YAJÑESA "यज्ञेश"

The Life and times of

"Mukkur"

Sri. Lakshmi Narasimha Chariar

M.K.Sudarshan

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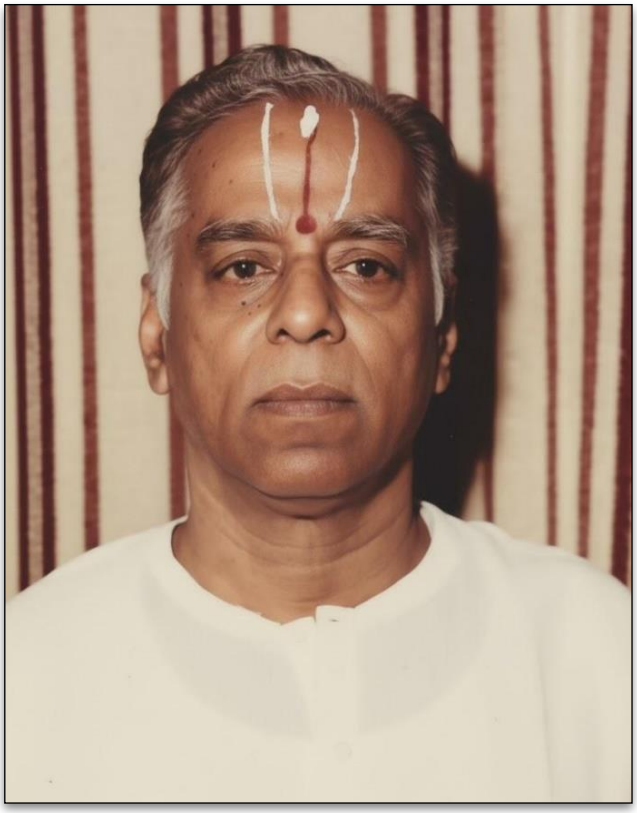
"*Dedicated to my dear Father in the year of his Birth Centenary*"



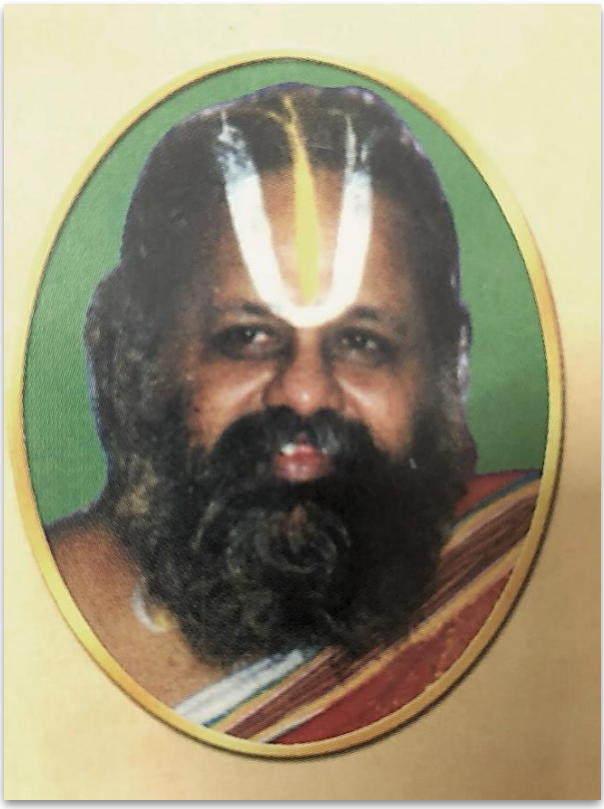
Madabushi Krishnaswami ("MK")

1926 – 2013 | Tirupati

श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंहपरब्रह्मणे नमः

(Obeisance to the Supreme Lord Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha)

"*In Humble Obeisance to my Ācāryā*"



"Upanyāsa-Cakravartī", "Ubhaya-Vedānta"

"Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār

1944 – 2001

Foreword

Śrīmatē Śrīvaṇ Śaṭakōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikāya Namaḥ

Forewords are usually written by scholars or eminent persons who can lend weight to a book. I claim neither distinction. My sole purpose here is to associate myself, even in a small way, with this holy endeavour of chronicling the life and times of **Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār *Svāmī*,** a ***Mahān*** whose memory alone is a blessing.

There are lives that cannot be measured in dates, titles, or public recognition. **Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār *Svāmī*** belonged to that rare category of souls whose very presence was a source of strength and spiritual awakening. Long after they leave this world, their voice continues to reverberate in memory, and their example continues to illumine lives.

For those who encountered him, he was not merely a ***Vedic*** scholar or religious orator. He was an experience in himself. When he spoke, scripture came alive. Watching him perform a ***Yajña*** transported you into another age. Even a brief meeting exposed you to a rare combination of intellectual brilliance, spiritual intensity, childlike humility, and profound compassion.

This book by Sri M.K. Sudarshan is, as he himself declares, an offering of gratitude, an attempt to preserve the memory of a life that touched thousands of hearts. At a time when tradition increasingly struggles against forgetfulness and distraction, books like this are sacred acts of remembrance.

Devotees would gather for ***Svāmī*'s** discourses not merely to listen, but to receive spiritual nourishment. Entire families rearranged their schedules to attend. Elders sat with tears in their eyes. Young students found themselves drawn unexpectedly towards tradition. Even those unfamiliar with philosophy would leave transformed not by argument, but by the force of his devotion.

What made this possible was not merely scholarship, though his scholarship was formidable indeed. It was authenticity.

In an age when religion is often reduced to intellectual exhibition or emotional gimmickry, **Mukkūr *Svāmī*** represented something increasingly rare: the complete integration of knowledge and devotion. The ***Vēdas*** were not academic material to be analysed from a distance. The **Divya-Prabandham** was not poetry to be aesthetically admired. Everything he spoke emerged from lived conviction — one had the feeling that he believed every syllable with his whole being.

His relationship with Lord **Nṛsiṃha** was the very core of his existence. When he spoke of the Lord's compassion, one sensed genuine tenderness in his own heart. When he narrated the ferocity and grace of **Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃha**, one could almost feel the intensity of his inner

relationship with the deity, as if he were reliving the anguish of **Śrī Nammāḻvār,** who sang in *Thiruvaimozhi (5.5.1)*:

Āṭiyāṭi akam karaintu |

Icaipāṭi pāṭi kaṇṇīr malki |

Eṅkum nāṭi nāṭi naraciṅkā eṉṟu |

Vāṭi vāṭum ivvāḷ nutalē ||

***Svāmī*'s** discourses were equally rooted in formidable learning. He moved effortlessly through ***Vēda*s**, **Upaniṣads**, **Itihāsas**, **Purāṇas**, **Divya-Prabandham**, **Śrī Bhāṣya**, and **Stōtra** literature. Yet he never used scholarship as a means of intimidation. He used it as a guiding lamp. When he described **Daśaratha** grieving for **Rāma**, listeners wept. When he spoke of **Draupadī's** helpless appeal to **Śrī Kṛṣṇa**, audiences sat in stunned silence. He had the rare ability to make the incredibly distant past feel immediate and personal.

Many highly learned people become inaccessible to ordinary audiences. **Mukkūr *Svāmī*** did the opposite. He brought profound truths within reach of common devotees without diluting their depth — a gift that arose from crystal-clear **Pramēya Jñānam** combined with genuine compassion for his listeners.

His contribution through ***Yajñas*** deserves special mention. Across many parts of India, he organised and conducted numerous ***Vedic Yajñas*** with extraordinary dedication. For him, ***Yajña*** was not external formalism. It was an act of cosmic harmony, prayer expressed through sacred sound, disciplined action, and collective participation. People who witnessed these ceremonies speak of them with reverence even decades later. In those moments, one felt that the spiritual heartbeat of ancient **Bhārata** still endured.

His life also embodied the continuity of a sacred civilisational memory. Through him, one encountered not merely an individual teacher, but an entire world of traditional ***Ācāryas*** whose wisdom had been preserved through centuries of discipline and sacrifice. His humility before his own teachers was total and unwavering. His devotion to his ***Ācārya***, **Mukkūr Śrīmad Azhagiyasiṅgar**, the 44th Pontiff of **Śrī Ahobila Mutt**, was legendary. He saw himself not as an innovator seeking personal fame, but as a servant entrusted with transmitting inherited wisdom faithfully. That humility lent extraordinary moral force to his words.

What endeared him to people most deeply, however, was his humanity. Many devotees recall not only his lectures but brief moments of kindness, humour, and accessibility. Whether speaking to eminent scholars or anxious householders burdened by everyday worries, he displayed the same patience and care. People did not feel judged by him. They felt elevated.

In many homes, his voice still fills prayer rooms through old recordings. Elderly devotees who once heard him in person introduce younger generations to him through

cassettes, CDs, books, and memory. His magnum opus ***Kurai Oṉṟum Illai***, running to several volumes, continues to do its work. In this way, his presence endures well beyond his physical absence.

For younger readers especially, **Śrī Sudarshan's** biography offers something rare. Many today encounter Hindu tradition only in fragmented or diluted forms. Through the life of **Mukkūr *Svāmī***, they can glimpse what a fully lived spiritual life looks like — how rigorous learning, devotion, discipline, humility, and service can coexist harmoniously within one human personality.

Civilisations survive not only through monuments and institutions, but through the memory of exemplary lives. When such lives are forgotten, societies lose their moral and spiritual moorings. **Śrī Sudarshan's** book, therefore, serves an essential purpose: it ensures that future generations know that in our own times, there lived a man who dedicated every breath to ***Dharma***, devotion, and service.

It is very true that the Lord chooses people to perform specific tasks that are dear to Him. **Śrī Sudarshan** is fortunate to be the instrument so chosen for this task of authoring the pen portrait of **Mukkūr *Svāmī***. Having known him and his devotion to ***Svāmī*** for many years, I can say with confidence that this book is a labour of love. He has spared no effort to bring out the glories of this great teacher in full measure, true to the ***Śāstraic*** dictum, **Gurum Prakāśayēt Dhīmān Mantraṁ Yatnēna Gōpayēt**. His excellent language adds to the pleasure of reading.

If this foreword has grown longer than expected, it is **Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s** own glory that has made it so.

As readers journey through these pages, they will encounter not merely information but inspiration. They will feel the spiritual force that radiated from **Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār** — and they will put this book down enriched with a deeper reverence for the ***Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya*** and a renewed appreciation for the sacred inheritance handed down through **Āḻvārs** and **Ācāryas**.

May the blessings of **Śrī Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃha** and the grace of the great ***Ācārya*** whose memory sanctifies this volume, guide and protect all those who read it with devotion.

21.5.2026 **K. SADAGOPA IYENGAR**

Chennai **Editor, "Sri Nrisimhapriya"**

How To Read This Book

Readers will find in the pages of this book several Sanskrit and Tamil terms transliterated into English. Care has been taken to render all such terms and expressions in the diacritical script conforming to IAST convention (International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration).

In books written in English that abound in transliterated Sanskrit, Tamil or other vernacular words, it is usual to find included a separate Glossary of Terms at the beginning of the book, explaining the meaning of such terms for the reader's easy reference. However, in this book, since the meaning of all such terms is explained – within parentheses -- alongside the texts/passages themselves, as they appear through its pages, a separate Glossary has been dispensed with, considering that it would be redundant.

Similarly, a separate Bibliography too has not been included since titles and references to original sources have been clearly stated and given as citations appearing alongside the textual passages in the book.

Readers will find in many chapters of this book, the narrations appearing as extended dialogues during interviews that had been held between the author and the principal interlocutor, Śrī M.L. Śrīnīvāsācāryar. To help the reader clearly distinguish between the voices of the two persons conversing, separate, font-types have been used throughout the book.

M.K. SUDARSHAN

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CHAPTER 1

Vignettes in Tribute: *Why this Book?*

संक्षेप-वर्णन (*Saṃkṣepa-Varṇana*) or சொல்லோவியம் (*Sollōviyam*)

This book has been written in the form of *vignettes in tribute* to **Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār** (1944-2001 CE). It is not a structured biography in the conventional sense.

The personal tribute to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s memory, twenty-five years after he departed to the eternal abode of *Śrī Vaikuṇṭham*, I must confess, comes rather late in time. This book of mine ought to have been written and published much earlier. Now, in the year 2026, when I find myself at the cusp of turning 70, I believe it is still better late than never.

In fact, it is in this year, 2026, that it is most timely and apt to publish this book. There are a few main reasons why, and they will be explained at quite some length further below.

[In the rest of this book, ***Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār*** *will be referred to as* **"Mukkūr *Svāmī.*"***]*

Before I recount the reasons, I ought to first explain what a vignette structure for a biography is as I have conceived it.

Saṃkṣepa-Varṇana and Sollōviyam: Defining the Vignette

A *vignette* is a special literary form, a short piece of literature used to add depth or understanding to a story. It is like a snapshot with words. A vignette will usually have one or two short scenes, moments, or impressions about a character, an idea, a theme, a setting, or an object. Each chapter in this book will read as a vignette.

In the hallowed traditions of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* religious literature, past and contemporary, the vignette literary form is rarely used by scholars, biographers, and commentators. The reason may be that no direct Sanskrit equivalent exists for vignette. The closest term for the pictorial sense of the word vignette (i.e. "*a shaded-off picture*") is *Saṃkṣepa-Varṇana* (**संक्षेप-वर्णन**). In Tamil, an approximate word for vignette could be

சொல்லோவியம் (*Sollōviyam - a painting in words*) or ***நினைவுச்சித்திரம்*** (*Ninaivuccittiram - snippets of memories*).

My choice of writing a vignette instead of yet another conventional biography of Mukkūr *Svāmī* was thus a very deliberate one.

Over the past thirty years, many distinguished individuals have personally known Mukkūr *Svāmī*. Others have encountered him through his published works or by watching his captivating *Upanyāsa* video recordings available on digital archives and platforms like YouTube. These devoted followers have shared their intimate experiences through blogs and articles. Today, an internet search offers comprehensive access to numerous related blogs, biographies, and archived narratives. Many erudite *Śrīvaiṣṇava* scholars and devout *Vedic* pundits, alongside academics and other prominent figures outside of religion and spirituality, have shared their first-hand impressions and reminiscences about the extraordinary Mukkūr *Svāmī* and his remarkable life's work.

Rather than contributing to the existing biographies of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, I felt compelled to capture my own unique interpretation of his exceptional mind, aura, and spirit. This was evident in the deeply significant yet episodic encounters I had with him. I believed these could be achieved or captured in my own narratives as a tribute to his memory. These narratives will take the form of *Saṃkṣepa-Varṇana* (**संक्षेप-वर्णन**) or *Sollōviyam* (***சொல்லோவியம்***) or what I conceive to be vignettes.

Now, I need to explain the main reasons for writing this book.

A Quintet of Reasons for this Tribute

(1) Public glorification of the spiritual mentor: duty of a student

Svāmī* Vedānta Deśika** (1268–1368 CE), a prominent *Ācāryā* in the rich history of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* creed, wrote his magnum opus, the *Rahasya-Traya-Sāram*. In the opening chapter titled ***Guru-Paramparā-Adhikāram, he urges disciples to repay their *Ācāryās* for the debt they owe. If repayment is impossible, the disciples can at least publicly praise their *Guru* constantly. This act of praise serves as a form of repayment for all the knowledge gained from their spiritual mentor.

The chapter begins by highlighting the impossibility of a student ever fully repaying the debt to their Ācāryā for imparting *Brahma-Vidyā*. *Svāmī* Deśikan

emphasises this point with a relevant quote from the *Śāṇḍilya-smṛti*: "*Even Gods cannot adequately repay the gift of Brāhmic knowledge received from an Ācāryā.*" Therefore, a disciple can only partially repay their Guru by publicly honouring them, much like worshipping Guru as God (*Ācāryādevo Bhava vide.* the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*). *Svāmī* Deśikan warns that failing to do so will risk the gradual erosion or even erasure of all knowledge gained. The exact passage (in *Maṇipravāḷam*) is paraphrased below:

> ***Guru-Paramparā-Adhikāram, Rahasya-Traya-Sāram of Svāmī Vedānta Deśika***
>
> ***இத்தன்மையுள்ள அறிவுள்ளவும் அறிந்து கொண்ட சிஷ்யன், அந்த அறிவைத் தன் ஆச்சார்யன் அருள் செய்ததன் விளைவு என ஏற்றுக்கொண்டு, எங்கும் எப்போதும் அவர் புகழைப் பேசுவது முதல், அவருக்குச் செய்யத்தக்க அனைத்து கடமைகளையும் சாத்தியமான அளவு செய்ய வேண்டும்.***
>
> ***"Ith-Thanmai Yulla Arivullavum Arindhu Konda Sishyan, Andha Arivai Than Aachaaryan Arul Seydhadhan Vilaivu Ena Etruk-Kondu, Engum Eppodhum Avar Pugazhai Pesuvadhu Mudhal, Avarukku Seyyathakka Anaithu Kadamaigalaiyum Saathiyamaana Alavu Seyya Vendum."***
>
> *"A disciple who has gained knowledge of this nature must accept that such knowledge is the result of the grace bestowed by his Guru (Ācāryā). From always speaking of the Guru's glory everywhere and, the disciple should perform all possible duties toward him to the best of his ability."*

Svāmī Deśikan emphasises the student's primary duty to publicly glorify their spiritual mentor, likening it to worshipping the *Guru as God*.

This book aims to rectify the unintentional delay in showering Mukkūr *Svāmī* with the praise I knew I owed him all along. He was my very first religious mentor, a renowned Vedāntic guru whose influence on my spiritual life has been profound and lasting.

THE CONSTANT COMPANION

Between the years 1981 and 1998, even amidst my professional engagements as a Chartered Accountant working in the corporate world both in India and abroad, I still managed to remain connected to Mukkūr *Svāmī* through occasional attendance at his many *Upanyāsas* in Chennai and its nearby locations.

Even while abroad, I kept track through news reports and the internet of the numerous *Mahā-Yajñas* he was seen conducting throughout the length and breadth of the country.

I also read summaries of books and reportage that described his marvellous public discourses, such as, for example, the most popular *Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai*.

Even to distant lands where my jobs took me to live and work—Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, UAE, the Far East, Europe, and America—I always used to take along with me as part of my personal effects, the collection of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s old audio recordings made over the years. I never could tire of listening to them repeatedly to savour their narrative excellence and profundity. They were his enlightening *Upanyāsas* on ***Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma, Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ, Daśama-Skandham, Rukmiṇī-Kalyāṇam*** … and more.

Whenever I visited Chennai from abroad on annual leave, I made sure to stop by Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s residence on Venkatesan Street in T. Nagar. I spent a lot of *quality time* with him, asking him questions and expressing my doubts.

These questions were often naïve, out-of-depth, and inconsequential, but they were about relevant matters of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* religious literature like *Śrī-Sūktis*, philosophy (*Rāmānuja-Darśanam*), *Purāṇa*, *Sampradāya,* and social history. He would take time out of his hectic schedule in the late afternoons to patiently and good-humouredly indulge me. He was incredibly gentle and understanding of my pedestrian mind as I tried to pose lofty questions.

THE INTANGIBLE PULL - FROM REFLECTION TO PUBLICATION

Despite the vast physical distance from Mukkūr *Svāmī*, a profound and intangible spiritual pull seemed to emanate from him throughout my years abroad.

His *influence* and *impact* were so profound that after a few years, I gradually began writing my own thoughts and reflections on *Śrīvaiṣṇava* thought, literature, *Vedānta Ācāryās'* history, and *Sampradāya*. This was due to the strong influence he had on my mind.

My blogs and essays on the global internet gradually gained attention and sparked interest among hundreds of young Indian diaspora readers, particularly *Śrī Vaishnavite* graduates studying in universities across America, the UK, and Australia. However, throughout my writing, I couldn't help but notice the unmistakable influence

and stylistic elements of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, even though I was writing exclusively in English and in my own unique voice.

My recollections of the brief yet frequent meetings I had with Mukkūr *Svāmī* between 1981 and 1998 were documented in the introductory and concluding chapters of my first published book in 2016-17 titled "*The Unusual Essays of an Unknown Śrī Vaiṣṇava*". The dedication page acknowledges my debt to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, my first *Sadācāryā* (spiritual mentor).

Later, between 2020 and 2024, three more books (in English) related to *Śrīvaiṣṇavism* were gratefully dedicated to Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī*. These books are: (i) "*The Nondescript God: Abstraction or Paragon?*", (ii) "*The Epistles of a Prolific Pontiff*" and (iii) "*A Tale of Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of the Ubaya-Vēdāntins*". Incidentally, the first two mentioned books were blessed and formally launched by none other than "*Asmad-Ācāryan*", the 46th *Azhagiyasingar* of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, His Holiness, **Śrīmate Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhakopa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādeśikan**.

THE SNAPPING OF THE CORD

Living and working abroad for many years, I had missed attending all Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Mahā-Yajñas* across the country except for the one he performed in 1988 in Sholinghur. Then one day in Kuwait City, I received the devastating news that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had suddenly ascended to *Paramapadam*. At that moment, all hope of attending his *Mahā-Yajñas* vanished.

That dark moment when the news of his departure broke – I still vividly recall it today – was truly shocking. It felt just as devastating as the news I received less than a year later in Kuwait City. It was the news of my mother's equally sudden death in 2002.

That day, my connection or ties with Mukkūr *Svāmī* snapped and ended, physically and in a mundane sense. I couldn't explain why, but despite lingering memories, my private grief and distress transformed the feeling of disconnect into something real and permanent.

THE RESTORED CONNECTION

It wasn't until September 2025 that a *truly spiritual connection* with him seemed to be restored. This happened when I met for the first time with Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Tirukumārar* **Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsan** (known formally as **Śrī M.L. Śrīnivāsan** *or* **MLS** or **Rameśa**).

More about that "*reconnection*" will be explained later.

[In all the pages hereafter, Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsan will be referred to as **MLS *Svāmī***.]

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(2) Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s 80th Anniversary Year (as per *Vedic* calendar)

The second reason I believe this book's publication is so well-purposed and timely is that 2026 coincides with the ***Śatābhiṣeka*** of Mukkūr *Svāmī*. According to the *Vedic* calendar, this year marks his 82nd birth anniversary. Consequently, if he were still alive today, he would be considered a *Sahasra-Candra-Darśī*.

A Sanskrit *Śloka* of some antiquity further states that *Bhagavān* held six different individuals in this world in very high regard.

Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgāram
(*an abridged anthology of over 10,000 Subhāṣitas* compiled by *Kaśinātha Śarma*)

नित्यान्नदाता तरुणाग्निहोत्री।
वेदान्तविद् सहस्रचन्द्रदर्शी ।
मासोपवासी सः पतिव्रता च।
षड्वन्दनीया मम जीवलोके॥

Nityānādātā Taruṇāgnihotrī |
Vedāntavid Sahasrachandradarśī |
Māsopavāsīsa Pativratā Ca |
Ṣaḍvandyaniyāḥ Mama Jīvaloke ||

"In my world of living beings, these six are to be revered: the one who always gives food in generous charity, the youthful performer of the Agnihōtra (fire-ritual) sacrifice, ***the knower of Vedānta, who has had a thousand moon-sightings (a greatly experienced/splendid person)****, The observer of monthly (Ekādaśī) fasts, and the devoted chaste wife".*

In this context, MLS *Svāmī* further clarified the significance of the year 2026 for me as follows:

> "In the secular calendar, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Śatābhiṣeka* occurred in 2024. However, according to the *Vedic* calendar, the event will only take place towards the end of 2027. During this time, "*1000 Mūṉṟām-Pirais*" (one thousand lunar-crescent sightings on the third night after the new moon) will be completed since his birth.
>
> This year, 2026, is also highly significant as it marks his 82nd *Tirunakṣatra* (birth anniversary). As you know, Mukkūr *Svāmī* embodied the

Vedic way of life, believing everything in life had its roots in the *Vēda* and that the *Vēdas* defined everything. He often told me that in the *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda*, there are ***82*** *Vedic* passages called ***Aśīti-Dvayam***. He encouraged every householder to organise a *Vēda Pārāyaṇa* (group chanting by *Vedavids*) of these 82 passages at least once in their lifetime at home. Therefore, his 82nd *Tirunakṣatra* signifies this very event. Since it falls between the ages of 80 years (secular) and 83 years and 4 months (*Vedic*), we can conclude that 2026 is also a ***Śatābhiṣeka*** **period**."

With this clarification from MLS, I was assured that 2026 was indeed the most auspicious time for me to publish my long-pending book of tribute to Mukkūr *Svāmī* – an exceptional **वेदान्तविद् सहस्रचन्द्रदर्शी** (*Vedāntavid Sahasra-Candra-Darśī*) of our time.

(3) My father's centenary year

There is also an especially important third purpose. The year 2026 also happens to be the Birth Centenary Year of my dear departed father, Madabushi Śrī. M. Krishnaswami, a native son of Tirupati. His mother hailed from the illustrious family of *Tirumalā Kumara Toḻappāccāryas*, the descendants of Śrī Tirumalai Nambi, the maternal uncle, and *Ācāryā* of Śrī Ramanujācāryā.

My father, a lawyer by profession, passed away in 2013 at the age of eighty-seven. He had a distinguished career as a top-ranking corporate executive in well-known organisations such as The Indian Express Group of Newspapers and Lucas-TVS (Chennai). He was an ardent, long-time devotee of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, admiring him greatly for his pursuit of *Vedic* ideals.

It was my father, in fact, who one day in 1981 had insisted upon my going along with him to be introduced to Mukkūr *Svāmī* at Āstika Samājam (Venus Colony, Chennai), where he was delivering a series of *Upanyāsa* on *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*. If it had not been for my father's strong persuasion that day, I never would have earned the *Bhāgyam* (rare spiritual privilege) of acquaintance with Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

It seemed to me, therefore, some sort of divine ordainment that in the year 2026, the 100th birth anniversary of my father, I should get to author and publish this book in tribute to a person … an exceptional **वेदान्तविद् सहस्रचन्द्रदर्शी** (*Vedāntavid Sahasra-Candra-Darśī*) … that both father and son had always greatly revered and admired.

(4) Golden Jubilee Year of the musical rendition of Dayā-Śatakam by my mother, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami

The fourth purpose of my writing this book in the year 2026 is to remember with gratitude Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s kind gesture of patronage shown towards my dear, departed mother, *Saṅgīta-Kalānidhi*, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami, for her musical rendition of *Svāmī* Vedānta Deśika's ***Dayā-Śatakam*** (100 verses in Sanskrit in praise of the Divine Compassion of Lord Veṅkaṭēśvara of Tirumalā).

Fifty years ago, in the year 1976, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami's *Dayā-Śatakam* rendition was recorded and distributed first as a 78-RPM LP (long-playing gramophone record). It was released by the Gramophone Company of India (Columbia EMI branding)

Image 1: *Mukkūr Svāmī appreciating Mani Krishnaswami's rendition of "Dayā-Śatakam" in early 1977 at an event organised under the auspices of AVM Recording Company and Āstika Samājam*

A little later in early 1977, at an event organised under the auspices of AVM Recording Company and Āstika Samājam, the former Finance Minister of the Union Government of India, Śrī C. Subramaniam, and other dignitaries took the stage to speak about *Svāmī* Deśikan's marvellous *Stōtra* work, *Dayā-Śatakam*, and my mother's excellent musical rendering of the same. One of the eminent speakers on stage at the event was Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who spoke eloquently on both, *Svāmī* Deśikan's work and very appreciatively of my mother. Years later, in appreciation of the contribution she made through more such recordings to *Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya*, she was felicitated by the 45th Azhagiyasingar, Śrīmad Nārāyaṇa Yatīndra Mahādeśikan, as *Āsthāna-Vidvān* (Laureate Emeritus) of the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt.

Smt. Mani Krishnaswami's 1976 *Dayā-Śatakam* recording is available today on all digital and recording media. Every *Śrīvaiṣṇava* home and family, both in India and abroad, continues to cherish it so very dearly.

The year 2026 thus is the 50th year or the Golden Jubilee of the *Dayā-Śatakam* recording of Smt. Mani Krishnaswami, which Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī* wholeheartedly endorsed and blessed in 1976-77. So, it is timely and apt indeed to have this book of tribute published now as a way of expressing, in part, my sincere gratitude to Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

(5) Reconnection with Mukkūr *Svāmī*

My fifth and final purpose in writing this book is to recount my ***"re-connection"*** with Mukkūr *Svāmī*. This was disrupted by his sudden departure to *Śrī Vaikuṇṭham* in 2001 and the subsequent death of my mother in 2002. Reflecting on these events, I realise they left a significant emotional void within me, and it took a long time to recover.

Remarkably and almost instantly, after a 24-year hiatus, a reconnection with Mukkūr *Svāmī* was restored late in 2025. This miraculous event also involved some inexplicable divine intervention, though its nature remains a mystery.

The "re-connection," if you could call it that, happened again in a remarkably similar way to the one in 1981 that first led to my meeting Mukkūr *Svāmī*. This time it was thanks to his *Tirukumārar* (son) **Mukkūr Śrī Śrīnivāsan *Svāmī*** (MLS *Svāmī*) at Mukkūr Village in Cheyyar, Tamiḻ Nāḍu.

ABHINAVA MUKKŪR LAKṢMĪNṚSIṂHĀCĀRYĀR - THE LIVING LEGACY

MLS *Svāmī*, a software engineer and IT specialist, had extensive experience as a Network Security expert for clients across India and internationally. Having worked in the corporate world for many years, he also doubled up on roles to assist his revered father Mukkūr *Svāmī* with *Mahā-Yajñas*. Reflecting on his career, MLS *Svāmī* acknowledges his good fortune in achieving success in balancing both *Laukika* and *Vedic* life.

Not only did MLS *Svāmī* excel in the IT professional field, but today, after having undergone many years of rigorous tutelage under an outstanding *Vēdavid*, an eminent *Salakṣaṇa-Ghanapāṭhī* from Vijayawada, one **Śrī Cellapalli Subrahmaṇya**

Ghanapāṭhī, has earned the distinction of learning *Vēda-Ghanapāṭha* in the traditional way.

Furthermore, MLS *Svāmī*, after having worked at assisting his father in the past in performing several scores of *Mahā-Yajñas* all over the country, now at the present time, is himself a totally dedicated and accomplished *Yajña-Krama-Adhikārī,* being well-versed in the ***Pāñcarātra-Āgama*** and other related *Śāstras* (such as *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, etc.) pertaining to conducting *Yajñas*.

In the couple of decades after the 2001 departure of his father, MLS burnt his bridges with all *Laukika* (secular professional) commitments and preoccupations. Today he has the distinction of having undertaken instead a sworn *Saṅkalpa* (solemn and austere *Vedic* resolve) to complete his illustrious father's task of conducting *Aṣṭottara-Sahasra (1008) Śrī-Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Yajña*. As of date, more than 600 of such *Yajñas* in various locations in the country have already been conducted by MLS *Svāmī*. He fervently prays and hopes that the Lord of Maṭṭapalli and the spirit of his father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, will together guide and lead him on the path to eventual success in completing the 1008th *Mahā-Yajña* at Śrī Ahōbila *Kṣetra*, sooner rather than later in his lifetime. He told me he eagerly looks forward to that day.

MLS *Svāmī* is indeed what many of his devotees and admirers say he truly is: a veritable "***Abhinava Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār***" … and this titular encomium, he told me, was conferred upon him by none other than his beloved mother, Smt. Vasumathy.

Abhinava in Sanskrit means *new* or *innovative*. In *Śrīvaiṣṇava* and broader Indian philosophical traditions, it prefixes the epithet to denote a modern reviver or fresh exponent of ancient teachings. Such a title as *Abhinava* signifies profound mastery and renewal of *Sampradāya* knowledge, reflecting the successor-person's focus on staying true and faithful to what the original exponent or the master taught, practised, and embraced.

It would be no exaggeration, thus, on the part of his devotees, if they say today that they see in MLS *Svāmī* an *Abhinava Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār* who continues the hallowed *Mahā-Yajña* tradition perfectly. The small but highly committed band of his devotees calls itself ***Mahā-Yajña-Kuṭumbam*** (*Yajña* Family), and the name was coined by Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself. It is this family that today endorses and supports MLS *Svāmī*'s commitment to the efficient administration and development of the great *Yajña Vatika* behind Śrī **Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃhā** temple at Maṭṭapalli village (Telangana),

that Mukkūr *Svāmī* instituted as an important pilgrimage destination for thousands of people. Today, the Maṭṭapalli *Yajña Vatika* houses a magnificent *Yajñaśālā* (grand sacrificial altars and ritual centres) within its complex, a commodious *Cattiram* (pilgrim accommodation), and a *Gośālā* (large cow-pen).

Śrī-Sūkta-Nilayam - A Unique Sanctuary in Mukkūr

MLS *Svāmī* is also single-mindedly focused today on the upcoming consecration of Aṣṭabhuja Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha, Śrī Lakṣmī-Hayagrīva and Āḻvār-Sannidhis at a beautiful kōvil aptly titled as "*Śrī Suktha Nilayam*". The main *kōvil* for the triad of Lakṣmī deities known as "**Trayī-Lakṣmī-Pirāṭṭi**." has already been consecrated in the year 2023. The construction is still a work-in-progress in the small native village of Mukkūr (Cheyyar). It is indeed a unique temple with *Upālayams*.

(Clockwise) Image 2: *Temple Environs,* ***Image 3:*** *Work-in-Progress,* ***Image 4:*** *Work-in-Progress, and* ***Image 5:*** *Trayi-Lakṣmī Sannidhi*

A Monument to the Masters - The *Avatāra-Sthalam* and *Vedic* University

His devotees and supporters today are also witness to MLS *Svāmī*'s plans for constructing a compact but grand memorial complex (*Avatāra-Sthalam*) to monumentalise the glory of the three great sons who hailed from Mukkūr Village, viz.,

Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar (*42nd pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt), Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar* (*44th pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt),* and *Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār*.

(Left to Right) Image 6 & Image 7: *"Building Complex of Vedic Research Institute and Library in memoriam of 42nd and 44th Azhagiyasingars of Ahōbila Mutt and Mukkūr Svāmī" - Under Construction*

There are also plans to establish a modern, well-equipped *Vedic* University in the adjacent area at Mukkūr Village with top-class digital library facilities, academic departments and chairs well-staffed with *Vedic* pandits of different disciplines, *Āgama* experts and *Vidvāns*, and research-faculty members and students.

MLS *Svāmī*'s devotees and admirers see him thus as a contemporary luminary upholding the legacy of his illustrious father. Hence, the epithet coined and given to him: "*Abhinava Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār*"!

THE DIGITAL DARŚANAM - SEEING THE FATHER IN THE SON

Now, let me relate the story of my *reconnection* with Mukkūr *Svāmī*…

An ardent devotee of both, Mukkūr *Svāmī* and MLS *Svāmī*, one Śrī Vangal Sudarsan, living in Bengaluru, is a good friend of mine. Sometime in the year 2023, at his house, MLS *Svāmī* had performed a *Dayā-Śatakam Pārāyaṇa* (group recital) after conducting a *Śrī Mantra-Rāja Mahā-Yajña* ritual. After the conclusion of the *Yajña* and *Pūjā* recital, a casual conversation between him and MLS *Svāmī* ensued.

Quite unexpectedly then, in the presence of my daughter-in-law at the event, MLS *Svāmī* and Śrī Sudarsan happened to mention the *Dayā-Śatakam's* musical rendition by my mother (late) *Saṅgīta-Kalānidhi*, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami. My daughter-in-law at once went up to MLS *Svāmī* and introduced herself as the "grand-daughter-in-law" of Smt. Mani Krishnaswami. MLS expressed delight at meeting her. Thereupon, my daughter-in-law immediately "*connected*" me on a mobile device from home in Chennai with MLS *Svāmī* in Bengaluru. On my device screen, he came in full view via a FaceTime video call.

Image 8: *Śrī M.L Śrīnivāsan (MLS Svāmī) - Tirukumārar of Mukkūr Svāmī*

For a few seconds, I gasped in disbelief! It seemed then that suddenly, right out of the blue, as it were, I was face-to-face again with Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself after so many years! It was a moment of eerie or surreal deja-vu! So remarkable indeed was the resemblance of MLS *Svāmī* with his father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*! The sudden FaceTime video *connection* was crystal-clear.

MLS *Svāmī* and I were then able to have a pleasant 5-minute video call. I told him briefly about my past and long-cherished *connection* with his father. He, in turn, after listening to me, briefed me quickly about his own various activities, programmes, and initiatives at Maṭṭapalli *Kṣetra* and Mukkūr Village temple and the planned *Vedic* institute complex.

At the end of the brief "connection" occurring so dramatically, MLS *Svāmī* extended a warm invitation to me to visit his *Yajña-Kuṭumba-Kuṭīr* at Mukkūr Village so that I could perhaps again revive many more of my memories of the times spent long ago with Mukkūr *Svāmī*. With immense pleasure, I promised him I would do so very soon.

On that incredibly happy note, we ended the FaceTime video call.

FROM VIRTUAL TO REAL-TIME - A PILGRIMAGE TO MUKKŪR

To go from "*online virtual*" to "*real-time in-person*" connection mode with MLS *Svāmī*, however, took much longer than a year!

It was not until 25th September 2025, and thanks again to Śrī Vangal Sudarsan, that my visit to Mukkūr village got arranged. It turned out to be a half-day outing for me as I drove from Chennai to Mukkūr village to attend the *Śrī Śrī Suktha Śrī Mantrarāja Mahā-Yajña* **ஸ்ரீ ஸ்ரீசூக்த ஸ்ரீ மந்த்ரராஜ மஹா யஜ்ஞம்** that MLS *Svāmī* was performing.

When I arrived there, MLS *Svāmī* was already engaged in performing the *Hōma-Japa* with total devotion and adherence to *Vedic* ritual. I sat there at the *Yajñaśālā* in front of the beautifully adorned Sannidhi of the *Śrī Trayī-Lakṣmī* sanctum. The ambience and the sonorous sound of the four *Vedavids* and *Ṛtviks* chanting mantras, echoing off the roof of the *Yajña Maṇṭapa*, created a vibrant, electric atmosphere all around, both inside and outside the quiet, sylvan environs of the temple.

After a couple of hours, the ritual ceremonies concluded with *Śāttumuṟai*. I received *Tīrtha* and *Śaṭhāri* and the blessings of *Prasāda* of **Śrī Yajñamūrti-Nṛsiṃhā** and the *Mūlavar*, *Trayī-Lakṣmī-Pirāṭṭi*. After paying obeisance to the memory of my spiritual mentor "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār, I took leave without further ado… but not before I had also presented to MLS *Svāmī* copies of my published books… including "*The Tale of Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of the "Ubaya-Vēdāntins*".

THE SEVEN STARS OF 2026 - A SACRED MANDATE

For several weeks after my September'25 visit to Mukkūr village, my mind, for some strange reason, kept dwelling upon a few old, fleeting memories of Mukkūr *Svāmī*. I felt that my meeting with his son at Mukkūr seemed to have "*re-wired and reactivated*" an old, disrupted *connection*.

It was precisely then that the paraphrased passage from *Svāmī* Deśikan's *Rahasya-Traya-Sāram* suddenly began ringing within my mind. It kept forcefully repeating itself:

Guru-Paramparā-Adhikāram, Rahasya-Traya-Sāram of Svāmī Vedānta Deśika

இத்தன்மையுள்ள அறிவுள்ளவும் அறிந்து கொண்ட சிஷ்யன், அந்த அறிவைத் தன் ஆச்சார்யன் அருள் செய்ததன் விளைவு என ஏற்றுக்கொண்டு, எங்கும் எப்போதும் அவர் புகழைப் பேசுவது முதல், அவருக்குச் செய்யத்தக்க அனைத்து கடமைகளையும் சாத்தியமான அளவு செய்ய வேண்டும்.

"Ith-Thanmai Yulla Arivullavum Arindhu Konda Sishyan, Andha Arivai Than Aachaaryan Arul Seydhadhan Vilaivu Ena Etruk-Kondu, Engum Eppodhum Avar Pugazhai Pesuvadhu Mudhal, Avarukku Seyyathakka Anaithu Kadamaigalaiyum Saathiyamaana Alavu Seyya Vendum."

"A disciple who has gained knowledge of this nature must accept that such knowledge is the result of the grace bestowed by his Guru (Ācāryā). From always speaking of the Guru's glory everywhere and, the disciple should perform all possible duties toward him to the best of his ability."

It was on that very same day–that I made up my mind to set about writing a tribute in the form of a book to Mukkūr *Svāmī* in 2026 itself. This year had great relevance for seven principal reasons, each commemorating significant milestones in life:

1. 25 years since Mukkūr *Svāmī* attained *Śrī Vaikuṇṭham*.
2. Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Śatābhiṣeka*.
3. The *Śatamāna-Saṃvatsara* --- the 100th birth anniversary --- of one of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s beloved *Ācāryas*: the 45th Pontiff of Ahōbila Mutt, *Śrīmad Villivālam Azhagiyasingar*.
4. *The Golden Jubilee year* of my mother, Smt. Mani Krishnaswami's recording of the *Dayā-Śatakam*.
5. The *Birth Centenary Year* of my father, *Madabushi Śrī* Krishnaswami.
6. MLS *Svāmī*'s *Ṣaṣṭi-Abda-Pūrti* (i.e., 60th birth anniversary).
7. And lastly, the year 2026 being my own 70th birth anniversary.

THE MUKKŪR VILLAGE INTERVIEWS

Śrī Sudarshan Avarkaḷ,

Thank you for the books, scholarly articles, and posts that you are sharing with the community.

With *Ādiyeṉ-Prathamācārya-Namasvāmi-Anugraha*, I have been working on two approaches to highlight the importance of *Ubhaya-Vedānta-Deśika-Sampradāya*.

One is *Bhagavadviṣayam vis-à-vis Bhagavad-Gītā* to bridge the Tamil-Sanskrit connection. During the COVID period, I had delivered daily lectures on the above subject to *Mahā Yajña Kuṭumba* members. Attaching the script of the first *Pāsuram* of "*Tiruvaimozhi*" for your reference.

The second approach is to create a custom-built "LLM model" for the *Deśika Sampradāya*. ("Large Language Model" -- To this I keep pinging the existing generic LLMs to understand their training, source materials, and biases.

Recently I asked a few innocent layperson questions (and answers for some of them appeared deliberately twisted) to the *Gemini-Pro* deep-thinking model. Attaching the conversation thread which is self-explanatory). We need to publish lots of materials in multiple languages to:

1. Reduce the effect of Western scholars' nonsensical interpretation of our *Vedas*, *Itihāsas*, and *Purāṇas* filtering into the LLMs

2. Improving the visibility and superiority of *Deśika Sampradāya* to the present and future generations in the language and methods they would understand.

Please do come to Mukkūr during this *Svāti* and plan to stay overnight. We can discuss and collaborate more on these topics.

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsan. *Śrī Mattapallinātham Praṇato'smi Nityaṁ Namaḥ* 🙏

On **December 3, 2025**, I received from MLS *Svāmī* a message on my WhatsApp:

I was truly happy to get MLS *Svāmī*'s message. My response to him was to seek "*collaboration*" with him for my own project that held topmost priority for me.

So, on **December 7, 2025**, I replied to him:

Dear *Svāmīn*, I am very keen to write a biography of my '*Manasika Sadhācārya*' *Vaikuntavasi* U.Ve. "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār. It will be published in English first and then, hopefully, in Tamil translation too. I have drawn up a tentative Questionnaire which will elicit Answers/Responses from you, other family members, disciples, and admirers of Mukkūr *Svāmī*. The biography will be based on all the material gathered through the Questionnaire.
I am now sharing it with you with the earnest hope that you will help and provide valuable support to me to fulfil my aim in completing the project as early as possible. I look forward to your reply and guidance.

Dāso'haṁ, Sudarshan

Matters gathered momentum swiftly as the flurry of correspondence below between me and MLS *Svāmī* helped finally to firm up my travel plans to Mukkūr village again. It effectively signalled the commencement of my 2026 book project in collaboration with him.

Me: *Svāmī*n, please can you let me know a day convenient to you for discussions on my project for writing Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s biography? I can plan to visit Mukkūr accordingly.

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsan: At present I'm travelling for a few days. Will be at Mukkūr on this Saturday and Sunday **(December 27th and 28th)**. If possible, you can plan for this weekend.

Me: I'm planning to leave for Mukkūr village on Saturday, 27th morning, to reach there by 9 am. And stay there through Sunday, 28th, to return to Chennai. Hopefully, we can cover as much ground as possible.

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsan: Svāgatam!

❀ सकलं भद्रमश्नुते ❀

On **December 27th and 28th, 2025**, I stayed at what MLS *Svāmī* called his *Kuṭisai* at Mukkūr village and conducted lengthy interviews with him, extending well over 10–12 hours continuously. There were brief time-outs we took for *Anuṣṭhāna*, meals, and on the last day, to attend the *Śāttumuṟai Sevai* inside the temple sanctum. A few words on the so-called *Kuṭisai* of MLS *Svāmī*.

THE 'KUṬISAI' - A SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

In fact, it was a most comfortable and cosy guesthouse meant for the hospitality of his guests and visitors to the temple.

(Left to Right) Image 9 & Image 10: *Śrī-Sūkta-Nilayam guest house (referred to as Kuṭisai) guesthouse and proposed Vedic faculty departments*

It was a construction that had been creatively conceived, designed, and executed. MLS *Svāmī* described it to me as his very own brainchild (he being very interested in Civil Engineering too!) to which he had devoted much time and effort in erecting and commissioning.

The guesthouse was not made of brick and mortar but of special clay that was thermal and rainwater resistant, brought all the way from a special source in Kerala. The roof rafters too, were all made of special Mangalore mud, and so was the flooring. The water and power connections were well laid out.

THE SYLVAN SURROUNDINGS OF MUKKŪR

Facing east, the *Kuṭisai* overlooked beautiful natural scenery: a huge acreage of emerald-green paddy fields as far as the eye could see, all belonging to the neighbouring farmer-villagers. Adjacent to the quarters, there was also a *Gośālā* where MLS *Svāmī* told me they were rearing about 40 cattle heads. Milk production was copious, the water wells never went dry, and the sylvan surroundings were all indeed a sea of tranquillity.

Image 11: *Sylvan surroundings of Śrī Suktha Nilayam*

THE LIVING ARCHIVE - WEAVING THE STORY OF A SCHOLAR-EXTRAORDINAIRE

The *questionnaire* I had prepared for MLS *Svāmī* to answer was lengthy. It covered a wide range of "connections" with Mukkūr *Svāmī* that I had had in the past. It was my wish to revisit them again.

MLS *Svāmī* patiently and thoughtfully answered each question. His information was factual, authentic, and comprehensive, interwoven with personal reminiscences, anecdotes, and real-life experiences. The audio recordings of the interview were so engaging that I felt as though I was watching an absorbing documentary.

A little after midday on December 28th, we wound up our marathon one-on-one interview after covering plenty of ground about Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life and times.

I left Mukkūr village very pleased with my possession of rich, authentic source material all in the form of "**Q&A** (*Questions & Answers*)". I knew I could reproduce it all in narratives that would weave the riveting story of the life and times of a *scholar-extraordinaire* and a true *exemplar* of *Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya* in contemporary times. It was a story I set out to tell 25 long years after Mukkūr *Svāmī* had attained *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*.

CHAPTER 2

Ācāryā-Vandanam and *Taniyāṉ*

Great institutions of the world in any country – whether they are organisations, large establishments, fora, associations, etc. – all proclaim their proud tradition and heritage in a short sentence or pithy phrase known as a *motto*.

A *motto* is chosen to encapsulate the beliefs or ideals that always guide and inspire the institution.

The national *motto* of India, for example, is *Satyameva Jayate!* ("*Truth ever triumphs"*). It appears on every important national document or publication and under every state emblem. A solemn motto gives a country its sense of identity more powerfully than even a national flag does. Colours that go into a flag might be the same or nearly alike the colours of flags of a few other countries of the world… Green, blue, and orange, for instance, appear on flags of several countries, often causing a bit of confusion to a viewer. But no such confusion can ever be caused in minds by a unique national motto such as *Satyameva Jayate*. It immediately tells a viewer that it belongs to one and only one country: India. Similarly, *E pluribus unum* ('*out of many, one*') is the distinctive motto of the USA and of none other.

In the whole of *Bhāratavarṣa*, now called India, there is a unique institution called G*uru-Śiṣya-Sambandha*. It represents an incorporeal and informal yet intimate and infrangible spiritual "*connection*" that exists between a spiritual guru and disciples. This "*connection*" or bonding, this *Sambandha,* is indeed a timeless *Vedic* institution. It was through this institution that, right from the dawn of time, the ancient *Ṛṣis* (sages) imparted *Vedic* Jñāna to *Śiṣyas*. The sacred knowledge—*Mantra*, *Vēda-Śākhās*, *Vedāṅgas*, *Vedopāṅgas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Smṛti*, *Upavedas*, *Itihāsa*, *Purāṇa*—all got transmitted through unbroken centuries in time and through generations of *Śiṣya-Paramparā* or lineages of *Ācāryas*, and finally down to present times.

The Ācāryan Taniyāṉ: Monumentalising the Guru-Śiṣya Bond

The *Ācāryan Taniyāṉ* is thus a *Vedic* motto whose main purpose is to monumentalise the ageless institution of *Guru-Śiṣya-Sambandha* in our vast country. The *motto* takes the form of a tribute or *Vandanam* composed in verse – i.e. a couplet or four to six lines in poetic metre, in either Sanskrit or Tamil or another native vernacular.

In *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition, a *Taniyāṉ* is a dedicatory verse or laudatory *Śloka*. Typically composed by a disciple to praise the *Ācāryā* or by any devout author of a scripture-based text or G*rantha*, it can be found either on the first page of the work or else heard recited right before the chanting of a *Stōtra* work commences.

For example, even today all *Śrīvaiṣṇavite* scriptural literature in the *Deśika Sampradāya* will always be prefaced by the *Taniyāṉ* addressed to Vedānta Deśika's memory -- a fitting one indeed to invoke here:

Śrī Vedānta Deśika

श्रीमन्वेङ्कटनाथार्यः कवितार्किककेसरी।
वेदान्ताचार्यवर्यो मे सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि॥

Śrimān Veñkaṭa-Nāthārya Kavitārkika Keśarī
Vedāntācārya-Varyome Sannidhattāṁ Sadā Hṛdī:

"May the noble Śrīmān Veṅkaṭanātha who is leonine (most regal) amongst poets and logicians, and the greatest preceptor to teach Vedānta, eternally reside in the core of our hearts."

Defining the Taniyāṉ

Taniyāṉ, in Tamil, means "*that which stands alone*". So, a *Taniyāṉ* serves as a *standalone eulogy* highlighting the guru's divine qualities, the lineage of preceptors

(*Ācārya-Vaṃśa-Paramparā* or institution) to which he belongs, his contributions to *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy, and his role in guiding devotees towards *Mokṣa* or salvation. The moment one comes across a *Taniyāṉ* in a G*rantha*, or else being recited right before the rendering of a *Stōtra*, one can at once easily infer from it as to which *Vedic Sampradāya* or *Ācārya lineage*, out of the many *Vedic* sub-traditions, the work unmistakably belongs.

A *Taniyāṉ* also invokes the *Ācāryās'* blessings, affirming their status as an *Upāya* (means to salvation) akin to *Bhakti* or *Prapattiḥ* (surrendering one's soul).

Theologically, a *Taniyāṉ*, furthermore, embodies *Sampradāya* etiquette by establishing the *Ācāryā's Māhātmya* (greatness) and *Sambandha* (***connection***) between *Upāya* (means or path for the individual soul (the disciples)) and *Upēya* (God). Reciting it fosters guru *Bhakti*, ensures the text's proper reception through the *Ācāryā's Anugraha* (grace), and treats the verse itself as a mantra-like prayer for inner spiritual guidance.

Honouring the Guru-Śiṣya-Sambandha: Rationale

For lay *Śrīvaiṣṇava* writers like me, omitting to invoke *Ācārya Vandanam Taniyāṉs* right at the very beginning on the first page of this book would not really constitute any grave or unpardonable lapse, since that traditional convention primarily applies to *Stōtras* or *Granthas* authored by truly revered *Ācāryās* and *Vedic* pundits in orthodox *Paramparā* contexts.

For works such as this book, a *Taniyāṉ* reflects optional reverence more than scriptural mandate. This book's main intention is to pay humble tribute to the memory of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, whom I regard as my spiritual mentor. Therefore, it certainly behoves me to duly invoke his *Taniyāṉ* to show reverence and gratitude to the great *Vedic* institution called *Guru-Śiṣya-Sambandha*.

Who is a Sadācāryā?

What are his essential qualities? The answer to the question can be found in the *Taniyāṉ* themselves addressed to the *Ācāryā*. Here below are the *Taniyāṉs* to Mukkūr *Svāmī*. There are four composed in Sanskrit and two in Tamil.

Many devout *Śrīvaiṣṇavas* make sure to memorise *Ācārya Taniyāṉs*. They will recite them very fluently whenever the occasion arises. Not many, however, would have taken the trouble to know the meaning of the verses, in either Sanskrit or Tamil.

Regarding Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Taniyāṉs*, I did not want to be found ignorant. So, I requested MLS *Svāmī* himself to please explain the *Taniyāṉs* to me. He obliged readily and did so with a clarity and style redolent of his father's. Below is how he explained them to me.

MLS Svāmī:

Firstly, the Sanskrit *Taniyāṉs*.

(I) The Yajñeśa *Taniyāṉ*

श्री यज्ञेश कृपापात्रं वात्सल्यादि गुणोद्भवम् ।
वाधूल वंश तिलकं मुक्कूर श्री नृहरिं भजे ||

Śrī Yajñēśa Kṛpāpātraṁ Vātsalyādi Guṇōdbhavam |
Vādhūla Vaṁśa Tilakaṁ Mukkūra Śrī Nṛhariṁ Bhajē ||

"I offer my salutations to Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari, the recipient of the grace of Lord Yajñeśa, the repository of virtues beginning with affection (Vātsalya), the shining jewel of the Vādhūla lineage."

In the lineage of our great preceptors, a *Taniyāṉ* is more than just a poetic tribute; it serves as a capsule containing the very spiritual essence of the *Ācāryā*. When, along with a dear friend (Śrī Vijayaraghavan Bashyam, an ardent devotee of Mukkūr *Svāmī*), I set out to compose this verse, my intention was to combine technical metrical precision with the deep *Purāṇic* insights that defined his life.

1. **The Secret of *Yajñeśa*:**

The opening phrase, *Śrī Yajñeśa Krupāpāthram*, was a deliberate choice to show the direct link Mukkūr *Svāmī* had with the *Pṛśnigarbha-Avatāra* of Śrīman Narayana. During the *Vedic* aeon of the distant past known as *Svāyambhuva-Manvantara*, the matriarch Pṛśni and her husband, Sage Sutapas, performed an intense penance. That Purāṇic tale must be recounted here:

Boons Across Aeons: How Devotion Bound Viṣṇu to Earth

In the *Varāha-Kalpa*, Sutapas—a *Prajāpati* or sage—and his wife Pṛśni prayed fervently to Brahmā for a son. Brahmā granted them a Viṣṇu idol for worship, which they adored with intense devotion. Viṣṇu was pleased and appeared before them and offered the couple boons. In their zeal, they wished for him to be born as their son. This led to Viṣṇu incarnating as their child over three aeons (*Yuga*).

Bhāgavata-Purāṇa explicitly mentions Sutapas and Pṛśni in *Skanda* 10, Chapter 3, Verse 32, during Kṛṣṇa's address to Dēvakī in his prison cell just after birth. Kṛṣṇa reveals their prior identities:

श्रीभगवानुवाच
त्वमेव पूर्वसर्गेऽभूः पृष्णिः स्वायम्भुवे सति ।
तदायं सुतपा नाम प्रजापतिरकल्मषः ॥ ३२ ॥

Śrī Bhagavānuvāca
Tvameva Pūrvasarge'bhūḥ Pṛśniḥ Svāyambhuve Sati |
Tadāyaṁ Sutapā Nāma Prajāpatirakalmaṣaḥ || 32 ||

"In the previous creation (Pūrva-Sarge), during Svāyambhuva Manvantara, you were Pṛśni when Svāyambhuva Manu existed, and this one (Vāsudēva) was the spotless Prajāpati named Sutapa"

This story is meant to underscore themes of *Bhakti* (devotion) and Viṣṇu's promise of multiple *Janmas* (re-births) to fulfil devotees' wishes.

Pṛśni and Sutapas, when they performed their 12,000-year-long *Tapas* or penance to attain a vision of Viṣṇu, used a very special and rare name by which they addressed him: they called him ***Yajñeśa*** (*The Lord of Yajña*).

The Purāṇa tells us that Lord Narayana was so enchanted with this unusual and unique honorific that it moved him to grant the couple their wish, as he had promised them, that in each of the *Vedic* epochs or *Yugas*, he would be born as an avatāra, three times as their offspring:

As ***Pṛśnigarbha*** (to *Pṛśni* and *Sutapas*)

As ***Vāmana*** (to *Aditi* and *Kaśyapa Prajāpati*)

As ***Kṛṣṇa*** (to *Dēvakī* and *Vasudēva*)

Invoking this specific name in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Taniyāṉ* suggests a profound parallel: just as Pṛśni pleased the Lord by calling Him *Yajñeśa*, he too became the true receptacle of His grace (*Krupāpāthram*) because he, too, worshipped the *Lord* ***Yajñeśa*** through the fires of *Yajñas* conducted on a massive scale.

2. The Definition of Compassion: *Vatse Dhenuriva Vātsalyam*:

The second line, *Vāthsalyādi Gunōthbhavam*, describes the *Ācāryā* as the origin of virtues, starting with *Vatsalya*. This is not merely "*affection,"* but a reference to the specific theological concept of *Vatse Dhenuriva Vātsalyam*—the unique love a cow bears for its calf.

The Paradox of Purity: A cow is naturally fastidious about what it eats; it will abjure grazing on contaminated pastures and other impure food, maintaining a strict standard of personal purity. However, the moment its own calf approaches—even if that calf has just rolled about in mud, slush, or dust—the cow does not reject it. Instead, the cow uses its tongue to lick the filth off the calf's body. It willingly ingests the "*impurity"* of the calf to make the calf clean. That is the true conception of *Vatsalya*!

The Ācāryā as the Cow: This powerful metaphor perfectly defines Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī.* Though he was a scholar of the highest order and a rigorous practitioner of orthodox rituals—in other words, possessed the *purity of the cow*—his compassion for his devotees knew no restrictions. When devotees approached him, laden with the "*mud, slush, and dust"* of the worldly sins (*Karma*), he never rejected them for being impure. Instead, with the *tongue* of his wisdom and grace, he cleansed them. He absorbed their burdens to purify them, treating every devotee with the same unconditional instinct that a mother cow has for her calf. Thus, he is rightly called the *Gunōthbhavam*—the very origin of such compassion.

3. The Jewel in the Crown of the Lineage - *Vādhūla Vaṁśa Tilakaṁ:*

The third line of the *Taniyāṉ* addresses his lineage: *Vādhūla Vaṁśa Tilakaṁ*. While *Vādhūla Vaṁśa* refers to his specific *Gōtra* (lineage descending from the great sage Vādhūla), the word *Tilakaṁ* holds out the weight of the metaphor. By calling him the *Tilaka* of his clan, the verse implies that while the *Vādhūla* lineage is historically illustrious, it finds its crowning glory and most visible mark of auspiciousness in Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī.* He is the ornament that makes the entire lineage shine.

4. The Final Salutation - *Mukkūr Śrī Nṛharim Bhajaē*:

The final line, *Mukkūr Śrī Nṛharim Bhajaē,* is the culmination of the verse—the act of surrender.

The significance of *Nṛhari*: the Sanskrit name *Nṛhari* (*Nṛ* = Man, *Hari* = Lion/God) instead of the common *Nṛsiṃha.* It serves a dual purpose as both name and identity. As a *name,* it refers to his given name, *Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār*. As *identity*, it establishes a non-difference between the *Ācāryā* and the Deity that he worshipped. For us devotees, the fierce yet compassionate Lord Nṛsiṃha (*Nṛhari*) is not found in distant *Vaikuṇṭha* but is visibly present right here in the form of this *Ācāryā* from Mukkūr.

The meaning of *Bhajaē*: Finally, the verb *Bhajaē* is significant. It does not merely mean "*I bow"* or "*I praise."* It stems from the root *Bhaj*, which implies "*service, adoration, and constant meditation*". This verse isn't

just about outward respect. It is an act of heartfelt devotion that is cultivated through meditation upon Śrī Mukkūr *Nṛhari*.

(2) The Sadāchāra *Taniyāṉ*

सदाचार अनुष्ठान सौशील्यादि गुणोद्भवम् ।
श्रीनृसिंह कृपापात्रं मुक्कुर् श्री नृहरिं भजे ॥

Sadāchāra Anuṣṭhāna Sausīlyādi Guṇōdbhavam |
Śrīnṛsiṃha Kṛpāpātraṃ Mukkūr Śrī Nṛhariṃ Bhajē ||

"I offer my salutations to Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari, the recipient of the grace of Lord Yajñeśa, the repository of virtues beginning with affection (Vātsalya), the shining jewel of the Vādhūla lineage."

This *Taniyāṉ* spotlights the role model for all *Śiṣyas* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* remained all his life. **MLS *Svāmī*** continues:

This verse focuses on the practical and interpersonal greatness of the *Ācāryā* as well as on his orthodox purity and his accessibility (*Sauśīlya*).

1. *Sadāchāra* (*Righteous Conduct*****):**

Sat (Truth/Good/Soul) + *Āchāra* (Conduct).

This refers to conduct that elevates the soul (*Sat*) and adheres strictly to the *Śāstras*. Even as a young boy, Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī* exhibited such fierce adherence to purity and scriptural injunctions that he was conferred the title *Sadāchāra Bālasūrya*.

Sadāchāra Bālasūrya means: Just as the sun dispels darkness, the *Ācāryā*'s *Sadāchāra* dispels the darkness of ignorance and laziness in his disciples. He did not just teach the rules; he lived them from childhood, shining brightly like a young sun.

2. *Anuṣṭhāna* *(Rigorous Adherence to duties enjoined by Śāstra):*

This refers to his punctilious and steadfast execution of duties (*Karma*) ordained by the Vēdas. As per the *Svāmī* Deśika, a true *Ācāryā* must be a *Śrotriyam* (versed in Vēdas) and *Brahmaniṣṭham* (fixated upon God). The *Śāstras* explicitly state that neglecting *Nitya-Karmānuṣṭhānam* (daily rites like *Sandhyāvandanam*) makes a person "*impure*". Mukkūr *Svāmī* was the embodiment of perfect *Anuṣṭhāna*. He never compromised on his ablutions, prayers, or *Yajñas*, regardless of time, place, or health. His life was a testament to *Anuṣṭhāna* being the foundation for spiritual advancement.

3. ***Sauśīlya*** (*Accessibility & Humility*):

Sauśīlya is the quality of a superior person mingling freely with an inferior person without showing any sign of superiority. Lord Śrī Rāma mingling with Guha and calling him his fourth brother is an example. *Sauśīlya* can be best explained through an analogy of milk and water mixing.

- Milk (*Ācāryā*) is pure, white, nutritious, and superior.
- Water (*Devotee*), on the other hand, is colourless, tasteless, and often lacking in substance.

When the union or merger between the two happens, Milk grants the Water its own whiteness and nutritional value. It does not separate itself. Similarly, Mukkūr *Svāmī,* despite being formidably orthodox in stature, as a *Sadāchārya,* he still mingled effortlessly with the simplest of ordinary devotees and lay disciples. He granted them his own "*colour*" (grace) and made them all *valuable*, just as milk enriches water while mingling with it.

4. ***Śrīnṛsiṃha Kṛpāpātraṃ*** (*Vessel brimming with Nṛsiṃha's Grace*):

This expression reveals Mukkūr *Svāmī* as one who had fully received the compassion of *Lord Nṛsiṃha,* whom he worshipped mainly in two forms all his life:

- ***Śrī Yajñamūrti*****:** the small silver idol of Śrī Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha, the Lord who presided over the Sacrifices (elaborate and grand "*Nṛsiṃha-Yajñas*").
- ***Śrī Maṭṭapalli Yogānanda Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha*** — The Deity residing in the centuries-old cave temple of Śrī Maṭṭapalli which was revitalised and brought to prominence by Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī* through the performance of *Mahā Yajñams. He* thereby re-established its spiritual significance. He further developed this sacred *Kṣetra* by establishing a *Mahā-Yajña Vāṭikā,* making Maṭṭapalli a distinguished centre for *Vedic Yajña* traditions.

By constantly worshipping these forms, the *Ācāryā* became a *Pātraṃ* (sacred crucible) himself. As a crucible, he didn't just hold and carry the Divine Grace for his own sake but was ever ready to distribute it wholeheartedly to all others.

(3) The Madhvapurī *Taniyāṉ*

मध्वपुराधिप प्रियम् उत्तमादि गुणोद्भवम् ।
विश्वात्म प्रियमात्मानं मुक्कुर् श्री नृहरिं भजे ॥

Madhvapurādhipa Priyam Utthamādi Guṇōdbhavam |
Viśvātma Priyamātmānaṃ Mukkūr Śrī Nṛhariṃ Bhajē ||

"I worship Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari, who is dear to the Lord of Madhvapurī (Maṭṭapalli), who is the origin of virtues beginning with the highest selflessness (Uttama), and who is the beloved soul of the Universal Soul (Lord Varāha/Siṃhācalam)."

1. ***Madhvapurādhipa Priyam*** (*Dear to the Lord of Maṭṭapalli*):

As revealed by God Himself, the ancient name for **Maṭṭapalli** is *Madhupurī* or *Madhvapurī* (The City of Honey/Sweetness).

- ***Adhipa:*** The Lord/Ruler of this city is Śrī Maṭṭapalli Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha.
- ***Priyam:*** Mukkūr *Svāmī* is described as very dear to this Lord. Just as a close friend or a beloved child has special access to a King, the *Ācārya* had the divine privilege of direct access to the Lord of Maṭṭapalli.

2. ***Utthamādi Guṇōdbhavam*** (*The Origin of the Uttama Quality*):

Here, the word *Uttama* is not used in the casual sense of "*good,*" but in the strict *Śāstric* definition of character classification of humans.

***The Four Categories of People*:** The *Śāstras* classify human beings into four levels based on how they treat themselves versus others:

- ***Adhamādhama*** (*Lowest of the Low*): One who destroys himself and destroys others.
- ***Adhama*** (*Low*): One who lives well (selfishly) but prevents others from living well.
- ***Madhyama*** (Middle/Average): One who lives well and allows others to live well (*"Live and let live"*).
- ***Utthama*** (*The Highest*): One who is willing to sacrifice himself (undergo suffering or humiliation) to ensure that others shall prosper.

In the Vāmana *Avatāra*, Bhagavān Viṣṇu exemplified the *Uttama* category. The Lord, who owned the entire Cosmos (*Aiśvarya*), reduced Himself to the state of a beggar in disguise. He humbled Himself (degrading His own status) to seek alms from King Mahabali, purely as a ruse by which

he could restore the welfare of the *Devās* and the Universe. This self-sacrifice is the mark of the *Utthama*.

It is significant to note here how the exalted quality of an *Utthama* is hailed in the *Tiruppāvai* (Verse 3) of *Śrī Āṇḍāḷ* in the line: *Ōṅki Ulakaḷanta Uttamaṉ Pērpāṭi –*

Śrī Āṇḍāḷ's Tiruppāvai - Verse 3

ஓங்கி உலகளந்த உத்தமன் பேர்பாடி
நாங்கள்நம் பாவைக்குச் சாற்றிநீ ராடினால்
தீங்கின்றி நாடெல்லாம் திங்கள்மும் மாரிபெய்து
ஓங்குபெஞ் செந்நெல் ஊடு கயலுகளப்
பூங்குவளைப் போதில் பொறிவண்டு கண்படுப்பத்
தேங்காதே புக்கிருந்து சீர்த்த முலைபற்றி
வாங்கக் குடம்நிறைக்கும் வள்ளல் பெரும்பசுக்கள்
நீங்காத செல்வம் நிறைந்தேலோர் எம்பாவாய்.

Oṅki Ulakaḷanta Uttamaṉ Pērpāṭi
Nāṅkaḷnam Pāvaikkuc Cātrinī Rāṭiṉāl
Tīṅkiṉri Nāṭellām Tiṅkaḷmum Māripeytu
Ōṅkupeñ Cennel Ūṭu Kayalukaḷap
Pūṅkuvaḷaip Pōtil Porivaṇṭu Kaṇpaṭuppat
Tēṅkātē Pukkiruntu Cīrtta Mulaipatri
Vāṅkak Kuṭamniṟaikkum Vaḷḷal Perumpasukkaḷ
Nīṅkāta Celvam Niṟaintēlōr Empāvāy.

"If we sing the names of the Most Noble One (Uttamaṉ), who grew tall and measured the worlds (Trivikrama), and perform this sacred vow (Pāvai-Nōnbu) with a ritual bath, then:
Abundant Rainfall: *Rain will fall precisely three times a month (Tiṅkaḷ Mum Māri) across the whole country, without any calamities.*
Ecological Wealth: *In the fields of tall, red paddy (Cennel), the fish (Kayal) will leap and play with joy.*
Abundance of Nature: *Inside the beautiful lily flowers (Pūṅkuvaḷai), the spotted bees (Porivaṇṭu), drunk on nectar, will peacefully fall asleep.*
Generous Cattle: *The great, generous cows (Vaḷḷal Perumpasukkaḷ) will stand so steady and give so much milk that even a gentle touch of their udders will fill the milk-pots to the brim.*
Thus, the entire land will be filled with inexhaustible, never-diminishing wealth (Nīṅkāta Celvam)."

Viṣṇu here is not called *Vāmana* or *Trivikarama*; instead, the poetess calls Him *Utthaman*. By invoking this specific name, it is not the *Avatāra per se* but its quality or *Guṇa* that is celebrated.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* fits this definition of *Utthaman* perfectly. He performed massive *Yajñas* on a scale lasting many days. During these times, he would often undergo severe physical hardship and austerities—fasting

without food or water, sitting in front of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* fire-altars for hours in the heat or smoke— "*degrading himself*" in terms of physical wellness and comfort… all for the sake of ensuring the spiritual and material welfare of society at large.

3. ***Viśvātma Priyamātmānaṃ*** (*The Beloved Soul of the Universal Lord*):

***Viśvātmā* (*The Soul of the Universe*):** This term refers to the *Varāha Avatāra*. Lord Varāha is called *Viśvātmā* because He physically lifted the *Viśvam* (Universe/Earth) from the ocean, proving He is the supporter of all existence. Siṃhācalam (a hillock-town near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh) is the abode of *Śrī Varāha Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha* (a dual form). Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed a grand *Mahā-Yajña* at this *Kṣetra*.

***Priyamātmānaṃ*:** By satisfying the Lord through that *Yajña*, the *Ācāryā* became the *Priyamātmā* (the beloved soul) of that Universal Lord.

4. ***Mukkūr Śrī Nṛharim bhajaē***: I meditate on Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari within my heart.

(4) The Viśvaṃbharaṃ *Taniyāṉ*

विश्वंभरं महात्मानं विश्वमूर्ति गुणोद्भवम् ।
उग्रसिंहं गुणभद्रं मुक्कुर् श्री नृहरिं भजे ॥

Viśvaṃbharaṃ Mahātmānaṃ Viśvamūrti Guṇōdbhavam |
Ugrasiṃhaṃ Guṇabhadraṃ Mukkūr Śrī Nṛhariṃ Bhajē ||

"I worship Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari, who is known as Viśvaṃbharaṃ and a Mahātmā (the Great Soul), who originates from the attributes of Viśvamūrti (Lord Nṛsiṃha), and who is celebrated as Ugrasiṃha and Guṇabhadra."

This verse is unique because it serves as a historical record of the divine revelation of Lord Siṃhācala Varāha Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha about Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own soul-journey across the *Yugas*.

1. ***The Yajña Rahasya*** (*The Secret of the Sacrifice*):

The names used in this verse— *"Viśvambhara, Ugrasiṃha, Guṇabhadra"* —are not merely poetic titles. They are specific and significant identities that were revealed during the 106th *Mahā Yajña* at Siṃhācalam conducted by Mukkūr *Svāmī*. The Lord *Nṛsiṃha* revealed then that He had made a *Saṅkalpa* (a solemn *Divine Resolve*) to have 32,000 *Mahā Yajñas* performed across the ***4 Yugas*** (ages). The *Adhvaryu* (Chief Priest) chosen for the task to perform those *Yajña* would be the same soul (*Jīvātmā*) incarnating in different forms in each age:

***Kṛta Yuga*:** He was *Viśvambhara*.

***Tretā Yuga*:** He was *Ugrasiṃha*.

***Dvāpara Yuga*:** He was *Guṇabhadra.*

***Kali Yuga*:** He is *Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha* (*Śrī Mukkūr Svāmī*).

By chanting this one *Taniyāṉ*, one would not only praise a Guru, but more importantly, also meditate upon a *Ṛṣi*-like soul who had been divinely appointed to strive for *Lōkakṣēmam* (the welfare of the World).

2. ***Mahātmānaṃ*** (*The Great Soul*):

Tri-Karaṇa-Śuddhi: The *Śāstras* define a *Mahātmā* not by power, but by the purity of *Thought*, *Word*, and *Deed* (*Manas*, *Vāk*, *Kāyam*).

By contrast to a *Mahātmā*, a *Durātmā* is one who thinks one way, says another, and does a third thing. He dissembles and deceives. That Mukkūr *Svāmī* was a *Mahātmā* was proven through his constant *meditation* upon the Lord Nṛsiṃha, his propagation of *Vedic* truths amongst large sections of society, and his lifelong commitment to performing *Yajñas*. All of which exemplified the yogic unity of Thought, Word, and Deed.

3. ***Viśvamūrti Guṇōdbhavam*** (*Born of the Attributes of the Universal Form*):

Viśvamūrti refers to Lord Nṛsiṃha/Varāha. The Lord's primary attributes are that His desires (*Kāma*) and His resolve (*Saṅkalpa*) always are fully realised and are established as the Truth. Mukkūr *Svāmī* mirrored this exact attribute. He took a *Saṅkalpa* (resolve) to perform *108 Svāti Yajñas* in life. Despite the extreme physical and financial hardship, he faced, he completed them. His resolve became *Satya Saṅkalpa* because it was inspired by the Lord's command.

4. ***Mukkūr Śrī Nṛharim Bhajaē*:** *I meditate on Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari within my heart.*

Turning now to the *Taniyāṉs* of Mukkūr *Svāmī* in Tamil. They are two in number and were explained to me also very clearly by MLS *Svāmī*. These Tamil *Taniyāṉs* in praise of Mukkūr *Svāmī* also evoke in the disciple's mind an equally vivid mental picture of his great piety, erudition, spiritual aura, and wisdom.

(1) Tamil *Taniyāṉ*

நம்முடை நம்பெருமான் நம் மட்டபல்லிநாதனை
நம்பி நம்பி நம்பி நம்பி - நம்பியென்று நவின்றுரைத்த
நம்ஸ்வாமியே நமவென்றால்
நம் வினை தீருமே ||

Nammudai Namberuman Nam Mattapallinathanai
Nambi Nambi Nambi Nambi Nambiyendru Navinruraitha
Namasvamiye Namavendral
Nam Vinai Theerume||

"Our own good Lord, our Mattapalli Naathan— Whom Mukkūr Svāmī praised As the one who is none other than Maṅgalagiri Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha, Vedādri Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha, Vāḍapalli Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha, Ketavaraṁ Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha and Ahobilam Sri Yogānanda Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha, brimming with trust, saying 'He alone is to be trusted, He alone!'— If we but say 'trust in our Svāmī, and obeisance to him!' All our karmic burdens too shall melt away."

(In this Taniyāṉ, 'Nambi' represents Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha in each of the Kṣetras Maṅgalagiri, Vedādri, Vāḍapalli and Ketavaraṁ. The fifth one indicates Ahobilam Sri Yogananda Lakṣmīṇṛsiṃha. This is based on Mukkūr Svāmī's own explanation in the book "Mattapalliyil Malarnda Maraiporul")

(2) Tamil Taniyāṉ

முக்கூரில் பிறந்த முக்கூர் ஸ்வாமி
தன்மையை முக்காலமும் தம் மனதில் நிறுத்தி |
மிக்கான் மட்டபல்லிநாதனைத் தொழுவோர்க்கு
எக்காலமும் பொற்காலமே ||

Mukkūril pirandha Mukkūr Svāmī
Thanmayai mukkālamum tham manadhil niruthi |
Mikkān Maṭṭapallinādhanai-th thozhuvōrkku
Ekkālamum porkālamē ||

Those who always keep in their hearts
the noble qualities of Mukkūr Svāmī, born at Mukkūr,
and who worship the supreme Maṭṭapalli Nāthan—
for them, every moment is verily a golden age.

What is to be noted is that the above *Taniyāṉ* uses the Tamil syllables *Na* and *Ma* in *staccato, alliterative* style; and the *onomatopoeia* rhyme has a charming ring to it. **MLS *Svāmī*** continues.

Once, *Mukkūr Svāmī* playfully had composed these lines as a poetic phrase --- *Mukkūril pirandha Mukkūr Svāmī*. I engaged *Mukkūr Svāmī* in slight banter, disputing its poetic quality (*rasa*). I was not too happy with the

phrase *Mukkūril pirandha Mukkūr Svāmī*. I expressed my feeling to him about the phrase sounding a little trite. He smilingly asked me what I thought the poetic blemish in it was. I replied:

"*What is this Mukkūril pirandha Mukkūr Svāmī? You were born in Mukkūr village and so, it sounds fine to call you Mukkūril Pirandha Nammsvāmī. But what is that additional Mukkūr Svāmī doing in the line? It sounds odd to me. If you are Mukkūr Svāmī, then obviously, you could have been born only in Mukkūr village, nowhere else. The appellation Mukkūr Svāmī in the Taniyāṉ itself should therefore suffice. The meaning gets conveyed well. What is the need to insert Mukkūril Pirandha as a prefix to Mukkūr Svāmī?! It is not only redundant but also confusing!*"

My father pondered a bit but did not give any immediate reply. He smiled mysteriously and asked me to dwell upon the question I had raised. He said:

"You will clear the doubt if you think it over deeply."

Even after several days of thinking about what he had said to me, I was still unable to shake off my misgivings about the jarring phrase in the *Taniyāṉ*.

One fine day, Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself came up to me and enlightened me about why the phrase had no poetic blemish; and that, in fact on the contrary, it was meaningful.

"A person may be born in one place and yet may have achieved recognition and eminence at another place. In that case, his name would get prefixed with the name of either one or the other place -- the place of his birth or the place where he achieved eminence. It all depends upon who took the greater pride in him: those in his birthplace or those in the place where he achieved eminence.

For example, we know that the place of birth of Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar (the great Ācāryā, the 42nd pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt) was Mukkūr Village. But his name is not associated with Mukkūr. His name got prefixed instead with Iñcimēṭu village… not Mukkūr! Why? No one calls him Mukkooril Pirandha Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar. They call him Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar because that is where he attained fame and glory. I am a Mukkūr-born person and people choose to call me only as Mukkūr Svāmī. So, the epithet of Mukkūril Pirandha Mukkūr Svāmī fits the description quite well."

Our friendly banter over the fine nuances of Tamil poetics ended there. I got not only educated that day but many years later when I had to formalize it, I was relieved to see that the *Taniyāṉ* was not flawed…. It was, in fact a *blemishless one*!

The Pūrvācārya Heritage: Mukkūr Svāmī's Spiritual Roots

The phrase *முக்கூர் ஸ்வாமி* (Mukkūr *Svāmī*) in the *Taniyāṉ* naturally recalls to my mind both Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār, and, in a parallel traditional register, also to two other great souls who were, in fact, *Ācāryās* held in the highest esteem by Mukkūr *Svāmī*. They were the Mukkūr-born *Azhagiyasiṅgars* of Ahōbila Mutt (the 42nd and 44th) and both were renowned for their intense *Nṛsiṃha-Ārādhana* – worshipping Him as a personal deity with spiritual intensity.

The 42nd, 44th and 45th *Śrīmad Azhagiyasiṅgars* of the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt all had very great and lasting influence on Mukkūr *Svāmī* in his early and formative years. In later chapters, much will be written about all three of them.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* never failed to acknowledge how deeply indebted he was to the Pūrvācārya lineage of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt pontiffs. He drew deep inspiration from them. In every discourse he gave from the public stage, every *Yajña* he conducted and in prefacing every work he wrote, he paid reverential homage to them through the recital of the *Taniyāṉs* of those *Ācāryās*.

42nd Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt - Śrīmatē Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Divya Pādukā Sēvaka Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Śaṭhagōpa Yatīndra Mahādēśikan

"Iñcimēṭu" Azhagiyasingar

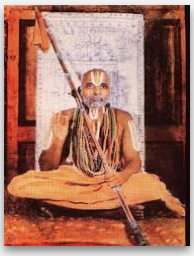
श्रीरङ्गेश यतीन्द्रवर्य करुणापात्रादि धेय प्रेक्षितं
ख्यात श्रीनरसिंह कारिजमुनीट् पादाब्ज भृङ्गेन्द्रवत् ।
दान्ति क्षान्ति दयादिभिः शुभगुणैः भान्तं बुधाग्रेसरं
श्रीमद्रङ्गशठारि योगिनृपतिं श्रेयोनिधिं संश्रये ॥

Śrī-Raṅgeśa Yatīndra-Varya Karuṇā-Pātrādi Dheya Prekṣitaṃ
Khyāta Śrī-Narasiṃha Kārija-Munīṭ Pādābja Bhṛṅgendravat |
Dānti Kṣānti Dayādibhiḥ Śubha-Guṇaiḥ Bhāntaṃ Budhāgresaraṃ
Śrīmad-Raṅga-Śaṭhāri Yogī-Nṛpatiṃ Śreyo-Nidhiṃ Saṃśraye ||

"I take refuge in the 42nd Jīyar, Śrīmad Raṅganātha Śaṭhagōpa, who is the treasure-house of spiritual wealth. He is the recipient of the grace of the 40th Jīyar and is a master of the senses, a beacon of patience, and the foremost scholar, who eternally serves the feet of Lord Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha."

43rd Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt - Śrīmatē Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Divya Pādukā Sēvaka Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Vīrarāghava Śaṭhagōpa Yatīndra Mahādēśikan

"Devanarvilagam" Azhagiyasingar



श्रीमच्छ्री रङ्गपृथ्वीश्वरशठरिपुणा संयमीन्द्रेण दृष्टं
न्यस्तात्मानं नृसिंहे नरहरिशठजिद्योगिनेतुः प्रसादात् ।
प्राज्ञ श्रीरङ्ग कारिप्रभवयतिपतेः प्राप्तलक्ष्मी नृसिंहा –
स्थानं सेवे यतीन्द्रं सकल गुणनिधिं वीरराघ्वीट् शठारिम् ॥

Śrīmac-Chrī Raṅga-Pṛthvīśvara-Śaṭharipuṇā Saṃyamīndreṇa Dṛṣṭaṃ
Nyastātmānaṃ Nṛsiṃhe Narahari-Śaṭhajid-Yoginetuḥ Prasādāt |
Prājña Śrīraṅga Kāri-Prabhava-Yatipateḥ Prāpta-Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃhā –
Sthānaṃ Seve Yatīndraṃ Sakala Guṇanidhiṃ Vīraraghvīṭ Śaṭhārim ||

"I serve the 43rd Jīyar, Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Vīrarāghava Mahādēśikan, a treasure-house of all virtues. Having performed surrender to Lord Nṛsiṃha, he ascended to the sacred seat of the Ahōbila Mutt through the divine grace and choice of his Preceptor, the wise 42nd Jīyar of Karimāṇ."

44th Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt - Śrīmatē Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Divya Pādukā Sēvaka Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Vēdānta Dēśika Yatīndra Mahādēśikan

"Mukkūr" Azhagiyasingar

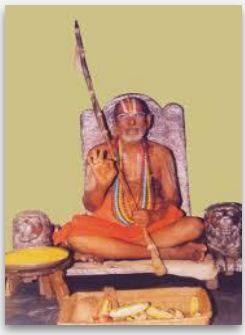
श्रीरङ्गनाथ शठकोप यतीन्द्र दृष्टं
लक्ष्मीनृसिंह शठजित् करुणैक पात्रम् ।
श्रीरङ्ग वीररघुराट् शठकोप हृद्यं
वेदान्तदेशिक यतीन्द्रमहं प्रपद्ये ॥

Śrīraṅganātha Śaṭhakopa Yatīndra Dṛṣṭaṃ
***Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Śaṭhajit Karuṇaikapātram* |**
Śrīraṅga Vīraraghurāṭ Śaṭhakopa Hṛdyaṃ
***Vedānta-Deśika Yatīndram-Ahaṃ Prapadye* ||**

"I surrender to the 44th Jīyar, Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Vēdānta Dēśika Yatīndra Mahādēśikan. He was favoured by the 41st and 42nd Jīyars and was the dearest disciple of the 43rd Jīyar. He is a master of the scriptures and a true king among monks."

45th Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt - Śrīmatē Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Divya Pādukā Sēvaka Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Nārāyaṇa Yatīndra Mahādēśikan

"Villivalam" Azhagiyasingar



श्रीमद्रङ्गशठारि संयमिवराल्लब्धागमान्तद्वयं
श्रीमद्वीररघूद्वहाद्यशठजित्पादारविन्दाश्रयम् ।
श्रीमद्वेदवतंस देशिकयतेः कारुण्यवीक्षास्पदम्
सेवे रङ्गधुरीण शासनवशं नारायणं योगिनम् ॥

Śrīmad-Raṅga-Śaṭhāri-Saṃyamivarāl-Labdhāgamānta-Dvayaṃ
Śrīmad-Vīraraghūdvahādya-Śaṭhajit-Pādāravindāśrayam |
Śrīmad-Vedavataṃsa-Deśikayateḥ Kāruṇya-Vīkṣāspadaṃ
Seve Raṅgadhurīṇa-Śāsana-Vaśaṃ Nārāyaṇaṃ Yoginam ||

"I serve the 45th Jīyar, Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Nārāyaṇa Yatīndra Mahādēśikan, who studied the scriptures under the 42nd Jīyar, surrendered to the 43rd Jīyar, and was blessed by the 44th Jīyar. He is a great Yogī who carries out the divine orders of the Lord of Śrīraṅgam."

In the illustrious lineage of the above four eminent pontiffs, comes the present 46th Pontiff, *Śrīmatē Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī* Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikan, who presides today over the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt. About this *Ācāryā*, in later chapters, much will be narrated too. The *Taniyāṉ* in his praise is reproduced below with due reverence and obeisance:

46th Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt - Śrīmatē Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikan

वेदान्तदेशिक यतीन्द्र कटाक्षलब्ध-
त्रय्यन्तसार-मनवद्य-गुणाम्बुधाग्र्यम् ।
नारायणाख्य यतिधुर्य कृपाभिषिक्तं
श्रीरङ्गनाथ यतिशेखरम् आश्रयामः ॥

Vedānta-Deśika Yatīndra Kaṭākṣa-Labdha-
Trayyanta-Sāra-Manavadya-Guṇāmbudhāgryam |
Nārāyaṇākhya Yatidhūrya Kṛpābhiṣiktaṃ
Śrīraṅganātha Yatiśekharam Āśrayāmaḥ ||

"We seek refuge in the 46th Jīyar, Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikan. He is a blemish-less ocean of virtue, who learned the secrets of Vedānta from the 44th Jīyar and was initiated into the holy order by the grace of the 45th Jīyar."

PART 1

The Mukkūr and Madurāntakam Years

(1944 - 1962)

Chapter 3

The Mukkūr Years:
Early life and Vedic Studies

Mukkūr is a village located in the Cheyyar subdivision of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai District, Tamil Nadu, India. With a population of 1616 (as recorded in the 2011 Census), it falls under the jurisdiction of Mukkūr Gram Panchayat and the Cheyyar Block *Panchayat* in Cheyyar District. The village has 401 predominantly farmer households, all contributing significantly to the rural ecosystem and economy of the Cheyyar Sub-District.

On a map of Cheyyar District today, one will see a cluster of many scores of small farming villages dotting the landscape, stretching right from Kāñcīpuram through Mukkūr and Iñcimēṭu villages, all the way to the town of Madurāntakam – Orirukkai (Orikkai), Māmaṇḍūr, Dūsi, Dāmal, Nāvalpākkam, Mukkūr, Cōḻapuram, Villivālam, Purisai, … and so on.

It was in this Kāñcīpuram hinterland of tiny farming villages that many centuries ago --- why, even as recent as 60 to 70 years ago! --- there used to be several small communities of Brahmins who lived and worked all their lifetimes in total dedication to the chanting of the *Vēdas*, the deep study of the *Vedāṅgas* and *Śāstras*, to practising the simple, austere *Vedic* ways of life, performing Yajña and Hōma and propagating the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. For generations thus, in these nondescript villages, the ancient body of *Vedic* knowledge and skills, linguistics, literature, culture, heritage and traditions had been kept alive.

Image 12: *Map of Cheyyar showing all the villages between Kāñcīpuram and Madurāntakam through Mukkūr and Iñcimēṭu villages – Orirukkai (Orikkai), Māmaṇḍūr, Dūsi, Dāmal, Nāvalpākkam, Mukkūr, Cōḻapuram, Villivālam, Purisai.*

The Mukkūr Agrahāra --- the street that leads to the village temples of Śrī Varadarāja Perumāḷ, Śrī Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Śrī Sañjīvarāya Āñjanēya within the precincts of what today stands there as the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt quarters --- is today a narrow street with about a dozen odd dwellings all inhabited by families of the native farmer folk. Here, once upon a time, used to live many happy and contented Brahmin and/or *Śrīvaiṣṇava* families who were known for their deep scholastic pursuits in *Vēda*, *Vedānta* and *Śāstra* branches of study. Proximity to the great city of Kāñcīpuram, which historically had always been a centre of great excellence in *Vedic* learning, arts and sciences, helped the Brahmin families of Mukkūr Village --- and its neighbouring villages of Orirukkai (Orikkai), Māmaṇḍūr, Dāmal, Villivālam, Purisai, Nāvalpākkam and others too – to reap the benefits accruing from centuries of fruitful intellectual exchange, dissemination and cross-fertilisation of ideas, and from higher knowledge and continuing education in traditional *Vedic* academia.

The temple-city of Kāñcīpuram got its name *Kāñcī* and associative fame from the *Purāṇic* times when it used to be called *Kāñcīdāmā* – according to the venerable Sage of Kāñcī, *Pūjyaśrī Candraśēkharēndra Sarasvatī* (known as *Kāñcī Ācāryā* and *Mahāperiyavā*):

> The planet Earth in our *Vedic* cosmogony is regarded as a female Deity… she is revered and worshipped as Bhūmidēvī or Bhūmi-Pirāṭṭi. The place where her navel, i.e. the navel of the Earth-Goddess, is situated is Kāñcīpuram. Since the girdle's front part is above the navel, the place is called Kāñcī.
>
> **Kāñcīdāmā:** Dāmā means (in Sanskrit) a rope made of several strands tightened together. In the Kṛṣṇa avatāra story, Bhagavān came to be called 'Dāmodara 'from the fact that Yashoda, his mother, bound him with a rope passing round his abdomen. Since the girdle tied around Kṛṣṇa's waist was made of fine strands of gold, he became Dāmodara: i.e. he who wore a

Hence, *Kāñcīdāmā*, in the passage of time, became shortened to Kāñcīpuram. And, perhaps, for the same reason of proximity to Kāñcīpuram as other satellite villages, it is from the name *Dāmodara* that the *Agrahāra* at *Dāmal* might have got its name in some very distant past.

Today, while all the little farming villages mentioned still exist around Kāñcīpuram, the old *Vedic* ethos and cultural heritage of the past in this part of Tamiḻ Nāḍu have all but disappeared.

Temples that once were the cultural epicentres in these farming villages now bear a forlorn, neglected appearance. Farmers till the soil not with the plough but with modern, efficient, air-polluting tractors. In Cheyyar, a vast industrial estate is now located, with many small and medium-scale factories, all humming with frenetic commercial activity. There are private primary health-care clinics mushrooming around here, as well as schools and dairy farms. There are mobile connectivity towers. All tell-tale signs of modernity and material development can be seen in this landscape.

However, the generations of Brahmin families here that once upon a time dedicated themselves to *Vedic* learning and practices, and to serving the temples and village communities as priests and preceptors, sadly, have all left their native hearths and migrated permanently to cities and even to foreign shores in pursuit of secular professions and advancement.

Mukkūr remains today, however, a tiny village with an ambience resembling an old-world era. It has less than a dozen small unpaved streets. All around the village are small agricultural fields, mostly paddy. Small ponds and water wells dot the land. Summers can be very torrid here, and at times, as in the past, this village suffered severe droughts whenever monsoons failed. But the soil is still very fertile, and small-scale farming continues to be the main livelihood of the community, although not a very profitable one.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s early life began here in this remote rural District of Tamiḻ Nāḍu. So, it is from here, his birthplace, that I thought it would be right to begin the narrative vignettes in this book of his illustrious and eventful life. The narratives are all verbatim accounts recounted to me by his '*Tirukumārar*' Śrī MLS *Svāmī* in his ancestral *Kuṭisai* at Mukkūr Village.

Ancestral Foundations: The Lineage and Birth of Mukkūr Svāmī

- ***Can you describe U. Ve. Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār's birth details, including date, place, and family circumstances?***
- ***What were his parents' names, occupations, and their influence on his early spiritual and scholarly development?***
- ***Tell me about his siblings, childhood home environment, and any early signs of his devotion to Śrīvaiṣṇavism or Lord Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha.***

From the responses to the above questions given by MLS *Svāmī* to me, the following details about his early life and family background were made known to me.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was born at Mukkūr Village on **6th July 1944 (*Paurṇamī*)**, under the Tamil calendar (*Avatāra-Dinam*) *Thāraṇa* year, asterism of *Āṇi Pūrvāṣāḍhā*. His mother was Smt. Amṛtavallī and his father, the great *Nyāya* and *Tarka* Philosophy and Vedāntic scholar, Mukkūr Śrī Śrīnivāsācāryār. Previously, around eight years before his birth, the couple had also begotten another son, Mukkūr Śrī Ragunāthācāryār, a renowned *Vēda-Ghanapāṭhī* in later years.

(Left to Right) Image 13: *Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār (Mukkūr Svāmī's Father);* ***Image 14:*** *Mukkūr SriRagunāthācāryār (Mukkūr Svāmī's Elder Brother)*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s paternal grandfather was Mukkūr Śrī Gōpālācāryār who had lived and served the communities in and around villages in the Cheyyar and Kāñcīpuram areas both as respected *Vēda Upādhyāya* (teacher) and as the *Bṛhaspati* (chief officiating priest for households and families).

Image 15 & 16: *Ancestral Home (Mukkūr Svāmī's Birthplace)*

On the *Agrahāra* street of the village, the ancestral house of Mukkūr *Svāmī* had for long been owned by the family until sometime in the mid-20th century. It had to be sold off to tide over the strained financial situation that had been faced by it then. Today, the house belongs to a resident-native farming family of the village. The owner of the house, however, has promised the family that after his time, he would be happy to sell the property back to them at any reasonable price or near-market value. It's really not in our hands. So, we will have to wait and see.

Thus, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s childhood years were otherwise quite normal and a happy, contented one. He used to be called at home by everyone with an affectionate pet-name or nickname, *Cheela*. It was just a moniker, that most well-knit, loving joint families in those days were fond of giving a sweet little child at home. No one really knew the reason for calling him by that name of endearment.

MLS *Svāmī*:

If you are curious to know if Mukkūr *Svāmī* as a small child, showed any signs of precocious learning or intellectual prowess, I can say there were none such, not at that very early age and, certainly, at least not to my knowledge, with two exceptions:

His memory even at a very young age was exceptional. He used to recall perfectly the names of the villages between Mukkūr and Kāñcipuram. He even composed a song based on a popular one at that time, with the village names in the lyric

I have also often heard from a few elders in the family that even as a toddler, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was fond of playacting or enacting imaginary *Perumāḷ Utsavams* (temple processional festivity) along with other children. He would design small *Vāhanams* (palanquin), *Rathas* (chariots), etc., all fashioned into little toys by using whatever rough and ready materials were available at home and then go around doing street processions in imitation of grand temple *Brahmōtsavams*!

CHAPTER 4

The Madurāntakam Years:
Scholastic Training

- ***What formal and informal education did he receive, including key gurus, institutions, or Sampradāya lineages he followed?***
- ***Who were the principal teachers or gurus who guided "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār in his early and advanced studies of Śrīvaiṣṇavism?***
- ***How did these mentors influence his approach to scholarship, discourse style, and spiritual practices?***
- ***Which specific Śrīvaiṣṇava texts, Vēdas, or Rāmānuja Siddhānta did he master early on, and how did he pursue advanced studies?***

Shortly after Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s birth, maybe around **1946-47**, the family, with him and his elder brother, moved to the town of Madurāntakam (Tamiḻ Nāḍu).

At that time, *Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar* (the 42nd pontiff) of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt had just then established a fledgling *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* (*Vedic* seminary) there. Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār joined the *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* as both a faculty member and administrator and, began to devotedly serve his *Ācāryā*, the Azhagiyasingar. It was a lifetime dedication to serve the pontiff for whom he had utmost regard as his lifelong guru.

There were many other great *Vedic* scholars and erudite *Śāstra Vidvāns* too who supported *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar's effort to develop the Madurāntakam *Vedic Seminary* into a premium *Vedic Pāṭhaśālā* in the region. Amongst them happened to be Mukkūr Śrī Rājagōpālācāryar, who in the later years became the 44th Azhagiyasingar as *Śrīmatē Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhagōpa Śrī Vēdānta Dēśika Yatīndra Mahādēśikan*.

There were also Śrī Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryār, Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār, Śrī Villivālam Krishnamachāriār and Śrī Purisai Kṛṣṇamācāryār *Svāmī* along with many other very accomplished *Vedic* scholars.

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār became a central figure in the Vēda *Pāṭhaśālā* as one of the key faculty members, who taught hundreds of students in the disciplines of

Nyāya and ***Tarka Śāstra*** (*Vedic* logic and dialectics). Soon he rose in rank to be appointed as the first Vice-Principal and Head of the *Nyāya Śāstra* department at the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*. His students included outstanding *Mahāns* like **Śrī Villivālam Kṛṣṇamācāryār** (45th Pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila mutt), **Śrī Śrīmuṣṇam Periyāṇḍavaṉ** (pontiff of *Śrī* Raṅganātha *Paduka Andavan Ashram*), **Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī*** and many more latter-day *Mahāvidvāns*.

Tragedy struck Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s family soon thereafter. His father, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, passed away suddenly (at age 43), leaving behind Smt. Amṛtavallī, a widowed mother of two very young sons, Ragunāthācāryār and Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who were still undergoing *Vedic* education at the Madurāntakam School. The mother, despite facing dire financial straits, persuaded her sons not to drop out of their studies at Madurāntakam *Pāṭhaśālā*. Thanks to the benevolence of *Iñcimēṭu* Śrīmad Azhagiyasingar and the kindness of the faculty like Śrī Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryār, the two young students continued at Madurāntakam School.

In his own personal recollections of those days, of difficult circumstances faced by Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s widowed mother, his teacher and guide, Śrī Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryār once wrote:

> *"After Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār departed from them, his surviving family underwent as great a hardship as that which can be compared with the many trials and tribulations that Kuntī-dēvī suffered in the Mahābhārata."*

At the time of his father's demise, the family did not have even sufficient means to perform for him the rite of passage that all young *Vedic* students are initiated into – i.e. the *Upanayana-Saṃskāra* when the father imparts the sacred *Gāyatrī-Mantra* to his son and invests him with the *Yajñōpavītam* (*Janēū* thread). Thus, at the request of the mother and family, the young Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanayana* was performed in a collective or group-ceremony (*Samaṣṭi-Upanayana*) by *Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryār Svāmī*. He took a paternalistic interest in Mukkūr *Svāmī* and became his tutor and mentor throughout the years he spent as a student in the *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*.

Years later, Pazhaveri *Svāmī* recalled and wrote about the days when Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, the father, had always expressed great confidence and faith in the ability and potential of both his sons. He had told him once:

> *"Both my sons will one day achieve great renown as Vedic scholars in their lifetimes, and the world will come to acknowledge them. And I will be watching over them with pride from Śrī Vaikuṇṭham even long after I have left here."*

MLS *Svāmī*:

My father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s education in the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* was unconventional. As a young boy, he never had any kind of formal primary-elementary school classroom experience. Instead, even from a very tender young age of six or seven years, he had received very rigorous traditional *Vedic* education under the personal tutelage of his father, Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār.

Besides his father as his teacher at the *Pāṭhaśālā*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* also had, as his *Vedic* tutors, such stalwarts as *Śrī* Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār *Svāmī*, who taught him other branches from *Grantha* works in the *Kālakṣēpam* format of education.

Pazhaveri *Svāmī*, who too tutored Mukkūr *Svāmī* in other branches of *Vedic* study, recalled later that it was during this time that he himself came to be aware that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was no ordinary student but a rare prodigy of outstanding intellectual calibre.

What he once wrote about Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s student days, in paraphrase was this:

> *"Watching the boy advance and progress so rapidly in his scholastic learning convinced me that Cheela was not unlike the great saint, Śrī Nammāḻvār himself, in so far as all the knowledge he was seen to be acquiring at the Pāṭhaśālā was something that he had been born with already! Whatever at the Vēda Pāṭhaśālā in Madurāntakam was being imparted to him was not education but merely the perfunctory motions of 'getting educated', as far as he was concerned. All the knowledge taught only seemed like it was a sort of 'aide-mémoire 'for him - a sort of finishing school!"*

It was during this extraordinary early training under his father that Mukkūr *Svāmī* seems to have acquired his very thorough and firm foundational grounding in all other most important Śrīvaiṣṇava scriptural curricula too, such as *Tiruvāymōḻi*, *Bhagavat-Viṣayam*, *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa*. Pazhaveri *Svāmī*, his teacher, could not help marvelling at the young student's precocity and amazing ability to grasp instantly whatever was imparted to him. He later wrote:

> *"Like Ēkalavya in the Mahābhārata, by the age of nine or ten, Cheela thus had completed the full Sapta-Kāṇḍa Yajurvēda (the entire seven parts of the Yajurvēda-Śākhā or branch of study) as well as getting fully tutored in Siddhāntic principles such as Tarka and Nyāya Śāstra."*

The Śiṣya-Paramparā: The Madurāntakam Foundation

- ***So, can it be said that the greatest influence on Mukkūr Svāmī's early education and academic brilliance was exerted by his father, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, during the formative years at Madurāntakam Vēda Pāṭhaśālā?***
- ***Were there other senior scholars or Ācāryās he regarded as significant influences or advisors in his spiritual and intellectual journey?***

To put the answer to this question in the right perspective, it can be framed in this way:

Mukkūr *Svāmī* belonged to the same *Śiṣya-Paramparā* to which his father, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, belonged. This lineage of disciples included, Purisai *Svāmī*, Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī,* and Pazhaveri *Svāmī. The* main preceptor for all of them was the legendary pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, *Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar*.

Śrēyōnidhim: The Treasure-House of Grace and Knowledge

- ***So, are you saying that it was Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar's influence that was greatly exerted on Mukkūr Svāmī, through the father Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār?***

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār's own *Taniyāṉ* is a very interesting one. By itself, the pithy *Taniyāṉ* reveals so much about not only his own *Vedic* erudition but also, and more importantly, about the extraordinary *Guru-Bhakti* that his *Ācāryā*, Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar, inspired in him.

Here below is Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār's *Taniyāṉ*, which was composed by Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself:

Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār *Taniyāṉ*

श्रेयोनिधिं कृपापात्रं न्यायवेदान्तकोविदम् ।
वाधूलवंशतिलकं मानिवासमहं भजे ॥

Shreyonidhiṃ Kṛpā-Pātraṃ Nyāya-Vēdānta-Kōvidam |
Vādhūla-Vaṃśa-Tilakaṃ Mā-Nivāsam-Ahaṃ Bhaje ||

"I worship the great scholar of the Vadhula lineage, who is a treasure of auspiciousness and a vessel of divine grace. He is a master of Nyāya and Vedānta, and a true ornament to his family, in whom the divine presence ever dwells."

The term *Śrēyōnidhim* has a very special significance. The word *Śrēyas* has many layers of meaning in Sanskrit: spiritual exaltation, affectionate devotion, and kindness. The word *Nidhim* means treasure.

The title *Śrēyōnidhim* was accorded to the 42nd pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, the *Mahā-vidvān* and *Ācāryā, Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar* because His Holiness was popularly known as a veritable '*treasure-house* 'of both Vedāntic knowledge and human kindness, both of which he generously bestowed upon everyone who approached him with devotion.

Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, who belonged to the family lineage of the *Vādhūla Gōtra,* had been a disciple of *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar. It was under his tutelage that he too had earned the reputation as a scholar of great erudition in all branches of *Vedāntic* and *Śāstric* studies and as someone who had trained hundreds of students at the Madurāntakam *Vēda-Pāṭhaśālā*. Thus, the *Taniyāṉ* epithet of *Nyāya-Vēdānta-Kōvidam* was chosen for him by Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

Incidentally, I must tell you here that *Śrī Śrīmuṣṇam Śrīmad Periyāṇḍavaṉ Svāmī*, the erstwhile pontiff of the *Śrī Raṅganātha Paduka Śrīmad Andavan Ashram* (the father of the present *Andavan Jīyar*), in fact studied under Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār.

Let me also share with you a personal memory.

The 'Little Child' of Madurāntakam - A Bond of Affection and Mirth

Śrī Śrīmuṣṇam Periyāṇḍavaṉ *Svāmī* had always maintained a very close bond with our family. At home, I was told that when Mukkūr *Svāmī* was just a little boy, this *Svāmī* used to come home when the family used to live in Madurāntakam and hold *Cheela* in his arms and play with him.

Years later, when during a major *Yajña* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was conducting in Śrīraṅgam, he wrote a letter to the Periyāṇḍavaṉ *Svāmī* inviting him to grace the event.

Playfully in the letter, Mukkūr *Svāmī* also asked him if Śrī Āṇḍavaṉ *Svāmī* would be kind enough to once again carry him in his arms as during the former's childhood. The *Jīyar* responded with great affection and mirth, telling *Cheela* he would gladly do so if he went to him as that very same "little child" he had known and affectionately fondled many years ago in Madurāntakam.

Anyway, to return to my grandfather, *Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār.* It was through long and devoted service to *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar that he received affection and great kindness from the 42nd pontiff and that is why

the *Taniyāṉ* says he became his *Kṛpā-Pātraṃ* – i.e. "*a crucible of the Ācārya's kindness*".

Mā-Nivāsam

The phrase next in the *Taniyāṉ* is *Mā-Nivāsam* and it refers to the Great Deity of Tirumalā, **Lord Śrī-nivāsan** where *Śrī* is a synonym of *Mā* or Goddess Mahālakṣmī in Sanskrit. It was that *Tiru-Nāma* of *Śrī* which Śrī Śrīnivāsācāryār himself bore. It was the same *Tiru-Nāma* given to me too. And thus, I became *M.L. **Śrī**-nivāsan*. However, since *Śrīnivāsan* also happened to be the name of my revered grandfather, within the family at home, out of reverence for his memory, the members and relatives refrained from calling me openly by that name. That is why today I am called by dear and near ones at home as '*Ramēśa*'.

The Art of Pada-Vibhāga

You may be wondering why I am telling you all this and explaining the *Taniyāṉ* word by word. In *Vedic* linguistics this method of explaining is known as *Pada-Vibhāga,* i.e., deriving the meaning of a *Vedic* passage not through means of plain parsing of phrases or expressions (*Vākyārtha*) to obtain a mere gist but by further splitting the phrases down to constituent root words or *Pada* to glean its inner root-meaning.

Pada (**पद**) refers to a word or foot in grammatical analysis, while *Vibhāga* (**विभाग**) means division or separation. Therefore, *Pada-vibhāga* (**पदविभाग**) is the standard compound used to parse sentences into words or words into morphemes.

You wanted to know more about why Mukkūr *Svāmī* is said to belong to the *'Śiṣya-Paramparā* of *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar. It is precisely because in later years, when he became a celebrated exponent of public discourse on Vēda *Praśnas* (passages), he too was effortlessly able to practise and display what he had been taught by his illustrious father, in the rare linguistic skills of *Pada-vibhāga* distinct from *Vākyārtha*.

By engaging here in a bit of *Pada-Vibhāga* of the *Taniyāṉ*, I simply want to underscore a point that Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself always used to make. He maintained throughout his life that a true *Vedāntic* scholar must provide meaning word-by-word rather than just summarising a sentence of *Vedic* scripture. It was a core principle taught to him by his father, who had, in turn, been taught *Pada-Vibhāga's* importance by *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar, who had been known to say that if a scholar was unable to precisely split

words or parse a sentence in a verse to extract its true philosophical meaning, then he was not a scholar of the first order.

Pillar-less Arch: A Father's Final Lesson in Pada-Vibhāga

On the day he passed away, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār called his son, Mukkūr Svāmī, to his bedside. He referred him to a specific verse from the great Sanskrit poet, ***Kālidāsa's*** *Raghuvamśa, which described a flock of birds flying high in the sky in a perfect symmetrical formation with the use of a phrase,* **अस्तम्भां तोरणस्रजम्**. *This should be appreciated, he told his son then, through Pada-Vibhāga, since it was a kind of 'double entendre'.*

Kalidasa's Raghuvamśa (Canto 1, Śloka 41)

श्रेणीबन्धाद्वितन्वद्भिरस्तम्भां तोरणस्रजम्।
सारसैः कलनिर्ह्रादैः क्वचिदुन्नमिताननौ॥ १-४१

Śreṇī-Bandhād-Vitanvadbhir-Astambhāṃ Toraṇa-Srajam |
Sārasaiḥ Kala-Nirhrādaiḥ Kvacid-Unnamitā-Nanau ||

The Imagery:

As the King and Queen pass, the Sarasa birds fly overhead in a formation that looks like a welcome arch (*Toraṇa*) made of living beings. Unlike normal arches that need pillars (*Stambhā*) to support them, this bird-arch is suspended in the sky without any pillars (*Astambhā*), held up only by their flight.

Astambhāṃ: **अस्तम्भां** (Pillar-less / Unsupported):
Toraṇa-Srajam: **तोरणस्रजम्** (Archway garland)

Meaning:
"The flock of birds flying across its expanse supporting it while also ornamenting it as a beautiful garland."

Or, in other words,
"…This bird-arch suspended in the sky without any pillars (*Astambha*), held up only by their flight…."

The poet Kālidāsa's play on Sanskrit words here is exquisite, and it was pointed out by Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār to Mukkūr *Svāmī*. *Astambhā* could mean "*support,"* "*prop*," or "*dependence"* in Sanskrit poetic contexts for the idea of *reliance* or *suspension*. And *Toraṇa* refers to a *festoon, garland, or ornamental archway,* commonly seen in temple iconography or rituals as a hanging decoration.

Thus, *Pada-Vibhāga* conveys a linguistic nuance about how a garland of birds in the sky could be described as "*the flock of birds flying across its expanse ornamenting it as a beautiful, unsupported garland*".

Pada-Vibhāga was, thus, one could say, the hallmark of the *Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyasingar's *Śiṣya-Paramparā* tradition, of which Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself was an exemplar. And it is only just one small illustration of the strong and lasting intellectual influence that the great 42nd pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt had exerted upon Mukkūr *Svāmī* via his father, Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār.

Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār's Quest for Excellence

- ***How long did the academic term of Vedic education at Madurāntakam last? Was there any formal graduation? Did Mukkūr Svāmī earn any formal academic qualification?***

Following the death of his father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s elder brother (my *Periappā)*, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār moved to **Vijayawada** to seek a livelihood and income for his now impoverished family, while Mukkūr *Svāmī* remained in Madurāntakam.

On completion of his education at the Madurāntakam *Vedic* seminary, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār was adjudged to be an exceptionally accomplished ***Vēdavid*** by his teachers and superiors. His chanting skills of the *Vedic* texts were extraordinary. The mastery of the method of *Saṃhitā, Mūla,* and *Pada* chanting he demonstrated, marked him out as a *Vedic* practitioner of very rare and high merit.

As the eldest son surviving his father, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār became aware of the very bleak financial situation his family faced. His younger brother, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, was still a boy and yet to finish schooling. Income was scarce in the Mukkūr home. So, he decided that it was time to leave the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* and go forth into the world seeking employment as a *Vēdavid* and *Vēda-Adhyāpaka* (scholar and teacher), putting to use thereby the skills he possessed in *Vedic* recitations.

Ragunāthācāryār found himself at a critical crossroad in life. He was at a loss to know what direction to take and how to move forward towards his goal.

It was at that time that a maternal uncle of his in Mukkūr village told him that perhaps he should advance his *Vedic* career in Andhra Pradesh rather than in Tamiḻ Nāḍu. He told him that in Andhra Pradesh, especially in the

coastal Districts of the River Godāvarī, many *Vedic* practitioners still lived in villages and *Agrahāra* neighbourhoods. The Andhra people greatly respected and cherished *Vedic* traditions, and hence the environment there would be much more conducive to Ragunāthācāryar's aspiration to pursue higher *Vedic* pursuits. As a *Vedic* scholar, he could perhaps also undertake assignments as a teacher (*Adhyāpana*, *Upādhyāya*) and as an officiating priest (*Bṛhaspati*) at temples and households. The uncle told him that it was an opportunity worth exploring. He could seize it if he left Mukkūr and Madurāntakam and permanently moved to Vijayawada.

Given the dire family circumstances, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār made up his mind and moved to Vijayawada—550 kms away from his Mukkūr home.

Ragunāthācāryār's uncle earlier had also advised him to go and seek the blessings of a very venerable *Ghanapāṭhī* of the *Smārta Sampradāya* who was then living in Rajahmundry. His name was **Śrī Viśvanātha Jagannātha Ghanapāṭhī** and his reputation as a *Vedic* practitioner was formidable.

"You go to him and beseech him to accept you as a Śiṣya and begin your journey to graduate into Ghanapāṭha."

Arriving from Mukkūr Village, he did exactly as his uncle had told him: he made his way to Rajahmundry.

This guru in Rajahmundry had an intimidating reputation among the *Vedic* community in Andhra Pradesh. He was a very strict, orthodox disciplinarian, a real martinet of *Vedic* education, always demanding the highest standards of excellence from *his disciples*. Disciples of Śrī Viśvanātha Jagannātha Ghanapāṭhī found him to be a very hard-to-please *Vēda-Parīkṣā-Adhikārī* (Vēda examining authority). Even the best of students could not easily pass muster under him. An undaunted Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār went to Rajahmundry to meet this great *Ghanapāṭhī* and seek his certification as a *Vēda-Adhyāyī.*

In the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*, the curriculum of the *Yajur Vēda* was limited to mastering the *Saṃhitā* versions of the *Sapta-Kāṇḍa* or seven parts. These were usually taught in the relatively less difficult chanting styles known as *Mūlam*, *Pada*, *Jaṭā,* and *Krama*. Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār was tested severely in the *Saṃhitā Krama* sections by Śrī Jagannatha Ghanapāṭhī, but he came out in flying colours in the very first attempt. The guru was astonished at the consummate skills in chanting displayed by the baritone-voiced young *Vēdavid* from Madurāntakam.

Extremely pleased with Ragunāthācāryār, the guru asked him to undergo training under him in the more advanced and complex versions of *Vēda-Adhyāya*, notably in the highly specialised style of *Brāhmaṇa-Bhāga* or *Śākhā-Grantha-Krama*, which very few *Vedavids* even in Andhra Pradesh could ever become adept at.

Again, after years of training, Ragunāthācāryār passed in high flying colours. His Guru then told him:

> *"You have excelled yourself in the Krama, but you should not stop there but must proceed to the highest level -- **Śākhā-Grantha-Jaṭā** and **Ghanapāṭha**. For this, I shall recommend you to a great master Ghanapāṭhī I know. He is **Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtri Sōmayāji Ghanapāṭhī**. You go to him and learn… You will then equal if not surpass the best of Vedavids in the country."*

The Guru's words came true a few years later, when under the tutelage of *Deṇḍukūri Sōmayāji*, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār was formally recognised as a *Salakṣaṇa-Ghanapāṭhī* of the first order by every *Vedic* scholar everywhere in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Ragunāthācāryār settled down permanently in Vijayawada and earned a very modest livelihood as a chief-priest at a temple owned privately and maintained by a family of distant relatives and descendants of the Mukkūr lineage. It was known in the local neighbourhood as *Śrī Śrīnivāsa Perumāḷ Kōvil*. From the meagre earnings earned there serving at the temple and supplemented by *Ācārya-Dakṣiṇā* given to him by small groups of students who came to the temple to attend beginner-level classes for Vēda chanting, Ragunāthācāryār was barely able to support both himself and his family back home in Mukkūr Village.

The Gold Medal and A Mother's Painful Choice

Meanwhile, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was left behind in Mukkūr village to continue his education at the Madurāntakam *Vedic* seminary. He lived in the hostel, and thereafter, spending six to seven more years at the *Pāṭhaśālā*, he completed the full term of *Vēda Adhyāya* (*Vedic* studies). After finishing his *Vedic* studies in Madurāntakam, he moved back to Mukkūr village to live with his mother.

Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār's meagre earnings in faraway Vijayawada, a portion of which only he was able to send home to support his family, left Mukkūr *Svāmī* and his mother facing severe financial difficulties. Nonetheless, Mukkūr *Svāmī* proceeded to acquire secular education in an elementary school at Kōḍanagar near Cheyyar from the 5th grade through to

the completion of higher secondary schooling. He was a very bright student. In the 10th grade, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was awarded a *Gold Medal in Sanskrit* by the then-Tamiḻ Nāḍu State Chief Minister **K. Kamaraj**. However, due to the family's extreme poverty at the time, his mother was forced to sell the medal to make ends meet in the household.

After high school graduation, Mukkūr *Svāmī* enrolled himself in Pachaiyappa's College in Kāñcīpuram for a Pre-University Course (PUC).

In 1961–1962, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had to abandon his college education after the first year of his PUC. His mother, Smt. Amṛtavallī, could no longer afford the tuition fees, and his elder brother, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār in Vijayawada, too, who had only then recently married and had had children of his own to parent, was finding it impossible to provide additional financial support for the rest of the family.

Given the near-penurious state of the family, his elder brother, Ragunāthācāryār, advised Mukkūr *Svāmī* to discontinue secular education. He asked him to join him in Vijayawada, where Mukkūr *Svāmī* could at least continue higher *Vedic* training and also be able to eke out a livelihood assisting him as a *Ṛtvik* (*Vedic* scholar who joins in conducting *Pūjās, Japa,* and *Hōmas* but does not directly conduct rituals as other professional *Bṛhaspatis* do).

Mukkūr *Svāmī* took his elder brother's advice and, with the blessings of his mother, took leave of her and relocated from the village to go and live with Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār in Vijayawada.

PART 2

The Vijaywada Years

(1962 - 1971)

CHAPTER 5

Ghanapāṭha

Mastery of Salakṣaṇa-Ghana

Śrī U. Ve. Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār earned the prestigious title of *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī,* not through any formal academic conferment but through recognition and endorsement by very erudite *Vedic* scholars of the very highest order within the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* community. Those scholars included pundits from all three different orthodox communities of *Smārtha*, *Śrīvaiṣṇava* and *Mādhva Sampradāya*.

Every Ācāryā too recognised his mastery over ***Ghanapāṭha*** — a highly complex *Vedic* recitation mode involving intricate permutations of mantras for preservation of pronunciation, intonation (*Svara*), and meaning and proficiency in ***Lakṣaṇa*** (nuances of phonetics, accents, and characteristics).

The title *Salakṣaṇa* (*Lakṣaṇa-Sahita Ghanapāṭha*) denotes excellence in perceiving and denoting *Vedic* subtleties, beyond standard *Ghanapāṭhī* status. This accomplishment, often equated to a **"PhD in *Vedic* studies"** due to its rigorous 8–10-year training post-initial memorisation, marked Mukkūr *Svāmī* out as an exceptional *Vēdavīd* throughout his student years spent at the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*. (*More on these traditional and special skills in the Vedic chanting, that will be discussed in Chapter 24*). This was the period in his life when his precocious and prodigious mental and intellectual prowess manifested itself.

Much of the training in *Ghanapāṭha* Mukkūr *Svāmī* received as a young boy, between ages 16 to 21 years, was in Vijayawada from his elder brother, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār, who had by then already completed his own course of *Vedic* studies at Madurāntakam with distinction. The elder brother had not then yet departed—driven by the penurious situation of the family—to Vijayawada to begin a career there as a *Vedic* pundit. At first, it was an uphill struggle for Ragunāthācāryār, but soon enough, he attained great heights of eminence in Vijayawada.

As an elite *Vedic* scholar, Mukkūr *Svāmī* could render *Vedic* passages with flawless distinction even among fellow *Ghanapāṭhīs*. He demonstrated this ability in

later years of life at *Upanyāsas* by beginning and interspersing the public discourses with stentorian *Ghana* renditions that enthralled his audiences of all backgrounds.

Although Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār had tutored his younger brother in *Ghanapāṭha*, as he himself later revealed, he had not taught his sibling the higher advanced skills of *Salakṣaṇa-Ghana*. The elder brother admitted that he himself marvelled at how Mukkūr *Svāmī* had naturally and effortlessly progressed to the *Salakṣaṇa* grade and excelled in it without undergoing any formal training. (A few rare audio recordings (YouTube) available in *Śrī Mukkūr Nṛhari Hṛdayam* do capture the sibling duo's recitations showcasing brilliant precision renditions from the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Śākhās*).

It was the *Vedic* prowess that Mukkūr *Svāmī* possessed, which underpinned and pervaded all his writings, public discourse, and *Yajña*. The *Nṛsiṃha-Yajña Mantra* compilations, *Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra,* and other *Upanyāsas he delivered in public,* were integrated *Ghana* recitals with deep *Śrīvaiṣṇava-Siddhānta* that also fostered *Smṛti*-ritualism.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s complete mastery of *Ghana* and *Salakṣaṇa* was indeed testimony to how the age-old chanting methods devised by our ancient *Ṛṣis* and *Ācāryās* in India had helped in ***Vēda-Rakṣaṇam***, i.e. preserving oral traditions as a priceless legacy of thousands of generations of *Vēdavīds* of past centuries amid declining patronage for it in modern times.

The Architecture of Sound: From Saṃhitā to the Pinnacle of Ghana

It is worth pausing here at this point to very briefly remind ourselves about a few unique features of the traditional methods of learning through which the *Vedic Ghanapāṭha practice* has survived over centuries until the present day.

Salakṣaṇa-Ghanapāṭha tests the mastery of *Ghanapāṭha*. It is the pinnacle *Vedic* recitation mode involving complex permutations e.g., *Tri-Kāla* (three-geared pace repetition like *abc-bca-cab*) of entire *Maṇḍalas* or *Prapāṭhakas* (whole *Vedic* passages) — with precise *Lakṣaṇa* (*Svara*, *Udātta-Anudātta* accents, phonetic distinctions, and *Varga* segmentation.

The syllabus covers a full *Vēda Śākhā* (e.g., ***Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda's Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 7 Kāṇḍas***), building sequentially the different formats of the *Vedic* text:

Saṃhitā → Pada → Krama → Jaṭā → Ghana, plus other texts like *Namakam-Camakam*, *Puruṣa-Sūktam*, and *Śikṣā* for *Lakṣaṇa*. *Salakṣaṇa* denotes flawless rendering from sheer memory of all such nuances, which is what really distinguishes it from the various other grades of superiority and excellence in traditional studies that may be attained by graduates from any *Vedic* school. (*More on this in Chapter 24*).

In the olden days, seminary students, after completing many years of gruelling training and *Vedic* education in *Vēda Pāṭhaśālās*, had to await their gurus and *Vēda-Adhyāpaka* to give them final certification as *Ghanapāṭhis* before they went out into the world to serve society as *Vēdavīds*, *Yajña-priests,* or *Purōhitas*. No formal diploma or certificate, in the modern sense as known today, was required. The stamp and seal of qualification was given instead by the mere word of a G*uru* or *Ācāryā* under whom the student had prosecuted *Vedic* studies and came out with flying colours. The guru or *Ācāryā's* name and his word of endorsement were the only credentials needed by the graduating disciple, which he carried with him as a lasting testimonial.

In modern times, however, *Vedic* graduates—even *Ghanapāṭhis*—from present-day institutional Vēda *Pāṭhaśālās* or seminaries are required to prove their academic credentials via live oral *Parīkṣās* (examinations) lasting many days of what in modern secular universities we know as *viva voce*— i.e. examination through verbal, one-on-one test-interviews conducted by a panel of eminent *Vēda-Adhyāpakas*.

The *Vedic* exams of today feature multi-stage oral demonstrations before a duly appointed *Ācāryā* panel. The examiners then select random *Sūktas* for forward/backward geared *Ghana* chanting with *Svara*; and candidates must answer by recalling from memory and delivering them at once. They also must self-correct *Lakṣaṇa* errors and explain the permutations. There are no written tests.

Success in these viva-voce examinations requires at least eight to twelve years of post-*Saṃhitā* memorisation, with the toppers earning *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī* via *Sadas* (faculty panel) certification. It is the panel that then formally grants the title of *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhīs* to the successful candidates.

Even today, the oral examination process is quite rigorous. Exams emphasise live demonstration: e.g., reciting *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Ghana* with *Lakṣaṇa Sahita* (nuanced accents), evaluated by *Ācāryās* appointed by the likes of (i) Śṛiṅgerī *Śāradā Mutt*, (ii) Kāñcī *Kāmakoṭi Mutt*, (iii) *Śrī Ahōbila Mutt*, (iv) *Śrī Parakāla Mutt*, (v) *Vēda Dharma Śāstra Paripālana Sabhā* (*Kumbakōṇam),* or (vi) Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) etc., who conduct and recognise similar feats via what is known as *Vēda Sadas* or *Vēda*

Parīkṣā. These *Mutts* periodically conduct rigorous oral examinations (*Parīkṣās*) where they test students' ability to execute complex permutations in chanting like *Varna*, *Pada*, *Krama*, *Jaṭā*, *Ghana*, and beyond, often spanning several days spent with the panel of *Vedic* experts. Candidates will be expected to recite flawlessly from memory, distinguishing subtleties in different *Ghana* recitation patterns even amongst peers. Success, akin to a "*PhD*" defence of an academic dissertation-paper, finally confers the title after eight to twelve years of post-*Saṃhitā* training, with toppers standing first across multiple *Pīṭhams*.

The Deeper Phase: From Recitation to Vēda Bhāṣyam

By the end of his teens, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had almost fully acquired the credentials to be awarded the title of *Ghanapāṭhī*. However, during his time as a seminarian in the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*, the modern institutional methods of examination and certification of today had not yet been developed.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s exceptional prowess as a *Ghanapāṭhi* and *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī* did not also really need any sort of examination, attestation, or accreditation by any other outside agency. The fact that he was a *Śiṣya* of the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* – generally regarded as what one might fancifully want to compare with an *Ivy League University* – distinguished him from peers elsewhere. Furthermore, the fact that he had been trained by his elder brother, the redoubtable *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī*, Mukkūr Ragunāthācāryār served to sign, stamp, and seal the hallmark of superiority and excellence upon him in recognition of mastery achieved over panoply of *Vedic* subjects.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was barely into his teens when he had already advanced into the next higher and deeper phase of studies – i.e. *Vēda Bhāṣyam* or hermeneutics, which involved a few more years of rigorous studies on ancient *Vedic* exegetical works such as those of *Sāyaṇācārya*, *Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara*, *Madhvācārya*, and *Mahīdhara*.

My interview with **MLS *Svāmī*** continued.

CHAPTER 6

Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār

- ***For how many years did Mukkūr Svāmī live in Vijayawada, and during which specific periods of his life (e.g., middle career or later years) was Vijayawada his primary residence, a secondary home, or a base for Andhra Pradesh activities, and what family connections tied him there?***
- ***Did family influences or community invitations play a role in this relocation away from Tamiḻ Nāḍu?***
- ***What specific work did he undertake in Vijayawada, Kākināḍa, and other regions in Andhra Pradesh, such as Upanyāsās, Yajñas, or teaching Vēda at local institutions?***

In his mid-teens, Mukkūr *Svāmī* joined his elder brother in Vijayawada. It could have been sometime around 1962. The move was driven mainly by the dire necessity to overcome the bleak financial circumstances under which the family was struggling at that time. Mukkūr *Svāmī* was beckoned to Vijayawada by his brother mainly to assist him and earn for himself any additional income he could for himself and the family, by doing any odd jobs that he might possibly be able to take up.

Before I tell you about how my father began his new life in Vijayawada, first I must tell you how the elder brother Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār was leading his there. It is important to describe that because it is central to understanding how Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s destiny began slowly unfolding thanks to the patient support his brother gave him.

The Friday Circuits

The elder brother was earning his livelihood as a *Vedic* priest for the local communities. In Vijayawada, priestly (*Bṛhaspati*) services for performing routine religious rituals were in much demand. The demand came mainly from local merchant communities that functioned similarly to how we know merchants and traders do in the Georgetown-Sowcarpet localities in downtown Chennai. In downtown Vijayawada too, at that time, there was a mercantile beehive… a marketplace wherein petty-shopkeepers and souk-traders, most of whom were cloth merchants, plied thriving trades.

Now, it was these shopkeepers' cultural custom to maintain and worship small shrines of Deities or sacred *Yantras* inside their shops. For those deities, they would arrange to perform solemn *Ārādhanā*: break coconuts, offer fruits as oblations, light camphor, and recite specific mantras believed to bring prosperity to their businesses. To officiate at these shop-level Friday *Pūjā* for the shop shrines, the shopkeepers needed and retained the services of qualified *Vedic* priests.

When they came to know that a great *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī* like Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār from Madurāntakam had settled down and was living in Vijayawada, they at once invited him to go to their shops every week to perform the Friday ritual *Pūjā*.

Thus, Raghunāthācāryār would trudge to each of the shops in the souk and cover 30 to 40 shops, all by himself, in a single forenoon on all Fridays, rendering service in and around the commercial District to hundreds of shop owners. Watching him perform the ritual Pūjā, the shopkeepers realised that they were in the presence of no ordinary priest but a very learned and highly accomplished *Vēdavid*. Their respect for him grew and very soon Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār's services as high priest in Vijayawada became a household name. Everyone began referring to him reverentially as "*Manchi Ghanapāṭhī*" or "*Pedda Ghanapāṭhī*" (good or great *Vedic* pundit).

For services thus rendered, Raghunāthācāryār was compensated by the Vijayawada traders through provision of groceries and many essential household foodstuffs – enough to last out a week and on which his family could feed itself comfortably. Also, at times were included, modest sums of *Dakṣiṇā*, cash or material (*Vastu*), which too the family gladly welcomed.

Thanks to the Vijayawada small-trader community, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār thus was able to gradually stabilise the family's finances in the early years in Andhra Pradesh. The income he earned was further supplemented by the *Vēda Adhyāpana* (teaching of *Vedic* chanting) activity he undertook at the Śrī Śrīnivāsa Perumāḷ temple. Many groups of young, poor *Vedic* students in the area came to him, wishing to equip themselves for a livelihood as community *Purōhitas*.

At first, they came in the dozens, but soon they began thronging to him in the hundreds, all eager to learn from Raghunāthācāryār. He devised a standard curriculum of *Vēda Praśnas,* which, when learnt, would help them to get a first start in their careers and earn a living as officiating priests (*Bṛhaspati*). Families and households in the Vijayawada District would commission them for priestly services – to conduct weddings, *Upanayana*, *Pāka-Yajña* or *Gṛhya-Hōma*, childbirth, *Puṇyāhavācanam,* etc.

As word of his prowess as a *Ghanapāṭhī* spread, very soon, serious *Vēda-Adhyāyīs* also began trooping to Raghunāthācāryār to undergo regular *Vēda-Adhyāya,* including *Ghanapāṭha*. Over the period from the mid-1960s until his demise in 1999, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Mukkūr Raghunathācārya had imparted training to more than a thousand students in Vijayawada. They fully qualified themselves as *Vēda Ghanapāṭhīs*. They came from villages in the neighbouring Districts of *Kākināḍa, Rajahmundry, and Siṃhācalam*. Many of them, in later years, achieved great renown as *Vedavids*.

The Tamarind Seed Tally: The Grinding Rigour of Andhra Ghanapāṭha and the Forging of a Śiṣya

In the Andhra tradition, Vēda scholars often direct their focus only on the *Ghanapāṭha* method of chanting for the *Saṃhitā* (hymnal portions). They usually relegate to lower priority the *Brāhmaṇa* or prose/ritualistic portions of the *Yajur Vēda's* seven long *Kāṇḍas.* Also, while in Tamiḻ Nāḍu, *Vedic* pundits prefer to chant the *Yajur* more in the *Mūlam/Krama* (prosaic) fashion, the Andhra *Vedavids* would give short shrift to *Mūlam* and instead chant more only in the typical *Ghana* or *Pada* mode of the hymnal versions of the same *Vedic Praśnas*.

Ghanapāṭhīs in Andhra Pradesh had a unique but extremely rigorous way by which they taught their disciples to gain mastery over the articulation of *Vēda Praśnas* word by word or *Pada* by *Pada.* They would provide the disciple with a large gunnysack filled with tiny black seeds of the tamarind fruit. There would be thousands of seeds. Then the disciple would be given another empty sack. The lessons would begin with a *Vedic Praśna*…. E.g. (*Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vēda Taittirīya Saṃhitā*) opening with the mantra **इ॒षे त्वो॒, -र्जे त्वा॑, वा॒यव॑: स्थोपा॒यव॑: स्थ, दे॒वो व॑: सवि॒ता प्रार्प॑यतु॒** etc. Now, the disciple will be instructed to pick one tamarind seed and hold it with his fingers, utter the first *Pada* (**इषे त्वा**) 13 times after which he would proceed to the next tamarind seed and do the same. The disciple thus will be expected to chant each *pada* not just 13 times but as many times as may be required to empty the sack. In other words, the disciple will not move to the next *pada* until the original sack is emptied.

In this grindingly slow, laborious method, the disciple would have to repeat each *Pada* in the whole *Vēda Praśna* in an interminable number of iterative sessions of practice until he was able to commit the whole of it to memory -- *word for word, Pada* by *Pada* -- and with the correct *Svara* intonation, phonetic *Chandas,* and metre!

In fact, it was so interesting for me when I was in Vijayawada to know that Andhra *Vedavids* would generally teach the *Taittirīya Śākhā* texts in their *Brāhmaṇa* form (prosaic) also in the *Ghanapāṭha* form. The focus, however, is more on *Saṃhitā* and the repetitive exercises (*Santai*) is conducted many times over. But for the *Brāhmaṇa* rendition, the *Santai* is done only once.

Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār too taught his *Śiṣyas* the *Ghanapāṭha* with the same degree of rigour and thoroughness observed to achieve the desired level of perfection.

The Master's Mirror: Cellapalli Svāmī

To give you some idea of Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār's eminence as a *Ghanapāṭhī*, I must tell you a bit about my own *Vēda Adhyāpaka,* who happened to be his *Śiṣya*. His name is **Śrī Cellapalli Subrahmaṇya Ghanapāṭhī *Svāmī*** (*more about him in Chapter 24*).

Today, if I can claim a modicum of knowledge and a bit of proficiency in *Ghana* rendering, I owe it all only to *Cellapalli Svāmī,* who today lives in Vijayawada. He specialises in *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda Ghanapāṭha* and other scriptural recitations while leading teams in extended (marathon) *Pārāyaṇams*. He led a group of 6 *Ghanapāṭhīs* and recited the entire *Saṃhitā* in *Ghana* format over a period of 30 days during Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s 70th *Tirunakshathram* at Mattapalli in the year 2014.

[**Author's Note:** The hoary Cellapalli *Zamīndārī* heritage near *Mōpidēvi Subrahmaṇyēśvara Temple* (*Kṛṣṇa* District, ~70 km from Vijayawada) is known to have, over several past centuries, actively sponsored and performed over 100 *Śrī Svāti Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas* nationwide, sustaining living *Vedic* lineages of the *Agrahāra* communities. Unverified research findings in this regard have discovered a treatise on the *Vājapēya-Yajña.* It contains scholarly contributions to *Śrauta* rituals. It upholds Godāvarī delta *Agrahāra* practices amid their modern decline, focusing on ritual procedures and recitation techniques.]

The mastery of *Ghana* rendering of Cellapalli *Svāmī* of Vijayawada is truly legendary. It has been acquired after decades of ceaseless practice and austerity. This *Vēdavid* virtually breathes, lives, and even dreams *Vēda*. You can hardly find him engaged at any time in any activity unrelated to *Vēda-Adhyāya*.

Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār's Subconscious Mastery

Once some years ago, when I was in Vijayawada, I was taking lessons from Cellapalli *Svāmī* in his home, rendering a few selected *Ghana* passages.

After a few hours of strenuous lessons in chanting, I was exhausted and famished. He then invited me to join him for a meal. We sat down to eat a sumptuous typical Andhra meal enriched with plentiful pure ghee and hot, spicy mango (*Āvakkāy*) pickle, curds, and loads of vegetables.

After the delicious meal, I made to go home. I wanted to relax and have an afternoon siesta. He at once accosted me and said,

> *"Where do you think you are going, young man?! You are not going anywhere to relax or rest. No rest for Vēda-Adhyāya. You shall now go with me!"*

I had to accompany Cellapalli *Svāmī* to another venue in Vijayawada where a *Vēda Ghana Pārāyaṇa Sadas* (group chanting of *Vēda*) was being performed by over 150-200 *Vedavids* assembled there. Every one of them was a highly accomplished exponent of *Vēda Ghana* rendering. The assembly welcomed Cellapalli *Svāmī* into their midst. He took his seat in the front on stage while I took my place right at the back row, about ten metres away. Behind me, at least a hundred other *Vedic* pundits were seated in the assembly. Amidst their august presence, I knew my rightful and humble place. I seated myself as far away from the stage as possible.

The *Ghana* chanting went on for an hour and a half. It was an absolute treat to listen to the majestic chants of the *Vēda*. For me, seated in the back row, it was a treat too to join in the chanting albeit in a low-key manner and appropriately low-voice tone.

The session ended and we took leave. On the walk back home, Cellapalli *Svāmī* turned to me suddenly and said something which stopped me in my tracks. I was stunned in amazement:

> *"You know from the stage I was watching you chant along with the others. You did quite well, yes. But I did spot you slipping a little and fumbling while rendering that specific sequence in the Ghana chant. After stumbling a bit, you did then recover, but that error didn't go unnoticed."*

And he proceeded to quote then the exact *Pada* (phrasings) in the exact sequence the recital had earlier taken place! I confessed to him that it was at that very point in the chanting sequence when I had indeed faltered.

The power of his observation and memory recall was truly astounding. He was seated on stage amidst about 200 other *Vedavids* who were chanting in unison. I was seated at the very back about 10 metres away. Yet, he had been able to instantly spot my lapse and could even quote the exact *Vēda Praśna* where my recital had gone awry. Turning to him in sheer amazement, I asked him,

"Svāmī, how are you able to do it?!"

He smiled and told me laconically,

"This is nothing…! Do you know, I used to learn Ghanapāṭha from your Periappā? In the many practice sessions, I had with him, he often used to ask me to keep chanting while he slumbered and dozed off a bit. But at precisely the point when I'd happened to slip up and make a mistake – the slightest one -- or I had fumbled a little, he'd instantly wake up to chastise and correct me. Even in his sleep, your uncle had only one thing running through his mind: the Vēda!"

CHAPTER 7

The Godāvarī *Agrahāra*

The Keepers of the Flame: Mukkūr Svāmī and the Elite Agnihōtrī Traditions of the Godāvarī Delta

Sixty years ago (circa 1960s), when Mukkūr *Svāmī* travelled to Vijayawada from Mukkūr Village to join his elder brother there, the Godāvarī delta region, including areas like Kōnaśīmā near Rajahmundry, Kākināḍa and parts of the Kṛṣṇa District, hosted numerous *Agrahāra* villages and Brahmin hamlets with *Āhitāgni* or *Agnihōtrīs* (sacred fire maintainers), *Vēda pundits*, and *Ghanapāṭha* experts who taught and performed *Vedic* rituals.

The *Āhitāgnis* of the Rajahmundry Godāvarī belt *Agrahāra* refer to a select group of *Niyōgī* Brahmin householders—primarily from the Rajahmundry, Kākināḍa, and surrounding Godāvarī delta *Agrahāra*—who performed and maintained the traditional *Vedic Agnyādhāna* rite, establishing the three sacred fires (*Gārhapatya*, *Āhavanīya*, and *Dakṣināgni*) in their homes.

They earned the name *Āhitāgni* (literally "*one who has kindled/placed the fire*") because, following marriage and *upanayana*, they underwent the formal *Agnyādhāna* ceremony—churning fire from *Araṇi* sticks (*Samidh* and *Aśvattha* wood)—and committed to perpetual upkeep of these fires for daily *Agnihōtra* oblations (per *Śrauta-Sūtras*), and major *Yajñas* like *Vājapēya*. This lifelong vow, rooted in *Gṛhya* and *Śrauta* texts like *Hiraṇyakēśi-Gṛhya-Sūtra* and *Bhāradvāja-Śrauta-Sūtra*, distinguished them as elite *Vedic* ritualists among Telugu Brahmins, preserving *Śrauta* traditions amid *Tantric* and *Purāṇic* dominance.

In the Godāvarī *Agrahāras* (e.g., Rajahmundry's Brahmin quarters), these pundits, including scholars like *Cellapalli Subrahmaṇya Ghanapāṭhī Svāmī,* specialised in complex *Yajñas*, earning patronage from local *Zamīndārs* and Maṭhas; their fires symbolised unbroken *Vedic* orthodoxy in Andhra's *Niyōgī* strongholds.

Very few *Āhitāgni* are known to survive today performing the full traditional rite in the Rajahmundry belt; the practice has largely vanished due to urbanisation, fire

maintenance challenges, and socio-economic shifts post-1940s, though symbolic *Agnihōtra* persists in some ***Smārta- and Vaiṣṇava*** families.

The Living Tradition of the Delta: The World of the Andhra Agrahāras

In the past, right up to the years till when Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār and Mukkūr *Svāmī* lived in Vijayawada, these small *Agrahāra* communities maintained a living tradition of *Vedic* recitation and *Śrauta* sacrifices, drawing scholarly interest from several generations in the region. The life of *Vedic* communities in this region has been well documented in historical and anthropological works on delta *Agrahāras* such as *Śrīrāmapuram* and *Kāmēśvarī*.

The Last Stronghold: Two Millennia of Vedic Heritage in the Delta

***Vedic* Voices: Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition** is a 2015 ethnographic book by **David M. Knipe** documenting *Vedic pundit* families in Godāvarī Delta *Agrahāras*.

The work captures first-person narratives from four generations of ten *Taittirīya Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda* families across villages like Śrīrāmapuram and Kāmēśvarī, detailing their *Āhitāgni* rituals, *Ghanapāṭha* training, and adaptation to 20th-21st century changes. It highlights *Śrauta Sōma* sacrifices, daily offerings, and spousal roles amid modernisation pressures, positioning Coastal Andhra as India's last stronghold for such ancient practices.

Knipe's three-decade fieldwork, starting from initial encounters with senior pundits, underscores the region's overlooked *Vedic* heritage despite its rice-coconut economy and pilgrimage sites. The book has been acclaimed as a vital contribution to South Asian religious studies, preserving Godāvarī voices on ancestral lineages and survival strategies.

Vedic Agrahāra villages in Coastal Andhra's Godāvarī and partly Kṛṣṇa deltas thrived for over a millennium before the 1960s too, long before Mukkūr *Svāmī* arrived there.

There are documents of royal grants and settlements here dating back to ancient dynasties in South India. *Agrahāras* emerged prominently from the

Śātavāhana era (2nd century BCE–3rd century CE), where *Vēṅgī* (the deltas) saw frequent Brahmin land grants, including migrations from northern India like *Ahicchatra* on the Ganges. *Śālaṅkāyana* rulers (3rd–5th centuries CE) in the Kṛṣṇa-Godāvarī region further established them, as evidenced by copper-plate charters.

Later Eastern Cālukyas (7th–12th centuries) and Cōḻa influences also boosted *Agrahāras*. For instance, in 1022–1063 CE, *Rājarāja Narēndra Cōḻa* received *Vedic* scholar families from Tamiḻ Nāḍu's River Kāvēri banks, and they founded village sites like *Ryāli* near *Rāvulapālem*. The Kākatiyas, Reḍḍis, and Vijayanagara emperors (*up to ~1500 CE*) also expanded them across coastal plains to Telaṅgāṇā and Rāyalasīma.

Later *Zamīndārs* perpetuated the system, such as early 1800s endowments in *Vōntimāmiḍi Agrahāra* near *Pīṭhāpuram* for the cause of *Vedic* propagation. This sustained the communities' prominence right into the 20th century CE.

The Fading Bastion: Mukkūr Svāmī's Arrival Amidst Cultural Twilight

By the time Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār and Mukkūr *Svāmī* arrived in Vijayawada, the traditional *Vedic* village communities in Coastal Andhra, particularly *Agrahāra* hamlets in the Godāvarī and Kṛṣṇa deltas, were slowly beginning to undergo significant decline and transformation since the late 1950s-early 1960s due to modernisation, urbanisation, and environmental pressures.

The whole region was experiencing economic shifts where the people's priorities were irrigated agriculture and wage labour and not *Vedic* scholarship. Village residents were switching to adopt diverse livelihoods like farming rice and coconuts. They were also migrating to urban centres. Large-scale infrastructure developments, including roads, railways, and canals from the colonial era onward, were integrating isolated villages into broader economies, eroding traditional self-sufficiency and ways of life. Urban expansion around cities like Rajahmundry and Vijayawada converted peri-urban agricultural land, imposing property taxes and fragmenting rural hamlets.

Family sizes shrank as younger generations pursued education and jobs outside *Vedic* recitation, reducing the number of *Āhitāgni* (sacred fire maintainers) and *Ghanapāṭha* chanters; multigenerational teaching persisted in pockets but was on a smaller scale.

Environmental factors, such as coastal erosion, cyclones, and sediment decline from upstream dams, damaged villages like *Uppāḍa*, prompting abandonment and relocation. Housing evolved from traditional vernacular styles to modern brick structures, reflecting socio-economic changes while vernacular elements languished.

Today, in Kōnaśīmā region, there still remains a rare but miniscule stronghold for *Śrauta* rituals and *Vedic* communities. They still attract *Vedic* scholars despite broader attrition elsewhere in the deltas. Active pundits in these micro-communities continue *Ghanapāṭha* recitations and rituals, amid national decline that only very recently was arrested and is seeing some degree of revivalism.

When Mukkūr *Svāmī* first arrived in Vijayawada, the overall reputation of the region as a bastion of *Vedic* ethos was slowly fading amid urbanisation, agricultural shifts, and migration. Still, when he and his elder brother began earning a livelihood in this region as *Vedic Ghanapāṭhīs* and *Bṛhaspatis*, the old Andhra tradition of *Vedic* chanting by *Ghanapāṭha* scholars was continuing. But the tradition could be described only as a specialised one rather than a tradition which historically had been known once upon a time to define the coastal regional belt's identity. The ecosystem and geography of the area had not yet entirely shifted to rice farming, tourism, and backwater aqua farming as seen today.

It was such an eco-and-cultural system that prevailed in Vijayawada when Mukkūr *Svāmī* first arrived there in *circa* 1962.

CHAPTER 8

Livelihood Challenge

From Penury to Divine Epiphany

Mukkūr *Svāmī* lived in Vijayawada for nearly a decade, between 1962 and 1971 when he moved back to Chennai. Most of this period in his life – certainly up to the year 1967-68 -- was personally the most harrowing for him. He had to grapple with near-penurious circumstances, facing at times situations of hand-to-mouth subsistence. Still, at the same time, it was also, spiritually, the most transformative period in which he experienced a powerful, life-changing religious experience… perhaps one might even call it a *miracle* or *epiphany* of sorts. The experience signified a watershed in his life, marked by a sudden consciousness of a divine visitation that he himself at first found mystifying.

It was indeed a moment when his life journey to a destined path unexpectedly began: firstly, as an ***Upanyāsaka,*** i.e. an outstanding exponent of Vēda/Vedāntic ritual, philosophy, scripture, literature, and culture; and later, as an austere, almost intensely *Ṛṣi*-like ***Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña Upāsaka*** who showed modern-day Hindu society the doorways to ancient *Vedic* liturgical practice and that the paths to worship through the conduct of ***Mahā-Yajña*** ("*great sacrifice*") could still be reopened and revived.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* began life in Vijayawada by ably assisting his elder brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, in all activities the latter undertook as the community's *Vēdavid* and *Bṛhaspati*. As their chief priest, the latter was conducting *Pūjā* in the downtown marketplace where over 200 local cloth-merchants and small traders owned shops. There, within small alcove-shrines they maintained in the precincts, they performed ceremonial worship for deities every Friday of the week.

Since the demand for such priestly services was high and pressing, and it became impossible for Raghunāthācāryār to officiate at more than about 20 to 30 shop establishments in a week, he urged his brother "*Cheela*" to perform the same Friday *Pūjās* in 10 or 15 more shops. That therefore ensured that the shopkeepers of Vijayawada marketplace did not miss the religious custom they wished should be regularly performed.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* gladly obliged and went around the shops and diligently performed his *Upa-Bṛhaspati* or assistant role to perfection. He was thus soon able to earn a steady weekly income stream – small amounts of cash as well as "*in kind groceries*" the shopkeepers kindly provided him with as *Dakṣiṇā*.

On certain special occasions, a few households in Vijayawada also requested Mukkūr *Svāmī* to come to their homes to perform the customary *Satyanārāyaṇa-Pūjā* – a special domestic religious rite very prevalent amongst all pious Andhra Hindus. He gladly went there to their homes and sincerely conducted the *Pūjā* in a very elaborate manner. His services so greatly pleased those families that many requested for the repeat of his priestly performance.

The *Satyanārāyaṇa-Pūjā* proceedings that normally would be hurried through by other professional *Bṛhaspati* in less than 45 minutes were conducted, however, by Mukkūr *Svāmī* for nearly three hours because he adhered to every detailed, prescribed rite and sacraments without compromising or giving short shrift to the rite. The family folk, when they thus realised that this was no ordinary priest performing *Pūjā* perfunctorily but a *Vēdavid* of great erudition and piety, thereafter, began entreating him to also deliver repeat performances at their homes. Furthermore, they requested him for *Pravacanams* (shorter versions of *Upanyāsa* or public discourse) on the significance of the Sathyanarayana Pūjā. These private discourses, delivered in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s elegant Telugu, captivated the families and very soon he became popular.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus became well known in Vijayawada family households for the way he could enthral them with his short *Pravacanams*. The *Dakṣiṇā* thus earned by him further supplemented Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s income.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s fledgling reputation as a very engaging *Upanyāsaka*, a *Vēdavid,* who was also steeped in ancient lores, *Itihāsa,* and *Purāṇa*, thus began to gradually flower in the Vijayawada clime. What amazed his audiences was his ability to deliver orations with ease and felicity in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Maṇipravāḷa, and also in native Telugu, and that endeared him to both the learned and common people.

The Indian Railways Service: Giving Wilderness an Identity

While meagre earnings did enable Mukkūr *Svāmī* to support himself to some extent, to make both ends meet from month to month, however, remained a challenge. He was desperate to further augment the measly income. It was then that, thanks to a

sympathetic friend of his elder brother, he was offered a part-time "*casual work*", a gig in the local Indian Railways Department.

At that time, the Railways were investing heavily in what was known as the Daṇḍakāraṇya Project for building railroad tracks through parts of forest territory running along coastal belts of Siṃhācalam/Viśākhapaṭṭaṇam into interior Andhra Pradesh. Near and around these areas, the rail tracks had to run through extensive landscapes with vast woods and wilderness dotted by trees. As per law, the Railway authorities while laying rail tracks had to be mindful of which trees were to be left untouched and which to be cleared. For that purpose, each tree on the terrain had to be located and identified. Each tree then also had to have painted prominently upon its trunk, a unique serial number. The job of going into the wilderness, identifying such trees in the woods and marking them with unique painted numbers was outsourced to local Vijayawada *casual workers* who were willing to do the job.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in desperate need to supplement income, volunteered for the menial job. For several months, he carried it out quite cheerfully even though the remuneration offered barely made any substantial difference to his financial situation. In later years, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would look back on those months of arduous work and smile to himself saying,

> *"Every tree in that landscape I know personally because it was I who gave them all a distinct numeric identity!"*

Office Job: the TVS Years

A little while thereafter, a family friend of the two brothers, who had seen the precarious financial plight of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, was good enough to put in a word of recommendation with the local Vijayawada TVS Group's (Sundaram Transport) lorry-freight service company office. The TVS Transport office offered Mukkūr *Svāmī* a steady desk job as a clerical assistant charged with filling out waybill forms and goods consignment notes, etc.

The "*TVS job",* although menial, did secure for him the security and mental comfort that a steady monthly income assures. More importantly, it also secured for him time and opportunity to continue without further disruption his other *Vedic* pursuits, religious *Anuṣṭhānas* (mandatory routines and sacraments). It left him free in his spare time to devote himself to advanced *Ghanapāṭha* training he continued to have under the tutelage of Raghunāthācāryār. With the resumption of the *Ghanapāṭha*

sessions, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s proficiency and prowess as *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī* and *Vedic* scholar grew by leaps and bounds. He attained higher, consummate levels of excellence.

MLS *Svāmī*, his son, recounted a personal memory in this regard that was emotionally touching indeed:

A Reflex of Perfection: Lessons at the Feet of Raghunāthācāryār

My father would practice his *Vedic* lessons at home while massaging his elder brother's feet and legs as Raghunāthācāryār *Svāmī* himself rested after a long day of service at the nearby *Śrīnivāsa Perumāḷ* temple, or else, after having finished long *Vēda* classes he took for his other young students there. But even while he was asleep, my *Periappā* would awaken momentarily and move his hand reflexively to correct any rhythmic error (*Svara* or *Pada*) that he heard creeping unobtrusively in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s chanting. That was the level of perfection that both the master and disciple always aspired to achieve. It demonstrated how they both gained absolute mastery over the *Vedic Śabda*… its pristine, sacred sounds.

CHAPTER 9

The Miracle of Maṅgalagiri

In trying to secure for himself a sustainable livelihood in Vijayawada, Mukkūr *Svāmī* did undergo much hardship. Nevertheless, that did not affect in the least his deep and unwavering religiosity. He became deeply involved in intense *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā*.

As a grand disciple of the 42nd *Śrīmad Iñjimēṭṭu Azhagiyasingar* of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, even from his childhood days in Madurāntakam, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had always been inspired by the pontiff's own famed *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā*. The *Ācāryā*'s devotees had believed that through the power of such *Upāsanā* he often could commune through *Dhyāna* (deep meditation) with Śrī Nṛsiṃha himself.

Image 17: *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā*

Perhaps emulating his *Ācāryā*'s example, Mukkūr *Svāmī* too began cultivating intense feelings of *bhakti* in his heart (*Upāsanā*) for the Deity of the Ahōbilam Hills (known as "*Siṅgavēḷkuṇṛam Kṣetra*"), *Śrī Mālōla Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha*. Having uprooted himself from native Mukkūr Village and finding himself grappling with severe adversities in life in distant Andhra Pradesh, the intensity of his *Nṛsiṃha-upāsanā*, inspired as it were by his *Ācāryā*, *Śrīmad iñjimēṭṭu Azhagiyasingar*, grew more personal and began assuming, day by day, more austere and severe forms.

Living in Vijayawada, he was far away— more than 350 kms— from the sacred hills of Ahōbilam. Yet, within his heart, Mukkūr *Svāmī* felt blessed, continuing to feel the constant presence of Śrī *Nṛsiṃha*. The reason he felt so was because there was in

Vijayawada this very ancient temple of *Pānakāla* Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Temple on the hills of Maṅgalagiri *Kṣetra* about 15 kms away from his home. Mentally, he clung in desperation to the Deity there, beseeching divine grace and succour even as his *Upāsanā* practices grew more intense, more austere by the day.

Throughout the years 1964 through 1969, at every available opportunity to him, and despite his daily struggles to eke out a spartan living— juggling as he did a clerical drudge job at a freighter-transport office, Friday *Pūjā* rounds at dozens of cloth-merchant shops in the busy marketplace, other special *Pravacana* assignments, and long, rigorous *Ghanapāṭha* sessions with his elder brother— Mukkūr *Svāmī* still managed to devote himself to intense, single-minded *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā*. This devotion exhibited itself in his frequently trudging all the way from Vijayawada to Maṅgalagiri by foot— 15 kms back and forth often in summer heat exceeding 40°C— to offer worship to the deity at the temple there. So ardent was his extraordinary *Nṛsiṃha-Bhakti* that often at the temple on the steep-slopes of the hill, people passing by often saw him sitting long hours in silent meditation (*Dhyāna*) or contemplation— reciting sacred mantras and *Vedic* passages in praise of *Śrī Nṛsiṃha-Mūrti*.

It was clear that a very deep psychic churning and a rumbling inward transformation of spirit was taking place within him— though Mukkūr *Svāmī*, to the outside world, appeared to be no more than just another priest or *Vedic* pundit eking a part-time livelihood with a day-job in a transport-company in Vijayawada.

The Miracle at Maṅgalagiri: Sowing of the Seed of a Life Mission

- ***What specific event, vision, teaching, or personal experience inspired him to undertake the mission Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas, and when did this resolve form in his life?***
- ***Did any guru, family member, or any intuited divine command play a motivating role in his decision to start popularising Nṛsiṃha theistic worship through Yajña?***

To the questions above, Śrī **MLS *Svāmī*** began reminiscing:

> "What I shall now recount to you is about an incident at Maṅgalagiri that involved my father. It can be described only as miraculous and life-transforming.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was rarely ever inclined in public discourses he delivered to reveal autobiographical information. However, an exception he made was regarding this incident, which he has described more than once in his *Upanyāsas*. In fact, what he recollected and conveyed about it in his own words got recorded in much later years in the popular book (Tamil), *Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai*, published as a compilation of many of his public talks delivered over the years. So, whatever I am now going to narrate to you about that incident is only a paraphrase of what has already been published.

It was a kind of severe *Tapas* Mukkūr *Svāmī* began undertaking while he walked up there to the hill temple, nearly 15 kms away from his home. Not a single day would he ever miss that trek if the day fell under the *Svāti* asterism – *Śrī Nṛsiṃha*'s own *Tirunakṣatra*. He would climb the hill on foot, carrying a pot of *Pānakam* (water sweetened by jaggery and flavoured mildly with rare herbs) to offer to his beloved deity, *Śrī Pānakāla* Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī*.

On Tuesdays of the week, whenever it was possible for him to steal time away from his day job or from other *Upa-Bṛhaspati* commitments, he would again go to Maṅgalagiri to worship the Lord. Throughout those years when he undertook those gruelling long pilgrimages on foot to Maṅgalagiri, the extraordinary devotion – *Asādhya-Bhakti* – he nurtured in his heart towards *Śrī Nṛsiṃha* grew more intense by the day. It was really what gave him great strength and fortitude to suffer tribulations in life. But it also seemed to signal that he was on the cusp of some divine visitation about to happen."

Maṅgalagiri: A Hill Temple and its Divine Mysteries

It is important here to pause and very briefly describe a few notable features about the great, age-old temple of Maṅgalagiri *Kṣetra* just so we can understand why Mukkūr *Svāmī* came under its intense spiritual spell; and how it all eventually led to the miraculous religious transformation --- the "*divine visitation*" as MLS *Svāmī* called it --- suddenly experienced later on a fateful day in the year 1969.

The temple of Śrī Pānakāla Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* is an ancient shrine where Śrī Nṛsiṃha manifested Himself in the *Kṛta Yuga*. The self-manifested (*Svayambhū*) deity cast in granite appears in the form of a large gaping maw, wide open. Into the mouth of this stone maw (more than 15.cms wide) devotees pour *Pānakam* (jaggery-sweetened water) as a copious flow of offerings.

Image 18: *Temple of Śrī Pānakāla Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī*

This unique temple is one of the eight important *Maha Kṣetras* where Lord Viṣṇu manifested Himself. The eight places are (1) Śrīraṅgam (2) Śrīmuṣṇam (3) Naimiṣam (4) Puṣkaram (5) Salagāmadri (Śālagrāmam) (6) Tōtādri (7) Nārāyaṇāśramam (8) Vēṅkaṭādri. Tōtādri is present-day **Maṅgalagiri**. The temple follows the sacred *Vaikhānasa-Āgama-Śāstra* traditions.

Maṅgalagiri means "*The Auspicious Hill*". The Consort of Viṣṇu, Goddess Śrī Lakṣmī-Dēvī (*Maṅgala*) is said to have performed *Tapas* (penance) on this hill. That's why it got this name (*The hill of auspiciousness*), according to the *Sthala Purāṇa* of the *Kṣetra* (temple lore).

There are three separate Nṛsiṃha *Svāmī* temples at Maṅgalagiri. One is *Pānakāla Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī* on the hill. Another one is *Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī* at the foot of the hill. The third one is *Gaṇḍālaya Nṛsiṃha Svāmī* at the top of an adjacent hillock.

The *Sthala Purāṇa* of the temple dates and traces the *Kṣetra's* existence across a meta-scale timeline era of *Yugas*. As per Vedas and Puranas, the timescale of the 4 yugas is in multiples of 432,000 years. *Kali-Yuga* - 4,32,000; *Dvāpara-Yuga* – 432000 x 2 = 8,64,000; *Tretā-Yuga* – 432000 x 3 = 12,96,000; Kṛta Yuga – 432000 x 4 = 17,28,000. Maṅgalagiri is believed to have existed from primordial times when the Universe was created. *Añjanādri* was its name in the *Kṛta-Yuga*; *Tōtādri* in the *Tretā-Yuga*; *Muktyādri* in the *Dvāpara-Yuga*; and *Maṅgalagiri* in the ongoing *Kali-yuga*.

The offerings of *Pānakam* made to the Deity here are peculiar and from which the Lord here gets his name, *Pānakāla Nṛsiṃha Svāmī*. There is a legend about the offering of the *Pānakam* (jaggery-water) to the Lord.

It is said that the hill was once upon a time in a distant *Yuga* an active volcano spewing molten lava and fumes. It is believed that in some subterranean bowels deep under the earth, the volcano still exists but lies in a dormant state. The jaggery-sweetened water poured into the idol's maw here in the temple, it is believed, neutralises toxic and noxious sulphuric compounds and fumes emanating still from the subterranean volcano and prevents volcanic eruption.

Pilgrims and devotees march into the sanctum here and pour their offerings of jaggery-water with the aid of a conch-shell into the Deity's gaping maw. A gurgling sound is then clearly audible, and the belief is that the Lord accepts the devotee's offering by drinking it (*Pānakam* even when poured, sometimes, will not be consumed by the Lord. Generally, this will happen if the vessel is half empty). The gulping sound becomes shriller as the Deity continues to quaff the *Pānakam* down the throat. The sound then stops and after a few moments half the quantity of jaggery-water that was reverently poured in begins flowing out on its own in reverse. The devotee then can collect the reverse-flow of *Pānakam* in a vessel as *Bhagavat-Prasādam* and withdraw from the sanctum. This amazing phenomenon happens not just once in a day but keeps recurring during the entire course of the day as and when devotees go there for *Darśana* and offer *Pānakam*.

What is also equally amazing is that despite the normal and expected spillage of "*jaggery-sweetened water*" in and around the sanctum, no ants nor any other insects or creatures can be found to be attracted to the spot or crawling anywhere near the Deity.

Behind the temple there is the Śrī Lakṣmī *Sannidhi*, to the west of which there is believed to be a dark, natural, and inaccessible cave. It is said that it leads to an even deeper network of invisible underground caves called *Undavalli* Caves that ends up somewhere on the distant banks of the Kṛṣṇa River. This is where, it is believed, ancient *Ṛṣis* and sages in past *Yugas* used to go to take a bath in the Kṛṣṇa River and perform ritual ablutions. The caves today are totally submerged and are not visible to surveys or the naked eye.

At the foot of the Maṅgalagiri hill, there is the third temple called the *Sannidhi* of Śrī *Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī* whose origin is traced to the time of *Yudhiṣṭhira*, the eldest of the *Pāṇḍavas* in the *Mahābhārata*.

At the very top of the hill, there is no idolised deity to be found but only a consecrated spot meant for lighting *Dīpam*—small oil-lit lamps. Pilgrims congregate

here and place hundreds of small oil-lit flaming lamps in prayer for boons to be granted. At night, the flames of these hundreds of lamps are often visible to surrounding villages as flickering lights in the distant darkness. It is a mesmerising, almost mystical sight indeed to witness.

MLS *Svāmī* continued his narrative:

The Divine Mandate: A Miraculous Encounter at Maṅgalagiri

"One day, sometime in the year 1969, Mukkūr *Svāmī* travelled by foot to the Maṅgalagiri temple on a Tuesday. It was a day of the rising *Svāti* asterism. He carried a pot-vessel filled with fresh *Pānakam* prepared lovingly at home for the Deity, *Śrī Pānakāla Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī*.

On that day, as in many others in the past, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was forced to journey on foot because he could not spare the fare of *four Annās* (*a quarter of a rupee*) charged by the local city shuttle-bus service. If the *four Annās* had been spent on the bus fare, he knew he would not have had the means to buy jaggery and prepare *Pānakam* for the pleasure of Lord Nṛsiṃha. So, after carrying the *Pānakam* in a vessel, he chose to trek the entire 15-odd km distance from home in Vijayawada and climb the cobbled-stone steps that led up the hills to the Maṅgalagiri temple.

My father reached the hilltop temple at 12:00 p.m. The chief priest *Ārādhaka* told Mukkūr *Svāmī* that he had made it just in time since the temple was about to be closed for the day and all *Darśana-Sēvā*. The priest said he was himself cleaning up the sanctum, and once done, he was going to lock up and head home.

So, Mukkūr *Svāmī* hurriedly made his offerings of *Pānakam* to the Deity, completed the worship, took leave of the temple priest, and, after collecting the rest of the '*jaggery-sweetened water'* as *Bhagavat-Prasādam* in a vessel in hand, he trekked down the cobbled steps down the hillside. The *Ārādhaka* called after him:

> *"Wait for me a little while, please, downhill, will you? Let me finish up here. I can join you on the way back to Vijayawada. You go and sit near the "Arasamaram" (peepal tree) and I'll see you there" (i.e. few steps below the sanctum overlooking the footsteps coming to the hill)."*

The priest added,

"You must be hungry, and so am I… Down in the sannidhi, there must be some Puḷiyōdarai (freshly cooked rice garnished with tamarind and spices) still left as Bhagavat-Prasādam. We can both eat it as a meal before we journey back to the city…. And you have with you the rest of the Pānakam… we can have that too to refresh us".

"Alright", said Mukkūr *Svāmī* and descended the hill.

As he climbed down the slopes to the foothill temple of Nṛsiṃha *Svāmī*, he stopped and sat on a stone step, resting his tired legs under the cool shade of a large peepal tree nearby. As he waited for the *Ārādhaka,* Mukkūr *Svāmī* began reciting under his breath the *Nṛsiṃha-Mantra* – ***Ugraṃ Vīraṃ Mahāviṣṇuṃ…*** (*from the "Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra"*).

Shortly thereafter, suddenly an old man holding a staff slowly trudged up to Mukkūr *Svāmī*. Coming nearer, he sat down a little way beside him. Huffing and puffing, the old man began complaining of the heat, sweating, and extreme thirst.

"I wonder if you could offer me something cool to drink to refresh myself…", he said.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* told him:

"I am sorry, I don't have drinking water to offer you, but here… if you don't mind… you are welcome to take this Pānakam. It's Prasādam from the temple up there… Here, take it. At least, it will slake your thirst a little."

The old man took the vessel in his hands and in the blink of an eye drank all the *Pānakam* in one draught.

Giving the vessel back to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the old man came close and looked at my father and suddenly, in coarse rustic Telugu dialect, said:

ఎప్పుడే పానాగం ఏనా?! యజ్ఞ హవిసు లేదా?! ...

"Eppudū Pānakam Ēnā?! Yajña Havissu Lēdā?!"

"Why always offer me only Pānakam Prasādam? Why not Yajña-oblations?"

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was astonished at the rather cheeky tone in which the old man spoke. He felt slightly offended that the old man was ungraciously taking kind gestures for granted. So, he replied sharply:

ఈ పొట్టకే లేదే...!!

ee pottakae ledhae...

"I don't have anything for this stomach (showing his belly), where can I offer Yajña Havis?"

Fearing that perhaps the old man thought him to be rude, Mukkūr *Svāmī* quickly added rather apologetically:

> *"Sir, but if you need more Pānakam to drink, please climb up a few more steps up the hill to the temple there… The priest there might still be around… He might offer you more Pānakam to slake your thirst. Go there now, refresh yourself and the Ārādhaka will accompany you back here, safely."*

The old man chuckled, sprang to his feet suddenly. Then with a wave of his long staff, he tapped gently on Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s head and muttered the *Nṛsiṃha-Mantra* of ***Ugraṃ Vīraṃ Mahāviṣṇuṃ…!*** Then he did another strange thing. He whispered:

> *"From this day onwards, I say you will begin performing a great many "Mahā-Yajñas" in your life and you will gain renown amongst devotees. So, go forth now!"*

The old man abruptly swirled around and, turning his back on Mukkūr *Svāmī*, began slowly walking up the hilly pathway and disappeared into the temple. My father, as he recalled it later, seeing the old man… *Vayō-Vṛddha*… made him think to himself:

> *"Poor old man… wonders what brings him all the way to Maṅgalagiri. He's so frail… could be mentally ill too. Why must he think me, the least qualified of all persons in the world, to be the one that's going to be performing "Mahā-Yajñas …?!"*

In a short while, the *Pānakāla* Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* temple "*Ārādhaka*" arrived at the foothills all alone. At once, Mukkūr *Svāmī* asked him in surprise:

> *"A poor old man with a long staff climbed up a while ago to meet you in the temple. Did you see him? I told him to return with you… Why isn't he with you? Where is he?"*

The priest was equally surprised:

"What old man?! I saw no one!"

Worried that the priest might have locked up the temple doors with the old man trapped inside somewhere, Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the *Ārādhaka* frantically rushed back to the temple. They reopened the bolted doors and

conducted a thorough search inside the empty precincts. They could not find anyone there even after calling out aloud several times for the old man.

Where could he have gone?! There was just no way out at the back of the hilltop shrine since behind were only those legendary, inaccessible, and invisible underground caves. They were known to lead simply nowhere into the ravines of the River Kṛṣṇa.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the temple priest, after further futile searching, unable to locate the old man, finally gave up. Thinking that perhaps he had found some other unknown pathway down the hillsides and had finally made his way back to wherever he had come from, they proceeded to go home.

As Mukkūr *Svāmī* walked back home to Vijayawada late that afternoon, he had already forgotten about the strange old man – the *Vayō-Vṛddha* – he had encountered at Maṅgalagiri."

A Transformation in Life

"Immediately upon reaching home, Mukkūr *Svāmī* found an express telegram message waiting for him.

It was from the organising committee of a well-known religious institution in Coimbatore inviting him to deliver a 30-day-long *Upanyāsa* in that faraway city in Tamiḻ Nāḍu.

Little did he realise then that it was the moment marking a *transformation in life*!

It was the beginning of a dramatic new phase… From that day in 1969 onwards until well into the year 1982-83, Mukkūr *Svāmī* seemed to be impelled by some powerful miraculous force of Divinity through those 12 long years. It was a period in which *Lord Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha*'s own voice was divined by him through psychic communion. It began defining his life mission."

A Lingering Mystery: The Second Encounter

"Many years later, looking back on the Maṅgalagiri incident as my father himself recalled it, little had he foreseen that there would be yet another sudden and fleeting encounter with that same *Vayō-vṛddha…* but under different circumstances. That second encounter, equally mystifying, however, must await retelling in a later chapter in this book."

CHAPTER 10

Marriage And Family Influences

- ***Can you briefly talk about "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār and his family life? Marriage, children and relatives?***
- ***Describe his relationships with his parents, sibling (his elder brother-guru), wife, in-laws, and children. Any notable anecdotes?***
- ***Amongst family members, who had the deepest and most profound influence on his spiritual growth and advancement as an Upanyāsaka and Yajña-Adhvaryu?***

Although the years between 1962 and 1966 were financially the most unstable and difficult that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had ever faced in life, his situation at Vijayawada nonetheless proved to be the most productive in terms of his ability to practice *Vedic* vocation, spiritual *Upāsanā,* and the austere observances that had become integral to his way of life.

As he neared the age of 21, matrimony might have become a matter of concern for his family. His mother still lived in Mukkūr Village. His brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, was married and had a family of his own with children, all living in Vijayawada. Mukkūr *Svāmī* greatly loved his mother, whom he had seen toil as a widow. She had borne the burden of being the family's anchor for so many years. He knew that she desired that her second son, too, should be able to lead a happy and normal family life.

It was then, sometime in the year 1963, that a family well-wisher in Vijayawada, one Śrī. S.K. Raman, an official in the Indian Railways, who had come to admire the young Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Vedic* erudition and *Anuṣṭhāna,* happened to mention him to Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār *Svāmī*, who, at the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā,* had at one time himself tutored Mukkūr *Svāmī* in the seminal Vedāntic curricula of the *Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā* and allied *Bhāṣya* texts (exegetical works). *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī* studied *Nyāya Śāstra* under Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār (Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s Father).

Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī (as he was always popularly known) was, of course, acknowledged by all *Vēdāntins* to be an exponent of the *Gītā* who could discourse on it with very great authority from the standpoint of a lofty and nuanced Viśiṣṭādvaita perspective.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* had the greatest respect and regard for this guru of his. So great was the reverence he held for him that Mukkūr *Svāmī*—in later years as his son-in-law—would never appear directly face-to-face with *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*! In his guru's presence, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would never allow himself to be seated. Even at home, he would always stand on his feet and position himself humbly either behind a wall, a pillar, or any kind of partition, and only then allow himself to converse with *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*! And that too only in low, very respectful tones!

One thing led to another, and as the adage goes, "*marriages are made in heaven.*" *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī* was most happy indeed to give his daughter, *Saubhāgyavatī,* **Vasumati's** hand in marriage to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, since the young groom and *Vēdavid*, after all, happened to be the son of his own erstwhile revered guru, Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār. He was pleased with the match.

The happy familial connections thus established, soon led to a marriage alliance. In the year 1965, the wedding of the couple was celebrated in Chennai. It was the beginning of a happy, lifelong *Dharmic* journey for Mukkūr *Svāmī* and his bride.

The Young Householder: Simplicity and Family Blessings

Back in Vijayawada, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, now a young *Gṛhastha* (householder), while still far from having secured real financial stability, nonetheless was able to set up a cosy home for his bride. He could not afford accommodation more comfortable than a small one-room rented house in one of the cramped quarters of Vijayawada. Life for the newly wedded couple, thus, began under conditions of financial hardship, but it was still a happy and contented one.

In the year 1966, Mukkūr *Svāmī* and his wife were blessed with a male child. I was that child and they named me *Śrīnivāsan*. It was the same *Tirunāmam* borne by my grandfather. In later years, however, I came to be called within the family as "*Ramēśa*."

Many years later, another beautiful girl child was born to my parents, and my little sister was given the name *Amṛtā*, after Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mother. My sister used to be affectionately called Gōdā-Śrī (a) Kuttima by my parents. Amṛtā today lives in Bagyapuri (Secundrabad). She had the good fortune of being taught Sanskrit by Mukkūr Svāmī himself and now pursues a MA in Sanskrit.

The Daily Life and Duties of a Young Vidvān

During the Vijayawada years, as a young boy, I remember Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s busy daily routine. After morning *Anuṣṭhāna* and *Tiruvārādhana*, he would don a loose cotton shirt over his *Pañcakaccha-Vēṣṭi*… his usual work clothes. The *Ūrdhva-Puṇḍram* (religious mark) applied on his forehead would shine prominently. He would set off on his bicycle to his workplace (the TVS job). In the late afternoon, he would return and change back into traditional *Vedic* attire again and begin his daily *Svādhyāya* chanting and then, again, evening *Anuṣṭhāna* and *Tiruvārādhana* for his household *Upāsanā Nṛsiṃha* and *Śālagrāma-Mūrti*.

On Fridays, he would assist his elder brother by going around the trader marketplace in Vijayawada to perform the shop *Pūjās*. On other days, he would attend occasional *Vēda Sadas* gatherings in surrounding village temples, mutts, and *Agrahāra,* where he was welcomed by *Vēda Vidvāns* into their midst as a highly accomplished *Vēda Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī*. On *Svāti Nakṣatra* days, of course, he would travel without fail to offer worship at Maṅgalagiri. On other special occasions, he would be invited to deliver *Pravacanam* and public *Upanyāsa* for small local household gatherings and audiences of devotees and *Āstikas*.

Compassion and Conviction: Life on the Banks of the Kṛṣṇa

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was a very affectionate father to his children. I remember that, when I was a child of 3 or 4 years old, he used to take me on long rides on his bicycle to the riverside in Vijayawada. There, on the banks of the River Kṛṣṇa, he would let me frolic and play about on the sandbanks while he himself would sit silently on the ground and, for a few hours, continuously chant *Vēda Praśnas* or the *Nṛsiṃha-Mantra*.

At times, ordinary folks from nearby neighbourhoods who were also walking there, would recognise him. At once, they would hasten to his presence and, acknowledging him as *Pantulu Gāru*, immediately prostrate at his feet and seek his blessings.

Quite a few of them would confidentially share their personal problems with him, seeking cures, divinations, and solutions. He would show them kindness and courtesy by giving them all a patient hearing, but he would never offer any promises. All he would do was simply assure them that he would certainly remember them in his own *Mantra Japa* and ritual *Pūjā* performed at home, and that he would pray to *Lord Nṛsiṃha* to relieve them of their troubles, ailments, and distress.

Although Mukkūr *Svāmī* was highly knowledgeable in astrology – *Jyōtiṣa-Śāstra* -- he maintained a strict "*out-of-bounds*" policy towards the indiscriminate use of such knowledge. When his followers brought horoscopes to him asking about future predictions, he would never open or read them. Instead, he would quietly place the horoscope before the Lord and simply utter a prayer.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* believed that attempting to predict the future in the presence of Lord Nṛsiṃha—who is the master of Time (*"Kāla*") —was an insult to the deity. He used his extensive knowledge of *Jyōtiṣa* solely for sacred purposes, such as determining auspicious dates for conducting *Yajñas*, *Utsavams*, and other divine services, rather than for personal predictions or material "*remedies"* (*Parihāra*).

At home, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, when in relaxed or pleasant moments, could be very playful too with some of us youngsters in the family.

Mischief and Mantras: A Father's Playful Pedagogy

Many years ago, when I was probably studying in high school, my cousin brothers Mukkūr Srinivasan (eldest son of Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār) and his brother Mukkūr Gōpālan, and I were playfully pulled up by my father and chastised for wasting too much of our summer holiday playing cricket or going to the cinema. With mock sternness, he told us that, for a change, we should start attending an *Upanyāsa* series that he was then delivering in Chennai … I think it was perhaps at the *Āstika Samājam* in Venus Colony.

Rather ruefully, my cousins and I went that evening and sat through the religious discourse with half our minds still fixated, however, on the latest released matinee movie show that we had been forced to miss that day.

After the *Upanyāsa*, when we returned home, my father beckoned us boys and asked us what its main highlights were that had drawn our attention. My cousins and I looked at him blankly, with dumb expressions on our faces. Nothing from the religious discourse had registered very strongly in our distracted minds. We were fearful of what Mukkūr *Svāmī* would say to us in anger.

Unexpectedly, he said nothing except simply this:

" From tomorrow evening, you boys should go to the Upanyāsa taking with you a notebook. Take down notes on the most salient parts of the discourse that you found most interesting. And on your return, if you are both able to relate to me from the notes what you learned, I'll reward you with some pocket money. So, go now…"

In the following two or three days, I remember, my cousins and I faithfully carried out the orders given. We took down notes on some of the major highlights from his *Upanyāsa* that evening and, on returning home, dutifully related to him the substance of those notes. Greatly pleased, he rewarded us with some cash, much to our joy. Already, we were planning to spend it all on buying cricketing gear or tickets for the next cinema show in the city.

In the following two evenings, when we attended the *Upanyāsa*, to our utter surprise, Mukkūr *Svāmī* did not – or rather could not – deliver any discourse.

Instead, he began chanting entirely from memory, a non-stop, soul-stirring, string of electrifying *Nṛsiṃha-Mantras* for the entire duration of the evening's discourse! The audience, I remember, sat spellbound watching -- and so did my cousins and me.

That evening on returning home, we both went up to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and told him that no notes had been taken down:

"*Svāmī, what notes did you expect us to take? What with that non-stop torrent of mantra-s you kept reciting all through the Upanyāsa?! We could make neither head nor tail of it!*"

For a moment, he glared at us in stony silence. Then with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, he smiled and replied in jolly, gentle humour:

"Yes, you're right… But I know what you are all up to… You've come to report to me you took no notes only because you want to claim your pocket allowance, all the same! I know how your little scheming minds work! Go away now, don't worry… I keep my word… You will still get your cash reward …!"

My cousins and I glanced conspiratorially at one another and grinned in glee.

There is another incident that comes to mind, which shows the affectionate and humane side of Mukkūr *Svāmī* as a father.

The Affectionate and Generous Spirit of Mukkūr Svāmī

For some years during the mid-1970s, Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to be invited to deliver month-long *Upanyāsas* at the Hindu High School auditorium in Triplicane, Chennai. I was about eight years old then.

On one occasion, during an ongoing series of daily discourses at this Hindu High School, I happened to tag along with my father. Quite unusually, when we reached the venue, Mukkūr *Svāmī* asked me to sit beside him on stage and began his *Upanyāsa*. Halfway through the discourse, while expatiating upon the theme of *Bhakti*, he suddenly turned to me and asked me to recite along with him a few passages from certain *Stōtras* and *Pācurams* (Sanskrit and Tamil hymns). At the end of that evening's discourse, the Hindu High School organisers came up to my father and expressed delight over the way I had readily accompanied Mukkūr *Svāmī* on stage and delivered the performance confidently.

Then they asked him a question:

"Svāmī, does your little son also deliver Upanyāsa like yourself? Has he been trained"

Without hesitation, Mukkūr *Svāmī* said:

"*Yes, he can.*"

"*In that case, Svāmī,*" cried the organisers, "*why not let the child have an opportunity to deliver a lecture in a few days' time? It would be welcomed by the audience as a novel idea*"

I was aghast and a little mortified when I saw my father say: "*Yes, of course*".

It was immediately agreed that the next occasion, it would be I who would be delivering on stage an *Upanyāsa* featuring the theme *Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra*!

The week before that occasion, Mukkūr *Svāmī* prepared me with a rigorous dress rehearsal for the following day's performance. He coached me on which select passages from *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and other *Purāṇas*, *Stōtras,* and *Divya-Prabandham* I should present during the *Upanyāsa,* which was slated to last an hour and a half.

Meanwhile, unknown to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the Hindu High School organisers had already given wide publicity to the event in the city. They even printed billboard posters and put them up at vantage points on public street corners in and around Triplicane, announcing the event as an *Upanyāsa* by the "*child prodigy*," son of Mukkūr *Svāmī*!

When my father and I arrived at the venue that evening, we were bewildered to see the organisers had set up a welcome reception for me!

The local temple elephant from the *Tiruvallikkēṇi Śrī Pārthasārathi Svāmī Perumāḷ Kōvil* had been specially pressed into service for the reception. I was asked to mount the elephant, and I rode upon it ceremoniously down the street to the gates of the auditorium in a noisy pageant of traditional *Nādasvara* pipers and *Tavil* drummers, festoons, confetti, and *Pūrṇa-Kumbham*!

That evening, I delivered an *Upanyāsa* on *Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra* without any hitch to the complete satisfaction of my father and to the delight of the audience.

When we returned home, my father proudly said to me:

"*Ramēśa, you outdid me today! You received a rare honour. They even made you ride a caparisoned elephant!*"

My mother stepped in and firmly put her foot down, telling us,

"*The focus of the child should be on school education. Upanyasams can be done after the completion of school education*"

The University-on-Wheels

My own relationship with Mukkūr Svāmī was always nurtured upon what I call "constant proximity" rather than based on any formal "classroom instruction." All the knowledge, values, life-lessons, and guidance he imparted to me as a father were imbibed through an invisible process of osmosis, as it were, over the years I spent with him.

Even while I was pursuing my secular education as an electronics engineer, I also persevered in religious studies viz. *Vēdas, Vedānta, Yajña, Śāstra, Purāṇa, Itihāsa and Āgama*. Throughout this period, I gained invaluable insights from my father through informal yet highly effective one-on-one instruction.

During the many years in which he travelled from place to place to either deliver *Upanyāsas* or perform *Yajñas*, I used to be his personal chauffeur. We travelled in a Maruti Minivan (about which another anecdote will be narrated in a later Chapter).

During those long nighttime drives on the highways —such as one I remember from a particularly foggy journey from Maṅgalagiri to Kākināḍa many years ago— I recall how Mukkūr Svāmī, seated beside me at the wheel, kept himself awake all night throughout the journey. He talked incessantly, imparting many spiritual lessons, *Purāṇic* insights, and teachings from *Āgama Śāstra* related to performing *Yajñas*… He was indeed a *Vedic* university-on-wheels for me! But of course, on that road trip that night, I could see that he was only trying to keep me fully engaged while I was driving… He didn't want me to doze off at the wheel!

Lighting the Pathway: Guidance of Father and Brother

As to the question of who amongst family members had the profoundest influence on his spiritual growth and advancement in life as an *Upanyāsaka* and *Yajña-Adhvaryu*, I have already explained (in an earlier chapter) that Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself acknowledged the great debt of gratitude he owed to his father and elder brother for lighting the *Vedic* pathway in life for him.

At Madhuranthakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā*, he received thorough grounding in ***Pūrṇa-Vēda- Adhyāya*** (a complete curriculum in the *Yajur Vēda*) from very erudite scholars such as Pazhavēri *Śaṭhakōpācāryar* and others who were verily like close family to Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

From his elder brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, he received training in *Vēda Śāstra* and *Tarka Śāstra* too, after the latter himself had in turn been tutored in the same disciplines by their father, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār. Mukkūr *Svāmī* too had been initiated into other allied *Vedic*

disciplines by his father, who had made sure he was fully trained in *Divya-Prabandham* and the *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa*.

Thus, I would say that the combined influence of his father and elder brother greatly shaped Mukkūr *Svāmī* during the Madurāntakam years.

When he left Madurāntakam and Mukkūr Village to go and live with his elder brother in Vijayawada, everything in *Ghanapāṭha*, that Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār had gained by way of higher knowledge and advanced skills from his own gurus (viz.: *Śrī Viśvanātha Jagannātha Ghanapāṭhī* and *Śrī Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtri Sōmayāji Ghanapāṭhī*) was transmitted to Mukkūr *Svāmī* as well. Being a very precocious *Vēda-Adhyāyī*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* took to it like, they say in English, "a *duck takes to water*" and thoroughly absorbed the instructions of his elder brother. With Raghunāthācāryār's grooming, and even more so by dint of his own precocious, strenuous, and austere efforts, Mukkūr *Svāmī* became very soon an outstanding *Salakṣaṇa-Ghanapāṭhī* in his own right.

CHAPTER 11

Community (*Deśa*) Impressions – 1

During the long interviews with **MLS *Svāmī***, there was one question that kept nagging at my mind, and it arose mainly because I had heard this passing remark from him:

> *"My Periappā, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, was, of course, the one who taught my father fully the Vedic curriculum, partly at the Madurāntakam Vēda Pāṭhaśālā first and then again, the advanced skills of Ghanapāṭha during the years in Vijayawada.*
>
> *However, Raghunathācārya himself openly used to admit that, after that 12–16-year Vedic learning phase, he really did not know how "Cheela" had been able to acquire—all by himself—such deep knowledge that, in later years, it became evident, he possessed… I mean all the other finer and more intricate Salakṣaṇa aspects of Ghana chants (including Krama, Jaṭā, and other forms). Neither did my Periappā nor anyone else know how Mukkūr Svāmī had also acquired deep knowledge in the esoteric Śrauta-Smārta-Gṛhya-Śāstras relating to the performance of fire rituals of Hōma and Yajñas (especially the Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña), and that too strictly as per the specialised rules of Āgama, although it later came to be known that some parts of Hōma and Yajñas śāstras had been taught to him by Tirukallam Svāmī*".

It was a singularly puzzling remark indeed, and it led me to frame my follow-up questions in two discrete and distinct sets as my interview with **MLS *Svāmī*** progressed.

The first set pertained to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s acquiring "*Salakṣaṇa-Ghanapāṭhī*" status, and the second set of questions pertained to how he had come to attain the knowledge, skills, and disciplines required to conduct esoteric *Vedic Yajña* litrugical practices.

- ***How was "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār able to achieve mastery over Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭha? — Who were the "gurus"?***

- ***Who trained him in the specific Ghana renditions that he used to perform, while incorporating them into Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas or often recited in his public discourses?***

- ***Which specific shakha (e.g., Kṛṣṇa-yajurveda) and Pīṭha examinations did "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār pass to qualify as a Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī?***

- ***Apart from his elder brother, were there other examiners too? Which Śākhās and specific Maṇḍalas/Prapāṭhakas did "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār recite and at which Sadas, Pīṭhas, Sabhas, or centres?***

- ***How was he able to acquire competence to perform Yajñas as a lifetime mission? What spiritual or societal goals did he aim to achieve? Was it mainly to propagate Vedic traditions, or as a healer who alleviated devotees' anxieties and ailments?***

- ***How did he develop the unique ability he demonstrated in explaining the integral connections between the Yajña sacrificial processes and other key Vedic texts, -- the Itihāsas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads, Gītā, or Nālāyira Divya-Prabandham -- in his discourses?***

All of Śrī MLS's responses to the first set of questions clearly revealed that it was the vibrant *Vedic* ambience of Mukkūr Village in which Mukkūr *Svāmī* was born and bred, and the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā in which he* had totally immersed himself that was the reason he evolved as a *Vēdavid* of such rare distinction in later years.

The *Vedic* environment there had also been graced by the benign presence of a galaxy of eminent *Ācāryās* and *Vedic* stalwarts who, for Mukkūr *Svāmī*, were lifelong inspirational role models – Iñcimēṭu *Śrīmad* Azhagiyasingar, his *father* Mukkūr *Śrīnivāsācāryār*, *father-in-law* Tirukkaḷḷam *Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryar*, Mukkūr *Śrīmad* Azhagiyasingar, Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryar, Purisai *Kṛṣṇamācāryar Svāmī* and *elder brother Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār*. Under their *Vedic* tutelage, it was but natural for Mukkūr *Svāmī*, given his inborn precocity, to rapidly progress in *Vedic* studies from the very moment he was invested with the *Saṃskāra* of *Upanayana*.

What, however, was not very clear to me was this: later, how did Mukkūr *Svāmī* "*post-graduate*", as it were to *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭha* during the decade or more that he lived in Vijayawada?

Even more intriguing to me was how he had gained such extraordinary proficiency in the esoteric practices of *Vedic Yajña* as well.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself had said on many occasions — and MLS *Svāmī* now repeated it — that the message to him to perform Mahā Yajñā was received from the

mysterious *Vayō-Vṛddha* (wise old man) who appeared before him in the "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*". No formal academic training in *Mahā Yajñā* performance was imparted *by* his elder brother or anyone else.

This facet of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Vedic* career thus remained an inscrutable puzzle. Neither Raghunāthācāryār, nor Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī*, nor any other family member or mentor could fully account for how Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in later years, became such a renowned *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña*-practitioner.

The explanation for this intriguing fact did not emerge quite clearly from the interviews I held with MLS *Svāmī*. But from what he related to me generally about Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life in Vijayawada, it led me—or, I might say, even *tempted* me—to construct a tenable, rational theory to satisfy my own curiosity and understanding.

Firstly, let me paraphrase below the explanations offered by MLS *Svāmī*'s in this regard:

At Home on the banks of the River Godāvarī

Mukkūr *Svāmī* spent 1962 to c.1972 in Vijayawada. The people of Andhra Pradesh have played and continue to play, as we all know even today, an important role in supporting and upholding *Vēda* and *Vedic* traditions. Like so many members of the *Vedic* collective community in Vijayawada - i.e. in the *Agrahāra* which in those days thrived in the fertile belt between the Godāvarī and Kṛṣṇa rivers - Mukkūr *Svāmī* too was an indirect beneficiary of that cultural ecosystem.

The six main duties (***Ṣaṭkarma***) of a *Vedic* Brahmin, as outlined in *Dharma Śāstras* like *Manu Smṛti*, are (1) teaching, (2) studying, (3) performing sacrifices for oneself, (4) officiating sacrifices for others, (5) giving gifts, and (6) accepting gifts.

Vedic Brahmins must engage in these six daily duties where possible, prioritising the first three as non-negotiable for maintaining *Varṇa* status. Failure leads to degradation, as per *Smṛti* texts. In practice, householders (*Gṛhasthas*) integrate these three daily rites in the same way as *Sandhyā* and *Pañca-Mahā-Yajñas*.

In those days and – and even now in some places – *Vedic* communities in Andhra Pradesh conducted *Yajña* as well as *Vēda Sabhas* (*Vedic* conclaves) at many centres of learning, and they did so quite regularly too. At all these events, small or grand, it was customary to invite *Vedavids* or pundits, arrange for *Vēda Pārāyaṇam,*

and give them suitable honoraria. The remuneration would not be much, but it would include generous provisions of groceries, vegetables, fruits, lentils, etc.

So, it could be said, without doubt, that amongst the Andhra people there was always a general but deep appreciation of the *Vedic* way of life that Brahmins embraced. Two out of the six main responsibilities mentioned above for a Brahmin i.e. *Adhyāya* (full-time practice of Vēda chanting) and *Adhyāpana* (teaching the Vēdas), could both be comfortably fulfilled in the communal rural life of the Rajahmundry-Vijayawada hinterland.

MLS *Svāmī*:

> "It was a clearly and deeply felt life-aspiration of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, as a fully accomplished *Vēda-Ghanapāṭhī,* that he should fulfil the other four duties of a Brahmin's *Ṣaṭkarma* also, viz., ***Yajana*** (self-sacrifice), ***Yājana*** (officiating as a priest at a *Yajña*), ***Dāna*** (giving in charity), and ***Pratigraha*** (receiving charity). The *Agrahāra* cultural space and landscape in the Godāvarī belt provided an extremely conducive ecosystem for Mukkūr *Svāmī* to equip himself fully for fulfilment of those aspirations.
>
> I must also mention here that although our family hails very long ago from Mukkūr Village in Tamiḻ Nāḍu, our ancestors actually hailed from a *Yajur Vēda Paramparā* (lineage) of Brahmins called ***Thaṭṭai***. The *Thaṭṭai* lineage, which traces back to *Ṛṣi Taṅka*, one of the first disciples of Sage Vyāsa, was a clan known for "*breaking*" or "*knocking down*" (*Thaṭṭal in* Tamil) opposing arguments in scholarly debate mainly through *Vedic* logic (*Tarka Śāstra*).
>
> After a great deal of genealogical research, I was able to trace the origin of my family to the banks of the River Godāvarī near Rajahmundry. This could perhaps be one of the inexplicable reasons why Mukkūr *Svāmī* felt absolutely at home when he chose to live for so many years in his life in the vast fertile Districts between Rajahmundry, Kākināḍa, and Vijayawada."

Fellowship with the Faithful: The Elders of Kōrukoṇḍa

Then, by way of further illustrating the above explanation, MLS *Svāmī* went on to describe to me Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s very special and long association with a grand *Vēda*

Sabhā that used to be organised annually by the *Vedic Āhitāgni* (*Agnihōtrī*) community at Kōrukoṇḍa *Agrahāra* (Narasiṃhapura *Agrahāra*).

MLS *Svāmī*:

> "My father would never fail to attend this *Vēda* Sadas or Sabhā, no matter what his other prior or pressing engagements or preoccupations were."

Kōrukoṇḍa *Agrahāra* originated in the medieval period as a Brahmin settlement tied to the Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* Temple in Kōrukoṇḍa village, East Godāvarī District. Its history aligns with Eastern Cālukya and post-Cōḻa land grants (13th–14th centuries CE), when rulers settled *Vedic* families from Tamiḻ Nāḍu's Kāvēri region to maintain *Vaiṣṇava* rituals.

The hilltop temple constructed 700–800 years ago atop a 120-metre "*carved hill*" (Kōrukoṇḍa), houses a self-manifested (*Svayambhū*) 9-inch Nṛsiṃha idol. It can be reached by climbing 615 steep steps. The priests here follow the *Vaikhānasa-āgama* traditions.

Image 19: *Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Svāmī Temple in Kōrukoṇḍa village*

Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's descendants from Śrīraṅgam became hereditary trustees of this temple. The Bhaṭṭar lineage here was sustained through royal patronage that drew scholarly migrants during *Rājarāja Narēndra's* era (11th century onward). The Telugu poet, *Śrīnātha* (14th–15th century), hailed it as *Vēdādri* (Vēda mountain), confirmed by a 1443 CE inscription nearby. As part of Godāvarī delta *Agrahāras*, it thrived via royal endowments for *Vedic* chanting and temple service, exemplifying Cālukya-era migrations that peaked in the 7th–12th centuries.

The settlements persist amid ***Kōnaśīmā*** regional *Śrauta* brahmin traditions, hosting festivals like *Kalyāṇa-Mahōtsava* and *Gōdāvarī-Puṣkaralu*, though now both events have started blending ritual with tourism.

Because Mukkūr *Svāmī* held Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar (one of the foremost disciples of Śrī Rāmānujācāryā and son of Kūrattāḻvān) in the highest esteem, he was always very fond of visiting Kōrukoṇḍa frequently to mingle with fellow *Vēdādhyāyīs* there in that village.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was thus living for ten long years amidst several groups of elderly *Vedic* scholars and practitioners in the Andhra region. These men were the veterans of the Godāvarī *Agrahāra*. They provided the communal validation for his early discourses. They were known as the āhitāgni of the Delta belt – *Vedic* scholars living a life of absolute "*bonding with Agni*" whose ways of life matched the ritualistic rigor required to teach the technicalities of a *Mahā-Yajña*. The scholars were also associated with these Nṛsiṃha hill shrines in the surrounding areas and were therefore most likely to possess knowledge of the liturgical details of the *Nṛsiṃha Tantra* texts containing details of an exalted ritualistic and mantric system of worship dedicated to Lord Nṛsiṃha. Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī* championed the *Nṛsiṃha* mantric system (excluding the *tantric* system) as a supreme spiritual science. These liturgical systems draw heavily from the ***Nṛsiṃha-Tāpanīya-Upaniṣad*** of the *Atharvavēda* and the ***Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā*** (a key *Pāñcarātra-Āgama* text), which contains the *Śrī Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra* composed by Lord Śiva in praise of Nṛsiṃha.

Image 20: *Sri Mukkur Swami at a Yajña*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* often described the *Nṛsiṃha mantra* as a profound form of worship that occupies a "*pride of place*" among spiritual disciplines, particularly within the mantric systems and traditions. The core of this *Yajña system* is the Śrī ***Nṛsiṃha-Anuṣṭup-Mahā-Mantra***, **a 32-syllable mantra**.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* taught that these 32 syllables represent the condensed essence of all *32 Brahma-Vidyās* (meditative paths to the Supreme Reality) mentioned in many

of the *Upaniṣads*, such as the *Chāndōgya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. He emphasised that while practising individual *Brahma-Vidyās* is nearly impossible in the modern age, the correct application of the *Nṛsiṃha Mantra* —learnt through proper initiation and training (*Upadēśa*)—bestows the spiritual benefits of all *32 Vidyās* simultaneously.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* viewed himself as a tool for reviving this *Nṛsiṃha mantric system* and eventually, he himself, on one occasion later in life, performed a *Svāti Mahā-Yajña* at the Kōrukoṇḍa/Vēdādri site to honour the local scholarly *Āhitāgni Agrahāra* community traditions.

During the 1960s and 70s, this community was a vital repository of *Nṛsiṃha-centric Vedic* and Agamic knowledge, providing the cultural environment for Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own formative growth and development as an outstanding practitioner of *Yajña Śāstras*.

The Mystery of Grace

Thus, from the foregoing broad narratives offered to me by MLS *Svāmī*, I ventured to seek for myself a plausible explanation or conjecture that would address the following questions in my mind:

1. Since Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself had so strongly always emphasised that the correct application of the *Nṛsiṃha Mantra* in the performance of *Yajña* should have been preceded by—and firmly based on learning it and being trained in it through—proper initiation or ***Upadēśa*** from a qualified guru or *Ācārya*, from whom then did he himself receive such *Upadēśa* or initiation?
2. The spiritual hagiography of Mukkūr *Svāmī* presents a significant epistemological paradox for the contemporary observer of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* liturgical traditions. On one hand, his formal academic pedigree is well-documented, rooted in rigorous education within the traditional *Vedic* and Vedāntic corridors of the Madurāntakam *Vedic* School and later tutelage under Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār. On the other hand, his emergence as the orchestrator of numerous *Nṛsiṃha Yajñas*—rituals of immense technical, geometric, and esoteric complexity—suggests an acquisition of knowledge that transcends the standard timelines of human apprenticeship. The central question thus remains: How did a scholar, primarily trained in the *Parā-Vidyā* of the *Vēdas* and the

devotional corpus of the *Nālāyira Divya-Prabandham*, and other *Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya* scriptural texts, achieve the functional mastery of *Yajña* protocols that traditionally require decades of dedicated training under a master of the fire-rituals or *Āhitāgni*?

The answer given by MLS *Svāmī* was very clear. He affirmed that Mukkūr *Svāmī* received *Upadēśa* and the knowledge of *Yajña* esotericism only through divine transmission involving mysterious encounters at *Nṛsiṃha Kṣetras* such as Maṅgalagiri, Vēdādri, or Kōrukoṇḍa. That is perhaps the only explanation for any conceivable "*missing link*" within the theological categories of *Pratibhā-Jñāna* (intuitive knowledge) and *Siddha-Saṅkalpa* (perfected resolve).

My own theory or conjecture in this regard has led me to further inquire into whether the centuries-old *Vedic* way of life of the *Agrahāra* communities in the coastal Andhra region, perhaps had provided a conducive environment in which Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s career flourished not only as a *Vēdavid* but also as an outstanding exponent of the *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña*.

The years 1963–1970 had been a time of relative financial hardship, but it had also been a period of very intense spiritual growth for him. Largely on account of his deep *Nṛsiṃha-upāsanā*, it was during this particular period of residence in the Andhra region that he did experience profound "mystical" or super-sensory events—like the "M*iracle of Maṅgalagiri*"—which eventually led to his initiation into the Nṛsiṃha rituals that came to define his later life. While his primary mentors were his family members (elder brother and then his father-in-law), the academic and ritualistic environment of the Godāvarī *Agrahāra* may have provided the fertile "*cultural soil*" where his unique synthesis of *Vedic* expertise and Nṛsiṃha devotion most probably took root and flowered.

There was no doubt that he had lived in a part of the coastal Andhra belt where he was in continuous proximity to *Vedic Āhitāgni* communities.

Living amidst this closely knit *Vedic* community in the Godāvarī belt, Mukkūr *Svāmī* possibly witnessed at close quarters all their customs, practices, values, and culture. Could it not be therefore construed that such association with that ***Deśa*** might have left an invisible but indelible impression upon him? This may have accelerated his evolution later into both a consummate *Ghanapāṭhī* and a *Yajña* practitioner as well?

To explore a bit more of and comprehend what such impressions upon Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life-mission might have been, I decided to take a slight detour – *not a digression* -- into a quick study of the Rajahmundry *Āhitāgni Agrahāra* communities.

CHAPTER 12

Community (*Deśa*) Impressions – 2

David Knipe is a social anthropologist from the University of Wisconsin who in 2015 authored a field-researched book ***Vedic Voices: Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition*** (Oxford University Press). The work presented a well-documented study of *four generations of ten families* living in isolated *Agrahāra* communities in the Godāvarī Delta region of coastal Andhra Pradesh, learning and reciting their legacy of Vēdas, performing *Āhitāgni* daily fire-rituals, offering oblations and occasional *Yajñas*.

The book described the geography, cultural history, pilgrimage traditions and celebrated personalities of the villages. It is a story of *Vedic Agrahāra*' pundits … a story scarcely known even inside India and not at all to the outside world. But it was a world that Mukkūr *Svāmī* certainly knew very well during the years he lived there between 1962-71 in Vijayawada and then again in Kākināḍa for a few years during 1984-97.

Reading the narratives in *The Vedic Voice* enabled me to visualise the Rajahmundry *Agrahāra*, the landscape, the life, the *Āhitāgni* rites and the cultural traditions of those same communities. Also, I could easily imagine Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who while living amongst them for so many years, had himself closely observed them… more closely and with greater engagement perhaps than any American anthropologist ever could.

A few of those narratives in Knipe's book served as useful and vivid visualisations that helped me to explore the conjecture I had formed in my mind: that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s initiation, as it were, into the esotericism of sacred *Yajña*, *Tantra,* and *Āgama* texts happened naturally, with no formal *Upadēśa* to speak of. In other words, simply through his having lived among these Godāvarī communities (such as Kōrukoṇḍa *Agrahāra*), he had imbibed the knowledge of the *Śrauta* rituals and *Yajña Śāstras*.

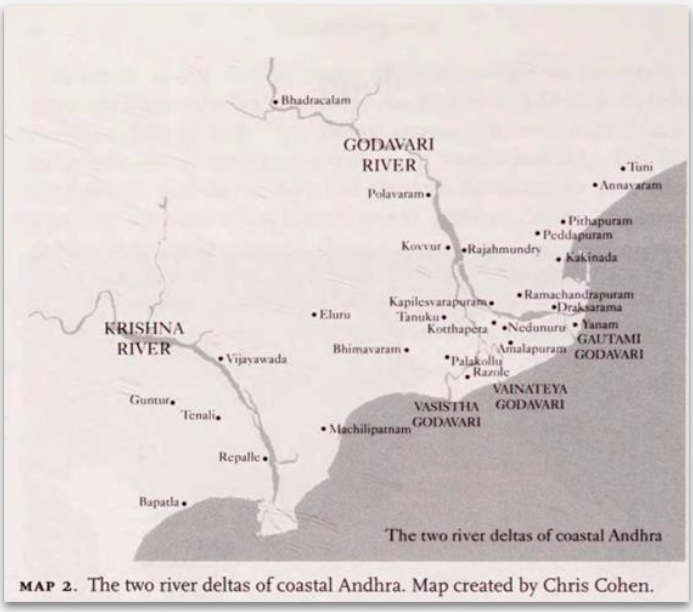
A few of the narratives in the book are therefore truly worth reproducing here below. They serve to underscore my conjectural point.

Visualisation of Geography

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices: - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages 5 and 6

With its source near Nasik, only fifty miles from the Arabian Sea, the 900-mile-long Godāvarī River cuts a diagonal course across the Deccan plateau before it delivers sumptuous brown waters into the Bay of Bengal. At the beginning point of its delta near Rajahmundry, it may in full flood be well over two miles wide.

To appreciate the true character of the Godāvarī, however, it should be studied in all its seasons. In bursting monsoon depths, it shakes the surrounding earth like the ferocious goddess it is known to be, great brown folds of water overlapping and tearing away chunks of the levee that are carried scores of miles to end up on the floor of a delta that has broadened this way for hundreds of thousands of years.



MAP 2. The two river deltas of coastal Andhra. Map created by Chris Cohen.

The roar of rushing water sixty feet deep is as awesome as the sight. Little boys who cannot swim spot great trees or branches hurtling downstream and hurl themselves with more guts than foresight, from the levee on "Godāvarī-horse" palm pontoons. They arm-paddle out wildly, and if they do not drown, intercept and steer potential firewood to a shore many miles down this monstrous water chute. But the seasonal rhythm always turns to its opposite, the dry period when a stream becomes so docile that cows may

saunter and cow-paddle from bank to where hundreds of new sand islands have appeared. These Laṅkā islands, as they are called in Telugu, are settled by fishermen who erect mud-and-thatch dwellings; raise tobacco and vegetable crops; keep chickens, pigs, and goats; and after sundown, light oil lamps that appear from distant levees as a new-born Milky Way across the silent river. The washing-all-away season will certainly follow, but for now, Godāvarī land is free for the taking.

The great river meanders eastward, then south-eastward for most of its journey across the Deccan until it emerges from the rumpled Eastern Hills at the Paapikondulu, the "Sinful Hills," a curious name for a gorge of breathtaking beauty and star-rich night skies at the southernmost rim of the Northern Sircar range. Here the river drops south onto the alluvial plain that separates the Telaṅgāṇā plateau from the sea, and in just thirty miles it reaches the apex tip of the delta. Down at the delta's base on the Bay of Bengal coast, the spread of riverine drainage from a tenth of India's land is nearly a hundred miles.

Atlas cartographers usually illustrate three or four broad streams between Rajahmundry and the sea. Local perception, however, declares a region of seven rivers, mythically labelled for the seven Ṛṣis, the famed seers who first intuited the Vēdas and whose descendants comprised the seven founding *Vedic* lineages, namely, Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, Gotama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kashyap.

Few people can name more than a sage or two, but many tell of encounters with these Ṛṣi progenitors (pravara) who still grace—or haunt— the delta with their presence. Sometimes they are glimpsed briefly in the mist that rises from the river before dawn… Several Āhitāgni bathe daily in a stream they call the Kausika, Kusika being another name of the Ṛṣi Visvamitra. And it is the broad Vasistha too that flows and separates two zones… East and West Godāvarī Districts.

Celebrated Āhitāgni Agrahāra personalities of the Godāvarī Belt

During the period of 1963–1970, the East and West Godāvarī Districts were home to an elite circle of *Vedic* scholars and *Śrauta* experts who maintained the highest standards of ritual precision. The Godāvarī *Agrahāras*, particularly *Śrīrāmapuram*, were famous for their *Āhitāgni*—scholars who maintained perpetual sacred fires for the performance of complex *Śrauta Yajñas* (such as *Agnihōtra*). A few of them were

outstanding practitioners of *Vedic Yajña* sacerdotalism, the foremost of whom even won national acclaim as a ***Padma Bhūṣaṇ*** awardee.

1. **Bhāmidipāṭi Yajñēśvara Sōmayājī ("*Baballa*"):** Based in the *Śrīrāmapuram Agrahara*, he was one of the most respected *Śrauta* experts of the era. Born around 1903, he was a "*gentleman farmer*" who dedicated his life to the *Taittirīya* branch of the *Yajurveda* and was a master of the elaborate *Śrauta* rituals.
2. **Laṅkā Vēṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī (1912-1999)** of the *Kāmēśvarī Agrahāra* near *Neḍunūru* village. He was sometimes called *Abhinava Āpastamba* (the new *Ṛṣi Āpastamba*) in recognition of his prowess in the indispensable ritual *Sūtras*. He had diverse knowledge of Vēda beyond the *Taittirīya* corpus, including considerable *Ṛg Vēda*, selected portions of *Atharva Vēda*, and acquaintance with the inner workings of *Sāma Vēda*. His command of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts and *Śrauta-Sūtras* was so great that he was able to supervise every detail of major *Śrauta* performances. In many ways, Mukkūr *Svāmī* … to me at least … reminded me of this remarkable *Āhitāgni Vēdavid!*
3. **Duvvūri Yajñēśvara Pauṇḍarīka Yājulu:** A contemporary of *Baballa* in *Śrīrāmapuram*, he was a noted expert in the *Pauṇḍarīka* and other massive *Vedic* sacrificial rites.
4. **Buluṣu Vyāghrēśvara Cayānulu:** Another key member of the *Śrīrāmapuram* scholarly triad, known for his expertise in building the *Garuḍa-Cayana* (eagle-shaped fire altars) required for the *Agni-Cayana ritual*.
5. **Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtra Sōmayājī:** An active *Agnihōtrī* based in Vijayawada during the exact years Mukkūr *Svāmī* resided there; it was under his tutelage that his elder brother Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, perfected advanced *Ghanapāṭha* skills. He and his son, Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Sōmayājulu, were part of a lineage that maintained the tradition of daily and seasonal fire sacrifices in the immediate vicinity of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s residence.
6. **The Parāśara Bhaṭṭars (*Periya Bhaṭṭars*):** As the traditional custodians of the Kōrukoṇḍa Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* temple, they were the regional experts in the *Vaikhānasa-Āgama* and *Nṛsiṃha*-specific rituals. Their

presence in the Kōrukoṇḍa *Agrahāra* made the site a focal point for the very *Nṛsiṃha-centric* culture that Mukkūr *Svāmī* later championed.

7. **HH Śrī Tridaṇḍi Śrīmannārāyaṇa Rāmānuja Jīyar *Svāmī*ji (*Periya Jīyar*):** A towering influence in the 1960s, he founded the *Ubhaya-Vēdānta-Ācārya-Pīṭham* in 1960. He was instrumental in organising the *Vedic* scholars of Rajahmundry and Vijayawada into *Paṇḍita* Sabhas (scholarly assemblies).

Quiet Mastery: The Selfless World of the Agnihōtrīs

The culture of this early generation of *Vedic Āhitāgni* pundits was unique. They shunned material acquisitions. Unlike the *Vedic* practitioners of the present day, many of them frowned upon earning a livelihood from what they called *Vēda-Vikraya,* or the "*selling of the Vēda*" or its commercialisation in any form. They also shunned publicity and unwanted recognition from the outside world. In this regard, the *Vedic Voices* narrates the very illustrative personal example of *Laṅkā Vēṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī*.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages 104 – 105

He was born with detachment (for all worldly things) … When the supernumerary Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcīpuram, venerated in South India as Pujyasri Jayendra Saraswathi)… as if he were a Maharaja if not a deity, suddenly appeared one day in the tiny Agrahāra just to see Laṅkā (privately, but) not in a palki (palanquin) in the style of his customary travels with an entourage, but in a car, like a businessman, everyone pressed Laṅkā for details on this extraordinary (private) visitation (by the great Sage of Kāñcī):

DUVVŪRI YĀJULU (excitedly): "What did he say?"

Laṅkā: "What would he say?"
D.Y. (awed by the thought): "Did he come in here, right into this very house?"
Laṅkā: "Yes."
DORA: "What did he say?"
Laṅkā: "What would he say?"
D.Y.: "Did he ask about your health?"
Laṅkā: "Ahh" (meaning yes).
A THIRD VISITOR: "Did you (both) speak in Sanskrit?"
Laṅkā: "No, Telugu."
D.Y. (trying one last time to break his reticence): "Was there any message from him?"
Laṅkā: "No."

When asked about how Laṅkā felt that he had received the Padma Bhūṣaṇ Award from the President of India on May 7, 1994, he just shrugged and said, "It's all just propaganda."

The life of these selfless *Vedic* practitioners of the Godāvarī District could not have escaped the attention of Mukkūr *Svāmī* while he lived in Vijayawada. They represented a tradition that looked down upon *Vēda-Vikraya*, focusing instead on the private "*bonding with Agni*" and the preservation of the Vēda as a sacred duty. He must have seen those *Agrahāras* as a precious and invaluable link to a near-vanished age of *Vedic* orthodoxy in coastal Andhra.

Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtra Sōmayājī was a distinguished *Vedic* authority and a practitioner of the rigorous *āhitāgni* lifestyle, based in Vijayawada. He too was part of a rare lineage of scholars in the Andhra region who maintained *perpetual sacred fires* in their homes for the performance of lifelong *Śrauta* rituals. He was a master of complex *Vedic* sacrifices, noted for his technical knowledge of *Agni-Cayana*, a ritual involving the construction of elaborate *fire altars*. Historical documentation includes detailed ground plans drawn by him for a *Śyēna-Citi* — a fire altar shaped like a flying eagle.

While many *Śrauta* experts of that era resided in rural *Agrahāras, Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtra Sōmayājī* maintained his practice in the urban centre of Vijayawada. His home featured a specialised room with side-by-side hearths used for daily and seasonal offerings. His son, *Lakṣmīnarasiṃha Sōmayājulu*, continued the tradition as an active *Agnihōtrī*.

The two were photographed together in their Vijayawada hearth-room as late as 2005, representing one of the few families to maintain an unbroken *Vēda-Adhyāya* lineage into the 21st century.

During the years 1963–1970, when Mukkūr *Svāmī* was residing in Vijayawada under his brother's tutelage, the *Deṇḍukūri* family would have been prominent figures in the city's small circle of orthodox *Vedic* practitioners. Their technical mastery of fire rituals and altar construction made them essential resources for any serious student of the *Śrauta* tradition.

CHAPTER 13

Community (*Deśa*) Impressions – 3

"The Divided Mind" and Vedic Education in the Agrahāra

In the Godāvarī belt's *Vedic Agrahāra*, the *Āhitāgni* elders looked down upon the English-speaking world as a *Laukika* world that was intrusive and divisive. They abhorred the English curriculum for the youngsters since they felt it interfered with traditional *Vedic Adhyāya* but they nonetheless had to send them to the town public schools.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Page – 251

The boy's mind, (said the old generation), should be fresh and open to retain the flow of the *Taittirīya* syllables, not stuffed with ephemera like maths and other subjects that can always be learned, as they learned them, later. The younger generation, having witnessed the advantages and wider perspectives of learning English and computer skills, among other subjects, has distanced itself, respectfully, from grandparental views. The middle generation is stuck somewhere between these viewpoints, having seen mediocrity or outright failure as the result of a boy's divided mind.

The Seamless Mind: Balancing the Ancient and the Modern

The *Vedic* education that Mukkūr *Svāmī* underwent at Madurāntakam from age eight to sixteen years excluded all English curricular studies. However, after he moved to Mukkūr Village, and began attending high school there and later a Pre-University Course of study for a year in Kāñcīpuram, he was quite comfortable acquiring a modern, secular education in English language and academia too.

The *Vedic* and secular education training he received thus did not in any way result in a "*divided mind*"; instead, he possessed a remarkably broad, cosmopolitan outlook in life that viewed Vēda and the world as a seamless whole.

The gruelling "*high-school, plus undergraduate degree*" training in *Vedic* curricula that the Godāvarī *Agrahāra* schools imparted to *Brahmacārins* was virtually

the same that Mukkūr *Svāmī* too had already undergone in the years he studied at the Madurāntakam Vēda *Pāṭhaśālā*. And when he came as a *Brahmacārin* to Vijayawada to live and learn from his elder brother, Raghunāthācāryār, and when later, after he also married and became a *Gṛhastha*, the training he received further in *postgraduate studies* also closely resembled what *Āhitāgni* masters and acolytes alike of the Godāvarī belt too had undergone for generations.

It is very interesting indeed to get at least a broad idea of what exactly that ancient tradition of *Vedic* learning was all about.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages 32, 34, 143 and 144

Every day the new student will sit opposite his guru for the daily lesson… sometime between 4 a.m. and dawn. In recent years, public school has intervened for some families and *Adhyāya* may not begin until dawn has broken.

In any case, if successful at memorising passages from either the third or fourth section of the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, the student will persevere until he has mastered all seven Sections (*Saptha Kānda*) before going on to the next three major texts of his tradition viz.: the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, Taittirīya Aranyaka,* and *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*. Supplementary lessons will be taught from two ritual manuals --- one for great sacrifices (*Mahā Yajña*), the other for domestic rituals (*Gṛhya Hōma*), respectively, the *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra* and *Āpastamba Grhya Sūtra*.

To appreciate the magnitude of this initial recitation achievement, traditionally a basic education lasting eight to twelve years, printed versions in *Devanagari* or Telugu script, or in English or other translation, could extend to well over 2,000 pages. One feature of this voluminous textual material, particularly true of ritual texts, is an interweaving of essential paradigms; a student will frequently encounter passages he has already committed to memory, especially in the transition from *Saṃhitā* to *Brāhmaṇa* to *Aranyaka*.

With his new thread over his left shoulder ('*Yajñōpavīta*') and under his right arm, … (the Brahmachari) touches the feet of his guru, usually his father but possibly his grandfather, older brother, uncle, or more distant relative, and in the technique of *Adhyāya*, sits down before him to hear and then recite back a phrase, one at a time. They begin sometime after the dawn *Sandhyā* and continue daily through the dark and bright halves of the lunar month

except for eight specified break days of an-*Adhyāya*, days without new recitations when review of past lessons, or study of *Mīmāṃsā, Dharma Śāstras*, or other acolyte texts take the place of a fresh *Taittirīya* recitation.

The process of retaining successive phrases of text, however, is familiar to outsiders only in part. The small boy with impressionable brain cells has a calling and faces a syllabus unbelievably daunting in its totality. True, he is adding but one line at a time. Nevertheless, pressure from the cumulative weight of successive days is enormous, the task being so formidable that the dropout rate is high.

The dropout rate amongst Vēda students is very high mainly because only a few of them possess stamina to persevere in the 8-15 years of intensive learning under a guru without a break. Without a deep-seated ardour burning in one's heart for such learning which gets further fuelled by an overpowering urge to go on delving deeper in the quest for *Vedic* discoveries, it is impossible to remain a committed *Vēdavid*. Mukkūr *Svāmī*, both as a *Brahmacārin* and *Gṛhastha,* clearly did possess such intense ardour and commitment.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages - 146, 144

Two key terms are applied to those who are receptive to transmission (from *Guru* to *Śiṣya*): "*Vyasana*", passion, and "*Asakti*", curiosity.

The word *Vyasana* that Telugu inherited from Sanskrit connotes not only passion but also obsession, excessive attachment, even addiction. *Vaidika* Brahmins use the term in a positive sense, redolent of prideful censure for overdoing it, with reference to those addicted to a lifetime of learning through *Vēda* and beyond. The younger two generations describe the old men— their fathers and grandfathers—with unmitigated awe. That kind of passion, the addiction of the young men, is gone, and may not be seen again. The old men agree and speak with nostalgia of bygone times in the *Agrahāra* when that tumult of mantra could be heard at all hours of the day, except, they add, "perhaps between midnight and 3:00 a.m."

But the old men also invoke the Telugu word *Asakti*: curiosity, inquisitiveness. A stretching of the imagination about *Vēda* should occur before passion is aroused. In a child, such curiosity can be identified as easily as passion, and no one today says that it has disappeared entirely.

The survivor of early *Vedic* learning is enrolled in something close to a degree programme broken into eighty-two "questions" the classical Telugu "*Panna*", from the Sanskrit "*Prashna*". This might be compared with a sequence of eighty-two "courses" all of them charged to memory!

As noted in the syllabus for the *Vedic* student, anticipating the examination system begins with the third or fourth *kaanda* of the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, those two sections considered to be the softest for starters. The seven kaanda are memorised in five portions, making up forty-four "*Praśnas*", or slightly more than half of the syllabus. The "dependent" (Telugu *Parayatta*) portion of thirty-eight "*panna*" is the second half of the Brahmacārin's coursework, that is, the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* of twenty-eight "*panna*" followed by the ten "*panna*" of the *Taittirīya Aranyaka* and *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*. Thus, they make up the eighty-two *panna* or "*Praśnas*" in all in what might be construed as the common *Vaidika* high-school diploma plus undergraduate degree. Tacked on are the aphorisms of two ritual manuals, *Āpastamba Śrauta* and *Grhya Sūtras*.

Even in Madurāntakam *Pāṭhaśālā*, his tutors were able to recognise both such *Vyasana* and *Asakti* for *Vēdas* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* possessed as a young boy. And both "passion" and "curiosity" thus, in later years, enabled him to cultivate powers of memory – deep *retention*, instantaneous recall, and verbatim reproduction – that were simply phenomenal (*about which more will be detailed in later chapters*).

Living in Vijayawada for so long and by interacting frequently with the Godāvarī *Āhitāgni Agrahāra* communities, he certainly must have had first-hand encounters with *Vedavids* with equally astounding memorising capabilities, acquired through years of continuous toil in *Vēda-Adhyāya*.

The mythic dimension of Vēda Adhyāya

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages - 146

What must be added to an understanding of *Vēda Adhyāya*, however, is the mythic dimension adhering to the space where transmission (of knowledge) takes place, namely, the *Agrahāra* itself. It is impossible to overestimate it.

The surrounding terrain is *Puṇya Kṣetra*, a sacred site, a place of merit and power, and therefore a place where *Adhyāya* is possible.

(The mythic dimension) begins with the fact that the *Ṛṣis* (who bequeathed the *mantra* and *Praśnas*), said to have lived "for 300 or 600 years," are still here and can occasionally be glimpsed in predawn mists on the Kausika stream, the Godāvarī channel named for Kusika, the Maharṣi Visvamitra.

Also here are the ancestors (*pitr*), including senior *Āhitāgni* who died in recent years, who "watch everything we do." The *Vedic* Brahmin identifies with both, the fabled *Ṛṣi* of the Great Time in which Vēda was first overheard, and the ancestors who have transmitted *Vēda* into the present day. Some *Āhitāgni* provide names of both maternal and paternal lineages for eight to ten generations in their *Vēda Pandit* heritage. Other holy beings who emerge in this *Puṇya Kṣetra* include powerful *Saadhus* who validate the terrain as a place of power and possibility…

It is perhaps this mythic dimension of the *Vēdādhyāyī* that accounts for, and lends considerable credence to, the appearance of the mysterious "*old man*", or *Vayō-Vṛddha,* whom Mukkūr *Svāmī* encountered as the "**Miracle of Maṅgalagiri**".

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages 146 and 147

Transmission of *Vēda* (by a *Guru* to his disciple) involves, in a remarkable reciprocity, what might be sound mysticism.

The student, day by day, year after year, is bonded to his *Guru* by *Mantric* sound (*Śabda*). He hears, and replicates, the *Guru*'s voice as text. He will always hear the *Guru*'s voice as text because he has appropriated *Vēda* in that voice as his own.

The *Vedic* Brahmin enlivens a remark of Bachelard's: "By certain of its traits, childhood lasts all through life." These infinite strands of sacred sound, accumulated over the years of childhood are a single resident voice, simultaneously the voice of the *Ṛṣi*, of the *Guru*, of the carefully constructed textual self.

This remains true long after the death of this latter-day *Ṛṣi* who has given spiritual birth to him. And when he participates in group recitations, he inserts his own voice, his *Guru*'s voice, to blend into the community text. As the text has entered his mind, so (also) has he interiorised and immortalised his father and grandfather.

After years of emulation, syllable by syllable, accent by accent, the *Guru* endures as an aural seed, until each recitation is a re-presentation of the *Guru*. In bhakti-like reverence, the *Vēda* pundit may frequently say of a *Guru* who was not his biological father, "First I remember him, and only then I remember my father."

[**Author's Notes:** This is the reason why, as explained in **Chapter 2**, in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition, the "*Ācārya Taniyāṉ*" is invoked].

The *Vedic* student carries for life the mnemonics of the Agrahāra resounding with mantras— and the mnemonics of the time as a Brahmacarya he underwent a rite of passage. In later life, every recitation has the capacity to evoke the guru's voice, the guru's house, the Agrahāra, the auspicious territory or "Kṣetra."

The *Vedic* student appropriates a given embedded micro-text in an entirely personal scale, being held responsible for it whenever he is ready, two months, six months, eight months, a year. Further, he will discover daily, familiar mantras embedded in his newly heard lessons, powerful, familiar sound bites he has overheard in various contexts, and these enable him to link together alien elaborations on unfamiliar passages. It is the *Vedic* text working, reverberating on the reciter, although here it is not visual but aural senses that are conduits for solidification and intensification.

Similarly, in the case of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the intimate and thorough methods of transmission by which the *Vedic Śabda* had been imparted to him, both in the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* and later by his elder brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār in Vijayawada, were truly *mythic* indeed in dimension and quality.

CHAPTER 14

Community (*Deśa*) Impressions – 4

The Career of the Vēda Pundit as Gṛhastha

To continue pursuing the conjecture or the theory, about how lasting was the impact that the nearly ten years of life in Vijayawada had upon Mukkūr *Svāmī* while he continued pursuing *Vedic* learning there, along with intense *Nṛsiṃha-upāsanā*, first as a *Brahmacārin* and then as a *Gṛhastha*, it is relevant to also study how the *Āhitāgni Śrauta* brahmins in the Godāvarī Delta *Agrahāras* conducted their ritualist lives as *Gṛhasthas* too. Remarkable similarities between how they lived and how Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself lived too in those years cannot go unnoticed.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages - 35 and 36

"The career of the married *Vēda Pundit* now follows a trajectory with multiple options. The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* is transmitted in several forms known as *Vikrti*, modifications of the "original" or model text.

"The student began with the *Saṃhitā*, "continuous," *Pāṭha*, "recitation." After completing it, he went on with *Pada-Pāṭha*, the same text over again broken down to separate "words," *Pada*, without regard to grammatical rules that alter certain initial and final letters when they coalesce. For a third review, he receives the same text in *Krama-Pāṭha*, a "step-by-step" recitation. Some students do not go beyond the first or second recitation pattern. Most young men, teenagers at this point, stop after krama-pāṭha with examination and certification.

"If he still has nimble brain cells, however, a student may elect to repeat much of what he has interiorised in a far more difficult recitation, the *Ghana-Pāṭha*, for example, a compact braided form that is popular among gifted students in coastal Andhra, a few of them relying on careers as *Ghanapāṭhī*, masters of *Ghana* who recite professionally at pandit assemblies, weddings, housewarmings, or other auspicious occasions, often in groups of two, four, or more in antiphonal response."

"The *Jaṭā-Pāṭha* is another difficult recitation pattern attempted briefly by many but mastered by few.

"On the other hand, after the chain of *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Aranyaka*, and *Upaniṣad*, the gifted student may turn to one of the other *Vēdas*, another *Shakha*, and begin learning some portion of the *Ṛg Vēda*, for example, with the same or a different guru. If his family includes someone with knowledge of the *Sāma Vēda*, the *Vēda* of *saaman*, melodies in a seven-note scale, an essential text for *Sōma* sacrifices, the student may elect to learn a segment of that difficult text from him.

"Now a young man with increasing ability, probably living with his wife and starting a family, he may choose further studies with a *pundit* elsewhere in the *Agrahāra*, or in another village or town. His options may also include extra-*Vedic* texts, *Mīmāṃsā*, for example, to develop his expertise in *Vedaartha*, inquiry into the meaning of the *Vēda*, or another of the philosophical schools, or *Vyākaraṇa*, the study of grammar, or domestic rituals in the *Smārta* curriculum.

"Another choice might be the study of the *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra* along with its commentaries.

"Less frequently studied are phonetics, prosody or metrics, and etymology, respectively, *Siksha, Chandas,* and *Nirukta* or *Mīmāṃsā*, inquiry into the meaning of the *Vēda, Vedaartha*, going beyond *Mantras* and precepts to contextualisation. Certification from further studies in any of these branches of learning adds to credentials and increases authority when attending a local or regional pandit assembly, a *Sabhā*, or *Sadas* for debates and exchanges of information on current *Vedic* events.

"In other words, after "graduating" from celibate studentship – '*Brahmacarya*' -- and becoming a householder – "*Gṛhastha*" --, the *Vēda pundit* engages in post-graduate studies, the lifelong learning that is the mark of *Agrahāra* residents who never seem to cease their quest for knowledge. And of course, "the *Vēda*," with hundreds of primaries, acolyte and commentarial texts, provides unbounded territory for exploration.

From the foregoing broad sketch of how a *Brahmacārin* gradually progresses on his *Vedic* academic path over a period of 8 to 15 years --- from *Sapta-Kāṇḍa-Saṃhitā-Pāṭha* to advanced post-graduate levels of *Krama, Śākhā, Ghana,* and *Jaṭā-Pāṭha* --- we are able to now visualise how Mukkūr *Svāmī* too easily navigated the same path

under the expert guidance of his elder brother and finally attained the very highest levels of proficiency as a *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī*.

Yajña Sūtras and Agnihōtrī

In the next phase of life, after completing *Brahmacārin* studies, the *Gṛhastha Āhitāgni* then segues into the study and practice of *Śrauta* fire-rituals: household *Gṛhya Agnihōtra*, *Agniṣṭōma*, and others.

While there is no record or evidence that Mukkūr *Svāmī*, while in Vijayawada as a *Gṛhastha*, ever underwent any formal training under any guru in the disciplines of *Yajña Sūtras* or how to perform elaborate fire rituals, it is most likely that he was fully aware of the *Śrauta* liturgical practices in the Godāvarī *Agrahāras*.

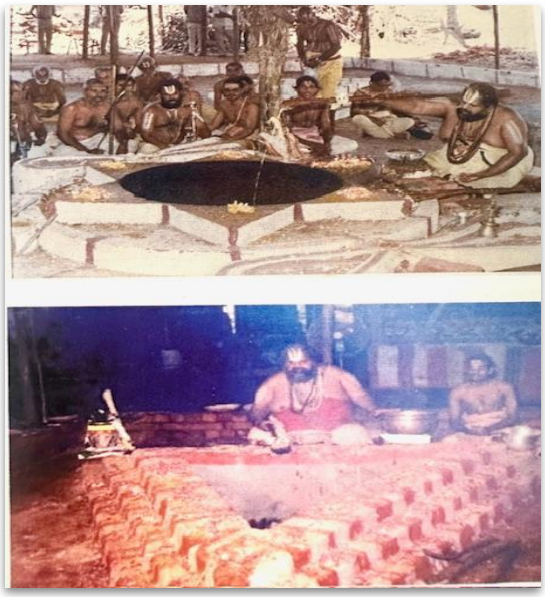


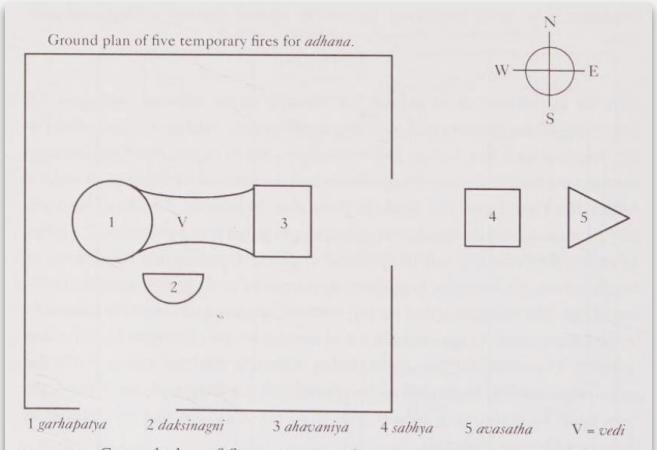
Image 21 & 22: *Nṛsiṃha Mantra traditions and Nṛsiṃha Yajña*

.

In later life, everyone could see that he was certainly well acquainted with several types of sacerdotal and/or liturgical esoteric traditions of *Agni-Cayana*. His knowledge in these disciplines, therefore, can possibly be attributed only to his having constantly observed in his surroundings, *agni*-inspired liturgical practices in vogue. That perhaps left some impressions upon Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s evolution in the later years as an exceptional exponent of *Nṛsiṃha Mantra traditions* and *Nṛsiṃha Yajña, performance* besides the related *Āgama* ritual protocols.

Excerpts from *Vedic* Voices - Intimate Narratives of a Living Andhra Tradition - David Knipe - Pages – 146

"*Vēda Pundits* who have been nurtured within the embrace of *Śrauta* traditions will be strongly encouraged to continue their heritage and become *Āhitāgni*, sacrificers who maintain three hearths, not a single sacred fire; perform the twice-daily heated milk offering known as *Agnihōtra*, that entitles them to be known as rare and privileged "*Agnihōtrī*" ; and (thereafter) move on, with *Sōma* sacrifice in mind, to perform the ritual known as *Yajna*, meaning the *Agni-Stoma*."



PLAN 2.2. Ground plan of five temporary fires for the *adhana* ritual setting of hearths.

"The *Śrauta* ritual system … is an extended one in the sense that a simple domestic routine … (gets) replaced by one far more demanding on the religious energies of the sacrificer (*Gṛhastha*) and his wife. A few may take the life-altering step into extended fires early on, but many wait until mid-life or later. They speak repeatedly about what is nitya, obligatory, and invariably distinguish between what is absolutely necessary for the sacrificial life of a *Vedic Brahman* and what is set aside as either *Kamya*, a ritual for a personal desire (long life, for example, or the birth of a son), or *Naimittika*, a ritual that is occasional, not calendric (such as rites for a funeral or for rain to end a drought). The last of these three categories, *Naimittika*, includes important *Prayascitta*, expiatory performances as recompense for failure to do the nitya rites in timely fashion."

"The significance of installing the god *Agni* as lord of house and family, and what his presence and the obligations of constant ritual attentions mean in the way of creating an alternative reality … (can be understood through) …. the multiple meanings of the word agni-hotra."

"The god and his cult become synonymous when we see that the common parlance of *Āhitāgni* and *Patni* employs "*Agnihōtra*" to mean three separate entities: the daily offerings, the fires into which libations are made, and the God *Agni* himself. *Pūjā*, at its heart, is the worshippers' reception and entertainment of a distinguished and adored guest, and that is precisely the case with the establishment of sacred fire (*Agnihōtra*) in the household."

"The construction of the fire-altar (called "*Adhana*") for these fire-rituals is as prescribed in the "*Yajña Sūtras*". They are built in … layers of bricks … (to represent) cosmogonic ritual in which the sacrificer is homologised to *Agni* as well as the primal sacrifice person, *Puruṣa-Prajāpati* (as in the *Ṛg Vēda* hymn of "*Puruṣa Sūkta*", about which more will be said in a later chapter in this book), and all of Time and Space are (symbolically) reintegrated and founded anew."

"Daily, as the bricks are being laid, course by course, the sacrificer carries *Agni* about in a firepan (*Ukha*). The *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* in the *Shukla*, or White, *Yajur Vēda* tradition devotes more than a third of its chapters to the *Agni-Cayana* and its mysteries."

"…. *Agni* has pride of place in the *Vēdas*: the *Ṛg Vēda* … begins with "*Agnim Ile Purohitam*...", (the *Mantra*) in praise of him as visible household priest. An entire community of deities, invited by *Agni*, gathers daily with fires as cynosure and the married co-sacrificers as host and hostess of the ritual assembly."

"Several *Āhitāgni* have reported what appear to be mystical experiences, visions stimulated by prolonged engagements with their fires and aspirations for the health and welfare of their families."

"From the … task of feeding the fires with kindling-stick offerings (*Samidh*), onward through a life of *Agnihōtra* (all the way) to the final oblation, one's own body is (given away) as offerings, *Tretagni-Āhavanīya*, *Daksinagni*, and *Garha-Patya*, igniting head, arms, and midsection before burning together as one. Devotion to *Agni* has no parallel in the religious experience of the *Āhitāgni*. That ultimate manifestation of the deity, the awe-inspiring and beloved god who absorbs, is "*Agni Kravyad*", the Fire-God who can consume everything."

From the foregoing account of how Yajña Sūtras and *Agnihōtra* traditions were practised so intensely in Godāvarī Brahmin villages, we can learn that a few of them were reported to have had "*mystical experiences, visions stimulated by prolonged engagements with their fires*". It is possible to infer why and how Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in later

years when he embarked upon his life-mission to perform 108 *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas,* also similarly experienced transcendent, near-mystic visions on several occasions.

Vēda Sabhas or Sadas

Across the wide Godāvarī alluvial belt between Rajahmundry in the north and Vijayawada in the south, the *Agrahāra Vedic* pundits and many devout Andhra families that were their patrons used to vigorously promote the holding of annual Vēda *sabhā* or *Sadas*.

The *Deṇḍukūri Agnihōtrī Sōmayājī* family (under whose tutelage Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār learnt *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭha*) also used to organise *Vēda Sabhās*. There can be no doubt that Mukkūr *Svāmī* too was thus not only aware of those events but perhaps also participated in a few of them.

What did a *Vēda Sabhā* mean to Vēda pundits? It was a gathering to debate any *Vedic* subject, often an unrealistically expansive one such as *Śrauta*, *Śākhā*, or *Pāṭha* -- *Vēda*, *Śrauta*, *Dharma-Śāstra*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Jyōtiṣa*, and other subjects, interspersed with illustrations from Epic (*Itihāsa*) and *Purāṇic* mythology. These events would draw a crowd. Usually everyone already knew or had heard of the principal panellists who addressed the larger gatherings or challenged the finer points of discussion.

The wide-ranging discussions at these *Vedic* symposia could focus on any one or more of themes or topics picked up from a schema such as, for example, as can be seen in the image below.

The *Sabhā* is usually open to the public and an audience that for the most part understands nothing of the Sanskrit and little of the esoteric Telugu but arrives anyway to bask in the esteemed company of Brahmins of consequence. Vēda pundits come there voluntarily and receive honoraria. For some, the honorarium (*Sambhāvanā*) is the reason they are there (*and about whom, in a later chapter, a humorous incident will be narrated!)*.

Three things are essential for a successful *Vēda Sabhā*: (1) ***Upaniṣad***, by which is meant precise statements on *Vedic* subjects, supported by references to the texts; (2) ***Satkāraṇa***, *hospitality*, including respect for the Brahmins, good food, and honoraria; and (3) thirdly, ***Svasti***, a group recitation of the *Svasti-Vacana* (*Ṛg Vēda* hymn), addressed to the *Viśvēdēvas* (*all the gods*). It is a moment of great pleasure for those

reciting the hymn as well as for those hearing a *Pāṭhaka* succeeding one another in increasing order of expertise.

Table 2.2. The Vedic textual tradition. Taittiriya texts are highlighted; some collections are fragmentary [fr.]. This table largely follows Staal 1983: 1.36.

Sakha / Samhita	Brahmana	Aranyaka	Upanisad	Srauta Sutra
Rg Veda				
1. Sakala	Aitareya	Aitareya	Aitareya	Asvalayana
2. Vaskala	Kausitaki	Kausitaki	Kausitaki	Sankhayana
Krsna Yajur Veda				
1. Kathaka & Kapisthala	Katha [fr.]	Katha [fr.]	Katha [fr.]	Kathaka [fr.]
2. Maitrayani			Maitri	Manava
				Varaha
3. **Taittiriya**	**Taittiriya**	**Taittiriya**	**Taittiriya**	**Apastamba**
			Svetasvatara	Baudhayana
			Mahanarayana	Vadhula
				Bharadvaja
				Hiranyakesi
				Vaikhanasa
Sukla Yajur Veda / Vajasaneyi				
1. Madhyamdina	Satapatha	[Brhad]	Brhadaranyaka	Katyayana
2. Kanva	Satapatha	[Brhad]	Isa	
Sama Veda				
1. Kauthuma / Ranayaniya	Pancavimsa		Chandogya	Latyayana
	Sadvimsa			Drahyayana
2. Jaiminiya	Jaiminiya		Kena	Jaiminiya
Atharva Veda				
1. Saunaka	Gopatha		Prasna	Vaitana [=Kausikasutra]
2. Paippalada	Gopatha		Mundaka	
			Mandukya	

Image 24: *Symposia subjects at Vedic Sabha*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s regular attendance at the annual Kōrukoṇḍa Temple Trust *Vēda Sabhā* organised by the Parāśara Bhaṭṭar family trustees most certainly provided him ample opportunities to imbibe—simply through observation, participation, and collegial interactions—deep knowledge in a wide range of *Yajña*, *Agamic* liturgy, and ritual practices…a knowledge just as deep if not more than that of the *Āhitāgni* Masters of Rajahmundry *Agrahāras*.

CHAPTER 15

Community (*Deśa*) Impressions– 5

In the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition, the mastery of high-level ritualism—particularly the *Mahā-Yajña*—is governed by strict lineages similar to those of *Āhitāgni* families of the *Śrauta-Smārta* tradition or as those of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* Parāśara Bhaṭṭar clans, who specialise in the application of the *Āgamas* (*Pāñcarātra or Vaikhānasa*) to large-scale sacrificial ceremonies.

As seen in the previous chapters, both these practitioners undergo an education that begins with the memorisation of the *Prayōga* manuals and moves through years of practical supervision in the construction of *Yajña-Śālās*, the measurement of *Kuṇḍas*, and the synchronisation of thousands of offerings with complex *Mudrās* and internal visualisations.

The formal training of Śrī Mukkūr *Svāmī*, while profound, does not appear to overlap with these specific vocational ritualistic lineages. His education followed a path much more common to the intellectual and devotional leaders of the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* faith:

- ***Vedic* and Vedāntic Mastery:** He learned the *Vēdas* and Vedānta from his elder brother and father-in-law (both distinguished *Vedavids*), and inherited knowledge in *Nyāya Śāstra*, *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa* and Sanskrit poetics from his father, who was connected to the Madurāntakam Sanskrit College faculty.
- **Hymnological Canon:** He received thorough training in the Tamil Āḻvār's *Nālāyira Divya-Prabandham* and deeply assimilated the works of the 14th-century polymath, **Śrī Vedānta Deśika** (1268-1368 CE).
- **Institutional Influence:** He came under the influence of his father-in-law, Śrī *Tirukkaḷḷam* Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār, and later also the *44th Jīyar of Ahōbila Mutt*, but there is no record of him spending the necessary twenty to thirty years as a *Ṛtvik* (sacrificial priest) in anything resembling the *āhitāgni* tradition before launching himself, in the year 1984, into performing a nonstop series of 107 *Nṛsiṃha-Yajñas*.

If the *Vedic* academic career of Mukkūr *Svāmī* were to be summarised in one comprehensive table, it would probably be presented as below:

Knowledge Domain	Traditional Source	Mukkur Swami's Documented Source	Gap in Transmission
Vedic Recitation	Oral tradition (6-12 years)	His brother and father.[1]	Minimal; he was highly proficient.
Vedantic Philosophy	*Kalakshepam* with Acharyas	Madurantakam College / brother.[1]	Minimal; recognized as a profound scholar.
Yagna Vastu (Geometry)	Sulba Sutras / Apprenticeship	Not explicitly documented.[1]	Significant; requires physical practice.
Narasimha Tantra	Specific Upasana lineages	Not in family or official records.[1]	Significant; tantra is *guhya* (hidden).
Mantra Varna Nyasa	Secret initiation (*Upadesa*)	Often attributed to mystical encounters.[7]	High; the "missing link" identified by users.

What can be inferred from the above table is that there is a clear *structural gap* suggesting that not only his prodigious encyclopaedic *Vedic* erudition and his phenomenal memory power, but also his great technical capability to perform *Yajñas,* were not the result of a gradual accumulation of academic training and qualifications in the different fields of *Vedic* study. Rather, they were all caused by a ***"sudden dawning"*** or an esoteric **"recollection"** triggered by external near-mystical stimuli.

It was not even clear to MLS *Svāmī*, nor to any other member of the family (elder brother, wife, or father-in-law), what that stimulus was and how it had occurred. In my interviews with MLS *Svāmī*, all he could offer as an explanation was a Tamil expression borrowed from a hoary *Śrīvaiṣṇava* hagiographical text – the *Guruparamparā-Prabhāva* – that described Nammāḻvār as follows:

Nammāḻvār

கருவிலேய் நெஞ்சிலேய் நிலையுலேய் ஆழியுலேய் ஆதரங்கள் ஆய் ….

Karuvilley Nenjilley Nilaiyulley Āzhiyulley Ādharaṅgaḷ Āyi…

(More on this hagiographical text will be explained in a later chapter)

The Tamil expression describes Nammāḻvār's prenatal precocity, dazzling eloquence, and divine inspiration, all derived directly from Viṣṇu. To buttress that point in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s case, MLS *Svāmī* attributed it all, again, only to the "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*" … to the *Ṛṣi*-like *Vayō-Vṛddha*.

The Invisible Teacher and Divine Transmission of Grace

In Indian spiritual history, the appearance of a "*mysterious old man*" is a classic trope for the manifestation of the *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā* (*a chosen personal deity*) or else, as in other Tantric *Sampradāyas*, a *Siddha-Puruṣa* from a higher spiritual plane of existence; i.e., *Siddha-Puruṣas* living in invisible forms in caves, emerging only to initiate those who have achieved spiritual exaltation, or are destined for a specific cosmic task.

In the Ahōbila Mutt *Sampradāya*, the first *Jīyar*, Śrī Ādivaṇ Śaṭhakōpa Yatīndra Mahādēśikan (15th century CE), is believed to have received the idol of the *Deity Mālōla-Nṛsiṃha* directly from the hands of Lord Nṛsiṃha Himself in a miraculous vision.

It is in that same lineage that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*" too must be contextualised. The encounter at Maṅgalagiri fits the same pattern. It is theorised that the "*old man*" was not a human teacher, but a manifestation of Lord Nṛsiṃha Himself, acting as the *Adi-Guru*.

This mode of transmission is referred to in the *Yajña* traditions as *Divyaugha,* wherein the deity bypasses human intermediaries to empower a specific agent of *Dharma* and confers primordial knowledge and wisdom without human embodiment.

This would explain the "*near impossibility*" of gaining years of training in a single meeting with a *Vayō-Vṛddha*. The meeting was a temporal marker for a non-temporal "*download*" of ritual protocols. To reconcile the lack of formal apprenticeship with Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s demonstrated mastery of the *Yajñas*, the category of *Pratibha Jñāna* or "*Supernormal Perception*" can also be invoked. Unlike empirical learning, which relies on the senses and intellect, *Pratibha Jñāna* is a "*flash of intuition*" that reveals cosmic reality directly to the soul. This *Jñāna,* or knowledge, is in fact the subject of research in psychology today called **Noetic Science** (*which will be elaborated in a later chapter*).

The Heart of a Devotee: When the Deity Becomes the Guru

For the "Supreme Being", it is possible to be everything and yet nothing, assuming strange and varied bodily forms only to communicate specific *Vidyās* (disciplines). In the case of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, his intense austerities practised in *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* in the Maṅgalagiri *Kṣetra* served as the ongoing laboratory for this divine communication and noetic intuition.

The Vidyā thus transmitted to him through just *Mantra-Upadeśa* may seem impossible or incredible from a human pedagogical perspective. However, in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition of *Siddha*, as seen in the examples of Ācāryās like *Nammāḻvār*, *Nāthamuni,* and *Ādivaṇ Śaṭhakōpan*, such "*downloaded*" divine knowledge is viewed as "*already present*" in the soul of the *dharmic* agent, requiring only a divine catalyst --- "*the meeting with the old man*", in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s case --- to become functional.

In the ultimate analysis, the prerequisite for conducting a *Mahā-Yajña,* as Mukkūr *Svāmī* did in his life, was really the level of intensity of *Upāsanā* (devotional practice and austerity). The ritual authority does not really come from any academic "diploma", but solely from the ***Tējas***, -- the spiritual effulgence and power, generated through such austerities. The meeting with the *old man in Maṅgalagiri* was likely the moment that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was given the *Deeksha* (initiation) to manifest that latent power --, in the form of public rituals for the benefit of the world.

In the ten long years of life that Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār spent during the "Vijayawada Years", whatever evidence presents itself as to how he acquired the Mantra *Śāstra* for conducting *Nṛsiṃha Mahā Yajña* points in only one direction: *that it was acquired through a process of divine revelation that bypasses standard human timelines*.

While his academic foundation in the *Vēdas* provided the necessary "*vessel*" of language and philosophy, the "*content*" of the ritual procedures was transmitted during mystical encounters at the sacred sites of Maṅgalagiri and other sites as well that he may have visited in the Rajahmundry and Kākināḍa villages. Such transmission, categorised as *Pratibha Jñāna*, allowed him to master, in a single "*divine meeting*", what takes other souls decades of practice.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life demonstrates that when the academic rigour of a great *Vedic* scholar meets the absolute surrender of a Vedāntic devotee, the deity Himself (the *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā*) becomes the Guru, providing the "missing link" that turns a *Vēdavid*

into also a Master of the cosmic fire rituals. Which is why Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Vedic Yajñas*, in later years, stood out as a monument to this esoteric transmission, bridging the ancient world of the *Āhitāgni Agrahāras* and *Āgamas* with the modern world of the *Āstika*.

PART 3

The *Upanyāsa* Years

(1971 - 1984)

CHAPTER 16

Upanyāsa Cakravartī

The Great Gathering: How the Upanyāsa Years Built the Foundation for the Maṭṭapalli Mahā-Yajña

On the same day that the "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*" in Vijayawada happened in the year 1969, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s dharmic mission in life as an immensely popular *Upanyāsaka* began at once. Thereafter, the hectic and eventful journey of the divinely ordained life he led did not cease until *circa* 1981, when it entered yet another extraordinary phase.

In this phase of his life – '*the Upanyāsa*' Years – Mukkūr *Svāmī* delivered hundreds of religious discourses throughout the country. He addressed vast numbers of devotees as he crisscrossed the states of the South and a few in the North as well. His *Upanyāsas* secured for him a following of *Āstikas* (the *Vedic* laity), whose numbers began swelling from a few hundred at the beginning to several hundred thousand by the time when, around 1984, he decided to curtail his travel commitments and concentrated instead on the other great dharmic mission in life ordained for him by ***Yajñeśa***, Lord of Maṭṭapalli village, viz. to perform 108 *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s extremely popular public discourses (*Upanyāsas*) endeared him to thousands of people for well over two decades. The collection of his discourses now available in the multi-volume Tamil publication titled ***'Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai',*** endures today as one of the very few works in contemporary *Śrīvaiṣṇava* religious literature that appeals to commoners as much as to pundits. He had a celebrated style of elocution, expounding upon the beauties and truths ingrained in that peerless work of Vedāntic scripture—the magnificent *Śrī* ***Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma***, the litany of one thousand glorious names of *Bhagavān Śrīman Nārāyaṇa*.

Although *Svāmī* dealt with difficult subjects in his discourses on philosophy and theology, he had an uncanny ability to present them to the general public in an easy, and intelligible way. He avoided the overuse of formidably technical expressions of *Siddhānta* (Sanskrit, Tamil, or Maṇipravāḷa). Everything he presented became an easy, almost languid essay in lucidity, simplicity, and arresting cogency. He never allowed

distance to develop between himself and his audience—that "*distance of scholarship*" which lesser pundits usually like to maintain to set themselves apart from the motley crowd. Ordinary folk, completely unschooled in the scriptural texts of *Vedic* tradition, were, strangely enough, attracted to the lofty subjects Mukkūr *Svāmī* explained and having once heard him remained riveted to every word he spoke thereafter.

When you attended Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s discourses, you never failed to notice the number of young faces that turned up amongst the audience in almost equal strength to the elderly ones. He had a tremendous impact on young *Āstika* minds because of his refreshingly contemporary approach to ancient scriptural subjects.

One of the ways in which Mukkūr *Svāmī* cast a spell on his audiences was through the retelling of captivating little anecdotes or stories from the *Purāṇa*. These seeming asides of *Svāmī*, at once utterly convincing and light-hearted, however, helped to underscore the main, and larger philosophical or theological themes of his discourses.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s memory was immense and phenomenal. He never needed the usual props public speakers rely upon; *viz*. handy little notes and texts carried under the arm for quick reference in case of memory or narrative lapses. He could easily recall, in torrential succession, passages from *Vēda-Ghanapāṭha* for hours on end without as much as a moment's pause. He could effortlessly weave intricate cross-references and allusions through a maze of scriptural material (*viz*. *Āraṇyakas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇa*, *Itihāsa*, *Brahmasūtras*, *Śrī-Bhāṣya*, *Āḻvār-Aruḷicceyal*, *Pūrvācārya-Śrī Sūktis*) in support and illustration of the simple yet most enlightening themes he covered. While quoting from those sources, he made sure they were apt and appropriate to the context. He never exaggerated anything, never overstated anything, and never for a moment appeared to be wearing his knowledge on his sleeve. No pedagogy. Everything he discoursed upon had real meaning and substance, and often, as one discovered upon deeper reflection, his exposition carried many subtle layers of meaning within the span and context of the same discourse.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* had a sparkling sense of humour too. His wit was an ornament to his discourses, never a distraction from them. Most public speakers, as *Upanyāsakas,* these days use humour as a tool to enliven proceedings when they sense the audience's attention waning. The urge to pander to audiences and to keep them humoured or entertained often mars religious discourses in the modern day. But Mukkūr *Svāmī* never had to resort to that obsequious brand of humour. His witticisms

and jokes blended so well with the subject that one always wondered which deserved more admiration—the witticism itself or its underlying profound message.

To give just one small example of such gentle and yet wonderful humour, here below is a paraphrase of one extract from Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* in a Single Phrase

A good man once approached a Wise One for advice on the art of living. He was told to start with a thorough study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The man went home and eagerly looked up the first chapter. Halfway through the chapters on the "*Samkhya-Yoga*", his mind boggled, and the poor man simply gave up.

He returned to the Wise One to complain. "*Sir, there are eighteen chapters in the Gītā. If each of them is as formidable as the first couple of ones, then I am afraid I must tell you I am woefully unequal to the daunting task.*"

"*Can you instead direct me,*" pleaded the man with the Wise One, "*can you direct me to the heart of the Gītā texts so that I can grasp the core of their sacred essence without having to traverse their entire length?*"

The Wise One replied, "*If eighteen chapters are too much for you, my friend, then you better restrict your study to the passages on the Bhakti-Yoga alone.*"

"*Thank you, O noble sir,*" said the good man to the Wise One and departed.

Back home, our good friend opened the *Gītā* text and began his arduous enquiry into *Bhakti-Yoga*. The chapter was long and the passages interminable. Soon, the man gave up the effort and returned to the Wise One.

"*Sir, the chapters on the bhakti-yoga too are beyond my powers of comprehension! Can you direct me to a single Śloka which may be the nutshell of the entire Gītā?*"

The Wise One was by now annoyed with this man's attitude, so typical of the modern times when everyone expects to maximise rewards while expending minimum effort.

However, he patiently advised, "*My friend, if you want the Gītā concisely, go to the verse called the Charama-Śloka in the eighteenth chapter: Sarvadharmān Parityajya… You might find in it whatever you are looking for in this world.*"

Our friend, the seeker of truth, returned home, delighted in the discovery that the whole of the *Gītā* could be easily grasped through the study of a single verse! He spent the rest of the day in zealous attempts to commit to memory the Lord's famous *Charama-Śloka*.

After about an hour's effort, he gave up!

Returning to the Wise One once again, he confessed, "*Sir, the thirty-two-syllabled Charama-Śloka eludes my mind.*"

"*So, what do you want me to do about it?*" asked the Wise One with now barely concealed exasperation.

"*Pray, direct me to a single phrase, expression, or word in the verse which epitomises the Gītā. That way I can rest content that I have ingested all the substance of the Lord's message in but one verbal capsule.*"

The Wise One thought carefully for a while and replied, "*Leave out Sarvadharmān Parityajya; leave out Mām Ekaṃ Śaraṇaṃ Vraja; leave out Ahaṃ Tvā Sarvapāpebhyo Mokṣayiṣyāmi.*"

Then after a pause, the Wise One said, "*Hold steadfast to the last phrase, Mā śucaḥ. It means 'Do not worry or grieve.' Believe me, it is verily the essence of the Lord's Gītā, DO NOT WORRY. It is the real secret of life. Hold on dearly to that phrase all your life and never let go of it!*"

The seeker of truth then asked "*How can you say not to worry? How is it even possible?*", for which the Wise One replied "*Yes, Krishna said 'Don't worry'.*"

The seeker then asked, "*What should I do to be worry free?*"

The Wise One replied, "*Start from the first Śloka!*".

So, *Mā śucaḥ* led back to the start of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* again!

Emperor of Oratory

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* thus always held universal appeal to all sections of the *Āstika-Samajam*. In a broad sense, he was therefore not just a pillar of the

Śrīvaiṣṇava community alone, but a pillar of the much larger *Vedic-Kuṭumbam* (*Vedic* brotherhood). He was always able to emphasise the fundamental unity underlying all Vedāntic traditions of India, even amidst their age-old and sometimes rancorous differences. He spoke a language, at once simple and utterly convincing, which the *Advaitin*, *Viśiṣṭādvaitin*, and *Dvaitin* alike found easy to understand and relate to. Although he was a staunch votary of Śrī Rāmānuja *Darsanam*, *Svāmī* was never afraid of openly acknowledging the mighty contribution of the rival systems to the development of Vedāntic thought through the ages.

It was no surprise that the number of his devotees and followers kept growing. The *birudu* or title, *Maṭṭapallī Upanyāsa Cakravartī,* was given to him by none other than his *Ācārya*, the 45th pontiff of Ahobila Mutt, ***Śrī Nārāyaṇa Yatīndra Mahādeśikan.***

Unlocking the Legacy: An Interviewer's Tribute to the Master

My very own personal impressions about Mukkūr *Svāmī* were the contextual background for framing my next set of questions in the interview I conducted with **MLS *Svāmī***:

- ***When and how did he begin his career as an Upanyāsaka, including his first major discourses or platforms?***
- ***What were his most famous Upanyāsas, such as on Gajēndra-Mōkṣam or other topics, and where were they delivered?***
- ***How did he propagate Śrī Rāmānuja Siddhānta and Śrīvaiṣṇava traditions, and what unique teaching styles made him renowned?***
- ***His most popular Upanyāsa was on Śrī Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma. What were the reasons?***
- ***Can you share stories of his impact on disciples, temples, or the broader community?***
- ***How did he balance teaching, travel, and other professional commitments, and what was his daily routine like?***

CHAPTER 17

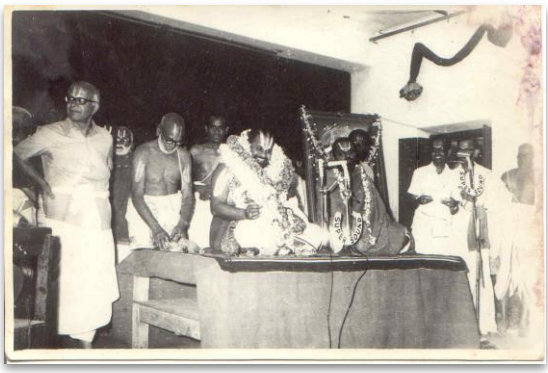
A Modicum of Domestic Stability

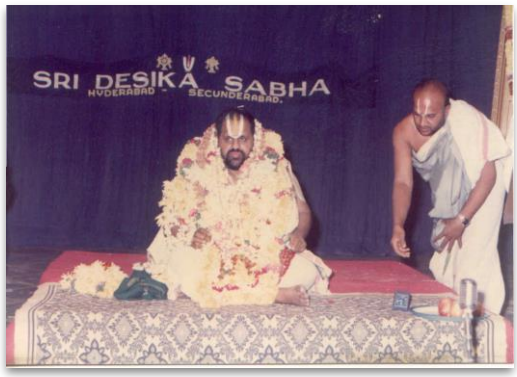
The Telegram of Transformation

As he walked back home to Vijayawada late that afternoon in 1969, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in his mind, thought no further of the strange, mysterious *Vayō-vṛddha* he had encountered at Maṅgalagiri.

Immediately upon reaching home, Mukkūr *Svāmī* found an express telegram message waiting for him. It was from the organising committee of a well-known religious institution in Coimbatore inviting him to deliver a 10-day-long *Upanyāsa* in that faraway city in Tamiḻ Nāḍu. Little did he realise then that it marked a transformation in life as he himself described it in later years.

A day later, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was doing his daily *Tiruvārādhana* (household worship) to *Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu* Azhagiyaingar when a letter also came by post from Coimbatore in confirmation of the earlier telegram message.





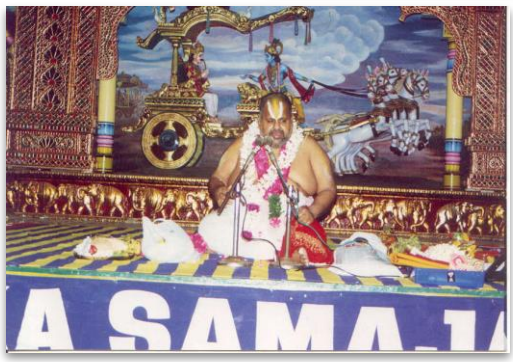


Image 25, Image 26 & Image 27 *- Mukkūr Svāmī on stage at prominent Upanyāsa*

My father was very fond of *Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar* and kept a framed photo of the *Ācārya* in a small bag, and the very first thing he did in the morning upon waking up was to take the photo and place it reverentially on his forehead like a *Śaṭhāri,* and then silently offer a heartfelt prayer to *Śrī Lakshmi- Nṛsiṃha*.

[**Author's Note:** *Śaṭhāri* is a small metal footwear-shaped, crown-like chalice representing the sacred lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu, which the sanctum priest (*Arcakā*) in a *Śrīvaiṣṇava* temple would place gently on the devotee's head during *Darśana* as a blessing. The practice, originating from the time of Nammāḻvār (*Śaṭhakōpan*), symbolises the devotee's humility, surrender (*Śaraṇāgati*), and divine grace. Devotees revere it as the highest honour, akin to the Lord's direct touch.]

The letter that arrived was from the cultural *Sabhā* in Coimbatore, requesting Mukkūr *Svāmī* to deliver an *Upanyāsa* in the Śrīram Nagar Kṛṣṇa-Temple for ten days. Hitherto, he had been delivering brief *Pravacanam* on public platforms in a few religious centres in Andhra Pradesh, but they were usually at occasional functions or special *Utsava* festivals programmed for maybe just a day or two. This invitation from Coimbatore was, for the first time, a request for a 10-day-long *Upanyāsa* on a specific topic and that too under the auspices of a large *Sabhā*. He immediately wrote a letter of consent back to them.

The first- ever long series of *Upanyāsa* delivered by Mukkūr *Svāmī* at Coimbatore was received so well by the audience that news about his outstanding *Vidvat* and oratory then spread everywhere. There was a sudden growing awareness amongst religious communities that a *Vedic* scholar and elocutionist of very rare distinction had arrived on the scene in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya*.

Neighbours of Vāḍēpallivāri Vīdhi

Requests for *Upanyāsa* from other *Sabhas* soon began pouring in, one after another, and within just a year after the "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*", Mukkūr *Svāmī* was being invited by dozens of *Sabhās* and temple administrations all over the country— Bombay, Madras, Delhi, and other metropolitan cities and towns. His following now spread to and grew in all parts of Tamiḻ Nāḍu and the greater Andhra region. There were times when his public discourses had been booked a full year in advance!

Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī*, a great pillar of support for Mukkūr *Svāmī* in those days, himself arranged many *Upanyāsas* for his brilliant son-in-law in Madras city at many places. It was also he who advised Mukkūr *Svāmī* to

relocate to Madras (now Chennai). As per the advice given by my maternal grandfather, our family returned to Chennai in the year 1972.

My memory, as a very small boy, of that day in Vijayawada when we packed up to return by train to Chennai, is still very much etched in my mind.

We were vacating the small house on *Vāḍēpallivāri Vīdhi,* near *Pāta Śivālayam,* on a small, narrow street which had been our home for nearly a decade. The neighbours all came out onto the street to see us off— several dozens of them!

A few of them were silently weeping, and since I was only a small boy at that time, I did not quite understand why. My only worry then was losing my close childhood friends in Vijayawada because of the relocation, and I was very anxious over whether I would be able to make new friends in Madras. It was only the excitement of the long train journey, for a little boy like me that kept both my puzzlement and anxiety at bay. Only much later did my mother explain to me the reason why our dear Vijayawada neighbours were weeping as we left them.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* had always treated all his neighbours with great affection. After performing *Pūjās* for them at many local temples, and even at Maṅgalagiri, he would frequently distribute *Bhagavat-Prasāda* to everyone. It greatly pleased the people to receive it from him… *Pantulu Gāru*, as they respectfully addressed him. Also, whenever neighbours came to him in distress over, say, somebody in their family falling ill or suffering any other misfortune, my father commiserated with them by immediately promising that he would undertake a *Saṅkalpa* for their welfare, and then proceed to do arduous *Japa* for several hours, and pray for divine intervention to alleviate the distress.

Many a time, his prayers were answered, and that used to fill the neighbourhood with awe. Mukkūr *Svāmī*, however, would never seek money or any other recompense from those simple-minded folks for the acts he undertook on his own volition, out of pure compassion for them.

Thus, the neighbours of *Vāḍēpallivāri Vīdhi*, my mother told me, remembered such kindness of Mukkūr *Svāmī*; and that is why they had been so distraught to see him depart from their midst.

Envy Tinged with Longing for the Ācāryā

Upon arriving in Madras, we lived in the first-floor premises of my maternal grandfather, *Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam* Svāmi's house on *Tukārām Third Street*, behind the *Śrī Śiva Viṣṇu Temple* in Tyāgarāya Nagar (T. Nagar).

I must here speak about my grandfather and the reverence that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had for his father-in-law, who was also his guru. The veneration was indescribable in words. As I have already said before, in the presence of *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*, my father would not even speak to him face-to-face. Out of extreme respect, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would always stand behind a door or a pillar and converse with him in a low tone and with his head always bowed.

Sometimes, when I was playing about on the veranda, my father would prod me and bid me go and play with my *Tāttā*. He would say:

"Pō, Tāttā Maṭiyilē Viḷaiyāṭu"

"Go sit on your grandpa's lap and play with him!"

My mother was the eldest daughter of *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*, so that made me his very first *Pēraṉ* (grandson). Thus, *Tāttā* was always doting on me, and I too was very fond of him.

In all my life, never have I sensed even a tinge of envy in Mukkūr *Svāmī*, and yet, on one occasion, when I was just a child, he told me:

"Do you know child that I envy you…? I envy you because you have the liberty to go and sit on the knees of that "Mahān" … and frolic with him! That's a privilege that I can never have!"

Image 28: *Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār (Mukkūr Svāmī's Father-in-Law & Guru)*

As a child, I never could understand what my father had meant when he said that to me, until many years later. During the year 2000, only a year before Mukkūr *Svāmī* passed away, my father and I were one day engaged in proof-reading the manuscript of the book, *Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai* which awaited publication. Suddenly, we somehow ended up remembering *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*. He then said to me:

"You were indeed very lucky that, as his grandson, you could play with your Tāttā as you wished…. உனக்கிருந்த அவர் திருமேனி சம்பந்தம் எனக்கு கிடைக்கலை... Uṇakkiruntā Avar Tirumēṉi Campantam Eṉakku Kiṭaikkalai (you used to climb upon him, touch him and play with him at will… I couldn't do that!)"

That emotional outpouring of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s reverence for his guru, *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī* in that instant made me reply:

"Well… you too then were lucky, weren't you, in a way that I never can be? Didn't you climb on and play at will with my other Tāttā (i.e. Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār)? That privilege was denied to me, wasn't it?!"

My father beamed a happy smile and drew me to him in a warm hug.

That warm fatherly gesture was not without meaning… It reflected the *Śrīvaiṣṇava Guru-Śiṣya-Sambandha*. It was Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s way of saying that, as a *Śiṣya*, he did yearn for his guru's divine grace gained via what is called *Sparśa-Anugraha* (tactile blessing), i.e. a mere touch of the latter's *Tirumēṉi* (divine body).

Let me turn now to the illustrious career of Mukkūr *Svāmī* as an *Upanyāsaka*.

The Last Train Home

Mukkūr *Svāmī* stayed at his father-in-law, *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*'s house for about two months before moving to a rented house on the first floor at *Kuppaiya Ceṭṭi Street* in West Mambalam. This was in the year 1973. It was our home for about three years during which my father had a very busy schedule fulfilling commitments to deliver *Upanyāsas* all over Madras and other places.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsas* were usually long. Although the duration of each would be planned for 2.30 to 3 hours, on many occasions it would extend nonstop to even 4 or 5 hours.

In those days, transportation to and from the venues was not usually provided by *Sabhā* organisers. So very often, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had to travel either by city bus or electric-train service to faraway venues such as Tiruvottiyur and Ambattur. At times, when the *Upanyāsa* ended, it would be too late to catch the last service back home. He would then be forced to stay back and sleep at the venue itself and catch the next day's first bus or train in the wee hours of the morning to return home.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, with his family, moved in the year 1975, to our new house on Veṅkaṭēśan Street, T. Nagar. This was after he had finally been able to purchase a small plot of land and construct a house with a single bedroom on the ground floor and another room on the first. This became our permanent residence.

The years from 1975 through 1980 were hectic for Mukkūr *Svāmī*. After weathering many years of financial hardship and greatly tumultuous personal circumstances, at last he was able to enjoy during this period, a modicum of domestic stability.

My father's work, however, kept him very busy. He was continually travelling all over the country, delivering *Upanyāsas* at several places away from Madras. Larger crowds were by now flocking to hear him speak… and the demands on him, physically, kept increasing: *Śrīraṅgam, Salem, Coimbatore, Madurai, Śrīvilliputtūr, Rājāpāḷaiyam, Kuḻikkarai, Mayavaram, Tiruvananthapuram, Tuticorin, Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (BHEL Township), Bhāgyapurī, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta,* and many other places…. His *Upanyāsas* were now reaching several thousands of people across the country, touching and transforming many hearts and lives.

CHAPTER 18

***Smṛti-Balam*: Memory without Mnemonics**

Beyond the Diploma

Mukkūr *Svāmī* received several honorific titles during his lifetime, conferred by Āstika-samājams, mutts, and other religious groups, all recognising his *Vedic* scholarship, *Upanyāsa* eloquence, and his mastery of *Yajña Śāstra*. Listed below are a few of the titles conferred upon him:

- ***Sadācārya Bālasūrya***: For his exemplary moral conduct (*Ācāra*) and brilliant scriptural expositions, delivered through nationwide discourses.
- ***Gurubhakta-Ratna***: Honouring his unparalleled devotion to gurus like his brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, and the Ahōbila Mutt Jīyars (the 42nd through the 45th).
- ***Vedānta-Viśārada***: Acknowledging his profound expertise in *Vēda Bhāṣya* interpretation alongside *Ghanapāṭha* recitation.
- ***Harikathāmṛta***: Likely conferred for the nectar-like (*Āmṛta*) quality of his *Bhakti*-laden discourses blending *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, and *Śāstras*.
- ***Pravacana Vācaspati***

These accolades arose from Andhra and Tamiḻ Nāḍu Sabhas celebrating the plenary sessions of his *Upanyāsa* (e.g., *Gajēndra-Mōkṣam*), distinguishing him as an itinerant *Ubhaya-Vēdāntin* without institutional roles. He had no formal affiliation with any *Vedic Pāṭhaśālā*, nor did he possess any honorary degree from a secular university or corporate house. All the titles he received were from purely *Sampradāya* institutions.

Of the titles mentioned above, the most notable was *Vedānta-Viśārada*. The term signifies profound mastery in interpreting Vedantic texts (*Vēdārtha*), distinguishing Mukkūr *Svāmī* beyond mere recitation (*Pārāyaṇa*) to authoritative exegesis in his *Upanyāsas* and *Yajñas*.

Vedānta-Viśārada specifically highlights interpretive mastery of *Vedic* meanings (*Artha*), setting Mukkūr *Svāmī* apart as an expositor who unpacked *Bhāṣya* during *Upanyāsa*, unlike broader titles such as ***Vidvan-Maṇi***, which denote general erudition

across *Śāstras* without emphasising exegesis. Conferred by *Sabhas*, after the discourse series such as *Gajēndra-Mōkṣam*, the other titles he earned also underscored his rare oral Vedānta propagation without *Grantha* commentary.

The Art of Upanyāsa: Placing the Divine Near

Upanyāsa derives from the Sanskrit root *upa-ni-yas*, meaning "*to explain,*" "*to expound,*" or **"to place near"** for detailed interpretation. In Tamil contexts, it evolved as *Upanyāsam* (**உபன்யாசம்**), denoting the act of narrating and interpreting religious texts through discourse.

Upanyāsa traces its origins to ancient storytelling traditions like *Harikathā* by figures such as Sage Narada, evolving in South India through *Bhakti* movements, with the Āḻvārs' Tamil works (*Nālāyira Divya-Prabandham*) integrated by *Śrī Nāthamuni* (10th century CE) and systematised by *Śrī Rāmānuja* (11th century CE). It flourished in Tamiḻ Nāḍu temples like Śrīraṅgam, adapting epics and *Purāṇas* for public edification, distinct from *Vedic* rituals. The whole purpose of *Upanyāsa* is thus to bring lofty Vedāntic ideals and philosophical ideas and have them "*placed near*" so that ordinary commoners may easily understand and then internalise them into their lives.

In *Śrīvaiṣṇavism*, *Upanyāsa* focuses on *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy, (emphasising Śrīman Nārāyaṇa's supremacy), cultivating *Bhakti*, and spreading deep awareness of *Sāmānya Dharma* (ethics) from texts like *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavata,* and *Divya-Prabandham*. Unlike the more esoteric *Kālakṣēpam* (reserved for initiated disciples (*Śiṣyas*) studying advanced *granthas* line-by-line), *Upanyāsa* is freely accessible to all audiences, promoting broad devotion without any formal initiation or pre-qualification.

Upanyāsa prioritises scriptural exposition primarily for devotion, or Bhakti. It is often narrative-driven. It is not a sermon (i.e. *message-first, scripture-backed*) or a homily (i.e. *scripture-first, then explanation*). It sows *Bhakti* seeds publicly through stories, fables, parables, recitations, and expositions, differing from the music-laden *Harikathā* or *Saṅgīta-Upanyāsa* by being more doctrinal than performative.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s excellent *Upanyāsas* surpassed the highest standards of religious discourse that were set in the hoary traditions of *Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya* mainly because of:

1. The phenomenal memory capacity, or *Smṛti-Balam* that he possessed: a capacity to recall instantaneously and quote verbatim – without

mnemonics -- from a vast repertoire of scriptural works stored, as it were, in his mind.

2. The rare ability to explain subtle and insightful connections, along with apt cross-references between very many different passages which he was able to allude to, drawing from different scriptural sources.

The above two facets of his *Upanyāsas* set him apart from peers who belonged even to the folds of other *Sampradāya* or contemporary religious orders.

Smṛti-Balam was a theme that Mukkūr *Svāmī* very often brought up in his *Upanyāsas* while explaining the mental powers that the ancient Ṛṣis possessed, which enabled the transmission of Vēda mantra, *Śabda,* and massive volumes of *Vedic* hymnodic articulations from one generation of disciples to the next in an unbroken chain extending right across past centuries. Such superhuman memory power, he would explain, was not truly *superhuman*. It was possible to acquire it through austerity – what in *Vedic* parlance is called *tapas* – and through *Vēda-Abhyāsa,* which is the ceaseless, repetitive chanting of the Vēda mantra.

Several historical figures in the Vedāntic tradition, as we all know, exemplified extraordinary *Smṛti-Balam* through verbatim recall of scriptures, discourses, and texts. (e.g. *Ādi Śaṅkara* in the past, and *Svāmī Vivēkānanda* in recent history). This *balam*, or strength, was invariably linked to *Brahmacarya* and *tapas*. It was all tied up with the embodiment of disciplined mental callisthenics—i.e. systematic over-learning beyond rote, cultivating synaptic consolidation (*Mēdhā-Nāḍī*) through interleaved practice and mindfulness.

In the passage of time, this ability of the ancient Ṛṣis was lost due to the mental debility of succeeding progeny caused by a decline in *tapas*, and, as Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to explain, people began to resort to the written word (*Likhitam*), or textual content, to commit *Vedic Śabda* and *mantra* to memory. *Vēda-Abhyāsa* thus saw aural transmission getting rapidly replaced by the textual mode of dissemination.

Still, *Vēda-Abhyāsa* meant employing concentration-intensive techniques rooted in yogic discipline to memorise entire texts rapidly, focusing on strict *Brahmacarya* (i.e. intense concentration while learning), progressive *visual chunking*, and *meditative visualisation* that resulted in the power to unfailingly recall text that had been learned after just one exposure to it. It meant reading in escalating units—from letters to words, sentences, paragraphs, or full pages—through undivided attention (*Ēkāgratā*), visualising concepts as vivid mental images rather than rote

words, which eventually became etched neural imprints. Pre-sleep and post-waking recitations also leveraged subconscious consolidation during REM cycles (*Rapid Eye Movement* during deep sleep), amplified by daily meditation and tapas for what is called *Mēdhā-Śakti* activation.

This mode of *Vedic* learning came to be described as *Ēkasanta-Grāhī,* and Mukkūr *Svāmī* exemplified it fully during the long and rigorous learning he underwent as a *Ghanapāṭhī* under his elder brother in the Vijayawada years. In later years, when he began performing large-scale *Yajñas*, eyewitness accounts confirm that Mukkūr *Svāmī* recited obscure passages from multi-volume sets of scriptures verbatim, astonishing even librarians. He was indeed a veritable *Śrutidhara*, a *Vedic* medium unto himself.

Long years of *Vedic* memorisation thus enabled Mukkūr *Svāmī* to deliver scintillating *Upanyāsas* wherein he could effortlessly achieve what few of his peers could ever do, *viz*: - recall with precision, through adaptive memory, amazingly spontaneous cross-references with which he could glide from one to another *Vedic* text – from a *Vēda-Sūkta* or *Upaniṣad* to *Prabandham,* to *Itihasa* to *Purāṇa,* to *Divya-Prabandham,* to *Ghana,* to *Stōtra*! Videos of his *Upanyāsas* watched today only confirm that there were no pauses, no glances, and no use of any kind of mnemonics in his discourses… It was all just pure oral and aural mastery.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Smṛti-Balam* thus shone in live *Upanyāsa* through verbatim recitations of extended passages such as:

- *Śrī Sūktam* (*16 verses*), *Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra* (*Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā*), and full *Adhyāya* segments from other Vēda *Praśnas*, from *Śrīmad Bhāgavata,* or *Rāmāyaṇa* allwithout aids.
- *Śrī Lakṣmī-Prabhāvam* series: He recited the entire *Śrī Sūktam Slokas* mid-*Upanyāsa*, linking them to Lakṣmī-*Guṇas*, as captured in audio where his flawless intonation mesmerised audiences.
- *Gajēndra-Mōkṣam* discourse: He delivered *Bhāgavata 8th Skandha* passages (dozens of *Ślokas*) *note-free*, interweaving *Nammāḻvār Pācurams* just to add contextual depth to the narration.
- *Śrīmad Bhāgavata: While* describing the Kṛṣṇa-līlā chapters, he drew a vivid picture of Lord Kṛṣṇa dancing upon the serpent *Kāliṅga's* hydra - like heads. Midway through the description, his focus shifted to the

Lord's sacred feet, under the soles of which the child Kṛṣṇa's numerous *Nāḍīs,* or neural extremities lay embedded. He immediately then launched into an enumeration of each of the one thousand *Nāḍīs* by their respective names in Sanskrit. The rollcall of the 1000-*Nāḍī* names was recited entirely from memory, without a single break in sequence. For the spellbound audience, his recitation sounded indeed like a torrential downpour of rain…. the neural or synaptic network names cascading forth with precision in a verbal torrent lasting almost an hour.

- *Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra-Upanyāsa:* Here, he would quote from the extended *Mantra-Rāja-Pada* and *Yajña* mantras verbatim, thus sustaining the momentum of marathon *Upanyāsas* lasting several hours.

The Divine Transcript: Reciting the Unwritten

MLS *Svāmī* corroborated all the above at one point during my interview with him with the following remarks:

> "Yes, Mukkūr *Svāmī* could spontaneously break out into very long, non-stop, ex-tempore recitations of thousands of verses that were not even found in any existing texts.
>
> I remember, once in Naṅganallūr, during an *Upanyāsa* he recited extempore, and without the aid of any notes, the entire *Bhāradvāja-Hṛdayam* (thousands of *Ślokas*), the *Śrīvatsa-Hṛdayam* (300 *Ślokas*), and works by Maharṣis Aṅgirasa and Atri as well. When asked for the source of what he had recited, Mukkūr *Svāmī* replied that there was no script available from which he had drawn the chant and that *Lord Nṛsiṃha* Himself was transmitting the script directly to him."

[**Author's Note:** It very likely was an incident wherein the "*progressive visual chunking*, and *meditative visualisation*", as explained earlier above, had come into play].

> "Recording such events was difficult for us in those days with the old cassette-tape recorder technology. Often, ten to fifteen verses that he had recited would get lost during the interval while switching the cassette tape cartridge. Moreover, those chantings were spontaneous outpourings during moments of divine inspiration. No one can or should be "*interpolating"* into them, nor should we attempt to complete them by filling in the blanks with

texts of our own. The chants were divine in origin…you could call them "divine secrets" (*Daiva-Rahasyam*)."

The Cosmic Radio: Decoding the Infinite

MLS *Svāmī* continued:

"Being an IT professional myself, at one time, I attempted to unravel a recording of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s extempore outpouring of chants. I used a technology known as *Audacity,* which is a free and open-source digital audio editor and recording application software.

Using *Audacity,* I tried to slow down Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s recording so that I could count the number of syllables in those chants. But his chanting was so fast that the individual sounds were indistinguishable even by the software.

The mantras he was intoning were not just sounds but precise descriptions of the child God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "*the 1,008 lines (Rēkhā) on His palms, 1,008 lines imprinted on the soles of His feet, His beatific smile, and 1,008 other specific features of Sri Nrusimha's nails, 1008 Astrams of Śrī Rama and so on".*

It was incredible the speed at which one could hear the chants being intonated. In those moments, Mukkūr *Svāmī* seemed like a "radio set" that was simply relaying a series of cosmic or extraterrestrial signals; there was not a moment of hesitation or pause or fumble! He could even spontaneously list the names of 700-odd generations of the family dynasty lineages of *Ikṣvāku* (Rama's lineage) and the 100 names of *Kauravās* including their family member names mentioned in the *Mahābhārata,* at the same incredible speed, without referring to notes or any other mnemonic support."

The Interior Library: Neuroscience Meets the Infinite

MLS *Svāmī* then narrated another very interesting acoustic-engineering experiment that was conducted to unravel Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s breathtaking chants, all powered by his astounding *Smṛti-Balam*:

"I must tell you that, when asked about this extraordinary *Smṛti-Balam*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself used to dismiss the idea that it was the result of any simple or complex technique of memorisation. He told me once that it was humanly impossible to remember *all ten million syllables in sequence* while chanting them, without faltering, from a passage or composition in Sanskrit.

Instead, he categorically attributed his powers of memory retention, recall, and reproduction to Pure Grace bestowed upon him by *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* and *Nṛsiṃha-Kṛpā*, and nothing else. He noted that, in those moments of heightened inspiration and spontaneity, the "*required knowledge*" seemed to simply "*manifest*" itself to his mind, without him having to exert any mental or intellectual effort.

Incidentally, I can tell you that many years ago, a group of researchers, including a neuroscientist, conducted a tentative experiment to analyse Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s recorded *Upanyāsas* on Āṇḍāḷ's ***Tiruppāvai,*** which were later published in Tamil as a book that, even today, is popular with its title *Kōtaiyiṉ Pātai*... (*Āṇḍāḷ's Way*).

Their study found that, across a single discourse series, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had *2,140 distinct allusions and cross-references* from a vast array of *Vēda*-Vedāntic scriptures, including the *Upaniṣads*, *Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya*, *Madhva* philosophy, and Telugu literature like the *Pōtana-Bhāgavata, Saṅkṣēpa-Rāmāyaṇa, Vēda Praśnas …*

The researchers fed all those references and allusions into an algorithmic search engine to identify any patterns or strings of cerebration. The neuroscientist concluded that the sheer diversity and complexity of the intellectual patterns were "*not humanly possible*" for even a domain-expert speaker, since the references were drawn from different and widely dispersed philosophical treatises and texts but with absolute precision in context and relevance. The study concluded that while a regular scholar in any field had to "*download*" and "*store*" information files in a mental vault and a sorting machine, so to say…, through years of rote study of the *Vēdas*, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s connection to the Divine enabled him to "*stream*" any specific reference he wanted to retrieve and reproduce at will from a virtual library of scriptures that seemed to have been "*hardwired*" into his mind. There never was a need for him to look up any book or reference material in any physical form.

There is a very intriguing French phrase to describe this *Smṛti Balam* phenomenon. It is *biblothèque intérieure* (interiorised library). If anyone wished to understand what the phrase meant, one simply had to attend an *Upanyāsa* of Mukkūr *Svāmī*."

CHAPTER 19

***Vāk-Paṭutvam*: The Power of Speech**

Vāk-Paṭutvam: The Divine Elocution that Riveted a Generation

Besides being blessed with *Smṛti Balam*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was also endowed with the divine gift of **वाक्पटुत्वम्** (*Vāk-Paṭutvam*) – the power of extraordinary speech. In all three languages, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu, his elocution could keep audiences enthralled for hours at his *Upanyāsas*.

MLS *Svāmī* narrated to me several interesting anecdotes about how, when Mukkūr *Svāmī* began expatiating upon a certain religious theme or philosophical topic, he could easily sway his audiences into a spellbound mood, with their attention riveted on every word he spoke.

Vēdamum Vijñānamum: The Day the Vēdas Mesmerised the Engineers

"In the year 1977, after completing ten days of *Upanyāsa* at Śrīraṅgam, Mukkūr *Svāmī* next began to deliver a series of discourses on *Mahābhārata* for 48 days continuously at the **BHEL Township** in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (*Tiruverumbūr*). I travelled with him on that tour. The organisers had arranged separate guest-house accommodation for the entire duration.

As the BHEL *Mahābhārata Upanyāsa* series was in progress, one day the organisers requested Mukkūr *Svāmī* to address a group of young undergraduates at the **Regional Engineering College (REC)**, Tiruchirapalli (now the *National Institution of Technology*). The title chosen for the talk was ***Vēdamum Vijñānamum*** *(Vēdas and Science)*.

In that large college auditorium, Mukkūr *Svāmī* delivered a three-hour *Upanyāsa* on the topic of Science, Engineering, and Technology as found in our ancient *Vēda Śāstras*.

All seats in the hall were taken, with some students even seating themselves on the aisles and outside in the corridors. The audience consisted

of faculty members as well as other invited academicians. During the *Upanyāsa* (of which, unfortunately, only a partly video-graphed version is still available for viewing today on *YouTube*), Mukkūr *Svāmī* must have quoted nearly 30 specific extracts from different *Vedic* texts and compared each with the findings of modern science, physics, astronomy, chemistry, and biology.

The academicians in the audience sat stunned and mesmerised.

At that time, I was only 15 years old. I was able to understand only a few of the modern scientific research findings and the range of comparative subjects that Mukkūr *Svāmī* covered in that sterling speech of his.

At the end of the address, the audience rose as one and gave Mukkūr *Svāmī* a standing ovation lasting several minutes and brought the roof down! Most of the faculty members and students rushed up to him and mobbed Mukkūr *Svāmī*. One young student told him:

"Svāmī, if only we had known beforehand that Science and Technology concepts were already embedded in our Vēda Śāstras, as you have explained so well, and that they are indeed forerunners to most of our modern-day physics, engineering, and technology, believe us, we would not have studied engineering at all. We would have joined a Vedic Gurukulam and studied the Vēdas." "

Until the Milkman Knocks: The Midnight Marathons of Mukkūr Svāmī

"*Svāmī*'s discourses were known for their marathon duration, lasting several hours nonstop. Despite this, devotees still flocked to listen to him since they knew his *Upanyāsas* never failed to arouse sheer thrill and inspiration in them.

At a venue in Thoothukudi (Tuticorin) where he was delivering a series of daily *Upanyāsas*, he often arrived at the venue very late and well past the scheduled start time. He could not help the delay because he never could complete his lengthy daily evening *Ārādhanā* rituals in time. Invariably, he would run into time pressure, which meant that the evening discourses would not begin until as late as 9:00 p.m. as against the slated 7 p.m. Despite the late start for which he would sincerely apologise, of course, the assembled crowds — including many from the *Smārta* community — would have already arrived by then at 7:00 p.m. They had to be sure to secure a vantage seat, which otherwise would all get filled up by then.

The *Upanyāsa,* which used to begin at 9 p.m., would frequently last well past midnight and sometimes extend even until 3:00 a.m. or 4:00 a.m.! But the audience would never leave the venue, staying rooted in their seats and totally absorbed in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s exposition. It used to be jokingly said that it was only when the local Tuticorin morning milk-delivery services knocked on the doorsteps of the households that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* would finally wind up!

On one occasion, Mukkūr *Svāmī* spent four consecutive days explaining the spiritual depth of significance of just the first *Bhagavān-Nāma* in the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*: "*Viśvam*".

New Heavens, New Earth: The Day Mukkūr Svāmī Turned Cinema into Scripture

"As mentioned earlier, thanks to his father, Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had mastered the entire *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa* by the age of five. His discourses on the subject, therefore, were so captivating that other Tamil scholars or *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa* elocutionists on the stage, along with Mukkūr *Svāmī* as a co-speaker, would often stop their own presentations halfway and yield to him just so they too could listen to his perorations.

At a book release event for Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s work, ***Maṭṭapalliyil Malarnta Maṟaiporuḷ,*** in Chennai, one of the leading poet-lyricists in the Tamil cinema world, *Vāli,* was in attendance. He was an ardent devotee of Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

During the event, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in his speech welcoming guests of honour, including *Vāli*, recited a Sanskrit *Śloka*. Playfully, he informed the audience that the poet *Vāli* had written it. *Vāli* was taken aback! When his turn came to speak, *Vāli* denied knowledge of Sanskrit and asked Mukkūr *Svāmī* how he could attribute the *Śloka's* authorship to him.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then jocularly revealed that he had only rendered, extemporaneously, a simple translation into Sanskrit of a line that had been taken from *Vāli's* very famous hit song in a popular cinema. He then went on to sing the Sanskrit version to show that it perfectly matched the meter and tune of *Vāli's* original Tamil song:

नव आकाशं नव भूमिः (*Nava Ākāśaṃ Nava Bhūmiḥ*) rendering the Tamil original of ***புதிய வானம் புதிய பூமி*** (*Puthiya Vāṉam Puthiya Bhūmi*).

Nava Ākāśaṃ Nava Bhūmiḥ fits *Anuṣṭup* perfectly: 8 syllables (*na-va ā-kā-śaṃ | na-va bhū-miḥ*), a common *Vedic* Śloka meter for cosmic themes. *Puthiya Vāṉam Puthiya Bhūmi* also aligns with the Tamil poetic structure known as *Veṇbā* (approx. 5-8 syllables per foot, total ~10-12), using *Nēr–Nirai* patterns for lyrical flow in *bhakti* songs. In fact, Sanskrit-Tamil prosody does share syllables – of *Guru/Laghu* roots; a bilingual *śloka* in *Anuṣṭup-Veṇbā* hybrid, thus, can be said to suit Carnatic music-based lyric and even the Āl̲vār poetry!"

The Scanning Machine: Humbling the Intellectuals

"Vāli was very deeply attached to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and, on one occasion invited him to the book-release event of his own published book, *Pāṇḍavar Bhūmi* (*The Land of the Pāṇḍavas*), at the *Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan Auditorium* in Mylapore.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was uncomfortable in acceding to the request since he knew beforehand that many politically connected dignitaries would be present on the stage at the event as speakers. He always kept a wide distance from such public or political figures. Politics was never Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s area of engagement.

The event indeed featured very prominent political figures like G. K. Mūppaṉār, "*Cho"* Rāmasvāmi, and well-known cinema art world personalities like Mukta Śrīnivāsan and others. But being compelled by friend Vāli, Mukkūr eventually agreed to attend the event but requested that after delivering his speech for about ten minutes, he may be allowed to leave the venue since he had another pressing engagement elsewhere. Vāli agreed.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* arrived at the venue, where he was welcomed and requested to take his seat on stage alongside the VIPs on designated chairs. Mukkūr *Svāmī* declined the chair and chose instead to sit on the floor. Since he had requested to be allowed to leave early, he was given the right of way as the first speaker at the event, well ahead of all others.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* began speaking. The ten-minute discourse, as planned, ended up lasting 90 minutes!

It was an amazing master-class performance of high-voltage, gripping eloquence. He amazed the audience by quoting verbatim specific verses from pages 76 and 73 of that book, even though I knew for a fact that it was only earlier, that same day, that a copy of the book had been delivered to him and, therefore, that he would have had really no time to even flip through it that afternoon.

It seemed to me that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had simply skimmed the pages in the book on his way to the venue, but yet there he was on stage, recalling whole passages from specific pages that he probably had hardly glanced at! His mind was certainly like a "scanning machine"!

When Mukta Śrīnivāsan, one of the event organisers, discreetly went up to Mukkūr *Svāmī* to whisper that it was time to finish his speech, suddenly several in the audience rose up and began creating a ruckus! They demanded that Mukkūr *Svāmī* should not be interrupted and that organisers should let him continue, if he so wished, since they were delighted by every word uttered!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* finally wound up his speech.

It was then the turn of the famous intellectual and political aficionado, *"Cho"* Rāmasvāmi, to come up and speak. He approached the microphone and abruptly stated that after the speech the audience had just heard from Mukkūr *Svāmī*, much like them, he too had been overwhelmed by his eloquence and brilliance!

"What is there left for me to really say, add, or embellish Mukkūr Svāmī's oration?! Nothing, really nothing!"

"Cho" humbly went back to his seat on stage to thunderous applause."

A Lesson in Humility

On another occasion, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was engaged in delivering a 10-day *Upanyāsa* series in Triplicane, Chennai, at the Śrī Pārthasārathi *Svāmī* Sabhā auditorium.

Midway through the series, suddenly a close relative in the family died, and the bereavement forced Mukkūr *Svāmī* into observing a mandatory three-day period of seclusion at home to adhere to *Śāstra* rules relating to ritual impurity (*Āśaucam* or *Tīṭṭu*).

To ensure the *Sabhā* organisers were not put to any difficulty by his absence, he told them that, in the following three sessions of the *Upanyāsa* series, the discourses would be delivered by none other than the *Mahāvidvān* (his father-in-law), *Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī*, who had already been requested to kindly stand in for him. He accepted the request. The *Sabhā* organisers were delighted by the arrangement and duly made a public announcement of it.

In the evening of the first few days, when Mukkūr *Svāmī* had been delivering his *Upanyāsa*, the size of the audience had swelled to about 1000 people. On the fourth day, when *Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī* took the stage, the audience strength dropped to 500. It dropped to about 300 by the sixth. And, finally, only around 100 turned up on the seventh day! When Mukkūr *Svāmī* returned to the stage on the eighth day, the audience strength surged back to 1,000!

Tirukkaḷḷam Svāmī, having noticed the trend, later showed what a great man he was through his humility and wisdom. Candidly, he told his son-in-law, Mukkūr *Svāmī*:

"Your style of discourse is unique, and it greatly attracts the common people of a certain profile. My style of oration appeals more to the scholarly types. You should never ask me again to stand in for you, because neither of our respective audiences should feel let down by such hasty, makeshift arrangements."

Indeed, the style of discoursing of the father-in-law and son-in-law differed… although the equal *Vāk-Paṭutvam* of the two great souls happened to only manifest itself in two distinct forms."

A veritable Kanakadhārā … downpour of currency and coins

Sometime in 1986, I remember attending an *Upanyāsa* of Mukkūr *Svāmī* at the Asthika Samajam in Chennai. Speaking on the *Daśama-Skanda* of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, he held the audience spellbound for almost three hours. It was the first time I personally witnessed the *Vāk-Paṭutvam,* the power of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s speech manifested.

When the discourse began, Mukkūr *Svāmī* seated himself on stage and beckoned to his side another gentleman who dutifully took his place on stage. He was a brahmin attired in traditional style, with tonsured head and a tuft, and his forehead smeared with the broad white stripes of fresh *Vibhūti* (holy ash) that is is the mark of the orthodox *Smārtha Vedavit*.

During the entire duration of the *Upanyāsa*, at many points, Mukkūr *Svāmī* interspersed his oration with certain relevant *Vedic Praśnāḥ* (passages). At every such point in time, the *Vedic* brahmin seated beside Mukkūr *Svāmī* too would join in the chanting the passage in tandem and that too in a strong, clear and resonating voice.

It became clear then to the audience that the brahmin was no ordinary Vedavit but one who was as proficient as Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself.

Towards the end of his *Upanyāsa*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* introduced the brahmin priest to the audience. He said that the respected *Vedic* Brahmin, who hailed from Rajamundry was an inveterate *Agnihotrī* and a *Gṛhastha* (householder) focused on *Vedic* chanting and teaching. The brahmin lived in very austere and at times near-penurious circumstances in life and often had to travel to other cities in Andhra Pradesh and Madras too, where he knew he could seek the help of a few friends and collegues in the *Vedic* fraternity to tide over a personal or family crisis. He had come to Madras then to spend a couple of days with me, said Mukkūr *Svāmī*, to engage in Vedādhyāya and to beseech a few good hearted *Vedābhimānīs* (adherents of the *Vedic* way of life) in the city who could help him overcome his financial plight.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then concluded the *Upanyāsa* with a sincere and humble appeal to the audience to come forward and offer any assistance that they could, out of the kindness of the heart, to the indigent brahmin priest from Rajamundry. No sooner had he wound up the discourse than I witnessed several dozen members of the audience at once rise and surge towards the stage with their respective contributions of cash in hand to hand over to the brahmin Agnihotrī.

In the minutes that followed I witnessed a veritable *Kanakadhārā* … downpour of currency and coins … being showered on the *Smārtha Vedavit*, with Mukkūr *Svāmī* seated beside him, smiling and acknowledging gratefully the spontaneous generosity shown by his devoted audience.

On that evening indeed did I get to watch first-hand, and truly understand, the power of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Vāk-Paṭutvam* and how it secured for a penurious *Vedic* brahmin and his family in truly dire straits, instantaneous and timely succour.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, thus, was known often to use the power of speech not only to hold audiences spell bound – as any ordinary, practised orator does – but he also used it to provide relief and solace to souls that he felt desperately needed it.

CHAPTER 20

Explaining Philosophy: "The Hard Way and the Soft Way"

Philosophical Neutrality: The Universal Appeal

Curious to know how Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s general approach to Vedāntic philosophy may be characterised, I posed the following questions to MLS *Svāmī*, to which his responses below were direct and very clear.

- ***How did he propagate Śrī Rāmānuja Siddhānta and Śrīvaiṣṇava traditions, and what unique teaching styles made him renowned?***
- ***Which non-Vaiṣṇava philosophies did he study deeply, and how did this enhance his Ubhaya Vedānta Upanyāsa?***
- ***Did "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār ever discourse on Advaita texts (e.g., Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya) or debate Advaitins, and how did he refute them using Rāmānuja Siddhānta?***
- ***Do any unpublished writings, letters, or Upanyāsa notes by "Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār engage Advaita texts (e.g., Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya), and if so, in what context—refutation or synthesis with Viśiṣṭādvaita?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

> "To characterise Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s general approach to Vedāntic philosophy in just one or two phrases, I would say they would be:
>
> (1) Philosophical neutrality and inclusiveness, and
>
> (2) Universal appeal to a very diverse cross-section of followers."

Having myself listened avidly to scores of *Upanyāsas* of Mukkūr *Svāmī* – both in person as well as through recordings – I could not have agreed more with MLS *Svāmī*'s characterisation.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* intuitively realised that, for an *Upanyāsaka* to have a deep impact on lay audiences, he had to communicate with them more strongly as a proponent of intense ***Bhakti*** than as a lofty philosopher explaining ***Siddhānta***.

• The first of the two approaches was intended to satisfy the head or the intellect; the second approach was directed towards the heart and mind.

• The first approach was the "*hard way*" to understand philosophy, and the second approach was the "*soft way*" to embrace it.

In other words, Mukkūr *Svāmī* always believed that the way to the *head* ran through the *heart* of ordinary *Āstikas*. Often, emotion will succeed more easily than *thought,* which would always struggle to instil *faith* in the spirit. For a true *Bhakta*, the heart will always have its reasons, which the head would know little about.

The Heart of the Vēdas in Yashoda's Kitchen

In every discourse of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, he would pose a rhetorical question to the audience:

> *"What need is there to go wandering about in the world of the Upaniṣads in search of truth when it is found so easily right here in Child Kṛṣṇa who is bound and secured to Mother Yashoda's kitchen-grindstone?".*

Then he would quote the Advaita preceptor, **Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī** (1490-1580 CE):

> ***Gūḍhārtha-Dīpikā commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā***
>
> **ऊलूखल-बंधः कृष्णः शास्त्र-चक्रं प्रविशति।**
> **तत्र ब्रह्म-स्वरूपं यत् कस्मात् तद्-अन्य-शास्त्र-भ्रमः॥**
>
> ***Ūlūkhala-Bandhaḥ Kṛṣṇaḥ Śāstra-Cakraṃ Praviśati |***
> ***Tatra Brahma-Svarūpaṃ Yat Kasmāt Tad-Any-A-Śāstra-Bhramaḥ ||***
>
> *"Kṛṣṇa, bound to the mortar (ūlūkhala), enters the wheel of the scriptures. Brahman's true form is there—why then go err into other scriptures?"*

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's verse, as Mukkūr *Svāmī* frequently quoted it, evokes the famous episode from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (*10.18*), where Kṛṣṇa drags the mortar between two trees -- (one of several delightful *Kṛṣṇa-Līlā-s*). In a metaphorical sense, it served Mukkūr *Svāmī* to illustrate so precisely the characterisation of his own *Bhakti-infused* approach to *Vedāntic* philosophy.

The Diamond Appraiser: Prismatic Light of Truth

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s scholarly approach to Vedānta philosophy was also defined by his deep, abiding respect for all great *Ācāryas*.

In his discourses, he frequently quoted from Advaita texts and scholars like *Madhusūdana Sarasvatī*. When discoursing on the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*, *Svāmī* would present the commentaries of both *Ādi Śaṅkara* and *Parāśara Bhaṭṭar* side-by-side.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* never labelled one interpretation as "*right*" and another as "*wrong*". Instead, he treated them as different opinions (*Abhiprāya Vividhaṅgaḷ* in Maṇipravāḷa), maintaining that both perspectives were ultimately directed toward the same Divine. He would highlight the subtle differences between Sankara's and Bhaṭṭar's views to enrich the listener's understanding rather than to create divisive thinking in them.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s approach to different philosophical commentaries was like that of a diamond appraiser. Instead of saying one facet of the diamond is "*better*" than another, he held the gemstone up to the light and showed his audience how each provided a unique *Darśana*—whether it was Sankara's *Advaita* or Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita*—revealing a different hue, a different and distinct, beautiful reflection of the same internal prismatic light."

The Three Photographers

"There is an old YouTube recording of an *Upanyāsa* titled *Śrīnivāsa Kalyāṇam*, in which one can watch Mukkūr *Svāmī* discourse on *Viśiṣṭādvaita,* or *Śrī Rāmānuja-Darśana*. It is perhaps one of his most lucid, popular, and definitive explanations of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* principles of philosophy. A central theme of the recording is a cogent analysis of the three great teachers: Ānandatīrtha (Madhvācārya), Śaṅkarācārya, and Rāmānuja.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* taught that all three *Ācāryās* focused their primary philosophical work on the exact same *Vedic* statement: ***Tattvamasi*** ("*Thou art That"*). He explained that each *Ācāryā* had provided a different *Bhāṣya* (commentary) on this single profound *Upaniṣadic Vākya* or phrase:

- Ānandatīrtha provided his *specific interpretation*.
- Śaṅkarācārya provided his *unique viewpoint*.
- Rāmānuja offered the Viśiṣṭādvaita *perspective*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* clarified a common linguistic misunderstanding regarding the word *matham* (often translated as religion or sect; Sanskrit: **मतम्** and Tamil: ***மதம்***).

He argued that in this context, *matham* means "*opinion*" (*Abhiprāya*). He sought to establish that these different philosophical schools were not meant to be sources of division or sectarianism. Instead, they represented the individual scholarly opinions of the *Ācāryas* regarding the same *Mahāvākya* (great *Vedic* statement).

By connecting these three viewpoints, *Svāmī* presented the concept of *Mummata Sāra* (the essence of the *three opinions*), emphasising that they all originated from a shared intellectual effort, or mode of inquiry, to understand the same divine truth.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* viewed the three philosophical schools like three different master photographers taking a picture of the same mountain from three different angles. While one might focus on the height, another on the forest woods at the base, and the third on the snow-cover at the peak, they were all, at the end, only documenting the same mountain. The "sectarian views" were merely unique "*perspectives*" on the same reality."

Holistic Path for Every Heart

Again, I couldn't agree more with MLS *Svāmī*'s precise characterisations above.

In the *Upanyāsas* I had myself listened to in the past, it had always been clear to me that Mukkūr *Svāmī* did have an innate distaste for the polemics of sectarian comparison of *Siddhānta Darśanas*. His eclectic ability to synthesise them into a distinctive, holistic perspective on Vedānta philosophy is what greatly attracted his vast public following. People of all religious backgrounds and social strata were able to relate to and appreciate his *Upanyāsas* only because everyone in the audience could go home after listening to his discourse believing that both the "*hard*" and the "*soft*" parts of his orations had been absorbed and digested in whatever ratio one wished or desired.

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* had a vast number of disciples from the *Smārta* and *Yādava* communities, often outnumbering even his *Śrīvaiṣṇava* following.

Many *Smārta* followers were deeply devoted to his teachings. At many a gathering during an *Upanyāsa*, I have seen *Smārta* disciples moved to tears, overwhelmed by the narrations and begin to openly vent their

feelings of *Bhakti*. A few of them I saw even came up to him to express a secret desire of the heart: "*to be born into the Vaishnava fold in their next lives!*" So strong indeed was the emotional impact that his discourses left on a few persons in the audience."

Knowing Nothing but Hari: Healing an Irate Audience

MLS *Svāmī* then related one more incident that came to his mind immediately while discussing how Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s philosophical approach may be characterised.

The incident was truly illustrative of how inclusive in nature his approach to Vedāntic philosophy was and how it enabled him to bridge sectarian rifts and even communal chauvinistic pride through the use of endearing *bon mots* in endearing *Upanyāsa* narratives which truly reflected his quick-thinking, and presence of mind---what is otherwise called *"savoir-faire"*.

MLS *Svāmī*:

"A very interesting incident occurred during a *Rāmāyaṇa* discourse in Madurai which Mukkūr *Svāmī* was about to commence on the day after his arrival in that city.

The organiser of the public discourse programmes, anxiously rushed to him and began beseeching Mukkūr *Svāmī* to please "*somehow save a grave and threatening situation*" into which the *Sabhā* had been plunged. Puzzled by what he heard, Mukkūr *Svāmī* asked "*Why, what happened?!*"

The organiser, then explained that on the previous day, an *Upanyāsa* series lasting three days had just been delivered and concluded by another *vidvān*, a well-known peer and scholar. However, this *Upanyāsaka*, during the discourse, had inadvertently committed a grave *faux pas*; a thoughtless remark that had offended members of a certain local community in the audience.

The *Vidvān* had been expatiating on *Tiruppāvai* 29th verse where the phrase *Arivoṉṟum Illāda Āyarkulattu… (**கறவைகள் பின்சென்று கானம் சேர்ந்துண்போம் அறிவொன்றும் இல்லாத ஆயர்குலத்து**)* …

The *Vidvān's* interpretations could not be faulted at all in a literal sense. However, the problem arose because of the unfortunate emphasis he had placed on the word *Arivoṉṟum Illāda Āyarkulattu…* meaning in Tamil:

நாங்கள் வெகுளிகள், அப்பாவிகள். எங்கள் பசுக்களுக்குப் பின்னாலேயே சென்று அவற்றை மேய்ப்பவர்கள். ஒரே சீரான தினசரி நடவடிக்கைகளில் ஈடுபடுபவர்கள். ஒரு

வட்டத்துக்குள்ளேயே சுழன்று வருபவர்கள். அந்த வட்டத்துக்கு வெளியே வந்து சிந்திக்கத் தெரியாதவர்கள். பசிக்குத் தயிர் சோறு உண்ணும் எளிமையானவர்கள். நாங்கள் அறிவார்ந்தவர்கள் அல்லர், திறமைசாலிகளும் அல்லர்….

Nāṅkaḷ Vekuḷikaḷ, Appāvikaḷ. Eṅkaḷ Pacukkaḷukkup Piṉṉālēyē Ceṉṟu Avaṟṟai Mēyppavarkaḷ. Orē Cīrāṉa Tiṉacari Naṭavaṭikkaikaḷil Īṭupaṭupavarkaḷ. Oru Vaṭṭattukkuḷḷēyē Cuṉaṟṟu Varupavarkaḷ. Anta Vaṭṭattukku Veḷiyē Vantu Cintikka-Th Teriyātavarkaḷ. Pacikku-Th Tayir Cōṟu Uṇṇum Eḷimaiyāṉavarkaḷ. Nāṅkaḷ Aṟivārntavarkaḷ Allar, Tiṟamaitālikalum Allar…

"We are simpletons, innocent souls. We are those who follow behind our cows to graze them. We are engaged in the same uniform daily routines. We are people who revolve within a small circle. We do not know how to come out of that circle and think differently. We are simple people who eat curd rice to satisfy our hunger. We are neither intellectuals, nor are we any talented experts…"

The above interpretation, however, came across to the audience the wrong way only because the *Vidvān* had chosen to explain the sense of the verse by using an inappropriate analogy. He thought he was being very humorous, but, in fact, the analogy ended up sounding crass and mocking in tone.

What the audience heard was that the cowherds, being so bereft of even common sense, would walk into the doorframes of their houses while holding their long staffs across their shoulders, not having even the basic intelligence to realize that they would only collide head-on with the edges of the doorframe! They were such ignoramuses that they did not understand that they ought to pivot on their feet and turn the long staff sideways before entering the doorway!

The *Vidvān's* analogy was misunderstood by the members of a certain caste in the audience to be a veiled insult upon their own community in Śrīvilliputtūr. It seemed to suggest the members of the community were good-for-nothing, illiterate folk. They were enraged by the insinuation, and the irate members of the audience were now threatening to act against the *Sabhā* organisers as well as the *Upanyāsaka,* who by then had fled from Madurai by the last night train to his home in Madras!

Veṅkaṭarāman thus beseeched Mukkūr *Svāmī* to somehow salvage the situation by assuaging the offended community members in the audience.

The following day, Mukkūr *Svāmī* began his own series of *Upanyāsa* in Madurai.

Midway through his discourse, with great tact, delicacy, and discretion, he subtly broached the subject of the same phrase in the *Tiruppāvai* but explained it through apt narratives drawn from the deeper, more traditional commentaries (*Vyākhyāna*) of the *Pūrvācāryas* in the *Śrīvaiṣṇava Paramparā*.

He explained that the phrase did not really mean any rustic community that lacked intelligence; rather, it meant only that its members "*knew nothing other than Hari*" (*"Ariyē Tavira Vēroṉṟum Ariyādavargaḷ"*) … In other words:

எங்களுக்குக் குறுக்கு புத்தி கிடையாது; எந்த வஞ்சகமும் தெரியாது. நாங்கள் உண்மையான அன்புக்கு அடிமையாகிக் கிடப்பவர்கள். அதனாலேயே நாங்கள் உன் அன்பு ஒன்றைத் தவிர வேறொன்றும் அறியோம் அரியைத் தவிர வேறோரு அறிவில்லாதவர்கள்.

Engalukkuk Kurukku Puthi Kidaiyādhu; Endha Vanjakamum Theriyaadhu. Nāṅgal Unmaiyāna Anbukku Adimaiyāgik Kidappavargal. Adhanālēyē Nāṅgal Un Anbu Ondrait Thavira Vērondrum Ariyōm. Ariyē Tavira Vēroṉṟum Ariyādavargaḷ.

"We do not have guile or crooked minds; we know no deceit. We are those who remain enslaved only to the true love of bhakthi. Because of that, we know nothing else, Krishna, besides your love alone."

He further clarified to the audience that the cowherds in the *Tiruppāvai* were in such a deep state of divine trance and constant meditation on Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Bhagavad Dhyāna*) that even in their day-to-day lives, they simply lost all awareness of their physical bodies and worldly cares.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s explanation had a calming effect on the audience, and it especially pacified the irate community members. All their pent-up anger vanished. In fact, they were quite moved by the elevated level of interpretation given by Mukkūr *Svāmī* and went home enlightened.

The Eight-Verse Answer to a Skeptical Scholar

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* enjoyed enormous popularity amongst common *Āstikas,* belonging to all community backgrounds and social strata. His *Upanyāsas* hence appealed very much to ***பாமர மக்கள்*** (*Pāmara Makkaḷ*) or, to use the *Tiruppāvai* phrase, to the *Arivoṉṟum Illādavargaḷ*… i.e. simple, innocent, and unpretentious folks who were distant from the intellectual pursuits of any *Siddhānta* or *Śāstra*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* empathised with them because he realised that while they carried true *Bhakti Bhāva* within their hearts, they still saw themselves as *lowly sinners*. They were thus all seeking only a way to surrender to divine grace with a profound sense of *Vinayam* (deep, sincere humility).

Amongst the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* orthodoxy and laity, there were indeed a very small few whose narrow pedagogic dispositions could not always successfully hide their spiteful intolerance towards others' success… In Sanskrit, there is a word to describe such veiled spitefulness: as **असूया** (*Asūyā*) or, the Tamil **அசூயை** *(Asūyai)*. Such people often, behind his back, attributed Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s popularity as mere pandering to the unlearned masses or *playing to the gallery*. They suspected his erudition was shallow and superficial.

At the end of an *Upanyāsa*, one day, a high-ranking government official from the audience, someone known in social circles as a self-proclaimed scholar on Śrī Vaishnavite religious subjects, approached *Svāmī* offstage. He began by heaping words of obsequious praise upon the eloquent way in which Mukkūr *Svāmī* had discoursed, but then, in a veiled and sneeringly patronising tone, offered an unsolicited suggestion:

"Svāmī, you should henceforth also seriously consider performing "Kālakṣēpam" (formal mode of traditional teaching) on the major philosophical commentaries (granthas) for the benefit of established scholars in the audience."

Mukkūr *Svāmī* simply smiled at the gentleman. He said nothing and moved on.

The next evening, after concluding his *Upanyāsa*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* beckoned the same gentleman to him. He then presented the so-called scholar with a sheet of paper on which were written in his own hand, eight couplets (*Aṣṭakam*), which he told the gentleman he had composed only the previous night at bedtime.

The Sanskrit composition was in chaste Sanskrit and titled ***Sūtrārtha Aṣṭakam***.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then said that it was Śrī Nṛsiṃha himself who had inspired and provided the eight verses. Quickly reading the *Aṣṭakam*, the gentleman was stunned. In silent amazement, he re-read the verses again and at once realised both their profundity and brevity.

अथ विज्ञायते पूर्वं परमात्मा सनातन : |
ईश्वर: सर्वलोकानां श्री हरि : पुरुषोत्तम : || १ ||

Atha Vijñāyate Pūrvaṃ Paramātmā Sanātanaḥ |
Īśvaraḥ Sarvalokānāṃ Śrī Hariḥ Puruṣottamaḥ ||

The Supreme Reality: *First, it is known that the eternal Supreme Soul (Paramatma) is the Lord of all worlds—He is Sri Hari, the Purushottama.*

लोकेशस्तनै कर्माणां सिद्धि - विचार : कार्य एव हि |
अल्पास्त्र फलत्वात् तत् कार्यं ब्रह्मादिया नरै : || २ ||

Lokeśastanai Karmāṇāṃ Siddhi-Vicāraḥ Kārya Eva Hi |
Alpāstra Phalatvāt Tat Kāryaṃ Brahmadiyā Naraiḥ ||

Beyond Rituals: *While rituals give results in this world, they are limited. Therefore, man must inquire into Brahman (the Infinite) for lasting results.*

बृहत्त्वं च स्वरूपेण गुणैश्चाति शयातिकं |
ब्रह्म हरिरेव फलम् दत्ते जिज्ञास्वार्थ धनार्थिनां |
ज्ञानी तु परमै कान्ति हरेरात्मैव विश्रुत : || ४ ||

Bṛhattvam Ca Svarūpeṇa Guṇaiścāti Śayātikaṃ |
Brahma Harireva Phalam Datte Jijñāsvārtha Dhanārthināṃ |
Jñānī Tu Paramai Kānti Harerātmaiva Viśrutaḥ ||

Magnitude & Grace: *Brahman is "Great" both in His essential nature and in His boundless qualities.*
Hari alone grants the fruits sought by the curious, the seekers of wealth, and the wise. The jnani (wise one) is known as the very soul of Hari.

शब्देन हि पर : सत्य : सगुण उच्यते || ३ ||

Śabdena Hi Paraḥ Satyaḥ Saguṇa Ucyate ||

Divine Attributes: *By the Word (Veda), the Supreme Truth is declared as Saguna (possessing glorious attributes).*

दूषणत्रय राहित्यम् ब्रह्मणो लक्षणम् विदु : |
ब्रह्मैव लक्ष्य मित्याहु यत : सर्वं प्रजायते || ५ ||

Dūṣaṇatraya Rāhityam Brahmaṇo Lakṣaṇam Viduḥ |
Brahmaiva Lakṣya Mityāhu Yataḥ Sarvaṃ Prajāyate ||

Purity of Brahman: *Brahman is defined as being free from the three types of defects--(impurity, change, and limitation).*
He is the goal from whom everything is born.

शास्त्रं प्रमाण मित्यत्र विषयो न भवेत् किल |
उपादान निमित्तत्वं ब्रह्मणस् तत्र कथ्यते || ६ ||

Śāstram Pramāṇa Mityatra Viṣayo Na Bhavet Kila |
Upādāna Nimittatvaṃ Brahmaṇas Tatra Kathyate ||

Source of Knowledge: *The Scriptures (Shastra) are the only valid proof here. Brahman is explained as both the material and efficient cause of the universe.*

पुरुषार्थ तया ब्रह्मण् यन्वयात् सिद्यति श्रुति : |
दृष्यन्ते सम्यगे तानि गुणानि विविधानि च || ७ ||

Puruṣārtha Tayā Brahmaṇ Yanvayāt Sidyati Śrutiḥ |
Dṛṣyante Samyage Tāni Guṇāni Vividhāni Ca ||

The Ultimate Goal: *The Vedas find their fulfilment in Brahman as the ultimate human goal (Purushartha).*
His various divine qualities are clearly perceived therein.

सूत्रार्थ विषयो विश्व : विभु : संकर्षण : प्रभु : |
इति रामानुजार्योक्ति घण्टार्योक्तिश्च सत्यवाक् || ८ ||

Sūtrārtha Viṣayo Viśvaḥ Vibhuḥ Saṅkarṣaṇaḥ Prabhuḥ |
Iti Rāmānujāryokti Ghaṇṭāryoktiśca Satyavāk ||

The Ācārya s' Word: *The meaning of the Sutras is the all-pervading Lord Sankarshana. This is the true word of Sri Ramanuja and Sri Vedanta Desika (Ghantavatara).*

श्रेयोनिधिम् समाश्रित्य प्रोक्तं अष्टकमद्भुतं |
धार्यं मुमुक्षुभि : सम्यक् पठितव्यम् दिने दिने || ९ ||

Śreyonidhim Samāśritya Proktaṃ Aṣṭakamadbutaṃ |
Dhāryaṃ Mumukṣubhiḥ Samyak Paṭhitavyam Dine Dine ||

Daily Practice: *This wonderful Ashtakam, composed by surrendering to the Treasure of Auspiciousness, should be held dear and recited daily by those seeking liberation (Mumukshus).*

He then sheepishly admitted that even great scholars he had known had always found it difficult to explain all the *Brahma Sūtras* clearly in summary statements. Yet Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in this *Aṣṭakam*, had indeed captured the very essence of the entire *Brahma Sūtras* within eight short and crisp verses in *Anustup* meter, without a single flaw or deviation from the original meaning.

Sūtrārtha Aṣṭakam, written by Mukkūr *Svāmī*, is thus a succinct restatement of the entire *Brahma Sūtras* of Sage Bādarāyaṇa. It encapsulates the profound meanings of key *Brahma Sūtra aphorisms* in eight devotional verses praising Lord Hari as *Puruṣottama*.

Śrī Vyāsa Maharṣi, with supreme compassion, composed the magnificent *Sūtras* comprising four chapters to clarify the doubts that may arise in the study of the *Upaniṣads*, which appear in the *Brahma Kāṇḍam* and the *Uttara Bhāgam* section of the *Vēdas*. This is named ***Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā***.

Thus, *Śārīraka Mīmāṃsā* comprises:

1. **Chapters - 4**
2. ***Pādas*/ Sections** (*4 Pādas per chapter*) **- 16**
3. ***Adhikaraṇams*** (sub-sections) **- 156**
4. ***Sūtras - 545***

On this composition of his, much later, Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself wrote a glossary, from which the following brief extracts are quoted:

This *Śrī Sūtrārtha Aṣṭakam Stotra* has been composed by me due to the bountiful blessings of *Śrīmad Iñcimēṭu Azhagiyasingar* (42nd Pontiff of *Śrī Ahōbila Mutt*). It comprises nine *Ślokas*, inclusive of a *phalaśruti* enunciated in the ninth Śloka.

In this *Stotra*, the main doctrine (**सिद्धान्तं** – *Siddhānta*) is that the subject-matter dealt with by the *Brahma-Sūtras* in the four *Adhikaraṇams* (sub-sections) in the first *Pāda* of the first chapter of the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* is none other than *Śrī Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃha* (affectionately extolled as ***அழகிய சிங்கம்*** *(Azhagiya Singan)*. This doctrine has been clearly established:

1*Jijñāsādhikaraṇam* (जिज्ञासाधिकरणम्)

***Sūtram* (सूत्रं) - *Athāto Brahmajijñāsā* (अथातो ब्रह्म जिज्ञासा)**

2*Janmādyadhikaraṇam* (जन्माद्यधिकरणम्)

***Sūtram* (सूत्रं) - *Janmādyasya Yataḥ* (जन्माध् यस्य यत :)**

3.*Śāstrayonitvadhikaraṇam* (शास्त्रयोनित्वाधिकरणम्)
***Sūtram* (सूत्रं) - *Śāstrayonitvāt* (शास्त्रयोनित्वात्)**

4.*Samanvayādhikaraṇam* (समन्वयाधिकरणम्)
***Sūtram* (सूत्रं) - *Tattu Samanvayāt* (तत् तु समन्वयात्)**

This *Stōtra* poetically expounds *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* through Hari's all-seeing gaze and world-manifestation. For example, in Verse 1:

ईश्वरः सर्वोपकान्तं वीक्षते।
एतत् ऽस्वरूपम्।
हरिः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १ ॥

Īśvaraḥ Sarvopakāntaṃ Vīkṣate |
Etat Svarūpam |
Hariḥ Puruṣottamaḥ || 1 ||

ईश्वर *(Īśvaraḥ)* sees all objects as proximate (*Sarvopakāntaṃ Vīkṣate*). This is the very nature (*Svārūpam*) of Hari Puruṣottama.

In the glossary, Mukkūr *Svāmī* went further to describe the *Sūtrārtha Aṣṭakam* as a *vortex* that remains difficult to fully decipher even aeons after it was first composed. The verses are so complex that they are said to be challenging even for the greatest philosophers and scholars.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s glossary-like commentary, however, present the *Sūtrārtha Aṣṭakam* as though it were a *digital-file compression* of the highest order. In it, he managed to *download the massive data* of the *Brahma Sūtras*—which would normally fill entire libraries of scriptural commentary—and shrink it into *eight kilobytes* of euphonious Sanskrit poetry. To the casual observer, this *Aṣṭakam* may look pithy, but if it were to be studied by a Vedāntic scholar of the first order, it would truly begin to expand into an infinite universe of meaning.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus clearly knew both approaches to Vedānta philosophy—the *soft* and the *hard way* too.

CHAPTER 21

Upanyāsa Masterpiece-1: *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ*

The daylong interviews conducted with Śrī MLS *Svāmī* in Mukkūr Village also gave me the opportunity to share with him a few personal impressions of mine about several of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsas,* which, in the years between 1981 and 1995, I had myself attended, off and on, whenever I found it possible to tear myself away from my professional and other *Laukika* occupations.

Of all the discourses I heard, there were two that had a tremendous impact upon me. Both were delivered at the *Āstika Samājam* auditorium in Chennai. Both *Upanyāsas* were part of a long series of evening lectures: the *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* was scheduled over 30 sessions, and the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* over 10 sessions, each lasting two-and-a-half hours.

Firstly, I shall try to recall and paraphrase below Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ Upanyāsa*.

The *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* is an 11-verse offering in praise of Lord Kṛṣṇa uttered by Bhīṣma in his last moments on earth. The event of the valiant warrior's final release from mortal coils is described in the 9th *Adhyāya* of the first *Skanda* of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.

If you go to the epic *Mahābhārata* itself, you can see it graphically recounting the scene of Bhīṣma, the venerable commander of the Kaurava armies, lying mortally wounded on the Kurukṣetra battlefield, his life-breath draining away little by little. By a supreme effort of sheer willpower, the *Uttama-Brahmacārī*, the *Agresaraḥ* among *Jñānīs,* and the foremost of *Dharmādhikārīs* of his times, is said to have held on to life waiting for the onset of *Uttarāyaṇa* (the beginning of the summer solstice) and for an auspicious moment to finally depart to the other world.

It is in those last few moments of his life that Bhīṣma is said to have had the direct and precious *Antima-Smṛti* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Brahman.

By his own account in the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ*, Bhīṣma had a grand vision of Truth and an experience rarely granted, if ever at all, to humans in the mortal world. And it happened in a crowning, climactic moment when Spirit takes leave of its tenancy in

the material state and regains its natural home in a place of eternal bliss… in the embrace of the Lord… an experience called *Mokṣa*.

In all *Vedic* literature, *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas*, there are only two great souls who have had the privilege of experiencing Mokṣa in the temporal world. One was Āñjaneya, who is reported to have been "*embraced*" by Lord Rāma on the former's return to Kiṣkindhā with news of Sītā's whereabouts in Laṅkā. The other one was Bhīṣma, who experienced *Antima-Smṛti* and ineffable *Mokṣānandam,* which Lord Kṛṣṇa blessed him with on his deathbed.

Indeed, for the wise and wizened pitāmaha, it was a moment of terminal consummation. It was the moment he had looked forward to all his life, and the culmination of all that he had struggled and worked for in life as an elder statesman of Hastināpura. He was the foremost well-wisher of its subjects, ruled by the Kaurava dynasty. It was the moment when the many *Dharmas* that Bhīṣma had stood for, fought for, and eventually died for, were all affirmed by the *Para-Brahman* Himself.

The *Stutiḥ* itself is a very simple one in terms of poetic construction or substance. The eleven endearing stanzas in it appear fractional by comparison to Bhīṣma's other magnificent offering—the immortal *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*. The reason, however, why *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* has traditionally been held in extremely high esteem by *Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryās*—as highly as the *Sahasranāma*, in fact—is because it contains, as its kernel, the very quintessence of many Vedāntic themes of distinctive Viśiṣṭādvaita.

[Mukkūr *Svāmī* at this point revealed that his *Ācārya*, *Śrīmad iñjimēṭṭu Azhagiyasingar*, the 42nd pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, was known to have been so fond of this "*Stutiḥ*" that he had made it a daily nighttime litany to be recited by all the Śiṣyas in the monastery before retiring to bed!]

Every phrase in the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ*, that scholars have commented upon, will strike one as being like they are a sort of shorthand for the vast saga of lofty wisdom in Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata*.

A unique feature of the 11 verses of this *Stutiḥ* is the way they sound to one's ears. Vowels and consonants, rhyme and syntax in this Sanskrit poem are sweetly evocative of the distant echoes of many subtle themes, scenes, and plots in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Stutiḥ* when recited can create a mood of grave reflection and repose in the mind of the reader/reciter, even if he/she were to possess only a

smattering of the Sanskrit language and/or the skimpiest acquaintance with the great message of the *Mahābhārata*.

Listening to the soft sounds of this *Stutiḥ* is, indeed, like listening to a philharmonic representation of a simple folk tune. It may sound like a simple, uncomplicated composition, but you sense, as you read or recite it repeatedly, that many grand operas lie latent between its lines.

In the 10-day *Upanyāsa* on *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ*, it was expected that Mukkūr *Svāmī* would be able to deliver his exposition of all the 11 *Ślokas* in the hymn. But when he began discoursing from day #1 with the opening first verse, everyone in the audience already began to sense that he would not have time to finish more than two or three verses … at best, four or five… So much of Vedāntic philosophy and wisdom was packed and unraveled indeed, in even the very first two verses. Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s oration was masterly, majestic, and moving… The audience remained spellbound during the entire series.

Immortality is Birthless-ness

The first verse of the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* shows us that a departing soul is not so much concerned about Death itself as about "*entering the Lord's abode,* which is really a state of being *unborn* (like the Lord Himself!). The whole focus of *Antima-Smṛti*, therefore, is not so much on *dying* as it is on attaining what the *Puruṣa-Sūktam* describes as *birthless-ness* or… *Ajāyamānaḥ*. If there is only one lesson the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* can teach us, it is this and this alone: *Immortality is not deathless-ness… it is really birthless-ness*.

Painting a Mural of the Infinite from a Single Phrase

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s opening presentation in that very first session that evening raised the level of expectation amongst the audience over what was to follow in sessions to come.

In the second verse, there was a phrase which Mukkūr *Svāmī* began to expatiate upon at great length:

Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ 33rd Verse, Śrīmad Bhagavatam (1.9.33)

त्रिभुवनकमनं तमालवर्णं रविकरगौरवराम्बरं दधाने ।
वपुरलककुलावृताननाब्जं विजयसखे रतिरस्तु मेऽनवद्या ॥ ३३॥

Tribhuvana-Kamanam Tamāla-Varṇam Ravikara-Gaura-Varāmbaram Dadhāne |
Vapur-Alaka-Kulā-Vṛtānanābjam Vijaya-Sakhe Ratir-Astu Me'navadyā || 33 ||

*(**Gist:** He is Arjuna's bosom-companion, but He is One whom the three worlds search for; the One of Beauteous Form clothed in finery, its colour that of sunrise; the One of lustrous looks—He is the One I beckon here and now before me!)*

As soon as Mukkūr *Svāmī* began his exposition of this Śloka, the phrase *Vijaya-Sakhe Ratir-Astu Me'navadyā* received all his attention.

On this phrase alone his mind began to dwell throughout the remaining five full sessions of *Upanyāsa*. He discussed that single phrase threadbare, with allusions and references galore to innumerable other scriptural works. Every quote of his was recalled from sheer memory. Not one was irrelevant or out of place. A magical tapestry of *Siddhāntic* profundity was woven right before the eyes of the mesmerised audience.

As the evening sessions went by, one after another, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, using that single phrase – **विजयसखे रतिरस्तु मेऽनवद्या** (*Vijaya-Sakhe Ratir-Astu Me'navadyā*) -- like a master artist raised before the eyes of the audience a marvellous original mural of *Vishistadvaita* thought. On the vast canvas of our collective minds was pictured, as it was, a spectacular sight!

In the above phrase, Bhīṣma echoes Arjuna's *Bhagavad-Gītā* vocative ***"Vijaya-Sakhe"*** (*O Friend of Victory!*) to Kṛṣṇa's *Tamāla* form praising *Tribhuvana-Kamanam Tamāla-Varṇam*….

Vijaya-Sakhe! is the vocative expression of *Vijaya-Sakhā* ("*He who is the Friend of Victory (Arjuna whose alias was Vijaya)*"). It is an allusion to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* scene where Arjuna invokes the ***friendship of Kṛṣṇa*** in the moment of a crippling moral crisis into which he sank on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* took the phrase and turned it into a brilliant epigram in Maṇipravāḷa for the purpose of elucidating an important doctrine, known as *Upāyavigraha* in *Śrīvaiṣṇava* soteriology. It was an original and very innovative idea, all

his very own and which was unprecedented in the annals of *Śrīvaiṣṇava* religious literature.

Upāyavigraha is the English transliteration of **उपायविग्रह** where **उपाय**ः (***Upāyaḥ***) denotes "*means/strategem*" and **विग्रह**ः (***Vigrahaḥ***) means "*embodiment/form*".

In Vedānta Deśika's *Śrīmad Rahasya-Traya-Sāra*, it appears as *Upāyavigrahaḥ Svayaṁ Bhagavān,* emphasising Viṣṇu's personal form as a *Prappanan's* (he who surrenders) sole instrument, central to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* illustration for the *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* verse.

The Maṇi Pravāḷam phrase was: ***விஜயசகே என்ற யுக்தி பிறந்தது*** (*Vijayasakhe Eṉṟa Yukti Piṟandadu),* which is the standard Tamil transliteration of the Sanskrit original, capturing its Sanskrit-Tamil fusion as coined by Mukkūr *Svāmī*. The phrase does not appear verbatim in any canonical Maṇi Pravāḷam works by *Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas*, such as Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇigaḷ's commentaries (e.g., on Śrī *Vacana Bhūṣaṇam* or *Ācāryā Hṛdayam*), Vedānta Deśika's Tamil *Prabhandhams*, or Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai's expositions.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own phrase is thus scripted as follows:

- ***விஜயசகே* (*Vijayasakhe*):** Sanskrit vocative in *Grantha Tamil* script.
- ***என்ற* (*Eṉṟa*):** Tamil quotative particle.
- ***யுக்தி* (*Yukti*):** in Sanskrit, meaning "*strategem*".
- ***பிறந்தது* (*Piṟandadu*):** Pure Tamil for "*was born/emerged.*"

The soteriological dimension that Mukkūr *Svāmī* revealed in this exquisite expression was introduced by him to unpack *Bhāgavata's Sakhā-Bhāva* as a *Prapattiḥ-Yukti* that distils Viśiṣṭādvaita *Upāyavigraha* for *Āstikas* who have not undergone the ritual initiation into *Prapattiḥ* or *Śaraṇāgati* (soul surrender).

So, what is *Upāyavigraha*?

It refers to the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophical doctrine where the Lord (Bhagavān) Himself embodies both the means (*Upāya*) and the end (*Upēya*) for *Mokṣa* (salvation), emphasising total surrender (*Prapattiḥ* or *Śaraṇāgati*) over self-effort.

In Vedānta Deśika's ***Rahasya-Traya-Sāra*** and Pillai Lokācārya's *Siddhānta*, the doctrine of *Upāyavigraha* posits Viṣṇu as the sole *Upāya*—devotees relinquish *Karma*, *Jñāna*, or *Bhakti Prayatna*, offering *Ātma Samarpaṇa* (self-surrender) to His

compassionate *Vigraha* (form). This aligns with yet another cardinal *Śrīvaiṣṇava* doctrine (*Artha Pañcakam*) where *Upāya Svarūpam* is Bhagavān's grace-activated *Kṛpā* or compassion.

V*ijayasakhe Eṉṟa Yukti Piṟandadu*—thus became Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s interpretive lens on Bhīṣma's vocative—exemplifying the *Śrī Vaishnavite Upāyavigraha* doctrine, where relational intimacy (*Sakhā-Bhāva*) emerged (*Piṟandadu*) as *strategic bhakti* expedient (*Yukti*) catalysing Soul-surrender (*Ātma-Samarpaṇam*) amid dire existential crises.

With the backdrop of Bhīṣmācāryā's last moments in life on earth, Mukkūr *Svāmī* in his *Upanyāsa* went on to illustrate the same *Upāyavigraha* doctrine using the phrase *Vijayasakhe Yukti viz*. the stratagem of Bhīṣma's *Sakhā-Bhāva*---akin to Kṛṣṇa's relational intimacy (as Arjuna's *Vijayasakhe*). It is an *Upāya*, that pierced through *Māyā* (mortal coils) to emerge (*Piṟandadu*) as *Ananya Bhakti* (peerless devotion) without the need for any ritual mediation.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* also used to point out that the term *"Vijayasakhe"* evokes the 8th Bhakti form ("*Sakhyam*") in the *Nava Vida Bhakti* which Prahalada himself had extolled in the *Srimad Bhagavatha* wherein it gets contextualised as "***விஜயஸகே என்கிற உக்தி பிறந்தது***" -

Sravanam Keerthanam Vishno:

Smaranam Paadasevanam

Archanam Vandanam Daasyam

Sakhyam Athma Nivedhanam

In Viśiṣṭādvaita, and as Mukkūr *Svāmī* went on to brilliantly illustrate it, *Ananya Ārādhanā* emerges when Bhīṣma, veiled by Kṛṣṇa's *Arcā Līlā* (i.e. the *Tamāla-Varṇam* form), intuits Arjuna's *Vijayasakhe* as a *Yukti* in itself — that gets invoked in the *Stutiḥ* as a metaphor for transforming the *Śarat-Arpa*, the *arrow-bed* ***Duḥkha*** on which Bhīṣma was lying in pain and distress, into *Śaraṇāgati* realisation.

That *Yukti* (*Upāya*) of Bhīṣma, as Mukkūr *Svāmī* pointed out, prioritised *Bhakti rati* over *Karma/Anuṣṭhāna*, aligning with Deśika's *Śrīmad Rahasya-Traya-Sāra* where *Sakhā/Sneha Bhāva* accesses *Para/Saubhāgya Anubhavam*... the experience of salvation. This underscores *Bhagavad Sambandha* as being relational, not ritualistic.

- ***Upāya Nirṇaya*:** *Sakhā* as accessible means for *Saṃsārī* or *Baddha jīvas*, echoing many of the Āḻvār *Pācurams* (Tamil hymns), that Mukkūr *Svāmī* quoted profusely during his *Upanyāsa*.

- ***Prapattiḥ Catalyst:*** Vocative intimacy giving birth to *Caraṇau Śaraṇam* (submission to divine will) and rejecting *Svātantrya Prayatna* (self-will).

The Double Homage

In the imaginative and creative way that Mukkūr *Svāmī* explained the phrase *Vijayasakhe Eṉṟa Yukti Piṟandadu*, there was yet another subtle dimension to be appreciated.

Some modern expositors explicitly say that Bhīṣma, in calling Kṛṣṇa *Vijayasakhe,* both glorified Kṛṣṇa and showed affectionate regard for Arjuna, even *envying* him for having such a charioteer-Lord.

> ***Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4 Verse 3***
>
> **स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।**
> **भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥ ३ ॥**
>
> ***Sa Evāyaṁ Mayā Te'dya Yogaḥ Proktaḥ Purātanaḥ***
> ***Bhakto'si Me Sakhā Ceti Rahasyaṁ Hy Etad Uttamam***
>
> "*That very same ancient Yoga is being spoken by Me to you today, because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore, you can understand this transcendental supreme secret.*"

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, however, pointed out that Vijaya was another name for Arjuna. And Bhīṣma knew that Kṛṣṇa had called Arjuna as *Sakhā*. In the *Avatāra-Rahasya* section in the Gītā (Chapter 4.3), Kṛṣṇa had openly called Arjuna ***Bhakto'si Me Sakhā Ceti*** ("*you are My devotee and friend*"). The word *Sakhā* was specifically used then.

Bhīṣma took a cue from the fact that Kṛṣṇa addressed Arjuna as *Sakhā* in the Bhagavad-Gītā; and that Arjuna was also known by his other name, *Vijaya* (he who never returns from battle without victory). The name fits the *internal logic of the narrative* because Bhīṣma effectively fuses:

i. The Gītā declared friendship, and

ii. Arjuna's victorious epithet, into one address.

In calling him *Vijayasakhe*, Bhīṣma was probably thus recalling the fact that, before the war of Kurukṣetra, Arjuna, when given a choice between Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's army to be at his disposal, had chosen Kṛṣṇa and not the army. Bhīṣma thus coined the word *Vijayasakhe* to hail that wise choice and the trust *(Mahāviśvāsaḥ)* in Kṛṣṇa that Arjuna had placed.

So, as Mukkūr *Svāmī* explained it, the epithet served Bhīṣma as a vehicle of "*double homage*" — to Kṛṣṇa's *intimate friendship* and to Arjuna, who *chose that friendship over material might*! It is a sensitive and well-grounded reading of the narrative and later devotional reception.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* on *Bhīṣma-Stutiḥ* has remained for me, even in distant recollection today, an ever-unfading spiritual experience as it was when I first heard it. And so will it remain until my own dying moment … as **त्रिभुवनकमनं तमालवर्णं रविकरगौरवराम्बरं दधाने" …** (*Tribhuvanakamanaṃ Tamālavarṇaṃ Ravikaragauravarāmbaraṃ Dadhāne*).

CHAPTER 22

Upanyāsa Masterpiece - 2:
Śrī Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma

Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa* on Śrī *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma,* delivered at various venues to thousands of his devotees in various parts of South India during the years 1980 through 1994 were all so immensely popular that even today, a mere mention of his name at once triggers in the memory of *Āstikas*, an instantaneous recall of this wonderful Vedāntic litany that Śrī Bhīṣmācāryā composed and Maharṣi Vyāsa recorded in the *Mahābhārata* and bequeathed to posterity.

The series of discourses enraptured people in the 1980s. And even today, people watch a few recordings of those that have been uploaded on YouTube.

The *Upanyāsas* were, in later years all converted into text, then serialised and published in widely circulated Tamil magazines such as the erstwhile *Kalki* and later in *Nṛsiṃha Priya* (official journal of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt).

The serialised magazine articles, again, were avidly read by thousands of devotees, and soon thereafter, the entire collection of *Upanyāsas* was compiled into multi-part print volumes titled குறையொன்றுமில்லை (*Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai*). This book, today, is sold in the hundreds and has come to be recognised as a one-of-a-kind masterpiece: perhaps the most readable, exhaustive, and authentic commentary of all others on *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*. The book is being read and re-read many times over by many thousands of people today to have their hearts fill up with *Bhagavad-Bhakti-Bhāva* thanks to its many narratives.

The Wide-Angle Spectrum

People who listened to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s discourses on *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* for the very first time in life became suddenly aware that the litany of *1,000 nāmas* was not merely a mechanical chant of the *Sacred Names of the Almighty, Viṣṇu,* but that, indirectly and in an esoteric way, it was the chant of one thousand reverberating *Vedic* mantras.

It was a thrilling experience for audiences to listen to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s unhurried and masterly expositions on how every single *Nāma* or *Śloka* from the *Sahasranāma* ought to be appreciated, not literally, but with wonder and awe, using a wide-angle, full-spectrum reference to relevant and related passages from other vast numbers of inter-connected scriptural texts.

The *Āstika Samājam* discourses in 1981-82, which I began attending regularly, saw Mukkūr *Svāmī* begin delivering a 30-day *Upanyāsa* series on the Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma. In a 180-minute-long oration on the opening evening of the series, I heard him begin and end it expatiating only just one *nāma* throughout the entire duration. It was on ***Viśvam*** (विष्वम् or ***விஶ்வம்***), the very first *Nāma* in the litany.

He picked *Viśvam*, explained its literal meaning, and then launched into an exhaustive, marathon elucidation of the sacred name through innumerable associated references to *Vēda Karma-Kāṇḍa* passages; to *Upaniṣad Vākyas*; to relevant explications found in Vedāntic *Bhāṣyas* of Ādi Śaṅkara and Śrī Rāmānuja; to whole cantos found in the *Vālmīki* or *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa*; to episodes and parables narrated in the *Mahābhārata*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavata,* or *Pōtana Bhāgavatam*; and, of course, also to the soul-stirring hymns and heart-wrenching Tamil *Pācurams* of the Āḻvār's *Divya-Prabandham* that were ever so close to his *Ubhaya-Vēdāntin* heart.

It was a bravura, breath-taking, heart-stopping class act in Vedāntic exposition. The audience found itself – as I did myself – transported, as never before, to unimagined levels of heightened spiritual contemplation.

The Scriptural Thesaurus

Thousands of people, after listening to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s discourses on *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma,* went to their homes feeling that they had their eyes and minds peeled open for the very first time to its importance as a uniquely handy and intense mode of *Vedic* worship – both personal and congregational.

The text was a rich and fecund source of Vedāntic knowledge and wisdom, if only one knew how to go about using it as a special kind of "*scriptural thesaurus*" in the sort of innovative way Mukkūr *Svāmī* had so clearly shown it could be done.

What do I mean when I describe *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* to be a *spiritual thesaurus*? *The Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* is a structured map of *names of Divinity* that points to the rest of *Vedic* literature, via *meaning-clusters*, *parallels*, and *carefully drawn contrasts*.

For example, Mukkūr *Svāmī* could pick just one *Nāma* (say ***Viśvam***), and he could then read its ***Sahasranāma*** gloss, then follow its echoes into *Ṛg Vēda, Upaniṣads, Gītā, and Purāṇas* via the references given by the commentators.

Over time, this unique method of his, inspired and gradually enabled me to build, by dint of serious study and effort, my own associative network of scriptural places too where the *Tattva* got unfolded. It is a method very close to how one navigates a thesaurus, but on the level of *Brahman, Guṇas, and Līlās*.

The idea of using the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* as a handy '*Spiritual thesaurus on Vedānta*' came to me after I had listened several times to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsas*. I could appreciate the thought-process he invariably followed while discoursing upon the litany of *Nāmas*:

Logic of the First and Last Name

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s approach to the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma was unique in one other respect: He viewed all the 1000 nāmas in it through a mental and spiritual lens coloured wholly by his *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā*. It was his firm belief that every *'Nāma'* denoted his *Iṣṭa-Devatā,* Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha or Śrī Mālōlaṉ only!

In his Upanyāsa, Mukkūr *Svāmī* explained his belief with a very telling justification for his assertion. Below is a paraphrase of what he said:

> *"The first three Ślokas of the Viṣṇu-sahasranāma have 24 nāmas. These sacred names all echo the same tattvas embedded in the 24 syllables of the sacred Gāyatrī-mantra, e.g. bhūtātmā, yoga, kṣetrajñaḥ, muktiḥ, Puruṣa … And finally, there is paramā gatiḥ, which is the goal of realising Godhood. That ultimate realisation is seen embedded in the nāma nārasiṃha-vapuḥ, for he is indeed the pradhāna-Puruṣa. It is significant to note here that Viṣṇu has 10 different avatars, but the very first one named in the Sahasranāma is Nṛsiṃha.*
>
> *If you go to the very last Śloka in the Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma, you will come across the nāma,* ***Sarvapraharaṇāyudhaḥ****. The meaning of this sacred epithet is "he who wields anything and everything as his weapon or instrument". This nāma most aptly applies to Śrī Nṛsiṃha since he could use even his fingernails as a death-dealing weapon to destroy evil.*

So, you see that the first word and the last word in the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma happen to be about Śrī Nṛsiṃha! In any book or scriptural work, whatever is its essence or core message can invariably be found in the beginning passage and the concluding chapter… i.e. the central theme will get introduced in the prologue and then will get recapitulated in the epilogue. So, applying that logic, we can say that the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma is an entirely Nṛsiṃha-centric scripture."

The Mambalam Dialogue

When I heard Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s expositions above, I was astounded by the insight he provided, i.e. that the first three *Ślokas* containing 24 *Nāmas* of the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* are sonic equivalents of the 24-syllabled *Gāyatrī-Mantra*. That was very clear to me.

However, what I could not quite accept as tenable was his claim that the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma,* in its entirety, was a litany of the sacred names of *Nṛsiṃha*. That seemed a rather far-fetched assertion.

A few days after the Astika Samājam series of *Upanyāsa* had concluded, I made my way, late one afternoon, to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s house on Veṅkaṭēśan Street, Mambalam, Chennai. I found him in a relatively relaxed mood after having completed all his earlier *Anuṣṭhāna* and *Pūjā*. A few other devotees were seated around him, conversing with him, when I walked in and prostrated before him. He smiled at me, and I took a seat on the floor respectfully. He inquired about my parents and about how I was doing in my professional life.

After exchanging further pleasantries, it was time for me to take leave of him. There were other devotees of his now queuing up behind me, waiting for an audience with him. So, quickly, I put forward my question to him:

> *"Svāmī, I have a small doubt about what you said in your Upanyāsa-- that the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma contains Nāmas only in praise of Nṛsiṃha. Can you please explain why that is not a sweeping, rather exaggerated assertion? Frankly, I am a little puzzled, Svāmī."*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* again smiled gently at me and answered:

> *"If you have any doubts about it, I urge you to do one thing. Return home now. Pick up the Sahasranāma. Also, keep beside*

you a copy of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's commentary, Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa. Pick, at random, from any page of the Sahasranāma, 24 nāmas. List them all down on a sheet of paper. Then refer to Bhaṭṭar's interpretation of each of those nāmas. They will all have some connection or other with the Nṛsiṃha-avatāra only. You will then have no more doubts on the matter."

On returning home that evening, I did exactly as I was told.

Opening my book of the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* (in *Devanāgarī* script), I slowly began letting my eyes randomly scan the text, up and down, one page after another. Strangely, in quick succession, 24 highlighted *Nāmas/Ślokas* also suddenly began leaping off the pages seemingly on their own, in a spontaneous but orderly manner. I noted each one down on a sheet of paper.

After writing them all down, I counted them. There were 24 of them, and it struck me then that they too were perhaps coincidental reflections of those 24 *Nāmas* appearing in the first three *Ślokas* of the *Sahasranāma* that Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in his *Upanyāsa* earlier had expatiated upon as being representative of the 24 syllables of the *Gāyatrī-Mantra*.

I was by now truly intrigued by the notion of the '*scriptural thesaurus*'!

Immediately, I rummaged my bookshelf, took down my copy of Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's commentary (*Bhāṣya*), the *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa,* and began looking up each of the 24 *Nāmas* on my list.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s claim was not untrue. The *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*, the *1,000 sacred names,* is in praise of Viṣṇu, of course, but then the litany was also eminently amenable to varying interpretations according to whichever deity one happened to adopt or worship as one's very own intimate *Upāsanā Dēvatā* or *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā*.

In that moment, I also recalled Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s references to the theological doctrines of *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā* and *Upāsanā Dēvatā*. Conceptually, the two are alike, but not identical:

- *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā* = axis of personal love and identity.
- *Upāsanā Dēvatā* = axis of prescribed practice and method.

Iṣṭa-Dēvatā refers literally to a *cherished or chosen deity,* i.e., a deity with whom a person feels the deepest affinity and to whom one offers primary devotion, *Japa*,

Pūjā, meditation, etc. It is a highly individual focus: it can be *Nārāyaṇa*, a specific *Avatāra*, a particular form (e.g., Ahōbilam Nṛsiṁha, Tiruvallikēṇi Parthasārathi), or even a Mantra-Devatā as revealed by a guru.

Upāsanā Dēvatā is the deity who is the object of one's *upāsanā* (systematic worship/meditation). *Upāsanā* means '*to sit near,*' i.e., to draw close to the Lord by focused worship or meditation. This is a more functional/technical form of focus: the *devatā* specified by *Śāstra* or guru in each *Vidyā*, *Vrata*, or *Yajña Sādhana,* e.g., *Gāyatrī-Upāsanā Dēvatā* or as in the case of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, *Nṛsiṁha-Upāsanā*.

Now, one person may have multiple *Upāsanā-Devatās* over a lifetime (different *Vratas*, *Mantras*), even while their *iṣṭa-dēvatā* remains constant.

In Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s case, both *Dēvatās* coincided: the devatā he was enjoined to meditate upon, and the deity of his heart became the same. He was an intensely single-minded *Nṛsiṃha Upāsaka* whose *Iṣṭa-Dēvatā* was Nṛsiṃha. For him, Śrī Nṛsiṃha was *Viśvam* and all *Viśvam* was Śrī Nṛsiṃha.

It was no surprise at all, therefore, that every '*Nāma*' to him in the Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma – beginning with *Viśvam* and ending with *Sarvapraharaṇāyudhaḥ*, and all other *Nāmas* in between, – denoted only Lord Nṛsiṃha in the full majesty of His leonine forms, manifestations, and iconic presence.

Viewed through the lens of the theology of *Iṣṭa* and *Upāsanā Devatā*, the 24 *Nāmas* that appeared on the list which I myself had drawn up at Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s behest, most certainly and convincingly, became proof for his emphatic assertion to me that the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* was indeed entirely a '*scriptural thesaurus*' for --- *Nṛsiṃha Tattva*, *Nṛsiṃha Mantra,* and *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña*.

1. योगो योगविदां नेता प्रधानपुरुषेश्वरः ।
नारसिंहवपुः श्रीमान् केशवः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ ३॥

Yōgō Yōgavidāṁ Nētā Pradhānapuruṣēśvaraḥ |
Nārasiṁhavapuḥ Śrīmān Kēśavaḥ Puruṣōttamaḥ|| *"3"*

"He is the goal of Yoga and the leader of those who know Yoga; He is the Lord of Nature and all souls. He has the form of a Man-Lion and is ever-associated with Śrī (Lakṣmī). He is Keśava and the Supreme among all persons."

नारसिंहवपुः श्रीमान् केशवः पुरुषोत्तमः (***Nārasiṁhavapuḥ Śrīmān Kēśavaḥ Puruṣōttamaḥ***)— celebrates Bhagavān's leonine incarnation, auspicious beauty, evil-slaying prowess, and supreme personhood.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa* interprets these as interconnected *guṇas* of Brahman in *Pararūpa* – in the Absolute State:

- **नारसिंहवपुः** (***Nārasiṁha-Vapuḥ***)—"*Lion-bodied for humans*"—Nṛsiṃha's half-man-half-lion form embodies flawless attributes (*Guṇa Nirapekṣa*), dispelling *Nara* (human) fears via His protective ferocity.
- **श्रीमान्** (***Śrīmān***)—"*Auspiciously beautiful*" — with Mahālakṣmī, denoting Vaikuṇṭha splendour and the source of the devotee's prosperity.
- **केशवः** (***Kēśavaḥ***)—"*Beautiful-haired*" — long, flowing, effulgent locks: projecting the image of the eradicator of evil.
- **पुरुषोत्तमः** (***Puruṣōttamaḥ***)—"*Supreme Person*" — the highest Puruṣa, worthy of eternal worship, transcending cosmic functions.

2. **रुद्रो** बहुशिरा बभ्रुर्विश्वयोनिः शुचिश्रवाः ।
अमृतः शाश्वतः स्थाणुर्वरारोहो महातपाः ॥ १३॥

Rudrō *Bahuśirā Babhrurviśvayōniḥ Śuciśravāḥ |*
Amṛtaḥ Śāśvataḥ Sthāṇurvarārōhō Mahātapāḥ || "13"

"He is the dispeller of sorrows with manifold heads, the sustainer of the world and its very source. His names are pure to hear; He is immortal, eternal, and unchanging. He is the highest goal and possesses supreme knowledge."

Bhaṭṭar interprets:

- **रुद्रः (*Rudraḥ*)**—as He who melts devotees' hearts with *Anugraha-Prema* (tears of ecstasy in *Bhakti*), eliminates *Duhkha* and its roots and grants *Śrēyas*— linking to Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrines of *Bhakti* and *Prapattiḥ* where Viṣṇu's *Krpā* transforms suffering into *Rati*. Child Prahlāda's own plight is evoked here.

3. लोकाध्यक्षः सुराध्यक्षो धर्माध्यक्षः कृताकृतः ।
चतुरात्मा चतुर्व्यूहश्**चतुर्दंष्ट्रश्चतुर्भुजः** ॥ ११॥

Lōkādhyakṣaḥ Surādhyakṣō Dharmādhyakṣaḥ Kṛtākṛtaḥ |
Caturātmā Caturvyūhaś ***Caturdaṁṣṭraś Caturbhujaḥ*** *|| "15"*

"He is the overseer of the worlds, the gods, and righteousness. He is the manifest and unmanifest, possessing a four-fold nature and manifestation. He has four teeth and is the glorious four-armed Lord."

चतुर्दंष्ट्रः चतुर्भुजः (***Caturdaṁṣṭraś Caturbhujaḥ***)— depicts Bhagavān's majestic Nṛsiṃha form with four fierce fangs and four protective arms. Parāśara Bhaṭṭar glorifies these as Nṛsiṃha's leonine perfection.

The four-armed *Yoga Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha* is a peaceful, meditative form of Viṣṇu's *Avatāra*, typically depicted seated in *Padmāsana* (lotus pose) with

a *Yogapaṭṭa* (meditation band). He often holds the *Śaṅkha* (conch) and *Cakra* (discus) in his rear hands, while his front hands are in *Abhaya* (protection) or *Dhyāna* (meditation) *Mudrā*, sometimes with Lakṣmī seated on his lap, representing his calmer, protective side after the destruction of Hiraṇyakaśipu. The band, or *Yogapaṭṭa*, is often seen tied around his legs and waist, indicating deep meditation. This form represents the divine origin of yoga and is worshipped for peace, tranquillity, and overcoming fear.

- **चतुर्दंष्ट्रः** *(**Caturdaṁṣṭraś**)*—evokes four fully developed canine teeth (upper/lower pairs) symbolising terror to *Asuras*, and protection for *Prahlāda*-like *Bhaktas*.
- **चतुर्भुजः** (***Caturbhujaḥ***)—signifies four arms wielding *Śaṅkha-Cakra-Gadā-Padma* to uphold *Dharma,-Artha,-Kāma,-and Mokṣa* for devotees.

These align with Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s Nṛsiṃha *Yajña* emphasis on *Avatāra-Anugraha*.

4. वेद्यो वैद्यः **सदायोगी वीरहा** माधवो मधुः ।
अतीन्द्रियो महामायो महोत्साहो महाबलः ॥ १८॥

*Vēdyō Vaidyaḥ **Sadāyōgī Vīrahā** Mādhavō Madhuḥ |*
Atīndriyō Mahāmāyō Mahōtsāhō Mahābalaḥ || "18"

"He is the ultimate truth to be known and the Supreme Physician. He is the eternal Yogī, the slayer of demons, and the Lord of Lakṣmī. Beyond the senses and Master of Māya, He acts with great energy and infinite strength."

Bhaṭṭar interprets these as interconnected devotee-centric *Guṇas*:

- **सदायोगी** (***Sadāyōgī***)—ever-awake *Antaryāmī* (immanent indwelling Bhagavān) for *Bhaktas*' protection;
- **वीरहा** (***Vīrahā***)—slayer of heretics and atheists (*Kutarka-Surāḥs* like *Hiraṇyakaśipu*) who obstruct and frustrate Meditation (*Upāya-Virōdhī*).

5. महाबुद्धिर्महावीर्यो महाशक्तिर्महाद्युतिः ।
अनिर्देश्यवपुः श्रीमानमेयात्मा महाद्रिधृत् ॥ १९॥

Mahābuddhir Mahāvīryō Mahāśaktir Mahādyutiḥ |
***Anirdēśyavapuḥ Śrīmān** Amēyātmā Mahādridhṛt || "19"*

"He is the source of supreme intelligence, energy, power, and light. His form is beyond description; He is the glorious Lord whose true nature is immeasurable, and He is the one who sustained the mighty mountains."

- **अनिर्देश्यवपुः** (***Anirdēśyavapuḥ***)—beyond the ken of the senses yet apprehensible by a heart filled with true bhakti;
- **श्रीमान** (***śrīmān***)—Lakṣmī-embodied auspiciousness. The contrast between Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda gets highlighted herein.

6. **अमृत्युः सर्वदृक् सिंहः** सन्धाता सन्धिमान् स्थिरः ।
अजो दुर्मर्षणः शास्ता विश्रुतात्मा सुरारिहा ॥ २२॥

Amṛtyuḥ Sarvadṛk Siṁhaḥ *Sandhātā Sandhimān Sthiraḥ* |
Ajō Durmarṣaṇaḥ Śāstā Viśrutātmā Surārihā || *"22"*

"He is deathless and sees all, a lion to the wicked and the uniter of all actions. Ever steady and unborn, He is the irresistible ruler who is celebrated throughout the scriptures as the slayer of the enemies of the gods."

Bhaṭṭar expounds these Pararūpa guṇas as bhakti-centric:

- **अमृत्युः** (***Amṛtyuḥ***)—beyond death, conferring *Amaratva* via *Bhakti* or *Prapattiḥ*;

  Mukkūr *Svāmī* here used to allude to the significant expression in the "**Mantra-Rāja-Pada Stōtra**":

  भक्तानां नाशयेद्यस्तु मृत्युमृत्युं नमाम्यहम्....

  Bhaktānāṁ Nāśayēdyastu ***Mṛtyumṛtyuṁ Namāmyaham****...*

  "I bow down to Him, who is the Death of Death itself, and who destroys the fears (and cycles of birth and death) of His devotees."

- **सर्वदृक्** (***Sarvadṛk***)—sees all *Jīva- Karmas* intimately;
- **सिंहः** (***Siṃhaḥ***)—Nṛsiṃha, whose roaring sounds themselves can destroy *Adharma*.

7. सुभुजो दुर्धरो वाग्मी महेन्द्रो वसुदो वसुः ।
नैकरूपो बृहद्रूपः शिपिविष्टः प्रकाशनः ॥ २९॥

Subhujō Durdharō Vāgmī Mahēndrō Vasudō Vasuḥ |
Naikarūpō Bṛhadrūpaḥ *Śipiviṣṭaḥ Prakāśanaḥ* || *"29"*

"He has beautiful arms and is difficult to attain. He is the eloquent Lord of Lords and the giver of all wealth. Manifesting in infinite and vast forms, He resides in the solar rays and illuminates everything."

Bhaṭṭar interprets these *Pararūpa Guṇas* devotionally:

- **नैकरूपो** (***Naikarūpō***)*—assumes countless Avatāra-Vibhava forms (Matsya to Kalki) without exhausting divine essence, accommodating any of a Jīva's Upāyas.*
- **बृहद्रूपः** (***Bṛhadrūpaḥ***)*— the vast Virāṭ-Rūpa, the universe-spanning form that yet can intimately reside in the heart of a Bhakta as Antaryāmi, again, evoking the image of Prahlāda.*

The term ***Naika*** (**नैक**) in Sanskrit literally means "*not one*" or "*not at all one,*" implying "*many,*" "*numerous,*" or "*manifold*"—not strictly "*infinite*" in the abstract sense, but rather countless in a real sense.

Naikarūpō denotes Bhagavān's countless *Avatāra-Vibhava* forms (e.g., 24+ major *Avatāras* per the *Bhāgavata*)—many yet comprehensible via *Śruti/Smṛti*—without exhausting His singular *Para* or Absolute - state essence. This underscores the Viśiṣṭādvaita conception of *Acintya-Adbhuta:* one essence, manifold *Līlā* expressions, —echoing the *Bhāgavata's Viśvarūpa* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* (as seen earlier) unpacked via that fine *Maṇi Pravāḻam* phrase of *Vijayasakhe Eṉṟa Yukti Piṟandadu,* linking relational intimacy to cosmic splendour.

8. ओजस्तेजोद्युतिधरः प्रकाशात्मा प्रतापनः ।
ऋद्धः स्पष्टाक्षरो मन्त्रश्चन्द्रांशुर्भास्करद्युतिः ॥ ३०॥

Ōjas-Tējō-Dyuti-Dharaḥ Prakāśātmā ***Pratāpanaḥ*** |
Rddhaḥ Spaṣṭākṣarō Mantraś Candrāṁśur Bhāskaradyutiḥ || *"30"*

"He is the bearer of vital force, brilliance, and light, the self-luminous one who warms the world. Full of perfection and clear in the sacred syllable, He is the mantra itself, soothing like the moon and radiant like the sun."

- **प्रतापनः** *(**Pratāpanaḥ**)— signifies Bhagavān as "He who scorches or burns the enemies of dharma while warming and protecting devotees with His radiant tapas."*

The *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa* interprets *Pratāpanah* devotionally as the Lord's inherent *Tējas* that incinerates *Asura-Ahaṅkāra* (like *Hiraṇyakaśipu's* before *Nṛsiṃha) yet* kindles *Bhakti-Prema* in surrendered souls (*Prapanna*)— evoking the metaphor of solar heat that ripens *Jñāna* fruits without harming *Prapanna* crops.

9. इष्टोऽविशिष्टः शिष्टेष्टः शिखण्डी नहुषो वृषः ।
क्रोधहा क्रोधकृत्कर्ता विश्वबाहुर्महीधरः ॥ ३४॥

Iṣṭō'viśiṣṭaḥ Śiṣṭēṣṭaḥ Śikhaṇḍī Nahuṣō Vṛṣaḥ |
Krōdhahā Krōdhakṛtkartā *Viśvabāhur Mahīdharaḥ* || *"34"*

"*He is the beloved, impartial Lord who is dear to the righteous. Adorned with a peacock feather, He is the binder of souls and the embodiment of Dharma. He destroys anger yet wields it to end evil, supporting the entire world with His infinite arms.*"

क्रोधहा and **क्रोधकृत्कर्ता** embody Bhagavān's dual mastery over anger—dousing it for the sake of His devotees while arousing it for the wicked.

Bhaṭṭar explains:

- **क्रोधहा** (***Krōdhahā***)— as He who removes *Krōdha* from pious *Bhaktas* (*Sādhūnāṃ Krodhaṃ Hanti*), purifying hearts for *Prapattiḥ*;
- **क्रोधकृत्कर्ता** (***Krōdhakṛtkartā)***— as the creator of anger in evildoers (*Asādhūṣu Krodhaṃ Karoti*), leading to their self-destruction like Hiraṇyakaśipu's —perfect Viśiṣṭādvaita justice balancing *Anugraha* (grace) and *Nigrah* (control).

These names highlight Nṛsiṃha's relational ethics: a protective healer for surrendered souls and a catalyst of downfall for *Durācārīs*—echoing Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Yajña-Upanyāsa* where he used to refer to how Nṛsiṃha's *Krodha* safeguards Prahlāda while incinerating *Adharma*.

10. स्कन्दः स्कन्दधरो धुर्यो वरदो वायुवाहनः ।
वासुदेवो बृहद्भानु**रादिदेवः** पुरन्दरः ॥ ३६॥

Skandaḥ Skandadharō Dhuryō Varadō Vāyuvāhanaḥ |
*Vāsudēvō Bṛhadbhānur **Ādidēvaḥ** Purandaraḥ || "36"*

"He is the nectar-like sustainer of Dharma and the bearer of the world's burdens. As the giver of boons and controller of the winds, He is the all-pervading Lord of light, the first of all gods, and the destroyer of evil strongholds."

आदिदेवः पुरन्दरः (***Ādidēvaḥ Purandaraḥ***)— denotes Bhagavān as the primordial deity and destroyer of fortified strongholds.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar interprets:

- **आदिदेवः (*Ādidevaḥ*)**—as the primary cause (ādi) and supremely effulgent deva, source of all gods' splendour—evoking the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*'s *Bhīṣāsmāt Vātaḥ Pavate* ("the great winds ,out of fear for Him, dutifully function and blow").
- **पुरन्दरः** (***Purandaraḥ)***— signifies the destroyer of *Asura-Pura* (e.g., *Tripura*), removing *Bhakta's* fears arising from *Adhidaivika* causes such as calamities and havoc caused by the forces of nature, with the child Prahlāda, again, serving as the exemplar here.

11. ऋतुः सुदर्शनः कालः परमेष्ठी परिग्रहः ।
उग्रः संवत्सरो दक्षो विश्रामो विश्वदक्षिणः ॥ ४५॥

Rutu-Sudar-Shanah-Kalah Para-Meshthi Pari-Grahah |
***Ugra-Samva-Tsaro Daksho** Vishramo Vishva-Dakshinah || "45"*

"He is the seasons and the auspicious vision, the time that governs all. Centered in glory, He accepts all offerings. Though formidable to the wicked, He is the year, the skilful creator, the final resting place, and the most generous giver in the universe."

उग्रः संवत्सरो दक्षो (***Ugra-Samva-Tsaro Daksho***) depicts Bhagavān as the fierce cosmic year-cycle and the supremely skilled Creator.

Bhaṭṭar interprets:

- **उग्रः संवत्सरो** (***Ugra-Samva-Tsaro***) —as the formidable *time-wheel* (***Samva-Tsaro***) that devours all created beings at *Pralaya* yet sustains dharma through seasonal rhythms;
- **दक्षो** (***Daksho***) —as the primordial *Prajāpati's* skilful *Sṛṣṭi* (primordial Creator and Creation), manifesting infinite diversity from His will alone.

Viṣṇu here is imaged as fierce *Kāla-Puruṣa*; like Nṛsiṃha's roar that echoes Time itself as it governs the 60-year cycles; aligns also with Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Yajña* emphasis, where *Hōma-Kāla* precision reflected divine *Dakṣiṇataḥ*... in other words, the perfect timing and execution of the *Hōma* seen as an expression of the Lord's own precise, and benevolent way of doing things.

12. **यज्ञ इज्यो महेज्यश्च क्रतुः सत्रं सतां गतिः ।**
सर्वदर्शी निवृत्तात्मा सर्वज्ञो ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ॥ ४८॥

Yajña Ijyō Mahējyaśca Kratuḥ Satraṁ Satāṁgatiḥ |
Sarvadarśī Nivṛttātmā Sarvajñō Jñānamuttamam || "48"

"He is the sacrifice and the one to be worshipped, the sacred ritual and the refuge of the righteous. The all-seeing Lord is ever detached from worldly attachments, possessing all knowledge and being the supreme wisdom itself."

यज्ञ इज्यो महेज्यश्च क्रतुस्सत्रं सतांगतिः *(**Yajña Ijyō Mahējyaśca Kratuḥ Satraṁ Satāṁgatiḥ**) hails Bhagavān as the embodiment, supreme object, and goal of all Vedic sacrifices.*

Bhaṭṭar expounds these as interconnected *Yajña-Svarūpa-Guṇas*:

- **यज्ञः** (***Yajñaḥ***) *—Viṣṇu as the all-Yajña essence (yajno vai vishnuḥ per śruti), carrying havis benefits to devas;*
- **इज्यः** *(**Ijyaḥ**)—worthy recipient of all worship;*
- **महेज्यः** *(**Mahējyaḥ**)—granter of Mokṣa via Yajña-Phala;*
- **क्रतुः** *(**Kratuḥ**)—mastermind of all ritual intelligence;*
- **सत्रम्** *(**Satram**)—protector of Sat-Puruṣas through extended Sattras;*
- **सतां गतिः** *(**Satāṁgatiḥ**)—refuge and goal for the virtuous.*

These names perfectly mirror Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *107 Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas*: i.e. *Vedic Kratu-Satram* as *Bhakti-Yajña* where Viṣṇu receives *Āhuti* directly.

13. सुव्रतः सुमुखः सूक्ष्मः सुघोषः सुखदः सुहृत् ।
मनोहरो जितक्रोधो **वीरबाहुर्विदारणः** ॥ ४९॥

Suvrataḥ Sumukhaḥ Sūkṣmaḥ Sughōṣaḥ Sukhadaḥ Suhṛt |
*Manōharō Jitakrōdhō **Vīrabāhur Vidāraṇaḥ** || "49"*

"He is the committed protector with a charming face, subtle and pervading the universe with auspicious sound. The benevolent friend and giver of joy, He captivates all hearts. Having conquered anger, His heroic arms destroy the unrighteous."

वीरबाहुर्विदारणः (***Vīrabāhur Vidāraṇaḥ***) praises Bhagavān's mind-captivating charm, anger mastery, heroic arms, and *Asura*-destroying prowess.

Bhaṭṭar interprets these *Vibhava Guṇas* devotionally:

- **वीरबाहुः** (***Vīrabāhuḥ***) *— heroic arms wielding Sudarśana;*
- **विदारणः** *(**Vidāraṇaḥ**)— He who rends enemy bodies like Nṛsiṃha's claws on Hiraṇyakaśipu.*

14. गभस्तिनेमिः सत्त्वस्थः **सिंहो भूतमहेश्वरः ।**
आदिदेवो महादेवो देवेशो देवभृद्गुरुः ॥ ५२॥

*Gabhasti-Nemi-Satvasthah **Simho Bhoota-Mahe-Shvarah|***
***Adidevo** Mahadevo Devesho Deva-Bhrudguruh || "52"*

"He is the radiant centre of light dwelling in the heart of goodness. As the mighty Lion and Supreme Lord of all beings, He is the first of gods and the greatest among them—the protector and teacher of the celestial world."

सिंहो भूतमहेश्वरः आदिदेवो (***Siṁhō Bhūtamahēśvaraḥ Ādidēvō***) proclaims *Bhagavān* as the majestic Lion, Supreme Lord of all beings, and Primordial Deity.

Bhaṭṭar glorifies:

- **सिंहः** (***Siṃhaḥ***) *— as Nṛsiṃha's regal ferocity— His roaring that petrifies Asuras, and grants protective asylum for Prahlāda-Bhaktas;*
- **भूतमहेश्वरः** *(**Bhūtamaheśvaraḥ**)— He who rends enemy bodies like Nṛsiṃha's claws on Hiraṇyakaśipu.*
- **आदिदेवः** (***Ādidevaḥ***)— as *Deva-Ādi*.

15. महावराहो गोविन्दः सुषेणः कनकाङ्गदी ।
गुह्यो गभीरो गहनो गुप्तश्चक्रगदाधरः ॥ ५८॥

Mahāvarāhō gōvindaḥ suṣēṇaḥ kanakāṅgadī |
***Guhyō gabhīrō gahanō guptaś** cakragadādharaḥ || "58"*

"He is the Great Boar and the Lord known through the Vēdas, adorned with golden armlets and followed by a divine army. Mysterious and deep like the ocean, He is the hidden protector who wields the discus and the mace."

गुह्यो गभीरो गह्नः *(**guhyō gabhīrō gahanō**) denotes Bhagavān's hidden, profound, and impenetrable nature as per Śrīvaiṣṇava exegesis.*

Bhaṭṭar interprets these *Antaryāmi-Guṇas* as *Bhakti*-accessible mysteries:

- **गुह्यः** (***Guhyaḥ***) *— resides in Hṛdaya-Guhā (the deep heart-cave), revealed through rahasya Upaniṣads and Prapattiḥ alone. The cave temple of Upper Ahōbilam temple is evoked here.*
- **गभीराः** *(**Gabhīraḥ**)—embodies unfathomable Jñāna-Bala-Vīrya-Aiśvarya qualities of Bhagavān.*
- **गहनः** (***Gahanaḥ***)*—transcends Avasthātraya Sākṣitva (witnessing of waking/dream/sleep), impenetrable like a dense forest or fortress—known intimately via Ananya Rati.*
- **गुप्तः** *(**Guptaḥ**)—Vāṅ-Mānasa-Agocara, revealed only through Prapattiḥ; Nṛsiṃha is hidden, beyond the grasp of speech and mind; yet He discloses Himself, in a special way, only to those who perform Bhakti/Prapattiḥ (total surrender)." In other words, intellect and language alone cannot 'get' Him; surrender is the doorway to real knowledge and experience of Him.*

All these emphasise *Acintya-Svarūpa*: concealed from worldly senses and logic, yet *Antaryāmi* (immanent) in every *Jīva*—echoing Nṛsiṃha's mysterious unseen presence in both Prahlāda's heart as well as in a lifeless pillar in the palace of Hiraṇyakaśipu.

In Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsas*, he was able to parallel this to *Vedic Rahasya-Vidyā* and Āḻvār *Anubhavam* of *Hṛdaya-Nivāsin*... He who dwells in the heart of the true *Bhaktha*.

16. स्वक्षः स्वङ्गः शतानन्दो नन्दिर्ज्योतिर्गणेश्वरः ।
विजितात्मा विधेयात्मा सत्कीर्तिश्छिन्नसंशयः ॥ ६६॥

Svakṣaḥ Svaṅgaḥ Śatānandō Nandirjyōtirgaṇēśvaraḥ |
***Vijitātmā Vidhēyātmā** Satkīrtiśchinna-Saṁśayaḥ || "66"*

"He has beautiful eyes and a glorious form, the source of infinite joy and the Lord of all celestial lights. Mastering His own nature, He remains ever-accessible to His devotees—the eternally famous Lord who clears all doubts."

विजितात्मा विधेयात्मा *(**Vijitātmā Vidhēyātmā**)* exemplifies Viṣṇu's *Saulabhya* (accessibility) in *Śrīvaiṣṇava* philosophy, where the *Sarveśvara* becomes *Bhakta-Vatsala* through *Kṛpā*.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's explanation of:

- **विजितात्मा** (***Vijitātmā***) *— "He whose Ātma (heart/mind) is easily Vijita (conquered) by devotees"—Viṣṇu voluntarily subdues His Svatantra Icchā-Śakti for Prapanna desires, as Gītā-charioteer for Arjuna or Prahlāda-Rakṣaka Nṛsiṃha.*

- **विधेयात्मा** (***Vidheyātmā***)— *"He of subservient nature"—obediently manifests as Upāya-Vigraha, taking devotees' orders (Vidheya) = He who listens to His Bhaktha's "commands").*

17. एको नैकः सवः कः किं यत्तत्पदमनुत्तमम् ।
लोकबन्धुर्लोकनाथो माधवो भक्तवत्सलः ॥ ७८ ॥

Ēkō Naikaḥ Savaḥ Kaḥ Kiṁ Yattatpadam Anuttamam |
Lōkabandhur Lōkanāthō *Mādhavō Bhaktavatsalaḥ || "78"*

"He is the One who manifests as the many, the source of energy and supreme bliss. He is the ultimate truth to be sought—the highest goal. The friend and Lord of the entire world, He is Madhava, who overflows with love for His devotees.

लोकबन्धुर्लोकनाथो (***Lōkabandhur Lōkanāthō***) denotes *Bhagavān* as the kinsman and protector of all worlds in *Śrīvaiṣṇava* exegesis.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar Explanation:

- **लोकबन्धुः** (***Lōkabandhuḥ***) — *"The kith of all worlds"—Viṣṇu relates to every Jīva without exception through boundless Anugraha (grace), binding creation as Ādhāra (support) while upholding Dharma via Śāstras, like a familial well-wisher.*

  Here, Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to quote from *Svāmī* Vedānta Deśikan's Stōtra, ***"Kāmāsikāṣṭakam"***: …

बन्धुमखिलस्य जन्तोः बन्धुरपर्यङ्कबन्धहरणीयम्

*"**Bandhum Akhilasya Jantōḥ** Bandhura-Paryaṅka-Bandha-Ramaṇīyam|"*

"I meditate upon Him, who is the friend of all living beings, and who looks exquisitely beautiful while reclining on His charming serpent-bed (Ādiśeṣa)."

- **लोकनाथः** (***Loka-Nāthaḥ***)— *"Lord of all worlds"—sovereign protector (Nātha) who witnesses and sustains Lokas as Lokādhyakṣaḥ, ensuring cosmic order per Antaryāmi Vigraha.*

Bhaṭṭar emphasises *saulabhya*: *Sarveśvara* becomes an intimate *Bandhuḥ via Bhakti-Prapattiḥ*, echoing *Vijitātmā/Vidheyātmā* where He responds to devotees as He did to Prahlāda.

18. चतुर्मूर्तिश्चतुर्बाहुश्चतुर्व्यूहश्चतुर्गतिः ।
चतुरात्मा चतुर्भावश्चतुर्वेदविदेकपात् ॥ ८२॥

Caturmūrtiś Caturbāhuś Caturvyūhaś Caturgatiḥ |
Caturātmā Caturbhāvaś Caturvēdavid Ēkapāt || *"82"*

"He manifests in four forms and four arms, as the four-fold emanation and the ultimate goal of all life. He is the four-fold inner self and the source of all human goals, the master of the four Vēdas and the sole support of all existence."

–Celebrates *Bhagavān*'s fourfold manifestations sustaining cosmic and devotional orders in *Śrīvaiṣṇava* exegesis.

- चतुर्मूर्तिः (***Caturmūrtiḥ***) — ***Four Vyūha forms****—Vāsudeva (Para), Saṅkarṣaṇa (Jñāna), Pradyumna (Vīrya), Aniruddha (Śakti)—as Ādhāra for Sṛṣṭi-Sthiti-Laya, per Pañcarātra Āgama.*
- चतुर्बाहुः *(**Caturbāhuḥ**)— Four-armed Vasudeva holding Śaṅkha-Cakra-Gadā-Padma, granting the **four Puruṣārthas** (Dharma-Artha-Kāma-Mokṣa).*
- चतुर्व्यूहः (***Caturvyūhaḥ***)*— Dynamic Vyūha expansions for Loka-Pālana in the **four directions** (Dik).*
- चतुर्गतिः *(**Caturgatiḥ**)—Goal of **four Varṇas/Āśramas**, or devotees' graded Upāsanā paths… i.e. along the life journey from Brahmacārī, Gṛhastha, Vānaprastha to finally, Saṃnyāsa.*
- चतुरात्मा (***Caturātmā***)—**Ātman of fourfold creation** (*Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Rudra-Īśvara*).
- चतुर्भावः **(*Caturbhāvaḥ*)** —***Source of four Puruṣārthas*.**
- चतुर्वेदविद् (***Caturvēdavid***): *Vēda-Svarūpi,* knowing **four Vēdas**.
- एकपात् (***Ēkapāt***): Universe as **one-fourth of His *Kalā*; three-fourths in *Paramaṃ Padam***.

In the *eight different four-fold Nāmas* of Bhagavān are deeply and symbolically embedded the conception of the *32-syllabled* (i.e. 8 multiplied by 4) *Nṛsiṃha Mantra* and the key to 32 *Brahma-Vidyās.*

19. भारभृत्कथितो **योगी योगीशः सर्वकामदः** ।
आश्रमः श्रमणः क्षामः सुपर्णो वायुवाहनः ॥ ९१॥

*Bhārabhṛt Kathitō **Yōgī Yōgīśaḥ Sarvakāmadaḥ** |*
Āśramaḥ Śramaṇaḥ Kṣāmaḥ Suparṇō Vāyuvāhanaḥ || "91"

"He is the sustainer of the world's burden, the Yogī celebrated in all scriptures, and the master of meditation who grants all desires. He is the ultimate haven and the judge of the wicked, the one who dissolves the universe and guides souls with Vedic wisdom, controlling the very air we breathe."

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar View:

- योगी (***Yōgī***) — *"One who has conquered the mind"—Viṣṇu attains perfect equipoise beyond Māyā agitation, residing in His own Self as Antaryāmin, effortlessly sustaining universes (an equipoise that was reflected in Mukkūr Svāmī's own calm, unhurried, Yogī-like focus on Yajña amid the chaotic world around).*
- योगीशः *(**Yōgīśaḥ**)— "Lord of Yogis"— Nṛsiṃha as he who guides all Yogāvit activities focused on Bhakti-Mārga, just as Kṛṣṇa the charioteer guided Arjuna's Karmayoga.*

- **सर्वकामदः** (***Sarva-Kāmadaḥ***)— *"Bestower of all desires"—grants the true devotees' summum bonum: reaching Him via Prapattiḥ, having purified all worldly Kāma into Ananya-Prema for Bhagavān.*

20. धनुर्धरो धनुर्वेदो **दण्डो दमयिता दमः** ।
अपराजितः सर्वसहो नियन्ता नियमो यमः ॥ ९२॥

*Dhanurdharō Dhanurvēdō **Daṇḍō Damayitā Damaḥ** |*
Aparājitaḥ Sarvasahō Niyantā Niyamō Yamaḥ || "92"

"He is the wielder of the bow and the master of all sciences, the source of law and the subduer of the wicked. Invincible and all-enduring, He is the supreme director who governs the universe through internal discipline and eternal rules."

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar:

- **दण्डः** (***Daṇḍaḥ***) — "*Source of punishment*"— Viṣṇu empowers kings/*Ācāryās* as *Daṇḍadhārī* to uphold dharma. Prahlāda enthroned after Hiraṇyakaśipu is destroyed.
- **योगीशः** *(**Yōgīśaḥ**)*— "*Subduer of devotees' foes*"—habitually destroys *Asura-Vṛndas* troubling *Bhaktas* (*Daityān Damayati*), as *Prahlāda-Rakṣā* Nṛsiṃha.
- **दमः** (***Damaḥ***) (***A-Damaḥ***)— "*Invincible Controller*"— no one tames Him (*Kaścinna Damayitā*), yet He imposes *Damaḥ* (self-restraint) on *Jīvas* as *Antaryāmin*.

This so-called "*Bhaṭṭar triad*" reveals *Antaryāmi* sovereignty of Nṛsiṃha as immanent Lord i.e.

(a) *Daṇḍa* enforces *Vyavahāra-Dharma*,
(b) *Damayitā* protects *Prapannas per Vidheyātmā Saulabhya*, and
(c) *A-Damaḥ* upholds *Sarvajñatva*

—echoing *Rahasya-Traya-Sāra* where punishment purifies the soul and makes it fit and ready for *Śaraṇāgati*.

21. शङ्खभृन्नन्दकी चक्री शार्ङ्गधन्वा गदाधरः ।
रथाङ्गपाणिरक्षोभ्यः **सर्वप्रहरणायुधः** ॥ १०७॥

Śaṅkhabhṛn Nandakī Cakrī Śārṅgadhanvā Gadādharaḥ |
*Rathāṅgapāṇir Akṣōbhyaḥ **Sarvapraharaṇāyudhaḥ** || "107"*

"He bears the holy conch, the sword, the discus, the bow, and the mace. With the chariot wheel in hand, He remains unshakable and possesses all possible things as weapons for the protection of the universe."

सर्वप्रहरणायुधः *(**Sarva-Praharaṇāyudhaḥ**)— signifies Bhagavān as the Wielder of all striking weapons, embodying infinite armaments that destroy devotees' obstacles.*

Parāśara Bhaṭṭar expounds as:
These complement the preceding **दण्डो दमयिता दमः** ***Daṇḍō Damayitā Damaḥ*** triad: Infinite *Śakti* manifests as infinite *Praharaṇas* used for *Bhakta-Rakṣā*.

सर्वप्रहरणायुधः ***(Sarva-Praharaṇāyudhaḥ)*** includes Nṛsiṃha's claws as an *Āyudha* (weapon), per traditional commentaries, including Ādi Śaṅkara's explicit reference in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Bhāṣya*.

Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryās like Bhaṭṭar extend "*Sarva-Praharaṇa*" to infinite striking instruments -- *Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gadā, Śārṅga*, plus unconventional ones like Rāma's *Darbha* (blade of grass) or child Kṛṣṇa's sucking breast milk and life from the *demoness, Pūtanā's*) -- encompassing *Vibhava* forms sans the standard arms held in hand.

22. अर्जुन उवाच ।
पद्मपत्रविशालाक्ष पद्मनाभ सुरोत्तम ।
भक्तानामनुरक्तानां त्राता भव जनार्दन ॥

Arjuna Uvāca:
***Padmapatraviśālākṣa** Padmanābha Surōttama |*
Bhaktānām Anuraktānāṁ Trātā Bhava Janārdana ||

"Arjuna said: O Lord with eyes like lotus petals, O Padmanābha, the Supreme among gods! O Janārdana, please be the saviour and protector of all Your devotees who love You with such deep affection."

Arjuna's invocational prayer to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Anuśāsana Parva*, extolling signature *Lakṣaṇas* enabling *Bhakta Saulabhya* in *Śrīvaiṣṇava* exegesis.

- **पद्मपत्रविशालाक्ष** (***Padma-Patra-Viśāla-Akṣa***) — "*Source of punishment*"— Viṣṇu empowers kings/*Ācāryās* as *Daṇḍadhārī* to uphold dharma. Prahlāda enthroned after Hiraṇyakaśipu is destroyed.

— Bhaṭṭar interprets this as eyes granting *Darśana* suffused with compassion (*Karuṇā-Katākṣa*), capacious enough to behold all *Jīvas* simultaneously as *Antaryāmin*, mirroring Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Yajñas,* where Nṛsiṃha's gaze from the fiery altars responds to every *Āstika Saṅkalpa*.

Here, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would also quote one exquisite line from **Tiruppāṇ Āḻvār's** Tamil hymn, *Amalanādhipirāṉ* that describes the bewitching eyes of Śrī Nṛsiṃha:

கரிய ஆகிப் புடை பரந்து மிளிர்ந்து செவ்வரி ஓடி
நீண்ட அப்
பெரிய ஆய கண்கள்
என்னைப் பேதைமை செய்தனவே....

Kariya Āgip Puḍai Parandhu Miḷirndhu Sevvari Ōḍi
Nīṇḍa Ap
Periya Āya Kaṇgaḷ
Ennaip Pēdhaimai Seydhanavē.

"*Smitten out of my senses am I now, looking at Thee --- dark in hue, spreading all around, shining, with red radiance running through them— those great, wide eyes of Yours!*"

23. श्रीभगवानुवाच -
यो मां नामसहस्रेण स्तोतुमिच्छति पाण्डव ।
सोऽहमेकेन श्लोकेन स्तुत एव न संशयः ॥ २४ ॥

***Śrī-Bhagavān Uvāca*:**
"Yo-Mam Nama Saha-Srena Stotu Michhati Pandava |
Sho Ha Mekena Shlokena Stuta Eva Na Samshayah || "24"

"*The Supreme Lord said: O Arjuna! If one desires to praise Me by reciting the thousand names, let him know that by reciting just one specific verse (or even focusing on the essence of one), I consider Myself fully praised by him; of this, there is no doubt.*"

Bhagavān here assures Arjuna: "*O Pāṇḍava, whoever desires to praise Me with this Sahasranāma, can praise Me with even a single Śloka from these—there is no doubt.*"

- **यो मां नामसहस्रेण स्तोतुमिच्छति पाण्डव** (***Yō Māṁ Nāma-Sahasrēṇa Stōtum Icchati Pāṇḍava***) — "*He who wishes to praise Me with the thousand names, O Pāṇḍava.*"
- **सोऽहमेकेन श्लोकेन स्तुत एव न संशयः** (***Sō'ham Ēkēna Ślōkēna Stuta Ēva Na Saṁśayaḥ***)— "*He is indeed praised by Me with even one Śloka from it, without doubt.*"

The 24 *Ślokas* and *Nāma* on the list that I had thus myself drawn up at the behest of Mukkūr *Svāmī*—indeed, even one out of them would suffice to offer as worship to Śrī Nṛsiṃha.

Now, if the reader has carefully noticed, the count of the *Nāmas* above so far is 23 only! What then is the *24th Śloka*? What does it signify? How does it fit into the lens and framework of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *"spiritual thesaurus*"?

It must await explanation in another separate Chapter in *Part 6* of this book.

PART 4

The *Yajña* Years

(1982 - 2001)

CHAPTER 23

The *Yajña* Years

The Vayō-Vṛddha's Prediction

In 1969, at the foothills of the *Pānaka Nṛsiṃha Temple near Vijayawada*, by his own account, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had experienced the '*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*'. He often relived that experience – the encounter with the mysterious, anonymous "old man" (*Vayō-Vṛddha*), his prediction about his life-mission that would be ceaseless, selfless spiritual sacrifice… and the transformations that were about to happen.

Not only did the "*old man's*" prediction come true in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life from 1982 onwards, but it was followed up with another similar event of divine ordainment – another seeming miracle that turned Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life-mission into his destiny.

Legendary Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas

Between the years 1971 and 1980, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s eminence as an outstanding *Upanyāsaka* evolved, grew, and got established among a vast national following of *Āstikas*, *Vedics,* and lay *Śrīvaiṣṇava* devotees. In parallel, there were a small number of his followers that came to be aware that he was also conducting regular *Hōma* as part of his *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* in the family home on Veṅkaṭēśan Street, T. Nagar, Chennai.

Gradually, public awareness of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s austerities and ritual practices started spreading wider amongst the religious communities in the Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu regions. Now and then, here and there, families known to him began also to entreat him to conduct similar rites at venues in their neighbourhood temples, community centres, or even residences. All the rituals were performed on the asterism *Svātī*, the day when the *Avatāra* of Śrī Nṛsiṃha occurred.

The most ardent of his devotees also began to trickle into his house to join him in *Upāsanā* and *Tiruvarādhana* to Śrī Nṛsiṃha-Mūrti. The trickles later began to swell into steady streams… And after 1982, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas* became legendary.

Theology to Teleology: The Purpose and Passion Behind the 108 Mahā-Yajñas

- ***What specific event, vision, teaching, or personal experience inspired Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār to undertake the mission of 108 Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas, and when did this resolve form in his life?***
- ***How did his devotion to Lord Nṛsiṃha, particularly at Nṛsiṃha Kṣetras, influence his decision to organise these Yajñas across India?***

Mukkūr *Svāmī* understood the theological nature of *Nṛsiṃha-Tattva* very deeply and intensely. It arose out of his long years of intense *Upāsanā* right from the Vijayawada years. It was what bestowed upon him the ability to reconcile the qualities (*Guṇa*) of both *Ugram* (destructive potency) and *Saulabhya* (extreme compassion) that were opposed to each other and yet coexisted esoterically in the *Nṛsiṃha Tattva*.

The doctrines which in his Upanyāsa he could explain as Theology, Mukkūr *Svāmī* gradually began to seek to demonstrate teleologically in *Yajñas*.

The *Vedic* ritual for him was thus an extension of Vedāntic doctrine, in so far as both were directed towards the same purpose. One was a Vedāntic idea, while the other was a *Vedic* event or process. Their inherent purpose or design was the same, as both were goal-directed towards the same *Puruṣārtha*. For him, *Yajña* was not a mechanical affair. It was the sacerdotal and the liturgical turning teleological within the framework of Vedāntic theology.

The underlying doctrine of both his *Upanyāsa* and *Yajña* was thus the same. It was, simply and profoundly, rooted wholly in the reality of the *Nṛsiṃha Avatāra*. When the Creator, Brahmā himself, had beseeched him to appear on earth as an avatāra to destroy the evil of *Hiraṇyakaśipu*, the Almighty had tarried and lingered. Nor did He, as the *purāṇa* reveals, show himself when "*33-crore Devās*" ("*…Mūppattu Mūvar Amarargaḷ Muṉ Ceṉṟu….*" as the Tiruppāvai described them: முப்பத்து மூவர் அமரர்க்கு முன் சென்று) had fervently prayed for his appearance. But he lost no time when a little child, Prahlāda, sent out a prayer. Instantly, in the blink of an eye, he rushed to manifest himself as *Nṛsiṃha*. The *Avatāra* thus manifested itself as two distinct but inseparable *Tattvas* --- i.e. both as ***Rakṣaṇa*** (protecting Prahlāda) and ***Niyamanam*** (defeating *Adharmic* power).

From a theological viewpoint, Mukkūr *Svāmī* posited the Lord Nṛsiṃha, as a far more "*accessible*" deity than Śrī Rāma, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even, because the primary quality of His *Avatāra* was to "*rectify and accept*" every devotee of His. The *Avatāra* embodied the spirit of "*திருத்தி பணிகொள்ளுதல்*" (*Thiruththi Paṇikoḷḷudhal)* … in other words, "*amend, accept, and embrace.*"

Both in his *Upanyāsa* and *Yajña,* what Mukkūr *Svāmī* highlighted was a fundamental tenet of Śrīvaiṣṇavism as cited in the Āḻvār's verse "*Aḷantitta Tūṇai*". Here, it is noted that, even while slaying Hiraṇyakaśipu, the Lord placed him on His lap and "*felt his heart*" (*Uḷḷam Toṭṭu*) to see if the resident Evil in it was very deep-seated or only superficially present. It was only thereafter that he tore open the chest to slay the *Asura*.

Periyazvar's Periyazvar Tirumozhi (1st Centum, 7th Tirumozhi)

அளந்திட்ட தூணை அவன்தட்ட ஆங்கே வளர்ந்திட்டு வாளுகிர்ச் சிங்க உருவாய், உளந்தொட் டிரணியன் ஒண்மார் வகலம் பிளந்திட்ட கைகளால் சப்பாணி பேய்முலை யுண்டானே சப்பாணி!

Aḷantiṭṭa Tūṇai Avantaṭṭa Āṅkē Vaḷarntiṭṭu Vāḷukirc Ciṅka Uruvāy, Uḷantoṭ Tiraṇiyan Oṇmār Vakalam Piḷantiṭṭa Kaikaḷāl Cappāṇi Pēymulai Yuṇṭānē Cappāṇi!

"The moment Hiranyakashipu struck the measured pillar, the Lord instantly grew out of it, manifesting as a majestic lion with sword-like claws. With those very hands that tore open the beautiful, broad chest of the evil Hiranyakashipu, and with those lips that sucked out the life and poisonous breast milk of the demoness Putana, O Lord, clap Your hands! My precious child, clap Your hands!"

Thirumangai Alvar's Periya Thirumozhi (2.4.1)

"உளம் தொட்டு இரணியன் ஒண் மார்பு அகலம், பிளந்திட்ட கைக்கலால்…"

Uḷam Thoṭṭu Iraṇiyan Oṇ Mārpu Akalam Piḷandhiṭṭa Kaithalathāl…

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* once had a vivid mental visualisation of Lord Nṛsiṃha with Prahlāda.

So powerful was the vision's impact upon him that he commissioned a freelance artist at once to start painting a large portrait of the same image,

after he had described the minutest details of its features. The portrait was to have included, along with *Lord Nṛsiṃha, Prahlāda, Mahālakṣmī, and Āñjaneya* also.

The artist completed the portrait to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s satisfaction.

Thereafter, Mukkūr *Svāmī* got it all bulk printed and then distributed the print copies to everyone in the audience at an *Upanyāsa* he was delivering then in Hyderabad. The price of each offered print copy was rupees eleven. He explained that the sale proceeds would all go to support a *Yajña* that he was going to perform in the ensuing days at the famous Nṛsiṃha temple at Yadugirigutta.

One devotee hesitated to buy the portrait. He said he feared having a portrait of an *Ugramurthi* kept enshrined at home, which might generate adverse vibrations! On being asked why, the man replied:

"Svāmī, I cannot maintain strict sanctity or purity at home … I do not have the requisite level of Anuṣṭhāna for a Nṛsiṃha upāsaka …"

Mukkūr *Svāmī* laughed and posed a counter question to the devotee: *"Tell me, which idols or portraits of other Deities are kept in your house?"*

"We keep a portrait of Śrī Venkatachalapathy…" answered the devotee.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* retorted: *"So, are you saying that despite your lack of Anuṣṭhāna, Venkatachalapathi at home holds no fear for you, but Nṛsiṃha petrifies you?! Does Venkatachalapathi accept your lack of Anuṣṭhāna? Why, are they not both the same one Universal Deity?"*

The devotee looked down sheepishly, both shame and remorse writ on his face.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* smiled and then explained to him:" *Rather than shunning this portrait of Nṛsiṃha, you should take it home with you. Make a firm resolve that henceforth whatever lapses of Anuṣṭhāna you hold yourself guilty of will be corrected. Then trust in Lord Nṛsiṃha. The ugramurthi is also your companion (Sakhā); and will surely "show you the way" (Mārgabandhuḥ)."*"

The Man-Lion with a Motherly Heart

In this context, Mukkūr *Svāmī* often used the endearing term *Kapaṭa Kēsariṉ* (the *deceptive lion),* borrowed from Vedānta Deśika's *Stōtra*, *Kāmāsikāṣṭakam*. In this *Stōtra*, Nṛsiṃha is described as possessing one eye spewing rage, fire, and sheer terror, while, simultaneously, the other eye brimming with tender, motherly love. It was only in this *Avatāric* form did *Bhagavān* manifest two contrasting emotions at one and the same time!

Vedānta Deśika's Kāmāsikāṣṭakam (Verse 7)

सटापटलभीषणे सरभसाऽट्टहासोद्भटे
स्फुरत्क्रुधिपरिस्फुटभ्रुकुटिकेऽपि वक्त्रे कृते ।
कृपाकपटकेसरिन् दनुजडिम्भदत्तस्तना
सरोजसदृशा दृशा व्यतिविषज्य ते व्यज्यते ॥ ७ ॥

Saṭā-Paṭala-Bhīṣaṇe Sarabhasā-Ṭṭahāsodbhaṭe
Sphurat-Krudhi-Parisphuṭa-Bhrukuṭike'pi Vaktre Kṛte |
Kṛpā-Kapaṭa-Kesarin Danuja-Ḍimbha-Datta-Stanā
Saroja-Sadṛśā Dṛśā Vyativiṣajya Te Vyajyate || 7 ||

He is "a lion only in outward play" (Kṛpā-Kapaṭa-Kesarin)— but inwardly He is full of compassion.

- ***Did any gurus, family members, or divine commands play a role in motivating him to popularise Nṛsiṃha worship through this ambitious religious mission that he undertook by divine ordinance?***
- ***Did Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār experience trance-like states (divine possession) in his later years, particularly during Nṛsiṃha Mahā-yajñas or private worship, where Lord Nṛsiṃha reportedly communicated through him?***

The Miracle of Malleswaram: The arrival of Śrī Yajñamūrti

The tradition of performing *Yajñas* began in 1982, and it can be directly attributed to the arrival of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s ***Ārādhya-Mūrti*** (a deity worshipped with utmost personal intimacy) -- a small silver icon of *Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha*.

In twelve earlier years, *Svāmī*'s focus had been almost exclusively on delivering *Upanyāsa*. During one such discourse delivered at a venue in Malleswaram, Bangalore,

a devout *Śrīvaiṣṇava* named Śrī Raṅgasvāmī Ayyaṅgār from Mysore (not closely acquainted) suddenly arrived on the scene. This devotee held a small palm-leaf covered wooden container (*Mara Sampuṭam*) in which an icon of Śrī Nṛsiṃha (as *Mālōlaṉ*) lay ensconced and wrapped in soft-silk cloth.

Śrī Raṅgasvāmī Ayyaṅgār approached Mukkūr *Svāmī* at the end of the *Upanyāsa,* held out the casket containing the idol and began explaining to him that the small *Nṛsiṃha* icon called **Śrī Yajñamūrti,** had been worshipped by generations in his family for over 300 years. He had now come carrying the deity to see Mukkūr *Svāmī* because this Deity had one night, very recently, appeared in a dream and told him that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was just about to begin conducting a series of *Mahā-Yajñas* in his lifetime and therefore it was time now for the idol to be duly handed over to him.

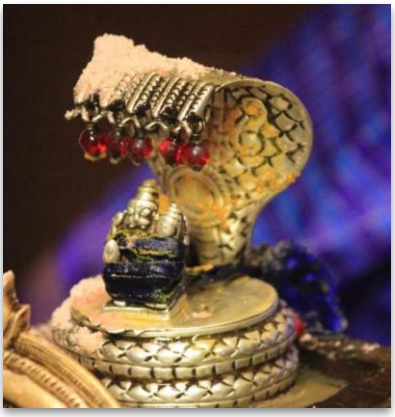


Image 29: *Śrī Yajñamūrti*

It took Mukkūr *Svāmī* only one fleeting, momentary glance at the miniature idol of *Śrī Yajñamūrti* to be convinced that this event too was the Almighty's divine command! The "*Miracle of Malleshwaram*" was no different from the "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*"!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* at once accepted the idol and, with extreme love and reverence, placed it upon his lap and continued in that same posture while delivering that evening's entire public discourse. This deity, **Śrī Yajñamūrti,** became the spiritual locus and cynosure of all future *Yajñas* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* conducted. He maintained an inseparable bond with the *Yajñamūrti*, always keeping the idol in the sanctified casket (*Sampuṭam*) under his personal care.

In earlier years, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had faithfully performed the daily *Nityārādhana* (worship) for all the idols he had kept in his household shrine. As the number and frequency of the *Yajñas* he had to perform increased over the years, he could no longer

manage the daily ritual at home all by himself. So, he appointed two assistants to perform the household *Tiruvārādhana* ritual. But the *Yajñamūrti* idol alone he would always carry with him wherever he travelled. Not a day passed without intimate worship (*Upāsanā*) of this deity.

The Lion's Stride that Shook the Altar

Around the same time, a committee at the Āstika Samājam in Venus Colony, Chennai, was planning to conduct a large-scale communal *Yajña* on their premises.

Most of the committee members belonged to the *Smārta Sampradāya* (including Śrī G. Ratnam Ayyar of Venus Pictures, and father of the famous cinema director, Mani Ratnam) and hence found themselves in a quandary over incorporating *Śrīvaiṣṇava* sacerdotal protocols or elements into the ritual proceedings. The committee approached Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s father-in-law, the *Vedic* scholar, Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār *Svāmī*, who suggested to them that Mukkūr *Svāmī*, being well-versed in *Yajña Śāstras* and an intense *Upāsaka* of the newly arrived *Yajñamūrti*, was fully competent to lead and officiate the 5-day Āstika Samājam Yajña.

The great *Nṛsiṃha-Yajña* at Āstika Samājam was thus performed over the following five days, with elaborate and grand ceremonies, all conducted with intense religious fervour and austerity by Mukkūr *Svāmī*. A large gathering of *Āstikas*, filled with religious awe and piety, thronged daily to witness the *Yajña* events.

During the final day of this *Yajña*, an event took place that rudely shook and awed everyone.

A massive brass vessel or cauldron (*Aṇḍā*) was used in the rituals. It contained the *Yajña* oblation or *Havis*: *Śarkkarai-Poṅgal* (*rice deep-cooked with ghee and jaggery into a soft gruel fed as an oblation into the ritual fire*). The clunky vessel was so large and so heavy, that it needed at least four strong-armed men to lift, shoulder, and bring it near Mukkūr *Svāmī*, from which he could ladle out oblations and ritually offer them into the fire altar.

Suddenly, to everyone's astonishment, the moment Mukkūr *Svāmī* touched the *Aṇḍā* brought near him, some deep nerve within him perhaps seemed to snap. His body began convulsing. He rose to his feet and went into a trance-like fit. Reaching out to grip the *Aṇḍā* with bare hands, he lifted the massive vessel single-handedly and with a flip of the wrists, he flung it aside. The cauldron went sailing through the air and landed right near a group of *Āstikas* seated in rows behind the *Yajña* altars!

Devotees stood aghast and dumbfounded as they then watched Mukkūr *Svāmī* rise and suddenly begin stomping about with massive strides, back and forth, around the fire altars, bellowing loud roars that sounded like a lion in rage! As he paced hither and thither across the ritual altars, the ground on the elevated *Yajña* stage shook!

No one dared approach him in that state of burning fury! For about forty-five minutes thereafter, he continued pacing hither and thither around the *Yajña* fire mounds, with guttural roars, growls, and snarls emanating from his throat, his chest heaving, and his arms flailing about! To the gathering there, he seemed to resemble Nṛsiṃha himself!

When the Lord Spoke through the Altar Fire

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was plunged into a frenzy, deep and fierce trance. He began speaking.

At first, the words came out in fits and starts, but they were in impeccable Sanskrit! Very few in the audience, standing by, gaping awestruck at him, could understand a word of the apoplectic utterances. However, Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī*, who was then sitting nearby, watching him calmly, being a great Sanskrit scholar, was the only one who understood the words spoken by Mukkūr *Svāmī* in a trance.

The rest of what happened next is best narrated by MLS *Svāmī* himself:

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam *Svāmī* approached him and asked gently, *"Why this Ugram (terrifying ferocity)? What do we all now have to do to calm you and bring your Ugram down?"*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, still in deep trance, began to speak. Judging from the first-person singular mode of address that was being used, it seemed that Śrī Nṛsiṃha himself was speaking through him:

"This is my Ājñā (command) and it shall be obeyed! There shall be 108 Mahā-Yajñas which henceforth will be conducted by him (i.e. Mukkūr Svāmī) as the Adhvaryu (chief officiating priest). The Yajñas are to be conducted during the auspicious days of my birth asterism of Svāti. All of you gathered here today should solemnly resolve to undertake a Saṅkalpa … that you will support him for the Yajñas to fulfil my Ājñā".

Immediately thereafter, Tirukkalam *Svāmī* recited the appropriate *Saṅkalpa* litany and initiated us all to swear and abide by it. I distinctly remember the entire congregation of devotees, including myself, taking an oath to support the mission to complete ***108 Svāti Mahā-Yajñas*** in the ensuing years.

Soon after this extraordinary event took place at Āstika Samājam that day in 1981, Mukkūr *Svāmī* began conducting *Nṛsiṃha-Yajñas* one after another in quick successions --- one *Yajña* performed every *Svāti* day, each month of the year. He was able to quickly complete *7 Nṛsiṃha Yajñas* in *7 months*.

That was when tragedy struck the family."

The Return of the "Old Man" of Maṅgalagiri

MLS *Svāmī*:

"My grandmother … Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mother, Amṛtavallī, suddenly took ill while the *7th Yajña* was under way.

At that time, she was in Vijayawada living with my *Periappā* (uncle), Śrī Raghunāthācāryar in his house. Immediately upon completing the *7th Yajña*, all of us along with Periappā, rushed to Vijayawada. When the family reached there, my grandmother, who was breathing her last, still managed to inquire of us whether the *7th Yajña* had been consummated.

The following day, Amṛtavallī passed away...

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s spirit was shattered by the sudden passing away of his beloved mother. She had meant everything to him—*mother, mentor, guide, emotional and moral support* after he had lost his father at a very young age, and she as a widow, had had to shoulder all the burdens of raising and protecting the family. He sank into deep and dark grief.

After the *Dahana-Saṃskāraḥ* (the cremation), while we all still stood on the banks of the River Kṛṣṇa for *Śūrakarma* (ritual tonsuring), Mukkūr *Svāmī* broke down in tears and sank to the ground. He lifted his arms in grief and began uttering an oath:

"No longer shall I perform Yajñas!"

He continued lamenting and addressed Śrī Nṛsiṃha thus:

"You have taken away my beloved mother from me! You have separated my amma from me. How cruel! I shall not perform any more Yajñas henceforth! I am done with all that!"

At that very moment, and seemingly from nowhere, an old man—the very same *Vayō-Vṛddha* who had accosted Mukkūr *Svāmī* years ago at the foothills of *Maṅgalagiri*—appeared suddenly on the banks of the Kṛṣṇa! Holding a long staff in hand, he sidled up to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and began speaking in a low, firm but commanding tone:

"Who are you to stop the Yajñas? Your mother has left at the very end of her ordained life—her Āyuṣ (karmic lifetime) exhausted. It was a destined end, and she has passed on in peace. What has that got to do with you? What connection is there between her death and the Yajña?"

The old man then uttered the *Nṛsiṃha mantram — "Ugram, Vīram, Mahā-Viṣṇum…",* turned on his heels, and briskly walked away. He went away and disappeared so quickly that Mukkūr *Svāmī*, all shaken up by the sudden encounter, called after his elder brother, Raghunāthācāryār, to go after the old man and fetch him back. Despite searching desperately, Raghunāthācāryār could see the *Vayō-Vṛddha* nowhere…

The old man had simply "vanished", as it were, into the morning mist!

Stunned by the suddenness and mystery of what had happened, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, on returning home that day, came to realise again that the re-appearance of the *Vayō-Vṛddha* of Maṅgalagiri was solely to remind him of his destiny --- that the command of Śrī Nṛsiṃha (*Bhagavad Ājñā*) could not be disobeyed:

"It's your destiny to continue performing Yajñas."

During that same year, and after returning to Chennai, my father uninterruptedly performed a series of *Yajñas* at home on Veṅkaṭēśan Street (what later came to be called *Chennai Yajña-Vāṭikā*). Most importantly, out of all those ritual-sacrifices, there were twelve *Yajñas* that were performed with *Dhāryāgni (धार्याग्नि)* (i.e. the ritual fire was never put to *Śamanam* (extinguished)… It was kept lit at home for a whole year."

The Divine Command: When the Lord Spoke through the Fire at Venus Colony

Initially, Mukkūr *Svāmī* commenced performing *Nṛsiṃha Yajñas* on a modest scale at his home. He erected a small, thatched hut on the roof of his house in Veṅkaṭēśan Street where he held the *Hōma* and *Yajña*. But very soon thereafter, the momentum of conducting *Yajñas* everywhere gathered speed.

One could imagine the small silver idol of *Yajñamūrti* -- now the beloved *Ārādhya-Mūrti* of Mukkūr *Svāmī* -- to be a metaphorical divine seed. It had lain dormant in a family vault of one Śrī Raṅgasvāmī Ayyaṅgār somewhere in Mysore for over three centuries. When the seed, however, finally got handed over to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, it didn't just sprout and grow into a tree… it exploded into what later could only be described as a veritable '*forest of 108 Yajñas*'!

Image 30: *Yajñamūrti household Tiruvārādhana*

The forests of *Yajñas* kept growing -- a mere sapling that was tended on a small roof atop a house in T. Nagar, Chennai, began spreading rapidly, thick and wide, all the way across to the highest peaks of the Himalayas. Saplings grew into vast forests. The seeds had not been tended by any human agency but by some strange, powerful divine force that had first revealed itself through a trance at a *Yajña Shāla* at Āstika Samājam. It had been a force that had so effortlessly tossed aside a massive, heavy-metal ritual vessel into the air, as wind blows away autumn leaves….

Uttuṅga-Kṣētra: Bridging Chennai to Badarināth

MLS *Svāmī*:

"By the year 1995, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s renown as a *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña Upāsaka* and *Yajña Adhikārī* had equalled, if not surpassed, the public eminence he had by then gained as an outstanding *Upanyāsaka.* Amongst a galaxy of Śrīvaiṣṇava scholars, past or present, and great orators too, Mukkūr *Svāmī* indeed stood very tall.

Although the deity, *Yajñamūrti*, did appear often in trances to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and manifested Himself during rituals, Nṛsiṃha did not directly speak again in public as He had done earlier at the Āstika Samājam *Yajña* in 1981.

However, by the time the 97th *Yajña* was conducted, Mukkūr *Svāmī* resolved to perform the final eleven ceremonies only in major Nṛsiṃha *Kṣetras* (holy sites), starting with Maṅgalagiri and Antarvēdi. During the 100th *Yajña* at Vēdādri in 1989, the Deity did speak once more in a trance. In an incorporeal voice, Nṛsiṃha appeared and commanded Mukkūr *Svāmī* to perform the ensuing *Yajña* at a place called *Uttuṅga-Kṣētra*. People gathered around Mukkūr *Svāmī* as he lay lost in a trance; they were utterly confounded by the term. Later, when he came out of the trance, he clarified that *Uttuṅga-Kṣētra* referred to the "*highest point*" … and that meant the place was Badarināth.

Now, for his devotees who were responsible for managing the logistics of conducting a *Yajña*, Badarināth presented a formidable challenge, since the temple there was not capacious enough to host a massive *Yajña* event. Besides that, the *Yajña* committee there too were reluctant to conduct such elaborate rituals to be held there in the freezing Himalayan heights.

Image 31: *Yajña performance*

Because the logistics of hosting such a massive *Yajña* at the Badarināth temple were impossible at the time, the 101st *Yajña* was held at Hṛṣīkēś, and the sanctified offerings after the event concluded were carried from there up the mountain all the way to Badarināth to be ritually submitted there. That token or symbolic ritual event conducted by Mukkūr *Svāmī* eventually paved the way for me, many years later, to fulfil what he had wished for -- to conduct on his behalf a full-scale 18-day *Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Yajña* at Badarināth."

Lōkakṣēmam: The 20-Year Odyssey of the 107 Sacred Fires (1981–2001)

> "The *90th Yajña* was performed in New Delhi. From the *97th Yajña* onwards, Mukkūr *Svāmī* began conducting them at *Divya Kṣetras* (mostly *Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Kṣetras*) like Maṅgalagiri, Vēdādri, Ghaṭikācalam, Antarvēdi, Hṛṣīkēś, Yadagiri, Śōbhanādri, Naimiṣāraṇyam, Vaḍapalli, Siṃhācalam, Brindavan, Śrīraṅgam, etc.
>
> Every *Yajña* was performed for the sake of *Lōkakṣēmam* (centred upon the *Vedic* concept of *Sarve Janāḥ Sukhino Bhavantu*). None was performed to fulfil any *Kāmyārtha,* i.e. individual or self-centred gratification of desire through worship."

Upon my request made during my interview with him, Śrī MLS *Svāmī* provided me with a full list of all the *107 Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas* that were conducted by Mukkūr *Svāmī* at various religious venues and *Kṣetras* across India during the period between 1981 and 2001. Below is a summary table:

Complete Summarised List (from records)

Location	**Yagnam #**
Chennai (including Venkatesan St. (T. Nagar), Vālmīki St, East Mada St. (Mayilāppūr), Sringeri Mutt, Deśika Bhavanam, Saundararājan St., Selaiyur (Tambaram), Padmanābha Nagar, Adyar, Ambattur, Agaram, Perambur, IIT Chennai, Triplicane, Korattur, Madipakkam, West Mambalam (Śrī Rāma Samaj), Kilkattalai, and Nangainallur.)	1-23, 31-35, 39 &40, 52 & 53, 62 & 63, 79 & 80, 92, 95 & 96, 107D
Other cities in Tamiḻ Nāḍu (including Madurai (TVS Nagar), Salem (Vasavi Mahal, Panduranga Temple, Shevapet, MSK Kalyana Maṇḍapa), Coimbatore, Tuticorin (New Colony, Toovey Puram), Sholingur, and Śrīraṅgam.)	24, 29, 36-38, 41, 58 & 59, 61, 64, 70, 93, 99, 107B
Godāvarī Delta (Rajahmundry (Godāvarī Theeram), Kākināḍa, and Antarvēdi.)	25- 28, 42, 45-51, 54 & 55, 65-69, 71-73, 77, 81, 83, 85-88, 94, 98

Complete Summarised List (from records)

Kṛṣṇa & Guntūr Region (including Maṅgalagiri, Vijayawada, Vēdādri, and Maṭṭapalli)	30, 43, 75, 82, 97, 91, 100, 104, 107C
Viśākhapaṭṭaṇam & North Coast (including Siṃhācalam, Kumili (near Śrī Koormam), and Arasavalli (near Vijayanagaram)	44, 56 & 57, 60, 74, 76, 84, 89, 107
Telengana Region (including Yadagirigudda, and Vadepalli)	102, 106
Other/Unspecified AP Hill Shrines (includes Shobanadri)	103,
North India/Other Locations (including Hoshangabad (Narmada Theeram), New Delhi (RK Puram), Hṛṣīkēś (UP/Uttarakhand), Naimiṣāraṇyam (UP), and Brindavan (UP))	78, 90, 101, 105, 107A

- ***What was planned for the 108th Yajña at Ahōbilam, and why was it not fulfilled—due to his health, sudden demise after the Mumbai Upanyāsa, or other factors?***

The Weight of the Sacrificial Fire

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Conducting a *Yajña* is a herculean project. It is far more demanding than delivering an *Upanyāsa*. While a discourse requires only the speaker's presence and depth of knowledge in *Vedic* scriptures, a *Yajña* involves massive pre-preparatory work, including planning, the logistics of sourcing materials (*Dravyam*), fundraising, extensive communications, and coordinating the post-*Yajña* distribution of *Prasāda* and *Vastra* (clothing) to thousands of participants. It can really take a toll on anyone who ventures to conduct a *Mahā-Yajña*.

By 1984, the burden and stress of managing all the complex tasks involved in conducting *Yajñas* while residing in a busy city like Chennai had become too great. It was then, in 1985, that Mukkūr *Svāmī* decided to move with his family to Kākināḍa in Andhra Pradesh. There he believed he would be able to focus exclusively on *Yajñas* without city distractions and disruptions.

In Kākināḍa, he remained until 1997, significantly reducing his *Upanyāsa* schedules. He accepted invitations to give public discourses only at very select venues, such as the Āstika Samājam, Parthasarathy *Svāmī* Sabhā, and the Naṅganallūr *Mutt*, in Chennai, and the Ghatkopar Kṛṣṇa Sabhā in Bombay.

Again, soon thereafter, another personal tragedy struck the family."

An Irresistible Force: Prophecy and Fate

"In February 1999, while absorbed in a divine trance (*Āvirbhāvaḥ*), Mukkūr *Svāmī* had a vision in which *Śrī Yajñamūrti* repeatedly warned him of an impending danger to the family… The Deity repeatedly said,

"Do not leave today; a great danger awaits".

On that day, his elder brother Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār had planned a road trip to Vijayawada. He set off before Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s warning, which had been sensed but could not be conveyed to the family. They only discovered it much later when they listened to the recording of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s words spoken during a trance.

Raghunāthācāryār, my Periappā, had unfortunately been unaware of his brother's intuitive wish that he should desist from travelling and stay back. He left for Vijayawada in a hurry. On the highway, a speeding, recklessly driven truck accidentally collided with his vehicle. He was injured along with his wife, the driver, and another companion. Sustaining serious injuries, he passed away a week later.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was shattered by the event. His beloved elder brother and Veda guru was gone…

In a grief-stricken moment much later at home, he sullenly observed that *Mṛtyu* (Death) is a force that cannot be resisted once ordained."

The 108th Offering: Final Act of Ātma-Samarpana

"As for the question, *"Why did Mukkūr Svāmī not perform the 108th Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Yajña?"* the answer was given by himself one day while

delivering an *Upanyāsa* in the year 1996 … later published too as a brief article under the evocative title, *"Myself, My Belongings, All Yours…"* (*Mām Madīyaṃ Ca Nikhilam*) … **मां मदीयं च निखिलं चेतनाचेतनात्मकम्।**

The title was borrowed from the Sanskrit *Stōtra* of Śrī Vedānta Deśika, *Nyāsa-Daśakam*. In a sombre act of abject surrender (*Nyāsa),* a soul performs humbly *Ātma-Samarpaṇam* …i.e. hands over itself and everything that belongs to it unto the Almighty, into His service, and for his pleasure and as per His will.

Just as, in 1999, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had, while deep in a trance, portended his elder brother's imminent tragic death, Mukkūr *Svāmī* seemed also to have had a premonition about the imminence of his own. In fact, he said he regarded it as *Śrī Yajñamūrti*'s own wish and command.

Below is reproduced Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s 1996 oration to an audience, wherein he explained the reason for his repeated postponement of the conduct of the *108th Mahā-Yajña*, which, if duly concluded, would have otherwise consummated the *Saṅkalpa* taken by him way back in the year 1982

Āyurdāyamantram, which appears in the 3rd Kāṇḍam of the Vēda, which is indeed the life-breath of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, states emphatically that cows, land and property, wife, children and all wealth are but assets meant for Yajña only. In another passage, the Vēda states:

आयुर्यज्ञाय दत्तं। आयुर्यज्ञपतये दत्तम्॥
Āyuryajñāya dattaṃ | āyuryajñapatayē dattam ||

Āyuryajñāya dattaṃ = "Offered to the sacrifice for life."
Āyuryajñapatayē dattam = "Offered to the Lord of the sacrifice for life."

What is conveyed is that even if a little part of one's lifetime is dedicated in charity for Yajña, Āyurdāya … one has lived a full life.

Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃha has blessed me with an opportunity now to give my Upanyāsa at the Sankara Jayantī Celebrations in the Īśvara year (1996). Otherwise, this year I should have been performing the 108th Yajña at Ahōbila Mahā Kṣetra.

Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan has ordained me not to perform the Yajña this year, but only later in the ***Tāraṇa Year*** *(2004), that is yet to come.*

I will now have to wait for eight long years for the Tāraṇa Year.

Therefore, Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan Himself is getting me to perform 107-A, 107-A1, 107-B, 107 and -B1 Yajñas… as precursors to the 108th!

Why did He shift the Yajña to the Tāraṇa Year? Will I be alive till the Tāraṇa Year? Shall we be able to participate in that Yajña? Many such doubts arise in my mind. But if Bhagwan wills it so, we shall all certainly live to see that day. If the 108th Yajña must be performed in the Tāraṇa Year, it must certainly mean that He will give us the needed blessings to be able to witness the same; it is His ordinance.

Once, when I was lost in trance and in communion with Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan, someone came up to me and queried why the 108th Yajña was getting repeatedly postponed. Bhagwan Himself then replied that it is a Dharma Sūkṣmam … a matter of subtle, if not veiled Dharma; and you won't want to know it now, but you will come to know it later, when it ought to be known. ….

So, none of us really knows what God has destined for us.

Since we are mere orderlies of Bhagwan, this Ātma of mine, and everything belonging to it, belongs really to Him alone, and therefore He knows well what should be performed and when. We just must work as per His wishes. We do not have the freedom to decide for Him. If we function with this feeling, this Bhāva, He will surely show His compassion, Karuṇā, to us abundantly.

I can myself determine only one thing from the above Vēda Mantra.

If you give your life for the sake of Yajña, Life itself will grow! If I finish this Yajña this year, I do not know whether I will have or not have more of Life left in me…

That is why, I believe, just so I might continue to live for eight more years, the Almighty Himself had decided to keep postponing the 108th Yajña. Also, since, in the Tāraṇa Year, I will be all of sixty years of age in life, the Lord wills that I should complete the Yajña in the year of my sashti-abdha-poorthi! That may be desire of Bhagwan. My mind thinks along those lines… Who can tell for sure?!"

Ācārya- Tiruvaṭi: The Final Ascent

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* attained *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi* in the year 2001."

CHAPTER 24

Eyewitness:
Śrī Cellapalli Subrahmaṇya Ghanapāṭhī

- ***Did Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār experience trance-like states (divine possession) in his later years, particularly during Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas or private worship, where Śrī Nṛsiṃha reportedly communicated through him?***
- ***Were there any key witnesses to Mukkūr Svāmī's trance-like episodes? How did they interpret or record them? How frequently did they occur? Can eyewitnesses detail additional healings (e.g., beyond Maṭṭapalli), including dates, Mantras used, and long-term outcomes?***
- ***Can family or disciples recount specific episodes where Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār used Mantra Śakti (e.g., Nṛsiṃha Mantras) for healings at Yajñas, including witnesses and outcomes?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

"The answers to a few of your questions can be readily given by me. But to most other questions, rather than responding on my own, I will invite you to meet my own *Vēda*-Guru, **Śrī Cellapalli Subrahmanya Ghanapāṭhī** of Vijayawada, who is expected to come to Chennai in a few days. He will be camping in my house. After he arrives, I will let you know, and you can then meet him and put your questions directly to him.

Image 32: *Śrī Cellapalli Subrahmanya Ghanapāṭhī*

Cellapalli *Svāmī* is one of the most highly accomplished *Ghanapāṭhī* in Andhra Pradesh. As I already told you, in Vijayawada he studied as a *Vedic* disciple under my Periappā, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, under whom he learnt *Vēda Ghana* for more than a decade, at around the same time that my father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, also was undergoing advanced training in *Salakṣaṇa*.

Cellapalli *Svāmī*, along with my *Periappā,* (in fact, I can say, far more often than my Periappā did), participated as an honoured *Yajña Ṛtvik* in scores of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Yajñas* held all over the country. So, he will be

able to give you an authentic eyewitness account from memory, of those years spent assisting Mukkūr *Svāmī* in his *Mahā-Yajñas*."

A week later, MLS *Svāmī* sent a message to me informing me of the arrival of Śrī Cellapalli *Svāmī* and that I could go to his home in KK Nagar, Chennai to meet him and interview him.

Before I met him, MLS *Svāmī* had already told him that I could not converse fluently in Telugu and hence the interview would have to be recorded on my iPhone and later transcribed into English. MLS *Svāmī*, being present, would act as our interlocutor.

Cellapalli *Svāmī* smiled and nodded assent, and I began asking some of the questions listed above. He listened carefully and gave very comprehensive, calm and objective answers. From his clear and emphatic responses, I was convinced I was eliciting a truly authentic first-person singular, eyewitness account of personal experiences with Mukkūr *Svāmī*. His absorbing narrations are reproduced below verbatim.

1. The Road to Perfection: Cellapalli *Svāmī* and the Rigorous Discipline of the Mukkūr Lineage

"My name is Subrahmanya Sarma from Andhra Pradesh. My family name is Chellapalli. I have witnessed the spiritual power of Mukkūr *Svāmī* during the years I served him as *Yajña Ṛtvik* at his *Mahā-Yajñas*. I have watched him perform intense spiritual practices (*Anuṣṭhāna*) dedicated to Nṛsiṃha *Svāmī*.

When he began his *Yajñas*, he would carry his ritual items in two or three wooden boxes and use a small table for the offerings. I used to take leave from my day job in Vijayawada to join him to assist in the conduct of the *Yajñas*. I participated in 70 of those *Yajñas*, travelling back and forth to Vijayawada from all over the country where the *Yajñas* were held.

I first had the *Darśana* (vision/meeting) of ***Svāmī* Raghunathācāryā in Vijayawada in 1973**. I used to see him at *Vēda* gatherings. I initially studied under my father, but I had a deep desire to master *Jaṭā-Ghanānta* (advanced *Vedic* chanting). I met the *Svāmī* there, offered my respects, and expressed my wish. He told me to come to the family temple of Śrī *Śrīnivāsa Perumāḷ,* of which at that time he was custodian, administrator, and *Ārādhaka*, all in one. I didn't know where the temple was in Vijayawada, but I searched for it and somehow ended up studying *Jaṭā-Ghanams* there under him for two and a half years.

My routine used to be to go at 6:00 AM to that temple and stay until noon, return home for a meal, go back at 2:00 PM until 6:00 PM, quiet often remaining there continuing lessons until 9:00 PM.

Raghunāthācāryār was a very strict teacher who showed no concessions to a student like me. He put me through the most rigorous training day after day, relentlessly.

One day, we were travelling from Maṅgalagiri to Vijayawada after he had completed some errands and prayers at the temple. We were riding—he was on his cycle, and I was on mine. All along the ride, he asked me to chant and practice a certain long *Vedic* passage. I began chanting as I pedalled. After we had travelled down the road for about 2 kms, suddenly in the middle of the ride, he stopped cycling and turned to me very upset, because, he said, my pronunciation of a certain *Pada* or phrase wasn't right. He asked me to repeat the same *Vedic* phrase after him, which I did. He wasn't satisfied. He repeated it a second time and asked me to articulate it after him.... and then a third time and a fourth... But when he found that still I could not get it right, he snapped at me in irritation:

"Get lost! It is a waste of time to teach you!" He scolded me, saying *"Poda (Get lost)!"*, right there on the road. It happened right in the middle of the road! The issue was that the *Sandhi* (the phonetic combination of words/syllables) was not being aspirated by me to his satisfaction. He insisted that the correct pronunciation of the Sandhi must come naturally to the mouth.

That afternoon, I went back home. I looked up the lesson and worked on it patiently, studying it word by word and letter by letter. I had to analyse exactly where each letter was placed, as there are instances where five or six letters must be pronounced simultaneously within a single *Mātrā* (a specific unit of time in *Vedic* meter). This involved complex sounds, like conjunct consonants following one after the other in an instantaneous sequence, wherein the articulation must not reveal the slightest fault or pause."

The Sacred Algorithm: Mathematical Precision of Vēda Ghana

Since I was myself only a rank novice in *Vedādhyayana,* I was very curious to know if Cellapalli *Svāmī* could explain in layman's language the complex and intricate patterns of chanting *Vedic* passages in the *Ghana* mode. He smiled at me and gave me a quick live demonstration which I captured on camera and transcribed below.

2. The Sacred Algorithm: Mathematical Geometry of Vēda Ghana

"The phrase *Vicakramē Trēdhā Nidhē Padam* is considered the source sentence. To chant this, one must first establish the ***Pada*** (word-by-word separation): *Idaṃ Viṣṇurvi Cakramē Trēdhā Ni Dadhē Padam*.

Following the ***Pada*** is the ***Krama*** (sequential order), where the pattern is 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, and so on; you keep moving to the next words while leaving the previous ones behind. For example: "*Idaṃ Viṣṇuḥ, Viṣṇurvi, Vi Cakramē, Cakramē Trēdhā, Trēdhā Ni, Ni Dadhē, Dadhē Padam…*".

The next step in the chanting style is called ***Jaṭā***.

In ***Jaṭā,*** the words are repeated in an alternating pattern: "*Idaṃ Viṣṇur-Viṣṇur-Idam-Idaṃ Viṣṇuḥ, Viṣṇur-Vi-Vi-Viṣṇur-Viṣṇur-Vi, Vi-Cakramē-Cakramē-Vi-Vi-Cakramē"* and so on through the sentence.

When you add another word to this structure, it is called ***Ghana***.

It can be demonstrated as this chant: "*Oṃ Idaṃ Viṣṇur-Viṣṇur-Idam-Idaṃ Viṣṇur-Vi-Vi-Viṣṇur-Idam-Idaṃ Viṣṇur-Vi, Viṣṇur-Vi-Vi-Viṣṇur-Viṣṇur-Vi-Cakramē-Cakramē-Vi-Vi-Viṣṇur-Viṣṇur-Vi-Cakramē…*"

Throughout the chant, the ***Svara*** (intonation/pitch) must not be compromised. The ***Svara*** must be woven together in that specific way.

Take another: "*Pāhi Mā Hiṃsīrviṣṇo Śarma Asi*" … I chant the ***Pada***. The ***Krama*** for this phrase is: "*Pāhi Mā, Mā-Mā, Mā-Mā, Mā-Hiṃsīḥ, Viṣṇo, Viṣṇo-Śarma, Śarma-Asi, Asi-Śarma*". For the ***Jaṭā*** of this phrase: "*Oṃ Pāhi-Mā-Pāhi, Pāhi-Mā-Mā, Mā-Mā-Mā-Mā...Mā-Hiṃsīḥ*".

So, in a single ***Pañcādi,*** there are 50 words, and all 50 must be arranged and chanted in this manner without the ***Svara*** being affected.

I could also demonstrate the ***Ghana*** for the same phrase, which will involve groups of three words. The sequence for it would follow a specific numerical line: 1-2, 2-1, 1-1, 1-2-3, 3-2-1, 1-2-3. For instance, when the word "*mā-mā*" is used, it results in three "***garlands***" (cycles). These three "*mā-mā*" s must be rotated in such a way that the ***Svara*** is not spoiled. Maintaining the ***Svara*** is difficult because of the length and complexity of ***Ghana***.

Regarding the ***Jaṭā*** and ***Ghana*** styles, you heard "*idaṃ viṣṇurvi cakramē*" earlier. In that, even if just one letter changes, it becomes confusing, and mistakes happen here and there.

The *Naḍakku* (gait or rhythm) is different when a word consists of two letters compared to when a word (*Pada*) consists of three letters.

With Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār as my guru, I had to get it all correct every time … no room for mistakes."

The Physics of Devotion: Mastery of the Primordial Sound

The anecdote highlighted to me the precision required in *Vedic* chanting, particularly regarding *Sandhi* (rules for combining sounds) and *Mātrā* (the duration of sounds). The teachers in the lineage, specifically Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s elder brother, even later came to be known for their absolute dedication to *Adhyāpana* (Vēda teaching) and their refusal to tolerate errors in the sacred sound of the Vēda.

I requested then Cellapalli *Svāmī* to continue his reminiscences about Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

3. The Quiet Pillar: Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryar and the Sacred Art of Teaching

"Later, in Vijayawada, I got myself a secular job to earn a living; so, I went to him only on Saturdays and Sundays. I eventually completed two *Kāṇḍas* (*chapters*), passed the exams, and received my certificate in *Vedic* learning.

As a disciple for so many years, I used to observe the bond between the brothers—Mukkūr *Svāmī* and his elder brother—which was as inseparable between them as the bond between Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. There was an unspoken, boundless love between the two brothers. My acquaintance with Mukkūr *Svāmī* in Vijayawada happened first around 1985. But even before that, from 1977, while I was studying there under the elder brother, I knew Mukkūr *Svāmī*, since he would visit Vijayawada for certain rituals, such as the *Śānti Hōma,* etc. I remember, on one occasion, I can't remember now exactly the village or place, when Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s father-in-law (Sri Tirukkallam Narasimharaghavachariyar) also made a brief visit…. He was a *Mahāvidvān* of the *Vēdas*. On that occasion, there were also two other *Ghanapāṭhīs* from Deṇḍukōru… I forget their names… and Śrī Agnihōtra Dendukori Somayaji Ghanapāṭhī *Svāmī*. When they came, that is when the great *Mahāvidvān* arrived.

After the first acquaintance, I did not again have any opportunity to know Mukkūr *Svāmī*, but I had heard that he was conducting great *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña* all over the country. Looking back, I think he first started coming regularly to Vijayawada in 1985-1986. From that point onwards, I established close contact with him again right until the very end.

Vēda study (*Adhyayana*), and teaching (*Adhyāpana*) always remained the specialisation of my own "guru" Śrī Raghunathācārya. He never went into *Yajña* or *Hōmas*. He was so kind that he taught the Puruṣa Sūktam, Śrī Sūktam, and a few other *Vedic* chants needed by any itinerant *Vedic* Purohita to about 40 young students, so they could go out and earn a livelihood for themselves serving as professional priests. Those young men I know were able to sustain themselves and support their families in Vijayawada. It wasn't just a small group; those 40 people became several hundred in later years. They thanked him throughout their lives for having taught them the Vēda.

Regarding Śrī Raghunathācārya, I knew he studied *Tarka Śāstra* also (the science of dialectics/logic) under ***Madhurapurī Māṇikka Śāstrī***. Many times, I have seen him travel daily on a bicycle to attend to his studies. This was because his father, Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār had also been an expert in *Tarka Śāstra,* and so it all came to him naturally. With that family background, Mukkūr *Svāmī* also pursued the study of these Śāstras. Later, alongside Agnihōtra Ghanapāṭhī *Svāmī* and Raghunāthācāryār *Svāmī*, he also mastered the *Jaṭā-Ghanams* (advanced methods of *Vedic* chanting). Along with two others, I studied the *Jaṭā-Ghana* all the time only under the elder brother. While many people today might claim to be very close to the Ācārya or speak as if they were his favourite students and even confidants, it was the greatness of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s heart that he made everyone feel that way. Neither Mukkūr *Svāmī* nor his elder brother ever had the word ***"No"*** **(*Nāsti*)** in their vocabulary whenever someone approached them for a favour or kindness. If a *Sādhu* (*holy person*) or seeker came to them, they would always fulfil his needs before sending him away. Above all, Raghunāthācāryār had a profound passion for teaching (*Adhyāpana*); he loved instructing and training others in the Vēdas more than anything else in the world."

4. The Architect of Sound: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Acoustic Physics of Salakṣaṇa

"In *Vedic* learning, there are concepts of *Varṇakrama* and ***Lakṣaṇam.*** While the terms used are often thought to be the same, they represent different subjects. These concepts belong to *Vedic* phonetics and acoustic physics.

- ***Varṇakrama*:** This involves the minute analysis of a single word. For example, the word *Namaḥ* is divided into five parts to analyse its syllable division, the specific point where the breath originates, and its specific *Jāti* (category/type).
- ***Lakṣaṇam*:** This refers to the specific "*characteristics*" or rules governing the syllables and words.

A *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī* is a *Vedic* scholar who can recite the *Ghana* (the most complex method of *Vedic* chanting) while also simultaneously being able to explain the *Varṇakrama* and *Lakṣaṇam* for every single word. That ability requires mastery of the *Ṣaḍaṅgas* (the six limbs) of the Vēdas. They are:

1. *Jyōtiṣa* (Astronomy/Astrology)
2. *Saṅkalpa* or *Kalpa* (Ritual Intent/Procedure)
3. *Śikṣā* (Phonetics/Pronunciation)
4. *Vyākaraṇa* (Grammar)
5. *Chandas* (Prosody/Meter)
6. *Nirukta* (Etymology).

Now, while the *Ṣaḍaṅgas* provide the framework for explaining the *Vēdas*, the sciences of *Śikṣā* and *Vyākaraṇa* are particularly profound and distinct from the rest. Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mastery of them qualified him as a rare *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī*.

I know that he conducted deep research into how syllables are categorised, including their *Varṇa* (colour/class) and *Jāti*. For instance, he could explain the esotericism of certain mantras considered particularly powerful because they consisted largely of syllables categorised under the *Brāhmaṇa Jāti* (not to be confused with caste).

It is my conjecture that while Mukkūr *Svāmī* learned the *Ghana* style of *Vedic* chanting from his elder brother, his mastery of *Lakṣaṇam* was perhaps developed through his own extensive research and collaboration with other great scholars, such as *Pazhavari* Satagopachari at Madurāntakam Vēda Pāṭhaśālā who once remarked that "*while most people learn from books, 90% of Mukkūr Svāmī's vast Vedic knowledge appeared to be innate and present from birth.*"

The Teaching Tradition of these *Vedic* subjects and their technical aspects was taught orally and with great precision in the Andhra Pradesh Godāvarī belt. There were scholars like **Hari Sītārāma Śāstrī** and **Sītārāma Ghanapāṭhī**. These teachers typically produced only a small handful of students—about ten or fifteen—who could have truly mastered the intricacies of syllable origin and categorisation. The goal of all *Salakṣaṇa* scholars is to ensure that the *Vēda Shabda* (*Vedic* sound) is reproduced exactly from its ***primordial source*** without any confusion."

5. Saphala Vāk: Yājulu *Svāmī* and the Divine Authority of the Penniless Sage

"Let me narrate to you now an incident related to one or two such great *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhīs* of Andhra Pradesh: Śrī **Jagannātha Ghanapāṭhī** and Śrī **Cintala Yājulu**.

Jagannātha Ghanapāṭhī was a *Vedic* scholar whose appearance, speech, and intellect were all so profound that it seemed to his followers and devotees as though **Sarasvatī** (the Goddess of Learning) herself was dancing on his tongue. He served many years as an examiner for official *Vedic* studies. Even at the age of 80, he was exceptionally handsome and possessed a radiant personality.

Another great figure mentioned is **Reṇḍi Cintala Yājulu**, a scholar who performed numerous *Śrauta Yajñas*. Like Mukkūr *Svāmī*, this *Vēdavid* was also completely detached from money; he never kept a single paisa for himself, distributing all the ritual offerings (*Dakṣiṇā*) he received. Many people these days use the title *Yājulu*, projecting *Vedic* knowledge only to accumulate wealth, but this scholar was a true practitioner of penance (*Tapas*).

[**Author's note**: David Knipe in his book, **"*Vedic* Voices**" writes this about Reṇḍi **Cintala Yājulu:** *"(He)… was the most famous sacrifice and promotor of Śrauta rituals in twentieth-century India, one whose name (itself) is a string of thirty-some sacrifices, a veritable litany recited with awe and admiration by most Vedic pandits of Andhra. The chanting of his name always has the ring of an ideal Mantra. …. Rendu chintala was born in the delta… spent most of his life in Kasi (Varanasi) where he died in 1987. …He and his wife, Lakshmikanta, performed their first Yajña, the Agni-Stoma in 1936, their last one in Kasi in 1980, and managed more than half a century of Agni-Hotra overall.***"**]

There is an interesting story about this **Yājulu *Svāmī***.

He was once travelling by train from Vijayawada to Tiruchirappalli along with a retinue of 60 *Vedic* pundits and disciples. They collectively had with them money to afford only train tickets for about 25 to 29 people. Yet they boarded the train and began travelling.

Shortly thereafter, at the Ongole station, a railway ticket collector (TC), who happened to be a Christian, came to check passengers for tickets in their compartment. He pulled them up and threatened to eject the indigent ticketless *Vedic* scholars. *Yājulu*, the scholar, then entreated him to calm down and spoke with an air of divine authority. He told the TC,

"*Sir, you are a human being; these people are headed to fulfil a divine mission. If you harass them, you will have to answer for the sin in your life, but if you let them go, you will have their blessings*".

The TC was moved by the power of *Yājulu's* words and, out of sheer Christian sense of charity, allowed the entire group to proceed… perhaps at his own personal cost.

During his final days in Kāśī, *Yājulu Svāmī* performed a very elaborate ritual ("*Kōṭi-Bilva-Arcana*").

A man from Guntūr, who was a follower of the Chief Minister of the State, happened to be visiting Kāśī at that time. He decided to visit *Yājulu Svāmī* just to pay obeisance and obtain blessings. This VIP then politely asked him if there was any way in which he could help *Yājulu Svāmī* to complete the *Yajña* after he had heard it being said that all money on the ritual had already been spent and that

Yājulu, after abandoning the ritual, was about to board a train to return home with nothing left.

Yājulu svāmī simply said this to the powerful politician: "*If you have the heart, the way to help me will by itself appear before you; what is there for me to tell you? Please do as you wish*".

The following day, the VIP came in person and delivered two large sacks of rice, two large sacks of dāl (lentil), and four giant tins of ghee (clarified butter) — all for use as *Havis* in the Yajña. It only proved that Yājulu svāmī's words had the power to manifest and realise reality (*Saphalam*)."

MLS *Svāmī* interjected here to describe how insistent Mukkūr *Svāmī* was when conducting *Yajñas,* that they should never be for the sake of *Kāmyārtha* – selfish, narrow individual material desires or spiritual benefits.

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* had been taught by his father-in-law regarding "*result-oriented rituals*" (*Kāmya-Karma*).

- ***Kāmya-Karma*:** If a ritual is performed for a specific material gain (such as wealth), the practitioner is personally responsible for any ritual lapses (*Dōṣa*) creeping into the conduct, which could bring negative or grievous consequences.
- ***Bhagavat-Prīti*:** If a ritual is performed purely for the pleasure of God (*Bhagavat-Prīti*), the Almighty himself takes responsibility for any errors or lapses and ensures no negative repercussions affect the practitioner.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus used to emphasise that one should never "*insert*" any element of personal desires into a ritual but should perform the *Yajña* as a sacrificial offering to the Divine alone."

Chellapalli *Svāmī* continued his narration:

6. Madhura Vākya: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Captivating Sweetness of the Puṇya Purushudu

"Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s eloquence in speech not only possessed that same power of a *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī,* but in addition, it had such sweetness too!

If you listened to his discourses, they were all incredibly sweet in tone and content. Even though I didn't know Tamil perfectly, I never felt bored sitting on that stage with him; I never felt like wanting to leave. His speech was so captivating that even if it was 11:00 p.m. or midnight, I saw that the seats always remained full. At certain

Upanyāsas, he would speak until 1:00 a.m., and only then would he go to rest … before starting again in the morning. He possessed an extraordinary stamina, both physical and mental. His speech revealed his deep grasp of every subject on which he discoursed.

There is a saying in Telugu that **"*among men, a virtuous man (Puṇya Purushudu) is very rare*"**—and Mukkūr *Svāmī* was, for me, indeed that kind of man. Listening to his old tape-recordings of his discourses on the Purāṇas brings a unique joy and peace to the mind; you won't feel any distress or conflicting thoughts."

7.The Healer of Hearts: How Anuṣṭhāna Transformed Ancient Mantras into Modern Solace

"Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s spiritual strength came from the purity of his mind and his intense *Anuṣṭhāna*. The power of the repeated *japa* of mantras such as *Ugram Vīram, Sudarśana, and Nṛsiṃha Bījākṣaras* – all gave him the inspiration to offer spiritual solace to help thousands of devotees.

I saw proof of that in places like Salem, where even multi-millionaires would come in their fancy cars, crying, whining, and moaning about their troubles in their personal lives. *Svāmī* would sit there calmly and tell them, "*Don't worry, come for the Darśana here of Nṛsiṃha for four days,*" and he would provide them with answers that left them satisfied and happy.

That was the fruit of his lifelong devotion and meditation."

MLS *Svāmī* interjected again here to share his own recollections on his father's rigorous regimen of *Anuṣṭhāna* and the severe austerities he observed, which became a way of life for him as a *Yajña Adhvaryu*.

"For Mukkūr *Svāmī*, ***Japa*** (meditative chanting) was even more critical than the *Hōma* (fire ritual). He followed a strict scriptural ratio of 2:1, meaning he performed two parts of *Japa* for every one part of *Hōma*.

I remember once … and Cellapalli *Svāmī* here too, who was there with me, can corroborate… there was a gruelling *Yajña* ritual held at the TVS Colony in Madurai. We commenced the *Yajña Japa* … but Mukkūr *Svāmī* would not tell us what was going to be the *Āvṛtti*… i.e. the *total Japa* count… He was always very reticent during a *Yajña* and generally would not reveal to others how many *Japa* repetitions he intended to complete. On one night during the *Yajña*, there were only the three of us --- Mukkūr *Svāmī*, Cellapalli *Svāmī*, and me to do the chant. One other *Ṛtvik* did not arrive there on time from Vijayawada. We began the *Japa*… and it went on for hours throughout the night… After a few hours, Cellapalli *Svāmī* and I began rotating our turn at chanting to prevent our throats from going dry and hoarse. But Mukkūr

Svāmī never stopped. His *Japa* of the *Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra* and the *Ugram Vīram Mantra* went on and on continuously from 9:00 p.m. until well after 7:00 a.m. the next morning.

Svāmī was adamant that there should be no shortcuts in divine service. He taught that while a person might be able to deceive the public or even himself by taking liberties with the ritual *Japa* counts, he could never deceive the Lord. He maintained that if a *Yajña* practitioner commits to 1,000 repetitions but ends up performing only 300, the Lord would be fully aware of the discrepancy and that would amount to short-changing Divinity. Consequences could be dire. So, for him, *Yajñas* had to be always performed scrupulously and to absolute completion, regardless of physical exhaustion, lack of sleep, or time constraints.

On a normal day before and after a *Yajña*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* did not spend his time reading books; instead, his life was a constant state of *Brahma-Yajña* (mental immersion in the Vēdas). He was in a state of perpetual chanting, with *Vedic* verses running through his mind 24/7.

A lot of physical and mental discipline is required during a *Hōma* (fire ritual). The practitioner must sit in a specific cross-legged posture with their hands held in a designated position—either suspended or supported—without allowing them to touch the body, hair, or nails.

During the ritual, which may last several hours, one is forbidden from scratching an itch, touching one's hair, or even drinking water. If a practitioner accidentally touches his hair or scratches himself, the *Āpastamba Sūtra* prescribes a penance (*Prāyaścitta*) where he must immediately bathe while still wearing his ritual garments. These strict rules extend to daily life also; for instance, when performing rituals in a *Kṣetra* like Badarināth, practitioners must sleep on a simple blanket or a wooden cot without a mattress, regardless of the freezing temperatures.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s strength to perform these austerities seemed to come from the Divine, not from human effort. My own stamina never could extend beyond a maximum endurance of eight hours while seated at a *Yajña Kuṇḍa* (fire altar). But I have seen Mukkūr *Svāmī* often perform rituals for 36 to 40 hours non-stop without moving from the ritual fires.

During these marathon ritual-sacrifices, *Svāmī* would not yawn, drink water, or attend to bodily functions. Most remarkably, observers noted that although *Svāmī* would start the ritual after a fresh bath at 6:00 p.m., he would emerge 36 hours later looking more radiant (*Tējas*) and fresh than when he

began. This level of focus can only be described as a state of Yoga that transcended physical limitations."

Cellapalli *Svāmī* further continued:

8. Salt and Camphor: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Tranquility of the Eternal Ritual

"Jagannatha Ghanapāṭhī's son was an unparalleled scholar of *Tarka Śāstra* and the *Vēdas*, respected even by the Kāñcī and Sringeri Pīṭhams. Mukkūr *Svāmī* also had an acquaintance with him.

Then there were the *Agnihōtrī/Sōmayājī* brothers: There were four brothers from Nallapāḍu, including Vēṅkaṭappa Yajñanapati and Agnihōtra Ghanapāṭhī, who was a teacher under whom both Mukkūr *Svāmī* and I studied the *Jaṭā-Ghana* for some time. He was a master of both the *Vēdas* and *Śrauta* rituals and was also a gifted public speaker, and it is not implausible that he could have had some influence on Mukkūr *Svāmī* as well.

There is a big difference between *Śrauta* and *Dēvatā Yajña* or *Hōma Sampradāya*. What is truly amazing to me, even today, is that while the other scholars focused on *Śrauta* rituals (i.e., purely *Vedic* fire-sacrifices), Mukkūr *Svāmī* specialised in *Dēvatā Sampradāya* (i.e., deity-focused rituals). Specifically, his work was centred on *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* and the use of sacred *Bījākṣara* mantras. His rituals often utilised the *Ēkāgni-Kuṇḍ* "or "single fire altar". He was also well acquainted with the *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*, the *Nṛsiṃha Tantra*, the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* and the *Nṛsiṃha- Tāpanīya-Upaniṣad* as foundational texts for some of his ritual procedures.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* taught that while many rituals involve various deities (*Dēvatās*), they are all ultimately offered to Lord Nṛsiṃha, who resides as the inner soul (*Antaryāmi*) of every being. In this regard, he referenced the *Nṛsiṃha-Pūrva-Tāpanīya-Upaniṣad*, explaining that the *Akṣaramālā* (Garland of Syllables) connects all deities—including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Mahēśvara—to Nṛsiṃha. Because the Lord manifested through sound (*Śabda*), Mukkūr *Svāmī* always maintained that constant *Vedic* chanting is essential for the worship of Nṛsiṃha.

In my mind, I often felt the urge to leave the *Yajña* altar due to physical exhaustion and move out for a rest pause, but for *Svāmī*, whether his ritual (*Anuṣṭhāna*) lasted one hour, two hours, three hours, or even ten hours, he never showed any sign of haste or anxiety. Because I was also holding a secular day job to which I had to return, I was always in a state of anxiety during the *Yajña*, looking constantly at the clock and wondering when I would be able to leave and go back to my job. If Mukkūr *Svāmī* called me to perform *Ṛtvik* duties at a *Yajña* that was meant to be a three-day event, and he extended to a week, I would start fretting and by the fourth or fifth day, wondering when the *Yajña* would finally end. No one could give me an answer, and *Svāmī* himself wouldn't say anything…. He would simply carry on as usual, -- calm, austere, and as focused as ever.

He performed every act—be it meditation (Japa), worship (*Arcana*), or the sacred bath of the deity (*Tirumañjaṇam*)—with total tranquillity and a sense of absolute devotion in thought, word, and deed (*Mānasa-Vācā-Karmaṇā*). Even while we were mentally rushing because of our professional lives, he performed the service as if the Lord Himself was physically present. Out of the approximately 70 Yajñas I attended with him; he was always this calm and never rushed the proceedings."

MLS *Svāmī* interjected here:

"The Madurai TVS Colony *Yajña* I remember was a two-day *Yajña*. On that occasion, a *Rtvik* Vidyasagar was delayed and arrived only the next day. *Svāmī* called me to sit with him, and along with him, the three of us spent the entire night reciting the *Ugra-Vīram-Sudarśana-Mahājvālā-Mantra*. I don't know how many thousands of times he counted it, but it required all three of us to complete it. *Svāmī* had a specific speed and a "secret" regarding the sacred mantra (*Vibhūti*) that others didn't fully grasp.

When the Nṛsiṃha *Svāmī* consecration (*Pratiṣṭhā*) took place in Naṅganallūr, he performed a *Yajña* there. Although it was planned for five days, it extended to seven or eight days.

He performed *Yajñas* at almost every *Nṛsiṃha* temple across Andhra Pradesh. His rituals always began at sunset, as that is the time associated with Lord Nṛsiṃha. He would take his silver *Kamaṇḍalum* (water pot) and walk slowly to the altar. I would follow him. We would begin with the *Puruṣa Sūktam* and *Śrī Sūktam*. His *Yajña* process was unique, involving a specific method of 32 mantras. The rituals would often continue until 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m., and even then, devotees would remain awake to receive the *Vibhūti* offerings."

Cellapalli *Svāmī* further continued:

A Puṇya Purushudu: Personal Reminiscences of Mukkūr Svāmī

"Once at Vṛndāvan, a *Yajña* originally planned for 24 to 30 days ended up lasting 40 days. I fell ill with a high fever during that time. I remember Mukkūr *Svāmī* sitting in his ritual seat from sunset the previous evening until 10:00 a.m. the next morning without moving.

He also performed *Yajñas* in Naimiṣāraṇyam and Hṛṣīkēś.

In my experience, I think of the Telugu saying about salt and camphor: they both look alike, but their tastes are completely different. Similarly, there are many men who give discourses or act devoutly, but a virtuous man (*Puṇya Purushudu*) is rare. I have never seen someone with such internal devotion as Mukkūr *Svāmī*. He had the patience to answer every suffering devotee who came to him with troubles, sending them away with peace of mind.

We travelled together to many places to perform *Yajñas* … Salem, Coimbatore, and Kerala…

In Trivandrum, during one *Yajña*, I was very frightened because Mukkūr *Svāmī* went into a trance, and Śrī Nṛsiṃha seemed to take possession of him. It felt as though the deity was manifesting through him in that terrible, fearsome mien, just as the *Purāṇas* describe Him!

Still, I was drawn to him like a magnet. This bond has lasted to this day; I still attend all their family functions. Eventually, he focused his work on Maṭṭapalli. He was a great soul, the likes of whom we will not see again. His spiritual strength—the result of his *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* (devotion)—brought prosperity to his entire lineage. He was an extraordinary person who could inspire thousands of devotees purely through his bhakti, and devotion."

CHAPTER 25

The 32-Steps of the *Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Yajña*

> • ***Can you describe the planning process for Yajñas, including locations (from Hṛṣīkēś to Tuticorin), their typical duration, and Mukkūr Svāmī's insistence on community participation rather than high-net-worth individual or VIP philanthropist sponsorship?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Svāmī viewed a *Yajña* not as a symbolic gesture, but as a high-precision engine. Just as a high-performance jet engine requires specific, unadulterated fuel and perfectly machined parts to fly, *Svāmī* believed that *Vedic* rituals required the "*pure fuel*" of unbroken rice and "*sacred timber*" like the quality *Palasa Samittu*, for example, as parts to bridge the realms of the physical with the divine. He was very particular about the size and quality.

Let me explain further.

Within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, *Nṛsiṃha Ārādhanā* is supreme. Mukkūr *Svāmī* taught a "*shortcut*" for those who lack the capacity or resources to undertake elaborate *Upāsanā*. If one has multiple deities to whom one yearns to offer *Upāsanā*, but lacks the time and resources, making humble ritual offerings in Nṛsiṃha *Yajña* propitiates all other deities.

A core principle of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s philosophy was that offerings to the Lord, particularly Nṛsiṃha, must, however, be of the highest possible quality and earned through righteous means. He maintained that while one might compromise on personal comforts and indulgences, ritual or sacrificial offerings to Nṛsiṃha must be impeccable… ***யஞ்ஞ கர்மத்திற்கு அர்ப்பணங்கள்உத்தமோத்தமமாய் ஆகுதல்*** … (*Yajña Karmattiṟku Arppaṇaṅkaḷ Uttamōttamamāy Āgutal* …) "In the *Yajña*, the offerings must be of the most superior quality."

Mukkūr *Svāmī* often used the example of Sage Vishwāmitra in the *Rāmāyaṇa* to emphasise this point. The *Maharṣi* possessed the power of the *Brahmāstra*; he possessed all martial arts, weapons, valour, and all other

means and resources required to protect the community of *Ṛṣis* in the forestlands and their *Yajña Kārya* from rampaging *Rākshasa* marauders. He could have, had he wished, easily vanquished all of them on his own. Yet he went and sought out Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from Ayodhya to come and protect his *Yajñas* in the forest. Why? So that whatever spiritual merit he had earned—all the hard-earned superior spiritual *Śakti* he had gained through *tapas* and the knowledge of weaponry too acquired through long austerities—could be offered as sacrificial oblations to Rāma at the *Yajña* site.

Thus, the resources (*Dravya*) that Mukkūr *Svāmī* procured for the *Yajñas* were always of the best quality available. I will give a few examples of his dedication in this matter:

- *Bāsumatī Rice*: In the late 1970s, *Svāmī* always insisted on buying expensive *Bāsumatī rice* (three times the cost of regular rice) for use as *Akṣata* (sacred rice in the ritual). He explained that regular rice grains break during the *Arcana*, whereas *Bāsumatī* grains remain whole; and spiritual potency is best contained in unbroken grains.

- *The Royal Wood*: *Svāmī* employed a dedicated carpenter in Kākināḍa for years to build the furniture and boxes (*Sampuṭam*) needed to house *Śrī Yajñamūrti* idol and *Pūjā* paraphernalia. He personally inspected and selected the finest teak and rosewood samples, refusing to compromise on quality for the deity, even though he himself lived with sparse and spartan furniture at home.

- *The Dēvadāru Wood*: I follow my father's personal example whenever I perform *Yajña* these days. During rituals in *Badarikāśrama*, a village administrator from *Māṇā* named *Mōlpā*—an engineer educated in Delhi—gifted me a large supply of *Dēvadāru* wood from a 2,000-year-old tree that grows only high up in the mountains. *Dēvadāru* is called as such because it is considered the "*wood of the Devās*" and is prized for its intense fragrance and spiritual potency.

It must be remembered here that many times, before a *Yajña*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would often go into a trance. During such trances, *Śrī Nṛsiṃha* Himself (as he would later report) would sometimes speak and demand that specific ritual offerings be made.

I remember one instance, when Mukkūr *Svāmī* was deep in trance, he began to lisp and voice Lord Nṛsiṃha, calling out the specific names of 32 devotees. He was commanding each of them to bring particular ritual offerings from their homes.

On another occasion, the Lord had insisted on some "*vital item*" (*Viśēṣam*) from the kitchen… which none could comprehend. Everyone was puzzled as to what vital offering Śrī Nṛsiṃha was demanding! Each devotee in the assembly came forward and worshipfully began offering items, one by one, which they thought would meet the demand: delicacies, fruits, rare spices and herbs.

For nearly three hours, it went on and on. None of it was accepted by Śrī Nṛsiṃha. At the end of it all, the Lord revealed that He only wanted *Cuṇṭakkāy* (Turkey Berry) to be offered into the sacrificial fire! It was to break the *Dvādaśī* day fasting (the 12th day of the fortnight when fasting is ritually broken following the previous day, *Ēkādaśī,* on which it is undertaken)."

The 32 Gates of Grace: Mukkūr Svāmī and the Perfected Architecture of the Mahā-Nṛsiṃha-Yajña

There are 32 distinct steps in the preparation for a *Mahā-Nṛsiṃha-Yajña,* all of which were conceived, designed, and perfected by Mukkūr *Svāmī.* They are described briefly below.

The Geometry of Sound: Mukkūr Svāmī and the 32 Syllables of Divine Manifestation

There are thirty-two *Bījākṣaras* (*seed mantric syllables*) in the *Nṛsiṃha Mahā Mantra*. Thus, it is not mere coincidence that there are typically thirty-two distinct events in every *Svāti Mahā-Yajña* conducted by Mukkūr *Svāmī.*

(1) The Divine Compass: Deciphering the Sacred Geography of the 108 *Mahā-Yajñas*

All the *Svāti Mahā-Yajñas* are conducted only according to Divine order received in trances by Mukkūr *Svāmī.* The venue for any upcoming *Mahā-Yajña* would be revealed to Śrī *Svāmī* either through a dream or through a *Perumāḷ* ***Āvirbhāvam*** (**आविर्भावम्** trance).

For example, the venue of the *106th Mahā-Yajña* was revealed to the devotees during the *105th Mahā-Yajña* at *Śrī Naimiṣāraṇyam Mahā Kṣetra*. *Perumāḷ* hinted that the forthcoming *Yajña* should be performed at a place where there is a *Svayaṃ-Vyakta* (self-manifested idol) **Śrī Yōgānanda Nṛsiṃha** temple flanked on either side by two rivers that flow and unite to

form a garland for the Lord. It took a great deal of time to search for and finally locate the venue at **Śrī Vaḍapalli Mahā Kṣetra,** situated at the confluence of two rivers, Kṛṣṇa and Mūsi, near Miryālaguḍa in (then) Andhra Pradesh. Sometimes, in the trance state, *Perumāḷ would* also indicate to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, through body language, some interesting clues about a venue.

(2) From Wilderness to Altar: The Master Engineering of the Sacred *Yajña-Vāṭikā*

Once the Lord revealed the *Yajña Kṣetra*, Śrī *Svāmī* undertook a preliminary tour to the *Kṣetra* and decided upon the exact site for the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* site.

It was necessary to have a spacious and elevated structure for the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*, *Hōma-Kuṇḍa* etc., as well as adequate seating for the numerous devotees who came from various places.

Another factor to be considered was the need to arrange dwelling accommodation nearby and adjacent to the *Yajña-Vāṭikā, for the* participating *Dīkṣakas* and *Ṛtviks.*

Invariably, there would be a river flowing nearby, providing the essential sacred water for the *Yajña*.

The erection of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* would commence a couple of months before the start of the *Yajña*, beginning with the levelling of the terrain. Some terrains were forests, some valleys, some fields, and some merely hillocks.

In the Siṃhācala *Yajña*, after levelling the ground, it was contemplated that the surroundings should be thoroughly cleansed with water. It would have cost a huge sum. But providentially, as always, an unusual downpour occurred. It appeared that Nṛsiṃha Himself had ensured that the site was purified.

At Vaḍapalli *Mahā Kṣetra,* the area near the Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* temple was so barren and uneven that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had to commission a bulldozer to level the land, upon which a huge *Śāmiyānā* was erected to accommodate the entire *Yajña-Vāṭikā*!

(3) The *Vedic* Algorithm: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the High-Precision Architecture of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*

Typically, the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* extends over a vast site and comprises there of *Sannidhi* (sanctum sanctorum), *Kalaśa-Maṇḍapa*, *Hōma-Śālā*, *pedestals,* and *Maḍapaḷḷi* (kitchen).

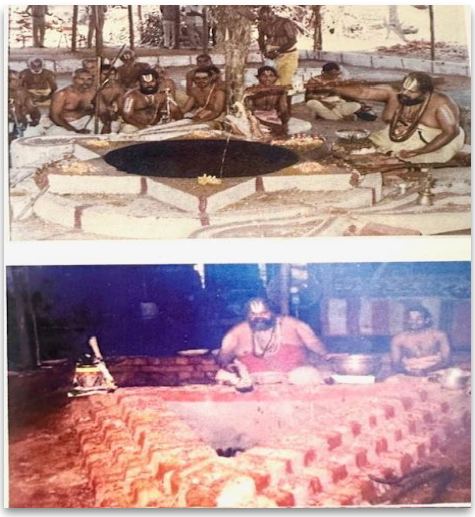


Image 33: *Yajña-Vāṭikā; Hōma-Śālā*

The *Sannidhi* is raised on a 15-foot square plot wherein the idols of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Divya Kṣetra deities,* i.e., *Śrī Yajñamūrti, the Āḻvārs, and the Ahōbila Mutt Yatīśvaras* (his *Ācāryās*), are all housed within a *Maṇḍapa*.

The *Kalaśa-Maṇḍapa* is erected in front of the sanctum-sanctorum on a 120-foot area, with a height of around 80 feet. This *Maṇḍapa* consists of a *Pradhāna-Bindusthānam* surrounded by the *Sudarśana-Ṣaṭ-Cakra* and ensconced within four concentric circles for accommodating the *Kalaśas* (*pots containing ritually sanctified water*). The 1008, 108, and 10 *Pradhāna Kalaśas* are placed upon separate and specially constructed pedestals. The *Kalaśa-Maṇḍapam* also accommodates a *Graha-Maṇḍapa,* housing miniature icons of *Yajña Puruṣa*, the *Navagrahās* and the *Pradhāna-Dēvās,* to whom *Havis* (oblations) is offered.

As ordained by the Lord, *one, three, five, or thirty-two* ***Hōma Kuṇḍas*** (fire altar pits) are constructed. The main *Hōma-Kuṇḍas* are at least eight feet deep. The *Ākāras (Sudarśana Cakra, triangle, square, circle, semi-circle, etc.)* are sketched upon them by Mukkūr *Svāmī*. On the front side of the *Hōma-Kuṇḍas*, symbolic figurines of *Kūrma* (tortoise), *Siṃha* (lion), *Sarpa* (snake), and *Matsya* (fish) are selectively sketched and affixed.

A special pedestal is constructed for placing the *Pālikai*. Separate kitchens for preparing the *Prasādās* for the Lord and for preparing food for the devotees are also set up.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself would establish a personal camp in a very small 10 x10 tent-like enclosure within the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* for his stay throughout the entire *Yajña*.

Vedic Engineering: The Maṅgalagiri Correction and the Marriage of Faith and Physics:

During the construction of a *Kalaśa* platform at the lower temple in Maṅgalagiri, where a *Mahā-Yajña* was to be conducted, I was assisting my father with the arrangements when I became somewhat sceptical about the feasibility of the design for the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*.

Using Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s original drawings, I realised that the measurements for the east-west alignment of the *Vāṭikā* were slightly short. I then had to recalculate the proportions to fit the space without distorting the structural integrity or the *Yantra Ākāra* (geometric form) of the platform. When Mukkūr *Svāmī* saw the adjustments, I had made, he was pleased and remarked that I did possess an innate knowledge of *Yajña Vāṭikā* designs.

The Divine Calculator: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the 3,000-Line Code of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own knowledge of *Vedic Yajña-Vāṭikā* specifications was not acquired through academic study or external books. Even his elder brother (my *Periappā*), a master of *Vēdas*, often wondered how Mukkūr *Svāmī* came to possess such deep expertise and insight into Nṛsiṃha-related ritualism. He concluded it was a divine gift bestowed upon him directly by Lord Nṛsiṃha.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s methods were instinctive; he would spontaneously fill sheets of paper with intricate grids and numbers in order to design ritual layouts. Because my father kept changing the *Vāṭikā* and *Kalaśa* designs for nearly every *Yajña*, I eventually had to write a 3,000-line computer program in BASIC to automate the technical layout blueprints to assist him. Using an old dot-matrix printer, I would then generate new and alternate designs within an hour, thus allowing Mukkūr *Svāmī* to tweak variables, such as the number of *Kalaśas,* etc., without requiring me to redraw everything by hand, repeatedly.

The Rule of Eight: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Acoustic Engineering of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*

It was often wondered how Mukkūr *Svāmī* claimed that the design for a *Yajña-Vāṭikā* was intuited by him while in a trance, during which Śrī Nṛsiṃha Himself divined it for him. He explained this to me one day.

The design must basically align in eight different ways (*Aṣṭavidha*) to ensure that it retains acoustic consistency and reverberates with the mantras as chanted around the altar. This '*Rule of Eight'* is, in fact, reflected even

today in the architecture of the *Maṭṭapalli Yajña Vāṭikā*, which Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself designed with *eight entrances*.

- The eight paths represent Nṛsiṃha's eight arms (*Aṣṭabhuja*).
- The design also follows a Sudarśana (discus) shape when viewed from above.

The multiple entrances ensure that the *Vāyu* (wind/energy) is never blocked, as Nṛsiṃha is associated with the *Vāyu* force.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was not averse to my using computer programming to design and map out the *Vedic Yajña* layout. But I could see that, for him, it was like using a modern calculator to solve a problem that an ancient form of architecture had already resolved within his head. While the computer provided the "*printout*" for the world to see, the actual "*code*" had already been written in the spiritual intuition that the Divine had shared with him.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* viewed the ancient *Ṛṣis* who laid down that architectural system not only as seers, but also as master engineers. He derived the technical specifications for the *Hōma Kuṇḍas* and *Yajña* altars directly from the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* texts, utilising complex mathematics that parallels concepts embedded in *Svāmī* Deśikan's *Sudarśana Aṣṭakam*. It was only because I am an engineer by education, that I always showed a deep interest in drawing and designing the *Yajña-Vāṭikās* whenever I was called by Mukkūr *Svāmī* to assist him in creating technical layouts that ensured the *Yantra Ākāra* (geometric form) was designed with both structural and spiritual accuracy.

(4) The First Creation: The Sacred Reception of the Divine at the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*

Śrī Yajña Mūrti, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s idols, and *Svāmī* himself are first ceremoniously received with *Pūrṇakumbha* at the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* upon arrival at the site. This is done by the local temple priest and/or *Vedic* scholars amidst auspicious chants. *Pūrṇakumbha* is offered because *Tīrtha* (water) is the abode of all Devās and because it is said to be the Lord's first creation! *Hārati* is performed by *Sumaṅgalī-Strys* (wedded ladies) for the Lords and Śrī *Svāmī*.

(5) The Foundation of Intent: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Power of the *Saṅkalpa*

On the first day of the *Yajña*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* performs the *Saṅkalpa* and *Viṣvaksēna-Ārādhana* rituals, invoking the blessings of the Lord for the completion of the *Yajña* without hindrances or impediments. This is followed

by *Puṇyāhavācanam, a* ritual for the sanctification of the entire *Yajña-Vāṭikā,* with mantras chanted to enrich the holy water.

(6) The Seeds of Grace: *Aṅkurārpaṇam* and the Living Germination of the *Yajña*

Aṅkurārpaṇam or *Mṛt-Saṅgrahaṇam* ritual is performed after the *Saṅkalpa*. This marks the beginning of the *Yajña*. *Mṛt-Saṅgrahaṇam* involves collecting the mud from an anthill which gets sanctified with mantras chanted invoking the deities *Bhūvarāha, Sōma-Dēva* etc., seeking their blessings for the successful completion of the *Yajña. Navadhānya* (nine different varieties of grain) is soaked in water and then sown into the sanctified mud filled within the 32-earthenware bowls. The sowing of the *Navadhānyas* is done by Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the *Ṛtviks*, temple priests, and gathered devotees. The bowls are then traditionally taken around the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* and placed upon a specially constructed pedestal. The *Navadhānya* sown are watered daily and they sprout and grow rapidly into plants within days. They are then collectively known as *Pālikai.*

(7) The Shield of the Divine: *Rakṣābandhana* and the Covenant of Protection

Rakṣābandhana rite is done to seek the blessings from the Lord and to protect one and all from all evil accidents or mishaps during the *Yajña*. Amidst the sound of auspicious music playing on the *Nādasvara*, the sacred thread (coloured yellow with turmeric) is tied to all the iconic deities beginning with *Śrī Yajñamūrti*. The *Rakṣā* (protective band) is tied around the right wrist of the Lord's idol and the left wrist of their respective Consorts. Thereafter, *Rakṣābandhana* is carried out on Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the *Ṛtviks,* and all participating devotees present.

While *Rakṣābandhana* is done, the *gōtram*, star and name of the participants are mentioned and *Saṅkalpa* is done by the individuals partaking in the *Yajña*. Although the *Yajña* is done for the common good of humanity without any *Kāmya* (desire for material benefit), while taking *Saṅkalpa*, devotees can still choose to seek fulfilment of their specific desires, if any. Śrī *Svāmī* used to give *Dakṣiṇā* (small honorarium), a few *Kharjūrakāys* (dried dates), betel leaves, coconut etc. to every person while tying the *Rakṣā*.

(8) Consecrated Presence: The *Dīkṣā* Vow and the Sequestered Sanctity of the *Vāṭikā*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the *Ṛtviks*, the temple priests, and the participating male devotees are then given *Dīkṣā-Vastrās* (*Vēṣṭi* and *Angavastrams* soaked

in turmeric water and then dried). Invariably, all males wear the *Dīkṣā-Vastrās* throughout the entire *Yajña* period. Mukkūr *Svāmī* then makes it known to them that he expects those who undertake *Dīkṣā* not to leave the sequestered conclave of the *Vāṭikā* until the *Yajña* is concluded.

(9) The Daily Pulse: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Sacred Rhythm of *Bhagavad Ārādhana*

Śrī *Svāmī* performs *Ārādhana,* a solemn ritual to *Yajñamūrti* and other deities.

In *Kṣetra Yajñas,* he seeks the blessings of the *Kṣetra* deity as well. The daily *Pūjā* during the entire *Yajña* consists of the early morning *Viśvarūpam*, morning *Abhigamanam*, the forenoon *Ijyā,* and the evening *Pānaka-Ārādhana*. These are rites integral to the *Tiruvārādhana*.

(10) The *Vedic* Battery: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Hierarchical Consecration of the *Kalaśas*

Amidst the sonorous chanting of *Vēda Mantras* and *Maṅgala Vādyam*, water is collected from the holy *Tīrtha* and brought in a procession led by Mukkūr *Svāmī*, followed by *Ṛtviks*, priests, and devotees.

The 1008 *Kalaśas* are usually earthen pots, the 108 *Kalaśas* are made of brass, while the 10 *Pradhāna* (principal) *Kalaśas* are made of silver. All the *Kalaśas* are wound with *rakṣā,* invoking their protection so that the *Tīrtha* placed therein is preserved till the conclusion of the *Hōmas*. The *1008, 108, and 10 Pradhāna Kalaśas* are all placed upon specially constructed pedestals and kept in special formations decided by Mukkūr *Svāmī* differently for each *Yajña*.

Image 34: *Tīrtha brought in a procession led by Mukkūr Svāmī, followed by Ṛtviks, priests, and devotees.*

The pedestals are first sanctified with *Kolam*, on top of which layers of plantain leaves, *Darbha*, paddy, *Vastrā,* and rice are laid out. The *Kalaśa* is placed on top of this layer and filled with the holy water from the sacred river. On each of the *Kalaśas, Hiraṇyam* (coins) are placed along with *Tīrtha Parimala* (aromatic powder mixed with finely ground *cardamom, cloves, saffron, Jātikkāy, Jātipattiri, Paccai-Karpūram,* etc.). The top of the *Kalaśa* is covered with mango leaves, coconut, and *Kūrcam* (long stalk made of *Darbha* grass) and further adorned with special silk *Vastrās* and flowers.

The *Pradhāna Kalaśa* at the central spot represents *Yajña Nṛsiṃha*, and the nine surrounding *Kalaśas* represent the nine *Nṛsiṃhas* as described in the *Nṛsiṃha Anuṣṭup Mantra.* The *Pradhāna Kalaśas* are adorned with colourful silk and *jari-thagaḍis*—cloth-bands embroidered with silvery strands.

Image 35: *Pradhāna Kalaśas*

Ṣaṭkōṇam consists of six *Bindusthānas* comprising 108 *Upa-Pradhāna Kalaśas* representing the *108 Divya Deśam temples* of *Bhagavān* Nārāyaṇa on earth. The four surrounding circular rows comprise, respectively, *8, 12, 16 and 32 Bindusthānas* containing *1008 Kalaśas* representing the most sacred of *Mantras* for *Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas*: *Aṣṭākṣaram, Dvādaśākṣaram, Puruṣa Sūktam* together with *Mahā Nṛsiṃha Mantra*. The *Kalaśas* are then consecrated after chanting several *Āvṛttis* (iterative or repeating chants) of *Yajña Mantras* and through offering *Bījākṣarās* vide *Mantra Jalam*. Fresh flowers are added to each of the *Kalaśas* every day.

(11) The Breath of the Divine: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Sacred Inherence of the *Kalaśas*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then performs *Āvāhana* (inherence) rituals for Lord Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha and Sudarśana in each of the *Kalaśas*. This is performed with

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma for the 1008 Kalaśas, Nṛsiṃha Aṣṭōttara for the *108 Kalaśas,* and *Mūla-Mantra* for the *10 Pradhāna Kalaśas*.

(12) The Precision of Presence: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Miraculous Japa of the 1008 *Kalaśas*

At the start of *Japa* for the *Kalaśas,* Mukkūr *Svāmī* would shower *Akṣatā* on all the *Kalaśas*. Standing at one end of the pedestal, he would sprinkle the *Akṣatā* on each of the 1008 *Kalaśas* and every single offering of *Akṣatā* would somehow, I have seen, fall exactly right on top of the coconut placed upon the mouth of each of the *Kalaśas* without fail. It used to be a treat to watch such precision in following ritual procedures which revealed Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s total immersive Bhakti.

At the start of the *Japa*, a *Kalaśa* filled with water and adorned with *mango leaves,* coconut, *Vastrā*, etc., is placed next to the *Kalaśas* and the Deity Brahmā is invoked into the same. This is done since Lord Brahmā is supposed to be the prime witness for the *Japa* to follow. *Pūjā* and offerings are done to Brahmā every day. The *Kalaśa* where Lord Brahmā was invoked is moved symbolically at the conclusion of the entire *Japa* for all the *Kalaśas*, after performing *Utthānam* (requesting the *Dēvatā* to return to *Svasthānam,* or *status quo ante*) of Lord Brahmā. Until then, care is taken not to disturb the *Kalaśa*.

Several *Āvṛttis* of *Japa* (including but not limited to *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā-Praśnaḥ 1, Puruṣa Sūktam, Śrī Sūktam, Bhū-Sūktam, Nīlā-Sūktam, Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra, Nṛsiṃha-Mūla-Mantram, Sudarśana-Mūla-Mantram, Nṛsiṃha-Aṣṭōttara-Śatanāma-Stōtram, Sudarśana-Śatakam, Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Vēda-Mantrāṇi, Mantra-Rāja-Dvātriṃśad-Akṣara-Dēvatā-Mantrāṇi,* and *Vedic* chants selected from the *Nṛsiṃha-Tāpanīya-Upaniṣad* for Lord Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha, from the *Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā* for Sudarśana, and from the *Padma Saṃhitā* for Mahālakṣmī are chanted by Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the *Ṛtviks.* Each *Āvṛtti* takes around two to three hours. Two or more *Āvṛtti Japa* is chanted for each of the *Pradhāna Kalaśas*. For the *108 and 1008 Kalaśas*, *Japa* is done collectively.

After each *Āvṛtti* of *Japa, **Vēda Ghana*** is recited by ***Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma, Atharva*** *Vedic* Scholars (Mukkūr *Svāmī* would recite all four) followed by rendering of ***Divya-Prabandham***. After each *Āvṛtti*, formal *Upacāram* (betel leaves, areca nut, coconut, fruits etc.) is offered to the *Kalaśa* followed by *Maṅgala Hārati* and offerings of *Prasādās*.

After the *Japa* for the day, the ritual gets completed. Then *Bhagavad-Ārādhana* would take place, followed by distribution of *Prasāda* to devotees.

The *Japa* during each *Yajña,* in the same manner, would continue for several weeks.

(13) The Churning of Light: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Ancient Mystery of *Araṇi-Mathanam*

After completion of *Japa* for all the *Kalaśas*, the next part of *Yajña* involves performing *Hōma* for which *Agni* (fire) is a prerequisite. *Agni* is *Pratyakṣa-Dēvatā* (one who can be seen with mortal eyes) while all other *Dēvatās* are *Parōkṣa-Dēvatā* (one who cannot be seen with mortal eyes).

As per the ***Taittirīya-Śākhā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vēda*** (the one that deals predominantly with the performance of sacrifices), in the olden days, the *Ṛtviks* used to take some *akṣatā* in their hand and just utter *Oṃ Bhūḥ* and put it into the empty *Hōma-Kuṇḍa,* and *Agni Bhagavān*, respecting their *Tējas*, would spring forth at once. Even though we devotees felt that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was capable of all that and more, it was out of his humility that he did not resort to such a dramatic act. Instead, to light Agni for the ritual, an *Araṇi-Mathanam* tool and ceremony was performed.

To create the *Vaidika Agni*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* used a special *Araṇi* wood (a kind of birchwood) equipped with grooves to insert and accommodate smaller *Araṇi rods*. After the chanting of *Yajña Manthra Japa* and invocation of the various deities upon the *Araṇi* wood, the smaller *Araṇi* rods were placed into the groove, and each rod was snuggled into dry coconut fibre and camphor which would act as inflammatory catalysts. The small *Araṇi* rods were then driven against a larger rod around which was wound a strong rope. Holding either end of the rope, Mukkūr *Svāmī* and another person (mostly his elder brother) would begin churning the *Araṇi* wood like the *Purāṇic churning* (*Mathanam*) of the ocean. The churning creates intense heat, causing sparks to fly up, and the cocooned coconut fibres quickly catch fire.

Most of the time, *Agni Bhagavān* reciprocates by appearing within a few seconds of churning. There were also times when he would test everyone by postponing his appearance. I remember once, a *Yajña* at the Ayodhya Maṇḍapa, Chennai. The *Agni* did not spring forth even after eight hours of *Araṇi Mathanam*!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to jocularly say that arousing *Agni* from the *Araṇi-Kaṭṭai* is akin to striving to get a million rupees! When the fire did appear, his face, like fire, would glow in happiness!

The glowing coconut fibre and *Agni* were then placed on an earthen bowl (*Maḍakku*) in a brass plate and Mukkūr *Svāmī* would carry the *Agni* on his head and go around the *Vāṭikā* in *Pradakṣiṇa* (clockwise

circumambulation) and then place the fire carefully in the *Pradhāna Hōma Kuṇḍa*. When more *Hōma Kuṇḍas* are ordained by the Lord, the *Agni* from the *Pradhāna Kuṇḍa* is taken and placed in the other *Hōma Kuṇḍas,* one after another, to start the *Hōma* therein.

On the *Araṇi-Mathanam* day, which is very special, plentiful *Kēsari Prasāda* -- a traditional delicacy filled with sumptuous amounts of pure ghee and full of dry fruits— cashew, almonds, raisins— is specially offered to the Deities and later distributed to all present.

(14) The Fire of Devotion: Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s Nine-Hour *Daśāṃśa Hōma*

For making the offerings in the *Hōma Kuṇḍas*, *Sruk* and *Sruvaḥ,* made of wood and covered with silver plating, are used.

Sruk and *Sruvaḥ* are specially fashioned wooden ladles with long handles whose ends are shaped in oval and rectangular forms respectively, suitable for holding the offerings to be made to the *Hōma Kuṇḍa.* As in the case of *Japa*, after each iteration of *Hōma*, a *Ghana* sequence from all the four *Vēdas* will be chanted and followed by a *Divya-Prabandham* recital too. This would be followed by the offering of *Upacāra* and *Prasādās* to the *Hōma Kuṇḍa.*

Before the start of *Hōma* each day, the *Yajñamūrti* is brought in a small palanquin (decorated beautifully and in different *Vāhanās*) in the clockwise order and placed on a pedestal in front of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*. After the completion of the *Hōma*, the *Yajñamūrti* is returned to the *Maṇṭapa.*

Image 36: *Hōma Kuṇḍa*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* would typically have one *Hōma Kuṇḍa* (in *Sudarśana Ākāra*) for most of the *Svātī Yajñas*. However, as per divine ordinance he received in trances, he has also performed *Hōmas* in the 3/5/3/32 order, such as he did at *Vaḍapalli, Siṃhācalam/ Vṛndāvan/ Maṭṭapalli Yajñas* respectively.

At the start of the *Hōma*, a couple of *Samidhs* are placed on all sides of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* to the chant of a few special mantras to ensure protection from evil or adverse vibrations/forces from interfering during the *Hōma*. These *Samidhs* are removed towards the conclusion of the *Hōma* and offered into the *Agni*.

A *Maḍakku* containing water is placed on the opposite side of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa,* as it is believed that *Agni*, respecting the presence of water, would not blaze out of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*. Each time *Hōma* is re-started, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would scrupulously sanctify the *Kuṇḍa* with *Mantra-Akṣatā*, flowers, etc.

The mantras recited during the *Hōmas* are the same with which the *Kalaśa Japas* are done. The *Āvṛttis* of mantras during *Hōma* are invariably one tenth of the number of *Āvṛttis* done during *Kalaśa Japas,* and hence they are known as *Daśāṅga Hōmas*.

Why Daśāṅga Hōmas?

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in **Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā,** said: *Yajñānāṃ japayajñō'smi* (10.25), and according to the *Taittirīya Śākhā* of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vēda*, it has been laid down that more time must be allotted to the performance of *Japa* than the amount of time planned for *Hōma*. There is no certainty for the proper performance of a *Hōma* to its conclusion, since the matter really is not in our hands. It is possible that there may be several types of deficiencies or lapses (*Lōpam*) in the proper conduct of a *Yajña-Hōma: Pratigraha Dōṣa, Dravya Lōpam, Kārya Lōpam, Niyama Lōpam, Anuṣṭhāna Lōpam, and other Lōpams.*

For example, when the *Adhvaryu* is performing a *Hōma* and touches his *Śikhā* (tuft on the scalp) inadvertently, he must immediately perform *Ācamanam* and *Prāṇāyāma* (expiatory rites). If by mistake, he touches his foot, there is no pardon. *Āpastamba-Maharṣi* lays down that the *Prāyaścitta* (expiation) must be performed by immediately having a bath with the same clothes and only then continue with the ritual.

Such strict controls are very difficult to adhere to, especially when one is supposed to follow the *Yajña* protocols repeatedly for weeks at a stretch. Hence, in accordance with scriptural sanction, the majority of time can be spent in *Japa* instead of in *Hōma*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus used to sit in front of the *Pradhāna Hōma Kuṇḍa* and upon a deer-skin rug spread over the *Kūrma Āsana*: every offering he made into the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* was purified by soaking it in *Ājya* (pure ghee). The same mantras recited during *Japa* were suffixed by a *Svāhākāra* sound during the *Hōma,* and for each *Svāhākāra,* the oblation would be made into

the burning *Agni*. Depending on the speed and pace at which the mantra was recited, the *Svāhākāra* sound also appeared at varying time intervals. Mukkūr *Svāmī* never defaulted at any point of time in perfectly synchronising the offering of the oblation with the articulation of *Svāhākāra*.

The recitation of the mantras would be done by Mukkūr *Svāmī* accompanied by the *Ṛtviks*. The oblations into the *Hōma-kuṇḍa* consisted of *Samidh, Anna, Ghee, Bhakṣaṇa, Milk, Honey, Medicinal Herbs, Fruits, Flowers*, etc.

At least one *Āvṛtti* of *Yajña* mantras would get recited for each of the *Samidh, Anna,* and *Ājya Hōmas*. It was very common for Mukkūr *Svāmī* to sit in front of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* performing the *Japa Hōma* for well over nine hours at a stretch, without even moving his legs despite the heat of the *Agni* and the blazing sun outside the *Yāgaśālā*. And, after the *Kṣīrānna Hōma* (oblations of cooked rice sweetened with pure milk), he would patiently distribute the *Hōma Śēṣam* (remains of *Kṣīrānna* after the *Hōma*) to all the devotees present.

The whole ritual-process of *Hōma Japa* would often take more than two hours each day. The *Hōma,* like *Japa,* used to be conducted over several days. When more than one *Hōma Kuṇḍa* was ordained, the same sequence of offerings was made to the remaining *Kuṇḍas* successively as well. The oblations into all the *Hōma Kuṇḍas* were all offered by Mukkūr *Svāmī* by his own hands.

(15) The Golden Cascade: *Vasōrdhārā* and the Peak Moment of Manifestation

After *Hōma*, the *Vasōrdhārā* rite is performed.

Herein, ghee is poured into the special *Vasōrdhārā* ladle. It is a long silver-plated wooden implement with a crucible-like formation on one end and into which the ghee (clarified butter) is poured to flow through the handle into the tongue of the ladle (usually shaped as a lion’s head) at the other end and then into the flames of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*. This gets done once again amidst the chanting of *Camaka-Praśna* and mantras that usually take all two hours to complete.

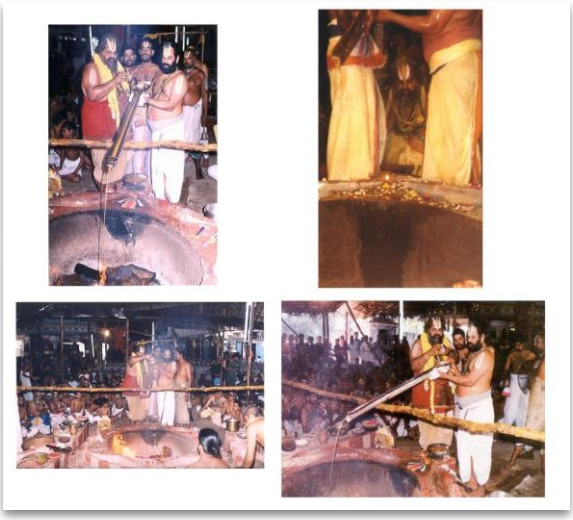


Image 37: *Vasōrdhārā*

Once the flow of the ghee begins flowing into the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*, the *Dhārā* (flow) must cascade smoothly without the slightest jerk or break in continuity in perfect synch with the *Vedic* recitation. This would mean that almost fifteen to twenty kgs. of ghee would have to be used for the *Vasōrdhārā* rite. Before commencing the *Vasōrdhārā, Pūjā* in fact, would be done for the ladle itself, with Mukkūr *Svāmī* consecrating it with ghee poured upon it as a *Kaiṅkarya-Pāra* (servitor) as he held the implement in his hand.

As the ghee cascaded down in one smooth continuous jet-flow into the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*, the embers of the *Agni* inside the *Kuṇḍa* would suddenly leap upwards in giant flames, sometimes to a height I have seen myself of about seven feet in the air! But soon thereafter, I have also seen Mukkūr *Svāmī* wave his hand at the *Agni* with a calming motion of the palms, and the fire would subside!

The *Vasōrdhārā* rite is performed only to redress and remedy any sort of *Dravya, Mantra, Niyama Lōpams* that may either inadvertently or involuntarily have crept in during the *Yajña* proceedings.

At this point, Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to inform the gathering of devotees witnessing the *Vasōrdhārā* rite that anyone wanting to mentally make a wish for fulfilment of any personal but pious nature, that was the precise moment for doing so. If the wish or prayer for fulfilment were to be made with implicit faith in the *Yajña*, it would get realised without fail!

(16) The Climax: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Total Surrender of the *Pūrṇāhuti*

Pūrṇāhuti marks the climax of the *Yajña*.

It is a ritual offering that culminates the *Hōma*. It is performed after special *Pūjās* in the presence of *Śrī Yajñamūrti*. They include *Gō Pūjā, Kanyā Pūjā and Dampati Pūjā*. At times, if ordained by Nṛsiṃha in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trance, the *Śukra Pūjā* and *Bṛhaspati Pūjā are* also performed.

Gō-Pūjā is performed for Cow and Calf, with offerings of fruits, application of *kuṅkumam* (vermillion) and turmeric, *Maṅgala hārati,* etc. *Kanyā Pūjā* is performed to one or two young pre-pubescent girls and *Dampati Pūjā* is performed to a wedded couple.

Sambhāvaṇā – or gift or honoraria, in the form of gold coin, cash and *Vastrās* are given in each of these *Pūjās*. These *Pūjās* are conducted near the *Pradhāna Hōma Kuṇḍa* just before the *Pūrṇāhuti* ritual takes place and is overseen by Mukkūr *Svāmī* accompanied by his *Dēvī* (spouse).

During the climactic moment of the *Pūrṇāhuti*, silk *Veshtis* and silk sarees (nine yards), silk blouse-pieces, coins in large numbers, *Matta-Tēṅkāy* (unpeeled coconut), etc., are given as offerings into the blazing fires of the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*. They are all first carried by a retinue of devotees who perform *Pradakshina* of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* and ceremoniously hand over the same to Mukkūr *Svāmī*. Then they are all soaked in ghee, one by one, and offered as oblation into the conflagration of the *Yajña Kuṇḍa*.

Pūrṇāhuti Dravyam (i.e. *betel leaves, areca-nut, Matta-Tēṅkāy, sandalwood piece, bits of Ōṣadhigaḷ (medicinal herbs), Vēṭṭivēr (aromatic roots), Navaratnaṅgaḷ (tiny gemstones), etc.*) are then bundled up in a white swathe of silk cloth and amidst the playing of *Maṅgala Vādyam*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would carry the *Pūrṇāhuti* bundle on his head, and place it reverentially at the divine feet of the *Yajñamūrti* idol. Thereafter, he would circumambulate the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* and finally arrive at the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* to offer the consummatory *Pūrṇāhuti* to *Agni Bhagavān* in the *Hōma Kuṇḍa*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* would then prostrate himself on the floor in front of the *Hōmakuṇḍa*. Then, he would gently shift aside the *Brahma Kalaśa,* signifying the completion of the *Hōma*.

Pūrṇāhuti is performed only for the *Pradhāna Hōmakuṇḍa*.

(17) The Sacred Shield: *Agni Udhvāsanam* and the Internalisation of the Divine Flame

After completion of the *Pūrṇāhuti*, *Agni Bhagavān* is symbolically removed from the *Hōma Kuṇḍa* by Mukkūr *Svāmī* with the *Sruk* and *Sruvaḥ*. The embers of the *Agni* are placed at the feet of *Yajñamūrti* and around all the *Kalaśas*. The black soot (or ashen collyrium) from the *Hōma* is then taken around and applied by hand by Mukkūr *Svāmī* to the eyelids of all the Deities,

then upon himself and then upon the *Ṛtviks* and finally upon the devotees. The collyrium is applied to ward off any *Dṛṣṭi-Dōṣaḥ* (evil spirits invisible in the vicinity).

(18) The Return to Source: *Kalaśa Udhvāsana* and the Graceful Conclusion

Special *Pūjā* is done to all the *Kalaśas* and after paying obeisance to the *Dēvatās* present in the *Kalaśas*, they are requested to return to their *Svasthānas*… elemental *status quo ante*.

(19) Liquid Mantras: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Grand *Tirumañjaṇa* of the Divine Pantheon

The idols of the entire pantheon of the *Divya Deśam* deities of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the *Yajñamūrti, Śālagrāma-Mūrtis, Dvārakā-Śilās, Āḻvārs, Ācāryās,* and the *Utsava-Mūrtis* of the *Kṣetra* are all then installed on the *Tirumañjaṇa-Vīthi* (specially erected silver pedestal for performing *Abhiṣēka*).

The *Kalaśas* are brought by the devotees and *Ṛtviks* who go around the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* in *Pradakṣiṇa*. Mukkūr *Svāmī* then performs the *Tirumañjaṇa* rite for the deities with the sacred water in the *Kalaśa*. This water is regarded as being fully charged with the potency infused into it by the chanting of powerful mantras with which the *Japa* had earlier been done.

The *1008 Kalaśas and the 108 Kalaśas* are brought in a specific order and Mukkūr *Svāmī* would take the utmost care to ensure that the correct order is maintained. Intermittently, after a particular row of *Kalaśas* is completed, *Upacāra* is offered to the Lords followed by *Hārati* etc.

(20) The Song of the Senses: *Kaṭṭiyam* and the Intimate Invitation of the *Mañjal Kāppu*

After *Tirumañjaṇa* with the *Tīrtha* from the *1008 and 108 Kalaśas* are completed, *Mañjaḷ-Kāppu* (turmeric paste) is placed on all the deities. Thereafter, *Kaṭṭiyam* is recited by a few *Ṛtviks*, for whom special honours are done by Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who ceremoniously ties a *Parivaṭṭam*—a bandana-like silk *Vastrā*—around the head of the *Ṛtviks*. *Kaṭṭiyam* is a melodious rendering of *Divya-Prabandham Pācurams* and *Nṛsiṃha Ślokas*, inviting the deities to "*Mañjaṇam Āḍa Vārāy*" … (literally, "*Come and luxuriate O lord in the gentle massage of turmeric paste with our hands upon Thee!*")

(21) The Thousandfold Rain: *Sahasra Dhāra* and the Marathon of Liquid Grace

After *Kaṭṭiyam* is completed, the *Pradhāna Kalaśas* are brought around the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* by *Ṛtviks*, and Mukkūr *Svāmī* proceeds to perform the *Sahasradhārā-Tirumañjaṇa* (a silver vessel with 1008 holes on its surface). After the completion of all the *Pradhāna Kalaśa Tirumañjaṇa*, the *Mañjaḷ-Kāppu* is distributed to all present to be smeared upon themselves in reverence.

At the *Naimiṣāraṇyam Yajña* in May 1992, it took Mukkūr *Svāmī* over eight hours just to complete the entire *Tirumañjaṇa* ritual without a break. That was because he performed *Tirumañjaṇa* for the **43rd *Jīyar* of Ahōbila Mutt**, *Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhakōpa Śrī Vīrarāghava Śaṭhakōpa Yatīndra Mahādēśikaṉ*, whose *Bṛndāvana* (memorial) is in *Naimiṣāraṇyam.*

After the *Tirumañjaṇa*, *Alaṅkāram* ritual (beautification) is done for the deities in the *Maṇṭapa.* This takes at least two hours.

(22) The Torrent of Mercy: *Avabhṛtha-Snānam* and the Ultimate Gift of the *Yajña*

Tirumañjaṇa Tīrtha is collected from the *Tirumañjaṇa-Vīthi* and stored in huge vessels. This potently charged *Tīrtha* is sanctified further by spiritualising it with what is called *Tirumēṉi-Sambandha:* it is brought to "*physical contact with*" all the consecrated idols. The *Tīrtha* thus possesses immense mantra-infused power.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* would sprinkle the sacred *Tīrtha* on all the devotees gathered, one by one and in case of couples, jointly. I have seen him perform this *Avabhṛtha* rite upon each person untiringly irrespective of the numbers gathered. Finally, he would pour it all on himself and his *Dēvī*. The gesture proved he practised what he preached: *Bhagavān* and *Bhāgavata* before self.

After the *Avabhṛtha-Snānam* is done, one is expected to take a bath only on the next day. The *Avabhṛtha-Snānam* is indeed so invigorating that it is said to cure physical ailments.

(23) Merging with the Infinite: *Tīrthavārī* and the Universal Sanctification of the Waters

In certain *Yajñas*, *Tīrthavārī* is done wherein *Śrī Śaṭhāri* and *Sudarśana Cakra* are taken in a palanquin, amidst the strains of *Maṅgala Vādya-Ghōṣam* to the riverside or pond. Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the *Ṛtviks* and devotees altogether with *Śrī Śaṭhāri* and *Cakkarattāḻvār* immerse themselves

ritually in the waters. At a few *Yajñas*, the *Avabhṛtha-Snānam* and *Tīrthavārī* used to be performed simultaneously.

(24) The Seeds of Grace: *Pālikai-Karaittal* and the Final Release of the *Yajña's* Merit

Amidst the auspicious sounds of *Maṅgala Vādya-Ghōṣam*, a few *Sumaṅgalī-Strys* (married ladies of the house), led by Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Dēvī,* would carry the earthen bowls containing the *Pālikai* to the riverbank, and all the devotees would witness them dissolve the *Pālikai* in the flowing waters.

(25) The Grand Proclamation: *Periya Śātrumurai* and the Coronation of the Devotees

After the conclusion of the *Avabhṛtha*, an elaborate service called *Periya Śātrumurai* is done in worship of Deities, with the recitation of the four *Vēdas*, *Divya-Prabandham Pācurams,* etc., all of which takes around two hours.

Offerings of countless delicacies as *Prasādās* (*Cuṇḍal, Puḷiyōdarai, Śarkkarai-Poṅgal, Dōsai, Kēsari, Sweet Varieties, Navanītam, Curd Rice*, etc.) are prepared in the *Maḍapaḷḷi* (kitchen) and are offered to the deities before later being distributed to all the devotees.

During the *Śātrumurai*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would ensure that *Kalaśa Vastrās* are taken out and used as *Parivaṭṭam* to adorn the heads of each male member present among the devotees. Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself would administer *Śrī Śaṭhāri* to all of them.

(26) The Mountain of Mercy: *Annakūṭa-Utsavam* and the Grand Banquet of the *Yajña*

In a few *Yajñas*, a rite called *Annakūṭa-Utsavam* was also performed.

Huge quantities of rice were cooked and heaped in big mounds on the floor in the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*. Also, *Alaṅkāram* was done upon the mounds by pasting on their sides many varieties of sweets and savouries like *Tēṅkuḻal, Madhumuraḷī, Maṉōppu, Pradhāna-Indriya-Lavaṇam, Pakoda, Maisūrpāk* etc.

Śrī Yajñamūrti would then be placed on a small pedestal in front of the *Annakūṭam* mound and *Kadamba-Kuḻambu* (gruel mixed with vegetables and lots of deep-fried *Cuṇṭakkāy or turkey berry*) would be contained in large vessels kept around it.

After performing *Pūjā, Naivēdyam* and *Hārati* to the *Annakūṭam*, the *Kadamba-Kuḻambu* and the savouries would get mixed with the cooked rice, and the resultant delicacy would be distributed to all the devotees. The *Prasāda*, piping hot and smelling delicious, would be relished by one and all.

(27) The Divine Union: *Kalyāṇa utsavam* and the Coronation of Universal Peace

As conferring *Śānti* (spiritual peace) upon the entire surroundings of the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* and to please the Almighty and His consorts, after the successful completion of the *Yajña*, a joyous *Kalyāṇa-Utsavam* is conducted. It is the recreation of the event of a divine wedding on earth of the deities (*Utsava-Mūrtis* idols). Under the *Adhyakṣam* (oversight) of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, *Kalyāṇa-Utsavam* is celebrated by *Kaiṅkarya Parās* in a grand manner with *Kaṅkaṇa-Dhāraṇam*, exchange of garlands, *Māṅgalya-Dhāraṇam* etc.

(28) The Celestial Lullaby: *Dōlōtsavam* and the Final Peace of the *Yajñamūrti*

After the *Kalyāṇa-Utsavam*, the deities and their consorts are kept seated upon a *Dōlā* (an ornamented swing), and devotees gently rock the Lord to the singing of devotional lyrics. Mukkūr *Svāmī* would sit near the *Dōlā* throughout the service, enjoying the songs. On several occasions, the singing by devotees would continue through the night, spreading an air of spiritual tranquillity!

This *Dōlōtsavam* is performed so that the Deities can rest a while after the hectic *Yajña* activities of the previous days. *Naivēdyam* of *Prasāda* is performed to the Deities in the *Dōlā* at the end and then distributed to the devotees.

(29) The Feast of Fellowship: *Tadīyārādhana* and the Glow of a Mission Fulfilled

Tadīyārādhana is another grand and elaborate service that is performed by Mukkūr *Svāmī* who sits down commensally for a meal with the *Ṛtviks* and all devotees. Since the beginning of the *Yajña*, he would have remained strictly on a liquid diet only and thus would now finally be able to partake of solid food on this plenary *Tadīyārādhana* day! In these moments his face would be seen glowing with happiness over the successful completion of the *Yajña*.

(30) The *Sadas* of Honour: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Consummation of Gratitude

Śrī *Svāmī* always used to say very emphatically that a *Yajña* would attain *Pūrṇatvam* (consummation) only when the *Ṛtviks* are given *Sambhāvaṇā.*

So, after the *Tadīyārādhana*, under the *Adhyakṣa* of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, all the *Ṛtviks, Kaiṅkarya Parās, Arcakās, Sannidhi Paricārakās, Temple Priests, Cooks, Nādasvara Vidvāns, Pūkkārar* (florists) … everyone would receive due honour at the *Sadas* and the *Sambhāvaṇā* would be conferred upon them by the *Pōṣakās* (active supporters) of the *Yajña*, devotees and by Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself.

Thereafter, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would render an *Upanyāsa* elaborating on the *Yajña* itself. It would go on for about two hours, and with his eloquence, he would move the hearts and minds of everyone in the audience. At the end, he would never fail to acknowledge gratefully the services rendered by every *Kaiṅkarya Parā* from the *Pradhāna Arcakā* to the *Maḍapaḷḷi-Cooks, Pūkkārar, Nādasvara Vidvāns* … all in his sweet and inimitable style, which itself would be regarded by them as a double *Sambhāvaṇā.*

After the *Vidvat Sadas* and Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa,* the devotees took leave of him. His *Dēvī* would then offer courtesy to all of them in the traditional way – sending them off with betel leaves, turmeric, *Kuṅkumam*, and blouse pieces to the ladies and *Bhakṣaṇam* packets to one and all.

(31) The Divine Echo: *Nāmasaṅkīrtanam* and the Melodious Seal of the *Yajña*

On a few occasions, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would also invite a devotee who was also a well-accomplished classical music exponent to give a brief concert.

(32) The Silent Seal: Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the Hand-Written Grace of *Śubha Maṅgalam*

It was thus that the *Svātī Mahā-Yajña* came to an end – i.e., with the *Vidvat Sadas* for all the rest of us. However, it did not signal the conclusion for Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself.

After everyone left and the *Vāṭikā* was left empty, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would turn his attention to another important task that only he personally would want to attend to. He would sit and write to each devotee who had contributed to the *Yajña*, in cash or kind! He would do so irrespective of the size or type of contribution given by the individual or his or her social status.

He would write by hand a brief but full report about the completed *Yajña*, acknowledging their *Ubhayam* (contribution). He would also then mail to them by post a meticulously packed sachet containing *Hōma Prasāda, Perumāḷ* photo, and Nṛsiṃha medallions, along with his kind blessings.

CHAPTER 26

***Yajña-Sambhāvanā*: Gifts and Honoraria**

In the *Vedic* tradition, ***Sambhāvanā*** embodies *Dakṣiṇā Dēvī*, the consort of *Yajña Deva*, Viṣṇu's form, whose presence ensures the ritual's fruition. Without it, the *Karma* remains incomplete, as priests invoke her *Śakti* to deliver *Karmaphala* (fruit of actions) to the performer. Scriptures emphasise that skimping on *Dakṣiṇā* ends up getting the ritual's benefits frittered away.

Sambhāvanā typically includes cash, clothing, grains, salt, and betel items tailored to the ritual. These offerings honour priests while fulfilling scriptural guidelines for *Dakṣiṇā* in *Vedic Karmas*.

Far from mere *charity* (*Dāna*), *Sambhāvanā* expresses gratitude to priests for guiding the *Yajña* performer to pure consciousness and invoking divine energies. This underscores the *Vedic* principle that rituals demand holistic participation, including selfless offering to sustain the tradition.

Dāna involves selfless giving to suitable recipients like the needy or Brahmins, emphasising *Tyāga* (relinquishment or renunciation) for spiritual merit, often without rituals. *Sambhāvanā* (*Dakṣiṇā*) is a *ritual fee* or honorarium to the priests for *post-Vedic Karma,* ensuring *Karmaphala* fruition—without it, rituals falter. Unlike *Dāna's* public benefit, *Sambhāvanā* symbolises dissolution, fulfilling and concluding the rite. In practice, *Dāna* accrues *Puṇya* broadly (*Sāttvika*, if pure), but *Sambhāvanā* is believed to activate a specific transfer of *Puṇya*: i.e., the priest's *Puṇya* passes via a material gift, balanced by prostration (*Samarpaṇa*). Scriptures warn that *Dāna* alone can turn out to be a chain of *Karma,* and *Dakṣiṇā* would be needed to render it pure. *Dāna* can be made to anyone, but *Sambhāvanā* targets ritual performers as *Brahman*-equivalents.

Key *Śāstra* citations on *Sambhāvanā* (*Dakṣiṇā*) appear across several *Vedic* texts. These injunctions emphasise its mandatory role in ritual fruition, drawn from prior scriptural references in our discussion.

Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā (1.5):

न यज्ञो विना दक्षिणा

Na Yajño Vinā Dakṣiṇā

No sacrifice succeeds without Dakṣiṇā.

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (3.7.12):

दक्षिणा हि यज्ञस्य पूरति। यद् ऋत्विग्भ्यः ददाति तेन पुण्यं प्राप्यते।

Dakṣiṇā Hi Yajñasya Pūrat I | Yad Ṛtvigbhyah Dadāti Tena Puṇyaṃ Prāpyate

Dakṣiṇā completes the Yajna; puṇya is gained through gifts to rtviks.

Manusmṛti (3.140-142):

गौर्वा हिरण्यं वासांस्यन्नं च दद्यात् तर्पयित्वा द्विजान्।

Gaurvā hiraṇyaṃ vāsāṃsy annaṃ ca dadyāt tarpayitvā dvijān |

दक्षिणां यथाशक्ति श्राद्धे कल्पयेत्।

Dakṣiṇāṃ yathāśakti śrāddhe kalpayet |

Offer cow, gold, clothesand food to the twice born; prepare Dakṣiṇā according to one's capacity in Śraddhā.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (6.2.13):

दक्षिणा शुद्धिः होमे।

Dakṣiṇā śuddhiḥ home |

Dakṣiṇā purifies the Hōma.

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* was extremely scrupulous in abiding by *Śāstra*-injunctions relating to giving *Sambhāvaṇā* at the conclusion of a *Yajña*. He went, in fact, out of his way at times to ensure that not a single person who had lent support to its performance in any way – either directly or indirectly, as *Ṛtvik, Paricārakā, Vidvān, Ubhayakāra* or as just a devotee – went home empty-handed or unacknowledged from the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* without *Sambhāvanā*.

With a total lack of concern for personal savings or returns, all material — *cash, food of all kinds, fruits, flowers, silks, vastrā, gold or silver coins and everything* — that had been collected and received for the purpose of conducting the *Yajña* was duly returned as *Sambhāvaṇā, Bahumāna* or *Prasāda*, back to the people at large as recompense and grateful appreciation for the effort and trouble they undertook to help him realise the successful culmination of the *Yajña*.

Let me narrate to you a few incidents to illustrate the extraordinary punctiliousness with which he went about fulfilling the obligation of *Sambhāvaṇā*."

The "Jiku Biku" Incident

"There was a past incident in which the 44th pontiff *Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar* was involved that remained ever etched in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s memory and which served as a constant reminder to him of how greatly *Sambhāvaṇā* mattered in *Vedic Yajña* rituals. Ironically, it was a comical incident that nevertheless taught him an invaluable lesson.

The "Jiku Biku, Jiku Biku" Incident

Mukkūr Śrīmad Azhagiyasingar used to convene and organise *Vēda Sadas* (*Vedic* conclave or seminars,) quite frequently, at which large numbers of *Vedavids* (*Vēda Pārāyaṇa* and *Śāstra Vidvāns*) from many parts of Tamiḻ Nāḍu, Andhra, and Kerala came to participate. Even in his pre-monastic life (*Pūrvāśrama,*) when he was known as the great *Vedic* scholar Śrī Mukkūr Rājagōpālācāryār, he took initiatives to hold such *Vēda Sadas* that came to be recognised as a wonderful platform for *Vēda* propagation by the *Vedic* community at large. The seminars thus became very prestigious events. Furthermore, the *Sambhāvaṇā* that *Śrīmad Azhagiyasingar* generously endowed upon all the participating *Vedavids* also motivated them to attend the event in large numbers.

Sometimes—albeit only in a stray incident or two – there would also appear on the scene an indigent *Vedic* pundit of dubious erudition from somewhere, with the intention only to collect the generous *Sambhāvaṇā* – unnoticed, of course -- along with all the others.

While presiding over one such event—an *Udaka Śānti* ritual chanting by 40–50 *Vedic* scholars—Śrīmad Azhagiyasingar happened to notice a *Vedic* pundit sitting in one of the rear rows of the large assembly joining in the chanting along with the chorus. But the man, it was obvious, did not know the mantras being chanted at all, and was simply pretending to chant along in chorus by merely moving his lips in time and in sync with the group. Upon listening very closely, Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar was able to make out that the man was simply mechanically

chanting nonstop nothing but the gobbledygook phrase: "*Jiku Biku, Jiku Biku, Jiku Jiku, Biku, Biku*!"

The poor pundit's performance did not go unnoticed by the other *Vidvāns* in the chorus either. At the end of the two- hour ritual chanting, they exchanged amused glances with each other and sniggered under their breath at the *Vidvān* whom they considered to be an impostor.

Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar did not fail to notice the derisive remarks that the other *Vidvāns* were whispering to each other about the "*Jiku Biku" Vidvān*! When the time came for everyone to receive their *Sambhāvaṇā* from him, they were surprised to see that the *Ācārya* did not mind the impostor also standing in line to receive his honorarium! They each thought to themselves: *"What cheek and temerity indeed! This man wants to collect Sambhāvaṇā for chanting nonsense "Jiku Biku"!"*

Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar however thought otherwise. Rather than embarrassing the delinquent participant, he openly praised the man's physical endurance for sitting still all of two hours and untiringly chanting pure nonsense without even once failing to keep pace with the other *Vidvāns*!

He turned to the assembly and chastised them for mocking the poor indigent pundit. He told them that despite the man trying to pass himself off as an adept at *Vedic* chanting, his perseverance he had shown at the *Vedic* conclave deserved a special *Sambhāvaṇā*. He then granted the man an additional "special" "*Jiku Biku Sambhāvanā"* (honorarium) of ten rupees.

When all the others had left, he beckoned the impostor to come close to him. The hapless man stood terrified, expecting to be punished for his deception that had defiled the *Vēda Sadas*. Śrīmad Azhagisingar, however, told him that he could keep his *Sambhāvaṇā* as recompense for the difficult act he had carried out, chanting garbled nonsense for such a long duration. But he also then told him, in private:

"You are welcome to come here again at the next event, but only if you promise me, you will properly learn the mantras and chant them with all the others without cheating".

The man fell on the floor, prostrated before the feet of the pontiff in abject remorse and promised to heed the advice given.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to narrate this incident even in a few of his *Upanyāsas* in later years just to validate the age-old *Vedic* convention that *"no participating member from a Vēda Pārāyaṇa chorus group should ever go back home empty-handed*."

The Beggar of Pāta Śivālayam

"The lesson learnt above from his *Ācārya*, Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar, was followed so very faithfully by Mukkūr *Svāmī* when it

came to giving *Sambhāvaṇā* at every *Yajña* that he himself went on to perform in life.

Let me illustrate that with an incident that showed Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s gesture of empathy during a *Yajña* held at the ancient *Pāta Śivālayam* in Vijayawada. This temple complex is unique because it houses approximately 30 small shrines, and the local Andhra custom involves devotees offering small coins at every single shrine to ensure all the sannidhis are maintained with the income so earned.

The "Pāta Śivālayam Yajña" and the Beggar

A five-day *Ahorātra* (day-and-night) *Yajña* was organised there, sponsored by wealthy merchants from the ***Āndhra Kōmaṭi*** (*Vaiśya*) community. On the final day of the *Yajña*, it was time to honour the sponsors with a traditional *Parivaṭṭam* (sacred headband) and garlands. After honouring the four main sponsors amidst the large assembly of devotees on the grand occasion, Mukkūr *Svāmī* then unexpectedly called for another *Parivaṭṭam*, which he carried and took out of the *Vāṭikā* to where a bedraggled beggar was sitting, drooped in a corner of the temple premises. Mukkūr *Svāmī* draped the *Parivaṭṭam* ceremoniously over the beggar's head since the beggar was physically unable even to stand on his feet.

The act shocked the four sponsors and all other onlookers too. One of them sidled up to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and questioned the propriety of equating the status of a beggar on the street with that of the designated, honourable sponsors of the *Yajña*, and thus placing both on the same pedestal. Was it not offensive to the community sponsors?

Svāmī then explained his reasoning to them:

"A Yajña requires two pillars: the Dhanavantulu (wealthy sponsors) who provide the funds and the Bhaktas (devotees) who witness it with pure hearts.

While the sponsors were busy with their own private work and occupations and only visited the Yajña-Vāṭikā site now and then, off and on while it was being performed, that beggar sitting outside on the temple street corner, – and I witnessed him closely, – was watching every moment of the Yajña from there all through the five days straight. So, I am obliged to acknowledge that beggar's unwavering focus and Śraddhā as a participant in this Yajña. Therefore, I give him the due recognition ("Aruka-Tai") by bestowing upon him the Parivaṭṭam honour."

The Window of Grace: Sacred Surplus

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* never could stint on either the quantity or the quality of the *Sambhāvaṇā* that he insisted must be granted to *Ṛtviks* and devotees participating in the *Yajñas*. At times, he did go to extremes to ensure it.

The Vijayawada Railway Station incident

I remember once that, after the conclusion of a *Yajña* at Vijayawada, we boarded a train to return home to Chennai.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was seated beside the window and had with him a bag of brand-new 5-rupee coins which he had earlier intended to bestow upon the devotees there. But having overestimated their numbers, he found that an excess remained with him in the form of 5-rupee coins in a bag. Mukkūr *Svāmī* believed that what had earlier been intended as *Dakṣiṇā* to be given away at the *Yajña* must not be retained either for personal use or for use in succeeding *Yajñas*. It must instead be given away as *Sambhāvaṇā* by way of general charity.

So, opening the bag of coins, Mukkūr *Svāmī* began giving away the money, one coin at a time, to the beggars who came walking down the railway platform looking for alms from passengers in the compartments. When they came up to the window of the train where he was seated, he began giving a 5-rupee coin through the train window to every beggar who passed by.

Word spread quickly right across the railway station, and soon a crowd of nearly 100 beggars thronged and surrounded the carriage window where he was seated. As he began to dole out the *Dakṣiṇā* with a kindly smile, the flock of beggars grew. Soon it became so dense that a local VIP, an MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) who came along and was about to board the train in his own adjacent cabin, found himself mobbed in the melee. Initially, he thought it was he who was the centre of all the raucous public attention. People were crowding around him because of his street-level popularity. But then he found that even entering the carriage was obstructed by the throng of beggars. He realised that it was not he, but Mukkūr *Svāmī* who was being mobbed by the happy group of indigents hailing him for his kindness!

Returning Empty-Handed

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Then I remember there was this other similar incident.

The Flow of Divine Nectar: From the State of Plenty to the Empty-Handed Return

Following a 30-day-long series of discourses at the *Āstika Samājam, Chennai*, the concluding ceremony was celebrated by several hundreds of devotees who had all attended Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Upanyāsa*. They showed their reverence and affection for him by coming up to him and showering him individually with offerings of garlands and several scores of trays filled with fruits, exotic dry fruits, nuts, raisins, sugar candy, and sweetmeats of many varieties! Soon, the entire stage floor around Mukkūr *Svāmī* was covered with trays overflowing with such loving offerings of gifts!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* smiled at each one of the devotees and immediately began giving everything away again to the gathering crowd who came up to him and prostrated before him to seek his blessings. For nearly an hour and a half, he sat there patiently, beckoning every person in the audience and giving away, without exception, everything that had been gifted to him by the audience with so much affection. Even after everyone had left the venue, and before he himself returned home, he gathered up the final remaining gift items and gave them to the auditorium watch–and–ward, staff that saw him off with warm gratitude for his generosity!

He returned home that night with nothing in his hands except the shawl he wore on his shoulders. Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mother, my grandmother Amṛtavallī, saw him come home empty-handed and with mock surprise and churlishness said to her son:

"Son, don't you have even a wee bit of paternal feelings for this little child of yours at home? How insensitive! Couldn't you at least have brought back home with you just a few nice gifts out of all those lovely things you were flooded with this evening?"

At that time, our family was still struggling a bit financially, and my *"Pāṭṭi (Grand-Mother in Tamil)"* often jocularly used to say:

"That little Yajñamūrti of ours at home, to whom my son is always offering everything, does have a giant appetite indeed!"

The Perfectionist: Sanctity of Every Detail

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* maintained strict quality standards for all offerings given as *Sambhāvaṇā.*

The "*quality*" that Mukkūr *Svāmī* insisted must always be maintained for *Yajña havis* or *Dravya*, *Sambhāvaṇā* or *Bahumāna* offerings to participating *Ṛtviks* and devotees had to be of uncompromisingly high standards. To ensure this, he would not delegate the task of quality inspection to anyone else but would himself go to market for procuring materials for a *Yajña*. I have seen him go with my mother from shop to shop to select the best-quality varieties, whether of *Dravya*, butter, ghee, turmeric, or betel leaves, etc. I have even seen him ensure that the coffee beans purchased for the coffee-drinking devotees who came to the *Yajña,* were correctly mixed in the right proportions, to produce the best-quality coffee beverage. He often tested the quality even for bulk batch quantities purchased at 30 kg at a time!

Not only the materials procured for the *Yajña,* Mukkūr *Svāmī* was meticulous about the quality of the packaging in which they would be delivered finally to the participating *Ṛtviks,* devotees, and guests.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s Uncompromising Quality and the "Miracle" of the Plastic Mugs

On one occasion, my father waited for us in the car while my mother and I went into the marketplace to buy some materials. When we returned, what we saw inside the car astonished us. Mukkūr *Svāmī* was seated neck-deep in a sea of plastic mugs, buckets, and odds and ends!

We asked what on earth he had done?!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* grinned sheepishly at us, telling us he expected all the plastic stuff would be needed for use by the guests at the *Yajña*. He explained that the 50 plastic mugs and 20 buckets he had bought were offered to him at a big discount while he was waiting in the car by a poor, kindly itinerant salesman who said he had been struggling all day, without success, to clinch a sale that whole day!

"*After you both went into the market, one person came and knocked at the window. When I opened the window, I saw a young man, decently dressed and carrying one set of this plastic bucket, mug, and kuṭam. After talking to him, I came to know that he was a student studying in college and was from a poor family. He was selling plastic items to support his education. He said if I bought one, then another set would be given free, and he pestered me to buy at least one set immediately. I asked him what the great hurry was, to which he answered, saying that he had to sell 50 more sets that day to be eligible to collect a commission from his principal trader. And he needed that money to pay the exam fees, for which the last date was going to be tomorrow. I offered him the exam fees, which he refused. So, I bought all this.*

Anyway, during Yajña Vāṭikā construction, we will need these plastic kuṭams for watering purposes; buckets and mugs too will be required for the Ṛtviks and others who are going to stay there.

I may have forgotten these items, so I think Perumāḷ himself came here as a salesperson to remind me not to forget buying these sundry items. I took pity on him, and so I simply had to buy his wares … After all, it would all come to some practical use during the Yajña… and that poor salesman man too, is happy now that he has indirectly participated in some way in the Yajña….".

" Nṛsiṃha Will Take Care of it"

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* also never did bother about budgets while conducting *Yajñas*. It was not as though he was unaware of such matters as cost control or funds management, but it was just that they were never at the top of his mind when he was planning and performing a *Mahā-Yajña*, which involved a great deal of detailed planning, mobilisation and disbursement of monetary

resources. He always seemed to maintain an almost blithe indifference to such matters, viewing them as inconsequential in the larger scheme of a *Yajña*.

In most cases, he went about performing the elaborate rituals exactly as he wished them to be done in accordance with *Śāstra,* without caring about where the resources to complete the ritual were going to be raised. It sometimes led to very embarrassing situations. Yet even then, he always abided in the faith that "*Lord Nṛsiṃha would take care of all that… nothing to worry about!"*

"Nṛsiṃha Will Take Care" and the Miracle of the Tirumalā Wedding

My own wedding was solemnised and celebrated on the foot of sacred Hills of Śōliṅgar in 1995 and after the wedding we all went to Tirumalā to perform Kalyāṇa Utsavam at Tirumalā. Mukkūr *Svāmī* had invited many *Vedic* scholars and *Vidvāns* to the wedding, and they all turned up at Tirumalā to bless my wife and me, the newly wedded couple.

My father must have, on that auspicious day, given as *Sambhāvaṇā* an average of at least 1,000 rupees to every *Vēdavid* who came to grace the occasion.

Eventually, all the cash we had carried with us — including an amount of 2,000 rupees that I had myself earmarked and set aside for fuel for our car on our return journey home to Chennai — was given away, and we were left utterly empty-handed. And more *Vedavids* were still turning up at the event, and to each, now, Mukkūr *Svāmī* now began to hand out cheques instead of cash as *Sambhāvaṇā*.

After a dozen such cheques were issued, I cautioned my father that he should stop giving away cheques since funds in the bank account would run dry and the cheques might bounce. Also, I whispered into his ear that we did not have cash to even fill up the car fuel tank! "*How are we to drive back home to Chennai?!...*" I asked him in consternation.

I remember that moment, when Mukkūr *Svāmī* simply turned to me and whispered back, *"Nṛsiṃha will take care… stop worrying"*.

Moments later, a devout family from Bangalore whom we knew, suddenly arrived there. They were ardent devotees of Mukkūr *Svāmī*. They prostrated before him, took his blessings, and offered me and my bride a surprise *Sambhāvaṇā* from their end and a handsome gift of 5,000 rupees in cash!"

CHAPTER 27

The Trances: Siting a Yajña-Bhūmi – Affirming *Mahā-Viśvāsam*

- ***What specific contexts, locations, or triggers led to Mukkūr Svāmī's trance-like episodes, and how frequently did they occur?***
- ***Can you describe the nature of utterances or messages delivered in these states—what did Lord Nṛsiṃha say, and what did they signify?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

"It is very difficult to pinpoint what "*triggered*" Mukkūr *Svāmī* or when he would go into trance-like moods since it was mostly random. But what can be said with certainty is that the frequency of their occurrences between the *Āstika Samājam Yajña* of 1981 and that held in **Antarvēdi** in 1989 was far and few between.

However, so many *Yajñas* were conducted during that period -- *Antarvēdi, s, Vēdādri, Badarināth/Hṛṣīkēś, Yādagiriguṭṭa, Agiripalli* – and I can say that, more often than not, it was really in those moods of trance that the siting or situating of an ensuing *Yajña-Bhūmi* was intuited by Mukkūr *Svāmī.*

Image38: *Mukkūr Svāmī Deep in Trance*

Later upon recovering to his normal senses from the trance -- although physically exhausted but mentally as sharp as ever -- he would himself report to us that *Śrī Nṛsiṃha* had appeared in a vision and had indeed

commanded him to perform a *Yajña* at a certain *Kṣetra* and *Yajña-Bhūmi* site, as willed by him.

There was one other aspect to those trances that, personally to me at least, became a most startling, significant, and enlightening lesson in life. And that was *Mahā-Viśvāsam*, which is the doctrinal core of *Śrī Rāmānuja Siddhānta* and which Mukkūr *Svāmī* came to exemplify throughout his life."

The Anchoring of the Soul: Mahā-Viśvāsam

"The incidents involving Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances turned out to be affirmations of how crucially ***Bhakti*** (*Devotion*) and ***Viśvāsam*** (Faith) differ from each other, even though, from a spiritual viewpoint, they are both tied together at the hip.

Many people possess *Bhakti*—they perform rituals, go on pilgrimages, donate to temples, and sing devotional hymns—but do they also possess, in equal measure, *Mahā-Viśvāsam* – unwavering, constant faith?

When a crisis suddenly arises, we often become fearful and lose our trust in *Bhagavān*. What do we tend to do then? We abandon faith and start looking to rely upon other gods and other means to save ourselves – astrology, perhaps, or other deities, cults, or belief systems.

Image 39: Postures in the trance state

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances very often were revelations of Śrī Nṛsiṃha to him directly. But to us, they also revealed the enormous power of *Mahā-Viśvāsam*.

There were quite a few instances of such trance-like occurrences I witnessed myself. So, let me recount a few of those since they did have elements of what one may call a *miracle*."

The Miracle of the "8888" Van

"By the time the 97th *Yajña* had been performed, Mukkūr *Svāmī* had resolved to perform the final twelve ceremonies only at specific Nṛsiṃha temples. Travelling across the length and breadth of the countryside from one *Yajña* site to another by railway or by public transport was increasingly becoming not only very exhausting but also impractical for him. It was at that time that our family began to feel the dire need for a personal car for his use. However, even at that time when we were relatively well off financially, buying a brand-new vehicle was beyond our means. So, we were looking out for a second-hand or used car that would be affordable to buy. We looked long and hard but with no success.

One day, while travelling in a rental taxi in Kākināḍa, Mukkūr *Svāmī* spotted a red Maruti van with the registration number "8888", parked outside a house with a signboard stuck to its windshield glass that said it was for sale. It belonged to a Marwari gentleman who was the owner of the shop, outside which, the car was parked.

The number immediately caught Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s attention. He muttered to me, "*This number is so captivating… it reminds me of the Aṣṭākṣara and Nṛsiṃha Mantra… Why don't we go and check it out?"*

We went inside and inquired about the sale. When the Marwari named his price for the car, Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who then had no savings at all, at once knew that the price was too steep and unaffordable for him. The disappointment must have shown on his face, and the Marwari shopkeeper too was quick to notice it.

For some strange reason, however, the Marwari was very moved emotionally upon simply having met Mukkūr *Svāmī*. It made him suddenly turn to my father and make a very generous offer. He agreed to finance us the 42,000-rupee van on credit, while accepting a 2,000-rupee monthly instalment plan based solely on trust. The deal was struck, and we drove away with the van with the auspicious number, *8888*.

It was in that Maruti van that, eventually, in the following several years, I used to chauffeur my father around -- from one *Yajña-Bhūmi* site to another -- across Tamiḻ Nāḍu and Andhra *Kṣetras*.

The remotest *Yajña-Bhūmi* that we ever drove to was **Antarvēdi**.

Between the Rivers: The Divine Mandate of Antarvēdi

Six months after conducting a *Yajña* at Maṅgalagiri *Kṣetra*, and as per the command he had received from Śrī Nṛsiṃha, while in a trance, Mukkūr *Svāmī* planned for a *Mahā-Yajña* to be performed at a remote *Yajña-bhūmi* called **Antarvēdi**. He had been commanded to perform it during '*Śukla-Varṣa Śrī Nṛsiṃha-Jayantī*' (19th May 1989) as the *2nd Kṣetra Mahā-Yajña*.

River Godāvarī, after flowing through *Bhadrācalam* and *Rajahmundry*, splits into two as *Vṛddha-Gautamī* and *Vasiṣṭha-Gōdāvarī*. They further split into two more rivers before reaching the sea near Antarvēdi and other nearby locations, forming a delta. Antarvēdi is located on the seashore between Godāvarī and Gautamī. Hence it is called '***Ubhaya-Gōdāvarī-Madhya-Pradēśam***' (in between two Godāvarīs).

Antarvēdi: A Lush Geography of Grace

When MLS *Svāmī* began to describe to me the location of Antarvēdi, I found myself at that point during the interview, drifting off into a private reverie. So very fascinating and intriguing was it for me to know about the details given, that I went further, discovering the place by doing a bit of research on the internet.

What I then thereby gathered reminded me of descriptions of the landscape in David Knipes's book, '*Vedic Voices*'. I also believed that they were perhaps reasons why Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself, in his life, also always nurtured a special place in his heart for the lush landscape of the Godāvarī in Andhra… It was a fondness which, in fact, had made him relocate from bustling Chennai to Kākināḍa in the year 1984-85.

Antarvēdi is a place of profound geographical and spiritual intersection. Often referred to as *Dakṣiṇā Kāśī* (the '*Varanasi of the South*'), it sits at the precise point where the *Vasiṣṭha-Gōdāvarī*—a major distributary of the Godāvarī River—empties into the Bay of Bengal. Even today, Antarvēdi offers a unique case study in deltaic geography, *Vedic* mythology, and socio-religious continuity.

Geographical Layout:

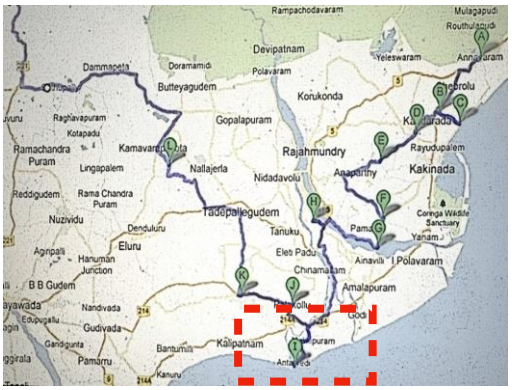


Image 40 & 41: Location of Antarvēdi

The Deltaic Tip: Antarvēdi is in the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar *Kōnaśīmā* District (carved out of East Godāvarī) of Andhra Pradesh. Its layout is defined by its '*Antar*' (inner) '*Vēdi*' (altar) position between the river and the sea.

The Sangamam: The most defining geographical feature is the *Saptasāgara-Saṅgamam*, where the *Vasiṣṭha-Gōdāvarī* meets the ocean. The surrounding Kōnaśīmā region is a lush, fertile deltaic island formed by the various branches of the Godāvarī.

David Knipes, in his book, gives a very picturesque description of this belt, which is worth reproducing here:

Excerpts from David Knipe's *Vedic* Voices— Pages 6 & 7

At the heart of the delta, a sort of cockeyed triangle within a triangle, is Kōnaśīmā, a prize canal-rich zone bracketed by the Vainateya and Gautami branches of the Godāvarī, blessed with some forty-five inches of annual rainfall. *Vēṅgī*, a historic name for the fertile stretch of Andhra coast between the Godāvarī and Kṛṣṇa deltas, drew the earliest settlements to southeast India, and Kōnaśīmā became the nucleus of the northerly delta… [This] lush area [is] a million irrigated acres of broad wetland rice paddies and coconut palms, the two major crops, as well as sugarcane and betel on irrigated tracts and on dry land cotton, peanuts, pulses, sesame, tobacco, mango, citrus, cashew, jackfruit, Areca, and banana groves laced with turmeric, tapioca, betel vines, chilli peppers, and other managed plants.

Its reputation is the zone where everything grows plentifully, luxuriously, a cornucopia, and for folks coming from crowded urban lanes, it is an "*arama*" i.e. a pleasure garden. Today the roadways are lined with nursery displays selling flowers, shrubs, trees, and planters to visiting townsfolk, more of them in the private cars of the new millennium's affluent middle class. Paddy fields, with two or even three crops a year, are always visible, and rice is anna, "food." If one has not eaten rice in each meal, one has not eaten. Carefully guarded and numbered coconut palms, with a nut-producing life of seventy to eighty years, grow fifty to an acre, and every farmer cultivates them for a steady income from meat, milk, oil, and husks beaten into coir or used for fuel. "*A coconut tree is more reliable than a son,*" is a familiar Telugu proverb… ***Tenē Cheṭṭu Kōguku Kaṇṭē Manchi Di***… **తెనె చెట్టు కొడుకు కంటే మంచిది**.

The terrain is indeed dominated by coconut groves, paddy fields, and mangrove-adjacent wetlands. The coastline is dynamic, prone to both accretion and erosion.

The nearby ***Anna-Cellella-Gaṭṭu*** (where the river and sea meet, but the waters seemingly do not mix (due to density/salinity differences)) is a point of both scientific and tourist interest.

The Altar of Atonement: Antarvēdi's Legacy

Historical & Mythological Foundation:

The history of Antarvēdi is a blend of *Purāṇic* lore and medieval patronage. According to the *Brahma Purāṇa*, Sage Vasiṣṭha brought the Godāvarī River to this location. It is said that Lord Viṣṇu, in his *Nṛsiṃha Avatāra*, performed a sacrifice here to atone for the killing of the demon *Aruṇāsura*, hence the name Antarvēdi (the inner altar).

- **Temple Evolution:** While this spiritual site is very ancient, the current structure of the Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha *Svāmī* Temple was largely reconstructed in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **Inscriptions:** There are historical records indicating patronage from local *Zamīndārs* and the *Mogaltūru Rājās*, who were instrumental in maintaining the temple's glory during the medieval and colonial periods.

- **Religious & Cultural Significance:** Antarvēdi is one of the *Pañca-Nṛsiṃha Kṣetras* (five important Nṛsiṃha temples) in Andhra Pradesh on the banks of Godāvarī River.
- **The Lighthouse:** Near the temple stands a historic lighthouse, which formerly guided ships navigating the treacherous deltaic waters of the Bay of Bengal—a symbol of the area's maritime history.
- **The Chariot Festival:** The annual *Bhīṣma Ekādaśī* (January/February) sees a massive influx of pilgrims for the Temple Chariot festival (*Rathōtsavam*). This is a vital period for the local folk's traditions and their mass religious gatherings.
- **Families and Social Fabric:** The social structure of Antarvēdi is deeply tied to the temple and the sea. Most communities depend on fisheries and other maritime livelihoods.
- **The Mogaltūru Dynasty:** Historically, the *Kṣatriya-Rājās* of *Mogaltūru* were the hereditary trustees of the temple here. Their lineage is still respected in the region's administrative and social history.
- ***Arcakā* Families:** The priestly duties are traditionally held by specific Brahmin families (belonging to the Vaishnavite sect) who have preserved the *Vaikhānasa-Āgama* traditions for generations.
- **Agnikula-kṣatriyas:** The local fishing community is a dominant demographic group here. Their relationship with the sea and the river is both a source of livelihood and a part of the local lore (as "*children of the fire/water*").
- **Golla & Seṭṭibalija communities:** These groups play a significant role in the agricultural and festive economy of the delta.

The Command of the Unseen: Mapping the Inaccessible Altar

MLS *Svāmī*:

"It was in a trance that Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus received the command of *Śrī Yajñamūrti* that a *Mahā-Yajña* should be performed in Antarvēdi … and that too in a spot that hitherto Mukkūr *Svāmī* had neither seen nor even heard of much. In those days, Antarvēdi was known to be so remote and isolated a location that the precise site of the *Yajña-Bhūmi* Mukkūr *Svāmī* was scouting

for was virtually inaccessible. To discover it, one was required to travel – criss-cross miles, and wade and sail too -- across several streams and riverine tributaries, using only primitively fashioned ferry boats that local fisherfolk plied."

Trials on the Godāvarī

"In the last week of April 1989, we as a family all went along with Mukkūr *Svāmī* on what was intended to be a reconnaissance trip to Antarvēdi for the purpose of identifying the exact location for the *Yajña-Bhūmi* and *Yajña-Vāṭikā*. Also, the trip was to serve us in checking out logistics and the availability of sources of supply for other essentials such as makeshift camping accommodation, drinking well-water, plentiful groceries and foodstuff, all of which were needed at the *Yajña*.

We travelled to Antarvēdi by the Maruti van (that we had recently come to own) 130 kms away from Vijayawada. The mission was to select a site for the *Yajña-Vāṭikā*. The entire stretch of the road to Antarvēdi was breathtakingly scenic, with crisscrossing river-canals and backwaters, the landscape covered thick with coconut groves that stretched for miles without end on either side of the roadways. But, due to the narrow and terrible road conditions, our journey took more than six hours to reach Antarvēdi.

In those days, at many places, there were no road bridges enabling crossings across the river en route to Antarvēdi. Only small ferry-boat services were available. Mukkūr *Svāmī* and I thus had to travel in specially rented ferryboats fitted with outboard motors. To transport the car across the river, the boat operators would use two catamarans to tug it and tag along. The Maruti van, thus, would be secured by lashing the chassis tightly with ropes to the floorboard of the catamarans.

As the driver of the vehicle, I had to sit inside the van. As the catamarans rolled and heaved on the waters of the river, the ropes creaked and seemed to give way at any moment. So afraid was I that I kept my foot pressed hard on the brake pedal all through the journey down the river… I also kept silently praying for the ropes not to give way and untie, plunging me and the vehicle into the rapid waters.

Imagine crossing the Godāvarī in a Maruti van lashed to catamarans being tugged by a motorised ferryboat ahead! It was so frightful that I found myself chanting '*Nṛsiṃha, Nṛsiṃha*' silently to myself… A terrifying experience indeed that I have never forgotten in life."

Synchronicity at Sunset

"To find the Antarvēdi *Kṣetra* for the first time was an extremely difficult task. In those days, there were no road maps available, and there were lots of stretches where there were treacherous curves, bends, gradients, and turns on the *Kaccā* roadway.

After winding through the woods and navigating uncharted roadways, we finally reached the *Kṣetra* at dusk during *Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra Samayam*. We alighted and first went into the temple there and had *Darśana* of the presiding deity *Śrī Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃha*.

As per the *Sthala Purāṇam* of the temple, Sage Vasiṣṭha performed *Mahā-Yajñas* at this *Kṣetra*. In the earlier *yugas*, there were many permanent *Yajña-Vāṭikā* structures already built in this *Kṣetra* for doing *Satra-Yāgams* (i.e. *Yajñas* whose durations could vary between 1 to 12 years!). The name *Antarvēdi,* in Sanskrit, also implies *'a Yajña-Vāṭikā bounded in between two rivers.'*

Since it is believed that Sage Vasiṣṭha performed *Yajñas* and *Tapas* in this place for very long periods of time in the past, the Godāvarī river near the *Kṣetra* came to be called Vasiṣṭha Godāvarī. Pleased with Sage Vasiṣṭha's austere *Tapas*, Lord Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha reappeared in his original *Avatāric* form on his *Garuḍa Vāhanā* and slayed the evil *Rākṣasa Raktavilōcana*, the son of Hiraṇyākṣa, using *Śrī Sudarśana-Cakram*, the divine discus."

Blueprint for the Antarvēdi Mahā-Yajña

"The following day, we began our search for a suitable site within the temple precincts, but all the available open spaces inside it were inadequate for constructing a large-sized *Yajña-Vāṭikā* for the proposed *Mahā-Yajña*. So, after further inspections and approval given by Mukkūr *Svāmī*, it was decided to construct the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* outside the temple environs, on open space near the *TTD Choultry*, a public charity townhall and dormitory accommodation for ordinary pilgrims.

The TTD *choultry*, a two-storied building, was in a very dilapidated condition at that time with few amenities. Hence, accommodation for the *Ṛtviks* and others was arranged by us separately in other quarters in the nearby village.

The *Yajña-Vāṭikā* at Antarvēdi was similar in construction to the Maṅgalagiri *Yajña*. Mukkūr *Svāmī* proposed, however, a few minor changes after finalising which, instructions were given to the masons and other workers to go ahead with it. We returned to Kākināḍa the next day and

thereafter waited for news to arrive from the masons in Antarvēdi about when the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* construction would be completed by them in time for commencing the rituals."

The Threshold of the Impossible

Meanwhile, we realised that there remained only a couple of weeks left before the proposed commencement date. Mukkūr *Svāmī* did not have many financial resources. The time, therefore, was running desperately short to begin writing and sending out letters of appeal for public donations for the *Yajña* or distribute the *Pattirikkai* (invitation) to devotees at large all over the country.

We were forced to approach the Marwari (the car financier) for a temporary loan, which he was good enough to oblige Mukkūr *Svāmī*, whom by now he had begun to revere as a guru. With the loan amount so obtained from him, and with the little extra money from savings the family had, we were able to procure a bit of groceries, provisions, and other essentials at Kākināḍa. After paying out the lorry rental charges for dispatching the goods ahead of us to the *Yajña-Bhūmi*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was left with just about Rs. 2000! Of this, I knew, Rs. 1000 would have to be spent on filling fuel for our Maruti van to journey forth to Antarvēdi.

Just two days before departure to Antarvēdi, I found our financial situation to be so very precarious. I became very anxious. I gathered courage and requested Mukkūr *Svāmī* to postpone the Yajña.

My father asked why. And I replied:

"*As you see, the time is insufficient. Many of our devotees do not even know the exact dates of the Yajña, and even assuming they somehow do manage to come, it is going to be extremely challenging for them to locate and travel to the remote site of the Yajña-Bhūmi in Antarvēdi …*

You know how bad the roads are… You know that there is no communication connectivity there… How will anyone be able to reach the Antarvēdi Yajña-Vāṭikā spot without proper directions? To reach Antarvēdi from even Madras, let alone other cities, people will be forced to take two different connecting trains, one long bus ride, one choppy boat ride, and then again catch another bumpy bus ride to the remote place in the wilderness! During the journey, they will have no telephone facilities. With their family, wives, and children tagging along, how do you expect them to make it to the Yajña-Bhūmi?"

"*Moreover, you know we don't have sufficient funds for the Sambhāvaṇā. And even if devotees send cheques by mail to us, you know that there isn't enough time for clearance and credit. Outstation cheques take 15 days to clear. Even if we reckon people will turn up at the Yajña with contributions, how to be sure it will all be in cash and sufficient for the Sambhāvaṇās? It all looks simply impossible to me…*"

Finally, I remonstrated to Mukkūr *Svāmī*: "*So, considering all these problems, please postpone this Yajña".*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* said nothing. He sat glumly and for long minutes, looked downcast, with his eyes half-closed.

Then he looked up and told me in a grave, resigned tone: *"Let me now go and silently do Prārthanā (meditative prayers) to my Śrī Yajñamūrti. I will let you know my decision tomorrow morning."*"

"Start the Vehicle": Verdict of Mahā-Viśvāsam

"Early next morning, Mukkūr *Svāmī* came to me and said:

"It was Perumāl's Ājñā (command) last night that, I must proceed with the Yajña on the proposed dates. No postponement. So, get ready. We must leave for Antarvēdi".

I heard him and looked at him in utter consternation. It was obvious to him that I was unhappy with his decision. But then I had to simply shrug my shoulders as if to say, "*If that's what you wish, well… alright, what more can I say?*" Sensing what was going on inside my mind, Mukkūr *Svāmī* at once said: *"We must have Viśvāsam (Absolute Trust) in Śrī Yajñamūrti. Go now and start the vehicle".*

I rose and walked away to the Maruti van to get it ready to go."

The Terse Telegram that Wrought a Miracle

"No sooner had we started for Antarvēdi, Mukkūr *Svāmī* did a very strange thing…

He asked me to stop the Maruti van outside the head post office at Kākināḍa. Turning to my mother and giving her a sheet of paper, he told her that there were scribbled on it the names and addresses of about 30 devotees. He asked her to go into the post office and send an express telegram to all thirty persons on the list. He dictated to her just one sentence, which he said should be the message on the telegrams:

'*Antarvēdi Yajña on 16th. Please come*'.

If the sentence were to be any longer, he told her, the telegram would cost more to send; and that would mean less money would be left with us when we reached Antarvēdi. My mother and I went into the post office and did exactly what he bid us to do. The terse message was sent over 30 telegrams and after duly dispatching them, we continued on our road journey to Antarvēdi."

The Antarvēdi Multitude

"We reached Antarvēdi at dusk, and Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed the *Pānaka-Ārādhana* ritual.

The ***98th (2nd Kṣētra) Śrī-Svāti-Nakṣatra Śrī-Mahā-Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Mantra-Japa-Hōma-Mahā-Yajña*** began the next day, i.e. 16th May 1989, to be exact, with *Kalaśa Āvāhanam*. There was hardly a score of people in attendance during the first couple of days of the *Yajña*.

And then the miracle happened!

The express telegrams that had been sent only a few days before from Kākināḍa to 30 different persons all over India worked in some mysterious, inexplicable manner!

On the final day of the Antarvēdi *Yajña*, we suddenly saw more than 250-300 people descending from seemingly nowhere, upon the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* in the early pre-dawn hours!

Unexpectedly, they all arrived from cities and towns… from as far away as Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, and Chennai…. Almost everyone who had earlier attended the *Yajña* at Maṅgalagiri -- getting there from all corners of the country -- seemed now to have also turned up for the Antarvēdi *Mahā-Yajña*! And many people came too who had never attended any earlier *Mahā-Yajñas*!

"We came as soon as we received Mukkūr Svāmī's telegram. We never knew where Antarvēdi was situated, but from Vijayawada railway station and bus-stations along the way, we kept asking for directions from ordinary people on the streets and highways … and lo and behold! we found our way at last here! It appears Nṛsiṃha himself was showing us the way!", they all said.

Some of the pilgrims recounted that at various points in time on the journey, total strangers seemed to suddenly show up out of nowhere and give

them proper directions to the remote village… as though they were unappointed, voluntary, and anonymous guides pointing them all, to where exactly they should be headed!

It was truly a miracle!

Every single visitor to Antarvēdi that day also happened to bring cash instead of cheques as their voluntary *Ubhayam* (donation) for the *Yajña*! Soon we found that the camp-treasury was filling up with adequate cash that was needed to cover all expenses, including amounts needed to not only give *Sambhāvaṇā* to everyone concerned, but also to redeem all the small personal debts accrued earlier by us for the sake of the *Yajña*... including the temporary accommodation the kind and generous Marwari friend had extended to us!"

Consummate Mahā-Viśvāsam

"The *2nd Kṣetra Mahā-Yajña* was thus conducted and completed in a grand manner at Antarvēdi, where not until the very last moment did it seem that it would ever get consummated in the way the *Śāstras* enjoin.

Thanks to the cash contributions that poured in just in time, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was able to endow generous *Sambhāvaṇā,* with his usual zeal and generosity upon all the *Ṛtviks*, Priests, *Ārādhakās*, Devotees, and *Paricārakās*.

On the final day, after the *Mahā-Yajña Pūrṇāhuti*, and when the time came for us to depart and return to Kākināḍa, Mukkūr *Svāmī* climbed into our Maruti van and, turning to me, asked with a tired smile on his face:

"Son, tell me now how much money you will need to fill up petrol for the vehicle?"

In all seriousness, I replied: "*Rs. 1000*".

He pulled out from the small bag he was holding ten crisp 100-rupee currency notes and handed them to me, saying:

"It's all the cash left with me now… This too was given by Śrī Yajñamūrti. Take it. But don't you ever again doubt the power of Mahā Viśvāsam (Supreme Faith) in our Lord…."

Even today, in hindsight, the memory of the Antarvēdi *Yajña* gives me goosebumps! For me, it was a firsthand experience of a miracle that had been augured by Mukkūr *Svāmī* in a trance: the miracle of *Mahā-Viśvāsam*."

Beyond the Dashboard: Miracle of an Empty Fuel Tank

"Kētavaram is an ancient Nṛsiṃha site near Guntūr, Andhra Pradesh.

This *Yajña-Bhūmi* too was revealed to Mukkūr *Svāmī* while he was in a trance. Through a divine command (*Perumāḷ Ājñai*) given, Śrī Yajñamūrti revealed He was atop a cave on a hill and on the banks of River Krishna and desired to be worshipped through a *Mantra-Japa*.

We travelled to Guntūr to locate the site. After a long road journey, we were eventually directed towards Bellamkoṇḍa where the locals warned us that the area was a dense forest and was known to be an extremist's hideout and camping zone. We were advised against travelling further beyond that point during hours after dusk. Despite such warnings, around 3:00 p.m., Mukkūr *Svāmī* insisted on proceeding with the journey immediately, stating he did not fear the forest.

We reached Kētavaram without incident. Upon reaching the temple, and there on the banks of the Kṛṣṇa River, at around 5:00 p.m., we performed *Sandhyā-Vandanam*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then spent an entire hour silently in the shrine doing *Yajña Mantra Japa*.

At the end of the *Japa*, when it was time for us to return home to Kākināḍa, I realised I had forgotten to refuel the Maruti van. Having driven the vehicle for well over 100,000 kms, I was very aware of its operational condition and its limits. With what little fuel was still left in its tank, I knew the vehicle would be able to take us no further than 5 kms on the journey home from Kētavaram.

We had more than 25 kms to cover before we had any prospect of getting to the highway to Kākināḍa where we could possibly find a gas station to fuel up. But on that road to the highway, about 20 kms ran through pitch-dark, uninhabited, and dense forestland. I estimated that the van had just about enough fuel to take us 3-to-5 kms before it would sputter to a complete halt right in the middle of the extremists-infested forestland.

Under the circumstances, I advised Mukkūr *Svāmī* that our family should remain in the Kētavaram village and camp there for the night. At dawn, I could take a bus to the nearest fuel station near Guntūr and bring back petrol in a jerry can for our vehicle. But if we did proceed to travel that night itself, we would risk running out of fuel on the way and being stranded midway in the middle of the forest all night. We had my mother and young sister to worry about.

Svāmī laughed at me and dismissed my concerns. He said laconically:

"The same Yajñamūrti who asked me to come here and perform Mantra Japa, do you think he will not take us back safely?!"

He commanded me to: *"get in and start driving the vehicle; I tell you; it will surely go all the way to the highway. And you can then find a fuel station there to fill up".*

Unwillingly, and fearing the worst, I took the wheel again and we drove through the forest that night!

It was an "unforgettable, incredible" experience.

The van I drove, successfully travelled the entire stretch of 25 kms without a hitch -- right through the dense forest and, in fact, even ran an additional 5 kms on the main road! The engine finally stalled and sputtered to a stop only when our vehicle neared the entrance to a wayside petrol station!

As the van was being fuelled up, I looked at Mukkūr *Svāmī* in sheer amazement! He merely smiled gently at me … It was a knowing smile. No word needed to be spoken in implied gloating: "*Didn't I tell you so!"*

Later, when we returned to Kākināḍa, I took the vehicle to the authorised Maruti Service garage to have the fuel system inspected by mechanics there. I told them all about the miraculous journey we had just had. I told them that I suspected the fuel gauge indicator on the dashboard was malfunctioning.

The mechanics looked in and checked the engine systems and fuel gauge. They said everything was working well and there was no apparent fault anywhere. They also confirmed that given the conditions I had told them about, the car certainly could never have done more than 10 kms at best with the fuel level that had been available. Even the service mechanics were dumbfounded… They simply had no explanation as to how the journey could have been possible!

What, however, was made once again clear to me was this: the mysterious power of *Mahā Viśvāsam* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* possessed."

The Search for the Four Markers: Maṭṭapalli

"The revelation of the great Maṭṭapalli Nāthan, Śrī Nṛsiṃha, was also intuited by Mukkūr *Svāmī* when he was seized by a trance-like mood.

The *Yajña-Bhūmi* there got revealed after Mukkūr *Svāmī* had sought, through divine command of Yajñamūrti, directions to a specific location to conduct a *Yajña* – i.e. at a spot that had been revealed to him as having four clearly identified markers that Nṛsiṃha himself had described: Yajñamūrti had told him that the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* spot must be near (a) a mountain (b) a cave, (c) a holy river (Kṛṣṇa), and (d) a forest.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* and I went searching all over the Godāvarī and Kṛṣṇa Districts for such a spot that had been earmarked as *Yajña-Bhūmi*. We visited seven different Nṛsiṃha shrines, one after another, over several months. But each one had to be rejected as the desired site because it lacked either one or more of the four prescribed features.

It was then that, one day in 1992, when he was again lost in a trance, that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was directed to go to the then very remote and deserted village of Maṭṭapalli where he was told he would find the site he was searching for. Before that he conducted a 5-day Mahā Yajña at Maṭṭapalli in 1992. This was 104th Mahā Yajña.

Following Yajñamūrti's command given to him while in trance, Mukkūr *Svāmī* organised and conducted a *Mahā-Yajña* at Maṭṭapalli *Kṣetra* that involved 32 *Hōma Kuṇḍas*. While the initial plan was to conduct the *Yajña* for 32 days, the rituals stretched first to 80 days and then got extended further to 90 days.

By the 90th day, the *Yajña Organising Committee* members had completely run out of funds. Yet Mukkūr *Svāmī* held that he could not disobey the divine command of the Yajñamūrti deity, who, he revealed to us, had wished that another 12 days of rituals inside the temple cave must be performed.

The Committee members were in a quandary. There was no way to abort the ongoing *Yajña* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* was insisting must be continued inside the forested cave of the Maṭṭapalli Hills overlooking the banks of the Kṛṣṇa River. On the other hand, the funds needed to enable continuance were already running out rapidly…

After completing the Yajña on the eve of the Sambhavanai day, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was well short of funds. He went and prayed to Lord Narasiṃha inside the cave. The next day morning (*Vidvat Sadas*), a man smartly dressed in shirt and pants in the manner of an important businessman…and not in *Vedic Svarūpa (attire)* … suddenly arrived there at Maṭṭapalli. He was carrying a briefcase. He told a *Yajña Committee* member that he was there because he had been sent by someone in Chennai who had wished to remain anonymous. On behalf of the gentleman in Chennai, he had

been asked to deliver the briefcase to Mukkūr *Svāmī* while en route to Hyderabad for an urgent business meeting. The man promptly handed over the briefcase to the Committee members and left without further ado.

Inside the briefcase, the Organising Committee members found 3 lakh rupees in cash!

We came to know later that it was the same amount that Mukkūr *Svāmī* already had known and estimated would be needed for expenditure to complete the Maṭṭapalli *Mahā Yajña* … He had, of course, not shared beforehand the information with anyone.

Maṭṭapalli: The "Old Man" again

"When Mukkūr *Svāmī* had first entered the Maṭṭapalli cave to commence the *Mahā-Yajña* rituals there, the idol of Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan that he beheld there he at once was able to recognise!

It resembled the same "*old man*" --- the ***Vayō-Vṛddha of Maṅgalagiri*** --- who had spoken to him back in 1969, prophesying that his destiny in life henceforth would be performing a series of 108 *Nṛsiṃha Yajña*s! And the ethereal voice he then heard too inside the cave-temple was the same as that of the "*old man*" who had appeared before him at the cremation-grounds where his beloved mother had been consigned to flames and it was the same voice which had ordained him to perform the first of the 108 *Mahā-Yajña* in 1982 at Āstika Samājam."

The Womb of Viśvāsam

"Thus, Maṭṭapalli *Kṣetra* too got first revealed to Mukkūr *Svāmī* only when he was in trance. His intuition, or epiphany, that day too was born in the womb of ***Mahā Viśvāsam***."

CHAPTER 28

Āvirbhāvaḥ - आविर्भावः

Śrī Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār experienced frequent trances during his extended daily *Pūjās* (4–5 hours), where he reportedly communed with Lord Nṛsiṃha and received direct instructions, such as sites and *Kṣetras* where *Yajñas* were to be performed or else cancel programmes if "*Nṛsiṃha had not given permission.*" His trance-like moods were not of the corybantic or occultic sort that one might mistakenly associate with other cultish practices or animistic folk traditions. His trances were aligned wholly with ***Bhakti*** traditions of *Bhāva-Samādhi* or *deity-Āveśa* - i.e. an ecstatic communion enabling divine revelation, rather than mere frenzied possession of spirit.

In Viśiṣṭādvaita (*Śrīvaiṣṇava*) exegesis, *Āvirbhāva* describes *Saguṇa* Brahman's episodic *Darśana* (vision) for *Ārādhanā* (worship), not ecstatic states. For instance, in scriptures like the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* or *Divya-Prabandham* commentaries, trances such as what Mukkūr *Svāmī* experienced are described as being all about the *Bhagavān's* ***Arcā-Vigraha*** or ***Antaryāmi*** form becoming perceptible, without implying human possession or trance as known to the world in the ordinary sense of the term.

Āvirbhāva derives from the root *Bhū* (to become) prefixed by *Āvir* (manifestation or appearance), literally denoting '*manifestation,*' '*appearance,*'or '*emergence into visibility.*' In *Śrīvaiṣṇava* theology and broader *Vedic*/Purāṇic contexts, it specifically refers to the divine revelation or visible manifestation of a deity, such as Viṣṇu or his forms, to devotees—often contrasted with *Tirōbhāvaḥ* (withdrawal or disappearance).

Trance or '*spirit possession*' in Sanskrit is typically termed *Āveśaḥ* (**आवेशः**), from *Ā-Viś* (to enter), implying a (often benign or devotional) entry or overwhelming of the self by a deity or spirit, as seen in *bhakti* traditions. Negative possession, however, uses terms like *Pravēśaḥ* or *Bhūtāvēśaḥ*. *Āvirbhāva* lacks this possessive connotation, focusing instead on perceptual revelation only, which is what Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself experienced during his trance-like moods.

The Eternal Adhvaryu: Cosmic Decree of the 108 Yajñas

In *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* and *Pañcarātra* frameworks, such trances represent the deity, Śrī Nṛsiṃha's, *Āvirbhāva*, or manifestation, tailored to the devotee, often via the *Antaryāmin* (indwelling Lord) or *Arcā-Vigraha* (idol) forms, as detailed in ***Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā—***a *Pañcarātra* text which Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself popularised through the ***Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra*** recitations that he relentlessly used to resort to in all *Yajñas* and *Upanyāsas*.

Eye-witness accounts even today describe episodes in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life when Nṛsiṃha spoke through him during *Pravacanams*, claiming Mukkūr *Svāmī* as his eternal ritual priest (*Adhvaryu*) across *Yugas*—from *Viśvambhara* (in the *Kṛta Yuga*) to *Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhā* (in the *Kali Yuga*)—ordaining *Yajñas* like the *Śrī Svāti Mahā-Yajña* for cosmic welfare.

The fullest recorded content of Lord Nṛsiṃha's directive, conveyed verbatim through Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trance during the inaugural *Śrī Svāti Nakṣatra Mahā-Nṛsiṃhā Mahā-Mantra-Japa-Hōma-Yajña* in 1981 at *Āstika Samājam*, spans cosmic history and mandates the 108 *Yajñās* for universal welfare. The following commands and revelations were from the transcribed *Āvirbhāva* during the 106th *Mahā-Yajña* at Siṃhācalam in the year 1993. (This experience has already been described in an earlier *chapter*). What was uttered then during that *Āvirbhāva* was later translated by a devotee as follows:

> ***"I, the Lord who now dwell at Maṭṭapalli [but not merely or only there] since the Kṛta Yuga, have ordained Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhā to conduct the Śrī Svāti Mahā-Yajña purely for the welfare of the universe.***
>
> ***This Yajña is not associated with Kali yuga alone. It originated in the Kṛta Yuga and continues till date.***
>
> ***He [Svāmī] has been the Adhvaryu [ritual priest] since the Kṛta Yuga: you [Assistants/Sēvārthīs/Devotees] have also been assisting him since then.***
>
> ***But for my volition, you would not be privileged to participate in the Yajña. Hence, participate.***
>
> ***Yajñas were conducted for 360, 720, and 20 years in the Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara yugas respectively.***
>
> ***Including the 16 years of Kali yuga [thus far], 32,000 Yajñās (at 1,000 Yajñās for each of the 32 Nṛsiṃha Bījākṣaras) would be conducted in 1,116 years. Hence, partake."***

Delivered in flawless Sanskrit during the *Āvirbhāva* trance, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s **Yajñamūrti** spoke through him at that first *Yajña* (post-receipt of the silver idol of *Yajña-Mūrti*). It was in that moment that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s eternal *Adhvaryu* role across the 4 *Yugas* (as *Viśvambhara*, etc.) was first revealed. Also testified was his participation in prior births too in the same role. The grand overall tally thus finally tied into everything – i.e. with the *Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stotra's* 32 *Akṣarās* and the culmination of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s eventual performance of 107 *Yajñās* (108th being symbolic).

Thus, what becomes evident is this:

In Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s experiences, *Āvirbhāva* manifestation was either personalised *Darśana* (vision) or *Upadēśa* (instruction) as delivered during the trance. It was comparable to *Āveśa* in *Nammāḻvār's* consciousness or in other *Bhāgavata* experiences narrated in *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* hagiographies such as *Divyasūri Caritam*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances were truly *Bhakti-Yoga* culminations, fostering Nṛsiṃha *Vātsalya Upāsanā* (compassion personification) without elements of the other rustic folklore-inspired '*ferocity myths*' (*Ugra-Āveśa*). Instead, they echoed the *Pañcarātra* consecration (*Pratiṣṭhā*) where the Lord '*appears*' in the *Bhakta's* consciousness as *Vigraharūpī*, akin to the experiences of the Āḻvārs, which they describe in their *Pācurams* or as even Vedānta Deśika spoke about in his many works, all of which, in fact, Mukkūr *Svāmī* expounded at great length in his *Upanyāsas*. His 107+ *Yajñās* (e.g., at Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃha, his *Iṣṭa-and Upāsanā Kṣetra*) were thus amplifications of the same fact, positioning his trances as signs of ***Parama-Bhakti*** fruition, not psychic pathology.

The Living Pramāṇa: Modern Legacy of the Guruparamparā

What has, over the years since 2001, emerged clearly in the public domain or collective consciousness of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas all over the world is, hence, a fairly large body of hagiography in the modern day that is based on many eyewitness accounts of devotees interpreting Lord Nṛsiṃha's words through Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances as direct divine *Upadēśa* (instruction) and *Ājñā* (command), revealing his transmigratory cosmic roles, the *Yajña* mandates issued to him, and *Bhakti Rahasya* (secrets) that he himself -- often in flawless Sanskrit oracular pronouncements -- shared with devotees during *Pravachanas*, *Upanyāsa* or *Ārādhanās*.

Utterances relayed verbatim and emphasised in hagiographies (e.g., *mukurnarasimha.blogspot*, *Rāmānuja.org*), embody ***Antaryāmin-Vākya*** (in-dweller's speech) via *Āveśa*, akin to Āḻvārs' *Arulvākya*. And devotees view them as *Pramāṇa* (scriptural authority) for Nṛsiṃha *Upāsanā*, *Mantra-Siddhi* (e.g., *Mantra-Rāja-Pada*), and *Yuga-Dharma* restoration, bereft of '*fierce or terrifying*' myths. In other words, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Nṛsiṃha-Upāsanā* evoked and typified the conception of *Bhakti's* ultimate fruition as expounded in Vedānta Deśika's great *Viśiṣṭādvaita* work, the *Śrī Rahasya Traya Sāra*.

Ahōbila Mutt pontiffs and the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* orthodoxy at large too -- even today -- view Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances positively as authentic signs of *Bhāva-Samādhi*, *Nija-Mānasa-Ārādhanā*, and direct *Nṛsiṃha-Āvirbhāva*, elevating him thus as a rare *Upāsaka* (devotee-priest) with *Mantra-Siddhi* akin to *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Guruparamparā* exemplars.

The 44th Jīyar (Mukkūr *Śrīmad Vedānta Deśika Yateendra Mahādeśikan*), Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own mentor and *Ācāryā*, initiated and unreservedly endorsed his path of worship to the *Ārādhana-Mūrti* (i.e. the silver idol of Śrī Yajñamūrti that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had consecrated for *Yajñās*) and by even publicly honouring his 107 *Vedic Hōmas*. It is not entirely a secret that the *Jīyar* himself was known to enter similar trance-states in his life, thus normalising such experiences as *Parama-Bhakti* fruits as extolled in Nammāḻvār and Deśika *Sampradāya*.

It is well known too today that *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya* (*Viśiṣṭādvaita*) does tacitly accept these types of trances as *Deha-Āveśa* or *Antaryāmin-Sakṣātkāra*, paralleling the 42nd Ahōbila Mutt *Jīyar's Mantra-Siddhi* and Vedānta Deśika's *Stōtra-Rahasya* inspirations (e.g. *Pādukā-Sahasram*, *Garuḍa-Daṇḍakam*... others). A few devotee hagiographies (e.g., *www.sadagopan.org*) go so far as to even hail Mukkūr *Svāmī* as *Aparāvatāram* (partial incarnation) of Vedānta Deśika, with no recorded dissent from Śrīvaiṣṇava orthodoxy or laity.

The Intuited Purāṇa: Revelation of the Eternal Adhvaryu

To corroborate the above accounts of the *Āvirbhāva* trances, I asked MLS *Svāmī* once again to recall any specific incidents that he believed only underscored the '*Cosmic or Yuga Adhvaryu role*' of Mukkūr *Svāmī* and the extraordinary "*Mantra-Siddhi*" potency that he came to possess and exhibit when in the throes of such spiritually elevated moods.

MLS *Svāmī*:

"Regarding the *Yajña Adhavaryu* role you refer to, which was assigned to Mukkūr *Svāmī* by Śrī Yajñamūrti, let me share with you an extraordinary *Purāṇa* narration that Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself intuited and spoke about while in a trance-like mood.

The Full Moon Oblation: Lost Recipe of the *Kṛta Yuga*

During a divine trance (*Āvirbhāva*), the deity Yajñamūrti had requested a specific offering, calling it *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam,* and revealing that it was a dish that, long ago during the *Kṛta-Yuga* had been prepared for Him on one occasion and offered as a special ritual-oblation into the sacrificial fires.

Initially, neither the devotees nor even Mukkūr *Svāmī* were able to comprehend what this dish, *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam*, could be. We were all perplexed until Mukkūr *Svāmī* came forward to decipher the meaning through *Akṣaravibhāgaḥ* (syllabic and phonetic analysis already explained in an earlier chapter). He did it by breaking the Sanskrit vocalisation into four different parts: *Bhōḥ, Gāyata*, *Paṭa*, and *Laṃ*. What he was able to unravel was a marvel indeed in Sanskrit semantics demonstrated as follows:

- **Linguistic Derivation*:*** Mukkūr *Svāmī* connected *Gāyata* to a term in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* referring to butter that got produced as a primordial byproduct during the *Purānic* cosmic churning (*Samudra Mathanam*) of the Devās and Asuras. He then interpreted *Bhōgāyata* to mean "*resident of the ocean shore,*" linking the dish to Lord Jagannath of Puri whose great and ancient temple in Orissa is situated on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Next, *Pada* or *Pattam* was identified as something that was circular in shape; and finally, *Kapālam* as something soft in texture to the touch and *Kāyam* as ground-sugar.

- **The Divine Recipe for *Yajña havis*:** Based on the above analysis, Mukkūr *Svāmī* intuited clearly that the dish *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* should be determined as being the soft *Pūrī* (a kind of flat-shaped fried pancake) that was immersed fully in a thick layer of butter-batter (such that the *Pūrī* became invisible); and the same pancake then being fully smeared with ample ground-sugar. The resultant *Havis* or oblation would thus resemble the *bright full moon in the night sky*!

The far stranger explanation Mukkūr *Svāmī* went on to reveal as *Pramāṇa* for the unravelled *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* was in the form of a hitherto rarely narrated or ever heard *Purānic* story. That legend he then went on to brilliantly narrate was also related directly to a specific passage (*Anuvākaḥ*) from the *Yajur Vēda Kāṇḍam*! It was the legend of "*Kṛṣṇa Sarma*"!

Mukkūr *Svāmī* related a story (see next box) traceable thus to the time of the *Tretā Yuga* to explain the special significance of *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* as a *Yajña* oblation.

The Legend of Kṛṣṇa Sarma: A Purāṇic Testimony of the *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam*

In a small, nondescript village, there lived a very poor but extremely learned Brahmin named Kṛṣṇa Sarma, and his wife, Susheela. They lived in extreme poverty, barely surviving on the grains he was able to collect as daily alms from the citizens of the village (the custom called *Uñchavṛttiḥ*). That village is none other than Mattapalli!

One day, Kṛṣṇa Sarma was unable to gather anything more than a handful of rice as alms. There was very little, thus, to cook at home on that day.

However, it so happened that, on that same day, there arrived suddenly, without prior notice, at Kṛṣṇa Sarma's doorsteps, thirty-two great *Vedic* scholars. Susheela hurried to welcome all of them into the humble home and seated them comfortably in the front yard. The *Ṛṣis* told Kṛṣṇa Sarma's wife that, since they had travelled very long through forests and hills, all on foot, they were utterly exhausted and hungry.

Susheela was greatly perturbed! To her horror, she found there was nothing at home to cook and offer to the 32 *Vedavids* except the handful of raw rice that had been collected as alms on that day. Frantically, she waited for her husband, Kṛṣṇa, Sarma, to return home from the banks of the River Kṛṣṇa to where, earlier, he had gone for his daily morning bath and ritual ablutions.

While Kṛṣṇa Sarma was performing rituals on the banks of the Kṛṣṇa River, the *Vedic* scholars sat at his home, making themselves comfortable and hoping that the host and hostess of the house would soon extend to them warm, generous hospitality, plenty of food, and nourishment.

While they waited for the man of the house, Kṛṣṇa Sarma, to return and for the wife, Susheela, to finish cooking up a hearty meal for them, the 32 *Vedavids* began to recite the ***5th Kāṇḍam*** of the ***Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vēda***. This section of the Vēda contained specific mantras that, when chanted with faith, were known to remove poverty.

By and by, Kṛṣṇa Sarma did return home, and when he sized up the dire situation, he and his wife Susheela were in, he became greatly distressed. It pained him to see that he had no food for the *Ṛṣis* and would therefore be guilty of showing honoured houseguests no courtesy, no hospitality, no respect. He wrung his hands in great despair, not knowing what to do…

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, there arrived at Kṛṣṇa Sarma's doorsteps another Brahmin. A large retinue of servants also followed him, carrying large loads of grain, lentils, bags of vegetables, fruits and legumes, cooking oil, sugar, salt … utensils and ladles… everything that might be needed to cook up a royal banquet.

Without further ado, and without introducing himself or explaining his purpose, the Brahmin immediately set about instructing his servants to begin preparing a grand feast for the 32 *Vedavids*. The dishes served that day, and the feast enjoyed by the *Ṛṣis* included the delicacy called *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam*! The radiant faced (*Tējas*) Brahmin too sat down along with the 32 *Vedic* guests and partook of the feast with them. He took his own time enjoying the repast and urged the guests not to take leave until he himself had finished his meal.

As it came to be discovered later by Kṛṣṇa Sarma, the Brahmin who had appeared mysteriously and so suddenly from nowhere was none other than Lord Nṛsiṃha Himself in disguise, but whose *Tējas*, the spiritual resplendence emanating from his presence, could not be concealed from view!

The *Purāṇic* narrative went on to underscore the delectation that Śrī Nṛsiṃha had derived and savoured from consuming the *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* at that feast in the company of thirty-two revered *Vedavids*."

The Linguistic Archaeologist

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* narrated the above *Purānic* story with great verve and conviction of faith. The story served to emphasise that *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* is an *Uttama Prasādam* – an oblation of exceptional excellence for *Yajña* purposes and when offered into the sacrificial fires (to the fervent chanting of the 32-syllabled *Nṛsiṃha Mantra*) has the power to negate and remove all forms of poverty (*Dāridryam*), and to grant flourishing wealth (*Kṣēmam*) to one and all. The offerings in *Yajña* of this unique kind of oblation are traditionally made during the month of *Adi* (July-Aug) specifically on the day of the asterism of the *Rēvatī-Nakṣatra*.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, while conducting *Mahā-Yajñas*, used to make references to this *Purānic* story by relating it and then segueing into the *5th Kāṇḍa of the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Vēda* and pronouncing those passages as a potent *Vedic* prayer for *Lōka-Kalyāṇa* or *Lōka-Kṣēma* (Universal Well-Being) and especially effective in liberating devotees suffering from the indignities of poverty in life. The mantra blessed them with prosperity, both material and spiritual.

Having himself, in his youthful years, borne with great fortitude so many tribulations that grinding poverty wreaked upon his family, but having overcome it all eventually, Mukkūr *Svāmī* believed implicitly… with intense *Mahā Viśvāsam* … in the great power of the *Vēda Śabda* to bestow prosperity on one and all.

The reason why I am now relating to you this unusual episode in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life -- where the significance of *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* was revealed -- is really to emphasise that when it came to specific interpretations of *Vēda* passages and *Purāṇa*, the way he was able to derive linguistic inferences and interpretations from them was uniquely his. His insights are not to be found even today in any other standard scriptural work or manuals.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* deciphering the *Bhōgāyata-Paṭalam* can thus be likened to a linguistic archaeologist discovering a single ancient word or script and reconstructing from it an entire cultural edifice. By breaking the

word down into its '*Syllabic DNA'* (*Pada-Vibhāga*), he was able to recover a lost '*recipe'* … a recipe for divine grace that had long been forgotten since the first Age of the world... the *Kṛta Yuga*."

A Torrential Oracle: Ten-Million-Syllable Revelation

"When he was absorbed in a trance, Mukkūr *Svāmī* would sometimes spontaneously recite thousands of verses in Sanskrit. Not even the most erudite Sanskrit or *Vedic* scholar could identify them or trace them into any other ancient scriptural text. A few of those utterances of his could not be represented by means of any existing script. But the method and manner of his recitations were torrential, extemporaneous, and spellbinding.

In Naṅganallūr, Chennai, he recited the *Bhāradvāja-Hṛdayam* (*32,000 Ślokas*) in praise of Śrī Maṭṭapallī Nāthan all in one go! Also, similarly, on another occasion, he went into a trance and chanted non-stop the entire *Śrīvatsa-Hṛdayam* (*300 Ślokas*).

On other occasions, he recited in profuse, nonstop, and extemporaneous chants, very rare works he attributed to *Maharṣis Aṅgirasa* and *Atri*. Later, when he was asked to name the source for his chants, Mukkūr *Svāmī* replied that he did not really rely upon, nor was he quoting from, any scripted texts – he confessed that it was Lord *Yajñamūrti* who conveyed to him the words directly.

On the fifth day of one *Yajña* being conducted during a nine-day series, Mukkūr *Svāmī* announced he would be chanting a *Nṛsiṃha Mantra* containing *10,000 syllables* (*Akṣarās*). He began chanting non-stop for two hours straight. The audience was left mesmerised. On the following days, he continued the marathon, completing another *7,000 syllables* just in one sitting. He did not stop but kept on going, unmindful of where he was and who was present. He was deeply immersed in trance and the words just kept flowing out of him in a cascade…

Sometime late that night, the trance broke, and he woke up... utterly spent in physical energy but mental strength retained as fresh as ever. He was still strong enough to tell us all that the mantras he had just concluded chanting contained over ten million syllables!

The Song of the Woods

"There was another extraordinary episode I must tell you about when Mukkūr *Svāmī* suddenly began composing a musical piece while he was lost in a trance."

The Vēdādri Awakening: The Spontaneous Birth of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s Carnatic Kīrtanās

It happened during the *Vēdādri Mahā-Yajña* (near Nalgōṇḍa, Telangana State). With *Perumāḷ Yajñamūrti's* blessings, Mukkūr *Svāmī* in fact thereafter went on to compose many inspired *Kṛtis* and *Kīrtanā* in pure Carnatic music style and standards.

The first *Kṛti* composed was on Vēdādri Lakṣmī Nṛsiṃha, a beautiful song penned by Mukkūr *Svāmī* in chaste Tamil:

ஆரணமலை வாழ் ஆளரியே உனைக் காரணம் என நாம் இனி அறிந்தேன் |

Āraṇamalai vāḻ āḷariyē unaik kāraṇam ena nām ini aṟintēṉ |.

"O majestic Lion (Narasimha) who resides upon the sacred Vedic Hills (Aranamalai)! I have now fully realised that You alone are the ultimate, primordial cause behind everything in existence."

Note: *Āraṇamalai (Āraṇam means Vēdam, and hill is Adri. Hence it is called Vēdādri)*

Mukkūr *Svāmī* went on to compose about 300 more songs in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Hindi, and, yes, English too! All his lyrical writings are laced with *Upaniṣad Sāra*… the essence of the *Upaniṣads*.

For example, the song ***ஒன்றானவன்; அவன் ஒன்றானவன்*** … *'**Ōṉṟāṉavaṉ; Avaṉ Ōṉṟāṉavaṉ** '* meaning "*He is the One; He alone is that One.*" In the *Bhakti/Vedānta* sense, the song conveys the meaning that Lord Nṛsiṃha is the "*Single, Non-Second Reality, and that very same One Deity appears as all other*..." The song, in yet another sense, encompasses all the *32 Brahma-Vidyās* contained in the *108 Upaniṣads.*

So, one can easily conclude that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s trances were not only transcendental but also quite often happened to spark artistic creativity too."

The Vṛndāvan Trance: Secreted Notebook of the Future

The Vṛndāvan Trance: Secreted Notebook of the Future

"Mukkūr *Svāmī* once experienced a divine trance (*Āvirbhāva*) during a *Yajña* which he was performing in Vṛndāvan. It lasted all of eight full days.

During that period, the Deity of Maṭṭapalli, Nṛsiṃha *Perumāḷ*, manifested in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s consciousness, and he began to speak nonstop while immersed in a dazed mood.

One devotee present on that occasion, a gentleman named Śrī Sāraṇāthan (then a high-ranking official of the Indian Telephones Department), sat beside Mukkūr *Svāmī*, who was lost in a trance, and began writing down in a long size notebook, the spontaneous utterances that were spewing out in a torrent.

The notebook was shown to Mukkūr *Svāmī* after he recovered. He read the notes very carefully, which made no sense or coherence to others. But after reading them, he was able to understand it all and made some startling revelations.

His revelations were about future occurrences that would take place. There was a clear reference to a book on *Viśiṣṭādvaita Siddhāntam* that had been long ago authored by *Svāmī* Vēdānta Dēśikaṉ known as '*Nigama Parimaḷam*'. It was an exhaustive commentary on *Nammāḻvār's Tiruvāymoḻi*. In that trance it was revealed that the book will be found soon. Mukkūr *Svāmī* praised the book as one of the most impactful works for establishing the cardinal foundations of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. However, since the trance had ended abruptly and rather inconclusively, Mukkūr *Svāmī* abruptly stopped explaining any further revelations. He snapped the notebook shut, and, to our utter surprise, he told us that he would read no further from it. He told us that since the noting in the book contained a few cryptic predictions about a future event that would occur, and which would have a mysterious significance on human affairs… Śrī Nṛsiṃha willed that predictions should not be revealed.
As it turned out to be, that notebook later somehow got lost or misplaced. None of us knew how. But after several months, it was again recovered, found in musty old archives… And then again, we lost it!

A few years later, during a *Nṛsiṃha Yajña* he was conducting in Madras, Mukkūr *Svāmī* suddenly lost his senses and lapsed into a trance. The Deity speaking through him revealed that the same notebook had, by divine will, been secreted away and would never again be discovered."

Disavowal of Human Authorship

"Thus, it was quite evident to us all that Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself did not often vividly recall or remember any of the *Āvirbhāva* experiences he had had. Even when audio-recordings were played back to him, he confessed that whatever words emanated from his trances were not his own but were those

spoken by *Yajñamūrti*. He then revealed to us that even the well-known work, ***Maṭṭapalli-Maṅgaḷāṣṭaka-Stōtra,*** attributed to his authorship today was not really his own composition. It was divine verse that Śrī Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha had merely conveyed through him."

PART 5

The Noetic Mind and *Mahā-Yajña*

CHAPTER 29

The Noetic Mind

Beyond the Mystic

One of the last few questions I asked MLS Svāmī in the series of interviews I had with him was this very important one:

- ***Was Mukkūr Svāmī a mystic?***

MLS *Svāmī* did not give a direct response to the question. All he said was that translating *Vedic* concepts into English, particularly words like "*Mystic*" or "*Mysticism,*" are inadequate and inaccurate. He cited the work of Indologists and colonial scholars, like **Arthur Berriedale Keith** (often cited as A. B. Keith), where word-for-word translations often diluted or even mutilated the original meanings in the *Vedic* texts.

Indeed, there is no single word in the *Vēdas* or *Upaniṣads* that precisely matches the Western notion of '*mysticism*' (direct, unmediated union with the divine) or '*mystic*' (one achieving such union), as these are modern interpretive lenses applied retrospectively.

Vedic seers, termed *Ṛṣis* (from ***Dṛś***, "*to see*"), are described as intuiting eternal truths or mantras through inner vision, only akin to mystical perception, but not really the same.

In Western narratives, terms like Kavi, Muni, Siddhar and others are often used as loose synonyms for ***Ṛṣi***. The ***Rigveda*** (for example *RV 8.79.1*) describes *Ṛṣi* as a '*seer of vibration and light*' possessing supra-rational insight that evokes poetic-mystical revelation. The word *Upaniṣad* itself suggests '*secret doctrine*' or '*super-sensory meanings*' referring to esoteric knowledge that dispels ignorance (*Avidyā*) leading to *Brahman-realisation*.

So, there really is no dedicated term like '*mystic*' that exists in the *Vēdas* or *Upaniṣads,* although practices like *Yoga* in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* emphasise breath

control and self-absorption for divine union, paralleling mysticism but without the label.

What Western scholars who engage in translating *Vedic* texts and conceptions fail to appreciate fully is that *Vedic/Upanishadic* emphasis lies mainly on *Jñāna* (knowledge), *Darśana* (vision), and *Mokṣa* (liberation) via the *Ṛṣis*' **intuitive seeing**, not Western *mysticism's ecstatic* or *theistic union*—although today, many modern so-called *Gurus* do claim that they are propagating ***Neo-Vedānta*** that teaches what apparently aligns the two.

The Four States of Immersion: Mukkūr Svāmī and the Archetype of Nammāḻvār

MLS *Svāmī* maintained that rather than trying to label Mukkūr *Svāmī* using Western Indological characterisations of mystic or mysticism, one should try to understand him and his mind by examining our own *Vedic* and typically *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* archetypes or tropes. He reminded me again of the verse to which he had earlier alluded:

> ***கருவிலேய் நெஞ்சிலேய் நிலையுலேய் ஆழியுலேய்***
> ***ஆதரங்கள் ஆய் ஆழியின் ஆற்றற்கு ஆய்***
> ***நான்முகை நான்முகனாகி ஞானமா நானே***
> ***பாவினை போக்கு ஆழ்வாரே பாடினேன் பாணி***
>
> ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē***
> ***Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy Āḻiyiṉ Ātraṟku Āy***
> ***Nāṉmukai Nāṉmukaṉāki Ñāṉamāy Nāṉē***
> ***Pāviṉaip Pōkku Āḻvārē Pāṭiṉēṉ Pāṇi***
>
> ***(Gist)****: Even in the womb (karuvil), heart (neṇjil), steadfast form (nilaiyul), and ocean depths (āzhiyul), you were the divine refuge (ādharaṅgaḷ); you became the ocean's Lord (āzhiyin āṭṭraṉ), the four-faced Brahmā (nāṉmukai nāṉmukhaṉ) embodying supreme knowledge (ñāṉamā nāṉ), O Āḻvār who dispels sins (pāviṉai pōkku āzhvārē)—with folded hands, I sing to thee!*
>
> ***(Alternate Gist):*** *"He exists in the womb, the heart, and the deep cosmic ocean as the ultimate support of all. Manifesting as the creator and supreme wisdom, He dissolves all sins. O Āḻvār! I sing these verses in praise of that divine power."*

The verse is often quoted by the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* devotee of Nammāḻvār, whose prenatal divine eloquence and Viṣṇu-*Avatāra*-like qualities were exhibited by the *Āḻvār*

even at birth and which became even more prominent in four distinct but concurrent states of consciousness as he progressed from the infant to the adult stage in life.

The four states in the phrase ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy*** symbolise progressive stages of Nammāḻvār's eternal, divine immersion in Viṣṇu-consciousness, from *foetal existence to cosmic totality*, emphasising his prenatal spiritual precocity and non-human incarnation.

1. ***Karuvilē* (கருவிலேய்):**
   Refers to the '*womb or foetal*' stage. It signifies that Nammāḻvār was divinely inspired even before birth, possessing *Bhakti* and verbal prowess (*Vāgvaikāri*) as Viṣṇu's *Amśa* (portion), not an ordinary human foetus.
2. ***Neñcilē* (நெஞ்சிலேய்):**
   Means '*in the heart*' or innate core consciousness. This denotes his heart as the seat of unwavering devotion (*Hrdaya-Ākāra Bhakti*), where divine knowledge and eloquence both resided intrinsically from infancy, and beyond physical actions like crying, feeding, or other bodily or mental functions.
3. ***Nilaiyilē* (நிலையுலேய்):**
   Indicates '*in the firm/steady state*' or established mental posture. Describes the Āḻvār's immobile meditation under the tamarind tree for 16 years post-birth (at the temple at Āḻvār-Tirunagari, Tamil Nadu), symbolising steadfast yogic *Sthira-Avasthā*, where he remained immersed in Brahman-consciousness without worldly engagement.
4. ***Āḻiyilē* (ஆழியுலேய்)**:
   Denotes '*in the ocean*' or cosmic expanse. Represents the primordial milk ocean (*Kṣīrōdaka-Sāgaraḥ*, Viṣṇu's abode), portraying Nammāḻvār as the ultimate refuge (*Ādhāraṅgaḷ*) pervading all existence, akin to Viṣṇu's cosmic form.

The Pathos of the Eternal Soul: Sleepless Yearning of Nammāḻvār

Now, Mukkūr *Svāmī* was a great devotee of Nammāḻvār. Some of his discursive expositions on the Āḻvār's *Bhakti* experiences, related through the *Pācurams* in the

Tiruvāymōḻi were so moving that audiences listening to them found themselves weeping with melting emotions.

On one occasion, I heard Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s exposition of the opening verse of Nammāḻvār's ***Tiruviruttam***: …

***Nammāḻvār's Tiruviruttam* Verse 01**

பொய்ந்நின்ற ஞானமும் பொல்லா ஒழுக்கும் அழுக்குடம்பும்
இந்நின்ற நீர்மை இனி யாம் உறாமை, உயிர் அளிப்பான்
எந்நின்ற யோனியுமாய்ப் பிறந்தாய்! இமையோர் தலைவா!
மெய்ந்நின்று கேட்டருளாய் அடியேன் செய்யும் விண்ணப்பமே.

Poynniṉra Ñāṉamum Pollā Oḻukkum Aḻukkuṭampum
Inniṉra Nīrmai Iṉi Yām Uṟāmai, Uyir Aḷippāṉ
Enniṉra Yōṉiyumāyp Piṟantāy! Imaiyōr Talaivā!
Meynniṉru Kēṭṭaruḷāy Aṭiyēṉ Ceyyum Viṇṇappamē.

To save us from false knowledge, From evil ways and the dirt of the body,
To save us from coming again and again, to all these, and to give us life,
Thou, Lord of the Immortals, Camest down here, Taking birth in many a womb,
And accepting many a form. Hearken, Lord, to my submission true.

"O Lord of the Celestials! You took various births in all forms of life just to save us. My humble plea is this: please graciously listen, so that I may no longer suffer from false knowledge, wicked conduct, and this impure body that binds me to this worldly existence."

And then he went on to further elaborate upon the following two Nammāḻvār *Pācuram* in the same text… And the way Mukkūr *Svāmī* described the '*dark night of the soul*' - *Bhāva* brimming in those last two verses, was indeed heart-wrenching in its pathos:

Nammāḻvār's Tiruviruttam Verse 97

எழுவதும் மீண்டே படுவதும் பட்டு எனை ஊழிகள் போய்க்
கழிவதும் கண்டுகண்டு எள்கல் அல்லால், இமையோர்கள் குழாம்
தொழுவதும் சூழ்வதும் செய் தொல்லை மாலைக் கண்ணாரக் கண்டு
கழிவதோர் காதல் உற்றார்க்கும் உண்டோ கண்கள் துஞ்சுதலே?

Eḻuvatum mīṇṭē paṭuvatum paṭṭu eṉai ūḻikaḷ pōyk
Kaḻivatum kaṇṭukaṇṭu eḷkal allāl, imaiyōrkaḷ kuḻām
Toḻuvatum sūḻvatum sey tollai mālaik kaṇṇārak kaṇṭu
Kaḻivatōr kātal utrāṟkkum uṇṭō kaṇkaḷ tuñcutalē?

To be born, to die, Age after age, age after age, to die and to be born,
Those who can see and laugh at this futility, Surely, they will yearn to end it
By turning in love To Him, the Origin, Round whom the Immortals gather in worship, how can there be any sleep for them?

"Having witnessed the repetitive cycle of birth and death across countless ages and felt weary of it, I have now seen the eternal Lord—whom the gods ever-worship—with my own eyes. For one drowned in such an overwhelming love for Him, can there ever be sleep for the eyes?"

Nammāḻvār's Tiruviruttam Verse 95

யாதானும் ஓர் ஆக்கையில் புக்கு அங்கு ஆப்புண்டும் ஆப்பு அவிழ்ந்தும்
மூது ஆவியில் தடுமாறும் உயிர் முன்னமே, அதனால்
யாதானும் பற்றி நீங்கும் விரதத்தை நல் வீடுசெய்யும்
மாதாவினை பிதுவை திருமாலை வணங்குவனே.

Yātāṉum ōr ākkaiyil pukku aṅku āppuṇṭum āppu aviḻntum
Mūtu āviyil taṭumāṟum uyir muṉṉamē, ataṉāl
Yātāṉum patri nīṅkum viratattai nal vīṭuceyyum
Mātāviṉai pituvai tirumālai vaṇaṅkuvaṉē.

Entering a body: Being wedged in it, being unwedged,
Thus, the soul struggles endlessly, So, betimes, somehow, I will turn
To Him who is my mother and my father, And the Lord of liberation.

"O Lord of the Celestials! You took various births in all forms of life just to save us. My humble plea is this: please graciously listen, so that I may no longer suffer from false knowledge, wicked conduct, and this impure body that binds me to this worldly existence."

Many *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* traditional commentators, and even modern Tamil literary scholars, are still not able to explain satisfactorily how and when Nammāḻvār familiarised himself with '*Sangam*' love-poetry conventions; it remains as much a mystery as the knowledge of *Vēdas* and *Upaniṣads* attributed to him.

The Archetypal Mirror: Alignment with the Four States of Nammāḻvār

Given that Mukkūr *Svāmī* drew such great inspiration from Nammāḻvār, it should be hardly surprising that he followed in the *Āḻvār's* footsteps and in his own life. He too traversed those four states, described in the phrase ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy***. In large parts, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own life seemed to mirror that of Nammāḻvār:

1. ***Karuvilē* (கருவிலேய்):** He was divinely inspired even before birth, as otherwise how is one to explain the extraordinary *Bhakti* and verbal prowess (*Vāgvaikāri*) that he possessed? By age 8, he had already mastered the seven *Kāṇḍas* of the *Yajurveda* as well as the entire *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇa*.
2. ***Neñcilē* (நெஞ்சிலேய்):** Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s devotees saw that his heart too was a virtual seat of unwavering devotion (*Hrdaya-Ākāra Bhakti*), where both divine knowledge and eloquence resided intrinsically.
3. ***Nilaiyilē* (நிலையுலேய்):** Mukkūr *Svāmī*, in his many *Yajñas* and trances (*Āvirbhāva),* was in emulation of the immobile meditative ways of Nammāḻvār, symbolising steadfast yogic *Sthira-Avasthā*, where he remained immersed in Brahman-consciousness without worldly engagement.
4. ***Āḻiyilē* (ஆழியுலேய்):** There was an element of '*Cosmic*' or '*Oceanic*' expanse in the manner that Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed his *Mahā-Yajñas*. They transcended mere ritualism to symbolise universal humanism of epic *Vedic* proportions.

The Catalytic Mind: Pre-Existent Understanding

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s learning years at the Madurāntakam *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* and his later tutelage under his elder brother, Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār, were strictly and completely in the ancient *Vedic* mould of *Guru-Śiṣya-Paramparā* and tradition.

• What was there in his learning of the Vēdas and Itihāsa/Purāṇa that set him apart from other Vedavids who also underwent the same curriculum and rigour?

Modern definitions of *learning* describe it as the process of acquiring new understanding, knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, attitudes, and preferences. True learning … and *Vedic* learning…, often mistaken to be by those who do not understand it, is not just rote memorisation or the accumulation of facts, but involves grasping the meaning, making connections, and being able to apply knowledge in different contexts.

This aspect of *Vedic* learning is well captured in the Tamil epigram of **Tiruvaḷḷuvar,** which, in fact, Mukkūr *Svāmī* frequently used to quote in his discourses —

Tiruvaḷḷuvar's Tirukkuṟaḷ (Kuṟaḷ 391):

கற்க கசடற கற்பவை கற்றபின் நிற்க அதற்குத் தக

Kaṟka Kasaṭaṟak Kaṟpavai Kaṟpapiṉ Niṟka Ataṟkut Taka.

"Learn thoroughly and, without fault, what should be learned, then conduct yourself according to that learning."

"Learn that which is worth learning and learn it thoroughly without any flaws. Once you have learned, let your conduct be worthy of your learning."

The traditional commentary on this verse, as he used to emphasise, was that ***Learning* (*கற்க*)** is not complete without ***Understanding* (*அறிதல்*)**. He explained to his audiences in the *Upanyāsas* that true learning involves:

(a) Understanding the subject deeply,

(b) Removal of doubts and misconceptions, and

(c) Internalising the knowledge so it can guide conduct.

This *Vedic* approach to *Learning*, in fact, aligns closely with modern educational and psychological perspectives, which state that learning is effective only when it leads to comprehension and the ability to use knowledge meaningfully. Viewed from this perspective of *Vedic* Learning, the suggestion that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s learning experiences were that of a ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy*** kind only gains further credence.

In other words, Mukkūr *Svāmī* exhibited *Understanding* even without *Learning*. Pre-existent *Understanding* seemed to only complement and supplement his post-facto *Learning* of the *Vēda*, *Itihāsa-Purāṇa*, *Āgama*, *Yajña Śāstra* and the Āḻvār *Prabhandhams*… It did not seem as though *Understanding* was the *Learning's* outcome. It was a catalyst.

The Noetic Mind: A Modern Theory for varieties of Ancient Religious Experiences

The educated class of the modern day which sets very great store by rationality, would naturally be very sceptical about the claim of ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy***. It would seem incredulous that inborn *understanding* could ever pre-exist, catalyse, or precede conscious efforts of *learning*.

While interviewing MLS *Svāmī* on this specific subject matter, I was very mindful of such well-founded scepticism. Yet, the evidence that was presented to me in support of such a claim, as clearly testified by eyewitnesses in Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life, left me searching for a '*rational explanation*'. If Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mind was not typically '*mystical*', and if his extraordinary *Yajña* experiences cannot be classed as '*mysticism*', then how is one to explain his trances and to study his mental states?

It was in trying to find an answer to this intriguing question that I began to theorise upon Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mind.

My theory is that his mind was of the ***Noetic*** kind.

The Noetic Frontier: Bridging Objective Science and the Mastery of Inner Knowing

Noetic science is a multidisciplinary field focused on the study of consciousness, subjective experience, intuition, and what is sometimes called '*inner knowing*' or direct

insight. It is called a science because its proponents aim to use scientific tools, methods, and research frameworks to examine these topics, though the field is often criticised for lacking rigorous empirical foundations and being labelled pseudoscience by mainstream science.

- The word noetic comes from Greek *noēsis/noētikos*, meaning ***insight, inner wisdom, or direct understanding***.
- *Noetic science* seeks to bridge objective scientific techniques (measurement, experiment, observation) and subjective ways of knowing such as intuition, revelation, and spiritual experience.
- Topics under its study include altered states of consciousness, intuition, extrasensory perception, and connections between mind and matter (such as claims about thought influencing physical reality).
- The founders of this field of scientific studies, notably NASA Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell, established the I**nstitute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) in 1973** to bring scientific inquiry to questions traditionally addressed by philosophy, spirituality, and metaphysics.
- Advocates insist that even subjective experiences—though difficult to quantify—can be studied systematically using scientific methods, laboratory experiments, and peer review.
- Research attempts include studies on meditation, healing, intuition, and collective consciousness, applying both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Mainstream scientists often regard *noetic science* as pseudoscience because its topics (telepathy, mind-matter interactions, etc.) have not yielded reliable, repeatable results under controlled scientific conditions.
- The field's inclusion of metaphysical, spiritual, and paranormal claims places it at the margins of accepted science, with ongoing debate about its validity.

Nonetheless, proponents emphasise the importance of exploring the full range of human experience, including phenomena that traditional science currently cannot explain.

The Noetic Signature

Noetic science occupies a unique—and controversial—space, attempting to apply scientific methodology to the inner workings of consciousness and experience.

A noetic person is recognised as someone who experiences or accesses noetic knowledge, which refers to inner wisdom, direct knowing, intuition, or insight that transcends ordinary sensory perception and intellectual analysis. This almost exactly corresponds to what, in Śrī-Vaiṣṇava parlance, is said to be ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy***.

The mystic mind and noetic mind represent distinct modes of consciousness. In mystic experience, there is ecstatic, passive absorption—marked by transiency, passivity, and a sense of '*more real than reality*'. '*Noetic*' mind, on the other hand, is intuitive and possesses authoritative knowing or insight into profound truths, carrying a sense of objective certainty beyond rational intellect. It prioritises discriminative wisdom over emotional mysticism. The '*pure noetic*' is the higher *mānasik* way yielding authoritative, intuitive truths (*Jñāna*). It transcends psychic visions through discriminative wisdom, aligning actions with the divine rather than selfish drives. *Ādhyātmikam* (**आध्यात्मिकम्**) is a Sanskrit term that approximates '*noetic*' meaningfully in a Vedāntic context, as it emphasises inner, intuitive and spiritual knowledge over sensory or external cognition.

Individuals who possess a noetic mind are said to often have life experiences like those Mukkūr *Svāmī* had, viz.:

- Precocity in *Vedic* learning and especially *Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭha*.
- Phenomenal *Smṛti Balam*.
- Extraordinary *Vāk-Paṭutvam*
- The "*Miracle of Maṅgalagiri*".
- The synchronicity in the sudden appearance of the *Yajñamūrti* idol representing the deity *Yajñeśa*.
- The realisation, from ancient *Purānic* lore that it is the *Yajña* form, of worship that delights Śrī Nṛsiṃha the most. And that *Purāṇa* dates all the way back to memories of the very first *Kalpa-Yuga* involving *Sutapa* and *Pṛśni*.

- The *Nṛsiṃha Āvirbhāva* trance during the *Mahā-Yajña* (in 1981 at the *Āstika Samājam*), in which the deity, as *Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan,* was first heard speaking.

- Repeat encounter with the mysterious *Vayō-Vṛddha* at the mother's cremation.

- Totally internalised *Mahā-Viśvāsam*.

In Noetic Science, such experiences are characterised by:

- ***Ineffability*:** The experience is difficult to put into words.

- ***Noetic Quality*:** A profound sense of truth or insight.

- ***Transiency*:** The experience tends to be brief but impactful.

- ***Passivity*:** The experience feels like something that happens to the person rather than controlled by them.

These traits were first articulated by the philosopher and psychologist **William James** (1842-1910 CE), who studied mystical and spiritual experiences and coined the term '*noetic quality*' to explain their powerful sense of knowledge and significance.

Noetic persons, the science says, might manifest inner knowing through *intuition, embodied sensations, or vivid dreams* among other ways, exhibiting a unique '*noetic signature*' comprising factors like healing, knowing the future, or communication with non-physical beings.

Researchers and practitioners affiliated with the **Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS)** are, even today, carrying out extensive field research to explore and validate such experiences empirically.

In brief, a noetic person is anyone who has direct, intuitive access to knowledge beyond the five senses and rational intellect, often associated with spiritual experiences, though it can also include everyday intuition and inner guidance.

The Primordial Seers: Ṛṣis as the Original Masters of Noetic Insight

The ancient *Ṛṣis* of India who intuited the *Vedic* mantras and directly apprehended *Vedic* truths (often described as *Apauruṣēya*, meaning not of human origin) can indeed be considered as noetic persons in the sense used by modern noetic science.

Reasons for Considering Ṛṣis as Noetic Persons:

- The *Ṛṣis* were profound seers and sages who attained direct intuitive insight or *Mantra Dṛṣṭi* (vision of the mantra), which is a form of inner knowing or revelation beyond ordinary sensory perception or discursive reasoning.
- Their knowledge was said to be received through meditative and contemplative states, symbolic of deep consciousness and spiritual insight, resembling the noetic emphasis on intuition, insight, and higher states of consciousness.
- They embodied what could be described as superior inner wisdom or consciousness that *penetrated cosmic truths*, aligning with the noetic characterisation of *accessing knowledge through direct experience or intuition*.
- Ancient Indian accounts honour *Ṛṣis* not just as poets or thinkers but as masters of all knowledge, including spiritual, scientific, and philosophical realms, echoing the noetic ideal of integrating subjective and objective knowing.
- Their insights anticipated or paralleled some modern scientific ideas about consciousness, unity of existence, and cosmic awareness, resonating with noetic science's premise that consciousness is fundamental and not simply a brain product.

The Field of Universal Consciousness: Mapping the Noetic Lineage from Ṛṣis to Āḻvārs

Many commentators, both in the East and West, note that *Ṛṣis'* knowledge was partly inspired, intuitive revelation working beyond deductive reason, much like noetic phenomena described today.

The *Ṛṣis* are often described as having accessed a field of universal consciousness or energy aware of itself, a core assumption of noetic science.

Their influence on various branches of knowledge (spiritual, medical, ethical, cosmological) reflects the broad scope that noetic science seeks to explore systematically.

In summary, the ancient *Ṛṣis* of India manifested the qualities of noetic minds through their direct, intuitive apprehension of cosmic and spiritual realities beyond

sensory experience and intellectual reasoning, paralleling the concepts explored in modern noetic science.

Besides the ancient *Ṛṣis*, in the latter-day *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* pantheon of saints and preceptors, several notable persons did possess noetic minds. The most well-known examples were Nammāḻvār, Tiruppāṇāḻvār, Nāthamuni, and Ādivaṇ Śaṭhakōpa.

The Modern Ṛṣis: Mukkūr Svāmī and the 20th-Century Lineage of Noetic Mastery

Several figures from the 20th century in India too exemplified unmistakably noetic minds through their profound direct insights, inner visions, and intuitive apprehensions of ultimate reality, akin to the ancient *Ṛṣis' Mantra-Drishti*. These individuals accessed non-sensory knowledge via meditative states, super-sensory experiences, and self-realisation, often describing ineffable truths of consciousness and unity.

Key Examples

- **Śrī Aurobindo (1872–1950):** Experienced *Nirvāṇa* in 1908 as a featureless, absolute reality flooding all existence with inexpressible peace and silence, beyond mental abstraction—a direct noetic vision of the transcendent self as described in the *Upaniṣads*. His inner sight as a '*seer*' penetrated spiritual truth, integrating it into a supramental consciousness that unified subjective intuition with cosmic knowledge.
- **Ramaṇa Maharṣi (1879–1950):** At age 16, this '*Sage of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai*' underwent a near-death-like self-realisation where ego dissolved into effortless ***'I'*** awareness, sustaining heightened consciousness amid bodily cessation—an innate noetic grasp of the eternal Self beyond time and senses. His self-enquiry method revealed direct inner knowing, paralleling noetic qualities of ineffability and profound truth.
- ***Svāmī* Vivēkānanda (1863–1902):** Under his guru, Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's influence, he perceived the Universe as *Brahman* alone, with macrocosm-microcosm oneness during the years he spent in the Himalayan regions, when, in his meditations, he had visions of Śiva at Amarnātha—dynamic mystical intuitions affirming non-dual reality.

These persons all shared certain *Ṛṣi*-like attributes: transpersonal awareness, prophetic insights into unity (e.g., consciousness as fundamental), and guidance derived from direct experience rather than intellect. Their legacies align with noetic science's exploration of consciousness beyond ordinary perception.

The Central Question: Mukkūr Svāmī and the Evidence of the Noetic Mind

Given the foregoing explorations into noetic science and its findings, I finally asked myself the central question:

Did Mukkūr Svāmī also possess a noetic mind?

The most plausible answer I could manage to come up with to satisfy my curiosity is laid out in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 30

Mahā-Yajña

Mahā: Linguistics of Supreme Sacrifice

MLS *Svāmī*:

"I remember how, after the completion of one *Mahā-Yajña,* Mukkūr *Svāmī* had instructed us to send small packets of *Yajña Prasādam* (the sanctified remains of the *Hōma* offerings) to all outstation donors and remote participants by postal mail.

A practical dilemma regarding the labelling of the small packets and container boxes arose. Mukkūr *Svāmī* had suggested a rather long title as an affix on the labels. It read:

"*Śrī Svāti Nakṣatra Śrī Mahā Nṛsiṃha Śrī Mahā Mantra Japa Hōma Mahā Yajña*".

To my consternation, I found the title for the packaging labels to be far too long and ponderous. When printed, it certainly did not fit on standard paper sizes (A4 or A5) and made the labelling and stencilling of the postal address go awry. So, I went up to Mukkūr *Svāmī* and suggested to him that by shortening the title—i.e. by using the word *Mahā* only once at the beginning rather than thrice—the labels on the A4-sized packaging could be made more legible.

Svāmī flatly refused.

He then told me that the word ***Mahā*** belonged exclusively to Śrī Nṛsiṃha and to the rituals related to him. He explained that according to *Śāstra Pramāṇa* (scriptural authority), this prefix is not applicable to other deities—not even to Rāma or Kṛṣṇa—and hence it must be repeated in all written references to *Yajñamūrti*. And so, it must read, he insisted, only as *Mahā Nṛsiṃha, Mahā Mantra,* and *Mahā-Yajña* to properly honour the deity's unique status. Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to explain that Śrī Īśvara in *Mantra-Rāja-Pada-Stōtra* calling Nṛsiṃha as '*Mahāviṣṇu*' (not merely a Viṣṇu) is an example. He used to go further and say 'if we call *Bhagavān* as Viṣṇu, it indicated one of the Trimūrtis; however, when you call Him *Mahāviṣṇu,* it indicates only Lord Nṛsiṃha and none other.

The adjectival title of *Mahā* thus assumed very great and imperative significance for Mukkūr *Svāmī* anytime while referencing *Nṛsiṃha Yajña*. *Mahā* (**महा**) means '*great/supreme,' Yajña*ḥ (**यज्ञः**) means '*sacrifice/rite.'* Thus, '*the Great Sacrifice'* or '*Supreme Yajña'* refers to Nṛsiṃha as the ultimate, all-encompassing cosmic oblation beyond all rituals."

The 'Mahā' Epiphany: Realising the Precision of the Noetic Mind

The incident above underlining the prefix *Mahā's* significance, at first, did not make any great impression on me when MLS *Svāmī* narrated it to me. However, much later, when I found myself dwelling deeply on the question of whether the mind of Mukkūr *Svāmī* was noetic or not, I suddenly realised how profound the adjective *Mahā* indeed was, and why there was insistence upon it being applied to the deity, to the mantra, and to the *Yajña*.

The 24th Verse: Oceanic Humanism

That Mukkūr *Svāmī* might have possessed a noetic mind was first suggested to me when I had the conversation with him at his residence on Veṅkaṭēśan Street in Chennai (*described at length in Chapter 22*).

The conversation then had been about the Śrī *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* being first, foremost, and essentially, all about the significance of the power and the glory of the Śrī *Nṛsiṃha Avatāra*. I had beseeched Mukkūr *Svāmī* to explain the rationale for his unusual claim. And he had merely smiled gently at me and replied:

"If you have any doubts about it, I urge you to do one thing. Return home now. Pick up the Sahasranāma. Also, keep beside you a copy of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's commentary Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa. Pick from a page of the Sahasranāma, at random, 24 Nāmas and list them all down. Then refer to Bhaṭṭar's interpretation of each of those Nāmas. They will all have some connection or other with Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra only. You will have no more doubts then on the matter."

For him, Śrī Nṛsiṃha was *Viśvam* – the entire cosmic expanse; and the *Viśvam* was all Śrī Nṛsiṃha immanence. It was no surprise at all, therefore, that every *Nāma* to him in the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* – beginning with *Viśvam* and ending with *Sarvapraharaṇāyudhaḥ*, as well as all *nāmas* in between -- denoted only one deity: Lord

Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha, in the majesty of all his leonine forms and manifesting both as the Śrī Yajñamūrti icon and as a looming *Yajña* presence.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* had urged me to randomly select 24 *Ślokas* and look them all up in the *Bhagavad Guṇa Darpaṇa* text of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. And when I did so, I did get the answers I was looking for (*as explained in Chapter 22*). However, the count of the *Nāmas* that were picked then, were from 23 verses only. So, what had been the ***24th Śloka***?

It was a verse that I discovered later and when it revealed itself to me, it began unravelling the main question: ***Was Mukkūr Svāmī's mind noetic in nature?***

The examination of this **24th Śloka** that contained a very significant *Nāma* also shed light on the 4th ***Āḻiyilē* (ஆழியுலெய்)** stage in the journey of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life as it related to his performance of *Mahā-Yajña*. It also explained why the adjectival *Mahā* was significant. It became evident from this *Nāma* and *Śloka* that there was an unmistakable element of '*Cosmic*' or '*Oceanic*' expanse in the manner Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed *Yajñas*. And that the '*Cosmic*' element transcended mere ritualism to symbolise a universal humanism of epic *Vedic* proportions.

Stanza 72: The 'Mahā' Revelation and the Noetic Identity of the Mahā-Yajña

That 24th *Śloka* from the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* I came across was this:

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma Stanza 72:

24. महाक्रमो महाकर्मा महातेजा महोरगः ।
महाक्रतुर्महायज्वा महायज्ञो महाहविः ॥ ७२॥

Mahākramō Mahākarmā Mahātējā Mahōragaḥ |
Mahākratur Mahāyajvā Mahāyajñō Mahāhaviḥ || 72 ||

"He is the Lord of great strides and magnificent deeds, possessing supreme brilliance. As the great serpent and the essence of all rituals, He is the supreme sacrificer, the greatest worship, and the ultimate offering itself."

And the most significant *Nāma* was ***Mahā-Yajñah***!

The Two Fires

Mukkūr *Svāmī* distinguished *Nṛsiṃha Yajña* as a standard *Vedic* fire ritual invoking Nṛsiṃha's protective ferocity against *Adharma*, while *Nṛsiṃha Mahā Yajña*, in the depths of his noetic mind, got elevated to a grander, cosmic scale mirroring the ***Puruṣa-Sūkta's*** primordial sacrifice. The subtle distinction between the two could be seen, of course, only as a difference in emphasis, not in purpose or potency.

- In **Nṛsiṃha Yajña,** the focus was on specific *Sāmānyā Yajña* elements—*Hōmas* with *Nṛsiṃha* mantras (e.g., from the *Ahirbudhnya-Saṃhitā*) for *bhakti*, protection, and *Dōṣa Nivṛtti*, akin to localised *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* rites where *Yajña = Viṣṇu* but ritual-bound.

- *Nṛsiṃha Mahā Yajña* represented the '*great sacrifice*' – *Mahā Yajña* -- embodying *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma's* reference to the supreme *Yajña* as Nṛsiṃha's *Līlā*—i.e. the '*offering of the self*' for universal welfare, transcending the fire-altar to the higher level of *Parama-Bhakti-Prapattiḥ* or *Śaraṇāgati*, linking directly to the ideal of *Yajño Vai Viṣṇuḥ* as infinite, non-ritualistic grace.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* thus went about in life performing over 100 such *Mahāyajñas* at Nṛsiṃha *kṣetras*, with noetic emphasis on the subtle distinction, i.e. wherein ordinary *Yajña* purifies *Karma*; and *Mahāyajña* reveals *Nṛsiṃha-Puruṣa's* eternal identity, fostering *Śaraṇāgati* beyond *Varṇa-Āśrama* rituals.

At the **Maṭṭapalli** and **Siṃhācalam** sacrifices which he conducted on a very grand scale, Mukkūr *Svāmī* reportedly shared his noetic insight with his devotees in subdued, reticent terms when he enunciated the above *Yajña Tattva* in an *Upanyāsa*:

> ***"Nṛsiṃha Yajña is the ritual fire (Agnikārya) invoking Ugra Nṛsiṃha for Rakṣā (protection) against enemies/ 'Dōṣas', using Taittirīya/Kṛṣṇa Yajur Mantras. But Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña is the cosmic Puruṣa-Yajña (Mahā-Yajñaḥ of the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma), where Nṛsiṃha as Viṣṇu self-offers as in the Puruṣa-Sūkta (RV 10.90.6-16), granting not just Śānti but eternal Bhagavad-Sambandha via Prapattiḥ."***
>
> ***"Ordinary Yajña binds to Karma-Kāṇḍa fruits; Mahā-Yajña transcends to Bhakti-Yoga, equating performer with Yajño Vai Viṣṇuḥ (TB 1.1.1), as Nṛsiṃha's Līlā dissolves ego for Mokṣa".***

Mukkūr *Svāmī* was probably only trying to relate an inner experience felt by him that reflected the ***Karuvilē Neñcilē Nilaiyilē Āḻiyilē Ātāraṅkaḷ Āy*** state. It was an

experience of noetic knowledge, an inner wisdom, direct knowing, intuition, or insight that transcended ordinary sensory perception and intellectual analysis.

Noetic Re-Absorption into the Primordial Sacrifice

To be able to appreciate Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s own explication of what his noetic experience might have been one has to grasp what he himself recounted in public discourses: i.e. about what is spoken about *Yajña* in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of the *Ṛg Vēda* and in the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*.

In many of his illuminating *Upanyāsas* on the subject of ***Mahā-Yajña***, he often dwelt at great length upon how reading both texts together offered revealing glimpses into the Vedāntic grand vision of universal creation – a noetic process in which 'naming' (*Nāma*) and 'attributing qualities' (*Guṇa*) are an integral epistemological act.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* then went on further to contextualise the noetic by quoting Bhīṣmācāryā's famous line in the *Sahasranāma* in a passage that appears just before the litany of '*one thousand names'* begins:

> **यानि नामानि गौणानि विख्यातानि महात्मनः ।**
> **ऋषिभिः परिगीतानि तानि वक्ष्यामि भूतये ॥**
>
> ***Yāni Nāmāni Gauṇāni Vikhyātāni Mahātmanaḥ |***
> ***Ṛṣibhiḥ Parigītāni Tāni Vakṣyāmi Bhūtayē ||***
>
> *"I shall now proclaim, for the welfare of all, those well-known names of the Supreme Being which are based on His divine attributes and have been sung by the great Seers."*

"Bhīṣma declares to Yudhiṣṭhira: "*Those secondary (gauṇa) names of the Great Lord (Mahātman), which are renowned and sung by the ṛṣis, I shall recite for your welfare.*"

The *Puruṣa-Sūktam* also describes the emergence and differentiation of the cosmos from the primordial *Puruṣa*, detailing how various elements and beings arise at the time of Creation, but it does not explicitly mention the act of naming them.

Puruṣa-Sūktam 16th & Final Verse (from Ṛg Vēda (10.90.16)):

यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन् ।
ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ॥१६॥

Yajñēna Yajñamayajanta Dēvāstāni Dharmāṇi Prathamānyāsan |
Tē Ha Nākaṁ Mahimānaḥ Sacanta Yatra Pūrvē Sādhyāḥ Santi Devaḥ
|| 16 ||

(Translations): *The devās performed the external Yajña by meditating on the real Yajña (i.e. contemplating on the Puruṣa who is shining from behind everything); and thus, they first obtained the dharma (based on the oneness of the Puruṣa), by meditating on the greatness of the Cidākāśaḥ (the blissful spiritual sky behind everyone, which is the essence of the Puruṣa). During those earlier times, the spiritual aspirants became the shining one themselves.*

"By means of sacrifice, the gods performed the sacrifice to the Supreme Sacrifice (the Lord). These were the first and original laws of Dharma. Those great souls attained the highest heaven, where the ancient, perfected beings and Gods reside."

(Gist): *The Anuvāka "Yajñena Yajña Ayajanta Devāḥ" thus describes the gods as performing a sacrificial rite using Yajña (sacrifice) itself as the offering. The devās offered Sacrifice to sacrifice itself in the primordial Yajña of the Puruṣa, establishing the first dharmas (righteous principles). Those who follow this path attain heavenly glory, like ancient Sādhyās and Devās.*

This verse reveals the principle of the cosmic sacrifice, where *Puruṣa* becomes all Creation, and emphasises *Yajña* as the foundational act sustaining *Dharma* and cosmic order. *Yajña* represents thus the primordial **cosmic sacrifice** through which the infinite *Puruṣa* manifested the entire universe, establishing it as the foundational principle of creation, sustenance, and cosmic order (***Ṛtam***).

The *Vedic* hymn portrays *Yajña* not merely as a ritual but as the eternal process where *Puruṣa* offers himself to birth gods, elements, *varnas*, and all existence from His own dismembered form. The *Devās*' subsequent '*Yajña with the real Yajña itself*' (as in *verse 16)* underscores reciprocity, linking microcosmic human acts to macrocosmic harmony.

Yajña thus embodies non-dual unity: all forms arising from and returning to *Puruṣa* via selfless offering. It prefigures *Vedāntic* ideas of sacrifice as *Bhakti* and

Karma Yoga. It is what sustains *Dharma*, with participants attaining divine realms like the *Sādhyās* and the *Ṛṣis*. In *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the Puruṣa's *Yajña* symbolises Nārāyaṇa's *Lila* for *Jīva* liberation, where ritual *Yajña* mirrors *Prapattiḥ* (*Śaraṇāgati*), fostering dependence on divine grace over egocentric action.

In the moments while he performed a *Mahā-Yajña*, it seemed as though Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s sudden immersion into trances or *Nṛsiṃha Āvirbhāva* was but *noetic re-absorption* in that primordial *Mahā-Yajña* that both the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* and *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* speak about.

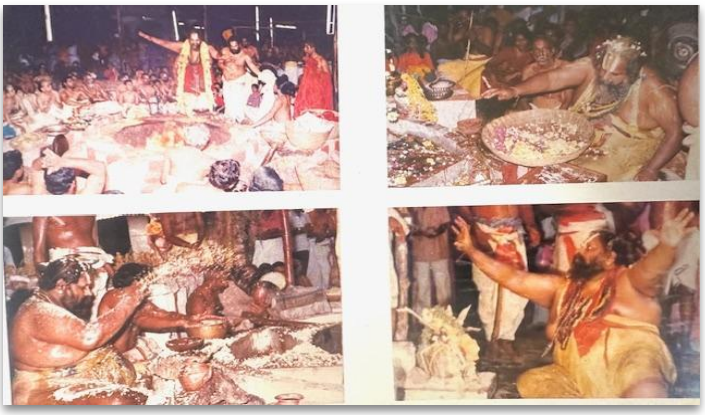


***Image 42**: Noetic immersion in Mahā-Yajña*

Epistemology: Bridge Between Names and Reality

The *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, however, presents a slightly different dimension of the *Mahā-Yajña*.

Each of the *thousand names of Viṣṇu reflects* a certain *quality*, function, or aspect of the divine and the preamble (*Yāni Nāmāni Gauṇāni Vikhyātāni Mahātmanaḥ*) acknowledges them as descriptive and well-known names for all conceptual creations.

In Vedāntic epistemology, naming is closely related to the concept of ***Śabda*** (word or testimony), one of the accepted sources of valid knowledge (*Pramāṇa*). Names are not merely labels; they are seen as pointers to underlying realities or attributes. The process of naming (*Nāma*) and form (*Rūpa*) is fundamental in Vedāntic thought, as Creation is often described as the manifestation of names and forms from the undifferentiated absolute (the *Upanishadic Brahman*). The *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, for example, explicitly says, "*From Brahman are produced all these: the Creator, names and forms and nourishment for all*". Thus, naming in *Vedānta* is an epistemic act—it is how the undivided reality becomes knowable, differentiated, and accessible to cognition.

So, the thousand names in the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma exemplify only this: each *Nāma* is a way of knowing, relating to, and invoking the divine, reflecting the belief that the ultimate reality manifests as multiplicity through names and forms.

So, in summary: While the *Puruṣa-Sūktam* describes the differentiation of cosmic elements, the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* demonstrates the epistemic function of naming as a means of knowing and relating to those divine or cosmic elements. In Vedāntic terms, both the performance of *ritual sacrifice* and the process of *naming* are integral to how Creation is known and experienced, since both serve as bridges between the unmanifest and the manifest, the undivided and the differentiated.

It was precisely with such profound purpose … and noetic perspective … that Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed his *Mahā-Yajñas*. It explained how he was able to achieve the precision and thoroughness and to observe the severe austerities with which *Yajña-Mantras*, *Yajña-Vāṭikā*, *Hōma Japa* and *Yajña-Sambhāvanā* were all conceived, planned, and executed in a truly cosmic or oceanic expanse … just as described in the *Vēda*:

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.1.1 (Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda):

यज्ञो वै विष्णुः। विष्णुर् वै यज्ञः।
यज्ञे विष्णुः प्रतिष्ठितः। विष्णुः प्रतिष्ठितः यज्ञे॥

Yajñō Vai Viṣṇuḥ | Viṣṇur Vai Yajñaḥ |
Yajñē Viṣṇuḥ Pratiṣṭhitaḥ | Viṣṇuḥ Pratiṣṭhitaḥ Yajñē ||

"Sacrifice (Yajña) is verily Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is verily the Sacrifice. Viṣṇu is established in the Sacrifice. In the Sacrifice, Viṣṇu is established."

The Symmetrical Blueprint: Seven-Fold Lifecycle of the Mahā-Yajña

In a sterling series of *Upanyāsas* that Mukkūr *Svāmī* delivered at *Āstika Samājam* in 1981 on the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*, he expanded on this magnificent theme with the aid of a few more enlightening *Ślokas* from that sacred text of *Sahasranāma*:

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma Stanza 104:

भूर्भुवःस्वस्तरुस्तारः सविता प्रपितामहः ।
यज्ञो यज्ञपतिर्यज्वा यज्ञाङ्गो यज्ञवाहनः ॥ १०४॥

Bhūrbhuvaḥsvastarus Tāraḥ Savitā Prapitāmahaḥ |
Yajñō Yajñapatir Yajvā Yajñāṅgō Yajñavāhanaḥ || 104 ||

"He is the sheltering tree of the three worlds and the saviour of souls. The primordial father and creator of creators, He is the sacrifice, its lord, its performer, its very limbs, and the divine vehicle that carries it to completion."

This *Śloka* (104th in *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*) extols *Viṣṇu* through cosmic and sacrificial epithets, portraying him as the all-pervading support of existence and ritual order.

***Gist*:** "*He who spans the earth (Bhūḥ), mid-regions (Bhuvaḥ), and heavens (Svaḥ); the wish-fulfilling tree (Staruḥ), stellar lights (Tāraḥ), solar creator (Savitā), and forefather of progenitors (Prapītāmahaḥ). He is the sacrifice (Yajñaḥ), its lord (Yajñapatiḥ), performer (Yajvā), constituent (Yajñāṅgaḥ), and carrier/vehicle (Yajñavāhanaḥ).*"

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma Stanza 105:

यज्ञभृद् यज्ञकृद् यज्ञी यज्ञभुग् यज्ञसाधनः ।
यज्ञान्तकृद् यज्ञगुह्यमन्नमन्नाद एव च ॥ १०५॥

Yajñabhṛd Yajñakṛd Yajñī Yajñabhug Yajñasādhanaḥ |
Yajñāntakṛd Yajñaguhyam Annam Annāda Ēva Ca || 105 ||

"He is the sustainer, creator, master, and consumer of all sacrifices. He is the very means by which they are performed and the one who grants their final rewards. He is the hidden secret of the ritual, the food that sustains life, and the consumer who enjoys it."

The *Nāmas* in this Śloka reveal that *Viṣṇu* is inseparably and intrinsically linked to the three worlds (*Vyāhṛtitraya*, *Śarīra-Śarīrī*, and *Apṛthaksiddhi* axioms in *Viśiṣṭādvaita* metaphysics), emphasising his role and function in sustaining dharma through Creation and Worship in *Yajña*.

Śloka 105 above too continues the same *Yajña-theme* from *Śloka 104*. It portrays *Viṣṇu* as the comprehensive essence, sustainer, and consummator of all sacrificial acts — encompassing creation, performance, fruition, and transcendence.

Thus, *Viṣṇu* embodies the entire *Yajña*-process, from cosmic support to *Jñāna-Yajña* as ultimate *Guhya* (esoteric knowledge apprehended by *Ṛṣis* or noetic minds), linking ritual to self-realisation.

- ***Yajñabhṛt*:** He is the sacrifice (**He is Yajña itself**).
- ***Yajñakṛt*:** He is **performer**/creator of **Yajña**.
- ***Yajñabhuk*:** He is **enjoyer**/consumer of **Yajña**.
- ***Yajñasādhanaḥ*:** He is **accomplisher**/means of **Yajña**.
- ***Yajñāntakṛt*:** He is the terminator/**dissolver of Yajña**.
- ***Yajñaguhyam*:** He is the inner secret/**mystery of Yajña**.
- ***Annam*:** He is the food-offerings or oblations into the **Yajña** and the **Prasādam** from it.
- ***Annādaḥ*:** He is the **eater of food**.
- ***Eva*:** Indeed.
- ***Ca*:** And.

The above sequence or *Pāda* progression of the *Sahasranāma* Śloka, as Mukkūr *Svāmī* explained it, aligns symmetrically with the *Puruṣa-Sūkta's own Yajña* progression:

- *embodiment* (***Yajñabhṛt***),
- *initiation* (***Yajñakṛt***),
- *sustenance* (***Yajñabhuk/Yajñasādhanaḥ***),
- *completion* (***Yajñāntakṛt***),
- *esotericism* (***Yajñaguhyam***), and

- *cyclical provision* (***Annam Annādaḥ***)

The *Śloka* thus directly echoes the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*'s ***Mahā-Yajña*** motif, portraying *Viṣṇu* (as *Puruṣa*) as the cosmic performer, enjoyer, and essence of sacrifice.

Nṛsiṃha as the 'Death of Death' and the Soul of the Mahā-Yajña

To the pointed question of how the above two *Ślokas* denoting Viṣṇu pertain to *Nṛsiṃha Avatāra*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* pointed out the verses as being connected to two other *Ślokas,* and he urged that they must all be read together to glean a correct understanding of what a ***Mahā-Yajña*** was:

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma Stanza 22:

अमृत्युः सर्वदृक् सिंहः सन्धाता सन्धिमान् स्थिरः ।
अजो दुर्मर्षणः शास्ता विश्रुतात्मा सुरारिहा ॥ २२॥

Amṛtyuḥ Sarvadṛk Siṁhaḥ Sandhātā Sandhimān Sthiraḥ |
Ajō Durmarṣaṇaḥ Śāstā Viśrutātmā Surārihā || 22 ||

"He is the deathless witness of all, a lion in strength and the uniter of all deeds. Ever steady and unborn, He is the irresistible ruler and the celebrated soul who slays the enemies of the Gods."

Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma Stanza 72:

महाक्रमो महाकर्मा महातेजा महोरगः ।
महाक्रतुर्महायज्वा महायज्ञो महाहविः ॥ ७२॥

Mahākramō Mahākarmā Mahātējā Mahōragaḥ |
***Mahākratur Ma*யஜ்ஞாய யஜ்ஞரூபாய யஜ்ஞிநே யஜ்ஞஸாக்ஷிநே |**
ஶ்ரீவராஹ நரஸிம்ஹாய ஸிம்ஹாத்ரீஸாய மங்களம் ||

Yajñāya Yajñarūpāya Yajñine Yajñasākṣine |
Śrīvarāha Nṛsiṃhāya Siṃhādhrīśāya Maṅgalam ||

"Auspiciousness (Mangalam) be unto Lord Sri Varaha Narasimha, the supreme Lord of the Simhadri hills, who is the sacrifice itself, whose very form is the sacrifice, who is the ultimate enjoyer of the sacrifice, and who is the eternal witness to all sacrifices."

In traditional explanation (especially Parāśara Bhaṭṭar and others), these names in Verse 72 signify the *Vāmana/Trivikrama Avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The *Nāma Mahākramaḥ* denotes "*He who takes great strides*".

However, Mukkūr *Svāmī* chose to evoke the Nṛsiṃha-avatāra here, pointing out nuances whereby the terms *Mahāyajvā* ("*He who is the great performer of sacrifice, and the true agent in all Yajñas*"), *Mahā-Yajñaḥ* ("*He who is the great sacrifice itself, which is superior to all other rites*") and *Mahā-Haviḥ* ("*He who is the great oblation offered in sacrifice, the ultimate offering to whom all offerings really go*") … all perfectly described the qualities of Śrī Nṛsiṃha.

When asked to substantiate the claim, Mukkūr *Svāmī* buttressed his point with the second of the two verses (viz. *Śloka 22*), where the *Nāmas -- Siṃhaḥ: Amṛtyuḥ/Ajaḥ* and *Surārihā:* -- appear and are unmistakable, perfect attributes of Śrī Nṛsiṃha.

• ***Siṃhaḥ:*** Strongly evokes Nṛsiṃha *Avatāra,* even as per Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's commentary.

• ***Amṛtyuḥ/Ajaḥ*** strongly evokes the mien of Nṛsiṃha as envisioned in the *Mantrarājapada-Stotra* and *Nṛsiṃha-Mantra*:

> ***Mantra Rāja Pada-Stotra, Stanza 9:***
>
> **साक्षात् स्वकाले सम्प्राप्तम् मृत्युं सत्रुगणान्वितम् ।**
> **भक्तानाम् नाशयेद् यस्तु मृत्युं मृत्युं नमाम्यहम् ॥ ९ ॥**
>
> ***Sākṣāt Svakālē Samprāptaṁ Mṛtyuṁ Śatrugaṇānvitam |***
> ***Bhaktānāṁ Nāśayēdyastu Mṛtyumṛtyuṁ Namāmyaham || 9 ||***
>
> *"He who arrives manifestly at the right moment to destroy death itself—along with its accompanying enemies—for His devotees: to that 'Death unto Death' (Mṛtyuṅjaya Nṛsiṃha), I offer my prostrations."*

• ***Surārihā:*** Culminates in the prowess for destruction of Evil (Śatru), fitting *Nṛsiṃha*'s protective fury. (Slaying of *Hiraṇyakaśipu*)

All three *Nāmas* read together denote *Nṛsiṃha-Avatāra,* and it is thus he alone who is the object of worship in a *Mahā-Yajña*.

Noetic Invocation of the Death of Death

In the unique noetic view of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, a *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña* thus signified Creation through sacrifice as primordially conceived in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*. It also signified *deathlessness* conceived in the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* as Nṛsiṃha's *Prahlāda-Rakṣaṇa* (protecting devotee Prahlāda from Hiraṇyakaśipu's **मृत्यु-संनादनम्** (*Mṛtyu-Saṃnādanam*) embodied as *Kāla-Mṛtyu-Nāśaka* potency -- **अमृत्युः सर्वदृक् सिंहः** (*Amṛtyuḥ Sarvadṛk Siṁhaḥ*) and … as *Nṛsiṃha Mantra*: "**मृत्युं मृत्युं नमाम्यहम्** (*Mṛtyumṛtyuṁ Namāmyaham*)"!

Kāla-Mṛtyu-Nāśaka (**कालमृत्युनाशकः**) describes "*the destroyer of time-bound death*" or "*conqueror of death at its appointed hour,*" a potent epithet for Śrī *Nṛsiṃha* in *Pāñcarātra* and many *Vaiṣṇava Stōtras* chanted for *Ayuḥ-Ārogya* (longevity/health) and affirms *Nṛsiṃha* as *Bhakta-Rakṣaka* beyond *Saṁsāra-Kāla*.

In the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt traditions to which Mukkūr *Svāmī* belonged, this title underscores Nṛsiṃha's *Ugramūrti* protection against sudden perils (*Apamṛtyu-Doṣa*) and is invoked in *Hōma-mantras* like "*Kālamṛtyuṁ Nāśaya Nāśaya*". This links up with the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Amṛtyuḥ* (*Śloka. 22*) as well as with yet another theological doctrine known as the ***Pañca-Yajña's Deva-Ṛṇa***.

The Cancellation of Debts

Another noetic insight of Mukkūr *Svāmī* into the *Nṛsiṃha-Mahā-Yajña* ritual was into the doctrine of *Pañca-Yajña's Deva-Ṛṇa*. To his devotees, merely participating in the *Mahā-Yajña* served as a means of repaying two out of three primal ***Ṛṇam*** or *congenital debts* incurred in human life from the moment one is born until death and beyond.

யஜ்ஞாய யஜ்ஞரூபாய யஜ்ஞிநே யஜ்ஞஸாக்ஷிநே |
ஸ்ரீவராஹ நரஸிம்ஹாய ஸிம்ஹாத்ரீஸாய மங்களம் ||

Yajñāya Yajñarūpāya Yajñine Yajñasākṣine |
Śrīvarāha Nṛsiṃhāya Siṃhādhrīśāya Maṅgalam ||

"Auspiciousness (Mangalam) be unto Lord Sri Varaha Narasimha, the supreme Lord of the Simhadri hills, who is the sacrifice itself, whose very form is the sacrifice, who is the ultimate enjoyer of the sacrifice, and who is the eternal witness to all sacrifices."

There is this ancient Sanskrit maxim that says that a *Dvija* or Brahmin (*twice-born*) is born with three congenital debts — one owed to the *Ṛṣis* (sages), one to the *Dēvatās* (Gods), and one to the *Pitṛs* (ancestors). All three debts are to be discharged by him through study, sacrifice, and progeny.

Taittirīya Saṃhitā 6.3.10.5 & Dharma Śāstras:

जायमानो वै ब्राह्मणस्त्रिभिरृणवान् जायते ।
ब्रह्मचर्येण ऋषिभ्यः यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः प्रजया पितृभ्यः ।
तस्मादेतं त्रयमपि यत्नेन समाचरेत् ।
यदेतत्त्रयं समाचरति, तदनृणो भवति ॥

Jāyamānō Vai Brāhmaṇas Tribhir Ṛṇavān Jāyatē |
Brahmacaryēṇa Ṛṣibhyaḥ Yajñēna Dēvēbhyaḥ Prajayā Pitṛbhyaḥ |
Tasmād Ētaṁ Trayam Api Yatnēna Samācarēt |
Yad Ētat Trayaṁ Samācarati, Tad Anṛṇō Bhavati ||

"Indeed, a Brāhmaṇa is born with three debts. By Brahmacarya (Vedic study and discipline), he repays the debt to the ṛṣis; by yajña (sacrifice), he repays the debt to the gods; by procreation, he repays the debt to the ancestors. Therefore, he should diligently perform all three. When he fulfils these three, he becomes free of debt."

"I bow down to that Lord Nṛsiṃha, the Death of Death itself, who destroys even the personified form of Death when it approaches His devotees at the appointed time accompanied by fearsome hosts."

Fulfilling all three is necessary before pursuing *Mokṣa* (liberation). *Manu Smṛti* and other texts state that after repaying these debts, one may devote oneself to liberation. Thus, a brahmin must be devoted to *Vedic* study and teaching, perform rituals for the gods, and ensure the family line and duties to ancestors are upheld.

Redemption of the three congenital debts is achieved through the following vocations in life:

- **Debt to the Sages (ऋषि ऋण)**
    - **Discharge:** Studying and teaching the *Vēdas*, practising austerities (*Brahmacarya*), acquiring and transmitting spiritual knowledge, and honouring teachers.
    - **Significance:** Since brahmins are regarded as custodians of sacred learning, fulfilling this debt ensures the preservation and transmission of *Vedic* wisdom.
- **Debt to the Gods (देव ऋण)**
    - **Discharge:** Performing *Yajñas* (*Vedic* sacrifices), daily rituals, and prescribed worship practices diligently and selflessly.
    - **Significance:** These actions repay the divine powers for sustaining the world and the individual, maintaining a harmonious relationship with cosmic forces.
- **Debt to the Ancestors (पितृ ऋण)**
    - **Discharge:** Procreation (having children, especially sons who will continue *Vedic* family traditions), performing *Śraddhā* and ancestral rites, and upholding family values and lineage.
    - **Significance:** Ensures the continuity of family and tradition and provides spiritual support to ancestors in the afterlife through rituals.

All three congenital debts underpin *Dharma*, repaid through the *Pañca-Mahā-Yajña* (*five great sacrifices*) to sustain cosmic order (*Ṛta*). They emphasise ethical reciprocity in terms of (i) knowledge from ***Ṛṣis***, (ii) life from ***Pitṛs***, (iii) boons from ***Devās***.

The five great sacrifices to be performed are:

1. ***Svādhyāya*** (daily scripture study/recitation)
2. ***Hōma*** (fire oblations, *Sandhyā-Vandanam* etc.)
3. ***Tarpaṇa/Śrāddha*** (water/libations to forebears)
4. ***Bali* or *Havis*** (food offerings to animals, birds, environment)
5. ***Anna-Dāna*** (feeding visitors/guests/the needy)

The repayment of the above three debts is a **महाकर्मा** (*Mahā-Karma*) in the human sphere of life -- as hinted in Verse 72 above of the *Sahasranāma*. While the debt to the ancestors (**पितृ ऋण**) could be repaid only through performance of individual *Tarpaṇa/Śrāddha* rites, the mere presence and participation with abiding faith in *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas*, Mukkūr *Svāmī* often declared, secured the cancellation of both **ऋषि ऋण** and **देव ऋण** -- the debts to the *Ṛṣis* and the *Devās*. His declaration categorically implied that the *Vedāntic* road to *Mokṣa* (salvation) ran through the *Mahā-Yajña*.

CHAPTER 31

Ācārya- Tiruvaṭi: The Passing of Mukkūr *Svāmī*

The Sacred Circle: Completing the Journey at the Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi

The second chapter of this book begins with *Ācāryā Vandanam* and *Taniyāṉ*. This chapter, the penultimate one, ends with *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*.

The Auspicious Arrival: Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi and the Mediated Path to Vaikuṇṭha

While rooted in the pan-Hindu *Guru-Paramparā* veneration, ***Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*** is a distinctly *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* idea emphasising the *Ācāryā's* role in *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and specific to *Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism*. It is not commonly used outside this tradition, making it a unique euphemism for death among Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas.

There is also another idea that is not uncommon among *Vaishnavas*. It is denoted by the phrase ***Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Praptiḥ***. Both denote auspicious spiritual attainments upon death but differ in focus and application.

Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi refers to reaching and embracing the '*Sacred Feet*' (*Divya-Padāravindam*) of one's *Ācāryā* (*Guru*), symbolising the soul's ultimate surrender and union within the *Guru-Paramparā* (*Śiṣya* succession), often used specifically for *Ācāryas* or eminent disciples.

Vaikuṇṭhapraptiḥ, by contrast, signifies direct attainment of *Śrī Vaikuṇṭha*, Lord Nārāyaṇa's divine abode, as the final *Mokṣa* for any qualified *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* who has performed *Prapattiḥ* (the sacramental rite of total surrender).

In *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the *Ācāryā's sacred feet* symbolise the divine grace of Nārāyaṇa mediated through the *Guru-Paramparā*, making surrender to them tantamount to reaching *Śrī Vaikuṇṭha*.

Both phrases appear in obituaries for *Ācāryās* and devotees: *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi Praptiḥ* highlights lineage devotion, while *Vaikuṇṭha Praptiḥ* stresses the final divine realm, but they both essentially denote the same auspicious end … the *summum bonum* of human existence.

The Galaxy of Teachers: Lineage of Ahōbila Masters

Mukkūr *Svāmī* enjoyed the rare privilege of *Vedic* tutelage under a galaxy of *Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryās* of the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt. In every *Upanyāsa* of his, and indeed on every occasion when it was fitting, he always prefaced his orations with due homage to their memory by reciting their respective *Taniyans*:

1. Śrīmad iñjimēṭṭu Azhagiyasingar (42nd pontiff of Ahōbila Mutt)
2. Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar (44th pontiff of Ahōbila Mutt)
3. Śrīmad Villivālam Azhagiyasingar (45th pontiff of Ahōbila Mutt)
4. Śrī Mukkūr Śrīnivāsācāryār (Vice Principal, Madhuranthakam Vēda Pāṭhaśālā)
5. Śrī Tirukkaḷḷam Nṛsiṃha Rāghavācāryār (*Vedic* scholar in the "Ubhaya Vedānta" tradition)
6. Śrī Pazhavēri Śaṭhakōpācāryar (*Vedic* scholar in the same lineage)
7. Śrī Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār (Salakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭhī)

Cheela's Room: Intimate Mentorship

Mukkūr *Svāmī*, while at Maṭṭapalli, performed *Prapattiḥ* at the holy feet of his *Ācāryā*, *Śrīmad Villivālam Azhagiyasingar,* both on his own behalf as well as on behalf of his whole family.

This pontiff had great affection for Mukkūr *Svāmī* even as a youth in Kāñcīpuram, when he was pursuing his Pre-University Degree course in the early 1960s at the Pachaiyappa's College. Thanks to the kindness of *Villivālam Svāmī* (who before he became pontiff was known as Śrī Kṛṣṇamācāryār), the young Mukkūr *Svāmī* was allowed free accommodation in a small, bare, and spartan room at the Ahōbila Mutt premises in Kāñcīpuram. That was the room where Mukkūr *Svāmī* often, after returning from classes in the College, used to take *Vedic* lessons for several hours at the feet of

Villivālam Azhagiyasingar. That room even today is known as "*Cheela Ullu*" … "*Cheela's* room"! ("*Cheela*" being Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s pet-name used by those very fond of him).

Mukkūr *Svāmī* never forgot the debt of gratitude he owed to the 45th *Jīyar* for having mentored him. Very often, he referred to the sayings and writings of Villivālam Azhagiyasingar in his own public discourses, referring to them as brilliant interpretations that had been taught to him by Azhagiyasingar and citing them as authoritative.

Since Mukkūr *Svāmī* had performed *Prapattiḥ* at the holy feet of the 45th Azhagiyasingar, his departure from mortal shores is solemnly referred to as his attaining *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*.

The Unfinished Sacrifice: The Bridge of Two Worlds

Mukkūr *Svāmī* attained *Ācāryara Tiruvaṭi* prematurely at the age of 56 in the year 2001, leaving his 108th *Yajña* at Ahōbilam unfulfilled. He suffered a sudden heart attack while in Kākināḍa, where he owned a house, shortly after returning from a series of ***Upanyāsams*** in Mumbai via Chennai. He passed away within an hour of the onset of the cardiac seizure, triggered perhaps by a life of intense travel, daily 4–5-hour *Pūjās*, severe austerities and fasting undertaken for the conduct of *Yajñas* and frequent visitations of deep trances. He had also not entirely recovered from the grief caused to him earlier by the demise of his elder brother Mukkūr Raghunāthācāryār.

I posed the following two questions to MLS *Svāmī*:

- ***What medical history or prior symptoms (e.g., stress from Yajñas, brother's loss) preceded Mukkūr Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār's sudden heart attack in Kākināḍa?***
- ***How did his disciples or family commemorate this event, and what spiritual interpretations (e.g., Nṛsiṃha's call) emerged?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

"In 2001, I was running an infrastructure management company called ***Chennai Net***, which hosted high-traffic clients like *India Times* and *Cricinfo*. My own life during the *Upanyāsa* and *Yajña* phases of my father, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s life, was a bit like a bridge spanning the two worlds of both *Vedic* and *Laukika*. On one hand, I maintained the ancient *Vedic* traditions my father had instilled in me. Whenever possible, I assisted him actively in the conduct of almost all *Yajñas* and other *Vedic* vocations. And on the other

hand, as a professional IT engineer, I was also managing my own cutting-edge digital-security technology firm that was serving global corporations as clients.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* and *Yajñamūrti*, kept constantly assuring me, nonetheless, that despite all odds, hindrances, and obstacles in life, I must persevere in the path I had chosen because Lord Nṛsiṃha had shown it. In juggling both my worlds, there was nothing to feel sorry about."

Final Call and the Embrace in Grace

"One day early in 2001, Mukkūr *Svāmī* suddenly called me in Chennai from Kākināḍa and beckoned me to Kākināḍa to temporarily assist him for about a month in performing a specific *Vedic Japa Hōma,* and also to help with the planning of a *Yajña-vāṭikā* and building complex at the Nṛsiṃha temple in Maṭṭapalli. At that time, the Maṭṭapalli temple complex was in its initial stages of development, and he was deeply preoccupied with it.

Moving from Chennai to Kākināḍa at that time posed professional difficulties for me. I feared my company, would suffer service downtimes during my absence because I knew that my staff was too young and inexperienced to deal with communications with the client's support engineers in America. I shared my misgivings with Mukkūr *Svāmī*. He dismissed my concerns, stating simply as he often had done in the past:

"Leave it in the hands of Perumāḷ. He will take care of you. You pack up and come."

Not willing to take complete leave of absence from my workplace in Chennai, I decided to move it partly to Kākināḍa. I packed up four large boxes containing the servers, the CPUs, the monitors, modems, and all other accessories in my office, and transported all of them to Kākināḍa, where I intended to set up a remote dial-up connection with my client office in the USA.

Upon arriving at the Kākiṇāḍa Town railway station with my family, I was very surprised to see Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself waiting for us on the platform. Normally, he never entered a railway station to receive anyone but would wait outside in the car for honoured guests to arrive. Outside, he would welcome them with trays of sweets and other snacks and flasks of hot coffee.

On this occasion, why he made an exception in our case to receive his pēraṉ (grandson) who is coming to Kākiṇāḍa for the first time, I do not know, but he was there waiting on the railway station platform to personally receive

and greet us as we alighted. And in a rare show of public affection, Mukkūr *Svāmī* took hold of his grandchild in his arms: my one-year-old son. He insisted on carrying him all the way to our home in Kākināḍa."

The Final Dvādaśī

"On a Friday night (*Dvādaśī*) in May 2001, the family retired to bed after a long day of activity.

Although Mukkūr *Svāmī* had suggested I sleep downstairs with my family and children, on that night I felt uneasy, with a strange premonition gnawing at my mind. Intuitively, I felt an urge not to leave my father's side that night as he went to bed. I told him that I was going to sleep in the same room with him, on a mattress laid out on the floor.

Around 10:30 p.m., I felt Mukkūr *Svāmī* awakening me. He was struggling to get to his feet. I reached up to hold him, and he then asked me if I would help him to the bathroom. I gently held his shoulders as he made his way to the bathroom door.

A few minutes later, he staggered out of the bathroom with a face that had gone ashen. He was breathing heavily. I suspected Mukkūr *Svāmī* had suffered a massive heart attack, for all the telltale signs of physical distress were writ large on his face. I was about to call at once for an emergency ambulance at that hour, soon after I had laid him out comfortably on the bed. He weakly gestured to me, asking me to hold him in my arms, with his head resting on my lap.

It was only many years later, with the benefit of hindsight, that it came to be known to the family that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s general health condition may have been wracked by a chronic thyroidal dysfunction. But whether that had anything to do with the cardiac failure he suffered that night is something we can only speculate upon today. Not once in his life—a life of such severe religious austerities undergone amidst hectic, nonstop travels all over the country—did he even care to tell anyone about the state of his physical health. Even when asked about it, he would casually shrug it off with the wonted phrase: "*Nṛsiṃha will take care of everything!"*

As I held him in my arms that night, Mukkūr *Svāmī* performed a final symbolic, poignant act: He began to vigorously shake his fists. It caused the two sacred rings (a ring embossed with the figure of Srinivasa, the deity of Tirumalā, and the other, the *Yajña Pavitra* ring he used in rituals) --which he always wore, to suddenly slide off from his fingers right into my hand.

Though those rings were fitted tight around his fingers, it was surprising to see that they fell away so easily and quickly!

Lying in my arms, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s pale face then looked up directly at a photo of Lord Nṛsiṃha of Maṭṭapalli that hung upon the wall of the bedroom… His glazed eyes stared at that portrait for a long moment… Then he passed away in peace to attain *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*, instantaneously.

It happened so suddenly that there was no time at all to respond in any effective way to the sudden emergency.

The cremation and last *Vedic* rites took place on the day of *Nṛsiṃha Jayantī*… the day of the Svāti asterism. My father attained *Paramagatiḥ* exactly in the manner as he had often wished for all *Bhāgavatas*, his devotees — that they too must receive the blessing of departing peacefully to *Śrī Vaikuṇṭha* from the arms of a son."

The Active Mystic: Ātma Nivēdanam as Life-Mission

Many were the experiences in the life of Mukkūr *Svāmī* that one perhaps might characterise as '*miraculous*', '*mystical*', or '*noetic*'. One can never be certain, of course. But his life certainly was not the '*mystic pursuit*' of any cloistered anchorite. Instead, it was dedicated work of *Dharma Saṃsthāpana* — establishing righteousness as per the *Vedic* ethos envisioned in the *Puruṣa-Sūktam* … He performed his ordained life-mission with the zeal and in the spirit of *Ātma Nivēdanam* -- sacrificial surrender of one's soul as ritual *Havis* poured into the sacral fires of *Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña*.

The Rare Intersection: Living Synthesis of Vēda and Life

Within the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya* and community, Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s departure left behind a deep void. Even today, many, including those within the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt orthodox religious leadership, admit that the void has been difficult to fill.

In the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* ranks of erudite scholars, writers, and commentators today, there are indeed many who can discourse on lofty subjects of scriptures, philosophy, and theology. There is certainly a very impressive display of religious scholarship (*Pāṇḍityam*). But there are only a few amongst them who one can say with conviction also possess the power to truly inspire in the hearts of the laity and the larger comity of *Vedic Kuṭumba*, and such a deep commitment to traditions and learning as Mukkūr *Svāmī* did in his lifetime.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* is sorely missed today amongst the community of *Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas* across the country because, as a *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* religious role-model, combining both *Vedic* learning and *Vedic* living, vast erudition and severe austerities, sheer selflessness and personal charisma, affability, and humility … there is none today to equal him.

Śrī Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār stood indeed at a very rare intersection in time in the contemporary history of *Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism*:

- ***Vedic* learning and *Vedic* living** – Strict and uncompromising in adhering to *Āchāram–Anuṣṭhāna*, he was an outstanding S*alakṣaṇa Ghanapāṭi* who performed over a hundred rigorous *Yajñas*, the famous *Svāti Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajñas*… across the country.

- **Erudition and austerity** – He possessed a memory that was truly astonishing. With a mind that was noetic in its insights, he could exercise superlative mastery over the vast and at times uncharted territory of *Ubhaya Vedānta* literature. And his lifestyle was one of severe *Vrata*, *Nṛsiṃha Upāsanā*, simplicity, and modesty.

- **Selflessness and charisma** – Using his extraordinary gifts entirely for spreading *Bhagavad-Viṣaya-Kathā* and *Bhakti*, he drew masses of people from all walks of life. They adored and some even worshipped him as a guru. Yet he remained, personally, a very simple, approachable, and deeply humble person with not a trace of affectation in him.

For many in the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava community, he became the living demonstration that even in this modern age, one can still be what the holy texts describe: a *Gṛhastha Vedic* scholar, a *Yajña Adhvaryu*, a *Rasika-Upanyāsaka*, and a *Nṛsiṃha Upāsaka*—all seamlessly integrated. That is why Mukkūr *Svāmī* is sorely missed, and to say that "*there is none today to equal him*" is not hyperbole. It is straightforward reporting of the whole community's inner experience today.

The Missing Exemplar: 2026 Reflections on Mukkūr Svāmī and the Future of Vedic Legacy

Very recently in this year 2026, under the auspices of the Ahōbila Mutt, and on the occasion to celebrate the 71st anniversary of the present 46th Pontiff, His Holiness Śrīmad Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhakōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikaṉ, a *Vidvat Sadas* (*Vedic*

Seminar) was held which was attended by quite a few great scholars and eminent *Vedic* pandits.

In his keynote speech, the Azhagiyasingar while extolling the great Śrīvaiṣṇava traditions of *Vedic* learning had, however, much to say about the decline in the numbers and quality of discourse and education in the *Vēdas*.

Implicit in his address to the conclave of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy and laity was a certain sense of regret and disappointment that there were few contemporary exemplars today in the community who matched the spiritual lustre of those in the past decades—someone like Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself perhaps he had in mind—someone who could attract the fresh minds and fire up the robust imaginations of our younger generations so they could rightly take pride in Śrī-Vaiṣṇava traditions, heritage, and cultural legacy.

Below is reproduced a transcript of Azhagiyasingar's speech. Hearing it, one gets the impression that *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* religious leadership acutely misses the presence amongst its midst of the likes of someone like Mukkūr *Svāmī*. Someone who one could turn to, point and say, "*There was a Vēdavid who was truly a brilliant adornment to our seminaries, our Vēda Pāṭhaśālās, our temples, research centres, libraries, and schools*".

Keynote Speech of present 46th Pontiff of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt, His Holiness Śrīmad Śrīvaṇ Śaṭhakōpa Śrī Raṅganātha Yatīndra Mahādēśikaṇ at the Vidvat Sadas to celebrate his 71st anniversary in 2026

Salutations to *Svāmī Vēdānta Dēśika* and the lineage of preceptors.
Namah Sadasē!

As part of the *Saptati-Mahōtsavaḥ* (70th birthday celebrations) of *Śrīmad* Azhagiyasingar, a *Sadas* (scholarly assembly) is being conducted every month by the Ahōbila Mutt.

This assembly is not restricted to the *Grantha-Catuṣṭayam* (four sacred texts), but also includes *Śrī-Pāñcarātra*, *Vēda-Bhāṣya*, and *Dharma-Śāstra*.

Scholars from various places gather here to participate, and the primary intention of these assemblies is to encourage everyone in matters of *Sad-Viṣayam* (spiritual truths) and *Śāstra* (scriptures). Previously, sessions on *Śrī-Bhāṣya* and *Gītā-Bhāṣya* were completed. Today and tomorrow, this assembly is focusing on *Vēda-Bhāṣya* (commentaries on the *Vēdas*). When we consider the vēdas, they are the root of everything, as stated in the phrase "*Vēdō'khilō Dharma-Mūlam*" (The *Vēda* is the foundation of all *Dharma*). Great sages and *Mahātmās* have provided extensive commentaries on them.

Starting from the authors of the *Nirukta*, they determined how the meanings of *Vaidika-Mantras* should be interpreted. We cannot interpret the *Vēdas* according to our own whims, even if we possess linguistic knowledge. It is often said, "*Itihāsa-Purāṇābhyāṃ Vēdaṃ Samupabṛṃhayēt*"—one should augment and understand the *Vēdas* through the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. Great souls have shown us this path to determine the true meaning of the *Vēdas*. Among the available commentaries today, the most prominent are those by *Sāyaṇācārya* and *Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskara*. Other great scholars have also written commentaries, and the scholars here will now lecture on the essence of these works.

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Lord Himself declares, "*Vēdaiśca Sarvair Aham ēva Vēdyaḥ*"—He is the one to be known through all the *Vēdas*. The scholars will explain the methods used in these commentaries.
To make these complex subjects easier to understand, the scholars will use *Maṇipravāḷa* (a blend of Sanskrit and Tamil) and even PowerPoint presentations during this assembly. We pray that everyone participates and becomes worthy of the Lord's grace. Today's *Vēda-Bhāṣya-Sadas* is very special and rare. My predecessor was also deeply involved in *Vēda-Saṃrakṣaṇa* (protection of the *Vēdas*).

We pray that the scholars who have gathered here provide a complete understanding of *Vaidika* matters. The *Vēdas* should be studied daily, and their meaning must be understood. It is said that one who learns the *Vēdas* but does not understand the meaning is like a pillar… (or a lamppost to lean on for support, not for enlightenment!)

One who knows the meaning is purified of sins and attains the highest state. Merely chanting the *Vēdas* is not enough; one must understand the meaning and perform the prescribed duties (*Anuṣṭhāna*). While the *Karma-Kāṇḍa* (ritual section) of the *Vēdas* is essential, it is taught that liberation (*Mōkṣa*) cannot be attained through these actions alone, which is why the *Upaniṣads* (the head of the *Vēdas*) provide further instruction.

Regarding the commentaries on the *Yajur-Vēda*, we have works by *Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskarā* and *Sāyaṇācāryā*. For the *Rg-Vēda*, there are commentaries by *Sāyaṇācāryā*, *Vēṅkaṭa-Mādhavā*, *Skanda-Svāmī*, and others—about five scholars in total.

Madhvācāryā also wrote commentaries on about 100 Sūktas of the *Vēdas*, interpreting them as *Nārāyaṇā-Para* (focused on *Lord Nārāyaṇā*). Others who commented on the *Rg-Vēda* include *Mudgalā*. *Sāyaṇācāryā* also commented on the *Sāma-Vēda*, as did a scholar named *Nārada*, though some of those works are now lost to posterity.

About 30 years ago, at the request of the *Kāñcī-Śaṅkarācāryā (Mahāperiyavā*) and a trustee of the *Maṭham* board named Annadurai, I was tasked with writing about the differences between the commentaries of *Sāyaṇā*, *Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskarā*, *Skanda-Svāmī*, *Vēṅkaṭa-Mādhavā*, and *Mudgalā*. I submitted that work covering five *Aṣṭakas*. I do

not know what happened to that work of mine. Its current existence or whereabouts is unknown.

Sāyaṇācāryā commented on the *Yajur-Vēda* first, before moving on to the *Rg* and *Sāma-Vēdas*.

One can ask why comment on the *Yajur-Vēda* first. Because it is the *Yajur-Vēda* that fulfils the requirements of *Yajña-Karmas* (sacrificial rituals). The commentaries thus explain how to invite the deities and provide whatever they require during a sacrifice.

In a *Yajña*, there are four main types of priests: the *Hōtṛ*, *Adhvaryu*, *Udgātṛ*, and *Brahmā*. The *Brahmā* priest must be knowledgeable in all three *Vēdas* to identify and correct any errors that occur in real-time. Whenever doubts arise, it is the *Brahmā* who must resolve them.
Agnihōtra Rāmānuja Tātācāriyar used to jokingly call the *Yajur-Vēda* the 'chef's *Vēda*'! This is because a guest is only satisfied when they are served a good meal cooked by the chef, and the *Yajur-Vēd*a, like a good chef, provides the '*food*' (offerings, oblations) that satisfies the deities by detailing how rituals should be performed.

Many scholars have studied these *Vēda-Bhāṣyas* deeply. The *Śaṅkarācāryā* also established a *Vēda-Bhāṣya*-trust during the year of his own *Ṣaṣṭi-Abda-Pūrti* to support those who study these commentaries.

In the past, those who passed exams in *Vēda-Bhāṣya* were given a reward of 3,000 rupees; today it is one lakh rupees. However, very few people come forward to study it.

I once mentioned in Kāñcīpuram that our maṭham would provide 5,000 rupees a month to anyone willing to study *Vēda-Bhāṣya* or *Ghanapāṭha*, but no one took up the offer. Many feel that just performing the rituals is enough and knowing the meaning is unnecessary. But the *Śāstras* say, "*Arthavit Sakalaṃ Bhadram Aśnutē*"—the one who knows the meaning attains all auspiciousness.

There is a similar lack of scholars in *Dharma-Śāstra*. With scholars like those from Nāvalpākkam (*Kāñcīpuram* and the Mukkūr belt of Agrahāra villages) becoming rare, we need people who can correctly interpret *Dharma-Śāstra*. Even if we cannot master everything, we should at least know the specific dharmas applicable to us.

I have told our *Maṭham-Vidvāns* that we must learn these things to ensure proper *Anuṣṭhāna* (practice). We should remember great souls like Nārāyaṇa Sōmayājī (in the Andhra Pradesh Gōdāvarī belt), as the mere remembrance of such holy people removes our sins.

I believe this *Sadas* should not be limited but should be unlimited (*Aparimita*). No matter how many people attend, the Lord Nṛsiṃha will provide the means. Sometimes we worry about the funds needed for such tasks, but the Lord encourages us not to worry and provides for us.

My view is that anyone who wishes to come and speak in these seminars should be allowed, and after they speak, they should be prepared to answer questions. *Vēda-Bhāṣyam* should ideally be learned from a guru, but if one has *Śāstra-Jñāna*, they can explain the meanings. *Sāyaṇācārya*'s commentary is very *Karma-Para* (focused on rituals). In contrast, *Madhvācārya*'s commentary on 100 *Sūktas* is *Nārāyaṇa-Para*. Even in the *Yajur-Vēd*a, the mantras can be interpreted as culminating in Lord Nārāyaṇā. Currently, a scholarly project is ongoing that links *Vaidika-Mantras* to the *Āḻvār-Pācurams*.

It is fascinating to see how a single *Vaidika-Mantra* can provide the meaning for a hundred or even a thousand *Pācurams*. Nothing exists outside the meaning of the Vedas. In the future, we plan to conduct a *Pāñcarātra-Sadas*. The *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa Āgama* traditions are intertwined. Later, we will have sessions on *Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya*. For the *Dharma-Śāstra* sessions, all are welcome—*Śrīvaiṣṇavas*, *Smārtas*, and *Mādhvas*. We want to hold a general *Sadas* for everyone. Beyond that, I have it in mind to also conduct sessions on the *Rāmāyaṇam*, *Bhāgavatam*, and *Bhāratam*, and even *Śilpa-Śāstra* (architecture/sculpture). These scholarly gatherings should continue.

Everyone might have their own constraints, but it is important to attend and appreciate these sessions. I am very pleased that our *Āsthāna-Vidvāns* are also engaged with various research projects. Many more scholars have promised to attend.

A *Vaidika-Sabhā* like this should not just have five or six people; there should be thousands of attendees and hundreds of scholars. If it is the Lord's will, He will provide the resources (*Divya-Dravyam*) for this. My responsibility (as Azhagiyasingar, Pontiff of the *Ahōbila-Maṭham*) is to pray to Him daily to conduct these sessions; if they do not happen, it would be a slight to Him, and He will not allow that. I pray that this *Sadas* continues to flourish and grow.

Nārāyaṇā.

PART 6

The Legacy of "Mukkūr *Svāmī*"

CHAPTER 32

The Mukkūr *Svāmī* Legacy

Going by the solemn views expressed by *His Holiness, the 46th Azhagiyasingar of Ahōbila Mutt*, it does seem as though the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava community at large is collectively wringing its hands, silently bemoaning today the paucity of truly stellar and popular representatives of its ancient cultural history and lofty *Vedic* intellectual heritage in the mould and likeness of Mukkūr *Svāmī*.

However, while the lamp of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s legacy after he attained *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi* has only flickered, it has not been blown out by winds of the passage of time. Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Tirukumārar*, Śrī. M.L. Śrīnivāsan, (MLS *Svāmī*) has in the last two decades and more, exerted great efforts to keep the flame alive at Maṭṭapalli, Mukkūr Village and Chennai through the activities of the **Śrī Svātī Narasiṃha Mahāyajña Trust**, a registered charitable foundation dedicated to propagating the message and legacy of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s ideals and values.

• ***Could you tell me more about Mukkūr Svāmī's legacy? And your efforts to preserve and propagate it through the Mukkūr family trust?***

MLS *Svāmī*:

Mukkūr *Svāmī* proclaimed that anyone that comes to offer sincere worship at the Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃha temple can trust in the Deity's compassion and be sure that whatever difficulties in life are faced will be removed. To his devotees who came for solace and advice to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, he had only one prescription:

Perform 11 days of Pradakṣiṇa (circumambulation) at the Maṭṭapalli *temple. During those 11 days, the Lord would answer prayers and remove the obstacles standing in the way of relief.*

I must tell you about an experience that I had while at Maṭṭapalli, which attested to the efficacy of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s prescription.

Once, I saw a lady from Tirunelveli who was performing the Pradakṣiṇa alone. Upon making polite inquiries, I was able to learn that she had read about the 11-day vow in Mukkūr Svāmī's book, Kuṟai Oṉṟum Illai. She had come to Maṭṭapalli and was praying for her estranged husband to rejoin her in normal family life as well as the spiritual life.

The following year, when I happened to be in Maṭṭapalli again, I was pleasantly surprised to see the same lady at the temple. This time she was happily performing the circumambulation alongside her husband.

The Vedic Laboratory: Blueprint for the Future

"It was to make pilgrimages as comfortable as possible for such ordinary people—as that lady from Tirunelveli—who come to Maṭṭapalli from all over the country that Mukkūr *Svāmī* undertook to build residential rooms—*Chattram*—at the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* in Maṭṭapalli to accommodate them while they underwent the 11-day vrata.

We are actively continuing my father's legacy at Maṭṭapalli through the **Śrī Svātī Narasiṃha Mahāyajña Trust**. I have already told you about the plans we have drawn up for the future (*refer Chapter 1*): a *Vedic* Research Institute, the Trayi-Lakṣmī temple at Mukkūr, the Gōśālās, the library and memorial complex for the 42nd and 44th Jīyars of Ahōbila Mutt and Mukkūr *Svāmī*, amongst other ideas.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* founded the **Śrī Svātī Narasiṃha Mahāyajña Trust** (2000) to construct a Yajña Vāṭikā and chatram at Maṭṭapalli Mahākṣētram. After 2001, and his attaining *Ācārya-Tiruvaṭi*, and building upon the traditions he laid down, such as *Yajñas, Gōśālā* and *Vēda Pārāyaṇa*, our Trust has progressed towards developing the Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃha temple into a major pilgrim centre in Andhra Pradesh.

The *Vedic* Centre that is still in the planning stage today has many programmes to initiate wherein application of *Vedic* ideas and concepts to modern living is to be demonstrated as being also practical and useful in modern life.

For example, take *rainwater*. If rainwater is stored and sealed properly without allowing external contaminants, its quality remains unchanged for over a year. The technology design for such storage is integral to the *Vedic Research Centre* projects to be undertaken.

There is also this goal we have to design and establish PhD programmes that scientifically prove the utility and value of medicinal herbs (*Ōṣadhi-Vanaspatayas*) mentioned in the *Vēdas*.

One other project is to show that the results of *Vedic* mantras are scientifically reproducible and not merely '*magic words*. The *Vedic* Research Centre will serve as a laboratory for such experimental inquiry.

The potency of *Vedic* mantras depends heavily on correct pronunciation (*Uccāraṇam*), which must originate from specific vocal centres (*Śabda-Sthānam*). Mukkūr *Svāmī* used to detail those vocal centres in his discourses and in his books, like his work on the *Gāyatrī-Mantra*. Those sources of his will serve as essential reference material for future research. Future generations will come to appreciate the research material, hopefully, much like how the scientific and mathematical depth of *Svāmī* Vedānta Deśika's Sanskrit works today is being realised 750 years later."

Vēda Mūlam: Quantum Mechanics

"After 2012, under the aegis of the **Svāti Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña Trust,** a dedicated programme was conceived by me to research and document Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s vast body of works.

A central principle of *Svāmī*'s teaching was *Vēda Mūlam*: everything he said or did have to be rooted in the *Vēdas*. He would not entertain any concept, however popular, if it lacked a *Vedic* foundation.

Just to give a few telling examples of the *Vēda-centricity* of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s mind, let me narrate to you how he applied *Vedic* reasoning to age-old Hindu marriage rites and customs.

Take the examples of **Arundhatī Marriage Rituals**: (1) the bridal couple sighting the distant stars (*Arundhatī-Pārppatu*) (2) the bride's ritual placing of her foot upon the mortar-stone (*Ammi-Midittal*) and (3) the *Kāśī-Yātrā* rite where the father of the bride beseeches the "*groom not to go away in a huff to distant Kāśī but to come back to the altar and take the daughter's hand in holy matrimony*"!

- ***The Symbolism of the Stone*:** The grinding stone (*Ammi*) represents stability and the resolve to remain unshaken in the *Gṛhastha* (householder) ashram.
- ***Arundhatī and Astronomy*:** Mukkūr *Svāmī* connected this ritual to modern astronomy, noting that Arundhatī (Alcor/Mizar) is a binary star system.
- ***Quantum Entanglement*:** One can relate here the *Vedic* concept of *Sūkṣmam Ēva Mithunam* (the subtle twins) and its connection to Quantum Entanglement, where two particles remain connected

regardless of distance—a concept Einstein called "*spooky action at a distance*".

- ***Mutuality*:** Unlike most binary systems where one star is stationary and the other orbits it, **Arundhatī** and **Vasiṣṭha** exhibit mutual rotation around a common centre. This serves as the *Vedic* ideal for marriage: *a relationship of mutual support rather than one-sided dominance.*

The ritual of sighting Arundhatī stars can be likened to a GPS calibration for a joint journey. Just as travellers across a desert look at a fixed celestial point in the night sky to ensure they are on the right path, the wedded couple too looks at Arundhatī in the sky and fixes its moorings in life. It was not just meaningless stargazing. It was a ritual signifying a model of perfect orbital mutuality—to calibrate the couple's lives so they kept orbiting around each other with equal respect and stability.

- ***Ancient Curriculum*:** Sighting the Arundhatī twin stars was historically a part of the *Vēda Pāṭhaśālā* curriculum; a prospective groom had to prove that he could locate the star in the night sky to be considered qualified for marriage.

According to Mukkūr *Svāmī*, the rites of the ***Kāśī-Yātrā*** have a *Vedic* origin too, but it has got transmogrified in time to become some sort of frivolous wedding custom.

It originated from a time when students from South India had to travel far north to Varanasi (Kāśī) to spend many years there learning to master Sanskrit and *Vedic* sciences. It was further explained as follows:

- ***Vaḍakalai* and *Teṅkalai* Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas:** Śrī Rāmānuja sent disciples who volunteered to go and live in Kāśī to learn the **"Northern Art"** (*Vaḍakalai*) *of Sanskrit Vēda*, while others stayed back in the South to master the **"Southern Art"** (*Teṅkalai*) of the Āḻvārs Tamil *Divya-Prabandham* hymns. These labels originally referred to their field of study (Art) rather than to any sectarian conflict.

- **The Umbrella and Sandals:** In this ritual, the father-in-law offers an *umbrella* and *sandals* to the groom. They represent symbolism: the historical act of welcoming a young scholar back home from his long academic sojourn in Kāśī and inviting him to marry into the family."

The Crossroads of Clarity: My own 11-Day Vrata and the Birth of the Maṭṭapalli Vision

"Following Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s death in 2001, I began to lose interest in my corporate infrastructure business and by 2003, I found myself at a "crossroads". I was unsure and confused whether to take up a job in Network Security or ERP. Wishing to seek mental clarity, I decided to follow Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s prescription. I travelled to Maṭṭapalli to perform the 11-day *Pradakṣiṇa* vow.

At that time, I had not yet begun building the 32 rooms near the Maṭṭapalli temple which Mukkūr *Svāmī* had envisioned.

Initially, I felt I should raise the funding needed for the building project on my own—estimated then at ten to twenty million rupees—rather than asking for donations from charitable institutions and philanthropic high net-worth individuals. It was a mindset which in hindsight I can only describe as "ignorance". But then the *Lord Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan* intervened to make me wiser and to accelerate the project.

After Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s passing, I was faced with the immense responsibility of managing the Trust and performing the daily *Ārādhanā* (ritual homely worship) for Śrī Yajñamūrti and the many other *Arcā* (iconic) deities that he had left behind at home. *Svāmī* had established a strict daily timetable for the household worship, which included specific offerings to be made to the deity (like making *poṅgal*, etc., every morning). I was determined never to stop the rituals that he had initiated and scrupulously performed all his life.

Suggestions came from family members and friends that since I was preoccupied with my own professional engagements that involved also frequent international travel, it would be practical for me to hand over and donate the household iconic deities to a temple. I refused. I wanted to honour Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s legacy at all costs: the deities at home must continue to be worshipped and maintained at home by the family alone.

With a mind troubled by confusion and anxiety and wanting to seek clarity about the direction my future was to take, I travelled to Maṭṭapalli to perform the *11-day Pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation) vow. I was accompanied by one *Śrī Lakṣmaṇācāryā*, a dedicated *Kaiṅkaryaparaḥ* who insisted on coming along to handle the cooking of victuals while on pilgrimage during the 11 long days so that I could focus entirely on the ritual itself. The *Vrata* I undertook was rigorous, requiring me to bathe in the icy waters of the Kṛṣṇa River at dawn and perform the 11 circumambulations three times a day.

While I was at the spiritual retreat in Maṭṭapalli, I also took the time to plan on how to realise Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s vision of building a 32-room residential complex for devotees and pilgrims. I discussed my ideas with Lakṣmaṇācāryā. At that time, I estimated the project would cost me at least twenty million rupees. To raise that kind of funds, I toyed with the thought of taking a job in America from which the savings would be possible to raise the money needed. Personally, I was very reluctant to go around soliciting for donations from the public or largesse from wealthy individuals."

How Exclusion Built the Walls of Maṭṭapalli's Future

"During this period, Lakṣmaṇācāryā and I regularly used to dine at the *Brahmin Chattram* (a rest house where one could enjoy free meals) in Maṭṭapalli. I noted that all local rest homes and cafeterias in Maṭṭapalli were strictly caste-based, with separate facilities for *Brahmins*, *Vaiśyas*, and *Reḍḍis.*

The *Brahmin Chattram* followed a strict rule that men had to remove their shirts to be served food. This enabled discreet verification whether the person had already undergone the investiture of *Yajñōpavīta,* which is compulsory for any Brahmin.

On the fourth day of my ongoing *Vrata*, a man I knew as Śrī Saundararājan arrived from Chennai. Saundararājan was a business consultant and astrologer by profession. He had for long been a very devoted follower of Mukkūr *Svāmī* since the late 1990s. Mukkūr *Svāmī* was fond of him and had even given the good-hearted man an affectionate nickname, "Ghee Saundararājan"! That was because the man would generously donate large quantities of ghee for *Yajña* rituals that Mukkūr *Svāmī* conducted.

Mukkūr *Svāmī* had once commanded Saundararājan, *"You must make it a lifelong spiritual practice to visit Maṭṭapalli every month and offer worship to Lord Nṛsiṃha there. You must do this without fail…."* It was a command that Saundararājan took very seriously and followed faithfully.

Often, on his monthly trips to Maṭṭapalli, Saundararājan also brought along groups of business clients or friends who too were seeking spiritual remedies for difficulties they faced in life.

On that day, I was happy to meet Saundararājan in the temple precincts.

After exchanging pleasantries, I invited him and his group of five or six friends and colleagues to join us for lunch at the *Brahmin Cattram*. The

invitation was made because I knew that otherwise he and his entourage would have had to travel all the way to some squalid wayside restaurant in Huzurnagar town, miles away. In Maṭṭapalli too, there were no restaurants, good or bad ones. So, my invitation was gratefully accepted and Saundararājan and friends followed us to the *Brahmin Cattram* to have a meal.

After I had finished my meal, as I was exiting the *Cattram*, I was taken aback to see two members of Saundararājan's group sitting outside on the porch. I went up to them and asked if they had had their meal. I was aghast when they, in low, self-apologetic tones, whispered to me that when they had sat down for the meal inside along with others, the rest-house serving staff had refused to serve them because they did not comply with the rule to remove shirts --- as proof they were Brahmins, viz. their *Janēū* or *Yajñōpavīta* sacred thread was the credential the serving staff were looking for.

I was deeply pained to hear the two guests of mine had been treated in such manner on account of so-called "rules of the house" ... However, it was their rules of commensality at the *Brahmin Cattram* and it was not for me to question them.

After apologising profusely to the two guests and to Saundararājan, I retired to my room feeling very wretched in heart.

The incident deeply troubled me since it directly contradicted Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s core principle for the Maṭṭapalli *Yajña-Vāṭikā:* that food should be provided to all devotees of Lord Nṛsiṃha irrespective of *Kula*, *Gōtra* or *Pūrvika* (family, caste lineage or social status).

It was in that same moment that I decided that I would give up my professional and other secular commitments in life. I resolved to devote the rest of my life to fulfilling my father's vision of developing the Maṭṭapalli temple as a great pilgrim centre for ordinary people coming from every part of this country.

The Mukkūr *Svāmī* Trust would construct a facility for the boarding, lodging, and comfort of all pilgrims who come to worship Lord *Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan*."

The Command of the Cave: Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan

"At the auspicious hour of 6:00 p.m., on the following day, at Maṭṭapalli, I entered the sanctum of the *Sannidhi* of the temple. It was deserted. I sat down in front of the deity in the sanctum and began meditating.

After about 20 minutes, I heard a distinctive, unique voice speaking. It was a calm and clear voice that spoke in Tamil. It simply said:

"*Start the construction of the Yajña-Vāṭikā Maṇḍapa immediately. Obstacles will, of course, arise. But soon thereafter, all will proceed well.*"

I was startled! I arose and looked around me to see if there was anyone in the cave sanctum. There was nobody. The cave was dark, cool, and silent. I went searching around the entry and exits of the cave but found no one there.

I returned to the sanctum and gazed at the deity, the idol of *Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan*. I could not but conclude that the voice heard had arisen directly from the ***Svayambhū*** (self-manifested) idol itself.

This was to me an experience that was both real and surreal. I went back to my rooms and contemplated on it.

I finally understood it to mean that it was a divine sign for me now to press ahead with the resolve to proceed posthaste with the project for the construction of the Trust's Pilgrim Complex at Maṭṭapalli… the Deity had spoken: "*… Obstacles will of course arise. But soon thereafter, all will proceed well"*. I had to obey the command.

How a Pressure-Cooker Launched the Maṭṭapalli Legacy

"Although mentally I had made a commitment to Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s cause, I knew that without raising funds I could not even lay a foundation stone for the Maṭṭapalli project --- not even symbolically.

However, I surprised even myself, in fact, when the following day, with the help of Lakṣmaṇācāryā, I went ahead and conducted a brief and perfunctory *Bhūmi Pūjā* (groundbreaking ceremony) on a small patch of land that the Trust owned and which was situated beside the temple. I hardly had about Rs.10,000 at that time in the bank.

I then told my assistant, Lakṣmaṇācāryā, to go and buy a rice pressure cooker from Huzurnagar and told him that henceforth neither of us should have meals outside and only from our own Annadānam Kitchen. We would cook our own meals no matter how spartan it would be. We would cook and live on curd rice and would share the same too with any hungry devotee who happened to pass by.

The next morning, as Lakṣmaṇācāryā got ready to prepare our first meal with the new pressure cooker, suddenly a lay devotee arrived at Maṭṭapalli asking to meet me. When he came up to me, he told me he had

come to perform the 11-day *Vrata* and asked if after his circumambulations, any food would be served to him as *Prasāda*.

That individual became the very first guest served at Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Mahā-Yajña Vāṭikā*, receiving curd rice in fulfilment of my father's principle that all *Bhāgavathas* (devotees) without discrimination of any sort should be served food at the temple."

How Global IT Security Built the Foundations of Maṭṭapalli

"By Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s *Tirunakṣatra* day (60th birth anniversary) in **2004**, the first block of eight rooms was completed and inaugurated at Maṭṭapalli.

To fund and oversee the project, I had no choice but to take a job as Technical Advisor at an IT Network-security firm in Dubai. The firm accepted my condition laid for service: I would be allowed to work in either Dubai or Mumbai during the week, but every Friday I would be free to travel to Maṭṭapalli to supervise the construction of the larger pilgrim complex."

The Japa of the Wired Sage: the 160-Day Vow

"As I thrashed around desperately trying to somehow balance my professional life and the other priority I had given to the Maṭṭapalli project, I found myself torn between competing ends and means. Remembering what Maṭṭapalli Nṛsiṃha had spoken: through Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s voice inside the cave temple on that fateful day, I decided to resort to what my father had always told me would reveal a path forward whenever I found myself in dark despair: *mantra japa*.

At the Maṭṭapalli *Yajña-vāṭikā*, I took a solemn *Saṅkalpa* to dedicate 160 days of *Nṛsiṃha Mantra Japa* (split into four 40-day cycles of 32 sessions each). I got a specific *yantra* consecrated for the purpose, exactly like the one I had seen Mukkūr *Svāmī* use in his own *Upāsanā* for *Yajñamūrti*.

The first cycle was held in Kākināḍa and the second in Chennai.

The Mukkūr Cycle (2012) was the third cycle, and it took place in his birthplace, Mukkūr Village. At that time, the Śrī Rāma temple in the village (belonging to the Ahōbila Mutt and first built by *Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar*) was in a dilapidated state. The village had also suffered the ravages of two successive severe drought years.

During the *32-day Japa* cycle in Mukkūr, I had to straddle and juggle two responsibilities simultaneously: Perform *Japa* as *Yajña* and attend to the

Trust's other projects and administration; and at the same time also continue to function as an online technical consultant for a major US-based computer technology firm based out of Dubai and Mumbai. It was my assignment to provide data-security product training to staff in banks and military establishments.

Because Mukkūr Village lacked reliable internet connectivity, I had to somehow find ways to not only keep the ***Japa*** schedule going but also carry out my professional assignment. It was a gruelling schedule I set for myself then:

- Japa in the temple from morning hours until 6:00 p.m.
- Then drive to Kāñcīpuram town 30 kms away to use a room in a hotel I had rented which had internet access.
- Late at night, log in and train staff of the North American clients until 3:30 a.m.
- Thereafter drive back to Mukkūr Village by 4:30 a.m.
- Resume the next day's morning rituals and Japa.
- Attend to other Trust affairs.

A significant miracle occurred upon the completion of the 32-day ritual: Though the Mukkūr Village and its surrounding areas had suffered much in the previous years 'severe drought --- bone-dry water-wells and depleted underground water levels --- a massive rainstorm hit the region for four days continuously. Wells filled up. The soil grew rich and in a year from then on, greenery sprouted everywhere … Farmers 'prosperity descended upon the people again who had been living there for years…

It was an auspicious harbinger Nature herself seemed to signal for me.

Soon thereafter, I was able to raise the much-needed funding for the Maṭṭapalli project!"

The Vision Manifest: Maṭṭapalli's 32-Room Sanctuary

"By 2012, the construction of all 32 residential rooms for pilgrims as well as one large hall adjacent to the *Yajña-Vāṭikā* to accommodate devotees attending *Hōma* and *Upanyāsas,* was completed. These facilities were built to provide food and housing for devotees performing the 11-day circumambulation vow."

The Dream and the Gō-Pūjā

"Another strange, perhaps supernatural event occurred during the *Tirunakṣatra* celebration.

It had been my intention to set apart one day during the 60th anniversary celebrations of Mukkūr *Svāmī* with a *Gō-Pūjā* (cow worship) scheduled for 7:00 a.m. that day. However, because we had been unable to find a live cow with the proper auspicious physical features, we began preparing to perform the ritual using an idol of a cow cast in silver metal. It was a rather disappointing alternate arrangement.

At 6:30 a.m., I received a phone call from a *Shivācārya* (a priest of a Śiva temple) located in a village 25 kms. away from Maṭṭapalli. The priest reported that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had appeared in his dream the previous night and had commanded him to bring his cow and calf to the celebrations immediately.

The arrival of that cow on that day with its little calf marked the unintended beginning of our Trust's *Gō-Saṃrakṣaṇam* (cow protection) mission. Although I had not initially planned to manage a large herd, the divine gift that arrived there on its own in the form of a cow and calf catalysed a future project that grew in headcount from a single cow into a large *Gōśālā* that houses today 150 cows in Maṭṭapalli.

The *Shivācārya* involved, named Mēlāceruvu Rādhākṛṣṇamūrti, later became a world-renowned spiritual leader. He went on to perform over *1,000 Chandi Hōmas* across the globe, including in Singapore and Indonesia. Wherever he goes, he never fails to credit Mukkūr *Svāmī* for his success and prosperity. He also explained that it was Mukkūr *Svāmī* indeed who had initiated him first into the *Rudra Yajña* and had taught him how to combine it with *Nṛsiṃha Mantras.*

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s spiritual influence thus did cut across all sectarian divisions, garnering deep respect from both Saivite and Vaishnavite communities in all parts of the country.

The pilgrim-centre and residential complex of the *Svāti Nṛsiṃha Mahā-Yajña Trust* at the Maṭṭapalli temple - where the maṇḍapam for Śrī Yajñamūrti and Nāmasvāmī was later constructed in 2012 - has thus evolved today into a fine infrastructure as a pilgrim-centre and is valued at about 100 to 120 million rupees. Looking back, and wondering how such an effort came to fruition, it all seems like, yet another miracle wrought by *Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan* in my life … just as it had happened to Mukkūr *Svāmī* in his!"

The Living Gaze: Supernatural Manifestation in Pañcalōha idol

"Again in 2004, another miraculous event happened.

As the date of the Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s 60th Anniversary Celebrations at Maṭṭapalli drew nearer, it was my desire for a life-size statue and small *Vigraha* of his figure in a sitting posture to be made and consecrated. Efforts to find a sculptor to do the job in Guntūr and Tenāli failed as the clay moulds could not quite capture Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s likeness.

A devotee named Vijayarāghavaṉ suggested to me that I should contact an expert sculptor (*Sthapati*), a very renowned sculptor in Kumbhakōṇam, Śrī Mōhanarām. When I approached this sculptor, he initially claimed he could not produce the likeness desired since I wanted the *Vigrahas* to be delivered in just ten days without even me sitting beside him to guide and assist personally in the detailing process.

Since I had to rush back to Maṭṭapalli to oversee other arrangements for the 60th Tirunakṣatram of Mukkūr *Svāmī*, I told Mōhanarām that I was leaving everything in his hands and trusted him to do the best. I returned to Maṭṭapalli, giving up all hope that the *Vigrahas* of Mukkūr *Svāmī* would ever arrive in time for the occasion.

However, on the very same day that Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s birth anniversary occurred, a sculptor's basket, all neatly packed, arrived at Maṭṭapalli via a courier service from Chennai.

The package was opened. Inside was a beautiful *Pañcalōha* (alloy) *Vigraha* of *Svāmī* so perfect in detail that it captured every physical trait of his, including the folds of his skin and the way he tied his tuft-hair. These were details that I had not even mentioned to the sculptor!

Mōhanarām later revealed to me that Mukkūr *Svāmī* had appeared in a dream and physically shown him how to prepare the mould needed to sculpt the figure. He followed the instructions on waking up. He was thus able to complete the job in just four days and have it delivered in Maṭṭapalli just in time!

Image 44: *The idol of Mukkūr Svāmī*

When the *Vigraha* first arrived in 2004, its eyes were closed, portraying Mukkūr *Svāmī* as though he were in deep meditation (*Yoga*). The sculptor had noted that while he could mould the body, the **नेत्रोन्मीलनम् (*Nētrōnmīlanam*)** or "*opening of the eyes*" for an *Ācārya* would happen through the power of daily worship.

During the *2005 Tirunakṣatra* celebrations, the following year again at Maṭṭapalli, while seated inside the temple sanctum, I was doing *Japa* amidst a large crowd of devotees, when I suddenly felt a powerful, "*supernatural*" sensation. I was being watched over by some looming, invisible presence.

I paused my chanting. Looking up at the *Vigraha* before me, I was astonished to discover that the eyes on the idol of Mukkūr *Svāmī* had opened on their own! The gaze was now transfixed ahead!

Photos were taken immediately and there is now available existing documentation showing the *Vigraha* both before and after the event. To this day, the eyes of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s statue, to the careful observer, possess a lifelike gaze. It changes the way it peers or gazes, according to his perceived "*moods*" or the intensity of the meditation he is engrossed in."

The Vedic Symphony

"The legacy of Mukkūr *Svāmī* manifested itself in later years in more miraculous instances than one.

We found amongst Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s personal papers that he had composed approximately 110 songs in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi including an English rhyme for children about Lord Maṭṭapalli Nathan!

While these songs appear to be very simple and straightforward, careful research into them reveals they contain complex material; for

example, one Tamil song about the **"*One*" Lord** (*Oṉṟāṉavaṉ*), proceeds line-by-line through 32 lines of pure mathematical functions.

There were other compositions found which incorporate complex Upanishadic concepts like *Tat Tvam Asi* and the *23 Tattvams of Moola Prakriti* in *Viśiṣṭādvaita* metaphysics.

Perusing some of the songs, I noted one that alludes to modern scientific theories too! It identifies that 93% of the universe is invisible "Dark Energy" or "Dark Matter" that cannot be measured… echoing the *Vēdas* that describe this unseen energy with great *Śabda* precision.

Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s intellectual bandwidth was immense. The *Vedic* Research Institute at Mukkūr Village will hopefully soon be able to conduct deeper research into these musical compositions which treat mathematics and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* metaphysics on the same plane."

An Excel Spreadsheet, the Moon, and the Miracle of Birth

"If there was one valuable lesson on *Vedic* research that I was able to learn from Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s personal example, it is the way he approached it in very creative and innovative ways of *lateral thinking*.

Let me give you an example of how I was influenced by his own approach to applying *Vedic* frameworks of thinking (noetic, perhaps!) to study even present-day phenomena.

There was this family known to us that had been very close to Mukkūr Svāmī.

A daughter-in-law in that family had suffered two miscarriages and chronic high diabetes. The doctors suggested to her that a natural pregnancy was going to be highly risky. They came to me seeking spiritual solace. I told them that all I could do was the same as what Mukkūr Svāmī himself might have done if alive: Pray on their behalf to Maṭṭapalli-Nāthan. When I did thus pray, I did receive a psychic command to perform a 9-day Pārāyaṇam of the Dayā-Śatakam to help the family overcome its distress. (Dayā-Śatakam, the 108-verse Sanskrit hymn composed by Vedānta Deśika in praise of Śrī Veṅkaṭēśvara of Tirumalā).

Following the ritual completion, one day the head of the family came to me and told me he was having a recurring dream in which he kept seeing an "Excel spreadsheet" filled with six-digit numbers. But only one number, however, remained clear in his mind upon waking up: It was **"388913"**.

The number left me greatly intrigued.

The number so fascinated me that I began researching it extensively. I was able to see that while the sum of the digits added up to 32 (the number of verses in many rituals), it did not appear in standard or common scriptures or numerology.

Further days were spent dwelling upon the number. It eventually resulted in me finding an astronomical connection: the distance between the Earth and the Moon varies in an elliptical orbit between 360,000 km and 420,000 km. The number 388,913 km falls exactly within that range.

Checking the traditional Pañcāṅga (Almanac), I was able to discover that the Moon crossed this exact distance during a specific Śukla-Pakṣa (bright fortnight) on the 8th and 9th days (Aṣṭamī and Navami). Both days are associated with the Aṣṭavasus, the eight deities who govern the realm of ancestors (Pithrus) and the blessings of the manes on progeny. I advised the father-in-law to perform 16 days of ancestral offerings (Nitya-Tarpaṇa) at Maṭṭapalli during that specific lunar phase. The gentleman followed the instructions.

The following year, a healthy child was born to his daughter-in-law without any medical complications."

Aḍi-Varavu: The High-Speed Digital Download of the Tiruvāymōḻi

A few years later, there was another extraordinary experience I had; and that too appeared to be like some ever-lingering presence of Mukkūr *Svāmī*'s legacy.

There was an occasion for me to make a pilgrimage to the holy temple of Lord Veṅkaṭēśvara in the holy Hills of Tirumalā. It was my intention and desire to offer heartfelt prayers in gratitude to the Deity there for the successful completion of a project at Maṭṭapalli that I had just overseen and consecrated, viz: the erection of 32 Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha pillars in the *Yajña-Vāṭikā Hall.*

The following morning, I hastened into the sanctum of the temple to avail of the early morning *Darśana* service known as *Jīyar Śātrumurai Sēvai*. The Jīyar *Svāmī* (temple pontiff) who was present in the sanctum there at once recognised me and graciously invited me to stand near him at the *Kulaśēkhara-Paḍi* (the threshold of the inner sanctum) and continue to worship the Deity.

There are some very interesting and hoary recital traditions of sacred scriptures carried on inside the Tirumalā temple that I must tell you about for your information.

During the *Tōmāla Sēvā* at Tirumalā… after the evening *Vīthi-Purappāḍu* processional service is completed … the Deity is adorned with fresh *Vastrās*, (raiment). The ritual procedure takes about 40 minutes. While the ritual is being carried out, the priests in attendance in the sanctum begin reciting a delightful cadence of Tamil verses. It sounds like some sort of *Aḍi-Varavu* chant.

The *Aḍi-Varavu* method of chanting is a high-speed, staccato recital of the first word of the first line of each of the verses in the entire *1,000 Pācurams of Nammāḻvār's Tiruvāymōḻi and Mudalāyiram*. Instead of reciting the full verses of the hymn, two groups of priests alternate by reciting only the first word of each line or verse in a rhythmic, rapid-fire sequence. The chanting of the entire cycle of 1,000 verses must be completed within the 40 minutes that it takes for the *Jīyar's* servitors inside the sanctum to change the Deity's jewellery, raiment, and garlands and replace them with fresh ones.

The *Aḍi-Varavu* type of recitation is like a high-speed digital download. While a normal recitation is like reading a book page by page, this method compresses the "*data*" of the *1,000 Tiruvāymōḻi* verses into essential "*packets*" (i.e. the first words), allowing the entire spiritual "*file*" to be transmitted and completed in the short window of the *Tōmāla Sēvā* ritual service. The recital demands extreme skill and mastery over the Tamil *Pācurams*. It takes years and years of training to be able to excel in such specialised chanting.

From the Tirumalā to the Badarināth Mahā-Yajña

Now, while standing there with my eyes transfixed upon the glorious *Arcā Svarūpa* in the sanctum of the Deity, Lord Srinivasa, and listening at the same time to the vibrant *Aḍi-Varavu*-method of chanting by the priests, I silently expressed my feelings of gratitude to the Lord for having blessed me with the strength and resources needed to successfully complete the 32 pillars project at Maṭṭapalli.

Suddenly, I began to feel a powerful sensation coursing through my veins, which I could not explain. Again, I began to hear a "*voice*" distinctly resembling that which I had heard before inside the Maṭṭapalli sanctum. Call it a flash of intuition or whatever, but the "*voice*" I heard sounded as though the Lord was telling me:

While you and your group of devotees have gone around reciting countless Stōtras and Japa, you have failed entirely and forgotten to recite the ***Dayā-Śatakam*** *Stōtra composed in my own praise!*

I was again deeply overwhelmed by the experience. As I exited the sanctum that morning, the fact of the omission on my part did not strike me as an accident or as *Bhagavān's* accusation, but only as the Lord's *Lila* (divine play) to create a pretext or opportunity for me to commence a new cycle of prayer. I immediately vowed mentally to perform a penance (*Prāyaścitta Saṅkalpa*) of 1,008 recitations of the ***Dayā-Śatakam***.

The *Dayā-Śatakam* recitations by themselves became a sort of *Mahā-Yajña* for me, very much in the style that Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself would have organised it. The structure conceived for the *Yajña* was the chanting of the *Stōtra* 1,008 times, all packed into a programme based on the 27 stars of the *Vedic* zodiac, including the *Abhijit* and *Sravanam* stars… the second mentioned being the asterism of Lord Veṅkaṭēśvara himself.

The programme was divided into 32 cycles, with each cycle consisting of 32 recitations performed over nine days. The recitations took place over four years (approximately 2014–2018) at various holy sites, including Tirumalā (in the Tirumalā Nambi Hall and the Nṛsiṃha shrine), at Maṭṭapalli, and at Guruvayur. By the end of the programme, we had completed over 1,200 group recitations of *Svāmī* Vedānta Deśikan's *Dayā-Śatakam*!

It was very much the direct consequence of this massive undertaking of 1,200 recitations of the *Dayā-Śatakam,* which I feel was the catalyst for my subsequent mission to go to the Himalayan shrine of Lord Badarināth. In the year 2017, we travelled with a large group of devotees to Badarināth with the intention and plan to perform *Dayā-Śatakam* recitation. But the spiritual momentum and thrust that such recitations generated enabled us to initiate the performance of a *Nṛsiṃha Mahāyajña* high up there in the mountainous *Kṣetra* where Mukkūr *Svāmī* himself had not been able to perform a full *Mahā-Yajña*.

At Badrīnāth, as per an Ājñā (divine command), adiyēṉ proceeded to perform 1008 Mahāyajñams. Starting in 2017 at Badrīnāth, and over a period of 9 years, more than 600 Mahāyajñams have so far been completed, of which the 632nd Śrī Mantrarāja Mahāyajñam was conducted at Mukkūr during the recently concluded Śrī Nṛsiṃha Jayanti in 2026.

The Coda of Infinite Compassion: Dayā-Śatakam as the Living Mahā-Yajña for Posterity

Indeed, the *Dayā-Śatakam* itself today attains the stature of a ***Mahā-Yajña*** in the legacy that Mukkūr *Svāmī* left behind for posterity.

---सकलं भद्रमश्नुते---

Epilogue

The Hindu Yajña Tradition: If It Is Not to Fall, How Its Decline Should Be Arrested

The story of the Hindu *Yajña* tradition in modern India is not merely the story of a ritual form in decline. It is the story of a civilizational inheritance that has gradually lost its centrality in the public religious imagination even while retaining immense scriptural prestige.

The older *Vedic* world placed *Yajña* at the heart of the cosmic, social, and spiritual order; yet in contemporary Hindu life, the sacrificial fire often survives only in reduced domestic rites, occasional temple *Homas*, or rare specialist performances, while the public center of religion has shifted decisively toward temple worship, festival spectacle, devotional recitation, and institutional liturgy.

This decline should not be misunderstood as proof that *Yajña* was somehow dispensable to Hindu tradition. On the contrary, the survival of *Yajña* across millennia testifies to its former centrality. The more accurate conclusion is that Hindu ritual culture underwent a long and consequential transformation. *Āgamic* modes of worship did not abolish *Yajña*; rather, they re-situated ritual authority by moving the center of sacred action from the sacrificial enclosure to the consecrated icon, the temple, and the liturgical calendar. In this transformation, the fire altar ceased to be the dominant public theatre of religion, while *Pūjā*, *Arcana*, procession, recitation, and *Utsava* came to define the religious life of the community.

This historical shift was mediated in different ways within the *Vaiṣṇava* world itself. The ***Vaikhānasa*** tradition retained a stronger *Vedic* and hereditary priestly texture, preserving more visible continuity with fire-oriented and mantra-centered ritual forms. ***Pāñcarātra***, by contrast, more fully developed a temple-centered liturgical order in which consecrated icon worship, *Mantra*, *Dīkṣā*, and repeated public observance came to the forefront. Both traditions belong to the same broad *Vaiṣṇava* religious universe, yet together they reveal how *Yajña* was not abruptly discarded but gradually absorbed, subordinated, and transformed within the expanding world of temple religion.

The result is the striking asymmetry visible in Hindu life today. In temple after temple, annual festivals such as *Brahmotsavam*, *Adhyayanotsavam*, *Pavitrotsavam*, and *Vasantotsavam* are marked by elaborate *Veda-Pārāyaṇam,* processions, decoration, and public participation. Yet *Yajña*, once the supreme public ritual grammar of the *Vedic* world, seldom appears with anything like the same scale of pomp, visibility, or institutional emphasis. What survives instead is often the aura of *Yajña* rather than its full discipline: a reduced *Homa*, an occasional ritual adjunct, a symbolic vestige, or a carefully curated relic of an older order.

Why should this be so? The answer lies not in any supposed inferiority of *Yajña*, but in the different demands imposed by the two ritual worlds.

Veda recitation and temple liturgy are more portable, more institutionally manageable, more publicly audible, and more easily integrated into festival life. Full *Yajña*, especially in its older *Śrauta* and *Soma* forms, requires specialized training, exacting procedure, multiple ritual personnel, substantial material support, and a culture prepared to sustain technical precision across generations. Where these conditions weaken, *Yajña* declines rapidly; where they remain intact, it survives only in enclaves.

This is why one observes, in modern India, the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon that Veda recitation traditions are in some places reviving even while *Yajña* traditions continue to recede. *Veda-Pāṭhaśālā*, temple-sponsored recitation programs, and charitable institutions have given oral transmission a renewed platform, often supported by cultural pride, institutional patronage, and the conviction that *Vedic* sound itself confers sanctity and visible spiritual benefit. The reciter, the donor, and the devotee can all participate in such preservation more easily than in the maintenance of a full sacrificial ecosystem. *Yajña*, by contrast, depends not merely on reverence for the Veda, but on the survival of a more demanding ritual civilization.

It would, however, be simplistic to explain this divergence solely in terms of *Dṛṣṭa-Phala* (tangible spiritual benefit) and *Adṛṣṭa-Phala (*intangible spiritual upliftment*)* as though Veda recitation promises visible benefits while *Yajña* offers only invisible ones. Traditional sources and modern advocates alike continue to ascribe tangible as well as intangible fruits to both chanting and fire ritual. The difference lies less in the metaphysics of *Phala* than in the sociology of practice. *Veda* recitation is portable, repeatable, individually demonstrable, and institutionally easier

to support. *Yajña* is collective, expensive, technically demanding, and dependent upon a far more fragile chain of embodied transmission.

The crisis, therefore, is not only ritual but pedagogic and civilizational. A *Sampradāya* (tradition) does not endure by admiring its past; it endures by transmitting competence. A *Yajña* tradition can survive scripturally, verbally, and emotionally long after it has ceased to survive liturgically. One may still praise the grandeur of *Agnicayana*, *Vājapeya*, *Agnihotra*, or other sacrificial forms, and yet inhabit a religious world in which scarcely anyone knows how to establish, sustain, and transmit them in practice. When that happens, one remains in possession of memory but no longer in possession of living continuity.

This is why the decline of *Yajña* must be described not merely as a ritual contraction but as a crisis of transmission. The often-cited maxim on tradition is apposite here: ***tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the keeping of the fire burning***. For a *Śrīvaiṣṇava* sensibility, this point carries particular force. A genuine *Sampradāya* is not a museum of venerable forms. It is a living current of *Tattva*, *Anuṣṭhāna*, and grace, in which doctrine, recitation, worship, and embodied discipline are handed down together. To preserve only the verbal praise of *Yajña* while permitting the actual disciplines of *Yajña* to lapse is to mistake sentiment for continuity.

If the Hindu *Yajña* tradition is not to fall further, its decline can be arrested only through a deliberate program of renewal.

First, *Yajña* must be restored to intellectual respectability within Hindu discourse. Modern educated Hindus have too often accepted a false binary that opposes ritual to knowledge, *Karma* to *Jñāna*, or embodied discipline to philosophical seriousness. Yet the classical tradition itself never sustained such a crude opposition. Mechanical ritualism without understanding may rightly be criticized; but knowledge divorced from embodied sacramental practice is equally impoverished. The first task, therefore, is hermeneutic: *Yajña* must be re-presented as a sophisticated and integral mode of sacred action, not as a primitive survival to be tolerated apologetically.

Second, transmission must be institutionalized, not left to accident. Just as *Veda-Pāṭhaśālās* preserve recitation through endowment, pedagogy, and social recognition, so too serious *Yajña* training requires stable patronage, *Gurukula* frameworks, documentation, apprenticeship, and ritual communities capable of supporting practitioners over the long term. No ritual

tradition survives on admiration alone. If modern institutions can fund recitation, they can also create *Yajña-Śālās*, fellowships, teacher lineages, and periodic public performances that train the next generation in more than symbolic *homa*.

Third, temple culture must recover a more organic relation to sacrificial practice. This need not mean a naive attempt to displace *Āgamic* worship with full *Śrauta* forms. Rather, it calls for a thoughtful reintegration in which *Yajña* is once again seen as a substantive liturgical reality and not merely as a minor adjunct to consecration, *Kumbhābhiṣeka*, or festival preliminaries. The public religious imagination must learn again to recognize the sacred seriousness of fire ritual, its theological depth, and its role in linking *Mantra*, offering, cosmic order, and communal welfare.

Fourth, a distinction must be made between rigid antiquarianism and principled continuity. Not every *Vedic* sacrificial form can be revived in identical historical circumstances, nor should revival be confused with archaeological reconstruction. What must be preserved is not every contingent feature of an ancient social order, but the disciplined heart of the sacrificial inheritance: trained recitation, consecrated fire, correct liturgical sequence, theological understanding, and a community willing to support practitioners who bear this burden. Tradition survives not by theatrical replication but by faithful re-animation.

Finally, the decline of *Yajña* will not be arrested by polemic alone. It will be arrested only by exemplars. Every tradition depends, at critical moments, on people whose lives become proof of continuity. In the case of the *Yajña* tradition described in this biography, such an exemplar was **"Mukkūr" Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃhācāryār.**

Mukkūr *Svāmī* belonged to that increasingly rare order of custodians for whom *Vedic* learning was not a matter of textual prestige alone, but a lived sacramental vocation. He did not merely speak about the sanctity of *Yajna* or invoke it as a symbol of civilizational grandeur. He performed it, taught it, carried it across the country, and kept alive its flame in the very age most tempted to reduce it either to curiosity or to nostalgia. His lifelong conduct of more than one hundred *Nṛsiṃha Mahā Yajñas* testified that *Yajña* could still remain a living mode of offering, prayer, discipline, and sacred service even in modern India.

Acknowledgments

Without the grace of **Śrī Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha of Ahōbilam** and my *Pūrvācāryas*, this book, within just six months of being conceived, would never have been written and completed.

To Sriman Mukkūr Lakṣmīnṛsiṃha Srinivasachariar (*MLS Svāmī*), I owe deep and sincere gratitude. He not only wholeheartedly extended support but also favoured me with valuable inputs and insights about the life and times of his illustrious father, **Mukkūr *Svāmī***. In the long interviews I conducted with MLS *Svāmī*, he was extremely kind to spare so much of his time to share biographical information about his ancestral Mukkūr Village, the years his '*Periappā*' and Mukkūr *Svāmī* both spent in Vijayawada, and then the latter's *Upanyāsa* and *Mahā-Yajña* years, all drawn from rich and vivid personal reminiscence, and from publicly available archival resources as well.

It is out of my sense of gratitude to '*Sadāchāryā*', Mukkūr *Svāmī*, that I have pledged all the net-income proceeds arising from the sale of this published book to the *Vedic* Institute, proposed to be soon established by MLS *Svāmī* at Mukkūr Village, under the auspices of the Svāti Mahāyajña Trust.

Writing a full-length biography demands considerable research effort. While much of the narrative material in this book was obtained from MLS *Svāmī*, a lot of additional contextual, correlated, and relevant information was also required, to add fullness, range, and depth to it. This book would not have seen the light of day without the incredible support of my family. I am profoundly grateful for their dedication, from encouraging my writing to assisting with the editing and proofreading.

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M.K. Sudarshan is a graduate of the Madras University from Loyola College, Chennai, and a Chartered Accountant. After a 35-plus-year-long and successful international career in corporate and project finance, he now lives with his wife in Chennai, India, pursuing wider interests in Indian philosophy, world history, and comparative religious literature, studies, and writing. His related interests are classical South Indian music, the history of Hindu temples in India, and travelling worldwide.

Sudarshan is also the author of published books on Religion & Spirituality with a focus on Śrīvaiṣṇava religious literature, philosophy, and community history. All his works have earned press and popular critical acclaim worldwide: (i) *"Unusual Essays of an Unknown Śrīvaiṣṇava";* (ii) *"The Nondescript God: Abstraction or Paragon?";* (iii) *"A Tale of Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of the "Ubaya-Vēdāntins: An outline of the history of Śrī-vaiṣṇavas of Tamiḻ Nāḍu that never was written*"; (iv) *"The Epistles of a Prolific Pontiff";* Two more of his latest books published are: (v) *"The Middlemen of Vedapura*", an English translation of a famous Tamil novel of Indira Parthasarathy (Sahitya Akademi Awardee); and (vi*) "The Death of the Brahmin-Liberal",* a candid biography of Rt. Hon'ble V.S. Srinivasa Sastri.

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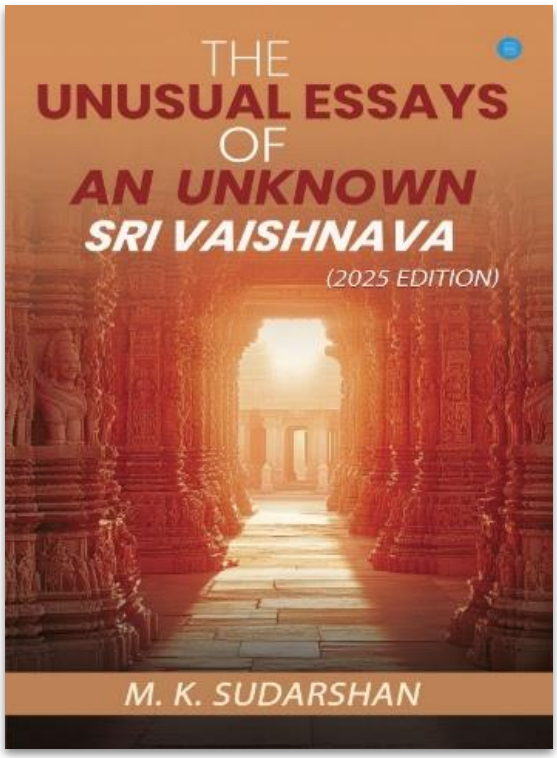
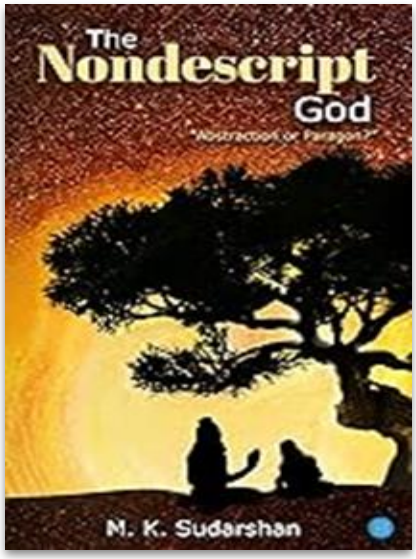




"The Nondescript God: Abstraction or Paragon?"

"The author of this book … has adopted a unique approach to explain the Viśiṣṭādvaita perspective of realisation Brahman, in the form of a dialogue between a student and an unknown Śrīvaiṣṇava…. The book is a welcome addition to the learners and scholars of both Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophies.

M. Varadarajan reviewing in THE HINDU dt. June 17, 2022

"*This book explains the uniqueness of the Viśiṣṭādvaita interpretation of Theism in contradistinction to the Advaitin's. It's an impressively intense read delving deep into these two streams of Hindu philosophy, but in a nutshell…. (This book) is a jackpot for a theology student or anyone generally … interested in understanding the dichotomy between Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita … (It's) a ten on ten!"*

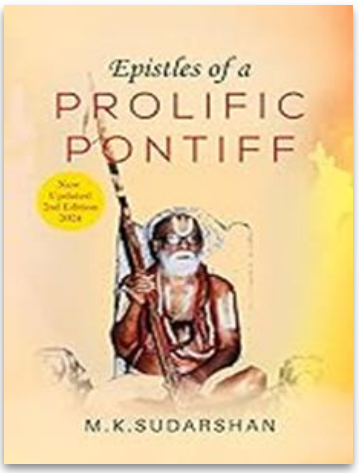
- ***The Indian Express dt. August 12, 2022***

"…. A welcome addition to Viśiṣṭādvaita literature … the book is aimed at those who thirst for 'sampradaayic' knowledge but are handicapped by their lack of acquaintance with Sanskrit or Maṇipravāḷa (language) in which most of the scholarly treatises (in Srivaishnavism) have been written".

- ***"Śrī Nṛsiṃha Priya": May 2022 issue***

"The Nondescript God" is a remarkable book with descriptive analysis and intellectual clarity. I read it twice. It reminded me of Socrates's dialogue! It educates people like me who are caught between modernity and tradition while you (the author) are well-equipped in both".

Indira Parthasarathy (R. Parthasarathy, or Ee. Paa., is an Indian author and playwright who writes in Tamil. He has published 16 novels, 10 plays, anthologies of short stories, and essays; the only Tamil writer to receive both the Sahitya Akademi Award (1977) and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2004). He received Padma Śrī in the year 2010, given by the Government of India).



"The Epistles of a Prolific Pontiff"

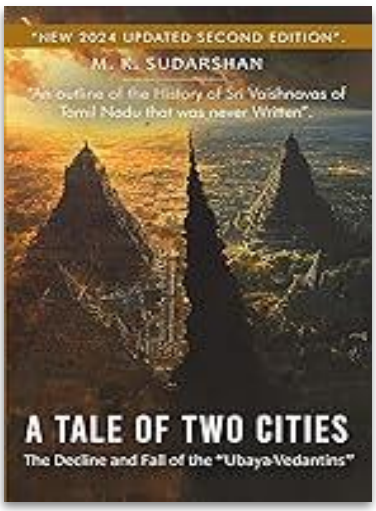
"The Tamil "Arul mozhis" of Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar conveyed lofty matters of Vedānta in easy-to-understand language for the layman. Now, in this book of English translations of the original by Sudarshan, the "Arul mozhis" have been made even more accessible and comprehensible to our younger English-speaking generations who are not so well versed either in Sanskrit or Tamil language…. I pray to Lord Mālōlaṉ *that this book should reach the homes of all those who have faith in the tenets of our Sanatana Dharma."*

- HH Srimathe Srivan Satagopa Śrī Ranganatha Yatindra MahaDeśikan (present 46th Pontiff of the Śrī Ahōbila Mutt)

"Sudarshan has translated into English the Tamil "Arul mozhis" of the great Ācārya Śrīmad Mukkūr Azhagiyasingar for the benefit of those of our younger generations who have relocated abroad or away from their native roots. The essays of the Ācārya have been translated not just in the English language… I would say rather they have been translated by him into sheer poetry…"

- ***Dr.S. PadmanabhĀcārya, Śrī Karyam of Śrī Ahōbila Mutt and former Head of the Department of Sanskrit and Vaishnavism Studies, Madras University, Chennai, India.***

"(Sudarshan) is able to capture the spirit of each Arulmozhi and tell the story in his own words, words which display a nice turn of phrase and make for a smooth, seamless narrative…. It is evident that this has been a labour of love for Śrī Sudarshan … to bring the wonderful words of this spiritual giant to the English-speaking readers without detracting a bit from the tone, tenor and spirit of the original".

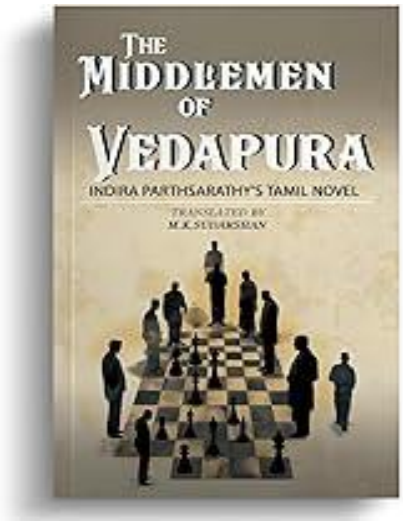


- ***K Sadagopa Iyengar, Editor, Nṛsiṃha Priya***

A Tale of Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of the "Ubaya Vēdāntins" – ***An Outline of the History of the Śrī-vaiṣṇavas of Tamiḻ Nāḍu that was never written*****" (2024)**

"*… the whole book is a must-read for every Hindu, whether he or she is a Śrīvaiṣṇava or not. Because this is part of our history and the author, with genuine love for all Hindus, has made this the story with valuable lessons for our future as well."*

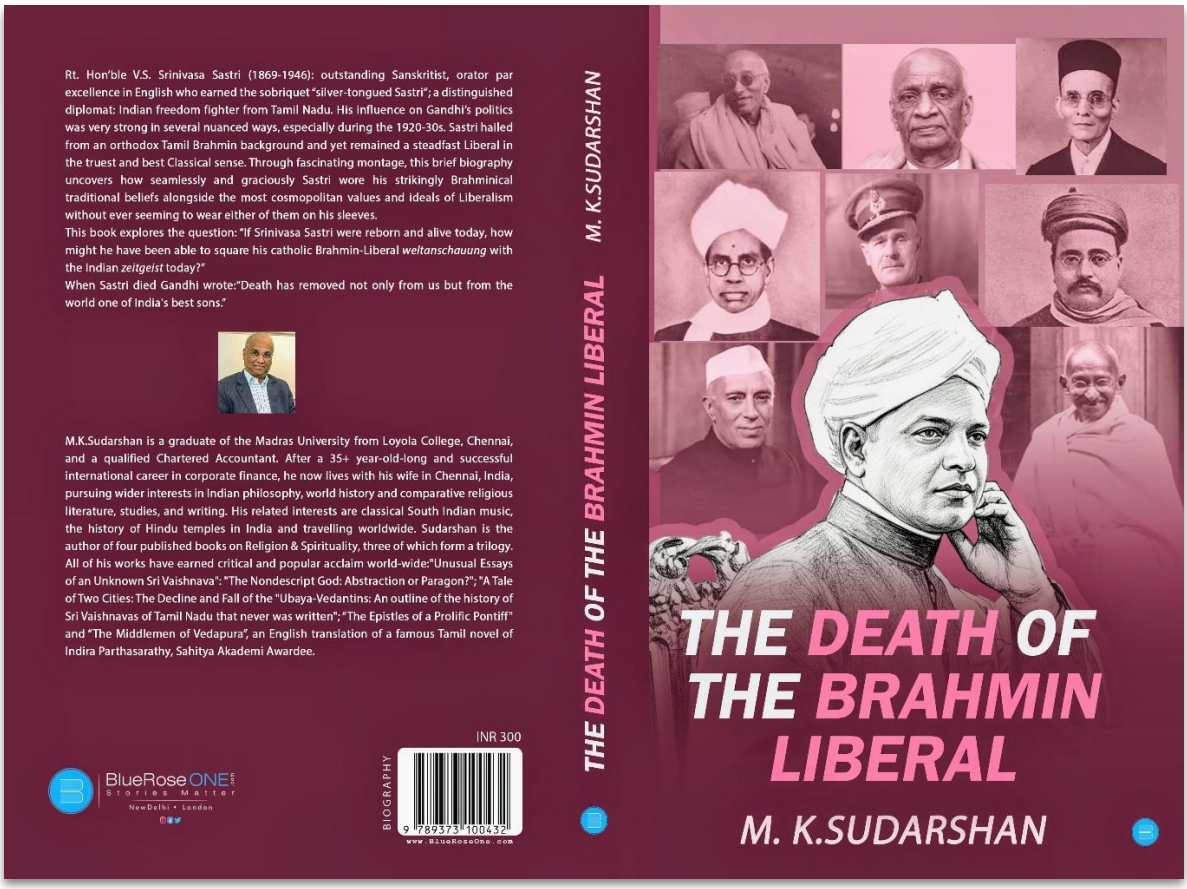
----- Aravindan Neelakandan



"The Middlemen of Vedapura" (fiction): *an English translation of Tamil satirical novel by* ***Indira Parthasarathy*** *(Sahitya and Sangitha Nataka Akademy and Padma Shree Award-winning author and playwright)*

"*… the narrative style and portrayal are engrossing. Notwithstanding certain striking similarities to political personalities that the country has seen, The Middlemen of Vedapura should not be viewed as a work that fictionalises real-life incidents. It goes beyond, and the translator has captured the spirit of the work very well".*

- ***"The Hindu"*** May 23, 2025



This book stands out as a heartfelt and erudite tribute, bridging the personal and the political, tradition and modernity. Sudarshan succeeds in rescuing Srinivasa Sastri from relative obscurity, inviting reflection on the values he stood for—and challenging today's readers, intellectuals, and leaders to rediscover the spirit of robust, ethical liberalism grounded in Indian traditions.