

# **THE FESTIVALS OF TIRUMALA : A HISTORY**

*Author*

**DR. SRIDHAR V. BASAVARAJU**



**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS  
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# **THE FESTIVALS OF TIRUMALA : A HISTORY**

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## **FOREWORD**

The book titled “The Festivals of Tirumala - A History” authored by Dr. Sridhar. V. Basavaraju deals with the historical details related to the festivals and rituals celebrated in the temple of Sri Venkateswara in Tirumala.

His focused interest and fascination led him to take up an in-depth study of the history of each ritual, the origin of the festivals and the duty of the priests who were involved in such religious duties. This helped him to put in writing the details of his research.

The book begins with a chapter on Vedas and Agamas followed by a calendar elaborating on the logistics of how and when to celebrate the festivals.

It is dedicated to chapters on the history of kings who ruled over various periods in South India. This becomes significant as it was they who implemented ornate festivals and continued the tradition set by great saints such as Sri Ramanuja and others. Moreover, it was during their time that many festivals came to limelight. Also, the jewels and valuable ornaments adorning the deities today were gifted by royal dynasties that thrived over centuries.

The author has skillfully demonstrated his expertise in incorporating the essence of earlier works

published by TTD, authored by Sri Sadhu Subrahmanya Sastri, N. Ramesan and other writers into this book.

The contents of the book appear extensive. Such a book would definitely be a source of knowledge to every devotee.

Let the Lord shower His blessings on Dr. Sridhar V. Basavaraju to take up many more such works.

*In the Service of Lord Venkateswara*



**Executive Officer**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.

## PREFACE

The temple of Sri Venkateswara in Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh is considered the richest and most popular temple in the world attracting around 80,000 pilgrims daily. Sri Venkateswara is the self-manifested form of Lord Vishnu. The temple and its antiquity are well known as it is mentioned in the Vedas and Puranas.

The temple of Sri Venkateswara is perhaps best known for its vibrant festivals celebrating the Lord along with his various avataras and past times. The present book, *The Festivals of Tirumala : A History*, written by Sridhar Basavaraju, chronicles the history of these various festivals dating back over 1,000 years. This book will be of tremendous importance to not only historians, administrators and those who are curious to know about the temple practices, but also to the youth and younger generations interested to learn more about the Tirumala temple and the grandeur of South Indian history.

I congratulate Sridhar on this excellent achievement and extend my gratitude to him for conducting this thorough and well researched project. I also convey my deepest appreciation to the artists, Smt Geetha Krishnamurthy and Smt Padmaja Sattiraju for their illustrations and the scholarly reviewers of

this manuscript, Prof. Sujatha and Sriman Archakam Ramakrishna Deekshitulu, Vamsaparamparya Archaka, Srivari Temple, Tirumala.

Finally, I thank TTD Board Member, Smt. Suchitra Ella, for her support in ensuring this work was published by TTD. May Sri Venkateswara shower His blessings on this service of Sridhar and his family.

**- Dr. Akella Vibhishana Sarma**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **The Vedas**

Before exploring the history of the rituals and festivals of Tirumala, an understanding of their foundations is necessary. All Hindu traditions in India find their origins in the Vedas, which are a set of texts developed at least 10,000 years ago. These Vedas are divided into four parts: Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharvana. The four Vedas are further divided into four more parts : Brahmana, Aranyaka, Samhita, and Upanishad. The information contained within the Vedas forms the basis for all Hindu practices and traditions, including those observed in the Tirumala temple. Specifically, many rituals and festivals within the Tirumala temple are derived from the Vedas.

The Taittiriya Upanishadis attributed to the disciples of sage Vaishampayana (~3000 BCE), the narrator of the Mahabharata. This Upanishad, as explained by Adi Sankaracharya, provides instructions on the process of learning and practice of meditation, by which one can ultimately understand the nature of Bhagavan (God). In the Vedas, God is described as Brahman. Brahman's nature is further characterized as Satyam Jnanam Anantam, or truth, knowledge, and infinite vastness, respectively. Each of these terms is a separate and complete sentence and statement, each preceding the word Brahman. Therefore, Satyam Brahman implies unchangeable nature. Jnanam

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Brahman means source of knowledge and the object of our consciousness. Finally, Anantam Brahman means Brahman is infinite and without limits. Therefore, Brahman is immutable, infinite, and the source and goal of knowledge.

Per the Yajur Veda, the formless Brahman is invoked through the medium of fire, or Agni, through an elaborate set of rituals referred to as homams (worship with fire sacrifice). Along with recitation of specific prayers, or mantras, priests offer various items including grains, specially selected wood, and ghee to Agni as a symbolic offering to Brahman. The homam ceremony is intended to impart wisdom amongst performers and to bring contentment to society. The homam is an integral and compulsory aspect of the Vedic form of worship and ubiquitous among rituals performed in Tirumala.

### **The Agamas**

Another set of equally ancient texts derived from the Vedas, the Agamas, form an additional foundation for rituals occurring in Tirumala. The Agamas focus on the practical application of instructions in the Vedas and serve as a reference guide for approaching and understanding Brahman. Three major Agamas are available; one addresses the worship of Siva, the Saiva Agama, and two are focused on Vishnu, the Vaikhanasa and Pancharathra Agamas. In Tirumala, rituals primarily follow the Vaikhanasa traditions, but not exclusively. As will be described later in this book, many SriVaishnava traditions have been adopted over

the centuries. Additionally, Tamil and Telugu cultural customs, secular traditions, and festivals implemented by royal decree, not specifically described in the Vaishnava Agamas, were adopted over the centuries. In this regard, while the core philosophy of Tirumala may follow the Vaikhanasa traditions, all rituals and festivals did not find their origins in this Agama.

### **Vaikhanasa Agama**

The Vaikhanasa Agama is attributed to Vikhanasa Rishi and describes God as both fundamentally formless and as having a form that is Vishnu. Vikhanasa Rishi conveyed his instructions to four disciples, Brighu, Kasyapa, Atri, and Marichi. The writings of these four Rishis total 32 original texts and form the Vaikhanasa Agama. Vishnu is further described as having five manifestations; these forms are Para (the highest form of Vishnu beyond human comprehension) Vyuha (the initial emanations of Vishnu), Vibhava (Avatars or incarnations of Vishnu), Archa (the stone/metallic image, or vighraha) and Antaryami (the atomic form of Vishnu which emanates all living and inanimate objects allowing for their existence). The Vaikhanasa Agama prioritizes the Archa form of Vishnu, as this image is tangible and serves as the object of one's focus during meditation, readily allowing the adherent to gain wisdom in the path toward realizing Brahman.

In addition to Vedic procedures and ceremonies pertaining to the individual (including birth, marriage,

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etc), the Agama has specific instructions on the construction of temples, vigraha installation, and performing worship of the vigrahas (both at home and in the temple). The Agama requires the performance of the homam as part of temple rituals but holds that the worship of the vigraham is of equal importance.

As part of worship of the vigraha, all three Agamas recommend the performance of daily rituals and periodic festivals or utsavas. In the Vaikhanasa Agama, these utsavas are stratified into three categories: Nithyotsavam, Santhyotsavam, and Sraddhotsavam. The Nithyotsavam includes festivals which are required by the Vaikhanasa Agama to be conducted on at least an annual basis. An example of Nithyotsavam is the Brahmotsavam, the most important festival conducted in the temple which celebrates the eternal and unchangeable nature of Brahman. Santhyotsavam festivals are implemented to relieve ill effects on society due to calamitous events including famine, epidemics, other dangers, or adversity attributed to malalignment of celestial bodies (grahapeedam). Festivals implemented by an individual as a show of their devotion and a sign of their gratitude for wealth or prosperity are referred to as Sraddhotsavam. Over the subsequent centuries, many of the festivals which were implemented can be classified as Sraddhotsavam.

In Tirumala, the basic structure of most festivals includes an abhishekam, or ceremonial bathing of a

smaller vighraha housed in the main shrine (often Sri Malayappa Swami, the main processional image), a homam, and procession of the replica vighraha in the four streets surrounding the main temple. As time progressed, the procession became more elaborate with the vighrahas mounted on various vahanas, or vehicles, to reflect revered stories in the Mahabharata, Puranas, or other ancient traditions. Based on the significance of the festival, additional ceremonial procedures may be conducted. As will be described later in this book, many traditions implemented in Tirumala are not directly described in the Vaikhanasa Agama but were instituted due to wishes of kings or prominent donors, most specifically of the Vijayanagar empire.

Per the Vaikhanasa Agama, festivals can be of varying lengths including one (1), three (3), five (5), seven (7), nine (9), nineteen (19), twenty-one (21), or twenty-seven(27) days in length. These can be organized to coincide with the birthday of a king or village elder, or the installation or prathista of the temple's vighraha. Festivals can also be performed monthly, on holy days including Ekadasi or Dwadasi, to coincide with milestones occurring in the sidereal Solar calendar, new moon (Amavasya) or full moon (Pournami). Festivals of five or more days are preceded and followed by one-day ceremonies. Therefore, a five-day festival will be total of seven days, nine-day festivals will total 11 days in length, etc. The preceding 1 day will include Ankurarpanam, or seed sowing, during which nine types of holy seeds are planted in

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clay pots to signify the beginning of the festival. Festivals of five or more days will begin with a Dhvajarohana step, or flag raising, as an invitation to the Hindu pantheon to attend the ceremony. During the Dhvajarohanam, a Bheri, or percussion instrument, is played as an invitation to the Ashtadikpalakas (deities overseeing the eight directions).

The Vaikhanasa Agama states that utsavas performed with faith and devotion will bring prosperity and happiness to the officiants, participants, their families, and villages in which they reside, bestowing them with earthly and heavenly contentment. Therefore, the Vaikhanasa Agama teaches that the worship of the vigraha form of Vishnu is greater than any other religious observance with the performers instructed to conduct ceremonies with the intent of the greater good of the Earth and its inhabitants. Throughout history, donors kept this underlying principle in mind when establishing the most elaborate, thoughtful, and ornate festivals for Sri Venkateswara and for the benefit of His devotees.

### **Sri Vaishnavas**

Adherents of the Pancharathra Agama, known as Sri Vaishnavas, have also left a lasting impact on festivals conducted in Tirumala. Chief among these is Sri Ramanuja, the eleventh century saint, who developed and described the Vishistadvaita philosophy. Ramanuja and his followers are credited with many traditions and customs occurring in

Tirumala. Furthermore, Ramanuja consecrated the Sri Govindarajaswami deity in Tirupati. His disciples and those in his disciplic lineage include the Thallapakam poets, the Acharya Purushas, and the Sanyasins (Pontiffs) of the Pedda Jeeyangar matham, or monastery. Numerous festivals and customs were instituted in Tirumala under the direction and by the donation of the Thallapakam family and Pedda Jeeyangar swamis. Traditions and customs implemented by Sri Vaishnava followers, but not specifically derived from an Agama, were known as Sampradaya festivals. These festivals were adopted as they were reflections of devotion to Sri Venkateswara, and their conduct is not specifically forbidden by the tenets of the Agama.

\* \* \*

## 2. LOGISTICS

### **The Calendar**

Around 200 BCE, South India, including present day Andhra Pradesh, was ruled by the Satavahana dynasty. The most prominent Satavahana ruler was the legendary Salivahana, whose birth serves as the start of the Salivahana Saka, or calendar, in 78 CE. All Tirumala temple inscriptions reference the Salivahana Saka dates. Following the end of the Satavahana era, the Tirumala region came under the rule of their Tamil speaking feudatories, the Pallava kings, who ruled until approximately 900 CE. The Pallavas left a lasting impression on Tirumala that is evident even today. The Chola dynasty, which replaced the Pallavas around 900 CE, continued to propagate the Pallava's influence in Tirumala.

The Tamil kingdoms adhered to a sidereal solar calendar which is still used to set many festival dates in Tirumala. In this system, a calendar year and the constituent 12 months occur based on the sun's transmigration compared to the motion of planets on a fixed background of stars along an imaginary 360° belt. This belt is further divided into twelve 30° parts corresponding to a raasi or Zodiac. The movement (or Sankranti) from one raasi to the next marks the start of a month.

**Table 2.1 : Tamil sidereal solar calendar and corresponding Western calendar and Zodiac**

<b>Tamil month</b>	<b>Corresponding Gregorian month</b>	<b><i>Raasi</i></b>	<b>Zodiac</b>
<i>Chittirai</i>	April- May	<i>Mesha</i>	Aries
<i>Vaikasi</i>	May-June	<i>Vrushabha</i>	Taurus
<i>Aani</i>	June-July	<i>Mithuna</i>	Gemini
<i>Aadi</i>	July-August	<i>Karkataka</i>	Cancer
<i>Aaavani</i>	August- September	<i>Simha</i>	Leo
<i>Purattaasi</i>	September- October	<i>Kanya</i>	Virgo
<i>Aippasi</i>	October- November	<i>Thula</i>	Libra
<i>Karthikai</i>	November- December	<i>Vrischika</i>	Scorpio
<i>Maargazhi</i>	December- January	<i>Dhanur</i>	Sagittarius
<i>Thai</i>	January- February	<i>Makara</i>	Capricorn
<i>Maasi</i>	February- March	<i>Khumba</i>	Aquarius
<i>Panguni</i>	March - April	<i>Mina</i>	Pisces

The year is separated into two halves or Ayana periods which begin with the winter (Makara Sankranti) and summer (Karkataka Sankranti) solstices, respectively. These are referred to as Uttarayana which begins with the winter solstice and Dakshinayana which commences with the summer solstice. Additionally, two Vishu Sankrantis correspond to the vernal (Chittirai vishu) and autumnal (Aippasi vishnu) equinoxes. These four days are holy per the Tamil traditions.

### **Nakshatras**

In addition to the Solar movements, many Hindu dates are measured relative to lunar motions which are calculated based on the moon's 360° circle against a fixed set of stars. This movement takes ~27.3 days and is the foundation for the Sidereal lunar calendar. The 360° circle is divided into 27 equivalent parts consisting of 13°20' segments as the moon completes an orbit. Each segment is referred to as a Nakshatra. Festivals are often coordinated to start and end during specific Nakshatras. The 27 Nakshatras are : Ashvini, Bharani, Krittika, Rohini, Mrigashira, Arudra, Punarvasu, Pushya, Ashlesha, Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni, Hasta, Chitra, Svati, Vishakha, Anuradha, Jyeshtha, Mula, Purva, Ashada, Uttara Ashada, Sravana, Dhanistha, Satabhisha, Purva Bhadrapada, Uttara Bhadrapada, and Revati.

### **Ensuring essential ingredients**

#### **Milk**

The Vedas describe the utmost sanctity of the cow and mandate its role in religious observances and festivals. In Hindu traditions, the cow is further deified as a descendent of Kamadhenu, a celestial bovine described as belonging to the Rishi Vasistha, a prominent figure in the Vedic period. According to the Vedas, Kamadhenu provided milk and milk products for use in the sage's homam ceremonies. Milk is described as enabling wisdom, intelligence, strength and vitality to those who partake. Food offerings, or

naivedyam, to celestial figures are performed through the medium of ghee which is offered to God, accompanied by the recitation of mantras, through the homam. In addition to ghee, the Yajur Veda places an importance on offering payasam (a sweet milk + rice preparation) into the homam as both equaling and symbolizing all other forms of food which should be offered to the various Hindu gods. The Vedas specify that only cow milk is suitable for use in rituals and festivals. In addition to the obligatory use of milk in homam ceremonies, the Agamas state that abhishekam must include milk contained within silver or gold vessels, which are then used to bathe the vigraha. To conform to these Vedic and Agamic rules, milk was required in large quantities in order for festivals and rituals to occur in Tirumala.

Following Samavai's donations, subsequent offerings by the Chola rulers occurred in 1111 CE, when the first recorded offering of milk and yogurt appear in stone inscriptions. To ensure that a daily provision of fresh milk would be available, in 1259 CE, 33 cows and one bull were donated to the Tirumala temple. A similar donation of 32 cows and 1 bull was also made to the Sri Govindarajaswami temple during this period. By the 1300s, a herd consisting of dozens, if not hundreds, of cows was likely present in Tirumala in service of Sri Venkateswara. These first milk, yogurt, and cow donations recorded in the inscriptions set a precedent which was periodically replicated over the

next several centuries. These cow and milk donations ensured that subsequent festivals could be endowed.

### **Naamam**

Forehead markings are common across Hindus throughout the Indian subcontinent. The basic structure of these forehead markings includes white colored vertical or horizontal lines along with red or yellow coloring. The followers of the Vaishnava Agamas place only vertical markings on the forehead referred to by the Sanskrit term, 'Urdhva Pundram.' Urdhva means upward and Pundram means marking and collectively consists of three lines extending from the starting point of the nose to the superior aspect of the forehead. The central line, or Sri Choornam is red or yellow and represents a light or Goddess Lakshmi. The two lines on either side are white colored and represent the feet of Vishnu. The adherent applies this symbol as an insignia of keeping Sri Vishnu and Lakshmi on his forehead. The vertical marking can be a Y shape, as worn by followers of the Thengalai Sri Vaishnava sect or a U shape adopted by the Vadagalai Sri Vaishnava sect. These shapes appear to have evolved due to differences in interpretation of the starting point of the nose. The Vadagalai interpret this area as the nasal bridge while the Thengalai view this as the nostrils and extend the white color from the tip of the nose to the most superior aspect of the forehead.

As Urdhva means upward, the adherent reminds himself that Vishnu and Lakshmi will inhabit both the

forehead and consciousness until death, at which time the soul will rise upward from the mortal body to Vaikunta, or the heavenly abode of Vishnu. Further signifying the human body as a 'temple' intended to gain knowledge of God and ultimately acquire moksha, Vaishnavas place the Urdhva Pundram across 12 sites on the body, including the neck, arms and torso. The Urdhva Pundram worn by Vaishnavas consists of a specific white colored clay or thiruman. Thiruman is found in holy places in India such as Ayodhya, the home of Rama, and Melkote, Karnataka, and Jaderi, Tamil Nadu.

### **Camphor**

While Thiruman and Sri Choornam are used to color the forehead of individuals, the Urdhva Pundram of the Vishnu vigraha does not typically consist of these materials. Rather, the Agamas dictate that the worship of the vigraha must include sugandha dravya or natural, fragrant, and pure materials. These include cardamom, cloves, sandalwood, saffron and nutmeg. Similarly, the Urdhva Pundram applied to the forehead of Vishnu must also consist of a sugandha dravya. Therefore, the Urdhva Pundram, which is most famously applied to Sri Venkateswara and covers almost his entire face is a white material referred to as karpooram, or camphor which is a volatile and flammable compound. Karpooram is derived from the bark and leaves of the genus *Cinnamomum* which occurs across the Western Ghats and Eastern

Himalayas and is ubiquitous in worship conducted for Sri Venkateswara. The material is included in food offerings, theertham (or ceremonial water), abhishekam water, as harathi (or ceremonial light where karpooram is lit on fire and offered to Sri Venkateswara), and finally as the Urdhva Pundram.

The first inscriptional reference to karpooram occurs in ~1250 CE, though this specifies karpooram light offered to Sri Venkateswara. In 1379 CE, karpooram appears to have been integrated into more widely applicable use in the Tirumala temple, based on inscriptional evidence, though this does not specify use for the face. The first mention of karpooram for the face occurs in 1435, suggesting that the now famous Urdhva Pundram may have evolved to its present form in the 1400s. Subsequent implementation of festivals in Tirumala included itemized allocation of donor funds for the procurement of karpooram suggesting that its use was viewed as compulsory. In addition to karpooram, the use of sandalwood or chandanam is an ancient custom in the Tirumala temple, with inscriptional evidence confirming its inclusion in the 1200s.

\* \* \*

### **3. STRUCTURE OF DONATIONS AND FOOD OFFERINGS**

#### **Methodology of Donations**

Inscriptions suggest that pilgrims were not expected to bear any costs associated with conducting a festival in the temple. Rather, the establishment of festivals in Tirumala followed a specific precedent. Donors endowed the conduct of festivals through land grants where the procurement of every material and all other expenses required to perform a festival were derived from the income from donations. The first example of such itemized donations is found in an intact inscription from 1380 in conjunction with the Brahmotsavam festivals. Throughout the Vijayanagar period, which lasted from ~1380 to ~1635, inscriptions describe the extent to which donors in collaboration with the temple administration, ensured that grants were appropriately allocated for intended purposes and festivals were sufficiently funded.

Donor funding included specific instructions on food offering (naivedya) per the preference of the donor and the traditions of the temple (Table 3.1). These included rice, milk, yogurt, butter, spices, vegetables, lentils, and sugar for rice preparations and various sweets. Fruits, including sugar cane, jackfruit, coconuts, bananas and mangoes were procured and offered in large quantities.

Food offerings were generally derived from rules set forth within the Vaishnava Agamas. The Vaishnava Agamas broadly categorize cooked food offerings into Anna prasadam (rice preparations) and Bhakshya (solid foods). Iterations of rice offerings can include :

- 1) Suddannam (plain rice and ghee), 2) Sharkarannam (Rice, ghee, coconut, water, saffron, cardamom, bananas, raisins), 3) Gudannam (Rice, jaggery, milk), 4) Mudhgannam (Rice, Moong dal, salt, ghee), 5) Tintrinyannamu (Rice, tamarind, cumin, mustard, rice, salt, Channa dal, asafoetida), 6) Dadhyodanam (Rice, yogurt, ghee, black pepper, mustard, dried ginger, coconut, salt), 7) Tilannam (rice, sesame, ghee, salt), 8) Mashannam (rice, urad dal, ghee, salt), 9) Kulutannam (rice, pigeon pea, salt, ghee), 10) Payasam (Rice (or wheat grains), milk, sugar), 11) Kadamba Lehiyam (Rice and Lehiyam (a liquid including tamarind, salt, vegetables, black pepper, ghee, asafoetida, Channa dal)).

Bhakshya include: 1) Mashapupam (fried Urad dal, cumin, black pepper), 2) Gudapupam (fried wheat or rice flour, cardamom, jaggery/sugar), 3) Pruthukam (items made from rice flour and/or Channa dal flour, which can be supplemented with jaggery/sugar).

Using these Agama recommendations as a template, donors instructed specific naivedyas to occur during festivals occurring in the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. While many of these items were directly derived from the Agamas, some reflected local customs.

**Table 3.1 : Some notable food offerings (Naivedyam) mentioned in inscriptions of the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples**

Tamil Name (from inscription)	Telugu	Comment
<b>Rice offerings</b>		
Thirupponnakam*	Pongali (now commonly made with yellow moong)	A rice preparation consisting of rice+ghee+green moong; Some inscriptions further describe this offered along with yogurt+vegetable side dishes
Matrai* <sup>2</sup>	Suddannamu	Plain rice (with ghee)
Tirukkanamadhu	Guddanamu	Sweet rice consisting of ghee + jaggery
Akkali	_____	A sweet Pongal (rice + dal) prepared with palm sugar
Puliyogarai*	Pulihora	Spicy rice preparation including tamarind
Ulundogarai	Minapapindi Pulihora	Rice preparation like pulihara but made with Ulundu (urad dal)
Dadhyodanam*	Dadyodanam	Yogurt rice with spices
Payasam*	Payasam	Sweet rice and milk
Chakarai pongal*	Chakara Pongali	Sweet rice+green moong+ jaggery
Ellu-ogarai	Nuvvulannam	A savory rice made with black sesame seed
Kadugu Ogarai	Aavalannam	Spicy mustard rice

<b>Tamil Name (from inscription)</b>	<b>Telugu</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Pori	Maramaralu	Puffed rice (mixed with lemon juice, turmeric, ghee)
Aval	Atukulu	Flattened rice (prepared with coconut, black pepper, ghee)
<b>Other offerings</b>		
Appam*	Appalu	Rice jaggery mixed fried sweet
Vadai*	Vada	Crispy, fried lentil fritter made with black urad+ghee+ginger+black pepper+cumin
Dosai*	Dosa	Thick pan-fried savory preparation of soaked rice/lentils/spices
Murukku*	Janthikalu	Crispy savory rice fried rice flour item (fried in ghee)
Manoharam* <sup>3</sup>	Manoharam	Sweet ball made of crushed thenkuzhal murukku in jaggery syrup
Manipparuppu urundai	Pesala Sunni Undalu	Sweet moong dal ball (slightly roasted with jaggery)
Ellu Undai	Nuvvundalu	Sweet ball made with sesame seeds, jaggery and cardamom powder
Kunuku	Punugulu	Fried fritter made of soaked rice/dal and spices
Iddali	Idli	Savory fermented steamed rice cake with black urad
Paruppuviyal	Pappu Guggilu	Spicy black dal fried preparation

<b>Tamil Name (from inscription)</b>	<b>Telugu</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Godhi	Godhuma Rava Laddu	Sweet wheat flour (with green moong) ball
Seedai	Venna Undalu	crispy rice ball
Sukhiyan*	Poornam Boorelu	Sweet stuffed fried fritter
Panyaram	Bellam Ponganalu	Pan-fried green moong + coconut dumpling with jaggerymade in a specific pan
Poruvilangai Urundai	---	Sweet multigrain ball including coconut pieces
Sambhara-el	---	Spiced and fried sesame seeds
Kanda Sakkarai	Kalakanda	Boiled and crystallized sugar candy (made with sugar cane)
Bhetanikai	----	A white bean preparation
Kalichchakkay	Vakkayya Pachadi	A sour fruit (carandas) chutney
<b>Combination offerings</b>		
Alankara Taligai: Porikkari-amudu; kattukkari- amudu; milk; rasa amudu; butter milk; ambili		Vegetable side dishes, Kootu, Pachadi (chutney), milk, Rasam, Buttermilk, Ambili (prepared from millet, flour, jaggery); these foods accompany rice
<b>Liquid items</b>		
Mangai Paal	Mamidi Payasam	Sweet gravy with mango and jackfruit; especially relevant for Nammazwar birthday

Tamil Name (from inscription)	Telugu	Comment
Paledu-kulambu	—	Thick boiled milk with cream + ghee + sugar+ cardamom
Pal Kulambu	Kobbari Pulusu	Coconut milk, vegetable gravy side dish
Mor	Majjiga	Buttermilk
Panakam*	Panakamu	Water+jaggery+cardamom

- \* These items are currently included among modern offerings. The remaining items are no longer included among Naivedyams
- 1 The famous Tirupati laddu is absent from inscriptions as it was not introduced as a prasadam until 1964.
  - 2 Inscriptional evidence suggests that Matrai was a plain rice offering which corresponds to Suddanam. The modern iteration of Matrai refers to Matrannamu (rice, yogurt, butter, dried ginger powder)
  - 3 The present day Manoharam does not follow the same description as the historical offering

In addition to food offerings, donors ensured the availability of materials required for homam ceremonies. These included ghee, wood, and other items that are traditionally offered into the homam. Donors directed that funds should be used to procure items related to the abhishekam and subsequent alankaram, or decoration, of the utsava vigraha including cloth, sesame oil, saffron turmeric, honey, chandanam, karpooram and Kasturi. Donations also

included provisions for woven baskets, clay pots for storage and cooking, brass vessels, and mats for seating. Finally, the donor was expected to ensure adequate funds were available to pay all staff and functionaries who were required to conduct a festival. These include artisans (including those who made clay pots, mats, baskets, and vessels), carpenters, and repair workers. Classical dancers and musicians were integral members of festivals. During the Vijayanagar era in particular, several donors earmarked funds for these artists to perform for Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami. Finally, a proportion of income for each festival was allocated to ensure appropriate reimbursement to priests, Veda parayanadhars, and Jeeyangar matham functionaries. This context in which donors ensured the availability of items is essential to understanding the subsequent establishment of festivals in Tirumala. From 1380 onwards, leveraging donor funds was instrumental to the expansion in the number and scope of festivals occurred in both the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples.

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#### **4. SAMAVAI, THE CHOLAS, AND YADAVARAYAS**

The first structure built to house the vigraha, or stone image of Sri Venkateswara, is thought to have been constructed by the South Indian king, Thondaman, around 2,000 years ago. It is accepted to be the self-manifested form of Vishnu, with no known human sculptor to whom its origin can be attributed. The antiquity of Tirumala and Sri Venkateswara is widely accepted to date back thousands of years. The image of Sri Venkateswara is mentioned in multiple Puranas. Tirumala also appears in the ancient Tamil literary work, Cilappatikaram (~500 BCE - ~300 CE). However, it was not until several hundred years following the construction of the first temple that festival worship of Sri Venkateswara is documented in an inscription on the temple walls. In 614 CE, Princess Samavai's donation to the Tirumala temple became the foundation for the next >1,000 years of tradition.

Samavai, the daughter of a Pallava minister serving a Chola king, married another Pallava and developed a deep devotion to Sri Venkateswara. Details of her life, including the origins of her devotion to Sri Venkateswara, are unknown. However, inscriptional evidence suggests that she was a prominent, wealthy, and powerful member of the ruling class of South India. The Pallavas are famous for their

devotion to Vishnu and are credited with the construction of many Vishnu temples. One of these temples is the Sundaravarada Perumal temple in Uttaramerur, Tamil Nadu (~750 CE), which was built in strict accordance with Vaikhanasa Agama tradition. This temple provides strong evidence that Vaishnava traditions to which the Pallavas adhered followed the Vaikhanasa Agama, even though this dynasty also identified with the Pancharatra Agama. The strong connection between both the Pallava and Tirumala traditions is evident.

No inscriptional information is available about temple festivals or rituals which may have been conducted in Tirumala prior to Samavai. With Samavai's donation of Bhoga Srinivasa, a small silver replica of Sri Venkateswara, daily rituals began. Additionally, Samavaideeded agricultural land to the Tirumala temple, with the instruction that revenue should be tax free and used for Sri Venkateswara.

### **Samavai's Donations**

In addition to the image of Bhoga Srinivasa and the accompanying priceless ornaments, the offerings by Samavai are grouped into two categories: 1) daily or regular practices and 2) festivals. The first category includes regularized food offerings (prasadam) in Tirumala. Fournali (1 nali ~ 3 pounds/total ~12 pounds) of cooked rice were offered to Sri Venkateswara daily. In addition, a deepam, or ghee-based lamp, was lit daily and shined perpetually inside

the sanctum. To celebrate the commencement of Uttarayana, Dakshinayana, and the two Equinox festivals, a ceremonial bath called thirumanjanam was conducted for Sri Venkateswara. The second category, or festivals, includes two Brahmotsavams. To coincide with the celebration of the birthday of Sri Venkateswara, the first Brahmotsavam was held in Purattasi for Bhoga Srinivasa. This Brahmotsavam was held for nine days with a preceding Ankurarpanam ceremony. A second Brahmotsavam for Bhoga Srinivasawas also instituted in Margali for seven days (again preceded by an Ankurarpanam) culminating on Mukkoti Dvadasi. The inscriptions provide no further description of what ceremonies were conducted on the remaining days of either of these Brahmotsavams. In the Vaishnava traditions, on Vaikunta Ekadasi, the day preceding Mukkoti Dvadasi, the gates to Vishnu's celestial abode, Vaikunta, are open. The faithful believe that visitors to Tirumala are granted moksha (salvation from the cycle of birth and death) by seeing Sri Venkateswara on that day.

The traditions founded by Samavaise set a precedent for the next 1,000 years of worship in Tirumala. Recognizing that the sustainability of her donations depended on the future generations, Samavai added a plea for protection by the Sri Vaishnavas and offered to allow those who protected her charity to rest their feet on her head.

**Table 4.1 : The first Tirumala rituals and festivals as implemented by Samavai, 614 CE**

	<b>Ritual or Festival</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Daily</b>	1. <i>Naivedyam</i> : 4 nali rice	
	2. Perpetual <i>deepam</i>	
<b>Periodic</b>	1. <i>Ayana Sankranti thirumanjanam</i>	Two per year
	2. <i>Vishu Sankranti thirumanjanam</i>	Two per year
<b>Annual</b>	1. <i>Purattasi</i> Brahmotsavam	<i>Ankurarpanam</i> + 9 day festival
	2. <i>Margali</i> Brahmotsavam	7 day festival culminating on <i>Mukkoti Dvadasi</i>

### **Cholas and Yadavarayas**

As the temple was renovated or repaired, some walls were demolished and rebuilt. As a result, early inscriptions from the Pre-Vijayanagar (prior to 1387) appear to be incomplete or otherwise damaged. Therefore, the description of early festivals is absent. However, during the Chola period and under the rule of the Chola affiliates, the Yadavarayas, several important festivals were established. In 1254, the Chola king, Vijaya Gandagopaladevar established a third Brahmotsavam festival in Tirumala, occurring

in the Tamil Chittirai month. This inscription provides no further description of the length or ceremonial steps of this Brahmotsavam or why this month was chosen. However, we can infer that the Chittirai month may have either coincided with the birthday of the king or commemorated his ascendance to the throne. Similarly, sometime during 1209-1263, another Brahmotsavam was established during the Tamil Panguni month. A subsequent inscription from ~1250-1291 CE characterizing offerings of rice, sesame oil, and sandal wood paste provides further evidence of the importance of the Brahmotsavam festivals in Tirumala.

Under the rule of Tiruvenkatanatha, another Yadavaraya ruler, a fifth annual Brahmotsavam festival was established ~1300-1330 in the month of Aadi. While the length and specific ceremonial steps are again omitted, the inscriptions provide unique insight into the administration of the temple and management of donations. Tiruvenkatanatha Yadavaraya designated several villages as sarvamanya, or tax free in perpetuity, from which agricultural revenue would be directed to the Temple to ensure the sustainability of the Aadi Brahmotsavam. Along with the Brahmotsavam, daily and festival food offerings were also established. The reverence that the Chola and Yadavaraya rulers had for the Sri Vaishnava philosophy is apparent in that the Aadi Brahmotsavam inscription also instructs that food offerings should

be sufficient to feed 32 Sri Vaishnavas. As with Samavai, Tiruvenkatanatha Yadavaraya begs later generations of Sri Vaishnavas to protect his offering to ensure the continuation of this Brahmotsavam.

### **Tulabharam**

The Puranas form a third body of Hindu literature which guide adherents and serve as an additional foundation for festivals occurring in Tirumala. The Puranas are composed in Sanskrit and are dedicated to various gods, containing thematic stories and legends about the activities of the Hindu deities. Many stories attributed to Vishnu are contained within the Bhagavata, Vishnu, or Varaha Puranas. Within these Puranas are stories of the Avatara manifestations of Vishnu. In the Padma Purana appears a story of Krishna and his wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama. In the story, Satyabhama gives away her beloved husband to the sage, Narada, and then attempts to win him back through “Tulapurusha dhaanam”, The term refers to a donation where a person is placed one side of a balance, and offerings of equivalent weight are placed on the other. In the Padma Purana story, Satyabhama offers gold equaling the weight of Krishna.

This story has pervaded the Hindu conscience across India for centuries. The Tulabharam practice is observed across temples in India, in which priceless items (e.g. gold) equivalent to the weight of the donors

are offered to the presiding deity of Vishnu. These temples include the ancient Dwarakadisha Krishna temple in Gujarat, Sri Narasimha temple in Sholingur, Tamil Nadu, and the Oppiliappan Vishnu temple in Kumbhakonam, Tamil Nadu. In Tirumala, the first mention of the Tulabharam practice appears in ~1209-1262, when the Yadavaraya king, Vira Narasimha, offered gold equivalent to his own weight to Sri Venkateswara as gratitude for victory in battle. This offering was used to begin the gold plating of the dome of Sri Venkateswara's temple in Tirumala.

### **Hunting Festival**

In ~1340, Ranganatha, another Yadavaraya king, established an Agama-based festival known by the Tamil name, Padiya vettai or Parveta Utsavam. This appears to be the first festival other than a Brahmotsavam implemented in Tirumala. Other than the Purattaasi Brahmotsavam, as will be described later in this book, all Brahmotsavams were subsequently discontinued over time. However, the Parveta Utsavam has continued to the present. While the inscription describing this event is damaged, this festival initially appears to have occurred in the Aavani month (August-September).

This celebratory festival is based on the Agama description of two ceremonies referred to as "Mrugayothsavam" and "Pranayakalhothsavam." The

Mrugayothsavam is a symbolic festival in which Vishnu is depicted as mounting a vahana and hunting wild animals. This festival represents the protection that God provides to his devoted subjects from dangers. In the Pranayakalhothsavam, Vishnu returns late from the hunt and encounters the Goddess Lakshmi, who questions him about his late arrival. The Parveta Utsavam represents only the Mrugayothsavam portion of the two Agama hunting festivals and includes the processional image of Sri Venkateswara mounted on a golden Tiruchi vahana while the temple priests carry a golden spear held in throwing stance.

### **Vasanthotsavam**

In the Vaikhanasa tradition, while God is ultimately described as Brahman, the formed manifestation, Vishnu, possesses attributes allowing for a personal connection with his devotees. As such, the devotees are recommended to revere Vishnu as one would a king or loved one. In India, various fragrant flowers bloom in the spring season, or Vasantha. The Agamas recommend the performance of a festival, termed Vasanthotsavam, where fragrant flowers and herbs are presented for the pleasure of Vishnu and to ensure his comfort and enjoyment. In Tirumala, the modern festival includes a thirumanjanam and procession of the processional vigraha through the streets surrounding the temple.

A powerful Yadavaraya military chief, Sri Narayanar, attended a Vasanthotsavam festival in Tirumala in 1360 where he deeded cattle for the provision of ghee in the Tirumala temple. The inscription suggests that the Vasanthotsavam festival was already occurring in the temple, therefore dating the first Vasanthotsavam to at least 1360. Complete details of the ceremonial steps of this Vasanthotsavam are not available in the inscriptions. As this was also considered a Sraddhotsavam, the festival could be conducted at any time of the year and could include fragrant flowers and herbs not only limited to those blooming in the spring season. Therefore, as time progressed, an additional Vasanthotsavam festival was added to the annual calendar in Tirumala.

**Table 4.2 : Tirumala festivals as occurring ~ 1360 C.E.**

	<b>Ritual or festival</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Daily	1. <i>Naivedyam</i> : 4 nali rice	
	2. Perpetual <i>deepam</i>	
Periodic	1. <i>Ayana Sankranti thirumanjanam</i> 2. <i>Vishu Sankranti thirumanjanam</i> 3. <i>Tulabharam</i>	Two per year Two per year First occurrence ~1209-1262
Annual	1. <i>Purattasi Brahmotsavam 614 CE</i>	<i>Ankurarpanam</i> + 9 day festival
	2. <i>Margali Brahmotsavam 614 CE</i>	7 day festival culminating on <i>Mukkoti Dvadasi</i>
	3. <i>Chittirai Brahmotsavam 1254 CE</i>	
	4. <i>Panguni Brahmotsavam ~1209-1263</i>	
	5. <i>Aadi Brahmotsavam ~1300-1330 CE</i>	Prioritizes the feeding of Sri Vaishnavas as part of the festival
	<i>Parveta Utsavam ~1340 CE</i>	First festival that was not a <i>Brahmotsavam</i>
	<i>Vasanthotsavam ~1360 CE</i>	

## **5. THE VIJAYANAGAR ERA- AN OVERVIEW**

From ~1336 to ~ 1638, the Tirumala temple experienced extraordinary patronage under the rule of the Vijayanagar empire. This empire extended across both South India and much of Eastern India, and its influence extended throughout not only India but also Asia and Europe. The empire prospered due to agriculture and lucrative trade in spices, silk, and other commodities. The empire retained a complex governance structure, advanced system of levies and taxation, security and surveillance apparatus, and one of the largest standing armies in the world. Much has been written about the Vijayanagar empire, though here only details relevant to the Tirumala temple will be discussed.

The Vijayanagar empire was divided into four separate dynasties, all founded by devout Hindu rulers. First came the Sangama dynasty, established in ~1336 by Harihara I and Bukka I. These two brothers along with their three other brothers, Kampa, Marappa, and Muddappa, led a conquest to liberate south India from Muslim occupation and aggression. The Sangama dynasty lasted until approximately 1470 and reached its peak under the rule of Devaraya II (~1419-1445). Control of the Vijayanagar Empire then came under the Saluva dynasty, which lasted until ~1505. The Saluva dynasty's greatest ruler was Saluva Narasimha,

who is credited as one of the main benefactors of the Tirumala temple. A coup was orchestrated in ~1505, when a regent ruler, Vira Narasimha II, arranged the assassination of the final Saluva king (Narasimha II) and established the Tuluva dynasty. From 1505-1542, the Vijayanagar empire and Hindu rule in South India reached its most prosperous era. Vira Narasimha's brother, Krishnadevaraya, became the supreme emperor and ruled from 1509-1530. Krishnadevaraya's offerings to Sri Venkateswara are unparalleled. Following his death, his brother, Achyutaraya ruled for ~12 years. Under Achyutaraya, the temple continued to experience great patronage and expansion of festivals. Finally, in 1542, Krishnadevaraya's son-in-law, Aliya Ramaraya, established the Aravidu dynasty which ruled over a gradually declining empire that finally collapsed around 1650.

Despite the occasional chaos, unstable succession plans, and near constant wars with neighboring states, all the rulers during the Vijayanagar era were firmly devoted to Sri Venkateswara. They viewed their legitimacy as granted by Sri Venkateswara and reciprocated their gratitude with extraordinary support to the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples.

During the Vijayanagar era, festivals were often founded by a single donor who would allocate one or more villages from which a share of agricultural income was relinquished to the temple authorities (or Sthanattars). These managers under took the

development of irrigation systems in donated villages resulting in increased agricultural yield. In these scenarios, the village cultivators benefitted financially due to overall increased yield, even after relinquishing some revenue to the temple. In other instances, cash was deposited into the temple treasury to endow a festival. The temple accountants who managed the treasury retained immense power and themselves became great benefactors.

Funds were used to conduct the festival per the wishes and directions of the donor. Once a festival was established, with few exceptions, the event continued annually. Additional donors ensured the sustainability of festivals by allocating funding for food offerings to occur during specific events. Occasionally, subsequent donors granted additional villages to ensure the solvency of a festival that became financially unstable. Donors constructed pavilions, or mandapams, for the utsava vigrahas to halt during processions and receive food offerings. Dozens of mandapams are mentioned in inscriptions.

In addition to temple accountants and Jeeyangars, the Acharya Purushas maintained a watchful eye over the conduct of festivals in both the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. The influence of the Acharya Purushas in Tirumala and Tirupati cannot be overstated. These Sri Vaishnava resident scholars served as gurus for many temple donors and made notable donations themselves. They ensured that

festivals were conducted appropriately and increased the base of adherents within Tirupati and across the region. Many Acharya Purushas were unparalleled scholars who made profound literary contributions. Their names occur in several inscriptions describing festivals in which donors demonstrate their reverence to the Acharya Purushas by allocating shares of food offerings to them.

Some notable Acharya Purushas of the Vijayanagar era included the Prathivadibhayankaram family whose patriarch, Sri Annan composed the Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatham. Annan's son was also a respected guru. The Paravasthu family, including Paravasthu Annan, were notable in the 1530's. Their disciples made donations in support of several festivals, ensuring their sustainability. Bhavanacharya appears in the 1500s as a preceptor who arranged for the establishment of a Pallavotsavam festival. Finally, Tirumalai Kumara Thathacharya (a member of the Tolapacharyulu Acharya Purusha family) reinvigorated the Aippasi Brahmotsavam in 1583, as it appeared to have otherwise lost patronage during the turmoil that ensued after the death of Aliya Ramaraya.

Inscriptions containing donor details and instructions on funding allocations included a plea to subsequent generations to preserve donations and continue the offerings as intended. Future custodians of the temple and Sri Vaishnavas were asked to protect

these donations. Those who would choose not to preserve these endowments were given dark reminders, perhaps best encapsulated by inscriptions directed by Krishnadevaraya in 1513 and 1514. “Those that are guilty of this sacrilege shall be liable to the sin of killing one’s own parents and cows at the banks of Ganga. To protect and carry on charity yields double the merit of the gift. By misappropriating other’s gifts, one’s own gift becomes fruitless. Of the two acts of giving and protecting the gift, the latter is far more meritorious than the former. By gift one attains Svarga, while by protecting one reaches everlasting heaven.” As will be explained, these warnings were not heeded in the subsequent years.

The following chapters will focus on festivals conducted throughout the Vijayanagar era in the Tirumala temple, and to a lesser extent, the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. The inscriptions reveal a stark diversity among donors during the Vijayanagar period. These festivals were sometimes deeded by kings and their immediate family members, but the majority were established through the donations of other individuals. Additionally, the transition of benefactor status from one prominent family to another was crucial in providing continuity of patronage to the temple. This evolution provides a valuable glimpse into the Tirumala community and the structure of South Indian society during the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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## **6. BRAHMOTSAVAMS AND VAHANAS (614-1638 CE)**

In the Agamas, the most significant festival occurring in the temple is the Brahmotsavam. The commonly held belief is that the Brahmotsavam signifies a festival where Brahma serves as the officiant of a multi-day festival to Sri Vishnu. However, this perception is not consistent with the Agama description of the event. The Agamas require that the Brahmotsavam is obligatorily held on at least an annual basis and focuses on the worship of unlimited and unquantifiable Brahmanaspect of Sri Vishnu. The festival is therefore called Brahmotsavam. The occurrence of this ceremony is believed to bless the performers, the village, and kingdom with plentiful crops and prosperity. In the Pancharathra Agama, the Brahmotsavam is further described as the festival that Sri Narayana narrates to Brahma as being capable of absolving the performer of reactions to the most heinous sins and providing moksha. The Vaikhanasa Agama requires that during the Brahmotsavam festival, the residents should not leave the village, no worship to other deities can be conducted, and no other celebratory events including marriages, can be performed. While the Agamas recommend the Brahmotsavam should be conducted for 27 days, due to the relative restrictions placed on the performance of other activities, the Brahmotsavams in Tirumala were generally held for nine to thirteen days.

As described in the introduction, the Brahmotsavam is preceded by an Ankurarpanam, or seed sowing ceremony, adding at least one day to each festival. Historically, an additional day was added following the event to designate a rest period, or Vidayarri, for Sri Venkateswara and the temple functionaries. Therefore, a seven or nine-day Brahmotsavam would be nine or 11 days in length. As the Vijayanagar era progressed, some Brahmotsavams were conducted over a 12- or 13-day period (from Ankurarpanam to Vidayarri). The Brahmotsavam begins with a Dhwajarahana ceremony where a flag with a Garuda insignia is raised. Since Garuda serves as the vehicle of Vishnu, the Dhwajarahana symbolizes the belief that Garuda will notify the celestials of the festival's conduct. A bheri drum is then performed through a process where specific tunes are played on the instrument to invite each member of the Hindu pantheon to the event. The culminating event occurs on the final day of the Brahmotsavam during the Chakrasnanam which involves the bathing of Sri Vishnu's primary weapon, the Sudarsana.

The Brahmotsavam includes the designation of a Yagasala, or space where four separate obligatory ceremonies are conducted twice daily during the festival: bimba aradhana, kumbha aradhana, mandala aradhana and dhomam. The bimba aradhana involves ceremonial worship of the utsava vighraha. Sri Venkateswara is invoked to temporarily inhabit nine water-filled precious metal pots, or kumbhas, for the

duration of the festival and is offered worship as part of the kumbha aradhana. The Yagasala includes the depiction of a mandala, or cosmic diagram, using colored uncooked rice grains organized into geometric symbols. Meditation upon this mandala is conducted to pray for humanity to realize the true source of the universe as the perfect Brahman. Finally, a homam is conducted in the Yagasala.

Following these worship procedures, the processional utsava vigrahas are taken on a vahana, or vehicle, into the streets surrounding the temple. The vahana procession is conducted for three separate reasons. First, the temple vigraha is perceived as a king by temple functionaries and residents. The procession therefore symbolizes a king leaving the palace to survey his subjects, understand their concerns, and determine whether they are content and happy. Next, some persons, due to age or health-related ailments, may be unable to come to the temple to seek audience of Sri Venkateswara within the temple. Therefore, Sri Venkateswara comes to visit such devotees. Finally, human attributes are assigned to Sri Venkateswara and the vahana procession is portrayed as a respite or recreational activity for him. Following return to the temple, Sri Venkateswara is offered a ceremonial bathing, or abhishekam, similar to an individual refreshing themselves after spending time outdoors.

As previously mentioned, the first Brahmotsavam was implemented in 614 CE by Samavai in the Tamil

Purattaasi month. The same year, a second Brahmotsavam was instituted in the Margali month. A Brahmotsavam occurring in Panguni is attributed to a Chola feudatory, Vira Narasinga Yadavaraya during 1209-1263. Due to renovations of the temple which occurred during that era, direct inscriptions describing the establishment of the Panguni festival are not available. Rather, an inscription occurring in 1551 attributes the Panguni Brahmotsavam to him. In 1254, during the reign of the Chola king, Vijaya Gandagopaladevar, a fourth Brahmotsvam in the Chittirai month was established. A fifth was added between 1300-1330 during the Aadi month by another Yadavaraya feudatory.

Prior to the start of the Vijayanagar Empire, five Brahmotsavam festivals were held annually in Tirumala. Three of these were implemented under Chola rule and two by Yadavarayas. During the Vijayanagar era, six additional Brahmotsavam festivals were added with a total of 10 Brahmotsavams per year. Two were started during the Sangama dynasty and four under the Tuluvas. Up to 1512, seven Brahmotsavam festivals were held annually in Tirumala. From 1514-1527, eight were conducted per year and nine held annually from 1530-1541. With the addition of the Karthikai Brahmotsavam, the Margali Brahmotsavam founded by Samavai was discontinued in 1534. Subsequently from 1539-1616, 10 are described in inscriptions, suggesting that from 1539-1541, an additional Brahmotsavam might have been held, but

not yet codified into regular practice. From 1558-1638, five separate inscriptions describe 11 Brahmotsavam festivals as conducted annually in Tirumala. Therefore, we can surmise that at least in some years, 11 Brahmotsavams were conducted in Tirumala. During most of these years, 10 festivals were held annually.

Similarly, four Brahmotsavam festivals were held annually in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple during the Vijayanagar era in the Vaikasi, Aani, Maasi and Margali months.

**Table 6.1: Brahmotsavams occurring in the Sri Venkateswara Temple, Tirumala 614-1638 CE**

<b>Year established</b>	<b>Month- Tamil calendar</b>	<b>Donor</b>
614	<i>Purattaasi</i>	Samavai
614	<i>Margali*</i>	Samavai
~1209-1263	<i>Panguni</i>	Vira Narasinga Yadavaraya
1254	<i>Chittirai</i>	Vijayaganda Gopaladevar
~1300-1330	<i>Aadi</i>	Tiruvenkatanatha Yadavaraya
1387	<i>Maasi</i>	Harihara II
1429	<i>Aippasi</i>	Devaraya II
1513	<i>Thai</i>	Krishnadevaraya Maharaya

<b>Year established</b>	<b>Month- Tamil calendar</b>	<b>Donor</b>
1530	<i>Aavani</i>	Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar
1533	<i>Karthikai</i>	Achyutaraya Maharaya
1539	<i>Aani</i> **	Thallapaka Pedda Tirumalayyengar***

\* Margali Brahmotsavam was discontinued in 1534 with the establishment of the Karthikai Brahmotsavam

\*\* From 1558-1638, 11 Brahmotsavams are mentioned per year, with a second one occurring in Aani (attributed to Ramaraja Chinna Timmaraja)

\*\*\* The Aani Brahmotsavam established by Thallapaka Pedda Tirumalacharya was conducted for 13 days

Description of the specific order of events for each Brahmotsavam is unavailable from early inscriptions. Based on food offerings endowed by donors, we can deduce some events occurring on specific days. For example, consistently across the Vijayanagar era, the fifth day of the Brahmotsavam was dedicated to Sri Venkateswara in his form as Krishna. The inscriptions suggest that schedule of specific events, ceremonies, and use of vahanas during the Brahmotsavam festivals was modified over the centuries. Any practice or custom introduced for Sri Venkateswara was also established for Sri Govindarajaswami and vice versa. In fact, many

customs appear to have been first introduced for Sri Govindarajaswami. Therefore, to understand the historical Brahmotsavam practices in Tirumala, study of the Sri Govindarajaswami temple is also required.

The two Vaishnava Agamas prescribe specific vahanas to be used during temple festivals, and specifically the Brahmotsavam. The vahanas are intended to celebrate a specific past time of Vishnu in one of his various avatars or to honor him as a king or universal ruler. The utsava vigrahas mounted on vahanas are further carried by men as a symbol of servitude. The Vaikhanasa Agama states that during nine-day Brahmotsavam festivals, the utsava vigrahas should be mounted on the following vahanas during processions: 1) Sesa (serpent), 2) Simha (lion), 3) Hamsa (swan), 4) Suryaprabha (sun), 5) Garuda (Eagle-celestial vehicle of Vishnu), 6) Gaja (elephant), and 7) Ratha (chariot). During five-day festivals, the Vaikhanasa Agama recommends: 1) Sesa, 2) Simha, 3) Hanuman, 4) Aswa (horse), and 5) Ratha (chariot). The Pancharatra Agama similarly specifies the use of certain vahanas during Brahmotsavam festivals. For a nine-day festival, the Pancharathra Agama recommends (day): 1) Sesa and Hamsa, 2) Simha, 3) Garuda, 4) Sesa, 5) Hanuman, 6) Suryaprabha and Chandraprabha (moon), 7) Ratha, 8) Aswa, 9) Gaja. Of these vahanas, the Ratha and Garuda are given special importance. The Ratha is designed to emulate the appearance of the temple in which the vigraha resides. Viewing the vigraha in the Ratha is considered

to be equivalent to seeing Sri Venkateswara in the temple. As Garuda is the carrier of Vishnu and considered especially dear to him, the Garuda vahana procession is celebrated with particular grandeur.

Despite the instructions of the Agamas, the practice of specific vahanas evolved independently in Tirumala. Prior to 1491, no vahanas are specified in temple inscriptions. From 1491-1495, only three vahanas are mentioned as being used in the Brahmotsavam festivals. These are the Ratha, Sesa (symbolizing Krishna dancing on Kaliya), and Aswa. In 1512, an additional vahana, Gaja, is mentioned as used in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. Despite the importance of Garuda vahana, its use is not mentioned in inscriptions until 1530. It is described as occurring on the fifth day of each Brahmotsavam festival in Tirumala.

Between 1545-1628, the inscriptions describe a proliferation of vahanas used in both the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. Subsequent chapters will describe the introduction of each of these vahanas. In many cases, these vahanas were not mainly intended for use in the Brahmotsavam festivals but were likely absorbed into the Brahmotsavams over time. Through the Vijayanagar era, the utsava vigrahas were mounted on the Sesa vahana on the ninth day of the Brahmotsavams. Sri Venkateswara was mounted on the Aswa vahana on the eighth day to symbolize a hunt festival. The Ratha is also described as occurring on the seventh or eighth

days of the Brahmotsavams during the Vijayanagar era. Finally, the culminating event, or Chakrasnanam was held on the ninth and final day of the festival.

**Table 6.2 : Introduction of vahanas in the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples, 1491-1628**

Year (first mention)	Vahana	Initial temple of introduction	Comments
1491	Ratha	Tirumala	Brahmotsavam
1491	Aswa	Tirumala	Brahmotsavam
1494	Sesha <sup>1</sup>	Govindaraja	Brahmotsavam
1512	Gaja	Govindaraja	Brahmotsavam
1530	Garuda <sup>2</sup>	Tirumala	Brahmotsavam
1539	Vaikunta Vimana	Govindaraja	Vasanthotsavam
1545	Stone Ratha	Govindaraja/ Tirumala	Kodai Tirunal
1545	Pallayamtulam	Tirumala	Unspecified <sup>3</sup>
1546	Hamsa	Tirumala	Kalyanotsavam
1546	Chathaka Pakshi	Tirumala	Kalyanotsavam
1546	Pallaki (palanquin)	Tirumala	Kalyanotsavam
1547	Muthyapu Pandiri <sup>4</sup>	Govindaraja	Maasi Brahmotsavam
1547	Pushpa Pallaki (flower palanquin)	Govindaraja	Maasi Brahmotsavam

Year (First mention)	Vahana	Initial temple of introduction	Comments
1547	Tiruchchi Vahana	Tirumala	Pallavotsavam
1547	Wood Ratha	Govindaraja	Maasi Brahmotsavam
1547	Hanumantha	Govindaraja	Kalyanotsavam
1547	Simha	Govindaraja	Brahmotsavam
1564	Suryaprabha	Tirumala	Ratha Sapthami
1614	Silver Sesha	Tirumala	Brahmotsavam
1614	Silver Simha	Tirumala	Brahmotsavam
1628	Golden Aswa	Tirumala	General donation <sup>5</sup>
1628	Samara Bhoopala	Tirumala	General donation <sup>5</sup>

The Vahanas introduced in one temple were subsequently incorporated into the other temple.

1In 1495, a two-day Sesha vahana procedure is mentioned for Sri Govindarajaswami (perhaps a predecessor of the modern Pedda and Chinna Seshavahanas)

2The first mention of Garuda vahana use in the Govindarajaswami temple is in conjunction with the Gajendra Moksha festival in 1539

3The first mention occurs in 1545, but the event was not specified in the inscription. The first reference of this vahana as used in a festival was in 1551 for Sahasranama Archana festival. Pallayamtulam may be a variant of the Tiruchchi vahana.

4A Pandiri is a temporary structure made for use in ceremonial events including weddings. A Muthyapu (pearl) Pandiri was first introduced for Sri Govindarajaswami

5These were donated by Matla Kumara Anantaraja during his visit to Tirumala in 1628. These two vahanas, along with his other donations during that visit are among the last major offerings of the Vijayanagar empire. See Chapter 10.

Once the expanded assortment of vahanas was introduced for Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami, the schedule of events for Brahmotsavams was modified. In 1547, the Sri Govindarajaswami Brahmotsavams included Hamsa vahana on the second day and Simha vahana on the third day. The first instance of decorating the utsava vigraha to emulate an avatara (a common practice now) is also mentioned in 1547. The utsava vigraha of Sri Govindarajaswami was dressed up as Madana Gopalavatara, or Krishna accompanied by his two wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama on the seventh day of the Brahmotsavams.

Each Brahmotsavam contained a day during which a Kalyanotsavam, or marriage ceremony, was performed for the utsava vigraha of Sri Venkateswara, Sri Malayappa Swami and his wives, Sridevi (Goddess Lakshmi) and Bhudevi (the Goddess of the Earth). In addition, each Brahmotsavam included a Pushpayagam day. The Pushpayagam is considered to be an obligatory portion of the Brahmotsavam and intended to atone for errors occurring during the festival. The Pushpayagam includes a homam and offering of flowers to the utsava vighras. The flowers are organized into a mandala shape where the geometric designs are 8 or 12 petal flowers, rather than representations of the universe. Flowers are offered repetitively over the course of 12 separate steps to the utsava vigraha. In 1545, an inscription describes a

Churnabhishekam ritual on the ninth day of each Brahmotsavam immediately preceding the Chakrasananam. The Churnabhishekam included grinding a powder containing turmeric, saffron, chandanam and placing this in a kalasa with sanctified water used to sprinkle on the utsava vigraha. Anabhishekam was then conducted.

These Brahmotsavam traditions implemented during the Vijayanagar era changed drastically over subsequent centuries.

\* \* \*

## 7. SANGAMA ERA

### **Sampradaya Festivals**

Under Sangama rule, several traditions were implemented that continue to the present time. While their predecessors, including the Chola and Yadavaraya rulers, were followers of Sri Vaishnava traditions, the inscriptions from those eras suggest that rituals and festivals strictly followed the Agamas. During the Sangama era, several Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya customs, rituals, and festivals first appear in inscriptions in the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. The first example occurs in 1390. In that year, a renunciant, Sri Mullai Tiruvenkata Jeeyar introduced the rendering of a famous poem, Tiruppavai, found in the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam in Tirumala during the Margazh month. This served as a sentinel event in the history of Tirumala. First, it marked the influence and respect conveyed upon the Jeeyangar within the Tirumala hierarchy. Next, it constituted the implementation of the first set of Sampradaya traditions not directly derived from the Agamas in the Tirumala temple.

The Nalayira Divya Prabhandam are a collection of ~4,000 Tamil verses written by 12 Alvars, or Vaishnava saints. Of these, ~1,100 are attributed to Nammalvar and are referred to as the Tiruvaymozhi. Another prominent prayer derived from the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam is the Tirupazhi Eluchi, a 10-verse

piece compiled by Tondaradippodi Alvar. This prayer constitutes a wake-up, or Suprabhatham, and was originally rendered in the Sri Ranganatha swami temple in Sri Rangam, Tamil Nadu. It was subsequently widely adopted across Vaishnava temples in South India. At present, the Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatham, written by Sri Prathivadibhayankaram Annan is the most famous hymn dedicated to Sri Venkateswara. However, unlike the Tiruppazhi Eluchi, the Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatham does not appear in the temple inscriptions.

Andal is the only female among the 12 Alvars and composed two of the most famous Nalayira Divya Prabhandam prayers, Tiruppavai and Nacchiyar Tirumozhi. Both prayers are dedicated to Sri Narayana in his form as Krishna and describe Andal assuming the role of a Gopi, or cowherd girl, and longing for Krishna. Another Alvar, Kulasekhara, was a member of the ancient Cheraroyal family. In addition to the Tamil work, Perumal Tirumozhi, Kulasekhara authored Mukundamala, a 30 verse Sanskrit poem which is regarded as an abridged version of the Sri Bhagavatham in terms of its devotion and dedication to Krishna. Kulasekhara begged Sri Venkateswara to make him a threshold at his sanctum's entrance since even the gods yearn to cross over to be near their beloved Lord. Hence, the final threshold before the entrance to the innermost sanctum of Sri Venkateswara is referred to as the Kulasekhara Padi, conveying Sri Venkateswara's reverence for Kulasekhara's wish.

Margali is given specific importance by Sri Vaishnavas. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna remarks on the month's auspiciousness. In an inscription occurring in 1390, Tiruppavai is first mentioned as recited daily during the Margali month in front of Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi. In 1446, Tiruppazhi Eluchi recitation during Margali is also mentioned as occurring in the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. These recitations were accompanied by rice-based sweet offerings.

In 1390, an inscription contains the first mention of another Sampradaya festival, the Adhyayanotsavam, as occurring in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. The Adhyayanotsavam is a 20-day festival where the processional vigrahas are taken through the streets surrounding the temple while chanting the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. The 20-day period included Vaikunta Ekadasi, which occurred on the tenth day of the Adhyayanotsavam festival. As these verses are in Tamil, the recitation was promoted by Sri Vaishnava adherents as they were in the colloquial language of the masses, in contrast to Vedic hymns. The Adhyayanotsavam was also adopted for Sri Venkateswara.

From the earliest inscriptions mentioning the Adhyayanotsavam, the festival included a one-day Tanniramudu ceremony. This event is attributed to Sri Ramanuja and commemorates his respect for his maternal uncle, Sri Tirumala Nambi, who brought water daily from Akasa Ganga for use in Sri

Venkateswara's temple. The festival includes the descendants of Tirumala Nambi, the Tollapacharyulu Acharya Purushas, bringing water in a silver pot from Akasa Gangato the temple. The water is used to bathe the pada kavacham (golden armor covering the feet) of Sri Venkateswara. The ceremony is overseen by the Pedda Jeeyangar and celebrated with grandeur. It involves a procession of Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi, including the temple elephants, recitation of the Periya Tirumoli (a Prabhandam by Tirumangai Alvar), and food offerings. Though specific for Sri Venkateswara, the festival was also adopted in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple.

#### **Recitation of the Vedas**

In addition to the Sampradaya traditions, the Sangama rulers promoted Agama and Vedic traditions. Prior to the rule of Devaraya II, Veda Parayanam, or recitation of the Vedas, had ceased in Tirumala. The Agamas require the recitation of Vedas to accompany temple rituals. Therefore, the emperor allocated funding to ensure that 24 experts were employed to perform Veda Parayanam in the Tirumala temple. These individuals were allocated a village for their residence and land revenues as income sources to ensure sustainability of Veda recitation. Under this arrangement, two Veda Parayanadhars were available for one month at a time during every calendar year.

#### **Brahmotsavams and Kodai Tirunal : Sangama Era**

Two Brahmotsavams were implemented during the Sangama period. One was started by Harihara II

in Maasi and another by Devaraya II during Aippasi. By the end of the Sangama period, seven Brahmotsavams were performed annually in Tirumala. Finally, in 1404, the first mention occurs of a summer festival (Greeshmotsavamin Sanskrit) in Tirumala. This festival was referred to as Kodai Tirunal. Details of the Kodai Tirunal are not available from these early inscriptions. However, like the Vasanthotsavam, where flowers in the spring season were offered to the utsava vigrahas, the Kodai Tirunal is likely to have involved seasonal offerings of summer flowers. Throughout the Vijayanagar era, the Kodai Tirunal was a major annual festival conducted for 20 days for Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami.

**7.1. Annual festivals occurring in Tirumala during the Sangama era, 1336-1470**

<b>Brahmotsavams<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Other Festivals</b>	<b>Sampradaya traditions</b>
<i>Purattaasi</i>	<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>
<i>Margali</i>	<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	<i>Tiruppavai/Tiruppali Eluchi recitation-Margali</i>
<i>Chittirai</i>	<i>Kodai Tirunal (Greeshmotsavam)</i>	
<i>Panguni</i>		
<i>Aadi</i>		
<i>Maasi</i>		
<i>Aippasi</i>		

1. During this era, two Brahmotsavams (Vaikasi and Aani) were conducted annually for Sri Govindarajaswami.

## 8. SALUVA ERA

### **Pavithrotsavam**

In addition to the Brahmotsavam, the Vaishnava Agamas require the annual performance of a Pavithrotsavam festival. This event is intended to absolve or correct any errors of omission or commission during all rituals or festivals occurring during the previous year in the temple. Though it is obligatory, the festival was not introduced in Tirumala until 1464. The Pavithrotsavam was the first festival implemented under the Saluva dynasty, by the royal, Saluva Mallayadeva Maharaja.

The Agamas describe specific requirements for the Pavithrotsavam. For example, the festival should be conducted during the lunar months of Sravana, Bhadrapada, Aswayuja, or Karthika, approximately corresponding to the Tamil months of Aavani, Purattaasi, Aippaasi, and Karthikai. In Tirumala, the endowment by Saluva Mallayadeva required the festival to be conducted in Aavani over five days including the Ankurarpanam ceremony. As with the Brahmotsavam, the Pavithrotsavam requires the establishment of a Yagasala with four sets of separate procedures including the kumbha, bimba, mandala aradhana, and homam.

Specific to the Pavithrotsavam is the use of pavithram threads. Per Vedic traditions, in order to

protect the sanctity of religious rituals, participants are required to adhere to fixed rules regarding dress analogous to sterility commonly encountered in modern medical professions. Vedic rituals require that clothing worn during religious events must be loomed out of specific threads considered to retain sanctity even if the participant inadvertently comes in touch with impurities. Silk is the purest of these threads and for the purpose of the Pavithrotsavam, silk threads are tied into garlands. The Pavithrotsavam includes ceremonial procedures to consecrate the pavithram garlands which are first laid between multiple layers consisting of gem-studded carpet, bedding, peacock feathers, and silk cloth accompanied by recitation of specific mantras. As typical with all ceremonies in Tirumala, an abhishekam is performed to the processional vigrahas. Following these ceremonies, the pavithrams are taken around the temple through a procession after which they are placed on the main, processional, and other vigrahas in the temple. The threads are wrapped around temple structures and ceremonial items and are worn by the officiants of the festival. The pavithrams remain until the final day when they are ceremonially removed. The placement of these garlands along with mantra recitation represents the removal of any deficiencies or impurities introduced during the previous year.

The Agamas specify that the pavithrams should be of specific lengths based on the vigraha on which

they will be placed and of certain colors as represented by Saluva Mallayadeva's endowment. He directed the procurement of blue, red, black, green and yellow colored silk thread. He ensured that all related expenses for the Pavithrotsavam were fully funded by his donation. In addition to the Pavithrotsavam, Saluva Mallayadeva directed specific food offerings during the Brahmotsavams.

### **Saluva Narasimha and Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar**

The Saluva Narasimha era is defined by the partnership formed between the king and his guru and guide, Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar. Together, they over saw the founding of many festivals while supporting several others through their donations. Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar's name appears in inscriptions from 1469-1496 as he was tasked to oversee the Ramanujakutams. The Ramanujakutams were establishments implemented by Saluva Narasimha to provide food to Tirumala and Tirupati visitors. All major endowments by the king ensured food offerings were delivered to the Ramanujakutams and made available to pilgrims. In addition to the Ramanujakutams, Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar served as an informal representative or minister of Saluva Narasimha in Tirumala. His influence grew considerably as evidenced by his recurrent donations to the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. His family and disciples continued to serve the

Tirumala temple for at least two generations. His chief disciple, Kandadai Madhava Iyengar made substantial donations to Thai Brahmotsvam, Adhyayanotsavam, and Parveta Utsavam in 1520 under Sri Krishnadevaraya. Ramanuja Iyengar's son, Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar was the guardian of Sri Venkateswara's gold treasury and established Aavani Brahmotsavam in 1530 during the rule of Achyutaraya.

### **Navalutru**

Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar contributed substantially to the sustainability of the Brahmotsvams in Tirumala. In addition to several food donations during the Brahmotsavams, he expanded some of these festivals. One special example is the Navalutru ceremony which appears in an inscription in 1496. Water in Tirumala is sourced from natural springs that emanate from ground water. Commonly known springs include Akasa Ganga and Papavinasanam. Kandadai deeded the establishment of a separate ceremony, Navalutru, occurring on the tenth day of the Panguni Brahmotsvam. A flower garden and mandapam were constructed along a spring named Naval, to which Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi were taken on the tenth day of the Panguni Brahmotsavam. Large amounts of food were offered during the Navalutru ceremony. Inscriptions suggest that this spring was located at a substantial distance from the temple. Kandadai ensured that sufficient funding was available for support staff to travel to the event. These included

Prabhandam reciters, vahanam bearers, lamp lighters, cooks, suppliers of firewood, workman, timekeepers, temple dancers, musicians (to play Nadhaswaram), singers, street sweepers, potters, and security guards. Subsequent generations of donors continued to support the Navalutru event.

Music and dance were intricately intertwined with festivals occurring for Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami during the Vijayanagar era. Multiple inscriptions document donor allocations for musicians and dancers. Classical dance, attributed to the sage Bharata Muni, is a medium of meditation and expression of devotion to God. Its history in India is as ancient as the Vedas. In the Vijayanagar period, classical dance was primarily of two types: 1) Sadir Attam, which was performed within the temple solely for the pleasure of the presiding vigraha 2) Yakshagana or Veedhi Natakam, which included enactment of stories from the Puranas in front of outside audiences. For Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami, Sadir Attam was performed by female dancers referred to in inscriptions as Emperumanadiyar (servants of the temple). The second dance type, though not directly discussed in inscriptions, was performed by artists called Bhagavatulu (those performing stories of Bhagavan or God) and was likely conducted during festivals as well. Donors who deeded performance of temple dance for Brahmotsavams and other festivals ensured the sustainability of not only the

Emperumanadiyars but also Nattuvars (artists performing accompanying oral percussion to maintain beats for steps) and Muttukarars (choreographers).

### **Kodai Tirunal**

Details of the Kodai Tirunalemerge in an inscription attributed to Saluva Narasimha in 1468. Kodai Tirunal was conducted for both Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami and was considered a major annual celebration with grand food offerings deeded by donors. The Kodai Tirunal was 20 days in length and included a floating festival in Tirumala referred to as Tiruppalli-odattirunal (also Jalakridai), that occurred during the latter ten days. The processional vigrahas in both temples were taken daily through out the streets surrounding the temple. A daily snapana thirumanjanam was also likely performed for the processional vigrahas. Saluva Narasimha endowed food offerings to occur on each day of the Kodai Tirunal. He constructed a Vasanthamandapam on the Pushkarini, or tank, where the floating festival was conducted, for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi to visit on the eleventh day of the Kodai Tirunal. The floating festival served as a leisurely boat ridefor Sri Malayappa swami, Sridevi and Bhudevion a hot summer day.

Throughout the Vijayanagar era, donors continued to support the Kodai Tirunal. An inscription from 1545 documenting donations made by daughters

of a prominent temple dancer describes Malayappa Swami being placed on a swing on each day of the Kodai Tirunal. The same custom was observed in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple by placing the processional vigraha on a swing. In both temples, this swing was mounted in a stone Ratha, indicating that each temple had a separate stone Ratha by 1545. Temple dancers were also engaged in Sankirtana recitals (to be further covered in Chapter 11) during the Kodai Tirunal. The importance of the Kodai Tirunal is further captured in a 1546 inscription. A donor, Gangu Reddi, constructed a garden mandapam in Tirumala in which Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi received an abhishekam on the fifth day of the festival annually. The Kodai Tirunal as a festival symbolizing relief from the summer heat is epitomized by several donations in the 1540s. One inscription documents the offering of 20 rose-water vessels and 40 pots of panakam (a sweet drink prepared with jaggery, black pepper, cardamom, and water) to Sri Govindarajaswami during the Kodai Tirunal.

### **Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal Tirunal**

In 1473, Saluva Narasimha introduced a new festival in Tirumala, the Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal Tirunal (Anna-unjal Tirunal). This festival became one of the more prominent events in Tirumala during the Vijayanagar era. The main festival was five days in length but was preceded by an Ankurarpanam ceremony. As with the Brahmotsavam and

Pavithrotsavam, a Yagasala was implemented for the Anna-unjal Tirunal and included homam, kumbha, bimba, and mandala aradhana. Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi were given an abhishekam and exquisitely decorated. The abhishekam included 1 nali (~ 1.5 kg) each of ghee, honey, milk, and yogurt, plus water from five tender coconuts. The festival included two distinct features. First, the processional vigrahas were seated on a swan shaped swing where they received food offerings. Additionally, Sri Malayappa swami and his wives were placed on a cushioned bed as an offer of rest. The festival was a symbolic extension of comfort, rest, and relaxation to Sri Venkateswara. Large amounts of elaborate food offerings were made as part of this festival. Saluva Narasimha ordered at least a quarter of the total food offered to be sent to the Ramanujakutams for free distribution to pilgrims by Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar. The remainder was given away at the temple during the morning hours of each festival day. The swan shaped swing was incorporated on at least three additional occasions throughout the year : during the first seven days of the Chittirai Brahmotsavam, the tenth day of the Kodai Tirunal, and on Makara Sankranti.

### **Aadi Ayanam Asthanam**

While donations to the temple were managed by administrators referred to as Sthanattars, the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples had prominent and

powerful temple accounts, or Tiruninra-ur udaiyars. A series of inscriptions in 1494 document 14 individuals, including four sets of brothers, who simultaneously served as accountants for the Tirumala and/or Sri Govindarajaswami temples (brothers): 1) Saranagati + Nallaperumal, 2) Permakkal + Govindan, 3) Narayanan + Tiruvenkatapriyar + Raman + Sriranganadhar, 4) Anantappar Narayanan, 5) Nammalvar + Sri Varahan + Ananta Parasamayar + Narayana Perumal Mudaliyan, 6) Govindan Tiruvenkatamudaiyan. These individuals were trained in accounting by a common teacher, Pallibhattar Singapperumal Anantalvar and were religious disciples of the Tirumala Acharya Purusha, Kumara Tattayangar. As another example of generational service to Sri Venkateswara during the Vijayanagar era, Anantappar Narayanan's grandson, Srinivasan, subsequently served as a temple accountant in 1523.

These individuals were referred to as Karanam (accountants) and were allocated two offices, Karanam mathams, located near the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples, respectively. In typical celebratory fashion of the Vijayanagar days, a mandapam was constructed in front of the Karanam mathams where the processional vighras stopped on designated days during the Brahmotsavam and other festivals to receive food offerings as directed by these accountants. The accountants were responsible for calculating revenue and expenditures to ensure that donor funds were spent as required. Further tasks

included tracking the balance in the temple treasuries, creating an annual report of revenue, expenses, outlays, and fiscal projections for the coming year.

The fiscal calendar began on the day of the summer solstice or Aadi Ayanam. The accountants collectively transformed this start day into a Sampradaya festival in both temples. This festival was referred to as Aadi Ayanam Asthanam, during this festival, the temple accountants presented themselves publicly before the processional vigrahas and read the previous year's financial report. They endowed food offerings and ensured homage was shown to both their religious guru and secular teacher by allocating a share of offerings to them. The Aadi Ayanam festival is poignant in Tirumala history as it demonstrates the devoutness of care takers of the temple and highlights their view of distinctly secular tasks as intrinsic service to Sri Venkateswara.

### **Toppu Tirunal**

During India's royal era, territory was defended using forts constructed with heavily fortified masonry and moats which served as bases for troops and security forces. The forts had a second purpose by which they were used to administer their catchment area. A governor was stationed at prominent forts and served as the royal representative through which government administration occurred in the region. During the Vijayanagar era, several famous forts were either won by the Vijayanagar kings or constructed

by them. One such famous fort was located in Chandragiri, a small-town neighboring Tirupati. The Chandragiri fort was a massive complex which contained a royal residence used by the Vijayanagar kings. Especially within the Chandragiri fort, the Vijayanagar rulers viewed themselves as subservient to Sri Venkateswara. A network of bells was constructed from Tirumala to Chandragiri which were rung at the time of naivedyam to Sri Venkateswara. Only after these bells were sounded, would the royals eat their meal, ensuring that Sri Venkateswara had dined first.

As previously mentioned, the Vijayanagar empire operated a complex system of local administration which included tax assessment and revenue collection. In Telugu speaking regions, this system was mostly implemented by a sub-sect of Brahmins called Niyogis. These individuals were appointed into the service of kings and relinquished priestly duties occupied by Brahmins. In addition to serving as royal counselors and governors, Niyogis occupied hereditary jobs through the Karanikam system. The Karanams (a term also applied to individuals who served in Karanikam roles) were embedded in villages and maintained land records which were the basis of tax assessments. Karanams conducted land surveys when property exchanged hands or was partitioned by joint heirs, maintained records on use of government properties by private citizens, and tracked the presence of crop irrigation. They observed and verified farm cultivation

and yield to assess revenue taxes. Tax assessments varied by intended use (e.g. cattle grazing, edible crop, flower garden), crop (including fruits, roots, vegetables, lentils, or grain), and land type (wet versus dry land crops). Further adjustments were made for blighted or damaged crops. Tax revenue for lands deeded to temples was forfeited by the government and either waived or diverted to the temple treasury. The Karanikam system persisted until abolishment by the Andhra Pradesh government in 1985.

Niyogis, including Karanams, formed a significant proportion of donors to the Tirumala temple and implemented or supported the sustainability of many festivals. In 1494, Timmana Danayakkar, the son of the Chandragiri Karanam, Annadata Devagal, is recorded to have made significant donations to Sri Venkateswara in support of the seven Brahmotsavams, Pavithrotsavam, Dolamahotsava Anna-unjal Tirunal, and another festival, Toppu Tirunal (Garden festival). Details of the Toppu Tirunal are scant, but this festival was conducted over 20 days in a Tirumala garden where the utsava vigrahas were placed in a mandapam following a procession. The Toppu Tirunal was not a major festival as there are few mentions of subsequent donations being made in its support. Through the reign of Achyutaraya, there is no mention of the festival at all, suggesting that it may have been discontinued. However, the Toppu Tirunal reappeared in 1544 as a one-day ceremony on the Ankurarpanam day of the Aani Brahmotsavam in a donation made by a wealthy

landowner, Murti Nayakkar. This individual donated 4.5 villages to implement a new Toppu Tirunal. The garden festival was performed in a flower garden deeded in Tirumala by the donor and included a snapana thirumanjanam for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, Bhudevi, Krishna, Vishvaksena, and Sri Ramanuja.

The Saluva era marked a substantial expansion of festivals conducted for Sri Venkateswara upon which subsequent Vijayanagar rulers continued to build.

**Table 8.1 : Prominent festivals occurring in the Tirumala temple during the reign of Saluva Narasimha**

Brahmotsavam	~11 days	Length is inclusive of <i>Ankurarpanam</i> and <i>Vidayarri</i>
<i>Purattaasi</i>		All Brahmotsavam festivals included <i>Pushpayagam</i>
<i>Margali</i>		
<i>Panguni</i>		Included <i>Navalutrucerem</i> ony started by Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar
<i>Chittirai</i>		
<i>Aadi</i>		
<i>Maasi</i>		

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>Aippasi</i>		
<i>Pavithrotsavam</i>	5 days	
<i>Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal Tirunal</i>	5 days	<i>Anna-unjal</i> was also implemented on the first 7 days of <i>Chittirai Brahmotsavam, Makara Sankranti</i> , and the tenth day of <i>Kodai Tirunal</i>
<i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	Celebration to commemorate the start of the new fiscal year
<i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	20 days	Included a float festival during the second 10 days
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	3 days	
<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	24 days	Included <i>Nalayira Divya Prabhandham</i> recitation during ceremonial procession of <i>utsava vighraha</i> ; Included <i>Tanniramudu</i> festival
<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Mukkoti Dvadasi</i>	1 day	
<i>Toppu Tirunal</i>	20 days	Appears to have been a minor festival which may have been discontinued.
<i>Sri Jayanti</i>	1 day	Sri Krishna's birthday
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	1 day	Sri Rama's birthday
<i>Vasanta Purnima</i>	1 day	To celebrate Sri Narasimha

## 9. TULUVA ERA

### **Thimmarusu**

On December 25, 1511, Lakshmi Ammangar came to the temple of Sri Venkateswara while visiting her daughter and son-in-law, Nadindla Appa, a powerful officer stationed at the Chandragiri Fort. During this visit, she deeded a daily food offering to Sri Venkateswara. Following this inaugural donation, her husband, Saluva Thimmarusu, one of the most influential men of the Vijayanagar era, visited in January 1512. During his visit, Thimmarusu presented an embroidered silk pitambaram (or dhoti) to Sri Venkateswara. Upon seeing him wearing this clothing, Thimmarusu noted that Sri Venkateswara's effulgence enlightened the world. Thimmarusu constructed a mandapam in Tirumala and ensured food offerings to Sri Venkateswara during the Navalutru event and Brahmotsavam festivals. These two visits would mark the beginning of an exquisite era in Tirumala history - representing the first visits by the inner circle of Krishnadevaraya - and served as a prelude to the emperor's subsequent seven visits.

While this book is focused on the festivals of Tirumala, any history of offerings made to Sri Venkateswara would not be complete without a detour describing the gifts by Krishnadevaraya and one clarification regarding his relationship with Thimmarusu. Krishnadevaraya's 20-year rule (1509-

1529) was the pinnacle of the Vijayanagar empire and is epitomized by his successful conquest over South India. His supremacy extended into Orissa where he subjugated the Hindu Gajapati kings. During his twenty years in power, South India experienced remarkable stability. Krishnadevaraya is described as loving, gracious, compassionate, welcoming, fair, and pious. His reign is synonymous with his devotion and offerings to Sri Venkateswara.

### **An enduring Myth**

Krishnadevaraya's successful rule is often attributed to the wise counsel of Saluva Thimmarusu. This prime minister first advised Krishnadevaraya's elder brother, Vira Narasimha. Following Vira Narasimha's death in 1509, Thimmarusu coronated Krishnadevaraya and played a dominant role in his military campaigns against the Gajapati rulers. He served as Kondaveedu (a major fort won by Krishnadevaraya in his battle against the Gajapatis) governor, and his statesmanship contributed to the excellent governing decisions of the emperor. Thimmarusu's younger brother, Saluva Govindaraja, also served as a powerful minister and governor during the rule of Krishnadevaraya. Per epigraphical

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<sup>1</sup> Sadhu Subrahmanya Sastry observed inscriptions attributed to Thimmarusu and Saluva Govindaraja occurring several years after the death of Krishnadevaraya. In 1930, Sastry first posited that the story of Thimmarusu's blinding and jailing is false.

evidence, both brothers continued service during the reign of Krishnadevaraya's brother and successor, Achyutaraya. Thimmarusu made donations to Sri Venkateswara until 1536 and had a close relationship with Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayyengar (who is described further in Chapter 11). Saluva Govindaraja lived to at least 1542. This fact is contrary to what is traditionally described as the fate of Thimmarusu and Govindaraja.

Domingo Paes and Fernao Nunes were Portuguese horse traders who visited Vijayanagar during the era of Krishnadevaraya and wrote letters describing their experiences with the king. Nunes's memoir was written ~15 years after he lived in Vijayanagar, raising concern that his accounts are incorrect at least due to recall bias. There are numerous discrepancies between his writings and parallel inscriptional and literary evidence. Nonetheless, owing to the deferential treatment shown to European writing of history, Nunes's statements are traditionally uncontested. By his account, grieving the death of his young son and heir apparent, Krishnadevaraya blamed Thimmarusu and blinded and imprisoned him and his brother. However, the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temple inscriptions are inconsistent with this account. Both individuals were held in high regard for the duration of their lifetimes, which extended beyond Krishnadevaraya's death in 1529. Epigraphical evidence suggests that there is no factual basis for the description by Nunes.

### **The Emperor's gifts and an eighth Brahmotsavam**

Krishnadevaraya first visited Tirumala on February 10, 1513. During that stay, he made the most famous donation in the history of the temple - a gold kireetam (crown) set with nine kinds of precious stones (Navaratna) to Sri Venkateswara. The description of the kireetam is stunning as it included 2,822 rubies, 1,339 pearls, 423 diamonds, 160 emeralds, 17 cat's eye gems, 10 sapphires and 3 large rubies. Krishnadevaraya further gifted a pendant containing 60 diamonds and one large golden cup for offering warm milk at night to Sri Venkateswara.

During subsequent visits, the emperor continued his offerings to Sri Venkateswara and the processional vigrahas. He presented a golden sword embedded with 431 rubies, 131 diamonds, and 2 sapphires. The sword's sheath alone contained 3,500 pearls. Three kireetams were given to Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi. These collectively contained 822 rubies, 405 pearls and 284 diamonds. In 1515, the emperor donated a Makara Toranam (ceremonial arch) embedded with Navaratnams. Three years later, the emperor completed the gold plating of the Ananda Nilaya Divya Vimanam (dome) of Sri Venkateswara's temple. During his final visit in 1521, Krishnadevaraya gifted a Navaratna pitambaram (silk dhoti embedded with nine kinds of precious stones) to Sri Venkateswara.

Krishnadevaraya's wives replicated their husband's largesse by making similarly priceless contributions. Following his victory over the Gajapati kings, Krishnadevaraya performed a Tulapurusha daanam during which his wives offered jewels equivalent to the weight of their husband. In 1514, Krishnadevaraya funded the performance of a Kanakabhishekam, in which Sri Venkateswara (possibly either the replica, Bhoga Srinivasa, or the processional image, Sri Malayappa Swami) was bathed with 30,000 gold coins. The bulk of Krishnadevaraya's gifts to Sri Venkateswara involved ornaments. Few new festivals were established during his reign. He implemented a new Brahmotsavam in Thai month in 1513. This Brahmotsavam corresponded to his birth month and was the only new festival directly endowed by Krishnadevaraya. His associates made substantial donations in support of festivals for Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami.

### **Sahasra Kalasabhishekam**

The Agamas recommend the performance of abhishekam to vigrahas for several reasons. The abhishekam symbolizes a refreshing bath following strenuous activities such as outdoor ceremonial procession. The ritual can be conducted as a purification step should any ominous or contaminating events occur in a temple. Finally, abhishekam may represent an offering of respect and gratitude to the presiding deity. Tiered abhishekam levels are described

in the Pancharathra Agama and include adhamam (acceptable), madhyamam (better), and uththamam (best). These three tiers are further stratified resulting in many grades of abhishekam. Water to bathe the vigraha is mixed with sugandha dravyas and is collected in ceremonial vessels referred to as kalasa. These containers are made of precious metals including silver or gold. Water is poured from the kalasa onto the vigraha accompanied by recitation of the Vedas. The grades are determined by the number of kalasams: (1 (acceptable/acceptable), 3, 5, 9, 16, 17, 21, 25, 49, 81, 108, 149, 249, 256, 473 and 1001 (best/best)).

In 1511, Appa Pillai, a subordinate officer of the Vijayanagar kings, granted a village to the Tirumala temple for specific food offerings occurring on festival days throughout the year. His donation was intended for the merit of Krishnadevaraya. The inscription contains the first mention of Sahasra kalasabhishekam. This festival was conducted during which 1000 kalasams were used to bathe Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi. Later inscriptions note frequent food offerings endowed by donors during the Sahasra kalasabhishekam indicating that it was considered a major annual festival.

### **Karthika Deepotsavam**

The Karthikai month retains special importance for both Vishnu and Siva. In particular, the Agamas

recommend a specific festival, Karthika Deepotsavam, to occur on the full moon day in Karthikai. On this day, deepams are lit in clay pots and illuminate the temple in the evening. In Tirumala, the Karthika Deepotsavam is slightly modified in that a clay pot is broken and the bottom used to contain the ghee deepam. The main deepam is taken by the priest in a ceremonial procession around the temple accompanied by Nadhaswaram music. This deepam is placed in front of the Dhvajasthambham and several smaller lights are prepared to illuminate the temple. The first mention of the Karthika Deepotsavam in Tirumala occurs in 1517 in an inscription describing food offerings made by a private citizen, Tryambakadevar. The festival is mentioned in subsequent inscriptions occurring during the Vijayanagar era. In another inscription in 1522 attributed to Saluva Govindaraja, the Karthika Deepotsavam is mentioned as conducted for Sri Govindarajaswami as well.

### **Vyasa Tirtha**

Sri Madhvacharya was a 13<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who developed and promoted a dualist (Dvaita) theory in which Brahman and the living beings are separate entities. The distinction per the Dvaita philosophy is that Brahman is independent while the living beings are dependent on God. In Dvaita, Brahmanis Vishnu and Madhvas form another sect of Vaishnavism. Vyasa Tirtha was a philosopher, scholar and renunciate associated with the Madhva tradition. He was a

spiritual guide to both Saluva Narasimha and Sri Krishnadevaraya.

In 1524, Krishnadevaraya authorized the construction of a Matha for Vyasa Tirtha in Tirumala. Vyasa Tirtha constructed a mandapam in front of the Tirumala Matha in which food offerings were made to the processional vigrahas during the Brahmotsavams, Kodai Tirunal, Adhyayanotsavam, Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal Tirunal and Pavithrotsavam.

**Table 9.1 : Festivals occurring in Tirumala during the reign of Krishnadevaraya: 1509-1529\***

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>Brahmotsavams</i>	12 days	Eight per year; Inscriptions mention 3 <i>Rathotsavams</i> / year. These may have been included in the <i>Brahmotsavams</i> and were not separate events
<i>Purattaasi</i>		
<i>Margali</i>		
<i>Panguni</i>		Includes <i>Navalutru</i>
<i>Chittirai</i>		
<i>Aadi</i>		
<i>Maasi</i>		
<i>Aippasi</i>		

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>Thai</i>		Started by Krishnadevaraya; Received substantial patronage from subordinates suggesting this was more prominent than the other <i>Brahmotsavams</i>
<i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	20 days	
<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	24 days	Includes <i>Tanniramudu</i> ; Additional Sampradaya customs included: Recitation of <i>Tiruppali Eluchchi</i> (during <i>Margali</i> ); <i>Tiruppavai</i> (morning during <i>Margali</i> );
<i>Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal-Tirunal</i>	5 days	
<i>Pavithrotsavam</i>	5 days	
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>		Likely 5 days in duration but length not specified during inscriptions in Krishnadevaraya's era
<i>Sahasra Kalasabhishekam</i>	1 day	First mentioned in 1511
<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Karthika Deepotsavam</i>	1 day	First mentioned in 1517
<i>Toppu Tirunal</i>	20 days	Likely discontinued during the reign of Krishnadevaraya or Achyutaraya; resumed in 1544 as a 1-day event during <i>Aani Brahmotsavam</i>

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>Ugadi</i>	1 day	Telugu new year
<i>Deepavali</i>	1 day	
<i>Sri Jayanti</i>	1 day	<i>Uri Adifestival</i> described in chapter 11
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	1 day	
<i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	
Each <i>Ekadasi</i> + <i>Mukkoti Dwadasi</i>		
<i>Mannasamudram</i> Festival	1 day	see chapter 11

\*An inscription occurring in 1527 attributed to Saranu Settiyar (a Tirupati merchant) describes a payment by the donor for the performance of a Sahasranama archana. During this procedure, the 1,000 names of Sri Venkateswara are recited while offering Tulasi leaves and flowers. A Sahasranama archana festival was later endowed and will be described in a subsequent chapter.

### **Achyutaraya**

Following the death of Krishnadevaraya, his brother Achyutaraya, succeeded to the throne of the Vijayanagar empire. The reverence that these rulers held for Sri Venkateswara is further epitomized by the coronation of Sri Achyutaraya in Tirumala in 1530, rather than Hampi. Achyutaraya's 12-year reign proved to almost equal that of his brother's in terms of patronage of the Tirumala temple. He made substantial jewelry offerings to Sri Venkateswara. During his first

visit in 1533, the emperor presented a Makara thoranam, earrings, pendants, and kireetam for Sri Venkateswara, all made of gold and studded with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and pearls. The kireetam is described as set with 709 blue pearls, 30 rubies, 3 emeralds, and sapphires.

Achyutaraya completed several renovations and infrastructure upgrades to the Tirumala temple. He was a notable lover of the arts and extended this patronage to the temple of Sri Venkateswara. In 1531, he deeded a royal classical dancer to be stationed in the temple of Sri Venkateswara and ensured sustenance through food offerings for Sri Govindarajaswami. Achyutaraya recognized and supported the poetic work of Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayyengar (described in Chapter 11). His royal officers were similarly compelled to make grand offerings to the temples of Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami. During Achyutaraya's era, the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples experienced a proliferation of new festivals. These events were a distinction from the rule of Krishnadevaraya during which relatively few new festivals were introduced.

### **New Brahmotsavams**

In a 1530 inscription, Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar is documented as the manager of the gold treasury of Sri Venkateswara. His presence is notable due to the continuity of the Kandadai family.

Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar's father, Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar served Saluva Narasimha and made several notable donations to Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami. The 1530 inscription contains the first mention of an Aavani Brahmotsavam for Sri Venkateswara. The inscription implies the festival was funded by Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar and resulted in the celebration of nine Brahmotsavams per year in Tirumala.

In a 1533 inscription attributed to Narayana Settiyar, a Tirupati merchant, the first mention occurs of a Karthikai Brahmotsavam. Subsequent patronage of this festival is noted in a 1534 inscription documenting a donation by Periya Kommanan Avargal, the wife of a tributary chieftain of Achyutaraya. Throughout Achyutaraya's reign, donations are made in support of this Brahmotsavam, suggesting that this festival was implemented at the direction of the emperor. Some specific details of this Brahmotsavam are evident from inscriptions. Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi were taken to a special flower garden on the seventh day. With the implementation of the Karthikai Brahmotsavam, the Margali festival implemented by Samavai, ~900 years earlier, was discontinued. In 1539, a tenth annual Brahmotsavam was added in Tirumala with the establishment of the Aani Brahmotsavam by Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayyengar (see Chapter 11).

### **Lakshmi Devi Festival**

In 1535, during a visit to Tirumala, Achyutaraya established a new festival for Sri Venkateswara, the Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam. The festival is not specific to the Agamas and represents a Sraddhotsavam. The event was intended to celebrate Sri Venkateswara and Alarmelamangai, the golden image of Lakshmi on the chest of Sri Venkateswara. Conducted over a five-day period, the festival included a Yagasala (for kumbha, bimba, mandala aradhana, and daily homam) and recitation of Sri Suktha (a Rig Veda hymn in praise of Lakshmi), Lakshmi Gayatrimantra, and Lakshmi Sahasranama (1008 names of Lakshmi). These daily recitations were the main aspects of the festival by which it garnered the name, “Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam.” The festival was endowed by Achyutaraya, specifically for his and his family’s merit. This is evidenced by the construction of seven mandapams where food offerings occurred to Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi. These mandapams were named in honor of Achyutaraya, his parents, wife, and son: 1) Achyutarayaswami mandapam, 2) Varadaji Ammanswami mandapam, 3) Achyutaraya-Angana mandapam, 4) Varadaji-Amman Angana mandapam, 5) Kumara chikka Venkadriudaiyar-Angana mandapam, 6) Narasanayakkar Angana mandapam, and 7) Obalachchi-Amman mandapam.

This event became a major festival in Tirumala with the emperor's subordinates and subsequent generations continuing offerings. Two years later (1537), Nami Setti, a Chandragiri merchant, made a substantial donation to the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. His endowment provides additional insight into the Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam. The festival was also implemented for Sri Govindarajaswami and concluded on the day before Vijaya Dasami (the day on which the exile of the Pandavas ended). The Sri Govindarajaswami temple processional vigraha was mounted on Aswa vahana (with the consorts on the Pallaki vahana) and a Sami tree (*Prosopis cineraria* - the tree in which the Pandavas hid their weapons) was ceremonially pierced with an arrow.

### **Gajendra Moksham Festival : An addition to Aadi Ayanam Asthanam**

The temple accountants continued their focus on the grandeur of the Aadi Ayanam Asthanam throughout the reign of Achyutaraya. In 1539, Tiruvanantalvar Kuppayan, a temple accountant, endowed a Gajendra Moksham festival to occur on the day of Aadi Ayanam Asthanam in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. In the Gajendra Moksham story, upon hearing the prayers of the elephant devotee (Gajendra) writhing in the clutches of a crocodile's bite, Sri Vishnu rushes from Vaikuntha to the rescue. Sri Vishnu liberates Gajendra by releasing his Sudarsana weapon on the crocodile.

The story symbolizes the belief that Vishnu will spare no effort to protect those who surrender to him.

This festival began with an Ankurarpanam ceremony. The utsava vigrahas (including Sri Govindaraja, Sridevi, Bhudevi, Vishvaksena, and Sri Sudarsana) were seated in Kuppayan's mandapam and received asnapana thirumanjanam. An impressive array of food offerings occurred during the mandapam celebrations. In addition to rice preparations, 200 tender coconuts, 200 sugar canes, 200 bananas, 200 mangoes, and 5 jackfruits were offered to Sri Govindarajaswami. The ceremonial bathing included sesame oil, milk, yogurt, honey, sugar, ghee and chandanam. Sri Govindaraja was mounted on Garuda vahana and accompanied by Sri Sudarsana and a temple elephant during a ceremonial procession. The festival included fireworks and a recitation of the Gajendra Moksham story from the Puranas. Interestingly, no mention occurs of this celebration for Sri Venkateswara. The Gajendra Moksham festival marked the first mention of Garuda vahana in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple.

### **Celebrating Sri Venkateswara as Rama**

As Sri Venkateswara is revered as the direct manifestation of Sri Narayana, celebrations were held in Tirumala for the various Avataras of Vishnu. During the Vijayangar era, these primarily included Krishna, Narasimha, and Rama. One example of Sri Venkateswara celebrated as Rama occurred in 1535.

During that year, Achyutaraya ordered the establishment of a new festival to be celebrated for Sri Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita on every Punarvasu Nakshatra (the birth Nakshatra of Sri Rama) occurring during a calendar year. As each Nakshatra occurs monthly, in addition to Sri Rama Navami, 13 festivals days were held for Sri Rama annually. On this day, the processional vigrahas of Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were given a snapana thirumanjanam with chandanam and panchamritam (ghee, sugar, honey, milk, and yogurt). Food offerings were made, after which the vigrahas were taken for a procession around the temple accompanied by torch bearers (holding oil lamps).

### **A continually evolving Vasanthotsavam**

The Vasanthotsavam presents a curious festival in the history of Tirumala as it changed forms multiple times. While the first mention occurred in 1360, throughout the Vijayanagar era, the festival changed forms over time. Additional Vasanthotsavams were added to the annual calendar per the wishes of donors. At least two annual Vasanthotsavam celebrations were held for Sri Govindarajaswami. In 1494, a feudatory of Saluva Narasimha deeded food offerings for a Vasanthotsavam held for Sri Govindarajaswami. This festival is described as commencing during the Chittirai Nakshatra in Chittirai month and was conducted over three days. Subsequently, in 1539, Periyasolai, the son of a Tirumala temple accountant,

made a cash donation to endow another five-day Vasanthotsavam for Sri Govindarajaswami occurring in Panguni. The festival is described as commencing with an Ankurarpanam, including a daily snapana thirumanjanam with panchamritham, a sesame oil massage and chandanam decoration of the utsava vigraha, and procession in the Vaikunta Vimana vahana.

Multiple Vasanthotsavams were celebrated for Sri Venkateswara as well. Following the first mention in 1360, another reference appears in 1511. In that year, Appa Pillai, an army general serving Krishnadevaraya, made multiple food offerings in conjunction with important annual festivals. His inscription specifically mentions a five-day Vasanthotsavam occurring in Tirumala. The inscription still suggests one Vasanthotsavam per year. In 1541, another inscription mentions only one Vasanthotsavam in Tirumala, but refers to the festival as Damanarohana Vasanthotsavam. The name Damana or Davanam refers to the *Artemesia pallens*, an herb with fragrant leaves that the Agamas recommend for the worship of Vishnu. The festival likely evolved to focus on the use of these leaves as a seasonal offering to Sri Venkateswara. Six years later (1547), Pendilikoduku Timmaraja, an influential Vijayanagar chieftain, deeded another Vasanthotsavam for Sri Venkateswara. This festival, commencing with Ankurarpanam, was performed in Maasi for five days and included snapana

thirumanjanam for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi and sesame oil massage and chandanam decoration. Timmaraja constructed a garden mandapam where Sri Malayappa Swami and his consorts were taken for snapana thirumanjanam. The presence of two separate five-day Vasanthotsavams in Tirumala is confirmed in a 1561 inscription which mentions Damanorohana Vasanthotsavam and Timmaraja's Vasanthotsavam.

#### **Archakas (Temple priests)**

Some details regarding the Vaikhanasa priests who rendered worship during the Vijayanagar era are offered in inscriptions occurring from 1539-1545. Generally, all donors are referred to by given name, father's name, sub-caste or sect, and gotra (ancestral rishi) in inscriptions. Offerings made by two Tirumala temple priests, Venkatatturaivar and Malaininra perumal are described in these inscriptions. These priests are recorded as belonging to the Kasyapa and Bharadvajagotras, respectively. Of the two, Venkatatturaivar occupied a more prominent role. He is described as the chief priest for all 10 Brahmotsavams and other festivals in Tirumala. He was also prominent in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple. He owned homes in both Tirumala and Tirupati in front of which ceremonial processions of the utsava vighras (of the Sri Venkateswara, Sri Govindarajaswami, and Sri Kodanda Rama temples)

briefly halted to receive food offerings during festivals. Venkatatturaivar's central role is further evident in that nearly half of all remuneration to priests performing the Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam was given to him. He was also entitled to a 3.75-day share of remuneration during the 10 Brahmotsavams celebrated in Tirumala.

Venkatatturaivar demonstrated his gratitude, affection, and devotion to Sri Venkateswara through significant offerings in support of several festivals. Notably, he deeded the establishment of the Ennai aadal ceremony during the Uri Adi festival (see Chapter 11). During this ceremony, the Krishna vigraha is bathed with sesame oil prior to a ceremonial procession. The remaining oil is distributed to pilgrims and devotees. Both priests made significant food offerings in support of the Karthikai, Thai and Aani Brahmotsavams, further indicating that these three festivals were given heightened attention during the eras of Krishnadevaraya and Achyutaraya. The prominence of the Kasyapagotra chief priest is intriguing. Though three generations of these priests are listed in inscriptions, this family is no longer present among the hereditary archakas rendering worship in the Tirumala or Sri Govindarajaswami temples.

**Table 9.2 : Notable festivals occurring during the reign of Achyutaraya : 1530-1542**

<i>Brahmotsavams</i>	13 days	10 per year; Inscriptions mention 4 major <i>Rathotsavams</i> / year. These were included in the <i>Brahmotsavams</i> and were not separate events - notated below
<i>Purattaasi</i>		Included a major <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Panguni</i>		Includes <i>Navalutruand Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Chittirai</i>		
<i>Aadi</i>		
<i>Maasi</i>		
<i>Aippasi</i>		
<i>Thai</i>		Started by Krishnadevaraya; Received substantial patronage during reign of Achyutaraya; included <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Karthikai*</i>		Started by Achyutaraya- received substantial patronage by his subordinates and military generals; included <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Aavani*</i>		Attributable to Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar
<i>Aani*</i>		Started by Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayangar – discussed in chapter 11;

<i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	20 days	continued mention of a 9-day floating festival component, <i>Jalakridai Tirunal</i> ,
<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	24 days	Includes <i>Tanniramudu</i> ; Additional Sampradaya customs included: Recitation of <i>Tiruppali Eluchchi</i> (during <i>Margali</i> ); <i>Tiruppavai</i> (morning during <i>Margali</i> )
<i>Punarvasu Nakshatra celebration*</i>	13 days/ year	For Sri Rama
<i>Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal-Tirunal</i>	5 days	
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	5 days	Referred to as <i>Damanarohana</i> - implying use of <i>Artemesia pallens</i> leaves
<i>Pavithrotsavam</i>	5 days	
<i>Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam*</i>	5 days	Festival focused on recitation of <i>Sri Suktam</i> , <i>Lakshmi Sahasranama</i> , and <i>Lakshmi Gayatri</i> ; Celebrated for both Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami
<i>Sahasra Kalasabhishekam</i>	1 day	
<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Karthika Deepotsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Deepavali</i>	1 day	

<i>Sri Jayanti</i>	1 day	<i>Uri Adi</i> festival (described in chapter 11) which included <i>Ennai Aadal</i> *by chief priest Venkatatturaivar ( <i>Kasyapa gotra</i> )
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	1 day	
<i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	Included <i>Gajendra Moksham festival</i> *for Sri Govindarajaswami
Each <i>Ekadasi</i> + <i>Mukkoti Dwadasi</i>		Utthana Dvadasi offerings for Sri Urga Srinivasa
<i>Mannasamudram Festival</i>	1 day	see chapter 11

\* Represent new festivals established during the reign of Achyutaraya

## 10. AARAVIDU ERA

Following the death of Achyutaraya in 1542, the Vijayanagar empire entered a period of turmoil. A military officer and brother-in-law of Achyutaraya, Salakaraja Timmaraja, attempted to usurp control, thereby provoking a civil war. Notwithstanding their conflict, the Salaka family were great benefactors of the Tirumala temple. Krishnadevaraya's son-in-law, Aliya Ramaraya, fought on behalf of the ruling interests and prevailed. He installed his father-in-law's nephew, Sadasivaraya, as the new king in 1543. Though Sadasivaraya was of the Tuluva bloodline, his reign was dominated by the Aaravidu family. Sadasivaraya was only a nominal ruler with Aliya Ramaraya serving as theregent and de facto emperor.

Aliya Ramaraya's regency came to a tragic end when he was killed in the Battle of Talikota by the Muslim Sultans in 1565. His death marked the beginning of the end of the Vijayanagar empire. The Aaravidu rulers controlled a gradually shrinking empire, with their capital shifting from Hampi to Penukonda, and finally to Chandragiri. Following Aliya Ramaraya's death, his brother Tirumala I ruled from ~ 1565-1572. Tirumala's successor was his son, Sriranga II until ~ 1586. Sriranga's younger brother, Venkata I held together the remaining Vijayanagar empire until ~1614. Venkata I was relatively successful and regained much lost territory from the kingdom's

Muslim neighbours. He was ardently devoted to Sri Venkateswara. Unfortunately, his death prompted a succession crisis with subsequent instability of the empire. The final ruler, Sri Ranga III relinquished the throne in ~1656, bringing an end to what remained of the empire.

From its inception, the Vijayanagar empire was formed as a bulwark against Muslim conquest and destruction in south India. The empire's rulers, including Aliya Ramaraya are credited with the preservation of the Hindu religion and its associated culture and traditions in the region. Despite waning power and constant battles with their Muslim neighbours, the Aaravidu kings remained steadfastly devoted to Sri Venkateswara. During their era, new festivals continued to be implemented in the temples of Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami. The Aaravidu period in Tirumala was marked by the influence of Matla chiefs, Nottakara family and Thallapakam poets (to be discussed in Chapter 11). As an additional safety net, the Jeeyangars and Acharya Purushas established several important events and continued to preserve festivals and traditions for the duration of the Vijayanagar era.

Matla Varadaraja was Krishnadevaraya's other son-in-law and a close ally of Aliya Ramaraya. In 1544, he visited Tirumala and made several food offerings in support of the 10 Brahmotsavams, Parveta Utsavam,

and Vijay Dasami celebrations. His nephew, Matla Kumara Anantaraja deeded the last golden offerings of the Vijayanagar era to Sri Venkateswara. In 1628, Kumara Anantaraja presented a gold Aswa vahana, gaja vahana, Samara Bhupala (war chariot) vahana, padma peetham, and ratna (gem-stone) kireetam. He built a foot path to ascend the hills with a rest tower (Gali gopuram) for pilgrims. Though the Matla family did not deed new festivals, their military prowess extended protection to ensure those previously established were conducted despite the waning empire.

### **Pallavotsavam**

The Pancharatra Agama mentions another festival referred to as Pallavotsavam. In 1545, Vitthalesvara, a chieftain of the Aaravidu rulers, made a donation of three villages for the implementation of a 5-day Pallavotsavam festival for Sri Venkateswara in Vaikasi month. This donation was made under the guidance of the Bhavanacharya Acharya Purusha, Kandadai Sri Rangacharya. The festival commenced with Ankurarpanam and was performed by a team of eight priests. An additional group of participants were present to recite Venkateswara Sahasranama, Vedas, and Divya Prabhandam including Tiruvaymoli. A snapana thirumanjanam was performed for the processional vigrahas on each day. A large amount of chandanam was allocated for a thick coating for Malayappa Swamiduring the snapana thirumanjanam.

As with all major festivals, a Yagasala was instituted with kumbha, bimba, mandala aradhana and homam. The kumbha aradhana was distinct from that described in other major festivals. While naivedyam, or food offerings, are common across all festivals, the Pallavotsavam included 100 lemons in addition to the more traditional coconuts and bananas. Hindu traditions assign soothing properties to lemons when incorporated into religious functions. By offering lemons to the kumbha, the intent was to bring cooling softness to the festival which was conducted during very hot weather.

The main aspect of the Pallavotsavam was a special mandapam with a central, cushioned bedding for an utsava vigraha. As there is no mention of Sridevi or Bhudevi in the inscription, the festival may have been focused on Koluvu Srinivasa. The cushion consisted of peacock feathers, silks, Vetiver and jasmine flowers. Vetiver is the highly fragrant and aromatic dried root of the *Plectranthus vettiveroides* plant. The Agamas describe the root as a sugandha dravya and Ayurveda assigns medicinal benefit when it is ingested. During the Pallavotsavam, the utsava vigraha was placed in a mandapam and on a cushioned bed decorated with jasmine flowers and Vetiver. A reading of the Venkateswara Mahatyam then commenced, signifying the appearance of Sri Venkateswara.

In 1547, a second Pallavotsavam was established for Sri Venkateswara occurring in the Maasi month. This festival was endowed by another Acharya Purusha, Srinivasa Iyengar, the son of Kumara Tattayangar. The festival lasted five days and differed from the first Pallavotsavam. The second festival focused on the offering of fruits. For example, 3,000 mangoes, ~3000 kumquats, 1,500 bananas, 1,500 mandarins, 600 sugar canes, 600 wood apples, 600 musk melons, 300 coconuts, 300 jambo, 300 black jambo, 300 dragon fruits, 300 pomegranates, 300 mimusops, 300 somakanai (another type of sugar cane), and 30 jackfruits were offered. The second Pallavotsavam included ceremonial procession on the Tiruchchi and Vaikunta Vimana vahanams.

In 1564, a Pallavotsavam festival was also implemented for Sri Govindarajaswami.

### **Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam**

The Agamas require a cleaning ceremony, or Aalaya Sudhi, to be conducted prior to commencing major festivals. The vigrahas, main temple and structures are washed and cleaned. These include the main and smaller shrines, vahanas, gopura, and dhvajasthambham. A fragrant paste is prepared with sugandha dravyas and applied to components of the temple. A canopy referred to Vithaanam is typically hung above the main vigrahas inside the temple. Per Vedic traditions, homam and other religious events must be conducted under a covering which serves as

a barrier from rain or other inclement materials which may fall from above. During the Aalaya Sudhi, this canopy is changed.

In Tirumala, this festival is referred to as Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam and was first mentioned in 1544. During this festival, the entire body of Sri Venkateswara is covered such that even the face is not visible. This is intended to prevent dust or cleaning water from touching his body. In 1544, Periya-Nagu Settiyar, a Tirupati merchant made a large cash donation to be used towards conducting several festivals. The inscription specifies preparation of panchamritam for Sri Venkateswara as a rest offering once the coverings are removed during the Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam. In 1547, Vada Tiruvenkata Jeeyar, the Tirumala Jeeyangar, made a cash donation to ensure food offerings during the Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam. The inscription describes this event as occurring prior to each of the 10 Brahmotsavams. In 1594, Koyil Kelvi Annan Ramanuja Jeeyar made another donation towards food offerings during this festival. The event is not mentioned in inscriptions prior to 1544. Given it is a compulsory activity, these donations may have signified the transformation of the Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam from a minor ritual into a major festival.

### **Sahasra-naamarchana Festival**

The Puranas describe recitation of Vishnu's names as a form of meditation and method by which

one overcomes ignorance and attains knowledge of God and the true self. During the Vijayanagar era, the recitation of the 1008 names of Sri Venkateswara, or Sahasra-namaarchana, during which flowers and tulasi leaves were offered, was a major daily ritual. The Sahasra-namaarchana is frequently mentioned and its importance is best encapsulated in an inscription occurring in 1533. During Achyutaraya's visit to Tirumala, the emperor himself performed the Sahasra-namaarchana while the priests stood beside him reciting the 1008 names.

Given the significance of the Sahasra-namaarchana, the implementation of a related festival is not surprising. In 1551, Surappa Nayakkar, a Vijayanagar general, granted one village for the purpose of conducting a five-day Sahasra-namaarchana festival in Maasi. The event began with Ankurarpanam and included kumbha, bimba, mandala aradhana and homam. The kumbha aradhana consisted of eight main pots for which 15 separate temporary images were consecrated. In eight directions around the kumbha, Ashtamangala or eight images were placed to signify auspiciousness and success. Per the Pancharatra Agama, these are Srivatsa, Kumbha, Bheri (drum), Darpana (Mirror), Matsyayugmam (two fish), Sankha (conch), Chakra, and Garuda. Images of Soma (Chandra or moon), Sridevi (Lakshmi), and Bhudevi (Earth) are also mentioned for the Sahasra-namaarchana. Incorporation of these temporary images

was a practice common across all kumbha aradhana procedures occurring in Tirumala during the Vijayanagar era. In kumbha aradhanas accompanying other Tirumala festivals, Soma was compulsory while Sesa, Brahmaor Brihaspati images were frequently included.

The main festival was conducted over three days, during which a daily panchamrita snapana thirumanjanam was performed for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi. The festival included specific daily food offerings for Sri Varaha Swami in addition to Nalayira Divya Prabhandham recitations. Ceremonial processions involved Garuda, Sesa and Pallayamtulam vahanas. The central focus of the festival included daily recitations of 1008 names. The donor specified that the Archana was to be conducted with jasmine, night lotus and red lotus flowers. Ahomam occurred on each of the three main days and included the offering of sesame seeds and ghee into Agni. The Vedas describe sesame seeds as emanating from the body of Vishnu and therefore of utmost purity. Sesame seeds are first offered to remove impurities associated with the establishment of the sacrificial fire. Ghee is then poured into the fire accompanied by Veda mantra recitation. Though not specifically mentioned in inscriptions, the homam may have been accompanied by recitation of the 1008 names during this festival.

### **Ratha Saptami**

The Vedas emphasize worshipping of the Sun as the bestower of enlightenment and the manifestation of Brahman. The Sun, or Surya, is symbolized as sitting on a 12-spoked, single wheel chariot drawn by 7 horses. Each spoke represents a Zodiac with the wheel constituting a year. The horses signify the days of the week or colors of the rainbow. The motion of this symbolic chariot towards the northern hemisphere is considered to begin on the seventh day (Saptami) of Thai (or the lunar month, Magha) and is celebrated by Hindus as the birthday of Surya. This festival day, Ratha Saptami, is traditionally celebrated in Sun temples, but was implemented in 1564 in Tirumala for Sri Venkateswara.

A Niyogi, Karanikam Appalayyar, instituted the Ratha Saptami in Tirumala and a Pallavotsavam for Sri Govindarajaswami. The Ratha Saptami was only a one-day festival but was celebrated with special grandeur. The event commenced with Ankurarpanam after which Bali offerings were made in the eight corners of Tirumala. This included placement of cooked rice to satiate the Ashtadikpalakas (gods who control the eight directions: Indra, Agni, Sani, Kubera, Nairuta, Varuna, Vayu, and Yama). A procession was then held for Sri Sudarsana vigraha. As part of the festival, homam was conducted and Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi received a sesame oil massage followed by snapana thirumanjanam and

Churnabhishekam. This festival marks the first mention of Surya Prabha vahana, on which Sri Malayappa Swami was mounted in the early morning for a ceremonial procession. In the evening, Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi rode the Vaikunta Vimana vahana.

**A flower kireetam for Sri Venkateswara and flower festival for Sri Govindarajaswami**

Once started, festivals were rarely discontinued throughout the Vijayanagar era. If funding was interrupted, new donors or donations filled the void. One example occurred in 1583. The Aippasi Brahmotsavam was first implemented in 1429 by Devaraya II and was performed continuously. In 1583, Ettur Tirumalai Kumara Tatacharyar Annan, an Acharya Purusha, granted four villages to implement several festivals. This Acharya Purusha was highly respected and his disciples included emperor Venkata I (whose statue still stands in Tirumala). While most inscriptions in support of other festivals describe only food or related offerings in conjunction with their respective event, this one described funding to support all aspects of the Aippasi Brahmotsavam. The inscription serves as evidence that the initial grant was interrupted, and the donor acted to ensure continuity of the event.

In addition to the renewed Brahmotsavam, Annan's donation specified two additional adjunct events. First, he directed another festival to occur on

the Thursday preceding the start of the Aippasi Brahmotsavam. During this festival, a flower kireetam adorned Sri Venkateswara. Many special food offerings occurred in conjunction with the flower kireetam festival. The following day (Friday prior to Aippasi Brahmotsavam), a special thirumanjanam was performed for Sri Venkateswara. Funding was allocated to ensure 200 civet vessels and 12 rose water pots, saffron and pachcha karpoom were available for the abhishekam. Annan ensured an elaborate array of food offerings for Sri Venkateswara. A flower festival commenced for Sri Govindarajaswami in 1592. Periya Timmappa-Nayakkar, a Tirupati merchant, implemented a four-day flower decoration festival for Sri Govindarajaswami.

The flower kireetam festival was the likely predecessor for the Pulangi Seva currently held on all Thursdays in Tirumala.

### **Jewelry appraisers and their donations**

The offerings of the Vijayanagar emperors point to an advanced understanding of gemstones. For example, references are made to diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, white and blue pearls, topaz and cat's eye gemstones. Valuations were assigned based on purity, size and weight of the stone. In 1614, inscriptions finally shed light on individuals with knowledge of gemology. The Nottakara family comprised three generations of Brahmins who developed expertise in the assessment of gemstones

and other precious materials (Nottam officers). This family served emperor Venkata I and were wealthy and powerful. Their affluence is striking in the offerings that were made in conjunction with their donations including new vahanas, grand food offerings and rare flowers.

The Nottakara family made several offerings in support of the Brahmotsavams. The first donation specified support for the Chittirai Brahmotsavam. Nottakara Venkatayyan established a Vasantotsavam festival to occur on the tenth day of the Chittirai Brahmotsavam. The event occurred in the Vasanta mandapam, constructed by the Pedda Jeeyangars of Tirumala. A Snapana thirumanjanam, referred to as Vasanta thirumanjanam, was conducted in this mandapam for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi. Nottakara Venkatayyan donated silver Sesha and Simha vahanas for procession on the first and third day of each Brahmotsavam, respectively.

Venkatayyan's wife, Venkatamman, endowed a new festival in Tirumala, the Ramayana Pattabhishekam. This event occurred on the day following Sri Rama Navami and the coronation of Sri Rama was enacted. The festival was performed for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, Bhudevi and the vighras of Sri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Sugriva, Angada, Sri Ramanuja, and Vishvaksena. The vighras were seated on a throne, received a thirumanjanam, and elaborate food offerings. The Vayu

Purana was read by a Purana Bhattar (Puranascholar) in honor of the Ramayana Pattabhishekam festival.

In 1627, Nottakara Venkatayyan's son, Narayanan, visited Tirumala and endowed another ceremony to occur during each Brahmotsavam festival. This Vasanta Navami event was to occur on the final day of each Brahmotsavam. A procession included the utsava vigrahas on Pallayamtulam with Vishvaksena and Ramanuja on Tiruchchivahana. A special thirumanjanam (Vasanta thirumanjanam) was conducted. The donor allocated funding to include Palasa flowers (*Butea monosperma*), a beautiful red flower shaped in the form of Agni. These flowers are considered sacred and the wood is used to make spoons and ladles to pour ghee into homam fire. These Nottakara endowments marked the last major donations of the Vijayanagar era.

**Table 10.1 : Major festivals occurring during the Aaravidu era in the Tirumala temple**

<i>Brahmotsavams</i>	13 days	10-11 per year; Inscriptions mention 4 major <i>Rathotsavams</i> /year. These were included in the <i>Brahmotsavams</i> and were not separate events- notated below; Each Brahmotsavam included a <i>Vasanta Navami</i> festival on the final day deeded by Nottakara family
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<i>Purattaasi</i>		Included a major <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Panguni</i>		Included <i>Navalutru</i> and <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Chittirai</i>		<i>Vasanthotsavam</i> on tenth day started by Nottakara donors
<i>Aadi</i>		
<i>Maasi</i>		
<i>Aippasi</i>		Renewed by Ettur Tirumalai Kumara Tatacharyar. Included a flower kireetam festival on the preceding Thursday*
<i>Thai</i>		Included <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Karthikai</i>		included <i>Rathotsavam</i>
<i>Aavani</i>		Attributable to Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar
<i>Aani</i>		Started by Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayyengar – discussed in chapter 11; included <i>Toppu Tirunal</i> on Ankurarpanam day; Occurred twice during each <i>Aani</i> month from 1558-1638
<i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	20 days	Included floating festival component, <i>Jalakridai Tirunal</i> ,
<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	24 days	Includes <i>Tanniramudu</i> ; Additional Sampradaya customs included: Recitation of <i>Tiruppali Eluchchi</i> (during <i>Margali</i> ); <i>Tiruppavai</i> (morning during <i>Margali</i> )

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<i>Punarvasu Nakshatra celebration</i>	13 days/year	For Sri Rama
<i>Koyil Alvar Tirumanjanam</i>	10 days/year	Prior to each <i>Brahmotsavam</i>
<i>Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal-Tirunal</i>	5 days	
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	5 days/two per year-10 total days	Referred to as 1) <i>Damanarohana</i> - implying use of <i>Artemesia pallens</i> leaves and 2) <i>Vasanthotsavam</i>
<i>Pavithrotsavam</i>	5 days	
<i>Lakshmi Devi Mahotsavam*</i>	5 days	Festival focused on recitation of <i>Sri Suktam</i> , <i>Lakshmi Sahasranama</i> , and <i>Lakshmi Gayatri</i> ; Celebrated for both Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami
<i>Sahasra-naamarchana festival</i>	5 days	Started by Surappa Nayakkar
<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	5 days	Started by Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha
<i>Pallavotsavam</i>	2 days	Twice per year; started by Vitthalesvara and Srinivasa Iyengar, respectively
<i>Sahasra Kalasabhishekam</i>	1 day	

<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Karthika Deepotsavam</i>	1 day	
<i>Karthika Vanabhajanam</i>	1	
<i>Deepavali</i>	1 day	
<i>Sri Jayanti</i>	1 day	<i>Uri Adi</i> festival (described in chapter 11) which included <i>Ennai Aadal*</i> by chief priest Venkatatturaivar ( <i>Kasyapa gotra</i> )
<i>Ratha Saptami</i>	1 day	<i>Established by Karanikam Appalayar</i> ; first mention of <i>Surya Prabha vahana</i>
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	1 day	
<i>Sri Ramayana Pattabhishekam</i>	1 day	Started by Notakkara family
<i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	Included <i>Gajendra Moksham festival*</i> for Sri Govindarajaswami
Each <i>Ekadasi</i> + <i>Mukkoti Dwadasi</i>		Utthana Dvadasi offerings for Sri Urga Srinivasa

\*Predecessor to modern Pulangi Seva

## **11. THE THALLAPAKAM FAMILY**

From ~1424 to ~1558, the Thallapakam family served a prominent role in the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. At present, the most famous member is Annamacharya (referred to as Annamayyengar in the inscriptions), whose Telugu and Sanskrit compositions on Sri Venkateswara have become broadly familiar to Hindus in South India. Annamacharya (1408-1503) is artistically depicted in a deified manner as wearing a kireetam and adornments, symbolizing the respect which the Tirumala community continues to convey upon him. He is the earliest member of the Thallapakam family, which over four generations made substantial contributions to the Sri Venkateswara, Sri Govindarajaswami, and other temples in the Tirumala region. The family is best known for their literary compositions, but their philanthropy directed towards the Tirumala, Sri Govindarajaswami and other temples is equally note worthy. The Thallapakam family members were Nandavarikas, a sect of Niyogi Brahmins, but adopted the Sri Vaishnava sampradaya. Temple inscriptions describe their loyalty to Sri Ramanuja and the Sampradaya traditions adopted in the Sri Venkateswara temple, including the Adhyayanotsavam and Nalayira Divya Prabhandham recitations.

### **Pedda Tirumalayyengar**

Annamacharya is credited with writing ~30,000 compositions, or Sankirtanas, (one per day for 80 years), on Sri Venkateswara and has wide spread fame now. However, during the 1500s, his son, Pedda Tirumalayyengar, was the most prominent and respected member of the family. No inscriptions are directly attributable to Annamacharya, suggesting that he was not recognized by the Vijayanagar rulers and did not make substantial financial donations or land endowments. However, multiple inscriptions describe the recognition that Pedda Tirumalayyengar received as a scholar and poet from Emperor Achyutaraya along with his acquaintance to the regent ruler, Aliya Ramaraya. Some Sankirtanas attributed to Annamacharya, are likely to be the work of Pedda Tirumalayyengar. In addition to their writings and musical compositions, the Thallapakam family made enduring contributions to the rituals and festivals conducted in the Tirumala and Sri Govindarajaswami temples, which will be described in this chapter.

During the reign of Krishnadevaraya, only one inscription describes Pedda Tirumalayyengar. This occurred in 1517 when he endowed a relatively modest daily food offering to Sri Venkateswara. By 1530, the family grew wealthier, likely due to the largesse of theart and literature loving Achyutaraya, and Pedda Tirumalayyengar deeded 4.5 villages to the Tirumala

temple for food offerings to occur during all major annual festivals, including the Brahmotsavams. The Thallapakam family owned a house in Tirumala in close proximity to the Sri Venkateswara temple. Pedda Tirumalayyengar constructed amandapamin front of this home for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi to receive a food offering of 108padi (in modern times, ~51 pieces = 1 padi) of aresalu (a South Indian sweet preparation) during the Brahmotsavam vahana processions.

An inscription describes the existence of a Sankirtana Bhandaram, or chamber, within the Sri Venkateswara temple, where copper plates inscribed with the works of Annamacharya were preserved by his descendants. The family promoted the public singing of Sankirtana compositions by ensuring adequate financial and in-kind reimbursement for singers during festivals. The Thallapakam family grew wealthier and leveraged their prosperity to renovate and upgrade the Sri Venkateswara and other temples including reconstructing the Swami Pushkarini, building walls and a Pradakshina Mandapam for the Sri Varahaswami temple, erecting the eastern gopuram for the Tirumala temple, and renovating the Kalyana Venkateswara temple in Srinivasa Mangapuram.

### **Karthika Vanabhojanam and Mannasamudram**

The first new festival implemented by the Thallapakam family occurred in 1537, when Pedda

Tirumalayyengar deeded two villages from which the income was directed to conduct the Karthika Vanabhojanam festival in Tirumala. This festival occurred in the Karthikai month during which both Siva and Vishnu are traditionally honored. Pertaining to Vishnu, the Tulasi plant is worshipped in a forest setting followed by a ceremonial worship to Lakshmi and Narayana. The ritual is followed by a forest picnic, hence the term Vanabhojanam.

Pedda Tirumalayyengar notably promoted other festivals as well. In 1517, an inscription associated with Obalayyan, an officer serving Sri Krishna-devaraya, contains the first mention of a festival, occurring in the Mannasamudram village, that remains an enduring mystery in the history of Tirumala rituals. From 1517-1547, inscriptions consistently mention the occurrence of an annual Mannasamudram festival. Mannasamudram is a village located close to Renigunta (where the Tirupati airport is located). Inscriptions describe both a Mannasamudram flower garden associated with the village and a Mannasamudram water tank in Tirumala. The processional vigrahas were taken from Tirumala to Mannasamudram for one to three days yearly. No details are offered about the event, and it remains unclear as to whether the event occurred in the (present day) village, flower garden, or water tank. After 1547, no further mention of this festival is found in inscriptions, suggesting that it was subsequently

discontinued. The prominence of the festival is apparent in that Pedda Tirumalayyengar paid for a pavilion, Pongal mandapam, to be constructed in Mannasamudram in 1537.

### **Aani Brahmotsavam**

Pedda Tirumalayyengar deeded the implementation of a new 13-day Brahmotsavam to occur in the Aani month in 1539. The reason for him to select this month is unclear but could be because this was one of the few months during which a Brahmotsavam did not occur. However, he directed the start to occur during the Sravana Nakshatra, corresponding to the birth Nakshatra assigned to Sri Venkateswara, and end on Mirgasirsha, his own birth Nakshatra. The 13 days included the Ankurarpanam and Vidayarri days. Every aspect of the festival was included in the financial allocation by Pedda Tirumalayyengar suggesting that neither the temple nor pilgrims or participants bore any cost. These expenses included food offerings, consumable items used in the performance of rituals, the homam, staff expenses (including payments to carpenters, artisans, flag, umbrella and torch bearers, cleaners, repairmen, and servants), and priest and religious functionary compensation. The Thallapakam family ensured the sustainability of this festival. In 1545, an inscription suggests that the revenues from the initial land grant to establish the Aani Brahmotsavam became interrupted. Therefore, Pedda Tirumalayyengar

petitioned Aliya Ramaraya to renew the initial land grant to ensure the sustainability of the Aani Brahmotsavam. The final ritual directly attributable in Tirumala to Pedda Tirumalayyengar occurred in 1545. During the Friday abhishekam to Sri Venkateswara, a separate abhishekam is performed to Sri Alarmelamanga, the golden image of Lakshmi on the chest of Sri Venkateswara. This abhishekam was instituted through a donation made by Pedda Tirumalayyengar.

#### **A five day marriage Ceremony**

Following Pedda Tirumalayyengar, his sons and grandson continued philanthropic activities and also deeded the implementation of new festivals. In 1546, Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha, Pedda Tirumalayyengar's son, granted two villages to the Tirumala temple for the implementation of a new five-day festival, the Vaivahikotsavam, or marriage festival for Sri Venkateswara. Prior to this donation, the only marriage ritual performed for Sri Venkateswara in Tirumala occurred during the Brahmotsavam festivals. The practice of a separate Kalyanotsavam ritual in Tirumala can therefore be credited to Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha.

The Vaivahikotsavam was performed for Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi and Bhudevi and involved the introduction of new vahanas in the Tirumala temple. Each day included a homam and abhishekam consistent with traditional Agama recommendations.

The first day included a procession of the utsava vigrahas on the Hamsa vahana and Chathaka Pakshi vahana, both of which were introduced for the first time in Tirumala. The Hamsa is mentioned in the Agamas as required for processions during festivals. The Chathaka Pakshi vahana is not derived from the Agamas. This vahana was based on the Jacob in Cockoo a large, long-tailed black and white bird which is observed to drink water from rain drops rather than fixed bodies of water. The bird was mythologized by the ancient poet Kalidasa in his master piece, Meghadhuta. The bird became further entrenched in the Hindu conscience through the philosophical works of Adi Sankaracharya who metaphorically depicted it as an ideal spiritual seeker that approaches the heavens to quench its thirst, rather than indulge in worldly comforts. The Chathaka Pakshi vahanawas found in other Vaishnava temples in South India associated with Sri Ramanuja, including the Melkote Cheluvunarayana Swami temple. Tiruvenkatanatha was surely aware of the significance of the Chathaka Pakshi when introducing this vahana in the Tirumala temple. Following these two processions, the utsava vigrahas were placed on a swing where garlands were ceremonially exchanged and the feet of Sri Malayappa

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<sup>1</sup> This description of the Chathaka Pakshi is borrowed from: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/Chataka-bird-sighted-in-Lankamalla-forest/article11262328.ece/amp/>

Swami were washed with milk, consistent with Hindu marriage traditions. The first day of the festival further included a viewing of the Dhruva star, analogous to traditions followed by a new bride and groom.

The second day of the Vaivahikotsavam included a Vasanthotsavam festival specifically including chandhanam scented with karpooram and rose water. On the evening of the second day, the utsava vigrahas were mounted on the Sesha vahana for a procession around the temple. The third day included procession on the Vaikuntha Vimanavahana and a blessing of the newly wed Lord and his wives by Sumangalis, or married women, also consistent with practices followed in a traditional Hindu wedding. The fourth day included procession on the Hamsa vahana and a Pallaki (palanquin) vahana. On the fifth and final day of the festival, the utsava vigrahas were taken for a procession on the Gaja vahana.

The Vaivahikotsavam included several other ancillary activities including daily Sahasranama Archana or worship where flowers are offered with the recitation of the 1008 names of Sri Venkateswara and a rendering of the Venkateswara Mahathyam. As with the Brahmotsavam festival deeded by Pedda Tirumalayyengar, all costs associated with the Vaivahikotsavam were included in the donation by Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha. In 1547, another son of Pedda Tirumalayyengar, Thallapakam Chinna Tirumalayyengar and his son Thallapakam

Tiruvanketam, (Pedda Tirumalayyengar's grandson), deeded the institution of a Vaivahikotsavam festival for Sri Govindarajaswami, identical to the ceremony held for Sri Venkateswara. The family ensured the sustainability of the Vaivahikotsavam. In 1554, Chinna Tirumalayyengar's son re-gifted another village to the Tirumala temple to ensure the continuity of the Vaivahikotsavam as revenue from the initial land grant in 1546 had been interrupted.

### **Krishna's Birthday**

Starting in 1491, inscriptions mention the occurrence of a Sampradaya festival, Uri Adi, which was held on the day after Sri Jayanti, the celebration commemorating the birthday of Krishna. The day of Krishna's actual appearance 5,000 years ago occurred during the Tamil Aavani and lunar Sravana months and fell on the eighth day (Ashtami) of the waning half of the lunar cycle and corresponded to the Rohini Nakshatra. As a result, there is variability across India regarding the day on which Krishna's birth is observed. During the Vijayanagar era, Sri Jayanti, was likely celebrated during Aavani when a confluence of Ashtami and Rohini Nakshatra occurred. Uri Adi festival celebrated Krishna as a butter thief. A pillar was constructed out of bamboo and decorated with silk and cotton cloth. Coconuts, flowers, bananas, and a pot of butter were suspended at the top using ropes. As part of the celebration, individuals ascended the pillar to break the pot emulating Krishna who drew

the ire of his mother, Yasoda by stealing butter. Donors supported Uri Adi by constructing pillars as stops during the procession.

In 1547, an inscription attributes the implementation of Uri Adi in both Tirumala and Tirupati (the Sri Govindarajaswami temple) to Chinna Tirumalayyengar, suggesting that he rejuvenated the festival through substantial financial support. Chinna Tirumalayyengar's donations covered all expenses for the Uri Adi festival include procurement of butter, fruits, bamboo, flowers and payments to artisans and support staff. He further allocated his donation to ensure substantial food offerings to the processional utsava vigrahas as they were taken around the temple to various pillars. Additional donors supported the Uri Adi festival. As described in Chapter 9, the chief priest, Venkatatturaivar (Kasyapa gotra) implemented the Ennai aadal ceremony (sesame oil bath to Sri Krishna) as part of Uri Adi. Based on concurrent donations in support of Uri Adi, it is likely that Venkatatturaivar was close to the Thallapakam family. In 1584, the Acharya Purusha, Tirumalai Kumara Tatacharyar Annan, allocated funding to continue the Uri Adi festival.

In summary, the Thallapakam family established three novel sets of festivals in Tirumala and for Sri Govindarajaswami and contributed to the success of many others over a ~40-year period (1517-1558). Including the literary contributions of their patriarch,

Sri Annamacharya, over 134-year period, the Thallapakam family's impact on Tirumala was profound.

**Table 11.1 : Notable donations by the Thallapakam family**

Donor	Year (appearing in inscriptions)	Item or Festival	Comment
Pedda Tirumal-ayyengar	1530	<i>Mantapam</i> in front of Tirumala home	Food offerings occurred in this <i>Mantapam</i> to Malayappa swami during <i>Brahmotsavam</i> and <i>Adhyayanotsavam</i> processions
		Aresalu padi offerings during: <i>Brahmotsavams</i> , <i>Adhyayanotsavam</i> , <i>Pavitrotsavam</i> , <i>Kodai Tirunal</i> , <i>Toppu Tirunal</i> , <i>Vasanthotsavam</i> , 1008 <i>Kalasabhishekam</i> , <i>Parveta Utsava</i>	These offerings occurred in the temple, rather than his home <i>Mantapam</i>
	1532	Daily <i>Yagnopaveetham</i> and <i>chandhanam</i> ; rose water for Friday <i>abhishekam</i>	
	1535	Reconstruction of Swami Pushkarini; building <i>Nirali Mantapam</i> in Swami Pushkarini	
		<i>Pradakshina Mantapam</i> for Varahaswami temple	
		Building eastern gopuram of Tirumala temple	

Donor	Year (appearing in inscriptions)	Item or Festival	Comment
	1537	Construction of <i>Pongali Mantapam</i>	For Mannasamudram village festival
		<i>Kartika Vanabhojanam</i>	Festival implemented by Pedda Tirumalayyengar
		Cradle for Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, Bhudevi	For use in <i>Brahmotsavam</i>
	1539	<i>AaniBrahmotsavam</i>	Festival implemented by Pedda Tirumalayyengar
	1541	Food offering in front of Thallapakam <i>SankirtanaBhandaram</i> ; perpetual oil lighting at <i>SankirtanaBhandaram</i>	This inscription demonstrates the extent to which the Thallapakam family strived to ensure the availability and sustainability of their poetic writings.
		Food offering during <i>Tiruppali Eluchi</i> and <i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	
	1545	<i>Aani Brahmotsavam</i> offerings: multiple daily food offerings; financial support of <i>Pushpayagam</i> ; decoration of Sri Ramanuja's <i>vigraha</i> ; repair of temple Ratha	These offerings were made to ensure the sustainability of the <i>Aani Brahmotsavam</i> due to an interruption in funding from the first donation in 1539.
	1545	Payment to singers of <i>Sankirtanas</i> during <i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	Food offerings were also made in front of the <i>Sankirtana Bhandaram</i> on each day of <i>Kodai Tirunal</i>

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Donor	Year (appearing in inscriptions)	Item or Festival	Comment
	1545	Payment to scholars for reading <i>Sri Bhashyam</i> in Tirumala temple	
	1545	Friday <i>abhishekam</i> to Alarmelamanga	Implemented by Pedda Tirumalayyengar
	1545	Sri Govindarajaswami temple-daily <i>abhishekam</i>	<i>Yagnopaveetham</i> ; turmeric; payment for singing <i>Sankirtanas</i> ; reading of <i>Sri Bhashyam</i>
	1545	Sri Govindarajaswami temple: food offerings for <i>Uri Adi</i> festival	
Chinna Tirumalayyengar (son of Pedda Tirumalayyengar)	1540	Kalyana Venkateswara temple-Srinivasa Mangapuram	Renovation of the temple and re-installation of <i>vigrahas</i>
	1547	<i>Uri Adi</i> festival	Donations were made to rejuvenate this festival for both Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami
	1547	<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	Implemented for Sri Govindarajaswami
		Multiple daily food offerings in Sri Govindarajaswami temple	For <i>Brahmotsavam</i> ; <i>Vasanthotsavam</i> , <i>Parveta utsavam</i> , <i>Kodai tirunal</i> . Inscription directs food offerings in front of Chinna Tirumalayyengar's home in Tirupati to Sri Govindarajaswami during processions

Donor	Year (appearing in inscriptions)	Item or Festival	Comment
Tiruvenganathan (son of Pedda Tirumalayyengar)	1546	<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	Implemented in Tirumala
		Additional financial support for <i>Parveta utsavam</i>	
		Food and <i>chandhanam</i> offerings to Sri Venkateswara and Sri Varahaswami	Offerings to Sri Venkateswara corresponded to family milestones (e.g. birthdays or annual ceremonies)
Tiruvengatam (Chinna Tirumalayyengar's son)	1547	Financial support for <i>Aani Brahmotsavam</i> ; Butter and food offerings to <i>utsava vighras</i> during this event;	Inscriptions directs the procession of the <i>utsava vighra</i> in front of <i>Sankirtana Bhandaram</i> to receive food, <i>chandhanam</i> , betel leaves and nuts
	1554	<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	He deeded additional villages to ensure the sustainability of the marriage festival in Tirumala
		Additional offerings during <i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam, Vasanthotsavam</i>	
		<i>Brahmotsavams</i>	Prasadam distribution among devotees singing <i>Sankirtanas</i> composed by Annamacharya and Pedda Tirumalayyengar
	1554	<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	He provided additional gifts to support this event in the Sri Govindarajaswami temple

## **12. THE FALL OF VIJAYANAGAR AND COLONIALISM**

### **The Looting**

In 1684, an inscription attributed to Sivaraja Ramachandra Yadamatarav Dabirsa describes a donation of food offerings made to Sri Venkateswara. The endowment specified suddhannam (plain rice) to be offered to Sri Venkateswara. A payasam pot was offered to Sri Varahaswami. An additional list described food shares allocated to temple functionaries. The inscription suggests that the elaborate food offerings of the Vijayanagar era were discontinued with the daily naivedyam reduced to suddhannam. Less than 60 years after the lavish donations made by Matla Kumara Anantaraja and the Nottakkara family, the region and temple descended into chaos.

Following the death of Venkata I, the succession of the Vijayanagar empire became unstable and ended up in the hands of the ineffectual Sri Ranga III who repeatedly lost territory to the Golconda and Bijapur Sultans. From ~1656, these Muslim kings launched multiple raids and ultimately usurped what remained of Sri Ranga III's domain. The Sultans were further pressured by looming attacks by the despotic Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. Both sets of Muslims were countered by the Hindu Marathas who launched their

own invasion of the region. The 1684 inscription likely occurred during a period of Maratha dominance where some attempt was made to restore the temple. Repeated famines occurred in India (during 1630-1632, 1655, 1682, 1684, and 1702-1704) and were superimposed on this violent chaos. Collectively, these wars and famines killed millions of people across the subcontinent.

The Muslim rule over the Tirupati region was traumatizing as is described in the Telugu poem, Sri Venkateswara Vihara Satakamu, composed ~1660-1662. The anonymous author described the state of temples in Tirupati as he begged Sri Venkateswara to intervene and liberate the region from Muslim rule. The poem mentions Muslim conquerors of Tirupati breaking temple vigrahas, spoiling food offerings, transforming mandapams into stables, physically assaulting Brahmins and temple functionaries, destroying vahanas and other temple items, and killing and robbing the masses. The author requested Sri Venkateswara to at least preserve the jewelry offerings of Krishnadevaraya and Achyutaraya. The poem suggests that naivedyam to Sri Venkateswara was reduced to a small portion of rice during this period.

In the darkness that engulfed the region, the French and British hovered over Tirupati like vultures. The Muslim invaders and European hordes were aware of the wealth concentrated in the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples. The importance

of these temples to the Hindu population was also apparent. The new ruling interests understood that preserving the temple was more beneficial to them than destruction. A Faustian bargain was imposed upon the Tirumala temple.

During the era of the Cholas, Yadavarayas, and Vijayanagar rulers, pilgrims were expected to bear no costs associated with visiting Sri Venkateswara. This is evident in the establishment of feeding halls (such as the Ramanujakutam), provision of clean water, and construction of shelters. Donors ensured that all expenses associated with conducting a festival were included in their endowments with no cost share by pilgrims. Though the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples may have had hundis (donation boxes), no inscription includes mention of an event, ritual, or festival being supported by such funds. The temples did not rely on funding by pilgrims. Following the end of Vijayanagar, the land grant system effectively collapsed. Muslim and British rulers did not uphold a central administration by which agricultural yield was assessed with funds diverted to the temple to conduct a festival per donor wishes.

Three Carnatic wars were fought between 1744-1763 between proxy parties supported by the British and French on opposing sides. During these wars, the temple was briefly under the rule of the British puppet, Nawab of Arcot, before the East India Company assumed full control ~ 1748. To siphon funds from

the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples, these Muslim and British rulers of Tirupati implemented a management structure which monetized access by pilgrims. The administration of a temple was handed to a Hindu contract manager who collected temple revenues and paid a periodic fee to the government (either the Nawabs or British government), with the remaining kept as personal profit.

The managers were often corrupt, profit driven, and showed little regard for sanctity. To increase revenues, the cost burden fell to pilgrims. For example, fees were assessed to ascend the Tirumala hills, to see Sri Venkateswara, and to obtain prasadam. The procession of the utsava vigrahas became monetized with pilgrims paying for mounting on specific vahanas. Under this structure, with some exceptions, virtually all festivals and food offerings deeded before and during the Vijayanagar era ceased. Festivals and rituals were largely replaced by an "arjitha" system where events were only performed if a pilgrim paid a fee. Donors who wished to present jewels to Sri Venkateswara had to pay an added amount equivalent to their donation value to the manager, effectively doubling the cost burden. The profit was taken by the government and the manager(s). During frequent revenue shortfalls, prior treasures granted by the Vijayanagar rulers were pawned to pay the annual installments.

The East India Company profited handsomely. The one-way transfer of wealth from Tirumala to the Company was enormous with a ~ Rs 237,000 payment occurring in 1755 alone. Though most festivals, including 10 of 11 Brahmotsavams (and the obligatory Pavithrotsavam and Pushpayagam), were discontinued in Tirumala, three were conspicuously preserved: 1) one Brahmotsavam (occurring in Purattaasi), 2) Anivara Asthanam (Aadi Ayanam), and 3) Mukkoti Ekadasi. On these occasions, the contractor was required to make a pre-defined installment payment to the East India Company. One Brahmotsavam was likely maintained due to pilgrim demand and basic adherence to Agamas, while Anivara Asthanam persisted as it was intended to document annual revenues. Mismanagement was rampant. During one instance, the manager absconded while still owing payments to the British. In 1786-1787, the East India Company documented the theft of 32 jewels of Sri Venkateswara.

### **Festivals during the East India Company control**

In 1801, the East India Company assumed direct management of the Tirumala temple and ended the contractor system. From that point onwards, the East India Company netted all revenues. The subsequent British looting of Tirumala was almost absolute. Whatever remained of temple lands (~187 villages in 1801) was subjugated to British dominion. Upon assuming control, the British Collector, George Stratton, published a report on the Tirumala temple.

The accuracy of the Stratton report is questionable. Europeans were not allowed inside the temple as they were foreigners. It is unlikely that Stratton ever witnessed a festival. He reported having interviewed “Brahmins” but did not specify whether those furnishing information had true knowledge or experience. A later example from 1843 demonstrates that the Acharya Purushas refused to come to government offices to directly converse with British officials. The linguistic barriers were vast with neither party speaking the same language. Even on a cursory glance, the Stratton report has multiple inaccuracies. However, the information still provided some glimpse into the status of vahanas and festivals conducted in 1801.

The Stratton report documented the presence of only 11 vahanas in the Sri Venkateswara temple: 1) Kalpavriksha (a celestial wish granting tree), 2) Andolika (a type of palanquin), 3) Sesha, 4) Sarva Bhupala, 5) Surya Prabha, 6) Andulam (another type of palanquin), 7) Garuda, 8) Chandra Prabha, 9) Hanuman, 10) Simha, and 11) Bala Sesha. Stratton reported a twelfth vahana, “Addala.” However, this was not a vahana, but rather a procession of Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi to the Addala mandapam (pavilion with mirrors). If this record is accurate, the following vahanas (see Table 6.2) were lost by 1801: Aswa, Gaja, Vaikunta Vimana, Pallayamtulam, Hamsa, Chathaka Pakshi, Muthyapu

Pandiri, Samara Bhupala, and Pushpa Pallaki. The priceless silver Sesha and Simha and gold Aswa were also lost. New vahanas (Kalpavriksha, Sarva Bhupala, and Chandra Prabha) were added between 1638-1803. Ratha was not mentioned in the Stratton report but occurred in the Mackenzie Collection (below).

In addition, the East India Company produced five more records pertaining to the Tirumala temple. These documents were intended to serve as an exhaustive description of the institution which became the Company's property. The documents were: Dittam (food offerings), Kainkaryapatti (duties and emoluments of temple functionaries), Sawal-Jawab (questions and answers relating to duties and incomes of functionaries), Bruce's code (template for temple administration), and Paimayishi account (dimensions and measurements of the temple and inventory of vigrahas). There was no effort to analyse information contained within inscriptions or copper plates.

The Bruce's code was designed by the British to extract all temple funds. For example, it required a government official to be stationed at the temple during the Brahmotsavam to continually monitor and siphon fees. A policy to search and seize all funds held by pilgrims who visited the temple was enacted. Pilgrims were categorized as wealthy or poor. The affluent (defined as those making special donations or sponsoring arjitha sevas) were given privileged access while the poor waited in long lines and were admitted

in 50 person batches. These five documents are now generally considered to be authoritative and reflective of Tirumala history. However, they largely represent the degraded situation of the early 1800s and not the Agamas or policies, practices, or procedures of prior eras.

### **The Mackenzie Collection**

The Mysore ruler, Tipu Sultan, formed the final road block against British aggression in South India. With his death during the Battle of Srirangapatna in 1799, South India fell under full control of the British. To better understand its new domain, the East India Company tasked Colin Mackenzie to lead a topographical survey of South India. Given his absolute ignorance of the region, he enlisted native, multilingual assistants. His primary staff members were the Kavali brothers from the Eluru region of modern Andhra Pradesh. With their assistance and over nine years, Mackenzie led a 40,000 square mile survey.

Through a process rooted in coercion, threats, and deceit, Mackenzie and his assistants gathered detailed information on the cultural history, religious beliefs, customs, practices and traditions of nearly all parts of South India. Through this survey, Mackenzie orchestrated a vast looting of thousands of antiquities including manuscripts, statues and images, copper plates, and coins. Many of these items and records are now stored in the British Museum in London.

Mackenzie's survey extended to Tirupati and Tirumala. However, he did not personally ascend to Tirumala due to restrictions on Europeans entering the sacred town. In 1803, his assistants documented a list of 28 festivals occurring in the Tirumala temple. These festivals differed from those conducted during the height of the Aravidu era. As with the Stratton report, inaccuracies and omissions are immediately identifiable in the Mackenzie Collection entry. For example, the Brahmotsavam is not included and Parveta Utsavam does not appear in the Mackenzie Collection, though it is mentioned in the Sawal Jawab. The sources who provided information to Mackenzie's staff are unknown. It is unclear whether this list was intended to be exhaustive or to accurately reflect all festivals occurring in that year. Despite these limitations, the Mackenzie Collection provides some insight into festivals occurring in Tirumala.

**Table 12.1 : Festivals occurring in Tirumala as described in the Mackenzie Collection, 1803**

Festival	Comment
<i>Anivara Asthanam</i>	Referred to as Aadi Ayanam Asthanam in inscriptions
<i>Vara Lakshmi Vratam*</i>	A puja done to Sri Lakshmi in <i>Sravana</i> ; the report describes this as adhered to by Smarthas suggesting it was not performed within the temple

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<i>Sravana Purnima</i>	<i>Upakarma</i> - changing of sacred threads by <i>Yajur Veda</i> adherents. Only a minor observance occurs in Tirumala, suggesting this mostly referred to a predominantly <i>Brahmin</i> household custom and not a true festival.
<i>Gokulashtami</i> (Krishna's birthday)	Inscriptions refer to the birth celebration of Krishna as <i>Sri Jayanti</i>
<i>Utla utsavam</i>	<i>Uri Adi</i>
<i>Ananta Chaturdasi*</i>	A celebration of sleeping Sri Vishnu as Ananta Padmanabha. As mentioned in the Puranas, Sri Krishna recommended observance of this celebration to the Pandavas.
<i>Ganesha Chaturthi*</i>	The appearance of Vinayaka; the report describes this as adhered to by Smarthas suggesting it was not performed within the temple
<i>Deepavali</i>	
<i>Kausika Dwadasi</i>	
<i>Swami Pushkarini Bharalatanva*</i>	A celebration when the Swami Pushkarini overflows with water.
<i>Kartika Purnima</i>	Kartika Deepotsavam
<i>Chakra Teertha Utsavam*</i>	A yearly event held at <i>Chakrateertham</i> near the <i>Silathoranam</i> . Includes <i>thirumanjanam</i> to <i>Sudarsana</i> + <i>Narasimha</i>

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<i>Danur Masa Puja</i>	Observation of <i>Margali</i> and <i>Sampradaya</i> customs
<i>Tiruvadhyayanam</i>	<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>
<i>Pranayakalahotsavam</i> *	Currently, <i>Pranayakalahotsavam</i> is performed on the 17 <sup>th</sup> day of <i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>
<i>Tanni Ramudu</i>	Mentioned in inscriptions as occurring during <i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>
<i>Mukkoti Utsava</i>	Occurs in inscriptions as <i>Mukkoti Ekadasi</i> and <i>Dwadasi</i>
<i>Sankranti Utsava</i>	
<i>Ramakrishnateetha Mukkoti</i> *	
<i>Ratha Saptami</i>	
<i>Sivaratri Kshetra Paalaka</i> *	Performed at the Kshetrapalaka sila
<i>Koyil Alwar Tirumanjanam</i>	
<i>Samvatsaradi</i>	<i>Ugadi</i>
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	
<i>Bhashyakarla Utsavam</i> *	Nine-day celebration of Sri Ramanuja
<i>Chaitramasa Utsava</i> *	
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	The report specifies this as occurring in the lunar month, Vaisaka.

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<i>Narasimha Jayanti Utsavam</i> *	The inscriptions describe celebration of Sri Narasimha as occurring on Vasantha Purnima. The Jayanti occurs on Vaisakha Chaturdasi.

\* These festivals are not described in inscriptions suggesting they were implemented between 1638-1803.

### **The Mahant era**

Direct administration of Hindu institutions by the British government became untenable due to opposition among the U.K. population. While the British populace certainly welcomed the unilateral wealth transfer, concerns grew about the anti-Christian nature of administering idol-worshipping institutions. The government divested control of the Tirumala temple in 1843. In doing so, further chaos and mismanagement ensued.

Ignoring the historic functionaries of the Tirumala temple (such as the Archakas, Jeeyars or Acharya Purushas), the British rulers handed control to the Mahants of the Hathiramji Matham. These mendicants had no historical association with the Tirumala temple but assumed administration in 1843. The Mahants continued the predatory financial policies of the British rulers. Access to the temple by pilgrims was granted in exchange for money. The system of arjitha festivals and prasadam (preparing specific food offerings for

money) was expanded. New arjitha events were implemented in exchange for large fees paid by individuals. These included a condensed Brahmotsavam, Vasanthotsavam, Vahanotsavam (mounting the utsava vigraha on a vahana of donor choice), and Kalyanotsavam. Though it was a major event during prior eras, the Kalyanotsavam was not mentioned in the British era documents. The fate of this event during the British administration is unclear.

The Mahant administrators became embroiled in charges of corruption, mismanagement and theft. The third Mahant, Bhagavan Doss, removed gold coins and special jewels from under the Dhvajasthambam and went to jail for 18 months. Another Mahant, Ramkishore Doss, was prosecuted for misappropriation of Rs. 50,000 and was murdered. A later Mahant pledged to make a new kireetam for Sri Venkateswara modeled after the one presented by Krishnadevaraya. In doing so, the Emperor's famed gift was melted down and destroyed, but no new kireetam was completed.

Despite their short comings, the Mahants were an improvement over the British. Some efforts to restore the Tirumala temple were made by them. Temple infrastructure upgrades were done. The Mahants made an earnest attempt to understand the temple's history by decoding the stone inscriptions and copper plates of the Thallapakam family. Several ornaments were made for Sri Venkateswara, Sri Govindarajaswami and the utsava vigrahas. New

vahanas were implemented by the Mahants. These new vahanas resulted in upgraded configurations for Rathasaptami and Brahmotsavam. For Sri Venkateswara, these included: 1) Silver Tiruchchi, 2) Ratha, 3) gold plated Sarva Bhupala, 4) silver Surya Prabha, 5) silver Garuda, 6) silver Hanuman, 7) silver Aswa, 8) silver Kalpa Vriksha, 9) Hamsa. They further supported the Sri Govindarajaswami temple with the following new vahanas: 1) Sesha, 2) Garuda, 3) Hanuman, 4) Hamsa, 5) Aswa, 6) Bhogi Ratha, 7) silver Surya Prabha, 8) silver Sarva Bhupala, 9) Simha, 10) Gaja.

In 1923, the Mahants documented annual festivals occurring in the Sri Venkateswara temple. Their record provides additional glimpse into festivals observed in the Tirumala temple during the colonial era and reflects additional deviations from those compiled in inscriptions.

**Table 12.2 : Periodic and Annual festivals occurring in the Sri Venkateswara temple during the administration of the Mahants - 1923**

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Paksha Thirumanjanam	Each Ekadasi
Sravana Nakshatra*	Tirumanjanam to utsava vighras on Sravana Nakshatra (Sri Venkateswara's birth Nakshatra)
Rohini Nakshatra*	Procession of Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, Bhudevi in silver Tiruchchi

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Ardra Nakshatra	Birth Nakshatra of Sri Ramanuja; Procession of Sri Rukmini and Krishna utsava vigraha on gold Tiruchchi
Punarvasu Nakshatra	Tirumanjanam + procession of Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman
Chitra Nakshatram*	In honor of the Mysore Maharaja (donors to Tirumala under colonial rule); procession of Sri Malayappa swami in aPallaki
Dwadasi Utsava*	Funded by Gadwal Maharaja- procession of Sri Malayappa Swami in Tiruchchi
Vasanthotsavam *	Three day event
Samvatsaradi Asthanam	Ugadi- procession on <i>Sarva Bhupala</i> *
Nityothsavam*	40 day Utsavam starting on Ugadi ; daily procession on silver Pallaki
Anivara Asthanam	
Deepavali	
Srivari Teppotsavam*	The Mahants resurrected the floating festival as a new event commencing on Phalguna Purnima
Brahmotsavam	The first mention of modern vahana configurations*
	Day 1: Tiruchchi + Pedda Sesha
	Day 2: Chinna Sesha + Hamsa
	Day 3: Simha + Mutyapu Pandiri

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Comment</b>
	Day 4: Kalpa Vriksha + Sarva Bhupala
	Day 5: Mohini + Garuda
	Day 6: Hanuman + Gaja + Vasanthotsavam
	Day 7: Suryaprabha + Chandraprabha
	Day 8: Ratha + Aswa
	Day 9: Pallaki + Sarva Bhupala + Churnabhishekam
Navaratri Utsavam*	A nine-day event modeled after the Brahmotsavam with no Ratha or flag hoisting; this evolved into a second Brahmotsavam during years when an additional month is added to the lunar calendar
Dhanurmasam	1 month – Sampradaya festivals + Mukkoti Ekadasi
Adhyayanotsavam	
Ratha Saptami	*First mention of modern configuration of vahanas: Suryaprabha+ Chinna Sesha+ Garuda +Hanuman+ Sarvabhupala + Kalpavriksha + Chandraprabha + Chakrasnanam
Sri Rama Navami	
Gokulashtami	
Kausika Dwadasi	

\* Not described in inscriptions

### **13. CONTEMPORARY ERA**

In 1933, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (T.T.D.) was constituted and ended the reign of the Mahants. The Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples came under the jurisdiction of the new organization. The T.T.D. administered these temples for the remainder of the colonial era and continues to do so in modern times. Since India's independence, the T.T.D.'s accomplishments for the betterment of the Sri Venkateswara temple and Hinduism are significant. Given this is a contemporary organization for which much information is available, no exhaustive summary will be offered here.

This book traces the history of the festivals of Tirumala. To complete this evolutionary journey, tables are included below to present comparative data on festivals conducted during the Vijayanagar and modern times. For this purpose, festivals from the Aaravidu era, the final Vijayanagar dynasty, are included. The marriage of Sri Malayappa Swami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi was a particularly poignant festival in history and remains a popular event. Therefore, an additional table is included to compare the Vaivahikotsavam of the Vijayanagar era and the SrivariKalyanotsavam of today.

**Table 13.1 : Comparison of notable festivals occurring during the final Vijayanagar dynasty (Aaravidu) and modern era (2023)\* in the Sri Venkateswara temple, Tirumala**

Festival as mentioned in inscriptions	Length	Occurring in Modern era (Yes/No)	Comment
<b><i>Brahmotsavams (and related events conducted during Brahmotsavams)</i></b>	13 days	Yes (caveat)	1) Only 1 Brahmotsavam is performed annually and is 9 days in duration. Order of Vahanas is different from inscriptions. The current configuration was adopted by Mahants. 2) An additional Brahmotsavam is conducted in 13 lunar calendar month years. There is no mention of this custom in inscriptions suggesting it began with the Mahants.
<i>Vidayarri</i> (ceremonial rest day after conclusion)	1 day	No	
<i>Vasanta Navami</i> festival on final day		No	
<i>Navalutru</i>		No	
Kalyanotsavam (as part of Brahmotsavam)		No	
<i>Toppu Tirunal</i>		No	Was conducted on the Ankurarpanam day of Aani Brahmotsavam

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Festival as mentioned in inscriptions	Length	Occurring in Modern era (Yes/No)	Comment
Vasanta Tirumanjanam		No	
Pushpa Yagam		Yes (with caveat)	Different from inscriptions. In Aaravidu era, this occurred during Brahmotsavam. Was resumed by T.T.D as a 1-day function in 1980 to occur several weeks following end of Brahmotsavam
<i>Purattaasi</i>		Yes	9 days length
<i>Panguni</i>		No	
<i>Chittirai</i>		No	
<i>Aadi</i>		No	
<i>Maasi</i>		No	
<i>Aippasi</i>		No	Included a flower kireetam festival on the preceding Thursday.* This evolved into modern <i>Pulangi Seva</i> (held every Thursday)
<i>Thai</i>		No	Started by Sri Krishnadevaraya
<i>Karthikai</i>		No	Performed in Tiruchanur for Sri Padmavati
<i>Aavani</i>		No	
<i>Aani</i>		No	Started by Thallapakam Pedda Tirumalayyengar; Included Toppu Tirunal on Ankurarpanam day; Occurred twice during each Aani from 1558-1638

Festival as mentioned in inscriptions	Length	Occurring in Modern era (Yes/ No)	Comment
<b>Additional festivals</b>			
<i>Kodai Tirunal</i>	20 days	No	
<i>Included Jalakridai Tirunal (float festival)</i>	9 days (part of Kodai Tirunal)	Yes (with caveat)	Kodai Tirunal is not conducted but Mahants resumed a 5 day float festival renamed Teppotsavam
<i>Adhyayanotsavam</i>	24 days	Yes	Includes <i>Tanniramudu</i> ; Additional Sampradaya customs included: Recitation of <i>Tiruppali Eluchchi (during Margali)</i> ; <i>Tiruppavai (morning during Margali)</i>
<i>Punarvasu Nakshatra celebration</i>	13 days/year	Yes	
<i>Koyil Alvar Tirumanjanam</i>	10 days/year	Yes (with caveats)	During Aaravidu era, this was conducted 10/year; now this is done 4x a year
<i>Dolamahotsava-anna-unjal-Tirunal</i>	5 days	No	
<i>Vasanthotsavam</i>	5 days/ two per year- 10 total days	Yes (with caveat)	This is conducted once annually in Tirumala for 3 days. Present Vasanthotsavam only vaguely resembles inscriptions; Was referred to as 1) <i>Damanarohana</i> - implying use of <i>Artemesia pallens</i> leaves and 2) <i>Vasanthotsavam</i>

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Festival as mentioned in inscriptions	Length	Occurring in Modern era (Yes/No)	Comment
<i>Pavithrotsavam</i>	5 days	Yes (with caveat)	Resumed by T.T.D in 1962 as a 3-day event
<i>Lakshmi Devi Mahothsavam*</i>	5 days	No	Festival focused on recitation of <i>Sri Suktam</i> , <i>Lakshmi Sahasranama</i> , and <i>Lakshmi Gayatri</i> ; Celebrated for both Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami
<i>Sahasra-naamarchana festival</i>	5 days	No	
<i>Vaivahikotsavam</i>	5 days	See Table 13.2	Started by Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha
<i>Pallavotsavam</i>	5 days X 2 events (10 total days per year)	No	Twice per year; started by Vitthalesvara and Srinivasa Iyengar, respectively
<i>Sahasra Kalasabhishekam</i>	1 day	Yes	Resumed by TTD (between 1933-1957) as an <i>arjitha</i> festival
<i>Parveta Utsavam</i>	1 day	Yes	
<i>Karthika Deepotsavam</i>	1 day	Yes	
<i>Karthika Vanabhojanam</i>	1	Yes	Resumed by T.T.D.
<i>Deepavali</i>	1 day	Yes	
<i>Sri Jayanti</i>	1 day	Yes (with caveat)	<i>The festival is now called Gokulashtami and includes Uri Adi festival. The Ennai Aadal is still included</i>

Festival as mentioned in inscriptions	Length	Occurring in Modern era (Yes/ No)	Comment
<i>Ratha Saptami</i>	1 day	Yes	Festival was transformed by Mahants to include additional <i>vahanas</i>
<i>Sri Rama Navami</i>	1 day	Yes	
<i>Sri Ramayana Pattabhishekam</i>	1 day	No	
<i>Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	Yes (with caveat)	Referred to as Anivara Asthanam now
<i>Gajendra Moksham festival as part of Aadi Ayanam Asthanam</i>	1 day	No	Was conducted for Sri Govindarajaswami historically.
Mukkotidwadasi	1 day	Yes	
Thirupudiyadhu on Thai Poosam (to celebrate new harvest)	1 day	No	
Ugadi	1 day	Yes	
Vasantha Purnima	1 day	No	Narasimha Avatara is now celebrated on Chaitra (lunar month) Purnima

\* TTD has implemented additional festivals and rituals since India's independence which are not listed in inscriptions or copper plates (and not displayed above). These are primarily conducted under a fee for participation (arjitha) policy. Readers can reference Tirumala.org for additional details.

While some festivals continue during modern times, the character has substantially changed. As a case study, a comparison is presented between the marriage ceremonies of the Aaravidu era

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(Vaivahikotsavam) and present (Srivari Kalyanotsavam).

**Table 13.2 A & B : Comparison of the Vaivahikotsavam (1546) and Srivari Kalyanotsavam (2023)**

**13.2 A - Vaivahikotsavam : Schedule, events, food offerings as contained in Tirumala inscriptions**

Day (5-day duration)	1	2	3	4	5
Archana (1000 names)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tiruvenkata Mahathyam reading	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nachchiyar Tirumoli recitation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tirumanjanam (included sesame oil, rose water, camphor, panchamrita, musk, chandanam)	Yes (tirumanjanam+chandana abhishekam)	Yes (specifically named, Vasanta tirumanjanam)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yagasala events	Bimba Aradhana Kumbha Aradhana Mandala Aradhana Homam	Occurred on all days (homams included payasam offerings)			
Vahana Procession	Chataka Pakshi Hamsa	Sesha	Vaikunta Vimana	Hamsa	Gaja Pallaki

Additional events	Madhuparkam+Dhruva Darsanam+ Panchavarna Peetham +Karpura Harati	Chandana Vasanthotsavam	Ashtanam with distribution of prasadam + areca nuts + betel leaves	Suman gali blessings	
Food offerings (count) *	Appam (51)	Dosai (102)	Dosai (102)	Dosai (102)	Appam (51)
Donations included provisions for: rice, green gram, vegetables, jaggery, refined sugar, pepper, salt, tamarind, mustard, cumin, milk, jackfruits+raw banana (suggesting the vegetable dishes of Alankara Nayaka taligai included jackfruit+raw banana), lemons	Iddali (51)	Paruppuviyal (13 Padi)	Paruppuviyal	Paruppuviyal	Dosai (102)
	Sukhiyan (51)	Alankara nayaka Taligai	Pongal	Appam (51)	Paruppuviyal
	Vadai (51)	Pongal	Areca nuts (250)	Pongal	Pongal
	Godhi (51)	Areca nuts (500)	Betel leaves (500)	Areca nuts (250)	Areca nuts (250)
	Manoharam (51)	Betel leaves (1000)		Betel leaves (500)	Betel leaves (500)
	Aval (68.2 L)				
	Pori (68.2 L)				
	Pongal				
	Dadyodanam				
	Coconuts (28)				
	Bananas (50)				
	Areca nuts (550)				
	Betel leaves (1100)				
Cost to pilgrims (all costs endowed by Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha)	0	0	0	0	0

\* 1 Padi = 51; 1 Marakkal = 13.64 Liters

**Table 13.2 B : Srivari Kalyanotsavam: Schedule, events, food offerings**

Duration	1-2 hours
Archana	No
Tiruvenkata Mahatyam recital	No
Nachchiyar Tirumoli	Briefly
Tirumanjanam	No
Vahana procession	No
Sumangali blessings	No
Dhruva darsanam	No
Yagasala functions	Homam only
Food offerings	Appam (51)
	Laddu (51)
	Vada (51)
	Dosa (51)
	Pongal
	Chakara Pongal
	Pulihara
	Dadyodanam
<b>Cost to pilgrims*</b>	Rs 1000 (per 2 persons)

\* Srivari Kalyanotsavam is an Arjitha event

## 14. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For thousands of years, Sri Venkateswara has fascinated humanity. The Alvars, including Andal, romanticized Sri Venkateswara, while Kulasekhara begged just to be his doorstep. Sri Ramanuja and his followers strived to make his festivals relatable to the Telugu and Tamil-speaking masses. Kings granted the spoils of their victories to Sri Venkateswara and ensured that his meals were grander than their own. Jewelers, poets, military officers, royal advisors, accountants, farmers, and merchants were counted among the many individuals who considered Sri Venkateswara to be the object of their worship and lives. Collectively, they turned divine events, such as the movement of celestial bodies, and mundane milestones, including the new fiscal year, into beautiful festivals. As I studied the history of this amazing institution, I concluded that no group of people could claim Sri Venkateswara as their own.

I wondered how it was that such a rich and amazing history seemed so esoteric and unknown to the masses of faithful worshippers. The story was written on the walls of the temples of Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami, but few individuals had heard of the festivals mentioned here. As I contemplated the answer to that question, I recalled the words of Annamacharya in his famed composition, *Dachuko nee padalaku* (“hide these compositions as they are only intended for your feet”).

I also wondered what Samavai and her Chola, Pallava, and Yadavaraya successors would have felt if they witnessed the progression of history. Would Thimmarusu and Krishnadevaraya, Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar and Saluva Narasimha, the Thallapakam poets, or the Nottakara family consider us to be good stewards of this institution? Over their lives and the centuries that followed, India shined as the wealthiest and most sought-after land on earth. However, India also experienced the darkness of war, famine, and colonialism. Throughout this history, Sri Venkateswara served as a beacon for millions of people.

In English, there is an expression that one cannot go home again, meaning we can never return to a place from the past. However, could we show ourselves Sri Malayappaswami, Sridevi, and Bhudevi in a five-day long Vaivahikotsavam, riding the Chataka Pakshi? Perhaps, the Dolamahotsava Anna-unjal Tirunal or Thai Brahmotsavam might once again be celebrated for Sri Venkateswara. Could Sri Govindarajaswami be seated again in a stone Ratha in the Kodai Tirunal? I remain forever hopeful that Sri Venkateswara's greatest festivals are yet to come.

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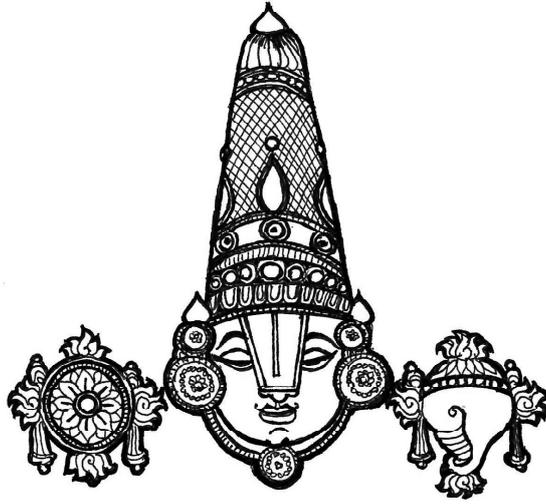
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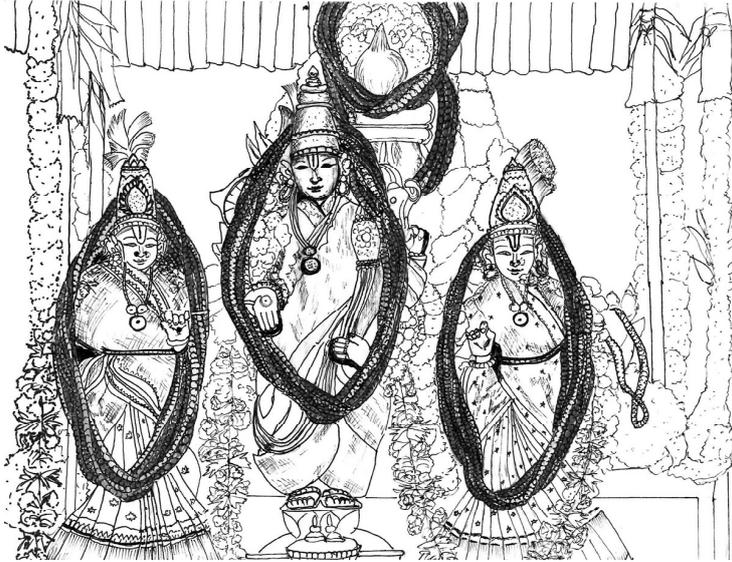
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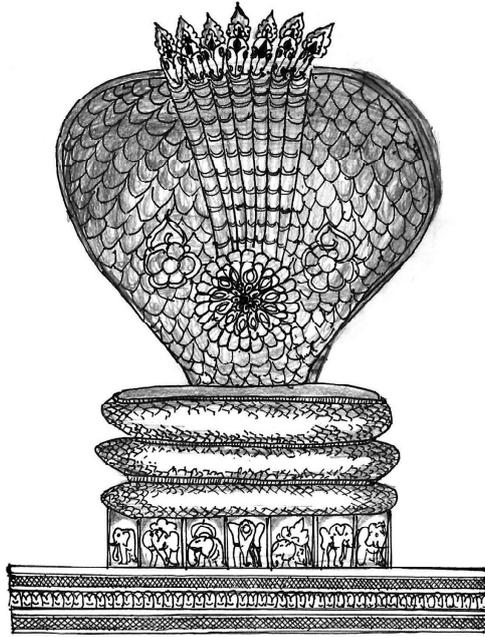
ILLUSTRATIONS



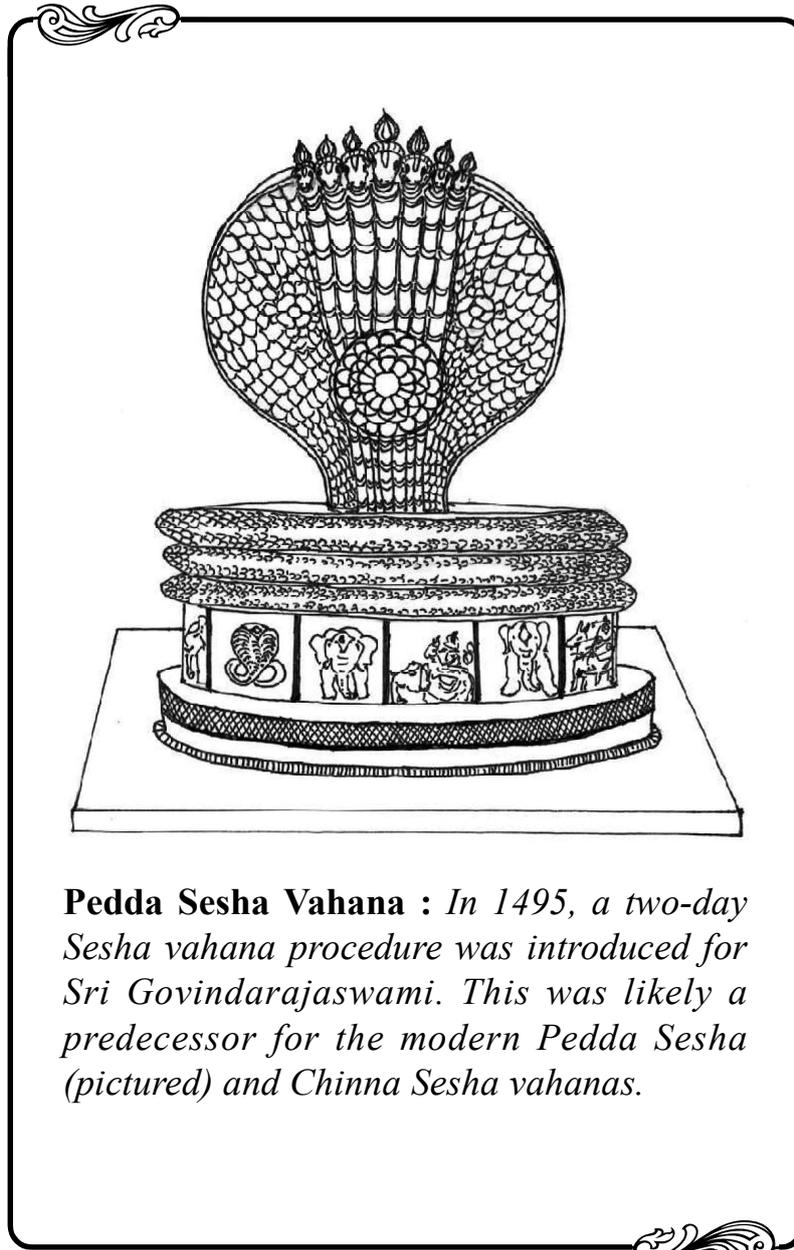
*Camphor, or Karpooram, is a fragrant white substance derived from trees in the genus Cinnamomum. In Tirumala, the material is included in food offerings, theertham, abhishekam water, and as harathi. In the 1400s, it was incorporated into the Urdhva Pundram for which Sri Venkateswara is widely recognized now.*



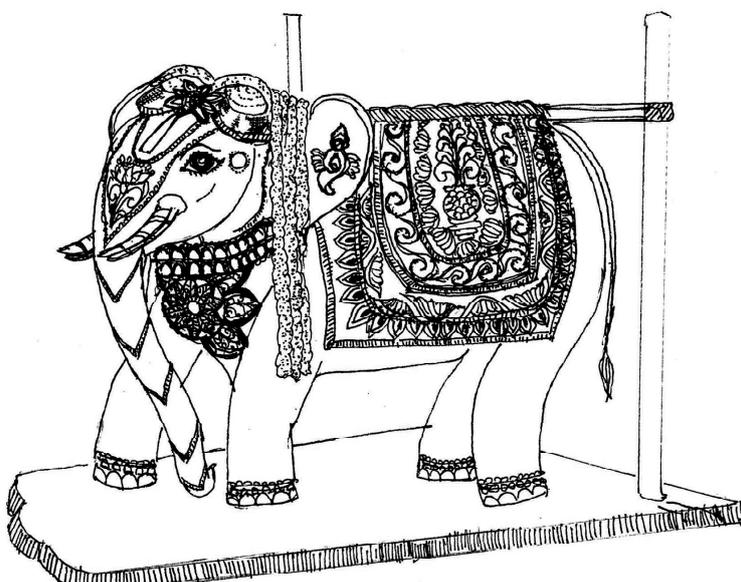
**Pavithrotsavam** : *The Pavithrotsavam festival was introduced in the Sri Venkateswara temple in 1464. This event is required by the Agamas and was conducted to absolve any errors during rituals or festivals occurring during the previous year. Silk pavithram threads were placed on all of the vigrahas and important structures in the temple until the end of the 5-day event. The event was discontinued after the fall of the Vijayanagar empire but reintroduced in 1962 by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.*



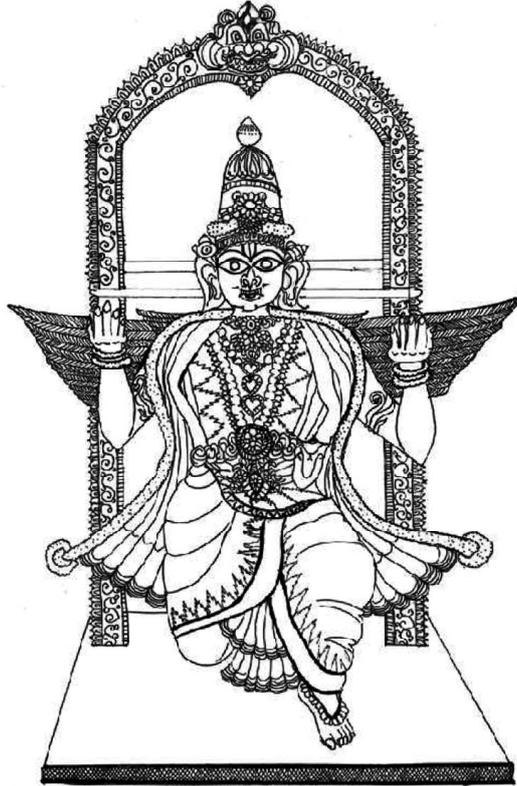
**Sesha Vahana :** *The Sesa vahana was first mentioned in stone inscriptions in 1494 as part of the Brahmotsavam festivals for Sri Govindarajaswami. In 1495, a two-day Sesa vahana procedure is mentioned for Sri Govindarajaswami (perhaps a predecessor of the modern Pedda and Chinna Sesa Vahanams*



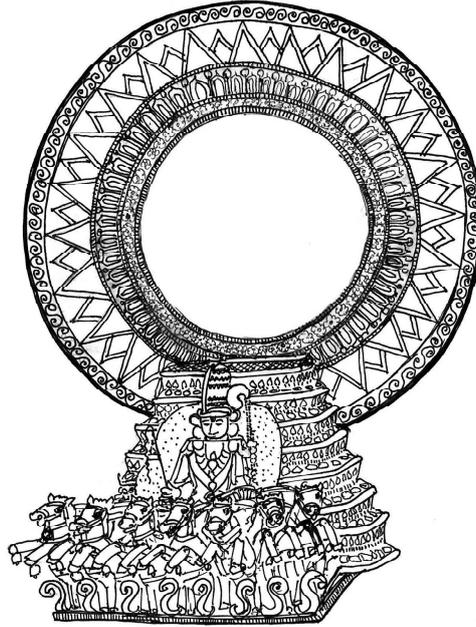
**Pedda Sesha Vahana :** *In 1495, a two-day Sesha vahana procedure was introduced for Sri Govindarajaswami. This was likely a predecessor for the modern Pedda Sesha (pictured) and Chinna Sesha vahanas.*



*In 1512, the first inscriptional mention of the Gaja (elephant) vahana occurs. This vahana is first mentioned as used in the Brahmotsavam festival for Sri Govindarajaswami.*

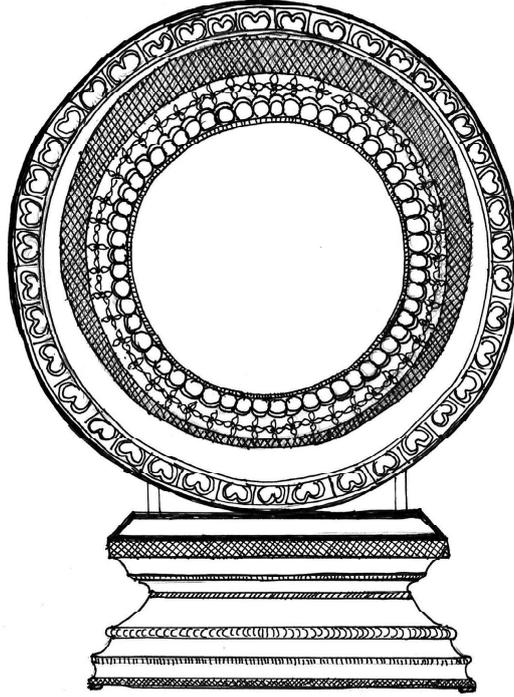


**Garuda Vahana :** *The Garuda vahana represents the most important vahana in the Brahmotsavams. Mention of the Garuda vahana first occurred in the Sri Venkateswara temple in 1530. In 1539, the vahana was mentioned as used for Sri Govindarajaswami temple during the Gajendra Moksha festival.*



**Surya Prabha Vahana:** *The Vedas emphasize worshipping the Sun as the bestower of enlightenment and the manifestation of Brahman. The Sun is symbolized as sitting on a 12-spoked, single wheel chariot drawn by seven horses. The festival day, Ratha Saptami, celebrates the motion of this symbolic chariot towards the northern hemisphere. The festival was implemented for Sri Venkateswara in 1564 during which Sri Malayappa Swami was mounted on the Surya Prabha vahana.*

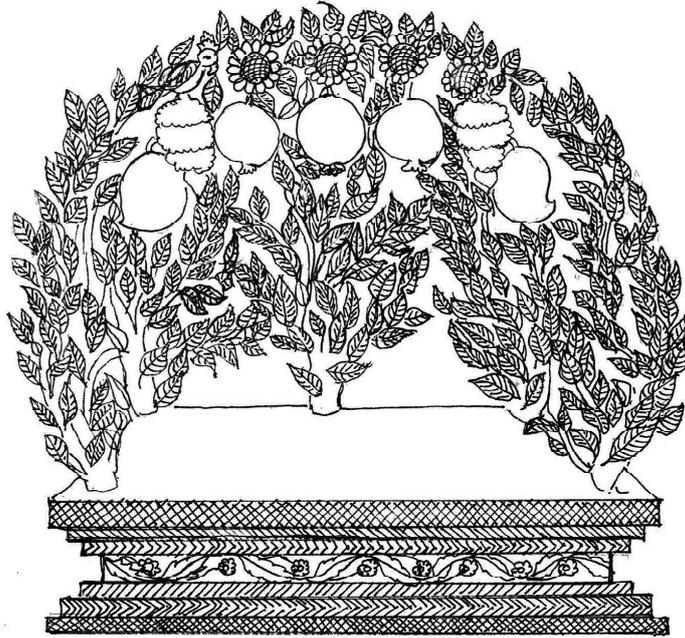




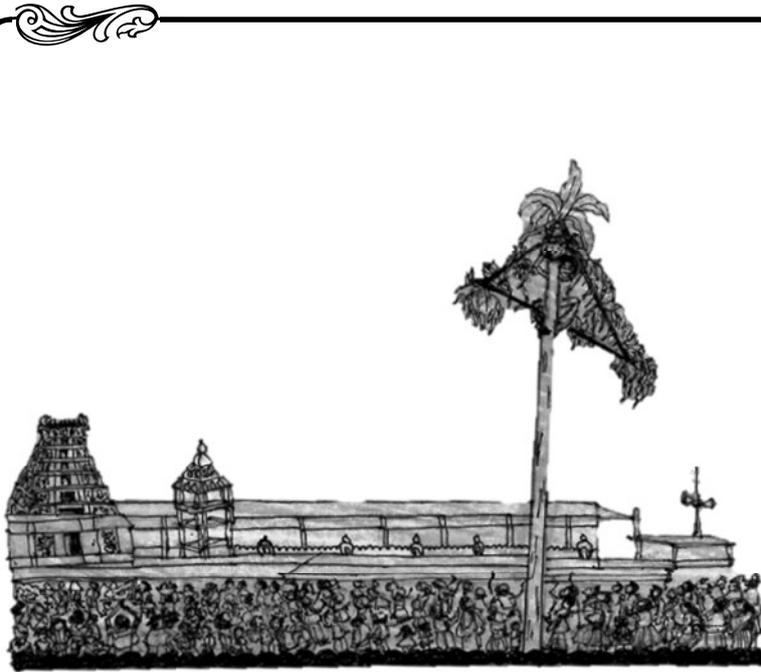
**Chandra Prabha Vahana :** *The Chandra Prabha vahana was likely introduced for Sri Venkateswara between 1638-1801 and is currently used on the seventh day of the annual Brahmotsavam festival. This vahana is not mentioned in the available inscriptions of the Sri Venkateswara or Sri Govindarajaswami temples, though many inscriptions were damaged or otherwise lost.*



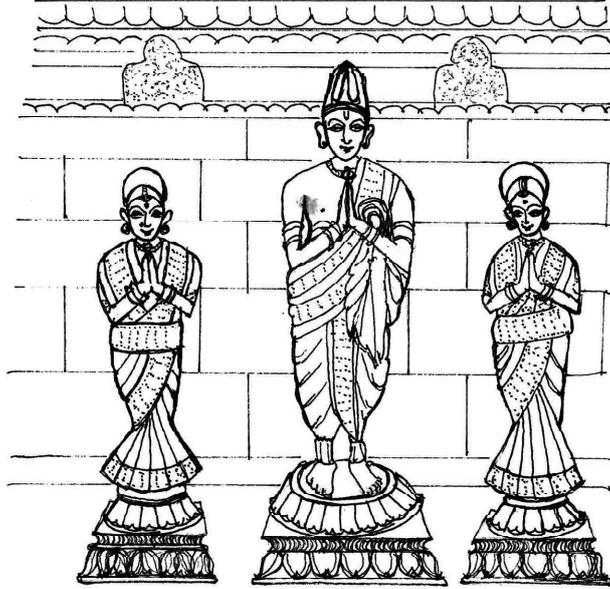
*The Hamsa Vahana was first introduced in Tirumala in 1546 by Thallapakam Tiruvenkatanatha as part of a five-day marriage ceremony (Vaivahikotsavam) festival. The vahana is not mentioned in an 1801 inventory conducted by the British colonialists, suggesting it was lost after 1638. The Mahants later reintroduced the Hamsa vahana in both the Sri Venkateswara and Sri Govindarajaswami temples.*



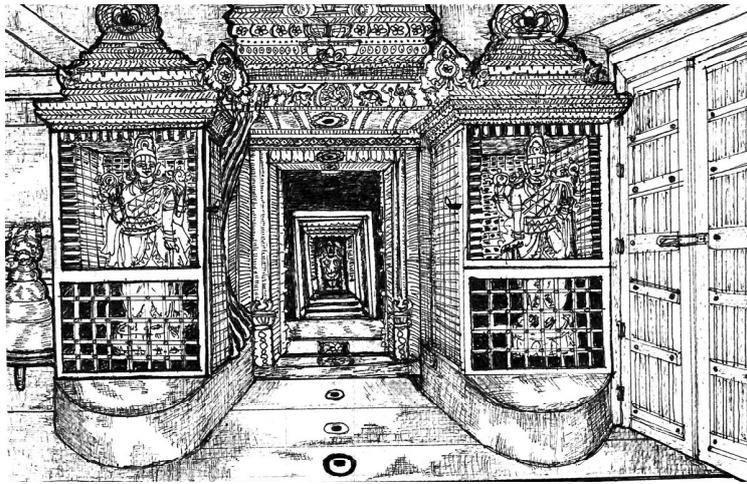
*The Kalpa Vriksha (celestial wish-granting tree) vahana does not appear in Vijayanagara era inscriptions. The vahana is first mentioned in an 1801 inventory conducted by the British colonialists suggesting that it was introduced in Tirumala after 1638.*



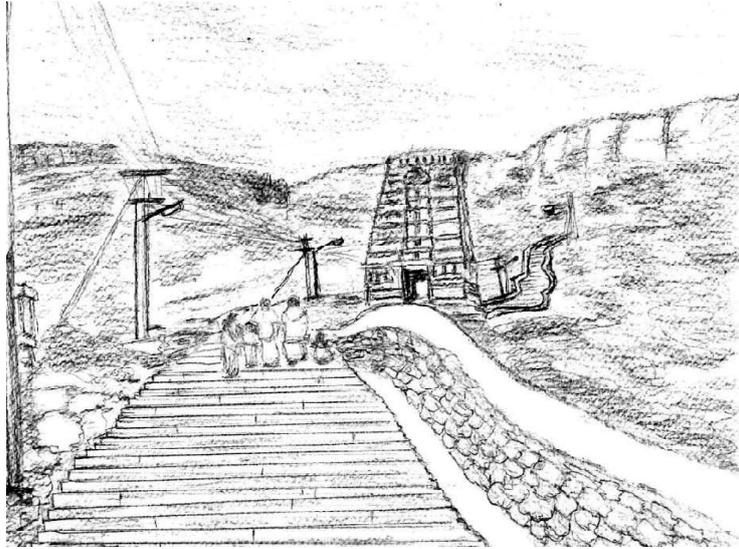
*The celebration of the birth of Krishna and the associated Uri Adi festival was a major celebration during the Vijayanagar era. The Thallapakam family ensured the sustainability of this celebration.*



*Krishnadevaraya and his queens, Tirumala Devi and Chinna Devi, are enshrined in the Tirumala complex as metallic sculptures. The emperor's gifts to Sri Venkateswara included priceless ornaments, gem-studded silk clothing, and gold-plating of the dome over the main sanctum. During Krishnadevaraya's reign, an additional Brahmotsavam was implemented corresponding to his own birth month (Thai). During his twenty-year rule, additional festivals were introduced including the Sahasra Kalasabhishekam and Karthika Deepotsavam.*



*Kulasekhara, one the Alvars, was a member of the ancient Chera royal family. His compositions include the Tamil poem, Perumal Tirumoli, and the Sanskrit work, Mukundamala. Kulasekhara begged to become Sri Venkateswara's doorstep since even the gods yearn to cross over to be near their beloved Lord. Hence the final doorstep before the entrance to the innermost sanctum of Sri Venkateswara is referred to as the Kulasekhara Padi.*



*In 1628, Matla Kumara Anantaraja visited Tirumala and presented a gold Aswa vahana, Gaja vahana, Samara Bhupala vahana, padma peetham, and Ratna kireetam to Sri Venkateswara. He built a foot path to ascend the hills with a rest tower (Gali gopuram) for pilgrims. The Matla family (including the son-in-law of Krishnadevaraya, Matla Varadaraja), were notable protectors of Tirumala in the waning days of the Vijayanagar era.*

# ANNEXURE

## A

- Aadi Ayanam Asthanam
- Aaravidu dynasty
- Abhishekam
- Accountants
- Acharya Purushas
- Achyutaraya
- Adhyayanotsavam
- Agama
  - Agama (Vaikhanasa) - Introduction
  - Agama (Pancharatra) - Introduction
- Agni
- Aliya Ramaraya
- Alvars
- Ankurarpanam
- Annamacharya
- Appa Padi (food offering)
- Archakas
- Aresalu (atirasa) food offering
- Arjitha system
- Artisans
  - Brass artisans
  - Carpenters
  - Potters
  - Role in festivals

- Ashtadikpalaka
- Ashtamangala

**B**

- Bhavanacharya  
(Acharya Purusha)
- Brahmotsavams (include references to every mention of each Brahmotsavam)
- *Agama description*
- *Implementation of Brahmotsavams (by year)*
- *Chakrasnanam*
- *Churnabhishekam*
- *Depiction of Krishna*
- *Order of events (and evolution)*
- *Pushpayagam*
- *Recommended length*
- *Vahanas*
- *Vidayarri*
- *Yagasala*
- Bruce's Code
- Aadi
- Aani
- Aavani
- Aippasi
- Chittirai
- Karthikai
- Maasi
- Margali
- Panguni
- Purattaasi

**C**

- Calendar (Solar)
  - Ayana
    - Dakshinayana
    - Sankranti
    - Uttarayana

- Sidereal calendar months
- Calendar (Lunar)
  - Nakshatras
- Camphor (Karpooram)
  - Date of introduction
  - Genus (Cinnamomum)
  - Use
    - Abhishekam
    - Harathi
    - Naamam
    - Theertham
- Carnatic Wars
- Chandanam (Sandalwood)
- Chathaka Pakshi
- Chinna Tirumalayyengar
- Cholas
- Cow

## **D**

- Dance
  - Grants for performing dance
  - Muttukarar
  - Nattuvar
  - Sadir Attam
  - Temple dancers
  - Yakshaganam
- Devaraya II
- Dittam

- Dolamahotsava-anna-Undalu Tirunal  
(swing festival)
- Dhvajasthambham

**E**

- East India Company
- Emperumanadiyar
- Ennai Aadal
- Ettur Tirumalai Kumara Tatacharyar Annan

**F**

- Flower festival (Govindarajaswami)
- Flower kireetam (Sri Venkateswara)
- Food offerings (See Prasadams)
  - Anna Prasadams (rice)
    - Dadhyodanam
    - Gudannam
    - Kadamba Lehiyam
    - Kulutannam
    - Mudhgannam
    - Sharkarannam
    - Suddanam
    - Tilannam
    - Tintrinyannamu
  - Bhakshya (solid foods)
    - Gudapupam
    - Mashapupam
    - Pruthukam

- Tirumala and Govindarajaswami temple food offerings
- Fruit offerings
  - Bananas
  - Coconuts
  - Jackfruits
  - Pallavotsavam

### **G**

- Gaja vahana
- Gajendra Moksham Festival
- Garuda vahana
- Generals (Vijayanagar; donations by)
- Ghee
- (Sri) Govindarajaswami temple

### **H**

- Homam

### **J**

- **Jeeyangar**
- Jewelry appraisers
- **Jewelry offerings**
- Kainkarya Patti
- Kalyana Venkateswara temple
- Kalyanotsavam
- Kamadhenu
- Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar
- Kandadai Sri Rangacharya
- Karanam

- Karanikam Appalayyar
- Karthika Deepotsavam
- Karthika Vanabhojanam
- Kavali Brothers
- Krishnadevaraya
- Kodai Tirunal
- Floating festival
- Koluvu Srinivasa
- Koyil Alvar Thirumanjanam
- Kumara Kandadai Ramanuja Iyengar

**L**

- Lakshmi Ammangar
- Lakshmi Devi Festival
- Landowners (donations by)

**M**

- Mackenzie Collection
- Mahants (Hathiramji)
- Malayappa Swami
- Mandapams
- Mannasamudram
- Marathas
- Matla (family)
- Merchants (offerings by)
- Melkote Cheluvunarayana swami
- Military officers (donations by)

**N**

- Naamam

- Sri Churnam
- Urdhva Pundram
  - Date of introduction
  - Shape (Y vs U)
  - Source of material
- Nadhaswaram
- Naivedyam
- Nalayira Divya Prabhandam
- Navalutru
- Niyogi
- Nottam
- Nottakara family

**O**

- Obalayyan

**P**

- Paimayishi Account
- Palasa flowers
- Pallavas
- Pallayamtulam
- Panakam
- Pancharatra Agama
- Panchamritam
- Parveta Utsavam (hunting festival)
- Pavithrotsavam
- Pavithram threads
- Pedda Tirumalayyengar
- Pendilikoduku Timmaraja (vasanthotsavam)

- Prasadam (food offerings)
  - Anna Prasadam (rice)
    - Agama requirements
    - Iterations
  - Bhakshya (solid food)
  - List of prasadam during Vijayanagar era
  - Pallavotsavam (fruit offerings)
  - Samavai and first offerings
- Prathivadibhayankaram
- Pulangi seva
- Purana Bhattar

## **R**

- **Rama**
  - **Punarvasu**
  - Sri Rama Navami
  - **Sri Rama Pattabhishekam Festival**
- **Ramanuja**
- Ratha Saptami
- Revenue collection (for festival sustainability)
- Rohini Nakshatra
- Rose water

## **S**

- Sadasivaraya
- Sahasra Kalasabhishekam
- Sahasra-naamarchana Festival
- Saluva Narasimha
- Samavai

- Bhoga Srinivasa
- Brahmotsavams (establishment)
  - Purattasi
  - Margali
- Deepam (establishment)
- Thirumanjanam
- **Sampradaya festivals**
  - **Adhyayanotsavam (see separate)**
  - Alvars
  - Margali (importance)
  - Nalayira Divya Prabandham
    - Kulasekhara
    - Nachiyar Tirumoli
    - Tirupalli Eluchi
    - **Tiruppavai**
  - Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatham
- Sangama Dynasty
- Sankirtana Bhandaram
- Sankranti
- Sawal-Jawab
- Sesha Vahana
- Sugandha dravya
- Sravana Nakshatra
- Sri Jayanti
- Sri Ranga II
- Sri Ranga III

- Srivari Kalyanotsavam (modern)
- Sthanattars
- Stratton Report
- Subordinate officer donations (under Vijayanagar empire)
- Suddhanam
- Sumangali
- Surappa Nayakkar
- Surya (Ratha Saptami)

**T**

- Taittiriya Upanishad
  - Description of Brahman
  - Emphasis on homam
- Tax assessments (under Vijayangara empire)
- Tanniramudu
- Thallapakam family
- Thengalai
- Thimmarusu
- Tipu Sultan
- Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam
- Tirumalai Kumara Tatacharyar Annan
- Toppu Tirunal
- Tulapurusha dhaanam
  - Enactment in Tirumala
    - Krishnadevaraya
    - Vira Narasimha

- In other temples
- In Puranas
- Tulasi plant
- Tuluva Dynasty

V

- Vadagalai
- Vahana
  - Agama description
  - Implementation of vahanas
    - Govindarajaswami
    - Tirumala
  - List of vahanas
    - Cessation of vahanas
    - Described by British
    - Estimated dates of introduction
    - Matla Anantaraja
    - Nottakara family
    - Thallapakam offerings
- Vaikhanasa Agama
- Forms of Vishnu
  - Antaryami
  - Archa
  - Para
  - Vibhava
  - Vyuha
- Utsavas (categorization)

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- Nithyotsavam (required festivals)
- Santhyotsavam (to counteract evil)
- Sraddhotsavam (offering of gratitude)
- Structure of festivals
- Vikhanasa Rishi
- Vaikunta Vimana vahana
- Vasanta Navami
- Vasantha Tirumanjanam
- (Sri) Vaishnava
- Vaivahikotsavam
- Vasanthotsavam
  - Agama description
  - Additional Vasanthotsavams
  - Damanarohana
  - In Govindarajaswami temple
  - Under Yadavarayas
- Varahaswami (temple)
- Veda Parayanam (recitation)
  - Sustainability donations
- Venkateswara Mahatyam (recitation)
- Venkateswara Vihara Satakamu
- Venkata I
- (Sri) Venkateswara temple
- Vetiver
- Vijaya Dasami
- Vishnu
- Vyasa Tirtha

Y

- Yadavarayas
  - Brahmotsavams (established under Yadavarayas)
    - Chittirai
    - Aadi
    - Panguni
  - Tiruvenkatanatha
    - Aadi Brahmotsavam
    - Sarvamanya (tax)
  - Vira Narasimha
    - Tulabharam
- Yagasala
  - Bimba
  - Homam
  - Kumbha
  - Mandala

\* \* \*