

## **Udaiyavar and His experiences/relationship with His acharyas**

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Let me write about a few experiences of Bhagavad Ramanuja with Sri Alavandar and Tirukkottiyur Nambigal.

Bhagavad Ramanuja saw the impressive Tirumeni (form) of Sri Alavandar from a distance in the sannidhi of Lord Varadaraja in Kancipuram during his student days, but did not meet him. He was awe-struck by the former's majestic tone and tenor of the contents of his praying the Lord with the verse "कः श्रीः श्रियः? परमसत्त्वसमाश्रयः कः? कः पुण्डरीकनयनः? पुरुषोत्तमः कः? । कस्यायुतायुतशतैककलांशकांशे विश्वं विचित्रचिदचित्प्रविभागवृत्तम् ॥" Though Udaiyavar continued studying under YadavaPrakasha, these questions kept ringing in his ears ever since. He developed a yearning to meet his Paramacharya and get his blessings.

However, later when such a meeting was indeed planned and was about to materialise, Sri Alavandar left his mortal form before meeting Udaiyavar. When Udaiyavar inspected the mortal remains of Sri Alavandar, he found three fingers of his right hand bent (or closed). On enquiry, Ramanuja learnt of three unfulfilled desires of the Paramacharya. He then made an earnest request to the Divine couple that he (Ramanuja) should be able to complete those desires and in a way signifying that it would indeed be so, the bent fingers of the corpse of Sri Alavandar straightened at once! This shows the grace of Sri Alavandar on Bhagavad Ramanuja, who then truly became the 'darsana-sthapaka', establisher of our system of philosophy.

The three desires relate to: 1. Writing a commentary on Brahma-Sutras establishing Soul-body relationship between the Lord SrimanNarayana and the cit and acit substances, as described by Upanishads; 2. Writing a commentary on Sri Vishnu Sahasranama, establishing Brahman's 'saguna' nature and 3. Writing a commentary on Nammalvar's Tiruvoimozhi. The last two were to be carried out bearing the names of the great sage Parasara and Nammalvar himself. Bhagavad Ramanuja, while fulfilling the first desire himself through "SriBhashyam", got the other two fulfilled through his disciples Parasara Bhattar and Tirukkurukaip Piran Pillan.

Ramanuja has composed this beautiful verse on Yamunacharya in memory of such unsurpassed blessing in Gita Bhashyam: यत्पदाम्भोरुहध्यानविध्वस्ताशेषकल्मषः । वस्तुतामुपयातोऽहं यामुनेयं नमामि तम् ॥ Even in SriBhashyam, he declares that the proper meanings of the Brahma-Sutras have been determined by earlier masters (पूर्वाचार्याः सञ्चिक्षिपुः । तन्मतानुसारेण सूत्राक्षराणि व्याख्यास्यन्ते) and he merely shows their relationships with the letters of the aphorisms. Clearly, Sri Alavandar's works including the famous 'Siddhi-trayam' have been a guiding light here. In Vedartha Sangraha also, he has composed a verse on Yamunacharya to show that it was Sri Alavandar who systematically refuted the three schools of Advaita and upheld Upanishad siddhanta as: परं ब्रह्मैवाज्ञं भ्रमपरिगतं संसरति तत् परोपाध्यालीढं विवशमशुभस्यास्पदमपि । श्रुतिन्यायापेतं जगति विततं मोहनमिदं तमो येनापास्तं स हि विजयते यामुनमुनिः ॥. The other tribute to Sri Alavandar is the use of the text स्वाधीन-त्रिविध-चेतनाचेतन-

स्वरूप-स्थिति-प्रवृत्ति-भेदम् used 'verbatim' by Ramanuja (and Svami Desikan has explained it in Rahasya Granthas).

Another of his Acharyas, i.e., Sri Tirukkottiyur Nambigal had taught Ramanuja the secret hymns of the Sampradaya after due processes of rigorous testing for fulfilling the requirements of a worthy recipient. He had strictly prohibited Ramanuja from passing on these tenets to others (except Kuresa, who in the teacher's opinion was the only worthy recipient from Ramanuja for rahasyas), without the express permission of his Acharya. However, the incident wherein, out of abundant compassion towards all beings, Ramanuja explained (revealed) the contents/purport of these hymns to a large audience from the tower of a temple, was brought to the notice of the master duly by some people. On hearing this, the master got angry and summoned Ramanuja to enquire about it. Here is his rebuke:

कूशस्य पवित्रकीर्तिवसतरेकस्य वाच्यं रहः नान्यस्येत्यभिशापपूर्वकमहो गूढं मयोदीरितम् ।  
त्वं शृङ्गाटकगोचरं व्यरचयः का ते गतिः? कथ्यताम्, इत्याक्षेपगिरा गुरुर्यतिपतेर्बोद्धुं मनोऽभर्त्सयत् ॥

Do you realise what you have done and what would befall you for this violation of my strict instruction? thundered the master.

Ramanuja's humble reply was: By violating the sacred injunction of the Acharya, I would sure reach downward path (Hell), but innumerable living beings (souls) would get released from bondage was the motivation for me to undertake this misadventure. On hearing this reply, the master was immensely pleased and was moved by the compassion of Ramanuja. He then said, I did this only to test your natural concern for fellow-souls' emancipation so that you could qualify to be the leader of our spiritual path.

आचार्यवाक्यमतिलङ्घ्य किलाहमेको यास्याम्यधोगतिमशेषशरीरभाजः ।  
यास्यन्ति मोक्षमिति लक्ष्मणयोगिवाक्यमाकर्ण्य देशिकमणिः मुमुदे निकामम् ॥

Let us all salute this great acharya and feel justifiably proud of being his disciples and the great lineage of Acharyas in an unbroken chain from him till our own acharyas.

