

Vidvan Ko. Ka.  
**Appan Ramanujachariyar Swamy**  
Vedanta Mimamsa Vyakarana Siromani  
Sriperumbudur



Lakshmi Bhavan  
11, North Mada Street  
Sriperumbudur  
Chingelput Dst.,  
Tamil Nadu 602105  
Phone: 04111 32595

**ஸ்ரீமதே ராமாநுஜாய நம:  
அப்பன் திருவடிகளே சரணம்**

அபகதமதமாணை: அந்திமோபாயநிஷ்டை  
அதிகதபரமார்த்தை: அர்த்தகாமானபேனகூ:  
நிகிலஜனஸூஹருத்தி: நிரஜிதக்ரோதலோபை  
வரவரமுனிப்ருத்தயை: அஸ்துமேநித்தயயோக:

ஸதாசார்ய சமாச்சரணம் பெற்ற ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவனுக்கு பெரும் பேறு பெறுவது மிக எளிது. பலவாராக ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவ லக்ஷணம் கூறப்பட்டுள்ளது. முதற்கூறிய செய்யுளின்படி மும்பதத்தை (தன-ஆபிஜாத்யா-வித்யா) விட்டவர்க்களும், பொருள் இன்பம் விரும்பாதவர்களும் அனைத்து ஜீவராசிகளிடத்தில் மிக ஆன்பு பூண்டவர்களும், காம க்ரோதங்களை வென்றவர்க்களும் தான் மணவாள மாமுனிகளின் அடியார். அவர்களுடனே எனக்கு எப்போதும் இருப்பு வேண்டும் என இதன் கருத்து. இந்த முறைப்படி எல்லாரும் இருந்தால் நாட்டில் சுகிஷ்டமும் செழிப்பும் ஏற்படும் என்பதில் ஐயமில்லை. இவ்விலக்கணங்கட்கு எடுத்துக்காட்டாக விளங்கியவர் நமது மணவாளமாமுனிகள்.

த்வயத்திலே பிறந்து, த்வயத்திலே வளர்ந்து த்வயைக நிஷ்டராக எழுந்தருளியிருந்த நமது மணவாள மாமுனிகளின் திருவவதார உத்ஸவம் ராஜாக்களுக்கு ஏற்பட்ட "த்ரோடக" (ந்ருத்யம்-கீதம்-வாத்யம்) த்துடன் கொண்டாடப்படுவது அறிந்து மிகவும் அகமகிழ்கிறோம். மிகவும் அரிதான வேதார்த்தங்களை பெண்ணுக்கும் பேதைக்கும் புரியும்படி நூல்யாத்து நமக்கு பேருதவி புரிந்தவர் நம் மணவாளமாமுனிகள்.

"சேற்றுக்கமல வயல் சூழரங்கர்தம் சீர்தழைப்ப போற்றித்தொழும் நல்ல அந்தணர் வாழ்விப்பூதலத்தே மாற்றற்ற செம்பொன் மணவாளமாமுனி வந்திலனேல் ஆற்றில் கரைத்த புளி அல்லவோ தமிழாரணமே"

என்றபடி நம் மணவாளமாமுனிகள் அவதரிக்கவில்லையாயின் ஆழ்வார்கள் ஈர்ச்சொற்களும் அதன் பொருள்களும் ஆற்றில் கரைத்த புளிபோல் வீணாகிவிட்டிருக்கும்.

ஆக அழகிய மணவாளமாமுனிகள் அவதரித்தது நாம் வாழ்ச்சி பெறவே. அவரது பொற்றாமரை அடியே நமக்குத் தஞ்சம்.

இந்த புனிதமான நன்னாளில் அடியார்கள் வாழ, அரங்கநகர் வாழ, மணவாளமாமுனியே! இன்றுமொரு நூற்றாண்டிரும் என வாழ்த்தி வணங்குவோமாக.

வேணும்

கோ. க. அப்பன் ராமாநுஜாசாரியார்

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**srimate Ramanujaya nama:  
appan thiruvadigale saranam**

*apahatamadamaanaair antimopaaya-nishthair  
atigataparamaarthair arthakaamaan-apekshai: |  
nikhilajansuhridbhir nirjita-krodha-lobhair  
varavaramunibrindair astu me nityayoga: //*

For a Sri Vaishnava who has taken refuge with a true acharya, receiving even the greatest of gifts is extremely easy. The attributes of such a Sri Vaishnava have been described in many ways. Such a person:

- must abandon the threefold pride of wealth, birth, and knowledge;
- must not have interest in wealth and worldly pleasures;
- must have great affection for all living beings;
- must have conquered desire and anger.

Such a person is truly a servant of Manavaala Maamunigal. The sloka above expresses these thoughts and prays for eternal connection with such people. If everyone conducted themselves in this manner, there is no doubt that the world would prosper and flourish; our Manavaala Maamunigal truly is one who displayed all of these qualities.

Our Manavaala Maamunigal was born in the Dvaya mantra, was reared on the Dvaya mantra, and remained firmly rooted in the Dvaya mantra. We are extremely happy to hear of the plans to celebrate this acharya's divine descent in a manner befitting a king, with dance, vocal and instrumental music.

Our Manavaala Maamunigal has done us the great service of taking Vedic teachings which are difficult to understand and conveying them in a manner in which even those who are uneducated or ignorant of Sanskrit can appreciate.

It is said:

*sEtruk kamala vayal soozharangar tam seer tazhaippa  
pOtrit tozhum nal andanar vaazhvipbootalatte  
maatraira sempon manavaala maamuni vandilanel  
aatril karatta puni allavo tamizhaaraname*

-- Appillaar, *Sampradaya Chandrikai*

If our Manavaala Maamunigal had not appeared in this world, the sweet utterances of the Alvars and their meanings would have dissolved and disappeared like tamarind in a flowing river. Therefore, the *avataara* of Alagiya Manavaala Maamunigal is a source of glory for us. His golden, lotus feet are our wealth.

On this auspicious day, we offer our salutations with the words:

Glory to all servants of Sriman Narayana!  
Glory to Srirangam!  
May Manavaala Maamuni be with us for another 100 years!

Sincerely,  
Ko. Ka. Appan Ramanujachariar



*srimate srinivasaranga mahayogine namah  
srimate srinivasa mahadesikaya namah  
srimate ramanujaya namah  
srimate nigamanta mahadesikaya namah  
srimate varavara mahamunaye namah*

**Benedictory Srimukham from His Holiness  
Srimat Paramahansa ityadi Sri Sri Rangapriya Mahadesika Swami  
Ashtanga Yoga Vijnana Mandiram Ashramam  
Bangalore, India**

Narayana smaranas to the devotees who are celebrating the Tirunakshatram of His Holiness Sri Sri Manavala Mahamuni at the Siva-Vishnu temple in U.S.A.

Sri Sri Manavala Mahamuni (Varavara Muni, Saumya Jamatru Yogindra) is one of the brightest stars in the firmament of the Srivaishnava Dharma. His *acharya nishtha* (devotion to the acharya) was as great or even greater than his *bhagavan nishtha* (devotion to God). So close and intense was his communion with the acharya *par excellence* Bhagavan Ramanuja that he came to be called Yatindra Pravana.

He has written very many works on the Srivaishnava religion, especially in the Tamil language, and owing to his excellent style in these great works, he got the title "Visada Vak Sikhamani", the crest jewel among those whose words are pure and limpid. He is also well-known for his declaration that what you say is more important than the language (Sanskrit, Tamil, etc.) in which you say it:

*sabdasya samskritataya yadi gauravam syat  
bauddhadi-sastra vachasam api tat prasangah /  
vacyena cet kathitam uttama-vacyam eshu  
bhasha-nikarsha iha tena na sakyasankah //*

*(Dramidopanishat Sangati of Vadikesari Alagiya Manavala Jiyar)*

Even like Acharya-varya Nigamanta Mahadesika, who is considered as an incarnation of the holy bell of the Lord and is rightly worshipped in Srivaishnava temples, he is also rightly worshipped in Srivaishnava temples, being considered an incarnation of Bhagavan Ramanuja.

May the life and message of the Acharya inspire the devotees to become Bhagavatas in the spirit expounded by the Acharya.

Bangalore  
Asvayuja Suddha Chaturthi  
October 13, 1999

Narayana Smaranah,  
**Sri Sri Rangapriya Sripada Srih**

## Sri Manavala Mamunigal - A Biography

compiled from The Srivaishnava Theological Dispute - Patricia Y Mumme

Sri Manavala mamunigal was the son of Thikalakidanthan thirunavirudayapiran thatharannan, a desciple of Sri Pillailokacarya, and Sriranga nacciyar. He was born in the town of kidaram in Tamilnadu, in the year 1370 AD. He was the first acarya to comment of the works of earlier acaryas.

His parents named him Azhakiya manavalan, after the Lord Himself. He learnt the Vedas, Vedangas and all other sastras from his father. He was was an outstanding student, who knew the Divya prabandhas, the Vedas and had a boundless knowledge of religion. He married at the proper time and lived as a true vaishnava. He moved to Alvar Tirunagari and became a sishya of Tiruvaymozhip pillai.

It is said that Manavala mamuni's devotion to Nammalvar, Ramanuja and to his own Acharya grew as he studied the Alvar's hymns and rahasyas at Alvar tirunagari. On observing his devotion to Ramanuja, Tiruvay mozhip pillai ordered the construction of a Shrine of Ramanuja at Tirunagari and appointed Manavala mamuni to take care of the activities at the shrine. During this time Manavala mamuni composed his first work *Yatiraja Vimsati*, twenty sanskrit stanzas in praise of Ramanuja. Tiruvaymozhip pillai read the works and gave him the title *Yatindra Pravanar*. Since that time onwards he was addressed Yatindra Pravanar. He had a son and named him Ramanujap pillai.

After the death of his guru, Tiruvaymozhip pillai, Manavala mamuni moved north to Srirangam with his family and his co-disciple Ramanuja Jeeyar (later to be known as Vanamaamalai Jeeyar). He was very well received at Srirangam in spite of some initial friction with Uttama Nampi who was in charge of the temple administration. Soon they patched up and Manavala mamuni started to institute some reforms at the temple, very much in line with what Ramanuja did. He started to research the manuscripts of earlier acharyas and had them restored and recopied. He went on a pilgrimage to Kanchi, Tirumalai and Sriperumpudur.

While in Kanchi he studied Sri Bhashya with Kitambi Nayanar, a disciple of Brahamatantra Svatantra Jeeyar. After his return to Srirangam he renounced his householder status and became a Sanyasin, concentrating on temple activities. He, soon, began giving discourses on Alvar's hymns and his list of disciples grew constantly. He took over and renovated the old math of Ramanuja, using clay from Pillai Lokacharya's house. He also ordered an idol of Pillai Lokacharya to be installed at Srirangam temple.

After some time he returned to Alvar Tirunagari and when trying to teach Acharya hrdayam, encountered some difficulties. So he decided to consult with Tirunarayanpurattay, who was a co-disciple of Tiruvaymozhip pillai. Ay was on his way to Alvar tirunagari to meet Manavalamamuni. They both met at the outskirts of Alvar Tirunagari and returned to Manavala mamuni's residence, and the later studied the secrets of the Acharya Hrdayam. It is said that, Manavala mamuni, during this time had many important disciples such as Kantadai annan, Prativadi bhayankaram anna, Erumbi appa, Appilai and Appillan.

Around 1430, Mamuni conducted a one year lecture series on Tiruvaymozhi according to all five commentaries. During these lectures a small boy stepped forward and uttered the verse that became to be known as Manavala mamuni's Taniyan

*srIsailesha dayaapaatram dIbhaktyAdi gunArnavam /  
YatIndrapravanam vande ramyajAmAtram munim //*

This was interpreted by the audience as a proclamation by the Lord Himself as the same verse was revealed through the archakas at Tirupati and Alakar koil. After this incident, Manavala mamuni started writing commentaries on the works of earlier acharyas, composed independent works and compiled source documentation and cross-referencing on some important works. These include independent works in tamil such as *Tiruvaymozhi noorranthaathi*, *Upadesa Rattinamalai*; commentaries on *Sri Vachanabushanam*, *Tattvatrayam*, *Mumukshupadi* and other works.

Yatindrapravana Prabhavam records that Manavala mamuni undertook many extensive pilgrimage from Tirumalai in the north to Madurai and Alvar tirunagari in the south. During one such trips, a local chieftain in Madurai, MahabalivAnanAtharayan became his devotee and donated a village which he renamed as Azhakiya manavaala naaloor. After his return to Srirangam, a dispute over the temple control arose between the Saivas and Vaishnavas at Alakar Koil. This ruler settled the dispute in favor of Vaishnavas and Manavala mamuni's appointee there, Ethiraja Jeeyar.

It is said that, while at a very old age, Manavala maamuni discovered that part of Periyavachchaan pillai's commentary on Periyalvar Tirumozhi was missing. So he sent word to Tiruppanalvar Tattar Nayanar at Alvar tirunagari to come and help him complete the commentary. It is also noted that he composed the commentary on Acharya Hridayam with great difficulty as his health was failing. When

he became very ill, preventing him from worshipping at the temple, he dedicated one tamil stanza a day, expressing to Ramanuja his anguish at staying in this world and his eagerness to reach Vaikuntham. These collected verses became known as *Arti Prabhantham*, his last work.

Manavala mamuni had many disciples, however, the following eight were the chief disciples known as *Ashtadiggajas* (elephants of the eight directions): Vanamaamalai Jeeyar, Bhattar Piraan jeeyar, Tiruvengada jeeyar, Koil kanthaadai annan, Prathivaadhi bhayankaram annaa, Erumbi appaa, Appillai and Appillan. They and their disciples made many contributions to promoting Srivaishnavam.

Source: *The Srivaishnava Theological Dispute - Patricia Y Mumme*

## **Compassion: The Chief Characteristic of a Vaishnava**

Anyone can see for himself whether he is a real Vaishnava or not. If upon seeing the misery or adversity of another, his pity is excited and he says, "Alas!", he can be certain of his connection to God. If on the other hand he declares, "He deserves that and more!", he can truly know for certain that he is thoroughly disconnected from God.

To be a Vaishnava is to belong to God. To belong to God is to be like God Himself, i.e., to conform to the ideals which He has preached and practiced, one of these ideals being to be "The Friend of all Creatures."

-- *Idu* Commentary, 1.2.

# Sri Manavala Mahamuni in Historical Context

*Prof M.R. Sampathkumaran*

Originally appeared in "Sri Ramanuja Vani", January 1988. In most of the Vishnu temples in South India, there are daily prayers for another hundred years of life to be added to Sri Manavala Mahamuni. It is suggested that this prayer commemorates a historic service rendered by him to the Sri Vaishnavas more than five centuries ago. In this connection one significant point may be observed. At the conclusion of the daily services in the temples, there is a prayer for the new dispensation established by Sri Ramanuja to flourish. This is followed by an address to Manavala Mahamuni that he should live for another hundred years. It looks as if these prayers suggested that for the order set up by Sri Ramanuja to flourish, Sri Manavala Mahamuni should live for another century. The Tamil stanza which concludes with this request adds that he is needed for the well-being of the men of religion, of the temple city of Srirangam, of Nammalvar's Tamil Vedas and of the entire world surrounded by the oceans. These prayers must have been incorporated in the temple ritual when the services rendered by Sri Manavala Mahamuni to preserve his work of Sri Ramanuja were being vividly remembered.

History justifies the claim made in these prayers. The *Guruparampara* and *Yatindra Pravana Prabhava* demonstrate the greatness of Sri Varavara Muni [\*] in other ways. But they too take note of the historic context in which he worked. One feels, however, that they do not lay sufficient stress on this. According to tradition, Sri Manavala Mahamuni was born in October-November, 1370, *Sadharana* year, and passed away in February-March, 1444, *Rudhrotkari* year. About the bare events of his life, the *Sampradaya Chandrika* attributed to one of his disciples gives some dates which may be mentioned here. He was married in 1386 and became an ascetic after a long pilgrimage in 1400-01.<sup>1</sup> [\*]His famous discourses on Tiruvaymoli in the presence of Sri Ranganatha were delivered from 1432 to 1434. It is in the latter years that the verse beginning with "Sri Sailesa Daya Patram" in his honor is said to have been composed and given out by Sri Ranganatha.

It was a matter of history that there was a Mohammedan invasion which penetrated far into the South in 1327-28.

Srirangam was sacked when according to tradition twelve thousand Sri Vaishnavas lost their lives. In order to safeguard the temple and its idols, it is related that the main shrine was walled up and a new pseudo-shrine was constructed for being desecrated by the invaders. The idol of Sri Ranganatha was carried away by Sri Pillai Lokacharya and the manuscripts of *Srutaprakasika* by Sri Vedanta Desika. Sri Ranganatha was restored to Srirangam only about forty years later (1361)<sup>2</sup>. In the interim from 1327 onwards Srirangam was under Moslem rule and ceased to be the religious capital of Srivaishnavam.

The *Madhuravijaya* of Gangadevi, wife of prince Kampana, describes with graphic details the desolate state of Srirangam about 1360. Kampana, a son of Bukka, one of the five brothers who founded the empire of Vijayanagara was a viceroy of Mulbagal. He set out on an expedition to the south and his wife accompanied him. She narrates the conquest of Kanchipuram, then ruled by Sambavarayas. Then comes the march on Srirangam and Madurai. On the way they pass through Chidambaram, and the poetess puns on its old name of Vyaghrapuri. She says that it had now become a real city of tigers.

At Srirangam, the temple remained desolate and ruined. The serpent on which the Lord is represented as reclining in the temple was said to be anxiously protecting him with its spread out hoods from falling bricks, lest His *Yoganidra* should be disturbed. The doors were worm-eaten and grass was growing in the *Mantapas*. The inner shrines (*Garbagrihas*) were in ruins. Where formerly the shrines had been surrounded by the musical notes of drums (*Mridangas*) now was to be heard the fearful howls of jackals. In place of the aroma of the smoke from the sacred fires in the Brahmin settlements, there was now the stink of raw meat spreading amid shouts of drunken Moslem soldiers. The *Ramabhyudaya* of Saluva Narasimha, a later emperor of Vijayanagar, before telling the story of Rama, speaks about the ancestors of the author. There Kampana's campaign against the Moslem rulers in the south is mentioned and the roles of Gopanna

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<sup>1</sup> The *Koyil Olugu* of the Srirangam Temple, which gives an account of its history and regulations mentions, however, *Parthiva* corresponding to 1405 as the year in which he became an ascetic and settled down in Srirangam.

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<sup>2</sup> If the inscription at Srirangam mentions, as it usually supposed, Bandhupriya as the chronogram of the Saka year, then the date is 1371. This conflicts with the tradition that Sri Vedanta Desika wrote the stanzas of the inscription and it is also recorded by Mahacharya that he was alive at the time of restoration. Dr. Hutzsch suggests that *Bandhupriya* should be read as *Bahupriya* in which case the restoration is pushed ten years earlier to 1361.

and Saluva Mangu, two generals who assisted the Prince are stressed. Of these Saluva Mangu was an ancestor of Saluva Narasimha. After the restoration of the Hindu rule in Srirangam, it is stated that 8 *agraharas* and 1000 *Salagramas* were presented. The *Prapannamritam* also narrates the story of Gopanna's crushing victory over the Moslems at Samayapuram. The *Koyil Olugu*, which records the history of Srirangam temple, describes how Krishnaraya of the famous Uttama Nambi family persuaded Gopannaraya to emancipate Srirangam from Moslem rule and how he obtained from Bukka of Vijayanagar 17,000 gold mohurs with which he purchased 101 villages for the maintenance of the temple.

Thus we can get some idea of the disorganization of religious life in South India, particularly that of the Sri Vaishnavas during three or four decades. The elaborate system established by Sri Ramanuja for the secular and religious management of the temple of Sri Ranganatha must have suffered badly. If at all there were any temple rituals or services, they must have been minimal and clandestine. Many of the 74 seats of religious authority set up by Sri Ramanuja must also have ceased to function or at least function effectively. The sacred texts were also safeguarded under great strain. That Sri Desika took with him the manuscripts of *Srutaprasika* when he escaped from Srirangam during the Moslem invasion is well known. It is possible that followers of Sri Lokacharya might have taken care of the commentaries on the *Prabhandas*. Even so, many valuable works have been lost. The works of Sri Yamunacharya have come down to us incomplete. One or perhaps two of his works have been completely lost. So too is the case with the works of Sri Nathamuni, known to us only through few quotations by later writers. The greater part of the commentary of Sri Periyavachchan Pillai on the poems of Periya Alvar was also lost.

That the sack of Srirangam affected religious life in South India profoundly is brought out by the story of Alvar Tirunagari near Tirunelveli. The idol of Nammalvar was taken to Malabar. It is said that for some time, the idol of Sri Ranganatha was also at Calicut along with Nammalvar. Later, after Sri Ranganatha was taken away, Nammalvar was brought south to a hill and hidden in a cave. For many years, the idol stayed there until Srisailesa (the preceptor of Sri Manavala Mahamuni) who held an important administrative post under a Hindu prince at or near Madurai, came to know about it. He sent a message to the ruler of Kerala which led to the recovery of the idol from the cave. It is said the cave had to be reached with the help of a chain and the idol sent up. In the process, one Thozhappar became a martyr and lost his life. The idol was then taken to Tirukkanambi [\*\*], where it remained for a few years.

Srisailesa (who is said to have lived from 1329 to 1434) was persuaded by some disciples of Sri Lokacharya to dedicate himself to religious life. He gave up his ministerial position and went on a pilgrimage to Tirukkanambi, where he probably resolved to restore the idol of Alvar Tirunagari. The undertaking proved difficult. It is said that Nammalvar's native city had become a jungle and that it had to be cleared and a new city built and colonized. The administrative experience of Srisailesa and his influence must have been utilized fully for this purpose.

Sri Manavala Mahamuni was later expressly directed by Srisailesa to devote himself largely to the exposition of the teaching of Nammalvar and to do so from Srirangam. It must have been with this purpose in mind that Sri Manavala Mahamuni established his headquarters at Srirangam and expounded the Tiruvaymoli of Nammalvar.

The *Koyil Olugu* records that Sri Manavala Mahamuni met with some opposition at first in Srirangam. Srirangacharya, son of Krishnaraya mentioned earlier, was not inclined to accept his leadership. Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan converted him and secured many rights in the temple. Thus Srirangacharya himself helped to establish Sri Manavala Mahamuni firmly in the seat of authority. He also obtained from the Vijayanagar emperor 101 more villages for the temple. His brother Chakraraya renovated the shrine of Nammalvar which had suffered during the Moslem rule and replaced the idol of Garuda in the *Alagiya Manavala Mantapa* broken by the invaders. The latter incident took place in 1415.

We thus get stray glimpses of the tremendous work of reconstruction that awaited Sri Manavala Mahamuni. He carried it out without fuss or show and without showing any strain. That is in keeping with his character. It was during this time that Srirangam once again re-established its primacy as the spiritual capital of Sri Vaishnavism. Before this could happen something like the work of Sri Ramanuja in organizing the temple affairs had to be done over again. During the pilgrimages he undertook, Sri Varavara muni must have renovated numerous temples and reorganized rituals and worship. The *Upadesa Ratna Maalai* composed by him provides a calendar of saints and teachers, evidently for observance at temples and homes. A manual of domestic worship was also prepared by him probably to make up for the rift in tradition. It is reasonable to suppose that the well-known stanza with which the prayers at the close of the daily services in home and temple was composed by Sri Manavala Mahamuni as a result of his success in the difficult task of reestablishing the authority of Sri Ramanuja's administrative arrangements. "May the divine commandment of Sri Ramanuja flourish more and more,

unimpeded in its victorious course at all times and places."

Whether the times make heroes or heroes make their times may rouse endless debates among historians. But at any rate we observe that the representative leaders of every age are in accord with what may be called its spirit and needs. When we consider the nature and quality of Sri Manavala Mahamuni's achievements, we must not fail to mark how they fulfilled the needs of his epoch, through the application of the radical elements in Sri Ramanuja's teachings.

Sri Ramanuja brought about a quiet revolution in the religious life in India. It was not the revolution of an iconoclast, but of one who claimed to restore disrupted tradition<sup>3</sup>. The reforms carried out by Sri Ramanuja were meant to bring philosophical teachings of the Vedanta to the masses and to uplift them morally and spiritually. These purposes were effected without violating the ancient tenets or tradition.

The stress on the Tamil hymns of the Alvars and the doctrine of grace served him admirably in this mighty endeavor. The universal charity behind his life and teachings continued to inspire later preceptors. Sri Lokacharya carried to their logical conclusions many precepts and practices of Sri Ramanuja regarding such things as *prapatti*, the value of Nammalvar's mystical experiences and the irrelevance of caste in the scheme of salvation.

It is possible that at about this time there was another trend among Sri Vaishnavas. Some features in the work of Sri Vedanta Desika suggest that there was a feeling the revolutionary zeal should not cut away the Sri Vaishnava community from the Vedic and Smarta tradition prevalent all over India from the distant past. Thus some teachings of Sri Lokacharya came under criticism. At the same time, Sri Vedanta Desika defended Sri Ramanuja's system from the criticism of the Advaitins.

How the history of Sri Vaishnavism would have shaped itself if the radical and moderate trends among Sri Ramanuja's followers had been allowed to influence each other in peaceful surroundings is only a matter of speculation. The fall of Srirangam to the Moslem invaders disrupted the natural course of evolution. Sri Sudarsana Bhatta was martyred at Srirangam during the assault on the city. Sri Lokacharya died a few weeks later in a village near Madurai. Sri Vedanta Desika found refuge at Satyamangalam. The idols of Sri Ranganatha and Sri Nammalvar were carried away to places of safety

far from Tamil Nadu.

When the Vijayanagar empire put an end to the Moslem rule over Srirangam and the Sultanate of Madurai, religious freedom was re-established. But temples had to be repaired or rebuilt, religious texts had to be gathered and spiritual preceptors commence again their interrupted activities. Sri Manavala Mahamuni presided over this reconstruction and revival.

In the circumstances of his time, no need was felt for controversies with Advaitins. But the fundamentals of the Vedanta according to Sri Ramanuja had to be taught to the masses as well as would be scholars. This Sri Manavala Mahamuni expounded and popularized the teachings of Sri Lokacharya. In the *Tattvatraya*, Sri Lokacharya had condensed in Tamil the principles of the Sanskrit Vedanta and now an elaborate commentary in Tamil was written on it. The other *rahasyas* of Sri Lokacharya discussed *prapatti* as well as seeking refuge with one's spiritual preceptor. The more important of these were commented on. The commentary known as *Idu* on Tiruvaymoli not only brought out the meaning of this mystical poem, but also set the mystical experiences of the Azhvars in the context of Vedanta philosophy and logic. Unfortunately it had remained more or less a secret work, being passed on from father to son and master to disciple, and good fortune preserved it during the age of chaos. Sri Manavala Mahamuni felt it necessary to broadcast its teachings. He expounded it many times and made its study a necessary qualification for religious teachers of the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Viewing in this light, the historians will recognize the validity of the tribute paid to Sri Manavala Mahamuni as an incarnation of Sri Ramanuja and as the last of the distinguished band of ancient teachers. It is fairly certain the the Srivaishnava community, in spite of differences of opinion on details of doctrine, ritual and observance, remained united in his time. The split into two sects must have come a little later, when security under the Vijayanagar Empire permitted philosophical debate and controversy.

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<sup>3</sup> Jesus declared that he came to fulfill and not to destroy.

# The Lord of The Venkata Mountain

## The Refuge and the Transforming Experience for Men

Dr. J. Parthasarathy

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Sri Venkateshwara's annual Brahmotsavam in the month of *Purattaasi (Kanya Maasa)*, lasting for 10 days according to the Vaikhanasa Agama prescriptions, is a very special occasion in our religious calendar. His devotees, running to millions in India and other parts of the world, come to Tirumala and get the bliss of seeing the Lord and participating in His worship, both in the Holy of Holies where His looks of compassion and grace pass into the hearts of beholders, and in His daily processional rounds seated on various *vahanas*, and on the scintillating golden chariot now made for Him. By His processions He makes Himself available to all in the streets of the holy city, especially the aged, the infirm and the sick who throng outside the temple in the hope of a glimpse of His entrancing form.

Truly, the Lord of Tirumala, Srinivasa, is the *Kaliyuga Varada*, the proven Deity of the Kali Yuga, the *Kalyana Nidhi*, who is answering the prayers of countless men and women for the earthly benefits they long for, not to speak of liberation (*moksha*), which He confers on those evolved souls who seek Him alone, discarding earthly as well as heavenly pleasures. The days of the Brahmotsavam come alive with musical concerts and religious expositions. Groups of dedicated devotees have made it a tradition to carry temple umbrellas with them, walking all the way from Madras to Tirumala and to offer them to the Lord on the Garudotsavam day of the festival. These umbrellas are offerings of the purest devotion, touching the hearts of those who are privileged to witness the pilgrimage of the men and the occasion of the presentation of their offerings to the Lord.

These and many more features of the Brahmotsavam show the appeal and the fulfillment which large populations of men and women associate with it and which draw them to Tirumala, unmindful of the strains of the travel and stay on the holy mountain. It is a unique sight to be seen only in South India -- the sight of huge populations, bound in loving attachment to Lord Srinivasa (none other than the Supreme Vishnu, descended from His abode in the heavens for the uplift of humanity) and involved in self-surrender to Him who speaks to them in a silent language which only they and He share. The community of dedicated devotees (called

*bhagavatas*) is as important in the Sri Vaishnava religion as the God (*Bhagavan*) who is their binding force; sharing the devotional involvement of the community of Bhagavan Narayana's men and honoring them is an indispensable part of the way of God-realization for a *bhakta*.

### The Temple Image (*Archa*) of the Lord Vishnu

The Lord of the Venkata mountain is the transcendent and yet immanent Lord of the Universe, called Vishnu, Narayana, Srinivasa and a thousand other names in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra. He manifests Himself in temple image (*archa*) form to grace mortals whom He ever wishes to help in many ways, and to redeem from their state of ignorance and bondage to material things in the world. According to our Agamas, which codify temple architecture, methods, rites of worship, and festivals of various kinds, the Supreme God Vishnu has five forms

- *Para*, in which he resides in His abode Vaikuntha with inexpressible glory
- *Vyuha*, in which He rests on the Milky Ocean, dividing Himself into four parts for His activities of creation of the world and entry into it in incarnation
- *Vibhava*, in which He descends to the earth, taking human and other shapes for the protection of the virtuous and the godly and the destruction of evil-doers incidental to such protection
- *Antaryaami*, in which He pervades the universe and resides in the heart of the individual soul as its controller, untouched by the taint of the physical body
- *Archa*, in which He makes Himself present in any image of any material consecrated by loving devotees and subjects Himself to their worship and confers benefits on them, retaining His own non-material divinity.

Individuals may have their household shrines (*griha-*

*archas*) but these cannot compare with the great temples - major centres of God's presence -- honoured by worship rituals with recitations of mantras and celebrations and festivals on a community basis. These function as the nucleus of the religious community, promoting the society of devotees of Lord Vishnu -- the *Bhagavata-samaja* -- which the individual bhakta needs for his inspiration, loving service and advancement on the Sri Vaishnava Spiritual path. In the Kali Yuga we have been denied the privilege of living at the time of the Lord's incarnations as Rama, Krishna etc., and His forms in Vaikuntha and the Milky Ocean are beyond our ken; equally, the *antaryaami* form is difficult to grasp. We are left with only the archa form of images in temples, which by its beauty and accessibility evokes our love and adoration and leads us to link ourselves in meditation and prayer and worship with the four other forms in which Lord Narayana is present, and thereby experience Him in full measure.

The daily meditative communion with the archa form exposes us to His countless glories and exploits and His vast love and unseen interaction with the liegemen. All our Vedas, with the Upanishads as their crown, the Puranas, Itihasas, Aagamas and innumerable Kavyas, Natakas, and Stotras and folklore as well, unfold a never-ending panorama of delight, ecstasy, enjoyment and rich fulfilment. Guided by competent teachers and men of mature understanding, the devotee praying before the archa form can experience the Cosmic Form of the Lord - the Purushottama of unspeakably auspicious qualities (*kalyana guna*) who creates and dissolves the world and is himself the world of sense and sound and time and space, standing beyond them all, conferring eternal life with Him on the elect souls He chooses for His favor.

Pointing out the archa as the form of the Lord, full of all qualities dear to the devotee (*gunapurti*), and therefore most suitable for the devotional surrender of the worshipper, the great Sri Vaishnava preceptor Pillai Lokacharya (late 13th and early 14th centuries A.D.) says in his classic, *Sri Vachana Bhushanam*:

God's state as the *Antaryaami* is like that of underground water (which the seekers can get only after enormous effort of digging with spade and axe); the state of *Para* is like that of the water enveloping the egg-shaped cosmos (*avaranaajala*) unreachable to the aspirant; the state of *Vyuha* is as unapproachable as the Milky Ocean to the devotee; the state of *Vibhava* is like that of rivers in spate reachable only in their flood-time and so beyond the grasp of the bhakta of later years; the state of *Archa* is that of pools left by the flood-waters which survive to quench our immediate thirst, ever within easy reach to

fulfill eager divine promptings of the worshipper.

-- Sutra 39, rendered with the writer's explanation

### **The Archa Form and the Veda Celebrating it: The Divya Prabandham**

The archa form (called also *archa-avatara* meaning the Descent of Lord Vishnu as the Temple Image) is the inimitable object of the ecstatic experience and mystic communion of our Sri Vaishnava seers called the Alvars. The Alvars' outpourings in Tamil have been collected as *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, the divine collect of 4000 verses, also called *Arulicceyal*, or poetical effusions of grace. The Alvars (and more specially Sathakopa or Nammalvar) are the originators and the fountainhead of the Sri Vaishnava religious tradition of bhakti (devotion) and prapatti (taking refuge in God); their *arulicceyal* anthology is esteemed as a book of independent spiritual revelation in Tamil, parallel to the Vedas and Vedangas in Sanskrit. This implies in particular that the great truths expounded in the Vedas and Vedangas are revealed again as independent experiences of our divinely blessed Nammalvar who attained Lord Vishnu - Narayana - Srinivasa, singing of him in soulful strains of 1102 verses in his epic composition, the *Tiruvaymoli*, (The Sacred Testimony), one of the unique masterpieces of world religious literature. He has also composed three other smaller poems. Through this seer's mystic experiences of the Lord, so far from us and yet so much near to us, the concepts left unclear in the Vedas get clarification and education, as the famous acharya, Sri Vedanta Desika has pointed out.

The *arulicceyal* of the Alvars, the Tamil Veda inspired preeminently by the archa forms of the Lord in all Sri Vaishnava temples, is our Sri Vaishnava prayer-book. Appropriate parts of it are recited in daily worship at Tirumala morning, noon and evening, as in all other South Indian temples of the faith. Most Sri Vaishnavas devotees (besides those of other sects paying homage to Vishnu) are familiar with selections from the *arulicceyal* meant for daily recital called *Nityaanusandhaanam*; as their eyes feast on their adored processional image of the Lord Venkata mountain or His endlessly captivating image in the inner sanctum during Brahmotsavam days, we expect them to be voluntarily mouthing the poems of the Alvars, especially those on the Venkata mountain and its Lord, which have an inspiration and a special meaning for them. For those and others who, for some reason are not familiar with the hymns of the Alvars, an introduction to some, at least of their rapturous poems on the Supreme One, resident in Tirumala as Srinivasa, given below, will be welcome for its enlightening and ennobling influence

on readers.

### The Alvar's Hymns on Tiruvenkatam

The holy temple-centres of Vishnu whose archa forms have received commemorative celebration in the songs of the Alvars have been reckoned as 108, but of these, only 95 are in South India. Besides Tirumala, these include famous centers like Kanchipuram, Srirangam, Tirumaaliruncholai (Kallazhagar Koil), Tirukkudandai (Kumbakonam), Tirukkannapuram, Tirukkottiyur, Srivilliputtur, Tirukkovalur, Tiruvantapuram, etc. It is noteworthy that when the Alvars come to sing of Tiruvengadavaan, the Lord of the Venkata mountain, their voice displays a special emotion and involvement of its own.

The Alvars are twelve in number. All of them have sung of the Venkata mount and its deity except Tondaradipodi and Madhurakavi Alvars, who confined themselves to the God of Srirangam and the acharya Sathakopa respectively. More specifically, four major Alvars have devotional hymns of ten or eleven verses on the Lord of Venkatam. They are (i) Andal, the only woman singer among the seers, (ii) Kulasekhara, the king of the Chera region with his capital at Kolli near modern Karur, (iii) Nammalvar, descended of a line of chieftains under Pandya rule, and (iv) Tirumangai Mannan, a chieftain under Pallava rule. All of them renounced their earthly life in their own ways to attain communion with the Highest. Their hymns on Venkatam and its Lord go straight to our hearts with their notes of emotional yearning, lofty dedication and sense of absolute refuge in Him as man's sole master-protector. We shall take up below some of these hymns for some elaboration. The special finer shades of meanings relevant for a devotional life pointed out by our acharyas in these verses call for a separate treatment.

#### Andal

Andal, the maiden who would wed none but Lord Vishnu Himself, prays to Manmatha, the God of Love, in the very first hymn of the *Nacciyar Tirumoli* to grant that she should wed only the Lord of Venkatam (Vishnu) her lover. Having the *chakra* weapon from which grim fire issued (to quell enemies), the master of Venkatam with excelling wisdom verily is an effulgent Light in His luster (Verses 1 and 3). From her childhood she had dedicated herself to Him and could never brook any talk of her being allied with a mortal; she would cease to live if such talk happened to fall on her ears.

In her love-lorn state of waiting for the Divine Lord she addresses the clouds, asking them to convey to the Lord of Venkatam (calling Him Tirumaal, Govindan, Narayana, etc.) her emaciated state of love-sickness and

her all consuming passion for Him:

Oh clouds which cover the sky with a blue canopy! Lord Tirumal, resident in Venkatam of pellucid waters, has gone off from me. Is it to His credit that he should break the forbearance of a woman waiting for His favor? I wither in weakness as droplets of tears from my eyes gather round the rotundities of my breasts in my forlorn state. (8.1)

Oh great clouds who shower great treasures of pearls! What has happened to the (plighted) word of the noble Lord of Venkatam, dark of complexion (that He would take me as His bride)? Seized by the burning fire of love, I am a target to be afflicted by the southern wind in the intervals of the night (bringing the agony of sorrow of separated lovers). (8.2)

My natural color, composure of mind, and sleep have all gone away easily, leaving me in a wasted state; my bracelets turn loosely on my arms. Oh merciful clouds, will I be able to stretch out my (emaciated) life, singing of the goodness of Govinda of Venkatam with cool, mountain springs? (8.3) ["Goodness" here may also be taken ironically as "illnature".]

Oh great clouds who rise, soaring into the sky! You who collect and shower the rains of Venkatam so that honey filled flowers on the mountain get scattered about! Tell me if He who tore the body of Hiranya the *rakshasa* with His strong claws, seizing the flesh, if He will restore my slipping bracelets, making them firm again (with the joy of His coming). (8.5)

Oh great clouds who rise like elephants in rut, and who live with Venkatam as your place of residence! What has happened to the (plighted) word of the Lord of the snake-couch? The people of the world will not honour Him if they hear a report that He tormented a tender creeper-like woman, disregarding the fact that He Himself was her refuge and savior. (8.9)

In these verses Andal speaks in the role of the lady-love whom the Lover has already favored and left with a promise; she waits and weeps and hopes for His coming.

#### Kulasekhara

Kulasekhara Alvar's hymn of intense longing to be somehow associated with the holy Venkatam, even as a stork on its lake, a fish in its springs, or as one of the steps on the door of its temple, goes to the very height of

devotional surrender. It is well known that the steps leading into the Tirumala temple are even now known as *Kulasekhara Padi*, after this verse. It is a poem of eleven verses of which a few are translated below:

I long for nothing except the bliss of eternally serving Him, the Lord who conquered seven bulls (to win Nappinnai, the cowherd maid in Krishna avatara). I reject the birth with this body whose only wealth is increasing addition of flesh to it. Let me be born even as a stork (living the blessed life of dedication to the Lord) on the Koneri tank of Venkatam, of the Lord bearing the conch in his left hand. (He dwells in the mountain as the most suitable place for accepting men into realm of divine service). (Perumaal Tirumoli 4.1)

Oh Tirumaal who destroys the clinging evil (of life) arising from sinfulness! Lord, towering with unfathomable love for followers! Master of the Venkata mountain! Let me be but a step in your temple doorway which human devotees, god and heavenly danseuses like Rambha pass over (to reach your sanctum), and thus let me have the bliss of feasting my eyes on your coral lips. (Surrender to the Lord should be absolute like that of the insensate step, but seeing the Lord is also necessary for the fulfillment of the surrender).

### **Nammalvar**

Nammalvar, the matchless seer of the Tamil Veda of Tiruvaymoli, displays his rapturous adoration of the archa form of the Lord of Tiruvenkatam in two poems of eleven verses each. In the first he yearns for endless service (*kainkaryya*) to his Master, the Supreme Effulgence, who has an attachment to a low mortal like him. In the second, he takes absolute refuge in him in whose breast the Lady of the lotus resides without ever moving from it. Both poems reach the loftiest levels of *kainkaryya* and *prapatti* (or *saranagati*) propounded in Sri Vaishnavism and provide invaluable inspiration and solace to the involved devotees of the faith. Some verses from the first hymn of great emotional appeal are translated in English below:

It should be given to us to stay with Him for all time without intermission and engage in consecrated service to Him (without a thought of self, as his absolute instrument) -- the Lord of Tiruvenkatam with resounding cascades, father of my father's father, whose radiant form is full of splendid beauty". (3.3.1).

The predecessor of my father and his father for five generations, the Lord evoking endless

praise, dark-hued in His beauty, dwells on the Venkata mount where falling flowers strewn on earth delight onlookers; with Him in service bound are the residents of heaven and their king (Indra). (3.3.2)

The Lord of glory, dwelling in Tiruvenkatam, the Nectar of the Veda chanted by the dedicated ones -- how can it be adequate praise of Him if I say merely that He is the effulgence, the Primal Form before whom all the worlds bows in veneration ? (His glory is beyond all words). (3.3.5)

This poem of prayer for boundless service in thought, word and deed is intimately connected with the history of Tirumala. Anantalvan, one of the disciples of Ramanuja, took upon himself the task of endless services to the Lord of Venkatam when his preceptor, in the course of expounding this poem in the public assembly, called for a devotee who would undertake to fulfill the yearning of Nammalvar, living and serving Lord at Tirumala. *Sri Venkatachala Itihasa Mala* (a Sanskrit poem published by T.T. Devasthanam) gives an account of the *kainkaryya* of Anantalvan -- the maintenance of a flower-garden and the offering of fresh flowers from it to the Deity of Tirumala, his encounter with the Lord Himself while digging a well in his garden, and of the Lord's favors granted to him in spite of a wound in His chin caused by a crowbar of the latter. These happenings are well-known and are reenacted in brief on a day of Brahmotsavam. A full account of these by the late Prof. M. R. Sampathkumaran has also been given in *Sri Ramanuja Vani* (July 1992 and April and July 1993).

Three verses from Nammalvar's great hymn, voicing in memorable terms his supreme surrender or *saranagati* to the Lord of Venkatam, are given below in English translation:

Oh ambrosia which I experience and love! Oh Lord of the celestials! Oh Lord with the powerful Eagle (Garuda) as your banner! Oh Master with beautiful coral lips! Oh my Master of Tiruvenkatam! I cannot bear to remain without the (redeeming) sight of Your feet even for the moment of a finger-snap! (6.10.7)

Oh Lord, who comes not, though looking like coming, and who comes, though looks like not coming! Oh ambrosial form with red lotus-eyes, red coral lips and four shoulders! My Life! Master of Tiruvenkatam where the sheen of scattered gem-stones makes night into day! Alas! I cannot in the least bear any separation from Your feet's refuge. (6.10.9)

Oh Lord in whose bosom Lakshmi, the Lady of the lotus, resides, affirming: "I shall not move from here to the slightest extent!" Master with matchless glories famed in the world! One who possesses the three worlds as His domain! Master who rules me! Lord of Tiruvenkatam whom gods and sages with no equals long to attain! As your servant having no refuge (except you), I place myself below Your Feet and enter into your Protection (forever). (6.10.10)

This supreme surrender of the Lord of Tirumala by the founder of the Sri Vaishnava tradition has inspired all our later acharyas and their teachings gain new dimensions as they cite these verses ever and anon.

### **Tirumangai Mannan**

Tirumangai Mannan (more familiarly Tirumangai Alvar) is a major poet, with the 1084 verses of his Periya Tirumoli covering the archa forms of almost all the holy temple centers in the South and North, which he visited as a pilgrim. In the midst of his entranced responses to various images of the deities, we see him realizing Lord Narayana in his heart, taking in both the glory and the beauty of the landscape against which he dwells.

He has sung four rapturous hymns of ten verses each in adoration of the Lord of Venkatam. The first turns on the refrain of advising his mind to dwell on Venkatam, the resort of many scenic beauties of Lord Vishnu with all His glories. The second is a prayer to Him to save his servant by taking him into His fold. The third is a supplication for His grace, removing his sufferings incidental to earthly existence, in the course of which he has the mystic experience of the Lord of Venkatam coming live in his own heart. The fourth turns on the refrain congratulating his own mind that it has plighted itself on that day to the occupation of being the servitor of the Ruler of Venkatam.

Four verses of touching emotion and experience of the Lord of Tirumala are translated below in English:

Saying mother and father and wife and kinsman  
I have gone down bringing only affliction of the  
earthly disease on myself. Mean as dog, I am  
now drawn by a longing to have a sight of you; I  
have come and reached Your Presence, Oh Lord  
of the sacred Venkata mount with beautiful  
scented groves having (clusters of) bamboo  
grass. (Periya Tirumoli 1.9.1)

Oh my Father who sleeps on the beautiful  
banyan-leaf (at the time of *Pralaya*) having  
devoured all the water, earth and oceans! Oh  
unceasing ambrosia, dwelling on the great and  
glorious mount of sacred Venkatam! Confer  
Your grace on me, Your servitor. (1.10.3)

Oh you have come. You have entered my heart.  
You stand rooted there. Oh rich effulgence  
which knows no dimunition! Our noble Prince!  
Priceless gem! My father dwelling on sacred  
Venkatam! I shall never allow you to leave (my  
heart). (1.10.9)

Oh you, the thing called my mind ! Even after  
you heard some people speaking in contradictory  
terms of Him as the Distant and the Near One  
and the Small and the Big One, you have taken  
upon yourself without telling me in the least  
about it, the business of service as a bondsman,  
of the Lord of the cowherds (Krishna) -- the  
Lord who dwells in the temple of the Venkata  
mount where bamboo-rushes stand and shower  
white pearls.

### **Conclusion**

Following the original Alvar seers of Sri Vaishnavism, we have a line dedicated acharyas lasting for more than six centuries, from about 800 to 1450 A.D., beginning with Nathamuni and passing through Yamuna and Ramanuja to Vedanta Desika and Manavaala Maamuni. These men of divine vision, gifted with powers beyond those of ordinary mortals, built up with their unique services, sacrifices and personal examples, the Sri Vaishnava religion of bhakti-prapatti based on temple worship and made it the faith of the masses and the way of deliverance for advanced seekers.

The Lord of the Venkata mount was their Guiding Light and their Refuge and the glories of His interaction with them through the centuries can never be told in full, least of all in this small essay. As we stand in the adoration before the Lord of Venkatam on the Brahmotsavam days, contemplating Him of infinite excellences (*ananta-kalyaana-guna*) in the ever enchanting archa form, the memorable heritage of the past blends with the golden promise of the future in the eternity of the present, and we may well catch a glimpse of the timeless world of pure experience of the *Supreme Srinivasa*.

## Tiruppavai: A Sacred Vow

Sri Marehalli G. Prasad

New Jersey, USA

The Tiruppavai is a poem of 30 songs, composed by Sri Andal, the only lady Alvar of the twelve Alvares, whose compositions of devotion and divine experiences put together is termed as *Nalayira Divya Prabhandam*, or 4000 divine hymns. The title Tiruppavai consists of two words, namely "tiru" meaning sacred, holy, auspicious, and "pavai" meaning vow and also a girl. Thus Tiruppavai is a poetic description of a sacred vow taken by a girl. The theme of Tiruppavai is spiritual awakening of an individual soul, which then yearns for Divine Union. This great poem of 30 songs is sung in the month of Margali (mid-December to mid-January) auspicious to Lord Krishna. Also, in the Sri Vaishnava tradition of Bhagavad Aradhana (Lord's worship) done at homes and temples, the last two songs of Tiruppavai are sung at the end.

Sri Vishnuchitta also known as Periyalvar or Bhattar Piran was a very pious devotee in Srivilliputtur. Once he found a baby in his garden near a *tulasi* plant. He gave her the name Kothai or Goda, meaning maiden or singing girl. Goda was fond of singing and naturally devoted to Lord Krishna. She learnt all about Lord Krishna from her foster father Sri Vishnuchitta. Goda began to love Lord Krishna in her heart and longed to be married to him. She would secretly wear the garlands meant for the Lord and imagine herself as Lord's bride. Sri Vishnuchitta came to know of this act of Goda and admonished her. However, that night the Lord appeared in the dream of Sri Vishnuchitta and said that "the garland worn by Goda would only be acceptable to Him and one day He would come to marry Goda." Hence she is known as Soodikoduttha Nachiyar, meaning a consort who first wore the flowers before offering to Lord. At a young age, Goda sang the Tiruppavai and after this she composed and sang a poem of 143 verses steeped in her love for Lord Krishna, called Nachiyar Tirumoli. Later, on an appointed day, through instructions by Lord Ranganatha in dreams of the head priest of Srirangam temple, then a Pandya King, and Sri Vishnuchitta himself, the divine wedding got fulfilled through her merger with the idol of Lord Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam. Thus, Goda achieved her divine union, and from then she is called Andal (liegess).

In Tiruppavai, the first five songs introduce the nature of the Sacred Vow. Goda sends a clarion call for her girl friends desirous of observing the sacred Vow of the Margali month, to secure, from Lord Narayana, the much coveted drum, a symbol of divine joy of union with Him. She says that, they should gather, with a dip in the sacred waters, early in the morning, as the first step. The rigors of

the vow are then stated, such as abstinence from fatty food and avoidance of bad words, decoration with jewels, etc. The lasting benefits of spirituality and prosperity accruing from the observance of the vow to the participants and the country are mentioned. Goda says that, when the Lord is worshipped with pure devotion combined with mental and bodily purity, all the age long sins will be burnt like cotton in fire.

Songs 6 through 15 deal with waking up of girls who are still asleep by Goda, one after another. They are coaxed, cajoled, teased, and even ridiculed by Goda to wake up from their slumber, lethargy and laziness and join the group in observing the vow. Then in songs 17 through 20, Goda with all her girl friends imagines herself as going to house of Nandagopa, foster father of Lord Krishna and ruler of Gokula with a view to meeting Him. Goda and her companions wake up, respectively, Nandagopa, his wife Yashoda, Balarama (elder brother of Krishna), Nila Devi (Krishna's consort) and finally Lord Krishna Himself.

In the songs 21-28, the expression of utter surrender of Goda and her companions to Lord Krishna, eschewing all self-related feelings is described. The appearance of Lord Krishna before them inspite of their worthlessness is an indication of the greatness and compassion of Him. Goda requests the grant of the drum and things like conches, musical instruments, beautiful lamps and canopies for the proper observance of the sacred vow. The girls, now that the sacred vow is about to be completed, will wear beautiful jewels and lovely robes and taste the rice cooked with sumptuous milk and ghee (clarified butter).

In the 29th song, which is the most important one in Tiruppavai, Goda says to the Lord that they have come to Him, not to receive the coveted drum, but to be with Him, serve Him and Him alone, eternally. They pray to Lord Krishna that all their desires and passions should be turned into Divine desires and divine passions. The last song sets out the fruits of the sincere study of this poem which is in the form of a garland of thirty songs in Sangam (classical) Tamil. The fruits of the sincere and devoted study of Tiruppavai are the grace of the Lord and perennial joy and blissful happiness.

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# Two Tamil Compositions of SriManavaala Maamunigal

by Oppiliappan Koil Varadachari Sadagopan New York

Sri Manavaala Maamunigal has blessed us with three Prabandhams:

1. Upadesa Rattina Maalai (URM) -- "Necklace of Teachings",
2. Tiruvaymoli Nurrandadi (TVN) -- "A Hundred Linked Verses on Tiruvaymoli", and
3. Arti Prabandham -- "My Anguish"

We will briefly cover the first two of these three here.

## Upadesa Rattina Maalai

In Upadesa Rattina Maalai, Maamunigal focuses on the glories of the revered Alvars and his acharyas who preceded him as promulgators of the Sri Vaishnava sampradaya, paying tributes to them in glowing terms in the delectable venba metre of Tamil.

There are 73 verses (paasurams) and one laudatory stanza (taniyan) in Upadesa Rattina Maalai. The individual paasurams fall into six distinct categories (A-F):

### A. Paasurams 1-3: Introductory remarks

In the first paasuram, Maamunigal declares that he is giving instruction (upadesam) for the future generations in strict accordance with the upadesam that he himself received from his acharya

Tiruvaymoli Pillai and his acharya parampara. In the second paasuram, he comments about the potential impact of his URM on two categories of people. He says that the learned ones of discriminating intellect will study the URM and instruct other devotees of the Lord on it with joy.

The other category will reject his prabandham out of jealousy and no harm will come to him because of their rejection of his "sad upadesam".

In the third paasuram, Maamunigal offers a benedictory prayer (mangalaasaasanam) for the Alvars and acharyas, their divine compositions, and says "pallaandu" to them along with the Vedas, whose essence they represent.

### B. Birth details of Alvars and acharyas (4-33)

Maamunigal devotes 30 paasurams to cover the details regarding the month of the birth, the constellation in ascendance at the time of birth, the birthplace (avatara

sthalam) and the unique glories of each Alvar and acharya. For Tiruppan, Tirumalisai, Tondar-adi-podi, and

Kulasekhara Perumal, he devotes one paasuram each; for Nammalvar, Madhura Kavi and Tirumangai, he dedicates two paasurams. Andal and Ramanuja receive three paasurams and Periyalvar has the unique distinction of being saluted with five paasurams. Details of the affectionate tributes by Maamunigal are covered in detail in my article on the Web.

### C. The Glories of the Commentators on the Poems of the Alvars (34-50)

In this section, Manavaala Maamunigal's salutation starts with a tribute to Nathamuni, the first acharya, who restored the Divya Prabandham to circulation through the grace of Swami Nammalvar. He continues with a salutation to Emperumaanaar (Ramanuja), the krupa maatra prasannacharya, and thanks him for his exquisite help in spreading the message of Tiruvaymoli through his order to his disciple Tirukkukurukai Piran Pillan to write the first commentary on it. With this in mind, Maamunigal expresses his gratitude to the five renowned commentators on Tiruvaymoli: Pillan, Nanjiyar, Periyavaccan Pillai, Vadaku Tiruvidi Pillai (who recorded the lectures of the acharya Nampillai) and Vadikesari Alagiya Manavaala Jiyar.

He also refers to the blessings of Alagiya Manavaala Perumal Nayanar, the brother of Sri Pillai Lokacharya, through his commentaries on Tiruppavai, Amalan-adi-piran, Kanninun Siruttambu and his exposition of the Tiruvaymoli in his Acharya Hrudayam.

### D. Tributes to Sri Pillai Lokacharya and his Rahasya Works (51-70)

Among the 18 rahasyas of Pillai Lokacharya, Manavaala Maamunigal focuses on the Sri Vachana Bhushanam (SVB) and points out that it is "the essence of the Sanskrit Vedas and their six accessories, all presented in Tamil". He instructs us that the understanding of the deep meanings of SVB through a sad acharya and conducting one's life according to those precepts would be the best of blessings that can come one's way.

In paasurams 60-70, he elaborates on the key messages of the SVB. Some of these messages are:

1. Those without acharya bhakti will not enter Sri Vaikuntham

2. A disciple who fully understands the immensity of his acharya's helping grace will not live away from his acharya's sacred feet; here, Maamunigal points out the importance of acharya kankaryam (service)
3. The acharya will protect the atma svarupa or true essence of the soul of his disciple and the latter in turn will tend with devotion the bodily well-being of his acharya. The importance of eternal service at the feet of one's acharya is emphasized here and the example of the devoted service of Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jiyar's kankaryam to his acharya Nampillai is cited here.
4. The practice of one's religious duties (anushtanam) as established by prior acharyas is emphasized instead of following modern fancy. Maamunigal states that spiritual growth should be attained through climbing the steps of the ladder of such anushtanam.
5. Those following the true way shown by our acharyas are the only ones for us to follow.
6. Contact with the holy (satsangam) is the most important cause for the enhancement of our atma gunas.

#### **E and F: Concluding Advice and Phalasruti (71-73)**

In paasuram 71, Maamunigal condemns pseudo-scholars who twist the meanings of SVB according to their own desire and instructs us to stay away from them. In the 72nd paasuram, he gives us the upadesa that those who seek a true acharya and follow the golden way shown by his tradition will get rid of the afflictions of worldly life; for them, even this earth will be like Sri Vaikuntham. He paraphrases Nammalvar's words, "ippattum uraikka vallaarkku vaikundam aahum tammoorellaam". In the concluding Seventy third paasuram, Maamunigal invites us to study and reflect on the teachings housed in this work and informs us that such an effort will grant us the supreme grace of Ramanuja without fail.

#### **The 74th Paasuram**

Maamunigal had the intention of composing 74 paasurams in the URM as a measure of his respect for Sri Ramanuja's appointment of 74 disciples as simhasana adhipatis (seats of authority) to propagate the tradition. As he was about to conclude the URM, however, a great contemporary of his who had revered Maamunigal as the "God who walked on this earth" (nadamaadam daivam) composed a paasuram beginning with mannuyirgal inge manavaala maamunivan" and begged Lord Ranganatha to include it along with the 73 composed upto that point. The Lord replied to this request and commanded that the above paasuram be included as the 74th and concluding paasuram of URM for daily recitation. This paasuram addresses those desiring

moksha and states:

Oh you who desire liberation! Hold on to the lotus feet of Manavaala Maamuni on your heads during your earthly stay as your sole refuge. You are assured in being blessed with the touch of the divine, which will precede your entrance into Sri Vaikuntham.

#### **Tiruvaymoli Nurrandadi**

Swami Nammalvar's Tiruvaymoli consists of 100 decades. Sri Manavaala Maamunigal has blessed us with a beautiful Tamil prabandham of 100 verses that summarizes the quintessential messages of each decade of Nammalvar's composition. A special home page created for Sri Manavaala Maamunigal will house an explanatory commentary on each of these paasurams. In this brief article, we will present an overview of Tiruvaymoli Nurrandadi (TMN) and comment on the first and the last paasuram to pay tribute to the genius of Maamunigal.

#### **Unique Features of The Work**

TMN has some extraordinary features:

- First of all, it is set in the andadi thodai style, where the last word of each paasuram becomes the first word of the next paasuram, as in the case of the Tiruvaymoli.
- Each paasuram of TMN sums up brilliantly the central message (uyir karutthu) of an entire decade in just 4 lines.
- A salutation to Nammalvar (addressed by his name Maaran) is specifically included in each paasuram.
- Maamunigal imposed on himself three severe restrictions while composing these verses:
  - (a) the first word of each paasuram of TMN should start with the first word of the Tiruvaymoli decade that being summarized,
  - (b) the last word of each paasuram should be the first word of the next paasuram in andadi style, and
  - (c) (c) in between these two "must" words, the name aaran" has to be placed.

#### **The First Paasuram of TMN: Summary of the First Decade of Tiruvaymoli**

uyarve paran padiyai ulladellaam taan kandu

uyarveda ner konduraitta -- mayarvedum

vaaraamal maanidarai vaazhvikum maaran sol

ver aahave vilayum veedu

Swami Nammalvar directly experienced the the essence and nature of God -- the glorious infinite perfections and auspicious excellences pertaining to Srīman Narayana's illustrious nature as Supreme Divinity (paran) and extolled His unparalleled compassion. Maaran further described these truths in his works in the light of the immortal Veda mantras, for our upliftment and eventual attaining of moksha through the destruction of our ignorance.

### Comments

This first verse is a summary of 11 verses of the first decade of the Tiruvaymoli. According to our acharyas, the first six paasurams of this decade cover the essence of the first two chapters of the Brahma Sutras, the aphorisms that systemize Vedanta philosophy. This verse therefore also acts a summary of these first two chapters.

The words "uyarve paran padi" establishes the essential nature and disposition of Srīman Narayana in the light of the Taittiriya Upanishad statement, "The Supreme Brahman is truth, knowledge, infinity." (satyam jnaanam anantam brahma). His glory as Paran (supreme) and Paraat-Paran (higher than the highest) is eulogized through the recognition of His nature as the master of the both states of existence, this world as well as liberation.

The words "uyar vedam ner kondu uraittu" used by Maamunigal point out that Nammalvar's paasurams sing in unison with the teachings of the Sanskrit Vedas and Upanishads.

mayarvu edum vaaraamal -- these words indicate that Srīman Narayana removed completely the delusion (mayarvu) of Nammalvar, who in turn removed all our delusions, beginning with our mistaken idea that our body is our self.

maaran sol ver aahave vilayum veedu -- Maamunigal points out that Nammalvar's grace is the causative principle behind our realization of moksha. He underlines the fact that moksha is unattainable without his grace.

### The last paasuram of TMN

muni maaran munbu urai sey mutrinbam neengi

taniyaahi nunru talarndu -- naniyaam

paramapattiyaal naintu pankayattaal konai

urumai utru uyarndu serndaal

Sathakopa Maamuni (Nammalvar) concludes his gracious utterances with the decade, "muniye! naanmukane!". In the preceding decade, "soozh visumbu", he was blessed by the Lord to have a glimpse of the experience of the Lord's essence, forms, auspicious perfections and the journey through the final splendorous path to His supreme abode. That experience thrills Nammalvar and fills him with a sense of bliss. At the end of this delectable experience, Nammalvar realizes that he was still on this earth and he longs dearly to travel by this path and reach Sri Vaikuntham to join the nitya-suris and serve the Lord and Lakshmi eternally. He cries his heart out and asked the Lord whether it is fair for Him to keep His bhakta who had completely taken refuge in Him in the world of samsara. The intensity of this lamentation is so profound that the Lord blesses Nammalvar with the boon of reunion with Him, now that the Alvar's work was completed.

This final decade is known as the nigamana dasakam and is the climax of the intense spiritual practice of Swami Nammalvar. In the last verse of this extraordinary decade, he declares to the Lord:

*Oh indweller of cosmic matter! Oh inner controller of all who are liberated! Oh you who uniquely possesses blissful knowledge which is instantly realized! My yearning to join You was even larger than this knowledge of Yours. But You have completely enveloped me and quenched my thirst for you! I have become a drop in Your nectarine vastness. My eternal ambition has been thoroughly fulfilled.*

Here Nammalvar thanks the asrita vaatsalyan and apunarjanma saayujyan, Sri Vaikuntanathan (Tiruvinnagarappan) for uniting him in His parama padam.

In his unique, exquisite way, Sri Maamunigal has summarized in four lines the longing of Swami Nammalvar, his heart-rending cry, and his joyous union with the Saranya Dampatis at Sri Vaikuntam. Maamunigal's beautiful choice of words about the supreme good-fortune of the Alvar in this 100th paasuram of TMN are "naniyaam parama bhaktiyaal naindu pankayattaal konai orumai utru serntan uyarntu". Here Maamunigal points out that Swami Nammalvar reached the full height of his supreme bhakti for the Lord and joined the Lord at His parama padam with a status equal to that of the other eternal there. Thus ends the moving summary of Sri Manavaala Maamunigal on the 100 decades of Maaran's Tiruvaymoli.

# Two Sanskrit Sri Suktis of Manavaala Maamunigal

*by Oppiliappan Koil Varadachaari Sadagopan, New York*

## Introduction

Sri Manavaala Maamunigal has blessed us with two delightful *stotras* in Sanskrit. In one of these, the *Devaraja Mangalam* Maamunigal pays tribute to Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi. The other *stuti* is the *Yatiraja Vimsati*, a eulogy of acharya Ramanuja in twenty verses. Sri YathirAja Vimsathi . We will summarize the highlights of these two works of Sri Maamunigal here.

## Devaraja Mangalam

For Sri Vaishnavas, Srirangam, Kanchi, and Tirumalai have been and continue to be the three important focal points of worship. Important philosophical and religious texts which form the bedrock of our tradition took their birth here due to the grace of the *archa moortis* there.

Lord Varadaraja has been presiding on top of the hillock named Hastigiri under the Punyakoti Vimanam from time immemorial. Nearby were born Sri Ramanuja, his loyal disciple and collaborator Kuresa, Sri Vedanta Desika and other great acharyas, most of whom were given away as presents by Lord Varadarajan to Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. Sri Yamuncharya happened to see Ramanuja at Lord Varadaraja's temple when the latter was studying with the Yadava Prakasa, an adherent of a rival school of Vedanta. Yamuna prayed to Varadaraja to bless Ramanuja to become his designated successor to further our glorious *sampradaya*. It was also here that Sri Vatsya Varadacharya (Nadadur Ammal) blessed Swami Desika to become one of the greatest of acharyas. In addition, at this sannidhi, Lord Varadarajan spoke with the saint Tirukkacci Nambi and imparted the highest truths of our faith, ignoring the *archa samaadhi* he was foresworn to.

As Maamunigal stood before Lord VaradarAja enjoying His divine beauty and lordship, 13 slokas in the form of a mangalam (benediction) arose out of him and reached the holy feet of the Perumaal known as Devarajan (king of the gods), Varadarajan (king among boon givers) and Perarulaalan (the One who confers unparalleled fortune upon His devotees). This moving mangalam on Devaraja joined the ranks of other great poems on the Lord of Kanchi such as *Devaraja Ashtakam* of Tirukkacci Nambi, *Varadaraja Stava* of Kuresa, and *Varadaraja Panchasat* of Desika. In later times, Sri Appayya Dikshitar, a great admirer of Sri Desika, also composed a *Varadaraja Stava* in honor of this Lord.

Typically, salutations to the Lord take the form either of a *suprabhatham* (morning poem to awaken the Lord), or *stuti/prapatti* (poem of praise and self-surrender) or mangalam. Maamunigal chose the format of mangalam for Lord Devaraja in view of his great fondness for Periyalvar's *Tirupallandu*, which hails long life for the Lord and wards off *drushti dosham* (the evil eye). .Out of the Parivu of Maamunigal , this MangaLam arose .

## The Taniyan for the thirteen slokams of Devaraaja Mangalam

The Taniyan for this Mangalam for the Lord of Kaanchi was composed by one of the eight famous disciples of Maamunigal known as AppiLLai :

yacchakrE DevarAjasya MangaLAsAsanam mudhA  
tham vandhE RamyajAmAthru munim visadha-vaagvaram

AdiyEn salutes my AchAryan , Sri Maamunigal, celebrated as Visadha Vaak sikhAmaNi ( the crown jewel among those poets with pellucid diction ), who out of his parama bhakthi for DevarAjA eulogied Him with great joy.

From here on , the meanings of the individual sIOkams will be given with occasional comments on the beauty of selected passages .The Sanskrit text of the slokams are assembled in the Maamunigal Home pages referred to above.

**Sloka 1:** MangaLam to the One , who arose from the Homa kuntam of Chathurmukha BrahmA at Hastigiri ! MangaLam to that house of DayA, DevarAjan, whose heroism as Raamachandran in VibhavAtharam and generosity in ArchAvathAram are legendary.

**Sloka 2:** MangaLam to VaradarAjan , who arose from the sacred fire of Brahma's Yaj~nam on top of Hasthi Giri and stood at the UttaravEdhi with His most beautiful body .Mangalam to the One , who presented Himself at the time when Brahma offered his own marrow(VapA ) as Havis to the Lord. ( The supreme sacrifice of VapA homam moved the Lord immensely and He could not wait anymore on the wings and hold Himself back from His son, Lord Brahma ).

**Sloka 3:** MangaLam to DevarAjA , who presented Himself with a bewitching smile before Brahma ,the YajamAnA of the Yaagam performed at Hasthi Giri to have the darsana soubhAgyam of the Lord with his (Brahma's) own eyes .

**Sloka 4:** MangaLam (PallANdu ) to DevarAja PerumAL (p)residing on Hasthi Giri known for His lotus soft eyes , beautiful peethAmbharam around His waist and the captivating hue reminding one of the dark blue clouds of the rainy season.

*Comments:* This is yet another beautiful sLOkam , where the Sanskrit words chosen by Maamunigal flow like the sweet waters of a cool mountain stream :

Vaaridha SyAma vapushE VirAjath peethavAsasE  
VaaraNaachala VaasAya VaarijAkshAya MangaLam

**Sloka 5:** MangaLam to my Lord PraNathArthiharan ( the one who destroys the dukkhams of His devotees) of Atthigiri , who blesses the assembly of boon seekers even today, just as He responded to the wishes of Brahma in the days of yore. He is my Prabhu , who removes ALL the obstacles and difficulties that we face on this earth as SamsAris.

**Sloka 6:** MangaLam to the Lord of Hasthi Giri , DEvarAjA, who shines beautifully with His lovely limbs ,jewelery and powerful weapons .

*Comments:* Sri Maamunigal uses in this sLOkam a rare name for the elephant , IrAvadham , the vaahanam of Indran, which took the form of the tall hill (Homa Kuntam). TanthAvaLam is that rare name for the rare white elephant of Indran.

**Sloka 7:** PallANdu to the most adorable , ancient PurushA celebrated in the four VedAs through Purusha Sooktham Rks! Mangalam to the beautiful KalpakA tree with fragrant bolossoms sanctifying the PuNya kOti VimAnam at Kaanchi ( PushpithOdhAra Kalpa dhru KamanIyAn).

*Comments:* It is appropriate to pause here to reflect on Swami Desikan's own beautiful sthuthi for DeavarAjan (VaradarAja PanchAsath) inview of the special reverence Maamunigal had for the Abhiyukthar , VedAnthA Desikan . Swami Desikan's choice of words in his sthOthram find their echos in Maamunigal's tribute .

Swami Desikan's words are juxtaposed below with those of Maamunigal's words in paranthesis below: ShyAmala:(ShyAma VapushE), Kalpa Saaki ( Kalpa dhru ), KaaruNya raasi: ( DayA dhAmnE), Kari Saila Naatha: ( VaaraNAchala Vaasa:), Swamin ( PrabhO), KarIsa ( DhanthaavaLa girIsa), KamalA Gruha mEdhinE ( VedhimEdhini gruha mEdhinE), Nithyam , Param , Sarva gadham , SusUkshumum , nishpandhAnandha mayam bhavatha: svarUpam ( PurushAya PurANaya, dayamAna DhruSaaya ). Both AchAryAs salute in resonant words the everlasting, all pervasive , ever-blissful nature of unalloyed auspiciousness .

**Sloka 8:** MnagaLam to the One with the hue of the dark rainy cloud sitting on the peak of a golden mountain (viz)., the shoulders of the Veda mUrthy , Garudan with golden wings.

*Comments:* This sLOkam is based on the ThiruvAimozhi Paasuram that begins with the words: " Kaacchina paRavai Oornthu ponmalayin meemisai karumuhil pOl --". This sLOkma is a salutation to the Garuda Sevai of DevapperumAL. This sLOkam is also connected with the mangaLAsAnam of BhUthathAzhwAr ( AtthiUrAn PuLLai OorvAn--).

**Sloka 9:** This sLOkam is a deep salutation to the Dhavaya manthram, since Sri VaradarAjan is closely linked to this mantra rathnam , just as Sri RanganAthana and Thirumalai SrinivAsan are linked to AshtAksharam and Charama sLOkam respectively. The two BhOgams (BhOga Dhvayam ) that the most generous VaradarAjan can confer on those reciting Dhvaya manthram are : (1)the BhOgams on this earth ( IruL TarumA gyalamAhiya ivvulaham ), LeelA VibhUthi and (2) Srivaikunta Vaasam and nithya kaimkaryam there ( NalamanthamillAthOr naadu ). One or both of these dhvaya BhOgams , Ihika and Aamushmika BhOgams , are conferred by the most generous Varadhan on His BhakthAs chanting Dhvaya manthram.His unmatched oudhAryam has been celebrated by AzhwAr as " Avan naadum nagaramum nankudan kaaNa nalanidai oorthi paNNI , Veedum peRutthi tannmUvulauhukkum tarum oru Naayakame " .

Maamunigal says: " ManagaLam to that avyAja karuNA mUrthy , who grants one or the other of the two boons as requested by His BhakthAs ."

**Sloka 10:** MangaLam to the jewel, which adorns the peak of Hasthi Giri ! MangaLam to that Lord who has taken the vow (Bhaddha dheeksha:) to protect me and my kind (His BhakthAs) !

*Comments:* Swami Desikan's elaboration of the Bhaddha Dheekshai of the Lord is worth reflecting here . Swami Desikan indicates that the boon giving Lord of Kaanchi blesses the ones possessing sathva guNam by taking His residence in their hearts in the form of Jn~aana svarUpi ( Satvavantha: HrudhayE chinmayatayA rootasya). His MahA krupA encourages Swami Desikan to beg for His life-giving , nectarine glances to fall on him ( TvadhIya: karuNA amrutha dhruшти paatha: jeevAthu asthu).Swami Desikan elaborates further the Bhaddha dhIkshai of Lord varadarAjan , the supreme bliss with no equal in the three worlds ,( Viswa adhisAyeeye suka Roopan ) with one powerful salutation ," MohanAnaandhakAran " ( the One , who destroys the false knowledge through His Param JyOthi svarUpam ).

**Sloak 11:** MangaLam to that Lord of Hasthi Giri, who broke His archAvathAraa protocol ( silence ) and spoke at all times with His parama bhakthan, Thirukkacchi Nampi ,with great affection .

*Comments:* The Vow of Sriman NaarAyaNA during archAvathAram is not to speak directly to anyone .Lord varadarAjan broke that self-imposed silence to speak to Thirukkacchi Nampi , who performed Fan service to Him daily . He spoke to His beloved Thirukkacchi Nampi and sent word through him to RaamAnujA . The special blessings that Thirukkacchi Nampi received from Lord DevarAja PerumAL led him to be recognized as "DevarAja DayApaathram " in the taniyan for DevarAjAshtakam of Nampi . The grateful Thirukkacchi Nampi saluted the Lord in his ashtakam as : "Samastha PrANi SanthrANa praveeNa! DevarAja DayA sindhO ! Deva Deva! Jagath pathE ! Vilasanthu katAkshAstHE mayyasmin JagathAm PathE !).

**Sloka 12:** May all auspiciousnes befall Lord VaradarAja known for the lingering perfume of KasthUri on His chest arising from His affectionate embrace of PerundeEvi ThAyAr , his inseparable consort *Comments:* This reference to the perfume of KasthUri on the Lord's chest reminds us of the NaacchiyAr ThiruvAimozhi section of ANDAL : " kongai mEl Kunkumatthin Kuzhambahzhiya puhunthu oru nALL tangu mEl yennAvi tangumennu urayeerE " .

**Sloka 13:** This is the well known verse that we use in our daily ThiruvArAdhanam :

MangaLAsAsanaparai: MadhAchArya purOgamai:  
SARVAISCCA POORVAACHAARYAI: sathkruthAyAsthu Mangalam

MangaLam to Lord DevarAja of Kaanchipuram, who has been worshipped by asmathAchAryan and all the poorvAchAryAs going back to NammAzhwAr , whose livelihood was nothing but singing pallANdu to Him. AdiyEn has followed the well trodden path of poorvAchAryAs to sing pallANdu to the Lord of Hasthigiri through this sthuthi .

### **Yathiraaja Vimsathi**

In Sanskrit literature , the poems are organized in numbers of 4,8,10,20,50 ,70 and 100. The examples are ; ChathuslOki of Alavandhar (4 verses); Sri DevarAjAshtakam of Thirukkacchi Nampi and Sri SudarsanAshtakam of Swami Desikan (8 verses); NyAsa dasakam of Swami Desikan ( 10 verses ); NyAsa Vimsathi of Swami Desikan(20 Verses ); Sri VaradarAja panchAsath of Swami Desikan (50 Verses); Sri YathirAja Sapthathi of Swami Desikan ( 70 Verses); Daya Sathakam and Sri Achyutha sathakam of Swami Desikan (100 Verses ). Sri YathirAja Vimsathi(YV) of Sri maNavALa MaamunigAL (Maamunigal) belongs to the category of Vimsathi , since this salutations to AchArya RaamAnujA has 20 verses.

Maamunigal's YV is a moving sthOthram , which came in to being as a result of the request of Maamunigal's Acharyan to Maamunigal to compode a sthOthra grantham on AchArya RaamAnujA .At that time, Maamunigal was a grahasthar and had the name of Azhagiya MaNavALa NaayanAr. He was the trustee and administrator for the special temple built by his AchAryan , ThiruvAimozhip PiLLai. NayanAr's devotion to RaamAnujA was so transparent that his AchAryan requested his sishyan to compose an eulogy in Sanskrit for RaamAnujA , whose nine Sri Sookthis are in Sanskrit. NaayanAr composed a

deeply moving sthuthi on RaamAnujA's glories and his own naicchiyams . NaayanAr begged for RaamAnjA's grace in a heart rending manner . NaayanAr's AchAryan was so moved by the reverence of his sishyan for RaamAnujA displayed in the YV that he began to address his dear disciple from then on as YathIndhra PravaNar or one who is an authority on the glories of AchArya RaamAnujA .

### **Taniyan for Yathiraaja Vimsathi**

Those who heard the sLOkams of YV were profoundly moved by the depth of reverence of NaayanAr .One of them composed a Taniyan in Tamizh for YV :

VALLARGAL VAAZHTHUM KURUKESAR TAMMAI MANATTHU VAITTHU  
SOLLAARA VAAZHTHUM MANAVAALA NAAYANAAR THONDAR KUZHAAM  
YELLAAM TAZHAIKKA YETHIRAASA VIMSATHI YEENRU ALITTHON  
PULLAARAVINTHAT-THIRUTTHAALL IRANDAYUM PORRU NENJE

Remembering the greatness of NammAzhwAr, who is worshipped by all AasthikAs , MaNavALa NaayanAr paid his heartfelt tribute to RaamAnujA so that all of his own disciples could prosper .NaayanAr gave birth to YathirAja Vimsathi and presented it to us as his special gift. Oh My Mind ! Please pay homage to the sacred feet of NaayanAr, which are like a pair of fully blossomed lotus flowers.

Another sishyar of Maamunigal has described the sweetness of YV putting to shame the taste of grape juice and excelling the delectable taste of honey ; he has compared the sLOkams of YV as a veritable , cool cascade of nectar .

The official Taniyan in Sanskrit for Yathiraaja Vimsathi is:

YA: STHUTHIM YATHIPATHI PRASAADANEEM  
VYAAJAHARA YATHIRAJA VIMSATHIM  
TAM PRAPANNA JANA SAATHAKAAMBHUDHAM  
NAUMI SOWMYA VARA YOGI PUNGAVAM

AdiyEn laudes the Sowmya vara Muni (Maamunigal), who composed the YV to delight the heart of RaamAnujA. Maamunigal is the nectar of moon's rays (food) for the PrapannAs taking the form of saathakA birds (it is believed that the SaathakA birds exist on moon's rays alone as their food and reject everything else).

This taniyan equates the PrapannAs to the SaathakA birds insofar as the PrapannAs live only by the grace of Sri RaamAnujA . It is implied that the PrapannAs do not need to go anywhere else their succor and survival and that Sri RaamAnujA's sacred feet are their upAyam and upEyam for salvation.

### **The twenty verses of Yathiraaja Vimsathi**

These twenty verses constitute one of the most beautiful appeal to RaamAnujA for conferring his anugraham on Maamunigal.

The choice of words for the MangaLAsAnam for AchArya RaamAnujA are exquisite . The depth of NaicchAnusandhAnam of Maamunigal has very few comparisons. One hears the echos of Swami AalvandhAr's SthOthra rathna SLOkams and Swami Desikan's YathirAja Saphthathi sLOkmas as well as the RaamAnujA NooRRanthAdhi Paasurams of Thiruvarangatthu AmudanAr .We refer readers to the above home pages and will cover here two sLOkams to illustrate the glory of this sthuthi.

### **Three illustrative slokams of Yathiraaja Vimsathi**

1. The second sLOkam of YV is an example of the exquisite skills of Maamunigal in the choice of words for the salutation to AchArya RaamAnujA :

SrirangarAja CharaNambhuja Raajahamsam  
Srimath ParAnkusa PadhAmbhja BhrungarAjam  
Sri BhattanAtha ParakAla MukhAbhja Mithram

Srivathsa Chihna saraNam YathirAjam EedE

There are four tattvams about RaamAnujA that are being revealed to us by Maamunigal here in terms of his AchArya and Sishya paramaparai . Each of the four paadhams of the above sLOkam elaborate on these specifics :

First , RaamAnjA is saluted as "SrirangarAja CharaNambhuja Raaja Hamsam ". Maamunigal points out that RaamAnujA is like the king Swan that is resting at the lotus feet of Lord RanganAthan .

Second , RaamAnujA is eulogized as " Srimath ParAnkusa padhAmbhuja Brunga Raajam ". Here , RaamAnujA is visualized as the King Bee sititng on the lotus feet of NammAzhwAr. This type of salutation is known as GuNa Prayuktha Daasyam . Maamunigal indicates here that ThiruvAimozhi was nectar for RaamAnujA.

Third, Maamunigal describes RaamAnjA as : "Sri BhattanAtha ParakAla Mukha abhja mithram ". RaamAnujA is described here as the Sun, which makes the Lotus faces of PeriyAzhwAr and Thirumngai bloom. The allusion here is to the deep involvement of Para Tatthva NirNayam by RaamAnujA , just as PeriyAzhwAr in the court of the PaandyA king . RaamAnujA was also involved in many temple Kaimkaryams , just as Thirumangai (ParakAlan ) was involved in building the saptha prakArams of the Lord at Srirangam and the building of the DasaavathAra Sannidhi there.

Fourth , Maamunigal moves on to the sishya paramaparai of RaamAnujA after focusing on his AchArya paramaparai. Here Maamunigal pays speacil tribute to KoorathAzhwAn , the dear sishyan of RaamAnujA : "Srivatsachihna charaNam YathirAjameedEh ".Maamunigal points out that RaamAnujA was the object of KoorathAzhwAn's saraNAgathi or latter was the Thiruvadi of RaamAnujA , who had a very special relationship with Lord RanganAthA (NamperumAl ) , NammAzhwAr , periyAzhwAr and Thirumangai AzhwAr .

2. The fifteenth sLOkam of YV is a moving one , where Maamunigal invites RaamAnujA's attention to his insufficiencies and begs for the dayA and anugraham of the great AchAryan :

Suddha aathma yaamuna GurUtthama KppranAtha  
Bhattaakhya Desika Vara Uktha SAAMSTHA NAICHYAM  
adhya asthi asankuchitham yEva mayi iha lOkE  
tasmAth YATHEENDHRA! KaruNA yEva thu math gathi: thE

(Comments): In this verse , Maamunigal appeals to yathirAjA this way: KaruNaiva thu math Gathi: thE karuN yEva math Gathi: ( Oh AchArya RaamAnujA ! ( Your linitless Mercy is my only refuge and cause for rescue from SamSarik afflictions ) . He goes on to say that the Naichiyams (Statements on one's deficiencies and inadequacies ) of AlavandhAr , ParAsara Bhattar, KurEsar and other PoorvAchAryAs have found their home in him .Therefore , Maamunigalpleads that eh should be the deserving and the most appropriate object of the compassion of AchArya RaamAnujA .

The Naicchiyam statements (NaicchyAnusandhAnams) that Maamunigal refers to are cited below.

- AlavandhAr: " na nindhitham karma tadhasthi lOkE " (sthothra rathnam : Verse 23), " amaryAtha: Kshudhra:--" (SthOthra rathnam : Verse 62)
- KuratthAzhwAn's: " Taapa thryamayee dhavAnala dhahyamAnam .."
- ParAsara Bhattar"s : " Garbha Janma JarAmruthi ", asannikrushtasya nikrushta JanthO:--"
- Sawmi Desikan"s : The twenty sLOkAs of NirvEdha Paddhathi of Sri ranganAtha PaadhukhA Sahasram.

**3. We will conclude this overview of Maamunigal's YV with the appeal made by him to YathirAjan :**

Vijn~Apanam yathidham adhya thu maamkInam  
ankikurushva YathirAja DhayAmbhrAsE  
aj~na aathma guNa lEsa vivarjithasccha

tasmaath ananya SaraNO Bhavathi ithi mathvA

This sLOkam reltes to the ChUrNikai of AchArya Hrudhayam : " ThAiykkum mahanukkum Tampikkum Ivarkkum Ivaradi PaNinthavarkkumE Ivai uLLathiu" .

In this concluding Twentieth sLOkam of the YV, Maamunigal hails RaamAnujA as "DhayAmbhurAsE " or the Ocean of Mercy. He pleads with RaamAnujA to accept his appeal (tath angikurushva). He cites a sreasons for such a plea his lack of knowledge about Sri VaishNavite doctrines ( Tattva- Hitha-PurushArtham )as well as nonposeesion of Aathma GuNAs. In his state of utter helplessness, Maamunigal begs the most compassionate RaamAnujA to take into account all his enormous deficiencies and accept his appeal to come to his (Maamunigal's ) rescue.

## **What is True Renunciation?**

True renunciation is not secured by merely changing one's place of residence or something similarly external. True renunciation is of the mind. It consists of giving up the erroneous notions of "I" and "mine", as Nammalvar taught (Tiruvaymoli 1.2.3):

Give up all notions of "you" and "yours". Pluck them out by the root, and join the Lord. There is nothing equal to this.

-- *Idu* Commentary, Introduction.

## **God is everywhere to seeing devotees**

Once, when Ramanuja was going about his daily routine collecting alms, he came across a number of boys imitating all that the priests did in the great temple of Lord Ranganatha. They had drawn the temple on the ground, had allotted separate chambers for God and His consort Lakshmi, and had performed the ceremony till the time of offering of food to the Lord. The boys gathered a handful of sand for the purpose, and after going through the formality of offering it to the Gods, presented it to Ramanuja for acceptance as *prasadam*. He at once prostrated on the ground and received the offered food in his bowl.

## Arti Prabandham of Manavala Mamunigal

### Sri Anbil Ramaswamy

Sri Manavala Mamunigal, also known as Vara Vara Munigal, is reputed to have been awarded by Lord Sri Ranganatha Himself titles such as *Vishada vaak sikhamani*, *Ittup perukkar* and *Yatindra Pravanar*.

If Bhagavad Ramanuja is renowned as the originator of what is known as "Ramanuja Darsanam" and the revamping of the temple rituals in Srirangam temple, Sri Mamunigal may be deemed as the last of the great acharyas who stayed permanently in Srirangam to perform great kainkaryams to the Lord and His temple.

In fact, he is considered a reincarnation of Bhagavad Ramanuja. He was born in the year 1370, the very next year to Swami Vedanta Desika's ascent to Paramapadam in 1369. Also, considering his echoes of the sentiments of Swami Desika as illustrated later in this article, may be, it would be appropriate to consider him as the reincarnation of Swami Desika! (This is only my own humble conjecture, though!)

Like Bhagavad Ramanuja who ordained 74 disciples known as *simhasana adhipatis* to carry on his mission, Mamunigal nominated 8 *ashta dig gajangal*. As directed by his immediate acharya, Sri Tiruvaymoli Pillai, he took efforts to spread the *arulicceyals* of the Alvars both personally and through these eight disciples.

He wrote several works like *Sri Devaraja MangaLam*, *Sri Kanchi Divya Desa Stuti*, *Yathiraja Vimsati*, *Upadesa Ratna Maalai*, *Tiruvaymoli Nurrantadi*, a manual of daily worship called *Jiyar Padi*, besides brilliant commentaries on several works of his predecessors. Like Periyavaaccan Pillai Swami, who is honored as *Vyakhyana Chakravarti* -- "the Emperor of Commentators" -- for his brilliant annotations, Mamunigal is celebrated as *Ittup perukkar* for his expansive expositions.

But, by far, the most soul stirring of his works is what is known as *Arti Prabandham* -- so moving that a Reverend Father of the Society of Jesus has translated it in the form of an equally moving poem in English bringing out the sentiments faithfully. Like Nammalvar who is regarded as the very personification of the "thirst for Krishna" (*krishna trishna tattvam iva uditam*), Mamunigal is known for his insatiable thirst for the grace of Yathiraja (Ramanuja) and hence came to be known as "Yatindra Pravanar", the one who had a unique affection for Ramanuja. Like Madhurakavi Alvar who valued his acharya Nammalvar as

even greater than the Paramatma, Mamunigal holds His acharya Bhagavad Ramanuja as the ultimate. Like Swami Desika's *Yatiraja Saptati* and Tiruvarangattu Amudanar's *Prapanna Gayatri* (also known as *Ramanuja Nurrantadi*, Mamunigal's *Arti Prabandham* extols the glory of acharya Ramanuja. Like Swami Desika who appealed fervently to the mercy of Lord Tiruvenkatam Udaiyaan, Mamunigal appealed to the mercy of Bhagavad Ramanuja, who was incessantly on his mind, word, and deed. Like Swami Desika who expressed his *naicyanusandhanam* (humility) in several ways, Mamunigal also expressed similar sentiments in this work. Like Swami Desika who describes the route "from here to eternity" and the splendor of Sri Vaikuntham, Mamunigal gives a vivid account of the same in his own inimitable style in Tamil.

Like Swami Desika, Mamunigal also conveys lofty ideas through scenes from daily life so that they leave an indelible impression:

- Mother taking medicines to save her breast-fed baby from disease
- Mother jumping into the well to save the drowning child.
- Father refusing to take food without his son
- How the Son rightfully inherits the property of his father
- How good or bad habits acquired stay put from cradle to the coffin.

The forthrightness of appeal, the clarity of expression, and the simplicity of the language with which he explains and exclaims prove how eminently he fits the title *Vishada vaak sikhamani*, meaning "one who can explain the esoteric in a clear and intelligible manner".

The language used is in contemporary Tamil with expressions used in day-to-day conversation. At the same time, the work is adorned with similes, metaphors, allegories, etc., which enrich and elevate the work to the "classic" level.

The "Dvaya Mantram" which was on his lips ever and anon and to which he initiated his followers was-  
*Emberumaanaar Tiruvadigale Saranam | Srimate Ramanujaya Namah.*

Sri Manavaala Maamuni's

Yatiraja Vimsati

## यतिराज विंशति

यः स्तुतिं यतिपतिप्रसादनीं व्याजाहर यतिराजविंशतिम् ।  
तं प्रपन्नजनचातकाम्बुतं सौम्यवरयोगिपुङ्गवं ॥  
श्रीमाधवाङ्घ्रिजलजद्वयनित्यसेवा प्रेमाविलाशयपराङ्कुशपादभक्तम् ।  
कामादिदोषाहरमात्मपदाश्रितानां रामानुजं यतिपतिं प्रणमामि मूर्ध्ना ॥ १ ॥  
श्रीरङ्गराजरणाम्बुजराजहंसं श्रीमत्पराङ्कुशपदाम्बुजभृङ्गराजम् ।  
श्रीभट्टनाथपरकालमुखाब्जमित्रं श्रीवत्सचिह्नचरणं यतिराजमीडे ॥ २ ॥  
वाचा यतीन्द्र ! मनसा वपुष च युष्मत्पादारविन्दयुगलं भजतां गुरुणाम् ।  
कूराधिनाथकुरुकेशमुखद्यपुंसां पादानुचिन्तनपरस्सततं भवेयम् ॥ ३ ॥  
नित्यं यतीन्द्र ! तव दिव्यवपुस्समृतौ मे सक्तं मनो भवतु वग्गुणकीर्तनेऽसौ ।  
कृत्यं च दास्यकरणं तु करद्वयस्य वृत्त्यन्तरेऽस्तु विमुक्तं करणत्रयं च ॥ ४ ॥  
अष्टाक्षराख्यमनुराजपदत्रयर्थनिष्ठां ममात्र वितराद्य यतीन्द्र नाथ ॐ ।  
शिष्टाग्रगण्यजनसेव्यभवत्पदाब्जे हृष्टाऽस्तु नित्यमनुभूय ममास्य बुद्धिः ॥ ५ ॥  
अल्पाऽपि मे न भवदीयपदाब्जभक्तिशब्दादिभोगरुचिरन्वहमेधते हा ।  
मत्पापमेव हि निदानममुष्य नान्यत्तद्वारयार्यं यतिराज ॐ दयैकसिन्धो ॐ ॥ ६ ॥  
वृच्या पशुर्नरवपुस्त्वहमीदृशोऽपि श्रुत्यादिसिद्धनिखिलामगुणाश्रयोऽयम् ।  
इत्यादरेण कृतिनोऽपि मिथः प्रवक्तुमद्यापि वञ्चनपरोऽत्र यतीन्द्र ! वरै ॥ ७ ॥  
दुःखावहोऽहमनिशं तव दुष्टचेष्टशब्दादिभोगनिरतशरणागताख्यः ।  
त्वत्पादभक्त इव शिष्टजनौघमध्ये मिथ्या चरामि यतिराज ततोऽस्मि मूर्खः ॥ ८ ॥  
नित्यं त्वहं परिभवामि गुरुं च मन्त्रं तद्देवतामपि न किञ्चिदहो विभेमि ।  
इत्थं शतोऽप्यशठवद्भवदीयसङ्घे धृष्टस्वरामि यतिराज ततोऽस्मि मूर्खा ॥ ९ ॥  
हा हन्त हन्त मनसा क्रियया च वाचा योऽहं चरामि सततं त्रिविधापचारान् ।

मोऽहं तवाप्रियकरः प्रियकृद्देवं कालं नयामि यतिराज ! ततोऽस्मि मूर्खः ॥ १० ॥  
 पापे कृते यदि भवन्ति भयानुतापलज्जाः पुनः करणमस्य कथं घटेत ।  
 मोहेन मे न भवतीह भयादिलेशस्तस्मात्पुनःपुनरघं यतिराज ! कुर्वे ॥ ११ ॥  
 अन्तर्बहिस्सकलवस्तुषु सन्तमीशमन्धः पुरस्थितमिवाहमवीक्षमाणः ।  
 कन्दर्पवश्यहृदयस्सततं भवामि हन्त त्वदग्रगमनस्य यतीन्द्र ! नार्हः ॥ १२ ॥  
 तापत्रयीजनितदुःखनिपातिनोऽपि देहस्थितौ मम रुचिस्तु न तन्निवृत्तौ ।  
 एतस्य कारणमहो मम पापमेव नाथ ! त्वमेव हर तद्यतिराज ! शीघ्रम् ॥ १३ ॥  
 वाचामगोचरमहागुणदेशिकाग्रय कूराधिनाथकथिताखिलनैच्यपात्रम् ।  
 एषोऽहमेव न पुनर्जगतीट्टशस्तद्रामानुजार्यं करुणैव तु मद्गतस्ते ॥ १४ ॥  
 शुद्धात्मयामुन गुरुत्तम कूरनाथभट्टाख्यदेशिकवरोक्त समस्तनैच्यम् ।  
 अद्यास्त्यसङ्कुचितमेव मयीह लोके तस्माद्यतीन्द्र ! करुणैव तु मद्गतस्ते ॥ १५ ॥  
 शब्दादिभोगविषया रुचिरस्मदीया नष्टा भवत्विह भवद्वयया यतिन्द्र ! ।  
 त्वद्दासदासगणनचरमावधौ यस्तद्दासतैकरसताऽविरता ममास्तु ॥ १६ ॥  
 श्रुत्यग्रवेद्यनिजदिव्यगुणस्वरूपः प्रत्यक्षतामुपगतस्त्विह रङ्गराजः ।  
 वश्यस्सदा भवति ते यतिराज ! तस्माच्छक्तस्वकीयजनपापविमोचने त्वम् ॥ १७ ॥  
 कालत्रयेऽपि करणत्रयनिर्मितातिपापक्रियस्य शरणं भगवत्क्षमैव ।  
 सा च त्वयैव कमलारमणेऽर्थिता यत्क्षेमस्स एव हि यतीन्द्र भवच्छ्रितानाम् ॥ १८ ॥  
 श्रीमन्यतीन्द्र ! तव दिव्यपदाब्जसेवां श्रीशैलनाथकरुणापरिणामदत्ताम् ।  
 तामन्वहं मम विविर्धय नाथ ! तस्याः कामं विरुद्धमखिलं च निवर्तय त्वम् ॥ १९ ॥  
 विज्ञापनं यदिदमद्य तु मामकीनमङ्गीकुरुष्व यतिराज दयाम्बुराशे ।  
 अजोऽयमात्मगुणलेशविवर्जितश्च तस्मादनन्यशरणो भवतीति मत्वा ॥ २० ॥

Subhamasthu .

Sri MaNavALa MaamunigaL ThiruvadigaLE SaraNam.