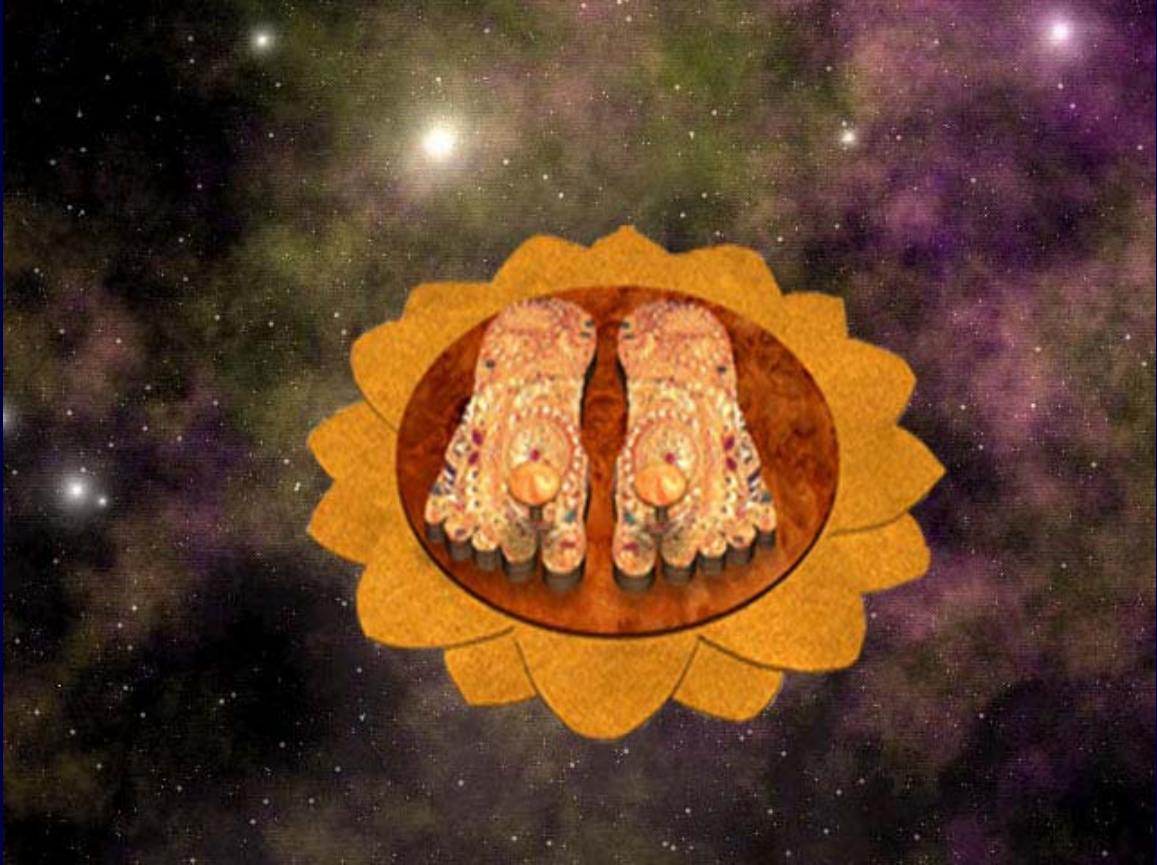


SWAMI DESIKAN'S
SRI RANGANATHA PAADHUKA SAHASRAM



ANNOTATED COMMENTARY IN ENGLISH BY
OPPILIAPPAN KOIL SRI VARADHACHARI SATHAKOPAN

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॥ श्रीः ॥

॥ श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः ॥

॥ श्रीमते निगमान्त महादेशिकाय नमः ॥

INTRODUCTION

SRIMAN VENKATANAATHAARYA: KAVI THAARKIKA KESAREE i VEDHANTHAACHARYAVARYO MEH SANNIDHATATHAAM SADHAA HRUDHI ii

In this multifaceted master-piece of a Kavyam of RPS, Swami Desikan has celebrated the glories of the two PAADHUKHAAS (sandals) adorning and supporting the lotus feet of the Lord of Srirangam. This suprasiddha (highly revered) kavyam has 1,008 verses housed in 32 chapters (Paddhathis). It is said that Swami Desikan composed all of these 1008 verses in one Yamam of a night in response to a challenge set by a Sr Sri RanganAtha PaadhukA Sahasram (RPS) is one of the most magnificent literary, philosophical and theological compositions of Swami Desikan. The other kAvyams such as Sankalpa SuryOdhayam, YaadhavAbhyudhayam, Hamsa Sandesam and Subhashitha Neevi have their unique merits. For instance, Sankalpa SuryOdhayam is an allegorical play, where the cardinal doctrines of SrivaishNavite philosophy are covered. The Hamsa Sandesam modeled very much after Mega Sandesam of the immortal bard KaaLidAsA , the literary and poetic talents as well as his knowledge of the Indian subcontinent of Swami Desikan come to the fore. In his kAvyam on the life and history of Sri KrishNA-- the Yadhava kula Tilakam --known as YaadhavAbhyudhayam, Swami celebrated the scion of the Yadhukulam. The Subhashitha neevi is a "didactic lyric" containing the wise and pithy statements similar to the ones found in the Niti Sataka of poet Bharthruhari. The uniqueness of PadhukhA Sahasram is that it is an intgrated essence of the literary, poetic, philosophical and theological and last but not the least, the Bhakthi of Swami Desikan at its full bloom.

A SrivaishNava of Srirangam challenged Swamy Desika and suggested that whoever completes 1,000 slokams on ANY subject of his choice in ONE NIGHT will be the winner of the title as the MahA Kavi. Swami Desikan was least interested in acquiring the title or entering into a competition with the ego-driven local poet/ SrivaishNavA of Srirangam. He accepted however this challenge as a command of Sri RanganAthA for him to compose a eulogy on HIS anantha KalyANa guNams. Swami chose the subject of the sandals of the Parama Purushan of Srirangam and created the 1,008 verses celebrating their glories. The competitor chose the subject of the Paadha Kamalam of Sri Ranganatha and barely completed 300 verses during the course of the night and gave up his futile attempt. During the next morning, Swami Desikan presented to the Lord of Srirangam his grantham entitled, "Sri Ranganatha PadhukhA Sahasram" at the temple and was duly honored by the scholars and devotees assembled there and most importantly received the blessings of the Lord Himself.

According to another version, Swami Desikan settled down in Srirangam after many years of residence at Thiruvaheendrapuram and was engaged in the SiddhAntha Pravachanam to his disciples. His MedhA vilasam and brilliance in interpreting Bhagavadh RaamAnuja SiddhAntham was admired by the residents of Srirangam. A group of scholars appealed to Swami Desikan at this time to compose an Uttama Kaavyam on the Lord of Srirangam to celebrate the unmatched devotion of their AcharyA to Periya PerumAL. Swami Desikan accepted their wish as the Lord's command and composed the bhakthi-laden verses of Sri Ranganatha PadhukhA Sahasram (RPS). In that extraordinary kaavyam, he explained that the Lord's sandals and NammAzhwAr are one and the same. He pointed out further that the sacred sound arising from the movement of the Lord on His padhukhAs is equal to the sacred sound of Thiruvaimozhi arising out of Sri SatakOpA's mouth and RPS emanating out of his own mouth.

The individual verses arising from the power of Swami Desikan's Hayagreeva mantrOpAsanam are very powerful in their mAntric significance. **The Andavans of Srirangam, who worship the MaNi PaadhukhAs of Sri RanganAthA in their daily AarAdhanam have identified individual slokAs for japam and DhyAnam to realize specific siddhis.** The Lifco Company of Madras has produced a small monograph on the individual slokams with such maantric significance and has given the sankalpams for the japam of these slokams of RPS with the guidance of the Andavans of Srirangam. This booklet also contains the yantrams with bheejAksharams at the center for the ladies of the house to draw in the pujA grahams of their houses as kolams (RangOlis) as the accompaniment to the japam and to invoke (aavAhanam) of the Lord wearing His sandals (Lord and NammAzhwAr) on individual days of the week. **There have been repeated demonstrations of the siddhis arising out of such japams of the individual slokams of RPS in many people's lives. People performing Mantra japam of individual slokams have attained the fruits of their efforts to achieve loukika and Vaidhika purusharthams.** In essence, RPS is a celebration of one's AcharyAs and the celebration of the acharya-bhagavadh sambhandham. It is therefore a PaarayaNa grantham like Srimadh RaamAyaNam of sage Valmiki. When one does PaarAyaNam of RPS, one enjoys the Lord of Srirangam directly (pratyakhshamiva Samvruddham). When we recite the hundred slokAs of the chapter of RPS (paddhathi) known as Naadha Paddhathi with devotion, the Ranganatha sevaka can experience literally the "GathAgathAni" (the hither and thither Sancharam) of the bell-studded padhukhAs of the Lord of Srirangam. The most beautiful sounds of his sanchaAram as the Lord leave His aasthAnam in Srirangam and coming to our Puja Grahams have been captured by Swami Desikan. One experiences the different mellifluent sounds of the Lord's bell-studded PaadhukAs as His Paadam Thaangis (Periya and Siriya Thiruvadis) carry him on their back and engage in the steps used in transporting Him known as Simha Gathi, vyAgra gathi and others.

THIRUVAIMOZHI AND RANGANATHA PAADHUKA SAHASRAM

Swami Desikan has closely modeled RPS after NammAzhwAr's Thiruvaimozhi with its 100 decade. In view of the importance of RPS to us, Therezhundhur Aandavan created a Tamil commentary for us. He completed the commentary upto 860 slokams and could not continue further due to his illness. He commissioned then Sri Aakkur Andavan to complete the work. The year was 1955 and the extremely valuable commentary along the Andavan tradition was released in that year. For many years thereafter, this monograph was out of print. Thanks to the efforts of the disciples of Aandavan, this sacred monograph was re-released in 1995 in two parts. Sri Uttamur Swami had released his own VyAkhyAnam on RPS earlier and it is also out of print now. I was blessed to receive in 1994 the last copy of this brilliant commentary of RPS from the son-in-law of Uttamur SwamigaL (Sri K.G.KrishNan) at Madras. I had the good fortune to translate this version into english in 1995. This English version may be released in 1997 with the help of Sri K.G.KrishNan and Swami Desikan scholars such as Sri V.N.Vedantha Desikan, the author of "AzhwAr ThiruvuLLam" and Dr. S. PadmanAbhan, the author of Parasara Bhattar's works and a descendant of the ThevanaarviLagam Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt. I am now bridging the two traditions of commentaries - that of Uttamoor SwamigaL and Srirangam Aandavans -- so that we can appreciate the integrated essence of the two schools offering their devotion to Sri Ranganatha Divya MaNi PaadhukhAs.

I will summarize in the next few postings the architectonics of RHS and the brief summary of the subject matter of the 32 paddhathis of RPS.

In this posting, I will start with a salutation to THE ILLUSTRIOUS GLORY OF SRIRANGAM, the abode of Sriranganatha and His inseparable consort, Sri RanganAyaki. For illustrating the incomparable glory of the abode of the Lord, we can take Swami Desikan's own citation in Sanchara Paddhathi of RPS. In this paddhathi, Swami Desikan enjoys the uthsavams of Sri Ranganatha from viswarupa darsanam to paryankAsanam (i.e), from suprabhAtham

(ThiruppaLLiyezucchi) to the Lord being sung to sleep at night. The particular slokam of Sanchara Paddhathi extolling the glories of Srirangam is the 312th slokam of RPS:

satyAlokAth sakalamahithAth sthanathO vaa RaghUNAm
sankhE maatha: ! samadhikaguNam saikatham sahyajAyA : I
poorvam poorvm chiraparichitham paadhukE ! yath tyajanthya
neethO naathastadhithamitharanneeyathE na tvayAasou II

Meaning: O PaadhukE! You brought BhagavAn first from Sri VaikunTam to Satya Lokam, the world of BrahmA Devan. Then you brought Him over to the house of Raghus at AyodhyaA. Thereafter, you carried Him to Srirangam. He has not ventured out anywhere else since arriving at Srirangam on Your back. Therefore, I conclude correctly that there is no place superior to Srirangam.

ADDITIONAL GLORIES OF SRIRANGAM

RAJA GOPURAM OF SRIRANGAM



Srirangam is indeed the Divya Desam celebrated by 11 AzhwArs through 247 pAsurams of the NaalAyira Divya Prabhandham. This is where AndAL, Kulasekhara AzhwAr, Tondardipodi, ThiruppAnAzhwAr, YatirAjar joined the Lord. AndAL and ThiruppANAZhwAr merged with the Lord in person; the rest ascended to Sri VaikunTam at this Divya Desam. Periya Nambi, ParAsara Bhattar, Vadakku Thiruvedhi PiLLai, Pillai LokAcchAr, his brother and author of Acharya Hrudhayam and many other AcharyAs were born here. AcharyAs like NathaMuni, AalavandhAr Swami Desikan, MaNavAla MaamunigaL and other Acharya PurushAs lived here and offered their worship to Sri RanganathA and His PaadhukhAs.

IMPORTANCE AND GLORY OF ACHARYAS

In our tradition, the Lord's Paadhukais are considered identical to Acharyan and particularly, NammAzhwAr, who is revered as SatAri Suri. The PadhukhAs are HENCE known as "Satakopam" and is placed on our heads at the sannidhis of BhagavAn to remind us of the Acharya Sambhandham. It is our deep belief that a Jeevan can attain sathgathi only through the strength and power of one's Acharya. The definition of an Acharyan is accepted by us as follows:

" Nalla sangathikaLai arindhu, anthappadi nadanthu, appadiyE pirarukkum therivitthu, nadatthi vaikkiravan " (One who understands the right messages from his acharyAs, practices them, interprets and passes them on to his own disciples). The practice of AchAram, AnushtAnam and helping others to understand them through personal example and uniting us with the Lord through the power of their own Tapas are the hall marks of a sadhAcharyan. Swami Desikan has covered the extraordinary and unique role of AcharyAs in his 32nd (final) chapter of his Rahasya traya Saaram to emphasize these doctrines.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NAMAASHWAAR IN OUR TRADITION

NAMAASHWAAR



It is well known that it is very difficult to obtain a SadhAcharyan. The **SEQUENCE OF STEPS** leading to Bhagavadh Anugraham are recognized to be: SadhAcharya KatAksham, SadhAcharya anugraham (PrasAdham), Bhagavadh Anugraham, Moksham.

Swami Desikan emphasised like the SadAchAryas before and after him that the attainment of Sadhgathi by the Jeevans is due to the strength and power of the AchAryAs and sambhandham with those AchAryAs. At his very end of his Magnum opus, Rahasya Traya Saaram, Swami Desikan concluded therefore "manyE Balam ". We have to understand and revere the Guru paramparA (Acharya VamsO j~nEya:) for that reason .

The first Acharyan in our tradition is SRIMAN NARAYANAN, THE SARVESWARAN. He lights the eternally shining lamp of sampradhAyam and illumines the mind of the next Acharyan. Through a line of succesion, NammAzhwAr or Thirukkuruhoor Satakopan occupies a key place in our Acharya paramparai. He is celebrated as the Prapanna Jana kutasthar and our Kula pathi (founder-seer). He himself has stated in his Periya ThiruvandhAdhi (paasuram 31) that "By becoming servants of the Lord, we have verily become as it were HIS sacred sandals (paadhukhAs)". **THAT IS OUR KEY REVELATION ON NAMMAZHWAR BEING CONSIDERED AS THE PADHUKAI OF THE LORD AT SRIRANGAM.** Swami Desikan elected therefore to celebrate the Padhukais of the Lord of Srirangam instead of the Lord's Lotus feet themselves.

In the subsequent postings, the summaries of the 32 chapters of RPS of Swami Desikan will be given and illustrative verses from each of the Paddhathis will be included.

In this posting, I will begin to cover the individual chapters of RPS of Swami Desikan. There are 32 chapters in RPS just as in the case of Rahasya Traya Saaram. The context of the 32 chapters of RPS by Swami Desikan is to the 32 Brahma VidyAs celebrated by the upanishads. Prapatthi is one of these 32 Brahma Vidyas and RPS is ALL about this particular Brahma Vidya.

The names of the Individual chapters and the number of slokams housed in these Paddhathis (chapters/Vazhi/Maargam) in parenthesis are:

1. PrasthAva paddhathi(20)
2. SamAkhyA paddhathi (10)
3. PrabhAva Paddhathi (100)
4. SamarpaNa Paddhathi (20)

5. PrathiprasthAna Paddhathi (20)
6. AdhikAra Parigraha Paddhathi (40)
7. Abhisheka Paddhathi (30)
8. NiryAthanA paddhathi(30)
9. VaithALiKA paddhathi (10)
10. SrungAra Paddhathi (10)

In the middle of the above Paddhathi, Swami Desikan completes the first quartile of RPS.

11. SanchAra Paddhathi (60)
12. Pushpa Paddhathi (30)
13. ParAga Paddhathi (30)
14. Naadha Paddhathi (100)
15. Rathna SaamAnyA Paddhathi (50)

In the middle of the above Paddhathi, Swami Desikan reaches the halfway point of His 1008 Slokams of RPS. He has by now reached the half way mark of the Yaamam of the night at Srirangam.

16. Bahurathna Paddhathi (50)
17. PadmarAga Paddhathi (30)
18. MukthA Paddhathi (50)
19. Marathaka Paddhathi (20)
20. Indra Neela Paddhathi (30)
21. BimBha PrathibimBha paddhathi (20)
22. Kaanchana Paddhathi (20)
23. Sesha Paddhathi (10)

In the middle of Sesha Paddhathi, Swami Desikan racing against time reached the third quarter of the RPS and is poised to enter the most important home stretch.

24. Dwandhva Paddhathi (20)
25. Sannivesa Paddhathi (20)
26. YanthriKA paddhathi (10)
27. RekhA Paddhathi (10)
28. SubhAshitha Paddhathi (10)
29. PrakeerNa Paddhathi (80)
30. Chitra Paddhathi (40)
31. NirvEda Paddhathi (20)
32. Phala Paddhathi (38)

In the very last slokam of PaadukhA Sahasram, Swami Desikan with His extraordinary sense of focus and purpose reminds us of the central message of His Sri Ranganatha PadhukhA Sthotram (VIZ)., SadhAcharya, Bhagavadh Sambhandham and the doctrine of us being married into the ROYAL FAMILY and the glory of the everlasting purushArtham, Moksham through the DayA of NamperumAL and the AnukampA of Sri Ranganayaki for us as their beloved children.

I will conclude this posting with the quotation of the FIRST AND LAST last slokam of RPS:

SLOKAM 1:

**SANTHA: SRIRANGAPRUTHVEESA
SARANA THRAANA SEKHARAA: I**

Sri

JAYANTHI BHAUVANATHRAANA
PADHA PANKAJA RENAVA: II

SLOKAM 1,008:

JAYATHI YATHIRAAJASOOKTHI:
JAYATHI MUKHUNDASYA PADHUKHAA YUGALEE I
TADHUBHAYA DHANAA: TRIVEDHEEM
AVANDHYAYANTHO JAYANTHI BHUVI SANTHA: II

The sense of symmetry and the unity in the first and the last slokams and for that matter across the length of RPS has no parallel. The start with the word Santha: and the ending with the same word, Santha: and the singing of Pallandu to those SanthAs with the words Jayanthi and Jayathi at the beginning and the ending of RPS is another great pointer to the centrality of the message of RPS on the BhagavathAs and their victory in obtaining the object of their endeavours (viz)., SadhAcharya Sambhandham and the marriage with the Lord of Srirangam through the anugraham of SatAri Suri, the Kula pathi for PrapannAs.

"santha: SrinigamAnthaArya sambhavithasuvrutthaya : I
santhAm saahasam teevram suhruthbhAvEna maamakam II "

SrimathE NigamAntha MahAdesikAya Nama: II

|| Sriranganaatha divya MaNi PaadhukhAbhyAm Nama: ||



Sri Ranganatha Paadhuka Sahasram, 1008 SIOkams of this magnificent work by Swami Desikan are set in 32 Paddhathis. The Paddhathis are organized as follows. (This is reproduced from U. Ve. Sri Vedanta Desikan Swamin's book). The brief meanings of the individual sIOkams that follow immediately after the sIOkams have been reproduced from Dr.V.N. Vedantha Desikan's monograph with the help of Dr. MuraLidhar Rangaswamy of Bangalore.

The breakup of Sri Ranganatha Paadhuka Sahasram's 1008 SIOkams in 32 Paddhathis is as follows:

Name of the Paddhathi	SIOkams	Content of the Paddhathis
1. Prasthaava paddhathi	Verses 1-20	Introduction to the Paadhuka Sahasram
2. SamAkhyA paddhathi	Verses 21-30	How Paaduka is appropriately referred to as Sataari or Satakopam
3. PrabhAva Paddhathi	Verses 31-100	Greatness of Paaduka
4. SamarpaNa Paddhathi	Verses 101-120	Rama had pledged Paaduka to Bharata as surety for return
5. PrathiprasthAna Paddhathi	Verses 121-140	Return of Paaduka to Ayodhya with Bharata
6. AdhikAra Parigraha Paddhathi	Verses 141-180	Assumption of Power
7. Abhisheka Paddhathi	Verses 181-210	Coronation of the Paaduka
8. NiryAthana Paddhathi	Verses 211-240	Reinstatement at Rama's feet after 14 years
9. VaithALika paddhathi	Verses 241-250	Poets and Panegyrist sing Paaduka's praise
10. SrungAra Paddhathi	Verses 251-260	Love-play between Paaduka Devi and Lord Rama
11. SanchAra Paddhathi	Verses 261-320	The Lord strolls with the Paadukas on
12. Pushpa Paddhathi	Verses 321-350	Oblations with flowers
13. ParAga Paddhathi	Verses 351-380	Potency of dust from the Paadukas
14. Naadha Paddhathi	Verses 381-480	On the melody of Paaduka walking
15. Rathna SaamAnyA Paddhathi	Verses 481-530	Gems as a totality-Distan view

16. Bahurathna Paddhathi	Verses 531-580	Varieties of gems present together emitting spectra-Near view
17. PadmarAga Paddhathi	Verses 581-610	The luster of the ruby
18. MukthA Paddhathi	Verses 611-660	On pearls in the Paaduka
19. Marathaka Paddhathi	Verses 661-680	On the emerald gems
20. Indra Neela Paddhathi	Verses 681-710	On the sapphire beauty
21. BimBha PrathibimBha paddhathi	Verses 711-730	Objects reflected in the Paadukas lustrous surface
22. Kaanchana Paddhathi	Verses 731-750	Gold Paadukas
23. Sesha Paddhathi	Verses 751-760	Paaduka exhibiting its status of subservience. Also the incarnation of Adishesha
24. Dwandhva Paddhathi	Verses 761-780	The twin-Paaduka and its speciality
25. Sannivesa Paddhathi	Verses 781-800	Shape and beauty of the Paaduka
26. YanthriKA paddhathi	Verses 801-810	The knob in each Paaduka
27. RekhA Paddhathi	Verses 811-820	Of the streaks on the Paaduka
28. SubhAshitha Paddhathi	Verses 821-830	The maxims of conduct that the Paaduka implies
29. PrakeerNa Paddhathi	Verses 831-910	Miscellaneous aspects
30. Chitra Paddhathi	Verses 911-950	Chitra Paddhati which emphasizes a suitable fitting matrix of artistry - a specialty of Oriental poetry
31. NirvEda Paddhathi	Verses: 951-970	Words in disgust, in humility; entreating about one's pitiable plight
32. Pala Paddhathi	Verse 971-1008	Rewards for having composed of the work and for recitation of the same

|| Sriranganaatha divya MaNi PaadhukhAbhyAm Nama: ||

कवितार्किक सिंहाय कल्याण गुणशालिने ।

श्रीमते वेङ्कटशोय वेदान्त गुरवे नमः ॥

kavitaarkika siMhaaya kalyaaNa guNa shaaline.
shrlmate ve-NkaTesdaaya vedaanta gurave namaH.