

श्रीः

श्रीमते रङ्गरामानुज महादेशिकाय नमः

श्रीमते श्रीनिवासरामानुज महादेशिकाय नमः

श्रीमते वेदान्तरामानुज महादेशिकाय नमः

श्रीमते श्रीनिवास महादेशिकाय नमः

श्रीमते गोपालार्य महादेशिकाय नमः

श्री रङ्गनाथ दिव्यमणिपादुकाभ्याम् नमः

On His Magnanimity: Some from here and some from there

by

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Unto him, whose benedictory verse reads,
श्रीमच्छ्रीवासयोगीश्वर मुनिकरुणालब्ध वेदान्तयुग्मं
श्रीमद्वेदान्तरामानुजगुरुपदयोरर्पितस्वात्मभारम् ।
श्रीमच्छ्रुत्यन्तरामानुजयतिनृपतेः प्राप्तमोक्षाश्रमं तं
श्रीमच्छ्रीवासरामानुजमुनिमपरं संश्रयेज्ञानवार्धिम् ॥

I bow with utmost reverence. A person who walked this earth for about 80 years with an unmatched combination of knowledge and humility and with an unshakable devotion to his ācāryās, unto him my very humble obeisance. While, on the one hand, my fingers tremble to write a few words about a man whose precincts of knowledge and humility knew no bounds for I know I will indubitably fail in describing the magnanimity of this person, on the other, I feel extremely fortunate for the opportunity to express my feelings, purely from my own experiences and from those of some

who have been very close to him. svāmi deśikan in his magnum opus, śrī pādukāśahasram, says

यदेष स्तौमि त्वां त्रियुगचरणत्रायिणि ततो

महिम्नः का हानिस्तव मम तु सम्पन्निरवधिः ।

शुना लीढा कामं भवतु सुरसिन्धुर्भगवती

तदेषा किम्भूता स तु सपदि सन्तापरहितः ॥

that the holy gaṅgā is not desecrated by a dog licking her water, but instead the dog's thirst is quenched. I derive great comfort in this verse since a few prattling from a lowly person like me would not in any way diminish the grandeur of this person. Yes, I am talking about **kaviratna vedāntavibhūṣaṇa pravacanakalānidhi vedasāra vidvān śrī ḥariharapuram gopālācārya**, who, in the year 1988 adorned the ochre robes as the 10th pīṭhādhipati of the āṇḍavan periyāśrama paramparā and became consecrated as His Holiness śrī śrīnivāsarāmānuja mahādeśikan, a.k.a., His Holiness śrī maisūra āṇḍavan. Born to śrī kṛṇamācārya and śrīmati raṅganāyakammā on August 19, 1909 in sosale village, t. narasipurā tāluk, a place that is majestically stationed at the confluence of kāverī and kapila rivers, he rose to great heights very early in his life that astounded strong men of erudition. It is believed that he composed a 134-stanza eulogy titled śrīmad āṇḍavan vaibhavam in Sanskrit in praise of His Holiness śrī nammāṇḍavan śrī vedāntarāmānuja mahādeśikan at a tender age of 14 when His Holiness performed prapatti and administered the pañca saṁskāram to him. Pleased with his scholarly disposition, His Holiness addressed the resplendent prodigious sapling of uncanny calibre with the appellation maisūra vidvān gopu. At a later stage in his life, he became known as maisūra gopu māmā. Throughout this article I will, with impunity and utmost

reverence and affection, address him as maisūra vidvān gopu or vidvān gopu.

śrī kṛṇamācārya breathed his last when vidvān gopu was barely eleven during a wave of plague that hit the village. Being the eldest son in the family, in addition to the family being in an impecunious state, he shouldered the responsibility of raising all his siblings, two sisters, lakṣammā and cellammā and two brothers śrīnivāasācārya (who in the his later years became famous as sosale vādyār śrīnivāasācārya) and raṅgācārya. Realizing the tremendous potential in him and the urge for the pursuit of higher knowledge, the scholars in sosale advised him to go to maisūrū for further education. With the blessings of His Holiness śrī abhinava raṅganātha parakāla mahādeśikan, then pīṭhādhipati of parakāla maṭham who provided him both accommodation and food, he was able to pursue his studies at the maisūra mahārājā saṃskṛta pāṭhaśālā. Subsequently, he brought his brothers from sosale and took care of their education with whatever assistance he got from parakāla maṭham. During this time, he completed vidvat degree in Sanskrit and passed all the high-level examinations with flying colours in Kannada and Hindi to be recognized as a paṇḍita in these languages. It is believed that he spent 14 years mastering the nuances of Sanskrit literature and grammar and learning the intricacies of vedānta śāstra and nālāyira divya prabandham.

Within a reasonable margin of error, it was in the year 1932 or 1933, vidvān gopu married śrīmatī jayalakṣmi of talakāḍu village. This newly-wed couple, along with vidvān gopu's mother, lived in sosale for a few years during which vidvān gopu would frequently disappear to śrīraṅgam to pay respects to his ācārya and quench his thirst of mastering esoteric works of śrīvaiṣṇava siddhānta by listening to the divine discourses (kālakṣepams) of His Holiness śrī

ākkūra āṇḍavan. Returning to sosale, every now and then, he would stun his mother and wife by speaking in chaste Tamiz and presenting to them what he had learned from his visit to śrīraṅgam. How the family managed to eke out a living, only the merciful Lord knows. vidvān gopu and śrīmati jayalakṣmi were blessed with six daughters, kamalā, sarojā, kumudā, rājalakṣmī, vaidehī and sītā, and two sons, kṛṣṇā and rāmā.

vidvān gopu started his career probably around the year 1940 in sakaleśapurā, a village near maisūrū, as a high-school teacher, after a short stint in the same profession in nañjanagūḍu and other neighbouring villages in and around maisūrū. During his stay in sakaleśapurā, he found it difficult to perform the annual ceremony of his father as there were only a couple of śrīvaiṣṇavas in that village. On one such occasion, although he had invited these men to help him perform his father's annual ceremony, due to some inconvenience they expressed their inability to attend the function, right at the eleventh hour. In those days the bus transportation was dismal and hence that very moment, he set on his journey to maisūrū on a bicycle only to reach it in the evening. For the strict discipline he followed, he travelled empty stomach to maisūrū and subsequently fast the rest of the day, feeling disappointed that he could not perform his father's ceremony that day. Upon consulting the scholars in maisūrū, another date was set for performing the ceremony. Soon after that he left sakaleśapurā and settled in maisūrū with a job in the newly-opened Mahajana High School in 1945. He served here up until 1975 for what was his longest career. A separate room was assigned to him for his studies and regular consultation with his students. A novice or the most erudite, both found time to converse in person with vidvān gopu. It is believed that people flocked to his room, both at college and at home. His daily routine would start around 4.00 A.M., with his morning āhnikams, tiruvārādhnam,

followed by vedantic and philosophical studies. He would then leave for work to return only in the evening. It would then be followed by his evening āhnikams and discourse, either at home or at the āṇḍāḷa mandira, a venue for religious congregation. It was vidvān gopu's belief that teaching is a god-given gift and that knowledge should not be hoarded in one's mind but disseminated. It is believed that he was the first person to teach nammāzvār's tiruvāymozi to eager aspirants, at the āṇḍāḷa mandira. With whatever he earned, he took care not only of the family but also fed the poor and needy, for he certainly knew his own times of hardship and difficulty. He raised a loan to buy a house in maisūrū and despite his altruistic demeanour and meagre earnings, he paid back all the debt towards the house. If these activities were not enough, he would frequently visit śrīraṅgam to pay his respects to his revered ācārya śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan, who, in turn, would eagerly await his arrival. śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan once visited maisūrū, fulfilling the desire of vidvān gopu, and camped at vidvān gopu's residence for a week. Day in and day out, for those seven days disciples and admirers flocked to his house, not just to seek the blessings of the revered ācārya but also venerate the man who brought the ācārya in their midst.

The pāṇḍityam, vairāgyam, dedication to the āśrama and all the features of a pīṭhādhipati were seen in vidvān gopu and it was His Holiness tenbirai āṇḍavan who administered the preṣa mantram and mokṣāśrama dharmānuṣṭhānams to vidvān gopu along with two other great men, śrī tirukkuḍandai śrīnivāsa rāghavācāriar and śrī mannārguḍi ghanapāṭhi narasiṁhācāriar, for shouldering the responsibility of the āśrama as the 9th pīṭhādhipati of the periyāśrama paramparā. At the time and place when His Holiness tenbirai āṇḍavan left His mortal coils, śrī tirukkuḍandai śrīnivāsa rāghavācāriar was present who, in the presence of many āśrama disciples, was immediately coronated as the pīṭhādhipati with the

revered appellation His Holiness śrī vedānta rāmānuja mahādeśikan (śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan). It was probably not in the divine itinerary for maisūra vidvān gopu to take up the ochre robes for he arrived much later at the scene. His Holiness śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan, who Himself was a great orator and whose philosophical discourses (upanyāsams), especially on śrīmad rāmāyaṇam, have mesmerized countless followers of śrīvaiṣṇavam, held vidvān gopu in high esteem for his erudition and unmatched skills in composing ślokas in Sanskrit. He once said that vidvān gopu, given a chance, would compose an impromptu welcome speech by way of a śloka in Sanskrit while others resort to a prepared speech in their native tongue. śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan, who became extremely popular as śrī kaṇṇan svāmi, had the highest regard and admiration for vidvān gopu's scholarship and unwavering dedication to his ācārya and the āśrama, while vidvān gopu looked up to śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan with utmost reverence and affection as his ācārya. Over time the two grew extremely close to one another, one aspiring to serve his ācārya in whatever manner he could, and the other confiding in his most trusted disciple many matters related to the āśrama and seeking his opinion on many philosophical matters. In order to keep vidvān gopu in his close proximity, śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan made him the śrīkāryam of the āśrama and vidvān gopu, true to his devotion to his ācārya, faithfully discharged this responsibility for nearly 25 years. maisūra vidvān gopu's dedication to his ācārya is amply reflected in the salutary verses of many of his compositions.

यत्कृपालेशमात्रेण सदोल्लसति सन्मतिः ।

वेदान्तलक्ष्मणमुनिः सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि ॥

I would like to particularly highlight the emotions of vidvān gopu for his ācārya at the time His Holiness śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan had taken seriously ill. vidvān gopu sincerely and wholeheartedly

implored the divya dampatis in all the divya deśams in his soul-stirring 100-stanza ācāryavaibhavaśtakam. Addressing the divya dampatis at kāñcīpuram, he says

दिव्यन् सत्यव्रतोर्व्या करिगिरिशिखरे पुण्यकोटीविमाने

भूमन् देवाधिराज श्रितवरद महादेव्यधीशान देव ।

नागेन्द्राऽनन्तसाक्षात्कृत दुरितहरानन्ततीराधिवासिन्

श्रीमद्वेदान्तरामानुजयतिप इहाऽऽराजतादाशताब्दम् ॥

Turning to śrī rāmacandra in ayodhyā, he says

श्रीमन् लोकाभिराम श्रितजनहृदयाराम रामाभिराम

सौजन्यावास भूमन् शुभगुणमहिमन् राम सम्पूर्णकाम ।

स्वामिन् आत्माश्रितेभ्यः शरणद सरयूवर्त्ययोध्याधिधाम

योगी वेदान्तरामानुजगुरुरिह संवत्सराणां शतं स्तात् ॥

Surely, one of the 100 verses must have struck a chord in the śaraṇya dampatis Who had no choice but to grant good health to the ācārya. vidvān gopu has travelled twice on foot accompanying His Holiness śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan from śrīraṅgam to badarinātha and back. If it is not the unflinching and resolute devotion and concern for his ācārya undertaking such an arduous task, what else can we ascribe this to. A parallel to such a devotion towards his ācārya, in my opinion, is probably only seen in kūrattāzvān's devotion to śrī rāmānujācārya. Let me add an incident that śrī pūṇḍi rāmānujam, an ardent disciple of śrīmad āṇḍavan āśrama, recalls that depicts the veracity of this comparison. In the mid 1970's śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan had ordained an eleaborate yāgam for which scholars from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were invited. For some reasons a friction between the two groups brewed that rose to such heights that it even threatened the commencement of the yāgam. Gauging the heat of the

situation, śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan signalled to his most trusted disciple vidvān gopu to handle the situation and bring amity between them. Having immediately understood the predicament his ācārya was in, he faced the two groups by accepting the complete responsibility for their actions and even offered himself to be beaten up physically if it helped diffuse tension and bring rapport in the two groups. The two groups had no choice but to submit to his humility and patch up their differences. The yāgam was later conducted in true spirit in a grand scale with great pomp and gaiety.

I am personally amazed beyond description with vidvān gopu's poetic skills. I have spent many years transcribing his works (some of which are published in this souvenir) and being extremely dim-witted in Sanskrit, I've had a hard time making sure I have faithfully reproduced the complex constructs in his compositions. ubhaya vedānta śrī H. R. śrīdhar, an ardent devotee of āṇḍavan āśrama and a person of great merit from bengalūrū, says that vidvān gopu's knowledge of Tamiz, Kannda and Sanskrit was such that not only did he skillfully and eloquently provide a word-to-word meaning with an elaborate commentary of svāmi deśikan's deśika prabandham in Kannada, but also, without the slightest deviation from the essence of each Tamiz pasuram, provide an equivalent śloka in Sanskrit. I am told that whenever śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan delivered an upanyāsam in Tamiz in Karnataka, vidvān gopu would provide an instant synopsis of the discourse in Kannada between pauses keeping the interest in the audience alive. I am dumbfounded at how magnificently vidvān gopu has captured the experiences of svāmi deśikan when he describes in his tiruccinnamālai the transcendental and awe-inspiring gait of kāñcī devādhirājan as He traverses the streets of kāñcīpuram. One can sing the sanskrit ślokas with the same lilting and ecstatic effect as the Tamiz pasurams, swaying in unison with the Lord's movement. The words "vandaar"

and "vandaar taame" occurring in 10 of the 11 stanzas in Tamiz have been woven so commendably and mellifluously in Sanskrit that one cannot distinguish between the Sankrit and Tamiz versions if one heard them from a distance. The same can also be said about tiruvaraṅgattamudanār's rāmānuja nūttandādi in Tamiz rendered in Sanskrit. vidvān gopu not only provided an elaborate commentary with word-to-word meaning of this masterpiece in Kannada but also provided a 108-stanza śloka in Sanskrit faithfully reproducing the purport of each pasuram in Tamiz. It must be noted that it is extremely difficult to capture all the sentiments expressed in one language and present it equally well in another. Only a person who has mastered the nuances of grammar, literature and poetry in all these languages would have the courage to venture into such a challenging task. Indeed, vidvān gopu was that person. He has shown beyond the slightest doubt and many times over, to cynics and critics alike, his command and deftness in these languages and mastery over the understanding of our pūrvācāryas works. What was looked upon as esoteric knowledge and belonging only to the Tamiz-speaking śrīvaiṣṇava populace, works like deśika prabandham, tiruvāymozi, and rāmānuja nūttandādi, were made known to the diaspora in Karnataka in crystal-clear and easy-to-understand Kannada. For this, the Kannada-speaking śrīvaiṣṇavas should eternally be indebted to maisūra vidvān gopu for his untiring and unflinching efforts and sacrifice. He mesmerized the Kannada-speaking world by publishing a voluminous commentary in Kannada of svāmi deśikan's śrī raṅganātha pādukāśahasram in the year 1968 on the occasion of svāmi deśikan's seventh centenary tirunakṣatram celebrations. It was in the year 2007, Prof. B.R. Ramaprian published the faithfully-translated work of vidvān gopu's commentary in English.

It was just providence that I stumbled upon a souvenir in śrī kṛṣṇa bhaṭṭa's house. śrī kṛṣṇa bhaṭṭa is the priest at the Ashland Lakshmi Temple in the Boston area. We had gone to the temple on one of Boston's cold wintry days and śrī kṛṣṇa bhaṭṭa invited us to his house for a cup of coffee. His house was within the temple premises. I had gone upstairs to wash my hands and my eyes fell upon a dust-laden bookshelf. Seeking śrī kṛṣṇa bhaṭṭa's permission to look at his collection, my hands fell on this souvenir. The first page I open, lo and behold, I find a stotram called śrīmannigamāntamahādeśika vaibhavaśatakam and the author was none other than śrī ḥariharapuram gopālācārya. After looking further in the souvenir I found another stotram on svāmi deśikan composed in Kannada by vidvān gopu. I immediately asked śrī kṛṣṇa bhaṭṭa to part with the souvenir as I had found a invaluable treasure in it.

Only recently did I come to know about a commentary written by vidvān gopu on śrī ālavandār's magnum opus, stotraratnam. A few weeks ago I spoke to my aunt sītā who mentioned to me that she had recently visited Dr. jayarām, a medical doctor, who happened to have the commentary of stotraratnam written by vidvān gopu. It seems that Dr. jayarām, who attended to vidvān gopu for his medical needs, once requested him to write a commentary on this stotram. It is believed that within a short span of time he wrote an extremely lucid commentary with translation of this stotra but, due to a impending commitment, could complete 57 of the 65 stanzas of this stotra. He handed Dr. jayarām this manuscript and promised that he would finish this work at a later date. As destiny would have it, this remained an unfinished work. Many of his works are either lost or not yet found. When I visited my uncle kṛṣṇan in the summer of 2007, he handed me a few notebooks which contained many unpublished works of vidvān gopu. Some of these compositions have been written in the 1940's. I didn't see many overwriting on whatever

he scribed in these notebooks, which gave me the feeling that the thoughts and emotions flowed like an uninterrupted river. There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that he was an āśu kavi. When śrī pāṭrācāriar, an ardent disciple of āṇḍavan āśrama, mentioned to me that on one occasion he happened to be with vidvān gopu enjoying the grandeur of varadarāja perumāḷ as He was taken around the streets of kāñcīpuram during His purappāḍu. śrī pāṭrācāriar recollects vidvān gopu spontaneously pouring his heart in a stotra. Unfortunately, śrī pāṭrācāriar does not recollect those verses. My uncle rāman has preserved a paper clipping from saṃyukta karnāṭaka published in 1971 which mentions that vidvān gopu has composed a 300-stanza stotra describing the bāla līlā of śrī kṛṣṇa. It is hitherto not known whether this work was published. It would not be an exaggeration to believe that the compositions of vidvān gopu we have unearthed so far is a fraction of what he may have composed, either written or rendered spontaneously. Recognizing the contributions made by vidvān gopu to the world of Sanskrit and Kannada literature, the office of the President of India conferred upon him the President's Gold medal. The hitherto known publications, to the best of my knowledge, are

1. śrīmannigamāntamahādeśikavaibhavaśatakam
2. mahālakṣmīstutiḥ
3. ācāryavaibhavaśatakam
4. śrīrāmānuja pañcāśat
5. śrīveṅkaṭeśa stutiḥ
6. śrīnivāsāṣṭottaraśatanāmastutiḥ
7. śrīmahālakṣmyāḥ aṣṭottaraśatanāmaguṇastutiḥ
8. dombavilli śrīnivāsapañcaślokī
9. śrīnivāsaprapadanastutiḥ
10. śrī nāthamunistutiḥ
11. śrī yāmunamunistutiḥ

12. The entire deśika prabandham with word-to-word meaning, commentary in Kannada and a śloka-by-śloka reproduction in Sanskrit. This is equivalent to composing a śloka with more than 400 verses.
13. Word-to-word meaning, commentary in Kannada and a śloka-by-śloka reproduction of tiruvaraṅgattamudanār's rāmānuja nūttandādi in Sanskrit.
14. A wonderful garland of 100 verses on the 1008 names of śrī viṣṇu in śrī viṣṇusahasranāmam titled sragdharāśatakam.
15. A magnanimous work on svāmi deśikan's śrīmad rahasya-trayasāram called śrīmadrahasyatrayasārāthabodhini. This work comprises of the commentary of rahasyatrayasāram in poetic form entailing 1748 stanzas spanning all the 32 adhikārās.
16. maisūra vidvān gopu's magnum opus, the commentary on svāmi deśikan's śrī raṅganātha pādukāsahasram in Kannada.
17. A treatise on āṇḍavan āśrama ācārya paramparā covering till śrī tirukkuḍandai āṇḍavan in Kannada titled śrīmadācārya paramparā prabhāva.
18. Word-to-word meaning with commentary in Kannada of many stotras of svāmi deśikan's. I have only a few of these stotras in my collection.

There are a few other works of vidvān gopu which I came across in other publications, namely,

1. A condensed version of śrī viṣṇusahasranāma bhāṣya (language not known).
2. A commentary to nammāzvār's tiruvāymozi on the lines of the commentaries by our pūrvācāryas in Kannada.

It would also not be an exaggeration to say that vidvān gopu made a significant contribution in spreading the paramparā of āṇḍavan āśrama and bringing many thousands of disciples into its fold, especially in Karnataka. It is worth noting the ordeal undertaken by vidvān gopu when he invited His Holiness ākkūra āṇḍavan to visit Karnataka. It is believed that he travelled on a bicycle from maisūrū to śrīraṅgam via cāmarājanagara, satyamaṅgaḷam, eroḍu, nāmakkal, to name a few, and made elaborate arrangements at many places enroute for His Holiness to sojourn and perform pādukā ārādhnam without any obstacles.

I pause here to reminisce on the extraordinary efforts of vidvān gopu to sustain and maintain the temple of his ever-so-dear śrī veṅugopāla svāmi in the hamlet of sosale. He spent most of his paltry savings to defray the cost of publishing his works and has walked miles and miles going from pillar to post trying to raise some coppers from his books just to ensure the day-to-day functioning of the temple. It was his long-cherished dream to renovate and expand the precincts of this temple and construct a rājagopuram. It was also his wish to see the annual functions conducted in a grand and pompous manner with people congregating from various quarters to experience the majesty of the perumāḷ and the sublimity of the surroundings. I am pleased to say that, to date, some progress has been made towards realizing the dream of this mahān.

vidvān gopu had other talents too. It is believed that he was a great swimmer who rejoiced the serene waters of kāveri growing up in sosale. It is believed that he had a keen interest in field hockey and kabaddi. During my elementary school summer vacations, we used to invariably camp in maisūrū to visit my grandparents. I remember him brandishing a few strokes with a cricket bat we sculpted with a washing paraphernalia. I remember him engrossed in this game

while playing with children less than a sixth his age. My father, śrī śrīnivāsācār (the second son-in-law of vidvān gopu) recalls that vidvān gopu and śrīmati jayalakṣmi visited him in cennai in 1961. During their visit they happened to picnic in Hensman Park in T. Nagar. Childhood nostalgia may have crept into each one of them as they decided to play on a see-saw. On one side was my father, my mother (sarojā) and my grandmother (śrīmati jayalakṣmi) and on the other was maisūra vidvān gopu trying his might to bring the see-saw down on his side. While attempting that, the see-saw broke into a few pieces. The esteemed scholar maisūra vidvān gopu, or should I say mighty vidvān gopu, had put aside all his achievements to enjoy the moment with his family.

My younger brother kaṇṇan recalls some of vidvān gopu's engineering skills when he lived in maisūrū during his college days in the mid 1980's. It was one afternoon when kaṇṇan had returned from college and after having his lunch he was going about doing his assignments. All of a sudden he heard a loud sound from upstairs. He immediately climbed the stairs only to be astonished to see vidvān gopu finish building a shed from metal sheets left aside as scrap. From one end to the other, he meticulously tied the ropes and made sure that the wooden poles were fastened tightly. He then ensured that the metal sheets, which were put on top as a roof, were held strongly with metal strings and secured tightly. What struck kaṇṇan with awe was the provision vidvān gopu made for the pressure gradient on a sloping roof that required special attention in the event of a gusty wind. Be it fixing a tap or laying a tile on the floor, there was no dearth of pragmatism in vidvān gopu for he had all the zeal and enthusiasm to finish the job with perfection.

śrī pūṇḍi rāmānujam recollects that vidvān gopu diligently and devotedly performed antaraṅga kaiṅkaryam to śrī tirukkuṇḍandai

āṇḍavan. On one occasion, His Holiness had a muscle pull on his back that proved to be very painful. vidvān gopu, unravelling another talent from his repertoire, twisted His Holiness' arm and raised it above His torso behind His back to relieve the pain. Just then, our witty His Holiness said, ``Maisūra svāmi!, don't do this to me. I will certainly give you the pīṭham''. On another occasion, when an astrologer visited the āśrama in śrīraṅgam, śrī tirukkuṇḍandai āṇḍavan, in the presence of vidvān gopu, jokingly asked the astrologer when maisūra māmā (referring to vidvān gopu) would get sanyāsam. śrī tirukkuṇḍandai āṇḍavan made sure that wherever He was honoured and welcomed, vidvān gopu was accorded the same respect. While it was the extreme liberty He took with one of his most trusted disciples, He surely and certainly conferred vidvān gopu with turyāśrama, with the unanimous consent of scholars, disciples of the āśrama and admirers of vidvān gopu, on Monday, April 11, 1988, navami, the 29th day of paṅguni in the year prabhava during the ascendance of śravaṇa nakṣatra with the revered appellation śrī śrīnivāsa rāmānuja mahādeśikan who popularly became, needless to say, śrī maisūra āṇḍavan. Even though vidvān gopu was considered old to take up the reigns of the āśrama, śrī tirukkuṇḍandai āṇḍavan verily felt that it would be colossal injustice if vidvān gopu, who served four generations of ācāryas from the depths of his heart and who dedicated every nerve in his body to the upliftment of the āśrama, were not given sanyāsam. Although vidvān gopu faced tremendous opposition from his family members, it was providence and the infinite grace of his ācārya, His Holiness śrī tirukkuṇḍandai āṇḍavan, that he ascended the pīṭham as the 10th pīṭhādhipati in the lineage of ācāryas of periyāśrama. But the good Lord had His own agenda who relocated śrī maisūra āṇḍavan from our midst to His own abode on May 22, 1989 thus allowing him to be eternally with his ācārya who had departed just 42 days before.

My uncle kṛṣṇan says that he had a kāmadhenu in his father who was a repository of knowledge and wisdom but unfortunately could not milk it enough due to his mundane commitments and obligations. It is my extreme misfortune (durbhāgyam) that I did not get to know vidvān gopu more intimately. It was only when he had settled well in the Lord's abode did I realize the greatness of this mahān. I most humbly admit that I have done inordinate injustice to this magnanimous soul by scribbling a few random thoughts from here and there with my grossly inadequate and poor literary skills. If I have portrayed even a modicum of his grandeur and loftiness, it is solely due to the grace and blessings of my ācāryas and most certainly of maisūra vidvān gopu. Our present ācārya sārvaabhauman revered His Holiness śrī raṅgarāmānuja mahādeśikan has strived very hard to bring as many publications of śrī maisūra āṇḍavan as are available today into limelight by publishing and making them available to the general public at a very reasonable price.

I conclude this article with a verse that appeared in a recent publication of śrī raṅganātha pādukā that reads

श्रीवासलक्ष्मणयतिं स्मरणीय शीलम्

आचार्य भक्ति परिपूर्णमनर्घ बोधम् ।

शान्त्यात्यकल्मषगुणैः स्पृहणीय भावम्

वैराग्य भक्ति रसिकम् कविमानतोऽस्मि ॥

*Who is worthy of always being remembered,
who showed an unshakeable devotion to his ācāryas,
who was an embodiment of merit and erudition,
who possessed humility and qualities ethereal,
who practiced bhakti and indifference to all mundane,
who was a poet par excellence, unto him,*

*His Holiness śrī śrīnivāsa rāmānuja mahādeśikan,
we bow with utmost reverence.*