

THE HOLY PANCHAKSHARA
AND OTHER DIVINE ARTICLES
MATERIALISED BY
AASAAN SADGURU
SRI-LA-SRI PANDRIMALAI SWAMIGHAL

—•—
PART IV



Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal

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—◆—
PART IV

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PREFACE

2016 EDITION

Indian spiritual wisdom says that man's only purpose in life is to seek God in this birth. Millennia of experience has honed this to practical methods whereby human beings move in graded doses from Dharma, Artha and Kama to Moksha. Moksha is the ultimate stage where the soul, as Jivatma merges with the Oversoul or Paramatma in Divine Bliss. Though we always think that only the soul is in search of the Divine, the reverse also is true i.e, the Divine also pines for union with the Jivatma and hence uses several stratagems towards this end.

One of the ways by which God tries to woo humans is to manifest Himself as a human and elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary. He manifests Himself in various forms, as Avatars, Rishis, Mahans and Siddha Pursuhas. His Holiness Bhagawan Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal was one of them and the unique way by which He spread the message of truth was to Divinely materialise typed articles on various topics encompassing the essence of the four Vedas.

To reassure the world that the physical body is only a temporary and ephemeral abode of the immortal soul, Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal continues His Divine Mission as Sri-La-Sri Sakthevadivel Swamighal. The Divinely materialised articles, a first in the spiritual history of the world, initially, when they were first vouchsafed to Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal were typed either in English

or Tamil. Tiruvacagam says that the Divine is older than the oldest and newer than the newest. We can understand the truth in this statement, as the articles materialised by Sri-La-Sri Sakthevadivel Swamighal are straight from the laser printer! Hinduism is always in the vanguard of progress and this is but one small example of that fact.

In the series of books published under the generic title Holy Panchakshara, we are happy to bring out not only the earlier volumes which had contained the articles materialised by Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal but also the current ones vouchsafed to Sri-La-Sri Sakthevadivel Swamighal.

Needless to say, we are grateful to Sangeetha Muthanna, Sunitha Nanjappa, Savitha Poovaiah, Sucharitha Nanjappa and Sujatha Nanjappa who have made a contribution for the republication of this book and also to the band of volunteers whose deep devotion to the Guru is denoted by the painstaking proofreading of the typescripts, and redesigning of these books. These individuals, like the foundation pillars of a superb building have remained invisible. Our grateful thanks to them also.

May we all benefit intellectually and spiritually by reading these precious gems and assimilate the eternal truths embedded in them. May the Grace of the two Gurus always abide by all of us.

Om Tat Sat.

V. D. Ramanathan
27 January 2016

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Since publishing "The Holy Panchakshara" - Parts I, II & III, twenty-seven more Divine Articles materialised by Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal are now made available in "The Holy Panchakshara" - Part IV.

The Publisher is thankful to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the Editorial Board of "The Light of Pandrimalai" for granting permission for the publication of these Articles, which have appeared from time to time in "Bhavan's Journal" and "The Light of Pandrimalai".

The life and mission of Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal have been described in detail in Parts I & III of "The Holy Panchakshara". A short sketch is reproduced below for the benefit of the readers.

His Holiness Swamighal is a standing example of a Jeevan Mukta (Perfected Soul) in constant communion with Lord Sri Muruga, his Ishta Devata, who's Divine Grace, permeates fully in Him.

His holy mission is to alleviate the sufferings of humanity and to guide devotees and aspirants on the onward march for spiritual upliftment, at the same time securing, in a righteous way, their material well-being.

True to the divine prediction before His birth, His Holiness bears various divine birthmarks on His holy feet, palms and body.

On the sole of His left foot is seen the divine marks of Sudarsana Chakra (the Wheel of Lord Sri Vishnu) and the Shakti Vel (Spear of Lord Sri Muruga) and on the sole of His right foot, the Chakra and the Conch (of Lord Sri Vishnu). The palm of His left hand bears the marks of Conch, Chakra, the Cock emblem of Lord Sri Muruga and Shakti Vel. On His right palm is seen the Conch, Chakra, the Flag of Lord Sri Muruga, Shadkonam and an inner Shakti Vel within a Vel. On His body the birthmarks of the Chakra on the right shoulder and the Conch on the left shoulder indicate Lord Sri Vishnu's Amsa. On His back are imprinted the Flag and the Cock emblem of Lord Sri Muruga. A tiny dot, noticed after His birth, that was located between the eyebrows, represents the "third eye" (of Lord Siva). Later, as He grew older and as a consequence of His intense tapas and spiritual sadhana, this mark has grown bigger and deeper for anyone to see and revere.

These divine insignia proclaim that His Holiness has the Amsas of Siva, Shakti, Vishnu and Muruga all on Him and is definitely an Avatara Purusha.

Swamighal lays great store in temple worship. He has consecrated many temples in India by installing yantras for deities, which release and radiate spiritual forces for the worshippers to derive great benefit from.

In recent years, temples have been built and consecrated, under the guidance and directions of Swamighal, in foreign countries as well.

During 1976, His Holiness toured South Africa. While at Natal in South Africa, he installed Lord Sri Nataraja's idol

with yantras in the temple and consecrated the temple.

The Hindu Temple Society of North America had the unique opportunity of approaching His Holiness for the construction of Lord Sri Ganesa's temple at New York and Lord Sri Venkateswara's temple at Pittsburgh. This project was inaugurated by Swamighal at Hyderabad in 1974. After three years of puja for forty-two yantras divinely procured for these two temples, His Holiness was brought to the United States during 1977. He performed the consecration of the New York temple on 4-7-1977 and the Pittsburg temple on 6-7-1977. During his stay in the United States, His Holiness performed the groundbreaking ceremony for Balaji's temple at Vappinger's Falls, Shakti's temple at Houston and Shakti's temple at Florida.

On his return journey to India, His Holiness did the consecration of Lord Sri Muruga's temple on 31-8-1977 in London.

There is no doubt that these temples will become powerful centres of divine forces that will result in the moral and spiritual upliftment and regeneration of mankind.

In the history of divine miracles and siddhis, the immediate and instant materialisation of typewritten articles in English on various topics of religious and spiritual importance to gratify the desires of disciples, is something unheard of. These articles materialised by His Holiness Swamighal, due to their highly divine nature, would leave their indelible imprints on the sands of Time. Such articles would also form a powerful spiritual substratum for educating and guiding all of mankind, without any distinction of caste,

creed, colour or status, towards leading a more purposeful and fuller life here and now, established in Service, Truth, Love and everlasting Bliss.

The publisher is grateful to Hon. Justice Dr. M. M. Ismail Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, for writing a fitting foreword to this book, and also to Hon. Thiru R. M. Veerappan, Minister for Information and Hindu Religious Endowments Board, Tamil Nadu for kindly releasing this book on the august occasion of the Birthday Celebrations of Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal, on the 4th of May, 1981, at Madras.

Publisher

Pandrimalai Swamighal Ashram

“Om Namasivaya”

New No. 9 (Old No. 5) Village Road,
Nungambakkam, Chennai 600034

FOREWORD



This Part IV of Holy Panchakshara contains twenty-seven articles. These articles, from the very nature of the case, deal with religious and spiritual matters. Some of them are of a general nature and a few others deal with the life and teachings of some 'Alvars' and 'Nayanmars'.

The strangest thing about these articles is their origin. Normally, an article is written by a human being. It contains his thoughts, suggestions and impressions. However, the origin of these articles is strange and striking. Unless one was present at the birth of these articles, it would be difficult to believe the said origin.

The penultimate article in this book has the title 'Kurumba Nayanar'. I had the good fortune to be present at the time when this article was materialised on March 25, 1981. Shri Pandrimalai Swamighal stood outside His pooja room and prayed for such an article. In an instant, a typewritten sheet of paper flew into the outstretched hands of Swamiji. I was standing in front of him with outstretched hands and Swamiji placed that sheet of paper in my hands. Soon after this, I read out the contents of that sheet of paper, which were in English, to Swamiji and explained the same in Tamil to Him.

Having known Swamiji for a few months, I cannot believe that the sudden appearance of the sheet of paper can be the result of any trickery. There is also another fact to be taken

into account. Swamiji does not know English; nor does he know Sanskrit. Even in Tamil He cannot be considered to be a deep and learned scholar. But the article contains a Sanskrit passage with transliteration in English. This alone is positive evidence of the fact that the article was not written by Swamiji. Hence, one thing that is definite is that the article is not of an ordinarily understood or known origin. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, is that the sheet of paper appeared as a result of the intense prayers of Swamiji. In fact, I can vouch for the said intensity. When Swamiji stood and uttered a prayer- song, His entire frame was shaking and the vibrations that went through His whole body was something which one cannot ordinarily perceive. The vibrations and shaking of the body of Swamiji were so intense and severe that I feared that Swamiji might collapse any moment. However, the said intensity strengthened the faith of Swamiji in the prayer and brought forth the sheet of paper.

I brooded over what happened. It is the birthpangs of a woman that bring forth a baby. Similarly, it is the pangs of a Bhaktha that bring forth such miracles.

Swamiji does not really believe in miracles. He has told me, more than once, that miracles are comparatively matters of insignificance; they are meant only to attract the uninformed towards God and arouse their faith in God and for those who are learned and who are capable of thinking and reasoning, miracles have neither relevance nor validity. What makes such people pious, religious and God-conscious is the contemplation of nature, their own birth and death, the relentless operation of the divine law and justice and the

beautiful orderliness that pervades the entire Universe.

Then, what is it that is responsible for making Swamiji a Guru for so many thousands of people, who look up to Him for help and guidance? The one thing to which this can be attributed is His intense 'bakthi'.

There are certain people who are born in the world with certain endowed gifts of divine grace. Swamiji is one such person. In addition to these naturally endowed gifts he had come across, at a very early age, one or two realised souls, whose contact had awakened in Swamiji His own divine instincts. These, in course of time, manifested themselves in the form of helping, guiding and blessing others. Over and above all these, His inimitable simplicity, earnestness and sincerity in the welfare of all those who come into contact with Him, single Him out as a man of great grace and kindness.

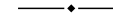
In view of the extraordinary origin of these articles, certainly they cannot deal with trivial and mundane things, but can deal with only things religious and spiritual, trying to elevate the mind and the spirit of the readers. Though, having respect for the religion of Swamighal and His own devotion to Lord Muruga and other Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon, the articles have the complexity of the Hindu Puranas and Ithihasas and theology and theories, yet any discerning person can read and discover in them an underlying current of a common concept of divinity which generally will not be opposed to the religious beliefs and principles of other persuasions.

I have no doubt that this publication will add to the

existing religious and spiritual literature and thereby contribute to the advancement of an attitude of humility, piety and service in the minds of the readers.

M. M. Ismail
Madras
April 28, 1981

POSTSCRIPT



On the evening of April 28, 1981, Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran came to my residence to collect the above foreword. I asked them whether the materialisation of Tamil typewritten article was possible. They told me that to date only typewritten articles in English had been materialized. Tamil articles had only been materialised in manuscript form and that to their knowledge no typewritten article in Tamil had been materialised. We debated among ourselves that with respect to the origin of these articles, materialisation of typewritten articles in Tamil could not be impossible. Since the articles are not written by a human agency and they are of an origin resulting from intense prayer, it should be possible to get typewritten articles in Tamil as well. Regarding the great respect and devotion they had towards Swamiji, they made a mention to me that they themselves might not ask Swamiji about the same as it would be presumptuous on their part and that I might ask Swamiji about it. I thought to myself that it should not be impossible to have a typewritten article in Tamil materialised and as a matter of fact, it should be possible to have an article materialised in any language and in any form that the Bhakta prays for.

On the evening of 29th April 1981, I had gone to meet Swamiji. Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran were also there, but they were sitting at a distance. I was not certain at that time whether I should ask Swamiji about this. However, in the course of my conversation

with Swamiji, I asked Him whether it was possible to get a typewritten article in Tamil. After a few seconds of silence, Swamiji told me that it was possible to get an article typewritten in any language and that in fact one could hear the typing sound itself. He further stated that he would pray for such articles being made available in all languages. I told Swamiji that if the articles are of divine origin, it must be possible to get the same in any language, since it cannot be said that God knows only one language and not the other. Swamiji agreed with me. He was in deep contemplation for a few minutes, which I was able to perceive. I did not want to talk to Swamiji further so as to not interfere with His meditation, but I was confident that something was going to happen. Suddenly Swamiji got up from his seat, went into the Pooja room very briskly and closed the door. At that time I was able to hear the tearing and fluttering sounds of a few sheets of paper. Swamiji opened the door and three typewritten sheets in Tamil were in His hands which He handed over to me. It was captioned "Vasi Yogam - 21".

Immediately Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran were summoned and in their presence I read out the articles to Swamiji. The article was in very chaste and appropriate Tamil dealing with "Vasi-Yogam". All of us were immensely pleased and surprised.

The article purported to be a continuation of an earlier article, and "to be continued" had been typed on the third sheet. I asked Thiru R. N. Sankaran who was familiar with the earlier articles, about the article in question being the continuation of an earlier one. He stated that the earlier articles had already been published as "Vasi Yogam 1 to 20"

in 'Bhagya Bharani' which had stopped being published and that they were being republished in "Light of Pandimalai". So far Vasi Yogam 1 to 18 had been republished and he had requested Swamiji for "Vasiyogam - 21". Swamiji Himself had told Thiru Sankaran that those articles were in manuscript form.

Swamiji told me that He prayed to Lord Muruga to provide a typewritten article in Tamil and He agreed to do so, and this took place when He was in meditation. Only after He got permission did He go into the Pooja room to get the article.

I have mentioned this only for the purpose of showing that the materialisation of such articles cannot be the result of any pre-meditated or deliberate attempt at trickery.

Prior to our meeting at my residence on the evening of 28th April 1981, Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan had not met Swamiji. Thiru R. N. Sankaran, though he had met Swamiji, had not made any mention to Swamiji regarding what we discussed at my residence on the evening of 28th April 1981. Hence what happened on the evening of 29th April 1981 happened on the spur of the moment, Swamiji Himself not being made aware of my suggestion and request to Him and He Himself not contemplating materialisation of any such article.

There is one significant fact which must be mentioned at this stage. When I was talking to Swamiji that evening, I asked him whether there was any particular time or day for the materialisation of such articles. Swamiji's reply was significant. It was: There is no particular time or day; but

He cannot command the Lord to give him an article and He will have to pray to the Lord for such an article and it is left to the Lord to comply with the prayer or not. He also mentioned a telling analogy: "If you are asking for some money from a rich man, he is not likely to ask you to come the next day or the day after, as he will have to arrange for the amount to be gathered. In the same manner, when the Lord is Omnipotent - powerful - the moment you pray to Him for something and your prayer deserves His grace, He gives it immediately and there is no question of postponing the same or fixing a date for it.

M. M. Ismail
Madras
30-4-81

1

BHAKTAVAAKPAALAKA KRISHNA

—♦—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai
Swamighal to gratify the desire of His disciples)*

Lord Krishna is *Bhaktavaakpaalaka Krishna*. He sees to it that the words uttered by His devotee never come to nought. He looks after his devotee carefully and carries out his request to the end. He protects the devotee under all circumstances. He himself told Arjuna:

*"Apichetsuduraachaaro bhajate maamananyabhaak
Saadhureva samantavyah samyagyasyitohisah
Kshiprambhavati dharmaatmaa savacchaantim nigacchati
Kaunteya pratijaanibi na me bhaktah pranasyati"*

The Lord said: "Even the worst and vilest fellow, if he were to concentrate his mind on me without any other thought, has to be regarded as a holy man for he is sure to get reformed and attain salvation. His mind will be turned towards *dharma* and he will be put well on the way to self-realisation. So O Son of Kunti! I swear that no devotee of mine will ever come to grief and be destroyed."

The Lord had stated here with all the emphasis at His command that His devotee shall never get ruined. This statement of the Lord was borne out in the case of His devotee par excellence Arjuna himself. By teaching the Celestial Song, He made Arjuna stand by his duty as a

kshatriya and do battle with the Kauravas to establish *dharma*. The Mahabharata war could be won only through the divine grace of Lord Krishna showered on Arjuna and the Pandavas above all. As it is said in the following inimitable words, without the Lord's guidance the Pandavas would not have won the war:

*"Bheeshma Drona tataa Jayadrabtha
jalaa Gaandhaara neelotpalaa*

*Salya graahavatee Krupanavahinee Karnavelaakuaa
Aswatthaama Vikarna ghoramakaraa Duryodhanaa vritinee
Sotteernaakbhalu Paandavai Rana nadee kaivartake Kesave!"*

The Pandavas could cross the river of the battle of *Kurukshetra* which had the banks Drona and Bheeshma, the water Jayadratha, the fierce crocodile Salya, the flowing stream Krupa, the wave Karna, the terrible crocodiles Aswatthaama and Vikarna and the whirlpool Duryodhana only with the help of the pilot Lord Krishna. The importance of Jayadratha known also as Saindhava is highlighted here as it was while conquering him that Lord Krishna had to see to it that Arjuna's oath had to be carried out. He became *Bhaktavaakpaalaka*.

Saindhava or Jayadratha was the husband of Dussala, the sister of the Kauravas. He was evil personified. He was the son of Vriddhakshatra, the king of Sindh. When he was born the Unseen Voice of the Sky declared that his head would be cut off while he was unaware. On hearing it Vridhak-shatra pronounced a curse that he who cut the head of his son and make it fall on the ground would have his head broken into a thousand pieces. It so happened that Saindhava saw Draupadi in sole control of the Ashram home with her

husbands away on a hunt in the forest through which he was passing. As nobody was there to oppose him except the purohit Dhaumya, he took her away in his chariot by force. The Pandavas came home and, learning about the dastardly act of Saindhava, went after him in fury. He was overpowered and Draupadi was rescued. Bheema wanted to kill him. Saindhava was in abject terror and prayed for clemency. Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, took pity on him and ordered his brothers to release him for he was, after all, the husband of their own sister by relationship. The brothers did so, then shaved his head, insulted him and set him free asking him to announce himself as *Pandava daasa* - the slave of the Pandavas. Saindhava felt greatly ashamed. He made a severe penance and propitiated Lord Mahadeva. He prayed to the Lord to make him powerful enough to defeat the Pandavas in battle. The Lord said that one day he would be able to defeat all the Pandavas except Arjuna. Thus strengthened, he thought he was blessed and waited for an opportunity to avenge his defeat and teach a lesson to the Pandavas who had humiliated him. He became a trump card in the hand of Duryodhana in the *Bharata yuddha*.

It so happened that Dronacharya, the teacher of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas, was crowned commander of the Kaurava forces after the vanquishing of Bheeshma and he, in his own terrible way, vowed to seize Dharmaraja as a prisoner before sunset the following day. The Kauravas felt that the vow of Dronacharya could not be carried out if Arjuna were to be present on the battlefield before him. So they planned to divert the attention of Arjuna to another battlefield that day. They used the services of the *Samsaptaka* army consisting of veteran Yadava warriors trained in the art

of warfare by Lord Krishna Himself and allied on their side as promised by the Lord to Duryodhana before the start of the Bharata War.

Only Arjuna alone could vanquish them. Arjuna was accordingly held up in his devilish skirmish with the *Samsaptakas* while Dronacharya went about his work of taking Dharmaraja as a captive.

Dronacharya arranged the Kaurava army in a lotus formation - *Padmayooba* as it was called – that was rather difficult to be destroyed. The method by which the said formation could be wiped out was known only to Arjuna. Hidden from all his disciples, Dronacharya had talked about it only to his favourite disciple Arjuna. Arjuna's son knew how to enter the formation but did not know how to get out of it; this fact was known to Dharmaraja. The battle raged fiercely. The *Vyooba* was invulnerable. So Dharmaraja asked Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna to enter it promising to follow him. The latter did so and fought his way in courageously. No one could stand against him. Upon entering, he was surrounded by all the reputed warriors of the Kaurava army. He battled every single one of them. The Pandavas headed by Bheema tried to go to his aid. They were unable to do so as Saindhava stood against them. He was invincible that day on account of the boon given to him by Lord Siva. So Abhimanyu had to fight a fatal battle alone. He was killed by Saindhava. At sunset, the battle was off for the day. Arjuna returned to his quarters. He was overcome with grief when he learnt about the uneven and cruel battle in which his son Abhimanyu lost his life. Knowing the cause to be Saindhava, in a fit of extreme rage, he vowed to kill Saindhava by sunset

the next day failing which he would bury himself with his mighty bow *Gandeeva*.

This oath disturbed Lord Krishna. The Lord knew that the Kauravas would go all out to protect Saindhava and in case Arjuna was unable to carry out his vow, the situation would turn out to be tragic. It would defeat the very purpose for which he had incarnated Himself. Arjuna was His instrument for the secure establishment of *Dharma* in the world. So the Lord felt that He should be watchful for any doubtful moves and see that His devotee's word held sway. So He gave orders to His charioteer Daruka to keep His chariot ready with all His weapons to be brought to Him on His blowing His conch. This was in accordance to His dictum: "*Na Me bhaktahpranasyati*" - "My devotee shall not come to grief."

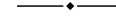
The next day the battle was very severe and intense. Arjuna fought with all his might. With great determination he proceeded towards Saindhava, who was hidden in the midst of formidable warriors in the middle of the army. Arjuna made short work of everyone that opposed him. It was nearing sunset and he was still a distance away from his goal. Then Lord Krishna thought that the time had come for His intervention. He set His discus against the sun so that an artificial darkness spread. Saindhava thought that the sun had set and he came out of his hiding place. He was killed in a trice as the discus was removed and light followed showing the sun still in the sky. Arjuna was asked by the Lord to use the *Paasupataastra* to make the head of Saindhava fall into the lap of Saindhava's father who was doing penance. It was done and the old man pushed the head down to the ground.

His head was broken into a thousand pieces as a result of his own curse. But for the Lord's strategem Arjuna could not have killed Saindhava and he could have ended his life. The Lord had taken upon Himself the duty of carrying out the word of His devotee at all costs. Though He had said that He would not take up arms in that battle, He laid great store by His stand to save His devotee at any cost and He would even stretch His own word for that matter. He is prayed to as:

*"Akaala Sandhyaa ghatanas chakraantarita Bhaaskarah
Dushtapramadhanah Paartha pratignaaparipaalakah
Sindhuraaja sirahpaatasthaanavaktaavivekadruk."*

This aspect of the Lord being the mainstay of His devotees through thick and thin had been brought to the fore even in the battle of Arjuna with the sterling devotee and warrior Bheeshma earlier. When the Lord felt that Arjuna was feeling the pinch in the battle with the grand old man and was unequal to the task, He Himself thought of doing away with Bheeshma. He relented however when Arjuna prayed to Him to desist from doing so and promising to fight better. Bheeshma said in this connection that the Lord had to take up arms against him because he had taken a vow to make the Lord take up weapons against him. It was the bounden duty of the Lord to gratify the sworn desires of His devotees and see that their words were fulfilled, hence the apparent contradiction in his acts. He is *Bhaktavaakparipaalana Krishna*: we salute him who was: "*Brahma bodha paritraata Paartha Bheeshmaartha Chakrabhrut, Arunaayaasa Vidhvamssee Kaaladamsbtraavibhooshanah!*" He saved Arjuna by His teaching of Brahavidya to him; took up the discus for carrying out

the oath of Bheeshma; removed the troubles and travails of Arjuna; and was the typical Time Spirit with its decorative fierce teeth.



2

THE GLORY OF KAVERI

—♦—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai
Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples.)*

The Lord Parameswara said to Bhagavati Parvati:

*"Sarnateertha mayo Vishnubh Sarvasastramayam Prabhuh
Sarvakratu mayo Vishnubh Satyam Satyam Vadaamyaham!"*

Lord Vishnu is manifest in all teerthas, in all Sastras and in all sacrifices. That is the Truth, so said the Lord.

Of these teerthas we invoke the following mentioned in the sloka at the beginning of every ritual.

*"Gangecha Yamunechaiva Krishne Godavari Sarasvathi
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri Jalesmin Sannidhim kuru!"*

The sacred waters of the holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna, Krishna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri are prayed for to be present in the sacred water of the vessel used for the ritual.

It is because Lord Vishnu is present in all these holy rivers the waters of these rivers are held in great sanctity.

Of these the Kaveri is highlighted for its value that is on par with Ganges, the Lord having promised Vibheeshana to be present in the Sree Ranga Kshetra washed by the sacred waters of the Kaveri for all time to come. He said that one who bathes in the Kaveri in the month of Vaisakha on

the full moon day graced by the Star Visakha is sure to get salvation. Even now the Chiranjeevi Vibheeshana visits the shrine on that day and worships the Lord. The account of the origin of the Kaveri will reveal how it became so dear to the Lord.

Kaveri was the daughter of the Rajarishi Kavera. Kavera did penance to Lord Siva with a view to attaining salvation. Lord Siva directed him to meditate on Lord Brahma the creator. In due course, Lord Brahma appeared before him and said: "I have got my daughter Vishnumaaya. She will be born to you and make you get salvation or freedom from the bondage of Samsara."

The Rajarishi was satisfied at the culmination of his penance. In due course, Vishnumaaya was born to him by the grace of Lord Brahma. She said that she would offer penance to Lord Siva, take the shape of a godly river and give redemption to her father. Thereupon she commenced her tapas in earnest. In the meantime Lord Brahma appeared before the sage Agasthya and told him, "The daughter of Kavera is performing intense tapas concentrating on Lord Siva. You better marry her." The sage followed the instructions of Lord Brahma and went to Kaveri and asked her to marry him. She told him that she was going to assume the form of a river to give salvation to her father. Agasthya agreed to it, married her and kept her in his Kamandalam. The sage was entrusted with the divine mission of humbling the pride of the Vindhya Mountains. So while on that mission he entrusted Kaveri to his disciples. It so happened that when they came to the vicinity of the Sahya Mountains she remembered her divine mission, converted herself into

a river and flowed away. The disciples requested her not to do so as their master would punish them. She allayed their fears saying that the sage knew her determination and hence no harm would come to them. She became famous as the Ganges of the South. Lord Brahma and Lord Siva appeared before her and granted her all her requests which included salvation for her father and the eternal residence of Lord Mahavishnu in her. That was how Lord Ranganatha made his abode there for time immemorial. Lopamudra, the wife of Agasthya, was her Amsa.

The greatness of Kaveri can be evident from the following episode. In Tretayuga, a king called Puranjaya ruled over Ayodhya. He ruled well for sometime, but out of greed he became evil minded and patronised thieves and robbers. He was so powerful that others were afraid to oppose him. Finally the ruler of Kanbheja made bold efforts to gather other rulers around him and made war on Puranjaya who had to run away into the forests with his family in abject terror. He lived in the forest and had the good fortune of a visit from the holy saint Maharishi Vasishtha who advised him to perform the Kartika Vritha to propitiate Lord Vishnu. He did so, and as a result, got back his kingdom. He ruled over the people wisely and properly leading a godly life. One day he was alone, deep in thought. He was wondering as to what vritha he had to perform, the place he had to go to perform it in and which holy river should he bathe in to attain salvation. Then he heard the Unseen Voice of the Sky tell him: "O King of Ayodhya! I shall clear your doubt. There is Sree Ranga Kshetra on the banks of the Kaveri. It is the Vaikunta itself on the earth. Lord Ranganatha will be pleased with any one who bathes in the Kaveri and worships

Him. That person is sure to get salvation. So go there and do so. No other river has that power. Your sins can be burnt only by this act."

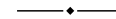
On hearing these words, Puranjaya immediately left keeping the kingdom under the control of his ministers and on reaching the Kaveri, had a holy dip in it. He worshipped Lord Ranganatha and prayed to Him.

*"Brahmaadivandye Jagadekavandye
Range Mukunde Muditaaravinde
Govinda Devaakhiladevadeve
Sree Ranga Deve Namataanamaami !"*

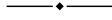
"I salute the Lord of Sree Ranga who is worshipped by all gods beginning with Brahma, the Creator and by all in the Universe."

He performed ablutions and rituals in Kartika bathing in the Kaveri and got immense spiritual consolation and power. Ultimately he got salvation. The bath in Kaveri, especially favourable to all the devotees of the Lord Vishnu, is sure to purge any one of his or her sins and bestow salvation on the devotee.

Glory be unto the Kaveri which Is Vishnumaaya in the shape of a sacred river!



SRI POODATTALWAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Swakarma phala nirdhishtaam
yaam yaam yonim vrajaamyaham
Tasyaam tasyaam Hrisheekesa!
Tvayi bhaktirdrudhastu Mey!"*

In whatever society and in whatever womb, may I be born as a result of the deed performed by me, O Lord Hrisheekesa! Let me have firm and secure devotion towards you.' This is the prayer of every sincere devotee of the Lord. His mind dwells always on the Lord and he cannot bear separation from the Lord even for a moment.

Such a great devotee was Sri Poodattalwar known also as Bhoota Yogi. He is one of the trinity of Alvars noted for their eminence in the heirarchy of devotees of the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The other two are Sri Poighai Alwar (Saroyogi) and Sri Peyalwar (Mahayogi).

The three alvars were born in the same month of the same year of Siddharthi at three different places to preach the love of God to people and set them well on the way to self-realisation. Poighai Alwar was born in the bright part of the month of Aswayuja on a Tuesday, the eighth day (Ashtami) under the star Sravana. He was found in a lotus flower in a tank in Conjeevaram. He was regarded as an Amsa of the

Lord's Sankha or Conch called the Panchajanya. The next day (Navami), under the star Dhanishta, Poodattalwar was found in a flower called Madhavee kusuma in Tirukkadalmallai. He is regarded as an Amsa of the Lord's gada or mace called the Kaumodaki. That is why in the invocation to him on the day graced by his birthstar, he is prayed to as below:

*"Tulaadhanishta sambhootam Bhootam kallolamaalinaha
Teerey phullotpaley Mallaapuryamedey Gadaamsajam!"*

Peyalwar was born in the same month of Aswayuja on the Dasami day under Satatara nakshatra in Mylapuram or Mayoorapuram. He was found in a red lotus flower and went by the name of Mahayogi. He is regarded as the Amsa of Nandaka, the Lord's sword. The three alvars were not born from human wombs. They were rare flowers who had offered their heartflower to the Lord and engaged themselves completely in preaching the love of God to all. They led a detached life not entangling themselves in the tentacles of samsara. They went from place to place praising the Lord and redeeming people. They were thus pilots of the Bhakti movement and under their inspiring guidance people became filled with god consciousness and devotion. They were not aware of each other's existence. The Lord out of compassion to the dumb millions intended to make them meet each other, sing of him and redeem the afflicted and the ignorant, creating the love of God in them.

On a certain night they met at the pial in front of the residence of a devotee in the town of Tirukkovaloor. They were in search of a place to sleep. First Sri Poodattalwar arrived at the place for shelter. A little later Sri Poighai Alwar came there for the same purpose and last came Sri Peyalwar.

They made themselves known to each other and were very glad that the Lord brought them together. They engaged themselves in a divine discussion dwelling on the blissful qualities of the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The Lord now wanted to test their patience and endurance. He made the place too small for giving them comfortable accomodation. The place appeared inadequate. They pondered the strange phenomenon. They then tried to find the cause for it through their occult eye. The truth was then revealed. The Lord appeared before them with the goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi seated on the divine vehicle Sri Garutman. Their joy knew no bounds. They prostrated before Him and went round him umpteen times praising Him in highly devotional songs. The Lord was pleased with them and vanished blessing them. Their verses in praise of the Lord took the shape of Andadi prabandhams, *i.e.*, compositions in which every succeeding verse begins with the last word of the previous verse.

Sri Poighaialwar began his Andadi prabandham with the following pasuram:

*"Vaiyamdagaliyaa vaarkadaley neyyaaga
veyakadiron vilakkaaga -Seyya
sudaraagiyaanadikkey soottineney sonmaalai
idaraayi neemgavey yenru"*

He says "I offer this sacred garland of verses containing pristine sayings after waving the light of Harati wherein the earth forms the vessel in which the ocean plays the part of ghee, the Sun god being the invoked light."

Sri Poodattalwar began his Andadi prayer with the following pasuram:

*"Anbey tagaliyaa Aarvamey neyyaaga
inburugu sindai idu tiriyaan nanburigi
jnanacchudavilakkeytrinen Naaranaarku
jnaanattamil purindanaan !"*

He appeals at the beginning of his prayer: "I have lit the big light with my mind as the vessel, my devotion as ghee and the ways of the mind as the wick for it before the Lord Narayana".

Sri Peyalwar's Andadi prabandham begins with the pasuram:-

*"Tirukkandeyn Pommeynikandeyn tigazhum
arukkanani niramumkandeyn, serukkilarum
ponnazhikandeyn puri sankan kai kandeyn
yennaazhi vannanpaalinru."*

He prays saying that he found the Lord with the divine mother Lakshmi in his breast, the golden hued body shining like the sun and the lotuses of the chakras in the two hands, bright and glowing.

The three pasuras reveal the exalted state of devotion of the alvars. In their prabandhams they had pointed out the Vedic truths in fine Tamil and pleased the Lord. They went on carrying out their divine mission in life and finally attained godhood. Of these Sri Poodattalwar always stressed on awareness of God and contemplation of the Lord and His blissful attributes, him being a shining example of the same. He is invoked daily by his disciples with the following prayer:-

*"Malaapuravaraadbeesam Maadhaveekusumodbhavam
Bhootamnamaamiyo Vishnorjnaanadeepa makalpayat"*

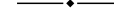
He is saluted as the one who had spread the knowledge about Lord Sri Maha Vishnu and made the people have the necessary jnaana to attain Him.

His Andadi prabandham should be read by everyone who desires the grace of the Lord.



4

SATSANG



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

Real Satsang is keeping company with the Lord through Yoga. The opposite of Satsang is Asatsang or worldly life. Association with Sages and Saints is positive Satsang, whereas to study the books written by them is negative Satsang. Both these types of Satsang are unfailing in their results, the positive bestowing purity of heart and the negative bestowing purity of mind. In short, Satsang is a safe boat to cross the Ocean of Samsara (cycle of birth and death).

*Abdhou vidhou vadumukee phaninam nivase
Swarga Sudha vasati cheti budha vadanti
Kshara kashayah pathimritir vigham Indranasah
Kante sudha vasti sa bhagavat jananam*

There is nectar in the ocean, moon, heaven and the lips of a young woman. As the moon disappears in a fortnight, it cannot contain genuine nectar. There is no real nectar in heaven, because the gods have to take births again in this world when the fruits of their virtuous deeds are exhausted. There cannot be real nectar in the lips of a young woman, because the husband who tastes the nectar from her lips does not become immortal. The real nectar is in the tongues of holy Sages and Saints whose instructions (Upadesa) help

their devotees to attain immortality and peace.

How are Saints to be identified? Bhagavatha gives a description of Saints in six words: (1) Anapeksha (not caring for anything wordly), (2) Macchitta (heart and mind fixed on the Lord), (3) Samadarshina (equal vision), (4) Manta (no self-centred activity), (5) Nirahankara (no egotism), and (6) Aparigraha (non receiving of gifts for personal benefits.) But, Saints cannot be described since they are the embodiments of Truth. Truth is not marketable.

Holy men are rare to find in this world. The sandalwood tree can hardly be found in every jungle. Pearls cannot be found in all seas. Precious stones cannot be found in all mountains. Real Swamighals cannot be found everywhere. One has to search for them.

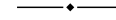
Satsang is an important sentinel in the domain of moksha. If one maintains a friendship with that sentinel, one will automatically be introduced to the friendship of Vichar (inquiry), Santhi (peace) and Santosha (contentment), who are the other close friends of Satsang.

Devotion to the Lord does not come by itself. One blind man cannot lead another. It is the company of the Mahatmas alone that can generate devotion in the heart of a man in the Kali-Age.

The language of the heart and soul is the same everywhere. Devotees of the whole world have one creed and one language to express their feelings and experiences and that is the language of Love.



5 THE AVATARS OF THE LORD



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the prayer of his disciples)*

The Lord said to Arjuna:

*Imam Vivasvate yogam proktavaanahamaryayam
Vivaswaan Manavepraaha Manurikshvaakavebraveet*

"I had vouchsafed this yoga of eternal significance to Vivaswata, the Sun god, who taught it to his son, Manu who, in turn, passed it on to his son, Ikshvaku".

Then Arjuna asked the Lord:

*Aparam Bhavatojanma param janma Vivaswataha
Kathametadvijaaneeyaam Tramaadonproktavaaniti.*

"You are born recently. How is it that you had taught it to Surya, the Sun god, at the beginning of the Yuga?"

Thereupon the Lord made mention of His descents into the world, time and again, the avatars which brought peace and prosperity to all creation. He said that though He had no births and deaths He, of his own volition, took form in the world, time and again, when vice got the upper hand and the virtues suffered, leading to the regime of Adharma all over the universe. He came down to the world to punish the tyrants and establish Dharma.

Thus the purpose of Avatars is for disciplining the

mortals – *Martyaavataarastviba Martyasikshanam*.

Also, it is not possible to describe the qualities and deeds of the Lord, who is the Absolute without form and attributes and about whom nothing is known. Unless the humans feel His personal form, touch and presence, they cannot envision Him and praise Him. He, therefore, takes shape in the world, showers His grace on the creation and enables the devout to attain him by seeing, contemplating, hearing and singing of his glorious deeds:

*Anugrahaaya Bhaktaanaam Maanusham Debamaasritaha,
Bhajate tatparobhavet.*

The Lord's manifestations on earth are for the purpose of bringing man nearer to his godhood and making him one with his divinity. The manifest Brahman takes the limited form of a human being to fulfil his spiritual purpose, (though God can control or extricate evil by a mere wish, His taking the human form is for making the human realise Him through the experience of His glorious presence as one among his kin. The Lord even takes upon Himself the form of even the lowest animal for the appropriate occasion demanding His incarnation.

For all the descents of the Lord into the world, the seed-avatara or *beejaavatara* is the Adinarayana avatara. All other avataras spring up from this manifestation of the lord and merge into it soon after their work is finished in the world. The following avataras of the Lord have come into the world:

Varaha avatara (Boar shape), Narada avatara, Nara Narayana avatara, Kapila, Dattatreya, Yajna, Rishabha

Pruthu, Matsya (Fish), Koorma (Tortoise), Dhanvantari (the Divine Vaidya), Mohini, Narasimha (Man-Lion), Vamana (the Dwarf), Parasurama, Vedavyasa, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Balarama, Buddha and the last to come, Kalki avatara.

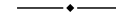
Some of these avataras are only fractional in power and some others are portions of such fractional energy of the Lord. Of these, the avataras of Matsya, Koorma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Buddha and Kalki are highlighted as *Dasa Avataras* par excellence and meditated upon by the devout with pleasure in worship.

The Lord said to Arjuna:

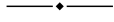
*Janmakarmacha medivamevam yo vettitattvataha
Tyaktvaa deham punarjanmanaiti maametisorjuna.*

"Arjuna! The one who knows the truth about my births on earth and my divine work, when he sheds the mortal coil, puts on its load no more and falls no more to earthly birth. He comes to me!"

Let us therefore reflect on the avatars of the Lord and His glory.



SRI DANDIYADIGAL NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Samsara sarpadashtaanaam Jantoonamavivekinaam
Chandrasekhara Paadaabja smaranam Paramowshadham"*

For one affected by the bite of the serpent of samsara, be he a human, a beast or a stupid person, the best and surest cure is meditation at the lotus feet of Lord Chandrasekhara, the deity with the crescent moon on his head. This is exemplified in the lives of the Nayanars.

The life of Sri Dandiyadigal Nayanar is a typical example of this point. He was born blind. But he was not downhearted. He believed in the grace of Lord Parama Siva whose holy name was always on his lips. He developed the occult eye or the Jnanachakshus. He always prayed to the Lord:-

*"Siva Sarvaga Sarva Sarmada Pranatho
Deva dayaam Kurushvamey
Nama Easwara naatha Dikpatey
Punareyveysa Namonamostutey"*

He offered salutations to Lord Siva, the omnipresent Lord, the Easwara or master of all, the Lord of the Directions and prayed for His grace again and again.

He lived in Tiruvaloor of the Chola Country. The place was a stronghold of the Jains. They were dead against people of

Saivite influence. They poured earth into the tank before the Siva temple to render it useless to devotees. Sri Dandiyadigal felt deeply sorry. He pleaded with them not to do so but they would not budge. Sri Dandiyadiga consequently got a stout pole established on the tank bund and another down in the tank. He tied a rope to them to guide his footsteps. He took out pails of earth and using the rope came out and discarded them away from the tank. Thus he tried to undo the work of the Jains. The latter tried to prevent him from doing so in vain. They jeered at him and said that he might lose his life in the process. The Nayanar said: "I cannot stop this work. This is dear to my Lord".

The Jains mocked him and said that he had no ears to even hear the right things besides being blind. The Nayanar said that they were both deaf and blind and he was not. Without looking at them he worked on. They said that if it were true that he had eyes, they vowed to leave the place forever. The Nayanar prayed to the Lord for rescue from the Jains. That night the Lord appeared to him in his dream: He said: "Don't be afraid and miserable. I have given you eyes. Hereafter you can see clearly. The Jains have all been made blind. They won't trouble you hereafter".

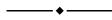
The Nayanar was overcome with joy at the mercy of the Lord towards him. He sang the Lord's praise. He prayed:

*"Jaya Sankara Paarvateepatey Mruda Sambho
Sasikhandamandana Madanaantaka Bhaktavatsala Priya
Kailaasa Dayaasudhaambudhey!"*

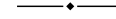
He sang, "Victory to the Lord Sankara, the giver of all bliss and auspicious things, the husband of Goddess

Parvati, Mruda, Sambhu, Chandrasekhara, the vanquisher of Madana, the god of love, the lover of devotees and Kailasa and the ocean of the ambrosia of kindness."

The same night the Lord appeared in a dream to the king of the palace and instructed him to do the bidding of the Nayanar and stop the Jains from teasing him. The next morning, the king came to Sri Dandiyadigal and waited for him. The Nayanar, who could now see, asked the king to order the Jains to come and see him. The blinded Jains somehow managed to come there. The king commanded them to leave the place forever according to heir vow. Some of the fanatic Jains left the place dropping and drooping, stopping and stooping. The rest fell at the feet of the Nayanar and craved his pardon. The Nayanar forgave them and prayed to the Lord. They recovered their lost eyesight and became Saivites. They became the followers of the Nayanar whose greatness was recognised by all. He was praised by everyone. Saivism spread due to his teachings and personal example. He spent the rest of his life always meditating on Lord Siva, the sure redeemer of his devotees. In the end he reached the abode of Sankara, showing to the world how redoubtable the Lord's name is for all time to come to those caught in the tentacles of the serpent of Samsara.



7
SRI MOORTHI NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Bheshajam bhavaroginaamakhilaapadaamapahaarinam
Dakshayajnavinaasanam Trigunaatmakam Trivilochanam
Bhuktimuktidaayakam Nikhilaaghasamghanibarhanam
Chandrasekharamaasraya Mama kimkarishyati vai Yamaha!"*

I seek the shelter of Lord Chandrasekhara, who is the divine curer of this disease of births and deaths, who wards off all dangers to humanity, who is the destroyer of the sacrifice of Daksha and the repository of the three Gunas (Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas) and who is the three-eyed deity, the bestower of physical well being and salvation with bliss and the eraser of the entirety of sins. What can Yama do to me? That is how the ardent devotee of the Lord feels. The Lord is the sole refuge of His devotees. He goes to the assistance of the sterling devotee at the appropriate time and gives him redemption. But the way to merit that mercy is the way of total surrender to Him without fear of anything. In Madurai of the Pandyan country, there lived a pious merchant called Moorthi Nayanar. He was a great devotee of Lord Siva. Everyday he used to offer sandalwood to Lord Sundareswarar and worship Him. In due course of time, a Jain king came into power. Under his aegis, many Jain priests settled in Madurai and, having royal patronage,

they converted a good number of people to Jainism. Many devotees of the Lord left the place unable to bear their persecution.

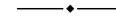
But Moorthi Nayanar would not budge. He continued his sandalwood kankarya to the Lord as usual. The matter was brought to the notice of the king. He directed that no one should sell sandalwood to the Nayanar. The latter wandered in vain to get sandalwood. No one would give it to him. He went to the Lord's presence in the temple. He poured out his heart's agony before the Lord. Suddenly an idea struck him. Why not scrub his arms on the ground; even as he did the sandalwood stick on its base. No sooner thought than done. The whole ground was then covered with blood. Bones protruded. He would not stop. The Lord was immensely pleased with his devotion. He appeared in full splendour before the Nayanar. He said that the oppressor king would die and the Nayanar himself would become the king in his place. The Nayanar found he was whole and perfect in body as he prostrated before the Lord. He praised the Lord:

*"Devadevam Yamaaraadhya Mrikandutanayomunhi
Niyatwamagamatsadyastam Vande Somasundaram!
Nijanetraambujakrutam Poojayaaparitoshyayam
Sreepatirabhatechakram tam Vande Somasundaram!
Yasyapranaama maatrena samti sarvaascha sampadaha
Sarvasiddhipradam Sambhum tam Vande Somasundaram!
Yasya darsanamaatrena Brahmahatyaadi paatakam
Avasyam nasyati kshipram tam Vande Somsundaram!
Uttamaangamcha charanam Brahmanaa Vishnunaa picha
Nadrusyate yasya yatnastam Vande Somasundaram!"*

"I salute the Lord of Lords, Somasundaram, who made

Markandeya eternal and who, pleased with the worship by the lotus eyes of Lord Vishnu, vouchsafed to him the Discus, Sudarsana. By merely saluting you, all riches amass with a person and all the desires wished for are fulfilled. By a vision of you itself all terrible sins like the murder of brahmins are destroyed. Lord Brahma could not find your head and Lord Vishnu could not discover your feet however much they tried to do so. I salute you, Lord Somasundara, of such glory!" He came out of the temple. In the meantime the Jain king died. He had no children. So it was decided that he, whom the royal elephant would garland, should be made king. Accordingly the royal elephant was blindfolded and left off. It walked straight in grand strides to the Nayanar, garlanded him and took him to the palace. The ministers got ready to perform his coronation. But he said that before he could be crowned, all of them should give up Jainism and become devotees of Lord Siva. They did so. Within a short time Madurai regained its pristine position as the shining abode of Lord Somasundara with Sri Moorthi Nayanar as the chief votary of the Lord. He worked for the spread of the Lord's kingdom on earth and attained salvation. Unalloyed worship of the Lord is sure to bring in its wake all bliss to the devotee and bestow the spiritual strength necessary to ultimately attain Him.

Om Namasivaya!



—◆—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Pandrimalai Swamighal
 to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

God's mercy is infinite and indescribable. His compassion for His devotees defies description. Pure, innocent illiterate worship also wins His grace. One need not be a Vedantin or scholar to attain Him. The uncouth ignorant lout also will and can earn His grace and realise Him. Caste and creed, prosperity or poverty and learning or illiteracy of the seeker, do not matter. Deep pure devotion to Him with absolute surrender alone is sufficient to get redemption.

Kannappa Nayanar was not of a high caste. He was a Sabara, a dweller of the forest. Yet he became one of the greatest of the Nayanars and attained immortality. His original name was Thinnan. He was the only son of the chieftain of a forest tribe that lived near the Sri Kalahasti Kshetra. He was born to the chief after many years of married life and was the apple of his eye. He was pretty and strong and the time had come to initiate him to hunting as he had become proficient in archery, sword play and all feats of arms. It was customary for the novitiate to offer the first killing to the tribal deity to the accompaniment of great pomp, gaiety and festivities and revelries. Accordingly Thinna, followed by his fellows, hunted a wild boar and offered it to the tribal deity. All present ate, drank and sang

to the accompaniment of wild dances. They rested awhile before embarking on further hunting.

Thinna also took rest under the shade of a huge banyan tree and dozed off. He then had a wonderful dream. He found before him the Lord Kailas, Parameswara, in all His glory with trident in hand. The Lord said, "Thinna! The time has come for the perfection of your soul. This place is of equal efficacy with the Mountain of Kailas. You will find a hill nearby. I am there. Come on, you shall attain Me." Thinna was suddenly disturbed at that time and he woke up with a start to find his tribesmen, bestirring themselves to resume hunting. He also followed. Then he found a wild pig which he chased. It led him away from his followers and disappeared near a clearing. Thinna searched for it high and low. Then all at once he found to his immense joy, a brilliant Siva Linga before him. He remembered his dream and fell prostrate before it. He thought it to be the Lord Himself. He could not bear to see the Lord in that forlorn condition. He said, "O Lord! How can You be here all alone? Who will give You food? Who will quench your thirst? I cannot leave You uncared for in this desolated place. Please come over to our village. You will be well looked after. You will have sweet delicious well cooked meat and you will be properly dressed. Why remain in this dreadful forest?"

The Lord did not respond. Then he entreated again and again for an answer to his request. Finding his efforts at getting a reply futile, he made up his mind to remain there and look after Him. He would not stir from the place. He was lost in deep contemplation of the Lord. His followers came in search of him. They could not shake him from his

resolve to stay there and serve the Lord for a long time. His parents came there and tried their level best to take him back with them, but their efforts were in vain. They left the place leaving him to his fate. Thinna felt that the Lord was hungry. So he left the place, hunted a pig, roasted it well, took the best part of meat from it, put the holy water of the Suvarnamukhi river in his mouth in order to wash the Lord and came back to Him. He spat the water on the Lord, worshipped with flowers, placed the meat before Him and prayed to Him to take the meat. When he found that the Lord would not partake of it, he became adamant and said that he would not take any food or water till the Lord took the offering made by him.

The All merciful Lord Kalahasteswara, who was immensely pleased with the purity and intensity of his devotion, partook of the meat to his great joy. Every day he stood sentry by the Lord, meditated on Him, got food by hunting in the forest, and continued to serve Him with steadfast devotion with no thought of home entering his mind.

Before the arrival of Thinna on the scene, a holy Brahmin devotee used to come to the place from a nearby village and worship the Linga with Vedic-rituals. After his worship he used to go back and come again the next day. After the advent of Thinna, he found everyday, to his chagrin, the holy linga and the place defiled by pieces of meat. He removed them, cleaned the place and after his worship left the place. When he found that the defiling of the place continued unabated, he sat before the Linga in great anguish and prayed to the Lord to tell him which evil rascal was at the root of that

daily sacrilege. Otherwise he would sacrifice himself before Him. Then the Lord's voice was heard. "O learned Brahmin; this is the worship of an ignorant and innocent devotee par excellence. He is a Sabara. The flowers that you have offered are removed by him by his shoes and he cleans Me by water brought in his mouth from the holy river. Though he does so and gives me meat, I relish his offering for it is sterling and crystal pure. He is a perfect devotee. You can see for yourself."

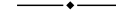
The Brahmin hid himself behind a tree and waited to see the woodman devotee. After some time Thinna came there as usual with meat in one hand, flowers in the other and the holy water in the mouth. Suddenly he found blood oozing out from one eye of the Linga. He felt deep misery on seeing it. He tried every known method to stop the flow of blood. He applied herbs to no avail. Then he thought that if he were to substitute one of his eyes with that of the Lord, the flow of blood would be arrested. No sooner thought than done. Immediately he pulled out one of his eyes and placed it on the eye of the Lord. Blood stopped oozing at once. Thinna was overjoyed. But his joy was short-lived as the other eye of the Lord began to ooze out blood. However, he was not dismayed. "I know the remedy now, my Lord! Don't be afraid" he said.

Keeping his leg on the damaged eye of the Lord to show him the place, he took out his arrow to pull out his second eye and place it on the damaged eye of the Lord. At once the Lord Sri Kalahasteswara emerged from out the Linga in full effulgence and blessed him. The Lord said, "O Kannappa! I am pleased with your deep devotion. Stop. I have never

seen a Bhaktha of such unsullied bhakthi. You have earned for yourself My complete grace. Your mind is purer than the minds of the sages who have performed austerities and conducted sacrifices. You are of Me." Thinna got back his eyes. He was ecstatic. The Brahmin devotee who had witnessed the epic scene revealed himself now to Thinna and called him Kannappa, the name given by the Lord Himself to him and worshipped him. To this day Kannappa Nayanar, the donor of eyes to the Lord Sri Kalahasteswara is venerated. His idol is found established in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple of Sri Kalahasteswara and worship is offered to him. There is a hill by his name where he attained siddhi before the Lord. It is evident from the forgoing saga of life of Kannappa Nayanar that one who loves the Lord with total surrender to Him is sure to realise Him however low in caste or position, and however ignorant he might be. All are equal in the eyes of the Lord and are eligible to obtain His grace. The only thing is his devotion should be wholehearted, deep and total.



9 NAVARATRI



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Geerdevateti Garudadhwajasundareeti
Saakambareeti Sasisekharavallabheti
Srushtisthiti pralayakelishu Samasthitaaya
Tasyainamastribhuvanaika Gurotarunyai."*

I Salute the Universal Mother, the spouse of the preceptor of the three worlds, who shines as the goddess of speech and word at the time of creation, who takes the form of Mahalakshmi, the wife of Lord Vishnu who has Garuda on his flagstaff at the time of preservation and who becomes Goddess Sakambari, the wife of Lord Chandra-sekhara at the time of dissolution. She is Trikala Narayani. Her creator aspect merged in Lord Brahma. Her preservation aspect Narayani shone resplendently in Mandara Hill as a damsel of pristine and peerless beauty. Her destroyer form made short work of a ferocious demon called Ruru. She separated his skin from his munda or head and got the name "Chamundi". As Narayani held court in Mandara Hill, the sage Narada came to her and paid his respects to her. He prayed to her:

*"Sarvamangala Maangalye Sive Sarvaarthasadbhake
Saranye Tryambake Devi Naaraayani Namostute".*

"O Narayani! I make my obeisance to you, the creator of all auspiciousness, the fulfiller of all desires and the consort

of the three-eyed Lord Siva. I surrender to you."

Narayani looked on him tenderly and asked him as to what ailed him. The sage told her about the cruel giant Mahishasura who harassed the Devas, the sages and the virtuous. The giant was the offspring of Diti who gave birth to him after getting a boon from Lord Brahma to beget the vanquisher of Indra and the Devas. He was born with the face of a buffalo. He performed severe penance meditating on Lord Siva. The Lord was pleased with his austerities and manifested Himself before him. He wanted the giant to name his desire. Mahishasura prayed for immortality. Lord Siva told him that the boon was impossible as one who was born has to die. Then Mahisha requested that only a woman should bring about his death. He got the boon and became fiery in his treatment of the Devas, the sages and the innocent. The Devas could not bear the torture meted out to them. The sage Narada represented their despicable plight of misery to the Goddess Narayani and prayed for her grace. Narayani smiled at him and expressed her readiness to wipe out the giant.

Narada was pleased with the success of his mission and went to the giant Mahisha. He praised the giant and told him that there was the most beautiful lady of the three worlds residing in the Mandara Hill and he was the fittest person to marry her. Mahisha was charmed with the account given by Narada and he ordered his warriors to bring her. His minister, Praghana, told him that he should not embark on that venture. She was the divine consort of Lord Siva. But Mahisha would not stop. His men were routed by the Devi. So Mahisha went to battle with her.

The terrible fight went on for nine days and Narayani killed him on the tenth day.

These nine days are the Navaratri days and the tenth day is the Vijayadasami day celebrated as the day of victory of the Devi who became Mahishasuramardini. This grand event is celebrated as the Dasara festival or Navaratri festival nowadays. These days are important for Devi-worship. They occur in the month of Aswayuja during the Sarat season.

The Devi is worshipped in her three-way manifestation of Trikala Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, the Iccha sakti, Kriyasakti and Jnana sakti, during these days. We have, accordingly, the Saraswatipooja on Saptami, Durga pooja on Durgashtami and the Mahalakshmi pooja on the Mahanavami (ninth day). The Devi's sport with the mighty Asura is also symbolised by artistically parading dolls representing all forms of creation in an attitude of prayer to the Devi for her grace to secure their well-being.

The Divine Mother is also worshipped by being visualised in young girls from the ages of 2 to 10, one for each day, who are regarded as the Devi Herself, and offered worship with intense devotion. The Divine mother will be pleased when worship is made to Her in this manner. She will protect all the devotees who offer their prayers to Her during these days.

The Sarat season is marked by the prevalence of virulent diseases and ill health. The Mother's worship in this period wards off all the diseases. One who recites the Devi Bhagavata and other works that highlight the glory of the Devi will be freed from all illnesses, physical or mental. Her

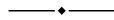
worship roots out all enemies, internal and external. The Navaratri vrata was performed by Lord Rama in Kishkindha on the advice of the sage Narada to obtain the Divine Mother's grace to get back Mother Seeta. So also did Lord Siva pray to Her at the time of his fierce battle with the giant Tripurasura. Without the Devi's animation, the Trinity of gods cannot function effectively.

That being so, let us offer worship to Her praying for Her grace time in and time out.

*Jaatavedase suna vaama soma maraatee yato nidabaati
Vedaha Sanah parshadati Durgaani Viswaa naaveva
sindhumduritaatyagnibi Taamagnivarnaam tapasaajwalamteem
Vairochabeem karmaphateshujushtaam
Durgaam Deveem saranamanam prapadye sutarasi tarase
Namaha!*

My salutations are to the Devi who is the Paramatman in swabhava, the life spirit, the incarnation of bliss. I seek refuge in Thee, O Goddess Durga of fiery complexion, beheld by Brahma, the burner of all our foes, the fulfiller of the desires of all your devotees and the guide to the ferry over this ocean of samsara.

Om Tatsat!



10 MURUGAN'S DIVINE CONSORTS

—◆—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Devaadidevanuta Devaganaadbinaatha,
Devendravyandya Mrudupankaja manjupaada,
Devarshi Naaradamuneendra sugeetakeerta,
Valleesanaatha Mamadehi karaavalambam!*

I pray for the guidance by hand of the Lord of Sri Valli, Murugan, who was saluted and praised by the Lord of Lords, the Devas, Devendra and the Divine Sage Narada, who sang and spread his glory in all the worlds. He is the Lord commanding the Devas. He vanquished the evil demon Taraka whose misdeeds resulted in his manifestation. Then the giant Soorapadman came to attack him. Lord Skanda annihilated him within no time. Devendra was pleased with his valour and gave his foster daughter Devasenai in marriage to him.

Mother Devasenai, was the biological daughter of Arishtanemi, a Prajapati. She was being carried away by a giant called Kesi, when she was very young. Hearing her cries of distress, Devendra went to her rescue. He killed the giant and brought her up himself as his own child. When asked as to what she wanted from him as a gift, she said that desired to have the most eligible, beautiful and powerful godly hero as her husband. Indra went to the Creator Brahma to find out who it would be. The Creator told him that the mightiest

commander of the divine forces would be her husband. With the advent of Skanda, the choice fell on him and she became his Divine Consort. Prayer to her in conjunction with Lord Skanda would make one powerful and invincible in his fight against evil and protect him, giving him health, wealth and prosperity.

Some time after this happy consummation, Lord Skanda came to Mount Kailas to perform service to his parents, Lord Parameswara and Mother Parvati. One day Narada came to see him and pay his respects. He told him that in Bhilpuram in Bhooloka ruled by the Bhil-king Pulinda, a golden jewel was born for him. She was the foster daughter of Pulinda. She was named Sri Valli. Her beauty and character were matchless in the whole Universe and she was the fittest to be his Divine Consort. After saying these words to Murugan, the sage went to Pulinda and told him that the only person fit to be Sri Valli's husband was the Lord Murugan, son of the mighty Lord Parameswara. He would be coming that way, fall in love with Sri Valli and marry her. What better fortune could he have than this, an alliance with the Lord of Lords! Pulinda was overjoyed and eagerly waited for the happy event to materialise. In the meantime Lord Murugan was very anxious to have a look at the beautiful Sri Valli and so he came down to the vicinity of Bhilpura with his retinue. Sri Valli was also disturbed in her mind ever since she heard about Lord Murugan's beauty, valour and fame. She was very agitated in mind as to whether that mighty Lord would deign to marry a low born person like her. She prayed to Him for His Divine Hand and pined for Him. As was her wont, she went with her companions to her flower garden the day Murugan descended

to see her for Himself. The Lord entered the garden. The companion maids objected to His presence there. When He revealed His identity, they were joyful and marvelled at the turn of events. They told Sri Valli about His presence and brought her there. Lord Murugan took her hand and asked her to come away with Him. She said that it was not proper for her to follow Him without being married to Him by her parents, whose permission He should seek. At that moment, bugles were sounded indicating the arrival of her father there. Murugan transformed Himself into a tree. Pulinda came there. He took his daughter with him without noticing anything peculiar. Learning about the affair at home from Sri Valli, Pulinda came to Murugan with his entire court, offered obeisance to Him and told Him that He could marry Sri Valli. There was an auspicious Muhurta early the next morning. He made the necessary arrangements. Lord Parameswara and Goddess Parvathi arrived in full splendour with all the other Divine Beings, and the marriage was performed with great pomp and bliss. Sri Valli received the blessings of all and went with her husband to His abode. There she was asked to salute and receive the blessings of Mother Devasenai praying for her permission to live with the Lord as her co-consort. Sri Valli did so with great pleasure. Murugan was immensely pleased with her conduct. When one prays to Murugan, one should think of him as in union with Sri Valli and Devasenai. One who surrenders to the Lord of Sri Valli would obtain spiritual progress and salvation, whatever caste, creed, race or status he might belong to. His divine grace would be showered equally on everyone whether they are high or low, rich or poor. The only thing that matters is the intensity of dedicated love towards Him with total surrender.

Hence let us pray:

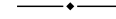
*Haaraadi ratnamaniyakta kireeta
baarakundala lasatkavachaabhirama
Hei Veera Taaraka jayaasurabrundavandya,
Valleesanaatha Mamadehi Karaavalambam!*

Lord of Sri Valli! Beautiful and charming with the necklace of gems, crown, earrings, bright armour and other regalia, annihilator of the Demon Taraka, praised and venerated by the gods, give me your precious guidance by hand.



11

TEMPLE, THE ABODE OF GOD



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

The temple is the abode of God. It is a spiritual reservoir. Everywhere in the world today, we find nothing but strife and discontent. People are talking atheism. Temples and holy men have the most important part to play in redeeming the present day world from this sorry state. There are people who say: "If God is everywhere and in everything, why should we go to a temple? Why could we not be where we are and think of Him?" That is all well and good. But can you do so? Can you perceive the Lord everywhere and in everything? It is not possible for you to do so unless you attain a state of spirituality which bestows Brahmajnana on you with the capacity to look upon all as the living manifestations of the Lord.

The Lord has said:

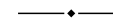
*Iswarassarvbhootaanaam bruddhserjuna tishttati
Bhraamayana Sarva bhootaani yantraaroodhaani maayayaa!*

The Lord is seated in the hearts of every living being; but all creatures wander hither and thither in pursuit of the Lord being deluded by illusion just like figures on a machine going around in circles. Hence, it is necessary to have some centres where one can concentrate on God and receive spiritual solace

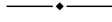
and strength. Temples or places of worship are intended to generate love for the Lord and infuse spiritual comfort. The idols installed in the temples are not mere stones. The worshippers look upon them as the living manifestations of the Supreme. When a worshipper stands before the idol, he feels the divine presence of the deity symbolised by the idol. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa saw the Divine Mother in the idol of Kali before him. He conversed with her. Not only that, he made his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, also see the Mother, speak to her and ask for gifts. Hence the devout have to think that the idol is the deity itself and that will lead him on to perceive the Supreme Being. The power signified by the aspect of the Lord indicated by the idol in the sanctum sanctorum permeates the devotee and he is spiritually elevated and feels divine presence and bliss.

Temples are the storehouses of spiritual energy and they have to be holy. All mundane talk must be avoided. We are all familiar with the word "Gossip". It originally meant "Talk in God's places", but now it has the meaning "light idle talk" for the templegoers indulged in worldly, material and unworthy talk in the precincts of the temples. This must be eschewed. Temples must be places for Satsang, Bhajan, Sankeertan and other holy discourses. From the time one enters the temple till he leaves, one must be mentally fixated on the Lord and take in the Lord's grandeur and presence with single-minded devotion. To enable the worshippers to feel the solemn grandeur of the Lord, provisions are made in the temples to hold their attention. Bells are rung while performing worship to keep out external sounds and to divert the mind inward and concentrated on God. Lights are shown and waved before the idol to denote that the Lord

is the Spiritual Light burning away the darkness of Ajnana and drawing the worshipper to bright life. Dhoopam, that is, Agarbathi or scented sticks, are lit to create a sweet aroma and make the environment pleasing and refreshing to the mind. It has also a physical effect and acts as a disinfectant. Food or edibles are offered to the deity and are given as prasad. Being the offering partaken of by the Lord, it has an elixir-like effect on the receiver and he feels blessed. The burning of camphor and the performance of harati is indicative of the total surrender and annihilation of the Ego and the merger of the individual soul with the Cosmic soul. Apart from the edible prasad, Vibhuti or the sacred ash is given in Saivite temples. It is to be applied on the forehead. It brings to the mind of the worshipper the equality of all in the eyes of the Lord irrespective of caste, creed or colour and all are reduced to ashes equally. Vibhuti can also be ingested. Kumkum is given in temples of Sakti worship where feminine forms of the Supreme are installed. It is to be put in the space between the eyebrows. It shows that all are one to the Divine Mother and the same blood runs in all. Thulasi is given as prasad in Vaishnavite temples. It can be ingested. In addition, it also has a medicinal effect. All these types of prasad are highly powerful as they are used in the worship of the Lord. They are charged with spiritual power generated by the mantras uttered during worship. All these facts must be borne in mind by the temple-goers and they must preserve the sanctity of the temples to feel and attain Divine Grace.



SATYAMEVAJAYATE NANRUTAM



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Deham praanamapeendriyaanyapi
chalaam buddhimcha soonyamviduhu
Streebaalaandhjadopamaastvaha
miti bhraantaa bhrusam vaadinaha*

*Maayaasakti vilaasa kalpita mahaavyaamobasamharine
Tasmai Sree Gurumoortaye Namaidam Dakshinamoortaye!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Parameswara, Dakshina-moorti, shedding spiritual enlightenment on the aspirant to realise him, the Supreme Brahman, facing South with the graceful chinmudra pose to enable all to escape from the difficulties and sufferings at the hands of Yama, the Lord of South. Salutations to all of you, bhagavatswaroopins. The Lord is in all - only we do not come to realise this cardinal fact due to Avidya or ignorance.

Men think of him in devious ways being deluded by the power of illusion of the Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent Lord. Due to the sport of his powerful illusion, men are not in a position to know His real nature. He is the Supreme Atman. Some think of this body itself to be the Atman. There are others who think it to be the vital air or Prana. Still others say that it is the sum total of the indriyas or the senses. There are others who say that it

is the intellect that is the Atman. Besides them, there are others who state the Atman is soonya or nothing. These are comparable to the illiterate women, children, the blind and the weak of intellect. They grope in the dark. They do not have real Atmajnana. Why should these people think of the Atman in this manner? Why should some of them even go to the extremes and say that there is no God or Brahman at all? Why should they deny the existence of the Lord who is formless and with form, who has no attributes but who still assumes attributes to facilitate their spiritual evolution by the gradual process of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana? It is because the Lord covers them with Avidya and puts them to the mettle.

Unless one strives for the grace and mercy of the Lord, he cannot get rid of this vyamoha or illusion or pet phobia, which is the offshoot of the sport of the mayasakti of the Lord. It is not easy to have a glimpse of the Supreme.

As Lord Yama says to Nachiketa:

*Avidyaayaa mantare vartamaanaaha swayam dheeraaha
panditam manyamaanaaha
Dandasyamaanaaha pariyaanti moodhaa
andheneva neeyamaanaa yathaandhaaha!*

The ignorant ones living in the midst of darkness fancy themselves to be enlightened and wise. They go around in circles being deluded in crooked paths in the manner of the blind led by the blind.

*Na saam paraabyaha pratibhaatibaalam
pramaadyantam vittamohena moodham
Ayamloko naasti para iti maani Punarvasamaapadyate me!*

The path to the hereafter or the para, is not comprehended by the ignorant man. It is not apparent to him. He is foolish being led by the power of illusion of wealth. He thinks, "this alone is the world, nothing else.' To him there is no otherworld. Thus he comes again and again under my sway." says Yama. The ego of man is so great that he becomes prey to the Arishadvargas-kama krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya (desire, anger, greed, binding attachment, arrogance and envy). He requires a great teacher who has recognised the Brahman to lift him up from this abyss of ignorance.

*"Na narenaa varenaa prokta esha suvigneyo
behudhaa chintyamaanam
Ananya prokte gatiratra naastyaneeyaanhyatarkya
manu pramaanaath".*

The Self or Brahman when taught by a man of inferior intellect is not easily known. It is difficult to comprehend. It is thought of in various ways. But when taught by a person who is one with the Brahman or who knows and feels his identity with the Brahman, the aspirant cannot have any doubt about it. It is definitely and clearly grasped then. The Self, being more subtle than subtle itself, cannot be obtained by arguing about. It should be noted that the Self is beyond words, feeling, argument and hearing, and beyond everything.

*"Sravanaayaaba babubhiryonalabhyaba Srunvantopi
bahavo yam navidyuhu
Aascharyo vaktaa kusalosya labdhaascharyo
Gnaataa kusalaanusishtaba"*

Many are not able to hear the self and its prabodha or

message. Even when they hear they do not comprehend. That person, when found, who is able to teach the Self, is wonderful. Wonderful is he who knows the Self when taught by an able acharya or teacher. That being so, the Lord has vouchsafed to the world, and is still doing so, a long procession of holy men and women, prophets and prophetesses, to make the ignorant wise and realise him properly. He has sent in Karmaveeras or the devoted to duty, the Bhaktasooras or the spirited devotees and the Jnanadhouryas or the firm bearers of Jnana or divine knowledge to suit the different rungs of the ladder of attainment.

We have the lives of great yogins, patriots, saints and devotees before us. But we are prone to think of their lives as mere concoctions of the theists who want to trade on god and godhood. Do you want any other instance to prove the intensity of illusion?

Hence I say as the Upanishad says:

*"Uttishtbata jaagrata praapyavararaan nibodbata, kshurasya
dhaaraa nisitaa duratyayaa durga pathastat Kavayavadanti!"*

Arise, awake and having reached the great preceptor, learn. Learn about the Lord: the one with attributes and without the attributes, the Brahman, the Self. As the wise affirm, the path of learning about the Brahman is like walking on that sharp edge of the razor. The preceptor will put you on the path and lead you on. The preceptor of preceptors, Lord Murugan, will lead you all in that direction by His infinite grace.

Don't lay store by caste. It is a man made institution. There is only one caste-man in the world. The Lord is attainable by

all. Murugan will bless you. Have abundant and intense faith in His mercy.

He is the *Vel Alwinar* - Governor of the Vel. The Vel pierces the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of evil, the toughness of the Arishadvargas, the invincibility of the vagaries of the mind. It works and works to that end. You are Velavan's chosen people. You are not vellalars- a caste to be looked down upon or frowned at. You are *Vel Alars*- the users of the Vel, the spear that probes into the soil and brings out plenty and prosperity in its wake. You are brought up by the *Vel Alwinar*, Lord Dandayudapaani, Murugan. He is looking after you all.

You are given talents. They may differ from one person to another. But put in your effort relying on the grace of the Vel Alwinar - Saravanabhava Murugan. You shall succeed more quickly than you can ever imagine. Note: "*Krishito naasti durbhiksham*" -Effort never fails to produce prosperity. The prosperity will be both material and spiritual.

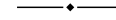
This is the Truth. It shall win.

*"Satyameva jayate naanrutam,
satyena panthaa .000vitato Devayaanaha
Enaakramantyasha yohyaapta kaamaa yatra
tatsatyasya paramam nidhaanam!"*

Truth alone gets victory- not Untruth. By Truth is opened the path of the gods by which the sages gratified in their desires proceed to where there is that highest place of the True One.

This is my discourse to you.

Subham bhooyat-blessedness will obtain. May Dandapani Murugan bless us all in the holy task of attaining his lotus feet!



13

SANKRANTI

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Dhyaayet Sooryamanantakotikiranam
tejomayam Bhaaskaram
Bhaktaanaamabhayapradam dinakaram
jyotirmayam Samkaram
Aadityam Jagadeesamachyutamajam
Trailokyachhoo daamanim
Bhaktaabheeshtavarapradam Dinamanim
Martandamaadyam Subham"*

I meditate on Lord Surya of infinite rays of brilliance, permeated with effulgence. I concentrate on Bhaskara who gives protection and shelter to His votaries, who makes way for all, full of resplendent light, giving all auspicious and blessed things. I contemplate on Aditya, the Lord of the Universe, Achyuta not subject to decay, the birthless and bright gem of the three worlds, fulfilling the desires of His devotees granting all boons asked for by them. I salute Him of severe scorching rays, the beginning of the blessed one.

The festival of Sankranti is connected with movement of Lord Surya Narayana, in relation to the Universe. He is Kalatma, the time Spirit, Sarvabhootatma, resident in all beings and Vedatma, the soul of the Vedas. He wards off all evil and diseases and keeps his worshippers in a state of

perpetual physical and mental health. His movement in the Rasis of the sky has a definite effect upon the entire world as the world exists and is sustained and protected by him. The entry of the sun into the houses of the zodiac is called "Sankramana". Of all the Sankramanas or such entries, the entry of his into the sign of Makara is the most auspicious. It is called Makara-sankranti or merely Sankranti for short. For, from that moment, the day begins for the gods. They shine in their full vigour and go about making their presence felt. That is why on these occasions all the deities are taken out of the temples in procession on all the mounts or vahanas in the temples one after another. The previous month of Dhanurmas ushers in this daytime for the Devas and so has highlighted significance.

The time of Sankranti is very auspicious and blessed. It is called Uttarayana punyakala. The sun travels north of the equator from this moment. We will receive the full blast of his beneficial presence. Those who leave the mortal coil now go to the heavenly abode of the gods through Deva-yana with no prospect of rebirth. That was why Bheeshmacharya waited till this blessed moment to leave the world having been gifted with the power to die at will by his father Santanu who was pleased with his filial love that prompted him to become a bachelor for life. The Uttarayana begins with Makara Sankranti.

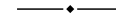
When the sun enters the Kataka sign, it is Kataka Sankranti or Dakshinayana punyakala. Though it is also auspicious, Makara Sankranti with Pongal following on the next day has a great auspiciousness and beneficial effect. Lord Surya is worshipped as He has directed His movement towards us

welcoming us all into His fold removing the bitterness of the cold season and bestowing on us the energy required for our vigorous well being. Oblations are also offered to the Devas whose day has just begun. In this world beset by diseases, birth, old age and death, worship of Lord Surya is a must and this is of its greatest effectiveness on Sankranti day.

The day before Sankranti, named Bhogi, is celebrated to mark the end of all darkness and affliction that have besieged us so far. It is the beginning of Bhoga or enjoyment for us. The old and soiled clothes and articles are made into a bonfire and burnt to signify the wiping out of all the evil memories of the past and beginning of a period of joy and peace. It is also a remembrance of the total destruction of Ravana, who was evil personified. The day after Sankranti is celebrated as pongal festival with offerings of the first products of the harvest as pongal to Lord Suryanarayana who is the vital animator of the Universe, and whose grace it needed for the production of articles and food for the sustenance of the world. The cows are worshipped the following day, beautifully decorated and paraded all over. This is Mattu pongal day. They give milk, the elixir of the world and their products have various uses. Agni, the fire god, once wanted to be away and he was in hiding from the gods. The cows gave him shelter and became holy on that account. They became kapila in colour, as a result of contact with the fire god. They became divinely blessed. All the divinities wanted a place in them and were so given. But when Goddess Lakshmi sought a niche in them, they refused saying that she was fickle and would not stick to a place. But on her persistent request they asked her to bless their excreta. That was how Gomaya and

Gomootra became blessed. They are disinfectants and are useful in ways. Thus the three days of Bhogi, Sankranti and Pongal are of the greatest spiritual and material significance. There is one other noteworthy fact about Sankranti. The presiding deity of Sankranti or Sankrantipurusha as He is called indicates certain things by His appearance, apparel, mount and direction of movement. The direction in which He moves shows destruction and disaster to the places in that direction. The things He wears, the category of animals denoted by His mount are subject to decay that year. By offering gifts to the Brahmins and to the poor at the time of Birth of the Sankrantipurusha, one can mitigate the evil and get beneficial results.

Hence it is that Sankranti has to be preserved as a holy day of prayer and worship of Lord Suryanarayana, the soul force of the Universe for all time to come.



14
TIRUPPANI ALWAR

—♦—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Lakshmeenivaase Jagataamnivase
Hrutpadmavaase Ravibimbavaase
Seshaadrivaase khalalokavaase
Sreerangavaase Namataamnaami!"*

I salute the Lord of Sreerangam who is omnipresent. He forms the residence of Goddess Lakshmi and permeates the whole universe. He makes his abode in the heart lotuses of the devout. He is in Seshadri or Tirumala Tirupati hill and in the Sun.

The Lord who is in the reclining posture in Sreerangam is the all merciful Lord who is the redeemer of all irrespective of caste, creed, race or rank. One of his foremost devotees was Tiruppani Alwar who was a Panchama by caste. He won great name and fame for himself by his unique and impeccable devotion to the Lord. He is himself worshipped by the devotees of Sreeranga Natha with the following prayer on the day with his birthday asterism.

*"Vruschike Rohineejaatam Sreepaanim nichulapure
Sreevatsaamsam Gaayakendram Munivaahana maasraye!"*

The worshiper seeks the shelter of Tiruppani Alwar born under the star Rohini in the Vruschika Lagh in Choolappur

or Turaiyur near Srirangam. He was born of the amsa of the breast-sign Sreevatsa of the Lord and was a great singer and saint. He was the one carried by a sage to the presence of the Lord under the instructions of the Lord Himself. Though brought up in the Panchama caste, he had obtained such merit as to be the closest to the Lord by the impression of his supreme devotion to Lord Sreeranganaatha.

He was found in a paddy field on the full moon day in the month of Kartik in the year Durmati as if to wipe out the evil in the minds of people. The person who found him was a pariah by caste. He was a pious gentleman and without a child. He took the baby home as a godsend. His wife was beside herself in great joy as God had answered her prayers for a child. They looked after the child affectionately. He grew into a sterling devotee of the Lord. He took up the Veena and sang the praises of the Lord with great fervour. In due course of time, he left his father's house due to intense devotion to the Lord and stationed himself near the banks of the sacred river Kaveri. He bathed everyday in the holy river, looked longingly towards Sreerangam and sang of the Lord playing on the Veena. The brahmins who came there objected to his presence and ordered him to go away. He could not hear them as he was lost in meditation. They threw stones at him in vain. This happened often. The saint was unaffected though blood oozed due to the impact of the stones with his body. The effects of the impact were seen on the idol of the Lord where bloodstains became visible. The king of the country thought that some grievous fault was committed by him for the blood stains to appear on the idol. Meanwhile the divine consort of Lord Sree Ranganatha prayed to Him to shower His grace on the alwar and have

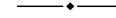
him go to the temple so as to enthrall them with his charming music in praise of the Lord. The Lord agreed. He appeared in a dream to the local sage Saranga yogi and ordered him to get the alwar to His presence at once. The yogi was thunderstruck. He told all the residents about it and went to the alwar. He told the alwar about the Lord's command. The alwar hesitated and said, "I am of the lowest caste. How can I tread on the holy land of Sree Ranga Kshetra?" But Saranga would not take no for an answer and carried him on his shoulders to the temple into the presence of the Lord. The very same brahmins who had thrown stones at him followed them singing the praise of the alwar thus:

*Sreeloka Saarangamahaamuneendra skandhaa
Dhiroodham Kalayaaminityaam
Kalankabeenam Kamaneeyabbaktim kaveeswaram
Gaayakasaarvabhoomam!*

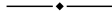
"You are peerless. We worship you born on the shoulders of the great sage Saranga. You are faultless in devotion. You are the lord of the poets and king of kings among musicians." On reaching the temple, the alwar was beside himself with joy. He drank in the beauty of the Lord and sang of Him. He composed a prabandham called "Amalanathapiran" containing ten paasurams in praise of the Lord. Sree Ranganatha was pleased with the alwar and took Him into His bosom for all to see. Thus Tiruppani Alwar lived his purposeful life of unadulterated service to the Lord as His divine minstrel and earned for himself a permanent and eternal place among the foremost devotees of the Lord. Sree Ranganatha is the saviour of all, high and low, weak, brahmin and panchama. Let us pray to Him:

*"Karmapramaade Narakapramaade
Bhaktipramaade Jagataadhigaadhe
Ananthanaathe Jagadekanaathe
Sree Ranganaathe
Narnataam Namaami!"*

Salutations are to the Lord of the helpless, the only Lord of the Universe, the Lord of Sreeranga who is protector of all from all risks and dangers in the performance of rituals and from deeds likely to lodge one in hell while on the path of devotion and in our sojourn in this world!



SRINIVASA KALYANAM



(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)

*Namah sakala kalyaanakaarine karunaatmane
Sreevatsa vakshase tasmai Lakshmeenaaraayanaatmane!*

"I salute Lord Srinivasa, the cause of all auspicious things, full of mercy, having the great *Sreevatsa* mark on the chest and in manifestation as Lakshminarayana."

This prayer of the sage Suka addressed to Lord Srinivasa made the Lord grant him the power of conquering the charming wiles of the damsels from heaven sent by Indra to spoil his penance. It also gave him untold virtue and *punya* which entitled him to play a vital role on the occasion of the marriage of Lord Srinivasa.

The Lord is a great boon-giver. He is born into this world not only to establish *dharm*a by punishing the wicked and protecting the meek and gentle, but also to honour the boons given to devotees. He is bound by His own boons given out of immense mercy towards His devotees who win His favour by austerities, penance or *bhakti*. Thus it is that in the avatar of the Lord to marry the divine princess, Sri Srinivasa, has chosen Padmavati, the daughter of Akasaraaja, who had won that favour in her previous birth. *Srinivasa Kalyanam* is a highly blessed event, the recounting of which will bring in its wake untold bliss and prosperity to the narrator, the

listener and the reader.

In the *Treta Yuga*, there was a king called Kusadhwaaja. His wife was a pious lady, always devoted to Lord Vishnu. To them was born an extremely beautiful girl called Vedavati and when she was born, the Vedas were heard uttered in the arms of the Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi. She was intended as a bride to the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu by her parents.

A giant demanded the hand of Vedavati from Kusadhwaaja as he was captivated by her peerless beauty. When the king refused, he killed him. The queen ended her life and Vedavati went to the forest to do penance and propitiate Lord Vishnu.

Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, came that way. He fell for her beauty and requested her to marry him. When she refused, he tried to force her. As he touched her, she felt defiled and, creating fire by her *yogaagni*, she cast herself into it, uttering a curse on Ravana saying that she would yet bring about her power by causing his ruin. She was staying in the residence of the fire god waiting for the opportune moment to work the destruction of Ravana. The time came when Ravana came to carry away Mother Sita. The fire god heard Sri Sita's cry for help.

Appearing before Ravana He told him: "O King of giants! Don't be deceived. This is not the real Sita. The real Sita is with me." So saying He took Mother Sita, kept her with His wife and brought with Him Vedavati in the garb of Sita, who was waiting for the opportune time to bring about the ruin of Ravana. Believing Agni, Ravana carried her off.

Then after Rama had killed Ravana, Sita entered the fire to prove her chastity. Two Sitas came out along with the fire

god. Sri Rama questioned the real Sita about the identity of the second one. Mother Sita related the story of Vedavati and said: "This Vedavati had borne all troubles for my sake. Please marry her for my sake." The Lord said: "You know that in this *yuga* I am to have only one wife according to my vow and principle. Let her be. I shall marry her in a later *yuga*. Till then may she live in *Brahma Loka*." This word of Lord Srinivasa had to be carried out by him.

At the end of *Dwapara yuga*, after the Mahabharata war and soon after Vikramarka and other rulers passed away, a king of the lunar race, Suchandra by name, ruled Tonda country. He had two sons, Akasa and Tondaman.

Akasaraja ruled over the Tonda country with Narayanavana as his capital. He did not have children for a long time. Then he was asked to perform a sacrifice for the purpose. As he was tilling the field in that connection, he found a lotus with a thousand petals. In it there was an exquisitely beautiful female child of divine brilliance. The unseen voice of the sky told him: "She is to be your daughter. Raise her. She will bring you great name and fame." The king was immensely pleased. As the child was God-given, he thanked his good fortune and brought her up as his own child. As she was found in the *padma* or the lotus, she was called "Padmavati".

This was Vedavati, the Lakshmi aspect that was in the shape of Sita and stayed at Lanka, now born to have the desire of marrying Lord Vishnu fulfilled. She was growing up into a highly beautiful damsel.

In the meantime an incident happened leading to the descent of the Lord Vishnu as Srinivasa. The sage Bhrigu

in the course of his test to find out the fittest deity to be worshipped among the trinity of gods struck at the breast of the Lord, thus defiling it. The Lord did not punish him for the transgression. So the goddess Sri Mahalakshmi, whose seat was in that spot, became angry and left the Lord. She came down to the earth and stayed at Kolhapur.

The Lord felt disconsolate and did not like to live in Vaikunta without Lakshmi. He came down to the world and made His habitation on Sri Venkatadri with the help of Sri Varahadeva, His boar form. He had Vakulamalika, Yasoda in her previous birth, to attend to Him. This was in accordance with the boon given to her in her earlier birth when she had said that she was not fully satisfied in her desire to spend her time in divine service to Him and wanted Him to live with her for some more time. The Lord had said to her then that He would give her that opportunity later.

Now came the time for her when the Lord was wandering aimlessly and needed someone to look after Him with motherly affection. Here Padmavati had grown into an exceedingly beautiful princess and she was told by the sage Narada who had read her palm that the Lord of Sri would be marrying her. Akasaraja was in search of a bridegroom suitable for her. Srinivasa came as a hunter and found her with her companions. He fell in love at first sight with her and made overtures to her. She resented his attempts and had him stoned and driven out by her companions.

But after he went away she swooned and when she revived, was so full of love for his beauty and affection that she began to pine for him. Here the Lord's predicament was similar. His ailment was found out by his foster-mother Vakulamalika.

She was sent to Akasaraja to present his proposal of marriage with Padmavati after enlightening her about the previous birth of the princess. Vakulamalika went out on her mission to the king. She came to the Agastyashrama and found the companions of Padmavati who had arrived there to perform *abhisheka* to Lord Siva in the temple there to bring blessings to Padmavati who was afflicted with a strange malady after she had seen the hunter.

Learning that Vakulamalika had come from Lord Venkatesa to meet Dharanidevi, the wife of Akasaraja, they promised to take her along with them after the *abhisheka* was over. She waited there with them. Meanwhile, the Lord, unable to brook any delay, took the form of a *Yerukala* soothsayer woman, gained admission to the presence of Dharanidevi and told her that her daughter had fallen in love with Lord Srinivasa who had come as a hunter and made advances to her. The Lord was sending an emissary to them to ask her for her hand in marriage to Him. If she were not to be given in marriage to Him, she would surely die within three days. So saying the Lord left her. Soon after the Lord's exit the queen found out the truth from Padmavati. She told her husband about it. Then Vakulamalika came there along with the companions of Padmavati from Agastyashrama. She was introduced to Dharanidevi and her mission on behalf of the Lord was revealed.

Akasaraja and his wife were extremely happy at the blessed turn of events. On the advice of the preceptor of the Devas, the king sent word for the sage Suka who arrived at the place and praised the king for his great virtue as the Lord, whom they could not see directly even by the severest penance

and austerities, was going to become his son-in-law. He gladly took upon himself the holy task of going to Lord Srinivasa with the proposal of marriage from the king and to complete the divine event. The king fixed Friday, the tenth day of the bright part of the month of Vaishkha (*Vaisakha Sukla dasami*) for the performance of the marriage.

Sage Suka approached the Lord and submitted the letter of Akasaraja praying for the acceptance of the hand of his daughter in marriage by the Lord. Srinivasa was pleased and He signified His willingness for the marriage with Padmavati. The sage returned to the king with the good news. After his exit Vakulamalika appraised the Lord as to how the bride felt and how her parents received the news.

The Lord thereupon sent letters to Lord Siva and the creator Brahma through Sesha and Garuda. Brahma came first and then Siva with his retinue. All the divine beings assembled there to participate in the marriage celebration each doing their bit for its grand success. Indra was commanded to build the marriage town with all the requisites for the purpose. Siva was assigned the job of looking after the guests. Subrahmanya was kept in charge of inviting the deities and others. Manmatha was to greet all and give them betels and other things like chandan (sandalpaste) etc. as tokens of a hearty welcome.

Agni, the firegod, had to supervise the cooking; Varunadeva had to look after the water supply; Vayu had to furnish sweet smelling ingredients; Kubera had to be in charge of money, clothes and other offerings; the Vasus were to look after the cleanliness and sanitation and the cleaning of vessels, while Lord Yama the god of death, was asked to

punish the wicked and protect the meek and gentle during the time of the marriage.

Lord Srinivasa was asked by Brahma to perform the auspicious bath as a prelude to the marriage rituals of *punyahavachana*, worship of Ishtadevata, Kuladevata and so on. He felt the absence of the divine mother Lakshmi. He asked the sun god Surya to go bring her from Kolhapur by informing her that He was sick and pining for her in the last throes of life. He said that she would certainly believe the story and come along with Surya because He would cover her with His power of *Maya*.

Surya accordingly went and brought Mother Lakshmi with him. The Lord appeared to be extremely unwell and was even unable to meet her halfway. He put one arm on Rudra and the other on Brahma and appeared to wobble. The Mother thereupon rushed to Him seeing Him in that condition, worshipped His feet with *champaka* flowers and embraced Him. Immediately the Lord appeared to have recovered His health. She asked for His command.

He said:

*Trayaa Raamaavataare shu kathitumsmara bhaamini
Vedavyayaa vivaahasya sampraaptah kaala yeshavai!
Tratsannidbou vodhumentaam kaamayebam Kalou yuge
Vadatyebam Hrusheekeshe saa smarath poorvikaamgiram.*

She said:

*Taamangeekuru Govinda Vivaahavidbipoorvakam;
Iti me vachanam Krishna saphalam kuru vatsala!*

The Lord reminded her of her request to Him in Ramavatara

in *treta yuga* as Sita to marry Vedavati and His promise to gratify her wish. The time had now come as Vedavati was born as Padmavati for that purpose. He wanted her consent for the performance of the marriage and her active presence. She prayed to Him to take Vedavati as His wife by going through the necessary marriage rituals.

Everybody felt glad at the turn of events.

Goddess Lakshmi gave Him the auspicious bath. Then a *Shami* tree growing near the Kumaradhara teertha was taken and planted near the Varahaswami temple and it was worshipped as the Lord's *Kuladevata*. Then the Lord felt the need for money to go through the marriage in a fitting manner. So he took Kubera, the god of wealth, aside. The Lord said to him under the Aswattha tree near the Swami Pushkarini: "Kindly lend me money for the purpose of my marriage. You can do so as per the practice of *Kaliyuga* taking interest for the money lent." Kubera agreed and a promissory note was executed written by Lord Brahma stating that Lord Srinivasa had borrowed the sum of fourteen lakhs of *Ramamudra nishkas* (coins) on the seventh day of the bright part of the month of Vaishakha in the year of Vilambi in the *Kali* age for the purpose of His marriage from Kubera and that He would clear the debt within a thousand years from the date of his marriage with interest due on the amount. Lord Brahma, Lord Sankara and the *Shami* tree were the witnesses to the deed.

Thus provided, Lord Srinivasa proceeded towards the king's capital for the marriage. On the way He halted at the Ashram of the sage Suka near Padmasarovar on the recommendation of Vakulamalika on behalf of the sage.

Suka felt himself highly blessed and entertained the Lord and His divine retinue suitably.

The marriage of Lord Srinivasa with Princess Padmavati was then performed with great grandeur. After appropriate rituals, the *Purohita*s of both sides recited the genealogy of the bride and the bridegroom. The devaguru Brihaspati acted on behalf of the king while the eminent sage Vasishtha spoke for the Lord:

Brihaspatihi:

*Atrigotra samudbhootaam Suvēryasya propoutrikaam
Sudbarmanastu poutreemcha putreemaakaasa bhoo pateh!
Tvamangeekuru Govinda kanyaam kamalalochanaam
Yevamukte Mabaaraajo mudaaratnaambaram dadou!*

Vasishthaha:

*Prapoutrasya Yayaateshu poutrasyaamita tejasaha
Soorasenasya Raajendra- Vasudevasya bhoo pateh
Putrasya Venkatesasya gotre Vaasishta samgnite
Jaatasyaatrikulotpannaam Kanyaam Kanaka
Bhooshitaam
Grabishyaamo vayam raajamstava putreem nrupottama!
Dharinisyaa saha Raajendraba Kanyaadaanaparaayanaha
Prabrushta hrudayah praaba Sreenivaasam Paraatparam!*

Brihaspati traced the lineage of the princess from Suvērya, his son Sudharma and then his son Akasaraja who belonged to the gotra of Atri. Vasishtha recited the genealogy from Yayati and Soorasena to Vasudeva, the father of Lord Venkatesa - all belonging to the gotra of Vasishtha. After this, the King and the Queen approached Lord Srinivasa with a prayer to marry their daughter; the

manglasootra was tied around the neck of the bride amidst scenes of great rejoicing. After the marriage, the Lord had decided to stay for six months at Agastyashrama as he was on *Vivaahadeeksha* and should not climb the hill. All the divine beings and Mother Lakshmi left Him with the bride. Thus *Srinivasakalyanam* was performed according to the promise given by the Lord to Vedavati in His Ramavatar. All blissful things would happen to one who contemplates this happy event. Let us Pray to Him:

*Aakaasaraatsutaanaadab Aatmaanam me sadaa vatū
Devadevottamah paayaatdeham me Venkateswaraba!*

O! Lord Venkateswara, the Lord of the daughter of Akasaraja, O Lord of Lords! Be in my mind and body and protect me.





*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*Yasya pranaama maatrena SamtiSarvaascha Samapadaha
Sarvasiddhipradam Sambhum Tam VandeSomasundaram!
Mahaadeva Devesa Devaadideva Smaraare Puraare Yamaare
Bruvaanah smarishyaami bhaktyaa bhavantam
Tato me Dayaaseela Devapraseeda !*

Salutations are offered to Lord Paramasiva who is beautiful with the moon god in His crest. By mere bowing to the Lord all riches are bestowed to anyone. He grants all attainments or Siddhis. I pray to the Greatest God, Mahadeva, the foe of Manmadha, Tripuras and Yama, the god of death, with the deepest devotion for His grace to descend on me.

Many are His devotees par excellence who have attained Him by their single minded devotion and absolute surrender to Him. Of them Maipporul Nayanar or Sadvastu Nayanar as he is also known is one who shines by his personal eminence as a unique devotee of the Lord.

He was the ruler of Chedinadu. He had Tirukkvalloor as his capital and ruled the country wisely. He knew the ins and outs of the Vedas and regarded Lord Siva as the Sat. The other gods were all Asat and illusory. He considered Siva bhaktas alone to be the substantial men that matter and

Siva's leelas alone as worthy of note. This led to his being called Maipporul Nayanar or Sadvastu Nayanar. He renovated Saivakshetras and looked after the welfare of the devotees of the Lord. Any one in the guise of a Saivite devotee was sure to be treated right royally by him.

A neighbouring king Muktinadhan by name wanted to annex his kingdom and laid seige to the capital. He could not succeed in his purpose. The Nayanar was more than a match for him. So Muktinadhan thought of a ruse to win. As he knew that the Nayanar was soft and worshipful towards Saivite devotees he disguised himself as a Siva bhakta donning ochre clothes and went towards the fort at night. He had a dagger hidden within his clothes. The guards allowed him in as they knew their ruler's attitude towards Siva bhaktas. Happy with his initial success, Muktinadhan went jubilantly towards the palace of the king. The sentries there opposed his entry saying that the king and queen were sleeping and no one could go in. But the false sannyasin said that he had come there to initiate the king to a mantra that would give him instant victory and he should see him at once. Believing his words they allowed him in. The queen was awake. Seeing the fake devotee she woke up her husband. The king saw his Lord Siva even in the deceitful knave. He saluted Muktinadhan and prayed to him for orders. The false muni said that he had come to give him an upadesa that would fetch him immediate victory. The Lord had commanded him so.

The Nayanar was all attention. The rogue sannyasin said that no one should be with him at the time of initiation. The Nayanar asked his wife to leave him alone with the Sannyasin. She did so. The Nayanar was ready to receive the initiation.

Muktinadhan instructed him to fall on his feet before him and pray to Lord Siva at the outset. As the Nayanar knelt down in prayer, the rascal monk stabbed him with the dagger. The Nayanar groaned uttering the name of the Lord. A faithful follower of the Nayanar, Datta by name, came there just at the moment as he had earlier suspected the intruder and drew his sword to kill the wretch. But the Nayanar ordered him not to harm the man as he had donned the attire of the Lord's devotee. It was perhaps the Lord's desire to bring about his end that way. The man must have had the Sivam in him as he had put on that garb. So saying the Nayanar ordered his attendant to escort the man safely to the outskirts of the city and see that nothing untoward happened to him. Datta did so warding off attacks by citizens who came to know of the situation. He came back and gave the news to the Nayanar who was pleased with his loyalty. The dagger was taken out and the Nayanar breathed his last uttering the holy Panchakshari of the Lord who vouchsafed to him his blissful vision and took him to Kailas.

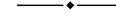
Mysterious are the ways of Lord Siva and one cannot discern how he would give salvation to his devotees. All one can do is to submit to His will with love and devotion thinking of no other thing as being real and worthy in the same way as Maipporul Nayanar had done. So let us pray to Him for his grace:-

*Mahaadeva Sambho Gireesa Trisoolin
Tvayeedam samastam vibhaateeti yasmaath
Sivaadanyathaa daivatam naabhijaane
Sivoham Sivoham Sivoham!*

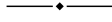
The whole world is permeated and lighted by you, O Lord

Sambho! The greatest God with the Trisool in hand. I do not regard any God other than Lord Siva. I am Siva I am Siva. I am Siva. Let me be imbued by Siva's energy. Let the whole world appear Sivamayam.

Om Santissantissantihi !



YERIBHAKTA NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*Sivaakaanta Sambho Sasaankaardhamoule
Mahesaana Soolin Jataajootadhaare
Tvameko Jagadvyaapako Viswaroopa
praseeda praseeda Prabho Poornaroopa!*

O Lord Sambhu! The creator of all auspiciousness, having Mother Parvathi for a consort, with the crescent moon on your head, the grand Lord Easaana with the trident and the jatajoota. You are the one permeating the whole universe, whose form are you in! O Lord full and whole, shower your grace on me!

Lord Maheswara is the fulfiller of the wishes of His devotees and causes all happiness to happen to them. But He specifically tests the devotion of the bhakta and, if sterling and pristine, all mercy and auspiciousness is vouchsafed. That is how Yeribhakta Nayanar was tested and his mettle proved.

Yeribhaktanayanar was a great saint who lived in the capital city of Karuvoor in the Konkana country. He was well versed in Saiva lore. He made it his duty to serve the devotees of the Lord with fervent love and interest. He was a good wielder of military arms and as such he did not

hesitate to venture forth, waging any conflict to save any devotee of the Lord when in distress. Sivakamiyandar was a devotee of Lord Siva a resident in the same city. He was an aged man. He used to offer garlands of flowers to the Lord in the local temple.

One day as he was going on that sacred task, the royal elephant of the king Keertichola Maharaja, dragged the flower basket from him and trampled it ruining the flowers in the process. Sivakamiyandar chased it with his handstaff but fell down tired. Yeribhakta Nayanar, who happened to come there, discovered the problem and pursued the royal elephant, killing it with its mahout and his companion. His anger was not mitigated. Like Veerabhadra, he began dancing in fury over their bodies. The king who heard about the death of the royal elephant came there to punish the culprit. But upon seeing the Nayanar, he thought that the saint would not have done that deed without cause for crime. So he fell flat on the ground before the Nayanar and appealed to him to become calm. He prayed to the sage requesting him to tell what sin was committed by the dead elephant. The Nayanar was pacified and recounted what happened. The King said that the mahout and his companion as well as the elephant met their just deserts. But he should atone for their faults. So he requested the Nayanar to kill him for the offence committed by the elephant. He handed a sword to the Nayanar who would not take it. The Nayanar felt the king would kill himself if he were not to take the sword from him. He did so but, in return, asked the king to take his trident and kill him for having committed a crime against the devotee of the Lord. The King would not take

the trident from him. So the Nayanar thought of punishing himself for having caused pain to such a devotee of the Lord. He raised his trident for the purpose when the Lord's voice was heard from the sky. "I have caused this illusion to test you. Do not do anything rash. I am pleased with you." At once, the elephant, the mahout and his companion were all alive and whole. The flower basket of Sivakamiyandar was full with beautiful flowers having a divine fragrance. The onlookers were amazed at the miracle. They realised that the Lord insisted on true devotion and would protect the sincere devotee at all costs. The Nayanar prayed to the Lord:

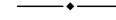
*Mahesam Suresam Suraartaanaasam
Vibhum Viswanaadham Vibhootyanga bhoosham
Viroopaaksha mindwarca Vahni trinetram
Sadaanandameede Sadaa Panchavaktram!*

The five-faced Lord Mahesa, the Lord of the Devas, the annihilator of their enemies, the Lord of the universe whose decoration for the body is afforded by the sacred ash, who has the fire god, the moon god and the sun god for eyes, may that three-eyed Lord always give us everlasting bliss!

The Nayanar was honoured greatly by the king and, after a long life of pure service to the Lord and his devotees, reached Kailas.



18 TOWARDS HEAVEN ON EARTH



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

In these days of materialism and atheism it is the duty of the devout to strive towards the establishment of the kingdom of God on Earth. The Lord can be contemplated upon as Saguna Brahman or the Supreme God with attributes. The worship of Saguna Brahman is performed by devotees who desire happiness in this life and thereafter and want certain prayers of theirs answered. They worship the appropriate forms of the Lord for the purpose. The Lord in his infinite mercy assumes the form prayed to by them and does the needful as desired if they surrender unto Him wholeheartedly without any reservation. The worship of Nirguna Brahman is resorted to by yogins and other highly spiritually developed souls for attaining salvation. They meditate on the infinite Lord without shape, form or attributes, being highly gifted with the spiritual ability necessary for the purpose of theirs. But the ordinary devotees, who are not so gifted, worship Saguna Brahman contemplating upon Him as having a particular shape, form and attributes and representing Him in an idol or image. The idol is placed in a temple and consecrated with rituals and holy mantras and yantras prescribed as appropriate and relevant to the particular form contemplated on. These mantras and yantras generate the necessary spiritual vibrations for the worshipper

to feel the presence of the Lord in the idol before him. They are to be mentioned and fixed properly and the devotees should be initiated into the why and where of the same. Each temple containing the Lord in the form and aspect which the devotees visualise him is thus a spiritual storehouse where they can obtain the necessary grace of the All merciful Lord who warily listens to their sincere prayers.

It is true that the Lord is everywhere and in everything. Nothing exists without Him. He has Himself said in the Geeta thus:

*Mattah parataram Naanyatkimchidasti, Dhanamajaya!
Mayisarvamidam protam sootrey maniganaaiva!"*

He said that He permeates everything even as a string going through a set of well knit gems.

Again he has said: "*Eeswarassarva bhootaanaam hruddeserjuna tishtati*" - the Lord is found seated in the hearts of all beings. The Upanishad said: "*Eesaavaasyamidagum sarvam*" - the whole Universe is the residence of the Lord. However, not all can perceive him, unless they are highly spiritually advanced. So He is sought to be worshipped at a certain place consecrated and set apart for the purpose and thus temples have come into being.

To the worshipper the idol is the living God. The Lord appears in it to the sincere believer, speaks to him as it were and grants his cherished desires. "*Kadavul Kandavarku Kalkandu: kaanaadavarku kalkundu*". The Lord is sweet sugarcandy to those that perceive and to those that do not, He is hard unbreakable rock. Just as the milk of the cow is spread all over inside its body, however we can get milk only

from its udder and not from its ears, horns or any other part. Similarly, though God is omnipresent and is everywhere in the Universe and in all beings, you cannot perceive him at all places easily. You have to go to places sanctified by the saints and devotees for having the auspicious darshan of the Lord.

The music broadcast by the Radio at Madras or New York goes all over the world. People at a distance cannot hear it. They can hear it only when they tune their radio to the proper wavelength. So it is that we can observe the Lord by frequenting temples consecrated to Him at different places highlighted into significance and spiritual power by regular correct poojas by saints and holy men.

Everything depends on the stage of development of the mind of the aspirant. Just as the mother gives gruel, cooked rice or milk according to the digestive abilities of the children, so also methods of devotion and worship to the Lord are prescribed according to the abilities of the devotees. It is here that the Guru comes into the picture.

The Lord is in everybody. But He is not perceived by all, hence the miseries and sorrows of the world. The stars are only seen in the sky at night. But they are not visible after dawn. Is it proper to say that the stars cease to exist in the sky during daytime? In your state of Ajnaana you may not be able to see the Lord. On that account you should not deny the existence of God. Do not fritter away your precious God-given gift of human life without meditation upon God. There is a difference between men and animals. Men have the power of discrimination and reasoning. Animals do not have that power. Men therefore can think for themselves and achieve the highest goal of becoming one with the

Supreme Brahman. They should not waste this gift. When it is raining, if you keep quiet without ploughing the fields, you cannot reap the benefit of the rain. Great saints like Appar Swamighal and Nammalwar said the same thing and they have cautioned that the worship of the Lord is the only way for salvation.

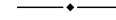
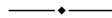
So dedicate yourself to serving the Lord who is of the Archa form in the temple in the first instance.

Then you can progress further. It is due to your poorva punya that you are able to get this opportunity of service to the Lord. Utilise it to the best of your ability. Then Heaven will surely come to Earth for you. May Baladandayudhapani Murugan bless you all and the Temple Society who have become his instruments in this sacred endeavor!

*"Sabanaavavatu Sabanau bhunaktu, Sahaveeryam
karavaavabai, tejaswinaavadheeta mastu, maavidvishavahai!"*

Let us be together, participate together, acquire the necessary power and energy to win the grace of the Lord and not allow any ill will to creep in between us! Share the Universal love of the Lord with love.

Om Santissantiantih!



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

"O Lord! Shower your grace upon me! Thou, who are perfect, who are the Universe and who permeates all over the cosmos! You are the only one absolute, Lord of Siva, the Devi. O Lord Sambho, adorned with the crescent moon in the crest, the great Easana, wielder of the Trisool, with matted locks of hair, show mercy to me."

This was the incessant prayer of Tiru Kurippu Tonda Nayanar. He was a perfect devotee of Lord Siva. He was a pious Brahmin and he lived in the sacred city of Kancheepuram. To him, duty was service to the votaries of Lord Siva. He offered to clean the clothes of the sacred men, the wearers of the sacred ash. He washed their clothes with readiness and gusto. They shone brilliantly after his handling of them. As a result of this selfless service, he was known by every one as Tiru Kurippu Tondan i.e. the person that offers service to humanity very readily without hesitation. As he was at the work of cleaning the clothes, he chanted the name of Lord Maheswara. It was his firm conviction that even as he washed the dirt off the clothes of the saintly, he was washing away the results of his past karmas or actions. He felt that he was nearing godhead by such service to the devotees of Lord Parameswara. He went

on in this manner joyously and was enjoying spiritual bliss in his full time contemplation of the Lord. The Lord took it into His mind to test him and take him into His fold. Wearing torn clothes, He appeared before the Nayanar as a holy mendicant wearing the sacred ash and Rudraksha beads. The Nayanar fell on his feet before Him and as was his wont offered to clean His clothing. The Lord Himself was overcome with the warmth exhibited by the Nayanar. He told the Nayanar that He needed the clothing that very evening as there was nothing else with Him to cover His body. The Nayanar would be committing a heinous crime if he were to fail to do so. The Nayanar agreed readily to finish the work within the stipulated time. Tiru Kurippu Tonda Nayanar did his work neatly. The clothes were washed. But unfortunately there was an unexpected heavy downpour of rain. There was no chance of the clothes drying. There was no prospect of the sun peeping through even for a moment. The rain grew in intensity. The Nayanar felt frustrated. He became depressed thinking about the fate of the old man without his only garments. He had failed in his duty. How could he face that saintly person without carrying out his behest? It was unthinkable. It would be better to make short work of himself. So thinking he resolved to strike his head against the stone and end his life. As he was about to do so, the Lord appeared before him with the goddess Uma. He told the Nayanar that He was pleased with his devotion. It was only a test to broadcast his real worth to the world. The Nayanar was in ecstasy. He prayed:

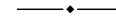
*Prabhulla neelotpala lochanaayai
Vikaasa pankerubalochanaaya*

*Jagajjananyai Jagadekapitrey
Namassivaayaicha Namassivaaya*

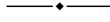
My salutations are offered to the Universal Mother and the Universal Father of the wide open Neelotpala eyes and of the full blown Lotus eyes, Sivaa and Siva, Parvati and Parameswara.

So praying he fell on his feet and offered obeisance to the Divine Couple. He prayed for salvation. The Lord picked him up and showered His grace on him. He took the Nayanar to Kailas in full public view. Thus the Nayanar had proved that service done to the devotees of the Lord is certainly service rendered unto the Lord Himself who will be immensely pleased when his devotee is given proper hospitality and made comfortable. Therefore it behoves one well to offer unstinting service to the Lord's Bhaktas.

Om Tatsat!



SRI RAMANUJACHARYA



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Namaami Naaraayana paadapankajam
Karomi Naaraayana poojanam sadaa
Vadaami Naaraayana naama nirmalam
Smaraami Naaraayana tattvamavyayam*

I offer my salutations to the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. I perform the worship of Lord Narayana always. I utter the sacred name of Narayana. I contemplate the eternal Narayana principle.

This was the creed of Sri Ramanujacharya, the savant of Vaishnavism, who propagated the worship of Lord Narayana as the sole means to attain salvation. So it is that the devotees of Sri Ramanuja pray to him thus:

*"Yo nitya machyutapadaambuja yugmarukma
Vyaamohatastaditaraani trunaaya menai
Asmadgurorbhagavatosya dayaikasindho
Raamaanujasya charanow saranam prapadyai."*

Salutation is offered by every Vaishnavite devotee to his Acharya Sri Bhagavadramanuja for whom everything other than the lotus feet of the Lord Narayana is straw, and who is an ocean of kindness with infatuation for the Lord's feet. The surrender to the Acharya is complete.

Sri Ramanuja came into the world at a time when people were confused by the intellectual gyrations that went under the banner of religion. There were the Buddhists, the Jains, the Saivites, the Advaitins and a lot of others advocating their principles alongside those of Vaishnavism. Interpretations of the Vedas and the Upanishads teachings varied. They were taught incorrectly and unrealistically. Sri Ramanujacharya's advent stemmed the rot. It was as if Lord Narayana Himself had taken the responsibility to put mankind on the right path through the birth of this spiritual beacon at the time.

Sri Ramanujacharya was born in the year Pingala (1017 A.D.) on the fifth day (Panchami) of the bright part (Sukla paksha) of the month of Chaitra at Sri Perumbudur, about ten miles from Trivellore. His father was the great scholar devotee, Kesava Yajwa, of Harita gotra. His mother was Kantimati, one of the sisters of Sri Sailapoorana, who was in the service of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumalai. For a long time, they were unable to conceive a child. As a believer in the Sastras, he performed putrakameshti contemplating upon Lord Parthasarathi, after having a bath in the sea on a Lunar eclipse day. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and promised that a part of Him would be born to them. Kesava Yajwa was gratified. Sri Ramanuja took birth under the asterism Ardra in Karkataka Lagna. Everyone felt at the time upon seeing his effulgent personality and the aura about him that Adishesha, the inseparable couch of the Lord, had incarnated as the son of the pious couple. The news of his birth delighted Sri Sailappoorana, or Peria Tirumaa Nambi as he was called, and he came specially to participate in the naming ceremony. He named the baby "Ramanuja" as he found all the attributes of Lakshmana, brother of Lord Sri

Rama. The boy showed astonishing ability in mastering the Vedas and the Vedangas and became a scholar and devotee in his own right. At the age of sixteen, his father got him married to a beautiful girl called Tanjammal, belonging to a chaste Vaishnava family. Unfortunately, Kesava Yajwa passed away shortly after this. It was a great shock to Ramanuja. But he got over it and devoted his time to the learning of the sacred lore and the worship of Lord Sri Mahavishnu. He desired to attain eminence as a unique scholar of the highest ability. He found that at that time Yadavaprakasa, a renowned Advaitin of Kancheepuram, was in the limelight as a learned preceptor to all aspirants. So he accepted the tutelage of that pandit and lived at the place with his wife. His cousin, Govinda Bhattar, also joined him there. Together, they became well-versed in the scriptures and the Vedas.

Yadavaprakasa was wonderstruck at the eagerness and intellectual accomplishment of Ramanuja, who became proficient in all the Sastras with little effort. Ramanuja became so learned that he found loopholes in the teachings of Yadavaprakasa, who was twisting the meanings of the texts according to his whims and fancy. One day, the preceptor was giving the meaning of the phrases: *Tasya yathaa kapyasam Pundareekamakshini* in the Chhandyoga Sruti. He began to give an absurd and perverted meaning for the word Kapyasam, which he said meant the buttocks of a monkey, thus comparing the eyes of the Lord to the rear end of a monkey. As he heard this, tears rolled down from the eyes of Ramanuja and fell on the thigh of the preceptor, whom he was giving an oil massage to at that time. The latter asked him the reason for his tears. Ramanuja said that he felt grieved at the absurd and ridiculous meaning he had

given for the Sruti phrase. Questioned by Yadavaprakasa as to what interpretation he would give, Ramanuja proceeded thus: Taking the generative meanings of kapi, he said: *Kam: water; pibateeti kapibi* – Lord Surya who drinks it; *Tena Atyati-vikaasayae iti kapyasam*; it means that is made by Lord Surya to blossom. Also kam: water; pibateeti kapibi: the stalk of the Lotus; *Tasmr Aste iti kapyasam*: shining with the brilliance of the Lotus though cut off. Again *Kam: water, Asabhuvi Api poorvakaha*: That which was in the water before. Taking all the derivative meanings as a whole, Ramanuja said that it meant: *Gambheeraambhassamudbhoota Sumrushtanaala Ravikara vikasitapundareeka dalaamalaayate kshanaha*. That is, the One having broad shining eyes like the wide petals of a fully bloomed lotus from deep waters and made to blossom by the rays of the Sun God. The preceptor found the meaning very appropriate. Instead of commending him for it, he asked him not to come any more to learn under his supervision as the meaning given by him was being objected to.

Ramanuja accordingly stepped away from his academy of learning. After some time Yadavaprakasa wanted to get rid of Ramanuja with an evil plan. He sent word to the latter to join him on a pilgrimage to Varanasi along with other disciples. The unsuspecting Ramanuja went with him. On their way when they neared the Vindhya terrain, his cousin Govinda Bhattar contacted him alone and told him about the plan of the preceptor to get him killed. Ramanuja was deeply upset when he came to know of the evil intentions of his teacher. He separated himself from the party without their knowledge and sat down under a tree brooding sadly over his fate. Just then a tribal person came there with his

wife. On accosting them, he found that they were going to Kancheepuram. Ramanuja's heart jumped with joy and gratitude to the All-Merciful Narayana, for he had now someone to guide him. He requested them to take him along with them. They complied with his request. They came to a certain region when it became dark, and they rested there. The woman wanted water. The husband said that there was a well nearby and they could have plenty of it in the morning. At dawn, Ramanuja woke up, but the tribals were not there. Presuming that they had gone to the nearby well mentioned by the man, he went on to a well which was some yards away. He could not find them. He found a group of people in the garden at the well. He enquired of them as to what the name of the town was. His joy knew no bounds when he knew it was good old Kancheepuram. He felt the couple who were his companions was none other than Lord Varadaraja and Divine Mother Perundevi. From that day he devoted himself vigorously to full time service of Lord Varadaraja, offering water for Tirumanjanam or abhishekam.

Meanwhile, Yadavaprakasa shed crocodile tears at the loss of Ramanuja thinking that some wild animal must have devoured him, and went to Varanasi. There he converted Govinda Bhattar into a Saivite by a ruse. The latter went to Sri Kalahasti and settled there doing service to Lord Kalahasteswara. On his return from Varanasi, Yadavaprakasa was stunned to see Ramanuja, alive and healthy. Upon learning what had happened he offered to teach Ramanuja once again. The latter continued to learn as his disciple. Just at that time, the great sage of Visishtadvaita, Alavandar, came from Sri Rangam to Kancheepuram and discovered the reputation and standing of Ramanuja. He felt that the latter

would be the appropriate person to become the beacon of Vaishnava Darsana. He prayed to Lord Varadaraja to offer the services of Ramanuja to others. Ramanuja's fame spread far and wide when he was able to exorcise the evil spirit that assailed the daughter of the local king. This increased the jealousy of Yadavaprakasa. He fell out with his disciple once again when there was a dispute about the interpretation of the sruti-vakyas: *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* "Neha naa Naasti kinchana." While the Acharya taught them in the advaitic sense, Ramanuja spoke of them in the Visishtadvaitic sense. This estranged them and they broke away. Ramanuja sought the shelter of Tirukkacchi Nambi and continued his usual service of the Lord. Coming to know of this, Alavandar sent an emissary from Sri Rangam to fetch him. It was Peria Nambi that came on the mission. He recited a sloka of Alavandar, the meaning of which attracted Ramanuja to him. Ramanuja learnt that the composer of the sloka was Alavandar and agreed to go along with him to have the darsan of the holy man. They travelled to Sri Rangam. But he discovered, on reaching the outskirts of the city, groups of Vaishnavite devotees on the sand mounds at the river Kaveri. He learnt that they were all gathered there to perform the last rites to the saint Alavandar, who had breathed his last that day. Ramanuja was deeply grieved when he heard the news. He felt it to be a great misfortune that deprived him of direct contact with the savant while he was alive. He went with Peria Nambi to pay his last respects to the mortal remains of the sage. He found that three fingers of the right hand were closed, which was unusual. He guessed that the saint might have had some unfulfilled desires, which he was counting on his fingers at the time of his departure from this mundane

world. He asked some of the closest disciples of Alavandar about it. He found out that the sage desired that an eminent person should be installed to carry on the visishtadvaita movement as advocated by Parasara, who had brought to light the Vishnu Purana and thereby made known Paratattwa to all; that a commentary should be written for Vyasa's Brahma Sutras with a visishtadvaitic view; and a detailed commentary of Nammalvar's Tiruvaymozhi should be made available to all. Thereupon Ramanuja declared within the hearing of all that the Acharya willing, he would strive for the fulfilment of his desires. Lo! At once, the fingers opened to the amazement of all. On witnessing the miracle, he was acclaimed as the worthy successor of Alavandar to establish the reign of visishtadvaita firmly in the country. Ramanuja immediately returned to Kancheepuram in a huff, because Lord Ranganatha had not allowed him to meet Alavandar in flesh and blood. He hurried to Tirukkacchi Nambi for guidance. His wife showed disrespect to the Nambi and he was sore with her for that. On directions from Lord Varadaraja, Tirukkacchi Nambi advised him to go to Sri Rangam to Peria Nambi for guidance.

At the same time, Peria Nambi was also on his way to take Ramanuja to Sri Rangam and make him the leader of visishtadvaita. Both he and Ramanuja met at Madurantakam. Peria Nambi performed Panchasam-skaras to him and taught him the sacred mantra of Vaishnavism. They both proceeded to Kancheepuram. There they lived together. The Nambi taught him everything that he had learnt from Alavandar. Here Ramanuja's wife picked up a quarrel with the Nambi's wife while dragging water from the well. The Nambi did not want to complicate matters further and so

left for Sri Rangam without the knowledge of Ramanuja. This made Ramanuja very angry with his wife, who had earlier denied food to a Vaishnavite pilgrim despite having food in the house. He thought that living with her any longer was impossible for him. So he sent her away to her parents house for good and took sanyasa before Lord Varadaraja, regarding the Lord as the Acharya. He subsequently came to be regarded as Ramanuja Muni and Yati Raja. He now decided to accomplish the promises made before the mortal remains of Alavandar. He wanted the assistance of a trustworthy co-worker to propagate the principles of visishtadvaita. He thought of Govinda Bhattar as the proper person. But the latter was a turned Saivite.

He felt that his uncle, Peria Tirumala Nambi was the right person to re-convert him to his creed. So on his request, Peria Tirumala Nambi went to Sri *Kalahasti* and after a mammoth spiritual and philosophical tussle with him brought him back to the Vaishnavite fold. Govinda Bhattar now joined Ramanuja in his mission. He became the staunch follower of the Acharya and went by the name of Embar. In the meantime, Ramanuja's erstwhile teacher, Yadavaprakasa, on his mother's persuasion and on being convinced about the rightness of the preachings of his former disciple, approached Ramanuja in all humility and became his ardent follower. He was given the name Govinda Jiyyar and he did a great deal for the spread of visishtadvaita till his death. Two more people of note belonging to Kooram, a neighbouring village, Kuresan and Kandadi Mudaliyandan, became his close disciples. Sri Ramanuja preached eloquently both in Sanskrit and Tamil the glory of the All-Merciful Lord Srimanrarayana and His Divine Spouse Goddess

Maha Lakshmi.

He proclaimed Brahman with attributes and without attributes and declared that one was not higher than the other. They were the two eternal and real phases in the One Brahman. As the Brahman without attributes, that was the Absolute. As the Saguna Brahman, that was Brahman Lord Srimannarayana, the maker of Heaven and earth and the lover of every single soul. The love we bear to Srimannarayana is one way of realising the mystic union that binds the Lover to His beloved, God to us. Each soul exists as an individual, distinct from another soul.

Yet, both live in God and are of His nature. By His grace, every soul evolves and blossoms. But evolution means feeling more and more of the grace of Sri Maha Vishnu and partaking of His nature. The ultimate goal of evolution is not loss of identity in the Lord like a drop vanishing in the ocean. We shall ever retain our individual consciousness. We shall enter the Light, but we shall never touch the Flame. His teachings appealed to every one. He went to Sri Rangam and was installed there as the head of the Visishtadvaitic Mutt. He devoted service to Lord Ranganatha. He reformed the manner of worship there and systematised the routine rituals. He corrected the errors in the management of the temple and made it perfect. These services earned for him the title "Udayavar" from the Lord Himself.

He tried to delve deep into visishtadvaita philosophy by obtaining instruction from Goshtipoorna at Tirukkotiyur. He could succeed only in his eighteenth visit to that saintly man. He was taught the eight lettered Mahamantra, the charama sloka beginning with "Sarvadharmān", and the

Dvaya mantra, collectively known as Rahasya Traya along with other intricate teachings of visishtadvaita, under strict conditions of secrecy. Ramanuja was so filled with compassion for all, that he wanted everyone to know the Mahamantra. So he summoned all together and proclaimed the Mahamantra to them in public without any reservation. He declared that deep and unadulterated love to Lord Mahavishnu and chanting the Mahamantra would lead them all to salvation. Goshtipoorna was very angry when he heard this. He demanded an explanation for Ramanuja's action, saying that he would rot in hell for going back on his promise. Ramanuja calmly answered that he was prepared to rot in hell for the sake of all souls who also had a right to get salvation. Goshtipoorna understood this and commended the Yatiraja for his action.

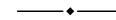
Ramanuja defeated the famous scholar-monk, Kandur Yajnamoorthy, in a sastric dispute with divine grace and made him a Vaishnavite. The latter became one of the foremost disciples of Ramanuja and his school of thought. He came to be known as Perarulaalapperumal Emberumanar.

Ramanuja wrote his renowned Sri Bashya in which all the tenets and features of visishtadvaita were vividly portrayed. He went on a missionary tour throughout the length and breadth of the country. He set right temple worship in many places. He pleased Goddess Saraswati at Kashmir and he was bestowed the title of Bashyakara by her. He came to Tirupati, where in earlier times he was having Ramayana discourses with Peria Tirumala Nambi. He settled the controversy that was raging there at the time about the identity of Lord Venkateswara, whom he demonstrated to be no other than

Lord Mahavishnu. He did a great deal for establishing the routine of the temple ritual there on a regular basis and he is uniquely honoured by a shrine for him having been built in the precincts of Tirumala near the Lord's abode by the Vaishnavite community. It is but proper, for how can the Lord ever be separate from his couch whose incarnation is Ramanuja!

At the age of seventy, he returned to Sri Rangam and resumed his service to Lord Ranganatha. He adopted Kurukesha, the son of Srisailapoorna, as his spiritual son. The latter wrote a classical commentary on Tiruvaymozhi. Kurukesha's two sons were named by Ramanuja as Parasara and Raman Pillai. They were entrusted to the care of Embar. Parasara later became a renowned exponent of Visishtadvaita. Now, the Chola King began to persecute the vaishnavites. Ramanuja had to seek shelter in Thondanur, the place of the Hoysala King, Bitti Deva. He drove out the evil spirit that haunted the king's daughter and became firmly established there. He renovated the temple at Melkote. He got the copper idol for it from the house of a Muhammadan princess, as directed by a divine vision, by performing the miracle of making it run towards him and reach his hands. On his return journey from Delhi, he was protected by the people of the untouchable community from his enemies. He was compassionate towards them and taught them the Mahamantra for their salvation. He made it a rule that they should be allowed entry into the temple on a certain day in the year. This is followed even to this day. The Chola king, Kulottunga, who had persecuted the Vaishnavites and who had the eyes of Mahapoorna and Kuresa plucked out thus blinding them, died. Learning about it, Ramanuja came over

to Sri Rangam. He retrieved the idol of Govindaraja, which was hidden in the hills of Tirumala after it was taken away from Chidambaram when Kulottunga Chola threatened to consign it to the sea. He had the temple of Govindarajawami built at the foot of the hills at Tirupati and made arrangements for worship there. He lived for eleven years after his return to Sri Rangam before he went to the abode of the Lord. He lived the fullest life for 125 years and left the mortal coil on the tenth day of the bright part of the month of Magha in the year Pingala, which was 1137 A.D. His works, *Sri Bhashya*, *Vedantasara*, *Vedanta Deepa*, *Vedantha Sangraha*, *SriRanga Gadyam*, *Vaikuntha Gadyam*, *Saranagati Gadyam* and others reveal his intense scholarship and devotion. No Vaishnava can afford to ignore the great Acharya who presented a religion of Universal love and salvation through bhakti, prayer and saranagati or complete surrender to Lord Sri Mahavishnu.





*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Deena maanavaali Kaamadhenavey Namassivaaya
Soonabaana daaha drukkruusaanavey Namassivaaya
Swaanuraaga Bhakta Ratnasaanavey Namassivaaya
Daanavaandhakaara chanda Bhanavey Namassivaaya."*

Salutations are for Lord Siva who is the Kamadhenu or celestial cow fulfilling the desires of the miserable humans who petition for his help, who is the Lord of Death for all pranks to which one is subjected by Cupid's arrows, who is the mount of gems to his loving devotees and who is the radiantly shining Sun chasing away the darkness created by the Rakshasas.

One who prays to Lord Siva with total surrender need not fear. He will never be ruined. The Lord will save him if only his faith never wavers. He will test the purity of mind and the devotion of the devotee very harshly too. One who stands the test successfully is sure to be redeemed.

The life of Maara Nayanar is a brilliant illustration of this point. Maara Nayanar lived in the village of llayaan-kudi. He was a ryot of means. He was a real devotee of Lord Siva. He offered his worship to the Lord first thing in the morning. He looked after the needs of every Sivabhakta

who came to him for help. The more he did so, the more prosperous he became.

Lord Siva was pleased with his devotion. He wanted to test his love towards Him and His devotees. He made the Nayanar lose his property and reduced him to penury. Undaunted, the Nayanar continued his worship of the Lord and Sivabhaktas. He sold even the Thali or the Mangalasootra of his wife in the process. One day he felt dejected thinking about what item to carry on his Kainkarya to the Lord and His devotees. That night it rained very heavily. An old man who was in the attire of a Sivabhakta came to his house and sought shelter and food. The Nayanar requested him to rest a while before his hunger could be satisfied. He consulted his wife as to what was to be done. She had great trust in the Lord like her husband. She asked him to go to the fields and get the corn that had been sown as seeds. Some vegetable leaves could also be brought. She said that Trinetra would look after their needs. His benevolent eye was on them. The Nayanar went in the rain praying to the Lord for succour.

*"Bhaktajeevanameesancha bhaktaanugraha kaataram
Vedaanasaktaayam stotum kimaham stoumi Prabhum!"*

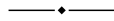
"O Lord! You are the spirit of your devotees. You are always on pins and needles to help your worshippers. Even the Vedas are unable to sing your praise. How can I do so? Please help me now." He was able to collect enough corn seeds and some vegetable leaves. His wife was able to cook them with great difficulty. When everything was ready, the Nayanar went to the guest. He found the old man to be the Lord Himself who appeared in His true shape along

with Goddess Parvati. He was beside himself with joy. He praised the Lord.

*"Jaya Sarvajagannaadha Jaya Chandravibhooshana
Jaya Sailasutaakaanta Jaya Bhaktaparaayana
Tvameyva kartaa karanam kaaranam karmacha Prabho
Tatphalam tatpradaataacha tatsaaksheecha niranjanaha!"*

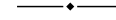
"Hail O the Lord of the Universe and all! Victory to Thee! O the one adorned by the Moon! Victory to Thee! O Lord of Mother Parvathi! Victory to Thee the Ever-loving patron of devotees! You are the Cause, the Deed the Causative Power, the Doer the Did and the Done. You are the giver of results of all actions and the Seer unattached to anything."

The Lord was pleased with the couple and took them along with Him to his divine abode. The Nayanar's name stood forever as the best devotee of the Lord. The true devotee of Lord Siva is sure to get ultimate salvation.



22

KANAMPULLA NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Vrushendrayaanaaya Puraantakaaya Namah
Prasiddhaaya Mahoushadhaaya
Namostu Bhaktaa bhimatapradaaya Namostu
Sarvaartibaraya tubhyam!*

I salute the Lord with the Bull as His mount, the vanquisher of Tripuraas, the famed and illustrious medicator, the gratifier of the desires of devotees and the destroyer of all troubles that assail humans.

Lord Siva is the protector of all and anyone who surrenders to Him wholeheartedly is sure to receive His grace in abundance. Kanampulla Nayanar completely surrendered himself to Lord Siva. He was always of the mind of Siva and all his acts were as ritual offerings to Him. He offered service to the Lord generously. He belonged to Irukkivelur, which was situated on the southern bank of Vellaru. A devotee of Lord Nataraja, he looked upon the world as the manifestation of the Lord. All the things of the world were of little value to him. He considered service to Lord Siva alone as lasting and productive of spiritual bliss. He was rich beyond his dreams. He was also rich in wisdom, generosity and steadfast faith to Lord Siva. He performed deepakainkaryam-lighting of lamps, in temples. He spent

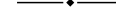
all his riches for the benefit of the Saivite sadhus and for temples. He exhausted all his wealth in this manner. Poverty began to stare him in the face. But he did not lose heart. He persisted in his service of lighting lamps in temples. He went to Chidambaram. He felt rejuvenated. He began his usual service of deepakainkaryam in the temple of Tirupuliyavaram nearby. He felt the cosmic dancer's dancing feet in his heart. Now the time for redemption approached. He had no money to get oil for the lamps. He could not beg. So he cut grass and from the money received by its sale he continued his lighting service. One day his grass could not be sold. Still undaunted, he improvised lighting by tying the grass into tiny bundles and burning them. But they soon ran out. He pulled out his hair and began to feed the fire with it. The Lord was pleased with this sacrifice and showered His grace on him. The nayanar became elevated and reached the abode of the Lord who blessed him with eternal light.

This is an object lesson to all those who seek the Lord. All thoughts of self, ego, desires, considerations and feelings other than those of the Lord must be thrown overboard and the Lord should be the sole object of our concern. Let us pray to Him to bless us with the strength of mind, body and action to serve Him even as Kanampulla Nayanar had served Him:

*Sevakaaya me Mruda prasaadate Namassivaaya
Bhaavalabhya taavaka prasaadate Namaha
Paavakaaksha Devapoojyapaadate Namaha
Taavakaanghribhaktadatta modate Namassivaaya!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Siva praying for His grace and bliss by offering sterling service to His lotus feet physically

and mentally with all thoughts on Him always. He is pleased with the devotion of sincere bhaktas who do such service and looks after them.



23
THE GLORY OF GAYATRI

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Muktaavidruma hemaneela
dhalacchaayairmukhai strayeeekshanaihi
Yuktaam Indunibaddha ratnamakutaam
tattvaarthavaranaatmikaam
Gaayatream varadaabbhayaamkusa
kasaam subhram kapaalam gadaam
Samkhamchakra madhaarvindayugalam
bastairvahanteem Bhaje!*

I worship the Divine Mother Gayatri whose five faces, each with three eyes are radiant with pearly white, red, yellow, blue and white hues whose crown is studded with gems and crested with the Moon, whose figure is the Varnas (letters) which is itself the highest principle, who bestows boons and fearlessness through hands in that posture and who holds the goad, the noose, the skull, the mace, the conch and the discus in the other hands while holding a lotus in each of the remaining two hands.

This is the form of Parasakti worshipped through the Gayatri Mantra. This form represents the microcosm and the macrocosm. The crown is the Pranava. The Varnas are the 24 letters connoting the 24 Tattvas and her ten weapons are the ten words addressed to the Parabraham in the Mantra. The five faces represent the five directions;

the three eyes represent the Moon, the Sun and Fire. The Indukala is Chitsakti. Her ten weapons are the instruments for bestowing boons, fearlessness, achievements of goal, attempts to that end, engendering pure Jnana, sharp intellect (Buddhi), sweet environment, destruction of ignorance or Avidya and realisation in Saguna and Nirguna stages.

This form of the goddess is her collective form while she appears diversely in the three parts of the day, namely dawn, midday and sunset. The sage Marichi describes her three forms thus:

*Poorvasandhyaam Koumaareem, raktavarnaam,
hamsavaabineem, akshasootra kamandalu
yagnopaveetadhaarineem, Brahmadevataam, Gaayatream
naama;
Madyaahne sandyaam youvanavateem, svetavarnaam,
vrishabbhavaabineem rudraakshaardha
chandratriooladhaarineem, Rudradevataam, Saavitream
naama;
Saayamsandyaam salakshanaam, syaamalaam,
Garudavaabineem, sarvaabharana bhooshitaam
samkbachakradhaarineem, Saraswateem naama.*

The Divine Mother appears at dawn in the form of Gayatri as a young girl who appears red in colour, riding the swan, having the Kamandalu, Rudraksha beads and the sacred thread in all the aspects of Brahma, the creator. At midday she appears white in colour, youthful and blossomed, having the ox for her mount and having all the aspects of Rudra with Rudraksha beads, crescent moon as well as the Trisool. She goes by the name Savitri at this juncture. At twilight in the evening, she appears as Saraswati with all auspicious

attributes, dark in colour, bedecked with all jewels, bearing the conch and the discus and riding the eagle Garuda with traits of Vishnu.

In anushtana the Mantra goes thus:

*Praatardhyaayami Gaayatream Ravimandalamadhyagaam
Rigvedamucchaarayanteem Raktavarnaam kumaarikaam
Akshamaalaakaraam Brahmadaivatyaam hamsavaahanaam
Madhyamdinetu Saavitream Ravimandalamadhyagaam
Yajurvedamvyaaharanteem Svetaam soolakaraam subhaam
Yuvateem Rudradaivatyaam Dhyaayami vrishabhavaahanaam
Saaym Saraswateem syaamaam Ravimandalamadhyagaam
Saamavedamvyaharanteem chakraayudhadharaam subhaam
Dhyaayami Vishnudaivatyaam Vruddhaam
Garudavaahnaam!*

The deity is of Rigveda at dawn, Yajurveda at midday and Samaveda at twilight. She is a maiden at dawn, middle-aged at midday and old at twilight. Thus the Divine Mother is Trimoorthyatmika in her collective form. She is Brahma, Rudra and Vishnu in one. The invocation is a prayer and a Mantra. The Mantra when chanted invokes Savita or the spiritual sun and through Him Parabrahma. It has got limitless power and this power is exhorted by Upasana and Japa or repetition. The Parabrahma or the Absolute becomes Siva-Sakti when manifest. Savitri is the Sakti corresponding to Savita. The main work of this Savitri or Gayatri is to free the souls from the tentacles of Samsara, brought about by illusion or Maya. Realisation of the true nature of the Self can be attained by identifying oneself with the three Devis - Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati corresponding to sunrise, noon and sunset. The symbology thus rests on the Trinity.

Each of the Devis gives the boons that she is expected to give. But Gayatri in the Samishti or whole form gives the very Iswara to the worshipper. Her worship through the Mantra leads to an entirety of knowledge. That is why it is called Vedamata or mother of the Vedas. The experience of the sages shows that the best way for knowing the Vedas and their importance is to learn the truth through the Gayatri.

The aspirant who utters the Gayatri Mantra with devotion is sure to become a seer by controlling the senses, steadying his mind and concentrating on Parabrahma resident in the spiritual orb of the sun, indistinct and inseparable from the Devi. Viswamitra who is the seer for this Mantra acquired powers which could annihilate all foes, internal and external, and which could create even a duplicate universe. He could do Pratisrishti. He could create another heaven on par with the Swarga of the minor gods. It had given the very Iswara, Rama, to him as a disciple.

The Gayatri Mantra actually consists of four feet. The Mantra runs thus:

*Om Bhoorbhuvassuvaha! Tatsaviturvareneeyam,
Bhargo Devasya dbeemahi!
Dhiyoyonah prachodayaat!
Paro rajasi savadom!*

O Lord Supreme that exists for all time to come! May we meditate on you so that we might obtain the great glory of the Lord Savita that enlightens our intellect! That Supreme being that has created all the worlds including Bhoo, Bhuvah, Suvaha, is none other than He who is symbolised by Om, that Paramatman who enlightens our intellect with glory

that can dispel the darkness, the spiritual sun (Savita) who is adorable - we meditate upon Him.

This is the meaning of the first three lines of the Mantra which alone are taught to the Grihastas or householders. The last line is taught to the advanced aspirants, those who have taken up the path of Sannyasa or the yogic path.

It means: "He who is transcending the effulgence is this." It refers to the reality of Godhead symbolised as Light. It is intended not so much for chanting as for experiencing the exalted stages of intense meditation or Samadhi.

The part "Tatsaviturvareneeyam" implies surrender to the will of the Supreme. It refers to all the regions of Bhoo, Bhuvaha and Suvaha. The second line "Bhargo devasya dheemahi" refers to the establishment of the Supreme in the heart-"devasya" - implying the holding of the Supreme in the heart. The third line "Dhiyoyonah prachodayaat" leaves the intellect completely under the guidance of the Supreme and getting enlightenment through intuition. The complete four-lined Gayatri Mantra is of the same importance and identical with the Panchadasaaksharee Mantra or the 15-lettered Mantra of the Devi in Sri Vidyopasana.

The Mantra is "*Ka Ae Eeia Hreem, Ha Sa Ka Hala Hreem, Sakala Hreem!*" *Ka Ae Eela Hreem:* O Maya sakti in conjunction with Parabrahma! Remove my Avidya (ignorance, shyness)!

Hasaka Hala Hreem: Let my mind be impelled towards the Brahmic career and Tattva and shine with effulgence!

Sakala Hreem: Let the Brahmic mind and career be kindled by the removal of the Avidya permeating me!

Thus each of the three parts of Sri Vidya is equal to parts of the Gayatri Mantra.

| | I | II | III |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | Agni | Surya | Soma (Chandra) |
| Tatsavitur vareneeyam Bhargo-devasya-dheemahi Dhiyo-yonah-prachodayaat Parorajasi Savadom | KA Ae Ee La Hreem Hreem | Hasa KAHala Hreem | Sa Kala Hreem |

Analysing the Mantras again, we find the following balance between the two:

| Vaagbhavakoota | Tatsavitur Vareenyam | Bhargo Devsya | Dhee Mahi | Dhiyoyonahprachodayaat Parorajasi Savadom |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|---|
| 5 | Ka Ae | Ee (Sivamurti) | La | Hreem |
| Kamarajakoota 6 | Hasaka | Ha | La | Hreem |
| Saktikoota 4 | Sa | Ka | La | Hreem |

Parorajasi savadom: Hreem: That which has to be worshipped as Parabrahman distinct from Sakti.

Thus it is evident that the same eternal Brahman is contemplated upon in both the Gayatri and Sri Vidya.

There is close correspondence between the Mantra and the various parts of a man's body.

First line: *Saviturvareneeyam:* leading to production, existence

and extinction corresponds to two feet, two forelegs, two hands and the two organs of evacuation.

Second line: *Bhargodevasya dheemahi*: refers to sustenance with the head as the leader, namely, mind along with the lungs, the heart, the liver, the kidney, the spleen, the intestine, and the stomach - eight in number.

Third line: *Dhioyonah prachodayaat*: is an appeal for enlightenment comprising of the head having two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth and intellect- eight in number.

That is why the scriptures prescribe that the aspirant must be completely free from any defect of behaviour or mind. He has to take a vow of continence and practise it to perform Gayatri Japa.

The 24 departments of knowledge correspond to the 24 syllables of the Gayatri Mantra. Hence one who utters the Mantra regularly and performs the Japa with complete devotion will certainly become proficient in all the departments of knowledge - the four Vedas, the six Vedangas, the four upavedas and six darsanas - all totalling to 24. He will become a sage par excellence by concentrating on the Truth. The fourth line leads him to realise the Self.

As described in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Gayatri is in the body as well as in the universe. There are in the human body organs and centres of energy that correspond to the various deities. The Gayatri is the effective means to bring about the harmonious attunement of the two. It is indeed in all beings. All that exist are in it. Truly it is Vak or speech. Vak sings (Gayatri) and protects (Tiayati) that seek its aid. It is the earth. In it everything is established. Nothing

transcends it. The earth again is the body in man. In it the Pranas are established and do not go beyond it. The Gayatri four-footed is of six forms (all beings, Vak, Earth, Body, Heart and Prana). Greater than it is the Paramatman. The first of this is all beings; three feet of his are immortal, in heaven. This Brahman, the Akasa around the man which is the Akasa within the heart with five divine gates of Prana, Vyana, Apana, Samana and Udana.

The east gate - Prana - is the eye, which is the Sun. Meditate on this as light, as God. He who knows- becomes healthy and bright.

The southern gate - vyana - is the moon. Meditate on this as happiness, as fame.

The western gate- apana - speech - Agni. Meditate on this as Brahmavarchas - the effulgent appearance of Brahman.

The southern gate - Samana - represents Manas- Parjanya. Meditate on this as fame and beauty.

The upper gate - Udana - Vayu - Akasa element. Meditate on this as power (Ojas and greatness).

That light which shines beyond Heaven, beyond Universe, beyond everything in the highest world *i.e.*, the world beyond which there is no higher, is the same light as the light within man.

That is to be realised through Gayatri Japa.

In order that Gayatri Japa may culminate in yoga, upasaka has to go through three stages. First, there should be repetition being conscious of the sounds that form the Mantra. Second, the meaning of every word of the Mantra

must be understood very well. Finally, the whole meaning of the Mantra, leaving behind the words in the background, must be grasped firmly.

This will be conducive to one going beyond the idea envisaged by the Mantra, realise the truth behind it and enter into Samadhi.

Every Mantra has a Rishi or seer who has realised it, the Cchand as or the metre in which it is to be uttered and the Devata or deity encompassed in the Mantra. So before a Mantra is taken in, there is a Viniyoga Mantra to take the permission of the Rishi, Cchand as and Devata of the Mantra to make it fruitful.

For the whole Gayatri Mantra Viswamitra is the Rishi, Gayatri is Cchand as and Savita is the Devata.

The following shows the Rishi, Cchand as and Devata for the three vyahritis: Bhoo, Bhuvaha, Suvaha and Gayatri:

| | Rishi | Cchand as | Devata |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Om Bhoo Bhuvah Suvaha | Brahma Prajapati | Gayatri Ushnik Anushtup | Agni Vayu Aditya |
| Gayatri Mantra } } | Viswamitra | Gayatri | Savita |

Gayatri is the Cchand as for Om, the first Vyahriti and the Gayatri Mantra. The Cchand as for the whole Mantra is Gayatri.

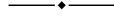
The Devata Agni is common to Prana and the first

Vyahriti Bhoo. Agni has the power to destroy illusion and ignorance. Similarly the Devatas of the second and third Vyahritis are Vayu and Aditya who promote vitality and shedding of light respectively. Through the ten names: Om, Bhoo, Bhuvaha, Suvaha, Tat, Savitur, Vareneeyam, Bhargo, Devasya and Dhee, the Surepeme Lord is prayed to. Savita is the Chief deity addressed to in this Mantra. This Savita is the influence, the driving force behind the cosmos, the force which sustains the sun, which makes Agni and Indra perform their functions. The outer sun is only the physical vehicle of the mighty all-knowing Chit which pervades the solar system with indescribable glory. The word Bhargo stands for the 33 Devatas corresponding to the planets and the stars. *Bhar* means to fulfil or energise. Go means the breath, the earth, the sun, the moon, the rays, speech, mind, etc. *Bhargo* also indicates the 33 types of wealth.

After the importance of these words is taken in, the Japa of the Mantra will help completely. But to get complete success, the Devi is to be invoked through the Avahana Mantra by which Her presence is enshrined in our heart. The Avahana Mantra says: "Salutations to the Gayatri Devi, the precious mother who grants all boons desired, who is known by the Vedas and who is the mother of the Vedas. I pray that you be pleased to give an audience to me and accept this devotional Veda Mantra hymn of praise. You are the very embodiment of the power of Prana as well as the power of the senses. You are the power that consumes the enemy of the light of divine wisdom, the resplendent form of the brightness of the Devi, the form of the universe, the age of the universe and hence the form of time, one who has conquered all. You, Gayatri Devi, are the incarnation of

Pranava. I pray for your darshan. To you, Savita Devi, I pray to you for your benign presence. To you, Saraswati Devi, I pray for your darsan."

Thus creating the *sannidhya* or presence of the Devi, one should proceed with the Mantra. Let us meditate on God (Savita) and His glory (Devasya) who has created the universe, who is fit to be worshipped (Vareneeyam), who is the remover of all sin and ignorance (Bhargo). May he enlighten our intellect. The Mantra requires initiation from a competent Guru to be truly effective.



24 KULACHIRAI NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Mahesam Suresam Suraaraatinaasam
Vibhum Viswanatham Vibhootyangabhoosham
Viroopaakshamindwarkavabni trinetrām
Sadaanandameede Prabhum Panchavaktram".*

Salutations are offered to Lord Mahesa, the Lord of the Devas, the annihilator of the enemies of the gods, the Lord of the Universe and of everything, the one adorned with the sacred ash all over the body, the three eyed one with the sun, the moon, and the fire god forming the eyes, the five faced Lord. May He grant eternal bliss!

The Lord certainly gratifies the desire of the earnest devotee who prays to Him soulfully without any sort of reservation whatsoever. Kulachirai Nayanar was such a devotee. He did his duty perfectly while his mind always dwelt on Lord Paramasiva. He was a native of Mana-melkudi, a village in Pandyanadu. He became a minister to the king of Madurai. He was respected by everyone for his piety and wisdom. He served the interest of the state wholeheartedly without any bias. He was equally good to the rich and the poor, the high and the low properly entertaining them. Any person wearing the sacred ash and uttering the holy name of Lord Siva received royal treatment from him. The name

of "Siva" stirred him deeply. He fed any number of Saivite sadhus that came to him. He was very liberal towards them.

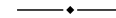
He managed the affairs of the state very efficiently and subjugated all the adversaries of the king. The state was free, worry free and carefree under his dispensation. But one thing made him feel sore. The Jains held sway over the king and the Saivites were sometimes harassed. The king himself being a Jain, the Nayanar felt out of sorts. But the queen Pandimadevi was of the same mind. He heard about the greatness of that spiritual dynamite Tiru Gnanasambandha Nayanar and wanted to seek his help in the matter. Together with the queen, he sent an invitation to Sambandhar to come over to Madurai and establish Saiva dharma. Sambandha Nayanar entered Madurai and Challenged the Jains to prove their superiority over Saivism. They tried to do so, but to no avail. Sambandar crushed every argument of theirs. When they failed to win with arguments, they tried other methods. They tried to burn down his abode. Sambandhar thought that the king was behind it. So he turned it into a fiery fever afflicting the king. The king hurried to Sambandhar and surrendered to him. The saint asked him to try and see if the Jains could cure him. The Jains could do nothing. Then Sambandhar gave vibhooti to the king uttering the name of Lord Siva. The king was instantly cured. The Jains tried to persuade the king not to leave their fold. But they miserably failed to convince him. Sambandhar's exposition of Saivism had a telling effect on the Jains as none could meet his arguments. Many of them immolated themselves and the rest were converted into Saivism. Sambandhar praised the sterling devotion of Kulachirai Nayanar who was thus instrumental in spreading the gospel of Lord Siva through

him. He regarded Kulachirai Nayanar as the chosen of Lord Siva to uphold the pristine glory of the Lord. The queen of Pandyanadu was indeed blessed. Tirugnana Sambandhar honoured Kulachirai Nayanar with the title Peru Nambi.

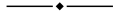
He also sang a hymn praising the nayanar and the queen. Kulachirai Nayanar served the Lord until the end of his life with great devotion and attained the lotus feet of the Lord. Anyone who is fired up with such a missionary zeal to propagate the tenets of the Lord is sure to attain Him. So let us pray to that Lord for such strength of mind and effort:

*Deena Maanavaali Kaamadhenave Namassivaaya
Soonabaana daaba drukkrusaanave Namassivaaya
Swaanuraaga bhaktaratna saanave Namassivaya
Daanavaandbakaara chandabhaanave Namassivaaya!*

I salute the Lord who is the Kamadhenu of the oppressed and the depressed. I salute the one who destroyed the flower- arrowed god of Love, by fire. I offer my worship to the one who polishes the devotee gems leading them to spiritual brightness. I bow to the Lord who is the strong-rayed sun dispelling the darkness caused by miscreant giants.



SRI NEELAKANTA NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Namo bhootanaadham Namodevadevam
Namabkaalakaalam Namodivyaitejam
Namabkaamabhasmam Namssaantaseelam Bhaje
paarvateevallabham neelakantam!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Neelakanta, the husband of Goddess Parvati, the Lord of the bhootas, the Lord of the devas, the one with divine effulgence, who had burnt the god of love to ashes, who put an end to the god of death and who is peace personified.

Lord Neelakanta is full of compassion towards everyone. The person who is always on His mind is sure to get His protection and redemption. This was illustrated in the case of Sri Neelakanta Nayanar. In Chidambaram there was a young man of the potter community. He always spoke about Lord Neelakanta who swallowed the dreadful poison of Haalaahala to save all of creation from being wiped out. As a result he was himself called Neelakanta and his original name was forgotten. He was very principled and god fearing. He worshipped the devotees of Lord Siva and entertained them in his house. He never uttered a lie. He was not after money. He baked only as many pots as was required for his sustenance and for his hospitality to the devotees of

the Lord. He was always thinking of the lotus feet of Lord Neelakanta who danced in his heart.

Once as fate would have had it, he committed an indiscretion. He went to the house of a dancing girl and spent the night with her. He came home as if nothing had happened. His wife found out the truth. However she did not judge him for it. She did her duties towards him as usual, but did not allow him to come near her when he wanted to sleep with her. She made a vow on Lord Neelakanta and said that he should not touch her thereafter. Neelakanta realised his folly and he kept his distance from her in that matter. He prayed to God to forgive him for his sin. This episode was not known to anyone. They carried on with their lives as usual in other areas. Their hospitality to Sivabhaktas continued as usual. His recital of Lord Neelakanta's greatness also continued as before. They both became old. They led a celibate life.

The Lord wanted to make their worth known to the world and take them into His fold. So He took the form of a Saivite sage and came to their house. They treated Him with great respect and love and requested Him to take food in the house. He agreed. He gave a mudpot to Neelakanta and asked him to keep it secure and look after it until He returned from His bath. It was very precious to Him. Neelakanta accordingly took it, kept it in a safe place and busied himself making preparations for providing all the necessities for the entertainment of the sage. The sage came after His bath and asked for His mudpot. Neelakanta went to get it from its place of safekeeping. To his consternation he did not find it there. He searched high and low for it in vain. His wife also helped him in the search. Their mortification was

great. He presented himself before the sage and told him about its loss. He offered to make a fresh pot and give it to Him. He begged for His pardon. The sage was very angry. He shouted at Neelakanta in the manner of an irate man imposed upon by a crook that he was an impostor in a holy man's guise and evil by nature. The pot was dearer to Him than His life. Neelakanta should return it at once. The poor Neelakanta begged the sage to state an alternative as the pot was nowhere to be found.

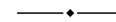
The sage said that Neelakanta and his wife were to hold their hands together, enter the tank, bathe and swear that they were not at fault in the matter. Now Neelakanta was at his wit's end. He said that he could not touch his wife due to a certain reason. He could singly comply with the order of the sage. The latter fretted and fumed. He said that He would go for justice in the matter to the assembly of brahmins at Chidambaram. Saying this, He walked off with Neelakanta and his wife following greatly agitated at the turn of events. The brahmins heard what the sage had to say. They declared that Neelakanta should take the hand of his wife and together they should bathe and come out. After that they should make the declaration demanded by the sage. Then Neelakanta got his wife there and bringing a bamboo stick he asked her to hold one end while he held the other to go into the tank and bathe. The sage objected to it. He said there should be no bamboo stick between them. They should actually hold hands. Now Neelakanta felt that he could no longer hide the truth and so described to the audience how he could not touch his wife on account of an indiscretion committed by him. The crowd was amazed by this. When they looked towards the sage, the latter was not

there. A voice was heard from the sky. All looked up. There was the Lord Neelakanta on his mount along with Goddess Parvathi. The Lord said: "Neelakanta! You and your wife are my peerless devotees. I am pleased with your austere behaviour. I have tested you. Come on, both of you, to Kailas!" So saying the Lord took both of them to His abode. The people present sang aloud in praise of the Nayanar and the Lord. Any one who worships the Lord with the same devotion and purity as was shown by Neelakanta Nayanar is sure to attain the grace of the Lord.

So let us pray to him:

*Sadaa teertha siddhamsada bhaktaraksham
Sadaa saivapoojyam
Sadaasubra bhasmam Sadaa dhyaanayuktam Saadajnaana
talpam Bhajr Paarvateevallabham Neelakantam!
Hey Neelakanta! Vrishbbhadhwaja! Panchavaktra!
Lokesa! Seshavalaya Pramathesa! Sarva!
Hey Dhoorjate! Pasupate! Girijaapate! Maam Samsaara
dhukakagahanaajagadeesa raksha!*

Salutations to Lord Neelakanta, Lord of Divine Mother Parvathi, who is in all sacred teerthas, always wedded to the principle of saving the devotees, worshipped always by Saivites, covered with pure and holy ashes, always in meditation and as jnaanamoorti. O Lord Neelakanta! Of the flag with the bull ensign, five-mouthed, lord of the universe, encircled by the serpent, Lord of the Pramathas, Sarva with matted locks of hair, Pasupathi, Lord of Girija the daughter of Himavan! Grant me protection in this forest of sorrows of samsara!



26
KURUMBA NAYANAR

—◆—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Yogakshema durambharasya sakalasreyah pradodyogino
Drushtaadrushta matopadesakrutino baahyantaryyaapinaha
Sarvajnasya dayaakarasya bhavataha kimveditavyam mayaa
Sambho Tvam paramaantaranga iti me chitthe
smaraamyavaham !*

"O Lord Sambho! You look to the safety and well being of the universe as your burden of love. Your profession is to gift benefits to all creatures. You are the skilled All knower with the ability to impart teachings that are conducive to this world and other worldly welfare. You are the All-merciful. What is it that I can make known to you? I am meditating upon you everyday with the firm belief that you are the best confidant of mine."

Thinking of the Lord and working with dedication in the service of the Lord's devotees are the twin engines that propel us to the Lord's lotus feet with terrific speed.

Kurumba Nayanar was such a distinguished worshipper of the Lord Siva and his devotees. He believed that the Lord is appeased when his devotees are well cared for and served. Kurumba Nayanar made it his virtue to do so.

He was the chieftain of Mizhalainadu. His place of

habitation was Perumizhalai. As a king is treated, so are the subjects, was his thinking. His people were holy and good. Consequent upon his earnest devotion and worship of the Lord and his followers, he developed extraordinary powers of intuition. He could divine what was in the minds of the person before him. Whenever he found holy men coming to him, he could know what they wanted and provided them with all that they desired at heart. He anticipated all their needs and spared no pains to fulfil them. He catered to their proper entertainment feeling that Lord Siva was in them manifest and that he was serving his ishta daiva through them.

The holy bard of Saivism, Saint Sundarar, sang Tiru ThondaTokai-the garland of hymns paying tribute to the holy servants of the Lord of Tillai. Kurumba Nayanar was enamoured of it. He regarded the Saint Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar as his philosopher, guide and master. He became the saint's ardent follower and worshipper. He took the hymns to be his gospel and sang them over and over again. He uttered the holy Panchakshara time in and time out and developed yogic powers.

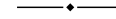
The time came for his exit from this mundane world. He heard that Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar was to go on a white elephant to Kailas and the time was fixed for it. He was filled with intense chagrin and sorrow. He loved Sri Sundarar so intensely that he himself decided to go in his astral form to Kailas leaving his mortal frame by his yogic powers well in advance to receive Sri Sundarar there. Having determined thus, he sat down in yogic pose and controlling his vital breath, he disengaged himself from his mortal body

and flew in astral form to Kailas. There Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar showered his grace on him and on his intervention, attained the Sannidhya of the Lord. Thus Kurumba Nayanar benefitted by his Acharyopasanam and service to the devotees of the Lord. It behoves us well to follow his shining example and attain the grace of the Lord.



27

SRI MANIKYAVACHAKAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Vamde Suraanam saaramcha Suresam Neelalohitam
Yogesswaram Yogabeejam Yoginaamcha Gurorgurum
Gnaanaanamdham Gnaanarooopam Gnaanabeejam Sanaatanam
Tapasaam phaladaataaram Dataaram Sarvasampadaam
Bhaktajeevanameesamcha Bhaktaanugrahakaataram
Vedaanasaktaayam stotum Kimaham Stowmitam Prabhum!"*

I salute you, Lord Paramasiva! The essence of all gods, the God of gods, the Lord of Yogins, the seed of Yoga, the preceptor of the Yogins and the First Guru and master of all gurus, enjoying the bliss of Jnaana, of the shape of Jnaana, the primal cause of Jnaana, the ancient eternal Lord who grants all gifts when penance is offered to Him, and the giver of all riches. You are the lifespirt of the devotees, the Lord always considerate, anxious to shower your grace on them. Even the Vedas are unable to praise your eminence. If so, how can I utter prayers adequately praising you? O Lord!

Lord Siva is the highest of the highest gods and He is at once the life and refuge of his devotees. It is difficult for anyone to praise His glorious qualities properly and fully. Even so, there is the saint singer who praised the Lord and earned the name "Manikyavachakar"- one whose utterances are rubies. His hymns of praise to the Lord go by the name

of "Tiruvachakam" - divine utterance. He was chosen by the Lord to praise Him and describe His glory. The saint singer says in his 188th song of Hymn V of Tiruvachakam Decad V:

*"Endaiyyaay, Embiran, Matrum Yaavarukkum
Tamdai, Taay, Tambiraan, Tanakkabtilaan
Mundi Yennul pugundanan, Yaavarum
Chindaiyaalum arivarung selvane!"*

In this rhapsody the saint says that the ever blissful Lord whom none can know by thoughts, father and mother to all, sire, mother, had sought him out from all the devotees and entered within his innermost soul. He had earned that merit whereby the Lord of Lords selected him as the fittest instrument to sing his praise and make all humans benefit from it. The saint was the first and main pillar of Saivism and his advent sounded the death knell for Buddhism, Jainism and other creeds. He was born in Tiruvaadvoor on the river Vaigai near Madurai. He was given the name Tiruvaada Voorar- he of the sacred place called 'Tiruvaadavoor.' He was a brahmin of the Amatya tribe, and was very intelligent, scholarly and highly learned in Saiva Agamas. His name and fame spread far and wide. The king of Madurai at the time, Arimarttanar, came to know about him. He called for Tiruvadavoorar and was so impressed with his deep scholarship and pious disposition that he became enamoured with him and made him the minister-in-chief. He honoured the young prodigy, with the title Tennavan Brahma Rayan, the Brahmin king of the Pandyan.

The sagacious and pious youth was the most excellent devotee of Lord Siva and his mind pined for the Lord though

he was surrounded on all sides by affluence, luxury and comfort. Though his will was law and his power absolute, he kept 'samatva', the principle of equality of all, with an astonishing balance of mind, a precious gift of the Lord to him. He was like King Janaka of old. He was fired by one supreme desire in his soul. He intensely longed for a spotless Guru who could teach him the secret of the sacred Panchakshari mantra and free him from the bondage of samsara. But for everything to bear fruit there is a proper time or 'samuchita samaya'. At the appropriate time the Lord deigns to fulfil the desire of the true devotee. He is always readily disposed to do so. He therefore goes by the attribute "Bhaktaanugraha Kaataram".

Now the time had come for the consummation of the desire of the young and saintly chief minister. The Lord in Kailasa announced to the deities around Him that He was going down into the world assuming the form of a preceptor to regenerate His devotee, convert him and gift him with self-realisation so that he would make the love of the Lord permeate all over converting everyone to his fold, teaching the Truth that the Lord was and making Tamil forever glorious and brilliant with the ambrosia of holy and devout poetry of the grandest order. He accordingly descended to the earth taking the shape of a Saivite Guru with his 999 saintly attendants following him in the guise of disciples. He made his abode under a spreading Kuruntham tree in a grove around the city of Tiruperunturai.

News spread to Madurai that rare horses of pristine standard were available there. The king of Madurai was filled with a desire to possess those master steeds. So he entrusted

his confidential minister Sri Manikkyavachakar with the burdensome task of going to Tiruperunturai, purchasing the horses and bringing them over to Madurai. He gave an enormous amount for the purpose to the saintly minister for the steeds were extremely costly. Sri Manikyavachakar travelled in all grandeur and pomp attended upon by a military escort to the western port never dreaming that the most crucial point in his life was about to be reached and his desire was about to be fulfilled. He reached Tiruperunturai and hearing the sacred hymns praising Lord Siva issuing from the grove; he stopped his procession and entered the grove. He was taken in by the majestic and awe-inspiring Adiguru, Lord Siva, in human form. Then and there he renounced everything in the Guru's favour and pronounced himself to be His disciple. He became a mendicant ascetic and worshipped the sacred feet of the preceptor. He handed over the fabulous treasure given by his king to purchase the horses to the Guru. His retinue were aghast at the transformation. They remonstrated with him to no avail. So they went back to Madurai and told the king what had happened. The king was enraged upon receiving the news and he sent orders to Sri Manikyavachakar to return at once with his emissaries. But the latter was in no mood to do so. He said that he recognised no one to be his overlord. He was in the state of mind of the devotee who prayed:

*"Tvameva Maataacha Pitaa Tvameva,
Tvameva Bandhuscha Sakhaa Tvameva,
Tvameva Vidyaa Dravinam Tvameva
Tvameva Sarvam Mama Devadeva!"*

He was in the world of Siva. He said that he would not

fear anyone as the Vanquisher of the God of Death was his protector. However he acquainted his Guru with the order of the king. The latter, smiling affectionately, asked him to obey the order, go to the king and state that the horses were purchased, that the time was not favorable to march them to Madurai and so he could not bring them along with him then and that the 19th day of Avani would be the appropriate auspicious time for their arrival at Madurai. Sri Manikyavachakar was instructed to say that the horses would definitely reach Madurai on that day. The Guru gave a brilliant ruby to be presented to the king in token of submission and said that everything would go well. Accordingly, Sri Manikyavachakar went with the king's messengers as grandly as he had come from Madurai, but was very sad at parting with his Guru, who was to him Lord Siva Himself and took a permanent abode in his heart. The king was very pleased with the account of Sri Manikyavachakar and with the gift of the extraordinary ruby. He reinstated the saint to his position of chief minister and everything went smoothly for sometime.

But when there were just two days left for the arrival of the horses as promised by the saintly minister, the king was influenced by his non-Saiva courtiers who made him believe that the saint had embezzled the king's treasure and gave it to some Saivite vagrant. As kings go, this king waived in his resolution and ordered Sri Manikyavachakar to be thrown into prison again to be kept there till the treasure was restored to the king's coffers. The saint prayed to the Lord who heard his outpourings and came to his rescue. The Lord transformed Himself into a merchant dealing in horses, made His attendants take the shape of grooms and

changed a number of jackals of the forest into the finest type of horses. They were led to Madurai. The news reached the ears of the king who felt repentant and released the saint. He restored the latter to his position of power and they both inspected the horses. The saint could recognise his Guru in the merchant but could not speak to him. The king was pleased with the horses and took them after rewarding the merchant and his attendants, who took his gifts with marked indifference and left. But this happiness for the saint was short-lived. In the night the horses changed back into jackals, made terrible howling noises, devoured the other horses and escaped into the woods. The king was furious and thinking that it was a trick played upon him by Sri Manikyavachakar ordered him to be severely punished. He ordered that the saint should be tortured in the burning sun till the treasures were recovered in full from him. Accordingly the saint was taken to the Vaighai river, made to stand in the burning sands carrying a heavy stone on his back and exposed to the horrible heat of the sun every day. The saint prayed to the Lord as he suffered the penalty. The Lord, who is the ocean of mercy, caused Mother Ganges to fill up the Vaighai and inundate Madurai where the saint was being tormented. The flood assumed alarming proportions and the city of Madurai appeared to be in danger of being submerged. The king became afraid. He thought it happened because he had punished the saint. He released the saint, begged him for his forgiveness and reappointed him as his minister-in-chief praying to him to take the necessary steps to save the city from going under water. As per the instructions of the saint, orders were passed that the residents of the city should build a dam for this purpose and all without exception should

work at it. Everyone was assigned a portion of the dam to be built.

In the city there was a poor woman called Semmana Selvi who made her livelihood by selling rice cakes. She was too old and weak for this work. Nor could she have anyone substitute for her due to her abject poverty. She made haste to Chokkanayagar's temple and supplicated before the Lord praying, "Siva, Sarvaga, Sarva, Sarmada Pranato Deva dayam kurushvame! Nama Easwara Naatha, Dikpate! Punarevesa Namonamostute!" O Lord! Siva! Existent in all, I bow unto you! Show your kindness to me! She prayed fervently. Her pathetic appeal had its effect. Just outside the temple she found the Lord, disguised as a worker poorly clad and having a basket on His head for carrying earth with a spade on His shoulder. He accosted her and requested her to give Him food in return for which He was prepared to do whatever action was required of Him. The old lady was beside herself with joy at the immediate fulfilment of her prayer to the Lord. She did not know that it was the merciful Lord alone that was before her in that guise. She gladly engaged Him. The Lord as the labourer played eccentric pranks. He ran hither and thither doing little work and singing wildly. The work inspectors declared Him to be a mad person. But the wonder of wonders was that the river went back to its restricted limits knowing him to be the Lord. The labourer crowned his laziness by lying down and falling asleep putting his basket as a pillow under his head. He was hauled up before the king for his indolent and impudent behaviour. He would not defend himself. The king became irate and ordered him to be beaten. As the blow fell on the Lord, the whole Universe felt it. Every god felt it. All in the court felt it. At

once the Lord disappeared. The king realised his foolishness and he felt miserable thinking that he had sinned against the Lord. He rushed to Sri Manikyavachakar, feeling utterly inconsolable, prostrated before him and begged to permit him to resign his kingship. The saint was beside himself with grief that the Lord was thus debased and belaboured.

He told the king to pray for the mercy of the Lord and rule in His name when he would get peace of mind. As for himself, he wanted to be left free to return to Tiruperunturrai where he decided to dwell at the divine feet of the Lord undisturbed by mundane affairs. The king had to agree to it. The saint lost no time in going to his preceptor and joining his service with great zeal and devotion. He thereupon engaged himself in singing the praise of the Lord.

After some time the Lord who was all along in human shape with him announced His departure from the world and said that His disciples, 999 in number, had to wait patiently till fire appeared in the sacred tank nearby where they had to throw themselves in and reach Him in their divine bodies. The saint was told that he had to wait still further in the world, establish the kingdom of the Lord in the world and compose sacred thrilling hymns in Tamil which would form the Vedas of the South. The Lord gave him special instructions to go from temple to temple and reach Chidambaram where he would attain eternal salvation after annihilating the creed of the Buddhists. After the Lord's departure, the attendants waited for the day of redemption. As foretold by the Lord, a sacred fire rose up in the holy tank and they threw themselves into it and reached the blissful abode of the Lord in Kailas. The saint

was pensive as he was not allowed to follow them. Then he rallied and uttered wonderful poems pouring out his heart's agony at the separation from his Lord. He pondered over his past experiences, thought of the work allotted to him by the Lord and lamented at the delay in attaining oneness with the gracious divine light. His feelings are recorded in the Tiruvachakam, Bhaktivairagya Vichittiram.

After sometime he began visiting temples dedicated to Lord Siva, worshipped him and composed poems in His glory. Finally he arrived at Chidambaram which he made his permanent abode. He wrote wonderful hymns in praise of the Lord of Tillai. His devotional ecstasy found full play in the ennobling presence of the Eternal Dancer whose feet danced in the heart of the saint. Most of his divine hymns were composed here and they reveal the glory of Lord Siva. They contain the quintessence of Saivism. In the Tiruvachakam, the Moonraavadu (Hymn III) entitled "Tiruvandappagidi," (the nature and development of Universe) ranks with the Sanskrit Satarudreeya hymns. It delineates the auspicious qualities of the Lord who is Sarvagata and Sarvajna-incomprehensible to any one, divine or not. No one could really know Him and His real nature. He is the Supreme. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer too, evolving the phenomena of aeons rolling out with the Universe being formed and dissolved in cycles. Sri Manikyavachakar expounded the Saivite principles to perfection. He was engrossed in visualising the glory of the Lord dancing forever with the divine Mother. He sang: "Prapancha Srustyunmukha Laasyakaayai, Samasta Samhaaraka Taandavaaya, Samekshanaayai Vishamekshanaaya, Namassivaayaicha Namassivaaya!"- I

salute the Mother Sivaa who eternally dances the dance called Laasya which procreates and the Father Siva who always dances his Taandava measure which dissolves creation. I bow to the even-eyed Mother and the odd-eyed Father. This blissful vision was always before his mind and he went on composing songs in praise of Lord Siva in Tamil. They have the potency of the Sanskrit hymns and are very endearing to the Lord.

In the meantime while the saint was so absorbed, a Buddhist Guru with a host of disciples following him came to Chidambaram from Ceylon for establishing the supremacy of his creed over Saivism. He camped in the temple precinct. The King of Ceylon also arrived there with his tributes to the Chola King. He was also there with the purpose of establishing the sway of Buddhism. The devotees of Lord Nataraja were in panic. They first thought of expelling the strangers. But on the bidding of the Lord, the Chola king approached the saint Sri Manikyavachakar who was in an asrama nearby in deep contemplation of the Lord. The prayers of the Chola king and the devotees of the Lord were heeded by the saint as it was his mission to establish the tenets of the Lord on a secure and firm footing in the world. The scene of the debate was a sight for gods to witness. The saint and the Buddhist Guru argued at great lingering length. In the end, vexed with the recriminations against the Lord indulged in the talk by the Buddhist Guru, the saint turned to Vageeswari Saraswati, the goddess of speech, and asked her why she, residing on the tongue of Lord Brahma, should permit those persons to speak ill of the Eternal Lord by their power of speech. At once the Buddhist Guru and his followers became dumb being deprived of speech by the

goddess. This miracle had a productive effect on all. The King of Ceylon was won over by the arguments of the saint in disproving the religion of the Buddhists and by the miracle that happened. He openly embraced Saivism declaring his faith in Lord Siva. He appealed to the saint to make his daughter who was dumb regain her power of speech. Sri Manikyavachakar made a soulful prayer to the Lord of Tillai to gratify the desire of the king. The Lord yielded to his supplications and the result was electrifying. The Lord made the dumb princess articulate. She began to speak fluently and tore to pieces the arguments of the Buddhists in favour of their creed. This wonder of wonders converted all the Buddhists into ardent devotees of the Lord of Tillai. Thus the saint accomplished the mission entrusted to him by the Lord. He performed his Vangmaya Tapas by composing and singing beautiful and thrilling songs extolling the Lord and expressing the Saiva Tattwa.

The songs "Tiruppadae Yezhucchi" (the holy march), "Tiruppadaeiyatchi" (Jeevopadi ozhital), "Anandamaalai" (Sivaanubhava viruppan), "Acchoppadikam" (Anubhava vezhariaamai), reveal the feelings of joy felt by him at the attainment of Siva Arul by all including the heretics who were converted by the grace of the Lord. He spent his time singing the glory of the Lord. He awaited his release from his mortal coils. Once a stranger in the garb of a sannyasin came to him from the Madurai region and prayed to the saint to allow him to take down all his songs exactly as uttered by him. The sage gladly did so. The stranger vanished immediately after taking down the songs to the utter astonishment of all present. It was the Lord Himself who came in that guise. He made all the deities in heaven listen to the songs. The next

day the book of songs was found at the base of the image of the Lord of Chidambaram. It had a thousand verses. The devotees were all thunderstruck at the miraculous appearance of the divine script. They sang the songs with great fervour and rapture. They marched straight to the saint and asked him to give them an authoritative meaning and commentary on the matter preached in the book. The saint went along with them to the Lord's golden court. He declared that Tillai Sabhapati was the meaning and commentary of his songs and merged in the image. He had been praying to the Lord to be allowed to reach His abode in Kailas, which he had always had before his mind's eyes. He sang:

*Paravuvaar Imaiyorghal Paaduvana Naalvedam
Guravuvaar Kuyanmadavaal Koordaiyaaloru bhaagam
Viravuvaar Meyyanbin Adiyaargal Memmelum
Aravuvaar Kayalinaikal Kaanbaaro? Ariyene!*

"The residents of heaven chant your praise. So also do the Four Vedas. The Mother Uma with fragrant hair of perfume shares your seat. There all your servants live in true love. There they have the sweet vision of your feet with tinkling anklets around them. You are hard to know!"

Now he had got to know the Lord by remaining forever with Him. His life is a life of crystal purity dedicated to the Lord's service. He always looked to the Divine Light for guidance. His Tiruvachakam has the force and efficacy of the Geeta of Lord Krishna. I hereby declare that it is a must for every devout person for winning the Lord's grace. Let it be sung by one and all. Salvation comes automatically.

Om Namassivaya!

28 SRI TIRUMoola NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Anantamayakta machintyamekam Haram
tamaasaambaraabham Ajam puraanam pranamaami
yoyam anoraneeyaanmahatomabeeyaan!*

Salutations are offered to the Lord, limitless, undifferentiated, beyond imagination, the one Lord Hara with the directions as his dress, birthless and ancient, animating the dot and the Mahat with limitless energy.

Great saints of yore have sung of the Lord Siva, the destroyer of avidya, who has His abode in the hearts of all and in everything animate and inanimate, permeating everything, all seeing and all-powerful. Saint Tirumoola Nayanar is a prince among them. He had realised the Self. He found the radiant Self within himself and in every being around him. He is a saint of compassion.

He was in his Himalayan ashram contemplating Godhead and doing intense penance one thousand years ago. He longed to meet the South Indian sage Agastya. So he trekked from the North towards the South. He passed by the great rivers. He scrupulously avoided going by the coastal places for he had an aversion to the sea, which had produced the dreadful poison Haalahaala that made the Lord's throat blue. He went on and on noticing the variegated environment and

the people inhabiting them. All of them were to him the forms of the Lord who is Ekam Sat. He saw a common human fraternity-all the children of the Divine Mother. They spoke diverse languages. Yet he could understand their thoughts, feelings, aspirations and frustrations. His heart overflowed with human kindness.

He wished them well, blessed them all and proceeded. He followed the banks of the Cauvery and reached Tiru Avadu Thurai. He prostrated before the Lord of the Bull there and went to a village there.

Here a memorable incident took place that transformed him significantly and earned for him the appellation of Tirumoolar by which he became universally known and adored.

There was a shepherd Moolan by name in the village. He was looking after his cattle in the evening and suddenly left the mortal world. The cattle moaned wildly at the death of their master. The saint saw the predicament of the dumb cattle whose hearts were full of love for the departed soul. Though he had control of passions and the senses as a well-disciplined Yogi, this sudden impact of the agonising and pitiable state of the mute creatures released his compassionate nature. On the spur of the moment, he decided to enter the body of the cowherd and save them from misery. The cattle jumped with delight when they saw their protector alive and led him homewards. Here he had to face the overtures of Moolan's wife and set his face against her. This made her apprehensive. He left her and sat under a tree in yogic posture and refused to have anything to do with her. The young wife became miserable and complained to

the elders about him and entreated them to plead with him and restore him to her. The elders approached him. They found that the Moolan before them was not the Moolan they had known. He had completely metamorphosed into a learned sage. They found that he had broken free from family ties and became enlightened. The words of wisdom that flowed from him like nectar stunned them. They concluded that some superhuman power had descended upon him and he would be of no further use for worldly life. They acquainted Moolan's wife about it. Thereafter, he was not pestered by her. Thus being freed from being enmeshed in the tentacles of Samsara, Moolan went back to the woods to find his former body. It was not there. So his soul had to take permanent residence in the hitherto mortal shell of Moolan, the shepherd. It did not in any way affect him. He cheerfully accepted the writ of destiny. He proceeded to the temple of Tiru Avadu Thurai, offered worship to the deity and sat in deep contemplation of Lord Siva under a Bo-tree to the west of the temple. He was engrossed in spiritual bliss. He realised the Self. Soon disciples gathered around him. He gave them the essentials of spiritual evolution. His pithy verses to them gave rise to his Magnum Opus, the Tirumandiram, which suggests the right way to realise the Self. The three thousand verses of the Tirumandiram contain the essence of all the Upanishads and the Vedas. It is a magnificent work of eternal value.

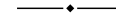
Tirumoolar is regarded as a Siddhar of Siddhars. His teachings as embodied in his great work remove the cobwebs created by dogmas, superstition, ritualism and bigots. As one who had realised the Self, he tried to remove the illusions under which the people laboured due to the power of Maya,

which deludes any being who does not have the grace of the Lord. He did not like the practice of subjecting the body to severe austerities or using the body for unclean purposes. He regards the body as a temple housing the eternal Self and as such life must be freely led with the consciousness of the presence of the Lord in every being. He has stated that everyone must lead a pure life of duty and devotion to God. He has found Reality and describes its various forms. He feels sorry for the deluded soul who, like the eye which does not see itself but views a million will not see the Self. Like the potter's wheel creating shapes and forms of vessels according to the potter's will and pleasure, so does the Self shape the forms and shapes of this Universe which is His form.

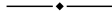
Tirumoolar pays his obeisance to Mahasakti, the Divine Mother, without whose volition, even the Gods cannot function. He becomes ecstatic while describing the Lord's Ananda Tandava. He prays for the Lord's divine feet to rest on his head to curb his turbulent desires. His sadhana was a regular process of spiritual evolution. He thought himself to be a separate entity from the Lord and sought Him here, there and everywhere. But with the dawn of self-knowledge, with the realisation of the existence of the effulgent Self in himself and in everything, he became free from such illusions. He appeals to all to comprehend the Truth that the Lord is hidden in the hearts of all like the rare sweetness hidden in honey. His Tirumandiram is a sure charter of sound instructions to the spiritual aspirant to find Lord Hara who destroys all illusions and physical and mental ills and who dances eternally, in the heart's sanctuary. His uniqueness lies in his compassion for all which prompted

him to share his delight, his knowledge and sadhana with all fellow beings even as the glorious form of Self now in the midst of all in "Om Namasivayam" redeeming the worldly and leading them to the enjoyment of Satchitananda.

Om Tatsat!



VIRANMINDA NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Namassivaayaadbhuta vikramaayate
Namassivaayaadbhuta vigrabaayate
Namassivaayaakbhila naayakaaya
Namassivaayaamrutabetave namaha!*

I salute Lord Siva of marvellous glory and power, the possessor of amazing shape and form, the Lord of everything and the causative power of Amrita and Amritattva or immortality.

Lord Siva's grace bestows on His devotees immense spiritual and material power with affluence leading to salvation. His votaries must be respected and worshipped. That would please Him. Anyone who neglects to show such respect is sure to go down in virtue leading to misery and hell in all affairs. The dust of the holy feet of the devotees of Lord Siva has the power of purifying even the worst sinner. The holy company or satsang of the devotees of Lord Siva is ennobling and it is certain to secure salvation for one who has the good fortune to be among them. If one sees such a holy company, he or she shall join them and sing the praises of the Lord. He will thereby attain redemption. So also, the female devotee.

Viranminda Nayanar was a devotee of the Lord, peerless

in his devotion. He sought the company of holy Saivaite devotees and spent his time with them contemplating upon the Lord's glorious qualities. He lived in a fertile hamlet called Senkundrur in the West Hill. He belonged to the Vellalar family. He worshipped the bhaktas of Lord Siva as Lord Siva himself. It so happened that he had the good fortune of going to the sacred Tiru Arur temple. His heart jumped with joy as he saw the pious bhaktas of Lord Siva in bliss singing the hymns in praise of the Lord. He could not leave the place. Afterwards he returned to the temple every day to join their holy company and experience spiritual bliss with them. One day it happened that Sri Sundaramoorthi Nayanar came to the temple to worship the Lord. Without even as much as a glance at the singing Godmen, he went straight to the sannidhi of Sri Thyagaraja to offer his worship.

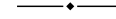
This act of the Nayanar roused the anger of Viranmindar. He became aggravated and called out to Sri Sundarar loudly chastising him for his neglect of the holy men singing the praise of the Lord. He had the boldness to say to Sri Sundarar that his act was outrageous and by that he had thrown himself out of the orbit of the grace of the Lord and his holy brood.

Sri Sundaramoorthi Nayanar heard him calmly and made obeisance to him. With all the humility at his command, he said to Viranmindar apologetically that he had no intention of slighting them for he was not even equal to the dust of their holy feet. He felt unworthy of their esteemed company, as he had not reached their standard of piety. But now that the clarion call had come from them to join them, he would certainly be glad to do so. He prayed to Lord Siva to make him virtuous enough to offer worship to their sacred feet.

Then joining them he poured out his heart before the Lord and sang sweet and soul-stirring songs. They described the glories of the Lord's devotees. They came to be known as Tiru Thonda Tokai. The devotees present were thrilled to the core of their heart. This monumental garland of verses yet without equal, roused the dormant spiritual fervour in them and made them spiritually more alert and strong. Thus Viranminda Nayanar's inspired boldness called to mind that spiritual dynamo Sri Sundarar and that which made him give out the grand Tiru Thonda Tokai to the world. All devotees paid their tribute to Sri Viranminda Nayanar who thus preached Bhagavatabhakti along with Bhagavadbakthi. All devotees should remember his name with gratitude for all time to come for inspiring Sri Sundarar to give out that epic poem. He eventually attained Godhead doing humble service to the servants of the Lord till the end. May his name inspire us all to do likewise!



30 NAMINAMBI NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Bhoorammbhaamsyanalonilombaramaharnaadho
himaamsubpumaa
Nithyaabbaati charaacharaatmakamidam
yasyaivamoorthyashtakam
Naanyatkimchanavidyate vimrusataam yasmaatparasmaadvibho
Tasmai Sri Gurumoorthaye Namaidam Sri
Dakshinaamoorthaye*

Worship is offered to the Lord who is the Preceptor Sri Dakshinamoorthy whose form is eight-fold appearing as the animate and the inanimate universe, as the earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, moon and the soul, beyond whom, supreme and omnipresent, there exists nothing for the enquirer.

The Lord is the Adiguru, first teacher. He guides all those who surrender to Him wholeheartedly by showing them the path to His lotus feet. One should have unswerving faith in Him. The five elements are under His control. They change one into the other at His will. No one need have any misgiving about it. He showed it to Naminambi Nayanar.

Naminambi Nayanar was always thinking of the Lord and his constancy of worship and devotion captured the Lord's

grace. He was a brahmin who was residing in Emapperur near Tiru-Arur on the banks of the Cauvery. He was saintly in character. He knew no art other than chanting the name of Sri Thyagarajaswami of Tiru-Arur. He was well versed in the Vedas and performed Vedic rites regularly. It was his wont to go to Tiru-Arur everyday on foot and worship the deity there. On the way, he found the Araneri temple. His heart broke to see its neglected condition. He renovated it and took it upon himself to restore daily worship there as per Agamic injunctions. One of the difficulties he faced in the task was the presence of a large number of unbelieving Jains who jeered at him for his pains.

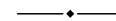
One evening Naminambi Nayanar found that there was no oil or ghee to light the lamps in the temple. He appealed to the neighbours to spare him oil or ghee for the purpose. The Jains mocked him. They asked him to light his lamps from the fire which was in the hand of the Lord's idol. Their sarcasm cut deep into his heart. In distress he turned to the Lord. He prayed earnestly for a way out. Thereon he heard a Divine Voice: "Do not be downhearted. Light the lamps with water."

The Nayanar implicitly obeyed the order. He prepared the wicks, poured water instead of oil and lit the lamps. Lo! The whole temple appeared brilliantly lit. The lamps burned with a dazzling light. They appeared like flaming torches. The Nayanar was ecstatic. The Jains were astounded. They acknowledged the supremacy of Lord Siva and were converted. The ruler of Tiru-Arur came to know of this and in token of his reverence and admiration for the Nayanar put the temple of Tiru-Arur under his executive control. The Nayanar felt immensely blessed. He carried on the affairs

of the temple with great zeal and in a spirit of sacrifice and dedication. The devoted public of the place were highly delighted and satisfied with his selfless service in the temple. He once had a feeling that by mixing with a crowd of people in the procession of the deity in the streets, he got polluted. So he did not enter his house after the procession was over but stayed on the pial. To his perplexed wife he said that he would enter the house after a bath in the morning as he felt defiled due to his mingling with all sorts of worshippers in the procession of the deity. But as he rested, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said that all the people were his own and no taint was had by him in freely mixing with them. He woke up and related his dream to his wife. He entered the house and offered prayers to the Lord asking for His forgiveness. The next day he found the great Lord in every one of the devotees.

This opened his eyes. He realised that the whole universe is the form of the Lord and only those who were His true followers could see Him manifested in everyone. Fire changes to water, water to light, light to heat and one thing into another at His bidding. The Nayanar was drunk with spiritual fervour and thereafter he made no distinction between man and man or any living or non-living thing. He saw the Lord everywhere and in everything. The eightfold form of the Lord danced before his eyes. He drew hymns of praise from saints like Appar who sang of him. He attained salvation in the end thus showing that God is Love. Let all emulate him.

Om Tatsat!



31
PARASAKTHI

—◆—
*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Sarvasmaatma Swaropam mukuranagaravat swaswaroopaat
swatantra swacchasmaatma swabittou kalayati dharaneetaha
sivaamtamsada yaa
Drugdevee mantraveeryam satata samuditaa sabdaraasyaatma
Poornaa
Hamtaanamtasphuratta Jayati Jayati saa Sankaree
Spandasaktihi!*

Victory to Thee! Victory to Thee! Devi! Spanda Sakti!
You are the builder of the Universe spread from the
Bhootattwa to Sivattwa. You are the Sakti or vital Energy
in Lord Sadaasiva. You animate Him. You galvanise Him.
You are the moving spirit and the mover spirit too. The
painted figures of diverse colours in the creation art Thou.
You are the wall for their drawing. You draw. You are the
drawn. You are Drugdevi or jnaana sakti. You are the sound
energy, the source for the power of mantras or incantations.
The Consciousness of 'I' in the Absolute form of Lord
Parameswara is You, Yourself. I offer my salutations to Your
lotus feet, O Sankaree.

The Universal Mother Paraasakti is Satyam, Sivam,
Sundaram: Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty. The power of the
Mother, the matrix of the Universe, makes for the wealth

and variety of the manifold creation. She is the ocean of
bliss.

She is called Threasika, that is, Three + Easika, or the
controller of the three powers, namely Icchaasakti (the
power to will), Jnaanasakti (the power of knowledge) and
Kriyaasakti (the power of action). Without her, the will, the
wisdom and the capacity required for any movement will be
nil. Nothing becomes 'Sivam' sans her presence.

The Sakti and Saktimaan are one and the same. There
is no division between Siva and Sakti. They are not two
mutually different aspects. Both make the Universal drama
of creation, sustenance and dissolution possible.

*Samastarsushtyunmukha laasyakaayai samasta samhaaraka
taandavaaya Samekshanaayai vishamekshnaaya
Namassivaayaicha Namassivaya.*

The Universal Mother is ever on Her dance of Laasya with
the proclivity to create while at the same time the Universal
Father Siva, inalienable from her, performs his dance for
dissolution of the manifest, called Taandava. His three eyes
are matched by Her two eyes, which balance the destructive
fire of the Lord and sustains the eternal dance of creation,
with upward, downward, harmonious many-sided motions.

She is moolaprakriti or primal energy or the functional
aspect of the Supreme power. She is the creator of the
Trinity of gods- Brahma, Vishnu and Siva to whom She
gave Her amsas of Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati with
particular functions to perform for the conduct of the
universe. Worship of any of their forms makes one attain
Her ultimately. She is the Kundalini Sakti or Hrullekha

resident in man. Its activation is the sine qua non for spiritual awakening. Everything is possible for one when the Kundalini is roused.

The eightfold siddhis will be at the person's beck and call. He or she is sure to become the universal charmer with unlimited power, sharp intellect, undaunted courage, popularity, prosperity, wealth, fame and all spiritual and material aiswaryas or riches.

She is contemplated upon as Bhuvaneshwari for the rousing of the Kundalini. The appropriate form envisaged is described here:

*Udayadinadyuti mindu kiraataam tungakuchaam Nayanatraya
yuktaam Smeramukheem Varadaamkusa paasaabheeti karaam
prabhaje Bhuvaneseem!*

She is resplendent like the rising sun, having huge breasts and three eyes, face beaming with a smile, four hands carrying the noose and gourd in the two hands bearing the boon giving mudra or pose and abhaya or protection offering posture in the other two hands.

Similarly there are other forms of Paraasakti like Chandi, Kali, Durga, Lalita and so on to suit the occasion and purpose of the devotee. Without the least beneficial look of Parasakti, nothing in the worlds can move or function.

She says here now: This is my message to you. People of the place from where the devotee who wanted to know about My imminent powers have come are suffering untold misery with internecine quarrels, hatred and carnal habits with animal behaviour because of neglect of My Devi form.

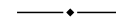
Know ye now that I, Paraaskati, will manifest powerfully there and restore spiritual and mental balance. This the devotee before me knows through Nadee Jyotisha. Note that great things will occur there hereafter!

This is the message of Paraasakti, who is known as Gowri in the Vedas. Let us salute Her reverentially surrendering ourselves wholeheartedly to Her mercy.

*Gowreemiyaaya salilaani takshatee
Ekapadee dwipadee saa chatushpadee
Ashtaapadee navapadee babhoovushee
Sahasraaksharaa parama vyoman!*

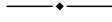
Salutations are to Devi Gowri who is the primal energy, which is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Salutations to Her who is Sabdabrahmaatmika and who is the Goddess of speech manifest as such at the time of creation giving rise to letters, words, vaakyas with Pranava or Omkaara, becoming Savitri, giving rise to the Vedas, the Vedangas etc., culminating in a thousand knowledge forms. I surrender to Parasakti the Mother of the manifest and unmanifest without whom there is no Siva.

Om Tatsat!



[Note: The above article given by Aasaan Sadguru Swamighal to Dr. A. Alagappan of UNESCO was materialised at the latter's request, in connection with the establishment of a Sakti Temple in the United States of America and contains a message to the people of that Country]

YAJNOPAVEETAM



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

Yajnopaveetam is the sacred thread worn by one spiritually ordained to the performance of sacred rites and rituals prescribed by the scriptures for the attainment of material and spiritual prosperity and for obtaining spiritual self-realisation. It is a symbol consecrated and designed to remind its wearer of his sacred duty to concentrate on the Lord with single-minded devotion in a disciplined manner. It is also called Upaveetam—the cloak of protection guarding its wearer against the attack of outside dirt, physical and mental. One wearing it after initiation becomes a Dwija or twice born having been spiritually reborn. It entitles him to embark on the spiritual voyage chanting the Vedas and the scriptures and performing religious rites as required to secure individual and community welfare, while attending to his normal duties as a brahmacharin or as a householder. Yajnopaveeta dharanam or the wearing of Yajnopaveeta is prescribed for the first three castes or working divisions made for convenience as it is feasible only for the members of those classes having the necessary leisure, means and facilities to observe them, The fourth caste is not per se obliged to wear it as their time is consumed in their manual duties and service to the community. They will not have the time required for performing the

scriptural rites by themselves.

Upanayanam is the function at which Yajnopaveeta dharanam is done for the first time. It is the function of opening the spiritual eye, performed so as to equip the wearer with the proper procedures and mantras.

The Yajnopaveeta dharana mantra reads:

*“Om Yajnopaveetam paramam pavitram
prajaapateryatsabajam purastaat
Aayushyamapryam pratimuncha subhram
Yajnopaveetam balamastu tejaha!”*

The mantra mentions that the Yajnopaveetam is the holiest of holy things and that it was born along with Prajapati or the creator Brahma. The first to wear it was Him and his object was to perceive Paramatman, the cause of all causes. He gave the Yajnopaveeta to the Devas to enable them to win immortality and eminence. They could attain heavenly bliss and victory over the giants by wearing the Yajnopaveetam and performing sacrifices.

Its wearing augments the span of life with strength and effulgence. Its real significance must be grasped for a meaningful performance of the rites. The Yajnopaveetam has three sets of three threads each for the householder. They signify the fact that the universe is composite of Trigunas, Trikalas, Trivargas, Srishti, Stithi and Laya of existence and so on. It is a symbol to focus one’s attention on the need to control these Three’s and keeps his Trikaranas viz: Mind, Body and Act of speech pure and in tune with the spirit and aim of the spiritual duties placed on him. The nine threads in the Yajnopaveetam each have a Devata invoked upon it

prescribed by a mantra. The mantra says:

*“Omkaarognischa naagascha somaha pitru
prajaapatee vaayu sooryau
Viswedevaa ityetaastu tantudevataaha”*

The first has the Omkara sakti on it. The others are the energies of Fire, Serpentine power, Moon, Pitru, Prajapati, Vayu, Soorya and Viswedevas. There is a knot called Brahmagranthi in each set to show that we are to keep our bodies and minds pure so that Brahman may seat Himself in us. That the sole purpose of the wearer is to concentrate on Brahman is denoted by the Brahmagranthi. Again the Yajnopaveetam brings to our mind the nerves Ida, Pingala and Sushumnaa and the need to control our senses, feelings and actions.

The wearer of the Upaveetam must know how to keep it pure and free from pollution. The sloka states:

*“Trivrutamchoaveetamcha tattraiko granthibshyat:
Naabheeroordhvam anaayushaym adbonaabhees tapakshyaha.”*

The Upaveetam besides containing three strings with one knot must be level with the navel. If it is above the navel it will lessen the span of life and if it goes below the navel it will become a hindrance to tapas or meditation.

*“Yajnopaveeta dvedhaarye sraute smaarte cha karmani
Triteeyam uttareeyartham vastraabhaave tadishyate!”*

The Brahmacharin has to wear one set. A grahasta or married man has to wear two upaveetams, to perform the spiritual rites of Srauta and Smartha. The third upaveetam is prescribed for fear that the individual might fail to wear

an upper cloth not being able to afford one. A person who desires longevity may wear more upaveetams in addition to the three prescribed.

Widowers also should wear three upaveetams. But a Brahmacharin must wear only one upaveetam. He has to do a lot of Agnikriya with daily sacrifices and develop Atmasamyamana Yoga. He has to concentrate his mind on rousing the serpentine power and attaining Brahma-teja. He has to control his senses, pursue the scriptures and get the strength of mind necessary to keep him abreast in the midst of the forces assailing him in later life with equanimity of mind, resourcefulness and resoluteness.

The Yajnopaveetam must be worn properly from left to right. It is called ‘Upaveeti’. When answering calls of nature, it should be in garland form and turned round the right ear from the back. It is because the Saastras reveal that in the right ear of the initiated to the Gayatri mantra, the Adityas, the Vasus, Rudra, Vayu, Agni, Dharmaraja, the sacred theerthas like the Pushkara and the sacred rivers like the Ganges etc., reside. So the upaveetam will be kept pure by them at that time. Wearing the upaveetam on the right shoulder is called pracheenaaveetam and wearing it in garland fashion is called niveetam. Pracheenaaveetam position is to be given to the upaveetam when performing Pitru Karyas like sraddhas, funeral rites etc. While answering calls of nature and doing Manushya Yajna it has to be kept in the niveetam position. At all other times it should be worn in the upaveetam position.

*The Taittiriya Aranyaka Second Prasnam says:
“Yatkincha braahmano Yajnopaveetyenaadbeeyeta
Yaajayedyajeta vaa Yajnyasa pravruttyaa Ajinam vaasovaa*

*Dhakshinata upaveeya dbakshinam baabum uddharatevadbhatte
Savyamiti Yajnopaveetam
etadeva vipareetam praacheenaaveetam
Samveetam maanusham.*

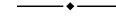
While discarding the Yajnopaveetam which has become dirty by wearing it, the following mantra is uttered:

*“Upaveetam bhinnatantum jeernam kasmala dooshitam
visrujami yasobrahmavarcho deerghaayur astu me!
or Samudram gacchaswaabaa!
or Pavitravantam atijeernavantam
Vedaangam agryam parabrahmaroopam
Aayushyamagryam pratimucha subbram
Jeernopaveetgam visrujantu tejaha!”*

The sullied and defective upaveetam which has suffered decay is being discarded. Let me have longevity, fame and effulgence of Brahman-so says the dwija. The yajnopaveetam is the prototype of Brahman and must be respectfully treated even while being discarded.

Once in a year as a must on Sravana Pournami day, every second born must wear a fresh sacred thread with sacrificial fire, Gayatri homa, Adhyayana homa etc., so that he might be fully equipped for the pursuit of the rites prescribed in the Vedas afresh. It is a reimbursement of spiritual energy every year. It is called Upaakarma. On the following day the defective Yajnopaveetam should be discarded after completing Sahasra Gayatri Japa for atleast 108 times. For those who have just been ushered into their second birth the Upaakarma day marks the beginning of Veda learning. The others shave to dedicate their Veda adhyayana performance

done during the year to the Lord and begin a new branch of the Veda cycle. Those who do not recite the Vedas have to offer their Sandhyavandana performance during the year to the Lord or their devotional rites performed during the year may be offered to the Lord and embark afresh with listening to the Upanishads, Puranas, Itihasas and religious discourses on the day.



THE KORAN

There is nothing anywhere apart from me. I am present in everything and in every one of you. But I am more powerfully present in my Adiyaan before you. This is vouchsafed to gratify his disciples as per his desire.

—♦—
(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru
Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal)

“*Ekam Sath. Vipra bahudhaa vadanti*”- The Parabrahm is one. But he is variously called by the learned and the religious.

The Koran declares the same fact. It states that the God of the Muslims and the God of the non-Muslim are one and the same. Nor can the Muslim regard himself as specially favoured or chosen by God. The Koran is the holy book of revelations made by the Lord to Mohammed, the Prophet, sent by him into the world.

He was born in Arabia in the year 571 A.D. At that time Arabia was steeped in sin. It was a seething hell of lust and bloodshed. The people were very evil minded. They drank heavily and gambled incessantly. They killed for the sake of killing. Men and women were sacrificed before idols. Women were bought and sold. Infanticide of girls was in vogue. They committed incest. To redeem them the mighty Allah (God) sent Mohammed, the Prophet.

He led a pure life. He was the very personification of forgiveness. He forgave the Arab who had murdered his

daughter leaving him to the judgement of God. Even he was administered poison by a Jewess as a result of which he passed away. He forgave her saying that it was not for him to punish. There was a higher judge for punishing evildoers

When asked to curse someone, he said that he had been sent to the world not to curse but to be a mercy to humanity. He was humble and did all the work by himself. Is it strange that God had chosen him as His instrument? He was exceedingly prayerful. His wife followed suit. He meditated on Godhead and cried for help to become free from the evil of the world. He wandered in fields and over mountain cliffs. Then without conscious effort of will there came to his mind sacred verses and a Divine Voice was heard melodiously humming in harmonious sounds. He heard tinkling of bells too. Sometimes he saw a human figure too. Thus in a state of spiritual ecstasy, he was given the Koran in full glory and brilliance. He preached the Koran to everyone. He was listened to avidly and his followers grew in number.

The Koran declares that there is only one God, Allah, who is attainable by pure believers. It emphasises the brotherhood of man. It states: “Truly we had created you all of Adam and Eve and we have made you into peoples and tribes that you might know one another. Verily the most worthy of honour among you is the most righteous.”

Says the Koran: Let not one person or nation mock or scoff at other people or nations. Perchance they may be better in the eyes of God having greater potentialities for doing good for others!

It declares the equality of women with man socially, economically and spiritually. It states: “They (women) are

raiment for you and you men are raiment for them.”

It wants everyone to annihilate the Ego. It desires everyone to treat others kindly. One should show kindness to parents, to kindred, to orphans, to the poor, to neighbours known or strange, to the sons of the road and to those treated as slaves.

The Koran requires the Muslims to act kindly towards the people of all religions and creeds, except in cases of aggression.

It emphasises the importance of peace. This is seen in the greeting of one Muslim towards another. One says, “Peace be with you!” and the other replies: “And on you peace.”

It lays stress on charity requiring everyone to set apart a percentage of his earnings for the common public fund.

It teaches everyone to act with firm faith in Allah. It tells us that strong and perfect faith in Allah, his attributes and his will is a delightful garden of fruitful trees while the good deeds which a man does are in fact the streams flowing in the garden giving life and fruit to its trees.

It prohibits sacrifice of living beings.

It says categorically that God does not withhold his blessings from the earnest seekers, be they of whatever creed or position. All low desires should be consumed. The seekers of God should surrender all life, property and honour as a sacrificial offering before God. Then death comes over the first life and victory over the passions of the flesh results. Man shall come face to face with God then.

Mohammed interpreted the Koran to the people and

lived the life adumbrated in it. He said, “I want to teach you to believe in God, to believe in the divinity and truth of God, of divine revelations that have been handed down to humanity time and again by God. I want you to believe that every messenger of God always brought a true message. I am like you, prone to committing mistakes. I am not God. I want you to pray to God. I want you to be charitable and pure in thoughts and conduct.”

Jihad is exerting oneself for the cause of religion. It is not waging war against unbelievers. Islam prohibits the use of force for its observance. There is no compulsion in religion, according to the Koran.

Prayer is very important. Every believer in Allah has to pray five times a day. If prevented by circumstances to say his prayers at the right time, he must make up for it later. It is forbidden to miss even a single hour of prayer. Asceticism is foreign to his tenet. No one should withdraw from the worldly duties enjoined upon him.

He wants everyone to declare the greatness of Allah, the only one All knowing, All merciful, All present and All powerful entity who rules over the Universe, his creation.

His dictum is contained in the Muezzin’s cry:

Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar;

Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar;

Ishhad la allah illa ‘llah;

Ishhad la allah illa ‘llah;

Ishhad la allah illa ‘llah;

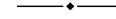
Ishhad la allah illa ‘llah;
Ishhad Muhammad rasuluhu
Ishhad Muhammad rasuluhu
Ishhad Muhammad rasuluhu
Haya ‘la ‘s-salat,Haya ‘la ‘s-salat’,
Inna’s s-salat khair min an-naum.

It proclaims the one God of glory and power who has made Mohammed, his Prophet.

Let every follower of the Koran love his fellowmen first if he truly loves the Creator. Selflessness and service to humanity must be his ideals.



34
MURUGA NAYANAR



*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Sadaa teerthasiddham saddaa bhaktarakshakam
sadaa saivapoojyam sadaa subhrabhasmam
sadaa dhyaanayuktam saddaajnaanatattvam
Bhaje Paarvateevallabham Neelakantam!*

Prayers are offered to the Lord of Goddess Parvati, Sri Neelakantam, who is eternally present in all sacred places always protecting the devotees. He is ever worshipped by the Saivas and wears pure sacred ashes. He is **ever** in meditation resting upon Jnana as a couch.

“Teerthee kurvanti teerthaani”—The places where devotees make their way to become sacred places and teerthas forming the abodes of Lord Siva. In Pumpugalur, a village in the Chola kingdom lived a holy Saivite devotee called Muruga Nayanar. His mutt became a sacred teertha as holy saints always stepped in there and spent some time there. He was a servant of the Lord’s servants and attended upon them with love and care. His house was open to all Saivite saints.

He gathered flowers and did pushpakainkaryam to Lord Vardhamaneeswarar of the local temple. He always uttered the Lord’s name and everything he said and did was for the Lord and the Lord alone. The universe seemed Sivamayam to him. The sacred five-lettered mantra “Om Namassivaya”

danced in his heart. He had the Lord's grace in abundance.

That great devotee of the Lord, Tirugnana Sambandhamoorthy Nayanar, often stayed with him and took part of his hospitality. It was also the practice of Saint Appar to come frequently to his mutt and enjoy his holy company. Muruga Nayanar was drawn intensely to Tirugnanasambandhar, whose Tevarams he sang day in and day out with ecstasy and devotional fervour. He could not live away from Saint Sambandhar. So he followed the holy man to receive the full benefit of his sacred company.

At the time of the marriage of Tiru Sambandhar, a divine light came out and covered the whole congregation. Tirugnaanasambandhar disappeared in the flaming light. Seeing this, Muruga Nayanar who could not bear any separation from Tiru Sambandhar also entered the divine flame uttering the sacred Panchakshari mantra. He became one with the Lord even as Tiru Sambandhar did. Thus redemption comes to one who throws himself entirely into the service of the holy feet of the holy devotees of the Lord, which in itself is service to the Lord. The Lord likes the devotee of His devotees and gives them salvation.

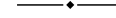
So let us pray to the Lord to shower His grace upon us and bless us with the company of the blessed of the Lord:

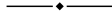
*Karacharana krutamvaa karmavaakekayajamvaa
Sraavanayanajamvaa maanasamvaaparaadham
Vihitamahitamvaa sarvametatkshamasva
Sivasiva karunaabdhe Sree Mahaadeva Sambho!*

O Lord! Sambho! Mahadeva! Forgive all the faults committed by my limbs, body, mind, actions, speech, eyes,

ears and every other part. Forgive kindly whatever friendly or unfriendly acts I may have committed, Lord Siva! You are the ocean of mercy!

SIVAMASTU





*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri
Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*“Satyam braveemi paralokahitam braveemi
Saaram braveemi upanishaddhrudayam braveemi
Samsaaramulbanamasaaramayaapy Jantob
Saaroyameeswara padaamburushasyasevaa!”*

The service at the Lord Iswara’s lotus feet is the only way for the salvation of all. I affirm that it is the Truth, the harbinger of well-being leading to the heavenly abode of the Lord. It is the pith of the Vedas and the sum and substance of the Upanishads. It is the sure way to get out of the tentacles of Samsara.

The above was the considered opinion of Amarneeti Nayanar, the famous devotee of Lord Sankara. He followed this principle to the letter and spirit. He was very rich. He spent all his money in the service of the saints and devotees of the Lord. He surrendered himself to the Lord totally. He prayed:

*“Yasyaagnayaa Vaayavovaati Loke jwalatyagnissavitaa
yaati Naake, Seetaamsuhu Khe taaraka sam grabascaba
pravartamte Tarn Paresam prapadye!”*

I seek the shelter and protection of the Lord by whose command the Wind, Water, Fire, Sun, Moon, Stars and

planets move in their orbits performing their allotted duties to perfection.”

*Namassreekantaaya Kshapita Puradaityaaya Namoh
Namah Phaalaakshaaya Smaramada vinaasaayacha Namaha!*

I salute Lord Neelakanta, the Destroyer of the Tripuraasuras, the Three-eyed Divinity who annihilated the Ego and pride of Manmatha, the God of love.”

He founded a mutt at Tirunallur and did service to the devotees of the Lord. He provided them with whatever they needed. The Lord took it into His head to test the devotion of the Nayanar. He came as a Brahmin brahmachari to the mutt.

Amarneeti welcomed him with folded hands. After the usual rituals of Arghya and Padya, the Nayanar requested the young sage to partake of his hospitality. The Lord agreed. He said that He had two kowpeenams, pieces of cloth to cover His private parts. He would keep one with His host and go to the Cauvery for His bath. On His return He would take the other one. Amarneeti gladly accepted the custody of the kowpeenam given, placed it in a safe place and looked after his work. In the meantime, the Lord caused the kowpeenam to disappear. He returned from His bath and asked for the one kept with Amarneeti. The Nayanar went to get it. It could not be found. He shivered with fear and told the Lord about it. He said that he would replace it with a new one specially woven for the purpose. The Lord appeared to be beside Himself with rage and called Him a cheat and a rogue deceiving people with seeming charity. The Nayanar fell at His feet and said that He would give all

his gold and gems in return for the lost kowpeenam. The Brahmin agreed and said that it was enough if he could give gold and jewels that could weigh the same as His remaining kowpeenam. A balance was brought. All the wealth of the Nayanar could not balance that piece of cloth. Undaunted, the Nayanar and his wife openly declared that if they were real devotees of the Lord, the balance would equalise and stand level with them in the balance. They both stood in the balance uttering the holy Panchakshari of Lord Siva. Lo! The balance stood still and was level. The Lord appeared before them in His true shape. The Nayanar and his wife fell on the ground before Him and prayed:

*“Sadaa teerthasiddham Sadaa bhaktarakshakam
Sada saivapoojyam Sadaa subhrabhasmam
Sadaa dhyaanayuktam Sadaajnaanatatram
Bhaje Paarvateevallabham Neelakantam!”*

“We pray to the Lord who is the husband of Goddess Parvati, Neelakanta who is always present in holy teerthas and places, always protecting the devotees.

We pray to Him who is eternally worshipped by the Saivites, wearing the sacred ash all over His body, always in meditation and propounding the essence of gnaana.”

The Lord was pleased with their prayers and said that He had come particularly to test the faith and devotion of the two of them. They had passed the test. They were fit to follow Him to Kailas. So saying He took both the Nayanar and his wife along with Him much to the amazement and devotional fervour of the onlookers. Verily the Lord is the saviour of His sterling devotees.

