

SADGURU SRI THYAGABRAHMA PUSHPANJALI

- book review-

Dr. Varadachari Sadagopan

The year 1994 saw the release of a remarkable book by a devout disciple of Sadguru Sri Thyagabramham. The book was released by Tirumalai-Tirupathi Devasthanam in the spirit of homage to the ancient pursuit of Nadopasana as one of the noblest means of communion with God. The author of the book is an erstwhile Professor of Mathematics, who gave up her academic career to the worship of Thyagabrahmam as her Supreme Guru and Ishta Daivatam (personal God). She has indeed followed the message contained in the kriti "Nidhi Chala Sukhama?". The name of the author and the remarkable disciple of the Sadguru is Pushpa Srivatsan. She has offered her Pushpanjali in the form of 2052 Namavalis as devotional offerings and personal salutations to her Sadguru and personal God. She says: "Oh, thou Nada Guru! the one worshipped by the flowers of thought burst open in a flash of inspiration! No praise whatever is exaggeration to thee! Grant me thy vision; make me one with Thee!" The Namavalis of this devotee are moving eulogies sprung from her overflowing love for Saint, whom she describes as the crimson dawn in the sky of music. She plays tribute to the Sadguru as "the uninterrupted quick-flowing Nada-Gana and as supreme teacher sonant with the supremacy of Nadopasana." She salutes Thyagabrahmam as the song bird nestling in the nest of Rama Nama and as the one, who soars high on the wings of Suswara. She recognizes him as the prop and support for the seekers of Nada Vidya (Suswara Vidya). She offers homage to him as the fragrance of Sangita in the flower of Rama Bhakti.

The highly personal and extraordinary outpourings of Pushpa's divine experiences assembled as 2052 Namavalis are grouped under the Titles of Ashtotrasata Namavali (108 salutations), Trisati (324 salutations or three Ashtotrasatams), Panchasati (540 salutations or five Ashtotrasatams) and a Sahasranamavali (1080 salutations or ten Ashtotrasatams). The author has also included a Saranagati Gadyam (a poem of surrender at the holy feet of her Sadguru) and a Mangalastakam, an auspicious octet in praise of him. Pushpa's book is remarkable in many ways as indicated by some of the excerpts from some of her reviewers. Swami Dayananda Saraswathi states that her book reveals not only the person, the music and wisdom of Thyagaraja, but also the beauty of devotion of a true disciple to one's Guru. The book itself is an offering to her Guru and Ishta Daivatam, who is looked upon as Brahmam (supreme being). The late Swami Haridoss Giri, an expert in Divya Nama Bhajans himself has praised the staunch Bhakti of Pushpa and has pointed out the importance of these Namavalis for worshipping Thyagabrahmam through Nadopasana. Swami Paramananda states: "By the grace of Thyagaraja, Pushpa

imbibed vocal voice, Veena and also the capacity to poetically express the deep feelings of communion with her Guru and God. These Namavalis are outpourings, which have occurred during her moments of inspiration."

The Namavalis of Pushpa bring out the beauty of Manasa Puja (internal worship) in chaste Sanskrit. She has also included translations of her Namavalis both in English and Tamil in this book. She has observed in her preface that her Namavalis were not meant for the glare of publicity, but intended only as an expression of her personal experience from the worship of the Sadguru in one of her Namavalis as the "the one identical with Rama, whose Form/Nature is Nada."

Selected examples of Pushpa's Namavalis expressing her utter devotion to her Sadguru and God and her special relationship to him are assessed below:

Salutations to the one:

- who acts as the Mother applying the honey of Rama Nama on the tongue of the baby that is the disciple.
- who acts as the Father protecting the interests of the disciples and bringing about their welfare.
- who releases the sweet-toned bird of Nada imprisoned in the inner cage of the worshipper to spread wings easily and effortlessly in the endless expanse of Nada.
- who is the cloud of Namananada (the joy of nama) kissing the snow-clad peak of Nada.
- absorbed in contemplation of Sri Rama in the consecrated golden hall of his heart inlaid with the nine precious gems of sweet sound, melody, rhythm, sacred knowledge, devotion, asceticism, emotion, joy and the totality of Nada.
- who causes disciple to bathe in the divine Ganga of suswaras.
- who makes the flower of Nada bloom in the disciple's heart.
- salutations to the Sadguru residing in the heart (feeling and emotion), mind (thought), throat (voice), and tongue (speech) of the ardent devotee of Nada.

Pushpa Srivatsan's Namavalis are indeed appropriate for inclusion in the daily prayers of serious Nadopasakas. We are grateful to the Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam for persuading Pushpa to release her Pushpanjali's for the benefit of the larger community of devotees of Saint Thyagaraja. In conclusion, it is appropriate to point out that Pushpa's contributions are unique and monumental. We know of no one, who has composed an Ashtotram, Trisati, Panchasati and Sahasranamam on their chosen God with the exception of Pushpa Srivatsan.

