

ĀḶVĀR VIṢṢUCITTA-PERİYĀḶVĀR

Viṣṣucitta, otherwise known as PēriyāḶvār—the great ĀḶvār, is considered to be one of the most learned among the āḶvārs. His mind was always absorbed in the worship and adoration and service of God, the form of God being, as in the case of the other āḶvārs, the Image form (Arcā). He was most inclined to worship God in the form of Kṛṣṇa, the divine Child of Yaśōdā. But this was not by itself great thing. He used to make garlands for God by cultivating a fine garden of flower-trees in his native town of Śrīvilliputtūru, which was surrounded by excellent forests and fertile trees and where rain was plenty. The period, historically speaking, was when Vallabhadeva was reigning in the Pāndya country. The ruler was a devout man who wished to know about the supreme Being and offered quite a large sum as prize to the best expounder. The story goes that Viṣṣucitta was asked (perhaps in a dream) to go to the court of Vallabhadeva and secure the prize for the Deity. But Viṣṣucitta knew well that he was not at all a competent pandit in the śāstras and pleaded excuse to the Deity, who however commanded him to proceed to the court giving him the assurance that all would be well. Thus commanded Viṣṣucitta went to the court and he was received with honour by the ruler and his minister who observed his mystic lustre. In the debate Viṣṣucitta acquitted himself superbly, inspired as he was with all the knowledge which he himself never knew. A divine gift was his knowledge of the śāstrās, and it is said that Viṣṣucitta got knowledge without remainder of the whole Vedas. It is also stated that when Viṣṣucitta was taken round the streets after his victory in the debate, so lost was he in the glory of God's grace that he saw the lovely form of God with Śrī on Garuda—the vehicle of God. It was then that he sang his "Long Live the Divine" (*Tiruppallāṇḍu*). No āḶvār before him or after him sang the song of Long Life to God and for the enduring Kingdom of God and His glory on this earth. This is one of reasons why Viṣṣucitta was called the Great āḶvār. He asked not anything for himself but for God's eternal sovereignty on earth. A second reason is given for the name; Viṣṣucitta was the foster-father of Godā-Dēvi, afterwards known as Āṇḍāḷ—the ruler or saviour, even as king Janaka was of Sītā. Viṣṣucitta one day in his garden found a beautiful child in the tulasi-bushes and having no child of his own at that time, brought her up as his own child. She was a divine-boon to him. And she became a wonderful devotee of Kṛṣṇa of the form of Śrī Raṅganātha, whom she worshipped as a husband. It is said that she ultimately married Him and merged into Him. So Viṣṣucitta was blessed with a son-in-law who was none other than God himself.* Viṣṣucitta was also considered to be the author of a Kalpasūtra-commentary

* Other āḶvārs sang first about their gratitude and God's greatness that made their welfaring possible. They had narrated their spiritual evolution through conflicts of rasas and interweaving patterns of conduct in relations to the multiple personality of God. Or else they loved and lost

which is not available. Śrī Vēṅkaṭanātha makes a mention of that work in his *Rahasyatrayasāra*. He also composed the Tirumoḷi that goes by his name.

TIRUPALLĀṆḌU.

1. For many years and everlasting years and many thousand years and crores of hundreds of thousand years
O Lord of blue emerald hue who have shoulders that vanquished Mallas!
Let Thine red-feet's beauty be protected.
2. Let Thee along with ourselves, Thine inseparable servants, live for everlasting years.
Let Her (Mother Śrī) adorning Thee as ornament who is residing on Thine right chest live for everlasting years.

Let the luminous blazing sharp disc in Thine right hand which is capable of annihilating foes, be preserved for everlasting years.

Let Thine conch Pāñcājanya whose sound pierces through the clanging din of weapons in battle be for everlasting years preserved.

3. O Ye who are fit to do service and art ready, come and carry the mud and fragrance (for God's worship). We will not admit into our fold those who serve others for food. For in seven births we have not been serving any other; We have sung eternal years to Him (Rāma) who in battle utterly destroyed Laṅkā the dwelling place of rākṣasās.
4. Before being (lost) in the world of sorrow, those who have mind to come and join our company, come giving up desire for everything, join us.
Come with a mind to chant with devotion 'Namo Nārāyaṇāya' so that the

themselves in the beauty of God. But Viṣṣucitta's love was of a father to a son, of a mother to her darling and there is appropriateness in his singing "eternal years"--*satamānam bhavati satāyuh*.

Recently it was suggested by Sriman C. Rajagopalacharyar that ĀṅḌā! was likely to have been a creation of Periyālvār and that Tiruppāvai and Nācciyār Tirumoli are compositions of Periyālvār since the richness and mastery of the metres and thoughts of intensest kind cannot have been the productions of a child-genius.

¹ Mallas are the wrestlers, who tried to throttle Kṛṣṇa at Kamsa's court. Kṛṣṇa overpowered them and slew them. It reveals the great physical power of the Lord which entitles Him to be sought as protector. Might is with God, even physical might.

² Man should seek long life for his benefactor and since God alone is man's true benefactor man should and indeed naturally does pray for the long life of God; the second verse gives the cue to the philosophic conception of inseparable relationship between the soul and God

³⁻⁶ The first two verses had prayed for God's long Life as also for his spouse Śrī, the mother of mercy and grace and the other instruments and weapons of God. Man is in this verse called to seek to live in the spiritual universe of God and enjoy the beneficent rule of God-the Kingdom of God. The one condition enjoined is renunciation of desire for everything except God. God alone is capable of destroying the demoniac forces of Laṅkā, and titans like Hiranyakaṣipu and others.

countryside and town may know. Sing Ye eternal Life (to god).

5. O Ye who belong to the community that serves the Lord Master of the senses (Hriśikēśa), who is the ruler of the entire worlds, who uprooted the whole host of the Asuras! Come, and touching His feet utter His names, abandoning the old grooves and giving up all sense of 'I' and 'Mine' Sing" Let there be thousands of years of Life (for God)".
6. Myself, my father, his father and his father and grand father for seven generations, having come are doing all services continuously.
To Him who in the hour (and star of) Tiruvōṇaṃ (Śravaṇa) when the asuras are strong slew the foe, in the form of man-lion, we shall Sing to our heart's content: "Eternal Life for Thousand Years".
7. Thee who art the abode of the disc that has red-luminosity brighter than that of the celestial lights have all our families come to serve.
Long life eternal do we sing to Thee who art the master who ordered that disc to cut asunder the thousand shoulders of Bāna, the master of an army capable of wonder-warfare, such that blood flowed out (of them).
8. To Thee who grantest me excellent ghee-mixed food, unceasing service, bettle-nuts filling my hands, flower garland to adorn my neck, earrings for mine ears, sandal-paste for the body, and who art capable of making me pure, and who have the foe of the hooded serpents for thine Ensign, I sing everlasting years.
9. Wearing the cloth which Thou hast worn and cast away; taking the food remaining after Thou hast eaten; wearing the tulasi-garland that has been worn by Thee and discarded; thus do we, Thine-feet-worshippers.
Performing assiduously the tasks set for us in whichever direction, we shall sing "Eternal Years' to Thee, who are lying on the luminous serpent, during the period of Tiruvonam.
- ¹⁰ On the day when, O Lord, we were connected with the word (Praṇava) that made us Thine slaves, then itself, there resulted to us, Thine slaves, renunciation of all attachments.

⁶⁻⁷ Speak about the āḷvārs heritage as being pure and uncontaminated by births of non-worshippers of Viṣṇu. The greatness of God's omnipotence is referred to in these two verses. Bāna's thousand arms were removed by the disc of Kṛṣṇa and Bāna was blessed with extraordinary superhuman wondrous power.

⁸⁻⁹ The āḷvār having dedicated himself to God's service and surrendered himself entirely and without remainder to God, was blest with every need of the body., clothes, food, ornaments, flowers and freedom from personal care by God. Man is śēṣa servant of God, and gets the *uccīṣṭa* of God and Brāhmanas hold that Uccishta of God or sacrifice is most excellent food. It partakes of the nature of Prasāda grace and does extraordinary good. cf. Bhagavad Gītā III 13.

¹⁰ Shows that the grace of God began even on the very day we got the initiation in the mantra '*Namō Nārāyaṇāya*' which cuts asunder the knots of attachment to inferior wealth and service.

To Thee do I sing eternal years, who was born on an auspicious day in Mathura, and who broke the bow and danced on the head of the five-hooded serpent fierce.

11. Like Śēlvānāmbi Faultless, ruler of the people of jewel- like Kōṭṭiyūr., a hill of pride, and lord of wealth, am I Thine eternal slave.
Uttering correctly 'Surrender to Nārāyaṇa' and pronouncing Thine many names, O Thou, who art pure in many respects, I shall sing to Thee 'Eternal years'.