SRIMAN NIGAMANTHA MAHADESIKA VIJAYAM
(SARVA TANTRA SWATANTRA)

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SARVA TANTRA
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SRIMAN NIGAMANTHA
MAHADESIKA VIJAYAM

by

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Himself.

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SARVA TANTRA SWATANTRA
PREFACE

Sarva Tantra Swatantra

SRIMAN NIGAMĀNTHA MAHADESIKA VIJAYAM

Vedānta Desika, also known as 'Venkatanāthā' (B. 1268 Tūppule, near Kānchipuram, India; D. 1370 A.D. Srirangam) was the most distinguished exponent of the Vishishtādvaita (Qualified Non-Dualism) school of Philosophy and the founder of the Vadagalai sub-sect of the Sri Vaishnavās, a religious movement of South India.

Venkatanātha was born into a distinguished Sri Vaishnavā family, who followed the teachings of Sri Rāmānujā, an 11th Century Saint. A precocious child, there is a tradition that he was taken at the age of five to meet the Vedantic scholar, Vatsya Varadhāchāryā, who blessed the child saying that in time he would be a great teacher and repudiate all false, baseless philosophies. He married Thirumangai and had a family, but lived on alms in order to devote himself to his philosophical and literary pursuits. He was a prolific writer in both Sanskrit and Tamil; His 116 works include
commentaries on Vaishnavā Scriptures; Nyaya Parisuddhi, a comprehensive work on Vishistādvaitā logic; Yadavābhhyudaya, a poetical work on the life of Sri Krishna; and Sankalpa Sūryodaya, an allegorical drama.

According to Vedanta Desika's interpretation of Prapatthi (surrender to the Grace of God), some effort is required on the part of the worshipper to open to the outpourings of the Infinite's Grace, just as the baby-monkey must hold to its mother (the Markata Nyāya or the analogy of the monkey). This view, together with the ritualistic and linguistic differences, became the basis for the split between the two sub-sects, the Vadagalai and the Tengalai, who held that the Infinite's Grace is unconditioned and that the human soul is as unassertive as a kitten carried by its mother (the Mārjala Nyāya or the analogy of the cat).

Vedanta Desika was an illustrious Personality, in whom the ideals of human perfection aspired by the elite-intellegentsia throughout the ages were brought to focus. His writings breathe an unusual inspiration, even after six centuries of his birth, so much that in almost every Sri Vaishnavā shrine he is Deified and worshipped. He had the rare combinations of multi-sensory poetical perception, penetrating philosophical insight, complete mastery
of various arts and sciences of his time and an
equipoised rhythm of Jnanā (Wisdom) and
Anushtanā (observance) in his life.

Homage to Vedanta Desika's greatness is found
in various biographical works, Sthothrās and
hymns, such as:

1. Guruparampara Prabhāva:
   (Muvayirappadi) in Manipravāla Tamil by H.H. Parakāla Swami II;

2. Guruparampara Prabhāva:
   (Pannirayirappadi) in Manipravāla Tamil by Hils Holiness Prakāla Swami
   II;

3. Vedanta Desika Vaibhava Prakāsika in Sanskrit verses by His Holiness
   Doddāyācharyar of Sholingar;

4. A Manipravāla Commentary to the 'Vedanta Desika Vaibhava Prakasika'
   by Periyappanaiyyangar, a disciple of Sri. Doddāyāchāryar;

5. Saptāthirathna Malika by Prathivathi Bhayankaram Annan, a Disciple of
   Sri Desika's son, Sri Varadhachary, popularly known as 'Nainar';

* 6. Desika Mangalāsasanam
* 7. Desika Dinacharya
* 8. Desika Vighrahadhyanā
* 9. Pillai Andhathi (Tamil)
10. Sarartha Tilakam (Tamil) by Thirūnappilill, one of Sri Desika's disciples.

Clairvoyant A. Sundararajan

* 6 to 9 : Sanskrit/Tamil stothrās by Desika's son, Sri Nainaracharya.
BIRTH CHART OF SRIMAN NIGAMĀNTHA MAHĀDESIKA

Born on Sunday, the 11th Day of Purattāsi, Ekādasi, SRAVANĀ star 6–19 in KANYĀ lagnā at 11 GATIGĀ 28 VIGATIGĀ at Tūppule, near Kānchipuram in South India in the Kali Age 4370, corresponding to Christian Era 1268 A.D. Balance in Moon Dasa 9 months and 13 days.

COURTESY: KAMBAIYANATTHAM S. RAMASWAMY from Palm leaf MSS of Sherloji's Saraswathy Mahal Library, (Thanjavur)
SARVA TANTRA
SWATANTRA
SRIMAN NIGAMANTHA
MAHADESIKA VIJAYAM
वेषुद्रेश्चावतागंधदेव तदएषांशोध्वचा भवेत ।
यन्त्रांशोधोपवेत्वैव वितत्तर्यास्तु मद्दलम् ॥
Sri Rāmānuja, the great exponent of the Vishistādvaśta system of philosophy, entrusted to his 74 chief disciples known as Simhāsanathipathis, the task of consolidating and propagating the tenets of his ‘Dharsanā’ of the Vedānta. After a lapse of a few generations of faithful followers, the system suffered grievously from the Māyāvādic propaganda and the imposition of Muslim rule in the South. Added to it, the Muslim invaders brought with them social disorder and chaos. It was at this crucial time Sriman Nigāmāntha Mahādesika emerged as the most dynamic philosopher and religious leader.
THE LORD’S
GHANTAVATHARA
In the heart of the sacred city of Kanchi, at Thūppule, there lived in the mid-13th century a devoted Sri Vaishnavā couple, Sri Anantasūri and his spouse, Thotharambā. After years of their happy marriage, they were yearning for their progeny. As they were both devotees of Lord Venkatesā, they went on pilgrimage to the famous hillshrine at Thirupathi with the hope of getting the Lord’s Blessings.

During their stay at the Tirumalai Hills, one night in the pre-dawn hours, Thotharambā saw a vivid dream. In that dream-scene, she saw Lord Srinivāsa in the form of an young handsome boy appearing before her husband. On awakening Anantasūri, the Lord gave him His temple bell, and said “For the flourishing of Sri Rāmānuja Siddhānthā, I am granting you an extraordinary genius. He will be born to you as your only son”. Anantasūri gave that bell to his spouse, who swallowed it at once. A similar dream occurred to Anantasūri as well. Upon waking up in the morning, both of them discussed with each other their dreams and a surprise awaited them in the Lord’s shrine: The temple ‘Bell’ was reported to be missing. The Jeeyar, the religious head of the temple, also had a vision of their dream-event. Everyone present was thrilled by the strange incident.
After a span of twelve years of this event, in the year 1191 of the Sālivāhana Era — corresponding to 1268 A.D. — in the month of Purattāsi under the
constillation of Sravanā Star, Venkatanatha was born at Thūppule. His birthday coincided with the Lord’s Sravanā Festival of Theerthavāri at the Hills. The child was named ‘Venkatanāthā’ as he was born by the blessings of Lord Sri Venkatesa or as the Avathārā of His Temple Bell — the Lord’s Ghantāvathārā.

The child was resplendent with the brilliance of Divine charisma. At the age of five, he accompanied his maternal uncle, Appullar, to the temple of Sri Varadharaja Swamy. In the temple, Vatsya Varadhācharya (also known as ‘Nadādur Ammāl’), a leader of the Sri Vaishnavās, was conducting his religious discourses amidst a good gathering of his disciples and the public. As the graceful young boy Venkatanāthā walked across the lecture hall, everyone’s attention was drawn to him. For a moment, the discourse was interrupted; and when the lecturer wanted to resume the discourse, no one — neither the audience nor the orator — could recollect the continuity of their thought! At once young Venkatanāthā pointed out where the orator left off, as he was just entering the hall. The great leader blessed the child, saying that in course of time, Venkatanāthā will become a great exponent of Vishistādvaitā and repudiate all false philosophers.

Blessed by the great master, Venkatanāthā began his studies at the age of five under his uncle
Athreya Ramanuja (APPULLAR) and soon displayed great industry and precocious intelligence. Before the completion of his 20th year, he completed the entire course of education, a marvellous accomplish-
ment for anyone at that period. His tutor and uncle Appu Pillar gifted him the sandals (Puduka) of Sri Rāmānuja and finally initiated him into the 'Garuda Mantra', an invocatory occult key to Garuda, the Lord of Birds.
After his scholastic attainments, he entered into marital life and settled in Kāṇchi. A little later, he started on pilgrimage to sacred places, like Tiruvahindrapuram. Here Venkatanāthā on the serene settings of Oushathagiri sat in deep meditation on Garudā and had His Pratyakshā—direct vision. Garudā initiated him into ‘Sri Hayagreeva Mantrā. By the grace of Sri Hayagreeva, Venkatanāthā had the complete knowledge and poetic vision.

The significance of this Divine Grace is clear in the literary works of Venkatanāthā. He wrote many short poems—like Sri Hayagreeva Sthōthrā and ‘Garudapanchāsāt’. At the Tirumalai Hills, he poured his inspiration, ‘Dayā Satakam’, one hundred verses on the Infinite Grace (Dayā) of Lord Śrinivāsā. Continuing his pilgrimage up to the banks of Thungabhadrā, visiting various shrines, he felt a homeward feeling and finally returned to Kāncheepuram. Here he lived a peaceful life, supporting himself by unchchavritti (Voluntary daily contributions). But he never accepted more than what was absolutely necessary. He scorned luxury, power and material possessions which most men prize and hanker after and led a life marked by simplicity and high thinking. His aversion to riches came to light on one occasion—Once some of his admirers, while offering him daily
dole of grain put some gold coins in his vessel. Venkatanātha did not notice it at that time.
When he handed over the vessel to his wife at home, his innocent wife noticed the shining objects inside it and brought to the attention of her husband.

Venkatanāṭha instructed her to throw away the coins, as if they were insects in the rice.

Several scholars of eminence from all over India gravitated to Srirangam, the seat of Vishishtādvaitā erudition since Sri Rāmānuja’s time. Venkātanāṭha moved there to share the perennial source of his mystical inspiration. He spent his time in Divine worship, philosophical and religious study, and occasionally in religious debates with the scholars of rival sects. The befitting arguments adduced by him on those occasions were subsequently compiled into a treatise now known as ‘Satadhūshani’ or the ‘Hundred Critiques’. This won him the title “Vedānthāchārya” or the ‘Grand master of Philosophy’. Legend has it that Lord Sri Ranganatha Himself conferred on him this title, while Sriranganayaki, the Goddess, appreciated him with the title “Sarva Tantra Swatantrar” or the ‘Master of all Sciences and Arts’. The several works by him during that period include ‘Bhusthuthi’, ‘Srīsthuthi’, ‘Dasāvathārasthōthra’, ‘Tattvamuktākalāpa’, ‘Nyāya-siddhānjanā’, ‘Seswaramimāṃsā’, ‘Saccharitrararakṣā’. In reply to Advaitic drama ‘Poorna Chandrōdaya’, Vedanta Desika wrote his famous ‘Sankalpa
Sūryodaya’. On one occasion Desika defeated one Dindima. On seeing the latter’s ‘Raghavābhyudaya’, he wrote his ‘Yadhavābhyudaya’. He also wrote a lyric ‘Hamsa-Sandesā’.

Can the Sarva Tantra Swatantra, omnicompetent Desika, annihilate totally poverty and bestow upon the sufferer enough wealth, comfortable to lead a married life?

As Sri Desika supported himself by alms, many of his neighbours were confounded with his blessedness. To testify their curiosity, they sent to Sri Desika a young Brahmin lad, who implored earnestly Sri Desika to grant him wealth for celebrating his marriage.

Sri Desika at once went with him to the shrine of Mahalakshmi* to pray for the Grace of the Cosmic Mother. As Sri Desika reverently uttered his invocations to Sri, the supreme Goddess, instantaneously a shower of gold leaves rained forth on the spot. This event was an eye-opener to many people, who questioned the rare distinctions of Sri Desika earlier. Sri Desika’s spiritual outpourings on Sri Mahalakshmi came to be celebrated as the famous Sri Sthuthi, to bring forth prosperity in anyone’s life, ever since the first miracle of Kanaka varsha, six hundred years ago.

* The sacred shrine of Sri Perundevi Thāyār, inside Sri Varadnaraja Swāmy Temple at Kānchipuram.
When thus he was establishing his mastery over all branches of literature, some of his contemporaries indirectly raised their objections against him. On one occasion a practitioner of tantrās made Desika's stomach swell with water transferred from a huge lake. Knowing this, Desika just touched a pillar, from which the entire water poured out. Then the Tāntric fell at the feet of Desika praying for his mercy.

One Azhakiya Manavāla Perumāl contended that Desika should not assume the title of 'Vedānthā-chārāya' unless and until he had succeeded in defeating Azhakiya Manavāla Perumāl. The scholars of Srirangam convened an assembly for debate by both the philosophers. In the debate finally Azhakiya Manavāla Perumāl was defeated. The latter then solicited a trial in the literary field. It was then resolved that the two scholars should sing a thousand verses on Sri Ranganāthā's Pādukkās (Sandals) and that whosoever first completed the work before next dawn should be conferred the title "Kavithārkika Simha" or the 'Lion of Poets and Philosophers'. Desika completed his 'Pādukkāsahasram' that very night — hours before dawn, while the other poet wrote only 300 verses of his 'Padakamalasahasram'. Decisively Desika's work has been acclaimed as second to none. Till date 'Padakamalasahasram' remains incomplete.
The title ‘Sarva Tantra Swatantrā’ sparked controversy.
A snake-charmer challenged him to exhibit his power over snakes. When the snake-charmer let off his serpents, Desika drew seven lines on the ground and prayed mentally to Sri Garuda Devā. The serpents could not cross the lines. A huge kite came from above and snatched away ‘Sankapāḷā’, the most venomous serpent among them. The charmer fell at the feet of Desika and prayed for the return of the lost serpent. Desika sang ‘Garuda Dandakā’ whereupon the serpent was returned. The charmer mumbled his apologies for his audacity and retraced his way.

On another occasion a brick-layer challenged Desika to prove his skill as a mason or else he should relinquish the title of ‘Sarva Tantra Swatantra’. Desika accepted his challenge and as desired by the mason, he built a well. This well exists even after a lapse of nearly six centuries at Tiruvahindrapuram.

In the Tamil year Nalā (1317 A.D.) Desika’s only son, Nainār alias Varadhāchārya was born. Between 1330-1360 A.D. the Muslims invaded South India, devastated the land, robbed Hindu temples and burnt sacred books. Forewarned of their approach to Trichy, the pious Brahmīns of Srirangam took away the procession Deity Sri Ranganatha to Mysore. An aged scholar, Sri
Sudharsana Bhattar, who was popularly known as 'Srutaprakasikāchāryā' entrusted his two sons and
his monumental work, 'Srutaprakāsikā, a rare commentary on 'Sri Bhashya' of Sri Rāmānuja, to the care of Desika. Desika protected them.

On one occasion Desika could not perform his regular worship of Sri Hayagreevā and could offer only 'Theertham' (consecrated water) to the Lord. That night he slept on the door steps of a merchant's house. At mid-night a white horse appeared there and it stood there, trying to eat the horse-gram from the stack. Alighted by the noise, the merchant came out to drive the horse. But the white horse never stirred out of its position. The merchant awakened Desika to drive away the

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अन्तःकाशिका भूमौ येनादै परिरक्षिताः।
प्रवर्तिता च पात्रेषु तत्मै शेषाय मञ्चलम्॥

सांस्कृतिक्षमिद्रामिद्धिमिइ: बहीमि: क्रितिदिशनान्।
यस्याः भीत्रायमास तत्मै सेवाय मञ्चलम्॥

य: रूपांति दाम् पूजासु विस्मृतो वैष्णवे जने।
ऋणीयाय ददां प्राश्च तस्मै मन्याय मञ्चलम्॥

भौमदेव्यन्रान्तर्विद्विषिकमञ्चलाशासनम्
horse. Desika knew who it was. He requested the merchant to bring milk from his house and offered it to Hayagreeva in the form of that white horse and
drank the remainings. At once the white horse disappeared! The merchant also understood who came to his house as the white horse.

In the meanwhile Gopanāryā, the ruler of Chengee and a Governor from the Vijayanagar Empire, defeated the Muslims and took possession of the kingdom, including Tiruchy. He brought back Sri Ranganāthā from the Tirumalai Hills (1365-70 A.D.) and reinstalled Him at Srirangam. Desika's benedictions to Gopanāryā's valour is inscribed on the temple walls at Srirangam. It indicates that Desika returned to Srirangam around that period.

**SCULPTURE MADE BY DESIKA**

In the Tamil year Kilaka, Vedanta Desika is said to have made a life-like statue of himself in competition with an expert in sculpture. He also wrote a treatise on Sculpture, 'Silpārtha Sārasangraham'.

In the following year, Sowmyā, on the 17th day of Kārthikā — corresponding to 1369-1370 A.D. and 1292 Sakā Year — on a full moon day, Vedānta Desika passed into transition, leaving behind him a vast literature and a legion of following. Brahmata-
Ira Swatatrar and Kumāra Varadhāchāryā (Desika's son) were among Desika's chief disciples.
THE 116 MONUMENTAL WORKS OF VEDANTA DESIKA

STOTRA GRANTHAS

1. Hayagreeva stotram
2. Dasavathara stotram
3. Bhagavadhyana sapanam
4. Gopala vimsathi
5. Sri Stuthi
6. Bhoo Stuthi
7. Goda Stuthi
8. Nyasa dasakam
9. Daya Sathakam
10. Abheethi Sthavam
11. Devanayaka Panchasath
12. Varadaraja Panchasath
13. Yothokthakari Stotram
14. Ashtabhujashtakam
15. Kamasikashtakam
16. Paramartha Stuthi
17. Saranagati Deepika
18. Achyutha Sathakam (Prakritic Work)
19. Dehaleesa sthuthi
20. Nyasathilakam
21. Raghuveeragadyam
22. Shodasayudha stotram
23. Sudarsanashtakam
24. Garuda Dandakam

* Only two scholars in the entire South Indian Classical literature, it is established beyond doubt, had brought forth more than one hundred monumental treatises which had survived down through the centuries. They are SRI VEDANTHA DESIKA and APPAIH DIKSHITHA.
25. Garuda Panchasath
26. Yaṭhirajasapthathi
27. Vairagya Panchakam
28. Nyasa vimsathi

KAVYA GRANTHAS

29. Subhashitha Neevi
30. Yadavabhuyudayam
31. Padukasahasram
32. Hamsa Sandesa

NATAKA GRANTHA

33. Sankalpa Suryodaya

VEDANTHA GRANTHAS

34. Meemamsa Paduka
35. Sesvara Meemamsa
36. Sathadushani
37. Adhikarana Saravali
38. Thatvateeka
39. Nyaya Parisuddhi
40. Nyayasiddhanjanam
41. Thatvamuktha Kalapam
42. Nikshepa Raksha
43. Sachcharitra Raksha
44. Sri Pancharatraraksha
45. Vaaditraya Khandanam
46. Dramidopanishat Thathparya Ratnavali
47. Dramidopanishad Saaram

VYAKHYANA GRANTHAS (Commentaries)

48. Chatusloki Bhashyam
49. Stotrarathna Bhashyam
50. Rahasyaraksha
51. Geetharthasangraha Raksha
52. Thathparyachandrika
53. Easavasyopanishad Bhashyam
54. Sarvarthasiddhi
55. Adhikarana Darpanam (not available)

ANUSHTANA GRANTHAS

56. Bhagavadradhanavidhi
57. Yognopaveetha Prathishta

RAHASYA GRANTHAS

58. Sampradaya Parisud.lhi
59. Thatva Padavee
60. Rahasya Padavee
61. Thetra Navaneetham
62. Rahasya Navaneetham
63. Thatva matruka
64. Rahasya matruka
65. Thatva Sandesam
66. Rahasya Sandesam
67. Rahasya Sandesa vivaranam
68. Thatva Ratnavali
69. Thatva Ratnavali Prathipadya Sangraha
70. Rahasya ratnaveli
71. Rahasya Ratnavali Hrudayam
72. Thatvatraya chulakam
73. Abhaya Pradana Saram
74. Rahasya sikhamani
75. Anjaliva'bhavam
76. Pradhana satakam
77. Upakara sangraham
78. Sara sangraham
79. Munivahana Bhogam
80. Madhurakavi Hrudayam (not available)
81. Paramapada sopanam
82. Paramatha Bhangam
83. Hasthigiri Mahatmyam
84. Srimad Rahasyatraya Saram
85. Sara Saram
86. Virodha Pariharam
87. Nigama Parimalam (not available)
88. Thirumudi Adaivu (not available)

TAMIL PRABHANDAS

89. Amrutha Ranjani
90. Adhikara Sangraham
91. Amurtha svadhini
92. Paramatha Sopanam
93. Paramatha Bhangam
94. Melvrutha Mahatmyam
95. Adalakalapattu
96. Artha Panchakam
97. Srivaishnavadinacharya
98. Thiruchinnamaalai
99. Pannirunamam
100. Thiru mantra churukku
101. Dvaya churukku
102. Charama sloka, churukku
103. Geethartha Sangraham
104. Mummanikovai
105. Navamani malai

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

106. Rahasyaihraya saram (Desika's Ekalakshyam of Avathara — His Magnum opus)
107. Servartha Siddhi (Tatwamuktha Kalapam Vikhyanam)
108. Rahasya Raksha (Gadyatraya Vykhyanam)
109. Prabhandha Saram
110. Rahasyatraya Chulakam
111. Nyasavimsathi Vykhyanam
112. Boogola Nirnayam
113. Hari Thila Thilakam
114. Silpartha Saram
115. Tatwa Sikhamani
116. Vedhartha Sangraham Vykhya

Panthupa, Kazhalpa, Ammanaipta, Usalpa, Yesalpa. Aahara Niyamam are partially available.

कवितार्फःकृति:सिद्धाय कल्याणगुणेणांलिते।
श्रीमते वेन्कटेश्याय वेदान्तगुरवे नमः॥

'KAVITHARKIKA SIMHAYA KALYANA GUNASALINAE
SRIMATHE VENKATESAYA VEDANTA GURAVE NAMAH'
THE ASURI BROTHERS