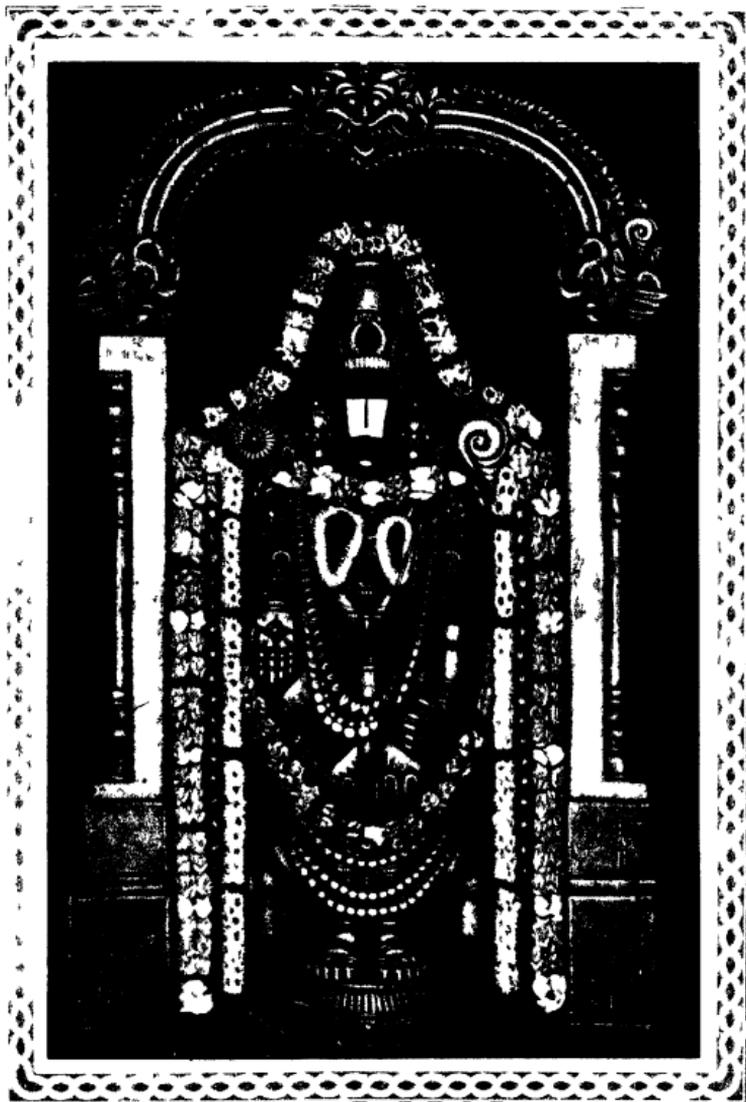


108 VAISHNAVITE DIVYA DESAMS

VOLUME FIVE

Miss M S Ramesh. I.A.S.



TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
TIRUPATI

1997

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VOLUME FIVE

Miss M.S. RAMESH, I.A.S. (Retd.)



Published by

M.K.R. VINAYAK, I.A.S.

Executive Officer

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TIRUPATI

1997

108 VAISHNAVITE DIVYA DESAMS - V

by

Ms. M.S. Ramesh

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T.T.D. Religious Publications Series No. 486

First Edition : 1997

Copies : 2000

Published by
Sri M.K.R. Vinayak I.A.S.,
Executive Officer,
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati.

Printed at
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Press,
Tirupati - 517 507.



**Dedicated
To my Parents
Smt. Padmavathy Srirama Iyengar
and
Prof. Srirama Iyengar**

FOREWORD

Tirumala, the sacred abode of Lord Venkateswara, is one of the most popular pilgrim centres in the country which attracts millions of devotees every year for offering prayers to the archa form of Sriman Narayana and getting their material and spiritual desires fulfilled. Apart from its hoary antiquity and the historical significance, what distinguishes Tirumala temple from other sacred shrines is the plethora of literary references and inscriptional evidence available from almost the very beginning of our history. The Vedas, Puranas and the early accounts found in Tamil literature of the Sangam period confirm the traditional view that the archamurti was not a man-made idol but the self-manifest God.

The antiquity as well as the growth and development of the holy temple at Tirumala through the centuries has so much fascinated the researchers and students of history that a number of books were written by eminent scholars like Sarvasi S. Krishnaswamy Ayyangar, T.K.T. Viraraghavacharya, N. Ramesan, and M. Rama Rao, focussing on the history, layout and architectural features of the shrine. The author of the present volume, however delves deep into the spiritual significance of the Tirumala Temple and delineates the glory of the Lord of Tiruvengadam in an enviable manner. The author also describes the transcendental and immanent nature of Lord Srinivasa as visualised by the Alwars.

The publishers deem it a great privilege to present the fifth volume of 108 Vaishnavite Divya Desas to the readers.

Executive Officer
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

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PREFACE

This book is the 5th volume in the series of seven covering the 108 Vaishnavite Divya Desas. This volume, I had originally programmed (vide preface of Volume I) to cover the two divya desas in Andhra Pradesh viz. Tirupati and Ahobalam along with the two divya desas which are beyond this world viz. Vaikunta and Ksheerabdi. But now this volume deals with only one divya desa viz. Tirupati. I think I should explain this change in plan. The readers may recall that while dealing with the other divya desas, I had selected only a few mangalasan pasurams of the alvars on that divya desa. But while writing about Tirumala, I felt a compelling urge to translate completely all the 202 pasuramson Lord Venkatachalapathi composed by alvars. Further the epigraphical material available in the Tirumala temple was also very voluminous and though I selected only a few representative inscriptions, yet I found that the matter relating to Tirupati came to about 800 pages in the manuscript form ! The material relating to the other three divya desas viz. Ahobalam, Vaikunta and Ksheerabdi came to another 300 pages of manuscript material. Thus, if I stuck on to my original plan of covering all these four divya desas in one volume, the book would have become too bulky to handle with ease. I decided that it is more convenient if volume 5 covered only Tirupati and that Ahobalam, Vaikunta and Ksheerabdi be taken on to a seperate book as volume 6. However, I wanted to stick to the holy figure of 7 and have therefore decided to cover all the remaining divya desas of Malai Nadu (Kerala) and Vada Nadu (North India) in the last volume i.e. the seventh volume. This in brief explains why this volume deals with only one divya desa viz. Tirupati.

It may be recalled that in the earlier four volumes, I had adopted the practice of presenting an introductory general chapter on one important general vaishnavite theme. In Volume one, I had a general chapter on "Temple and its architecture and the Traits of Lord Vishnu", in volume two I wrote on Maha-

lakshmi, in Volume three on panchayudhams of Maha Vishnu and in Volume four, I covered Peria Thiruvadi viz. Garuda. In this volume, as I am dealing with Tirupati which is regarded as Bhooloka Vaikuntha, I felt it would be appropriate to have a general chapter on Prapatti i.e. surrender. Prapatti marga is regarded as a sure and easy means for attaining moksha.

The readers of this volume may also notice that I have omitted to translate the verse written by Divya Kavi Pillai Perumal Iyengar on the Tirupati Divya desa. This is because I have seperately brought out a small booklet translating all the 1 08 verses each of Divya Kavi Pillai Perumal Iyengar on the Lord of the Seven Hills in his Thiruvengadathu Andaadhi and Thiruvengada malai. This has been published seperately and so the same is not repeated here.

It is now my pleasant duty to specially thank atleast few of the many who have helped me in bringing out this volume. My special thanks are to my elder sister Dr.M.S. Lakshmi Kumari, my brother Dr.M.S. Rajajee and my sister Dr. Revathy Sriram for all the help and encouragement that they so affectionately extended in collecting, collating and presenting the material covered in this volume. I will also be failing in my duty if I do not express my special thanks to my teacher Ubhaya Vedantha Sri Pillai Lokam Sthalasayanathuraivar Swamigal, who explained the pasurams in great detail. My thanks are also due to Prof. Ananthan, Professor and Head of Department of English, Vivekananda College and Prof. Narasimhachary, Professor and Head of Department of Vaishnavism, University of Madras for their expert guidance and encouragement.

My special thanks are due to Sri Ramaswami, who was then working as Private Secretary to the Executive Officer, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams who spared no effort in helping me to

collect all the photos which bring to life the chapter on Tirupati. But for him, I would have found it quite difficult and almost impossible to collect these photos.

My special thanks are also due to Sri K. Ramji and Miss Lakshmi for the excellent secretarial assistance that they extended to me so cheerfully and willingly. It was their personal and religious involvement with the material that was being typed out which made it possible for them to cheerfully work for long hours denying themselves many a holiday so as to complete this work on time. I wish to place on record my special thanks to them. My thanks are also due to Sri Chandrasekhar who extended unstinting co-operation in correcting the proof copies.

I would also like to take this opportunity to place on record the wonderful co-operation and assistance extended by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Press in bring out this volume. My special thanks are due to late Sri Vijayakumar Reddy, Manager, TTD Press and Sri Mohan Rao, Manager TTD Press and Sri Govindarajulu, Assistant Manager, TTD Press who spared no efforts in maintaining the quality of the printed material. All the people who have read the earlier volumes of this book also praised the quality of printing, the quality of the photos and the overall get-up of the book. The credit for all this goes to the above-mentioned officers in the TTD Press who spared no efforts in ensuring the technical excellence in printing of the book.

In conclusion, I do hope that all those who read the chapter on Tirupati will experience the same joy and spiritual satisfaction that I got while writing it. I hope this armchair travelogue will be a fairly good substitute for a personal visit to that Bhooloka Vaikunta.

Om Namo Narayanaaya

SRI SWAMIJI'S SRIMUKHAM

At a time when a majority of the public are leaning towards ways suited to their own tastes neglecting vedic rites, temples and adorations, the attentive attempt of Kum. Ramesh MS., I.A.S. by penning volumes on the Divya desas-holy places of Vaishnavas (greatly praised by Alwars who were the replicas of devotion) gives us great joy and wonder.

It is only the lucky that develop faith in God. The devotion in the Lord of Lakshmi comes to those who for several thousands of births adore devas (Demi gods). Then alone can one know the greatness of idol worship. At least the idol never asks one 'why worship has not been offered to Him.' A very broad-mind is needed to believe deity as the divine form of Almighty who is the cause of the universe.

We may defend ourselves with a logic that the all-pervasive Lord contained in each and every atom of the Universe and likeness is found in the sanctified deity bearing a form and a name. We accept Spiritual Texts as authority and observe the ways mentioned in them. They are known as the Agamas.

There are temples in many places but a few only got acceptance of 'Sistas' the highly purified spiritual souls, as Divyadesas. Divyadesas are famous because the Bhagavan had manifested to devotees of high order or in the places frequently visited by alwars or the ones favoured by them. In some places the deities had been consecrated by sages. Divyadesas, however, are famous because of the visits of devotees the world over.

The holy places are 108 sung by Alwars of which 106 are on our earth. They always sang the praises of the Lord in different ways. Palkadali and Paramapadam are above our imagination. Alwars' songs have become 'Divya prabandhas' or Treatises

Divine depicting the pilgrim centres and the grandeur of the presiding deities. According to Agamas, God comes onto the earth and gets installed by Rishis and Alwars as deities. Praised by them, the Divine descends even at discomfort to Him. In order, however, to avoid pains to the Godhead, elders ever offer best wishes to the archamurti or the deity being worshipped.

Some doubt why at all God who created the universe had to become a deity? Can't he save this world from above? In answer to the requests made to Him He took idol form for making Himself available to the ardent devotees for accepting their worship. The second benefit of the paramatma's act is to protect the world. Such kind of devotees want nothing from the Lord. They only want to see and adore Him always.

Our tradition holds that if God manifests in mobile form, He shall go back to look to multifold jobs of the Universe. So in order to ever appear before the eyes of the devotees the Lord became immobile idol, the deity. So the idol in the temple is regarded as 'adorable incarnation' of God. It is termed as 'archavataram'.

'Soulabhyam' or 'easy accessibility' is one of the endless beneficent and auspicious qualities of the Lord. Paramatman has no personal needs and is ever satisfied and free in all aspects, yet He allows Himself to be in the custody of the priests. This is the quality of the Lord's availability in the easiest way. If some object falls into a well it must be drawn out by a device called anchor; it is possible only when the anchor goes to the bottom of the well and holds the object by connecting its hooks to it. Jivas' condition in the mundane world is similar. They are uplifted by the Lord in the like manner, He fulfils the wishes of jivas and wins their love and favour. Agamas or sciences of temples depict the deity as a form attracting jivas towards it by its loveliness, eye-catching decorations, festivities and divine

food called 'Prasadām'. Deserted hearts also find solace and shelter at the deity's feet.

Those who have the heart to understand praise idol worship as wholesome and others dismiss it as useless.

I am reminded of the conversation between Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Pedda Jeeyar Swami and Sri E.V. Ramaswami Naikar when they met in Tiruchi in 1969.

EVR showed a cockroach on the Pillayar idol in his house. "If God cannot throw away the visible insect crawling on His body, how can He throw away the sins of devotees clinging unseen to the mind? As it is impossible I decided that idol worship is useless and became an atheist," he said.

Swamiji smiled and said: "Don't we see grandfathers feeling overjoyed on seeing grandchildren and great grandchildren? They embrace them and put them right on their heads and do not abuse them or throw them away if they excrete stool or urinate on their bodies. God's love for us is greater than ours. His family is bigger than ours. Ours is a family of few members. The entire creation is His family. That is why when cockroach is playing on His body, He thinks his grand children and great grand children are playing and never throws them away." It seems he felt happy on hearing this explanation.

There is a sloka in 'Srimadbhagavata', "Preatimasu Aprabuddhanam", idol worship is for the simpletons and not for the 'Prabuddhas' who are knowledgeable. Some modern people have entertained wrong ideas that idol worship is the first step and meditation (without doing anything else) is the final step. 'Aprabuddhas' are those whose eyes do not see whether the outwardly visible forms of money, metal, wood, paper or loam or whatever is outside the idol. They give importance to the 'Paramatma tatwa' inside and worship with complete faith.

They are great 'Jnanis' who do not desire any form other than the 'Archamurti'. Hanuma in Sri Ramayana belongs to this category of Jnanis. Similarly an Alwar called 'Tiruppaan' also belongs to this category.

The Alwars belong to this category. After giving devotional services to Lord Sri Ranganath they held the faith that the eyes which enjoyed the picturesqueness and perfection of that Lord, dislike to see all other forms. (Unnai kanda kangal mattonninai kkanave). When the divinity Himself appears as deity before our eyes, 'isn't it a folly to go for other things?' So Alwars are satisfied with the presence of deities as Archamurtis.

A santi mantra of Veda (Poorname vavasishyate) is authority on the overall perfectness of deities as the right channel for spiritual progress. Way other than this is like expecting water from clouds when it is readily available at hand

History has it that Lord Sri Ranganath is the first deity to have descended onto the earth. Yet Lord Venkateswara has attained recognition as the foremost Deity and as Godhead on the earth. He is worshipped by different Divine names like Ventachalapati, Sri Venkatesa etc. Sri Srinivasa is the only Lord with prettiness in all details and Tirupati is famed as the unique pilgrim centre having enormous earnings. None other than Lord Venkateswara enjoys the splendour among the 106 Divya Desas. Personal experiences of devotees by alleviation of their grievances and elevation to spiritual world are indicators of the rare powers of the Lord.

Tamil terms "kata" represent sinheaps of past births and 'Vem' dispeller or burner. It means 'dispeller of all sins'. Some ways or other demi gods too can remove sins. But the firm bonds of the Karma are broken by Lord Srinivasa alone. Hence the nomenclature 'Venkateswara'. 'Ishwar' means one who is

the custodian and controller. All Devas are beholden to only one Lord who is the custodian and controller. All Devas behave at the orders of the Lord by his mere looks. So Lord Srinivasa became Lord Venkateswara. The Hill 'Venkatachalam' where He stays itself cleanses the sins of the devotees. This was stated by the Alwars. It is also called 'Tiruvengadam' and the Lord is addressed as TIRUVENGADAMUDAIYAN.

Holy places or pilgrim centres assume popularity and eminence when some persons work for them and serve with commitment. In the past, people found leisure and visited temples with great attention and devotion in spite of non-availability of transport facilities. People used to move all over the country and visited places of spiritual eminence. Paradoxically, now people stopped pilgrimage although world became too small with latest transport modes. Lack of proper knowledge about the Divyadesas and love of earning money are reasons for this lapse. Though money-earning is a great attainment, it should not become a handicap to spiritual progress. Pilgrimage (visits to holy places) must be given top priority. Spread of English education has adversely affected devotional literature mainly because most of it was written in Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil. To overcome this problem at the right time, Kum. Ramesh has published a compendium on the splendour of the 108 Divyadesas in a simple and lucid English. This gives us satisfaction. The volume is a guide to pilgrims. It contains important addresses, routes, history, testaments of yore etc. together with worthseeing places and mainly the pasuras sung by Alwars in praise of the Divyadesas. A short note on them has also been given by her.

A thing which needs special mention among the contents is the description of Lord Venkateswara which has been made in proportion to His stature and is indicative of the writer's dearly regard towards the Lord of Seven Hills. Besides transliteration of Alwar's pasurams into English, inclusion of ordinary, extraordinary and exclusive meanings make the volume authoritative.

Some modernists spread doubts among the public asking the gender of Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati: 'Is he Male or Female?' 'or What kind of person?' Srimadbhagavadgita has answers to them. It reveals Him as Sri Mahavishnu who dons conch, discus, mace etc., with countless names. Devas exist in his form Universal. Kshetra mahatyam almost the 12 out of 18 puranas mentioned the famous story of Lord Srinivasa. The uncontextual remarks passed by some people due to half-knowledge are unimportant. Among the 108 Divyadesas the lively descriptions made by Kum. Ramesh with greater care and devotion deserves benedictions by Padmavati Lakshmi Ammavaru who is the winner of Lord Srinivasa's Heart's Empire.

We proffer our blessings profusely for the spread of the Lord's splendour by means of this rare work. We hope her books will be utilised by the seekers who believe in the great Almighty.

sd/- Sri Shriman Narayana Jeer Swamiji.

108 VAISHNAVITE DIVYA DESAMS

VOLUME - V

PRAPATTI

In these series of volumes where I have been dealing with the 108 vaishnavite divya desas, I have been following the practice of having an introductory chapter dealing with a topic which is of relevance to vaishnavism in general. Accordingly in the first volume, there was a general chapter on the temple and its significance and on Lord Vishnu and His traits. In the second volume I dealt with Mahalakshmi. In the third volume, I covered the Panchayudhas of Maha Vishnu. In the fourth volume, I wrote on the vahana of Perumal viz. Peria Tiruvadi (Garuda). In this volume which is going to cover the four divya desas of Tirupati and Ahobilam and also Vaikuntham and Ksheerabdhi, I feel it will be appropriate if I touch upon the fundamental concept in vaishnavism viz. prapatti as a mokshopaya. At the outset, I must state that prapatti is a very crucial concept in Vaishnava philosophy. Tomes have been written on it by great acharyas. It is like a deep ocean. Many may think that in this small canvas it would not only be very difficult to fully explain and expatiate upon this fundamental truth, but also fool hardy to attempt it even. But then I believe that even when the ocean is deep, people who take to surf riding have the pleasure of skimming with speed on the crest of the waves and deriving the pleasure of enjoying the ocean to some extent though denied the pleasure of diving deep into the ocean and discovering pearls and corals. So it is that I am making bold in this general chapter - within the scope of 10 to 15 pages to broadly touch upon the essentials of this subject of prapatti.

Prapatti is the theory of surrender (at the feet of the Lord) and it is of unfailing efficacy in achieving the desired result viz. salvation. Prapatti is also known as Nyasa. The spiritual literature says that nyasa or self surrender at the feet of the Lord is one of the many means for attaining Moksha. Nyasa is

severally known as Tyaaga (sacrifice), Saranagati (taking refuge), Prapadana (seeking asylum), Atma nikshepa (surrender of self), Bhara nyasa (transferring the burden of protection). Whatever be the word that is used nyasa is a means for salvation.

The Alvars thro their literary outpourings have made the maximum contribution for postulating on this prapatti yoga as a mokshapaya. Acharyas like Yamunacharya, Ramanuja, Desika and Periavachan Pillai have thro' their numerous works in four languages viz. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Tamil and Mani pravala dealt with nyasa. The treatises which require special mention are Nyasa dasakam, Nyasa vimsati, Nyasa Tilakam, Nikshepa raksha, Saranagati dheepika, Adaikkala pattu Abhaya pradanasaram . Saranagati gadyam as well as Sriranga gadyam as also Sree Vachana Bhooshanam and Stotra Ratnam.

Nyasa as an upaya for moksha has a great holy antiquity. It is regarded as a brahma vidya. Sri Vishnu purana, Sri Bhagavata purana and other satvika puranas have in several places expatiated on the efficacy of nyasa as a means for attaining salvation. The Ramayana is itself regarded as a saranagati veda. Numerous episodes in that great treatise speak volumes about the efficacy of Saranagati. The srutis say that nyasa is a great tapas. The Taittiriya Upanishad says that Nyasa is superior to all the forms of tapas. One who performs prapatti i.e. nyasa is said to be equal to one who has performed a great yaga or sacrifice. Nyasa is described as a yaga in Rig veda. The vedas say that it is a direct and immediate means to moksha. Lord Shiva in the Ahirbudhnya samhita has praised Nyasa as a means for moksha when He said that a prapanna (one who adopts the practice of nyasa) is a swadhvara i.e. one who has performed a good yaga. In another place, the Tittiriya Upanishad refers to Nyasa as "Devanam guhyam" i.e. regarded as a top secret by the devas. The scriptures say that nyasa is "sakshan mokshopaya" i.e. a direct means for moksha.

The Tittiriya Upanishad goes one step further and lists out the different paths in the ascending order of effectiveness for attaining moksha. They are as follows:

Satyam (practice of truth)
Tapas (reducing bodily needs)
Dama (control of one's outer senses)
Sama (control of one's inner senses)
Daanam (giving liberally of one's possessions)
Dharma (practice of the duties)
Prajanana (begetting children)
Agneyah (tending sacred fires)
Agnihotra (offering to the devas through fire)
Yajna (sacrifices)
Maanasa (meditation of God)
Nyasa (surrender).

It says that nyasa is the most effective and most superior of all the above mentioned tapas (Tasmaan nyasam esham tapasam atiriktamaahuh).

In brief, therefore, prapatti has sanctity as a vedic prayoga. It is recommended as a means to attain moksha by our elders who are proficient in dharma sastras. It is also an acceptable means to the vaishnavite preceptors and acharyas. In addition, it has the sanction of srutis. Above all, it is most acceptable to Lord Himself. Nammalvar did prapatti at the feet of Lord Srinivasa. Ramanuja did it at the feet of Lord Ranganatha. Desika did it at the feet of Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi. Let us now touch upon some of the broad characteristics of prapatti.

The two most commonly adopted practices for attaining salvation are Bhakti and Prapatti. Let us now briefly cover the strong points in each of these means to attain salvation. Both the means are hard though the end result is the same. It is basically the characteristics and the plus points of the upasaka i.e. the devotee which will determine which path he adopts. Bhakti marga is very hard. It involves a great amount of exertion and trouble. It has to be practised for a long period till the prarabdha karma of the individual who adopts this means gets fully exhausted. Further, Bhakti yoga can be adopted only by people who have the necessary jnana and sakti. It cannot be

practised universally, as only those who are learned in vedas and who practise the vedic path can take to this method. Very often, it is said that the bhakti marga is as difficult as trying to cross a river of fire on a bridge of hair! What is more, it does not yield the fruit viz. salvation quickly, because any possible lapse in implementing the method will push the end result farther away from one's reach. It therefore needs a continuous, sustained effort and is prima facie inconsistent with the nature of an ordinary atman.

Bhakti marga has seven important angas or aspects:-

The first is Viveka i.e. discrimination about his food that one eats. It is suggested that satvic food is conducive to promotion of to the attitude of bhakti. The second step is vimoka i.e. freedom from all desires. The third aspect is abhyasa i.e. there should be repeated practice of meditation. It is only through practice that one becomes perfect and control the mind and make it think of God and only God. The fourth aspect is kriya. This step prescribes that one should perform pancha mahayajna as per one's own capacity. The pancha mahayajnas as per Manu are as follows: Brahma yaga i.e. teaching and studying sacred texts. The second is pitru yajnas i.e. one should please the forefathers with offering of food. The third yajna is Deiva yajna. This involves performing fire oblations to please Gods. The fourth yajna is Bhootha yajnas which refers to offering food to the creatures like crows and other living beings. The last of the pancha mahayajnas is nara yajna i.e. to receive and honour guests. Thus, performing these pancha mahayajnas constitutes the kriya aspect of bhakti marga. The fifth aspect of bhakti marga is kalyanam i.e. adopting the fundamental truths like satyam, ahimsa, paropakara etc. The sixth aspect is Anavasadha i.e. one should not lose one's heart and one should be cheerful even in the face of adversity. The last aspect of bhakti marga is Anuddharsha i.e. one should not express excessive joy or exaltation, but should have a very balanced approach and reaction to worldly things. Only when one adopts all these seven aspects one can claim to be following the bhakti marga for attaining salvation.

Prapatti is the very opposite of bhakti. It is easy. It is quick. It is result-oriented. It is universal. It does not have the danger of any possibility of lapses. It is ideally suited and consistent with the nature of the atma especially in Kali yuga when confusion and adharmā predominate. It is a completed task (siddha) and therefore does not require any continued self effort. Prapatti means a state of complete subjugation of oneself to the Lord. It is therefore capable of immediate effect to those in extreme distress. It will do away with another birth. There is no question of one having to live out the consequences of one's prarabdha karma before attaining salvation if we adopt this practice of prapatti. It does not have as a pre-requisite, any agni-karya. Thus, it can be followed by anyone irrespective of caste, creed or sex. It is observable by mankind in general, like adopting some basic philosophic truths like speaking truth for ever. It has to be performed only once like a yaga. It is regarded as not only "sakrt kartavyam", but also as "kshana-kartavyam" i.e. it gives the good result immediately unlike the bhakti yoga which is a long drawn out process! Prapatti is regarded as a sarva phala sadhana i.e. it confers all types of desired ends as against yagas and yajnas which confer on people only select desired fruits. For example, a person who performs putra-kameshti yaga will be blessed only with good progeny. But prapatti as a means can be adopted for any and every and all kinds of ends. This "sarva roga nivarini" characteristic of prapattito secure all kinds of ends is elaborately dealt with in the Rahasyatrayasara. It is said that adoption of prapatti can wipe out immediately all the sins of the prapanna.

The doubting thomases may wonder as to how prapatti can wipe out so quickly the accumulated sins. This question has been answered by Desika in sloka 19 of Nyasa Tilakam. Sri D.Ramasamy Iyengar commenting on this has beautifully summarised the answer when he says that our accumulated sins get wiped out by the single act of prapattias Sri or Lakshmi who is inseparably associated with Perumal pleads with Him for us. Perumal will not ever refuse Her request. She has vatsalyam towards us and so the moment we seek the grace of Perumal, She takes on the role of Purushakara i.e. pleading on our behalf and prevails upon God to wipe out our immense sins. Can

Lokamata ever fail? That is why prapatti which acts or appeals thro Sri is a never failing, ever sure path to salvation.

The question is also raised how the Lord Who is the dispenser of results as per each one's karma can lead us to His abode, which even Brahma and Shiva cannot easily reach. This doubt is settled by saying that Narayana is more anxious than we to take us back to Himself. He is only waiting for the slightest excuse to protect us. When we raise our hands in helplessness, He immediately holds the hands and draws us into Himself. The Lord's love and affection towards His children is said to be phenomenal. He is said to be ever ready and eager to help mankind even in preference to other devas. That is why while Brahma and Shiva find it difficult to attain moksha or to enter into Vaikuntha, we mere mortals are helped by Lord Vishnu to reach His divine feet.

There are some who doubt as to how a small act of prapatti can result in the great Supreme bliss of attaining salvation. This is said to be possible as the love of God towards us, His creation, is so great that even a small act on our part pleases Him with a ageometric multiplier effort. That is why when Draupadi threw up her hands and cried out for help and when Gajendra trumpeted his pain and sought saranam, God rushed to their aid.

Some wonder how prapatti could have an immediate effect. This is said to be because of the great quality of daya i.e. infinite kindness of God which does not tolerate or brook any delay. It is said to be "varuttam pora arul" .(Sri Desikaprabandham - Navamani malai, v.9) That is why prapatti is said to result in immediate prompt relief and blessing, as God does not tolerate delay and does not tarry.

Some wonder as to how prapatti can confer the benefit of all and sundry irrespective of their status. The answer for this is very simple, as in the eyes of God all are equal. Birth,wealth, learning etc. do not have any weight in the eyes of Perumal. He is said to be like the cloud which empties the life giving water on all without making any distinction and demarcation.

Prapatti needs no other aid. It is not preceded by the necessity to observe any karma, yoga or varnasrama dharma, etc. It has no pre-conditional limitations.

Let us now see what are the main tenets and steps to be taken while adopting prapatti marga.

Inevitably the first step is to secure a good acharya. Nyasa vimsati of Vedanta Desika, slokas 1 and 2, clearly spell out the qualities of a good acharya. The acharya sambandha is an essential part in this journey towards salvation through surrender. The slokas spell out 14 qualifications for a good acharya. He should be one who takes a firm stand in keeping with tradition (siddham satsampradaye). He should possess a steady and unflinching mind (sthira dhiyam). He should be blemishless and pure (anagham). He should be well versed in the vedas (srotriyam). He should be having firm belief in Bhagavan (Brahmanistha). He should be the embodiment of satva guna (satvastham). He should be one who swears by speaking the truth and only the truth (satya vacham). He should be one who possess good conduct (samaya niyataya sadhu vrtya sametam). He should be a person free from vanity and jealousy (dambha-asuyadimuktam). He should be one who is having no desire towards worldly pleasures (jita visaya ganam). He should be one who regards the entire mankind as his relations (dirgha bandhu). He should be extremely kind, compassionate towards all (dayalum). He should be one who checks and corrects people who are apt to stray away from the correct path (skhaalitye sasitaram). Finally he should be one who always acts in a manner which results in welfare for himself as well as for others (sva para-hita param).

The acharya should be worshipped as if he were the Lord Himself as it is he who helps in dispelling ignorance and makes us realise God. Hence it is that our ancient always used to say "acharya devo bava", "yatha deve tatha gurau". To drive home this point of the importance of having a good acharya, Vedanta Desika in his Nyasa Tilakam, sloka 21, gives three examples as to how acharya helps a mumukshu. He says a blind man is led by a man with a good eye sight and is thus able to move about

fearlessly. This means that the blind person does not have jnana and the person with eye sight has jnana and is able to guide the devotee properly. Another example given by Vedanta Desika is that of a lay man who wants to cross a stream who entrusts himself to a boatman who lifts him and carries him in the boat across the water. The lay man reaches the other shore which he could not have done, had he not sought the help of the boat man. Here the illustration shows want of strength (sakti) on the part of the lay man. Yet another illustration given in that sloka is a situation where a faithful servant of the king is gifted with presents by the king as he is pleased with his services. The servant takes those presents home and enjoys them in the company of his wife and children who may not have even seen the king. This illustrates a situation where a person has neither jnana nor sakti but yet is able to enjoy fruits of both with a good preceptor. In short, Vedanta Desika says that before seeking prapatti, one should entrust oneself to a great acharya.

The second most important aspect of prapatti is that one should perform Saranagati only to Sriman i.e. Bhaghavan along with Thayar. Surrender has to be made to the two of them. The intervention of "Akhila Jaganmata" is necessary for Bhagavad-anubhava. This is known as Sri Prapatti or Purushakara prapatti. Purushakara means one who recommends. A person who recommends must have sufficient influence to carry through his or her recommendations (vallabhyam) and should also have unbounded affection (vatsalyam) towards the person who seeks the recommendation. Thayar as the chief consort of the Lord, fulfills both these qualifications. She is ever eager to recommend to Jagatpita to forgive and forget all the sins that may be committed by the devotees who are seeking salvation. She has great influence over Perumal and She has great compassion towards us. That is why She has Herself said in the Lakshmi Tantram "Prayaschitta prasangetu sarva papa samudbhava mamekam deva devasya mahishmi saranam srayet". In the fourth sloka of Nyasa Tilakam Vedanta Desika has specially drawn our attention to the special qualities of Thayar which make Her the only person fully qualified to intercede on our behalf. The very word "Sri" has the following six meanings:-

"Sriyate" that She is sought after as the sole refuge;

"Srayate" She seeks the Lord on our behalf for our protection;

"Srunoti" She is ever willing to listen patiently to our cries;

"Sravayati" She makes the Lord listen to us;

"Srunati" She gets rid of our difficulties

"Srinati" She makes us to receive His daya kataksham We have to therefore seek refuge in Sriman through Thayar i.e. Sri.

Let us now understand the five angas i.e. steps or aspects of prapatti. Sloka 18 of Nyasa Vimsati of Vedanta Desika clearly spells out the following five angas: The first is "Akinchanyam" or "kaarpanya anusandhanam" i.e. the devotee has to say that he is absolutely helpless and impotent, worthless incapable person i.e. absolute humility.

The second is "praati koolya varjana", i.e. there should be a determination not to transgress or violate any of the laws laid down by Lord i.e. we should have no passing thought even to disobey His commands. Renounce what is repugnant to God.

The third step is "anukoolya sankalpa". This is a positive way of representing the second point. Here it says that we should take a vow to follow the rules and regulations laid down by the Lord and consequently cause Him pleasure. Be willing and ready to follow the will of the Sesin.

The fourth step is "Maha visvasa". The use of the word "maha" is not to be missed. This represents that one should have unshakeable faith in the Lord being the sole saviour, protector and succour i.e. God as universal rakshaka. Maha visvasa is a very difficult proposition. Bhattar while explaining this concept is said to have given an illustration. He said that a landlord asked his tenant to pay rent at one "kalam" of gingelly seeds as the "melvaram". The tenant pleaded his inability to pay that much. The Landlord then said, "Well, I concede your request. Instead you pay one "kalam" of gingelly oil!". To obtain that one kalam of gingelly oil, many more kalams of seeds than the one kalam asked for earlier, are needed. Similarly to obtain Mahavisvasa which is necessary for adopting the prapatti marga, one has to put in much more effort than while adopting the bhakti marga.

The final step is "goptrva varana" i.e. one should seek the daya of the Lord as the sole protector and hope for moksha. These five steps are therefore the angas of prapatti i.e. intrinsic parts of prapatti and prapatti becomes an angi i.e. the principal object sought to be achieved.

The person who adopts prapatti yoga need therefore to observe certain dictates. He should be willing to carry out the dictates of the Lord and please Him. He should not do anything that will displease him. He should have absolute, unquestioned faith that Perumal will protect him. He should seek Bhagavan as the sole saviour. He should, in unmistakable terms, say that he is helpless and cannot survive without the helping hand being extended by Perumal. The prapatti yoga nishta need not have jnana and sakti, but he should be prepared to entrust himself to God and offer a prayer for protection. Thus svarupa samarpana, bhara samarpana and phala samarpana form important integral parts of prapatti. The aspirant for moksha through saranagati therefore consigns himself to the care of Perumal and has to believe that the upaya i.e. the means as well as the end i.e. the fruit along with all His belongings chetana and achetana i.e. sentient or otherwise belong only to God. In prapatti, therefore the upaya i.e. the means is God, the upeya i.e. goal is also God. In order to attain Him in prapatti yoga, the siddhopaya is God Narayana Himself. The sadhyopaya is also God Himself. Thus He becomes the means as well as the end. When we accept to follow the path of saranagati we should say that all the other upayas have abandoned us and that we are unfit to take any other upaya. The vedas describe this situation by saying "Mumukshur vai saranamaham prapdye" i.e. "I who am desirous of attaining moksha am seeking saranagati at your feet" i.e. "I am seeking solace and succour at your feet". As stated earlier, the two important aspects of prapatti can be broadly classified as a positive and negative aspect. The negative aspect is to stress that I who am seeking saranagati am no good. The positive aspect is to say that the person at whose feet I am seeking saranagati is all powerful and is endowed with all gunas or lakshanas of a great person.

Prapatti as a sure and sovereign remedy for getting rid of our sins and as an instrument which holds the only message of hope for all mankind has been expatiated upon by the Lord Himself during His avataras as Rama and Krishna. This aspect is referred to in sloka 3 and 23 of the Nyasatilakam by Vedanta Desika and in the Saranagati Gadyam by Ramanuja Himself. The moola mantra, Dvaya mantra and Charama slokas uttered by Perumal are themselves the quintessence of the saranagati philosophy. Let us now look at these three mantras and their content.

The moola mantra is "Om Namō Narayanaya" The word OM is called pranava. It is A + U + Ma. A stands for Perumal with Thayar i.e. Sriyahpati. He is the source of all things, ideas, words. Ma or makaram and it stands for jeevatma i.e. nara. U or ukaram stands for ananyarhatvam i.e. jeevatma belongs to none other than God. Thus this one word establishes His transcendental immanence and His role as sarva rakshaka. "Namaha" is arrived by Na + mah which mean, "I do not belong to myself". The utterance of that word defeats three enemies viz. svaroopā virodhi, purushartha virodhi and upaya virodhi. It prescribes the abandonment of ahamkara (egoism) and adoption of saranagati as upaya. The word Narayana means one who is the embodiment of all things and who is in everything. The suffix aya in Narayanaya explains kainkarya i.e. service.

In brief the moola mantra says that atma nivedana i.e. offering one's self to the sesin is the means for moksha. The Mula mantra as a whole and thro' its component parts makes it evident says Sri P.N.Srinivasachary¹ that Narayana alone is the source of all existence, the goal of all experience and the means of realising that goal".

Let us now see how the Dvaya mantra also is an epitome of Nyasa philosophy. The Dvaya mantra reads as follows:-

*"Sriman Narayana charanam saranam prapadye
Srimate Narayanaya Namah"*

¹ Sri P.N. Srinivasachari "The philosophy of Vishistadwaita" Page 387

i.e. I seek refuge at the feet of Sriyahpati. When the chetana seeks salvation and wants his sins to be forgiven he has to address God with whom consort is there. The word Narayana refers to Perumal Who has sauseelyam, sauwlabhyam, vatsalyam and svamitvam. Sri, Who resides on His chest intercedes on behalf of the devotees and redeems them. Thus, the dual form of God as Jagatpita and Jaganmata holds hope for salvation of even the worst sinner. To such a daya svaroopi, the devotee who repeats Dvaya mantra, naturally desires to do kainkarya. God in His role as Karman thro' intervention and association with Sri (Thayar) becomes Kripamoorti. The words "Prapadye" and "Namaha" in Dvaya mantra prescribe and indicate svaroopam samarpana and bhara samarpana i.e. renouncing egoism and responsibility to protect oneself. Thus, the Dvaya is also a saranagati mantra.

The Srivaishnava tradition speaks of three charama slokas. First is Varaha Charama Sloka which runs as follows:

*"Sthite manasi susvasthe
Sariresathil yo narah!
Dhatu samye stite smartha
Visvaroopancham mam ajam!!
Tatastam mriyamanam tu
Kashta pashana sannibham
Aham smarami madbhaktam
Nayani paramam gatim!!!"*

Lord told this fundamental truth to Bhoomidevi when as Varaha He had rescued Her from the depths of the ocean to which the asura Hiranyaksha had abducted Her. Here Perumal assures Thayar that if a person when he is young and has perfect control over body, and is hale and healthy and thinks of God atleast once at that time, later even if that person were to become old, decrepit, and senseless and useless like a stone or piece of wood, and not respected by anyone, and about to die and not able to think of God at that last moment, he will still confer moksha on him. He will protect him.

The second Charama sloka is Sri Ramacharama sloka. It runs as follows:

*"Sakrudeva prapannaya
Tavasmeehi cha yachate
Abhayam sarva bootebhyo
Dadami etad vratan mama"*

(Ramayana, Yuddhakanda, Ch.18 v.33)

During Rama avatar when Vibhishana, brother of Ravana sought saranagati with Sri Rama, the monkey warriors were doubting the antecedents of Vibhishana. Rama then propounded this truth and said that whoever does prapatti even once and says that he belongs to God, such a being be it man or animal He would give abhaya. That is the vratha or the policy that Rama took upon Himself in that avatar. That is why Rama is known as Saranagata vatsala. He gave protection to Vibhishana as also to Kakasura, to Samudra raja, to Sugreeva and others.

The third Charama sloka is popular as the Sri Krishna charama sloka. It runs as follows:-

*"Sarva dharman parityaya mam ekam saranam vraja
Aham tva sarva papebhyo mokshay ishyami ma suchah
(Bhagavad gita XVIII.66)*

The meaning of this sloka is only too well known. Lord Krishna told Arjuna that "whoever renounces all dharmas and takes refuge in me, will be released of all sins. Do not grieve". This sloka also is an epitome on the Nyasa siddhanta.

Thus it is seen that while the moola mantra expresses Nyasa philosophy in a nut shell, the Dvaya mantra makes it more explicit. The charama sloka makes the meaning even more elaborate. To quote Sri Srinivasa chari² "If the moola mantra explains the theory of saranagati and the dvaya mantra elaborates it and shows also how it is to be practised, the charama sloka explicitly prescribes saranagati as the means to be adopted by the mumukshu incapable of bhakti yoga and expressly promises him release from all the accumulated load of sins that prevent his enjoyment of the birth right of absolute service to the Lord in Paramapada".

² *The philosophy of Vishista dwaita by Sri P.N.Srinivasachary page 391*

Among the many acharyas, Alavandar in his Stotra ratham (22nd sloka also has propounded on this prapatti. He says as follows:

*Na dharmanishtosmi Na chatma- vedi na bhaktiman
tva charanaravinde akinchanah ananya gadih saranya
tvaat
pada mulam saranam prapadye"*

Here the great Acharya says, "O' Protector! I am not well-versed in either Karma yoga or jnana yoga or bhakti yoga. I am a akinchana. I have no good qualities. I have no other protector. I am seeking protection at Your feet".

It is now proposed to briefly recapitulate the words of prapatti or saranagati as uttered by the alvars. Nammalvar in his Tiruvaimozhi (pasuram 3183) performed saranagati at the feet of Perumal at Vanamamalai through the pasuram starting with the words "Notra non bilen". Nammalvar addresses Bhagavan Who is lying down on Adishesha in Sri Varamangala nagar full of tanks filled with lotus flowers. He says, "O Master of mine! I have not done any karma yoga which would merit attaining You. I do not have any atma jnana (nun arivilen). I therefore do not have bhakti yoga either. Yet I cannot be away from You and tolerate separation from You even for a minute. I seek Your protection". Through this pasuram Nammalvar clearly expresses akinchinya i.e. his helpless condition.

Nammalvar in pasuram No.3335 of the Tiruvaimozhi seeks shelter at the feet of Lord Srinivasa starting with the words "akalakillen iraiyum enree". He clearly expresses not only his akinchinyam but his ananyagatitvam that is to say he makes it that while he does not have any special qualities which merit special consideration at the feet of the Lord, yet he has no other recourse or protection other than the lotus feet of the Lord.

Nammalvar is usually regarded as the super prapanna of Srivaishnavism.

Tirumazhisai Alvar in his Tiruchanda viruttam pasuram 841 also expresses in general, this philosophy of saranagati. He

says he does not belong to any of the castes. He has done no good deeds which deserve any merit. Neither has he uttered any profound words of wisdom. He says he has not conquered the five sense (panchendriyas). He concludes by saying, "O merciful master of mine! I have no other recourse except Your lotus feet. Here again akinchanyatvam and ananyagatitvam as also maha visvasa are reflected".

Tirumangai alvar in his Peria Tirumozhi pasuram 1031, also did saranagati at the feet of Lord Srinivasa. In this, the alvar says that he had gone through a cycle of births and deaths in different castes. He has no good deeds worthy of mention to his credit. He has not followed the path of dharma. He says, "O Lord residing in Thiruvengadam full of tall peaks! I have suffered a lot. I have now reached Thiruvengadam. You are my only hope and support." Here again all the angas of prapatti are evident.

Tondaradi Podi Alvar in pasuram 896 of his Tirumalai also performs saranagati. He says, "O Lord! I was not born as a brahmin who traditionally safeguards the three agnis. I am not well-versed in bhakti yoga. When such is the situation, how can I be happy? O Lord Whose body has got the hue of the ocean! You Who are Supreme Being! (Parama purusha) I am frankly worried. O Lord of Arangam, Ranganatha! Please bestow Your full glance on me and confer salvation on me". This also reflects the basic tenets of the philosophy of saranagati.

Kulasekhara Alvar in his Perumal Tirumozhi (pasuram 688) does saranagati at the feet of the Perumal at Thiruvithuvakkodu (Malainadu divya desa). "O Lord staying at Thiruvithuvakkodu full of scented groves and flowers! Whatever be the troubles that You make me face, I have no other protection other than Your lotus feet. I am like a child who goes crying to its mother even when she, in a fit of anger, asks the child to go away". That is to say that he is banking heavily upon the vatsalyaguna of Bhaghavan which will be his sole support. This pasuram also reflects the traits of prapatti.

The same Kulasekhara alvar in pasuram 691 again beautifully expresses this concept of saranagati. He says that a doctor might have performed a surgery on a patient in order to cure him of the disease. Though the doctor has caused pain to the patient, yet in as much as the pain is caused to remove the disease, the patient forgets the pain and loves the doctor more as he has cured him. Similarly, the alvar praises the Perumal of Thiruvithuvakkodu and says, "O Bhaghavan! Even if You make me walk through fire and make me face many ills, even as I experience that pain, I am fully convinced that Your grace and kindness are my only salvation". Here the concept of "maha visvasa" is clearly spelt out.

Andal in pasuram 29 of her Tiruppavai also clearly spells out the concept of saranagati. Many believe that Tiruppavai is a saranagati sastra. The last sloka (the 29th stanza) in Tiruppavai is like the charama sloka uttered by Krishna on the battle field. In that pasuram, Andal and her friends say that they belong to "arivonrum illadha aayarkulam" that is to say they belong to the cowherd class who do not lay any claim to jnana. They say they have no claim to either bhakti, or karma yogas. But they seek protection at the feet of "kuraivonrum illadha Govindha" i.e. the Lord Who is blemishless and Who is the personification of perfection. What is more, they clearly say that they have full faith that Lord Narayana will give them the "parai". Thus, in the 29th pasuram, ananyagativam, akinchanatvam, mahavisvasa and pratikoolyavarjanam are clearly brought out by the words that are very carefully phrased.

Perialvar in pasuram 463 of his Tirumozhi also performs seeks saranagati at the feet of the Lord of Thiruvengadam. He says, "O Lord residing in Thiruvengadam full of high peaks! You are residing there only for the benefit and the good of the entire world. O Damodara! O Protector! I have samasrayanam done in order to prove that this soul and body (atma, atmeeyam) belongs to You. I am looking only to Your grace (arul)". Again this pasuram is also an epitome on the philosophy of prapatti.

Let us now look at what Pillai Lokacharya says about saranagati in his Srivachana bhooshana. The great acharya says

that prapatti as an upaya, has no constraint of either person or place or time or methods or status or any constraints with reference to the result (phala) expected. The only constraint is that it should be done to the Supreme protector Who is the Parama purusha and poornaguna i.e. Bhaghavan. There is no specified punya kshetra where it has to be done. There is no specified time when it has to be done. There are no caste restrictions. The acharya says that the fact that Arjuna was taught the meaning of prapatti in the midst of the battle field full of neechas i.e. sinners makes it clear that there is no desaniyama also. Similarly, Dharmaputra performed saranagati in order to regain his lost kingdom. Thus prapatti can be sought not necessarily for moksha but for any object. Similarly, Draupadi did saranagati in order to avoid public shame. Kakasura and Kaliya the snake are two persons who sought saranagati in order to save their lives. Gajendra did saranagati so as to be able to do kankarya i.e. offer the lotus flower which he was holding in his trunk to the Lord. Vibhishana did saranagati in order to have Ramaprapti. Thus, it is evident that saranagati can be sought for any object not necessarily salvation. The only constraint is that it should be sought at the feet of a person who is the blemishless and embodiment of all gunas and who is all powerful. That is why the acharyas as well as the alvars sought saranagati at the feet of the Arshavataara, where the Lords saulabhyam sauseelyam, vatsalyam, svami tvam and other gunas shine in full.

To conclude, I wish to quote a sloka of Vedanta Desika from his saranagati Deepika where he describes prapatti or surrender to the Lord as a wedding with Him:

*"dattah praja janakavat tava desikendraith
patyaabhinandya bhavataa parineeyamaanaah
madhye sataam mahitabhoga-vishsha-siddhyai
maangalyasutramiva bibhrati kinkaratvan"* (v.30)

He says that when prapatti is performed by an acharya it is a wedding of that individual's soul with the supreme soul i.e. the Lord of the universe. The acharya performs the role of doing kanyadana in the shape of bharanyasa i.e. passing on the

burden of taking care of the bride. The Lord accepts the bride by His panigrahana i.e. Bhara sveekaram. Thus prapatti is the wedding of the individual prapanna's soul with God.

Having dealt with prapatti in general, I feel it will be in the fitness of things if the ten slokas of Nyasa Dasakam with meaning are given as those ten slokas express and explain beautifully and succinctly the concept of prapatti.

SLOKA 1:

*Aham madrakshanabharo
Mad-rakshana-phalam tathaa
Na mama sreepatereveti
aatmaanam nikshiped budhah*

I am not responsible for my own protection. The benefit that arises from such a protection also does not belong to me. The burden as well as the benefit belongs only to Srīman Narayana (thus the relation of svami- svamitva is clearly established).

SLOKA 2:

*Nyasyaamyakinchamah Sreeman!
Anukoolah anyavarjitah
Vishvaasa-prarthanaa-poorvam
Aatmarakshaabharam tvayi*

"O Lord! I am absolutely helpless. I am worthless. I have full faith that You will protect me. I am entrusting You with the burden of saving me. I shall not violate any of the dharmic principles laid down by You. I am sure, You will protect me".

SLOKA 3:

*Svaami svasesham svavasam
Svabharatvena nirbharam
Svadatta-svadhiyaa saaradham
Svasmin nyasyati maam svayam.*

Here atma samarpanam is done with maha visvasa. "O Perumal! I am Your sesha. I am Your slave. The burden of protecting me is Yours. I am therefore not worried as to how

I should protect myself. I request You to bestow on me the knowledge for seeking Your protection. The resulting benefit of such a knowledge will belong to You. In brief, he says that God should teach him to do saranagati and the benefit of the saranagati belongs to God Himself. My doing atma samarpanam, giving me the knowledge to do that atma samarpanam, the benefit of such an atma samarpanam and thus the various stages in atma samarpanam all belong only to God."

SLOKA 4:

*Sreeman abheeshtavarada!
tvaamasmi saranam gatah
Etad-dehaavasaane maam
tvatpaadam praapaya svayam.*

"O Lord Abhishta Varada! (Perumal of Kancheepuram) You fulfil all the desires of Your devotees. I surrender at Your feet. You please make me attain moksha as soon as my existence in this world ends".

The sastras say that all those who do prapatti will attain moksha as soon as the bodily existence ceases. It may be recalled that Ramanuja asked this question of Deva Perumal through Tirukkachi Nambi. For the third question, the Lord replied. "dehaavasane muktissyat" i.e. as soon as the bodily existence ceases, conferment of moksha on you is a certainty.

SLOKA 5:

*Tvaccheshatve stiradhiyam
Tvat praaptyekaprayojanam
Nishiddha-kaamya-rahitam
Kuru maam nityakinkaram*

"O Perumal! I am very clear in my belief that I am Your slave. I am sesha to You. My only object is to render service to You (kainkarya) and thereby have Bhagavad anubhavam. Make me an eternal servant of Yours and rid me of all unwanted desires".

This sloka more or less expresses the same thoughts as expressed by the Nammalvar when he said, "Ozhivil kalamellam udanay manni, vazhuila adimai seyyavendum". (Tiruvaymozhi III 3.1)

SLOKA 6:

*Devi bhooshana-hetyadi-
Jushtasya Bhagavan! tava!
Nityam niraparaadhesu
Kainkaryeshu niyunkshva maam*

"O You Perumal Who is the perfect embodiment of all gunas! You are always in the company of the Thayars. You are adorned with beautiful jewels. You are holding Sudharsana and other weapons. Please bless me so that I would render blemishless eternal service (kainkaryam) to You."

SLOKA 7:

*Maam madiyam eha nikhilam
Chetana-achetanaatmakam!
Svakainkaryopakaranam
Varada! svikuru svayam!*

"O Lord Varada! Please take me as well as my possessions sentient and non sentient and utilise them for rendering service to You."

SLOKA 8:

*Tvadeka narshyasya mama
Tvameva Karunaakara!
Na pravartaya paapaani
Pravrttami nivartaya!*

"O merciful Lord (Karunakara) Perarulala! I am the object which is to be protected by You. You please therefore ensure that I donot commit any sins. By chance if I commit any sins, please bless me and see that I do not suffer the consequences of such sins".

In brief, Desika requests God to see that he never commits sins and if by chance unknowingly he sins, he wants God to ensure that he does not suffer from the consequences of such sins.

SLOKA 9:

*Akrtyaanaam cha karanam
Krtyaanaam varjanam cha me!
Kshamasva-nikhilam deva
Pranataartihara Prabho!*

"O Pranatharthahara i.e. Who dispels all the troubles of those who seek solace at Your feet! O Devapperumal! Please forgive me if I have transgressed any of the dharmic laws and have done something which should not be done or omitted to do something which should be done. Forgive all my sins of omission and commission. Bear with me. (The sins can be of two types. One category is known as akrtya karanam i.e. doing the prohibited acts. The second category is known as Krtya karanam i.e. failing to perform that which is prescribed as a mandatory act. But both are equally sinful).

SLOKA 10:

*Sreeman! niyatapanchaangami
Mad-rakshana-bharaarpanam!
Acheekarah svayam svasmin
Ato'ham iha nirbharah*

"O Lord of Sri! You, of Your own accord have taken on the burden of protecting me with its component five characteristics like anukoolya sankalpam, etc. I am therefore free of the burden and responsibility of protecting myself. I am now rid of the worry of suffering myself."

In brief, Desika says that it is God Who has made him do the prapatti and that the benefit that flows out of it also belongs to God. It clearly enunciates the efficacy of prapatti as a means of salvation.

Thus ends the Nyasa Dasakam.

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TIRUPATHI

INTRODUCTION:

Andhra Pradesh has two out of the 108 vaishnavite divya desams viz. Ahobilam and Tirupathi. The very mention of the word Tirupati creates in many a divine feeling. This holy temple is popularly known as Bhooloka Vaikuntam. It is perhaps the richest of the temples in the world. The entire town of Tirupati as well as Tirumala has an eternal floating pilgrim population. The business and trade activities in this town are mostly centered around the activities connected with the temple. The Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams which administers this temple is a mini Government, having on its rolls nearly 14000 employees and an income of around Rupees 150 crores. The town has a university and a leading hospital besides various other institutions run by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams like a yoga school, a vedic patasala, schools, colleges, orphanages, etc.

Tirumala is the holy abode of Lord Venkateswara. There are as many as 1800 epigraphical records available in this temple. Among the eighteen important puranas the sthala mahatyam of Tirumala is mentioned in as many as ten puranas viz. Sri Varaha, Padma, Garuda, Brahma, Markandeya, Vamana, Brahmottara, Kanda, Aditya and Bhavishyottara puranas. Faced with this abundance of materials, this author frankly wonders where to begin, what to say and which to omit. The choice is very difficult. However keeping in view the pattern followed so far, while presenting the history of the various vaishnavite divya desams, an attempt will be made in this chapter also to present the sthala purana of the place along with certain important epigraphical highlights. While dealing with the other divya desams meanings of only a few of the mangalasanam pasurams composed by the Alvars were presented. But in this chapter, the meaning of all the 202 pasurams sung by the ten alvars will be presented. I also propose to include a few of the songs composed by Tyagaraja, Purandaradasa, Muthusamy Dikshithar and Annamaya on Lord Venkatachalapathi. It is my earnest desire that the matter dealing with Tirupati should be

presented in such a manner that the reader is able to experience a manasika anubhavam of a pilgrimage to Tirupati even while reading the book - a veritable armchair travelogue.

The following sentences mentioned in Varaha Puranam briefly but significantly highlights the greatness of this divya desam. It says "Venkatesa Samo Devo Nasthi Nasthi Mahi thale". These words are repeated during the mantra pushpam offered to Lord Venkatachalapathi everyday. This sentence in Sanskrit means that none equals Lord Venkatachalapathi, not one - None equals the Lord Venkateswara in the entire universe. A visit to this great pilgrim centre is a rare spiritual experience. It is this divinity which pervades the area not only in the temple precincts, but in the entire town which has an irresistible magnetic attraction to the millions who come from far and near unmindful of the difficulties involved in the journey to just have a darshan of the Lord may be for just a few seconds. Everyone who has a darshan of the Lord even for a few seconds will have no doubts about God's existence. This temple is a living institution with a presiding deity who elevates everyone who comes in contact with Him with a feeling of peace and joy and spiritual strength. That is why even the puranas say "Venkatadri Samam Sthanam Bramande Nasthi Kinchara Venkatesa Samo devo Nabhutho No Bhavishyate". This means that in the entire brahmandam, amongst all the worlds, there is no God to equal Lord Venkatachalapathi in the past or future and there is no punya kshetram which is equal to Thiruvengadam.

Nammalwar the most venerated amongst the vaishnavite savants said "there is no equal to you oh Lord of seven hills. You are the owner and dweller of all the three worlds. Saints, sages and celestials are hastening to have your darshan . I am your bounden slave. I request you to call this slave to your holy feet. O Lord Venkatesa, give me moksha and see that I merge in you". This rapturous verse of Nammalwar typifies the thought of each and everyone of the pilgrims who visit this temple town.

Let me quote yet another stanza from the popular suprabhatam which is an invocatory song rendered every day before this Lord. It runs as follows:

*Sriman Abhista varadakhila lokabandho
Srisrinivasa jagadeka dayaikasindho
Sri devatagraha bhujantara divyamurte
Sri Venkatachalapathe Tava suprabhatam*

Translated this means:

O Lord of Lakshmi, You are the bestower of boons. O You friend of the whole world. Abode of Sri. the matchless ocean of compassion. Lord Srinivasa, you are the one having a form charming on account of the chest which is the abode of Srilakshmi, O Lord of Venkatachala! Awake to the auspicious dawn.

Yet another stanza in this suprabhatam which appealed to me a lot is as follows:

*Tvatpadadhooli baritha spurithothamangah
Swargapavarga nirapeeksha nijantarangah
kalpagamakalanayakulatam labhante
Sri Venkatachalapathe thava suprabhatam.*

Freely translated this would run as follows:

O Lord! Your devotees place the dust of Your holy feet on their heads. The heads then shine. They do not desire heaven or moksha. On the other hand, they are sad that another kalpa i.e. birth of new yuga may make them lose this opportunity which they now have of worshipping you and being blessed with your darshan! Lord Venkatachalapathi awake to the auspicious dawn.

One more stanza from the invocatory song runs as follows:

*Tvad gopuragra sikharani nireekshamanah
Swargapavarga padaveem paramam srayantah
Martya Manushya bhuvane mathimasrayanthe
Sri Venkatachalapathe thava suprabhatam*

Translated this would run as follows:

O Lord! the beauty is that even the people who have attained mukthi and others who are on their way to heaven, see from up above the sikaram and gopuram of your temple. Even at that time, on their way to paramapadam they are consumed by a firm desire to be re- born on earth with the only objective of having your darshan and serving you! O Venkatachalapathi! awake to the auspicious dawn!.

A visit to the temple of such a Perumal is therefore a soul stirring spiritual experience. Before we start on that journey let us begin with two stotrams on Lord Venkatachalapathi and Padmavathi Thayar respectively.

ओं नमो वेङ्कटेशाय

अस्य श्रीवेङ्कटेश्वराष्टाक्षर महामन्त्रस्य गोपीनाथ ऋषिः देवी गायत्री छन्दः श्रीवेंकटेश परमात्मा देवता ओं बीजं, ओम् इति शक्तिः, श्रीं कीलकं, क्रीं कवचं, मं अस्त्रं, श्रीवेङ्कटेशानुज्ञया श्रीवेङ्कटेशमुखोलासकृपा कटाक्ष वीक्षण प्रसाद सिद्धयर्थे जपे विनियोगः ।

ओं अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यां नमः

नमः तर्जनीभ्यां नमः

वेङ्कटेशाय मध्यमाभ्यां नमः

ओं अनामिकाभ्यां नमः

नमः कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः

वेङ्कटेशाय करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः

ओं हृदयाय नमः

नमः शिरसे स्वाहा

वेङ्कटेशाय शिखायै वौषट्

ओं कवचाय हुम्

नमः नेत्रत्रयाय वौषट्

वेङ्कटेशाय अस्त्राय फट्

भूर्भुवस्सुवरोमिति दिग्बन्धः

ध्यानम्--

विद्युत्कोटि दिवाकराभमनिशं शंखं गदां पद्मं
चक्रं बिभ्रतमिन्दिरा वसुमती संशोभिपार्श्वद्वयम् ।

केयूराङ्गद हारकुण्डलधरं पीताम्बरं कौस्तुभं
दीप्तं विश्वधरं विभुं सुवक्षविलसच्छ्रीवसुचिह्नं भजे ॥

सशंख चक्रं कटिवर्तिहस्तं
स्वर्णाम्बरं रत्नकिरीटकुण्डलम् ।
प्रलम्बसूत्रोत्पलमाल्य भूषणं
नमाम्यहं वेङ्कटशैलनायकम् ॥

* * *

श्री

चतुर्भुजां महालक्ष्मीं
द्विनेत्रां चारुकुण्डलाम् ।
श्वेतमाल्यांबरधरां
हारकेयूरभूषिताम् ॥ १ ॥

सर्वलक्षणसम्पन्नां
पीनोन्ततपययोधराम् ।
प्रभुलोत्पलविस्तीर्णा
लोचनां स्वस्तिदाननाम् ॥ २ ॥

लसललाटतिलकां
बिन्दुमाधववल्लभाम् ।
कृष्णकुञ्चितकेशान्तां
वंशमुक्ताफलत्विषाम् ॥
पद्मगर्भोपमाचारां
सुमुखीं भावयेसुदा ।

आनन्दकन्दलमयीं अविचाररूपाम्
तां राजहंसगमनां तनुमध्यभागाम् ।
फुल्लारविन्दनयनां भुवनैकपत्नीं
श्रीवेङ्कटेशमहिषीं श्रीयमाश्रयामः ॥

श्रीः श्रीः श्रीः

* * *

Venkateswara Ashtakshara Mahamantraoya*Gopinatha Rushih**Devi Gayathri Chandaha**Sree Venkatesah Paramatma Devatha**Om Bijam**Am ithi Sakthih**Sreem Kilakam**Kreem Kavacham Mam asthram**Sree Venkatesa anujhaya**Sree Venkatesa Mukhollasa**Kripa Katakshaveekshana Prasada**Sidhyarthae Jape Viniyogah**Om Angushtambyam Namaha**Namaha Tharjuneebhyam Namaha**Venkatesaya Madhya Mabhya Namaha**Om anamikabhyam namaha**Namaha Kanish kabhyam namaha**Venkatesaya Karathala Kara**Pushtabyam namaha**Om Hridayaya namaha**Namaha Siraseysvaha**Venkatesaya Sikhayaiva vovshat**Om kavachaya Hum**Namah Netra Trayaya Nowshat**Venkatesaya Astrayaphut**Bhoorbhavassu Vasomithi Dhighbhandaha***Dhyanam:***Vidyithkoti Divakaranisham**Sankhamgada pankajam chakram Bibrathi Mindisha**Vasumathy Samsobhi paswa dwayam**Keyuragandhahara Kundala dharam**Peethambaram Kousthubam**Deeptham Viswadharam Vibhum Suvaksha**Vilasath Sreevatsa Cihnambajae*

*Sasanka chakram Kativarathi hastam
Swarnambhara dharam Ratna kireeta Kundalam
Pralambha Satrothpala Malya Bhooshanam
Namamyaham Venkatasaila nayakam*

Prayer to Padmavathi Thayar

1. *Chaturbujam Mahalakshmeem
Dwinetram Charukundalam
Swetha malyam bhara dharam
Hara Keyura Bhooshitham
Sarva lakshana Sampannam
Paenonmatha Payodharam
Prupallothala Visteernam
Lochanam Swasthi dhananam
Lasallalata Thilakam
Bindhumadaya Vallabham
Krishna Kunchitha Kesantam
Vamsamukta Phaladhwisham
Padma garbopama charam
Sumukheen Bhava Yaetsadha"*
2. *Anantha Kandala mayeem
Avichara roopam
Tamraja Hamsa gamanam
Thanu madhya Bhagam
Pullara Vindha nayanam
Bhuvanaika Patnim
Sri Venkatesa Mahisheem
Sriya masrayamaaha*

Sreehi Sreehi Sreehi

TIRUPATI - LOCATION:

Tirupati is a small municipality. A Devotee wishing to worship Lord Venkatchalapathi has to first reach this town. It is well connected by train, by bus and by air. It is about seven miles from Renigunta an important junction on the Madras Raichur broad gauge line. Renigunta itself is about 135 kms. from Madras. From Madras one can also go up to Renigunta by air. Numerous buses are also plying between Madras and Tirupati. On arriving at Tirupati the pilgrims have reached the foot of the Seven Hills and at the top viz. Tirumala resides Lord Srinivasa. Tirumala is about 14 kms from Tirupati. A Beautiful ghat road connects Tirupati to Tirumala. A number of buses are run by the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams connecting Tirupati with Tirumala. Both at the foot of the hill and at the top there are a number of choultries and cottages where the pilgrims can stay while waiting for His darshan. Free accommodation as well as paying accommodation is available. Tirumala is a hill range which is part of the Eastern Ghats. It has seven principal peaks each of them having a separate name and sthalapurana. On one such hill viz. Seshachalam is located the Tirumala temple and the entire range is called after this peak. The puranas compare this Tirumala range to a serpent which is lying down. Sri Sailam temple is located on the tail of this serpent. The Ahobila Narasimha temple is situated in the middle. Sri Venkateswara temple of Tirumala is regarded as the head of this range. The Kalahasteswarar temple at Kalahasti is the mouth of this reclining serpent. There are five well known paths which lead from Tirupati to Tirumala. Two of them start from the town of Tirupati. One is the path by which the pilgrims climb on to the hill. The other is the ghat road i.e. the motor road. The third way is to climb the hill from Chandragiri side. The fourth path starts from Mamandoor railway station. The fifth is from Nagapatla side. But almost all the pilgrims come from Tirupati only either by the hill path on foot or by walk or by the ghat road by car or bus. Till 1974 there was only one ghat road. But from that year, there are two ghat roads and one is used as the way for the vehicles which go up while the other is used by the vehicles which come down. Thus, the moment one

arrives at Tirupati there is a certain methodicity and clear-cut practice which one has to follow to reach the temple of Lord Venkatachalapathi.

TIRUPATI IN LITERATURE:

Thiruvengadam in literature has a hoary antiquity. In Tolkappiam a very early Tamil classic there is a reference to the existence of the deity Sri Venkateswara on Vengadam hill. In addition, various anthologies of Sangam literature also there is reference to Venkadam i.e. Tirupati. Generally they refer to Tirupati as the northern border of the Tamil speaking people. In Ahananooru (83rd verse) there is a reference to the chieftain Pulli of the region surrounding Vengadam. The same Ahananooru (verse 209) refers to a narrow passage across the hill viz. a Tunnel which one had to pass to emerge from the territory of the chieftain Pulli! Nakkirar who is a wellknown ancient Tamil poet also refers to Vengadam. Another ancient Tamil poet viz. Kanakkayanar (it is said he may be the father of Nakkirar) also refers to Vengadam and says that it has a host of elephants in its forests. Numerous other poets including Mamulanar refer to Vengadam and specifically say that Vengadam was famous for its festivals (verse 61 of Ahananooru).

The Tamil classic Silappadikaram (generally attributed to Second Century A.D.) refers to Tirumala as a famous vaishnavite shrine. The author of that Silappadikaram though not a worshipper of Vishnu (he is believed to have been a Jain) makes a vaishnavite pilgrim describe three vaishnavite divya desams which he had occasion to visit in the course of his travels. These three vaishnavite divya desams are Srirangam; Thirumaliruncholai and Thiruvengadam. The verse in Silappadikaram which describes Thiruvengadam is as follows:-

வீங்குநீ ரருவி வேங்கட மெனனு
மோங்குயர் மலையத் துச்சி மீ மிசை
விரிகதிர் ஞாயிறுந் திங்களும் விளங்கி
யிருமருங் கோங்கிய விடைநிலைத் தானத்து
மின்னுக் கோடி யுடுத்து விளங்குவிற் பூண்டு
நன்னிறமேக நின்றது போலப்

பகையணுங் காழியும் பால் வெண் சங்கமுந்
 தகை பெறு தாமரைக் கையி னேந்து
 நலங்கிள ரார மாற்பிற் பூண்டு
 பொலம்பூ வாடையிற் பொலிந்து தோன்றிய
 செங்க னொடியோ னிந்த வண்ணமும்.

In the above poem the author says that Lord Vishnu of the lotus eyes is seen in a standing posture on the top of Vengadam hill which is full of water falls and where the effulgent rays of the sun and the moon fall on the idol. The lord is adorned with brilliant cloth of gold round His loins and He wears a beautiful garland on His chest and holds in His lotus like hands the invincible discus and milky white conch. He looks like a black cloud with a streak of lightning and a rainbow. Thus, even in Second century A.D. it is evident that Tirupati was considered as a holy pilgrim centre.

Besides, the classic literature the hymns of the vaishnavite alvars also have abundant references to Thiruvengadam. Of all the twelve alvars except for Tondaradipodi Alvar and Madura Kavi Alvar the rest have sung on Tirupati.

Kamba Ramayanam also refers to Venkadam and its holiness in its Kishkinda kanda (Nadavitta padalam stanzas 26,27 and 28). It runs as follows:

" (Commanding his armies under different leaders to proceed in different directions in search of Sita, Sugriva says to Hanuman you reach the cool Vengada Hill which is overgrown with forests full of bee-hives, which limits the boundary between the northern and the southern language, which contains the Truth enshrined in the Four Vedas and all the Sastras, which is the abode of all good deeds and which stands out as the eternal Satya. We have to worship the holy men that are on the Vengada hills even from here, holy men who do good deeds without any idea of reward, who look on riches and poverty alike and who have attained the highest bliss. The sacred Vengada Hill contains many rivers where a number of true brahmins bathe and has many Asramas where live a number of holy men of great tapas and topped slopes of the hill abound in pre-

cious stones and on this hill all animals, naturally inimical, sleep together forgetting their feuds, lured to sleep by the sweet music of Kinnara Vadya of the fair celestial maidens)".

There is reference to Tirupati in Sanskrit literature¹ as well. Mr. Ramesan in his book refers to a champu kavya in Sanskrit composed by Venkatadhvari son of Raghunatha Deekshitha and Sitamba. The book is reported to be in the form of a dialogue between two gandharwas and describes the different sacred temples and places in the country from Badri to Sethu. In the course of this pilgrimage a visit to Seshachala and Tirumala temples is also mentioned. The book praises the Lord and compares Him to Lord Krishna who gave immense wealth to Kuchela in exchange for a handful of beaten rice. A detailed description of Seshachalam is also given in that book.

In Telegu literature also there is abundant reference to Thiruvengadam and its Lord. The foremost amongst such literary pieces which refer to Thiruvengadam is Krishnadeva raya's Amuktha Malyadha. Krishnadevaraya was a great devotee of Lord Venkateswara. He visited Tirumala temple seven times and presented plenty of jewellery and ornaments to the Lord, gold plated the Ananda Nilaya vimanam. The king was the author of Amuktha Malyadha written in 1516 A.D. This book deals with the life of Andal and Perialwar, and is dedicated to Lord Venkateswara. Another well known Telugu book is "Raghavabhudayam" written by Chinthalapalli Chayapathi. It is also dedicated to Lord Venkateswara. He was a Telangana poet of the 18th century. Venkamamba, famous poetess had intense devotion and faith in Lord Venkateswara. She belonged to the second half of 18th century and first half of 19th century. She is believed to have practised intense yoga in Tumburu kona in the thick forest about ten miles away from Tirumala temple. Her samadhi still stands in the garden on the northern side on the north street in Tirumala. She is reported to have offered a muthyalaharam (pearl necklace) in a silver plate embedded with pearls for use each night to Bhoga Srinivasamurthi.²

¹ *The Tirumala temples by Dr. N. Ramesan published by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Page 207.*

² *The Tirumala Temple by N. Ramesan P. 210.*

THE LORD OF TIRUMALA AND COMPOSERS:

If we turn to music, numerous are the composers who have sung the praise of Lord Srinivasa. The famous composers Thyagaraja, Muthusamy Deekshithar, Annamacharya, Purandaradasa, etc. all have composed songs in praise of this deity. The most prolific composer amongst all these musicians was Annamacharya who is said to have composed nearly 32000 sankirthanas on Lord Venkateswara. He also wrote a book called Venkateswara Sathakam. Even today some of the copper plates on which the songs of Annamacharya are engraved are kept safe in the Tirumala temple.

ROUTE TO TIRUMALA:

As stated earlier, there are two main routes by which one can reach Tirumala from Tirupati. The path take by those who prefer to walk up the hill is a bit stiff and tough but exhilarating. The pilgrims who take to this path are mostly those who have vowed to walk up the hill. Young and old alike climb and it is very evident that it is sheer faith which sees them through the steep, rough terrain.

I propose to first describe briefly this traditional path to Tirumala. The pilgrim has to visit Sripada mandapam at the foot of the hill and offer worship at the holy feet of Lord Venkateswara which is there imprinted on a stone. Enroute there is a boulder which is popularly known as "Thala yeru gundu". The pilgrim is expected to touch this boulder and the belief is that such a touch will ensure that he is free of headache and other bodily pains which one experiences while climbing up the hill!. The pathway up the hill is known as Sopana margam. The distance to be covered by foot may be around seven miles. But the pilgrim has to cross several hills in the process. The first hill is rather steep. The structure on the top of the first hill is known as Gali gopuram i.e. a temple tower in the mid air! This is at a height of 3000 feet above sea level. This Gali gopuram was built by Matii Kumara Ananda Raja of the Matli family of chiefs belonging to Rayachoti Taluk of Cuddappah District. This Gali gopuram came into existence in 1628. If the pilgrim stands here facing south, he will have a beautiful birds' eye view of the railway line,

the river Swarnamukhi, the number of tanks in that area, the numerous temples and towers in Tirupati and Tiruchanur and the vast university campus. To his back and to his side are the huge hills virtually rising vertically up to the sky. There are two inscriptions on the eastern and western wall of the mandapam at the foot of hill viz. in 'Alipiri'. One is in Tamil and the other is in Telegu. These mention details regarding the person who constructed the Gali gopuram and the numerous charities established by him.

From the Gali gopuram onwards the path is fairly easy as it passes through rich vegetation, and a sharp descending ravine. Then comes the next difficult ascent which is known as "Mokalla Konda". In Tamil it is known as "Mozhangal Mudichu". Literally translated both these means that the steps are "knee breakers" and require enormous efforts to climb. On the top of this Mokalla konda, there is a small mandapam with a small temple for Sri Ramanuja. It is known as Bhashyakara sannidhi. There is a story connected with it. It is said that at this mandapam, everyday Ramanuja had his lessons in Ramayana under the tutelage of his maternal uncle Thirumalai Nambi. The Venkatachala Ithihasa mala a Sanskrit book belonging to the 12th century A.D, says that a rishi by name Vishwambara in the town of Kalavingam had installed icons of Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita and was worshipping them in his native town. Once due to communal disturbances, he was worried about the safety of the idols. He therefore handed over the icons to Sri Vaishnavas to be taken away and kept in safe custody at Tirumala. One day while Tirumalai Nambi and his nephew Ramanuja were studying the episode of Vibhishana seeking saranagathi from Rama, the Sree vaishnavas brought these idols of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana and Angatha and handed them over to Ramanuja for safe custody. It is said that Sri Ramanuja and Thirumalai Nambi took these icons to Tirumala and arranged for their worship.

A little further to the left of the pathway there is a structure called "Ghanta mandapam" (i.e. Bell quadrangle). Tradition says that once upon a time, there was a bell (ghanta) here. It would be rung as soon as the midday neivedhyam for Thiruv-

gadamudaiyan was offered. Only after hearing the sound of the bell Sri Ranganatha Yadhavaraya of Chandragiri, (1336-1356) a local chief, would take his daily meal. This chief is reported to have constructed for himself a palace on Venkatachalam to enable him to often worship the lord.

Proceeding further up the hill the pilgrim reaches Tirumala i.e. the journey's end. Tirumala is known as Kaliyuga vaikuntam. This journey of climbing of hill by foot is an experience in itself. Only people who have walked up the hill will be able to appreciate the divine bliss that envelopes a person right through the climb.

Let us now turn to the other path which is what is taken by most of the pilgrims. Previously only the Tirumala-Tirupati devasthanam buses used to transport the pilgrims from Tirupati to Tirumala by the ghat road. The first ghat road was built in 1942-1944. The second ghat road was built in 1974. The journey by the ghat road is exciting in its own way. The new ghat road which is normally used for going up fortunately does not have many hair pin bends. But the ghat road which is used for the climb down has got as many as 52 hair pin bends all within a length of about 14 kms! The climb up the hill by foot may take about 3 to 4 hours. But the journey by car or bus by the ghat road may take only about thirty to forty five minutes.

The moment one reaches Tirumala one feels that one is nearer to God. All the petty worries vanish. The hill reverberates with divine music or prayers broadcast by the temple authorities. The God is a living legend in Tirumala.

STHALA PURANA:

Let us now turn to the sthala purana of this place. This sthala mahatmyam can be dealt with under three heads as it were - one relating to the stories connected with the Venkatachala hill, the second part relating to the stories connected with the theerthams in this place and finally we will deal with the divya leelas of Lord Srinivasa.

The sthala mahatmyam of this temple is known as Sri Venkatachala mahatmyam. The legends connected with this deity are mentioned in several puranas like Padma purana, Garuda

purana, Varaha purana, Brahma purana, Markandeya purana, Vamana purana, Brahmottara purana, Khanda purana, Aditya purana, Bhavishyotra purana. The most important sources however are the Varaha purana and Bhavishyotra purana.

The sthala purana is believed to have been compiled by Pasindi Venkata Thuraivar also known as Jeer Ramanujayan. He lived in Tirupati in the last quarter of the 15th century. There is an inscription in the temple relating to the year 1413 which refers to the permission given by the authorities of the temple for reading at a Thiruvolakkam, in the presence of the deity, the Thiruvenkata mahatmyam compiled by the author. This Venkatachala mahatmyam was published in Telegu script in 1884 A.D by the devasthanams and re- published in 1896 and 1928. Meanwhile Devanagari editions as well as Hindi editions this mahatmyam were released. This sthala purana describes of the sanctity and the greatness of the hills, the theerthas and the divine acts.

Thiruvengadam hill is known by very many names. The different names and the manner by which these names were acquired makes interesting reading. The hill is varyingly known as CHINTHAMANI: It is known as Chinthamani as, like the famed precious stone, the hill grants devotees desires.

It is known as GNANADRI as it is believed to be the essence of knowledge and confers enlightenment on the devotees.

It is known as THEERTHADRI as there are reportedly as many as 1008 theerthas on these hills.

It is known as PUSHKARADRI as there is an abundant growth of lotuses in the tanks in this area.

It is known as DHARMADRI as Dharma devata is reported to have performed penance here for attaining prosperity.

It is known as KANAKADRI as once upon a time the hill was full of gold and precious stones. The alvars in their pasurams refer to this fact of the hill being covered with precious stones in many of their pasurams.

It is known as NARAYANADRI as a brahmin by name Narayana did severe penance here and God appeared and blessed him. He then requested god to name the hill after him.

It is known as VAIKUNTADRI as it is believed that this is a hill which has been brought from Vaikuntam by Garuda at the behest of the Lord Himself.

It is known as SIMHACHALAM as it is in this range of hills that Lord took the form of Narasimha and killed Hiranya Kasipu in order to help the child devotee viz. Prahladha.

It is known as ANJANADRI as Anjana the mother of Hanuman did severe penance here.

It is known as VARAHADRI as it is a famous Varaha kshetram where God took the form of the boar and rescued Bhoomi devi from the depths of the ocean where the asura had carried her.

It is known as NILAGIRI as it is the residence of the Vanara chief Nila.

It is known as VENKATADRI. The word Vengadam refers to unlimited wealth. It also means that one's sins i.e. vem gets burnt, when one visits the hill.

It is known as SRINIVASAGIRI as Vaikuntanatha came here as Lord Srinivasa and then married Thayar.

It is known as ANANDADRI or KREEDADRI as it was believed to be the sporting hill for the residents of Vaikuntam.

It is known as SRISAILA as Lakshmi resides in this place and confers wealth and prosperity on the devotees.

Though it has got many names; it is believed that it was popularly known as VRISHACHALAM in Krita yuga, as ANJANADRI in Treta yuga, as SESHACHALAM in Dwaparayuga and as VENKATACHALAM in Kali yuga. An attempt will now be made to briefly relate the stories connected with these different names.

VRUSHABHADRI

In Kiruta yuga, this hill was known as Vrushabadri. It was named after Vrushabasura, an asura who lived in this hill. This asura was a great devotee of the lord. But his penance was in keeping with his asura gunam. He did severe penance near the Tumburu kona waters on the hill. Everyday he would cut off his head and offer it to Perumal along with a flower. Everyday, by God's grace, the severed head would rejoin his body. He is said to have done this demonic penance for nearly 5000 years. Finally Lord Vishnu appeared before him and asked him to choose a boon. The asura replied that the only boon that he wanted was to have a direct fight with the lord, as he felt that the moment Vishnu appeared before him, he had already attained salvation. The lord smiled at this strange request and agreed for the fight. It was a strange fight as it was a fight between Perumal and His own baktha. All the devas assembled to watch this unusual sight. The fierce fight lasted for full seven days. At the end, the lord decided to let loose Sudarsana chakra and kill the asura. The moment the asura saw the chakra, he knew the end had come. He requested God to name the sacred hill after him so that pilgrims who come to offer worship will remember him. God granted this wish. Hence it is that the hill is known as Vrushabhachalam. Brahmanda puranam is the source for this story.

ANJANADRI

In Treta yuga, this hill was known as Anjanadri. Anjana, mother of Anjaneya performed a severe penance on this hill before begetting Hanuman. She was the daughter of a monkey king by name Kesari. Kesari was a great Shiva baktha. He did penance for many years, had darshan of Lord Shiva and asked to be blessed with an immortal son. Lord Shiva however assured him that his wish will be fulfilled through a daughter who will be born to him, and that while he will be blessed with a daughter, that daughter would have a son who would be immortal and famous as desired by Kesari. In due course of time Kesari had a daughter. He named her Anjana. She was married to a monkey king also by name Kesari. As they did not have any

issues for a long time, Anjana decided to proceed to Vrushabadri and offer prayers to Perumal. She chose a place near Akasa ganga theertham in Tirumala and started her penance. Vayu, the Wind God saw her severe penance and would give her one fruit a day. In course of time, Anjana had a vision of the Lord and He assured her that her wish would be fulfilled. As the Wind God would give her without fail everyday one fruit, the child who was born to her was known as Vayu putra. The child looked like a golden monkey with a golden face, red limbs. Even at the time of his birth he was wearing a sacred thread. The young child one day mistook the rising sun to be a red fruit and sprang to catch it. All the devas in heaven got worried. Brahma the Creator Himself rushed to protect the Sun. He struck this monkey child with the Brahma Dandam so as to incapacitate him from reaching the Sun. The heat of the Sun and the power of the Brahma Dandam made the child faint and fall down. The mother seeing the child falling down thought that he had died. She wondered how it could be as Shiva had promised her father that she would have an immortal child. Immediately, an asareeri voice assured her from heaven that her son was not dead and that he would never die, he would live for ever as promised by Lord Shiva to her father Kesari. Brahma is reported to have assured her that no weapon will hurt him in the future. All the other devas also joined Brahma and blessed the child with various boons. Brahma named the hill Anjanadri after Anjana who did penance for 7000 long years on this hill. The child was named Anjaneya. The hill is also known as Anjanadri.

SESHADRI

In Dwapara yuga the hill was known as Seshadri i.e. named after Adishesha. The formation of the hill is said to resemble a reclining serpent Adishesha himself. Brahmada puranam again is the source for the following story:

One day Sri Vishnu along with Mahalakshmi was not at home to anyone. At that time, God Vayu wanted to enter the place where God and the Thayar were staying. Adishesha who was on gaurd at the door prevented Vayu from entering. Vayu got annoyed. He said that he was the air that every living

being breathed and that he was everywhere even as that the Lord was everywhere and that without him nothing could live even a moment. He insisted on having the darshan of the Lord. Adishesha got angry and felt that Vayu was arrogant in comparing himself to Perumal and was adamant in refusing entry to the Wind God. Adishesha said that he would behead Vayu. Vayu replied that he would blow apart the hill as well as the ocean. Hearing this commotion, Vishnu came out. He realised that both his bakthas had become over- confident of their respective strengths and their closeness to Him. He wanted to teach both of them a lesson. The Lord said that both of them could test their strength and prove their mettle. Adishesha wound himself round Mount Meru, covering the mountain with his thousand hooded head. Vayu began to blow fearlessly with his mouth. This competition caused a lot of distress to the inhabitants of the three worlds.

The earth and the stars shook. The velocity of the wind was unbearable. The devas, the rakshasas, the yakshas, the kinnaras as well as mere mortals became panicky and wondered how to save their lives. Trees and boulders were flying all over. Waters of the ocean were churned sky high and it looked as if they would submerge the earth. All the devas assembled and looked at the strange fight between the two devotees of the Lord. They requested God to put an end to this unseemly fight, and save the world from premature destruction as the time for pralaya the great deluge had not yet come. Perumal smiled. Narada who was watching this fight knew the purpose of this divine leela. He played on his tambura. Hearing this melodious note, Adishesha raised one of his hoods. Immediately Vayu blew with all his might on that unprotected hill top. A portion of Mount Meru was thus blown away and that bit alighted on earth as Tirumala hill. As the mountain bit was tumbling down from the sky, Mount Meru was afraid for the life of his son and prayed to Adishesha to save the life of that mountain top. It is said that Adishesha then acted quickly, unwound himself and landed on the ground so that the part of the meru hill could fall on him and thus the impact of the fall was reduced. Seeing this Vayu as well as other devas were very worried and sad as Adishesha was the divine couch and he could not be away from the Lord even

for a moment. Adishesha realised that Perumal had taught both him and Vayu a lesson. The Lord then comforted Adishesha as well as Vayu and said that He had decided to stay on earth till the end of Kali yuga and that He will continue to use Adishesha as His couch. He said Adishesha would take the form of a hill. This was the hill which came to be known as Seshachalam or Seshadri.

It is a bit difficult to understand how Anjana and Vrushabasura could have offered penance to the Lord on Tirumala Hill in Kiruta yuga and Treta yuga respectively if the hill was formed only in Dwapara yuga. However, a scientific analysis should not be applied for all these spiritual and puranic stories. We have to only accept the mythological stories.

GARUDADRI

According to Hindu mythology, the yugas follow this order viz. Krita yuga, Treta yuga, Dwapara yuga and Kali yuga. As creation is a cyclical process the yugas follow in the same order again and again. After the pralaya when there is no life on earth God wakes up from His yoga nidra and asks Brahma to re-create the world. On one such occasion, Brahma is said to have asked Perumal as to where is the place to live as the earth was completely submerged by the deluge. Brahma prayed to God to restore earth so that man and animal created by Him may have a place to live in. Perumal realised that Bhoomi devi had been abducted by Hiranyaksha, who had hidden her in the darkest region in the depths of the ocean. He was waiting to fight with Perumal. God took the form of a boar, plunged into the ocean, fought with Hiranyaksha. The frightful encounter with Hiranyaksha lasted for a long time. Sweta varaha finally tore the huge body of the demon with His tusks. It is said that the blood of the demon mixed with the water, turned the ocean red. Sweta varaha then brought Mother Earth up from the depths of the ocean, holding her safe on His tusks. This fierce fight and the rescue of Bhoomi devi by Perumal is described in the 33rd chapter of Varaha purana. After the rescue, Bhoomi devi specifically asked Perumal to stay with Her. God conceded her request. He called Garuda and asked him to bring a beautiful

hill from Vaikunta. Garuda flew to heaven and brought down the Kreedha parvath from Vaikuntam. It was a beautiful golden hill studded with gems and other precious stones. Perumal as Varahamurthi and Bhoomi devi took up residence on that hill. All the devas then showered flowers on God. Even to-day Lord Varaha lives on the banks of Swami Pushkarini to the west of the temple. The pushkarini is called Varaha pushkarini and as the hill was brought to earth by Garuda, it is known as Garudadri.

VENKATADRI

In Kali yuga, the hill is known as Venkatadri. Ven + kata conveys the meaning that all sins get burnt up by visiting the hill. There is a story which proves this point. Once in Kalahasti lived a very pious and learned brahmin by name Purandara Somaiyaji. After doing a severe penance, he was blessed with a son named Madhava. The son was as learned as the father. But unfortunately he had developed several vices. His wife was known as Susheela. She was a gentle lady. Madhava fell in love with a chandala woman. He gave up his family and went and lived with that woman on the banks of the river Krishna. The name of that woman was Kuntala. Madhava followed her everywhere. He lived with her for twelve years after which Kuntala died. Madhava took to begging and wandered from village to village. One day when he was trudging the lonely path, he met a group of pilgrims who were singing the praise of the Lord and were going to Tirumala on a pilgrimage. Madhava followed them and joined them in their prayers crying out aloud Govinda, Govinda. He walked along with the pilgrims and reached Kapila theertham. He had his bath there. He then realised the enormity of his sins and felt sad that he had deserted his parents and his wife. He wept. However, he continued on his yatra, and ascended the Tirumala hills. It is said that when he went up the hill and stood along with the others in front of the temple, a horrible stench arose from his body suddenly. The whole body was consumed by flames. It could be seen even by the naked eyes. All the sins enveloping his soul thus got burnt like a piece of cloth. His body felt liberated. He who was suffering from leprosy suddenly found that his fingers and limbs had become whole; his ugly body became shining and beautiful.

The hill henceforth came to be known as Venkatadri i.e. the hill which has the powers to burn away all sins. It is said that this Madhava was later re-born as Akasa Raja and ruled over Tondamandalam.

NARAYANADRI

Tirumala hills are also known as Narayanadri. Once upon a time, a great sage by name Narayana rishi did penance to Lord Brahma. Brahma appeared before him. Narayana rishi then requested Brahma to bless him with the darshan of Perumal. Brahma advised him to go to Tirumala hills and offer prayers to Lord Vishnu. Accordingly, Narayana rishi did penance in Tirumala hills and after many years, Perumal appeared before him. The rishi then asked for moksha. Perumal granted that wish. Thenceforth the hill came to be known as Narayanadri.

THEERTHAS:

Above is the brief account covering the different names of the Tirumala hills and their significance. Let us now turn to the theerthas in the Seven Hills i.e. Tirumala and their legendary importance.

A punya theertha, as the very name signifies, refers to holy water. It is the combination of the two words punya+ theertha. Punya refers to "punathi" which conveys the meaning "subham karoti" i.e. it does good. Theertha connotes the meaning Taranthva nena. In Sanskrit, it means that it is a tool which helps an object to cross. It means that a dip in the holy theerthas would help the soul to cross the ocean of samsara and thus confers blessings on the pilgrim. These theerthas are broadly classified into four categories viz. firstly are those which confer dharmic qualities (dharma rati theertha). The second type are those which confer gnana i.e. enlightenment. The third confer bakthi and vairagya i.e. devotion towards God and a distaste for worldly pleasures. The fourth type are those which confer mukthi i.e. heaven. According to Brahmanda puranam and Skanda puranam there are 66 crores punya theerthas in Sesa parvatham. There are 1008 dharmarati theerthas, 108 gnana prada theerthas, 68 bakthi vairagya theerthas and 7 mukthiprada theerthas in Seshachalam. The balance from among the 66 crore theerthas fall into the general category.

As per Brahma purana, the theerthas of great significance are the mukthiprada theerthas. As stated earlier, they are seven viz. Swami Pushkarini theertham, Kumaradhara theerthan, Tumburu theertham, Ramakrishna theertham, Akasa ganga theertham, Papavinasana theertham, Pandava theertham (Gogarbha theertham). The Skandha purana however omits Ramakrishna theertham and says that the balance of six are mukthiprada theerthas. The Varaha purana also omits Ramakrishna theertham, but adds Deva theertham and says that those are the seven mukthiprada theerthas. However, all these puranas agree on six mukthiprada theerthas. Whether the seventh one is Ramakrishna or Deva theertham or Chakra theertham has not been finalised.¹

Perhaps the best way out is for the person who wants to get the maximum punya to add the other two theerthas also to his itinerary.

Each of these theerthas have a particular day in the year as parva day i.e. the holiest day. It is believed that on that particular day all the river goddesses in the entire country come there to bathe in that particular theertha so as to rid themselves of their accumulated sins left behind by the devotees who had a purificatory bath in their waters. On the parva day, therefore, those theerthas purify themselves by having a dip in this particular mukthiprada theertham j.e. they have papa nivrutthi. Therefore anyone who has a dip on that parva day in that particular theertha will have a benefit which is equivalent of having had a dip in all the punya theerthas of the country. The following are the parva days for the seven mukthiprada theerthas in Tirumala:

Sri Swami Pushkarini theertham at the sun rise time on sudha dwadasi day in Dhanur month (December-January)
Kumaradhara theertham on the full moon day when the Makha star is in the ascendant in Kumbha month.

¹ For the details of the names of the second, third and fourth category of theerthas, refer to pages 4 to 6 of Sri Venkateswara vaibhavam by Jagannathacharyulu (Telugu) published by T.T.D.

Tumburu theertham on the full moon day when the Utharphalguni star is in the ascendant in the month of Meena.

Akasa Ganga theertham on the full moon day when Chithirai star is in the ascendant in the month of Mesham.

Papa vinasa theertham in the month of Ashwayuju during sukla pakshami when Uthirashada star along with saphthami on a Sunday is in the ascendant. OR in the Utrabadra star on a dwadasi day.

Ramakrishna theertham on the full moon day when Pushya star is in the ascendant in the month of Makaram. ¹

Pandava theertham on the suddha dwadasi Sunday in the month of Vrushaba OR on Bahula dwadasi Tuesday.

Of the seven mukthipradha theerthas mentioned above four theerthas have festivals connected with the main temple of Lord Srinivasa on the Parva days. These festivals are known as Swami Pushkarini theertha mukkoti festival, Kumaradhara theertha mukkoti festival, Tumburu theertha mukkoti festival and Ramakrishna theertha mukkoti festival. On those days after aradhana is done to Lord Venkatachalapathi, the priests and others along with the mangala vadhyams carry the prasadas of the main deity and assemble on the banks of the above mentioned theerthas, offer prayers to the idols on the banks of those theerthas and distribute the prasadam to the pilgrims assembled there.

It is now proposed to briefly relate the stories connected with each of these divya theerthas.

SRI SWAMI PUSHKARINI THEERTHAM:

The following famous sloka in Venkatesa Mangalasanam bears ample testimony to the glory and the greatness of Swami Pushkarini theertham:

¹ Sri Venkateswara Vaibhavam by Pandit Vedantam Jagannatha Charyulu (Telugu) pp.8 T.T.D. Publication.

*"Sri Vaikunta virakthaya Swami Pushkarini thate
Ramaya rama manaya Venkatesaya mangalam."*

This couplet says that glory be to Lord Venkatesa Who got fed up with vaikunta and along with Lakshmi is spending His time happily on the banks of Swami Pushkarini Theertha. So God is believed to have preferred to stay on the banks of Swami Pushkarini theertham as against even Vaikunta. It is believed that as this theertha is the "swamy" i.e. leader to all the punya theerthas in the world, it is known as "Swami Pushkarini". The Bhavishyotra purana says "Swami pushkarani snanam, Venkateswara darsanam, Mahaprasada sweekaram thrayam thrylokya durlabham". Literally translated this means that in all the three worlds the most difficult task is to achieve all the three things viz. a bath in Swami Pushkarini, the darshan of Lord Venkateswara and have the fortune of receiving the mahaprasadam at the temple. Unless a person has poorvajanma punya, it is very difficult to achieve this triple task. This is very true even today because rarely do the pilgrims successfully fulfill all these three desirable tasks during a particular visit to Tirumala. It is said that a bath in Swami Pushkarini will get rid of doshas besides it would ensure that the 28 types of hell like Tamisra, Antha thamisra etc. can be avoided by a bath in this theertham. A bath in this theertha would give the benefit that one can get by performing an aswamedha yagam, gosahasra dhanam (gifting 1000 cows), Brahma gnanam (supreme enlightenment), Yashah sampath (fame), Lakshmi vaibhavam (wealth), vairagyam (a distaste for worldly pleasures), dharma buddhi (turning ones thoughts towards God), Manas suddhi (a pure mind) besides conferring on a person the benefit of the four purusharthas - dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Skandha purana quotes Vedavyasa as having said that a pilgrim can get the same benefit as a bath in Swami Pushkarini theertham by bathing in any other theertham provided he merely utters the words 'swami theertham, swami theertham, swami theertham, three times while having a dip in that other tank. That is to say a mere namasmaranam of Swami Pushkarini theertham would also confer on a person the benefits that accrue by an actual bath in that theertha!

It is believed that there are nine theerthas in this Swami Pushkarini theertham. They are Markandeya theertham (which confers longivity), Agneya theertham (which redeems the sins), Yama theertham (which helps to avoid hell), Vasishta theertham (which prevents incurring of monetary losses), Varuna theertham and Vayu theertham (which confer prosperity (kaivalyam), Dhana theertham (which confers wealth), Kalava theertham (which confers devotion and mukthi) and Saraswati theertham (which gets rid of all sins). Swami Pushkarini theertha which is a combination of all these theerthas is therefore bakthi mukthi pradhana theertham.

Let us now take up the various interesting stories connected with this theertha:-

MARKANDEYA RISHI AND THIS THEERTHAM:

Once upon a time Markandeya maharishi did severe penance to Lord Brahma. Pleased with his penance, Brahma appeared and asked him to choose any boon. Markandeya then asked that he be blessed with the opportunity to visit all the theerthas in the country. Brahma then smiled and said that it will take a very long time to visit all the theerthas and that even Rudra could not complete such a task. However, he assured him that the sarva theertha phalaprapthi can be obtained by visiting Venkatadri hill and having a dip in Swami Pushkarini theertham on the parva day. On that day waters from all the punya theerthas merge with the Swami Pushkarini theertham in order to be cleansed by Swami Pushkarini theertham. Brahma therefore advised Markandeya to have a dip in Swami Pushkarini on the parva day and thus have the benefit of bathing in all, and thus attain sarva theertha yatra siddhi and sarva theertha snana phalam. Markandeya accordingly had his bath in Swami Pushkarini theertham. This is the story related in Vamana puranam. The same purana also says that Kubera, the Lord of Wealth, Chandra, Indra and other devas also had visited Swami Pushkarini theertham and gifted gold, land and other precious things and received God's blessings.

BHAVISHYOTRA PURANA also details the greatness of Swami Pushkarini theertha. It says that whoever performs

the rites for the pithrus on the banks of this theertha would definitely please those souls.

Bhavishyotra purana as well Varaha purana mention the story as to how king Sankhana regained the kingdom which he lost after offering prayers on the banks of Swami Pushkarini theertha. Sankhana was a king who belonged to the Lunar race. Unfortunately, once he lost his vast kingdom to Samantha Raja. He with his family had to leave his kingdom. He went on a pilgrimage upto Sethu in deep south and on his return journey gradually reached the banks of the river Swarnamukhi. One day when he was feeling very depressed at having lost his throne and having to roam about from place to place, he heard an asareeri voice advising him not to feel sad. It directed him to go to Venkatachalam. The voice said that the perumal who resides there is like Kamadhenu (a celestial cow which satisfies one's wishes), a chinthamani (a celestial stone which grants all prayers), a suradruma (a tree which grants all wishes). The voice requested the king to go to the tank which is situated near the temple to build a hut on its bank and stay there and worship the Perumal for six months after which his royalty (swamitvam) will return to him. The king was naturally very happy on hearing this. He acted as advised. One day from the midst of the Swami Pushkarini theertham, a divya vimanam arose. The Lord holding the shanku, chakra and gadha in His hand along with His divine consorts Sridevi and Bhoomidevi was seated in that vimanam. The other devas were also there. The divine dundhubhis were heard. Sankhana stood up, praised the Perumal and bemoaned his state when he had lost his kingship and was deprived of his kingdom. The ocean of mercy, Lord Vishnu blessed him and assured him that whoever bathes in Swami Pushkarini would definitely obtain swamitvam and therefore he would soon regain his kingdom. Sankhana Maharaja was very happy. He started on his return journey towards his own kingdom. Meanwhile, the enemies who had usurped the kingdom from him had fought amongst themselves. The people who rose in revolt and had expelled the intruders were coming in search of king Sankhana so as to request him to return to rule his state. The leaders met king Sankhana on the banks of Godhavari river and to the mutual

joy of the king and his subjects the king returned to his country. Thus, Sankhana regained his throne after his prayers on the banks of the Swami Pushkarini theertham.

Yet another story relates that a brahmin devotee by name Narayana used to have his bath, regularly in the Swami Pushkarini theertham and offer prayers to Perumal. Perumal blessed him with salvation.

Sri Rama, son of Dasaratha, also is reported to have halted on the banks of the Swami Pushkarini theertham. Sri Rama on His way to Lanka with His vanara sena was camping near Seshachalam. Anjanadevi requested Him to stay on Venkatadri for some days. Sri Rama was initially hesitating as he wanted to hasten towards Lanka to rescue Sita Devi. But due to the persuasion of Hanuman. He decided to stay on the banks of Swami Pushkarini for a few days. Sri Rama visited Akasa Ganga theertham, had His bath in Swami Pushkarini. It is said that while Sri Rama was staying in Tirumala, the monkey warriors Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharaba, Ganda madana explored Thiruvengadam hill. They entered a cave which was the famous cave of Vaikuntam. As they entered the cave, they saw a magnificent seat inside which was indescribably beautiful. It was golden in colour. The cave was full of celestials with four arms and having the roopa of Vishnu saropyam. In the middle was a vimana studded with gems which shone like a thousand suns. In the midst of that vimana was seated a divine person whose face resembled that of a full moon. In His four arms, He wore the chakra, Shanku and other weapons. He had two consorts - Sridevi and Bhoodevi seated by His side. On His chest shone the Sri vatsa and kousthuba jewels. The monkeys were pleased to see this divya manohara murthi even as they were lost in that beauty upon which they had stumbled by accident. The celestials are reported to have chased them out of the cave. After coming out they tried to locate the Vaikunta cave again, but were unsuccessful. Thus it was that the monkeys in Sri Rama's retinue had a darshan of Vaikunta which is difficult task to achieve even for the maha rishis.

Before Rama, Dasaratha also is said to have visited Tirumala. Vasishtha Mahamuni gave him mantropadesam at Tirumala. King Dasaratha had his bath in Swami Pushkarini and repeated the Ashtakshara mantram. The Lord along with Brahma, Shiva and other devas seated in his Ananda nilaya vimanam appeared. Sounaka and other rishis who were there also offered their prayers. At their request, the God agreed to stay on in Venkathachala, until the end of Kaliyuga. He asked Dasaratha to perform a yagna in Ayodya when he would be blessed with four powerful and brave sons, one amongst whom would ultimately kill Ravana and establish peace in the world.

Thus Dasaratha also had his bath in Swami Pushkarini before being blessed with Rama as his son.

Skanda Purana has a few other stories to relate with regard to this Swami Pushkarini theertham. Dharma Gupta was the son of King Nanda who belonged to Chandra vamsam. The King Nanda in his old age left his kingdom to his son Dharma Gupta and took to the forest. One day Dharma Gupta went hunting. It became dark. He decided to stay in the forest. A lion chased him. The king climbed up a tree. He found to his consternation that there a bear had also taken refuge. The lion sat on the ground below the tree waiting to catch the prey. Faced with this common danger the king and the bear agreed to remain awake each for half the night so that the other could sleep for that half of the night. First the king slept. The bear dutifully protected him remaining alert and it spurned the entreaties of the lion to drop the king on the ground that man was a common enemy to both of them. But the bear ignored the sweet talk and guarded the sleeping king. After mid-night when it was the king's turn to watch and the bear slept, the lion renewed its entreaties. The fickle king succumbed and he tried to push the bear down as a prey to the lion. The bear assumed the form of a sage and saved itself by holding on to the branch. The sage cursed that the king become a lunatic as a penalty for the breach of trust. Dharma Gupta thus became mad and was roaming about the forest aimlessly. He forgot that he was a king. The followers in the retinue realised that something had gone wrong with Dharma Gupta. They went and informed his

father, king Nanda. King Nanda then took his son to the asrama of Jaimini maharishi. He fell at the feet of the maharishi and asked him to bless his son. With his divya drushti the rishi knew what had happened. As a pariharam for the dosha, the rishi advised king Nanda to go to Venkatachalam hill. He said that there was a theertha on the top of the hill known as Swami Pushkarini. The tanks of that Swami Pushkarini will be filled with punya purushas who will be offering their prayers to the Lord. He assured the king that if his son were to bathe in the holy pushkarini, he would be cured. The king was very happy. He went to Venkatadri, made Dharma gupta have his bath in Swami Pushkarini. As promised Dharma gupta recovered his senses and later ruled his kingdom wisely.

STORY OF SAGE KASYAPA

King Parikshit was cursed by a maharishi that he would be bitten by the snake Takshaka and meet his death within seven days. The king wanted to avoid this untimely death. He therefore retired to a palace standing on a single pillar in the midst of Ganga river. People who entered the palace were thoroughly checked before they were allowed entry. Hearing of this danger due to snake bite to his king, a brahmin by name Kasyapa who was an expert in curing the Takshaka mahavisham (the venom of the bite of snake known as Takshaka) decided to go to the palace and seek an interview with the king and ask for money to save him from the impending death. Enroute this brahmin met Takshaka himself. They started conversing. They wanted to test each other's strength. To prove his mettle Takshaka emitted flames of venom from his tongue and turned into ashes a big tree along with a man who was sitting on the tree. Kasyapa the brahmin then proved his mettle with the strength of his mantra brought back to life the big tree as well as the man seated on it. Takshaka was duly impressed with this mantra shakti of kasyapa. He realised that if he were to achieve his mission he should tempt Kasyapa with great wealth. He offered him double the amount of money which he hoped to get from Parikshit and asked him to return to his town. The brahmin succumbed to the temptation. He received the precious stones, gold and other money offered by Takshaka

and happily returned. Takshaka the snake then fulfilled the curse of the maharishi by entering the palace hiding himself in a fruit bowl filled with fruits. The king, as, cursed died of snake bite. But Kasyapa the brahmin who could have cured the king of the snake bite but succumbed to the temptation of wealth and did not perform his duty as a medical expert was looked down upon by the general public.

They named him as the great sinner (Mahapathaki). They boycotted him. Kasyapa felt very sad. He went to his guru Sakalya maharishi and asked him for help to get rid of this great sin. Sakalya maharishi with his gnana dhrushti realised all that had transpired. He said that as he had the power and skill to rescue the great Vishnu Baktha viz. Parikshit Raja, and yet due to love of filthy lucre had allowed the king to die, he was guilty of a grave sin. There was only one way by which he could rid himself of that sin. The rishi advised him to go to Venkatadri and have his bath in the holiest of the holy theerthams viz. Swami Pushkarini and then offer prayers to Perumal. He said there was no other solution. Thus, Kasyapa who had failed in his duty to cure the sick and the dying man was absolved by his bath in Swami Pushkarini.

Brahma purana has yet another story to relate regarding the greatness of this theertha. Long ago, Saraswati river wanted to be regarded as holier than Ganga and all the other rivers. She undertook a severe penance. One day while she was doing penance her son sage Pulasthia came there. But as she did not give him the respect due to a sage, Pulasthia got angry and cursed that she would not attain the purpose of her penance. This infuriated Saraswathi who also cursed Pulasthia saying he will father sons who will be demons and hate God. Pulasthia was sorry that he had lost his cool. He fell at the feet of Saraswathi. She then relented a bit and said that one of his grandsons will be a great devotee of the Lord and be blessed with immortality by God. (Pulasthiya's grandson was Vibhishana and he got the boon of immortality from Rama). Meantime, Saraswathi continued her penance. God appeared in response to her prayers. She asked that she should be regarded as the holiest river on earth. Baghavan then replied that due to the curse of Brahma and

Pulastiya rishi, She could not become a holy river. However, He blessed her and said she would be venerated as a sacred tank near His temple on the top of the Venkatadri hill. He assured her that to the west of that pushkarini He would reside and that all the theerthas including Ganga would come to the pushkarini once a year to wash off their accumulated sins. God assured her that Saraswati in the form of Swami Pushkarini would be able to cleanse all the theerthas including Ganga river. Thus sarva theertha papa nivruthi was conferred on Swami Pushkarini. Thus it is that Lord Srinivasa along with Thayar left even Vaikuntam to stay on the banks of Swami Pushkarini theertha and give darshan to the millions of devotees in Kali yuga.

STORY OF ATHMARAMA

Another story related in Varaha puranam deals with the life of Athma rama who was a famous brahmin who lived in Central India. He was a great Vishnu bhaktha and a vedic scholar. He was very humble and simple. All the learned men adored him. But somehow he lost his ancestral wealth and became very poor. He then felt miserable that he who was born in a good family had been reduced to destitution. He wandered about and ultimately reached Venkatadri. He bathed in Kapila theertha, went up the hill. Even as he was climbing up he felt very much at peace. On top of Seshachala, he met Sanath kumara Yogindra. He prostrated before the great sage and sought from him a solution for his problems. The sage told him that in his previous life, he had prevented charitable gifts by discouraging the giver as well as the receiver and that he had caused pain to good souls. He had neither gifted the money, land, grain clothes etc. nor had he offered worship to Vishnu. Hence it was that he was suffering in this life. The sage then imparted to him the Ashtakshara mantra. The brahmin then repeated the mantra, reached Swami Pushkarini which the purana says is equal to the heavenly Ganges and Viraja rivers. Athmarama took his bath in Swami Pushkarini. He felt light hearted. He saw a lofty vimana adorned with many gopurams and mandapams set with gems and surrounded by devas and siddhas. The brahmin was surprised on sighting this

wonderful vimanam. He went towards it. He saw that in the midst of that vimanam was seated Lord Venkateswara with eyes looking like an open lotus. His hands were adorned with sanku and chakra and one hand was pointing downwards to His lotus feet. His ear rings shone with kundalatas. His bejewelled body wearing pithambaram looked as beautiful as countless cupids. He was accompanied by Bhoomidevi and Lakshmi devi. To this omnipotent Venkateswara, the brahmin Athmarama bent down and offered his obsequence. Lord Srinivasa then said that all his evil acts were condoned and that henceforth he would be blessed with prosperity, long life, health and wisdom. Athmarama again prostrated before God and on rising found that both God and the goddess had disappeared. He retraced his steps to Swami Pushkarini, feeling full of awe and wondering whether it was a dream. However, he felt absolutely at peace. He continued to stay near Venkatadri and lived happily for a long long time. This is the legend of Athmarama which speaks about how the troubled brahmin was able to get peace of mind and the darshan of the Lord by having his bath in Swami Pushkarini theertha and offering prayers with devotion to Perumal.

KUMARADHARA THEERTHA

This theertha is situated about five miles away from the temple. Let us now recall the legends connected with this theertha. Varaha purana says that whoever has his bath in this theertha during parva kalam would definitely attain paramapadam.

This theertha got its name Kumaradhara as once upon a time it transformed an old man into a youth. One day Lord Venkatesa took the form of a young person and was walking in the mountain. He saw an old brahmin with bent body, sunken eyes, bereft of sight, with wobbling knees and apparently feeling hungry and thirsty walking that way. It appeared he had lost his way on the mountain paths as he was calling out loudly for his son and also wondering whether his son had wandered away leaving him alone. His frequent crying out loudly for his son had also made his tongue dry and stiff. When the youthful Venkatesa came across this old brahmin, He asked him as to who was Koundinya whom he was repeatedly calling. The old

man replied that Koundinya was his son and that he had lost him enroute. He asked the stranger to help him to reach his distant asrama. In disgust he wondered aloud as to why God had not been kind to him and in that advanced age with a weak body when he could not carry on his daily rites and without riches and relations he was still allowed to live and linger. Perumal then in fun asked the old man whether he desired to live longer in spite of his weak body. Promptly the old brahmin replied that he was not at all keen to live except that he wanted to fulfill all his duties to the devas, pithrus, etc. Hearing this reply Perumal took the old man by His hand led him a short distance, took him to a pool of water and asked him to have his bath in that pool. The old man obeyed. When he rose out of the water, the old man was transformed into a youth of sixteen years! God with a thousand faces, thousand heads and thousand arms appeared before him. The devas from the heaven showered petals, the deva dhundhubi was heard. Perumal then asked the old brahmin to perform his daily rites and He also conferred wealth on him to enable him to perform those rites satisfactorily. In as much as the sacred flowing water had changed the old man into a youth henceforth that theertha came to be known as Kumaradhara theertha. It is believed that whoever has his bath in this water three times a day continuously for three months will be relieved of all his sins and will attain salvation.

Markandeya puranam has another legend relating to this theertha. Once upon a time, Deva senapathi i.e. Kumaraswamy (Lord Muruga) at the request of other devas killed an asura by name Tarakasura. But by this he had committed Brahmahatty dosha. He approached his father Sankara and asked him about dosha nivruithi. Shiva advised Him to go to Venkatadri, have His bath in Kumaradhara theertha and do tapas by repeating the Venkatesa mahamantram. Devasenapathi i.e. Muruga obeyed His father's instructions, bathed in chakra theertha then Swami Pushkarini and later in Kumaradhara theertha. After a long penance, Lord Venkateswara appeared before Him bedecked with shanku, chakra, vaikunta katika hastam in His jaganmohana roopam. The Perumal blessed Lord Muruga and said that henceforth that theertha would be known as Kumara dharika theertha as Kumara i.e. Muruga did tapas on its banks.

TUMBURU PUNYA THEERTHA

This theertha is about seven miles away from the temple.

The Brahmottara purana says that once upon a time Tumburu and Narada were moving about in the sky. Narada looked at the peculiar veena held by Tumburu and asked him as to where he had obtained that strange veena. Tumburu replied that he had sung some songs in praise of a king in his sabha and had got this veena as a reward. Narada immediately fell foul on him and told him that he had committed a grave mistake in doing narastuthi instead of Vishnu stuthi. Narada therefore cursed Tumburu and said that as a punishment he would be banished to earth. Tumburu fell on Venkatadri hill on the bund of a theertha. He had his bath in that theertha stayed there for one full year and observed severe penance and offered prayers to Venkateswara. Finally, the Lord appeared before him and blessed him. From that day, the theertha came to be known as Tumburu theertha.

The Brahmothara purana has yet another story to relate. Once upon a time, there lived a brahmin by name Sarvabadhu. He fell into bad ways. So whenever he went to attend any yagna, he was being chased out. He felt sad. He approached Vasishta rishi. Vasishta pitied him. He prayed to Lord Brahma and asked him as to how Sarvabadhu could be redeemed of his sins. Brahma advised Vasishta to tell him to proceed to Venkatadri and do penance on the banks of Tumburu theertha. In due course, God appeared before him and redeemed him of his sin.

Skanda purana has yet another story to relate. It says that once Tumburu, the Ghandarva got annoyed with his wife as she would not perform Vishnu pooja as directed by Tumburu after having her bath in the holy waters of a punya theertha. She was a bit reluctant to have her bath in the cold water. Tumburu is said to have got annoyed with her and cursed that she become a frog and have her residence only in the hollow of a tree and that because of her reluctance to have a bath in the water when she became a frog also she would not have any water source anywhere nearby. The wife got frightened.

She fell at his feet and asked for forgiveness. The ghandarva then relented and said that a curse once uttered could not be recalled. However, he assured her that in due course Agastiya maharishi would come to the banks of Drona theertha and then would sit in the shade of an aswath tree in whose hollow would be living the frog i.e. Tumburu's wife. The rishi would then relate to his sishyas the greatness of the Drona theertha and when the frog i.e. Tumburu's wife hears these stories, she would be rid of her curse and regain her original form. Accordingly, Tumburu's wife took on the form of a mandookam. She was born in Venkatadri, slowly she reached the aswatha tree and was waiting patiently in the hollow of the tree. As ordained, one day Agastiya maharishi came and the frog was redeemed of the curse when the rishi related the greatness of the Tumburu theertha. The lady then fell at the feet of Maharishi who blessed her.

Tumburu theertha is also known as Thunba theertha as also Drona theertha.

Tradition has it that when the idol of Sri Ranganatha was brought to Tirumala to avoid desecration by muslim marauders in the early part of the 14th century, the idol was said to have been hidden in deep revine and was kept safe in one of the caves in that Tumburu kona. Even to-day, there is a small mandapam in the middle of the water source which may have been the place referred to in tradition.¹

AKASA GANGA THEERTHA

This punya theertha is about two miles from the temple. The waters of this theertha is so sweet that it is believed that even the devas regard the water as amrutham. The Ganga river is said to have three branches viz. in the sky, earth and pathala. That is why she is known as Tripadha. The one which flows in the sky is known as Akasa ganga. At Akasa Ganga theertha she is believed to have landed from the sky on Venkatadri. The water from this source is used for abishekam and other aradhana purposes for Lord Venkateswara.

¹ Page 8 History of Tirupati by T.K.T. Veeraraghavacharya.

Bhavishyothara purana says that Anjana the wife of Kesari did her tapas on the banks of this Akasa Ganga theertha and only on the successful completion of her tapas, was she blessed with the great son Anjaneya. This story has already been related earlier while explaining the reason for the hill being known as Anjanadri.

The Skanda purana relates yet another story. Once upon a time there lived a brahmin by name Punyaseela on the banks of the river Godavari. One day while he was performing the sraddha for his father, by chance a guest came that way. He treated him like his father and completed the sraddha. But after some time this brahmin found that his face was changing in to that of a donkey. He was worried. He went to Agastiya asram on the banks of the Swarnamuki river, fell at the feet of the rishi and asked him as to why he was cursed with a donkey's face. He felt that he had done no dosha to deserve this disgrace. He also wanted advise as to how he could atone for any unthinking act of commission or omission that he might have committed. The trikala gnana maharishi knew what was wrong. He told the brahmin that when he performed the pithru sraddha he had committed certain violation as the guest who had come to attend the sraddha at that time was not all that pure and pious. That dosha had resulted in his face becoming ugly. He advised the brahmin to proceed to Venkatadri, have his bath in Swami Pushkarini and also in Akasa ganga theertha. He assured him that after a dip in Swami Pushkarini and Akasa ganga theerthas he would regain his original face. The brahmin acted accordingly and was able to get rid of the face of the donkey.

The Skanda purana has yet another story connected with this theertha. It is said that a Vishnu baktha by name Ramanuja was observing vanaprastha. He would eat only the fruit which had fallen down from the trees on the ground (i.e. never pluck the fruit), he would offer worship to God regularly by collecting the freshly fallen flowers on the ground from the trees. He stayed on the banks of Akasa ganga for a long time and did severe penance. Pleased with his japa Lord Srinivasa appeared before him. Ramanuja was very happy with the darshan of Venkatesa which was a difficult task even for Brahma and Rudra as also

the rishis. He therefore decided to ask for no other boon. He only wanted God to bless him with sufficient intelligence as to think of God throughout his life. God conceded the wish and also assured him that whoever has their bath on the parva day in this Akasa ganga theertha would attain moksha.

PAPAVINASA THEERTHA

As the very name indicates a bath in this theertha is said to rid one of all his sins. This is a beautiful water fall situated about three miles from the temple. There are a number of buses plying to the water falls. A visit to this theertha is a very pleasant experience. It is said that Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanathkumara and Sanathana the four sons of Brahma are even today doing penance on the banks of this theertha. The atmosphere at the theertha is serene, beautiful, quiet and calm. There are quite a few stories connected with this theertha.

The Skanda purana relates the following story:

Once upon a time there lived a sudra by name Drudamathi. He was very keen to perform yagnas and tapas. He approached a rishi by name Kulapathi. Kulapathi however declined to teach him the methods of performing yaga. Undeterred Drudamathi built a parnasala for himself and started doing tapas on his own. One day a brahmin by name Sumathi came that way, and Drudamathi offered hospitality to him. Sumathi was impressed with the sincerity and perseverance of Drudamathi and initiated him into the vedic practices. In course of time, Sumathi passed away. As he had not atoned in full for many of the sins committed by him, he was reborn on earth. He was afflicted by a brahma rakshasa. His father felt very sad. He took his son to the asrama of Agastiya maharishi and requested him to rid his son of the brahma rakshasa. Agastiya maharishi with his gnana drushti knew the entire story. He told the father that his son had in his poorva janma violated the vedic percepts by teaching a sudra the vedas and practices and allowing him to do a yaga. He said the only way he could get rid of this sin would be to go to Venkatadri and have his bath in Papavinasa theertha for three days. The father and the son proceeded to Venkatadri, had their bath in Papavinasa theertha and got rid of the brahma rakshasa. Later all his sins were forgiven and he attained salvation.

Another story mentions how a brahmin by name Badramathi was blessed with riches and salvation after a bath in Papavinasa. Badramathi had six wives known as Krupa, Sindhu, Yasovathi, Kamini, Malini and Shoba. He had numerous children and naturally suffered from acute poverty not able to have even one full meal a day. One day the youngest of his wives Kamini told him that she had heard Sage Narada telling her father that whoever offered charity after having a bath in Papavinasa theertha in Tirumala and worships Lord Venkatesa later will be redeemed of all the sins and will become prosperous and wealthy. He accepted her advise and the brahmin along with his family proceeded to Venkatadri. Enroute in the town known as Susali he approached a brahmin by name Sughoshana and begged him to give him some land. He got a piece of land as charity. He then proceeded to Tirumala, had his sacred dip in Papavinasa theertha. He gave the land in charity to a brahmin and then offered prayers to Lord Venkatachalapathi. He was then relieved of his penury and was blessed with riches. After some years, he attained salvation.

Tradition has it that Tirumala Nambi, the maternal uncle of Ramanuja, the famous vaishnavite saint, used to fetch water from this theertha for the daily thirumanjanam and worship of the God. One day while he was bringing water on his head, God decided to test the depth of his devotion. He appeared as a small boy and asked for some water to quench his thirst. Tirumala Nambi refused saying that he was taking it for God and that he was too old to give him water from this pitcher and go back to the theertha to collect fresh water for God. The boy, however, let loose an arrow on the pot and drank the water which trickled out of the hole. Unfortunately, Tirumala Nambi was not aware of this. He proceeded to the temple and found to his consternation that the pot was empty. But he also found that the God had also received His abishekam. He was wondering how this would be possible. He then realised that the boy who appeared and drank the water unknowing to him was none other than Lord Srinivasa Himself.

The next day when he went to fetch water, the same boy appeared before Tirumala Nambi and told him that there was

an equally pure water source much nearer. He shot an arrow into the ground and from there Akasa ganga is reported to have begun to flow. From that day, water for thirumanjanam for the Perumal is brought from this Akasa ganga and not Papa vinasa. As tradition connects Akasa ganga and Papa vinasa theerthas, pilgrims invariably go and have their bath in both the places.

PANDAVA THEERTHA

This is situated within half a mile to the temple. Varaha purana says that advised by Sri Krishna paramathma, the Pandu puthras came to Venkatachalam in order to get rid of their adiyadika, adibouthika and adi deivika sins. One day after they lived on the banks of the theertha for one year, Dharmaputra had a dream wherein he was told that they have got rid of their sins because of the theertha snanam and he was assured of victory in the war and regaining of their lost kingdom.

Padma purana also confirms this.

RAMAKRISHNA THEERTHA

This is about six miles from the temple. Skanda purana says that a rishi by name Ramakrishna while doing tapas in Venkatachalam dug this tank for his daily snana. The rishi continued to stay on the banks of this theertha and worshiped Mahavishnu. It is said that he did such a severe penance that he was not aware of even the ant hills that were built around his body. Seeing this Devendara sent thick clouds and poured heavy rain on him for seven days. In spite of the heavy rain, the thunder and the lightning, undisturbed and undetted, the rishi continued his tapas. Pleased with this Vishnu, adorned with His shanku and chakra, seated on Garuda, appeared before the rishi and blessed him. The day when God appeared before the rishi is regarded as parva dhinam for this theertha. God assured the rishi as well as others that whoever has a bath on that day, would be able to get rid of all their sins and have all their desires fulfilled and that the theertha will henceforth be known as Ramakrishna theertha.

JABALI THEERTHA

The seven theerthas mentioned earlier are the mukthi pradana theerthas. Jabali theertha is a theertha which is said to confer on the pilgrims who have a bath there the bakthi and vairagyam i.e. sincere devotion and a healthy distaste for worldly pleasures. This theertha is located about one mile away from the temple. Jabali rishi is said to have had his asrama here and did tapas. Hence the theertha is known as Jabali punya theertha.

Skanda purana says that long ago a brahmin living on the banks of the river Kaveri took to evil ways, became a maha papi i.e. great sinner. A vethala i.e. a demon virtually took charge of him and he lost his peace of mind and was roaming about the country. In course of time, he reached Venkatachalam, had his dip in Jabali theertha. Many of his sins got washed away. The vethala also left him. The man who regained his senses saw Jabali rishi in deep meditation on the tank bund. He fell at his feet and asked him as to why and how he had come to this place. Jabali rishi then told him the entire story and advised him to offer prayers to Lord Srinivasa and attain Vishnuloka.

KAPILA THEERTHA

This is the only theertha located at the foot of the hills.

Vamana purana mentions a story connected with this theertha. Once upon a time, Kapila maharishi was worshipping a Sivalinga in pathalam. He used the milk from Kamadhenu, the divine cow for the abishekam for the Lingam. One day the Sivalingam started rising from the pathala, split the earth and rose above the ground. Kamadhenu is said to have got annoyed at this and kept its foot on the top of Sivalinga and henceforth the lingam stopped growing. As this Sivalingam was worshipped in pathala by Kapila maharishi in Krutha yuga, it is known as Kapileswara. The same lingam was worshipped in Treta yuga by Agni deva and hence it was known as Agneyam. In Dwapara yuga this lingam was worshipped by Chakra deva.

It is said that at this theertha it was that the Ganges of the netherworld was brought up to earth by sage Kapila. This is also known as Alvar theertha because there is a temple of Alvar on the other side.

VAIKUNTHA THEERTHA

This water fall is about ten miles to the north of the temple. It is said that it is the water of this theertha which brought back to life the wife and son of a brahmin during the reign of Thondaiman. This detailed story will be related later in this chapter while describing the leelas of Perumal.

THE JOURNEY TO THE GARBHAGRIHA

After having acquainted ourselves with the stories connected with the different names of the Seven Hills, and the stories connected with the important punya theerthas on the hill, let us now start on the journey to the garbagriha. It is no exaggeration to say that every day in the hill is a holy festival day. This is one pilgrim centre where there is nithya kalyanam and pachcha thoranam everyday (i.e. a wedding everyday and evergreen garlands of auspicious mango leaves tied all the time around the temple precincts). From the time one starts the climb up the hill and more so when one has reached the top of the hill, one hears the cry of the devotees "Yedu kondala vada, Venkata Ramana Govinda, Govinda" i.e. the pilgrim refers to the perumal as the Lord of the Seven Hills Govinda. We can also hear the ecstatic cry "Rama Ramana Govinda Govinda". It shall be the endeavour in the next few paragraphs to join the queue of the devotees entering the temple to obtain the darshan of the Lord in the temple and stage by stage explain the route to the garbagriha.

OUTER GOPURAM

The mukhadwaram i.e. main gateway of the temple is about 11 feet wide. The outer gopuram is a five storeyed structure. It was probably built in 13th century A.D. At the entrance itself on either side there are two images viz. of Sankha nidhi

on the southern and Padma nidhi on the northern side. They face the worshippers entering the temple. These are the two guardian deities. On entering through the mukhadwaram, to our left are three statues. One is a copper statue of king Venkatapathiraya. The next two images are of stone representing an emperor and his queen. These two statues are of Achutaraya maharaya and his queen Varadaraji amman. On the northern side there are three statues in bronze which represent Sri Krishnadeva maharaya with two of his queens Tirumala devi and Chinna devi.

RANGANAYAKULU MANDAPAM

To the south of the Krishnadeva raya mandapam is the Ranganayakulu mandapam standing on a high basement. At its southern end is a small shrine about 12 feet square which is kept closed. It is popularly believed that this was the abode of Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam during His stay in Tirumala in the years 1320-1360. Apparently, after the idol was restored to Srirangam, the shrine remained closed with a sesha vahanam screening the above shrine.

TIRUMALARAYA MANDAPAM

This mandapam adjoins the Ranga mandapam. In a portion of this mandapam there are three statues of Lala Khamaram (Thodarmalla), his mother Matha Mohana De and his wife Pitha Bibi. While not much is known about these devotees, yet the standing pose with anjali hasta mudra clearly speaks volumes about the fact that they must have been some wellknown great devotees of the Lord.

SAMPANGI PRADAKSHINAM

The outer pradakshinam for the temple i.e. pradakshinam which lies in between the outer gopuram and inner gopuram is known as Sampangi pradakshinam. It is said that once upon a time this area was full of sampangi trees and the pradakshinam got its name after those trees. But to-day there are no trees there but one can visualise the scenic beauty and splendour that

would have been there long ago when the idol was nestling in the midst of this thick wooded forest surrounded by the scented flower trees in the outer prakaram.

POOLA BAVI

If one were to walk round the Sampangi pradakshinam today watching it bereft of all its pristine beauty, one finds that a portion of the sampangi pradakshinam is being used for performing kalyana utsavams. If we walk through the kalyana utsavam area, one sees the old rooms which are being used for storing the various raw materials required for preparing the prasadams for the Lord. Moving further, one comes across a set of rooms adjoining this pradakshina which are used for preparing prasadams like dosas for the Lord. On the northern side of this pradakshina lies the Poola Bavi. This is a step well. "Poolu" in Telugu means flowers. Therefore it means well of flowers or better still it was a well for flowers. Once upon a time, it was used for disposing of the used flowers and flower garlands in the temple. It is said that this practice was initiated by Sri Ramanuja when he visited the temple in the 12th century. But alas to-day the Poola bavi is a closed structure and has no religious sanctity attached to it. Apparently, the flowers and garlands worn by the God are perhaps disposed of in some other mundane manner.

The Venkatachala Ithihasa Mala however has a very interesting legend connected with the Poola bhavi. It is said that Thondaiman king used to visit the temple by using a subterranean passage called Narasimha bila. On one occasion, the king was pursued by his enemies. He rushed to the temple at midnight for safety. At that time, Lord Venkatachalapathi and His consorts Sridevi and Bhoodevi were having a pleasant time roaming outside the garbagriha, perhaps discussing men and matters! Seeing the king entering the hall premises Sridevi hid Herself in the vakshasthala of Srinivasa while Bhoodevi sought refuge in the Poola bhavi i.e. the well of flowers reportedly dug by one Rangadasa for watering the flowers in the nandavanam. This legend is mentioned in Varaha puranam. Sri Ramanuja heard this story and he set up images of Srinivasa and Bhoodevi

on the step well and ordered that the used flowers and flower garlands, tulasi etc. of the temple be dropped in the well in honor of Bhoomi devi. But as stated earlier, today the well is not having any sanctity attached to it. Let us hope the tradition will be revived.

DWAJASTHAMBHA MANDAPAM

The most important mandapam in the sampangi pradakshinam i.e. the outer prakara through which the pilgrim passes before reaching the inner gopuram is the dwajasthamba mandapam. The dwajasthamba or the Lord's flag pole is located in this mandapam. The Bali peetam is also located in this mandapam. Both these are in front of the inner gopuram of the temple. After one passes through this area, one reaches the inner gopuram. There are two interesting basreliefs on the side walls of this inner gopura vasal. Many people in their hurry and anxiety to enter the temple quickly miss these two interesting pictures. One of these shows the lord's devotee Hathiram playing dice with Lord Venkateswara. God with four arms is shown comfortably seated on an asanam . The upper arms hold the shanku and chakra. The lower right hand holds the two dice in the palm. On the other side of the entrance way of the inner gopura vasal, there is another interesting basrelief which shows Sri Rama seated on a platform along with Sita, Lakshmana and Bharatha. It is as if Sri Rama is holding court. The figure of Anjaneya is also shown in the traditional style kneeling and praying for the blessing of his master.

VIMANA PRADAKSHINAM

As soon as one crosses this inner gopura vasal we step into the vimana pradakshinam. To the left as we enter the temple lies Varadarajaswami shrine. Tradition has it this was built for housing the idol of Varadaraja swamy of Kancheepuram during the troubled muslim invasion period.

POTU ROOMS

As one proceeds further, next to the Varadaraja swamy temple is the main kitchen of the temple called Poturooms.

The Lord's prasadas are cooked here. Everyday the cooking is done only in new earthen pots. The kitchen is incharge of Sri Vakuladevi, the mother of Srinivasa. There is an idol of Vakula devi at the entrance to the kitchen. She is also known as Madapulli Nachiyar.

BANGARU BAVI

In front of the poturooms there is a well which is called Bangaru bavi (golden well). The water for the abishekam of the Lord and for cooking the prasadas of the Lord is taken from this well. Venkatachala Ithihasa Mala says that in the olden days water for abishekam of the Lord was taken from papa nasa theertha. When Tirumalai Nambi became old, Alavandar prayed to the Lord to accept the water from the well in the temple itself. Ramanuja who heard about this in one of his visits to Tirumala ordered that the waters of Papanasa theertha, Akasa ganga theertha as well as the water of this Bangaru bhavi are equally holy and can be used for all purposes in the temple. Ever since, the water of Bangaru bavi is used in the temple.

ANGA PRADAKSHINA CORRIDOR

This inner vimana pradakshina corridor circumambulates the sanctum. This is the area where the pilgrims who have taken the special vow roll along the corridor on the floor in their wet clothes in fulfilment of a vow made to God. This circumambulation is called Anga pradakshana, as all the angams in the body touch the floor while the pilgrim rolls along the floor on the stone pavement of the vimana pradakshina in a prostrate form.

On the northern and the western side of the vimana pradakshina there are open mandapams as well as rooms. In the open mandapams the pandits reciting the vedas etc. sit. There are also other rooms. In one such room the copper plates on which the songs composed by Annammacharya are engraved are stored. There is a small room called Sabhai arai where the Lord's wardrobe and the cot on which He is put to bed in the night are stored.

ANANDA NILAYA VIMANAM

The holy tower over the garbagriha in Tirumala is known Anandha nilaya vimanam. Ananda means bliss nilayam refers to house. Ananda nilayam therefore stands for the abode of bliss. Tirumala temple is truly an abode of bliss. The Varaha purana says that when the Lord manifested Himself near Swami Pushkarini, it was in a divya vimanam which arrived from Vaikuntam. The varaha puranam also says that this divya vimanam from Vaikuntam will be invisible to mortal eyes in Kali yuga and that men will construct separate vimanam for God. The Bhavishyotra purana says that the first vimanam constructed by men was by Thondaman, the Chola king. This vimanam has been gilded many times. The first time was during the reign of the Vijaya nagara king Vira Narasimha deva between 1205- 1262. The king had a thula arohana ceremony performed when he weighed himself against gold and presented the gold to the temple for gilding the vimana. The next gilding of the vimana was done during the reign of Saluva Mangi deva in the year 1359 A.D. The next devotee who renovated the vimanam is Amatya Sekhara Mallanna, a minister under Devaraya II. This was done perhaps between 1417 and 1444 A.D. Sri Krishnadevaraya of Vijaya nagara was the next person who gilded the Anandha nilaya vimanam during 1518 A.D. In 1630 A.D again this vimanam was gilded by Koti Kanyadanam Tatacharya of Kanchi. The T.T.D rebuilt this vimanam in 1958. The dazzling beauty of this Anandha nilaya vimanam is something to be seen and enjoyed. The Vimana Venkateswara which is seen on the first tier of Anandha nilaya vimanam is an exact replica of the Lord's image in the sanctum sanctorum).

In this corridor also one can stand on the steps built on to lead to the mandapa on the side and from there one can have the darshan of Vimana Venkateswarar i.e. Lord Srinivasa on the Ananda nilaya vimanam of the temple.

SRI RAMANUJA SHRINE

In this corridor itself is the shrine of Sri Ramanuja the great vaishnavite acharya. Here theertha and satari are offered

to the pilgrims. There is however no independent pooja for the acharya. A portion of the prasadas that are offered to Lord Venkatchalapathi first is later taken to this shrine and offered to Sri Ramanuja also. It is interesting to note that no other acharya and none of the alwars find a place in this temple. Thus a shrine for Ramanuja speaks volumes only for all that he has done for this temple in systematising its religious practices. Sri Venkatchala Ithihasa Mala says that the image of Ramanuja was set up by Anantarya. On hearing about the death of Ramanuja, he prayed to Lord Srinivasa for permission to set up Ramanuja's image in the temple. The Lord's sanction was obtained and only then the image of Acharya installed in the temple. Apparently this was done in 12th century. It was the same Anantalwan who got Lord's Permission for recitation of Ramanuja 108 Andadhi during the Adyayana utsavam in Tirumala.

Many stories are related about the greatness of Anantalwan. It is said that once Anantalwan was bitten by a snake. But in spite of the advice given by the people, he did not pay any attention to that bite; instead very calmly he had his bath in the tank and continued to string the flower garlands for Perumal. It is said that later when he took the flower garlands to Lord Venkatchalapathi, the Lord asked him as to why he was not heeding the advice given by his friends regarding the snake bite. Anantalwan is said to have replied to the Perumal if the snake which bit him was more powerful than him, he would go to Vaikuntam and would continue to do his kankaryam to Perumal there: If he was more powerful than the snake which bit him, then he would survive and continue to do kankaryam in this world itself to Lord Venkatchalapathi! He therefore said that either way the snake bite required no attention at his hands. Such was the deep devotion of this vaishnavite sage towards Lord Venkatchalapathi.

Once Anantalwan was busy with his job of stringing the flowers. But Lord Venkatchalapathi had asked him to come over to His sannidhi. It is said that Anantalwan refused even the call of Perumal and went to see the Perumal only after he finished stringing the garland. Perumal feigned anger and asked him as

to why he was so disobedient. Anantalwan said that he had come to the hill at the behest of Ramanuja to do kankaryam to the Lord and that he would not allow any interruption in his paying single-minded attention to that kankaryam. God then tried to test the depth of devotion of Anantalwan. He refused to wear the garlands brought by Anantalwan. It is said that Anantalwan then replied that he could not care less and that his main duty was to implicitly obey the orders of his teacher viz. Ramanuja who had entrusted the job of providing flower garlands to the Perumal. He therefore calmly hung the flower garlands on the door jamb and was about to return. God felt very pleased at this absolute sense devotion of the sishya Anantalwan to his mentor Ramanuja and blessed the ideal 'adiyar 'i.e. disciple.

SRI YOGA NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE

By the side of the shrine of Ramanuja facing west is situated the shrine of Yoga Narasimha swamy. The idol of Yoga Narasimha swamy is seen in meditation seated on a high pedestal holding the shanku and chakra in upper arms.

TIRUMAMANI MANDAPAM

Having gone round the vimana pradakshinam, we now enter the Tirumamani mandapam. This houses the Garuda shrine in the eastern portion just opposite the Bangaru vakili or gateway of gold. The Garuda image in the Garuda shrine is about 5 feet high with hands in the anjali hasta pose. Huge rings adorn his ears. He has several ornaments on his body. There is a small vimanam on this shrine. Originally the Tirumamani mandapam was an open mandapam. But today it is a closed one with railings all around. In the north western part of this mandapam is located the hundi where the pilgrims drop their devotional offerings to God. Today it is separated by railings from the main Tirumamani mandapam in order to facilitate the pilgrims to go round the hundi in a leisurly way and not get mixed up with the queues of pilgrims going into the inner sanctum. There are two huge bells located in the south eastern portion of this Tirumamani mandapam. These bells are rung when neivedhyam is offered to the Lord in the inner sanctum.

The bells ring with a loud resounding note and many believe that the music of this sound is synonymous with the cry "Govinda, Govinda". Thus even the bell in Tirumala utters only the name of that powerful deity.

BANGARU VAKILI

At the western end of the Tirumamani mandapam is the Bangaru vakili or golden doorway. This doorway has a panel which exhibits all the forms of Vishnu viz Para, Vyuha, Vibhava antaryamin and archa forms. The images of Jaya and Vijaya are seen on either side of the doors. They are the dwara palakas. The suprabatham is recited in the Tirumamani mandapam in front of this Bangaru vakili. In this mandapam sometimes enormous quantity of cooked rice is heaped on the floor and Bhoga Srinivasamurthi is brought to the Bangaru vakili for accepting the food neivedhyam. It is called Tiruppavadai. Previously sahasrakalasa abishekam where 1008 silver vessels filled with consecrated water are used for performing abishekam to the Lord Malayappaswami, used to be held in this central aisle.

SNAPANA MANDAPAM OR THIRUVILAM KOIL

As soon as one crosses the Bangaru vakili, we enter a portion which is known as Snapana mandapam. Bhoga Srinivasamurthi was consecrated in this mandapam in the year 966 A.D. So this mandapam must have been in existence from the 10th century A.D. itself.

RAMAR MEDAI

When one crosses the Thiruvilankoyil or Snapana mandapam one enters a portion known as Ramar medai. This has two small platforms on either side of which figures of Sugreeva, Angadha and Hanuman are seen. On the opposite side there are equally beautiful Panchaloha images of Anantha, Garuda and Visvaksena. But of course as soon as one crosses the Bangaru vakili, the image of the divya manohara vighram of Lord Venkatchalapathi is the sole attraction for the pilgrim. The pilgrim therefore has no eyes to see either to the right or to the left

and notice other idols. In the olden days there must have been a circum ambulatory path around the main shrine known as the Mukkoti pradakshinam. However, the circum ambulatory path is today closed. The Ramar medai has become a closed area. The mukkti pradakshinam around the garbagriha is now open only on three sides. It is opened only once in a year on the day of Vaikunta Ekadasi. The Mukkoti pradakshina is open only on northern, southern and western sides. The northern portion of the mukkti pradakshinam is wider than the western and southern sides. There is a small temple for Viswakshenar on the northern side in the mukkti pradakshinam. This small shrine can be visited even on non-Vaikunta Ekadasi day by entering from the vimana pradakshina corridor.

SAYANA MANDAPAM

From the Ramar medai one enters the sayana mandapam which is again a small room. The Lord is put to sleep in this mandapam during ekantha seva at night.

GARBHAGRIHAM

Behind the Sayana mandapam is the garbhagriham or the sanctum sanctorum. The stone step which separates the garbhagriham from the Sayana mandapam is the famous Kulasekhara padi named after Kulasekhara Alwar who in his outpourings expressed the desire that he wants to be born as any object on the hills so that he would have eternal Tirumala sambandam. Such was his great attachment to Tirumala.

This garbhagriham houses only one Murthi. The temple in Tirumala is thus unique in that it is the only Ekamurthi temple for Vishnu in the whole of India.

THE DEITIES IN THE GARBHAGRIHA

The moola vigraham is believed to be a swayam vyaktha murthi i.e. It is a vigraha which manifested by itself and was not sculpted by human hands. There is a story in Mausala Parva chapter 5 in Mahabharatha which establishes the connection between the manifestation of the idol with the Supreme being

viz. Sriman Narayana. The story says that Krishna, having finished the task for which he had taken the avatar in this world lay down on the ground in a thick forest with the right foot placed on the left knee. At that time, a hunter by name Jara was on a hunting expedition in the same forest. He saw the sole of Krishna's foot and mistook it for a beast of prey and let loose an arrow. The arrow head was shod with a piece of steel which was the only piece left for fulfilling a curse uttered by Durvasa rishi for the destruction of the entire Yadhava race. As Sri Krishna was a yadhava, He offered Himself for that sole remaining piece of steel and thus fulfilled the curse of Durvasa rishi. Jara found that he had committed a big mistake having killed a man instead of an animal. The mythology has yet another story to explain this accident. In Treta yuga i.e. the yuga preceding Dwapara yuga, the Supreme being had taken avatar as Rama to destroy evil. At that time He shot with a deadly arrow Vali, the great monkey king. But when He let loose the arrow Rama hid Himself behind as Vali had been blessed with a boon that he would be able to draw on to himself major power of the enemy who faces him. As such nobody could fight him straight face to face. So even Rama had to fight him hiding behind the trees. But when Vali was about to die he accused Sri Rama of having acted in a cowardly fashion and said that he was an unworthy son of the great king Dasaratha. Sri Rama felt that Vali was right and that he was entitled to a quid pro quo. It was Vali who was reborn as Jara and when Sri Rama reincarnated as Sri Krishna he provided an opportunity to Jara to kill Him. When Jara fell prostrate at the feet of Sri Krishna and begged pardon, the Lord blessed him and freed him from future births. With that episode Krishnavataram came to an end. When Krishna shed His mortal coils the people as well as the devas were sad as they felt they were losing touch with divinity and wondered when they would see Him again. It is said that while the divine spirit was ascending to the heavens, it illuminated the earth and the heavens. As it entered Surya mandalam, the people and Devas saw it taking the shape of a formation with four hands but made of lifeless stable matter. Simultaneously, there was an asareera voice heard which proclaimed that Perumal would appear on earth in that same form and that the image would possess considerable power

and that Brahma and devas could continue to worship Him in that form. This incident happened at the end of Dwapara Yuga. It is therefore believed that the vigraha in Thiruvengadam which manifested itself at the beginning of Kali Yuga is the same as the one which was seen by Brahma and others earlier. When Brahma and others saw the image in the sky, they noticed a scar running down the shoulder near the arm. The devas who saw the vision describe the vision as having the bow (sarngam). The description clearly refers to a scar from the shoulder to the armpit caused as it were by the constant wearing of the bow and a pack of arrows on the shoulder. It is said that even today the mula vigraha of Lord Venkateswara has such a scar on the shoulder. This lends credence to the theory that God manifested Himself on Tirumala in the form in which He appeared before Brahma and other devas while ascending to Heaven at the end of Krishnavataram. Even to-day every night arrangements are made for aradhana by Brahma and other devas by keeping five large gold cups filled with Akasa ganga theertha and all other ingredients required for regular worship.

Nammalwar also in his pasurams states that Paran has come down to Tirumala from His divya loka out of His own choice in order to help the devotees. Nammalwar also says that the devas including Brahma offer worship daily to Lord Venkateswara. Sri Ramanuja also in his Mangala slokam in Sri Bhashya says that Lord Srinivasa is none other than parabrahmam. It is thus very evident that Sri Venkateswara at Tirumala is a self-manifested vigraha and personification of God Himself i.e. the image is Swayam Vyaktham.

The description of the Perumal has been given beautifully by Mr Sithapathi in his book '*Sri Venkateswara the Lord of the Seven Hills*'. The pen picture is so graphic and perfect that Mr. Ramesan has given the credit to Mr. Sithapathi and repeated the description verbatim in his book "*The Tirumala Temple*". I find that T.K.T. Veeraraghavacharya in his book '*History of Tirupati* (three volumes) also has given a good description of the moolavar. In this book, I also propose to broadly adopt the description given by Mr. Sithapathi.

THE MOOLAVAR :

The Lord's image is in a standing posture (sthanaka pose). The Lord is standing on a high lotus pedestal. The height of the Lord has never been recorded but cannot be less than 9 feet from the tip of the makutam i.e. crown to the bottom of the lotus pedestal. Every Friday when abhishekam is done, a clear picture of the image emerges as all the gold kavacham and jewellery and clothes ornamenting the figure are removed. The priest who performs the abhishekam may not exceed $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet. He stands on a stool $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. Even then he is not able to perform abhishekam on the Lord's makutam without assistance from the priest standing behind the idol. Keeping in view all these facts as also the fact that the lotus pedestal on which the Lord stands is itself below the floor in the sanctum sanctorum, it can easily and safely be assessed that the Lord's figure from the tip of the crown to the base of the lotus pedestal must be nothing less than 9 to 10 feet. Thus, it is a majestic figure.

As stated earlier, the Lord's majestic beauty is best seen at the time of the abhishekam on Friday, when the jewels and other para phernalia do not distract our view of Him in His celestial pristine glory. It is at that time that we see the eyes of the Lord in the sama drushti pose with a smile that is extraordinarily tranquil and beautifully reflecting a sense of complete love and serenity that immediately captivates all the living beings with its benevolence. The eyes neither look upwards nor downwards, but straight into the devotees eyes as prescribed in the Sukra Neethi. The face is beaming with joy and wears a smile. The Lord wears a makuta or crown which is more than 20 inches high. Sometime back the Kireeta was completely covered with diamonds and that diamond studded crown on special occasions adorns the head of the Lord. The diamond studded crown is a thing of a dazzling beauty and attractive effulgence. The Perumal's head is richly adorned with flowing locks of hair or jata juta and some of these locks of curly hair rest on His shoulders. The nose is delicately carved and is neither prominent nor flat. The mouth of the Lord is also exquisitely shaped. According to the prathima Mana Lakshanam the mouth "should be made slightly smiling, pleasant and possessed of all good signs. One

should absolutely avoid the construction of the mouth which is passionate impetuous wrathful sour bitter or circular". The Lord's mouth which is smiling confirms to the idealistic standard prescribed in the above work. The chin and the ear are carved proportionally. The ears wear beautiful ornaments (Kundalam). The chest of the Lord is magnificent in cut and size and if measured may be between 36 and 40 inches in width while the waist would be between 24 and 27 inches. The neck is like a conch and the body in the posture of a lion and exquisitely shaped. The belly is also beautifully modelled. The Lord's image has four arms. The upper two being carved to hold the chakram and the conch. These two weapons are not an integral part of the main idol. The upper right arm holds Sudarsana chakra. The upper left arm holds the panchajanya.. The lower right hand is in the varada hasta pose. The varada hasta is the pose in which the Perumal holds His hand with the palm facing the devotee and all the fingers of the hand pointing downwards. This pose indicates that the Perumal is the giver of boons. While the lower left hand is in the *Katya valambita pose*. Actually the fingers of the left hand rest on the left thigh with the thumb of the hand almost parallel to the waist line. This pose reminds the devotee that those who worship the Lord's feet with constant devotion will be blessed and protected by Him. According to another interpretation this pose indicates that the samsara is only knee deep to those who cling to the Lord's feet. While the idol itself is not exactly standing in the Tribhanga pose, the body near and below the waist has taken a slight tilt to the left and the knees themselves are bent and open slightly outwards giving the idol a peculiar grace and charm. Lakshmi Thayar is carved on the right half of the chest of the Lord. She is seen in the sitting pose and is an integral part of the moola murthi. Yagnopaveetham and a set of four necklaces or ornaments of the neck also are clearly visible on the main idol during the abhishekam time. The arms have armlets with finger like projection which appear to be naga bhooshanam or cobra like ornaments. The kati bandham or waist band is about 2 inches thick. The legs and the feet of the Perumal are beautifully shaped, and are strong and lissom. As stated earlier both the knees are bent and open slightly outwards giving the stately majestic figure a grace and a charm that words cannot adequately describe. The feet are models of

perfection and have ornaments near the anklets. The Lord's image has, on the shoulders marks resembling scars made by constant wearing of the bow. Thus this perfectly modelled image of the Perumal is beauty personified and is indeed a divya manohara murthi. A darshan of this beautiful idol is a spiritual experience by itself. A darshan of the Lord instils in us a certain divine presence, a power and an intangible ethereal sensation that completely overshadows any troubled emotions. The same feeling is expressed by Mr. Ramesan in his book when he says "who can describe Him who is beyond speech and try to encompass in time one who is timeless? We in our vanity think of serving Him. But whatever we do, the love of the Lord and His everflowing grace is there and whatever else may or may not be added to a divinity, one thing is certain that mental peace, joy and a strength to sustain anything which the Lord chooses to give us would be added to us. If ever any proof is required, that the temples are live institutions the Lord at Tirumala is a verifiable truth".¹ A darshan of this divya manohara Murthi leaves one totally transformed. A certain sense of fulfillment an indescribable, indefinable elation of the spirit, a certain peace of mind, absolute sense of security on surrender of oneself to the Great Protector, a supreme sense of satisfaction and joy, in short a divine power and bliss envelopes the devotee.

It is indeed amusing to think that once upon a time there were serious doubts raised as to whether the image is that of Vishnu or that of any other deity. Some claimed it was the idol of Lord Shiva. Some others said that it was the idol of Sakthi. Yet others said that it was Muruga. Those who need conviction through a scientific analysis of the pros and cons may refer to the analysis done by Mr. Ramesan in his book "*The Tirumala temples*"².

After analysing the claims one by one, Mr. Ramesan comes to the conclusion that the detailed examination of all the points proves that the idol is and has been all along a vaishnava idol only. The Alwars have also referred to this idol as that of

¹ Page 112 *the Tirumala Temples* by N. Ramesan.

² Page 112 to 121 of *Tirumala Temple* - Mr. Ramesan.

Narayana. We found earlier in this chapter that even during Silappadikaram days the author has referred to the existence of a Vishnu temple and not any other temple at Tirumala.

Sri Venkatachala Ithihasa mala a sanskrit work of the 12th century in its first three stapakas mentions a discussion that took place between the vaishnavites led by Ramanuja and the saivites about the nature of the Lord's image at Tirumala.

The then king was convinced about the arguments advanced by the vaishnavites and he confirmed that the image at Tirumala was that of Vishnu. However, Ramanuja is reported to have requested the king that as a final clinching argument the weapons of Vishnu and the weapons of Shiva may be left in the temple over night and the matter left for decision by the Lord of Tirumala Himself. This was agreed to. Accordingly one night the weapons of both Lord Vishnu and Shiva were left inside and the doors closed. The next morning when the temple doors were opened the Lord was seen wearing the conch and the chakra. This story repeated in Ithihasa Mala is interesting and clinched the issue.

ORNAMENTS WORN BY MOOLAVAR

Lord Srinivasa is decorated daily with flowers. In addition several precious unique jewellery adorn the divya manohara murti. The reader who has so far read the description of the moola murthi will be able to have a complete picture in his mind's eye only when the ornaments which decorate the moolavar is detailed. The idol is adorned with a big emerald 3" in diameter called "Meru Paccha". It is the biggest emerald in the world. He has a gold crown decked with precious gems which is believed to have been gifted by Akasa Raja. He has also an alternative crown studded with diamonds. He wears makara kundalams or gold ear rings shaped like a crocodile. He holds the conch and the chakra which have gold covers studded with precious gems. He wears a necklace with a pair of tiger claws mounted in gold case, a makara kanti two nagabharanam i.e. cobra jewels worn round, the upper arm. There are two sets of this jewel. One is in pure gold. Recently another pair was donated and is studded with diamonds. He wears a Lakshmi garland which is

a big necklace with the images of Lakshmi carved out on each pathakam. He also wears a tulasi necklace, a salagrama garland which contains salagramas encased in gold and on which the sahasranamas are engraved. Near His knees He wears a vanki like gold ornament, a pair of gold anklets. He also wears a cobra jewel just below the chest. His varada and katyavalambitha hasta also have two covers one made of gold and the other studded with diamonds. He is adorned with a sword by name Suryakatari. He has a yagnopaveetham in gold as also in silver. The divine tiruvadis are covered with gold covers. He wears an exquisite carved dasavathara belt around the waist which depicts the Lord's ten avatars. The surya katari referred to earlier hangs from this dasavatara belt. On His chest He has two gold sculptured plaques one is of Sri Lakshmi, the other that of Padmavathi. The murthi of Goddess Lakshmi with four arms is seen seated on a lotus. The two upper arms are holding the lotus buds, the right lower arm is in the abhaya pose and the other lower arm is varada hasta pose. The image of Sri Padmavathi adorns the Lord's left chest. She is Alarmel Mangai. The Venkatesa Ithihasa Mala says that Sri Ramanuja made a gold necklace containing the image of Padmavathi and put it round the neck of Lord Srinivasa. Sri vari vastram i.e. the cloth which adorns the deity is a silk dhoti which is 12 yards in length and two yards in width. The upper cloth is also gold laced and is six yards in length and one yard in width.

THE OTHER IDOLS IN THE GARBAGRIHA BHOGA SRINIVASA MURTHI

This image is made of silver. It is an exact replica of the moola vigraha, with only this difference that the conch and the chakra are not detachable in this murthi, unlike in the case of moola vigraha. The idol has a six pointed yantram installed in it. It is in a standing pose with four arms. This idol receives all the bhogams and upacharams in the temple. It is seen near the moola vigraham. This image was made and consecrated in the temple in the year 966 A.D. The donor was a Pallava queen by name Samavai. There is an interesting epigraph on the northern wall of the first temple prakaram which records this consecration. This epigraph clearly says that the queen founded this charity so

as to last as long as the Moon and the Sun endure. The epigraph also mentions the exact quantity of food that is to be cooked (tiruamudhu) for the daily offering to the moolavar and to light a perpetual lamp (nanda vilakku) and provide for thirumanjanam on the two ayana sankranthis and the two Vishnu sankranthis and for celebrating the Purattasi festival and to conduct the main festival for nine days. It mentions that this silver idol was installed in Thiruvilankoyil after performing special worship to the moolavar presiding over the sacred Venkata Hill. It also says that gold ornaments worth 47 kalanjus and lands were endowed to the new Kouthaka Bhera i.e. the silver idol which was installed. The concluding part of the epigraph is very touching. After mentioning the various services that are to be rendered in the temple it says "all these services, the managers of the temple on Thiruvengadam shall have conducted and the sabhayar shall protect the land from being taxed. The feet of those who protect this charity shall be borne on my head. The protection of the Sri vaishnavas is sought for this. This is a writing of Sattandai".

Every morning abishekam is performed to the Bhoga Srinivasa whereas for the moolavar it is performed only on Fridays. It is this idol which is put to bed during the Ekantha seva for the Lord. At that time, the idol is placed on a silver cradle bed in the sayana mandapam before the garbagriha. Milk and fruits are offered to the accompaniments of music and songs composed by Talapakka. Even to-day one of the descendants of the Anamacharya family is given the privilege of singing the lullaby before God goes to bed. This ekantha seva bogam is performed to this idol i.e. Bogha Srinivasa murthi for eleven months in a year. In Dhanur month, the ekantha seva is performed for the idol of Krishna which is also in the garbagriha. When this idol was consecrated in this snapana mandapam the consecration was done by tying this idol to the main idol by means of a silk cord. A gold link and a silk cord is still attached to this idol whenever it is brought outside the sanctum sanctorum for deputasing for the dhruva murti on special festive occasions.

THE IMAGE OF SRI MALAYAPPA SWAMI OR MALAI KUNIYA NINDRAN PERUMAL

This image is in a standing pose and is again a replica of the Dhruva bhera. This is the image which is used as a processional deity for the Lord of Tirumala. Sridevi and Bhoodevi are also standing by the side of this image.

There is a legend that on one occasion during the Brahmotsavam when the procession with the utsava murthi was winding its way through the streets, a fire broke out in the village-destroying many houses. The priests and the devotees were naturally upset. Sincere prayers were offered. It is said that at that time an asareeri voice was heard saying that the utsava murthi which they had brought in the procession was Ugra Srinivasa. Ugra standing for anger, typifying the destructive aspect of the Lord. The voice said that the Ugra utsava murthi should no longer be used as a processional deity and that instead in the glades of the mountain nearby there was another murthi which would be found and which should be used as a processional deity. Tradition says that when accordingly the people went and searched, they found a new murthi with the consorts at a particular place where the hill bows down i.e. low. Hence this idol got the name Malai kuniya Ninra Perumal. In course of time, this got shortened as Malayappan. The glade where the images were found is still known as "Malayappan Konai".

On special occasions, the utsava murthi of Malayappan is decorated with a diamond armour known as Vajrangi. On some occasions, He also wear a pearl armour known as Muthangi. All the arjitha sevas like Kalyana utsavam, Brahmotsavam, Teppotsavam is performed to this Malayappa image.

THE IMAGE OF UGRA SRINIVASA

This image was originally known as Venkata Thuraivar. As the very name signifies this was an idol to represent the angry mood of God. As stated in the earlier paragraph after the occurrence of a fire accident this image is now not used as the

processional deity. There are now only three occasions when this image is taken out viz. Uttana Ekadasi, Mukkotti Dwadasi and Dwadasa aradhana. It is said that the rays of the Sun should not touch this idol and if they do so, they will bring incalculable harm to the world. That is why this idol is taken in procession before the day dawns and is hurriedly brought back to the garbagriha before the Sun rises.

KOLUVU SRINIVASA

Every day after the tomala seva, Koluvu i.e. dharbar is held in Tirumamani mandapam. This idol is then brought out of the garbagriha and is seated in a silver chair with a gold umbrella above it. This idol officiates for the moolavar during this function. Hence it is that it is known as Koluvu Srinivasa. At this function, the panchangam for the day is read out and the accounts relating to the receipts of the previous day in the temple is reported to God. Thus God keeps Himself posted with all the affairs and revenues of His temple. It is at this function that the Matra danam of rice, the customary share of the archaka is made.

THE IMAGE OF SRI KRISHNA

In the garbagriha there is a beautiful image of Lord Krishna in the Navaneetha Nrutya pose. He is seen along with His consort Rukmini. The lord is shown as a dancing child. The right hand holds butter while the left is stretched out gracefully in a dancing pose. As stated earlier, this idol receives ekantha seva at night during Dhanur masa. This idol does not have any daily pooja. He only shares in the nityarchana of Sri Venkateswara. The presence of the image of Krishna in the garbagriha is explained by some on the ground that it is Lord Krishna Who has returned to earth as Srinivasa in Kali yuga after His Krishnavataram ended thro' a hunter's arrow in Dwapara yuga.

THE IMAGE OF SRI RAMA, SITA LAKSHMANA AND HANUMAN

Four copper idols of Sri Rama, Sita devi, Lakshmana and Sugreeva find place in the garbagriha. The copper image of

Angadha and Hanuman are exhibited separately in the Ramar medai outside the garbagriha. The presence of Rama's image in the garbagriha also has a story associated with it. It is believed that Padmavathi, the consort of Lord Venkateswara is the reincarnation of Vedavati Who assumed the form of Sita and faced all the difficulties imposed on Sita devi by Ravana, the demon. At that time, Perumal had promised that He would one day marry Vedavati. It is in fulfilment of that promise made in Treta yugam that Venkateswara in Kali yugam married Padmavathi, the daughter of Akasa raja. So the image of Rama and Seetha are appropriately found in the sanctum sanctorum.

CHAKRATTALVAR:

The image of Sudarsana chakra or Chakrattalwar also is found in the garbagriha. This deity always precedes the utsava murthi in the processions. On the Ratha saptami day it is this Chakrattalwar who is given a ceremonial bath in Swami Pushkarini theertham.

THE STHALA PURANAS - THE LEGENDS

Some of the stories connected with the names of the hills and the religious sanctity of the theerthas have already been related. It is now proposed to relate the main legends connected with Lord Srinivasa i.e. Tirumal Himself.

Long time ago, Kasyapa and other rishis were performing yagna on the banks of the river Jahnavi. Narada appeared at the site and asked the rishis as to who was the presiding deity i.e. the Yagna Purusha who was to receive the yagna phalan. The rishis then got confused and wondered as to who among the devas deserved the honour of being the Yagna purusha. They selected Brighu maharishi from amongst themselves to select a fit person. Brighu maharishi decided to visit Sathya lokant, Kailasam and Vaikuntam and make an on the spot assessment. Brighu Maharishi left for Brahma loka. But found that Brahmā was talking to His consort Saraswati, the eight vasus and other devas and he did not pay any attention to the entry of Brighu Maharishi. Brighu got wild with anger and felt that Brahmā was not a Yagna Purushā fit enough to receive the yagna phalan

and walked out of Satya loka. He also cursed that the people of Bhooloka would not offer any worship to Brahma. Brighu then visited Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva. There also Shiva and Parvati were engaged in deep conversation and did not pay any attention to the entry of the rishi. The rishi therefore felt insulted and concluded that Lord Shiva also was not bothering about men and matters. He felt he was self centred. He therefore left Kailas and proceeded to Vishnu loka. Vishnu was reclining on His serpent bed. He was in yoga nidra. He also did not notice the arrival of Brighu. The rishi got angry and kicked the Perumal on His chest. Vishnu woke up and immediately caught hold of the feet of the great sage and asked him whether his tender feet were hurt by knocking against His chest, hardened with many a battle waged against asuras. Brighu was bewildered at this supreme act of kindness of the Perumal. He realised his folly. He returned to earth and told the rishis that God Vishnu with His satvik guna was the most suited person to receive the yagna phalan and accordingly he asked the rishis to offer the fruits of their yagna to Lord Vishnu.

In the meantime, in Vaikunta, Lakshmi devi was very angry, as Brighu had kicked the chest of Vishnu which was Her abode ever since she emerged from the milky ocean. She left Vaikunta to Kara vira kshetram in Maharashtra State. When Goddess Lakshmi left Vaikunta, the place lost its grace. The birds would not sing. The precious stones lost their lustre. The place looked desolate. Lord Vishnu also decided to leave Vaikunta. Finally He reached Venkatadri and settled on the banks of the holy pushkarini under a tamarind tree. In course of time, an ant hill covered Him.

When Vishnu was absorbed in deep meditation inside the ant hill, Brahma, Shiva and others noticed His absence in Vaikunta. Mahalakshmi also was aware of the severe penance. She wanted to sustain the Lord. Accordingly She asked Brahma to become a beautiful cow, Shiva as its calf and Mahalakshmi took on the form of a beautiful hill tribe damsel. She sold the cow and the calf to Chola king in whose domain Venkatadri (where the Lord was doing penance) was situated. The Chola king bought the cow. Everyday the cowherd would drive the

cattle along with this cow to Venkatadri Hills and leave them to graze. This divine cow would then steal away from the herd, go to the ant hill in which Lord Vishnu was doing penance and empty the milk from its udder. In the palace, the servants were worried as to why the cow was not yielding any milk. Once the cowherd decided to keep a close watch on this cow and to his amazement he saw that this divine cow emptied its milk into an ant hill. The cowherd got angry and tried to hit the cow on its head. The axe would have hit the cow. But the Lord Who was inside the ant hill suddenly emerged out of the hill, and held the axe. The axe hit His forehead and made a deep cut. Blood oozed out of the wound. The cowherd saw this and died on the spot. The cow ran down the hill, reached the king and displayed extreme anguish. The Chola king followed the cow, which led him to the ant hill. The king saw the cowherd lying dead and the ant hill bathed in blood. He thought that somebody had killed the cow herd and hurt the animal also. He became very angry and said He would kill the person who perpetrated this evil deed. Lord Vishnu Who heard this got annoyed that the king had come to a decision so quickly without waiting to verify all the facts. He cursed that the king become a ghost and wander about in the forest. The king fell upon His knees and prayed to the Lord to forgive him. The Lord then said that after spending sometime as a pichasam i.e. ghost the king will be reborn as a king and at that time, Goddess Lakshmi will be born as his daughter and that Perumal Himself will marry Her. He said that in the future this king would be Akasa raja, and his daughter will be Padmavathi and his son-in-law will be Venkatachalapathi. He also said that Akasa Raja will then present a gem studded gold crown which He will wear on every Friday. Having said all this, the Lord vanished.

After the king had become pichasa, Lord Vishnu roamed about the forest. He met Lord Varaha and narrated to Him all that happened. Lord Varaha realised that Vishnu was feeling the absence of Lakshmi. He offered the Lord place to stay on the Hill. In return Lord Srinivasa promised that the Varaha would receive the Pradama darsanam and Pradama nevedyam at Venkatachalam. That is why even today a pilgrim is expected to first offer prayers to Varaha Swamy on the hill and only then go to the temple of Lord Srinivasa.

Lord Varaha also offered to send Vakula Malika to help Lord Vishnu to run the house. She was none other than Yasodha Devi of Krishna Avatar days. During Krishna avatar the Lord had promised her that in Kali yuga she will be given the opportunity to witness His marriage and see Him as a Kalyana Murthi. In the absence of Mahalakshmi Vakula Malika looked after the Lord.

At the end of Dwapura Yuga there was a chola king by name Sudharma. He ruled over the country with Narayanapuram as his capital. One day he went for a hunt in the forest near Seshachala. Halting at a place for a little rest, he came across a handsome young woman. She was a Naga princess, daughter of Dhananjaya who lived in Pathala. The king fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. The Naga maid wanted to obtain her father's permission. But the king persuaded her to go through the formality of a Ghandarva marriage. They spent their time happily for some time. The Naga kanya made the king promise that he would crown the son, if any, born to them as the king and recognise him as the legal heir. In course of time, the Naga kanya went back to Pathala and Sudharma returned to his kingdom. On arrival, he learnt in the meantime his wife had also given birth to a male child and he was recognised as the prince throughout the country. The king was happy, but at the same time was worried about the promise he had given to the Naga kanya. He hoped she would forget his promise. Later, he learnt that the Naga kanya also gave birth to a male child. He went to see her. When the Naga kanya asked him to take the boy with him and accept him as his heir, the king hesitated. The Naga kanya got angry and was disappointed with the cowardly attitude of the king. She decided to kill her child rather than leave it to the mercy of the cowardly father. She announced that she will leave the child to the mercy of the Sea God as the forefathers in her clan used to do. She took the child draped it with athondi (a kind of creeper), placed it in a basket of reeds and pushed the basket into the sea to be carried away by waves. The king Sudharma and the Naga king who watched this incident with a heavy heart did nothing to prevent the cruel act. Sudharma returned to his country. Strangely after a few days, some fishermen who were out fishing in the

sea noticed and brought the basket with the child to the king. On seeing his child Sudharma was over joyed. He accepted before the astonished court that the child was his own, narrated the story to his queen as well. The queen decided to bring up the child along with her child. Sudharma's first son was known as Akasa raja and his second son through the Naga kanya was known as Thondaman, as he was recognised by the king by the creepers called athondai in which he was wrapped in the basket. Thondaman and Akasa raja were good friends and even when the king offered to divide the kingdom, equally between them Thondaman prevented it and instead both Akasa raja and Thondaman ruled the country together.

In course of time, both were married. Akasa raja had no children. One day he and his wife decided to perform puthra kameshti yaga. When the yaga sala was being prepared, the king had to plough a few rounds for preparing the Yagnavatika. Suddenly the plough got stuck in one place. The king wondered as to what could be the impediment. The place was carefully dug. They found a casket. It was opened carefully. Inside was a big thousand petalled lotus with a girl child nestling in it. The king felt that just like Janaka Maharaja was blessed with Sita devi, he also has been blessed by a child even as he was preparing the yagasala for Puthra kameshta yaga. As the child was found on a lotus i.e. Padmam, he named her Padmavathi. They performed the sacrifice as scheduled and in due course his wife gave birth to a male child. He was named Vasudhana.

Both the children were brought up with affection by the parents. In the meantime, Vakula malika looked after Lord Srinivasa well. One day the Lord went for a hunt seated on a white horse brought by Garuda. He saw a wild elephant and chased it. The elephant ran faster and the Lord seated on the horse chased it. The elephant ran into a garden where Padmavathi and her friends were playing. Seeing the elephant the girls ran helter skelter. Lord Srinivasa who was following the elephant also entered the garden. On seeing Padmavathi, the Lord introduced Himself as Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. He found out that Padmavathi was the daughter of Akasa Raja and asked Padmavathi to marry Him. She asked Him to get permission of her parents and along with her friends left the garden.

Srinivasa returned to Venkatadri. Vakula Malika noticed that He was very worried and in due course she learnt from the Lord that He was in love with Padmavathi and wanted to marry her. The Lord enlightened Vakula Malika about Padmavathi's past life history. He said that in Treta yuga, she was the daughter of Kusadwaja Rishi. Kusadwaja rishi was performing a sacrifice uttering veda mantras and Goddess Mahalakshmi appeared through his words in the form of the child. Because she was born while the vedas were being chanted she was named Vedavati. When Vedavati attained the age of marriage, she started doing penance praying that Lord Vishnu should be her husband. While she was doing her penance in the Himalayas, Ravana saw her and attempted to molest her. Vedavati tried to dissuade him. But Ravana said that he was the grandson of the sage Pulasthya who was the son of Brahma and therefore he was in no way less desirable than Lord Vishnu. He tried to take her by force. Vedavati then invoked the Fire God and immolated herself. Before dying She cursed Ravana and said that in her next birth she will be the cause of destruction of Ravana and his entire tribe. She leapt into the fire and vanished. Lord Srinivasa then continued with His story and said that when He was born as Rama and was banished along with His wife and brother Lakshmana to the dandakaranya forest Ravana heard about the beauty of Sita and came to carry away Sita. At that time, Vedavati decided to fulfil her vow. She took the form of Sita and the Sita who was carried away by Ravana was maya Sita i.e. Vedavati and not Janaka's daughter Sita. The Lord said that the real Sita had meantime been kept safe by Fire God in His abode. The rest of the story is well known. After the Rama-Ravana yuddha, Rama asked Sita to go through fire to prove her chastity. Maya Sita i.e. Vedavati entered the fire and the true Sita emerged out of the fire after the agni pareeksha. At that time, the Jagan Matha the real Sita had requested Rama to fulfil the wish of Vedavati by marrying her. Rama then promised that in His next incarnation when He appeared as Lord Srinivasa, Vedavati will then be born as Padmavathi, daughter of Akasa raja and that He would wed her then. Lord Srinivasa narrated

all this to Vakula malika and said that time had come to marry Padmavathi, who was none other than Vedavati of Treta yuga. He requested Vakula Malika to go to Akasa Raja and convince him to give Padmavathi in marriage to Him.

Vakula malika went to Narayanapuram. Enroute she met the royal playmates of Padmavathi at the temple of Kapileswara. She learnt from them that Padmavathi was also pining for the handsome hunter who was seen seated like a blue cloud on a white horse and whom she met in her garden. Vakula malika asked the maids to take her to the queen Dharuni devi and promised to cure Padmavathi of her illness.

Meanwhile Lord Srinivasa had doubts about the effective manner in which Vakula malika would be able to plead his case. The Lord therefore decided to meet the king and the queen Himself. He took the form of a gypsy girl (pulinda sooth sayer), and went into the streets of Narayanapuram carrying Brahma deva as a child on His hips. Lord took on the garb of a toothless hill woman, had a big paunch, big ears, wore necklace of shells. She carried a big bamboo basket of grains on her head like a true gypsy. The Lord was crying out aloud that she would foretell the future of anyone who cared to consult Her. Slowly the gypsy vended her way to the palace and had audience with the queen. The queen consulted the gypsy about Padmavathi's future. The gypsy told her that her daughter had seen a great warrior who looked like a blue cloud and who came riding on a white horse chasing an elephant and had fallen in love with that warrior. She said that warrior was none other than Lord Srinivasa living in Venkatadri hills. The gypsy advised the queen to agree to give Padmavathi in marriage to Lord Srinivasa. The gypsy also added that an old lady will be coming to broach with the king and the queen this offer of marriage. Having said this, the gypsy woman left. The queen thought that there was no truth in the entire episode. Meantime Vakula Malika obtained her audience with Dharani devi, the queen. Vakula malika placed before the queen a plaque made of ivory with shining jewels glowing like fires of blue green and red. She said that she had collected them from the hills of Venkatadri which was rich with precious stones. She said that she had come seeking the

hand of the princess for her son Srinivasa Who was also called Krishna. Dharani devi was speechless as she felt that what all the gypsy had foretold was coming true. The king and the queen had a talk. They consulted the ministers, Brihaspathi and Suka muni. Sage Suka with his gnana drushti knew the entire celestial drama that was unfolding itself. He told the king he was indeed fortunate to have the Lord as his son-in-law and the divine mother as his daughter. He said that the Lord was living at Tirumala hills and that all the devas from Deva loka were regularly visiting Venkatadri and offering their worship. He advised Akasa raja and fixed the marriage at an early date. The king requested Suka muni himself to go and finalise the date for marriage. Akasa Raja sent the Kalyana patrika thro' Suka muni to the Lord.

On hearing the news from Vakiula Malika and Suka muni Lord Srinivasa was very happy. Suka handed over to the Lord the letter written by Akasa raja offering to give his daughter Padmavathi in marriage. Srinivasa agreed and sent His acceptance and willingness for the marriage through Sukha himself to Akasa raja. Meantime, Lord Srinivasa despatched Garuda and Ananta to invite Brahma, Shiva and the other devas for the marriage. It is said Indra undertook the general supervision and the arrangements for the marriage. Yama accepted to maintain law and order in the bridegrooms party. Lord Shiva agreed to receive the guests. Visvakarma agreed to accommodate the guests. Lord Shanmuga took upon himself the task of sending invitations to all. Manmadha agreed to distribute betal leaves and nuts, Agni undertook to cook the necessary food and Vayu to look after the services in the marriage pandal. Varuna promised to look after the drinks. The vasus agreed to clean the vessels. Kubera promised to provide the money for performing the marriage. It is believed that even to-day all the money offered by the pilgrims to the Lord is going towards discharging the debt incurred by Lord Srinivasa at the time of His marriage. While the preparations to the marriage was going at a hectic speed, the Lord had a heavy heart. Vakula malika, the mother wondered why He was unhappy. Lord Srinivasa related to her the story of Brighu maharishi and how Mahalakshmi had got angry with Him and left Vaikunta in a huff. He therefore asked

Sun God to go to Koravirapuram where Mahalakshmi was doing penance. Sun God met Mahalakshmi. He informed her that the Lord was pining for her and was in none too good a health and that Mahalakshmi should come immediately to Venkatadri. Mahalakshmi agreed. The Lord then told her "oh! Devi remember thy request to me in Ramavatharam period when you sought the boon from me that I should wed the maya Sita viz. Vedavati. The time to keep up and fulfil that promise has come". Mahalakshmi remembered the whole episode. Goddess Mahalakshmi then agreed to fully participate in the marriage preparations. Thus with the full blessings of Sree, i.e. Thayar, Lord Srinivasa prepared Himself for the marriage.

The marriage party started towards Narayanapuram. En-route they halted at the hermitage of Sage Suka. When Lord Srinivasa and Mahalakshmi partook of the fruits offered with reverence by the sage, the entire party of devas accompanying the Perumal felt their hunger was satisfied. This proved that the humble preparations offered by a true devotee satisfied not only the Perumal but also the numerous devas and large number of the rishis and others accompanying the God.

Meantime at Narayanapuram, the preparations for the marriage was going on at great speed. The city was fuzzing with activities. The wedding was celebrated for eleven days. Later Srinivasa and Padmavathi left Narayanapuram and proceeded to Venkatadri. Lord asked Thondaman to build a temple so that He and Padmavathi could reside there comfortably. At the request of Srinivasa Lakshmi devi also joined so that wealth and the riches could continue to be with them. That is the story of the marriage of Lord Srinivasa with Padmavathi Thayar.

LORD SRINIVASA AND THONDAMAN

Brahmanda puranam mentions yet another legend as a continuation as it were to this story of the marriage of Srinivasa with Padmavathi. It says that in due course of time Akasa raja

died and the kingdom was divided equally between Thondaman and Akasa raja's son. Thondaman was an ardent devotee of the Lord. Once when the enemies invaded the kingdom of Thondaman, Thondaman rushed into the temple by a tunnel path which he used to use for visiting the temple. He prayed to Lord Srinivasa to help him and make him win the war and retain his kingdom. The Lord gave him his conch and disc and asked Thondaman to go and fight the enemies and assured him that the enemies will run away. Thondaman won the war as promised. While returning the conch and the disc to the Lord, he is said to have requested the Lord to wear them invisibly so that the world may remember for ever the great help rendered by Lord Srinivasa to His ardent devotee viz. Thondaman. The Lord agreed. This explains why the moolavar in Tirumala does not have the conch and the disc as an integral part of the Moola vigraha. It is said that the conch and the disc were invisible till Ramanuja who is said to be the amsam of Adishesha prayed to the Lord to wear them visibly so that the men in the Kali yuga would believe and accept the incarnation of Vishnu as Lord Srinivasa at Tirumala.

Brahmanda puranam also says that the temple was built by Thondaman. But it has a different story to relate. It says that Thondaman was ruling over a vast kingdom. He was a great devotee of Lord Venkatesa. One day some cowherds living in Venkatadri met the king and told him that everyday while they were bringing milk pots to the palace from the hills, some of the pots break of their own accord when the party passes near an ant hill. They were worried at this unusual event. More or less at the same time, a hunter approached the king with his peculiar problem. He said that everyday he would offer the food to God before he and his family partake of the meal. They would dry the rice in the Sun before their hut and everyday a white boar would eat a portion of the rice. The hunter's wife could only cook the balance of the rice for their meals. They would then offer the rice along with honey to the Lord before eating the food. The hunter said that previous day when he was returning with honey from the forest, he saw his son eating the food. He said that the son had failed to offer it to the Lord before eating the food and in his anger raised the hunting knife

to kill the son. At once from nowhere a white boar appeared and asked the hunter not to kill his son and assured the hunter that he had taken his share as usual. The boar then advised the hunter to go and relate the story to the king. The king hearing the story of the cowherd and the hunter about the miracle told them he also had a dream the previous day and that he was planning to visit the hill to find out the truth. Thondaman, the hunter, the cowherds and his ministers went to the hill. They poured milk upon the ant hill. The ant hill was washed away and Varaha appeared from beneath the ant hill. Varaha then advised the king to go to Swami Pushkarini where the Lord Srinivasa was living in an ant hill underneath a tamarind tree on the southern banks of Swami Pushkarini. The king went to Swami Pushkarini located the ant hill. He poured milk over the ant hill. The walls of the ant hill gave way and the king sighted a vimana, underneath which stood Srinivasa in all His effulgent glory. Lord Srinivasa then asked the king to build a temple on the hills for him as also for Lord Varaha. Thondaman immediately built a temple.

STORY OF RANGADASA

To now relate other legends that speak about the devine leelas. This story is related in Brahmanda purana. Once upon a time, there was a brahmin by name Gopinatha in the Chola country. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. He requested the Lord to give him salvation. Lord advised him to go to Seshachala and worship Srinivasa there. He also assured him that enroute he would be met by one Rangadasa who would also be going to the temple of Srinivasa. As predicted by the Lord when the brahmin came to the foot of the hill, Rangadasa was also there. Separately Rangadasa had also been informed in a dream to proceed to Seshachala, meet Gopinatha enroute and then offer worship to the Lord. The two accordingly went up the hill. As indicated in their dream, they dug the image of the Lord from out of the ant hill. They built a mandapa with a thatched roof and a stone wall around it. Rangadasa also dug a well for the Lord. One day some Ghandarvas were sporting themselves in the well constructed by Rangadasa. Rangadasa who had gone to the well to gather flowers for the Lord was enchanted by the

sight of the Ghandarvas and was late for the mala kankaryam (flower garland service) in the temple. Naturally, the temple priests scolded him for being late. Rangadasa realised he had committed an apachara to the Lord. But the Lord appeared before him and informed him that he would be reborn as a king in his latter birth, he would then be Vishnu baktha and construct a vimanam and prakara for the Lord at Tirumala. Rangadasa died. It is believed that when he was born, he was Thondaman. As Thondaman he lived at Narayana vanam and went to Seshachala everyday and worshipped the Lord. It was he who built two prakaras, two gopuras, garbagriha, yagasala, gosala, etc. for the Lord. He presented many jewels to the God and instituted many festivals.

STORY OF KRISHNA SARMA

There is yet another story which speaks volumes about the deep devotion that Thondaman had for Lord Srinivasa. Once a brahmin named Krishna Sarma came to Thondaman. He told him that he was on his way to Banaras and that as his young wife and small baby could not withstand the strenuous journey to Banaras he requested the king to grant asylum to his wife and child till he returned. The king agreed. He assigned a separate house for the mother and the child and gave her provisions for six months to look after herself. Having made the arrangements, the king forgot about her and her child. In course of time Krishna sarma returned from the pilgrimage, met the king and asked for the return of his wife and child. The king then sent a servant to fetch them from the house. But the servant who went there found that the lady and the child had died. Only the skeletons were to be found in the house. The king was aghast. He repented for not having taken proper care of his charges. He was not willing to face the brahmin and accept that he failed in his duty. He therefore bought time by telling the brahmin that his wife and child had gone to Tirumala to worship the Lord and that they will be returning the next day. Having thus satisfied the brahmin, Thondaman rushed through his secret passage to the hill fell at the feet of the Lord and asked to be forgiven. He wanted the Lord to bring back to life the wife and the child. The Lord appeared before him. He

gave him water from asthi kuta tank and had it sprinkled over the two skeletons. When that was done, the lady and the child came back to life. The king was very happy. He restored them to Krishna sarma.

Thus the Lord rescued His ardent devotee from embarrassing situation.

STORY OF FLOWERS OF MUD OFFERED TO LORD

There is yet another story connected with Thondaman. Thondaman's love and devotion to Lord Srinivasa was immense. He would offer anything and everything to God. One day he ordered his gold smiths to make flowers of gold to be offered during pooja to the Lord. One day while the priest was offering the golden flowers, he found that flowers made out of mud were already adorning the feet of Lord Srinivasa. The priest was dumb founded. He rushed to the king and informed him about this strange incident. The king then wanted to go and examine the issue in depth and he wanted to know who was the devotee who was offering mud flowers to the Lord. The king asked Lord Srinivasa Himself to resolve this mystery. He wanted to know who was the greater devotee than himself whose flowers Lord accepted even before his golden flowers were placed at His feet. Lord Srinivasa then asked him to go to the outskirts of the town to the residence of a humble potter by name Bhima. He assured the king that if he visits the hut of Bhima, he will understand why and how he was a greater devotee. Accordingly the king went to the hut. The potter was Kneading the clay. His eyes were closed. Though he was at work, all the time he was chanting the name of the Lord. Before he started the base work, he would offer before the idol of Srinivasa a flower specially made out of the very same clay. The potter never asked the Lord for anything. But prayed with sincere devotion. The king seeing this scene was moved. He realised that the humble potter was the embodiment of devotion. He informed the potter that the Lord was very pleased with his devotion and that is why he accepted his mud flowers even before the gold flowers made by the king were offered to the Lord. Hearing this story from the king himself, the potter was overcome with joy for more reasons than one. He told the king that one day Lord had appeared in

his dream and informed him that he would attain salvation and moksha on that day when the Lord conveyed through another mortal about his sincere devotion. The potter therefore felt that the time for his salvation and moksha had come as the king had come to inform him about the greatness of his devotion. Thondaman stood speechless while the messengers of God took the potter and his wife in their vimana to Vaikunta. Thondaman then realised that he had not been a sincere devotee and mistook his ability to offer costly gifts to the Lord as being synonymous with a higher degree of devotion. He realised that what God wanted was simplicity and sincerity in devotion. Thondaman returned to his palace made his son the ruler and went to the forests to do penance.

ANANTHALVAN STORIES

Yet another legend that illustrates the leela of Lord Venkatchalapathi explains why pachchai karpooram is applied on the Lord's chin. Whoever has a look at the moola vigraham will find that the Lord's chin has a thick white paste applied on it. This is pachchai karpooram. A small portion of this is always packed and put in the cover and offered to the devotees as Sripadareru. This application of pachcha karpooram is explained by a story. Ananthacharya was one of the disciples of Ramanuja. Ramanuja had asked him to maintain a Nandhavanam or a flower garden in Tirumala and thus ensure regular supply of flower to the Lord. Ananthacharya wanted to obey his guru's order implicitly. He asked only his wife to assist him. She was expecting a child at that time. One day Ananthacharya was digging a small tank to provide water for the garden. He had asked his wife to assist him by carrying the earth in a basket on the head. Due to her delicate condition, she felt tired in performing this task. Realising this predicament, the kind Lord appeared before her as a young brahmachari and offered to assist her by carrying the earth himself. Finding that his wife was completing her task very fast, Ananthacharya followed his wife, and found that a brahmachari was helping her. He thought it was presumptuous on the part of brahmachari to have interfered in their doing kainkaryam to the Lord. He struck the boy with a spade in his hand. The brahmachari was wounded on his chin. But he

vanished from the scene. Later in the day when Ananthacharya proceeded to the temple to handover the flower garlands and worship the Lord, he found that blood was oozing from the chin of the Lord's image. He immediately realised that the brahmachari whom he had hit was none other than the Lord Himself. He immediately fell at the feet of the Lord, sought forgiveness and he applied pachchai karpooram to the chin. The Lord is said to be continuing to wear the pachchai karpooram on His chin as a proof of Ananthacharya's devotion to Him. The spade which Ananthacharya used for digging the tank is even today found hanging from the wall of the main entrance i.e. gopura vasal of Tirumala temple.

There is another legend connected with Ananthavan's devotion to the Lord. It is said that once Lord Srinivasa and His consort Padmavathi assumed the guise of a prince and a princess and entered the nandavanam of Ananthacharya. The next morning when Ananthacharya came to collect the flowers for the Perumal, he realised that there were intruders in his nandavanam. Ananthacharya felt offended that the flowers meant for the God were being collected by other mere mortals. The next night therefore he kept watch. That night, he discovered the couple in the garden. He tried to capture them. The man managed to run away, but the lady was caught. Ananthacharya tied Her to a champaka tree. The next day in the morning when Ananthacharya came back to the garden, he discovered that his captive was none other than Jaganmatha. He took her back to the temple. Hearing this story, Ramanuja is said to have ordered that on the seventh day of the brahmotsavam, Lord Venkatachalapathi should be taken in a procession round the town and on the eighth day Ananthacharya would be presented with a garland of flowers from the temple. This practice is said to be observed even today.

DESTRUCTION OF MADHU AND KAITABA BY LORD SRINIVASA

Padma purana narrates the legend connected with the destruction of the demons Madhu and Kaitaba. These demons were very powerful and were giving a lot of trouble to all the devas. They approached Lord Vishnu for relief. The Lord

assured them that He would kill the two demons. The demons prayed to the Lord Vishnu that He should kill them at a spot where there was no water. Lord Vishnu then enlarged his thighs, seated the demons on his thigh and destroyed them with His chakra. This explains why Lord of Tirumala Srinivasa is worshipped as a Mathu Kaitaba bhari i.e. one Who destroyed Madhu and Kaitaba.

STORY OF TIRUMALA NAMBI

Let us now turn to the story of Tirumala Nambi his undiluted love to Lord Srinivasa. Tirumala Nambi was the maternal uncle of Sri Ramanuja and also his tutor. Tirumala Nambi was a great devotee of Lord Venkateswara. Everyday he was doing *kainkaryam* i.e. service of carrying water to be used for performing the *thirumanjanam* for the Lord. One day while he was carrying the sacred water in a pitcher the Lord appeared in the guise of a young boy and asked him to give some water to quench his thirst. Tirumala Nambi refused as he said that the water was needed for the Lord's *abisheka* and that he was too feeble to go again and fetch water for the Lord from the water source which was far away. But the boy hit the pot with a small stone. The water drained out without the knowledge of Tirumala Nambi. When Nambi reached the *sanctum sanctorum*, he discovered the empty pot. He felt extremely sad at this turn of events. He turned his head and found that the boy who had accosted him earlier was standing there smiling. The boy led him to a mountain range closeby and showed him another spring of fresh water gushing forth from the split in the bolder. This was *Akasa ganga theertham*. Since then Tirumala Nambi brought water from *Akasa Ganga* for the Lord's use. Even today the dissidents of the family of Tirumala Nambi have the privilege of receiving the sacred *theertham* in the *sanctum sanctorum*. The house where Tirumala Nambi lived can also be seen in the South Mada street in Tirumala. As stated earlier in this chapter Ramanuja learnt the nuances in *Ramayana* at the feet of Tirumala Nambi. There is a shrine of Sri Tirumala Nambi in Sri Govindaraja Temple down the hill at Tirupati.

LORD AND SIR THOMAS MUNROE

Lord Venkateswara also had two Englishmen as His ardent devotees. It is said that once Sir Thomas Munroe, the Governor of Madras Presidency was suffering from acute stomach pain which baffled the doctors. An official working with Sir Thomas Munroe who was a great devotee of Lord Venkateswara advised him to take a vow that he would visit Tirumala via Chandragiri path and worship Lord Venkatchalapathi. Non-Hindus in those days were not allowed to enter the temple. Munroe agreed that he would remain outside the temple and offer worship to the Lord if he was cured of his stomach pain. To his great astonishment and relief, he got complete relief from his chronic pain. As a thanks-giving measure, Munroe created an endowment to offer one big vessel (gangalam) of rice prasadam (pongal) to the Lord everyday in fulfilment of the vow taken by him. He ordered that the pongal prasadam be distributed freely to all the devotees. He gifted the revenue collections of a village called Kotavayalu in Vayalpadu taluk of Chittoor district for meeting the expenditure connected with this charity. This charity is even to-day called Munroe gangalam.

LORD SRINIVASA AND WILLIAM

The other foreign devotee was a British Government official by name Lord Williams. He also was suffering from a chronic disease which could not be cured. Based on the advice of a Hindu official he also took a vow to visit Tirumala, provided he was relieved of this stomach pain. He also got cured and like Thomas Munroe he also created a charity called Lord Williams Chali pandili (drinking water service). This water shed was located near the Mokalametta in the foot path on way up to Tirumala. This charity is continued even today by T.T.D.

IMPORTANCE OF MANOHARAM PRASADAM

A brief mention should be made here about the one rather ordinary eatable offered to the deity here. This is known as manoharam. This eatable is prepared right from the inception of the temple. Whenever dignatories visit the temple when temple honours are extended to them, this humble manoharam

is also along with chandanam and Sripadarenu is given on a silver plate at the entrance to the main gopuram. This is considered as a mark of great distinction conferred upon the important devotee. This sweet manoharam is made of cleansed wheat gram and rice, fried in ghee, and then powdered, mixed with jaggery made into balls. This manoharam has antiquity priority and great distinction amongst the various offerings made.

A DAY IN THE TEMPLE

Having read about the leelas of Lord Venkatchalapathi, let us now enjoy in brief all the different prayers offered to the Lord of Tirupati on any single day.

The temple is virtually open through out the day and the night with perhaps a gap of about three to four hours in the night between the Ekanthaseva and the early morning suprabatham. The timings of the various sevas change from day to-day depending upon the crowds that throng the temple city. The following pages an attempt will be made to detail a days poojas in the temple.¹

Early in the morning the archaka after having his bath will do pranams to the key of the sanctum and proceed to the temple holding that key on his head. He will be accompanied by the paricharikas, the temple paraphernalia and music. After going round the pradakshina and prostrating before the dwarapalakas he will open the main door. When the archaka, paricharika all go inside to the sanctum, the outer door is again closed. Meantime supra patham is recited in front of the closed Bangaru vakili. A descendant of Talapakkam Annamacharya sings a few sankirthanams. The suprabhatham consists of four items viz. *Suprabhatham, stotram, prapatti and mangalam*. When the suprabhatham is sung, the Bhoga Srinivasa murthi Who was laid to rest in the sayana mandapa the previous night is shifted to the garbagriha. Harathi is offered to the Lord and a mixture of cow's milk, butter and sugar is

¹ Please refer for detailed account of the poojas to T.K.T. Veer-araghavacharya's book "History of Tirupati" Vol.I pages 209 to 232.

offered to God which is latter given as prasada to devotee. The *Supra batham* is believed to have been written by *Prathivadhi Bhayankaram Annan*. Once the *Suprabatham* is over, devotees are allowed to have darshan of the *Dhruva Berar* i.e. *moolavar*. This is known as *Viswaroopa sarva darsanam*. As stated earlier, tradition holds that Brahma offers worship to the Lord at Trimula every night. The theertha left in the vessels over night are distributed to the devotees as the theertha of the pooja performed by Brahma and other devas during the night. A lucky few may also be given a pinch of sandal paste along with a small piece of perfumed silk cloth. The sandal paste is called *Sripada chandanam* and the cloth *Sripada vastra*. The *chandanam* can be reverentially applied by the devotee to his forehead but the cloth is expected to be reverentially pressed to one's forehead and returned. Both these were in contact with the Thiruvadi of the *Moolavar* overnight.

After the *viswaroopa darsanam* is over *suddhi* is done in the sanctum sanctorum when the previous day's flower decorations of the *Dhruva murthi* are removed and the vessels required for the pooja etc. are all cleaned. Meantime, water for the next pooja comes from *Akasa Ganga*. The members of the *Tirumala Nambi* family alone are permitted to bring this water. It is this *Akasa Ganga theertham* which is used for the pooja in the forenoon and the evening as also for the *Brahma aradhana* in the night.

After the *suddhi* is over the next item of worship is known as *Thomala seva*. *Thomalai* in Tamil stands for "*Thodutha malai*" i.e. garland of strung flowers. The *moolavar* is decorated with these flower garlands and hence the name for this pooja. The flower garlands are strung as several pieces of different lengths and once the decoration is done the image looks really beautiful and impressive. During *Thomala seva* water is offered to the Lord for His daily needs. *Abhisekam* is also done to the gold covers which adorn the feet of the *moola vigraham* as well as to *Bhoga Srinivasa*.

After the *Thomala seva* the next ritual for the day is *Koluwu*. *Koluwu* stands for *dharbar*. During this *dharbar*, the

idol of koluvu Srinivasa murthi is brought out to Tirumamani mandapam, seated in a silver plated chair with a canopy of a gilded umbrella. The murthi is then offered a mixture of fried ginger seeds and jaggery. The income of the temple on the previous day is read out to the Lord along with a reading of the almanac of the previous day, the current day and the next day.

This is followed by *Sahasranama archana*. During this archana the holy names of the Lord are recited. It is conducted for the material and spiritual welfare of the individual devotees. The names recited in this archana are appropriate only to Sri Venkatchalapathi and is not the usual Vishnu sahasranama.

After the archana the sayana mandapam is cleaned and cooked food brought there as neivedhya for the Lord. The Bangaru Vakili doors are closed and the bells in the Tirumamani mandapam are rung indicating that food is being offered as neivedhyam to the Lord. The ringing of the bells is popularly known locally as the first bell of the temple. When the food is offered as neivedhya to the Lord only the archakas are present and the Bangaru Vakili doors are closed. The food that is brought to the mukha mandapam in front of the garbagriha are brought in large vessels made to exact sizes called solai, half-a-solai, etc. gangalams.

Following the neivedhya, *sattumurai* is performed. During this ritual portions of the Tamil prabandhas of the Alvars are recited. At that time, only Sri Vaishnavas are present. The Sri vaishnavas headed by a Jeer alone go into the garbagriha after the archaka returns from the offerings of bali.

Sattumurai is followed by *sarva darsanam* when the devotees who throng to the temple are able to have a chance to have a glimpse of the Lord. Sometime it takes even six hours for a person who stands in the dharma dharsana queue to have perhaps one or two minutes dharshan of the Lord.

Around mid day neivedhya for the second time is offered followed by a second archana reciting only 108 names of the Lord. During this worship only the Lord's ashtotra nama from Varaha purana is repeated. When the second neivedhyam is

offered to the God it is announced by a long continued ringing of the huge bells in the Tirumamani mandapam which is locally popularly known as the second bell. With the ringing of the second bell, the day's pooja ends. But in view of the heavy influx of the pilgrims in this town, sarva darsanam is allowed after the neivedhya is over.

The night pooja known as "*Rathri pooja*" is done to the Lord in the night. This is similar to the morning Thomala seva. But this is a private pooja and only the Sri vaishnava archakas are present at that time. Before the Lord is put to bed, the ardha jama pooja is performed. It is also known as *Pavvalimpu seva*. This is an arjitha seva. The Bhoga Srinivasa is placed in a sleeping posture on a velvet bed on a swing cot suspended by silver chains hanging from a beam in the mukha mandapam which is also known as sayana mandapam. This seva is done to Bhoga Srinivasa Murthi for eleven months in a year. In the Dhanur masa the idol of Sri Krishna receives this Pavvalimpu seva. Boiled and sweetened milk, fruits, almond nuts etc. are offered to the deity and also distributed amongst those devotees who are present. The kavacham covering the moolavar's thiruvadi is removed and two billas i.e. circular shaped perfumed chandanam is placed over the feet of the moolavar. Half a billa of chandanam is also placed on the chest of Bhoga Srinivasa and a quarter billa placed on Alarmel Mangai on the chest of Dhruva murthi. Another quarter is left for night pooja by Brahma. With that, the day's routine poojas come to a close.

POOLANGI SEVA

However, on Thursdays and Fridays there are certain special poojas which are performed to the deity. Thursday is famous for Poolangi seva. As the very word denotes, it is a seva in which the Lord is bedecked mostly with flowers. After the mid day pooja on Thursday the Lord is dressed only in a dhoti and a uttareeyam. The kasthuri is also removed leaving only a thin mark. The second neivedhyam then takes place. After the evening pooja, a laced velvet gown is put on the Lord and then the body is decorated fully with garlands of flowers from crown to foot of the murthi. This decoration exclusively with flowers

is called Poolangi seva. The description of the murthi with the flowers is given in Silappadikaram also in the following words:

"Puvadaiyil polindhu tonriya sengan nediyon"

Thus it is evident that this Poolangi seva was in existence even in 756 A.D. It is said that perhaps the reason why the Lord is bedecked exclusively with flowers is to prepare Him for the detailed abhishekam on Friday. The poolangi seva therefore appears to be a preliminary operation for preparing the murthi for the detailed abhishekam on Friday so that the detailed task of removing all the thiru abaranams clothing etc. on Friday itself gets done partly the previous day.

FRIDAY ABHISHEKAM

The thirumanjanam is done to the Moolavar only on Friday. On Friday, after the suprabatham chanting, the thomala seva and archana are conducted privately, things are got ready for Lord's abhishekam. Silver cups containing powdered pachchai karpooram, saffron paste, musk, civet oil, chandanam and other sughandha dravyas are reverentially carried in silver vessels by the devotees who are performing this arjitha seva. They are accompanied by the nadaswaram when they go round the vimana Pradakshinam. The vessels are then handed over at the Bangaru Vakili to the temple authorities. Then while the devotees are all seated in the corridor in front of Moolavar, the Thirumanjana abhishekam is performed to the moola vighram. The function takes about an hour and a half. *Purusha suktha, Narayana suktha, Srisuktha, Bhoo suktha, Nila suktha and the Prabhandas are recited.* The abhishekam starts with suddhohakam and then alternates with milk, water, chandanam etc. The saffron water flowing down is collected in silver cups to be later distributed to the devotees. Then the body of the Lord is dried gently with a cloth and civet oil is lightly smeared from crown to feet. Abhishekam is performed to the gold image of Sri Lakshmi also. At the end harathi is offered. The Lord is dressed in pithambaram and decked fully with valuable jewels and ornaments. The white namam is broadened and thickened as usual.

SRI PADARENU

Sri Padarenu is a very cherished prasadam of this temple. This is a mixture of the gambura or pachai karpooram and kasturi which is removed from the face of the moolavar and mixed with civet oil which is collected from the feet of the moolavar. This is well kneaded by hand by the Jiyangar. The resulting stuff is Sripadarenu. A small quantity of this is taken out for distribution to the pilgrims. The major portion is taken by the Jiyangar and other religious hierarchy in the temple.

IMPORTANT FESTIVALS

As stated earlier, this is a temple where everyday there is some festival or other. That is why the phrase "*Nithya Kalyanam Pachcha thoranam*" is referred to while describing this temple. The most important festival that lasts for a period of ten days is the famous Brahmotsavam. Till some decades ago, the temple conducted about four Brahmotsavams in a year. The first in the Purattasi month, the second on Radha saptami day, the third on Kousika ekadasi day in Kartika month and the fourth on the Mukkoti Ekadasi day. The Brahmotsavam during Radha saptami period is considered to be an arsha utsavam. While that on the Kousika Dwadasi day is considered to be a rakshasa utsava. The most important Brahmotsavam is in the Purattasi month utsavam (September-October Period). The utsavam commences when Sravana nakshathiram is prominent. At present, only this Brahmotsavam is celebrated. On the day before the Sravana star Ankurarpanam is done when the nava dhanya seeds are sown in specially decorated new earthen pots called palikas. A poorna kumbham is also installed in the yagasala. The festival commences on the first day with Dwarajohanam ceremony, When the Lord's flag with the emblem of Garuda is flown on a flag staff erected next to the Dhwaja sthambham. The daily utsavam to the Lord is full of splendour with a number of homams, etc. being performed. The utsava vigraha is taken out in procession twice in a day once in the day and again in the night on various vahanas. The vahanas for the procession on each day of the Brahmotsavam festival at night are *Peddha sesha vahanam, Hamsa vahanam, Muthyapu pandiri vahanam, Sarvabhoopala vahanam, Garuda vahanam,*

Gajavahanam, Chandraprabha vahanam, Aswa vahanam respectively. Similarly every day during the morning God is taken in procession on *Chinna Sesa vahanam*, *Simha vahanam*, *Kalpa Vriksha vahanam*, *Mohini Avatara procession*, *Hanumantha vahanam*, *Surya Prabha vahanam*, *Rathotsavam procession* respectively on the Brahmotsavam festival days. The most important festival days during the Brahmotsavam are the fifth, eighth and the eleventh days. Every day in the evening, there is unjal seva for the Lord.

The utsavam on the night of the fifth day is called Garuda seva when the processional deity is taken out in a procession seated on Garuda. The consorts of the Lord are not seated by His side on that day. After the unjal seva in the evening the deity is installed on the Garuda vahana. The Makara Kantti ornament and the Lakshmi haram of the moola vigraham are used that day for decorating the utsava vigraham on the Garuda vahanam. It is the only occasion when those two ornaments adorning the moolavar adorns the utsavar and goes round the Mada streets i.e. the streets on the four sides of the temple.

The car festival on the eighth day attracts the largest crowd during the Brahmotsavam festival. The utsava murthi along with the Consorts is placed on the temple car early in the morning and the beautifully decorated temple chariot is then drawn round the Mada streets of Tirumala.

On the eleventh day of Brahmotsavam, the processional deity is taken on Tiruchhi vahanam to Swami Pushkarini and Chakrattalwar is given a bath in Swami Pushkarini. When Chakrattalwar has his snanam, the devotees of the Lord also plunge into the theertha and it is considered to be very holy and twice blessed to have a bath at that propitious moment. With the bathing of the Chakrattalwar in the Swami Pushkarini, the curtain rings down on the Brahmotsavam festival.

However much one may like to describe the various festivals celebrated in the temple, it is not possible to render justice to it within the constraints of space of this book. But I would recommend those who are interested may like to go through the

book written by Pandit Jagannathacharyulu in Telugu which details at great length the different festivals celebrated in Tirupati.¹

EPIGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

This temple like many other temple has on its walls several inscriptions of considerable interest and importance. These inscriptions throw a lot of light on the political, cultural, social and economic conditions of those days. They provide a continuous and authentic record of the events that occurred in those centuries. There are nearly a thousand and above inscriptions on the walls of the temples under the management of the Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams. There are 1180 inscriptions of which 640 are from Sree Venkateswara temple, 340 from Sri Govindaraja temple at Tirupati. Of these 236 belong to Pallava, Chola, Pandya and first Vijayanagar kings. 189 inscriptions belong to the period of Saluva Narasimha Raya, 229 to Krishnadevaraya, 251 to Achyutaraya, 147 to Sadasivaraya and 135 to Aravidu dynasty kings. The Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams has done signal service to the scholars as well as lay people in having commissioned Sri Sadhu Subramania Sastry to decipher and codify these inscriptions. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has brought out six volumes known as T.T.Devasthanams Epigraphical Series which detail the inscriptions along with English introductory notes. There is also a general report on the inscriptions of the devasthanams written by Sri Sadhu Subramania Sastry himself. Besides, Sri T.K.T.Viraraghavacharya in his three volumes titled "History of Tirupati" also refers to numerous inscriptions and the information conveyed by these inscriptions. In the short compass of this book, it is not possible to exhaustively deal with all the inscriptions. But I would recommend those who are interested in studying in detail these inscriptions to refer to the above-mentioned books for an enjoyable, enlightening study when history will come alive before their eyes. Here I shall only attempt to kindle the readers interest by giving a select epigraphical evidences. First I shall give an account of the gifts and endowments made by the royal

¹ "Sree Venkateswara Vaibhavam" by Pandit Vedantam Jagannathacharyulu (Telugu) published by T.T.D.

benefactors to the Lord of Tirumala and then one or two other general inscriptions which are interesting.

One important inscription has already been referred to earlier in this chapter while describing the installation of the Bhoga Srinivasa idol by queen Samavai. That inscription refers to the following ornaments and weapons gifted to the murthi. These are:

(1) Tirumudi (crown or Kireetam) which is set with 23 diamonds, 16 big pearls, two large central rubies or (Tadavikki-attina manikkam)

(2) Ear ornaments consisting of gold makaram and coral koppu for each ear.

(3) Necklace or garland of four strands of gold set with 14 diamonds, 3 rubies, 11 large pearls and several small red pearls.

(4) One gold body belt or Udara Bandhanam.

(5) One gold waist girdle (Tiruvaraippattikai) set with four rubies

(6) Gold bracelet round each of the upper arms set with two cut rubies (called Bahu Valayam).

(7) Gold bracelets four (Tiruchchandanam) each set with two rubies.

(8) Necklets or valaiyal of gold, four.

(9) Anklets or Karai of gold, two set with precious stones, corals, pearls.

(10) Silver Prabha set with one big ruby (Nayaka manikkam) and two anklets with belts (Padachayalam)

The total weight of gold in all these ornaments was 48 kalanjus. Among the royal benefactors, Krishnadevaraya is the most munificent benefactor. He visited Tirumala seven times. A number of inscriptions detail his conquests and visit by the

king and his two queens to this holy temple. His first visit to Sri Venkateswara temple was in the Salukya year Angareesa corresponding to the Saka year 1434 (10-2-1573 AD). In the very first visit, he presented a kreetam of gold set with 9 kinds of gems and 25 silver plates for offering camphor harathi. His two queens also presented a gold cup weighing 374 carats each for offering milk for God. His second visit was within three months of his first visit (2-5-1513 A.D.) and again he presented a number of ornaments for God and 3 small kreetams for the processional images of Venkateswara, Sridevi and Bhoodevi containing pearls, rubies, diamonds, cats eye, sapphire etc. Within 1 1/2 months of his second visit, he paid third visit to the temple and granted five villages to the temple so as to meet the expenses of nithya neivedhyam and for the conduct of Vastra mahotsavam for the deity. That festival he is said to have instituted for the merit of his father Narasa Nayaka Vodayalu and his mother Nagajammam garu. Krishna devaraya paid a visit for the fourth time on his way back to the capital city of Vijaya Nagar after pursuing Pratapa rudra Gajapathi as far as Kondaveedu and capturing Udayagiri fortress. This was on 6-7-1514 A.D. This time he had a kanakabishekam performed for the God with 30000 gold varahas. He also presented some ornaments and gifted some villages to God. His two queens who accompanied him from the military campaign also presented ornaments to God. Chinna Devi presented a padakkam and a kanthamala and gave a village in Thondai mandalam. Similarly, the other queen Tirumaladevi presented a padakkam and arranged for similar offerings and distribution from the produce derived in grain from a particular village. The king has also recorded his military achievements in some of the inscriptions found in the temple. He visited Tirupati for the fifth time after his victorious eastern expedition against Kalinga. He details the events of the war and then mentions performing of Tulapurusha mahadanam at Amareswara and then returning to Vijayanagar. Another inscription mentions that Krishnadevaraya had the divya vimana of Thiruvengadamudaiyan gilded with gold by gifting 30000 varahas. This gilding was completed by September 1518. Another inscriptions refers to the sixth visit of Krishnadevaraya along with Tirumaladevi in October 1518 A.D. within five weeks after the gilding of the vimana. During that visit, he again granted some lands for

the merit of his new born son. Apparently, as soon as the son was born, he came to offer thanks giving worship to his patron God Thiruvengadanathan. For the seventh and the last time, Krishnadevaraya visited Tirumala in February 1521 A.D. when he presented a pithambaram set with 9 kinds of gems, a cap with pearls, diamonds, emeralds and sapphires embeded into it, 2 fly whisks set with 9 kinds of gems, a padakkam and 10000 varahas and a navarathna padakkam was given by his queen Tirumala Devi.

There are several other inscriptions which indicate that the temples of Sri Venkateswara at Tirumala and Sri Govindaraja at Tirupati enjoyed the patronage of sovereigns. The most prominent amongst such gifts by royal benefactors are the following:

(i) The queen of Parantaka II, Sundara-Chola, "the King who slept at the Golden-Hall", and daughter of Cheraman. She presented to Sri Venkatesvara a pattam or plate for the forehead, set with precious stones, in the 16th year of the reign of Rajaraja I (equivalent to 1001 A.D.(no. 17 T.T.)

(ii) A Pallava queen, by name Samavai, who presented a kiritam (diadem), a necklace of four strings and other ornaments for the hands, waist and feet of Sri Venkatesvara, and consecrated a silver image of His under the appellation of Manavalapperumal, provided for processions for this image and endowed the temple with lands in Tiruchchakanur (Tiruchanur), sometime in the third-quarter of the 10th century (Nos. 18 and 19 I.T.).

(iii) Jatavarman Sundara-Pandya I (1250 to 1275 A.C.) who placed a gilded kalasam over the vimanam of Sri Venkatesvara's shrine.

(iv) The queen of Vira-Narasimha Yadavaraya, a Chola subordinate of the 13 th century, instituted a fresh Brahmotsavam in the Tamil month of Ani for Sri Govindaraja, in addition to the primary one held in Vaikasi, constructed a four-faced car and made a gift of half the village of Paindappalli for meeting the expenses of the newly started festival and for effecting repairs to the temple from the balance, if any.

(v) Tiruvenkatanatha Yadavaraya, a subordinate of the last Hoysala king Vira-Vallala III, granted, in the thirties of the 14th century, two villages to the temple as sarvamanya (tax-free) for propitiating the deity daily with food-offerings.

(vi) Saluva Mangidava Maharaja does not appear to have been keen about enriching the temples either in the form of lands or money. His fancy was for splendour and magnificence as testified to by his covering the vimanam or the tower over the central shrine at Tirumala with gilded copper-plate, and placing a gilded kalasam over it in Saka 1281. This must certainly have been an expensive undertaking, and the temple should have presented, as he desired, a noble appearance, enthralling the minds of the pilgrims by its beauty.

(vii) Devaraya II merited extensive divine grace through the help he rendered towards the revival of the Vedaparayanam in Sri Venkatesvara's shrine at Tirumala in Saka 1355. He had already granted three villages to the temple in Saka 1351 as the usual royal benefaction.

(viii) Saluva Narasimha's devotion flowed in the usual channel of making gifts of villages in the several parts of the kingdom between the Saka years 1378 and 1410.

(ix) Krishnaraya not only presented diadems and ornaments set with precious stones, and gold and silver vessels, both for the Moola-Murti (the chief deity) viz. Sri Venkatesa, and the Utsava-Murtis (the processional images), but also endowed the temple with villages in the districts of Chandragiri, Udayagiri and Penugonda. His two queens Tirumaladevi and Chinnadevi were present with him during almost all his visits to Tirumala and they shared with him the credit for the gifts and grants which were made by him between Saka 1434 and 1442 (detailed earlier).

(x) Varadajidavi-amman, the queen of Achyutaraya, comes next. She granted six villages to the temple so as to serve for the propitiation of Sri Venkatesvara.

(xi) Matli Kumara-Anantarajayya is the latest of the royal benefactors. An inscription of his enumerates his variegated charities at several centres of pilgrimage, among which Tirupati figures as the recipient of three golden asva (horse), gaja (elephant) and samarabhupala (chariot) vahanams (vehicles); one padma-pitham (lotus shaped seat), one ratna-kiritam (gem-set crown), one naivedhya-bhajanam (plate or dish for offering food), one unnata-keli-mantapam (a lofty porch for pleasure-swinging for the deities), one sopanamarga (flight of steps on the side of the front hill), and one agra (top or front) gopura (tower); all these services rendered in the name of Sri Venkateswara; two golden elephant and horse vehicles for Sri Govindaraja; and the charity of one anna-satram (free feeding-house) at the Alvaritirtha at the foot of the front hill and another on the way up the same hill.

NITYA-DIPAM (DAILY LIGHTING) AND NITYA NAIVEDYAM (DAILY FOOD-OFFERINGS).

The Pallava inscription No.219 G.T. dated in the 51st year of the reign of Ko-Vijaya-Dantivikraman, (corresponding roughly to 830 A.D.), the earliest in date in the collection, records an arrangement made for keeping a lamp burning before a processional image newly installed in the shrine of Tiruvenkatattu Emperumanadigal.

The Chola records register donations and gifts intended for nanda-vilakku (lamp lighting) or for aradhanam (food offerings). A fragmentary record (No.232 G.T.) dated in the 29th year of Madiraikonda Ko- Parakesarivarman alias Parantaka I, registers an arrangement made by Kodungoluran of Malai-nadu with the sabhai of Tiruchchokunur (Tiruchanur) by which the sabhai undertook to keep a lighted lamp. Another epigraph (No. 234-G.T.) dated in the 10th year of the same king's reign, registers a similar deposit for lamp- lighting. In the reign of Rajaraja I, one Arulakki alias Rajaraja-Mavendavelan paid 40 kalanju of gold into the temple treasury for maintaining a lamp (Nos. 212 to 216 G.T.). The epigraph No.20-T.T., dated in the reign of Sri Koppatrakesari-panmar alias Sri Rajendra- Choladeva, records a provision made for lamp-lighting. Besides, it gives us some interesting information regarding state-supervision over

temples in those times. It was brought to the notice of Adhikari (royal officer) Korramangalam-udaiyan that the assembly of Tirumundiyan which undertook to light 24 lamps at Tirumala had failed in the discharge of their trust by discontinuing 22 and maintaining only 2 lights. The Adhikari enquired into the matter, became convinced of the neglect on the part of the assembly, and ordered the continuance of the entire service through the managers of the temple. It is incidentally mentioned that all articles required for the daily food-offerings were transmitted from Tirupati every day to Tirumala, and also that the Tirumundiyan sabhaiyar had a certain service (Paricharakam) to render to the temple for which at the time a sum of 3 Pon was standing to their credit.

No.71-T.T., belonging to the time of Ko- Rajakesarivarman Rajendra chola (Kulottunga I) refers to offerings of Pal-amudu and tayir amudhu, i.e. milk and curds, for the deity. No.126 G.T. of the 19th year of Rajaraja III (=1235 A.C.) registers a grant of land made on the orders of the king by the Periyar attar of Tirukkudavur-nadu for serving for daily food offerings for Tirumangai-alvar who had been installed in the temple of Sri Govindaraja some time previously by the same body. Another inscription (No.222 G.T.) dated in the same king's reign, mentions a gift of land by Pokkaran Pandiyataraiyan, probably intended for daily offerings.

Thus, during the 13th century we find ampler provision made by devotees both for nitya-dipam (lamp lighting) and for nitya-naivedyam (food offerings). We also observe that, in the place of the then prevailing practice of paying 40 kalanju of gold usually for a lamp, cows were presented to the temple to serve the purpose. Nos. 101, 118, and 176 - T.T. and 112 and 113 G.T. belonging to the reign of Tribhuvana chakravartigal Sri Vira-Narasimha Yadavaraya, and Nos. 73, III and 173 - T.T. belonging to the reign of Tribhuvana- chakravartigal Vijaya Gandagopaladeva, illustrate the above procedure regarding arrangements for the service of lamp-lighting through donations of gold and silver coin or through gifts of cows. During this period we have provision made also for offerings of food to the deities through a gift of a village, as in No.164-T.T. in

which Vira-Narasimha Yadavaraya granted as sarvamanya the village of Padirivedu in Asuvamukkilai-nadu, a sub-division of Kudavur-nadu, for offering a naivedyam; or through a deposit of money, as in Nos. 137 and 139 - T.T. and 127 G.T. in the latter of which food-offerings were required to be made to Sri Govindaraja during the festival in Vaikasi and to Sri Venkatesvara in the Chittirai festival.

In the Vijayanagara period, food-offerings took precedence over lamp-lighting and in certain cases presentation of cows was preferred to payment of gold, since, besides 'yielding ghee for the lamps, they served the additional purpose of offering the dairy products to the deities. No.92 T.T. is a Sanskrit verse recounting in general terms the charities of Amatyasikhara Mallana (chief minister under Devaraya I and Devaraya II of the First dynasty) in the matter of naivedyam and nitya-dipam for Sri Venkatesvara. This minister Mallana is stated in more explicit terms in No.93 T.T. dated in Saka 1330 (= 13.3.1409 A.C.) to have presented 82 heads of cattle including cows and calves for maintaining 3 lamps set up by him, besides at the same time arranging for one other lamp (nandavilakku) burnt with ghee to be supplied by the temple authorities in conjunction with offerings of food agreed upon by them in consideration of his investments in the excavation of an irrigation channel draining a devadana village.

No.70 T.T. of the time of Saluva Narasimha records a gift in Saka 1390 (28.2.1469 A.C.) by Kandadai Ramanujayyengar, a zealous and influential Vaishnava preceptor, of 40 cows to the temple for supplying curds for preparing dadhyodanam (food mixed with curds) to be offered to Sri Venkatesvara daily. The most prominent instance of such a gift of cows occurs in the case of Sriman Mahanayankacharya (chief-commander) Periya-Obala-Nayakkar Rama-Nayakkar who served as a general under king Vira-Narasimha, the elder brother of Krishnaraya, and under Krishnaraya also. He presented 100 cows in Saka 1426

(= 1504 A.C.) for burning a lamp (No. 305 T.T.); 50 cows a second time in Saka 1434 (= 1512 A.C.) for another lamp (No. 312-T.T.); and finally 200 cows in Saka 1435 (= 1514 A.C.) (No. 306 T.T.) for the supply of dairy products daily for one nali of Paledukulambu (i.e. thick-boiled milk with the cream formed over it) for being offered to the deity.

No.59 T.T. is a somewhat peculiar record. Instead of the usual gift of lamps that we meet with in other inscriptions, we find here an arrangement made by Koneri and Ulagalandavelan, head-men (kartar) of Sattukudi- Marudar, a village in the subdivision of Narayanapurapparru in the Chandragiri-rajya, by which they deputed in Saka 1384 (= 1462 A.C.) for the merit of Saluva Narasimha, certain persons, being residents of the above village of whom four are mentioned by name, for the service of lighting lamps (tiruvilakkukkudi) in the temple of Tiruvenkata-mudaiyan, and directed them to render service to the temple in perpetuity through their descendants. These persons were enjoined also to measure out two marakkals of ghee every year with the measure called Chalukya Narayanan-kal, as they used to do till then and obtain the certificate issued by the Jiyar under his signature. This measure was the one in use in Sri Govindaraja's temple at Tirupati, while the one in use in Sri Venkatesvara's temple at Tirumala was known as the Malaikiniyaninrankal. It would appear that these men had to deliver two marakkals of ghee to the temple in Tirupati by virtue of some previous agreement or contract, probably for some favour received by them in the form of loan of cows belonging to the temple or for some other reason which is not explicitly stated in the record; and this delivery of ghee of two marakkals was declared to be imperative on them notwithstanding their prospective service in the temple at Tirumala. Neither is any reason given for the deputation of these men for lighting service in the Tirumala temple. Perhaps by the middle of the 14th century the duty of lighting the lamps presented liberally by the devotees had become very onerous and impossible of being fulfilled in the usual way by the then existing staff and consequently necessitated the appointment of additional hands to discharge it adequately.

SANDHIS (FOOD-OFFERINGS).

As noted already, during the Vijayanagara period, food offerings came to be extensively provided for by the devotees in preference to lights which were observed to have been put up in the presence of the deities during the earlier centuries. This course was so universally adopted that the offerings were arranged not only for special occasions but for each day and on different occasions in the course of the day. Thus, the quantity of holy food offered each time as well as the number of times it was so offered to the deities increased so much so that the particular duty must have entailed much labour and time and demanded the services of a large number of cooks. In addition to this large quantity of holy food offered each day, certain worshippers desired to have offered occasionally big heaps of cooked rice measuring about 200 marakkals, styled Tiruppavadi (Nos. 54, 197 and 253 T.T. and 151 G.T.).

The time for offering naivedyam in any quantity and variety each day at present occurs usually at the end of each of the three series of functions in the course of the worship of the deity (trikala-puja) for the day, commencing early in the morning and closing early in the night. But, in the past, it would appear that the deities were propitiated with food offerings, on more than these three occasions, as at the beginning or end of each function during the interval forming the sandhi (juncture) between two succeeding functions. This term sandhi which occurs in the epigraphs must have originally indicated the juncture forming a short interval of time between two succeeding puja functions when offerings were made to the deities, but latterly it came to signify the offerings themselves made during such intervals, as we have it in the expressions, sandhi-muppadu (thirty units of cooked rice), pagal sandhi (day offerings) etc. In the inscriptions we meet with a number of them commencing with the udayakalam, sirukalam or arunodayakalam (the early hours of the morning) and closing with the ardhayamam (the early hours of the night). Even at the present time, in the course of the daily worship there can be observed a certain number of individual functions making up the series of ceremonial, such as the rites of waking up the deity in the morning with the chant-

ing of hymns (suprabhatam) and offering of sugared butter, then decorating Him with flowers (tomala seva), next holding a levee or darbar (koluvu) when the temple purohita reads the panchangam (almanac) for the day and the temple-accountant presents an account of the income and expenditure of the temple, both grain and cash, of the preceding day; and then worship through invocation of the 1008 appellations of Sri Venkatesvara (Sahasranama archana) and lastly offering of cooked, seasoned and sweetened food (maha naivedyam), as the final rite in the series. It is thus possible to arrange for offerings for the deity either before beginning or after completing an individual rite in the series, and we infer from the several offerings provided for each day by the devotees, both high and low, that in the past this possibility was effectuated. Of these, three occasions can be definitely known, as the udayakalam (early hours of the morning) when the deity is offered light food, tiruvadi-vilakkina-poludu (the time when the Holy-Feet are washed) which is a special rite in the tomala-seva, or decoration with flowers, and ardhayamam (early hours of the night), while the others are not clear.

There is one other inscription which throws up very interesting information as to how the kings in those days were aware of the importance of these inscriptions and the need for preserving the same even when renovation and repair works were undertaken in the temple. Perhaps their awareness of these inscriptions as a record of history was more developed than what we have today when we find that many of the inscriptions can be either defaced by vandalism or get neglected by the Governmental departments not paying any attention to those inscriptions.

One inscription clearly says that in the 40th year of the reign of Tribhuvana chakravartigal Sri Vira Narasimha Yadavaraya one Tiruppallani dasar a desanthri i.e. an outsider applied through the sthanathar of the temple to the king for the permission to renovate the central shrine of Sri Venkateswara at Tirumala which was in disrepair at that time. The order issued to the sthanathar is engraved on the northern wall. This enjoined on the managers the responsibilities of copying the

epigraphs which have been inscribed on the wall to be repaired and to have the same re-engraved in their original position after completion of the repairs. Underneath these inscriptions which originally found a place on that portion on the wall. Thus these stand mute testimony to the solicitous care and patronage extended to the inscriptions by the kings and the people in those days. The date of the king's order permitting the repair to be carried out is recorded as also the date of completion and reengraving in obedience to the direction of the king is also recorded. This later date is indicated as the 22nd day of the month of Chithirai, the week day being Friday and the star Uthrashada occurring during the Yadavaraya's 40th year of rule.

As stated earlier, the inscriptions are too many in number to be dealt with satisfactorily in the brief space that can be allotted to such coverage in this book. The inscriptions deal with a wide range of subjects varying from the institution of nitya neivedhyam, sandhis (food offerings), veda parayanam, abhishekam, utsavam, vahanams, nandavanam, gifting of villages, setting up of water sheds, Ramanuja kutams (feeding houses), repairing and expansion of temples etc. These inscriptions deal with the times of Pallava, the Chola, the Pandya, Kadavarayars, Yadavaraya, Telegu Cholas, Telegu Pallavas, Vijayanagara kings, Saluva kings, Thuluva kings, the aravidu line, the mahants of Tirupati etc. I can only repeat the suggestion made earlier that those who are interested in reading these inscriptions may refer to the epigraphical series brought out by the TTD.

MUSICOLOGY

The Lord of the Seven hills has been in the subject of soul stirring music by the doyens of Carnatic music like Tallapakka Annammacharya, Tyagaraja, Purandaradasa, Muthusamy Dikshithar, etc. In the following few paragraphs, a few of these compositions with their meaning will be presented. The most prolific music composer who composed Adhyatma Sankirthanams, Sringera sankirthanams, in thousands, is the great Sangeetha sagara Tallapaka Annammacharya. This great bard is considered as the incarnation of the Lord's sword Nandaka. His musical compositions mostly in Telegu and Sanskrit are said to be around 32000 in number. But only 12000 are now available.

These songs are engraved on thick copper plates. About 2500 of such copper plates were unearthed from a stone cellar in the Tirumala temple in 1922. Some more were found later in Ahobilam where also this composer spent sometime. It is said that Annamacharya sang these compositions in the presence of the Lord as part of the daily worship in the temple. That is why even today his descendants continue to sing his composition during the Ekantha seva in the night. The TTD itself has published a number of volumes of Annammacharya's kirthanas and thus helped in popularising these songs. One song of this composer and its meaning is given below:-

ANNAMACHARYA

Ragam: Mukhari

Talam: Adi

Pallavi: Brahma kadigina padamu

Brahmamu tanae nee padamu

Charanam 1: Chelagi vasudha golichina nee padamu

Balithala mopina padamu

Talagaka gaganamu tannina padamu

Balaripu kaachina padamu.

2 Parama yogulaku pari pari vidamula

Varamosageti nee padamu

Thiruvenkatagiri sthiramani choopina

Parama padamu nee padamu.

Meaning:

This is the foot washed by Brahma. The very feet are Brahmam (universal truth) by themselves!

You measured with Your one foot the entire beautiful earth; You kept one foot on Bali's head with the least effort one foot of yours kicked thro' the sky (and reached the upper worlds). These were the feet which protected Lord Indra.

These feet of Yours fulfill a variety of wishes of great sages (parama yogi). These feet of Yours make it clear that Tiruvenkatam is Paramapada (Vaikuntha).

N.B : The poet says in his pallavi that His feet are the Supreme being and Supreme truth itself. Rig veda says

*"Thadh Vishno Paramam padam
Sada pasyanthi soorayaha"*

It means the supreme feet of Maha Vishnu.

SAINT THYAGARAJA

Ragam: Madhyamavati

Talam: Adi

Pallavi: Venkatesa Ninu Sevimpanu

Padhi Velakannulu Kaavolae nayya

Anu Pallavi: Pankajaaksha Paripalitha Munijana

Bhavukamagu Divya roopa manugonna

Charanam 1 Ekkuva neevani Dikkulu Bogada

Akkaragoni Madi sokki kanugona

Nikkamu Neevae Grakkuna Brovedha

Lukkani Merasae Chakkadhanamugala

2 Yaenomu phalamo Nee Naamaamrutha

Paanamu Yanu Sopanamu Dorikaenu

Sree naayaka Paramaanonda Nee Sari

Gaanamu Shobhaayamaanaamgrulu gala

3 Yogi hrudaya Neevae gathi yanu

Jana Bhaagadheya! Vara bhogeeshasayana!

Bhaaghavatha priya Thyagarajanutha

Naagaachalamupai Baaguga Nelakonna!

Meaning:

Oh Venkatesa Who have taken abode on Sessaachala hills and in the hearts of yogis, one needs myriad eyes to see your glorious roopa. All praise you and say you are the highest of the deities. Your mere darsan will ensure salvation to those who are pining with devotion for you. I do not know what is the meritorious deed (punya) that I did that has earned for me this opportunity to drink my fill of the nectar of thy sweet name and thro' that stepping stone reach you with the divine effulgent feet.

SAINT THYAGARAJA

Ragam: Gowlipanthu**Talam:** Adi*Pallavi: Theru Theeyaga raadha?**Loni Tirupati Venkataramana! Mathsaramanu.**Anu Pallavi: Paramapurusha! Dharmadhi Mokshamula**Paaradholu chunnadhi Naaloni!**Charanam 1: Matsayamu yaakaligoni gaalamuchae**Magnamaina Reethi Nunnadhi;**Achchamaina Deepa Sannidhini**Marugadabadi Cherachinattunnadhi;**2 Iravondaga Bujjyinchi Samayamula**iya Dagulu Reethinunnadhi;**Haridhyanamu Saeyuvela chithami**Yamthyaju Vaadaku Boyinattunnadhi**3 Vaaguramani Theliyaka Mrigaganamulu**Vachchi Thagulu reethi Nunnadhi.**Vegamae Neemathamu Nanusarinchina**Thyagarajanutha! Madamatsaramanu***Meaning:**

Oh Lord of Tirupati, Oh Venkataramana please remove the screen of anger, arrogance, jealousy, with which I am afflicted and which are denying me Dharma artha purusharthas including moksha. As a result of this screen in me I am like a fish which get caught by grasping the bait in the fish angle. This screen is blinding me even from jnana. My pitiable situation is similar to that of a diner getting stuck with a fly in his throat while eating his food. This screen is creating havoc in me which is akin to the situation where a person offering prayers to God allows his mind to wander over the place of residence of a chandaala. This screen is making my mind get caught in the web of evil. Even as ignorant beasts get caught unawareness in a hunters net. I Thyagaraja pray you remove this veil which is blinding me from seeing the Truth.

PURANDARADASA

Purandaradasa, the famous Kannada composer is another of the famous musicians who have composed songs on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. It is said that once he and Annamacharya visited the Tirumala temple at the same time. They commemorated their joint visit by composing one song jointly. Though the song was the same, they addressed it differently to their respective favourite deities viz. Thiruvengatanayaka and Vithala. One famous composition of his with its meaning is given below:

Ragam: Malayamarutham

Talam: Adi

Pallavi: Smaranae onde salade

Govindana nama onde salade

*Anupallavi: Paramapurusha nannu nera nambidavarige
duritha badhegalu guruthu thuruuvell (smaru)*

Charanam: Sakala theerthayathreyu madidanta

Nikhila punyada phalavu

Bhakthi purvakavagi bidadanu dina dalli

Prakata purandharavittalana namada (smarana)

Meaning:

Will it not suffice if I think only of You? Will it not suffice if I utter the name Govinda? Those who believe in You as the Paramapurusha are relieved of their great sufferings immediately without any delay. Purandara dasa says that by uttering Your name with devotion one can obtain the merit obtained by visiting many holy pilgrim centres.

PURANDARA DASA - SONG 2

Ragam: Thodi

Talam: Rupakam

Pallavi: Ninnanodi dhanyanadeno He Srinivasa!

Anu pallavi: Pakshivahana Lakshmiramana

Lakshya vittu nodo pandu. Paksha sarva

daithya siksha - rakshisenna kamalaksha

*Charanam: Desa desa thiriginanu asebadhdhanade
swamy Dasanenisi enna jagadesa kaayo
Vasudeva - Kanthu janaka kelo enna
antharanga dasa ennu - anthara villade
pali saiya hanthakari Purandara vittalana!!*

Meaning:

Oh Srinivasa! I am indeed blessed to have seen you. Oh Lakshminatha, Garuda Vahana, Vanquisher of asuras, friend of Pandavas, oh lotus eyed Srinivasa! Please bless me. Save this sinner who is wandering from place to place and is lost in enjoying worldly pleasures. Please make me your abject slave and devotee. Oh Sreenivasa You have understood my prayers and have answered them by saving me (blessed me with salvation).

PAPANASAM SIVAM - (TAMIL SONG)

Ragam: Hameeranandi

Talam: Adi

*Pallavi: Sreenivasa Thiruvenkata mudayay
Jaya Govinda Mukunda Anantha*

*Anu pallavi: Deena saranyam enum peyar kondai
Deenan ennaipol varevar kandai*

*Charanam: Jagam Pugazhum ezhumalai mayavanae
Thirumagal Alarmel Mangai manalane
Jagannatha! Sankhu chakra Dharanae!
Thiruvadi kabhayam abhayamayya
Jaya Sreenivasa!!*

Meaning:

Oh Srinivasa! Oh Lord of Thiruvenkatam! Oh Jaya Govindaa! Oh Mukunda! Oh Anantha! You are known as the unfailing support of the weak. You could not have seen any one more helpless and weak than me.

Oh Lord of Seven Hills praised by the world. You are the consort of Alarmel Mangai Thaayar. Oh Jagganatha (Saviour of

the worlds). Oh Lord adore me with conch and discus. I salute Your divine feet Oh Srinivasa.

MUTHUSAMY DIKSHITHAR

Muthusamy Dikshithar, the contemporary of Tyagaraja also has composed five songs on Lord Venkatchalapathi. The following song of his with its meaning is given below:

Ragam: Kapi (Manipravalam)

Talam: Adi

*Pallavi: Venkatachalapathi Nannu nammithi
Vegamae nannu rakshiyumayya*

*Anupallavi: Parakajasana pramukhadi vinutha
Padamunu aasrya china varkella
Sankatamulu deercu sampadalichi
Mangalam porindiya pulivalathil vilangum*

*Charanam 1: Srinivasa Seshachala muninchi
Seegramai vandu anduni kabishta
Dana mosagi gokarna kshetramulo
Nilakoni Mrukandu munigal*

*2 Mudalana bhakthanam abhayavara
Pradana chathuratara Ramapathae
Dayanidhe! Prathyakshamuga nindhha
Manilathil nin mahimai anekam!*

*3 Vanavar vanangum vasudevanae
Vanchitartha phalamichu varadane
Deenarakshaka! Peethambaradhara
Deva deva guruguhan Mamanana
Venkatachalapathae*

Meaning:

Oh Venkatachalapathae! I place my complete trust in You. Please come fast and protect me.

You are the one Who is praised by Brahma and to all those who seek Your feet You remove all the obstacles and confer pros-

perity on them. You are residing in auspicious Tiruvengadam forests filled with wild animals;

Oh Srinivasa You came very fast from Seshachalam to bless a blind devotee; Oh Ramapathae! Dayanidhae! Abhayapradana chaturathara! You stayed in Gokarna kshetra and gave abhayam to Mrukandu muni and other sages. Your innumerable glories are experienced by many in this world; Oh Vasudeva worshipped by devas; Oh Varada granter of boons of devotees; Oh Deennarakshaka! Oh Peethambaradhara (wearer of yellow silk robe)! Oh Devadi deva You are the maternal uncle of Gurguha (Lord Subramanya). Oh Venkatachalapathae! Protect me.

VEINAI KUPPIER a direct disciple of Tyagaraja also has composed Pancharatna kirthanams on Venkateswara. One of those with its meaning is given below:-

Ragam: Sankarabharanam **Talam:** Rupakam

Pallavi: Baagu Meeraganu naato palukaga rada? Vaada?

*Anupallavi: Naagaraajagiri Nivaasaa! Nalinaakshaa!
Venkatesaa!*

*Charanam 1: Nee Laavanyamu joodanu nancentho veedaya nee
Veelagunaa nerchuta idi neeku meera?
Sri llola! Javamuna gopala dhasuni karamidi
Vaataayamu gaachina deivamee neevani
Ee velanu!! Baagu.*

*2 Bhava poshanamunakai dhanikula polumaaru
Vinuthi jeyu*

*Kavi Janamula sahavaasamu kaaraadani rosi
Navarasambululukaga nee naama keertha namulu
Vivaramuga paadeti naa vyathalanu teerchenani !!*

*3 Saranaagata vatsalae! Nee charana yugamula naa
hrudh*

*Saraseeruhama nilpi jaajiveerula thonu
Nirathamu poojinchuvala, nindaara baadhinchedi*

*Duritaasesha rogamulanu drunchi ikanannu
brochevani Baagu!!*

Meaning:

Why is it You are not coming and talking tome? Is there any dispute or difference of opinion between us? Oh Lord Who reside in Seshadri! Oh lotus eyed Lord! Oh Venkatesa!

Oh Srilola! Is it fair to torture me like this when I am eagerly waiting to see Your beauty? You rushed to the rescue of Gopaladasa. You are easily approachable Lord. So I seek Your help.

I have refused to associate with the poets who for the sake of money praise many times the rich mortals. I have taken to singing ecstatically at length Your honey sweet myriad names hoping You will resolve all my problems and remove all my difficulties. Oh Saranagatha vatsala! I have enshrined Your divine lotus feet in my lotus like heart and worship them daily with scented jasmine flowers and praythat You will absolve me of all the sins and cure me of all my diseases. Hereafter I entrust myself to Your care and protection.

SUBBARAYA SASTRI (TELUGU)

One song of his with its meaning is given below:

Ragam: Hameer kalyani

Talam: Adi

*Pallavi: Venkatasaikavihaara neeve gathi, brova raaraa
Sri Venkatesa !!*

*Anupallavi: Pankajabhayapurapati nuthacharana
Kinkara sankula sankatacharana SriVenkata !!*

*Charanam 1: Vintini nee nee varaguna kathalanu
Veenula kento Anandamauna
gantini girini gopuramala mani maya
Mantapamulanu ni bhakhtuda neithi Sri !!*

*2 Emani telepudu needu Mahatvamu
Samaja varada nee Sarigalada*

*Prematho janulu nee nama bhajanamula
Vemaru balukaga veduka nunnava Sri Venkata !!*

3 *Dinadinamunu pada vanajamulaku prartha
Nanu chellinchitaku ghanamuganu
Dhana kanakamani Bhushanamula tama sira
Munanu vahinchi kommanuchu gacheri
Sri Venkatesa!!*

4 *Tamasmela nee dasula brova
Tamarajaksha nee daya raada
Kamithaphala dayakudani Birudu
Prakyathi vahinchi neeku emi
Paraku Sri Venkata !!*

5 *Korithi nee paada vanajamula
Jerithi needhu Sannidhini sada
Marajanaka nata kumaruni brova
Bharama neekithi tarakanama! Sri Venkat !!*

Meaning:

O Lord of Venkatadri! You are my saviour. Kindly come to protect me. Your divine feet are extolled by Brahma the lotus born and by Indra the King of Gods. You are the one Who relieves the devotees of all their troubles and turmoils. When I heard the many stories about Your great qualities, it was so pleasing to the ears. I saw the gopurams, the hill; the gem studded mantapas and have become Your sincere devotee. How am I to describe Your greatness and glory? Oh Samaja varada there is none to equal You. With abundant love and ecstasy people repeat Your myriad names and You are happy listening to that. Every day, people throng to Your place carrying on their heads wealth, gold, ornaments etc. to offer at Your feet and wait patiently requesting You to accept their loving offerings. Oh lotus eyed Lord! Why this delay in helping these devotees of Yours. Won't You show Your compassion? You Who are known as the bestower of all boons and granter of all wishes, why this indifference? I seek Your lotus feet. I have reached Your presence. Oh Tarakanama! Oh father of Manmadha! I,

You son, bow down to You. Is my protection such a great burden to You?

TIRUPATI NARAYANASAMY NAIDU

This musician belongs to early part of this century.

He has composed four songs on Sri Venkateswara one of which with its meaning is given below:

Ragam: Darbar

Talam: Roopakam

Pallavi: Momu joopavemi Rama

Mohanamga needhu muddu momu

Anupallavi: kaumari vinutha naama

Kaavu manchu vedukonna

Charanam: Kari moralidaganae vachchina

Karuna nedendu daachitivo?

Venkatesa needu momu!!

Meaning:

Oh Rama! Oh beautiful one! Why don't you show me Your enchanting/loving face? Kaumari (Parvati) sang Your name.* I pray for Your protection. Where have You hidden that quality of compassion which You displayed in abundance by rushing to the rescue of Gajendra the elephant when he called You. Oh Lord residing at Tirupati! Oh Deva! Oh Venkatesa! Please why are not showing Your face to me?

* Reference here is to the passage in Vishnu Sahasranama where Parvati uttered the words "Rama Raama Ramaethi Ramae Ramae Manoramae".

There are many more equally moving compositions on Lord Venkatchalapathi. Time and space do not permit quoting them here.

To conclude Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati is a Pratyaksha Deivam - Sakshaat Parabrahmam. A visit to that holy town and a darshan of the Lord there is an unique experience which

should not be missed. In conclusion let me quote the words of the great acharya Ramanuja as founded in Sri Bhashya.

*"Akhila Bhuvana janma sthema Bhangaathi leelae!
Vinatha Vividha Bhootha Vraatha
Rakshaika Deekshae Sruthi
Sirasi Videptae Brahmani
Srinivasae Bhavathy Mama
Parasmin Se mushee Bakthi roopa".*

To explain this, Ramanuja says may my knowledge assume the form of loving devotion for Lord Srinivasa Who is the Supreme Brahman and Who is the shining crown of the vedas i.e. He is the unpanished Himself and Who has as His sportive activity the tasks of creation, sustenance and destruction and Who has taken upon Himself the unfailing, Supreme task (Deeksha) of protecting whoever surrenders before Him.

HYMNOLOGY

The mangalasaasana pasurams literally translated means they are verses sung by the vaishnavite savants for auspicious glory. These songs were rendered by the Alvars in praise of the Lord at the divya desam and seeking the blessing of the divine Lord for the devotee. Each of these pasurams has got a deep inner philosophic meaning. No wonder that one famous commentator on the Naalaayira Divya Prabandham has written cantos explaining each of the words in the pasuram! But such an indepth analysis has to be left to the experts. Suffice it for us to broadly understand the meaning of the pasuram and get into the mood of the Alvar when he rendered the original in the presence of the perumal of the divya desam.

Ten Alvars have done mangalasaasanam to Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam in 202 pasurams. Thirumangai Alvar and Nammalvar have contributed the maximum number of pasurams with 52 and 50 pasurams respectively. In the following paragraphs, an attempt is made to explain all the 202 pasurams.

* * *

POIGAI ALVAR

Poigai Alvar is one of the first three alvars. He was born in a lotus tank in Yadothkari Perumal temple in Kancheepuram in the month of Aippasi when Sravana nakshatram was in the ascendant. This Alvar, unlike the others, never mentions his name in the prabandham written by him. It is said that at Thirukoilur, he lighted a kadir vilakku i.e. he made the Sun God as the light for Thrivikrama Perumal at Thirukoilur.

PASURAM 2107

எழுவார் விடை கொள்வார் ஈந்துழா யானை
வழுவா வகைநினைந்து வைகல்-தொழுவார்
வினைச்சுடரை நந்து விக்கும் வேங்கடமே வாணூர
மனச் சுடரைத் தூண்டும் மலை.

In this pasuram, he sings about the greatness of Thiruvengadam hills which rid the sins of all the people. The Alvar classifies people into different categories. First category are the devotees who never like to be separated from God. They stay in the presence of God and enjoy for ever. The moksha which they aspire for may get delayed because of their sins. The Alvar says that a visit to this hill will rid all the sins of such people and thus remove the stumbling block and enable them to attain their heart's desire viz. moksha. The second category of people are those who seek aiswaryam. These set of people pray to God, to give them material wealth, and prosperity. As soon as God fulfills their wish they then take leave of Him and live. The sins of such people are also wiped out if they visit the Tirumala hills. The Alvar says that this hill has the great qualities which attract the Nitya suris staying in Paramapadam to visit the hill where Lord Srinivasa resides. The Perumal Who is wearing the sweet scented tulasi mala resides in this hill which wipes out the sin of many persons. This pasuram therefore sings the praise of the hill viz. Tirumala hill where the Lord resides.

PASURAM 2118

வகையறு நுண்கேள்வி வாய்வார்கள் நாளும்
புகை விளக்கும் பூம்புனலும் ஏந்தி திசை திசையின்
வேதியர்கள் சென்றிறைஞ்சும் வேங்கடமே

வெண்சங்கம்

ஊதிய வாய் மாலுகந்த ஆர்.

Freely translated this pasuram runs as follows:

Thiruvengada divya desam is the place where Lord Krishna Who used pancha janya with His coral coloured lips resides happily and of His own free will. It is also the place where from all the four sides the persons who are well versed in the vedas congregate holding the dhoopam and dheepam and other Thiruvaradhana articles in their hands so as to worship the Perumal here. These vedic experts are those who possess the gnana and the sharp intellect to distinguish between the good and the evil and who are able to guide the people as to what course of action will give maximum benefit and what course would land one in trouble. Such gnanis are carrying the dhoopas and the dheepas, the pushpa (flowers) and the theertham (holy water) and are worshipping the Lord of this place. The holysmoke that emanates from the dhoopas and the dheepams are said to be encompassing the holy hill with its sweet scent. Devotees from different parts have come to this hill and pay obiesience to the Perumal Who resides here.

PASURAM 2119

ஊரும் வரியரவம் ஒண்குறவர் மால்யானை
பேர வெறிந்த பெருமணியை - காருடைய
மின்னென்று புற்றடையும் வேங்கடமே மேலசூரா
எம்மென்னும் மால திடம்.

In this pasuram the Alvar sings the praise of Thiruvengadam hill. He says that this Thiruvengadam hill is claimed as theirs by the Nitya suris and other Devas residing at Paramapada. It is also claimed as their hill by the hunters (kuravars) who live and eke their living in the hill. The Alvar says that one day the kuravars living in the hill who had sold kambu,

kezhvaragu and other crops saw an elephant had come into their field and was grazing on the crops. To chase that elephant away they threw a manickam (precious stone) on the elephant. That is to say this holy hill has got a lot of precious stones in it. This shining red coloured precious stone (manickam) which was thrown on the elephant hits the elephant and then falls on the ground. The snakes which crawl on the ground and drag themselves farther and who have stripes on their bodies see this precious stone (manickam) fallen on the ground looking at the dazzel and bright light, they think it is a flash of lightning from a dark rain bearing cloud which precedes the thunder. Anticipating the noise of thunder these denizens of the underworld viz. the snakes are said to have got frightened and rush for protection and security into their ant hills (putru) . Thus, the Alvar says that the devas, the Nitya suris, the kuravars as well as the elephants and the snakes try to establish their rights on this hill where each one of them feels their Lord resides. It only means that the Perumal residing in this hill is one Who is loved and held in high esteem (abhimanam) by one and all.

PASURAM 2120

இடந்தது பூமி எடுத்தது குன்றம்
கடந்தது கஞ்சனைமுன் னஞ்சக் கிடந்ததுவும்
நீரோத மாகடலே நின்றதுவும் வேங்கடமே
பேரோத வண்ணர் பெரிது.

In this pasuram, the Alvar mentions in brief the different feats achieved in His earlier avatarams by the Perumal Who resides here viz. Lord Srinivasa. Freely translated the pasuram runs as follows:

The Great God (ocean hued Perumal) Who is seen standing at Thiruvengadam is none other than the Perumal Who during His Varaha avataram saved Bhoomidevi by killing Hiranyakshan and rescued Her from the depths of the ocean where the demon had hid Her by balancing Her on His snout. This is also the Perumal Who, during His Krishnavatar, lifted the mighty Govardhana mountain on His little finger and held it aloft for seven days to protect the cattle and the cowherds at Gokulam from the severe storm let loose by an enraged Lord Varuna.

This is the same Lord Who instilled tremendous fear in Kamsa and finally destroyed Him. This is the Lord Who is seen in the sayana pose at Tirupparkadal.

PASURAM 2121

பெருவில் பசுழிக் குறவர்கைச் செந்தீ
 வெருவிப் புனம் துறந்த வேழம் இருவிசும்பில
 மீன்வீழக் கண்டு அஞ்சும் வேங்கடமே மேலசுரர்
 கோன்வீழக் கண்டு கந்தான் குன்று.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that in Thiruvengada hill resides the Perumal, Who, in His Narasimha avataram destroyed Hiranya kasipu and saved Prahladha. In this hill the Alvar says in the fields where the Kuravars i.e. the local hill tribes have grown some crops elephants get in. Seeing the destruction of their crops, the kuravars get burning sticks (theevatti) in their hands. They held the bow and the arrows and try to chase the elephants. The elephants are frightened on seeing the red fire. They run away from them. One such elephant went to a solitary place and when it lifted its eyes upwards to the sky it saw a star falling from the sky. The elephant thought that one of the kuravars i.e. the hunter had thrown the theevatti i.e. the flaming torch held in his hand on the elephant. It gets frightened and runs seeking shelter. The Alvar says that Tirumalai is a hill where such incidents take place.

PASURAM 2149

உணர்வாரார் உன்பெருமை? ஊழிதோ றூழி
 உணர்வாரார் உன்னுருவந் தன்னை உணர்வாரார்?
 விண்ணகத்தாய் மண்ணகத்தாய்! வேங்கடத்தாய்
 நால்வேதப்
 பண்ணகத்தாய்! நீகிடந்த பால்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that it is impossible to fully grasp the greatness of Perumal.

Freely translated the pasuram will run as follows:-

O Lord residing in Thiruvengadam

You are also the person Who, in the Paranilai are residing in Paramapada.

You are also the same Lord Who in Vyuha form are lying down in Thirupparkadal

You are also the same Lord Who in the Vibhava form have taken numerous avatars (incarnations) to help Your sincere devotees.

You are the same Lord Who in the archa form are seen in Thiruvengadam.

Even if one were to spend one's life time thinking of You only, even then Your greatness cannot be grasped completely.

Who is there to say that he has understood the significance of Your swaroopa completely?

Here the Alvar conveys the thought that even as one cannot see the boundries of the ocean or the boundries of sky the greatness of the Lord Who is omnipresent and omnisient cannot be grasped fully by anyone. There are some alvars who have gone to the extent of saying that even God Himself does not know His own greatness. Neither the mind can grasp nor can the tongue utter any words nor can the body measure in full the greatness of God. God experience is therefore never complete.

Kurattalvar in his Panchasthavam once expresses a similar thought while addressing Thayar. In that stotiram Kurattalvar addresses Thayar staying along with Ranganatha Perumal. He then says-

*"Devi thun mahima avadhihi nagarina napith
Thvaya gnanathae"*

It means that the boundries or the limits of the greatness of the Thayar is not known even to the Perumal Who is staying with Her all the time. He even says that Thayar Herself does not know Her greatness. Alvar goes one step further and says that if anyone thinks he can satisfactorily enumerate and weigh and express in verifiable quantifiable terms the greatness of the

God, he should be a branthan i.e. a person having illusions. If anybody were to attempt such an impossible task, it will be as silly as it would be if someone were to say they saw a lotus in the sky. In brief, the Alvar says that those who are wise will realise their limitations and understand that God is beyond everyone's comprehension.

Nammalvar also in his Thiruvaimozhi expresses a similar thought when he says that God Himself does not know His full capabilities and capacities.

PASURAM 2157

வழி நின்று நினைத் தொழுவார் வழுவா
மொழி நின்ற மூர்ததியரே யாவர் - பழுதொன்றும்
வாராத வண்ணமே விண் கொடுக்கும் மண்ணளந்த
சீரான் திருவேங் கடம்.

In this pasuram the Alvar again speaks about the greatness of Thiruvengadam Hill. Freely translated this pasuram reads as follows:-

The Perumal at Thiruvengadam Hill is none other than the Perumal Who, in His Thrivikrama avatar, measured all the worlds with His two steps. If one were to worship at Thiruvengadam Hill where the Ulagalandumurthi i.e. Lord Thrivikrama is residing, he will ensure that there are no problems and difficulties and that you are blessed with moksha. Thus, one has to repeat what is said in the Upanishads that if you approach the God with sincere devotion, you will be blessed with gnana anandha vikasam i.e. absolute enlightenment. Such a moksham and blessing will be conferred says the Alvar even if you worship at Tirumala.

PASURAM 2158

வேங்கடமும் விண்ணகரும் வெஃகாவும் அஃகாத
பூங்கிடங்கின் நீள்சோவல் பொன்னகரும் நான்
கிடத்தும்
நின்றான் இருந்தான் கிடந்தான் நடந்தானே
என்றால் செடுமாம் இடர்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that even if one merely mentions that Perumal is seen in a standing pose at Thiruvengadam, in a sitting pose at Thiruvehka (Yadothkari temple) and in a walking pose at Thirukovalur, all the sins will get wiped out. The mere mention of the names of the Perumal in these divya desams is sufficient to wipe out one's sins.

The Alvar says that these divya desams are full of groves, water falls, tanks, flower gardens. In brief, he says these are idyllic spots.

Similar thought is expressed by Tirumangai Alvar when in pasuram 1078 he says if one mentions the name of the Perumal Who is seen in a standing posture in Thirunaraiyur (Nachiyar coil) and the name of the Perumal (Narasimhar) Who is seen in a sitting posture at Thiruvali and the name of the Perumal Who is seen in a lying down posture at Thirukudanthai and in a walking posture at Thirukovalur. Even if one is not able to go to Thirunaraiyur (Nachiyar coil) where God is seen in a standing posture and to Thiruvali where God (Narasimhar) is seen in a sitting posture and to Thirukudanthai where God is seen in a lying down posture and to Thirukovalur where God is seen in a walking pose one could go to Thiruneermalai and have the pleasure of witnessing God in all these four forms in one divya desam itself. He therefore exhorts the devotees to come to Thiruneermalai and worship the Perumal there and receive His blessings. Perhaps when the alvars refer to the sitting, the standing, the lying down and the walking postures of God, they wish to convey the thought to us that whatever sins we commit while performing these four activities viz. sitting, standing, lying down and walking will be wiped out by the God seen in a similar posture.

PASURAM 2163

படையாரும் வாட்கண்ணூர் பாரசி நாள் பைம்பூந்
தொடையலோடு ஏந்திய சூரபம் - இடையிடையில்
மீன் மாய மாசூலும் வேங்கடமே மேலொருநாள்
மான் மாய வெய்தான் வரை.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who is residing at Thiruvengadam is none other than the Perumal Who in His Ramavataram killed Maricha who disguised himself as a golden deer. This is also the hill where on dwadasi day countless number of women come early in the morning with flower garlands, dhoopas and other items of worship and come to offer prayers to the Perumal. The Alvar says that the sweet scented thick smoke coming from the dhoopas offered by the devotees is preventing the devotees from even seeing the stars in the sky. In brief, it means that so many devotees are thronging Thirumalai and worshipping the Perumal there.

The Alvar refer to the women devotees worshipping the Lord on the dwadasi day with a purpose. Usually Sri vaishnavites break the Ekadasi vratha fast on dwadasi day. Having fasted for one whole day, the devotees will be steeped in satva guna on dwadasi day. So the Alvar says that the humble sincere devotees are thronging Tirumalai to worship the Perumal there.

PASURAM 2180

உள்ள சண்டாய் நன்னெஞ்சே! உததம னென்றும்
 உள்ள சண்டாய் உனளுவா றுள்ளதது உள்ள
சண்டாய்
 வெள்ளத்தி னுள்ளானும் வேங்கடதது மேயானும்
 உள்ளத்தி னுள்ளா னென்று ஓர்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the God Who is seen in a standing posture at Thiruvengadam is the same God Who is seen lying down on an ocean in Thirupparkadal. This is the God Who takes pleasure in rushing to the rescue of the sincere devotees who never lets go an opportunity to save the world and Who happily regards protecting us as His duty. Such a Perumal resides for ever in the hearts of the vaidheekars i.e. learned people who think of Him always. It is said that once he takes His residence in the hearts of His devotees, he never leaves that place. He prefers to stay in the hearts of the sincere devotees rather than staying in Thirupparkadal and other places. Kurattalvar say that the hrudaya or heart of the acharyas or the learned people is the permanent home for God while Thirupparkadal is His temporary abode, till such time, he

finds a suitable devotees heart. His stay in Tirupparkadal is like Balalayam when the powers of the main vighraha are believed to be transformed to a utsavamurthi and kept separately till such time as the renovation work for the main garbagriha gets completed.

Kurattalvar in one of his pasurams advises God as follows:

He says O God! Don't give up Thirupparkadal just so that you may happily come and stay in my heart. Don't regard Thirupparkadal as Ilamkoil i.e. Balalayam. Similar thoughts are expressed also in the vedas when it is said that the town where God stays is the heart of the devotees, which is like a lotus flower. This thought which says that God Who lives in our heart as an antaryamin is known as Daharakasam. Paramakasa refers to Paramapada. Daharakasam refers to antharyamithyam i.e. the hrudaya of a sincere devotee.

* * *

BHOOTHATH ALVAR

Boothath Alvar is the second alvar. He was born in Mahabalipuram in Chengleput district of Madras State. He believed in devotion as a means to attain salvation. Devotion or parabhakthi, he felt was the way, the means to reach the goal of our endeavours viz. God realisation. To this alvar "devotion is the lamp bowl, aspiration is the ghee, the mind that has melted out of delight, is the wick. Only out of these can the flame of devotion to Narayana the Supreme be lit".

Let us now see what this alvar has to say about Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala.

PASURAM 2206

சென்றது இலங்கைமேல் செவ்வேதன் சேற்றத்தால்
கொன்றது இராவணனைக் கூறுங்கால் நின்றதுவும்
வேயோங்கு தண்சாரல் வேங்கடமே-விண்ணாவர்தம்
வாயோங்கு தொல்புகழான் வந்து.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who resides at Thiruvengadamalai which is full of bamboo forests and has a cool climate is none other than Rama Who is worshipped by all the devas. That Rama is the one Who crossed the oceans, went to Lanka, fought with demon Ravana and destroyed him. The very same Rama, Alvar says is today seen in a standing posture at Thiruvengadamalai so that people like us can worship Him and seek His blessing.

Once sage Valmiki had asked Narada as to who was the one person who has all the 14 lakshanas i.e. qualities which are the hall mark of a great person. Narada replied that Rama is the only person Who fits such a description. One of those 14 lakshanas is Jithakrodha i.e. one who has conquered anger. Even such a Rama, the Alvar says in this pasuram, got angry at the heinous crime committed by the demon Ravana. The people who have control over their anger rarely get angry. But once they loose their temper, it is said, that even the devas get frightened and run away from the scene!

While referring to Rama the Alvar says he is a "maveeran" மாவீரன் i.e. unequalled great Hero, praised by the devas also. Why? This was because Rama fought with demon Ravana, in the enemy's homeground and yet emerged victorious. This type of a hero is effectively described in Tamil as a person who woke up a sleeping tiger, fought with it and then defeated it. Of such stuff are heroes made while we humans like to allow even sleeping dogs to lie undisturbed! Such a great Rama, the Alvar says is now staying in Thiruvengadamalai to enable us to have easy access to Him, worship Him and attain salvation.

PASURAM 2209

மனத்துள்ளான் வேங்கடத்தான் மாகடலான்மற்றும்
நினைப்பரிய நீளரங்கத் துள்ளான் எனைப்பலரும்
தேவாதி தேவ னெனப்படுவான் முன்னொருநாள்
மாவாய் பிளந்த மகன்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who is residing as an antaryamin in the Alvar's heart, is Lord Srinivasa Who is also residing at Thiruvengadam so as to enable all to worship Him with ease. He is also the same Lord Who is seen in a captivating, enchanting beautiful lying down posture at Srirangam. He is also the same Lord Who as a small child in His Krishnavataram killed Kesi, the demon in the form of a horse, by splitting open his mouth. He is also the same Lord who is lying down in yogic slumber in Tirupparkadal. He is also the Lord Who is known as Devadideva. This great Lord, is happily residing in his heart - says Alvar.

In the previous pasuram i.e. 2208 the Alvar had said that his mind is going in search of the Perumal even as a creeper goes in search of a stick so as to cling and wind itself upon that support and grow. In this pasuram the Alvar says that his efforts searching for God ended fruitfully and the God has come and taken residence in his heart.

Another significant point in this pasuram is that all the forms of the Lord viz. Para, Vyuha, vibhava and archa avatara forms are covered by referring to the Perumal in Tirupparkadal, Paramapadam and as Lord Krishna and the Lord of the Seven

Hills. In brief, he says that the Lord who has the choice of so many forms yet prefers to stay willingly and happily in the hearts of true devotees.

PASURAM 2214

துணிந்தது சிந்தை துழாயலங்கல் அங்கம்

அணிந்தவன்பேர் உள்ளத்துப் பல்கால்

பணிந்ததுவும்

வேய்பிறங்கு சாரல் விறல்வேங் கடவனையே

வாய்திறங்கள் சொல்லும் வகை.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that his mind was determined to only think and sing the praise of Lord Srinivasa seen standing in a majestic manner at Thiruvengadam filled with bamboo trees. He also adds that he is determined to utter many times the myriad holy names of the Lord Who is adorned with the tulasi garland. His body (sareera) is also determined only to worship and bow down in reverence to Lord Srinivasa.

Thus, in thought, word and deeds the alvar wants to only serve Lord Srinivasa.

Mind, speech and body are referred to as Trikaranas. The great souls always synchronise these three activities. In Sanskrit it is referred to as follows:-

"*Manas yekham, vachas yekham, karman ekham, Mahatmanam*" that is to say mahatmas say what they think and do what they say unlike many ordinary mortals whose thought, action and words have no correlation at all and may even be contradictory.

Usually, while referring to Trikaranas, mind, speech and action is the order in which it is mentioned. But in this pasuram, the Alvar in his hurry jumbles this prioritisation and refers to mind, action and then speech.

PASURAM 2226

உளதெள் றிறுமாவார் உண்டில்லை யென்று

தளர்தல தனருகுஞ் சாரார்-அளவரிய

வேதத்தாள் வேங்கடத்தாள் விண்ணோர் முடிதோயும்
பாதத்தாள் பாதம் பயின்று.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that those who seek solace and worship the divine feet of the Lord of Thiruvengadam will be able to maintain their equipoise.

They will neither become haughty and proud thinking they are wealthy, neither will they be affected by the sorrows and ills of this world. They will be able to take the good and the bad in their stride.

The Alvar says that the tiruvadi திருவடி i.e. divine feet of the Perumal is praised in the vedas and that such a Perumal is seen standing at Tirumalai. Even the devas worship His feet so as to be blessed. If we worship those feet, we will not be affected by the ills of this world neither will we become proud.

The Alvar uses the words "alavariyaa vedathan" (அளவ-
ரிய வேதத்தாள்). Literally translated this means the Lord Who is the embodiment and the swarupa of vedas which can never be measured (alavariyaa vedam i.e. vedas which cannot be expressed in any quantificatory manner). This refers to a story which is told in Krishna Yajur vedam in Katakam Sakha. It is said that Bharadwaja wanted to master the vedas and do vedadhyananam. He prayed to Lord Indra and asked him to give him longtivity of hundred years so as to enable him to read through the vedas. Indra conceded this wish. Bharadwaja started the vedadhyananam. But he was not able to complete it. He again prayed to Lord Indra and got another 100 years life. Even then he did not derive satisfaction. He again did tapas and asked for another hundred years. Indra then smiled and told him that whatever be his longtivity, he cannot ever completely do adyayanam of the vedas. To drive home this point, Indra pointed out three hills nearby. He took one fistful of mud from each hill and placed them in front of the maharishi and told him that what he has read in the vedas in the 300 years was in proportion to the three fistsful of mud to the three hills. He told him that what he still had to learn was as vast and as unexplored as the high hills. Hence it is said that one

cannot measure and express in clear identifiable quantitative terms the wealth that is enshrined in the vedas. Vedas are thus immeasurable and the Perumal Who is Vedaswaroopi is therefore beyond all comprehension. Such a Vedaswaroopi is at Thiruvengadam.

PASURAM 2227

பயின்றது அரங்கம் திருக்கோட்டி பன்னாள்
பயின்றதுவும் வேங்கடமேபன்னாள்-பயின்றது
அணிதிகழும் சோலை அணிநீர் மலையே
மணிதிகழும் வண்தடக்கை மால்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who has the colour of a precious blue stone and the Perumal Who has long hands resides of His own free will at Srirangam and Thirugoshtiyur. The said Perumal is having His nityavasam for a very long time at Thiruvengadam. He is also staying at Thirumaliruncholai full of beautiful groves and at Thiruneermalai which adds beauty and lustre to earth itself.

In this pasuram, the alvar uses the word "*van thadakkai*" (வண் தடக்கை). This means that the hands of the Perumal have reached up to the thigh. This is a paramapurusha lakshana. The hands are said to have become long because for so long they have been engaged in extending a helping hand to the devotees and giving to them whatever they ask. It is said that God never fails to respond to the prayers of a sincere devotee. Ask and it will be given is His policy. As the hands have been engaged busily for long in this act of stretching out and giving, the hands have become elongated!

The alvar mentions the names of some divya desams and says that God is residing in these places of His own free will and pleasure and is waiting to satisfy the desires of the devotees who come and worship Him in these places. Even if one were to think of these divyadesams, it is said, one can avoid the sorrows, the follies and foibles of this world.

PASURAM 2234

நெறியார் குழற்கற்றை முன்னின்று பின் தாழ்ந்து
 அறியா திளங்கிரியென் றெண்ணி - பிறியாது
 பூங்கொடிகள் வைகும் பொருபுளற் குன்றென்றும்
 வேங்கடமே யாம்விரும்பும் வெற்பு.

In this pasuram, the alvar says that the place which he loves and desires is Tirumalai also known as Thiruvengadam. It has plenty of water resources and hence is evergreen and prosperous. It is also the hill where number of people sat on the pathway leading to the hills and did tapas to Perumal. They were so deeply immersed in meditation that the flower creepers thought the pig tails worn by such devotees were small hills and wound themselves deep around such hair. It means that the people were so immersed in meditation that there was no movement at all and it was very difficult to believe that they were human beings. Their immobility made them synonymous with small hillocks. In brief, the alvar says that such sights and scenes can be seen only in Thiruvengadamalai which is dear to him.

PASURAM 2235

வெற்பென் றிருஞ்சோலை வேங்கடமென்
 நிவ்விரண்டும்
 நிற்பென்று நீமதிக்கும் நீர்மைபோல் நிற்பென்று
 உளங்கோயில் உள்ளம்வைத் துள்ளினேன் வெள்ளத்
 திளங்கோயில் கைவிடே லென்று.

In this pasuram the alvar says that the two hills where Perumal delightedly resides of His own free will are Thirumaliruncholai and Thiruvengadam. In addition, he says that God added one more delightful place of stay for Himself. It was the heart of the alvar himself (hrudaya koil). But the alvar advises God and says that though He came to reside in his heart willingly yet He should not forget Thirupparkadal which is like Balalayam. Usually when temples are renovated the sakthi from the moolavar is transferred to a vessel full of water or the utsava vigraham or a painting etc. and kept in another place. Such a place is referred to as Balalayam. It is therefore a temporary ac-

commodation for God. Here the alvar compares Thirupparkadal to Balalayam as God prefers to stay there only temporarily. The alvar is conveying the thought that the Perumal is to be seen not only in the divya desams but also in the hrudayam (heart) of mahans, i.e. as an Antaryamin. Similar thoughts are expressed by Perialwar in the following words:

"Panik kadalil palli kondu pazhaga vittu Odi vandhu yen manak kadalil vazhavalla maya manalan".

“பனிக் கடலில் பள்ளிகொண்டு பழகவிட்டு

ஒடிவந்து என்

மனக்கடலில் வாழ்வல்ல மாய மனாளன்”

He says that the Perumal left the ice cold cosmic ocean of Creation and came to reside in the mind of the alvar which is also an ocean by itself. We know too well that unfathomable is the ocean of mind. It is restless. Yet even in such a disturbed mind when God chooses to reside, the devotee gets peace and happiness.

PASURAM 2253

போதறிந்து வானரங்கள் பூஞ்சுனைபுக்கு

ஆங்கலர்ந்த

போத ரிந்து கொண்டேத்தும் போது உள்ளம்-

போது

மணியேங் கடவன் மலரடிக்கே செல்ல

அணியேங் கடவன்பே ராய்ந்து.

In this pasuram, the alvar says that even the monkeys in Thiruvengadam get up early in the morning, have their bath in tanks which are full of flowers, then collect the freshly blossomed flowers and offer it at the feet of God, all the time praising Him. The alvar says

O mind, you also act accordingly and repeat the divya thiru namams of beautiful Thiruvengadam Udaiyan also and offer the namavali (garland of holy names) as Kusumavali (garland of flowers).

The alvar says that to repeat the myriad names of Thiruvengadamudaiyan is equal to offering pushpanjali to the lotus feet of Lord Srinivasa.

A doubt may arise as to why the alvar referred to the monkeys of all the animals at Thiruvengadam. May be even then as of now, monkeys were in abundance in Tirumalai. Yet another reason may be that mind is described by many as a monkey. The alvar therefore exorts and appeals to the human beings who possess a mind to get up early in the morning and worship the Lord during the Brahma muhurtham when the satvic gunas will be at their height. Bhagavath dyanam early in the morning would confer the maximum benefit on one's life.

PASURAM 2256

பெருகு மதவேழம் மாப்பிடிக்கு முன்னின்று
 இருக ணிளமூங்கில் வாங்கி - அருகிருந்த
 தேன் கலந்து நீட்டும் திருவேங் கடம்கண்டர்
 வான் கலந்த வண்ணன் வரை.

In this pasuram the alvar refers to an incident that occurred at Tirumalai. He says that a male elephant in Tirumalai stood in front of its mate, a female elephant and offered to it a tender bamboo shoot having only two kanus. Kanu is the ring like structure which is formed at different places in a bamboo or a sugarcane, almost demarcating the entire length of the cane. A tender bamboo shoot having two such rings when broken will yield sweet milk. It is said that the male elephant broke the tender shoot and even as the milk was dripping, it dipped the ends in honey which was hanging from the branches in the nearby tree and offered that twice distilled sweetened bamboo shoot to his mate. The alvar says that such a sight can be seen only in Thiruvengadamalai where the Megavannan i.e.Perumal with the colour of a dark cloud resides.

The Alvars it is believed never climbed up the hill to offer worship to Thiruvengadamudaiyan on the top of the hill. They sung all their songs standing only at the foot of the hill, but yet with their gnana drushti they are able to so clearly present the picture of happenings in the Seven Hills and in the temple.

Here the alvar through this pasuram clearly states that Thiruvengadamalai is full of elephants and is filled with natural bounty having bamboo forests and honey.

This pasuram has also got a sampradaya artham i.e. a significant inner meaning which virtually forecasts what happened at Thirumalai some centuries later when Ramanuja, the famous vaishnavite savant visited Thirumalai. It is said that once Ramanuja and his sishyas visited Thirumalai. Ramanuja was lecturing to his sishyas. He then impressed upon them the significance of the three rahasyas - the pradama rahasya standing for Thirumantram, the Dviteeya rahasya standing for Dwaya mantram and Truteeya rahasyam standing for Charama slokam. The use of the word "Irukkan ila moongil" (இருகணிள மூங்கில்) is said to represent dwayam; the use of the words "arigurundha then" in the pasuram refers to the sweet beauty of Thirumantram and Charama slokam. Ramanuja is said to represent the male elephant which offered the tender bamboo shoots dipped in honey to his sishyas who are referred to as the female elephants in the pasuram. Thus, with his gnana drusti in this pasuram, the alvar was able to anticipate what would occur some centuries later when Ramanuja imparted knowledge about the quintessence of vaishnavism to his sishyas when he visited Thirumalai.

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PEY ALVAR

The first three alvars who had a vision of the divine couple are Bhoothath alvar, Poigai alvar and Pey alvar. All the three of them were born in the month of Aipisi. Bhoothath alvar was born when avittam was the ascendant star. Poigai alvar's birth star is sravanam. Pey alvar's is Sathayam. Thus, on three consecutive days these three alvars were born. When we use the word 'born' so far as these three alvars are concerned, we do not refer to their birth in the normal manner as being born to human parents i.e. they are not yonigers (born through a mother). These three alvars were Ayonigers i.e. they were born like swayambus i.e. on their own. Poigai alvar was born in a lotus in a tank near Yadothkari temple in Kancheepuram. Bhoothath alvar was born in Kurukaththu flower (Madhvi flower) in Mahabalipuram. Pey alvar was born in one well in Neidal flower (belonging to the lotus family). The story as to how these three alvars met in a small hut, in Tirukoilur on a rainy day is well known. On that day in that hut there was place enough only for one person to lie down or two to sit or for three to stand. Then one after another these three alvars came to this place to take shelter against the lashing rains. They decided to stand huddled and enter into religious discussion. Suddenly they felt that a fourth person had entered in their midst and they were feeling very cramped. Two of them decided to light a lamp and see who was the intruder. It is said that the lamp which they lighted is the lamp of bhakti (thagali) (தகழி). Bhoothath alvar used anbu (அன்பு) (love and affection) as thagali, arvam (ஆர்வம்) i.e. enthusiasm as nei (நெய்) (ghee) and inburuvach chinthai (இன்புருவச் சிந்தை) i.e. thought of God as wick. Thereby he lighted jnana vilakku (ஞானவிளக்கு). Poigai alvar used the world as agal (அகல்) (i.e. the recepticle) the ocean as the ghee, the sun as the wick. Thus, he is said to have lighted a sudar vilakku i.e. (சுடர் விளக்கு) Pey alvar it was who had the vision of the divine couple. He burst out saying "Pon Meni Kanden" (பொன்மேனி கண்டேன்) i.e. he saw Mahalakshmi with the golden effulgence, first and it is only later that he saw Perumal's thirumeni. Pey alvar continued and said "Ani niram kanden" (அணி நிறம் கண்டேன்) i.e. He saw the shining jewellery, "Serukkilarum Pon

Nazhi kanden" (செருக்கினரும் பொன்னாழிகண்டேன்) i.e. he saw in the hands of the Perumal the discus i.e. chakra ready to go to fight. Puri Sangam Kai Kanden (புரி சங்கம் கைகண்டேன்) i.e. he saw the hand holding the conch. Thus, the first description of Perumal and Thayar is that which is given by Pey alvar to us. Pey alvar is also known as Peria alvar, Perumai petravar, Pei pidithavar. He is known as Periyalvar because he was the acharya to Thirumazhisai alvar. The other two alvars viz. Bhoothath alvar and Poigai alvar had no such acharya padhavi. He was known as Perumai petraver i.e. a person who is entitled to greatness because he was the first who saw God and Goddess. He is known as Pey pidithavar as he converted Thirumazhisai alvar who was an ardent saivite to vaishnavism. Poigai alvar said God is Ubaya vibhoothi nathan. Till then people thought God had no form and no gunas i.e. qualities. Poigai alvar however claimed that God has Ubaya Vibhoothis. One is the nitya vibhoothi i.e. Paramapadha. The other is leela vibhoothi i.e. all the other worlds. Vibhoothi means Aiswaryam. The leela vibhoothis i.e. vayyam (வையம்) (ulagam) (i.e. the earth), varkadai (வார்கடல்) (i.e. samudram or ocean), kadiravan (கதிர்வன்) (sun). Having said that God is Ubaya vibhoothinathan, the question that arose next was who is He? Bhoothath alvar answers this by saying that He is Narayana. Pey alvar it was who said that God is not mere Narayana. He is Sriman Narayana i.e. God who is inseparable from Thayar i.e. Sri. All the three said that one should always enjoy only Him and his qualities. Thirumangai alvar referred to these first three alvars as "anbu koorum adiyavargal" (அன்பு கூறும் அடியவர்கள்).

Let us now understand the 19 pasurams sung by this alvar on Lord Venkatachalapathi.

PASURAM 2295

மாற்பால் மனஞ் சுழிப்ப மங்கையர்தோள் கைவிட்டு
 தூற்பால் மனம் வைக்க நொய்விதாம் நாற்பால
 வேதத்தான் வேங்கடத்தான் விண்ணோர் முடிதோயும்
 பாதத்தான் பாதம் பணிந்து.

In this pasuram the alvar says that God who is praised by the vedas is Thiruvengadathan i.e. Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. He has saulabhya. The alvar advises us to seek His divine feet as those feet are so powerful as to make even the devas place their crowns at his feet. The alvar adds that more we think of Him, the more we worship Him, we will be able to give up the desire for the worldly pleasures and will deeply get involved with the vedantha sastras. In brief, the alvar advises that one should control and if possible get rid of the ihaloka bogas i.e. these worldly pleasures. Instead concentrate our mind on the sastras and to pray to Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati so that automatically one would get steeped in bhakti rasa.

PASURAM 2307

சிறந்த என் சிந்தையும் செங்க ணரவும்
நிறைந்ததீர் நீள்கச்சி யுள்ளும்-உறைந்ததுவும்
வேங்கடமும் வெஃகாவும் வேளுக்கைப் பாடியுமே
தாம்கடவார் தண்துழா யார்.

In this pasuram the alvar mentions the various places where Perumal resides, of his own free will and with pleasure. He says taht Perumal who is wearing the cool basil (thulasi garland) has nityavasam (permanent residence) in the alvar's heart and on Adishesha the divine serpent having red eyes and at Kanchipuram which is a very big and prosperous town. Besides he stays at Tirumala, Thiruvenka (near Kanchipuram) and at Velukkai (near Kanchipuram) and at Ayarpadi (i.e. Gokulam).

The alvar says that the Perumal is very fond of staying in the heart of his true devotees. He prefers the heart of the sincere devotees to even Paramapadha.

PASURAM 2311

சேர்ந்த திருமால் கடல் குடந்தை வேங்கடம்
நேர்ந்த என் சிந்தை நிறைவிசும்பு-வாய்ந்த
மறையா டகம் அனந்தன் வண்துழாய்க் கண்ணி
இறைபா டியாய இவை.

In this pasuram the alvar again lists out some of the places where Perumal resides. The alvar says that the Perumal who is

wearing the cool basil garland (the only God who wears tulasi as a garland is Perumal, thus tulasi mala is always identified with Perumal) is residing at Tirupparkadal, Thirukkudanthai (Kumbakonam), Thiruvengadam (Tirupati) and in the alvar's pious heart. Besides he also resides at Vaikuntam which is huge and at Padagam (near Kanchipuram). Besides he also resides on Adishesha. He is himself the veda swarupi. The alvar says that all these divya desams where Perumal has nitya vasam are rajadanis i.e. places fit for the mighty kings to stay.

When the alvar mentions the various divya desams where God resides it is with the belief that even the mere mentioning of the names of the divya desams would establish a divya desa sambandam and thereby establish an unbreakable link with Perumal.

PASURAM 2313

பாற்கடலும் வேங்கடமும் பாம்பும் பனி விசும்பும்
நாற்கடலும் நுண்ணூல தாமரைமேல்-பாற்பட்
டிருந்தார் மனமும் இடமாகக் கொண்டான்
குருந் தொசித்த கோபா லகன்.

In this pasuram the alvar again lists out some of the places where Perumal resides. In this pasuram the alvar uses the word "Gopalakan" with a specific purpose to refer to Lord Krishna. Gopalan means one who tends the cattle. Gopalakan means a small boy who tend the cattle. The alvar adds another adjective to this word Gopalakan when he uses the word "Kurundosikha Gopalakan" (குருந்தொசித்த கோபாலகன்) Here he refers to an incident in the life of child Krishna. Krishna was very fond of the kurundha tree. Kamsa wanted to kill Krishna at any cost. He had asked an asura to take the form of kurundha tree thinking that Krishna would as usual climb on to the kurundha tree and then the maya tree which was a real asura could carry him away to be killed later. But things did not occur as anticipated by Kamsa. Instead, the child Krishna was able to identify the asura who had taken on the form of kurundha tree. He plucked the tree with all its roots, hit it on the ground and thus killed the asura. The Alvar thus identifies the Perumal as Krishna who killed the asura, he then lists out the places where that Perumal

stays. Those places are Tirupparkadal, Tirumala, Anantalvan, the cool Paramapada. The alvar uses the word cool for parama patham as the worldly problems (samsara thapams) are not in existence in Paramapada. It is therefore a cool calm place with nothing that affects one's temper or feelings. The alvar continues and says that Perumal is Himself the sastras and the vedas and therefore resides in those scriptures. In addition, He also stays in the minds of the yogis who have controlled all the elements. Above all the alvar concludes by saying that Perumal resides in Thamarai. The word thamarai has two meanings. It could refer to the hrudaya thamarai i.e. the heart of a devotee. The word thamarai could also simply mean the lotus. As alvar says that Perumal resides on the lotus, we have to conclude that he is referring also to Mahalakshmi who is seen seated on a lotus. alvar perhaps is saying that God resides in the heart of Mahalakshmi. One thing is clear that He resides in the heart be it the heart of the Thayar or the heart of the sincere devotees or in both those hearts.

PASURAM 2320

இறையாய் நிலனாகி எண்திசையும் தானாய்
மறையாய் மறைப் பொருளாய் வானாய்-

பிறைவாய்ந்த

வெள்ளத் தருவி விளங் கொலிநீர் வேங்கடத்தாள்
உள்ளத்தி னுள்ளே உள்ளள்.

In this pasuram the alvar says that all the things in this world are God Himself. He is "Paramporul" (பரம்பொருள்) alvar says that Tirumala has got tall peaks and mighty sikharams which almost touch Chandra mandalam and that in Thiruvengada hill one can hear the melodious sound of water cascading from the innumerable water falls. He continues and says that Thiruvengadathan who resides in Tirumala is the very person who also stays in his heart. He is the omniscient God. He is seen as antaryamin. He is the earth (bhoomi). He is the eight directions (8 disai). He is the Ashtadik palakars i.e. the guardians of the 8 directions. Thus, He is the direction as well as the guardian of the direction. He is himself the person who created the vedas and he is also the person who is the substance of the vedas. He is himself the leader of nitya vibhoothi i.e. to

say He is himself Sri Vaikuntam. He is one, He is many. He is one, He is all. In brief the alvar conveys the thought that Perumal is omnipresent, omniscient and therefore omni powerful. The alvar uses the words " Ullam ulle ulan " (உள்ளத்தினுள்ளே உள்ள). The choice of the words makes it clear that the depths of one's mind are unfathomable. "Ullam" (உள்ளம்) means the ocean that is mind is very deep. "Ullae" (உள்ளே) means it is the deepest part of the deep ocean. "Ulan" (உள்ள) God resides in that deep ocean i.e. mind.

PASURAM 2321

உள்ள கண்டாய் நல்தெருஞ்சே! உத்தம னென்றும்

உள்ள கண்டாய் உள்ளுவா ருள்ளதது

உள்ளகண்டாய்

விண்ணொடுங்கக் கோடுயரும வீங்கருவி

வேங்கடத்தாள்

மண்ணொடுங்கத் தானளந்த மன்.

In this pasuram alvar first describes Tirumala and then addresses his mind and describes the qualities of Perumal.

The alvar says that Tirumala where the Perumal stays is even better than Paramapada and that Tirupati outshines even Paramapada. Tirumala has got tall peaks and innumerable water falls. Tiruvengadathan who stays in such a beautiful scenic Tirumala is none other than the Perumal who once upon a time covered the entire earth with one foot of His (the alvar here refers to the foot of Perumal during the Trivikrama avatar). The alvar says that the Perumal who is at Tirumala will always protect his devotees. He has as His chosen pleasurable duty saving us the mere mortals from the temptations, troubles and turmoils of this world. Such a Perumal alvar says, resides in the minds of all those who think of Him. He is a Purushothama. He is the Supreme.

PASURAM 2326

புரிந்து மதவேழம் மாப்பிடியோடு ஊடி

திரிந்து சினத்தால் பொருது-விரிந்தசீர்

வெண்கோட்டு முத்துதிர்க்கும் வேங்கடமே

மேலொருநாள்

மண்கோட்டுக் கொண்டாள் மலை.

In this pasuram the alvar relates a charithram i.e. the symbolic small tale. He says that once in Tirumala there lived two elephants - a male elephant and a female elephant. One day they had a quarrel. The male elephant got angry roamed about in the hilly terrain at Tirumala, vented its fury by rubbing its tusk on a mountain slab. The moment the tusk poked into the slab, the alvar says that pearls fell out of the elephant's tusk! He says there are many places in Thiruvengada hill where such pearls are strewn. The alvar then asks rhetorically the question To whom does such a precious mountain belong? The alvar replies that that malai i.e. hill belongs to that Perumal Who once during His varaha avatar rescued Bhoomi devi from the depths of the ocean to which the asura had carried her, by balancing Her on His tusk. The alvar says that the Perumal Who stays at Thiruvengada hill is the same person Who manifested Himself as varaha during Varaha avatar. Tirupati, alvar therefore says, is a Varaha kshetra. We all know that even as per the legends Tirumala originally belonged to Varaha and Lord Srinivasa is said to have taken temporary lease as it were of that Hill for His stay from the Varaha murthi. Even today the pilgrims have the practise of first worshipping the sannidhi of Varaha at Swami Pushkarini before proceeding to the sannidhi of Lord Srinivasa as Lord Varaha is the adinatha of Tirumala.

PASURAM 2339

தெளிந்த சிலா தலத்தின் மேலிருந்த மந்தி

அளிந்த கடுவனையே நோக்கி-விளங்கிய

வெண்மதியம் தாவென்னும் வேங்கடமே

மேலொருநாள்

மண் மதியில் கொண்டுகந்தாள் வாழ்வ.

This pasuram also refers to an allegoric story. The alvar says that Thiruvengadam is full of tall peaks. Once there was a female monkey sitting on a block of stone which was shining bright and looked like a polished mirror. In the same place, there

was a male monkey which was very fond of the female monkey. The female monkey asked the male monkey to pluck the moon which was shining bright in the sky. The alvar conveys the thought that the peaks in Tiruvengadam are so tall that they almost touched chandramandala. It is this illusion which made the female monkey think that the male monkey could catch the shining bright light in the sky i.e. the moon and present it to her. The alvar says that in such a Thiruvengada hill lives the Perumal Who, once upon a time, saved the world with His sharp intelligence and received it as a gift from Mahabali. Here alvar refers to the incident that occurred during Vamanavatar. Perumal then did not want to destroy Mahabali by engaging him in a fierce fight. However, He used His clever intellect to defeat Mahabali by exploiting the quality of generosity of Mahabali. He took on the form of Vamana and asked Mahabali to gift three feet of land to Him. Then He assumed the viswaroopa and covered the seven worlds with two steps. Mahabali then offered his head for the third step. Thus, it was a battle where not a drop of blood was shed and Perumal was able to keep up the promise which He had given to Prahladha that the generations that succeeded him would never be engaged in a fight or battle by Him. The alvar says that it is that Perumal Who took the form of Vamana Who is living happily in Thiruvengada hill.

A doubt may arise as to why alvar had to make the female monkey in his story ask the male monkey for the gift of the moon. The female monkey could itself have plucked the moon. Perhaps this is because in the later part of the pasuram the alvar says that the Perumal in Thiruvengadam is Vamana Who had to extend His hand and seek a gift from Mahabali. Similarly the female monkey here had to extend its hand in supplication to the male monkey, even as Vamana had to seek yachakam from Mahabali!

The alvar thus conveys the thought that the Vamana who lives at Thiruvengada hill and had rescued the world from Bali chakravarthi will be able to similarly save us and satisfy our wishes.

PASURAM 2342

பண்டெல்லாம் வேங்கடம் பாற்கடல் வைகுந்தம்
கொண்டங் குறைவார்க்குக் கோயில்போல்-வண்டு
வளங்கிளரும் நீள்சோலை வண்பூங் கடிசை
இளங்குமரன் தன்விண் ணாகர்.

In this pasuram the alvar mentions the divya desa where Perumal resided before He took residence in the heart of the alvar. He says that the Perumal Who resides in Vaikuntha also resides at Thirupparkadal and Tirumala. He also resides in beautiful ghatikachalam or Sholingapuram which is full of bees sucking honey from the scented groves. The very youthful Perumal (Ilamkumaran) also resides at Thiruvinnagaram. These are all the divya desas where Perumal resided before He took refuge in the heart of the sincere devotees.

It may not be an accident when the alvar chose to refer in same breath to Thirupparkadal and Tirumala in succession. He believes Tirumala to be equal to Thirupparkadal and Vaikuntha i.e. Bhooloka vaikuntha.

PASURAM 2343

விண்ணகரம் வெஃகா விரிதிரைநீர் வேங்கடம்
மண்ணகரம் மாமாட வேளுக்கை-மண்ணகத்த
தென் குடந்தை தேனார் திருவரங்கம் தென்கோட்டி
தண் குடங்கை நீரேற்றான் தாழ்வு.

In this pasuram again the alvar enumerates the divya desams where the Perumal who once received from Mahabali "dhana neer" (தான நீர்) i.e. pouring of water into a hand signifying granting of a wish, resides. He says that Perumal resides among other places at Thiruvinnagaram, Thiruvahka, Thiruvengadam full of waterwalls and Velukkai with big mansions and at Thirukudanthai which is the most beautiful place in this world and at Thiruvarangam (Srirangam) which is filled with beautiful groves from which the intoxicating scent of honey wafts along with the cool breeze and at Thirugoshtiyur.

The alvar uses the words "Than kudangai kaiyalae neer yettran" (தன் குடங்கை நீரேற்றான்). These words very

graphically paint the picture of the Perumal receiving in the hollow of the palm of His outstretched hand the gift of water from the kamandalam of Bali which puts the seal on the promised gift of three feet of land by Bali.

PASURAM 2344

தாழ்சடையும் நீள்முடியும் ஒள் மழுவும் சக்கரமும்
 சூழரவும் பொன்னாணும் தோன்றுமால்-சூழும்
 திரண்டருவி பாயும் திருமலைமே லெந்தைக்கு
 இரண்டுருவு மொன்றா இசைந்து.

This is a very significant pasuram where the alvar states that Thiruvengadamudaiyan is both Shiva and Vishnu. The alvar in this pasuram presents a picture as to how the Perumal will look if He were to take an avatar as Shankaranarayana. The alvar says that the Perumal at Tiruvengadam has the jadai which is usually associated with Paramasiva. In the same breath the alvar says that the Perumal at Tirumala has got Neela mudi (நீள் முடி) i.e. a clear indication of Emberuman. His crown i.e. Kireetam (கிரீடம்) which is worn on the head of Perumal conceals in itself the tall hair style of Perumal. The Perumal, he says, holds a "mazhu" (மழு) which is an ayudham of Lord Shiva. In the same breath, he again says that the Perumal holds in one hand the chakram i.e. the disc, weapon of Vishnu. He says that He is wearing as ornaments the snakes "nagabarana" (நாகாபரண) i.e. Lord Shiva. In the same breath he says that the Perumal is wearing a golden waist thread which is the ornament associated with Perumal. Thus he describes the Perumal at Tirupati both as Lord Shiva and as Lord Vishnu. This is usually referred to as "Sera-Serthi" (சேரா சேர்த்தி) i.e. the art of combining that which is different and cannot be joined. The opposites are made to look as one. Such a Perumal he says is living in Tirumala which is full of water falls. That Perumal Who is the father he says, combines in Himself i.e. His one body the murthi (traits) of both Shiva and Vishnu.

This, as is obvious, is a pasuram that raises more questions than its answers. Perhaps the best solution is not to delve too deep trying to understand the meaning but to just accept the fundamental truth that God is one - be it Shiva or Vishnu.

PASURAM 2349

பார்த்த கடுவன் சுனைநீர் நிழல் சுண்டு
 பேர்த்தோர் கடுவ னெனப்பேர்ந்து - கார்த்த
 களங்கனிக்குக் கைநீட்டும் வேங்கடமே மேல்நாள்
 விளங்கனிக்குக் கன்றெறிந்தான் வெற்பு.

In this pasuram the alvar refers to a charithram i.e. a small allegoric story. The alvar says that Tiruvengadam is the place where Krishna (Kannan) resides. It is full of waterfalls. Once upon a time, near one water fall, there was a kala tree. Krishna was said to be fond of kala maram. A male monkey climbed on to that kala tree and was trying to pluck kala fruits. It did not succeed. It felt dejected and hung its head down. As it bent its head it saw its own reflection in the water which had collected from the water fall. The monkey mistook the reflection to be that of another monkey who was also trying to pluck kala fruits. As this male monkey had not succeeded in satisfying his desire, it requested its own reflection which it mistook to be another monkey to pluck the fruits and stretched out its hand to receive the fruits. The alvar says that the place where this incident took place is Tiruvengadam. It is also the place where once upon a time the Perumal killed two asuras with one act. Here the alvar refers to an incident that occurred during Krishnavatar. Krishna was very fond of vilampazham i.e. wood apple. Knowing this Kamsa who was always wanting to kill the child Krishna asked an asura to take on the form of a vilampazham tree i.e. wood apple tree. That asura was Kapithuvan. As Krishna was always fond of calves, another asura by name Vatsasuran took on the form of a calf. The calves used to come to Krishna to be petted. Kamsa therefore thought that either Vatsasuran or Kapithuvan would be able to kill Krishna. But the child Krishna saw through the game. He took up Vatsasuran in the form of a calf and threw it on the vala maram which was none other than the Kapithasuran. It was literally and metaphorically killing of two birds with one shot. Vatsasuran died. Kapithuvan also was destroyed.

Perhaps the only reason why the alvar referred to the desire of a monkey for kala fruit was to justify his referring to the Krishnavatar, when Krishna also had a desire to eat fruits.

PASURAM 2350

வெற்பென்று வேங்கடம் பாடும் வியன் துழாய்க்
கற்பென்று சூடும் கருங்குழல்மேல்-மல்பொன்ற
நீண்டதோள் மால்கிடந்த நீள்கடல் நீ ராடுவான்
பூண்டநா ளெலலாம் புகும்.

In this pasuram the alvar takes on the role of a mother who describes the state of mind of her daughter who is madly in love with Perumal. The alvar as the mother says that her daughter when asked to mention the name of a hill immediately refers to Tirumala. The daughter, the mother says, keeps in her dark beautiful hair the basil leaf (thiruthuzha) (திருத்தூழாய்) which is usually used to adorn Perumal. When she is asked to go and have her bath, she immediately replies that she will go to Tirupparkadal where the broad shouldered Perumal Who destroyed the mallars (boxers) is seen lying down on Adisesha.

In this pasuram the alvar brings out very clearly how Perumal is in the thought word and deed of the sincere devotee. Perhaps this is alvar's advise when he says all consuming singieminded devotion is the sure method to attain salvation.

PASURAM 2351

புகு மதத்தால் வாய்பூசிக சீழ தாழ்ந்து அருவி
உகு மதத்தால் கால்கழுவிக்க கையால்-மிகுமதத்தேன்
விண்ட மலர்கொண்டு விறல்வேங் கடவனையே
கண்டு வணங்கும் களிறு.

In this pasuram the alvar mentions how even the elephants in Tirumala believe in observing the religious formalities before offering worship at the feet of the God. The alvar says that in Tirumala there was an elephant which was in musth. When the elephants are in that state a liquid oozes from the forehead just above the ear. The alvar says that an elephant used the liquid which was oozing out of its forehead to gargle its mouth. Then it washed its feet clean in the mathaneer i.e. the oozing

liquid which flowed like a rivulet from its forehead. It used its trunk to pluck honey and flowers and then having gargled its mouth and washed its feet and plucked the flowers it went before God and offered the scented flowers at the feet of the Perumal. alvar says that the God Who is seen standing in Tirumala was having a certain majestic (Nedukku in Tamil) (நெடுக்கு) figure, a commanding personality. Perhaps he used the word commanding personality as Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala is even able to make the animals come and worship Him only after purifying and cleansing themselves.

The facts mentioned here could also be interpreted to mean that because of the sambantha i.e. connection with Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati even the animals behave with jnana (knowledge), acharam (holiness - cleanliness) expected of a true devotee.

PASURAM 2352

கனிறு முகில் குத்தக் கையெடுத்த தோடி
 ஒளிறு மருப்பொசிகை யாளி - பிளிறி
 விழக் கொன்று நின்றதிரும் வேங்கடமே மேல்நாள்
 குழக் கன்று கொண்டெறிந்தான் குன்று.

In this pasuram the alvar says that Thiruvengada hill is the place where Lord Krishna Who killed the two demons Kapithuvan and Vatsasuran who had taken on the form of tree and a calf, resides. He describes an incident which is said to have taken place in the hills. There was a male elephant which ran on the hills holding aloft its trunk. The dark clouds which were hovering on Tirumala looked like another elephant. This elephant therefore poked the thick clouds with its tusk. Seeing this, a lion felt its ego was hurt and wondered how when it was having control over the area, a mere elephant could go and fight with the clouds, mistaking it to be another elephant. The lion therefore jumped on to the elephant, broke its tusk and killed the elephant. The lion then let loose a loud roar of victory (veera garjanai/jaya gosham).

By relating this incident the alvar conveys the thought that the animals in Thiruvangada hill are also free and unfettered like the Perumal in that place. The elephant fought with the cloud;

the lion fought with the elephant, each wanting to establish its superiority over the other. This incident could also mean that due to Bhagavath sambanda i.e. due to the mere fact that these animals live in the same place where Perumal resides, they are affected by ahankara i.e. pride. But such a pride is pardonable as it is pride borne out of association with God. Such a pardonable pride is expressed by Thiru Muzhisai alvar also when he used the words "en madikku vinnallam undo vilaikku" (என் மடிக்கு விண்ணானும் உண்டோ விளக்கு). Here the alvar says that his knowledge is matchless and unequalled. There is none who knows more about God than himself. Embar, a student of Ramanuja, also once is reported to have said that as the picture of Ramanuja was inscribed indelibly on his mind and heart, he is very fortunate and there can be none to equal him in this world. He said "yarum illai, illai, illa vae illai" - (யாரும் இல்லை, இல்லை இல்லவே இல்லை) i.e. he categorically asserts that in the entire world there is none to equal him only because the image of Ramanuja is engraved on his heart. All these incidents only make it clear that sincere devotees of God can have ego and it is pardonable.

PASURAM 2353

குன்றொன்றி னாய குறழுகளிர் கோலவளைக்கை
சென்று விளையாடும் தங்கழைபோய'-வென்று
விளங்குமதி கோள்விடுகதும் வேங்கடமே மேலை
இளங்குமரர் கோமா னிடம்.

In this pasuram the alvar says that kurathis and kuravas (the tribes) who live in Tirumala know of no other place than Thiruvengada hill. The kurathis are wearing beautiful bangles on their hands. They are using the tall bamboos in abundance in Thiruvengada hill as swings for playing. This means that the bamboos are so tall that when bent by the kurathis it stands erect again carrying the kurathis along with it and thus giving them the pleasure of a swing. He also says that the bamboos are so tall that they reach Chandramandalam and they promise the Moon God to kill Rahu who causes chandra grahanam. They are assuring the Moon God not to worry as they would relieve him of the curse of Rahu. No doubt all these similies fall into the category of Athisa yokthi alankaram - exaggerated statement of

facts. But still the fact is very clearly conveyed that there are plenty of bamboo groves in Thiruvengada hill and that the hills are so tall that they almost reach the sky.

PASURAM 2354

இடம் வல மேழ் பூண்ட இரவித்தே ரோட்டி
வடமுக வேங்கடத்து மன்னும் - குடம் நயந்த
கூத்தனாய் நின்றான் குரை கழலேகூறுவதே
நாத்தன்னா லுள்ள நலம்.

In this pasuram the alvar says that the only reason why we have been blessed with the tongue is to praise the divine lotus feet of the Perumal residing at Tirumala. He says that Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala is none other than Lord Krishna. He is seen in a standing posture at Tirumala. His divine feet are adorned with ornaments. He is the Perumal who as Antaryami drove the chariot of Sun God with seven horses.

The alvar here conveys the thought that the Perumal is there in Surya Mandalam. The Vedas also says so with the following words. "Savithra Mandala Madhyavarthi Narayanaha". The alvar says that it is not the Sun God who is driving the chariot but it is Perumal sitting as antaryami Who is driving the chariot. It will be interesting to note here that the seven horses which head the chariot of the Sun are named as Gayathri, Brihathi, Ushnik, Jagati, Thrishtup, Anushtup and Pankthi. In brief, the alvar says that the Perumal residing at Tirumala is the great God who is the antaryami for all the Devas. He is also the Perumal who manifested Himself as Lord Krishna. This interlinking of Perumal at Tirumala being the avathar of Sun God could also convey the reason as to why the Radha Saphthami function in Tirumala is a very grand occasion.

PASURAM 2356

சார்ந்த கடு தேய்ப்பத் தடாவிய கோட் டுச்சிவாய்
ஊர்ந்தியங்கும் வெண்மதியி னொண்முயலை
சேர்ந்து
சினவேங்கை பார்க்கும் திருமலையே-ஆயன்
புன ிவங்கை நாரும் பொருப்பு.

In this pasuram the alvar mentions a few of the incidents which are said to have occurred in Tirumala. He says that the peaks in Tirumala are so high that they touch Chandra Mandalam. In Chandra Mandalam there is a rabbit. Seeing that rabbit, a tiger is waiting. The alvar says that the Perumal at Tirumala is the same Perumal who was born as Lord Krishna. He continues that Tirumala is full of vengai trees which fill the whole place with beautiful pleasing scent.

PASURAM 2370

முடிந்த பொழுதில் குறவாணர் ஏனம்
படிந்துமுசால் வைந்தினைகள் வித்த-தடிந்தெழுந்த
வேயங்கழை போய் விண்திறக்கும் வேங்கடமே
மேலொருநாள்
தீங்குழல்வாய் வைத்தான் சிலம்பு.

In this pasuram also the alvar relates a few incidents in the lives of the kurathis i.e. tribes living in Tirumala. He says that some of the young kurathis who are full of zest and energy roam about in the forests in Tirumala, collect the honey and bring it. Some of the kuravas go hunting in the forest. The older generation grows thinai (a type of maize) and fills their stomach with that crop. The older kuravas wait for the forest pigs to dig up the earth with their snout. The pigs dig the earth at the foot of the bamboo grove so that they can eat the roots of the bamboo trees. Incidentally, when they dig the earth around the bamboo trees, it is almost like ploughing a land. Old Kuravas therefore grow the thinai (a type of maize crop) in that ploughed land and eat the produce. He says that when the bamboos are cut and kept in a place, the fields are so rich that the cut bamboo shoots immediately start growing. Tiruvengadam is such a fertile land that it provides food for all the kuravas and kurathis. That is also the place where Krishna Who once played hauntingly on the flute resides. Lord Srinivasa the alvar says lives in that fertile beautiful Tiruvengadam.

TIRUMAZHISAI ALVAR ON LORD SRINIVASA OF TIRUMALA

Tirumazhisai Alvar has sung 15 pasurams on Lord Srinivasa. He is known as "Bhakti sara" or the essence of bhakti. He is the fourth Alvar. He is said to have been born to sage Bhargava and Kanakangi, an apsara woman. He is regarded as the amsa of Sudharsana the divine discus held by Lord Narayana. When he was born, he looked like an unseemly mass of flesh which had not yet assumed any recognisable form. His parents therefore left him in the forest as soon as he was born. Hearing him cry, a childless cowherd took him home and brought him up. Right from his young age, he was steeped in devotion. Originally he was a brilliant expounder of Saivite philosophy. Many are the stories related about this sage. I shall briefly relate the three stories as a sort of introduction which will mainly concentrate on giving the meaning of the pasurams sung by Tirumazhisai Alvar on the Lord of the Seven Hills.

At one stage in his life Tirumazhisai Alvar took up mouna vratha i.e. vow of silence. Pey Alvar heard that Bhaktisara was a great yogi. He wanted to have some meaningful discussions with him. But when he found Bhaktisara adopting a vow of silence, he hit upon an ingenious plan. He started digging up for a small garden just within the sight of Bhaktisara. He started planting seedlings in that prepared plot with the roots standing in the air and the leaves buried under the earth. He very seriously watered the seedlings standing in an inverted, unnatural posture with the help of a pot which had so many holes that it could not retain any water. Looking at this absurdly mad act of Pey Alvar, Bhaktisara laughed out aloud and said what a mad fellow you are? Thus, the vow of silence was broken. Pey Alvar immediately retorted by saying that he was not mad, but it is Bhaktisara who was mad as he was worshipping one who is the grandson of the original person who is the cause for the creation of the entire world. Thus, the two Alvars started heated arguments and it is said that Pey Alvar finally won over Bhaktisara to accept Narayana as the Supreme being and the original cause of all the worlds.

Yet another story explains how this sage got the name Bhaktisara. Once he was seated in deep meditation by the side of Gajendra tank at Kairaveni, Triplicane, Madras. At that time, Rudra and His consort Parvati were flying in the sky. It is said that Tirumazhisai Alvar was busy sewing up an old cloth. He did not even want the shadow of Rudra and His consort to fall on him and he therefore moved away from the celestial path of the divine couple. This act of the sage made Parvati curious to know who was the saint who had the audacity to even avoid their shadow. The divine couple came down. As the Alvar did not pay any attention to them, Rudra wanted to know the reason. The saint then replied that he had nothing to gain from Rudra. Rudra promised to satisfy any wish of his. The saint then asked whether he could grant him moksha. Rudra had to reply that Narayana alone had the power to grant moksha. The saint then asked whether Rudra could postpone by atleast one day the death of a person who was destined to die that day. Rudra replied that the death was pre-determined as per a person's karma and hence such an event could not be delayed by even a moment. Tirumazhisai Alvar then very sarcastically told Rudra that if he was still keen on granting him boon, He may help him to see that the thread that he was holding in his hand may enter the eye of the needle with ease so that he could stitch his torn raiment without any trouble. This casual attitude of the Alvar irritated Rudra. He opened His third eye and wanted to reduce him to ashes. But the Alvar let one eye in the thumb of his right foot open and an equally dazzling fire came out. In comparison it looked as if the fire that emanated from Tirumazhisai Alvar was equal to the heat generated by a million Suns whereas the heat generated by the fire of Rudra was like a fire fly's heat. Rudra had to command strong clouds in order to quench the fire produced by the saint. Impressed by this single-minded unswerving devotion of this saint to Narayana, Rudra was lost in admiration and is said to have conferred upon him the title "bhakti sara" i.e. one who is the quitesence of devotion.

One other well known story connected with this Alvar relates to an incident that took place when the Alvar was staying at Kanchi Yadothkari temple. The presiding deity of the temple came to be known as 'Sonna vannam seidha Perumal' after an

incident connected with the life of this sage. It is said that this sage had rewarded an old woman who had rendered service to him by cleaning the premises by making her young and beautiful. The king fell in love with this transformed youthful girl and married her. But due to the blessing of the sage, the girl continued to be youthful and young, but the king was becoming older and older day by day. When asked about the mystery of her evergreen youth, the queen replied that this was a blessing conferred on her by the saint who is living in that town in a place near the Yadothkari temple. The king sent word to the disciple of Alvar, Kanikannan by name and ordered him to bring the Alvar to his presence. The disciple told the king in unmistakable terms that his master, the saint was so great that it was but appropriate for the king to go and meet him and not the other way about. The king got enraged. However, he wanted the disciple to compose a song in his praise as Kanikannan was well known for his poetic genius. Kanikannan refused this request also as he said that his mortal lips would only praise God and none else. The anger of the king knew no bounds at this second incident of insolence. He therefore ordered Kanikannan to leave the city. The disciple went to his master, told him what all had occurred and said that he was leaving the city. The Alvar said that he would also follow and he ordered that the God Who was reclining in the temple to roll up His mat and follow the two of them. Thus it was that the presiding deity of the temple Who was being worshipped for a long time by the Alvar and disciple decided to follow His disciples outside the city. The moment God left the temple there was darkness in the city. The king realised his mistake as he found that the entire town people were also evacuating the city and following the Alvar and the disciple. The king realised his folly. He ran to the Alvar, fell at his feet and requested him to forgive his offence and return to the city. The Alvar agreed and asked the Perumal also to follow him back and re-enter His temple. It is said that the posture in which the God was seen before He left the temple and the posture which He adopted when He re-entered the temple are different, thus making it evident that the Perumal left the temple at the behest of the sage and returned also only at the behest of the sage. Hence it is that the Perumal is known as 'Sonna vannam

seidha Perumal' (சொன்ன வண்ணம் செய்த பெருமாள்)
i.e. the Perumal Who acted as ordered by the Alvar.

Tirumazhisai Alvar is famous for two compositions. One is Nanmukha Tiruvandaadhi and the other is Tiruchanda viruttam. The pasurams in these two compositions of his dealing with the greatness of Lord Srinivasa are dealt with below:-

PASURAM 799

குன்றில் நின்று வானி ருந்து நீளக
டலகி டந்து மண்
ஒன்று சென்ற தொன்றை யுண்டுஅ தொன்றி
டந்து பன்றியாய்
நன்று சென்ற நாள வற்றுள் நல்லு யிர்ப
டைத்து அவர்க்கு
அன்று தேவ மைத்த ளித்த ஆதி தேவனல்லையே?

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who is seen in a standing pose at Tirumala is the same Lord Who is seen in a sitting posture in Paramapada and in a lying down posture in Ksheerabdhi. He adds that this Lord at Tirumala is the one Who in His Thrivikrama avatar measured the worlds with His two feet. It is also the very same Perumal, Who during the great deluge (pralaya), swallowed the entire world and kept it safe inside His stomach. The same Perumal during His Varaha avatar rescued Bhoomidevi from the depths of the ocean to which the asura Hiranyakshan had carried her. The same Lord is the Creator of mere mortals as also the devas. Such is the great Paramapurusha, Adidevan Who is residing at Tirupati. He says that He came from Paramapada to Tirumala so that both the devas and the manushyas could worship Him. The Alvar uses the word 'nal uyir' (நல் உயிர்) to refer to the fact that *manushya janma* is some thing great. In Sanskrit it is said '*Durlabho manusho dehaha*'. Avviyar also expresses a similar thought when she says '*aridhu aridhu manidarai pirappadhu*' that is to say it is a rare, indeed a very rare gift, to be born as a human being. The Alvar says that when God has blessed us with such a rare janma one should use it properly and worship the Lord of the Seven Hills.

PASURAM 811

செழுங்கொ மும்பெரும்ப னிபொ ழிந்திட
 உயர்ந்தவேய்
 வழந்து லர்ந்தெழுந்து விண்பு டைக்கும்
 வேங்கடத்துள் நின்று
 எழுந்திருந்து தேன்பொ ருந்து பும்பொழில்த
 மைக்கொழுஞ்
 செழுந்த டங்கு டந்தை யுள்கி டந்த மாலு
 மல்லையே?

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who resides at Tirumala where the well grown bamboo trees bend as the heavy dew falls on them but stand up erect almost touching the sky the moment the rays of the Sun fall on them is Lord Srinivasa. In the same Thiruvengadam the beetles suck the honey from the flowers at Tirumala and then fly high in ecstatic joy. He adds that the Lord of Tirumala is the same Lord Who is seen in a lying down posture at Kumbakonam (Kudanthai) which is full of tanks brimming with water. The Alvar asks rhetorically the question whether the Perumal in Venkatadri is not the same as the one Who is in Thiru Kudanthai?

The bent bamboo which stands erect as well as the bees which fly about after having sucked the honey signify the happiness that envelops one who is blessed by God and on whom the kataksha of God falls. The certain cause and effect equation is happiness that arises by residing in the same place as the Bhaghavan (viz. Tirumala hills) due to Bhagavat sambanda.

PASURAM 832

கடைந்து பாற்க டல்கிடந்து காலநேமி
 யைக்கடிந்து
 உடைந்த வாலிதன்த னக்(கு) உதவ வந்(து)இ
 ராமனாய்
 மிடைந்த ஏழ்ம ரங்க னும்அ டங்க வெய்து
 வேங்கடம்
 அடைந்த மால பாதமே அடைந்து நாளும்
 உயம்மினோ

This pasuram freely translated will read as follows:

O Lord of Thiruvengadam

You were seen in a lying down posture at Tirupparkadal

You are the same Perumal Who killed the demon

Kalanemi

You in Ramavatar helped Sugreeva against Vali

You are the same Perumal Who convinced Sugreeva with

Your prowess by felling with one arrow the seven sala
vrukshas standing in a row

You are now residing at Thiruvengadam

All should be happy after offering prayers at Your
divine feet.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal at Thiruvengadam is the same Sayana Perumal seen lying down in Ksheerabdhi and the same Perumal Who took an avatar as Rama and Krishna. He says that one should get lost in the nectar of loving contemplation of God's holy feet and so he exhorts us to seek the feet of Lord Srinivasa at Thiruvengadam.

PASURAM 2415

குறிப்பு எனக்குக் கோட்டியூர் மேயானை யேதத

குறிப்பு எனக்கு நன்மை பயக்க-வெறுப்பனோ

வேங்கடத்து மேயானை மெயவினை

நோய் எய்தாமல

தான்கடத்தும் தன்மையான் தாள்.

The meaning is as follows:-

The Lord Who is happily residing at Thirugoshtiyur is the same lord Who is equally happily staying at Thiruvengadam. It is my desire to seek His anugraha (blessing) by singing his praises. I desire such an anubhava (atmanubhava) as the divine feet of that Perumal is the sole protection against all the ills of this world. When such is the protective power of the divine feet will I ever forget and be away from those feet of Tirumalai Udaiyan?

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Lord of Thiruvengadam is the same Perumal Who is also seen in Thirugoshtiyur.

PASURAM 2420

அழைப்பிள் திருவேங் கடத்தானைக் காண
இழைப்பள் திருக்கூடல் கூட - மழைப்பே
ரருவி மணிவரன்றி வந்திழிய யானை
வெருவியர வொடுங்கும் வெற்பு.

This pasuram like the previous one is the pasuram from Nanmukhan Thiruvandaadhi. In this song the Alvar gives advise as it were in the first two lines of the pasuram and in the second two lines describes the beautiful things in Tirumala hill. In this pasuram the Alvar wonders whether his desire to have nithya vasam in Tirumala will be fulfilled. In order to decide this question, he is even prepared to caste dice and see what it foretells. The Alvar says that it is his desire to worship and serve the Lord of Thiruvengadam. The Thiruvengadamalai is full of water falls whose water is flowing so fast that pearls and other precious stones are being washed ashore by the gushing waters. The precious red stones glitter so brightly in the night, that the elephants mistake the glow for forest fire and run away seeking shelter. The snakes on seeing the bright shining light of the precious stones think it is lightning which precedes torrential rains and so seek shelter in their ant hills. The Alvar wonders whether he will be blessed with the fortune of being able to worship the Lord of such a beautiful Thiruvengada hill. In order to seek the answer for this question of his, he is prepared to cast dice. He uses the words 'kootal koottuvathu' (கூட்டல் கூட்டுவது). This means he wants to cast dice, count the formation and then see whether the total number cast is an even number or an odd number. If it is an even number, it indicates that his desire will be fulfilled. Usually this kootal, kazhithal (கூட்டல், சுழித்தல்) i.e. additions and subtractions through casting of dice is known as kuri or reading the sakunam (fortune). This is usually resorted to by ladies. It has therefore to be inferred that the Alvar in this pasuram takes on the nayika bhava and expresses his ecstatic longing for worship of the Lord of Tirumala.

PASURAM 2421

வெற்பென்று வேங்கடம் பாடினேன் வீடாக்கி
 நிற்கின்றேன் நின்று நினைக்கின்றேன் - கற்கின்ற
 நூல்வலையில் பட்டிருந்த நூலாட்டி கேள்வனார்
 கால்வ லையில் பட்டிருந்தேன் காண்.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he merely uttered the word Thiruvengadam and immediately became eligible to attain moksha. Such is the efficacy of the mere mention of the name of the Tirumala hills. The Alvar says that he was himself wondering as to what was the great thing that he did to become eligible for attaining moksha. When he thought about it, he realised that it was because he uttered the word Thiruvengadam . The Alvar says that the uttering of the word Thiruvengadam assures moksha siddham. He says that the Lord of Tirumala Who is the divine consort of Peria Piratti i.e. Lakshmidēvi is the embodiment of the vedas. He is Veda porul. He was caught in the net of vedic knowledge and the Alvar is happily caught in the web of Thiruvengadamudaiyan's feet. The Alvar says that even accidentally i.e. in a ahrudaya manner we mention the word Thiruvengadam, we will have moksha siddhi. It is not even necessary to utter the names of the Lord in a sahrudaya manner i.e. a conscious manner to attain moksha.

PASURAM 2422

காண லுறுகின்றேன் கல்லருவி முத்துதிர
 ஓண விழவி லொலியதிரப் - பேணி
 வருவேங் கடவா! என்னுள்ளம் புகுந்தாய
 திருவேங் கடமதனைச் சென்று.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Lord of Tirumala viz. Tirumalai Udaiyan has left the hill which is His abode and has instead taken residence in the Alvar's heart! The Alvar says that everyone believes that Perumal is in Thiruvengadam. But he knows that He has taken residence in his heart. But yet he has a desire to see that Thiruvengadam from where He has voluntarily changed His residence and occupied the heart of the Alvar. The Alvar says that he is desirous of seeing the hill where as the water gushes down from the water falls there is a deafning

noise created by the pearls and the precious stones which are also being washed down. He says that the Thiruvengadam hills are also resounding with nadaswaram music and the bajans sung by the devotees who are going to that hill to celebrate the day on which Thiruvonam star i.e. the birth star of Perumal falls. In brief, the Alvar says that God is residing in Thiruvengadamalai which is full of natural beauty flowing water, precious stones, divine music etc. and yet He has left the heavenly place and has sought the silent solitude available in the heart of the Alvar. But the Alvar has a desire to see the beautiful Thiruvengadamalai where the God earlier lived happily of His own free will.

PASURAM 2423

சென்று வணங்குமினோ சேணுயர் வேங்கடத்தை
நின்று வினைகெடுக்கும் நீர்மையால் - எனறும்
கடிகமல நான்முகனும் கண்மூன்றத் தானும்
அடிகமல மிட்டேதும் அங்கு.

In this pasuram the Alvar exhorts the devotees to go and worship the Lord at Thiruvengadamalai on the auspicious day on which the birth star of Perumal falls viz. the Sravana or Thiruvona star. He assures the devotees that by very nature the tall hills of Thiruvengadam have a quality viz. swabhava of ridding us of all our sins. He adds that Brahma Who was born out of the nabhi kamalam of Vishnu and also the Lord with three eyes viz. Shiva are offering flowers at the feet of the Perumal at Thiruvengadam. We men also should hasten to go to Tirumalai and worship the Lord there so that all our sins could get washed away. It is said that the hills are known as Vengadamalai ven meaning a sin, kadam (கடம்) meaning burning. So a visit to the hills washes away ones sins.

PASURAM 2424

மங்குல் தோய் சென்னி வடவேல் கடத்தானை
கங்குல் புகுந்தார்கள் காப்பணிவான்-திங்கள்
சடையேற வைத்தானும் தாமரைமே லானும்
குடையேற தாங்குவித்துக் கொண்டு.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Lord Shiva Who has the Moon on His head and Lord Brahma born out of the lotus

have come in the evening to Thiruvengadam carrying the pearl studded umbrella and chamaram to perform Thiruvandi kappu to Perumal. Thiruvandi kappu is a function where a person tries to rid a loved person from the effects of possible evil eye cast on him. The Alvar says that Perumal Who is worshipped by Lord Shiva and Brahma is residing in Tirupati hills whose sikharam i.e. top touches the clouds.

PASURAM 2425

கொண்டு குடங்கால் மேல் வைத்த குழுவியாய்
தண்ட வரக்கள் தலைதாளால் - பண்டெண்ணி
போம்குமரன் நிற்கும் பொழில்வேங் கடமலைக்கே
போம்குமர ருள்ளீர் புரிநது.

The Alvar exorts the devotees, even when one is young and is full control of ones limbs, to go to Tirumala filled with beautiful groves and worship the Lord there. He says that the Lord there once performed a very rare feat. It is said that the ten headed Ravana, the demon came to Brahma disguising himself as a human being with only one head, so as not to disclose his demonic identity. He wanted to get a boon from Brahma. Perumal who saw through this game of Ravana was worried lest Brahma should be taken in and be misled by the appearance of Ravana and grant him the boon and create problems for others. Perumal therefore took the form of a child and lay down on the lap of Brahma and started with His little fingers counting the ten toes of His two feet thus indicating to Brahma that the one headed visitor who was before Him was none other than the ten headed Ravana. Thus, Perumal put Brahma on the alert lest He should bless the demon. The Alvar says that this child who lay in the lap of Brahma and prevented a likely catastrophe is none other than the Kumaran i.e. ever youthful Perumal at Tirumala. The Alvar says that one should go to such a great hill even when one is young and is able to withstand the strain and the stress of climbing the hill and going on the pilgrimage.

A similar view has been expressed by Thirumangai Alvar also who addresses all those who are young and who are blessed with the gift of health to go to Badriksrama before one becomes old (vide pasuram 968). In the pasuram he says that before

one reaches the stage where one has a stick in hand and one's back is bent with a hunch due to age and one is constrained to take hesitant slow steps due to advancing age, one should visit Badriksrama where the Perumal Who killed Poothana by sucking her dead resides. Similarly, Nammalvar also says that before one becomes (vide pasuram 2886) old, one should go to Thirumaliruncholai. In that pasuram, Nammalvar says that before the beauty of youth vanishes and before the ills of old age overtake us, one should go to Thirumaliruncholai filled with flower groves where the most beautiful Mayavan i.e. Alagar resides, of His own free will.

This incident of the Perumal taking on the form of a child and helping Brahma is not mentioned in any of the sastras or puranas. But it is believed while the sastras and puranas are written only by the rishis, the alvars are blessed with jnana, by God Himself. So they have access to certain information which is not known even to the great sages. This story related by Thirumazhisai Alvar in this pasuram is one such story not known even to the sages. A similar story is related by Perialvar in Pasuram 319 where he refers to an incident related by Hanuman when he meets Sita devi in Lanka and wants to convince Her that he has been sent by Lord Rama to search and locate her. At that time, Hanuman relates various messages sent by Rama through him. In addition, he narrates certain incidents to her which could have been known only to Rama and Sita and none others as it happened in the palace when once the divine couple were staying alone. Perialvar in that pasuram says that at that time, Rama and Sita had a friendly contest. The condition laid down by Sita at that time was that if Rama gets defeated, She would tie Him up with a flower garland. Rama was defeated in the contest. This contest took place in sandhya velai i.e. dusk time in the anthapuram i.e. palace. Sita therefore tied Rama up with a jasmine flower garland. Hanuman recalled this incident to Sita. It is said that Perialvar knew of this incident and he made Hanuman repeat this story to Sita to convince her that he was Ramadhootha. Valmiki Ramayana also does not mention

about this incident. This once again lends credence to the theory that the jnana of the alvars is unmatched and unequalled. It is something more than the knowledge of even the great rishis like Valmiki.

Similarly in yet another pasuram Perialvar mentions a story relating to Krishnavatar. That story does not also find place anywhere in the Bhagavatam. Perialvar there refers to the way Krishna taught a lesson to His friend Sri Malikan. Perialvar says that Sri Malikan was always with Kannan. So he virtually knew all that Krishna knew except to use the Chakrayutha. Once he asked Krishna to teach him the art of using the chakra i.e. chakra prayoga. He wanted Krishna to teach him how to release the chakra and how to recall it. Krishna tried to dissuade Sri Malikan. But Malikan insisted. Krishna then decided to teach his friend a lesson. He first demonstrated the use of the chakra. He whirled the chakra from His fingers and when the chakra was returning, He stretched His arm and received the chakra atleast three feet away from His body by catching it with His fingers. He then handed over the chakra to Malikan and told him that as He had demonstrated the manner of using the chakra, he could try it. Malikan accordingly released the chakra. But when the chakra was returning, instead of stretching out his hand, he held his outstretched fingers and hand very close to his own neck. The chakra which came back to rest on the fingers also cut the neck of Malikan as the fingers were held close to the neck! Perialvar refers to this incident when he is praising Lord Ranganatha vide pasuram 189.

PASURAM 2426

புரிந்து மலரிட்டுப் புண்டரீகப் பாதம்
பரிந்து படுகாடு நிற்ப தெரிந்தெங்கும்
தானோங்கி நிற்கின்றான் தண்ணருவி வேங்கடமே
வானோர்க்கும் மண்ணோர்க்கும் வைப்பு.

In this pasuram, the Alvar asks the devotees to go to Tirumala which is full of beautiful water falls. He says that Tirumala is a place which is visited both by the devas as well as the people living in this world. In that Tirumala Bhagavan is seen standing very tall and is displaying His multifaceted lovable qualities.

The Alvar says that the devotees have placed the flowers with love and affection at the lotus feet (pundareeka patham) of Perumal and are singing His praise (pallandu) standing immobile and unshakeable like a felled tree that is to say that the devotees are standing mesmerised virtually, lost in contemplation of the divine feet (Thiruvadi) (திருவடி) of Lord of Tirumala.

A similar thought is expressed by Swami Desikan when he sings the praise of Lord Varadaraja i.e. Hastagiri Perumal. There Desikan asks the devotees to place the flowers they have brought at the feet of the Lord before they lose their sweet smell.

PASURAM 2427

வைப்பன் மணிவிளக்கா மாமதியை மா லுக்கென்று
எப்பொழுதும் கைநீட்டும் யானையை - எப்பாடும்
வேடுவளைக் கசுகுறவர் விலலெடுக்கும் வேங்கடமே
நாடுவளைத தாடுமேல் நன்று.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the best thing that one can do is to do pradakshina of Tirumala. It should not literally be interpreted as referring to pradakshina of the hill. What he seeks to convey is that a pradakshina of the sannidhi of Lord Srinivasa would bestow heavenly blessings on us.

The Alvar says that there are a number of elephants in Tirumala. These elephants one night saw the full moon in the sky. One amongst the elephants mistook the full moon to be a bright light. It therefore wanted to catch the moon with its trunk and place it in the temple as a beautiful lamp for the Lord. As the attention of the elephant was concentrated on catching the moon, the hunters living in Tirumala surround the herd of elephants with their bow and arrows to catch them. The Alvar says that all of us should go to such a mountain, do our pradakshina and be blessed by the Lord.

One of the thoughts which is conveyed in this pasuram is that even the elephants realise that it is good to light a lamp in Perumal's sannidhi. Hence it is that it wanted to catch the moon and make it a mani vilakku i.e. a mangala dheepa in

the Perumal sannidhi. The elephant did not desire the moon for its own satisfaction. It only desired to catch the moon for beautifying the sannidhi of God. Thus, the Alvar implies that in the holy hill even the elephant does not have selfish thoughts i.e. one thinks of only God on that sacred hill.

Similar thoughts are expressed by Perialvar also while singing about the greatness of Thirumaliruncholai. In that pasuram, Perialvar says that the hills of Thirumaliruncholai are sky high. He says that the serpents which are roaming about in the mountain try to catch the moon by sticking out their tongues, implying thereby that the sikhara of Thirumaliruncholai is so high that it touches Chandramandala and the serpent which is crawling on the sikhara is so close to the moon that it thinks that it can catch the moon by putting out its tongues! Such is a poetic liberty and fascinating heights to which a poet reaches.

PASURAM 2428

நன்மணி வண்ணலூர் ஆளியும் கோளரியும்
பொனமணியும் முத்தமும பூமரமும - பனமணிநீ
ரோடு பொருதுருளும் கானமும வானரமும
வேடுமுடை வேங்கடம்.

Here also the Alvar describes Thiruvengadamalai where Lord Srinivasa resides. He says that this is the mountain where the animals of the higher order like Yali and lions are roaming. He adds that this hill is also unique in that it is full of gold, precious stones and pearls which are washed ashore from the top of the hill by fast flowing forest streams. Besides the hill is also known for the beautiful scented flower groves that are found in abundance on the hill ranges. Plenty of monkeys inhabit this hill. The Alvar also says that large number of people who are knowledgeable and well versed in the vedas reside on this hill. Such is the greatness of Tirumala where the Neela Manivannan (நீல மணிவண்ணன்) (blue hued Lord) i.e. Thiruvengadathan resides.

PASURAM 2429

வேங்கடமே விண்ணோர் தொழுவதுவும்

வேங்கடமே மெய்வினைநோய் தீர்ப்பதவும்
 வேங்கடமே
 தானவரை வீழ்த்தள் னாழிப் படைதொட்டு
 வானவரைக் காப்பாள் மலை.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Thiruvengadam is the place where the devas come and worship the Lord. It is also the hill to which the mere mortals go to worship the Lord and get rid of their sins and other ills. It is also the hill where devadi deva Lord Srinivasa resides holding in His hand the disc so as to destroy evil and protect one and all.

A doubt may arise as to why the devas who have an opportunity to worship the Lord in Paramapada should come to Tirumala and worship the Lord. The Alvar conveys the thought that in Paramapada certain qualities of the God like vatsalyam, saulabhyam and sauseelyam do not shine as there are no sinners there. Perumal is able to demonstrate to us the efficacy of His vatsalya guna (motherly love and affection) in forgiving all the mistakes we commit in this earth provided we seek solace at His divine feet. Similarly it is only during His avatar on the earth that the mere mortals are able to have easy access i.e. saulabhyam towards God. Similarly, it is only during His stay on the earth that Perumal is able to prove to us that He is one with us because of His sauseelyam quality. All these gunas are not in evidence in Paramapada where there are no sinners who need God's assistance through forgiveness and affection etc. Hence the Alvar says that the devas who do not have an opportunity to enjoy these qualities of God in Paramapada also come to Tirumala to witness and enjoy those great qualities of Lord Srinivasa. He says that all these qualities which are in evidence at Tirumala shine like a lamp in a dark room. He adds that when one goes to Tirumala all the sins get destroyed like cotton before fire! This idea is expressed in Sanskrit as follows:

"Vemithi asesha pa papani kataha thath dahow ichathae"

It means that Thiruvengadamalai virtually burns up and destroys one's sins.

PASURAM 2471

வீற்றிருந்து விண்ணாள வேண்டுவார்

வேங்கடத்தாள்

பால்திருந்த வைத்தாரே பன்மலர்கள்-மேல்திருந்த

வாழ்வார் வருமதி பார்த்து அன்பினராய்

மற்றவர்க்கே

தாழ்வா யிருப்பார் தமர்.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that those who worship the Lord at Tirumala are like the Nityasuris who are staying in Paramapada. But those who are devoted and want to do kainkarya for the devotees of the Lord are more fortunate than even the Nityasuris. The Alvar says that while those who are desirous of staying in Paramapada and worshipping the divine feet of the Lord with scented flowers are great people. But those who are absolutely devoted to the devotees of the Lord i.e. dasanu dasa are even one step more fortunate than the residents of Paramapada. In this pasuram, the alvar highlights Bhagavata abimana as he feels that those who serve the devotees of Perumal are enunciating the greatness of the principle of Bhagavat seshatva. Those who worship and serve God, serve only Him but those who serve the devotees of God with equal fervour and ardour are greater as they serve the devotees whom the God loves.

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NAMMALVAR TIRUVIRUTTAM

Starting with this pasuram, there are about ten pasurams wherein Nammalvar does mangalasaana to Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. These ten pasurams are different from the rest of the pasurams composed by Nammalvar in as much as the commentators on the Nalayira divya prabhanda read into these pasurams an inner meaning and an ostensible meaning that is to say a straight meaning as against swapadesa artha. It is said there are only two divya prabhandas which lend themselves to swapadesa artha. They are Tiruppavai and Tiruviruttam. Tiruviruttam has got 100 pasurams of which 10 are on Lord Srinivasa.

PASURAM 2485

காண்கின றனகனும் கேட்கின் றனகனும்
காணில் இந்நாள
பாண்குனற நாடர பயின்கினறன இதெல
லாம் அறிந்தோம
மாண்குனற மேந்திதண் மாமலை வேங்கடத்து
உமபர நம்பும்
சேண்குனறம சென்று பொருளபடைப்பான கறற
திண்ணனவே.

This pasuram is in Porul Vayil Piridhal (பொருள பயிற் பிரிதல்) chapter. The pasura artham makes it evident that the nayakan is planning to go away to earn money. Consequently there will be separation from the nayaki. This is the situation which is explained in this pasuram. Here the nayaki says that the thalaivan is Malai nattu thailavan i.e. Lord of the hilly ranges. She says that the manner in which he is behaving, his actions as also his words are all very different from his normal words and actions. His behaviour makes it clear to her (as she knows him well) that he is hiding his real feelings when he is uttering certain words and that what he is doing and seeing are only for her ostensible consumption and that the truth is something else. She says that she has seen through these acts of his and that she

knows he is planning to leave her and go to Tirumala where the Perumal Who lifted the Govardhanagiri with His little finger i.e. Lord Krishna resides. That Thiruvengada hill has a cool salubrious climate. It has tall peaks. The devas also come and worship the Perumal in that hill. She says that she has seen through the behaviour of her nayakan and knows that all his upacharams i.e. affectionate services being offered are only to make up for the pain that will be caused when he proceeds to Tirupati and leaves her behind.

The Alvar in this pasuram uses the words "Pankundra Nattar" (பாண்குன்ற நாடர்) while referring to the nayakan. This makes it clear that He is the Lord of the hills. The Perumal Who resides in Hastigiri, Thirumaliruncholai, Tirumala etc. is indeed the master of the hills. The words "Manakkundram Yendhi Than Mamalai Vengadathu" (மாண்குன்றம் ஏந்தி தண்மாமலை வேங்கடத்து)

conveys the meaning that the Perumal will adopt and do things as demanded by circumstances (samayochitha seyalgai) in order to save lives be it human or animal. Thus, when He lifted the Govardhanagiri, it was to teach a lesson to Indra and humble him and also to protect the cows, the calves and the innocent people who placed implicit faith in Him and worshipped the hill as ordered by Him. The Alvar thus by referring to the Govardhanagiri episode makes it clear that the Perumal Who is standing on the top of Thiruvengada hill will save the lives of the innocent sincere devotees provided they repose absolute faith in Him.

It is also said that the word "man" (மாண்) refers to Vamanavatar. Thus, the Alvar says that the Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam is Lord Krishna Who lifted the Govardhanagiri and also Vamana Who covered the entire worlds with His three steps. Many of the Alvars refer to Lord Srinivasa as the Lord Who manifested Himself as Vamana in the Vamanavatar. Further, the Alvar uses the word "Umbar Nambu Sane Kundram" (உம்பர் நம்பும் சேண்குன்றம்) in the pasuram. These words mean that the Perumal Who is staying at Tirumala radiates sauseelya, vatsalya and sawlabhya gunas. These qualities

cannot be enjoyed in Paramapada. That is why the "umbar" i.e. devas come down to earth to enjoy these qualities of the Perumal. The Alvar says that in order to enable the devas as well as the mortals to worship Him, Lord Srinivasa resides in Tirumala on the top of the hill which has got tall shikaras.

Let us now turn to the swapadesa artham of this pasuram. The commentators say that the nayakan referred to in this pasuram are the Sri vaishnavas. The nayaki is Alvar. Alvar values the company of the baghavathars who are staying with him. These baghavathars i.e. adiyargal (devotees) are planning to leave him and go to Tirupati on a divya desa yathra. The Alvar who has been moving closely with these devotees is able to gather from the manner in which the Sri Vaishnavas are behaving that they are planning to leave him and they are trying through their words, actions and behaviour to soften the blow of seperation. All the sweet talk the Alvar knows precedes the pain to be caused by seperation. The Alvar who has not yet attained the Perumal is already feeling sad. If the baghavathars also leave him, he would be in- consolable. Thus, the impending seperation, planned visit of the baghavathars to Tirupati is causing as much pain to the nayaki as to the nayakan i.e. the Alvar as well as his devotees. This pasuram's inner meaning is said to reflect to important of baghavat seva. In the vaishnava terminology, this is referred to by the words "adiyargalin adiyar" (அடியார்களின் அடியார்) To be a devotee of the devotee of the Lord is itself considered as great.

PASURAM 2487

மாயோன் வடதிரு வேங்கட நாடவல் லிக்கொடிகாளி
 நோயோ உரைக்கிலும் கேட்கின் றிலீர் உரை
 யீர்நுமது
 வாயோ? அதுவன்றி வல்வினை யேனும்
 கினியுமெளகும்
 ஆயோ? அடும் தொண்டை யோ? அறை
 யோ! இ தறிவரிதே

This pasuram ostensibly refers to the words spoken by a Thalaivan to damsels with slender waists residing in Thiru-

vengadamalai. These girls are residing in Thiruvengadamalai where unsurpassed and unequalled Perumal resides. Apparently, these damsels are safeguarding the maize crop by driving away the birds which come to pick on the ripe grains. It is a common sight in the rural side when some sort of a machkan i.e. a raised platform will be constructed in the midst of a field. The girls would be standing on the top of it and twirling the ropes shouting in between as "Ayo". The sound as well as the twirling of the rope will frighten away the birds, if any, which are hovering around to consume the ripe maize grain. The nayakan looks at these girls and says that he is not able to determine what is the cause for the pain that he is experiencing. He says that if he expresses his love for the girls and the pain caused by it, they do not listen to it. He says he is not able to decide whether it is their beautiful mouth or the music of the word "Ayo" uttered by them to drive off the birds or whether it is the beauty of their slender necks - as to which amongst these caused the pain he is not able to decide. He asks them to give the answer.

The words "Mayon Vanga Thiruvengada Mada Valli Kodi Kal" (மாயோன் வடதிரு வேங்கட நாடவல்லிக்கொடிகாள்!) conveys the meaning that the person who is seeking the Perumal in Tirumala has got a swaroopa which is tender like a creeper. Here the reference is not to the creeper but to the mind of the devotees which goes in search of the Perumal. Just as the creeper needs a stick as a support for it to climb so also the mind of the devotees goes in search of the Perumal for the support.

While mentioning the swapadesa artham, the commentators refer to the relationship that exists between the baghavathars and the Alvar. The baghavathars are telling the Alvar with whom they are staying that they are not able to decide as to what are the qualities of the Alvar which have attracted them to their master. They say that when they are with the Alvar they are completely enveloped by bhakti towards him. They are trying to analyse as to how such an all encompassing bhakti has resulted. They wonder "Is it the words of wisdom uttered by him?" That is why they refer to the beauty of the mouth. Is it the compelling personality which made them subservient

and devoted to the alvars? Is it his tirumeni azhagu or is it his words which is evident from the use of the words Thondaiyo? or is it his words (upadesam) which have captivated their hearts? They have no definite answer.

PASURAM 2492

கயலோ நுமகண்கள்? என்று களிறு வினவி நிற்கீர்
அயலோ ரறியினும் ஈதெனன வாரத்தை?

கடல சுவரநத

புயலோ டுவாங்கொண்டல வண்ணன் புனவேங்

கடததெம்மொடும்

பயலோ விலீர் கொல்லை காக்கின்ற நாளும்

பலபலவே.

This is a pasuram where the companion i.e. thozhi tells her mistress about her assessment of the action of the thalaivan. Apparently, the warrior (veeran) came to the kollai i.e. field where the thina (maize crop) was being raised. He looked at the nayaki who was standing in that field and asked her whether she saw an elephant come that way and then started speaking about her beautiful eyes. Then he said that her eyes looked beautiful like kayal fish. The thozhi i.e. companion maid then tells the nayaki what is this unusual question? The two statements asking about a lost elephant and then referring to the beauty of your eyes are not consistent. She also says what will people say if they were to see this or hear these words? This incident occurred in Thiruvengadamalai where the Perumal with the colour of a dark rain bearing clouds resides.

PASURAM 2508

இசை மின்கள் தூதென்று இசைத்தால் இசையிலம்

என தலை மேல்

அசைமின்க ளென்றால் அசையுங் கொ லாம்?

அம்பொன் மாமணிகள்

திசைமின் மினிரும் திருவேங்கடத்துவன்

தாள்சிமய

மிசைமின் மினிரிய போவான் வழிக் கொண்ட

மேகங்களே!

In this pasuram Parankusa nayaki (Alvar) sends the clouds as her messenger to the Perumal. She says that the thick rain bearing clouds are going towards Thiruvengadamalai

The clouds are having streaks of lightning in them as they are proceeding in the sky. These flashes of lightning she says looks like a glitter of the red rubies and other precious stones that are found strewn all over in plenty in Thiruvengada hill. She says they are going so fast and so she has a doubt whether they will convey her message. Still she pleads with them to rest for a while on her head before going to Thiruvengadamalai. She says I request you to give my message to the Perumal. It does not appear as if you have heard my words. As you are going towards Tirumala where my Lord resides, I am requesting you to rest for a while on my head before you go to Tirumala. That also you are not doing - complains Parankusa nayaki.

The swapadesa artham of this pasuram is that the Sri vaishnavas who are staying with the Alvar are going to Tirupati. The Alvar is saying that the Sreepadha dhooli i.e. the dust of the feet of these devotees is precious and will also confer blessings on a person.

PASURAM 2527

ஒண்ணுதல் மாமை யொளிபய வாமை விரைந்து
நதேர
நண்ணுதல் வேண்டும வலவ சுடாசினறு
தேனநவினற
விணமுதல நாயகன நீளமுடி வெணமுதத
வாசிகைத்தாய
மண்முதல சேரவுற்று அருவிசெய யாநிறகும
மாமலைக்கே.

This pasuram has a link with the earlier pasuram (2485) where the thalaivan was leaving the thalaivi in order to earn some money and only then return. In this pasuram, the nayakan has apparently earned the money and is returning. As he is nearing his place, he is hurrying the charioteer to speed up the vehicle so that he could reach the nayaki quicker and lessen the

time of sadness caused by the seperation and also so that he could reach well before the promised date and time. The first two lines of the pasuram are the words of the thalaivan. He addresses the charioteer and says, "O you expert in driving this chariot! Please drive the chariot faster." He says the nayaki has got a beautiful brow and says that he wants to reach the place before she pales further due to the pain of seperation. He says that the nayaki is residing at Thiruvengadam where the bees hum beautifully. There the water which is cascading down from the water fall has the clear translucent colour like the colour of the pearl strings worn by Perumal on His head.

In this pasuram the word "Mamalaikku" (மாமலைக்கே) which is used by the Alvar is interpreted by some to refer to the hill which is close to Nammalvar's birth place viz. Thirumaliruncholai and not Tirupati.. This is the view of Alagiya Manavala Jeer. However, many feel that this pasuram refers to Thiruvengadamalai and not Thirumaliruncholai.

The swapadesa artham of this pasuram again reflects the feelings of the baghavathars vis-a-vis the Alvar. As stated earlier, the baghavathars were reluctantly planning to leave the Alvar and go to Tirupati. In this pasuram, they are returning after having had the darshan of the Perumal. They are able to understand and feel the pain of the Alvar in not having as yet attained and become one with the Perumal. They are therefore trying to hustle themselves to reach the Alvar faster so as to provide him their company and to assuage his feelings of sadness. They are therefore asking their manoratham i.e. their mind to go fast to their Alvar and keep his company.

PASURAM 2537

முலையோ முழுமுற்றும் போந்தில மொய்பூங்குழல்
குறிய
கலையோ அரையில்லை நாவோ குழறும்
கடல் மண்ணெல்லாம்
விலையோ வெண்மிளி ரும்கண் இவள்பரமே?
பெருமாள்
மலையோ திருவேங் கடமென்று கற்கின்ற வாசகமே.

In this pasuram, the sevili thai i.e. the mother who is bringing up Parankusa nayaki expresses her surprise at some of the words uttered by Parankusa nayaki, her child. She says this child of mine is so young, her body is not even fully developed, the thick tresses of hair which she has are not even long enough to be tied into a knot. She does not even know to dress properly. When she speaks she lisps like a child. Her eyes are not concentrating on any particular object. But instead are darting from one place to another as if she is appraising the entire world. She is asking whether her thalaivan, the Perumal is residing at Thiru vengadamalai. She is wonder struck that this young child should ask about the Lord of the Seven Hills.

The swapedesa artham again refers to the feeling of the baghavathars towards the Alvar. The baghavathars who are staying with the Alvar wonder as to how the Alvar could be so impatient and want to attain salvation so quickly. To attain the Perumal first para bhakti is needed. Then it has to lead para jnana and only later parama bhakti. Only when parama bhakti dawns will there be absolute all encompassing devotion which will lead to moksha i.e. salvation. The baghavathars feel that the Alvar is in too much of a hurry. The doubts of the baghavathars is evident from the use of the words that the hair has not grown long enough to be tied into a knot which actually conveys the meaning that the person has not attained jnana and realised the greatness of bending one's head before Perumal. Similarly, the use of the words "Navu kuzharum" makes it evident that the need for never ending repetition of baghavath nama nama sankirthanam has not yet been appreciated. Similarly, the words "kan milirum" means that the person concerned has not attained the parama bhakti stage and has not mastered tatva jnana as to concentrate on God (dyhyana). Further, when the sevili thai asks the rhetorical question "ival parame" i.e. will this small child be able to attain what she wants really conveys the meaning that without sadhana it is not possible to attain God quickly. Perhaps this question can be answered by a counter question is it correct to be impatient to attain God when we have not learnt to do sadhana and bow down one's head in reverence to God and do absolute undisturbed dhyana on Perumal?

The swapedesa artham of the pasuram makes it clear that from the day the Alvar was born, he was unhappy and not able to bear the pangs of separation from the baghavan. But the baghavathars feel that there is no short cut to salvation and that one has to go through the three stages of bhakti, para jnana and only later parama bhakti before attaining God.

PASURAM 2544

காவியும் நீலமும் வேலும் கயலும் பலபலவென்று
 ஆவியின் தன்மை அளவல்ல பாரிப்பு
 அசுரைச் செற்ற
 மாவியம் புள்வல்ல மாதவன் கோவிந்தன்
 வேங்கடம்சேர்
 நூவியம் பேடையன் குள் கண்களாய துணைமலரே.

This is a pasuram where the thalaivan is reporting to his friend. He says he went to Tirumala, there he saw the lady who had completely captivated his mind. The lady here is Thayar. This lady is residing in Thiruvengadamalai where the Perumal who destroyed the demons, and Who is riding on Garuda resides. He is the Lakshmi nayakan. He is the person Who saved the cattle (Govardhanagiri episode). This lady the pasuram says is beautiful like a swan. She has eyes like a lotus flower. She resembles the sengazhuneer, a rare type of a flower and karu neidhal (alli flower). Her sight is sharp and piercing. Her eyes look like a kayal fish. With all these attributes, She has conquered and subjugated me. Did She need so much of effort to conquer me? The Alvar says that he went to Tirumala, he met a lady there who has completely captured his mind. Many of the words in this pasuram convey a lot of meaning. The words "Maviya pul valla" refers to Garuda vahana. This draws attention to the dushta nigraha aspect of God i.e. the quality of God which makes Him rush to the assistance of His devotees and to destroy the enemies of His devotees. The word Maviya refers to Lakshmi Nayakan and makes it evident that it is only the purushakara aspect of the thayar which makes Her intercede on our behalf with the Lord. By using the word "maviya" (மாவிய) the Alvar has made it clear that Thiruvengadamalai is the Bogasthanam of Lord Srinivasa. The use of the word "Vengadam sera thuviam

to exorcise the demon). Take her to Tirupati. Get the basel garland worn by Perumal and place it on the head of this child. That will cure her of the pain caused by seperation. This child is suffering from Virahatapam i.e. sadness due to the seperation from Perumal. The solution therefore is to take her to Tirupati and not what you are doing now.

The swapadesa meaning refers to the feelings of the Alvar. The Alvar who is experiencing viraha thunbam i.e. feeling the pangs of seperation from Perumal. He is sad because he has not been able to become one with God and attain moksha. The followers the baghavathars are trying all methods to relieve his sadness. They are doing many pariharas. The pasuram in the swapadesa artham conveys the thought that the actions of the baghavathars are not real antidotes. What they are trying will not be successful. The solution lies in blessing the Alvar with the divya desa vasam i.e. a visit to Tirumala. Baghavath prasadam i.e. tulasi garland is the only parihara i.e. the sure remedy for the ills troubling the Alvar.

PASURAM 2754

கண்ணோ வான் என்றும்
மண்ணோர் விண்ணோர்க்கு
தண்ணோர் வேங்கட
விண்ணோர் வெற்பளே.

From this pasuram onwards, each set of ten pasurams the Alvar enjoys one particular guna i.e. the quality of Perumal. In this pasuram, Nammalvar enjoys the aarjava guna of Baghavan. Aarjava guna represents straightforwardness, a perfect synchronisation of thought, word and deed. The aarjava guna is a quality when the manas (mind), the vakku (speech) and the sareera (deed) act in unison.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that Baghavan Who is like the eyes for those living in this world as well as the nityasuris residing in Paramapada is residing in Tirumala known as Thiruvengadam. That place has a cool and salubrious climate. This pasuram makes it evident that God is equally concerned about the people in this world as also the nityasuris. So He is

residing at a place which is approachable to both. This thought is expressed in the vedas as follows:

"Chakshur devanam utha marthyanam"

Literally translated it means that Perumal is like eyes to devas and human beings. The alvars also express the view that the devas come to Thiruvengadam, so as to enjoy the various qualities of the Perumal which are not in evidence in Paramapada like saulabhyam, sauseelyam etc. Tirumazhisai Alvar said (pasuram 2426) "than ongi nirkinran thannaruvi Vengadamae vanorkkum mannorkkum vaippu" (தானோங்கி நிற்கின்றான் தண்ணருவி வேங்கடமே வானோர்க்கும் மண்ணோர்க்கும் வைப்பு)

"Vaippu" means like a nidhi i.e. wealth. Tiruppan Alvar (vide pasuram 929) says "Mandhipai Vadavengadamaa malai vanavargal sandhi seyya ninran". (மந்தி பாய் வடவேங்கட மாமலை வானவர்கள் சந்தி செய்ய நின்றான்) Literally translated this means that at Vadavengada hills, the female monkeys are playing about by jumping from one branch to another. In that hill, Perumal is seen in a standing posture so as to enable the nityasuris also to come and worship Him. So the alvars feel that in Tirumala devas also come to worship the God. It is therefore a very sanctified hill.

The Alvar makes it clear in this pasuram that unlike with the human beings, for divinity, sol and seyal (thought, word and deed) is one and the same. He does not say one thing, do another thing and think of yet another thing. That sort of duplicity is reserved only for human beings. When God comes to this earth, however He moves with us freely, tries to rescue us and gives us moksha. Thus He displays His great quality as a saviour.

PASURAM 2848

எந்தாய் தன் திருவேங்கடத் துள்ளின்றாய்!
இலங்கை செற்றாய் மராமரம்
பைந்தா னேழு ருவஒழு வாளி கோத்த வில்லா!

கொந்தார் தண்ணந் துழாயினாய்! அமுதே! உன்னை
என்னுள னேகுழைத்த எம
மைந்தா! வானேறே! இனி எங்குப போகின்றதே?

In this pasuram, the Alvar wants to reach God. God comes there. But it appears as if Alvar took a step backward. God wonders as to why he who was eager to meet Him should retrace his steps. The Alvar then says, I will never let You go. Where will I go? I was only worried that association with me may lessen Your glory. That is why, I stepped back. But now that You have come, I will not leave You ever. The Alvar says, "O Master, You Who are standing in the cool Thiruvengada hill. You are the person Who destroyed Lankapuri. You are the person Who let loose one arrow and split seven well grown deep rooted trees (this refers to an incident in Ramavatar when Rama let loose one arrow and felled seven trees so as to impress Sugreeva about His prowess). O Baghavan, You are wearing the thick cool basel garlands. O Amruth of Mine! O You Who have become one with me. O Master of the devas! Hereafter will I allow You to leave me? Where can You go?"

By referring to the two incidents in Rama charithram, the alvar makes the point that Perumal destroyed Ravana who was the embodiment of ahamkaram. Similarly, the same Perumal has rid the alvar of his ahamkaram, mamkaram. Again, during Ramavataram, in order to enable Sugreeva to gain confidence that He is capable of destroying Vali, Perumal had to fell seven well grown massive trees with one arrow and lifted with ease the skeleton of Dhundubi and threw it far away. Thus, instilled confidence in Sugreeva. The alvar says that similarly, the Perumal has instilled in him absolute unquestioned confidence. The alvar says that such a nectar like Perumal is wearing the basel garland and has become one with the alvar. The alvar concludes by asking the rhetorical question to God how can You now leave me? The answer being an emphatic No. O God You cannot be separated from me.

PASURAM 2849

போகின்ற காலங்கள் போய காலங்கள் போகு
காலங்கள் தாய்தந் தையுயி

ராகின்றாய்! உன்னை நான் அடைந் தேள்விடு
 வேளோ?
 பாகின்ற தொல்புகழ் மூவுல குக்கும் நாதனே!
 பரமா தண் வேங்கடம்
 மேகின்றாய்! தண் துழாய் விரைநாறு கண்ணியனே.

In this pasuram, the alvar says that Perumal is his sole saviour in the past, the present and the future. He says that in all the three kalas (times), He was like a mother and a father to him. He was his very life. He says O God! You Who are the embodiment of the eternal glory, You Who are the master of the three worlds, You Who are the Supreme being, You are residing with sweet pleasure at Thiruvengadamalai of Your own will. You are wearing the cool scented basel garland. Having reached You, having possessed You, having got You, will I leave You and go anywhere? The answer is no.

PASURAM 2861

பற்ப நாபன் உயர்வ றவுயரும் பெருந்திரலோன
 னற்ப ரன் என்னை யாக்கிக் கொண்டு எனக்கேதன்
 னைத்தந்த
 கற்ப கம் என் அமுதம் கார்முகில் போலும்
 வேங்கடநல்
 வெற்பினன் விசும் போர்பி ரான்எந் தைதா
 மோதரனே.

This pasuram is the first in the set of 12 + 1 pasurams which is in the Andaadhi style. Here the Alvar mentions the twelve names of God Vishnu. The first pasuram starts as Padmanabha and the fourth line ends with mentioning the name of God as Damodara. The next pasuram starts with Damodara and ends with vamanan This is the Andaadhi style of writing pasuram where the last word of the first stanza becomes the first word of the next stanza.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that whoever is a sincere devotee of God and gets blessed by the Lord enables seven generations before and seven generations later also to be blessed by God i.e. the blessing of God does not restrict itself to the

person who offers the sincere prayers but it blesses the preceding and succeeding generations. In this pasuram, the Alvar refers to God as kalpaka viruksha. The kalpaka viruksha is a mythical tree which is believed to answer all ones prayers. It is also generally said that God is one better than kalpaka viruksha in as much as the kalpaka tree only satisfies the specific request whereas Baghavan blesses the individual by not only giving him what he wants but what He thinks the devotee deserves which is usually something more than what one has asked. A free translation of the pasuram is as follows:-

Oh my master!

Your nabhi has been the cause for the creation of the worlds (Brahma emerged from the nabhi kamalam of Lord Vishnu and as Brahma is the Creator of the worlds, the nabhi of Perumal becomes the prime cause for the creation of the world).

Oh You who are omni powerful!

There are none to excel You;

You have showered love and affection on me;

You have given Yourself to me;

You are like the kalpaka vriksha;

You are my amrith;

You are like the dark rain bearing cloud;

You are the master of Nityasuris;

You have boundless affection for Your devotees;

You are residing in Thiruvengadamalai

In this pasuram, the Alvar refers to Thiruvengadamudaiyan as "Kala megam". It will be relevant here to recall the song made very popular by Smt.M.S.Subbulakshmi viz.

"Sri Ranga mangala manim karuna nivasam"

(Oh You who are the embodiment of mercy! You are the precious jewel at Srirangam)

"Sri Venkatadri sikaralaya kala megam"

(You are the dark rain bearing cloud seen on the top of Venkatadri Hills)

"Sri Hasti saila sikarajvala parijatham"

(You are a scented parijatha flower in Hastigiri hill at Kancheepuram)

"Sri sam namami sirasa Yathusaila dheepam"

(Oh light of Thirunarayanapuram Lakshminatha! I bend my head in reverence to You).

Usually God is compared to the dark rain bearing cloud as the clouds render selfless service to humanity. They collect the water from all over and give it back as life giving rain to humanity. Thus, they display an oudharya guna i.e. a quality when helping others is of prime importance. Perumal is known for such selfless ever willing nature to extend a helping hand to the devotees.

The name Padmanabha for God conveys effectively the paratva quality of God Who resides at Paramapada. Damodara is yet another name for God which refers to the incident in Krishnavatar when Yasodha tied the child Krishna with a cord to the pestle to prevent the child from getting into too much mischief. The fact that the great Lord allowed Himself to be tied like a mere mortal and a helpless child stands testimony to His great quality of obedience and subservience to those who love Him. The supreme acted as if He was subject to the control of Yasodha.

PASURAM 2919

ஒழிவில் காலமெல் லாம்உட னாய்மன்னி
வழுவி லாஅடி மைசெய்ய வேண்டும் நாம்
தெழுகு ரலரு வித்திரு வேங்கடத்து
எழில்கொள் சோதிஎந் தைதந்தை தந்தைக்கே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he wants to do kaikaryam to Perumal for ever and ever. He says that the Perumal Whom we should worship without availing a moment's rest resides at Tirumala. In Tirumala streams flow with deafening noise. He adds that the Perumal there is gloriously effulgent. He is a sublime beauty. He is his Kulanathan. To such a Perumal Alvar says that one should offer worship and be prepared

to render all services without wavering and wasting even one minute of one's time. In brief, he feels that the sole object of one's life should be to do kainkaryam to Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadamalai.

The Alvar here uses the word "ozhivil kalamellam" (ஒழிவில் காலமெல்லாம்) thus referring to the past, present and future times. One may legitimately get the doubt as to how one can offer kainkaryam in the present for the time that is past. The children who read Science fiction, the acceptance of this concept is very easy as they study about the time machine which can take us back easily to the past. May be the Alvar himself thought of some such device. Leaving aside this explanation, the commentators speak of two other possibilities to enable rendering of service to God for the time which is past. They say that God is the Master of time. It is He Who is the sutradhar. If God is so inclined, He can therefore make the past become the future and thus enable the time which has been wasted without doing service to God to come back at a future time and thus enable us to do kainkaryam to Him. This is not wishful thinking and vain hope. There are two stories when Perumal during His Krishna avatar made it evident that He has control over time i.e. past, present and future. The first story deals with an incident that occurred in the life of Santheepamuni. Santheepamuni's daughter was washed away by the waves when she was playing on the banks of Gomathi river near Dwaraka. Santheepamuni asked Krishna to bring back that child and give her to him as Gurudakshinai. Lord Krishna brought back that child and thus He re-wrote the past. This incident is referred to in pasuram 402 which reads as follows:-

Madhava thone puthiran poi

Mari kadal vai mandanai

Odhu vitha dakkinaiyai

Uru uruvae koduthanoor

மாதவத்தோன் புத்திரன் போய்

மறிகடல்வாய் மாண்டாளை

ஒதுவித்த நக்கணையா

உருவருவே கொடுத்தானூர்

Yet another incident where He recalled the past with ease is reflected in another story which is referred to in Pasuram 403. It is said that there was a brahmin. To him three children were born, but unfortunately immediately after the child was born, within a few minutes they used to disappear completely. The brahmin met Lord Krishna to help him and prevent the mysterious disappearance. Arjuna who was with Krishna thought it was a very easy task. When for the fourth time the wife of the brahmin was expecting a child, Arjuna tried to prevent the recurrence of the disappearance act by covering the entire hut with protective arrows (sara goodu). The child was born but again within a few minutes of its birth it disappeared. Lord Krishna whom the brahmin again approached said that all the children were happily staying in Vaikuntha. Lord took the brahmin couple in a ratham to Vaikuntha and they saw their children happily playing there. Thus, the Lord has got the capacity to make the past also become the present if He so desires. The Alvar therefore is referring to this quality of the Perumal and prays that God should provide the opportunity to do service to God for ever and ever both in the past and in the future.

One other factor that has to be borne in mind is that doing kankaryam is not for one's own pleasure (swa bhogyatha budhi). Real kankaryam should bring happiness to God. Only then it is good kankaryam. It is said that once an arayar in Srirangam was rendering this particular pasuram and keeping time playing on the cymbals in his hand. But he was so lost in the beauty of the line that he went on repeating the words "ozhivil kalamellam" (ஒழிவில் காலமெல்லாம்) and did not proceed any further!

In this pasuram the word "thezhi kural aruvi" (தெழி குரலருவி) refers to the sound caused by the gushing cascading waters of the falls. The Alvar says that this sound is like a clarion call inviting all to come to Tirumala and do kankaryam to Lord Srinivasa!

Once when Ramanuja was explaining this pasuram in Tiruvaimozhi, he asked the devotees assembled there as to who amongst them would volunteer to go to Tirumala and do

kainkaryam to God in the manner enunciated by Nammalvar. It is said that in the huge crowd only one offered and that was Ananthalvan. Ramanuja embraced him and said "Nee ooruvanae aan pillai" (நீ ஒருவனே ஆண்டிள்ளை) you are the only man in this group! That volunteer later became famous as Anantalvar. Even today there are some in Tirumala who claim lineage from that great devotee. Here I will digress a bit and relate an incident that occurred when Ananthalvan and his wife resided at Tirumala. Ananthalvan was digging a tank at Tirumala. That is the tank which today is known as Ananthalvan eri. As the Alvar was digging, his wife was helping him by carrying headloads of the mud away from the spot of digging. As she was pregnant at that time, she found it difficult to carry the headloads for a long time. But Ananthalvan was keen that this kainkaryam for God should be rendered only by his wife and himself. God took pity on the lady. He therefore appeared as a small boy before her and offered to help her with the job of carrying the headloads. She readily agreed. Ananthalvan found that his wife was completing her part of the job very fast. He therefore asked her as to how she was so fast. The lady confessed that a small boy was helping her. Ananthalvan was angry. He followed his wife, saw that boy and chased him with a view to hit him. The boy who was none other than the Perumal who ran into the temple and disappeared. Some say that Ananthalvan slung the crowbar at the boy and the boy had a slight wound on the chin. Later when Ananthalvan went into the garbagriha to offer worship, he saw the idol bleeding at the spot where his crowbar had hit the boy. He realised his mistake. Even today there is a pick axe (gadapparai) hanging on the inner side of the front gopuram at Tirumala. It is said that it is the very same gadapparai used by Ananthalvan for digging the tank.

PASURAM 2920

எந்தைதந் தைதந்தை தந்தைதந் தைக்கும்
முந்தை வானவர் வானவர் கோனோடும்
சிந்து பூமகி மும்திரு வேங்கடத்து
அதமில் புகழ்க் காரெழி லண்ணலே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who is his Kulanathan i.e. family deity resides at Thiruvengadam. His

whole appearance is that of a dark blue cloud. He says the fame and glory of Perumal is immeasurable. The flowers with which the Nityasuris and devas as well as Visvaksenar worshipped the Lord are remaining ever fresh and fragrant at the feet of the Lord. The Perumal, Alvar claims, is the progenitor of our forebears. He uses the words "endha thanda thandai, thandai thandaikkum mundai" (எந்தை தந்தை தந்தை தந்தை தந்தைக்கும் முந்தை) and thus establishes the hoary family tree of God and His devotees. Thus, the Alvar establishes the seshitvam of Perumal. In Paramapada it is the paratva quality of God which dominates. In Tirumala it is His sauseelyam and saulabhyam that predominates. It is because these qualities of sauseelyam and saulabhyam are not in evidence in Paramapada that the Nityasuris and the devas come to the Tirumala to worship the Lord. While referring to the flowers offered for worship by the vanavar, the Alvar uses the words "sindhu poo maghizum". (சிந்து பூ மகிழும்)

This clearly conveys the thought that the Nithasuris and the devas are solely lost in the sauseelya guna of the Perumal, that unknown to them the flowers held in their palms fall down at the feet of the Lord! The Alvar says that these flowers which have fallen at the feet of the Lord are ever fresh and fragrant! The word "sindhu" (சிந்து) therefore refers to the flowers which have fallen out of the palms of the devotees as against the word "udhirnda poo" (உதிர்ந்த பூ) which would have referred to the petals and flowers which fall down due to efflux of time from the trees.

Another word used in this pasuram is also very significant. That word is "andhamil pugazh" (அந்தமில் புகழ்). Literally translated it means God has endless glory. It is as if the Alvar is saying that even in Paramapada God's glory may be measurable but in Tirumala it is immeasurable!

PASURAM 2921

அண்ணல் மாயன் அணிகொள் செந்தாம்பரைக்
கண்ணன் செங்கனி வாய்க்கரு மாணிக்கம்
தெண்ணி றை(ச்) சுனை நீர்த் திரு வேங்கடத்து
எண்ணில் தொல் புகழ் வானவ ரீசனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar describes the beauty of the Perumal at Tirumala. He says the Perumal is Lordly. He is the leader of the Nityasuris. He is our Swamy. He is Mayan (He possesses endearing ways and inscrutable actions). He is enchanting. His eyes are like the red lotus. His mouth is red like ripe kovai fruit. His body has the colour of dark clouds. That beautiful Perumal, the Alvar says resides at Tirumala which is full of water falls with crystal clear water.

The Alvar uses the word "Annal" (அண்ணல்) to convey the thought that Srinivasa is our Master. The word "Annal" (அண்ணல்)

usually refers to 'thalaivan' i.e. king of Kurinjee nilam. In Tamil literature there are four types of lands. They are Kurinjee, Mullai, Marudham and Neithal.

Kurinjee: Usually refer to hill and the land adjoining the hills.

Mullai: refers to the forest and the land adjoining the forest.

Marudham: refers to the fields and the lands adjoining the cultivated fields.

Neithal: refers to the ocean and the land occupied by the oceans.

Thus, the Alvar by referring to the Lord at Thiruvengadamalai as "Annal" (அண்ணல்) classifies Tirumala as Kurinjee land.

The Alvar refers to the Lord Srinivasa as Mayan and then proceeds to describe the beauty of the Lord. (tirumeni azhagu) (திருமேனி அழகு). First he refers to the beautiful lotus like eyes (anikol senthamarai Kannan) (அணிகொள் செந்தாமரைக்கண்ணள்) which will confer on us His benign kataksha. Then follows His sweet words "sengani vai" (செங்கனி வாய்) which is followed by the enchanting beauty of His entire form which enslaves us to Him.

PASURAM 2922

ஈசன் வானவர்க் கென்பன்என் றூல் அது
 தேச மோதிரு வேங்கடத் தானுககு
 நீச னேன்நிறை வொன்றுமி லேன் எனகண்
 பாசம் வைத்த பரஞ் சுடரச் சோதிக்கே.

In this pasuram the Alvar asks a rhetorical question. He says that the Perumal has extended His infinite love and compassion to a mean creature who has nothing to boast of viz. Alvar. He says that when that is the situation it is not anything great to say that He is the Lord of the Nityasuris and other Devas. He says with a certain pride and authority that the Perumal with the unsurpassable and effulgent Jyoti Who is at Thiruvengadam gets more glory by extending His compassion to sinners like himself rather than as the Lord of the heavenly beings i.e. Nityasuris.

The use of the words "en kan pasamvaitha" (என கண் பாசம் வைத்த) can be interpreted in two ways. The straight interpretation is that the Lord loves me. The other meaning is that Perumal has so moulded me that I think of none else but Him.

PASURAM 2923

சோதி யாகிஎல் லாவுல கும்தொழும
 ஆதி மூர்த்தியென் னூல் அள வாசுமோ?
 வேதி யர்முழு வேதத் தமுதத்தை
 தீதில் சீர்த்திரு வேங்கடத் தானையே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar raises another rhetorical question for which the answer is a categorical No.

In this pasuram, he says the Lord Who is residing at Thiruvengadamalai is the person Who is the embodiment of the vedas. He is the nectar of all the vedas. He is blemishless. He is the personification of all great qualities. He is effulgent. He is worshipped by all the people in the world. He is the creator of all the worlds. He is Sarveswaran i.e. omnipotent. He is the Adimurti i.e. prime cause of creation. The Alvar says if I a lowly person worship that God, is it something great to describe

Him as one Who is worshipped by all the worlds etc. why will not one and all worship Him?

PASURAM 2924

வேங்க டங்கள் மெய்ம் மேல்வினை முற்றவும்
தாங்கள் தங்கட்கு நல்லன வேசெய்வார்
வேங்க டத்துறை வார்க்கு நமவெள்ள
லாம்க டமைஅ துசுமந் தார்கட்கே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that all those who suffer with the load of past karmas need not give up hope of attaining Him. They have only to say Namaha to the Perumal residing at Thiruvengadamalai. Then not only will their past sins get wiped out, even the sins which they may accumulate in the future will get burnt up. The Alvar says that is the truth and the entire truth and whole truth.

It is said that each man has got three types of duties viz. the duty towards the rishis, devas and forefathers. If we do veda dyana, then the duty to the rishis is fulfilled. By performing yagas the duty to the devas can be satisfied. If one has a good son, the duties of one's forefathers can be met. If one fails to do these different types of duties, the vedas say it would be almost impossible to attain moksha. But the Alvar says that if one were to say "Namaha" to Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam all the sins will get burnt up and so moksha can be attained. Sins are usually classified into two types viz. Poorvaagam and utara agam. Agam means sin. Poorva agam refers to sins committed in the past before one decided to seek solace at the feet of the Perumal. Utara agam refers to the sins which one may commit even after deciding to worship the Perumal, due to various combination of circumstances which are beyond one's control. One can place absolute faith in God, the poorva agam will get burnt out just like a piece of cotton when brought in touch with fire. The utara agam will get wiped out if the words "namaha" are uttered. The sins will not affect us even as a drop of water on a lotus leaf never sullies the lotus plant or the leaf. The Alvar says that if we utter the words "namaha" and seek God the past as well as the present and future sins will get wiped out. Let us recall a small story connected with Ramavatar. It is said that Lord Rama was waiting on the seashore wondering

as to how He would cross the ocean and go to Lanka to rescue Sitadevi. He prayed for three days to Samudra raja, but he did not come. Rama got angry. He decided to let loose the Brahmastra on Samudra raja and dry up the entire ocean. Only then Samudra raja realised his mistake. He along with his wife came post haste and fell prostrate at the feet of Rama and asked to be forgiven. Bhaghavan Who is regarded as "sosthrapriyaha" immediately forgave Samudra raja and was prepared to let loose that very same Brahmastra on the enemies of Samudra raja! This story only helps in highlighting the thought that if one seeks saranagathi at the feet of the God and utters the words "namaha" all our ills will be over. Similar thought is expressed by Andal (vide pasuram 478). She says if one were to worship the divine feet of the Lord with the freshly blossomed flowers and sing His praises and concentrate ones thought on Him, then all the sins both past as well as the future sins will get washed out.

Bhaghavan is referred to as Stavyaha. It means He is one Who is fit to receive our stotra i.e. praise. He is also known as Stavapriyaha i.e. He is one Who loves to be praised. Even if the word uttered is small like "namaha" God out of His boundless compassion considers it as a great offering meriting serious reward. If we offer sincere prayers, it then becomes the responsibility of God to look after the yogakshemam of the devotee.

Bhattar in Sri Gunarathnakosa stotra says as follows:

"Kasmaichithu, anjali bharam vahatae".

He thus says that once I fold my hand and say "namaha" henceforth it is God's duty to see that our anjali bears fruit. Namaha means maha na. Maha means "I belong to myself". Na means No. So Na maha means that I do not belong to myself. So I am one who belongs to Him, the Divine father.

PASURAM 2925

சுமந்து மாமலர் நீர்கூடர் தூபம்கொண்டு
அமர்ந்து வானவர் வானவர் கோ னொடும்
நமன்றெற மும்திரு வேங்கடம் நங்கட்கு
சமன்கொள் வீடு தரும் தடங் குன்றமே.

This pasuram is about Thiruvengadamalai, the hill. The Alvar says that Thiruvengadam is a huge mountain. It has the virtue of conferring Paramasamyapa moksha to us i.e. it has got the capacity to make us one with God. He says that devas headed by Indra have come to that hill carrying flowers, holy water, camphor, scented sticks and other holy articles for worshipping the Perumal. The Alvar says that Thiruvengadam hill will ensure for us moksha (vidu) on the same terms as the heavenly beings (devas) provided we emulate them and offer sincere prayers without expecting anything in return. We will then attain moksha - says the Alvar. To explain this, Alvar uses the words "samankol veedu tharum". This Tirumala hill makes us sesha porul. Tirumala hill is close to God. So it will ensure that we also get that sameepya moksha. Mokshas are of four types. Sayudhyam i.e. become one with Him. Saroopyam i.e. become like Him - a splitting image. Salokhyam i.e. see Vaikuntha from far and yet get moksha. Sameepyam i.e. go near Him, close to Him.

The Alvar says that devas including Indra have come with "mamalar" i.e. good flowers to worship the Lord. Good flowers are those offered with bhakti. The flowers get their fragrance from the bhakti with which they are offered and not so much the real fragrance or the money cost of the flowers etc. God attaches great value to that which is offered with sincerity and devotion.

PASURAM 2926

குன்ற மேந்திக் குளிர்மழை காத்தவன்
அன்று ஞாலம் அளந்தபி ரான் பரன்
சென்று சேர்திரு வேங்கட மாமலை
ஒன்று மேதொழ நம்வினை ஓயுமே

In this pasuram, Nammalvar says that the Lord at Tirumala is the same Perumal who manifested Himself as Vamana and Krishna. He says that the Perumal who lifted Govardhana hill and protected the cows and calves and the people living in that place from the severe rain let loose by Indra and the Perumal who once measured all the worlds with His two steps

has come to stay at Thiruvengadamalai. The Alvar says that if we bow down before this hill, all our problems will get resolved.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says about the importance of the hill. Once Gokulam, a particular town was saved by Krishna. Later, as Trivikrama, He saved the entire world. Even offering prayers to Thiruvengada malai will redeem us of our sins. Very often people refer to Tirumala also as Tirumala Alwan as if the hill itself is a holy sage.

PASURAM 2927

ஓயும் மூப்புப் பிறமபு இறப் புப்பிணி
வீயு மாறுசெய் வான்திரு வேங்கடத்து
ஆயன் நாளமல ராம்அடித தாமரை
வாயுள் ளும்மனத் துள்ளும் வைப் பார்கட்கே.

In this pasuram, Nammalvar says that if we think of the Perumal in our minds and offer with devotion flowers at His feet, He would rid us of the cycle of birth and re-birth.

The Alvar says that the Aayan i.e. Krishna Who is residing at Thiruvengada malai will give us salvation, provided we offer flowers at His feet. He describes the feet as beautiful as freshly blossomed lotus flowers. He adds that our tongue should be used only for praising such divine feet and our thoughts should always centre round those divine feet. If such a concentrated attention is given, He will rid us of birth, disease and all the ills of this world.

PASURAM 2928

வைத்த நாவரை எல்லை குறுகிச் சென்று
எய்த்தி னைப்பதன் முன்னம்அ டைமினோ
பைத்த பாம்பனை யான்திரு வேங்கடம்
மொய்த்த சோலைமொய் பூந்தடம் தாழ்வரே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that before one becomes old, atleast once in one's lifetime, one should go to Tirupati so as to receive the blessing of the Lord Srinivasa.

The Alvar says, "don't wait till the limit of your life span in this world is reached. Don't wait till you become very old and all the ills and handicaps of old age get upper hand. Even when you are still young, go to Tirupati where the Perumal Who has Adishesha as His bed is residing. The place is full of thick groves, beautiful water-falls. Go atleast to the foot of the hill if you are not able to climb up the hill. Think of the Lord there and you will be blessed.

In this context, it is relevant to recall what Kulasekhara Alvar said in his Mukundamala. He says

Oh tongue! praise Kesava (*Jihvey kirtayya Kesavam*)

Oh mind! think of Murari (*muraripum chetho bhaja*)

Fold your hands and pray to Sriyahpathi

(*Sridharam pani dwandwa samarchaya*)

Oh ears! listen only to stories of Achuta

(*Achuta katha stotra dwayatvam srunu*)

Oh eyes! look only at Lord Krishna

(*Krishnam lokaya lochana dwaya*)

Oh feet! start walking only towards sannidhi of Perumal

(*Harehe gachchangri ugmalayam*)

Oh nose! smell only the scent of the tulasi at the feet of Bhaghavan

(*Jigra grana Mukunda padha tulasim*)

Oh head! bend before Sriman Narayana

(*Moor dhan, nama, adhokshajam*).

Both these alvars bring out very cryptically the principle that Perumal has given us life and karna kalebarangal i.e. eyes, ears, nose, tongue and head, so that this human body will spend its time usefully visiting divya desas and praying to God.

In this pasuram, Nammalvar has also stated that Perumal Who is lying on Adishesha in Tirupparkadal is seen standing at Thiruvengadamalai. He urges us not to lose time but to proceed to Thiruvengadam, before one becomes old and decrepit and finds it difficult to walk up the hill after the ravages of time have ruined us.

PASURAM 2929

தாள்ப ரப்பிமண் தாவிய ஈசனை
 நீள்பொ ழில்குரு கூர்ச்சட கோபன்சொல்
 கேழி லாயிரத்து இப்பததும் வல்லவர்
 வாழ்வர் வாழ்வெய்தி ஞாலம் புகழவே.

This pasuram is a palasthuthi pasuram for the preceding ten pasurams. The Alvar says that he who was born in Thirukkurgur which has thick groves has composed a thousand pasurams in Tiruvoimozhi. Whoever repeats these beautiful ten pasurams composed on Thiruvengadam udaiyan Who measured the three worlds would be blessed with good life and all the people living in this world will envy the good life conferred on them.

In this pasuram, the use of the words "thazl parappi man thaviya Easanai" (தாள் பரப்பி மண தாவிய ஈசனை) actually refers to Ulagalantha Perumal. Perhaps the Alvar wishes to convey the thought that even as Vamana measured all the three worlds and saved all the people, so also Perumal who is standing on Tirumala will protect all of us (Rakshakan).

The words "vazhvu aithi vazhva" (வாழ்வர் வாழ்வெய்தி) used in this pasuram also has got a special significance. The mere word vazhvar (வாழ்வர்) would have been enough to convey the thought that the people will be happy. Why did he have to say "vazhvu aithi vazhvar?" (வாழ்வெய்தி வாழ்வர்) It appears he said so to make it clear that life would give the opportunity to do service to God and that the reward (phala) which one will get after reading these ten pasurams is to be blessed with life which will be full of such opportunities to do kankarya to God.

PASURAM 2948

வார்புன லந்த ணருவி வடதிரு வேங்கடத்தெந்தை
 பேர்பல சொல்லிப் பிதற்றிப் பித்தரென்
 றேபிறர் கூற
 ஊர்பல புக்கும் புகாதும் உலோகர் சிரிக்கநின் ருடி
 ஆர்வம் பெருகிக் குனிப்பார் அமரர்
 தொழப்படு வாரே.

In this pasuram, the alvar exhorts the devotees to sing the praise of Lord Srinivasa Who is residing in Thiruvengadam which is full of famous tanks and beautiful cool water-falls. He asks us to go on singing like mad the myriad names of God. He advises them to utter Bhagavan nama even if there be some mistakes in the utterances. He says: "Don't mind if others mistake you in the process to be mad. Visit a number of towns, all the time praising Lord Srinivasa. In the ecstasy of devotion if you dance and even if the people of this world laugh at you, don't mind it". In short, he advises the devotees to become God-frenzied. He says that when a devotee has such a frenzy of religious belief the nityasuris themselves will come and bend their head in reverence before such ardent devotees, respecting the bhakthi, says the alvar.

This advocacy of frenzied bhakti to God is also reflected in a few statements made by the other alvars. To quote, Kulasekhara alvar said "Paeyare enakku yavarum, yaanum oor paeyane" (பேயரே எனக்கு யாவரும் யானும் ஓர்பேயனே). Literally translated this would mean that the whole world is mad according to his judgment and he is also a mad person. Tirumangai alvar also said, "Unnai atha ariyane ariyae endru unnai azhaikka pithu endru pesukinrar pirar ennai" (உன்னை அதர்! அறியேன் அரியே என்றழிக்க பித்து எண்டு பேசுகின்றார் பிறர் என்னை) Here the alvar says that as he is addressing God and calling Him, the others are saying that he is mad. The alvars also are making it clear that we should not bother about what others think of us. What is of prime importance is to have absolute devotion, faith and bhakti towards Perumal. If, in the process, we have to part company with such non-believers, nothing could be better. This is illustrated in the life of Vibhishana and Milagu azhvan. As is well-known, Vibhishana left Ravana, as the demon king would not listen to the sound advice given by Vibhishana. When he left Lanka, Vibhishana was not sure whether Rama would accept him and whether his saranagathi would be successful. Yet he said, even if Rama does not accept me, what is good is that I have left the avaisnavan i.e. Ravanan. Similarly Milagu aazhvan was great vaishnavite philosopher. Once he went to Thirunarayanapuram i.e. Melkote, Mysore State. The

king was giving gifts i.e. dhanam to all the saivites. But he refused to give it to Milagu azhvan and said that as he was a Sri vaishnava, he could not be a beneficiary. Azhvan then replied that he considered it as a great fortune that somebody atleast recognised him as a srivaishnava and he said that he was happy that the king had left him out of the honours' list.

The alvar in this pasuram uses the words "amarar thozah paduvar" (அமரர தொழப படுவாரே) He says that those who show great faith verging on madness towards God will be held in high regard by the devas. He says that the devas will bend their heads in reverence to such devotees. It is only on the earth that one can enjoy the many qualities of God. In Paramapada it is only the paratva quality which shines. But in the divya desas in this earth, the various other qualities of God like sauseelyam, şaulabhyam, vatsalyam etc. can be seen and enjoyed; and one can sing and dance enjoying such nectar like qualities of Perumal. That is why even the nityasuris who are not able to enjoy the many other facets of Perumal while in Paramapada are lost in admiration and envy the devotees in this earth, provided they are mad with bhakti towards God.

PASURAM 2985

சொன்னால விரோத மிது ஆகிலும் சொல்லுவன
கேணமினோ
என்னாவி லினகவி யானொரு வர்க்கும்
கொடுக்கிலேன்
தெனனா தெனாவென்றுவண்டு முரலதிரு
வேங்கடத்து
என்னானை என்னபபன எம்பெரு மானஉள னாகவே.

In this pasuram, the alvar says those who have the capacity to compose poems should sing only the praises of God. He says that his Lord Who is as majestic as an elephant to him and Who is ever helpful to him, is residing at Tirumala where the beetles are fluttering their wings and producing music (reenkaram). (Reenkaram is roughly the noise made when the beetles fly about). The alvar says: Listen to me even if you do not like what I am going to say. Listen to me. What I am saying is

for your good. Listen intently. Lend me your ears. When Bhaghavan is the only person fit to be praised through my poetry, why should I compose sweet poems on others. I will not compose any poems on others. My sweet music is reserved to none else but Lord Srinivasa. He advises others also to follow his policy and be blessed by the Lord.

Similar thought has been expressed by the famous saint-composer Thiagaraja who said that Narasthuthi is anathema to him. All great men say that Narasthuthi is swaroopa virodham i.e. it is almost as if we are doing a evil turn to God when we praise mere mortals and waste our time.

The alvar says that he will advise even if it is not appreciated by the persons to whom he is offering the advice. Perhaps in his mind he thought of situations where great characters in many of our puranas gave good advice, though it fell on deaf ears. For example, Sitadevi even when she was kept captive in the forest by Ravana advised him to give up his evil ways. Similarly Prahladha did upadesam to his father Hiranyakasipu. Again Vibhishana gave sound advice to Ravana though he would not listen to him. Malyavan the grandfather of Ravana, though a demon himself, also advised Ravana to mend his ways. The alvar says that it is up to him to advise but it is up to us to accept and follow or reject to our cost. That is why he used the word "kanemin" (கண்ணமின) i.e. he says listen intently. Usually to make the message doubly effective one can put the thought in a positive way as also in a negative way. The alvar has adopted similar tactics. He says: I will sing only in praise of God i.e. anvaya mukham. He also says I will not sing about others i.e. vyatirekamukham. This is nothing but two ways of saying the same thing. We will sing only the praise of God. Similar thought is also expressed in Naanmukhan Tiruvandadhi when it is stated as follows:

Marandhum puran thozha mandar (மறந்தும் புறந-
தொழா மாந்தர்) i.e. even by mistake some men will not
praise mere mortals.

While in this pasuram the alvar exhorts the devotees to sing the praise of Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam, it can be said to equally apply as an advice to sing the praise of Lord in all the five forms, i.e. para, vyuha, vibhava, archa and antharyami forms.

PASURAM 3061

மாரிமா றுததண் ணம்மலை வேங்கடத் தண்ணலை
வாரிமா றுதபைம் பூம்பொழில் சூழ்குரு கூர்நகர்
காரிமா றன்சட கோபன் சொல் லாயிரத்து
இப்பத்தால
வேரிமா றுதபூ மேலிருப்பான்வினை தீர்க்குமே.

This pasuram is about Thayar. The alvar says that Thiruvengadamalai is the place which has a cool and salubrious beautiful climate. It rains there in proper time. Lord Srinivasa has chosen to reside in that beautiful spot. Because Nammalvar born in Kurugoor which is full of water resources and flower gardens sang thousand pasurams in praise of the Lord of which these ten pasurams i.e. Veetiruntha Tiruvaimozhi, Thayar Who is sitting in the ever sweet smelling lotus flower will bless all of us and redeem us of all our sins.

It is said that Nanjeeyar used to say that through these ten pasurams, Nammalvar had paripoorna anubhava i.e. complete enjoyment of Bhaghavan. He therefore feels that this set of ten pasurams viz. Veetiruntha Tiruvaimozhi should have come after "soozh visumbadi mukhil" (சூழ் விசும்படி முகில்) which describes the paramapada anubhava of Nammalvar. When Nammalvar visited Thirumoghur, the Kalamega Perumal is believed to have personally escorted the great soul to Paramapada. Visumpadi mukhil pasurams are a description by Nammalvar of the path taken by a mukthathma i.e. blessed soul on its journey to Vaikuntha.

PASURAM 3282

மாலுக்கு வைய மனந்தம னூளற்கு
நீலக் கருநிற மேக நியாயற்கு
கோலச் செந்நாமரைக் கண்ணற்கு 'என்கொங்கல
ரேலக் குழனி இழந்தது சங்கே.

Ten pasurams starting from this pasuram are *thai pasuram* i.e. they are the words expressed by the mother describing the condition of her daughter who was thinking of Perumal all the time and becoming thin. In each pasuram, the alvar ends with the word "izhandadhu" (இழந்தது) i.e. that which was lost. Every one of the pasurams lists out what was lost by the daughter through her limitless bhakti to Perumal, as stated by mother.

The mother says that her daughter is all the time lost in her thoughts, thinking of Perumal. She says that Perumal is very fond of sincere devotees (*adiyan vyamoham*). That God was the one Who took the form of Trivikrama and measured the three worlds. He has beautiful eyes. He has the colour of dark rain bearing clouds. His eyes are beautiful like the petals of a lotus flower. My daughter has given her heart and soul to that Perumal. As a consequence my daughter who has thick hair adorned with scented flowers has lost her bangles as her hands have become thin and wasted away due to her pining for God.

In this pasuram, the word used is "Mal". This represents *aasrutha vyamoham* i.e. she thinks of His beautiful colour, His eyes and then feels that she is not one with God. She became so thin that her bangles slip out of her hands. In Gita in the 9th chapter, in one sloka, the word used is "samoham sarvaboothaeshu". Lord Krishna there says that his love for the devotees will be matched to the degree of the devotees love to Him and I will behave towards such devotees with love and affection.

PASURAM 3283

சங்குவில் வாஸ்தண்டு சக்கரக் கையற்கு
செங்கனி வாய்ச்செய்ய தாமரைக் கண்ணற்கு
கொங்கலர் தண்ணந் துழாய்முடி யானுக்குள்
மங்கை யிழந்தது மாமை நிறமே.

In this pasuram, the mother says that her daughter has been thinking of God with the five weapons and is so sad at not having attained Him and hence has lost her beautiful colour.

She says: My daughter is thinking all the time about Perumal Who is holding the conch and chakra, the sword, the mace and the bow in His hands i.e. panchayudhams. She is lost thinking about His mouth which has the beautiful colour of a ripe fruit. She is thinking about Him Who has lotus like eyes. She is lost dreaming about Perumal Who wears sweet scented basel garland on His head. As a result, my daughter has become pale and has lost her beautiful colour.

The mother refers to the hands of Perumal holding panchayudhas. It is as if she is wondering as to how the Bhaghavan Who has the panchayudhas to destroy the enemies of His devotees and protect them, does not rush to the rescue of her daughter who is pining for Him.

The mother refers to the fruit like mouth of Bhaghavan. Perhaps she is rueing why Perumal Who in His Krishnavatar blessed gopikas has not rushed to the rescue of her daughter.

The mother refers to the lotus like eyes of Perumal and then wonders why Perumal Who with His benevolent kataksha of His eyes had blessed Sabari, Vidhura, Rishipatnis etc. has not blessed her daughter but had instead left her in the lurch.

The mother refers to the basel garland worn by Perumal and says that Perumal has adorned His head with the basel garland and conveying the message to the world that He is the king Who will protect the entire world. Why has this Supreme Protector left my daughter in the lurch, she asks. The basel garland worn on the crown of Perumal is the insignia to show to the world that He is Sarvarakshaka.

PASURAM 3284

நிறங்கரி யானுக்கு நீடுல குண்ட
 திறங்கிளர் வாய்ச்சிறுக் களவ னவற்கு
 கறங்கிய சக்கரக் கையவ னுக்குள்
 பிறங்கிருங் கூந்தல் இழந்தது பீடே.

In this pasuram the mother says that because of unrequited love and devotion that her daughter has towards Perumal, she

has lost her name and fame (Perumai). The mother says that her daughter has fallen in love with Perumal Who had the dark Colour of the rain bearing clouds. He has the mouth which is big enough to swallow the entire world during the pralaya times i.e. the great deluge. He has beautiful coral-like mouth. He is the person who, as a small child, swallowed the entire world and kept it safe in His stomach. He is the person Who is holding in His hand chakra. My daughter with thick tresses has fallen in love with such Perumal and has lost her fair name.

The mother refers to the dark-hued colour of Perumal. It is as if she says that her daughter who has boundless affection to Perumal has become pale and lost her colour but He has dark glistening colour which, she feels, is very unfair.

The mother refers to the Perumal having protected the world by swallowing it during the pralaya times and having earned the name and fame as a protector but she wonders why that rakshtvam i.e. capacity to protect has not been extended in her daughter's case.

The mother refers to the great achievement of God when after having swallowed the world, He lay down like a child on a tiny banyan leaf. She wonders why He has not condescended to protect her one small daughter when He saved the entire worlds?

The mother refers to the holding of the whirling chakra in His hand by Perumal. She perhaps is thinking of the Kasi dhahanam incident, Sisupala vadham, Narakasura vadham, Jayadratha vadham, Mali vadham, the vadham of the crocodile in Gajendra moksha incident. When Perumal Who used chakra in all these cases and rushed to the rescue of various devotees, why is it that He is not coming to the rescue of my daughter, she asks. It is also as if she says that Perumal Who holds in His hand the powerful chakra captivated her with that enchanting sight but having captivated her, He is now rebuffing her with His indifference. She wonders why.

PASURAM 3285

பீடுடை நான்முகனைப் படைத் தானுக்கு
மாடுடைவையம் அளந்த மணுளற்கு

நாடுடை மன்னர்க்குத் தூதுசெல் நம்பிக்கு என்
பாடுடை யல்குல் இழந்தது பண்பே.

In this pasuram, the mother says that her daughter has lost her panbu i.e. the quality of modesty of a chaste woman.

The mother cries that because her daughter has fallen in love with Perumal Who has Brahma, the Creator in His nab-hikamalam, the beautiful Perumal Who as Vamana measured this entire world with His two steps and the Perumal Who went as an ambassador on behalf of Pandavas, she has lost her streethvam (an attribute which is an admixture of gentleness, honour, chastity and nobility).

The mother refers to Perumal having Brahma in His nab-hikamalam. It is as if she is saying that God displayed to her daughter this paratvam and captivated the little girl's heart.

The mother refers to Vamanavatar. Perumal as Vamana asked for 3 feet of land and covered the entire world with two foot steps and then asked where is the land for the third feet of land that was promised. Finally Bali chakravarthi who had never worshipped at the feet of Perumal was blessed by Perumal keeping His one foot on his head. The mother therefore says that the God Who blessed with His tiruvadi, Mahabali who never worshipped at His feet is somehow reluctant to accept her daughter who knows nothing else but His tiruvadi.

The mother refers to the incident when during Krishna-vatar Perumal went as an ambassador of peace on behalf of Pandavas. Perumal was then known as Pandava doothar. He then displayed His saulabhya guna. She wonders why such Perumal is not coming to protect her daughter. The word used by the alvar to refer to the Pandava dhoothu incident is "nadudai mannarkku" (நாடுடை மன்னர்க்கு). The Pandavas who were in the forest had lost their kingdom. Yet Perumal felt that they were the people who were fit to rule the kingdom i.e. Nadu aala thakunthavar. alvar therefore follows this abiprayam (line of thought) of Perumal and refers to Pandavas as "nadu udai mannar" (நாடுடை மன்னர்).

PASURAM 3286

பண்புடை வேதம் பயந்த் பரனுக்கு
 பண்புரை வையம் இடந்த வராகற்கு
 தென்புனற் பள்ளிஎம் தேவபி ரானுக்கு என்
 கண்புனை கோதை இழந்தது. கற்பே.

In this pasuram, the mother weeps that her daughter has lost her nanam (நாணம்). The mother says that her daughter who has beautiful tresses which will captivate the eye of the beholder lost her gnana (arivu) because she fell in love with Perumal Who rescued the Vedas and restored them to Brahma and Who rescued the Mother Earth from the bottom of the ocean taking on the form of Varahamurti and the Perumal Who is lying down on Adishesha in Tirupparkadal and the Perumal Who is known as Devadi deva.

Perumal has done many things to many and protected many. To think that Perumal may not come to her rescue and to doubt His bonafides itself is an indication of having lost her nanam (நாணம்).

The mother refers to Perumal having rescued the vedas. As is known, during pralaya vedas were lost. At the time of creation, Perumal did upadesam of the vedas to Brahma and thus gave Him gnana. Again when the vedas were stolen by the demons, it was Perumal Who rescued them and gave them back to Brahma. The mother therefore asks that Perumal Who gave gnanadrushti to those who had lost it and Perumal Who gave knowledge has robbed her daughter of whatever gnana she had. The mother asks why? Oh God why?

The use of the words "Manpurai vaiyam izhantha varaharku" (மண்புரை வையம் கிடந்த வராகற்கு) also has a significance. It is as if the mother is asking why Perumal Who went to the rescue of another lady i.e. Bhoomi piratti by manifesting Himself as Varahamurti has not come to the rescue of her daughter.

The use of the words "Then punalpalli" (தென்புனல்பள்ளி) refers to the yogic nidra pose of the Lord in Tirupparkadal. It

is as if the mother is saying that Perumal Who is all the time thinking as to how to create the world and protect it from the ills has failed in His duty in not having protected one of His creations i.e. her daughter.

The use of the words "en deva piranukku" (எம்தேவ பிரா-
னுக்கு) refers to the name of the God as Devadhi deva. The mother says that Perumal Who has done many things which the other Devas could not do and the Perumal Who has helped the other Devas, has not shown kindness towards her daughter who wants to attain Him. The mother wonders why.

PASURAM 3287

கற்பகக் காவன நற்பல தோளற்கு
பொற்சூடர்க் குன்றன்ன பூந்தண் முடியற்கு
நற்பல தாமரை நாளம்லர்க் கையற்கு என்
விற்புரு வக்கொடி தோற்றது மெய்யே.

In this pasuram the alvar describes the state of mind of the lady. The language is couched in such a manner as if the mother is describing the effect of her daughter's love towards God. The mother says that her daughter has lost control over her mind and body because of the love that she has towards God (paravasam).

The mother says, "O Perumal! You have many shoulders. They are like a grove of kalpaka vruksha. You have beautiful hair. They are shining bright like a golden mountain. Your delicate hands are like freshly blossomed lotus flowers. My daughter has fallen in love with the Perumal of such enchanting captivating beauty. My daughter has beautiful eye brows which look like a bow. She is like a tender creeper. Her unrequited love has made her lose her sense. She has no control over herself".

In this pasuram, while describing the shoulders of Perumal the words used are "karpaka kavana narpala tholarku" (கற்ப-
கக் காவன நற்பல தோளற்கு). The mother compares the chathurbuja of God to a grove of kalpaka vruksha. Kalpaka vrukshas are known for their liberally granting and fulfilling the desires of the people. The mother perhaps is indirectly

hinting that the Perumal Who has got shoulders like kalpaka viruksha should grant this wish of her daughter to attain Him. The use of the words "narpala" instead of using the specific word "chathurbuja" gives room for the interpretation that God has got more than the four shoulders. For example in Varahapurana when God rescued the Bhoomi devi from the depths of the ocean, He is described as having one hundred hands. When Perumal took the viswaroopa, He is described as having thousand shoulders. Thirumangai alvar also refers to the Perumal of Thirumaliruncholai as "ayiram tholinan". Thus, the mother asks the rhetorical question O Ye God! You Who have so many hands and so many shoulders! Why are You delaying responding to the prayers of my daughter and extending a helping hand and offering a shoulder as support?

While referring to the beauty of the hair of Perumal the words used in this pasuram are "por sudar kundrenna poonthan mudiyarku" (பொற் சுடர்க் குன்றன் பூந்தண் முடியற்கு) These words convey the meaning that the hair on God's head is full of tejas. The lady has lost her heart to such a Thiruabhishekam (hair). The golden hue shows He is the Nayakan of the entire world. The mother wonders why is it a person who is so bright is so slow in fulfilling my daughter's desire? Why is there this indifference (upeksha).

In this pasuram while describing the delicate hands of Perumal, the words used are "Narpala thamarai naal malar kayarkku" (நற்பல தாமரை நாள் மலர்க் கையற்கு)

The mother says the thirukkai i.e. the holy hands of God are soft and delicate like the lotus flowers. Why is it that He does not hold my daughter's hand and answer her prayers?

While referring to her daughter, the mother uses the words "pen kodi" i.e. she describes her to be a creeper. Any creeper needs a support. She is therefore requesting God to be the support for her daughter who is a tender creeper.

PASURAM 3288

மெய்யமர் பல்கலன் நன்கணிந் தானுக்கு
பையர விளணைப் பள்ளியி னானுக்கு
கையொடு கால் செய்ய கண்ணபி ரானுக்கு என்
தையல் இழந்தது தன்னுடைச் சாயே.

This is yet another of the pasurams where the mother lists out what all her daughter has lost because of her unrequited love for Perumal. In this pasuram she says her daughter has lost her lavanya (delicate beauty).

In this pasuram she says that her daughter has lost her beauty because of the love she has towards Perumal Who is bedecked with jewels and ornaments befitting His beautiful body and Who is lying down in yoga nidra on the many hooded Adishesha and Whose feet are red in colour.

In this pasuram, the mother specifically refers to the number of ornaments worn by Perumal. Perialvar in his pasuram 73 also describes the beauty of the abharanas worn by God. It is interesting to recall here the abharanas enumerated by Perialvar. He says that Perumal is wearing the following abharanas viz. Sengamala kazhalil seetri sitridazh pole viralil serthikazh yazhigalum, kinkiniyu araiyil Thangiya Pon vadamum, taala nan madulaiyin poovadu pon maniyum, modiramum, kiriyum mangala aimpadaiyum, thol valaiyum, kuzhayum, makaramura, valigalum", Suttiyum othhilaga"

செங்கமலக் கழலில் சிற்றிதழ் போல் விரலில்
 சேர்திகழாழிகளும் கிண்கிணியும், அரையில்
 தங்கிய பொன்வடமும், தாள நன் மாதுளையின்
 பூவொடு பொன்மணியும் மோதிரமும் கிறியும்
 மங்கல ஐம்படையும் கோள் வளையும் குழையும்
 மகரமும் வாளிகளும் சுட்டியும் ஒத்திலக.

Meaning:

The Tender lotus petal like toes in the Lotus like Lords feet are adorned with rings;

The tiny bells adorning the anklet makes a sweet jingling noise (kin kini);

The golden belt adorning the waist has tiny pomogranate flower like golden lockets and golden beads stringed on it;

The fingers in the hands are all adorned with rings;

He has an aimpadai necklace round His neck (i.e. Pancha ayudham amulets)

He sports Makara Kundalas in His ears;
The chutti is adorning His forehead.

It is believed that the Perumal wears all these ornaments in order to please Thayar. So the mother asks why has He not chosen to please my daughter?

In this pasuram, the mother specifically refers to the kainkarya rendered by Thiru Anantalvan when he acts as the divine couch for Perumal. It is as if the mother says that her daughter is willing to do all kainkaryas to Perumal like Anantalvan if only He would give her salvation. While referring to the delicate hands and feet of the Lord, the words used in this pasuram are "kaiyodu kaal seyya" (கொயொடு கால் செய்ய) The body of Perumal is usually described as having the dark blue colour of a mountain (neela malai). But the hands and the feet have a tinge of delicate light red colour of the lotus flower. Thus, the dark background and the tender beautiful colour of the hands and the feet acts as a contrast which is usually referred to as "para bhaga kanthi".

PASURAM 3289

சாயக் குருந்தம் ஓசித்த தமிழற்கு
மாயச் சகடம் உதைத்த மணாளற்கு
பேயைப் பிணம்படப் பாலுண் பிராலுக்கு என்
வாசக் குழலி இழந்தது மாண்பே.

In this pasuram, the mother says that because of the unrequited love of her daughter to Perumal, her daughter who has beautiful scented hair has lost her dignity and greatness (perumai).

The mother says that her daughter who has beautiful scented tresses has given her heart to the Perumal Who is none other than the person Who destroyed the demoness Poothana (the well known incident relating to Krishnavatar). The mother continues that the Perumal to Whom her daughter has given her heart is none other than the person Who brought down the gigantic karunda trees (This again is an incident that occurred during Krishnavatar). He, she continues, is the person Who

kicked with His feet the maya chakra which was a demon in disguise (this again is an incident in Krishnavatar). It is said that Yasodha kept Krishna near a cart wheel. Kamsa who was waiting to avail of any opportunity to destroy the child sent an asura to kill the child. Seeing that the child was left unattended near the cart wheel, the asura assumed the form of the cart wheel and started moving so that the child could be crushed under the wheel. But Krishna knew the danger that was lurking. He is said to have kicked with His tiny feet the cart wheel. It is said that the kick left a mark on His feet.

The mother therefore says that her daughter has given her heart to this Adviteeath i.e. unequalled and matchless person, the great Perumal and is allowing her body to get wasted because her devotion has not been rewarded.

PASURAM 3290

மாண்பமை கோலத்து எம் மாயக் குறளற்கு
 சேண் சுடர்க் குன்றன்ன செஞ்சுடர் மூர்த்திக்கு
 காண் பெருந் தோற்றத்து எம் காகுத்த நம்பிக்கு
 என்,
 பூண்டுகளை மென்முலை தோற்றது பொற்பே.

In this pasuram, the mother says that her bejewelled daughter lost her heart to Perumal and in the process lost her own beauty.

The mother says that her beautiful bedecked daughter has lost her beauty because she has lost her heart to Ramapiran (Sri Rama) Who is effulgent and is majestic like a mountain. He is the Vamana Who has captivated me.

The mother specifically refers to Vamanavatar here because God when He appeared as a brahmachari in the court of Mahabali is said to have been very beautiful to look at. Perhaps she also is wondering as to why the Perumal Who manifested Himself as Vamana and went a begging to Bali chakravarthi in order to help others is not as helpful towards her daughter who is suffering because of her love to God.

The mother uses the words "Yen kakutha nambikku" (என் காகுத்த நம்பிக்கு) while referring to the Perumal with Whom her daughter is in love. These words refer to Rama as He is the person Who was born in Kakutha vamsam.

PASURAM 3291

பொற்பமை நீள்முடிப் பூந்தண் துழாயற்கு
மற்பொரு தோளுடை மாயப் பிராலுக்கு
நிற்பன பல்லுரு வாய்நிற்கு மாயற்கு என்
கற்புடை யாட்டி இழந்தது கட்டே.

In this pasuram, the mother says that her intelligent daughter has lost all her sense because of the depth of her love towards Perumal. The mother says that her daughter has lost her streethva qualities (i.e. the great qualities of a woman like humility, obedience, shyness etc.) She says that the Perumal with whom her daughter has fallen in love is the person Who wears the cool basil garlands. He is the person Who has the strong shoulders with which He was able to fight with the mallars (mallars are wrestlers). She says He is also the person Who performs unbelievable feats. He is the Creation. He is Himself the animate as well as the inanimate objects in this world (sthavara jangama porul). He is blemishless.

The mother by referring to the fight that Perumal had with mallars is referring to an incident that occurred in Krishnavatar. Kamsa arranged for a vil vizha. He invited Krishna and Balarama to his court. First they had to fight with an elephant known as Kuvalayapeetam. After overpowering the elephant as a second line of defence, Kamsa had kept the mallars i.e. wrestlers ready. It is said that when Krishna fought with the mallars and defeated them, He did so with great ease. To describe how easily He defeated the mallars, it is said that even the garland worn by Krishna did not get torn and the sandal paste which he had on His brow also remained in tact! The mother therefore says that this Perumal has got the mighty shoulders which had earlier defeated the wrestlers. Perialvar also uses the words "sandani thol chaturan" (Pasuram 343) and thus lost himself in the beauty of the majestic shoulders of Perumal.

The words used by the mother in this pasuram viz. "nirpana palluruvai nirkum" (நிற்பன பல்லுறு வாய் நிற்கும்) means that Perumal is many things both animate and inanimate and yet He is one and He is all while He is many. These words reflect the Visishtadvaida philosophy and it conveys very clearly the idea that God is Himself the Creator and also the Creation. He is antaryamin. He is to be found in each and everything.

PASURAM 3292

கட்டெழில் சோலைநல் வேங்கட வாணனை
கட்டெழில் தென்குரு கூர்ச்சட கோபன் சொல்
கட்டெழி லாயிரத்து இப்பத்தும் வல்லவர்
கட்டெழில் வானவர் போகமுண் பாரே.

This pasuram is in the nature of a phalastuthi pasuram. It would have been noticed that in all the ten pasurams that preceded this, the mother only refers to the Perumal, the beauty of the Perumal and the Perumal to whom her daughter has lost her heart but nowhere is the name of the Perumal specifically mentioned. It makes many wonder as to how these ten pasurams of Nammalvar are linked up and referred to as pasurams sung on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. The key to that question lies in this phalastuthi pasuram where the alvar mentions the name of Tirumalaiyan.

In this pasuram, he says that the alvar Who has composed these ten pasurams was born in beautiful Thirukurugoor also known as alvar Thirunagari and these pasurams have been composed by him on the Perumal Who resides in Thiruvengadamalai which is filled with beautiful groves. The alvar says that whoever repeats these ten pasurams in that bunch of thousand pasurams composed by him will be blessed with the same joy and anandam that the Nityasuris get when they are with the Perumal. Thus, in the concluding pasuram the alvar has made it clear that the ten pasurams starting from 3282 to 3291 are the pasurams composed by him on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala (Vengadavanan).

PASURAM 3326

உலக முண்ட பெருவாயா! உலப்பில் கீர்த்தி
யம்மானே

நிலவும் சுடர்க்கு மொளிமூர்த்தி! நெடியாய்!
 அடியே னாருயிரே!
 திலத முலகுக் காய்நின்ற திருவேங் கடத்து ஏம்
 பெருமானே!
 குல தொல் லடியேன் உனபாதம் கூடுமாறு
 கூறயே.

This pasuram occurs in 10th Thiruvaimozhi. In one of his earlier pasurams (No. 3315) Nammalvar had requested the Perumal to appear before him and give him darshan atleast once. Apparently, in spite of the prayer of Nammalvar, Bhaghavan did not give him darshan. The alvar was therefore sad and desolate. He then said that people living now did not have an opportunity to see Rama and Krishna and worship them personally. He says that as if to make up for this lost opportunity, the same Perumal Who manifested Himself as Rama and Krishna is today living in our midst as Thiruvengadamudaiyan at Tirumala. He says that the nityasuris also go to Tirumala to worship the Perumal. We i.e. the naras can go to Tirumala and worship the deity. The hunters as well as the animals in the forests in that hill also have an opportunity to worship the Perumal. He says that He sought the intervention of Thayar and fell at the feet of Thiruvengadamudaiyan and impressed upon Him his ananya gathitvam i.e. a situation where he has no where else to go and none else to help him and through his abject surrender seeks saranagathi. In the following ten pasurams starting with pasuram 3326 he is seeking saranagathi. In this Thiruvaimozhi in the first nine pasurams the alvar mentions the greatness of Bhaghavan and in the tenth pasuram he seeks saranagathi at His feet thro' the Purushakara of Thayar.

Let us now see what the alvar has to say in pasuram 3326. i.e. first of the set of these ten pasurams.

The alvar says,

"O Thiruvengadamudaiyan!

You are standing in Tirumala which is a crown jewel for
 the entire world

You are the great and the Supreme Lord

You radiate brilliant effulgence
 You are immeasurable
 You possess a mouth which is big enough to swallow the
 entire world during the pralaya times
 I am Your slave for many generations
 Please bless that I attain Your divine feet."

The alvar in this pasuram refers to God as "Ulagam unda peruvaya". Perhaps he uses these words to say that the pain he is experiencing in not seeing the Perumal and in not attaining the Perumal is similar to the pain that people had during the pralaya time when flood water was swirling all round and destroying every living being. The alvar says that the trouble that one experienced during the pralaya is similar to what he is experiencing now in not having attained salvation. He is giving a broad hint to Perumal that his fame as a Protector and never failing succour will become greater when He rescues him from the swirling waters of existence in this world. It is as if he is telling Perumal that He will be regarded as a true Apathbandavan, Apatrakshakan only when He rescues alvar from the worldly ills and blesses him with moksha. These are the interpretations given by Nampillai in his Eettu. Nampillai further says that the alvar is asking the question, "O God! Will You come to the rescue only if the entire world is in danger? If I who am living in this world am torn asunder by similar problems will You not rush to my rescue? Will You rescue only those who are getting drowned in the pralaya waters? Will You not rescue those who are drowning in this ocean which is samsara? Will You rescue only if we do not cry out for succour and help? If we pray and seek Your help will You not come to our rescue? Will You bestow on us Your kataksha only if there is danger to this body? Will You not bestow on us Your kataksha if this atma of ours is suffering? Will You come to our rescue i.e. raksha only if we are caught in the jala pralaya i.e. swirling waters of pralaya times? Will You not rescue us when we are caught in the viraha pralaya i.e. swirling waters of disgust with life? Will You come to our rescue only if there is extraneous or external danger? Will You not come to our rescue when the danger lies within us? Are You thinking that only those who have not sought saranagathi

should be rescued? Those who have surrendered absolutely and abjectly and sought saranagathi at Your feet, don't You think You should rescue them also?" Nampillai therefore says that the soul of alvar is asking all these soul searching inconvenient questions just because he felt that God has not as yet blessed him with salvation and had not helped him to attain His lotus feet.

The word "peruvaya" (பெருவாயா) speaks of Bhaghavan's quality of Parippu. Parippu is the feeling where one thinks and feels that one has not done enough for the devotees. It is said that though He renders great help to His devotees, God always feels that there is much more remaining to be done. To illustrate, He, it was, Who was responsible for ensuring that the Kauravas failed in committing mana bangam to Drowpathi in the crowded court. The Perumal it was, Who ensured that Duryodhana and his wicked brothers get defeated and Dharmaputra regains his lost kingdom. It was He Who ensured that Drowpathi fulfilled her vow to tie her hair into a knot only after the wicked Dussasanan is killed. Thus, many are the examples of timely help rendered by the great God. Yet when Krishnavatar was over and God was returning to Paramapada, He did not say that He had done what all requires to be done. He is said to have uttered the words "nathi swasthamana yayow" i.e. He said "No, I am not returning with perfect sense of satisfaction with having done all that needed to be done".

The use of the words "ulappil keerthi ammane" (உலப்பில கீர்த்தி அம்மானே) conveys the meaning that He is the great one Whose fame cannot be measured and Whose fame has no boundries, Whose great qualities are limitless. His qualities i.e. gunas are so great that even though some come to curse Him they go back blessing Him. To illustrate, when Soorpanaka met Karan (Karan is Ravana's cousin and her watchful guard) with blood dripping from her face with her ears and nose cut, instead of cursing Rama and speaking ill of Him, she related to Karan the beauty of Rama. The words that she used at that time were 'tharunow roopa Sampannow'. She was lost in the beauty of Rama though He and Lakshmana had disfigured her and humiliated her. Similarly, after Vali's vadham, Tara,

the wife of Vali did not curse Rama. Instead she praised the Godly qualities of Rama. Yet again we find that Mandodari even after the death of Ravana caused by Rama's arrow, she looked at Rama and said "tamasah paramo dhatha". Even on that occasion she recognised Rama as a mahatma. All these go to prove the fact that God's qualities are so great that even the enemies praise Him. This is a quality which only God has. This is referred to as "ulappil keerthi" (உலப்பில் கீர்த்தி). In this pasuram, Perumal is referred to as "Sudar soozha oli murthi". (சுடர் சூழ் ஒளிமூர்த்தி) This conveys the meaning that God is eternally beautiful. The mortals may be beautiful for some time. But age finally takes its toll and beauty becomes the thing of the past. But not so with God Who is ever effulgent and perennially beautiful. Further, He is Tejomurthi because there is no admixture of rajo guna or tamo guna in the Lord. His is an undiluted suddha sathvam.

The alvar uses the word "Nediyai" (நெடியாய்) while referring to God. This means that God is the only person Who is fit to be called as Mahan. The vedas say "Vedaham aetham Purusham Mahantham" i.e. the God is the only mahathma. Similar thoughts are expressed by Visvamitra when he asked Dasaratha to send Rama with Him without any hesitation. He then said "aham vedmi mahathmanam". The alvar refers to Perumal as his very life. The words used are "adiyen aaruyire" (அடியேன் ஆருயிரே). He says life cannot be separated from the body. Similarly, I i.e. the alvar cannot be separated from Perumal. Neither can Perumal have an independent existence without the alvar. The alvar by his effective choice of words conveys clearly the thought that Perumal is his very life-breath.

While referring to Tirumala, the alvar uses the word "thilagam ulagukkai ninra" (திலகம் உலகுக்காய் நின்ற) He conveys the thought that the most precious jewel in the earth is Thiruvengadam. Some people also say that alvar conveys the meaning through these words that Thiruvengadam is like the thilagam (kunkumam) for Bhoomi piratti. Both are alluring interpretations.

While pleading with God to give him salvation, the alvar says that for generations, he has been serving God. It is as if he is asking God that he who is serving him for generations has no other place to go except to seek the protection of the divine feet of Perumal. The alvar is beseeching and pleading with Perumal to give him one word of assurance or a nod of acceptance and assure him of salvation.

PASURAM 3327

கூறாய் நீறாய் நிலனாகிக் கொடுவல் லசுரர்
 குலமெல்லாம்
 சீறூ எறியும் திருநேமி வலவா! தெய்வக்கோமானே
 சேறூர் சுனைத்தா மரைசெந்தீ மலரும்
 திருவேங் கடத்தானே!
 ஆறூ வன்பி லடியேன்உன் னடிசேர் வண்ணம்
 அருளாயே.

In this pasuram, the alvar again pleads with Perumal asking Him to bless him with the necessary wisdom (arul) to attain His divine feet.

The alvar says, "O Perumal! You are the Supreme being. You held in Your hand the Sudarsana chakra. This disc has destroyed and burnt to ashes the most troublesome asura hordes. Even after such acts of destruction razing the evil forces to ground and making them one with the dust it has not lost its shine and dazzle and brightness. You, My Lord are residing at Tirumala, where there are ponds where in the midst of dirt the lotusses bloom. It appears as if these red lotuses are spots of red blazing fire in the midst of water. O Lord of Tirumala! I have boundless affection and love towards You. I wish to attain Your feet. Please bless me with the wisdom necessary to attain Your Thiruvadi (divine feet)".

The alvar in this pasuram refers to the holding of the effulgent bright chakrattalvar in His right hand. He says that even after having destroyed the asuras, the disc i.e. Chakrattalvar is glowing red with anger. The alvar says, You Who hold such a Chakrattalwar in Your hand, can't You destroy my enemies who are standing in the path of my attaining Your divine feet?

He appeals to the God Who is holding the chakra in His hand to destroy all the obstacles in his path to attain the divine feet.

The alvar refers to Perumal as "Deiva komane" (தெய்வக் கோமானே). This could be interpreted to mean that God is the Supreme i.e. Parama purusha. It could also be interpreted to say that God is the "Thalaivan" (master) of nityasuris.

While describing Tirumala the alvar uses the words "serar sunai thamarai senthee malarum Tirvengadathanae" (சேரூர் சுனைத்தா மரைசெந்தீ மலரும் திருவேங்கடத்தானே) This refers to the lotus filled tanks in Tirumala. In Sanskrit lotus is referred to as Pankajam. "Pankham" in sanskrit means slushy mud. Even when the pond is filled with the dirty mud and moss the lotus flowers blossom in plenty. Nampillai in his Eettu says that these lotuses which alvar says are looking like spots of fire are perhaps lamps which are burning not with the traditional oil, but by water (இது எண்ணையாலே எரியும் விளக்கல்ல நீராலே எரியும் விளக்கு - ஈடு) The alvar says that he is bound by limitless affection towards God. The words used are "Ara anbil adiyen" (ஆரா அன்பில் அடியேன்). Through these words the alvar conveys the meaning that his affection and love towards God is limitless. It could never become less. The alvar says that water in the tanks may dry up. But his love towards God will never dry. He therefore pleads with God to take him in His arms and bless him with salvation. He is as good as saying that Perumal's residing in Tirumala will be fruitful only if He gives him salvation. If You, O! Perumal do not bless me with salvation, where is the need for You to come down from Paramapada to Tirumala?

PASURAM 3328

வண்ண மருள்சொ ளணிமேக வண்ணா! மாய
வம்மானே!

எண்ணம் புகுந்து தித்திக்கும் அமுதே
இமையோ ரதிபதியே

தெண்ண லருவி மணிபொன்முத் தலைக்கும்
திருவேங் கடத்தானே!

அண்ண லே! உள னடிசேர அடியேற்கு
ஆவா வென்னாயே.

In this pasuram Nammalvar requests God to have pity on him and give him salvation at His lotus feet. He says

Oh Perumal! You are the embodiment of kindness;
 You have the beautiful colour of a cloud;
 You are the embodiment of excellence;
 You have entered my mind and are sweet like nectar;
 O Devadi deva! You are residing at Thiruvengadamalai
 which is full of water falls with crystal clear waters.
 The flowing water brings along with it precious rubies,
 gold and pearls.
 O Lord You are my master!
 Hava pity on me and bless that I attain your divine feet.

In this pasuram, the words "Vannamarul kol pole animegha vanna (வண்ணமருள் கொளனிமேக வண்ண) are capable of two interpretations. Vannam + arul would mean that God is the embodiment of kindness. If the word is interpreted as Vanna + marul, it would mean that He is a person Who completely captivates the mind of those who see Him (kanbor nenjai mayangumbadiyaga seidhal (காண்பார் நெஞ்சை மயங்கும் படியாகச் செய்த)

The Alvar refers to God as nectar i.e. amrith. The divine nectar is available only for the devas. But the Lord at Thiruvengadam is a nectar that is available not only to the devas but also to the mere mortals like us. This is an amruth which enters the heart and the mind and sweetens the entire atmosphere. In another place, this Alvar says Aravamudhai adiyen aavi agame thithippai (ஆராவமுதை அடியேன் ஆவி அகமே தித்திப்பை) meaning You are the honey like sweetness in my life.

PASURAM 3329:

ஆவா! என்னாது உலகத்தை யலைக்கும் அசுரர்
 வாணுள் மேல்
 தீவாய் 'வாளிமழை பொழிந்த சிலையா! திருமா
 மகள் கேள்வா!

தேவா! சுரர்கள் முனிக்கணங்கள் விரும்பும்
 திருவேங்கடத்தானே!
 பூவார் கழல்கள் அருவினையேன் பொருந்து மாறு
 புணராயே.

Freely translated this pasuram is as follows:

Oh Deva, O Lord, the beloved of the Thayar!

Oh You Who reside in Thiruvengadamalai so that the devas and the munis in huge numbers could come and worship You;

You hold the bow sarnga which lets loose arrows which emit fire and thereby kill without showing any pity the hoards of demons who caused trouble to the people living in the world.

O Lord! my only prayer is that You must confer on this sinner the anugraha of attaining Your flower bedecked Thiruvadi (divine lotus feet).

The use of the word "Thirumamakal kale va" (திருமாம-
 கள் கேள்வா) the reference to the use of sarnga bow to kill the hoards of demons, makes it clear that the Alvar is having Ramavatar in his mind. It was Kothanda Rama who fought single handed against fourteen thousand demons. He let loose a shower of arrows and killed Karadhooshana and other demons. Sita Piratti who saw this victory said "Than drushtva satru hantharam maharshinam sukhavaham babhoova srushta Vaidehi bartaram parish aswaje". Vaidehi embraced Her husband Rama when she saw that He had killed all the enemies and thereby helped the rishis.

Besides the use of the words "Thirumamakal kaleva Deva" makes it clear that Perumal becomes great only by association with Thirumamakal i.e. Thayar. In Sanskrit this concept is conveyed beautifully by using the words "Sradhdhaya devo devatvam asnuthae" i.e. the quality of devatvam is attained by God only when He is associated with Thayar. The use of the words "Surargal muni ganangal virumbum Thiruvengadam" (சுரர்கள் முனிக்கணங்கள் விரும்பும் திருவேங்கடம்,) makes it clear that not only the mere mortals worship Lord Srinivasa but even

the devas like Brahma, Shiva, Indra etc. and the rishis like Sanaka, Sanandana and others worship the Lord at Tirumala.

Again the use of the words "Poovar kazhalgal" (பூவரீர் கழல்கள்) could convey two sets of meaning. One refers to the flower bedecked Thiruvadi of God. The other meaning could be that His Thiruvadi is as soft as the flower. Usually while referring to the divine feet of Thiruvengadamudaiyan, the words used are "Poovar kazhalgal". While referring to the Thiruvadi of Ranganatha the words used are "Thiru polindha sevadi" (திருப்பொலிந்த சேவடி) i.e. the beautiful thiruvadi which has the kataksham of Lakshmi. While referring to the Thiruvadi of Deva Perumal of Kanchi the words used are "thuyararu sudaradi" (துயரறு சுடரடி) i.e. the Thiruvadi which removes the obstacles of the devotees.

PASURAM 3330

புணரர் நின்ற மரமேழ்அள் றெய்த ஒருவில்
வலவாவோ!
புணரேய் நின்ற மரமிரண்டிள் நடுவே போள
முதல் வாவோ!
திணரார் மேகமெனக் களிற்று சேரும் திருவேங்
கடத்தானே!
திணரார் சார்ங்கத்து உனபாதம் சேர்வதடியே
எந்நாளே?

In this pasuram, the Alvar refers to the Rama and Krishna avatar and then asks God as to when he will attain salvation at His divine Feet. Freely translated the pasuram runs as follows:

Oh warrior! During Ramavatar You split the seven sal trees with a single arrow

O Moola Purusha! You (during Krishnavatar) crawled in between two trees and pulled them both down.

O Lord Srinivasa residing at Thiruvengadam which has hordes of dark coloured powerful elephants which look like a cluster of dark clouds.

O Lord Who hold the powerful sarnga bow;

Please let me know which is the day when I will reach Your divine lotus feet.

The use of the words "thinarar megam yena" (தினாரார்) could be explained in two ways. It could mean that elephants come crowding like clouds or it can also be said that black clouds come crowding like elephants at Thiruvengadam! Either way it is evident that Thiruvengadam is full of clouds as well as elephants.

PASURAM 3331

எந்நாளே! நாம் மண்ணாளந்த இணைத்தா
 மரைகள் காண்பதற் கென்று
 எந்நா னும்நின்று இமையோர்க ளேத்தி
 இறைஞ்சி இனமினமாய்
 மெய்ந்நா மனத்தால் வழிபாடு செய்யும்
 திருவேங்கடத்தானே!
 மெய்ந்நா னெய்தி எந்நாள்! உன் னடிக்கண்
 அடியேன மேவுதவதே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again pleads with God for an early date of deliverance from this samsara.

The Alvar says Thiruvengadamalai is the place to which the devas and Nityasuris come in huge numbers, and offer worship the Lord in thought, word and deed and pray for salvation. They wonder as to which is the day when they will have a darshan of divine lotus feet which measured the three worlds. O Lord of Thiruvengadam, please let me know when I Your humble slave, will attain Your lotus feet.

The use of the word "mei na manathal vazhipadi seyyum" (மெய்ந்நா மனத்தால் வழிபாடு செய்யும்) refers to the different ways by which one could praise the Lord. We could worship the Lord with our body, by doing pradakshina and by Anjali i.e. folding of our hands. We can worship the Lord with our tongue by singing His praises. We can worship the Lord with our mind by thinking of Him (Dhayana). Whenever saranagathi is sought, it is customary to refer to the role of Perumal as Thirivikrama when He measured the three worlds with His divine feet. Bhavishya purana while speaking about the greatness of saranagathi uses the following words "Loka

vikrantha saranow saranamthae vrajam vibho" i.e. O Perumal! the divine feet of Yours which measured the three worlds is my succour and saviour. I seek saranagathi at such feet. In Thiruvaimozhi the sixth decad is known as saranagathi saram. In that Thiruvaimozhi in many places the following words occur:

Malukku vaiyyam alandha manalarku (Thirumal Who measured the three worlds), Agal pol vayyam alandha mayan yen appan (my father Who measured the wide world), Thavi vaiyam konda kazhal thamaraigal (the feet which are like the lotus in a tank). Thus, the Alvar makes it clear that the Thiruvadi of Thiruvengadamudaiyan are the feet which measured the worlds and we should pray to those feet for saranagathi.

PASURAM 3332

அடியேன் மேவி யமர்கின்ற அமுதே! இமையோ
ரதிபதியே!
கொடியா வடுபுள் ளுடையானே! கோலக்
கனிவாய்ப் பெருமானே!
செடியார் வினைகள் தீர் மருந்தே! திருவேங்
கடத்தெம் பெருமானே!
நொடியார் பொழுதும் உனபாதம காண
நோலா தாற்றேனே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar is getting impatient and says that he cannot wait any longer to attain his sole objective of attaining the divine lotus feet. He says

"Oh Lord Srinivasa! You are the amrith which I want to enjoy;

O Devadi deva! Who has on His flag the Garuda which will destroy the enemies;

O Perumal! with a beautiful red mouth which looks like a ripened fruit;

You Oh God are the medicine which will cure my ills and sins. I have not performed any nombu i.e. vratha for attaining Your divine feet. Yet like the people who have performed the vrathas I am also impatient and cannot wait even for a minute more for attaining Your lotus feet.

The Alvar uses the word "adiyen mevi amarukinra amud-hae" (அடியேன் மேவி யமர்கின்ற அமுதே). This is a title given by Alvar to the God. He makes it appear as if the devas who have tasted amrith in reality have really tasted only salt and that the manner in which the Alvar is enjoying Thiruvengadamalaiyan is an asadharana anubhav and that is is an exclusive unique experience which even the devas have not had the fortune to enjoy.

The Alvar uses the word "sedyar vinaigal theer marund-hae" (செடியார் வினைகள் தீர் மருந்தே) Usually the medicine cures the disease. Thiruvengadamudaiyan, on the other hand, goes to the root cause of such diseases and cures that root cause itself. In one pasuram itself the Alvar refers to God as the medicine as well as the amrith. The concluding part of the pasuram when the Alvar says "Un patham kana nolaru nodiyathu thozhudum Attren" (உள் பாதம் காண நோலா நொடியார் பொழுதும் ஆற்றேன்) conveys very beautifully the depth of devotion and the impatience born out of such devotion that the Alvar has towards Perumal. He says that if the people who have performed nombu i.e. vrathas in order to attain the divine feet are not able to attain those feet and are therefore impatient it is understandable. But he i.e. the Alvar has not done any such sadhananushtanam and yet he is impatient and is not willing to brook any delay in attaining that lotus feet.

Bhattar was so fond of this pasuram that he said that this pasuram should always be sung whenever Thiru aradhanai is done to the Perumal and prasadam is being offered to the God.

PASURAM 3333

நோலா தாற்றேன் உனபாதம் காண வென்று
 நுண்ணுணர்வின்
 நீலார் கண்டத் தம்மாலும் நிறைநான் முகனும்
 இந்திரனும்
 சேலேய் கண்ணூர் பலர்கூழ் விரும்பும் திரு
 வேங்கடத்தானே!
 மாலாய் மயக்கி அடியேன்பால் வந்தாய் போலே
 வாராயே!

In this pasuram Alvar again repeats that he has done no nombus (vrathas) or good deeds and yet he pleads with the Lord to give him darshan. He says that Lord Shiva with the blue neck and sharp intellect and Brahma the embodiment of gnana and Lord Indra have claimed that they have done no sadhana nushtanam (no special prayers or efforts) to see you who are residing at Thiruvengadam. Those devas have come with their wives who have beautiful eyes like kayal fishes. Their desire is also to attain You. O Perumal You Who reside at Thiruvengadam were once born as Krishna and gave happiness with Your actions and gunas to Your parents Vasudeva and Devaki. Similarly appear before me and bless me (Kataksha).

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to Nilakanta as "Nun unarvin neelar kandathu amman" (நுண்ணுணர்வின் நீலார் கண்டத்தம்மாள்). It is believed that Lord Shiva possesses sukshma gnana and is able to pass it on to others. In Sanskrit this thought is conveyed in the words "Eshanam gnanam anvicheth".
PASURAM 3334

வந்தாய் போலே வாரா தாய் வாரா தாய்போல்
வருவானே!
செந்தா மரைக்கண் செங்கனிவாய் நால்தோ
எழுதே! எனதுயிரே!
சிந்தா மணிகள் பகரல்லைப் பகல் செய் திருவேங்
கடத்தானே!
அந்தோ! அடியேன் உனபாதம் அகல கில்லேன்
இறையுமே.

In this pasuram, again the Alvar reiterates his impatience at attaining the lotus feet. He says O Perumal You create the illusion that You can be attained easily; But it is very difficult to attain You. It appeared as if You were beyond our reach. But you came and stand before us. Your eyes are like lotus flowers. Your coral like red mouth is like a ripened fruit. You have four majestic shoulders. You are sweet like amrith. You are my very life. You have the effulgence of the precious stones. You are residing at Thiruvengadamalai where even the nights look bright like day. Don't you know that I your devoted servant will not stay away from your feet even for a moment?

The use of the word "Vandhai pola varadhai" (வந்தாய் போலே வாராதாய்) conveys the thought that through manasanubhavam (appreciation through mind's eye) the Alvar feels God is near him. But when he opens his eyes he finds that he is not able to see Him. Similarly when he uses the words Varadhai pol varuvane, (வாராதாய் போல் வருவானே) he clearly conveys the thought that through his manasanubhavam he is able to feel all the joy of having seen God and that his enjoyment is real. But when he opens his eyes in order to feel that thing of joy and beauty, God is beyond his reach. This quality of God is very evident during Krishnavatar when we find that many of the enemies thought that they had tied up Krishna effectively, but he was beyond their control. The gopastrees and other devotees thought as to how they would ever enjoy Him. He gave all of them the full benefit and pleasure of His company. Thus He is inexplicable and beyond one's comprehension.

The Alvar describes in detail the cool glance of the lotus like eyes of Perumal, i.e. kataksha of thiru kangal and then describes the beauty of His mouth and then the majesty of His shoulders. The Alvar says that Perumal has completely subjugated him and enslaved him by His beauty and after having given him such an experience, the Alvar cries that he cannot bear any separation.

PASURAM 3335

அகல கில்லேன் இறையுமென்று அலர்மேல்
 மங்கை யுறை மாரபா!
 நிகரில் புகழாய்! உலகம்மூன் றுடையாய்!
 என்னை யாள்வானே!
 நிகரி லமரர் முனிக் கணங்கள் விரும்பும்
 திருவேங்கடத்தானே!
 புகலொன் றில்லா அடியேன்உன் னாடிக்கீழ்
 அமர்ந்து புகுந்தேனே.

This is a very important pasuram as in this pasuram the Alvar conveys the meaning of the first part of dwaya mantra. The first part of dwaya poorva kantam runs as follows:

Sriman Narayana saranam saranow prapathyae.

The Uttara kadam i.e. the second part reads "Srimathe Narayanaya Namaha". Freely translated this pasuram is as follows:

O God who have a beautiful chest from which lotus like Mahalakshmi refuses to be separated even for a minute!

She wishes to stay there for ever and ever.

O God with immeasurable fame and glory!

O God who are the master of all the three worlds!

O God who have made me your eternal slave

O God You reside in Thiruvengadamalai to which place devas and the rishis come in huge numbers to worship You.

I have no other saviour. Very appropriately I have come and reached your feet.

Straight away we find that this pasuram is different from the other nine pasurams. In the earlier pasurams, the Alvar expresses his agony at the separation from God but in this pasuram he has mentioned Mahalakshmi and through Her intervention he seems to have attained his heart's desire. Thus Peria Piratti has acted as purushakaram i.e. her usual role of favourable intervention on behalf of the devotees. The Alvar expresses his helplessness and sought intervention of Mahalakshmi for attaining the divine feet of the Lord. The Alvar expresses openly his "akinchinyam" as well as his "ananya gathitvam" i.e. he plainly says that he does not possess any great qualities which deserve immediate salvation, but he also says that he has no other rakshakan i.e. saviour other than God. Thus, the philosophy of absolute unconditional surrender as a definite preceding factor for attainment of salvation is expressed through this pasuram.

Through the use of the words "alar mel mangai iraiyum agala killen" (அலர்மேல் மங்கை இறையும் அகலகில்லேள்) the Alvar makes it clear that Mahalakshmi is present on the chest of the Perumal in order to intercede on behalf of the devotees so that the aparadha done by the chetana would escape a punishment at the hands of Bhagavan. The use of the words "nikaril pughazhai" (நிகரில் புகழாய்) denotes the vatsalya guna of Peru-

mal. Similarly the use of the words "ulagam moonrudaiyai" (உலகம் மூன்றுடையாய்) denotes the swamitva guna of perumal. The use of the word "Yennai alvanae" (என்னை யாள்வானே) denotes his sauseelya guna. The use of the words "Amarar muni ganangal virumbum Thiruvengadathane" expresses the saulabhya guna of Perumal. At the time when one seek saranagathi from Bhagavan because Piratti is by His side all these four qualities of God shine. It is only at the time of conferring saranagathi that all these four qualities of God are together. The words "pugazh ondrilla vadiyan" (புகழ் ஒன்றில்லா வடியேள்) clearly denotes the condition precedent necessary for seeking saranagathi. Saranagathi is also known as Prapathi. As stated earlier, those who seek saranagathi have to possess akinchinyam and ananya gathitvam. The feeling that we are nothing and that we are not specially endowed for doing any job is conveyed by the word akinchinyam. The feeling that we have none to protect us that mother, father, sun, husband, Brahma or Rudra or even anyone else will not come to our rescue and that Lord Sriman Narayana is our only rakshaka will come to our rescue is yet another condition precedent for attaining saranagathi i.e. anyagathithwam.

Thus as stated earlier in this pasuram the beauty of Dwaya philosophy is explained in very simple terms by the Alvar. Saranagathi can be done through manas (thought) through "seyal" (action) through varthai (words). In this pasuram, the Alvar has done saranagathi through words.

PASURAM 3336

அடிக்கே மூமர்ந்து புகுந்து அடியீர் வாழ்மி
 எனன்றென் றருள் கொடுக்கும்
 படிக்கே ழில்லாப் பெருமானைப் பழனக்குருகூர்ச்
 சடகோபன்
 முடிப்பான் சொன்ன ஆயிரத்துத் திருவேங்
 கடத்துக் கிவை பத்தும்
 பிடித்தார் பிடித்தார் வீற்றிருந்து பெரிய வானுள்
 நிலாவுவரே.

This pasuram is in the nature of a phala stuti pasuram. In this pasuram the Alvar exhorts the devotee to seek saranagathi at the feet of the Perumal. The Alvar says that He is the master of Thirunagari which is blessed with plenty of water resources and fertile lands. He adds that whoever repeats these ten pasurams dealing with Thiruvengadamalai in the thousand Thiruvaimozhi pasurams written by Alvar would attain Paramapada and stay there for ever.

The Alvar uses the words "adikeelzh amarndu pugundhu vazhumin" (அடிகேழ்மர்ந்து புகுந்து வாழ்மின்). He is only repeating what moolavar in Thiruvengadam is Himself conveying. He Himself points out His feet and asks His devotees to seek salvation by praying at His lotus feet.

The words "padikke illa Perumanai" (படிக்கேழில்லாப் பெருமானை) refers to the great Sarveswaran. It conveys clearly the meaning that there is none equal to Him and there is none better than Him or superior to Him. He is the ultimate truth in enlightening and helping the devotees. The Alvar himself uses the word "Thiruvengadathukku ivai patthum" (திருவேங்கடத்துக்கிவை பத்தும்) and makes it very clear that in the thousand pasurams in Thiruvaimozhi which deals with Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam, these ten saranagathi pasurams deal exclusively with the Perumal at Thiruvengadam.

Another interesting factor is the use of the words "pidithar pidithar" (பிடித்தார் பிடித்தார்). In this pasuram these words make it clear that Nammalvar not only sought saranagathi for himself, but for all the mortals existing in this world. Hence it is that Nampillai, the great commentator says that if we repeat these ten pasurams, we will be blessed with saranagathi. Even as when Vibhishana approached Rama for saranagathi the four people who came along with Vibhishana also got the saranagathi phalan along with Vibhishana. It is like the case of the thread with which the flowers are tied smelling as sweet as they flowers themselves by virtue of association.

PASURAM 3458

நங்கள் வரிவளை யாயங் காளோ! நம்முடை

யேதலர் முன்பு நாணி

றுங்கட்கு யானொன் றுரைக்கும் மாற்றம்
 நோக்குகின் றேன் எங்கும் காணமாட்டேன்
 சங்கம் சரிந்தன சாயி முந்தேன் தடமுலை
 பொன்னிற மாய்த்த ளர்ந்தேன்
 வெங்கண் பறவையின் பாகள் எங்கோள் வேங்கட
 - வாணனை வேண்டிச் சென்றே.

This is a pasuram where Nammalvar takes on the role of Parankusa Nayaki. The Nayaki was looking thin. The companions asked her the reason. She felt shy. The companions then pleaded with her to share with them the reason for her losing weight as they were her trusted friends. The nayaki then says that she has nothing to say and that the friends can see it for themselves. She says that she merely expressed the thought that she wanted to visit Thiruvengadam and offer worship to the Perumal Thiruvengadamudaiyan there and that mere thought itself has resulted in this change in her body and mind. She has become thin and the bangles in her hand are virtually falling off her thin hands. She says she has lost her beauty pining for her Lord.

PASURAM 3586

இன்றிப் போக இருவினை யும் கெடுத்து
 ஒன்றி யாக்கை புகாமைஉய் யக்கொள்வான
 நின்ற வேங்கடம் நீள் நிலத்து உள்ளது
 சென்று தேவர்கள் கைதொழு வார்களே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that to have Parama padha anubhav one must give up one's body. But the similar parama padha anubhav with this sareeram itself being in tact can be enjoyed by worshipping Thiruvengadamudaiyan at Tirumala. He says that the Perumal Who is residing at Thiruvengadam is the one who can get rid of all punyas as well as papas and ensure that there is an end to the cycle of birth, rebirth and death. He is the one who protects the devotees. He is the one who is seen in a standing pose at Thiruvengadamalai waiting to welcome all those who come searching for Him seeking salvation at His lotus feet. The Alvar exhorts the devotees to realise this and rush to Thiruvengadamalai and offer worship to that great Perumal.

Those who offer worship to that Perumal, he says, are devas even if they are ordinary mortals.

PASURAM 3716

மேயாள் வேங்கடம்
காயா மலர்வண்ணன்
பேயார் முலையுண்ட
வாயாள் மாதவனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Sriman Narayana has taken permanent residence on the banks of Swami Pushkarini in Thiruvengadamalai. He has the colour of a kayal flower (a blue coloured flower). His is the mouth which drank the poisoned milk offered by Poothana the demon and killed her by sucking her dry. The Alvar continues that the Perumal at Thiruvengadam is Madhava. Ma refers to Lakshmi. Thavan means residing with Her. As Goddess is there along with Perumal, Alvar advises all of us to go and seek salvation at His feet as she will be the effective purushakaram to intercede on our behalf.

PASURAM 3740

திருமா விருஞ்சோலை மலையே திருப்பாற்கடலே
என் தலையே
திருமால் வைகுந் தம்மேதண் திருவேங்
கடமே எனதுடலே
அருமா மாயத்து எனதுயிரே மனமே
வாக்கே கருமமே
ஒருமா நொடியும் பிரியான்என் ஊழி
முதல்வன் ஒருவனே.

In this pasuram the words used are such that it is evident that the Alvar has attained God. Actually, the Alvar says that instead of his attaining the God, the God has entered his heart. He says that the God who is fond of the divya desa has shown equal love and affection for his body and has entered his heart.

The Alvar says that the Lord Who is the Creator of this world would not be separated from Him even for a moment. The Perumal treats the head of the Alvar as equal in importance

to Thirumaliruncholai hills and Tirupparkadal divya desas. The Alvar continues that the God who stays along with Peria Piratti i.e. Thayar in Paramapada and the Perumal who stays in the cool salubrious Tirumala regards Alvar's body as equally welcome place to reside. The Alvar says that though his atma is still inextricably surrounded by the prakruti i.e. maya yet the Perumal has completely merged and become one with the Alvar's thought, word and deed.

Usually when the Maya is removed, one can attain the Perumal. Here the Alvar specifically says that though his body is still tied up with maya, the Perumal has blessed him by taking residence in such a body. The pasuram makes it clear that Perumal first stepped on to the head of the Alvar and it is only later that he merged with his body and still further he merged with thought, word and action. The Jagathkarakan and Jagathrakshakan the Alvar claims has rewarded his bakthi by becoming one with him.

* * *

KULASEKHARA ALVAR

Kulasekhara Alvar was a king by birth, belonging to the royal family of Travancore. He was known as "Kolli Kavalan", (கோல்லி காவலன்) "Koodal Nayakan" (கூடல் நாயகன்) and "Kozhi Kon" (கோழி கொள்). Kolli Kavalan means he was the master of Kolli malai in Kerala. Koodal Nayakan refers to the fact that he was the master of Madurai, the capital of the Pandya kings. Kozhiyoor Kon means that he was the king of Uraiyur i.e. the kingdom of the Cholas. Thus, Kulasekhara Alvar was the great Chera king who had defeated the Pandyan and the Cholas. His daughter, Cheravalli Nachiyar was married to Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. This Alvar is known as Kulasekhara Perumal as he had total faith in the Perumal as Lord Rama. He felt sorrow when God was in sorrow and happy when God was happy. His complete identification with the Perumal earned for him the title "Kulasekhara Perumal". Hence it is that the pasurams written by him also came to be known as Perumal Thirumozhi. It is said the first Ramayana rasika i.e. a person who appreciates the Ramayana, is Hanuman. Next is Kulasekhara Alvar. Many are the stories told about his love for Lord Rama. One such story is narrated here:

The Ramayana used to be read daily in the king's court and the king would listen to it with absolute single-minded devotion. One day when it was being read and Rama was single handedly fighting the demons led by Ravana, Kulasekhara got agitated. He said that his hero Rama could not be left to fight alone. He rose and commanded that he would lead and his army should march immediately to help Rama who was fighting alone! His ministers wondered how to bring the king back to reality. They sent a secret party in advance of the king and asked them to meet the king on his onward march and pretend to be people returning from the battlefield and inform the king that the great Rama had already won the battle and He had single handedly killed the rakshasas. Their plan worked and the king returned to his palace as his hero no longer needed his assistance. Yet another time when the passage in the Ramayana relating to Sita's abduction by Ravana, the demon, was read, the king was agitated at the trouble caused to his mother Sita Devi. He

immediately decided to swim across the ocean, reach Lanka, kill Ravana and his retinue, rescue his weeping mother and unite her with his father Sri Rama. The king jumped into the ocean. His subjects watched helplessly. Then Sri Rama along with Sita Devi is said to have appeared before Kulasekhara Alvar and convinced Kulasekhara Perumal that there was no danger to either of them and Sri Rama lifted Kulasekhara Alvar and brought him safe to the shore. Many are the stories that are related about the great all consuming love and concern that Kulasekhara Alvar had for his hero and Lord, Sri Rama.

This great Alvar has sung ten pasurams in praise of Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati. In all these 10 pasurams he visualises himself as a particular object in the Tirumala Hills. He wants Baghavat seshatvam i.e. he wants to belong to Perumal. Some people want Bhagavata sambandam i.e. their ultimate desire is to be followers of God's devotees. Through devotion to the devotee they hope to attain God. Pillai Lokacharya the great commentator said that Bhagavata seshatvam i.e. close association with the devotees should be as close as the intrinsic connection between the scent of a flower and flower itself or like the inseparable quality of effulgence of a jewel and the jewel itself. Such a close association of atma with Bhagavatha is held to be the sure way to attain moksha. Kulasekhara Alvar however believed in Bhagavat seshatvam. He wanted direct sambandam with Perumal Himself. He wanted to be different objects, all of which had association with Tirumala Hills. He wanted Bhagavat sambandam, and that too only sambandam with Tirumalai Udaiyan. Let us now understand each of these 10 pasurams and get into the mood of Kulasekhara Alvar in visualising different ways of rendering devoted service (Kainkarya) to the adorable Lord of the Seven Hills.

PASURAM 677

ஊனேறு செல்வத்து உடற்பிறவி யான் வேண்டேன்
 ஆனேறேழ் வென்றான் அடிமைத் திறமல்லால்
 கூனேறு சங்க மிடத்தான்தன் வேங்கடத்து
 கோனேரி வாழும் குருகாய்ப் பிறப்பேனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he does not desire, nay, almost detests - this life of prosperity and wealth where only the wants of flesh are pampered and the body puts on weight. The Alvar's desire is to serve that Lord, who subjugated the seven oxen, and who is seen holding in His hand the bent hunched conch and that Lord who is staying at Thiruvengadam. The Alvar's sole ambition is to be born as a kurugu bird and stay on the banks of Swami pushkarini at Tirumala. In this pasuram, the Alvar refers to an incident in the life of Perumal during His Krishnavataram, when He subjugated the seven oxen in order to marry Nappinnai. Nappinnai is an amsam of Neeladevi. When she was born in the Edyar kulam, her father collected seven male calves which were born in the same day. The calves also grew up along with the child and when Nappinnai came of age, the father decreed that whoever wants to marry her should subjugate those seven oxen. Krishna defeated the seven oxen and married Nappinnai. The Alvar refers to this incident so as to bring home the point that even as Lord Krishna had to control the seven oxen to attain His hearts desire, if we desire to attain God we have to overpower the temptations of wealth and prosperity. The Alvar appeals to that Lord Who defeated and controlled the oxen to help him also to overcome the worldly pulls and tugs.

His use of the words "Adimai thiram allal" in the (அடிமைத் திறமல்லால்) pasuram makes it clear that the Alvar wishes nothing else but absolute surrender and sincere service to God (Kainkarya). He perhaps refers as a model, the service rendered by Lakshmana who was ever willing to do any service to his brother Lord Rama. He may also be referring to Adishesha who renders manifold services to Perumal acting as His divine couch, His umbrella, His slippers, His throne, His garment and so on depending upon what activity the Perumal indulges in. The Alvar says that similarly he is willing to be of any service to his God Thirumalaiyan. His only burning desire is to serve the Lord of the Seven Hills in some capacity.

Significantly, the Alvar wants to be born only as a kurugu bird. This bird is also known as Narai. It is white in colour like the conch. The white colour represents the sattvic guna, which

is usually associated with godly qualities. The Alvar who is a born Kshatriya does not want to have any connection with rajo or tamas guna. He wants to be born as a white bird symbolising satvic guna.

Further the Kurugu bird which belongs to the stork family has a unique quality. These storks usually stand silently like sentinels and immovable objects in the tank. The fishes which are the natural prey for the stork, are taken in by this immobile attitude. They ignore that silent spectator much to their sorrow. First the shoals of small fishes sail past. The stork does not harm them. Seeing them go unharmed, the bigger fishes follow. Then the stork suddenly darts its beak into the water, catches its prey and satisfies its hunger. Thus, it has a single-minded approach in achieving its objective viz. to catch its selected prey. Similarly, the sole objective of the Alvar is to attain the feet of the Lord. To achieve that objective, to fulfil that desire he wants to adopt the tactics of the kurugu bird.

It is also interesting to see that even as a kurugu bird he does not want to be far from his favourite Lord Srinivasa. The nearest tank to Srinivasa Perumal temple is Swami pushkarini theertham. Kulasekhara Alvar chooses that tank as his abode so as to do the kankarya to His Lord.

In brief in this pasuram, the Alvar says that he does not want the rajya sugam i.e. aihikam (worldly happiness). Instead he hungers for amushmikam i.e. the happiness of the other world.

PASURAM 678

ஆனாத செல்வத்து அரம்பையர்கள் தற்முழ
வானாரும் செல்வமும் மண்ணரசும் யான்
வேண்டேன

தேனார் பூஞ்சோலை திருவேங் கடச்சனையில
மீனாய்ப் பிறக்கும் விதியுடையெ னாவேனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar wants to be born as a fish in the streams flowing in Thiruvengadam. The Alvar says that even if he were to be offered Indralokam he would spurn it. Indraloka

with its youthful damsels like Ramba, Urvasi and other apsara sthrees hold no attraction for him. Even if he were to be offered that swarga loka on a platter he would not accept it. He says that the real wealth is to attain Moksha. He says that the anandam i.e. joy got out of seeking moksham is nithyanandam i.e. a permanent joy while the pleasures of Indraloka are evanescent pleasures of the senses. The Alvar conveys the thought that rajya sugam is like iron shackles, the Indra lokasugam may be golden shackles. But neither attracts the Alvar. He wants to be born as a fish in a water stream in Thiruvengadamalai, filled with sweet honey-scented flower groves.

In the previous pasuram, the Alvar wanted to be born as a kurugu bird. But in this pasuram, he wants to be born as a fish. May be he felt that the kurugu bird which has wings may in weak moment fly away from Swami pushkarini. The Alvar does not want to take any such chance! He therefore feels that it is better to be born as a fish in a water stream as it can neither fly away from the stream nor can it live outside the stream. May be he also thought that as the very first avataram of Perumal was matsyavataram, it is better to seek Bhagavat sambandam by being born as a fish! What is more, a fish can live only in water. Paramapadam where the God resides is a manifold manifestation of the water stream. The Alvar therefore felt that his association with Perumal and paramapada will be greater if he takes on the form of a fish in a stream of water. In the Ramayana when Rama decided to go to the forest, Lakshmana and Sita wanted to accompany Him. Rama tried to dissuade Lakshmana from accompanying Him. But Lakshmana said that he would be like a fish out of water if he were to attempt to live without Rama! This idea is borrowed by Kulasekhara Alvar who says that the best life is to be born as a fish in a stream in Thiruvengadamalai. Even as a fish he wants the Thirumalai sambandam.

PASURAM 679

பின்னிட்ட சடையானும் பிரமனும் இந்திரனும்
துன்னிட்டுப் புகலரிய வைகுந்த நீள்வாசல்

மினவட்டச் சுடராழி வேங்கடகோள் தானுமிழும்
பொன்வட்டில் பிடித்து உடனே புகப்பெருவே
னாவேனே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar expresses his all-consuming desire to be of service to the Lord by being a Kainkaryadarar i.e. a person who does a specific service to God. The kainkaryam envisaged by Alvar is to carry a golden bowl into which God will spit the water used for brushing His teeth in the morning! Alvar says that Lord Shiva with His matted locks i.e. the great Jatadhari, as well as the Chaturmuka Brahma as also Lord Indra are not able to go through the Vaikuntha neela vasal at Tirumala! Alvar says that the heavy crowds make it difficult to enter the sannidhyam. Even Lord Shiva, Brahma and Indra are waiting for their turn to reach the sannidhi. The Alvar felt that only the kainkaryadarars will be able to pass through the Vaikuntavasal to render service to God! He therefore opts to carry the golden bowl. Moreover, the Alvar got worried that a mountain stream may run dry and as a fish he may die without water, so he chose to be a bowl carried by a man.

In all the temples we personify the Gods as parama purushas and render various services to Them. Thus, starting with suprabatham when the Lord is woken up, the various sevas in the temple coincide with various events in the daily life of the human beings. There are specific persons i.e. kainkaryadars identified for rendering various services. Even small services like fanning the Lord when the abishekham is performed are entrusted to specific persons. The Alvar therefore hopes to have easy access to the sannidhi and be near the God by becoming a kainkaryadarar.

The use of the word 'Vaikuntha neela vasal' (வைகுந்த நீள்வாசல்) by the Alvar is significant. It is believed that once upon a time, Thiruvengadamalai was a part of the paramapada itself. It was the kreedha parvatham i.e. the hill of enjoyment in paramapada. On the orders of Perumal and due to the maya of His creation, Garuda carried this Kreedha parvath to Bhooloka. This is the puranic story. As this hill was a part of Vaikuntha,

Tirumala is known as Bhooloka Vaikuntha. What is more the entrance to the temple is known as Vaikuntha vasal.

A doubt may arise as to why the Alvar chose of all services to hold a pon kalanjiam (பொன் களஞ்சியம்) i.e. the golden spitting bowl. This must have been because the Alvar felt that when the Lord spits into a vessel He has to perforce aim correctly and see the person who is holding the bowl. The Alvar therefore felt that if he held the golden bowl surely when God spits into that vessel, His benign eyes will rest on the kainkaryadarar and he would receive His benign glances i.e. His kataksha!

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to the milling crowds waiting to enter the temple and he specifically says that "Sadaiyan" (சடையான்) i.e. Lord Shiva as well as Brahma were waiting patiently along with the jostling crowds to have darshan of the Lord! Apparently then as now the crowds that gather to enter the precincts of the Lord of the Seven Hills were ummanagably huge in numbers.

PASURAM 680

ஓண்பவள வேலை யுலவு தண் பாற்கடலுள்
கண் துயிலும் மாயோள் சுழலிணைகள் காண்பதற்கு
பண்பகரும் வண்டினங்கள் பண்பாடும் வேங்கடத்து
செண்பகமாய் நிற்கும் திருவுடையெனாவேனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar wants to be born as a shenbagam tree in Tirumala. He says that the Perumal Who is at Thiruvengadam is none other than the Perumal Who is seen in yogic slumber at Tirupparkadal. He claims that in Tirupparkadal the coral creepers are washed ashore by the waves. He says that as it is not possible to go to paramapadam and have darshan of the divine feet of ksheera sayana, we could have that pada seva at Tirumala! The Alvar says that in holy Thiruvengadam the bees are singing beautifully after having had their fill of honey sucked from the abundant flowers at Tirumala. In that idyllic Thiruvengadam hill, filled with the sweet music of the humming bees, the Alvar wishes to be born as a shenbaga tree.

In the previous 3 pasurams, we find that the Alvar expresses a desire to be born as some movable object in Thiruvengada Hill. First he wants to be born as a kurugu bird, later as a fish and then as a golden bowl carried by a kainkaryadarar. But in this pasuram he wants to be born as an immovable object in the same Thiruvengadam. Perhaps after having expressed a desire to be born as a kainkaryadarar, the Alvar got worried least he should be dismissed from service for not having performed satisfactory service. He was afraid that in such a situation, he may lose for ever the opportunity to be near God and at Thiruvengadam. He therefore wants to be an immovable object in Thiruvengadam. Thiruvengadam is usually described as a place where the Gods shower flower petals. In Tamil literature Thiruvengadam is referred to as "Sindhu poo makizhum Thiruvengadam" (சிந்து பூ மகிழும் திருவேங்கடம்). In effect it means that Tirumalai is full of scented flowers. This is true even to-day. In such an idyllic surrounding the Alvar wants to be born as a shenbaga tree which also has lots of flowers which could be used to worship his favourite Lord viz. Lord Srinivasa. The Alvar felt that as an immovable object viz. a tree, he could not commit any mistake and be banished from God's presence.

PASURAM 681

கம்ப மதயாணைக் கழுத்தகத்தின் மேலிருந்து
இன்பமரும் செல்வமும் இவ்வரசும் யான் வேண்டேன்
எம்பெருமான் ஈசன் எழில்வேங் கடமலைமேல
தம்பகமாய் நிற்கும் தவமுடையெ னாவேனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that it will be a great boon (Tavam udaiyanaven) if he is born as a bush in beautiful Thiruvengadam Hill. He says he will consider it as the ultimate blessing to be born as a bush in Tirumalai. He says he does not desire the joy that comes out of wealth like ruling over a kingdom. He does not think it is great to be able to sit on the neck of an elephant. This honour is usually associated with kings who go in a royal procession in the streets of their kingdom seated on a bejewelled caparisoned elephant. The Alvar does not value such aiswarya. His only desire is to be born as a bush in beautiful Thiruvengadam where his thalaivan (தலைவன்) i.e. master as well as the Lord of the world is residing. People wonder why

the Alvar who earlier opted to be born as a shenbaga tree, in this pasuram, wants to be born as a useless bush. Perhaps he felt that if he is born as a shenbaga tree, the tree has great value. Some people may be tempted to cut the tree and take it away. Whereas if he is born as a useless bush which none desire, he will be left alone to satisfy his all consuming passion viz. be near the God at Tirumala. Perhaps the fear that the shenbaga tree may be uprooted and carried away was born in Alvar's mind from an incident that happened in the life history of Lord Krishna. After the killing of Narakasura, Indra invited Lord Krishna to Indraloka. Accompanied by Satyabama Krishna went to Indraloka. Indra and Indirani were sitting on a throne. The apsaras brought sweet smelling parijatha flowers and placed them at the feet of Lord Indra. Satyabama was taken in by the sweet smelling delicate looking flowers with the red stem. She asked Krishna to identify the flower. Krishna said that it was a devaloka pushpam i.e. flower flourishing in the kingdom of the Gods. Satyabama insisted that Krishna should carry the parijatha tree to her abode on earth. Krishna had to oblige and the parijatha tree was planted in the backyard of Satyabama's residence. Alvar got worried that similarly somebody may take a fancy to the shenbaga tree and carry it away from Thiruvengadam Hill, thus inadvertently severing his connection with the Bhooloka vaikuntha. He therefore preferred to be a useless bush on which nobody would cast a second glance - nay they may even turn their eyes away from such an ungainly sight! Alvar welcomed people avoiding the bush so that he would be left alone to pursue his pleasure of having Thiruvengada sambanda.

PASURAM 682

மின்னளைய நுண்ணிடையார் உருப்பசியும்

மேளகையும்

அன்னவர்தம் பாடலொடும் ஆடலவை ஆதரியேன்

தென்னவென வண்டினங்கள் பண்பாடும்

வேங்கடத்துள்

அன்னளைய பொற்குவாடம் அருந்

தவத்தெனாவேனே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar wants to be born as a tall stone in the Tirupati Hills. He says that he has no desire to either hear the songs or witness the dance of the slim waisted beautiful apsara sthrees like Urvasi or Menaka. Instead he says that it will be a great blessing if he were to be born as a mere tall stone in beautiful Thiruvengadam filled with the pleasant humming of bees.

Urvasi is said to be the most beautiful among the apsaras. Once during His Nara Narayana avatar, Perumal was doing tapas along with the rishis. To interrupt that tapas, Indra sent an apsara. The rishis succumbed to the temptation. Perumal then created a female form out of His thigh (ooru). That was Urvasi. The apsara sthrees immediately made her their leader and took her to Indraloka. Alvar says that he has no desire to watch the dance of even such a beautiful apparition created by God Himself. Instead he wants to be a tall stone in Vengadam Hill.

In the previous pasuram, the Alvar wanted to be a useless bush. But he got worried that if a cleaning operation were to be taken up in the hills, even the bush might be cleared. He therefore wanted to be born as a tall stone which could not be easily shifted from the Thiruvengadam Hill. Thus, we find that in each pasuram he wants to take on the form of a different object, the sole object being that there should not be any break in his association with Thiruvengadam and the Perumal residing there.

PASURAM 683

வானாளு மாமதிபோல் வெண்குடைக்கீழ்

மன்னவர்தம்

கோனாகி வீற்றிருந்து கொண்டாடும் செல்வறியேன்

தேனார் பூஞ்சோலைத்திருவேங் கடமலைமேல்

கானாராய்ப் பாயும் கருத்துடையெ னாவேனே.

In this pasuram he says that it is of no value to him even if he were to be a king among kings and sit on a throne under a white umbrella which looks like a Moon in a clear, cloudless sky. Instead, he says he would prefer to be born as a "kaattaru"

(காட்டாறு) i.e. forest stream in Thiruvengada hill which is filled with honeyed flower groves. When the Alvar refers to the throne he is obviously referring to a rajadhi raja having a number of chieftains under his control. That is why he is referring to the king sitting under a white umbrella. Even as the Moon on such a day looks down on the stars the king seated on a silver throne under a silver umbrella can look down upon all his subordinates! Even a promise of such an aishwaryam holds no temptation to this Alvar. His only wish is to be born as a forest rivulet in Thiruvengadam. May be the Alvar felt that if he were to be a tall stone in Thiruvengadam as stated in the previous pasuram, someone may cut the stone and take it away for sculpting a beautiful idol. Arising out of that fear he prefers to be born as a rivulet. May be he preferred to be a rivulet so that as it flows it could benefit the animals and birds and trees by providing sustenance with life giving water whereas a mere stone would not have benefitted so many. The Alvar therefore expressed a desire to serve others and at the same time serve God.

PASURAM 684

பிறையேறு சடையாலும் பிரமனும் இந்திரனும்
முறையாய பெருவேள்விக் குறைமுடிப்பான்

மறையானான்

வெறியார் தண்சோலைத் திருவேங் கடமலைமேல்
நெறியாய்க் கிடக்கும் நிலையுடையெ னாவேனே.

In this pasuram, the Alvar wants to be born as the pathway trodden by the devotees who go to see the Perumal residing at Tirumala. He adds that this 'Paramaporul', 'Yaga swaroopi' Who is residing at Tirumala is none other than the Perumal Who grants the wishes of even Lord Shiva, Brahma and Indra. The Alvar says that "Sadaiyan" i.e. the Lord with the matted hair having the half Moon on His head, the great Vishnu baktha and Lord Brahma Who is known for His gnana as also Indra who is known for His aishwarya i.e. wealth all have some unfulfilled desires. They performed a great yaga in order to fulfil such wants. The Alvar says that the Paramaporul Who could satisfy the desires of those three Devas is none other than Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam. He adds that the place where

that Yaga swaroopi lives is Tirumala which is filled with scented flowers. On that hill he wants to be born as a pathway which will be trodden on by the devotees who go to worship the Lord at Tirumala.

In this pasuram, the Alvar makes it clear that the padadhooli i.e. the dust from the feet of the devotees is great and holy. It will bless the person on whom such dust settles. Even in Krishnavatar Sukha munivar said he wants to be born as the sand particle (manal) on the banks of Yamuna river as those sand particles were blessed by the feet of Krishna and gopikas who tread on them when they stayed on the banks of the Yamuna river. Similarly, Alvar wants to be a pathway in the Tirumala Hills. In the previous pasuram, he wanted to be a forest rivulet. He perhaps got worried that a forest rivulet may run dry. It is by its very nature not perennial. When it dries up, nobody respects it and it is of use to none. It may also disappear from the very face of Tirumala Hills. As the Alvar wanted a continuing Bhagavath sambanda, in this pasuram, he opts to be a mere pathway. In addition, he feels that the padadhooli i.e. the dust of the feet of the devotees would bless him. Tondaradi Podi Alvar expresses a similar thought when he says that it is of no use even if one were to bathe in the holy river Ganga if the padadhooli of the baktas who dance and sing the praise of Lord Ranganatha does not fall on him.

Kulasekhara Alvar in this pasuram specifically refers to the half Moon that is resting on Lord Shiva's head. It is said that while Tirupparkadal was being churned, first halahala poison rose out of the ocean. This was given to Lord Shiva Who promptly swallowed it. Parvati then confined the poison to the neck of Lord Shiva and hence it is Lord Shiva's neck became blue and He is referred to Neelakanta i.e God with blue neck. As the poison was fiery, Vishnu is said to have given to Lord Shiva the cool Moon which emerged out of the ocean that was churned. That Moon was to adorn the head of Lord Shiva and bring down the heat of the poison which he had earlier consumed. There is also another story connected with the presence of this half Moon on the head of Lord Shiva. It is said that Daksha muni had 27 daughters. All were given in marriage to the Moon God.

But Moon always preferred the company of Rohini. The others were angry. Even to-day when one watches the sky, one can see the Rohini star is closest to the Moon. Daksha on hearing the complaint of his 26 other daughters cursed Moon and said that henceforth he will wane. Moon has got 16 kalaigal. Because of the curse of Daksha everyday he lost one kalai. He became smaller and smaller. Seeing this waning of his form, Moon God rushed to Shiva and sought refuge at His feet. Shiva then took that one day old Moon and placed it on His head and said that henceforth he would wax. That is why the Moon depicted on the head of Shiva is a small line which shows that it was the last day of the waning spell. In this pasuram the Alvar says that this great Vishnu bhakta Shiva Who could help the Moon, could get his desires satisfied only by the Lord Who is residing at Thiruvengadam.

The importance of padadhooli depicted beautifully in an interesting story connected with the life history of Tirukkachi Nambi. This great sage used to have conversation with Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi when he was performing the Alavattan kankarya i.e. fanning the Lord. It is said that while fanning the Lord, Tirukkachi Nambi and Lord Varadaraja would converse about various things happening in the world. One day Tirukkachi Nambi told Perumal about an incident that had occurred that day. Nambi had his bath in Vegavati river and was returning. He was followed by a dhobi who bent down and took the dust from every step covered by Tirukkachi Nambi and smeared it on his body. When Nambi asked him the reason for this unusual action, the dhobi replied that the dust from the feet of such a great man would surely ensure moksha for him. Nambi wanted to know from Lord Varadaraja whether this was true. Lord Varadaraja confirmed this holy trait of the dust of a true devotee's feet. Alvar therefore in this pasuram wants the padadhooli of the myriad devotees walking up the hill to offer worship to Lord Srinivasa to bless him.

PASURAM 685

செடியாய வல்வினைகள் தீர்க்கும் திருமாலே!
நெடியானே! வேங்கடவா! நிள்கோயி லின்வாசல்

அடியாரும் வானவரும் அரமபயரும்

கிடந்தியங்குமர்

படியாயக கிடந்துஉன பவளவாய காண்பேன

In this pasuram the Alvar wants to be the step near the garbagriha. The Alvar perhaps felt that if he were to be mere pathway the devotees may take alternate routes and he may not have the benefit of the pada dhooli of the devotees. In this pasuram therefore he wants to make sure that he is near God and so expresses his desire to be the step in front of the garbagriha in the temple.

The Alvar says that the Lord Srinivasa Perumal Who is older and greater than all the other Gods (Nediyane) resides at Thiruvengadam. It is that Perumal Who resolves all the problems of His devotees. In front of His sannidhi the baghavatas i.e. devotees and devas i.e. other Gods as also apsara sthrees i.e. divine damsels are waiting in large numbers to worship Lord Srinivasa. The Alvar desires that he would be a padi i.e. step in front of sannidhi of the great Lord and thus have the chance to worship the coral coloured lips of Perumal. Even to-day in all the Vaishnavite temples the step in front of the garbagriha is known as Kulasekhara padi. The Alvar hopes that the multitude of devas apsaras and devotees waiting to worship Lord Srinivasa will see on the Kulasekhara padi and thus bless him. Further he feels that whenever the utsavamurthi of the God is taken out of the sannidhi God's eye will first rest on the step which He has to cross. The Alvar similarly hopes that if he becomes the step he will be near the feet of the Lord and God will while watching His step cast His benign glance on the Kulasekhara padi and enable the Alvar to have to his heart's content the darshan of the Lord.

PASURAM 686

உம்ப ருலகாண்டு ஒருகூடக்ஷே உருப்பதின
அம்பொற் கலையல்குல பெறறூலும் ஆதரியேன்
செம்பவன வாயான் திருவேங் கடமென்றும்
எம்பெருமான் பொன்மலைமேல் ஏதேனு மாவேன.

In this pasuram, the Alvar does not specify what form he wants to assume. But gives a general prayer to the God saying that he should be 'ethenum oru porul' (ஏதேனும் ஒருபொருள்) (some object) in Tirumala Hills. Apparently, the Alvar felt that if he were to restrict the God's choice and pray that he should be either a kurugu bird, a fish, a golden bowl, a shenbaga tree, a bush, a tall stone, a forest rivulet, a pathway or a step he may be giving a chance to God to reject that specific request. In this pasuram therefore he gives God a wide choice with only one constraint viz. that God should create him as some "porul" (பொருள்) i.e. as some object in Thiruvengadam so that he will continue to have for ever and ever the connection i.e. sambandam with Thiruvengada Hill, the abode of his Lord Srinivasa.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says that he has no desire for any of the ephemeral pleasures of the body. He does not desire any of the pleasures of swarga loka or devaloka where beautiful bejewelled damsels like Urvasi and other apsaras are able to satisfy the bodily pleasures. The Alvar says that his one and only desire is to be allowed to stay in some form or other on the beautiful golden Thiruvengadamalai where the Perumal with the coral lips is residing. The use of the word 'ethenum avane' (ஏதேனும் ஆவேனே) literally translated means 'let me be anything. In brief, the Alvar does not want to specify the item whose form he wants to take. He says neither he need know what form he is assuming neither need God worry about the form that He is going to confer on him. But the only condition is that he should be allowed to stay in Thiruvengadamalai and have the supreme satisfaction of worshipping the Perumal with the divine coral lips.

PASURAM 687

மண்ணிய தண்சாரல் வடவேங்க டத்தாள்தன்
பொன்னியலும் சேவடிகள் காண்பான் புரிந்திறைஞ்சி
கொன்னவிலும் கூர்வேல் குலசே கரன் சொன்ன
பன்னியநூல் தமிழ்வல்லார் பாங்காய பத்தர்களே.

This is a phalastuti pasuram. In the earlier ten pasurams, the Alvar has mentioned the different forms he wants to take

so as to have a close association with Thiruvengadam. In this pasuram the Alvar says that all those who either repeat all these ten pasurams or who have heard these ten pasurams will be the recipients of the blessings of the Lord. The Alvar ends the pasuram saying that this fact of certain definite benediction is assured by Kulasekhara who holds in his hand a sharp (vel) spear which can annihilate all enemies.

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PERIALVAR

Amongst all the Alvars Perialvar is regarded as the primus inter pares i.e. first among equals. As the very name indicates 'Peria' means 'Big' Alvar means saint.

He is therefore, by all standards, the first and the foremost among the Alvars. He was the one Alvar who burst forth into verses blessing God Himself. These verses of his known as 'Pallandu' are even to-day repeated in all the vaishnavite temples and all the religious functions.

Perialvar has sung seven pasurams in praise of Thiru Ven-gadathan of Tirumalai. Perialvar is an Alvar who derived great pleasure in enjoying God in His Krishnavataram. Amongst the various bakthi paths or margas he adopted the vatsalya marga. Invariably he transposed himself into the position of Yasodha, the mother of Krishna. He enjoyed Krishna as Balakrishna of Brindavan and not so much as Gitacharya of Kurukshetra. He perhaps felt the self-less love of a mother towards her child is the ultimate in enjoying and attaining the ultimate truth viz. God Himself.

PASURAM 56

சுற்றும் ஒளிவட்டம சூழநது சோதிபரநதெங்கும்
எத்தனை செய்யினும் என்மகன்முசும்நே ரொவ்வாய
வித்தகன் வேங்கட வாணன் உன்னை விளிக்கின்ற
கைத்தலம் நோவாமே அம்புலீ! சுடிதோடிவா.

In this pasuram Perialvar refers to one of the very common scenes in any household where the mother has the child on her hip, shows the Moon to the tiny tot and calls the Moon to come down and play with her child. The child is taught to wave its tiny palm and entreat the Moon God with its lovable luster to come down and play with it. In this pasuram Perialvar builds this mental picture very effectively. Yasodha addresses the Moon and asks him to come quickly without delaying as her little child is clapping its petite hands and she is worried that any delay on the part of the Moon might cause pain to the child who is continuing to wave and clap its hand calling the Moon.

Having thus appealed to the Moon to come faster Yasodha also ubraids the Moon God. She brings him down a peg or two and in unmistakable terms says that the Moon should not think that because of its dazzling bright fair look it is very beautiful. She says that the Moon is no match to the beauty of her child Krishna whose beauty is unmatched and imcomparable. She adds that her child is Krishna Who also lives in Thiruvengadam.

Thus, Perialvar makes it clear that Lord Srinivasa and Venkatadri is none other than Lord Krishna Himself. Another interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this pasuram is the fact that Perialvar makes it clear that though the Moon is high up in the sky he is not great. He says that Paramapurusha Who is at Thiruvengadam is the greatest. Through the words of a mother's love to her child and her eagerness to satisfy the smallest whim of her child in requesting the Moon to come down to earth the Alvar has presented the truth the absolute, unconditional love which a devotee should have towards his Lord is like that of a mother towards her child.

PASURAM 104

என்னிது மாயம் என்னப்பன் அறிந்தீலன்
முன்னைய வண்ணமே சொண்டளவா யென்ன
மன்னு நமுசியை வானில் சுழற்றிய
மின்னு முடியனே! அச்சோவச்சோ
வேங்கடவாணனே! அச்சோவச்சோ.

In this pasuram Perialvar again takes on the role of Yasodha. Yasodha has apparently called the child Krishna and asked him to embrace her. She then says that this child is none other than Thiruvengadamudaiyan with the glorious shining head of a victor. Perhaps Perialvar visualised Lord Srinivasa with the bright vajra kireetam on His head. Yasodha continues and says that Thiruvengadamudaiyan is none other than Vamana who lifted Namusi, the son of Bali chakravarthi, twirled him high above his head, whirled him and threw him up into the sky. The story goes that Namusi, the asura had the audacity to accuse Perumal of being unfair and unjust because when Bali chakravarthi promised to gift three feet of land to Vamana it was in the belief that the measure would be with the three tiny

feet. But later having got boon, Vamana assumed the gigantic form, measured the seven worlds and Brahmaloaka and later kept the third foot on Bali's head and pushed him down to Pathala. Namusi felt this was not fair. But philosophers say that the moment Bali gave the dhana dhara i.e. he poured water from his Kamandalam into the hands of Perumal, the promise of the gift was already made. It was not material whether it was to be three feet measured by Vamana or three feet measured by Thrivikrama as Vamanan never said it would be land measured by his feet only.

In this pasuram therefore Perialvar says that Thiruvendamudaiyan is Vamana who is yet another avatar of Krishna.

PASURAM 180

தென்னிலங்கை மன்னன் சிரம் தோள் துணி

செய்து

மின்னிலங்கு பூண்வி பீடண நம்பிக்கு

என்னிலங்கு நாமத் தளவும் அரசென்ற

மின்னலங் காரற் கோர்கோல் கொண்டுவா

வேங்கட வாணற்கோர கோல் கொண்டுவா.

Here again Perialvar continues with his role as Yasodha, the mother of the divine child. The mother has given a bath to the child Krishna and wants to comb the hair of the child. Like all children, Krishna was apparently distracted, would not sit still even for a moment, thus preventing Yasodha from combing His hair. Yasodha therefore takes recourse to the usual motherly trick of trying to hold the interest of the child with interesting asides. Yasodha calls the crows and tells them to bring a stick - a beautiful colourful one which the cow herds use while tending the cows. She tells the crow that this beautiful stick is for the child who in His Ramavataram destroyed Langadhipathi Ravana and severed his many heads and powerful shoulders. She says that it is that very Rama, who installed the brother of Ravana viz. Vibhishana as the Ruler of Lanka. That Vibhishana wears bright shining ornaments and she adds that Rama assured that he would rule Lanka as long as Rama's name lasted in this world. In effect, therefore Rama blessed Vibhishana to be a chiranjeevi as the people in this world cannot ever fail to repeat

the name of Rama. Here it is interesting to note that there are only seven persons who are regarded as chiranjeevis i.e. people without death. They are Asvathama, Bali Chakravarthi, Vyasa rishi, Hanuman, Krupachariyar, Parasurama and Vibhishana. The belief is that all these great souls are living even to-day in this world. The Bhavishyotra purana says that when God manifests Himself at the end of Kaliyuga in his Kalki avatar, He will learn at the feet of Parasurama.

To go back to the pasuram, Yasodha asks the crow to get the colourful stick to this child who is wearing a chain with a pendant. Perhaps, Perialvar wants to convey the thought that this bright pendant i.e. Thiru Abaranam is the figure of the effulgent Mahalakshmi Who resides for ever on the chest of Perumal.

It is said that this request to bring a colourful kol i.e. stick has got another significance. Kol is a necessity for a cow herd to do his job of tending the animals well. At the same time, as is well know when Perumal took on the Krishnavatara, He did not have the usual ayudhams for Maha Vishnu. This Kol was therefore His only ayudham. Even later in Krishnavataram, He holds the whip (chattai) as the ayudham when He went to the epic battle field acting as a charioteer for Arjuna.

PASURAM 207

போதர்கண் டாய் இங்கே போதர் கண் டாய்
 போதரே எனன்னாதே போதர் கண்டாய்
 ஏதேனும் சொல்லி அசல கத்தார்
 ஏதேனும் பேசநான் கேட்க மாட்டேன்
 கோது கலமுடைக் குட்ட னேயோ!
 குன்றெடுத் தாய்! குட மாடு கூத்தா!
 வேதப் போருளே! என் வேங் கடவா
 வித்தகனே! இங்கே போத ராயே.

In this pasuram also Perialvar takes on the role of Yasodha mother of Krishna. Apparently, in the morning, while Yasodha was attending to her house work, Krishna had gone into a number of houses of gopasthrees and was up to his mischievous

tricks like stealing butter, kicking the vessels which were full of milk on to the ground and then bursting into childish laughter on hearing the noise of the tumbling vessel; drinking the boiled milk kept in their houses, taking the bangles from the hands of the small girls, and buying nawal fruits in exchange. Finding all these mischievous acts difficult to accept the gopasthrees came running to Yasodha complaining about her son Krishna. This is the back drop in which this pasuram is composed by Perialvar as in this pasuram Yasodha calls Krishna to come fast as she wants to check with Him the truth in the complaints made by the neighbours. She says that she is not willing to believe the neighbours until and unless she checks it with Krishna. She adds that Krishna should come fast and should not adopt the delay tactics of saying that He is coming and coming and yet not arrive!

This pasuram literally translated will run as follows:

- O child of mine with infectious joy de vivre
- O child you who are the quintessence of the vedas
- O wonder child performing great and rare feats
- O Lord who lifted the Govardhanagiri with your little finger
- O Kudamadu Kootha (dancer with pots)
- O My God Vengada of Thiruvengadam
- O child of mine, please come quickly.

This pasuram has also a lot of inner meaning. Yasodha addresses the child as Kudamadu Kootha (குடமாடுகூத்தா). This is a dance peculiar to the Edayar kulam (இடையர் குலம்) i.e. the cow herds. The edayars are said to balance four and more pots on each shoulder and another four on the head and perform a dance without upsetting the pots. Krishna identified Himself so much with the edayar kulam that He could outshine the edayars in this dance. Thus, she is referring indirectly to his ability to mix and mingle and become one with the people whom He loves (Sausheelya).

Similarly when she refers to Krishna as Vithagane, (வித்தகன) i.e. great one, she is referring to the fact that the great

God who performed such mighty feats was not being appreciated and understood by the ignorant gopasthrees.

Again when she refers to His having lifted the Govardhanagiri with His little fingers, she is referring to His vatsalya guna. She says that the Lord who lifted with His little fingers the mighty Govardhanagiri and held it aloft for seven days in order to protect the dumb animals and the residents of Brindhavan from the lashing rains let loose by an angered Varuna showed His immense compassion towards them. Can that child wantonly cause trouble to the gopasthrees? No never!

Thus, she makes it clear that the vithagane, Govardhanagiri dara, Kudamadu Kootha is incapable of any wanton mischief.

Another interesting feature which we notice in this pasuram is that when calling Krishna, Yasodha makes it abundantly clear that she does not want Him to adopt any delay tactics. She pleads with Him requesting Him to come fast and says she does not want to believe what she is convinced are a pack of lies uttered by the gopasthrees until and unless she checks them with Him. She pleads with Him to come fast and not keep her waiting. She also adds that the child should not say I will not come, as she will not be able to stand such a denial. She also says that He should not keep on saying I am coming and coming and yet not arrive! Perialvar thus makes it clear that however great a devotee one might be, even if one has got the authority of a mother over her child yet one cannot command God. God has to come of His own free will and volition. One has to request and plead and not order God.

It is also evident that the specific incidents mentioned in this pasuram have been selected as they refer to the various qualities of the God. Thus, the Kudamadu Koothan episode refers to His sousilya guna as the great Lord when He acted as a cow herd mingled with that crowd even as water joins water. He was one amongst them and the edayars did not think He was different. This ability of becoming one with His devotees is His great sousilya bhava. Similarly when Yasodha addresses Him as great Veda porul, (வேத பொருள்) the quality of paratvam

of the Lord is highlighted. Again, when Yasodha addresses the child Krishna and says 'Yen Venkatava' (என் வேங்கடவா) She is using a proprietorial possessive right that she has over her child. This enunciates the soulabhya quality of the Lord as each and everyone of His devotees feels that the God is His. Again, when addressing Him as Vithagan, (வீத்தகன்) the quality of God as the embodiment of all the great qualities is evident. When Yasodha says that she will not listen to the tales carried by the gopasthrees and wants Krishna to come without tarrying and confirm or deny the statement made by the nieghbours, she makes it clear that mere mortals as devotees should approach God with love, devotion and full faith and only then will God respond to their call.

PASURAM NO.247

கடியார் பொழில்ணி வேங்கடவா! கரும்போரேறே!
நீயு கக்கும்
 குடையும் செருப்பும் குழலும் தருவிக்க கொள்ளா
தேபோனாய் மாலே!
 கடிய வெங்கா னிடைக்கள் றின்பிள் போன
சிறுக்குட்டச் செங்கமல
 அடியும் வெதும்பி உன்கண்கள் சிவந்தாய்
அசைந்திட் டாய்நீ எம்பிரான்!

In this pasuram Alvar again becomes Yasodha. Apprently, Yasodha had in the morning exquisitely decorated the child Krishna before He was to go into the forest to graze the cattle. He stays in the forest till the evening and then returns with his charges. Having stayed in the forest throughout the day the dust and the dirt of the forest are all evident on the child's body. Thus, the beautified Krishna Who goes in the morning and the dishevelled Krishna Who returns in the evening are two different entities. But Yasodha sees the beauty in that picture as well as this picture. At the same time, she says that Krishna got into that dishevelled state only because He refused to accept the umbrella, the flute and the chappals offered by her in the morning before He set out to the forest. She even adds that if He were to continue to disobey her, he need not go into the forest henceforth, and He need not also tend the cattle.

In this pasuram she says

O Venkada residing at Thiruvengadamalai full of scented groves.

O God Who look like a jet black vrishabam (kaalai maadu)

O Krishna, the umbrella, the shoe and the flute which
You like, You did not take with you in the morning

O child Your tender lotus like feet which traversed the forest path without chappals while herding young calves has been hurt

O child Your eyes have become red because You were out in the hot sun without an umbrella

O child of mine, you are looking tired, exhausted and jaded as the whole day You were out in the Sun and that too without the flute which would have helped you in herding the calves which had strayed into the nooks and corners of the forest area. (Yasodha says that if Krishna had taken the flute and just played on it, the calves which might have spread themsevels over the vast forest would have come homing straight to Him hearing His music.)

My child I offered all these three items to you. But you refused to take them.

Later in another pasuram Yasodha gives the child the ultimate warning that if He continues not to listen to her advise (kandrin pin pogadhe) (கன்றின் பின் பொகாதை) he will not be allowed to tend the calves the next day.

In this pasuram the Alvar specifically mentions that Krishna took the calves for grazing. Perhaps he makes it clear that God looks after the helpless persons even at the cost of great discomfort to Himself. The calf is not able to look after itself and such persons are looked after by God.

The second theme that strikes us in the pasuram is that the heart of Perialvar through the eyes of mother Yasodha weeps and bleeds for the troubles Caused to the God when He ventured out to tend the calves. The vatsalya bhava as a path of devotion is again in evidence.

Actually in the pasuram 275 to 285 Perialvar waxes eloquent about the playing on the Pullanguzhal i.e. flute by Krishna and what all it does to the world. One may wonder as to how Yasodha could think that God needed all petty things like umbrella, flute and chappals. After all God has Adishesha as His divine couch. Pasuram No. 2134 in the Naalaayira Divya Prahandham eloquently explains the role of Adishesha as follows:-

"Sendral kudaiyam" (சென்றால் குடையாம்) i.e. when the Lord walks Adishesha is the umbrella.

"Irundal simhasanam" (இருந்தால் சிம்ஹாசனமாம்) i.e. when the Lord sits Adishesha becomes a throne.

"Nindral Malaradiyam" (நின்றால் மலரடியாம்) i.e. when the Lord stands Adishesha become His wooden shoes.

"Endrum thunaiyan" (என்றும் துணையான்) i.e. He is a faithfully permanent companion for the Lord.

"Mani vilakkum" (மணிவிளக்கும்) i.e. Adishesha is the light which lights the path that God walks

"Poo pattam" (பூ பட்டாம்) i.e. Adishesha is the silken raiment for God

"Palgum Anaiyam" (பல்கும் அணையாம்) i.e. Adishesha is the pillow for God.

When such is the multifarious role of Adishesha who is ever with God why does Perialvar through Yasodha bemoan the child having failed to take the umbrella? This is explained by the fact that motherly love i.e. vatsalya bhava blinds her eyes to the fact that her child is no mere child but it is Paramapurusha Himself. To the mother however great the child might be it is still her child. This is illustrated in another place in the Ramayana also. Visvamitra came to the court and asked Dasaradha to allow his two sons to go with rishi to protect the yagasala and fight with the asuras who were trying to destroy the yaga site. Dasaradha immediately says that his sons are just children, and that they cannot fight the demons. Visvamitra smiles and tells Dasaradha that his sons are mahatma. He made it clear that for Dasaradha they are children, but for others they are great persons. Similarly, here Perialvar as Yasodha though she refers to Krishna as Veda Porul, Vithagan, Paramapurusha etc.

suddenly forgets all that and when she saw Krishna with red eyes, tender feet and dishevelled hair, she sees Him only as her child and an innocent child needing her protection. It is only in Krishnavatar that in spite of God revealing Himself in His viswaroopa quite often yet the moment the viswaroopa fades and the usual Krishna re-appears, the devotees treat Him as a saha i.e. compatriot and mere mortal and one amongst them and not one above them.

PASURAM 184

மச்சொடு மாளிகை யேறி மாதர்கள் தம்மிடம்புக்கு
கச்சொடு பட்டைக் கிழித்துக் காம்பு துகிலவகீறி
நிச்சலும் தீமைகள் செய்வாய்! நீள்திரு வேங்கடத்து
கிடந்தாய
பச்சைத் தமனகத் தோடு பாதிரிப்பூச் சூட்ட வாராய்.

In this pasuram Perialvar as Yasodha is requesting the child Krishna to come to her and allow her to beautify His hair by decorating it with His favourite flowers viz. the green davanam and padiri flower. This pasuram is one amongst the set of 10 pasurams where Perialvar as Yasodha refers to ten flowers which are great favourite to the God. They are shenbaga flowers, malligai flower, padiri flower, sengani neer flower, punnai flower, kurugatti flower, Iruvatchi flower, Karumugai flower, Marukkoznundu i.e. davanam. Yasodha pleads that child Krishna should come to her and allow her to beautify his hair with these flowers before they lose their smell and fade.

Yasodha addresses the child and says as follows:-

- O my child residing in the high Venkatadri hills
- O Lord you who always play with the gopasthrees in Gokulam and tease them with childish pranks, tearing their clothes etc. and yet they like you immensely.
- O Krishna please do not tarry, come quickly and give me the pleasure of adorning these flowers in your neatly combed hair.

Thus, through the simple everyday incident of the mother combing the hair of her child and beautifying it with flowers,

the Perialvar conveys great truth. This verse again brings out the point that God cannot be commanded or ordered by any one. One can only plead with Him, request Him to come. That is why in this pasuram Perialvar uses the word 'Varai' (வாராய்)? (won't you come?) Yasodha tries to coax and cajole Him tempting Him with His favourite flowers and specifically uses the word. 'Pachai davanam' (பச்சை தாவளம்) i.e. devanam which is green now. She says that before the davanam ceases to be green and fresh, He should oblige her and come.

Yet another point which is conveyed by this pasuram is that God does not require costly things to be won over. He can be attained with bhakti manam i.e. fragrance of Bhakti through offering poo manam i.e. fragrance of flowers! At this point it is interesting to recall a story which is related about Lord Jagannath of Puri. That Perumal is said to be fond of senganni neer poo. One day in the market there was a great scarcity for this flower. Only one vendor had one flower. All the devotees wanting to attain God through the simple method of offering this particular flower started out bidding each other in trying to grab that single flower from that flower seller. Finally one successful devotee paid a high price for it and offered it to God. That night Lord Jagannath is said to have appeared in the dream of that devotee and told him that he found that the flower offered by him weighed very heavily on His chest. God made it very clear that the high price paid by the devotee was only a burden on the God's chest. Perhaps, this story only tries to convey the meaning that we cannot tempt God with costly presents. What God needs is simple true bhakti as is evident by the fact that many of the flowers which Lord likes are simple flowers available in plenty in any place.

PASURAM 463

சென்னி யோங்கு தண்டிரு வேங்கட முடையாய்!
உலகு
தன்னை வாழ நின்ற நம்பீ! தாமோ தரா! சதிரா!

என்னையும் என்னுடைய மையையும் உன்சக் கரப்
பொறி யொற்றிக் கொண்டு
நீன்னரு ளேபுரிந் திருந்தேன் இனிஎன் திருக்குறிப்பே?

This is the last of the seven pasurams which Perialvar sung on the Lord of the Seven Hills. This is a pasuram where Perialvar seeks mukthi from the Lord. He says he has no more wants, no other thought or desire. He only wants salvation. The meaning this pasuram is as follows:-

- O Lord of Venkatadri Hill which is very high and almost touches the sky
- O Great Perumal who are seen standing to protect the World
- O Lord Who is so generous as not to notice the wrongs committed by the sincere devotees (That is to say the Lord is ever willing to forget the unwitting wrongs committed by His devotees).
- O Lord, my atma and my sareeram now belong to You in as much as I have had samasrayanam done (Un chakra pori ettrukondu refers to the fact that Perialvar had shanku and chakra caste marks imprinted on his shoulders and has thus become His servant.)
- O Lord of mine I am eargerly looking forward only for your grace.
- O Lord I do not have any more unsatisfied unfulfilled wants and desires.
- O Lord give me salvation.

Here therefore Perialvar concludes his seven pasurams on the Lord of the Seven Hills by telling him that his athma (soul) and sareeram i.e. body belong to Him and he is only waiting for the Lord to grant moksha to him. Perialvar says that his job in the world is over and wants to go to the abode of the Lord.

ANDAL

Andal has sung 16 pasurams on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. The meaning of those pasurams will be given below.

Andal is the only lady Alvar. She is the daughter of Vishnu Chitta i.e. Perialvar. Both father and daughter are equally famous Sri Vaishnavite savants. Andal is regarded as the amsa of Neela Devi. The story of her birth and ultimate marriage with Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam is too well known to bear repetition. She is known as "Choodi kodutha Nachiyar" (சூடிசு கொடுத்த நாச்சியார) i.e. a "damsel who adorned herself first with a garland and then offered it to Perumal". She has authored two Prabandhas viz. Nachiyar Thirumozhi and Tiruppavai. In the 30 pasurams in Tiruppavai Andal assembles her play-mates and they offer worship to Lord Krishna of Ayarpadi i.e. Gokula. She performed a "pavai nonbu" in order to attain God. The second prabandha written by Andal is Nachiyar Thirumozhi.

In these pasurams, Andal offers prayers to Kama, Lord of Love her sole object of being to become one with God. The pasurams of Andal are steeped in Sringara rasa. She adopts the Nayika Nayaka approach to depict the struggle, the all consuming desire of the devotee to merge with God. Thus though the words used in the pasurams refer to the agony of a love lorn maiden wanting to reach her beloved God, actually it signifies the eternal yearning of athma to reach Paramathma. Let us now turn to the pasurams themselves.

PASURAM 504

தையொரு திங்களும் தரைவிளக்கித்
தண்மண் டலமிட்டு மாசி முன்னாள
ஐயநுண் மணற் கொண்டு தெருவணிநது
அழகினுக்கலங்கரித் து அனங்க தேவா!
உய்யவு மாங்கொலோ வென்று சொல்லி
உன்னையும் உம்பியை யும் தொழுதேன்
வெய்யதோர் தழலுமிழ் சக்கரக்கை
வேங்கட வற்கு என்னை விதிக்கிறியே.

In this pasuram Andal offers prayers to Kaman (காமன்) i.e. Manmadha, God of Love. Her sole object is to become one with God and render service (Kainkarya) to Him. She did pavai nonbu in the month of margazhi but still had not attained God. So in Nachiyar Thirumozhi she does pooja to Kaman for a mandalam. Mandalam means 40 to 43 days. This poojas, she starts, for the first day of Thai, the Tamil month (which usually corresponds with 15th January). The pooja is to end by the end of first paksham in the month of Masi (i.e. second fortnight of February). She addresses Kama as O! Ananga deva! Ananga means a person who is without a sareera. There is a story connected with this. Once Manmadha at the instance of Brahma tried to spoil the tapas of Lord Shiva. Shiva got annoyed. He opened the third eye and burnt Kama into ash. Thus Kama lost his sareeram. Hence he became Ananga deva. This incident also proves the fact that while Kama knew that disturbing Shiva would invite His wrath and yet he was willing to sacrifice himself. He endangered his life in order to satisfy the wish of Brahma. Andal therefore prays to such a selfless Manmadha as he is a person who does not mind taking a risk in order to fulfill the wishes of those who approach him. Andal says that beginning with the month of Thai for one whole month and one paksham in the month of Masi, she offered prayers to Manmadha. She swept the floor, having cleaned it, she decorated the floor with kolam i.e. drawings with rice flour. She says she put up a medai i.e. a raised platform for performing the mandala pooja. She continues that she used fine grains of sand (Nun manal) to put the kolam. A doubt may arise as to why she had to specifically mention 'Nun manal' (நுண் மணல்). She says that she used such a fine sand that many wondered from where she collected such fine sand. She used such a fine sand so that when Manmadha walks on it; his beautiful tender feet won't get hurt! She also refers to having beautified the whole street with kolam so that it conveys the thought that she made the whole place attractive, in order to entice the God of Love. She says that she prayed to Manmadha so that she could earn and seek Nal vazhvu i.e. good life for herself. In the pasuram she refers both to Kama and his brother Sama. The prayer to Manmadha is that he should make her attain the Lord Who holds in His hand the discus which spits fire and causes fear amongst the

foes. That Lord, she says, is Lord Venkata i.e. Srinivasa of Thiruvengadamalai. She requests Manmadha to help her in getting an opportunity to do kainkarya i.e. service to God.

In this pasuram Andal asserts that the month of Thai and part of Masi are auspicious to offer prayers to Manmadha. Similarly Valmiki also held a particular month as auspicious viz. Chitrai masam (April - May). To Valmiki Chithrai is auspicious as Rama was born in that month.

A doubt may arise whether Andal by praying to a devata anantharam (i.e. one who is not God) had not gone against the normal codes of conduct when one approaches with prayers only God. Apparently, she felt that the transgression of such cannons is permitted if she could achieve the end viz. reaching God. A similar situation is noticed even in Ramayana when the great Hanuman searches for Sita in vain in Lanka. Then out of desperation he sat on a tall building and offered prayers to his ishta devata i.e. Rama. He says "Namostu Ramaya sa Lakshmanayai" But then concludes his prayers by adding

"Namostu Rudrendra, Yaman Ilebyaha"

Here also Hanuman prays to Rama first, but then also adds his salutations and request to the two non Gods viz. Yama and Anilam i.e. Vayu. Perhaps any straw is clutchable when a person is desperate.

It will also be of interest to briefly mention here that Manmadha is the son of Krishna and Rukmini. Sama the brother of Manmadha is the son of Krishna and Jambavathi. Here Andal while addressing Manmadha also joins the name of his brother Sama. In Rama avatar also Anjaneya while saluting Rama says

"Namostu Ramayasa Lakshmanaya"

I offer salutations to Rama Who is seen along with Lakshmana.

Manmadha has five arrows. These are not the usual arrows, but arrows of flowers. The five arrows are aravindham (lotus) asokam (flower of asoka tree), Chootham (the mango

flower) Nava Malligai (jasmine) and Neelothpalam i.e. blue lotus.

PASURAM 506

மத்தநன் னறுமலர் முருககமலர்
கொண்டுமுப் போதும்உன் னடிவணங்கி
தத்துவ மிலியென்று நெஞ்செரிந்து
வாசகத் தமிழ்த்து உனனை வைதிடாமே
கொத்தலர் பூங்கணை தொடுததுக கொண்டு
கோவிந்த னென்பதோர பேரெழுதி
வித்தகன் வேங்கட வாணனெனலும்
விளக்கினில் புகளன்னை விதிக சிற்றியே.

This pasuram also is a prayer to Kama. Andal says that she will collect Oomaththa malar and murunga malar. Both are said to be flowers which Manmadha likes as they have a heady scent. She says that she will worship him three time in the day and that she is convinced that he will not fail her as people believe that Manmadha never lies. She also threatens him in a veiled way and says that if Manmadha fails to fulfill her wish, people will lose the respect they have for the God of Love. She therefore pleads with Manmadha to take his bow and arrows of fresh flowers which have just blossomed. She asks him to write the name Govinda on the arrows before letting them loose on Perumal. She thus requests him to help her to reach the great Thiruvengadamudaiyan who is the eternal light.

It is of interest to note that even Cupid the Roman God of Love also has only flowers as his string of arrows.

Andal refers to Lord Srinivasa as the light. Thirumangai Alvar also while praising the Lord of Annan koil refers to him as "Oli Vilakku" (ஒளி விளக்கு) i.e. a light which is very bright.

PASURAM 535

கூட்டில் வேங்கடம் கண்ண புரநகர்
வாட்ட மின்றி மகிழ்ந்துறை வாமனன்
ஓட்ட ராவந்தென் கைப்பற்றி தன்னொடும்
கூட்டு மாகில் நீகூடிடு கூடலே.

In this pasuram Andal resorts to Kuri. Kuri (குறி) in Tamil refers to an act of a person who casts dice and then tries to read the future from the formation of the dice. Sometime kuri is read by drawing a big circle and then drawing smaller and smaller circles within that big circles. Then count the number of circles. If it is an even number, it is said to foretell the fulfilment of the wish. If the number is odd it means the wish will not be fulfilled. Andal here does kuri in order to know whether her efforts to attain God will be successful or will fail. She requests that the God Who took the form of Vamana and who is residing happily without any problems in the midst of Venkatadri forest at Thiruvengadam and at Thirukkannapuram should come fast and hold her hand. If her wish were to be fulfilled, she would get a even number when she sees kuri.

Here Andal refers to Thiruvengadam which is like a forest area and in the same breath refers to Thirukkannapuram which is a town area. Perhaps she deliberately chose these extremes, as the Tirupathi hill is like Brindhavanam where the Govardhanagiri was there and Kannapuram is like Ayarpadi i.e. Gokulam. But in both the divya desams the Lord is Krishna.

Here Andal requests God to come fast and to hold her hand. This has an inner significance as it is usually the Baghavan who has to come to the place where the chetan i.e. devotee stays. Moreover, Andal is Thayar and it is but natural that she asks Perumal to come to her and not the other way about. That is why even in Ramayana, when Hanuman spotted Sita, he offered to take her away from Lanka on his shoulders back to Rama. She politely declines and says that it is Rama who should come to her and release her. Only then it will be honourable to Him and honourable to Her. In Tamil, the words used are

"Veeranukkum azhagu, Veera patnikkum Azhagu"

"வீரனுக்கும் அழகு, வீரபத்னிக்கும் அழகு"

So Andal and Valmiki both are one and the same thought line and say that it is God who should come to Her and not she who would run to God. Her prayer is therefore only asking for God to come speedily.

PASURAM 546

வெள்ளை விளிசங்கு இடங்கையிற கொண்ட
 விமலன் எனக்கு உருக் காட்டான்
 உள்ளம் புகுந்தென்னை நைவித்து நாளும்
 உயிர்ப்பெய்து கூத்தாட்டுக் காணுல்
 கள்ளவிழ் செண்பகப் பூமலர் சோதிக் களித்திசை
 பாடும்சூயிலே!
 மெள்ள விருந்து மிழற்றி மிழற்றுதென்
 வேங்கட வன்வரக் கூவாய்.

In the previous pasuram, Andal has seen the koodal i.e. kuri. In this pasuram she sends a pet cuckoo as a messenger (dhoothu) (தூது) to Thiruvengadamudaiyan. She addresses God as Vimalan i.e. one with Hrudhya suddhi and says You Who hold the Sanku i.e. conch in Your right hand are not giving me darshan. But You have entered my heart and are not allowing me to forget You. You are making me suffer You are not allowing me to die. You are troubling me. She then says O Cuckoo, You go and sit on the Shenbaga flower full of honey and suck and enjoy only the rich honey and leave the rest and sing happily. Please come close to me. With your lisping loving words like that of a child (mazhalai sol) (மழலைக்கொல்) utter the name of Thiruvengadamudaiyan who is always in my thoughts. You please go and ask Him to come to me.

Andal here compares the warble of the bird with the lisping of a small child as she feels that God is very fond of innocent children and hence will not refuse the request couched in a child's voice.

PASURAM 577

விண்ணீல மேலாப்பு விரித்தாற் போல்
 மேகங்காள்!
 தெண்ணீர் பாய் வேங்கடத்து எள்திருமாலும்
 போந்தானே?
 கண்ணீர்கள் முலைக்குவட்டில் துனிசோரச்
 சோர்வேனை

பெண்ணீர்மை யீடழிக்கும் இதுதமக்கு ஓர்
பெருமையே.

From this pasuram onwards, the next 10 pasurams refer to the messages that Andal sends to the Perumal of Tirupathi hills using the clouds as the messengers. In literature there are different types of messengers. Hanuman was Rama's messenger to search for Sita and convey to Her His agony at separation from Her. Krishna went as a messenger for the Pandavas in order to dissuade kauravas from embarking on the war. Desika sent Hamsa i.e. swan as the messenger in his Hamsa Sandesam. Kalidasa wrote Mega Sandesam. Here Andal also uses the clouds as her messengers. May be because the top of the Seven Hills is always thick with clouds.

Andal addresses the clouds and says they look like the "Vithanam". Vithanam is the cloth that is tied above the head of Perumal when He is taken out in order to provide shade and protection. It is also called "Malaappu vidhanam" (மாலாப்பு விதானம்). Andal therefore refers to the clouded sky on Thiruvengadam as the blue cloth spread above God's head. She then asks the clouds whether her Lord of Thiruvengadam with crystal clear waters had come along with them. She then upbraids God and asks him whether he is happy and proud because tears are flowing down her cheeks and He is the cause for her tears. Immediately she pities herself and says I have thrown to the winds my inner womanly qualities by openly emotionally asking whether you have come. She says "O Lord! by making me suffer like this, do you think you have been fair and just?"

The pasuram makes it evident that Andal does not know when God will come. But she is anxiously waiting for His arrival and grace. There is a significance in this statement. It is said that always one should dig a tank and keep it ready so that as and when the clouds open up and pour the divine nectar of rain the parched lands would be ready to receive the life-sustaining amrith. It will be foolish to start digging a tank after the clouds have arrived as by then one would have missed the chance of storing and receiving the water. Similarly one should be ever

ready to receive the divine grace. One does not know when He will arrive and when He will bless us with His anugraha.

Andal again makes it clear in this pasuram that nobody can dictate the time and the place where God would concede our wish. This is made clear even in Krishnavatar. In Krishnavatar he tells the gopikas so many things. But it does not mean He keeps up all His promises all the time, to all of them. He chooses His time, place and person. This fact is made clear by Andal in this pasuram as she only beseeches Him to come impressing on Him and soulfully expressing to Him all the troubles and turmoils she is under going to reach Him and requesting Him to come soon and bless her.

PASURAM 578

மாமுத்த நிதிசொரியும் மாமுகில்காள்! வேங்கடத்துச்
சாமத்தி னிறங்கொண்ட தாடாளன்

வார்த்தையெள்ளே!

காமத்தீ யுள்புகுந்து சுதுவப்பட்டு, இடைக்கங்குல்
ஏமத்தோர் தென்றலுக்கு இங் கிலக்காய்நா

எிருப்பேனே.

In this pasuram Andal again addresses the clouds. She says

O Dark coloured rain bearing clouds!

Who rain pearls and precious stones, Did the blue coloured
Lord (Shyamala Vannan) Thrivikrama of Thiruvenga-
dam send any message through you?"

What is the message He has conveyed to me?

I am inexplicably caught in this web of love.

I am consumed by this fire of raging love

I am being destroyed. When such is my state, how will I
be able to enjoy the gentle cool breeze that blows
in the night?

This pasuram is again nothing but the out-pouring of a love lorn lady. As stated earlier, when Andal is the lady and Perumal is Her desire this is nothing but a reflection of the anxiety of the soul to merge with Paramathma.

Some may wonder why andal chose the clouds as the messengers. Clouds are usually identified as having udhara swabhava i.e. quality of being generous to a fault. Karna is one such person who is noted for his dhana guna, as he was willing to give everything to anyone who approached him. In Tamil there is a proverb which reads as follows:

கர்ணனுக்குப்பின் கொடையும் இல்லை
கார்த்திகைக்குப்பின் மழையும் இல்லை.

This means that there is none after Karna to equal him in generosity even as after the Tamil month of Karthigai there can be no rains. Such unbounded generosity is also the quality of the clouds as they pour and empty their life giving water viz. rain to sustain the parched earth. It rains without our asking. Such an oudarya guna made Andal choose the clouds as her messengers.

In this pasuram Andal concludes by asking the rhetorical question to the clouds, "Do you think I will be able to enjoy the cool breeze in the absence of my Lord"? This also merits some explanation. It is well known that certain things which give pleasure at certain time give nothing but pain at other times. The enjoyment of the pain therefore arises out of other factors and not due to the particular item referred to. Here Andal conveys the thought that those who think of God want to be with Him always. That which gives joy viz. the cool breeze when she was with Him gives nothing but sorrow when she is away from Him.

Nammalvar adopts the dasa bhava as a path of devotion. Perialvar adopted the vatsalya bhava. But even these two Alvars sometimes revelled and adopted the sringara bhava.

Andal however uses no other vehicle other than sringaram to attain her Lord.

There are various recognisable stages in evolution. First is the sky, then wind, followed by fire, water and earth respectively. Wind and fire follow each other. That is why sometimes, the wind fans the fire, other times, the wind quenches the fire.

Thus, the cool breeze for a person in love with God quenches that love when enjoy with God. But when seperated from God the fire of love is fanned by the wind. Andal says that she is consumed by the raging fire of love for God and that the gentle breeze of the cool night only fans her all consuming love to unbearable level.

In this pasuram, Andal refers to the beautiful "neela shya-mala meni" (நீல சயாமள மேனி) i.e. blue colour of the Perumal. It is not as if she is referring to the physical body of the Lord. She is, on the other hand, drawing out attention to a beautiful sight which we should enjoy. God is beautiful not for Himself but so that others may enjoy that sight and derive pleasure. Perhaps it is this thought which made even Keats the English poet say that a thing of beauty is a joy forever. The puranas also say

Nathae roopam

Nacha akaram

Na ayudhani

.... *Nacha spakam*

This means roopam i.e. the beauty, the akaram i.e. the physique of God, the ayudham i.e. the weapons are all not for Himself. It is to give pleasure to His devotees and to protect His devotees from all ills. All that He is and He has is for us His devotees.

Andal in this pasuram asks the clouds whether Thadalan sent any word (varthai) (வார்த்தை) to her. Thadalan refers to Thrivikrama. Andal is asking whether God sent any comforting words to her, even as Krishna and Rama uttered comforting words to Their devotees. For example when Arjuna was torn between filial duty and a warrior's duty, on the Kurukshetra battlefield when he had to fight with his own co-brothers, Krishna uttered the charama sloka. He comforted Arjuna directed him to do his duty and leave the rest to the God. That was the "varthai" (வார்த்தை) of Krishna to Arjuna. Similarly in Ramavataram when Vibhishana, brother of Ravana sought refuge with Rama deserting his own brother Ravana, as he did not see eye to eye with him, Rama readily accepted Vibhishana into His

fold. He said that whoever seeks refuge at His feet, will be given abhaya. Rama then uttered the following words viz. "Varthai" (வார்த்தை). He said

*Sakrutheva Prappannaya thavasmee thicha yachathae
Abhayam sarva bhoothae bhyo"*

Thus both Krishna and Rama uttered words of advise to set at ease the minds of their troubled devotees. Here Andal is asking the clouds whether her Thadalan at Thiruvengadam sent such comforting words to her through them so as to enable her to continue to live in the absence of her Lord.

The word "Varthai" (வார்த்தை) has also got another significance which is clearly enunciated by Lord Krishna to Drowpathi. It is said that once Drowpathi got annoyed with Krishna as He went on assuring her that she had nothing to worry and that He will look after her and yet she was facing many difficulties and undergoing many troubles. When she upbraided Krishna and expressed her doubts as to whether He had failed to keep up His word, Krishna replied O Drowpathi! Even the sky may fall, even the earth may split, even Himavan, the mighty mountain may collapse into rubble, even the deep vast ocean may go dry. But "Namae mogham vacho bhavetha Ma suchaha" i.e. He said "O Drowpathi My word will never go to waste. My word will be true. That is why Andal here uses the word "Varthai" and want to verify whether her Thiruvengadamudaiyan has sent the word "Masuchaha" (i.e. I will not fail - Do not grieve) through the messenger clouds. She is looking forward anxiously to some words of encouragement, hope, confirmation and assertion that her devotion will be rewarded with salvation and moksha.

PASURAM 579

ஒளிவண்ணம் வளைசிந்தை உறக்கத்தோடு

இவையெல்லாம்

எளிமை யால் இட்டு என்னை ஈழியப்

போயினவால்

குளிரருவி வேங்கடத்துஎன் கோவிந்தன் குணம்பாடி

அளியத்த மேகங்கள்! ஆவிகாத்தி ருப்பேனே.

Here again Andal addresses the clouds. She says "O merciful kind clouds! I am suffering untold miseries due to separation from my Lord. My body has lost its glow (shoba). My hands have become thin and wasted so that the bangles are on their own slipping off my hands. I am not able to sleep. I am torn asunder by doubts and worries. I have lost my sanity. Why has Thiruvengadamudaiyan not blessed me with His darshan? O clouds! You suggest that I sing his qualities and continue to live, deriving sustenance by mentioning His names. But do you think I will be able to preserve this life of mine by merely singing the qualities of my Govinda residing at Thiruvengadam which is full of water falls having cold water? Fie on you. I have no desire to live a life separated from my Perumal. Life has no meaning and purpose and is empty without Him, my Lord Govinda".

There is an allegoric story which brings out the difference between the pleasure of being with God and the pain of being away from God. Once there was a tank filled with water. On the bund there was a tree. Its roots availed of the copious supply of water and had green foliage. It had a thick growth. All the water birds came, resided and nested in the tree. But once as misfortune would have it, the tank dried. The tree also dried. The birds left. The scenario changed, the tree became barren and bereft of beauty. Andal says that when God was with Her her mind was full of thoughts of Him, her body was beautiful. She has no worries. She had good sleep. But then the Lord deprived her of His company she felt she lost everything and that her life had no meaning.

PASURAM 580

மின்னாகத் தெழுகின்ற மேகங்கள்! வேங்கடத்துத்
 தன்னாகத் திருமங்கை தங்கியசீர் மாரவர்க்கு
 என்னாகத் திளங் கொங்கை விரும்பித்தாம்
 நாள் தோறும்
 பொன்னாகம் புல்குதற்கென் புரிவுடைமை
 செப்புமினே.

This is yet another pasuram steeped in sringara rasa bhava. Here Andal says

"O clouds! streaks of lightning brighten your dark appearance. Go and tell Thiruvengada Perumal who has Thayar residing for ever on His chest that I want him to come to me and embrace me".

Here Andal refers to God having Thayar i.e. Sri on His chest. The name Srinivasa also means one with whom Sri i.e. Lakshmi stays or has vasam permanently. Similarly the word "Thiruvengadathan" means Vengadanatha with whom 'Thiru' i.e. goddess is always residing. Venkadam is actually constituted by two words Ven + kadam i.e. literally translated it means that the sins will get burnt up. So Venkadanathan means one with whose help all the sins get wiped out. With such a person 'Thiru' i.e. goddess is inseparable. The divine mother and Perumal are inseparable. In Ramayana also a similar thought is expressed when Valmiki says that even as one cannot separate the bright sun's rays from the Sun, so also Rama and Sita are inseparable.

In this pasuram, Andal specifically requests that Perumal who has Thayar on His chest to come to her. This only confirms the fact that when God wishes to bless people He has to be accompanied by Thayar for anugraha, the presence of Thayar is a must. But for dushta nigraha i.e. for killing the enemy the Perumal goes alone. Further, to earn God's grace, one needs the benevolent intervention of the divine mother, that is why when Andal says that she wants to be one with God she describes the Perumal to the clouds by referring to Him as Thiruvengadathan having Sri on His chest. She is therefore invoking the help of Sri to attain Sriyah pati.

In this pasuram Andal requested God to embrace Her. This has also got a significance. Such a blessing is given very sparingly by God. For example during Ramavata Rama moved freely with many. But he embraced only two people. One was a bird, the other was a monkey. When Rama was searching for Sita, He saw Jatayu, the great jeevathma who had sacrificed his very life in trying to prevent Ravana from carrying away Sitadevi. Even when its wings were cut, it continued to keep its body and soul alive till Rama arrived on the spot. It conveyed

that fact to the Rama and then breathed its last. Rama then embraced the bird.

Similarly when Hanuman returned from Lanka after locating Sita, Rama out of His unbounded joy embraced Hanuman.

In this pasuram we again notice that Andal only expresses her innate desire. She does not command him to come to her. She requests the clouds to go and tell Perumal that she wishes Him to come to her. Thus, she makes it very clear that nobody with certainty can say on whom God will confer such a rare honour. It is said that after Ramavatar was over and Rama returned to Paramapada, Hanuman was asked whether he would also go to Paramapada. He promptly declines. He said that as long as the name of Rama is uttered and as long as the Rama gandham i.e. sweet smell of Rama's body which embraced him earlier remains in tact, he would prefer to stay on earth itself. Such is the efficacy of God's embrace.

Again when Andal refers to the dark clouds with lighting streaks brightening it, she is referring to the image and mental picture which the first three Alvars saw at Thirukkollur, two Alvars lighted lamps, the third Alvar cried out "Pon meni kanden" (பொன் மேனி கண்டேன) i.e. the first glimpse which they had was that of golden effulgence which was caused by Sri's presence. Later only they saw the dark hued Perumal. So also here Andal refers to the dark clouds with lightning streaks as it reminded her of Thiruvengadathan with Thayar on His chest.

PASURAM 581

வான் கொண்டு கிளர்ந்தெழுந்த மாமுகில்
காள் வேங்கடத்துத்
தேன் கொண்ட மலரசிதறத் திரண்டேறிப்
பொழிவீர்காள்
ஊன் கொண்ட வள்ளுகிரால் இரணியனை
உடலிடந்தான்
தான்கொண்ட சரிவளைகள் தருமாகில் சாற்றுமினே.

In this pasuram Andal addresses the rain bearing clouds. She sees thick dark clouds everywhere in the sky. She says

"O clouds! You have rained so heavily that the flowers of Vengadam hill laden with honey have fallen to the ground. She then tells the clouds that the Lord at Thiruvengadam is none other than the Perumal Who with His nails split open the chest of Hiranyan, the demon. She tells the clouds that when they met Thiruvengadathan if He were to return the bangles which He took from her and asks them to return the same to her, then they should use that opportunity to relate to Thiruvengadathan her present miserable plight at the separation from Perumal.

One wonders why Andal refers to the fact that it rained very heavily and the beautiful flowers have got destroyed with their petals scattered all over. Why does Andal derive pleasure in this act of destruction? The only answer can be that Andal who had enjoyed the flowers in bloom in the company of God felt that the same flowers were recalling painful memories when God is not with her. So when the clouds destroyed them accidentally and scattered the petals, she felt that the clouds had rendered a service to her (upakaram) as they destroyed that which caused her unhappiness.

Having referred to the act of destruction, Andal then turns to the same clouds and asks them to help her in conveying a message to Perumal. Having helped her in destroying that which gave her pain (anishta nigraham) she now requests them to do something which will give her pleasure (ishta prapathi).

Andal refers to Lord Srinivasa as the one Who in His Narasimhavatar split open Hiranyan. Here also Andal is referring with a purpose the trait of the Lord Who destroyed the enemy so that the devotee could be vindicated. The destruction of the enemy can be done by the Perumal sitting where He is by merely releasing the discus. It is said that God derives greater pleasure in giving darshan to the sincere devotees. That is why in Gajendra moksha if God's objective was only to kill the crocodile, he would have continued to stay in Vaikunta and asked the discus to do the job. But as Gajendra had a lotus in its trunk which he wanted to offer to Lord, God came winging on the back of Garuda to receive the flower and enable His devotee to see Him and also to destroy the evil. Similarly, here Andal

requests God to come to her not only to remove her pain but also to give her pleasure and answer her prayer. Andal therefore specifically refers to God's power not only to destroy evil but to the power of rushing of the rescue of His sincere devotees. She therefore asks such a Perumal to come to her rescue.

She tells the clouds that if the Perumal returned the bangles which He took from her, only then they should use that opportunity to tell Him about her plight. Here again Andal makes it clear that the clouds cannot go and directly ask Him to return the bangles. That is why she uses the word "than konda sari valaigal tharumakil" (தாங்கொண்ட சரியவளைகள் தருமாகில்) i.e. if He returns the bangles that He took only then use the opening ambit, and plead with Him my case. Andal therefore again says that we cannot as a matter of fact ask the God for a gift. We can only take what He gives and that too only when He choses to give it! No one has therefore the right to ask or the right to receive except at His behest.

PASURAM 582

சலங்கொண்ட கிளர்ந்தெழுந்த தண்முகில்காள்!
மாவலியை
 நிலங் கொண்டாள் வேங்கடத்தே நிரந்தேறிப்
பொழீவீர்காள்!
 உலங்குண்ட விளங்கனிபோல் உள்மெலியப்
புகுந்துஎன்னை
 நலங்கொண்ட நாரணற்குள் நடலைநோய்
செப்புமினே.

In this pasuram again Andal addresses the clouds. She says

"O cool clouds! you have absorbed and imbibed water from the ocean and climbed high into the sky and spread yourself in Tirumalai hills and emptied heavy rains on the hills".

Tirumalai hills is the place where Thiruvengadathan resides. He is the Perumal Who got as a boon three feet of land from Mahabali. That Lord has entered my heart and has de-

prived me of all feminine graces even as the worm inside a kapitha fruit (wood apple) eats up the inside fruit completely though the shell remains in tact. O clouds! Go and tell that Narayana about my plight which is known as meyppadu (Bramai). In this situation, I have hallucinations when I think I see the chakra or the sankhu or God Himself and I have been thinking of Him.

Here again Andal refers to the water laden dark clouds. May be the dark beautiful visage of Perumal. That is why she says that seeing the full clouds gives her kulirchi i.e. contentment.

Clouds usually collect water from the ocean. They do that not to satisfy their thirst but to satisfy other's thirst. The clouds therefore render a service to others in a self-less manner. That is why she is requesting the clouds to go to Tirumala and meet Perumal on her behalf. Perhaps the clouds which give kshema to the world remind her of God's kalyana gunas.

In the previous pasuram she referred to the Narasimhavatara of God. Here she refers to the Vamana avatara of God. She says that the Lord residing at Tirumalai is Vamana who helped Indra to regain his lost kingdom when Bali the asura took away the kingdom of devas. God went to the help of Indra, a person who is not a God (prayajo nan thara parar), she feels that such a person would definitely agree to come to the rescue of a sincere devotee like her tho she is not a Deva herself.

Here again she says that her love for God has deprived her of all the feminine qualities like decency, dignity and decorum. She wants the clouds to go and inform Perumal as to how, He has unwittingly looted her of all her wealth of good qualities and that now He should recompense her for her loss by conferring on her salvation.

PASURAM 583

சங்கமா கடல்கடைந்தாள் தண்முலை காள்!

வேங்கடத்துச்

செங்கண்மால் சேவடிக்கீழ் அடிவீழ்ச்சீ விண்ணப்பம்

கொங்கைமேல் குங்குமத்திள் குழம்பழியப் புருந்து
ஒருநாள்
தங்குமேல் என்னாவி தங்குமென்று உரையீரே.

This pasuram is again in Nayika Nayaka bhava. Here Andal addresses the clouds and says

“O clouds! This Lord churned the mighty ocean filled with conches. Please go and place at the feet of the great Lord with eyes red like the colour of a lotus, my humble plea that unless He comes and spends one day with me it will not be possible for me to keep this body and soul together.

Here Andal uses the word ‘Makadal’ (மகடல்). It has several meanings. Ma kadal (மா கடல்) means widespread ocean. It also means a famous ocean. It is famous because the shanku or conch held by the Lord was born in the ocean. Besides, it is the ocean which gave Aiswaryam i.e. Mahalakshmi to God when it was churned. It is also famous because it is the cosmic ocean ksheerabdi, where God is seen in a reclining posture. All these make the ocean Ma kadal (மா கடல்).

Yet another interesting aspect is the specific words used by Andal, when she requests the clouds to place her plea at the feet of the Lord. The words used are “Sevadai kizh” (சேவடி கிழ்). She also uses the word “adi veezchi” (அடிவீழ்ச்சி). The equivalent words used in Tamil for referring to this form of humble request are “thandam samarpithu” (தண்டம் சமர்ப்பித்து). Thandam literally translated means a petition submitted after a million salutations to a person. Petitions to mere mortals to-day refer to these words. In Telugu the corresponding words used are “Maharaja raja Sri Variki aneka namaskaramlu chesi vinnappinchu manavi”. These words represent absolute abject surrender. It is rather interesting to find that even in those days Andal used these words while addressing God.

PASURAM 584

கார்காலத் தெழுகின்ற கார்முகில்காள்!

வேங்கடத்துப்

போர்காலத் தெழுந்தருளிப் பொருதவனார்

பேர்சொல்லி

நீர் காலத்து எருக்கினம் பழவிலைபோல்
வீழ்வேளை
வார்காலத் தொருநாள் தம் வாசகம் தந்தருளாரே.

In this pasuram again Andal addresses the clouds. She says

“O Dark clouds of the monsoon days starting from Thiruvengadam Hills!

Please utter the name of that Lord who went to the battle field, entered the fray himself and successfully fought the war (i.e. Rama who fought with Ravana and vanquished him on the battle field.) That Rama is at Thiruvengadam says Andal. She continues that in the rainy season the erukkam tree sheds all its ripened old leaves and thus has lost all its beauty. Similarly in this rainy season she says she has lost all her beauty. She asks am I to continue to wane like this or will He sent some “vasagam i.e. message to me through you? Andal here refers to Vijayaraghava with a specific purpose. It was who rescued Sita who suffered due to separation from her Lord. Similarly Andal here conveys the thought that she is suffering due to the pangs of separation from Perumal and so tries to comfort herself with the thought that like Rama the Perumal at Tirumala will also come to her rescue?

Some others feel that may be she refers to Thiruvengadathan as Rama and wants the clouds to mention his name so that even as Siva told Parvati the mere repeating of the name of Rama would enable her to attain moksha. The sahasranama has the following words which repeat what Shiva told to Parvati:

“Sri Rma Rama Ramethi rame rame Manorame
Sahasranama tatulyam Sri Rama Name varanane”

That is why Andal refers to Thiruvengadathan as Rama.

PASURAM 585

மதயானை போலெழுந்த மாழ்கில்காள்!
வேங்கடத்தைப்
பதியாக வாழ்வீர்காள்! பாம்பணையாள்
வார்த்தை எள்ளே!

கதியென்றும் தானாவான் கருநாது

ஒர்பெண்கொடியை

வதைசெய்தா னென்றும் சொல் வையகத்தார்

மதியாரே.

Here Andal says

“O ye clouds you look like dark mad elephants (madha yanai) you have arisen from Venkatadri hills. You are spread on the top of Venkatadri hill. You are Nityavasees is permanent residents at Thiruvengadam. Please tell me what happens to the word given by Lord who rests on Adishesha. He is the never failing protector of all those who seek His help. He is the sarva rakshakan. He is Achyutha. His word never fails. If such a person does not rush to rescue the tender creeper of a helpless woman won't the people of this world lose their respect for Him? Go and tell Him that. There are a number of significant thoughts in this pasuram. When Andal refers to the dark clouds on the top of Venkatadri hills, one is reminded of the famous words rendered so eloquently by the Nightingale of Indian music Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi. She sings “Sri Venkatadri Sikaralaya Kaala megham”. That song refers to God as the dark cloud on the top of Venkatadri. Perumal is dark hued like a cloud. Thus the dark clouds on the top of the hill reminds one of the dark coloured Perumal residing on the top of the Hill.

Andal uses the word ‘Venkadathai Pathiyaḡa Vazhveer kaal’ (வேங்கடத்தைப் பதியாக வாழ்வீர்காள்). Literally translated this means the clouds who have Thiruvengadam as their holy home. She is thus giving a divya desa sambandam to the clouds as the clouds are residing at Tirupathi which is a divya desam. She is jealous and envies them as they are having nitya vasam at the abode of her Lord.

She used the word Madhayanai i.e. elephant in musth. The elephant in musth is usually recognised by the oozing liquid from the forehead of the elephant. Here she is referring to the dark rain bearing clouds which empty the rains which they carry as reminding her of the musth that is oozing on the elephant's forehead.

May be Andal uses the word 'Madham' (மதம்) to make it clear that the clouds are proud as they are enjoying the company of God all the time. So the Megha i.e. clouds have become proud (madham kondu) (மதம் கொண்ட).

Andal here again asks the clouds whether her Lord has sent any message through them. The words used are 'Varthai yenna?' (வார்த்தை என்ன). As stated in one of the earlier pasurams, this use of the word 'Varthai yenna?' can mean literally as to what was the exact message conveyed by the Perumal. It can also mean that she is expecting the Perumal to repeat the words 'Masucha' which He told Arjuna as well as Drowpathi asking them to believe and have faith in His words. She is perhaps also conveying the thought that the Perumal Who told Arjuna and Drowpathi that He will never fail in His word could never behave in such a manner towards her as to belie His earlier promise to others. She asks the clouds what happened to His boast "masucha"? Was she to believe Him or to loose His faith in Him?

She goes one step further and says that if He does not keep up His word, he will become a liar. He will lose His name and fame and people will think badly of Him and will have no respect for Him. He who is known as Sarva rakshakan, saviour of all, He Who is known as Achutan (one who never lets down those who seek shelter at His feet) how is it in my case His word and fame is becoming a lie? Thus, it is that Andal airs her thoughts at one time certain that He will come, at another time feeling dejected that He has not come. All her thoughts centre around one question Why and Why is He tarrying and delaying coming to me and blessing me with salvation.

Andal goes one step further when she asks the question whether Achuta would not rush to the rescue of a tender creeper. She uses the word "Pen kodi" (பெண் கொடி). She asks what will the people of the world say when they come to know of this unforgettable, inexcusable treatment that He has meted out to this helpless woman. She refers to herself as a fragile tender creeper. Perhaps she is referring to that story where the great king who went hunting in the forest saw a creeper

on the road. He got down from his chariot, left it there so that the creeper may climb on to the chariot and have it as a support for it to spread. She hints that when that king Pari did so much for a jasmine (mullai) creeper why is it that the Perumal of Thiruvengadam is not bothered about this tender helpless kodi i.e. Andal? She alternately coaxes and cajoles or adopts an attitude of abject surrender and supplication, on one side she asks that He should rush to the rescue of the tender creeper and in the same breath says that if he were not to rush to her assistance the people would get to know about his attitude of callous indifference and will loose their respect for the Almighty. Her single minded object is to seek salvation an immediate salvation from Perumal.

Andal uses the words 'Pambu Anaiyan' (பாம்பணையான்) i.e. she is referring to the Lord who is resting on Adisesha i.e. the sesha sayana Lord of Tirupparkadal lying down on Adisesha is also seen in the Seshadri hill (Tirumala) giving seva in a standing posture to His devotees. May be she is also using this word 'Sesha sayana' with her tongue in the cheek and she is asking God whether He who is having the serpent as His couch has also developed two tongues like the serpent, one tongue not knowing what the other tongue is uttering.

PASURAM 586

நாகத்தி னணையானை நன்னுதலாள்
 நயந்துஉரைசெய்
 மேகத்தை வேங்கடக்கோன் விடுதூதில் விண்ணப்பம்
 போகத்தில் வழுவாத புதுவையர்கோன்
 கோதைதமிழ்
 ஆகத்து வைத்துரைப்பா ரவர் அடியா ராகுவரே.

This is a phalastuti pasuram. In this pasuram Andal says that She, the daughter of Perialvar who has a beautiful forehead (vilakshanamana netri udaiyaval) (விளக்கூனமான நெற்றி உடையாவள்) addresses in these ten pasurams Thiruvengadamudaiyan Who is reclining on Thiru Ananthalvan. She says that she has sent the clouds as the messengers and that whoever repeats these 10 pasurams will definitely get the benefit of God's grace which she herself sought.

PASURAM 601

பாடும் குயில்காள்! ஈது என்ன பாடல்? நல்வேங்கட
நாடர் நமக்கு ஒரு வாழ்வுதந் தால் வந்து பாடுமின்
ஆடுங் கருளக் கொடியுடை யார்வந்து அருள் செய்து
கூடுவ ராயிடில் கூவிநும் பாட்டுக்கள் கேட்டுமே.

In this pasuram Andal again describes her feeling of dejection and depression due to separation from God. She says

“O Ye cuckoo! What sort of a song is this that you are singing? I am feeling sad because I am separated from Thiruvengadamudaiyan When I was with Him I enjoyed your warbles and cooings. But now the same song causes me pain. Why then are you continuing to sing? I have not asked you to sing. Your song is now harsh on my ears. But if I am blessed and lucky and Perumal comes to me in response to my call then I will permit you to resume your song. You want to know is it as to how will you know when and whether the Perumal is coming to me? Let me answer that question. When Perumal comes here you cannot but sight the Garuda kodi i.e. flag in the distance. You will sight the divine vehicle of my Lord flapping its wings spreading them and winging its way to this place. Then you, as well as I, will know that God is coming. At that time you sing my dear cuckoo I will listen to your music transported into absolute happiness.

Here Andal makes it clear that the same music when heard in the company of God becomes divine music and in His absence the same music becomes cacophony and a strain on the ear drums.

PASURAM 604

மழையே! மழையே! மண்புறம் பூசிடெள் ளாய்நின்று
மெழுசூற்றி னாற்போல் ஊற்றுநல் வேங்கடத்
துள்நின்ற
அழகப் பிரானார் தம்மை என் னெஞ்சத் தகப்படத்
தழுவிநின்று என்னைத் ததைத்துக் கொண்டு
ஊற்றவும் வல்லையே?

In this pasuram Andal addresses the clouds again. She says

O Ye clouds! When copper vessels are made first the shape of the vessel is moulded out of mud. Then wax is applied. Again another coat of mud is given. Then a hole is made through the structure into which molten copper is poured. When the copper sets, the wax is removed by giving a heat treatment to the mud cover. The wax flows out the mud covering is broken. The copper vessel emerges. Similarly Andal says that God enters one's mind and then all the thoughts and actions are His. He gets complete control. It has happened to her. Having entered her mind she says. He has looted her of all sanity. She says O ye clouds! Please rain heavily, only after my soul merges with Paramatma.

It is said that Nambi, the uncle of Ramanuja used to shed tears when he listened to the pathetic appeal of Andal in this pasuram and the previous pasuram. He was so moved by this sincere appeal of a true devotee seeking God's blessing. It is said that whenever Rama's story was heard by Hanuman, Hanuman used to have tears in His eyes. That is why in Sanskrit it is said

“Yatra Yatra Raghunadha kirtana Tatra Tatra Kritamas-
thakanjalem Bhashparipurnam lochanam, Maruti

The adjective “bhashpavari” applied to Hanuman paints the picture of Hanuman with tear laden eyes being present whenever Rama's story is repeated in this world.

So we have travelled along with Andal and had an opportunity to experience her sincere supplication to God to bless her with salvation. As stated earlier, the entire set of pasurams are couched in the Nayaka Nayika bhava of presentation. We find that within the campus of the pasuram, she presents a convincing picture of anger leading to anguish, bravado suddenly changing to bashfulness. The mere thought of the God conceding her request taking her to the pinnacle of happiness at achieving her

desire, the agony at the separation from Lord and the ecstasy anticipating certain salvation and benediction are very compellingly and convincingly portrayed in these pasurams. Through this vehicle of Nayika terminology, the vaishnavite savant is able to impress upon us the need for abject unquestioned surrender with the full faith that such a surrender will be rewarded by the Almighty with salvation.

* * *

TIRUPPAN ALVAR

PASRUAM 926

கடிமலர்க் கமலங்கள் மலர்ந்தனஇவையே?
கதிரவன் கனைகடல் முளைத்தனன் இவனோ?
துடியிடை யார்குரி குழல்பிழிந் துதறித்
துகிலுடுத் தேறினர் சூழ்புன லரங்கா!
தொடையொத்த துவளமும் கூடையும் பொலிந்து
தோன்றிய தோள் தொண்ட ரடிப்பொடி யென்றும்
அடியனை அளிய னென் றருளி உள் னடியார்க்கு
ஆட்படுத் தாய்! பள்ளியெழுந்தரு ளாயே.

Tiruppan Alvar is well known for the famous song Amalan Adi Piran. He has composed only a few pasurams. But those pasurams describe in detail the beauty of each part of Lord Ranganatha. The Alvar loses himself in such a beauty. He starts first by describing the Tiruvadi and then goes on to describe the pithambaram (cloth), thiru nabhi kamalam, udara bandham (the waist band), thiru marbu (chest), neck, the mouth, the eyes. In the final pasuram, the Alvar merges with Lord Ranganatha.

The Alvar says the Lord who is seen in a sayana pose in Srirangam is parisudhan. He is Jagathkarana bhoothan i.e. the Creator of the world. He is the supreme help. He is effulgent. He has made me the slave of His devotees. He is the master of the nityasuris. He has come and stayed in Thiruvengada hill which is full of scented groves. He is the supreme Lord who has helped me even when I do not deserve that help. He is the one who resides in Nithya vibhoothi (Paramapada). He stays in Srirangam which is surrounded by tall fort like walls. His feet are like lotuses. Though my eyes have rested on His divine feet, they continue to be beautiful as ever (this is the height of humility when the Alvar says that in spite of his eyes having rested on the divine feet of the Lord, the feet have not lost even an iyota of their beauty).

In this pasuram, the Alvar refers to the Perumal as Amalan, Vimalan, Nirmalan, Adi piran.

It is well known that Tiruppan Alvar was a great devotee of only Lord Ranganatha. A person is reported to have gone and asked of Bhattar as to why the Alvar who sang only about Sri Ranganatha should mention about Lord Srinivasa of Tirumalai. Bhattar then replied that a poet who sings the praises of the particular God has to necessarily mention as to from where that God emerged. That is why in this pasuram the Alvar refers to Paramapada and says that the Lord on His way to Srirangam from Vaikuntha halted enroute at Thiruvengada hill.

PASURAM 929

மந்தி பாய்வட வேங்கட மாமலை வானவர்கள்
சந்தி செய்யநிள் ளான்அ ரங்கத்தர வினணையான்
அந்தி போல்நிறத் தாடை யும்அதன்மே லயனைப்ப
டைத்த தோரெழில்
உந்தி மேலதன் றோஅடி யேனுள்ளத் தின்னுயிரே.

This pasuram describes the beauty of nabhi kamalam of Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. The Alvar says that the Perumal who is in Srirangam is seen lying down on Adisesha. He is adorned with a pithambaram which has got the colour of the reddish orange skyline preceding Sun set. The Alvar says that his mind is lost in contemplation of the beautiful nabhi kamalam from which Brahma emerged and which lies just above the beautiful pithambaram. The same Lord is seen in a standing posture at Tirumala which is also known as Vada Vengadam i.e.the northern boundary of the Tamil speaking kingdom. In that Tirumala, the female monkeys are jumping from one branch to another. The devas have brought flowers to worship the Lord.

The Alvar refers to the existence of monkeys on Tirumala hills. May be to drive home the point that Thiruvengadam is a forest and hence the denizens of the forest starting from the monkeys to the elephants, lion etc. are found in plenty on that hill. The Alvar refers to Thiruvengadamudaiyan standing (vanavargal sandhi seyya ninran) (வானவர்கள் சந்தி செய்ய நின்றான்)

Sri Rama stood on Rishya mukham hill and gave dharshan in a standing pose to the monkey king Sugreeva and his monkey

armies and also to Lakshmana. Similarly, the Alvar says that Thiruvengadamudaiyan is giving darshan in His standing pose to the monkeys as well as to the devas. When the Alvar uses the words Arangathu keyilil aravin anaiyan (அரங்கத் தரவின-
னையார்) he refers to the God reclining on the divine couch Adishesha. Perhaps the God Who started from Paramapadam and enroute stood for some time at Thiruvengadamalai and then started to Srirangam felt He needed to recline a bit after the long journey.

* * *

TIRUMANGAI ALVAR'S PASURAMS ON LORD SRINIVASA

This Alvar has written 40 pasurams on Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati. As is well known, he was a prince who later turned into an Alvar. He is also the only Alvar who is known as Nalu Kavi Perumal, as he wrote his poetry in four forms. These four types of poetry are Aasu Kavitha, Chitra Kavitha, Madura Kavitha and Visthara Kavitha. Aasu Kavi refers to a poet who is able to spontaneously and with great speed compose the poems even as the thoughts originate in his mind. Chitra Kavi is one who is able to compose poem which when written down forms a diagram. The ratha - bandha poetry is the only form in which the Chitra Kavis compose the songs and such a Ratha Bandha pasuram has been sung in praise of the deity at Kumbakonam. Madura Kavi is the third type of the poet. As the very word Madura indicates, this poetry is steeped in the quality of maduryam. It is sweet in thought and content. The last type of Kavi viz. Visthara Kavi is one who is able to write large numbers of poems, as his repertoire is unlimited.

This Alvar is referred to as a Perumal. Such a title is given only to two other Alvars viz. Kulasekhara Alvar who is also known as Kulasekhara Perumal and Tirupan Alvar who is known as Pan Perumal. The three other Alvars viz. Thirumazhisai Alvar, Poigai Alvar and Peria Alvar are popularly known by affixing 'Piran' to their names. To illustrate, Thirumazhisai Alvar is known as Thirumazhisai Piran. Piran also refers to Perumal.

Thirumangai Alvar starting from Badri Ashram, visited all the Divya desams. When he visited Ahobilam in Andhra he said the dense forest in that area made it difficult to visit that divya desam. It is worthwhile to recollect the very words used by the Alvar to get a picture of the difficult terrain that existed at Ahobilam in those days. He says as follows:

1. "Senru Kandarku Ariya Kovil" (சென்று கண்ட-
டார்க்கு அரிய கோவில்)

Meaning: This is a temple where one cannot go with ease and offer worship.

2. "Deiva Mallal Sella Vonna" (தெய்வமல்லால் செல்ல வொண்ணா)

Meaning: Except for Devas, no one else can visit Ahobila Malai.

3. "Soorai Kaatru Kattu Theeyai Akasam Varaiyil Kondu Sellugirathu".

Meaning: The devilish whirl wind blew with such force that the flames of the forest fire in that hill almost reached the sky.

4. "Kanaittha Theeum Kallum Atta Villudai Vedaru-mai" (கனைத்த தீயும் கல்லும் அட்ட வில்லுடை வைடருமாய்)

Meaning: The blazing fire and the crackling noise of the dry heat is resounding in the hills. The heat generated by the fire has made the stones in the pathway uncomfortably hot to tread. The hunters are armed with their bows and arrows and are seen in plenty in the hill.

5. "Thinai Thanayum Sella Onna" (தினை தனையும் செல்ல வொண்ணா)

Meaning: It is very difficult to go near that place even for a minute.

Hearing the discouraging words uttered by Thirumangai Alvar, Perumal got worried. Perumal is said to have assured the Alvar that while the approach to Ahobila was hard, he may visit Tirumala which is cool and inviting and that he can see the same Perumal at Tirumala. Thus after the first ten verses describing the difficulties at Ahobila, we find that in the next 40 pasurams the Alvar is completely taken in by the scenic splendor and the cool climate at Tirumala. In this context, it is worthwhile to recall a few significant sentences used by Nammalvar while describing Tirumala. He said Thiruvengadam is "Thezhi Kura Aruvi". These words in Tamil refer to the fact

that Thiruvengada malai is resounding with the noise of the water gushing down the innumerable water falls. He again refers to "Thennirai Sunai Neer Thiruvengadam". This means that the theerthas in Thiruvengadam have crystal clear waters. He says that Thiruvengadam has "Moitha Solai Moipoom Thadam Thal Varai". This refers to the fact that Thiruvengadam is full of luscious scented groves. Let us now turn to the Pasurams of Thirumangai Alvar on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumalai.

PASURAM 1018

கொங்க லர்ந்தம லர்க்கு ருந்தம்ஓ சித்த கோவலன்
எம்பிரான்
சங்கு தங்குத டங்க டல்துயில் கொண்ட தாமரைக்
கண்ணினன்
பொங்கு புள்ளினை வாய்பி ளந்தபு ராணர் தம்மிடம்
பொங்குநீர்ச்
செங்க யல்திளைக் கும்சு னைத்திரு வேங்கடம்
அடை நெஞ்சமே!

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal who is residing at Tirumala is none other than Sriman Narayana who is in Tiruparkadal. He is the same Perumal who destroyed Bakasura by splitting open his mouth. He is also the same Perumal who destroyed the two Kurundha trees. That Perumal, Alvar says, is residing at Tiruvengadam which is full of water falls and which has a very salubrious cool climate.

In this pasuram Alvar refers to two incidents which occurred during Krishna Avatar. He says that the asura Bakasura who took on the form of a stork to deceive others was identified by Krishna. He tore open his mouth and killed the asura then and there. Similarly, once Krishna the child was tied by his mother Yasodha. In spite of his movement being curtailed, the child wanted to go ahead. He pulled Himself forward. The way was blocked by two giant Kurundha trees full of scented flowers. While the child Krishna crawled through the space between the two trees, the stick to which He was tied could not pass through it. It got stuck lying across to the trunks. Unmindful of the

blockade, the child Krishna crawled ahead. The two mighty trees were felled. Such was the greatness of Krishna the child. The Alvar continues and says the same Pundareekaksha Perumal is lying down on Adishesha in His yoga nidira pose on the cosmic ocean filled with conches (sanku). He continues that Sriman Narayana the Perumal is a Purana Purusha and He stays in Tirumala which is full of tanks where the red kayal fishes (a type of fish) flourish. The Alvar concludes by advising his mind to seek salvation by visiting that beautiful Tiruvengada Malai where the great Perumal resides.

In brief the Alvar says that the Perumal Who destroyed the Kurundha trees, the Perumal Who destroyed Bakasura and the Perumal Who is seen in his yoga nidhra pose in Tiruparkadal are one and the same and that Perumal resides at Tiruvengadamalai which has a cool and refreshing climate.

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to Perumal as "Puranar". It means a very ancient person. It can also mean that He is one who for a very long time (puranic length of time) is in the habit of destroying the enemies! That is to say this quality of the Perumal to rush to the rescue of His devotees and destroy their enemies is noticed not only in the Krishna avathar but also from His earlier avathars. Alvar therefore advises his mind to seek shelter at His feet. He therefore advises his mind to go to Tirumala and seek salvation at the divine feet of the Perumal residing there.

PASURAM 1019

பள்ளி யாவது பாற்க டல்அரங் கம்இ
 ரங்கவனபேயமுலை
 பிள்ளை யாய்உயி ருண்ட எந்தைபி ரான வன்பெரு
 கும்மிடம்
 வெள்ளி யான்கரி யான்மணி நிற வண்ண
 னென்றெண்ணி நாள்தொறும்
 தெள்ளியார் வணங்கும் மலைத்திரு
 வேங்கடம்அடைநெஞ்சமே!

In this pasuram the Alvar advises his mind to approach the Perumal at Tirumalai, as He is none other than the person Who even as a child sucked the life out of the demoness Poothana He is seen in his sayana pose at Tiruparkadal as well as at Thiruarangam (Sri Rangam). That same God is seen in a standing pose at Tirumala. He is worshipped by the gnanis i.e. wise men who refer to the Lord of Tirumala as "Velliyan" i.e. the Perumal with white colour. They also refer to Him as "Kariyan" i.e. the Perumal with a dark colour. They also refer to Him as "Mani Nira Vannan" i.e. the Perumal with the colour of a blue precious stone. Surrender to that Lord at Tirumala in abject obeisance says the Alvar.

The Alvar here refers to an incident that occurred in the life of the child Krishna i.e. Poothana Vadha. Immediately after referring to this miraculous deed of the child Krishna, the Alvar's mind flies to the scene of Perumal lying down on the cosmic ocean as also at Sri Rangam. He thus identifies the child Krishna with the Perumal in the sayana pose at Tiruparkadal and Sri Rangam. Then in his mind he sees the child Krishna has grown up. He is able to stand up. Alvar says that Lord Srinivasa seen in a standing pose at Tiruvengadam is the same child Krishna and the sayana pose Perumal of Tiruparkadal. This quick transformation of the child lying down in the cradle to the person seen standing is described in Tamil as follows:

"Thottil Pillai Pei uyir

unda pinbu nirka

kattu kondathu Thirumalaiyilae".

i.e. The child in the cradle after sucking the life of the demoness learnt to stand up at Tirumala!

The reference by the Alvar to the various colours of the Perumal also has a significance. It is believed that Perumal has one colour in each yuga. In Krita yuga, He has a milky white colour. In Tretha yuga, He has a yellow colour called Peetham. In Dwapara yuga, He has the blue colour. In Kaliyuga, He will have the black colour also known as Shyama meni. The Alvar

the children of Kubera viz. Nadakooparan and Manigreevan were engrossed in Jala Kreedai in Deva loka. Narada arrived at this place but the two children did not pay any respect to Narada but continued to stand like mute trees. Narada therefore got angry and cursed that as they were standing like mute trees, they should become real trees as a punishment for the disrespect shown to him. Thus, it was that the two children of Kubera were cursed by Narada. The children got worried and requested Narada as to when they will have sapa vimochana i.e. redemption from the curse. Narada told them that they will have to remain as trees for a long time until Perumal comes to the earth and redeems them of their curse. These two sons of Kubera were the two trees in the backyard of Yasoda's house. As the child Krishna was very mischievous, Yasoda had tied Him up to a pestle; but the mischievous Krishna found the pestle no obstacle to His pranks. He dragged Himself out of the house along with the pestle. He crawled through the space between the two trees but the pestle got blocked by the two trees. He continued to pull. The pestle then felled the two trees. Nadakooparan and Manigreevan got released from their curse.

The other incident related by Alvar in this pasuram also refers to an incident that occurred during Krishna avatar. Though this incident is also fairly well known, a brief account of the story is relevant at this spot. It is said that the people in Gokulam used to worship Lord Indra for many years. Once they came and asked the child Krishna as to whom they should worship. Krishna said that as the Govardhana Giri provides grass for the cattle which formed their main wealth, they should, in all fairness, worship the hill. The innocent residents of Gokulam therefore switched over to offering worship to Govardhana Giri. Indra got angry. It is said that there are many types of rain i.e. varsha. Indra decided to let loose the dark rain bearing clouds which bring in terrific devastating deluge. It rained non-stop for seven days. The cows, the calves and the residents were all frightened. They came back to Krishna seeking His protection. Krishna then lifted the Govardhana Giri with His little finger, held it above His head like an umbrella and thus provided shelter to all. The Alvar says that Krishna Who saved even cows and

the calves and thus made it clear that He Who helped the meek, the weak and the helpless, is staying at Tiruvengadam.

Thus, the Perumal Who is a "Rakshaka Deivam" (definite saviour) helped the children of Kubera to get released from their curse even when He was tied up by His mother Yasoda. He again saved the helpless cows and the calves by holding aloft a huge mountain. Both the events prove that He is a certain saviour. Alvar refers to this aspect of the Perumal and exhorts his mind to seek solace and salvation at the divine feet of Lord Srinivasa at Tirupati.

PASURAM 1021

பார்த்தற் காய் அன்று பார தம்கைசெய் திட்டு
 வென்றப ரஞ்சுடர்
 கோத்து அங்கு ஆயர்தம் பாடி யில்குர
 வைபிணைந்தனம் கோவலன்
 ஏத்து வார்தம்ம னத்துள் ளான் இட வெந்தை
 மேவிய எம்பிரான்
 தீர்த்த நீர்த்தடஞ் சோலை சூழ்திரு வேங்க டம்
 அடை நெஞ்சமே.

In this pasuram again the Alvar exhorts his mind to go to Tiruvengadam and seek salvation at the feet of the Perumal at Tirumala. He says that the Perumal at Tirumala is the Lord, who, prior to Mahabaratha war, acted as an envoy on behalf of the Pandavas and tried to intercede with the Kauravas and avoid the war, if possible. Having failed in His mission, He stood on the side of the Pandavas and ensured the victory of Dharma. He is the same Perumal Who, while residing in Gokulam, showed His quality of sow seelyam by identifying Himself completely with the cowherdsmen in Gokulam and sometimes even excelling them in their Kuravai Koothu (a peculiar dance of the cowherdsmen). He is also the Perumal who derives happiness in residing in the hearts of His sincere devotees. He stays in Thiru Vidanthai also. Such a Perumal is staying in Tiruvengadam which is full of punya theerthas, flower groves and luscious forests.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that for the sake of Arjuna and the Pandavas, the Perumal master minded the defence operations during the Mahabaratha war and thus ensured the victory of the Pandavas. When the Alvar refers to the participation by Perumal in Kuravai Koothu, he is only referring to the quality of Samoham Sarva Bhoothaeshu" i.e. in the eyes of the Perumal, all are equal, be it the residents of Paramapada or the residents of Paracheri viz. ayarpadi. The Kuravai Koothu is a peculiar dance where Krishna manifested Himself many times and made each Gopika feel that He was with her. The Rasa Kreedai dance expresses clearly this axiomatic truth that the Perumal though one, is many in Himself. He is one. He is all. He is everything.

The Divya Desas referred to in this pasuram have one connecting link. All these are holy places where the Goddess i.e. Thayar stays along with God. No doubt, the Thayar is permanently residing on the chest of Perumal, but, in this pasuram, the places referred to are such places where the God and the Goddess are seen as Moolavars in the Archa form in the same Garba Griha. Thus, in ayarpadi He is seen with the various Gopikas, the Gopikas are none other than the Thayar herself. Similarly, in Thiruvidadanthai He is seen with Boomi Devi. In Tiruvengadam He is referred to always as "Alarmelmangai ura marban". He is known only as Sri...Nivasan i.e. Goddess "Sri" is staying (Nivasam) with Him.

PASURAM 1022

வண்கை யான் அவு ணர்க்கு நாயகன் வேள்வியில்
சென்று மாணியாய்
மண்கை யால் இரந் தான்ம ராமர மேழும்
எய்தவலத்தினான்
எண்கை யான் இமயத்துள் ளான் இருஞ்
சோலைமேவிய எம்பிரான்
திண்கைம் வாதுயர் தீர்த்த வன்திரு வேங்கு டம
அடை நெஞ்சே

In this pasuram the Alvar again exhorts and pleads with his mind to seek solace at the feet of the Perumal at Tiruvengada

Malai. He says that the Perumal Who is seen at Tiruvengada Malai is the one Who during His Vamana avathar approached the asura King Mahabali and asked for a gift of three feet of land. The Alvar says that the roles were reversed when the great giver of boons had to extend His hand, requesting a boon from the asura King. He says that He is the same Perumal Who during His Rama avatar to convince Sugriva about His might, let loose one arrow which pierced through seven sala trees standing in a row and slashed them down to the ground with His one arrow! He is the Perumal Who is residing in Ashtabuja divya desa, appearing before us with eight hands. He is also residing at Thirupiridhi divya desa in Himalaya mountain (near Badrinath) and at Thirumalirum solai. He also is the one Who was the saviour of the mighty elephant Gajendra. The Alvar addresses his mind and says "Oh mind of mine seek the feet of that Lord residing at Tiruvengadam".

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to an incident that occurred in Rama avatar when Rama was going towards Lanka to rescue Sita. With the help of Hanuman, He befriended Sugriva. Sugriva wanted Kishkinda Rajyam to be given to him. Rama promised to help him. But Sugriva looked at Rama and wondered whether that delicate looking person could withstand the might of Vali. Sugriva therefore showed to Rama the skeleton of Dundhubi, killed by Vali and asked him to lift it and throw it away. Rama realised that Sugriva was wanting some proof of His prowess. He used His little toe and kicked the skeleton. The skeleton fell at a place about 20 miles away. Sugriva then asked Rama to break the huge tree in front of them with a single arrow. Rama took one arrow. There were seven trees standing in a row. With one arrow, He split all the seven trees at one shot. It is said that when He tore asunder the seven trees, all the things having number seven started trembling - e.g. seven hills, seven oceans etc. What was more, the arrow having split the seven trees, returned to Rama's quiver! Such is the greatness of the Perumal.

The Alvar uses the word "Thinkai Ma Thuyar theertha" while referring to the episode of the rescue of Gajendra by Perumal. Literally translated, this means that Perumal resolved

the misery of Gajendra the mighty elephant with the mighty trunk. For the elephant, all its strength lies in the trunk. The Alvar perhaps refers to this incident to make it clear that God rushes to the help of even animals like elephants. He is an "apathbandhava" and "anadha rakshaka". That Perumal says the Alvar, is none other than Lord Srinivasa.

PASURAM 1023

எண்தி சைகனும் ஏழுலகமும் வாங்கிப் பொன்
வயிற் றில் பெய்து
பண்டோ ராலிலைப் பள்ளி கொண்டவன் பால்ம
திக்கு இடர் தீர்த்தவன்
ஒண்தி றலவு ணன்னுரத்துகிர் வைத்தவன்
ஒள்ளெயிற்றெருடு
திண்தி றலறி யாய வன்திரு வேங்க டம் அடை
நெஞ்சமே!

In this pasuram again the Alvar exhorts his mind to seek salvation at the feet of the Lord residing at Tiruvengadam. He says that the Perumal Who is residing at Tiruvengadam is none other than the one who, once upon a time, when the pralaya (deluge) occurred, swallowed the eight directions (disai) and the seven worlds and kept them safe in His beautiful stomach and yet lay peacefully on a tender banyan leaf floating calmly in the turbulent pralaya waters. He is also the same Perumal Who rescued the Moon God from the curse and saved him from extermination. He is also the Perumal Who took on the form of Narasimha with the terrifying shining sharp teeth and nails, and tore open the chest of the mighty Hiranyan.

Here, the Alvar refers to the Perumal having rescued the Moon God from the curse of Daksha. As is well known, the waning Moon is seen adorning the head of Lord Shiva and a doubt may arise as to how Vishnu rescued the Moon. It is believed that it was on the orders of Vishnu that Shiva kept the waning Moon as a decoration on His head and thus prevented it from waning completely and gave the necessary strength to again get back its original shape and beauty. The Saivites may question this sequential events. However, we need not enter

into any controversy. Let us accept the Alvar's expression of the prowess of Lord Narayana.

The Alvar also refers in this pasuram to the Narasimha Avatar. Perhaps this has also got a significance as in the shrine on the top of the seven hills besides the sannidhi for Lord Srinivasa, there are only two other sannidhis - one for Lord Narasimha and the other for great Vaishnavite Savant Ramanuja.

The Perumal is usually referred to as one Who performs tremendous feats. In Sanskrit the words used are "agaditha gatana samarthyam". It means it is a feat which can be done only by Him - e.g. to lie down on a tender banyan leaf in the troubled turbulent pralaya waters or to lift the Govardana Giri. Yet another example of such a feat is when He took the form of Narasimha and with ease tore the chest of Hiranyan with His nails. At the very same moment He was full of love for Prahlada. Thus the two apparently contrary gunas of anger and love shone at one and the same moment of time!

PASURAM 1024

பாரும் நீர்எரி சாற்றி னோடுஆ காச மும்
இவை யாயினாள்
பேரும் ஆயிரம் பேசநின்றபி றப்பி லிபெரு கும்மிடம்
காரும் வார்பனி நீள்விசும்பிடைச் சோரு
மாமுசில் தோய்தர
சேரும் வார் பொழில் சூழ்ள ழில்திரு வேங்கடம்
அடை நெஞ்சமே.

In this pasuram Alvar again exhorts his mind to go to Tirupati and seek salvation at the feet of Perumal of Tirumala. The Alvar refers to the splendor and beauty of Tiruvengada Malai. He says that the Perumal who is residing at Tirupati is the embodiment of Pancha Boothangal. He is the creator of the five elements and Himself is the five elements! He is the Perumal Who has thousand names. He is the one Who has no birth and death like the mortals. He is born only to protect and save us. Even with the mere mention of His name, all our ills will get resolved. The Alvar says the place where that Perumal Who has no birth or death and Who is Himself a creator resides,

is Thiruvengadam with heavy dew fall, heavy rains, dark clouds and luscious thick groves. He thus paints a pen picture in our minds eye of irresistible inviting Tiruvengadam, with its salubrious cool climate and thick vegetation. He thus tempts his mind to succumb to go to that place of scenic beauty.

The word used by the Alvar to refer to God as the one Who has no birth - i.e "pirappu illada" means He is one who is not born as a consequence of some karma like us mere mortals. He, on the other hand, takes birth as a mercy mission of His own volition so as to rescue us from our sins. Alvar also says that to merely mention the fact of the birth of the Perumal would rid us of all our sins. He is only repeating what Perumal Himself states in Geetha - viz. "*Janma Karmacha mae Divyam*". Literally translated, it means that His actions as well as His different manifestations are all with specific purpose.

The third and the fourth lines in this pasuram read as follows:

காரும் வார்பணி நீள்விசும்பிடைச் சோரு மாமுகில்
தோய்தர
சேரும் வார் பொழில் சூழ்ள ழில்திரு வேங்கடம்
அடை நெஞ்சமே.

It makes it clear that even in the days of Alvar, they were born environmentalists. Alvar makes it clear that high mountains and thick forests in Tiruvengadam are the cause and the effect is life giving rain.

PASURAM 1025

அம்ப ரம் அனல் கால்நி லம்சல மாகி
நின்றஅ மரர் கோள்
வம்பு லாமலர் மேல்ம லிமட மங்கை
தன்தொழுநனவன்
கொம்பி னன்னஇ டைம டக்குற மாதர்
நிளிதணந்தொறும்
செம்பு னம்மவை காவல் கொள்திரு வேங்கடம்
அடை நெஞ்சமே!

In this pasuram the Alvar again describes the beauty of Tiruvengada malai and the greatness of the Perumal residing there and exhorts his mind to seek salvation at the feet of the Lord residing at Tiruvengadam.

Alvar says that in Tiruvengada malai slender waisted girls get on to the machkans built in the midst of fields so as to have an over-all view of the grain laden fields and drive away the birds that come to eat the crop. In such a place which is full of luscious and prosperous fields resides the Perumal Who is Himself the five elements and Who Himself created the five elements. He is Devadhi Devan. He is the Lord of the Nitya sooris who stay at Paramapadam. He is also the Nayakan of Mahalakshmi who is sitting on a scented lotus flower. Attracted by the scented flowers in that place, the beetles are said to be humming with joy and busy collecting honey from the freshly blossomed flowers!

In this pasuram the Alvar makes it clear that Perumal is the totality of all that exists in this world - animate and in-animate. That is why he says that He is the creator of the five elements viz. the sky, fire, wind, earth and water. He is also the five elements Himself. Thus, He has no beginning (adhi) or end (antam). He dwells in all creations, controlling their activities. He is not dependent on any one but all are dependent on Him. He is the creator, the saviour and the redeemer.

The other quality of Perumal which the Alvar highlights here is that He is Sriyahpathy. Thayar is the eternal mother who intercedes on behalf of the devotees with the Perumal. His tendency to redeem, save and help is eternally fanned brighter by the ever compassionate mother i.e. Thayar.

Another interesting fact that should be noted in this pasuram is that while Sriyahpathy - the all pervading reality is there to save and redeem His true devotees, in Tiruvengada Malai where He resides, the Kurathis i.e. the tribal girls are always guarding the ripened crops from being eaten up by the innumerable birds hovering about in beautiful Tiruvengada Malai. Just like the Perumal, the Kurathis are also acting as saviours,

perhaps because of the Perumal Sambandam that they have been able to establish by living in Tiruvengada Malai along with the Lord.

PASURAM 1026

பேசுமின் திரு னாமம் எட்டெழுத் தும்சொல் லிநின்று
 டின்னரும்
 பேசு வார்தமை உய்ய வாங்கிப்பி றப்ப
 றுக்கும்பிரானிடம்
 வாச மாமலர் நாறு வார் பொழில் சூழ்த
 ரும்உலகுக்கெலாம்
 தேச மாய்த்திக மும்ம லைத்திரு வேங்கடம் அடை
 நெஞ்சமே.

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to the efficacy of the Ashtakshara Mantra. He says that Tiruvengada Malai is full of thick groves. The gentle breeze blowing across Tiruvengada Malai wafts the scent from the numerous freshly blossomed flowers in the hill. In such an enchanting place resides the Perumal Who ensures that devotees are saved the pain of rebirth if they repeat with devotion and conviction the Ashtakshara Maha Mantra. Alvar says the Ashtakshara Maha Mantra is sweet to repeat and all those who repeat it will be blessed with happiness and moksha. The Alvar requests his mind to go to Tiruvengada Malai which is like a shining jewel amongst all the Divya Desas. (Divya Desa Thilakam).

The Alvar says that Srinivasa of Tirupati is the Lord Who will rid us of the Samsara bandham and ensure that we attain moksha and be of eternal service to Paramapadanathan in heaven.

As this pasuram touches upon the efficacy and significance of the Ashtakshara Mantra viz. Om Namō Narayanaya, it will be relevant here to briefly dwell upon the mystery of these eight letters. It is called Ashtakshara Mantra as the syllables in the Mantra totalled up comes to eight as follows:

OM (1 letter) + Namaha (2 letters) + Narayanaya (5 letters). Thus, the sum total is 8. The letter OM is Pranava.

It is arrived at by adding (a) + (u) + (ma). Ah in Sanskrit refers to Bagawan. In Sanskrit it is said "Akarartha Vishnuhu". Similarly, "Ma" stands for "Makarartha Jeevathma". Thus Ah is the God and Ma is the Jeeva who is eternally seeking union with God. The word "vu" stands for "ukaro ananyarham". It specifies our relationship with God. We are nothing but sesha porul to God. Thus, it is great truth, eternal truth, fundamental truth, is conveyed through the simple letter OM. The meaning of this pranava letter is explained in detail in syllable Namō Narayanaya. Narayana sabdam means that God is the creator, the saviour and redeemer. He is everything that exists in this world. He is Himself the person Who creates the various things and thereby He becomes those things Himself. That is why we say sarvam Narayana. To such an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipowerful God we offer salutations by saying namaha i.e. Namaskaram. Namaskaram is also a kainkarya - i.e. service we render to God. When we render a service to God, it is with the objective that it should please Him not so much as to please the one who renders the service! The Alvar says that Ashtakshara Mantra though sweet is most efficacious to ensure that one puts an end to this cycle of birth and re-birth. The God Who holds the key to this ultimate goal of one and all is none other than Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati.

It will be interesting in this context to extract and present pasuram No.956 where Thirumangai Alvar sings the glory of this Ashtakshara Mantra.

PASURAM No.956

குலம்தரும் செல்வம் தந்திடும் அடியார் படுதுய
 ராயின வெல்லாம்
 நிலந்தரஞ் செய்யும் நீள்விசும் பருளும் அருளொடு
 பெருநில மளிக்கும்
 வலந்தரும் மற்றுந் தந்திடும் பெற்ற தாயினும் ஆயின
 செய்யும்
 நலந்தரஞ் சொல்லை நான்கண்டு கொண்டேன்
 நாராய னாவென்னும் நாமம்.

Through the above pasuram the Alvar says that he discovered the most powerful Mantra viz. the chanting of the name of Narayana. He says that by repeating this holy name, one will be able to attain a good family (kulam), wealth (selvam), get over ones troubles and attain heaven/swarga (Neel Veisum), attain moksha (Peru nilam). The crowning sentence in this pasuram is the quality which the Alvar attributes to the holy word Narayanaya when he says "Petra Thayinum ayana saiyum nalam tharum solle". In these cryptic words the Alvar has condensed so much of meaning. All of us concede that the mother has got unbounded compassion, love and affection for the child and is willing to do anything for the happiness and welfare of the child. Alvar says that if there is one word uttering of which would bring more welfare and surpass the bounty of a mother, it is the word Narayanaya.

To go back to the pasuram No.1026 in that pasuram the Alvar refers to Tirupati as the crowning glory among all the Divya Desas. A similar thought is expressed by Nammalvar when he addresses the Perumal at Tirumala in pasuram No.3326 as follows:

*"Thilagam ulagikkai
Ninra Thiruvengadathu emberumanae"*

It means that he refers to Tiruvengadam as the jewel of the universe itself. In another place, Thirumangai Alvar refers to Tiruvengada Malai as "Desamai Thigazhum Malai" i.e. the hill itself he says is a Divya Desa!

PASURAM 1027

செங்க யல்திளைக் கும்சு னைத்திரு வேங்க
டத்துஉறை செல்வனை
மங்கை யர்தலை வன்க லிகன்றி வண்த மிழ்ச்
செஞ்சொல் மாலைகள்
சங்கை யின்றித்த ரித்துஉ ரைக்கவல் லார்கள் தஞ்சம
தாகவே
வங்க மாகடல் வையம் சாவலராசி வானுல
காள்வாரே.

This pasuram is in the nature of a Palasthuthi where Thirumangai Alvar says that if we repeat the above 10 pasurams, the benefit would be as described by him in pasuram NO.1027. He says that all those who repeat the above 10 Pasurams without entertaining any doubts in their mind about its efficacy, the certain good that will flow from repeating these pasurams which deal with Tiruvengada Malai which is full of tanks filled with water where the red kayal fishes gambol about, would become the Kings of this world surrounded by oceans. What is more, they would also in later time become masters of Paramapada. In brief, he says that those who repeat these pasurams will be the masters in this world and also the masters in the other world. They will attain moksha after having enjoyed life in this world. So says in beautiful Tamil Thirumangai Alvar through this garland of 10 beautiful Tamil verses.

In the pasurams from 1028 to 1037 known as Thaayae Thanthai pasurams, the Alvar refers to the Perumal and Thayar as Jagath Pitha and Loka Matha. In the previous ten pasurams, the Alvar had exhorted his mind to go to Tirumala and seek salvation at the feet of Lord Srinivasa at Tirumala. Apparently, the Alvar went to Tirumala but yet felt that God did not receive him with open arms. He wonders why the Perumal is so indifferent to him. In this batch of ten pasurams, he pleads with God to forgive him his sins. No one who reads these ten pasurams can escape without having his or her eyes becoming moist with tears as the Alvar pours tremendous feeling of remorse, helplessness and absolute surrender into these lines. He makes it clear that Pariharam (redemption) for all sins is Paschyathapam i.e. sincere repentance. The Alvar gives a call "Oh sinner confess your sins at the feet of the merciful God and be blessed with Saranagathi".

PASURAM 1028

தாயே தஞ்சையென் றும் தார மேகிளை

மக்களென்றும்

நோயே பட்டொழிந் தேன் நுள்ளைக் காண்பதோ-
ராசையினால்

வேயேய் பூம்பொழில் சூழ்விரை யார்திரு

வேங்கடவா

நாயேள் வந்து அடைந் தேள் நல்கி ஆளெள்ளைக்
கொண்டருளே.

The Alvar addresses the Perumal Who resides at Tiruven-gadam which is full of bamboo forests and scented groves. He says that all along he had wasted his life thinking of only sar-
era sambandha relationship like one's mother, father, children and relations and that he spent a life of ingratitude. He was a neechan - i.e. a man who is to be more pitied than hated. The Alvar says that he has now got all the desire to worship and do service to Perumal and that he is seeking Saranagathi i.e. sal-
vation and redemption at the feet of the Perumal. He continues and pleads with the Perumal Who is known as a Saranagatha Rakshaka to have mercy on him and bless him.

In this pasuram he uses the word "Nayanae" (i.e. I am a dog). This single word is interpreted by Peria Vachan Pillai in so beautiful and telling a manner that it bears a brief repetition here. Peria Vachan Pillai says that the Alvar conveys the thoughts through this word that if one were to look at all the acts performed by the Alvar, then he is certain that neither all the merciful God nor the not so merciful others would receive him in their midst. If he were to go out, people will cast stones at him. If he were to come inside, they would think that his very presence has vitiated the atmosphere and people may throw out all the things which come in contact with him saying that it has got polluted. Thus, Peria Vachan Pillai makes it clear as to how the Alvar hates his erstwhile actions and holds them in such utter hatred. Yet another interpretation for this word "Nayane" would also mean that the Alvar says that he has come like a dog with absolute surrender and regret writ large on his face with the tail held between the feet. He pleads with God that when he has come like a dog, He, Deenabandhu and Lokabandhu should not let him down, but should receive him with open arms.

The Alvar says that he wasted his life earlier thinking of all blood relationships. These mortal Bandhus the Alvar says are "abhasa Bandhus" i.e. these relationships are established in

this World of Maya. They are not the truth. The Alvar also conveys the thought that these mortal relationships are like a lamp. When there is a bright sunlight, we do not need the lamp. So also we do not need this mortal relationship so long as we have God. He says that the Apathbandhava i.e. Perumal is the one and the only true bandhu and we should seek His relationship. He regrets that this truth did not strike him earlier when he mistook the other bandhu i.e. relationship as the true helpers. He seeks God's forgiveness for this sin of his and seeks saranagathi.

PASURAM 1029

மானேய் கண்மட வார்மயக் கில்பட்டு மாநிலத்து
 நானே நானாவி தநர கம்புகும் பாவம் செய்தேன்
 தேனேய் பூம்பொழில் சூழ்திரு வேங்கட மாமலை
 என்
 ஆனாய்! வந்தடைந் தேன்அடி யேனை ஆட்
 கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again enumerates yet another sin committed by him in his earlier life, before wisdom dawned on him. He says that he mistook the worldly pleasures to be the true pleasures. That was his great sin. He requests God to forgive him for that sin and grant him saranagathi.

The Alvar addresses the Perumal and says "Oh Lord you look like a majestic elephant. You reside in Tiruvengada Malai which is full of bees sucking honey out of freshly blossomed flowers. In this mortal World, I got taken in completely by the beautiful eyes of women and wasted my life trying to give them happiness. I mistook that to be my sole aim in life. I therefore committed any number of sins. Even if you, Oh Lord! were to create more number of hells, it will not be enough to mete out justice for my sins. I am now confessing and expressing my regret for my earlier ignorance. Now that wisdom has dawned on me, I have come to You. I seek your pardon. I seek saranagathi at Your feet. Please bless me, so says Alvar.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "Nanae Nana vidha Narakam Pugum Pavam Seiden". By this he states very

tellingly that he has committed innumerable sins which entitle him to a place in different types of hells and that the number of hells available and created by God in order to punish the evil doers may not be adequate for all his sins. The Alvar paints himself as a terrible sinner with the firm belief that once he has confessed his sins and seeks forgiveness and pardon at the divine feet of the Lord, he should be welcomed like the prodigal son. The use of the words "Nanae seiden" also conveys the fact that the Alvar regards himself a very mean person (thazhdavan). To present oneself in a position which is worse than a crook is called Neichya anusandhanam. By recounting one's sins, one has to surrender himself before God and hope for pardon.

The Alvar uses the word "enn anai" which is very reminiscent of similar words like "en appan" "Nam peruman" etc., which are used by Nammalvar. A direct relationship is sought to be established with God by use of these words which convey a certain high degree of familiarity and closeness.

PASURAM 1030

கொன்றேன் பல்லுயி ரைக்குறிக் கோளொன்
 றிலாமையினால்
 என்றே னும்இரந் தார்க்குஇனி தாக உரைத்தறியேன்
 குன்றேய் மேகம திருகுளிர் மாமலை வேங்கடவா!
 அன்றே வந்தடைந் தேன் அடி யேனை ஆட்
 கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again refers to Tiruvengadam with poetic words. He says that Tiruvengada Malai is full of heavy rain laden clouds. It has a cool climate. In such a idyllic place of beauty resides Tiruvengada Malaiyan says the Alvar. He continues that in his youth he had no vivekam i.e. awareness. Out of such ignorance he killed many animals. When people came to beg alms, says the Alvar, he not only refused to give them alms but he used such harsh words which would have caused considerable pain to them. He says "I now regret these sins of mine. I have confessed the same before you with the hope that you will pardon me and give me saranagathi".

The Alvar uses the word "Kurikol onru illamayinal pala vuyurgalai konren". Here the word "kurikol" does not mean that there are no established precepts. This only means that the Alvar did not have enlightenment and truth realisation. He did not know that besides the body which is evanescent there is an athma which is eternal. He says that he had no belief in *_____* and papa, swarga and naraka and that he was not aware of having to pay heavily for one's sins. He says it was this ignorance which prompted him to take the life of many living beings. As is well-known, Thirumangai Alvar was once a King before he became an Alvar. He is thus referring to his time as a King when he must have gone hunting for pleasure. Similarly, he refers to the number of people who came to him with their hands extended, seeking alms. He confesses that while not giving them alms was a sin, the greater sin was to have used harsh words, while refusing to give alms. This reminds one of what Thiruvalluvar said that "Sollambu patta pun maradbu" i.e. the wound caused by a harsh word would never heal, while the wound caused by an arrow would heal.

The Alvar says that I have committed so many sins but I am now expressing my regrets. I have confessed so. Oh! my Lord it is upto you now to give me saranagathi, as I have none else to help me. There is a belief in Hindu religion that when one seeks saranagathi, one should make true, complete, exhaustive confession and pardon will follow!

While seeking saranagathi one should not only confess one's sins but also make it clear that the person at whose feet we are seeking pardon is praised as a powerful one and he is the only one Who can forgive, forget and bless. The greatness of the person who has to be blessed has also to be mentioned openly and acknowledged unashamedly. This principle is enunciated also in one of the Thiruppavai pasurams. Starting with the word "karavaigal" in Thiruppavai, the ladies of the yadhava kulam describe this as "arivonrum illadha aaya kulam". Literally translated it means a tribe which has absolutely no intelligence and knowledge. But while addressing Lord Krishna they use the word "Nee Kuraivonrum illadha Govindan". Literally translated it means the Supreme blemishless God Govindan. Thus, while

describing the Supreme being, it is necessary to use humble words and while addressing God His greatness must be spelt out. The word "kuraivonrum illadha Govindan" is generally interpreted not only to mean that God has no blemishes but also means that He ensures that those who seek Him do not have any unfulfilled wants.

In this pasuram the Alvar makes it clear that if one has committed a sin one should confess and feel sorry for it and one should also atone for that sin. The two pronged attack is therefore first to express anuthapam i.e. regret; next is to do pariharam i.e. atone for the sin. The Alvar says that having committed the sin he has confessed it in the presence of Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati and thereby seeks His forgiveness.

PASURAM 1031

குலந்தா னெத்தனை யும்பிறந் தேயிறந்
 தெய்த்தொழிந்தேன்
 நலந்தா னொன்றுமி லேன்நல்ல தோரறம்
 செய்துமிலேன்
 நிலம் தோய நீள்முகில் சேர் நெறி யார்நிரு
 வேங்கடவா
 அலந்தேன் வந்தடைந் தேன்அடி யேனைஆட்
 கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar appeals to the Perumal at Tiruvengadam to forgive and forget the past and bless him with salvation. He says that even without his knowledge he has not done any punya i.e. good deeds. To commit more sins he has no more strength. I have come seeking Your divine feet says the Alvar. He pleads with the God to forget the past and to bless him.

In this pasuram the Alvar describes Tiruvengada Malai as a place where the dark rain bearing clouds are almost crawling on the ground. It means they are having so much of water that with that weight they are almost touching the ground. It would also mean that the tall hills in Tiruvengada Malai almost touch the sky and hence the clouds which are passing in the sky touch

Tiruvengada Malai. Alvar says that the Perumal Who resides in such a picturesque Tiruvengada Malai should come to his rescue. He continues that as he has taken many births he is tired of the cycle of births, and rebirths and deaths. He is aware that he has done no good and that he has suffered a lot for his sins. However, the only good thing that he has done is that atleast he has reached Tiruvengada Malai and he appeals to the God to forget and forgive and give him salvation immediately.

The Alvar says that he has done no good even unwittingly. The use of the word "even unwittingly" has got a significance. It is said that Sukrutham i.e. good deeds which earn one a good name are of four types. They are: Agnatham, Yadrichikam, Prasangikam and Anu Shanghikam. These four types are best explained by giving examples. Pillailoka Chariar in his Sri Vachana Booshanam (4th Prakaranam Mudal Choornikai) explains and elucidates these four types of good deeds. It is said that once a person was chasing a cow with a view to deliver a few blows on its back as it had strayed into his compound. The cow ran into a temple nearby and went round the prakara. The man following it also made a round of the prakara. Thus, his objective was to hit the cow; the objective of the cow was to escape from the man; but the all merciful one Perumal looks at this incident and puts a plus mark in the account of the man, as he says that without his knowledge he has made one pradakshina of the sanctum sanctora. This is an example of Agnatha Sukrutham - good deed done without one's knowledge.

For Yadrichika Sukrutham the following example is usually given. In a village a man who had a big field had dug a well in one corner and connected his field with channels so that water from the well would flow to the four corners of the field. One day as the water was flowing, some Srivaishnava pilgrims came that way. They were tired and thirsty. They wanted water very badly. They saw the gushing water. They sipped the heavenly ambrosia and went their way happily. The man who dug the channel and allowed the water to flow to the field thus did punya without his own knowledge.

Yet another example for Yadrachikam Sukrutham is the case of the thief who goes to steal from one group of people lying in a choultry. They are Srivaishnavas. When he goes near them, he finds that they have nothing precious which he can steal. He, therefore, returns. But God with his generous outlook makes a credit entry in the book of that thief by liberally interpreting his act of having returned without stealing by saying that he had shown respect to the Srivaishnavas.

The example for Prasangikam Sukrutham is the case of a person who was watering his plant. At that time a wanderer came there feeling thirsty and asked him for some water. The man who was watering the plants then poured water into the palm of the traveller. That is Prasangikam punya.

To now illustrate the Anu Shanghikam it is said that a Srivaishnava was travelling from one place to another with all his belongings tied in two bags and kept it on either side of his head. A thief who saw this wanted to steal the goods carried in the two bags. By a sheer accident just a few yards behind the pilgrim two watchmen were going in the same direction. The thief seeing the watchmen thought it was not safe to rob the pilgrim and therefore he gives up his idea. The pilgrim is not aware of the plan of the thief. The watchmen are not aware that they had acted as the unknown protectors for the pilgrim. The punya of saving the Srivaishnava pilgrim therefore goes to the watchmen in a Anushanghikam manner.

The Alvar says that in his entire long life none of these incidents had occurred which enabled him to earn some punya in his series of births and re-births. Yet he says that as he has come and sought refuge at the feet of the Lord, Perumal should bless him.

PASURAM 1032

எப்பா வம்பல வும் இவை யேசெய்து இளைத்தொ-
ழிந்தேள்
துப்பா நின்னடி யேதொடர்ந் தேத்தவும் கிற்தின்-
றிலேள்

செப்பார் திண்வரை சூழ்திரு வேங்கட மாமலைஎன்
அப்பா! வந்தடைந் தேன் அடி யேனை ஆட்
கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again seeks saranagathi at the feet of the Perumal. He says Oh Father of mine Who are residing at Tiruvengada Malai which is protected on all sides by tall hills, Oh Sarva Rakshaka I have committed many sins. I repent for the same. I have come seeking solace at Your feet. I do not have even the strength to sing sostras in praise of Your divine lotus feet. As I have come and fallen prostrate at Your feet, forgive me and bless me with saranagathi.

The Alvar says that as long as he had strength he committed limitless number of papas - i.e. sins. Now he is helpless and left with no strength. He says "I am too weak even to sing your praises. But I fall at Your feet Oh Lord and seek protection and salvation".

A similar thought is expressed by Yamuna Charya i.e. Alavandar in his Stotra Ratna. He also said Oh Lord I have committed all the possible acts that require to be condemned in this world. The sins are now troubling me. I am frightened. I have none else to protect me. I seek solace at your feet Oh Lord. Please protect me. Thus all the great sages who when compared to us are such punya athmas yet feel that they have committed sins and seek forgiveness from God. When such is the situation, what should be said about our attitude?

PASURAM 1033

மண்ணாய் நீர்எரி கால்மஞ்சு லாவும் ஆ காசமுமாம்
புண்ணு ராக்கைதன் னுள்புலம் பித்தளர்ந்து எய்த்-
தொழிந்தேன்
விண்ணார் நீள்சிக ரவிரை யார்திரு வேங்கடவா
அண்ணா! வந்தடைந் தேன் அடி யேனை ஆட்-
கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram also the Alvar addresses the Perumal at Tiruvengada Malai. He says Oh my Master Who are residing at Tiruvengada Malai with sky high peaks and full of scented

groves. Oh Lord this body of mine consists of five boothas - viz. earth, water, fire, wind and sky. My body is sick. I am caught in this web. I am helpless. I cry out for You. My body has become weak. I am suffering a lot, yet I have reached Your feet. It is now up to you Oh Lord to forgive, forget and bless me with salvation.

In this pasuram the Alvar cries that he is fed up with the cycle of births and re-births. He wants relief and release from the cycle and seeks moksha at the feet of the Lord Srinivasa.

PASURAM 1034

தெரியேன் பாலக னாய்ப்பல தீமைகள்
செய்துமிட்டேன்
பெரியே னாயின பின்பிறர்க் கையுழைத்து
ஏழையானேன்
கரிசேர் பூம்பொழில் சூழ்கள மாமலை வேங்கடவா
அரியே! வந்தடைந் தேன் அடி யேனை
ஆட்கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar regrets that when he was very young, instead of learning about all the good things that would have earned him punya, he, out of ignorance, stupidly did a number of wrong things and committed innumerable sins. The Alvar continues that when he was an youth he wasted his time indulging in bodily pleasures. He says Lord! I wasted my entire life. Atleast now I have reached Your feet so that I may do some service and earn Your blessings. Oh Lion of Tiruvengada Malai please welcome me and forgive and forget the past and bless me with saranagathi.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Lord Srinivasa resides at Tiruvengada Malai where there are a number of elephants and where the place is full of beautiful groves.

PASURAM 1035

நோற்றேன் பல்பிற விநுள்ளைக் காண்பதோ
ராசையினால்
ஏற்றேன் இப்பிறப் பேஇட ருற்றனள் எம்பெருமாள்

கோல்தேன் பாயந்தொழு கும்குளிர் சோலைசூழ்
வேங்கடவா!
ஆற்றேன் வந்தடைந் தேன்அடி யேனைஆட்
கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar addresses the Perumal and says Oh Lord Who reside at Tiruvengada Hill full of cool fragrant groves where from the trees honey trickles as tiny drops and flows eternally as a dhara. He says Oh Lord of mine I have committed so many sins that it is inevitable I have a cycle of births and re-births. But I have now realised my mistakes. I have come in search of You. In this life of mine I am your slave. I regret whatever I did in the past. My desire is that hereafter I should break this chain of births and re-births. I want to be released from this human bondage. I seek solace at Your feet. Oh Lord forgive, forget and bless me with saranagathi.

The Alvar used the word "Pala piravi notrane unnai kanbadhu or asaiyinal Ippirappae etrane". It means that in the past in so many births he did some punya which enabled him to seek solace at the feet of the Lord atleast in this birth. This thought reminds one of Thigaraja Swami when he says that unless one has done a lot of punya, he is not going to be born in this earth as a human being. (enno nomulu nochina gaani ee nara janmamu dorakadura).

PASURAM 1036

பற்றேல் ஒன்றுமி லேன்பாவ மேசெட்து
பாவியானேன்
மற்றே லொன்றறி யேன்மாய னே! எங்கள்மாதவனே!
கல்தேன் பாயந்தொ முகும்கம லச்சனை வேங்கடவா!
அற்றேன் வந்தடைந் தேன்அடி யேனைஆட்
கொண்டருளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again prays to Perumal and seeks His forgiveness and blessings. He says

Oh Lord You are the embodiment of divine qualities.

Oh Perumal Who are the husband of Thayar Who with a benign benoalance intercedes on our behalf with You.

Oh Lord Who are residing in Tirumala which has many tanks filled with lotus flowers and where honey drips from the hills and collects at the foot of the hills.

Oh Lord I am absolutely without any support. I am helpless. I am sinner who has committed a number of sins. I am not aware of any other way to get out of this depressing situation. I have come to you. You are my only saviour. Please accept me, forgive my sins, bless me and give me salvation.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the words "Pavamae seidu paviyaanaenae". This is rather an interesting combination of words. When literally translated it means that he is a sinner who has committed only sins. This apparent redundant use of words has a significance, as it is possible to commit what is obviously a sin but yet accumulate punya. Similarly it is possible to commit what is apparently a punya but really is tantamount to a sin. To give examples for such apparent contradictory situations, Dasaratha did not want to be accused of having given his word to Kaikayee and then having gone back on it. In order to be hailed as a person who lives up to his promise, he wanted to accumulate punya. But he lost that punya when he had to send Punya Swaroopi, his son Rama to the forest. So the punya done by him in keeping up his word became a pavam i.e. a sin. On the other hand, let us take the case of Sisupalan who spent completely his entire life cursing Krishna. Krishna Himself had given word to Kunti the mother of Sisupalan that He would patiently bear the 100 insults and only when the 101st insult is released by Sisupalan, he would meet his end. True to His word, after 100 insults were over and Sisupalan continued to insult Krishna, Krishna killed him but gave him moksha. Thus, Sisupalan did nothing but commit a number of sins and yet he was rewarded with punya. Yet another example is connected with the story of Dadhipandan. This is the story

connected with Krishna avathar. A number of women had come and complained to Yasoda that Krishna had stolen the butter kept by them in their house. An angry, Yasoda wanted to hit Krishna. Krishna the child is said to have run away from the mother. He ran into a house where Dadhipandan was living. He was having a number of huge pots for storing the curds. He quickly got into one of the empty pots and asked Dadhipandan to keep it closed and Krishna advised him that if Yasoda comes, he should plead ignorance of the presence of Krishna. Accordingly, Dadhipandan told Yasoda who came in search of Krishna that Krishna was not there. He thus uttered a lie which was a sin. But the sin helped in saving Lord Krishna. When Lord Krishna requested to be released from the pot, Dadhipandan refused to help him. He said that he will release him only if He confers moksha on him. Thus, not only did Dadhipandan utter a lie, but he got moksha as a reward from Krishna for having uttered a lie. Thus, a lie can also result in punya. That is why Alvar categorically asserts that he did commit only sins which made him nothing but an un-adulterated sinner. That is why he uses the words "Pavathai seidu paviyagavae yanane".

Alvar addresses the Perumal here as Madhava. This has also got a special significance. Ma refers to Thayar. Madhavan means one who is having Thayar permanently on His chest. Thus by addressing the Perumal as Madhava, he seeks the intervention of the Divine Mother with the Perumal. The Thayar is always known for her intervention with the Perumal on behalf of all the sincere devotees - be they sinners or otherwise. It is believed that it is the Thayar who always successfully convinces Perumal to forgive and forget the mistakes committed by the devotees. The compassion and kindness shown by Perumal is due to the benign intervention of the Thayar (purushakaram).

PASURAM 1037

கண்ணாய் ஏழூல குக்குடியி ராய எங் கார்வண்ணனை
விண்ணோர் தாம்பர வும்பொழில் வேங்கட

வேதியனை

திண்ணூர் மாடங்கள் சூழ்திரு மங்கையர்

கோள் கலியன்

பண்ணூர் பாடல்பத் துமபயில் வார்க்கு இல்லை

பாவங்களே.

This pasuram is in the nature of phalasthuthi for this set of 10 pasurams. The Alvar says that whoever repeats these 10 pasurams composed by Thirumangai Alvar praising Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala surely would be rewarded with all his sins being redeemed and all his problems being resolved.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Perumal is like eyes to the people who reside in the seven worlds. May be He is the very life breath. He has the colour of a dark cloud. He is a person Who is worshipped by the Nithyasooris. He is the person Who is the Veda Purusha. He resides at Tirumala which is full of groves. The Alvar says that the king of Tirumangai Nadu which has got huge mansions has composed these 10 songs. Whoever recites these ten pasurams will get rid of all their sins.

In these ten pasurams of Thirumangai Alvar the last line says "அடியேனை ஆட் கோண்டராளே" i.e. he seeks again and again saranagadhi saying that he has surrendered at the feet of the Perumal. Thus the efficacy of saranagati is very clearly enunciated in these ten pasurams. It will not therefore be out of place to dilate briefly on the concept of saranagati itself. The essence of Prapatti i.e. saranagati is that the aspirant for liberation i.e. "Mumukshu" realises that his sins have accumulated over the many births. They are so heavy and burdensome they cannot be expiated by performing any rites or poojas. But the only way is to surrender to the Lord, pleading with Him to give upaaya i.e. for salvation. While the act of surrender i.e. sarana-gathi is Sadhyopaaya, the Lord is Siddhopaaya. The first step for the soul seeking liberation is to perform Sriprapatti i.e. seek the intervention of Sri i.e. Thayar. So Purushaakaara Prapatti has to precede the prapatti to the Lord. Actually, the Mumukshu i.e. the soul seeking liberation has to realise first that the Atma i.e. the individual soul is not his property but belongs to Paramatma. He has to therefore first perform Atma Nikshepa

i.e. surrender of the soul of the individual to the Supreme. Along with the surrender of the self (svarupaa samarpana) surrender of the burden of protection (i.e. Bara samparna) and surrender of the fruits of all actions (phala samarpana) also have to be offered sincerely and conscientiously.

Saranagathi entails three pre-requisites. First is the thought that "I am the doer" which must be eschewed (kartrutva Tyagami). The second step is to eliminate the thought that this is mine or this belongs to me etc. i.e. "Mamatva Thyagam". The third step is to surrender and abandon the fruits of all one's actions i.e. "Phala Thyagam".

It is stated that there are three modes of Prapatti. The first is when the Acharya initiates the Mumukshu into the Prapatti Mantra, the aspirant has to repeat it after understanding the Prapatti Marga. This is known as Vukti Nyaasa. The second mode is when the totally ignorant aspirant for moksha entrusts himself to the care of the preceptor who prays to the Lord on his behalf i.e. Acharya Nishta. The third method is known as Svanishta. Here the Mumukshu has the complete knowhow. He has the knowledge, skill and the spiritual sanction and competence and he surrenders his soul directly to the Lord.

Amongst all the Alvars Nammalvar is hailed as the Prapanna Sanatana Kutastha i.e. he is the first and foremost Vaishnavite Savant who advocated prapatti. Sri Ramanuja in his Saranagati gadya also shows the way to surrender at the divine feet of the Perumal and the Thayar viz. Sri Ranganatha and Sri Ranganayaki. But it is Sri Vedanta Desika who is hailed as the person who has systematised this doctrine in a divinely masterly way in his various works viz. Rahasya Traya Sara, Thatparya Chandrika, Nikshepa Raksha, Abhaya Pradana saram, Saranagathi deepika etc.

In brief, through saranagathi we place the entire burden of protection on Perumal Himself. That is why He said "take refuge in Me and Me alone, abandoning everything else. I shall liberate you from all sins, do not grieve. This is the charama

sloka which when uttered in one's ear before death or even uttered by oneself is said to surely take the soul to the feet of the Lord.

It is said that absolute surrender is superior to all the other paths. Even those who perform karma, jnana and Bhakti yogas i.e. duty, knowledge and devotion, are only secondary to the prapanna who absolutely surrenders, totally surrenders to the Lord. The examples of such surrender are plenty in mythology itself - e.g. the surrender of Gajendra, Draupadi, Vibhishana etc. are examples of absolute self-surrender sought by the soul and rewarded by Perumal.

This Prapatti has five components. They are:

- (1) *Aanukulya Sonkalpam* (desire, will and determination to do what are scriptural injunctions and most pleasing to Him).
- (2) *Prapatti Kulya Varjanam* (abjuring acts that would cause displeasure to Him).
- (3) *Rakshisyatiti Visvasah* (intense and invincible faith in the Lords power of protection His omnipresence omniscience, omnipotence, and as a peerless impartial independent disperser of justice and a profound faith in the means adopted i.e. saranagati).
- (4) *Goptrutva Varanam* - seeking the Lords protective grace.
- (5) *Agnikanyam - Kaarpanyam* (Aatmanikshepam) Surrender in a state of realisation of utter helplessness (selflessness) and then seek the Lords feet.

Some may raise a doubt whether the simple solution of surrender will really be that potent especially if one is an unmitigated sinner. Prapatti requires absolute unquestioned intense and unassailable faith in Perumal i.e. Maha Viswasa is a prime pre-requisite. In his Sri Rahasya Trayasaram Sri Vedanta Desikar deals with five main doubts that may arise and answers

these. It is interesting to dwell briefly on these five doubts and answers:

- (1) The Prapanna is a confirmed sinner. He may commit further sins. Will the Lord be accessible (Abhigamya) to even such a sinner?

Answer: The Lord on the recommendation of Thayar Lakshmi as Purushakara and in His infinite mercy treats the Prapanna as if He were ignorant of all his sins (Avignyata).

- (2) The Lord is a Karma Phala Prada - conferring His grace according to merits. He punishes the transgressor as he deserves. So how can He grant Liberation to the undeserving?

Answer: The Lords relationship with the individual soul is such that as the Eternal master it is within His supreme power to condone Transgressions as He deems fit and grant salvation to the truly repentant sinner surrendering solely to Him. Similar to the President's clemency remission for good conduct, pardon for the Approver, the Amnesty etc., of current times.

- (3) The Prapatti is simple and short and done in a moment. Is it not out of proportion that even a hardened and confirmed sinner could have such an easy way out?

Answer: The Lords Dayatvam (quality of infinite mercy) is such that He values this simple but sincere Act of the Prapanna as most valuable. All Saints were sinners in the past and all sinners have a future as saints. Portia said of the quality of Mercy in Merchant of Venice Act IV Section I "the quality of Mercy is not strained". The Lord treats Prapatti as a very great favour done to Him and so grants His grace.

- (4) The Lord is said to grant His grace only at leisure. How is it that He is so generous only in the case of a Prapanna?

Answer: The Lord has His own sankalpa and levels of generosity. He condescends to smile most benignly on the true Prapanna.

(5) Does not the sinful nature of the Prapanna matter at all to the Lord?

Answer: None can question the Lords independence and omniscience. He knows who deserves what, when and how? He is a "Svatantra" He is the true saranagata vatsala. He is Saulabhya easily accessible. The personified and the dependent Prapanna is therefore permitted to take advantage of it.

As the ten pasurams of the Alvar advocate saranagathi, it is relevant for us to understand, though not in depth, about the principles of saranagathi and its nuances. Here I would like to acknowledge that I have borrowed these explanatory words on the philosophy of saranagathi from a very interesting article which appeared in the Indian Express (1992).

3rd Set of 10 Pasurams 1038 to 1047

In these 10 pasurams the Alvar requests that Perumal should rid him of Ahamkara and Mamakara and bless him with bhakti. Only when ahamkara and mamakara are destroyed, bhakti will be sincere and true and only when there is bhakti, there will be jnana and a desire to do kainkarya to God. A similar thought is expressed by Ramanuja also in Saranagathi gadya when he says "Thwath Padaravinda ugalum Saranamaham Prapadhyae". This means that the devotee seeks protection at the Divine lotus feet of the Lord. Thus, after saranagathi only he requests God to give him bhakti. Thus, the two great men viz. Alvar and Ramanuja thought alike. That is why in Tamil we have the saying "Pesitrae pesum eka kantargal" i.e. great minds speak alike in one voice the same truth.

PASURAM 1038

கண்ணூர் கடல் சூழ் இலங்கைக்கு இறைவன்தன்
 திண்ணூர் கம்பிளக் கச்சரம் செல உய்த்தாய
 விண்ணூர் தொழும்வேங் கடமா மலைமேய
 அண்ணூர் அடியே னிடரைக் களையாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that Sri Rama is Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadamalai. He says "Oh Lord Who are residing in Thiruvengadamalai You are none other than the Perumal Who let loose a number of arrows and killed Ravana, the powerful asura and the master of Lanka, surrounded by the oceans. "Oh Perumal You are worshipped by Nitya Sooris, Brahma and other Devas. "Oh Perumal You are the only person Who can rid me of all my ills and resolve all my problems. Please accept me and bless me.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "Thunbangal" (pain). He refers to the fact that to live in this world is itself a pain.

The Alvars uses the word "Kannar kadal". This means that once the eyes are set on the ocean, one is not able to look at anything else and that one is lost in the beauty of the ocean. The ocean has such compelling beauty attracting all our attention.

PASURAM 1039

இலங்கைப் பதிக்கு அன்று இறையாய அரக்கர்
 குலம்கெட்டு அவரிமா ளக்கொடிப் புளதிருத்தாய்!
 விலங்கல் குடுமித் திருவேங்கடம்மேய
 அலங்கல் துளப முடியாய்! அருளாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to a small story when Perumal during his Rama avatar killed Malyavan, the grand father of Ravana. It is said that first Malyavan was engaged by Garuda in a fierce fight. The asura however hit Garuda on the head with his mace. Seeing his divine vehicle wounded, Perumal got angry. He got on to the Garuda and with his Chakrayuda destroyed Malyavan.

In this pasuram the Alvar addresses the Perumal residing at Tirumala. He says "Oh Perumal residing in Thiruvengadamalai with its tall peaks where the Sun and the Moon God also have to give way in order to allow the tall peaks to reach the sky. He says that God is of His own sweet will and pleasure residing in Thiruvengadamalai. He is wearing the basil garland round his neck. He once destroyed the rakshasas who ruled over Lanka

and who came in huge hordes to fight. The Alvar says that the Perumal was able to destroy the huge horde of asuras by allowing Garuda Who is His divine bird to roam about freely on the battle ground and kill as many as possible of the enemies.

PASURAM 1040

நீரார் கடலும் நிலனும் முழுதுண்டு
 ஏரார் லமிளந்தளிர் மேல் துயில் எந்தாய்!
 சீரார் திருவேங் கடமா மலைமேய
 ஆரார் வமுதே! அடியேற்கு அருளாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar requests God to rescue him from the worldly ills. He anticipated that God might say that it is a difficult task to rescue him as he has committed too many sins. Anticipating such a reply the Alvar says "Oh God you Who have rescued so many and You Who have once saved the entire world by swallowing it and keeping it safe in Your stomach, all the while lying down on a banyan leaf like an innocent child. Is there anything that is impossible for You? Thus, he requests Perumal to relieve him from the worldly bondage.

In this pasuram he says "Oh Lord once You swallowed the seven oceans and all the worlds during pralaya. Having swallowed these, You were lying down on a beautiful tender banyan leaf and were seen in a yoga nidra pose. Oh Lord You are my master. You are staying of Your own will and pleasure in the famous Tirumala. You are sweet like honey. Oh Lord please have mercy on me. Oh Sarva Sakthanae i.e. omni powerful Lord please help me.

PASURAM 1041

உண்டாய் உறிமேல் நறுநெய் அமுதாக
 கொண்டாய் குறளாய் நிலம்ச ரடியாலே
 விண்தோய் சிகரத் திருவேங் கடம்மேய
 அண்டா! அடியே னுக்கு அருள் புரியாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that one is able to see parathva and saulabhya in the Perumal residing at Tirumala. Saulabhya is the quality of familiarity that God is able to establish with His devotees - e.g. when He resided at Thiruyarparadi,

He mixed freely with the yadhavas. He ate the butter kept by the idayar women and tended the cows. Parathva is the avatar taken by Perumal as Trivikrama when He sought 3 feet of land from Mahabali. Saulabhya is a quality which cannot be seen in Vaikuntha. That is why it is believed that the Devas and the Nithya Sooris from Paramapada come to Thiruvengadamalai to enjoy this quality of God. The mere mortals go to Thiruvengadamalai in order to enjoy the parathva quality of Bhagavan. While Perumal is there in Vaikuntha, the mortal cannot go there to enjoy that quality. Hence it is that Perumal has taken residence in the tall hills at Thiruvengadam so that both the Devas and the mortals can enjoy Him. That is why Thirumazhisai Alvar while referring to Lord Srinivasa uses the words " Vanorkum Mannorkum veippu" - i.e. Lord Srinivasa is a Nidhi for both the Devas and to mortals.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal Who is doing nithya vasam in Tirumala which is having tall peaks which touch the sky is a Devadi Devan. He during His Krishna avatar had stolen butter kept by the women in vessels hanging from ropes hung from the ceiling. That is to say that the women thought that they had kept the vessels beyond the reach of the child. But the child felt that the butter was amrith and he ate it with happiness. The Alvar says that the same Perumal during His Vamana avatar had requested Mahabali to gift Him with 3 feet of land and that He covered this entire world with 2 feet and asked Mahabali as to where was the land, for measuring the remaining foot. The Alvar asks such a Perumal to shower kindness on him and bless him.

PASURAM 1042

தூணய் அதனூடு அரியாய் வந்துதோன்றி
 பேணு அவுண னுடலம் பிளந்திட்டாய்
 சேணுர் திருவேங் கடமா மலைமேய
 கோணு கணையாய்! குறிக் கொள் எனையே.

In this pasuram also the Alvar refers to the great achievement of God when He was able at one point of time to show anger against Hiranyan the asura and shower loving kindness on Prahlada His devotee. This quality when two opposite feel-

ings are reflected at the same point of time is usually referred to as "aganitha ghatana samarthyam". It is believed that only Perumal is capable of reflecting with ease the two opposites.

In this pasuram the Alvar says "Oh Perumal Who are residing in Tirumala which is having tall peaks. Oh Perumal You are having the majestic looking Adishesha as Your divine couch. Oh Perumal You are the one Who came out of a pillar in Your Narasimha avatar and tore the chest of Hiranyan the asura who had shown no respect to You. Oh Perumal I plead that of Your own sweet will You should accept me, protect me and bless me".

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "Kol Naga aniyai". Perhaps, the Alvar wanted to convey the thought that even Adishesha the divine serpent is having a majestic gambhira pose because he is doing kankarya to Perumal. The Alvar is also conveying the request to Perumal that just as He has accepted the kankarya from Thiru Ananthavan, He should accept him as His ever willing and obedient servant.

PASURAM 1043

மன்னா இம்மனி சப்பிற வியை நீக்கி
தன்னாக் கித்தன் இன்னருள் செய்யும் தலைவன்
மின்னார் முகில்சேர் திருவேங் கடம்மேய
என்னா னைஎன் னப்பள்ளன் நெஞ்சிலுளானே.

From this pasuram onwards we find that the tone of the Alvar as seen in the pasurams completely changes. So far, he had been pleading with God seeking pardon for his sins. Then he offered saranagadhi at the feet of the Lord. He requested God to forgive and forget all his past sins and to accept him and give him a chance to render service i.e. kankarya to the Perumal. From this pasuram onwards he creates the impression that his mooving prayer to God has been accepted and God has blessed him, and has taken residence in his heart. From this pasuram onwards we find that the last line of the earlier pasurams and the last line in these pasurams are different. In earlier pasurams he was addressing the Perumal by using the words like "Arul puriyayae" i.e. have some pity on me. From this pasuram

onwards we find the words used are variations of "en nenjil ulane" i.e. oh You Who have taken residence in my heart. In short, his prayers have been answered.

In this pasuram, the Alvar says "Oh Perumal You look majestic like an elephant; You are my master. You are residing in Thiruvengadam where the dark clouds with streaks of lightning strike . Oh Perumal You have agreed to rid me of this non permanent manushya janma and You have made me Your servant and bless me. You are now residing in my heart".

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the words "Manna en manisha piravi" meaning this life is not permanent. Our human body is only a temporary residence. Nammalvar when referring to this aspect of evanescent life says that our existence in this world i.e. janma is worse than a streak of lightning in the sky. Even before we see the lightning strike, we see the flash has disappeared. He uses the words (vide pasuram 2687) "Minnin nilaiyila mannyyur akkaikal". The Alvar says that the Perumal Who is capable of releasing one from such a worthless life has now come and taken residence in his heart.

Yet another word used by the Alvar in this pasuram requires a little elaboration. He says that Perumal is residing in "Minnar Mugil Thiruvengadam". As stated earlier, it could, literally translated, be taken to refer to Thiruvengadamalai where along with the dark clouds lightning also flashes. The inner meaning can be that in Thiruvengadam resides Perumal with the colour of the dark clouds and having Mahalakshmi with the effulgent colour of lightning permanently residing on His chest. This background of the dark cloud with the flashing lightning in its midst may refer to Perumal with Thayar on His chest. In the Vedas the words that are used to refer to this situation are "Neela Thoyada Madyastha" "Vidyulekheva Bhasvara Kunthi". The Alvar therefore says that Thiruvengadam i.e. Tirumala is the place where Perumal resides along with Thayar.

PASURAM 1044

மாளேய் மடநோக் கிதிறத்து எதிர்வந்த
ஆளேழ் விடை செற்ற அணிவரைத் தோளா!

தேனே! திருவேங் கடமா மலைமேய
கோனே! என்மனம் குடிகொண் டிருந்தாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Lord residing at Tirumala is none other than the Perumal who during Krishna avathar defeated the seven oxen and then married Nappinai.

Here the Alvar says "Oh Perumal Who are residing in Thiruvengadamalai You have now taken permanent residence in my heart. You are none other than the Perumal Who fought with the seven fierce oxen and destroyed them, so that you can win the hand of Nappinai. Oh Perumal you have majestic shoulders. They look like mountains. You are sweet like honey. You are the person who won Nappinai and are now staying in cool Thiruvengadam as well as in my heart.

Nappinai as is well known is an amsam of Neela Devi. Nappinai was the daughter of an edayarkula leader by name Kumbhur. On the day she was born, seven fierce looking calves which were also born on the same day were selected. Even as the child grew, the calves grew and became ferocious oxen. Her father had set a challenge saying that he would give his daughter in marriage to the brave youth who can control and kill the fierce oxen. Krishna succeeded and married Nappinai. While describing this incident when Krishna got into the foray and stood in the field in the middle with the seven oxen charging on Him from different directions in a fierce manner, Nammalvar uses the words "Kottidai adina koothu adalayartham komburukkae" i.e. he says that Krishna stood in the middle and almost treated the whole incident as a game as the horns started zeroing in on him from all four sides. He caught and crushed all the oxen which came charging on to him from different directions. It was as if He was dancing in the middle of the horns coming charging at Him.

By referring to the Nappinai incident the Alvar is reminding Perumal that He Who had succeeded in the almost impossible task of destroying the seven fierce oxen single handed and thus wiped out all the obstructions in the way to His taking the hand of Nappinai should not find it difficult to remove all the problems

that may come in the way of accepting this sincere devotee i.e. Alvar as His eternal servant.

PASURAM 1045

சேயன் அணியன் எனசிந் தையுள்நின்ற
மாயன் மணிவா ளொளி ளெண் தரளங்கள்
வேய்வின் டுஉதிர வேங்கட மாமலை மேய
ஆய னடியல லதுமற் றறியேனே.

In this pasuram also the Alvar says that Thiruvengada Mudyar is Kannan. He says He is far and yet near. For those who do not have bhakti he is far away and not reachable. But for those with bhakti He is with them right through. The Alvar says that such a benign person is in His heart. A similar thought that Perumal helps those who have sincere bhakti is expressed by Nammalvar also when he says "Patthudai adiyavarku eliyavan pirargalukku ariya vithagan" (pasuram 2697). This means that Perumal is easily accessible to those with bhakti. For others He is difficult to approach.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal resides in Tirumala where the bamboo shoots break and spill pearls and other precious stones all over. Perumal is Krishna Himself. He was born in the ayar kulam. He performs apparently impossible feats - e.g. being close to some and very far for others. He is a Mayan. The Alvar calls Him Mayan as though His heart was not pure yet God has consented to come and stay there which is like achieving an impossible task. He addresses him as Saeyan i.e. for those who do not have bhakti He is unapproachable and very far away from them. He is Aniyar i.e. for the devotees He is in their hands. The Alvar says "I worship Him and I know none other than the divine feet of such a Perumal". He is according to Alvar "sarva sulaban" for the true devotees.

The Alvar here refers to Tirumala being full of bamboo groves. It is widely believed that pearls can be had from three sources. One is from the ocean about which many of us are aware. The other two sources are head of an elephant and the top portion of the ripe bamboo shoot. As Tirumala is said to be full of bamboo shoots the Alvar refers in this pasuram to

Tirumala as the place where shining precious stones are seen strewn all over the place from the split bamboos from the thick bamboo groves.

Very often one wonders why the Alvar describe in detail the scenic splendor of Tirumala. It is said that it is because the joy and the happiness that one derives while speaking about the Perumal is equally derived while speaking about the place where He resides i.e. Tirumala in this case.

PASURAM 1046

வந்தாய் என்மனம் புகுந்தாய் மன்னி நின்றாய்!
 நந்தா தகொழுஞ் சுடரே! எங்கள் நம்பீ!
 சிந்தா மணியே! திருவேங் கடம்மேய
 எந்தாய்! இனியான் உன்னை என்றும்விடேனே.

In this pasuram also the Alvar again refers to the fact that Thiruvengada Mudayan has entered his heart and has made his heart his place of residence. He says "Oh Lord Srinivasa who have made Tirumala your place of residence; You are an eternal light; You are the embodiment of all the great qualities; You are the person Who grants all the wishes of Your devotees. You Oh Perumal have come near me; You have entered my heart; You have made the heart your permanent place of residence. Hereafter, I will not, on any account, allow you to go out of my heart. The Alvar addresses the Perumal as "Chinthamaniyae". Chinthamani came when the Thiruparkadal was churned. It is believed that this precious stone will satisfy all one's desires. By addressing Perumal as "Chinthamani" the Alvar makes it clear that this Lord Srinivasa is the God Who will fulfil all our wishes.

In this pasuram we find that the Alvar wants to savor the entry of God into his heart by describing the entry and the stay step by step. He uses the words "Vandai" (வந்தாய்) (you came), "Pugundai" (புகுந்தாய்) (you entered my heart/mind), "Manni Ninrai" (you stayed put in my mind), "Inni yan unnai enrum vidanae" (இனியான் உன்னை என்றும் விடேனே) (I will not allow you to step out) i.e. vini vidi vicey. (Came, Saw, Conquered).

PASURAM 1047

வில்லார் மலிவேங் கடமா மலைமேய
 மல்லார் திரள்தோள் மணிவண்ண எம்மாளை
 கல்லார் திரள் தோள் கலியன் சொன்னமாலை
 வல்லா ரவர்வானவா குவர்தாமே.

This pasuram is again in the nature of a Phalastuthi. The Alvar says that in Tirumala there are people who do *Mangalāsana* to the Perumal. They are the hunters i.e. tribals living in the hill. The Alvar says that Thiruvengadam is full of vedars i.e. hunters. He says that the Perumal Who stays in Thiruvengadamalai has got majestic shoulders. He has got a commanding personality. He looks like a blue precious stone. He adds that Thirumangai Mannan i.e. Thirumangai Alvar who also possesses broad shoulders has composed this garland of verses in praise of the Perumal. The Alvar says that whoever repeats those ten pasurams will become Nityasooris and will have the blessings of God and be able to do *kainkaryam* (service to God).

Here the Alvar who was originally a King and who wants to do *kainkarya* to Perumal says that Tirumala is full of *mangalāsana parargar* i.e. people who do *kainkaryas* and service to the Lord. Further, he refers to them as vedars i.e. hunters. As the Alvar wanted to do service to God and also he wanted to protect God, his mind's eye sees only the hunters in Tirumala. It is usual that our mind's eye pre-determines what the physical eye shall see. The thought in our mind very clearly influence the facts on the ground which we notice. So when he saw the hunters he immediately says "Oh they are protecting my Perumal and are doing service to Him".

A similar reaction is seen when Perialvar saw the Perumal at Thirumalirum solai (pasuram 339) when Perialvar went to Thirumalirum solai and wanted to sing Pallandu to the Perumal there. he saw the birds chirping and the place full of brooks and the gurgling gushing water making melodious sounds. He said "Lord! the birds, animals and nature itself at Thirumalirum solai is singing Pallandu to God". He uses the words "illavi-

dathilium engum parandhu pallandu oli sella nirkum seer then Thirumalirum solai". (The whole of Thirumalirum Solai is re-verbating with the sound of Pallandu)

Similarly, Nammalvar as Parankusa Nayaki saw a narai (a bird) sitting on the tank bund. He addressed the narai and said "oh He has left you also here and gone. Is it"? Nammalvar as Parankusa Nayaki felt that Perumal had left him behind and had gone (pasuram 2708). He uses the words "anjiraiya mada narai alizhiyaththai antu azhagiya siragiya udaya narai enru azhaithu vanchiraiyil avan vaikkil vaippundal en seyyumo" - i.e. to say if He were to decide to imprison us what is it that we can do? He told the narai that because of separation from its master it had become pale and so was Parankusa also suffering due to the pangs of separation.

IV Set of ten pasuram

PASURAM 1048

வான வர்தங்கள் சிந்தை போலஎன் நெஞ்சமே!

இனி! துவந்து மாதவ

மான வர்தங்கள் சிந்தை அமர்ந்துறை கின்றஎந்தை

கான வரிடு கார கில்புகை ஒங்கு வேங்கடம் மேவி

மாண்குற

ளான அந்தணற்கு இன்று அடி மைத்தொழில்

பூண்டாயே.

In this batch of 10 pasurams we find Thirumangai Alvar is praising his nenju i.e. mind or heart for having attained God and thinking of nothing else but God. He is able to think of his mind as if it is separate from the body and when the mind has attained God the body voices its praise to the mind for having achieved the superb task of reaching God. We find that Nammalvar also in one of his pasurams says "Nenjamae nallai nallai unnai petral en seyyom? ini enna kuraivinam"? Here, Nammalvar says that nenju i.e. his mind is a very great and good person. If only one were to get a friend like that particular mind what is it that one cannot achieve? If I get such a friend, I will have no more unsatisfied wants says Nammalvar. He

continues and says "yan en nenjum isaindozhindom" i.e. I and my mind have agreed and are now of one mind. Thus, we find that this great philosopher's thinking of the mind is as if it an entity which is something different, having an indepth separate existence apart from the body.

In these set of ten pasurams we find that the Alvar ends each pasuram with the words "adimai thozhil poondayae" (அடிமைத் தொழில் பூண்டாயே) i.e. you have been able to get the rare opportunity to do kankaryam i.e. service to God. It is as if the Alvar wonders how such a rare blessing was conferred on his mind?

The Alvar says Oh mind of mine my master i.e. Lord Srinivasa is staying in Tiimala where the hunters have lighted agil i.e. a particular type of dhoop (scented stick). He says that the the Perumal at Tirumala is the one Who manifested Himself as Vamana. He is like the heart for the Nithyasooris. He takes residence in the heart of select persons who are his sincere devotees. The Alvar concludes and says "Oh mind of mine I am very happy that now you have been accepted as the kankaryadhar to that Perumal.

In this pasuram the Alvar makes it clear that Perumal prefers to reside in the hearts of sincere devotees and once He enters such a heart, He never leaves it. In this pasuram the Alvar has referred to agil. Agil is a particular type of wood. It is very rare but in Tirumala it is found in plenty. That is why the Alvar says that Tirumala is filled with sugandha scent of this agil wood.

In this pasuram the Alvar addresses the Perumal as andanar. Usually the word andanar refers to a brahmin. But as the Alvar refers to the vamana avathar of Perumal, he uses the word "andanar", (அந்தணர்) as Perumal came as a brahmin youth in his vamanava avatar.

Similarly, the use of the word "inidhu vandhu" (இனிது வந்து) can be interpreted in two ways. It means that He came with happiness. It also means that He stayed on happily.

PASURAM 1049

உறவு சுற்றமென் றென்றி லாஓரு வன்உ கீந்தவர்
 தம்மை மண்மிசைப்
 பிறவி யேகெடுப் பாள்அ துகண்டு என்
 நெஞ்சமேன்பாய்!
 குறவர் மாதர்க ளோடு வண்டு கு றிஞ்சி மருளிசை-
 பாடும் வேங்கடத்து
 அறவ ளாயகற்கு இன்று அடி மைத்தொழில்
 பூண்டாயே.

In this pasuram again the Alvar addresses his mind and says "oh mind of mine how great it is that you have accepted to do kainkaryam to Perumal. You have indeed achieved a very great task. The Alvar therefore gives a pat to his mind which has achieved this rare feat. He says that the great Perumal Who has none to equal Him and Who has no bandhukal and dayadigal (relatives) ensures that there is no birth and re-birth for those who have absolute faith and affection towards Him. The quality of Perumal is to help all those who come to Him seeking His help. The kuravars and kurathis i.e. tribals as well as the bees in Tirumala are said to be singing kurinji and marul songs in Tirumala.

In this pasuram the Alvar refers to the Perumal as "uravu sutram enru onrila voruvan" - He has no relatives in the sense which we use the word. He is an adviteeyam but all the relations, so far as we are concerned, should only be God. That is why we have the words which say "*Thwameva Matacha Pitha Thwameva, Thwameva Banduscha guru stvameva, Twameva vidya dravinam, Twameva sarvam mama Deva Deva*". This means that "Oh God you are mother, father, bandhu, guru, knowledge. You are all. You are everything". You are a friend to all living being i.e. "*Sukrutham Sarva boothanam*".

The Alvar uses the words "Man misai piraviyae keduppan". It means that for all those who repose their faith completely in Him and who seek protection at His feet, He would ensure salvation and rid them from the ills of birth and re-birth. He says that He will rid them of "piravi noi" i.e. the evil of birth

and re-birth He will make them nithyasooris i.e. the souls who live permanently with God in Paramapadam.

The Alvar says that in Tirumala we hear Kurinji and Marul isai, Kurinji Pann i.e. raga is usually the song sung by the kuravars i.e. tribals. Marul Pann is the music that is hummed by the beetles. Marul can also be taken to refer to ecstatic feeling that one gets when kurinji raga is sung - a feeling as if one is out of this world, an absolute feeling of elation.

The Alvar uses the words "aravan nayakarkku" in this pasuram. It means that the Perumal is a great Dharmishtan. He says that the only reason why Perumal has taken residence in Tirumala is to enable us to serve Him!

PASURAM 1050

இண்டை யாயின கொண்டு தொண்டர்க ளேத்து
வாருற வொடும் வானிடைக்
கொண்டு பொயிட வும்அது கண்டுஎன் நெஞ்சமென்
பாய்!
வண்டு வாழ்வடவேங்க டம்மலை கோயில
கொண்டத னோடும் மீமிசை
அண்ட மாண்டிருப் பாற்குஅடி மைத்தொழில்
பூண்டாயே.

This pasuram is also addressed by the Alvar to his mind. He says Oh mind of mine worship the Perumal with flowers. He will give you salvation. He resides in Thiruvengadamalai as well as in Paramapada. He says this mind of mine has found out the upaya of pleasing God by offering flowers to Him. There are certain flowers which have been detailed by Perialvar as fit to be offered to Perumal (vide pasurams 182 to 190). Perialvar says that God likes Shenbaga poo, Malligai poo, Padiri poo, Sengayzhineer poo, Punnai poo, Kurukathi poo, Iruvatshi poo and Karumugai poo. While all these are believed favourites of God, in the absence of those flowers any flower which is offered is welcomed by Him. He is regarded as a pushpa premi. Nam Jeeyar, the sishya of Bhattar, was a well read person. Bhattar had told him that any flower can be offered to Perumal. What

is important is that it is offered with a sense of sincerity and bhakti. Nam Jeeyar then quoted the sastras where it is said "kanta kareeka pushpam devaya vini vedayeth". This means that the Vedas prescribe that kanta kareeka pushpam should not be offered to God. Bhattar then replied that Nam Jeeyar was correct and explained the reason why that flower alone is not recommended. He said that kanta kareeka pushpam is full of thorns. It is prescribed that this flower should not be offered lest while plucking these flowers, the hands of the devotees should get hurt. Bhattar said that God likes that thorny flower also. He reiterated "Athyantha Bhakthi yukthanam Naiva Sastram Nachakramaha". It means that when one is offering with a lot of bakthi, neither the sastras nor the sampradayam can stand in the way.

The Alvar says Oh mind of mine I am very happy that you have taken to doing kankarya to the Perumal Who is residing in Tirumala. That Perumal is ruling over Tirumala as well as Paramapada. In that Tirumala the bees are living happily imbibing the honey from the flowers. In that Tirumala resides the God Who ensures that all those Who offer flowers to Him and utter His divyanama are provided a place in Paramapada.

This special importance given to the worship of the Perumal with flowers is perhaps reflected in one of the poojas performed in Tirumala even today. Every Friday God is decorated with plenty of flowers and only flowers. (Poolangi sevai).

PASURAM 1051

பாவி யாது செய் தாய்என் நெஞ்சமே! பண்டு
 தொண்டுசெய் தாரைமண்மிசை
 மேவி ஆட்கொண்டு போய்வி சும்பேற வைக்கும்
 எந்தை
 கோவி நாயகன் கொண்ட லுந்துயர் வேங்க
 டம்மலை யாண்டு வானவர்
 ஆவி யாயிருப் பாற்கு அடி மைத்தொழில்
 பூண்டாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says Oh mind of mine I am very happy that instead of doing fundamental research trying to find out which is the best method to attain God, you have made up your mind to do service to Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. The Perumal to whom you have decided to do service is Gopi Natha. He is residing in Tirumala full of tall peaks which almost push aside the clouds that are floating in the sky. He is ruling in Tirumala. He regards the jnanis i.e. enlightened souls as almost His life breath. Once upon a time He came to this world. He took many avatars and all those who sought protection at His feet, He accepted them and took them with Him to Paramapada.

Here the Alvar again expresses his pleasant surprise at his mind having successfully found out a sure path to attain moksha i.e. in doing kankarya to the Perumal at Thiruvengadamalai.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the words "Bhari yudu seidai". These words convey clearly the thought that Alvar has congratulated his mind for not having wasted time trying to find out what is best and instead having successfully decided to do kankarya to Thiruvengada mudayan. The Alvar says Oh mind of mine you are indeed great for having achieved this impossible difficult task.

The Alvar uses the word "vanavar avi" (வானவர் ஆவி). Here he repeats what Lord Krishna Himself said in Bhagavat Geetha viz. "Gnaneethu atmaiva Mae Matham". This means that Krishna Himself asserted that He is like the athma for the jnanis.

PASURAM 1052

பொங்கு போதியும் பிண்டி யும்முடைப் புத்தர்
 நோன்பியர் பள்ளி யுள்ளுறை
 தங்கள் தேவரும் தாங்க ளும்மே யாக எள்
 நெஞ்சுமென்பாய்!
 எங்கும் வானவர் தானவர்நிறைந் தேத்தும்
 வேங்கடம் மேலிநின்றருள்
 அங்க னாயகற்கு இன்றுஅடி மைத்தொழில்
 பூண்டாயே.

In this pasuram the Alvar again praises his mind for not getting distracted and accepting the other religion like Buddhism, Jainism etc., for achieving enlightenment and instead for having stuck steadfastly to doing *kainkarya* to Thiruvengada mudayan at Tirumala.

The Alvar says Oh mind of mine the Buddhists and the Jains treat the pipal tree (*arasa maram*) and asoka tree as their divine symbols. The Samanars have plenty of temples with their own deities. Instead of accepting and following one such religion, you Oh mind of mine have accepted to do service to Lord Srinivasa. This Perumal is always surrounded by Devas and Asuras who are all singing His praises. He has beautiful eyes. I am glad that you decided to worship and serve Thiruvengada mudayan. I am indeed very glad, so says the Alvar.

Apparently Buddhism and Jainism were very popular during the time of Alvar. Hence it is that he praises his mind which decided to follow Srivaishnavism and seek shelter at the feet of Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. Similar thoughts the Alvar expresses in another pasuram while singing the praise of the Mahabalipuram Sthala sayana Perumal. There he says "Pitcham chiru pveli saman kondar Mudalayor vitchaikku irai ennum ariraiyai paniyadae kachi kadandavanoor kadal mallai thala sayanam nacchi thozhu varai nacchhai endan mal Nenjae" Here the Alvar says that the Samanars have held in their hands fans made out of the peacock feathers. They are very mean minded. They think that their God is Sarvagnan; but instead of bending their heads to such Gods, oh mind of mine you should fall prostrate at the feet of the Perumal who is lying down at Thiruvehkaa near Kanchipuram and in Mahabalipuram divya desas. You should seek only the devotees who worship the Perumal at Thiruvehkaa and Mahabalipuram.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "An kan nayakan" (அன்புடன் நாயகன்). Literally translated this means the Perumal has beautiful eyes i.e. Pundarikakshan. But the beauty referred to here is not the physical beauty of the eye. If it is asked what is it that makes the eye beautiful it is the eye which reflects sympathy, mercy and affection when looking at

those having problems and difficulties. This eye conveying the message of mercy and concern is the beautiful eye and the Alvar says that Thiruvengada mudayan i.e. Lord Srinivasa has such compassionate eyes.

PASURAM 1053

துவரி யாடையர் மட்டை யர் சமன் தொண்டர்
 கள்மண்டி யுண்டு பின்னரும்
 தமரும் தாங்களு மேதடிக்க என் நெஞ்சமென்பாய்!
 கவரி மாக்கணம் சேரும் வேங்கடம் கோயில்
 கொண்ட கண் னார்வி சும்பிடை
 அமர நாயகற்கு இன்று அடி மைத்தொழில்
 பூண்டாயே.

Again the Alvar addresses his mind and congratulates it for the wise decision taken by it to do kainkaryā to Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. The Alvar says that he is glad that his mind decided not to follow the sages and the saints belonging to samana philosophy. Those sages wear kavi vastram and have shaven heads but compete with each other and eat sumptuously and become fat. The Alvar continues and says that his mind is indeed very lucky in having decided to do kainkaryā to Paramapadha nathan and the leader of Nityasooris Who is now residing at Thiruvengada malai. In that Thiruvengada malai there are plenty of deers which have the hair that is used for making the chamaram i.e. fan for Perumal. The Alvar thus separates himself as it were from his mind and says that his mind has indeed done a lot of baghya i.e. punya to have taken this wise decision.

PASURAM 1054

தருக்கி னால்சமண் செய்து சொறுதண் தயிரி
 னால்திரளை மிடற்றிடை
 நெருக்கு வாரலக் கண்து கண்டு என் நெஞ்ச
 மென்பாய்
 மருட்கள் வண்டுகள் பாடும் வேங்கடம் கோயில்
 கொண்டத னோடும் வானிடை

அருக்கள் மேவிநிற் பார்க்குஅ டிமைத் தொழில்
பூண்டாயே.

Here again, the Alvar congratulates his mind for having stayed away from the Samana religion. (Samanam is a type of Jainism). He says that the sages and saints (in that school) resort to only clever arguments. Those saints make balls out of the curd rice and stuff their mouth with it. The Alvar says that he is glad that his mind did not fall a prey to those temptors and instead decided to do kankarya to Thirumalaiudayan. He says that Lord Srinivasa resides in Thiruvengadamalai where the bees hum in marul raga and that the Perumal at Thiruvengadam also resides in Surya Mandalam. In brief the Alvar says that to do kankarya to the Perumal is the only and the best remedy for all the ills in this world.

PASURAM 1055

சேயன் அணியன் சிறியன் பெரிய னென்ப தும்
சிலர் பேசக் கேட்டிருந்
தே என் நெஞ்ச .மென்பாய்! எனக்கு ஒன்று
சொல்லாதே
வேய்கள் நின்று வெண் முத்த மேசொரி வேங்கடம்
மலைசோயில் மேவிய
ஆயர் நாயகற்கு இன்றுஅடி மைத்தொழில்
பூண்டாயே.

In this pasuram again the Alvar congratulates his mind on the feat that it has achieved in taking the correct decision to do kankarya to the Perumal which is the only solution for redeeming his ills and problems.

The Alvar says Oh mind of mine you must have heard my discussing that God is Seyan, Aniyam, Siriyan, Periyam. Seyan refers to those who believe that God is very far away and beyond our reach. Aniyam refers to those who look down at the archa roopa of God and say is this small archa roopa the great God? Siriyan refers to those who say that Lord Krishna was born as a member of the weaker section of society. Is He the God to be worshipped? Periyam are those who say that God is beyond

our reach and hence no attempt should be made to attain Him. In brief, the Alvar says that people use all sorts of arguments to say that God cannot be attained. He congratulates his mind for having heard all these arguments and yet not having joined any one of those groups. He wonders how without informing him i.e. the Alvar, suddenly the mind of his decided to do **kainkarya** to Lord Srinivasa at Thiruvengadam. He says that Thiruvengadam is thick with bamboo groves and that the ripe bamboo shoots when they split, throw precious stones on the ground at Tirumala. In such a beautiful Thiruvengadamalai resides Lord Krishna Who is Thiruvengada mudayan. Oh mind of mine you are indeed lucky to have decided to do **kainkarya** to that great Lord says the Alvar.

PASURAM 1056

சுடி யாடியு ரைத்த தேஉரைத தாய் என் நெஞ்சு
 மென்பாய்! து ணிந்து கேள்
 பாடி யாடிப் பலரும் பணிந் தேத்திக் காண்கிலர்
 ஆடு தாமரை யோனும் ஈசனும் அமரர் கோனும்நிள்
 றேத்தும் வேங்கடத்து
 ஆடு கூத்தனுக்கு இன்று அடி மைத் தொழில்
 பூண்டாயே.

In this pasuram also Thirumangai Alvar wonders at the wise decision taken by his mind in doing service to Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. The Alvar says that his mind used to associate itself with all sorts of people in this world and accept their thoughts and act according to their advise. The mind was then convinced that what they were doing was right and it used to repeat what they were uttering. The Alvar says Oh mind of mine listen to what I have to say with sincerity. There are many who are singing the praises of the Perumal. There are many who are dancing and praising the great qualities of Perumal. There are many who are offering their pranams and praises to the Perumal. That Perumal praised by one and all is beyond one's perception. He is being worshipped by Brahma who created the worlds, Shiva and Indra. They are all singing His praises staying at Thiruvengadam. The Lord Who is residing at Thiruvengadam during His Krishna avathar danced the kuda koothu. I am glad

oh mind of mine that you have changed your ways and that you have now accepted my word and my plea and have started doing kainkarya to Lord Srinivasa at Tirumala.

PASURAM 1057

மின்னு மாமுகில் மேவு தண்திரு வேங்க டம்மலை
 செயில் மேவிய
 அன்ன மாய்நி கழந்த அமரர் பெருமாளை
 கன்னி மாமதிள் மங்கை யர்கலி கன்றி இன்தமி
 ழாலு ரைத்த இம்
 மன்னு பாடல்வல் லார்க்கு இடமாகும் வானுலகே.

This pasuram is in the nature of a phala stuti. Here the Alvar says that Thirumangai Alvar the King of Thirumangai nadu having huge mansions has composed in sweet Tamil pasurams which are almost like Vedas indestructible. Whoever sings these pasurams will definitely attain Paramapada. He says these pasurams are sung in praise of Thiruvengada mudayan Who stays in cool Thiruvengadamalai where the dark rain bearing clouds with the flashes of lightning assemble in plenty and where the Perumal Who took the form of swan stays. It is also the place where the Perumal Who is the master of the Nityasooris stays. These pasurams sung in praise of Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam will definitely ensure attainment of Paramapada to those who utter them says the Alvar.

Part V

Balance of Thirumangai Alvar's Pasurams on Lord Srinivasa

Thirumangai Alvar is a prolific poet having composed 40 pasurams in one set in praise of Lord Srinivasa at Thiruvengadamalai. He has composed another 30 pasurams in praise of Lord Srinivasa. But these pasurams are not found in a contiguous manner. We find that whenever the Alvar visited many of the other divya desas, his mind immediately went back to

Thiruvengadam and Lord Srinivasa residing at Tirumala. While singing the praise of the Perumal of that divya desa, he asserts and re-affirms that the Perumal in that divya desa is none other than Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati. Thus, he sees Lord Srinivasa in many other divya desas. We shall now take these stray pasurams and try to understand the meaning of each those pasurams.

PASURAM 1275

அன்றிய வாண னாயிரம் தோளும் துணிய அன்று
 ஆழிதொட் டானை
 மிள்திகழ் குடுமி வேங்கட மலைமேல் மேவிய
 வேதநல் விளக்கை
 தென்திசைத் திலத மனையவர் நாங்கைச் செம்-
 பொள் செய் கோயிலினுள்ளே
 மன்றது பொலிய மகிழ்ந்து நின் றுனை வணங்-
 கிநாள் வாழ்ந் தொழிந் தேனே.

This pasuram is one composed by Thirumangai Alvar when he was doing Mangalasarasana to the Perumal at Sem Pon Sei kovil in Thirunangoor.

In this Pasuram the Alvar says that he worshipped Sem Pon Arangan Who resides in Thirunangoor. In Thirunangoor many great sages and saints reside. In that place a Srivaishnava goshti i.e. a group of Sri Vaishnavites are also residing. In that place resides the Perumal Who once fought with Banasura, severed his thousand hands and released Anirudhan by using the Chakrayutha. He is also the same Perumal Who resides at Thiruvengadamalai with its tall bright peaks. He is like the eternal light that shines through the Vedas. I worship with pleasure that Perumal Who is seen in a standing posture at Sem Pon Sei kovil and I in return have been blessed.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "Azhi Thottanae". It means that he is referring to the person who touched the Chakrayutha. The use of the word "touched" signifies that Chakrayutha is so powerful and the God who uses it is even more powerful, so that to annihilate the powerful Banasura, a

mere feather touch of His Chakrayutha by the Perumal was enough to destroy that mighty thousand shouldered Banasura, an ardent Shiva baktha who had the blessing and protection of Lord Shiva. By using the word "Thottanae" the Alvar is able to convey the fact that with ease the Perumal was able to destroy the mighty Banasura.

The use of the word "Manradhu Poliya" i.e. referring to the fact that Srivaishnava koshti residing in Sem Pon koil also has a significance. It is believed that once 4000 Srivaishnavites stayed in Thirunangoor. There is an old Tamil proverb which refers to this fact when it says "Thillai moovaiyiram (3000) Thirunangoor naalayiram (4000)".

PASURAM 1312

வேடார்திரு வேங்கடம் மேய விளக்கே!
நாடார் புகழ் வேதியர் மன்னிய நாங்கூர்
சேடார் பொழில் சூழ்திரு வெள்ளக் குளத்தாய்!
பாடாவரு வேன்விளை யாயின பாற்றே.

This pasuram is the one where Thirumangai Alvar does mangalasaana to the Perumal at Annan kovil in Tanjore District. The Perumal at Annan kovil is usually regarded as the elder brother of Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala. No wonder therefore that Thirumangai Alvar while singing the praise of the Perumal at Annan kovil sees in that Perumal Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati.

The Alvar says 'Oh Perumal You are residing in Thiruvengadam hill which is full of hunters. You are like an eternal light. Vedic experts are residing in plenty and permanently in Thirunangoor. This is also a place where there are plenty of thick groves. You are the Perumal Who are residing at Annan kovil. I am singing your praise. I request that you should relieve me of all my sins.

In this pasuram therefore Thirumangai Alvar says that the Perumal at Thiruvellakulam i.e. Annan kovil is Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam.

PASURAM 1371

வாம்ப ரியுக மன்னர்தம் உயிர்செக ஐவர்கட்கு
 அரசளித்த
 காம்பி னார்திரு வேங்கடப் பொருப்ப! நிள்
 காதலை அருள் எனக்கு
 மாம்பொ ழில்தளிர் கோதிய மடக்குயில் வாயது
 துவர்ப்பெய்த
 தீம்ப லங்களித் தேனது நுகர்திரு வெள்ளறை
 நின்றானே.

This is a pasuram where Thirumangai Alvar does Man-
 galasasana to the Perumal in Thiru Vallarai.

The Alvar says Oh Perumal You are seen standing at Thiru Vallarai. That place is full of mango groves. The beautiful cuckoos search for the tender mango leaves and eat them. Then their mouth gets a queer taste (thuvapu). To get rid of that queer taste, they eat jack fruit. The sweet honey in the jack fruit gets rid of the earlier bitter taste. In short the Alvar conveys the thought that Thiru Vallarai has got a number of fruit trees as well as cuckoos. It is a beautiful scenic spot. The Alvar continues that the Perumal Who is standing at Thiru Vallarai is the one Who restored the kingdom to the Pancha Pandavas. While taking part in Mahabharatha war, the horses of the enemies which were rearing fiercely and attacking the forces of Pandavas as well as the Chieftains who were supporting the Kauravas were all destroyed with ease by you. You are the Perumal Who is residing at Thiruvengadam full of bamboo groves. Oh God! I have only one request to make to you. Please ensure that I become a sincere devotee of Yours without any distractions and diversions. Give me the strength and the wisdom to worship You.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that the Perumal at Thiru Vallarai is the one Who fought the Mahabharatha war to help the Pandavas. That was a tough assignment. The Alvar implies that he is not giving him such a tough task. He only wants God to ensure that he has single minded bhakti towards the Perumal. The Alvar realised that only if one has bhakti one can

do kankarya to the Perumal. It is as if he is pleading with the Perumal that what he is expecting from the Perumal is nothing compared to what He did to the pandavas. He thus pleads and tries to cajole the Perumal to show him the correct path of devotion so as to attain salvation.

PASURAM 1388

வெருவாதாள் வாய்வெருவி வேங்கடமே! வேங்கடமே!
 என்கின் றுளால்
 மருவாளால் என் குடங்கால் வாள் நெடுங்கண்
 துயில் மறந்தாள் வண்டார் கொண்ட
 லுருவாளன் வானவர்த முயிராளன் ஒலிதிரை நீர்ப்
 பௌவம் கொண்ட
 திருவாளன் என்மகளைச் செய்தனகள் எங்ஙனம்
 நான் சிந்திக் கேனே?

This is a beautiful pasuram where the Alvar does mangalasanam to the Perumal at Sri Rangam. Here, Thirumangai Alvar as a mother sings these lines about her daughter. The Alvar takes on the role of mother and says, my daughter without the least hesitation and fear, says "Vengadamae". She is repeating this one word. She is refusing to place her head even for a moment on my lap. Her beautiful long eyes have forgotten what it is to sleep. The mother then says I do not know how God's kataksha came to this daughter of mine. I do not know how God's mercy fell on her. What is this magic wielded by that Perumal Who has the colour of a dark rain bearing cloud and Who is the life breath of Nityasooris and Who married Thayar Who came out like a bright light when the ocean was churned. It is almost impossible for me to think of how this Perumal has completely captured the heart and the mind of my daughter.

The Alvar says that Parakalanayaki the daughter keeps on saying "Vengadamae" and it is very sweet on the ears.

The Alvar conveys the thought that the child who was content to sit in the lap of its mother and think that was the height of happiness is now refusing to even place its head for a moment in its mother's lap. It is almost as if the lap is like a hot

bed of fire. The child keeps on referring to Thiruvengadamae. The child has forgotten what it is to sleep. This situation, the Alvar says, is caused by the beauty of the Perumal. When the Alvar refers to the Perumal as the one Who married Thayar Who came out of the ocean when it was churned, is also conveying the thought that He Who captivated the heart of Thayar when she came out of Parkadal, is the same Perumal Who has captured the heart of her daughter in this world. The Alvar wonders how it was that her daughter developed this all consuming desire for Perumal.

One should not miss that in this pasuram where the Alvar is doing Mangalastasana to the Perumal at Sri Rangam, he did not say that parakala nayaki repeating the words "Ranga Ranga". Instead, the girl repeats the word "Vengadamae". That shows the alvars attachment to Srinivasa Perumal.

PASURAM 1404

சிந்தனையைத் தவநெறியைத் திருமாலை பிரியாது
வந்து எனது மனத்து இருந்த வடமலையை
வரிவண்டார்
கொந்தணைந்த பொழிற் கோவல் உலகளப்பாள்
அடி நிமிரத்த
அந்தணனை யான்கண்டது அணிநீர்த்தென்
எரங்கத்தே.

This pasuram also the Alvar is doing Mangalastasana to the Perumal at Sri Rangam and yet thinks of Lord Srinivasa at Thiruvengadamalai. The Alvar says that he saw at Sri Rangam which is surrounded by the cauvery river that Perumal Who grants all our wishes and who is the person Who is for ever in his thoughts and the Perumal Who is Lakshmi Narayana. He is the master of Thiruvengadamalai. He voluntarily came away from that place and has taken residence in his heart. He is inseperable from him. That Lord Srinivasa is also residing at Thiru Kovaloor which is full of flower groves where bees are collecting honey from those flowers. He is the Perumal Who measured the entire world extending His feet to gigantic

dimensions. Alvar says he was happy to see that Perumal at Sri Rangam.

In this pasuram therefore the Alvar makes it clear that Sri Ranganathan is none other than Lord Srinivasa.

The Alvar uses the word "Thavaneriyai" while referring to Thiruvengadamudayan. This means that He is the Perumal Who helps in fulfilling our hearts desire. Whatever we wish for, is, without fail, fulfilled by that Perumal. For example, Gajendra the elephant wanted to offer lotus flower at the divine feet of the Perumal but the corcodile prevented him from moving away from the tank. God removed the obstacle i.e. the crocodile and thus provided the upaya i.e. the means to enable the Gajendra to offer the precious flower to Perumal.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "adi nimirtha andananai". It refers to a person with a golden heart filled with the feeling of compassion and mercy. The famous Tamil saint Valluvar also said "andanar en bore matru evvuyikkum sen thanmai poondu ozhgulah". This means that those who stand steadfastly by the path of dharma are andhanars. All those who are very kind to all living beings, be it human or animal, they are the persons who are parama dayalus and they are standing firmly by dharma marga.

PASURAM 1518

மாள் கொண்ட தோல்மார்வின் மாணியாய்

மாவலிமண்

தாள் கொண்டு தாளா லனந்த பெருமாளை

தேள் கொண்ட சாரல் திருவேங்க டத்தானை

நாள் சென்று நாடி நறையூரில் கண்டேனே.

This pasuram is one where Thirumangai Alvar is doing Mangalasaana to the Thiru Naraiyur Perumal (Nachiar kovil). But even there he thinks of Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he went searching to meet Thiruvengadathan i.e. the Perumal of Tirumala who once took the role of a brahmachari and wore Krishna janam around

His chest so as to hide the presence of Thayar who is inseparable from Him and sought the alms from Mahabali. He begged for a gift of 3 feet of land and having got the same, he measured the world with his two feet and thus became the object of adoration to all of us. That Perumal is residing in Thiruvengada hills whose slopes are filled with scented groves. When I went searching to see that Perumal, I was able to worship Him at Thiru Naraiyur.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that as brahmachari He could not openly give darshan with the Thayar residing in His chest. Hence, He hid Lakshmi by wearing Krishna Janam which all the brahmacharis are expected to wear. Nammalvar also refers (Pasuram 2926) to Lord Srinivasa as Trivikrama when he used the words "anru gnyalam alandha piran paran senru saer Thiruvengadamalai" i.e. the Lord Who measured the worlds is residing at Thiruvengadamalai. In another pasuram Thirumangai Alvar again refers to Thiruvengada mudayan as Vamanan when he says "thalal alandha perumanai thane konda saaral Thiruvengadamalai".

PASURAM '1572

ஆங்கு வெந்நர கதது அழுந் தும்போது
 அஞ்சே வென்று அடி யேனைஅங் கேவந்து
 தாங்கு தாமரை யன்ன பொன் னாரடி
 எம்பிரானைஉம் பர்க்கணி யாய் நின்ற
 வேங்க டத்தரி யைப்பரி சீறியை
 வெண்ணெ யுண்டுஉர லினிடையா ப்புண்ட
 தீங்க ரும்பினை தேளைநன் பாலினை
 யன்றி என்மனம சிந்தைசெய் யாதே.

In this pasuram the Alvar while doing Mangalasarasana to the Perumal at Thirunaraiyur, refers to Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvengadam. The Alvar says that his mind will not think of any other Perumal except Thirunaraiyur Nambi. He then continues that the Perumal at Thirunaraiyur is sweet like sugarcane juice. He is sweet like honey. He is like milk. He is the one Who stole butter and ate it and as a punishment was tied to the pestle by Yasodha. He is the Perumal Who is like a lion. He is the one Who destroyed the asura Who came in the form of a horse

(kesi). He is the one Who will rescue me from naraka i.e. hell. What is more He will ensure that I do not ever go to such a hell. He is the one Who asks me to be courageous and says that there is nothing to fear in this world. He is protecting me. He has feet like a lotus. He is my friend, philosopher and guide. He resides at Thiruvengadamalai which is like a beautiful jewel to Heaven itself.

The first few lines of this pasuram literally translated convey the meaning that when one is suffering in hell Perumal will come there and assure us that there is nothing to fear and will protect us. Actually this is not what the Alvar wishes to convey. What he means to say is that Perumal will not allow us to go to hell even though we may think that all the sins that we have committed merit a punishment in hell. He says that He will come and redeem us of our sins atleast at the last minute and will protect us.

The Alvar uses the words "vumbarkku aniyai ninra venkadathu ariyai". This could mean that the peaks in Thiruvengadamalai are so high as to touch the heaven. It could also mean that the Perumal Who is staying in Thiruvengadamalai is the nayagan for the Nithyasooris and that He is residing at Thiruvengadamalai. This is how we will have to interpret it as the jewel for the higher regions i.e. Mel ulagangal cannot be found on this earth.

The Alvar uses the word "uralinidai". This means that Perumal got tied up to a pestle. Here we have to realise that it was possible for Yasodha to tie up Krishna only because He allowed Himself to be tied in order to please his mother. It is His sowseelya guna which is reflected in this action of His. The Alvar refers to it and enjoys the sowseelya guna of Perumal. It is very clear that nobody can tie down the Perumal unless He Himself wishes tied to be.

PASURAM 1640

எங்க ஞாக்கு அநுள் செய்கின்ற ஈசனை வாச
வார்குழ லாள்மலை மங்கைதன்

பங்களை பங்கில் வைத்துக்ந் தான் தன்னைப்
 பான்மையைப் பளி மாமதி யம்தவழ்
 மங்கு லைச்சுட ரைவட மாமலை யுச்சி
 யைநச்சி நாம்வணங் கப்படும்
 கங்கு லைபக லைச்சென்று நாடிக் கண்ண
 மங்கையுள் கண்டுக்கொண்டேனே.

In this pasuram the Alvar does Mangalasaana to the Perumal at Thiru Kannamangai and he sees in that Perumal Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he went searching for the God

Who is the cause for day-light as well as night.
 Who is worshipped by all of us;
 Who is the crown of Thiruvengadamalai;
 Who is Sun God Himself;
 Who has Sowseelya guna;
 Who is the sky where the Moon God travels;
 Who is ever merciful to all of us; and
 Who when He took His Viswaroopa accommodated in part of His body Rudra (Shiva) Who had Himself given half of His body to Parvathi. That Perumal whom I searched for I worshipped Him at Thiru Kannamangai.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that God is the Sun, the Moon, the Sky etc. In brief he says that Perumal is pancha boothams i.e. five elements Himself. He is the creator of the five elements and Himself constitutes five elements. He is one, He is all, He is many all at the same time.

PASURAM 1660

அருவிசேர் வேங்கடம் நீர்மலை யென்றுவாய்
 வெருவினாள் மெய்யம் வினவி யிருக்கின்றாள்
 பெருகுசீர்க் கண்ண புரமென்று பேசினாள்
 உருகினாள் உள்மெலிந் தாள்இது என்கொலோ.

In this pasuram Thirumangai Alvar thinks of the Lord at Tirumala while doing Mangalasarana to the Perumal at Thiru Kannapuram. Here the Alvar takes on the role of a mother and expresses the state of mind of her daughter Parakala Nayaki. The Alvar tells Souriraja Perumal that her daughter Parakala Nayaki is always mentioning about Tiruvengadam which is full of water falls. She refers to the divya desa at Thiru neer Malai. She asks questions about Thirumeyyam and then maintains absolute silence. Suddenly she burst out about the greatness and the glory of Thiru Kannapuram and then starts crying. The mother asks the Perumal what was the reason for this state of mind of her daughter.

PASURAM 1811

பண்ணுவா மென்மொழிப் பாவைமார் பணைமுலையணையும் நாமென்று
எண்ணுவா ரெண்ணம தொழித்து நீ பிழைத்துயக் கருதினாயேல்
விண்ணுளார் விண்ணின் மீ தியன்றவேங்
கடத்துளார் வளங்கொள்முந்நீர்
வண்ணனார் வல்லவாழ் சொல்லுமா வல்லையாய்
மருவுநெஞ்சே.

In this pasuram while doing Mangalasarana to the Perumal at Thiru Valla in Kerala, Thirumangai Alvar thinks of the Perumal at Thiruvengadam. There are 13 divya desas in Kerala and Thirumangai Alvar has sung in praise of the Perumal in three of those divya desas, one of which is Thiru Valla.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that if we mention the name of Thiru Valla, we will have good thoughts in our mind which will enable us to attain salvation. The Alvar says Oh mind of mine all those who think or spend their time pleasantly with the sweet voiced ladies who excel in pleasant words should be persuaded to change their ways. We should tell them that if they have to prosper and survive in this world, they should worship the Perumal Who is giving darshan at Paramapada for the benefit of Nithyasooris. That same Perumal is also residing at Tirumala. He has the enchanting colour of a dark cloud. He

is staying in Thiru Valla divya desa. Only if they mention the names and worship the Perumals in these places, they would be people worthy of our attention.

PASURAM 1836

வலம்புரி யாழிய னைவரை யார்திரள் தோளள்
தள்ளை
புலம்புரி நூலவ னைப் பொழில் வேங்கட
வேதியனை
சிலம்பிய லாறுடை யதிரு மாலிருஞ் சோலைநின்ற
நலந்திகழ் நாரண னை நணுகுங் கொல்? எள்
நன்னு தலே.

In this pasuram the Alvar while singing the praise of the Perumal at Thirumalirun solai, thinks of the Perumal at Thiruvengadam. This pasuram expresses the thoughts of the mother about her daughter i.e. Parakala Nayaki's state of mind. The Alvar as the mother asks the question "will my daughter with the beautiful face ever attain the Perumal Who is the embodiment of kalyana guna (excellent qualities)"? He is seen in a standing posture in Thirumalirun solai where Noopura Ganga flows. He is the embodiment of the Vedas, which can be understood only by those who are proficient in Vedas. He wears the beautiful yagnopaveetham. He has majestic broad shoulders like huge mountains. He holds in His hands the Shanku and Chakra. He resides in Tirumala which is thick with groves. Will my daughter attain such a God, asks the mother?

In this pasuram the Alvar specifically refers to Silambu aru i.e. Noopura Ganga. It will be relevant here to briefly mention the three interpretations that are given regarding the origin of Silambu aru. The well known interpretation is that Perumal during His Vamana avathar covered the entire World with two feet. One feet which reached Brahma lokam was washed by Brahma with water from his kamandalam. Some of that water splashed on the anklet worn by the Perumal and spilt on to the earth. That is the origin for the flow of the waters in Noopura Ganga. Another interpretation given is that the Kinnara strees i.e. divine damsels came to Thirumalirun solai. They stood on

the slopes of the hill reciting Thiruvoimozhi in a musical tone. Hearing that sweet melodious song, the mountain itself is said to have melted into water and swelled into a river. This is what is said by Koorath Alvar in his Sundara Bahu Stavam in the sloka "vakula dhara saraswathi". The room for this interpretation arises because Silambu refers not only to the small bells worn like an anklet mostly by the dancers, but also refers to kunru in Tamil i.e. "a hill". While another theory regarding the origin of the Silambaru is provided by Peria Vachan Pillai who says that apsara strees from Swargam used to come often to visit the Perumal at Thirumalirun Solai. Hearing the pleasant noise made by the anklets worn by those damsels, the river which was flowing at Thirumalirun solai also started repeating that noise or reflecting that noise. All these interpretations paint a very alluring picture of the origin of Silambaru.

PASURAM 1849

பொன்னை மாமணி யை அணி யார்ந்த தோர்
மின்னை வேங்கடத்து உச்சியில் கண்டு போய்
என்னை யாளுடை ஈசனை எம்பிரான்
தன்னை யாம் சென்று காண்டும் தண் காவிலே.

This pasuram is one among the ten pasurams composed by Thirumangal Alvar known as Kalivirutham. Here, Thirumangai Alvar is aware that he has been blessed by the Perumal Who is going to take him to Paramapada any time. So, like a girl who after marriage, before leaving to her in-law's house, goes about visiting all her friends and takes leave of them, similarly the Alvar who is ready to go to Paramapada, recites in these ten pasurams the names of the various Perumals in different divya desas, addressing them with love and affection, as if he is taking leave of each and every one of them before going to his permanent abode.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he worshipped only yesterday the Perumal residing on the top of Thiruvengada malai. He is a Sarveshvara. He is shinning like gold. He is like the precious blue stone. He is as beautiful as lightning. He is the master Who has enslaved me. After worshipping such a

Lord Srinivasa yesterday, today the Alvar says he is preparing to go to Thiru Thanka and worship the Perumal there.

The Alvar compares the Perumal with gold. As is well known, gold is a metal which has no dosha i.e. evil. Hence it is whatever the Perumal does and whatever avathar i.e. manifestation He assumes, He is blemishless like gold. When the Alvar compares the Perumal to a precious blue stone, he means that He is a *serva sulabhan* i.e. easily attainable and accessible even as a precious stone can be easily carried about. The effulgence of God is because of the presence of the inseparable Thayar with Perumal.

PASURAM 1946

சொல்லாய்-பைங்கிளியே!

சுடராழி வலனுயர்ந்த

மல்லார் தோள்வட வேங்கட வளைவரச்

சொல்லாய் பைங்கிளியே!

In this Pasuram the Alvar as Parakala Nayaki calls all the birds that she has brought up and entrusts the task of inviting Perumal to these pets of hers. She requests them to warble with sweet voices and ensure Emperuman comes to her.

In this pasuram Parakala Nayaki is addressing her pet young green parrot. She says Oh parrot please go and tell the Perumal Who is seen standing in a majestic pose with His broad shoulders at Thiruvengada malai to come here. He is seen holding in His hand the bright shining chakra.

Some of the commentators give a beautiful interpretation while analysing the reason as to why Parakala Nayaki identified the Perumal to the parrot by saying that He is the one holding the disc i.e. chakra. It is said that when Parakala Nayaki entrusted the task to the parrot, the parrot replied "will the great Perumal come here as there are so many obstacles enroute". Then the Alvar replies and tells the parrot that it need have no doubts as that Perumal whom she is inviting holds in His hand the chakra which will remove all the obstacles. This is as if Parakala Nayaki is taking the parrot to task for talking needlessly and

raising too many queries. She says "your job is to merely repeat parrot like Venkata vaa". Parakala Nayaki teaches these two words to the parrot and sends it on its job.

PASURAM 1978

கண்ணன் மனத்துள்ளே நிற்கவும் கைவளைகள்
என்னோ கழன்ற? இவை என்ன மாயங்கள்?
பெண்ணானோம் பெண்மையோம் நிற்க அவன்மேய
அண்ணல் மலையும் அரங்கமும் பாடோமே.

In this pasuram the Alvar takes on the role of Parakala Nayaki. She says Kannan i.e. Lord Krishna is residing in my heart. Is it not surprising that yet my hands are becoming thin? Why is it that the bangles are slipping out of my hands on their own? I have taken all precautions to continue to look beautiful. What is it that is preventing me from enjoying the beauty and singing the praise of that Perumal Who of His own free sweet will, is staying at Thiruvengada malai and Sri Ranganam?

This is a little bit abstruse pasuram. The Alvar confirms and affirms that God is residing in his heart. Normally Nayaki should become thin due to the pangs of separation only when God is away. The Alvar therefore raises the question himself and asks why am I becoming thin, though the Perumal is in me? The answer is that the Alvar as Parakala Nayaki feels sad that though God is residing in her, she is not able to derive the full pleasure as she is not able to see His beauty and enjoy His presence with her naked eye! She wails that she is not able to see Thiruvengada mudayan or Sri Ranganathan, though they are residing within her and hence the pains of separation.

PASURAM 2001

கள்ளத்தால் மாவலியை மூவடிமண்
கொண்டளந்தான்
வெள்ளத்தான் வேங்கடத்தான் என்பரால் காணேம!
வெள்ளத்தான் வேங்கடத்தா னேலும் கலிகன்றி
உள்ளத்தி னுள்ளே உள்ள்கண்டாய் சாழலே!

In this set of ten pasurams i.e. 1992 to 2001 Thirumangai Alvar takes on the role of Parakala Nayaki and has a conversation

with her companions i.e. Thozhi. Now in these pasurams of four lines each, the first two lines are what the thozhigals i.e. companions sing about the Perumal. They decry the Perumal in the two lines. In the following two lines Parakala Nayaki replies and rebuts the arguments advanced by her companions i.e. thozhigals.

In the first two lines the thozhigals ask Parakala Nayaki how she is so sure that Perumal is in Thirupardakadal when He is the person Who deceived Mahabali with His diminutive form and made him agree to three feet of land and later assumed the gigantic form covering the entire world with just two steps. Why is it that such a Perumal Who cheated Mahabali does not stay in a place which is easily accessible to all and instead goes and stays in Thiruparkadal which is difficult to reach? You say that He is residing at Tirumala; Who can assure us that it is the truth. To these questions Parakala Nayaki replies: Oh companions the Perumal stays in Thiruparkadal as also in Tirumala. He is also residing in the heart of Kaliyan i.e. Thirumangai Alvar. He is easily approachable and attainable in one's heart. Have you not realised it?

Here the Alvar conveys the thought that the God Who lives in Paramapada as well as in the other divya desas always prefers to stay in the heart of His sincere devotees. Once He enters the heart He is even willing to give up the other places in order to enable His devotees to attain Him with ease. He takes different manifestations and appears in different divya desas to provide easy accessibility to the millions of His followers. The Alvar says that the Perumal prefers the heart of Kaliyan i.e. Himself to even Thiruparkadal and Tirumala!

PASURAM 2038

இம்மையை மறுமை தள்ளை எமக்குவீ டாகி நின்ற
 மெய்மையை விரிந்த சோலை வியள் திரு
 வரங்கம் மேய
 செம்மையைக் கருமை தள்ளைத் திருமலையொரு-
 மையானை
 தன்மையை நினைவார் என்றன் தலைமிசை
 மன்னுவாரே.

This is a pasuram in Thiru Kurunthadakam. Usually bakthi i.e. devotion is an essential pre-requisite for gnana i.e. knowledge. Only after acquiring that knowledge will one reach a stage of Parama bakthi i.e. enlightenment. In this pasuram the Alvar reaches the last stage namely such a Parama bakthi and tells the Perumal that only the feet of the sincere devotees of the Perumal are fit to be placed on the head of the Alvar. This pasuram therefore reflects Bhagavata Prabhava where the Alvar makes it clear that sincere devotees are powerful and effective means to attain God.

He says that those people who think of the great qualities of the Perumal who is the person who gives lot of happiness in this world as also in the other world, that Perumal Who is the sure way to attain moksha, that Perumal is residing permanently in Sri Rangam which is full of thick groves, that Perumal assumes different hues i.e. colours with the change of the yugas, that Perumal is residing at Thiruvengada malai so that the nityasooris as well the human beings could approach Him at Thiruvengada malai. The people who sing the praise of such a Perumal alone are fit to keep their feet on my head - says the Alvar.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "emakku immamai marumai". This can be interpreted as the person who gives happiness in this world and in the other world. The inner meaning is that happiness in this world as well as the other world means only attainment of the Perumal. The happiness in this world is to possess such qualities which enable one to enjoy the great qualities of Bhagavan. The Paraloka inba i.e. the happiness of the other world is to aspire to be like Adishesha who is absolutely inseparable from God and he is prepared to do kainkarya to God in whatever manner it be. The Alvar therefore says that Inhaloka inba and Paraloka inba is Perumal.

In this pasuram the Alvar also uses the word "semmaiya karumai thannai". As stated earlier this refers to the fact that God assumes different colours in the various yugas. Thus in Krita yuga people are satviks. So in that yuga the Perumal is also milky white in colour. In Treta yuga He assumes a red colour. In Dwapara yuga He assumes a green colour. In Kali yuga He

assumes a dark blue colour. Though in this pasuram only the black and the red colours are referred to, it has to be assumed that the Alvar is referring to all the four colours assumed by Perumal in the four yugas.

In this pasuram the Alvar uses the word "Thirumalai oru-mai yanai" he says that the Lord is seen standing in Tirumala so as to be approachable by those who are residing in this world as well as by nityasooris living in parama pada. The Alvar again and again reiterates that while the people in this world are able to see in the Lord Srinivasa at Thiruvengadam the Paratva quality of the Perumal; the nityasooris residing in parama pada will be able to enjoy the seela guna of Perumal only by coming to Thiruvengada malai. The Alvar therefore says that those devotees who are able to appreciate the great qualities of the Perumal and who are His sincere devotees only are fit to be allowed to keep their feet on the head of the sincere devotee.

PASURAM 2059

நீரகத்தாய் நெடுவரையி னுச்சி மேலாய்!
 நிலாத்திங்கள் துண்டத்தாய்! நிறைந்த கச்சி
 ஊரகத்தாய்! ஒள்துறை நீர் வெகிகா வள்ளாய்!
 உள்ருவா ருள்ளத்தாய்! உலக மேத்தும்
 காரகத்தாய்! கார்வானத் துள்ளாய்! கள்வா!
 காமருபூங் காவிரியின் தென்பால் மன்னு
 பேரகத்தாய்! பேராதுள் னெஞ்சி னுள்ளாய்
 பெருமான்! உள்திருவடியே பேணி னேனே.

This pasuram is a part of Thirunedunthandakam. In this pasuram the Alvar lists out the different divya desas where the Perumal resides. He says Oh Lord my only desire is to attain your lotus feet. You are my master. You are residing in Neeragam divya desa. You are also residing on the top of Thiruvengada hills. You are also residing in Nila Thingal Thundam in Ooragam in Kanchi and in Thiru Vehka on the banks of Vegavathi river. You are residing in Karagam and Karvanam divya desas. You are also residing at Thiru Paer Nagar liked by all and situated at the southern banks of cauveri. Oh Kalva! you are residing in the minds of all those who sincerely think about you. Oh

You Who have never left my heart after having taken residence there. I seek salvation at your feet.

PASURAM 2060

வங்கத்தால் மாமணிவந் துந்து முந்நீர்
மல்லையாய்! மதின்கச்சி யூராய்! பேராய்
கொங்கு த்தார் வளங் கொன்றை யலங்கல்

மார்வன்

குலவரையன் மடப்பாவை இடப்பால் கொன்டான்
பங்கத்தாய்! பாற்கடலாய்! பாரின் மேலாய்
பனிவரையி னுச்சியாய்! பவள வண்ணா!
எங்குற்றாய்? எம்பெருமான்! உன்னை நாடி
ஏழையேன் இங்ஙனமே உழிதரு கேளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar says that he is searching for the Perumal and wonders where He is staying. He says Oh Perumal You are residing at Mamallapuram whose shores are strewn with precious stones brought by the ships which do a lot of trade from that port. You are residing at Kanchi which is having big mansions. You are also residing at Thiru Vehka and Thiru Pare Nagar. You have provided a place on the right side of your body for Lord Shiva who has the Parvatha Raja Puthri i.e. Parvathi on His left side. You are seen in a yoga nidhra pose in Tiruparkadal. You have manifested Yourself in different avathars in this world so as to help your devotees. You are seen in a standing posture in cool Thiruvengada malai. Oh Perumal with the red coral lips where are You? Your slave i.e. I am searching for You and roaming all over. Bless me with salvation.

PASURAM 2067

கன்று மேய்த்து இனிதுகந்த காளாய்! என்றும்
கடிபொழில் சூழ் கணபுரத்துஎன் கனியேஎன்றும்
மன்றமரக் கூத்தாடி முகிழ்ந்தாய்! என்றும்
வடதிருவேங் கடம்மேய மைந்தாய்! என்றும்

வென்றசுரர் குலம்களைந்த வேந்தே! என்றும்
 விரிபொழில் சூழ் திருநறையூர் நின்றாய்! என்றும்
 துன்று குழல் கருநிறத்து என் துணையே! என்றும்
 துணைமுலை மேல் துளிசோரச் சோர்கின்றோளே.

In this pasuram the Alvar takes on the role of Parakala Nayaki and mentions the various acts of Perumal and then seeks Him. She says Oh Perumal You look makestic like a young bull; You happily tended the innocent calves. You Who are residing at Thiru Kannapuram which is filled with scented flower groves are my favourite. During your Krishna avathar You did the kuravai koothu and won the hearts of all the people who had assembled there to watch the dance. You are standing in a majestic pose and residing for ever at Thiruvengada malai. You fought with the asuras and virtually destroyed their entire families. You are seen ever standing in Thiru Naraiyur which is surrounded by extensive groves. You have thick black hair. You are my master. The mother of parakala nayaki says that her daughter having enumerated all these different facets of the Perumal, she shed copious tears so much so her entire chest is wet with the free flow of tears. This pasuram is therefore a description by the mother of the state of mind of Parakala Nayaki.

PASURAM 2673

சீரார் திருவேங் கடமே திருக் கோவ.....
 ஓராளை கொம் பொசித்து ஓராளை கோள்
 விடுத்த.....
 ஊரா ரிகழிலும் ஊரா தொழியேன் நான்
 வாரார்பூம் பெண்ணை மடல்.

This pasuram forms part of Siria Thirumadal. The 69th, 75th and 77th lines in this Seria Thirumadal has references to Thiruvengada malai and Lord Srinivasa Who resides there. In these lines Parakala Nayaki (the Alvar) almost threatens the Perumal saying that she will openly proclaim amidst the people in different divya desas, the could not careless attitude of Perumal so that the people will take pity on her and will try to intercede on her behalf with the Perumal and ask Him

to accept her. She says I who am thinking of you all the time have the compelling desire to see Your dark person. I have gone to the great Thiruvengadam as also Thiru Kovalur. I have without fail visited many other divya desams without leaving out even one. I have been repeating the myriad names of Perumal. Even if people assembled in the wide streets make fun of me, even if they talk badly about me, I shall not keep quiet without proclaiming your insensitivity to my devotion - says Parakala Nayaki.

Here, Parakala Nayaki uses the word "madal oorudal". Madal oorudal has a certain sequence of events. Perumal Who took the avathar as Krishna performed kuda koothu. Parakala Nayaki, a cowherd girl saw this dance and was captivated by the dancer. She desired to become one with that Perumal. But finding that she has not as yet been able to attain Him, she is torn by the pangs of separation. As a means of ending this separation, she decides to take a brave step which is known as Madal Oorudal. In this process the lady keeps in her hand the picture of her God. In the other hand she will have a panai madal i.e. a palm leaf. Her hair will be loose. She would go and stand at a place where the four streets meet i.e. a public place and loudly proclaim that the master Who is seen in the picture is the person Who deserted her. He is heartless. Repeating all these, she will wail and weep loudly, thus evoking the sympathy of the passers by. Thus, by publicly shaming the Lord saying He did like this, He did not accept me, He did not come to my rescue etc., she feels she would have created sufficient public opinion against the Perumal. She hopes that such a situation will compel the Perumal to come to her. It is also possible that seeing her state of disarray and sorrow, the elders will come and advise the Perumal not to leave her high and dry but to accept her. Thus, these are two methods of compelling the hands of God and attaining God which is reflected in the use of the one word "madal oorudal".

It may be stated here that though Parakala Nayaki threatened saying she will do "madal oorudal" she did not do it in actual practice. The mere threat was believed to be sufficient

to make the Perumal quickly, climb down and accept Parakala Nayaki the embodiment of devotion.

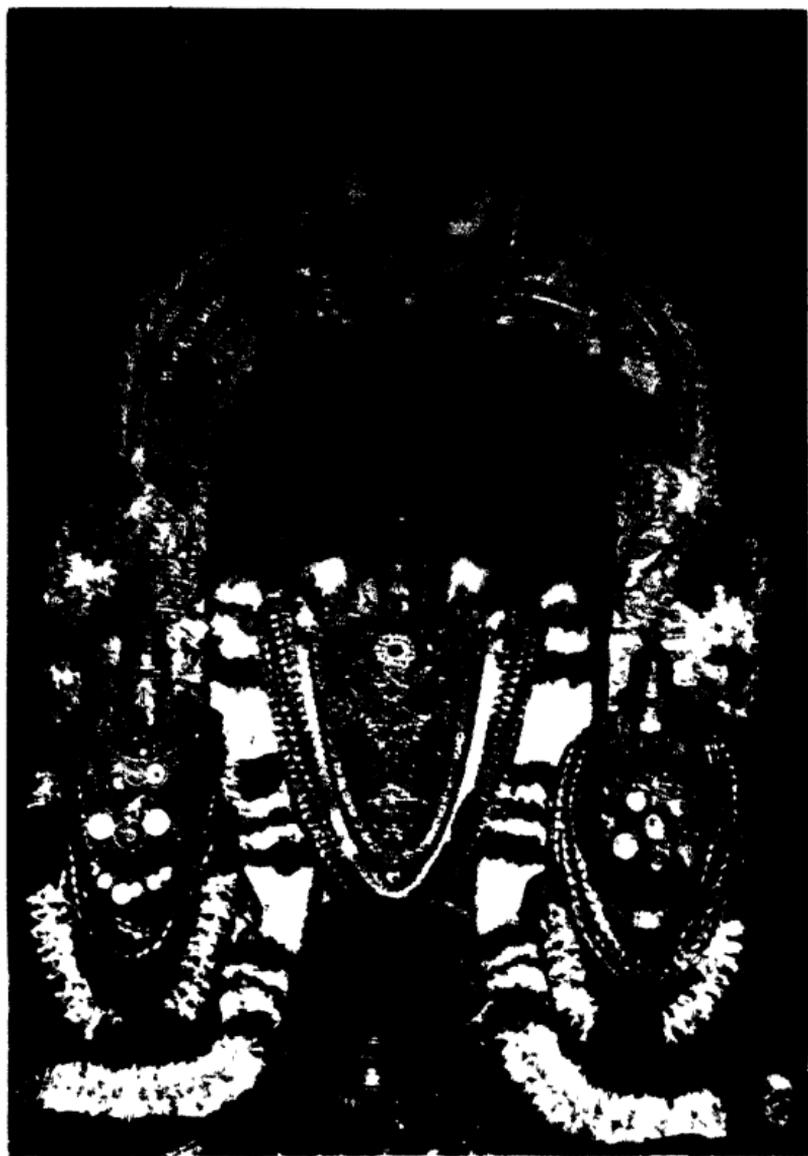
PASURAM 2674

..... தென்ன னுயர் பொருப்பும் தெய்வ
வடமலையும்
..... மின்னி மழை தவழும் வேங்கடத்து எம்
வித்தகளை.....

This pasuram is a part of Peria Thirumadal. The 6th and the 124th lines have reference to Thiruvengada malai. Here again, the Alvar takes on the role of Parakala Nayaki. She says that her Lord i.e. the Perumal is residing very happily at the divine Thiruvengadam and Thirumalirun Solai in Pandya Nadu. He Who is precious is also staying in Chidambaram which is located in the south and which is full of thillai trees. Seeing Him at Chidambaram, the dark clouds with flashes of lightning are moving fast to reach Chidambaram. He Who is all knowing, my enlightened one, is residing in Thiruvengadam. Seeing Him, I folded my hands and related to Him my sorry plight. After haring me, if still Perumal does not bestow His kindness on me and if He rejects me, I will go to the Idai Cheri i.e. Yadava township which is full of ladies and proclaim loudly to the people that He has let me down. I will make sure that every one comes to know about this. Here again, we see the Alvar using the weapon of threat to make the Lord bend and then bless him. The threat is to quicken the process of God attainment.

With this pasuram ends the wide canvas of 61pasurams sung by Thirumangai Alvar on Lord Srinivasa of Tirumala.

* * *



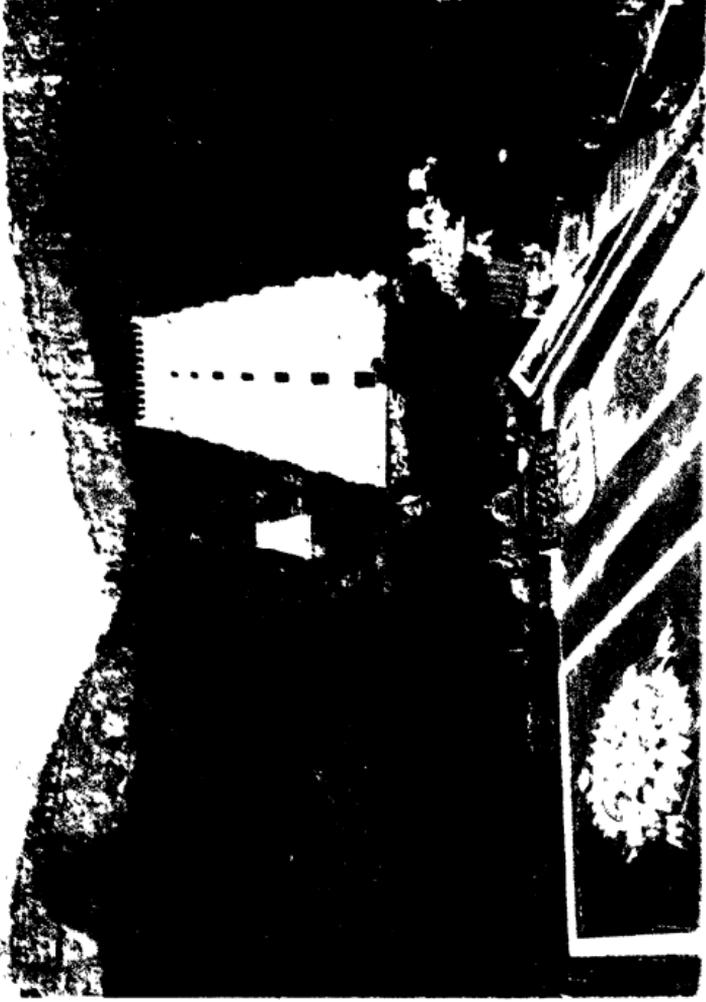
I. ETERNAL PURIFIER PAVITHROTSAVAM



2 THE LORD AS BRIDEGROOM WITH HIS BRIDES



3. ALARMELMANGAI THAYAR



4. VIEW OF GALI GOPURAM PATHWAY



5. VIEW OF THE STONE IMAGE OF GARUDA
ENROUTE TO TIRUMALA



6 VISWAKSENA



7 SWAMY PUSHKARINI VIEW



8 SRI VARAHA SWAMI - MOOLAVAR



9 PAPA VINASANAM - A VIEW



10 VIEW OF JABALI THEERTHA



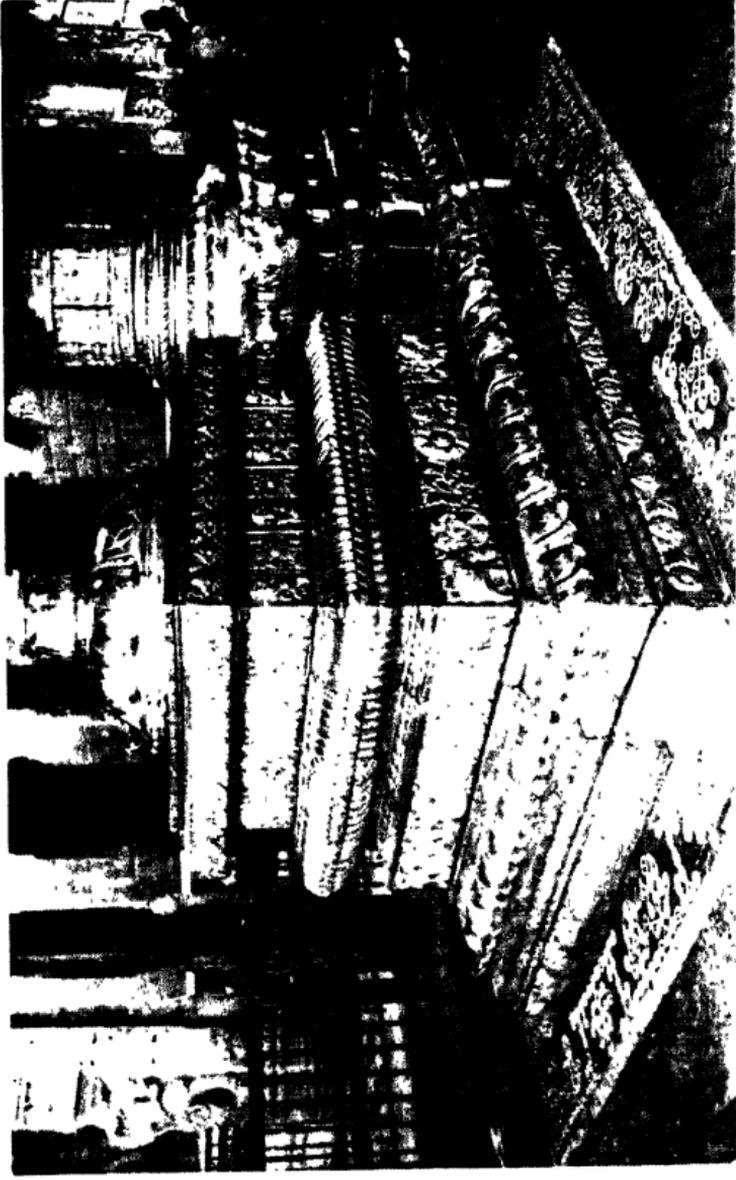
11 VIEW OF KAPILA THEERTHA



12 VIEW OF MAIN TEMPLE GOPURAM



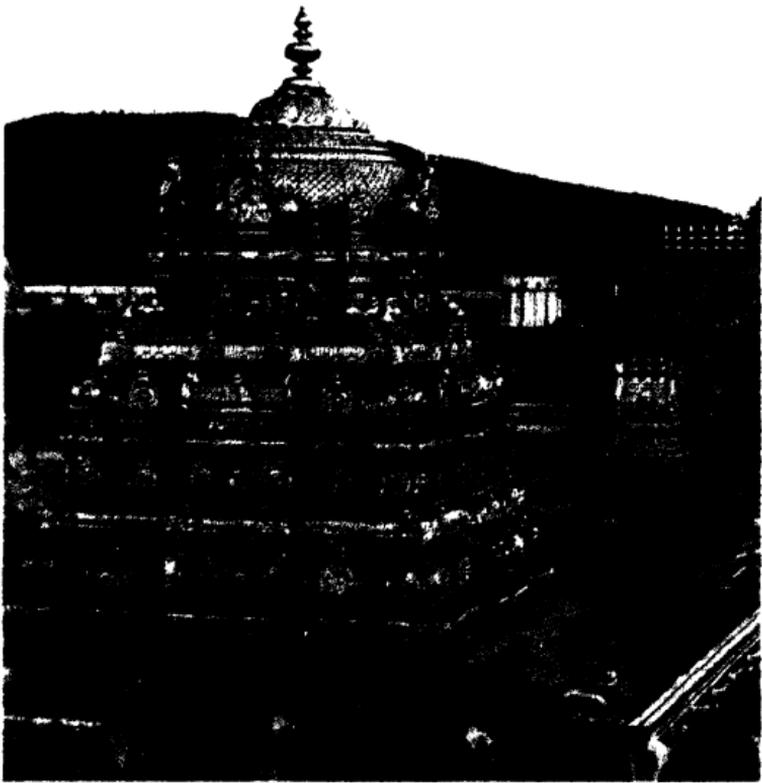
13 VIEW OF DWAJASTHAMBAM



14 VIEW OF BALI PEETAM



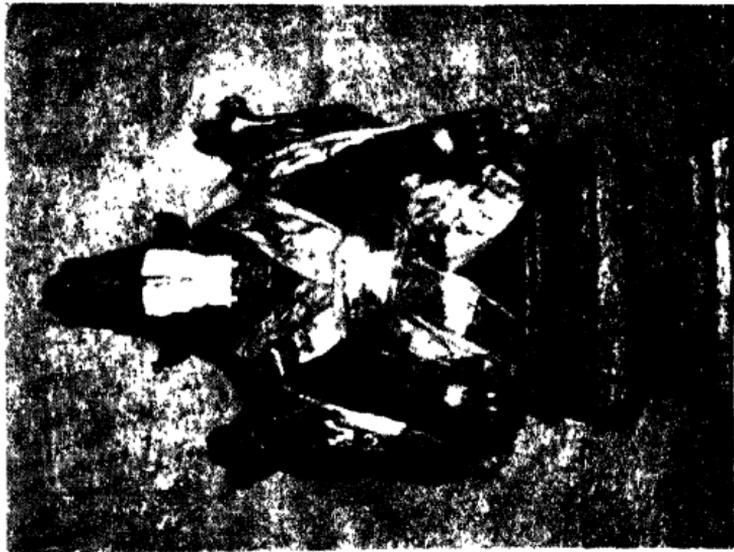
15 SILVER VAKILI



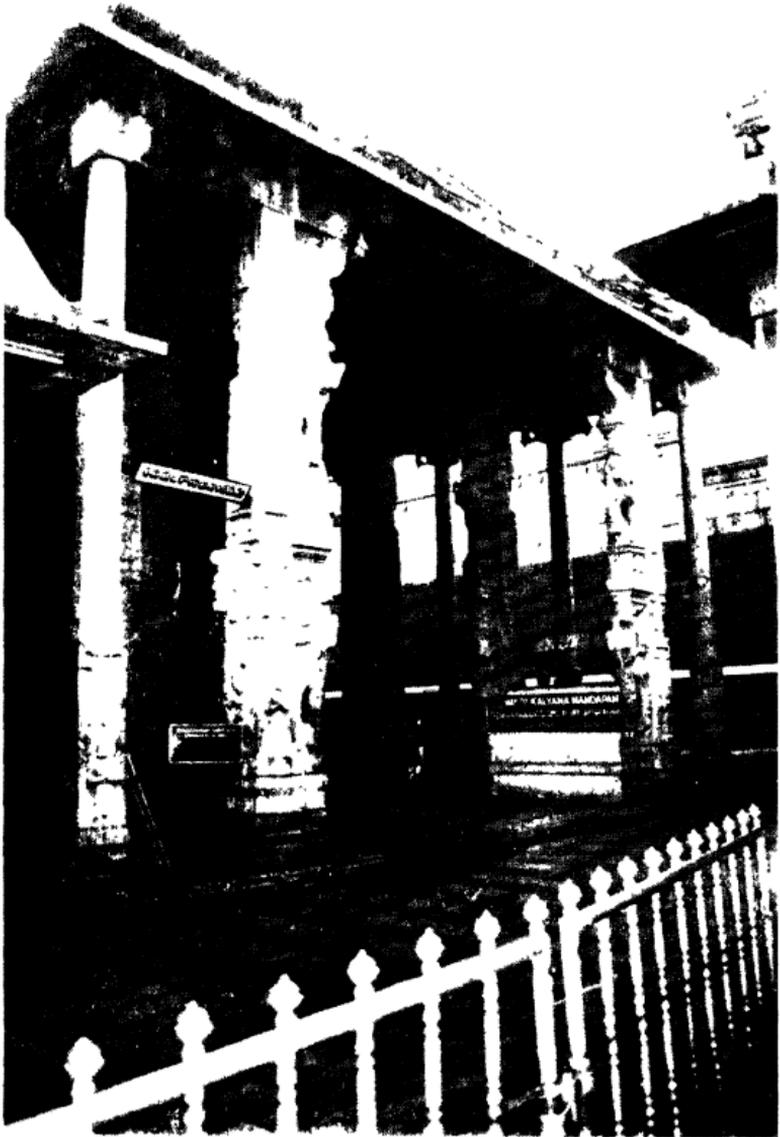
16 VIEW OF ANANDA VIMANAM



17 IDOL OF SRI RAMANUJA



18 IDOL OF SRI NARASIMHA



19. VIEW OF THIRUMAMANI MANDAPAM



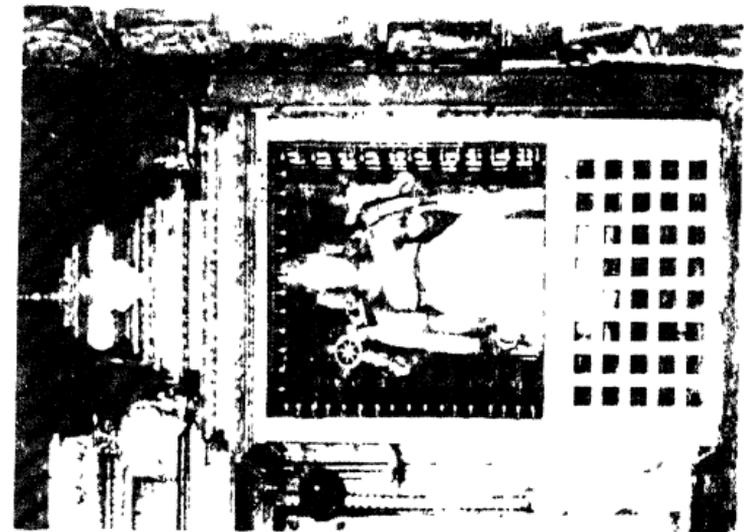
శ్రీ వారి పుండ
శ్రీ బాలాజీ శ్రీ
శ్రీ లక్ష్మీ నారాయణ

THE KANUK
WILL GO TO
...

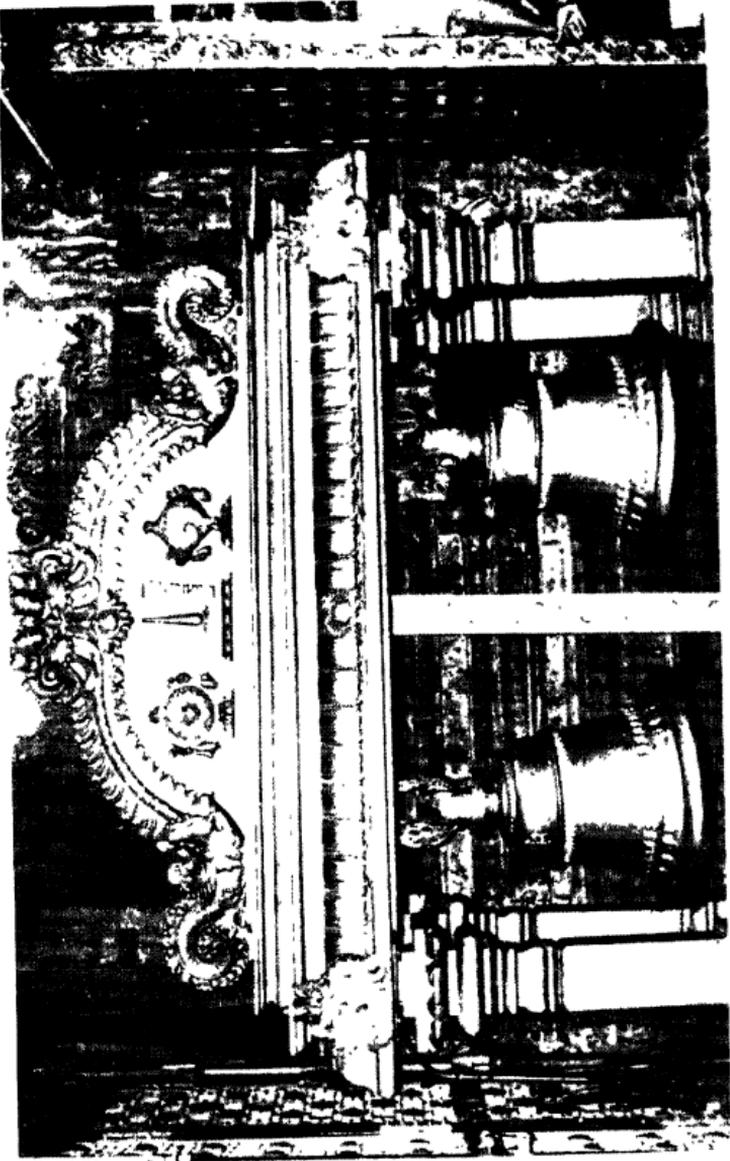
20 SRI VARI HUNDI - A VIEW



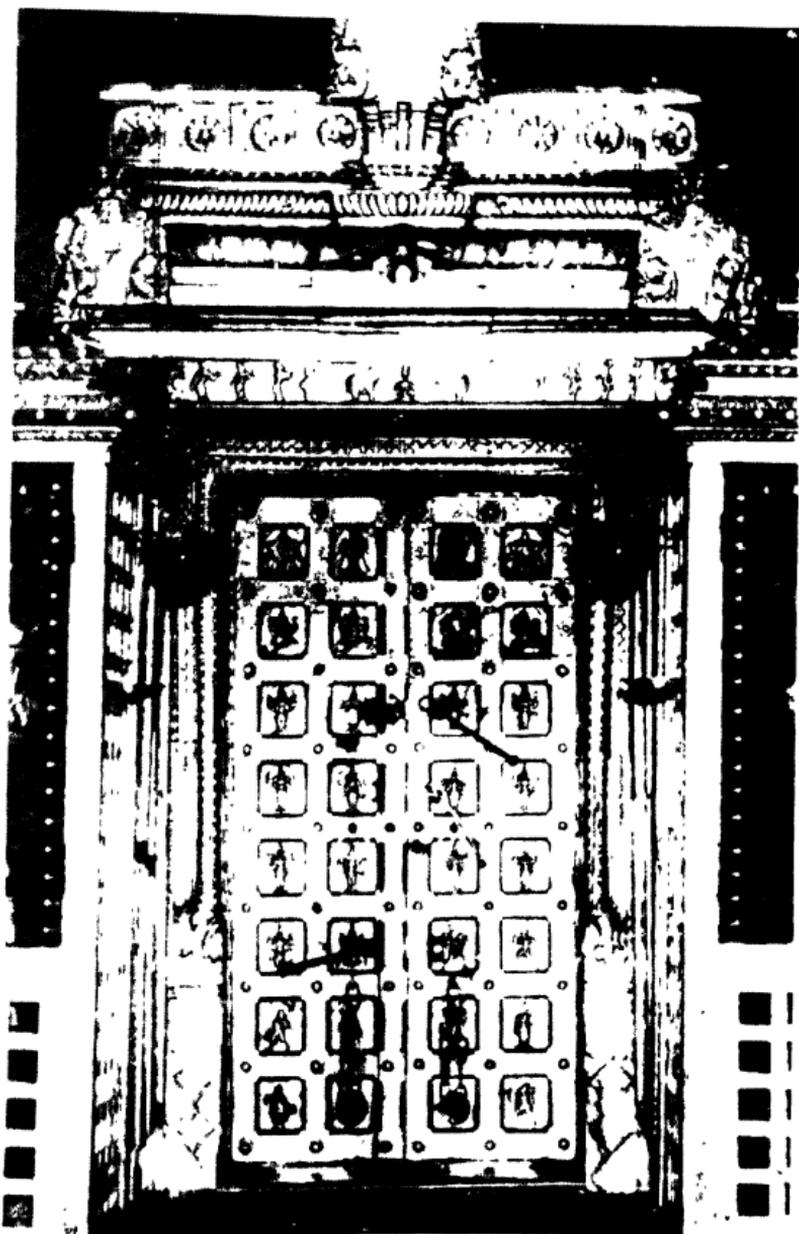
21. UTSAVA VIGRAHA OF GARUDA



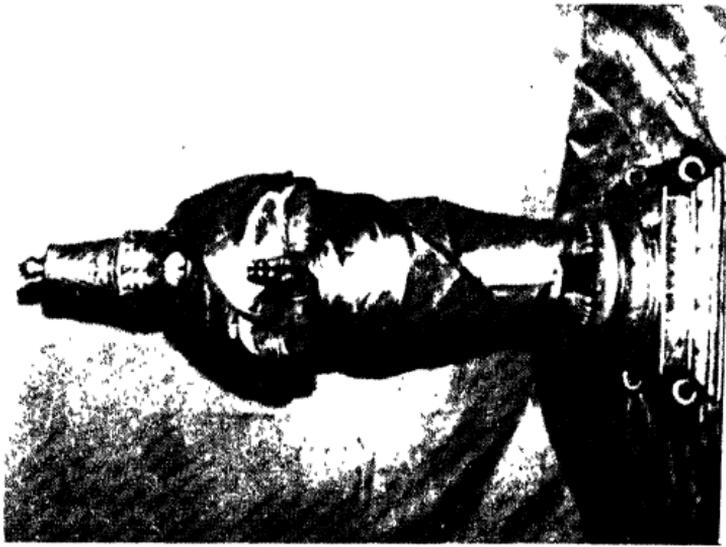
22. JAYA-VIJAYA IDOLS



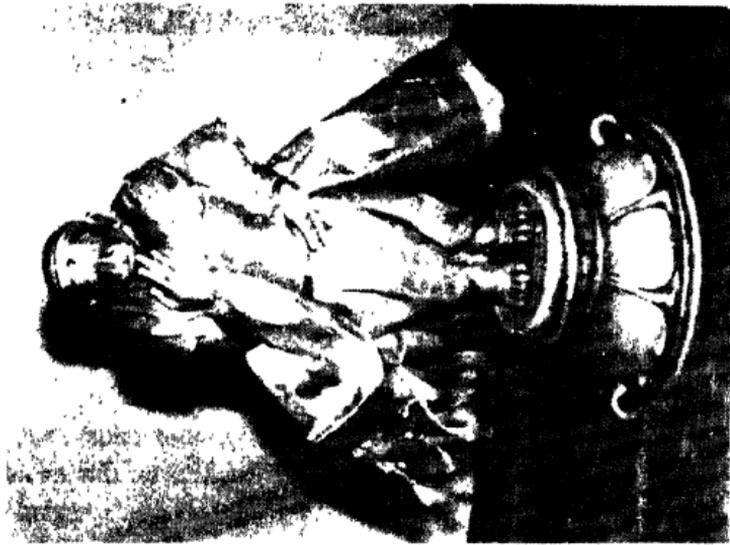
23. VIEW OF TEMPLE BELLS



24. BANGARU VAKILI - A CLOSED VIEW



25 IDOL OF HANUMAN IN SOPANA MEDAI



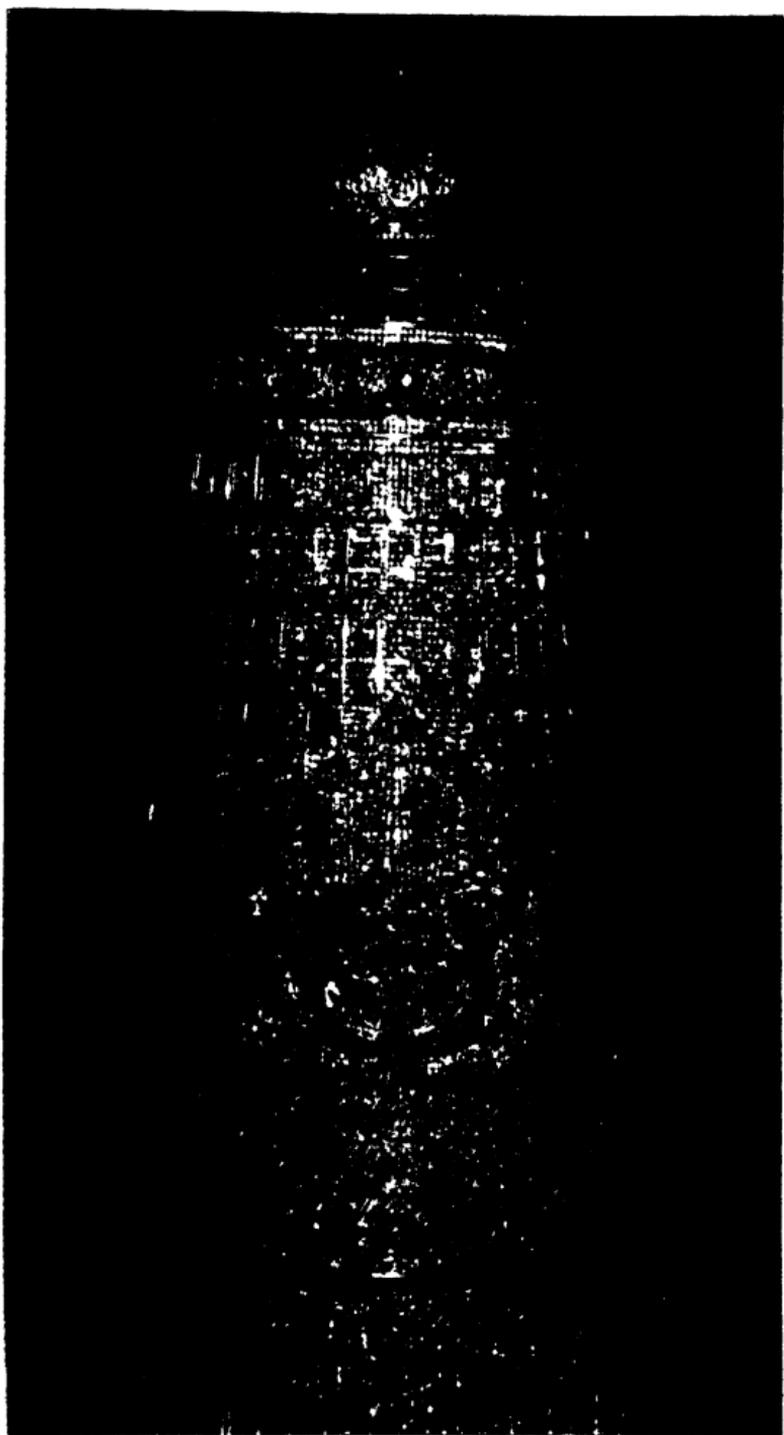
26 IDOL OF SUGREEVA IN SOPANA MEDAI



27. IDOL OF ANGATHA IN SOPANA MEDAI



28 LORD SRI VENKATCHALAPATHI - IN PEARL COAT



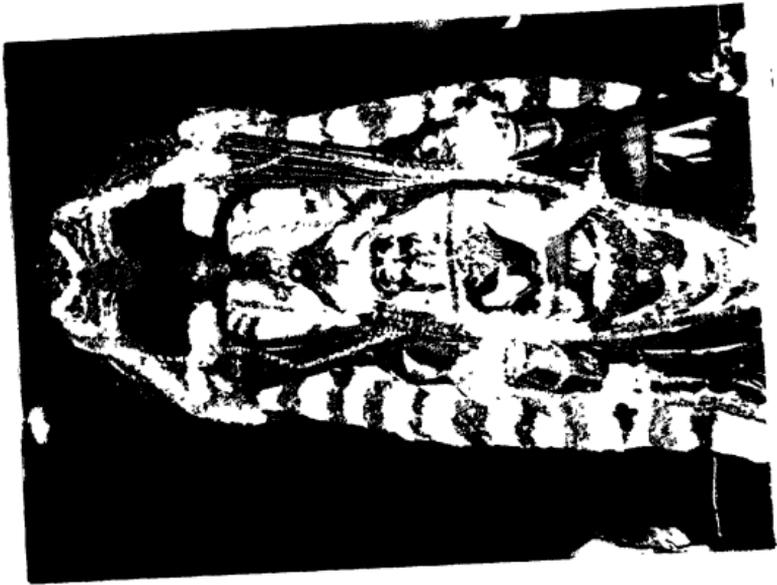
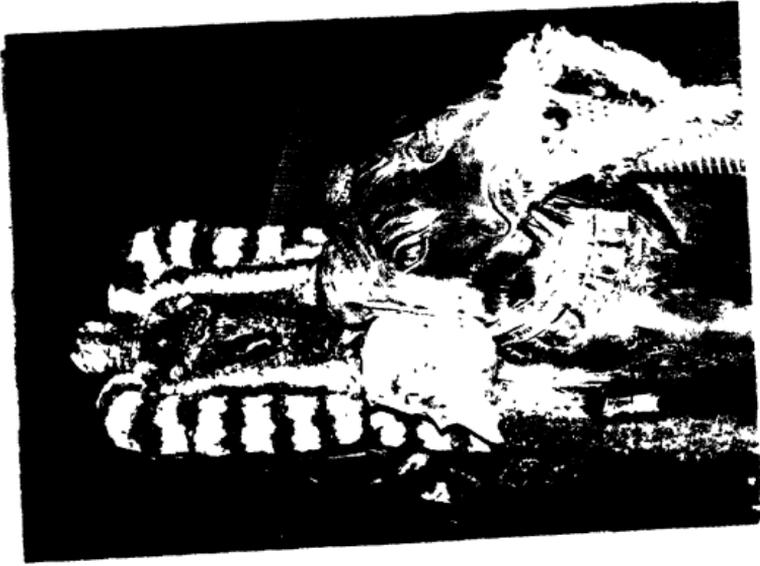
29 DIAMOND CROWN VIEW



30 PROCESSIONAL DEITY OF VENKATESWARA



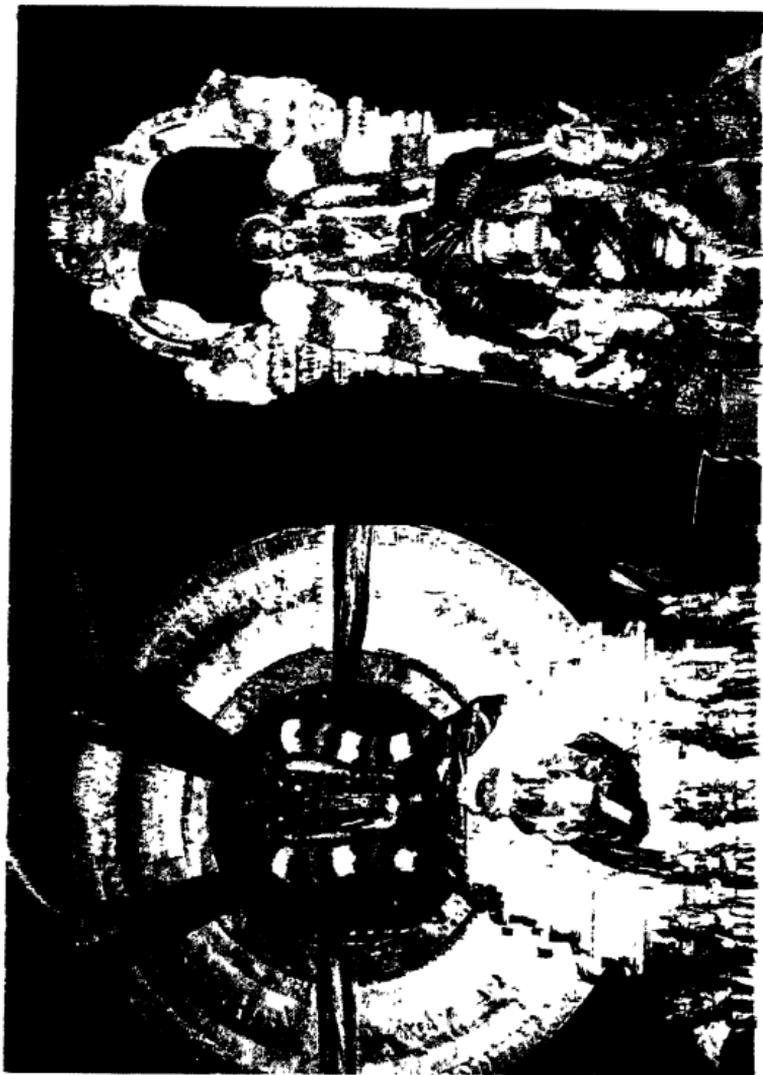
31. IDOL OF KOLUVU SRINIVASA



33 LORD SRINIVASA ON GAJA VAHANA



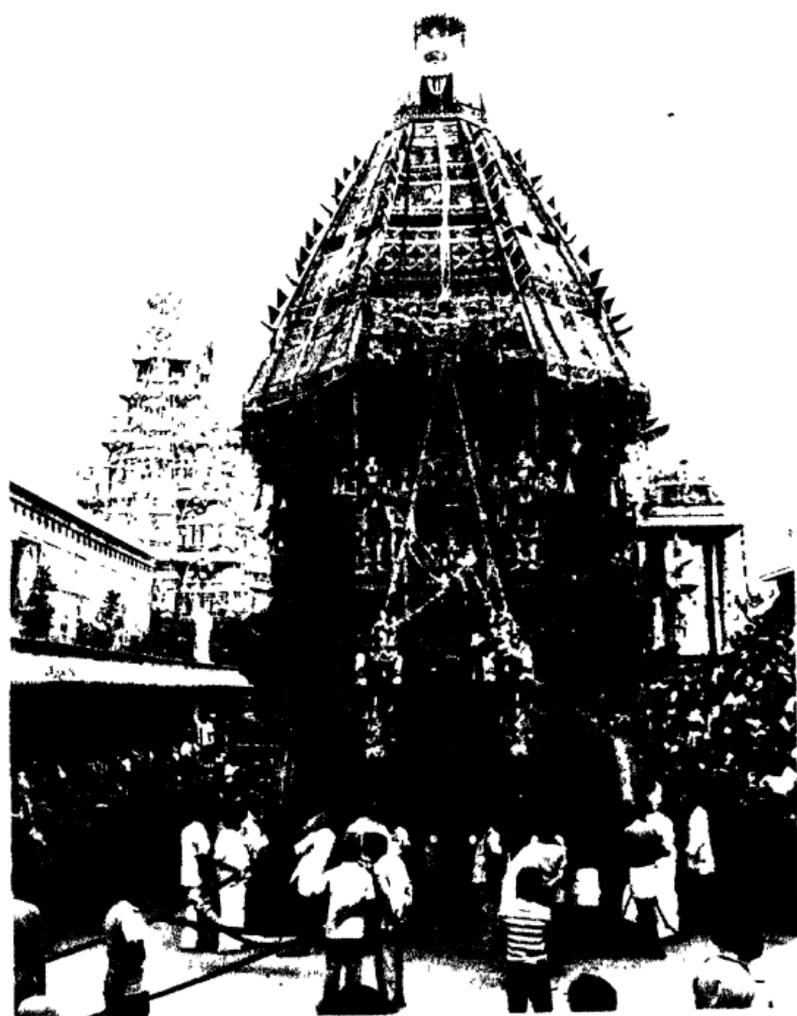
34 LORD SRINIVASA ON SESA VAHANA



35 SURYAPRABHA VAHANA



37.LORD ON KALPA VRUKSHA VAHANA



38 VIEW OF BRAHMOTSAVA RATHAM

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