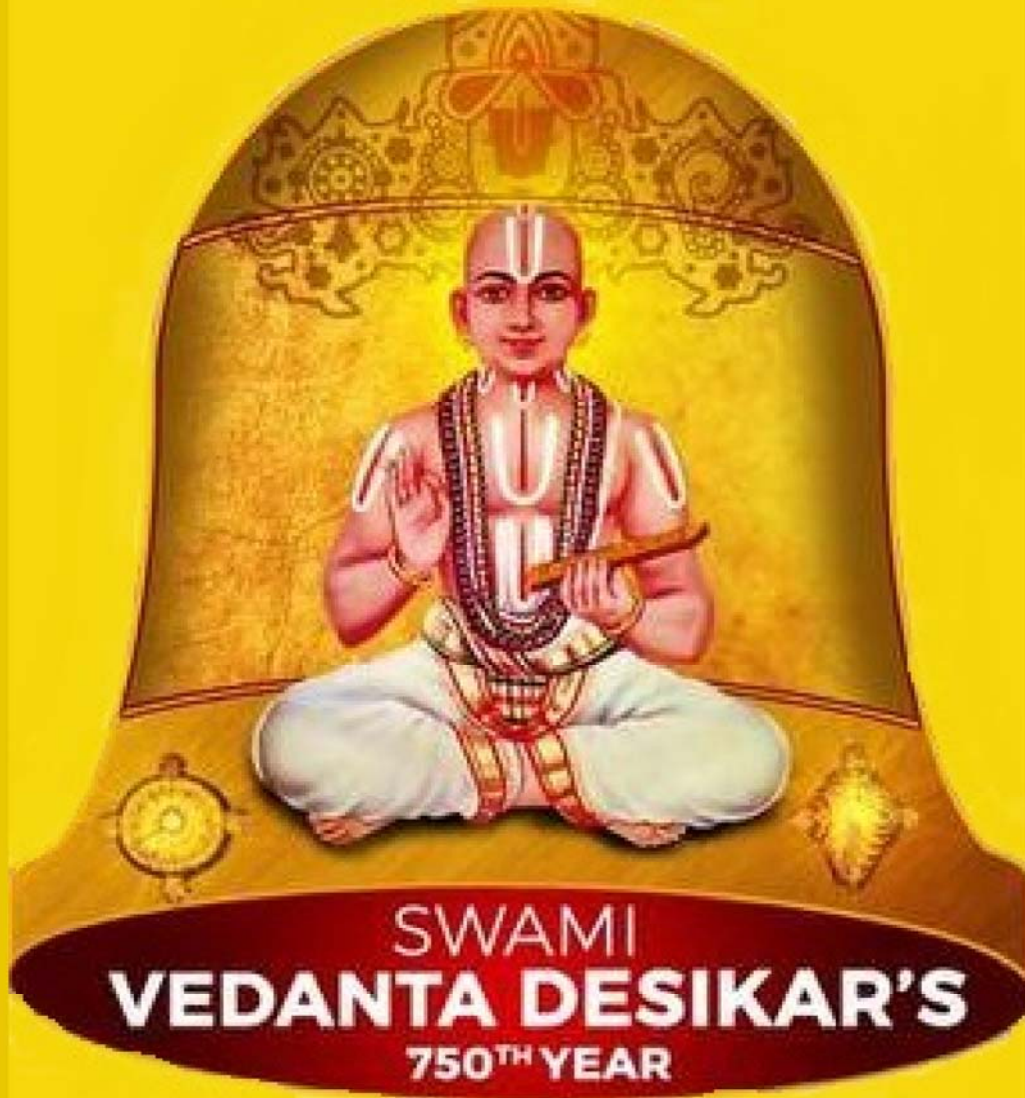


THE DEXTEROUS DESIKA



POET

A famous Thaniyan (Sloka on Swami Desika goes by this..

*śrīmān veṅkaṭanāthāryaḥ kavitārkkikakesarī |
vedāntācāryavaryo me sannidhattāṃ sadā hṛdi ||*

Meaning:

"**the great lion of poets** and the great preceptor of Vedanta (that Swami Venkatanatha was) should reside in his heart always."

At each place, he composed many different works in languages such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Prakrit and Manipravala (a mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil) that revealed his ingenuity, creativity, logic, linguistic expertise, devotional fervour and erudite scholarship.

He composed over hundred works in the following genre:

28 devotional poems in Sanskrit such as Hayagriva-stotram, Kamasika-ashthakam and Gopala-vimshati

24 devotional poems and treatises in Tamil such as Gitartha-sangraham and Charama-sloka-churkku

11 philosophical treatises such as Shata-dushani, Mimamsa-paduka and Tattva-mukta-kalapam

10 commentaries on the works of previous acharyas such as Stotra-ratna-bhashya , Chatus-shloki-bhashya and Tatparya-chandrika

5 Narrative poems such as his magnum-opus, the Paduka-sahasram, and the epic poem called Yadavabhyudaya which rivals the decorative poetry of Mahakavi Kalidasa's works, and the Hamsa-sandesha

32 esoteric texts revealing the hidden meanings of prappati-marga such as Srimad Rahasya-traya-saram, Paramapada-sopanam, Amrita-ranjani and Amrita-svadhini

1 drama named Sankalpa-suryodayam

13 works on arts and sciences such as Bhugola-nirnayam and Silpartha-saram

4 works that codified religious rites and practices such as Sri-vaishnava-dinasari and Bhagavad-aradhana-vidhi

One evening in SriRangam, where Desikan lived and worked several years, a rival poet contemptuously challenged him to compose poetry on the most shabby and un-poetic of themes on earth -- a pair of common footwear! Next morning Desikan astounded the rival, and the rest of the world too, with a poetic work of 1000 stanzas entitled

"PadukA-sahasram"! One thousand stanzas in Sanskrit of the highest order, in praise of the sacred Sandals of Lord Ranganatha, the Deity of the temple! Written in one sitting within the course of one night!

One sample to prove that He is Kavi Simham

in the 'pAdukA-sahasram' Desikan demonstrates how the reverse effect can also be achieved with equally telling effect – where meaningful words are woven out of pure sound:

pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA
pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA
pAdapa pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA
pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA pAdapA (939 Paduka-Sahasram)

Now if any poet of lesser stature than Swami Desikan were to pen lines like the above, and try and pass it off as poetry, it is likely he will be taken to be a raving lunatic. But Desikan's genius shows us how even seemingly senseless sound can be made to contain lofty poetic meaning. The above stanza when read as follows:

pAdapA-apAdapA-aapAda-pApA-dapA, pAdapA, pAda-pApA-dapA-apAdapA
pAda,pApAda, pApAda-pApAda-pApAda, pApAdapApA-adapApAdapA

yields the following meaning in very rough English translation:

"The pAdukAs of Lord of SriRangam
-- render sinless all things and all beings of this world
-- protect all beings in this world and the other
-- reward all men who do their bounden duty by their parents and punishes those that fail in it
-- elevates the devotees of God in the eyes of all the worlds
-- maintains eternal order in both heavenly and earthly spheres".


A detailed list of Swami works could be browsed here
<http://srivedantadesikan.blogspot.com/2007/02/innumerable-works-of-swami-desikan.html>

No wonder indeed, it was then as it remains today, that Swami Desikan was hailed by one and all as "kavi-kEsari" (Lion among Poets).

PHILOSOPHER

Veṅkaṭanātha is an important figure in the history of Indian philosophy. Since he is a historical figure, the explication of his thought is facilitated by the contextual knowledge available about the times, the cultural and geographical milieu, and the religious tradition related to him. Conversely, the study of Veṅkaṭanātha and of his sources allows one to undertake a study of Indian philosophy as known to him and of the changes he implemented in its interpretation.

"That Desika was accepted by followers of other philosophies — Dvaita and Advaita — shows his greatness," observes Dushyanth. Appayya Dikshitar, renowned Advaita scholar and composer, was a close friend of Desika. So was Vidyaranya Tirtha of Sringeri. "When there was a debate on the meaning of Tatvamasi between Akshobhya Tirthar (dvaita) and Vidyaranya Tirthar, they chose Vedanta Desika as the judge. Desika's verdict has been etched in a pillar at Moolabagilu in Karnataka. Such was his credibility and clear thinking," .



The Vedāntic school of Indian philosophy we refer to as Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta has been largely influenced by the shape Veṅkaṭanātha gave to it. For instance, the traditional lineage of teachers of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta includes the Āḷvārs (an elusive Vṛttikāra), Nāthamuni, Yāmunācārya, Rāmānuja, and Parāśara Bhaṭṭa. All bear just some vague family resemblance with each other but all are directly linkable to Veṅkaṭanātha's view of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, which includes the Āḷvārs devotionalism, the Pāñcarātra's ritualism together with a robust commitment to the scholarly tradition of Indian philosophy in general (as already found in Nāthamuni and, from a different point of view, Yāmuna), and Vedānta in particular (as explicit in Rāmānuja).

Tatva Mukta Kalapa (A gem garland made of tatvas exposing its true nature) has 500 verses giving the various loop holes in other philosophies such as Advaita, Dvaita, Sankya, Mimamsa, Yoga etc.. and establishing the Visishtadvaita philosophy which reflects the true philosophy as stated in Vedas, Vedanthas, Ithihasa, Purana and Pancharathra agama.

Any philosopher with his neutral approach who reads Swami desika's Tatva Muktha Kalapa will surely praise its unbiased nature in establishing the Vedic philosophy. Without any ambiguity they will declare that He is "THE PHILOSOPHER" in the world.

SPORTSMAN

There are innumerable sports around the world both played indoor and outdoor. Some sports supplement to our physical fitness and some to mental fitness while many are played as respite from this mundane and hectic academic schedule. Swami Desika is the only person who has seen sports as the spiritual media.

It may be noted that the five poems pandhu, oosal, kazhal, yEsal, ammanai composed by Swami Desika are five different sports played from vedic era and Swami has beautifully composed these poems to depict bhakti rasam through these poems.

The poem named pandhu declares the lady in love as playing with flower balls with her female friends in the garden of the harem. Where she sings the praise of her lover (which is God himself in this occasion).

The compositions **Kazhal** describes the play of heroine in the hall of the palace with small marble like smooth nuts of a shrub of that name. A poem that portrays the play of the heroine and her friends with small bell shaped wooden toys goes by the name of ammanai in which they sing the praises of the Lord.

In **Oosal** poem, usually we see the heroine seated in an oscillating swing suspended from the green branches of a flowering tree in the garden probably with recollections of the happy time spent with her lover (God).

yEsal is that composition which depicts a lady in love in anger taunting the lover with insincerity since he has not kept his word to come at the fixed committed time because of his dalliance with some other lady even though he may try to pacify her with words and acts of apology. In those works, Sri Venkatanatha has elevated causal love to divine love and devotion, into Bhagawath kaama as shown very beautifully and esoterically by Alwars.

Ammanai an improved form of this game is in vogue at present. It is played with hollow brass balls, about the size of a lemon, filled with tiny pebbles or pellets. The usual number of the balls is eleven or thirteen and all of them are tossed into the air continuously one after another and the player trying to keep them

all in the air by dexterously throwing them again as they drop. The success lies in preventing any of them from falling to the ground. This game, as a speciality of women, has not been mentioned in ancient literature but has found a place in the literature of a later period. Swami Desikar in this prabandham sings the praises of his Lord by the song of the maids playing ammanai. The song is known as Ammanai-p-pattu and is in the duet form.

It is unfortunate that they are lost.

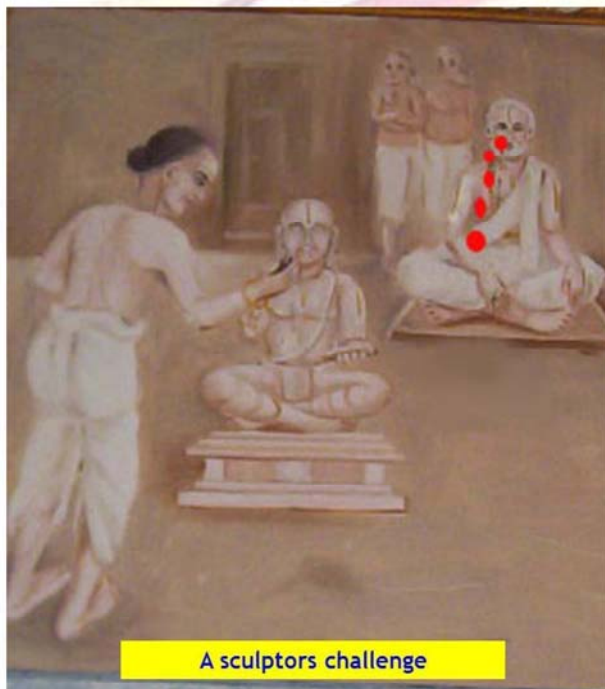
In a spiritual world, Bakthi is an inevitable part of life and mingles in each and every aspect of our day to day deeds of life. Who else other than Desika can make it so simple to practice Bakthi even while engaged in sports / games. He is a divine SPORTSMAN !!

SCULPTOR

Once a sculptor asked Desika to make an image out of panchaloha (a mixture of five metals - copper, tin, lead, silver and zinc) on a condition that the image had to exactly fit on the base provided by him. Desika made an image of himself but when the sculptor tried to fix it on the base, he could not do so. He tried to chisel out a portion of the body of the image. Blood flowed from the corresponding part of the body of Desika. The sculptor admitted that the fault was in the base made by him. Desika fixed it up in the base exactly as it should be, like a professional sculptor.

Later, this image was installed by Desikan's son Nayinaacharya at ThiruvahIndhrapuram. Anyone visiting ThiruvahIndhrapuram and offering prayers to the idol, can never take their eyes off this marvelous Vighram.

Desika not only sculpted an immaculate image but also pointed out the defects in the base structure provided by the professional SCULPTOR.



A sculptors challenge



Sculptor loses the challenge