



Swami Desikan's

Hamsa Sandesam



Thirumaliruncholai



Thirupathi



Thiruvarangam



ThiruveLLarai



Thirukkacchi

Sri nrusimha sEva rasikan

Oppiliappan Koil Sri.VaradAchAri SaThakopan



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Swami Desikan - Satyagalam

(Thanks: Sri.Laskhminarasimhan Sridhar)





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॥ श्रीमते निगमान्तमहादेशिकाय नमः ॥

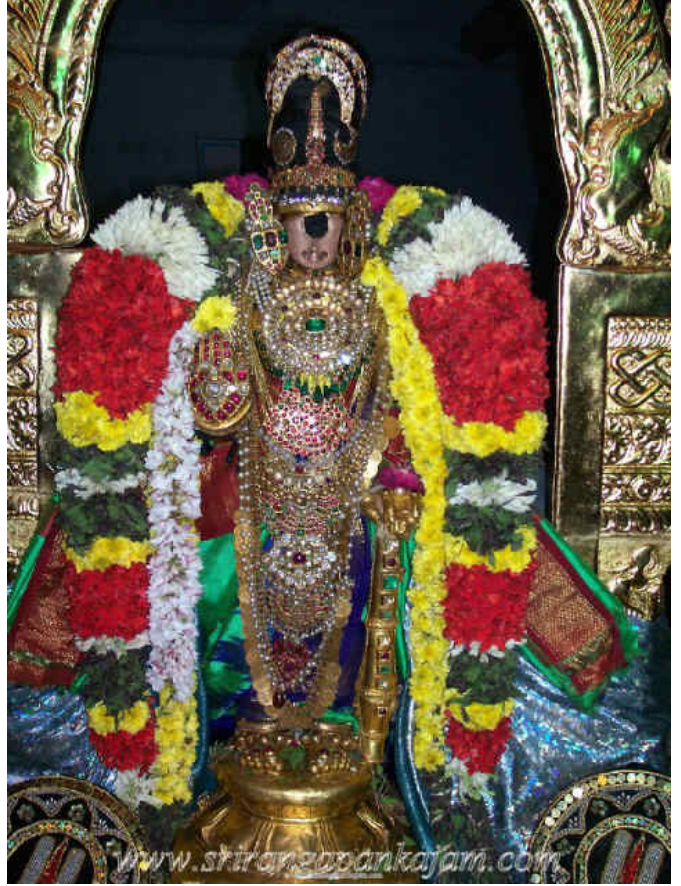
हम्स सन्देशम्

HAMSA SANDESA

INTRODUCTION

I want to share with you the tribute that Swami Desikan paid to Sri Ranganatha through one of his Kavyams known as Hamsa sandesam. The other Kavyams of Swami Desikan are: **Subhashitaneevi**, **Yadavaabhudhyam** and **Padhuka Sahasram**.

Hamsa Sandesam is what is known as a Sandesa Kavyam. This Kavyam follows the style of Aandaal and Nammazhwar, when they requested clouds, birds and bees to take a message to their Lord and asked them to help in uniting them with their beloved Lord. In more recent times, Poet Kalidasa Composed Megha Sandesam, where he asks



NamperumAL - SrIRangam
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the hurrying clouds to take a message to his beloved one in the Northern region.

Swami Desikan sets Hamsa Sandesam as a Kavyam, where Sri Ramachandra languishing from the sorrow of separation from His beloved Sita sights a Raja Hamsam and implores it to take a southward journey to Lankapuri and asks the hamsam to convey to Sita his sense of anguish and inconsolable desolation. There are 110 slokas in this Kavyam set by Swami Desikan in the Mandaakrantha Meter.

Sri Rama points out the landmarks that the hamsam will fly over in its southward journey. In this Kavyam, we get a glimpse of the Sarva Tantra Swatantrar's extraordinary knowledge about the geography of Bharata Desam.

His choice of hamsam as a messenger to convey Sri Rama's pangs of separation is very similar to the Vipralambha Mood of separation experienced by the Nayakis such as Parakala and Paraankusa Nayaki. The mood is very similar to that we experience of Parakala Nayaki (Thirumangai Azhwaar) in the Thirupullani Pasurams (Periya Thirumozhi 9.4) and Paraankusa Nayaki's Pasurams (E.G: Thiruvaimozhi 9.9). Paraankusa and Parakala Nayakis have begged the cranes and parrots to convey their sense of forlornness and despair, while possessed by the mood of Vipralambha Sringaram.

This Kavyam has both poetic majesty as well as philosophical message in the form of Rahasyartham. Swami Desikan's reverence for Sri Ranganatha, the family deity of Sri Ramachandra is also brought out in number of Slokas of this Kavyam.

Swami Desikan describes the majestic flight of the Messenger of Rama over the Thiruvencatam hills, Kanchipuram, Chola Desam. The Hamsam follows aerial course along the banks of Cauveri River. Sri Rama then points out to the expectant swan the sights it will see during its southern journey. He says that you will see an island formed by Cauveri and in the middle of it; you will see Chandra Pushkarani and the sacred Sesha Peetam. On that Peetam, You will see



the FUTURE site where Sri Ranga Vimanam and Sri Ranganatha are going to rest. Rama asks the hamsam to offer its salutations to the deity sacred to the Ishvaku dynasty. The second half of the 44th slokam describes the sighting of the Chandra Pushkarini by the hamsam:

TEERTHAIRANYAIRAPI PARIGATHAAM

SUDDHIHETOH SAMANTHAATH |

CHANDROLLAASAPRATHITA YASASA:

SAMPATAM PUSHKARINYAA: ||

Sri Rama says that "you (hamsam) will see the holy Pushkarani, which will have the beautiful lustre of the Moon and you will recognize its holiness by the fact that many theerthams (waters) are resting next to this Pushkarani to attain holiness for themselves by situating themselves in the proximity of the Chandra Pushkarani. You will also witness the richness and sampath associated with Chandra Pusharani all around it."

The prosperity or the Eiswaryam that he has in mind is described by him in the next verse:

TEEREH TASYAA VIRACHITAPADHAM

SAADHUBHI: SEVYAMAANAM

SRADDHAA YOGAATH VINAMITA TANU:

SESHA PEETAM BHAJETHAA: |

YASMIN ASMATH KULADHANATAYAA

SOWMYA SAAKETA BHAAJA: |

STHAANAM BHAVYAM MUNIBHIRUDHITAM





SRIMATHO RANGADHAAMNA: ||

Sri Rama says to the hamsam that it will see on the banks of Cauveri, the Sesha Peetam that is worshipped from time immemorial by the Yogis and Bhagavathaas. He asks the hamsam to bow deeply before the Sesha Peetam. Sri Rama reveals to the hamsam that sacred site will be the future site of Sri Ranganatha's Pranava Vimanam with Para Vasudeva at its crest.



Cauveri River

At this point, Sri Rama reminisces about the Aprameya Swaroopam that is resting under the Sri Ranga Vimanam that He worshipped every day at Ayodhya. His thoughts now return to his capital, while He is talking to the hamsam at the pool side in Dandakaaranyam. Overcome by the thought of the beauty of Sri Rangaatha, Sri Rama says that His family heirloom is visible as a Superior, matchless emerald gem enshrined on the holy seat on top of the Sesha Peetam. The sloka celebrating Sri Ranganatha's glory is as follows:

SATTVEH DIVYEH SVAYAMUDHAYATAS

TASYA DHAAMNA: PRASANGHAATH

MANJUUSHAAYAAM MARAGATAMIVA

BHRAAJAMAANAM TADHANTA: |

CHETO DHAAVATUPAHITA BHUJAM

SESHABHOGEH SAAYANAM

DHEERGAAPAANKAM JALATHI TANAYAA

JEEVITAM DEVAMAADHYAM ||





Here Rama reveals that the Sesha Peetam is made up of Suddha Sattvam, free from the trigunaas. On top of that Sesha Peetam, Lord Ranganatha emerged as the Svyam Vyaktha (self-manifest) Mahaa Purusha. He appeared there of his own volition. There, He is resting on Adi Sesha and is placing His head on his right hand, while looking at Maha Lakshmi, worshipped at this Kshetram as Sri Ranga Nayaki. The description of the land marks continue and includes Kshethrams like ThiruveLLarai as he points the road map to the attentive Hamsam. The Kavyam ends with Rama's blessings to the hamsam for undertaking such an important journey.





HAMSA SANDHESAM : RAHASYAARTHAM

Srimad Ramayanam is revered as Saranagathi Vedam. Swami Desikan takes the Hanuman's Thoothu and sets his Sandhesa Kavyam with the involvement of a Raja Hamsam in the spirit of the Thoothu requests of our Azhwaars. A great Desika Bhaktha, Late Sri D.Ramaswami Iyengar has pointed out the special significance of the service rendered by Swami Desikan thru the composition of Hamsa Sandesam. I will attach his observations, since it may be difficult for many to access his Original preface to Hamsa Sandesam monograph of Oppiliappan Koil V.N. Srirama Desikaacchaar Swamy.

According to Srirama Desikaacchaar Swamy, the Inner Vedantic meaning is as follows:

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SrI RAma parivAr - SrI Oppiliappan Koil, Puzhuthivakkam

This Sariram is like Lankha. This Sariram is immersed in Samsaric Ocean, just as the island of Lankha is immersed in the salty ocean. Our Arrogant mind, the





leader of the ten Indriyas is like the ten-headed (Dasagreeva) Ravana. In this Sariram, Jeevan is housed and it undergoes the sufferings from Vishayaanubhavam. This is similar to Piratti's suffering in Ashoka Vanam. Sita Is equated to Jeevan here; Lord is Sri Rama; Hamsa/Hanuman is similar to Acharya, who carries the message of the Lord, describes His kalyana Gunas, gives the message of the Lord's resolve to come to the rescue of the Jivan and comforting the Jivan. Hamsam stands for Parama Hamsa Acharyas. The Azhwaars chose Annam for that reason to send their appeals to the Lord. THE CENTRALITY OF THIS RAHASYA ARTHAM IS THE CONCEPT OF THE LORD USING ACHARYAS AS HIS AGENT TO COMFORT THE JIVAN AND RESCUE THEM FROM THE SAMSARIC SUFFERINGS THRU PRAPATTI OR BHAKTI YOGA. The comparison of Sita to Jivan may have some weakness, but in a larger context of the relationship between Bhagavan, His messengers (Acharyas) and the suffering/Bewildered Jivan, this Rahasyartham can be accepted.

HAMSA SANDESAM'S SIGNIFICANCE

In his erudite introduction to Srirama Desikaacchaar"s monograph on this Kavyam of Swami Desikan, the late Sri D. Ramaswamy Iyengar educates us on the special significance of the Hamsa Sandhesam

He says: "one of the several important purposes with which Lord Sri Venkatanatha of the seven hills (Tirupathi) came into the world as Thuppul Venkatanatha (Vedanta Desika) is to lift poetry from the mire of mere eroticism (sensuous Sringara) into which it had sunk. Even as Acharya Ramanuja lifted up Para Brahman (ultimate Godhead) from the mire of the school of Kapardi (Kapardi Mata-Kardamam ---Para Brahmanah Kara Graha Vichakshano Jayati Lakshmana Ayam Muni: --Yatiraja Sapthati Sloka 38), Vedanta Desika redeemed the great poetic muse from Vulgarity (Commonness). This same Acharya has referred to how the Alwars had sublimated Sringara into Bhakti. At the hands of the Alwars, Sringara blossomed into Bhakti, when their great Bhakti found expression in the language of love.



In this Hamsa Sandesam, Sri Desika refers to the status of Sringara in sloka II-10 to that of a Nidhi or treasure (**SrungArAkyam nidhimatigataa SreyasI Devadeva**). No wonder poetry, which is the language in which SringAra finds expression gets sublimated too. That is how and why every poetic work of Desika is entwined with philosophy and religion. It is strange and it is almost a tragedy that it is for this reason Desika's works are not as widely known as they deserve to be. The educated world is still in large measure allergic to philosophy and religion and so, however exquisite Desika's poetry may be, it is not popular because of its special flavor.

Even as Ramayana is a Kavyam, which became Mahat charitam by Sita Devi being the chief topic thereof, (**Kavyam Ramayanam kritsnam Sitaaya: charitam mahat**), this Hamsa Sandesa Kavyam couched in the words of Rama Himself has become a precious epic, because Sita Devi is the person to whom the Sandesam (Message) is sent. In fact, right from the first sloka, which refers to Janaka-Tanaya, this poem is well and truly devoted to that paragon of the feminine species (**Naareenaam UttamAvadhU:**) Gods and Goddesses have been and ever will continue to the object of praise by their followers, devotees and votaries. But, here is a poem, where God Himself praises and Goddess Herself is the object of praise. There is no higher God to us than Rama, and no higher Goddess than Sita. So, who can adequately evaluate the greatness of this poem?

Sita Devi's appraisements and estimate of Rama can be seen in great detail in the Sundara Khandam (chapter 36 onwards). Valmiki, however, does not place before us to the same extent, Rama's estimate and evaluation of Sita, which we are left to gather from His ravings and periodical outbursts of anger and depression at separation from His beloved. Sri Vedanta Desika, however, makes his Rama speak at length on the beauty, righteousness and excellent qualities of head and heart of Sita.

The Second AaswAsa (Chpter) of Hamsa sandesa is really a monologue of Rama on Sita. Slokas 9 to 23 therein deserve to be read and reread. Out of them,



Sloka 9 which refers to the excellence of Sita Devi, who is compared to a Divya-Ratnam (celestial gem) and sloka 22, which depicts Her state of samadhi (intense concentration) are worthy of being written in letters of Gold. In the latter, Desika has wonderfully perfected the sentiment of Valmiki, who makes Hanuman say about Sita (EKASTHA HRUDHAYAA NOONAM RAMAMEVAANUPASYATI).

To understand the greatness of this Bhagavat Kaamam as opposed to Vishaya Kaamam, only a person, who has renounced all worldly attachment is fit and capable. That is why a Hamsa has been chosen as the messenger by Desika's Rama. That Hanuman has been depicted to us by Desikan as an Acharya --vide: Hanumat samena guruNaa -- in Sankalpa Suryodhayam. A Hamsa stands for a Sanyasi, who has renounced the world and its pleasures. So, it is a message replete with divine love; the love of divinity is vouchsafed to that Hamsa.

"But, by far the greatest achievement of Desika in this kavyam is the praise of the lovely EmperumaanArs of the various Divya Desas. Desika's great attachment to the Archa forms of the Lords that preside over the several shrines is revealed to us by the excellent stotras in praise of:

- Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam,
- Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvencatam,
- Lord Varadaraja of Kanchipuram,
- Lord Sundararaja of Thirumalirumcholai and
- Lord Semthaamarai Kannan of ThiruveLLarai.



Thiruvellarai Pundarikaksha Perumal

Thanks: Sri.Murali Bhattar





These five Archa Murthys have captured the rapturous attention of Swami Desikan and captivated his love-lorn mind. Not content with his own praise in other slokas and Prabhandhams, Desika struck on a very fine idea for effectively establishing the greatness and glory of Archaavataaras in his Hamsa Sandesam.

Rama noted for His own exquisite beauty (**Atheeva Priyadarsanam**) is made to praise, nay, and wonder at the beauty of several Archa forms. Only a Sarva Tantra Svatantrar can think of eulogizing Archavataara and establish its greatness and glory through a Vibhavavataara Emperumaan. The first Aaswasa is full of praise for the Divya Desa Archa Murthys. The Second Aaswasa shows to us the intensity of Rama's love towards Sita.

In the slokas 23 to 35 in praise of Kanchi's Lord Varadaraja, Rama is made to share Desikan's great infatuation for that Lord's beauty and grace. But, By far, the best beauty spot in this Kavyam is where Rama is shown to enjoy the greatness of Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam, who is Periya Perumaal (Rama Himself is Perumaal). In sloka 46, Rama at the mere mention of the Sesha Peetam on the banks of Chandra Pushkarini forgets Himself for a moment and is unable to proceed with his thoughts further; His mind travels in a trice (**Chetoh Daawati**) to distant Ayodhya and revels on the beauty of the Ishvaaku Kula Daivam (Sri Ranganatha), who is lovingly known as Azhagiya MaNavALan, who reclines softly on Adishesha. "PERUMAAL BECOMES AZHWAAR FOR THE NONCE."

Such is the rich repast of poetry and Philosophy offered by our Vedaanthaacharya in his Exquisite Hamsa Sandesa Kavyam.

Daasan,

Oppiliappan Koil Varadachari Sadagopan

