CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUAL LIFE

The spiritual life consists of a deeper insight into the understanding of the concepts of religion, God and self-realisation. Human life become wholesome and worthy only when an inquiry is made about the spiritual pursuits.

Religion is a major social aspect which is an integral part of an individual’s life from birth to death. The customs, practices and precedents of that particular religion govern all family functions, ceremonies and social interactions.

God is the Supreme and primordial cause for the creation and sustenance of the Universe. He is the protector of all beings. He is the bestower of the fruit of action.

Devotees are sacrosanct as they collectively inspire one to be in constant remembrance of God and follow the path of dharma. Association with them brings a sense of community feeling and encourages one to be actively involved in charitable pursuits.

Any inquiry into the absolute reality will not be complete without dwelling deep into the Atman, which is the substratum of one’s existence. Self realisation is the ultimate goal of human endeavour.
In the works of *Vedānta Deśika*, one can find a detailed disposition of the whole gamut of spiritual life encompassing the various aspects relating to religion, God, temples, devotees and the Ātman. He recommends *saranāgati* (surrender) before the Lord as the safest and reliable route to realize and reach Him.

9.1 Religion

Religion is an important social institution as it facilitates human beings to raise above mundane existence from materialistic pursuits towards the coveted spiritual journey. It makes human life more meaningful, fulfilling and desirable.

Religion is a system of beliefs, practices and philosophical values shared by a group of people; it defines the sacred, helps explain life, and offers salvation from the problems of human existence.\(^{356}\)

Religion is the form of worship adopted by a people, and is an institution in the sense that it satisfies the spiritual hankering of men.\(^{357}\)

*Vedānta Deśika* devotes a major portion of his attention in his literary works to the institution of religion, bringing out its various facets and dimensions. He emphasizes the pivotal role of God in an individual’s life. He gives the clarion call

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to the mortals to follow the path of self-surrender before the supreme and achieve salvation and fulfillment.

9.2 God

God is the eternal truth responsible for the creation, maintenance and destruction of the entire Universe. From Him alone all beings emanate and unto Him alone all merge finally. His nature is existence, knowledge and bliss. He is without a beginning or an end. He is the efficient and material cause of the Universe.

Theism is the belief in divine beings-gods and goddesses - who shape human affairs. Gods are seen as powerful beings worthy of being worshipped. Most theistic societies practice polytheism, the belief in a number of gods. Each god or goddess usually has particular spheres of influence such as childbirth, rain, or war, and there is generally one who is more powerful than the rest and oversees the others’ activities.\(^\text{358}\)

_Vedānta Deśika_ is a staunch believer of God. He emphasises the supremacy of Lord _Viṣṇu_ as the chief of all Gods. He has composed various works in praise of the Lord. According to him it is only through the divine grace of the Supreme that human beings can attain salvation and eternal bliss.

_Viṣṇu_ is Supreme.

_Teśakāla gananāthalanghbhiḥ māthumāgamaganena vanchithaiḥ_

_Bhūṣitho gunavibhūtisāgaraiḥ tvatsamatvamitare mithassamab\(^\text{359}\)


\(^\text{359}\) Yadavabhudayam xvii-101
The worship of other Gods is denounced.

Parimita deśa kāla phaladān phaladakṛtikān

Kathamadhi kurmahe vidhiśiva pramukhānāmukhān. 360

One shall not seek other deities.

Tvatpāda padma madhuni tvadananyā bhogyena

Nūnam samāśrayati nūtana śarkarātvam. 361

Besides the śrutis and smṛtis, the will of the God can be understood from the commands of competent saints and also from omens, signs, dreams and so on. 362

9.2.1 Accessibility

Though the Supreme is all mighty and superior, His greatness lies in the fact of His being accessible to ordinary mortals. His divine quality of easy accessibility is an important factor in the devotees thronging to Him. Despite their innumerable weaknesses and shortcomings, the Lord remains accessible.

Vedānta Deśika is of the firm view that God is accessible to one and all irrespective of their economic status, education or caste background.

Even men of ordinary learning can realize the God.

Alpaśrutairapi janairanumīyase tvam. 363

360 Nyasa Tilakam 29
361 Dehalesa Stuti 7
362 Srimad Rahasyatrayasara xvii
363 Paduka Sahasram 35
The Lord does not forsake those who develop friendship with Him.

śakrayesa šaraṇam prapadyathe bhaktajivita! Bhavantamīśwaram

Mitrabhāva samupāgatam janam na tyejeyamithi nāthamanyase 364

9.2.2 Divine glory

The glory and fame of the Supreme who is the father of all creations is beyond the human expression.

Vedānta Deśika asserts that the glory of the Supreme is beyond all words and expressions.

Only when the whole sky becomes the paper and the seven Seas turn into ink, while the Thousand faced Lord becomes the Speaker, can the glory of the Pādūkā of Śrī Ranganātha be written.

Niśśeṣambaratalam yadi patrikā syāt

Saptārṇavī yadi sametya maṣī bhavitri

Vaktā sahasravadanāḥ puruṣāḥ svayam cet

Likhyeta rangapatipādukayoḥ prabhāvab 365

He is blemishless.

364 Yadavabhudayam xvii-89
365 Paduka Sahasram 32
Svachchanda vikrama samunnamitadampusmät

Srotastrayam yadabhavat tava pada padmät. \(^{366}\)

His glory is sung by the Gandharvas.

Gandharva dūtha gīta vijaya gāthāsata \(^{367}\)

9.2.3 Mercy
The divine quality of mercy towards the devotees is the most prominent attraction towards the Supreme. As the Lord is full of compassion, He forgets and forgives the misdeeds of the sinners who appeal to Him for clemency. He provides them with solace and gives them abundant opportunities for redemption and salvation. Once He takes them into His fold, there is no looking back for the devotees whose lives get totally transformed in the divine path.

Vedānta Deśika eulogises the power of divine mercy and offers salutations invoking Her blessings.

He prays dayādevi to offer protection from committing sins repeatedly.

Santanyamānāmaparādhagaṇam vicintya
trasyāmi hanta bhavathīṁ cha vibhāvayāmi

ahnāya me vṛuṣagiriśsa daye jahīmām
āśīvaṣa grahaṇa keli nibhāmavastham \(^{368}\)

\(^{365}\) Dehalesa Stuti 16
\(^{367}\) Raghuvira Gadyam
\(^{368}\) Dayasatakam 96
He compares himself who repeatedly commits sins to a rogue elephant and solicits the blessings of *dayādevi*.

*Baddhva grhāna vrśaila paterdaye mām
Tvadvāraṇam svayamanugraha srūkhalābbhiḥ.*  

Due to Her divine intervention, even the punishment for the worst offenders get diminished.

*Apām patyūḥ śatūnasahana muner dharma nigalam!*

*Janita sugatim dandana gatim!!*  

The God's blessings makes the poor wealthy.

*Vigāhante rangakṣitipatipadatrāyinya sakṛd
Vahasantvāmantarvinihitakucelayatikarāḥ.*  

He is compassionate like a mother to her child.

*Ananya vatsale*  

He is the dam for crossing the samsara

*Alpamasthira mapāva tanturam swarga saudhamavadhirya sūrayaḥ
Nistaranti jagadeka hetunā setuney a bhavata bhavārnavam*  

His grace protects one from the vision of death.

*Yāvanna paśyati nikāmamamamsanomām*

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369 ibid 99
370 ibid 64
371 Paduka Sahasram 63
372 Yadavabhudayam xvii-130
373 ibid xvii-99

175
Bhrūbhanga bhīṣana karāla mukhaḥ kṛtāntaḥ
Tāvat patantu mayite bhagavan dayāloḥ
Unnidra padma kalikā madhurāḥ kataksāḥ.  

Vedānta Deśika prays for the vision of the Lord when he departs from the world in his final journey.

Harinīla silā vibhanga nīlaḥ
Pratibhāḥ santu mamāntima prayāne.  

9.2.4 Patience
The Supreme’s divine quality of patience provides the leeway even for a worst sinner to transform himself into a saint over a period of time and attain salvation.

Vedānta Deśika asserts that the Lord is the treasure of patience.

Madvidhā visamavṛttī śalināḥ śantaghora samayatilanghinaḥ
Poṣayanti bhavataḥ ksamanidheḥ praṇayaḥ prahasanocitam rasam  

9.2.5 Non-discrimination
The divine quality of non-discrimination and equitable treatment to all without any partiality is one of the greatest attribute of the Supreme. He dispenses flawless justice to all depending on the fruits of one’s own action.

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374 Varadaraja Pancasat 39
375 Gopala Vimsati 12
376 Yadavabhudayam xvii-97
Prejudice is a subjective feeling, whereas discrimination is an overt reaction. Discrimination refers to differential treatment, usually unequal and injurious, accorded to individuals who are assumed to belong to a particular category or group.  

**Vedānta Deśika** highlights that God does not discriminate and is always impartial.

The Supreme does not discriminate.

Lord Rāma had intimate friendship with Guha, the Hunter-King.

**Niśāda rāja souhyda sūcita sauśilya sāgara**

9.2.6 Source of Vidyās

The Supreme is the spring source of all learning and education. He is the ultimate repository of knowledge.

**Vedānta Deśika** explains that the Lord is the source of all the Vidyās.

He is the source of all *vidyās*.

**Jñānānanda mayam devam nirmala sphatikākytim**

**Ādhāram sarva vidyānām hayagrīvamupāsmahe.**

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378 Raghuvira Gadyam  
379 Hayagriva Stotram 1
9.2.7 Primordial cause

The Supreme Lord is the primordial cause of the universe. He is its material and efficient cause. Only by His divine will the universe along with all beings are sustained and protected.

_Vedānta Deśika_ emphasizes that the Supreme is the primordial cause for the three-fold activities of creation, protection and destruction. He considers God as one who redeems from _samsāra_.

He is the prime cause for creation, sustenance and destruction of the world.

_Nityam ya yeva jagato manipādarakṣe_

_Sattāsthetiprayatanesu param nidānam_

_Sopi svatantracaritasvadhīnavṛthiḥ_

_Kāvakathātaditareṣu mitampacesu._ 380

He is the _Sūtra Dhāri_.

_Idāntimuparyapayayam guna grhīto dāru putraka eva paravaśaḥ_
_Tasyāpi mama tridaśeśwara triswapi karanesu bhava sukha sankalpaḥ._ 381

He has no birth or death

_Sadā kṣapitasakalaeheyam ṣaraṇāgathasatya satya nānānandam_
_Ullangita trividāṇtam upaniṣadām satāni gāyanti tvām._ 382

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380 Paduka Sahasram 299
381 Acuta Satakam 82
382 ibid 8

178
He is the doctor who removes the poisons of worldly life.

Tväyarpitåni manujairmanipådarkåśe!
Dûrbånkuråni sulabhånyathavå tulasyåb
Sårådikåb sapadi rañganarendraåakåyå
Såmsårånågådåmanousådhåyo bhavånti. 383

The Lord is unattainable for one who is engulfed in sensory pleasures.

Kalusa jålesvåva hamsåb kåsåya
kåråberåsu tåståsyachutå na kånam. 384

He is the enemy of the demons.

Tråtåmeva såranågåtån surån åsurån abhijåghåmsåta tvåya
Rågåroåråhåtitåmanå swayåm dhaityå śåtåritå nåma gråhyåte 385

9.2.8 Medicine for fear
God removes the fear of all types and safeguards all beings in the Universe.

Vedåntå Deåśåka swears that the God is the ultimate abode for one who has to be freed from the miseries of samsåra. God protects the devotees and ensures that there is no fear for them about death.

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383 Paduka Sahasram 334
384 Acuta Satakam 6
385 Yadavabhudayam xvii-119
He is the medicine to cure the fear of *samsāra*.

*Kavikathaka simhakathitam*

*Kathora sukumāra gumbha gambhiram!*

*Bhava bhaya bheṣajametat*

*Pathata mahāvīra vaibhavam sudhiyaḥ!* 386

For His devotees there is no fear of *Yama* or *Naraka (Hell)*.

*Na tasya yama vaśyatā, naraka pāta Bhūtīḥ kutāḥ* 387

9.2.9 Abode of God

The eternal abode of the Supreme is luminous, stainless and fragrant, full of tranquility and filled with bliss.

*Vedānta Deśika* praises the divine abode of the Supreme in which if one enters, he does not come back.

*Bhūtabhavya bhavadātmanabh prabho yannidhānamakilasya śāsvatham*

*Yatpraviśya na punarnivartate yat param padamūṣanti tat bhavān* 388

9.2.10 Bliss

The Supreme Being represents ultimate and eternal bliss. When the mind is concentrated on the Supreme, even Heavenly pleasures seem relatively small.

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386 Raghuvira Gadyam
387 Abhitistavah 7
388 Yadavabhudayam xvii-103
Vedānta Deśika picturises with poetic beauty the nature of supreme pleasure.

When one’s mind is concentrating on the divine superior pleasure, the thoughts about Heavenly pleasure also disappears.

Sakṛtapi bhuvanesmin sārūgināḥ pāduke tvāṁ
Upaniṣadanukalpairuttamāṅgair dadhāna!

Narakamiva mahānto nākamullaṅghayantab
Pariśadi niviśante prāktanānāṁ gurūṇāṁ!!

He is of the nature of bliss.

Śvacchanda viṣvara samunnamitādāmuṣmāt
Srotasrayam yadabhavat tava pādapadmāt!

Vetāla bhūta sarasāmapadiśya vācam
Prāyena tat prasava bhumimavāpa bhūyaḥ!!

9.2.11 Five forms of God

The Supreme manifests Himself in the five-fold forms of paratva, vyūha, vibhava, arca and antaryāmi.

Vedānta Deśika has sung the praise of the Lord Viṣṇu in all the five forms of paratva, vyūha, vibhava, arca and antaryāmi.

389 Paduka Sahasram iii-54
390 Dehalesa Stuti 16
9.2.11a Para God

Para God represents the Supreme Lord in Srivaikuttha, the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu.

Nityam param varada sar vagatah susūkṣmam!
Nispanda nandathu mayam bhavatab svarūpam!!
Viśvatiśāyi sukha rūpa yadātmakastvam!
Vyaktim kariṣa kathayanti tadātmikam te!!
Mohāndhakara vinivartana jagārūke!

doṣā divāpi niravagraha medhamāne!! 391

9.2.11b vyāha God

The emanated Gods are Vāsudeva, sankarasana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha.

Stānesu jāgrati chaturśvapi satavantab
śākā vibhāga chature tava chāturātmye. 392

9.2.11c Aantaryāmi God

Aantaryāmi God is the inner Ruler, who dwells inside every person.

He is the antaryāmi.

Tanvi hrde spurati kāpi śikhāmuninām!
Soudāmaniva nibṛta nava mega garbāl!
Antab ṭ kalebamitam suṣīram susūkṛṣmam!
Jātam kariṣa katamādaranāspadam te!! 393

He is the abode of all principles.

391 Varadaraja Pancasat 16-18
392 ibid 19
393 Varadaraja Pancasat 20-21
Mahita sampatsadakṣara vihita sampatsadakṣara
ṣadara cakra pratiṣṭhita sakala tatva pratiṣṭhita. 394

He has subtle form (Sūksma Rūpī)

Vetāla bhūta sarasāmapadiśya vācam
Prāyeṇa tat prasava bhūmimavāpa bhūyāb. 395

9.2.11d Vibhava Gods

Vibhava Gods represent the divine incarnations of the Supreme from time to
time to protect the good people and destroy the evil powers for establishing the
order of Dharma.

Vedānta Deśika covers all the ten avatārs of Lord Viṣṇu in his works.

His divine incarnation as Varāha, Nṛsimha, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa.

Tasyaiva tat varada hanta katham prabhūtam
Vārāha māsthitavato vapurathutam te!! 396

Bhaktasya dānava śiśoḥ paripālanāya
Bhadraṁ nṛsimha kuhanāmadhijagmuṣaste! 397

Krāman jagat kapata vāmanatāmupetab

Tredhā karīṣa sa bhavān nidadhe padān! 398

394 Sudarsanastakam vii
395 Dehalesa Stuti 16
396 Varadaraja Pancasa 22
397 ibid 23
398 ibid 24
Tam vikṣya sethumadhunāpi śariravantaḥ
Sarve śadārmi bahulam jaladhim taranti !!

Kecid vicitra caritaḥ bhavatovatārān

Satyān dayā paravaśasya vadanti santāḥ.

He takes the following ten avatārs:

➢ Matsya
➢ Kūrma
➢ Varāha
➢ Nṛsimha
➢ Vāmana
➢ Paraśurama
➢ Rāma

He performed the last rites for Jatāyu

➢ Bala rāma
➢ kṛṣṇa

He who drunk along with milk the life of Pūtanā is the Supreme Being.
Kalki

The Supreme Lord took the form of the fish (Matsyāvatara) to protect the Vedas, which represents the repository of all knowledge.

Ichhā mīna!

He took the playful form of a wild boar to support and hold the earth with compassion.

Vihāra kacchapa!

Mahā potrin!

Yadrucchā hare!

Rakṣā vāmana!

Roṣa rāma!

Karunā kākustha

Helāhalin!

Kṛiḍā vallava!

Kalkavāhana daśā kalkin! ⁴₀⁶

He also praises the other Vīhava avatārs of Lord Viṣṇu in his works. The following Vīhava avatārs find a place in his compositions:

Hayagrīva

Jñānānandamayam devam nirmalasphatikākrtim!

Ādhāram sarva vidyānām hayagrīvamupāsmaha!! ⁴₀⁷

⁴₀⁶ Sankalpa Suryodayam vii
⁴₀⁷ Hayagrīva Stotram

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9.2.11e *Arca Gods*

Of the five forms of the Supreme, the arca form in the temple is the most accessible and simplest. This form is mainly intended to focus meditation and concentration on the Supreme through sincere prayers and worship. All people who believe in the deity can assemble and offer their obeisance before the deity forgetting the differences in caste, creed or economic status. Thus the temple worship concept is a great step forward in integrating and harmonizing people belonging to different strata of society. Each one can contribute his service in a way that he desires and is capable. Besides the distribution of *prasada* (offering to the Lord) in the temples and the consumption of the same by all the devotees vanquish the inequalities at least at that particular point of time and makes each one feel equal to others.

*Vedânta Deśika* has composed innumerable verses praising the divine qualities of the various forms of *Arca* Gods in his works. He is deeply moved by the accessibility of the Lord in the *Arca* forms. The following references about in this regard:

- *Sri Vijayaraghava of Tirupputkuli, near Kâñcî* 408.
- *Sri Âstabhujâ of Kâñcî* 409
- *Sri Yathoktakâri of Kâñcî* 410
- *Sri Dîpaprakâsa of Kâñcî* 411

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408 Paramartha Stuti
409 Astabhujastakam
410 Vegasetu Stotram
411 Saranagati Dipika

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> *Sri Narasimha at Velukkai on the banks of the river Vegavati* 412
> *Tirupati Venkatesa Perumal* 413
> *Srirangam Ranganathar* 414
> He is in the sleeping form for the redemption of his devotees. 415
> *Kanchipuram Varadarajar* 416
> The Gods dwelling in the form of idols in temples. 417
>
> 9.2.11e.1 *Arca Godesses*

*Arca* Godesses are accessible to devotees at all points of time in the divine temples, which are sanctified by purificatory rites and rituals. They are available in all places so as to satisfy the social urge of the devotees to offer daily worship. They also facilitate the devotees to congregate at a particular temple on an auspicious day and celebrate the religious function jointly with festive fervour.

*Vedanta Desika's* compositions include references about the following *Arca* Godesses as well:

> *Srirangam Ranganachiarp*
> *Tirupati Padmavati Tayar*
> *Kanchipuram Perundevi Tayar*

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412 Kamasikastakam  
413 Daya Satakam  
414 Paduka Sahasram  
415 Nyasa Tilakam 6  
416 Varadaraja Pancasat  
417 ibid 27-30
9.2.12 Temples

Temples are towers of the social institution. They provide the equal opportunity for people belonging to various caste groups and sub-groups to participate and rejoice. By attracting pilgrims from even distant places, they act as the hub centre of economic activity by providing job and trade opportunities to the local population. They also guide the youth on the proper path. By poor feeding, they cater to the basic needs of the downtrodden almost on an ongoing basis. The Chariot function held in the temples where the decorated temple car adorned by the presiding deities is drawn by people representing different social and economic background with the sole objective of pulling it safely towards the destination is a wonderful concept of true socialism. This symbolically means that all people have a role to play in the social well-being and if people join hands together, they can always realize their targeted objective by unified efforts, harmonious relationships, proper interaction and close co-ordination.

All religions have formalized social rituals, but many also feature private rituals such as prayer. Of course, the particular events that make up rituals vary widely from culture to culture and from religion to religion.

All religions include a belief in the existence of beings or forces that human beings cannot experience. In other words, all religions include a belief in the supernatural. Hence, they also include prayer, or a means for individuals to address or communicate with supernatural beings or forces, typically by speaking aloud while holding the body in a prescribed posture or stylized movements or gestures.  

The Lord’s images in different forms are there in the temple sculptures.

*Anantachitra pratimābhīrāmairajasra mākrānta dīsāvakāśaiḥ*

*Abhāvayath gopura vaibhairyā viśwprasūtairiva vaiśvarūpyam* ⁴¹⁹

Whomsoever worships whatever form of God, the Supreme Lord *Puruṣottama*

*Who is the antaryāmi with the world as his body blesses them.*

*Nigamadṛśamidham nikhilena vaḥ kwachana viśwathanau puruṣe sthite*

*Ya eha yāmupajjivati tat tanum sa hi tayā hitayā bhuvi nāthavān* ⁴²⁰

9.2.13 Goddesses

Goddesses are of *Vedic* origin and they occupy an important role in the religious prayers and places of worship. By their divine qualities of measureless compassion, they bestow their devotees with all wealth, health and inner peace besides fulfilling their *dharmic* desires.

*Vedānta Deśika* believes in the supremacy of Goddesses as well.

*Vedānta Deśika* is a staunch devotee of Goddess *Sṛi Mahālakṣmī*. He has elaborately eulogized Her supremacy and extraordinary compassion for the redemption of the aspiring soul. He has also composed works in praise of *Sṛi Godha*.

She is the way to reach heaven (*Svarga*) and liberation (*Mokṣa*).

*Svargāpavarga saranim bhavatimuṣanti*

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⁴¹⁹ Yadavabhudayam xi-62
⁴²⁰ ibid vi-3
Svatchanda sūkara vadāmavadūtaptapangām.\(^{421}\)

She removes the three *tāpās of ādi Bhautikam, ādi daivikam and ādhyātmikam*.

*Tāpa trayim niravadhim bhavati dayārdraḥ*

*Samsāra garma janitām sapadi kṣepantāḥ.\(^{422}\)*

*Her devotee gets immediately all the desired fruits.*

*Yadyat kāmyam sapadi labhate tatra tatra pratisthām\(^{423}\)*

*One who surrenders to Goddess Laksmi will be liberated.*

*Vartiyante vitamasi pade vāsudevasya dhanyāḥ.\(^{424}\)*

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**9.2.14 Divya dampati (Divine Couple)**

*The divya dampati representing the eternal duo, viz., Sriman Nārāyana and Sri Lakśmi are the protectors of the world and all human beings are their children. They pervade the universe, being omnipresent and omnipotent.*

*Vedānta Deśika believes in the supreneness (Paratāva) of the divine couple, who are the eternal parents of the world.*

*Tvāmevaḥuḥ katicidapare tvatpriyam lokanātham*

*Kim tairantaha kalaha malinaiḥ kimciduttīrya magnaibl*

*Tvatsamprityai viharati harou summukīnāṁ srutinām*
Bhāvārūdou bhagavatī yuvām dampatī daivatam naḥ!

Goddess Śrī Lakṣmī is the mother and Bhagavān Vāsudeva is the father.

Maṇā devī tvamasi bhagavān vāsudevaḥ pitā me

Jātab soaham janani yuvoyorekalaksyam dayāyāḥ. 426

Both are always united.

Āpannārti prāṣāmana vidhou baddha dikṣasya viṣṇoḥ

Ācacyustvām priya sahacarimaika matyopapannām. 427

The Gods get back their lost wealth through Her grace.

Ālokya tvāmamṛta sahaṇe viṣṇu vakṣasthala sthām
śāpākrāntāḥ śaranamagaman sāvarodbhāḥ surendrāḥ

Labāhva ṃbhuyāstrībhubhavanamidam laksitam tvatkatākṣaiḥ

Sarvākara sthira samudayām sampadam nirviṣānti. 428

Whichever direction Her vision goes, wealth flourishes there.

Artā trāṇa vratibhiramṛtāsāra neelāmbuvāhāiḥ

Ambhojanāmaṣasārī misatāmantaraṅgairapāṅgaiḥ

Yasyām yasyām diṣi viharate devi drstistvadīyā

tasyām tasyāmahamahamikāṁ tanvate sampadoghāḥ. 429

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423 Śrī Stuti 9
426 ibid 23
427 Śrī Stuti 10
428 ibid 14
429 ibid 15

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9.3 ṣaraṇāgati (surrender)

Complete and unconditional surrender of one before the Supreme is the most safe, reliable, trusted and proven path for one's salvation. A true devotee has absolute and unflinching faith in the Supreme and surrenders himself at His lotus feet. This is the wise path of surrender advocated by the Ācāryas.

All religions contain certain shared elements, including ritual and prayer, emotion, belief and organization. 430

One of the functions of ritual and prayer is to produce an appropriate emotional state. 431

All religions endorse a belief system that usually includes a supernatural order and also often a set of values to be applied to daily life. 432

Vedānta Deśika highlights the importance of total surrender at the feet of the Supreme Being. He roars that out of sheer compassion, God is willing to redeem, reform and transform even the worst sinner once he genuinely realizes his wrong doings and mistakes and take absolute refuge in the Supreme. This is a great consolation for the materialistic society which too is provided an opportunity to mend its ways and traverse in the path of eternal truth and wisdom. The sweet and healing words of Vedānta Deśika provides the much needed succour and soothing to the debased humanity of modern days which has lost its way in the darkness of sheer materialistic pursuits devoid of any value systems.

The Supreme Lord is ready to protect even the worst sinner.

ṣaraṇāgata rāksana vratimāṁ

431 ibid P.397
432 ibid P.398
Na vihātum raṇa puṅgavārhiṣi tvam
Viditam bhuvane vibhiṣanovā
Yadi vā rāvana ityūdiritam te. 433
Prapatti is fruitful.

Raṅgakṣonibhṛdadgripadmayugalipūrnaprapatteḥ phalam

Niścinvanti vipaścitaśsamadhanā nityam yaduttamsanam. 434
Prapatti is the best and is meant for all.

Nirantaram nirviśatastvadiyam
Aspruṣṭa cintāpada mābhirūpyam
Satyam śape vārana śylanātha

Vaikuṇṭa vāsepi na mebhilaśab. 435
One shall have deep faith (Mahāviśvāsah) in the Lord.

śastra prāmāṇya vedī nanu vidhi viṣaye nirviśankodikari
Viśvāsasyāṅgabhāve punariha viduṣā kim mahatvam prasādyam. 436
One shall be fully devoted to the Supreme Being.

Brahmā girīṣa etarepyamanā ya yete

Nirdhūya tānniraya tulya phala prasūtīn

Prāptum tavaiva padapadma yugam pratīṭab

433 Paramārtha Stuti
434 Pāduka Sahaśram 37
435 Varadaraja Pancasat 49
436 Nyasa viṃṣatī 7
Pātivratim tvayi vahanti parāvaragūhā

Vedanta Deśika considers in all humility that he is the emperor of all offenders.

Ahamasmi aparādha cakravarti

Karune tvam ca gunesu sārvabhaumī.

Due to His Karuṇa, the Lord provides solace to the old, child, lunatic and the blind.

Nidrayitān nigama vartvani cārudarśi

Prasthāna śakti sahitān pratibodhya jantūn

Jirna stanandhaya jadāndha mukhānivāsmān

Netum mukunda yatase dayād saha tvam.

His vow is to protect those who surrender unto him.

Sarvāvastha sakrūtparpanna janatā samraksanaika vratī

Dharma vigrahavānadharma viratim dhanvisa tavrīta naḥ.

Prapatti is open to all as an upāya as there are no caste restrictions.

9.4 Fate

Destiny is the result of one’s own actions and none is in a position to escape from its clutches.

Vedanta Deśika highlights the inescapable force of the fate.

Salutations to the fate which is so unkind.

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437 Saranagati Dipika 34
438 Daya Satakam 30
439 Saranagati Dipika 15
440 Dasavatara stotram 8
441 Srimad Rahasyatrayasara X
442 Sankalpa Suryodayam 50

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9.5 Rituals

Rituals are very important as they strengthen and nourish one’s belief in the Supreme in addition to purifying the body as well as the mind. They enable one to achieve a higher state of consciousness and are necessary adjuncts in the spiritual evolution of an individual. They also help one to mitigate the effects of one’s Karma.

In addition to sacred symbols and a system of beliefs, religion also includes specific rituals. Rituals are patterns of behavior or practices that are related to the sacred. 443

One of the functions of ritual and prayer is to produce an appropriate emotional state. This may be done in many ways. In some religions, participants in rituals deliberately attempt to alter their state of consciousness through the use of drugs, fasting, sleep deprivation and induction of physical pain. 444

_Vedānta Deśika_ attaches great importance to the _pañca samskāra_ for the _prapannas_.

The Lord cleanses the sins of those devotees with the imprints of _sankha and cakra_.

_Rathacarana Nirūda vyañjanānām janānām_

duritamathanālīṣa dohāli dehaliṣaḥ 445

9.6 Devotees

Devotees are very important in the religious and spiritual spheres as they espouse the cause of unflinching faith in the Supreme. Association with devotees gives steadfastness to the people pursuing the path of religious austerities and enables them to continue their service to the Lord with

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445 Dehalesa Stuti 27
dedication and commitment. Thus devotees contribute to the spiritual well-being of the society at large.

Vedānta Deśika stresses that the devotees of the Supreme have to be duly respected. He explains how the Lord guides and protects his ardent followers at all points of time. The Lord never lets down his devotees.

_Tava mukha jyotsnā drāvita mānasa śaśikānta pravāha samnibha bāspān_

_Acyuta na muncas bhaktān kadamba gola nibha kantakāyamāna nijāṅgān._

He protects those wise men who take refuge in Himself. It is the duty of the master to protect his followers who are dependent on him. He should be willing and ready to protect his followers at any point of time.

_Praharāṇa grāma mandita_

_Parijana trāna pandita_

_Jaya jaya ṣrī sudarśana_

_Jaya jaya ṣrī sudarśana_ 447

He dispels the _tamas_ in the mind.

_Danuja vistāra kartana_

_jani tamisrā vikartana._ 448

He destroys _māyā_ (ignorance)

_Danuja vidyā nikartana_

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446 Acuta Satakam 53
447 Sudarsanastakam iv
448 ibid v
bhajadavidhyā nivartana. \(^{449}\)

He wholly removes all wickedness. The Master should set an example for his followers. He should protect them from pursuing wrong path of action.

Nikhila duṣkarma karśana. \(^{450}\)

He shows the path of righteousness.

Nigama saddharmā darśana. \(^{451}\)

He removes the fear of birth.

Janibhaya sthāna tārana \(^{452}\)

He is the regulating force of the Universe.

Jagadavasthāna kārana \(^{453}\)

There is no fear for the devotees.

Bhavantamiha Yaḥ sva dhī niyata cetanācetanam

Panāyati namasyati smaratī vaktī paryeti vā

Guṇam kamapi vetī vā tava guṇeṣa gopāyetuḥ

Kadācana kutaścana kvacana tasya na svād bhayam. \(^{454}\)

One shall be humble and subservient to the Lord while serving Him.

śayātmanā madhuriporasi śesabhūtā

Pādāśrayena ca punardvigunīkṛtam tat

Bhūyopi bhāgavataśeṣatayā tadeva

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\(^{449}\) ibid
\(^{450}\) Sudarsanaśatakam ii
\(^{451}\) ibid ii
\(^{452}\) ibid i
\(^{453}\) ibid
\(^{454}\) Abhiti Stava 5

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Vyañktum padāvanil śathāripadam bibhari. ⁴⁵⁵

9.7 Puruṣārthaḥ

There are four Puruṣārthas dharmā, artha, kāma and mokṣa representing righteousness, wealth, desire and release. These impel one into action.

Vedānta Deśika advocates the path of action through renouncing the attachment towards the fruits of action. According to him one has to perform his mandatory duties as offerings to the Supreme without any expectations in return.

Vedānta Deśika believes in the concept of even sacrificing the four-fold Puruṣārthas of dharmā, artha, kāma and mokṣa at the altar of the God to realize the ultimate goal of life. ⁴⁵⁶

Avadhīrya caturvidham pumartham

Bhavadarthe vineyukta jivitaha san

One shall perform all actions as offering to the Supreme.

Vedhab kamandalu jalaivihitārcanam te

Pādāmbujam pratidinam pratipaddhyamāṇā. ⁴⁵⁷

9.8 Ātman

The Ātman (Soul) resides in the individual body, enlightening it in the form of intelligence and is of the nature of supreme bliss. It cannot be destroyed even

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⁴⁵⁵ Paduka Sahasram 27
⁴⁵⁶ Paramarta Stuti
⁴⁵⁷ Dehalesa Stuti 15
when the body is killed. It has originated from the Supreme Soul (Paramātman) and remains conditioned by bodily forms as long as it remains in ignorance without understanding its true nature.

Many cultures believe that everyone has a soul, or several souls, which survive after death. Some of those souls remain near the living and continue to be interested in the welfare of their kin. 458

Vedānta Deśika impels one to understand spirituality and inquire into the nature of the Ātman so as to enjoy the supreme bliss.

One shall seek the imperishable spiritual wealth.

Anagha tanuḥā Kṣemamāntaram Dhanamaksayyam 459

Vedānta Deśika expounds the nature of the individual self.

There are three categories of the individual self as follows:

➢ Baddha- who are in the bondage of samsāra due to the stream of beginningless karma.

➢ Mukta- who have attained release from samsāra and permanently transcended the vicious cycle of births and deaths.

➢ Nitya- who are eternally free from bondage and are almost like īśvāra Himself.

The common characteristic attributes to all of them are as under:

➢ Atomic in size (āṇu)

➢ Nature of knowledge (jnāna)


459 Yadavabhudayam xxii-40
Bliss (ānanda)

Purity (amalatvam)

Servant of the Supreme and subject to His will (śeṣatvam).

śaraṇāgati is the only upāya (means) to attain mokṣa and get rid of all hindrances due to ignorance (avidyā), karma and vāsanā (impressions left in the mind).

Vedānta Deśika explains the process of departure of the Ātman.

Arcirdinam viśadapakṣa udakprayānam

Samvatsaro marudaśītakaraḥ śaśānakāḥ. ⁴⁶⁰

9.9 Summary

This Chapter has discussed in depth the multifarious aspects of spiritual life including religion, God, devotees, self-surrender and Ātman.

The ensuing Chapter presents the summary and conclusion of this research study.

⁴⁶⁰ Saranagati dipika 39