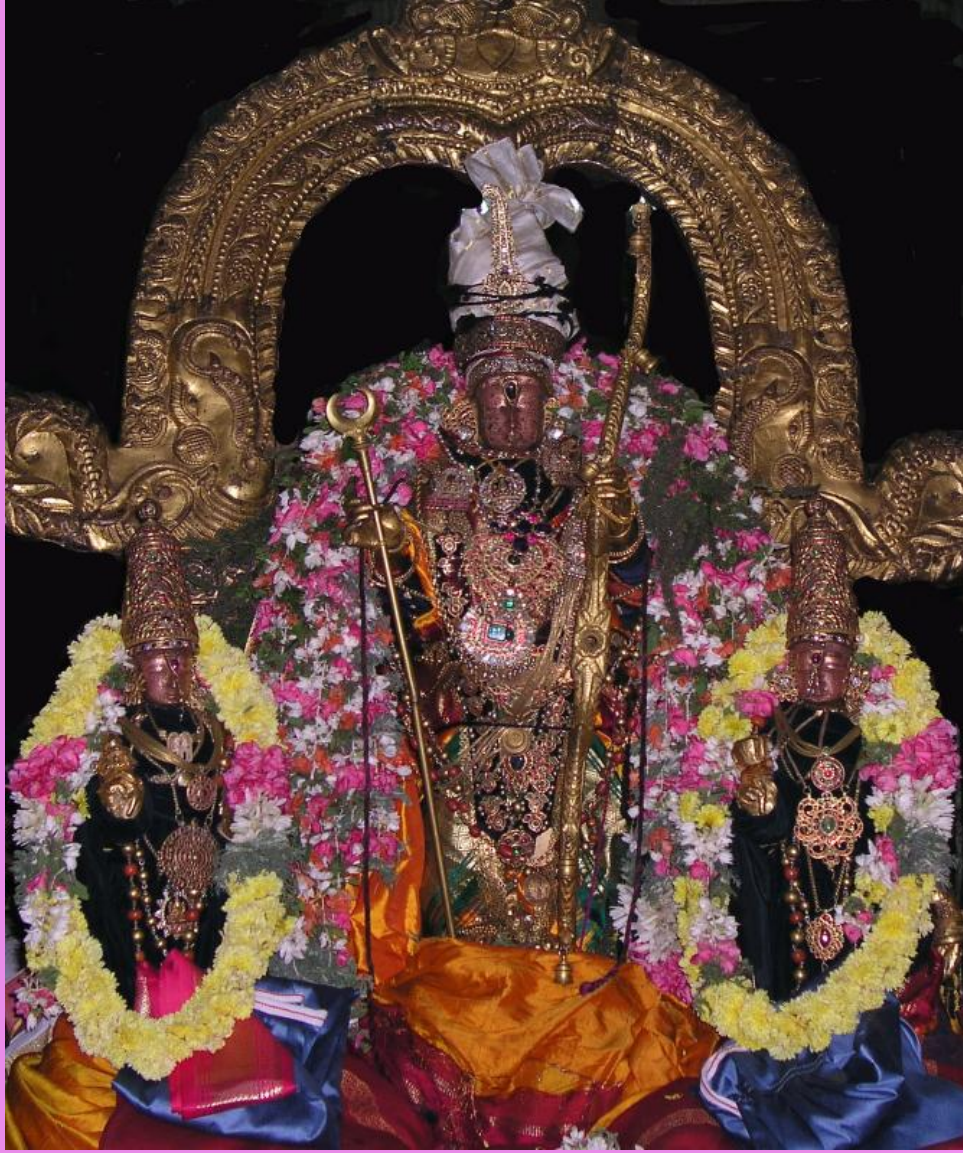


**THIRUKKACCHI NAMBIGAL'S
DEVARAAJAASHTAKAM**



**ANNOTATED COMMENTARY IN ENGLISH BY:
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॥ श्री देवराजाष्टकम् ॥
SRI DEVARAJAASHTAKAM
BY
THIRUKKACCHI NAMBI

On this occasion of the birth day of this great Acharya, Thirukkacchi Nambi, adiyen will make a few observations on his devotion-filled Sthuthi on Sri Varadaraja PerumaaL, Sri Devarajaashtakam.



“Chandra Prabhai”

As an Ashtakam, this sthotram has eight verses. The number eight has sacred significance for Sri Vaishnavas, since their sacred mantram is Ashtakshari or the one with 8 letters. The Acharyas therefore are fond of creating Ashtakams or sthuthis with 8 verses known as Ashtakams. For example, Parasara Bhattar, the son of Kuresa composed his Ashtasloki to dwell upon the meaning of Ashtaakshari.

Swami Desikan composed Ashtabhujaashtakam and Kamaseekaashtakam to salute the Archa Murthys of two divya desams near Kanchipuram. His third ashtakam is the powerful Sudarsanaashtakam. Multiples of 8 and particularly 32 have special significance and I have posted earlier a note on that number and its relevance to Sri Sampradhaayam.





Thirukkacchi Nambi composed in chaste Sanskrit the first Ashtakam on the Lord of Kanchi and prayed for the well being of Ramanuja and the Sri Sampradhayam that he was going to establish as per the wishes of ALavandaar. One can consider therefore the Devarajaashtakam of Nambi as the trend-setter for the other Ashtakams that followed.

Thirukkacchi Nambi was also known as Kaanchi Poorna. As one of the early preceptors of Sri Ramanuja, he had a key role to play at different stages of Sri Ramanuja's ascendancy as the heir to Swamy ALavandaar. Thirukkacchi Nambi was born in Poovirundhavalli (a.k.a Poonamalle). He used to go to Kanchi every day to serve Sri Varadaraja. The summum bonum of Nambi's life was service to Sri Varadaraja. He performed the Fan service (ThiruvAla Vatta Kaimkaryam) to the Lord of Kanchi. In hot summer days, he used to dip the fan in water and waved the fan in service to the Lord, so that the Archa Murthy could benefit from the cool breeze generated by his devotee. The Lord of Kanchi did some thing exceptional during those hours of kaimkaryam. He broke His Archa silence and conversed with Thirukkacchi Nambi. In view of this great devotion and status of Nambi, he was revered by one and all as a Mahatmaa.

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“Poovirundhavalli Thirukkacchi Nambi”

Sri Perumbudur is in between Poovirundhavalli and Kanchi. Thirukkacchi Nambi used to walk everyday from his home to Kanchi to offer his services to Sri Varadaraja. One day, the young Ramanuja saw the great devotee of Varadaraja walk though his village. He saluted Thirukkacchi Nambi and invited him to rest for few minutes at his house. Nambi





recognized the marks of greatness of a future Acharya in Sri Ramanuja. When latter tried to prostrate before Nambi, he said: “O, Ramanuja! I am a low-born Sudra! You should not prostrate before me. How could you salute your servant?” Ramanuja was saddened by the remarks of Nambi and replied: “O, Great soul! Dearest devotee of Sri Varadaraja! Is it the wearing of the sacred thread that makes one a Brahmana? He, who is devoted to God, he alone is a genuine Brahmana. You know about the life of Thiruppanazhwaar, who became the object of worship of the Brahmanas and the temple priest of Srirangam”. Nambi was very pleased with the utter devotion of Ramanuja and drew close to him.

Time went by. Ramanuja became the student of the Advaitin, Yadava Prakasa. Thirukkacchi Nambi kept up his friendship with Ramanuja. Yadava Prakasa was the promulgator of the rigid Advaita School that would not accept or acknowledge the God with form. Ramanuja was all devotion and cared a great deal for the service to God with a form (Saguna Brahman). Ramanuja served his Acharya well in spite of the fundamental differences in their view points. The anger and jealousy of Yadava Prakasa over Ramanuja’s scholarship and divergence of views led this Acharya to think of doing away with his star pupil. He arranged hastily a Kasi Yatra, during which he wanted to drown Ramanuja in the river Ganga at Kasi. Tipped off by his cousin Govinda, Ramanuja escaped from the clutches of his plotters halfway during that Yatra and was rescued by the Divya Dampathis of Kanchi, who appeared before Ramanuja as a fowler couple. They walked with Ramanuja and received water that he fetched from a well to quench their thirst three times. When Ramanuja returned for the fourth time, the fowler couple had disappeared and Ramanuja found himself at the boundary of Kanchipuram. He understood immediately that it was the Divya Dampathis of Kanchi Temple that had blessed him with service to them. He returned to his home to the utter joy of his mother. Thirukkacchi Nambi came to the house on hearing about Ramanuja’s return from the ill-fated theertha Yatra and was overjoyed to see Ramanuja. Latter fell at the feet of Nambi and asked Nambi to accept him as his disciple. Nambi protested and asked Ramanuja to offer service to Varadaraja by fetching water daily from the very same Well that Ramanuja had used earlier to remove the thirst of the Divya Dampathis and that service will help Ramanuja to gain the proper Guru later. Ramanuja continued that service and during one of the occasions of such a service, he met Maha Purna, who was sent by ALavandaar to persuade Ramanuja to accept the responsibilities of succeeding him and strengthen Sri Sampradhaayam. Thirukkacchi Nambi’s prediction thus came true.

Meanwhile, Ramanuja revered Nambi as his Acharya and once had invited him to come to his home and be his guest. Ramanuja’s wife was a strict observer of Varnaasrama formalities and she committed an Apachaaram to Nambi, when Ramanuja was away. When Ramanuja came home, he learned that Nambi had come earlier, partaken the food, gave the remaining food to a Sudra lady and his wife had cleaned the place, where Nambi had eaten and had taken a bath and was cooking afresh to serve him his meal. Ramanuja was extremely unhappy at his wife for insulting the Mahatmaa dear to the Lord and began to distance himself from his wife.

Before this incident, Ramanuja had a number of doubts on Tattvas and begged Nambi





“During uRiyaDi”

to ask Varadaraja to clarify his doubts. Ramanuja appealed to Nambi and said: “To whom but you shall I tell about the matters that agitate my mind for long?” Kanchi Purna during the night service to the Lord passed on the queries of Ramanuja. The Lord answered Ramanuja’s question and directed Nambi to convey His answers to Ramanuja. Next morning, Thirukkacchi Nambi met Ramanuja and delivered the message of Sri Varadaraja, which was in six parts. Those parts of the message are:

1. **AHAMEVA PARAM BRAHMA JAGAT KAARANAKAARANAM**
(I am the Absolute Brahman, the cause of Prakriti, which is the cause of the Universe).
2. **KSHETRAGYESVARAYHORBHEDA: SIDDHA YEVA MAHAMATEH**
(O Bright one! The distinction between Jiva and Iswara is axiomatic).
3. **MOKSHOPAAYO NYASA yEVA JANAANAAM MUKTIMICCHATAAM**
(Self-surrender (at my feet) is the only means for liberation for those who seek Moksham (final Beatitude).





4. **MADHBHAKTAANAAM JANAANAANAAM CHA NA ANTIMA SMRITHI
IRISHYATEH**

(The liberation of my devotees, even though they fail to remember me during the last moment of their lives, is sure to take place).

5. **DEHA AVASAANEH BHAKTHAANAAM DADHAMI PARAMAM PADHAM**

(As soon as my devotees give up their bodies, they attain residence at my supreme abode).

6. **POORNAACHAARYAM MAHAATMAANAM SAMASRAYA
GUNAASRAYAM**

(Seek Refuge in the great soul Maha Purna, who is endowed with all virtues).

After hearing the Lord's answers to his questions, Ramanuja went for initiation by Maha Purna at Srirangam. Maha Purna at that time was hurrying towards Kanchi at the command of the Lord to meet Ramanuja. They met half way at Madhuraanthakam. Ramanuja received the five Purificatory rites (Pancha Samskaaram: Yajna, Ankana, Urdhvapundra, Mantra and Dasyanama) from Mahapurna. He also returned with Maha Purna and his wife to his home in Kanchipuram. Kanchi Purna met with Maha Purna at Ramanuja's home and both enjoyed each other's company discussing Bhagavath Vishayam. Rakshambaal, the wife of Ramanuja committed two more grave Apacharams to her Husband's guru Patni and a guest. Ramanuja decided to take Sanyasa Asrama then and tactfully sent his wife to her Parent's home before becoming a Sanyasi. When Ramanuja took Sanyasam at Kanchi Temple of Sri Varadaraja, Kanchi Purna addressed Ramanuja as Yati Raja for the first time at the behest of Lord Varadaraja.

Thus, Thirukkacchi Nambi's pervasive influence as the messenger of Sri Varadaraja had a central role in shaping the life of Ramanuja at critical moments and set him forth on his journey to strengthen the Sri Sampradaaya even unto this day.





**DEVARAJAASHTAKAM COMPOSED BY THIRUKKACCHI NAMBI ON HIS ISHTA DAIVAM,
THE LORD OF KANCHI (SRI VARADARAJA PERUMAAL)**

There are two Taniyans or invocatory verses for this Ashtakam by one Ramanusappillai, a disciple of Pillai Lokaacchaar. He composed a work of ten verses known as “Sri Kaanchi Poorna Dasakam” to pay his tribute to Thirukkacchi Nambi.

FIRST TANIYAN:

श्रीमत् काञ्चीमुनिम् वन्दे कमलापतिनन्दनम् ।
वरदाङ्घ्रिसदा सङ्ग रसायन परायणम् ॥

**SRIMATH KAANCHIMUNIM VANDE KAMALAPATHINANDANAM |
VARADAANGHRISADA SANGA RASAAYANA PARAAAYANAM ||**

Here, the author says: I salute the Kaanchi Muni, who gladdened the heart of Varadaraja. That great Acharya was involved with uninterrupted service at the lotus feet of the Lord of Kaanchi and was engaged in invigorating himself with the practice of that Rasaayanam.

The phrase “Kamalapathi Nandanam” has been alternatively interpreted to suggest that Thirukkacchi Nambi was the son of Kamalapathi and the son warmed the heart of the father. Since Nambi made Varadaraja happy with his Fan service that resulted in the Lord breaking His Archa Samaadhi to speak with Nambi, I prefer the interpretation of Kamalapathi as the Lord (Pathi) of Perum Devi Thaayar (Kamalaa).

In the parlance of Ayurveda, Rasaayanam refers to a special medicinal creation that gives the users an invigorating, disease -free life. Ramanusa PiLLai points out that Thirukkacchi Nambi practiced the Rasaayanam of devoted service to Sri Varadaraja and was specially blessed by the Lord for that Rasaayana Kaimkaryam.





SECOND TANIYAN:

देवराज दयापात्रं श्रीकाञ्चीपूर्णमुत्तमम् ।
रामानुज मुनेर्मान्यं वन्देऽहं सज्जनाश्रयम् ॥

DEVARAJA DAYAAPAATRAM SRIKANCHIPOORNAM UTTAMAM |
RAMANUJA MUNERH MAANYAM VANDEHAM SAJJANAASRAYAM ||

The author points out that Thirukkacchi Nambi was the object of the limitless mercy of Devaraja (Varadaraja) PerumaL and that Nambi was a supreme bhakta of the Lord of Kaanchi. He says further that Nambi was the refuge of all evolved souls and the object of special adoration for Yatiraja.



“Ekantha Sevai”





VERSE 1 OF ASHTAKAM:

नमस्ते हस्तिशैलेश! श्रीमन्नम्बुजलोचन!
शरणं त्वां प्रपन्नोऽस्मि प्रणतार्तिहराच्युत ॥

NAMASTE HASTISAILESA! SRIMAN AMBUJALOCHANA |
SARANAM TVAAM PRAPANOSMI PRANATAARTHIHARAACHYUTA | |

This is a verse pregnant with meaning. Here, Nambi celebrates the five states of the Lord known as: Param, Vyuham, Archa, Vibhavam and Antaryaamitvam. When Nambi addresses the Lord as Hastisailesa, he salutes the Archa State of the Lord consecrated on top of the hillock known as Hastigiri.

His salutation as Sriman is associated with the Para Vaasudeva state. In Vaikuntam, He is residing with Sri Devi as Para Vaasudeva (Vaikunteh tu pareh Lokeh Sriyaa Saardham Jagatpathi: Aasteh).

His next salutation, Ambujalochana refers to the beautiful Vibhava state of the Lord, when He walked on this earth as Rama and Krishna. Reference to his Lotus eyes relates to his Subhaasrayam.

The fourth salutation, “Pranataartihara”, is associated with the Ksheera Sagara Nilaya VYUHA state. He engages in Yoganidra in the middle of the milky ocean and rushes to the help of his Bhaktas, when they cry aloud for Him, during their times of distress.

The fifth and final salutation is “Achyutha”. This Sambodhanam relates to Antharyaami state, where he is pervasively present everywhere and does not ever fail to give his helping hand to the Prapannas. Achyutha is the 101st Sahasra Naamam of Vishnu. Sanskrit etymology (Nikantu) explains the word Achyuta as “Aasrithaanaam chyuthi: yasmaat naasthi ithi Achyutha:” (He NEVER abandons His Bhaktas and because of this act of HIS, He is celebrated as Achyutha). In this context, Swami Desikan composed a Satakam known as Achyutha Satakam and saluted the Lord as Natha Satyan, Kinkara Satyan to reveal his loyalty to his devotees.





SECOND VERSE OF THE ASHTAKAM:

समस्त प्राणिसंत्राण प्रवीण करुणोल्बणाः ।
विलसन्तु कटाक्षास्ते मय्यस्मिन् जगतां पते ॥

**SAMASTA PRAANI SAMTHRAANA PRAVEENA! KARUNOLBANA |
VILASANTHU KATAKSHAASTE MAYYASMIN JAGATHAAM PATE ||**

O Lord full of Mercy and Grace! O Lord with the power to protect one and all! O Lord of the Universes! May your benevolent glances fall on me! May those glances shine on me! Like Aandaal, who prayed “SengkaN Sirucchirithe Emmel Vizhiyaavo” (Thiruppavai verse 22), Nambi prays for the Lord’s most compassionate glances to fall on him.



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THIRD VERSE OF THE ASHTAKAM:

Here Nambi engages in Naicchaanusandhanam or Aatma Garhanam (Self-depreciation or recounting of one's shortcomings). Even if the great soul did not commit any of the Apacharaas, Nambi and other Acharyas in this mood of Self-depreciation, they "confess" about their "sins" in a penitent mood. This approach is taken to set a model for others to desist from committing such sins. Alavandaar states in a similar mood in Stotra Ratna that he has transgressed the rules of Sastraas tens of thousand times and there are not many Sins that he has not committed. Those Papa Karmas have ripened and are about to yield their fruits. At this juncture, I stand before you, my Lord and lament about, who is going to save me from disaster. Swami Desikan described himself as the emperor of all aparaadhees at one place. Again, all such declarations by these pure souls is to set an example for us and to help us from committing such apacharaas.

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“Seshavaahanam”





**THE THIRD VERSE OF NAMBI WITH SUCH THOUGHTS OF
NAICCHANUSANDHAANAM ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

निन्दिताचारकरणं निवृत्तम् कृत्यकर्मणः ।
पापीयाम्सममर्यातं पाहि मां वरद प्रभो ॥

**NINDITAACHARAKARANAM NIVRUTTHAM KRITYAKARMANA: |
PAAPEYAMSAM AMARYAATHAM PAHI MAAM VARADA PRABHO ||**

Here Nambi says: “O lord, who gives all the boons that one asks! I have the following attributes:

I engage in acts prohibited by Saastraas

I stay away from Karmas prescribed by Saastraas.

I am a great sinner, who has transgressed the boundaries of behavior established by scriptures and Pramaanaas. “O Lord, take pity on me and save me”.

Saastraas typically say “Idam Kuru, Idam Maa kaarshi” (Do this and stay away from that forever). These are known as Vidhi and Nishedam among Saastraas. I do not follow these rules. I am now suffering from such wanton behavior. You are Pranataarthihara Prabhu. Please come to my help, who is crying before you and protect me. This is the prayer housed in the third verse.





VERSE 4 TO 8 OF THE ASHTAKAM

The verses from 4 to 8 form one thought module. These verses are addresses to Achyuta saluted in the first verse. They form a single prose order (Anvayam) and hence the set of the 5 verses is known as a Kulakam. Here, Nambi pleads with Devaraja to protect him and hails him with sweet names such as Deva Raja Dayaa Sindho, Deva Deva, and Jagat Pate. The FIVE verses are as follows:

संसार मरुकान्तारे दुर्व्याधिव्याघ्रभीषणे ।
विषय क्षुद्र गुल्माढये तृषापादपशालिनि ॥ ४ ॥

SAMSARA MARUKANTHARE DURVYADHI VYAGRA BHEESHANE
VISHAYA KSHUTHRA KULMAATYEH DRUSHAAPAADA PASAALINI (4)



“Seevaram Paar Vettai”





पुत्रदारगृहक्षेत्रमृगतृष्णाम्बुपुष्कले ।

कृत्याकृत्यविवेकान्धं परिभ्रान्तमितस्ततः ॥ ५ ॥

**PUTRA DARA GRUHA KSHETRA MRUGA TRISHNAAMBHU PUSHKALE
KRUTYAAKRUTYA VIVEKAANDHAM PARIBHRAANTHAMITASTATAH (5)**

अजस्रम् जाततृष्णार्तमवसन्नाङ्गमक्षमम् ।

क्षीणशक्तिबलारोग्यं केवलं क्लेशसंस्त्रयम् ॥ ६ ॥

**AJASRAM JAATATRUSHNAARTHAM AVASANNAANGAMAKSHAMAM
KSHEENA SAKTHI BALAAROGYAM KEVALAM KLESASAMSRAYAM (6)**



“During Pavithrotsavam”





संतप्तं विविधैर्दुःखैः दुर्वचैरेवमादेभिः ।

देवराज ! दयासिन्धो ! देवदेव ! जगत्पते ! ॥ ७ ॥

**SAMTAPTAM VIVIDHAIR DUHKKAIH DURVACAIREVAMADEBIH
DEVARAJA ! DAYA SINDHO! DEVA DEVA! JAGATPATHE ! (7)**

त्वदीक्षणसुदासिन्धु वीचिविक्षेपशीकरैः ।

कारुण्यमारुतानीतैः शीतलैरभिषिञ्च माम् ॥८ ॥

**TVADHEEKSHANA SUDHA SINDHU VEECHEE VIKSHEPA SEEKARAIH
KAARUNYA MAARUTHAANEETHAIH SEETHLAIRABHISHINCHA MAAM
(8)**

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“During Padisevai”





MEANING OF THE FIVE SLOKAS:

O Ocean of Mercy! O Devaraja! Oh the origin and founding father of the Universe! In this samsaric life full of sorrow and fears, horrible diseases are like the roaming tigers in a forest; the little bushes that give way under one's feet and bury one in the shoals are the sensory temptations; desires are the dense trees of the dark forest; relatives and the personal possessions are like the mirage of desert; I roam in this forest not knowing what to do and what to avoid. I do not have vivekam (discriminatory intellect). Incompetent me, roaming here and there, weakened by this aimless wandering, I am depleted of energy, strength and health. I am full of debilitating anxieties. I am distressed by these indescribable calamities.

O PraNataarTihara! O Achyuta! Please moisten me with the cooling droplets from the waves of your mercy, which have been driven by the winds of your matchless compassion! Please bless me and protect me!

Thus prays Thirukkacchi Nambi and begs Devaraja PerumaL to cool him from the scorching Samsaric afflictions through the rejuvenating shower of mercy and concludes this beautiful and moving Ashtakam.



Sri PeraruLaLan, Sri Perum Devi Thayaar ThiruvadigaLe Saranam
Daasan, Oppiliappan Koil Varadachari Sadagopan

