

Sri:

Sritmate Ramanujaya Namah

Project Sriranga-Sri:

**(A Comprehensive, Encyclopedic Project
to preserve and propagate
all aspects of Srirangam
in Physical & Digital Formats)**

Project Sriranga-Sri:

Detailed Project Report

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Further Details:

I. Encyclopedia in Book form 10 Volumes

Volume Details:

- 1. Vol. 1: Tradition & Antiquity
- 2. Vol. 2: Physical Features
- 3. Vol. 3: History & Epigraphy
- 4. Vol. 4: Town-planning, Architecture & Iconography
- 5. Vol. 5: Religion & Festivals
- 6. Vol. 6: Fine Arts
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IV. Digital Web-Portal of the Encyclopedia &

V. DVD Set of the Encyclopedia

1.0 Executive Summary

Srirangam is said to be the Vaikuntham on earth with unmatched piety, grandeur and spiritual importance. It is a living culture that is unique and vibrant despite the passage of time. The current project is to A Comprehensive, Encyclopedic Project to preserve and propagate all aspects of Srirangam in Physical & Digital formats.

As part of the above, the following major projects are to be undertaken:

- 1. Bring out an encyclopedic publication covering all aspects of Srirangam (explained in below) which will be in the form of:**
 - i. Printed Books – In 10 Volumes (Deluxe Edition)
 - ii. Web portal
 - iii. Multimedia DVD
- 2. Create a 3D Virtual Reality Multimedia Walkthrough that will give the viewer a thorough idea and Unique spiritual experience of the Srirangam of the 11th Century as described by the Poorvacharyas like Parashara Bhattar, inscriptions and other historical evidences**
- 3. Create a unique Museum that will also include:**
 - i. **3D Virtual Reality Multimedia Walkthrough (mentioned above)**
 - ii. Artefacts found in and around and connected to Srirangam.
 - iii. Replicas of the vessels, icons and other objects used in the main temple and other such items
 - iv. A library both physical and digital of books etc
 - v. An Audio library that has all the musical kritis sung about Srirangam, Lord Ranganatha and all related aspects including all the pasurams / stotrams of all the Alwars and other Poorvacharyas (like Srirangaraja Stavam etc.)
 - vi. A Video Library containing all the videos of all Utsavams including Areyar Sevai-s etc

2.0 Introduction

Srirangam (*Thiruvarangam* in Tamil) is an island and a part of the city of Tiruchirapalli, in South India. Srirangam is bounded by the Kaveri River (also known as Cauvery river) on one side, and the Kaveri distributary Kollidam (Coleroon) on the other side. Srirangam is the foremost of the eight self-manifested shrines (Swayam Vyakta Kshetras) of Lord Vishnu. It is also considered the first, foremost and the most important of the 108 main Vishnu temples (Divyadesams). This temple is also known as Thiruvarangam, Periyakoil, Bhuloka-Vaikuntham, Bhogamantapam. In the Vaishnava parlance the term "KOIL" signifies this temple only. The temple is enormous in size. The temple complex is 156 acres in extent. It has seven prakaras or enclosures. These enclosures are formed by thick and huge rampart walls which run round the sanctum. There are 21 magnificent towers in all prakaras providing a unique sight to any visitor. This temple lies on an islet formed by the twin rivers Cauvery and Kollidam.

The temple of Sri Ranganathaswami at Srirangam boasts an historic past of great kingdom and a civilization thousands of years old. The reign of the Pallavas was marked by the creation of a solid religious foundation, for example the encouragement given by the dynasty appears to have contributed to the growth of Aryan institutions in Southern India more particularly in the Carnatic. Cholas reigned for about three hundred years over the Coromandel Coast and the greater part of Eastern Deccan, where they helped an advanced Hindu Culture to flourish.

Historically too, this town is of great significance. The Cholas were defeated in the thirteenth century by the Pandyas of Madurai and Hoysalas of Mysore. Hoysalas had taken particular interest in the building of the Temple of Srirangam, leaving behind both the inscriptions and buildings. The Hoysalas were then driven away by the Pandyas in the early part of fourteenth Century. Later, the Mohammedans began frequently raiding the Deccan facing strong resistance from the Hindu Kingdom, which was established in Vijayanagar in 1336. The Kingdom maintained its independence until 1565.

During this time, the Europeans had appeared in the south of India. In the sixteenth century a number of foreign travelers and traders passed through

but taking least interest in the hinterland except for the routes it provided for their trade with the Kingdom of Vijayanagar. In 1600, the English East India Company was formed, and 1664 the French company.

In 1680, King Aurangzeb (1658-1707), launched a campaign in western Deccan. After long sieges and a great loss of life, the fortress cities of Bijapur and Golconda fell to him, and the campaign lasted until his death.

In Europe, however, the war of Austrian succession set the English and the French at each other's throats. Duplex captured Madras (1746), which was given back to the English two years later. The French were forced to surrender in 1752 and Duplex was disavowed and recalled in 1754.

In 1760, a further French attempt, led by Lally-Tollendal, was unsuccessful and the French trading post was dismantled in 1763. From then on, the English Company gradually annexed the whole of the territory of India. Though the French came near to victory, later on they were defeated in 1798 by the English led by Wellesley and who invaded Mysore and in 1799 captured the fortress of Srirangapatnam. There after all of the Southern India came under the supremacy of England. The Carnatic was included in the direct administration of the Madras Presidency where it remained.

The temple-town is also significant from many other points of view as given later in this document.

3.0 Why this Project

The greatness of Srirangam has already been explained above. Once upon a time, Srirangam was a vibrant temple-town that was a living tradition that espoused the thought and deed of Srivaishnava and Indian Cultures. It continues to be so even today. The temple, the architecture, the rituals thereof, the lifestyle, the literary arts and everything that is part of the temple-town has its own uniqueness that is unparalleled.

Though there have been sporadic efforts to document certain important aspects mentioned above, there has not been a concrete and concerted effort to document, preserve and propagate all aspects concerning Srirangam in a

comprehensive manner that will survive for many generations to come and inspire the members of those generations.

4.0 Why Srirangam

The sacred shrines sung of by the Alwars (Vaishnavite Saints) are 108 in number. These Vishnu Temples are called 'Divya Desams'. The foremost among them is Srirangam. It is a famous shrine of all-India importance. North Indians who go to Rameswaram do not fail to visit this place. It is in Tiruchirapalli District of Tamil Nadu. There is a railway station of the same name on the Tiruchirapalli - Villupuram Chord Line of the Southern Railway. The temple is situate half-a-mile from the Railway Station. Buses ply from Tiruchirapalli town and Railway Junction.

"Srirangam" is composed of two words, 'Sri' and 'Arangam'. 'Sri' means 'pious', 'sacred', 'prosperous' 'beautiful' etc. The land lying between two rivers which is in the form of an island is called 'Arangam'. This Kshetram lies between the rivers Cauvery and Kollidam.

The traditional account of how the temple at, Srirangam came to be established is interesting. Sri Ratna, king of Ayodhya, gave permission to Vibhishana to remove Sri Ranga Vimana with Sri Ranganatha to Lanka with the express condition that it should not be put down anywhere on the way. But when Vibhishana reached the island of Srirangam he was forced by circumstances to entrust it to a Brahmin lad for a few moments. As Vibhishana exceeded his allotted time of absence the Brahmin boy put it on the ground. On return Vibhishana tried to lift it but as it had already got firmly rooted to the ground he could not do so. He got angry with the youth and chased him. The youth was no other than Vigneswara who came in disguise. This is the Vinayaka for whom a shrine had been built on the top of Tiruchirapalli Rock-Fort. Malik Kafur invaded South India in the 14th Century and captured Tiruchirapalli. Fearing destruction at their hands the priests of Srirangam Temple removed the deity to Tirupati via Thirunarayanapuram in Karnataka and kept it at Tirupati for some time. After the Mohammedans left Tiruchirapalli, it was thought safe to bring the

deity back to Srirangam. This was done by Gopanna, the chief of Gingee, a vassal of the Vijayanagar King Kampanna II. Gopanna took the image from Tirupati and kept it in the Hill Temple of Singavaram near Gingee for some days and then brought it to Srirangam and re-installed it in the temple after performing the consecration ceremony. This was done in A.D. 1371-72. So says *Guruparampara Prabhava*, a Vaishnavite work of great renown. An inscription in the temple also testifies to this fact.

The temple lies in the middle of the island town of Srirangam. All the essentials necessary for the construction of temples according to Silpa Sastras have been observed in the building up of Srirangam Temple. There are seven prakaras (inner circles) in the temple apparently representing the seven worlds. The Vimana over the sanctum sanctorum is called the Pranava Vimana representing the Ashtakshara.

There are as many as 21 gopuras (towers) in the temple of which the Villai Gopuram in the east is the tallest being 165 feet high. The seven prakaras in the temple have been named after the persons who constructed them. There are many inner shrines in the temple. Those for the Garuda, Hanuman, Sriranga Nachiar (Goddess) and Alwars are important. The image of Sri Ramanuja, the great Vaishnavite philosopher who spent his last days here, is also worth seeing.

Architecturally the temple of Srirangam is unique among the great temples of South India. The Sculptures found in the temple are some of the finest. The 1000 pillared mantapa, Horse Court, Garuda Mantapa, Ranga Vilasam, Vasantha Mantapa, the mirror room are worth seeing. Sri Ranganatha in the Sanctum - Sanctorum in the lying posture is a charming idol of great beauty and grace.

Except Madhurakavi Alwar, all the other eleven Alwars (the Vaishnavite Saints) have sung about this holy shrine and God Sri Ranganatha. No other temple has got this unique honour. References to the greatness of this place abound in Tamil Literature starting from the Sangam works of the early Christian era down to the present day. *Silappathikaram*, a great Tamil epic

beautifully describes the Sayana (lying posture) of Sri Ranganatha. Kambar, the great Tamil poet, had the rehearsal of his Ramayana done in this temple. The incidents connected with the lives of two Vaishnavite Saints, Sri Andal and Tiruppan Alwar, reveal the glory of this temple. Sri Andal of Srivilliputhur, daughter of Perialwar, made a vow that she would marry only Lord Ranganatha and none else. Her desire was fulfilled. Tiruppan Alwar was a Harijan. As a Harijan he could not, in those days, enter the temple. He used to worship Lord Ranganatha standing at a distance and sing devotional songs. Sri Ranganatha in order to bless this devotee appeared in the dream of a priest and asked him to carry the Harijan Saint on his shoulders to His very presence in the temple. It was done and that Saint attained bliss.

There are a large number of inscriptions in the temple which range from the 9th century to 16th century. They belong to the periods of Chola, Pandya, Chera, Hoysala and Vijayanagar dynasties. They relate to large endowments made for the maintenance of daily worship, performance of festivals, upkeep of flower gardens, singing of devotional songs etc.

5.0 Deliverables

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, the following are the Deliverables of the Project:

- 1. An encyclopedic publication covering all aspects of Srirangam (explained in below) which will be in the form of:**
 - i. Printed Books – In 10 Volumes – Deluxe Edition
 - ii. Web portal
 - iii. Multimedia DVD
- 2. Create a 3D Virtual Reality Multimedia Walkthrough that will give the viewer a thorough idea and Unique spiritual experience of the Srirangam of the 11th Century as described by the Poorvacharyas like Parashara Bhattar, inscriptions and other historical evidences**
- 3. Create a unique Museum that will also include:**
 - i. **3D Virtual Reality Multimedia Walkthrough (mentioned above)**

- ii. Artefacts found in and around and connected to Srirangam.
- iii. Replicas of the vessels, icons and other objects used in the main temple and other such items
- iv. A library both physical and digital of books etc
- v. An Audio library that has all the musical kritis sung about Srirangam, Lord Ranganatha and all related aspects including all the pasurams / stotrams of all the Alwars and other Poorvacharyas (like Srirangaraja Stavam etc.)
- vi. A Video Library containing all the videos of all Utsavams including Areyar Sevai-s etc

6.0 Plan of Action:

- i. Procure the necessary financial resources for the project

For the Encyclopedia (in book form – 10 Volumes)

- ii. Engage a team of Research Scholars headed by a highly acclaimed academician who has experience in executing such tasks along with authors who are well-versed in English language and editing tasks.
- iii. Conduct Seminars and Conferences on various themes of the Volumes listed and detailed below (later in this Project report) and get the content for the Volumes
- iv. Conduct necessary research based on field studies, books and other literature as well as oral interviews etc with traditional knowledge experts of Srirangam
- v. Edit and format the contents and see the publications through the press

For the Encyclopedia (in Digital form – DVDs and Web Portal)

- vi. Engage a team of Software experts who are experts in the field, headed by a competent Project Manager who can help, oversee and ensure the delivery of the content of the books (as mentioned above) in the form for a Digital Web Portal (that is

designed to international standards) and also in the form of a DVD set with Videos etc.

For the Museum:

- vii. Engage a team consisting of :
 - a. Civil Construction experts who will construct the museum
 - b. Interior Decorators who will design the museum
 - c. Museum experts
 - d. other personnel who will maintain and look after the upkeep of the same along with necessary technological updated etc.

For the Virtual Reality 3D Walkthrough:

- viii. Engage a team of experts who are experts in the field of creating such projects and have the project implemented. Further details to be worked out

Overall:

- ix. Appoint a CEO who can initiate, implement and maintain the entire project with proper and timely guidance from experts in the concerned fields.
- x. Have an executive committee consisting of experts in the concerned fields to oversee the implementation of the project and also guide in the maintenance of the entire project for a long time to come.

Source books to be collected:

- a. Tantric texts.
- b. Mythological texts.
- c. Philosophical texts.
- d. Religious texts
- e. Historical source books
- f. Literary texts
- g. Folk literature.

Secondary source books.

- a. Books written in English and other Indian languages.
- b) Articles published so far directly or indirectly connected with Srirangam.
- c) Hard copies of the material available in the internet.
- d) Musical composition classical and folk.
- e) Inscriptions
- f) Any other aspects

Further all necessary action to conduct the successful implementation of the project is to be taken for which the greater details are to be worked out.

7.0 Time Frame

Subject to the availability of funds, it is proposed to complete the entire project within a period of 3 years.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 1. Printed Books of the Encyclopedia of Srirangam:
10 Volumes: @ 20 lacs per Volume: 2 crores**
Break-up:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Amount (in Rs. Lacs)
1.	Content research	5.0
2.	Editing and Formatting	5.0
3.	Printing and Publication	8.0
4.	Miscellaneous expenses (Including Seminar etc on each topic)	2.0
	Total: Rs. Twenty lacs only	20.0

- 2. Digital format:
(of the 20 volumes that are brought out in the form of books)**

- I. Web-portal: 40 lacs**
(@ Rs. 4 lac per volume)
(This will include Web-hosting, Web programming etc.)
- II. Multimedia DVD: 60 lacs**
(@ Rs. 6 lac per volume)

- 3. Virtual Reality 3D Walkthrough: 2 crores**

Total: 5 Crores

4. Museum

1. Land of about 1 acre: 2 crores
2. Building of about 120 squares: 4 crores
3. Building of Multi-vision theatre etc: 1 crore
4. Internal design, interior decoration etc: 1 crore
5. Collection of artifacts etc: 1 crore
6. Collection of video material etc: 1 crore
7. Collection of audio material etc: 1 crore
8. Maintenance (corpus) 3 crores
(including salaries etc)
9. Miscellaneous expenses: 1 crore

Total: 15 crores

Grand Total: Rs. 20 Crores

(Rs. Twenty Crore only)

9.0 Conclusion

Despite the changes in Srirangam over time, it remains a treasure trove for all types of connoisseurs of religion, art, aesthetics and what not! As already mentioned, many things around Srirangam have changed, not always for the better but for devotees Namperumal is always as resplendent as he was and for the historian there are still those nuggets of our past to rediscover. For the residents, they are supremely happy content that they live in “bhooloka Vaikunta” or heaven on earth.

This project, if successfully realized, will help others also realize the greatness of Srirangam.

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Volume I : TRADITION AND ANTIQUITY

Introduction:

Tradition is the sustaining force of any culture. For, it is the main link between the past and the present. Basically the traditions that are cherished and followed by a society determines the cultural level of the society. Many a times it is the tradition that gives the clue for the memorable happenings of the past. A valuable record of history! A society without a tradition is like a tree without roots. Tradition will be in many forms. They could be the mores and modes of action designed to suit the specific activities that are unique to a society. It could be the time-tested solutions valid for all times to come for that specific society. It could also be practices remnant of the past for which there seem to be no reason or logic for its retention in the present. But if one were to go deeper we are sure to find even meaningless traditional activities of the present have a valid reason for its practice, because traditional activities of the present have a valid reason for its practice, because they are the sign posts of the place and times of the societies origin and growth. It is from that we largely derive and justify our aims and goals of life and of our actions in the present. Tradition is not only a thing to be proud of but also a bridge made of memories which links us to our ancestors. It also helps us in reducing the generation gap. It is fact that more ancient a culture is, the more strong will be its tradition. The traditions of the east are the best example of that.

The strength of tradition lies in its antiquity. It is also an accepted fact that the culture which is more ancient than others have been able to design strong structures of tradition which has helped in facing the crisis in the present and the future. Hence the study of tradition of a place strengthens one's capacity in tackling the problems of an individual or the society along with creating a sense of pride about one's own tradition.

The present volume, therefore presents the greatness of Srirangam with regard to tradition and antiquity.

¹Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

- i. **Vedic Tradition**
- ii. **Divyaprabandha Tradition**
- iii. **Agama-Temple-Text Correlation²** – Construction of the monuments as described in the main Pancaratra Agama texts.

¹ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

²Worship protocol - Vaishnava Agamas:

The Agamas are texts derived from various concepts in the Vedas dealing with Worship protocol. The Agamas describe in detail the various forms of God, the methods of temple worship, home worship; fire sacrifices offerings and even temple constructions. The Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya accepts two Agamas only as authoritative and non-conflicting with Vedas. They are Pancaratra Agama & Vaikhanasa Agama.

The Azhwar Thirunagari temple follows the Vaikhanasa Agama as do the temples in Thirupathi, Thiruallikeni, Thiruvaheendrapuram etc.,

Very few temples follow the Pancarathra Agama, notable among them are Srirangam, Thiruvallur, Thirukudanthai, Melkote, Kanchi Varada temple and Ahobilam.

Vaikhanasa Agama was revealed to sage Vaikhanasa.

The chief characteristics are –

1. Priesthood is hereditary
 2. Samashranam (ritual tattooing on the shoulders) for priesthood is not obligatory
 3. Mudhras in the worship ritual are important and the thanthric element is pronounced
 4. Mantras are less important than the thanthric element
 5. The Gnanakandam (on how the soul reaches self realization) is very minimal
- 90 out of the 108 Divya Desas follow this agama.

Pancarathra Agama was revealed to sages by Vishnu over five nights.

1. It is the latter of the two.
2. There is a an elaborate Gnanakandam (that is not accepted by Advaita philosophers).
3. Anyone who is a Sri Vaishnava after the Samashranam (ritual branding) can become a priest after four dheekshas –
 - a. Agama deeksha – can perform rituals in the sanctum but not touch the idols.
 - b. Anusarma deeksha – same as above with greater privileges.
 - c. Rakshabandhana deeksha – can conduct major temple rituals.
 - d. Acharya deeksha – can initiate others.
4. There is a high predominance for mantras and very little mudhras.
5. There are four major Samhitas (schools of practice)
 - a. Padma
 - b. Prameshwara
 - c. Jeyeykya

- iv. **Temple text correlation** regarding the different festivals of the temple their significance.
- v. Utensils, jewels, etc used in different festivals, their special names and significance.
- vi. **The Alvars and Srirangam**³ – The association of each Alvar, the hymns sung by that Alvar along with the specialty of the poems of each Alvar with English translation and explanation. ⁴

d. Shuka Pancharatra

6. This was preferred by Ramanuja.

7. Generally more liberal than Vaikhanasa.

18 out of the 108 Divya Desas follow this agama.

³ (May also be made into one separate Volume depending upon resources)

⁴ Srirangam's ascent to fame was undoubtedly during the time of the Azhwars, 12 saints who glorified Vishnu in Tamil. Among the Azhwars, Poigai Azhwar is the first and Thirumangai Azhwar the last. The period of the Azhwars date from the 5th to 9th century. Most of them, it is believed however lived closer to the 8th century.

Dating the Azhwars is however still controversial since internal evidences are few and these are not agreed upon by the devout. The stories of their lives were first recorded by Pinbazhagiya Jeeyar in the 11th/12th Century in his 6000 Padi Guruparampara Prabhavam. Others have done this later and all the works need to be read to get a holistic view. These works are written from a primarily religious point of view. The dates given in this section are based on commonly accepted sources and are suggestive and not definitive. Azhwars preached bhakthi and they spoke of Vishnu with the affection a mother would have to her child and is always keen on serving the child. Every Azhwar except Madhurakavi sang the praises of the Srirangam temple. Madhurakavi himself anyway, sang only 11 verses and all of them were on his preceptor Nammazhwar. In effect, Srirangam for the Tamil Vaishnavite is the most sacred temple.

Poigai Azhwar was born in Thiruvehka near Kanchipuram. **Bhootath Azhwar** was born in Mahabalipuram. **Pey Azhwar** was born in Mylapore, Chennai. It is commonly believed that these three Azhwars lived in the 4-6th centuries CE. Between these three saints, they authored 7 verses on Srirangam. Their references to the deity are either a mention of his reclining in Thiru Arangam or mention a mythological episode from the Ramayana/ Mahabharata/ Bhagavatha and connect it to Ranganatha.

Thirumazhisai Azhwar has sung 14 verses on Srirangam.

Periyaazhwar and Andal have sung 45 verses on Srirangam. Periyaazhwar is famous for his "Pillai Tamizh" a genre where God is treated with love and affection and adored in verse as the poet's child. Ranganatha figures in some of these verses, in the verses where Azhwar adorns the Lord as his child with flowers. The Azhwar's daughter's love for the lord is well

- vii. **Poorvacharyas and Srirangam**⁵ - The association of each Acarya (right from Nathamuni to the disciples of Varavaramuni), the hymns sung by that Acharya – both in Tamil and Sanskrit and Manipravalam – if any – along with the specialty of the prose / poems of each Acharya with English translation and explanation
- viii. **A Mythological Study**⁶ – The Vaibhavam of Srirangam as enshrined in the different Sthala Puranams
- ix. Srirangam as Yogabhumi.
- x. Recitals of Veda, divyaprabandham and stotras, traditions that are followed in the religious festivals of Srirangam

documented, in a particularly evocative verse she sings to the deity, as a woman who has lost her heart to Him. Appropriately, the processional deity of the temple is known as Azhagia Manavala or the “bridegroom of matchless beauty”.

Kulasekhara Azhwar’s verses on Srirangam and Thirupathi where he prefers to be any living being or object in the sacred hill are particularly moving. His 31 verses on Srirangam are indicative of his fanatical desire to see the Lord.

Thondaradippodi Azhwar sang the Thirupalliezhuchi, 10 verses that gently request the lord of Srirangam to wake up. He also sang the Thirumaalai containing 55 verses, only on Srirangam. These 45 verses have a deep philosophical content where Azhwar points out Ranganatha as the true God worthy of granting salvation.

Thirup-paan Azhwar sang only 10 verses but they speak eloquently about his love for Sriranganathar.

Thirumangai Azhwar sang of several temples and was an indefatigable traveler. Among his 73 verses on Srirangam, the last few in the Peria Thirumozhi are the most poignant.

In his 12 verses on Srirangam, **Nammazhwar** takes the role of the mother of Parankusa Naayaki lamenting on her girl’s frenzied devotion to Srirangam.

Thus, it is pertinent to study the relationship, adulatory verses of each Azhwar regarding Srirangam.

⁵ (May also be made into one separate Volume depending upon resources)

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Volume II: PHYSICAL FEATURES

One may wonder and say what greatness lies in the physical features of a country except for its natural beauty and aesthetic appeal. But in reality the growth of tradition customs and religious practices of a region is largely dependant on the physical features and its geographical location. In a vast country like ours we find even though a single Vedic philosophy encompasses the whole continent, we find wide variations in the ritualistic practices, the dresses worn, the language spoken and the social attitude of the people. For example even though Brahmins had left off meat-eating long ago but those who live by the side of the sea are permitted to consume marine products. Seems to be a very sensible arrangement. In the same way the wearing of cloth worn even during religious ceremonies are different from the tropical plains to the Himalayan Mountains. But many a times when different groups of these people have migrated from one place to another they seem to have continued to follow the same way of life that their ancestors practiced in their original home land. So by a study of the physical features along with the way of life the people lives one can come to many historical conclusions. That is why even though Manu Smṛti is considered to be the all encompassing code of conduct there have been the presence of many other Smṛtis which have codified the variations and the existing practices of the place. A study of physical features does give us an insight into the different practices, which might be unique to the place and may be a clue to the background and history of the population of the place.

⁷Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

- i. Physical Features in general
- ii. Specialty of the Geographical Location
- iii. The weather of Srirangam and changes in the weather over the ages
- iv. Flora & Fauna (existing at present)
- v. Flora & Fauna (as explained in various texts of Alwars and Acaryas, Puranas and other texts)
- vi. Srirangam as an island and it significance in terms of geography
- vii. Evolution

⁷ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume III : HISTORY AND EPIGRAPHY

Just like an individual's personality can be deduced from his behavioral pattern a societies persona can be understood by its history. History is the imprint of the society's psyche. For it tells us how the people of that culture reacted individually and collectively to new situations that they had to confront. It is a fact that these reactions have turned the very direction of flow of culture in an entirely a new direction. It also tells us how best a social problem can be tackled by analyzing the way our ancestors tackled a similar problem in their times. The underlying idea in such a study is that the social problems and its solutions are Human based and an ethnic or a cultural group think and react by and large in the same way even after centuries. After all it is that predictable pattern which makes us identify a group or a civilization as a single entity.

But to know and understand history one of the major sources would be epigraphy. It is particularly so in South India for it abounds with inscriptions on stone. The best use of granite that our fore fathers made use of. Perhaps in the whole world we do not come across such a medium that can defay the ravages of time for centuries to come. India a country, which was mainly Sruti oriented and was least concerned about the physical exactitude of events has no other factual records than these inscriptions. Thus epigraphy gives the skeletal structure of past event of history to us and we by joining it with our strong traditions and folklore can complete the picture of the events of the past to know why we are here and where we are headed.

Inscriptions in Srirangam – A brief Account

Inscriptions in the temple The temple has more than more than 926 inscriptions on the walls and more in copper plates and if one counts those in metal objects like vessels and worship object, the total will be over a thousand.

Very few temples in India can claim this distinction!

A typical inscription begins with a Meikeerthi or Prashasti, a verse that recounts the lineage of the king, the chief events of the reign. Each year's verse will vary and make the account an updated one.

Then will be the documentation of the oral order (Thiru Vai Kelvi). In most cases in addition to what was said by who will also have the location of the order and even the clerk who wrote it down. If the source was not a royal one, e.g., if a common man gave a gift, the reigning king will be mentioned. Inscriptions will always have a date based on the Tamil lunar calendar and mention the year of the current king's reign.

The inscriptions in the temple span the reigns of the following dynasties – the Cholas (maximum inscriptions), Pandyas, Hoysalas, Kakatiyas, Vijayanagara, Thanjavur and Madurai Nayaks. The temple was in existence in the Pallava times, but the first inscription is dated 876 ACE. It is from the reign of Aditya I (871-907). Notice again the connection of this Chola's name with the sun god! The Pallavas incidentally claimed their descent from the moon.

This inscriptions states that the land that belongs to the temple can be cultivated only by residents if this is disobeyed, a fine of 25 gold coins will have to be paid to the treasury. The Chola kings, particularly Kulothunga I (1070-1122) lavished enormous amounts of wealth on the temple. Pick any handful of his 82 inscriptions and there will be references to gold in abundance. Not all the wealth was for the temple alone. Temples in the past had a significant social role and the many inscriptions that refer to "Manal meetu kidantha nilam" are possibly unique to this temple. This term means land that had for various reasons become uncultivable. The king allotted this land to farmers and not only helped in the land regaining fertility but also made the land tax free for the first few years to help the person and the land. Post the land regaining fertility a measure of produce, named after the deity, "Pallikondan Marakkal" was caused to be made over to the temple.

Several inscriptions were for the alighting of a "Nunda Vilakku" or eternal lamp. The donor also made over cash for animals like goats, buffaloes etc.,

and the temple brought land with the cash or gave the goats to local goatherds who would give the designated ghee for the lamp and sell the rest.

The temple would conduct audits and ensure the number of goats is at the original. Extra goats could be sold and dead ones replaced. Thus with just one lamp, an entire economy thrived!

Lord Vishnu is known as “Alankara Priya” just as Shiva is known as fond of listening to chants. Ornaments and flowers for garlands are therefore favourite offerings. An inscription from the Chola times is on a gift of land for a daily offering for the lord of a garland of 200 lotus flowers. It was in the witness of several temple staff called “nambidasan”. Significantly no Chola inscription mentions “Iyengar”.

Among the Pandyas the greatest benefactor was Jatavarman Sundara`Pandya I (1251 -1268) who is in the temple annals known as “Hemachandra Raja” or “the king (Perumal) who covered the temple with gold”. Among his gifts include, an image of Anantha, a prabhavali (the elliptical structure behind the image), a processional car, a kavacham, vessels and Kalasa, a pedestal, a makaratorana (to shelter Ranga) and an image of Garuda. The specialty being all of these were cast in solid gold! The king didn't stop with this, he also gave a fabulous emerald necklace that was the cynosure in the 17 treasury of Orissa's Kataka (Cuttack) Raja, a crown of jewels, a mandapa of pearls, and covered the vimana and the wall of the second enclosure with gold. He also built a large madapalli or kitchen. The king also performed a thulabhara where he sat on the elephant on a boat in the Kaveri River. The boat beside it was filled with jewels till it was immersed to the same extant. The grandest offering was that of a gold image of Ranganatha himself cast in gold modeled on the kings likeness; in this the king reasserted his divine descent. The inscription goes on to mention the crushing defeat he inflicted on the Chera, Chola and Hoysalas whose booty was surely a part of this magnificent and ostentatious offering. (ARE 60 of 1892). It is unlikely any of these still survive today post the plunder of the Muslims and the natural course of time.

From the Hoysala times, an interesting inscription refers to the temple maintaining an Arokiya Salai or a hospital. Srirangam also has a rare shrine dedicated to Dhanvanthri, Vishnu holding in addition to the conch and discus, the divine medicine aushadha and a leech that was used commonly in ancient Indian medicine to remove infected blood. 1100 coins were given to purchase land for this hospital that was situated to the north of the “Edutha Kai Azhagiya Nayanar” gopuram.

The depredations by the Muslims of the temple caused an interregnum in inscriptions in 1311 to 1371. The temple was desecrated, jewels looted and many lost their lives, including a devadasi in trying to protect the lord. Vedanta Desika, the preceptor for the Vadagalai Vaishnavite sub sect did much to organize the population and the processional deity that was taken north with the other loot was returned and then hid in a ravine and then in Thirupathi. Normalcy returned in 1371 and the Vijayanagara kings followed by their vassals, the Madurai and Thanjavur Nayaks commenced rebuilding of the temple. Much of the temple as we see it today is from these times in the 15th and 16th centuries.

An inscription from 1546 is an interesting and unique one since it quotes an inscription from 1198 when the flooding of the Kaveri caused its course to be changed and the protests of the affected villagers. Ramanuja Iyengar on 23rd April 1612 caused a special service to be initiated when Chakkarai Pongal - a sweet rice preparation was sent from the shrine to that of Ramanuja's when a specific verse from the Thiruvaimozhi in the 5th decad was recited. The inscription goes on to mention the quality of the dish in detail as well!

With the administration of the temple moving to the British government and then the HR and CE, inscriptions become reduced. Further disputes between the two sub sects of Vaishnavism are largely confined to paper records. The temple today is administered by the Thenkalai sub sect and follows the Pancharathra agama.

The inscriptions are always in danger of modern reconstruction but for as long as they survive they will give us a fascinating glimpse into a world that can never come back.

⁸Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. History is in thy Name
2. History in a Nut-shell
3. A Study of Historical Perspective
4. An Epigraphic Study of all inscriptions of Srirangam⁹
5. Srirangam and its rulers
6. Invasions of Srirangam from Outsiders and its effects (with authentic references)
7. Srirangam & other divyadesams - A Study in their Historical Links
8. The Forgotten Fort
9. Koil-Ozhuhu
10. Reconstruction of the history of Srirangam based on its inscriptions
11. Other related aspects

⁸ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

⁹ (May also be made into one separate Volume depending upon resources)

Volume IV : TOWN PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

The town plan and architecture of a place definitely gives us the clues about the life style of the people of the place. We see the western emphasis, on the class system of differentiation, reflected in their town plan and architecture too. We find the affluent and the powerful taking the highest and the best parts of the land and the ordinary and the poor being designated to the lower regions and confined in large numbers into small spaces resulting in so-called slums. In contrast to this Indian culture followed the caste system of differentiation. Here the township was divide according to the castes and profession of the people. The best part being assigned to the place of worship. Even though the architecture was not much different from one house to another the mortifs and the frontage had definite ornamentation and decoration which symbolized the caste and the status of the person and also the profession which he practiced.

In the west town planning was necessitated only by the physical conveniences, like having wide roads etc. In India it was the concept of *Vāstu* which determined the town and house planning. This concept was basically dependant of the hypothesis that any structure when once becomes complete be it animate or inanimate will have a soul of its own, which helps or hinders the activity. Hence *Vāstu* defined and designated the town structure and the location of its inhabitants and also the individual houses and its inner structure.

The ultimate in this filed has been Iconography. As the Indians have been predominately idol worshippers they brought the structure of those icons into a perfection. It was not only for the sake of invoking the divine but also to be a piece of art. Even here East has struck a different note form the West. The iconography of India is based on the concept of *Vāstu* and *tīrtham* etc. The identification of which will lead one to get clues regarding the history of the place and the people. Another mile stone in unraveling the history of our country.

¹⁰Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. A Walk Through Srirangam
2. A Town Planner's View
3. Assimilation of other Cultures & Architectural Development
4. Unfinished Gopurams – compared to the finished ones today
5. Design aspects of pillars in Hindu Temple Architecture
6. An Abode Here
7. Ponds & Mantapas
8. Iconography
9. Original Deities at the Temples of Srirangams
10. A Survey of Mantapas & Ponds
11. Using Computer aids for Deciphering Ancient Temple Architecture
12. Other related aspects

¹⁰ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume V : RELIGION AND FESTIVALS

It is in India we find that all aspects of human activity from birth to death have been interwoven into the religion that one follows. Religion basically is the attitude one develops towards a particular faith and a deity and follows a set of procedures called ritual which brings some sort of the people who profess to the same faith or religion. In olden days and many a times, even now irrespective of one's faith or belief people do participate and help in all festivals of the village or town where all contribute their mite to make it a success and also enjoy it collectively. That is why in India festivals have a special place and significance. Festival is the time, when the deity comes out to see its devotee, it is the time when the joy of the spirit overflows from the temple into the streets and into the houses of the township. It builds up a sense of kinship between the temple and the society that surrounds it.

From time immemorial the temple has been the focal point of all social activities in India. This can be fairly seen in the temple towns of India even today. A closer scrutiny of the festivals in the temple town shows how tradition has been maintained for ages without change and how the deity is considered as a living embodiment and as an important personality of the town. The participation of one and all in the tasks handed down from generation to generation to celebrate the festival irrespective of their caste or religion shows the harmony and understanding the individuals of the community have for one another. It also shows how a life based on mutual cooperation and respect and love for each other was in practice. Many of the festivals are a result of historical happenings in the place. They remind every generation about a great event that happened at the place. Thus it also keeps the local history alive. Festivals particularly in temple towns are a great relief from the daily drudgery and a valid reason for the local population to enjoy themselves here in the present, and also feel a sense of satisfaction of having gained something for the life beyond.

Every day is a festival – Festivals at Srirangam

If the world and heavens are a stage, Ranga is the hero who causes them to happen. As the hero, he needs to be constantly entertained and in that process entertain others. Therein lies the connection with festivals. The celebrations of festivals was also a product of the bhakthi movement which elevated their role in order to give the temple a more inclusive social presence. The benefactions of the kings added to the pomp and pageantry and the celebration of festivals today give us a glimpse of the treatment of a king in the past. Ranganatha or more specifically the processional deity is known as the Nithyothsava perumal, since there is some festival or the other every day or for at least 322 days out of 360. All festivals follow the Tamil lunar calendar and the schedule is now published as a booklet. The Srirangam temple also publishes a yearly almanac that is widely used in homes as well. No other temple has an almanac of its own that is used in this fashion.

The daily offerings Each festival has several rituals with their own set of protocols, the following account is meant to be a glimpse of the same. Each festival is a heady combination of recitation from the Vedas and Prabhandam, processions to the accompaniment of music, special food offerings and other customs.

To give a sense of the grandeur, let us look at the daily food offerings for Ranganatha and his consort Ranganayaki. Early in the morning, at around 6AM the doors open for the lord to see an elephant and a cow, two auspicious symbols. Offerings in this ritual called the Viswarupa Dharisanam are milk, roti (a Muslim influence), butter, sugar and paruppu (cereal). Then comes Pongal – this offering is after the ritual bath for the processional deity and a symbolic bath for the main deity who is made of stucco and therefore not bathed in water but anointed annually with scented oil. During Pongal, the offerings include Pongal, dosai, akkara adisal (a sweet made of milk) and rice, chukka or dried ginger, jaggery, ghee, pickle and vegetables. This may also include other offerings sponsored by devotees on this day.

Peria avasaram, literally means the “great hurry” is the mid day meal. The offerings here are akkara adisal, saatru amuthu (rasam), vegetables, adhirasam and thirukannanamudhu (Payasam). Ksheera annam is the evening meal. The offerings here include Ksheera annam, a milk based sweet, vegetables, vadai, appam, thenkuzhal and other offerings sponsored by devotees on this day. Chelavu samba is the night offering and here the items are paruppu, akkara adisal and rice. Late night before bed time is Aravanai, which includes sweet pongal, vegetables and finally milk. The offerings for Ranganayaki are similar except puttu, keerai (greens), pakarkai (bitter gourd) curry and narthangai (lime) pickle that are served for her but not the lord. Appam which is served for the lord is not served for Thayar. Notice the number of vegetables and other healthy food offerings!

¹¹Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Srivaishnavism and Srirangam
2. Influence of other religions on Srirangam
3. Niyamanappa of Ramanuja & Srirangam
4. The History of Mathas in Srirangam and their role in the temple of Srirangam
5. Tradition of Acaryapurushas with all details
6. Temple Festivals
7. Uniqueness of the temple festivals of Srirangam with all details
8. The Way of Worship

¹¹ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume VI : FINE ARTS

It is said that fine art is the very expression of the soul of the society. Its depth of expression its melody, its capacity to leave a lasting impression of the inexpressible, its haunting quality to evoke and to leave a strong impression for a longer time on the hearts of the observer is well known. It is the true sign of a sophisticated society in terms growth of the heart and the spirit of the individual and the social psyche of the time. It also gives the key to the heart, emotions and the mores of the society of the time. It is the breath of life that flows through the society which rejuvenates and obliterates the pains and shortcomings that produces the negative emotions that are detrimental to societal living and growth.

Srirangam is treasure trove for those inclined towards art – priceless Nayak paintings that not only depict the abodes of Vishnu but also the life histories of the saints associated with the temple, sculptures from the Chola, Pandya, Hoysala and Nayak periods and the very construction of the temple will delight the historian. Srirangam had a tradition of supporting Sadir, the precursor to bharathanatyam till the abolishment of the devadasi system but the veena players still continue. Nowhere else but here is the veena played the old way, vertically held and strapped to the players shoulder. The festivals of Srirangam occasion the support of many smaller crafts – from the humble fashioning of parrots from the leaves of the Mandhara tree to the grander floral decorations. The Temple ornaments, ivory figurines, jewelry, wood carvings are all examples of a bygone age of splendor.

¹²Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Tradition of Fine arts & paintings of Srirangam
2. Development of Divyaprabandha Music of Srirangam
3. Delicious Dishes of Srirangam
4. Women & Their Traditions in Srirangam
5. Folklore in and of Srirangam

¹² Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume VII : LITERATURE AND EDUCATION

The history of literature of a place and the quality of contribution from the place to literature is a true measure of the degree of culture. It is a representation of the awareness of the society in terms of life and imagery of the times. For that matter it also mirrors the mind of the intellectuals towards the social, economic and religious sensitivity of the society surrounding them and its place in the frame work of the nation as a whole. Here literature becomes an indicator of the mind of the intellectuals of the society had towards the possible goals and the solutions to the present shortcomings in the society.

On the other hand the system of education prevailing is an acid test about the degree of involvement and commitment of the leaders and the intellect of the community in disseminating the knowledge and culture to the common man. Education determines the trend of the society and the pulse of the people. It also acts like a guide to the masses to formulate their opinions by suggesting the possible direction that they should follows. Thus the system of education is a measure of the place's involvement in the down to earth affairs of the society and also the vision of the socially conscious elders about the direction that the society should take. Therefore, it is one of the most important aspects that need to be studied.

¹³Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Contribution of Srirangam to Sanskrit
2. Contribution of Srirangam to Tamil and Manipravalam
3. Contribution to English & Hindi etc.
4. Contribution of Srirangam to Journalism and other streams of literature
5. Contribution of Srirangam to education – religious, traditional etc.

¹³ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume VIII : ADMINISTRATION

The study of administration through the ages of a place shows the reasons for a societies ups and downs and the way the elites responded to it either to rescue or to revamp the entire arrangement of the administration. It will also show us the consequent impact of those decisions on the place and the society. After all changes in administration particularly under the Indian circumstances has had a powerful impact on the life and living of people, much more so in relatively small communities like Srirangam. The changing pattern of administration and the creation of new administrative wings to look after the needs of the society will certainly be an indicator of the changing needs of the society. It is also a reflection of happenings due to technological and political changes.

¹⁴Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Town Administration
2. Temple Administration at the time of Ramanuja and subsequent Acaryas
3. Temple Administration today
4. Administration of the religious institutions and their effect on the temple administration
5. The Shrines & their assets

¹⁴ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume IX : INSTITUTIONS & COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

Institutions of a place show the type of needs that a society has. The study of the creation of new institutions and the modification in terms of activity of the older institutions are an indicator of the diverse needs the society faced during different times. The importance given to some type of institutions at certain periods of times, definitely throw light on the needs of the times. In a temple town like Srirangam we find the changing scenario of institutions, changing from only being temple oriented to become an industrial center and then to be academically oriented. Then again, we have institutions to serve the social needs of the society, which in the wider context of the state and the nation tells its own story.

¹⁵Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Academic Institutions
2. Social & Religious Institutions
3. Home Industries
4. Handloom Industries

¹⁵ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

Volume X : SERVICE & MISCELLANY

To God

The very life sustaining force of Indian psyche has been God and religion. Be it an orthodox philosophy or Heterodox the emphasis on service has been the main theme. It has been particularly so in the South which abounds in temples, living monuments. These has been places of focus for all social and cultural activities. God has been treated as the part and parcel of society. Service to God has been emphasized as the ultimate means of liberation. Opportunities to suite the wide variety of people has been designed so that one and all can participate not only as just a social service but also for the expiation of sin and as a means of liberation.

To People

In the religions of the world service to the people has been eulogized as the service to God. It has been said again and again the service to the downtrodden, to the poor, the handicapped and the under privileged is the duty of the ones who are privileged to enjoy the benefits of society without much toil. In India the concept has been well woven into the fabric of life imparted through the concept of Dharma. Apart from that service to the people was a spontaneous action of the compassionate ones. Such noble souls inspired the people to go in for the struggle and gain freedom from bondage. This has been in vogue even from the time of the famous law compiler Manu. For he has included the Samaja seva as one of the debts that an individual owes and says that it is his duty to redeem it before one can think of liberation.

¹⁶Probable Chapter titles of the current Volume:

1. Ramanuja & Srirangam
2. Ramanuja – The Social Influence of His Life & Teaching
3. In the Service of God
4. In the Service of the People.
5. Sports & People of Srirangam
6. Famous scholars of Srirangam and their services

¹⁶ Chapters may further be added or modified as per requirement

The Volume will also include:

PERCEPTIONS AND REMINISCENCES

Whatever be the scientific study of the history of a place, the very life of the place particularly in a temple town like Srirangam is determined by the emotional attachment that is inspired in the residents and the persons who visit the place. In reality their impression of the pilgrim and the visitor which determines whether the place will become a lively centre of attraction or descends to the level of a place only of archeological interest. Writings of purely emotional content will naturally bring a metamorphosis in the visitor, for he starts seeing the place through the eye of the writer, which makes it a memorable cherished experience. In a place like Srirangam the emotional content plays a more important part than that of art and architecture. Because, Srirangam is not just a monument, but a living entity vibrant with activity, which creates a proper ambiance to discover the fountainhead of faith within oneself. The whole town ship is a pleasant blending of art, architecture, devotion, a lively tradition and a beehive of social, cultural and religious activities. Hence it makes the experience lively and memorable. An experience to be remembered forever!

1. Reminiscences
2. Oh! This place is Different
3. Perceptions
4. Garden Divine
5. Yatiraja Ramanuja

It will also include:

1. Shraddhanjali
2. Upakara Smriti
3. Acknowledgements
4. Contributors
5. Donors etc.

WEB PORTAL On SRIRANGAM

A **web portal** is a website that brings information together from diverse sources in a uniform way. Usually, each information source gets its dedicated area on the page for displaying information (a portlet); often, the user can configure which ones to display.

Apart from the standard search engines feature, web portals offer other services such as e-mail, news, information, databases and religious entertainment. Portals provide a way for enterprises to provide a consistent look and feel with access control and procedures for multiple applications and databases, which otherwise would have been different entities altogether.

Cultural portals aggregate digitised cultural collections of galleries, libraries archives and museums. This type of portal provides a point of access to invisible web cultural content that may not be indexed by standard search engines. Digitised collections would include books, artworks, photography, journals, newspapers, music, sound recordings, film, maps, diaries and letters, and archived websites as well as the descriptive metadata associated with each type of cultural work. These portals are usually based around a specific theme.

The Current web-portal on Srirangam will house the entire content of the 10 Volumes of the Encyclopedia on Srirangam that is to be brought out in printed form, and also a virtual museum that will facilitate viewers around the world to view the proposed Srirangam museum online without physically coming to Srirangam. It will also have dynamic content in the form of news-updates, details of the Utsavams and other audio-visual content of concerts, lectures, Araiya-sevai-s etc in a complete comprehensive manner. It will also be designed in an aesthetic manner befitting the content that it depicts, and will be a unique, one of its kind portal that will be a model for one and all to see, emulate and design.

Srirangam Museum

About Museums in General:

A **museum** is an institution that cares for (conserves) a collection of artifacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, cultural, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary. Most large museums are located in major cities throughout the world and more local ones exist in smaller cities, towns and even the countryside. The continuing acceleration in the digitization of information, combined with the increasing capacity of digital information storage, is causing the traditional model of museums (i.e. as static “collections of collections” of three-dimensional specimens and artifacts) to expand to include virtual exhibits and high-resolution images of their collections for perusal, study, and exploration from any place with Internet.

Early museums began as the private collections of wealthy individuals, families or institutions of art and rare or curious natural objects and artifacts. These were often displayed in so-called wonder rooms or cabinets of curiosities. Public access was often possible for the "respectable", especially to private art collections, but at the whim of the owner and his staff. Most mid-size and large museums employ exhibit design staff for graphic and environmental design projects, including exhibitions. In addition to traditional 2-D and 3-D designers and architects, these staff departments may include audio-visual specialists, software designers, audience research and evaluation specialists, writers, editors, and preparators or art handlers. These staff specialists may also be charged with supervising contract design or production services. The exhibit design process builds on the interpretive plan for an exhibit, determining the most effective, engaging and appropriate methods of communicating a message or telling a story. The process will often mirror the architectural process or schedule, moving from conceptual plan, through schematic design, design development, contract document, fabrication and installation. Museums of all sizes may also contract the outside services of exhibit fabrication businesses.

MUSEUM on SRIRANGAM or “SRIRANGAM MUSEUM”

SRIRANGAM MUSEUM will be a unique Museum that will include:

- i. **3D Virtual Reality Multimedia Walkthrough (mentioned above)**
- ii. Artefacts found in and around and connected to Srirangam.
- iii. Replicas of the vessels, icons and other objects used in the main temple and other such items
- iv. Extensive collection of all the literary texts both in the form MSS and Books directly and indirectly connected with Srirangam and exhibiting them and creating a web enabled digital library.
- v. An Audio library that has all the musical kritis sung about Srirangam, Lord Ranganatha and all related aspects including all the pasurams / stotrams of all the Alwars and other Poorvacharyas (like Srirangaraja Stavam etc.)
- vi. A Video Library containing all the videos of all Utsavams including Areyar Sevai-s etc

The Museum building will be in the form of Pranavakara vimana. The construction of this building will be done keeping with the oriental architecture of Srirangam monuments. It will also highlight the symbolism of Srirangam.

A 3D Virtual Reality visualization of Srirangam

based on

Parasara Bhattarr's Sri Ranganatha Stava

Project definition

To produce a 3D visualization of the precincts, inner halls, and sanctum sanctorum of the temple town of Srirangam as would have been witnessed by the great stalwart Sri Vaishnava saint Sri Parasara Bhattar (Bhattar) which inspired him to compose the Sri Ranganatha Stava.

The idea is to take the audience on a 3D tour along-side Bhattar as he composes and recites the Sri Ranganatha Stava and circumambulates the various sannidhis within the Srirangam temple until he finally arrives at the sanctum of the Lord of Srirangam, Sri Ranganatha.

Document overview

This document addresses, at a cursory level, the technical and technological aspects of the project.

3D technologies – A brief history

Stereoscope

3D films and technologies are inseparably interwoven in their evolution. 3D technology is about 170 years old starting with the invention of the stereoscope by Sir Charles Wheatstone and 3D photographs by David Brewster in 1844 [1].

In the beginning of the 20th century, the invention of a stereo animation camera, ***Kinemascope***, brought about the screening of the first public 3D movie *The Power of Love*. Later in 1935, the first 3D color movie was produced [2].

Space Vision 3D and Stereo Vision 3D

The 3D film and technology business saw several ebbs and revivals throughout the 20th century; the ebbs were because of the eye strain and headaches that audiences complained of. This was because of the double projector solution that was used which was very difficult in keeping the two film strips synchronized throughout the duration of the film. The technologies that helped alleviate the problem were the Space Vision 3D in the 1950s and Stereo Vision 3D in the 1970s [3]. The former put the two images (for the two eyes) one on top of the other on the same film strip, while the latter put them side by side. By the 1980s, 3D films like *Friday the 13th Part III* and *Jaws 3D* became extremely successful mostly because of these improvements in 3D film technology.

IMAX theatres

IMAX theaters gave a boost to 3D films in the 1990s by releasing a slew of successful films like *Into the Deep* and *Wings of Courage* with its focus on the mathematical correctness of rendering 3D that significantly reduces eye fatigue and its much bigger 70 degree field of view in contrast with 54 degrees in regular screens [4].

3D TV

TV, just like any other technology, has undergone tremendous evolution [5] from

- *Black-and-white tube TV* to
- *Color tube TV*, to
- *Plasma TV* and *LCD TV* which has reduced the thickness of the TV to only a few centimeters,
- *High Definition TV (HDTV)*, which uses high resolution digital signals to render pictures, and finally,
- *3D TV*, which was introduced in 2010.

3D TV technology is still in its infancy and is currently available both as Plasma and LCD TV. In 2010, several TVs were introduced that required the viewer to wear *Active Shutter Glasses*. This contains high-speed electronic shutters to synchronize the left and right eye images. In this

technology the TV screen renders left and right eye images sequentially every 1/120 of a second [6]. This is synchronized by the glass shutters. In 2011, a new 3D technology called *Film Pattern Retarder (FPR)* which uses very light weight Passive Glasses that are identical to those used in 3D movie theatres.

Both these technologies seem to be very useable and comfortable at a subjective level for the consumer.

3D Video Storage

External storage of digital content has now become monopolized by discs. Discs themselves have undergone an evolution from Compact Disc (CD) to Digital Video Disc (DVD) to Blu-ray Disc (BD) [7]. The only tangible difference between these technologies is the storage capacity; CD stores 700 MB of data, DVD 4.7 GB, and BD 25GB.

3D movies can be stored on both DVD and BD discs.

3D Videos and YouTube

3D is getting fairly popular on the Internet also, so much so, there is a separate channel on YouTube dedicated for 3D content [8].

3D Video Cameras

3D content has also become fairly accessible for common users to produce with the advent of 3D camcorders. All major consumer electronics companies like Panasonic and Sony have 3D camcorders. In India, they are priced at approximately Rs 1 lakh.

3D Animation

3D animation was a \$250M business in 2008 and is steadily increasing [9]. There are whole slew of animation companies even based in India like 3D Animation [10].

Technical proposal

We have done a cursory analysis of the landscape of the 3D technologies available for our project. We have not done a cost analysis, but that would follow shortly.

Here are a few proposals regarding the project.

1. First embark on a pilot project that produces a 2- or 3-minute 3D clip, which can be stored on DVD or BD as 3D and demonstrated on a 3D TV.
2. Define scope and cost of project.
3. As part of this engage the following parties:
 - a. A professional 3D video/film production company for video production. The effort would be to produce video of existing artifacts like the Cauvery river, the temple precincts, and sanctum sanctorum.
 - b. A professional 3D animations company for 3D graphics production. The effort would be to re-create an animation of how the environs as it existed during Parasara Bhattar's time with the help of historical documents and applying an artists imagination.
4. Once the project has been shown to be successfully doable, embark on a much longer 60-minute or 90-minute production.

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