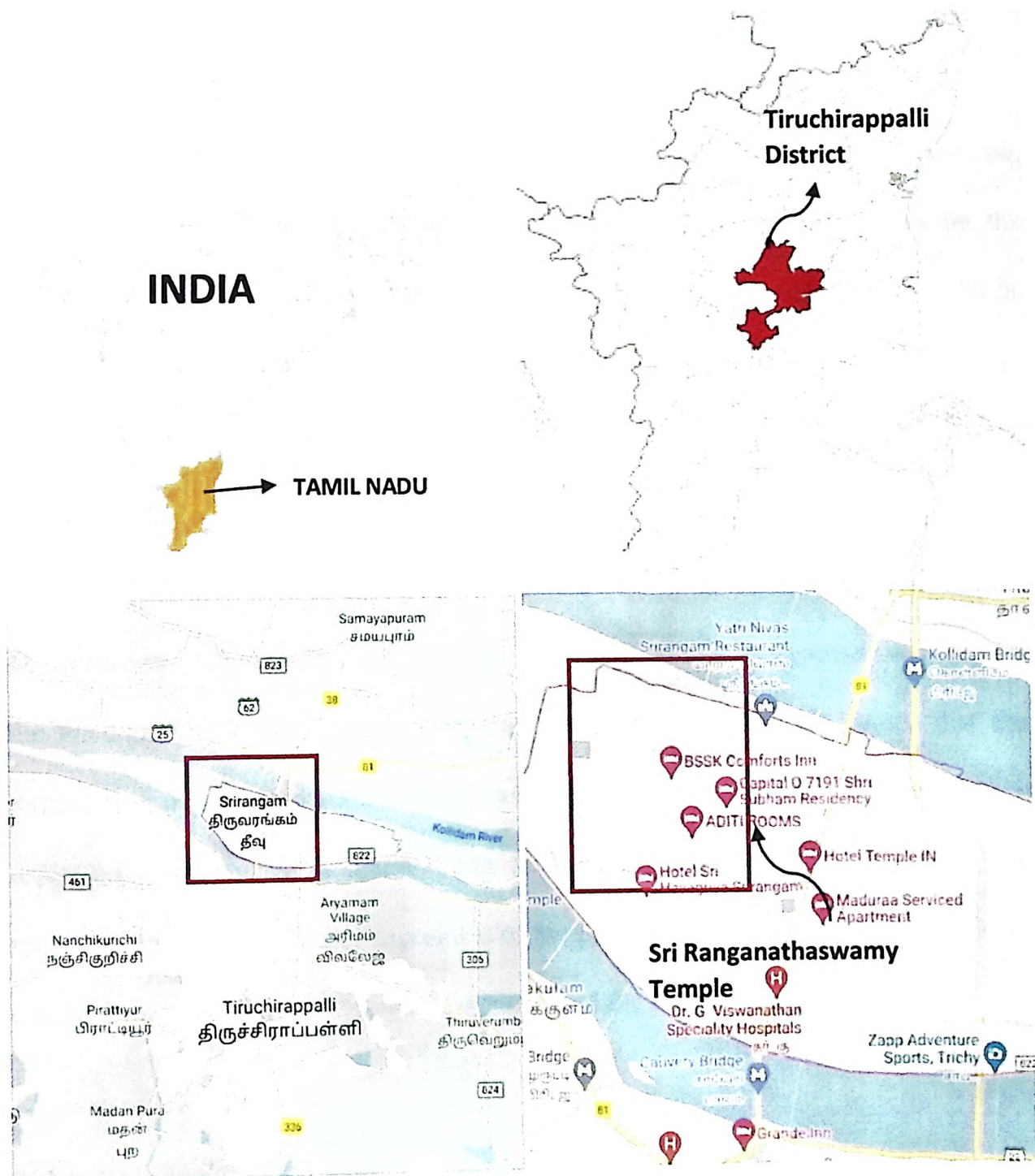


Figure 1: Location of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Trichy, Tamil Nadu.

### 3.2. History of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam

#### *Tradition*

Tradition has it that the *Śrīranga vimāna* (the self-manifested image of *Ranganātha*) sprang up from the ocean as a result of the prolonged and intense penance of *Brahmā*, who appointed *Sūrya* to offer daily puja (worship) to the god. *Ikṣvāku*, a descendant of *Sūrya*, started worshipping the *vimāna* in Ayodhya. *Rāmā* gifted it to *Vibhiṣaṇa*, who wanting to take a break before leaving for Lanka, placed the *vimāna* on the banks of the Kaveri. When he wanted to resume his journey, the *vimāna* could not be moved from the ground where it had become fixed. *Dharmavarma Chōḷa*, the king of the region, consoled a weeping *Vibhiṣaṇa*.

The god wished to remain on the banks of the Kaveri and promised to lie down facing south for the sake of *Vibhiṣaṇa*. Thus, *Vibhiṣaṇa* returned to Lanka, and *Dharmavarma Chōḷa* built a temple with *prakārās* (walls) and organised worship for the *vimāna*. The *Kōil Oḷugu*, a chronicle of the Srirangam temple, states that the temple built by *Dharmavarma Chōḷa* was buried in a sandstorm and forgotten, before *Kiḷi Chōḷa*, discovered it again. With the help of a parrot (*Kiḷi* in Tamil), he reconstructed the temple and exposed it to the public. The reference to a Chola king can be found in both the *Śrīranga Mahātmya* and the temple chronicle.

#### *Literary references*

The temple and the *Panguni* festival at the temple find mention in the *Ahanānūru*, a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE Sangam work. The *Silappadikaram*, written between the 5<sup>th</sup>

and 6th century BCE, also refers to the god of Srirangam. The *Kōil Oḷugu* is the chronicle of the temple in Tamil. Local chronicles such as the *Aṅṅan Tirumāḷigai Oḷugu*, the *Uttamanambi Vamsaprabhā*, and the *Guruparamparai*, a Vaishnava hagiology, mention the temple. Besides this, the *Śrīranga Mahātmya* finds reference in the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Pādma* and *Matsya Purāṇas*. The Sanskrit works such as *Prapannāmrtam*, *Lakshmikavyam*, *Madurāvijayam*, and the *Saluvābhyūdayam*, also refer to the temple.

Twelve *Alvārs* (Tamil poet-saints) propagated the *Bhakti* movement in southern India between the 5th and 8th centuries. The cultural tradition of *Sri Vaishnavas* was founded by the twelve *Alvārs* who sang devotional hymns to *Vishnu* and his avatars. The hymns of worship form a collection referred to as the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* (four thousand devotional verses). They have also sung about one hundred and eight *Divya Desam* temples, of which the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam is the foremost one.

### *Historical Background*

The Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas, Madurai Nayaks, and the Vijayanagara kings were instrumental in building the temple and bestowing it with land and monetary endowments. The *sanctum sanctorum* has been in existence since the Sangam age (1-500 CE). The earliest inscriptions in the temple belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> century Cholas. The second *prakārā* is called the Rajamahendran *thiruveedi* as its wall is said to have been built by Rajamahendran Chola (1060-1063 CE). This was also the period of the early Vaishnava Āchāryas, who propagated the Vaishnava faith and controlled the affairs of the Srirangam temple. Ramanuja, a prominent Vaishnava Āchārya, was

headquartered in Srirangam and reorganised the temple's administration during his time.

The Hoysalas built numerous shrines and mandapas. It includes the thousand-pillared mandapa, the shrines of *Paravāsudēva*, *Sudarshana Perumāḷ*, and *Lakshminārayaṇa Perumāḷ*, the *Nācciyar* shrine mandapa, which two generals built in the Hoysala army, *Kampaya Daṇḍanāyakka* and *Kariyamaṇikka Daṇḍanāyakka*. The most ornate shrine in the fourth enclosure is the *Vēṇugōpāla* shrine, and its construction is attributed to the Hoysalas. The Pandyas were great benefactors of the Srirangam temple. *Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan I* covered the temple with gold and performed the elephant-*tulābhāra* in which he floated two boats in the Kaveri, sitting on one with his elephant and filling the other with precious stones and gold. The contents were then gifted to the temple.

The Muslims invaded Malabar twice, in 1311 and 1323, and the Srirangam temple suffered on both occasions. In 1311, *Malik Kafur* sacked the temple and took away the gold and treasure. *Ulugh Khan* invaded in the year 1321 to expand the *Tughlaq* empire to the south and was successful. Malabar became a province of *Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq's* empire with headquarters at *Madurai*. During this expedition, Srirangam was occupied by the Muslims. However, the procession images of the god and goddesses (i.e., *Azhagiya Manavalan*, *Sri Devi* and *Bhu Devi*) and other items for worship and a few jewels were taken out of Srirangam by *Pillai Lokacharya* and other temple servants. The processional images travelled via a long route to *Tirupati*. They stayed at *Tirupati* and returned to Srirangam after 47 years thanks to the *Vijayanagar* army that installed the images back in 1371.

The temple was restored and reorganised by the Vijayanagar generals, primarily Kumāra Kampana, Gōpana, and Sāḷuva Guṇḍa. The vimāna was reconstructed and gilded, damaged shrines were repaired, gateways and gopuras were reconstructed, new shrines and mandapas were built, new services were instituted, and the foundation for what is now the *Rajagopura* (outermost gateway) was laid. Donations and grants of villages and gold by the Sangama dynasty helped the temple get back on its feet and celebrate its festivals. Festivals such as *Viruppaṇ thirunāl* and *Bhūpati-uḍayār thirunāl* are celebrated till date in memory of the Vijayanagar chieftains.

By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Madurai and Tanjore Nayaks were patrons of the Srirangam temple. In this period, several mandapas were painted with scenes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and with portraits of some Nayak rulers and officers. Achyutappa Nāyak of Tanjore (1580-1614) retired to Srirangam and is said to have gold plated the vimāna, reconstructed some prakārā walls, and newly constructed several mandapas. The temple received attention from the Madurai Nayaks, who shifted their capital to Tiruchirappalli in 1616. They contributed land, villages, and jewels to the temple.

The Nawabs of Arcot were used as political pawns by the English, and the French and the Srirangam temple was occupied and used as a fortress. However, the inner precincts were not occupied, and worship was not interfered with. Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan occupied the Srirangam temple in 1781 and 1790, respectively, but the English defeated them. In 1801, John Wallace took charge of the temple management as the Collector of Trichinopoly. The temple management was handed

over to a body of four *stalattār* or trustees of the locality. Presently, the temple is managed by the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu, India.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter explains the various research methods used to carry out the study. The researcher explains how the necessary data and information have been collected, presented, and analysed. She also provides reasons and justifications for using the research design, data sources, data collection tools, and analysis for the research.

#### **4.2. Research Design**

Research design is described as a plan or structure that describes the strategies for conducting a research project. It is a master plan that lists the specifications and procedures used in research. The research design is a deliberately planned arrangement of conditions for the analysis and collection of data in a manner that aims to be relevant to the purpose of the research.

##### **4.2.1. Descriptive Research Design**

Polit & Hunger (2004) define descriptive research design as those studies that have as their primary objective the accurate portrayal of the character of persons, situations, or groups. Descriptive research design is concerned with describing the characteristics of a problem. It describes conditions or relationships that exist, the

opinion that is held, a process that is going on, and effects that are evidence or trends that are developing. Questionnaires and surveys are two methods used to collect data for a descriptive research design. The researcher has used a descriptive research design.

### **4.3. Area of Study**

The study was carried out in the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, India. The rationale behind this choice is that the temple is its historical prominence and continuity as a living heritage site. A core community exists around the temple with strong cultural connections. Apart from the resident core community, the temple is also a primary pilgrimage site and attracts many visitors from other regions. The temple is a major economy and contributes to the socio-economic development of the region. It is also listed on the Tentative Lists of World Heritage for the state party India.

### **4.4. Research Approach**

There are two types of research methods, i.e., quantitative method and qualitative method. The quantitative research method uses numbers and statistics in presenting the research. It seeks to provide a general description of a particular phenomenon. On the other hand, the qualitative research method uses non-numerical data or data that have not been quantified. Interviews and or analysis of historical materials are used as techniques, and data is presented in a discursive format concerned with a

comprehensive account of some event or subject. Qualitative research is sometimes linked with case studies where the focus is on the history or culture of a particular region analysed in full detail.

The researcher used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in analysing the data collected. The reason is that some findings needed to be described due to the nature of information, while some could be analysed using quantitative tools resulting in tabulations and graphs.

#### **4.5. Data Collection and Analysis Process**

A combination of social science research tools – structured questionnaires and interviews – were used. The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey among local shopkeepers to understand the temple's role in economic development. The researcher used stratified random sampling to identify the respondents for the same. Questionnaires were chosen for this research because they are a reliable and quick method to collect information from multiple respondents efficiently and timely. The questionnaire is attached in the appendix. The researcher tabulated the cultural values of the temple using already existing information on the temple.

In order to understand the administration and organisation of the Temple, the researcher conducted interviews with the Temple administration. An overall understanding of the Temple's functioning as a religious and economic entity was achieved through this effort and is reflected in the subsequent chapters. The data collected from local shops and businesses help determine the temple's importance for

their survival. The temple's financial functioning through the core economies helps understand its use in preserving its cultural values. Finally, the researcher assessed which cultural values are dominantly preserved by the core economies.

#### **4.6. Limitations**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was a challenge. Many shops functioned for a limited time, and some were closed. Permission to access the Temple's financial records were not provided by the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments (H.R.&C.E.) Department. Hence, the Temple's financial position could not be determined accurately, and the researcher had to rely on historical studies for the same. The complexity of Temple's administration could not be simplified in the research due to the limited duration of the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1. Living Heritage of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam

The Temple was initially built for the worship of Lord Ranganatha. Hence, the original function of the Temple continues to this day through rituals and festivals that Ramanujacharya had explicitly ordained. The rituals and festivals that continue to be celebrated are explained below. Festivals, music, and dance occupy the most important place because they formed an integral part of temple worship in Srirangam. The festivals, dance, and music in Srirangam Temple, performed on behalf of the society, are believed to promote happiness, and enabled them to obtain absolution and various other favours and privilege. Hence, dance, music and festivals are regularly conducted. The physical fabric of the Temple includes exquisite architecture, numerous inscriptions and beautiful sculptures and paintings found in many parts of the Temple.

##### 5.1.1. Art and Architecture

The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture. It covers a total area of 156 acres, making it the largest functioning in the world. The Temple complex consists of seven prakaras or enclosure walls, with streets and residences. It also has 21 big and small *gopurams* or towers, 51 *upa-sannidhis* or sub-shrines, nine *theerthams* or sacred pools and a gilded *vimana* or

dome over the sanctum sanctorum. Numerous inscriptions and fresco paintings can also be found in various parts of the Temple complex. The Srirangam Temple is the only Temple in India with seven enclosures. The enclosures are counted outwards from the sanctum sanctorum, surmounted by a gilded *vimana* or dome crowned with four golden *kalasa* or vases. The extent of the Temple and its enclosures can be gauged from the following figures.

Table 1: Extent of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple and its seven *prakaras* (enclosures)

Enclosures or Prakaras	Length (in metres)	Area enclosed by the four walls	
		Hectares	Acres
7 <sup>th</sup> enclosure— Adaiyavalaindan Street	3, 264	63	155.6
6 <sup>th</sup> enclosure—Chitra street or Kaliyugaraman <i>thriuveedi</i>	2, 319	33.5	82.8
5 <sup>th</sup> enclosure—Uthara street or Trivikraman <i>thiruveedi</i>	1,690	17.68	43.7
4 <sup>th</sup> enclosure— Akalankan <i>thiruveedi</i>	1, 270	9.74	24.07
3 <sup>rd</sup> enclosure—	739	3.28	8.13

Aalinadan <i>thiruveedi</i>			
2 <sup>nd</sup> enclosure— Kulasekharan thiruveedi	409	0.35	0.89
1 <sup>st</sup> enclosure— Rajamahendran thiurveedi	241	0.18	0.46

The first enclosure (*prakaram*) is the Rajamahendran Thiruveedi, named after a Chola prince called Rajamahendran. It consists of the *garbha-griha* (sanctum sanctorum) and is circular. Devotees enter through the Nazhikettan Vasal into the first enclosure to catch a glimpse of Lord Ranganatha. The *moolava murthi*, made of stucco, is in a reclining position seated on Adihsesha, its hoods spread over the head of Lord Ranganatha, who is facing southwards. It also houses the *utsava murthi* or processional image of Lord Ranganatha, who is seen along with his Divine Consorts, Sridevi and Bhudevi. He is worshipped as Azhagiya Manavalan. Another processional image known as Thiruvaranga Maligayar is seen in the sanctum, which was in worship when the original *utsava murthi* was taken out of Srirangam during invasions. The dome atop the sanctum is called famously called the Srirangam Vimana.

The Rajamahendran Thiruveedi also houses the Gayatri Mandapam, the Periya Thirumandapam, the Azhagiya Manavalan Mandapam, Arjuna Mandapam and a Garuda shrine. The Gayatri Mandapam consists of twenty-four pillars that signify the

24 letters of the Gayathri mantra. The first enclosure also has a shrine dedicated to Senai Mudaliar, the leader of the army of Vishnu. The sanctum of Thuluka Nachiyar is located on the north-east side of the Arjuna Mandapam, and that of Cherakulavalli Nachiyar is on the northwest corner of this mandapam. The Kili Mandapam is also in the Rajamahendran Thiruveedi and is essential because of the traditional story of Sriranga Vimana being revealed to King Dharmavarman by a parrot (kili).

The second enclosure is Kulasekharan Thiruveedi, named after Kulasekhara Alvar, one of the twelve Alvars. It consists of the Aryabhatal gateways, the Aniyarangan thirumuttram (courtyard), the Unjal Mandapam and the Pavitra Mandapam. It also has a pillared corridor on the other side and the Dorai Mandapam. The second enclosure houses the madapalli (kitchen) on the south-eastern side. The northern Aryabhatal entrance is known as Paramapada Vasal (gateway to heaven).

The third enclosure is called the Alinadan Thiruveedi, named after Thirumangai Alvar, also known as Alinadan. It is longer and has many shrines and mandapams within it. The gopuram on the south is Karthikai Gopuram, and the one on the north is called Aindukuzhi Moondruvasal Gopuram. The eastern entrance is known as Thavittra Vasal. This enclosure houses the Garuda mandapam, with the idol of Garuda reaching fourteen feet in height. Nammalvar, the most revered Alvar among the twelve, also has his shrine in the Alinadan Thiruveedi. His shrine also houses the processional images of Madurakavi Alvar and Thirumangai Alvar. The magnificent Kottarams (granaries) constructed of brick can be found in the third enclosure. They are situated in the southwest area and were used to store rice and grain. Other shrines

dedicated to Mela Pattabhirama, Mudal Alvar, and Tirthakkarai Vasudeva Perumal are located in this enclosure.

The Alinadan Thiurveedi also houses the Chandra Pushakrini, a circular sacred pool, and the shrines of Veda Vyasa, Tondaradippodi Alvar, Santanagopala Krishna and Radha Krishna are located close-by. To the north of Chandra Pushkarini is the shrine of Varaha and Varadaraja Swami. The Kondandarama shrine Paramapadanatha shrine can be found nearby. Near the front mandapa of the Kodandarama shrine is a sanctum that enshrines the idol of Kulasekhara Alvar. The east side of the third enclosure consists of many mandapams, and shrines dedicated to Kizh Pattabhirama and Srinivasa Perumal. It also houses the shrine for Thirumazhisai Alvar, whose stone and processional images are in worship. The prakara also has a shrine for Thirukkachi Nambi, a well-known Sri Vaishnava Acharya who was the preceptor of Ramanujacharya. The Surya Pushkarini, another square sacred pool, is also located in the third enclosure.

The fourth enclosure is Akalankan Thiruvedhi, one of the titles meaning 'one who is blemishless' of Kulottunga Chola I and his son Vikrama Chola. The gopuram on the south side of this enclosure is known as Rangavasal Gopuram or Ranga Ranga Gopuram. The north gopuram near the Thayar sannidhi is called the Thayar Sannidhi Gopuram. The gopuram to the east is known as Vellai Gopuram and is the tallest after the Rajagopuram. Upon entering the fourth enclosure through the Rangavasal Gopuram, to the right is a pillared hall called the Thiruvandikkappu Mandapam and to the north is the famed Rangavilasa Mandapam. The Dvajasthambam and Balipitham are located further north. On the western side of the Rangavilasa

Mandapam are located the shrines of Andal, Nathamuni and Venugopala. To the eastern side are shrines of Thiruppanazhvar, Vittala Krishnam Tondaradippodi Alvar, and Kurattazhvan.

The Venugopala shrine is unique and houses the idol of Lord Krishna. It was built during the Hoysala period and had exquisite architecture and beautiful sculptures. The famous shrine of Chakkrathazhvar is located north of the Venugopala shrine. It appears as a separate temple because it has its maha-mandapam, antarala (connecting the mukha-mandapa with the main shrine), and an inner enclosure (pradakshina). The sanctum for Dhanvantari, the divine physician, is located in the fourth prakara, on the northern side. The Vasantha Mandapam is also located in this enclosure.

The Akalankan Thiruveddi also houses the most important shrine of Goddess Ranganayaki Thayar on the northern end. The shrine of Vedanta Desika, a great Sri Vaishnava Acharya, is located opposite the Thayar shrine. The Kambar Mandapam or the Ramayana Arangetra Mandapam is situated between these two shrines. The first Ramayana recital written by the Tamil poet Kambar is said to have taken place in this mandapam. Another shrine near the Thayar sanctum is dedicated to Mettazhagiyasingar, which is a raised structure. Further towards the east is a shrine for Periavacchan Pillai, a 12<sup>th</sup> century AD scholar. Nearby is a sanctum for Vasudeva Perumal.

The most essential and prominent mandapams in the Temple are located on the eastern end of the Akalankan Thiruveddi. They are the thousand-pillared mandapam

and the hundred-pillar mandapam. The Aiyramkal Mandapam, although known as thousand-pillared, has only 864 massive granite monolithic pillars of varying size and shape. It formerly had a shrine inside it, which is now empty. The hundred-pillar mandapam, otherwise known as Seshagirirayar Mandapam, is a beautiful structure with ornate sculptures. It was built during the period of the Nayak kings and had exquisite carvings on eight pillars that reach a height of about nineteen feet. The fourth enclosure also houses important shrines such as that of Pillai Lokacharya, an eminent Srivaishnava Acharya, Yamunacharya and Parthasarathi. The important shrine of Ramanujar is located on the south-eastern side of the Akalankan Thiruveedi.

The fifth enclosure is named the Uttara Veedhi or Trivikraman Thiruvedhi. The sixth enclosure is the Chitra Veedhi and is also known as Kaliyugaraman Thiruvedhi, a title of the Pandyan ruler, Maravarman Vira Pandya. The seventh and outermost enclosure is the Adaiyavalaindan Thiruvedhi which in Tamil means 'that which goes around'. The three outer enclosures contain houses, shops, and other structures, which have, over time, led to the Temple being called the temple town, indicating that the Temple itself is the town and that both are inseparable. The *sapta-prakaram* concept is also believed to represent the seven worlds which the *Jiva* (soul) has to transcend to reach the *Paramatma* (Vishnu), here enshrined as Ranganathaswamy.

The street shops sell various products such as flower garlands, holy images, textiles, household items and other religious commodities. Traditional houses with pillared verandas and sheds containing processional cars and stalls for the temple elephants can also be found in the outer three enclosures. Gopurams and small sanctuaries and

shrines are found in the seventh enclosure (Adaiyavalaindan), towards the southern gopura, and at the southwest corner, the outer Temple of Andal, known as Veli Andal Temple is found.

### **5.1.2 Inscriptions and Paintings**

The earliest inscriptions belong to the Chola period. These inscriptions have been dated to the reign of Aditya Chola I (871-907 AD). The other Chola Kings whose time inscriptions were written are Parantaka I, Uttama Chola, Rajaraja Chola I, Rajendra Chola I and Rajendra III. The names of a few Chola queens are also mentioned in these inscriptions. An inscription dated to the time of Kulottunga I (1070-1120) records a grant of gold for the recitation of Tiruppallelucci and the Thiruvaimozhi in the Temple. This inscription also gives a few authentic details regarding the organisation of the Temple in the time of Ramanuja.

The Pandyas also have numerous inscriptions in the Srirangam Temple to their name. They mainly belong to the reign of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I, Maravarman Sundara Pandya II, Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I, Vira Kulasekhara, and others. An inscription in Sanskrit of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251-68) records that he constructed many shrines and offered gifts and jewels to the Srirangam temple. He also covered the *vimana* of the main shrine in gold and gifted a garland of emeralds, a bejewelled crown, a pearl garland, a gold car, a gold trough, garments of gold, a *simhasana* of gold, and many more.

The Hoysalas have inscriptions in the Srirangam temple dating to the times of many great Hoysala kings such as Vishnuvardhana, Vira Narasimha II, Someshwara, Ramanatha and others. The names of a few royal ladies such as Devaladevi, Vijvala

Mahadevi and Somaladeviyar are also mentioned. An inscription dating to the period of Ramanatha in 1257 records the founding of an Aarogyasaala (hospital) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> prakara of the Temple through a land endowment by a donor named Singana Dandanayaka.

The Vijayanagar rulers have left many inscriptions in the Srirangam temple. An inscription refers to the restoration and reconsecration of the Srirangam temple in 1371 when the images of Ranganatha and His consorts Sri and Bhu were brought from Tirupati and reinstalled. They also point out that all the donations and endowments made during this period by kings, officers or private persons were entrusted to the Uttamanambis. They were the wardens of the Temple. An inscription refers to the acts of self-immolation committed by a few temple servants as a protest against unlawful taxes on the temple lands. A few inscriptions of Krishnadevaraya register gifts of villages to the Temple.

The Nayak kings also contributed immensely to the Srirangam temple, and their contributions are recorded in several inscriptions. An inscription of the period of Veerappa Nayak (1572-95) records a monetary endowment for feeding Srivaishnavas in the Ramanujakutam in Srirangam. Two inscriptions of Chokkanatha Nayak (1659-82) refer to the construction of the Ashtabuja Gopalakrishna shrine and the grant of land and a village for its maintenance. Another records the grant of a village to worship the image of Varadaraja in the Temple Vijayaranga Chokkanatha (1706-32) built the Vedaparayana Mandapam. A copper plate grant records his gift of land for conducting charity at Srirangam.

The Srirangam temple is also known for its beautiful paintings, in addition to its exquisite architecture and sculpture. The Ranga Vilasa mandapa, the shrine of Goddess Ranganayaki, Mettu Azhagiyasingar shrine, Udaiyavar (Ramanuja) shrine, east Chittirai Gopuram and other places in the Srirangam temple contains many paintings. Painted in the Vijayanagara-Nayak style of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, most of these have labels in Telugu script describing the scene portrayed in the painting.

Several inscriptions on both stone and copper plates are found in the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam. The number is approximately six hundred and forty-four. They are composed in various languages and contain essential information about the Temple's social, political, cultural, and economic aspects.

### **5.1.3. Rites and Rituals**

Lord Rangantha's day starts with music from the veena every morning, and the music also marks the beginning of the day for the Temple. Ritualistic hymns known as the *Tiruppalli Ezhuchchi*, composed by Thondaradippodi Alvar, is sung to wake up the ord. To make the occasion more auspicious, an elephant and a cow are brought before the Lord. The elephant faces the deity, and the cow stands facing the opposite direction since this is considered auspicious.

Every morning, freshwater is brought from the Kollidam river by the serves on the temple elephant for Lord Ranganatha. *Thiruvadarahirai*, meaning holy bath, is performed every morning during the Viswaroopadarsanam. The deity is decked with flowers and ornaments, and wick lamps are lighted in the sanctum sanctorum. It is

then followed by several sevas scheduled for the entire day till 9:30 PM. Following is the schedule of sevas.

Table 2: The daily ritual timetable at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.

6:00 AM	Viswaroopam
6:15 AM to 7:30 AM	Seva
7:30 AM to 9:00 AM	Pongal Seva
9:00 AM to 12:30 PM	Seva
12:30 PM to 1:15 PM	Periyavasaram Pooja
1:15 PM to 5:30 PM	Seva
5:30 PM to 6:45 PM	Ksheeraannam Pooja
6:45 PM to 9:00 PM	Seva
9:00 PM to 9:30 PM (Devotees not allowed)	Aravanai (food offering)

These rites and rituals were set by Sri Ramanujar more than a thousand years ago. The Temple gives precedence to the Alvar recitals than the Vedas. Poojas are performed throughout the day, but the one in the morning is the most important. The Temple's schedule has been constant for many years and begins with the ablution of the principal deity Lord Ranganatha. He is then anointed with ghee and dried with saffron powder. Sandal paste is applied to His chest and feet. Then, the Lord is clothed with dry garments, and the sacred sign (*Namam*) is applied on the forehead. Only after this morning ritual can the devotees have *darshan* of the deity in the sanctum sanctorum for about an hour.

Every Friday, a special paste made out of oil mixed with camphor called *punugu thailam* (civet musk) is applied to the idol of Lord Ranganatha. The process is called *punugu kaappu*. It is done by the *Jiyar* and *archakar* (priest), and nobody else is allowed to witness the ritual. It is a norm in the Temple to apply the *punugu thailam* for twenty-seven Fridays in a year. This ritual is performed to protect the idol's physical fabric (through the interview).

From 7:30 AM to 9:00 AM, *neivedyam* is offered to the deity. *Neivedyam* means the offering of food to the Lord. The food is prepared in the Temple's kitchen, known as *madapalli*, exclusively for Lord Ranganatha. After *neivedyam*, betel leaves and areca-nuts are offered, following which the Lord's mouth is washed. Various offerings of incense, small butter lamps, Tulasi leaves, and flowers are made, accompanied by recitations. The ritual comes to an end after all offerings from devotees are presented to the deity.

#### **5.1.4. Festivals**

Apart from pujas, rites and rituals, various festivals are also celebrated in the Temple. Primarily religious, these festivals provide an opportunity for the people to fulfil religious obligations and vows. Srirangam temple festivals are ceremonies of social gatherings and enjoyment. Festivals are broadly categorised into three categories. The festivals that are conducted regularly, on dates significant to the deity, installed in a temple and celebrated on the days, fixed according to the astronomical calendar, belong to the first category. All festivals instituted by the kings, nobles, and other public and charitable institutions, form the second group. Festivals arranged for the

propitiation of gods and goddesses, at times of distress and difficulties such as famine, flood, or drought, come under the last group.

Festivals are an important part of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple. Residents and devotees often claim that every day is a festival in Srirangam. These festivals are celebrated with much pomp and are important events in the Temple's calendar. During festival time, the *utsava murthi* is taken out on a procession to the accompaniment of music to offer darshan to those who cannot visit the Temple. The Temple at Srirangam has a long list of festivals on its calendar. Important festivals are held in the months of Chithirai, Avani and Masi, Adi, Purattasi and Aippasi.

It starts with the Viruppanan Tirunal in the month of Chithirai (April-May). The festival is celebrated for ten days with the *utsava murthi* riding the various temple cars and going on a procession in the mornings and evenings. A ceremonial bath is given to the Lord in the Revati Mandapam after the processions. Chitra Pournami day falls on this month, and the Gajendra Moksham episode is re-enacted in the Kaveri by the *utsava murthi* of Lord Ranganatha. The Vasantotsavam festival falls in the month of Vaikasi (May-June) and is celebrated for nine days. The deity is taken to the Vasanta Mandapam in the evening and returns at night. On the seventh day, the paddy is measured in front of the Lord and his consorts and is sent to the granary.

The month of Ani (June-July) reckons the Jyeshthabhishekam festival. It is also known as *Ani Thirumanjanam*. During this festival, all the armour of the deity is removed, and the whole area is cleaned. It is celebrated in order to rid the water of possible impurities. On that day, the temple elephant carries a golden pitcher; the servants carry silver pitchers on their heads, and others carry brass pitchers. It is also during

this month that the *moolavar* is dressed in *punugu thailam*. No cloth covers the body, and hence a screen shields the body, leaving only the face visible. The Periya Paavadai festival is celebrated the very next day to remove impurities from cooked food. Large amounts of cooked rice and fruits are offered on a wide cloth to the Lord, and they are distributed to the devotees later.

The Kaveri River is celebrated in the month of Adi (July-August). Lord Ranganatha goes to the river in a grand procession and offers new clothes and garlands to it. Andal was born in the Adi month, and hence, while returning from the river, He exchanges garlands at the Veli Andal Sannidhi. Krishna's birthday falls on the month of Avani (July-August), and the Lord, accompanied by Krishna from the Kili Mandapam, goes in procession to witness the Uriyadi (breaking the pot) festival. Pavitrotsavam festival is also celebrated this month for nine days, during which the Lord is only adorned with garlands made out of threads and not flowers.

Navratri is celebrated during the Purattasi month (August-September) in the Temple of Goddess Ranganayaki. On the Vijayadasami day, which falls on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Navratri, Lord Ranganatha visits the Kattazhagiya Singer temple and remains there till the evening. Aippasi month (September-October) celebrates the unjal (swing) festival. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the Lord checks the granaries with the servitors measuring paddy in the granary. On the day of Deepavali, Lord Ranganatha sits in court along with the Azhvars and Acharyas. During the Karthikai month (November-December), the Deepam festival is celebrated with lamps lit in the Temple and homes. The Lord comes in procession and remains in Sri Chakrathazhvar temple mandapam. A huge

pillar built of palm leaves is erected in front of the Kartika Gopuram Entrance and is set on fire.

The most important and famous festival is Vaikunta Ekadasi that falls in the Tamil month of *Margazhi* (December-January). The festival is celebrated for 21 days in two sets known as *pagal pathu* (daytime ten) and *ra paththu* (night-time ten) days. For the first ten days, known as *pagal pathu*, Thirunmangai Alvar's hymns called *Thirunedun Thandakam* are recited at the sanctum sanctorum. The next ten days, known as *ra pathu*, are celebrated as Thiruvaimozhi Thirunal when Nammalvar's hymns called the *Thiruvaimozhi* is recited. The last day of *ra pathu* is the day of Vaikunta Ekadasi.

Preparations for the festival begin in October, with a pillar made of coconut tree trunk being erected first. A *pandal* is erected in the northeast court of the 3<sup>rd</sup> enclosure. On the day of Vaikunta Ekadasi, the *utsava murthi* (processional image) of Lord Ranganatha passes through the northern gate of the 2<sup>nd</sup> enclosure, which is otherwise kept closed throughout the year. This gate is known as the *paramapada vaasal* (gate to heaven) and is opened only on the occasion of Vaikunta Ekadasi. Many sacred texts are recited and chanted in the presence of Lord Ranganatha during the festival.

The Araiyaars, who are well-versed in music, dance, and exposition, enact plays from the Thirumozhi and Thiruvaimozhi during the festival. The icons of Alvars and Acharyas are seated in front of Lord Ranganatha, and they sing sacred hymns. The Vaikunta Ekadasi festival is the most important in the Temple. Lakhs of devotees

visit the Temple during the festival, observe an all-day fast, stay awake during the whole night, and sing and dance to the beat of cymbals.

The Sankranti (Pongal) festival falls in the month of Thai (January-February), and the Lord gives darshan to devotees in the thousand-pillared hall. In the month of Masi (February-March), the Teppotsavam festival is celebrated for nine days in which the Lord mounts on the Garuda and goes in procession. The Bhupati festival is famous during the month of Thai because of which it is also known as Thai Ther. Lord Ranganatha comes out in procession on different chariots, and on the ninth day, He comes with His consorts.

In the final month of Panguni (March-April), the cycle of temples comes to an end. The Brahmotsavam is the last festival in the year, and the Lord goes to Uraiyyur for a day to be with Goddess Kamalavalli Nachiyar. On Panguni Utthiram day, He goes to the shrine of Lord Ranganayaki and stays with her. It is a nine-day festival with several ceremonial processions and rites day and night. A quarrel between Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Ranganayaki ensues, which is a spectacle to watch. The Araiyyars represent the Lord, and the servitors represent the Goddess. They try to bring them together and sing their virtues as a duo after reconciliation. The festival involves fun and devotion. On the day of Panguni Uttiram, Lord Ranganatha and Goddess Ranganayaki give darshan to several devotees. It is also the only day in Srirangam that the Lord and the Goddess can be seen together; hence, it is a special occasion.

The Temple of Srirangam occupies an important place in India's religious history as one of the most active centres of Vaishnavism, which flourished particularly in

southern India from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was the seat of Vaishnavism, the most outstanding leader of which was the famous teacher Ramanuja. Thus, Srirangam is an eloquent symbol of India's age-old devotional tradition, civilisation, and culture in general, and South India in particular. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple has thus led to the growth of Srirangam as a township. The gopurams and architecture, according to the Agamas, have lent beauty to the temple-town.

### 5.2. General and Financial Administration of the Temple

The General Administration of the Srirangam Temple vests with Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department (H.R.&C.E.), Government of Tamil Nadu. The Temple is protected under the H.R.&C.E. Act since 1960. All the works carried out in the Temple are an essential part of the H.R.&C.E. Department and the Temple Trust.

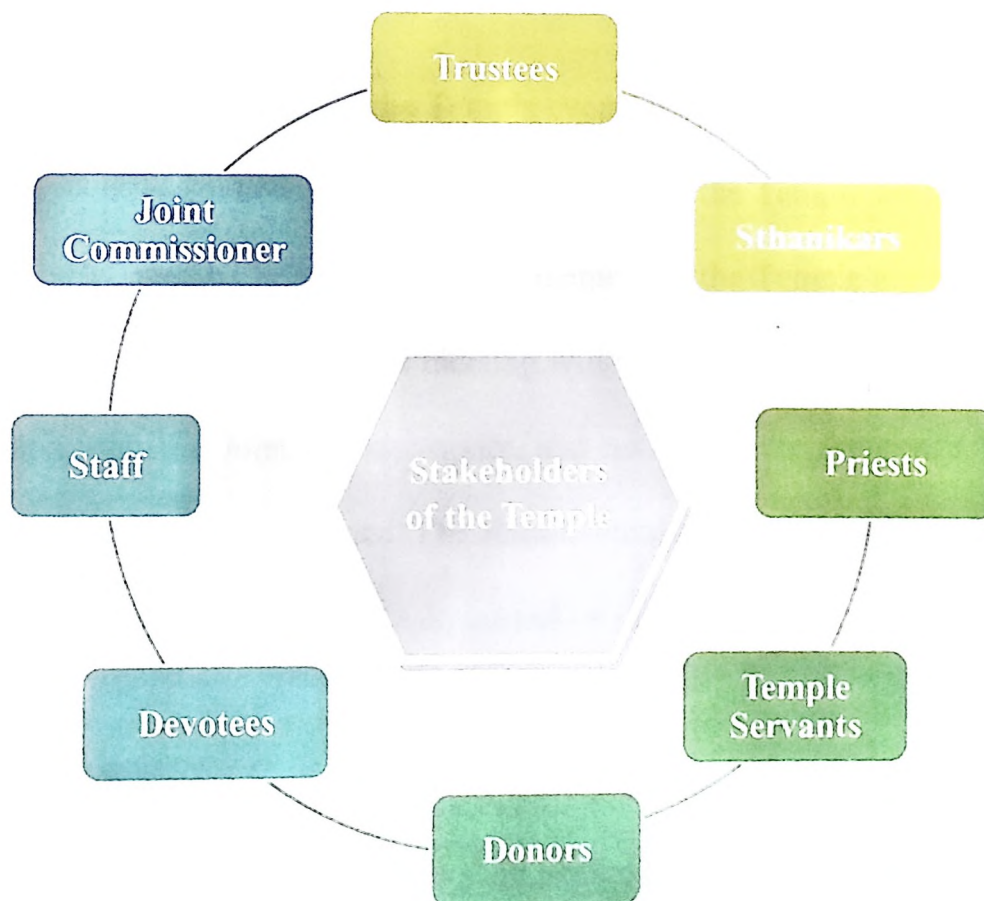


Figure 2: Stakeholders of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.

There are two types of Trustees—hereditary and non-hereditary. The H.R.&C.E. Act defines a hereditary trustee as “the trustee of a religious institution, the succession to whose office devolves by hereditary right or is regulated by usage or is specifically provided for by the founder, so long as such scheme of succession is in force.” [Section 6 (11)]. A non-hereditary trustee is someone who is not a hereditary trustee. [Section 6 (14)].

The Board of Trustees should consist of not less than three persons and not more than five persons. It should consist of members among whom one shall be from Adi Dravida or Scheduled Tribe, and one shall be a woman. The period of the Board of Trustees is two years. The Non-Hereditary Trustees for the Hindu Religious Institutions falling under section 46 (iii) of the H.R.&C.E. Act, having an annual income of ₹10 lakhs or more, are appointed directly by the Government.

The Board of Trustees meets in the Temple every month for discussing the Temple functioning and transactions. The monthly accounts of the Temple are passed in the meeting, and all matters relating to the management of the Temple are considered at these meetings. The agenda for the meeting will be set by the Chairman Trustee in consultation with the Joint Commissioner, and notice for the same will be shared with the other Trustees in advance. The Joint Commissioner and staff of the Temple are appointed by the H.R. & C.E. (Administration) Department.

The Chairman must be present at and lead the meetings of the Board of Trustees. The quorum at the meetings of the Trustees shall be three. The Joint Commissioner must attend all the meetings of the Board of Trustees and can place his views before the

meeting regarding subjects under consideration. However, he will not be entitled to vote at the meetings and will only carry out the resolution of the Board of Trustees.

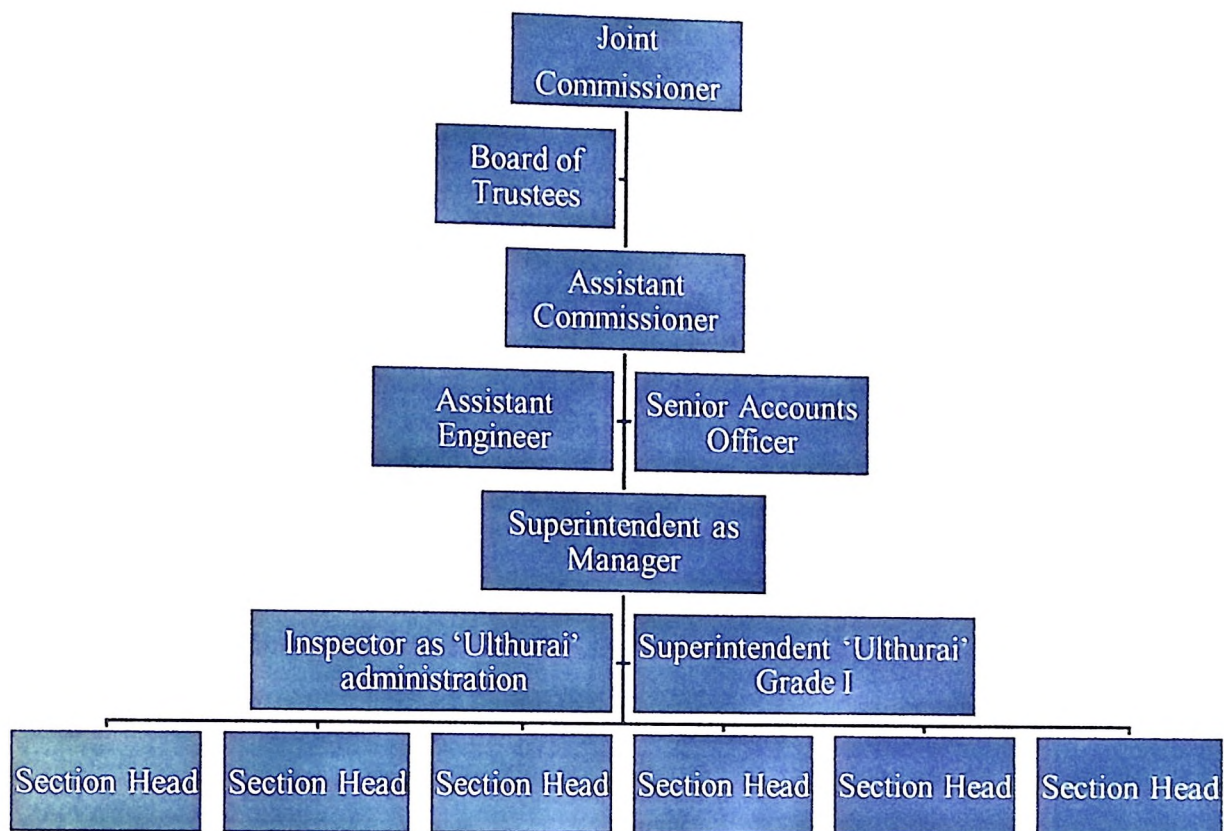


Figure 3: Organogram of the Temple Management at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam

In every monthly meeting, cash and perishables are checked and noted down in the minutes' book. The previous month's accounts are passed, and other subjects brought by the Joint Commissioner or the Chairman or any member before the meeting are discussed. Subjects such as the Budget, Thittam (scheme), the programme of festivals, and proposal for repairs are placed before the meeting once every year in March. Once every year in August, the following are placed before the meeting— Administration Report, Festivals' accounts, improvements to the buildings and additions to jewellery. Audit notes and replies are also placed before the meeting.

The Joint Commissioner oversees the day-to-day administration of the Temple, the temple office, records, and accounts of the Temple. In the absence of the Joint Commissioner, the Chairman Trustee may pass emergency orders that the Temple employees shall be bound to obey.

#### *Daily worship and festival activities*

The Board of Trustees and the Joint Commissioner are responsible for the proper conduct of daily worship and of the festivals in the Temple. They are jointly responsible for keeping the jewels, vehicles, and the immovable properties of the Temple in good repair and conditions. All correspondence relating to the Temple proceeds from the Joint Commissioner. Documents and papers which require the signature of the members of the Board of Trustees are signed by the Chairman Trustee on their behalf.

#### *Budget*

The Joint Commissioner will prepare a draft budget for the coming *fasli* (year) and submit the same to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will, after scrutiny and any modifications and alterations, submit the Budget to the H.R.&C.E. Department a month before the commencement of the *fasli*. The order of the H.R.&C.E. Department concerning the Budget will be final. As a rule, neither the Board of Trustees nor the Joint Commissioner shall incur any kind of expenditure which is not provided for in the Budget except with the previous sanction of the H.R.&C.E. Department. The 'Thittam' or scheme is the prescribed estimate for all the expenses connected with the temple poojas and festivals. The 'Thittam' has been

prepared as per the ancient period. The authorities are expected to adhere to the 'Thittam' strictly.

### *Finance and Accounts*

The Joint Commissioner is the only person entitled to receive amounts of money and other income due to the Temple and make disbursements on behalf of the Temple. All amounts of money received for the Temple and paid by it should be supported by vouchers printed and numbered accordingly. Accounts of the Temple are kept *fasli* year-wise, and they must be ready for audit within three months from the close of each *fasli*. The Joint Commissioner maintains an accurate, regular, and correct account of the income and expenditure of the Temple, which the Board of Trustees pass every month at their meetings. The Temple funds are invested in a recognised Bank, and the Joint Commissioner operates the funds through a cheque. All amounts of money received on behalf of the Temple, such as rents, sale of produce, other movables, donations, upayams etc., are deposited in the bank. No money can be dealt with by any officer of the Temple directly for any expenditure.

### *Temple Lands*

Lease of temple lands and *Kanikkais* (voluntary offerings), which cannot be used in kind by the Temple, are sanctioned. The Joint Commissioner conducts all auctions in the manner resolved by the Board of Trustees. The Board will have the right to approve the manner prescribed and to modify the same. The Srirangam Temple has lands both inside and outside Srirangam and spread across many adjoining districts too. There are two types of land, namely, *punjai* and *nanjai*. Land that can be

cultivated upon is known as *nanjai* land. *Punjai* lands are basically barren lands on which nothing can be grown. Farmers who hold *nanjai* land pay *rokkam* (rent).

Currently, there are 110 farmers owning temple land (*nanjai*) on lease. A few years ago, farmers had to give away a fixed portion of their produce to the Temple granaries. But, this practice, rather than being discontinued, was transformed into cash in lieu of paddy. Hence, the farmers pay a fixed amount to the Temple, which is calculated after considering the extent of land and the quintals that could potentially be produced in a particular year. *Nanjai rokkam* is another type of payment where the farmer would have built a house on the land. Hence fair rent fixation is placed on the house, and the house owner pays a monthly rent to the Temple.

*Punjai* land belonging to the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is found in many areas and districts such as Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Dindigul and others. Owners of *punjai* land should pay a fair rent to the Temple. They cannot change the structure of the land by constructing houses, compound walls, or business establishments. Suppose payment is not made for a long period of time; the land will be retrieved by the Temple and auctioned at a flat rate fixed by the Government.

#### *Maramathu (Repairs)*

The Joint Commissioner places proposals for doing *maramathu* or repairs of temple property before the Board of Trustees and the amount required for working the *maramathu* with details of estimates. The Board of Trustees, after subjecting to the provisions in the Budget, decide as to the necessity of the *maramathu* or repairs and the amounts to be spent for the purpose. All works of repairs or construction are

entrusted to contractors. The Joint Commissioner calls for tenders and opens them at the time and place fixed for the purpose. All provisions for use in the Temple are unless specially directed by the Board, purchased from the local cooperative stores.

### *Kattalais*

The Joint Commissioner prepares and submits to the Board a register of *Kattalais* attached to the Temple containing the following particulars:

- (1) An abstract of the deeds of grants relating to endowments
- (2) An account of the mode of management since the foundation of the *Kattalais* up to date.
- (3) The income of *Kattalais*.
- (4) The scale of expenditure.
- (5) The *Thittam* now in force.
- (6) The Surplus income, if any.
- (7) Mode in which surplus income is utilised.
- (8) Alienations, if any, with particulars regarding date, consideration etc.
- (9) If any *Kattalais* are not being performed now, particulars regarding the *Kattalais* shall be furnished with reasons for non-performance.

The accounts of the several *kattalais* should not be mixed up with general accounts of the Temple (Hariharan, 1993).

### *Jewels and their Safe-Custody*

All the jewels and costly articles etc., of the Temple, are preserved in *Therkalarai*.

The Joint Commissioner is primarily responsible for the safety of the jewels of the

Temple. When the jewels are to be delivered to the Archakas for worship on the festival or other occasions, the Joint Commissioner or person deputed by him therefore on his own responsibility and Temple Superintendent will deliver them to Archakas. As soon as the purpose for which the jewels are taken is over, the Archakas will redeliver them to the Temple Superintendent for deposit in the lock room. The jewels are checked by the Joint Commissioner in the presence of the Chairman Trustee whenever they are taken out of and restored to the Therkalarai. The key-holders should be present at the opening and the closing of the Therkalarai and the boxes in it and examine the jewels whenever they are given out of or restored to the Therkalarai. A list of jewels should be brought up to date at least once every year and kept in the temple office and the jewels room. The exhibition of jewels to the public should not be generally made.

#### *Records and Accounts*

The records of the Temple will be in the custody of the Joint Commissioner and will be sealed with the Temple seal. The Joint Commissioner sends all records required for disposal of the subjects posted for the meeting and all the paper relating to the subjects referred to for circulation amongst trustees after taking a receipt from any clerk who takes them for circulation. Once in five years, the Joint Commissioner has the records examined/

The main human resources involved in the processes of worship and management of the Temple are:

- (1) Priests are generally called 'Bhattar'.

- (2) The group that provides services for the deity during worship in carrying water from the river, cooking and carrying things during services.
- (3) 'Ulthurai' temple servants include the macebearer, singers of songs, adorer, and astrologer.
- (4) 'Velithurai' temple servants include the palanquin bearers, umbrella carriers and musicians.

On a day-to-day basis, authority and control in the Temple are distributed in a complex manner. Power is not necessarily systematically delegated downwards through a system of ranked roles in the Temple, but the officials are themselves linked to the duties. Authority is shared in making day-to-day decisions. To begin with, their service is known as 'kainkariyam' and is performed as a part of the divine service. In addition to that, they receive honours throughout the ritual year sponsored by particular donors.

The supervision of this entire ritual and the redistributive process is, today, overlapping and shared between the Temple Trustees, who represent the prestigious local groups of interest, the Joint Commissioner, who is the appointed representative of the H.R. & C.E. Department, and the donors themselves, who maintain considerable control on key ritual aspects. Thus, the supervision and management of the ritual process are shared by several groups and agencies; no one has total and final control in the vertical and bureaucratic sense.

They are all seen as contributing to the 'protection' (*paripalanam*) of the presiding deity. In order to understand the nature of the day-to-day management of temple affairs, and more particularly the role of the State, in dispute arbitration in the Temple, it is necessary to look closely at the idea of "protection". Today, the H.R. & C.E. (Administration) Department perceived acts, in conformity with the cultural expectations, as a state agency, to protect the interests of Temple.

The successful functioning of the administration of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, depends upon the excellent coordination among the Board of Trustees, Joint Commissioner, and the Government. The decision-making and policy-making powers lie with the Board of Trustees. The execution aspect alone vests with the Joint Commissioner of the Temple. The Joint Commissioner, who is leading and controlling the employees of the Temple, is not consulted in taking the decisions connected with these. On the other hand, the Board of Trustees does not exercise direct supervision and control in the administration. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple offers a good view of administration and management in a temple. Various levels of employees must coordinate and work as a team to keep the Temple functioning efficiently. The orthodox form of worship flourishes under the modern management system.

The Temple has played an essential part in the economic life of people and the town of Srirangam. It is a mini landlord that owns properties such as lands, buildings, valuables, and investments. Revenues received from various sources are used for the performance of puja and the development of the Temple. The income of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple stands third among the temples in the state of Tamil

Nadu. The accounting year of the Temple is called "*Fasli Year*". Generally, the cultivation period is taken as the financial year, i.e., from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June).

The revenue of the Temple is classified into two heads – revenue receipts and capital receipts. The ordinary revenue account covers recurring items, and the capital receipts refer to earnings from the disposal of property and donation for specific purposes.

#### *Revenue Receipts of the Temple*

- a) Receipts from land, buildings, and other immovable properties.
- b) Kattana Sevai
- c) Hundial
- d) Upayam (Donation in-kind)
- e) Lease of Prasad sales
- f) Interest on investment
- g) Vaikunta Ekadasi festival
- h) Archana ticket sales
- i) Sale of books, etc.
- j) Cash in lieu of paddy
- k) Kaannikai
- l) Receipts from sub-Temples
- m) Receipts from other sources.
- n) Special entry tickets (₹250 and ₹50)

*Thiruppani* activities that involve Temple conservation and restoration are carried out using the following financial sources-

- Public donations
- Own funds of the temples
- Diversion of surplus funds of the temples
- Government Grant
- Common Good fund
- Temple Development Fund
- Village Temple Renovation/Restoration Fund
- Temple Renovation/ Restoration and Charitable Fund
- Renovation/ Restoration by Donors themselves
- Renovation/ Restoration Fund for temples in the habitation of Adi Dravida and Tribal people.
- Finance Commission Fund

Conservation or restoration is carried out using donations from industrialists, private institutions, wealthy persons, philanthropists and the common public. In this case, the H.R. & C.E. Department or the Board of Trustees act as an administrative body and calls for the Expression of Interest to issue tender for the conservation works. In 2015, renovation work in the Temple was carried out at the cost of ₹10.45 crore.

The Temple gets a major share of its revenue from *kattana sevai*, followed by income from *hundial*. Interest on investments, income from land and buildings, *upayams* (donation-in-kind), lease of *prasadam* counter sales, *kaanikkai*, and *archana* tickets sales, listed out in the above order are also important sources of income for the Temple. Other revenue sources include cash in lieu of paddy, earnings during festival days, especially the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival, and income from sub-temples.

Furthermore, additional sources include the sale of books, flowers, etc., that generate considerable income for the Temple.

The Vaikunta Ekadasi festival is an important celebration in the Srirangam Temple and is celebrated with great religious devotion and splendour. It attracts lakhs of devotees to the Temple for all the twenty days of celebration. Ekadasi falls on the 11<sup>th</sup> day, and people walk through the *Paramapada Vasal* (Gate of Paradise) to be free of sins and reach Vaikuntam (the Abode of Vishnu). Hence, the income of the Temple drastically increases due to donations, ticket sales, and hundial collections.

A study of the expenditure pattern of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple reveals that the total expenditure of the Temple is maintained under two heads – revenue expenditure and capital expenditure. The revenue expenditure covers recurring items like administrative expenditure on staff salary, travelling allowance, and Government taxes. It includes service expenditures like daily pooja expenditure, utsava (festival) expenditure, and Vaikunta Ekadasi expenses. Development expenditures like maramathu (repairs), endowment expenses and other expenses covering electricity, stationery, audit fees, ex gratia payment to the staff and animal maintenance are also included. The expenditures of the sub-temples are also included in the revenue expenditure section. The capital expenditure of the Temple comprises of investment and interest on deposit advance, donations, etc.

Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple incurs capital payment for the following purposes: (1) Investments; (2) Repayment of deposits and advances; (3) Purchase of furniture, electrical pieces of equipment, etc.; (4) Contribution in Provident Fund; (5) Other

capital receipts comprising of sub-temple receipts and funds created for another purpose.

The investment expenditure includes general fund investment, time deposits, endowment fund, staff security fund. Deposits and advances comprised of fixed deposit refund, other deposits as well as advance received. Staff salary, pooja expenses, other expenses, sub-temple expenses were the essential items of expenditure in connection with the administration of the Temple. In 1993, this constituted 75 per cent of the total payment. So only 25 per cent of the expenses formed endowments, upayam expenses, maramathu, etc. After analysis, Hariharan (1993) concludes that funds from the operation were the most important source of total funds. Funds from the operation were sufficient to finance working capital requirements. The concept of working capital only included cash and bank balances, stock of paddy, etc. and not temple finances. The cash and bank balances, stock of paddy, etc., alone must be considered the working capital.

At the same time, the working capital was used to finance the capital expenditure. As a matter of prudent fiscal policy, the financing of fixed assets should be made out of increasing deposits and securities, borrowing from banks or financial institutions, depreciation funds, and reserves created out of the surplus. However, the fund flow statement relating to the Sri Ranganathaswamy temple shows that the working capital was used to finance fixed assets and meet capital expenditure. This was mainly because the depreciation fund and the reserve fund were not created in the Temple.

From the analysis done by Hariharan (1993), it was evident that cash from operation was the primary source of cash. As Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is a religious and service-oriented institution, the adoption of policies to increase revenue to augment the income of the Temple cannot be done. The significance of the Temple as a sacred place of worship is the foremost quality upheld, and hence, any other measure to accrue income is but a secondary concern. The ever-increasing flow of tourists and the marked increase in Hundial collections will ensure that the financial position of the Temple remains sound and stable. The Temple maintains two accounts in two different banks located in Srirangam. The hundial is opened each month, and each bank is called on alternative months to take away the hundial collections for depositing in the bank.

The temple earns considerably from hundial collections. In August 2016, the Temple received hundial collections amounting to ₹65,66,000 in cash, 125 g of gold, 1.1 kg of silver and 229 foreign currencies. This was ₹10 lakhs more than what it received in July 2016. The average amount of cash that the Temple received through hundial collections in the year 2016 was ₹40 lakhs per month. In September 2017, due to the Maha Pushkaram festival, the temple saw an influx of ₹94,55,862 in cash in hundial collections, including 186 g of gold and 668 g of silver. The 2017 Vaikunta Ekadasi festival fetched an amount of ₹85-86 lakhs through hundial collections alone.

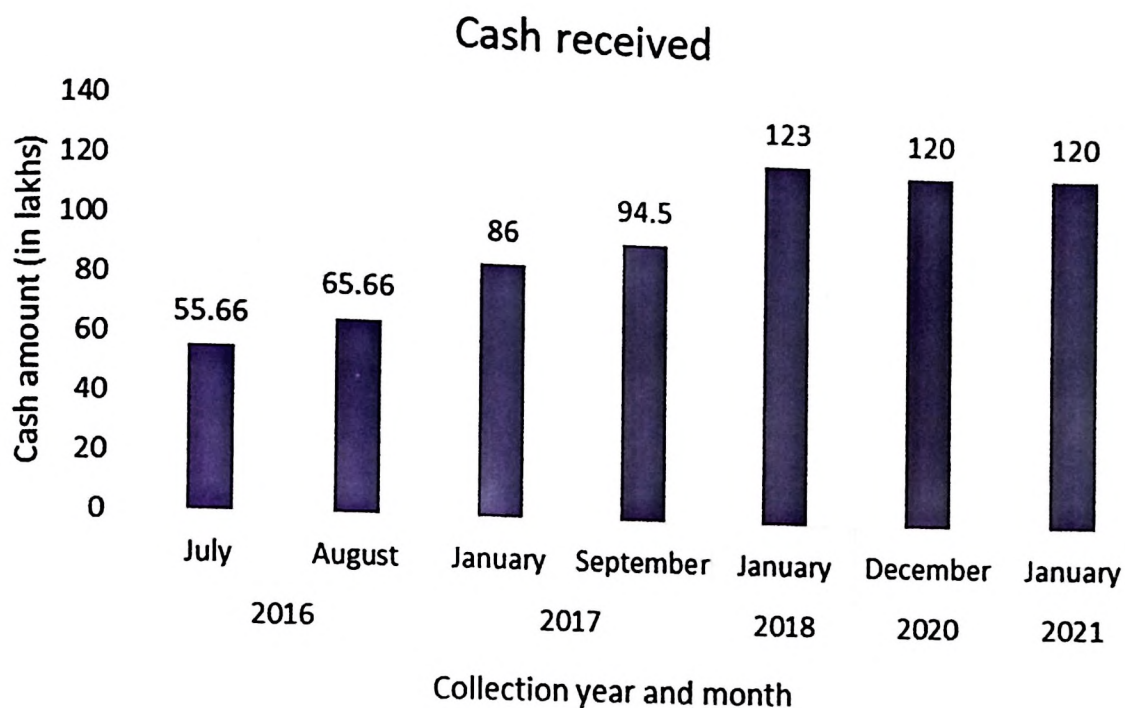


Figure 4: Cash received in hundial collection in the Srirangam Temple.

The Vaikunta Ekadasi festival between December 2017 and January 2018 saw 10 lakh attendees. This considerably increased the Temple's revenue in terms of hundial collection. January 2018 saw the Temple receive hundial collections up to ₹1.23 crore in cash, 276 g of gold, and 1,135 g of silver. In December 2020, the Temple earned ₹1,02,25,578 in cash along with 179 g of gold and 840 g of silver. It also received several foreign currencies in the hundial. In January 2021, the Temple earned ₹1.2 crores in cash through hundial, including 179 g of gold and 849 g of silver.

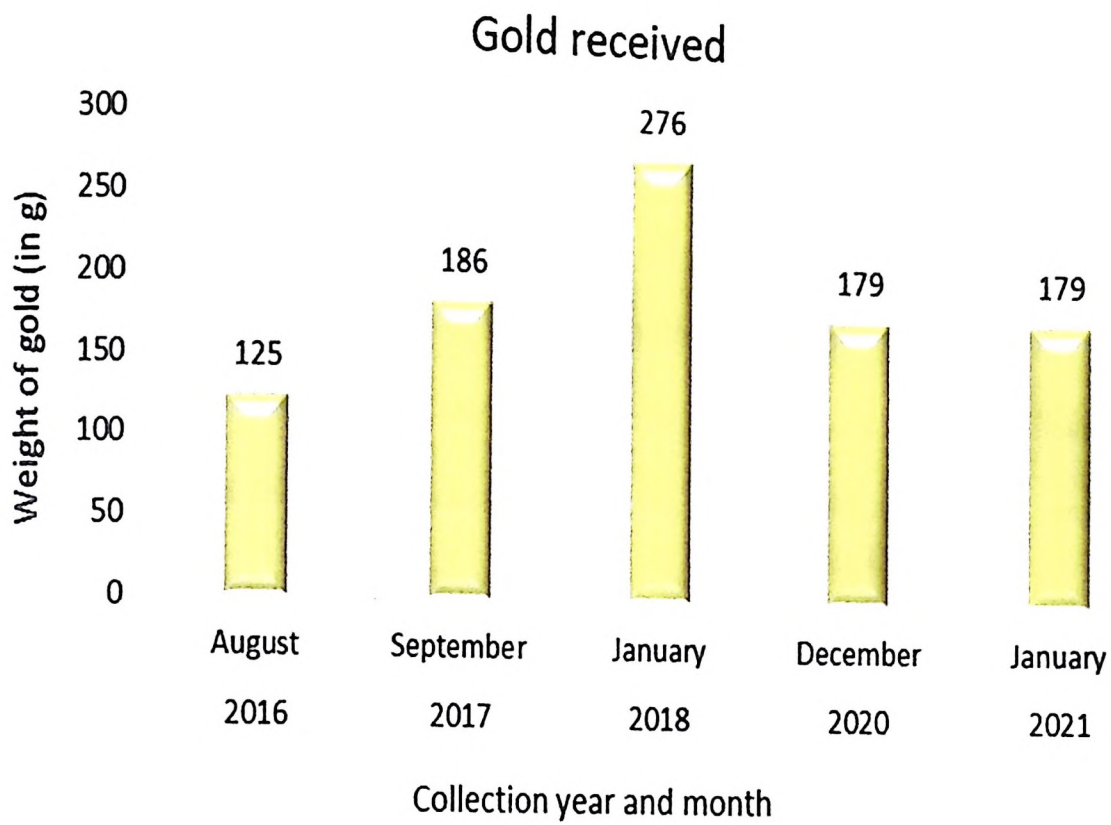


Figure 5: Gold received in hundial collection in the Srirangam Temple.



Figure 6: Silver received in hundial collection in the Srirangam Temple.

Annadaanam scheme, which is a government scheme, provides free food to devotees. It is conducted all 365 days a year. Under the scheme, free food is offered to more than 2,000 devotees every day in the Temple, and contributions from devotees fully fund the expenditure. Annadaanam is provided every day in the Srirangam Temple from 8:00 AM to 9:30 PM and in the sub-temples in the afternoon. The main sources of income for Annadaanam are from public donations, a separate hundial for Annadaanam and face value tickets (₹50, ₹100, ₹250, ₹500, and ₹1000) sold at the Information Centre inside the Temple.

A separate account is maintained for Annadaanam. It is not mandatory for the Temple to organise Annadaanam, but the Agama texts prescribe that parasadam shall be given to devotees. The Annadaanam hundial is counted on a different day than other hundials. Vegetables and rice can be donated by the public to the Temple for the purpose of Annadaanam. There have been donations of 1,000 kg rice previously for the Annadaanam scheme. Bigger markets that have a surplus donate it to the Temple so that the products don't go to waste. Annadaanam items are stored separately, and food is prepared in a separate kitchen.

It is similarly set up in the sub-temples too. But the expenses for Annadaanam in sub-temples are distributed from the Srirangam Temple office. The public can pay at the individual sub-temples too. However, the income is deposited by the sub-temple to the Srirangam Temple. The public can also pay at the Srirangam Temple for Annadaanam to be served in the sub-temples. People can donate ₹5 lakh or ₹7 lakh or ₹10 lakh and request Annadaanam to be served during specified dates. Hence, the amount received will be deposited as a Fixed Deposit in the bank, and the interest

accrued thereof will be spent for serving Annadaanam on the date specified by the donor. The donations received are majorly used to meet expenses such as Annadaanam staff salary, purchasing ingredients, and equipment.

### **5.3. Heritage Values and Attributes of the Temple**

The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple exhibits numerous values, both cultural and economic, due to its prominence as a living religious heritage site in Tamil Nadu. A brief description of the relevant heritage values and their attributes in the Srirangam Temple is given below.

#### **a) Historic value**

*Historic values are commonly defined as the capacity of a site to convey, embody, or stimulate a relation or reaction to the past (Mason, 2002).*

Historic value may grow through an important event, phase, or figure's influence on the site, or association of the site with an important event or the integrity of the site.

The history of Srirangam Temple dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to the Sangam age and has immense historic value. Festivals for the Lord happen throughout the year and the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival is an important annual event in the Temple's calendar. These festivals have influenced the historic value of the site. Ramanujacharya's time (11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) at Srirangam is an important phase in the history of the Srirangam temple as that was when it

went through an administrative restructuring. The inscriptions on temple walls also point to different time periods in history.

b) Architectural value

*The value relates to the design and evolution of buildings, and is concerned with the architectural style, craftsmanship, and the development of materials. It also includes value related to development and high points of technical achievement.*

The architectural value of the temple is reflected in the ornate shrines and physical structures, particularly the mandapams (halls) such as the 1000 pillared mandapam and the Seshagirayar mandapam (100-pillared hall). The Rajagopuram, rising to a height of 236 ft., completed only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is a great achievement in terms of architecture, since it is the largest temple tower in India. The numerous sculptures in Srirangam also have very high architectural value.

c) Aesthetic value

*It refers to the visual qualities of heritage that is a strong contributor, has a sense of well-being, and is the most personal and individualistic among other values. It refers to aspects of sensory perception such as scale, form, colour, texture, and material of the site along with smell and sound.*

The scale of the Srirangam Temple is important to the aesthetic value of the site. There is a sense of enclosure with the *sapta-prakara* design, and the core Temple complex has a strong impact on human thoughts, feelings, and attitude in terms of smell and sound. The aesthetic value includes the ornate sculptures and inscriptions in the temple, the idol of Lord Ranganatha in the sanctum sanctorum.

d) Social value

*The use of a site for social gatherings such as festivals, celebrations, markets, or recreation. The value embraces qualities for which a place has become a local marker or symbol, focus of community, spiritual, political, and national sentiment.*

The temple, although religious in nature, is a common public space for the residents of Srirangam who visit it daily. It provides an opportunity for residents to interact and socialise. This could be for meeting friends and family or simply as an act of leisure coupled with devotion. It has become a local symbol for Srirangam and is the focus of community sentiment. The Temple brings diverse people together at the time of festivals and processions and hence has high social value.

e) Spiritual/Religious value

*It refers to sites that are associated or imbued with religious or sacred meaning (Worthing and Bond, 2008). They can emanate from the beliefs and teachings of organized religion, traditional art and folklore related to spiritual practice of a group, but they can also encompass secular experiences of wonder, awe, and so on, which can be provoked by visiting heritage places.*

The spiritual/ and religious value of the Srirangam Temple is the highest and most prominent value for the site. The site is known for its religious heritage, particularly for Lord Ranganatha in the sanctum sanctorum and the various poet-saints (Azhvars) and teachers (Acharyas) who espoused and continue to espouse the teachings of the Sri Vaishnava movement in South India. The annual processions in the temple-town further emphasise the spiritual value of the site. The religious value also includes the feeling of devotion that reverberates in the temple.

f) Symbolic value

*Symbolic value includes those shared meanings associated with the heritage that is not, strictly speaking, historic.*

In the Vaishnava tradition and parlance in south India, the term "Koil" refers to the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam. It is also a local and regional marker for the Vaishnavas of southern India.

g) Political/civil value

*The use of heritage to build or sustain civil relations, governmental legitimacy, protest, or ideological causes.*

Srirangam is an important constituency and was also the home constituency of the late Chief Minister Ms. J Jayalithaa. Temples, in general, have political value as they leverage a considerable vote bank.

h) Educational/Academic value

*The potential to gain knowledge about the past in the future through, for instance, archaeology or an artist's creative interpretation of the historical record embodied in the heritage.*

The Srirangam temple is well-documented and researched and hence has high educational value in terms of religious studies, architecture, and management. Since it is the foremost temple among the 108 *Divya Desams* (sacred shrines), it is visited and studied, specifically for religious purposes. Historians have studied the temple extensively due to its cultural significance. The Temple

also offers immense opportunity for other disciplines of study such as architecture, management, and economics.

i) Provenance value

*The value of a heritage site where something originated or was nurtured in its early existence.*

The Sri Vaishnava movement in southern India was nurtured in Srirangam by the Azhvars and Acharyas. Among the 12 Azhvars of Vaishnavism, the Srirangam Temple has been sung in praise by all but one in the *Divya Prabandhams* (holy texts). Temple management, espoused by Ramanujacharya, also spread to other parts of Tamil Nadu from the Srirangam Temple in the early days, specifically to other temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

j) Representativeness

*The value of a heritage site in terms of it being a good/rare example of its type or era.*

The Srirangam temple is representative of the Sri Vaishnava movement in southern India and is the foremost shrine for the Sri Vaishnavas of South

India. It is also the only temple-town in India that showcases the *sapta-prakaram* formation, with settlements being a part of the temple.

k) Townscape values

*The association of a heritage place to the wider townscape or landscape setting and/or as a landmark.*

The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam is the nuclei of the temple-town and is a prominent landmark in southern India. The town of Srirangam derives its significance from the temple. It has given meaning and identity to the region of Srirangam.

l) Continuity value

*A heritage site that is still being used for its original purpose and cared for by a core community through traditional practices.*

The Srirangam temple has continued to function as a pilgrimage site since the Sangam era. All rituals are still performed as per the writings of Sri Ramanuja in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. The core community continues to espouse devotion to the deity of Lord Ranganatha, and the temple is cared for through the traditional Agama texts.

m) Economic value

Pilgrimage tourism in the area is generated by the fame and significance of the Srirangam temple and it supports a network of related businesses in the temple-town and adjacent cities. There is also potential for further development of businesses related to pilgrimage tourism. The Temple is an economic entity that generates considerable revenue to support welfare activities, the most prominent of which is Annadaanam scheme run by the State Government.

(i) Bequest value

*This value stems from the wish to bequeath a heritage asset to future generations.*

The bequest value is high for Srirangam since devotees and heritage practitioners wish to bequeath the living heritage of Srirangam to future generations.

(ii) Existence value

*Individuals value a heritage item for its mere existence, even though they themselves may not experience it or "consume its services" directly.*

The site is valued for its mere existence by devotees of Lord Ranganatha and heritage enthusiasts for its architectural and sculptural marvel in other parts of Tamil Nadu, India, and the world.

#### **5.4. Business Survey Results**

The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam is a major booster for the local economy. The main market of the town of Srirangam is located inside the seven *prakaras* of the temple-town. On the southern stretch of the Temple complex, beginning from the Rajagopuram to Uttara Street, shops, restaurants, and hawkers are a dominant presence. It is the busiest stretch inside the temple-town and caters to the needs of the general public and tourists.

A total of 60 business establishments were interviewed for the study to understand their socio-economic conditions, the benefit of the Temple's presence to their business, their attitude towards pilgrimage tourism and the impact of economic activity on the cultural values of the Temple. A questionnaire was prepared for the purpose, and during fieldwork, a few patterns emerged in the responses. Hence, the data is presented using a combination of qualitative and quantitative elements. A summary of the demographics obtained after processing the data are presented below.

More than 30 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 41 – 50 years, 32 per cent between 51 and 60 years, 17 per cent above 60 years, and 16 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 31 – 40 years. It is also observed that 55 per cent of the respondents are male, while 45 per cent of the respondents are female. In Srirangam, 78 per cent of the respondents surveyed had a business establishment of

their own in a permanent setting, while 22 per cent of the respondents were hawkers and roadside vendors.

More than 80 per cent of the shops were more than 60 years old and functioned as a family business. Only the commodities for sale have diversified with changing times. The majority of respondents, i.e., 35 per cent, dealt with the sale of religious commodities to be offered inside the temple or to be taken back as souvenirs. These commodities included puja items such as lamps, camphor, bananas, flowers, and fruits, *murtis* or statues of God made of silver and brass, and portraits of God. More than 15 per cent of the respondents sold vessels made of iron or brass. From the interviews with shops selling iron items, it was revealed that Srirangam is well-known for its vessels made of iron. The vessel market in Srirangam caters to both residents and devotees.

Srirangam does not have many accommodation facilities inside the seven *prakaras*. A total of 15 accommodation facilities exists inside the Temple-town, and they are run by Charitable Trusts with head offices in Chennai. Most accommodation facilities have an average of 10 rooms. Rooms are allocated only for a period of 3 days and not more than that. Most charitable organisations that manage the accommodations allow a room only for couples or married persons. Students and young adults are not provided rooms. The rent charged is minimal, with the minimum being ₹250 and the maximum being ₹1,000.

On most days of the week, accommodation facilities do not see a footfall. However, during the weekends, especially from Friday to Sunday, most accommodation facilities reach close to full capacity due to an influx of tourists from neighbouring

cities, particularly from Chennai. They reach full capacity during festival months such as Vaikunta Ekadasi in December to January and Chithrai Ther and Panguni Uthiram festivals in March and April. Most rooms are booked months in advance. Few hotels exist beyond the Rajagopuram; however, tourists prefer the more developed city of Trichy for accommodation due to it being only a 30-minute drive from Srirangam. This is the preference of most people who do not manage to get accommodation inside the seven prakaras of the Temple complex.

Most business establishments do not restrict themselves to selling only a single item. It is often a milieu of religious commodities, flowers and fruits, and other toys or everyday items. The southern part of the Temple complex is the market for Srirangam, the villages that surround the Temple-town and the visitors who come to the Temple from other parts of the state and country. However, more than half of the business establishments cater to devotees visiting the Temple. Festival days and weekends (Friday to Saturday) are a time when a lot of people converge in the Temple-town, and hence, there is more business and an increase in sales during that time of the year. Particularly, the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival is a great crowd-puller.

A common occurrence during the interviews was the mention of tourism development in Srirangam after the construction of the Rajagopuram in 1987. Prior to 1987, Srirangam was but a village temple. Only the Vaishnava community, devout devotees and people from the nearby villages visited Srirangam for worship. However, in 1987, the Rajagopuram was constructed through generous donations from governments, eminent personalities, and the common people. Having become the highest *gopuram* or temple tower in India, reaching a height of 236 ft., it attracted

many curious visitors over the years. More than half of the respondents claimed that the Temple had more visitation after the Rajagopuram was constructed. Due to this, most business establishments have seen an increase in sales over the years as a result of a higher number of tourists.

### Increase in visitation after 1987

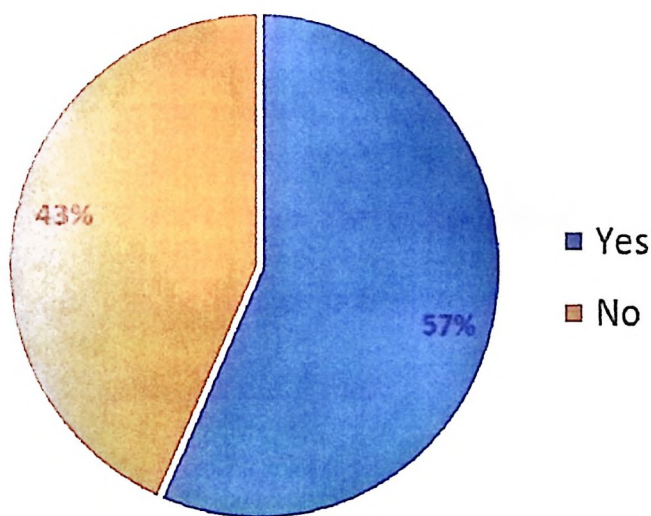
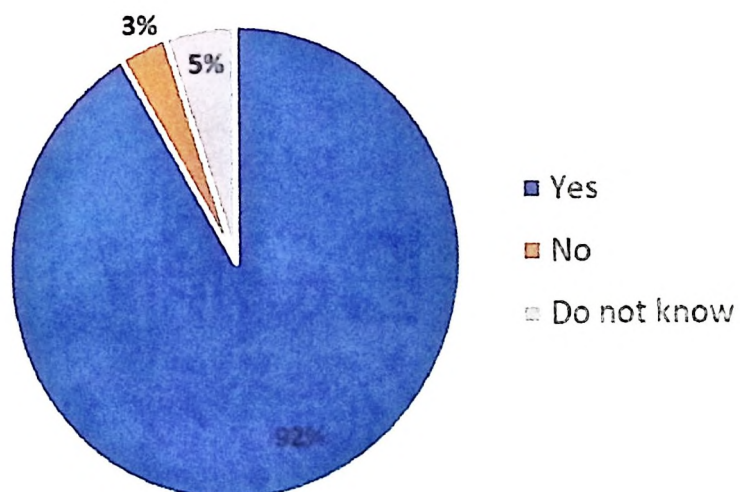


Figure 7: Increase in visitation to Srirangam Temple after the construction of Rajagopuram in 1987.

### Increase in business opportunities

Figure 8: Increase in business opportunities due to the temple's significance



### Cultural significance impact on business

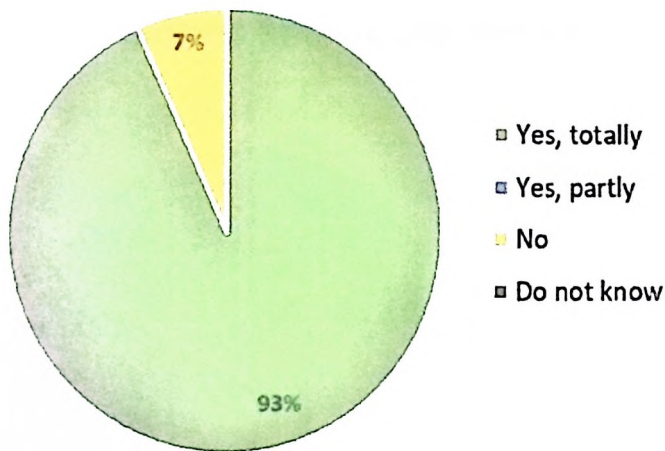
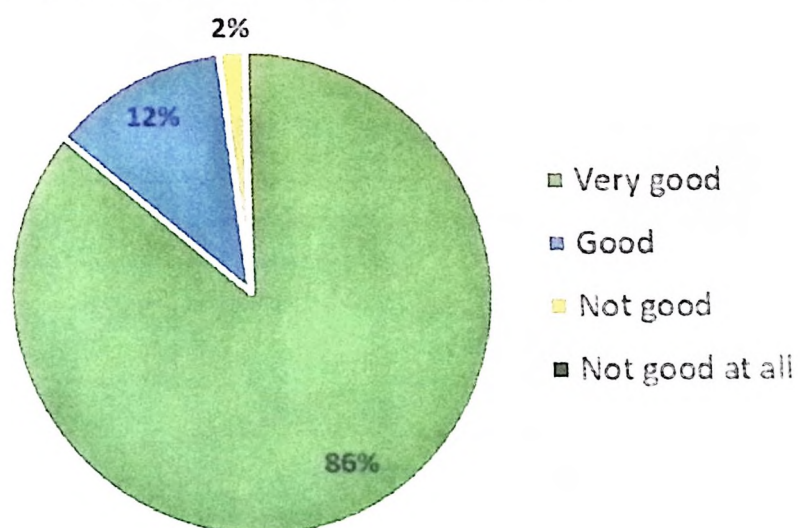


Figure 9: Impact of the temple's cultural significance on business around Srirangam

More than 90 per cent of the respondents agreed that the temple's significance as a pilgrimage site helped their business flourish, and business opportunities are more numerous thanks to the temple's presence. 83 per cent of the respondents said that the effects of pilgrimage tourism in their neighbourhood were very good in terms of increased opportunities to run a business. The impact of increased economic activity was seen as a positive by more than half the respondents. More than 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the respondents believed that strengthening economic status without a loss in cultural values was important to them as an individual and businessperson in Srirangam.

### Impact of pilgrimage tourism on business

Figure 10: Impact of increased pilgrimage tourism on business around Srirangam.



### Attitude of respondents in balancing cultural values and economic development

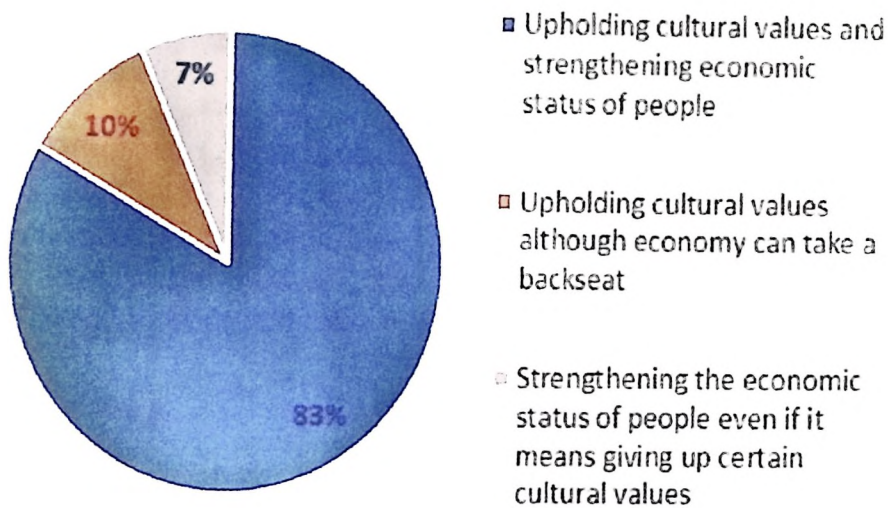
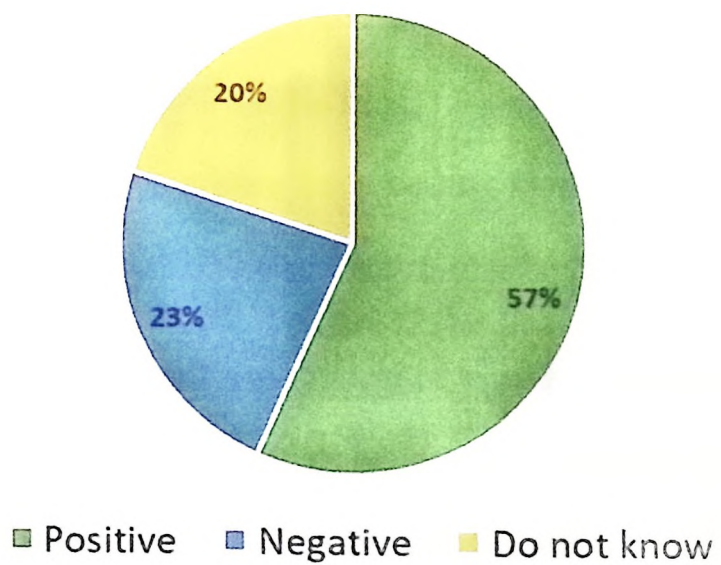


Figure 11: Attitude of respondents towards balancing cultural values and economic development in Srirangam.

### Impact of increased economic activity

Figure 12: Impact of increased economic activity on the neighbourhood.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The study has described the living heritage of Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam. The Temple has portrayed various elements of continuity, out of which the most important is the continuity of its original function. Historically, it was established as a place of worship, with elaborate rituals and festivals added over the years. However, the rituals are performed, and the festivals are celebrated even today.

The general administration of the Temple is carried out in such a way that the cultural and economic obligations are balanced. The Temple derives a major portion of its revenue from the sale of entry tickets, hundial collections and generous donations by devotees. Financing of festival expenses and ritualistic expenses are also traditionally done. The Temple has a '*thittam* (scheme)' for every activity. 'Thittam' is referred to those instructions that have been written in the Temple records since the time of Ramanuja and that which are still followed today.

Each Temple festival is funded by donors. Similar to the role of hereditary trustees exist hereditary donors who are bound to donate materials or cash to the Temple for organising the festivals. It is an ancestral obligation to the Temple that has to be met. Hence, the Temple is having a demand for major consumer goods that are used in the daily rituals. Most activities are funded through donations by devout people who have great devotion for Lord Ranganatha.

The business survey revealed the position and attitude of business establishments in and around the Srirangam Temple. The Temple, specifically after the construction of the Rajagopuram in 1987, has become prominent among tourists. It has helped the local shops and business establishments to flourish, especially during the weekends and festival days.

Although a religious centre, the Srirangam Temple has transformed into a social and economic hub. It has lent an identity to Srirangam and become synonymous with the town. Hence, it is veritably a temple-town. If not for the donors who shower their wealth on Lord Ranganatha, and for the people who participate in the various celebrations at the Temple, the living heritage would not sustain in the Temple. Any halt in the financial transactions of the Temple will result not only in economic loss, but also cultural loss since the scale of rituals and festivals and the income to conduct them are disproportionate. They would not be able to meet the expenses if not for donors who generously contribute to the upkeep of the Temple's cultural and religious ethos.

The Srirangam Temple exhibits numerous cultural values, among which, the most prominent, important, and high are the religious, socio-economic, and associational values of the community. As heritage professionals, it is a given that the architectural value of the Temple, especially sculptures, is very high and has great economic significance in the art market. Hence, from the perspective of a professional not associated with the faith, it is the architectural value that is most important for the Temple.

However, for the community, it is the religious, social, symbolic, bequest and existence value that is very high, due to which they donate to the Temple. The faith and belief in the Lord and continuity of the same provokes people to donate to the Temple. It is these values that people associate with the Temple and donate accordingly, due to which an economy is generated for the temple. These values are also very high that they help conserve the architectural attributes of the Temple. Hence, these cultural values help sustain the Temple's economy which in turn drives the functional continuity in the Temple. If the cultural values are diminished, then it would reflect in the economy of the Temple, and subsequently in its continuity as a living heritage site.

Temples have a unique economic model whose financial transactions remain similar to the past and continue to function in a similar fashion. The allegiance of people previously associated with the temple may change, but the model remains as long as the community espouses religious, social, symbolic, and other cultural values with the Temple. A shift in cultural values may alter the Temple's economy which will in turn reflect in the functional continuity of the same. The vice-versa is also a possibility. The sustainability of the Temple is due to the interplay of both cultural and economic values. The economy is more sustainable due to the prominence of cultural values and thus, helps in protecting and conserving the living heritage in the Temple.

It is a sign in many temples in Tamil Nadu today. The reduced intensity of religious, symbolic, and social values has diminished the economy of many temples and turned them into abandoned sites. Temples that do not exhibit high architectural value, yet

score high on religious and social value, have a thriving economy due to the community that associates with the site. Regeneration of temple economy is also encouraged, not by directly pouring economic resources into temples, but by invoking cultural values associated with the temple. Reinvigorating lost cultural values in temples helps regenerate the economy and thus enables them to function as religious heritage sites. Hence, economy, invigorated by cultural values that people associate with temples, is a driver of functional continuity of living religious heritage as evidenced from the case of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam.

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**APPENDIX I**

**BUSINESS SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

*Assessing use values impact on local economy*

**Profile**

Age:

Sex:

Business Type:

Products Sold/Services Offered:  Religious commodities  Accommodation

Food  Flowers & Fruits  Others

**Sales and Revenue**

*Business providing accommodation services*

What is your average monthly occupancy? \_\_\_\_\_

Does occupancy increase during important festive days?  Yes  No

If YES, then by how much? \_\_\_\_\_

*Business selling religious commodities*

What religious commodities do you sell?

Do you sell religious commodities to devotees for offering inside the temple?

Yes  No

Do you sell religious commodities to devotees to be taken back as souvenirs?

Yes  No

Does your business primarily cater to devotees visiting the temple?  Yes  No

How many years have you been running the business? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your business ...?  Year round  Seasonal

If SEASONAL, what do you do for the rest of the year?

Is there more business at a particular time of the year?  Yes  No

If YES, when is it?

Do you witness an increase in sales during important festive days?  Yes  No

If YES, then by how much? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your approximate average monthly revenues? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you seen an increase in your sales/revenue over the years?  Yes  No

If YES, by how much? (in percentage) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you seen an increase in the activities of the temple over the years?

Yes  No

Does the temple's significance as a pilgrimage site help your business?

Yes, totally  Yes, partly  No  Do not know

Do you feel that the temple's cultural significance and value as a pilgrimage site has created new job opportunities in the neighbourhood?  Yes  No  Do not know

Do you feel that business opportunities are more numerous thanks to the temple?

Yes  No  Do not know

How many workers do you employ? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you employ local workers?  Yes  No

If YES, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Tourism**

How would you rate the effects of pilgrimage tourism on your neighbourhood?

Very good  Good  Not good  Not good at all

Do you think the temple has attracted more devotees to the neighbourhood over the years?

Yes  No  Don't know

Do you think pilgrimage tourism has increased business opportunities in your neighbourhood?

Yes  No  Don't know

### **Impact on Cultural Values**

What according to you has been the impact of increase in economic activity?

Positive  Negative  Do not know

Do you think it has led to a loss in cultural values of the temple?

Yes  No  Don't know

What is more important to you as an individual and a businessperson in Srirangam?

Upholding cultural values and strengthening economic status of people

Upholding cultural values although economy can take a backseat

Strengthening the economic status of people even if it means giving up certain cultural values

Are traditional methods of production still being practiced?  Yes  No  Don't know

Have the methods of production become more commercial?  Yes  No  Don't know

If YES, what according to you is the reason?

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**Any additional information ...**

APPENDIX II

GALLERY

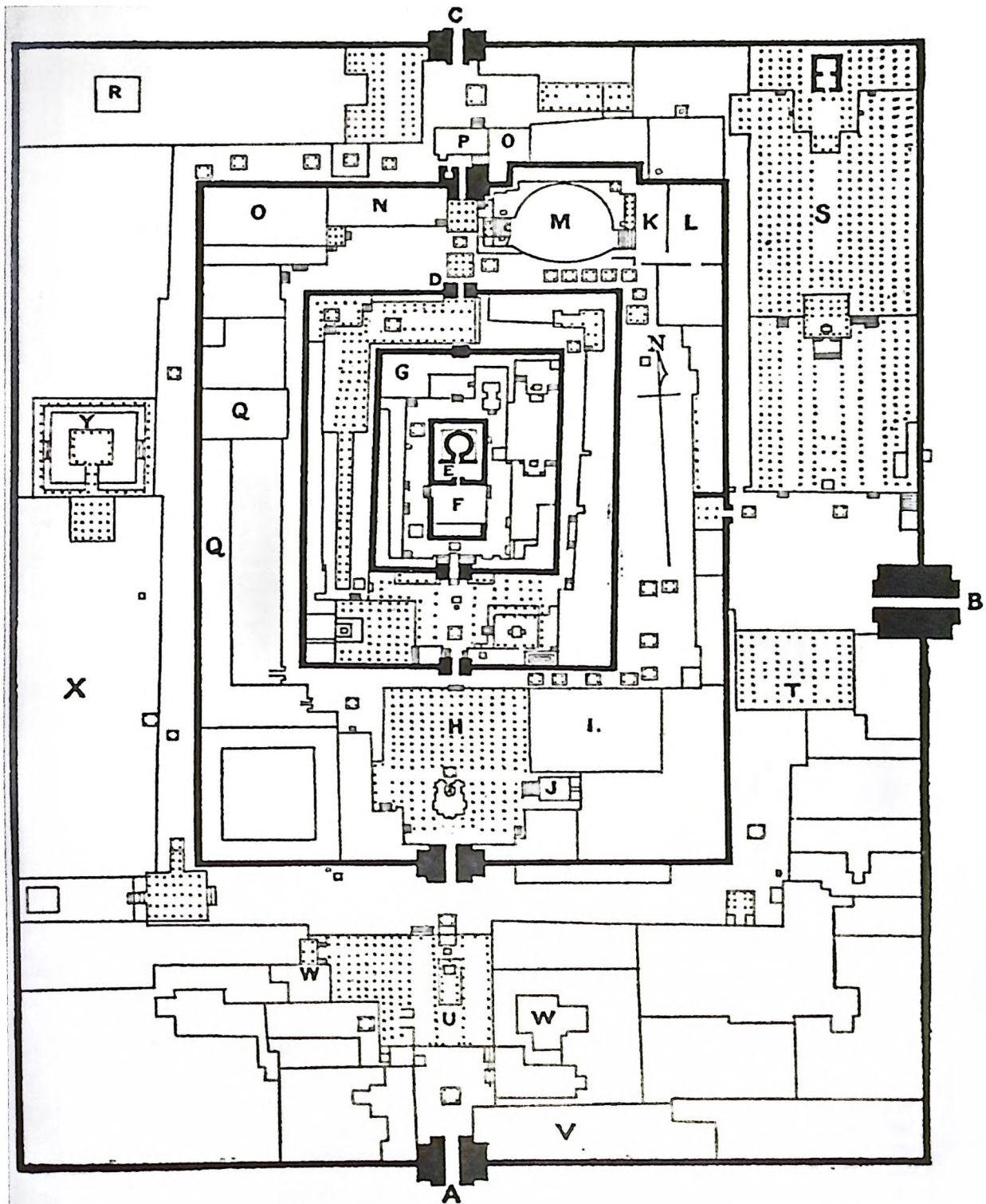


Photo 1: Plan of Srirangam Temple - the four inner courts; *History of Indian Architecture*; James Fergusson, James Burgess, R Phene Spiers; 1910



*Photo 2: Gilded vimana atop the sanctum sanctorum*



*Photo 3: The Venugopala shrine in the 4<sup>th</sup> prakaram (enclosure)*



*Photo 4: The hundred-pillared mandapam (hall), also known as Seshagirirayar Mandapam*



*Photo 5: The Kili mandapam (hall)*



Photo 6: Entrance to the Dhanavantri shrine



Photo 7: Granaries (Kottarams) inside Srirangam Temple



Photo 2: The eastern side of the 3rd prakara



Photo 3: A view of the Rajagopuram (southern main entrance)



Photo 4: The Vaikunta Vasal (gate to Vishnu's abode)



Photo 5: Inscriptions on the Temple's walls



Photo 6: Fresco paintings on the temple's walls



Photo 7: Fresco paintings on the temple's walls



Photo 8: Chithirai Ther festival in Srirangam between April and May.

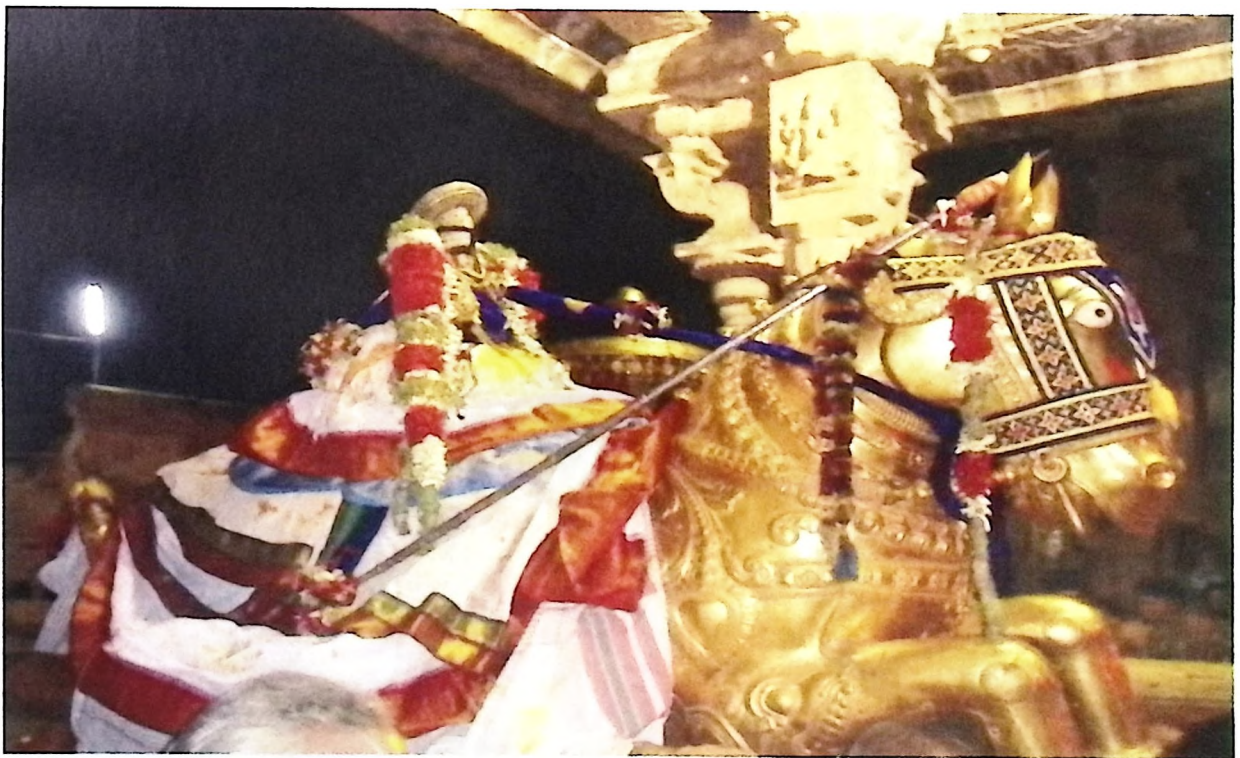


Photo 9: Vasantotsavam festival in Srirangam between May and June



Photo 10: Aadi festival in Srirangam between July and August



Photo 11: Jyeshthabhishekam festival between June and July



Photo 12: Navaratri festival between August and September



Photo 13: Unjal festival between September and October



Photo 14: Karthikai Deepam festival between November and December



Photo 15: Vaikunta Ekadasi festival between December and January



Photo 16: Thai Ther festival between January and February



Photo 17: Teppotsavam festival between February and March



Photo 18: Panguni Ther festival between March and April

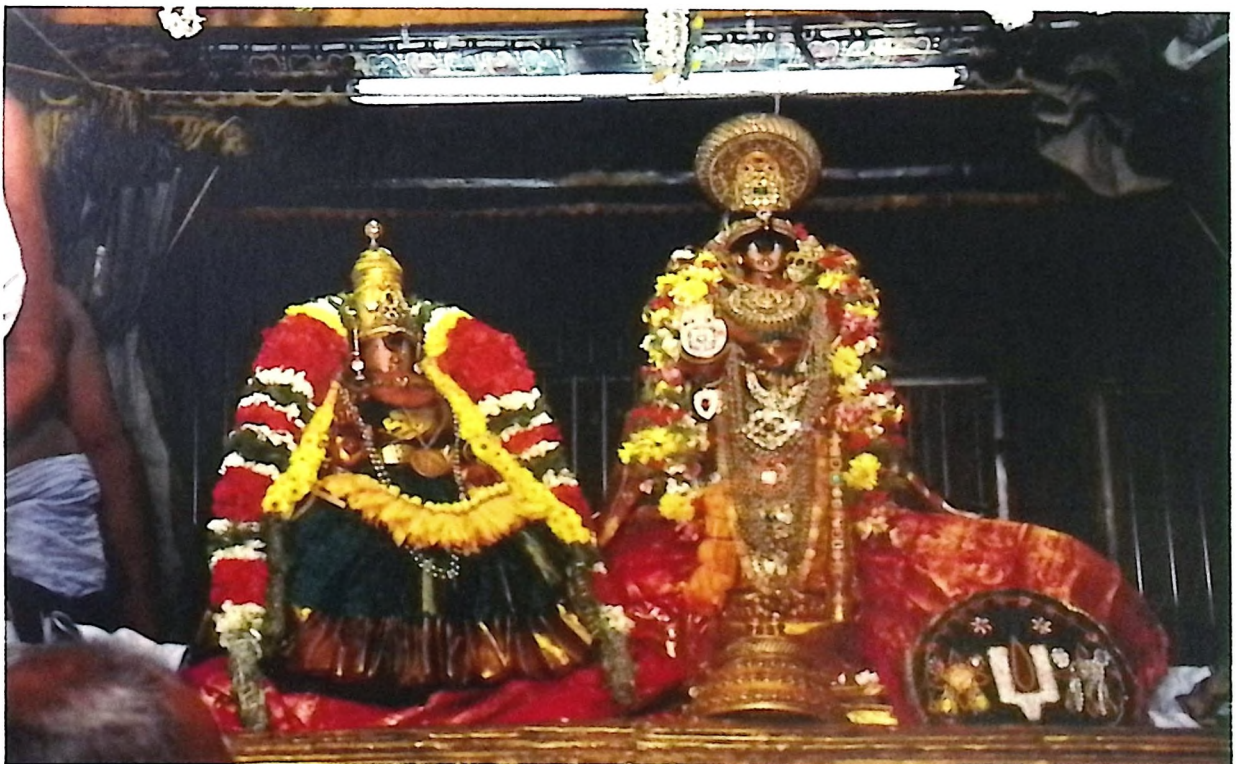


Photo 19: Panguni Uttiram day in March



Photo 20: A shop selling lamps, toys, and pots within the seven prakaras of the temple-town.



Photo 21: A shopkeeper selling flowers and other religious commodities inside the Srirangam temple to be offered at Goddess Ranganayaki's shrine.



Photo 22: The utsava murti being carried out in procession in Srirangam