

Srimad Rahasyatraya Saara Saaram

Volume 1



Svacchandam Sri.S.Aravamudachariar



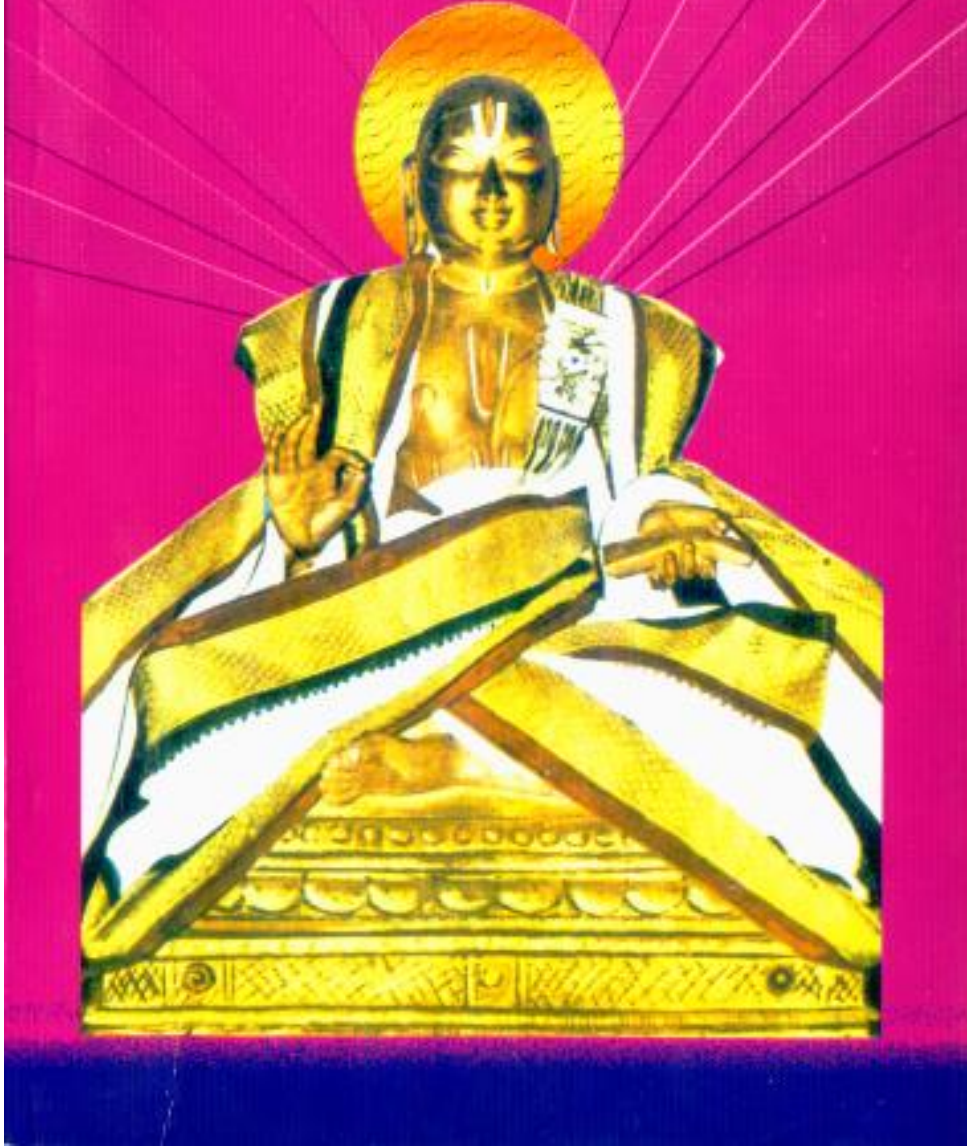
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Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha

SRIMAD RAHASYATHRAYA SAARA SAARAM

by

Svacchandam Sri S. ARAVAMUDHACHARIAR



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(in English)

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Sri S. Aravamudhachariar, M.A.

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by

Sri S. Aravamudhachariar, M.A.
(Retired Sanskrit Professor)

A.V.C. College, Mayuram

&

Retired Research Scholar
Adyar Oriental Research Library,
Madras

Volume 1

English Translation

by

Dr. SRIMATHI PREMA NANDAKUMAR

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''பித்ரே ப்ரஹ்மோபதேஷ்ட்ரே மே குரவே தைவதாய ச''
என்கிறபடியே அடியேன்களுடைய திருத்தகப்பனாரும்
ஆச்சார்யரும் ஆகிய ஸ்வாமி ஆராவமுதாச்சார்யரின் திருவடிகளில் ஸமர்ப்பணம்



ஆ. ப்ரீதிவாஸராகவன், ஆ. கிருஷ்ணன்

PREFACE

When I was a doctoral research student way back in 1958, I happened to ask my father, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, to tell me something about Vedanta Desika. I was not yet twenty and had but the vaguest notion of Srivaishnava philosophy. My father began to give me guidance in the subject and also gifted me with Sri Satya Vrat Singh's study of Vedanta Desika's works and Prof. M.R. Rajagopala Iyengar's English translation of **Srimad Rahasyatraya Saram**. Both the books have been cherished possessions for me during all these decades that have gone by. As one born to the heritage of Srivaishnavism and married into a home active in the propagation of Sri Ramanuja Darsana in North India, I have received in full measure the grace of the Divine Mother.

All the same, when Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan wrote to me asking me to translate his father's pellucid summary of Vedanta Desika's classic, I had some trepidation in accepting the assignment. I was not unaware of **Srimad Rahasyatraya Sarasaram**'s importance as my parents had attended the book release ceremony several decades ago in Mylapore and father had spoken of the need for such simple introductions to our great past. But would I be able to match the phraseology of the original so that no suicidal distortions

occur in an English version? And yet, the temptation was great and I remembered Sri Aurobindo's command which was a favourite quote of my father: "If thy aim be great and thy means small, still act; for by action alone these can increase to thee." There is always scope for improvement in a translation, and the present work is offered in all humility as the best I have been capable of at present.

I am grateful to Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan and Sri A. Krishnan for giving me this opportunity to be associated with the work of Sri Swachchandam Aravamudachariar Swami. They exemplify the finest in our Indian culture and have been noble sons of the illustrious father. My debt to Sri Rajagopala Iyengar's translation is palpable. I am also deeply grateful to my mother Srimati Padmasani and my husband, Sri M.S. Nandakumar for their loving support in all my literary endeavours and spiritual strivings.

"Mudhal Tirumaligai"

Prema Nandakumar

152 (Old Number 91)

South Chitrai Street

Srirangam

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The Author's Introductory Note (Contained in the First Edition-Tamil)

Sriman Nigamantha Mahadesikan composed many sacred Sastraic works, in order to propagate and stress the philosophies of Sri Bhagwat Ramanuja. He also wrote Kavyas, Dramas and Stotras. His compositions include many poems in Tamil based on Srisukthis of Sri Alwars.. Not fully satisfied with these remarkable works alone, Sriman Desikan finally presented to us, for the sake of our upliftment, the exemplary work, 'RAHASYATHRAYA SARAM' in Manipravalam style (mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil) elucidating Sriman Bhagwat Ramanuja's philosophies. As this work is in Tamil and Sanskrit and contains poems in Tamil, and as the language is not easy to follow for our present generation, one has to approach a learned Acharya, who is well-versed in Sanskrit and attend classes regularly over a period of time. In these days, many are in employment for their livelihood and so they do not have leisure time to undergo regular lessons under an able Acharya.. I have written this book believing that Sri Desikan's inner desire gets fulfilled somewhat. I have not reproduced the original Sanskrit slokas and Tamil poems. I have tried to write in simple Tamil strictly following the original text. I believe that this aspect will be clear to all those who give the book a patient reading. In this context, I shall mention about my own Acharyas in Vedantha and about their descendants,

keeping in mind what Sriman Desikan had himself stressed on the importance of honouring Guruparampara. I am the only son of Madutanthakam Tharka Simham Swachandam Sri U. Ve. Srinivasachariar Swami. I learnt from my revered father, since my age of five, Kavyas, Dramas, Nyaya Sastras in Sanskrit and I obtained Nyaya Siromani Diploma. I underwent training attending regular classes of Sri U.Ve Kothimangalam Tirumalai Nallan Chakravarthi Veeraraghava Mahadesikan. This revered Swami was the son of my revered father's maternal grandfather's younger brother. He was himself the regular disciple of his paternal elder uncle Sri. U.Ve. Gopalarya Mahadesikan and did Vedaadyanam and learnt Kavyas, Dramas and Sastras. Sri Gopalarya Mahadesikan was very well known as 'Apara Vedavyasar". He learnt under Sri. U.Ve. Navalpakkam Chadurveda Chatakruthu Sriman Annayarya Mahadesikan. I claim with pride therefore, that I belong to the line of disciples of Sriman Annayarya Mahadesikan.

.....
Swachandam Aravamuda dasan.

These are excerpts from the preface written by the author in Tamil, while publishing the original work.

श्रीः

श्रीमते निगमान्तमहादेशिकाय नमः

SRIMAD RAHASYATRAYA SAARA SAARAM

On the Greatness of the Succession of Acharyas

The Vedas happen to be our Witness. To understand the inner significances of the Vedas, we must have a clear view of the divine verses indited by the ten Alwars, Poykai Alwar, Bhutattalwar, Peyalwar, Nammalwar, Perialwar, Kulasekaralwar, Tiruppanalwar, Tondaradippodi Alwar, Tirumazhisai Alwar and Tirumangai Alwar as well as the hymns of Kothai. Hence, those who follow the religious path must study the works of the Alwars.

Besides, by singing of Nammalwar as the visible divine, Madhurakavi Alwar has shown us the path which gives prime importance to the acharya's grace. It is not easy for anyone to gain the right path without the grace of the teacher. Though Kshatrabandhu had performed terrible deeds, he gained release by the grace of his teacher. Pundarika who had done good deeds also gained release from bondage only through his teacher. Hence, each one of us can gain release only by drawing close to a teacher. The shastras say that those who wish to gain release, must pray to the succession of Acharyas that originates from Sri Narayana.

For all of us, the acharya is Narayana accompanied by Lakshmi. He first taught the Vedas to Brahma. When Brahma lost it at some point of time, he retrieved the same and presented it again to him. Through Brahma he spread the

Vedas all over the world. Through Brahma's sons like Sanatkumara, he showed the path of virtue to the people of the earth. Sriman Narayana also saw to the continuance of the Vedic pathways through Narada, Parasara, Suka, Saunaka and other sages.

As Vyasa, he indited the Mahabharata and the Brahma Sutras. Taking incarnations like the Swan, the Fish, Hayagriva and Gitacharya, he propounded universal Truths and what is conducive to the increase of goodness. He gave a living image to his ideas through great scholars like Bhishma. He also indited the holy shastra of Pancharatra. He incarnated again as the ten Alwars like Nammalwar and Tirumangai Alwar. Like the cloud that takes the salt water of the sea and returns it as pure water that sustains all lives, he revealed the significances of the Vedas through the Divya Prabhandha in Tamil that could be comprehended by everyone. Also, he incarnated as several acharyas and wrote works to put an end to the critics of his message. Such acharyas are Nathamuni, Alavandar, Sri Ramanuja also known as Sri Bhashyakara and Sri Nigamantha Mahadesikan. These acharyas are incarnations of the Lord.

Hence Sri Narayana is the first acharya. He is followed by Lakshmi, Nammalwar, Nathamuni, Uyyakondar, Manakkal Nambi, Alavandar, Peria Nambi and Emperumanar. Sri Ramanuja is referred to severally as Emperumanar, Udaiyavar, Ilaiyazhvar, Yatiraja and Sri Bhashyakarar. Emperumanar received the pancha

samskara from Peria Nambi and received initiation from him regarding mantras like Tirumantram. He learnt the inner significances of the mantras from Tirukoshtiyur Nambi.

Tirumalai Andan taught him the Tiruvaimozhi. From Alavandar Alwar he learnt more about Tiruvaimozhi, the Stotras and the ancient tradition. He studied the Ramayana with Tirumalai Nambi. After him the succession of acharyas has been a continuous stream. Sri Nigamantha Desikan was born in this parampara, wrote several great works, strengthened Sri Ramanuja's teaching and has performed priceless service to those who follow the Sri Ramanuja Darsana. Thanks to this acharya, this sampradaya has gained an impregnable position today.

One must render open praise about one's guru. The Vedas and Puranas stand witness to the fact that he who has devotion to his Guru gains all his desires. A disciple's knowledge gains or wanes according to the amount of devotion he has towards his teacher. The shastras say that by praising one's teacher, one gains increase in wealth and life. In the same way, one ought to praise the teachers of one's teacher.

Even as we recite the mantras and their significances, we must hail the succession of acharyas aloud as well as silently. In fact, praising the acharyas in the silence of the mind is considered as an expiation for having conversed with people who should have been shunned.

Thus, closeness to acharyas is vital for gaining release and other good on earth.

Introduction

For the Supreme who is the Lord of Lakshmi, the individual soul is as dear as the Kausthubha gem that shines on his chest. The shastras speak of this individual soul as Sri Narayana's son, disciple and serviteur. To him Sri Narayana is Seshi or Lord. This Supreme is the Chief of the Immortals; he has the highest good; dear is He to us and Lakshmi; He is the Lord of earthlings as well as the dwellers in the Heaven. Along with Lakshmi this Lord resides in the city of impregnable Ayodhya which is in the pure spaces of Srivaikunta. Here in the Jewelled Hall, the Prince of Heaven rests on the bed of Adishesha stretched on a beautiful cot, surrounded by the immortals.

The individual soul is also qualified like the immortals with auspicious qualities to enjoy the pauseless glories like them. He is also qualified to serve the Lord daily like them. But he has descended into the wilderness of Prakriti (Matter), has careered dizzily through several births, suffered and lost his splendorous heritage and lies encrusted with dirt. Hence he remains ignorant of the truths enumerated by the shastras.

There is a parable that reveals to us the truth about this individual soul. Consider a king who has gone out to the forest along with his queens and prince and is engaged in hunting. The prince who has not yet learnt to lisp words

gets lost. A hunter finds the boy and brings him up in his settlement. The prince considers himself to be the hunter's son, follows the speech and customs of the tribe and grows up to be one among them. Away from the luxuries he is entitled to by birth, he finds the lowly ways of his present condition to be quite pleasing. He is in a state when he is far away from those who know the truth about his birth. If he continues to be a hunter all his life, he would have to suffer lower births in his next life. It would be impossible for him to gain a better state.

Like the prince, the individual soul does not understand the difference between himself and his body, considers the body to be himself and is living in a low state. Some good men note the signs of royalty in the prince and rescue him with love. They drive away from his mind the thoughts that he belongs to a different caste. They decorate him with the royal trappings and explain to him how he is actually a prince. Thus they create a distaste in him for the life he had led till now. After they explain to him how he belongs to a noble state and should gain all that is good in life, he comes to the right path.

In the same manner some noble people explain to the individual soul through his father and others that the body is different from the soul. They teach him of the goal to be pursued that is proper to his condition, and also the right way to attain the goal. They speak to him of the activities that are right and the activities that he should avoid. Looking upon this individual soul

that has been awakened by good people, some acharyas sent by the compassionate Lord come to him with love.

Sincere servants now make the prince realise his origin, speak to him of what is conducive to his good, and create a desire in him to join the King. In the same manner, the acharyas clearly enunciate the relationship that exists between this individual soul and Narayana who is the Lord of this earth, Srivaikunta and Lakshmi. They strive for the individual soul to follow the proper path, find the good name garnered by him as dear to them, and teach him. They give many instances as testimony to remove his doubts and speak to him of the real nature of God and the individual soul. Thus do they make him realise the relationship between the two, the promised Ananda, the path of Release, of what he should do and also of what he should avoid and other important factors concerning himself. Thus is he brought to the correct path.

These are matters that the individual souls who desire for Release ought to know. All these have been enumerated in the Upanishads. The essence of these teachings are to be found in the three Secrets (rahasya) known as the Tirumantra, the Dvaya and the Charama Sloka. Sri Desika explains these concepts in very clear terms in Srimad Rahasyatraya Sara.

Determining What is Best

Of these three mysteries, the Tirumantra is said to contain all the rest. Hence, if we

understand its significance, we can understand the meaning of everything.

The Charama Sloka posits a way and assures us that by accepting this, one can gain the result of all other paths as well.

The Dvaya Mantra has the power of gaining release for one who recites it just once. Hence, aspirants desirous of gaining release must attend to the Secrets in earnest.

The goal of Release and the way to attain the same cannot be seen by the physical eye. Therefore one ought to learn about them by studying the scriptures. Since there are a number of scriptures that have to be learnt, and human life-span is brief, and any number of obstacles can come up to hinder one's work, we must seek out the essence of the scriptures. As the scriptures of other darsanas are of no use to us, we can ignore them. Except for the Upanishads, the earlier part of the Veda deals with rites desiring worldly goods like the sacrifice, and so even that is not needed. Though goals like the heavens detailed in the Veda are certainly better than life on earth, these must be eschewed as they come as a mix of joy and sorrow. The portions in the Veda which speak of the realisation of one's soul and the means to attain the same are certainly better than what is spoken of earlier. But they are lesser than the portion of the Veda which speaks of the Supreme and the way to attain Him, and so they are also to be eschewed.

Hence, only those portions of the Veda that speak of the Supreme and the way of attaining Him need to be taken for prime study. These three Secrets that bring out their significance are verily the essence of scriptures. The three items state in summary the unique nature of this doctrine. The individual soul aspiring for Release must needs learn their significance.

The Main Doctrine

The word 'pratitantra' signifies a unique doctrine which is not found in any other religion. The important and unique feature of our Visishtadvaita doctrine deals with the relationship between sentient and non-sentient beings and the Supreme as akin to the relationship between the body and the soul. As is the soul to the body, the Supreme is soul to our soul. The sentient and non-sentient things are the body (sarira) of the Supreme Lord. The Lord is sariri, the soul. As long as these things exist, the Lord (sariri) supports them, controls them, and uses them for himself. The sentient and non-sentient beings are considered to be the sarira of the Lord, supported by him, and are unable to remain separated from Him, and they exist only as His serviteurs (sesha). Generally for an aspirant the substance that is unable to leave him as long as it exists is his body (sarira). In the same way, these sentient and non-sentient beings are not able to exist independent of the Lord and hence they are known as His body.

The idea of the Lord supporting the sentient and non-sentient beings is to be understood as

their existence, continuance and activity being dependent on His will. Keeping them under his control, His will supports their existence and continuity. Those of the Lord's qualities that help others understand the Lord and the qualities that are understood through them which belong to Him: indeed, He directly supports everything except himself. The Lord is the support of the qualities of the substances through the substances themselves. Some say that the bodies supported by the soul are being supported by the Lord through the soul. Some acharyas say that the Lord supports bodies through the souls and by himself as well. Thus all substances hold on to the essential nature (svarupa) of the Lord, do not get separated from Him at any time. It is the Lord's will that commands the continuity of the beings. Hence it is said that He controls and rules over them. It is the Lord's will that stays heavy substances like the heavens and stars in their places without falling off. Therefore it is to be understood that as all these substances hold on to His essential nature and act according to His will, they are the Lord's body. One can see such a relationship between the body and the soul on earth. The body exists as long as the soul is; once the soul withdraws, the body gets destroyed. Or, if the soul wills, it is supported. In the same manner, the Lord is the soul of sentient and non-sentient beings. He is the Lord (seshi) of them all because he fulfils His purposes through them and gains in glory.

This view is unique to the Srivaishnava doctrine.

The Five Articles

As stated earlier, the basis of Visishtadvaita doctrine is that the Lord is the soul (sariri) of all sentient and non-sentient beings. Visioning them as the Lord's body is to underline the relationship between the Lord and creation. Elders speak next about five articles. Along with the relationship mentioned here, they present the number as six.

These five articles are the Lord or Supreme Brahman, the soul that must gain Him, the way to attaining Him, the goal of attainment and the hindrances on the way. The Brahman to be gained is to be meditated upon in the opening 'A' sound of the Tirumantra, in the word 'Narayana' and the phrases 'Srimate Narayanaya', 'Sriman Narayana' in the Dvaya. This Brahman is Narayana. Whenever we think of this Narayana, we must envision Him in the company of His consort Lakshmi who is inseparable from Him and as one who is full of infinite knowledge and shoreless Ananda. Besides, we must think of Him as possessing a gracious body which supports all the worlds. His body has not been formed by the five elements. This is a form that is incomparably beautiful and has an indestructible individuality.

The Lord's form is of five kinds. They are Param, Vyuham, Vibhavam, Archai and Antharyami. I shall deal with them in detail in the next chapter. They have been well defined in the Pancharatras. Besides we must also envision Him as one who has countless Vibhutis (glories).

Vibhuti is the substance which is subservient to Him or is His splendour. This creation is a Vibhuti meant for the Lord's play or sport. This earth is but one fourth of it. Three-fourths of it is the world of Srivaikunta. There it is unalloyed joy all the time. Sri Narayana is the Lord of both these existences.

The Lord has to be envisioned even thus: as one who is ever with Lakshmi, an image of endless knowledge and joy, one who is untainted, ocean of countless good qualities like knowledge and power, one who has the two Vibhutis as His image, as one engaged in the sport of birth, sustenance and death in this world. Envisioning the Lord thus, the individual soul must anxiously try to attain Him.

Now, one must understand the nature of the individual soul. This Jeevatma is of three kinds: Bhaddha, Muktha, Nithya. Of these, the Bhaddas (the bound) are the souls from Brahma to the tiniest plant that have been in existence in creation. The Mukthas (released souls) are those who have held on to one of the ways suggested in the Scriptures and have by the grace of the Supreme beyonded life on earth to Srivaikuntam where they exist with the Lord experiencing illimitable Ananda. The Nithyas (the eternally free) are like friends of the Lord in Srivaikuntam and have been enjoying bliss from times immemorial. They include the snake Anantha, the bird Garuda and the rest. The Mukthas and Nithyas consider servitude to the Lord to be the highest Ananda. The common

attribute to all these is atomic; their knowledge is Ananda. Their characteristics lie in being serviteur to the Lord and remaining under His control. This soul must be thought of while meditating on the Pranava, namo in the Tirumantra, nara in Narayana, the first person singular of prapadhye (I seek refuge), and the second person singular of prapadhye and in the words vraja (surrender thyself) and tva (thee) in the Charama Sloka.

Next comes the way (upaya) the soul must take to attain the Lord. It will be presented in detail in later chapters. This may be learnt from the word namah and the part ayana (resting place) in the Tirumantra, the first part of the Dvaya and in the first half of the Charama Sloka. The fourth is the fruit to be attained. This is serviteude to the Lord in Srivaikuntam. This must be understood in the dative or fourth case (Narayanaya), the word namah in Dvaya and the sentence sarvapapebhyomokshayishyami (I will free you from all sins).

The fifth point to be known is the hurdle that comes in the way of attaining the Lord. It is ignorance and the rest which hinder the attainment of Moksha. Foremost among the evils of ignorance is rebelling against the orders of the Lord which have been followed from times immemorial. His orders are the Vedas and the Dharmashastras. By going against the Lord's orders, one incurs his wrath resulting in chastisement. This is indeed the most important obstacle.

Hence the pure knowledge of the soul gets constricted. The reason is the association with

Prakriti (Nature) that makes the soul subject to the body and the senses. Hence the soul gets bodies like those of birds and animals through many births. Even if he does gain a human body, he remains a stranger to authentic scriptures. Following religions that lead one astray, he gets lost. Or, he takes to evil ways for the sake of small gains and becomes loaded with sin. Some worship lesser gods for the lowly gifts they confer. They consider these gifts as great as if they were themselves worms or insects. Even if some aspirants overcome such temptations and gain expertise in scriptures, they take to lesser ways of gaining good and never rise to higher planes of achievement.

It is but the Lord's punishment that keeps one away from the path which takes us to Moksha and release from birth and continues to keep us struggling in wrongful paths. The reason is Avidya (Ignorance). Ignorance is nothing but the act of considering what is eternally good as evil and taking to evil as if it were good. This is the hurdle to Moksha.

There are paths like karma yoga to gain the Lord's presence. But it is not possible to count the number of births that would be needed to gain moksha by following such pathways. However, since the path is good, it is certain to lead us to the goal. Though Vasishta and other sages were realised souls, they gained Moksha only after a very long time. Others like Vrithra and Kshtrabandhu had innumerable hurdles on their way to moksha, but gained it speedily.

Hence it is not possible to gauge the qualities that helps us gain Moksha soon. Nor is it possible to find out the sins that may be resident in one which delays Moksha. Suffice it to say that by contravening the orders of the Lord, one's progress gets delayed. The Lord punishes the aspirant for this reason. The only way to escape the Lord's wrath is surrendering at His feet. In this context, Sri Ramanuja says that surrender is the only way to gain the Lord's kind attention.

The hurdles mentioned therein must be meditated upon by thinking of what has to be eschewed as stated in the Three Secrets, and hold oneself in readiness and work fast to gain the Goal swiftly.

The Three Reals

As stated earlier, those who desire Moksha must understand the five articles. They must also know the relationship of soul and body which is the sixth article. But the Acharyas speak of the need to know about the three Reals. Of course, these form part of the five articles. The reason for speaking of the three Reals as separate is that by knowing them, one is free of ignorance. This ignorance considers the physical body created by Prakriti to be the soul, and that there is no other Lord but the soul or that there is no god at all. These false notions have to be chased away. This can be done by understanding the nature of the three Reals. Hence the shastras speak in detail about the enjoyer (bhokta), the object of enjoyment (bhogyam) and the Lord who is the Master (Iswara). It becomes necessary to know

these before proceeding to learn of the five articles.

Reality is classified into three objects. Of these, non-sentient things (Acit) are classified as Prakriti (which has the qualities of rajas, tamas and sattva), Time (Kala) and Transcendental Substance (Suddha Sattva). These are non-intelligent (Acetana).

The sentient beings are spoken of as Baddha (in bondage), Nitya (eternal) and Mukta (released). They are intelligent (Cetana).

Iswara is the third Real.

Their form (swarupa), continuance (sthiti) and activity (pravritti) have been laid out in the shastras.

Swarupa (essential nature) refers to the unique attributes of the thing, sthiti to its presence in time and pravritti to its activity.

When the real nature is observed, its unique attributes and action are seen. Those attributes without which it cannot be understood stand revealed. If those qualities are not mentioned, one cannot understand it. Hence it is importance to adumbrate the qualities.

The essential nature of the jiva is to be described as jnana (knowledge), Ananda (bliss), Amala (faultless) and Anu (atomic). It is serviteur only to the Lord. He is the slave of the Lord and to none else. He is the chetana (sentient being) who is atomic and in Prakriti he is the chetana who is servietuer to the Lord. The identity of the

Lord is the chetana who is the Lord and who is not subservient to anyone else. What is common to the jiva and the Lord is that they are both chetana (sentient) and pratyak (inwardly luminous). Chetana signifies knowledgeable and pratyaktva means self-luminous. That is, there is no need for an external intelligence for the self but realises its self by itself. Since these two qualities are always same for the jiva and the Lord, the form of the jiva is to be ever a serviteur to the Lord.

When it is said that this jivatma is the slave of the Lord, it should be understood that this servitude continues even in moksha and he would ever be the slave of the Lord. However, as desired by the Lord, the jivatma should serve the devotees also. Such is the true nature of the jiva.

The jivatma's pravritti (action) is always being obedient to the Lord, doing everything for Him and enjoying everything for Him. The Lord makes the jivatma do and enjoy action for His sake. Hence all the activities of the jiva are for the Lord.

Of the chetanas the Baddha (bound) can be identified by the manner in which he is bound by avidya (ignorance), keeps performing karmic action and experiences the fruits of such action. From Brahma to the tiniest plants, everyone is in bondage. The differences among them can be recognised by observing the kind of knowledge, happiness and other experiences each of them comes to have. The jivas who are in bondage will

use their nature and intelligence to carry around the bodies given to them by the Lord according to their karmic performance. As they uphold by their nature, the body is not destroyed and remains awake. Holding up the body in time is useful for the jivas to perform action like sacrifices to gain the ends of life such as swarga. For him who has surrendered and has prepared the way for Moksha, the body is useful to perform services to the Lord on earth. For sinners, holding up the body becomes the means to go to hell and be born again.

One may ask: If the jiva is the cause of the body, then how come the body continues to exist even after life has withdrawn from it? But once the jiva leaves the body, many of the things that hold it together get dispersed. What we call the body is only what we see externally. Actually that is not the body. All the things that go to make this body (the five elements) become the body of the Lord. When the jiva leaves it, the body disintegrates.

These sentients who are in bondage are different from other chetanas in the condition of living. This earthly life continues till one reaches moksha. These chetanas in bondage are either doing good or bad action or that which is neither, like winking the eyes.

The essential nature of the Muktas is a condition where the obstacles to their moksha have been removed. The essential nature of jivatma is to be like the Paramatma, an illumined

image, faultless and full of Ananda. When he is in bondage, this image disappears due to karmic connections. Once Moksha is attained, the karmas are gone, and the essential nature stands revealed. Thereafter nothing new gets attached to him.

Their condition of being has only a beginning but no end at any time. Among the Muktas there is no difference that comes because of the movement of time. All are equal as there is no end to any.

Their work is the shoreless service that they can do as they wish to, a right they had lost from times immemorial.

The essential nature of the Nityas has no beginning and they are, as always, serviteurs to the Lord. The specific feature is the enjoyment of performing service to the Lord and Lakshmi. As this is common to all Nityas, there are no mutual differences in their existence in time.

In their service, each has a specific duty from times immemorial.

Ananta, Garuda, Vishwaksena and some other Nityas have specified duties, and so can it be said that all Nityas and Muktas can perform the service they like for the Lord? The idea is that they are not stopped from performing any service they so desire. There is no competition. Everyone becomes happy by watching the joy of the Lord who is being served by any one of them. Thus there is no difference in the happiness they

all gain in serving the Lord. This is why it is said that all of them have a right to perform service as they like.

There is a substance called Dharmabhuta Jnana (attributive knowledge). It is the intelligence possessed by the soul. It should have been included in Acit which is non-sentient. But it has not been listed so. The reason is that the substance is part of the Chetana, and hence considered as mentioned along with it. When the Dharmabhuta Jnana renders invaluable help in understanding things, that is, when it shows things outside oneself, it remains self-luminous in the soul. When it does not show any outside things, it has no illumination. This Dharmabhuta Jnana is found everywhere, at all times for Iswara and Nityas. For other souls it will have various shades according to their karmic patterns. Once Moksha is attained, it is ever present. This Dharmabhuta Jnana is eternal. It has neither beginning nor end.

The work of this substance is to make known the outside world. Besides, when there is life in the body it controls the body and the senses. For the soul in bondage, it expands and contracts. It reaches the state of Bhoga. Bhoga is the state of experiencing what is pleasant for oneself or what is evil. But all things belong to the Lord. Hence all things are agreeable. This is its true nature. If it appears evil at times, it is due to one's karmic results. For the Lord, the Nityas and the Muktas all things are agreeable. For those in bondage it depends on Time and the individual soul and the

place for things to be sometimes agreeable, sometimes inimical and sometimes neutral. It is not the true nature of objects that we see. The Lord shows things according to one's karmic fate and gives appropriate results.

The common nature of the jivatma and the Paramathma is self-luminosity. There is no expansion or contraction of this luminosity at any time to anyone including those in bondage.

When Dharmabhuta Jnana reveals what is outside the soul, it remains luminous to the soul.

Here Dharmabhuta Jnana is intelligence. The souls are also images of intelligence and Jnana. Jnana is also self-luminous. Jnana and self-luminosity are common to souls and Dharmabhuta Jnana. Dharmabhuta Jnana reveals other things or announces it. That is its special nature. This power is not held by the soul. This is known as Pratyaktva or inwardness.

Jnana is defined as illumining something. The soul illumines itself. Hence that which illumines oneself or anything apart from the self is Jnana. Self-luminous means that one is not dependent on something else to reveal oneself. This is common to Dharmabhuta Jnana and the soul. The speciality of Dharmabhuta Jnana is illumining something apart from itself. The soul does not have this quality. We have already mentioned that the soul's special quality is Pratyaktva. Pratyaktva is the ability to illumine oneself. Just as we say something is illumined by something else, here we say that illumines itself. Dharmabhuta Jnana does not have this quality.

The non-sentient beings are of three kinds. They can be apprehended only by others. They have no intelligence. When we say they can be apprehended only by others, it is understood that they cannot be apprehended by themselves. This condition of non-intelligence and the inability to be self-luminous are common both to non-sentient beings and Dharmabhuta Jnana. The three non-sentient beings are: Triguna (Matter), Time and Suddhasattva. Matter and Time are Jada. Jada means that which is not self-luminous. Some say Suddhasattva is also Jada. But since Pancharatra Shastra says that Suddhasattva is pure Jnana or luminosity, some say this too is self-luminous. Since Suddhasattva has no intelligence, it has been listed as non-sentient. These three non-sentient things take varied forms as desired by the Lord.

Of these three, the substance of Matter is the place for the three gunas. This keeps changing variously. The three gunas are sattva, rajas and tamas. When all the three are evenly balanced, it leads to pralaya or total dissolution. It is when one of them is more or less than the other, then there is creation and sustenance. When one of the gunas increases and the other two decrease, the world is created.

The shastras speak of twenty-four tattvas including Matter (Prakriti). Of these, Prakriti is all pervading, that is three-fourths is Suddhasattva and one fourth is Prakriti mandala. The one-fourth portion is full of Prakriti. In that portion, the gunas undergo unevenness giving rise to the tattva

called Mahan. Ahankara and the rest follow.

The twenty four Tattvas (Reals) are: Prakriti, Mahat, Ahankara, five tanmatras (sound, touch, form, taste and smell), the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space), and five senses of knowledge (eye, nose, tongue, skin and ear), five senses of action (hand, foot, mouth, the anus, the procreative organ) and the mind. Aspirants performing upasana should know about these different divisions and their presiding deities. We must also understand that the soul is quite independent of these twenty-four Reals.

The nature of this non-sentient Triguna is to help the souls in bondage by making their bodies work through their senses, by taking on changes that mark its unevenness so the souls can attain moksha. Using Rajas, Tamas and Sattva, it will hide the truth from the bound souls, give them wrong knowledge and immerse them in worldly pleasures. The same will also improve Sattva guna, infuse right knowledge, make the soul recognise Truth and help it attain moksha. All these activities help the lila of the Lord.

Suddhasattva forms three-fourths of the whole. This is a space which has no infusion of Rajas or Tamas in it. The unique quality of Suddha sattva is that it is temporary in some places and eternal elsewhere. The Tirumamani Mandapam, spires and the rest in Srivaikuntha, the transcendent form of the Lord, his Vyuha forms, immortals like Ananta and Garuda are eternal. The bodies of Nityas, Mukthas and that

of the Lord which take shape at different times are impermanent. The Vedas say that if the Mukthas have certain desires like seeing their fathers, that gets fulfilled. These forms that take shape are impermanent. When different forms are shaped of Suddha sattva, they become the means of enjoyment for the Lord. He is the Master. This would help his serviteur the soul to perform kainkarya.

Time is also non-sentient. It has no intelligence. This is spread everywhere and is called Vibhu.

Again, Time is Matter, non-sentient. Its essential nature is to be non-sentient and it has a universal presence. Since it has no measure, it is ever present. Its action helps creation through divisions such as minutes and day.

Prakriti, Time and Suddhasattva are always present in nature. Though they are eternal, as they have a characteristic to receive different forms, some of them are considered perishable. That is they are like water flowing in the flood, and in that sense they are eternal. That is the old form yields to a new one. Mahat, Ahankara and other tattvas were there earlier and in the following Kalpas too. The essential nature, the state of their being and activity of all these substances are dependent upon the Lord. Their essential nature and other attributes depend upon the Lord and his will. Hence all substances are kept in an agreeable state by the Lord. Thus everything is agreeable to the Lord, the Nityas and the Muktas.

It is only to the Baddhas who are in bondage that things are agreeable or inimical according to their karmic results. But the Lord considers the souls of even these bonded ones to be agreeable. If one thinks of oneself, and says things belong to him or desires things for himself, these souls will be on the other side of the Lord. When right intelligence dawns and it is realised that everything belongs to the Lord, all manner of things become agreeable to Him also.

Let us now draw closer to the essential nature of the Lord. It has been said that the existence of things depend upon Him. There are separate attributes that reveal His nature. They are Satya and the rest. Hence His essential Nature has Truth (Satya), Knowledge (Jnana), Infinitude (Ananta), Bliss (Ananda) and Pure (Amala). Once He is seized by the attributes listed above, they would reveal his unequalled image and other faultless qualities. Of his qualities, knowledge, strength, lordship, valour, energy and splendour are the six which reveal him unequivocally as the Supreme. Saulabhya or easy accessibility and Vatsalya or spontaneous love reveal that He can be attained easily. All the qualities are always in His essential nature. All the qualities are with Him and a few of them are spoken of specially to help people in their personal upasana to reach Him. The Lord reveals Himself as Para (transcendent), Vyuha (emanation), Vibhava (incarnation), Antaryami (indwelling universal) and Archa (consecrated images). Para is the transcendent form in Sri Vaikuntha. The six

qualities enumerated above are all found in this state.

Vyuha is variously referred to as three or four in number. Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Sankarshana and Aniruddha are the four Vyuhas. However, since there is no difference between qualities, form and rules regarding upasana between Paravasudeva and Vyuhasvasudeva, it is appropriate to speak of three Vyuhas. Vyuhasvasudeva also has six qualities. These are divided into two each in three Vyuhas: so Sankarshana has knowledge and strength, Pradyumna has lordship and valour, Aniruddha has energy and splendour.

Apart from these are the twelve Vyuha forms (emanations) like Kesava and Narayana. Each of them has its individual quality. All these are forms seen in Sri Vaikuntha.

There are more than thirty Vibhava (incarnational) forms. Of these Matsya and others making ten are very popular and are spoken of with special interest.

In the incarnations called Vibhava, the Lord reveals or hides his qualities appropriate to the need of the situation. There are sub-divisions in incarnations as well. The Krishna incarnation is associated with several forms. One must learn about many incarnations in this manner. Some are to be taken as entering the jiva directly and engaging itself in the action of the hour.

Archa is the image installed in temples. Archa is the consecration of the Supreme for those

who want to see themselves the images of Para, Vyuha and Vibhava.

These five forms including the Para are pure. They have no karmic connections. In Sri Vaikuntha the image is pure Suddhasattva. It has nothing to do with Matter. All these incarnations are true. Though the Lord takes several incarnations in this world, His qualities like knowledge never get exhausted. All His images are Suddhasattva as seen in Sri Vaikuntha. It is not like the human form. It is the Lord's will that leads to these incarnations. They manifest when dharma has to be safe-guarded. The Gita says that those who know this truth about incarnations will gain moksha. By knowing this truth about the Lord's glorious qualities, the aspirant who seeks prapatti (surrender) as the means gains supreme confidence.

Saunaka says that the Archa incarnation also grants moksha: "By making a lovely image of gold, silver or other material, the seeker salutes the image, performs worship, meditates upon it, gets rid of his sins this way and gains moksha." The Alwars knew of this and prayed to the Lord in many ways, had visions of Him and gained Realisation. The Lord is happy to be engaged in action like creation and finally grants us moksha as well.

The Lord pervades the Archa image as it is made by the aspirant.

The Lord's presence in the heart in His subtle form is known as Antaryami. As this helps

meditating upon the Supreme who dwells in all hearts, the form is known as Antaryami.

This Lord is always united with Lakshmi. He has kept to Himself the power to punish those who commit wrong. Lakshmi retained for Herself Purushakaratra (of leading) which helps us draw closer to the Lord. Though the Lord and Lakshmi have identical qualities, it will be seen that the Lord has some qualities which are manly and Lakshmi has some which are feminine.

The Truth Regarding the Supreme Deity

Though we know in general about God as indicated above, it is imperative to understand who is the Supreme Divine. By knowing this it becomes possible to worship the one god who can grant Realisation speedily and without our having to beseech any other godhead. Otherwise, the pathway to that Supreme will remain unknown. Hence we should know about the Supreme Divine.

Though the sentients and non-sentients have been determined with the help of pramanas, it will not be acceptable to consider everything as Brahman or Brahman as the One.

Nor is it right to consider the Lord and jivatma as a single entity. All sentient beings are different because of varied experiences of joy and sorrow. Because of this there is difference among gods and living beings as well. Though the Supreme is the Indwelling Universal within Brahma, Rudra and other gods, yet they are all different. It is not right to consider them all as being same. Brahma, Rudra and the other gods have been

created by Narayana. They have to endure the results of their action. This truth is stated in several works which say Sri Narayana alone is their cause and that He is indestructible. Hence it is not correct to accept the statements that Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra are equals, or that all these are one and the same, or that there is a god superior to the three or that Brahma or Rudra is the Supreme.

There are several proofs and Pramanas to prove that Sri Narayana alone is Supreme to all, and not Brahma or Rudra.

The Puranas speak through the words of Brahma and Rudra that they were created by Sri Narayana the Supreme. The Puranas describe how these gods were bound by some desires and karmic results, and how they worshipped the Lord and gained their status. Besides this, several Puranic stories tell us how they are controlled by Nature known as Maya. They are controlled by the three gunas of Rajas, Tamas and Sattva. Their knowledge has decline as well as growth. It has been said that with the help of the Supreme who dwells within them, Brahma and Rudra fulfil the commands issued to them. They are not auspicious. Nor can one take refuge in them. That is, they have not the capacity to chase away the sins of aspirants. They cannot be envisioned through meditation. Parasara, Suka, Saunaka and others have said so in the Puranas. The Lord has also said that these godheads are beneath Narayana whereas He is not subject to them.

Where it is stated that all the worlds are bound by the sway of the Lord, Brahma and Rudra are included in the mention, and referred to as His serviteurs. All creation is the body of the Lord. The Lord is spoken of as the soul of all things. Brahma and Rudra are his bodies. They are serviteurs of Narayana. The all-knowing Rudra has himself affirmed in the Mantrarajapatha Stava that Narayana is their Supreme.

There is no one who is equal or superior to Narayana. Several Puranas and other works have affirmed that He is without an equal. It is said that one who is glanced at by Narayana even when in the womb, and when born of this grace is watched by Him and becomes intent on moksha (Realisation). Whereas it is said that those seen by Brahma or Rudra thus are full of Rajasic or Tamasic qualities. Also that those who desire moksha should not worship Brahma or Rudra. They and those who wish for moksha should worship Narayana only.

Though the Puranas speak at times of Brahma or Rudra as givers of moksha, it only means that they give the knowledge for attainment of Moksha like a teacher. Though one may worship them, the aspirant will but gain evil if he equates Brahma or Rudra with Narayana. They must be worshipped only as devotees of Narayana.

Even the Ramayana says that if the Lord decides to punish a person, Brahma or Rudra or any other God cannot save him. But if the Lord decides to save some one, He will give the right

explanation to those who seek to prevent Him and also destroy those who oppose, and thus be the saviour. He gave a proper explanation to Sugriva who sought to prevent Vibhishana from being given refuge, and took him in as a friend. He then killed the enemy Ravana, made Vibhishana as his associate, and fulfilled his desires. This stands out as an example.

If one approaches gods other than Narayana, minor desires other than Moksha could be fulfilled speedily. Even this is done because of the power devolved in them by Narayana. However, one cannot gain moksha from any god other than Narayana. If one approaches Him, one can gain riches vaster than that is given by Brahma and other gods. Gaining riches from Narayana is like bathing in the river Ganges to cool oneself from the heat of existence. By the Lord's grace, his sins also will be washed away, he will be endowed with sattwik qualities and gain a taste for moksha as Janaka, Ambarisha and the Kekaya king, and ultimately gain moksha as well. But there is a time differential between those who approach the Lord for moksha straight and those who desire riches first and then moksha. He who desires only moksha and follows the Path gains the same without any loss of time.

He who desires wealth first and also hankers after Moksha, has to go through Karma and Jnana yogas and after a passage of time enter Bhakti Yoga and thereby gain Moksha. For him who surrenders, there is no time-lag at all except the limit he himself has sought. It may be understood

that for one who follows Bhakti Yoga even though it has many difficulties, the result comes only after a considerable lapse of time. For those who surrender (Prapatti) there is immediate result. The shastras say that due to the boundless nature of the Divine, the path full of difficulties yields result after a long time while the easier path gives immediate result. We must accept what the shastras say with unwavering faith. Only those who do not know this truth will worship gods other than Narayana.

However, as all gods are the body of Narayana, worship offered to them will ultimately reach Him just as the external application of sandal paste pleases the king's heart. But since such worship has not followed the right method, they will not yield results. When such worship is done keeping in mind these gods to be the body of Narayana, one gains results. Knowing this, if one worships Narayana alone for moksha as well as other desires, the gifts will be even more valuable than that given by other gods. For those who hold on to the Lord for moksha, He will on His own give health, wealth and happiness. A fine illustration is Kulasekhara Alwar.

The Alvars have pointed out in several places the superiority of Narayana to Brahma, Shiva and other gods. The truth of Narayana being the Supreme must be meditated upon the first letter 'A' and the word "Narayana" in Tirumantra, the terms 'Sriman Narayana' and 'Srimate Narayanaya' in the Dvaya and the words 'mam' and 'aham' in the Charama sloka.

Only he who knows this truth about the Supreme Lord will find it possible to surrender to Him completely. The Alvars have considered it imperative to worship the Lord's devotees as well. One should always salute the Lord along with the Mother as the equal. The Alvars and the Vishnu Purana have said that they should be always worshipped together as equals.

Aspiration for Moksha

From the earlier four chapters we gain a clear understanding of the following points. The Vedantic texts speak of the true nature of the Atman. This Jivatma is self-illuminated. He is the knower, the doer, the enjoyer, housed in the body, atomic, has neither birth nor death, has no limbs, cannot be cut or destroyed in any manner, registers neither growth nor decay. It is thus clearly learnt that he is different from the body in which he is housed, and the limbs that help him. He knows that this atma when it leaves the body, goes to reside in another or moves away to another world. Generally it comes to be known that the atma deserves to go to another world and gain other experiences.

Whether it turns out to be hell or a life on this earth again, he now realises the evil therein and distances himself from the action that leads him to such states.

Also, he knows what differentiates him from Narayana, that he is the body housing the Lord; that he lacks certain good qualities. He knows that servitude to Narayana makes for the

superiority of his being; hence he desires for such serviteurship. This knowledge is a must as it helps the aspirant to pray for such good in another world, especially the privilege of serving the Lord in Moksha and prevents him from doing anything inimical to this aspiration. Such discrimination helps him shed the egotism of the 'I' and the avarice of 'mine'.

For giving up the feelings of 'I' and 'mine', we must meditate upon the important significations in the Tirumantra. The third letter 'ma' in the first word helps a good deal in this regard.

This atman is, of course, the image of wisdom, and has knowledge. By knowing this we get released from the feeling of 'I-ness' in the body and that the things connected with the body are 'mine'. Even though one realises that atma and its attributes are different from the body, it is by understanding that one belongs to Narayana who is the significance of the fourth case of the first syllable that one ceases to think of oneself as all-capable. By considering oneself as the servant of the Lord, one realises that he is no more the owner of himself or the objects concerning him. Thus egoism ceases to be.

By the middle letter 'u' of the first syllable, it is understood that I am the serviteur of Narayana alone and not of anyone else. Hence no more does the jiva think of himself as the property of someone else, or that anyone other than the Lord can own him.

The middle word 'namah' of Tirumantra says 'I am not independent.' By saying so, one is freed from the idea of saving oneself without the help of others.

By understanding thus the inlaid significance of the Tirumantra, the jiva is freed from erroneous ideas. The true knowledge teaches him that the joys to be gained on this earth and in places like heaven are tainted. From several Pramanas he understands that only the Ananda gained in the Lord's Vaikunta is blemishless. He understands that mere enjoyment of one's self is also tainted. The Ananda gained in Srivaikunta alone is spotless. Hence he desires to give up his attachment for ordinary pleasures and looks out for shoreless Ananda. He is a Mumukshu, or one who desires Moksha.

Those who are desirous of Moksha, and have learnt the aforesaid points, if they do not pursue the goal which is the highest Purushartha by giving up worldly attachment, vain has been their studies. They will be looked down upon by others. Those who seek to act immediately upon what they have understood so far will be praised by even gods. They will gain glory.



Conclusion of Volume 1. Continued in Volume 2