

MAMUNIGAL THIRUNAKSHATRA VAIBHAVA VYASAM

Swami MAmuni Sri

**By: Azhvar Thirunagari U. Ve. Gomatam Seshadri Ramkumar DAsan, Professor,
Texas Tech University, USA**

Swami Manavala MAmunigal is MahA Muni. Thirumangai Mannan eulogizes only a few rishis as MAmuni. This eulogium has been given to a few, who have undertaken great tasks such as giving the GAYathri mantra for the wellbeing of the world by sage Vishvamitra, “mAmuni koNarndha gangkaiyin karai mEl.” MAmunigal by virtue of his bhakti, gnAnA, athma gunAs reaches the ranks of rishis like Visvamitra and Agasthya.

Taitiriyam proclaims that knowledge on bhrahmam (Kannan EmperumAn) is Sri (wealth) as “Sa hi Sri: AmruthA.” Prapannas have corpus of this knowledge in two languages, i.e., Sanskrit and Tamil. Swami Manavala MAmunigal, a parama sathvika strived all through his life to elevate the stature of Tamil Veda. AzhvArs have sung the praise of the bhagavathAs who sing the praise of EmperumAn in two languages, “senthamizhum vadakalaiyum thigazhndha nAvar,” and this served as the guiding principle for MAmunigal. His yeoman service resulted in elevating the status of AzhvArs and their magnum opus, “Aruliseyal.” Swami emphasizes this in his lucid ode, Upadesa Rathina MALai, “seyya maRai thannudanE sErndhu.”

Swami’s avathAram happened to propagate dharmA according to tenets prescribed by Swami EmperumAnAr. Veda prays that such mahApurushAs be born to rejuvenate dharma. “आ ब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम (Aa brahman brAhmanO brahmavarchasi jAyatAm). In accordance with this sruti, MAmunigal was born as Adishesha amsA and aparAvathArA of Swami EmperumAnAr. MAmunigal propagated Swami NammAzhvar’s Sri Sukthis by preaching its elaborate commentary (vyAkyAnam), Eedu of Nampillai mahadhAchariar. This is a classical text because of its literary style, content and presentation of ithihyAs (anecdotes). This text is a magnum opus and is praised as if a well-decorated elephant enters a field bringing enormous excitement, “YAnai Seyyum KolAlaham,” so does Eedu. MAmuni is fondly referred to as Eedu MuppathuArAyira Perukkar.

MAmuni’s Wealth

MAmuni Eva Sri—MAmuni is our wealth. MAmunigal was blessed with limitless katAksham of AchAryars such as his immediate preceptor Swami ThiruvAimozhi Pillai of Azhvar Thirunagari. This enabled him to acquire huge wealth—not materialistic though! Swami’s wealth: 1) Vidhya dhanam, 2) Kainkarya dhanam and 3) Guna dhanam served him well in propagating EmperumAnAr dharsanam as prescribed by elders, “munOr mozhindha muRai thappAmal.”

Vidhya Dhanam

Swami MAmunigal had exemplary mastery in languages such as Sanskrit and Tamil and was a true ubhaya vedanthi (dual vedanthi). His erudition sparkled not merely due to his Sastra gnAnA, but also due to his Athma guNAs and knowledge qualified by bhakthi. His extraordinary literary piece, “ThirivAimozhi NootrandAdhi,” epitomizes his literary skills, his bhakthi towards Maran. Swami’s lucid manipravAla commentaries for MahadAcharyan Pillai Lokhachariar’s rahasya granthAs and PeriyAzhvar’s Thirumozhi speak volumes of his literary preaching and writing skills. His writing of elaborate commentary for PeriyAzhvar’s Thirumozhi brings to fore his knowledge and his Athma gunam. Swami undertook this task at the behest of elders as major portion of VyakyAna Chakravarthi’s commentary was lost. His Athma gunam and reverence to PeriyavAchchAn Pillai was such that MAmunigal did not even write a syllable than what was required to have seamless continuation with the earlier vyAkyAnam. MAmunigal penned lucid commentary for 420 pasurams plus a word in PeriyAzhvAr Thirumozhi and put his scribing pen down at the place where PeriyavAchchAn Pillai’s text

was available [VakAvadhu--, PeriyAzhvar Thirumozhi, 5-1 (first padham)]. This is a classic example of the adage, “Vidhya Vinaya Sampannam.”

GnAna Vailakshanyam

MAmunigal’s gnAna vailakshanyam is evident in his writings such as Upadesa Rathina MAIai, ThiruvAimozhi NoottrandAdhi and YathirAja Vimshati. YathirAja Vimshati was composed by Swami at the behest of his preceptor, ThiruvAimozhi Pillai on Bhavishyadh Achrayan (Swami EmperumAnAr) of Azhvar Thirunagari. The way Vimshati has been scribed highlights Swami MAmunigal’s sAstra and literary expertise--worth enjoying.

Vimshati: Ode Extraordinaire

The heart-felt eulogium in reverence and praise of Swami EmperumAnAr is an outpouring of bhakthi in sweet Devanagari. Swami’s stellar knowledge (medhAvilAsam) is revealed in the composition of this stothram.

Why did MAmunigal choose Twenty Verses—this is a classic exhibition of Swami’s knowledge qualified by bhakthi. Like EmperumAnAr handled srutis by involving all texts, as a spark of knowledge, MAmunigal wrote this ode with great wisdom. In fact, YathirAja Vimshati is Prapanna GAYathri in Sanskrit similar to AmudhanAr’s RamAnuja NoottranAdhi with 108 verses.

GAyathri mantram in praise of SavithA (Kannan EmeperumAn as he is the niyanthA) in Rig-veda has a special meter with 23 syllables instead of the regular 24 syllables for GAYathri meter. This qualified GAYathri is referred to as “**nichRut GAYathri.**” As Swami was scribing the Sanskrit version of Prapanna GAYathri, Swami’s Sastra gnAnam enabled him to limit the shlokas in twenties range, that too less than the syllables in **nichRut GAYathri.** While doing so, Swami also took into account the total number of padhAs in Thirimanthram, Dvayam and Charama Slokam and arrived at twenty, as Vimshati is a summary of the three rahasyams. What an extraordinary skill in bringing unison between sruti and sampradhAyam.

Kaikarya Dhanam

Following on the footsteps of EmperumAnAr and Pillai LokhAchariar, MAmuni emphasized the importance of temple kaikaryams. After the invasion of Sri Rangam from the North, things were unorganized. Swami Mamunigal reorganized the temple administration as carried out by Udayavar. He was well regarded for his administrative abilities, as is evident in many construction projects and the establishment of mutts to do kaikaryams to divya desa EmperumAns—the notable one being VAnamAmalai Mutt, which till this date is one of the largest Sri VaishnavA mutts. Swami is said to have delivered 100 Eedu kAlakshepams, an onerous task indeed. His manana (memorizing) skills were evident in his recitation of Eedu, which was admired by learned scholars of centers of learning like Kanchipuram. Swami’s yeoman service to establish Tamil VedAs as parama pAVana granthA has been lauded in this Tamil poem,

*மாற்றற்ற செம்பொன் மனவாளமுனிப் பரன் வந்திலனேல் ஆற்றில்
கரைத்த புளி அல்லவோ தமிழ் ஆரணமே!*

[mAttratra sempon manavalamunip paran vanthiLanEL Attril karaitththa puli aLLavO tamizh AranamE]

Swami built the Thirumalai Azhvar mandapam in Sri Rangam as a mark of respect to his guru and many buildings in divyadesams like Thirukkurugoor, Thirukkurungudi, to name a few.

Guna Dhanam

MAmunigal is known as “poyyillAdha” kovil ManavAla MAmunigal, which is a testimony to his exemplary Athma gunAs. Swami is known to be courteous to everyone and was a parama bhagavathA as instructed by Swami Nanjeevar, “துன்பப்படும் ஒருவனை கண்டால் அய்யோ என்று இறங்குபவனே ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவன்.” [thunpapadum oruvanai kaNdAL iyO endru irangupavanE Sri Vaishnavan]. Swami was like PerumAl (Lord Rama) in speaking with others as portrayed by sage Valmiki “Poorva Bhashi Evam Mrudhu Bhashi.” Even while instructing or correcting people, Swami had such a karunA and vathsalyam. There are many incidents in his life that attest to these highest qualities such as showing mercy to those who burnt his mutt in AzhvAr Thirunagari and advising people not to be proud of their vidhyA and kulA greatness. As Thyagabrahmam says Chakravarthy Thirumagan tried to change Ravana using many good means such as sending friendly messages, “Hithavu mAtal Entho—.” MAmunigal always practiced what he preached. Such qualities attracted many learned scholars like Erumbiyappa, PrathivAdhibhayankaram Anna to take refuge under him as his shishyAs.

ManavAla MAmunigal’s vaibhavan was such that AdhinAthana chose him as his preceptor although MAmunigal was the last AchAryar among poorvAcharyars. Namperumal’s eulogy on MAmunigal captures his gnAna, bhakthi and vairAghya gunAs, and is recited in divyadesams and households all over the world.

On the auspicious day of his Thirunakshathram (ThulA Moolam), let bhagavathAs pay obeisance to the MahA Muni by following his preachings and carrying out kankaryams to EmperumAn and His adiyArs.

*மன்னியசீர் மாறன்கலை உணவாக பெற்றோம்
பிறர்மினுக்கம் பொறமை இல்லாப் பெருமையும் பெற்றோம்*

[manniyaSīr mArankaLai uNavAha petrOm pirarminukkam porAmai iLLap perumaum petrOm]

(This article was specially penned for Swami ManavAla MAmunigal’s Thirunakshathra celebrations organized by Sri RamAnuja Thondarkulam on November 1st, 2019, Dallas, United States of America.)