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Sri Garuda Dhandakam

In this stotram, Swami Desikan covers the following topics to illustrate the glory, power and status of Garuda as one of the foremost Nitya Sūris serving Śrīman Narayana in Śrī Vaikuntam:

1. Vedas praising Garuda Bhagavan.
2. Garuda's service to Śrīman Narayana as His Vehicle and Flag
3. His matrimonial status with his two wives (Rudrai and Sukīrthī)
4. His adornment of great serpents as his jewellery on his limbs
5. His heroic did in bringing nectar from Indra Loka
6. His other heroic dids in battles on behalf of his Lord
7. His splendour as the Amsa (aspect) of Para Vasudeva (i-e) his Sankarshana swarūpam
8. His manifestation in five individual forms
9. His conferral of Vedhanta Vidya to his aspiring devotis (i-e) his status as Acharya
10. The worship of him by learned scholars and saints
11. His power as the Garuda Mantra Mūrthī
12. His power to bless one with the 4 Purusharthas (goals) of Life
13. His incarnation as Garuda as a result of the prayers of the Vālakilya sages
14. His power to bless one with the True knowledge or Brahma Vidya

It is generally believed that the recitation of this Dhandakam daily would protect one from the harms caused by poisonous animals such as snakes, scorpions et al.

Poetic Structure of this Dhandakam

In sanskrit poetry, each of the 4 Pādas of a sloka can have 26 letters. If the letters of each Pāda increase to 27, 30, 33, 36 (other multiples of 3 beyond 27), then this sloka is recognized as a Dhandakam. The 3 lettered unit is known as a Gana. Thus a 27 lettered Pāda will have 9 Ganas. There is generally no restriction on the length of the Pāda in a Dhandakam. Śwami Desikan chose Pādas with 36 Ganas or 108 = (32X4) letters for the four Pādas of Garuda Dhandakam.

The poetic genius of Swami Desikan is abundantly evident in this Composition. The Pādas of this Dhandakam parsed by its 144 Ganas make intricate swoops in the air and make sharp turns like the high soaring Pakshi Raja (Garuda). The grammar of the flight movement of this Dhandakam is defined by Naganas and Raganas. At the beginning of each Pāda, the first two Ganas are made up of Naganas and the remaining 34 are made up of Raganas. Naganas are those Ganas of triads of Aksharas/Syllables, which are laghu in character; Raganas are those, where the middle Akshara is Laghu and the remaining two are Guru. The genius of Swami Desikan as a poet is revealed from the study of this Dhandakam, where he scrupulously adheres to the rules of the Dhandakam construction, including the
nuances of meter and Ganas constituting them.

**Meters**

The first sloka (nama: pannaganaddhaya) is set in the vedic meter known as anushtub with 32 syllables. The last sloka (vichitra siddha:) is also set in the same meter. The sloka prior to the last one is set in ārya vrittham. The remainig sloka forms the body of the dhandakam with its four pādas and each of the pādas containing 36 ganas.

**SRI GARUDA DHANDAKAM**

srimathe nigamantha maha desikāya namah
sriman venkatanāthāya kavīthārktika kesari I
vedanthācharya varyome sannidhattām sadha hrudhi II

**Sloka 1**

namāḥ pannaganaddhāya vaikuṇṭha vasavardhineḥ I
śruti-sindhu sudhotpādamandarāya garutmathe II

My salutations to Garuda with the beautiful wings. His limbs are adorned by the mighty serpents, that he has conquered in battle. They are his jewellery. He does all the intimate kainkaryas to his Lord and is His Atharvam Dāsa. Garuda is devoted always to the Lord and His services. He is adept like the Mandara mountain in churning the milky ocean of Vedas and to bring out the Brahma Vidyas. We can get the benefits of these Brahma Vidyas by offering our worship to him. My salutations are to him.

**Dhandakam : Pāda 1**

garudamakhila veda nīdhādirūtam dviśad pītanotkantitākunta
vaikuntaśāntikrtta skandhamidhe svanidhā gatipritha rudrā sukīrthi
sthanaḥbhogakatopakuta sphuratkantakavraṭta veda vyatāvepamāna
dwijihavādhihalpa vishpāryamāna spatāvatiṃā ratna rochīsaḥtā rāji
nirajitham kānti kalollinī rājitam I

Garuda Bhagavan has designed the Vedas as his cage and uses that cage as his seat. (This suggests that the Vedas sing his praise). His Lord Srīman Narayana is bent upon destroying the Enemies of His devotees. No one can stop Srīman Narayana in these endeavours. When He sets about to destroy the enemies of His devotees, he uses the shoulders of Garuda as his transport. When Garuda transports his Lord on His missions, his wives-Rudrai and Sukirthi-- miss his absence from home. When the Lord”s mission is successfully concluded, Garuda returns to his wives,
and they embrace him intimately with affection. In that ecstatic state, the hairs on
the body of Garuda become stiff like thorns. This in turn hurts the serpents, which
are covering his body. The serpents are overcome with fear and they raise their
hoods. On those occasions, the ratnas positioned on their hoods radiate their
brilliant red rays. That splendid group of red rays appear at that time as the
mangala āratthi to Garuda and he sparkles in that flood of red light.

Dhandakam: Pāda 2

jaya garuda suparna darvikarāhāra devādhipāhārahārin diwowkaspati
kṣipta dambholi dhārā kinākalpa kalpāntha vatāla kalpodhayānala
vīrayiḥūḍhyacchamakāhāra dāityāri jāitra dhvajārohanirdhāritotkarsha
sankarshanātman garutmun marutpanchakādhisa satyātimurthe na kascchit samas
te namaste punaste nama: II

O Garuḍa Bhagavan! You have been named Suparna, because of the beauty of your
wings. Serpents of immense size serve as your food. You brought Nectar - the food
of the Devas- from Indra Loka to release your mother from the bonds of servitude.
Indra got angry at you during that time and threw his Vajra weapon at you. The
sharp edge of that powerful weapon caused wounds on your wings and rest of the
body. the welts from those wounds look today as pieces of jewelery on your body
and attest to your heroic did in defeating Indra. Your other heroic dids stand out
like the mighty winds that swing the universe during the time of the great deluge.
You are sitting on the flag of your Lord, which denotes His victory over His
enemies and from your position on the flag of your Lord, we are able to infer your
glories. You have incarnated as Sankarshana among the four Vyūhas of
Śrīman Narayana, which are Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradhumana and Aniruddha.
You have divided yourself into five forms-- Satyar, Suparnar, Garuḍar, Tārkshyar
and Vihageswarar-- and matched those five forms with the five Vayus (Prāṇan,
Apānan, Sāmānan, Udānan and Vyānan) and shine thereafter as a supreme Devan.
O Lord with the most exquisitely beautiful golden Wings! There is none, who is
equal to you.I offer my salutations to you first and then again repeat my
salutations.

Dhandakam Pāda 3

nama idha mahajat saparyāya paryāya niryāta pakṣānilāsppalanodhvela
pathotī vichi
chāpetāhatāgādha pātala bhankara sankruttra nagendra pītāsrunī bhava
bhavannakasrenaya āchandatundaya nṛtyat bhujanga bhruve vajrine dhamshtrayā
tubam adhyātmavidyā vidheyā vidheyā bhavat dhasyamāpādhayeta
dhayaṭāsccha meh I

O Garuḍa Bhagavan! Learned scholars offer their uninterrupted worships to you.
Your wings in flight generate mighty winds that stir up all the oceans and make
them flow over their boundaries. The waves that rise and fall from those powerful
winds reach down to the netherworld (Pātalam) and the effect is like a violent blow given by the palm of one”s hand. A frightening sound heard as “Bhām” reverberate around the world at that time. The mighty elephants guarding the quarters are shaken up by this mighty sound of "Bhām" and run to attack you, the generator of that sound. Your rows of sharp nails acting as the elephant goad attack those angry elephants of the quarters and repulse them. Your mighty beak raises terror in the minds of your enemies. When you squint your brows, it looks like the movement of the hood of a Cobra. Your canine tīth look like the Vajra weapon of Indra and strikes terror in the hearts of your enemies. My salutations to you of such limitless glory! May thou bless me so that Brahma Vidyas become easy to be possessed by me! Please bless me out of your infinite compassion so that I can have the good fortune to offer kainkaryam to you.

Dhandakam Pāda 4

manuranugata pakshivaktra spurattharakas távakaschitrabhanupriyá sekharasthrayathām nastrivargápavarga prasuthi: paravyoma dhāman valadweshidharpjivalat válakilya pratigynávathirna thirām tatvabuddhim parām bhaktidhenum jagannmālakandhe mukundhe mahānandadhogdhriṃ dhatitā mudākāmahinamahinānānthaka II

O Garuda Bhagavan residing permanently in Sri Vaikuntam! Your mantram confers to the reciters the four fold (Dharma-Artha-Kama -Moksha) goals of Life. THat mantram of yours made up of 5 syllables,has the Pranavam as its first syllable. At the end, it carries the syllable associated with the wife of Agni. May the mantram of that structure protect us! Once, Devendran became arrogant over his powers and insulted the Sages with the name of Valakilyas. (The sages got angry and cursed Indra. They cursed that Indra’s arrogance be destroyed by an incarnation of Sankarshana (Garuda) at a future date). You were born from the vow made by the Valakilyas that the mighty arrogance of Indra be destroyed by you and you made their words become true. You serve as the lord of Death for mighty serpents that challenged you. Please bless me with the discriminating knowledge to distinguish betwín true(superior) and false (inferior) knowledge. Your Lord is the fundamental and principal cause of all the universes. Please bless me to have the cow representing the limitless devotion to your Lord, so that It can yield for me its delectable milk. May that devotion of mine be frí from the distractions of the insignificant and evanescent pleasures of life! May thou confer on me the boon of possessing such a superior devotion to your Lord and True Knowledge about Him!

Sloka in ārya meter outlining the structure of Garuda Dhandakam

shutrhmatsatganacharanoh nara paripāti navina ghumbhagana: I
vishnuratadhandakoyam vikatayathu vipaksha vahini vyuyam II

This entire Garuda Dhandakam is of the form of one slokam. This has four Pādas. Each of the Pādas have 36 Ganas. Each Gana has thrī syllables. This Dhandakam
follows strictly the rules of composing Dhandakams and has the Naganas and Ragnas in each of the Pādas and yields novel word constructions. When one recites this Garuda Dhandakam, it will destroy the formations of the enemies, who have assembled to do battle with us and scatter them to the winds.

Concluding Sloka in the Anushtub meter

vichitra siddhidada: soyam venkatesa vipascchitā I
garudadhwajathoshāya ghto garudaadhanda:ka: II

This Garuda Dhandakam was composed and sung by me, the Vidwan known as Venkatesa to please the Lord, who has Garuda on his flagstaff. The recitation of this Garuda Dhandakam will confer on the reciter multifold blessings and fulfill their heartfelt wishes of every kind.

kavithārkikasimhāya kalyanagunasālineh i
srimathe venkatesāya vedanthaguraveh nama: ii
srimathe nigamantha mahā desikāya namah: