IMMERSION IN DESIKANUBHAVAM

A Tribute By

Smt. G.N. Praveena, Singapore

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Sri Hayagrivar and Swamy Desikan
Thiruvaheendrapuram

Immersion in DesikAnubhavam

Topics covered/Objectives:

1. The greatness of Swami Desika
2. An outline of the guruparamparA
3. Basic principles and greatness of ViSishTAdvaitam
4. Importance of prapatti
5. Post prapatti / ParamapadasopAnam
6. Summary
7. Acknowledgements

Sri Yoga Hayagrivar, Thiruvaheendrapuram

SrI:

Immersion in DesikAnubhavam

SrImate SrI lakshmInrsimha parabrahmaNe nama:
SrImate SrI rAmAnujAya nama:
SrImate nigamAnta mahA deSikAya nama:
SrImate SrIvaN SaThakopa SrI nArAyaNa yatIndra mahA deSikAya nama:
SrImate SrIvaN SaThakopa SrI ranganAtha yatIndra mahA deSikAya nama:

THE GREATNESS OF SWAMI DESIKA

Swami Desika is an outstanding Sishya of bhagavad Ramanuja. He is a conglomeration of all virtues besides being a philosopher and a poet. Above all, he is an ardent devotee of Sriya:pati. He had absolute mastery of arts and all his works reflect deep understanding and great knowledge.

Bhagavan Sri Ranganatha was so pleased with Swami Desika's knowledge, his teachings and works that Bhagavan himself conferred the title 'vedAntacAya' and what more, Goddess Mahalakshmi conferred the title 'sarva-tantra-svatantrar'. Swami Desika's immense knowledge helped establish Vedanta on a firm basis. He propounded our sampradaya in no uncertain terms and defeated other doctrines with ease. Swami Desika established the greatness of Sri Ramanuja's philosophy, thus - 'Yatipati matam sarvatAsthapayitva'. Swami Desika used his abundant knowledge to create many SrI sUktis. He also wrote commentaries establishing the yatipati matam everywhere. His works are the greatest treasure for millions of generations and we can easily refer to him as the greatest 'Vallal'. Swami Desika was awarded the title of 'KavitArkika Simham" at Srirangam in the presence of SrutaprakASikAcharyar and several scholars.

Sri Appayya Deekshitaron his own merit was a great advaitan and a critic. On reading the works of Swami, Deekshitar praised Swami as follows -

ittham vicintya sarvatra bhAvA SAnti pade pade |
kavitArkika simhasya kAvyeshu lalitesvapi ||

Appayya Deekshitar was moved by the poetic excellence of Swami Desika. He experienced KavitArkika Simham's excellence, in every word of even his soft and simple compositions. Swami went on to work more and more and in an attempt to bring out the truths expounded in Upanishads, Gita and Brahma sUtras, Swami Desika wrote independent works like nyAya siddhAnjanam, tattvamukta kalApa and nyAya pariSuddhi. In those days, even for Swami Desika, there were many who held different views.

Sri Bharadwaja Srinivasacharya had been holding different and rather opposite views compared to Swami. Sri Bharadwaja Srinivasacharya had not even visited or met Swami but still carried on his different opinions that dangerously trekked on creating apacharams to Swami. Later, Sri Bharadwaja Srinivasacharya happened to read nyAya PariSuddhi. This grantham made him realise the greatness of Swami Desika.

Thus wrote Sri Bharadwaja Srinivasacharya -
etat samayan aham vimatya

mati bhedam vivaSa prapattyamana: |
svam avancayam anja sadhya deivat
nigamAntArya nibhantataprabhutta: ||

In the above, he confesses that he had a prejudice against Swami based on listening to others and felt bad that he commited apacharams to Swami Desika. He went on to add that it is naïve to think that he can do an apacharam to Swami - as any apacharam aimed at Swami is actually aparacharam on himself. He expressed relief that his life did not end with that dosham to Swami.

Our Swami Desika's given name was Venkatanatha. When Venkatanatha was just five years old, Sri Appullar took him to Sri Bhashya Kalakshepam being rendered by Sri Nadadur Ammal.

The child Venkatanathan was looking his best and was adorning a rAkkudi on his head. The child's tejas impressed Ammal so much, he forgot where he stopped his discourse. The five year old Venkatanatha was quick to remind of the place where the AchAryan had stopped.

Sri Nadadur Ammal was impressed by this child prodigy and hence blessed Venkatanatha thus -

pratishThApita vedAnta: pratikshiptabahirmata: |
bhUyA: traividyamAnya: tvam bhUrikalyANabhAjanam ||

Realising the divinity in our Swami, Sri Nadadur Ammal directed Venkatanatha to establish Vedanta on a firm basis and to refute the doctrines of opponents.

He also blessed Venkatanatha that he will be held in great esteem by scholars well- versed in the three Vedas and further ordained that our Swami be a recipient of all auspicious things.

Blessed in such a way, our Swami maintained these instructions and worked to fulfill the directions of Sri Nadadur Ammal to the greatest extent.

This Sloka [the blessing of Nadadur Ammal] is seen in Act II of Sankalpa Sooryodayam of Swami Desika.

Swami uses the same Sloka as a blessing to a young disciple when he sets out to establish the supremacy of ViSishTAdvaita over other schools of thought.

So, why is it that Venkatanatha is being addressed as "deSika"? What does "deSika" mean?

Well, "deSika" usually refers to an Acharya. This could be 'one who orders', 'guides' or 'advises'.

In Sanskrit, the term, 'de' refers to devAnugraham; 'Si' refers to SishyAnugraham and 'ka' refers to karuna.

When these three letters are combined it results in 'deSika'. This is reflected in the following sloka:

devAnugraha dharidvAt SishyAnugraha
kAraNAt kAruNAmaya-rUpatvat
deSika: kathyate bhUtai:

No wonder that the term 'deSika' is always used to refer to our Swami.

If you look for meanings for deSika' in Tamil, you get the following:

a king
a beautiful person, a Guru
one who teaches Vedas, father etc.

Only our Swami can fit all these definitions. Swami Desika is an all-encompassing personality - he is the best. More importantly, he emanates the right waves. Swami is a vedantin among vedantins; a vidvan among vidvans; poet among poets; an Acharya among Acharyas; an avatar among avatars; a perfect personality and on the whole the greatest.

Bhagavan's paratvam is characterised by six guNas, viz., j~nAna, Sakti, bala, aiSvarya, Veerya and tejas.

j~nAna of Swami Desika is clear from 'sarvaj~nyatvam tatvamuktakalApe'. Our Swami produced pAdukA sahasram in one yAmam, which shows his **Sakti**, we see our Swami's **balam** when he refutes the doctrines of opponents. We can very clearly see the richness when Swami establishes VedAnta on a firm basis

viSesha vitpArishadeshu nAtha
vidagdha goshThI samarAngaNeshu |
jigIshato me kavitArkikendrAn...

The above Sloka recited by Swami as part of Hayagreeva stotram shows the **Veerya** guNam of our Swami.

By virtue of being celebrated as 'venkaTeSavayam maha:' Swami's **tejas** can also be observed. Is not it true that we enjoy Bhagavan in our Swami?

Sri Pillai Lokacharya said thus -

cIronRu tUppul tiruvenkaTamuDaiyAn
pAronRac conna pazhamozhiyuL - OronRu
tAnE amaiyAtO tAraNiyil vAzhvArkku
vAnERap pOmaLavum vAzhvu.

A single statement of the great Acharya, tUpul Tiuvenkadamudaiyan (Our Swami), uttered for the benefit of humanity, is enough for a person who desires to ascend up to the Heavens and this will itself lift him/her up to desired goals.

It is very clear that our Swami Desika was an abode of knowledge; a person of Vairagya; establisher of Vedanta on a firm basis; master of all arts, crafts and artefacts; establisher of Sri bhagavad Ramanuja's philosophy; lion among poets and logicians.

Swami, as adiyal had mentioned in the beginning, is a true "Vallal". Swami has given humanity, enormous amounts of works so that all Jivatmas can realise the Paramatma and surrender to Sriya:pati .

Our Swami has given us

1. stotra granthams
2. kAvya granthams
3. nATaka granthams
4. vedAnta granthams
5. vyAkhyAna granthams
6. anushThAna granthams
7. rahasya granthams and
8. Tamil prabandhams

Swami used Sanskrit, Tamil and Prakritam to build his works and he gave as much as 116 granthams. Swami's works are extensive and exhaustive. Swami has given us simple to complex renderings. Take GopAla VimSati - for example. This looks simpler when compared to Srimad RahasyatrayasAram or pAdukA sahasram for that matter.

However, there is no doubt each one of them is a rare gem that needs extreme care and devotion in handling and understanding. Swami has provided us the opportunity to go closer to Bhagavan by including BheejAksharAs in his works.

A special mention needs to be made here as to how our Swami brought in the pAdukA sahasram. Swami wrote pAdukA sahasram in just one yAmam. However it is interesting to note that each verse has an abundance of meanings, which may take us years and years to comprehend and fully enjoy.

Swami Desika's works make us learn, understand and enjoy Bhagavad anubhavam. Above all Swami's works stress the importance of 'nyAsa' thereby helping us reach the abode of Sriya:pati to perform eternal kaimkaryam.

Swami's works - while emphasising paratvam - uses the authority of the Vedas, Itihasas, Puranas and strong logic to support our sampradAyam.

Swami exposes the defects of the other schools of thought and his establishment of ViSis**h**TAdvaita is complete. Swami consolidated the philosophy of ViSis**h**TAdvaita based on bhagavad Ramanuja's teachings.

Swami Desika has furnished all the details of our sampradAyam with matchless insight and precision.

Our Swami was the greatest Acharya yet he was humility personified. Swami with all his unparalleled qualities was the most devout disciple. His Acharya bhakti too is unparalleled.

Swami's humility is beyond comparison. As we saw in the very beginning, Sriya:pati named Swami as “VedAntacArya”

Swami Desika himself says

viSvasmin nAma-rUpANi anuvihitavata tena devena dattam |
vedAntacArya-samj~nam avahita bhahuvit-sArtham anvartayami ||
-- adikaraNa sAravaLi

"The supreme Bhagavan, Sri Ranganatha, who created the forms and gave the names to all the things in the universe, conferred on me this appellation 'Venkatacharya', and here is an attempt of mine to make that title significant and meaningful by writing this poem adhikaraNa sArAvaLi (the garland of essentials of the adhikaraNas, which is a Digest of the teachings of Brahma sUtras)".

Swami continued to work relentlessly to establish our sampradAyam. HH Srimad Azhagiya Singar (45th pattam) mentioned in a cassette (which I had) that Swami Desika wanted to do justice to the title conferred by Sri Ranganatha. He did not want Bhagavan to be blamed by anybody for having given such great titles to undeserving personalities and hence strived to ensure that he stood to the expectations and directions of Bhagavan. Our Azhagiya Singar further added that Swami Desika would be the only one who would have been conferred a title and then worked for it.

Swami had the greatest blessing from Sriya:pati and had paripoorna Lakshmi kaTAksham. In the second part of the pAsuram (munivAhana bhogam, pAsuram 37, kANpanavum ,,,, ,,,,) below Swami says that the whole world called him as VedAnta vAriyan and that he is still a humble person and would approach elders who are there to tell us what is right and what is wrong.

vIN periya viri tirainIr vaiyattuLLE
vEdAnta vAriyan enRu iyampa ninROm
nAn periyOm allOm nAm nanRum tItum
namakku uraippAr uLar enRu nADuvOmE

Swami Desika emphasises on BhAgavata kaimkaryam in his PurushArtha kAshThAdhikAram of Rahasyratraya sAram. Swami says it is not enough if we do bhagavad kaimkaryam only but we must also do BhAgavata kaimkaryam.

Swami was categorical in stating that BhAgavata Kaimkaryam is of utmost importance - even higher than Bhagavat Kaimkaryam. Swami was convinced that B**h**agavat KaTAksham can be obtained by doing BhAgavata Kaimkaryam itself.
Satrugnalvar and Madhurakavi Alvar did only BhAgavata kaimkaryam and had complete bhagavad kaTAksham.

It is difficult to comprehend our Swami's overwhelming devotion to Sri Ramanuja. In fact, Swami repents not having been a direct Sishya of Sri Ramanuja.

Swami felt that his works on pAdukA devi attributes to accomplishment of his Janma. As stated earlier, Swami has written 1,000 Slokams on pAdukAs. Here, Swami refers pAdukA to Sri Nammalvar's SaThAri. In the third Slokam of pAdukA sahasram (varNastoma..),

Swamy salutes Nammalvar thus: "hEy pAduke! tvannAmnam munim bhaje", meaning, I salute the rishi (Nammalvar), who has your name.

Swami Desika spoke on Nammalvar, that is o.k, but is not it exciting to note that Sri Nammalvar has also mentioned about Swami Desika?

Before adiyal starts writing about the works of Swami Desika, let us see what Sri Suka had said in Srimad Bhagavatam -

.... kalau khalu bhavishyanti nArayaNa parAyaNa: ||
kvacitkvacit mahArAja dramiDeshu ca bhuriSa: |
tamraparNI nadI yatra krtamAla payasvini ||
kAveri ca mahpuNyA (bhAga) pratIcI ca mahAnadI
-- Bhagavatam 11.5.38, 39, 40

"Great AtmAs devoted to BhgavAan Narayana will be born during Kaliyuga. These saints will be born in great numbers in the fertile Tamil deSam, watered by sacred rivers like Tamraparani, KrtamAla (Vaigai), pAlAr, Kaveri as well as those that flow westward".

All of us know that Nammalvar was born in Thirukkurukur on the banks of the river Tamaraparani. It is hence clear that Sri Suka during the purana kAla itself has mentioned about Sri Nammalvar's avatara in Kali Yuga.

Sri Nammalvar in turn has mentioned about BhashyakArar and Thirumangai Alvar in Thiruvaimozhi. And what more, the same Sri Nammalvar in Tiruviruttam mentions about Swami Desika.

nAnilam vAykkoNDu nannIraramenRu kOtukoNDa,
vEnilam celvan cuvaittumittumizh tamizh pAlai, kaDantaponnE!
kAlnilam tOyntu vinnOr tozhum kaNNan vekkAvutu am pUm
tEnilam cOlaiyap-pAlatu ep pAlaikkum cEmattatE.
--- Tiruviruttam, 26

In the third and fourth lines of the above pAsuram, Nammalvar mentions about Thiruvekka and Thirutanka (tUpul), where Poigai Alvar and Swami Desika were born respectively.

About Tirutanka, It may be a indirect inference to the avatAram of Swami Desika there for the benefit of the welfare and upakArams for all by the Swami ("eppAlaikkum cEmatattE"), This is as per the vyAkhyAnam of Dr. V.N. Vedantadesikan.

Our Kulapathi addresses Swami Desika as a person from tUpul who will help everybody by giving them all time well being.

Our Poorvacharyar's vyAkhyAnam for "eppAlaikkum cemattatE", is that Swami Desika proved Nammalvar's words true by giving us the SaraNAgati tattvam.

Because of our tUpul pillai, tUpul is always capable of giving well being "eppAlaikkum cEmatttatE"

Swami Desika's SaraNAgati tattvam is a sure, straight forward and simple path to reach Perumal's Tiruvadi. This is due to our wonderful lineage i.e. Guruparampara!

Earlier the Thiru avatAram of Poigai Alvar and Swami Desika was mentioned. This helps us understand the glory of SravaNam (i.e., TiruvoNa Nakshatram).

ThiruvoNam, being the Tirunakshatram of BhagavAn has been glorified in many pAsurams. For instance,

1. tiruvONattiruvizhavil....
2. tiNNAr veNcanguDaiyAy.... tiruvONam inRezhu nALiL..
3. nee piRanda tiruvONam..
4. attattin pattAm nAL (Hastam's tenth day is tiruvONam)

-- and this great Nakshatram is the same for Poigai Alvar and Swami Desika.

Swamy Desikan, Sri Thooppul

AN OUTLINE OF THE GURU PARAMPARA

Adiyal will highlight the guru-Bhakti of Sri Vedanta Desika by taking a few Slokas from the YatirAja saptati.

Swami Desika begins this hymn with salutations to the chief profounder of the doctrine of Sri VaishNavism. From BhagavAn, the first Acharya up to Periyanambi, the direct Acharya of Sri Ramanuja, in this BhagavAn Sriman Narayana, Goddess Lakshmi, Sri Vishvaksena, Sri Nammalvar, Sri Nathamuni, Sri Uyyakkondar, Sri Manakkal Nambi, Sri Alavandar and Sri Periyanambi are saluted as Acharyas in independent Slokas.

From the subsequent Sloka, Swami Desika explains the greatness of Sri BhAshyakArar.

A study of the stotra will reveal the unparalleled devotion of Swami Desika to the Acharyas in general and to Sri Ramanuja (Yatiraja = ascetic-king) in particular.

kamapyAdyam gurum vande kamalA grhamedhinam |
pravakta chandasAm vaktA pancarAtrasya ya: svayam ||
-- Yatiraja saptati, Slokam 1

BhagavAn Sriman Narayana is not separated from his unexcelled consort Goddess Lakshmi even for a second. He first created Brahma and taught him all the Vedas and promulgated the Paancaraatra Saastra.

Therefore he is the first and foremost preceptor, for everybody. Swami Desika bows to this unequalled and unexcelled Bhagavan Narayana!

Such is the greatness of our Lineage [Guruparampara] tracing back to Sriman Narayana itself!
In the first sloka of Yatiraja saptati, Swami Desika bows to Bhagavan Sriman Narayana. Swami Desika's works in many instances reflect the words of Alvar's. Our Alvar's words (divya Prabandham) in turn are the essence of Vedas.

Swami says that he could not comprehend the greatness of Bhagavan. Even the Vedas could not explain Bhagavan in full.

The same is reflected in TiruvAimozhi as 'tanakkum tan tanmai arivariyAn' and in the Periya Tirumadal of Tirumangai Mannan, we see 'tannai pirAr ariyA tatuvattai'.

Swami Desika mentions that Goddess Lakshmi and Bhagavan Sriman Narayana run a household. But then this household comprises the entire cosmos.

This is, but a sport for our divya dampati!

Swami Desika further says that Bhagavan has revealed the Vedas to us. After the Maha Pralayam, Bhagavan imparted the Vedas to Brahma.

Again, when the Vedas were lost, Bhagavan rescued it from Madhu and KaiTapa. Bhagavan Vishnu took the form of Matsya, Hayagreeva and Hamsa to restore the Vedas to us.

Because Bhagavan bequeathed the Vedas first, he is regarded as the 'Adi-guru'. Periyalvar echoes the same in 'arumaRai tantAne accO-accO'!

Though Bhagavan's qualities are incomprehensible, Swami Desika wants to start the Yatiraja saptati with salutations to Bhagavan because HE is our first Acharya.

The Vedas as mentioned above have been revealed to us by the grace of Bhagavan. On the other hand, the pAncarAtra Agamas are reckoned to be the words of Sriman Narayana Himself.

pAncaratra Agamacaryam
vande vaikuNThAt bhUpatim |

pancarAtrasya krstanasya
vaktta nArAyaNa: svayam |
ananta prathamo rAtrau
garuDastu dvtlyake
trtlya rAtrau senesa:
caturtham vedasa Srutam
rudrAha pancama-rAtram tu
pAcarAtram prasasyate ||

Ananta Samhita, first adhyA Saastra was taught by Bhagavan on the first day to Anantan, second day to Garuda, third day to Vishvaksena, fourth day to Brahma and the fifth day to Rudra.

Sri Yamunacharya wrote an extensive work 'Agama PramANyam', and to further emphasise the authority of pAncarAtra, Swami Desika wrote several works.

The following sloka of Swami Desika clarifies to us that both VaikhAnasam and pAncarAtram are equally venerable to Sri VaishNavas.

tvAm pAncarAtrika nayena prtakvidhena
vaikhAnasena ca pathA niyatAdhkArA: |
samj~nA viSesha niyamena samarcayanta:
prltyA nayanti phalavanti dinAni dhanyA: ||
-- SaraNAgati dIpikA - Sloka 32

The fortunate ones worship Thee according to the various and different systems in vogue in pAncarAtra Agama and according to the mode laid down in VaikhAnasa Agamas, respectively in which they are trained strictly adopting the names of Thine, out of Love and there by spending their days profitably.

Swami Desika now in Yatiraja saptati salutes to Goddess Lakshmi who is the next in our GuruparamparA.

saha dharmacarlm Saure: sammantrita jagaddhitAm |
anugrahamaylm vande nityamaj~nAta nigrahAm ||

Swami Desika prostrates at the lotus feet of Goddess Mahalakshmi the inseparable consort of Bhagavan Vishnu. She is an embodiment of mercy. She does not know to punish anyone. She converses with Bhagavan for the well being of the whole world. When Bhagavan wants to establish dharma like protecting his devotees, she accompanies him to ensure the proper execution of the same.

The divya dampati are inseparable. They are not separated even when they manifest as avatars.

This is explained in the Vishnu Puranam thus -

rAghavatve abhavatsItA rukmaNI krshNajanmani |
anyeshu cAvatAreshu vishNoreshAnapAyinI ||
devatve devadeheyam manushyatve ca mAnushI
vishNordehanurUpAm vai karotyeshAtmanastanum ||
-- Vishnu PurANam 1-9-144, 145

Goddess Lakshmi is forever united with Bhagavan Vishnu. So, when Bhagavan becomes Rama, Sri becomes Sita, when He is Krishna, She is Rukmini. Not just this, even when Bhagavan takes the form of a Deva, or for that matter a human being, Goddess Lakshmi also takes a suitable form of a Devi or a human being. Goddess Lakshmi thus adjusts herself according to the embodiments of Bhagavan Vishnu.

Sri Nammalvar reflects this in Tiruvaimozhi (6.10.10) -

akalakillEn iRraiyumenRu alarmElmangaiuRai mArbA

Goddess Alarmelmangai sits on the chest of Bhagavan Srinivasa because she cannot bear to be without Bhagavan even for a fraction of a second!

In our tradition the word "SrI" points to the exclusive position of our Mother. She is Bhagavan's consort, the Mother of the entire Universe, mediatrix between God and humanity and of course an Acharya in our tradition!

'SrI' stands for SrNAti, SrIyate, SrNoti, SrAvayati, SrINAti, SrAyate

'SrI' removes all sins, is resorted to by all for ever, hears their petitions, makes Bhagavan hear (the petitions) nourishes the world by Her virtues, Our mother, the mother of the whole world - akhila jaganmAtA, does not know to punish any one.

What can we speak of our tAyar's innumerable auspicious qualities? She is an ocean of mercy. She is an embodiment of karuna. She has a kind heart even for the evil ones.

When Goddess Lakshmi manifested as Sita, and in Lanka, the rakshashis harassed her. The repeated torture from the rakshashis did not provoke our Mother. She could have reduced them to ashes, without any efforts. In addition to resisting herself from punishing them, our eternal ammA full of dayA, pleaded to Anjaneya on their behalf when he wanted to kill them, and thus saved them.

Goddess Sita by way of pointing out to Sri Anjaneya teaches us the importance of mercy and magnanimity in forgiving the erring individuals.

Goddess Mahalakshmi stays in the highest abode (SrAyate) i.e, Paramapada. Like Bhagavan our mother is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent.

When I was a child, I had so many wishes. Starting from buying a beautiful dress to learning to ride a bicycle. I was a little reluctant to approach my father, but with my mother I felt absolutely comfortable. Amma is the most ideal mother we can ever imagine!

Amma was so patient and used to sanction whatever I asked for. Sometimes I used to ask her for things which I was afraid to ask Appa. In fact knowing my mind Amma used to come separately and listen patiently to all my wants. My mother is absolutely understanding!

Amma and Appa do all possible things to take care of me. They don't expect anything for all what they do! Appa and Amma always stand next to each other in order to protect me. I am the luckiest!

I continuously keep committing mistakes. If Appa and Amma ask me to do something, I would invariably end up doing it the wrong way. One day, Amma was talking about me to Appa. I had troubled Amma a lot, and I thought she was going to complain about me to Appa. But when I listened to it, tears rolled down my eyes. To my surprise, even the wrong things/ a few of my acts that could provoke appa were so nicely presented to him by Amma.

After realising this, I tried my level best to do what Appa and Amma want me to do. I realised that it is my greatest blessing to have them as my parents!

It is true that it is adiyal's story, but the parents mentioned are OUR PARENTS.

Our Mata is worshipped in three forms as Kaamya-arcaa, bhogya-arcaa and laya-arcaa. In the form of Kaamya-arcaa, Goddess Lakshmi is in a separate sannidhi in the temple where people worship her and get all their desires fulfilled. This is my mother sanctioning me all material requirements, I had asked for!

In the bhoga-arca form, she is by the side of Bhagavan in the main Shrine for protecting the world. This is Amma and Appa jointly protecting me.

In the form of laya-arca, Lakshmi adorns the left side of the broad chest of Perumal's Thirumeni itself as compassion - incarnate and prevails upon Him to have tolerance and forgiveness towards the erring Jivas. This is my mother presenting even my wrong actions in the right perspective.

Amma, please ensure that your daughter does not pray for any materialistic desires to be fulfilled. I don't want to see you standing alone for my sake. You've done enough and more for me. It is my folly not to have realised it so far. Please mould me in such a way to serve you both now and ever.

Swami Desika, pours out his emotions thus -

mAtA devi tvamasi bhagavAn vAsudeva: pitA me
jAta: so'ham janani yuvayorekalakshyam dayAya: |

datto yushmat parijanatayA deSikairapyatastvam |
kimte bhUya: priyamiti kila smera vaktrA vibhAsi ||
-- Sri stuti, 23

Swami Desika says, Oh! Divine Mother, ignoring all my sins, with the only notion to protect me, Thou have blessed me. Bhagavan wants to correct me from my wrong doings by punishing me. He, therefore, becomes my Father. It is by Your divine grace that I have reached great Acharyas. They offered me to perform nitya kaimkaryam. Even now, the subtle smile on Your face seems to reflect the question, 'what else can I do for you?'

There is another interesting episode from Ramayana, portraying the 'dayA' of our Mother. In this, Goddess Sita saves Kaakasura - the demon crow, which had painfully hurt her.

Swami Desika reminds us of this incident in 'aDaikkalappattu' pAsuram .

kAkamirAkkatan mannar ---- ----

She is ever united with Bhagavan and ensures the proper execution of the SaraNAgata samrakshana dharma, to protect all those who have surrendered to them.

It is to Our Mother, Sri Ramanuja makes SaraNAgati first requesting her to bless him in his efforts to perform SaraNAgati at the feet of Bhagavan. This confirms her role as "PurushakAra" or mediatrix.

Goddess Lakshmi appeals to her Bhagavan to be ever considerate to the Jivas. A mere glance of our mother is enough to make people devout, virtuous and wealthy.

There are a lot of incidents in support of this statement. Sri Rama's introduction of Sita to Guha, Sri Krishna asking Rukmini to have a glance at the direction of Kuchela's kudil.
When a bachelor boy requested dhanam for his marriage, Swami created Sri stuti and then there were shower of gold coins when the 16th Sloka was recited. SvAmi asked him to take the gold coins.

In fact wherever the glances of our mother fell, Swami Desika says, there was a flood of all desirable wealth.

yasyAm yasyAm diSi viharate devi drshTIstvadIyA |
tasyAm tasyAm ahamahamikAm tanvate sampadoghA: ||
-- Sri stuti (15)

Oh! Goddess! In whichever direction Your glances fall, in all those places, heaps of wealth flow competing among themselves, to be the first to bless.

In the CatuSSlokI, a short hymn composed by Sri Alavandar, 'Sri' is described as the Goddess of plenty, prosperity, compassion and paramount authority. All other Gods and Goddesses are subordinate to her. She stays in Nithya-Vibhuti (Sri VaikuNTham) along with her Bhagavan. Bhagavan or Herself do not know Her Greatness in full. Without her Grace, none can aspire for any welfare either in this world or the other. Being an Acharya, even Liberation can be obtained only through Her grace.

She grants us everything starting from the materialistic desires to the ultimate liberation viz., granting of Moksha!

Goddess Mahalakshmi, teaches the philosophy of our system to Sri Vishvaksena. Swami Desika bows this unequalled mother!

Bhagavan Vishnu along with consort Sri or Lakshmi occupies the Supreme position. The importance of our mAtA is so great that our system of thought itself is referred to as 'Sri VaishNavism'.

Goddess Lakshmi and Bhagavan Vishnu have divine discussions on the well being of all. As a result of the discussion, Goddess Mahalakshmi, with incomprehensible greatness, out of her concern to us taught the philosophy of our system to Sri Vishvaksena.

Sri Vishvaksena is the head of the nithya soories and MuktAs. The place where they reside is called bhoga VibhUti, aprAkruta lokam or Sri VaikuNTham.

Below this is the prAkruta lokam or leela vibhUti. There are crores of aNDAs, with each aNDa having 14 lokams. baddhas, bound by the ropes of puNya and pApa live here.

The leela and bhoga vibhUtis behave as per the rules and regulations of divya dampati. Next to them, Sri Vishvaksena supervises it. Thus, everything is under the control of the 'Senkol Atchi' of Sri Vishvaksena.

Our divya dampati instructed Sri Vishvaksena to impart the tatva, hita and PurushArtha to Sri Nammalvar. Because of this great upakAram done by Sri Vishvaksena, we worship him as our Acharya.

In our Guruparampara, Vishvaksena forms the bridge between the celestial gurus and the gurus, who appeared in the human form. So, why is it that the divya dampati don't come directly, why is it that we have Acharya's in human form who give us the upadeSam? Well, that is again because of us. Even if the divya dampati come and say that they are the ultimate realities, and that they can grant liberation, most of us will not take it. Just as a diamond is used to cut another diamond so also another JivAtmA can easily correct a jivAtmA.

Swami Desika offers his praNAms to Sri Vishvaksena in the 3rd Sloka of Yatiraja saptati thus -

vande vaikuNTha senAnyam devam sUtravatI sukham |
yatvetra Sikharaspande viSvametat vyavastitham ||

Let me pay my humble adorations to Bhagavan Vishvaksena (Senaimudaliyar), the commander-in-chief of all the celestial forces of Bhagavan Sriman Narayana, and who has for his beloved consort Sutravati, and at the movement of whose cane/vetra tip this whole cosmos is just established as what it is.

When Vishvaksena was instructed by divya dampati to teach our system of Philosophy to Sri Nammalvar, Sutravati urged him to do it at once. So, as a sign of gratitude for this great help, Swami Desika salutes to both Visvaksena and his consort Sutravati.

Sri Vishvaksena will remove all the hindrances in the way of Mumukshu in attaining Moksham.

Rivers form a very important aspect in Sri Vaishnava tradition. The "Koyil" - Srirangam Sri Ranganathaswami Koyil - is situated on the banks of Kaveri and Kollidam rivers. The basic duties of a Sri VaishNva are supposed to be performed on the river banks.

Swami Desika, in SubhAshita neevi, has done extensive comparison of the river flow and human behaviour.

Some humans who take up bad behaviour are generally born in noble families [like the rivers that spring from high mountains], but follow a mean path because of sins [like rivers flowing down-stream].

Rivers tend to take tortuous paths as humans take crooked decisions and humans tend to show indifference towards the good-natured. This is compared to river water making, even areas uneven and making uneven areas even.

The bad elements are compared by our Swami to the river flow in other aspects where one transgresses the virtuous path for gain as overflowing rivers change course and cause destructions, breaking dams and banks.

Swami Desika records in dayA Satakam too, some significance to riverflow -

aSesha vighna Samanam anikeSvaramASraye |
SrImata: karuNAbhodhau SikshA srota ivotthitam ||
-- dayA Satakam 5

As tributaries branch out of oceans, there are branches to Bhagavan's ocean of dayA. Bhagavan's dayA includes preaching, correcting and even punishment. It is interesting to note our Swami's view that Bhagavan's punishment is also a form of dayA - "tirutti paNikoLvAn..." Bhagavan does not punish for the Jiva to suffer, instead Bhagavan punishes to rectify the error and take the Jiva into his abode.

It is astonishing to note that our Swami had found and established this dayA of Bhagavan and adiyal is bewildered to praise either Bhagavan's dayA or our Swami's knowledge that establishes Bhagavan's dayA.

Bhagavan has assigned the function of preaching the sampradAya to Sri Vishvaksena - the Senamudaliar or the Commander-in-chief. Sri Vishvaksena metes out punishment to wrong-doers and helps them change as desired by Sriya:pati. This goes to prove that punishment to Jivas is part of Bhagavan's dayA. Sri Vishvaksena clears all obstacles and protects the good Jivas. Our Swami in his dayA Satakam (Slokam 5) salutes Sri Vishvaksena

Swami Desika in his "YatirAja Saptadi" says thus -

nAnAbhUtairjagati samayairnarma lIlAm vidhitso:
antyam varNam prathayati vibhorAdhima vyuha bhede |
viSvam trAtum vishaya niyatam vyanjitAnugraha: san
vishvakseno yatipatirabhUd vetrasArastridaNDa: ||

Swami establishes the greatness of Sri Vishvaksena, yet again. In this Slokam, Swami states that Sriya:pati takes four Vyuha forms -

1. Vasudevan
2. SankarshaNan
3. Pradyumnan
4, Aniruddhan

In each of these, based on the chronology of the respective yugas, Bhagavan comes in different hues (white, red, yellow and black). Bhagavan conducts various leelas in all yugas.

In this, during the Kali Yuga, Bhagavan sports the black hue and directs the Kali Yuga in his black Vyuha Vasudeva form. Bhagavan creates contradictory elements - elements that even refute Vedas => creates different faiths and also creates a set of rules for each faith.

Bhagavan does this as part of his leelas in the Kali Yuga where the Jiva gets distracted into other faiths and loses the basic knowledge on Parathvam.

It is a practice of wise ministers to save the subjects from the King's wrongful / playful decisions. Sri Vishvaksenar, decides to do his role - as per the command of Sriya:pati - that of saving the Jivas to realise the Paratvam.

Sri Vishvaksena is knowledge personified. Our all merciful tAyAr is the Acharya for Sri Vishvaksena.

Sri Vishvaksena has been assigned the task of bringing in errant Jivas to understand

Paratvam and surrender to Sriya:pati - Towards this, Sri Vishvaksena heads an entire army to protect the right and bring them to Bhagavan's abode. Sri Vishvaksena always sports a cane.

To save the Jivas and to make them understand Paratvam, Sri Vishvaksena arrived in the bhUloka as bhagavad Ramanuja. He made his cane as the 'daNDam' [the long three sticks bound together, tridaNDam] we always see on the side of Sri BhAshyakArar].

** Rendered Sri BhAshyam;
** Established the ViSishTAdvaita siddhAntam;
** Debated, controlled and defeated other faiths
** Taught and established to the world about Paratvam
** Spread the importance of attachment only to Bhagavan,
** Very importantly, explained our divya dampati dayA and demonstrated the way to reach Bhagavan and perform kaimkaryam to Sriya:pati .

Swami Desika has immensely enjoyed the dayA of Bhagavan through Sri Vishvaksenar who came into this world as Bhagavad Ramanuja to help the Jivatmas to reach Bhagavan.

Sri Vishvaksena performed mantropadesam to Sri Nammalvar and taught him the Sri VaishNava Philosophy. In our Guruparampara, Sri Nammalvar is considered as the fourth in a hierarchy starting from Sriman Narayanan. The second and the third AcharyAs are

Periya Piratti and Sri Vishvaksenar. Swami Nammalvar is celebrated as our Kulapati and is also considered as the first guru to appear in human form amidst us. Sri Vishvaksenar is a nitya soori and an amsam of the Lord at Sri Vaikuntham and is the commaander in chief of the Lord's army. Fitting his rank, Sri Vishvaksenar carries a cane as an insignia of the office. In Sriman Narayanan's leela Vibhuti, Swami Nammalvar, the Sishya of Sri Vishvaksenar incarnated as the son of a pious couple, KaariyAr and Udaiya nangai at Thirukkurungudi divya desam.

Just as how, the word 'deSika', by default, refers to Swami Desika, so also the word Alvar refers to Sri Nammalvar.

Bhagavan Krishna in Bhagavad Gita says, it is very rare to see a person who sees Vasudeva in everything!

Our Sri Nammalvar was such a rare person. Sri Nammalvar lived thus - "uNNum sOrum", "parukum neerum", "tinnum vetrilaiyum" ellAm kannan!

Alvar also regretted that he should have been born a little earlier so that he could have enjoyed Kannan directly!

Swami Desika says

yasya sArasvata sroto vakulAmoda vAsitam |
SrutInAm viSramAyAlam SaThArim tamupAsmahe ||
-- Yatiraja saptati (4)

May I prostrate at the lotus feet of Sri SaThakopa i.e., Nammalvar or ParankuSa whose masterpieces of literary and philosophical gems are full of the divine fragrance of Vakula flowers (worn by him), his works are the sure and sufficient resting place for the divine Samskrita Vedas (Sruti). Sri Nammalvar always wears Vakula flowers (Maguzham poo) blessed by Bhagavan. So, even the SrI sooktis that come from his mouth have the fragrance of Vakula flowers. Sri Nammalvar poured out the essence of Vedas in Tamil. Whenever there is confusion, in understanding Upanishads, the ready reckoner is Nammalvar's Sri Sookti. Swami Desika says, since Alvar's Sri Sooktis reflect the Vedas, the Vedas can take rest and relax.

This way, Sri Nammalvar blessed us with such great Sri Sookti that could benefit the whole world. Swami Desika says that we should think of Sri Nammalvar constantly. Alvar contemplates on Perumal and gets intimate with Bhagavan. So, the fragrance of Alvar's Vakula flowers spread to Bhagavan, and our Alvar smells of Bhagavan's tiruttuzhAi fragrance.

Swami Desika meditates on the Alvar who enjoys Perumal, so in Swami Desika's Sri Sookti we enjoy the fragrance of both Vakula flowers and tiruttuzhAi.

As mentioned earlier, Sri Suka during the purana kAla itself has mentioned about Sri Nammalvar's avatara, in Kali Yuga.

Sri Nammalvar was such a great bhakta that enjoying and experiencing Sriya:pati flowed in as hymns. Sri Nammalvar wrote not just in tens and hundreds but in thousands about

our Emperumaan. Sri Madhurakavi Alvar on realizing the glory of Sri Nammalvar sang thus "aruL koNDu Ayiram intamizh pADinAn."

As mentioned earlier, Swami Desika felt that his works on pAduka Devi attributed to accomplishment of his Janma. Here, Swami refers the pAduka in the 3rd Sloka of pAdukA sahasram to that of Sri Nammalvar (SaThari) and thus his pAduka sahasram, can be equated to Sri Nammalvar, Swami treated this as his prati sambhAvanA to Sri SatThakopa.

Sri Nammalvar has contributed extensively to the establishment and the growth of Sri ViSishTAdvaitam following the command of Sriman Narayanan. Sri Nammalvar was honored with the name of SaThakopan, since he chased away the inauspicious Sata vAyu, that acts as inertia for the Jeevans to break away from the ills of samsaric sufferings and seek moksham and the eternal kaimkaryams at the sacred feet of Sri VaikunThanathan at His supreme abode of Paramapadam. At His leelaa vibhuti, the divya desa Emperumaan of Thirukkurukur, Polintu ninRa pirAn, adorned SaThakopar with a garland of VaguLaa flowers in recognition for the Alvar's prabandhams that established the soundness of Sri ViSishTAdvaita doctrines over those associated with the para matams. Hence, Swami is also celebrated with the title of VagulAbharaNar. The birudu of "ParankuSa" was conferred by Polintu ninRa PirAn for the Alvar being the ankuSam (goad) to defeat the para mata vAdis .

Sri Nammalvar's love to Bhagavan Krishna was intense. He was born just 43 days after the exit of Bhagavan Krishna from this world. Sri Nammalvar's love to Bhagavan Krishna was so great that he was called as "Krishna-trishna" i.e., the Love incarnate of Krishna; He is our "Kulapati" and the Head of Prapannas - "Prapanna-Jana-kooDastar".

The 'SaThAri' placed on the heads of all devotees in our Koil is Sri Nammalvar himself. The SaThAri is thus the link between God and us in the form of Acharya.

Sri Nammalvar has classified his works as follows -

Tiruviruttam [100 verses]
TiruvAimozhi [1102 hymns]
TiruvAciriyam [7 stanzas]
Periya TiruvandAti [87 verses]

Sri Nammalvar longed for communion with Bhagavan. His worked on Tiruviruttam primarily focusing on the longing of the AtmA for its communion with Bhagavan.

Sri Nammalvar sings the glory and the kalyana gunas of Bhagavan in TiruvAciriyam. Also, Sri Nammalvar describes the ways and means of attaining Bhagavan.

Sri Nammalvar enjoys and shares the anubhavam of Bhagavan's Saulabyam while establishing Bhagavan's Paratvam.

The fact that Sriya:pati is supreme and all Jivas have to reach Bhagavan has been established in Sri Nammalvar's TiruvAimozhi.

The ViSishiTAdvaita Philosophy speaks of five doctrines, viz.,

*** Brahman or God to be attained (PrApya);
*** The Jiva or the aspirant seeking God (prApta);
*** The sAdana or the means of attainment (prAptyupAya);
*** The goal to be attained (phala); and
*** The obstacles in the way of its attainment (prApti-virodhi).

Sri Nammalvar's TiruvAimozhi is an elaboration of the above five doctrines.

Swami Desika prostrates at the feet of this Great Alvar, whose literature and philosophical gems are the sure resting-place for the Sruti's.

Swami Desika considers Sri Nammalvar's TiruvAimozhi as "dramiDa Upanishad". In the introduction to the works on "dramiDopanishatsArma"; and "dramiDopanishat tAtparya RatnAvali", our Swami states that the Alvars are Seers and their works are Upanishads. Since the Alvar's works spell out the bhagavad Gunas, Swami says they are Upanishads.

Bhagavan is delightfully beautiful and ever young. Alvars and Acharyas, on seeing the "Saundarya" and "SaukumArya" of Bhagavan, have felt that Bhagavan could be cast upon with some evil.

Please note that such a thought is NOT with the thinking that Bhagavan is prone to such things. It is the divine love and Bhakti of our Alvars and Acharyas that sees Bhagavan as everything and sometimes like their child. Hence, when they see the beauty of Bhagavan they instantly feel the need to protect like a mother would like to do for her son.

Such fear made the Alvars and Acharyas (who have been granted omniscience by God himself) utter mangaLAlaSAsana paasurams (anju kudi). The Tamil words 'vAzhi, vAzhi', (pORRi, pORRi), PallANDu, PallANDu, signify mangaLASAsanam.

Out of this affection, our Alvars and Acharyas recite " mangaLASAsanam ". Swami Desika in his tAtparya candrikA elaborates like this Bhagavan is deemed as saying -

"Whatever the VedAnta may hold, it is my settled conviction that the man of wisdom is my very self"

Just a glimpse of Nammalvar's anubhavam --

"ALuma ALAr Azhiyum cangum cumappAr tAm
vALum villum koNDu pin celvAr maRRillai,
tALum tOLum kaikaLai yArat tozhakkANEn
nALum nALum nADuvAn aDiyEn j~nAlattE"
-- TiruvAimozhi 8.3.3

Our Alvar grieves at the loneliness of Bhagavan. Alvar's divine love to Bhagavan makes him feel that there is none to do mangalLASAsana in both nitya and Leela VibhUtis.

Bhagavan, in spite of being the King of Kings, has not even appointed one servant to take care of his demands.

He is upset that Bhagavan, whose Divine body is Lovelier than the loveliest of flowers, has to carry the PancAayudhas, all the time, for protecting his Devotees!

Alvar feels that Bhagavan should give this burden to be carried by someone! Our Alvar's Love for Bhagavan is so great that Bhagavan, carrying the ornamental Ayudhams, looks like carrying a mountain itself.

Sri Lakshmana carried all the weapons when Bhagavan incarnated as Sri Rama in this world. But then Bhagavan is denied such service in Sri VaikuNTham.

Being the head of the fearing tribe, (anju-kudi), the Alvar melts at the loneliness of the Supreme Being.

Swami Desika's Sishyas, Sri Periya ParakAla Swami, Sri Rangaramanuja and Sri SAksAtsvAmi wrote erudite commentaries on TiruvAimozhi.

Swami Desika prostrates to the "vEdam tamizh ceyda mAran"!

Sri Nammalvar gave us splendid pAsurams to follow and cherish. In my opinion besides giving us his works, Sri Nammalvar gave us Nathamunigal.

When we speak of Sri Nammalvar, Sri Madhurakavi Alvar's KaNNinuN ciRuttAmpu needs special mention. As all of us know, Sri Madhurakavi Alvar established BhAgavata Bhakti through his verses. Swami Desika states that Sri Madhurakavi Alvar's verses portray the ten virtues of Sri Nammalvar, as similar to the qualities of Bhagavan - in the context of protecting and liberating the Jiva.

Sri Nammalvar pleased with Nathamunigal's Bhakti and perseverance blessed him with the divya Prabandham. Besides blessing Nathamunigal with the Prabandham, Sri Nammalvar initiated the Rahasya trayam.

But for Nathamunigal, we Jivas could have well missed the Prabandhams. Sri Nathamuni wrote two works - nyAya tattva and the Yogarahasya.

1. Sri Nathamuni worked relentlessly to receive divya prabandhams from Nammalvar.

2. Sri Nathamuni recited kaNNinuN ciRuttampu 12,000 times to be blessed with divya prabandhams.

3. Nathamunigal saw the beaming Nammalvar after reciting KaNNinuN ciRuttAmpu 12,000 times. This act is referred to as the vision of seeing million Suns at the same time.

Swami Desika has sung in praise of Bhagavan sudarSana in two hymns - sudarAanAshTakam and shoDsAyudha stotram.

Swami Desika details the protective nature of Sri sudarSana in his ShoDasAyaudha stotram. In this work, Swami explains various weapons Sri sudarSana carries in his 16 hands.

Swami goes on to highlight the immense power of Sri sudarSana in the sudarSanAshTakam. Sri sudarSana protects all devotees of Sriya:pati, while shoDasAyudha stotram will ensure our benefit and protection, says Swami Desika.

The 9th Slokam of sudarSanAshTakam - PhalaSruti says thus -
Even if our mind-chariot runs riot over an uneven terrain Bhagavan sudarSana will protect us, if we earnestly recite this hymn.

Bhagavan Vishnu has many names, as we all know. In the Vishnu Sahasranamam, Bhagavan is referred to by the weapons he possesses. Of which, "cakri" and "rathAngapANi:" stands for Sri sudarSana and are described as foremost.

Sri sudarSanar is referred in divya Prabandham, significantly.

...aDaloll tikazhtaru tikiriyan taDakkai
arangattamA! paLLiyezhuntaruLAye
-- Thiruppalliyezhucchi

...kaiyinAr curiccankanalAzhiyar, nlLlvaraipOl
meyyanAr, tuLapaviraiyAr kamazhnlL muDiyem...
-- amalanAdipirAn

Azhi yezhaccankum villummezha,
ticai vAzhi yezhattantum vALumezha, antam...
-- Thiruvaimozhi

...Azhi pOl minni valampuri pOl ninRu adinrntu
tAzhAtE cArnga muDaitta caramazhai pOl...
-- ThiruppAvai

The Greatness of Sri Sudharsana is such, as enjoyed and shared by our Alvars. Periyalvar too has mentioned the greatness of Sri Sudharsana in many places. For instanceh

...vaDivArcotivalatturaiyum cuDarAzhiyum pallANDu
-- Thiruppallandu

cenniyOngu taNtiruvEnkaTamuDaiyAy! ulaku-
tannai vAzhaninRanambl! dAmOdarA! catirA!
ennaiyum ennuDaimaiyaiyum un cakkarappoRiyoRRikkoNDu
ninnaruLE purintiruntEn iniyen tirukkuRippE.
-- cenniyOngu, Periyalvar Thirumozhi

Let us look into what Swami Desika has written, on Periyalvar

pEraNinta villiputtUrAnitannil
perumcOti tanil tOnRum perumAnE, mun-
clraNinta pANDiyan tan nencu tannil
tiyakkaRamAl parattuvattait tiRamAc ceppi
vAraNamel madurai valam varavE vAnil-
mAlgaruDa vAkananAyt tonRa vAzttum

EraNi pallANDu mudal pATTu nAnURRu
ezhupatonRiraNDum enakku utavu nIyE
-- PrabandhasAram, pAsuram 9

Sri Vishnu Chitta was born in Ani month, SwAti nakshatram in Srivilliputtur.

As Sri Vishnu-Chitta started speaking in Pandya king's court, the hall was filled with the divine knowledge of Vedas and the entire assembly heard him in rapt attention. Our Alvar established the Paratvam of Sriya:pati. The Porkizhi just came to Perialvar's hands, instantly.

The Pandya king, pleased with having known the truth, arranged for a grand procession to celebrate the occasion.

Sriya:pati was immensely pleased with Perialvar for having established the truth. Bhagavan wanted to witness the grand ceremony given in honour of our Alvar and came with his consort in Garuda Vaahanam.

This occasion was marked by Periyalvar singing "pallANDu pallANDu pallAyirattANDu"

You would have seen, in the last 2 lines of Swami's pAsuram on Periyalvar, where, Swami even gives the count of the paasurams rendered by Periyalvar. Periyalvar has given us 461 pasurams as Thirumozhi in addition to 12 paasurams in Thiruppallandu.

Sri Karunakaran Swami, in his upanyasam, enjoyed, Bhagavan's Leela on Periyalvar as below:

Bhagavan was deep in his thoughts. He was very happy with the way things were going, but he had one feeling of longing for something. Bhagavan realised that he misses the company and guidance of elders. Bhagavan feels that there should be an elder to whom he can prostrate; from whom he can seek blessings and advice.

Periyalvar solved Bhagavan's longing by giving his daughter - Goda piratti - in marriage to Bhagavan. So, Sri Vishnu Chittar by virtue of being Bhagavan's father-in-law, thereby solving Paramatma's grievance [kurai!], became 'Periya' [lofty] 'Alvar'.

We saw what Swami Desika has written on Periyalvar. In adhikArasangraham, Swami Desika mentions about Sri Nathamuni thus -

kALam valampuriyanna naRkAdal aDiyavarkkut-
tALam vazhankit tamizhmaRai innicai tanta vaLLal
mULum tavaneRi mUTTiya nAtamunikazhalE
nALum tozhutu ezhuvOm namakkAr nikar nAnilattE.

Swami Desika sings the glory of Sri Nathamunigal and in the above mentioned paasuram, Swami says -

Sri Nathamunigal blessed us with the Tamizh maRai - the naalaayira divya prabandham - set to various raga and tALam. Swami further states that Sri Nathamunigal's lotus feet is our only refuge. Swami is proud and thunders that since we have the divya Prabandham given by Sri Nathamunigal there is none equal to us. "...***namakku Ar nikar nAnilattE***".

Now, that equates to Periyalvar's "***...ninnuL ennai peRRa nanmai inta ulakil yAr peruvAr?***"

Sri Nathamunigal was a great scholar and an expert in yoga saastras. He used to perform kaimkaryam to Mannaar - the presiding deity of Sri Nathamunigal's birth place (Veeranarayanapuram).

One fine day, Sri Nathamuni heard a group of Sri Vaishnava pilgrims reciting the paasuram "AarA amudhe..." This paasuram ended with stating that "these ten paasurams of Nammalvar - out of the thousand - are much sweeter than the melody of the flute". This phrase caught the imagination of Sri Nathamunigal.

As stated earlier, Sri Nathamunigal spent considerable time and put in tremendous efforts to learn the divine paasurams. With total devotion, Sri Nathamunigal recited the eleven paasurams of Sri Madhurakavi Alvar's - KaNNinuN ciRuttAmpu - a whopping 12,000 times.

On completing 12,000 times of recitation, Sri Nathamunigal was blessed with the vision of a lifetime and what a sight it was! It was like KoTi soorya prakASam. Sri Nammalvar was pleased with Sri Nathamunigal's devotion and gave him all the divya Prabandha paasurams.

Sri Nathamunigal made the best use of the treasure that was given. Sri Nathamunigal tuned to deva gAnam of the paasurams and taught them to his disciples.

Swami Desika has given accolades to Sri Nathamunigal in his work - Yatiraja Saptati. Swami says -

nAthena muninA tena bhaveyam nAthavAnaham |
yasya naigAmikam tattvam hastAmalakatAm gatam ||

Swami states in the above verse, that Sri Nathamunigal is the preceptor and Swami could boldly consider that Sri Nathamunigal is the guardian.

Swami states that Sri Nathamunigal availed a great opportunity to perceive the nigamatattvam, i.e., the true and subtle meaning of the Vedas. Swami adds that Sri Nathamunigal gave the meaning of Vedas in such simple terms that it looked as clear as the tiny Amla fruit in one's palm. [ullangai nellikkani...]

Swami prostrates before Sri Nathamunigal with folded hands and prays for the master to protect him forever. Sri Nathamunigal gave us nyAya tattvam and Yogarahasyam and luckily for us, the first Mangala Sloka of the nyAya tattvam is available - thanks to Swami Desika.

yo vetti yugapatsarvam pratyakshena sadA svata: |
tam praNAmya harim SAstram nyAyatattvam pracakshmahe ||

Having humbly bowed down to the supreme Bhagavan Hari who knows everything

(1) directly

(2) forever
(3) through immediate perception
(4) on his own accord and
(5) simultaneously

Let me commence to write this work nyAyatattvam.

It is also known that the nyAyatattva has been a refutation of some principal doctrines of nyAyam

Sri Nathamuni has written a lot of taniyans (prefatory stanza). The taniyan of Nammalvar TiruvAimozhi, highlights the greatness of the Alvar and his work.

bhaktAmrtam viSvajananumodanam
sarvArthadam SrISaThakopavAngmayam |
sahasra Sakhopanishat samAgamam
namAmyaham drAviDavedasAgaram ||

Both the Sanskrit and tamil taniyan of KaNNinuN ciRuttAmpu are ascribed to the authorship of Sri Nathamunigal.

(i) avidita-vishayAntara: SaThAre: upanishadAm upagAnamAtrabhoga: |
api ca guNavaSAt tadekaSeshI madhurakavirhrdaye mamAvirastu ||

(ii) veRonRum nAnaRiyEn vEdam tamizh ceyda
mARan caTakOpan vaN kurukUr - ERengaL
vAzhvAm enRu Ettum madhurakaviyAr emmai
ALvAr avare yaraN.

Nathamunigal has extolled the greatness of Madhurakavi thus –

Madhurakavi knew saint SaThakopan as the only true guide and preceptor; he knew none else other than him; he became overjoyed by singing the holy upanisadic utterances of SaThakopan. He hailed Nammalvar as the supreme master because of his ennobling qualities and benign virtues.

Sri Nathamunigal made his life's sole aim to collect and systematise the Tamil maRai - Naalaayira divya Prabandham, thereby laying the foundation of establishing and spreading of Sri Vaishnavism.

Sri Nathamunigal, provided tunes and dance movements to divya Prabandham. He passed this tradition to his grandson Sri Yamunacharya, whom he felt would be a great Sri Vaishnava Acharya. Sri Nathamunigal also said that Sri Yamunacharya will do immense service to Sriya:pati and the devotees of the divya dampati.

Sri Uyyakkondar is the principle disciple of Sri Nathamunigal and our Swami has mentioned Sri Uyyakkondar in Yatiraja Saptati, with great respect.

namasyAm aravindAksham nAtha bhAve vyavasthitam
Suddhasattva mayam Saure: avatAramivAparam

Swami pays respect by prostrating at the pair of Lotus like feet of Sri Pundarikakshar. Swami sees a perfect personification of our Supreme Bhagavan in Sri Uyyakkondar. Swami states that Sri Uyyakkondar is a thorough embodiment of Suddhasattva as Sri Uyyakkondar firmly established the doctrines of Sri Nathamunigal and passed the precious wealth to his disciple Sri Ramamisra.

Shi Uyyakkondar was once asked if he would like to learn the secrets of Bhakti Yoga instead of divya Prabandham? divya Prabandham here stands for the "prapatti maarga". Either “Bhakti or prapatti" was the question.

Sri Uyyakkondar replied - "Will anyone agree to perform a marriage in one's house with a dead body inside?"- meaning, individual self realisation through the secrets of yoga would amount to selfishness. The whole world is in need of saving the knowledge contained in Naalaayira divya Prabandham. Sri Uyyakkondar claimed that learning divya Prabandham is most important.The term self-realisation (jivatma sakshatkaram) is usually used for "j~nAna yoga". Fruit of Bhakti-yoga is "God realization".

Thus the answer is: "If adiyen gets to know bhakti yoga, then adiyen only will reach Sri VaikuNTham and not others; since

a. For bhakti yogam, continuous meditation is needed => no contact with people as such; fully absorbed in meditating on Sriman Narayana only in accordance with brahma vidya.

b. Even if you tell others, hardly anyone has the qualification to take it up; Even telling a stotram with full concentration on PerumaL is impossible for people; then what to speak of bhakti yoga.

But, if adiyen propagates divya prabandham and thereby prapatti maarga, not only Adiyen, but also many other fortunate ones will attain Sri VaikuNTham! This is the essence of the answer by Sri Uyyakkondar. We all are eternally indebted to this most merciful decision of our purvaacharya Sri Uyyakkondar. But for that decision, we will be roaming around somewhere or at the best will be trying to perform bhakti yoga (hopeless thing, Oh God! We are really saved). Sri Nathamuni was pleased with the reply and taught him Naalaayira divya Prabandham and asked him to impart this to all sincere devotees.

Sri Nathamunigal also named Sri Pundarikakshar as "Uyyakkondar" in appreciation. Sri Nathamunigal embraced him, just as how Sri Rama embraced Hanuman. Sri Nathamunigal cherished the treasure [Sri Ramanuja's Bhavishyat Acharya Vigraha] given by Sri Nammalvar. Sri Nathamunigal instructed Uyyakkondar to pass on this treasure to Sri Yamunacharya - Sri Nathamunigal's grandson, and gave him some secret instructions.

Sri Uyyakkondar passed on the secret instructions to Sri Mannakkal Nambi. In all, Sri Uyyakkondar acted as per the thinking and beliefs of Sri Nathamunigal as Sri Ilaya Perumal did for Bhagavan Sri Rama.

Swami Desikan states that Sri Uyyakkondar has parallels to Bhagavan Krishna. Swami states, that Sri Uyyakkondar had a controlled life - control of rajo and tamo gunas and hence was full of Suddha Sattvam like Bhagavan. There is probably a play of words here by Swami Desikan.The Suddha sattva material (i.e., nitya vibhuti) is "aprAkrutam" and is different from the "sattvam" belonging to the prAkruta material. Prakruti (cosmic matter) is

a jada (non-spiritual); material (dravyam) and has sattva, rajas and tamas as its essential characteristics. But, Suddha sattvam is a dravyam, which is different from prakruti. Suddha-sattvam is a spiritual substance and is ajada (since it is j~nAna svaroopam, unlike prakruti). The divine body of Perumal is made up of Suddha sattva material and is not "prakruti material devoid of rajas and tamas". Sri Uyyakkondar did not have rajo and tamo gunas and was stationed in complete sattva guna and in this sense Suddhasattvam. On a different angle, actually, Sri Uyyakkondar being an incarnation of a nitya suri had Suddha sattvam(aprAkruta) thirumeni.

Swami had referred to Sri UyyakkKondar in adikArasangraham as "...nan neRiyai avarkku uraitta uyyakkoNDAr".

It is clearly established by Swami that Sri Uyyakkondar passed on the vital things he learnt from Sri Nathamunigal to Sri Ramamisra.

Sri Manakkal Nambi is the disciple of Sri Uyyakkondar and is the next great Acharya in our lineage of Gurus. Swami Desika who compared the divine qualities of Sri Uyyakkondar to that of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, compares Sri Manakkal Nambi to Rama[s]! Swami Desika offers his salutations to this Acharya in Yatiraja Saptati thus -

anujjhita kshamA yogam apuNyajana bAdhakam |
asprshTa madarAgam tam rAmam turyam upAsmahe ||

Swami Desika worships Sri Manakkal Nambi who is full of forbearance forever, who never hinders the meritorious great persons and who is not at all even tingled with any pride or passion.

Swami Desika addresses Sri Manakkal Nambi, who bears the name Rama Misra as the fourth Rama different from the other three Rama's

(i) Parasurama - full of anger towards Kshatriyas
(ii) Sri Rama - who vanquished the demons and
(iii) Balarama who is said to be madiragandhi-sprshTa as also madarAga sprshTa.

Sri Rama Misra served Sri Uyyakkondar for twelve years. He also looked after the household of his master.

Once Sri Rama Misra escorted the daughters of Sri Pundarikaksha after a river bath. The canal was slushy, and so the girls could not wade through it. Sri Rama Misrar laid himself across the two sides of the small slushy canal and requested the children to cross over his back. Since the girls' muddy feet were pressed on his body, He was hence named as “maNal" + "kAl'. ‘maNakkAl Nambi’. According to some, he was known as MaNakkAl Nambi as he was born in an agrahAram near Srirangam/Lalgudi.

Sri MaNakkAl Nambi's kainkaryam to his Acharya and his family members is beyond comparison.

Sri Uyyakkondar made Sri Ramamisra as the spiritual heir of Sri Vaishnava darshanam. He asked him to fulfil the desires of Sri Nathamunigal, who bade him to meet Sri Yamunacharya (Alavandar, grand son of Nathamunigal), initiate him into the secrets of Sri

Vaishnavism, teach divya Prabandham and hand over the Bhavishyat Acharya Vigraham to him.

With faith in abundance and steadfastness, Sri Manakkal Nambi was successful in fulfilling his Acharya's Aj~nya.

Let ussee the patience and pains undertaken by this great Acharya --

Sri Manakkal Nambi was entrusted with the task of finding Sri Yamunacharya. Sri Yamunacharya was now having a royal status.

Sri Manakkal Nambi took the orders of his Acharya as his primary objective in life and took all efforts to search out for Sri Yamunacharya. Sri Manakkal Nambi having located Sri Yamunacharya did indirect service to him in order to gain an entry.

Sri Yamunacharya learnt about Sri Vaishnavam and divya Prabandham from Sri Manakkal Nambi. Sri Manakkal Nambi taught Yamunacharya, the secrets embedded in bhagavad-Gita.

Sri Yamunacharya, having learnt the secrets of Bhagavad Gita from a sadacharya, has given us the essence of Gita in a nutshell in his Gitarthasangraha (32 Slokas).

Swami Desika has also given us Gitarthasangraham, a prabandham in Tamil with twenty-four paasurams. Gitarthasangraham is the fifteenth one. This again gives the essence of all the eighteen chapters of Bhagavad Gita. Out of these twenty four Tamil prabandhams, five prabandhams viz., Pandu, kazhal, ammAnai, Ucal and Ecal were lost (luptam).

Let us immerse ourselves into the first Sloka of Sri Alavandar's Gitarthasangraham

svadharmaj~nAnavairAgya sAdhyabhaktyekagocara: |
nArAyaNa: param brahma gItaSAstre samIrita: ||

Swami Desika has rendered the above Sloka in Tamil

karumamum j~nAnamum koNDezhum kAdalukku -
Or IlakkenRu
arumaRai ucciyuL Adarittu Otum arum piramam
tirumagaLODu varum tirumAlenRu tAn uraittAn
darumam ukanta danancayannukku avan cAratiyE.

This paasuram tells us the whole gist of Gita Saastra.

The subject matter of the Gita Saastra is Sriman Narayana, Sriman Narayana is Para Brahman. Gita has been addressed as Saastra because it speaks only the truth.

This highest Brahman - Sriman Narayana is attainable by Bhakti alone [bhakti eka gocara], meaning Bhagavan Sriman Narayana comes within the range of Bhakti alone or Bhagavan Sriman Narayana is both upaya and upeya.

Bhakti is attainable only by performing the duties of one's own Varna and Ashrama

(svadharma), by the acquisition of true knowledge - the knowledge of the Seshatvam of the jiva, and by Vairagya - turning away from allegiance to anything but Bhagavan.

All these are explained fully and clearly [sameerita]

Sri Manakkal Nambi successfully brought Sri Yamunacharya out of materialist life and made Sri Yamunacharya realise and surrender at the Lotus feet of Sri Ranganathan.

Sri Yamunacharya - also fondly known as Alavandar – realised that there is nothing in loukeekam and there is everything at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Ranganathan. On realising this, Sri Yamunacharya's Bhakti knew no bounds.

Alavandar records this in his stotraratna Sloka thus -

tvadanghri muddiSya kadApi kenacit
yathA tathA vA'pi sakrt krtonjali: |
tadaiva mushNAtyaSubhAnya Seshata:
Subhani pushNAti na jAtu hIyate ||

Sri Yamunacharya states in the above mentioned Sloka as:

When a person starts meditating on the Lotus feet of Periya Perumal, he / she instantly is relieved of all his/her sins. Just a single performance of anjali namaskaram to Azhagia Manavalan is enough to destroy all sins and increase the Bhakta's prosperity and will keep the Bhakti eternal.

Sri Alavandar states that when a person surrenders to Bhagavan,he melts like a liquid, thinking "What do I do to such an AtmA"?

Once prapatti is done at Bhagavan's feet, all the sins are destroyed (...theeyinil thoosagum ...). Alavandar did prapatti to Bhagavan in this Atma stirring stotram - stotra Ratnam. Sri Alavandar having realised Bhagavan and his duties to Bhagavan, focussed his thoughts and actions towards kaimkaryam to Sriya:pati. Sri Alavandar also started teaching and preaching the tenets of Sri Vaishnavism.

There are quite a few parallels between Swami Desika and Sri Alavandar that has been visible in various works --

In Swami's SaraNAgati deepikA (52)

svAmi dayA jalanidhirmadhura: kshamAvAn
SIIAdhka: Srita vaSa: SuciratyudAra: |
etAni hAtumanagho na kilArhasi tvam
vikhyAtimanti birudAni mayA sahaiva ||

Swami Desika says that Bhagavan cannot afford to give up the well known titles of his namely Swami

(i) Ocean of dayA
(ii) Sweet Person

(iii) One who has forbearance
(iv) Exceedingly free in mixing with all – sauSIlyam
(v) One who is under the control of those who have sought refuge
(vi) Pure
(vii) Liberal to a fault and
(viii) Bereft of blemish
- to give up all these along with me.

Swami Desika's bhAvam is so enjoyable when he tells Bhagavan, "If you don't protect me, it is not just about you losing me, but you may not get another of my worth who richly deserves protection at your hands".

Swami in his work VairAgya PancASat tells Bhagavan that he will lose his title "SaraNagata samrakshita" if Bhagavan does not protect him. But it will be interesting to note that in the above-mentioned SaraNAgati deepikA, Swami states that Bhagavan will lose eight titles if he fails to protect him.

Sri Alavandar too has poured out his emotions in a similar way, "dayAnIya: tava nAtha durlabha:"!

Swami Desika gets into this mode of "threatening" Bhagavan as and when he chooses. Well, it could be easily looked at as the child does to its mother on a few occasions.

Stotra Rathna, containing 65 Slokas, is the first of its kind in Vaishnavism giving us the essence and as rightly claimed is a gem among stotras. In the stotraratna, Sri Alavandar has defined the nature of Bhagavan, his attributes and has enjoyed his beauty. Sri Alavandar brings out the three tatvas, viz., cit, acit and ISvara as seen by Sri Parasara in Sri Vishnu Purana.

Sri Alavandar's deep understanding and bound-less Acharya Bhakti brought out prapatti in this Atma stirring stotram.

Let us enjoy few more parallels between our Swami and Sri Alavandar and towards this let us take the penultimate stotra in the Stotraratna

nanu prapanna: sakrdeva nAtha
tavAhamasmItI ca yAcamAna: |
tavAnukampya smarata: pratij~nAm
madekavarjam kimidam vratam te? ||

In the above stotram, Sri Alavandar prays to Sriya:pati, for protection. Towards this, Sri Alavandar quotes Bhagavan's declaration in his RamAvatara, where he had declared that anyone surrendering to him would be protected.

Sri Alavandar states that since he has now approached Bhagavan for protection, Bhagavan should give him "abhaya" as Bhagavan's pratij~nA does not exclude me [Sri Alavandar].

Our Swami reflects similar sentiments in the 45th Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA --

yam pUrvamASrita janeshu bhavAn yathAvat

dharmam param praNijagau svayamAnrSamsyam |
... .

Swami Desika in the Sloka, incorporates Sita devi's words,

AnrSamsyam parodharma: tvatta eva mayA Suta:

In this Swami says that Piratti Sita Devi has said "compassion is the highest among dharmas and I have heard it from you [Bhagavan] only"

Swami, as quoted says, "My Bhagavan! a helpless being like me is standing before you, reminding you of your pratingya and you, Sri Rama, are known for your truth and uprightness. Please protect me!"

Sri Alavandar in the last line of the above mentioned stotraratna sloka asks - "madeka varjam kimidam vratam te?" What is this vow of yours which takes in the whole world and leaves me alone?

In the very next sloka, 46th Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA, Swami Desika thinks of forbearance, the Great quality of Bhagavan, and hopes that in his case also it will help to pardon if not overlook his sins. Swami Desika says there is no reason why he alone should be an exception to the rule of reprieve.

This gives an amazing feel when we look at the similarities of thought between Swami Desika and Sri Alavandar.

Sri Yamunacharya's knowledge and commitment to Bhagavan, resulted in eight excellent works, viz.,

Atmasiddhi
ISvarasiddhi
samvitsiddhi
GitArthasangraha
AgamapramANya
CatuSSloki
Stotraratna and
MahApurusha nirNaya

In these he clearly establishes the Sri Vaishnava school and refutes other schools. Sri Yamunacharya was particularly upright when denouncing Saivism.

Sri Yamnuacharya's work on Sidddhitraya is simply outstanding where the existence of God and the nature of self are clearly established. More importantly, Sri Yamunacharya refutes the doctrines of advaita and other systems with authority.

Sri Yamunacharya brought out the GitArthasangraha – an abridged version of the bhagavad Gita in just 32 slokas - an effort of "Gita made easy" in those days.

Sri Yamunacharya's AgamaprAmANya proves the validity of ancient Paancharaatra Agama and its antiquity.

Sri Yamunacharya's splendid slokas called Sri CatuSSloki eulogised the importance of Goddess Lakshmi and her relationship with humanity.

It is also believed that Yamunacharya wrote the stotraratna to enable the devotees to understand Nammalvar's TiruvAimozhi and benefit from Alvar's works.

Let us enjoy a glimpse of ThiruvAimozhi vs stotraratna.

We saw ealier Alavandar's stotraratna thus -

tvadanghri muddiSya kadApi kenacit
yathA tathA vA'pi sakrt krtonjali: |
tadaiva mushNAtyaSubhAnya Seshita:
Subhani pushNriAti na jAtu hlyate ||

Here, Sri Alavandar stresses on the importance of meditating on the Lotus feet of Bhagavan. He says that a single performance of anjali namaskaram is sufficient to destroy all sins, increase the Bhakti, and give prosperity.

This can be equated to Sri Nammalvar's ThiruvAimozhi (1.3.8) thus -

nALum ninRatu namapazhamaiyam koDuvinaiyuDanE
mALum, Or kuRaivillai mananaka malamaRak kazhuvi,
nALum nam tiruvuDai aDigaltam nalam kazhal vaNangi,
mALum Or iDattilum vaNakkoDu mALvadu valamE

Sri Nammalvar reminds us that our sins get accumulated every day and the only way out for us to get rid of our sins is by holding Bhagavan's feet. This cleanses our inner self and removes all our shortcomings. Sri Nammalvar adds that salutations lead to prosperity!

Sri Yamunacharya performed pushpa kainkarya to Bhagavan Venkateshwara in Tirumala. This is mentioned in Sri Venkatachala Itihasamala. Maybe, this is the reason why that place is even now known as 'Yamunaitturai'!

Yamunacharya spotted the glittering Ramanuja amidst the pupils of Yadavaprakasa. Sri Yamunacharya blessed Sri Ramanuja thus - 'Am mudalvan'! meaning, ‘the chief personage’. He identified Sri Ramanuja would become his edifying force in the spread of ViSishTAdvaita.

Swami Desika in YatirAja sapati offers salutations to this great Acharya thus -

vigAhe yAmunam tIrtham sAdhu brndAvane sthitam |
nirasta jihmaga sparSe yatra krshNa: krtAdara: ||

Let me plunge into the holy and oceanic teachings of Sri YamunAcharya (Alavandar) who has been steadfast in protecting the righteous persons and who has defeated the alien systems of thought (in Indian philosophy) by pointing out the errors/fallacies in their principal viewpoints.

'vigAhe yAmunan tIrtham', Swami Desika has pun intended in the word 'tIrtham'. 'tIrtham' refers to both water and 'Acharya'.

Swami says, just as how a person who had been in heat would immerse himself in the river yamuna and enjoy, so also we can do dhyAna on all the auspicious qualities of Sri Alavandar and immerse ourselves in the Greatness of his qualities!

Swami Desika states that Bhagavan Krishna

(i) has protected the pandavas
(ii) chased away kaliyan serpent from the Yamuna river
(iii) along with Gopas and Gopikas sported in the Yamuna river.

But then our Alavandar has not done any of these deeds. Then why is it that Swami Desika mentions these attributes of Sri Krishna while speaking of Sri Alavandar?

Here it goes ..

(i) Alavandar by his teachings to his disciples like Periya Nambi protected them just like how Bhagavan Krishna protected the pandavas.

(ii) The river yamuna is useful for everybody, but then the kaliyan serpent had occupied the river and exhaled poison. The water now could not be used. Bhagavan Krishna chased away the serpent and made the yamuna river useful for everybody.

Bhagavan Krishna chased away Kaliyan, Alavandar chased away desires, Kaama and kroda.

(iii) Bhagavan Krishna played along with Gopas and Gopikas and sported in the Yamuna river. For all the above reasons, Bhagavan Krishna had a liking towards the yamuna river.

Sri Alavandar was an abode for the Preethi of Krishna. He ran down the theories of opponents and assured the protection of Bhaktas.

Sri Manakkal Nambi after having taught Sri Alavandar all the vedantaarthas, instructed him to learn the Bhakti yoga of his grandfather, Sri Nathamuni, from Sri Kurugaikaavalappan.

Alavandar immediately went to visit him. Sri Kurugaikaavalappan was in his Yoga. So, Alavandar did not want to disturb him and so went silently and sat behind him. Sri Kurugaikaavalappan after a short while completed his yoga and asked if there was anybody belonging to 'sottai kulam?'

Alavandar replied "adiyen" and prostrated to Sri Kurugaikaavalappan. Alavandar humbly enquired – " How did devareer know about Adiyen's visit?"

Sri Kurugaikaavalappan replied that he was meditating on Bhagavan Krishna. Bhagavan Krishna who was looking at him was suddenly distracted and turned behind to look at somebody else. Sri Kurugaikaavalappan added, "Who else can it be, other than a 'Sottai kulattAn' capable of moving away Bhagavan Krishna's attention from me?"

Hence seeing the preeti of Bhagavan Krishna towards Alavandar, Swami Desika says "yatra Krshnah krtAdara:". Swami Desika gets immersed in Sri Alavandar's great qualities and offers salutations to him.

We have been seeing the inexplicable Greatness of Sri Alavandar. With all these greatness, our Alavandar's humility, just brings out tears in our eyes.

Sri Alavandar performs Saranagathi at the lotus feet of Bhagavan in the stotra ratna.

na dharma nishTho'smi na ca Atmavedi
na bhaktimAm tvat caraNAravinde: |
akincana ananyagati: SaraNya:
tvat pAda mUlam SaraNam prapadye ||

Sri Alavandar confesses to Bhagavan that he is neither a Karma yogi, nor a Bhakti yogi, and adds that he is bereft of all sadhanas.

Sri Alavandar communicates to Bhagavan that he has no other refuge [other than Sriyah pathi] and surrenders absolutely at the lotus feet of Bhagavan.

In this Sri Alavandar confesses his Aakinchanyam and Ananyagathitvam to Bhagavan and hence chooses "prapatti" marga.

Alavandar has performed prapatti for our sake. We now have to just follow our Poorvacharyas footsteps.

Alavandar states that he is an akinchanan. It is not because of the incapacity of this Great Acharya, but then it is just because our Acharya wanted us to follow his footsteps. He has reflected our Aakinchanyam.

If our Acharya himself claims akinchanyam, then where are we? What can we do? We cannot even dream of choosing Bhakti yogam because we will end up nowhere. Let us follow the footsteps of Sri Alavandar.

In sloka 62 of stotra ratna –
"amaryAda: kshudra: calamati: asUyAprasavabhU:"

--We see Alavandar in absolute humility confess his weakness on the following ten counts:

1) Disobedient; Disrespectful
2) Easily attracted by petty sensuous attractions
3) Distracted mind
4) Full of jealousy
5) Ungrateful
6) Peevish
7) Ensnared by sensuous infatuations
8) Deceitful
9) Cruel
10) Sinful

Sri Alavandar prays to Bhagavan stating that Despite his absolutely undeserving nature, he looks upon Bhagavan's grace! Sri Alavandar communicates his urge to near Bhagavan's Lotus feet, cross this ocean of sorrow and to do Kaimkaryam to Bhagavan.

Here we see the over pouring mercy of our Acharya to point out our weakness by claiming it to be his and there by enlightening us to be worthy of Bhagavan's grace by performing prapatti.

Sri Alavandar after having performed prapatti adds that it is Bhagavan's mercy that he accepts us who have committed so many sins.

Swami Desika reestablishes this in his SaraNAgati deepikA thus -

mukhyam ca yatprapadanam svayameva sAdhyam
dAtavyamISa krpayA tadapi tvayaiva |
tanme bhavaccaraNa sangavatIm avasthAm
paSyanupAya phalayorucitam vidheyA: ||

Swami states that for the performance of prapatti itself we need Bhagavan's grace and it does not end there. Even after the performance of prapatti, It is upto Bhagavan to accept us. It is again Bhagavan's grace that he accepts us.

How are we to show our gratitude to our Great Poorvacharyas for ALL that they have done for us?
We are all akinchanas, we are totally indebted to them in this life, after this life, ...

WE ARE INDEBTED TO OUR ACHARYAS FOR EVER!

All of us have been accumulating sins from time immemorial. Bhagavan because of his overwhelming mercy wants us to enjoy eternal happiness and wants to help us out. To achieve this objective Bhagavan gives us a form and the capacity to think, so that we will take up either Bhakti or prapatti as upaya.

Having got the capacity to think all we have to do is to realise that Bhagavan is the ultimate and surrender at his lotus feet.

Our Alvars, Sri Nathamunigal and Sri Alavandar spread the teachings of Sri Vaishnava tattvams. This helped many people to perform prapatti and to take refuge at the feet of Sriya:pati and be redeemed.

At this juncture there were also many atheists and misinterpreters of Vedas who created problems for Sat Sampradayam. Periya Perumal felt that only Sri Ramanuja would help solve this crisis and so asked Sri Periya Nambi to teach all the Vedanta Sastras [taught by Sri Alavandar] to Sri Ramanuja. Bhagavan added that Sri Periya Nambi had to spread our siddantham through Sri Udaiyavar.

Sri Periya Nambi having been instructed by Sriya:pati decided to go ahead and meet Sri Ramanuja instead of waiting for him. He started to Kanchi and on his way landed in Madhuranthakam.

Bhagavan (Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal) at the same time instructed Sri Ramanuja through Thirukachi Nambi to take refuge in Sri Periya Nambi. So, Sri Ramanuja also came to Madhuranthakam.

Sri Periya Nambi performed Panchasamskaram to Sri Ramanuja in Madhuranthakam itself and taught the mantras.

It is interesting to note that we can still see the discus (Sri Sudharshana) and conch (Sri Paanchajanya) that was used by Sri Periya Nambi to perform taapa samskaaram to Sri Ramanuja. Later Sri Periya Nambi taught Sri Ramanuja all vedantarthas that he had learnt from Alavandar.

Thus Periya Nambi, through Udaiyavar has helped all of us. Sri Periya Nambi thus fulfilled Bhagavan's Agnya and thereby gave us the greatest pokisham - Sri Ramanuja, he is truly a Mahapoorna.

Sri Perya Nambi is one of the five Acharyas of Sri Ramanuja. The others areh Goshtipoornar, Srisailapoornar, Maaladharar and Sri Ranga-gayakendra (Tiruvaranga Perumal Araiyar).

Swami Desika salutes to this Acharya, who was an important Acharya of Sri Yatirajar thus -

dayA nighnam yatIndrasya deSikam pUrNamASraye |!
yena viSva srjo vishNo: apUryata manoratha: ||!
-- Yatiraja Saptati (9)

Swami Desika seeks refuge at the lotus feet of Sri Periya Nambi, who was the most compassionate guru and the chief preceptor of Yatindra.

Sri Periya Nambi, as per the instructions of Bhagavan, initiated all the mantras to Sri Ramanuja (Yatiraja), and so Sri Ramanuja is the next in our Guru Parampara.

Swami's devotion to Sri Ramanujacharya - also known as Sri Yatiraja - is well-known and unparalleled. Swami wrote an exclusive work - the Yatiraja Saptati - dedicated to Sri Ramanuja. In this, Swami defines, describes and details the greatness of Sri Ramanuja and tells the world the greatest contributions rendered by Sri Ramanuja to ViSishTAdvaita. Sri Ramanuja has defined and spread ViSishTAdvaita and more importantly refuted other schools with such power that one has no doubts in mind.

Let us enjoy the flavour of the Yatiraja Saptati through couple of slokas –

praNAmam lakshmaNamuni: pratigrhNAtu mAmakam |!
prasAdhayati yatsUktih svadhIna patikAm srutim ||
-- Yatiraja Saptati (10)

Swami offers his salutations to the Great Acharya Ramanuja. Swami says that Sri Ramanuja's teachings have been perfect and accurate interpretations of the Vedas (Sruti). It is interesting to note that Swami says that She (Sruti), has hence become Svadhinapatika.

svAdhina patikA refers to a heroine (nAyika), who has got back her Bhagavan within her control.

Information regarding God, nature, practices etc are contained in the Vedas. As Vedas are so vast, all the information is not found at one place. This gives room for independent interpretations by different saints, scholars and others involved in understanding the Vedas. This gives an impression as 'conflict' though when viewed in total we get the correct and complete picture.

Kanchi Perarulalan

BASIC PRINCIPLES AND GREATNESS OF VISISHTADVAITAM

Now, let's take a brief look into the schools of thought -

The dvaita School as propagated by Sri Madhva – who interprets Vedas from "bheda Sruti" perspective, states that the "JeeAtman" and "ParamAtman" as totally different and also adds that these two could never be the same.

The advaita School - The advaita School as propagated by Sri Shankara – who interprets Vedas from "abheda Sruti" perspective, states that the "JeevAtman" and "ParamAtman" are one.

The VisishTAdvaita School - Sri Ramanuja, professed the theory where he established that the "JieevAtman" and "ParamAtman" are two different entities being in unison- with the JeevAtman being the property of ParamAtman.

Sri Ramanuja establishes this school of thought with the example of body - AtmA relationship. By this Sri Ramanuja states that, the body and the AtmA act as one and are in unison, but they are totally different. The body is the vehicle for the AtmA. The ParamAtma abides in the AtmA and pervades it within and without. Sri Ramanuja uses "ghatakasruti" principle to establish a common ground between bheda and abheda Sruti.

Sri Ramanuja states that the body is subordinate to the Jiva and the Jiva the subordinate of the supreme. The Jiva, Sareera and ISvara are thus inseparable. Since Sri Ramanuja interpreted the Vedic texts in the right perspective as mentioned above, Swami Desika states that the Veda mAtA got back Bhagavan within her bounds - svAdhina patikA!

A pearl chain has continuous pearls on both sides. Both these join with a common bigger pearl (Pendent). Similarly, Sri Yatiraja is the bigger pearl in our chain of Acharyas. Our elders have reverently referred the Acharyas before Sri Yatiraja to be the "tirumuDi sambandham", while the Acharyas after Sri Yatiraja are referred to as "tiruvaDi sambandham".

It is interesting to know about Bhavishyaacharya. Sri Madhurakavi Alvar wanted to make an archa vigraha of Sri Nammalvar. On completion, to his surprise, the end product was the archa vigraha of Sri Ramanuja. Sri Madhurakavi Alvar in his dream learnt that the divine personality figuring in the vigraha would be the future Acharya as prophesied by Sri Nammalvar.

Sri Nathamunigal was also shown this archa vigraha of Sri Ramanuja when he reinstated the divya prabandham. Thus, Sri Ramanuja's worship began long before his physical advent on earth!

All the Acharyas have sung praises on Sri Yatiraja and what more!? Our ViSishTAdvaita sampradaya is referred as "Emperumanar darshanam"!

Sri Ramanuja is also addressed as Yatiraja, Udaiyavar and Emperumanar. Swami Desika has complete devotion to Sri Yatiraja and has used around 30 epithets to address this Acharya.

Swami Desika's devotion, admiration and respect for Sri Yatiraja is boundless and Swami used to feel very hard that he could not get the bagyam of being the direct disciple of Sri Yatiraja. Swami addressed his longing through his "Sankalpa Suryodaya". In this, Swami creates two characters, that of an Acharya and his disciple and likens the Acharya to be Sri Ramanuja and he himself as the disciple. Swami stages the "Sankalpa Suryodaya" to get indirect blessings from Sri Ramanuja.

We saw that Sri Nadadur Ammal blessed our Swami stating that Swami will establish the supremacy of ViSishTAdvaita. Swami portrays the same event as a scene in the "Sankalpa Suryodaya", where Sri Ramanuja blesses him.

pratishThApita vedAnta: pratikshiptabahirmata: |
bhUyAH traividyamAnya: tvam bhUrikalyANabhAjanam ||

The above mentioned sloka depicts the blessing of Sri Nadadur Ammal received by Swami. [This is seen in Act II of Sankalpa Suryodaya of Swami Desika.]

Swami exclaims his devotion to Sri Ramanuja, thus –

"...siddhAntA na samindhate yativara granthAanu sandhAyini"
-- Yatiraja saptati (61)

"I will not even look at faiths other than Sri Ramanuja"

yatISvara sarasvatI surabhitASayAnAm satAm
vahAmi caraNAmbujam praNati SAlinA maulinA |
tadanya mata durmada jvalita cetasAm vAdinAm
Sirassu nihitam mayA padamadakshiNam lakshyatAm ||
-- Yatiraja saptati (41)

Swami Desika's dedication and devotion to Sri Ramanuja was so great that Swami was even prepared to bear the feet of those whose intellect was filled with the fragrance of the amrudam flowing from the lips of Ramanuja, his head lowered.

Swami does not stop here. Swami was very particular that people should not be misguided by wrong interpretations. Swami's concern for humanity on the whole is so great, that Swami says, the world can see that he will never hesitate to place his left foot on the heads of those who contests Sri Ramanuja's philosophy. This clearly establishes that Swami had almost taken a vow to declare the supremacy of ViSishTAdvaita over other schools.

After extensive study of several schools of thought like Buddhism, Jainism, Paasupatam, Sankhya, Yoga, VaiSeshika, Bhedabheda, advaita, etc., Swami Desika empathetically states that all these could give him only knowledge. Only Sri Yatirajar's works viz., VedAnta saara, VedAnta deepa and Sri BhAshya (the commentaries on the Brahma Sutras), Gita BhAshya, VedArtha sangraha (a digest of the Upanishads) and the three Gadyas (SaraNAgati, Sriranga and VaikuNTha) made him devoted and enlightened.

Swami extends this gratitude to Yatiraja in many places in Yatiraja Saptati.

parushAtivAda parivAda paiSuna-

prabhrti prabhUta patanIya pankilA |
svadate mamAdya subhagA sarasvatI
yatirAja klrti katakairviSodhitA ||
-- Yatiraja Saptati (19)

Swami Desika's qualities melts our heart! In spite of all his greatness, Swami Desika says that he had many defects like harshness, exaggeration, demeaning others, carrying tales of others etc., which were great sins capable of dragging one to hell. Swami with his greatest humility adds that after he started speaking the greatness of Sri Ramanuja, he was cleansed, just as how a "Thetankottai" in a jug of water cleanses all the impurities in it!

Swami Desika speaks of the above mentioned defects in order to make us understand that even people with many limitations get cleansed by learning the greatness of Sri Ramanuja.

yati kshoNibharturyadidamAnidam bhoga janatA-
Sira: SreNIjushTam tadiha drDhabandham prabhavati |
avidyAraNyAni kuhara viharanmAmaka mana: -
pramAdyan mAtanga prathama nigalam pAda yugalam ||
-- Yatiraja Saptati (59)

Swami Desika says that only those who realise that the worldly pleasures are worthless (the paramaikanthins) can understand the greatness of Sri Bhashyakarar. With great devotion they place Sri Ramanuja's "tiruvadi" (feet) on their head and worship.

To emphasise the importance of Sri Ramanuja in his life, Swami compares his mind to that of a wild elephant. Just as how a wild elephant in a large forest will roam here and there and play as it wishes, so also Swami says his mind was roaming about in the large forest of aj~nAna. In order to channelise and discipline the elephant it needs to be chained at one place. Similarly the feet of Ramanuja proved to be an effective fetter on Swami's mind to check him from going astray.

Though Swami Desika states that he was in a forest of aj~nAna, full of evil qualities etc, we have to understand it in the correct perspective.

1. To make a line look small we draw a bigger line, this is the principle used by Swami, to emphasise the greatness of Sri Ramanuja, Swami underestimates himself.

2. It is not that Swami Desika had all these evil qualities, he has just reflected our qualities, and thus advises us to get hold of the feet of Sri Ramanuja.

Swami Desika states that Sri Ramanuja has not helped him alone but has helped Bhagavan himself!!!!!!

Well, how is it that Sri Ramanuja has helped (even) Bhagavan? Swami Desika gives us the reply.

kapardi mata kardamam kapila kalpanA vAgurAm
duratyayamatltya tad druhiNa tantra yantrodaram |
kudrshTi kuhanA mukhe nipatata: para brahmaNa:

***kara graha vicakshaNo jalati lakshmaNo'yam muni:* ||**
-- Yatiraja Saptati (38)

Swami Desika says that there are so many dangers for the Parabrahman.

Each school of thought has their own beliefs. According to their beliefs they frame their own viparita attributes for Brahman. They even deny whatever is mentioned in the Vedas. Is it not a danger for Brahman?

The Saivas portray so many degraded states and mention many aspects of bitterness about Brahman. They also say that we have to meditate on that Brahman. This again is a danger for Brahman!

Brahman slowly recovered from this!

Later Brahman got trapped in the Sankhya matam. There were again difficulties in getting released from this. Somehow with all difficulties, Brahman came out of the trap.

Yoga matam, targeted our Brahman next. Somehow managed to escape this also.

Note: Brahma is the four-faced one, who came from the lotus, out of the navel of Bhagavan Narayana. Brahman means one who is greatest and hence denotes the Supreme Being or the ultimate reality. Brahman is defined as one from whom the creation of the world etc., takes place.

Imagine the pressure our Brahman would have faced in coming out of all these difficulties. Breathtaking! But after having come out of all these dangers, it got caught in a bigger danger – Even after accepting the Vedas, the true meanings were hidden. Everything was called maaya. Only Brahman was considered true and everything else was false. These wrong interpretations negated all the auspicious qualities of Brahman. This system was teaching avidya there by destroying and avenging the greatness of Brahman. At this critical situation, Brahman needed a helping hand to be lifted and placed in the appropriate place.

Only Sri BhAshyakarar had the capacity to render a helping hand. Sri Ramanuja established and exposed the truth to the world. He showed us our Emperuman's thirumeni Swarupam, Kalyana gunas, Vibhavas and gave us the correct interpretation of the Vedas. Sri Yatirajar disclosed to the world the greatness of Brahman and thus saved Brahman!

Swami Desika says that Sri Ramanuja rescued Brahman who had fallen in the ditch of Mayavaadins (called kudrushti) by his helping hand!

vande tam yaminAm dhurandharamaham mAnAndhakAra druhA
panthAnam paripanthinAm nija drSA rundhAnamindhAnaA |
dattam yena dayA sudhAmbunidhinA pItvA viSuddham paya:
***kAle na: kariSaila krshNa jalada: kAngshAdhikam varshati* ||**
-- Yatiraja Saptati (62)

Other systems of thought assume wrong paths and keep propagating their thoughts. Swami Desika states that Sri Bhasyakarar can easily solve this issue.

Swami Desika empathetically states that if Sri Bhasyakarar opens his glittering eyes and sees them once, that itself is enough to break the path of the opponent systems and bring them out of darkness.

Swami Desika speaks of the karuna of Sri Yatiraja. Swami is not happy just speaking of Sri Yatiraja's karuna to us, so he states that Sri Yatiraja has karuna on Bhagavan Varadaraja itself!!!!!

Bhagavan Devarajan of Kanchipuram is a bestower of boons, hence worshipped as Varadaraja. Swami Desika opines that Bhagavan Varadaraja gets this credit only because of Sri Ramanuja.

A cloud draws the waters of a lake for sustenance and pours it out in the form of rain. Likewise the cloud of Bhagavan Varadaraja has drunk the pure waters offered by Sri Yatiraja on his return from Vindhya forest and is raining showers on the devotees even to this day more than asked for!

Swami Desika says that Sri Bhashyakarar is the resting place of karuna. Swami states one important fact that Sri Ramanuja had no limitations - absolutely. In Yatiraja Saptati, out of sheer Acharya pratipatti, Swami has done some excellent comparisons. Let us see one such comparisonh

SIta svabhAva subhagAnubhava: SikhAvAn
doshAvamarda niyatonnatiroshadhISa: |
tApAnubandha Samanastapana: prajAnAm
rAmAnujo jayati samvalita tridhAma ||
-- Yatiraja saptati (27)

There are three major tejas in the world viz., agni, chandran and sooryan. The prime quality of Agni is purity, Chandran is the capacity to make one happy, and sooryan is possessing brightness. Swami Desika says that Sri Yatiraja's tejas is the synergy of agni, chandran and sooryan. And what more, Sri Yatiraja had even the qualities that they did not possess.

There are some limitations to agni, chandran and sooryan. Swami Desika says that Sri Ramanuja shined because he did not have any such limitations.

Sri Yatirajar was extremely pure like agni. Agni will not let anyone near it because of its heat but Sri Yatirajar because of his capacity to bless with calm mind is easily approachable and enjoyable.

Just as how we feel happy seeing Chandran, when we prostrate to Swami's thirumeni we feel happy. Chandran depends on the darkness of the night to shine consistently. But Sri Yatirajar having removed the doshas of devotees has obtained consistent greatness. Here Swami Desika uses the word "dosham". "dosham" may refer to 'fault' or 'night'. There is pun intended in the word "dosham".

Sri Emperumanar's tejas is even greater than that of sooriyan. sooriyan brings about taapa, while Sri Ramanuja through his upadesas and Sri Sookti's clears samsaara taapa.

hatAvadye hrdye hari caraNa pankeruha yuge

nibadhnantyaikAntyam kimapi yati bhUbhrtphaNitaya: |
SunAsIra skanda druhiNa hara heramba hutabhuk-
prabheSAdi kshudra praNati parihara pratihbhuva: ||
-- Yatiraja saptati (53)

People who have the bhaagyam of enjoying Sri Bhashyakar's Sri Sooktis worship Bhagavan's lotus like feet, they have no faults and are very happy. A strong conviction is developed in them. This conviction makes everyone realise Paratvam and reach Sriya:pati's Lotus feet.

Therefore, they reach a great state where they resort only to Bhagavan's feet and to nothing else. Because of such a state they do not worship demi Gods like Indra, muruga, Brahma, siva, Vinayaka, Agni, Sooryan who can grant only temporary benefits.

Since we now know the importance of Sri Bhasyakarar's Sri Sooktis, here is a brief – Sri Bhasyakarar has given us nine Samskrit granthas/ Sri Sookthi's.

They are the navaratnas (nine gems) for us.

1. SribhAshyam - a commentary on Brahmasutras

2. VedAntadeepam - a brief commenatary on the Brahmasutras
3. VedAntasAram - a brief commentary on the essence of Brahmasutras

4. VedArthasangraha - a thesis on ViSishTAdvaita which refutes other schools of thought.

5. BhagavadgItA bhAshyam - based mainly on the Gitartha sangraham of Alavandar

6. SaraNAgati gadyam - explains the essence of the dvaya mantra

7. Sriranga gadyam - A summary of SaraNAgati gadyam appealing to Bhagavan Ranganatha.

8. Sri VaikuNTha gadyam - a glorification of the supreme abode

9. nityagrantham - the procedure to perform IjyA Aradhanam to Bhagavan.

Swami Desika says that Sri Bhasyakara's Sri sookti's will make a person:

1. Worship only the Divine feet
2. Not to worship other deities
3. Reach the state of a paramaikantin.

Let us see Swami Desika's description on the greatness of Sri Emperumanar's tiruvadi. Swami Desika's explanation makes all of us long for the touch of Sri Ramanuja's tiruvadi!

lipse lakshmaNa yogina: padayugam rathyA parAgacchaTA-
raksharopaNa dhanya sUri parishatsImanta sImAntikam |
bhikshA paryaTana kshaNeshu bibharAmcakre galatkilbishA
yadvinyAsamisheNa patra makari mudrAm samudrAmbarA ||

-- Yatiraja Saptati (64)

Sri Ramanuja was a sanyasi. As part of his daily routine he used to walk along the streets and get the Maadhokaram (bhiksha) from paramaikantins, (as a sanyasi ought to do) and prepare amudhu (food).

At that time Sri Ramanuja's feet used to touch the ground. Alas, all the impurities of that place would disappear by the very touch and the whole place would become pure!

Maha purushas have some symbols viz., kodi, Meen, kudai, taamarai, etc. We see these symbols in the inner part of the feet of Sri Ramanuja in the form of lines. So, when Sri Ramanuja's feet touch the earth all these symbols also get imprinted!

Swami Desika says that Sri Yatirajar places his feet on the ground as a matter of fact. In reality, it is Bhoomi devi (mother earth) who utilises this opportunity. Swami Desika beautifully explains that by the touch of Yatirajar's tiruvadi, Bhoomi devi gets purified. And in addition to that Bhoomi devi receives these symbols and thus gets her work done!

The vidvans come in droves to collect the dust in the streets which was touched by Sri Emperumanar. These vidvans realise this dust to be a raksha (protection), and place it on their heads. Their heads are blessed with such a bhagyam! This is not all, after this the vidvans come in person and have Sri Yatirajar's feet itself placed on their head!!!
Swami Desika says that he also wants to bear Sri Yatirajar's thiruvadi on his head and get purified!

Swami Desika tells us about Sri Yatirajar's philosophy. Swami gives us the reply to the question "Is ViSishTAdvaita of Sri Ramanuja an evolved philosophy"? Swami Desika establishes that Sri Ramanuja's philosophy is ancient.

yati kshmAbhrd drshTam matamiha navlnam tadapi kim
tata: prAgavAnyadvada tadapi kim varNa nikashe |
niSAamyantAm yadvA nijamati tiraskAra vigamAt
nirAtankAshTAnka dramiDa guhadeva prabhrtaya: ||
-- Yatiraja Saptati (57)

Some people say that Sri Ramanuja has found Sri ViSishTAdvaita Vedanta and hence the philosophy is new! They say that the other matams existed before this and hence are ancient.

Swami Desika says that even if we take their words to be true, we have nothing to lose. Swami says – What is it we lose if our philosophy is new, and what do the other philosophies gain because it is old?

Swami emphatically states that Superiority of the Philosophy is not based on its advent. Vedas have to be wholly considered and interpreted appropriately. The philosophy that succeeds in this is the superior philosophy. And it is obviously our philosophy, which is the MOST SUPERIOR.

If we analyse it further, we realise that Sri Ramanuja has not found ViSishTAdvaita Vedanta! Our sampradayam is also anAdi like the Vedas. Tanka, dramiDa, Guhadeva, Nammalvar, Nathamunigal, Alvars, all those who lived long before Sri Ramanuja have

been teaching this philosophy. Nobody could come forward and refute their doctrines. So without any interruptions they could spread the philosophy. They have not established the philosophy based on the just swaarasyam of vakyas and padams of the Vedas and Brahma sutras. It is explicit that they have considered swaarasyam, akshara by akshara and have written the Vedanta granthams. Sri Bhashyakarar, in the beginning of Sri bhaashyam itself says that it is based on Poorvacharyas' principles the aksharas of Brahma sootras are being translated. In reality, Sri Bhashyakarar gave a new shape to the philosophy, which came through this lineage, in a way that all learned people could understand. Sri Ramanuja by systematising these in his Sri sookti's did an extraordinary help and that is the reason for our philosophy to be called as Ramanuja siddhantam.

Swami Desika determinedly states that the arguments, which state that this philosophy is new, is baseless.

Swami Desika excels in using similes in all the four quarters of the following Sloka.

jayati sakalavidyA vAhini janma Sailo
jani patha parivrtti SrAnta viSrAnti SAkhi |
nikhila kumati mAyA SarvarI bAlasUryo
nigama jaladhi velA pUrNacandro yatIndra: ||
-- Yatiraja Saptati (28)

Sri Bhashyakarar is a person with tremendous knowledge and he is the only one who analyses all arts and while he accepts the good ones, he reprimands others. Besides, Sri Bhashyakarar spreads the right ones across the world for the benefit of others. Sri Bhashyakarar's kaimkaryam is like the flow of rivers that make the land prosperous and this quality of Sri Bhashyakarar has made him an embodiment of total virtue. All of us, when roaming around in the hot sun feel completely exhausted and find the shade of a tree a blessing to relax. In today's samsara lokam, our continuous chain of birth and rebirth makes us go through happiness and sorrow and various suffering. As we get exhausted, Atmas are struggling, Sri Bhashyakarar - becomes the grand big tree – that gives us shade.

Emperumanar is not just a shade, he is also the light for humanity. Just as the morning Sun spreads light to clear away darkness, Sri Bhashyakarar removes the darkness of aj~nAna [created by teachings of other schools of thought] and provides brightness into us.

Sri Yatiraja's important kaimkaryam is releasing the world from Vipareeta J~nAna. Our Vedas, which is so vast, gives room for many interpretations and when there are many interpretations it gives room for wrong and dangerous understanding. Humanity was, in general, driven and directed by many who completely misread the Vedas. The teachings by such people, who misread the Vedas, just rocked humanity.

Sri Yatiraja understood the Vedas in the right perspective and told the world in no uncertain terms. Just as the oceanic waters rise on the sight of full moon, the Vedas just relish the very sight of Sri Ramanuja interpreting and teaching the correct understanding of the Vedas.

This makes Sri Bhashyakarar the supreme amongst everyone.

Here, Sri Bhasyakarar is visualised as a mountain, tree, sun and moon. He is also referred as YatIndra and hence can be interpreted as being visualised as Indra also!

Swami Desika's above sloka is a jaya gosham with the following meaning:

May victory be unto Yatiraja, who is the mountain where from perennial rivers of Vedas flow always, who is the grand tree offering solace to the tired pilgrims of samsara; who is the rising sun dispelling the snows of Mayavadins; who is the full moon gladdening the waves of Vedas!

Whatever, Adiyal is able to understand and share with you are from the works of Swami Desika. This little knowledge gained from Swami's works gives immense pleasure and depth of Sri Yatiraja's greatness! The words are limited to detail and enjoy Sri Yatiraja's efforts and knowledge.

Let us recite and relish Thiruvarangattamudhanaar's Ramanuja nooRRandAti, paasuram 84 in which he pours out thus --

kaNDukoNDEn em rAmAnucan tannai, kANDalumE
toNDukoNDEn avan toNDar poRRALil en tollai vennOy
viNDukoNDEn avan clr veLLa vAriyai vAymaTuttu
inRu uNDukoNDEn, innam uRRana Otil uvappillaiyE

"Now, I have seen my Ramanuja; what a sight it is indeed! It makes me seek to serve the golden feet of his devotees; Now I take just a sip from this ocean of auspicious qualities and all my past karmas are destroyed, No, there is no end if I start to say more."

Having enjoyed Sri Ramanuja, though in a small effort, it is time for us start enjoying the glory of our Swami Desika. There have been Oracles on Swami Desika's arrival (even before Swami's actual advent) to our lokam for our upliftment. Sri Yatiraja himself had hinted on this.

As the time came towards the avatAra Poorti of Sri Bhashyakarar, many of his Sishyas were upset about the impending separation from their Acharya.

Truly, the Sishyas were perturbed that they would be missing the greatest Acharya [won't we?].

More importantly, they were worried that there could be none who could be so emphatic about ViSishTAdvaitam.

Sri Emperumanar knowing their worries, addressed a collective meeting of his Sishyas and ordered them to visit his Sishya Kongu pirati in her house, for their worries to be driven away. All Sishyas went to Kongu piratti's house and after accepting her hospitality, told her about the purpose of their visit.

She immediately went inside and brought two silk ropes, one rope was red in colour while the other was white. She sat down in front of them.

Kongu piratti uncombed her long hair and put them in front. She removed the plaits, applied perfumed oils and massaged it. She then removed the knots and conditioned the

hair. Now she started combining the hair tresses, tied it and then tightened it with the first red rope. She used the other white rope to tighten further along the red rope so that it could not be removed. Having done this, she paid respects to the visiting Sishyas and bade them farewell.

Thoroughly confused, the Sishyas narrated the whole episode to Sri Bhashyakarar and said that they could infer nothing out of this.

Sri Bhashyakarar smiled and explained the episode to them. This lady was not an ordinary lady. The Veda devathai herself had taken that form. Because Sri Yatiraja had established the correct meanings of the Vedas this lady showed her gratitude and acted as a Sishyai in this form. Her hero is the sarvesvaran himself. The different saakhaas are her different parts. Her long tresses are the Vedanta part. The act of "un-combing her long hair", represents the other schools which rocked the Vedantas.

The act of "applying perfumed oils on her hair and massaging it", shows the research done by Sri Yatirajar to find out the truths of the Vedanta.

The act of "removing the knots and conditioning it", refers to the arguments through which Sri Yatirajar proved and established the concepts of our sampradaya, while reprimanding the other doctrines.

The act of "combining the separated tresses of hair and pinning it", symbolises that Veda devathai is relieved that the true meanings are established and is saved from the rocking by other schools.

The act of "tightening with the first red rope", refers to the philosophy that Yatiraja systematised. Because it should not be spoilt by anybody in the future, Yatiraja wore the kaashayam, became a sanyasi and negated the arguments of other schools by his Sri bhashyam and many other granthams and thus established the sampradayam. The Veda devathai was now happy and comfortable with her Bhagavan Emperuman without any interruptions.

The act of "using the other white rope to tighten further along the red rope so that it could not be removed ", addresses to further allay the fears of the Sishyas. Yatirajar said that he himself would take an avatar in Kanchi (Thoopul) after some time.

The red and white rope, tied by Kongu piratti, symbolises the Sanyasam and gruhastashrama respectively. Gruhasashrama stage is where brahmacharis and sanyasins are respected and nourished with care. Sri Ramanuja says that he himself will take up an avataram in the gruhastashrama and wear white robes till the avatara poorthi.

He further ordained that during this avataram, he shall through upadesas and granthas, offer the world more help. Devotees will respect and revere the Gruhastashrama avataram and goes on to say that the philosophy propounded and propagated will stay established.

Having listened to this explanation and announcement of his next avataram, from Emperumanar, the Sishyas felt light and delighted.

It makes a wonderful reading when we see that Sri Nammalvar, who had his avataram long before the advent of Swami, had mentioned about the emergence of Swami Desika.

In Thiruneduntandakam, Thirumangai Alvar states:

vilakkoLiyai maradakattait tiruttaNkAvil
vekkAvil tirumAlaip pADak kETTu
vaLarttatanAI payan peRREn varuga! enRu
madak kiLiyai kai kUppi vaNanginALE

Our elder's say that the kili (parrot) specified in this refers to Swami Desika. This goes well, as we watch Swami referring to himself as "just appear as a trained parrot".

Swami refers to himself as a bird thus in devanAyaka pancASat, Slokam 8-

... . AkrshTavAnAsi bhavAnanukampamAna:
sUtrAnubaddha Sakuni kramata: svayam mAm

Swami was regarded for his contribution and immense value to the Acharya Goshti Swami ensured that the efforts and teachings of our AcharyAs were directed in the proper form, ensured the spread of proper jnana and removed the ignorance from one's mind.

Like "karNa sa esha kavitArkika simhanAdha: ", Or kavitArkika Simham, the lion among poets and logicians rocked all the other doctrines!
Bhagavan Sri Ranganatha was so pleased with Swami Desika's knowledge, his teachings and works that Bhagavan conferred the title 'VedAntacArya'

Like our Poorvacharyas, the main objective of Swami Desika's avataram was also to protect Bhakti and prapatti.

Due to all the above auspicious attributes of Swami Desika our elders state that Andal has also mentioned about Swami!

It is exciting to note that our Alvars and Acharyas have made clear mention about the avataram of Swami Desika and this clearly establishes the qualities, and place of avataram of Swami.

Swami Desika inherited vital philosophy from our Acharya. Swami not only exhibited the great qualities in himself but also proved his poetic genius, courage, conviction and unique devotion.

How does one refer to our Swami? Many call him a maha Vidwan; some as maha medhavi; a few as maha Kavi. Most accept our Swami as the greatest mahan of ViSishTAdvaita, but the truth is that none were able to find a single word to depict our Swami's greatness.

Swami lived a life of complete simplicity and austerity and he was totally indifferent to material wants.

Swami Desika, in his SubhAshita neevi, says that an ordinary Atma having submitted to an able Guru, will gain true knowledge on tattva, hita and Purushartham.

Let us take this important lesson from our Swami and prostrate with total devotion to his Lotus Feet.

asmad guru venkaTanAthArya yativara pUrnau sayAmunam rAmam
padmAksha nAtha SaThajit senesa ramA ramApatim vande

Let us prostrate to the esteemed and foremost Acharyas of Sri Vaishnavism viz., Bhagavan Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi, Sri Vishvaksena, Sri SaThakopa, Sri Nathamuni, Sri PundarIkakshar, Sri Ramamisra, Sri YamunAcharya, Sri Mahapoornar, Sri Bhagavad Ramanuja and Sri Vedanta Desika.

A number of 'tanians' (laudatory dedicated verses) were dedicated to him.

SrImAn venkaTanAthArya: kavitArkika kesarI |
vedAntacaryavaryo me sannidhattAm sadA hrdi ||

Swami Desika's son Sri Varadacharya implores "the great lion of poetics and dialectics and the great preceptor of Vedanta (that Swami Venkatanatha was) should reside in his heart always".

Once upon a time a Vidwan Sri Krishna Misra challenged Swami if Swami could bring out a play to match his own play called the 'Prabhoda Sooryodayam'.

Never to let down an opportunity to contribute, our Swami instantly wrote a play called 'Sankalpa Sooryodayam'. Our Swami took just a night to complete this play of 10 Acts in which various qualities [like Viveka, jealousy, greed, etc., were personified].

kavitArkika simhAya kalyaNa guNaSAline |
SrImate venkaTeSAya vedAnta gurave nama: |!

Swami stood a personification of Kalyana Gunas,

KavitArkikasimham - VedAntAcaryan, Sri VenkatanAtha! I pay obeisance to You..

It is a practice that when we start our daily prayers and recitation of stotras, we start with the salutation to our Swami, as:

"SrImAn venkaTanAthArya ... ." and at the end we recite - "kavitArkika simhAya ... ... "

Sri Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan, a disciple of Sri Kumara Varadarya, had his living during the times of Swami Desika - something like a Junior contemporary. In saptati ratna Malika, Sri Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan gives us a brief of Swami's birth, education and other basic details.

putro anantAryaSUre: purushasamaguNa: puNDarikAkshayashTu:
pautra: totArabhikya Sruta-varajananI-garbha vArASicandra: |
viSvamitranvavAyo varadagurupitA vAdihamsAmbuvAhAt
AcaryadAptaSAstro varadagurumata: sarvatantrasvatantra: ||
-- Saptatiratna mAlikA

Swami Desika belonged to ViSvAmitra gotra. Swami was the grandson of Sri Pundarikakshar and the son of Sri Anantha soori. Smt Totaramba, was a gem among mothers from whose womb Swami came out like a moon that comes out of the ocean. Swami had the blessings of Sri Nadadur ammal. Swami learnt all the Saastras from Sri Appullar. Swami was the father of Sri Kumara Varadarya Nainaracharya. Swami was endowed with all auspicious qualities and in that respect equaled Bhagavan. Swami was a master of all sciences - "sarva tantra svatantra".

Sri Kumara Varadarya was Swami Desika's son. He learnt all the meanings under Swami's thiruvadi and was Swami's ardent disciple. At the peak of his Bhakti, Sri Kumara Varadarya shared all the greatness of Swami as experienced by him. This great work is in Tamil and is called PillaiyandAti. It is interesting to note that a few paasurams in this describe both Sri Ramanuja and Swami Desika.

PillaiyandAti communicates a few very important points to us. Sri Kumara Varadarya says that –

* We cannot survive unless we sing about the greatness of Swami Desika.

* Only the philosophy which has been analysed and arrived at can be a saadhana.

* All our sins disappear when we sing the praise of Swami Desika and hold him in our heart.

* If we seek refuge in Swami Desika we will acquire all the auspicious qualities.

* There is no other upAyam, other than Swami Desika's blessings.

Sri Kumara Varadarya says in his MangaLASAsanam, an euology on Swami Desika:

anRu ivvulakinai Akki arum poruL nUl virittu
ninRu tannIL pukazh vEnkaTamAmalai mEviyum pin
venRip pukazht-tiruvEnkaTanAtan ennum guruvAi
ninRu nikazhntu maNmEl ninRa noykaL tavirttananE
-- PillaiyandAti (5)

In times of yore, all the beings were like achetanas. Bhagavan with full sympathy gave them the saeeram, indriyas etc. In addition to this, to prevent the chetanas from choosing the wrong track and to make them follow the right path, Bhagavan created the world and revealed the Vedas and the Saastras pregnant with noble ideas.

In spite of this the chetanas did not come out of their aj~nAna.

So, he installed himself with great love as Bhagavan Venkatesa on the Venkata hills so that he can be seen even through naked eyes.

In spite of all this the chetanas did not correct themselves and so were suffering in the samsara.

Finally, in the Kali yuga he took an avatara as Thiru Venkatanatha in Toopul, the Acharya endowed with worldwide reputation and dispelled all the evils prevalent on earth!

Are we not reminded of the 41st paasuram of Ramanuja nooRRandAti - "manmicaiyonikaL?

Sri Kumara Varadarya and Sri Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan saw Swami Desika as an avataram of Bhagavan Sri Vishnu. Sri Kumara Varadarya sees our Swami as an avataram of Bhagavan Venkatesa and addresses Swami as "venkaTeSa varadroyam". A Sloka in Sankalpa Sooryodayam complements this thought.

Many learned scholars accept Swami Desika as Bhagavan Vishnu's avatara. This can be seen in the following Sloka: --

vidyAraNyo vividham venkaTasUre: viSodhya vairAgyam |
yam vishnoravatAram mene seve tamAgamAntagurum ||
-- VaibhavaprakASikA, Sloka 43,

It is a fact that our Swami impressed one and all during his time and after. Our Swami's contemporaries and successors held our Swami in awe and were spell - bound on realising Swami's superior knowledge and service to humanity. They learnt from our Swami's works and discourses in Samskrit and Tamil and were sure that our Swami was an avatara of either Bhagavan Venkatesa or of Bhagavad Ramanuja.

There are other devotees who revere our Swami as our Sriya:pati 's sacred bell - the bell that brings in the best and keeps up with Bhagavan.

utprekshyate budhajanai rupapatti bhUmnA
ghanTA hare: samajanishTha yadAtmaneti
-- Sankalpa Sooryodayam (Act 1. 14)

"It is considered by wise men that the bell of Hari was born as Vedanta Desika. This is done on the strength of abundant and appropriate reasons."

Sri Dindima Kavi, a junior contemporary of our Swami Desika, pays his tribute to Swami as follows:

vede sanjAtakhede munijanavacane prApta nityAvamAne
sanklrNe sarvavarNe sati tadanuguNe nishprAmANe purANe |
mAyavAde samode kalikalusha vaSAtSUnyavAde' vivAde
dharmatrANAya yobhutsajayati bhagavAn vishNu ghanTAvatAra: ||

"There was confusion all around as a result of the turbid nature of Kaliyuga; the Vedas were in great distress (because of misinterpretation); wise sayings of seers were completely ignored; there was an unholy intermixture of all castes; and quite in consonance with this sorry state, all the sacred epics lost their validity; the mayavada was in all glee; and the school of nihilism was having undisputed acceptance by all.

It was at this critical juncture that Sri Vedanta Desika came into this world as an incarnation of the great ringing bell of Bhagavan Sri Vishnu for the establishment and protection of Dharma. He shines all victorious".

The mahans during Swami's times state that Swami's avataram is vilakshanam. Swami himself points this out as:

vitrAsinI vibhukaivarUthInAm
padmAsanena paricAravidhau prayuktA
utprekshyate budhajanair upapatti bhUmnA
ghanTA hare: samajanishTa yadAtmaneti
-- Sankalpa sooryodayam (Act I, 14)

Elders say that this sloka from Sankalpa Sooryodaya confirms that Bhagavan's bell - the bell that is used for Sriya:pati 's Thiruvaradana - has taken the birth of our Swami. In line with this many mahans wish thus –

"tirumalai-mAI tirumaNiyAi cirakka vandOn vAzhiye"

Of course, there are other mahans who emphatically state that it is Bhagavan Sri Venkatesa who has arrived as our Swami Desika.

We saw devotees holding different opinions on Swami Desika's avatarma. Sri Kumara Varadarya states this in his Desika mangaLASAsanam thus -

venkaTeSAvatAro'yam tadgaNTAmSo'thavA bhavet |
yatIndrAmSo' thavetyevam vitarkyAyastu mangalam ||

"May all auspiciousness be with Sri Vedanta Desika about whom different views were held that he was an incarnation of Bhagavan Venkatesa or he was his bell, incarnate or a part of Acharya Sri Ramanuja himself"

We see that there are different opinions on Swami Desika's avataram. Well, but the bottom line on which all the devotees agree is that there has been nobody equal to our Swami!

Our Swami, right from his childhood days has shown mastery in all his learnings. Swami was like sage Vyasa himself in the knowledge of Vedas with its various methods of recitation like Jata - Varna and Carca, and of the Kalpa sutras dealing with the conduct of rituals. In addition to the Vedas Swami studied the tarka and mimamsa. Swami Desika acquired mastery over other systems of Philosophy Viz. Sankhya and Yoga, dvaita and advaita, Bhaskara and Paasupata, Bauddha and Jaina.

In saptatiratna mAlikA there is a mention about Swami Desika's knowledge. Let us have a glimpse of it --

bharadvAja SANDilya hArita mukhya-
smrti stoma sUkshmArtha nirNItidaksha: |
purANa AgamAdishva sAdhAraNa Sristuto
bhAti lokeshvanantAryasUre: ||
-- saptatiratna mAlikA (27)

There are subtle thoughts in the various smiritis written by Bharadvaja, Sandilya, Harita and others. Swami Desika's expertise is evident from his proper and most appropriate interpretations. Not just this, Swami's mastery over the Puranas and Agamas is matchless.

jyoti: chanda: SAbda-SAstra pravlNa:
kAvyaSreNi nATaka alankrtij~na: |
mlmAmsAyAm brahmakarmAnugAyAm
srashTa sAkshAt sarvatantrasvatantra: ||
-- saptatiratna mAlikA (28)

He had an extraordinary skill in the sciences of astrology, prosody and grammar and was perfectly acquainted with epic, poetry, drama and poetics. He was the creator as it were, of the Karma-Mimamsa and Brahma-Mimamsa.

sAnkhye yoge bhATTatantre gurukte
Saive jaine Sankare bhAskare ca |
SAstre bauddhe yAdave garvitAnAm
pratyAkhyAtA sarvatantrasvatantra: ||
-- saptatiratna mAlikA (29)

Swami was all victorious by refuting the arguments of those belonging to various other schools of thought like sankhya and yoga, dvaita and advaita, Bhaskara and Paasupata, Bauddha and Jaina.

All this our Swami was able to do even before he was twenty years old. Swami Desika has himself stated this in Sankalpa Sooryodayam. Is not this Divine!!!

We had a glance at the depth of Swami Desika's knowledge. In addition to his vast knowledge, Swami Desika was an abode of all auspicious qualities.

Sri Alavandar describes the kalyana guna's of Bhagavan in his stotra ratna.

vaSi vadAnyo guNavAn rju: Suci:
mrdurdayAlurmadhura: sthira: sama: |
krti krtaj~nyastvamasi svabhAvata:
samastakalyANnaguNAmrtodadhi: ||
-- stotra ratnam (18)

Sri Alavandar says that Bhagavan Sriman Narayana, is an ocean of amruta; is full of kalyana gunas; is the Supreme King; is remarkably royal; is a refuge of bhaktas viz., Bhagavan loses himself to his bhaktas. This quality of Bhagavan is ASrita-paaratantriyam. Bhagavan is most magnanimous, sweet, firm, pure, extremely fresh, compassionate, charming, valiant, dispenses love equally to all, grateful and Bhagavan is always pleased even with the tiniest kainkaryam of his Bhaktas!

Thus the words used by Sri Alavandar, to describe the divine qualities of Bhagavan areh

vaSi
vadAnya
guNavAn
ruju
Suci
mrdu
dayAlu
madhura

sthira
sama
Krti
krutaj~nya

Now Let us see how all these auspicious qualities fit Swami Desika:

vaSi - One who has everything under his control is vaSi. All the Saastras were under Swami's control. Swami had complete control over senses too! He is the one on whom Sri bhagavad Ramanuja darshanam relied. It is said "asau venkaTeSa: abhisakta:". Is mot it true that vaSi fits Swami?

vadAnya - Swami Desika himself has given the meaning of vadanya, one who speaks with affection, and cares for giving (offering). When we offer something, we should give it with happiness, consider the person who receives it as a udaarar and in fact one should have the courage to offer oneself. Swami has offered solutions to the problems of many, in so many instances. Swami has even fulfilled the material request of a brahmachAri! So, Just as how Bhagavan Vishnu is “sarva bala pradan", Swami Desika is also addressed as "sarva bala pradan".

Swami has given invaluable granthams to our sampradayam and has made us indebted for life. Swami Desika is indeed a Vidanyar!

The next kalyana guna of Bhagavan, according to Sri Alavandar, is guNavAn. Sri Rama is described as being guNavAn in Ramayanam.

In fact for the question, "konvasmin sampradam loke guNvAn .. ". it required 24,000 Slokas for Sage vAlmIkI to give a detailed explanation of the kalyana Gunas of Bhagavan Rama.

Swami Desika's kalyana gunas are also plenty and would require an equal amount of explanation.

Bhagavan Rama wanted to manifest his kalyana gunas into the world and thus be a role model to mankind.

Swami Desika was also a glowing example of kalyana gunas.

Sri Rama's SauSIlyam that is mixing with the lowly, without any tinge of lineage, wealth or position is highly praiseworthy;

Swami Desika did not distinguish vidvans and avidvans, he was the same to all Srivaishnavas.

What are we to speak of Swami Desika's gunas!!!

All of us are aware that we should not commit Bhagavad and BhAgavata apacharam. This itself is a mega task for us. But Swami Desika has advised us that there should be no apacharam even in one's mind. Even by our thoughts we should not commit Bhagavad and Bhaagavata apacharam. Which means that we should have complete control over our mind. Swami Desika lived by it and is an example for us to follow.

There are eight Atma gunas. All these gunas can be seen in unison only in our Swami and not anywhere else.

Swami's divine qualities bring in prosperity, to one and all!

Swami Desika's life is a lesson for us to learn from. We can learn from Swami's authority in his speech, his reverence/respect to Bhagavan in his heart, his humility to Acharyas, his overwhelming love towards Srivaishnavas, his authority for seekers of authority.

Swami Desika's auspicious qualities are beyond comparison!!

'ruju' is the next auspicious quality of Bhagavan as described by Sri Alavandar. Bhagavan creates situations where he allows himself to be portrayed as a "mAyan" or "KapaTan" [for ex., mAya varAhan or kapaTa vAanan]. Swami Desika did not allow himself to be portrayed with rajo or tamo gunas and hence our Swami is not referred to with such relative adjectives. Adiyal's guess is that some ardent Swami Desika devotees will afford to keep our Swami a step above Bhagavan on account of this.

Our Swami stood an embodiment of virtue and conviction. His thoughts, speech and action were always in sync and he practiced what he preached. When we learn and understand Swami's explanation of Gadyas we realise that our Swami will never let down those who attain him.
Swami's divine qualities were known to the world through his dialogues / arguments with Vidyaranyar. Lets see a brief account on this faith.

Both Swami Desika and Sri Vidyaranya were contemporaries and they knew each other. While our Swami perfected his knowledge on the most important school - the ViSishTAdvaita,, Sri Vidyaranya became an eloquent person on advaita.

Those were the days when scholars were respected and regarded highly and they were directly patronised by the Royalty. While Sri Vidyaranya accepted the patronage of the Vijayanagar King, our Swami, out of his sheer vairAgya, lived a humble and simple life in Kanchipuram.

Sri Vidyaranya, out of compassion to his friend, i.e., our Swami, sent a message stating that he could also be part of Royal patronage. Our Swami politely declined and when further pressed by Sri Vidyaranya expressed his unwillingness. Our Swami, now we know why he is so great, expressed his gratitude for Sri Vidyaranya's gesture, and then poured his heart out in five superb Slokas, while he added the 6th sloka as his complement.

Thus came the "VairAgya pancakam" from our Swami. This Slokam remains the shortest stotra and upon understanding its meaning, we come to know how well our Swami defined "VairAgya". More importantly, our Swami defined, emphasised and lived the life of a Sri Vaishnava and told us that we need to lead a simple, contented life, devoid of any pomp and glamour.

We saw earlier, the first Sloka of Sri Alavandar's GitArthasangraham

svadharma j~nAna-vairAgya sAdhyabhaktyekagocara: |
nArAyaNa: param brahma gItaSAstre samIrita: ||

We also saw Swami Desika's Tamil equivalent -

"karumamum j~nAnamum ..."

Sri Alavandar states that devotion has to be accomplished by the performance of one's svadharmam. This leads to knowledge through vairagyam.

Now, what is vairAgyam?

Swami Desika himself defines this in his commentary, thus -

vairAgyam paramAtmavyatirikteshu sarveshu virakti:
paramAtmani yo rakta: virakto paramAtmani

Swami Desika says that vairagyam is detachment or a strong dislike in matters other than the supreme Bhagavan. It is said that if one is completely devoted to Sriya:pati - the Supreme Bhagavan, then all other objects look worthless thereby creating a strong dislike.

Swami Desika, as we all know, was highly devoted to Bhagavan. Hence it was natural for Swami to have a strong dislike towards everything else.

When Sri Vidyaranya sent a message stating that Swami Desika could also be part of Royal patronage, our Swami politely declined and replied to the letter thus –

kshoNi koNa SatAmSa pAlana kalA durvAra garvAnala –
kshubhyatshudra narendra cATu racanA dhanyAn na manyAmahe |
devam sevitumeva niScinumahe yo'sau dayAlu: purA
dhAna mushTi muce kucelamunaye datte sma vitteSatAm ||

Swami states that he does not consider those persons who are favoured by the kings and extolled by them as blessed. He says that they spend their life flattering petty chiefs of small states, who are proud of their rulership of the one-hundredth portion of a corner of the earth.

We also see Swami's strong conviction in stating that he has resolved to worship and render service to the supreme Bhagavan alone, who is compassionate and who bestowed wealth equal to that of Kubera to poor kuchela who offered him just a handful of parched rice.

In this verse, Swami Desika exhibits his lack of interest in acquiring wealth, by praising the mortal kings.

It needs tremendous vairagyam to send such a message, and it was only our Swami, the vairagya nidhi who did it!

In spite of Swami's persistence, Sri Vidyaranya insisted on Swami coming to the King's court. Swami retorted in his inimitable way with 5 slokas, the Vairagya Pancakam.

While there has been enough learning for us, the Jivas – on why we should not go in pursuit of wealth, Swami's Vairagya Panchakam tops on the subject, giving us clear

instruction that we should not be going behind material wealth. Also, Swami makes it clear that the only wealth that we should be seeking is the Sriya:pati .

As our Swami advises Sri Vidyaranyar, he actually gives us a clear message - "stay away from material wealth; lead a simple life". In the very first sloka of VairAgya Pancakam, Swami Desika says -

silam kimanalam bhavet analamaudaram bAdhitum
paya: prasrti pUrakam kimu na dhArakam sArasam |
ayatna mala mallakam pathi paTaccaram kaccaram
bhajanti vibudhA mudhA hyahaha kukshita: kukshita: ||
-- VairAgya Pancakam

In the above Sloka, Swami goes on to substantiate thus -

Are not the scattered grains on the field enough to satisfy one's hunger? Will not the water taken in the cup of two hands, quench one's thirst? Will not a piece of dirty cloth obtained be used to cover oneself?

Swami adds that just water could be taken in as food and goes on to wonder, when Bhagavan's arrangement of life is so simple, why [even learned] Jivas should run around to acquire material wealth. Swami pities such Jivas.
Swami Desika is a role model for all of us. Even though Swami was a householder, he lived the life of a great ascetic. Swami practiced a life of simple living and high thinking.

Swami Desika had the complete belief in Bhagavan that HE had been taking care of him (Swami Desika) and would continue to take care of him. So Swami had no necessity to think or worry about anything else.

While we learn and enjoy the glory of our Swami, it makes it important that we too practice what our Swami had established. Is not it the basic duty of a disciple to follow the Guru?

In the subsequent Sloka of VairAgya Pancakam, Swami Desika says -

jvalatu jaladhi kroDa krIDatkrpIDa bhava prabhA-
pratibhaTa paTu jvAla mAlAkulo jaTharAnala: |
trNamapi vayam sAyam samphulla malli matallikA
parimalamucA vAcA yAcAmahe na mahISvarAn ||

There is a fire in the middle of the ocean, which sucks the excess water that flows into the ocean. This is the reason for the waters to stay within the boundary. Similarly, there is a fire in our stomach called jataraagni. This takes all the food that we consume and digests it. As this agni glows, it creates hunger.

Swami says, let this agni glow with fierce flames, let the hunger increase to whatever extent possible, we will still not beg the king even for a straw-piece. Are not our words sacred? It is as sweet as the jasmine flower blooming with fragrance to the music of the evening breeze. Just as the jasmine flower is only worthy of adorning Bhagavan, so also our tongue is meant only to praise Bhagavan and no earthly being.

Swami Desika firmly states that even a straw-piece will not be obtained by using these words to praise earthly beings.

Swami instructs us that whatever be the circumstance, we should resort only to our Supreme Bhagavan.

The same point is communicated in the 28th sloka of nyAsa tilakam, thus --

tvayyekAnjali kinkare tanubhrtAm nirvyAja sarvamsahe
kalyANAtmani ranganAtha kamalA kAnte mukunde sthite |
svAmin pAhi dayasva dehi kuSalln jlva prabho bhAvayeti
AlApAnavalepishu pralapitum jihreti jihvA mama ||

Swami Desika starts off with a mention about the innumerable kalyana gunas of Bhagavan viz., Bhagavan's kshamA, His auspicious nature, He being Sriya:pati, He being Mukunda and He being the conferor of Bhoga and moksha.

In the later part of the same sloka, Swami states that our Great Bhagavan, with all his Sowlabyam waits for a call from the persons who have made an anjali (symbolises prapatti) to Him. He is ready to help us out. So, we as prapana's should feel ashamed to seek the help of other human beings by appealing to them for protection after praising them in meaningless jargon.

Swami states that it is not just his eyes that are ashamed to look at persons regarding themselves as wealthy and looking at others with contempt, even his tongue shivers to pray to such persons for help.

One's words and expressions would become meaningful and purposeful only by praising Bhagavan and not any other person. The fact that one should not resort to anybody other than the Supreme Bhagavan for anything is well portrayed here.

In VairAgya Pancakam, Sloka 3, Swami Desika says -

durlSvara dvAra bahirvitardikA –
durAsikAyai racitoyam anjali: |
yadanjanAbham nirapAyamasti me
dhananjaya syandana bhUshaNam dhanam ||

Swami Desika's depth of vairagyam is visible in this Sloka. Swami says, Arjuna's chariot was most beautiful when Bhagavan Krishna was the charioteer. Bhagavan Krishna was extremely beautiful and all lustrous like a dark diamond seated on the chariot. He protects the world from entering into sinful ways. Bhagavan Krishna is an everlasting wealth. When this wealth is with me, why should I go behind some other wealth?

For obtaining some favours, people have to wait at the entrance of haughty persons. Even for a minute interview with them, people would have to wait disgracefully for endless days. This state indeed is a pathetic one for learned men. Instead of such a state, if we offer our anjali to that supreme Bhagavan who is the imperishable dhanam, that Bhagavan would bestow on us the greatest wealth. Here, Bhagavan is pictured as having a dark complexion like a collyrium. As a magic collyrium would reveal the hidden treasures, Bhagavan too would reveal the hidden treasures, which is his true nature.

Swami Desika does not want to be in such a state of remaining trembling in the outer courtyard of those cruel masters. So, Swami folds his hands in the form of anjali to that predicament so that Bhagavan will save him from such a situation.

Swami Desika has expressed stronger views in SubhAshita neevi. Sri L. Srinivasan has given English translation of the same, the relevant text is reproduced below -

"Those endowed by the grace of God with the wealth of grain in the shape of good qualities, particularly poets, should have noting to do under any circumstances with the wicked who are lofty in their arrogance, even though they are in very high positions of power and patronage and appear to be celebrated, being surrounded by misguided fools lacking discrimination touching their feet apparently for small favours, because their deeds are atrocious and shocking, their nature is hard-hearted, they associate with cruel persons and they lack refined taste for appreciating excellence."

Swami Desika clearly explains to us that we degrade ourselves by waiting in the door steps of people who have temporary riches.

Swami advises us to resort to Bhagavan Krishna, who would come down to any level if we resort to him. In this sloka itself Swami mentions that the Great Bhagavan who protects the whole world from entering into sinful ways, did even sArathyam to Arjuna!

Swami Desika, in Vairagya Panchakam repeatedly warns us that acquiring material pursuits is a waste because they are temporary in nature. Swami further emphasises that one has to slog only for the permanent wealth - Bhagavan!!

Let us look into the penultimate Sloka of Vairagya Pancakam,

SarIra patanAvadhi prabhu nishevaNapAdanAt
abindhana dhananjaya praSamadam dhanam dandhanam |
dhananjaya vivardhanam dhanamudUDha govardhanam
susAdhanamabadhanam sumanasAm samarAdhanam ||

Swami Desika says, What is the use of acquiring any amount of wealth? All this is used only to fill our stomach with water and food in order to subside hunger and satisfy jataragni. To earn this wealth, one has to keep praising rich people till one's death. This wealth acquired by doing servitude to some persons till the fall of the physical body is similar to that of lighting in the cloud and is not permanent.

To earn this temporary wealth, one has to put in a lot of efforts and face too many difficulties. Why suffer so much of difficulties unnecessarily?

Swami Desika explains to us that there is one everlasting wealth - Bhagavan Krishna! When this wealth is approached one gets enormous auspicious things. This wealth enlightened Arjuna and lifted up the Govardana Hill. This wealth is the proper means and is the sole sadhana for attaining all purusharthas.

Swami Desika empathetically states that when this true wealth, Bhagavan Krishna is there, attempting for any other wealth is an unnecessary effort!

Swami Desika, in this Sloka plays with the word 'dhana'. The word 'dhana' (wealth) occurs eleven times. It has different meanings when taken with the preceding or succeeding syllable or word.

Sri Dr.S. Padmanabhan has explained the usage of the word dhana, in this sloka thus -

“Wealth (dhana) obtained by servitude is impermanent. Just like a lightning (dhananjaya) that appears in the cloud (abindhana) it is perishable (dandhana). The real wealth (dhana) is the one which nourished Arjuna (dhananjaya), (vivardhana) which lifted govardhana, which is imperishable (abadhana), which is the proper means (susadhana) and which is worshipped by wise." The difference between the temporary wealth which is insignificant, perishable and hard-earned and the eternal is effectively brought out.

Swami's extraordinary knowledge of Samskrit vocabulary and proficiency in their use is evident in this Sloka (also). In this sloka we can enjoy the charming poetic aspect and at the same time get immersed in Swami's vairagyam.

This Sloka is a feast for our ears and food for our thoughts!!

Our respect and awe grows more when we read Swami's conclusion of VairAgya Pancakam, with that crisp Sloka –

nAsti pitrArjitam kincinna mayA kincidArjitam |
asti me hasti Sailagre vastu paitAmaham dhanam ||
-- VairAgya Panchakam (5)

Swami says he neither has earned any material wealth nor inherited any from his father. But, Swami adds, that he has his treasure on the top of Hastigiri [at Kanchi, Elephant Hill], earned by his "Grandfather" - "Pithamaha, which refers to the four-faced Brahma].

As it is believed traditionally, Bhagavan Varadaraja manifested himself from the aSvamedha Sacrificial fire, performed by Brahma and Bhagavan was propitiated by the forefathers of Swami Desika. The Hastigiri Mahatmya says that the Supreme Being gave darshan to Brahma, having been pleased by the Aswamedha yaga performed by Brahma.

Swami mentions that since he has this great treasure earned by Brahma he does not need any diminishable wealth.

Note: 'kAncII' (Hastigiri) means: - 'ka' = Brahma; ancitam = Worshipped, i.e., the kshetra is so called because Brahma worshipped here.

An analysis of the contents of VairAgya pancakam would reveal various facts and it could be clearly understood as to what exactly Vairagya means. This word, in broad sense, means, non-attachment.

Swami Desika could be understood as a virakta as he was supremely devoted to Bhagavan Varadaraja. Though vairAgya would be observed from his other stotras and other dialectical works, it would be said that Swami Desika gives the definition of Vairagya in this stotra only.

Now we know the significance of our Swami being referred as "rAmAnuja dayApAtram" and "j~nAna vairAgya bhUshaNam".

Swami Desika despises the act and tendency of praising humans and seeking refuge under humans for the sake of food and money. Swami says that there is no way one can think of 'seeking refuge' to a human and also explains the uselessness of those material wealth earned by such 'refuge'. Our Swami is emphatic that Sriya:pati alone is the wealth.

In this context, Adiyal enjoys Sri Tirumangai Alvar's Periya tirumozhi [tAye tanttaiyennum....], in which alvar says "...pirarkE uzhaitu EzhaiyAnEn"

These anubhavams are very clear that time spent on working for others will take away precious time that needs to be spent on bhagavad / BhAgavata kaimkaryam.

We related a few of Bhagavan's kalyana guna's as enjoyed by Sri Alavandar, with Swami Desika's qualities.

Sri Alavandar describes 'Suci' as the next kalyana guna of Bhagavan.

'apahatapApmAtvam' etc., are known as 'Suci'. It means, 'untouched by sin/evil'. This is Brahman's quality. Even though Perumal is everywhere, in connection with prakruti etc, He is untouched by its gunas (rajas etc) etc; Perumal is always pure.

Similarly, Swami Desika is also pure, not at all contaminated by materialistic elements, though Swami was in the midst of the materialistic world. Swami was antagonistic to all that is evil/bad and was a possessor of all auspicious qualities.

Swami explains purity (Suddhi) as the pure expressions of mind, helping without expecting anything in return and seeing and relishing Bhakti alone!

When it comes to speaking about the greatness of Bhagavan, we say a person's sins are removed by thinking/ chanting Bhagavan's name. For instance Swami Desika himself states that if one thinks of Pundareekaksha, he becomes a pure person irrespective of how he was!

Sri Kumara Varadarya, in his PillaiyandAti explains Swami Desika's divine qualities. It is interesting to note that these qualities fit Bhagavan's unique quality viz.,.'Suci'.

vittakan vEdiyan vEdAntadesikan engal tUppul
meyttavan uttaman vEnkaTanAtan viyankalaikaL
moyttiDunAvin muzhkoDuvAdiyar mUlamaRak
kaittavan enRu uraittEn kaNDilEn en kaDuvinaiyE.

Swami Desika, had the fame of being A'sarva tantra svatantran'; was competent in everything; had clear knowledge of the meanings of Vedantas; is a main Acharya for learning Vedanta; took an avatAr in Toopul due to his devotees' extensive penance; was the most superior; and was named as Venkatanathan. There is a tough competition even among the peculiar arts because every art wants to occupy a place in Swami Desika's tongue. These arts wait there to bounce out with a lion's roar to cut and throw the roots of the opponents.

Sri Kumara Varadarya, says that he uttered Swami's names and auspicious qualities this way and all his sins disappeared immediately without leaving even a trace. Such is the Greatness of our Swami !!!

In the very next paasuram, Sri Kumara Varadarya explains Swami's qualities even further.

vinaikALumakkini vERORiDdam tEDa vENDum, enaic–
cinamEvi munpol cidaikkum vakaiyinkaritu kaNDIr
Enenil irAmanucamuniyinuraicErum tUppul
punitan en pukuntu tikazhntu porundinarE.

Sri Kumara Varadarya states that Swami Desika who is blessed by Sri Bhashyakarar's Sri Sooktis residing in his heart, has entered his (Sri Kumara Varadarya's) heart and blesses him by staying there always. Therefore, Sri Kumara Varadarya warns his sins that they cannot get angry and trouble him like before. He wants the sins to search for some other place for survival.

It is hence clear that Swami Desika is not only away from being contaminated by materialistic elements, in spite of being in the midst of the materialistic world, but contamination just cannot occur to those in whose hearts Swami Desika resides and whose mouth sings the praise of Swami!

The next Kalyana guna of Bhagavan as described by Sri Alavandar is 'mrdu'.
There were many miraculous and mystical incidents in Swami Desika's life - Sriya:pati's leela; Swami was the most revered Acharya of his time, yet he was humility personified. Pomp and Anger were unknown to Swami. Swami was easily approachable to one and all.

Swami Desika was extremely simple and even when he had authority, Swami refrained from using it. In spite of his Great knowledge, Swami moved freely with one and all and this exemplifies Swami's unique character.

Various miracles in Swami's life are highlighted in the Saptaratna mAlikA, Desika Vaibhava PrakASika, and in GuruparamparAsAram.

Let us look into one such incident which will help us enjoy Swami's soft-heartedness - 'mrudu'.

This miracle happened when Swami Desika was residing in Kanchi. A Sanyasi with mystic powers challenged Swami to enter into a dispute with him.

Our Swami respects every devoted atma. Swami extended his respects to this saadhu and refused to enter into any controversies.

This saadhu, not knowing the greatness of our Swami, tried some tricks with him. He drank the water from a nearby tank. He had some tantrik powers through which he tried to make this water enter into Swami Desika's thirumeni. This he thought would create unbearable pain to our Swami.

Swami Desika visualised the problem and as a solution scratched the wooden pillar nearby. Alas! The water started flowing out through it.

Later the sanyasi, confident of the damage inflicted on Swami Desika was happy to see the quantity of water in the pond reduced.

To confirm his victory, he came to Swami Desika's gruham. But he was baffled that no untoward incident had happened. He saw the water flowing freely through the pillar. He was ashamed and repented the apacharam committed to Swami.

The reaction of our Swami to this incident makes us enjoy Swami's Kalyana guna. Our Swami's quality one among many is "pakaivanukku aruL ceivAi nal nenjE". With this quality, Swami rightfully did not want the sanyasi to feel let down. So, before the sanyasi could think of apologising, our Swami thanked him for the water as it was used to clean up Bhagavan's city.

This quality of Swami removed any embarrassment on the sanyasi. Our Swami stands out here too – "innA ceytArai oRuttal avar nANa nannayam ceitu viDal" fits our Swami's quality straight away.

Sri Alavandar describes 'dayAlu' as the next kalyana guna of Bhagavan, and this kalyana guna perfectly fits our Swami.

A person with compassion is addressed to as 'dayAlu'. When people are in misery, one should try to relieve them from it without expecting anything in return. This great quality is daya. There is no point in crying along when people cry for want of relief! One should act fast and provide a solution.

Swami Desika holds 'dayA' as the king of all gunas. Swami Desika is a dayAlu who explained that only 'dayA' makes all other gunas attain more stability.

All actions of Swami circled around this main kalyana guna.

We know that Swami Desika exposed the defects of the other schools of thought and established ViSishTAdvaita based on Bhagavad Ramanuja's teachings. This again is due to Swami's dayA. So, many Jivas are struggling from time immemorial. These Jivas are led into different paths by different schools. These schools will lead them into an unending cycle of births and rebirths. So, Swami highlighted this and exposed the defects of other schools and showed them the correct path. The only path that could give liberation from this samsara sagaram. All these were done by our Swami only because of his compassion to us. But for him, we just cannot imagine our plight - where will we be, what will we do? Desikan tiruvaDigalE SaraNam.

As an extension of his dayA, Swami has given us the Tamil Desika Prabandham which gives the meanings of VedAnta crystal clear.

Swami's renderings cover a wide range – helping people to make a choice depending on their level of understanding. What can this be described as but for Swami's dayA?

No wonder! Swami being a dayAlu, sang dayA Satakam. Swami Desika was truly the dayA incarnate of Bhagavan Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. Swami Desika was a dayA swaroopan.

Sri Kumara Varadarya, in his PillaiyandAti (paasuram 18) explains Swami's "dayAlu" guna.

aruLtarum AraNadesikanE engaL tUppul tevE
varukavitArkika cingamE vAdiyar vAzhvaRuttAy
irukaiyum kUppi uraikkum ivviNappamonRu kELAy
uruvavenakkaruLAy eNNumuLLamuntoNDaraiyE.

Sri Kumara Varadarya, addresses Swami as our God, as kavitArkika simham, and as the destroyer of the lives of opponents. Sri Kumara Varadarya says that only because of Swami's compassion to protect all the lokams, Swami Desika took an avataram in Toopul and stood there making everybody offer salutations to him (there by saving them).

Sri Kumara Varadarya with his folded hands makes a request for a boon with Swami. Sri Kumara Varadarya wanted to have the association of those great men who had taken refuge under Swami's feet.

Such was Swami's greatness. Even the association of people who have taken refuge under Swami's feet will lead us in the correct path. Giving us this association is again Swami's dayA..

'madhura' is the next quality in the series of kalyana gunas as described by Sri Alavandar.

'madhura' can be understood as being beautiful, nectarine, sweet etc. Experiencing our Swami is certainly sweeter than the sweetest experience.
Swami's mAduryam was evident in his talks, works and even in his physical appearance. Swami was sweet to everybody and spent his life happily. Because of his sweet (madhura) words he lived as madhurakavi!!

In terms of physical height, Swami was slightly short. An opponent commented on Swami's height as 'Akaro krashva:'. Swami instantly replied as 'Akaro deergayeva' - meaning the alphabet 'A' of 'Akaro' is long (deergam) unlike 'a' which is short !!! This explains Swami's sense of humour, his knowledge and nectarine talks.

Every aksharam in every work of Swami is madhuram. If we have to explain the sweetness of Swami's works, it is humanly impossible.

Let us have a glimpse of one of the nectarine slokas of Swami -

bhaktahpriya tvayi tathA parivardhamAne
muktA vitAna vitatistava pUrvamAsIt |
hArAvali: paramatho raSanA kalApa:
tArAgaNastadanu mauktika nUpura SrI: ||
--dehalIsa stuti (13)

Swami Desika speaks of the Trivikrama avataram of Bhagavan.

Swami narrates that Bhagavan has now started growing, he is growing at such a fast pace. The speed in which Bhagavan is growing is unimaginable. Swami Desika proves his poetic genius in this sloka too!

To enjoy Swami Desika's experience of enjoying this avataram, let us now fix our focus on the stars in the sky.

The stars were close by and looked like pearls spread above Bhagavan's head. This was like a pearl crown to Bhagavan (muttu kreedam). The next moment, Bhagavan grew further, now the string of pearls were around Bhagavan's neck resembling a chain (haaram), even before we can grasp this sight fully, these pearls appeared to be a pearl waistband (oddiyaanam). In a flash When Bhagavan grew more, these pearls became an anklet to Bhagavan's lovely feet.

Oh!! What an experience !!!

Swami's face was full of Brahma tejas. He had a glittering golden body and posed the vyakyana mudra, which exposes the inner meanings of the Upanishads. Swami had authoritative books in his hand. Swami was extremely beautiful with all this in his jiva dasai.

Sri Kumara varadarya says that the same beauty, which was seen in the jiva dasa of Swami, is seen in the archa avatara also. Sri Kumara varadarya's heart was moved at the beauty of Swami Desika, which made him do mangalasasana to Swami thus -

cempon mEni mARAda tUppul mAlE"

and

... . nin tU muRuval koNDa mukam vAzhi
vAzhi viyAkkiyA muttiraikkai
... ... vAzhi nin vaDivE

Sri Kumara varadarya could not resist seeing the beauty of our Swami and so did mangalasasanam to his own father. Such is the sweetness of Swami's physical beauty.

Swami's maaduryam can hence be viewed in various perspectives.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAPATTI

In Sri Alavandar's description of the kalyana gunas of Sriya:pati, 'sthirah' falls next. A person without any confusion is ‘stirah’.

Swami Desika states that it is imperative for an Acharya to have absolute clarity of thought – devoid of confusions. As we all know our Swami was a personification of clarity.

With this clarity of thought Swami Desika systematised the doctrine of prapatti - self surrender. KavitArkikasimham declared that this greatest act of self-surrender was available to one and all and is a direct means for liberation. Swami emphatically states the significance of prapatti - loud and clear! This itself is enough to show his 'sthiradiyam'.

Swami Desika estalished prapatti also as a distinct anushtanam like Samasrayanam.

Swami Desika has based the validity on the words of Bhagavan and poorvaacharyas like Sri Alavandar and Sri Bhashyakarar.

Bhagavan Krishna himself has instructed the concept of prapatti in the charama Slokam.

Swami took untiring efforts to save us. All through his life Swami was hence bent upon establishing prapatti as a separate and direct method for liberation.

This is evident from Swami's works. All the works of Swami, be it in Samskrit, prAkrutam or Tamil will have its central theme as prapatti, SaraNAgati or nyAsa.

Swami Desika states that Sri Ramanuja's saranagathi gadyam" supports the stand on prapatti. In this gadyam we see Sri Ramanuja in the peak of his Bhakti, speaking of SaraNAgati which he performs at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Ranganatha.

Brahmavidyas are of different types. These are based on the invocation of the direct attributes of Sriya:pati. Sage Veda Vyasa in his Brahma sootra listed these. Swami gave nyAsa an appropriate place among the Brahma Vidyas. Swami Desika clarifies that during prapatti a Prapanna invokes the dayA of Sriya:pati and hence prapatti is a separate and direct Vidya.

We have yet another Poorvacharya who has dealt with the concept of prapatti, Sri Nadadur ammal's Prapanna pArijAtam. Sri Nadadur ammal is the prAchArya of Swami Desika.

All the ideas expressed in this work is supported by pramanas. In fact there are a lot of quotations incorporated in this work from different sources like Vishvaksena samhita, words of Sri Suka, words of Bhagavan Vyasa, Bhagavan's own words, quotes from PaancharAtra Agamas etc. This is truly a forerunner of Srimad RahasyatrayasAram of Swami Desika.

nyAsa, as mentioned, has been the central theme of all Swami's works. However the following works hold SaraNAgati as the main topic itself.

aDaikalapattu in Tamil; cillarai rahasyangal and Rahasyatraya sAram, these are in manipravALam; nikshepa raksha in Samskrit.

Out of the twenty-eight stotras of Swami Desika, the following four stotras focus entirely on SaraNAgati -

nyAsa daSakam
nyAsa vimSati
nyAsa tilakam and
SaraNAgati deepikA

Swami Desika was thus extremely firm 'sthira:' in the concept of prapatti and is justly eulogised as the "Ocean from which the science of prapatti has sprung", prapadana kala janma jaladhi:!

'sama:' is the next Kalyana guna of Bhagavan as described by Sri Alavandar. A person who does not see discrimination can be viewed as 'sama:'.

Bhagavan is like a mirror. It is our 'bhAvam' that gets reflected by Bhagavan. Once we surrender to Bhagavan we become a recipient of Bhagavan's overwhelming Love. Bhagavan protected even an elephant for the SaraNAgati made by it. So, all Prapannas are the same to Bhagavan. Bhagavan does not discriminate a Prapanna based on wealth or poverty, learning or ignorance - 'sama:' !!

The following are a few points taught by Bhagavan Krishna to Arjuna, in the ninth chapter of bhagavad Gita which explains very clearly that all his devotees are the same for Bhagavan and should be highly respected –

"But the worship of Me leads to eternal bliss; and it is not so difficult. After all, a leaf (tulasI), a flower, a fruit or even a drop of water offered to me in true sincerity satisfies me. He who dedicates every act of his to Me, when he eats, sleeps or does any act of sacrificial character, has all his sins burnt up, and he attains me." (9th chapter 26-28)

"Such a person may be anybody, or belong to any caste. I am equally well disposed to them, who worship Me with sincere Bhakti. Even if such a Bhakta swerves from correct performance of daily conduct, he is really a virtuous man and is respected for his firm devotion. He will duly improve or correct his conduct and immediately reach the true path. Therefore proclaim, Oh! Arjuna! that my devotees never perish." (26-31)

Our Swami had the same trait. Swami Desika treats everybody equally. But now the question is how are we to say that Swami treated everyone as equal when all of us are aware that Swami condemned the theories of opponents? Here, when we say 'all', it means 'all Prapannas'. All those who have surrendered to Bhagavan are the same in Swami Desika's eyes.

Swami Desika's compassion towards us knows no bounds. Swami has given us so much details anticipating the questions that would arise in our minds. By giving us clarity of thought our Swami makes us do what Bhagavan commanded us to do 'SaraNam vraja'. Swami himself explained in the rahasya rakshA (also knownas gadyavyAkhyAnam) thus -

"jAti-guNa - vruttAdi nimnotatvAnAdaraNe sarvai: ASrayaNeeyatvam".

--There is no discrimination among those who take refuge (in Sriya:pati).

In this context Adiyal would like to share an interesting incident mentioned by Sri D. Ramaswami Aiyangar that took place a few years ago.

An Acharya was performing prapatti for a number of disciples. Among them was a great Pandit and scholar and also a few ladies who had lost their husbands. The Pandit felt that it was demeaning for him to be granted moksham along with those ladies and shouted "what? The same moksha for me and them" The Acharya coolly replied "You are right. They will obtain moksha; you will not. So, no prapatti for you." The Pandit was a learned one, but he had not learnt the nature of Bhagavan, His easy accessibility to one and all with out difference.

A lot of pramanas have been quoted by Swami Desika to show that a Vaishnava should be adored irrespective of his caste. Swami Desika adored the devotees irrespective of their birth - 'sama:' !!

Sri Alavandar describes 'krutin' as the next Kalyana guna of Bhagavan.

One who accomplishes whatever that has to be accomplished is called a 'krutin'.

Bhagavan has to protect all those who seek refuge in him, when He Protects them, Bhagavan being a protector becomes a ‘krutin’. Thus, whoever accomplishes all what is prescribed is a 'krutin' (krutinan or Kruta krutyan).

We saw in earlier that Sri Nadadur Ammal was impressed by our Swami even as a child and hence blessed him thus -

pratishThApita vedAnta: pratikshiptabahirmata: |
bhUyA: traividyamAnya: tvam bhUrikalyANabhAjanam ||

Through this sloka Sri Nadadur Ammal directed Venkatanatha (Swami Desika) to establish Vedanta on a firm basis and to refute the doctrines of opponents.

Swami Desika worked towards these objectives. Swami himself has put his accomplishments in black and white in the following Sloka (rahasyatraya sAram, nigamanAdhikAram)

nirvishTam yatisArvabhauma-vacasAm Avrttibhiryauvanam
nirdhUtetara paratantra nirayA nItA: sukham vAsarA: |
angikrtya satAm prasattimasatAm garvopi nirvApita:
SreshAyushyapi Seshidampati dayA dIkshAmudIkshAmahe ||

Swami says that he has fulfilled the orders of mahans and has refuted the doctrines of opponents. So, the objective of his avataram has been accomplished. Swami adds that he would henceforth wait for the instructions of the divya dampati.

45th pattam Azhagiyasingar has mentioned in his cassette "Desikarum avar sUktigalum which I have about Swami Desika's 'kruti'm’, Swami Desika had highest regard to Sri Bhashyakara's Sri sooktIs. Swami used to repeat it again and again. Swami was happy that he has not worked for anybody. In fact Srimad Azhyagiyasingar said that working for

others' is naragam and Swami Desika threw it away. Swami was very happy to live on unchavrutti. Swami Desika lived up to the expectations of Sri Nadadur ammal.

Even in the Rahasyatraya sAram, Swami Desika says that he has accomplished all the works assigned to him by elders and now he wanted only Perumal's tiruvadi!"

Swami Desika accomplished all what he wanted to! - 'kruti'

Can we ever see a 'kruti' better than this? Krutam also means help. So, a person who helps is also a kruti.

Swami Desika systemetised the SaraNAgati SAstra and is a 'kruti'.

Swami said that who can ever measure the infinite help of our arulala PerumAn -- "aruLALar perumAn ceyyum andamilla udavi ellAm aLappAr ArE!"

Are we not in the same position now? Who can ever conclude the amount of help rendered by Swami Desika!!!

'krutaj~nya:' is the last in the list of Kalyana gunas of Bhagavan as mentioned by Sri Alavandar.

Generally one who does not forget the help rendered is 'krutaj~nya:'

Bhagavan Rama was a 'krutaj~nya:'. Sri Rama's gratitude to all sundry - to even the smallest squirrel – is glorious. He was grateful for the smallest act of goodness done towards him.

Swami Desika held his Acharyas in high esteem for the inheritance of his knowledge. Swami respected the help rendered by Emperuman, Piratti, Nammalvar, Nathamuni, Alavandar, Bhashyakarar, Nadadur Ammal and Appular. Swami did not stop at remembering their help but also ensured that the whole world knows and remembers their help. What a "Krutaj~nyatvam" from our Swami!!

We saw earlier, Sri Pillai Lokachaarya announcing thus -

cIronRu tUppul tiruvenkaTamuDaiyAn
pAronRac conna pazhamozhiyuL - OronRu
tAnE amaiyAtO tAraNiyil vAzhvArkku
vAnERap pOmaLavum vAzhvu

A single statement of the great Acharya, tUpul ThiruvEnkatamudaiyan (Our Swami), uttered for the benefit of humanity, is enough for a person who desires to ascend up to the Heavens and this will itself lift him/her up to desired goals.

While speaking of Swami's " krutaj~nya:", Adiyal wonders if we can ever be a " krutaj~nya:" to our Swami. Adiyal believes that we should at least strive to be one. We, Jivas are indebted to our Swami - for ever!!

Alavandar declared that explaining each and every guna of Bhagavan is impossible. Because Bhagavan's auspicious qualities are infinite. So, Alavandar concluded thus –

"samasta kalyaNa guNamrtodadhi: ".

Swami Desika is the avataram of Thiruvenkatamudaiyan and hence we are blessed to experience all the kalyana gunas of Bhagavan in our Swami.

Sri Alavandar enjoyed the kalyana gunas of Bhagavan and told the entire universe. Sri U.Ve Seva Srinivasacharyar enjoyed such Kalyana Gunas of Bhagavan in Swami Desika. Adiyal shared Sri U.Ve Seva Srinivasacharyar's anubhavam with all of you to my very little capacity.

Swami Desika has also been given some adjectives by Sri Nayinarachariyar.

Yogyar - Swami could bless the Acharya goshti because Swami Desika had the special blessing of Poorvacharyas to an extraordinary extent.

praj~nyar - Swami learnt all arts even before he was 20 years of age.

SreshTha - 'The Sri sUkti. 'SrutaprakAsika' was protected and handed over to the world (doing something which others cannot do is the beauty of elders).

sevyArha - Swami was worshipped by everybody because he gave plenty of granthams to the world.

bhavyArha - Swami was humble to all vaishnavAs. Swami Desika exhibited each and every quality of Bhagavan, Sriya:pati, in himself. Swami also espoused these traits on his works with the excellence of poetic genius; courage; conviction; unique devotion and tolerance.

It takes a Swami Desika to have a share of our divya-dampati's kalyana gunas. Surely, our Swami is the most gifted and ofcourse, our Swami is none other than Bhagavan Thiruvenkatamudaiyan.

We saw that Bhagavan's kalyana gunas as exhibited by tUppul Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. Now, let us dwell with the adjectives used by our tUppul ThiruvEnkatamudaiyan on Bhagavan's avataras.

When Swami Desika went to the daSAvatAra sannidhi in Thiruvarangam, Swami had a darshan of Bhagavan's tirumeni of all the ten avatArs and worshipped them. In this stotra, Swami Desika has blessed us with the mention of the divine leelas of the ten avatars of Bhagavan.

The stotra starts with the mention that it was Bhagavan Thiruvaranga who took these avatarams. Swami Desika enjoys the ten avatarams in a Sloka for each. Swami Desika has compressed all the ten avatarams into one Sloka, using very significant and appropriate adjectives for each.

In this Sloka we can enjoy Swami Desika's poetic excellence, talents of summarising and Swami's unique devotion.

icchA mlna vihAra kacchapa mahA potrin yadrcchA hare

rakshA vAmana rosha rAma karuNA kAkutstha helA halin |
krIDA vallava kalka vAhana daSa kalkinniti pratyaham
jalpanta: purushA: punanti bhuvanam puNyauka paNyapaNA: ||
-- daSAavatAra stotram

In this Sloka Swami Desika uses an adjective for all the ten avatarams of Bhagavan.

During the pralaya kAla when an asura took off the Vedas and got immersed into the waters, Bhagavan took the matsyavataram through his own sankalpam and hence Swami refers to this avataram as 'icchA mIna'!

Next when the Devas and asuras used the mantarA mountain to churn the ocean, Bhagavan, as a sport came as kurmAvatAram hence 'vihAra kacchapa'!

When the asura Hiranyakshan folded the worlds like a mat, Bhagavan appeared as the mighty VarAha avataran and protected the world. Swami addresses this huge varahAvatara as 'mahApotrin'

Bhagavan Narasimha's sowlabyam is evident here. Bhagavan made this avataram just to make true the words of his devotee, PrahlAdan. Bhagavan appeared in the form of Narasimha when nobody expected hence the adjective - 'yadrcchAhare'

Bhagavan took the Vaamana avataram only to protect. Bhagavan having come as Vamanan during MahabalI's yagam measured all the three worlds. By doing this Bhagavan not only protected the three worlds but also protected Mahabali, hence 'raksha vAmana'. 'rosha rAma' was used by Swami because, Bhagavan ParaSurama came to destroy the kshatriya race from the world.

Bhagavan Rama is an embodiment of karuna towards SaraNAgatas. Hence Swami Desika address Bhagavan Rama as 'karuNAkAkutstha'.

Bhagavan Balarama by means of his kalappai (plough) did many leelas and so is addressed as "helAhalin".

Bhagavan appeared as Kannan in Ayar kulam and performed a variety of exceptional leela's. Bhagavan lifted govardana and protected the people, Bhagavan showed his paratvam in this avataram. Swami hence empathetically addresses Krishna avataram as 'krIDA vallava'

Kalki perumal would ride on a white horse and would establish Dharma. He would remove every body's trouble that are going to come during kali hence Swami addresses him as 'kalka vAhana daSA kalkin'.

Swami Desika adds that these avatarams of Bhagavan can be equated to the shops where only punya is stored. when one approaches a shop he can get whatever he wants. Swami says that in the same way, if we approach these punya purushas we can get a lot of good things, they make their place of stay itself pure.

We are able to 'realise' that Swami is actually enjoying "himself" when he defines "his" avataras!!!

This is just a glimpse of Swami's poetic and summarising skills. We can see the same skills being exhibited in the tenth sloka of Bhagavad-dhyana-sopanam, also.

In the daSAvatAra sloka that we saw, there was an adjective used for each of the avatars indicating the characteristics of the respective avatara. Here, the several angas of Bhagavan are enjoyed in individual slokas and are finally summarised with a verb each. Swami uses such verb[s] in connection with each anga to draw our attention to the corresponding enjoyment.

pAdAmbhojam sprSati bhajate ranganAthasya janghAm
Urudvandve vilagati SanairUrdhvamabhyeti nAbhim |
VakshasyAste valati bhujayormAmikeyam manishA
vaktrAbhikhyAm pibati vahate vAsanAm mauli bande ||
-- Bhagavat-dhyAna-sopAnam

Swami Desika completely enjoyed Bhagavan Ranganatha and reached the peak of his anubavam. Swami has shared this great experience with us so that by learning from his anubavam we will experience at least a small percentage of it.

This stage in Bhagavat-dhAyana-sopAnam can be equated to Tirupanalvar's amalanAtipirAn: 'nIlamEni ayyo! niraikoNDatu en nencinaiyE'.

Swami Desika takes the role of a 'nAyaki' here. It is absorbing to see the nayaki's reaction to each of the angas which is described using just one appropriate word.

Here, the nAyaki (Swami Desika) enjoys Bhagavan from the Tiruvadi to the Tirumudi - pAdAdi keSam!

Initially Bhagavan's Thiruvadi attracts her. So, She touches it. Swami has used the word 'sprSati' suggesting love and reverence. Now, our 'nAyaki' also caresses and fondles the feet of Bhagavan, like Sri devi and BhU devi.

The nAyaki's mind then remembers the greatness of the the limb from knees to ankles so, gratefully worships. Swami has used the word 'bhajate', which can mean both attain and worship.

Now our 'nAyaki's focus comes to the thighs. Her eyes get rooted to it. The thighs of Bhagavan bear the marks of the sambhogam of Sri devi, BhU devi and Neela devi. Our nAyaki is not able to move her mind from it.

The mind of our nAyaki was now like that of a drunken bee. It could not move its attention from Bhagavan's thighs, but somehow freed itself and slowly moved upwards. Here, in the midst of our divine anubavam, our Swami's poetic genius also needs a mention. Swami uses words like 'SanairUrdhvamabheyeti'. The mind of the nAyaki moved slowly and almost reluctantly upwards and reached the navel!
i
Now, it is the turn of the navel to give a treat to the mind. After this, the nAyaki reaches the chest next and takes a firm seat there - 'Aste'!

In the chest of Bhagavan, our nAyaki sees another lady being seated - alarmel mangai who welcomes this new nAyaki with both hands as if she were part of herself. Our nAyaki

enjoys the warmth of Lakshmi's grace. She forgets herself for a long time being immersed in the peace, comfort and beauty of that region.

Accidentally she happens to have a glance on the arms. She was so excited by this that she actively went round the arms. From shoulder to elbow, and then elbow to wrist and then to the soft palms, and again upwards, and again from one arm to another her mind roamed as in a merry-go-round.

Face was her next attraction. Like a bee attracted by a blossoming lotus, the mind (manIsha) feels drawn to the vadanAravindam and sucks the honey available there in plenty. It drinks the 'mukhakAnti'.

Finally, the nAyaki's mind loses itself completely in the fragrance of the kreedam (crown).

Bhagavan is 'nARRa-tuzhAi muDi nArayaNan'. Having got so intimate with Bhagavan, the nAyaki herself acquires this fragrance of tuLaSI and enjoys it.

We saw that Sri Nammalvar contemplates on Perumal and gets intimate with Bhagavan. So, the fragrance of Alvar's Vakula flowers spread to Bhagavan, and our Alvar smells of Bhagavan's tirutuzhAi fragrance! Now, Swami Desika's mind as a nAyaki bears the vasanai of His kredam.

Adiyal read and enjoyed these anubhavams of our Swami in the book written by Sri. D Ramaswamy Ayyangar.

Swami Desika has sung about many deities. Of these Bhagavan Devanatha is the only deity who has been praised in three Languages!

When we read the sundara Tamil paasurams of Swami on Bhagavan Devanatha, we realise that Swami assumed the role of nAyaki - as a lady in love with Bhagavan. Swami expresses complete love in the thoughts, words and action and these are full of emotions. Swami uses the role of a mother, friend and a maiden - to explain the emotions and feel of separation from Bhagavan Devanatha. There are seven Tamil pasurams composed to portray various emotions.

In navamaNimAlai, Swami Desika describes the divine nature of the feet of Bhagavan Devanatha and his incarnation, his auspicious qualities and supreme prayer. The festival of sea-bath is referred to here. It is a popular festival in which Bhagavan Devanatha travels on the Magha asterism day in the Tamil month of Masi for sea bath.

The concluding verse of navamaNimAlai, has a special significance since it gives us the names of all the works on Devanatha by Swami Desika in the serial order. In this, we yet again, see the talent of our Swami to crisply summarise a lot of information.

antamil clr ayintai nagar amarnda nAthan
aDiyiNaimEl aDi uraiyAl aimbatEttic-
cintai kavar pirAkirutam nURu kURic-
cezhum tamizh mummaNikkOvai ceRiyac cErttup-
pandu kazhal ammAnai Ucal Ecal
paravu navamaNi mAlai ivaiyum connEn
mundai maRai mozhiya vazhimozhi nl enRu

mukundan aruL tanta payan peRREn nAnE
--- navamanimAlai, paasuram 10

"Bhagavan Devanatha, possessed of countless auspicious qualities has chosen Tiruvaheendrapuram (ayindai) as His pleasing abode and remains there. As an offering at His lotus feet, adiyen composed the Slokams “Devanayaka pancASat” consisting of fifty Slokams in the mother of all languags, Samskrutam. Adiyen sang a hundred songs in the heart captivating prAkrita language, “acyuta Satakam”. Adiyen placed at His feet in a fitting manner the poem mummaNIkkkOvai in the sweet Tamil language. Adiyen also sang the poetical composition, Pandu, kazal, ammAnai, Ucal, Ecal and the navamaNimAlai praised by all.

Thus adiyen realised the front of the mercy bestowed on me by Bhagavan Mukunda, who in a tone of command said - "go on, compose works in the wake of the language of the ancient holy Vedas." (translation by Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan)

Swami has composed all the above mentioned work on Bhagavan Devanatha - Swami's most beloved! Swami not only enjoys Bhagavan from the Lover's perspective, but takes love into being a Divine Love, i.e., kAma into Bagavat kAma as desired and shown by our Alvars.

Swami had an in-depth knowledge of Sri Yatirajar's works viz., VedAnta sAram, VedAnta Deepam and Sri BhAshyam (the commentaries on the Brahma sUtras), Gita BhAshyam, VedArthasangraham (a digest of the Upanishads) and the three Gadyams (SaraNAgati, Sriranga and VaikuNTha).

Swami has also done an extensive study of several schools of thought like Buddhism, Jainism, Paasupatam, sAnkhya, yoga, VaiSeshika, bhedabheda, advaita, etc.

Swami was a master of all scriptural texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Agamas and Puranas. Swami had perfect knowledge of mantraSaastra. Even sculpture, architecture, music, dance, etc were at his fingertips. To sum it up, our Swami was the best in everything and there was nothing - literally nothing that our Swami proficient in!!!

Swami's knowledge was so vast that one would be made to wonder as to 'how is it humanly possible?'. But then, our Swami is no ordinary human. Swami was an avatara purushar! Since Swami lived in leela vibuthi, we do trace back to reasons of how Swami Desika shines as an abode of knowledge. The reason is basically because Bhagavan Hayagreeva had bestowed on Swami the nectar of knowledge flowing from his mouth.

Of Bhagavan's different manifestations, Sri Hayagreeva avataram was one. Bhagavan Sri Hayagreeva is the supreme God of learning. Bhagavan Hayagreeva bestows knowledge to DakshinamUrtii, Saraswati and many sages.

Hayagreeva stotram is the first lyric composed by Swami Desika on Bhagavan. This shows the great devotion that Swami Desika had on Hayagreeva. The first Sloka of Hayagreee stotram is –

j~nAnandamayam devam nirmala sphaTikAkrtim |
AdhAram sarvavidyAnAm hayagrIvam upAsmahe ||

Swami Desika wanted his words to be successful, pleasing and graceful always. So, Swami prayed to Hayagreeva asking him to always shine in his heart.

With the blessings of Bhagavan Hayagreeva, Swami realised that a complete knowledge of all sciences was at his beck and call. Swami prayed to Bhagavan Hayagreeva to take his seat on the throne of the tip of his tongue so that every word of his would be correct and authoritative because of the divine origin and it would be accepted by all those who had teLinda j~nAnam.

The following Sloka was sung by Swami Desika to aid the above request.

viSeshavitpArishadeshu nAtha!
vidagdha goshThI samarAngaNeshu |
jigIshato me kavitArkikendrAn
jihvAgra simhAsanamamabhyupeyA: ||
-- Hayagreeva stotram (28)

"O Bhagavan! In the assemblies of erudite scholars and in the arena of batches of clever men, when I begin to speak with a desire to defeat the best of poets and dialecticians be pleased to take a seat on the throne of the tip of my tongue."

Bhagavan Hayagriva granted Swami's prayer and always occupied Swami's tongue. So, all the words that flowed from Swami's mouth are pramanam. Because of Bhagavan Hayagreeva's blessings, Swami could give convincing explanations as seen in SatadUshaNI.

We all know that our Swami had the darshan of Bhagavan Hayagreeva [pratyaksham]. Swami sees, enjoys and experiences the divine grace, beauty of Bhagavan Hayagreeva and wants the Jivas to enjoy the same. For the benefit of all of us, Swami gives this wonderful description of Bhagavan Hayagreeva, thus -

vyAkhyA mudrAm karasarasijai: pustakam Sankacakre
bibhradbhinna sphaTika rucire puNDarIke nishaNNa: |
amIAna SrI: amrtAviSadai: amSubhi: plAvayan mAm
AvirbhUyadanagha mahimA mAnase vAgadhISa: ||

This verse is the dhyAna sloka for Bhagavan Hayagreeva.

Swami describes that Bhagavan Hayagreeva has four lotus-like hands. He holds the discuss and the conch on upper arms. The lower right hand shines with the J~nAna mudrA - the symbol of instruction. In the lower left hand, Bhagavan Hayagreeva holds a book as though it is an evidence for the recovery of the Vedas carried away by an asura from the four-faced Brahma. Bhagavan Hayagreeva is seated on a beautiful full-blown white lotus (puNDarIka) sparkling like a part of the dissected sphaTikamaNi (marble slab). Bhagavan Hayagreeva’s glory is always bright and has absolutely no limitations.

Swami prays for the grace of Bhagavan Hayagreeva - the first Bhagavan of learning. Swami also wants Bhagavan to reside in his heart.

Our Swami is immersed in Bhagavan Hayagreeva's J~nAna mudrA as shown by Bhagavan in his lower right hand. When we enjoy our Swami's anubhavam, Adiyal is reminded of the 24th Sloka -

citte karomi sphuritAkshamAlam
savyetaram nAtha! karam tvadIyam |
j~nAnamrtodancala lampaTAnAm
IllaghaTI yantramivASritAnAm ||

There is a japamAlA in Bhagavan Hayagreeva's lower right hand. This hand slightly faces down. On seeing it, Swami says that Bhagavan Hayagreeva is ready to give J~nAna amudam to all devotees who have great urge in acquiring J~nAnam. To show his willingness to grant J~nAnam, Swami says that Bhagavan Hayagreeva has this hand facing slightly down so that he can instantly take and give the J~nAna amudam.

Swami Desika compares this to a game like seesaw (leelagatiyantra). By its movement it raises the knowledge from the deep, like the machine which raises water from a deep well for the benefit of all. Just as how water can be drawn and poured out from a well that is full of water, so also Bhagavan Hayagreeva's hand with this appearance (full of J~nAna and slightly facing down) pours out the J~nAna amudam enormously !!!

Swami says that he does dhyanam with this hand in his mind!

In the last Sloka of Hayagreeva stotra, Swami Desika advises all of us to read the stotra with devotion for the attainment of mastery over words and their meanings (vAgartha siddhi).

We saw that Bhagavan Hayagreeva was pratyaksham to Swami Desika. This was possible only because of Garuda. Sri Appular initiated the Vainateya mantra to Swami and advised him to concentrate on the mantra and do dhyana on Bhagavan Garuda to acquire his grace.

Swami went to ayindai (Tiruvaheendrapuram) to start the dhyAnam. Tiruvaheendrapuram has the Garuda nadhi and aushadhagiri. These have been purified by the divine presence of Garuda himself. Swami meditated at the foot of aSvattha tree, on Garuda – the deity who is Veda incarnate.

With in a short time, pleased with Swami, Garuda appeared and initiated Bhagavan Hayagreeva mantra to him. Garuda having instructed the mantra of Bhagavan Hayagreeva - the horse faced supreme God presiding over all knowledge, advised Swami to propitiate to that God by dhyAnam. So, Swami meditated as instructed by Garuda and thus could have a dharshan of Hayagreeva.

When we discussed the Kalyana gunas of Swami Desika, we discussed that Swami was a 'krutaj~nya'. One who does not forget the help rendered is ' krutaj~nya''. This being Swami's: kalyana guna, Swami wanted to please Garuda who helped him to realise Bhagavan of learning. Swami's indebtedness to Garuda has resulted in two stotras composed by him GaruDa pancASat and Garuda daNDakam. Swami Desika's GaruDa daNDakam briefly describes the greatness of Garuda. The name Garuda daNDakam was given by Swami Desika himself to this stotram.

Later Swami composed GaruDa PancASat, the fifty Slokams on Garuda who is the vehicle of Bhagavan Narayana and also the king of all birds. Here Garuda's greatness is dealt with more detail for the benefit of all.

From the last Sloka of Garuda PancASat, we learn that Swami Desika composed this hymn carrying out the command of Bhagavan Garuda.

In every one of the four quarters of the hymn Swami pays respects and salutations to Bhagavan Garuda. From this, Swami's devotion to Bhagavan Garuda is evident.

Swami had the realisation of Guruda and Hayagreeva in Thiruvaheendrapuram. This made Swami Desika to continue his stay. In the due course, Swami worshipped the presiding deity of the Shrine - Bhagavan Devanatha.

Swami's poetic talents are evident in every Sloka of both these hymns.

For instance in Garuda PancASat, instead of repeating the word 'Garuda' in every sloka, thirty-five synonyms are used!

In every Sloka, Swami makes a prayer to Garuda for protection. Both these stotras on Garuda are the result of the love and devotion of Swami Desika to Garuda!!

After Swami Desika's realisation of Garuda and Hayagreeva in Thiruvaheendrapuram, Swami stayed there for a decade and then proceeded to Tirukkovilur, the Shrine sanctified by the visit of the mudal alvars. We all know the unique anubavam of the mudal alvars, where they had the greatest opportunity of having had Bhagavan with them listening to their paasurams. dehali is the corridor of a house which immediately adjoins the front door and leads to the inner apartments. In tamil it is known as 'Rezhi'. Bhagavan associated himself with the mudal alvars in the dehali and is hence addressed as Dehaleesa means Bhagavan of dehali.

dehaleesa Perumal is none other than Bhagavan Trivikrama. But what distinguishes this Bhagavan from others is his exploits in a small dehali of Tirukkovilur which has resulted in the advent of divya Prabandham to us.

The First three alvars are designated as mudal alvars. In the same way the three prabandhams that they sang should also be understood and enjoyed as one unit. This is evident from the very first verse of each of them taken together.

Sri D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar explains it thus -

"vaiyam tagaLiya" paasuram deals with Prakrti or acetana tattva, "anpe tagaLiya" with cetana or individual AtmA (which is j~nNna by nature) and "tirukaNDEn" verse with the Parama cetana or Bhagavan. tattvatraya is thus depicted.

Similarly, tattva, hita and PurushArtha as also Parabhakti, Paraj~nAna and Parama bhakti and such like triple sets are all derivable from the three andAdis which can be referred to as aiyandAti, anbandAti and tiruvandAti respectively with reference to the first word in each.

satkurvatAm tava padam caturAnanatvam

pAdodakam ca SirasA vahatAm Sivatvam |
ekatra vikramaNa karmaNi tat dvayam te
dehalyadhISa yugapat prathitam prthivyAm ||
-- dehaleesa stuti (12)

Swami Desika states that only in the Trivikramavataram, Bhagavan demonstrated his supremacy beyond controversies. When Bhagavan's uplifted foot reached the satyaloka, the four-faced Brahma worshipped Bhagavan's foot by offering arghyam, pAdyam etc. This pAdyam offered respectfully to wash Bhagavan's foot flowed as Ganga. This was in turn received by Siva on his head.

In nAnmukan TiruvandAti, Tirumazhisai Alvar expresses similar points --

kuRai koNDu nAnmukan kuNDikai nIr peytu
maRai koNDa mantirattAI vAzhtti - kaRai koNDa
kaNDattAn cenimEI Erak kazhuvinAn
aNDattAn cEvaDiyai Anku.

Tirumazhisai Alvar explains that he who worshipped the foot of Bhagavan is Brahma and he who received that paadyam on his head is Siva.

From this it is clear that "CaturanAnatvam" and "Sivatvam" as used by our Swami are earned by washing Bhagavan's foot and receiving the water on the head respectively.

There is a pun in the words "caranAna" and "Siva". In addition to positions like Brahma and Siva, the capacity for clever speech and auspiciousness can also be acquired by washing the feet and receiving that water on the Head.

Swami Desika addresses Bhagavan as dehalyadhIsa. Swami states that Bhagavan who was once a Trivikrama of cosmic proportions now confined himself to a small dehali. Bhagavan's sowlabyam is evident here. Bhagavan being a bhakta vatsalan comes down to any extent for the sake of his devotees.

Bhagavan was proud to associate himself with the mudal alvars and to assume the name dehaleesa (Bhagavan in the narrow passage).

Swami Desika has sung the dehaleesa stuti in praise of Bhagavan where he portrays Bhagavan as sugarcane. The three Alvars are pictured as the instrument to crush the sugarcane and the resultant juice is the three nURRandAtis. The essence of these three nURRandAtis is the sweet sugar-candy, namely dehaleesa!!!

Earlier, we saw Swami Desika establishing that Bhagavan demonstrated his supremacy beyond controversies only in the Trivikramavataram.

Swami now says that there is nothing to wonder at how Bhagavan measured the worlds by his three steps because there is something much more interesting to wonder about!!!

Bhagavan had been growing so fast and became extremely huge when he measured the worlds.

Now, how does one define the fact that Bhagavan could find room in a small place along with the Mudal Alvars when he had scaled the entire universe in his Trivikramavatara!!!

citram na tat trishu mitAni padeshu dhatte
viSvAnyamUni bhuvanAni viSankaTeshu |
bhaktai: samam kvacidasau bhavanaikadaSe
mAti sma mUrtiramitA tadihAdbhutam na: ||
-- dehaleesa stuti (9)

Swami wonders how Bhagavan who took cosmic proportions transfers himself to a tiny form compressed into a dehali This dehali was sufficient for just one person to sleep, two people to sit and a maximum of three to stand! There were already three devotees in the dehali. The dehali was not even sufficient for them to stand comfortably, they had to huddle together.

Bhagavan's tirumeni entered into such a small place. Bhagavan who had exhibited his supremacy in his Trivikramavataram shows his sowlabyam by entering into this small place just for the sake of his devotees. Swami Desika enjoys this adbuta rasa and says that in front of this great wonder - exhibiting Bhagavan's sowlabyam, those feet measuring the cosmos by two broad strides which completely covered it all, dwindles into insignificance!

Swami Desika has enjoyed similar adbhuta rasa in Varadaraja PancASat.

bAlAkrte: vaTapalASamitasya yasya
brahmANDa maNDalamabhUddudaraikadeSe |
tasyaiva tad varada hanta katham prabhUtam
varAhamAsthitavato vapuradbhutam te ||
-- Varadaraja PancASat (22)

When Bhagavan was a small baby, lying on a banyan leaf, the entire cosmos was confined to a small portion of Bhagavan's stomach. This itself is an adbutam!

Bhagavan's VarAha avatAra was so huge that the mount Meru was a pebble in the anklet on one of the feet of Bhagavan VarAha! So, when Bhagavan took the Varaha avataram, how did the cosmos become so big as to carry the huge Varaha? This is another adbhutam!

Now, if the cosmos is bigger than Bhagavan's tirumeni, how is it that the entire cosmos was confined to a small portion of Bhagavan's stomach when Bhagavan was a small baby, lying on a banyan leaf? If the cosmos is smaller than Bhagavan's tirumeni, how is it that the Varaha tirumeni, which is many times bigger than the cosmos carry it?

Swami is wonder-stuck with these great miracles which happen only due to Bhagavan's exclusive powers!!!
On one hand we see our infinitely huge Bhagavan Trivikrama, Shrink to a tiny form, and on the other the infinitely small Bhagavan growing immeasurably huge in the Varaha avatara!!!

Each of these is an adbhutam in its own way !!!

Goda is an avatara of Bhu Devi. Bhagavan Sriya:pati has established that he has a special place for those devotees who offer him flowers chanting his divine names. Bhu Devi took the incarnation of Goda Piratti to prove to the world that poo maalai and paa maalai are the important offerings to Sriman Narayana.

Just as Bhagavan accepted the flower garlans (poo mAlais) that were offered by Goda [after she wore it], Bhagavan also accepted the paamaalai offered by her. Bhagavan's affection towards Goda Piratti is immense as he is pleased by her unflinched devotion. Bhagavan listens to Goda's recommendations to liberate jivas of this lokam.

Goda Piratti is fondly called by various names - Andal [one who rules or redeems], Choodikodutta naacchiyar [the consort who offered garlands after adorning them on Herself].

Goda piratti's paasurams give the complete essence of the Vedas. Goda Piratti composed 30 Atma-stirring Paasurams called the Thiruppaavai. In this Piratti puts herself amongst the gopis of Brindavana and pleads with Bhagavan for awakening and salvation. Thiruppaavai emphasises and advocates the doctrine of prapatti and Nithya Kaimkaryam to Sriya:pati.

Needless to say that our great Acharyas are 'conquered' in full, by Goda piratti's Paasurams. Bhagavad Ramanuja used to recite Thirupapavai verses on his unchavritti and he came to be known as "Thiruppaavai Jeeyar". Sri Kurattalvan composed a tanian that is recited before singing Thiruppaavai.

Goda Piratti's other 143 verses, called the Nacchiyar Tirumozhi, consists of 14 decads of lively paasurams. These paasurams reflect Her appeal to Bhagavan for Bhagavan's love and care towards Goda Piratti and mankind.

Swami Desika's anubhavam of Goda Piratti's works are exemplary. Swami was so moved by the Paasurams and could visualise the divine couple – Sri Andal and Sri Ranganathan. On this, Swami brought a fluent and lovely stuti - Goda Stuti. Swami adds in the Stuti's last sloka as -

".. utthitAm venkaTeSat bahuguNa ramaNIyam vakti godA stutim"

where, he mentions that by reciting the Goda Stuti the Jivas will get the divine grace of Bhagavan Sri Ranganatha.

Swami Desika's Goda stuti consists of 29 verses containing rare gems of thought based on her birth, life and ultimately merging with her Bhagavan. Goda stuti mentions certain aspects for which Goda has a special capacity.

Swami Desika did not use more than 29 Slokams out of reverence to Andal's tiruppAvai paasurams, completed GodA stuti with 29 paasurams.

in Tirupaavai, GodA sings –
"...vantu unnaic-cEvittu un poRRAmaRai aDiyE poRRum poruL kELAi"
-meaning, prostrating before you, and seeking the service of worshipping your lotus feet, while Swami Desika concludes the GodA stuti by singing -

".. caraNa kamala sevAm SAsvatim abhyupaishyan"
meaning, attaining Bhagavan's lotus feet to perform nithya Kaimkaryam.

In the GodA stuti, Swami Desika says that GodA Devi's numerous and superior aspects of glory are far ahead of Vedas! The Upanishads portray and eulogise the Kalyana gunas of Bhagavan thereby adding a flavour. However, GodA Piratti's cUDii koDutta mAlai increases the fragrance of Bhagavan itself!

In the 21st Sloka, Swami enjoys the anubhavam of Bhagavan and Piratti's Thirukkalyanam and their praise and awe fills the three worlds. The rasikas wonder as to who is higher - Bhagavan or Piratti – and they even wonder if they were equal.

Swami goes beyond enjoying Bhagavan and Goda Piratti and he has used the phrase -
"praNayAnubandhAt anyonya mAlya parivrttim"
- GodA stuti, Sloka 21
Meaning, "exchange of garlands to express mutual love"
where Swami adores the love between Goda Piratti and Bhagavan.

In the 23rd sloka of Goda stuti Swami says,
"nAtham tvaya kamalayA ca"
mentioning Goda first and then Goddess Kamala (Sri:) which echoes the words in the purushasuktam in which "hri" is mentioned before Lakshmi (Sri:)!!!

Bhagavan's sowlabhyam is also put into test, sometimes, says Swami. Swami finds that Bhagavan moves away from Jivas in distaste, though, the Loka mAtA Goddess RamA pleads to Bhagavan to forgive the Jiva's sins. Bhagavan is moved, but decides to move his gaze at the other side, and there, Goda Piratti is pleading to Bhagavan, for the same. But for Goda's pleading we Jivas would still be loitering around in this lokam. Swami makes it clear that we are indebted to Goda Piratti. Swami establishes the importance of Goda Piratti's help to Jivas - in 2 slokas - slokas 24 and 25.

In temples we see the sannidhi's for Goddess Lakshmi and Andal on either side of Bhagavan apparently with this background. Not just Goda pirantha oor is Govindan vAzhum oor, Goda pEr sollum Ur is also Govindan vaazhum Ur.

We saw that both Goddess Goda and Goddess Lakshmi are on either side of Bhagavan requesting Bhagavan to relieve the Jivas from the repeated cycles of births and rebirths. Both of them are extremely compassionate to the Jivatmas. Thus the objective of Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Goda is the same!

Goddess Lakshmi has a very special place in our Philosophy. The attributes of Goddess Lakshmi are as innumerable as those of Bhagavan Vishnu. Our ultimate objective is Moksha and the divya dampati together constitutes it. They are always united. The divine couple together create, preserve and bless the universe.

Goddess Lakshmi does not know to punish anybody. This is not the case with Bhagavan. Bhagavan does punish us in order to correct us. Sri is full of mercy to us. The mere sight of Goddess Lakshmi is sufficient to bring in prosperity!
In the Vaamana avataram, Bhagavan wanted to take back the worlds from MahA Bali. Bhagavan could not achieve this by nigraham because MahA Bali was a descendant of

Prahlada and out of consideration to the great devotion of Prahlada, Bhagavan had promised him that he would not slay any of his descendants.

That is why in daSAvatAra stotram also, Swami uses the term "raksha vAmana" - In Vaamana avataram Bhagavan protected every body including MahA Bali!

So, Bhagavan went as a Brahmachari to achieve this objective. Sri is always in his chest and Bhagavan knew that the mere glance of Sri was sufficient to grant MahA Bali all prosperity. The alternative of coming without Lakshmi is inconceivable, as Lakshmi would never entertain the idea of leaving Bhagavan's chest even for a second. The only alternative therefore was to keep Goddess Lakshmi hidden. Bhagavan used the KrshNAjinam (deer skin) for this purpose.

Swami Desika enjoys these leelas of Bhagavan in the 11th sloka of dehaleesa stuti --

"bhikshocitam prakaTayan prathamASramam tvam"

Now that Lakshmi was not visible in Bhagavan's chest nobody expected the Brahmachari to be the Supreme Bhagavan!

But, when Bhagavan took the trivikramavatara, Goddess Lakshmi was visible to everybody on his chest between his protecting arms. At once everyone realised that He was the Supreme being - the consort of Sri - Sriya:pati !

This amply clarifies that being Sriya:pati is the hallmark of Parabrahmam. This is embodied in Swami's Sristuti (Sloka 4) also.

yatsankalpadbhavati kamale yatra dehinyamIshAm
janmasthema pralaya racanA jangamAjangamAnAm |
tat kalyaNam kimapi yAminAmeka lakshyam samAdhau
pUrNam teja: sphurati bhavati pAda lAkshA rasAnkam ||

Several Vedic concepts of the Supreme Bhagavan are brought in by Swami Desika to establish who He is! Swami says that Bhagavan is the AtmA of all animate and inanimate things, all the worlds originate, sustain or face destruction by Bhagavan's will. The Supreme Bhagavan cannot be described, and He is effulgent and auspiciousness incarnate. And He is the Atma aim of Yogis in meditation!

But some of these Vedic descriptions qualify a few other demi Gods also. So, how are we to categorically declare that the Vedas refer to Bhagavan Vishnu alone as the Supreme Brahman? Swami Desika states in the above sloka that the red coloured marks of Goddess Lakshmi’s feet are visible on Bhagavan's chest. Swami says that this confirms that Bhagavan is the One whom all the Vedas adore and worship as the supreme God.

So, Goddess Sri, not only gives Bhagavan an identity but also glorifies Bhagavan's complexion by Her red prints on His sapphire - blue form!

Many utterances of the Vedas praise Goddess Sri. Swami Desika gives us the essence of these Vedic utterances in his Sristuti. Here, Swami brings forth the essential nature and the role of Goddess Lakshmi.

Swami has described the oneness of divya dampati in all activities and Goddess Lakshmi's karuna towards all Jivas. Goddess Lakshmi is the dispenser of all boons, material and spiritual!

Swami also adds that all those who read the Sristuti will enjoy sovereignty, unlimited wealth and welfare." Swami proved this phala Sruti true during his life time itself – This incident happened when Swami Desika was at Kanchi. A bachelor boy wanted some material help from Swami to conduct his own wedding. Swami creted Sri Stuti. When Swami was reciting the 16th Sloka, "yogArambhA ..." . there was a shower of gold coins. Swami says wherever Goddess Lakshmi's glance fell, there was a flood of all desired wealth.

...yasyAm yasyAm diSi viharate devi! drshTistvadIyA
tasyAm tasyAm ahamahamikAm tanvate sampadoghA: ||
-- Sristuti (15)

Wherever the glance of Goddess Lakshmi falls, in all those places waves of wealth roll forth competing among them to bless him.

...teshAm bhUme: dhanapati gruhAdambarAdambudhervA
dhAra niryAntyadhikamAdhikam vAnchitAnAm vasUnAm ||
-- Sristuti (16)

People who approach the divya dampati alone (and no anya devatas) with undivided attention and utmost concentration, will be immediately blessed with all desirable wealth. The wealth that such people want would only be for a good cause. Swami says that the wealth so got would be much more than what they expected!

This wealth was available from the earth (mother to Sita) as a hidden treasure to Thirumangai Alvar, from the sky ie., Bhagavan Vishnu's abode as in Kuchela's incident, or from Kubera's mansion.

Our Goddess Lakshmi can thus confer upon us any kind of wealth that we desire!!!

There are many other stotras in which Swami Desika mentions the greatness of Goddess Lakshmi.

For instance in the third sloka of the nyAsa tilakam, Swami Desika performs prapatti at the feet of Goddess Sri wherein he says that he follows Goddess Lakshmi's words (as found in Lakshmi tantra).

...tadArambhe tasyA giramavadadhAnena manasA
prapadye tAmekam Sriyahmakhila nAthasya mahishIm ||
-- nyAsa tilakam (3)

Swami Desika surrenders at the feet of Goddess Lakshmi, the supreme queen of Bhagavan Mahavishnu, the God of Gods. Swami says that he performs prapatti to her based on her advice only.
We know that Bhagavan is called Sriya:pati - the husband of Goddess Sri. Similarly Goddess Lakshmi by virtue of being ever associated with Bhagavan Vishnu is known as

Vishnupatni. Swami Desika incorporates these in the first and second Sloka of YatirAja Saptati.

Vishnu is called Kamala gruhamedhi and Lakshmi is referred to as "sahadharmacarIm Saure:".

Again, in the very first Sloka of daSAvatAra stotram, Swami Desika refers to the avatAram of Goddess Lakshmi as being ever in unison with the avatAram of Bhagavan. Goddess Lakshmi assumed suitable forms to the respective roles of Bhagavan. Goddess Ranganayaki assumed the form of Sita, Rukmini etc., when Bhagavan took the role of Rama, Krishna etc.

This shows the oneness of divya dampati in all activities! Let us enjoy a few Slokas of Swami Desika's Sristuti.

The following Sloka describes the coronation of Goddess Lakshmi. To understand and enjoy Swami Desika's anubhavam of Piratti's coronation let us visiualise Thirupparkadal.

Thirupparkadal is the vast milky ocean, pure white in colour covered with waves and ripples.

agre bhartu: sarasija maye bhadra plThe nishaNNAm
ambho rASeradhigata sudhA samplavadutthitAm tvAm |
pushpAsAra sthagita bhuvanai: pushkalAvartakAdyai:
klptArambhA: kanaka kalaSairabhyashincan gajendrA: ||
-- Sri stuti, sloka 13

This verse portrays the coronation of Goddess Lakshmi as supreme empress of the entire universe. The devas and asuras churned the Thirupparkadal. In the process nectar came from it. Following the nectar the avatar of Goddess Lakshmi, with incomparable beauty emerged from it. Goddess Lakshmi took her seat in front of her Bhagavan on a lotus (making it her simhAsanam). Clouds such as Pushkalaavartam poured water like a shower of soft petalled flowers and world was hidden by this. Goddess Lakshmi's Thirumanjanam which was commenced this way by the clouds was concluded by airAvatam, puNDarikam and other huge elephants which poured down crystal clear water from vases of yellow gold.

Swami says that Goddess Lakshmi was thus coronated as the Supreme empress of the Universe!

Goddess Lakshmi then proceeds straight to Bhagavan's chest, her permanent residence.

Many devotees interpret different incidents in relation to this Sloka. A few of them relate this to the emergence of Padmavati tAyar from the Padma sarovar on the banks of river Svarnamukhi near the sacred seven hills of Venkatachalam.

A few other devotees compare this coronation with that of Goddess Sita. It is an ecstatic feeling to see the unique honour done to Goddess Lakshmi with Bhagavan's approval.

The feet of Goddess Lakshmi are considered as the crest jewel of Vedas, Hence the Vedas worship Lakshmi in a big way!

The devotees who aspire for Moksha place the feet of Goddess Lakshmi always in their mind. Swami Desika admires those who aspire for Moksha instead of worrying about the comforts of the present life. By meditating on the feet of Goddess Lakshmi such aspirants of Moksha in addition to achieving their desired ends gain recognition in this world also.

Swami explains in the 17th Sloka that such rare people are recognised all round, praised by others and are taken in a procession with regal paraphernalia.

Though they are not for these attentions, the grace of Goddess Lakshmi's extends these to them.

We can see this Pratyaksham in the case of our Acharyas. Acharyas like Azhyagiyasingar are living examples of what Lakshmi kataksham can do to one.

Srimad Azhagiyasingar (45th) in his cassette, "Desikarum avar sookthigalum" says that it is a great gift for a person to directly hear people praise him. For this, a person should have paripoorNa Lakshmi kataksham and for obtaining this he should constantly meditate on Goddess Lakshmi! In this context Swami Desika's paripoorNa Lakshmi kataksham becomes all the more evident! Swami Desika had the bagyam of listening to Bhagavan and Goddess praise him - what else can this be attributed to other than paripoorNa Lakshmi kataksham !!!

In this stotra "SreyaskAma: ...", Swami Desika has used the word "Sreya" instead of "preya". It would be interesting to note that the word "Sreya" refers to greater acquisitions like blessedness, supreme felicity, bliss etc. while "preyas" refers to material happiness, mundane welfare, physical comforts etc. Swami clarifies that the seekers of Sreyas get the best of both worlds !!!

Swami Desika brings out yet another extremely important truth in the 20th Sloka - "seve devi tridaSa mahilA mauli mAlArcitam te"

Swami emphatically states that Goddess Sri is equally competent to grant Moksha!

We can enjoy eternal bliss in Moksha which is the permanent abode devoid of danger and decline.

Only two are capable of granting this to devotees - Bhagavan Narayana and Goddess Lakshmi!

Here is a brief of Swami Desika's explanation on prapatti to divya dampati. Swami considers divya dampati together as one entity.

When one performs kAmyArtha sacrifices, the offerings are made to demi Gods viz., Agni, Vayu, Indra, Varuna etc. These demi Gods act as intermediaries in receiving the obligations while it is Bhagavan Narayana who actually accepts it. The demi Gods have attained the status of accepting the offerings because of their punyas. But when it comes to the act of total surrender - prapatti, Bhagavan does not permit any deities as intermediaries. Bhagavan Narayana together with Goddess Sri accept the prapatti directly! Acharya sambandham is the only link between us and Bhagavan, no demi Gods in-between !!!

Swami Desika states that Bhagavan along with Goddess Sri maintain direct link with Prapannas. Bhagavan is the Greatest that even the Vedas could not describe Him in full. On one side Bhagavan's paratvam is so great - He is the indweller and consequently the master of everything, but on the other we see Bhagavan's sowlabyam where due to his infinite grace He directly accepts our prapatti. Swami Desika is bewildered at the nature of the Supreme Brahman!!!

divya dampati are full of compassion for us. Goddess Lakshmi feeds us the knowledge of tatvas and makes the chetanas (who are her children) take the correct path. By virtue of this Sri is the Mother of the whole world. Swami makes a mention of this in the dayA Satakam Sloka below -

samasta jananIm vande caitanya stanya dAyinIm |
***SreyasIm SrInivasasya karuNAmiva rUpinIm ***
-- dayA Satakam (6)

Here, Swami Desika bows to Goddess Sri who is an embodiment of Thiruvenkatamudayan's compassion!

In the following verse, Swami Desika makes an appeal to Goddess Lakshmi to stay in His heart forever.

kalyANanAmavikala nidhi: kA'pi kAruNya sImA
nityamodA nigama vacasAm mauli mandAra mAla |
sampad-divya madhu vijayina: sannidhattAm sadA me
saisha devi sakalabhuvana prArthanA kAmadhenu: ||
-- Sristuti (24)

Goddess Lakshmi is the wealth of Bhagavan Vishnu himself. She is absolute prosperity. She is the bestower of all the wishes of every living being in the entire universe. Swami Desika emphasises on her uniqueness by the work "kApi". Goddess Lakshmi adores the heads of the Upanishads as an ever-fragrant flower! Swami Desika describes Goddess Lakshmi as kAmadhenu, the divine cow which yields everything to all those who seek!

Goddess Sri resides in Bhagavan's chest with an objective to make room for us in His heart! What to say of her compassion!!!

In the Sri stuti, the auspicious quality of Goddess Lakshmi is mentioned in the very first Sloka. "Sri" has been referred to as "mangalam mangalAnAm" ie., She is auspiciousness to auspicious"!

It is interesting to note that Goddess Lakshmi is mentioned in the first Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA also. Here, Goddess Lakshmi is addressed as Padma, denoting her auspicious quality.

Padmapati is Sriman Narayana. Swami repeatedly establishes that Sri and Narayana form the ultimate truth - paratattva. Swami Desika stresses and emphasises the inseparable nature of the union.

Swami Desika is "tanca paragatiyai tandaruLvOn". Swami established the doctrine of prapatti for us. In Srimad RahasyatrayasAram, Swami deals elaborately with the doctrine of prapatti. SaraNAgati deepikA is a brief in verse form of RahasyatrayasAram.

SaraNAgati deepikA is conceived in praise of divya dampati. Bhagavan deepa prakASar presiding over Tirutanka in Kanchipuram is celebrated in the stotra. Swami gives the connotation of deepa prakASar in the following slokam --

"dIpastvameva jagatAm dayitA ruciste
dIrgham tama: pratinivartyamidam yuvAbhyAm"

Swami explains that Bhagavan's is the lamp and consort Lakshmi is the luster of the lamp. Together they drive out the darkness of ignorance, which has been there for a long time. Ignorance in this world can be of three kinds viz. utter inability to know anything, understanding in a wrong way and vipareetha j~naanam. The lustrous lamp dispels all these!

Swami boldly states that mere Narayana is like an unlighted lamp and only when He is in association with Goddess Lakshmi, Bhagavan Narayana is a lustrous lamp. Hence Bhagavan is a light in its full sense (deepaprakASa) only when He is inseparably associated with piratti.

In the 54th Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA, "rakshyatvayA tava...", Swami imagines a situation where Bhagavan refuses to overlook our sins and denies protection to us. Swami's explanation consoles us –

Bhagavan's grace was instrumental in us approaching and surrendering to Him. We have never uttered the words of surrender to Bhagavan in any of our previous janmas. We have been in the cycle of births and rebirths from time immemorial but have not surrendered to Bhagavan. Elders say that even the number of sand in a sea shore can be counted but it is impossible to count the number of births taken by us!!! It is a pity that we have not surrendered to Bhagavan in all our previous births. Had we surrendered we would now be in SrivaikuNTham enjoying nityakainkaryam. So, it is very clear that it is primarily Bhagavan's grace that makes us perform prapatti. Even now, the words of surrender may not be completely from our heart, it might be just from our lips. It is because of Bhagavan's sankalpam that these words pass atleast through our lips.

Now, Swami Desika says that Bhagavan has done so much for us. After taking so much of effort if Bhagavan does not accept us as saraNagatAs (for the reason that we are sinners), all the efforts of Bhagavan would become a waste. Not just that, Bhagavan cannot permit our sins to over power his Superior qualities. So, Swami makes a request to Bhagavan to complete His task since He has put in so much of effort towards it. Swami tells Bhagavan that the task which lies ahead is not much compared to what has been achieved!

Swami Desika now reminds Bhagavan that the prapatti as per dvaya mantram takes in both Bhagavan and Goddess Lakshmi. Swami threatens Bhagavan as to what will happen to the good impressions that Goddess Lakshmi has for Him if Bhagavan allows His great qualities to be defeated by our sins?

Goddess Lakshmi is a dayAroopi. Swami Desika states that even if Bhagavan for some reason fails, Goddess Lakshmi will come to our rescue. She will protect us and even grant us Moksha !!!

We've been enjoying Swami Desika's explanations as to why Bhagavan has no options but to protect the saranagathas!

In abheetistavam, Slokam 18, Swami gives a very interesting and unique reason.

"nisarga niranishTatA tava niramhasa: SrUyate
tatastriyuga srshTivadbhavati samhrti: krIDitam |
tathA'pi SaraNAgata praNaya bhanga bhIto bhavAn
madishTamiha yadbhavet kimapi mA sma tajjIhapat ||"

Swami Desika states that Bhagavan cannot hurt anybody. That is His nature. Swami adds that even the act of creation and pralaya are acts of Bhagavan's daya only.

This is elaborated in the 16th Sloka ("AsrshTi santatAnAm...) of dayA Satakam.

Swami says that from the time of creation, sins done by people in the world is infinite. People are never tired of doing sins. So, Bhagavan's dayA devi thinks as to how to make them attain 'nargati'. To help them break the chain of repeated sinful activities, dayA devi performs a leela called pralaya. During pralaya, the chetanas are without Sareeram, IndriyAs etc. They are in a sleep stage and are like achetanas. At this time, (even if they want to) they are not in a position to do sins. So they finally relax after continuously under going happiness and sorrow. Because of a break, the habit of performing sins will also be broken. Thus the objective of this leela also is to do good to Jivas. In this world also we see mothers, whose children have been notorious for a long time. In order to make them rest and also to make them forget these activities, their mother will force them to lie down and sleep. Children forget their notorious activities and sleep. After they wake up these unwelcome activities tend to reduce.

The pralaya leela, thus makes people take rest from performing sinful activities!

In the very next sloka (17th "acidaviSishTAn...") of dayA Satakam, Swami explains that during the time of pralaya, the creatures neither have Sareeram nor indriyam. Even intelligence disappears. The creatures are not capable of doing anything and just lie like achetanas. Seeing their plight dayA devi's heart pains. She thinks as to how these creatures will reach the right path if they are always kept in the same stage? So, she again gives them a Sareeram and then indriyam and then a clear mind. This way they get the eligibility to take the right path.

Swami says all these are the deeds of Bhagavan's dayA. In this world also we see the mother who packs the eatables etc., for them and gives them a word of advice not to do these notorious deeds wakes up the notorious children who were made to sleep.

It is hence clear that pralaya and creation are both due to Bhagavan's karuNA. In abhItistavam Swami reestablishes the above explanation.

Swami says that whatever Bhagavan does is in our best interest. He can never do anything that is not beneficial to us. Some acts might look unpleasant for a moment, but finally we will realise that the objective of that act is also our well being .

There are acts which are pleasing and enjoyable at the moment. They are known as priya (pleasing). They may or may not be hita also.

This can be understood as follows -

Assume that two men go to a bank. One person deposits $10,000 and the other person takes a loan of $10,000 from the bank. When we see from outside it might look as if the person who has withdrawn the money enjoys all luxuries while the other person having deposited the available money somehow manages his cash flow crisis. Now, though the latter may appear unpleasant, it is short lived. After some time we would realise that it is the depositor who is actually benefited and not the person who has taken the loan!

Swami now touches upon another very interesting trait of Bhagavan, viz., His desire to please His SaraNagatAs and never to cross or impede their desires. Bhagavan is afraid of losing the friendship and goodwill of His SaraNAgatas. Swami prays to Bhagavan not to oppose whatever Swami desires!

Swami says that Bhagavan too has something to fear!!!

When we visualise Swami's bhAvam we realise that the "AnukUlya sankalpam", of a SaraNagata is two way. Just as how the prapannas perform only such acts that please Bhagavan, Swami says that Bhagavan also has a desire to please SaraNAgatas!!!

We dealt with a Sloka from abheetistavam. Let us now elaborate the situation that led to the birth of the storam.

Swami Desika and Sri Pillai Lokachariar had to save the SrutaprakaSikA and Srirangam temple. This is a historic event. Many temples were being looted and desecrated by Muslim invaders. Like the many temples that fell prey to the Muslims, Srirangam was also was plundered by invaders. Srirangam was invaded by Malik Kafir the general of Alauddin, the Sultan of Delhi. The Acharyas gathered together and took counsel. They decided to divide themselves into three groups and act secretly. Preparations were made to move the utsava Murthy of Ranganatha to safety. The objective was not to confront the enemy but to focus their efforts to ensure that the moola vigraham was not desecrated.

One group under Sri Pillai Lokachariya, who was the eldest, was to take the idols of Bhagavan Ranganatha and His consorts in a covered palanquin and proceed south ward after crossing the river Kaveri.

Another party under Sri Sudarsana Suri and others were to stay at Srirangam, erect a stone wall in front of the sannidhi to protect Bhagavan [Anantha Sayanar] and save the temple and city from devastation from the Muslims and they were prepared to lay down their lives for this.

The third team was to provide cover for the team lead by Sri Pillai Lokachariya [the team with the idols of Bhagavan and his consorts] so that Sri Pillai Lokachariya has enough time to maintain safe distance from the enemy.

Swami Desika who was the youngest among the Acharyas was persuaded by Sri Sudarsana Suri to go with the third party and somehow save himself so that he atleast might be left to propound Sri Vaishnavism and the teachings of Acharya Sri Ramanuja.

Sri Sudharsana Suri entrusted his two sons - who were very young – with Swami Desika as well as the very valuable and only manuscript SrutaprakASikA".

SrutaprakASikA was written by an old and scholarly Vaishnava called Sri Sudarshana Bhattar. SrutaprakASikA is a work that was made out of generations of learnings and this is an elaborate commentary on Sri Bhashyam. Apparently, Sri Sudharshana Bhattar recorded SrutaprakASikA during the kAlakshepams of Sri Nadadur Ammal.

Swami Desika had an earnest desire that it must be saved for the benefit of prosperity. So, Swami immediately took up the direction from Sri Sudharsana Suri and left northward with a number of Srivaishnavas.

The cruel muslim army which was in Samayapuram, a village few miles away from Srirangam, attacked and killed many of them. Swami was appalled at this murderous act by Muslim invaders and he had to act quickly to avoid further Sri Vaishnava loss. We all are aware of Swami's genius and this was yet another moment to bring out his true skills. Swami saw heaps of corpses lying around and he asked the boys to lie stretched underneath some of them and our dear Swami also lay down next to them with the book. Sri Desika thus concealed the two boys and himself amidst a heap of corpses and passed the night. The enemy troops that passed by assumed that they were corpses and did not bother to probe. Before dawn he took the boys and moved away unnoticed in North-Westerly direction.

Swami composed abheetistavam - (Stotram for the repulsion of fear) on Bhagavan Ranganatha himself praying with devotion that the army of the muslims should be driven from Srirangam and Bhagavan should return to his city for relief of devotees in distress. He often repeated this and prayed to invoke the mercy of Bhagavan. This Stuti was composed at Satyagalam and not immediately after the Muslim invasion.

Since Bhagavan always tries to please His devotees, He did heed to Swami's prayers. The muslim invaders were driven away from Srirangam by the chieftain of Gingi fort in South India. The idols of Bhagavan Ranganatha and His consorts were reinstalled in the temple.

Swami saved the SrutaprakASikA for our sake. Even today we see Swami in the archa vigraham with a symbol of teaching in the right hand and the form of SrutaprakASikA in the left.

In Srimad Vendanta Desika mangaLASAsanam, Sri Kumara varadaarya addresses this incident thus -

SrutaprakASikA bhUmau yenAdau parirakshitA |
pravartitA ca pAtreshu tasmai SreshThAya mangalam ||

Sri Nayinarachariyar addressed Swami Desika as "SresTha". "SreshTha" is an adjective given to mention a superlative tense however, in this sloka it is used to mention about Swami as "one who does something which others cannot do".

Our Swami is respectfully remembered for this great act of saving the "SrutaprakASikA" and it is for this precise reason, all Sri Vaishnavas remember Swami before beginning the study of Sri Bhashya.

When we get immersed into the gigantic efforts of Sri Pillai Lokachariya, Sri Sudarsana Suri and our unparalleled Swami, we may realise that all the drama of muslim invasion, the trouble thereon, could well be the leela of our Sriya:pati

Earlier, we saw Swami's description about Tiruvenkatamudaiyan's compassion in dayA Satakam. The only other Satakam of Swami Desika is acyuta Satakam!

acyuta Satakam is the only stotra of Swami Desika in Prakrutam language. We have already seen Swami taking a role of a nAyika. Here, Swami's intense love to Bhagavan, makes Swami to even talk in the language of a nAyika - hence Prakritam.

The very first word of the first Sloka in acyuta Satakam in prAkrutam "Namaha" (namata in Samskrtutam). Thus, in the opening Sloka itself, Swami instructs us to pay obeisance. Generally it is Swami who pays salutations at the beginning of the stotras, but here Swami wants us to prostrate to Bhagavan Acyuta.

Having instructed us to be devoted to Bhagavan Acyuta, Swami describes the love of Bhagavan towards his true devotees.

Alagati tava caraNau acyuta vidhinA'pyarcanAcarita |
vaikAnti prayuktA Seshamiva svayam SirasA pratigrhNAsi tam ||
-- acyuta Satakam (57)

Swami says that even the puja offered to Bhagavan by Brahma reaches only Bhagavan's foot. But true to Bhagavan's sowlabyam, He accepts the puja performed by his dear devotees on his head like a Seshavastra.

A person becomes a dear to Bhagavan when he strictly adheres to the SAstras, does bhagavata/bhAgavata kainkaryam and leads a life of a paramaikAntin. Bhagavan is both the means and the goal for such devotees. The objective of every act performed by a paramaikAntin is bhagavad preetyartham. PraramaikAntins do not seek refuge in anya devatas for any material benefits - in fact they do not even request material benefits from Bhagavan. Their entire request circle around Bhagavan's dayA for bhagavad/ bhAgavada kainkaryam! They have a lot of vairAgyam and keep themselves from all material attachments. So, Bhagavan Himself enables them to attain Him who is otherwise unattainable.

Bhagavan holds these devotees in such a high esteem that the puja and offerings of such devotees are received by Bhagavan on His head like a Seshavastra!!! Bhagavan is fond of them and is always with them.

Seshavastra is a cloth tied around the head of a devotee before he receives the Sri SaThAri on his head. Swami says, Bhagavan receives the puja offered by ParamaikAntins with bent head as if He is receiving the Seshavastra.

Imagine Bhagavan bending His head to receive the prayers of a devotee ... Bhagavan's sowlabyam is unmatched !!!

Bhagavan reserves this honour only for ParamaikAntins. How lucky are we –
"....ninRruLLenaip peRRananmai ivvulaginil yAr peruvar ..."

Swami Desika says that Bhagavan is easily approachable only to those devotees who have undivided attention and utmost concentration on Bhagavan. Bhagavan keeps a distance from those who do not have constant attachment towards Him.

Swami covers various important subjects in acyuta Satakam.

Swami has explained Bhagavan as the upAdAna kAraNa, nimitta kAraNa and sahakAri kAraNa.

Swami has emphasised on the Seshitvam of divya dampati. Swami states that Bhagavan along with Goddess Lakshmi is the mokshopAya.

Swami having taken the role of a nAyika admires Bhagavan from head to toe, contrary to TirupAnalvar who admired Him padaadi kesam (from feet to head).

Swami also describes the journey of a Prapanna to SrivaikuNTham and prays for eternal union with Bhagavan!

Swami Desika, describes the swaroopa of Bhagavan as laid down in the prasthAna traya.

There are three texts or books that explain the VedAnta philosophy and so they are called PrasthAna traya. They are

1. Upanishads
2. Brahma sUtra
3. Bhagavad Gita

Swami says that Bhagavan is full of auspicious qualities. He is above the limitations of time, space and object. He is poorna – everywhere and in every thing i.e. Bhagavan has a place in every object, even in a small atom, He is full and complete!

In the 11th Sloka of acyuta Satakam, Swami explains the cardinal doctrine of ViSishTAdvaita VedAnta. Here, Swami explains the Sareera (body) AtmA relationship between the world and Bhagavan.

sakalAnAm dharaNa niyamana svAmitva niyama samsthita: sarvatanu: |
Sruyase acyuta sarva: sadA darSita kArya kAraNatva karbura: ||

Swami says that Bhagavan is "sarvatanu:" - has everything as His body. Bhagavan supports (dharaNa) everything. Bhagavan is the Seshi, owner of everything and everything works as commanded (niyamana) by Bhagavan.

Bhagavan is the cause and effect (kAraNam and kAryam) - He is everything (sarva:)!!!

Our body is dependent on the AtmA. It can exist only as long as the AtmA supports it. The body becomes worthless, the moment the AtmA leaves the body. It is hence clear that the

body is supported by the AtmA. The body and the AtmA act as one and are in unison, but they are totally different. The body is the vehicle for the AtmA.

Swami explains the Sareeram-AtmA relationship between the world and Bhagavan. The cetanas and acetanas are the body of ParamAtmA. They are supported and commanded by him and exist only for his sake. They exist only to be of servitude to Bhagavan, Sesha. Bhagavan is the master who derives these benefits, Seshi.

The ParamAtmA abides in the AtmA and pervades it within and without. The body is subordinate to the Jeeva and the Jeeva the subordinate of the supreme. The Jeeva, Sareera and ISvara are thus inseparable!

By having everything as Bhagavan's body, Bhagavan demonstrates that He is the cause and effect of everything!!!

Swami has explained Bhagavan as being the upAdAna kAraNa, nimitta kAraNa and sahakAri kAraNa. Bhagavan is the cause and effect!

This has been dealt with by Swami in acyuta Satakam. Here is a brief of the Slokas 12 to 15 of Swami Desika's acyuta Satakam giving us the basic concepts.

Bhagavan has everything as His body and so becomes the material cause, upAdAna kAraNa. Since Bhagavan's will is the cause of creation He is also the instrumental cause, nimitta kAraNa.

Let us take an example of a goldsmith who makes a jewel out of gold. Gold is the cause and jewel is the effect. So, gold is upAdAna kAraNa of the jewel.

To convert gold into a jewel, we need the goldsmith. So, the goldsmith is also a cause in making the jewel, hence is the nimitta kAraNa.

From the above it is clear that the upAdAna kAraNa and nimitta kAraNa can never be the same! The only exception to this being our dear Bhagavan !!!

Brahman is the upAdana and nimitta kAraNa in the creation of the world!!!

If we consider the world as a jewel, He is both the gold and the goldsmith, for the creation of the jewel (i.e. the world)!!!

Swami Desika exclaims the Sakti of Bhagavan to be marvelous!!!

Though the upAdAna and nimitta kAraNa in the creation of the world is one and the same, we find differences among the created beings. Swami Desika explains that this is due to the Karmas (past actions). The results of such acts or Karmas are accumulated and sticks to each AtmA. This gets embodied in the resultant well being; being in poverty; going through various ups and downs etc.

Swami Desika goes ahead to explain the tattva, hita and purushArtha aspects pertaining to our sampradAyam.

"tattva " is the ultimate truth; "hita" is the means and "PurushArtha" is the final goal;

The ultimate truth is the divya dampati. They are the supreme tattva. They are our refuge. The word divya dampati should be understood as an eternal dual. Divya dampati has no singular nor plural form. Hence divya dampati means the Divine couple as one unit. Swami addresses them as divya dampati, SaraNya dampati and Seshi dampati to indicate that they alone are respectively the tattva, hita and purushArtha.

In the 14^{h} Sloka of acyuta Satakam, Swami Desika says that all Purushas belong to Bhagavan and all Strees to Lakshmi. Besides the two of them there is nothing else!

Swami has emphasised on the Seshitvam of divya dampati. Swami states that Bhagavan along with Goddess Lakshmi is the mokshopAya.

Swami emphatically states that there is no one equal or superior to the divya dampati. They are the sole refuge for all the worlds.

Swami states that this is the essence of all knowledge and should always be kept in view. Swami adds that the purpose of all other knowledge is only to understand, comprehend, realise and confirm this supreme truth.

Swami established that the ultimate essence of all knowledge is to understand that Goddess SrI is inseparable from Bhagavan and there is no one equal or superior to the divya dampati.

The Divine Couple is inseparable. They are not separated even when they manifest as avatars. We saw this earlier where in we dealt with the following Sloka from Vishnu PurANam.

"rAghavatve abavatsItA rukmaNI krshNajanmani |
anyeshu cAvatAreshu vishNoreshAnapAyinI .... " **||**
-- Vishnu PurANam, 1 -9-144, 145

Goddess Lakshmi is forever united with Bhagavan Vishnu. So, when Bhagavan becomes Rama, Sri becomes Sita, ... Goddess Lakshmi thus adjusts herself according to the embodiments of Bhagavan Vishnu.

Now, the question is, how is it that during the Rama avataram, Bhagavan Rama accepted SaraNAgati (e.g. Sugeeiva, Vibeeshana etc.) even in the absence of Sita?

Here we should understand that though SIta was physically not next to Rama, she was really with Him.

We saw this even in the trivikrama avatAram, though Bhagavan was a brahmacAri in this avatAram, being without Goddess Lakshmi was inconceivable and so Goddess Lakshmi was hidden in his KrshNArjinam!!!

Swami Desika has emphasised this in the paramarthastuti. Paramarthastuti is a stotra on Bhagavan Vijayaraghava in Thirupputkuzhi, near Kanchi. Thirumangai Alvar refers to this Bhagavan as 'pORERu'.

The context of the following Sloka plays an important role here. This is the fifth Sloka, after which Swami deals with the SaraNAgati of Sugreeva, Vibheeshana and the like which happens during the physical absence of SIta. So, Swami as a precautionary measure clarifies that the divya dampati always stand united! Swami gives prominence to the Jatayu episode of Ramayanam, especially his supreme service at the cost of his life in this stotra.

"kamalA nirapaya dharmapatni
karuNAdyA: svayamrtvijo guNAste |
avanam SrayatAmahInamAdyam
sa ca dharmastvadananya sevanIya: ||"

Swami says that the ritual performed by Bhagavan is to protect SaraNAgataas. Any yAgam has to accompanied by one's wife. Swami says that since Periya piratti is always united with Bhagavan, Bhagavan performs this yAgam. Bhagavan's compassion and such guNams itself accompany Bhagavan as priests.

Swami adds that the ritual of protection should be performed continuously by Bhagavan like "ahInam" - which continues always without limitations. No body else can perform this ritual other than Bhagavan !!

The quality of mercy of Bhagavan Rama has been exhibited in a lot many places. For instance Bhagavan accepted vibheeshana SaraNAgati and declared that he would accept even Ravana's's SaraNAgati.
"...dattamasyAbhayam mayA vibhIshano vA sugrIva vA rAvaNAsvayam".

Swami Desika has dealt with vibheeshana SaraNAgati in abhayapradAna sAram in maNipravALa style. Swami calls Valmiki Ramayanam as a SaraNAgati Vedam and says the Principle of surrender is the connecting thread of all the six kaNDas.

In the eighth sloka of ParamArthastuti ***"SaraNagata rakshaNa vratI mAm..."*** Swami speaks of Bhagavan Rama's declaration ***"sakrdeva prapannAya tavasmitica yAcate..."***

Swami Desika says "Since Bhagavan's protection extends even to a wretch like Ravana, surely I will not be forsaken or excluded however sinful I may be". This is to give us reassurance that Bhagavan will definitely protect us.

ParamArthastuti of Swami can be termed as a short Ramayana. Swami Desika himself calls it ramaNeeya (beautiful). This is because of the blessings of Bhagavan Vijayaragavan.

Swami Desika's has given us the epic of 24,000 verses in just ten verses, ParamArthastuti!!!

Swami Desika who compressed the 24,000 verses of the great epic and gave us ParamArthastuti in just 10 verses has rendered 1,000 Slokas on the pAdukA of Bhagavan. We are in short of words to explain Swami's overall talents. Swami says just as how SIta piratti was instrumental in Sage Valmiki bringing out the caritram so also pAdukA itself was instrumental in Swami composing this great sahasram!

A special mention needs to be made as to how our Swami brought in the pAdukA Sahasram. A devotee said that he would compose 1,000 slokas on Sri Ranganatha's tiruvadi with the title "pAdakAmAla sahasram". The devotee questioned Swami if it was possible for him to compose thousand hymns on the Holy Lotus feet of Bhagavan. Swami performed nycyanusandhAnam and said that he was an akincanan and can sing only on the pAdukAs, which are below Bhagavan's feet and composed the thousand Slokas on the holy pAdukAs of Bhagavan. This was the birth of extraordinary pAdukA sahasram containing information's about pAdukA and about Alvar.

Swami wrote pAdukA sahasram in just one yAmam. However it is interesting to note that each verse has abundance of meanings, which may take us years and years to comprehend and fully enjoy.

Swami himself states that in the third yAmam, these slokas poured out of his mouth like the leaves of a mango tree which would fall down when blown by a strong breeze! Swami adds that the reason for the slokas to flow from his mouth was because of the touch of the pAdukA on his head (SaThAri).

Swami exclaims that he is not able to comprehend the greatness of pAdukA. Swami explains that there is a slight possibility to explain the greatness of the pAdukA only if the sky was the writing paper, sea was ink and the person who speaks of the greatness was none other than Bhagavan himself with thousand heads!!!

Swami states that even if he composes hundred thousand Slokas on pAdukA, it would still be an insignificant part of the Greatness of pAdukA! This reveals to us that there is nothing to be amazed by Swami's capability of composing 1000 Slokas, Swami unlimited capabilities could have given us hundred thousand or even much more.

Swami gives us a reason as to why elders bear only the pAdukA on their head, leaving behind Adisheshan, Garudan and others. Swami clarifies that it is because pAdukA is greater than the above mentioned.

Even Bhagavan washes his tirupAdam before placing them on the pAdukA. When this is the case, how to speak of pAdukA's greatness?

Speaking of dependency, Swami says that the Devas are dependent on Rudra and Rudra depends on Brahma. Brahma in turn is dependent on Bhagavan. Now Swami goes to the extent of stating that Bhagavan himself is dependent on paduka => such is padukas greatness!!

The greatness of pAdukAs knows no bounds! The pAdukA (SaThAri) placed on the heads of all devotees in our Koil is Nammalvar himself.

Swami states that Nammalvar wanted all Jivas to serve Bhagavan. Alvar tried to achieve this by blessing us with his Thiruvaymozhi. But there are Jivas who are not aware of Thiruvaymozhi. Being concerned about such Jivas, Nammalvar out of his own free will became Bhagavan's paduka in order to help us. "SaThAri" or the padukA is thus the link between Bhagavan and us in the form of an Acharya! Nammalvar exhibits his sowlabyam in this form and grants contact with himself to all who come to the temple!!

pAdukA also bears the name SaThakopa! Swami acknowledges it by stating that pAdukA herself was instrumental in generating Swami's pAdukA sahasram. These thousand verses can be equated in many respects to Nammalvars TiruvAimozhi!

After equating the pAdukA to Nammalvar, Swami goes ahead to explain the unique quality of the pAdukA. Swami says that pAdukA constitutes the entire universe. Though it is "one" pAdukA, it is all-pervasive. It is under the Lotus feet of Ranganatha, in the mind of Rishis, in the Upanishads, and in the speech of good poets. Swami hence concludes that pAdukA is everywhere!

Being prevalent everywhere at all times, the pAdukA serves for Bhagavan Ranganatha's sport. In addition pAdukA helps us in so many ways. Swami summarises it thus, pAdukA brings our sense organs into control like a chain binding the elephants;

pAdukA prevents us from entering into hell by functioning as the bolt-rod for the door of the hell!

pAdukA being our Acharya, serves as a ladder for us to ascend to SrivaikuNTham! The heads of cetanas are below the pAdukA and the feet of Bhagavan is over the pAdukA. Hence Swami confirms that we can recognise paduka as the shortest route to Moksha!

pAdukA plays a vital role in Ramayana. Gurus and learned devotees cling to her. She shines like the sun. Eminent Brahmins worship her. She stays in Bhagavan's feet permanently. pAdukAs confer permanent benefits on us!

We saw Nammalvars concern towards us. This concern is not restricted to us, Nammalvar in the form of pAdukA extends his concern even to Bhagavan!

Due to the great consideration of the highly sensitive and delicate feet of Bhagavan, Swami says that pAdukAs did not want Bhagavan's feet to be placed on the surface, which was rough because of gems. So, the pAdukA spreads a lotus layer on herself before Bhagavan places his feet!

The concern of pAdukA towards Bhagavan and the anubhavam of Swami Desika are both extraordinary. They compete with each other leaving us at a loss of words to express our feeling!

Since the pAdukAs care so much for the protection of Bhagavan's feet, Swami Desika says that Bhagavan's feet are the protecting authority for all people. But those feet are themselves protected by the pAdukAs. So, the pAdukAs alone need no protection by another! Thus they are the ultimate force for protection!!

Swami states that many devotees think that they have to worship Bhagavan or the pAdukAs but we strongly believe that worshipping the pAdukAs itself is sufficient!!

This clearly explains that we have to worship our Acharyas on the line of Madhurakavi Alvar. This makes us eligible for Bhagavan's mercy!!

pAdukA sahasram is a stotra kAvyam prostrating not just Bhagavan's pAdukAs but also to Alvars who had contacts with Bhagavan's feet and to Acharyas too!

The nitya sUri Adisheshan does different kaimkaryams to bhagavan by taking different forms. This is evident from "cenRAl kuDaiyAm ..ninRAl maravaDiyAm". "ninRAl maravaDiyAm" refers to Adisesha serving as the pAdukA when Bhagavan stands.

In Srimad Ramayana we see the pAdukAs being a representative of Bhagavan and accepting the burden of the kingdom. Do pAdukAs have the capability to govern a kingdom?

As a reply to this, Swami Desika states that the pAdukAs are superior to Bhagavan Himself and goes on to explain the role of pAdukAs in Srimad Ramayanam.

Swami says that the pAdukAs bore the burden of the kingdom for 14 years till Bhagavan Rama returned. Bhagavan Rama then received the responsibility of ruling, but still stands on the pAdukA. So, the pAdukA now bear the old burden with Rama added!

pAdukA sahasram deals with many topics like PrastAva paddadi, samarpani paddati etc. It has thousand Slokas and has kAvya lakshnam too! So, pAdukA sahasram is considered as a kAvyam.

Swami's poetic talents are well known. This is more evident in the citra Paddhati. This Paddhati emphasises a suitable fitting matrix of artistry, a specialty of oriental poetry. Here the letter, the sound, the syllable are more important than the meaning. But even in these Slokas, Swami Desika's meaning make us think deep.

Swami Desika has given us Slokas with just one base alphabet, has framed Slokas with one word and even with just one alphabet!!! Being Swami Desika's stotrams even these contained vast meanings!!!

Let us have a look at the following sloka for instance.

***tatAtattAtitattetA tAtatItetitAtitut* |**
***tattattattAtatitatAtatetAtetatAtutA* ||**
-- Citra paddati, 25

(padavibhAgam - tatAtattA; atitattetA;. tAtati; itetitAtitut; tattattattAtatitatA; AtatA; itAtetatAtutA).

"The itinerary of the pAdukA is vast. It excels Bhagavan Himself in its enjoyability and in its status of being kept as the goal of life. It will destroy with a great fury all the unhappy visitations (such as excessive rain, drought, pestilence, foreign invasion etc.) called 'eti' pain. The pAdukA has ordained all things with their respective characteristics to be subservient to it. This kind of affluence of the pAdukA has a vast extent, all available to the devotee at the will of the pAdukA. It showers a bliss of experience by virtue of melodies as from the Veena. That pAdukA which has joined the father of Manmatha, is like a father to us all - sharing in our mirth and grief." (Translation by Sri V.N. Vedanta Desikan).

It is extremely interesting to note that one word has so many meanings. We have had a flavour of it in vairAgya pancakam by the usage of the word dhanam five times. But here, the repetition of the word results in the Sloka!

pAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapA pAdap pAdapApAdapApAdapA |
pAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapA ||
--Citra paddhati, 29

(padavibhAgam - pAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapA, pAdapA, pAdapApAdapA, apAdapA, pAdApapAdapApAdapApAdapApAdapApAt, apApAdapApA , AdapApAdapA

In the above sloka the whole Sloka is made up of a single world pAdapA used sixteen times. The meaning it conveys is amazing. How can a single word ever communicate so many different meanings?

The most interesting aspect is that there is no other word used in the Sloka. ThisSsloka is complete and full of deep meaning!

Who else but for our Swami can ever venture into writing a full sloka with just a single word!!! Let us have a look into its meaning as translated by Sri V.N. Vedanta Desikan.

"The pAduka purifies all movables and immovables of sins by means of its ablution of water, It takes care of the beings in the leela VibhUti as well as those (Muktas and Nityas) of Sri VaikuNTham".

It does good to those dutiful persons who kindly take care of their parents as their duty and abandons those people who forsake this duty,

Enhances the worth, stock of self restraint and equanimity in the fortunate ones given to the drink of the nectar of Bhagavan's delectable qualities, Dries up, by its radiation's, the enemies to its devotees, and helps all, like Indra, to discharge their respective duties in their respective offices. "

Swami's poetic skills goes to the extent of using just one alphabet (in Samskrit) to complete a Sloka!!!

yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA |
yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA yA ||
--Citra paddhati, 26

These are split in to 19 words/padams as below (padavibhAgam) -

yAyAyA; Aya; yA; AyAyA; yA; ayAya; yA; ayAya; yA; ayAya; yA; ayAya; ayAyA; yA; yAyAya; yA; AyAyAya; yA; Aya

"That pAdukA which collected revenue, being in the throne, which ensures the auspices of the devotees, which is the benefactor of True Wisdom on the devotees, which kindles a yearning for the good things of life (which makes the devotee look to itself as the Supreme Deity), Which wipes out enemies (also the sins of the devotees), which after attaining Bhagavan's feet is for His travels, which helps bring Bhagavan to us and which is the Supreme Aid for the Jivas reaching the Highest Goal, that pAdukA has the distinction of solely being for Bhagavan. "

Swami says that just the radiance of the pAdukAs makes the Jivas shine with knowledge. The melodious sound raised by padukAs when Bhagavan walks with it will make the Jivas

to increase their devotion to Bhagavan. pAdukAs create devotion in the Jivas towards Bhagavan. Nammalvar, being pAdukA, formed a very important bridge like relationship between the Jivas and Bhagavan.

Periya tiruvadi is referred as "VedAtmA". When Bhagavan Sriya:pati sits over Periya tiruvadi, it is clear that Bhagavan is the boss of the Vedas. Similarly, pAdukAs symbolise "tamizh maRai" and when Bhagavan adorns the pAdukAs, Bhagavan automatically establishes that he is also the boss of tamizh maRai!!!

Swami considers that the pAdukAs are firm and strong like Bhumi (bearing the great kula parvatams, mountains). The pAdukAs remind Swamy Desikan of BhUmi pirATTi.

From the great kAvyam, pAdukA sahasram, It is clear that Swami (with all his greatness) wanted himself to be identified as "Sri pAdukA sevaka"!!!

None can comprehend Swami's poetic talents! dindimakavi did not accept Swami's talents initially. But when Swami brought out yAdavAbudayam as a sequel to dinddima kavi's rAmAbyudayam, he realised his folly and whole heartedly praised Swami!!

YaadavAbudayam is a mahA kAvyam and contains explanations of a city, sea, mountains, time, description of sun rise, moon, garden, water sports, gambling, boozing, recreation, separation, marriage, discussions, vehicles, birth etc.

Swami Desika wrote seven works in Samskrit of which YaadavAbudayam, is the first work. YaadavAbyudayam is a mahA kAvyam in twenty four cantos on the life and achievement of Bhagavan Krishna. This contains two thousand six hundred and forty one slokas.

Sri Krishna was an incarnation of Bhagavan! Bhagavan captivated the whole world through his leelas which exhibited his greatness on one hand and sowlabyam on the other. Bhagavan Krishna killed the evil doers, relieved the earth of the troubles, lived with his devis in Dwaraka and protected dharma. YaadavAbudayam explains these in detail. Sri Krishna leela is explained in the fourth canto.

There are a lot of conditions laid down by ancient rhetoricians for a work to be qualified as a mahA kAvyam. YaadavAbudayam fulfills all these conditions and is hence is accepted as a MahA kAvyam.

All Swami's work has the central theme of prapatti. YaadavAbudayam is no exception. Devotion, Self surrender and the tattvatraya are handled here.

Swami has himself explained the qualities of a poet in the first five cantos. Swami has lived as an example even in this. YaadavAbudayam reflects Swami's unique style and the use of choicest words in addition to the qualities of a poet as mentioned by Swami himself! In our sampradAyam "Ratnatrayam" is important for us. The three ratnas are -

PurANa ratnam - Sri vishNu PurANam
mantra ratnam - tirumantiram
stotra ratnam - Alavandar's stotra ratnam.

Our Swami added yet another ratna to the Sri VaishNava world, YAdavAbudaya mahA kAvyam.

Though we know the highest worth of YaadavAbudayam mahA kAvyam, it would be great to know the commentary of Appayya deekshitar, an advaitin and a critic. On reading Swami's YaadavAbudayam and immersing in its charm and Swami's reasoning, Appayya deekshitar calls YaadavAbudayam as "utkrushTha kAvyam" i.e., a very superior kAvyam! He means the senses or purports, which are to be neglected upon in this way are found in each word in the poems of kavitArkikasimham, including the simple and lovely poems. While commenting on canto I, Appayya deekshitar observes that the title, KavitArkikasimha, sarvatantrasvatantra and VedAntacArya are meaningful in their application to the Acharya. He explains each word of these titles. Appayya deekshitar acknowledges that the eminence of Swami Desika cannot be easily assessed.

The ninth sloka, Canto 1 of YaadavAbudayam needs a special mention.

krIDAtUlikayA svasmin krpArUshitayA svayam |
eko viSvamidam citram vibhu: SrImAnajIjanam ||

Having been soaked in karuna, Goddess Lakshmi's Pati who has the capacity to create this astonishing world, picturises Himself by His own leela!!

Deekshitar explains this to be in sync with Purushasuktam. He adds that the phrase "svayam svasmin eka:" explains the concepts of ViSishTAdvaita siddhAnta - nimitta karaNa, upadAna karaNa and the sahakari karaNa (with reference to Bhagavan).

Abinava Desika Uttamoor Swami has referred to this Sloka as "anavamam navamam", hence it has been crowned as the incomparable ninth sloka!

We saw Swami's talents of repeating a single word/alphabet to complete a sloka. This is seen in the sixth canto of YaadavAbudayam also.

nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA |
nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA nayA ||
-- Canto 6, Slola 97

This sloka is such that it forms a picture of a lotus with sixteen petals, shoDasa-dala-padma-bandham! This sloka has a unique feature, even if the word is reversed the sloka will still communicate a meaning! If the word "nayA" is reversed it becomes "yAna". If "yAna" is repeated instead of "nayA" also, the sloka will be meaningful. This feature is called pratiloma (reverse).

yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna |
yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna yAna ||
-- Canto 6, Slola 98

When it is read this way, this Sloka forms a picture of a chakra with sixteen arams (spokes).

To top all this, as we have seen in pAdukA sahasram, Swami has given Slokas with single alphabets also.

nAnAnAnAnAnAnAnAnA nanA nanA nA nanA |
nA nAnAnAnA nA nAnAnAnAnA nA nAnAnA ||

This above is based on the write up of Vaduvur Sri R. Veeraraghavan and from the book "The Life and works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof A. Srinivasaraghavan.

Eralier, we have dealt with two kAvyams, pAdukA sahasram and yaadavAbhyudayam which exhibited Swami's inaccessible eminence. There are three other kAvyams of Swami viz., Hamsa sandeSam, SubhAshita neevi and Sankalpa sooryodayam (a nATaka kAvyam).

Hamsa sandeSam is a small devotional kAvyam. It contains 110 slokas divided into two parts called Ashvasa, 60 plus 50 Slokas.

When Anjaneya (siriya tiruvadi) arrived at Malyavan, and said "kanden Sitayai", he revealed that Sita's residence has been located. Hanuman says that Sita was kept in the Ashokavana at Lanka by Ravana. And thus removed the worry of where Sita was! This was not the end because the worry of not being near was still existing.

sandeSam means message. Because a Swan was sent as a messenger, it was known as Hamsa sandeSam –

"hamsamukhena prekshita ASvAsasatta karma hamsasandeSa:|
atha eva sargayo: ASvAsa iti nama ||"

-- says Sri Abhinava Desika. The word ASvAsa leads to two groupings. Separation is also named as ASvAsa.

The first ASvAsam has 60 slokas telling the route to the swan to reach Lanka. The second with 50 slokas deal with meeting Sita and the message to be communicated to her.

Here, Swami Desika uses a swan to communicate Rama's assurance to Sita to release her from captivity. Rama hence chooses to send a message through a swan. So, the swan is given the direction for its journey!

Kanchi, Tirumalai, Tiruvellarai, Srirangam and Tirumalirumcholai are described as places of visit by the swan. Swami describes Kanchi alone in eleven Slokas and Tirumala in two unique Slokas. Swami does not stop here. He explains about the forests, the ocean and the other regions lying around them. The first sixty Slokas end here.

Lanka is described in the second part. The description further includes the aSokavanam, SIta and delivery of Rama's message.

Towards the end, Swami has given us two Slokas.

The former mentions Rama's killing of Ravana and his return to Ayodhya with Sita and his Kingship there. In the latter Sloka, Swami has instructed us to study this best gem, Hamsa sandeSam dealing with the life of Sita and Rama! This is a kAvya with a lot of VedAnta meanings.

This above is based on the write up of Vaduvur Sri R. Veeraraghavan and from the book "The Life and Works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof A. Srinivasaraghavan.

SubhAshita neevi is yet another kAvyam of Swami Desika. It is a book of instructive verses in 144 Slokas.

"SubhAshita" means good words, "neevi" here refers to the source. SubhAshita neevi can also be understood as a "Treasury of Golden sayings in fine verses". In SubhAshita neevi, Swami has shared his rich experience and ripe knowledge of men and matters.

Singha Bhupala, the King of Rajamahendra was aware of Swami's greatness. He wanted to honour and propagate Swami's Greatness. The king sent some poets to Swami and prayed for Swami's blessings. Swami composed SubhAshita neevi and gave it to the poets. Swami also explained to them the correct way of understanding the meanings.

The evil aspects of life are depicted in the first five sections and the good aspects in the remaining seven sections. The Slokas are simple with great depth in meaning. They appear to be full of wit and humour though in reality they have layers and layers of inner meaning!

The aspects to be avoided are mentioned in the start as it should be given primary importance and the qualities to be cultivated are mentioned next.

SubhAshita neevi is divided into paddhatis. Paddhati refers to a chapter. In SubhAshita neevi, the name of each paddhati is the essence of the chapter itself!

The first chapter is named anipuNa paddhati. A person lacking discrimination is referred to as 'anipuNa'. The mental framework of such a person and the results thereof are described here.

anipuNa, because of such bad qualities soon becomes a drpta, proud and arrogant. This is dealt with in the 2nd chapter drpta Paddhati.

The third paddhati is the Khala paddhati which is a description of a degenerated 'drpta'. Here the person behaves as he likes and stoops down to becoming a wicked person.

durvrtta paddhati is the next which deals with one who lacks good character.

The fifth is the asevya paddhati which deals with persons who occupy a high position because of birth or other circumstances, but who can neither appreciate true service nor spare his servants from reproach. Swami, in this paddhati states that such persons are not fit to be served, respected or be associated with the wise.

From the above it is clear that each defect leads to the next and is like a chain reaction. After identifying and taking necessary measures to get rid of the undesirable qualities, one should concentrate on cultivating the desirable qualities. Swami elaborates this in the second part.

The second part starts with the MahApurusha paddhati. One should acquire the right knowledge by following the example set by Mahapurushas.

The next chapter deals with the importance of discriminative knowledge - samacitta paddhati.

sadASrita paddhati deals with the importance of association with good learned men. People have to follow noble principles. This is dealt with in the neetimat paddhati.

When all these qualities are developed, generosity and other virtues automatically fall in place. These are dealt with in VadAnya (dhanadhAnya) paddhati.

A generous person should also be polite and use sweet words - sukavi (satkavi) paddhati.

When a person follows this ladder, he becomes perfect. The last chapter relates to such persons who are not misled by unwanted arguments. This is hence named 'parIkhsita paddhati'.

SubhAshita neevi is highly psychological in its insight into various facets of human character. In this unique work, Swami has provided a guide for code of conduct that helps us lead a happy and peaceful life!

This is an edited version of the SubhAshita neevi of Swami Vedanta Desika as translated by Sri L. Srinivasan, New Delhi.

SubhAshita neevi is filled with gems which can enlighten our path in the acquisition of knowledge. Swami has taken different kinds of people, their nature of behaviour and varied circumstances into consideration. This is like a practical guide for us in our day to day life!

In anipuNa paddhati, we saw that Swami had dealt with persons lacking mental discrimination. Swami says that they see non-existent fault in others, and assume themselves to be perfect. The following Sloka is on such ignorant critics!

paSyati pareshu doshAn asato'pi jana: sato'pi nAiva guNAn |
viparItamidam svasmin mahimA mohAnjanasyaisha: ||
-- anipuNa paddhati (3)

"Men see non-existent faults in others but not their obvious virtues. On the contrary, they see not their own defects but see imaginary virtues in themselves. This is the wonderful effect of the collyrium of delusion applied to their eyes."

The ignorant critics, due to false notions as explained above, becomes a drpta (proud and arrogant). In the following Sloka in drpta Paddhati, Swami explains that great men may have similarities with other men in certain aspects. But this does not mean that they are equals. Ordinary men have their own limitations.

gatirvyomnA kim tat garuDamabhiTanketa caTaka:
pibatvambha: kshAramna khalu kalaSIsUnuralasa: |
kala: kaNThe nAta: ka iva maSaka: kinnarapati:
kathamcit sAdharmyam kshipati na hi vaidharmya niyama: ||
-- drpta paddhati (11)

"Pride and arrogance behoove little to ordinary beings. Can a sparrow challenge Garuda though both fly in the sky? Can an invalid, who gets saline water for his cure, claim equality with sage Agastya who drank the entire ocean? Can the whine of the mosquito ever rival

the music of the celestial bard? Flying, drinking and singing may be common to such pairs, but there ends the similarity".

In the durvrtta Paddhati Swami emphasises on the need for purity of character. Here, Swami deals with one who lacks good character.

jAtimAtraSaraNa bahishkrtA: kecidAdrtajaghanya vrttaya: |
roshaNa viparidhAvino muhurhepayanti janamujjhitAhiya: ||
-- durvrtta paddhati (11)

"The truly virtuous will shun all contact with those who though well-born, commit evil deeds who are shunned in good society due to their actions, are ill tempered and being unconscious of their own guilt, swank about in society arrogantly".

Swami gives us a clear picture of who deserves to be served and who does not. In the asevya paddhati, Swami states that birth alone is not detrimental in people deserving service!

All of Swami's preachings are what he practiced. Swami's humility and respect to elders is unparalleled. In the following Sloka, Swami goes to the extent of stating that people who do not honour their elders will never be served by good people!

anAkalitamAnushya: kshamAsamsparSavarjitA: |
pratibhuddhai: na sevyante pUrvadevavirodhinaH ||
-- asevya paddhati (10)

"Wise and good men would not serve those who show scant respect for human values, lack tolerance and good behaviour and who do not honour their forebears and elders."

Swami gives us inputs on how to lead a tranquil life –

anantakhyAnisampanna: Suddhasattva: sudhlibala: |
dhatte bahumukham bhogam Sruti drshTi sthirSaaya: ||
-- mahApurusha paddhati (6)

"True knowledge, correct observances, virtuous conduct, sharp intellect, courage of conviction and viewing the world through the lens of scriptures with complete trust in God's dispensations will enable a person to have a tranquil, joyous life in this very world."

The following is an interesting comparison on generosity andmiserliness -

vadAnyaSca kadaryaSca grhitasthiralobhata: |
svAnarthAn sancinotyarthAn parAnarthairayojayan ||
-- VadAnya paddhati (9)

"A miser hoards wealth in the delusion that it will remain permanently with him. A generous person amasses wealth in the hope that he can gift it away permanently to others."

All the translations are by Sri M.K. Srinivasan.

SubhAshita nieevi clearly shows Swami's deep concern for us. He warns us of different kinds of people, guides us as to whose company has to be preferred and whose should be shun, specifies the undesirable qualities to be discarded and desirable qualities to be cultivated...the list can go on.

Swami in short has given us A-Z of all what we should do!!!

We have been enjoying Swami Desika's kAvyams. Now in our list is Sankalpa sooryodayam.

Sankalpa sooryodayam is a drama in ten acts explaining the doctrines of our sampradAyam in no ambiguous terms.

Sunrise gives relief to sleeping persons by waking them up. It is also instrumental in making one perform their respective duties. Bhagavan's Sankalpa sooryodaya to grant Moksha gives relief to the Jivatma and makes it happy. This is in short the meaning of the title of the drama.

This drama is based on the principles of Brahma sUtras.

Different qualities, which rage in the AtmA and create conflict, are represented as characters like Viveka, Darpa, Asuya and others. Viveka ultimately wins the internal battle and predominates the atma.

Devotion to Bhagavan is absolutely essential. We should pray for his dayA. Bhagavan's will is a basic necessity in all our endeavors and the only way out to acquire Bhagavan's daya is through total surrender at Bhagavan's feet. Here Sadacharyas role is crucial. Only a Sadacharya will be able to show us the correct path. (II, 63).

The blessings of Sadacharyas make us perform prapatti at Bhagavan's feet. And ultimately by Bhagavan's will we are granted Moksha - ultimate everlasting enjoyment.

A glimpse into a phrase in Act II of sankalpa sooryodayam –

yatsatyam tadeva nityam bhavati
yatpunarmityA tatkAlenalikam bhavati
-- Act II Pravesika

"What is true will endure forever; what is false in the course of time will perish".

Swami Desika, after extensive study of human nature has given us inputs in each and every verse in Sankalpa sooryodayam which would immensely benefit us.

In the following verse, Swami emphasises the importance of gratitude.

prathitam pAtakivargam krtadna ekohi krtsnamatishete |
tamimam kreyamANadnastamapi durAtmA karishyamAnadna: ||
-- Sankala sooryodayam, Act III Verse 33

"The man who is ungrateful for a past act of kindness is worse than all groups of sinners. The man who is ungrateful for a present act of kindness is worse than the ingrate

mentioned earlier. But the man who is ungrateful for a future act of kindness takes the cake, being the worst of all".

Swami has also exposed the human weakness caused by greed, hypocrisy and pride.

In addition to human affairs, Swami has given us clear inputs with regards to food habits, spending one's time usefully etc.

In the AhAra niyamam, Swami explains how food is instrumental in changing human nature for better or worse. Swami has given a list of food which can be consumed, which should be avoided etc. We should take all measures to ensure that we consume only sAtvik food!

Each day should be spent only on bhagavad kainkaryam. Swami has given us instructions on who we should spend our time in his "Sri Vaishnava dinacari". The day is divided into five parts - the early hours are devoted to ablutions and getting ready for the day, the forenoon is earmarked for gathering materials and getting ready for worship of God, the noon time is meant for actual worship with love and devotion, the afternoon intended for study and discourses and finally the evening is the time for review and contemplation, meditating on the archa form of Bhagavan.

Any work we do, should be bhagavad kainkaryam and should be done with saatvika tyagam!!

The source of this compilation is from an article by Sri M.K. Srinivasan and from the book "Life and works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof. A. Srinivasaraghavan.

We shall now enjoy our Swami's works on Bhagavan Krishna!

Swami has given 21 Slokas on Bhagavan Krishna and named them GopAla vimSati. In Gopala vimSati, Swami has picturised and enjoyed Bhagavan's childhood and his leelas.

animesha nishevaNiyamakshano:
ajahadyauvanamAvirastu citte |
kalahAyita kuntalam kalApai:
karaNonmAdaka vibhramam maho me ||
-- GopAla vimSati (10)

Swami's anubhavam of Bhagavan Krishna is amazing. Swami says that Bhagavan is ever youthful and his beauty mesmerizes everyone and also goes on to state that Bhagavan's beauty should be enjoyed without batting an eyelid. True, the split second time we wink our eyelids, we miss to enjoy the beauty of Bhagavan and Swami emphasises this fact. Just the small peacock feather on top of Bhagavan's hair is enough to behold our attention.

The divya leela's of Bhagavan captivates the mind and other indriyas of the people.

Swami prays to Bhagavan that these beautiful floods of Bhagavan Krishna’s Jyoti form should always be in his heart.

Swami Desika is so charmed by the beauty of Bhagavan that he prays to Bhagavan to bless him with the same vision during his final phase.

adharAhita cAru vamSa nAIA:
makuTAlambi mayUra pincha mAIA: |
harinIla SilA vibhanga nIlA:
pratibhA: santu mamAntima prayANe ||
-- GopAla vimSati (12)

Swami prays to Bhagavan that at the time of his avatara poorthi, he should see only Bhagavan Kannan's tirumeni in his heart and should not get reminded of any other thing. Swami describes that Bhagavan should hold his beautiful flute and appear as Venugopalan. Swami's anubhavam and even wishes were beautiful. Not only did our Swami wish that Bhagavan appears as Venugopalan, but also, he wished to see Bhagavan sport the peacock feathers slantingly on his head. Swami also states that Bhagavan's Thirumeni should be blue in color, similar to the blue bead of Indiran.

Swami Desika adds that by reading this stotra one will be blessed with a direct vision of Bhagavan Krishna!!!

Further, Swami has given another work on Bhagavan Krishna - YadavAbyudayam. In this work, Swami enjoys Kutti Kannan's leelas in great detail. In the fourth canto [29th Sloka], Swami says -

It is amazing to note Bhagavan's SauSIlya guNam and his desire to be present amongst us - the Jivas. Bhagavan - sarveSvaran - who has everything and who grants everything - including Moksha - is seen here as stealing butter from maids. While stealing the butter, Bhagavan was afraid that they would find him and punish him. Seeing the maids come, Bhagavan lays down motionless and with folded hands. Bhagavan requests the chalangai, with a shivering fear, not to raise jingles as it would show him to the maids.

Bhagavan's SauSIlya guNam is so evident in his Krishna avatAram. Bhagavan exhibited his greatness and easy accessibility at the same time.

The most gifted mother of all - Mother YaSoda - was finding the pranks of Bhagavan a bit too much. So, she punishes Bhagavan Krishna by tying Bhagavan to a mortar with a thick rope. Bhagavan - what a Leela – accepts the punishment like an ordinary Jiva. However, he pulls around with the mortar and exhibits his paratvam by granting saapa vimocanam to two yakshas.

Swami has described the above episode in both Gopala VimSati and YadavAbyudayam.

How to define Bhagavan's quality who at one step performs sArathyam to Parthan and at the same time gives the world the Bhagavad Geetha through Parthan! Our Sriya:pati's Kalyana gunas captivates one and all. But it immerses the Jivas when the Kalyana Gunas are enjoyed and expressed by Swami Desika. Swami's Krishnanubavam is vast.

And how to define our Swami's vast knowledge and anubhavam. On one end, Swami enjoys bAla Krishnan's leelas while on the other he shares the greatness of Baghavan's Geetopadesam. Swami has written commentaries on Sri Yamunacharya's GitArthasangraha in the same way as Swami enjoyed Kutti Krishnan's leelas.

Swami speaks of the greatness of Bhagavan in the following Sloka

nikaTeshu niSAmayAmi nityam
nigamAntairaradhunA'pi mrgyamANam |
yamalArjuna drshTa bAla kelim
yamunA sAkshika yauvanam yuvAnam ||
-- GopAla vimSati (8)

Swami Desika describes Bhagavan Krishna as 'nigamAntairaradhunApi mrgyamANam' (i.e.) 'being searched for even now by the Vedas' or 'beyond the comprehension of the Vedas'. Upanishads are not able to explain even one Kalyana guna of Bhagavan completely and are stuck at the very beginning!

With all the above-mentioned greatness our kutty kannan revealed His sowlabyam by pulling himself around with the mortar as a respect to his mother's words. Bhagavan also exhibited his paratvam by granting sapa vimocanam to two yakshas. These Yakshas had enjoyed the bala leelas of Bhagavan when they were trees. Not being contented with that they stayed there for some more time even after they got back their original forms and were immersed in the leelas. The river yamuna also had the bagyam to see all the leelas of Kannan.

Swami states this Greatest Bhagavan is seen by his side all the time – “nikeTeshu niSAmayami nityam!”

There are several works of Swami Desika which expatiate on Bhagavan being out of reach of even the Vedas.

In the very first Sloka of kAmAsikAshTakam, Swami says that supreme Bhagavan who is unreachable and incomprehensible is found to reside to the south of Vegavati river (vegavatyaSca dakshiNam). Upanishads reveal Him as the supreme deity having the sun, the moon and fire as his three eyes and having the body of a man and the head of a Lion with over hanging manes Nara simha - (Man lion).

kAmasikA is the translation in Samskrit by Swami Desika of the tamil word vELukkai (vEL - irukkai). Two meanings are given for this word - vEL = kAma, irukkai = sitting posture; and vEL = as he likes, irukkai = being seated.

In kAmAsikAshTakam, Swami has given an extremely moving and profound declaration of Bhagavan's dedication to protection of those who have taken refuge.

tvayi rakshati rakshakai: kimanyai:
tvayi cArakshati rakshai: kimanyai: |
Iti niScita dhI: SrayAmi nityam
nrhare vegavati taTASrayam tvAm ||

Swami Desika has described his total dependence on Bhagavan for his safety. Swami resolves to serve Bhagavan Narasimha who resides on the banks of river Vegavati.

Swami makes an emphatic declaration - "When you are there to save me why indeed should I seek other Gods? And should you decide not to save me, who else will dare intercede?"

These four lines brief us the concept of SaraNAgati. Swami makes a resolution with a determined mind. Immense faith or mahA viSvAsam is of highest importance for the performance of prapatti and this has been emphasised here.

Swami with utmost faith and confidence declares that if Bhagavan decides to protect us nobody can stop it and if Bhagavan Himself decides not to protect us then there is nobody to protect us. When we know this truth we have no option but to wholeheartedly seek refuge in Bhagavan and become a recipient of Bhagavan's daya!!!

This compilation is based on the inputs from "Sri kAmAsikAshTakam" by Seva Swami, published by Sri Vedanta Desika Research centre and from Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan's "The Life and Works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika".

In kAmAsikAshTakam, Swami Desika exhibited his mahA viSvAsam towards Bhagavan.

Now the question is, why should a person have mahA viSvAsam? Only those who have faith in Bhagavan would surrender to Him, so where is the need for the adjective "mahA"? Is the existing faith insufficient?

Before we look for a solution to the above question we should be clear of the following facts.

Attaining the Lotus feet of Bhagavan is the only goal in life. Bhagavan gives us this life and the only service one should yearn for is the service of Bhagavan. Only by attaining Moksha we can perform service to Bhagavan in his Para form. Moksha means liberation from the cycle of births and re-births.

So, attaining Moksha for performing the Kaimkaryam for Bhagavan and his Consort is the only goal of life.

Moksha can be reached only by adopting one of the two paths. They are the Bhakti Yoga and the Prapatti (*). Bhakti mArga, underlines the importance of complete and total devotion by which we can please Bhagavan thereby Bhagavan accepting us in his abode. Prapatti mArga, underline the fact that we have to perform total surrender at the Lotus feet of Bhagavan. This is prescribed for those who just cannot comprehend Bhakti Marga.

(*) Prapatti is also called SaraNAgati, bharanyAsam, bharasamarpaNam and nyAsam. Here we seek Bhagavan as the sole refuge, for salvation. We surrender ourselves to him and pray for salvation.

One who gets liberation goes to Sri VaikuNTham and serves Bhagavan in a capacity that Bhagavan himself orders/confers on the Jiva. Moksha is a life of eternal blissful servitude (nithya kaimkaryam) to Bhagavan.

As a result of prapatti, Bhagavan will relieve the Prapanna of all the past Karmas, which have not begun to yield fruits (sancita Karmas), and Karmas done in the present which will yield fruits in the future lives (Agami Karmas).

Only prArabdha Karmas i.e., Karmas, which have started giving fruits in the present life will remain untouched. Thus, a SaraNAgatan will divest oneself of all the fruits of one's past and present Karmas and will be fit to reach God.

Prapatti is performed only once but this wipes out heaps and heaps of heinous sins committed by Jivas in innumerable previous births.

There is no need to worry as to how a single act of prapatti can wipe out all our sins. Isn't a small matchstick sufficient to burn heaps of thrash? Andal emphatically states that how much ever our sins are, they will be burnt into ashes " ... theeyinil thoosagum.. ".

One should be sure about this and believe in Bhagavan's mercy and capacity to grant us Moksha. Hence the need for mahavisvasam!

Swami Desika has clarified this to us in the following sloka.

SAstra prAmANya vedi nanu vidhi vishaye nirviSanko'dhikAri
viSvAsasyAngabhAve punariha vidushA kim mahattvam prasAdhyam |
maivam ghorAparAdhai: sapadi guru phale nyAsa mAtreNa labhye
SankA pArshNi grahArhA SamayitumucitA hetubhistattadarhai: ||
-- nyAsa vimSati (7)

"When one has correctly understood the authority of Saastras and has and can have no doubts about following what has been prescribed there in, why should that faith be elevated to the level of "intense faith" - MahA viSvAsam and prescribed as an essential component (anga) in the performance of prapatti which has to be compulsorily acquired? - one is prone to ask. That is not a proper attitude. MahA viSvAsam is quite essential and has been rightly stressed upon, in view of prapatti earning for the Prapanna (one who has performed prapatti) quickly the greatest possible benefit- Moksha- not withstanding his having committed horrible sins, a contemplation of which is prone to drag back the intending performance of prapatti. It is necessary and Proper that such doubts are done away with". -- Translation by Sri D. Ramaswamy Aiyangar.

MahA viSvAsam is the most important anga of prapatti. The other angas are mentioned in the following sloka –

nyasyAmyakincana: SrIman anukUlo'nyavarjita: |!
viSvAsa prArthanA pUrvam AtmarakshA bharam tvayi ||
-- nyAsa daSakam (2)

"Absolutely helpless and incompetent as I am, oh Bhagavan of Sri, with the resolution that I shall henceforth act in accordance with your wishes, avoid and give up all transgressions from the rightful path laid down by you, with the supreme confidence that nyAsa at your feet will never fail to liberate me, I have laid down the responsibility of my protection at your feet with a prayer, You be my protector". -- Translation by Thaiyar Vangeepuram Raghavadasan

There five angas [pre-requisites] for performing prapatti are listed in this sloka. They are -

1. The devotee must decide to do those that please Bhagavan

2. The devotee should desist from doing anything that does not please Bhagavan,

3. MahA viSvAsa or, unflinching loyalty is expected in each devotee.

4. The solid belief that the Bhagavan Sriman Narayana is the Supreme and the Bhagavan will grant Moksha is a vital parameter for the devotee.

5. The devotee must be aware that he/she does not have the capacity or capabilities to attain salvation by own efforts.

6. The devotee must postively pray to Bhagavan to save him/her and grant salvation.

Swami Desika systematised the Doctrine of nyAsa and gave it the rightful place among the Brahma Vidyas.

svata: siddha SrImAnAmita guNa bhUmA karuNayA
vidhAya brahmAdin vitarati nijAdeSamapi ya: |
prapattyA sAkshad vA bhajana SirasA vApi sulabham
mumukshurdeveSam tamahamadhigacchAmi SaraNam ||
-- nyAsa tilakam (5)

"Swami says that he is desirous of attaining Moksham and approaches (resorts to) that Bhagavan of Devas as his refuge, that Bhagavan who is self evident, who is Sriman (ever associated with Lakshmi) and who shines with abundant and immeasurable (auspicious) attributes, who out of His grace created Brahma and others and gave the Vedas which are His commands, and who is easy to approach only through prapatti, either as such or as an adjunct to Bhakti yoga."

The above sloka is an upanishadic mantra, which Swami has rendered in the form of a poetry. The first part of the sloka communicates –

The self evident nature of Bhagavan - Bhagavan's eternal union with Goddess Sri; Bhagavan as an abode of all Kalyana guna's; Bhagavan's grace as evident during the act of creation - Bhagavan creates Brahma in the first instance and through him the entire cosmos.

In addition to all this Bhagavan discloses the Vedas to us.

Swami assertively states that prapatti is the only means for Moksha. Though Bhakti yoga is also referred to as an upAya, even this has to depend on prapatti in order to get over several hurdles in its course.

Swami's nyAsa vimSati gives briefly all the information one needs to know about prapatti. The unique distinction of nyAsa vimSati is that this is the only stotra for which Swami has himself provided excellent commentary quoting PramANAs from the Vedas, samhitas and PurANAs!

In the following stotra, Swami Desika himself performs prapatti (*) at the Lotus feet of Bhagavan Varadaraja of Kanchi. Swami has been a living example for us to follow. This Sloka is recited at the end as part of the nyAsa daSakam.

(*) There are three modes by which one can do prapatti -

1. svanisTha - Applicable to Alvars, Acharyas and others who have full knowledge of the requirements.

2. uktinisTha - Applicable to others and is done through Acharya to Bhagavan. The Acharya recites sentences, in the presence of the arcA moorthy conveying full surrender, which are repeated by the aspirants.

3. AcAryanisTha - In this case, the individual surrenders to the AcArya himself. The AcArya out of compassion prays to the arcA moorthy to look after the protection of the individual.

samsAravarta vega praSamana SubhadrgdeSika prekshito'ham
santyakto'nyai: upAyai: anucita cariteshvadya SAntabhisandhi: |
ni:SangastattvadrshTyA niravadhikadayam prArthya samrakshakam tvAm
nyasya tvatpada padme varada nijabharam nirbharo nirbhayo'smi ||
-- nyAsa vimSati (22)

"Bhagavan Varadaraja! Having been the beneficiary of the auspicious AcArya kaTAksham (glances) which have the power to contorl the speed of the whirlpool of samsaaram, having been given up (abandoned) by all other means, having now quelled my tendency to pursue prohibited paths, having dispelled all doubts by virtue of true knowledge, having prayed to Thee, - possessing boundless grace-to be my protector, I have placed the burden of protecting me at thy lotus feet, I have become burdenless and fearless".

Swami emphasises on the importance of Acharya kaTAksham which is a prerequisite to taking up nAysa. The power of Acharya kaTAksham is so great that it can relieve us from the repeated cycles of births and rebirths.

Based on our sukrudams, Bhagavan Himself secures us Acharya sambandham. Srimad Azhagiya Singar, in his cassette "Desikanum avar sooktikalum" has stated that just as a true well wisher would try to save a drowning person (a true well wisher would anxiously wait to somehow save the person and the moment the person comes closer to the shore would pull him out), so also Bhagavan based on our Karmas tries to save us by giving Acharya sambandham. The upakAram rendered to us by Bhagavan is mentioned in pAsuram 30 of amirutasuvAdini, which refers to "pazhiyAta nalvinaiyil paDintAr tALil paNivittup pAcankaL aDaiya nIki"

Bhagavan makes us prostrate to our Acharyas there by relieving us of all sins!!!

Swami has also referred to several angas of prapatti. Swami states that after performing prapatti ,Swami feels relieved of his burden and his fears. He adds that he is now safe and secure!!!

The translations mentioned above are by Sri R.Ramaswamy Aiyangar.

Acharya sambandham is an essential element on the arduous path of spiritual effort, all the more in the case of nyAsa or SaraNAgati.

The importance of adoring Acharyas has been dwelt with at a great length in "GuruparamparA sAram" which is a prelude to Srimad RahasyatrayasAram. The first Sloka of nyAsa tlakam "gurubhyastatgurubhyaSca...", which starts with guru vandanam is

the first Sloka of GuruparamparA sAram also. Swami Desika begins his GuruparamparA sAram by referring to a PurANa sloka which runs thus -

"pApishtTa: kshatrabandu ca puNDarIka: ..."

"A sinner Kshatrabandu and a righteous man PuNDarIka both attained Moksha only by obtaining the grace of an Acharya. Hence it is up to every one to seek and secure an Acharya."

One who desires to obtain (spiritual) true wealth and Prosperity must wish to secure an Acharya with the following qualifications - Swami has given these details in the very first sloka of nyAsa VimSati "siddham satsampradAye sthira ...".

1) siddham sat sampradAye - One who firmly attaches himself to and takes his stand on the sat sampradayam – asmad deSika sampradAyam which in turn is elucidated as "mAnyam yatISvara mahAnasa sampradAyam" in Sloka 1 of his SaraNAgati deepikA, the glorious and highly revered tradition that emanated from the kitchen of Acharya Ramanuja.

2) sthiradhiyam - One who is possesed of a steady and unflinching intellect. Has firm knowledge and extends the tradition he imbibed from his Acharya to his disciple.

3) anagham - One who is blemishless (in thought, word and deed). He is spotless and pure. The purity must be such as to purify all who come in contact with him.

4) Srotriam - One who has mastered the Vedas. Shrotriya is one who has properly heard, learnt and mastered the Vedanta i.e the Upanishad.

5) brahma nishTham - One who is deeply attached to Bhagavan and who lives, moves and has his being in Him. He is one who is absorbed in and intent on the contemplation of Brahman, the supreme being dealt with in the Upanishads.

6) satvastham - One who takes his stand in sattvaguNa to the total exclusion of rajoguNa and tamoguNa. It is sattva guNa alone that helps one to achieve what is good for him and to others.

7) satyavAcam - One who ever speaks the truth and truth alone.

8) samaya niyatayA sAdhu vrttyA sametam - One who possesses good conduct as per the pure tenets. Vritti means, means of livelihood and also conduct. Samaya means time or occasion and also a siddhanta or school of Philosophical thought. The way the Acharya has to conduct himself must be in tune with the times and also with the code adopted by the righteous.

9) DambhAsUyAdi muktam - One who is totally free from vanity, jealousy etc. Humility must be the hallmark of an Acharya.

10) jita vishaya gaNam - One who keeps under control the senses prone to go after worldly pleasures.

11) dIrghabandhum - one who regards the entire human race as his relations. The relationship referred to here is not that of the body alone but of the atma which looks upon the whole world (including himself) as the body of Bhagavan.

12) dayALum - One who is ever full of mercy and compassion.

13) skhAlitye SAsitAram - one who checks and corrects them on seeing them swerve from the right path.

14) sva parA hita param - One who always acts in a manner conducive to the welfare of himself and of others. As mentioned by Sage Parasara in Sri Vishnu Puranam, he must pray for the lasting good of one and all by the grace of God. "sa diSatu bhagavAn aSesha pumsAm harirapajanmajarAdikAm samrddhim"

We should respect such Acharyas as we respect Bhagavan. Swami Desika explains the reason for this in the very next sloka of nyAsa vimSati.

The Acharyas should be venerated and worshipped as if they were Bhagavan Himself. For both possess the same qualities, viz.,

1. aj~nAna dvAnta rodhAt - Dispelling the darkness of ignorance

2. aghahapariharaNAt - Wiping out sins

3. AtmasAmyAtvahatvAt - Converting others into a likeliness of himself.

4. janma pradvamsi janmaprada garimatayA - The excellent trait of conferring a new life which does away with samsAric life forever.

5. divya drshTi prabhAvAt - By conferring Divine glances

6. nishpratyUhAnrSamsyAt - By the flow of unobstructed compassion.

7. niyatarasatayA - By virtue of eternal sweetness.

8. nitya Seshitva yogAt - Because of the eternal bond of Seshi and Sesha.

The disciple must hence be imbued with the feeling that the help of the Acharya is above recompense.

These eight fold qualities are common to Bhagavan and the Acharya. The disciples should never think that the upakAram done by the Acharya can be compensated. The sishya should serve the guru truly and faithfully and offer himself and his possession to the extent possible at the feet of the Acharya.

Nothing can ever be done to recompense for what our Acharya's has done to us!!!

Swami Desika has been our ideal Acharya. In fact Swami's auspicious qualities cannot be restricted to just the above 15 points - it is infinite! Our Swami is certainly the avatara of Bhagavan Thiruvenkatamudaiyan!

The above write up is based on Sri R. Ramaswamy Aiyangar's commentary on Swami Desika's nyAsa vimSati.

We saw the definition of an ideal Acharya. In the third sloka of nyAsa vimSati "sadbuddhi: sAdhu: sevI samucita caritastattva bodhAbhilAshI.." Swami Desika defines an ideal sishya or disciple.

The following are the qualifications which a true Sishya (we) should possess. They are 15 in number.

A disciple --

(1) sadbuddhi - must possess right intellect and should properly imbibe Acharya's teachings,

(2) sAdhu sevI - must be intent on worshiping and revering sAdhus (right minded ones),

(3) samucita carita: - must be of good conduct consistent with his status and the environment he lives in. This includes due performance of duties prescribed for his varna and Ashrama,

(4) tattva bodhAbhilAshI - must have a keen desire to learn about the true nature of men and things, one's actual goal and the means to achieve the goal viz., tattva, hita and Purushartha,

(5) SuSrUshu: - must be willing to render service to his Acharya,

(6) tyaktamAna: - must not have false prestige and must have given up notions of self importance,

(7) praNipatana para: - must be willing to bend and prostrate before the Acharya,

(8) praSnakAla pratIksha: - must await for the proper time and opportunity to put questions to the Acharya for clarification and learning,

(9) and (10) SAnta: and dAnta: - must keep his indriyas and mind under control,

(11) anasUyu: - must never be jealous,

(12) SaraNam upagata: - must have sought refuge at the Acharya's feet by way of SaraNAgati,

(13) SAstra viSvAsa SAlI - must have implicit gaith in ths Sastras

(14) parIkshAm prApta: - must have been tested by the Acharya and found fit,

(15) krtavit - must be ever grateful to the Acharya for all what the Acharya has done.

Swami Desika in adikArasangraham, pAsuram 38 states –

ERRi manattezhil j~nAna vilakkai iruLanaittum-
mARRinavarkku, oru kaimmARu mAyanum kANakilAn
pORRi ukappatum pundiyil koLvatum, pongupugazh
cARRi vaLarpatum caRRallavO munnam peRRatarkE.

Our Acharya drives out the darkness in our minds by lighting the bright lamp of knowledge. Swami Desika states that even Bhagavan who is capable of working wonders cannot find any means of adequately compensating the Acharyas.

So, all that a disciple can do to an Acharya is to praise him, be constantly thinking of him and keep singing the glory of his Acharya. But all what we do, can only be a trifle when compared to the benefits we have obtained from the Acharya.

We are ever indebted (ruNavan) to our Acharyas.

A disciple with the above qualifications alone will be entitled to be taught what he truly and sincerely desires to learn.

The above write up is based on Sri R. Ramaswamy Aiyangar's commentary on Swami Desika's nyAsa vimSati.

The Vedas, Smrtis etc., have firmly established the nyAsa vidyA. Bhagavan has Himself spoken about it. Our Poorvacharyas have also preached nyAsa vidyA (prapatti).

When a person has completely surrendered to Bhagavan by performing prapatti, death becomes a welcome guest for him. He is not scared of it, rather he looks forward for it! Only non-prapannas have to be afraid of death!

But, in real life situations we see that so many people who perform prapatti request Bhagavan to reach SrivaikuNTham only at the end of their life and not immediately. Therefore a question might arise, that if Prapannas are not scared of death why can't they perform Artha prapatti and reach SrivaikuNTham immediately??

In the 61st Sloka of acyuta Satakam, "bhaktAstAvaka sevA rasa bharitA: ...", Swami explains the reason as to why people prefer to go to SrivaikuNTham at the end of the life time instead of going immediately (by performing Artha prapatti).

Swami says, though the true devotees, have been longing for several years to be released from samsArA and go to SrivaikuNTham, they do not seek Moksham immediately. They wait for dehAvasAnam. This is because of their fascination for the arcA forms of Bhagavan here, and to render kainkarya - loving and respectful service to them. Another reason is that Bhagavan himself is desirous of keeping those devotees here for some time so that they may serve as examples for other people and also induce a taste in those others for release from samsAra and attain Moksha, both by precept and example.

In many of his works, Swami Desika has emphasised the importance of prapatti, the greatness of a Prapanna and the way a Prapanna has to lead his life after performing prapatti. Let us have a look at a few Slokas -

prAptabhilAsham tvadanugrahAnmAm
padmA nishevye tava pAda padme |
Aa dehapAtAdaparAdha dUram
AtmAnta kainkarya rasam vidheyA: ||
-- ashTabhujAshTakam (8)

In this Sloka, Swami declares that a person who has performed prapatti will certainly attain Moksha. However, Swami reminds us that there is a code of conduct for a Prapanna to be observed for the rest of the life till dehAvasAnam. Swami leads us by being an example and prays to the divya-dampati that for the rest of his life he must be blessed with the opportunity of performing nitya kainkarya to Bhagavan's feet which are already glorious from the assistance at the hands of Goddess Lakshmi.

tyaktvopAyAnapAyAnapi paramajahanmadhyamAm svArha vrttim
prAyaScittam ca yogyam vigata rNatatirdvandva vAtyAm titikshu: |
bhakti j~nAnadi vrddhim paricaraNaguNAn satsamrddhim ca yuktAm
nityam yAcedananyastadapi bhagavatastasya yadvApta vargAt ||
-- nyAsa VimSati (19)

The uttarakritya, or the conduct of behaviour of a Prapanna in the post prapatti period is the topic of this sloka. The dos and don'ts are very clearly mentioned.

Swami states that a Prapanna should give up all upayAs for obtaining anything other than Moksha (Moksha is also guaranteed by performing prapatti just once, so he should not try any other means for obtaining Moksha). He should not also pursue anything which is svaroopa virodham. He must never give up the mode of life suited to his status and state of mind but must strike a middle course performing necessary atonement when necessary. A Prapanna must feel that he is free from all debts and must bravely put up with the changes in life in the shape of pleasure and pain. He must not aspire for any other benefit. He must sincerely pray for more jnana, Bhakti etc., and also for the objects needed for the worship of Bhagavan. He must also pray for the appropriate prosperity of the righteous. He should pray only to Bhagavan or to His true devotees.

In the very next Sloka, Swami Desika elaborates on uttarakrtyAdhikAram - the service to God and his devotees. Service or Kainkarya is of two kinds - Aj~nyA and anuj~nyA. The former has to be rendered scrupulously without any break or slip. Its rigour cannot be relaxed. These are our duties. They will NOT give us specific results, but non- performance leads to accumulation of sins. This can be equated to our breath. By breathing there is no specific result but by non-breathing we are dead!!!

anuj~nyA kainkarya is optional. Performing such kainkarya is a pleasure by itself and one need not expect any results for performing such kainkaryams.

How a Prapanna must desist from acting is indicated in the above sloka which can well be regarded as a summary of the uttarakrtyAdhikAram of Srimad RahasyatrayasAram!

The above write up is based on the commentary of the following authors, Sri K.P. RangaSwami on Swami Desika's asthabhujAshTakam, Sri R. Ramaswamy Iyengar's commentary on Swami Desika's nyAsa vimSati and acyuta Satakam.

Swami Desika glorifies the exceptional greatness of Prapannas. In SaraNAgati deepikA, Swami states that the mantras used by Prapanna's during the performance of prapatti are based on authoritative pramANAs.

mantrairanuSrava mukheshvadhigamyamAnai:
svAdhi kriyA samucitairyadi vA'nyavAkyai: |
nAtha tvadliya caraNau SaraNam gatAnAm
naivAyutAyuta kalA'pyaparairavApyA ||
-- SaraNAgati deepikA (29)

Swami states that people who follow other paths can never be equated to Prapannas who have surrendered at Bhagavan's feet. They utter mantras appropriate to the upAsaka.

The mantras may be from Vedas, PaancharAtra, other authoritative pramANAs or the vAkyAs that have originated from Alvars and Poorvacharyas. Swami's respect to Alvars and Poorvacharyas is so great that Swami refers to their words as equal to the Srutis and Itihasa-Puranas.

Swami's concern to us knows no bounds. Swami views everything from our position and gives us answers for all our queries. There are a lot of false notions about prapatti. The following sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA clarifies such false notions.

dattA: prajA: janakat tava deSikendrai:
pratyA'bhinandya bhavatA pariNIyamAnA: |
madhye satAm mahitabhoga viSesha siddhyai:
mangalya sUtramiva bibhrati kinkaratvam ||
-- SaraNAgati deepikA (30)

In this Sloka, Swami portrays prapatti as an Atma vivAham (wedding). The wedding here is between the JeevAtmA and the ParamAtmA. The JeevAtmA is the bride and Bhagavan is the bridegroom. This wedding is performed by the Acharya who is the father. This father (the Acharya) does kanyAdAnam to Bhagavan. Bhagavan Vishnu, the bridegroom, is extremely pleased with the gift and takes holds of the Jiva. It becomes the duty of Bhagavan to protect this Jiva just as how a husband has to protect his wife!

Similarly, a wife (Prapanna) also has certain duties to be performed (to Bhagavan). Even in the lowkika life (as a wife), we have to follow stree dharma, so as a Prapanna, we are expected to follow Prapanna dharma. In the uttara-krutyam (after prapatti), a Prapanna lives in the midst of dedicated atmas and engages oneself in service to Bhagavan, which is like keeping the tirumAngalyam safe and sound.

(This can be related to a married lady relating herself to her husband's well wishers, serving her husband and his relatives)

A wife (Prapanna) tries to please her husband (Bhagavan) in all possible ways. She tries to do only those that will please her husband and will honestly try to desist from doing anything that will not please him.

The most important thing that is expected of a wife is her chastity. She should have chastity in devotion towards Bhagavan. Just as how a wife expects all her requirements

to be satisfied by her husband alone, so also, a Prapanna should rely only on Bhagavan and should not go behind anya devatas.

In the 72nd sloka of acyuta Satakam, Swami Desika compares a true devotee to a cAtaka bird. This is a species of bird which has got a hole in its throat. This hole prevents it from drinking the water of ponds and lakes. So this bird can quench its thirst only when there is rain. The rain water can go into its stomach straight through the upturned open mouth. So, mere gathering of thick clouds will not quench its thirst. Even if heavy dew sets in it is of no use to it.

Similarly, Swami states that, to a true devotee of Bhagavan, who always looks up to Bhagavan to quench his thirst, the other devas singly or put together can be of no help!!!

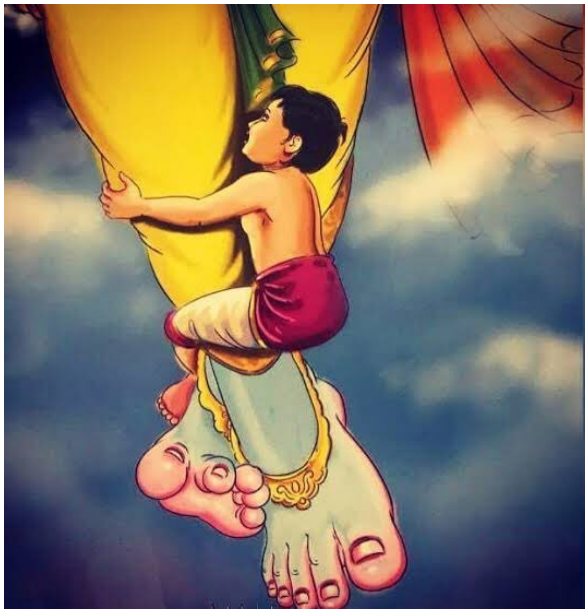
By explaining SaraNAgati as a wedding, Swami has given rest to a lot of questions that could arise because of ignorance.

Many people link SaraNAgati with death. They have a feeling that if prapatti is performed to a person he will die at once. They fail to understand that during prapatti, we can request Bhagavan for reaching SrivaikuNTham at the end of this life. There are yet others who say that prapatti has to be performed immediately before death because after prapatti they have to become strictly orthodox and cannot move freely in society as before.

Swami has hence portrayed prapatti as an Atma vivAham which can bring about happiness and a feeling of relief. prapatti removes our burden and is the only objective of every JivAtmA!!!

It is an understatement to state that we are extremely fortunate to be disciples of Swami Desika who has systematized prapatti for our sake. We should be eternally grateful to Swami!!!

The above write up is based on Sri R. Ramaswamy Iyengar's commentary on Swami Desika's SaraNAgati deepikA and acyuta Satakam.



POST PRAPATTI / PARAMAPADA SOPANAM

Since Prapatti is an Atma vivAham (wedding) - the wedding between the JeevAtmA and the ParamAtmA, every Prapanna (as Bhagavan's wife), has a code of conduct to be followed!

In the 36th Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA, Swami further emphasises on the way Prapanna spends his time as long as he is in this world.

Swami Desika mentions four distinctive features on how Prapannas lead their life.

1. A Prapanna is always amidst like minded people. Prapannas relish the company of other Prapannas - Godly men who have surrendered to Bhagavan. This sat sangam makes even this bhUlokam a SrivaikuNTham!

2. Just as how it is necessary for Prapannas to have constant sat sangam, it is equally important for them to keep away from the company of people who have a wayward tendency. Prapannas should not associate themselves with people who are erring personalities. He should run away from men who sin against Bhagavan as if they have seen serpents. They do not mix with people who are devoted to other devatas.

3. The most important attribute visible in Prapannas is the unflinching steadfast faith in blemishless conduct. Prapannas follow anushThAnams very strictly for the sake of Bhagavad preetyartham (to please Bhagavan and not for any other material benefits).

4. A Prapanna has no illusions about the power and position of devas such as Brahma, Siva, Indra etc. He worships only Sriya:pati. This does not mean that he hates other devas, it is just that he is indifferent towards them. A Srivaishnava considers everything to be Bhagavan's property and so does not hate anything!

In the 67th Sloka of acyuta Satakam, Swami explains how these devas treat humans. Swami also explains that there is a drastic change in the way devas treat a Jiva when he becomes a Prapanna and heads towards SrivaikuNTham.

devAnAm paSusamAno janturgatvA devanAtha tava padam |
taireva sarvai: samsAramANai: bhavati sadA datta bali: ||

Swami states that everyone is indebted to devas, Rishis and Pitrus. There are various ways to wipe out these debts. The debts to devas can be wiped out by performing yagas and yagnas, to Rishis by VedAdhyaya and by begetting progeny the debt to pitru gets liquidated. Swami hence explains that devas regard humans as mere sacrificial beings!

But the reaction of devas is absolutely different when a person by the grace of the Acharya and the liberality of Bhagavan ascends to Sri VaikuNTham. The muktas are instantly freed from their indebtedness to the devas. Not just this, the devas and even the persons who continue in this samsara treat the Mukta with great reverence and respect and offer homage and tribute to Him.

So, it is once again clear that a Prapanna should be grateful to his Acharya (who by his upadesa) converts his atma and makes it fit to be offered to God for eternal kainkaryam by doing prapatti which takes him to Paramapadam.

The following things should be abandoned by a Prapanna at any cost -

1. Worship of anya devatas
2. association with devotees of other devatas
3. Showing disregard to a true devotee of Sriman Narayana and
4. Showing disregard, disrespect and neglect to his Acharyas.
5. The Prapannas thus spend their days, each karaNam and each Indriya getting its full share of enjoyment on proper lines.

The above write up is based on "tattva RahasyArtha sangraha" an English translation of "upayukta sangraham" by Srimad Ranga Ramanuja Maha Desikan (Sri Kozhiyalam Swami) and Sri R. Ramaswamy Aiyangar's commentary on Swami Desika's SaraNAgati deepikA and acyuta Satakam.

An ideal Prapanna, spends his days fully enjoying Bhagavan. The ultimate objective of a Prapanna at the end of this life is to reach the highest destination, Paramapadam. To reach SrivaikuNTham, Swami Desika has given us nine things in the form of steps in Paramapada sopAnam.

Paramapada sopAnam is a short rahasya which gives in a nutshell all that a pious Srivaishnava should know and do for his emancipation. The nine parvas which can be broadly divided under three heads –

1. adhikAra - The first four sections are on qualifications.
2. upAya KaNDa - The fifth chapter is on means of attainment.
3. Phala KaNDa - The sixth to ninth steps are on the fruits of attainment.

1. Viveka Parva - This Parva is based on the discriminatory knowledge. This knowledge is based on the various experiences and incidents that we come across in life.

It is Bhagavan's upakaram that we reach an Acharya and get His Upadesam. It is the duty of a sishya to prostrate to the Acharya, and request him for Upadesam. The Sishya should be very attentive during the upadesam.

The Acharya explains about the nature of Bhagavan and that of the Jivas. This enables the sishya to understand the meanings of tirumantiram and the Upanishads. He understands the realities for his survival and his vivekam starts growing.

The Viveka Parva deals with the three tattvas viz,. cetana, acetana and ISvara and declares the cetana is neither creator, nor a protector nor a master.

2, nirveda parva - After understanding the meanings of the tirumantiram, the Sishya regrets for the deeds he had done earlier. He realises that by not seeking refuge in

Bhagavan, he has wasted a lot of births. He further realises that Bhagavan is the only Seshi.

These regrets are positive. It helps him remove the unpleasant and disgussting qualities in himself, makes him devoid of ego and cultivates Atma gunas and makes him eligible to take up the upaya for moksha.

A person has distaste for all earthly and heavenly pleasures including those of Brahma and other Gods, which are trifles and transitory.

3. Virakti parva – Non-attachment for men and things, seeing that they are not free from defects and detachment from the enjoyment of one's own self (Kaivalya).

Other than Moksha, he understands that every other association has limitations. So he is detached from samsara. All the happiness in this world ends up in sorrow only, the life in the world is full of sorrow and our relatives are not going to help us. Even the kings enjoying luxury have had enough and more tough times which explains to us that these luxuries have limitations.

He also understands the limitations of Svargam (heaven) etc. A person does yAgas to ascend to svargam. There, he takes up a form of a deva and serves the Devas just as cows serve us. He performs the works as instructed by the devas and stands there like a slave. The karmas like yAga which he performed will keep decreasing as he gets the svargAnubavam. After the effect of the karma gets over, he will be pushed from there. He loses the deva form and will fall upside down.

He now has to fall into the same cycle of births and rebirths. Taking a birth is an extremely painful process. The Jiva should reach the moon in the sookshma form and from there take steps stage by stage to mix with sky, breeze, clouds, rain, grains etc and enter the body of the man which might materialise into the Jiva obtaining the human form. By the time the Jiva is born it suffers a lot. If a person realises all this he will never have temporary desires like going to Svarga etc. Similarly the positions like Siva and Brahma are also not worth desiring.

Kaivalyam is AtmAnubhavam. This also has its own limitations because the anubhavam is restricted to JivAtma and it does not enjoy ParamAtma.

Thus, because vivekam has removed the desire for other results, he will not pray to anya devatas which give temporary benefits. He will pray to Bhagavan only for kainkaryam and nothing else.

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha VivaraNam" by Sri Sriramadesikachariyar Swami and "Life and works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof. A. Srinivasaraghavan.

A person with vivekam (viveki) does not have desires that yield temporary fruits. His only objective is kainkaryam and prays to Bhagavan to enable him to perform kainkaryam to Bhagavan and to His Devotees.

The last step in the adhikAra is the Bheeti-Parva. A person initially gets virakti on the JivAtmA, paramAtmA and Sareeram and gets a feeling that he is a dAsan to Bhagavan. He has all along been thinking that he is independent and so had incurred the mahA

pAvam of being a thief - the theft here is because he thinks that the AtmA is his, while it actually belongs to Bhagavan. Once he realises his dAsatvam, the theft of having stolen the AtmA goes off. He stops committing mistakes because he regrets his earlier behaviour. Over a period he gains a lot of vairAgyam and gives up all material desires. So, he does not perform kAmya karmas which binds him into the rope of samsara.

After attaining such a state he thinks of his karmas which are anAdi. It has not been exhausted and so has been accumulated. He has not even done any prAyaScittam to cancel it. Some karmas have started bearing fruits and some are yet to start. He realises that it is beyond one's capacity to exhaust the karmas, either by undergoing it or by doing prAyaScittam. As a result of this, one is forced to take a lot more births with innumerable sariras. He then gets caught into the cycle of being in the womb, taking birth, old age, death. The depth of this sorrow knows no bounds. A viraktan realises these realities.

To get relieved of these troubles, one cannot go in search of anya devatas. It is a great mistake even to think of approaching anya devatas. Even if a person worships them and reaches Svarga, these devas push him down. So, how are they ever going to help men? One should have two important qualifications if men have to approach him for help –

1. The intention to help
2, Capacity to help.

From the above it is very clear that the anya devatAs do not have any intention to help. They just treat humans as sacrificial beings and get work done through men.

When we speak of the capacity to help, none of these devatAs have the capacity to confer moksham. Infact, they are not even eligible to enter Paramapadam. So, they cannot in any way help us attain moksham

So, irrespective of which anya devata we reach, we are sure to have all kinds of problems.

A person thinks of the troubles one would encounter when the yama dootas throw their pASa rope. The yama dootas are prone to using harsh words. The path through which they take one to naraka is dreadful. After reaching naraka, the troubles encountered are just too much. These are explained in Sri VishNu PurANam, when one listens to this, he really gets a lot of fear in his mind.

A person who is overcome by fear at the thought of sufferings here and in hell would consider moksham as his only requirement and take up the required upAya. The upAyas can be Bhakti yoga or prapatti.

The next section is the upAya kaNDa. PrasAdana Parva is the only parva in upAya KaNDa. This is the next (fifth) step to the transcendental World!

Due to the birth of vivekam, frustration of mind, vairAgyam, fear etc., a person is affected by two diseases viz., punya and paapa. What is the medicine to get rid of these? Who is the doctor? Brahma, Siva, Indra and other anya devas are not even aware of the medicine of the disease of samsara. Bhagavan is the only greatest doctor! He has been assigned two medicines called Bhakti yoga and prapatti for this. A person hence seeks the help of God to mercifully liberate him by making him perform Bhakti or prapatti.

Bhakti Yoga, underlines the importance of complete and total devotion by which we can please Bhagavan thereby Bhagavan accepting us in his Abode. The Bhakti yogi should not worship anybody other than Bhagavan. The other devas worship him. To perform Bhakti yoga with the angas, we need proper j~nAna, sakti, the patience to bear with the delay in reaching moksham, A person who cannot take up Bhakti yoga and believes in Bhagavan's mercy alone should take up prapatti. Prapatti underlines the fact that we have to perform total surrender at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. After he does this, there is no other upAya that needs to be done. Bhagavan who is an ocean of mercy, takes care of a Prapanna!

When this prapatti is an anga of Bhakti yoga, it is called anga-prapatti. When it is a direct means to moksham, it is called svatantra prapatti. The greatness of prapatti can be equated to the greatness of Brahma because prapatti is a saadhana to attain Brahma!

Bhakti and prapatti are thus the prAyaScittam for all the paapams. A person who does svatantra prapatti is considered to have done all the yagas. He is relieved of all the past Karmas which have not begun to yield fruits (sancita karmas) and karmas done in the present which will yield fruits in the future lives (Agami karmas).

Only PrArabdha karmas i.e., karmas, which have started giving fruits in the present life will remain untouched. Thus, a SaraNAgatan will divest oneself of all the fruits of one's past and present karmas and will be fit to reach God.

For persons who have taken up one upAya to attain moksham and who have been accepted by Bhagavan, the pramanas state that the troubles of getting caught with yama, suffering in naraka etc., are not there. A true devotee thus lives without any fear, does not expect anything from anyone, is relieved of the burden of protecting himself and has no fear about naragam etc.

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha VivaraNam" by Sri Sriramadesikachariyar Swami and "Life and works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof. A. Srinivasaraghavan.

The next section is the phala KaNDa. utkramaNa Parva is the first parva in phala KaNDa. This is the next step to the transcendental World!

A cetana performs Bhakti or prapatti as a prAyaScittam to the past karmas. These karmas are the reason for all samsara bandhams. When he performs this prayaschittam, there are a lot of positive changes that take place in him.

He now wants to restrain from doing such karmas which results in punya and papa. He realises that his mind, words and body has to be devoted only for Bhagavan's kainkaryam. He controls his mind from getting distracted. He gets himself associated with Bhagavatas and delinks himself from people who are not devoted.

He desires to have paripoorna anubhavam of Bhagavan like the nityasooris but is not successful. This failure makes him feel that he is being immersed in Thirupparkadal without being able to drink milk because his mouth is tied!! His heart melts on seeing his own plight. Each nAzhikai (second) at night moves like a kalpam. He does not sleep either in the morning or at night. He acknowledges that but for Bhagavan it would not be possible for him to escape this samsaram. With this state of mind he prays to Bhagavan to destroy his aj~nAna and Sareeram. The words spoken by him during prapatti confirms the start of

his journey to SrivaikuNTham. All the karmas and attachments which were hindrances till now are destroyed and he gets moksham!!

The end of his stay in this world comes closer. The yoga Saastras speak of the identifications that can be seen at the end of a person's lifetime. Seeing these identifications and realising that the day to reach SrivaikuNTham is getting reduced, the person feels extremely happy.

There are certain rules (based on the time, place etc., of death) mentioned in the Saastras based on which a person's state after death is analysed.

That is -

1. A person who dies in UttarAyaNa, in Sukla paksha, in the morning, in a good sthalam, in good sagunam, will reach a good state (gati)

2. A person who dies in dakshiNAyana, Krishna paksha, at night, in a bad place, in a bad omen will have a bad gati.

However, these restrictions are not there for a Prapanna. Swami Desika re-emphasises this in the 38th Sloka of SaraNAgati deepikA "***savyAnyanyorayanayorniSi vAsare vA ...***"

To a Prapanna irrespective of the place or moment for bodily existence to come to an end, it is auspicious. Without any hindrances and without rebirth Bhagavan grants moksham. Bhagavan does sankalpam during the time of prapatti itself to destroy the Punyas/paapas done before prapatti, and to prevent the punya/paapas done unknowingly after prapatti from sticking on to him. Those punyas and paapas get switched over to others during his time of death i.e., the punyas and paapas of a Prapanna who is dying is transferred to his friends and enemies respectively. This is because of their behaviour towards him.

At the time of death, there is a restriction that one has to remember Bhagavan by his own efforts - only then there is phalan. A prapanna does not have any necessity to take efforts to remember Bhagavan at that state. During the time of death, he lies unconscious like a wood or a stone. Bhagavan makes him think of Him alone. His desire to reach SrivaikuNTham does not reduce.

At this stage, Bhagavan stands as a cause for the Jiva to be released from the Sareeram. Yama dootas do not come to take him.

Bhagavan combines the karmendriyAs, J~nAnendriyas and the manas. This is combined with the prana vayu. This prana vayu is mixed with the Jiva. This combination, in this Sareeram, mixes with a small portion of pancha bhUdams. All this combines with the antaryAmi residing in the hrudaya-kamalam. The antaryAmi (Bhagavan) relieves one of the tiredness during release from the body.

So, Bhagavan does all these upakAras to us starting from taking the 10 indriyAs, to releasing the Jiva, to making us relax from the tiredness. To Prapannas, punyAtmas, Papis and to everybody it is the same. These will happen irrespective of whether a Jiva goes to Moksham, Svargam or naragam.

In the body there are 101 naadis that branch from the heart. If the Jiva is released from the 100 naadis, it goes to Svargam etc. Bhagavan does not allow the Prapanna to enter into these 100 naadis. The 101st naadi, the brahma naadi the edge of this is the door step for Moksham. Bhagavan shows this in a way that a Prapanna understands.

Bhagavan makes it (indriyas, pranavayu combined with sookshma Sareera Jiva) enter that naadi. Later, from the hrudaya-kamalam, Bhagavan takes the Jiva further. Bhagavan resides in this sthoola Sareeram and so it is called as brahmapuram. In this sthoola Sareeram, Brahmarantran is important. The final departure of the AtmA from the body is only by the grace of God through the Brahma naadi and the Brahmarandhra in the skull.

Bhagavan also makes him get hold of the Sun's rays as a hold for the hand and then to go to SrivaikuNTham makes him take the archiraadimaargam!

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha Vivaranam" by Sri Sriramadesikachariyar Swami and Sri D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar's commentary on Swami Desika's SaraNAgati deepikA.

arciraadi Parva, the seventh step to the transedental World is the next parva in phala KaNDa.

For a person who has performed prapatti, punyas are like golden hand-cuff's and paapas are like iron hand-cuff's. He wants to get rid of both. At the time of death Bhagavan clears him of all this. The antaryami releases and carries him from the prison of sthoola Sareeram.

The devas had accepted a lot of offerings in the form of yagas and other karmas that have been performed by this Jiva earlier. They all are now happy to see his greatness. They are afraid to cause apacharam to him. They even offer him their salutations.

In the 85th Sloka of acyuta Satakam ***"kadA amAnavAntA: angimukhA...",*** the longing of the released AtmA to leave this dark world of samsara and ascend to SrivaikuNTham is expressed.

Bhagavan's retinue graded from Agni devata to amAnava devata lead the Mukta from this world to SrivaikuNTham in stages, through the respective territories of each one of them. People who lead the AtmA are called "AdivAhikAs". In this list the first is Agni. He is also referred to as "archis". Because archis (agni) is the first among them, this path is referred to as archirAdi mArgam - the path of agni etc. This agni welcomes the mukta and offers various kinds of respects like poorna kumbam, offering light, singing, offering showers of flowers and takes him till the end of his region.

Swami has also mentioned this in SaraNAgati deepikA in Sloka 39 "***arcirdinam viSadapaksha udakprayANam....***".

The same is conveyed in the Rahaysatraya sAram, (gativiSeshAdhikAram) from the pAsuram of adhikArasangraham, pAsuram 28 -***"naDaipeRa angi pakal OLi nAL uttarAyaNamANDu ..."***

After agni the God of time, the God of Suklapaksha, the God of uttarAyana and the God of rain welcome him and offer their respects.

Vayu, the wind God welcomes him next. After accepting Vayu's offerings he gets near the Sun. After receiving the hospitality of Sun God he reaches the moon.

Then the God of Lightning leads him further. The Upanishads state that amaanava (the God of Lightning) hands over the chetana to the Brahmam.

Then Varuna, Indra and PrajApati join amAnava. Varuna, Indra and Prajapati accompany only till their boundaries. But amAnava alone escorts the released AtmA completely.

This way, by Bhagavan's mercy he nears the Viraja river. The Sruti's state that he crosses this divine river by his mind. "Mind" here should be understood as "sankalpam". For a Mukta his mere sankalpam is sufficient to create and enjoy whatever he wishes!

To summarise, the order is as follows –

(1) Agni devata
(2) the devata of time
(3) the devata of Suklapaksham (bright fortnight)
(4) the devata of uttaraayanam
(5) the devata of rain
(6) Vaayu devata (wind God)
(7) the Sun and
(8) the Moon.

Each of them welcome the released Atma when it enters their respective territories and escorts him till their boundary. Finally, amaanava (God of lightning) escorts the Atma to Bhagavan who welcomes the Atma warmly and in person.

The Srutis emphasise that a person who reaches Moksha through the archiraadi maargam can take forms according to their wish and will always be with Bhagavan. It is also mentioned that they will not be subject to re-birth and will not suffer happiness/ sorrow due to karmas.

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha Vivaranam" by Sri Sriramadesikachariyar Swami and Sri D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar's commentary on Swami Desika's SaraNAgati deepika and acyuta Satakam.

divyadesa PrApti Parva, the next parva in phala KaNDa is the eighth step to the transedental World.

For time immemorial the Jiva had involved himself into activities unacceptable to his svaroopam as a result of which he had to hang around in the samsara. That life is an endless trouble! Having got rid of his troubles, this Jiva takes up the extraordinary archirAdhi mArgam and goes to paramapadam. He immerses himself in the clear, sweet smelling cool water of the viraja river. His sookshma Sareeram which came along gets destroyed. AmAanavan, with his pure hand, now touches this mukta. This touch relieves the mukta of his old samsara feelings. This Jiva is now in the paramapadam, the same place as that of Bhagavan!!! He gets a form like Bhagavan, without any link to Prakriti.

It is impossible for a person without the required qualifications (vivekam, mental urge, vairaagyam, and fear) to reach SrivaikuNTham. Only a paramaikantin who does not worship anybody other than Bhagavan and who does not seek anything other than bhagavad/ bhaagavatha kainkaryam can get Moksha. Nitya soories always keep seeing paramapadam (their j~nAna never contracts).

SrivaikuNTham is not affected by time, there is no concept of naazhikai, day, month etc. SrivaikuNTham is million times brighter than Sun or Agni. This divine loka is always bright, it has no limitations whatsoever. It is impossible to comprehend the sweetness of SrivaikuNTham. Even great yogis cannot think, speak or measure its greatness. Everything in SrivaikuNTham is Suddha sattvam. The chetana now enters this place of unending happiness!

After the chetana crosses the viraja river he is received, welcomed, respected, loved and worshiped by those residing in SrivaikuNTham!

There are two water bases "aram" and "Nyam". This chetana sees the perfect gardens, the mountains (full of ratnas), rivers and lakes all full of Suddhasatvam. Earlier he had thought about these briefly after having read about them from the upanishads, Sri pancharatra sastras, Sri VaikuNTha gadyam etc. Now, he is blessed with a direct vision!

He sees yet another poigai called airamyadiyam. In a world of endless extreme happiness this Poigai is like a flood of happiness surrounding it. After this he approaches a beautiful divine arasa maram (peepal tree) named Somasavanam. The nithya soories keep prostrating to it!

Later Bhagavan sends 500 apsaras from SrivaikuNTham to welcome this mukta. They organise themselves in batches of hundreds and offer him garlands of Suddhasatvam, fragrant powders, dresses etc. At that time the sound of the tirucchinnam and valampuri changam reverberate everywhere. These apsaras do mangaLASAsanam to the mukta. He is treated like a prince! They adorn him with different kinds of ornaments appropriate to visit SrivaikNTha nAthan!!

From there he approaches a tree called "tilyam". After this he reaches "saalajyam" a mantapam. Later he arrives at a divine sthAnam called "aparaajitam". At that time SrivaikuNThanAthan's divine fragrance, divine essence and divine tejas comes to him. His body becomes extremely bright like the fragrance of parijatha flower, amrutham and sun God melted and combined together! He approaches SrivaikuNTham which is far greater that the vishnu lokas viz., Amodam, pramodam and sammodam in the samsara mandalam.

The nithyasoories welcome him. He approaches the Gopuram adorned with flags. There are two dvaarapalakas in the entrance of the Gopura gate by name Indra and Prajapati. They offer their salutations to him stating that, " You, who are a dAsa to Bhagavan, are Swami to us"! They request him to enter into the Gopura vaasal. This Gopura vaasal is always open to people who seek refuge in Bhagavan!

He proceeds beyond it. There are beautiful big streets, with the thirumaligais' of nithya soories on either side. The thirumaligais are arranged in a row and look like mountains of ratnas. The nithyasoories consider the muktas arrival as their bagyam and take him to their thirumaligai. They offer water to his feet in an appropriate manner.

Goddess Sri, Bhoomi and Neela Devi come with their attendants and welcome the mukta with the fragrant powders which had adorned Bhagavan's tirumeni. They offer him poorna kumbham and mangala deepam and welcome him.

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha VivaraNam" by Sri Sriramadesikachariyar Swami.

The mukta then approaches the divine golden vehicle. At that time he gets all divine fame. Like Bhagavan, he also becomes an embodiment of fame. He then reaches the Tirumaamani mantapam. There he is welcomed with love and respect by kumudar, the head of the people in the sabha and by the eight dvarapalakas (Indra, Prajapati, Jaya, Vijya, chandar etc). Later, Vishvaksena, the head of the chetanas instructs the nithya soories who are incharge of the sabha mandala administrations. Vishvaksena asks this Jiva also to join the kainkaryam. This Jiva offers salutations frequently and goes to the front side of the thirumamani mandabam and climbs up.

Garuda (Periya Thiruvadi) stands in front of the Paramapada naathan. His thirumeni makes one feel that it is the huge Meru Mountain (but made of gold) having two wings. His thirumeni is all divine. Garuda's thirumeni is full of tejas that the reflection of Periya piratti who sits on Bhagavan's chest and Bhagavan can been seen on him as if he is a mirror to Bhagavan. The Jiva offers salutations to this Periya Thiruvadi.

There, a beautiful ghoshti of nithyasoories sit and discuss about the kalyana gunas of Bhagavan. In fact they even enter into arguments as to which kalyana guna of Bhagavan is superior etc. Their love towards Bhagavan is so great that even in SrivaikuNTham they worry if something bad would happen to Bhagavan! Eternal happiness is evident in nithya soories. The dreams of this Jiva now comes true. He was always eager to join the group of Bhagavatas and is now amidst them!

Later, the nithyasoories take different forms for doing kainkaryam viz., kudai, cAmaram, weapons, ornaments. They take up a form according to their work and serve from their respective places. This Jiva now reaches the peak of his wishes and wants to do all sorts of kainkaryam. He moves closer.

He sees his Poorvaacharyas near Bhagavan's simhAsanam. On seeing him the Acharyas are happy and feel that the efforts taken by Bhagavan to refine this Jiva's atma have materialised! This Jiva states that but for his Acharyas he could have never chosen the right path. He makes a request to the Poorvaacharyas to place their feet on his head since they were instrumental in showing him the correct path and he prostrates to them with gratitude. The Acharya-sishya relationship is eternal !!!

Our Emperuman rules both the leela vibhuti and the nithya vibhuti. He is ever youthful and is a saarvabhauman in SrivaikuNTham. The divine simhAsanam in which he sits is like a great cot with unlimited brightness. The Jiva now approaches that simhasanam.

Some Pramanas state that, belonging to samsara mandalam and paramapadam, the foundation of all creations prakruti-mahan-ahankara, are parts of the simhasanam. The ParyankavidyA states that the tatvas that were existent or those that are yet to come are its parts. The Paancharaatra SAstras state that dharma, artha etc are the parts of the

simhasanam. This way, the Jiva clearly sees that Bhagavan has made all the tatvas into one Simhasanam for his enjoyment.

There is a superior Lotus (taamarai). It is as bright as thousand crore suns and spreads such brightness. It has eight petals which see the eight directions. In that, Vimala, utkarshani, j~nAna, kriya, yoga, prahva, satya, and ISAna stand in a row, hold a cAmaram in their hand and perform kainkaryam. On the front side of the lotus flower anugrahai does cAmaram service. Seeing these girls perform kainkaryam, the Jiva gets great happiness. He had always wanted Bhagavan and Piratti to order him to do the cAmaram for them. Now he feels that he can do it.

There is a big part known as stigma (kaai in Tamil) at the center of this lotus. When one sees the width and height of it, one feels that even if a lakh of golden garlands join together it will not be sufficient even for a small portion of paramaanu.

On top of that stigma (kaai), Thiruvananthalvan in an extraordinary way shows his divine appearance with white colour like the Milky Ocean (tirupparkadal). Thiruvananthalvan has enough j~nAnam and strength to bear Bhagavan who is the Adhaaram for all vasthus. He takes different forms based on the situation and performs all kinds of kainkaryams. Because he performs the work to be performed by a Seshan (slave), he is known as Seshan. Bhagavan, a 'trividha pariccheda rahitan' who has no constraints based on time, deSam (place), vasthu is seated on the lap of Adi Seshan and due to this vaibhavam he is also known as Ananthan,

Though Bhagavan has all kinds of divine fragrance, Adiseshan adds his divine fragrance too! Adiseshan is very soft and serves as an appropriate seat for Bhagavan and Piratti when the three worlds offer salutations. The thousand hoods of Adiseshan look like thousand full moons made to stand in a line. The glow of the ratnas in the hoods look like early morning sunlight. The Jiva prostrates to this Thiruvananthalvan.

This Jiva also wants to enjoy all these bhogams! Thiruvananthalvan's kataksham (with his 2000 eyes) falls on this Jiva. This is like a nectarine rain to him!

He now sees the ParamapadanAthan who is on Thiruvananthalvan. The Jiva now has unending jn~Ana and is capable of seeing anything. He moves very close and reaches Bhagavan.

PrApti-parva is the last parva in phala KaNDa. This is the last step to the transcendental world!!!

The Jiva is now attracted to the divine seat of Bhagavan, Thiruvananthalvan. Bhagavan being seated on this soft Thiruvananthalvan, looks like a maragatha mountain seated on a silver mountain! Bhagavan who sits here rules over everything!!!

Bhagavan is ever youthful. We can imagine the tejas of Bhagavan be to greater than lakhs and lakhs of suns put together, it is unimaginable! The consorts of Bhagavan sit beside Him. It looks like Bhagavan's karuna itself has taken the form of Periya Piratti,

His patience has taken the form of Bhoomi Piratti and his unending vallal thanmai (kodai) has taken the form of Neela Piratti!!!

Among His consorts there is a unique greatness for Periya Piratti. Periya Piratti's svaroopam, Thirumeni and kalyana gunas can be equated to that of Bhagavan. They are permanent and there are no limitations to these. Bhagavan and Periya piratti always keep seeing each other and are in a state where separation is impossible. In-spite of always being associated with Periya piratti, Bhagavan feels that this enjoyment is new! This is because of the unending greatness of Periya piratti! She is ever youthful and resides in Bhagavan's chest. She appeared from the nectarine ocean. Residing on the Lotus, she destroys everybody's sins. Chaturmukha Brahma and other devas get their respective positions by Periya Piratti's kataksham. Her Greatness is evident from the very fact that she is the consort of sarveshvaran!

Periya Piratti's karuna to us knows no bounds. When it comes to devotees her karuna overflows and her eyes are filled with tears!!! She hence gets hold of the right chest of Bhagavan! So, Bhagavan along with Periya Piratti is our Seshi, they together accept our kainkaryams. It is pleasing only if Bhagavan is enjoyed along with Periya Piratti. kainkaryam has to be performed for both. Periya Piratti assigns kainkaryams to the troops according to the requirements.

The Jiva then offers salutations to Bhoomi Piratti. One seeing Bhoomi Piratti it looks like Periya piratti has herself taken another form. Bhoomi Piratti is always regarded and respected by everybody. Her thirumeni is like the hue of a huge green mountain.
The complexion of Neela Devi is karuneithal. We saw that Periya piratti captivates Bhagavan by all her bhogams. But this looks too small when we see Neela Devi's chaaturyam. She woke up Her Lord, Kannapiran who was comfortably enjoying the Sukahm in the company of Neela Devi (Nappinai), and sleeping blissfully. She wakes the Lord and reminds Him about His sworn duties.

All the consorts of Bhagavan are very compassionate to the devotees. In order to make it convenient for the devotees to perform kainkaryam, the consorts magnanimously sit on the left side of Bhagavan and worship!

The ones who perform kainkarya to Bhagavan in this state (where he is with his consorts), realise that he is "Rasam" and he is the "form of Anandam" in the way the Upanishads state. Bhagavan is possessed of incomparable sweetness!!! Bhagavan is the natural Seshi to whom devotees with naturally blooming knowledge perform kainkaryam.

It is interesting to note that Bhagavan himself likes his Thirumeni more than His svaroopam. Needless to say that Bhagavan's Thirumeni looks extraordinary! The complexion of Bhagavan's Thirumeni shines like that of dark clouds, karuneidhal, sea, peacock. Bhagavan's complexion is like a blue gem (mani) and Piratti who is in Bhagavan's chest is of Golden complexion. What a superb vision it would be to be blessed with a darshan of this combination!!!

Just as how, we in this leela Vibhuti are desirous of Moksha and try to perform only those actions that please Bhagavan, so also even those who have reached Moksha perform acts that pleases Bhagavan, and pray to him!

When each part of the Thirumeni is enjoyed, they get involved in that beauty. They are carried away by each part and the appropriate ornament that is worn by Bhagavan. They pray to Bhagavan enjoying each of his parts and the associated ornaments.

The process of enjoyment is beautiful and moving and there are appropriate quotations from the hymns of the Alvars and the works of Acharyas.

They first enjoy Bhagavan's kreedam because this confirms Bhagavan as the sarveSvaran. Bhagavan's Thirumudi is straight and is in steps. On seeing Bhagavan's dark and thick Thirumudi it looks like night. But Bhagavan's kreedam is full of tejas like the combination of hundred suns. The Thirumudi and kreedam together makes one visualise day and night at the same time!!! Is it possible? Bhagavan has the capacity to combine things which can never be combined! They salute the kreedam and praise Bhagavan's Thirumudi.

The Jiva sees Bhagavan's Thirukkuzhal. They are curly. Bhagavan's Thirukkuzhal is so beautiful that the bees consider his Thirumugam as a lotus and they stand in a row in order to taste the nectar.

When this Thirukkuzha touches the bright forehead, it looks like the moon on the ashtami day, brightness on one side and darkness on the other! This Jiva enjoys the white asthami moon!!!

As though to put a boundary to the beauty of the forehead, appear the two beautiful eyebrows of Bhagavan. He then sees the broad and big Thirukkangal (eyes) with red lines running on both the sides. On seeing Bhagavan's Thirukkangal even those who think themselves to be independent will lose their independence and fall at Bhagavan's feet. Pramanas state that Bhagavan's breath is Vedas!

This Jiva now salutes the Thirumooku (nose) that let out that breath. Bhagavan's Thirukapolangal (cheeks) is like a ratna mirror for the consorts who are near him. The greatness and beauty of this cannot be explained. So, the parts surrounding it viz., Thirukkangal, thiruvaai, Thirupparkal, Thirukkundalam etc., are alone discussed.

The Jiva then offers salutations to Bhagavan's lips which is like a group of red pavalam. He wonders if they are some ripe fruits. It is so beautiful that he regrets having missed these enjoyments for so long due to his papas.

Bhagavan's Thirumukhamandalam (face) is of exceptional beauty. Bhagavan's mouth looks like a kovai fruit, when Bhagavan smiles the beauty of the line of pearls (Thirupparkal) looks like an emission of swallowed lightning!

Both the thirusevigal (ears) are for the kaanthi of the face. The kuntalas are bright and are in the shape of a fish. The kuntalas are so bright that it makes one wonder if the thirusevi's have themselves become the magarakundalas!

The Jiva now has a complete anubhavam of Bhagavan's Thirumukham. Even the full moon which is completely surrounded by brightness is nowhere near the beauty of Bhagavan's face. On seeing Bhagavan's face the Jiva thinks that the beautiful lotus (Thirukkangal), karpaga creeper (Thiru mooku), pavalam (Thiruvadaram), bow (Thiru puruvam), Pearls (Thiruparkal), petal (Thirusevi), chandra kalai (Thirunetri) are all contained in one complete jyothi mandalattan!!!

The above write up is from the book "Rahasyartha VivaraNam" where Sri SriramadesikachAriyar Swami deals with Swami Desika's Paramapadasopanam.

After having a complete anubhavam of Bhagavan's Thirumugam, the Jiva enjoys the Thirukkazhuttu (neck).

Bhagavan's Thirukkazhuttu looks like a changu. It is of fertile colour because of the blue glow of Bhagavan's thirumeni. The mukta offers salutations to this Thirukkazhuttu and is involved in its beauty which swallows all the lokas during pralaya.

The thiruttolgal (shoulders) of Bhagavan gives us, all the four fruits viz., aram, poruL, inbam, veedu in plenty. But Bhagavan is not satisfied with this. With the help of Bhagavan's thiruttolgal, Bhagavan hugs one who performs even a small service. Is not the tight hug of Bhagavan greater than having all possible wealth!! The Jiva equates Bhagavan's thirutolgal to that of a garden of karpaga trees.

Bhagavan's Thirumarbu (chest) which is made of maragada ratnas attracts the Jiva next. Bhagavan's srivatsam (thirumarbu), kausthuba ratnam, vanamalai etc adds beauty to the chest. Periya Piratti who is never separated even for a second resides in this right Thirumarbu. This way, the Jiva enjoys the Thirumarbu and gets enslaved to it.

The Thiruvayuru (stomach) of Bhagavan is very considerate to us. When the danger of maha pralayam comes, Bhagavan keeps and protects this whole prapanjam in His Thiruvayu. Even after Bhagavan swallows so many things like clouds, sea, mountains, worlds etc. it looks like Bhagavan's stomach is still not full!!!

Bhagavan's thirumeni stands like a maragada mountain. The Peetambara on Bhagavan looks like the maragada mountain surrounded by the brightness of the manikka.

Everything in Bhagavan is beautiful. Even Bhagavan's kanaikal is so beautiful that the Jiva loses himself in its beauty. If one prostrates to Bhagavan's kanaikal, he can escape from the samsara margam.

Vedams praise Bhagavan's thiruvadi. Bhagavan's Thiruvadi is common for all Jivas. Everybody enjoys the beauty of Bhagavan's feet as if it is a common property. Bhagavan has the changu and chakaram inscribed on his thiruvadi.

The lotus that is below Bhagavan's thiruvadi, bears them. On seeing Bhagavan's feet inscribed on the Lotus, one feels whether the thiruvadi's brightness itself has blossomed into a lotus!!!

Bhagavan's thirumeni is like a black maanikkam, Bhagavan's Thirumarbu is like a poigai. Thiruvaai, thirukkangal, thirukkaigal, thirunaabhi, thiruvadi, thirupeetaambaram ... are all beautiful, like a forest of Lotus!

Bhagavan's thirumeni complexion is like the colour of Blue clouds. Bhagavan's Thiruvaabaranam is like lightning that does not move. Each of these ornaments are the deities of the tatvas in the world.

Bhagavan holds thiruvaazhi Alvan and thiruchanga-alvan on his two hands. The beauty of both thiruvaazhi and thiruchangu increases when it combines with the other.

After enjoying Bhagavan's thiruvabharanam, thiruvayudham and divya mangala vigraham completely, the mukta now starts enjoying Bhagavan's kalyana gunas. A lot of qualities shows Bhagavan's greatness. Many reflect his simplicity. On seeing the kalyana gunas of Bhagavan, the Jiva feels that there is nothing greater than that jnanam, happiness etc. The mukta also enjoys the kalyana guna of Bhagavan which attracts even sinners.

The Jiva now proceeds near Paramapadanathan's thiruvadi. The Jiva prays to Bhagavan to grant him his thiruvadi. On seeing him Bhagavan because of his karuna places the thiruvadi on this mukta's head. All the desires of this chetana, not to worship any other devata and to always perform eternal kainkaryam to Bhagavan's thiruvadi now gets satisfied. The Jiva relishes the happiness of having been blessed by Bhagavan's feet. He dwells in this happiness.

At that time the Jiva wants to enjoy a closer association with Bhagavan. This ParamapadanAthan stands as the gati for people who have no other gati. The Jiva catches hold of his thiruvadi and climbs the cot of the ParamapadanAthan. The Lotus eyed Bhagavan who is our protector, mother and father, consider the mukta like a son who sits on their lap and hence they feel happy. Bhagavan grants him all his svabavas. He accommodates this Jiva below his two thiruvadi's.

The Jiva considers itself as being Bhagavan's Seshan. Bhagavan is a Seshi to everybody. Though Bhagavan knows about the Jiva's current state of happiness he wants the Jiva to speak this out. Bhagavan hence questions the Jiva as to "who is he?" The Jiva is reminded of the pitiable plight he was earlier in. But now, because of Bhagavan's karuna, he has got so many attributes of Bhagavan and is grateful to Bhagavan. He requests Bhagavan to eternally accept the kainkaryams that he performs.

Bhagavan who along with the Piratti listens to the requests of this mukta and is extremely happy. Bhagavan's happiness is like the pride of the father when he listens to his son speak for the first time! Bhagavan immediately looks at piratti. Bhagavan does all the acts only in accordance with Piratti's mind. Then Perumal and Piratti bless the Mukta. Thus the mukta receives the blessings of the sarvaSeshi Perumal and piratti.

Bhagavan by his very nature knows everything, his svaroopam, svabhavam etc. Now, the mukta also gets the capacity to see these things directly. This is Para Bhakti. He gets an anubhavam to directly see and because this process is continuous, he acquires paraj~nAnam.

This anubhavam keeps on increasing. This is Parama Bhakti. So, what kind of an anubhavam is it? It is a complete and clear anubhavam. There is no time limit and this is permanent. The mukta is so happy with this anubhavam that he does not seek anything else. Endless happiness overflows. Due to bhagavad anubhavam there is overflowing happiness at all times and so a desire arises in him that he wants to perform all kainkaryams.

The mukta can take up a body also in order to perform kainkaryam, or if he wishes he can also take many forms. All these forms are suddha satvam. Kainkaryam can be performed even without sariram. The mukta can jump with enthusiasm, dance, sing etc and demonstrate many leelas. We can go round and round and do pradakshinam to Bhagavan. If the Jiva wants to perform kainkaryam along with his relatives (mother, father and other relatives) by his sankalpa he makes them appear, he can be with them and

enjoy! We can always live with Bhagavan. When Bhagavan takes avataras, the mukta can also accompany Bhagavan to this leela vibhuti. His knowledge does not contract even in leela vibhuti. After the objective of the visit is satisfied, just like Bhagavan, the mukta also ascends to SrivaikuNTham. He sings sAma gAnam. He also surrounds Bhagavan and sings Pallandu.

Swami Desika finally states that the mukta sing the paasurams of our Alvars in SrivaikuNTham for thousands of years. This way they please themselves and more importantly please Sriya:pati !!!

Swami Desika's paramapadasopanam made us get the feel of being in SrivaikuNTham. ParamapadasopAnam is almost like a summary of Swami's magnus opus , Rahasyatraya saaram.

The above write up is based on "Rahasyartha Vivaranam" by Sri SriramadesikachAriyar Swami and "Life and works of Sri Nigamanta Maha Desika" by Prof. A. Srinivasaraghavan.

SUMMARY

Swami Desika has written thirty two Rahasya granthams in Manipravala style which contain the teachings of the Upanishads about the tattva, hita and Purushartam. Of these the Rahasyatraya saaram is of great importance. Swami elaborates the treatment of the three Rahasyas viz., Moola mantra, dvaya and Charama sloka in the Rahasyatraya saaram.

Kaalakshepam of Rahasyatraya saaram from a sadacharya will make a person gain knowledge to lead a religious life. It will also make one understand the realities and choose the correct path which leads to eternal bliss.

In the concluding verse of Rahasyatraya saaram, nigamanAdhikAram, Swami reveals his own identity!

rahasyatrayasAro'yam venkaTeSa vipaScita |
SaraNyadampati vidAm sammata: samagrhyata ||

Swami states that he is an incarnation of Sri Venkateshvara and explains the essence of the three secret mantras, ashTAksharam, dvayam and carama Sloka. Swami states that this work has the approval and admiration of great seers like Parasara and Vyasa and the ancient sages and the revered Alvars who have realised the great truth that the creators and protector of all are the divya dampati, Goddess Lakshmi and Bhagavan Narayana.

Swami has blessed us with many other unique works like abhayaprada sAram, Rahasya Sikhamani, anjali vaibhavam, Upakara sangraham, Virodhaparihaaram and Paramapada sopanam.

Swami has written numerous works covering various subjects. In the field of philosophy his chief works are tattvamuktaa kalapam sarvartha siddhi, nyAya pariSuddhi, nyAya siddhaanjanam, SeSvara meemaamsa, meemaamsa paaduka and SatadUshanI.

Swami has himself written commentary for tattvamuktakalapa, sarvarthasiddhi. Swami has written this in the form of a verse, containing five hundred stanzas in five chapters. This gives an exposition to the nature of Jada, Jiva, Isvara, Buddhi and adravya.

The 32nd Rahasya namely the Paramatabhangam is a magnificent work. Here, the doctrines of the different schools of thought with their arguments are given first. Then it is stated how they are against the teachings of Vedas and other scriptural texts there by explaining why they cannot be taken as authoritative. At the end the final view according to our sampradayas is given. Swami thus makes a critical examination of the different systems of philosophies and demolishes their positions.

Swami criticises advaita very forcefully. In SatadUshanI one hundred philosophical issues have been chosen for systematic criticisms directed against the school of advaita. shata-dusani goes hand in hand with Paramatabhangam. At present 66 arguments are available in this work. Swami Desika has exposed the weak position of advaitam.

Not just Samskrit and manipravala, Swami Desika has also composed nineteen works in Tamil. They are Prabandhams popularly known as Desika Prabandham.

Desika has marvelously summarised the essence of each verse of Sri Nammalvar's Thiruvaimozhi in his work dramiDopanishad tAtparya ratnAvalii.

Swami Desika considers Sri Nammalvar's TiruvAimozhi as "dramiDopanishad". In the introduction to the grantham "dramiDopanishatsAram"; and "dramiDopanishat tAtparya ratnAvali", our Swami states that the Alvars are Seers and their works are Upanishads. Since the Alvar's works spells out the bhagavad Gunas, Swami says they are Upanishads!!!

Swami Desika held dramiDa Veda in equal esteem with Vedas and propagated it. Swami's adhikaraNasAravali is a masterpiece where he summarises the teachings of several adhikaraNas of the Brahma sootras along with clarifications and explanations where ever necessary.

Swami's Desika's contribution to our sampradayam is so vast that Adiyal is not even able to make a mention all his works. What to speak of Swami's greatness!!!

This write up is based on "advaita and ViSishTAdvaita " by Sri S.M.S Chari, the "Life and works of Nigamanta mahA Desika by Sri A. Srinivasa Raghavan and from an article "Vedanta Desika's contribution to ViSishTAdvaita " by Dr. N.S. Anantha Rangachariyar in "Sri Vedanta Desika - a special number" which was published by Sri VedAnta Desika research center.

What we may not be able to achieve by ourselves can be easily achieved by the grace of our Acharyas. Swami himself explains this in the 21st Sloka of nyAsa tilakam "andho'nandha grahaNa vaSago yAti rangeSa yadvat..."

Three common illustrations given in the Sloka are noteworthy and significant. Swami says

"Like the man with a good vision leading a blind man,
Like the ferryman who rows across a lame man struck amidst a cross stream'
Like the child of a King's Valet, which, enjoys the best pleasures in life"

We too can obtain redemption by the Acharya's grace, even though we lack J~nAnam or Sakti or both.

Let us look at the above examples of Swami and see how we Jivas are benefited by Acharyas -

The man, unfortunate to be blind does not have the capacity to see things and thereby cannot reach the destination, while the person with a good vision has the ability and capacity to lead the blind person to reach the destination. In the same way, we Jivas are in the dark in not knowing the grace and facts about Parattvam and the means to reach Sriya:pati. It is the Acharya who has the vision of knowledge who leads us to reach the abode of Bhagavan. In this example, Swami makes it amply clear that we lack J~nAnam.

In the second example, Swami says just as an unfortunate lame person cannot reach the shore, we Jivas, impaired with material pursuits, will not have the energy to cross the samsaara saagaram. Hence the Acharya plays the role of the ferryman to row us into the

safe hands of our Supreme Bhagavan. In this example, Swami cites that we do not have Shakthi.

In the third example, Swami shows that when a King is immensely happy with his Valet, he is going to shower him with the best of presents. The Valet takes the gift home and shares it with his family. While the family enjoys the pleasure out of the gifts, they actually may not know who gave the gifts. Swami uses this example to show that we Jivas have neither J~nAnam or Sakti.

If we Jivas realize we will know that we will fall in one of the categories, if not more.

Our sadacharyas have both J~nAnam and Sakti in abundance and more importantly have immense mercy and compassion towards Jivas, thereby making us reach the lotus feet of Sriya:pati.

In short, Swami emphasizes that Jivas SHOULD entrust oneself to a sadacharya.

Speaking of the role of Acharya, the role of a Sishya becomes all the more important. The life study on Sri Madhurakavi Alvar will give us Jivas the all important learning of Bhagavata Seshatvam. Sri Madhurakavi Alvar has clearly demonstrated that Acharya Seshatvam is more important than bhagavad Seshatvam.

Swami speaks on this in "Madhurakavi hrudayam", where Swami emphasizes the importance of Acharya Seshatvam and has expressed in adhikArasangraham [2] that appears in Srimad Rahasyatraya sAram

"tunpaRRa madhurakavi kATTum tol vazhiyE nalvazhi" ....

Azhagiya singar (45th) in his upanyasam explained that Madhurakavi Alvar did bhAgavatha Bhakti and so did not have any troubles!!!

A statement like this from HH Srimad Azhagiya singar is not to undermine bhagavad Seshatvam but to share the fact that we get immersed into bhagavad anubhavam and tend to miss BhAgavata seshatvam. HH Srimad Azhagiya singar also said, seshi usually undergoes trouble while the seshan is free from trouble. True, we Jivas simply surrender through the Acharya and the Acharya goes through all the trouble to ensure that the Jivas reach the abode of Sriman Narayana.

Our Alvars and PoorvAcharyars were greatness personified and lived a Principled life and left a legacy for us to learn and follow, besides giving us the gems of paasurams and Stotrams. Swami Desika inherited this great legacy and it was Swami's genius to bring together the gems of wisdom strewn around on the four-fold firmaments of Karma, J~nAna, Bhakti and Prapatti. Swami brought these four fold firmaments into a single strand and presented this as a garland of precious stones with all purity.

Swami had great strengths of character. The presiding deities of all the sixty four branches of arts appeared before Swami on his successful completion of meditation on Bhagavan Hayagreeva. Given an opportunity to choose, Swami chose power of knowledge over others. This was when Swami was in his twenties. What a clarity of thought!!!

Swami Desika is an example of an ideal Acharya. We should never prostrate to our Acharyas with an intention that we are doing something in return to what our Acharyas have done, because that is impossible. Whatever we do is nothing before the help our Acharyas have done to us.

As stated earlier, Swami Desika in adikArasangraham (paasuram 38) states –

ERRi manattezhil j~nAna vilakkai iruLanaittum-
mARRinavarkku, oru kaimmARu mAyanum kANakilAn
pORRi ukappatum pundiyil koLvatum, pongupugazh
cARRi vaLarpatum caRRallavO munnam peRRatarkE.

Our Acharya demolishes the vipareeth j~nAnam we Jivas tend to possess and clear the darkness in our minds by lighting us up with knowledge. Swami states that even Bhagavan, who is everything and who has everything, may find it difficult to compensate the efforts and role of Acharyas.

In light of this, the role for us Sishyas becomes simple and focused. We need to keep thanking our Acharya for showing the right path; keep singing the Acharya's praise and glory. Even if we keep doing this full time till we reach paramapadam, this will just be equal to a drop when compared to the ocean of help rendered by our Acharya to us.

We are always a ruNavAn in front of our Acharyas. We are ever indebted to them!!!

Speaking of gratitude to our sSadacharyas and Poorvacharyars, Swami Desika obviously takes a special and important place. Swami is none other than Bhagavan Venkatesa. Bhagavan came in as Swami -

To show us the right path
To give us a treasure of works to read and immerse ourselves
To give us Acharya anubhavam.

Swami who made it clear that SaraNAgati is the ONLY means (for us) to reach the abode of Sriman Narayana is the greatest boon that we Jivas can get.

vAzhi aruLAr vAzhi vAzhiyaNi aittigiri
vAzhi yetirAcan vAcakattOr - vAzhi
caraNAgati ennum cArvuDan maRRU onRai
araNAkak koLLAtAr anpu

nAnilamum tAn vAzha nAnmaRaikal tAm vAzha
mAnagarin mARanmaRai vAzha - j~nAniyarkaL
cenniyaNicEr tUpul vEdAnta decikanE
Innumoru nURRANDirum.
(for saving the jivathmas like us)...

Swami Desika is Divine - Swami is Bhagavan!

tiru Venkatamudaiyane tiru VenkatanAthan !

Other points:

1. Adiyal, with the blessings of Sriya:pati, Poorvacharyars, Swami Desika, HH Srimad Azhagia Singar and Bhagavatas like you has attempted “Immesrion in DesikAnubhavam".

2. Swami’s efforts and contribution is so vast that Adiyal could hardly touch a tip of the great iceberg. Adiyal believes that even if 108 Bhagavataas jointly write continuously for several days we may still end up writing only a small portion on Swami’s greatness!!!
3, Let’s pray to Swami Desika to use us as tools to popularize Swami’s works and teachings thereby enabling every Jiva possible to realize Parathvam and perform Saranagathi. Adiyal believes that this could be the bare minimum we can do towards sharing the Acharya Anubhavam.

It is Adiyal’s bhaagyam that Adiyal was used by our Swami to share the anubhavam.

All the credits please be placed in the Lotus feet of HH Srimad Azhagiya Singar. All the mistakes be attributed to Adiyal - please excuse Adiyal for inadvertent errors.

Swami Desika in his dayA Satakam states that Sri Valmiki, Sri Vyasar and others tried to speak on Bhagavan's greatness through their Itihasa and Puranas. Since Bhagavan's greatness is a huge ocean, in spite of coming near the ocean they were afraid of getting into it and so stood on the shore itself. Their great voluminous books could not even cover a minor part of Bhagavan's Greatness, leave alone writing completely! Bhagavan is such a huge ocean of greatness that even Maharishi's stand only on the shore because of their fear to enter into it!

Swami says that he is entering this ocean without any apprehensions. Swami tries to get immersed repeatedly into this ocean and attempts to touch the floor. Swami states that he is not even able to talk on a small portion of Bhagavan's greatness, he just uses some words, says something and stammers.

Swami feels that he could have also stood on the shore like the sages. But without knowing He has entered into a job which is not appropriate for his status and so he is struggling.

Swami finally concludes that he may not have achieved anything by this. But states that Bhagavan Thiruvenkatanathan and Periya Piratti laugh at the sight of Swami's playful behaviour of attempting to speak on their greatness which is next to impossible! Swami is happy to see them laugh!!!

This is nothing but a reflection of Swami's naichyaanusandhanam! Swami in the above explanation states Bhagavan's greatness as a huge ocean. Swami's greatness is so much that Bhagavatas consider even Adiyal's ramble to be enjoyable because it is on Swami!!!

In reality, Swami Desika's greatness is greater than the Greatness of Bhagavan!!!

Knowing this fully well, Adiyal tried to immerse myself into this ocean. This am sure would have made Bhagavan, Periya Piratti and Swami Desika laugh at me for attempting the impossible... but they are sure to be happy to see their child's ramble.

My sincere gratitude is to be conveyed at this moment to the books, Adiyal had referred for the write ups. The credit for completing this should go only to the authors of the books who are great Vidvans. Just by translating, and editing it is not correct on Adiyal's part to

take any credit. Even this editing and translating Adiyal was able to do only because of our Acharya's blessings.

Swamy Desikan with Sri Bhoomidevi Sametha Sri Oppiliappan

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(2) Sri Desika stotramala commentaries by Oppiliappan sannidhi Sri U.Ve Vangeepuram Navaneetham SrIramadesikacharya, LIFCO Publication

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Adiyal had also incorporated some points learned from upanyasams by HH Srimad Azhagiya Singar, Sri U.Ve. Karunakaram Swami and others.

Adiyal has also posted the learning's from HH Srimad Azhagiya Singar's cassette on “Desikanum avar sookthigalum and Sri Yathiraja Saptati rendered by HH Srimad Andavan Sri Gopala Desika MahA Desikan of Poundareekapuram Srimad Andavan Ashramam, Srirangam - released by Srirangam Desika sannidhi kalakshepa kainkarya sabhaa Srirangam.

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