

## Sixth Birth Centennial of Annamacharya

On May 19, 2008 the six hundredth anniversary of the birth of Annamacharya was celebrated in a grand manner at the remote village of Talapakam in today's Andhra Pradesh. A tall statue of Annamacharya was consecrated in the presence of the current Jeeyar of Sri Matam, Sri Narayana Yattheendhra Mahaa Desikan. Sri Matam has long links with Annamacharya is also known as Annamayyanga of Talapakam.

Annamacharya was born on the Vaisaka Poornima day of the Sarvadhari year (May 9, 1408) and lived for 95 years until Phalguna Bahula dwadasi of the Dhundhubi year (February 23, 1503). Prakrutham Srimad Azhagiya Singar of Sri Matam, Sri Vann SaThakOpa Sri Narayana Yattheendhra Maha Desikan was invited by Tirupati-Tirumala devastanam to be the chief guest to preside over the sixth birth centennial celebrations. It is but appropriate that the titular head of Sri Matam was invited to preside over these well planned and well attended sixth centennial avatara utsavam of Annamacharya at his birth place in the context of the precious relationship that the divine bard had the founding Jeeyar of Sri Matam, Adhi VaNN SaThakOpa Jeeyar. The bond between the Jeeyar and Annamacharya was a special one. The Jeeyar performed the sacred rite of BharanyAsam for Annamacharya, taught him Sri Bhashya, Rahasya thraya saaram, Srimad Ramayanam, Nitya grantam and the four thousand divine collect. This great Acharyan consecrated and presented an archa moorthy of Lord Venkatesa with His two divine consorts for the daily worship (Aradhanam) of Annamayya. Further, Adhi Vann Satakopa Jeeyar initiated Annamayya into the Nrusimha and Venkatesa mantrams and nurtured the deep bhakti of the bard to glorious heights. Annamayya was immensely grateful to his Acharyan for all the blessings and spent number of years at Ahobilam performing kaimkaryams for Malolan and his Acharyan. He composed many moving sankeertanams on the dhivya desam of Ahobilam, the Lord of Ahobilam and his revered Acharyan. He moved onto Thirumala with his Acharyan and spent most of his life there composing and presenting atleast one keertanam per day for the Lord of Saptha Giri.

Prakrutham Azhagiya Singar summarized in his inimitable style the life and kaimkaryams of the divine bard from Talapakam in a Srimukham this way: "Sri Annamacharya was a mystic poet and like Alvars, he delved deep in

the ocean of divine love. His greatness lay in his songs being in simple language; yet profound in supreme thoughts as reflected in scriptures, epics and puranas. His devotion for Lord Venkateswara was unparalleled; but his bhakthi towards Sri Ahobila Narasimha was no less adorable. In a song, he asserts that to him, the Lord who is a veritable treasure, omnipresent and ever smiling is the Ahobileswara of Venkatadhri -- Hari Sri Venkatadhri Ahobilesudu. Annamayya known popularly as Annamacharya saw Narasimha in Venkatadhri and Venkateswara in Ahobilam as per his meaningful words: "Paavanaputahobila giri devam Sri Venkatagiri jalagee vaade". He avers that Malola Narasimha in all His forms is the all pervading, all conscious, all consuming Parabrahman." Prakrutham Azhagiya Singar observes further that the Acharya bhakthi of Annamacharya was unique: "Annamacharya, the evolved soul, was a passionate disciple of the founder Jeeyar of Sri Ahobila Mutt, Sri Adhivann Satakopa Swami." To him, this Satakopa Muni is the easily accessible Hari, Prince among ascetics, ever by our side like a shadow, the glittering pathway for Moksham, the last word for enemies, an embodiment of holiness, the boat to cross the Viraja river, possesses glowing erudition to protect the worlds and the effulgent lightning to both the animate and the inanimate. Surely, he is the vehicle to cross the ocean of Samsara. Annamacharya significantly ends up this composition stating that Sri Satakopa Muni is all for Lord Ranganatha, Kaanchi Varadharaja, Tiruppathi Venkateswara and to Ahobila Narasimha, the repository of compassion. Totally absorbed in ecstasy, he hails the Nava Narasimha as "Viswa Simha, Veda Simha, Varada Simha, Saranaagatha Simha, Trimurthi Simha, Durita nivaarana Simha, Kreedha Simha, Aapat uddhara Simha and Bhaya nivarana Simha". Sri Adhivann Satakopa Sri Narayana Yatheendhra Maha Desikan concludes his tribute to this special disciple of the founding Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt with the observation that it is very appropriate and laudable to propagate the bhakti-soaked Sankeertanams of Annamacharya for future generations to illustrate the vaibhavams of Acharya-sishya relationship and Bhagavath Bhakti.

## **Sankeertanams of Annamacharya:**

Annamacharya has composed many krithis on Lord Venkatesa, Alarmel Manga, Malolan, Ranganathan, Kaanchi Varadhan, Nithya Suris of the Lord (Vishvakshena, Garuda, Anantha), the utsavams of the Lord including Pushpa Yaagam, the Bhaagavataas of the Lord and their glories as Parama

VaishNavaas, Bhagavad Raamanuja siddhAntham and its infallibility, Vaishnava lakshaNams and the supremacy of the performance of Saranagathy at the sacred feet of the Lord as the never-failing means to gain the richest of the purushartams. The meanings for the sankeertanams quoted here are by Sriamthy Ambika Ananth and Sri Adviteeya Dixit.

## **Exceptional sishyan for an extraordinary Acharyan:**

The most important sankeertanams in the context of the sixth centennial for us as Sri Matam sishyas are in the form of upadesams of this divine bard about the Acharya-Sishya relationship and the importance of performing Kaimkaryams for one's Acharyan. In his case, the Acharyan was the founding Jeeyar of Ahobila Matam, who was initiated into SanyAsasramam by Lord Narasimhan Himself at Ahobila dhivya desam. Let us study some excerpts from his sankeertanams extolling Acharya bhakti.

## **Tribute to Adhivann Satakopa Jeeyar:**

In his sankeertanam "chUdu dindariki sualabhudu, Hari todU needayagu doramuni yitadu", Ananmacharya presents Satakopa Muni to us and explains to us as what this great yathi and Acharyan means to him:

"Look! He is easily approachable by all!  
Hari is the companion of this Lordly Sage!

Being the golden paved path to eternal,  
Being the final authority of the vedas,  
Being the sole personification of purity,  
Being the boat to viraja, here He is!

To save the worlds, (by) being a brilliant lamp of true knowledge,  
and filling the worlds with (His) effulgence,  
To absolve the sins of the ocean of Samsara,  
Being the raft, Here He is!

The abode of compassion, the Lord of Srirangam,  
Lord Varadha of Kaanchi, Lord of Venakata hill  
eternally, Lord Narasimha of Ahobilam,

These being His supreme goal, Here He is, Sri SatakOpa Muni!"

## **Other Upadesams on Acharya Tattvam.**

### **(1) Sankeertanam (yeetanimoolamepo):**

Here the divine bard describes what his wealth in the universe is. He points out: "Because of Him (Acharyan) alone, here on this earth, there is prosperity. He is there for us. How much wealth we possess! Happiness is our wealth, AchArya is our wealth. The all pervading Lord of Sree Venkatadhri is our God!"

### **2) Sankeertanam (annitiki Hari antaryaami moolamu)**

Annamayya's steadfast devotion to the Lord and His AchAryaas are saluted here: "For everything, Hari--the antaryaami, is the origin; All other means that are heard of, or seen, are fruitless. For attaining the rare right-knowledge, Acharya is the origin on this earth; for the material world, money is the origin; for supreme salvation, Sree Venkatapathi is the origin for me, Saranaagathi unto Hari is the supreme means!"

### **3) Sankeertanam (Vishnude yintaani bhaavinchute buddhi)**

Here, Annamaacharya instructs us on what is the right kind of Knowledge: "Understanding that Vishnu is everything is the right knowledge, Being a Vaishnava and serving Acharya, is the right knowledge."

### **4) Sankeertanam (neevu naasommavu neeu neesommu)**

Here is a song that Annamacharya sang to his personal deity: "You are my property, and I am Your property! For this reason, why don't You stay in my house forever? Oh Hari! My Acharya bestowed Your perceivable form unto me long ago, with abounding joy! Oh Nara-Hari! I did not know You by any unjust means. Is it right then for You to go away even by mistake?"

### **5) Sankeertanam (yettayinaa jesko ika nee cittamu nannu)**

In a dialog with the Lord, Annamayya shares his inner convictions about his Acharyan and utter faith in his Acharyan and his teachings: "(Oh Lord!)

What do You want with me? It is up to You! My Guru made me hold Your feet, I will not let go! -- My devout Acharya is the very reason between You and me! If You asked "why this love", my Acharya offered me unto You ---- Joyously my Acharya did the same thing, this remains for eternity, You and I will never be separated!"

For Annamayya, his Acharyan is the very manifestation of the Lord Himself. Annamayaa's gratitude to his Acharyan poured out in the form of moving sankeertanas eulogizing his Acharyan's greatness. To Annamayya, Adhivann SatakOpa Jeeyar was the true companion of Lord Hari and serving those sacred feet of his Acharyan was the greatest blessing for him. Together, the adhbhutha Acharyan and his ideal sishyan raised the glory of Sri VaishNava sampradhaayam and the illustrious matam founded by Adhivann Satakopa Jeeyar to great heights. That tradition thrives under the illustrious prakrutham Azhagiya Singar.

Srimath Azhagiya Singar Thiruvadigale Saranam,  
Daasan, Oppiliappan Koil Varadachari Sadagopan