

**Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit participated as Guest of Honour at the Book release function "Sri Ranganathaswamy temple, Srirangam: Preserving antiquity for posterity" organised by Chairman, Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam and the Board of Trustees**

Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu participated as guest of honour at the book release function "Sri Ranganathaswamy temple, Srirangam: Preserving antiquity for posterity" organised by Chairman, Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam and the Board of Trustees at the Vivekananda Hall, Anna University, Chennai today (13.07.2019) and addressed the gathering. Hon'ble Vice President of India, Thiru. M. Venkaiah Naidu Ji participated as Chief Guest.

**Hon'ble Governor said,** "It is a pleasure for me to be here to participate in the function at which the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri. Venkaiah Naidu Ji is participating as the Chief Guest and releasing the Coffee Table Book "Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam: Preserving antiquity for posterity". We are all privileged to be having the Hon'ble Vice-President of India on this occasion.

The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple or Thiruvarangam is one of the most illustrious Vaishnava Temples in South India rich in legend religion and history.

The temple is situated on the large island of Sri Rangam bounded by the Kaveri River and Kollidam River. It was planned as a temple town with the Sapta Prakaram design where the sanctum, gopuram, services and living area are co-located in seven concentric enclosures.

Its antiquity is evidenced by the mention found in Tamil literature of the Sangam era including the epic Silapathikaram. The relevant lines translated into English read as follows "On a magnificent cot having a thousand heads spread out, worshipped and praised by many, in an islet surrounded by Kaveri with billowing waves, in the lying posture is the magnificent one, who has Lakshmi residing in his chest".

There is an interesting background that is narrated about the temple. The presiding deity Sri Ranganatha faces south, i.e., towards Sri Lanka. It is said that when Vibhishana accompanied Rama to Ayodhya after the battle in Sri Lanka, Rama gifted him a idol of Maha Vishnu and told him to take it to Lanka without any

intermediate stops. However Vibhshana absent mindedly placed the idol on the ground, at Sri Rangam when he stopped on the way to say his evening prayers. The idol remained transfixed to the ground and the Lord made Sri Rangam, his divine home.

Worship continued uninterruptedly at the temple till 1327, when Sri Rangam was invaded by Malik Kafur, the General of Allauddin Khilji, who wanted to loot the temple and destroy it. The main Deity of the temple was placed safely behind a newly built wall, and a duplicate Deity kept in the front. The smaller festival Deity was taken out and carried to Tirupati, where it was worshipped secretly for many years.

Twelve years later, General Gopanna of the Vijaya Nagara empire, defeated the invaders and restored the city of Sri Rangam to its pristine glory.

The temple has served as the path finder for Indian spirituality since the greatest personalities of Vaishnavism, namely Nathamuni, Ramanujacharya and Vedanta Desikan are closely associated with the shrine.

Sri Ramanuja who lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Common Era was a philosopher par excellence who propagated the Vishishtadvaita tradition of Vedanta. This tradition of Vishishtadvaita along with the Dwaita philosophy of Madhvacharya and the Advaita tradition of Adi Sankara constitute the three main pillars of Vedantic philosophy.

Swami Desikan established the rituals and ceremonies for worship in the temple, which are still in vogue today. In particular, he established the chanting of the Tamil compositions called the Divya-Prabandhams and installed Deities of the twelve Alwar saints for worship in the temple.

It is said that Sri Desika was blessed by Garuda Bhagawan with an icon of Lakshmi Hayagreeva, which he worshipped throughout his life. This moorthi is cherished in the shrine of the Parakaala Matha of Mysore even today.

As Sri Hayagreeva is a moorthi reflected in the Vedas and represents knowledge in all its forms, Sri Vedanta Desika became a master of all arts, crafts and sciences.

The book that is being released today by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, "Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam: preserving antiquity for posterity", commemorates the conservation project undertaken at the temple, detailing both the historical and mythological significance of this ancient shrine as well as the conservation efforts undertaken to restore the temple to its original glory and is

complemented with photographs that can help readers visualise the extensive depth and range of this timely project.

The aim of the conservation project was to restore, conserve, manage, protect and preserve the rich architectural heritage, historicity and original intent of this ancient shrine and to make every space of the temple complex accessible to all devotees to pursue their ritual practice within sanctified precincts as was intended, over five centuries ago. This challenging project, which started in June 2014, was completed in a record time of 16 months and has been recognized with the prestigious UNESCO Award of Merit at the UNESCO-Asia Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, 2017.

I can unhesitatingly say that the conservation project at this temple seems willed by Lord Ranganatha himself, resulting in every member of the team, subsequently, as a dasa, submitting to His divine will to accomplish, with astounding ease and speed, a project of such incredible magnitude.

I extend my best wishes and greetings to the Chairman, Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam and the Board of Trustees for their efforts in preparing the Coffee Table book and for organizing this function. May they be visited with success in all their endeavours”.

On this occasion, Thiru. M. Venkaiah Naidu Ji, Hon'ble Vice President of India, Thiru. D. Jayakumar, Hon'ble Minister for Fisheries, Personnel & Administrative Reforms, Thiru. Sevvoor S. Ramachandran, Hon'ble Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Thiru. S. Gurumurthy, Editor, Thuglak, Srimad Srivaraha Mahadesikan Swamy, Andavan Ashram Srirangam, Srimad Srivensadagopa Sriranganatha Yathindra Mahadesigan Swamy, Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt, Shri Madhurakavi Vanamamalai, Jeeyar of Naguneri Mutt, Thiru. Venu Srinivasan, Chairman of the Board of Trustee, Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple and other dignitaries participated.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai -22

Sd/-

Date : 13.07.2019

Joint Director (PR)