

SWAMI DESIKAN'S GOPAALA VIMSATI



ANNOTATED COMMENTARY IN ENGLISH BY:
OPPILIAPPAN KOIL
SRI VARADACHARI SATHAKOPAN



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॥ श्री : ॥

॥ श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः ॥

॥ श्रीमते निगमान्त महादेशिकाय नमः ॥

॥ गोपाल विंशतिः ॥

GOPALA VIMSATI

INTRODUCTION

The birthday of our Lord Krishna (Sri Jayanthi) is on Simha SraavaNa month (AavaNi). When Ashtami of Krishna Paksham is united with the constellation RohiNi, our Lord was born. Swami Desikan composed 20 verses in praise of him and prayed that he should be blessed with thoughts exclusively about HIM during his final moments (Anthima Smrithi) on this earth. Swami composed these twenty verses, when he was overcome by the beauty of the Archa Murthy of Sri Rajagopalan in the Divya Desam at Thiruvahindrapuram. The Sanskrit name for twenty is Vimsathi and hence these twenty verses in praise of Sri Gopala are celebrated as Sri Gopala Vimsathi. For more than 700 years, these verses have been sung prior to Sri Vaishnava TadhyaAraadhanams (Group partaking of food presented to the Lord earlier) to seek the Lord's blessings and during the occasion of marriages to confer the blessings of the Lord on the bride and the bridegroom.

Swami Desikan paints a word picture of the incomparable beauty of Sri Gopalan, describes the structure of His mantram and affectionately recalls the many mischievous deeds performed by Bala Gopalan in Gokulam and Brindhavanam to the utter delight of the humans and the celestial beings.

Sri Gopala Vimsathi must have been very dear to Swami Desikan as indicated by his inclusion of the twelfth verse of this stotram in his esoteric master piece known as Sankalpa Suryodhayam. There, he depicts Narada descending from heaven singing joyously the above verse during his journey to meet Purushan and initiate him into the Maha Mantram of the Lord.

On Krishna Jayanthi days, the Archa Murthy of Rajagopalan is taken in procession around the streets of Thiruvahindrapuram and Sri Gopala Vimsathi slokams of our Acharya is recited. May our thoughts be blessed with the delectable experience of Swami Desikan! I salute Sri Vedantha Desikan prior to attempting to provide an English translation to these bhakthi-laden verses dedicated to Sri RukmiNi Satyabhama Sametha Raaja VeNugopalan.

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SLOKAS – COMMENTARY

श्रीमान् वेङ्कट नाथार्यः कवितार्किक केसरी ।

वेदान्ताचार्य वर्योमे सन्निधत्तां सदाहृदि ॥

shrImaan.h ve~NkaTa naathaaryaH kavitaarkika kesarI.
vedaantaachaarya varyo me sannidhattaaM sadaa hR^idi.

VERSE 1:

वन्दे बृन्दावन चरं वल्लवी जन वल्लभम् ।

जयन्ती संभवं धाम वैजयन्ती विभूषणम् ॥ १ ॥

vande bR^indaavana charaM vallavii jana vallabham.h.
jayantii saMbhavaM dhaama vaijayantii vibhuuShaNam.h..1

I salute that divine effulgence named Gopala, who was born on this Sri Jayanthi day and roamed in the forests of Brindhaavanam wearing the unfading garland made of wild flowers of the forest known as Vaijayanthi MaalA. This garland was his characteristic decoration. He enchanted the Gopis of Brindhavanam. adiyEn salutes this illustrious Jyothi.

We will now add the highlights of Commentaries by Vaikunta Vaasis Thirukkudanthai Raaghava PatrAcchAr, his brother Chinna Mu SrinivAsa PatrAcchar and Anbil GopAlAcchAr



Dodda Krishna





Swamy as well as the summary observations from Dr.V.N. Vedantha Desikan under each one of the Gopala Vimsathy sIOkams for enriching the anubhavam of Swamy Desikan. adiyEn is indebted to Poundarikapuram Srimath Andavan for making it possible to access these treasures with the help of Dr.V.N.Vedanatha Desikan, the Editor of this series on Swamy Desikan's SthOthrams.

COMMENTARIES:

ParAsara Bhattar saluted the ThiruvAimozhi Veda Samhithai blessed to us by Swamy NammAzhwAr as being driven by the doctrine of “KrishNa ThrushNaa Tatthvam” or the deep love and longing of SaThakOpar for KrishNan. That thirst transformed into the Paasurams of Swamy NammAzhwAr. Commentators point out that the same Krishna ThrushNa bhAvam has been experienced by Swamy Desikan in his Gopala Vimsathy SIOkams. Further, the commentators opine that this sthOthram is about GopAlan aspect as Aayan and not about the aspects of Him as GithAchAryan or DwArakAdhipathi enjoying GrahasthAsramam. The Gopalan aspects are about the Lord's sojourn in Gokulam and BrundhAvanam as an infant, child and adolescent Youth.

Let us now focus on the individual words chosen by Swamy Desikan in the twenty (vimsathy) sIOkams of this sthOthram. The first SIOkam is also the first sIOkam in the Mahaa Kaavyam of Sri YaadhavAbhudaya. The first sIOkam is noted for so many adjectives (VisEshaNams) and for the omission of the VisEshyam (prime object, KrishNa here). Great poetic beauty is revealed through such abundant usage of adjectives (BrundhAvana Charam, Vaijyanthi VibhUshaNam, Jayanthy sambhavam and Vallavi Jana vallabham) Krishna is not specifically mentioned by name.

WORD BY WORD COMMENTARY BY EARLIER SCHOLARS:

1. **VandhE:** “NaaTayaiva nama: padham” was the salutation to Krishnaa in DasavathAra sthOthram of Swamy Desikan. Here, the salutation is “VandhE”. Gopala is fond of seeking anjali (anjalinim yaachamAnO GopAla:). Before He even waits and begs for the anjali, Swamy Desikan offers his anjali through the declaration: “VandhE”. Swamy Desikan identifies thus Gopalan as His NaaTan (Supreme Master). He indicates that He can not let the Lord seek anjali from him and he will offer his anjali even before He asks. The extreme simplicity (Soulabhya) and His over-supremacy (Parathvam) propel Swamy Desikan to offer his homage to His Lord as the resident of Gokulam and BrundhAvanam. He is not focusing on Him as GeethAchAryan or DwArakAnATan. “VandhE” is namaskArAthmaka MangaLa sabdham.

2. **BrundhAvana-charam:** BrundhAvanam means a forest. It also means a place filled with calves and cows. Gopalan roamed in this forest with the calves and cows to make it sacred with His holy steps. He was born in Mathurai but all His leelais took place here. “BrundhAnAm avanam yasmin, Tath BrundhAvanam” is one definition: He protected and





nurtured the calves and cows at this forest. In the sixth sLOkam of NyAsa Tilakam, Swamy observes as to what happened at this forest known as BrundhAvanam: “**BrundhAni Ya: svavasayan vrasundareeNAm, BrundhAvanAnthara-bhuvAm sulabhO BhabhUva**”. He got the assembly of Cowherds under His influence and HE HIMSELF became readily accessible in all parts of BrundhAvanam.

3. **Vallavee Jana vallabham**: He is the dear Lord (Priya NaaTan) of the GopikAs. Swamy Desikan is going to refer elsewhere about this special relationship as: “**Vallavee VallabhO na:**” and “**dhaivatham youvana Priyam**”. He is normally SrI Vallabhan (dearest to SrI Devi, who pleads (PurushakAram) for us. Here, Swamy Desikan suggests that the Gopis have similar power due to their love for their Lord. At the time, He is with the Gopis, He will not think about His SrIvallabhathvam. Now, Only Gopalathvam is dominant. He is the Youth (YuvA) who is the Sun for the lotus Faces of Gopis (**MadhanAdhura vallavaagana VadhanAmbhOja DhivakarO YuvA**).

4. **Jayanthee Sambhavam**: He incarnated on the auspicious day of Jayanthee, which is the day in which KrishNa Paksha ashtami is united with RohiNi during the AavaNi month. The PurANic support for this auspicious day is: “**Jayam PuNyam cha tanuthE Jayantheem tEna thAmm vidhu:**” (Both victory and PuNyam is conferred). As Gopalan born on the Jayanthee day, He is forever victorious. There are other Jayanthees but His Jayanthee is SrI Jayanthee.

5. **DhAma**: This means Supreme effulgence (**Sva PrakAsa Param JyOthi**). It also means abode (sTANam). His three abodes are: Vaikuntam, Milky Ocean and Adhithya MaNDalam. This is the apoorva JyOthi, which moves around the forests of BrundhAvanam. As this child moves with Vyjayanthi garland and the sacred feet having the rekhAs, the paths of the forest are lit with this divine jyOthi. That is the result of the SarvalOka CharaNyan's lotus feet (**dhvaja rEkhangitham asya MahA Purusha Dimbhasya charaNam**). He is the One having the tEjomaya MangaLa vigraham. He is the radiant lamp born in the Kulam of Cowherds (**Aayar kulatthil thOnRu aNi ViLakku**). This tEjas (DhAma) is self-radiant and is recognized as aprAkrutha Suddha Satthvamayam. Swamy NammAzhwAr salutes that JyOthi as “**adhiyanchOTHI uRU /Aadhi+amm+jyOthi+uru**” (Beautiful ancient jyothir maya roopan).

6. **Vyjayanthee vibhUshaNam**: “**Jayanthee Vajjayanthee**” padha prayOgam is delectable to the ear (ANUPRASA SABDHALANKARAM). He has many vibhUshaNams(alankAra vasthus) but as one who roams the forest, Vana Maalai (Vyjayanthee Maalai with TuLasi and wild flowers of the forest) seems to be the most appropriate for this GopAla Sisu (**GopAlOchitha VanamAlaa**).

7. The Four most dominant GuNams of the Lord indicated in the words of this sLOkam are,





VAATHSALYAM, SOUSEELYAM, SOULABHYAM AND SWAMITHVAM

Vaathsalyam is implied by the word “**BrundhAvana charam**”, where His love for the calf and cows. Souseelyam is indicated by the word: “**Vallavee Jana Vallabham**”. He is the Lord who delights the company of Sri Devi without interruption and yet during KrishNaavathAram, He has joy in the company of common folk as the cowherdresses. His Soulabhyam is referred to by the word: “**Jayanthee sambhavam**”, when He descends form His Supreme abode to “**BhU MaNDalam**”. The word “**Vyjayanthee VibhUshNam**” implies Swaamythvam (Lordship).



Mannargudi Rajagopalan





VERSE 2:

वाचां निजाङ्क रसिकां प्रसमीक्षमाणो
वक्त्रारविन्द विनिवेशित पाञ्चजन्यः ।
वर्ण त्रिकोण रुचिरे वर पुण्डरीके
बद्धासनो जयति वल्लव चक्रवर्ती ॥२॥

vaachaaM nijaa~Nka rasikaaM prasamiixamaaNo
vaktraaravinda viniveshita paa~nchajanyaH.
varNa trikoNa ruchire vara puNDariike
baddhaasano jayati vallava chakravartii..2

The Lord of the cowherds, Sri Gopala is seated on a Yantra in the shape of a eight-petaled lotus. Inside that Yantra is yet another yantra in the shape of a triangle. Gopala Upasakas seat him at the centre of this inner triangle and enjoy His illustrious beauty. On His lap, they find Saraswathi, the Goddess of learning. He blesses her with His auspicious glances. He has on His lotus lips the conch known as Paanchajanyam, whose sound is that of the holy Pranavam symbolizing the essence of the Vedas. (His devotees meditate on Him in this manner and receive His blessings).



Udipi Krishnan





(COMMENTARIES):

Two interpretations are given by the earlier commentators. In the first interpretation, the infant KrishNan is lying in the lap of His Mother. Goddess Sarasvathy, the daughter in law of the Lord is enjoying this scene along with the Gopis assembled all around. The baby has a conch in its mouth. The joyous Mother shifts the baby from her lap to a cradle bearing a seat in the shape of the 8 petalled lotus with a mantra-enriched triangle in the central cavity (GopAla AshtaadasAkshari Yantram). This Yantram imparts rakshai and MangaLam for this divine baby.

In the second interpretation, YasOdha keeps the infant KrishNa in her lap, enjoys the avayava soundharyam of her baby and then feeds the baby with milk from a conch and tells Him many stories to reduce His distractions. Afterwards, she lays Him down in the cradle protected by the above yantram. As the Emperor of the Gopa Janams, He reins Supreme there.

There is GopAla mantram incorporated in this sIOkam. This is the rakshA Mantram with the Yantram of Ashta DaLa Padhman, a Triangle with the three letters of the name “Gopaala” (G, P and L). The actual mantram to be initiated by an UpAsakar is;

“Kleem KrushNaya GovindhAya Gopijana vallabhAya svAhA”

This is the 18 lettered (akshara) mantram.

The beauty of this child lying on the cradle is being enjoyed by Sarasvathy. The child has a white conch on its lips. He is lying in the middle of the rakshA Chakram. Gopala UpAsanam leads to Vaak-arTa siddhi, Santhathi abhivruddhi and gaining of Jn~Anam.



Ahobila Mutt Dolai Krishnan





VERSE 3: PARAMA PURUSHA WITH THE SCENT OF VEDAS IN HIS BREATH

आम्नाय गन्धि रुदित स्फुरिताधरोष्टम्
 आस्राविलेक्षण मनुक्षण मन्दहासम् ।
 गोपाल डिम्भ वपुषं कुहना जनन्याः
 प्राण स्तनन्धयमवैमि परं पुमांसम् ॥३॥

aamnaaya gandhi rudita sphuritaadha roShTam.h
 aasraavilexaNa manuxaNa mandahaasam.h.
 gopaala Dimbha vapuShaM kuhanaa jananyaaH
 praaNa stanandhayamavaimi paraM pumaaMsam.h..3

(MEANING):

I visualize and revere Sri Gopala as the Supreme Lord, who took the form of the child born in the cowherd family. He was not an ordinary baby. As he feigned fear at the sight of the approaching evil Puthanaa, he alternately cried and smiled. When he cried, his upper and lower lips quivered from that exertion. At that time, his sweet breath carried the fragrance of the Vedas. He also smiled in between his crying spells. His smile was over the thought of what he planned to do next with the deceitful Puthanaa. He not only helped himself with the poisonous milk from her breast, but also sucked her life through the very same act of responding to her cunning invitation to breast feed him. He drank at one swoop Puthana's milk and her life force and blessed her this way. This certainly is no ordinary child!

(COMMENTARIES):

The subject of this sIOkam is PootanA SamhAram; she took on the role of the Mother YasOdha to feed the infant with her poisonous milk. Her deceit was seen by the Lord, who innocently drank her milk and her life in one gulp. Swamy Desikan sums it up this way: “KuhanA JananyA: PrANa stanandhayam Param PumAmsam avaimi” (adiyEn recognizes this breast feeding child as the Parama Purushan, who sucked out the cunning mother's milk and life at the same time.

1. **AamnYa Gandhi:** It is said that children derive their strength by crying (BaalAnam rhOdhanam Balam). KrishNa's crying is Vedam. His strength is Vedam. Yasya nissvasitham Veda: His breath is Vedam and it has the fragrance of Vedam (Sruthi Sourabham, AamnAya gandhi). When he cries, His lips quiver and His eyes are red (rudhitha sphurita-adharOshtam). One moment, He cries as if He is fearing some thing (danger form Poothanai) and the next moment, He smiles since He knows that He is playing a game with the deceitful Poothanai (AASRAVILEKSHANAM ANUKSHANA MANDHAHAASAM). He has the form of a small child of the cowherd clan (**GopAla**





Dimbha vapusham) and yet He is ParamAthmaa. YaadhavAbhudhaya sLOkam (4.4) instructs us that the Lord sucked Poothanai's life and gave her mOksham through the divine contact of His lips with her breast. She had no more births. Those who reflect on this sacred leelai of the Lord will also be blessed with the boon of freedom from the cycles of births and deaths granted by this Parama Purushan.

2. **Kuhanaa Janani:** Poothanaa was sent by Kamsan to kill KrishNan. She assumed an appearance like YasOdhA and approached the Child lying in the cradle. PoothanA is the equivalent of the MaayA (Prakruthi), which enshrouds us. It hides the svaroopam of Bhagavan from us (**Bhagavatha: svaroopA thirOdhanakaree**). The Lord alone can destroy this Maayaa. Who else can destroy this prakruthy except the Supreme Lord (**Param PumAmsamanthara kO vaa mAyAm chindhyAth?**). As Jagath Guru, The Parama Purushan makes the poison of SamsAram powerless. He is the Mruthyu for the Maayaa. By destroying this visham of Maayaa, He grants the chEtanam the Moksha SaamrAjyam.



Doddamallur Krishna





VERSE 4: DANCE FOR NAVANEETHAM AT HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE

आविर्भवत् वनिभृताभरणम् पुरस्तात्
आकुञ्चितैक चरणं निभृतान्य पादम्
दध्ना निमन्थ मुखरेण निबध्द तालं
नाथस्य नन्द भवने नवनीत नाटयम् ॥ ४ ॥

aavirbhavat.h vanibhR^itaabharaNam purastaat.h
aaku~nchitaika charaNaM nibhR^itaanya paadam.h
dadhnaa nimantha mukhareNa nibadhda taalaM
naathasya nanda bhavane navaniita naaTyam.h..4

(MEANING):

At the house of his parents, Yasodha was strenuously churning milk to produce butter as part of the daily chore. Krishna, the bhagyam of Yasodha listened to these rhythmical sounds coming from her efforts and began a special dance to amuse her and to receive gobs of butter as a present for his performance. For this special dance, he planted one of his foot firmly and he moved the other foot around in different directions. The gold necklaces, jewelry and the ankle bells on his holy feet produced then a most delightful musical sound, which matched the laya patterns emanating from his mother's efforts at churning milk. May that vision of this butter dance of Lord Gopala appear before my eyes! (Navaneetham is freshly churned



Udipi Navaneetha Krishnan (Image Courtesy Aikya Param)





butter mixed with sugar).

(COMMENTARIES):

In the previous sLOkam, Swamy Desikan consoled himself by recognizing the innocent looking child lying in the cradle as “Paramam PumAmsam avaimi”. His avidhyai was banished and prakruthy-bramam (confusion caused by Maayaa) was gone. He gained Brahma Vijn~Anam and this state is followed by Sva-svaropa aavirbhAvam (parabrahmam manifests in him). Prior to that most desirable and ultimate stage of bliss, Swamy Desikan wishes to have the bliss of visualizing the dance that the Lord performed to persuade His mother to give Him a ball of navaneetham He has one foot lifted and slightly bent (aakunchitha yEka charaNam) and firmly planted the other foot on the ground (nibhrutha anya paadham). He needs a rhythmic time measure (tALam) for His navaneetha nAtyam. That kind of tALam comes from the regular curd churning operations by His mother (dadhnA nimanTamukharENa niBaddha tALam). That dance of the Lord proceeds in the house of NandhagOpAlan (NaaTasya NandhabhavanE navaneetha naatyam). Swamy Desikan prays for the appearance of that special and delectable dance before his mind's eye (NaaTasya navaneetha nAtyam purasthAth Aavirbhavathu).

The goal of the dance by SarvEswaran at Nandha Bhavanam was the acquisition of a ball of navaneetham. Nandha bhavanam becomes Aanandha bhavanam as a result of the Lord's dance choreographed to the beat of the regular movements of the churning rod in the vessel containing the milk. Even if He is a Lord, who does not need anything and has every thing (avAptha samastha Kaaman), He is seeking Navaneetha Bhikshai from His Mother. During this dance, the AabharaNams on His body also move in a rhythmic manner following the beat (anibhruthAbharaNam). When He went to steal navaneetham in other people's house, He moved gently to suppress any sound generated by His movements. Here, in His own house, it is a different story. This dance is a kind of dheekshai for the chEtanams to gain Moksham. Our Lord does this novel (nava) dance (nAtyam). He asks for navaneetham and dances as a barter for that gift.



Image Courtesy: Aikya Param





VERSE 5: LORD'S FRIGHT AT THE SIGHT OF HIS CHASING MOTHER

हर्तुं कुम्भे विनिहित करः स्वादु हैयङ्ग वीनं
 दृष्ट्वा दाम ग्रहण चटुलां मातरं जात रोषाम् ।
 पायादीषत् प्रचलित पदो नाप गच्छन् न तिष्ठन्
 मिथ्यागोपः सपदि नयने मीलयन् विश्व गोप्ता ॥ ५ ॥

hartuM kumbhe vinihita karaH svaadu haiya~Nga viinaM
 dR^iShTavaa daama grahaNa chaTulaaM maataraM jaata roShaam.h.
 paayaadiiShat prachalita pado naapa gachchhan.h na tiShThan.h
 mithyaagopaH sapadi nayane miilayan.h vishva goptaa..5

(Here, Swami Desikan enjoys the scene just before the Lord is caught in the act of stealing butter from a hidden vessel by his angry mother).

May the special pose that this protector of the Universe, who acted like an innocent child born in the family of cowherds of Gokulam, nurtures the inhabitants of his world! His mother normally stored freshly churned butter in shallow earthen vessels (Chattis). Gopalan routinely raided the kitchen and stole those gobs of butter. Yasodha thought that she could hide the butter in deep water pots to mislead her child. Gopalan defeated his mother in her efforts to save the butter and won the game. When his mother stepped out of the kitchen for a moment, he put his hands into the pot and helped himself. As he was enjoying himself, his mother arrived suddenly suspecting something was going on behind her back. She saw Gopalan stealing butter again and ran towards him with a rope in hand to tie him down as a punishment. Gopalan was bewildered by the sight of his angry mother. For a moment, he wanted to run away to escape his mother. He lifted his foot to run. His feigned fright at his mother however made him stop. He stood still pretending that he did not know what to do next. He closed his eyes at the thought of the impending calamity of being caught and punished by his mother. He appeared as though he was averting that danger by closing his eyes. It is common for ordinary human beings to close their eyes, when they face serious danger out of a sense of utter helplessness. Our Lord, who is the protector of His universe, adopted this posture as if he was a mere mortal. May the thought of the simplicity that He adapted for this occasion protect all of us in our daily lives!

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan longed for the visualization of the navaneetha nAtyam. He did not gain that boon and the SvAthma RakshaNam did not result. Now, Swamy Desikan shifts his prayer for protection from the Lord, who got caught in the act of stealing butter and ended up by being tied to a mortar by His mother. By the act of submitting Himself to being bound by a simple





cowherdess, the all powerful SarvEswaran demonstrated His souseelyam for the entire world to see. Swamy Desikan now prays for svarakshaNam from this Parama Souseelya Moorthy.

Harthum: He asked for bikshai of navaneetham using His dance as a trade off. It did not work because butter was money for the Gopis; it was their livelihood and hence YasOdha would not give her son what He wanted. She was also worried about her darling son eating too much butter. When He did not get the navaneetham, he resorted to gaining it (freshly churned delicious butter = svAdhu haiyangaveenam) by stealing it, when His mother was not looking. He got caught. He wanted to run. Before that He hesitated for a moment on the strategy of escaping His angry mother by running or by staying in place and trying to charm her by staying motionless (naapi gacchan na thishtan). This was the search in His mind (GopAla vichAram).

Now the reaction of GopAlan on seeing His angry mother rushing towards Him with a rope to tie Him down is described beautifully by Swamy Desikan: “DhrushtvA dhAmagrahaNa chaDulAm mAtharam jaatha rhOshAm”. He jumped from his place by a few feet (yeeshathprachalitha padhOnApagacchan na thishtan) and yet stayed put without running or staying put. He was caught in a state of dharma sankadam. What did He do next? He closed His eyes immediately fearing the worst and hoping for the best (sapadhi nayanE meeLayan). Swamy Desikan prays for this Protector of the Universe, who has taken this dubious role as a cowherd although He was born in the Kshathriyaa clan (MiTyA Gopa:).

dhAma grahaNa chaDulAm: YasOdha was angry. She got hold of a rope to tie down her mischievous son. She was moving rapidly to catch the swift moving son of hers. The rope was short by two inches to tie Him. She got agitated over the problem and began to get angry. Her angry movements to get additional rope frightened the Lord. He was frozen with fear and stayed put although He wanted to run away. He closed His eyes quickly in fear of facing the music. Actually He wanted to come to the help of his tiring mother and let her tie him down.

Viswa Goptha, MiTyA Gopa: Maam pAyAth: The Prayer of Swamy Desikan is: “May this KapaDa Naataka soothradhAri playing now the role of a helpless cowherd and yet is the Rakshan of the Universe and its beings protect us!”





VERSE 6: DEVAKI'S DARLING INFANT & MATHURA'S BLESSING

व्रज योषिदपाङ्ग वेधनीयं
मधुरा भाग्यम् अनन्य भोग्यमीडे ।
वसुदेव वधू स्तनन्धयं तत्
किमपि ब्रह्म किशोर भव दृश्यम् ॥ ६ ॥

vraja yoShidapaa~Nga vedhaniyaM
madhuraa bhaagyam.h ananya bhogyamiiDe.
vasudeva vadhuu stanandhayaM tat.h
kimapi brahma kishora bhava dR^ishyam.h..6

(MEANING):

The young girls of Gokulam looked at this lovely child of Yasodha with great affection. Their glances entered Him like arrows and made Him subservient to them. He is the great fortune of the city of Northern Matura. He, who was born there, is the object of delectable experience for the sages, who do not covet anything else in this world. Right from his infant stage, when He was breast fed by His natural mother Devaki in the prison, He has been the essence of beauty in all the three worlds. I salute and offer my tribute to this Supreme Being known as Gopalan.

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Kaaliya narthanam





(COMMENTARIES):

Here Swamy Desikan states that he prays to the matchless Parabrahmam appearing as an infant at Gokulam for his sustenance with the help of meditation on His soulabhya chEstithams (Baala leelais). Swamy Desikan regrets that he did not live amongst the gopa janams in KrishNaa's time to visualize all these delectable sports at Gokulam and BrundhAvanam. He explains that he is engaging in the singing of Bhagavath guNams (Bhagavath GuNa ghAnam) for sustaining himself like the AzhwArs. The link is to Swamy NammAzhwAr's ThiruvAimozhi (IV.3.10): “**yaanum EmpirAnayE yEtthinEn yaanyuvAnE**”. Swamy Desikan chooses to praise the soulabhya GuNams of the Lord as the child at Gokulam and BrundhAvanam as a route to compensate for his misfortune in not living during the time of the Lord's avathAram. Swamy recognizes his handicaps in such an attempt and says: “**VasudEva VadhU sthanyam Tath Brahma kisOra-bhava-dhrusyam kimapi yeeDE**”. Swamy observes: “adiyEn will eulogize that matchless Para Brahmam appearing as an infant feeding from the milk of Devaki's breasts”.

The Gopis nourished themselves from the enjoyment of looking with love at the Mukha SrI of Gopalan at Gokulam. He was born in the city of Mathurai and made it auspicious (**Madhura BhAgyam**). MadhurA is considered auspicious, an abode of PuNyams and cure for sins because of His avathAram (**MadhurA nAma nagaree puNyA pApahari SubhA**). He enjoyed Devaki's breast milk (**Devaki sthanya bhOgyam**) although He is a Para Brahmam. He became the target of the cowherd girls of Gokulam (**vraja yOshith apAnga vEdaneeyam**). He was born in MadhurA but grew up in Gokulam and the gopis had the alabdha laabham; Maturai had the abhAgyam, when our Lord moved immediately after birth to Gokulam (**Orutthi mahanAy piRanthu, orutthi mahanAy vaLara**). The GopAs and the Gopis had the adhrushtam (yOgam). He was destined to be a King in MathurA as the son of VasudEvan and Devaki but blessed NandagOpan and YasOdha instead by growing up in Gokulam. This ParavAsudEvan, Sarva KaaraNa Brahmam was seen as an infant toddler due to the PuNyam of the Gopa Janams at Gokulam.





VERSE 7: REFLECTION OF GOPALAN AS THE ONE WHO DRAGGED THE MORTAR

परिवर्तित कन्धरं भयेन
स्मित फुल्लाधर पल्लवं स्मरामि ।
विटपित्व निरासकं कयोश्चित्
विपुलोलूखल कर्षकं कुमारम् ॥ ७ ॥

parivartita kandharaM bhayena
smita phullaadhara pallavaM smaraami.
viTapitva niraasakaM kayoshchit.h
vipuloluukhala karShakaM kumaaram.h..7

(MEANING):

I meditate on that child Gopala, who dragged the big mortar to which he was tied by his angry mother Yasodha. She wanted to teach him a lesson for stealing butter. As Yasodha went away, he checked around to make sure that she was out of sight and then pulled the tied mortar to the garden. He smiled with a sense of satisfaction that he duped his mother once again and his lips were rosy with that joy. He dragged the mortar further and went between two Marutha trees. The shock of the collision with the mortar broke the twin trees and the sons of Kubera, who stood as the trees in the garden of the Lord got released from their curse and regained their original bodies. I offer my worship to that blessed child, who freed the sons of Kubera from their existence as the twin trees.

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan is mortified over the thought of the Omnipotent Lord being tied with a husking mortar and states that he can only think about that sad situation of the UIUkala bhaddha KrishNan and could not dare to describe it in detail. Swamy Desikan says: “adiyEn shudders over this thought of you being bound to a big mortar by your exasperated Mother and adiyEn is powerless to describe that distressing scene”.





VERSE 8: POWER OF SWAMI DESIKAN'S MEDITATION ON RAJAGOPALAN

निकटेषु निशामयामि नित्यं
निगमन्तैरधुनाऽपि मृग्यमाणम् ।
यमलार्जुन दृष्ट बाल केलिं
यमुना साक्षिक यौवनं युवानम् ॥ ८ ॥

nikaTeShu nishaamayaami nityaM
nigamantairadhunaa.api mR^igyamaaNam.h.
yamalaarjuna dR^iShTa baala keliM
yamunaa saaxika yauvanaM yuvaanam.h..8

(MEANING):

Vedas are still searching for Him; His leelas were seen by the twin Marutha trees in His backyard. Even after they were released from their state as trees, the sons of Kubera did not want to get back to their home, since they wanted to enjoy some more of His Bala Leelas. The river Yamuna, the daughter of Surya was a joyous witness to all his playful deeds that took place on her sands and banks. adiyEn sees that wonderful young Gopala next to me always. (This is a blessing that Swami Desikan earned as a result of his meditation on Rajagopalan at the dhivya dEsam of Thiruvaheenhrapuram).

(COMMENTARIES):

When Swamy Desikan collapsed over the thought of the infant GopAlan pulling an oversize mortar like Swamy NammAzhwAr, Bhagavaan blessed Swamy Desikan with the Jn~Anam equivalent to direct vision of Himself and Swamy Desikan begins to celebrate this unique blessing. “anugraha viSEshENa kenachith ParamAthmanam pasyanthy”. Even if they did not qualify themselves through Bhakthi yOgam to visualize Him, they experience Him due to His special anugraham. Swamy Desikan is one such bhAgyasAli and describes his Aanandha anubhavam here. The twin Arjuna trees (Marutha maram) shed their life as trees due to the Lord's intervention and went back to their father's home (ALakApuri). They did





not get to see the chEshtais of the Lord as a Youth. Swamy Desikan saya that he was able to see those activities all around him (NikaDEshu niSAmayAmi nithyam) due to the Lord's anugraham. That Parabrahmam is sought after unsuccessfully though by the Vedanthams (Upanishads) even today (nigamAnthai: adhunAapi mrugyamANam). The YakshAs who were in the garden of YasOdha saw some of these leelais until their curse was lifted. Yamunai had however the good fortune to see them in their completeness from the time to She made the path for the Lord to travel across to reach Gokulam to the delectable rAsa KreeDais of the Lord in full Moon evenings. That Lord had river Yanmuna as the witness for His sports (Yamuna saakshika youvanam yuvAnam).

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Image Courtesy: Aikya Param





VERSE 9: SALUTATION TO THE POWER OF THE UNIVERSE

पदवीम् अदवीयसीं विमुक्तेः
अटवी संपदम् अम्बु वाहयन्तीम् ।
अरुणाधर साभिलाष वंशां
करुणां कारण मानुषीं भजामी ॥ ९ ॥

padaviim.h adaviiyasiiM vimukteH
aTavii saMpadam.h ambu vaahayantiim.h.
aruNaadhara saabhilaaSha vaMshaaM
karuNaaM kaaraNa maanuShiiM bhajaamii..9

(MEANING):

I worship the most merciful Gopala, who is the root cause of the creation, sustenance and destruction of this universe; He is the one, who revealed to us the easy to practice route of Prapatthi as the short road to Moksham. He is the rejuvenating, rain-bearing cloud that enhanced the wealth and well being of the citizens of Brindhaavanam. The flute that rests on His red lips during the time of His playing appears to be deeply eager to taste the sweetness of his mouth. I salute this embodiment of mercy known as VeNugopaalan.

(COMMENTARIES):

After being blessed with darsana samanAkAra sevai, Swamy takes it as a real experience and begins to eulogize the Lord through kaimkarya roopa sEvaa. Swamy Desikan envisions KrishNaa before him now. His dark hue, red lips and the flute positioned on those charming lips become the object of homage this sIOkam. Swamy Desikan celebrates the object of his vision as the Parama KaaruNya Moorthy, who had descended from Sri Vaikuntam as KaaraNa Maanusha GopAlan to respond to our Prapatthi and to remind us that there are no other easier path for Moksham (Naanya: panTA ayanAya vidhyathE).





VERSE 10: BEAUTY OF PEACOCK FEATHER CLAD GOPALAN

अनिमेष निषेवणीयमक्ष्णोः
 अजहद्यौवन माविरस्तु चित्ते ।
 कलहायित कुन्तलं कलापैः
 करणोन्मादक विभ्रमं महो मे ॥१०

animeSha niShevaNiiyamaxNoH
 ajahadyauvana maavirastu chitte.
 kalahaayita kuntalaM kalaapaiH
 karaNonmaadaka vibhramaM maho me..10

(MEANING):

One should enjoy the unchanging and incomparable beauty of the youth, Gopala with unblinking eyes. When we blink, we lose that moment of this delectable experience. He is wearing the peacock feathers (Peelis) in his dark tresses. The “eyes” at the top of each of the peelis decorating his hair seem to compete for attention with his youthful beauty. When we think of His many playful deeds/pranks as Balagopala in Gokulum and Brindhavanam and his blemish less beauty, our minds fall in intense love with Him. Our senses are overpowered. May the overflowing flood of that beauty and its luster remain steadily in adiyEn's mind?

(COMMENTARIES):

The direct vision that Swamy Desikan enjoyed disappears now. He gets agitated on experiencing this Viraha dasai. He becomes restless and begs the Lord to reappear before him so he can enjoy the Youthful moortham of the Lord as VeNugOpAlan.

Swamy Desikan attains the state of a woman (Venkata Naayaki) now like ParakAla, ParAnkusa Naayakis and the Gopis before and suffers from the disappearance of the Lord from his vision. He had become intoxicated (unmatthan) from the anubhavam of the Lord's beauty (nithya siddha Youvanam) and had been enjoying that soundharyam without winking his eyes (akshNO: animEsha nishEvaNeeyam). After the Lord's disappearance, Swamy Desikan was experiencing one by one the pangs of vislEsham (separation): weeping, sleeplessness, losing weight, losing interest in appearance, losing shame (madal Urthal), agitation of mind, MATTHA NILAI and fainting. Swamy Desikan is at the stage of mattha nilai here. He remembers the beautiful face of the Lord, where the peacock feathers were competing with the curly tresses for being recognized as the more beautiful one among the items of soundaryam of the Lord. He feels like a cane sugar stalk, which has been pressed of all its juice. Swamy Desikan prays for the krupaa of the Lord to bless him with the





reappearance of the Lord in his mind (mE chitthE aavirasthu).

Our Lord is Nithya yuvaa (eternally youthful); His kumara bhAvam never leaves Him (ajahath youvanam). He is iLam Kumaran. His beauty is intoxicating and His tEjas drives the one's indhriyams to madness (karaNOmAdhaka vibramam maha:).

Earlier, Swamy Desikan appealed for the Navaneetha Naatyam to appear before him (purasthAth Aavirbhavathu). Now, he prays for His roopa soundharyam to be captured in his mind (Aavirasthu chitthE). He wants to see the face in his mind's eye, where his curly locks do battle with the peacock feathers. Each of them competes with the other to be recognized as the one with the greater beauty.



Peacock –feather clad Dolai Krishnan





VERSE 11: MEDITATION ON THE BEAUTY OF VENUGOPALAN

अनुयायि मनोज्ञ वंश नालैः
अवतु स्पर्शित वल्लवी विमोहैः ।
अनघ स्मित शीतलैरसौ माम्
अनुकम्पा सरिदम्बुजैरपाङ्गैः ॥ ११ ॥

anuyaayi manoj~na vaMsha naalaiH
avatu sparshita vallavii vimohaiH.
anagha smita shiitalairasau maam.h
anukampaa saridambujairapaa~NgaiH..11

(MEANING):

VeNugopAlan plays on his flute and creates delightful music and casts his most merciful glances on the Gopis. They are totally captivated by his friendly smile and the divine music originating from His flute. At this time, His cool and welcoming eyes resemble a pair of just-blossomed lotuses in the river of His mercy (Dayaa). May this enchanting youth Gopala protect me always!

(COMMENTARIES):

In this sOkam, Swamy Desikan begs the Lord take him to His side even if He could not come to him. Even if that were not possible, Swamy Desikan pleads for the rain of His KaruNaa Kadaaksham to drench him. KrishNan is delighting the minds, ears and eyes of Gopis with His VeNu gAnam and Raasa Kreedai on the banks of the Yamuna river. Swamy Desikan appeals to the busy Lord this way: You might not be able to leave the banks of Yamunai and come to my side. In that case, please bring me to your side through the enchanting power of Your VeNu GhAnam. Please bless me with your karuNA KadAksham. That would be my protection. Bring me close to you like you get the wandering calves and cows to your side with the sound of Your VeNu. **Sthree bhAvEna vipralambha srungAram anubhavathy.**



Mannar





Dr.V.N. VedAnth Desikan sums up the message of the 11th sLOkam this way: “Gopala’s flute plays a role in tandem with the lovely glance, smile and mental wish. Indeed the flute-music might be audible only to the Gopis or even to the Particular Gopi (KaaRRinilE varum gheetham). Such a lovely music might even be meant for the cows, to which they would respond appropriately. Both (the music of the flute and His eye glances) are love-inciting. Both cause an instant captivation to the Gopis. The glances are faultless, the smiles are also faultless, both are cool but not chilly. The eyes are like lotus in the stream of Gopala’s daya. May He safeguard me with those glances! May He call me, by name, with His flute!”.



Venugopalan





VERSE 12: PRAYER FOR MEMORY OF VENUGOPALAN DURING THE LAST MOMENTS

अधराहित चारु वंश नालाः
मकुटालम्बि मयूर पिञ्छ मालाः ।
हरिनील शिला विभङ्ग नीलाः
प्रतिभाः सन्तु मम अन्तिम प्रयाणे ॥ १२ ॥

adharaahita chaaru vaMsha naalaaH
makuTaalambi mayuura pi~nchha maalaaH.
hariniila shilaa vibha~Nga niilaaH
pratibhaaH santu mama antima prayaaNe..12

This is the famous verse sung by Sage Narada in Sankalpa Suryodhayam. The beauty of VenNgopAla and His world-enchanting flute music has been celebrated also by Srimad Bhagavatham and Periyazhwaar in particular (Periya Thirumozhi: 3.6)

(MEANING):

May the resplendent blue jyothi of Gopala reminding one of an incomparable blue gem stone (Indra neela stone), with blue peacock feather decorations on His dark black hair and the divine flute on His lips appear before me during the last moments of my life on this earth.

(COMMENTARIES):

Gopalan responds to the moving appeal of Swamy Desikan and enters his heart lotus and stays there. Swamy Desikan enjoys the reunion (samsIsham) and begs for the retention of that blissful experience even during his last moments (anthima smruthy). He responds to the earlier prayer of “Aavirasthu mama chitthE”.

The question arises: Why does one need to pray for anthima smruthi since the Lord has said that there is no need to ask this anugraham by the PrapannAs. It will happen on its own due to BhagavAn's own sankalpam. Swamy DEsikan's prayer should be understood this way without conflict with VarAha charama sIokam or Lord VaradarAjan's message to Ramanuja (six words) through Thirukkacchi Nampi: “Swamy Desikan's prayer is not an emphasis on anthima smruthi. Swamy cherishes the Gopala vision so much that He would like to have the vision vouchsafed to him continuously ever hereafter. In other words, he wishes to see this form of Gopala during his last moment in this world”. This is his prayer.





VERSE 13: ENJOYMENT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE BEAUTY OF THE LORD

अखिलानवलोकयामि कालान्
महिलाधीन भुजान्तरस्य यूनः ।
अभिलाष पदं व्रजाङ्ग नानाम्
अबिलापक्रम दूरमाभिरूप्यम् ॥ १३ ॥

akhilaa navalokayaami kaalaan.h
mahilaadhiina bhujaaantarasya yuunaH.
abhilaaSha padaM vrajaa~Nga naanaam.h
abilaapakrama duuramaabhiruupyam.h..13

(MEANING):

Even in His incarnation as Krishna/Gopala, Sri Devi is always united with Him. He has left her His chest region as her place of special residence and enjoyment. He has the eternal and youthful beauty that qualifies Him to play with her. We are powerless to describe His full beauty. The Gopis of Gokulam are thirsting to enjoy His beauty. I am blessed to have the vision of this beautiful youth everywhere and at all times.

(COMMENTARIES):

The Lord responded to Swamy Desikan's prayer and seated Himself with His devis on the heart lotus of His devotee. Swamy acknowledges that beautiful happening and says that he is looking at Him directly. Prathyaksha SamanAkAram has taken place and Swamy Desikan responds to that blissful anubhavam just as Thirumangai acknowledged before: “Kaavi pOI vaNNar Vanthu yenn kaNNuLLE thOnRinArE”.

Swamy Desikan declares that he sees the Aapiroopyam (Beautiful soundharyam) Lord with his eyes for all times to come (akhilAn avalOkayAMi kaalAn). His beauty is one that is sought after by the Gopis (abhilAsha Padham veaja anganAnAm). His beauty is not describable as this or that; it defies all descriptions (aabhilApa krama dhUram Aapiroopyam). It can not be conceptualized. This Lord, who has granted my wish, who has given His chest as the place of residence to Sri Devi, who has the eternal youth, who is the subject of the deepest love of Gopis and whose beauty can not be conceptualized is the One that adiyEn is seeing now.





VERSE 14: WHICH ARTIST CREATED THIS SPLENDOR?

हृदि मुग्ध शिकण्ड मण्डनो
लिखितः केन ममैष शिल्पिना ।
मदनातुर वल्लवाङ्गना
वदनाम्बोज दिवाकरो युवा ॥ १४ ॥

hR^idi mugdha shikaNDa maNDano
likhitaH kena mamaiSha shilpinaa.
madanaatura vallavaa~Nganaa
vadanaamboja divaakaro yuvaa..14

(MEANING):

Which (bold) artist drew this picture of this insatiable beauty known as Gopala in my heart?
Who etched this embodiment of beauty wearing the charming peacock feathers in His hair?
Which painter painted the picture of this beautiful youth in my heart, who is like the morning
Sun to the lotus-like faces of the love-sick Gopis?





(COMMENTARIES):

Some may question how Swamy Desikan could have seen the Para Brahman in real, concrete form, when Upanishads are still chasing to see that form. Yes, one can not see with one's own effort but if He chooses to appear on His own, no one can stop that (*yaMEvaisha vruNuthE tEna labhya: tasyaisha AathmA vruNuthE tanUm svAm*). The Upanishad declares here that He shows His whole form before one He chooses. Therefore, there is no contradiction in Swamy Desikan's statement that he is seeing the Lord in his heart's wall with His head adorned with lovely peacock feathers and other sukumAra roopa lakshaNams.

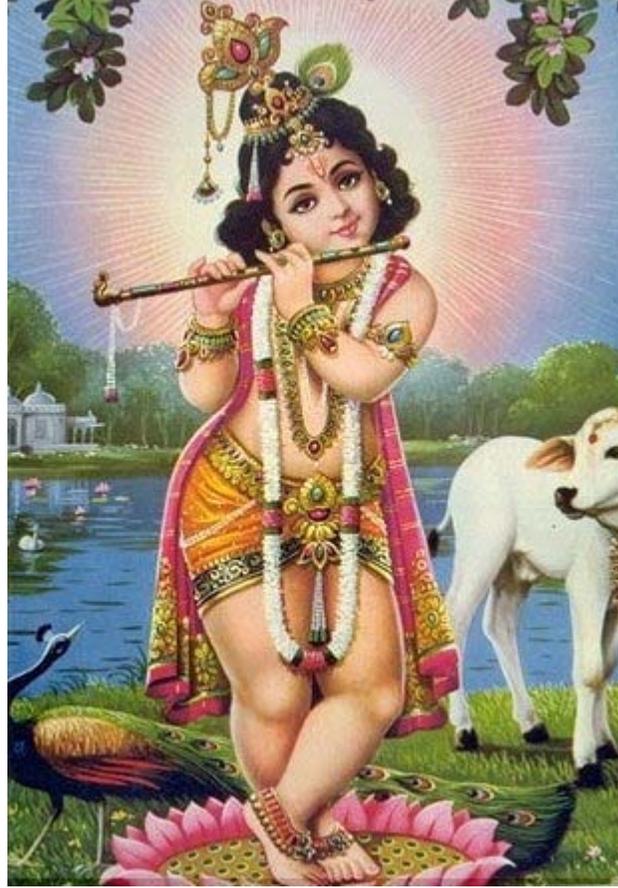


Image Courtesy: Aikya Param





VERSE 15: VENUGOPALAN'S MUSIC SUPPORTED BY THE TALAMS OF GOPIS

महसे महिताय मौलिना
 विनते नाञ्जलि मञ्जनत्विषे ।
 कलयामि विमुग्ध वल्लवी
 वलयाभाषित मञ्जु वेणवे ॥ १५ ॥

mahase mahitaaya maulinaa
 vinate naa~njali ma~njanatviShe.
 kalayaami vimugdha vallavii
 valayaabhaaShita ma~nju veNave..15

(MEANING):

I join my hands in Anjali Mudra and lower my head in salutation of that much revered effulgent, dark-hued Jyothi of Gopala, whose divine flute music joins in conversation as it were with the taaLam of Gopis wearing golden bangles that jingle as they keep up with the rhythmic patterns.

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan offers his humble anjali to the Self-effulgent JyOthi, KrishNa, for drawing His sampoorNa chithram on his heart lotus out of a sense of gratefulness. KrishNan performed a MahOpakAram by entering Swamy Desikan's heart with all His perfection. The grateful AchAryan acknowledges that matchless help for which no prathyupakAram. Vide: Swamy NammAzhwAr in his ThiruvAimozhi Pasuram (I.10.10): “MaRappaRa yennuLLE ManninAn Tannai”. KaNNan enacted for His dear devotee all the Raasa KreeDais on the banks of Yamuna from His seat on Swamy Desikan's heart lotus. Swamy Desikan enjoys that Supreme JyOthi (MahithAya MahasE) and bows his head low to offer his anjali (vinathEna mouLinA anjalim kalayAmi). In Tamil, the scene can be described thus: Anjana VaNNan KaNNan Tannai, Brahma RudhrAdhihaLAI koNDADappadum Appanai, ulaham yellAm vaNangum JyOthi manDalatthai, adiyEn talai thAzhnthu vaNanguhirEn. Swamy Desikan hears divine music from inside His heart, where the sweet VeNu Naadham emanates to the accompaniment of the resonating sound (Kai thALam) generated by the bangles of Gopis enchanted by the Lord 's VeNu ghAnam. The flute music and the sound of bangles following that divine music merge with each other like a symphony. The profound happiness resulting from hearing that symphony propels Swamy Desikan to lower his head and offer his anjali in a spirit of gratefulness. Our Lord's heart melts when He sees the anjali mudhrai (anjali ParamA mudhra kshipram dEva prasAdhinee). He blesses the holder of anjali mudhra immediately with all soubhAgyams. Swamy Desikan becomes a beneficiary of those blessings and describes his contented state in the next sLOkam.





VERSE 16: VENU MUSIC AND RAASA KREETAA WITH GOPIS

जयति ललित वृत्तिं शिक्षितो वल्लवीनां
शितिल वलय शिञ्जा शीतलैर्हस्त तालैः ।
अखिल भुवन रक्षा गोप वेषस्य विष्णोः
अधर मणि सुधायां अम्शवान् वंशनालः ॥ १६ ॥

jayati lalita vR^ittiM shixito vallaviinaaM
shitila valaya shi~njaa shiitalairhasta taalaiH.
akhila bhuvana raxaa gopa veShasya viShNoH
adhara maNi sudhaayaaM amshavaan.h vaMshanaalaH..16

(MEANING):

The incarnation of Vishnu taking the form of a cowherd to protect all the universes has on its coral-red lips the bamboo flute that tastes the nectar of this Gopala's mouth. As he plays the flute on the banks of the Yamuna River during the moon-lit nights, the lovelorn Gopis engage in Raasa Kreeta with him. The Gopis beat taaLam to the music of their Lord with their cool hands decorated with golden bangles. Their follow-up with taaLam suggests as though they are teaching the abhinayam step known as LaLitham to the flute of the Lord. (The Abhinaya saastras describe LaLitham as the gesture, where the dancer places her hands on the appropriate portion of the body and change the movement of her eyebrows to mimic the different rasas. The delectable interplay between the Bhavam, Ragam and TaaLam-Bharata Natyam- is suggested here as the Rasa Kreetaa progresses).

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan bows low before the Lord and folds his hands in anjali mudhra. KaNNan is moved by the devotion of His dear one. He continues with His divine flute music to the accompaniment of the hastha tALam marked by the rhythmic movements of the bangles on the wrists of the Gopis. It is a blissful experience all around. Our Lord becomes one of the assemblies to enjoy this sweet scene. There was no formal tALam from Mrudhangam and there was no VeeNA accompaniment to the VeNu Naadham. Just the beat of the hands of the Gopis wearing the bangles was the sole accompaniment. The scene was very intimate and delectable. Swamy Desikan performs namaskAram to this Lord taking the avavthAram of KrishNan for protecting the beings of the Universe (akhila bhuvana rakshA GopAla Veshasya VishNO:).





VERSE 17:

Gopalan with the decorations appropriate for his role as a cowherd now roams in the forest of BrundhA vanam to graze the cows and calves accompanied by His friends. He roams the forest with His herd of cows and decorates Himself with ornaments appropriate to the simple folks residing in the forests (i-e), natural products readily available in the forests.

चित्राकल्पः श्रवसि कलयन् लाङ्गली कर्णपूरं

बर्होत्तंस स्फुरित चिकुरो बन्धुजीवं दधानः ।

गुञ्जा बद्धा मुरसि ललितां धारयन् हार यष्टिं

गोप स्त्रीणां जयति कितवः कोऽपि कौमार हारी ॥ १७ ॥

chitraakalpaH shravasi kalayan.h laa~Ngalii karNapuuraM
barhottaMsa sphurita chikuro bandhujiiivaM dadhaanaH.
gu~njaa baddhaa murasi lalitaam dhaarayan.h haara yaShTiM
gopa striiNaam jayati kitavaH ko.api kaumaara haarii..17

(MEANING):

The mischievous Gopalan, who stole the youth of the Gopis appears before them with many decorations that enhance His beauty. On his ears, the Gopis find the flower known as Laangali (Flower from the coconut tree's sheaf/Tennampaalai flower); peacock feathers are found by them on his dark and curly tresses; red hibiscus also decorates those tresses. On his broad chest, they find a beautiful necklace made of yellowish-red seeds known as Gunjaa or Kunrumani strung together. With these and more AabharaNaas made of forest products, Gopala enchants the hearts of the adoring Gopis.

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan describes now the Kithava vEsham put on by the GopAla Baalan to bring the Gopis under His total control. Kitavan is one who is a pOkkiri (bemusing rogue). He is an enchanter and at the same time is a mischief maker (KuRumbhan). The Gopis naturally fall for Him head over heels. He has the red hibiscus (Bandhujeevam) in His hand. Over His ears, He has placed a Laangali flower. On His tresses are the peacock feathers. GrAmya bhUshaNams and His kalyANa guNams adorn Him. MahA Lakshmi resides on His chest in the form of the necklace made of KunRu MaNi seeds. He steals the hearts of the Gopis with His kithava vEsham. His charm and novel AabharaNams make the Gopis succumb to Him unconditionally. Kitavan is not a respectable term. Swamy Desikan chooses it as a term of endearment to address his personal God, the Gopika RamaNan, Govindhan.





VERSE 18: THE BEAUTY OF RAJAGOPALA SVAROOPAM

लीलायष्टिं कर किसलये दक्षिणे न्यस्य धन्याम्
अंसे देव्याः पुलक रुचिरे सन्निविष्टान्य बाहुः ।
मेघ श्यामो जयति ललितो मेखला दत्त वेणुः
कुञ्जापीड स्फुरित चिकुरो गोपकन्या भुजङ्गः ॥ १८ ॥

liilaayaShTiM kara kisalaye daxiNe nyasya dhanyaam.h
aMse devyaaH pulaka ruchire sanniviShTaanya baahuH.
megha shyaamo jayati lalito mekhalaa datta veNuH
ku~njaapiiDa sphurita chikuro gopakanyaa bhuja~NgaH..18



Leela yashtim kara kisalayoH



(MEANING):

Lord Gopalan showing great affection for the Gopis stands before them in resplendent attire. He strikes a pose at that time with his tender right hand holding the shepherd's bent stick; his left hand rests on the shoulder of the beautiful Nappinnai; that touch of Gopalan sends shivers of joy over Nappinnai's body. That beautiful Gopalan has tucked his flute inside his waist band and has additional decoration in the form of a chain of Kunrumani beads tied across his own dark hair pulled up in the form of a bun. He shines with his dark blue hue, reminiscent of the clouds in the rainy season and wins over the Gopis with his formidable beauty. He roams around with great desire for union with Gopis.

(COMMENTARIES):

In this sIOkam, Swamy Desikan admires the standing posture of the Lord and concedes that this sevai is even more beautiful to enjoy compared to the decorations and VeNu ghAnam. What is it that overpowered Swamy Desikan? In this sEvai, He has a sportive baton (leelA Yashti) in His right hand and His left arm is resting on the shoulder of His dear Nappinnai. The waist of His beautiful blue body (mEga syAma tanu) holds a flute with the decoration of gunja beads. He shines victorious in this posture as the paramour of the Gopis (gOpa kanya bhujanga: laLitha: Jayathy).





VERSE 19: THE JALA KREETA OF GOPALAN

प्रत्यालीढ स्थितिमधिगतां प्राप्त गाढाङ्ग पालिं
पश्चा दीषन्मिलित नयनां प्रेयसीं प्रेक्षमाणः ।
भस्त्रा यन्त्र प्रणिहित करो भक्त जीवातु रव्यात्
वारि क्रीडा निबिड वसनो वल्लवी वल्लभो नः ॥ १९ ॥

pratyaaliiDha sthitimadhigataaM praapta gaaDhaa~Nga paaliM
pashchaa diiShanmilita nayanaaM preyasiiM prexamaaNaH.
bhasraa yantra praNihita karo bhakta jiivaatu ravyaat.h
vaari kriiDaa nibiDa vasano vallavii vallabho naH..19

(MEANING):

Gopalan desirous of performing water sports with the Gopis tucked tightly his garments. He took in his hands the water pump used in those sports. He approached one of the Gopis, who was standing with one foot forward in the water and the other planted backward on the land., He surprised her from behind and embraced her tightly. That Gopi was overpowered by that delectable experience and partially closed her eyes and looked at Gopalan with half-open eyes. He returned her affectionate glances. Their eyes met. May that Gopala engaged in water sports with the Gopis as their lover protect us, since he is the medicine for his devotees suffering from the afflictions of Samsaara!

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan enjoys the Lord sporting with the Gopis using water pumps (PecchAnkuzhal) on the banks of YamunA River. His garments are tucked tight (Vaari kreeDA niBiDa vasana:) so He can move rapidly and escape the pursuit of the Gopis. When He stands in one place surveying the scene, He has the PrathyAleeDa pose (with his left leg firmly planted on ground and His right leg behind it like an archer ready to send his arrow (PrathyAleeDa sthithim adhigathAm). He moves and surprises a dear gopi by embracing her from behind, which in turn makes her close her eyes in a state of bliss and He looks at her adoringly (PaschAth miLina nayanam PrEyaseem prEkshyamANa:). He holds the water sport instrument (pump) in His hands (bhasthrA Yanthra praNihitha kara:). He is the protector of the souls (Bhaktha JeevAthu) and is the Gopi Jana Vallabhan. He is Bhaktha JeevAthu since the bhakthan can not live or survive without Him. He is thus the PrANan for the jeevan. May that enchanting Lord protect us (Na: avyAth)!





Dr.V.N.VedAntha Desikan's summation is beautiful to enjoy here: “In vedAntha SaasthrAs, this verse corresponds to SaadhanAdhyAya (3rd Chapter of Brahma Soothram). We resort to the Lord as Siddha-upAya. We are enabled to be close to Him, enjoy Him, taste His qualities of charm, love, condescending grace etc. In fact, if we look at Him as our dear life-sustaining force, He reciprocates and treats us as giving Him life!”.

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Dolai Veugopala Perumal: Andavan Ashramam





VERSE 20: KRISHNA STEALING THE CLOTHES OF GOPIS (GOPA STHREE VASTHRABHAHARANAM)

वासो हत्वा दिनकर सुतासन्निधौ वल्लवीनां
लीलास्मेरो जयति ललिताम् आस्थितः कुन्द शाखाम् ।
सव्रीडाभिस्तदनु वसने ताभिरभ्यर्थ्य माने
कामि कश्चित् कर कमलयोर् अञ्जलिं याचमानः ॥ २० ॥

vaaso hR^itvaa dinakara sutaasannidhau vallaviinaaM
liilaasmero jayati lalitaam.h aasthitaH kunda shaakhaam.h.
savriiDaabhistadanu vasane taabhirabhyarthya maane
kaami kashchit.h kara kamalayor.h a~njaliM yaachamaanaH..20

(MEANING):

On the banks of the Yamuna river shines the Lord, who is seated on the bow of a Kunthaa tree with a smile on his face. He is enjoying the prank that he played on the unsuspecting Gopis, who had left their clothes on the river bank and were engaged in taking morning ablutions. He wanted to teach them a lesson for breaking the rules of Sastras, which forbid one from taking bath in the river without wearing a cloth. Gopalan sneaked up on the crowd of Gopis deeply absorbed in water sports and took all of their clothes and climbed up the Kuntha tree and sat on one of its branch and waited for them to come out of the water. The unaware Gopis completed their water sports and ablutions and got out of the water and discovered that their clothes were removed by the smiling Gopalan sitting on the adjacent Pinnai (Kuntha) tree. Overcome by modesty, they rushed back into the water and prayed to him to return their clothes. He commanded them to come out of the water with folded hands raised above their heads as a mark of atonement for the sin of breaking the injunctions of Sastras. They had no choice, but to obey him to regain their clothes. May that mischievous Gopalan fond of Gopis be victorious!

(COMMENTARIES):

This sLOkam is the equivalent of the PhalAdhyAyam of Brahma Sootrams. It deals with the event that took place on the banks of Yamuna River, when the Lord stole the garments of the Gopis, who were sporting in the river without clothes (naganais). He steals their clothes laid out on the banks of the Yamuna river (Vallaveenam vAsa hruthvA Dinakara suthA sannidhou), climbs a nearby Kuntha tree with the vasthrams and has a big smile on His face in anticipation of events to unfold (leelA smEra: laLithAm Kuntha Saakham Aasthitha:). The gopis come out of the water and look for their vasthrams (anthareeyams and Utthareeyams), which are not to be found anywhere. Then they see the Kithava Gopalan on the branch of the

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Kuntha tree holding their vashtrams. They beg Him to give the vashtrams back and save them from the cold and shame. They fold their hands and beg Him for mercy (**savreeLabhi: vasanE abhyarTyamAna: kara kamalayO: anjalim kurvan**). He responds to their anjali and returns their vashtrams and is victorious in the game (**kascchith Kaame Jayathy**).

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VERSE 21: PHALA SRUTHI OF GOPALA VIMSATHI

इत्यनन्य मनसा विनिर्मितां वेङ्कटेश कविना स्तुतिं पठन्
दिव्य वेणु रसिकं समीक्षते दैवतं किमपि यौवत प्रियम् ॥ २१ ॥

ityananya manasaa vinirmitaaM ve~NkaTesda kavinaa stutiM paThan.h
divya veNu rasikaM samIxate daivataM kimapi yauvata priyam.h..21

(MEANING):

This stotram has been created by the poet Venkatesa, who does not consider any God other than Gopala/Naraayana. Those who read and recite this eulogy will have the blessings of the Darsanam of the God of incomparable beauty, VeNugOpAlan, who was the keen object of desire of the youthful Gopis.

(COMMENTARIES):

Swamy Desikan was propelled by his deep devotion to visualize Baala GopAlan and His kreetais on the banks of Yamuna and BrundhAvanam. He composed this Sri Sookthi under the pull of this Aanandha anubhavam (BhavanA prakarsham). Swamy Desikan points out that those who recite this SthOthram will be able to visualize the Lord dear to the Yuvathis (VeNugOpAlan) in His enchanting form even without the benefit of any bhAvanA prakarsham. Swamy Desikan states that he composed (constructed) this sthOthram in a unique manner -- the poetry, the diction, the informing events were all granted to him by Raaja VeNugOpAlan. Swamy informs us that the sIOkams arose from him out of the intensity of the emotional experience associated with the enjoyment of the bliss of visualizing GopAlan enacting these events on the banks of YamunA and BrundhAvanam. Swamy Desikan assures us that we will visualize the Lord and His delectable chEshtais even without the emotional fervor and investment. Swamy pays tribute to this eternal Youth and matchless God.

कवितार्किक सिंहाय कल्याण गुणशालिने ।

श्रीमते वेङ्कटेशाय वेदान्तगुरवे नमः

kavitaarkika siMhaaya kalyaaNaguNashaaline
shriimate veN^kaTesdaaya vedaantagurave namaH

Daasan,

Oppiliappan koil V. Sadagopan

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DOLAI KANNAN OF SRI AHOBILA MATAM



Dolai Kannan in Thirumanajana Kolam

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Dolai KaNNan is the venerable archA Moorthy, who adorns the Silver Mantapam of Sri Ahobila Matam along with MalOlan and other dhivya MangaLa Moorthys. Daily AarAdhanam is performed for Him by HH SrImath Azhagiya Singar. Dolai KaNNan is an ancient vigraham worshipped by AchArya RaamAnuja (1017-1137 C.E) Himself going back to ten centuries. After AchArya RaamAnuja's time, Dolai KaNNan might have been in the aarAdhanam of Swamy Kidambi AacchAn (1057-1157 C.E) or NadathUr AmMAL vamsam (GhatikAsatham AmMAL, the AchAryan of Adhi VaNN SaThakOpa Jeeyar, the founder of Sri Matam) or joined MalOlan later from one of our PoorvAchAryAs.

Dolai KaNNan is the sacred Moorthy with bheejAksharams on many parts of His ThirumEni. One can clearly see these bheejAksharams on the butter ball on His right hand, His broad chest and other regions of His ThirumEni. It is possible that some or all of the eighteen bheejAksharams of Sri RaajagOpAla manthram take their residence on the Lord's beautiful ThirumEni to permit us to visulaize His Sareeram as "**Mathramyam Sareeram**". Dolai (Unjal Sevai) is arranged for Him by the sishyAs of Sri Matam at their houses. SrImath Azhagiya Singar accompanies Dolai KaNNan on these special occasions to the houses of fortunate BhakthAs. Those who are not blessed with progeny invite Dolai KaNNan with ardour to their houses to have the blessings of SanthAna BhAgyam. In this context, Dolai KaNNan is recognized as SanthAna GopAlan.

Dolai KaNNan is indeed Baala KrishNan performing Navaneetha Naatyam at NandhagOpan's house in front of His enchanted Mother, YasOdhAi (**NaaTasya NandhabhavanE Navaneetha Naatyam**). The fourth sLOkam of Sri GopAla Vimsathy of Swamy Desikan describes this enchanting dance. The right foot of the Lord is slightly bent and held aloft during this dancing effort aimed at securing a ball of navaneetham from His Mother (**aakunchitha yEka CharaNam**) and the other foot is firmly planted on ground (**nibhrutha anya padham**). He has many aabharaNams on His ThirumEni, which generate sunAdham as He performs His Naatyam and follow the beat of the sound arising from the regular movements of the rod churning the milk for butter (**anibhrutha AabharaNam nimanTa-mukharENa dhadhna niBhaddha tALam**). Our Lord, Navaneetha KrishNan pesters His enchanted mother for more and more navaneetham. Such is the delectable dance scene that Swamy Desikan witnesses at the house of NandhagOpan in ThiruaaypAdi. Similar is the scene enjoyed by the delighted bhakthAs during Dolai KaNNan's visits to their homes. The divine beauty (**dhivya soundharyam**) of Dolai KaNNan as he rocks back and forth in His dOlai is beyond description (**abhilApa-krama-dhUram Aabhiroopyam**). KrishNa BhakthAs like Sukha Brahmam, Swamy NammAzhwAr, PeriyAzhwAr, Swamy Desikan, Sri Leela Sukhar (the author of KrishNa KarNAMrutham) have enjoyed Navaneetha KrishNan's beauty as He went about stealing butter and being caught by His Mother and the ladies of Gokulam, whose houses He invaded in search of navaneetham Swamy Desikan salutes this incomparable beauty of the Lord as one to be enjoyed without winking of eyelids (**akshNO: animEsha nishEvaNeeyam**).





Excerpts from KrishNa KarNAMrutha sLOkams are testimonies to Navaneetha KrishNan's dhivya soundharyam. The sevai of Dolai KaNNan with slightly bent right foot and His gaze directed at the ball of navaneetham on His right hand is saluted by LeelAsukhar this way : "aakunchitham jaanu, dakshiNa-hastha-padhmE navaneetha khaNDam aalOkayantham Baalam Mukundham manasA smarAmi". He has ksthUri tilakam in His broad forehead (LalADa phalakE KsthUree tilakam); His dense dark tresses are adorned with a peacock feather (BarhOthhamsa vilAsi kunthalabharam); His eyes are like blossoming lotus flowers (mukulAyamAna nayanAmbhujam); His lotus-soft, slightly red hands are like the tender creeper (pallava-aruna pANi pankajam); His face is lit with the assembly of reddish radiance emanating from His lower lip (ullasan-madhura adhara dhyuthi manjaree sarasAnanam); His wrists have jingling golden kankaNams (kala-kvaNitha kankaNam); His incomparable dark bluish hue belittles that of the clouds of the rainy season (nissemasthaBakitha neela kAnthi dhAram); As His dolai moves back and forth, His eyes rock in unison (dOlAyamAnam nayanam) with pleasure at the sight of His devotees; His whole ThirumEni is the embodiment of SrungAra rasam (SrungAra-bhangee mayam); His body has the fragrance of a divine child (KaisOragandhi:). He is adorned with PeethAmbharam on His waist and looks like Manmathan's Manmathan according to Sukha Brahman (PeethAmbharadhara: sragvee SaakshAth Manmatha-Manmatha:).

The Yathi Saarvabhoumar, HH Sri NaarAyaNa YathIndhra MahA Desikan and His predecessors, who adorned the peetam of Sri Matam, who are totally devoid of any blemishes in aathma guNams, see this jyOthirmaya roopam of Navaneetha KrishNan and MalOlan in their heart lotuses as hinted by the MuNDaka Upanishad paasage: "antha; sareerE jyOthirmayO hi subhrO Yamm pasyanthi YATHAYA: ksheeNa-dhOshA:". They see Him externally as Dolai KaNNan and MalOlan at the silver MaNtapam. SrImath Azhagiya Singar performs upadEsam for us using the words of MuNDaka Upanishad again: "Know that Parama Purushan (aathman) alone, the unparalleled immutable, enduring Para Brahman in whom are strung the heaven, earth, interspace, the vital forces and the mind as well as sensory organs. Abandon all other inquiries and talks. He alone is THE BRIDGE leading to immortality (amruthasyaisha sEthu:). May the navaneetha nAtyam of the Thribhuvana Sundaran delight our minds through all of our lives and grant us Moksham as we perform SaraNAgathy at His sacred feet!"

Namo Vaasudevaaya

Oppiliappan Koil V. Sadagopan

