

NakshtraMalika

by Jeeyar Nayanar

(grand son of Varavara muni)

Vyakhyanam by Kanchi Prativadi

Bhayankaram Annangaracharyar

(Translation by Mandayam Nayaka Ramanuja)

NakshatraMaalika was authored by Jeeyar Nayanar, the grandson in purvashrama of Sri Manavala Mamuni. He was reputed by the name 'AcharyaPoutra'. This stotram which was composed in prayerful praise of Nammalwar, shines sans compare in the celestial sphere of Sanskrit stotragranthas.

Endowed with a wealth of beauty of both words and meaning, this stotram can be likened only to itself. Each one of the slokams refers to a star in the order of reckoning among the twentyseven stars and as such is titled as Nakshatra Maalika. Besides, the last letter of the previous slokam is the beginning letter of the next slokam following the 'Andaadi' style like Ramanuja Nootrandaadi. Another significant speciality of this stotram is - just as a garland weaver begins with a lean bunch of flowers and gradually increases the thickness of the flower bunch towards the centre and again thins out to the other end of the garland, so also this stotram starts with a slokam of

Anushtup metre of eight letters per quarter and in the increasing order of one letter per slokam reaches the fourteenth slokam or Nadunayakam slokam having twentyone letters per quarter called the Sragdhara meter, which is literally also true as the fourteenth central slokam supports the whole garland. the corresponding slokas on either side of the central slokam have the same meter and the number of letters per quarter. This type of poetic engineering has not been witnessed in any poetic endeavour. A behoving and extensive vyakhyana for this stotram was provided by Sri U.Ve. Kanchi P.B.Annangaracharya Swamy, to whom we are indebted for this brief translation and gist in the following lines.

Taniyan:

It is as though the great Manavala Mamuni reincarnated out of his own free will on this earth out of motherly affection and great mercy towards us, in the form of his grandson called AcharyaPoutra, wellknown as Abhiramavara in Sanskrit and as Jeeyar Nayanar in Tamil. I bow to that Acharya of unbounded mercy who is our Guru.

1. May victory be to Nammalwar, owing whose JnanaMudra (a special pose of the right hand fingers) or the pose of Knowledge, the roads in the form of sense objects are never trodden by the horses in the form of sense organs. People adoring the JnanaMudra of Nammalwar never indulge in the objects of their senses. They beget good knowledge

Nakshatramala

and devote themselves to the JnanaMudra of Nammalwar which can guides them out of the Samsara. This slokam refers to Aswini star by the word Aswayuk.

2. Nammalwar is wearing on his chest, a fitting garland woven with Vakula flowers in full bloom. Nammalwar adheres steadfastly to the feet of Lord Murari. May victory be to that master of great significance, Nammalwar. This slokam refers to the second asterism Bharani.

3. Nammalwar bows to the lotus feet of Anantha (Lord Vishnu). Nammalwar cuts asunder and swallows up the woes of the devotees. Nammalwar is the seer and preceptor of the Tamil Vedas. May that Nammalwar bedecked with Vakula flower garland, bless (us) with abundant wellbeing. This slokam refers to the third star Kritika.

4. The great outpouring of Nammalwar, Tiruvaimoli, paves the supreme path to Vaikuntha, which is like a ladder to devoted people to go to higher levels and never leads them to the nether worlds. It is so much unlike the Vedas which prescribe paths which can lead to uplift as well as downfall. Refer SrimadBhagavadGeeta "Trygunya Vishaya Vedah..". The Vedas prescribe protocols according to the candidates' desires of Dharma Artha and Kama. But this Tiruvaimoli shows only one path and the path to Moksha. May such Tiruvaimoli

Nakshatramala

always be favourable to me. This slokam refers to Rohini star.

5. In the Vedas, none of the Hymns born of no human head (Apourusheya) and Upanishats have been able to demonstrate in clear certain terms that such and such is the real master of masters of the three worlds. Whereas every word created by the Vakula-adorned Nammalwar has pointed out in no uncertain terms at the original Godhead SrimanNarayana. This slokam refers to Mrigasheersha asterism.

6. Nammalwar considered SrimanNarayana as his father, mother, brother and girls, children and wealth and all other relationships as stated in "Shindaiyalum sollalum sheigaiyalum Thevapiranaiye Thandai Thayenradaintha..." " Unnum Shoru .." etc. May such Vakula-bedecked Nammalwar's Kataksham (sideglance) drenched with the shower of the juice of solid compassion befall on me. This slokam refers to the asterism of Ardra.

7. I take refuge in that Grace (called Nammalwar) enchanting with Vakula flowers, which has reincarnated on this Globe. That Kindness of great significance (Nammalwar) with the full-bloomed Knowledge and Enlightenment bestowed by the Lord, did totally comprehend the Supreme Effulgence (ParamJyothi) which was described vaguely by the Vedas as Neti Neti, as a fruit on the palm and spread

forth the qualities of The Lord through Tiruvaimoli for the benefit of the sprawling devotees. This slokam refers to the Punarvasu star.

8. Having wantonly plunged to the heart's content in the torrent of nectar from the ambrosial ocean of waxing cordial love for the lotus feet of the Lord of Shree, this dark rainbearing cloud, capable of quenching the scorching heat of Kali (yuga), in the form of the king of sages, Nammalwar, wearing Vakula flowers, has become our master and will provide us with shade, and therefore how can there be any mention of our woes (samsara tapa). This slokam refers to the Pushya star.

9. The pose of the right hand of Sathari, Nammalwar, is like the art brush that would draw the picture of Bhakti on the wall that is the heart of the devotees taking refuge in him; or it is like coaxing the devotees into uttering the king of Mantras (Ashtakshara) in order to neutralise the venom of the Samsara Sarpa (serpent of the cycles of births and deaths); or it is like the cool sweet moonlight for the blooming of the blue lotus in the form of the world of refugees: May that pose of the right hand of Nammalwar expeditiously expel my inner darkness. In this sloka the word 'Ahi' meaning a snake is used to refer to the Aslesha star, because the serpent is the devata of Aslesha star, according to the Vedas.

10. The famous Bodha mudra or jnana mudra

or the pose of enlightenment of the right hand of Nammalwar, the enemy of Satha (a wind that seizes all beings at birth), that appears as if picking out the reflection of the Supreme Being that is shining on the crystal mirror of his heart removes the fears of the devotees who are panicking with the fear of Samsara. May that right hand of Nammalwar tranquillise our load of sins. This sloka refers to the star Magha or Regulus.

11. Persons of high levels of practical orthodoxy, bow their heads down to the lotus like pair of feet of Nammalwar who is an ocean of nectar-like mercy. My heart is disturbed with the earlier commissions of many types of mean sins and violations. May Nammalwar give me consolation and contentment by bestowing a sense of belonging to his incomparable pair of lotus feet. This sloka refers to the Purva Phalguni star.

12. Oh my mind, please do not sink with depression! The effortless casual mercy of Nammalwar is a beautiful ship and Nammalwar is a leader of Navigators who can carry us across the Bhavasagara. With the help of that ship and that sailor, you can cross this samsara ocean which has trivial, insipid and troublesome indulgences for its waves and which with its whirlpools of sorrows makes crossing to the other shore next to impossible. This sloka refers to the Uttara Phalguni star.

13. The pose of Nammalwar's right hand is like a Jewel torch light, which is indicating at the deep-dwelling Primordial Being, in the deep interiors of the dark caves of the king of mountains that the Vedas are. By virtue of Nammalwar sitting under the divine Tamarind tree and reciting the Tamil Vedas, the roots of the tree get sprinkled with cool nectar and the leaves of the tamarind tree are not affected by sleep, and are always awake unlike other tamarind trees. I am fortunate to have such Nammalwar, Parankusha as my Master and Guardian. This sloka refers to the asterism of Hasta.

14. Nammalwar does not even for a moment, stop bowing to that Effulgence, Which has made a great resolve to redeem all living and nonliving beings, Which is the gist of the Vedas and Which shines in union with Mahalakshmi. Nammalwar is a befitting refuge for all great personalities like Madhurakavi and Nathamuni. Nammalwar is fragrant with the constant contact with the garlands of Vakula flowers. May that Nammalwar save us from falling into the ocean of samsara by just a momentary glance at us. The star Chitra or Spica is indicated in this sloka.

15. (From here, we see padadikeshanta varnanam). How can a red lotus be comparable to the divine feet of Nammalwar? A lotus does not have even the smell of the history of exploits of enjoining people on the path of Prapatti or surrender; neither

does a lotus ever stay without connection with a water reservoir. Whereas Nammalwar's feet are strongly affectionate with the lotus-like hearts of Yogis who are fanatically in love with Nammalwar's feet and also pulverise the woes of people who are prostrating to Nammalwar's feet. They also put people on the right path of prapatti and never even for a moment have association with people of dull minds and mean intentions. Puns are used here in 'anurakta' and in jalashaya where 'la' is used in the case of lotus and 'da' is used instead of 'la' as jadashaya (by the grammatical rule of 'ladayorabhedah') in the case of Nammalwar's feet for interpretation. In this sloka the star of Swati is referred to.

16. Nammalwar's aesthetically conical forelegs overshadow the beauty of the quiver of Manmatha, the flower-arrowed. After seeing and bowing down to them, which have their lustre spread in all directions and look like branches of celestial tree, even the minds of great people stopped running after the attractive forelegs of young belles. The fragrance from the heavenly tree in the form of Nammalwar's forelegs, has wafted throughout the forest of my contemplation (in my mind) This slokam refers to the Vishakha star.

17. The lustrous white brilliant eflux from the limbs of Nammalwar is flowing down like a waterfall producing big bubbles, as though, in the form of the pair of divine knees of Nammalwar. The knees also

Nakshatramala

by nature have attained similarity to the humps of bulls. May such knees of Nammalwar brighten my heart. In this slokam, the word Mitra is used to denote the Anuradha star since the Veda says 'Anuradha nakshatram Mitro devatha'.

18. The divine thighs of Nammalwar, are so handsome and beautiful that they have joined the chain of comparisons to the trunks of elephants, or the portion of the palm between the thumb and forefinger, or the stems of giant plantain trees. Further the thighs are greatest by their power of capturing the eye of the observers.. My mind is wonderstruck by the marvellousness of Shathari's divine thighs. In this slokam the asterism of Jyeshtha or Antares is referred to.

19. The brilliant white cloth around the waist of Nammalwar is the next target of adoration. The sparkling bejeweled girdle appears like the flower artwork over the brilliant foamy waist cloth. This in turn triggers speculation in the minds of devoted onlookers, whether it is the sheet of foam created owing to the avalanche of effulgence from the area of the chest falling into and creating the deep navel of Nammalwar. The star referred to here is Moola.

20. The interpretation regarding the navel of Nammalwar that it is a pond, usually done by poets in comparing the navel to a pond, is very apt in the case Nammalwar. That appears so true as otherwise, how

Nakshatramala

else would we explain the fact that all the shoal of fish in the form of the devoted spectators' eyes, always dwell and enjoy swimming in the navel with curiosity and excitement. In this slokam, Purvashadha asterism is mentioned.

21. I observe with appreciative adoration, the aesthetic beauty of the region of abdomen of Nammalwar, which is pleasing to the eye with the slender hairline and the three wrinkles. The beauty of the leaf of Peepul tree which possesses thin lines and which is over-ambitious to contend with the abdominal beauty of Nammalwar, may or may not after all not succeed to stand comparison. In this sloka mention is made of the star Uttarashadha.

22. Nammalwar is adorned with two garlands on the chest. One is the long necklace made of emeralds and the other is the fragrant garland woven with the sweet honied Vakula flowers. The bees that hover near the emeralds in search of honey are indistinguishable from the emeralds because of identical green lustre.. But when they land on the fragrant Vakula flowers, they get intoxicated with the honey and begin to hum sweet notes to the ears and thus become distinguished from the emeralds by their sweet hum. The emeralds look like the bees and the bees look like the emeralds in the garland. This sloka mentions the star Sravana.

23. The right hand of Nammalwar sage is held

Nakshatramala

with the famous Jnana mudra or the knowledge pose and the palm resembles a fully bloomed lotus. It turns intoxicated people into ones with a great restraint and disciplines them. It infuses politeness in insolent people. It turns indiscriminate dullards into great scholarly people. In this slokam, the asterism of Dhanishtha is referred to.

24. In this world, the great disease of perpetual cycle of births and deaths, has no hope whatsoever of being eliminated even by the medication of a hundred physicians. However, there is the only hope and the only solution in the pollens from the Vakula flowers in garlands hanging down the divine shoulders of Nammalwar, the enemy of Shatha (the wind that surrounds every being at birth and makes it forget the past and start off on a new slate from scraps). This slokam refers to the star Shatabhisha.

25. The divine face of Nammalwar is enchanting with the glittering red lips, fascinating with the soft smile, attractive with the sweet cool glance, having beautiful eyebrow lines and smooth cheeks. The divine face of Nammalwar is sure to put a stop to the cycle of births of devotees adoring it. A look at Nammalwar face bestows Moksha to the refugees. In this sloka, reference is made to the star of Purvabhadra.

26. Nammalwar's crown which has adorned the head of Nammalwar bestows the supreme

Nakshatramala

position to the worshippers of Nammalwar. Nammalwar's crown is glittering with diamonds and with its effulgence brightens the refugees by driving away their night of a load of their sins of omission and commission. This sloka mentions the star of Uttarabhadra.

27. After all, who else in this world, other than Nammalwar can redeem and protect us? Therefore, I shall permanently, establish and emboss his beautiful physical form in my heart. With this sloka the author Jeeyar nayanar, winds up the Nakshatramala, by referring to the Revathy star.

28. May this verbal garland of words, Nakshatramala, merge and blende with the pair of lotus feet of Parankusha and be refined and exalted.

Alwar Emberumanar Jeeyar Tiruvadigale
Saranam

Jeeyar Nayanar Tiruvadigale Saranam



Mandayam Nayaka Ramanuja