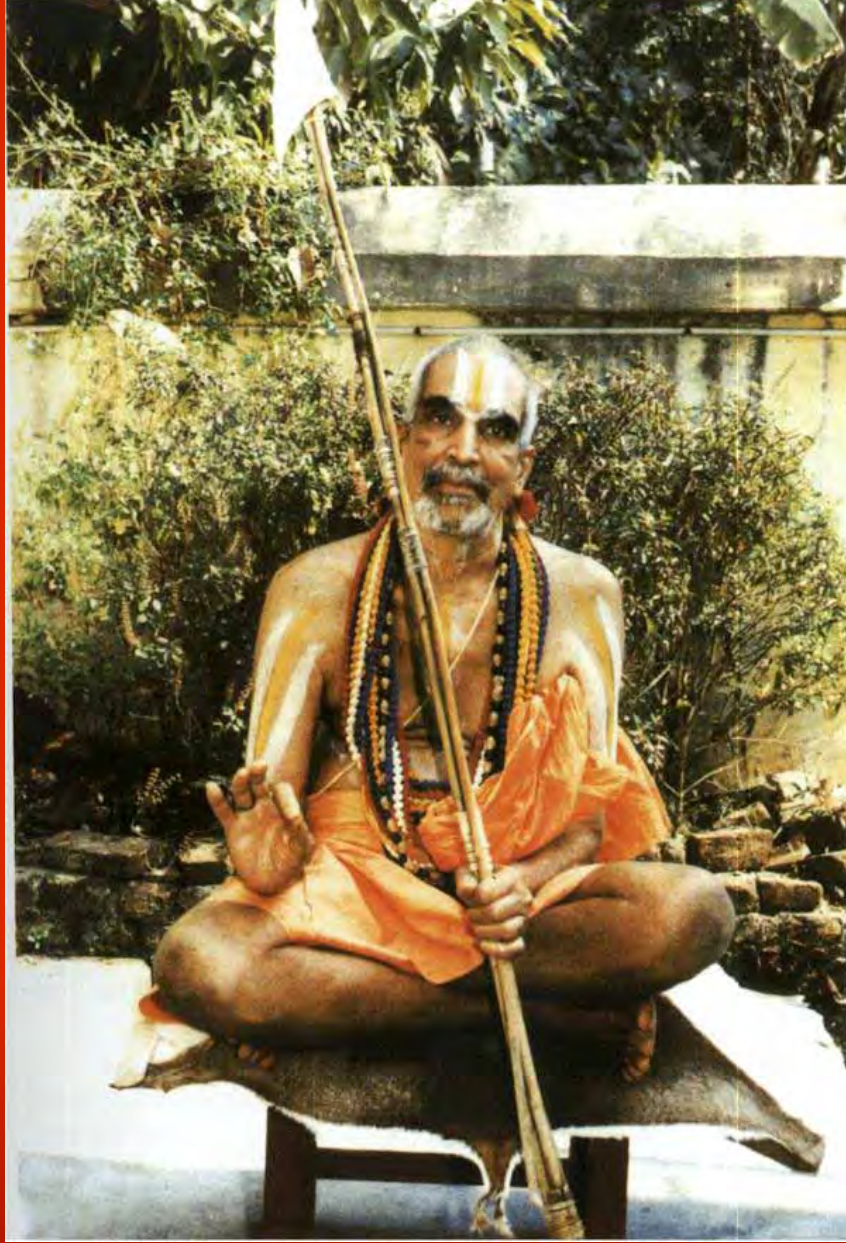


śrīvāsa raṅga parakāla munitrayāpta lakṣmātma
rakṣaṇa yatitva yugāgamāntam
ācārya bhakti paripūtam anarghaśīlam
gopāladeśikamunim gurumāśrayāmaḥ

Biography & Acharya Vaibhavam



By Various Yathis and Vidwans



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Paravakkotai Srimath Andavan with Parakala Matham Jeeyar

Biography of PARAVAKKOTTAI SRIMATH GOPALADESIKA MAHADESIKAN (Panguni- Rohini)

BY SRI MURALIDHAR RANGASWAMY

Prakrutam Srimad Andavan, Srimath Gopaladesika Mahadesikan was born in the year Roudri, on the 2nd day of Panguni under the star of Rohini, corresponding to 17th March 1921 in Mazhaiyur village as the son of Sri Venkatachar Swami and Janaki Ammaal, the daughter of Puraanam Vidwan Sri Kuppaswami Iyengar Swami. The village was gifted to the forefathers of this family about 6 generations earlier. Since then the subsequent generations of the family had been living there.

Srimad Andavan was named Rajagopalan after the presiding deity of Mannargudi temple which at the time of his birth was celebrating the Tiru Ther (car) festival. Paravakkottai Sri Venkatachariar Swami was a pious scholar belonging to Vadhula Gotram Kandaadaiyar family who fashioned his life strictly according to the prescribed rules for a Sri Vaishnava. He had received instruction in Rahasya Traya Sara at the feet of Poundarikapuram Srimad Andavan. His elder brother, Sri Chakravarthi Aachariar, also had been performing Biksha services to Srimad Andavan.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

When child Rajagopalan was 2 ½ years old, his mother died and two aunts from Thillaiambur came to look after the child. After the Upanayana Samskara, Sri Rajagopalan was placed under Mannargudi Sri Srinivasa Gopalachariar for Vedic instruction. Later, he joined K.R.M. Estate Paatasala and studied Sanskrit poetry under a distinguished Vidwan Peruga Vaazhndaan Sri Krishnamachariar Swami. Owing to the hard discipline of the teacher, the pupil was able to acquire proficiency in Sanskrit.

Subsequently, the boy was admitted into the Sanskrit college at Sholinga Puram by Sri A.R. Krishnamachariar Swami who also instructed him in Champu literature. Because of the boy's proficiency in Sanskrit, in 1936, he was admitted into the 3rd Year class in the Sanskrit College, Tirupathi, in which he studied hard for 6 years.

When he returned to Thillaiambur, during the summer holidays, he did not waste a single moment; he used the occasion to study Granthas under Vidwan Sri Venkatachariar Swami. During his stay at the Sanskrit college, he had as class mates or college mates some of the distinguished scholars of the present time, such as Purisai Krishnamachariar Swami, the Editor of Nrisimhapriya, Villivalam Sri Narayanachariar Swami a great scholar and brother of the present 45th Pontiff of Ahobila Mutt and Mylapore Sri Srinivasachariar who later set up a Publishing house 'Sarasa Kala Nilayam' solely for the purpose of printing and publishing the works of our great Acharyas like Melpakkam Narasimhachariar, Marudur A.R. Krishnama chariari. Sri Rajagopalan moved with these persons intimately, true to the saying "Birds of the same feather flock together".

When he was just 12 years old, he had his Samasrayanam and Bharanyasam done by the Great Poundarikapuram Andavan himself. Having lost the mother at a tender age, child Rajagopalan had to perform the mother's annual Sraddha. He lived such a pure and disciplined life in strict conformity with Sri Vaishnava tradition as to win the awe and regard of the learned Srivaishnavas of Thillaiambur. They regarded him as another VASISHTA and would not do or say anything unorthodox during the Sraddha. He would never take para annam (outside food) even from his childhood.

Two days before Rajagopalan's father attained the lotus feet of the Lord, he had advised his son to do Vedaanta Kalakshepam under the feet of the Jeeyar of Parakaala Mutt. An obedient son that he was, Sri Rajagopalan went to Mysore and studied under Srimad Abhinava Ranganatha Parakaala Swami such branches of knowledge as Grantha Chatushtayam. Later, he learnt under Deekshachari Swami, Nyaya Siddhanjanam, Tattva Mukta Kalaapam and Nyaya Parisuddhi and returned to Thillaiambur in 1947. The Swami participated in six examinations in Vedantha Sastras conducted by "Vedaanta Desika Vichara Sadas" under the direction of the Jeeyar of Parakaala Mutt. He also passed the Purva and Uttara parts of our Vedantha in the examination conducted by "Mysore Maharaja Vidwat Pariksha".

GRUHASTHASRAMAM

Later, he entered Grihasthasramam marrying Lakshmi, the eldest daughter of Tirukkudanthai Aarupaathi Setlur Sri Srinivasachariar Swami, who was a strict follower of Vaishnava Aacharam and had done Vedantha Kalakshepam. The couple was blessed with five sons and a daughter. After getting employed as a Sanskrit Pandit at Musiri, Sri Rajagopalachariar Swami used to visit Srirangam in connection

with the affairs of the Asramam, which was always uppermost in his mind. On such occasions, he would call on Sri Madurantakam Veeraragahavachariar Swami and cultivate his acquaintance. Whenever he prostrated at the feet of Madurantakam Swami, the latter would do 'Prathivandanam'. Our Swami felt embarrassed and hit up on a plan to stop the 'Prathivandanam'. So, he submitted that that he had not been initiated into Vaisvadevam and requested Madurantakam Swami to initiate him. This done, the Madurantakam Swami had become his Acharyan also and there was no way for him to do 'Prathivandanam' anymore! At the age 59, Sri Rajagopalachariar Swami accompanied by his family proceeded to Kshetraadanam bathing in the Narmada, Ganga, Triveni confluence and afterwards offered worship at Gaya, Haridwar and Bhadarikasramam. Then he went to Ahobilam where he participated in the 10 days Utsavam of Lord Nrisimha and returned to Musiri.

TAKING HOLY ORDER

Srimad Vennatrankarai Andavan was keen and anxious to nominate a successor so that the Muni Traya Munirupa tradition could be continued without break in the Acharya line. He used to sound the Srikaryam Sri Rajagopala Iyengar about this and persuaded him to assume the Sannyasa Asrama. One day, on the spur of the moment, he called the Srikaryam and administered Presha Mantram, Prapatti Yogam, Sannyasa Anushtaana Kramam and Ashrama Sweekaara-Kramam. The day before he merged with Jyoti, he called Sri Rajagopala Swami and gave him the ochre robes, (Avakundanam, Jala Pavitram, Sikhyam, Kavacha Vastrams etc.) and staff as well as the keys of the Asramam and commanded that he should assume the role of the Acharya in a year or two. After that, for more than a year and a half the Ashramam remained without an Acharya.

ASRAMA SWEKARANAM

Owing to the appeal and entreaties of many eminent persons such as the late lamented 44th Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt, Ubhaya Vedaanta Navaneetham Ramadesikachariar Swami, Madurantakam Sri Veeraragahavachariar SWAMI, (Mannargudi M.S. Rangachariar Swami, Vennatrankarai Velaamur Sowriraja Iyengar) and a host of others, the Srikaryam Sri Rajagopala Swami occupied the Peetam of the Acharya in a picturesque ceremony held at Vennar Bank, Thanjavur. The place, appropriately chosen for this solemn purpose, is twice- blessed. Three of the 108 Divya Desas lie here close to each other; it is the native place of Vennatran Karai Srimad Andavan and the resting place of Veliyanallur Srimad Andavan; it is further sanctified by its association with three of our Purvaacharyas- Sri Nainar Acharya,

Brahma Tantra Swatantra Swami and Saakshaat Swami. The Asrama Sweekaranam took place on 20th February 1982, Dwadasi day of Masi month in the cyclic year Dunmathi, when he assumed the new name "SRIMAD GOPALADESIKA MAHADESIKAN".

On the previous day, on Ekaadasi day, he performed Jeeva sraaddha as Anna Sraaddha. As many as 16 scholars participated in the Nimantrana like U.V. Madurantakam Vidwan Veeraraghavachariar Swami, Vidwan Villupuram Madhava-chariar Swami, Ahobila Matam Srikaryam Swami, Periyaasramam U.V Padukaa Swami, Vaduvor Salakshana Ganapaadigal who acted as Brihaspathi, Bangalore Veda Vidwan Swachannam Anantachariar who acted as Brahma. Throughout the night, he kept awake along with others when Madurantakam Swami delivered discourses on Satkatha and Vedantas. Never before in the annals of any Matam or Asramam had such a jeevasraaddham been performed. The Parakaala Mutt Swami presented, as Hayagriva Prasadam, a Kamandalu and Kaashaayam.

SRIMAD ANDAVAN'S MANY-SIDED SERVICES TO RELIGION

Shortly after taking charge of the Asramam, Srimad Andavan who had spent long and laborious years in "collecting" Vedantic knowledge, was now called upon by the 44th Jeeyer of Ahobila Mutt, to collect big sum of money to meet the expenses for the construction of the 12th tier of the Rajagopuram of Srirangam temple. Undaunted, Srimad Andavan, through the active help and cooperation of his disciples like Tirumalaikattam Villankuppam P.A.Ranganatha Tatachariar Swami of Shenoyanagar Amuda Mukunda Kalyana Mandapam, was able to collect a sum of Rs.3,43,000/- which was presented to Srimad Azhagiya Singhar.

Srimad Andavan's devotion to his and our Purvaacharyas is too apparent to need any special mention. He renovated the Brindavanam of Velianallur Sriman Narayana Maha Desikan at Vennar Bank, erecting of four pillared Mantapam and installing the idol of the Acharya. He also raised a compound wall and an iron fence all around the Mandapam.

In 1989, the Swami visited Vennatrankarai, where the local host, Sri Sowriraja Iyengar honored him with Poornakumbham and a heavy garland that adorned Nee-lameghap Perumal. It was a sight for Gods to see!

Under Srimad Andavan's direction, Swami Desikar's shrine in East Uttara Street was completely renovated. The Utsava idol of Lord Hayagriva, previously worshipped by one Amma Sathram Seshachariar Swami was handed over to the As-

ramam by his grandsons on June 13, 1990. This idol as well as idols of Ashtabujan and Vaikuntanathan were installed in the shrine. The Asramam building as well as the Pushkarani were renovated at a cost of Rs. 1.5 lakhs.

Under the patronage and Presidentship of the Acharya, the "Sat Sampradaaya Samrakshana Sabha"- registered as a Society was founded in 1986 to foster FREE Sanskrit education and offer FREE instruction in the Vedas, Prabhandas and other Grantha Chatushtayams.

The Nitya Aradhana plan to provide uninterrupted Aradhana in the Asramam was created with a deposit of Rs. 1,000 collected from each disciple. The amount donated under the head has been deposited in the Bank and the accruing interest is being utilized for the administration of the Asramam.

A revised edition of Rahasya Traya Sara was published in 1990. Chillarai Rahasyangals of Swami Desika have also been published by the Swami - in three parts. Sri-mad Andavan has been imparting instruction to the disciples through Kalakshepams. On such occasions, the disciples have highly benefited by Srimad Andavan's approach, his mastery of the subject, the clarity of thought and the ease with which he reduces any complicated concept in philosophy or theology into simple and clear terms." His Tanian reads as follows:

Srivaasa Ranga Parakaala Munitrayaapta Lakshmaatma Rakshana Yathitva Yugaaga Maantham

Achaarya Bhakthi Paripootham Anargha Seelam Gopaala Desika Munim Aasrayaamah

Narayana, Narayana,
Muralidhar Rangaswamy

Source Material for the write up:

[1] Veda malar issued on the occasion of Centenary Celebrations of Vennatrankarai Swami

[2] Saptadi Mahotsava Malar issued on the occasion of 70th Tirunakshatram Celebrations of Paravaakkottai Swami.



"ACHARYAN NADAMAADUM DEIVAM"

BY

KULAPATHI U.VE. N.S RAMANUJA TATACHARIAR SWAMI, TIRUPATI

"In the modern times when everything has turned topsy-turvy, it is our Sukritam that we have in our midst Sri Paravakkottai Gopala Desika Maha Desikan who excels in Gnaanam, Anushtaanam and Viraaghyam.

When the Swami was studying in the Vyaakarana Siromani class in the Sanskrit College at Tirupati, I had occasion to study at a junior level. Myself and 2 or 3 of my colleagues used to learn from the Swami "Laghu Siddhanta Kaumudi". It is hard to believe his masterly teaching capacities. He could bring even the hardest of concepts well within the reach of the dullest headed by simple but effective explanations.

I vividly remember how even at that time as a Brahmachari, Paravakkottai Swami was upright to a fault and adopted a very high standard of personal rectitude and Aachaaram. There was never a moment when he was not reciting the Bhagavan Namas and one or the other of the Stotras.

There was a long gap when we had not met. I had the opportunity to pay my respects to this Yathivara. I am proud to see the same simplicity, Satvik Qualities, absolute detachment to Worldly enjoyments (Parama Virakti), an aversion to name, fame, pomp and money, the majestic yet mellowed delivery of Pravachanams that endear him to everyone, - which he exhibited right from his student days. If anything, the best in him got better than ever!"

"PRAPADHYE PRANAVAAKAARAM Bhashyam"

BY

SRI AHOBILA MUTT AASTHAANA VIDWAN PURISAI NADADUR,

SRI BHASHYA SIMHAASANAM

SRI U. VE. KRISHNAMACHARIAR SWAMI

(Editor, Sri Nrisimhapriya, journal of Ahobila Mutt)

"In 1938, when the Swami was studying in the Siromani class in the Sanskrit College, Tirupati, we shared the same room and stayed together in the Ahobila Mutt. So, I am an eyewitness to his fastidious and punctilious adherence to Aachaaram and Anushtaanam, which were of a very high order and do not come by easily for others.

I have never seen in this Mahaan from then on and till now, any trace of Kaama, Krodha etc. It is indeed a marvel, how he has mastered these and kept them under perfect control.

With a imposing majestic appearance matched only by his inimitable majestic Swabhaava, a mellifluous voice matched only by an impressive delivery- he proved himself an incomparable "Poorvabaashi", a "Mithabaashi" and a "Vairaaghya Seela". In thought, word and deed, he upholds and what is more important actually practices, the high standards of Aachaara and Anushtaana with a single pointed devotion.

It is amazing to see how he conducts the Saturday Sadas every week on Sri Baashya and other Granthas in a calm and serene atmosphere. His discourses are as entertaining and enlivening as his comments and elucidation are educative and revealing his mastery of the nuances. They certainly gladdened the hearts of the listeners and chastened their minds by removing all doubts.

He delights in doing this purely as a Bhagavad Kainkaryam in the true spirit of what Swami Desika says-

"Santhoshaartham Vimsruti Muhur Adhyaathma Vidyaam"

and he performs the "Uttara Kriya" in such a way that cannot fail to steep an onlooker without wondering.

It is such Mahaans who should be our Aachaaryas. Never can one find any blemish to detract him from his high code of conduct he has laid down for himself and which he has been observing with utmost diligence and care. In short, he is a perfect Yathivara and sets the standard for other Sannyasis.

At the same time, his administrative capacities are none the less impressive. With almost no wherewithal, he has renovated and is maintaining Swami Desikar Sannidhi at East Uttara Street, Srirangam: he has brought out admirable publications of Srimad Rahasya Traya Saaram and Chillarai Rahasyams of Swami Desikan which will be a valuable treasure for posterity.

We pray to the Divya Dampathis that this great Mahaapurusha , Sri Parama Hamsetyaadhi Paravaakkottai Srimad Aandavan Sri Gopaala Desika Maha Desikan Swami should live long for hundreds of years more in perfect health and guide us all".

"PARAVAKKOTTAI SWAMI SAPTADHI RATNA MAALIKAA"

BY

**SRI. U.VE. VILLUR NADADUR AASUKAVI SAARVABHOUMA SRINIDHI
SWAMI**

Srinidhi Swami has composed and dedicated the above poetic tribute to Prakritam Paravaakkottai Aandavan Swami. We offer here a few flowers from the Maalikaa:

Ajasya Thaare Bhuvane Avatheernaha
Gajasya Samrakshakam Aasrayam Thum /
Rajasya Magnah Tamasas Sudoorah
Vrajasya Naathah Kila Satva Bhaajaam //

MEANING

"Sri Paramahamsetyaadhi Paravakkottai Aandavan Swami was born in the same Rohini Nakshatra of Brahma Prajaapathi (Ajasya); He propitiates the Gajendra Varadha who saved the elephant (Gajasya); He has banished both Rajo (Rajasya) and Tamo Gunas; by his Sattva Guna, he shines as the master of all Prapannas (Vrajasya Naathah)".

Thishyasi Cha Thigma Bhaavam
Nirasya Thimiram Thiras Kurvan /
Tilakam Sri Yathiraaja Deepyathi
Saptathy Upetha tho Ayam //

MEANING

"This Swami who dispels darkness of ignorance shines like the 'Tilakam' among Yathiraajas.

Sri Rohinee Thaara Samudbhavassan
Dhrito Vichitram Vasudeva Vrinda /

Brindaavanam Saadhu Vidhraaya Nandhyam

Gopaala Thaam Vamsa Karo Vibhaathi //

MEANING

"Lord Gopalan appeared in Rohini Nakshatram and was brought up by Vasudeva, his family and friends. Living in Brindavanam, he held the bamboo flute in his hands. This Gopalan (Swami Paravakkottai Aandavan) also appeared in the same Rohini Nakshatram and is always surrounded by Sishyas; He repaired the Brindavanam and holds the "Tridandam" made of bamboo."

ROHINIYIL AVATARITHA GOPALAN

BY

SRI. U.VE. PERUKKARANAI CHAKRAVARTHIYAACHARIAR SWAMI

AASTHAANA VIDWAN, AHOBILA MUTT

"Gopala who was born somewhere under the constellation of Rohini grew up somewhere else and fed people with the milk of Gnaana. Likewise, our Aachaarya was born somewhere under the same constellation of Rohini. Leaving behind Brahmacharyam and Grihasta Aasramams, he came elsewhere to take over Sannyasam and stands as a great preceptor. And he is also freely giving us, the milk of Gnaana.

Lord Krishna who left his place of birth and grew up elsewhere solely for giving us the celestial song. So also, this Swami also had left his near and dear ones and adopted Sannyasa Aasrama solely for the purpose of lighting the lamp of Gnaana in the minds of his Sishyas.

Even in his Poorva Aasramam, this Swami was well known for a high level of Aachaaram, Anushtaanam and Paramaikaanthitvam and righteous conduct. After assuming Sannyasa, he is adhering strictly to the disciplines enjoined for Sannyasis and stands a beacon light and a veritable "Vairaghya Nidhi"

BHAGAVAD PAADUKAA PRABHAAVAM

By

PANAMUGAI VEERAVALLI VIDWAN SRI U.VE. NARASIMHACHARIAR SWAMI
SRIKARYAM, AHOBILA MUTT, SRIRANGAM

"Baalyaath Prabriti Susnigde"- I had the good fortune of moving intimately with this Swami even from a very young age when we were studying in Vyakarana Siromani class in the Sanskrit College, Tirupati.

Since the Swami would not relish a garland of flowers , which would fade away, I am submitting at his holy feet a garland of praise, the one that will remain fresh forever.

I pray to Maalolan that this great Mahaan should live long (Pallandu, Pallandu) spreading the message of Granthas like Sri Bashyam and nourish our Satsampradaya".

"YEMMAI AALUDAI NAATHAR"

BY

U.V.E. SRI VANGEEPURAM NAVANEETHAM

VEDANTA DESIKACHARIAR SWAMI

"Let us see whom Swmi Desika praises as our Lord (Yemmai Aaludai Naathar):-

Saakhaanaam Upari Sthithena Manunaa Moolena Labdaatmakah
Sathaa Hetu Sakrut Japena Sakalam Kaalam Dvayena Kshipan /
Vedothamsa Vihaara Saarathi Dayaa Gunbjena Visrambitah
Saarajno Yadhi kaschit Asthi Bhuvane Naathah Samyuthasya Naha //

MEANING

- i) One who has gained Swarupa Gnaanam by having understood fully the meanings of Tirumantram:
- ii) One who spends his entire lifetime in meditating on Dvaya Mantram which alone helps in crossing the ocean of Samsaram;
- iii) One who has absolute faith in the Charamasloka of Gitacharyan extolled by the Upanishads and who delivered the message from the driver's seat of Arjuna's chariot. Such a one is known as "Saarajna". If there is one such in this world, he is verily our Lord.

The word "Naatha" is significant. It means that he protects those that surrender to him; It means that it is he who should be resorted to for securing what one aspires for viz., Moksha; It means all these and more As Swami Desika says-

"Naatha Muniyai Thalavaraagak Kondathaaaleye Naan Naathavaan Aanen; Illaiyel, Anaathan, Rakshanam Atravan"

MEANING

It was because I had Sri Nathamuni as my my lord and protector, I had protection; Otherwise, I would have been an orphan (Anaathai) lacking a true protector.

Here is one who exactly fits in with this description of Swami Desikan. This Naathan is our Lord. If he were not there, we would be real orphans.

"Than OppAr il I appan"

(THE LORD BEYOND COMPARE)

BY

U.VE. SRI VANGIPURAM NAVANEETHAM GOPALA DESIKACHARIAR SWAMI

"Sri Swami hails from 'Paravaak kottai' - a fort that stands firm and does not fly away. He shines as a 'Paravum Kottai'- a fort that spreads our Siddhanta. Through sage advice, the Swami redeems numerous Sishyas; By publishing Granthas like Srimad Rahasya Traya Saram, he does real service to the growth of Srivaishnavam; By such silent but steady activities, he has become renowned throughout the Vaishnavite world true to Swami Desika's words- 'Disaasu Dasasu Khyaathih Subah'. He shines as a beacon light that sheds its floodlight far and wide so that everyone could see clearly and appreciate the greatness of the edifice that is Visishtaadvaitam. Indeed, 'Roopameva Asya Yetan Mahimaanam Vyachashte'

"Par i mukhan"

BY

SRI U.VE. ANNAATHUR VARADACHARIAR SWAMI, MYSORE

"Sri Parama Hamsetyadhi Sri Gopala Desika Maha Desikan Swami is blessed with the complete grace of Sri Lakshmi Hayagrivan; He is the very personification of Gnaana, Anushtaana and qualities of Sama, Dhama etc. May the Horse-face Lord Parimukhan and Sriranga Sayee grant him long life"

"ATRA SRIRANGE SUKHAM AASWA"

BY

U.VE. SRI TIRUMALACHARIAR SWAMI

RETIRED PROFESSOR, VYAKARANAM, SRIRANGAM

"It is well known that all the pontiffs of this Ashramam have forever stayed in Srirangam itself attending to their Nityakarma Anushtaana with meticulous care, spending their time constantly meditating on the meanings of Sri Bashyam and delivering Kalakshepams.

The Present pontiff is keeping aloft this tradition with utmost sincerity, has been contributing to the Satsampradayam following the commands of Sri Bashyakaarar and is verily a treasure house of Gnaana and Vairaghya.

The weekly Vidwat Sadas on Sri Bashya and Srimad Rahasya Traya Sara and discussions thereon, the efforts to publish the granthas of Poorva Aachaaryas are all proof of the depth of his involvement in spreading our Siddhantam.

May the Sriranga Divya Dampathi grant him long life so that his glorious service to Visishtaadvaita Sampradayam grows from strength to strength.

"Ar Atha aruL amudham pOthintha kOil "

BY

U.V.E. THAIYAR VANGIPURAM, NYAYA VEDANTA VIDWAN,

SRI AHOBILA MATAM AARAADHAKAR SRI RANGARAJACHARIAR SWAMI

" This Srimad Aandavan has devised a novel method for illuminating the knowledge of Vedanta; for the last several years, he has been conducting classes for explaining one Adhikaram of Sri Bashyam and similarly one Adhikaranam of Srimad Rahasya Traya Saram every week. These sessions are not only through discourses but a critical discussion with audience participation of Vidwans attending the Sadas. This has been a real boon to people like us- a shower of milk and honey indeed.

Here is an "Aadarsha Aachaarya" (Preceptor Perfect) who exemplifies 'Achaarya Lakshanam' in its entirety and truly represents what Swami Desika says- 'Kaakkum Karuthudai Desikar Kanru Yena Nammai Yenni Surakkum Suravigal Pol Soriginranar Sollamudhe'- (meaning) Like the mother cow that feeds her calves with abundant love, our Aachaarya in his infinite grace deems us as his very calves and feed us with his nectar- like words of wisdom.

If one needs to see what is the ideal and blemishless Anushtaanam of a Sannyasi - Come, See it in its pristine glory in our Swami, Srimad Paravakkottai Aandavan. Swami.

Observing Ahimsa and avoiding jeevahimsa are among his top priorities. Even while lifting water from the well, one has to be careful in this regard. Such is his strict emphasis on Ahimsa.

A Sannyasi is expected to beg alms (Biksha) from a Grihasta and then only, he can perform the 'Antharyaami Nivedanam'. The Grihasta should be equally an impeccable Anushtaatha. At least a Grihasta can expiate sins of himsa accruing during his routine chores by performing Vaisvadevam. But, since a Sannyasi has no 'Agni Kaaryam', he has to be doubly careful to ensure that the Grihasta who offers him biksha scrupulously observes the Saastraic injunctions in this regard. Otherwise, he would have to starve!

Even if it is a poisonous snake or scorpion, he would not allow anyone to even harm it , let alone kill it. He would say-' Leave it alone; it would not harm anybody'. Though on many occasions such poisonous creatures were sighted in the Asramam premises, never have they hurt anyone. This is an example of his compassion and adherence to the principles prescribed for yathis in Yathi Dharma Sastras.

The very presence of such Yathiswaras alone contributes to the greatness of this Koil. That is why the Koil becomes "Aaraatha Arul Amudham Podhindha Koil"

AACHAARAH PRABHAVO DHARMAH

BY

TIRUMALAI EECHAMPADI, NYAYA VEDANTA VIDWAN

ORATTI RAGHUNATHACHARIAR SWAMI

"Our elders would not respect even great Vidwans if they are derelict in Aachaara. It is this predilection of our elders that prompted Vyasa Bhagavan to conclude in the Phala Sruthi of his Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam

Sarvaagamaanaanaam Aachaarah Prathamam Parikalpitha /

Aachaaro Paramo Dharmah Dharmasya Prabhuh Achyutah //

MEANING

"Wherever one goes, Aachaaram is considered to be the greatest virtue (Dharma); indeed, the Lord of Dharma is Achyuta himself"

Our Godha Piraatti also echoes this sentiment when she says- 'Melaiyaar Seivankal'

Our Saastras declare that only he who masters the Saastras, remains steadfast in what he has learned and is deeply rooted in Aachaara and who practices the discipline strictly- can ever be called an Aachaarya.

Aasinothi Saastraan Aachare Sthaapayatyapi /

Svayam Aacharate Yasmaat Tasmaat Aachaarya Uchyate //

Since Aachaara is at the bottom of all Dharma, Dharma can be equated with Bhagawaan Himself. That is why Vyasa said- 'Dharmasya Prabhuh Achyutah'. Rama and Krishna are considered the very personification of Dharma thus- 'Raamo Vighrahavaan Dharmah' and 'Krishnam Dharmam Sanaathanam'.

Puraanas say that Narada and other Mahrishis earned reputé and reverence because they proved that if only Karma are done with Aachaara, it becomes Dharma that sustains the world. The Prakritam Paravaakkottai Swami is an epitome of what all these Maharishis did. (i.e) performing Nishkaamya Karma backed up by an exemplary Aachaara thus proving the veracity of the statement ' Aachaarah Prabhavo Dharmah'

"THE ROLE OF GURU IN SPIRITUAL SADHANA"

BY

DR. N.S. ANANTARANGACHARIAR, PH. D

"It is no exaggeration to say that there is nothing on earth by paying which, we could free ourselves from our indebtedness to a Guru. The benefaction bestowed by the Guru is so great that we have to be ever grateful to him. A number of teachers have taught us different things and have given a shape to our life. We have to grateful to all of them.

An Aachaarya is celebrated personage who is a SROTRIYA and a BRAHMANISHTA. Without initiation by an Aachaarya, it is not possible for one to gain the knowledge of the ultimate reality.

Sri Vedanta Desika declares that there is no God greater than the Aachaarya himself- 'Aachaaryaita Devatam Samadhikam Anyam Na Manyamahe'

The Guru shows the path of knowledge, fills one with faith by his own example, initiates the procedure, plans for his progress, gives him the necessary technique, corrects him whenever he goes wrong and leads him to the ultimate goal surely and safely.

The Mundaka Upanishad says that one who has developed dispassion on seeing the hollowness of the earthly gains should go to such a Guru alone who is a Srotريا and Brahmanishta for gaining knowledge of the Supreme reality.

The Guru to be sought should be endowed with the following qualities.

- i) he must have gained realization;
- ii) he must be of a firm understanding,
- iii) sinless,
- iv) well versed in the scriptures,
- v) established in Brahman,
- vi) Satvic in nature,

- vii) truthful,
- viii) endowed with virtuous behavior,
- ix) free from jealousy, vanity and other vices,
- x) endowed conquest over his sense organs,
- xi) forgiving,
- xii) compassionate,
- xiii) corrective whenever there is a lapse and
- xiv) mindful of his and other' welfare.

The Prakritam Aachaarya, Sri Paravaakkottai Aandavan Swami fulfills everyone of these parameters admirably well and is truly a Srotريا and Brahmanishta fit to be worshipped as God himself as ordained by Taittiriya Upanishad-' Aachaarya Devo Bhava' and as voiced by Apasthamaba-'Devamiva Aachaaryam Upaaseetha"

"HISTORY OF VAISHNAVISM IN A NUTSHELL"

BY

DR. PROF. V.S.SESHADRI, M.A., M.ED., PH.D

"In the Post Vedanta Desika period, the task of propagation of Vaishnavism became largely institutionalized. Thus, the leading Mathas like the Ahobila Matam came into the forefront and since then are holding aloft the flag of Vaishnavism. The Munitraya line of Aachaaryas is one such significant development in the 16th Century. Gopala Desika Maha Desikan and the poet Venkatadwarin, author of Viswa Guna Darsana, and who belonged to the family of Aatreya Ramanuja, the maternal uncle and mentor of Vedanta Desika sowed the seeds, which sprouted in the 16th Century. The adherents of this Sampradaya believe that Munitrayam embodies the whole body of Sri Vaishnava principles handed over by Nathamuni, Yamuna Muni and Ramanuja Muni.

The Srimad Poundarikapuram Swami belongs to this tradition and it is a matter for rejoicing that he helps preserve the Vaishnavism in its original distinct and pure form.

May the Aachaaryas protect us !

A TRIBUTE TO ASMAD ACHARYAN ON HIS 90th TIRUNAKSHATRAM

SRI ANBIL RAMASWAMY

It used to be said that unable to enumerate the auspicious qualities of Bhagavaan, the Vedas returned crestfallen.

“Yatho vaachaa nivartantE apraapya manasaa saha”

The same can be said of the qualities of head and heart of Asmad Acharyan. However much we may extol his ‘GuNas”, they fit him like a “T” and yet fall far short of describing him fully. I was therefore, scared to write about him lest it should give an impression that this was all that could be said about him. However, his very qualities compel me to venture to say a few words of obeisance to him.

As LakshmaNa put it, I became a slave to his GuNas.

“guNair daasyam upaagata:”

As Swami Desika puts it in his “GOdha Sthuti”, his guNas embolden even a dumb person like me to venture to say a few words about him.

“mounaan mukharayanti guNaas tvadeeyaa:

As all of you know, he is hailed by all other Acharyas of our Sampradayam as verily the “*VasishTa*” among them and as “*NaDamaaDum Deivam*” (God walking on earth)

WHAT MAKES HIM QUALIFIED FOR THESE EPITHETS?

Asmad Acharyan belongs to a long line of “*Munis*” who are absolute *Viraktas*” to name fame and material gains but remain silent to the point of being almost incognito shunning publicity and pomp, doing their duties with incredible rigor and intense self discipline.

SWAMI’S TANIAN (DEDICATORY VERSE)

The Tanian (dedicatory verse) of Prakritam Srimad ParavAkoTTai GOpAla Desika MahAdEsikan of ANDavan of PounDarikapuram Ashramam is as follows:

Srivaasa Ranga Parakaala Munitrayaapta Lakshmaatma Rakshana Yathitva Yugaaga
Maantham
Achaarya Bhakthi Paripootham Anargha Seelam Gopaala Desika Munim Aas-
rayaamah

MEANING

“We seek refuge at the sacred feet of our revered AchAryan, Sri GOpAla MahA De-
sikan, who received the sacred rites of SamAsrayaNam , Bhara SamarpaNam,
ThurlyAsramam and the wealth of Ubhaya VedAntham from the three great
AchAryAs, Srinivasa MahA Desikan, Sri RanganAtha MahA Desikan and ParakAla
MaTam SwAmi. He shines with illustrious sadAchAram and is resplendent with his
limitless AachArya Bhakthi”

There are quite a few significant words in this Tanian.

ACHAARYA BHAKTI PARIPOOTAM:

Means that he is filled to the brim with devotion to his Achaaryan.

The question arises whether other Prakritam Achaaryas are any less in their devo-
tion to their Achaaryas. Let me hasten to assure that this is no reflection on these
other Achaaryas but only emphasizes the real and remarkable depth of devotion
asmad Achaaryan displays with reference to his Poorva Achaaryas. His sense of hu-
mility would never let him stress his own importance and he would constantly ac-
knowledge the glory of his Achaarya true to the saying “*gurum prakaasayEth dheem-
maan*”.

ANARGHA SHEELAM:

Means that he is blemish-less.

Again, the question arises whether other Prakritam Achaaryas have any blemishes.
Let me again hasten to assure that this is no reflection on these other Achaaryas
but only emphasizes the impeccable character and conduct of asmad Achaaryan. A
strict adherent to Achaarm and anushTaanam, he is uncompromising both on him-
self and on his Sishyas in observing them scrupulously.

MUNI IN ALL TANIANS:

If you look at the Tanians (Stand alone dedicatory verses) of successive Achaaryas

of Poundarikapuram Swami Asramam, you will find the word “MUNI” repeated in each one of them. For example:

Paravakkottai Andavan: “gOpaala Desika MUNIM gurum assrayaama:”

Vinnatrankarai Andavan: “Sri Srinivasa MUNI VARYAM aham prapadhyE”

Mannargudi Andavan: “Jnaanaabdim suguNaakaram MUNIVARAM Sriranganaatham bhajE”

Poundarikapuram Andavan: “rangEsa paada vinatam Srinivaasa MUNIM bhajE”

Narayana Maha Desikan: “naaraayanaakhyam MUNIM aasrayaama:”

PeriyaaNdavan: “Sri Srivaasa MUNEENDRA dEsika maNim sreyOnidhim samsrayE”

TirutturaipooNDi Andavan: “Srimad Srivaasa Ramaanuja MUNIM anagham tam bhajE DesikEndram”

Vazhuttur Andavan: “vEdaanta LakshmaNa MUNEH srita bhaagadEyam paadaara vinda yugaLam saraNam prapadhyE”

Tirukkudantai Desikan: “vEdaanta LakshmaNa MUNEENDRA krupaata bOdam...”

Sri Saakshaat Swami: vEdaanta LakshmaNa MUNIM saraNam prapadhyE”

“MUNIM”

The word “Muni” means “a Saint, Sage, Seer, Ascetic, Monk, Devotee, Hermit (especially one who has taken the vow of silence)” Vide Monier Williams Sanskrit to English Dictionary (page 823). It is derived from the root “Mouna” meaning “Silence, Holding one’s tongue” (ibid p837)

All the AchAryas of our RamAnuja - Desika SathsampradAyam are indeed “munis” and “Gurus” in terms of the above definition. Srimad ANDavan of PounDarikapu-ram Ashramam is verily a “Muni-srEshTa”- a living example for every definition of the word “muni” as mentioned above.

This repetition of the term “Muni” is not by any accident nor because the compos-ers could not find alternative expressions! I feel it was by way of conscious recog-nition of the “*Virakti*” of these Acharyas in not indulging in vain talk but keeping “mum” in silent contemplation and meditation on the Lord. This does not mean

that they never speak out at all. Speak they will, but only while expounding the nuances of our Siddhantam in KaalakshEpamas or while advising on AnushTaanams to their Sishyas in private.

He is known not only for his “JnAnam” (Knowledge), “AachAram” (Cleanliness both physical and personal) and “AnushTaanams” (strictest adherence to the code of conduct enjoined in the scriptures for the ascetic order) but also for his conscientious adherence to this characteristic of a true “muni”.

“The acid test of real spiritual leaders is that they never project themselves as 'somebody', never show off their powers of Siddhis, never indulge in magic, never seek after disciples and never presume to indoctrinate others. They withdraw into seclusion, practice their Dharmic duties unostentatiously in humble dedication to God, shun publicity and are content to be inconspicuous, selective in choosing only deserving students who would follow their own code of conduct before imparting to them the eternal truths. They have to be 'searched for and sought after' than their 'searching, and scanning'. They do not hanker after name or fame, are prepared to pass into oblivion 'Un-sung. Un-honored, un-wept' by the mere mortals because their minds and vision are truly fixated on the transcendental reality”.

Quote from the concluding paragraph of the series

“Oh! My God!” Our SwAmi answers precisely to the above description:

- To this day, in the matter of discipline, he is absolutely and uncompromisingly strict on himself and those who approach him.
- To this day, he has lived almost always in Srirangam;
- To this day, he had never sought after name or fame.
- To this day, he never went out soliciting Sishyas;
- To this day, nevertheless, to genuine seekers who seek his advice has never failed to impart true knowledge
- *To this day, he has lived in seclusion SILENTLY meditating on the Lord as the Nityasooris are reported to be doing.
- He is blind to others' faults; deaf to scandals; mute in the sense of avoiding vain talk.

GURUM

“gu” means darkness or ignorance. “ru” means to destroy. Asmad Achaaryan is one who by his lucid explanations, destroys our ignorance on matters that really matter. He is indeed a ‘Guru” Par excellence.

Living in the 21st century, he still upholds the old - world values. Strict on himself, he is practical enough to understand the predicament of common folk like us. He offers sensible and really sage advice on the appropriate “modus operandi” to reconcile the great time - divide and space - divide to prove how even in the so called present circumstances and the much touted so called “modern day compulsions”, one can and should practice “AnushTaanams”.

He is the one who can advise exactly where “relaxation ends and where repugnance starts” in observing “AnushTaanams” for us who seek to excuse ourselves on grounds of being away from our mainland and away from the values of yore.

Thus, the words “Muni” and “Guru” just fit him well.

SENIORITY

He is the Senior most of all Prakritam yathivaras of Bhagavad RamAnuja- Swami Desika SathsampradAyam both in point of age and assumption of the ascetic order (Ashrama sweekaraNam), which latter is the criterion for determining the seniority among them. He is not only a fitting successor to the glorious lineage of the PounDarikapuram Ashramam but also a role model for all other yathivaras, in the matter of his superb “AtmaguNas”. No wonder, he is hailed verily as “VasishTa” among them and held in very high esteem by all.

VADOOLA GOTRAM:

You will remember that a while ago, I had mentioned about the glory of “Naitrava KAsyapa” GOtram and how the word “MADabhoosi”, became a variant form of “MATru-bhooshaNam” which the famed “Naitrava KAsyapa” Rishi was. Every GOtram has its own unique glory.

I have heard in Kalakshepams that the uniqueness of ‘VAdoola GOtram” is that those belonging to it are such ‘Viraktas” that they never ask for any favors, much less any pecuniary favors from anyone, however dire their circumstances may be. Their palm when outstretched is always “down-facing” (signifying giving) and

never “up-facing” (signifying receiving). I understand that this mahAn belongs to this “VAdoola GOtram”.

He never asks for anything either for himself or for any Kainkaryam or even for running the Ashramam. If Sishyas or abhimAnis offer any genuine and voluntary help, he accepts them regarding it as “*Bhagavad anugraham*”.

His rectitude can be seen in how personally and scrupulously he monitors that assistance received in this manner is spent precisely for the purpose for which it is received from the donors.

PANGUNI- ROHINI

I remember to have read somewhere (but at this point of time I do not remember where). When the Lord decided to take His abode between the two kAvEris (ubhaya kAverI) he did so on a “Panguni ROhiNi” day. Our SwAmi’s Tirunakshatram is also “Panguni ROhiNi”. I believe that this is not a mere coincidence but seems to have a special significance. When we celebrate his Tirunakshatram, we are simultaneously celebrating this sankalpam of the Lord of “BhoolOka VaikunTam”.

TIRTHIP PANI KOLLAL

As mentioned earlier, H.H. is strict on himself and strict on others who come to him. He would never spare anyone committing any indiscretions like coming into the Asramam without washing their feet, without wearing Oordva puNdram and the traditional Pancha Katcham (grihastas) and MaDisaar (for Sumangalis). But, his advice would always be polite “hitam” so that we would be made to feel ashamed of ourselves for committing such indiscretions.

SANDHYAVANDANAM - A JUSTIFIED HARSHNESS

In the matter of doing Nitya karmas like Sandhyaavandanam, he is uncompromising. Sometimes, he may look a bit harsh but it would always be for our good.

He is always careful in accepting one as Sishya by satisfying himself about the genuineness of the would - be - Sishya being keen on performing Nitya Karma AnushTaanams not as a favor done to someone but in the firm conviction that it is “Swayam PrayOjanam”, (a self rewarding exercise ordained in the Saastras) and that it is one’s bounden duty to observe them in letter and spirit.

DID YOU WASH YOUR HAND?

Once, I was attending the “Abhigamanam” and Pongal prasaadam was offered and we had to take it with a leaf in our cupped up palms. I had unwittingly kept it on the floor because I was called for some urgent call. This had not escaped the watchful eye of H.H. When I returned and was about to take the prasaadam back, he asked me whether I had washed my hands.

ACCEPTING SISHYAS AND ADMINISTERING RAHASYA MANTRAS

H.H. follows the traditional method of testing the would-be- Sishyas before accepting. He is not the one to consider “**Anything is fish that comes to the net**” or **indulge in “body-shopping”** for Sishyas. This is because his only concern is the spiritual welfare of the would-be-Sishya and he is never motivated by monetary considerations that might come by accepting Sishyas indiscriminately.

He never searches out for Sishyas. It is for the would- be-Sishyas to come on their own accord and seek his acceptance. He never compromises on the need for the Sishyas to appear in proper Swaroopam like sporting of the Sikhaa (tuft), wearing the “Oordva puNDram” on their foreheads and wearing traditional attire of Panchakatcham (for Grihasta men) and MaDisaar (for Sumangali ladies),

For those who seek initiation into BharaNyaasam at his hands, he would advise the aspirant from overseas to go to Tiruppullaani, have Samudra Snaanm (Bath in the sea) as a “Praayschittam”.

Also, he would require the aspirant to have a basic knowledge of the Tattva Trayam and the requirements for initiation into BharaNyaasam; He would go the extra mile to teach the aspirants on these BEFORE undertaking to administer the procedures.

In my case, when I went to him for BharaNyaasam some 23 years ago, he asked me to go back and listen to KaalakshEpams of the then Villivalam Swami (Present Jeeyar of AhObila Mutt) before coming back to him for the purpose. He asked me to have a bath in the sea at Tiruppullaani for receiving the mantras. He insists on what Swami Desikan says as “Ashad-karNam” method in administering Rahasya mantras and does not initiate Sishyas en masse.

MOSQUITOES NOT DRIVEN

There were several occasions when we were given to realize that the Sareeram of Achaarya is like that of the Lord made of Suddha Sattvam and not like ours.

While describing Rama to Sita in the Ashoka vana, Hanumaan says:

“naiva damsaan na masakaan na keetaan na saree srupaan/
raaghavO apanayEt gaatraat tvad gatEnaanantaraatmanaa//” (VR-6-36-42)

I could see this once when I visited the Asramam in the evening. Swarms of mosquitoes were invading everywhere. One cannot open one’s mouth lest a bunch of mosquitoes should get into the mouth. We were fidgety all the time. H.H also went through the same torture. But, not once did he venture to chase away the tormentors, not because he was not bothered but because his concentration was on Bhagavaan. Is it not said *“Paramaatmani yO raktah viraktah aparamaatmani”*

Another occasion we were reminded of this was when he had a fall and fractured his leg. The Sishyas offered a wheel chair for him to sit but he refused saying that he was not supposed to touch metal. With excruciating pain, he slowly got up and moved to the Asramam. Anyone of us in similar circumstances would have raised a hell of noise renting cries of suffering.

Here is an Achaarya who proved his mettle in the face of grave pain.

Yet another occasion arose at the time of his SathaabhishEkam in 2001. H.H. used to get up early in the morning before dawn and climb down the steps of the tank that had dried up but with some water in a deep well dug at the center of the tank. Seeing how he was struggling to climb up and down, we suggested that we would put up railings on the side walls of the tank and well so that he could hold them for steadying himself, especially as there was lot of moss and algae all over making the surface slippery. He declined the offer saying again that he cannot touch an iron railing. To this day, he has been adhering to this difficult exercise!

ONLY WALKS - NO PALLAKU

He is the only Achaarya who does not travel by car or palanquin till this day. He normally does not go out of Srirangam but when he does on Sanchaaram, he always goes by foot as ordained by the Saastras. This is not a reflection on others who may use vehicles. H.H. used to say that he would not comment on them but this is the norm that he had been following ever since he took up the ascetic

order 25 years ago and there was no reason for him to change it now.

Indeed, he is literally and allegorically a "*NaDamaaDum Deivam*"!

NO TELEPHONE

When we suggested that he should have a Telephone in the Asramam, he resisted the idea saying that it would be a nuisance interfering with his AnushTaanams. We had to convince him that it was in the interests of his Sishyas who were like his children that there should be a phone installed in the Asramam for our sake. I even suggested that we would install an Answering machine with caller id so that he need not have to answer the calls right away but could choose to call back if he felt later that it was necessary for him to respond. Only after much persuasion did he agree to our request to install a telephone. And, this has been a boon to us because we are now blessed to hear his voice through Tele-discourses.

SAPTADI, SATABHISHEKAM AND RAJAT JAYANTI OF HIS SANN-YAASA SWE EKARANAM AND NOW HIS 90TH TIRU NAKSHATRAM

H.H. would have none of the "celebrations part" on the occasions of his Saptadi, Sathaabhishekam and Rajat Jayanti of his Sannyaasa Sweekaranam and wanted to keep them at a low key without pomp and paraphernalia. It was almost impossible task for us to make him agree to it. It was because these functions gave opportunities to be in the midst of Veda Vidwaans whose company was dear to his heart, that he accepted our requests.

SAMARPANAI

He is not the one to accept any Samarpanai unless he made sure that it was tendered without any ulterior motives. Once, he contributed an article to one of the Souvenirs. The publishers published it in the name of another author. H.H. had noticed this but did not object. When the publishers came to offer some honorarium for the article, he politely declined.

COMPASSION INCARNATE

His extraordinary compassion to Sishyas and Abhimaanis should be seen to be believed. During my visit in 2006, I could do the "SaashTaanga namaskaaram" only with great difficulty, due to knee pain. H.H. noticed this and immediately motioned to me saying that I did not need to prostrate and that an Anjali was

enough. He suggested that I should apply some Ayurvedic Thailams to the knee and even took pains to explain how to apply and how long too apply to get full relief.

TIRU ANBIL DWAJASTHAMB KAINKARYAM

I will be failing in my duty if I do not mention the immense help and guidance he gave in completing the Dwajasthamba Kainkaryam in 2006. From the inception to the conclusion, H.H. took personal interest in obtaining estimates from various Sthapatis, arranging for the approval by Temple and HR &CE authorities and instructing on even the minutest details in executing the project.

READY ANSWERS

Every time I go to India, I used to collect a long list of doubts bearing on our Siddhaantam and AnushTaanam for securing clarifications from the H.H. He himself would ask me "Have you brought any list this time?" For every question, he would give a ready and convincing reply and for every doubt he would give startling clarifications with appropriate PramaaNams.

GUEST HOUSE

Noticing that Sishyas and Abhimanis coming from outstations and overseas were experiencing difficulty in getting suitable lodging facilities, he had constructed a beautiful guest house very near the Asramam. Anyone who goes to pay respects to H.H. can book a room (for free, I understand). This is a great boon for people like me.

ACHCHIDRA ASWAMEDA PAARAAYANAM

During my SathabhishEkam in 2005, H.H. suggested that the famous "Achchidra-Aswamedaha PaaraayaNam" may be arranged. I could not find anyone to do it in U.S.A. H.H kindly arranged to have it performed on my behalf at the Asramam itself under his immediate supervision and the Veda Vidwaans were sumptuously rewarded and a grand Tadeeya Aaraadanai was also done at the Asramam.

BOOKS GALORE

H.H. has brought out several publications like Srimad Rahasya Traya Saaram, Chillarai Rahasyangal, Raampiraanai KarpOm etc and almost all Desika StOtras

with commentaries of Poorva Achaaryas. This is a yeoman service to the SrivaishNava world that will be eternally indebted to him.

We have the sacred duty of praying to Divya Dhampatis to grant him “PoorNaayus” with pink of health.

