

Swami MAmuni Sri

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Swami ManavalaMAmunigal is MahA Muni. ThirumangaiMannan 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, “mAmunikoNarndhagangkaiyinkaraimEl.” MAmunigal by virtue of his bhakti, gnAnA, athmagunAs 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 ManavalaMAmunigal, a paramasathvika 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, “senthamizhumvadakalaiyumthigazhndhanAvar,” and this served as the guiding principle for MAmunigal. His yeomen service resulted in elevating the status of AzhvArs and their magnum opus, “Aruliseyal.” Swami emphasizes this in his lucid ode, UpadesaRathinaMALai, “seyyamaRaithannudanEsErndhu.”

Swami’s avathAram happened to propagate dharmA according to tenets prescribed by Swami EmperumAnAr. Veda prays that such mahAporushAs be born to rejuvenate dharmA, “आब्रह्मन्ब्राह्मणोब्रह्मवर्चसीजायताम (Aa brahmanbrAhmanObrahmavarchasIjAyatAm). In accordance with this sruti, MAmunigal was born as AdisheshaamsA and aparAvathArA of Swami EmperumAnAr. MAmunigal propagated Swami NammAzhvar’s Sri Sukthis by preaching its elaborate commentary (vyAkyAnam), Eedu of NampillaimahadhAchariar. 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, “YAnaiSeyyumKolAlaham,” so does Eedu. MAmuniis fondly referred to as EeduMuppathuArAyiraPerukkar.

MAmuni’s Wealth

MAmuni Eva Sri—MAmuni is our wealth. MAmunigalwas blessed with limitless katAksham of AchAryars such as his immediate preceptor Swami ThiruvAimozhi Pillai of AzhvarThirunagari. This enabled him to acquire huge wealth—not materialistic though! Swami’s wealth: 1) Vidhyadhanam, 2) Kainkaryadhanam and 3) Guna dhanam served him well in propagating EmperumAnArdharsanam as prescribed by elders, “munnOrmozhindhamuRaithappAmal.”

VidhyaDhanam

Swami MAmunigal had exemplary mastery in languages such as Sanskrit and Tamil and was a true ubhayavedanthi (dual vedanthi). His erudition sparkled not merely due to his Sastra gnAnA, but also due to his AthmaguNAs and knowledge qualified by bhakthi. His extraordinary literary piece, “ThirivAimozhiNoottrandAdhi,” epitomizes his literary skills, his bhakthi towards Maran. Swami’s lucid manipravAla commentaries for MahadAcharyan Pillai Lokhachariar’srahasyagranthAs and PeriyAzhvar’sThirumozhi speak volumes of his literary preaching and writing skills. His writing of elaborate commentary for PeriyAzhvar’sThirumozhi brings to fore his knowledge and his Athmagunam. Swami undertook this task at the behest of elders as major portion of VyakyAnaChakravarthi’s commentary was lost. His Athmagunam and reverence to PeriavAchchAn 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 PeriyAzhvArThirumozhi and put his scribing pen down at the place where PeriyavAchchaAn Pillai's text was available [VakAvadhu--, PeriyAzhvarThirumozhi, 5-1 (first padham)]. This is a classic example of the adage, "VidhyaVinayaSampannam."

GnAnaVailakshanyam

MAMunigal'sgnAnavailakshanyam is evident in his writings such as UpadesaRathinaMALai, ThiruvAimozhiNootrandAdhi and YathirAjaVimshati. YathirAjaVimshati was composed by Swami at the behest of his preceptor, ThiruvAimozhi Pillai on BhavishyadhAchrayan (Swami EmperumAnAr) of AzhvarThirunagari. The way Vimshatih has been scribed highlights Swami MAMunigal'ssastra 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. LikeEmperumAnAr handled srutis by involving all texts, as a spark of knowledge, MAMunigal wrote this ode with great wisdom. In fact, YathirAjaVimshati is PrapannaGAYathri in Sanskrit similar to AmudhanAr'sRamAnujaNootranAdhi with 108 verses. GAYathrimantram in praise of SavithA (Kannan EmperumAn 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 "nichRutGAYathri." As Swami was scribing the Sanskrit version of PrapannaGAYathri, Swami's Sastra gnAnam enabled him to limit the shlokas in twenties range, that too less than the syllables in nichRutGAYathri. While doing so, Swami also took into account the total number of padhAs in Thirimanthram, Dvayam and CharamaSlokam and arrived at twenty, as Vishati is a summary of the three rahasyams. What an extraordinary skill in bringing unison between sruti and sampradhAyam.

KainkaryaDhanam

Following on the footsteps of EmperumAnAr and Pillai LokhAchariar, MAMuni emphasized the importance of temple kainkaryams. 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 by many construction projects and the establishment of mutts to do kainkaryams to divyadesaEmperumAns--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 EedukAlakshepams, 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 yeomen service to establish Tamil VedAs as paramapAvanagranthAhas been lauded in this Tamil poem,

மாற்றற்றசெம்பொன்மனவாளமுனிப்பரன்வந்திலனேல்ஆற்றில்கரைத்தபுளி அல்லவோதமிழ்ஆர
ணமே!

Swami built the ThirumalaiAzhvarmandapam 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

MAmunigalis known as “poyyillAdha” kovilManavAlaMAMunigal, which is a testimony to his exemplary AthmagunAs. Swami is known to be courteous to everyone and was a paramabhagavathA as instructed by Swami Nanjeeyar, “துன்பப்படும் ஒருவனைகண்டால் அய்யோ என்று இறங்குபவனே ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவன்.” Swami was like PerumAl (Lord Rama) in speaking with others as portrayed by sage Valmiki “PoorvaBhashiEvamMrudhuBhashi.” 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 AzhvArThirunagari and advising people not to be proud of their vidhyA and kula greatness. As Thyagabrahmam says ChakravarthyThirumagan tried to change RavanA using many good means such as sending friendly messages, “HithavumAtalEnto—.” MAmunigal always practiced what he preached. Such qualities attracted many learned scholars like Erumbiyappa, PrathivAdhibhayankaram Anna to take refuge under him as his shishyAs.

ManavAlaMAMunigal’svaibhavan 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 vairAghyagunAs, and is recited in divyadesams and households all over the world.

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

**மன்னியசீர்மாறன்கலைஉணவாகபெற்றோம்
பிறர்மினுக்கம்பொறமைஇல்லாப்பெருமையும்பெற்றோம்**

(This article was specially penned for Swami ManavAlaMAMunigal’sThirunakshathra celebrations organized by Sri RamAnujaThondarkulam on November 1st, 2019, Dallas, United States of America.)