

# Srimad Rahasyatraya Saara Saaram

## Volume 3



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Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha

## SRIMAD RAHASYATHRAYA SAARA SAARAM

by

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CONTINUED FROM VOLUME 2

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## *The Way That Exists*

The jivatma had suffered through births on this earth for aeons. By the Lord's grace gained for no reason it is freed from the bondage of birth. Learning the Truth by studying authentic shastras, the jivatma becomes desirous of gaining Moksha. Performing the upaya (the means), he gets saved. Recognising his present state, he learns to do his work in accordance with the shastras and avoids committing mistakes. After the body falls away, he reaches Paramapada through the pathway of Archis and the rest. All this has been explained above.

Of these, one must have a clear idea of siddhopaya and sadhyopaya and their greatness. The reason for the prapanna's lack of clear knowledge is due to the punishment meted out to him by the Lord for his earlier sins. The jivatma has three important ways to effect a change in the Lord's attitude.

The first is the jivatma's prayer to the Mother: "Grant me true surrender at the feet of the Lord". The Mother replies. "May it be so. May this surrender gain you all that you want."

Second is the grace of a good acharya.

Third is the gaining of a good sampradaya.

Sri Vishnu Purana and other scriptures speak of several legends of good acharyas. One must read them and absorb them. It is very difficult to gain a good sampradaya for walking on the right path, gain an acharya who is not interested in fame, profit or ritualism, and through him get at the great thoughts disseminated from the first acharya who is Narayana Himself, learn the shastras and understand their important precepts. Hence it is better to approach an acharya and learn about the important concepts of Srivaishnavism. If there are sincere followers who yet do not have the ability to read the scriptures, for them the acharya's initiation alone is important. Sometimes shastras can confuse people. Hence it is good to gain knowledge through an acharya.

When there are aspirants who can learn the shastras well , they should gain much clarity so that they can defeat people who indulge in illogical and vain argumentation, and give clarifications to those who feel disturbed by such arguments. A person knows the dharmas well when he learns of the Vedas and shastras in clear terms in the light of shastras that are not inimical to the Vedas.

People who do not arrive at clear perception will lose the true concepts through illogical reasoning. In the process they might be led to think differently of the Lord and His ways. This would be a great loss. It is, for instance, quite wrong to say Sriman Narayana is not the Supreme

or speak of another deity as superior to Him. Or insinuate that all glories do not belong to the Lord, or that the jivatma is not subservient to Him. These are also mistaken opinions.

Even if one of these wrong opinions stick to the prapanna, he would be like one who has recovered his lost property only to lose it again. Hence it is imperative that one does not join forces with people interested in mere argumentation. Otherwise his intelligence will be clouded and he will be lost. So it is good to learn of shastraic truths with crystalline clarity.

Nowadays one finds people with a confused approach towards Siddhopaya. Vedanta Desika has answered their doubts in detail in this section. Without going into them all, I shall touch upon a few.

Some say there is no need to observe Prapatti by referring to the qualities of the Lord and about the relationship between the Lord and the jiva. Vedanta Desika replies to them in firm accents and says that Prapatti is necessary and Prapatti alone assures Moksha.

As many shastras say the Lord is the guardian along with the Mother, some object to the point that "the two together" alone give guardianship. Vedanta Desika clears their doubt. Srimad Ramayana, the hymns of the Alwars, the prayers of the acharyas and what Sri Ramanuja has underlined in Vedanta Sangraha are witnesses that the divine pair of the Lord and the Mother are to be attained together through the instrument

of Prapatti, service in Moksha which is the fruits thereof and for those who desire moksha. Be it creation or for giving Moksha, the Lord always acts in unison with the Mother. All the pramanas say that the sentient beings are all the sesha of the divine pair.

Having given answers for all such objections, Vedanta Desika proves that the Mother has a status in all respects equal to that of the Lord. He says that for everyone, in all things, the Divine Pair remain the goal. Nanjeeyar also averred: "Where the Lord is mentioned, the Mother is understood." He then spoke of what he had heard from his acharya about Sri Ramanuja's view on the matter.

A doubt may arise that if Lakshmi is never separated from the Lord, is it right to have temples for her and for the true devotee to worship there. However, though the Mother is sanctified in a separate temple for devotees to pray for gaining desires, since she is there as the consort of the Lord, praying to her one gains one's desires. Where Sridevi is to the right of the Lord, it is 'bhoga-archa'. The Mother on the Lord's chest is "laya-archa". Just as the Mother is worshipped in these forms, it is perfectly right to worship the Mother in separate temples for fulfilling one's desires (kamyā-archa) as we worship archa forms like Santana Gopala.

Hence the Lord and the Mother together form the Siddhopaya.



*The Way to be Adopted*

Earlier Vedanta Desika gave clarifications to doubts and confusions regarding the Lord as Siddhopaya (the Way). As a result the Lord was recognised as the all-knowing, all-capable, immensely compassionate, the Lord of all, ever together with Lakshmi, the definite Way to guard all those who surrender to him. In spite of knowing this, if the jiva has flouted the Lord's shastras for long, the jiva has to perform Prapatti as laid down by the Lord Himself. He must know about it in clear terms. Else, he has no other instrument for gaining the grace of the Lord, for the Lord is the Way.

Firstly, it may be questioned that since Prapatti is mentioned in the Veda, whether only that caste which has the right to learn the Vedas can have recourse to Prapatti. The objection is that any and everybody cannot perform Prapatti. The answer can be had from the Svetasvara sruti of the Vedas, Sri Ramayana, Satvatasamhita and Sanatkumarasamhita which say that everyone has the right to perform Prapatti. The path of devotion is allowed for the first three castes. But just as the Vedic injunctions are common to everyone (like the need to speak truth), Prapatti is the right of people belonging to all castes. In fact we learn from shastras that even crows perform prapatti. Sri Krishna Himself has given an assurance in Sri Bhagavad Gita that whosoever surrenders to Him will gain Moksha, irrespective of his caste. If someone is innocent and has no other refuge, he is worthy of Prapatti.

Prapatti is also known as Saranagati and Paaranyasa. This has been referred to earlier in this work. In Prapatti, paaranyasa is important. Paaranyasa is the movement when the jivatma surrenders to the Lord and leaves to Him the responsibility of guardianship. The jivatma hands over itself to the Lord through the mantra of Saranagati. This is the most important part of surrender. The other five like Viswasa are the limbs of Prapatti. However, the form is found to be complete only with the limbs. As mentioned earlier, the firm decision to live in accordance with the Lord's wishes, the rejection of what is inimical to the Lord, an immense faith that the Lord will surely guard the aspirant, praying to Him for such guardianship, and a feeling of one's own helplessness: these are the five limbs of Prapatti. If any of these is lacking, the surrender is not complete. Sometimes saranagati is performed with a particular desire in mind and the desire may not be fulfilled. This might make them doubt about the efficacy of Saranagati performed for attaining Moksha. This is not right.

If saranagati is done for a particular gain, there is a definite result. If it is not gained, it only means one of the limbs did not function. The prapatti for moksha performed with the five limbs is definitely fruitful. If a doubt arises, it only means the surrender is not complete, as a total faith is the major limb for prapatti.

Both Bhakti and Prapatti grant Moksha. Followers of both should keep to the respective tradition of varnashrama dharma. The names of

the gods used in their rituals refer to the Lord who is an antaryami. And so their worship is also done for the Lord.

Vedana Desika has given several questions and answers in this section.

### *The Limitations*

So far Vedanta Desika gave clear answers to doubts and confusions that rise regarding Siddhopaya and Sadhyopaya. In this section Vedanta Desika seeks to put this Path on the right track, unswayed by over-enthusiasm or ignorance.

It is said of a person who follows Prapatti that seven generations before and after him will attain Moksha by his act. Without prejudice to this high praise, this person's greatness has to be understood.

Firstly, there is a confusion regarding caste. Generally speaking, Puranas like the Bharata speak of how persons belonging to lowly castes raised themselves in the hierarchy by their devotion to the Lord. In the same way, there are references to upper castes falling low because they have no devotion. One must know the inner significance of this condition. It does not mean all the devotees of the Lord belong to the same caste. If so, it will run counter to the shastras which have laid down different types of conduct for brahmins and others. The difference between a brahmin and those belonging to other castes remain so among devotees. The elders have said they are equal in the sense that all of them have a right to attain Moksha. What the Alwar says of the Name as

'giving caste' is that those who are associated with the Lord do not give thought to it and it is sinful of them even to think of others as 'low'. But it is not right to marry one's daughters to them. That action belongs to caste. Honour and fame belong to one's character. 'Kulam' is different from caste. Caste comes through birth. Kulam comes from character. Kulam changes according to one's character. But caste does not change.

This is found to be so in the puranas with reference to Vidura and others. It is understood that one should look after devotees with respect and humility, to whichever caste they may belong and avoid even upper caste persons if they have no devotion.

Those who have performed Prapatti should follow the guidelines for their respective castes. Recognising this to be the Lord's command, one should avoid transgressing it.

### *Prapatti is Potent*

Vedanta Desika speaks of the devotee's greatness here, following his earlier observations on the subject.

We can understand them in a nutshell. When a devotee has problems or sorrow, he must accept it as the Lord's compassion. Though the Lord saved Kakasura when he surrendered, yet he blinded one eye of the crow for its good. One must not only avoid performing evil to the Lord but also avoid evil action towards His devotees. Some may be true devotees. Some may just go about in a devotee's garb. Whoever

be the devotee, sincere or insincere, no harm or impoliteness of any kind should be done towards them till one knows the truth about them. The Lord will not condone a disservice done to a devotee. Hence one must avoid behaving impolitely even towards false devotees.

Though residence in a holy place is preferable, if the enemies of Lord are there, one must not live there. The best place of residence is where devotees live.

### *The Tirumantra*

Till now important information which good people should know has been conveyed through replies to questions. All this is revealed by the three secrets, — in Tirumantra, Dvaya and Charamasloka, which Vdanta Desika takes up for detailed exegesis now.

Of these three the Tirumantra avers that the jivatma is serviteur of the Lord. It removes hurdles, raises in him the desire for the supreme plane of Moksha and anxiety to gain it at the earliest. The Tirumantra will increase his desire for the fulfilment of his ideal.

To this chosen devotee, the Dvaya teaches the method of performing Prapatti. The charama sloka commands him to perform this surrender. From each of the secrets one can gather the significance of the Way through the sound or meaning. However, each mantra has an individual significance.

As individual meanings, the charama sloka is to be understood as a command to perform saranagati; the Dvaya is the mantra to be repeated for performing Prapatti; Tirumantra indicates everything in a flash.

The Dvaya shows that the first syllable of the first word of Tirumantra, 'a', symbolises the supremacy of the Lord. The middle word 'namah' indicates that Prapatti is the Way. The third word 'Narayanaya' insinuates that the fruit of surrender is kainkarya. In Dvaya, the word 'prapadhye' signifies the humble devotee, and how he has interest in no other Way, and 'namah' symbolises the act of giving up what should be rejected.

These three secrets are the cause of knowledge, spiritual discipline and strength. The Tirumantra enters the disciple's mind through the acharya's initiation, chases away the darkness of ignorance found there, reveals the jivatma's true status as the Lord's serviteur (sesha) and makes him remain so. Hence it gives a status to the jivatma. The charama sloka teaches the path of surrender and thereby helps the growth of intelligence for becoming an ideal serviteur. As it is capable of granting the supreme state of Moksha even by uttering it once, and as it helps the jivatma achieve transcendence by repeated recitation, Dvaya Mantra gives him great happiness.

The Tirumantra has been praised high in works like Atharvana Upanishad and Kato Upanishad, shastras like those of Manu, and also

in Narayana Hiranyagarbha Kalpa, Naradiya Kalpa and Bhodhayaneeya Kalpa.

Of all mantras, those that refer to gods are great; of them Ashtakshara, Dvadasakshara and Shadakshara are of special significance. Of these again, Ashtakshara is superior. It is the very essence of all the Vedas, has a powerful thrust to destroy all sorrows, is capable of granting all desires, a help for all paths, is common to everyone transcending caste barriers, speaks the truth about Matter, sentient beings and the Lord; and it is applicable to all forms of the Lord.

Hence the Alwars and acharyas favoured this Ashtakshara (Tirumantra). The sages have also spoken of its greatness in many ways. The Tirumantra was taught by the Lord to Sri Pundarika through Narada. As he received it in good faith, he repeated the mantra and gained Moksha. The Lord Himself taught the mantra to Tirumangai Alwar.

This core mantra with pranava is not advisable for being taught to women and persons belonging to the fourth caste. Instead of Pranava, its first letter 'a' alone can be added to get the eight letters. One should meditate upon the significance of Pranava when reciting this 'a'. It is said that even if the Pranava is not added to 'namo Narayanaya', it has the same glory and strength as when 'aum' is added to it. The Alwars have recorded the Tirumantra without the Pranava.

The Pranava by itself in the instrumentation of Prapatti would mean the self-offering of the

jivatma to the Paramatma. The Vedas and Dharmashastras say it is the essence of the three Vedas as it has the three letters, 'a', 'u', 'm'. Of the three letters, 'a' refers to the Lord. Sri Ramanuja has stated in the Vedanta Sangraha that the first letter 'a' always refers to the first of creation, the Lord. This idea is found in Nighantus and Vyakaranas. Vyakarana considers 'a' as 'the guardian of all', and links it to the Lord. As the term 'guardian' does not indicate the guardianship of a particular thing, it transpires that He is the guardian of all.

One must remember that the Lord who is the guardian of all is always in the company of Lakshmi. This has been underlined by many pramanas. Wherever the Lord is mentioned, the Mother's presence is understood. Just as when engaged in devotion one must meditate upon the Lord's gracious qualities along with the Vidyas, one must meditate upon the Lord always with the Mother. This is what distinguishes the Lord from other gods. The great sages who have experientially envisioned the Lord say that his superiority lies in being seen along with the Mother. Even the term 'Narayana' must be taken as indicating the presence of Lakshmi.

The first letter 'a' in the Pranava is in the dative or fourth case singular where the singular suffix has been dropped. As the letter 'a' signifies the Lord, there is this need of the fourth case. To the Supreme Lord signified by 'a' belongs the jivatma signified by 'm'. The first letter of Tirumantra, i.e., the Pranava indicates that the



jivatma is the serviteur of the Lord. This is equal to saying that the Pranava is the mantra that offers the jivatma to Paramatma. When it is said that the Paramatma is the seshi (owner) of all and jivatma is His servant, it should be remembered that Narayana with Lakshmi is the seshi. Hence the jivatma is serviteur to both Lakshmi and Narayana. Seshan means one who does not regard the good of himself but is ever intent in the good of 'others'. The 'others' in the Pranava are seshi. Hence the 'a' itself means jivatma is the serviteur of Lakshmi and Narayana.

The Kata Sruti refers to the middle letter 'u' as Lakshmi. Thereby we understand that the jivatma symbolised by 'm' as serviteur to Vishnu who is signified by 'a' and Lakshmi by 'u'. The 'u' also shows that this jivatma is serviteur only to Lakshmi and Narayana and none else. It means that the jivatma has always to be their serviteur.

The idea that the third letter of Pranava 'm' refers to the jivatma: according to the rules of grammar it refers to jivatma who is the image of knowledge, is intelligent and atomic. Though the general idea is an image of knowledge, it is particularly understood as the image of Ananda.

Here some people conjoin 'm' which means 'myself' and explain it as, "I am the Lord's serviteur". Others say, 'm' being 'myself', there is no need to tag on another letter. It is appropriate to consider 'm' itself as 'myself'. The meaning of Pranava is clear: I belong to the Supreme Lord and no one else.

In the second syllable 'nama', 'ma' refers to the jivatma. Since this ends in the sixth or genitive case, and 'na' would mean 'not', the syllable 'nama' means 'not for me'. As 'not' is important, 'na' stands first. If we say "it does not belong to me", the question could be posed: "What is that which does not belong?" Bring the third letter of Pranava here and get the meaning proper: "I do not belong to myself". It is clear that the jivatma in the Pranava belongs only to the Lord and no one else. If one should wonder whether the jivatma is master of himself, the term 'nama' makes it clear that the jivatma is not master of himself either.

Also, jivatma is not master of any quality or thing belonging to him. It is the Lord who is the owner. The jivatma controls the body, qualities and the rest by the permission of the Lord. All that belongs to the jivatma have been gifted to him by the Lord. The Lord gives all that to the jivatma actually for His use. The jivatma has no freedom in anything. The jivatma does everything by the grace of the Lord. Usually, in this world of human affairs, nobody likes to be beholden to others for actually being master of himself, the freedom to do as he likes or as a servant. But such thoughts arise only due to karmic reasons. It is natural for the jivatma to be a serviteur and it pleases him. Just as he is a serviteur to the Lord, he happens to be that for other devotees as well in consonance with the Lord's wish.

As he is under the control of the Lord and has to gain his wishes through His grace, the surrender undertaken by him in the Dvaya and the charama sloka to fulfil his wishes is indicated in the Tirumantra. Epics like the Mahabharata indicate the act of surrender by 'nama'. Here also the term refers to Prapatti or surrender. 'Nama' is also used as offering oneself.

Therefore the conclusion: I do not belong to myself. My actions are not under my control. All of this belongs to the Lord. The Nirukta when explaining 'namaskara' speaks in such terms. The term 'nama' in its external meaning and inner sense refers to surrender. The term 'Narayana' refers to the Lord whose grace is elicited through surrender and as one who accepts servitude indicated in the fourth case, and who is the protector of all of us.

This places Narayana apart from all other gods. The term does not indicate any other person or god. Without any doubt, it has been made clear that the 'a' in the Pranava is Narayana. The Narayanuvaka of the Veda repeats that Narayana alone is the Supreme Deity. The Rishis and Alvars say that one who repeats the terms Narayana gains all prosperity and his sins and dangers are washed away. Some Puranas even give eight letters to the term Narayana and equate it with Tirumantra.

Another meaning of Narayana is that He is the Lord of everything (Naras) and upholds them all. There is also a meaning that the Naras

are the residence of the Lord. That is, the Lord is antaryami, the Indwelling Universal. From this it is understood that the Lord upholds all and that the Lord pervades everything. When it is said Narayana is the upholder of Naras, it indicates that the world is made up of things that have all sprung up from the Lord, Nara. Naturally this means Brahma, Rudra and others were created by Narayana. He is their Cause. Ayanam means that which is attained. Thus all these are dependent upon the Lord and the Lord pervades them and is everywhere. It also indicates that the Lord is subtle whose characteristics are not found anywhere else.

It has been said Nara means the group of jivatmas and their refuge is the Lord. 'Ayanam' has three meanings. The Lord is upeya when we say 'he gains the fruit'. When it is understood as 'in Him it is attained', the Lord becomes the basis of everything. That means He is the Way and the Goal Supreme. Besides, 'ayana' means residence, that is residence for all. So the Lord surrounds everything. As one who resides in everything, he is immanent all over. These two truths are mentioned in the Vedas also.

One may ask: How can one say a subtle being like the soul is pervaded by something else? Where is place within? Indeed, when it is said the Lord pervades, it means the Lord's aegis is part of these selves. Wherever they are, the Lord is. Vedas and other scriptures refer to the Lord as subtler than the atom. It means He is within, that He cannot be denied entry anywhere, not that He is an atom.

By the letter 'a' in Pranava, the 'Nara' in 'Naram' and the syllable 'ayana', the Lord is addressed. When addressing with the three syllables, one takes in the significances that the Lord is the guardian, the doer, the eternal and the mover of all. By these three one should realise the effects of the Name.

In works like Subalopanishad, Narayana is differentiated from other deities as the indweller of all and a relation in every way. The relations one has on earth became relations by the will of the Lord. It is the Lord who appears like the father, the mother, the son and everybody else. If His grace is present, even He can be no enemy. He becomes a priceless friend.

Then the fourth case, 'Narayana'. First it appears as 'for Narayana'. As it is added to 'namah', it appears as the fourth case. But there seems to be no particular function for it. This is the place for the cause that leads to fruition in Tirumantra. It is also taken as a prayer for results. The sterling significance is that we are offering this atma to Narayana.

Vedanta Desika says that the elders have found ten significances for the Tirumantra.

First: Take it as a single sentence which means, 'I salute Narayana'.

Second: Divide the Tirumantra into two sentences to mean the Lord indicated by 'a' and 'Narayana' as the guardian of all, and that 'I am the serviteur of Narayana alone who is the base of all, and have no freedom for myself.'

**Third:** Another meaning when it is taken as two sentences. Elders speak of the Tirumantra itself as Prapatti (the act of surrender). Narayana of 'ma' has been offered 'a', the jivatma. It means that, I am not master of myself. Sri Ramanuja has spoken of the Tirumantra itself as the mantra of surrender in his Nitya.

**Fourth:** Praying for servitude to Narayana indicated by 'a' and that nothing may prevent it. Thus the prayer is for being granted what he wants; also to keep away what he does not want.

**Fifth:** Tirumantra is read as three sentences: Pranava, Namah, Narayanaya. I am the property of Narayana of 'a' as I am not my owner. I want to serve Narayana all the time in every way. So you have three meanings.

**Sixth:** Pranava means the same. Namah means I do not belong to myself, nor does anything belong to me. The intention is to reject what the jivatma does not want and through Narayana signify that he wants only Narayana and servitude to Him.

**Seventh:** It shows the true form and the Way which are indicated by 'ayana', that the Lord is the Way and the Goal.

**Eighth:** Some say the order found in charama sloka and Dvaya are indicated by Pranava (surrender) and the other syllables (results).

**Ninth:** The Pranava is said to indicate the nature of the Lord and jivatma, namah speaks of the Way and the rest refer to the accruing results.

Tenth: The conclusion is as follows. Only through Vedanta can one understand clearly and in detail the real nature, the Way and the Goal. The Vedanta shastra has four sections. The first two sections speak of the nature of Brahman. The third section speaks of the Way and the fourth section of the Goal. Pranava, Namah and Narayana have been set in that order. One who understands properly the significance of the Tirumantra and has full faith in it becomes so close to the divine that the land where he lives is free from drought, sickness and thievery.

The shastras say that the Tirumantra contains the Rig, Yajus, Sama and Atharva Vedas. The Tirumantra reveals to aspirants who want moksha all that they desire. It is said that by pronouncing the divine Tirumantra once, one gains the fruit of reciting Rig, Yajus, Sama and Atharva Vedas. One gets the fruits desired by him in proportion to his faith in the mantra.

We noted earlier that Tirumangai Alwar received initiation of Tirumantra from Narayana Himself. Indeed, even the Lord cannot adumbrate entirely the mantra's glory!

### *The Dvaya*

The Dvaya mantra makes clear the Way indicated by the central syllable of the Tirumantra and the Goal underlined by the third part. The Katta Valli asks us to separate them and repeat them together. This Dvaya mantra has been recorded in Pancharatra also. As it is thus found in the Veda and Tantra shastras, it is a Tantric

mantra that is the base of the Vedas.

As it mentions both the Way and the Goal, it is known as Dvaya. Hence, only he who has no interest in other paths becomes eligible to have this mantra. This mantra has to be received from an acharya. This mantra has no formal discipline as for others. This Dvaya mantra can be recited at all times and in all conditions. It can be used for meditation. This is the mantra of surrender.

To indicate its unique position among all mantras, Sri Ramanuja has commanded in the Gadya: "Repeat the Dvaya in some way or the other." We can understand its greatness when we learn that it is enough if it is recited even once. The glory of such mantras should be accepted with faith in the shastras. Vain disputation must be avoided. No other mantra speaks of surrender in such clear terms. Thus, among mantras of surrender, the Dvaya is unique.

Now let us draw closer to the greatness and significance of the Dvaya Mantra. Firstly it refers to Sriman Narayana who is the Supreme who grants refuge to everyone. By indicating Him as the consort of Lakshmi and the word Narayana, the highest concept of the Vedas is made manifest. The term 'Srimat' in the first part of Dvaya shows that when one surrenders to Narayana, one must envisage Him as being together with Lakshmi.

The Pancharatra gives six meanings for 'Sri':

First: She is approached by those who wish to be saved.



Two: She is with the Lord to help them be saved. By this it is obvious she is like a mother who guards even the guilty when he surrenders, requests the Lord to overlook the guilt and save him. Thus the Mother is Purushakaara. Purushakaara means 'one who recommends'. Here the Mother is the one who helps the devotee fulfil his desire when he surrenders.

The third meaning is "she hears", and fourth is "she makes Him hear". Thus when we pray to Her to bring us to the feet of the Lord, she hears us and then makes Him hear and thus fulfils our desires. This too shows how She is a Purushakaara.

Fifth: She removes all the faults of the prapanna. It means she removes all the karmic results of the devotees who surrender.

Sixth: She enriches the devotees with qualities that help them attain servitude to Narayana.

Bhattar and others have stated that in all this Sri indicates that Mother Lakshmi is all-auspicious.

Though we speak of Sriman, it actually means "consort of Lakshmi". By this we know that Lakshmi is the Mother to whom all of us turn and as Narayana is Her consort, He is the Supreme, and easy of approach. Sriman insinuates that the Lord is never separated from Lakshmi. Even when he acted the part of a bachelor in the Vamana incarnation, the Lord used a deerskin to veil Lakshmi who was on His chest, says the Purana.

The 'srimat' syllable is in both the sentences (the first speaks of the Way and the second of the Goal) and helps one in envisioning the Mother with the Lord as one pursues the Way and the Goal. By reciting thus, it helps the guilty gain the Mother's compassion immediately and then reach the Lord.

Srimat is an adjective for Narayana. The meanings given for Narayana in Tirumantra are applicable here as well. However, as Narayana in the first sentence means the Lord "saves those who take refuge", one must repeat the sentence with the appropriate qualities in mind. Such qualities are as follows:

**Vatsalya:** This is compassion that accepts others without caring for their faults. This helps one from hesitation in approaching the Lord due to one's faults.

**Lordship:** This shows the connection between the Lord and the jivatma. The Lord as a master will surely guard His serviteur.

**Simplicity (Sauseelyam):** Simplicity is a quality. It is what the Lord exemplifies in His closeness with a lowly hunter, monkeys, cowherd and others.

**Easy Approachability (Saulabhyam):** This indicates that the Lord can be attained easily. The Lord who is not attainable even for yogis like Sanaka incarnates due to this quality so that all human beings may see Him. This quality helps us from withdrawing from Him thinking that He is unattainable.

**Sarveswara:** One who knows everything. This too is a quality. We realise that He knows what should be given to the worthy devotee and chase away what may harm him.

The Lord is all-capable. He can make us dwell with the Nityasuris in Moksha.

**Satyasankalpa:** When He decides upon a course, He can fulfil it, come what may.

The Lord is full of compassion. He wants to help others without caring for Himself. It follows then that if we surrender, even if we are sinners, He will forgive us.

He is full of gratitude. Despite committing many sins, if we but do one good thing, He will not forget this small act. This assures us that if we perform even a small good act, we will yet be saved by Him.

The Lord is a Paripoorna. He has all that He needs. Hence He is not in need of anyone giving Him anything. If offered with devotion, the least thing is accepted by Him as if it were a huge offering. He looks to our intention, and not the worth of what we offer. We need not worry that we are not able to offer Him much. If offered with devotion, He accepts with joy.

The Lord is also generous. He might give a lot to His devotee, yet would not consider it enough.

One must thus meditate upon the Lord's qualities that show how He guards those who surrender.

When holding 'Sriman Narayana charanau' as one term, it is explained as the Lord's feet. Sriman and Narayana are also spoken of as separate terms to explain as 'Thy feet, O Narayana with Lakshmi'. Both mean the same.

'Charanau' tells us that the Lord has an all-auspicious form and we must meditate upon Him as an image. Srimad Ramayana and the work of the Alvars and acharyas speak of surrendering at the feet of the Lord. It is easier for meditation to hold on to the divine forms.

'Saranam' indicates the Way. This term shows that the Lord Himself appears as the Way and saves the devotee who surrenders.

'Prapadhye' indicates the important instrument of surrender which is 'buddhi' or feeling. This signifies the impregnable faith that the Lord will definitely save the aspirant. This is the best of the five limbs of surrender. However, this firm faith along with other limbs alone is indicated here. 'Pra' reveals the firm faith, and assures us that there is no need for doubting it. Prapatti bears fruit only when there is total faith. The shastras say that the Lord accepts the surrender performed with total faith and gives moksha.

It is certain that the Lord does not help the doubting devotee. Full faith is vital for surrender. Even if there is some lack in faith when one surrenders, if the Lord descends to save, the faith will be strengthened further. So the first part of Dvaya deals with the way of surrender.

The second part of the Dvaya refers to the gain granted by the Way that assures all gain. The one who grants the fruits of surrender is Sriman Narayana who wants to save. The second part prays for removing the hurdles and grant Moksha. This also tells us that one does not want anything other than Moksha.

'Srimate Narayanaya' in the second part indicates that He is the Lord and that He gives ananda.

Here 'Srimate' also tells us that the service of the devotee to the Lord is to be taken as service to Narayana in union with Lakshmi who are the Auspicious Couple. The meanings given for 'Sri' earlier are applicable here as well. Of the meanings, the most appropriate one would be, 'she is worshipful'.

'Narayanaya' underscores the love that follows the basis of the relationship between jivatma and the Lord. The fourth case makes it obvious that one must wish to serve Narayana only.

Here a word may be added that would make it clear one is praying to the Lord.

By adding 'Namah' after praying for the fulfilment of one's desires, one prays for the removal of obstacles.

Sometimes an adverb is added to 'Namah' to mean, "Let me be not for myself". It is a prayer to say, "nothing belongs to me", and that egoism in all things concerning the devotee may be removed.

The second part of the Dvaya — “I am giving myself as bhara to Sriman Narayana” — is seen also as the act of surrender alone with ‘na mama’ to indicate rejecting everything else. This is also appropriate. By this, the first part of Dvaya may be seen to indicate the five limbs of surrender and the second the act of surrender. Since both of them speak of surrender, the result is realised on its own.

If as indicated earlier, the first part signifies Prapatti and the second part the gains of Prapatti, one must meditate as surrendering oneself to the Lord in the first part.

Though the first part, the term that ends in the dative case and Namah might make separate sentences, it is best they are seen as a single sentence focussed on the one Way.

The deep significance of the Dvaya mantra is as follows:

Narayana is the Supreme Lord who grants Ananda to all. He is never separate from Lakshmi. I surrender at His Feet. May He remove all obstacles in the way of my service to Him appropriate to my position. May I be free from the care of looking after myself. I offer my humble self at the Lord’s feet with the five limbs of surrender and hand over the responsibility of guarding me to Him.

### *The Charama Sloka*

Sriman Narayana rests on the Adishesha in the milky ocean. He left it to come to Mathura

to uphold Dharma. He incarnated as the Lord of Dwaraka to destroy the wicked and save the virtuous. He was humbler than all of them. When the five Pandavas with Draupadi surrendered to Him, he became their ambassador. He placed Arjuna as the master in the chariot, and himself acted as the charioteer. Making Arjuna appear as his helper, he destroyed the evil ones. At that time Arjuna was overwhelmed by fear and would not fight as it would lead to the killing of his kinsmen. He was also afraid of the sin that would accrue to him by killing his teachers.

Arjuna requested Krishna to educate him on what would be good to him. Krishna spoke the Bhagavad Gita to chase away his sorrow. In this work he clarified the nature of the jivatma and of Paramatma. He explained the ways of Karma and Jnana yogas that lead to the supreme Ananda of Moksha, and Bhakti yoga which is a straight path to moksha.

Even after being taught about the straight path of devotion to attain moksha, Arjuna was sad that it does not work speedily for one who wants to attain Moksha immediately. Besides, Bhakti yoga is difficult, and even if one has the knowledge to perform Bhakti yoga, it may not grant the gain one wants. Taking the sorrowing Arjuna as a pretext, Krishna, the author of the Gita Upanishad also spelt out Prapatti as another Way. There is no difficult sadhana to do here except surrendering with the five limbs of Prapatti. This needs only the five limbs like Anukulya Sankalpa. So it is an easy path. It can be

performed in a few seconds. With compassion towards the whole world waiting to be redeemed, Krishna spoke of this Way at the very conclusion of the Gita. The Way indicated in the Vedas was again stated in the Gita as the last word. The same has been stated with love by the Alwars and acharyas in their works.

The charama sloka opens with the phrase, 'sarva dharmaan'. This is the last sloka of the Bhagavad Gita. This was the final firm and compassionate statement of Prapatti taught by the Lord to the people of the world with Arjuna as a pretext. One must definitely understand its significance.

The first part of the sloka teaches the Way. By recording the gain, the latter half speaks of the limbs of the yoga. needed for surrender. 'Vidhi' is the command given to a person to perform an act. If there is no result for the action, no one would like to do that action. Hence the sentence that speaks of the fruits of action will enthruse him to get down to action. Thus the whole sloka indicates the Way.

When it is said, 'giving up all dharmas', one must know about dharmas. Dharmas are the methods pursued to gain the goals stated in Purusharthas. The plural indicates that many dharmas have been stated in the shastras to attain our goal.

'All' means dharmas as well as the instruments of dharma. For, the instruments needed to perform dharma are also referred to as



dharma.

Though here all dharmas are referred to in general, taking in the earlier references, dharmas here refer to the methods of the Way to gain moksha as stated in the shastras.

The next word is 'parityajya'. The words so far given mean, 'having given up all dharmas'. Here 'giving up' calls upon the aspirant not to desire other ways as he does not have the capacity to undertake them.

'Pari' means 'completely'. This is because here the aspirant is taken to be incapable of undertaking any of the ways and at any time. So he does not wish to pursue any other way.

The advice to give up all dharmas can also be taken as a command. When taken in that light, it should be understood that whereas Karma and other limbs are necessary for upasana, no such accessory is needed for Prapatti. This would mean that those who cannot perform other dharmas and those who can do them but cannot stand the wait are also eligible for performing Prapatti.

Giving up all dharmas surrender to me alone, is the command. But if some people think that this is a command to give up duties like sandhyavandhanam and the rest of Anjna and Anujna ordained for their castes, it is a wrong assumption. Even he who has performed Prapatti must follow the duties laid down in the shastras for different castes.

Here it only means these services are no more a limb of Prapatti. What is required most

for Prapatti are Anukulya Sankalpa, humility, total faith, unquestioning nature and a prayer for guardianship. Prapatti expects nothing else. Hence the devotee who has surrendered must fulfil his daily duties. It only means one who is unable to do, need not unnecessarily struggle to perform the dharma. He should not desire to do things which he wants to do. Also, if he thinks of following another path along with Prapatti, the latter will not accept it and will withdraw, like Brahmastra. The phrase, 'give up all dharmas' indicates that one should not mix other methods with this Way.

The next word is 'maam'. Krishna says, 'me'. Surrender to me alone. One must take in the significance of the incarnation as spelt out by Him in the fourth canto, and understand His compassion in these words. The true greatness of His incarnation is that His incarnation is true, He never gave up His true image which is the same as in Srivaikuntha, it is His desire that caused the incarnation and His aim is to guard the virtuous whenever dharma declines. By knowing this truth about the incarnation, the one who has desire to surrender is able to approach Him. By revealing His compassion thus, the Lord invites one to surrender "to me".

'Ekam' has been used to indicate 'alone' to be taken with 'me'. The word 'me alone' shows that the Lord is the Way and the Goal. The Lord stands as the Way, answers compassionately to the surrender and grants Moksha. One reaches this Lord only. So it means He answers the

prapatti as Himself and grants refuge.

'Alone' is also taken to mean that He stands as the Goal of Dharma, Himself standing as the Goal to be gained by all other dharmas. 'Saranam' is taken to mean the Way. The Lord says: Consider me alone as the refuge. Because this was addressed to Arjuna, and by other Pramanas also, one must take it as addressed to everyone through Arjuna. It would also mean 'do not take refuge in anyone except me'.

Next comes 'vraja'. This is used in the place of 'prapadhye' found in the Dvaya. There the aspirant says, "I take refuge in you". Here the Lord says: "Take refuge in me". Having stated the way of surrender in the first half, the Lord now reveals that He accepts the surrender and will grant refuge.

Here 'alone' indicates 'one who is capable of everything'. Whatever sin the prapanna may have committed, nobody can withstand the Lord's power of guarding him. Such indescribable power is shown in the word, 'I'.

He refers to 'you'. When he says I shall release you from all sins, 'you' indicates this. This is the Lord's beloved message to everyone through Arjuna. "I taught you all the philosophies. I said all other wealth is impermanent. You also found clarity and realised that the greatest gain is coming to Me. You are not eager for that as the ways I have mentioned are hard. Hence surrender to me. You need not do anything else to gain your Goal. You who are in this condition." Such is the significance of 'you' here.

The Lord who removes our bonds and gives Moksha is referred to as 'I'; he who surrenders to Him and desires Moksha is referred to as 'you'; the sins that have bound him to the world are referred to as 'from all sins'. Sins are mentioned in shastras as the root cause of evil. Evil destroys good and gives what is bad.

For him who desires Moksha, even some good things have to be listed as evil. As one who desires Realisation has no need for heaven and the rest, the good deeds done for gaining them have to be abdicated. For a mumukshu even these are evil. The mumukshu has to give up both good and evil. The term 'all' indicates that evils are countless.

The statement, "I shall release you from all sins and save you" contains all these meanings. When the aspirant performs surrender, immediately the Lord destroys his sins and grants him moksha. For one who performs Prapatti desiring Moksha at the end of his earthly life, the Lord removes all his sins committed earlier except prarabhdha sins. He also sees to it that sins committed in ignorance after Prapatti are nullified. Even in the prarabhdha sins, those not accepted by the aspirants are made void. After Prapatti, the devotee does not commit sins knowingly. But if he does, the Lord gives him the buddhi to surrender again in atonement. In this way the sins are removed. If one persists on a sinful path, He will ordain small punishments to clear the prapanna of the sins. In any case, the aspirant gains Moksha at the falling away of his physical

body. He will have no rebirth. All these thoughts are for cleansing up sins. All this is done because of the Lord's compassion.

By saying, "I release you from all sins", it is understood that the Lord conveys the message, "I shall give you Moksha." Moksha is the state when this jivatma gains his natural form. This jivatma also possesses all auspicious qualities as the Lord. These get veiled due to the karmic results of earthly life. Once the sins are removed, the real form emerges. We do not see the brilliance of a glass once dust covers it. When the dust is removed, you gaze on the brilliance. That is its natural state. In the same way, when a well is dug, the water within gushes forth. It is not as if new water has been created there. So do evils veil one's nature. When they are removed, the good nature is revealed. Qualities like pure intelligence shine forth. So this jivatma is able to join the group of Nityasuris, engage himself in servitude and gain supreme bliss. When the Lord says, "I shall free you from all sins", it is obvious the Gitacharya means that He will grant him Moksha as the fruit of Prapatti.

Finally by saying, "Do not fear", the compassionate Lord consoles the aspirants through Arjuna. As all his sorrows are destroyed by choosing the way of surrender, the Lord seeks to strengthen his resolve by saying "do not fear". Also, it means that there is no need for the aspirant to fear after gaining a Way that is easy, that destroys all enemies and gives speedy result.

"After you performed this act, all your actions have become my responsibility. The results are also mine. This being the state of affairs, it would be my mistake if you are not saved. Hence where is the need for you to be afraid?" Such is the Lord's view.

The full signficance of the charama sloka is to be realised as follows:

"You have little intelligence and strength. Your life span is brief. You cannot brook delay. Do not lose yourself in other ways which you cannot understand, follow or which take a long time to bear fruit. I am humbler than all, the guardian of all the worlds, and capable of such guardianship. Consider me as the Way and surrender to me through the five-limbed prapatti. You who have become dear to me through such surrender, I who am compassionate and free shall accept you with my will. I shall remove your obstacles, make you enjoy experiences equal to mine, give you the wherewithal to serve me at all times in every way and make you experience Brahmananda. You need not sorrow."

This is the significance of the concluding message of grace.

### *The Acharya's Role*

The acharyas have come in the line of the supreme acharya, Lord Narayana. Our sampradaya has come in the acharya parampara beginning with the Lord. Nobody except these people know the significance of the three Secrets, as lion's milk. The acharyas who briefly meditate

upon the significance of the Three Secrets, glow with good qualities that please the Lord. They should test the capacity of the disciples and then initiate them in the mantras without a third party listening to it. People who are not worthy, who have no faith or who are ungodly should not be initiated in them. Our earlier acharyas never gave initiation in the mantras for money, fame, show or pride.

These acharyas teach as follows:

The 'jivatma' has neither birth nor death. He is apart from the body and the senses. Apart from Matter and sentient beings, there is the Lord who is the Indwelling Universal.

The jivatma has none to save him except the Lord. "I who have been bound to this earthly life till now should be made free of entering the womb of a mother. You have to save me by granting me Your feet."

As the acharya guides thus, the aspirant must surrender at Narayana's feet through the line of gurus. Then he must follow the instructions of the acharya and remain in the unswerving hope that the Lord will never abandon him. After prapatti he should avoid sinful acts and spend his time doing good deeds.

Such would be the teachings of the acharya in a nutshell.

### *The Disciple's Duties*

The acharyas reveal important factors as if showing a poor man the hidden treasure in his

own backyard. For bestowing such priceless help, the disciple should have deep gratitude towards his acharya. He must not deceive him. This is laid down only because if he deceives his acharya, others will blame him. But it does not mean that by acting so, the disciple was rendering any great help to his acharya.

In the same way the disciple should understand what the shastras say of things to be offered to the acharya or saluting him. Because the shastras say the acharya should teach his disciple with kindness and not desire for anything, it should not be interpreted that the disciple is expected to give gifts. It has been reiterated in many works that one can never recompense an acharya. It is only for the peace of mind of the disciple and his devotion that reference has been made to what the disciple gives, not that he can ever recompense the teacher.

All that the disciple can do for his acharya is as follows: He should not go against the teachings of the acharya and render them useless. He must not waste what he has learnt as the cawings of the crow. These teachings should not be used for pursuing a career for earning money. If he does so, the disciple would be laughed at by others. These teachings should not be spoilt as a garland of flowers in the hands of a monkey. One must guard them and not teach them to others who have evil qualities like jealousy.

The disciple must realise that he was born blind and the acharya gave him sight that would



enable him reach the line of the Nityasuris, and so he can never adequately recompense him. He must be happy that he has entered the line that begins with Sri Narayana.

When the disciple transmits the significance of the Three Secrets which are a treasure to the proper person as described earlier, he must reveal the line of acharyas, teach the disciples of the greatness of the sterling truths he had learnt from them and make them realise his gratitude to his acharyas. One who speaks of these inlaid truths in the Vedanta shastra must follow the Sampradaya (spiritual tradition). If one learns them from books, or by overhearing when hiding on the other side of the wall and then speaks of them, it would be akin to wearing stolen ornaments, and he may have to teach the truths to all and sundry.

It is a sin to learn a mantra by hoodwinking others, on the sly or from a book. Even when he has learnt it the proper way and yet does not praise or name his acharya when initiating others, his disciple may lose faith in him. If he does not speak of his guru's greatness, his wealth and life-span will diminish.

If he gets a good disciple, but will not initiate him, he is liable to be condemned as greedy. Just as the holder of a lamp, if asked by the king to do an errand, hands over the lamp to the right person, when a good disciple appears, he must give initiation. Even then he must reveal his acharya first and then pass on what he has learnt. Some great persons like Perialwar had

gained supreme intelligence by the grace of the Lord. Yet they said it was gained from good acharyas and not self-revealed. If one shows such humility, everyone will gain respect.

Watching a disciple who is full of gratitude and aspiration, the acharya will have a sense of fulfilment.

### *Conclusion*

Starting with Introduction (Upothgathathikaram), in the course of thirty-one chapters Vedanta Desika has spoken of what is needed to sustain our sampradaya. He gave a final note in the Adhikara. I will speak of it and bring this precious work to a close.

All the explanations noted down so far must be learnt in detail with humility, devotion and faith from someone who belongs to the Acharya Parampara and is worthy. The teachings must be acted upon with discipline to attain clarity. The dharmas spoken of in the shastras are subtle. It is difficult to understand them well. The Rishis have learnt the subtle nuances with great effort. Striving hard, they delete the mistakes and uncover the truth. Those who follow the path laid out by such acharyas of earlier times, need not fear hell and other furies. They are saved from rebirth, gain the supreme Residence of the Lord with the honour of serving the matchless Ananda-form of the Lord at all times and in all manner of things.

The aspirant experiences the feet of the Lord who is ever with Lakshmi, when he follows the

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**ThiruevvuL Sri VeerarAghava PerumAL and Srimad Azhagiya Singar**

path of surrender and later the shoreless joy of servitude to the Divine Couple in Sri Vaikuntha.

Vedanta Desika incarnated as the amsa-avataara of Sri Venkateswara and wrote this work with thirty-two chapters for bringing good to the people of the world.

I was born as the son of the faultless Svachchandam Srinivasacharya. By God's Grace, I (Aravamudan) have written this brief treatise. I pray to Lord Venkateswara, my revered father and my acharya Sri Veeraraghavarya Mahadesikan to pour their grace on me and the readers of this book and grant all things auspicious.

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||Srimad Rahasyatraya Saara Saaram SampoorNam||

