

READING COMMUNITY IDENTITIES AND TRADITIONS: THE HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION OF THE SHRIVAISHNAVAS OF SOUTH INDIA

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The History of Vaiṣṇavism in South India falls naturally into three divisions. The first covering the period from the earliest times upto Ramanuja (1017-1137) would deal with the origin of Vaiṣṇavism, the age of the Ālvārs, and the age of the Ācāryas from Nāthamuni to Ramanuja. The second division covering a period of nearly three centuries—the 11th, 12th and 13th from Ramanuja to Pillāilokācārya and Venkaṭanātha (1286-1370) may be described as the period of the unity of Vaiṣṇavism. The third and the last division comprising the period after the 13th century may be described as the schismatic and therefore, the least creative period of its history.

B.V. RAMANUJAM (1973: 3)

Writing in 1970s, Ramanujam was restating the central idea of the researches on the history of Shrivaiṣṇavism that had preceded him.¹ Primarily written from the beginning of the twentieth century, the history presented in these works mostly identified a history of the Shrivaiṣṇava community that was uniform and consistently unanimous in its projection of identity. Any occurrence of contradictions especially after the thirteenth century was treated with discomfort. Either they were ignored or marginalized in these researches or presented in a polemical manner depending on the ideological and sectarian affiliations of the writer as a Vadakalai or Tenkalai- two groups that the Shrivaiṣṇava community was divided into.² However, an analysis of the Shrivaiṣṇava historical past in its textual tradition, practice and the context in which they evolved and were located did not sustain any claims to uniformity nor supported the modern interpretations of the schism of the community into Vadakalai or Tenkalai groups. Rather, the resources from the past represented multiple identities in the form of caste,

occupation and regional affiliations and the interaction with the textual normative that acted upon the latter making the evolution of the tradition a dynamic process. The textual and liturgical strategies adopted for disseminating the religious ideas constantly attempted to negotiate with the tensions and contradictions often by accommodating them in the Shrivaiishnava temple organizations and ritual activities. Consequently, a multiplicity of identities emerged that mirrored the multiple perceptions of the community amongst its believers.

This paper will attempt to juxtapose the ideas of history of the Shrivaiishnava community in the modern works with the analysis of the historical past especially from the thirteenth century onwards and examine the ways in which modern representations were informed by the context in which they were situated. Section I will discuss the modern twentieth century works on the history of the Shrivaiishnavas in which the notion of a homogeneous community identity was emphatically put forth that defined the successive researches on this subject. It will also discuss the ways in which the split into Vadakalai and Tenkalai was represented in such histories. Section II will provide a historical survey of the Shrivaiishnava community in its textual tradition, the context in which it was evolving and the emerging multiple identities and the formation of the community. Section III will discuss the ways in which the notion of an uniform identity and sectarian affiliations were articulated in the texts, tradition and practice.

I

Who are the Shrivaiishnavas and according to them what is their history? Shrivaiishnavas are a Vaishnava community of South India. The community considers Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi as their supreme godhead, and regards the Sanskrit Vedas and the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* (the 4000 Tamil hymns of the Alvars, the early Vaishnava saints) as its main scriptures. It has two distinct groups, the Vadakalais and Tenkalais. The Vadakalais regard the Varadarajaswami temple at Kanchipuram as their institutional centre and give preference to the Sanskrit *Vedas* over the Tamil ones and therefore are considered to be conservative in outlook. The Tenkalais represent the Tamil tradition with Shrirangam as their institutional centre and regard the *Dravida Vedas* or the Tamil hymns of the early Vaishnava saints, the Alvars (sixth to ninth centuries) as their scripture and are considered to be more broad based with a large

non-brahmana following. There are three religious figures or *acharyas* whom the Shrivaisnavas regard as most reverent, Ramanuja who belonged to eleventh and twelfth century and is credited with bringing together the social basis and the intellectual philosophy together into one organization and one community, and is therefore considered the most important *acharya*, Vedantadesika, (traditional dates: c. 1268-1369 CE) located in the thirteenth century, is considered to have established the ideas and practices of the Vadakalai sub-tradition and finally Manavalamamuni, located in the fourteenth century is considered as the founding *acharya* of the Tenkalai sub-tradition. Both the Vadakalais and Tenkalais believe that the lineages of their respective *acharyas* were derived from the direct 'legitimate' descendants of Ramanuja.

From where does one get this information? The hagiographies or the *gurunparamparas*, which began to be composed approximately from thirteenth century onwards undoubtedly, provided us with such a history, but they did not speak in the same voice. We have some hagiographies that presented the history of the community from the Alvars to Ramanuja and the others that presented the history of the community starting from the Alvars, to Ramanuja, to Vedantadesika or Manavalamamuni, the life stories of both of them seldom appearing together in any of these texts. The subsequent successors of both of them were rarely mentioned in the hagiographies.³ But did the hagiographical representation comprise the only delineation of the history of Shrivaisnavas? There were varieties of sources in the historical past that documented the history or rather the histories of the Shrivaisnavas through the eyes of different groups situated within the temples, including the non-brahmanas like the *Sattadas*, *kaikkolas*, different *mathas* or monastic organizations and individuals, the *brahmana acharyapurushas*. While the consciousness of belonging to a distinct Shrivaisnava community can be traced back to historical past in the textual traditions and the institutional structures of the temples and the *mathas*, the modern writings, on it that started emerging around late nineteenth and especially early twentieth century presented a consolidated and seamless history that in many ways diluted the multiple traditions of caste and regions existing within the Shrivaisnava community and a created a new exclusive homogeneous modern self. The varied documentations were either hardly registered or completely ignored. The works of several scholars on the history of the Shrivaisnava community like Alakondavilli Govindacharya, C.R. Srinivasa Aiyengar, S. Krishnaswami Aiyengar, V.Rangachari and so

on focussed on the Alvars, and *acharyas* till Ramanuja and few till Vedantadesika and Manavalamamuni.⁴ However, independent documentations of the temples and the *mathas* existed but they were not a part of the histories that were being written. Finally, virtually the non-brahmanas like the *Sattadas* Shrivaishnava, who had a significant share in the temple authorities in the sixteenth century, were almost erased from this delineation of the past.⁵ Hence the identity of a Shrivaishnava in the late nineteenth and twentieth century in the public domain meant essentially being a *brahmana* adhering to the reverential lineage of the Alvars and *acharyas* till Ramanuja. Consequently, such an interaction led to the thematic accent on the homogeneous delineation of the past, in which the Alvar phase and the life of the *acharyas* till Ramanuja received prominence; the subsequent phase in which the split into Vadakalai and Tenkalai was one of the crucial developments was muted and finally the notion of social reform by projecting the avowed dissent of the Alvars and Ramanuja against the caste hierarchy was highlighted.

Another area on which these scholars focused upon to accentuate the notion of a homogeneous community was the biography of Ramanuja. The perspectives in these biographies influenced the development of some of the enduring imagings of Ramanuja that not only circulated within the South Indian context but also became the basis of understanding and perceiving him at the pan-Indian level- an image of a benign saint who was not only a great exegete, but also a champion of the oppressed and the poor, stridently arguing against the caste hierarchy. His philosophy of the Vishishtadvaita was perceived to have had a seminal impact on the medieval *bhakti*, for it made the act of *prapatti* or spiritual salvation through surrender to God accessible to everybody, irrespective of the individual's caste status. The writings considered this idea revolutionary and radical. The larger frame of reference that resonated in these writings was that Ramanuja was a "social reformer". It needs to be stated that while using the textual sources, especially the *guruparamparas* and the *stotras* (praise-poems), these modern writings often overlooked the variations in the narratives and the complexities arising from them. For instance, Ramanuja is said to have shouted out the *Dvaya mantra*, exclusively meant for *brahmanas*, from the top of the temple tower at Tirukottiyur so that everyone, irrespective of caste status, could hear, learn and recite it. Though censured by the Shrivaishnava *brahmana* community, that included his own *guru*, Ramanuja was undeterred.

This account along with such other narratives, accepted as historical reality has been documented as a radical step taken by Ramanuja, who the writings have felt deserve to be upheld as a 'social reformer'- a point that is overstressed considering that this narrative was not so dramatic as the modern representations would like us to believe.⁶ Interestingly, in two of the hagiographies, viz., the *Divyasuricharitam* that has two long chapters on Ramanuja and *Yatiraja Vaibhavam*, that deals exclusively with Ramanuja's life, it is not the *Dvaya mantra*, but *Carama Śloka* that Ramanuja learnt from his *guru* and revealed to everybody.

Why was such a unilinear homogeneous identity delineated? To look for answers to this question, it is crucial that one examines the audience which such writings were addressing and the contexts in which they were articulating. It needs to be stated here that while the project of history writing had become an integral part of the nationalistic agenda, there were parallel specific history writings that on one hand reformulated the definite religious identities, on the other repositioned them within the larger, universalistic historical narratives of Hinduism and the nation. Therefore, the authors of such particular histories were products of a historical process that attributed to them their lineage, in this case the Shivaishnavas. But this was now being refashioned and written in a manner so that they could become a part of the larger nationalist discourse and discursive dialogues related to the ideas of Hinduism- two aspects that were crucial in this period. Hence, the focus on composing uniform seamless histories that obliterated multiple voices and in this case, these voices were often at variance with each other.

How was the process of relating the particular to the universal achieved by the Shivaishnavas? The writings of Alkondavilli Govindacharya, S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar and so on, who were nationalistic in their outlook and also Shivaishnava *brahmanas* wrote the history of Shivaishnavism, articulating for the first time a modern community consciousness that linked the larger discourse of the Tamil tradition to Hinduism and the nation with the modern agenda of social reforms. Thus the attempt to be an integral part was in two ways: one, secularizing the history writings and two, focusing on the themes of social reform and protest against the caste hierarchy. The colonial state's takeover of the temple managements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, opposed strongly by the British missionaries was an attempt to secularize and push religious control to the margins of the political and public sphere. The principles

that determined the management of the temple and control and authority within it underwent a process of transformation with the British expanding their involvement in the temple on one hand, but refused to mediate in the disputes, preferring the help of the natives as intermediaries and arbitrators.⁷ Such an ambivalent attitude on the part of the colonial state created complexities leading to situations of disputes over the temple rights. Subsequently, the Shivaishnavas, one of the groups affected by these measures found themselves administratively and in terms of authority marginalized in their very own institutions. The *mathas*, *acharyapurusas*, the Vadakalais and Tenkalais now had to reorient their interactions and claims to privileges vis-à-vis the colonial state that was diluting the religious control. The classic universal modernity separating the sacred and the secular was at work here, though it needs to be stated that colonial modernity was a dynamic process that negotiated with and was influenced by its interaction with the Indian context. Thus the traditional religious consciousness articulated mainly through the institutional frame of the temple was now being reconfigured and reformulated.

The division into Vadakalai and Tenkalai sects is the most dominant form of identity for the Shivaishnava community today. Temples and *mathas* are affiliated to a distinct Vadakalai or Tenkalai tradition. The attempt to articulate and reiterate these boundaries was made in the colonial context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when a new political formation emerged and the temples and the sectarian leaders had no role in the establishment and the manifestation of the duality of the Sanskrit and the Tamil tradition, which had previously provided the ideological contexts for various sectarian leaders. Therefore, contradictions were always present in the history of Shivaishnava philosophy and community before the eighteenth century but the forms of articulation were at the level of intellectual and theological disputes.

The basic difference between the Vadakalai and the Tenkalai sects lie in their respective *acharyic* lineage immediately after Ramanuja. For the Vadakalai, Vedantadesika systematized and interpreted the philosophy of Ramanuja and hence was the *acharyic* head of the Vadakalai lineage. For the Tenkalai lineage, Manavalamamuni was the *acharyic* head. The importance of these two *acharyic* heads for their respective sects lie in the fact that they were in direct line of descent from Ramanuja onwards and hence claimed to be his legitimate successors. Therefore, it followed that, the interpretations of Ramanuja's teachings by Vedantadesika and

Manavalamuni were a logical continuation to Ramanuja's teachings and were valid.

Much has been written about the meanings of the terms Vadakalai and Tenkalai. It is in the hymns of Tirumangaiavar, one of the Alvars that a duality was first indicated in the reference to the Sanskrit and Tamil language (Jagdeesan, 1977: 45).⁸ However, in the context of community identity, the implications go beyond the linguistic affiliations. Vadakalai means north, i.e. northern part of the Tamil country with Kanchipuram as its cultural centre and Tenkalai means south of Tamil country with Shrirangam and Kaveri delta as the cultural center although in both these centers, the Vedic (i.e. Sanskritic) and Prabandhic (i.e. Tamil) tradition flourished.⁹ Today, the Vadakalais are projected as adhering to the Vedic tradition and are therefore linked to Kanchipuram.¹⁰ The Tenkalais emphasizing on the Prabandhic traditions are inevitably linked to Shrirangam. The historiography on the schism has followed two broad trends. The first reflected the sectarian bias of the historians who belonged to either of the two sects.¹¹ According to them, the schism was an unfortunate development in the history of Shivaishnavism. These historians hold *others* responsible for the split, thereby exonerating their own sects of any responsibility. Hence, fixing the onus of the split has always been a major historiographical preoccupation. According to the Tenkalais, since Vedantadesika was chronologically before Manavalamuni, therefore, the Vadakalais generated the schism. The Vadakalais counteracted this by tracing the genesis of the schism not to Manavalamuni, but to Pillai Lokacharya (traditional dates: c.1264-1372 CE), who was a Tenkalai leader and a senior contemporary of Vedantadesika. There is another interpretation to this chronological difference. Since Vedantadesika was placed before Manavalamuni, the Vadakalais asserted that they were more ancient than the Tenkalais. Hence, it followed that Ramanuja was a Vadakalai and the Tenkalai system being a later development was an aberration.¹² Conversely, Tenkalais feel that since they were always larger in number, the Vadakalais developed as an opposition and until day are consolidating themselves. The implication of these interpretations is that both the Vadakalais and Tenkalais have always asserted that they are the true representatives of Shivaishnavism.

Another dimension to this sectarian viewpoint is the pride of place given to the respective *acharyas* of both the sects on the basis of their contributions towards Shivaishnavism. For instance, V.Rangachari's essay on Vedantadesika portrayed the latter in

eulogistic terms whose achievements even the Tenkalais acknowledged. K.V. Raman's monograph on Varadarajasvami temple at Kanchipuram put forth the valuable contributions made by Tenkalais towards the development of the temple as the center of Shri vaishnavism. (Raman, 1975) In this context, Raman referred to one of the influential Shri vaishnavas of fifteenth century, Alagiya Manavalamamuni (1420-1468 A.D.) as the most significant religious leader at Kanchi Varadarajasvami temple. In Raman's words:

Several inscriptions datable to the latter half of the fifteenth century and the earlier half of the sixteenth century speak of his (i.e. Alagiya Manavalamamuni's) services to the temple and his eminent position in the temple affairs at Kanchipuram (ibid.: 76).

The epigraphical evidences from which Raman drew his conclusions however, pointed towards a different situation. Of approximately sixty-two inscription of Varadarajasvami temple, only three belong to Alagiya Manavalamamuni who was the *koyil-kelvi*, i.e. the 'overseer' of the temple-undoubtedly an important position. However, his contributions appeared to have been just some gifts of land to the temple.¹⁴ Epigraphical evidence refers to the Tatacharyas, a powerful Shri vaishnava *brahmana* group as the major functionaries involved in the temple activities.¹⁵ The forty-five inscriptions in which they appear prominently were ignored by Raman evidently as he wanted to highlight the Tenkalai leaders' importance. The Vadakalai response to Raman's understanding and highlighting the role of the Tenkalais was hostile and alternatively highlighted the contribution of the Tatacharyas.¹⁶ However, it is difficult to conclude whether Tatacharyas were representing the Vadakalais. For epigraphical evidences, do not refer to this affiliation. Rather, it appears that the Tatacharya emphasized their independent identity.

The second historiographical viewpoint is a simplistic unilinear view where the twentieth century understanding of the Vadakalais and Tenkalais was extrapolated to the historical development of sectarianism in Shri vaishnavism from the twelfth to the seventeenth century A.D. According to K.A. Nilakantha Sastri, in the post-Ramanuja period differences in interpretations arose which were instrumental in creating doctrinal differences under Vedantadesika and Manavalamamuni (Sastri, 1963: 82-85). N. Jagadeesan takes the antecedents of the schism further back to a tenth century *acharya*, Nathamuni (Jagdeesan, 1977: 182). According to him, after Nathamuni, schismatic tendencies developed amongst the

immediate disciples, Yamuna and then Ramanuja. The philosophies of Pillai Lokacarya and Vedantadesika, which evolved consequently, were stabilized by Manavalamamuni and Brahmatantra Svatantra Jiyar (traditional dates: c.1545 A.D.-1595 CE), head of an important Shri vaishnava *matha*, the Parakala *matha* respectively. Further he says: ‘When the schism weakened the Vadakalai developed subdivisions like the *Munitreyam*, Ahobilam *matha* and Parakala-*matha* and Tenkalai Kandadais, Telugu- Shri vaishnavas, the *Soliyar*, the *Sikkiliyar*.’¹⁷ However, while referring to the weakening of the schism, Jagadeesan does not explain how and when the process took place, nor has he been able to appreciate the independent developments of some sects (which he has referred to) without any affiliation to the Vadakalai-Tenkalai paradigm. Therefore, both Sastri and Jagadeesan failed to analyze the diachronic history of development of sectarianism.

However, the above views of schism overlook the historical processes of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD. Within the Shri vaishnava tradition, the notion of duality was established in the texts and in the philosophy of *ubhaya-vedanta*, i.e. Tamil *Veda* (i.e. the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*) and Sanskrit *Vedas*. This notion of duality crystallized into Tamil tradition and Sanskritic tradition that was reflected in the hagiographical texts which were constructing a lineage for their respective sects. Hence, some of the *acharyas*, their *guruparamparas*, the *mathas* and temple that were the centres of *acharyic* and community activities acquired a Tamil or a Sanskritic identity as the case may be. Interestingly, the *acharyic* lineages emerging from Vedantadesika and Manavalamamuni associated the two *acharyas* with the Sanskritic and Tamil traditions respectively. Therefore, multiple affiliations emerged between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries that did not coalesce around the Sanskritic and Tamil traditions to form a distinct Sanskritic or Tamil sect.

II

From the thirteenth century, a plurality of identities based on multiple traditions emerged within the Shri vaishnava community. Each of these traditions preserved the names of all its *acharyas* in a succession list and attributed several *taniyans* (i.e. praise poems) to them. These *acharyas* were either independent *acharyapurushas* (influential Shri vaishnava *brahmana* individuals) or *mathadhipatis* (heads of the *mathas*). However, both these categories were

associated with the brahmanical temples and *mathas*, which emerged as the convergence points of the Shrivaiishnava community and its activities.

The basis of the multiple traditions and therefore identities based on the institution of *acharyas* and temples was the caste and the regional affiliations of a Shrivaiishnava individual. These were primary affiliations of an individual, formed the core of an individual's identity and were linked in a complex manner with the religious identity. Despite the overarching community, sectarian and institutional affiliations, the caste and the regional identities never got marginalized and remained integral to the entire social set up.

The changing socio-context in which such identities were evolving, especially with the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire in the fourteenth century was instrumental in generating a complex community consciousness. Further, the political integration of three different linguistic zones-viz, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh led to several trans-regional migrations. The rise of new social classes as well as the rising prominence of the old ones led to regrouping of the social identities that negotiated with the *varna* framework for a superior position within the hierarchy. Such negotiations accommodated these newly oriented groups in the temples by providing them new ritual spaces and incorporating their participation in the temple activities. The emergence of the non-brahmana landed class and new mercantile communities and the migration of the Telugu warriors and landed magnates to the Tamil region led to the evolution of a distinct Shrivaiishnava non-brahmana identity. Since these groups were powerful and influential, they emerged as major benefactors of the temples and the sectarian leaders. A network of redistribution and exchange between the non-brahmana and *brahmana* elite groups developed that brought into the temple arena the former and provided a regular channel for patronage to the latter. Tradition attributes Ramanuja with the introduction of certain 'social reforms', including participation by the non-brahmanas. These 'reforms' aimed to broaden the social basis of the community.

Consequently, Shrivaiishnavism not only had to expand its social base, but also its regional base beyond the Tamil region. Therefore, local variants of Shrivaiishnavism and Shrivaiishnava communities with coherent regional affiliations emerged. For example, Mandyattars, Hebbars and many others from Karnataka were prominent regional Shrivaiishnava groups. The textual tradition of the Shrivaiishnavas

began to be articulated in regional languages like Kannada and Telugu. Some of these works contributed towards enriching the ideas and the general Shivaishnava community consciousness. Regional affiliations were further asserted when migrants to the Tamil region preserved their regional identities, such as the Telugu warrior-class and landed communities who migrated from the Andhra region. However, conversely the *brahmana* migrants from Tamil Nadu to Andhra and Karnataka region often were assimilated completely into the regional setup, thereby subsuming their Tamil identity. These regional *brahmana* and non-*brahmana* Shivaishnava groups of the Karnataka and Andhra region were usually named after the *gurus*, place of settlements or place of origin. The regional identity did have considerable importance, as seen from the hagiographical texts which always mentioned the place of origin, the migratory pattern and the place of settlement of a Shivaishnava *acharya*. This is best illustrated in the case of Tatacharyas, whose different stages of migration before settling down at Kanchipuram is a subject of the hagiographies.

Hence, caste affiliations got interwoven with the community-class and regional paradigms. That is Shivaishnavism became the integrative factor between the *brahmana* and the non-*brahmanas*, when powerful sections of both the castes groups joined in an interactive/productive relationship. This was reflected in the philosophy too. The presence of non-*brahmanas* in the community influenced the Shivaishnava discourse on society. New concepts like *ubhaya vedanta* and *prapatti* were evolved, which were all inclusive. Regional language, primarily Tamil came to be emphasized along with Sanskrit. Some of the brahmanical religious leaders like the Kandadais and Periya Jiyar at Tirupati had non-*brahmanas* as their disciples. Referred to as *ekakis*, *ekangis* and *sattada Shrivaisnavas*, these non-*brahmanical* groups figured prominently as the recipient of several shares in temple offerings. The *Koila Olugu*, a chronicle of the Ranganathaswami temple at Shrirangam in the Tamil region states that Ramanuja first recognized their importance and included them in various activities in the temples.¹⁸ However, it appears that these non-*brahmana* groups were not given any priestly functions. Their activities were to be mainly confined to:

“Decorating with followers the *tirumandapas* during festivals and the Alagiyanavalan *tirumandapa* daily; making garlands and offering them for the starting of processions; raining (see) flowers (on special occasions); proceeding in two rows holding ceasors, two folded cloths, eight gold torches and twenty silver torches and waving two pieces of cloth; forming

a rear batch, with hands folded behind the row by the waists reciting the last two lines of each stanza; bearing the Ramanuja sword and acting as the bodyguard of the *Jiyars* and the Shri vaishnavas".¹⁹

Hence, these groups played a marginal role in the actual ritual activities. One can conclude that despite efforts to include non-brahmanas in the ritual activities, Shri vaishnavism remained highly brahmmanical in its outlook. Even the elite amongst the non-brahmanas (i.e. the political leaders and other powerful agrarian and mercantile groups) could participate in rituals only symbolically. In fact, the marker of social respectability was an upward movement in the *varna* hierarchy and became the basis for competing over the control of the temple resources. For example, in the fifteenth century A.D., the members of the *cetti* community claimed a *Traivarnika* status for their mercantile community. That is, they claimed that they were thrice born as opposed to the twice born *brahmanas* and therefore, were entitled to a higher social status, especially in the temples.²⁰

Often the identities of the temple non-brahmanas were linked to their respective religious leaders and hence were a monolithic one. Their power and the privileges stemmed from their being disciples of these influential Shri vaishnava leaders. With the waning influence of their respective preceptors, these groups also lost their importance. From the sixteenth century, (i.e. during Saluva Narasimha's time) the *Sattadas* were attached to Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar, a powerful *acharyapurusha* whose influence extended to the temple centres at Shrirangam, Tirumala-Tirupati and Kanchipuram and controlled the feeding houses or *Ramanujakutam* at Venkateshwara temple at Tirupati. They enjoyed numerous privileges and made donations in the name of their preceptor. Nevertheless, in the later period, when the influence of Kandadai was diminished the *Sattadas* do not appear to have enjoyed the same status. It should be noted that despite holding positions of prominence in the respective institutions of their leaders, the non-brahmana could never assume leadership or be the head of a *matha*. The successor to Kandadai Ramanuja as the head of the *Ramanujakutam* was a *brahmana*, Kandadai Ramanuja Madhvayangar. Thus; the Shri vaishnava attitude towards the non-brahmana devotees was characterized by an element of duality. On the one hand, endowments were encouraged irrespective of caste and there developed a close nexus between the religious and political leaders. On the other, they retained a brahmmanical organization within the temple structure and the community. The

former attitude was a result of religious exigency than of religious/theological liberalism. For the *mathas* and temples could not survive without the patronage of political rulers.

By the end of the thirteenth century A.D., Shrivaiṣṇavism emerged as an organized religious community. From this time onwards, the dominance of various religious leaders in the different temple centres also became prominent. Therefore, the temple emerged as an arena, where patronage, power and religiosity converged and enhanced the importance of the religious leaders as well as the centre itself. In fact, the complexity and competition for control over resources within a single temple centre or over a group of temples in a region or beyond was a characteristic feature among the sectarian leaders during this period. As a centre of community activity and community interaction, temples emerged as important institutions, association with which had significant ramifications. Therefore, the nature of association with a temple centre, had an influence on the identity formation of a Shrivaiṣṇava. The Narayanasvami at Melkote and Narasimhasvami temple at Ahobilam drew local patronage and therefore, fostered the regional identity. The Varadarajasvami temple at Kanchipuram, the Ranganathasvami temple at Shrirangam and the Venkatesvarasvami temple at Tirupati became the focus of the community across the local and supra local boundaries, thereby fostering macro level identities.

Amongst the institutional structures, the *mathas* have been the more crucial factor in fostering the sectarian identity of the community. As a powerful institution within the larger community structure of the temple, the *mathas* were either a competitive unit vis-à-vis the temple authorities or participated along with them in various transactions. Very often, they came into conflict with other groups in the temple like the *acharyapurusas* over the control of resources. The social base of a *matha* was determined by it being attached to a temple in some form or the other. Some *mathas* were associated with a single temple and hence were localized and became the controllers of the administration of that temple. The Periya Jiyar *matha* and the Cinna Jiyar *matha* at Tirupati belong to this category. Other *mathas* made a particular temple their base, drew supporters from all over South India and then became involved in numerous ways in the temples' transactions of other places. The Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha* at Narashimhasvami temple at Ahobilam in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh belonged to this category. Therefore, as the core of all the sectarian activities, the *mathas*

emerged as a prominent institution of the Shrivaishnava community particularly from the fourteenth century onwards. Even today, despite being classified as Vatakalai and Tenkalai, *mathas* have remained distinct and have retained their own sets of traditions and lineages.

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

Amongst such the multiple identities and a complex religious consciousness, the *acharya* emerged as the focal point onto which all the affiliations converged. The concept of a *guru* was epitomized in the *acharya* who was the spiritual guide as well as the initiator into the community. Hence, of all the levels of identities, the one at the level of the *acharya* became important as it linked the disparate groups into the mainstream Shrivaishnava community, through the *acharyic* institutional organization. The *acharyas* then became the disseminator of Shrivaishnavism by rearticulating the tradition according to the changing context and need of the community. These religious leaders projected an independent identity that became the basis for establishing power and authority and a large following. In this context, the composition of a genealogy to create an antiquated lineage became an important textual exercise for the Shrivaishnavas in the post-Ramanuja period particularly when the religious leaders tried to establish a strong institutional organization with a large following. Hence, within the community, multiplicity created a hierarchy of identities, with the *acharyic* one at top, which was followed by the identities of the *brahmanas* and the non-brahmana elites, who ranged from political, landed and mercantile elites to marginalized communities.

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

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

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

The construction of the genealogies ensured the authority of the leaders and clarified the position of the successor. This established a continuous line of teachers and a hierarchical organization on a permanent basis, giving the community a legitimate status. The *acharyapurushas* as well as the *mathas* had their respective retinue of servants, system of recruitment and organization comparable to any political system. For instance, Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar had a group of disciples called the *Sattada Shrivaisnavas* who managed the institution of *Ramanujakutam*, which was headed by him. The influence of the *jiyars* and *acharyas* was so pervasive that they were even deified and worshipped.

The sectarian hagiographies and the other *guruparamparas* while evolving their respective apostolic lines of succession developed an

important institution that became the basis of community organization. This was the concept of *guru*. The head of the acharyic lineage, his successors and the heads of the *mathas* were all designated as *gurus*. By the virtue of being a *guru*, the *acharyas* emerged as the foci of the sectarian/multiple identities. *Guru* and *acharya* were often interchangeably used (a practice that continues till day).

The importance of the *gurus/acharyas* lay in their role as disseminators of the canon and the *guru-sisya parampara*, i.e. the preceptor-disciple relationship was the transmitter of tradition. The *guru* was indispensable to the devotees who sought his help for attaining salvation. The Shrivaisnava tradition provides details on the role of the *acharya/ guru*. The *acharya* initiated the disciple into the community through the initiation rites of *panchasamskara*. He was instrumental in the dissemination of three main texts (i.e. *granthas*) viz, the *Shribhasya*, the commentary on the *Vedantasutras* composed by Ramanuja, the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* and the secret *mantras* like the *Dvayam* and *Tirumantaram*.²¹ The discourses of the *acharya* that explained the theological meaning of the texts became a part of the exegesis.

The two roles of the *guru*, the initiatory and expository got institutionalized into *acharyaparampara* and *granthaparampara* respectively. Hence, the importance of the *guru-shishya parampara* not only ensured continuity but also legitimized the validity of the teacher as the preceptor of the tradition with the added authority to interpret. Lineage or *parampara* bestowed ideological and textual legitimacy to the sectarian leaders (both to the *acharyapurushas* and the *mathadhipatis*). In the practical context, there were four spheres of competitive control, which contributed towards their legitimacy and dominance. The first was the theological sphere, where the leaders had to prove the validity of their ideas through the debates within not only the community but also vis-à-vis other religious traditions. Hagiographical texts refer to many debates, which enhanced the position of the leader/*guru*. The sectarian *guruparamparas* provide several examples of the intellectual superiority of the *guru*.

Secondly, the socio-economic sphere of control was equally important. The predominant feature of the Vijayanagar economy was the appropriation of maximum surplus, which created tensions between the existing and the newly emerging social classes. This can be seen particularly at centers like Kanchi, Shrirangam, Tirupati and Melkote. Shrivaisnava sectarian leaders took advantage of this

social tension to increase their body of followers and thus enhanced their position. They with their particular group of followers converged at the temple, which provided the normative and superordinate institutional base. Hence, religious ideology and social developments complemented each other, leading to the rise of the sectarian affiliations.

Thirdly, the temple was also a sphere of competitive control. It was the source of ritual legitimation of the authority of new warrior class (Appadurai, 1981: 99-105). The establishment of ritual control over a temple through gifts (for rituals and festivals) became an important agency for the enhancement of power and domination of this class. The powerful sectarian leaders were often the intermediaries through whom the warrior class made gifts and in return obtained 'honours' and 'authority' (ibid.: 88-89). The *matha* leaders and *acharyapurusas* who were the recipients of these privileges from the ruling class also gained greater control over temple organization and administration. This was the 'redistributive process' at the center of which Vishnu was the 'paradigmatic sovereign (ibid.: 103-106).' The sectarian control of this redistributive process was the essence of the entire power structure in the temple. Therefore, on the one hand, there developed a two-way relationship between the sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagar rulers and on the other, temples emerged as the power base for the sectarian leaders. Arjun Appadurai points out that an asymmetrical relationship existed between the rulers and the sectarian leaders. While the rulers conferred 'honour' as well as resources to the latter, the latter only rendered honour and did not confer any material resources. However, the religious leaders were the vital link between the local population and the new class of rulers, thereby enabling the establishment of authority over the newly conquered areas. Hence, the 'sectarian control of the redistributive capacities of the temples' promoted the efficacy of the faith and enhanced the position of the religious leaders, making them virtually indispensable in the politico-religious system. This not only satisfied the religious desires of the donors, but also imparted a universalistic character to an otherwise brahmanical system. The inscriptions on the walls of the temples indicate that donors wished not only to record their donation and hence be remembered by posterity but also to be recognized as a figure of authority ('little kings') (Carman, 1981: 41-43).

Fourthly, another arena for competition over authority and influence was the administrative affairs of the temple. In almost

every festival and ritual, the religious leaders figured prominently as administrators as well as the recipients of the *prasadam*. Thus, as the *acharyapurushas* and the heads of *mathas*, the sectarian leaders established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimized themselves as central figures of the community. The example of the various Shrivaishnava families as well as the *matha* organizations projected these developments. In fact, the assertion of the identities became so strong, that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century A.D., the *acharyas* as well as the *mathas* were affiliated to the Bhasyic school of thought (i.e. Sanskrit) and the Prabandhic school of thought (i.e. Tamil) that ultimately crystallized into the dual divisions of the Vatakalai and Tenkalai respectively.

This identity was further reinforced in the textual traditions as well as the pilgrimage centers and pilgrimage network of the Shrivaishnavas. In both cases, a collective community consciousness was represented. The different genres of texts presented a “tradition”. This Shrivaishnava tradition represented a past, a particular kind of religious ideology, canonical or scriptural basis and an institutional organization. The process of the construction of tradition began from the twelfth century AD. Keeping the contemporary needs in mind, the tradition as reflected in the texts codified pre-existing ideas along with the interpretations and commentaries of the codifier, thus stabilizing the identity of the Shrivaishnava. The dynamism of this textual tradition lay in its dual character, viz. the Sanskritic and Tamil. This duality was notionally presented in conciliation with each other and this crystallized into the philosophy of *ubhaya vedanta*, i.e. the dual *Vedas*. Such a philosophy for the first time, accorded a sacred status equivalent to that of the *Vedas* to the Tamil hymns of the Alvars compiled as *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. This was reflected in the language of the texts, *Manipravalā* that was a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit words.

The delineation of the community in the Shrivaishnava textual tradition although acknowledged the multiple affiliations, such a multiplicity was contained and accommodated within the structure of a cohesive and distinct identity around Vishnu as the supreme universal god with Shri (Lakshmi) as his divine consort. The texts further introduced the cohesiveness in the charismatic portrayal of Ramanuja, whom the Shrivaishnavas regarded as their most important *acharya*. Ramanuja was attributed with the organization of the community and his philosophy of *Vishistadvaita* provided a

religious ideology to the Shrivaiśhnavaś. Ramanuja is supposed to have introduced temple reforms to include the non-brahmana participation in the ritual and temple activities. Therefore, the idea of a uniform identity meant belonging to a single Shrivaiśhnava community with Ramanuja as its head. Uniformity became an important theme in all the sectarian hagiographies that provided the respective sects with a lineage. The origin of the lineage in most of cases was traced to Ramanuja. In this manner, each sect with its lineage claimed to represent the uniform Shrivaiśhnava community. Such a projection became important for establishing claims in the competitive spheres of resource control in the temples. It represented an integrative framework, whereby devotees could be from any section of the society.

It was in the pilgrimage process that the uniform identity of the community was projected. This pilgrimage process formed a network between the pilgrimage sites. In this manner, it laid down the spatial boundaries for the community to identify with. The origin of the pilgrimage network can be traced to the Alvar phase when a sacred geography was projected in the hymns. However, this sacred geography was itinerant in nature and did not evolve into a formal pilgrimage network until the thirteenth century when a community consciousness emerged. The sacred geography was extended beyond the southern boundaries to incorporate the northern Vaiśnava sites, fixing the number of the pilgrimage centers to one hundred and eight. The extension of the community boundaries beyond the southern frontiers reflected an attempt to identify with the pan-Indian Vaiśnava tradition. Therefore, through the pilgrimage network of one hundred and eight centers, the community consciousness went beyond the southern boundaries and acquired a pan-Indian identity. However, the number, one hundred and eight was merely notional. Certain centers emerged for the first time in the post-thirteenth century AD, which acquired a pilgrimage status. For instance, the Narayanaśvami temple at Melkote became a pilgrimage center, more important than the some of sites in one hundred and eight were. The pilgrimage network while projecting temple geography also evolved a hierarchy. Some centres were of regional importance and hence enforced a regional identity. Then some centres promoted a supra-local identity, and drew pilgrims from all over south India. Lastly, some pilgrimage sites became the center of the Shrivaiśhnava activities and assumed a pan-Indian status. For example, Srirangam was the major Shrivaiśhnava center and epigraphs refer to *brahmanas* of 'Kasmiradesa' in the fourteenth

century AD. Similarly, in the seventeenth century, Tirupati had emerged as the center of Hathiram Jiyar *matha*, which was of north Indian origin.

Thus, the Shrivaiishnava community identity is understood through the analysis of the textual tradition, institutional organization, viz., the *mathas*, and temples and finally the pilgrimage network. It is also stated that the community emerged as a coherent structure when the normative tradition as represented in the texts evolved a religious philosophy that became the ideological basis of the institutions and the pilgrimage process in the post twelfth century AD. However, none of these categories through which the community identity has been understood were stabilized until the end of the sixteenth century AD. They were constantly evolving and modified upon and, contributed to the fluidity in the community consciousness and its sectarian affiliations. The socio-political context against which the identity construction took place and crystallized thereafter also contributed to the fluidity within the Shrivaiishnava community.

Thus, when the modern scholars wrote on the history of the Shrivaiishnavism, they drew heavily from the normative paradigm of the textual tradition that projected the notion of a single homogeneous community, but also tacitly acknowledged the multiple identities by accommodating them.

III

It has often been maintained by scholars working on the history of religion in South India that the Shrivaiishnavas were able to successfully achieve a syntheses of the northern Sanskrit and the Southern Tamil traditions, almost a fusion of the two, especially under Ramanuja. However, this duality could be discerned even in the hymns of the Alvars that reflected an awareness of these two distinct linguistic traditions. However, this did not prove to be a theological barrier to the Alvars, as they did not attempt to evolve a philosophy for a community construction. Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita attempted for the first time to reconcile this duality. The systematization of theology and organization of the community being the major concern, Ramanuja's commentary on the *Brahmasutra* i.e. the *Sribhasya* emphasized "qualified monism" bringing together for the first time the concepts of *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti*.²² By the end of the twelfth century, the emergence of a well-developed Shrivaiishnava community solved the major concerns

of the organization. The theological questions assumed more importance and numerous interpretations evolved. In this context, the philosophy of *ubhayavedanta* that is dual Vedas, Tamil and Sanskrit and the development of a language that reflected this dualism in the use of both the Tamil and Sanskrit words emerged as another attempt at reconciliation. Therefore, the philosophy of Vedantadesika and Manavalamamunigal reflected the concerns of the theological issues centering on the *ubhaya-vedantic* framework and evolved certain concepts for the community: the nature of god and soul, the nature of *bhakti* and the life pattern of *prapanna*, the status of Shri and other minor issues. These conceptual issues as discussed by these *acaryas* emerged as the exegetical framework for the Vadakalai and Tenkalai sects in the post-seventeenth century period. However, it should be remembered that neither Vedanta Desika nor Manavala Mamuni had ever consciously attempted to evolve a distinct community, probably due to their different religious attitudes; they were identified with the Sanskrit school of thought and Tamil school of thought respectively. Nor did the other theological and commentatorial works that took inspiration from them reflected a distinct Vatakalai or a Tenkalai status. Therefore, the duality was only notionally evident in Shrivaisnava exegesis.

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

The various sectarian affiliations between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries had evolved their individual *acharyic* lineages, thereby reflecting an independent assertion of the respective identities.³¹ In these apostolic lines of succession, two points were fixed. One, was that of Ramanuja. Two, that of Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamunigal. Thus, the ideological context of a well consolidated Vatakalai and Tenkalai lineage in the post-seventeenth century was already laid before this period.

The 'schism' as understood in the colonial period by the historians involved a series of disputes between the Vatakalais and Tenkalais over the temple administration. This feature was also characteristic of the pre-colonial period. Although direct evidence is not available, it can be inferred from the epigraphical as well as textual sources that tensions between various sects and religious leaders existed. Besides, the presence of several prominent leaders in a temple center would hardly encourage peaceful co-existence. However, over a period, the alignments across Sanskritic and Tamil ones were gradually crystallizing into strong sub-sects. The coming of the British and their interactions with the religious institutions led to the reworking of the entire power relations. In the early years of the colonial rule, the British government decided the temple disputes. Perhaps, then the need arose to establish distinct sectarian identities cutting across the regional frontiers based on common interests. Therefore, the Sanskritic affiliations came to be identified as the Vatakalai and the Tamil ones as the Tenkalai.

Today, the Vatakalai-Tenkalai notion of Shrivaishnavism has altered the entire identity pattern of the community. The daily practices of both the sub-sects have too much specificity that has the rational for the assertion of Vatakalai-Tenkalai identity. For instance, the external sect marks (like the *namam*) and other rituals of the respective sects reiterate the differences that strengthen the sectarian affiliations for the Shrivaishnava psyche. However, a problem arises when direct connections are made with the historical situations. For instance, it is assumed that these sub-sects had existed right from the post-Ramanuja period. Second, the assumption that Tenkalais attached secondary importance to caste and Vatakalai stressed on caste injunctions is not correct. The entire history of Shrivaishnavism right from Ramanuja's time indicates the domination of the brahmanical hierarchy, where *varnashramadharm*a was always upheld and readjustments and realignments were made within this framework. Third, Kanchipuram as the center of Sanskritic school (hence Vatakalai) and Shrirangam as the center of Tamil school (hence Tenkalai) is historically over emphasized. Both Kanchi and Shrirangam emerged as major centers of Shrivaishnavism in the post-Ramanuja period. However, the textual references themselves do not clearly account for such associations. Both Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamuni are shown to be influential in both the centers in the biographical narratives of the hagiographies. Therefore, it becomes narrow to attribute the Prabandhic /Tamil

and Vedic/Sanskrit affiliations to Shrirangam and Kanchi. Rather the characterization of Kanchi as the northern center and Shrirangam as the Southern center seems more appropriate.

The modern works on Shrivaiṣṇavism have presented the notion of uniformity, multiplicity and duality as discrete, non-interactive categories. However, as has been attempted to show the various levels of the Shrivaiṣṇava identities were mutually interactive and influencing each other and constantly underwent a transformation. The identities were fluctuating and depended on the context against which they were articulating. Similarly, the duality of the Vatakali and Tenkalai sects that ossified into sub-castes were not exclusive categories. Several overlapping areas between them made the Shrivaiṣṇava identity more complex. Nevertheless, the sense of belonging to one single community was always adhered to and the claim of being the direct descendant of Ramanuja was a major exercise on the part of all the sectarian affiliations of the Shrivaiṣṇava community. There were moments when the sectarian affiliations were muted and the single identity was reasserted.

NOTES

1. Ālkondaville Gōvindāchārya. 1906. *The Life of Rāmānujāchārya. The Exponent of Viśiṣṭādvāita Philosophy*. Madras: S. Murthy & Co; idem, 1982. *The Holy Lives of The Azhvars or The Dravida Saints*. Bombay: Anantacharya Indological Research Institute (Reprint); C.R. Srinivasa Aiyengar. 1908. *The Life and Teachings of Shri Ramanujacharya*. Madras: R.Venkateshwar & Co'; T Rajagopalachariar. 1909. *The Vaishnavite Reformers of India: Critical Sketches of Their Lives and Writings*. Madras: G.A. Natesan and Company; T.A Gopinatha Rao. 1923. Sir Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Sri Vaisnavas. Madras: University of Madras, Government Press; K. Devanathachariar. 1914-15. "Shri Vaishnavism and Its Caste Marks", *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, 5, pp.125-140; V. Rangachari. 1953-58. "Historical Evolution of Shri Vaishnavism in South India", in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. H.Bhattacharya Vol. 4. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, pp.163-185; K.V Raman. 1975. *Shri Varadarajasvami Temple-Kanchi: A Study of Its History, Art and Architecture*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications.
2. Ālkondaville Gōvindāchārya. 1910. "The Ashtadasa Bhedas, or the Eighteen Points of Doctrinal Differences between the Tenganalai (Southerners) and the Vadagalais (Northerners) of the Vishistadvaita Vaishnava School of South India", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*: 1103-112; idem, 1912. "Tenganalai and Vadagalai", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp.714-717; V. Rangachari. 1914-15. "The Successors of Ramanuja and the Growth of Sectarianism among the Shri-

- Vaishnavas”, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, pp.102-136; idem, 1914-15. “The Life and Times of Shri Vedanta Desika”, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, pp. 277-312. 1917; idem, “The History of Shri Vaishnavism. From the Death of Shri Vedanta Desika to the Present Day”, *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 7, 2 (January), pp. 106-118 and 7, 2 (April), pp.197-209.
3. Some of the widely regarded hagiographies or *guruparamparas* are: Garuda Vahana Pandita. *Divyasuricaritam..* (trans. from Hindi by Pandita Madhavacharya).T.A. Sampathakumaracharya and K.K.A. Venkatachari (eds.). 1978. Bombay: Ananthacharya Research Institute; *The Yatirajavaibhavam of Andhrapurna (Life of Ramanuja)* in *The Indian Antiquary, A Journal of Oriental Research* (1909[1985]), Vol.XXXVII, Sir Richard Carnac Temple (ed.), 1872-1933, Delhi: Swati Publication; Pinbalzhgiya Perumal Jiyar. *Arayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam*. Tiru Krishnaswami Ayyangar (ed.), (1968); *Muayirappadi Guruparamparaprabhavam* (Vadakalai) of Tiritiya Brahmatantra Svatantra Parkala Svami, 1968, Lifco: Madras.
 4. For instance, see, Ālkondaville Gōvindāchārya. 1906, op.cit; idem, 1982, op.cit; C.R. Srinivasa Aiyengar. 1908, op.cit; T Rajagopalachariar. 1909, op.cit; V. Rangachari. 1953-58, op.cit.
 5. For details, see, Robert C. Lester. 1994. ‘The Śattada Śrīvaiṣṇvas’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114 (1), pp. 39-53; Burton Stein. 2004. ‘Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects’, in David Lorenzen (ed.), *Religious Movements in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.81-101 [Originally published in James Silverberg (ed.), 1968. *Social Mobility and the Caste System in India: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, pp. 78-94. Paris: Mouton]
 6. Garuda Vahana Pandita. *Divyasuricaritam..* (trans. from Hindi by Pandita Madhavacharya).T.A. Sampathakumaracharya and K.K.A. Venkatachari (eds.). 1978. Bombay: Ananthacharya Research Institute, Chapter 18, *shloka 2*; *The Yatirajavaibhavam of Andhrapurna (Life of Ramanuja)* in *The Indian Antiquary, A Journal of Oriental Research* (1909[1985]), Vol.XXXVII, Sir Richard Carnac Temple (ed.), 1872-1933, Delhi: Swati Publication, *shloka 58*; Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jiyar. *Arayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam*. Tiru Krishnaswami Ayyangar (ed.), (1968), pp.192-8; *Muayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam* (Vadakalai) of Tiritiya Brahmatantra Svatantra Parkala Svami, 1968, pp.95-6
 7. For details, see, Arjun Appadurai. 1981. *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 105-228.
 8. *Kalai* also means language.
 9. In both the centres, both the Vedas as well as the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* are sung on various occasions with great devotion.
 10. Since Kanchipuram was a multi-temple centre- different religious traditions developed. It has been stated that Kanchi emerged as the major centre for various inter-religious theological debates. Consequently, the Shri Vaishnavas had to rely on the Vedic-Upanisadic tradition to establish

- their legitimacy. See Patricia Mumme. 1987. *The Theology of Manavalamamuni: Toward an Understanding of the Tenkalai-Vatakalai Dispute in the Post-Ramanuja Shri Vaisnavism*. Madras: New Era Publications; idem., 1988. *The Shri Vaisnava Theological Dispute: Manavalamamuni and Vedantadesika*. Madras: New Era Publications.
11. One of the well-known historians is V. Rangachari. See footnotes 2 and 3 for complete reference of V. Rangachari' works
 12. V. Rangachari, 1914-15, op. cit., p. 103.
 13. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*. 1919. Nos. 433, 447 and 495. New Delhi: Archeological Survey of India.
 14. Ibid., Nos.347, 354, 363, 379, 381, 382, 383, 421, 462, 475, 479, 499, 531, 586, 587, 588, 649, 650, 651, 651, 655, and 663.
 15. V Varadachari. 1983. *Two Great Acharyas. Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamuni*. Triplicane, Madras: Prof. M. Rangacharya Memorial Trust.
 16. The *Koil Olugu*, p. 142
 17. The *Koil Olugu*, p.46
 18. South Indian Inscriptions, Volume XXIV No.385, 426 and 432.
 19. This information was gathered during the field trip to various Shri vaishnava centres, where I had discussions with several Shri vaishnava *acharyas* and lay devotees.
 20. Arjun Appadorai, 1981, pp 85-86 Appadorai; Arjun, and Carol A. Breckenridge. 1976. "The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution." *Contribution to Indian Sociology* 10,2:187-212.
 21. For instance, *Vadakalai Muayirappati* does not mention the eight disciples of Nathamuni. However, the *Guruparamparasaram* that forms the first chapter of the *Rahasyatrayasaram* mentions the eight disciples. Another texts *Panniyirapati* gives a detailed lineage of Nammalvar and attributes a *kshatriya* status to him. Other texts of the same affiliation do not give such details.

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