Poetry and Praise, Prayer and Imagination: Illuminating Hindu *Stotra*s Through a Sympathetic Reading of Appayya Dīkṣita's *Varadarājastava*

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Abstract

This dissertation is the first to examine the relationship between religion and literature through the lens of the *stotra*s ('praise-poems') of Appayya Dīkṣita, a 16th-century CE Hindu poet and philosopher from southern India. It likewise reexamines *how* we as scholars approach and read Indian literature (especially poetry) historically and at present, and explores ways in which we can better read and understand this literature by refocusing on its *poetic* qualities. The *stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita are unique in that he spent much of his life as an ardent defender of Śaiva non-dualist philosophy in South India, yet he also later wrote the *Varadarājastava* (*VRS*): his longest and best developed poem, praising Viṣṇu (in the form of Varadarāja of Kanchipuram), the chief deity of his polemical and sectarian rivals. In refining our approach to this poetry and in providing the first full English translations and close readings of the *VRS* and other untranslated *stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita, I explore what it means to be a *sahṛdaya*—a sympathetic, penetrating, and erudite reader—while also showing that literary *stotras*, due to their artistry and innovativeness, form the imaginative core of the vast and diverse corpus of *stotra* literature.

By way of arguing that works of art and poetry bear a degree of autonomy and are not ultimately reduceable to their political, religious, performative, pedagogical or other contexts, I argue that *stotra*s are best engaged primarily *as* poems that are created within such fecund dynamics as that of authority and freedom, devotion and invention, and tradition and individual inspiration. The application of such dynamics shows just how vibrant and original Sanskrit *stotra* literature truly was, unencumbered by explications and methods that decenter and even impair its poetic core. This dissertation illuminates Appayya's poetry in its relation to Sanskrit *kāvya*, Sanskrit poetics, the sociopolitical world of 16th century CE South India, and the world of South Indian Hinduism, all while giving this poetic core the paramount attention that it merits.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: The Value of *Stotra*s and Approaches to Understanding Poetry 1

*Stotra*s (Sanskrit Praise-poems), and Key Terms in Their Understanding 1
A Review of Scholarship on Sanskrit Stotras and Poetry 17
Approaches to Sanskrit Poetry: The Hermeneutic of Suspicion and the *Sahṛdaya* 30
Why Poetry, Why *Stotra*s, and Why Appayya Dīkṣita? 34
How We Read Poetry, How We Can Read Poetry, and What We Can Do with It 45
Chapter Outline 53

Chapter Two: The *Varadarājastava* as *Kāvya*: Appayya Dīkṣita's Place in the History of Sanskrit Poetry 59

Introduction 59
An Overview of *Kāvya*: Parameters, Characteristics, History 60
Mayūra and Bāṇa: The Earliest Hindu Literary *Stotra*s 66
Mayūra and Appayya's Praise-Poems to Sūrya 69
Understanding the *Varadarājastava* as *Kāvya* 80

Chapter Three: From Poem to Commentary, Commentary to Poetics: Appayya's *Varadarājastava* and Its Relation to *Alaṃkāraśāstra* 91

Introduction 91
An Overview of Sanskrit Poetics (*Alaṃkāraśāstra*) and Appayya's Place Within It 92
The Commixture of Poetry and Poetics in the Varadarājastava and Its Commentary . . 106

Chapter Four: The Poetry, Philosophy, and Life of Appayya Dīkṣita in the Shifting Sands of the Late Vijayanagara Empire 124

Introduction 124
The Late-Vijayanagara World of Appayya: Pluralism and Division, Politics and Religion, Polemics and Poetry 126
Religious Identity and Blending Theologies in Appayya's *Stotra*s 141

Chapter Five: Appayya's Poetry in Relation to South Indian Temples and the Wider Tamil Landscape 157

Introduction 157
The *Hariharābhedastuti* and the History, Art, and Ritual Life of the Temple(s) at Chidambaram 159
Ill on a Journey: Appayya's Fever and the Cure of Āpitakucāmbā of

Thiruvannamalai 172
Networks of Worship and Praise in Kanchipuram, the City of Temples 179

Chapter Six: The Poetry at the Heart of the *Varadarājastava* **192**

Close reading of the *Varadarājastava* 192
Conclusion 218

Appendix: Selected *Stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita **223**

Bibliography **238**

Chapter One: The Value of *Stotra*s and Approaches to Understanding Poetry

I. *Stotra*s (Sanskrit Praise-poems), and Key Terms in Their Understanding

In commencing a study on the Sanskrit *stotra*s of the 16th-century South Indian polymath Appayya Dīkṣita, focusing especially on his longest and most accomplished poem, the *Varadarājastava* ("The Praise of Varadarāja, the King of Boon-granting"), it is perhaps most beneficial to begin by elucidating key terms, including what *stotra*s are, their relationship to the phenomena of poetry (and Sanskrit *kāvya* in particular) and religion (*stotra*s were written in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions in South Asia), and how they may be comparable to related terms and categories such as "prayer," "hymn," and "literature." This also necessitates that we outline what scholarship has been done on *stotra* literature so far, what these scholars have had to say, and where our studies can go in the future. We can then discuss the main research topics and questions of this dissertation, along with its methodology and its significance and contribution to the field. My hope is that this dissertation provides a novel and useful discussion of what I see as the poetic core of the vast *stotra* corpus and the poetic qualities of specific *stotra*s, focusing especially on the *Varadarājastava* of Appayya Dīkṣita and its auto-commentary. I believe *stotra*s of a particularly poetic or 'literary' nature, such as the *Varadarājastava*, are nexuses of originality and innovation, especially in the realms of poetics, the imaginary, and in religious thought. Our reading and understanding of *stotra*s have been deeply informed (and continue to be) by emic South Asian traditions of poetics, theology, and hermeneutics (this will be especially apparent in discussions of Appayya's auto-commentary on the *Varadarājastava*), but we can also simultaneously gain a great deal by examining them in new ways: by reading them while thinking along with works of poetics and literary criticism from other places and traditions, and

by more consciously placing *stotra*s (and Sanskrit literature more broadly) in the global arena of literature and the arts, religion, and human aesthetic experience.

At its simplest, a *stotra* is a "praise-poem," and Sanskrit works ending in *-stotra*, *-stava*, *-stavana*, *-stuti*, and the like, all have their genesis in the Sanskrit verbal root "√*stu*" which means "to praise." Two working definitions of *stotra*s giving greater detail are provided by Yigal Bronner and Hamsa Stainton. In his article, "Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of *Stotra*s," Yigal Bronner observes that as a genre, *stotra*s are prolific, popular, diverse, and ultimately challenging to define.[1] Nonetheless, in terms of their form, he observes that they are generally "relatively short works in verse, whose stanzas directly and repeatedly address a divinity in the vocative case," and that they are "typically not divided into chapters or sections and tend to consist of a round or auspicious number of verses."[2] In terms of their function, Bronner states that "*stotra*s are typically viewed as a form of direct communication between devotee and God, involving no third party," but nonetheless their "public dimensions and functions" need to be better understood.[3] Many of Appayya's *stotra*s, as he observes, are notable for their auto-commentaries, which, by the simple fact of their existence, calls into question the "directness" of the communication between devotee and divinity. One of the key elements in Bronner's article (which I will discuss in more detail further on), and in his thoughts on the definition of *stotra*s, is the importance in understanding their wider dimensions and functions, in that they encompass much more than an individual human – divine dialogue.

[1] Yigal Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of Stotras," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no. 2 (2007): 2. Before Bronner, Siegfried Lienhard (*A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 128-131) and Jan Gonda (*Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 232-236) offered extensive overviews of the history and genre of *stotra* literature, but without concise definitions like Bronner's above.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 3.

In his book *Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir*, Hamsa Stainton initially observes that "[t]here is no standard definition of a *stotra*, despite the common assumption of its stability as a genre," recalling the definitional and classificatory challenges noted by Bronner and others.[4] The title of his book also introduces two important and related terms that will be taken up later: poetry (and its related term "*kāvya*" in Sanskrit) and prayer. At the end of the second chapter of his book, after arguably the most detailed and comprehensive overview of *stotra* literature to date, Stainton provides the following "working definition" and observations:

> I characterize *stotra*s on a basic level as reasonably short, vectorial poems, almost always in verse, that directly and indirectly praise and appeal to a deity (or some other religious addressee) using devotional language and that are considered efficacious in obtaining religious or material benefits when recited or sung. When we actually begin to differentiate between the countless compositions that have been called *stotra*s, the usefulness of such definitions begins to fade. And yet much of the diversity of this corpus should be understood in relation to such a centralized understanding of the genre. The creativity of individual poets and traditions becomes clear when it contrasts with the existing conventions that serve as its backdrop.[5]

In summary, he observes that *stotra*s are short, directional poems praising a deity or other religious addressee (Buddhas or Jain Tīrthaṅkaras, or even landmarks and holy places like the Gaṅgā/Ganges river or the city of Benares, for example), using devotional language, and are considered efficacious. Like Bronner (and Jan Gonda and Siegfreid Lienhard before him), Stainton acknowledges that the vastness and diversity of the genre makes defining a *stotra* challenging. However, he also acknowledges that the genre does have a central strain, and the originality and innovation of specific poets becomes more pronounced when their work is juxtaposed with existing traditions and conventions.

[4] Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 2.
[5] Ibid., 62.

For my part, I agree with both Yigal Bronner and Hamsa Stainton in their analysis of the *stotra* form as being relatively short poems (i.e. not divided into sections as are *mahākāvya*s, see chapter two) addressing a divinity or other religious figure or object in the vocative case, commonly understood as being religiously efficacious, and having a 'vectorial' or directional quality *toward* the addressee while also speaking to a wider audience or religious public. Furthermore, along with Hamsa Stainton, I am not arguing for a universal or exclusive definition of *stotra*s, and I agree that "at the core of all *stotra*s […] is the act of praise itself."[6] Any attempt to define them is ultimately part of an *ongoing* conversation. With this in mind, I think as a shorthand definition or signpost, *stotra*s as 'praise-poems' is useful and sufficient since this act of praise is key (and a literal translation of the verbal root √*stu*), and since they are almost entirely written in verse. In the term 'praise-poem,' I also believe the 'poetic' dimension is as significant as the 'praiseful' dimension, and I will discuss this more below.

Regarding the sheer scope of *stotra*s as a genre, I agree with Bronner and Stainton (and others) that its sheer vastness and diversity indeed presents a challenge. At the same time, similar kinds of diversity can be seen in other large corpuses, including those such as Sanskrit *kāvya* (discussed more fully in chapter two), poetry and literature in general, and even religious and liturgical texts. I do not think (as Stainton himself alludes to in the latter part of his definition) this vastness necessarily impedes us from observing what we might consider to be central or key characteristics from which there can be variation within the genre. For me, the 'praiseful' and 'poetic' dimensions are two of the most important (and commonly intertwined) strands within the corpus as it developed over time. The *stotra* corpus certainly contains multitudes, including *nāmastotra*s, which are texts consisting almost entirely of epithets of a deity being addressed,

[6] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 29.

and *stotra*s with clear philosophical, theological, or pedagogical perspectives.[7] Yet, even in the case of *nāmastotra*s, as Siegfried Lienhard notes (and as I have seen extensively in my own reading), the epithets in these *stotra*s "may either be based on Indian religious traditions, be derived from poetic language or even be invented by the poet himself."[8] Many of these epithets *are* neologisms (Lienhard lists various epithets of Sūrya, the sun, employed by Mayūra in his *Sūryaśataka*, a *stotra* which we will examine in comparison to Appayya in chapter two), and many of these are quite vivid, inventive, and poetic in their own right! So, even in the sub-genre of *nāmastotra*s, in which we might expect to encounter the rote listing and repetition of divine epithets in verse, we not only see a profound praiseful dimension, but a core dimension of poetic inventiveness and creativity as well. Collectively, I am using here *Nāmastotra*s and the extensive use of creative epithets in *stotra*s in general to briefly exemplify why I think both 'praiseful' *and* 'poetic' dimensions (among others perhaps) can be counted as core characteristics as we grow in understanding, evaluating, and classifying *stotra*s. I will discuss this more fully as we move forward, but briefly, in my view, the more poetic a *stotra* is, the more imaginative originality and innovation are present, and this has arguably served as the engine of growth and perpetuation of the genre, motivating more and more writers over time to compose their own *stotra*s.

As a useful addendum to this discussion of the scope and characteristics of *stotra*s, I think it is important to discuss the term 'prayer,' which is a key term in Hamsa Stainton's work, and which has a rich corpus of scholarship all its own, before moving onto 'poetry.' Owing to the book's title alone, "Poetry *as Prayer* in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir" (italics are mine), we

[7] See Stainton, *Poetry and Prayer*, 34 and Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 128-129. For *stotra*s having pedagogical qualities, see Yigal Bronner's article "Singing to God, Educating the People" (which will be discussed more fully in what follows) and my master's thesis, "Teaching Through Devotion: The Poetics of Yaśaskara's *Devīstotra* in Premodern Kashmir," (Univ. of Kansas, 2017).
[8] Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 129.

can see that, although it is not the only comparative and evaluative category Stainton employs in his study of *stotra*s, 'Prayer' is nonetheless a significant one. In the fifth chapter of his book, Stainton discusses the relationship between *stotra*s and prayer in illuminating detail. At the outset, he interestingly and creatively enfolds Western ideas of prayer with key traditions in Hindu temple worship in describing Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa's *stotra*s as "a type of verbal *prasāda*, an offering received by a deity and then enjoyed by a community of devotees."[9] *Prasāda* and *darśana*—respectively, an offering of food, flowers, or other pleasing things partaken of (and blessed by) the deity and the devotees, and the act of seeing and being seen by the deity—are arguably the two core daily practices in Hindu temple life, and I am not aware that anyone else has conceptualized *stotra*s as both prayer and *prasāda* in such an original way.

To be sure, as Stainton notes in detail, there are challenges to the application of prayer as an analytic category to Sanskrit *stotra*s or similar religious expressions in the Hindu world. He notes that in Sanskrit and other South Asian languages there is no single word that is exactly equivalent to 'prayer' in English, although such terms as *japa* ('repetition'), *āśīs* ('blessing' or benediction), *stotra*, and others do exist.[10] There are also possible trepidations among scholars in employing a term such as 'prayer' due to both its deeply Christian origins and the Orientalist, ethnocentric, and colonialist shadows of prior scholarship on South Asia and other parts of the world, but Stainton notes that such a blanket avoidance, "implies a rejection of the comparison inherent in the study of religion as a field."[11] He then pointedly observes,

> Part of our task as scholars of various religions and regions is the practice of translation as interpretation. Through translation we make the unfamiliar intelligible for the sake of analysis and comparison. The benefits of analytic categories such as prayer allow for

[9] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 159. It is also noteworthy that Steven Hopkins similarly calls *stotra*s "the poetry of pūjā," in his monograph, *Singing the Body of God: The Hymns of Vedāntadeśika in Their South Indian Tradition* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 62.
[10] My summation and comments here follow Hamsa Stainton's discussion in *Poetry as Prayer*, 160-169.
[11] Ibid., 161.

> movement from the specific to the general, from the singular to the comparative, and thereby facilitate knowledge valuable beyond a highly distinctive context.[12]

Here, even while acknowledging potential drawbacks, Stainton argues that prayer as an analytical tool has the potential to grant us new insights into the form and function of Sanskrit *stotra*s specifically. He further argues that, in discussing and experimenting with the category of 'prayer' and its applicability as a whole, we are doing the essential work of students and scholars of religion (and, I would argue, scholars of the humanities collectively) in employing interpretation, comparison, and translation to generate new and useful knowledge for all. For me, I wholly agree that this open-mindedness and sense of experimentation is essential in advancing our broad understanding of ourselves, each other, and the world around us. If we do not allow for a willingness to employ new perspectives, new categories, and new approaches in the study of religions and the humanities (with healthy debate and discussion, of course), then any meaningful advancement in these fields abruptly ceases.

Stainton also notes the developments all within the last decade or two in the study of prayer that have invigorated approaches to its study and have the potential to invigorate our study of *stotra*s and other expressions. These developments include interdisciplinary approaches to better understanding the materiality and embodied aspects of prayer, its sensory and affective dimensions, its presence in media and in "places previously presumed to be largely absent of it," which allow us to see prayer as much more than simply a "personal conversation," defining "a living relation of man to God, […] a union of an 'I' and a 'Thou.'"[13] Stainton argues, however; that this latter perspective of prayer as something more genuinely spontaneous and 'heartfelt', a personal conversation between a human 'I' and a divine 'Thou', still pervades and hinders the

[12] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 161.
[13] Ibid., 163-164, the final quote excerpted from the work of German theologian Friedrich Heiler.

study of devotional literature and especially poetry in Hinduism.[14] So, to some degree, scholarship still views the devotee, rapt in ecstasy, spontaneously praising and expressing love for the divine, as embodying in some way a more 'authentic' expression of prayerfulness and devotion in comparison to a more densely crafted and poetic *stotra*. This view, of course, leaves us with only a surface-level understanding of both prayers and *stotra*s, but Stainton's discussion shows that there is much more to be understood.

One further approach to the study of prayer in addition to those Stainton outlines would be to think about how the *rhetoric* of prayer is employed in *stotra*s and other potentially 'prayerful' expressions in the Hindu world. A study of prayer's rhetorical dimensions that I have found incredibly insightful and useful in its potential applications to *stotra*s is William Fitzgerald's 2012 monograph, *Spiritual Modalities: Prayer as Rhetoric and Performance*. Following Kenneth Burke's theories of motives and dramatism, Fitzgerald comes to see prayer as "a performance of attitude through acts of communication," and the attitude is specifically that of "reverence."[15] He defines reverence as "a discerning and gracious acceptance of one's subordinate, contingent place within an ordered and hierarchical cosmos," and he sees it as "the attitude most characteristic of prayer in its many forms and concerns."[16] In Fitzgerald's discussions of different rhetorical aspects of prayer we see parallels to the ways Bronner, Stainton, and others have discussed *stotra*s. He discusses prayer as speech act and as performance (see chapters three and four in his book), and his discussion of 'scene' and prayer sounds a great deal like their discussions of the functions and public dimensions of *stotra*s when he states that "an emphasis on scene underscores the richness of prayer as performance before

[14] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 167.
[15] William Fitzgerald, *Spiritual Modalities: Prayer as Rhetoric and Performance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2012), 5-6.
[16] Ibid., 72.

multiple audiences," while also acknowledging the "substantial differences between audiences that figure as addressees and audiences that figure in prayer's performance."[17] One can see how further analyses of the 'scene,' 'act,' and 'attitude' dimensions of *stotra*s, in addition to what has been done already, can deepen our understanding of their form, functions, characteristics, reception, and motives for composition among many other aspects.

Further on, in a section examining the "Rhetoric of Praise," Fitzgerald discusses the term 'adoration' in conjunction with Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem "Pied Beauty" in a way which allows us to merge our discussions of '*stotra*' and 'prayer' with that of 'poetry.' Fitzgerald states that adoration (following Richard J. Foster, as the "spontaneous yearning of the heart to worship, honor, magnify, and bless God") "sets a high aspirational bar for the rhetoric of praise, which may be understood as the perfection of an impulse to address the divine, disinterestedly and authentically," and he sees the poem "Pied Beauty" as exemplifying this.[18] The short but vivid and densely alliterative poem is both "an exhortation to praise and an act of praise in its own right," and Fitzgerald sees that the poem is "specific in identifying attributes worthy of praise in the *object* of praise," and that praise itself "is a mode of artistic performance."[19] Furthermore, he observes that the poem is "an insistent, if subtle, reminder that praise is never simply unmediated expression of a graced insight, but a matter of (in this case, exquisite) craft," and that in reading the poem as a "commentary on praise in the form of praise," we see that praise "is not only language offered; it is also language *made*."[20] Seeing this distinction, between "offering prayer" and "making poetry," is essential, Fitzgerald argues, for us to see the rhetorical dynamics of such things: a "spontaneous yearning" provides the "essential spark of adoration," but nonetheless the

[17] Fitzgerald, *Spiritual Modalities*, 40. Italics are his.
[18] Ibid., 83-84.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 84-85.

activity of praise is that of a "specific rhetorical enactment of an adoring stance."[21] Following Fitzgerald, I see the act of praise as something being both vectorial (i.e. in addressing a divinity while also being conscious of other audiences, following Stainton), *and* creative (in making and crafting its own praiseful language). We can also see the poem as encompassing both an act *of* praise and a meditation *on* praise; observations such as these, I believe, can give us great insight into the rhetorical and poetic dynamics of *stotra*s, and they help us to open new avenues into seeing what religious poetry in Sanskrit is and what it is able to do.

The term 'poetry,' like the term 'religion,' encompasses a broad swath of human phenomena and behavior seen across all cultures and time periods; in the case of poetry specifically, we are dealing with creative and imaginative utterances that grew into complex and robust traditions throughout the world. Furthermore, like 'religion,' the term, 'poetry,' has its etymological roots in the early Greco-Roman world ('poetry'—*poiesis*, Greek; 'religion'—*religare*, Latin), even as it speaks (not necessarily without critique)[22] in English for a worldwide phenomenon. In the Sanskrit world, there exists the term '*kāvya*', which is fairly equivalent to 'poetry' and 'belles-lettres,' and the term '*kavi*,' or 'poet.' These terms will inform our discussion here, but they are also the focus of chapter two in which I discuss the relationship between *stotra*s and *kāvya*.

Of course, attempting to define poetry is every bit as challenging as defining 'religion' or any other term in the humanities with such a wide ambit, but I will attempt here to offer some parameters and observations. In my experience, I have observed poetry to be either written or oral language crafted specifically for what I call 'artistic purposes,' and at the same time,

[21] Fitzgerald, *Spiritual Modalities*, 85.
[22] In the case of 'religion' Tomoko Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions, or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005) is deeply instructive.

designed for an aesthetic effect on a reader or an audience. Especially in premodern times, poetry has often been composed in verse—a predetermined and repeatable arrangement of syllables (which may not necessarily be entirely uniform)[23] either rhymed or not—but not exclusively so. In addition to its artistic purpose, which I will explain more momentarily, I believe poetry in the vast majority if not all of its forms commonly has a meditative dimension which involves a sort of state of suspended reflection[24] on a particular topic, theme, or an object being poeticized.

For an utterance to be 'artistic,' it must be creative and original to the author, it can (but not necessarily) have an overt meaning to be intellectually understood by its reader or audience, but it *must* produce a response, no matter how subtle, in the emotions and sensations of the reader; it must have an affective quality. Like any other well-crafted work of art, a poem must leave an *impression* on its receptive reader or listener. In the visual arts, it is readily apparent how a painting such as Eugène Delacroix's *The Barque of Dante* (a painting on a poetic theme no less!) leaves a deeply tempestuous, uneasy, and brooding impression on the viewer; or how the more abstract *Water-Lilies* paintings of Monet give a warmer, serene, and calming impression.

A scene from the northern gateway of the Sanchi Stupa in Madhya Pradesh (author's photo).

[23] Moraic meters in Sanskrit (i.e. *āryā*) are an example of meters that are regulated but nonetheless may not have a uniform number of syllables in each line or verse.

[24] The Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, or 'meditation' also has purchase here, but I should clarify that for now I am using the terms 'meditative' and 'meditation' in a more general sense rather than in a sense referential to specific Hindu and Buddhist practices.

Even ancient sculpture, such as the famous gateways of the Sanchi Stupa or the *Descent of the Ganges* relief at Mahabalipuram[25] give vivid impressions of reverence, wonder, and fruitfulness to the viewer. In these visual scenes, as in all well-crafted poems, the creators' talents, imagination, knowledge, and intellect are employed in a focused manner to not only *relate* something to their audience, but to simultaneously *impress* something on them. This to me is arguably the core dynamic of art and poetry. Likewise, in my experience it is also important to note that whatever useful information we can glean from poems or other works of art in terms of their social, political, intellectual historical, or other contexts, all works of art are first and foremost aesthetic creations, and if we as scholars engage with them, we must remain aware of these aesthetic dimensions.

For me, the 'meditative' dimension of a poem refers to the way in which a poem offers an evocative and reflective element which elevates its content from simply straightforward description or denotative narration. Numerous poets in all global cultures and historical periods have developed novel ways of achieving this, and it can be observed in the shortest of poems as readily as it is in the longest and most heavily crafted examples. This meditative element is also not necessarily a highly developed or refined intellectual process (although in certain circumstances, i.e., in a poem in which a reflection is heavily elaborated , it can be); it can be the briefest of apprehensions or feelings of appreciation that go beyond the denotative language of a verse or a poem. Here, even the pithiest Japanese haiku from the era of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) to the present exemplify this quality:

> In the fish-shop
> The gums of the salted sea-bream
> Are cold.

[25] This relief sculpture also harbors a deep connection to South Asian poetry, see Yigal Bronner, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010): 92-99.

First winter rain,—
Enough to turn
The stubble black.[26]

I chose two poems that at first glance seem merely descriptive; but in sitting with them a moment, we see that they are also highly suggestive and evocative. What could possibly be more quotidian than the day-to-day activities of a fish market or the dreariness of a late autumn rain? However, in the poet's attention to detail in both instances, we are able to glimpse broader reflective themes. The cold gums of the freshly caught sea-bream recall the coolness and wetness of the ocean, but their coldness also communicates to us that they are indeed dead and for sale at the market; and embedded within these evocations of the ocean, fishing, markets, and meals to cook, we see a deeper awareness of the cycles of life and death, the need for sustenance, and the relationship between the human and animal worlds. Likewise, in the second poem the blackening of the stubble along the ground by the rainwater evokes a deeper apprehension of the harvest that has come and gone, along with the overall cyclic change of the seasons that made both the prior harvest and the currently bleak landscape possible.

This meditative element is also readily apparent in South Asian poetry, both in Sanskrit and in other languages. Tamil *Akam* poetry, for example, uses descriptions of different landscapes to symbolically reinforce specific romantic situations, as in the following:

What She Said

Bigger than earth, certainly,
higher than the sky,
more unfathomable than the waters
is this love for this man

of the mountain slopes
where bees make rich honey

[26] These haiku of Bashō are translated by R. H. Blyth, and can be found in *A History of Haiku: Volume One, From the Beginnings up to Issa* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1963), 108-109.

from the flowers of the *kuṟiñci*
that has such black stalks.[27]

In his afterword to this verse anthology, A. K. Ramanujan details how this particular landscape, which encompasses mountains, honeybees, Kuṟiñci flowers and much other flora and fauna, specifically evokes the feelings and experiences of clandestine young lovers who tryst together before marriage.[28] Thus, in classical Tamil poetry, any descriptions of this landscape are not mere descriptions; they are connected to and evocative of the union of young lovers along with subsequent reflections on the nature and qualities of this romance.

In Sanskrit poetry, even long narrative poems (*sargabandha*s or *mahākāvya*s) do more than simply tell stories; they too have this meditative dimension. The opening of Kālidāsa's famous *Raghuvaṃśa* is but one example. In brief, the first canto opens with a series of descriptors of an unspecified lineage (*vaṃśa*) of kings: those who were pure since birth (*ājanmaśuddhānām*), whose acts produced fruit (*āphalodayakarmaṇām*), whose punishments justly fit the transgression (*yathāparādhadaṇḍānāṃ*), whose wealth was accumulated for the sake of giving it away (*tyāgāya saṃbhṛtārthānāṃ*), and who spoke measuredly for the sake of truth (*satyāya mitabhāṣiṇām*), among others. Only then (and, notably, the suspended syntactical and grammatical structure adds to both the dramatic and meditative effect), does the poet reveal that he will be describing the Raghu lineage (*raghūṇām anvayaṃ vakṣye*), and specifically (at the outset):

12. In that pure race, one who was even purer was born; Dilīpa was his name, a moon among kings, just like the moon itself born from the ocean of milk.[29]

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[27] A. K. Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1967), 19.
[28] See Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape*, 105-108, especially his detailed table on page 106.
[29] *tadanvaye śuddhimati prasūtaḥ śuddhimattaraḥ |*
dilīpa iti rājendurinduḥ kṣīranidhāviva || *Raghuvaṃśa* (*RV*) 1.12

The poet then goes on to describe attributes of King Dilīpa specifically, but what is important to note is that, like the above, these are not mere descriptions. The tenth verse of the canto makes this abundantly clear, but even *without* the verse we can see that these descriptions of the Raghu kings, and Dilīpa specifically, also constitute a meditation *on* what ideal kings or rulers are and how they should conduct themselves.[30] The poeticization of Dilīpa in the verse above, along with the grammatically suspended description of the Raghus, further illustrates how this is an artfully crafted piece of language designed to have an aesthetic effect on its audience. The *Raghuvaṃśa* is both an exemplary piece of Sanskrit *kāvya* and poetry, as I see it, in its aesthetic, artistic, and meditative aspects.

The genre of *stotra*s, like the overall range of poetry itself, is wide, rich, and highly variable. We can also approach them in various ways, and I think there is value in examining both their prayerful and poetic aspects along with other possibilities. It may be that not all *stotra*s are poems, but even in the case of *nāmastotra*s we can observe artfulness and creativity in the composition of various epithets for a deity and we can see how such epithets can be meditations on significant deeds or attributes of that deity. Going by what I have said previously about poetry's 'artistic' and 'meditative' dimensions, I believe that poetic *stotra*s form the creative and imaginative core of the entire genre, and I believe that more *stotra*s are possessed of poetic qualities themselves than we may initially realize. In the introduction to *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb

[30] The tenth verse states: "The wise ones are able to listen to this [poem], who can discriminate between good and bad; for only in fire is the purity of an alloy of gold to be tested."
taṃ santaḥ śrotumarhanti sadasadvyaktihetavaḥ |
hemnaḥ saṃlakysate hyagnau viśuddhiḥ syāmikā 'pi vā || RV 1.10

remark on the centrality of innovation in Sanskrit poetry by citing a verse of Bilhaṇa, which in part states:

> A poet's words are worthiest
> when they break the boundaries of traditional style
> by their outstanding boldness.[31]

This boldness (*prauḍhiprakarṣa*) is a core part of Sanskrit poetry, and I would argue that in numerous *stotra*s (as in those of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa above, and in those of Appayya Dīkṣita) it plays a central role as well. Bronner, Shulman, and Tubb call attention to the importance of being "able to discern freshness where it exists [in *kāvya*]. The lingering view that Sanskrit poetry is monolithic, self-replicating, and ultimately sterile is untenable."[32] I would also say (and I believe Hamsa Stainton and others would agree) that *stotra*s are certainly not monolithic, self-replicating, or sterile either, and in looking for places of boldness, creativity, and originality, we are able to show how dynamic of a genre it is. They also note the use of "knots" or *granthi* in Sanskrit poetry, which are "not meant to be mere obstacles [to understanding]," but are "opportunities" for the patient and attentive reader to deliberatively disentangle, this itself being "an integral part of the aesthetic process."[33] Of course Bronner, Shulman, and Tubb are talking about *kāvya* specifically, but Hamsa Stainton interestingly quotes this passage toward the end of his discussion of poetry and prayer (discussed above), further stating that "the same applies to *stotra* literature," their complexity and "literary knots of sound and sense" being "central to how they function as praise and prayer."[34] It is perhaps here that he most convincingly speaks to the

[31] The Sanskrit is *prauḍhiprakarṣeṇa purāṇarītivyatikramaḥ ślāghyatamaḥ padānām*; see *Innovations and Turning-Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* ed. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 4-5.
[32] Bronner, et al., *Innovations and Turning Points*, 6.
[33] Ibid., 13-14.
[34] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 169.

crucial role our understanding of the poetic qualities of *stotra*s plays in our understanding of them as a whole, especially in their scope as both praise and prayer. Following Hamsa Stainton, I believe it is innovative and useful to understand *stotra*s as a verbal *prasāda*, an offering to a deity, and I also think it can be effective to view them as a verbal *darśana*, or a simultaneous 'see-ing' and 'being-seen-by' the deity. Specifically, Appayya's *Varadarājastava*, both as a poem and as an act of *darśana*, is a deep and intricate praise of and meditation on the deity, Varadarāja, but it is also a poetic meditation on the acts of praise and visualization themselves. This quality, along with Appayya's use of verbal 'knots' will be supremely evident in the *Varadarājastava*, a text which, like the best of *stotra*s, is both a religious work and a work of poetry, having been created for artistic purposes and offering an opportunity for meditative reflection.

II. A Review of Scholarship on Sanskrit *Stotra*s and Poetry

Hamsa Stainton's book *Poetry and Prayer in the Hymns of Kashmir* (2019), and the book edited by Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (2014), are two of the most significant scholarly volumes on Sanskrit *stotra*s and *kāvya*, respectively, in recent years. The only other major works of scholarship devoted to *stotra*s in English are Steven Hopkins' monograph *Singing the Body of God: The Hymns of Vedāntadeśika in Their South Indian Tradition* (2002), Nancy Ann Nayar's book *Poetry as Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja* (1992) and Gudrun Bühnemann's study, *Budha-Kauśika's Rāmarakśāstotra: A Contribution to the Study of Sanskrit Devotional Poetry* (1983). Hopkins translates and provides extensive commentary on numerous Sanskrit *stotra*s and Tamil *bhakti* poems of Vedānta Deśika (c. late 13th century CE), a Vaiṣṇava theologian and polymath, and an important intellectual and poetic precursor to Appayya Dīkṣita.

As I feel is the case with Appayya, Hopkins states that for Vedānta Deśika, "the medium of the poem offers Deśika the philosopher a unique space of interpretation, distinct from his own prose commentaries and independent treatises;" furthermore, in this medium, "we have displayed in a most complex form Deśika's union of intellect and emotion; philosophy and poetry; the sensual/erotic and intellectual dimensions of devotion."[35] Nancy Ann Nayar also focuses on Sanskrit *stotra*s from the Tamil region of South India, specifically those of Rāmānuja's (an important Vaiṣṇava theologian, c. 12th century CE) disciple Kūreśa and his son Parāśara Bhaṭṭar.[36] Her book illustrates how these *stotra*s influenced and were influenced by the development of Vaiṣṇava textual traditions, theology, and practice in South India, involving Tamil, Sanskrit, and Maṇipravāḷa sources.[37] In a subsequent volume, she additionally provides full translations of all the *stotra*s of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar discussed in *Poetry as Theology*; both books are excellent resources on these poets and on the development of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in South India in the early second millennium CE.[38] Gudrun Bühnemann provides extensive research alongside a critical edition and translation of the *Rāmarakṣāstotra* attributed to Budhakauśika, a *stotra* with continuing popularity in the state of Maharashtra.[39] Her study offers important observations on *stotra*s in general, and shows the different manuscript versions, interpretations, and uses of the *Rāmarakṣāstotra* specifically.[40]

General scholarship on Sanskrit *kāvya* is more extensive than that on *stotra*s, including monographs on specific texts, such as Indira V. Peterson's *Design and Court Rhetoric in a*

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[35] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 8.
[36] Nancy Ann Nayar, *Poetry as Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 1-2.
[37] See her introductory chapter in *Poetry as Theology*, 1-32.
[38] For the translations, see Nancy Ann Nayar, *Praise Poems to Viṣṇu and Śrī: The Stotras of Rāmānuja's Immediate Disciples* (Pondicherry: All India Press, 1994).
[39] Gudrun Bühnemann, *Budha-Kauśika's Rāmarakṣāstotra: A Contribution to the Study of Sanskrit Devotional Poetry* (Vienna: Institute for Indology, Univ. of Vienna, 1983), 7.
[40] Ibid., 14.

Sanskrit Court Epic: The Kirātārjunīya of Bhāravi (2003), and broader overviews such as *Innovations and Turning Points*, mentioned above. There are also well-researched scholarly translations of various works in the Clay Sanskrit Library and Murty Library collections. In contemporary scholarship since the mid-20th century, the earlier work of Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Siegfried Lienhard, and Sheldon Pollock was instrumental in advancing the field. Ingalls' *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry: Vidyākara's Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* (1965), Lienhard's *A History of Classical Poetry, Sanskrit—Pali—Prakrit* (1984), and Pollock's work culminating in *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (2006), were all influential studies. Concurrently, in the realm of Sanskrit poetics and aesthetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*), Ingalls published a translation the influential *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana (9th century CE) and the *Locana* commentary of Abhinavagupta (c. early 11th century CE) in 1990, and Pollock edited and translated a volume of selections of these texts titled *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics* (2016). I will discuss Appayya's relationship to *alaṃkāraśāstra* in greater detail in chapter three. Lienhard's *History* provides a detailed overview of the history of *kāvya* literature, the training of poets, and many of the styles and subtypes of *kāvya*, and it is an indispensable scholarly introduction to Sanskrit poetry. Ingalls' *Anthology* translates a specific collection of Sanskrit verses compiled in the late eleventh or early twelfth century CE by a Buddhist monk named Vidyākara, and his vivid and straightforward translations still serve as models today. Pollock's *Language of the Gods in the World of Men* shows in detail the rise of the 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' in South Asia while charting Sanskrit's transformation from a 'liturgical' language of the Vedas to a literary language of *kāvya*, and subsequently charting the rise of vernacular languages in South Asia in the second millennium CE. All of these works have continued to influence new generations of Sanskrit scholarship.

In the time since, there has been a profusion of scholarship on *kāvya*, general South Asian poetry, and aesthetics by numerous scholars including Yigal Bronner, Lawrence McCrea, Gary Tubb, Herman Tieken, Indira Peterson, Charles Hallisey, Phyllis Granoff, David Buchta, Lynna Dhanani, Hamsa Stainton, David Shulman, Deven Patel, and Anand Venkatkrishnan, among others. Yigal Bronner's 2010 book, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* and the *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (2014) discussed above are two landmark works in the study of Sanskrit poetry. *Extreme Poetry* is a detailed study of the mechanism of *śleṣa* ('embrace', or a sustained double meaning) in Sanskrit poetry, its development being one of the truly unique and fascinating aspects of the language.[41] Bronner argues that although Sanskrit indeed has a rich and varied vocabulary, poets actively cultivated and crafted this over time in the late first and second millennia CE with impressive results.[42] In the book, he frequently illustrates the central and important roles of poets in the development and refinement of language itself, stating:

> After all, poetry is often not 'natural' to the language it is written in, nor should it necessarily be. Poets typically write against their language, breaking conventions, transgressing grammatical rules, and saying what could not have been said ordinarily. It is not language that writes poets, but the other way around.[43]

This creative and generative capacity of poets is further elaborated in the *Innovations and Turning Points* volume Bronner co-edited with David Shulman and Gary Tubb. Although the book's title rightly suggests that the historicization of *kāvya* is an ongoing enterprise, it is arguably the most detailed and comprehensive study of *kāvya* from its beginnings and early

[41] In my own translations, to indicate *śleṣa*s of individual words I use a double dash (//) between the two words and to indicate verse-long *śleṣa*s I use a line-length repeated dash to indicate the two possible readings (//////////////////////).
[42] See Bronner's discussions on the supposed 'naturalness' of *śleṣa* to Sanskrit and the history of *śleṣa* in his introduction in *Extreme Poetry*, 13-19.
[43] Ibid., 16.

'classical' writers such as Kālidāsa, through the developments of Bhāravi, Māgha, and Bāṇa, the further developments of the second millennium CE, and even providing detailed essays on its historical development in Tibet and Southeast Asia. It is impossible to give a detailed summary of its contents here, but attention is paid throughout not only to the remarkable stylistic and formal aspects of Sanskrit poetry, but also to its narrative and thematic dimensions, its aesthetic capacities, and its ability to spread beyond South Asia, all while situating individual poets and works in historical relationships with one another. It is a foundational volume for the study of Sanskrit poetry going forward.

There have been two articles written specific to Appayya Dīkṣita's poetic *stotra*s, one by Yigal Bronner and one by Ajay Rao. Rao, his 2016 article, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," discusses Appayya's *Varadarājastava* within the context of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava sectarian conflicts of the period, focusing particularly on these contexts and on the *daharavidyā* meditation on Brahman within one's heart that was theologically significant for Appayya.[44] Even though it only translates and discusses three of the *stotra*'s one hundred and five verses, the article nonetheless give valuable insight into the political and religious contexts of Appayya's life and work, and it sheds light on the relationship between Appayya's *Varadarājastava* and the *Varadarājapañcāśat* of Vedānta Deśika, an important precursor to Appayya's *stotra*.

Yigal Bronner's article, "Singing to God, Educating the People," cited above, is the only other piece of scholarship on Appayya's *stotra*s, and it discusses Appayya's role as an educator while seeking to integrate the study of Appayya's *stotra*s with his scholastic and intellectual works. He examines the pedagogical qualities of three *stotra*s and (when applicable) their commentaries: the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* ("The Praise of the Digits of the Moon of Durgā"), the

[44] Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (March 2016); for an introduction to the *daharavidyā*, see pages 52-55.

Ātmārpaṇastuti ("The Praise of Offering One's Self//Offering One *to* the Self [Śiva]"), and the *Varadarājastava*.[45] Composed in sixteen easily comprehensible Sanskrit verses and accompanied by an extensive commentary, the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* is in many respects the most explicitly pedagogical poem of Appayya's as the poem summarizes and the commentary explains in great detail the deeds and qualities of the Goddess. The *Ātmārpaṇastuti* is much more a confessional poem in nature (as we will see in the next chapter)—Appayya, at a moment of spiritual crisis, acknowledges his own sinfulness and asks for Śiva's salvific aid—but Bronner examines an apocryphal story of Appayya ingesting a hallucinogenic substance from a Datura plant and composing these verses in the company of his disciples. Bronner interestingly argues that there is a pedagogical dimension present through the telling of this story and the more public dimension it grants the poem.[46] Lastly, Bronner views the *Varadarājastava* and its later auto-commentary (likely composed around the same time that Appayya composed his major works on poetics such as the *Kuvalyānanda* and the *Citramīmāṃsā*) as a means by which Appayya seeks to educate others on the value and the use of poetic ornaments (*alaṃkāra*s).[47] Here, we get a thorough elucidation of some of the poem's verses and accompanying pieces of commentary as pedagogical tools to be used in educating trained readers in poetry and poetics. In his conclusion, Bronner calls on scholars to "scrutinize the unique cultural fusion found in Appayya's writings, and examine it in its political, sectarian, and social contexts."[48] He also outlines the value of such work, stating that Appayya's *stotra*s have "an overall synthesis that has remarkable affinities with today's Hinduism," and that our "understanding of India's present will be significantly

[45] The *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and *Varadarājastava* are accompanied by self-authored commentaries (a relative rarity in Sanskrit poetry) whereas the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* is not.
[46] See pages 14-15 in "Singing to God, Educating the People."
[47] Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People," 7-11.
[48] Ibid., 17.

enriched if we turn our attention to local, pre-colonial scenes […] and the activities of their prominent agents," which includes Appayya and his South Indian locale.[49] One of the aims of this dissertation is to take up Yigal Bronner's call and to shed further light on this.

Some detailed studies of Sanskrit *stotra*s have been discussed above, including those of Hamsa Stainton, Steven Hopkins, and Nancy Ann Nayar, but it is noteworthy to observe the ways in which *stotra*s factor into other modes of scholarship. One example is Ellen Gough's recent monograph, *Making a Mantra: Tantric Ritual and Renunciation on the Jain Path to Liberation*, in which she outlines the connections between the famous Jain *Bhaktāmarastotra* of Mānatuṅga, Jain *yantra*s (images or diagrams which are aids to prayer and meditation), and the *ṛddhimaṅgala*—a collection of *mantra*s (sacred syllables or utterances) having curative or even salvific powers.[50] In the book's conclusion, she states that today many practicing Jains can recite "at least a few" of the *Bhaktāmarastotra*'s forty-four to forty-eight verses (depending on the particular tradition and recension of the text), and that all Jains accept a set of forty-eight *yantra*s that accompany the poem along with the *ṛddhimaṅgala mantra*s.[51] She then describes a workshop she attended in Mumbai in 2016 on the *Bhaktāmarastotra* in which its leader described chanting the sixth verse of the *stotra* regularly for "developing one's IQ and memory," along with its associated *ṛddhi mantra*.[52] In conjunction, she also discusses the influential 1369 CE commentary of Guṇākarasūri on the *Bhaktāmarastotra*, in which he "associates different verses of the poem with different mantras, or spells," and she outlines various examples dealing with the ridding of illness, freeing one from bonds or debts, bestowing wealth, and the

[49] Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People," 17.
[50] The interrelationship between these things is woven throughout the book; for an overview of the *ṛddhimaṅgala* especially, see her introduction, pages 3-6 and chapter one, pages 26-29: Ellen Gough, *Making a Mantra: Tantric Ritual and Renunciation on the Jain Path to Liberation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2021).
[51] Ibid., 198.
[52] Ibid., 200. The *mantra*, in Prakrit, is "*oṃ arhaṃ ṇamo kuṭṭhabuddhīṇāṃ*," and she translates it as, "praise to those whose intellects are like granaries that store the seeds of teachings."

pacification of dangers.[53] As her conclusion makes clear, these "tantric" practices involving hymns, *yantra*s, and *mantra* spells form a core part of modern Jain practice and have a long history within the tradition, and are important parts of the text's modern understanding and reception history.

As Ellen Gough also explains, an early German Indologist, Hermann Jacobi, was tasked by F. Max Müller to contribute studies and translations of Jain scriptures for Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* project. What is interesting is that, along with other scriptures, Jacobi published a German translation of the *Bhaktāmarastotra* in 1876, recognizing its popularity among Jains and their use of it in prayer and in the curing of ailments.[54] Gough also notes what she describes as a "missed opportunity" on the part of Jacobi, in that, in his introduction he "showed no interest in the *yantra*s associated with the poem," instead focusing on its author, history, and literary qualities.[55] Here I agree with Ellen Gough in that Jacobi missed an opportunity to present the *stotra* in the context of the *ṛddhimaṅgala* and the creation of *yantra*s, and thus provide an enlightening window into contemporary Jain religious practice and its history. I am also not aware of any translation of the *stotra* into German since Jacobi's own, nor am I aware of any previous scholarly translations of the *stotra* into English.[56] Just as Ellen Gough has now filled this lacuna left by Hermann Jacobi, I also believe that the poetic qualities and content of a *stotra* such as the *Bhaktāmarastotra* can receive renewed attention. Take, for example, the sixth verse of the poem, mentioned by Gough previously:

6. As one who has little scriptural knowledge, being an abode of the ridicule of the wise; being vigorously devoted to you nonetheless makes me garrulous, just as a Cuckoo cries

[53] Ellen Gough, *Making a Mantra*, 204-207.
[54] Ibid., 211-212.
[55] Ibid., 212-213.
[56] In a forthcoming volume, edited by Hamsa Stainton, to which I am also contributing, Jain scholar Steven Vose is preparing an annotated translation of the *Bhaktāmarastotra*. There are many *stotra*s that either remain untranslated or have not received an updated scholarly translation for well over a century (e.g. George Quackenbos' *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, published in 1917. Mayūra's *Sūryaśataka* will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two).

melodiously and sweetly, its cause being a single cluster of a mango tree's [newly] pleasing buds.[57]

It is evident that throughout the poem there is a consciously constructed *poetic* praise of the first Jain Tīrthaṅkara (Jain saint and sacred teacher), Ṛṣabhanātha. The garrulousness of the poet's praise is compared to the beautiful and distinct sound of the Indian Cuckoo in early spring. The image of the poet being an object of ridicule while nonetheless being inspired to compose poetry is also an important trope in Sanskrit literature. In this way, the above verse bears similarity to sections of the beginning of Appayya Dīkṣita's *Varadarājastava*, the primary focus of this dissertation:

2. O Lord, one who is born does not know the utmost totality of your greatness, nor one who will be born, O Supreme Man. I, who have an overflowing rashness, in praise of your greatness—why wouldn't there be laughter of the wise toward one like me?

5. O Ramāramaṇa (husband of Lakṣmī) I think that the best of poets must pour forth your praises, and someone like me is blessed because of them. One like me, whose reverent attention is fixed upon your image obtains good fortune from a long reflection on [your] various parts because of an excessive poetic indolence.

In brief, these comparable examples of the verse of Mānatuṅga and Appayya Dīkṣita show the poetic contemplation that inheres in their work and the poetic value that results. Ellen Gough's work in *Making a Mantra* elucidates the clear and strong connection between literature such as the *Bhaktāmarastotra*, the history and evolution of the *ṛddhimaṅgala*, and the daily practice of Jains throughout the world involving *yantra*s and the *mantra*s of the *ṛddhimaṅgala*, and I would say additionally that the comparative example above illustrates the need for further examination of the poetic qualities and core content of such important *stotra*s as the *Bhaktāmarastotra* and

[57] The translation is my own.
alpaśrutaṃ śrutavatām parihāsadhāma tvadbhaktireva mukharī kurute balānmām |
yatkokilaḥ kila madhau madhuraṃ virauti taccāmracārukalikānikaraika hetuḥ || Bhaktāmarastotra 6

the *Varadarājastava*. In addition to the fascinating world of the *ṛddhimaṅgala* and its contextual relationship to the *Bhaktāmarastotra*, I also believe there is space to better detail the *stotra*'s style, theme, tone, content, intent, and its interrelationships with other poems.

As a final example of recent (and perhaps the most comprehensive to date) scholarship on *stotra*s, I return to the work of Hamsa Stainton, whose book *Poetry and Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir* and related articles focus especially on the *Stutikusumāñjali* of the fourteenth-century CE Kashmiri poet Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa, along with *stotra*s of others from Kashmir in the early second millennium CE. As discussed previously, I think Hamsa Stainton's research is perhaps the most revelatory on the subject of *stotra*s to date, and his approach is arguably the closest to my own. In his article for a 2016 special issue of the *International Journal of Hindu Studies* focusing on *Stotra* literature, he articulates many important themes that are developed later in his book, and he uses the *stotra*s of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa to challenge narrow understandings of "prayer" (i.e. simply as "spontaneous outpourings of the heart"), while showing how the "poetic features of these hymns are integral to their efficacy" *as* prayers.[58] In the article, he illustrates how Jagaddhara's *Stutikusumāñjali* is "not particularly Tantric," nor rooted in the esoteric practices and theologies of Kashmiri Śaivism; he also states that Jagaddhara rather utilizes much more content from Sanskrit aesthetics and poetics, which in itself seems to indicate that Jagaddhara likely composed these *stotra*s first and foremost *as* poetry.[59] Throughout the article are beautiful translations of verses from Jagaddhara's collection, showing different functions that *stotra*s can perform, from offering praise, to paying homage,

[58] Hamsa Stainton, "Poetry as Prayer: The Śaiva Hymns of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa of Kashmir," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 20.3 (2016): 339.
[59] Ibid., 347. Pertaining to the *Bhaktāmarastotra* discussed previously, it is interesting to think on the degree to which that *stotra* is particularly Tantric or not. My initial reading of the *stotra* left me with the impression of it being closer in kind to Sanskrit *kāvya* rather than *tantra* or other genres. Perhaps the *Bhaktāmarastotra* acquired a more Tantric and ritual-focused character over time, due especially to the influence of the of Guṇākarasūri's commentary.

offering blessings, and bringing about auspiciousness.[60] This article is also the first place where Stainton observes Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa's own interpretation of his *stotra*s as a "type of verbal or aural *prasāda*" for the enjoyment of a "community of aesthetically oriented devotees."[61] Historically, it is a rare gift to have an example of an author's meta-reflections on the use or possible intent of his or her own work, especially in South Asian letters. Stainton also calls for a "greater appreciation of Sanskrit expressions of and reflections on *bhakti* [devotion]," and his observation that Sanskrit (and *stotra*s in particular) "continued to be an important medium for innovation," even in the presence of vernacular poetic and devotional traditions, and that *stotra*s are a "vital genre for exploring the intersection of religious and aesthetic concerns."[62]

Stainton greatly expands his research into the *stotra*s of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa and others in his 2019 book *Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir*. While retaining some of his scholarly focuses on poetry and prayer from the article above, he introduces other perspectives; analyzing, for example, the relationship between poetry and theology in the context of Kashmiri Śaiva traditions, the potential to read *stotra*s as *kāvya*, and treating devotion itself as an aestheticized experience (*rasa*). It is impossible here to give a full overview of the book and its pathbreaking contribution to the field, but there is room for a few brief observations. Although this certainly occurs elsewhere in the book, the fifth chapter, entitled "*Stotra* as *Kāvya*," is perhaps the most sustained treatment of the poetic qualities of particular *stotra*s, framed around the simple but significant question: "Are *stotra*s *kāvya*?"[63] Earlier, in his introduction, he remarks that the relationship between *stotra*s and *kāvya* "is far from clear," and that *stotra*s

[60] Hamsa Stainton, "Poetry as Prayer: The Śaiva Hymns of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa of Kashmir," 348.
[61] Ibid., 352.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 198.

themselves, "are also largely absent or marginal in the history of poetics."[64] In the chapter, he acknowledges that the breadth of the genre of *stotra* literature can be an impediment for both emic and etic Sanskrit readers to adequately characterize it, and subsequently that "it also seems unclear exactly how the components of devotional poems can be analyzed with the aesthetic terminology used to analyze Sanskrit drama and poetry."[65] Nonetheless, in the chapter he is able to show how Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa's use of *śleṣa*, an extended double meaning, (among, of course, many other poetic tropes and ornaments in his rich oeuvre) gives his *stotra*s a powerful *kāvya*-like quality. The only thing I hoped to see more of in this chapter was the content and poetry of the *stotra*s themselves. Here, the *stotra*s are only excerpted in single verses,[66] and in our studies of *stotra*s more generally, I think we would benefit from a sustained close reading of longer passages along with translations of full poems either within chapters or as an accompanying appendix, in order to get a more thorough sense of their style and content.

In Hamsa Stainton's chapter on "*Stotra* as *Kāvya*," and in arguably all other important research on *stotra*s, I have observed that scholars generally approach *stotra*s through the emic lens of Sanskritic theology, poetry, and poetics. In addition to this, I am curious how our understanding of *stotra*s might change and develop if we were to experiment with other reading approaches, potentially even allowing for approaches in aesthetics, poetics, and literary criticism gathered from literary and critical traditions beyond the Sanskrit world. I also acknowledge that there may be reservations at the introduction of methods and tools from English departments, for example, or elsewhere, into the study of Sanskrit and South Asian literature, and there is some

[64] Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 8.
[65] Ibid., 204-205, 207.
[66] In a preceding chapter, there are excerpts of multiple verses from the eleventh century *Cittasaṃtoṣatriṃśikā* of Nāga, but this reading is done within the context of theology and religious and meditative practices, see *Poetry as Prayer*, 136-142.

merit to this, especially when considering the pernicious histories of colonialism and Orientalist scholarship in South Asia. At the same time, I would say that we certainly stand to benefit from an injection of fresh perspectives, terminology, and ideas (I think, for example, that we can do much more than simply describing *stotra*s as "devotional" works of literature). In future work, this has the potential to tackle larger questions I am interested in, especially as an outsider coming to the texts and traditions of South Asia. Whether, for example, aesthetic experiences (from reading and enjoying poetry to viewing art or listening to music) are *universal* experiences that humans share (especially if given the background and awareness of one's own sensing and judging faculties), or whether they are culturally mediated (i.e. one could only have been a Renaissance-era Catholic to have *fully* appreciated Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes) is a significant question and a fruitful place for further study and conversation.

In summary, there continues to be excellent research and scholarship granting new insights into *stotra*s themselves and into a variety of topics related to them: sectarianism, pedagogy, prayer, ritual, the use of religious speech, religious publics, and reception traditions, among others. Along with this, I think there can be more scholarship that examines *stotra*s at what I believe to be their core: *as* poetry (religious or otherwise) clearly and consciously crafted *to be* poetry. Thus here, we have ample space to apply the kind of scholarship to Sanskrit poetry (and *stotra*s especially) that we have long applied to poetry and rhetoric in general. At its simplest and most direct, this scholarship can pose questions such as: what is an author doing as a poet or as a person in writing this *stotra*? How does a *stotra* (along with other forms of poetry South Asia) *say* what it says and *do* what it does? What does the author gain by writing the poem? What does the reader gain through reading it? Being religious poems, to what extent do *stotra*s contain moral messages? How and in what ways can *stotra*s themselves be agentive (e.g.,

the relationship between the *Bhaktāmarastotra* and Jain practice)? Our understanding of all the *stotra*s mentioned above and many more would benefit immensely from sustained close readings and translations that analyze them in terms of their form, tone, style, and content, and foregrounds this literary analysis. The work of Steven Hopkins and Hamsa Stainton have pointed in this direction; but so few *stotra*s have received this kind of treatment. Furthermore, the *stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita, which are a small but significant part of the vast *stotra* corpus, are creations of great aesthetic merit and great artistic skill and scope, and a primary goal of this dissertation is to illuminate these qualities, speaking to the religious, literary, and cultural world of South Asia of his time and how it has influenced the formation of such a world today.

III. Approaches to Sanskrit Poetry: The Hermeneutic of Suspicion and the *Sahṛdaya*

Early Western Orientalist scholars took a reductive view of Sanskrit poetry post-Kālidāsa (c. early 5th century CE) and Sanskrit poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*) post-Ānandavardhana (9th century), and such sentiments were even echoed by Indian scholars of the 19th and early- to mid-20th centuries (exemplified in the views of S.K. De and P.V. Kane in their studies of the history of Sanskrit poetics). Through postcolonial and contemporary scholarship, however, much has been done to refine and expand these perspectives. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, Marxist historiographic approaches and related approaches to the study of South Asian politics, religion, and literature have also loomed large. D. D. Kosambi and Sheldon Pollock (especially in his early work) are two of the most prominent and influential figures in this stream of thought. Such approaches have yielded valuable insights to be sure, and a work such as Pollock's *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, discussed previously, is an important and comprehensive example. When employed with care, Marxist historiography and a hermeneutic

of suspicion help to unmask and uncover things previously unaccounted for in various traditions and power structures. At the same time, I find that approaches bent on broad, sweeping views, or perspectives that are skeptical of religion or are fundamentally anti-religious run the danger of being reductionist and simultaneously flattening the traditions they claim to be excavating and explicating. In the introduction to *Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, Sheldon Pollock states that "The definition of the literary in South Asia was not a fact of nature but an act in a field of power, no less so than any other cultural definition."[67] I certainly do agree with Pollock's view that poems or works of literature are not composed in the vacuum of nature, and that they are created within, and can serve to reinforce, the power dynamics of human societies and cultures. This is evident, for example, in the high esteem reserved for kings, generals, warriors, and other figures imbued with authority (divine and/or worldly) in *mahākāvya*s from the *Rāmāyaṇa* through those of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Māgha, and others.[68] Such stories and illustrations serve to reinforce the might and wisdom of the ruling classes, cementing these images in the minds of readers. As a modern reader, I do believe that the texts themselves speak to this, but they also express much more. In my own reading, I frequently find myself oscillating between the poles of suspicion and sympathy; wanting to dig deeply *into* the text while balancing this desire with the need to let the text speak on its own terms and articulate its own vision of how it is to be understood.

Such challenging but fruitful dynamics have been observed and commented upon by a number of scholars. In response to D. D. Kosambi's class and production-based theory of South

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[67] Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2006), 5.

[68] Although it is also important to note that the *Mahābhārata* epic (not itself considered *kāvya* but nonetheless highly influential) takes an incredibly pessimistic view of kingship, and the *mahākavya*s of the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa, especially his *Buddhacarita* ("Life of the Buddha"), treat Brahminical and royal power structures with deep skepticism. All this is to say that the Sanskrit literary tradition does not necessarily speak with one voice on such subjects as kingship, class, power, or societal and cultural norms.

Asian literature (with an eye especially toward Sanskrit) Daniel H. H. Ingalls readily acknowledges that Sanskrit poets were patronized by royals and the wealthy (and thus instruments in these power dynamics), but this in and of itself makes them neither good nor bad poets. In Ingalls' view, the rigid application of such a theory would further make "Mozart a decadent and Elvis Presley a genius by reference to the economic history of their particular patron class."[69] Ingalls sees the path to a fuller understanding of Sanskrit poetry as one which "must begin with Sanskrit poetry itself," and "seek[ing] guidance from those versed in the tradition."[70] Observing the positions of Kosambi and Ingalls we can see the tension at play between a hermeneutic of suspicion and a more sympathetic (and perhaps also more traditionalized) reading approach.

More recently, scholars such as Rita Felski have reexamined the aims and capacities of critique in juxtaposition to other approaches. In her book *The Limits of Critique*, she cites Talal Asad, who turns the tables on critique by illustrating its potentially "corrosive and colonialist dimensions," along with "its ignorance of faith, its disdain for piety, [and] its inability to enter imaginatively into a lived experience of the sacred."[71] Asad himself says, "Like iconoclasm and blasphemy, secular critique also seeks to create spaces for new truth, and, like them, it does so by destroying spaces that were occupied by other signs."[72] In terms of attempting to better understand Sanskrit literature and the Sanskrit world, especially texts with religious significance, being able to perceptively enter these imagined, lived, and historical spaces is crucial. This requires an openness that can sometimes be missing from critique-based approaches.

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[69] Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "On the Passing of Judgments," in *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyākara's 'Treasury'* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), 46.
[70] Ingalls, "On the Passing of Judgments," 47.
[71] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2015), 149.
[72] Ibid. Asad's original quote can be found in "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, CA: Townsend Center for the Humanities, 2009), 33.

Following Ingalls to a degree, a term (and possible reading approach) from the Sanskrit world itself I have always found fascinating and informative is that of the "*sahṛdaya*." In a literal sense it means one who possesses or 'is with' (*sa*-) the same heart (*hṛdaya*) as the poet, and it has instructive value both within the historical world of Sanskrit poetry and poetics, and for our current purposes. Within the tradition it speaks to the role of a literary connoisseur, one who has a similar training and pedigree (*śikṣā*) as the poet, but also one who has the requisite enthusiasm, good taste, fineness of perception, emotional wholeness, and openness to partake in, intellectually apprehend, and affectively relish and appreciate the poetry itself.[73] In our time, it serves as a possible approach to reading poetry (not necessarily Sanskrit poetry alone), and it perhaps even serves as a model to aspire to as a reader. A close reading of a poem is an act that shows reverence for the *tradition* of Sanskrit poetry itself, following Ingalls' insistence that we look to the tradition for guidance, and at the same time, close reading also shows appreciation toward the *individual* poet and poem, taking the text on its own terms as a unique and original expression. Departing somewhat from Ingalls, I would also argue that we retain some level of critical judgement in that we don't necessarily have to take what the tradition says *about* a particular poet or poem as the final authoritative word on the subject. The poem or *stotra* itself is the final word, and there may be more than one way to read and understand it. Using a possible approach that foregrounds a type of close reading that is largely sympathetic but retains some level of natural skepticism, we can enfold and build in other important perspectives: contexts, networks, histories, commentarial traditions, pedagogy, religious practice, publics and so on.

[73] I would add that enthusiasm and good taste also don't necessarily mean that one only restricts oneself to what he or she finds enjoyable at first glance. Openness, again, is just as important; there are, after all, the important *rasa*s of horror (*bhayānaka*), disgust (*bībhatsā*), and fury (*raudra*) which are employed in various Sanskrit works (see David Buchta and Graham Schweis, "Rasa Theory," B*rill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Volume Two: Sacred Texts, Ritual Traditions, Arts, Concepts*, ed. Knut Axel Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 623-624). Analogously, an experienced connoisseur of music would find something to appreciate in everything from classical to popular music, given enough time to savor and experience each.

Perhaps in contrast to other approaches that have potentially decentered and flattened the text while elevating other things, this approach may be closer to that of a *Sahṛdaya*.

IV. Why Poetry, Why *Stotra*s, and Why Appayya Dīkṣita?

1. Poetry

Our core experience of ourselves and of the world around us is in no small part an aesthetic one, bound up in and reaching out through the senses and our apprehension of them. The progressive amalgamation of particular experiences of this sort, from pleasurable to painful and to everything in between, gives rise to our temperament and sensibility, and it is ultimately instrumental in the development of our emotional selves and our overall personhood. As one develops, one's overall outlook takes form, along with more specific opinions, preferences, likes and dislikes, and along with a burgeoning perception of one's own self and the world and the logics of causality and relationality that accompany it, critical, reflective, and analytical thought are made possible—the basis of one's intellectual life. In brief, as we develop, sensation, feeling, and emotion come first, not thought and logical reflection.

I put together this brief sketch to state that, although intellectual and thought-driven processes are crucial in many ways (especially in the world of scholarship), they are built on the core aesthetic, emotive, and affective foundations that preceded them in early childhood and continually inform them throughout the course of one's life. The world of feeling and perception has always been as important as (if not more important than) that of thought and intellectualization. This is especially relevant in apprehending and experiencing various forms of art and literature in which one may find oneself suspended in a sort of dynamic state of play with the feelings, expressions, and evocations of another person. To enter into the world of poetry in

particular, is to enter most intimately into the world of human feeling and expression. Visual art, performance arts, and music are of course not to be devalued, one certainly may receive incredibly moving sensations and impressions just as one does in reading poetry, but a poem is uniquely an *utterance* in that it both denotatively expresses something and simultaneously evokes an aesthetic experience for the reader or listener. To read a poem ably, one must both feel *and* comprehend it.

Even if the poet is anonymous, or even if the poet speaks through a secondary persona (e.g., Lear, Prospero, the various voices in Eliot's *Waste Land*) the poet is nonetheless on a certain level authoring his, her, or their own expression through the medium of words and their accompanying lexical, verbal, and grammatical systems. A poet *says* something, and so must *choose* which words, and in which order, to employ. Even if a poet speaks indirectly through a persona, these choices inform us of certain qualities unique to the poet and give us somewhat of a window into the poet's mind and way of thinking that is perhaps not possible to the same degree in other artistic mediums. This is true, moreover, in any language, be it a poem composed in English, Sanskrit, or another. By way of a personal example, as a young reader, I had always found myself baffled by the clipped syntax and sometimes unpredictable diction of a poet like Emily Dickinson, but as my reading developed over time, I gained a greater appreciation for her, and came to discover how her poetry offers a valuable glimpse into this particularly special and intimate relationship between poet and reader that I am trying to elucidate:

> We—Bee and I—live by the quaffing—
> 'Tisn't *all Hock*—with us—
> Life has its *Ale*—
> But it's many a lay of the Dim Burgundy—
> We chant—for cheer—when the Wines—fail—
>
> Do we "get drunk"?
> Ask the jolly Clovers!

Do we “beat” our “Wife”?
I—never wed—
Bee—pledges *his*—in minute flagons—
Dainty—as the tress—on her deft Head—

While runs the Rhine—
He and I—revel—
First—at the vat—and latest at the Vine—
Noon—our last Cup—
“Found dead”—“of Nectar”—
By a humming Coroner—
In a By-Thyme![74]

After having read her poetry over a number of years, this was the first poem of hers that I encountered in my late twenties in which I felt I better understood the nature of her mode of expression, the play of words, thoughts, and images in her work, and perhaps something of her outlook and character more broadly. In short, I *grasped* something about her and her poetry that I hadn’t before. Here, one can perhaps glimpse something of her state of mind, her demeanor, and her overall character. We see, for example, a deep and observant love of nature, especially for the smallest creatures. We see a zest for life and a love of pleasure in the mixture of the imagery of honey and wine making. In the scare quotes and pithy phrases such as “found dead” [pause] “of nectar,” we also see an incisive wit and sense of humor. We can of course formally analyze the imagery and symbolism (the bee, nectar, flowers, drinking, revelry, etc.), the mechanics and style of the poem (its syntax, the pun of ‘thyme’ at the end, etc.), and much else, but to set that aside for the moment, it’s almost as if we are given a brief window into something deeper, as mentioned above.[75] The dashes in her poems (which were all hand-written by her, and which some editors do her a great disservice by attempting to “clean up” in their editions) had also

[74] Poem 230 in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), 105.
[75] What I am trying to describe here is admittedly difficult to intellectualize and discuss analytically, but I believe it is still useful. I am also not the first reader to have such insights about Dickinson’s poetry; it is more with a mind toward the broader point I am trying to make about poetry itself.

frequently perplexed me, but I came to see them as essential; their value in being the briefest of pauses, more minute that a caesura or a line-break, that (when read aloud for example) give the poem a highly inflected quality.

With these dashes it is almost as if we are reading verbatim the ticking of her mind and the minute flights of thought and feeling that come and go instantaneously. The thought movement in the second stanza exemplifies this: do we get drunk? Yes, humans do; how do bees? They are drunk on the delight given to them by the nectar in clover flowers (by which they make honey). Aren't drunkards bad? Yes, they may be abusive, but *I* (Emily) never married, and the bee himself with his "minute flagons" of nectar is merely dainty and as soft as a tress of hair on a wife's head.[76] There are darker undercurrents present: the downside of drunkenness, hints at physical abuse, a bee's sting (unmentioned but implicit), being "Found dead;" yet, the poet says that like the bee, she "live[s] by the quaffing" in an intoxicating but also naturalized sphere, and in her world even the coroner hums through fields of thyme. The overall impression and understanding I receive of the poem is delivered both through the denotative elements of the words chosen, and through the affective, evocative experience of reading it. It is interesting to read it aloud, for example, inflecting *all* the italics, the dashes, and scare quotes Dickinson employs. The poem itself becomes enlivened in a way that very few people can likewise articulate.

I give this poem as an example of the uniqueness of the medium of poetry and as an example of the especially intimate connection that can arise between poet and reader; Emily

[76] In his introduction Johnson also states he left the dashes, punctuation, and capitalization (and presumably italics) unaltered, giving the reader a clear view of Dickinson's poems *as she wrote them* (x-xi). This has been augmented by facsimile selections and editions of her original manuscripts in the last decade, see *The Gorgeous Nothings: Emily Dickinson's Envelope Poems* edited by Jen Bervin and Marta L. Werner, (New York: New Directions, 2013). For someone who has long been considered a highly private and hermetic poet, Emily Dickinson *shares* a great deal with her readers and her poetry rewards close and persistent readings.

Dickinson herself is of course long since deceased, but there is arguably something of her core mindset, temperament, affect, and character preserved in such a poem, and preserved in such a way that other artistic mediums perhaps cannot fully articulate. It is remarkable that a reader today and in the future can vividly experience this piece of her *through* her poetry. In its own way, I also believe this example sheds light on the significance of the concept of the *sahṛdaya*—a penetrating sense of sharing, partaking, and ultimately synergy between the poet and reader that I believe to be unique to this medium.

2. *Stotra*s and Devotion

In his book, *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres*, Jahan Ramazani has a remarkable chapter on the complex relationship between poetry and prayer which offers useful insights for scholars of South Asian religions and *stotra* literature, and which continues my reflection of the relationship between poetry and prayer along with Hamsa Stainton's analysis of prayer discussed previously. Here, Ramazani expands our perspective by discussing the relationship between poetry and prayer through the use of examples furnished by numerous contemporary European and American poets. He also engages with postcolonial literatures of South Asia, Africa and elsewhere, while offering insights applicable to the study of *stotra*s and the history of religious poetry more broadly. In brief, Ramazani suggests that although much is shared between poetry and prayer—for example, they both may arise in moments of solitude but still have a "social dimension" in which the "circuit of speech is never closed"—important differences nonetheless distinguish them one from the other.[77] These differences are articulated both as a tension between devotion and invention (135), and as the

[77] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2014), 129-131.

"friction between the overlapping but divergent imperatives of *oratio* and *poesis*" (143).[78] Such a tension between 'devotion' and 'invention' (or, *oratio—poesis*) is important to note, and although Sanskrit scholarship has discussed the relationship between *stotra*s and prayer, we have yet to examine and discuss this specific dynamic (i.e., viewing a *stotra* specifically as a piece of poetic inventiveness rather than as the utterance of a devotee within a wider religious community). Ramazani also states that poetry and prayer "differ in their weighting of signifier and signified," meaning that,

> In prayer, language and form are scaffolding that may help bring the worshipper into the presence of the divine; in poetry, they are paramount. To a greater extent than prayer [whose language and form are more "vehicular"], the medium of poetry *is* its message.[79]

In texts such as *stotra*s, which encompass both poetic (the evocative medium of language and form) and prayerful (a direct address to the divine) elements, this dynamic is constantly manifested. Ramazani quotes Samuel Johnson in stating that, "The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights."[80] He also follows Kevin Hart, who notes that although many strong poems are also prayers, the power of metaphor risks distracting the reader from the transcendence of God, and in such poems, "the aesthetic risks leaping out ahead of the devotional."[81]

One of the important implications of poetry's inventive nature is that it has the unique ability, "unlike more doctrinal and devotional forms, […] to utter sometimes contending viewpoints and beliefs."[82] Finally, in one last startling insight, touched off by the poetry and 'vacillations' of William Butler Yeats, Ramazani observes, "[m]uteness is, paradoxically, the

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[78] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*; specific page numbers given above.
[79] Ibid., 134. Italics are mine.
[80] Ibid., 135.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 151.

fullest expression of devotion, a humble self-silencing before the divine that seems incompatible with the eloquence and effulgence of poetry."[83] Here, even momentarily setting aside the value and/or challenges of utilizing 'prayer' as an analytical category,[84] we are still left with an interesting dilemma: if devotion at its fullness is a manifestation of muteness and humble self-silencing in the face of the Divine (following Ramazani and Yeats), then to what extent *are stotra*s (to say nothing of other corpuses of religious poetry) devotional?

Following Ramazani here, devotion at its purest and fullest—unfazed by doubt, difficulty, or other obstructions—would not necessarily require any utterance, much less a creative one; it would be a stable state of being, an embodiment, that a person resides in. So, by this logic, a devotional poem is perhaps not a product of *pure* devotion; it would be a product of devotion with some sort of impurity, irritant, or dislocation present, much like a small particle that by chance is embedded in the mantle of an oyster which then, over time, produces a pearl.[85] Maybe then, a crisis of faith, a small particle of doubt embedded long ago, or something more immediately circumstantial at the time was the prime impetus for a poem to be conceived, crafted, and ultimately completed. Even then, with an impurity (so to speak) present, here too, a pearl is produced. Although it is especially difficult to definitively grasp a specific authorial intent in poetry from distant cultures and epochs (especially in the world of South Asia where biographical and contextual information can be fragmentary or scarce), I believe that in Sanskrit *stotra* literature, there can be moments where we glimpse the 'irritant' that helped to engender the pearl of the poem, especially in the case of Appayya Dīkṣita.

[83] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, 153.
[84] See again the beginning of chapter five in Hamsa Stainton's *Poetry as Prayer*, (160-169).
[85] A useful example may be the opening of John Dryden's poem "Religio Laici."

Interrogating and reflecting on the use of the term 'devotion(al)' as a descriptor and as a defining paradigm of religious and religious-adjacent poetry may also be constructive, especially when seeking to explicate the poetry of *stotra*s *as poetry*, first and foremost. For example, what do we mean when we say a poem is 'devotional,' 'eulogistic,' or 'hymnic'? When we read poetry *as* prayer, poetry *as* theology, or, poetry *as* pedagogy, for example, how might that impact our reading of the poetry itself? As Christian Wedemeyer has said, "[t]he discourses that circulate in the secondary literature *condition* what people see in the primary sources."[86] This 'dilemma' of *stotra*s and devotion, so to speak, as a sort of thought experiment, offers a window into our employment of terminology that is both descriptive *and* paradigmatic; terminology that is useful, to be sure, but terminology that I also don't want to take for granted. Here, the study of Sanskrit *stotra*s (a relatively new and less concretized field of study compared to other religious genres of Sanskrit literature and other religious poetic corpuses elsewhere) provides an invigorating opportunity to interrogate and reflect on our own approaches even as we examine, translate, and reflect on the material itself.

3. Appayya Dīkṣita

Appayya Dīkṣita is a significant figure in the intellectual and cultural fabric of South Asia in the sixteenth century CE, as he was one of the last great Sanskrit polymaths to flourish before the drastic upheavals of British colonialism and modernity. Yigal Bronner, Jonathan Duquette, Ajay Rao, Christopher Minkowski, and others have done important work to bring Appayya's oeuvre of philosophy, theology, hermeneutics, and poetics to a broader audience. However, outside of the articles by Yigal Bronner and Ajay Rao, discussed previously, Appayya's poetic

[86] Christian Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2014), 4. Italics are my own.

corpus remains almost entirely untouched. Appayya is also significant in that he is arguably one of the truly unique and perhaps idiosyncratic figures in the history of South Asian intellectual life and letters. To look at Jonathan Duquette's recent book on Appayya's Śivādvaita and Advaita Vedānta philosophy, for example, is to see an intellect that is not bound to one-sidedness or the single-minded pursuit of holding fast to one doctrine at all hazards (although there is plenty of polemic in Appayya's corpus, to be sure). As Christopher Minkowski says, Appayya "resists classification according to the usual Indological criteria […] It is hard to pin him down, primarily because as an author he lived more than one life at once."[87] For Minkowski, the heart of the 'Appayya question' is that it is difficult to know precisely *what* he believed, because not only did he write out of a wide erudition in so many disciplines, he also wrote "from many authorial positions."[88] This is true of Appayya's *stotra* literature as much as it is true for his other works, but it's doubly significant in light of what was said above about poetry and *stotra*s more broadly: Appayya's oeuvre of *stotra*s is worth translating, studying, and appreciating in detail because in its 'difficulty to pin down,' it represents a fresh opportunity to engage Appayya's authorial persona, and to reflect on larger questions about *stotra*s, poetry, and Sanskrit studies. Just as Appayya rethinks and complicates how and in what way one can be a Sanskrit intellectual and poet, so too can one use his work to occasion fresh though on how we may approach the study of Sanskrit texts and our methodologies and approaches to reading poetry.

In his study of Vedānta Deśika, Steven Hopkins offers a very sympathetic and immersive reading of Vedānta Deśika's Tamil and Sanskrit poetry while also foregrounding it. Vedānta Deśika was both an inspiration and an agonistic influence on Appayya, a towering intellect and

[87] Christopher Minkowski, "Apūrvaṃ Pāṇḍitdyam: On Appayya Dīkṣita's Singular Life," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (March 2016): 2.
[88] Ibid., 2.

poet in his own right, but also far less manifold in his intellectual interests and productions: his adherence to Vaiṣṇavism and his fidelity to the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy of Rāmānuja and his disciples never wavered. Appayya, for his part, is also distinguished for his intellectual and religious background, being primarily a Śaiva devotee (as he clearly articulates in his poetry) and an Advaitin. He wrote numerous *stotra*s, and his longest, which is likely the last one he composed, and certainly his most accomplished, is the *Varadarājastava*, which focuses on Viṣṇu/Varadarāja Perumāḷ of Kanchipuram. Strikingly, he is one of the rare figures (and perhaps the only) to write devotional poetry in Sanskrit to *both* Śiva and Viṣṇu.[89] Like Vedānta Deśika, Appayya also ultimately possesses "[t]he talents required to create superior poetry and to maintain penetrating philosophical arguments [which] are not normally found in one and the same individual."[90]

Appayya's Śaiva adherence is evident enough from his Śivādvaita philosophical work and his *Ātmārpaṇastuti* (discussed in chapter four), but true to his mysteriously elusive and manifold character, the Vaiṣṇava strain in his work doesn't bear simple explanation. This will be discussed in greater detail later on, but previous hypotheses have involved his mother's Vaiṣṇava background, the patronage provided by a local Vaiṣṇava ruler Veṅkaṭa II later in his life, Appayya's admiration for Vedānta Deśika, and the proximity of his home village of Aḍayapālam to Kanchi, coupled with the fact that he seemed to spend his entire life in the north central and northeastern region of modern-day Tamil Nadu.[91] I think a thorough examination of the content

[89] Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who lived into the 17th century, was an Advaitin and a devotee to Kṛṣṇa who also wrote a commentary on the *Śivamahimnastava* (a *stotra* to Śiva that dates to the mid-12th century at the latest, see W. Norman Brown, *The Mahimnastava or Praise of Shiva's Greatness* (Pune: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1965), 3) but I am not aware of anyone else who specifically wrote *stotra*s to Śiva *and* Viṣṇu.
[90] Friedhelm Hardy, "The Philosopher as Poet – A Study of Vedāntadeśika's *Dehalīśastuti*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (September 1979): 277.
[91] See, for example, Christopher Minkowski, "Apūrvaṃ Pāṇḍitdyam," 2, and Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 62-63.

of the *Varadarājastava* itself also provides important information, especially in light of its style, tone, and scope.

Compared to the *Varadarājastava*, Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* (a *stotra* to Śiva) reads more straightforwardly like a cry in distress for salvation, emphasizing the mighty and multifaceted qualities of the deity and the lowness and vileness of its author, and it is closer in tone and scope to the *stotra*s of Vedānta Deśika and many others. The *Varadarājastava* praises the deity in a multitude of ways, but it also provides a broader meditation on the experience of Kanchipuram and the temple, the experience of being with Varadarāja himself, and the experience of praise-*ing* the deity (in addition to the *daharavidyā* meditation that Ajay Rao describes).[92] Perhaps a direct praise of and supplication to the deity (here, Varadarāja) is not necessarily Appayya's core goal in the poem; praise itself is certainly a significant trope in the poem, but as we will see there are also what I might call 'meta-*stotraic*' and 'meditative' elements that complicate our reading of it as a purely 'devotional' work.

Lastly, regarding Appayya Dīkṣita's identity, the question of how we understand these poems also raises the question of how we understand and evaluate the various writings of a polymath that fall into different genres and discourses. Is such a person's intellectual or philosophical prose to be privileged over his poetry? A preponderance of scholars (but not all) over time, who have engaged with significant figures in the Sanskrit world, have overwhelmingly given attention to the former, perhaps at the expense of the latter. I believe this gives us an insightful but only partial view of someone like Appayya, and it raises larger questions about the relationship between philosophical prose and poetry, being ostensibly 'intellectual' and 'artistic/evocative' works, respectively: which of the two, we may ask,

[92] Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 52-55.

furnishes the more 'personal' statement? Which is more authentic or authoritative? Do they all merit close reading and explication so as to paint the most complete picture possible of the figure who authored them?

V. How We Read Poetry, How We Can Read Poetry, and What We Can Do with It

1. Overview

Ultimately, the main objective of this dissertation is twofold: I seek (1) to reexamine and expand on how we read *stotra*s (and more broadly, Sanskrit poetry and religious poetry in general), and (2) to begin to situate the scholarship of Sanskrit literature and poetry more firmly in the broader conversation of the literatures of the world and their scholarship, taking into account developments in literary criticism and understanding in places outside of South Asia and exploring future possibilities thereby. In adopting a paradigm that suggests that works of art and literature bear a certain degree of autonomy and are not ultimately reduceable to such things as their political, religious, performative, pedagogical or other aspects, I argue that it is important to continue to develop reading and understanding *stotra*s first of all and primarily *as* poems that are crafted and created within such pivotal dynamics as that of authority and freedom, devotion and invention, religious and literary tradition and individual inspiration. We understand that a significant subset of *stotra*s, perhaps commencing with the 7th-century CE *Sūryaśataka* of Mayūra and the *Caṇḍīśataka* of Bāṇa, if not earlier, following though numerous developments in Kashmir, South India, and elsewhere, and leading up to the poetry of Appayya and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (17th c.), have a more pronounced 'literary' or poetic nature. (These also includes significant *stotra*s of Jain and Buddhist authors.) These, I argue, form the creative and innovative *core* of the vast, variable, and somewhat amorphous corpus of *stotra* literature. At the same time,

all art (and poetry) no matter where, when, how, or by what means it was created, is both engaged with and to some degree autonomous from its particular world. It exists for the people (audience) who appreciate and partake of it (and who also perhaps enfold it into religious practice), but it also exists in and of itself. I believe it would be beneficial to begin to construct a thorough methodological outline detailing how we have read *stotra*s up to this point and possible ways that we can read them.

Regarding objective (2) above and following what I have just said, a pervasive paradigm I sometimes find among scholars of Sanskrit and South Asia is that in practice we can remain siloed in this particular South Asian world which we are studying, and this ultimately produces works by, of, and for scholars of South Asia alone. This can reinforce what Christian Wedemeyer has said previously: that the prevailing discourses and perspectives circulating in secondary literature heavily condition what we see in primary sources. In a way, we can end up caught in a whirlpool of our own making. In terms of broader engagement, there has been some evidence of change in the last decade or so: Yigal Bronner has produced excellent articles aimed at engaging larger audiences for *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, discussing topics like Sanskrit poetics and *śleṣa* (2012), and Namrata Chaturvedi has published an article on "Christian Devotional Poetry and Sanskrit Hermeneutics" (2018) for Brill's *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, and I think such examples point to what is possible for a more sustained and expansive engagement. I would someday love to see article and book-length studies that integrate (*not* compare) literary insights from the Sanskrit world and other literatures, for

example.[93] In a review of *Inside the Performance Workshop: A Sourcebook for Rasaboxes and Other Exercises* (2023), an edited volume that integrates modern training methods in performing arts and *rasa*, I encourage the book's editors to follow in the footsteps of their teacher and creator of *Rasaboxes*, Richard Schechner, to engage deeply with South Asian performing arts, as he had, and I likewise think that scholars of Sanskrit and South Asia can engage more and do more to integrate our work with the broader scholarly world and the world at-large.[94]

The relationship between a scholar of South Asia and the world of South Asia itself, and the relationships between South Asia, the body of scholarship produced in its study, and the world at-large also call to mind the kinds of questions which have been reflected on in a special issue entitled "Who Speaks for Hinduism?" in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. To quote from its introduction, "What is the proper stance of the 'outsider' vis-à-vis the 'insider'? Are these roles static or fluid? What kinds of productive interrelations can be forged between the scholar and the believer, and when must the two part ways?"[95] Much is of course at stake in conversations prompted by questions such as these, and the significance of such discussions is compounded by the central importance of what we may think of as the 'religious' in the lives of many in South Asia, along with the rise of Hindutva religio-politics in the last thirty years. In some respects, speaking as a scholar of literature, and of poetry in particular, is in some ways fundamentally different from speaking as scholar of religions or as or for a religious

[93] A wonderful but rare example of integration is Edwin Gerow's use of a variety of passages from American and English literatures (in addition to Sanskrit translations) to help elucidate the finer points of various *alaṃkāra*s in his *Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (Paris: Mouton, 1977); a particularly lucid example is his use of Carl Sandburg's poem "Happiness" to elucidate the figure of *samādhi* (or alternatively, *samāhita*) in which two seemingly unrelated things are brought together (315-316).
[94] The review can be found in *Theatre Topics* 34, no. 2 (July 2024): 187-188. I also think of talks and colloquia I have attended while at the University of Virginia involving John Nemec, Jennifer Geddes, Shankar Nair, Kurtis Schaeffer, Erik Braun, and many others which are in many ways budding efforts at doing exactly this.
[95] Sarah Caldwell and Brian K. Smith, "Introduction: Who Speaks for Hinduism?," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 4 (December 2000): 708.

adherent, but at the same time I certainly acknowledge the religious qualities of *stotra*s, along with their place in the Hindu world, and I strive to handle these texts and traditions in my studies with great sympathy and care. Thinking of my own experiences in South Asia, studying Sanskrit and Tamil literature, and studying poetry in general, has also prompted for me questions about the nature of literature, art, and aesthetics throughout human experience. As I stated briefly before, this dissertation (and further work) helps us to examine to what extent the appreciation and understanding of a work of art or literature is culturally mediated, and to what extent such an understanding may be open to anyone, and therefore universal.[96] Personally, I believe that an engaged reader of a non-South Asian background can fully comprehend and appreciate a *stotra* just as a South Asian *pandit* would be able to appreciate and even relish the poem of Emily Dickinson discussed previously. More broadly, this dynamic between the culturally specific and the universal can help to frame our discussion on approaches to reading poetry produced in South Asia, especially *stotra*s.

2. Reading Poetry

To this point I would identify four predominant approaches to reading Sanskrit literature, and poetry especially, in modern scholarship. I would categorize them as (1) a Marxist/neo-Marxist reading imbued with a hermeneutic of suspicion (Pollack, Kosambi), (2) a more emic/sympathetic style of reading that seeks to understand the poetry as the Sanskrit tradition

[96] A countervailing point can be made that the idea of the autonomy of art and the potential universality of aesthetic and artistic enjoyment is *itself* a product of a particular culture, time, and place (i.e. art criticism in the modern Euro-American sphere). In response, I would say that in no way do I see my statements as the final word on this subject, but I would also reiterate my observation above that I believe it is possible for people of different backgrounds to enjoy and understand *both* a *stotra* and a poem of Emily Dickinson, for example. It also calls to mind the example of someone like the novelist Richard Wright, acclaimed for writing the novel *Native Son*, but who also took a deep interest in Japanese poetry toward the end of his life and who wrote thousands of haiku (among, I think, some of the best in English).

itself would understand it, i.e. reading *with* the 'grain' of tradition (exemplified by Daniel H.H. Ingalls, the authors of *Innovations and Turning Points*, and others), (3) a spectrum of approaches in which the poems are intellectualized and contextualized both in their immediate window and/or with an eye toward broader and later developments (this is a broad category, but can include approaches such as reading poetry as theology or pedagogy, accounting for a poem's "intellectual context,"[97] or accounting for the continued popularity and long reception-history of a poem or corpus of poetry[98]), and, finally, (4) an approach perhaps specific only to *stotra*s and vernacular *bhakti* poetry which takes its cue from Friedrich Heiler's view of prayer as "a spontaneous emotional discharge, a free outpouring of the heart," which has, as discussed at the outset, "pervaded—and hindered—the study of Hindu prayer."[99] I believe there is value in each of the above approaches, and I am especially sympathetic to the second and third reading styles. I also think that our analysis can go even further than presenting a thorough understanding of the contexts of *stotra*s, whether they are intellectual/philosophical, pedagogical, prayerful, performative, popular/receptive, or theological. For example, there are Sanskrit poems of various styles and lengths (including *stotra*s) that are explicitly pedagogical in nature and intent beyond any doubt, e.g., the 7th-century *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, Appayya's *Durgācandrakalāstuti*[100], or the *Devistotra* of Yaśaskara (c. 12th-17th century CE).[101] There are also texts that contain a pedagogical aspect to one degree or another, such as the *Śivastotrāvalī* of Utpaladeva[102] or even Appayya's *Varadarājastava* commentary, but it is also evident that such poems invite other

[97] See Shiv Subramanian, "How a Philosopher Reads Kālidāsa: Vedāntadeśika's Art of Devotion," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 49 (2021): 48.
[98] Christian Novetzke's *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008) is an example.
[99] Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 165, 167.
[100] See Bronner, "Singing to God: Educating the People," 4-11.
[101] See my M.A. thesis, "Teaching Through Devotion: The Poetics of Yaśaskara's *Devīstotra* in Premodern Kashmir," University of Kansas, 2017.
[102] See Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 58, 120-127.

approaches and are not only pedagogical. It is insightful nonetheless to read these poems in a way that foregrounds their pedagogical qualities, but at the same time, we don't necessarily need to apply these kinds of contextual-interpretive brushes so heavily to *all* poetry in Sanskrit, religious or otherwise, especially given that poems like the latter two examples can be understood as more than just pedagogical pieces, *or* perhaps can even be read as something else entirely.

The first and second approaches outlined above are in many respects mutually antipodal, and at first glance it would appear that one must ultimately choose between them: either one is a suspicious or a sympathetic reader. Perhaps in resisting this binary, and in reading both with and against the grain, one ends up in uncharted waters, or risks incoherence. Even so, one can temporarily set aside the scholarship and theory accompanying each approach, and still at the very least do the work of a penetrating reader and critic (an exercise that is always fruitful, in my opinion). In his essay on Dante Alighieri, T.S. Eliot states that, in his experience, "[t]he less [he] knew about the poet and his work, before [he] began to read it, the better;" further on he reasons that it is better to be spurred to *acquire* scholarship because one enjoys the poetry itself, rather than "to suppose that you enjoy the poetry because you have acquired the scholarship."[103] In a way, this echoes Christian Wedemeyer's statement on the ways which secondary literature colors the reading of primary sources, and shows that the appreciation and understanding of poetry is a "continuous process," in which the enjoyment itself precedes the intellectualization.[104] Eliot's style also perhaps overlaps somewhat with that of a *rasika* or *sahṛdaya* in the sense that he doesn't want his intellectualization of any information contextual to the poem or about the poet to unduly influence his tasting of the flavor offered by the poetry itself. I think we can similarly

[103] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 237.
[104] Ibid., 238.

allow our own 'tasting' of the poetry we encounter in the Sanskrit world greater freedom in guiding our scholarship. I am wary of putting our intellectualization of poetry before our aesthetic experience of it, otherwise our reading, translations, and interpretations of such texts risk becoming instrumentalized; a poem then *becomes* a pedagogical text, a prayer, or a piece of theology, philosophy, or intellectual history, and something is missed.

3. Art and its Autonomy, Authority and Freedom – A Possible Approach

An approach to understanding art and literature outlined by art critic Jed Perl in his book *Authority and Freedom: A Defense of the Arts* is an approach that both gives voice to the autonomy and irreducibility of poetry (and of all art) and allows for close reading and penetrating analysis, and it can be used in addition to (and even in conjunction with) the four approaches outlined above. In *Authority and Freedom*, Perl defines 'authority' as "the ordering impulse" which also functions "almost simultaneously as an inhibition and an incitement" for the poet or artist, and he defines 'freedom' as the coexistent "love of experiment and play."[105] Furthermore, he states that what people think of as mere "formal concerns" are much more:

> To write, to paint, to compose is to struggle with what is possible and impossible within the constraints of a medium. For the artist the medium is a world unto itself, but the struggle within the medium is also a way of coming to terms with the struggle between the possible and impossible that plays out in the wider world.[106]

The dynamic between authority and freedom and the struggle between artist and medium are as applicable to the *stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita as they are to the paintings of Picasso, or Mozart's repertoire. Such an approach I think can be especially beneficial for the study of Sanskrit poetry, considering the sheer weight of tradition and the compression of the ordering impulse of

[105] Jed Perl, *Authority and Freedom: A Defense of the Arts* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021): 3-4.
[106] Ibid., 7.

authority within the Sanskrit world were among some of the strongest cultural forces anywhere. Perl's introduction likewise recalls the freshness of Bilhaṇa's statement, discussed previously, on the worthiness of a poet's words that break the boundaries of style on account of their outstanding boldness.[107] It is clear that the forces of authority and freedom as Perl defines them are deeply embedded in the world of Sanskrit poetry and poetics, and this will be further illustrated throughout this dissertation. Although changes, upheavals, and developments certainly occurred, religious and political authorities in certain periods could also be quite firm; the grammar and phonetic development of Sanskrit became essentially fixed after the 4th-century BCE *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini; and even though there were numerous 'new (*navya*) intellectuals' much later in the centuries before colonialism, they too "seldom presented their theories as innovative, let alone as general theoretical breakthroughs, and mostly worked from within the conceptual frameworks of their predecessors."[108] The pressures against freedom and invention within Sanskrit poetry and other genres were undoubtedly immense, but nonetheless, freshness, boldness, and innovation can be found, rendering untenable "[t]he lingering view that Sanskrit poetry is monolithic, self-replicating, and ultimately sterile."[109]

Due to his idiosyncratic and evasive character, as explained previously, Appayya's *stotra*s, along with his auto-commentaries, are perhaps some of the best examples of this freshness and innovation, and they are all the more remarkable against the backdrop of the pressing forces of language, tradition, religion, and culture in his homeland. As Jed Perl states, the arts have a paradoxical place in our world (and, I would argue, in historical worlds as well); he further adds that the arts are essential "*because* they stand apart. Whatever the artist's

[107] Bronner, et. al., *Innovations and Turning Points*, 4.
[108] Yigal Bronner, "What is New and What is Navya: Sanskrit Poetics on the Eve of Colonialism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30 (2002): 441.
[109] Bronner, et al., *Innovations and Turning Points*, 6.

relations with patrons and public, the artist's primary relationship is with the tools and techniques of the trade."[110] In this dissertation I propose and seek to map out an approach to reading Sanskrit *stotra*s that doesn't let observations on the artist's or poet's "relations with patrons and public" or contextualization of their work overwhelm their primary relationship with their art. The application of this antipodal but interconnected dynamic of authority and freedom allows us to see most clearly just how vibrant and original Sanskrit *stotra* literature truly was, unencumbered by explications and methods that may decenter and even impair this poetic core. The following chapters illuminate Appayya's poetry in its relation to Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*), poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*), the world of South India during his lifetime and its prior history, and the world of South Indian Hindu temples and worship, all while giving this poetic core the paramount attention that it merits. I believe that people ultimately write poetry or create art simply because they have the inspiration and compulsion to do so, not because of any secondary motivation involving pedagogy, patronage, politics, or other contexts, and there is room in the study of Sanskrit poetry for a scholarly perspective more attuned to this.

VI. Chapter Outline

In the following chapter (chapter two), my work situates Appayya's *stotra*s squarely within the tradition of Sanskrit poetry and belles-lettres (*kāvya*). Examining these texts concurrently within the long history of *stotra*s with specifically poetic qualities, and within the wider context of Sanskrit *kāvya*, further underlines the value of understanding these *stotra*s as poetry first and foremost. It allows us to see and understand these works as they should be seen: as a *core part* in the evolution and development of Sanskrit poetry. Organizationally, in doing

[110] Perl, *Authority and Freedom*, 73. Italics are mine.

this, the chapter provides a bedrock of analysis from which the rest of the dissertation follows. Chapter two provides a summary of *kāvya* literature before examining the development of literary *stotra*s by way of comparing the 7th c. CE *Sūryaśataka* of Mayūra to Appayya's *Ādityastotraratna*, which are both praise-poems dedicated to Sūrya, the sun. The chapter then concludes by comparing Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* and *Varadarājastava*, examining their style, tone, and content, and it shows how the meditative and poetic qualities of the *Varadarājastava* are paramount, deviating from those of the more prayerful *Ātmārpaṇastuti*. By situating the *Varadarājastava* within the long stream of Sanskrit poetry, we see that its artful language and poetic craftsmanship, built upon this long and rich poetic heritage, are most crucial to our full appreciation of the text.

Chapter three explores the relationship of the *Varadarājastava* to the discipline of Sanskrit poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*), focusing on the poem, Appayya's self-authored commentary on the poem (a rare phenomenon itself in Sanskrit literature), and Appayya's own works in poetics, particularly his *Kuvalayānanda*. It briefly outlines the development of *Alaṃkāraśāstra* before analyzing specific verses from the *Varadarājastava* and their commentary, outlining Appayya's thoughts on specific poetic ornaments along with the relationship between the *Varadarājastava* and the *Kuvalayānanda*. Interestingly, Appayya quotes select passages of the *Varadarājastava* in the text of his *Kuvalayānanda*, but the *stotra* itself (along with its commentary) is nonetheless more than the sum of these pedagogical aspirations. The *stotra* is foremost a *poem*, but it also occasions meta-poetic reflections on Sanskrit poetry itself and the state of affairs of Sanskrit poetics in Appayya's time. Through specific examples discussed in the chapter, we can clearly see the development of Appayya's creative thought from the poetry of the *Varadarājastava* to its commentary, and subsequently to his work in the *Kuvalayānanda*. The

poetry of the *stotra* is at the root of this entire project, and here we see how Appayya's poetic composition spurred him to further reflections *on* poetry and its mechanics, which he then (1) reintegrated with the poem in the form of an auto-commentary and (2) used as a foundation for his work in *Alaṃkāraśāstra*.

Chapter four situates Appayya's poetry in the 16th-century world of South India in which he lived. The previous rise of specific forms of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, coupled with new theological and philosophical perspectives, and the rise and fall of the Vijayanagara Empire collectively had far-reaching political, social, and religious consequences, which are reflected in both Appayya's philosophy and his poetry. Further reading of Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* and the *Varadarājastava* shows how he was nonetheless able to absorb ideas of different religious traditions into his own poetic and religious imagination, showing that, even in spite of his polemics and the overall sectarian climate of his time, Appayya did at times have a sympathetic ear toward his sectarian rivals and interlocutors. Perhaps in some ways the fluid social, political, and cultural climate of South India during this time presented Appayya with various 'irritants' that ultimately produced the poetic 'pearl' of the *Varadarājastava*. Through this lens, we can see the *stotra* as having both shades of ecumenism and self-assertion: Appayya seeks to sympathetically inhabit the religious world of his Vaiṣṇava interlocutors in Kanchi while also leaving his own distinct poetic stamp on his native temple city.

Chapter five details the relationship between Appayya's *stotra*s and the ancient and highly developed temple culture of South India. It focuses specifically on Appayya's *Hariharābhedastuti* and its relationship to the Śiva Naṭarāja Temple of Chidambaram, the *Apītakucāmbāstava* and the Arunachaleśwarar Temple of Thiruvannamalai, and the *Varadarājastava* and the Śrī Varadarājaswāmi/Varadarāja Perumāḷ Temple of Kanchipuram. The

history, architecture, and descriptions of the rituals and culture of these temples are outlined, which then serve as important contexts for these poems. Here we can vividly see how contemplation at such venerable religious sites and poetic inspiration are deeply intertwined for someone with as vibrant an imagination as Appayya. In the shorter *stotra*s, Appayya begins to explore and articulate the relationship between the locale (microcosm) and cosmic divine (macrocosm) that he was able to employ to masterful effect in describing Kanchipuram in the *Varadarājastava*. Here we can glimpse the rich history of the development of temples themselves along with the vividly aestheticized experience of temple worship in South India. We see how these are places which leave deeply emotive impressions, and which can serve as sources of poetic inspiration, especially in the case of highly developed *stotra*s like the *Varadarājastava*.

The concluding chapter gives a close reading of the *Varadarājastava*, bringing to life the ultimate poetic nature and qualities of the text while simultaneously showing how the discourse of *stotra*s created a less combative arena for the sharing of religious sentiments, as in comparison to philosophical and sectarian disputations. Ultimately, by seeking to more fully comprehend how other cultures understand themselves and their literary productions we increase our universal understanding of our relationships to what is both 'religious' and 'literary.' Here, having seen how Appayya's awareness of the history of Sanskrit poetry and poetics, his social and political world, and the remarkable development of Hindu temple culture in South India helped inform his composition, we return to the *stotra* itself as a poetically inspired document. Following the concluding chapter is an appendix which translates all of Appayya Dīkṣita's *stotra*s in full discussed within this dissertation (with the exception of the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*).[111]

[111] A full translation of this *stotra* can be found in the Clay Sanskrit Library edition of Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, *"Self-Surrender" "Peace" "Compassion" & "The Mission of the Goose:" Poems and Prayers from South India* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

This is included to make the poems themselves (without any accompanying commentary or critical apparatus) more accessible to non-Sanskrit readers, and to give all readers a chance to relish and enjoy the poems on their own.

The overall structure of the dissertation also contributes to its argument: that it is imperative to prioritize the reading of poetic *stotra*s and related works *as* poetry, first and foremost. A poetic *stotra*, as is true for any work of art or literature, is itself more than the sum of its mechanical parts and is not reducible to its contexts. Following Jed Perl's analysis, a poem is both a part of and apart from the contemporaneous milieu of its creator and the wider social histories involved in its readership. By foregrounding the content of poetry rather than its contexts, we see how its inherent artistic and verbal creativity provides us with penetrating insight into the possibilities of imaginative language, especially in the way it works on *us* and in the way it enriches and sharpens our perception of ourselves and our surroundings. We first foreground Appayya's *stotra*s within the traditions of Sanskrit poetry and Sanskrit poetics before adding other dimensions: social, political, cultural, and religious. We then finish with a close reading of the *Varadarājastava* itself, affirming the need to understand South Asian and Sanskrit poetry on its own terms and recentering the *Varadarājastava* as a key text in Appayya's vast oeuvre. Throughout these chapters we will see such things as Appayya responding to sectarian forces, illuminating deep-seated religious traditions, or reflectively taking in his experience of Hindu temple life and his and others' interactions with the Divine. What is ultimately most important to grasp is that he articulates his thoughts and impressions *through* poetry. Here in this dissertation, we can also glimpse and reflect upon the approach of a *Sahṛdaya*: a reader who is both learned and open-minded, discerning, and sympathetic. This mode of reading both

acknowledges emic traditions of appreciating poetry in South Asia, and provides further material for the ongoing historical analysis and critical reflection of contemporary scholarship.

Chapter Two: The *Varadarājastava* as *Kāvya*: Appayya Dīkṣita's Place in the History of Sanskrit Poetry

I. Introduction

This chapter has three main objectives: first, to articulate a working understanding of the basic history, characteristics, and parameters of what constituted *kāvya* (high poetry or *belles-lettres*) in the Sanskrit world; secondly, to provide an overview and brief history of highly literary *stotra*s (*stotrakāvya*) and to examine selections in comparison to Appayya's poetry (specifically the *Sūryaśataka* of Mayūra and Appayya's *Ādityastotraratna*); and thirdly, to examine how and why the *Varadarājastava* (in comparison with other *stotra*s) is especially and self-consciously poetic, i.e., to examine it as a piece of *kāvya*.

Even as he does indispensable work in outlining the relationship between *stotra*s and the wider realm of *kāvya* literature, Hamsa Stainton acknowledges that until recently, the history of this relationship "is largely uncharted."[112] Just as the seas of *stotra*s are vast and diverse, so too are those that make up the array of what is classically considered to fall under the umbrella of *kāvya*. The classical definition of *kāvya*, like that of *stotra*, is also fraught and without a complete consensus.[113] Nonetheless, we do know that *stotra*s appear at various points in the early epics (although not perhaps of a high literary quality, the *Ādityahṛdaya* within the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is an important example), within the *mahākāvya*s (the hymn to Śiva in Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*), and that some of the earliest independent *stotra*s were consciously crafted to be of high literary quality (the work of Bāṇa and Mayūra). Rather than muse over definitional questions, in this chapter I seek to build on Hamsa Stainton's analysis of the relationship between *Stotra* and *Kāvya* and their intertwined history by examining the presence of *stotra*s within the

[112] Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 198.
[113] Ibid., 199. Also see the beginning of chapter six in *Poetry as Prayer* for a thorough discussion of this.

Mahābhārata and *Rāmāyaṇa*, within the *mahākāvya*s of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, and others, and as independent *kāvya*s themselves. Were *stotra*s what we conventionally think of as 'literary', and if so, why? What does the presence of *stotra*s in the epics and *mahākāvya*s say about their potential 'literariness'? Why and in what ways were the early *stotra*s of Bāṇa, Mayūra, and others so artfully and poetically composed? Where did the relationship between *stotra*s and the world of *kāvya* go from there? Having discussed these topics, I will then examine the place of Appayya's devotional poetry, and the *Varadarājastava* specifically within the domain and evolving history of *kāvya*. His literary output is both an integral part of this long and highly sophisticated tradition, and also constitutes important evidence that literary creativity in Sanskrit was alive and well in a changing South India as the Vijayanagara polity was slowly collapsing in the middle of the second millennium C.E.

II. An Overview of *Kāvya*: Parameters, Characteristics, History

In the most basic sense, as Siegfried Lienhard outlines in his study of classical poetry in Sanskrit, '*kāvya*' is what is known as 'poetry.' However, as with all great literatures of the world, the kinds of texts that fall under this umbrella can be vastly different, idiosyncratic, and highly original. To ask, 'what *is* a poem?' is perennially a fraught question. For example, Lienhard cites the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira and the *Līlāvatī* of Bhāsakara (which deal with astronomy and algebra respectively) as two texts which, in spite of their content being "far removed from the sphere of poetry," are yet nonetheless full of "beautiful descriptions of nature and poetic figures," to the extent that they are thought of as *mahākāvya*s ('great poems') by tradition.[114] Another example of the sheer diversity of *kāvya* is the 7th century CE *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (otherwise known as

[114] Siegfried Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 3.

the *Rāvaṇavadha*, 'The Killing of Rāvaṇa'), which is a pedagogical work telling the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic while simultaneously illustrating grammatical rules, principles of poetics, and specific poetic ornaments.[115] On the other hand, there also exists a traditional repertoire of works that make up the 'core' of Sanskrit poetry, even as it is a broad and varied tradition.

Although the ancient hymns of the *Ṛgveda* were composed in verse and highly poetic in their own right, they were not traditionally considered '*kāvya*'. (There is, however, an interesting if complex relationship between Vedic hymnology and the development of *stotra* literature, which may or may not always necessarily be considered *kāvya*.)[116] Following this, Vālmīki, the legendary author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, was generally acknowledged as the "*ādikavi*," or "first poet," even if the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself was not consciously composed as a *mahākāvya*.[117] The exact beginnings of what came to constitute *kāvya* written intentionally *as* such are obscure, but do have their roots in the epics and the wider Sanskrit cultural world around the beginning of the first millennium. *Kāvya* was composed not only in Sanskrit, but also in the related languages of Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa. It could also be composed in verse (*padya*), prose (*gadya*), or a mixture of the two (*miśra*), and specific works were either *mahākāvya*/*sargabandha* (longer narrative poems following certain principles and themes organized in collections of 'cantos' or *sarga*s) or *laghukāvya*, short or minor poetry.[118] The oldest surviving *mahākāvya*s are the *Buddhacarita* ('Life of the Buddha') and *Saundarananda* ('Handsome Nanda') authored by Aśvaghoṣa, a 1st or 2nd century CE Buddhist poet. The content of the *Buddhacarita* is straightforward; however, only the first half, or roughly fourteen cantos, of the original Sanskrit text survives (up to the Buddha's confrontation with Mara and the first part of his awakening), and this only in a *sole*

[115] See Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 180-183 for a more detailed overview of the work.
[116] See Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 40-42.
[117] Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 53.
[118] Ibid., 46-47. Also see the first *pariccheda* of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, verses 11-39.

manuscript copy discovered in 1892, the latter half of the text however being preserved in translations into Tibetan and Chinese.[119] The *Saundarananda* concerns the life of the Buddha's half-brother Nanda, his happy marriage to Sundarī, and his eventual abandonment of her and ordination as a monk (along with the dilemmas this would entail).[120] The Sanskrit original of this work was only rediscovered in a Nepalese library in 1908, and without this discovery it would have remained unknown.[121] From the information he gives about himself, it appears Aśvaghoṣa was a Brahmin living in north India who later converted to Buddhism and critiqued Brahminism in his writing.[122] Even though he influenced the Hindu poets who followed him (especially Kālidāsa) and while individual verses of his were quoted by *ālaṃkārika*s and anthologized, the fact that his major works only survived each in a single extant manuscript apiece (and that they were fortunately rediscovered in the last century plus), illustrates how unpredictable the history of cultural and textual preservation can be, and it also illustrates how the study of Sanskrit *kāvya* is *still* a dynamic and developing field with much yet to uncover.

Following Aśvaghoṣa was Kālidāsa, who likely lived in the 5th century and came from a Śaiva Brahmin background.[123] He authored two *mahākāvya*s along with shorter poems and plays. The longer poems are the *Kumārasambhava* ('The Birth of Kumāra') and the *Raghuvaṃśa* ('The Lineage of the Raghus'). The former is an account of the austerities of Pārvatī in her attempt to win over the god Śiva, their marriage, and their consummation which engendered the god Kumāra; the latter tells the story of the dynasty of Ayodhyā, Rāma's ancestors and progeny.[124] In

[119] Patrick Olivelle, *Life of the Buddha* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2008), introduction, l-li. See also, Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 166-167.
[120] Linda Covill, *Handsome Nanda* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2007), 15-21.
[121] Ibid., 15.
[122] See Olivelle, *Life of the Buddha*, introduction, xx-xxiii.
[123] See Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 170-179.
[124] Appayya himself cites a verse from the *Raghuvaṃśa* in his *Varadarājastava* commentary, this will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

my own readings, Kālidāsa's poetry is vivid yet highly tempered, incredibly well crafted but also having a clear flow and meaning. His poetry has commonly been seen as the apex of Sanskrit *kāvya* (especially by critics of the late-19th and early-20th centuries), and although it does merit a particular distinction, these judgments, especially among the earliest Western readers of Sanskrit (and their Indian contemporaries), were tinged with Orientalist biases. This is to say that while Kālidāsa is indeed one of the most accomplished Sanskrit poets (and perhaps the best), nevertheless in prior periods of scholarship, whatever poetry came after him was commonly regarded as decadent and therefore represented by works of a supposedly lesser quality.

Kālidāsa's best work includes the two dramas, the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* ('Śakuntala's Sign of Remembrance') and the *Vikramorvaśīyam* ('Urvaśī Won by Valor'), his *sargabandha*s mentioned above, and his shorter lyric, the *Meghadūta* ('The Cloud-messenger'). For me, his best poetry is found in the *Kumārasambhava*, the *Raghuvaṃśa*, and the *Meghadūta*, and in the English world the scope of his longer poems is perhaps analogous to Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth's *Preludes* (without the sole focus on the development of the author's subjectivity and interiority), or Byron's *Don Juan* (without his caustic comic and satirical asides). The Sanskrit poets who followed Kālidāsa in authoring *sargabandha*s and other long poems (*gadya*, or prose-poems, in the case of Bāṇa) also merit such analogues and a similar high regard.

Bhāravi was the next major Sanskrit poet chronologically to follow Kālidāsa, and he lived in the 6th century. His major work, the *Kirātārjunīya* ('Arjuna and the Hunter'), is a retelling of an episode during the Pāṇḍavas' forced exile early in the *Mahābhārata*. In order to acquire divine weapons with which to defeat their cousins and mortal enemies, the Kauravas, the Pāṇḍava brothers must win favor with the gods. Arjuna, the most skilled warrior and living as an

ascetic at the time, shoots and kills a boar just as another hunter shoots the same animal. During the argument and fight that ensues over who should take the prize it is revealed that the other hunter is the god Śiva, disguised to test the Pāṇḍavas' bravery, and ultimately, he furnishes them the weapons they seek. In my own reading of parts of the *Kirātārjunīya*, I found Bhāravi's style to be more robust and complex in comparison to that of Kālidāsa, but still fluid, easily intelligible, and rewarding to read. As in other *sargabandha*s from this period, the story of the *Kirātārjunīya*, while important, is in many ways secondary to the plethora of its textured descriptions—natural, celestial, and divine.[125] The long poem features detailed representations of rural and natural settings, the sporting of Gandharvas and Apsarases, and, notably, features a *stotra* to Śiva toward the end, acknowledging both his power and his grace in aiding the Pāṇḍavas.[126]

The last two esteemed authors of classical *mahākāvya*s are Māgha and Śrīharṣa, who lived in the 9th and 12th centuries CE, respectively. Māgha authored the *Śiśupālavadha* ('The Killing of Śiśupāla') and Śrīharṣa authored the *Naiṣadhīyacarita* ('The Life of the Niṣadha King'). As Siegfried Lienhard has noted, not only was Māgha influenced by the poetry of Bhāravi, he explicitly modelled his long poem on Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*.[127] The source of the story of the poem also comes from an early part of the *Mahābhārata*, in which Kṛṣṇa reluctantly kills Śiśupāla, an enemy of his, at the consecration of Yudhiṣṭhira (the eldest Pāṇḍava) as king. The long poem features elaborately crafted descriptions of natural scenes and divine activities

[125] See Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 185. As he notes, following Bhāravi, the power of description and poetic virtuosity become more and more central to the creation of long poems, at the expense of plot development.
[126] In later work I would like to examine the role of religion and religious discourse as it is embedded in *mahākāvya*s like the *Kirātārjunīya* and others.
[127] Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 189.

similar to those of the *Kirātārjunīya*, but also expands its scope to include cities and urban life (Kṛṣṇa's city of Dvārakā especially), royal processions, and battle.[128]

Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacarita*, in turn, focuses on the famous story of the young king Nala, his loss and subsequent pursuit of his future queen Damayantī, and her *svayaṃvara* ceremony where she correctly identifies and chooses him for her husband among numerous, identically appearing deities. The story itself was one of many recounted to the Pāṇḍavas during their exile by the Kauravas, highlighting the pain and hardships of exile, loss, and separation while hinting toward a future reconciliation. The *Naiṣadhīyacarita* was heavily quoted and anthologized, and over forty-five commentaries were authored on it.[129] It is also mentioned with some regularity in Appayya's *Varadarājastava* commentary, the most frequently cited of any of the *mahākāvya*s.

Besides *sargabandha* poetry and the major works and poets mentioned above, there were significant developments in *gadya* (prose-poetry), which involved Daṇḍin (who also wrote the *Kāvyādarśa*), Subandhu, and Bāṇa (who also composed the *Caṇḍīśataka* and who worked as a court poet for King Harṣa, 606-647 CE). For his part, Bāṇa was well known as an innovative and highly original poet, and his *Harṣacarita* and unfinished *Kādambarī* are two of the most original works of *belles-lettres* ever composed in Sanskrit. Bāṇa himself classified the *Harṣacarita* ('The Deeds of [King] Harṣa') as an *ākhyāyikā* work (an ostensibly historical prose narrative), and while it is a prose work, its relation of King Harṣa's story is highly poeticized and descriptive, and includes numerous stanzas in verse, perhaps making it a sort of *campū* (a mixed composition of verse and prose).[130] The sheer descriptiveness of the work is also noteworthy in that although Sanskrit poetry did not always feature this kind of material, Bāṇa nonetheless took great pains to

[128] Lienhard summarizes some of these in his overview, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 189-190.
[129] Ibid., 193-194. Also see Deven Patel's introduction in *Text to Tradition: The Naiṣadhīyacarita and Literary Community in South Asia* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2014).
[130] See Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 249.

describe life in the military and at Harṣa's court, and everyday life more broadly during this time, "portray[ing] the world as he saw it in as much detail as possible."[131] His work in the *Harṣacarita* not only provided invaluable historical information, it also broke new ground in the literature of South Asia.

The *Kādambarī*, on the other hand is a work of *kathā* (a fictional story), and Bāṇa likely died before he could complete it. It is a highly complex work that involves multiple narrative threads and a vast scope that includes human, fantastical, and mythological characters; however, the main content of the work relates the tales of two women, the princess Kādambarī and Mahāśvetā, and the romances, separations, duties, and dilemmas they both experience.[132] Like the *Harṣacarita* this work is also filled with vivid, highly developed, and arresting descriptions. Given the ornate complexity of these works (and in the *Caṇḍīśataka* too), Bāṇa is often acknowledged as "one of the most difficult poets in Sanskrit," but he is nonetheless highly sensitive to the surrounding world and imbued his work with "human warmth," humor, and poetic richness.[133] Along with his prose-poetry, Bāṇa wrote exceptionally well in verse, and he and Mayūra provide us with the two earliest examples of highly literary praise-poems in Sanskrit, to which we now shall turn.

III. Mayūra and Bāṇa: The Earliest Hindu Literary *Stotra*s

As an element of shorter Sanskrit poetry (*laghukāvya*), *stotra*s have a vibrant but also somewhat overlooked history. Jan Gonda, Siegfried Lienhard, and Hamsa Stainton in their overviews of the history of *stotra* literature all acknowledge that two of the earliest and best

[131] Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 252.
[132] Ibid., 252-257.
[133] Ibid., 256.

examples of *stotra*s as independent works are the *Caṇḍīśataka* ('The Century on the Wrathful Goddess,' abbreviated *CŚ*) of Bāṇa, and the roughly contemporaneous *Sūryaśataka* ('The Century on the Sun' *SŚ*) of Mayūra.[134] George P. Quackenbos also provided an early translation and study of these two *stotra*s in 1917.[135] Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka* is a *stotra* dedicated to the Goddess (Durgā) and written entirely in verse, unlike the *Harṣacarita* and the *Kādambarī*, but it is every bit as poetically rich, even if scholarship has not always acknowledged this. In his examination of the boldness of Bāṇa's poetry, Gary Tubb argues that Bāṇa's stylistic idiosyncrasies and originality are not focused solely on "the verbal achievement in itself, but on the deep meaning that it helps to convey."[136] The verses of the *CŚ*, while being benedictory or salutatory as most *stotra* verses are, can also be viewed "as a collection of reflections on a particular iconographic form of Durgā, called 'Mahiṣamardinī,' which depicts the slaying of Mahiṣa," focusing on the stabbing of the demon/*asura* with the Goddess' trident and kicking him in the head with her otherwise beautiful left foot.[137] In brief, Bāṇa's stylistic ingenuity allows for a unique and deeper reflection on the Goddess' form and attributes.

In his discussion of the poem, Tubb notes the "anti-religious bias" that was common among modern scholars of Sanskrit poetry (citing D.D. Kosambi and Sheldon Pollock specifically), which in turn prevented them from appreciating the significance of religious and

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[134] See Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 137-139, Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 48-49, and Jan Gonda *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, in *A History of Indian Literature Vol. II fasc. 1* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 250-252.
[135] George P. Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1917).
[136] Gary Tubb, "On the Boldness of Bāṇa," in *Innovations and Turning-Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* ed. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 319. Tubb also states that the verbal misdirections Bāṇa employs "are impossible to convey in translation in any way close to their accomplishment in Sanskrit;" a sentiment which I find common ground with, but I also think via translation and commentary it is possible to give at least a small taste and an explication of what the original is like, which Tubb himself duly accomplishes.
[137] Ibid., 321.

benedictory verse within the tradition.[138] Both Kosambi and Pollock went so far as to omit any mention of the *CŚ* in cataloguing Bāṇa's poetic oeuvre, both were or are scholars influenced by Marxist and Neo-Marxist perspectives, and consequently both at times were dismissive of the potential value of *stotra*s.[139] There is of course value in Marxist perspectives in the critique and discussion of literary histories, but it is also reasonable to say that dismissing entire works or even entire categories of literature leaves us with an incomplete view of a literary tradition as a whole. Daniel H.H. Ingalls responded specifically to Kosambi, arguing that "Sanskrit poetry should be judged in the first instance by the criteria that authors within that tradition themselves claimed to be following."[140] Tubb himself says that even if religious content should not preclude the anthologizing or studying of a verse as 'good poetry,' "neither should it guarantee it," while also stating that there can be "reasons beyond the poetic" for certain religious verses to be preserved.[141] I agree with him and I would go a step further and argue (as in my introduction) that (1) we should not dismiss or conversely lionize poetry based on its religiosity alone, (2) we should view poetry through the emic lens of the Sanskrit tradition itself while also acknowledging where the tradition may be opaque or contradictory, and, simultaneously, (3) we can and must trust our own instincts and capacities as sympathetic readers to perceive, comprehend, and elucidate what is worthwhile about the poetry we encounter. Every sensitive

[138] Tubb, "On the Boldness of Bāṇa," 325.
[139] Ibid., 325. Also see Sheldon Pollock's article, "The Death of Sanskrit," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 417.
[140] Tubb, "On the Boldness of Bāṇa," 326. I would point out, however, that it is often more likely that not that we do not have evidence of authors' claims regarding what criteria they were following. In most cases we are lucky to have full or partial manuscripts of various works with little if any contextual information. The exceptions to this are figures like Daṇḍin, Ānandavardhana, and even Appayya to some extent, who wrote both poetry *and* literary theory.
[141] Ibid. Gary Tubb gives as an example Ānandavardhana's elaborate *Devīśataka*, a defining work of *citrakāvya*, replete with verbal intricacy but exactly the type of poem that Ānandavardhana would disparage in his literary criticism in the *Dhvanyāloka* (See Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Ānandavardhana's Devīśataka," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 4 (1989): 565-575). The *Devīśataka* is in many ways more of a complex verbal puzzle than what we might think of as a conventionally moving piece of poetry.

and sympathetic reader, no matter the temporal or cultural distance, has his or her own array of receptors to relish, reflect, and decide whether something is a worthwhile piece of poetry or not. Whether or not we can appreciate or fully digest the heightened rhetoricity of certain Sanskrit poems (especially *stotra*s such as these) at first glance, we will see that just like the gradual opening of a lotus flower, they have much richness to offer, especially to those who are patient and perseverant in their reading. Even if the kinds of creativity and ingenuity present in a Sanskrit verse cannot always be fully rendered in a like-for-like manner in translation, we can at the very least provide an account of our own experience, of how poets' styles impact *our own* reading of this poetry, as a way of fleshing out the relationship between stylistic choices and a poem's 'deep meaning.'

In what now follows, then, I will demonstrate this by way of a comparative reading of selections from Mayūra's *Sūryaśataka* and Appayya Dīkṣita's *Ādityastotraratna* (*ĀSR*), two poems possessing a type of verbal density that I would argue augments, rather than detracts from, their comprehension and enjoyment even for modern and non-Indian readers.

IV. Mayūra and Appayya's Praise-Poems to Sūrya

All three of these *stotra*s: Mayūra's *Sūryaśataka* and Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka*, on the one hand, and Appayya's *Ādityastotraratna* on the other, are composed in *sragdharā* meter (with a few small exceptions), which contains twenty-one syllables per verse quarter. The meter is significant in that it shows Appayya's awareness of Mayūra and Bāṇa's *stotras* and arguably a desire on his part to acknowledge and emulate their poetic style. Containing twenty-one syllables per quarter (for a total of eighty-four per verse), this meter understandably lends itself to dense, ornate, highly wrought, and highly descriptive poetry in my reading experience. As George P.

Quackenbos states in his study of Mayūra and Bāṇa's *stotra*s, the employment of this meter is uncommon; of the few other notable uses we find it occasionally in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalā*, and in the poetry of Bhartṛhari.[142] I imagine it would be an intriguing but challenging meter in which to write; the first part of each verse quarter is largely a torrent of heavy syllables (having conjunct consonants, long vowels, or both), followed by a section of all light syllables in the middle (single consonant and short vowels), and ending with a mixture of the two. The long length of the verse quarters and the prevalence of heavy syllables also allow for the frequent employment of *śabdālaṃkāra*s, a great deal of alliteration, and the use of long compounds, which give the verses a density and robustness (Gauḍīya-like, in many respects) that augments the subject matter and descriptive intensity of both Mayūra and Appayya's poems.[143] We can see the complimentary relationship between poetic vigor and descriptive power in both Sūrya *stotra*s.

Mayūra robustly describes the intensity of the early dawn sun in the opening verse of the *SŚ*:

1. Bearing thick vermillion dust like that which is visible on the elephant's frontal lobes of Jambha's enemy (Indra), reddened as if wetted by the floods of a fluid stream of minerals on the slope of the dawn (eastern) mountain, [with] morning lights arriving

[142] Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, 97.

[143] As a matter of fact, verse six of the *Sūryaśataka* is quoted in Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa* for its harshness of sound (a hallmark of Gauḍīya-style versification) which Mammaṭa classifies as "neither a fault nor an excellence," see Quackenbos, 98. The first *pariccheda* of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* gives a great deal of comparative description of Gauḍīya and Vaidarbha styles, here emphasizing the vigor of the Gauḍīyas in contrast to the delicacy of the Vaidarbha style. A few examples:

> 43. Compactness (*śliṣṭa*) is not touched by looseness and is predominantly unaspirated syllables, just as in "a thicket of moving bees in a garland of jasmine" (*mālatīmālā lolālikalilā*).
> 44. This (*śliṣṭa*) is desired by the Gauḍas because they have a mind for alliteration; it is (also) desired by the Vaidarbhas because of the heaviness of the construction, as in: "A wreath of jasmine flowers covered by bees" (*mālatīdāma laṅghitaṃ bhramarair*).
> 80. Vigorous expression (*ojas*), being an abundance of compounds, is the heart of prose and even in verse; it is the one refuge of the Gauḍas;
> 82. "The western quarter (*vāruṇī*) has as its expanse all the rays of the sun diffused on the peak of the evening mountain (*astamastakaparyastasamastārkaṃśusaṃstārā*) as if it were a beautiful red garment covering [a woman's] full breast (*pīnastanasthitātāmrakamravastreva*)."

simultaneously, like the luster of a cluster of lotuses, the fresh new rays belonging to the sun and illuminating the earth—may they exist for your well-being![144]

The torrent of syllables and the alliterative play throughout the verse mirror the imagery of torrents of reddened light breaking through in the early dawn. The alliteration is particularly strong in the last quarter of the verse: "***bh***ūyāsur ***bh***āsayanto ***bh***uvanam a***bh***inavā ***bh***ānavo ***bh***ānavīyāḥ." The imagery itself is vibrant and even slightly overwhelming, while at the same time being tender and sweet. On the harsher side of the spectrum, the vermillion color of the sunrise is compared to the dust (or perhaps a sort of war-paint) on the broad head Indra's war elephant, and to the deep and arresting glow of lava-like flows along the edge of a mountain.[145] On the tender side, the lights of the sunrise are reminiscent of the luster of a clutch of lotus flowers. This dynamic between 'harsh and sweet' grows more pronounced in the verses that follow.

The second and third verses of the *SŚ* state:

2. Those [rays] which facilitate the opening of clusters of lotuses, as if desiring to draw out the beauty//wealth adhering to the interior of the house-like cavity in a cupped bud in order to give again with humble devotion; which are vigorous at the destruction of the fear that the world has fallen into the mouth of darkness having the form of death's inevitability; those rays of the maker of light, having the beauty of fresh sprouts, may they make you prosperous!

3. Falling equally on the calyces of water-born lotuses, and on sharp peaks and crested mountains, and having thus one form at the beginning of day, and at the time of [its] cessation; arisen all out of order in the courtyard of the abode of the three worlds, bearing a powerful heat born from the toil of [their] continuous course, may the rays of the ruddy one protect you![146]

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[144] *jambhārātībhakumbhodbhavamiva dadhataḥ sāndrasindūrareṇuṃ*
raktāḥ siktā ivāughairudayagiritaṭīdhātudhārādravasya |
āyāntyā tulyakālaṃ kamalavanarucevāruṇā vo vibhūtyai
bhūyāsurbhāsayanto bhuvanamabhinavā bhānavo bhānavīyāḥ || Sūryaśataka (ŚS) 1

[145] It is rare in my experience to encounter imagery of what could possibly be volcanic activity in Sanskrit poetry and Indian poetry more generally.

[146] *bhaktiprahvāya dātuṃ mukulapuṭakuṭikoṭarakroḍalīnāṃ*
lakṣmīm ākraṣṭukāmā iva kamalavanaudghāṭanaṃ kurvate ye |
kālākārāndhakārānanapatitajagatsādhvasadhvaṃsakalyāḥ

The imagery of the sunlight falling on lotuses is expanded in the second verse; the word '*kuṭi*' (a hut or cottage-like abode) is used to describe the flower's receptacle on which pollen dust settles, which is like the spots of intensifying light, and which recalls the vermillion dust (*sindūrareṇuṃ*) in the opening verse. The rays are what cause the lotuses to open (*udghāṭana*), and the lotuses themselves, now opened, are described as offerings made in devotion (*bhakti*). However, death or the inevitability of time (*kāla*)[147] is described as a 'mouth of darkness' (*andhākarānana*) into whose jaws the world falls. Nonetheless, the vigor of the sun's rays, while tenderly opening the lotuses on the one hand, also forcibly expels this fear and darkness from our countenance. In this imagery, the powerful and gentle qualities of the sun's light are seamlessly intertwined, just like the fresh sprouts the light is compared to.

The third verse makes clear that the sun's rays fall without discrimination on all surfaces, whether soft like lotus petals, or rough and treacherous like rugged mountain. It is also perhaps a way of saying that the grace and brilliance of Sūrya knows no boundaries and is available to all. In the fourth verse, Mayūra employs a complex and well-developed metaphor to show once and for all the Sun's grace and tenderness, and in the sixth verse we see that even the sickliest, the lowliest, and the most sinful can receive it:

4. When darkness has its splendor slipping down like an upper garment, having perceived eastern people whose covering is now gone, the one with scorching rays spreads thick

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kalyāṇaṃ vaḥ kriyāsuḥ kisalayarucayas te karā bhāskarasya || *ŚS* 2
garbheṣvambhoruhāṇāṃ śikhariṣu ca śitāgreṣu tulyaṃ patantaḥ
prārambhe vāsarasya vyuparatisamaye caikarūpāstathaiva |
niṣparyāyaṃ pravṛttāstribhuvanabhavanaprāṅgaṇe pāntu yuṣmān
ūṣmāṇaṃ saṃtatādhvaśramajamiva bhṛśaṃ bibhrato bradhnapādāḥ || 3

[147] The phrase that most clearly illustrates the foreboding quality of *kāla* is Yudhiṣṭhira's comment at the beginning of the Pāṇḍava's final journey in the *Mahābhārata*: "Time (*kāla*) cooks all beings, O great-minded one (Arjuna); I think of Time's noose, and you must also see it in this way."
kālaḥ pacati bhūtāni sarvāṇyeva mahāmate |
kālapāśamahaṃ manye tvamapi draṣṭumarhasi || *Mahāprasthānika Parva*, *MBh*, v.3

> particles of light as if they were threads; and having become dense, these particles whose extent is possessed of a row of fringes that are the ten quarters which are pure white in succession, arising continually, may they at once grant you sufficient happiness, which is [itself] a spotless garment.[148]

The imagery of the fourth verse borders somewhat tantalizingly on the erotic, but never completely enters that territory. The quiet beauty of night is described as a feminine figure whose garment or nightgown is slowly falling off her, having been startled by the advancing dawn. Seeing this, the sun weaves his own dense rays as a garment to protect the night's modesty and to cover the also otherwise naked earth. The clothing metaphor is enhanced when Mayūra describes the leading edges of the light rays as the pure white hem of a garment (*viṣada daśāli*) leading in the ten directions (the eight directions of a compass, upward, and downward). The ending of the verse exquisitely ties together the preceding poetic imagery with its benediction in granting the reader a happiness or felicity that itself is a "spotless garment" (*amalam ambaram*). Numerous alliterations also lend a sort of peaceful humming cadence to the verse (*viśadadaśāśādaśālīviśalaṃ*, and '*mbaramamalamalaṃ*, for example), accentuating the softness of both the garment-related imagery and the imagery of night gradually transitioning into day.

The preceding imagery is contrasted with the diseased souls described in verse six, desperate for Sūrya's healing grace:

6. The warm-rayed one, his course//conduct unhindered [but] subject to the thick warmth//compassion in [his] twofold heart; being that one who, in passing over, makes as

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[148] George P. Quackenbos' study of the *stotra*s of Mayūra and Bāṇa is a valuable resource in many respects, but I must note that his translation of this verse is unfortunately poor and not entirely coherent, showing the need for updated translations and scholarship on this poetry. It's especially unfortunate because the verse is strikingly original and beautiful, and it can be rendered lucidly.

prabhraśyantyuttarīyatviṣi tamasi samudvīkṣya vītāvṛtīnprāg-
jantūṃstantūnyathā yānatanu vitanute tigmarocirmarīcīn |
te sāndrībhūya sadyaḥ kramaviśadadaśāśādaśālīviśalaṃ
śaśvatsampādayanto 'mbaramamalamalaṃ maṅgalaṃ vo diśantu || SŚ 4

> before those who have hands, feet, and noses which are rotten, with limbs possessing sores, who make woeful cries and indistinct gurgles, who exude multitudes of sins; may his heat and sunshine, which are offerings given by assemblies of Siddhas, grant you the swift destruction of [your] sins![149]

In apocryphal stories of Mayūra's life it is said that the poet himself may have suffered from leprosy or a similar type of skin disease for which the composition and recitation of this *stotra* was a cure.[150] The verse is also noteworthy in that Mammaṭa quoted it in his *Kāvyaprakāśa* as an example of mere alliteration (or verbal 'harshness,' *kaṣṭatva*) being neither a fault nor an asset, but also importantly without an underlying *rasa*.[151] There *is* certainly a great deal of harsh alliteration; as Quackenbos notes, the consonant '*gh*' occurs twenty three times in the verse, but he views it more charitably than does Mammaṭa, musing that this alliteration is possibly a "striving for onomatopoeia" in that people suffering from leprosy can have their speech affected.[152] In this, Quackenbos is saying that the harshness of the alliteration is intentional and it is meant to enhance the verse's meaning. I agree with his judgment, and I would also hypothesize that even if a *rasa* or particular sentiment does not predominate in the verse in the way that theorists like Mammaṭa or Ānandavardhana would like, the verse nonetheless has at least *some* sense of *karuṇa rasa*, or the element of pathos and compassion. For example, the root word of '*ghṛṇi—ghṛṇayaḥ*,' '*ghṛṇa/ā*' can have a sort of double meaning involving heat in the literal sense (i.e., the sun's rays) and warmth in a more personable sense (i.e., Sūrya's compassion). Anyhow, leaving aside the speculation on the presence or lack of *rasa* in the verse, I would argue

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[149] *śīrṇaghrāṇāṅghripāṇīnvraṇibhirapaghanairghargharāvyaktaghoṣān*
dīrghāghrātānaghaugaḥ punarapi ghaṭayatyeka ullāghayan yaḥ |
gharmāṃśostasya vo 'ntardviguṇaghanaghṛṇānighnanirvighnavṛtter-
dattārghāḥ siddhasaṃghairvidadhatu ghṛṇayaḥ śīghramaṅghovighātam || SŚ 6

[150] See Gary Tubb, "On the Boldness of Bāṇa," 322-323, and George Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, 23-24.

[151] *kvacittu nīrase na guṇo na doṣe* | From the commentary on *Kāvyaprakāśa* 7.59, the *Sūryaśataka* verse is quoted as verse 294.

[152] Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, 115.

that the matter-of-fact descriptions of diseased people seeking Sūrya's blessing furnishes a unique piece of Sanskrit poetry, and the alliteration helps to augment this imagery.

A final example of Mayūra's deserves mention before analyzing Appayya's hymn to Sūrya, and the verse is an example of *śleṣa*, an extended paronomasia in which an entire clause or verse can have two equally weighted meanings produced from a single string of words. This kind of poetry, as Gary Tubb recognizes, may be impossible to successfully render in translation, but it nonetheless merits discussion and analysis.

9. The rays (*gāvaḥ*) of the brilliant-rayed one, which are joys bestowed on people, with waters that are drawn up and discharged at the proper time, spread out (*viprakīrṇa*) in various directions in the morning, and partaking in coming together when day is coming to an end, [the rays] which are ships for crossing over the ocean of the fear of the cycle of being, which is the source of long suffering, may they produce unlimited joy for you, the best of purifications.
//
The cattle (*gāvaḥ*) of the sun, which are joy bestowed on all people, with milk that is drawn up and discharged at the proper time, dispersed (*viprakīrṇa*) in all directions in the morning, and collected [again] when day is ending; [the cattle] which are ships for crossing over the ocean of the fear of being, which is the source of long suffering, may they produce unlimited joy for you, the best of purifications.[153]

The paronomasia is rooted in the words '*gāvaḥ*' ('*gauḥ*', meaning 'cattle' or 'rays of light') and '*payobhiḥ*' ('*payas*', meaning 'water' or 'milk'), and when combined with the rest of the imagery the verse acquires two equally valid meanings. The idea of a general but significant interrelationship between the sun and rainfall is an old one in Indian mythology, and as Quackenbos notes, the idea of the sun as a reservoir of water is found in both the *Mahābhārata* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.[154] Here, the sun draws up and disperses rainfall at the proper times,

[153] *dattānandāḥ prajānāṃ samucitasamayākṛṣṭasṛṣṭāiḥ payobhiḥ pūrvāhṇe viprakīrṇā diśi diśi viramaty ahni saṃhārabhājaḥ | dīptāṃśor dīrghaduḥkhaprabhavabhavabhayodanvaduttāranāvo gāvo vaḥ pāvanānāṃ paramaparimitāṃ prītimutpādayantu || SŚ* 9
[154] Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra*, 120, footnote 2.

its rays spread out in the morning and are drawn together again at the day's end; augmenting the water imagery, the rays are further described as ships (*nau*) crossing the perilous seas of suffering and rebirth. At the same time, cattle produce milk for all, and are dispersed in the morning to be put to pasture and are rounded up again in the evening. Since livestock are an important source of both wealth and sustenance, they quite literally help to allay one's fears of poverty and misery. The two meanings of the verse dovetail exquisitely in that both cattle and the sun's rays follow a sort of diurnal routine: both help to give and sustain life, and the verse evokes the centrality of both in this natural/pastoralized world.

While Mayūra's *stotra* is of course a 'century' of verses on Sūrya (one hundred and one verses to be exact), Appayya's *Ādityastotraratna* is only fourteen verses, and although it follows much in Mayūra's style, the density of expression is even greater, almost as if to compensate for the relative shortness of the poem. The opening verses are as follows:

1. With one thousand *yojana*s and ten vast lengths traversed; located in a six-fold shining ring, having a threefold hub and five spokes on its wheel; may the chariot of the hot-rayed one, having a yoke for conveyance placed on horses who are the seven meters and whose parts are wholly fixed, break forth before me with an appearance of the *trivarga* (decline, stability, and increase) during respective parts of the year!

2. The disc of the hot-rayed one which is the revolving light of Brahman, having a form thickened into the collection of scripture, sets alight the middle of the sky like the jewel standing upon what is to be pervaded, and sets alight the whole of the chariot, pervading the tenth part [of the sky] with the Gandharvas, the Bālakhilyas, holding a raft for the villagers, the Ādityas, the Apsarases, and sages, who are the best of the sun.

3. Stalks coming forth, which have entered into the tubes of tenderness of the births of the entire disc of light, arisen in various directions [on account] of the sweetness of that [sun] which is a multitude of spokes//gems being the host of Vasus and others, shine forth. Waters, which are sprouts of beauty, shine forth, made of the sap of the immortal nectar of herbs which are oblations offered by ancestors for the fathers and others, drinking in and raining water, heat, and even cold all around.[155]

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[155] *vistārāyāmamānāṃ daśabhir upagato yojanānāṃ sahasraiḥ*
cakre pañcāranābhitritayavati lasannemiṣaṭke niviṣṭaḥ |
saptacchandasturaṃgāhitavahanadhuro hāyanāṃśatrivarga-
vyaktyā klṛptākhilāṃgaḥ sphuratu mama puraḥ syandanaścaṇḍabhānoḥ || Ādityastotraratna (*ĀSR*) 1

In comparison to Mayūra, Appayya opens his poem evoking not the rapturous and reddish glow of the dawn sun, nor a spirit of explicit benediction to the reader, but rather evoking the chariot of Sūrya, his qualities, and his retinue in relentless and dizzying detail. The sun's chariot is guided by seven horses, rather evoking the seven days of the week or the seven traditional meters (*chandas*) in Sanskrit, and it calls to mind a verse from Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*:

> Having a one-wheeled chariot, a driver who is disabled, and uneven [numbered] horses; even thus, the mighty (*tejasvin*) sun crosses over the surface of the sky.[156]

Ostensibly, to drive in a straight line, the chariot would need an even number of horses on each side of the draft pole and harnesses and two wheels; furthermore, the chariot is driven by Aruṇa, the dawn, who is '*anūru*' or without thighs, because of a premature birth.[157] In Daṇḍin's verse, despite all this, the sheer might of the sun (*tejas*) allows him to cross the sky uniformly and unfailingly. In Appayya's opening verse, he asks the sun continually to break forth for him, following its customary pattern of increase, stability, and decline throughout the year as the seasons take their course.

ādityairapsarobhirmunibhirahivarairgrāmaṇīyātudhānaiḥ
gandharvairvālakhilyaiḥ parivṛtadaśamāṃśasya kṛtsnaṃ rathasya |
madhyaṃ vyāpyādhitiṣṭhanmaṇiriva nabhaso maṇḍalaścaṇḍaraśmeḥ
brahmajyotirvivartaḥ śrutinikaraghanībhāvarūpaḥ samindhe || 2
nirgacchanto 'rkabimbānnikhilajanimatāṃ hārdanāḍīḥ praviṣṭāḥ
nāḍyo vasvādivṛndārakagaṇamadhunaḥ tasya nānādigutthāḥ |
varṣantastoyamuṣṇaṃ tuhinamapi jalānyāpibantaḥ samantāt
pitrādīnāṃ svadhauṣadhyamṛtarasakṛto bhānti kāntiprarohāḥ || 3

[156] *ekacakro ratho yantā vikalo viṣamā hayāḥ |*
ākrāmatyeva tejasvī tathāpyarko nabhassthalam|| *Kāvyādarśa* 2.138
This verse occurs in the second *pariccheda* of the *KĀ* which lists and exemplifies various poetic ornaments. Here, the verse is an example of *hetuviśeṣokti* (an utterance of distinction on the basis of cause), in which the subject is still capable in spite of a perceived deficiency. The word "*tejasvī*" in the verse signifies the power of the sun *despite* the issues of his chariot, horses, and driver.

[157] See John D. Smith, *The Mahābhārata* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 5.

The second verse elucidates the wider retinue that follows with Sūrya on his course and overlays this description with Śaiva terminology. The third verse evokes the sun's dizzying splendor while connecting it to plant and vegetative life, in a fashion not so unlike Mayūra. The words '*brahmajyotir vivartaḥ*' in verse two have several theologically significant meanings; '*brahmajyotiḥ*' signifies a sort of spiritual light or illumination, but it is also an epithet of Śiva. The word '*vivartaḥ*' signifies something that is revolving, and/or transforming, which is also a significant motif in Śaiva cosmology, although in Advaita Vedānta terms it also signifies something illusory.[158] In both verses there are numerous divine and semi-divine beings mentioned, some explicitly associated with the sun (the Ādityas, Vasus, Bālakhilyas), and others not so closely linked thereto, for example the Gandharvas and Apsarases, celestial musicians and nymph-like spirits. Although quite challenging to read on account of its many double meanings, the third verse roots its praise of Sūrya in the juxtaposition of different sorts of imagery. Here, light imagery (*arkabimba*—disc of light, *bhānti*—to shine forth) mixes with aqueous and sap-like imagery (*amṛtarasa*—sap of the nectar of immortality, *madhu*—honey, *jalāni*—waters, *varṣantaḥ* and *āpibantaḥ*—raining/pouring out and drinking in, respectively), all in the context of plant life that also thrives on the sun (*nāḍī*—stalk(s), *praroha*—sprouts, *oṣadhī*—herbs, and *jalāni* again can have the meaning of herbs), and the cycle of the seasons (the absorbing and raining of *toyam*—water, *uṣṇam*—heat, and *tuhinam*—cold). The birth (*janiman*) of the sun's disc and the offerings of oblations to ancestors (*pitrādīnāṃ svadhā*) also give us imagery of the cycles of life. Combining all the imagery in the verse presents us with a tour-de-force catalogue of the cyclic and dynamic qualities of vegetal, animal, and human life, all of which is powered by Sūrya, the sun.

[158] See Lyne Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology: Some Key Issues of Understanding," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42, no. 1 (2014): 54.

The fourth verse of the *ĀSR* transports the reader from earthly surroundings to a celestial realm, populated by heavenly bodies and influenced by the language of *Jyotiṣa*, Hindu astrology/astronomy:

> 4. When a thousand of the most beautiful of those [sunbeams] of heaven and earth illuminates the fullness of the five directions, and illuminates the five faces of Mercury, the flood of stars, and the moon, being the seven suns, chief among them Āroga and Bhrāja, at the fiery destruction of the three worlds; may the sun beams, the beginnings of the Suṣumna rays (which illuminate the moon), destroy all my afflictions here! afflictions here![159]

Both the cosmic reach and the (destructive) power of the sun's rays are emphasized in this verse, and this power dovetails with the speaker's wish for the sun to destroy and burn away his worldly afflictions. The verse illustrates that the sun's reach encompasses both the earth and the heavens, including Mercury (*Budha*), one of the nine planets or heavenly bodies (*navagraha*) that influence human affairs in Hindu astrology, as well as the moon and all the constellations of stars. Just as the seven suns (including *Āroga* and *Bhrāja*) burn away the threefold universe at periodic intervals of destruction and renewal, so too may the sun's rays burn away the afflictions that mar the human condition.

The *stotra*s of both Mayūra and Appayya Dīkṣita venerate Sūrya in poetically dense, imaginative, and highly original language, and even at first exposure it is practically impossible to read these *stotra*s as anything else *but* poetry of the highest order. The complexity of their verse and the profusion of various types of imagery (from the iconography of the sun, the natural and pastoral worlds, human life, and the celestial sphere) reflect the intensity and dynamism of the poems' main subject: the sun. Although Appayya was clearly indebted to Mayūra in the

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[159] *śreṣṭhāsteṣāṃ sahasre tridivavasudhayoḥ pañcadigvyāptibhājāṃ*
śubhrāṃśuṃ tārakaughaṃ śaśitanayamukhānpañca codbhāsayantaḥ |
ārogabhrājamukhyāstribhuvanadahane sapta sūryā bhavantaḥ
sarvānvyādhīnsuṣumnaprabhṛtaya iha me sūryapādāḥ kṣipantu || ĀSR 4

composition of his own *stotra*, there are of course stylistic differences. It is evident that the *SŚ* is more exclusively emblematic of the alliterative Gauḍīya style (see footnote 32, above) in comparison to the *ĀSR*, but Appayya's poetry here has the kind of elliptical syntactic style that is characteristic to him (and is also seen in the *Varadarājastava*). At the same time, both poets make effective use of a long and uncommon Sanskrit meter to construct verses that contain richly developed and satisfying imagery of the natural, human, and celestial worlds, and ultimately the powers, profusions, and processes of the sun.

V. Understanding the *Varadarājastava* as *Kāvya*

Like the *ĀSR*, the *Varadarājastava* (*VRS*) is a dense and imaginative poetic reflection on subjects both immanent and transcendent. It *employs* the language of prayer and devotion without being only an example of religious speech. In a notable contrast to Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* (*ĀAS*), in which these religious imperatives are more clearly emphasized, the *VRS* praises poetic creativity, description, and meditation just as it praises the emanation of Viṣṇu at Kanchipuram. By comparing the two poems we can see that the former is more purely a work of personal devotion, whereas the latter is more conscious of itself *as* meditative poetry (although these are not mutually exclusive). The opening verse of the *ĀAS* states:

1. Who can perceive your might, O Supreme God of gods? This creation in its manifold arrangement arose from that. Even so, here you can be grasped through devotion. I wish to sing of you from a place of complete devotion. Please put up with my incredible recklessness.[160]

[160] *kaste boddhuṃ prabhavati paraṃ devadeva prabhāvaṃ*
yasmādittthaṃ vividharacanā sṛṣṭireṣā babhūva |
bhaktigrāhyastvamiha tadapi tvāmahaṃ bhaktimātrāt
stotuṃ vāñchāmyatimahadidaṃ sāhasaṃ me sahasva || *Ātmārpaṇastuti* (*ĀAS*) 1

Here the supremacy, centrality, and efficacy of Śiva, along with Appayya's devotion to him due to his own spiritual crisis (which is detailed as the poem progresses) are front and center. In the following verses the image of Śiva as progenitor of the universe and Śiva *as* the universe becomes clearer:

2. It is determined that things having parts, made up of earth and so on have a birth. Furthermore, various created things cannot be devoid of the basis of a creator. Anything void of life would not be able to govern, nor could a being who is not God. Because of that, you must be the prime refuge and creator of the world at its origin.

3. They call you, "Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Brahma, Viṣṇu, Īśa," O Supreme Śiva when they are bewildered with your illusion. Along with them, everything comprises merely a minute portion of the energy of that God which is you. You are known as Śambhu, the God of creation, found in the Vedas.

4. Having undertaken a thickening into form from an ocean of joy, desiring continual enjoyment together with Umā the Supreme who is your energy, you roam this wilderness radiant with the horns of the sun and the moon, where there are no roads, O Matted-haired One, always attended by your lords and multitudes.[161]

Śiva is the God of gods, the primal force of creation, and the sustainer of the cosmos; a cosmos which is itself only a minute portion of his great energy. Appayya makes clear that to him, the names of all other gods (including Viṣṇu) are merely illusory and mistaken appellations for the supreme spirit that is Śiva. He is also beautifully described as Pārvatī's lover and as a matted-haired ascetic bearing the sun and moon, roaming this wilderness-universe. The 'thickening into

[161] *kṣityādīnāmavayavavatāṃ niścitaṃ janma tāvat*
tannāstyeva kvacana kalitaṃ kartradhiṣṭhānahīnam |
nādhiṣṭhātuṃ prabhavati jaḍo nāpyanīśaśca bhāvas
tasmādādyastvamasi jagatāṃ nātha jāne vidhātā || *ĀAS* 2
indraṃ mitraṃ varuṇamanalaṃ padmajaṃ viṣṇumīśaṃ
prāhuste te paramaśiva te māyayā mohitāstvām |
etaiḥ sārdhaṃ sakalamapi yacchaktileśe samāptaṃ
sa tvaṃ devaḥ śratiṣu viditaḥ śaṃbhurityādidevaḥ || 3
ānandābdheḥ kamapi ca ghanībhāvamāsthāya rūpaṃ
śaktyā sārdhaṃ paramamumayā śāśvataṃ bhogamicchan|
adhvātīte śucidivasakṛtkoṭidīpre kapardin
ādye sthāne viharasi sadā sevyamāno gaṇeśaiḥ || 4

form' (*ghanībhāvam*) is also an important piece of Śaiva cosmology and theology.[162] In this cosmology, all of creation can essentially be described as originating as Śiva's consciousness (*cit*) which is gradually brought into phenomenal and material form through the stimulation or pulsation (*spanda*) of his generative power through Umā (*śakti*).

This all-encompassing image of Śiva is contrasted sharply in Appayya's description of himself and his own life. In the following verses he states,

6. Some, meditating on you, cross over this difficult ocean of being. Some are constantly worshipping your lotus feet according to rule or otherwise. Others who perceive you observe their vows, enamored of the rules of caste and life stages. Having left all of them, I am drowning in this awful sea of existence.

7. Having been born, O Slayer of Kāma, in this great family among the best, having even tasted the fine spray of the ocean of your greatness, my heart turned away from the adoration of your feet because of the fickleness of my senses. Ah! I have made this birth useless on account of this sin![163]

Unlike those who meditate on Śiva, observe religious vows, and those who worship him, Appayya has let himself descend into a mass of sinfulness, selfishness, and decadence. Here he is acutely aware of his own frailty and helplessness, made all the worse because of the good fortune of his birth, his family, and his awareness of Śiva from an early age. In these verses, taken collectively, we see the outlines of Śiva's divine and salvific powers coupled with Appayya's dawning realization of the smallness of his being and the sinfulness of his life. Only an intense period of spiritual crisis could have produced a poem like this, and even though there are vivid

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[162] For a detailed summation of this, see Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology," 41-43.

[163] *dhyāyantastvāṃ katicana bhavaṃ dustaraṃ nistaranti*
tvatpādābjaṃ vidhivaditare nityamārādhayantaḥ |
anye varṇāśramavidhiviratāḥ pālayantastvadājñāṃ
sarvaṃ hitvā bhavajalanidhāveṣu mañjāmi ghore || ĀAS 6
utpadyāpi smarahara mahatyuttamānāṃ kule 'sminn
āsvādya tvanmahimajaladherapyahaṃ śīkaraṇūn |
tvatpādārcāvimukhahṛdayaścāpalādindiyāṇāṃ
vyagrastuccheṣvahaha jananaṃ vyarthayāmyeṣa pāpaḥ || 7

poetic images, the overall tone is one of religious devotion and calling out to Śiva from the poet's own spiritual wilderness. The imperative of this poem is not that of writing poetry for the sake of and the enjoyment of writing poetry; it is a poem written because a crisis must be surmounted.

The tone at the opening of the *VRS* is incredibly different from what we encounter in the *ĀAS*; this can partially be attributed to the use of different meters (which are, of course, intentionally selected by the poet), but it's also immediately clear that the *VRS* is much more a poem of calm reflection than a cry of desperation and petition to the Lord. The opening verse states,

1. Having opened the storehouse of the lotus of the heart by means of a small bit of yoga, apprehending [the heart] as one desires for a long time along with the virtuous ones; the one who shines forth unceasingly having a perfect and complete form, may he, Mukunda, show me eternal good fortune.[164]

The calm and meditative imagery strongly contrasts with the unfathomability of Śiva's might and Appayya's compulsion to praise him in the opening verse of the *ĀAS*. Here Appayya articulates how his heart was opened to Varadarāja (using the epithet 'Mukunda' here) through discipline and meditation and a desire to partake of the god's eternal blessings. In the following verses, Appayya does acknowledge his own rashness and faults, but he is at far greater ease here compared to the state he was in while composing the *ĀAS*, and his confidence in his intention to apprehend, reflect on, and describe Lord Varadarāja does not waver. Comparing this verse to the ninth verse of the *ĀAS* is particularly illuminating regarding the poet's temperament:

9. What can I do? I've been bound in this body with my enemy, the one possessing knots in the heart, free-roaming in rough sense-objects; a calf laboring together in one place in a yoke with a running bull who delights in bearing affliction and pride, what can it do?[165]

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[164] *uddhāṭya yogakalyā hṛdayābjakośaṃ dhanyaiścirād api yathāruci gṛhyamāṇaḥ |*
yaḥ prasphurati aviratāṃ paripūrṇarūpaḥ śreyaḥ sa me diśatu śāśvatikaṃ mukundaḥ || VRS 1

[165] *kiṃ vā kurve viṣamaviṣayasvairiṇā vairiṇāhaṃ*
baddhaḥ svāmin vapuṣi hṛdayagranthinā sārdhamasmin |
ukṣṇā darpajvarabharajuṣā sākamekatra naddhaḥ

Rather than focusing on opening the storehouse of the heart through discipline and meditation, here the poet's heart is knotted and bound to the delusion and heat of his senses. The description of a young calf yoked to a rampaging bull makes Appayya's description of his troubled state all the more emphatic. On the other hand, in the opening verse of the *VRS* a more seasoned and mature poet is able to apprehend his heart and the deity patiently and at length, surrounded by other virtuous members of the temple community.

In terms of reflection and description, within the *VRS*, perhaps more than in any of Appayya's other *stotra*s including the *ĀAS*, seeing and perceiving are *dynamic* states, and whether it is the temple, the temple icon, the cosmic deity, or the outer world being in some way described, Appayya's poetry has a way of lending itself as an ornament to the deity. In a cluster of verses in the middle of the poem, Appayya even plays with our notions of perception, comparison, and connectedness as the relate to divine presence. In verses fifty-four and fifty-five, Appayya imagines a scene in which Kāmadeva momentarily beholds Varadarāja's legs, almost as if he is beholding himself in a spotless mirror:

54. The one whose bow is sugarcane, who is capable of loosing arrows left and right, mistaking your two lower legs for his own quivers because of a trick of light from [your] foot bracelets, having laid down his own arrows nearby, beholds this state of resemblance

55. O Lord of the three worlds, I fancy your two knees becoming a mirror of Kāmadeva, made of jewels which are objects of play. This one (Kāmadeva), seeing that (Varadarāja's knees) having a pure and delightful appearance, considers his own inverted form.[166]

śrāmyan vatsaḥ smarahara yuge dhāvatā kiṃ karotu || *ĀAS* 9

[166] *savyāpasavyaśaramokṣakrtīkṣudhanvā jaṅghe tava svaśaradhī iti saṃdihānaḥ* |
ālokate 'ṅghrikaṭakodgatarukchalena nyasyābhito nijaśarānanurūpabhāvam || *VRS* 54
jānudvayam tava jagattrayanātha manye mārasya kelimaṇidarpaṇatāmupetam |
ālokayan yadavadātamanojñavṛttam rūpam nijam kalayate viparītameṣaḥ || 55

Kāmadeva affects both comprehension and confusion: he sees Varadarāja's legs as if they were his own ornate quivers of arrows, but he is at a loss as to how this came to be. It is only by means of a trick of light; we might picture the temple icon here being polished and ornamented to the point that parts of it are practically mirror-like. The verb '*kalayate*' is also notable. It carries the sense of the verbal meanings to know, observe, consider, think of, etc., but it also has a more active sense: to perform/do, to furnish with. So, Kāmadeva stops to observe his image in the mirror of Viṣṇu, but he has also perhaps crafted his own image inspired by the deity.

Verses fifty-six and fifty-seven have an almost whirling or bewildering feeling to them as they focus solely on the thighs and groin areas of Viṣṇu/Varadarāja.

56. What else could be comparable to the thigh, apart from the right of the left and that [left] of that [right] one; how can Rambhā and the rest of the Apsarases suitably be similar? Even Urvaśī herself is but a particle of the power of that thigh, O Subhaga!

57. O Lord, the clothes worn by you contain the seat of passion of the fairest women//an abode of yellow colors. How can the glory of the touch of those clothes be with [your] loins which are themselves an abode of the essence of beauty?[167]

The Sanskrit phrasing of verse fifty-six is challenging to parse at first; and I think this was deliberate by Appayya. A literal rendering might be, "How can the state of resemblance of the thigh go to another, apart from (*vihāya*) the right of the left (*dakṣinam vāmasya*) and that of that one (*tam amuṣya*)?" Without the help of the commentary the flurry of pronouns is quite puzzling, especially considering the 'mirroring' of Kāmadeva and Viṣṇu in the previous verses. However, the verse is not comparing Kāmadeva's and Viṣṇu's thighs, it is only comparing the two of Viṣṇu alone. Thus, even Urvaśī (one of the most beautiful Apsarases, herself born from Viṣṇu's thigh)

[167] *ūroḥ kimanyadayatāmupamānabhāvam vāmasya dakṣiṇamamuṣya ca taṃ vihāya | rambhādayaḥ sadṛśa ityucitam kimetadyasyorvaśī subhaga sāpi vibhūtileśaḥ || VRS* 56
nātha tvayā parihitam varavarṇinīnām rāgasya yadvasanamāspadatām bibharti | saundaryasāranilayena kaṭītaṭena tasyaiva kim tu mahimā pariśīlanasya || 57

and the other Apsarases are only a mere fragment of Viṣṇu's beauty. Ultimately, the fact that his thighs are only comparable to each other means that they are in a way, incomparable.

In verse fifty-seven, a noteworthy *śleṣa* occurs. Varadarāja's clothes (*vasanam*) contain (*bibharti*) an abode (*āspadatām*) of the passion of beautiful women, but also yellow pigments. In stating in his commentary that such a paronomasia is present in the words "*varavarṇinīnām rāgasya*," Appayya also effectively ties this to the previous verse and the imagery of the Apsarases. In the commentary he outlines a sort of mixing or confusion (*saṃkara*) taking place; the beauty of God evokes both awe and passion; he is both an object of reverence and desire. Yet at the same time, God already is the essence of beauty itself. How could such fine rags or fleeting passions *enhance* a beauty which is already timeless and limitless? I am also inclined to think here that 'clothing' or adorning God can be seen as a metaphor for words and descriptions; namely, the use of our imperfect language to describe what is ineffable. Can even the most powerful poetic adornments get to the heart of what God is really like? Just as these clothes in a way conceal Varadarāja's most intimate parts, there might also be a tension in that the finest descriptions can both be evocative *and* obscuring.

The verses that follow move up from Varadarāja's loins and waist to his navel area, well-recognized as the birthplace of Brahma's lotus seat, and here the (pro)creative and life-generating qualities of Viṣṇu are evoked:

60. And, O One resting on the ocean, without an intermediate dwelling that is superimposed at this, your navel, the water's level could in no way reach a state of agitation. For it is not a supposition that this birthplace of the lotus exists right before the eyes, O Lord.

61. At the end of Kalpas, an abundant energy//pollen dust pervades as if making a great expanse of lotus seats; this lotus that rose up from the cavity of your navel, O Murāri, may it perennially be that which engenders me!

62. O Unmovable One, this line of flowers which are rays from divine rubies tied to the belly chain illuminates the radiance of a line of opening lotus buds risen from the navel which is the womb of the creator of countless hundreds of Kalpas to come.[168]

In verse sixty, the lotus extending from his navel is significant both in a cosmological sense (Brahma's seat, agitating the cosmic ocean/*kṣírasāgara*) and in a poetic sense. The 'word' (*padam*) "water" (*saras*) can also only make sense here (*vṛtti*) in a verse about Varadarāja's navel only because *lotuses* are born from both his navel and water. Viṣṇu nominally rests on the cosmic ocean, but the presence of the lotus is what creates the direct association between the waters and his navel in the reader's mind; Appayya makes clear that if we remove the image of the lotus, the verse is no longer legible. The adverbial "*sākṣāt*" ("before the eyes") also ties Viṣṇu's cosmic form directly to the temple image of Varadarāja. We see through the poet's eyes that Viṣṇu, the lotus-navelled creator of All, is immanently right here in front of us. Appayya makes clear that Varadarāja of Kanchipuram and the cosmic form of Mahāviṣṇu are one and the same.

The prosody and the aural qualities of verses sixty-one and sixty-two is also noteworthy. In verse sixty-one there appears to be a small but noteworthy sort of *anuprāsa* (alliteration) at specific points in each quarter verse: the *ka—ka* repetition in the first quarter, *na—na* in the third, and *bhū—bhū* in the second and fourth quarters. There are also several alliterative sequences in verse sixty-two that enhance its musicality, particularly repetitions of "*da*/*dha*" and "*śa*," (*ullāsayatyudarabandhanibaddhadivyaśoṇāśmaraśmikalikāvaliracyutaiṣā*).

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[168] *āropamadhyavasitim ca vinā tavāsyām nābhau saraḥpadamupaitu katham na vṛttim | sākṣādiyam sarasijasya samudraśāyin utpattibhūriti hi nāyaka nāyamūhaḥ* || *VRS* 60
kalpāntareṣu vitatiṃ kamalāsanānāṃ bhūyo 'pi kartumiva bhūri rajo dadhānam | nābhihnade samuditamṃ nalinaṃ tavaitadbhūyāt sadaiva mama bhūtikaraṃ murāre || 61
ullāsayatyudarabandhanibaddhadivyaśoṇāśmaraśmikalikāvaliracyutaiṣā | āgāmyanekaśatakalpavidhātṛgarbhanābhyudgatāmburuhakuṭmalapaṅktiśobhām || 62

Regarding their subject matter, there are three main observations to be noted in reading these verses. First, in verse sixty-two it appears that the rubies on Varadarāja's belly chain illuminate or enhance (*ullāsayati*) the radiance of the lotus buds risen from his navel. This perhaps contrasts with what we observed in verses fifty-six and fifty-seven; namely that the beauty of Varadarāja is without comparison and transcends all adornments. Secondly, besides the procession (throughout the poem) of the devotee's gaze up from the feet of Varadarāja to the crown of his head, there is another movement over the course of these particular verses. In verses fifty-four through fifty-seven, which describe Viṣṇu's thighs and loins, there is a *śṛṅgāra rasa* (a flavor of the erotic) that pervades. Kāmadeva (Cupid) is identified as the 'One whose bow is sugarcane' and he is described as athletic and ambidextrous (the commentary mentions him being like Arjuna). He also pauses to admire Viṣṇu, and to admire himself as if in a mirror. The imagery of the Apsarases, along with the women's passion in verse fifty-seven add to this tone. Here, in Varadarāja's intimate regions we have a poeticization of desire, gazing, passion, and hints at sexual activity.

However, in verses sixty through sixty-two there is an important shift in tone and imagery. In the navel region, we have imagery not of procreation, but of gestation and creation (and cosmic creation at that). Verse sixty refers to Varadarāja's navel as the birthplace (*utpattibhūḥ*) of the lotus, which itself is suggestive of the image of an umbilical cord (Brahma, the material creator god, also resides on this lotus). Taken together, the images of water, wombs, navels, blossoms, and the like are also images associated with birth. The Kalpas (the eons of the creation and re-creation in the Hindu cosmos) are mentioned both in the past tense (verse sixty-one: *kalpānta*) and in terms of looking to the future (verse sixty-two: *āgāmyanekaśatakalpa*) suggesting the constant and eternal movement of this process. It is indicative of Appayya's poetic

skill that the movement from interest/desire/procreation to birth/creation simultaneously mirrors the movement of the devotee's gaze up from the groin area to the navel. He also takes the time to develop this subtly over several verses rather than within an individual verse, which adds to the reader's enjoyment of the poem and his reflection on Varadarāja's image.

As a way of tying together all that has been discussed hereabove, which simultaneously offers a way to further elucidate Appayya's poetic skill and his knowledge and appreciation for the *kāvya* tradition, I will conclude this chapter with an analysis of a verse from the *VRS* that pauses to savor the color of a ruby-like gem on a bracelet around the deity's wrist, but also has broader allusions that stretch back to the poetry of Kālidāsa. Verse seventy-three of the *stotra* states:

> 73. O Varada, I imagine that since this jewel has the redness of a bud by its very nature, and since it has been placed into a bracelet, being cherished by the Lord; therefore, having reached a state of blind intoxication, it creates contempt even for the very sun before one's eyes.[169]

The poetic thrust of this verse comes from the impression that the redness of this gem that has been placed in a bracelet for Varadarāja even outpaces the robust redness of the sun as it sets. Varadarāja himself even adores the gem, and in the intoxicated state that seeing it causes, one forgets anything else. The compound '*pallavarāga*' specifically, was borrowed by Appayya (as he makes clear in his commentary) from a verse in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*:

> Having made pure the courses and intermediate spaces, at the end of day, the light of the sun and the sage's cow, ruddy like the red of a bud, set out to go to their abode.[170]

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[169] *jātyaiva yad varada pallavarāga eṣa yallālyate ca bhavatā kaṭake niveśya |*
manye maṇistadupagamya madāndhabhāvaṃ sākṣādayaṃ savitureva karotyavajñām || VRS 73
[170] *saṃcārapūtāni digantarāṇi kṛtvā dināṅte nilayāya gantum |*
pracakrame pallavarāgatāmrā prabhā pataṅgasya muneśca dhenuḥ || RV 2.15

This literary allusion gives an added resonance to the verse, both in the simple fact that here Appayya consciously recalls arguably the most venerated of classical Sanskrit poets, and in the fact that the motif of the powerful color of the sunset is prominent in both verses, with Appayya inverting this imagery in a novel and original way. In Kālidāsa's verse the sun's declining light and the cow share a rusty reddish color, and the coming of dusk signals both (along with all people and creatures) to return home. This passing of day and the pastoral imagery here recalls portions of Mayūra's poetry discussed earlier. On the other hand, Appayya's verse emphasizes the *otherworldly* red luster of the gem, to an extent itself also the deep red color of the setting sun, but upon viewing, the brilliance of this gem transcends that of the sun and creates contempt for it in one's eyes. Here, as in the *ĀSR*, Appayya consciously builds on classics of Sanskrit *kāvya* while simultaneously crafting his own original and imaginative verse. Above all else, the analysis of these *stotra*s makes clear that at heart these were *poetic* projects of Appayya Dīkṣita, rather than projects exclusively consisting in exercises in pedagogy or devotional religion. These *stotra*s undoubtedly contain elements of prayer, instruction, reflection, and pedagogical utility, but like all the best poetry, they are not bounded or delimited by such elements. Simply put, these verses underline my core argument about these devotional praise-poems, namely, that it is best to approach these kinds of highly developed *stotra*s as poetry *first*, before applying other modes of reading and analysis.

Chapter Three: From Poem to Commentary, Commentary to Poetics: Appayya's *Varadarājastava* and Its Relation to *Alaṃkāraśāstra*

I. Introduction

Along with his poetic skill, Appayya Dīkṣita was a polymath of intellectual mastery in several disciplines. Appayya produced significant works in various forms within Śaiva philosophy and theology, Hindu philosophical non-dualism (*advaita vedānta*), Vedic hermeneutics (*mīmāṃsā*), Grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), and poetic theory in Sanskrit (*alaṃkāraśāstra*), in addition to commentaries on earlier poetry and the epics and his own devotional poetry. Judging from his work (and his commentaries especially), it seems that poetic theory was particularly dear to him, and his influence in this field continues to the present. He produced three works in aesthetics and poetic theory, the *Kuvalayānanda* (the 'Joy of the Water Lily') and the *Citramīmāṃsā* (the 'Investigation of Figuration') are particularly significant, along with the shorter *Vṛttivārtika* (a 'Further exposition on Commentaries').[171] These are in addition to auto-commentaries on his own *stotra*s, which, especially in the case of the *Varadarājastava*, contain glosses and explanations of his poetry, expositions on Sanskrit poetics, and other intertextual information.

This chapter will examine in detail selections from Appayya's work as an *ālaṃkārika* or poetic theorist in his standalone works *and* his auto-commentary on the *Varadarājastava*, and how this work informs his devotional poetry. A brief overview of the discipline of poetic theory in Sanskrit and a more thorough examination of Appayya's oeuvre and his relation to

[171] Yigal Bronner translates *Citramīmāṃsā* this way in "Sanskrit Poetics," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012), 1248. Elsewhere he translates it as "Investigation of the Colorful," in "Back to the Future: Appayya Dīkṣita's *Kuvalayānanda* and the Rewriting of Sanskrit Poetics," *Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 48 (2004): 48. In the discussion of poetics, "*citra*" is a broad and loaded term (see Mammaṭa's treatment of *citrakāvya*, for example) with multiple meanings in different contexts.

contemporaries will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between poetry and pedagogy both within Appayya's work. The chapter then turns to a close reading of selected verses from the *Varadarājastava* and their accompanying commentary, focusing specifically on its discussion of *alaṃkāra*s within the verses while seeking to understand the purpose of Appayya's commentarial project, its broader implications, and how his poetry ultimately informs his poetics. As the previous chapter situated Appayya's *stotra*s in the long tradition of Sanskrit poetry, this chapter will situate his *Varadarājastava* and commentary in the tradition of Sanskrit poetics. Using the *Varadarājastava* as a starting point, rather than as a mere contextual detail for other focuses, allows us to see clearly how his thought evolved *from* the realm of poetry *to* other realms such as pedagogy, poetics, and even philosophy. To do this, we need to prioritize our reading of his poetry, using other genres of text as context.

II. An Overview of Sanskrit Poetics (*Alaṃkāraśāstra*) and Appayya's Place Within It

Regarding traditions of literary theory, poetics, dramaturgy, and criticism in world literatures, the dual traditions of poetic theory (*Alaṃkāraśāstra*) and dramaturgy (*Nāṭyaśāstra*) in the Sanskrit sphere of South, Southeast, and Central Asia are among the oldest, most intellectually rigorous, and most continually developed anywhere in the world. Sanskrit poetry itself has roots in the epics (the *Rāmāyaṇa* especially) and began to flourish on its own in the works of Aśvaghoṣa (2nd c. CE) and Kālidāsa (4th c. CE); whereas the first blossoming of poetic theory and analysis occurs in the work of Daṇḍin (end of 6th century CE) and Bhāmaha (6th to 7th c. CE). Another important formative text from the world of stage drama is the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, which likely predates the work of Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha, though its dating is less reliable. Daṇḍin's work, the *Kāvyādarśa* ('Mirror on Poetry'), is an early touchstone within the

development of Sanskrit poetics, and it was translated into other languages besides Sanskrit and read widely across South, Central, and Southeast Asia.[172] Daṇḍin's *Mirror* provides an early, thorough list of poetic ornaments (*alaṃkāra*s) in Sanskrit, a set of literary qualities (*guṇa*s) and flaws (*doṣa*s), and some early discussion of poetic genres and styles.[173] It remained a significant work in poetic theory; however, it is important to point out that neither the *Kāvyādarśa* nor any other work in this discipline occupied the role of being a sort of 'root text' or a sole source of authority the way the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*s were in Vedic hermeneutics, the *Brahmasūtra*s were in Vedānta, or the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini was in the study of grammar. Nonetheless, the *Kāvyādarśa* can be seen as a locus where many important themes in Sanskrit poetics are given an early expression. These include thoughts on the number, types, and correct classification of various poetic ornaments, reflections on style and genre, and further reflections (via the consideration of poetic strengths and flaws) on what constitutes good poetry.

After this early period, the valley of Kashmir in the far north became a central location for innovation in Sanskrit intellectual disciplines and an overall efflorescence of Sanskrit literature and culture. This was especially true for the development of poetic theory in Sanskrit in

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[172] See Ann Monius, "The many lives of Daṇḍin: The *Kāvyādarśa* in Sanskrit and Tamil," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 4, no. 2 (April 2004): 1-37, Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Belles-Lettres: The Influence of Daṇḍin and Kṣemendra," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (1996): 393-410, and *A Lasting Vision: Daṇḍin's Mirror in the World of Asian Letters* edited by Yigal Bronner, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2023, for further information.

[173] My discussion here in the broadest sense relies on Yigal Bronner's article "Sanskrit Poetics," along with other sources such as Edwin Gerow's *Indian Poetics*, in *A History of Indian Literature*, ed. Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984) and my own reading with John Nemec of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*.

The following is a brief example of a type of simile (*upamā*) explained by Daṇḍin:

"Your face is only equal with a rose-colored lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) and not some other lotus." Because of the exclusion of similarity with others, this is a simile having restriction.

tvanmukhaṃ kamalenaiva tulyaṃ na anyena kenacit |
ityanyasāmyavyāvṛtteriyam sā niyamopamā || KĀ 2.19

Kashmir. What was particularly significant was the "push for systematization" characterized by the work of Vāmana and the incorporation of cognitive and semantic theories in the work of Udbhaṭa in particular; both lived in the 8th century CE.[174] In addition to these innovations the Kashmiri *ālaṃkārika*s gradually assimilated into their own work on aesthetics a discussion having roots in the aforementioned *Nāṭyaśāstra* concerning emotional flavors (*rasa*s) evoked in drama and the ways in which an audience receives, experiences, and responds to them.[175] If such emotional forces and interplay existed within a staged drama, then they surely must also exist in the more interiorized drama of a poem or other work of literature when they impress upon the mind of a sympathetic reader. As Yigal Bronner mentions, these trends of thought are masterfully integrated in the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana (9th c. CE), which combines speculation on the role and place of *rasa*s in drama with a teleological model borrowed from *Mīmāṃsā*/hermeneutics in that "all the elements of a text are seen as subordinate to the production of a single overriding import."[176] For Ānandavardhana, the telos of poetry in Sanskrit is to invoke *rasa*, and poetry does this by means of suggestion (*dhvani*) rather than denotation. Ānandavardhana's work allowed for significant progress in Sanskrit poetics: theorists now had a comprehensive framework through which they could discuss the nature of poetry and its effect on its readers, and simultaneously a framework through which they could judge the qualities of various literary works and the epics (as Ānandavardhana himself had done) and engage in literary criticism. They could also discuss and debate the merits and potential shortcomings of Ānandavardhana's framework itself while offering their own perspectives.

[174] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1245-1246.
[175] Ibid., 1246.
[176] Ibid.

By and large, Ānandavardhana's framework became the standard paradigm for poetics in Kashmir by the beginning of the twelfth century CE.[177] Around this same time Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa* ('Light on Poetry') became available in Kashmir which further integrated Ānandavardhana's work with theories on *rasa*s and discussions of poetic ornaments that had existed previously (especially those having roots in Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*). Mammaṭa used Ānandavardhana's thesis on suggestion to create a tiered system of poetries of differing quality. The highest, in Mammaṭa's critical judgment, is poetry in which suggestion is most prominent; the second tier consists in poetry in which suggestion is present but secondary; and the third tier, what he called '*citrakāvya*' or 'flashy poetry' contained no suggestion, only operated through other poetic devices, and often contained elaborate verbal puzzles and diagrams. As Yigal Bronner shows, Mammaṭa's work was significant in that he again put all the different analytical categories within Sanskrit poetics to use:

> [S]uggestive processes and emotional flavors were crucial for the analysis of *dhvani*, while the charm of 'flashy' poetry was analyzed using the *alaṃkāra* tool kit, which Mammaṭa revisited at length. If Ānandavardhana led a 'paradigm shift' in Sanskrit poetics, Mammaṭa signaled the resumption of 'normal science.' The overall framework he provided invited new studies on *alaṃkāra*s, *rasa*-related matters (in poetry or dramaturgy), semantics, and cognition, either in independent treatises or commentaries on older works (Mammaṭa's own work in particular).[178]

Before Ānandavardhana, the *alaṃkāra* toolkit gave poetic theorists and critics the ability to comprehend and evaluate poetry on largely only a formal level; with the *Dhvanyāloka*, critics were given a specific paradigm (*rasa-dhvani*) by which to evaluate poetry in form, style, *and* content; after Mammaṭa's reintegration of the earlier toolkit with Ānandavardhana's perspective, critics and poeticians were given a much wider choice than ever before in how they approached

[177] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1246.
[178] Ibid., 1247.

and evaluated poetry and drama. They could analyze poetic ornamentation on its own, or *alongside* an evaluation the overall emotional flavor of a work; they could push Ānandavardhana's theory in new directions or offer provocative critiques regarding our understanding of *rasa* and the nature of poetic language; or they could simply take an 'all-of-the-above" approach, cataloguing and anthologizing any number of examples and their poetic import (along with subtle distinctions, gradations, and preferences that gives insight into their sense of taste and literary opinions). However, certain crucial points of tension continued to exist within the discipline. One obvious point of tension existed between the suggestion/*dhvani*-centered framework and earlier frameworks with formal analyses of *alaṃkāra*s at their core. Another point of vociferous debate involved the locus of *rasa* and how it functioned (is it in the text or in the reader, or both? how does the reader experience it?). The most significant issue, however, was perhaps the potential insecurity and instability of the discipline itself: its "constant borrowing from older and prestigious knowledge systems while attempting to establish itself as an independent discipline."[179] The relative chronological lateness of poetic theory in comparison to grammar, hermeneutics, and the other various *Vedāṅga*s ('Vedic Sciences'), coupled with its lack of a root text vested with a universally recognized authority, meant that the discipline would invariably be unstable and constantly fighting for respectability in the intellectual scene of South Asia. Despite these tensions both within and outside the discipline, it persevered and expanded well beyond Kashmir in the following centuries.

It should be noted that during the time of Kashmiri efflorescence there were other important *ālaṃkārika*s who lived and worked in other parts of India. These included King Bhoja of Dhār, in contemporary Madhya Pradesh, who lived and reigned in the early half of the

[179] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1248.

eleventh century, and the Jain monk Hemacandra who also lived in the eleventh- or twelfth-century CE in Gujarat.[180] Hemacandra is a particularly noteworthy figure. His amalgamative and encyclopedic approach was a refinement of Bhoja's scholarship and arguably a key precursor to the resumption (and expansion) of the 'normal science' of the discipline post-Mammaṭa.[181] He also had important contemporaries and intellectual descendants in the Jain communities of western India, including Vāgbhaṭa and Māṇikyacandra, the latter of whom, as Gary Tubb notes, wrote a significant early commentary on Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*, and Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra who jointly authored the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* which dealt with both dramaturgy and poetics.[182]

> Regarding Bhoja and Hemacandra specifically, Gary Tubb says:
>
> > [For Hemacandra] the goal of usefulness is apparent, and on the subject of poetics in particular one may summarize the difference between Bhoja and Hemacandra by saying that Bhoja aimed to be as detailed as possible, without regard for the provenance or coherence of the material collected, while Hemacandra aimed at presenting a full account of the current state of the art in literary theory, even at the cost of ignoring or explicitly excluding entire catalogues of obsolete or peripheral information.[183]

Here we see in Hemacandra two strains of thought that would be hugely important for later poetic theorists: an appreciation for the organizational coherence and pedagogical usefulness of the subject matter, and a realization of the importance of historical consciousness, i.e., a sense of "what is going on currently and what has gone on in the past in the discipline." Both of these strains are central to the poetic theory of Appayya and his later rival Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, who was the last major figure in the discipline of Sanskrit poetics before modernity.

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[180] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1247. Gary Tubb dates Hemacandra to the early half of the twelfth century in "Hemacandra and Sanskrit Poetics," *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Culture in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (State Univ. of New York Press: Albany, 1998), 57.
[181] For his and his patron's relationship to King Bhoja and his academy see Gary Tubb, "Hemacandra and Sanskrit Poetics," 54-56.
[182] Ibid., 54.
[183] Ibid., 55.

Gary Tubb further explains how the work of Hemacandra and his fellow scholars in Gujarat showed their awareness of the developments taking place in Kashmir while at the same time being instrumental in ending the geographical isolation of the study of poetics far to the north and helping to break the monopoly Hindu Brahmins largely possessed in various intellectual disciplines in the process.[184] Furthermore, in Yigal Bronner's summation of Sanskrit poetics, he shows the vigor and vitality of scholarship outside Kashmir in outlining the arguments of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra on the experience of *rasa*. In contradistinction to the Śaiva Kashmiri polymath Abhinavagupta (early 11th century CE), the two disciples of Hemacandra argue that the experience of *rasa* may *not* always be pleasant if the underlying emotions themselves (i.e., grief, disgust, anger, etc.) are unpleasant (this being an example of a revision or critique of a significant part of Ānandavardhana's original theory).[185] Abhinavagupta had asserted that the experience of *rasa* is necessarily pleasurable because literature "abstracts characters of their individuality," and thus in various situations "enables readers to 'taste' love for no one in particular or to experience fear that is stripped of any frightening cause."[186] Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra on the other hand believed that an emotion's 'aesthetic flavor,' "is not very different from the emotion itself (i.e., grief is the 'flavor' of grief), even if the spectator/reader can intellectually appreciate, and thus enjoy, the skill [on the part of the poet or actor] in evoking it."[187] The specific intrigues of this debate aside, what it shows is that while Kashmir was a significant intellectual center in the Sanskrit world, already by the twelfth century other centers existed which hosted figures well-versed in the overall tradition and capable of responding to, or even challenging, prevailing Kashmir-based views on poetics. It is also but one

[184] Tubb, "Hemacandra and Sanskrit Poetics," 57.
[185] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1248.
[186] Ibid., 1247.
[187] Ibid., 1248.

example that illustrates the remarkable ways in which the overall tradition of Sanskrit poetics expanded in the centuries following Ānandavardhana and Mammaṭa.

As time went on, the study of Sanskrit poetics blossomed throughout the subcontinent. In addition to the scholars already mentioned, Viśvanātha, who authored the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (the 'Mirror on Composition') perhaps lived in Orissa and is dated to either the 14th century or early 15th c. CE.[188] Rūpa Gosvāmin and his nephew Jīva Gosvāmin flourished in Bengal at the beginning of the 16th century.[189] Appayya Dīkṣita lived in the 16th century, and Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja resided at the Mughal court of Shāh Jahān who ruled from 1628-1658.[190] Separately, Bronner and Tubb also mention a Narendraprabha Sūri, a Jain monk in western India who lived in the early 13th century, and Amṛtānandayogin, who lived in the Telegu-speaking region of southern India in the 14th century.[191] Appayya and Jagannātha were commonly regarded as the last towering figures in this premodern period in Sanskrit poetics.

As previously mentioned, Appayya authored the *Kuvalayānanda*, the *Citramīmāṃsā*, and the shorter *Vṛttivārtika*, all likely toward the end of his life when he was focusing on the *Varadarājastava* as well. A generation or two later, Jagannātha authored the *Rasagaṅgādhara* (the 'Ocean of Rasa') and in direct response to Appayya, the *Citramīmāṃsākhaṇḍana* (the 'Demolition of the *Citramīmāṃsā*'). We will discuss Appayya's work in poetics in greater detail further on, but here we can outline Appayya's and Jagannātha's relationship more broadly and the philological culture of South India during this period.

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[188] See Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the Messenger: A Controversy in Late Sanskrit Poetics and its Implications," *Bulletin of SOAS* 70, no. 1 (2008): 80, and P.V. Kane *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 296-299.
[189] See David Buchta, "Pedagogical Poetry: Didactics and Devotion in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Stavamālā*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2014).
[190] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1248.
[191] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 80.

Yigal Bronner states that during this period, beginning in the sixteenth century, the *ālaṃkārika*s' historical awareness, the intellectual rigor of *navyanyāya* (New Logic), and new essay styles in which the writers tended to write produced an intellectual climate in which "the [individual] *product*, in the form of refined answers to older, unresolved questions, was often subjugated to the *process*: an exercise in the history of ideas."[192] These new approaches also "emboldened explorations [into topics] about which earlier generations had seemed hesitant."[193] Bronner cites as an example Appayya's description of suggestion in the *Citramīmāṃsā* as a sort of intellectualizing process of elimination that is not so unlike deductive reasoning, which (subversive in itself) also recalled the much earlier (and largely unheeded) critique of Mahimabhaṭṭa (11th c. CE, Kashmir) against Ānandavardhana, stating that 'suggestion' was simply just another word for 'inference.'[194] This assertion by Appayya, while reflective and intellectually grounded (as opposed to simply being polemical for argument's sake), was nonetheless one of many provocative ideas for which he was notorious, and assertions like this invariably produced strong reactions. Responding to this and many other against-the-grain ideas in Appayya's *Citramīmāṃsā*, Jagannātha was apparently incensed enough to draft his *Citramīmāṃsākhaṇḍana* to be a comprehensive refutation of Appayya's work.

Although Jagannātha's relationship to Appayya was adversarial (a *khaṇḍana* is a refutatory or 'demolitionary' essay), it was nonetheless motivated by concerns at the heart of the discipline, i.e., "what is it that makes the best type of poetry so great," and a concern for the preservation of the discipline itself.[195] The debate between Appayya and Jagannātha centers

[192] Bronner, "Sanskrit Poetics," 1248. Italics are mine.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid. Also see James D. Reich's monograph, *To Savor the Meaning: The Theology of Literary Emotions in Medieval Kashmir*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2021), especially chapter four, 135-184.
[195] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 76.

around a famous example cited in Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*, which was of the highest type of poetry for him (following Ānandavardhana) in that it predominantly suggested "an emotional flavor but [contained] no obvious poetic ornament."[196] Bronner and Tubb translate the verse as follows:

> All the sandal paste has fallen
> from the slopes of your breast.
> The red has been wiped from your lower lip.
> The makeup is missing from the edges of your eyes.
> Your body has grown thin and the hair on it is bristling.
> You lying go-between!
> You don't realize the pain you cause a friend.
> You went from here to bathe in the pool.
> You didn't even go near that jerk.[197]

It is spoken from the point of view of a woman who has realized her friend, whom she asked to arrange a rendezvous with her lover, went and had a tryst with the lover herself (instead of ostensibly bathing). For Mammaṭa, the fact that the woman's knowledge of this is suggested rather than said outright to her friend is the key to the verse even though it engendered much commentary and differing interpretations in the centuries that followed (which was to be expected).[198] The nuances and details of these debates aside, what is important to grasp is that they grant one a window into broader currents within *alaṃkāraśāstra* itself: the examination of the mechanics of a poem or a single verse; the centrality of suggestion as opposed to the use of specific tropes and ornaments to achieve poetic results; and the ways in which a reader grasps the meaning and the 'flavor' of a verse whether by affective or intuitive means, or through intellectual discernment. These debates also said a great deal about the perspectives and

[196] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 77.
[197] Ibid. (The scenario in this verse is also the source of the article's title.)
[198] Bronner and Tubb suggest that commentaries on the *Kāvyaprakāśa* became a genre in and of themselves and a common vehicle for subsequent developments in poetics, see "Blaming the messenger," 78.

backgrounds of their authors: i.e., whether they may be also logicians, grammarians, theologians, *Mīmāṃsika*s, and so on, and how these other disciplines colored their arguments. In addition to supplying the above verse near the beginning of the *Kāvyaprakāśa* as an example of the best kind of poetry (in which, for him, as previously stated, suggestion predominates without any specific poetic ornaments at play), Mammaṭa returns to it later as a refutation (one of the few) of Mahimabhaṭṭa's view that suggestion is merely inference. For Mammaṭa, the imagery and evidence in the verse "is not conclusive proof of one activity or the other (bathing or lovemaking)," it is "described in a way that could support either interpretation," and therefore the male lover's rakish character cannot be logically or inferentially proven.[199] However, although Mammaṭa's reading of the verse remained the most prominent, other interpretations followed.

Some suggested a poetic ornament *was* at play in the verse, such as Māṇikyacandra, who claimed that the verse was an example of a reciprocal comparison or simile (*upameyopamā*), in the sense that "you [go-between] are as low as he is, and he is as low as you."[200] Another commentator, Śrīdhara (ascribing this view to Vācaspatimiśra) suggested that an ironic reversal (*viparītalakṣaṇā*) is at play since the literal meaning of "You went from here to bathe in the pool," cannot be true due to the tone of the verse.[201]

These differing perspectives illustrate larger (though fruitful) tensions within the discipline: *ālaṃkārika*s had to explain the experience of the emotional content of a work (ideally through the process of suggestion), on the one hand, *while also* doing justice to the experience of the wording, formal mechanics, and verbal textures of a work, on the other hand. In practice, they commonly simply acknowledged the former while devoting much of their work to the latter;

[199] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 78.
[200] Ibid., 79.
[201] Ibid., 80.

furthermore, existing theories within more established disciplines (especially grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and *nyāya* philosophy) on the nature of semantics and language contributed to the difficulty in establishing the authority of one's own theory (a difficulty of course exacerbated by the lack of an ancient and revered root text). Into this challenging, fecund, and fractious environment Appayya stepped to offer his own views.

It is interesting that the above messenger-verse is the *second* one discussed in Appayya's *Citramīmāṃsā*, the first being a well-known verse from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* detailing Pārvatī's beauty and her ascetic practice while exposed to the rain and the elements.[202] His ordering and selection almost seems to indicate a desire to refocus the discussion on the poetry *of poets themselves* and the invariable change and innovation produced, rather than stock examples rehashed and debated endlessly in the realm of theory. For the "Blaming the messenger" verse, however, he traces two sequential layers of interpretation; a layer of "superficial (*āpātataḥ*) interpretation which supports the literal statement," which is then followed by a "hidden (*hṛdi sthitaḥ*) implication which is in the end the only possible conclusion."[203] Appayya's analysis is a refinement of his predecessors', and he acknowledges the centrality of suggestion in the verse; however, his conclusions also subvert his predecessors' views. As Bronner and Tubb explain, Appayya constructs a sort of flowchart through which the reader checks and eliminates all spurious conclusions before understanding the true meaning; in this he is saying that it is not simply the semantic power of the word "jerk" (*adhamaḥ*) that gives the verse its suggestive power and ultimate meaning, but it is the construction and flow of the *entire* verse. In doing this, Appayya's approach "has much in common with the inference-centered attack on *dhvani*" made by Mahimabhaṭṭa earlier, even though he acknowledges the importance of *dhvani* and uses much

[202] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 82.
[203] Ibid., 83.

of its terminology.[204] Here, in brief, Appayya's analysis of the verse shows both a continuation and evolution of Mammaṭa's integrative approach; he uses terminology related to the theory of suggestion but also uses an analytical approach that recalls the formal analyses of pre-*dhvani* poetic theorists while marking a clear step forward from merely formal concerns.

Stepping back from the specifics of the relationship between Appayya and Jagannātha, it is important to contextualize their life and works within the broader social realities of South Asia in this period. The realities of growing sectarianism and the prominence of temple culture will be discussed later, but here we can explore the significance of South Asian textual and intellectual culture as it relates specifically to Appayya and Jagannātha's era. Broadly, it is interesting to consider both Sanskrit poetry and poetics in these contexts perhaps even more so than other Sanskrit disciplines. As previously noted, the lack of a root text and other issues left the discipline of *Alaṃkāraśāstra* with a certain instability, this as compared with *Mīmāṃsā*, Grammar, Vedānta, and other major disciplines. However, these very same disciplines (especially in comparison to *Alaṃkāraśāstra*) had always resided in a sort of immemorial, almost timeless, inward-facing, and deeply Sanskritic vacuum in which things such as historical change, pluralism, and vernacularization wouldn't have been able to be countenanced, much less discussed. This is not to say that innovation was non-existent in these traditions, it most certainly did occur. Yet, these traditions largely accreted over time in such a way that newer texts and commentaries remained—or at least presented themselves as—mere satellites orbiting around the central body of the root text and commentaries, pointing inward toward the central body, and bound by its gravitational pull.

[204] Bronner and Tubb, "Blaming the messenger," 83.

Sometimes, when more startling and uniquely innovative illustrations and discussions of the core subject matter of these disciplines did occur, it's noteworthy that such authors reached deeply into Sanskrit literature (*Kāvya* and the epics) or dramaturgy to fully articulate their ideas. In Grammar, the 7th-century *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is one such example, in which the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, told in *mahākāvya* style, is used to elucidate the grammatical and semantic principles of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. In the discipline of Vedānta (and Advaita Vedānta specifically) the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* allegorizes the story of Rāma from an Advaitin perspective. The 11th-century *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Kṛṣṇamiśra also discusses Advaitin philosophy in the form of an allegorical drama. Although each of these texts are highly original and innovative works, none of them are regarded as core texts either intellectually or doctrinally within their traditions. In other words, despite their originality, the 'gravitational pull' of these traditions arguably prevents such texts from achieving a preeminent status.

I would argue, in contrast to these traditions, that both literature/dramaturgy and poetics are much more adroit in their evolution over time and are much more fertile ground for broader historical and cultural consciousness *particularly* because they lack this unyielding central gravitational pull. In *Kāvya*, for example, the *Rāmāyaṇa* identifies itself as the "*ādikāvya*," or the 'first poem,' but then what of the influence of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Daṇḍin, and the earliest verse anthologies? Why does only one of the traditional *mahākāvya*s take its material from the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself? Taking this into account along with the unique history of *Alaṃkāraśāstra*, which has already been discussed, it is clear that even though there is less stability in this tradition than in other intellectual disciplines, much more is at play, and, I argue, much more is *possible*. Specifically for Appayya, the kind of dynamic energy which I believe was particular to Sanskrit poetry and poetics was coupled with the fertile and energetic climate of the

Vijayanagara empire (and its later remnants) and the dynamism of *navya-nyāya* intellectual culture in shaping his own intellectual and poetic character. Here, again, the power and possibilities of poetry helped to shape him, just as much, if not more than, other contexts and circumstances.

III. The Commixture of Poetry and Poetics in the *Varadarājastava* and Its Commentary

Toward the beginning of the *Varadarājastava*, in the fourth verse, Appayya lays out his intent for the poem, which is at once both a project of both religious aims (expressing devotion) and art (crafting quality poetic description):

> 4. O Lord, your image, the ornament-jewel upon the elephant hill, still honored by unselfish people; O Vaikuṇṭha, I am one who holds an intention to describe it because of my intense desire for apprehending and reflecting on your name, form, and qualities.[205]

It is evident too, early on, that the *stotra* is not a simple act of devotion, but an elaborate fusion of religious sentiment, poeticization, and further reflection (in the form of Appayya's commentary) on this creation and its antecedents in poetry and poetics. Appayya's intent is to describe the temple icon (*mūrti*) of Varadarāja from his feet to the crown of the head; his intent is based on his desire to apprehend and appreciate the form and qualities of Varadarāja, and this desire stems from the intense feeling of joy and devotion at the sight of the temple icon. There is also a meditative sense here, too, in that Appayya wishes to *dwell on* Varadarāja's name, form, and qualities. Appayya's commentary makes this last point clear when he states that, "The suggestion of emotion manifested by this [verse] is pleasure in the form of devotion and whose refuge is the Lord. The feeling which is pleasure manifesting in kings, sages, and gods is to be

[205] *netas tathāpi tava nirmamalokasevyāṃ mūrtiṃ madāvalamahīdhararatnabhūṣām |*
vaikuṇṭha varṇayitum asmi dhṛtābhilāṣas tvannāmarūpaguṇacintanalābhalobhāt || VRS 4

described."[206] Yet, even though he is discussing this feeling of devotion from a first-hand, first-person perspective, it implies a sense of *collective* joy at the sight of the image of Varadarāja in the temple space. From an *ālaṃkārika* perspective, it is noteworthy that Appayya, in his commentary, combines reflections on the emotional content of the verse (as quoted above) *with* specific ornaments that are central to the verse's mechanics. In this way he is fusing a *rasa-dhvani*-centered approach of Ānandavardhana and the Kashmiri poeticians with the *alaṃkāra*-focused approach pioneered by Daṇḍin. He acknowledges the necessity of giving proper explanation of the verse's emotional content independent of poetic ornamentation, but at the same time he carves out a space for a discussion of *alaṃkāra*s too, since *both* suggestion and ornamentation have key roles in the verse. The poem itself, with its broader meditative quality, is not merely an act of devotion either; it provides an unbounded space for the deep reflection on and illustration of Varadarāja's form and attributes, as we will continue to see.

In his commentary on verse four, Appayya discusses the ornaments of '*parikāra*' and '*rūpaka*' specifically, *parikāra* meaning "retinue," which Edwin Gerow defines as "a figure in which the adjectival qualifications or epithets of a thing are multiplied" to accentuate its distinctiveness.[207] *Rūpaka* is commonly translated as 'metaphor' but is more precisely a specific set of subtypes of metaphorical identifications between two objects either in compound with one another or given equal syntactic and grammatical weight in a phrase or verse.[208] In the fourth verse, both ornaments add poetic density to the description of the temple image of Varadarāja.

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[206] *anena bhagavadviśayā bhaktirupā ratiḥ abhivyajyata iti bhāvadhvaniḥ. devatāgurunṛpādiṣu abhivyajyamānā ratiḥ bhāva ity ucyate.*
[207] Edwin Gerow, *Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 203.
[208] See my master's thesis, "Teaching Through Devotion," 23-24, and Gerow's treatments of *rūpaka* (239-243) and *utprekṣā* (131-138) in his *Glossary*; *utprekṣā* is commonly translated as 'poetic fancy' but perhaps closer to the broader category of 'metaphor' that we know in English poetics.

Appayya borrows the definition and example verse illustrating *parikāra* in his own *Kuvalayānanda* in discussing the verse:

> When there is an epithet (*viśeṣaṇa*) with particular intent (*sābhiprāya*), that is the ornament '*Parikāra*';
>
> "May Śiva, the one whose crest is furnished with the nectar-rayed one [the moon], remove your affliction!"[209]

Here in the example, the epithet or string of attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*) attributed to Śiva is "the one whose crest is furnished with the moon" (*sudhāṃśukalitottamsas*). As noted by Rudraṭa and an early Jain commentator of his, Namisādhu, the qualifier "with particular intent" (*sābhiprāya*) is important in that the attributes should be "imaginatively significant" in some way for their subject.[210] In Appayya's brief example, the fact that Śiva is crested with the moon suggests a sense of coolness, which is the antidote for the "affliction" (*tāpam*, lit. "heat" or fever) of his devotee. A *parikāra* is not simply a rote string of attributes; it needs to have a particular relevance to the subject matter of a given verse.

Varadarāja is described by two epithets in the fourth verse; his *mūrti* is both "honored by unselfish people" (*nirmamalokasevyām*) and "the ornament-jewel upon the elephant hill" (*madāvalamahīdhararatnabhūṣām*). These epithets serve to root Appayya's poem and

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[209] *alaṃkāraḥ parikaraḥ sābhiprāye viśeṣaṇe |*
sudhāṃśukalitottamsas tāpaṃ haratu vaḥ śivaḥ || *Kuvalayānanda* (*KĀ*), verse 62.

The ornament of *parikāra* first appears in Rudraṭa's 9th century CE *Kāvyālaṃkāra*; it is not included in the original lists of Daṇḍin or Bhāmaha, and is rejected as an *alaṃkāra* by Hemacandra (see K. Leela Prakash, *Rudraṭa's* Kāvyālaṃkāra*: An Estimate* (New Delhi: Indu Prakashan, 1999), 115-116). This does not mean it should be dismissed, however; Rudraṭa was the last and arguably most comprehensive *alaṃkāra*-focused poetician before Ānandavardhana's paradigm shift and his work is highly comprehensive in this regard. He also demonstrates an early awareness of *rasa* itself independent of *alaṃkāra*s, along with full attention to the phenomenon of *citrakāvya*, among other innovations (see Prakash, *Rudraṭa's* Kāvyālaṃkāra, 19-24).

[210] Prakash, *Rudraṭa's* Kāvyālaṃkāra, 116. Prakash translates "*sābhiprāya*" as "significant," but the verbal root *abhi-pra√i* has more of a sense of "to aim for," "to approach," or "to intend."

Varadarāja's *mūrti* in a community and place. The qualifier "even still" (*tathāpi*) in the verse is significant in many ways, but as Appayya illustrates in his commentary,

> When there is a mocking laugh from people who are impediments to the composition of a *stotra*, when an impediment is also evident by this "even still," one's emptiness of pride, having the form of self-respect and desire for that beginning with poetry stimulates a kindness which arises as an act [of composition].[211]

Appayya makes clear that the epithet *nirmamalokasevyām* is as applicable to the surrounding community of devotees as it is to Varadarāja himself. It is also clear that *both* the deity and the community serve as inspiration for the *stotra*, and that the epithet is used with particular intent to highlight the gap between the selfless/devoted community around the deity and derisive others. I have translated *nirmama* as 'unselfish,' but it more precisely means those who have negated or freed themselves from ego, worldliness, and self-interest.[212] There is also likely intentional wordplay present in the compound in that "*loka*" can mean "the world" *or* "people," so there is a slight irony in thinking of Varadarāja as being the master 'of the world that is freed from worldly things.' This descriptor serves to amplify the fact that this setting transcends the mundane while still not losing contact with it. Even though Appayya had a firmly Śaiva theological background, he took inspiration from this Vaiṣṇava community in their worship and ritual practice *despite* the 'mocking laughter' (*apahāsa*) of those who sought to obstruct this community. Their yearning for contact with Varadarāja and the fullness and transcendence this contact brings stands in contrast to the turmoil of the late-Vijayanagara times in Kanchipuram and throughout South India. More will be said on this in a later chapter, but the inclusion of the particle "*tathāpi*" at the

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[211] *stotranirmāṇapratibandhakalokāpahāse, tathāpi ity anena āviṣkṛte saty api pratibandhake kāryotpattyanukūlam uttejakaṃ svasya kavitādyabhimānarūpamamatāśūnyatvam ity etat nirmamalokasevyām iti*.

[212] Appayya elucidates this in his commentary: "*nirmama*" is a compound of the prefix "*nir*" with the particle "*mama*," having an extreme difference from pride/self-conceit (*abhimāna*) which takes the form of egotism (*mamatā*). (*nirmama ity atra mamaśabdena avyayena mamatārūpābhimānaviśeṣapareṇa nirityupasargasya samāsaḥ*).

beginning of the verse alongside the compound "*nirmamalokasevyāṃ*" illustrates that to be present in this temple in the heart of Kanchipuram may very well have felt like being in the calm eye of a very tempestuous storm. From seeing Varadarāja's image *and* its surrounding community of worshippers, Appayya (despite a lifelong commitment to nondualist Śaiva theology) took the inspiration to create and disseminate this *stotra* in his "intense desire for apprehending and reflecting on [Varadarāja's] name, form, and qualities." Setting aside his polemics at this late stage of his life, Appayya's open-heartedness in witnessing this religious community's devotion despite their adversaries and adversities gave him inspiration for the poem.

The second epithet, "the ornament-jewel upon the elephant hill" (*madāvalamahīdhara-ratnabhūṣām*), lends radiance and color to the icon of Varadarāja (*parikāra*, the epithet's relevance) while also standing as the first instance in the *stora* that gives a concrete sense of place. There is also a metaphorical identification between Varadarāja's 'icon' (*mūrti*) and the 'ornament' (*bhūṣā*) of elephant hill, along with a further identification between 'ornament' and 'jewel' (*ratna*) in the epithet. In his *Glossary*, Edwin Gerow describes the mechanics of *rūpaka* identification as,

> [T]he specific characterization of one thing (the subject of comparison) *as* another (the object). Both terms must be mentioned specifically […] and the relation between them must be immediate and substantial rather than through an aspect or a property, as in *utprekṣā* or *upamā*. The proper grammatical form through which this substantial identification is expressed is ideally the compound noun [*samastarūpaka*], with the object of comparison following (as, face-moon).[213]

Although a *rūpaka* is ideally expressed as a compound (*samasta*, or *samāsa*), the words can also stand separately. The most important aspect is that the subject and object of identification or

[213] Gerow, *Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*, 240. Gerow also describes an "uncompounded (*asamastarūpaka*) metaphor where the object is simply predicated of the subject (her face *is* the moon)," (Ibid.).

comparison (‘*upameya*’ and ‘*upamāna*’ respectively) agree grammatically in a sort of apposition. The two objects being compared in this identification are compared in their entirety, exclusively, and directly to one another. It is not enough to compare one object with only certain qualities in a second, as in Carl Sandburg’s, “The fog comes / on little cat feet.” Here, even though ‘cat’ is explicitly stated, it is adjectival rather than in apposition to ‘fog,’ which makes it more of a general metaphor or poetic fancy (*utprekṣā*) than a tight and tidy *rūpaka*.[214]

In his commentary, Appayya states that “[i]f what is to be described is articulated by the form of the object of comparison (*viṣayin*), that is *rūpaka*;” he then gives the example: “O slender woman, your eye is a lotus! Your face is the moon’s disc!”[215] The architecture of the example highlights the appositional relationship of the objects being compared:

padmaṃ	*tanvaṅgi*	*te netraṃ*	*mukhaṃ te*	*candra|maṇḍalam*
lotus	O slender woman!	your eye	face [your]	moon—disc

If this were like Sandburg’s poem, a woman’s eye could “flutter its lotus petals” or her face could “radiate the [light of the] moon,” but these would not be *rūpaka*-type identifications. Here, the nouns ‘lotus’ and ‘eye,’ ‘face’ and ‘disc,’ agree in case, number, and gender, and absent any comparative particle like “*iva*,” they identify directly one with the other. Likewise, in the verse to Varadarāja, the nouns ‘image’ (*mūrtim*) and ‘ornament’ (*bhūṣām*) agree grammatically, and they

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[214] Many of Stephane Mallarmé’s highly original and idiosyncratic images in his “Plusiers Sonnets” and “Tombeaux” sonnets are probably some of the best illustrations of *utprekṣā* in a Euro-American language, along with the sonnets of Baudelaire.

[215] *varṇyaṃ viṣayirūpeṇa gadyate yadi rūpakam |*
padmaṃ tanvaṅgi te netraṃ mukhaṃ te candramaṇḍalam ||

I was unable to find the source for this verse; it was not in any of the major *alaṃkāraśāstra* texts I looked at, including Appayya’s *Kuvalayānanda* or *Citramīmāṃsā*, Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyālaṃkāra*, Mammaṭa’s *Kāvyaprakāśa*, Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyālaṃkāra*, or Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyādarśa*. It was also not present in the fifth chapter of Jayadeva’s *Candrāloka* (on which the *Kuvalayānanda* is based). There could still be an elusive source for this verse, or Appayya could have conceivably written it for the *Varadarājastava* commentary; however, this would be uncommon and unusual.

are *wholly* identified with one another, not just by way of selected qualities thereof. This metaphoric identification opens a long project of 'ornamentation' throughout the poem; not only is Varadarāja the ornament and the jewel of Elephant Hill in Kanchi, the icon himself is ornamented with gems and silks (and even is later described as being ornamented by the 'pearls' who are his devotees),[216] and Appayya's intricate and 'ornamented' verses themselves are offered as adornments to the deity. By identifying the deity's icon as an ornament and jewel in the verse in which he lays out his intentions for the poem, Appayya demarcates poetic creation as a religious act, and simultaneously renders the deity as a poetic object entirely worthy of ornamentation.

Following his statement of poetic intent, Appayya discusses the qualities of poets he hopes to possess and the value of long, studied reflection. In verse five, he says,

> 5. O Ramāramaṇa (husband of Lakṣmī) I think that the best of poets must pour forth your praises, and someone like me is blessed because of them. One like me, whose reverent attention is fixed upon your image obtains good fortune from a long reflection on [your] various parts because of an excessive poetic indolence.[217]

At the beginning Appayya is at the very least implicitly acknowledging the achievements of Kureśa/Kurāttāḻvār (Rāmānuja's 11th century CE disciple) and Vedānta Deśika (whom Appayya greatly respected, 13th-14th centuries CE) and their far-reaching poetic influence in Kanchi and beyond. He acknowledges he is blessed by their example, but he is also careful to draw a line between himself as a poet and their influence, since, to distinguish oneself as a poet, one must demonstrate a level of originality, not merely following the style, imagery, and tropes of one's predecessors. The chief poets of earlier times are effusive in their praise, but a poet like Appayya

[216] See verse 51 of the *Varadarājastava*.
[217] *manye sṛjantvabhinutiṃ kavipuṃgavāste tebhyo ramāramaṇa mādṛśa eva dhanyaḥ | tvadvarṇane dhṛtarasaḥ kavitātimāndyādyastattadaṅgaciracintanabhāgyam eti || VRS* 5

fixes his entire inclination on the image of the deity, and because of this "excessive slowness" (*atimāndya*), which in some respects recalls the kind of 'indolence' or absorption of someone like John Keats, a poet of Appayya's mold patiently obtains the ability to describe Varadarāja.[218]

I will show this distinction between Appayya and his predecessors by contrasting his versification with that of Vedānta Deśika. Early in his *Varadrājapañcāśat*, Vedānta Deśika calls on the deity to give him the ability of praise:

4. O Varada, how am I to speak, or what [am I] to praise!—Being a firefly whose light is shrunken and dim. Having given me understanding and the power of speech, I['ll] instantly please you with words of praise.[219]

In this verse and others, one can feel Deśika's nervous excitement in praising Varadrāja.[220] The punchy, declarative phrasing, punctuated by simple vocatives (O *Varada*! as opposed to Appayya's O *Rāmāramaṇa*!) and adverbs like *añjasā* (instantly!) contrasts significantly with Appayya's style and approach, even though in essence both poets find themselves struck dumb for words and plead with the god to help them articulate their praises. In the immediately following verse, Deśika says,

5. O Elephant Lord, in calculating the scope of my power what can be done here? Or, what is to be accomplished with your power? Suppose something is accomplished by me; but even then, it is done by you. What can exist? There is little if anything at all in a state of [your] indifference.[221]

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[218] It would be useful to perhaps set side-by-side the *Varadarājastava* and a poem of Keats' such as "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in which the aesthetic contemplation of a highly venerable object leads to a heightened meditative and pleasurable state, which then leads to other reflections.

[219] *kiṃ vyāharāmi varada stutaye kathaṃ vā khadyotavat pralaghusaṃkucitarakāśaḥ |*
tan me samarpaya matiṃ ca sarasvatīṃ ca tvām añjasā stutipadair yad ahaṃ dhinomi || Varadarājapañcāśat (*VRPŚ*) 4

[220] Steven Hopkins himself alludes to the "conciseness" and the "clipped, nervous syntax" of verse five in *Singing the Body of God*, 179. Stylistically, it is noteworthy that Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* has more in common to Deśika's *Varadarājapañcāśat* than does the *Varadarājastava*.

[221] *macchaktimātragaṇane kimihāsti śakyaṃ śakyena vā tava karīśa kimasti sādhyam |*
yadyasti sādhya mayā tadapi tvayā vā kiṃ vā bhavedbhavati kiñcidanīhamāne || VRPŚ 5

Here we can see Deśika going back and forth, practically arguing with himself over the question of his agency and perceived powerlessness. The more distressed he becomes, the more his words become clipped and exclamatory (*kimihāsti śakyam*! *tadapi tvayā vā*!). For Appayya, Varadarāja's efficacious power seems to be more well-grounded and better understood. His self-abasement and acknowledgment of poetic slowness is not coupled with an existential crisis. Perhaps writing this *stotra* later in life, as he did, allowed him a greater sense of reflective detachment that allowed him to focus exclusively on the image of the deity.

Although he does not mention Vedānta Deśika by name in his commentary, Appayya shows he has undoubtedly read Deśika's *stotra* and acknowledges his influence while charting a new course. Looking at Deśika's verses above, how else could Appayya characterize them, other than a "pouring forth (*√sṛj*)" from "the best of poets"? Appayya is indeed blessed for having Deśika's example and influence, but as we see in his commentary, his poetic and intellectual move away from Deśika is to emphasize the value of his own slowness or indolence (*atimāndya*). Even though the great poets are desirous of pleasing the Lord, and being "aware of heaps of visible objects variously hanging and delightfully coloring the limbs of that Lord," they "pour forth forms of praise," and do *not* obtain "good fortune from slow reflection."[222] Here, Appayya makes a significant break in style, emphasis, and approach from his predecessors. Sober-minded, meditative, and rich description is what is needed to properly illustrate the experience of communing with the Divine. Perhaps the prior verses of Deśika quoted above show a poet who is too entangled in his own anxieties, fears, and dilemmas to participate fully in a shared experience with the deity of Varadarāja. Appayya's approach here also contrasts with *his own* earlier poetry, especially the frenzied and sometimes fearful tone of the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*. The

[222] *mahākavayastu bhagavantaṃ tuṣṭūṣavaḥ tadavayavavarṇanocitavividhacitrārthasamūhālambanajñānvantaḥ vaśyavācaḥ santaḥ kṣaṇena bhagavatstotrarūpaṃ sṛjantīti na taiḥ ciracintanabhāgyaṃ labhyate iti bhāvaḥ.*

older, more seasoned poet has deeply learnt the value of taking his time and composing with a steady hand. In his article on Appayya's *stotra*s, Yigal Bronner reads this verse as indicting the great poets of old are unfit to compose *stotra*s because they are "over-qualified;" in depicting the divine like anything else "with their swift style and smooth words," they invariably miss the point of the entire endeavor.[223] However, in the same passage Bronner goes on to say that Appayya's introductory verses conclude "in an enthusiastic endorsement of using *kāvya* for praising god."[224] What I would add to this is that Appayya is advocating *for a specific kind* of *kāvya* to reach, know, and praise God. It is a style that acknowledges both the ineffable and the need for descriptive ornamentation, but it strikes a balance between these two poles by means of a meticulous, slow, and carefully cultivated reflectiveness.

The distinction Appayya draws between himself and his poet-predecessors in verse five leads to a noteworthy discussion on the nature of the very ornament of 'distinction' or 'contrast' (*vyatireka*) itself, and its treatment by his predecessors in poetics. In examining this, we get a picture of how Appayya thought and meditated on his own poetry, and we are also able to see the ways in which poetry and poetics are intertwined in the *VRS* and how Appayya's commentary both encapsulates and comments upon the tradition of poetics. The example verse Appayya quotes in his commentary on verse five is from Rudraṭa's ninth-century CE *Kāvyālaṃkāra*:

> Thinner and thinner, [and] growing and growing, the moon always increases. O woman cease [your anger] [and] be satisfied! Youth (unlike the moon) is that which goes but does not return.[225]

[223] Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People," 9.
[224] Ibid.
[225] *kṣiṇaḥ kṣīno 'pi śaśī bhūyo bhūyo 'pi vardhate nityam |*
virama prasīda sundari yauvanam anivarti yātaṃ tu ||

Here, the distinction is between the waxing and waning cycles of the moon and the woman's youthful beauty, which once gone does not return. As K. Leela Prakash explains in her study of Rudraṭa, the verse is addressed to a woman from her lover who is trying to ameliorate her anger and coax her into being more favorable to him. According to her, for Rudraṭa, the *upamāna*, or the standard of comparison (the moon) is superior because it regenerates and the *upameya*, or the object of comparison (the woman's youth) is therefore diminished.[226] However, Mammaṭa states that, "the statement of some [who say that] there is an excellence of the standard of comparison [the moon] rather than the object of comparison [the young woman], that statement is unfit. For here the excellence of the instability/fleetingness (*asthairya*) characteristic of youth is intended."[227] As Prakash further notes, the verse impresses upon the woman that "youth is a precious thing as it is the most unstable in duration," and therefore "the utmost possible advantage must be derived from it" while it lasts.[228] She also acknowledges that Rudraṭa's reading of the verse would be "detrimental to the lover's purpose," because if youth itself was inferior, the woman in the verse wouldn't have any regard for it in the first place.[229] Prakash also lumps Appayya in with numerous other commentators and poeticians who agree with Rudraṭa and lists Jagannātha as one of the few agreeing with Mammaṭa. What is interesting is that the *Kuvalayānanda* does not cite or discuss this verse, nor is there any discussion of *vyatireka* in the *Citramīmāṃsā*, as far as I can tell, making Appayya's *Varadarājastava* commentary the *only* place he addresses this.

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[226] Prakash, *Rudraṭa's* Kāvyālaṃkāra, 123.
[227] *ityādāvupamānasyopameyādādhikyamiti yat keciduktaṃ tadayuktam. atra yauvanagatāsthairyasyādhikyaṃ hi vivakṣitam.*
[228] Prakash, *Rudraṭa's* Kāvyālaṃkāra, 123.
[229] Ibid.

However, it is challenging to determine precisely where Appayya comes out on this difference of opinion. Recalling verse five of the *stotra*, in which Appayya both acknowledges his indebtedness to previous poets and asserts the uniqueness of his poetic 'slowness,' we would think, given that example, that Appayya would be inclined to support Mammaṭa's view. If his poetic slowness in verse five is to be interpreted as a positive trait, we should ideally read the verse so that the object of comparison (Appayya's poetic approach) is considered superior to the standard of comparison (the style of previous great poets). Both Appayya and his forebears *are* poets, hence, like the beauty of the moon and of the youthful woman, they share a common characteristic by which they can be compared. However, in both cases, for the verse to impart its meaning most strongly, the slowness of Appayya's style and the instability of youth in the case of the woman are their most eminently distinct qualities. In his verse five commentary after quoting Rudraṭa's verse of the woman and the moon, Appayya says that the ornament in the example verse is *not* an instance of deficiency, and what is evoked in the verse is the superabundant quality of the instability of youthfulness.[230] It's also not exactly clear if, having mentioned Mammaṭa specifically, Appayya is simply summarizing Mammaṭa's argument or actively following it. Reading forward, Appayya mentions the threefold division of *vyatireka*, referring to his own *Kuvalayānanda* and following Mammaṭa, and he states in part,

> When there is the establishment of a state of accomplishment because of comprehension of the verse, [that] suggestion of an ornament being different from *vyāghāta,* is the root of the power of the meaning [of the verse], embellished with the three-fold ornament [of *vyatireka*] which has been stated.[231]

[230] *nyūnātirekasya nāstyudāharaṇaṃ; kṣīṇaḥ kṣīṇo 'pi iti śloke candrādyauvanasthasya asthāyitvaguṇe ādhikyaṃ vivakṣitamiti so 'py ādhikyavyatirekasyaiva udāharaṇam ityuktam.*
[231] *sādhakatvasamarthane ślokasya paryavasānāduktālaṃkāratrayapariṣkṛtārthaśaktimūlo vyāghātaviśeṣālaṃkāradhvaniḥ.*

What is important is that Appayya identifies this ornament as something *other than* the ornament '*vyāghāta*' (an 'obstruction'), and it appears to me he in no way is challenging Mammaṭa's understanding of the ornament of *vyatireka*. This is significant since, for the mechanics of his own verse, it would be sensible for him to adopt Mammaṭa's view on the way in which this ornament functions. Furthermore, by differentiating *vyatireka* from *vyāghāta*, Appayya is making sure that his poetic slowness could not be construed as an obstruction to his overall poetic abilities. Just as the fleetingness of the woman's beauty makes her fit to be soothed and persuaded by her lover, the slowness of Appayya's poetic style makes him an ideal illustrator of the radiance of Varadarāja. To summarize, Appayya's poetic slowness is an asset for him, *not* an impediment or obstruction (*vyāghāta*) to his poetic creativity (as might otherwise be surmised); the *vyatireka* ornament functions here in verse five in much the same way as the example of the young woman and the moon from Rudraṭa. Just as the fleetingness of the woman's youth is an '*excellence*' or an exemplary quality, so too is Appayya's slowness here, which serves to set him apart from the poets of the past and their stylistic influence. There is no frenzied "*kimihāsti śakyam*!" or "*tadapi tvayā vā*!" to be found in the *VRS*, only the effusive and meditative flow of the description of Varadarāja's divine presence in the locale of Kanchipuram. Appayya's wide reading and detailed analysis here also show his precise understanding of poetic ornaments and their uses, along with his deep and lucid understanding of the tradition of Sanskrit poetics.

As a final observation, I turn to a verse later in the *Varadarājastava*, to show how directly the *stotra* and Appayya's *Kuvalayānanda* are tied together, and to give a specific instance illustrating his poetic inventiveness. Here, we see how Appayya's composition in the *VRS* invited further reflections, which eventually led to coining and defining a brand new *alaṃkāra* in the *Kuvalayānanda*, using this *VRS* verse as an example. We see the intertextuality between these

two texts, but ultimately it is the *stotra*, the poem, that comes first; since, without it, none of Appayya's further writing on poetic ornamentation, nor his coinage of a new *alaṃkāra*, would have been occasioned.

At the temple in Kanchipuram, both the large Atti wood icon (brought out only for major festivals) and the smaller stone icon of Varadarāja in the temple (regularly viewable) have four arms. His top two arms hold up the conch shell Pāñcajanya at the left and the discus Sudarśana at the right; his bottom left hand rests on top of his mace Kaumodakī, and his bottom right hand is uplifted, palm facing outward, forming an *abhaya mudrā* (a gesture of welcome, non-fear, and benevolence). As the verse notes, none of Varadarāja's four hands form the *varada mudrā*, a gesture with the hand reaching outward, palm up, which is Varadarāja's own namesake and a symbol of boon-granting and the gift of blessings.[232] The verse addresses the deity in this way:

> 80. Your very name, O Varada, explains being the giver of boons; for this reason you do not have the boon granting gesture. For a sage, who has the essence of the spoken scriptures, does not accept what is to be known by means of a sign; the meaning [already] accomplished in the scriptures.[233]

Just as a sage already trained in the knowledge of the scriptures needs no secondary proof or sign of their truth or efficacy, Varadarāja doesn't require any secondary indicator of his boon-giving qualities for his devotees outside of his own name. Appayya also provides a textual basis for the significance of the *name* of Varada in his commentary:

> The destroyer of pain by means of obeisance gives a boon from possessing things; [thus] he has acquired the eternally efficacious name "Varadarāja."[234]

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[232] It is curious and noteworthy that neither Kureśa nor Vedānta Deśika in their *stotra*s to Varadrāja observe or comment on this fact.

[233] *nāmaiva te varada vāñchitadātṛbhāvaṃ vyākhyātyato na vahase varadānamudrām |*
na hyāgamoditarasaḥ śrutisiddhamarthaṃ liṅgena bodhyamurarīkurute vipaścit || VRS 80

[234] *arthibhyo vai varaṃ datte praṇatārtivināśanaḥ |*
ākhyāṃ varadarājeti yayau nityaṃ kṛtārthayam ||

The verse comes from the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, and in his commentary Appayya explains that "the state of being a boon-giver is brought about by scriptural expression; it is not to be known by the sign of the boon-granting *mudrā* which is not borne."[235] So, Varadarāja is himself, in total, the *embodiment* of the giving of blessings; because of this no further hand gesture or sign is needed on his part. Since the etymology and long history of his name is widely understood in South India, Appayya uses the verse in illustrating and substantiating an *alaṃkāra* of his own coinage.

The ornament Appayya coins in the *Kuvalayānanda* is "*lokokti*," or a "popular expression."[236] To give a sense of the structure of the *Kuvalayānanda* as a text, I provide the entire passage below, both as it would appear in Sanskrit and in translation. The *kārikā* or definitional verse is given, followed by commentary and further examples, all of which was arranged and composed by Appayya.

90. *lokoktyalaṃkāraḥ*

An ornament of 'popular expression'

> *lokapravādānukṛtirlokoktiriti bhaṇyate |*
> *sahasva katicinmāsān mīlayitvā vilocane ||* (157)
>
> An imitation of a popular expression is called "lokokti."
> "Having closed [your] two eyes, bear it a few months!"

atra locane mīlayitvā iti lokavādānukṛtiḥ. yathā vā madīye varadarājastave—

Here, "[your] two eyes closed" is an imitation of a popular expression. Accordingly, also in my *Varadarājastava*:

> *nāmaiva te varada vāñchitadātṛbhāvaṃ vyākhyātyato na vahase varadānamudrām |*
>
> Your very name, O Varada, explains how you are the giver of boons; for this reason, you do not bear the boon granting gesture.

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[235] *ato 'bhidhānaśrutyā prasiddhaṃ varadātṛtvaṃ na varamudraliṅgena bodhanīyamiti sā na dhṛteti arthaḥ.*
[236] Although specific details about the *alaṃkāra* and the verse praising Varadarāja are not mentioned, I am indebted to Yigal Bronner for noticing the occurrence of this verse in the *Kuvalayānanda*. See Bronner, "Back to the Future," 74.

viśvaprasiddhataraviprakulaprasūter yajñopavītavahanaṃ hi na khalvapekṣyam ||

For it is surely desirable for one appearing in an assembly of Brahmins much celebrated by all, [to be] bearing a sacred thread at the sacrifices.

atrottarārdhaṃ lokavādānukāraḥ ||

Here is an imitation of a popular expression [also] in the latter half.

Immediately following the definition of *lokokti* is a stock example dealing with romance; I am not especially familiar with the phrase, but Appayya indicates that "your eyes now closed" is a common saying. My estimation is that a woman whose husband or lover has left for some period of time closes her eyes in sadness and resignation, and her female friend encourages her to endure the separation a few months. Appayya then reprints the first half of verse eighty in the *Varadarājastava*, indicating that it resembles a popular expression. He then gives a subsequent example which depicts the necessity for Brahmins to wear their sacred threads during religious celebrations. Undoubtedly, someone living in Appayya's time in South India would recognize these expressions, but for a modern reader such as myself it's not especially clear what exactly in each half-verse constitutes the "popular phrase," or if the half-verses in their entirety constitute these kinds of sayings. I would have to think that the fact that the deity's name reflects his most important characteristic, and the fact that Brahmins are required to wear sacred threads are the types of common knowledge that these examples are drawing on.

As Yigal Bronner indicates, examples such as *lokokti* and its commentary show a remarkable widening of the scope of Appayya's poetic theorizing, and it may show a changing Sanskrit intellectual world in Appayya's time, one that addresses other spheres within the Sanskrit world, along with Persianate and vernacular spheres in South Asia.[237] I also think that

[237] Bronner, "Back to the Future," 74.

such an example shows Appayya's remarkable awareness of *other* spheres in addition to this. In the context of the *stotra*, the verse definitively illustrates Appayya's knowledge of the popular culture around the Varadarājaswāmi Temple in Kanchi, and his willingness to incorporate this kind of material into his highly wrought poetry. It may very well be that his experiences at the temple and his inspiration to compose poetry from these experiences then drove him to rethink and expand his views on poetic stylings, suitable materials for poetry, and the vast discipline documenting and debating the mechanics of poetic ornamentation. Ultimately, his composition of poetry, as here in verse eighty of the *VRS*, led to further reflections on the nature and possibilities of poetry and poetic ornamentation. This progression is shown specifically in the above example of *lokokti* which also serves to illustrates how the *VRS* and Appayya's works on poetics are interrelated. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the *VRS* at its core is foremost an independent poem, and a *source* for Appayya's reflections on poetics.

Appayya is centrally situated in the long line of Sanskrit *alaṃkārika*s, but like the best of them he grants the discipline new perspectives and takes it in new directions while also respectfully integrating the work of his predecessors. Although I do not see the *Varadarājastava* itself, nor its commentary, as wholly or primarily pedagogical projects, I do acknowledge that pedagogy is nonetheless an important aspect thereof. Appayya's pedagogical skill is also seen in the widespread popularity of the *Kuvalayānanda* as a primer in Sanskrit poetics up to the present. However, as this chapter has shown, in the case of the composition of the *Varadarājastava*, Appayya Dīkṣita was foremost a *poet*, rather than a pedagogue. I think it is more reasonable and more charitable to Appayya to say that, rather than writing pedagogical poetry, he was simultaneously making immense efforts in writing good poetry for its own sake (the *stotra*), and explaining his poetry, descriptions, and stylistic choices by reflecting on the nature of poetry in

the wider Sanskrit world (the commentary). From these efforts, he realized that intertextual connections (with what became the *Kuvalayānanda*, for example) and much larger projects were possible. It is nonetheless important to remember that without Appayya's first and most basic drive to *be* a poet and to *write* the *Varadarājastava* and other *stotra*s, none of these broader projects may well have come to pass.

Chapter Four: The Poetry, Philosophy, and Life of Appayya Dīkṣita in the Shifting Sands of the Late Vijayanagara Empire

I. Introduction

Appayya Dīkṣita lived and composed his wide array of works (philosophical, polemical, commentarial, and poetic) during a time of great change, instability, and possibility in South Asia. Although it is notoriously difficult to piece together every biographical detail of any figure in this, or any other, premodern era in South Asian history, Appayya's writings in a variety of genres serve as a window into his experience and perspective as they grew and evolved over the course of his life. His poetry, in particular, shows certain nuances and the interplay of ideas that aren't entirely possible in other modes of composition, which are more rigidly polemical or philosophical in their focus. As other scholarship has elucidated, it is true that Appayya wore many hats, and it may well be that the 'Appayyafrage' or the question of his authorial identity may perpetually hang chimerically over us. He was both a philosophically grounded Advaita Vedāntin and a theologian committed to (and arguably fashioning the philosophical basis for) a particular non-dualistic strain of Vedānta focused on Śiva, or Śivādvaita. He was a vociferous public defender of Śaiva belief and practice while also authoring poetry in praise of Viṣṇu, the Goddess, and Vedic ritual.

Perhaps, if Appayya were simply at heart a non-theistic Advaitin, authoring poetry in praise of various deities would not necessarily raise much interest. If *all* is ultimately Brahman, what would it matter if a non-dualist authored poems to Śiva, Viṣṇu, the Goddess, or any other deity—all being, after all, an undifferentiated unity or singularity? There are, of course, numerous *stotra*s (rightly or wrongly) attributed to the famous Advaitin, Śaṅkara, and many

Advaitins have authored *stotra*s[238]; but the question of why a philosophical monist would feel the need to write devotional poetry in which there are inherent separations between the human author and the divine addressee (thus undercutting the singularity of Brahman) is a question still to be answered.[239] In many respects, Appayya's multifaced philosophical and theological nature shows an exploratory impulse along with a deep unease with the rigidity of schools and traditions. In this, he is much more of a realist (or perhaps even a South Indian pragmatist) than an idealist. As an Advaita Vedāntin, Appayya was by no means a traditionalist: his *Siddhāntaleśasaṃgraha*, a consummate doxography of the various Vedānta schools, was modelled on and influenced by the similar work of the dualist philosopher Vyāsatīrtha, living in Hampi/Vijayanagara, and preceding Appayya by a generation.[240] So, he was clearly willing to look anywhere and everywhere for useful models for his own thinking and writing. While evaluating the various schools from an Advaita perspective, Appayya nonetheless offers clear-eyed critiques his own tradition, particularly the "heedlessness" (*anādara*) of previous Advaita teachers in asserting their proofs above all else (i.e., "[being] wholly intent on proving the unity of the Soul," for example), and therefore being wholly caught up in their idealism.[241] Although he was ultimately of the broader Advaita school, Appayya exemplified much more of an exploratory, pragmatic, and reflective spirit than others.

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[238] See Hamsa Stainton, *Poetry as Prayer*, 34-35, or Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 139-140.
[239] I.e., if *all* is a unitary whole, any distinction between self and God is immaterial, and nothing would need to be expressed on the subject. By writing *stotra*s or even by authoring commentaries on them, it would seem that Advaitins are granting these various gods a certain amount of ontological reality independent of the singularity of Brahman and their own philosophical system, which would have them straying from these philosophical roots. Is such an expression an example of *avidya*? If not, how might we explain it? See also, Christopher Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta in early modern history," *South Asian History and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2011): 211-212.
[240] See Lawrence McCrea, "Freed by the weight of history: polemic and doxography in sixteenth century Vedānta," *South Asian History and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2015): 87-101.
[241] Ibid., 97.

Furthermore, Appayya as a philosopher, theologian, polemicist, and poet still casts a complex and deeply imaginative figure, having lived in an unstable and complex time. This chapter explores Appayya's writing of *stotra*s within the context of a declining and fragmenting Vijayanagara Empire and the religious sectarian world of South India, the intriguing questions their composition raises pertaining to philosophy and poetry as different forms of human expression, and his multifaceted relationship to the wider world around him. By all accounts, Appayya lived out his life in the north-central and northeastern region of Tamil Nadu, and his home village of Aḍayapālam lies south of the Palar River between Vellore and Kanchipuram (the site of the Varadarājaswami Temple and many others). We know he frequently travelled between these and other nearby religious centers (Thiruvannamalai, for example), and likely spent the last years of his life in Chidambaram. His *stotra*s grant us insight into his life in this region, along with his absorption of the evolving strains of religious thought in this dynamic (but also turbulent) social and cultural landscape.

II. The Late-Vijayanagara World of Appayya: Pluralism and Division, Politics and Religion, Polemics and Poetry

A significant amount of scholarship has been produced on the subject of the Vijayanagara Empire and important research continues, but I will focus on a selection of the best and most recent scholarship available, this in an effort here to contextualize Appayya's life and poetry in the light of this research on South India of the Vijayanagara period, in the 15th and 16th centuries. In addition to the general theme of the relationship between religion and poetry, my hope here is that in a small way my commentary on Appayya's *stotra*s and their contexts can contribute to the growing picture of the vibrant cultural and intellectual mosaic that existed in this place and time

while still making clear the significance of his poetry. With the help of the scholarship of Elaine Fisher and Valerie Stoker I will begin by holding up a broad lens to Vijayanagara history and culture, and by reading the scholarship of Jonathan Duquette, Yigal Bronner, and Ajay Rao, I will then focus more specifically on Appayya's northern Tamil homeland, his milieu, and his life and career. With this information we will then analyze sections of Appayya's *stotra*s, including the *Śivamahimakalikāstuti*, the *Varadarājastava*, and the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, and other important works.

To begin, it is evident that what we call 'sectarianism' in Hindu circles predated the founding of the Vijayanagara Empire itself in the fourteenth century CE, as seen in Elaine Fisher's book, *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India*. In her introduction, she cites a verse from the *Śivamahimnastava* ("Praise of Śiva's Greatness"), a famous Śaiva poem dating from at least the 10th-11th centuries CE that describes "Śiva *alone* as the destination of all religious practitioners […] above the otherwise level playing field that encompasses all other branches of what we typically categorize within Vaidika [of the *Veda*s] 'Hinduism.'"[242] Along with an inscription from the Vaiṣṇava Cenna Keśava Temple in Karnataka, which espouses the supremacy of Viṣṇu over all else, the *Mahimnastava* verse brings forward an insightful interrogation into what exactly "Hinduism" may be. Do these inscriptions indicate that the kinds of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism they espouse are indeed branches of a broader Hinduism or are they something entirely independent to themselves? As Fisher says, such verses "capture[] a pervasive motif of Hindu religious thought: one particular God, revered by a community of devotees, encapsulates in his—or her—very being the *entire* scope of divinity."[243] Fisher shows that the rhetoric of both examples essentially argue not for tolerance or pantheistic

[242] Elaine Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2017), 33.
[243] Ibid., 32. Italics are mine.

views, nor for "the essential unity of all Hindu traditions," but for "the supremacy of Vaiṣṇavism and of the god Viṣṇu [or in the case of the *Mahimnastava*, Śiva and Śaivism] as the telos of all religious practice."[244] In contrast to Brian K. Smith's definition of Hinduism as "the religion of those humans who create, perpetuate, and transform traditions with legitimizing reference to the authority of the Veda," Fisher shows that rather than subordinating themselves to (and legitimizing themselves through) Vedic authority, Śaiva texts of this period "transcend the Vedas themselves," and by the middle of the first millennium CE, "Śaivism, rather than Hinduism or Brahminism, could justifiably be described as the dominant religion of the Indian subcontinent."[245] Nonetheless, as we will see, by the middle of the *second* millennium the influence of Vaiṣṇavism in South India greatly increases, making it a significant competitor and interlocutor for Śaivas. I would argue that Appayya's authoring of both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *stotra*s reflects these evolving dynamics to at least some degree. In view of what Elaine Fisher has said regarding the relationship of these religious movements to the authority of the Vedas, it is also important to explore to how and in what ways Appayya may have adopted Vaidika, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava perspectives in his *stotra*s, and to what extent his *stotra*s seek to potentially reinforce the authority of the Vedas or transcend them.

To get a detailed perspective on the growth and evolution of Vaiṣṇavism in the Vijayanagara empire and its sectarian yet also pluralistic climate, I turn to the work of Valerie Stoker. In her 2016 book, *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsatīrtha, Hindu Sectarianism, and the 16th c. Vijayanagara Court*, Stoker traces the social and intellectual life of the late 15th-century Dvaita Vedānta (dualist) and Vaiṣṇava philosopher Vyāsatīrtha (1460-1539), mentioned above. In doing so she furnishes unprecedented insight into the royal, religious,

[244] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 32.
[245] Ibid., 33.

intellectual, and broader social milieus of Vijayanagara during this period. The capital city of Hampi was located along the Tungabhadra River in what is now east-central Karnataka. As stated in Stoker's opening pages, it was one of the largest and most diverse urban centers in the world by the year 1500 CE, though it was ultimately sacked and destroyed after the Battle of Talikota in 1565.[246] If we take the most commonly accepted dating of Appayya's life (1520-1592),[247] it's noteworthy that the battle and the upheaval it caused happened squarely in the middle of his life.

Stoker describes both Hampi and the larger empire as a "tolerant haven" for many religious traditions, even though Hinduism predominated and even while the court *did* privilege "certain forms of religiosity over others," not always for religious reasons.[248] The selective nature of this patronage, coupled with its generosity, "galvanized Hindu sectarian leaders to pursue certain kinds of intellectual projects as well as to form different inter-sectarian alliances and rivalries."[249] Stoker shows this to be the case in analyzing the life and activities of Vyāsatīrtha in particular, who being more than just a polemicist was also the "head of a network of sectarian monasteries that was significantly expanded by Vijayanagara patronage;" he

[246] Valerie Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsatīrtha, Hindu Sectarianism, and the Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara Court* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2016), 1.
[247] I am also inclined to accept these dates, or at the very least that he lived through the bulk of the 16th century and not into the early 17th c. CE. Yigal Bronner notes Appayya's inscription of his achievements and construction of the Kālakaṇṭhaleśvara temple in his home village in 1582, and a copper plate inscription from Thanjavur in 1580 that mentions Appayya taking part in a debate as a propagator of Śaiva non-dualism (See Yigal Bronner, "A Renaissance Man in Memory: Appayya Dīkṣita Through the Ages," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (March 2016): 12, 16. Others, for example, S. K. De in his *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960), 222, date Appayya into the beginning of the 17th century, but I find this unlikely when considering that, in order to have the personal wealth to erect a temple (and inscribe the accomplishments of an already fairly lengthy intellectual career), and in order to participate in courtly intellectual debates in the early 1580's, Appayya must have been well established and likely middle-aged or late middle-aged at this time, at the very least.
[248] Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage*, 2.
[249] Ibid.

deployed "royally bequeathed wealth to install icons and subsidiary shrines at prominent Vaiṣṇava temples," while also directing beneficial public works projects, Stoker explains.[250]

A figure such as Vyāsatīrtha serves as a useful comparison for Appayya, for, although on a more localized scale in the northern Tamil country, he was influenced by the same sociopolitical climate and conducted similar activities. Appayya famously was "bathed in gold" by Cinna Bomma of Vellore, this for his completion of the *Śivārkamaṇidīpikā* and more generally for his defense of Śaivism.[251] Supplied with such generous patronage, he managed to have built the Kālakaṇṭheśvara (Śaiva) Temple in his native village of Aḍayapālam; taught his philosophy to one thousand fellow scholars in Aḍayapālam and Vellore;[252] and he strengthened temple and ritual networks in this region of southern India.

Broadly speaking, the Vijayanagara empire and its aftermath in the 16th century possessed an indisputably pluralistic climate, but it was nonetheless a complex pluralism. Over the timeline of the empire, there were dynasties of both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava rulers, but also to be a Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava at this time was, as Elaine Fisher notes in her book, *Hindu Pluralism*, "not simply to believe in the supremacy of Śiva or Viṣṇu but to belong to a socially embedded community and to mark one's religious identity as a member of a particular religious public."[253] These sectarian communities, she notes, were "dynamic social systems composed of networks of religious actors, institutions […] and the religious meanings they engender;" which is to say they were dynamic and constantly evolving communal structures, rather than being rigid and monolithic.[254] Notably,

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[250] Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage*, 4.
[251] For further details on this and the information that follows, see Yigal Bronner, "A Renaissance Man in Memory: Appayya Dīkṣita Through the Ages," 16-17, "Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of *Stotra*s," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no. 2 (2007): 1-2, and Jonathan Duquette, *Defending God in Sixteenth-Century India: The Śaiva Oeuvre of Appaya Dīkṣita* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2021), 2-5.
[252] See Elaine Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 10, and Yigal Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People," 1-2.
[253] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 13.
[254] Ibid.

Fisher draws attention in particular to the evolving nature of these communities within such a pluralistic sphere, a sphere that encompassed many different networks and relationships from cooperation to conflict and even outright conflagration. She also outlines the significance of the overall public sphere and the specific religious *publics* these networks and communities constituted in South India. With Jürgen Habermas' idea of the "public sphere" in early modern Europe in mind, Fisher states that like Europe, South Indian communities also contained "flourishing network[s] of scholars who began to gather in publicly demarcated spaces to debate issues of timely social interest."[255] Temples and other religious institutions, as well as the royal court in Hampi, served as spaces for debate, discussion, and the forming (or breaking) of intellectual alliances. They were also "highly sectarian spaces," which encompassed both outright polemical opposition (even though such polemics also involved "significant intellectual borrowing and exchange"), and what Valerie Stoker insightfully calls "competitive collaboration" between groups.[256] The acceleration of sectarian rivalries in these public spaces and elsewhere was in many ways fueled by the rise to prominence of Vyāsatīrtha in the Vijayanagara court, coupled with the shift of the ruling families toward Vaiṣṇavism during the reign of the Sāḷuva (1485-1505) and Tuḷuva (1505-1570) dynasties.[257] Elaine Fisher illustrates one such example in discussing the attempt by Vaiṣṇava priests in 1598 to install a large temple image of Viṣṇu in Chidambaram, which invited the retaliatory threat of Śaiva priests, that they would commit mass suicide in protest.[258]

[255] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 21.
[256] Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage*, 133.
[257] For specific dates and a useful historical overview, see Anila Verghese, *Religious Traditions at Vijayanagara as Revealed Through its Monuments* (New Delhi: Manohar, American Institute of Indian Studies, 1995), 1-9.
[258] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 19.

This helps to illustrate the degree to which established orthodoxies (Advaita and Śaiva institutions) felt their influence threatened by these types of new developments in religious practice and thought. Vyāsatīrtha's *Nyāyāmṛta* and his growing influence, along with the growing influence of Vaiṣṇavism, served to challenge Śaiva orthodoxy and hegemony. Indeed, as Valerie Stoker argued, the changes during this period were unprecedented, and as such they "actively encouraged new ways of thinking about religious identity."[259] In a word, it was a dynamic but also unsettled period: a period that produced novel and innovative work in theology and philosophy, along with social, cultural, and artistic growth, but there were also sectarian tensions present that threatened to explode into public confrontations.

In his article, "Advaita Vedānta and early modern history," Christopher Minkowski similarly accounts for these radical changes while tracing social networks and histories of Advaitins like Appayya in the 15th and 16th centuries. Through his work and the work of Jonathan Duquette, Yigal Bronner, and Ajay Rao in the same *Journal of Indian Philosophy* issue, dedicated to Appayya, we can begin to narrow our lens to Appayya's specific time and place in late Vijayanagara South India.

As Minkowski shows, it is clear that an earlier Advaitin thinker in South India, Nṛsiṃhāśrama (c. 1555 CE), had an important influence on Appayya's polemical approach to the philosophically dualist opponents of Vyāsatīrtha's lineage, whether Appayya and Nṛsiṃhāśrama personally knew each other or not.[260] It is evident even from the titles of some of their works (Nṛsiṃhāśrama's *Bhedadhikkāra*, "Reproaching [the idea of] Difference," and Appayya's *Madhvatantramukhamardana*, "Grinding the face of Madhva's framework," for example) that

[259] Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage*, 137.
[260] Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta," 210.

Appayya adopted the sharp edge of critique put to use by Nṛsiṃha.[261] Although his and Nṛsiṃha's attacks were of a rhetorical nature, it's clear they did not take the growing influence of dualist systems of thought lightly, and they seemingly did not see their philosophical opponents in a collaborative light. Currents of thought were changing *within* Advaita circles, too, as Minkowski makes clear. Likely inspired by opposing explications and commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra*—by Rāmānuja (Viśiṣṭādvaita), Madhva (Dvaita) and others—Advaitins began to revisit the core of their metaphysics and the roots of their interpretation of that foundational work, along with other, scriptural sources. One particularly significant issue at play was "the ontological status of God," in relation to the longstanding monist Advaitin claim that "Being was undivided."[262] As Minkowski elaborates, "[the] old distinction, between Being free from any possible characterization (*nirguṇa*) and God as characterized (*saguṇa* [lit. "with attributes"]) Being was no longer satisfactory."[263] The rise in the popularity of non-dualist and qualified non-dualist schools of thought, along with (and alongside) devotional (*bhakti*) traditions, forced Advaitins to reexamine and rethink their old positions. This led to a great deal of philosophical experimentation, including Appayya's crossover works in Śivādvaita philosophy and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's exploration of the relationship between Advaita metaphysics and Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.[264]

In institutional terms, two important *maṭha*s, or monasteries, emerged as significant Advaita centers in the late medieval period, one located in Śṛṅgerī (in what is now southern Karnataka), the other one in Kanchipuram. Minkowski states that all South Indian Advaitin

[261] Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta," 210. Minkowski also later says that Appayya cites Nṛsiṃhāśrama but doesn't mention the specific texts in which he does so.
[262] Ibid., 211.
[263] Ibid., 211-212.
[264] Ibid., 212. One future avenue of research involves closely examining both Appayya's and Madhusūdana's understanding of the ontology of God, the God-individual relationship, and the overall Being of Brahman as expressed through their *stotra*s, their commentaries on *stotra*s, and their philosophical work.

thinkers likely had significant relationships with one or both of these monasteries, although, he further states (though unfortunately without expanding on his reasoning), "with the probable exception of Appayya and his family."[265] It would be significant to know why this may have been the case. Appayya did come from a highly intellectual family, and Cinna Bomma's patronage of his work during the early part of his intellectual career would have certainly aided in his independence, but absent any specific reasons it seems quite unlikely that he wouldn't have had any relationship with or awareness of the Advaita *maṭha* in Kanchi. After all, he was intimately connected with the city and its religious culture on both the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sides.

Near the end of his article, Minkowski makes clear the role of the Vijayanagara state in the establishment and promotion of the Śṛṅgerī and Kanchipuram *maṭha*s as important religious and intellectual centers. The patronage from Vijayanagara royalty, starting with the Saṅgama dynasty in the 14th century, was directly responsible for the emergence of these *maṭha*s, and the kings, sectarian leaders, and temples all benefited in what Arjun Appadurai (cited by Minkowski) called a "single system of authoritative relations."[266] Here, this "triangular relationship" allowed all three groups to benefit, "the rulers through the durability and legitimacy of their kingdoms, the temples and religious sects through the increase in their followers, gifts, and prestige."[267] This system did not long endure, however; the rise of the influence of Vaiṣṇavism and its dualistic philosophy at the Vijayanagara court, embraced particularly by the Tuḷuva dynasty, 1505-1570, coupled with the eventual defeat of the Vijayanagara armies at the Battle of Talikota in 1565 by an alliance of kingdoms to its north, dramatically destabilized these relationships.

[265] Minkowski, "Advaita Vedānta," 218.
[266] Ibid., 219.
[267] Ibid.

This emerging social fragility is demonstrated by Elaine Fisher in an anecdote involving royal endowments for the two most prominent temples in Kanchipuram. In 1533, the Vijayanagara king Acyutadevarāya explicitly decreed that the grants to the Śrī Ekāmranātha (Śaiva) Temple and the Śrī Varadarājaswami Temple be equalized; however, the local ruler, Sāḷuva Nāyaka, appropriated a larger portion for one temple over the other.[268] It was clear that Vijayanagara rulers were having difficulties in getting local leaders to follow their decrees, and since Kanchi had grown to be an important regional center both religiously and economically, the stakes were incredibly high. Acyutadevarāya's predecessor, Kṛṣṇadevarāya (ruled 1509-1529), arguably the most successful of the Vijayanagara kings, had already found Kanchipuram to be of specific importance; for in addition to being a culturally significant area, the "weaver communities and overseas trade routes situated along the Coromandel coast [near Kanchi] were increasingly important to the Vijayanagara economy," and the local rulers and highly militarized and "sometimes rogue" Nāyaka leaders could cut off Vijayanagara access to these resources.[269] Kṛṣṇadevarāya was the first to succeed in placating and bringing this area under firmer Vijayanagara control, but his suzerainty was short lived, and the eventual collapse of the Vijayanagara empire ended these tenuous relationships once for all. Appayya was alive to learn of this collapse and witness its aftermath, including the local changes that accompanied it.

Following the fall of Hampi and the collapse of the broader Vijayanagara Empire in 1565, what remained of the ruling class moved eastward into what is now southern Andhra Pradesh. The remaining Aravīḍu rulers (following the Tuḷuva dynasty) established themselves first at Penukoṇḍa and then Chandragiri, and they largely kept the Vaiṣṇava leanings of their

[268] Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism*, 8-9.
[269] Stoker, *Polemics and Patronage*, 86-87.

predecessors.[270] As Ajay Rao has illustrated, Appayya enjoyed three distinct periods of patronage during his life. He first served Cinna Timma of Tiruchirappalli or Trichy, then Cinna Bomma until Cinna Bomma's death in 1578.[271] After this, his patron was the Vaiṣṇava Aravīḍu king Veṅkata II, who ruled from Penukoṇḍa, then further south to Chandragiri and Vellore, and who had an unstable relationship with the local Nāyaka warlords. A powerful illustration of the violence and instability of the times is this: Vēlūri Liṅga, the son of Cinna Bomma, was killed in 1603 (a little over a decade after Appayya's death) while leading a revolt against Veṅkata II. So, the son and heir of Appayya's most prominent Śaiva patron was killed in battle by the forces of his final, Vaiṣṇava, patron. As king, Veṅkata and his preceptors, Pañcamatabhañjana Tātācārya and Lakṣmīkumāra Tātācārya (being Pañcamatabhañjana's adopted son), were staunchly Vaiṣṇava and proselytized heavily their commitments. Lakṣmīkumāra eventually took over the management and control of the Śrī Varadarājaswāmi Temple in Kanchi, and his adoptive father was an intellectual and, although some accounts are clearly embellished, perhaps mortal rival to Appayya. Intellectual rivalry did provide for spirited debate and the arguable cross-fertilization of ideas, however. Thanks to the 1580 inscription of Sevappa Nāyaka, we know that Appayya (Śaiva), Vijayīndra Tīrtha (a Mādhva dualist philosopher), and an unspecified Tātācārya (Vaiṣṇava) debated at Sevappa's Thanjavur court, and the three of them together were described as being "embodiments of the three sacred [Vedic] fires."[272]

Following the above example, I will not here go deeply into the details of Appayya's polemics, philosophy, and intellectual rivalries, but with the guidance of Jonathan Duquette's scholarship I will give a brief overview of them as relates to his *stotra* literature. Appayya wrote

[270] Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 45.
[271] For further reading on this and what follows, see Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 45-48.
[272] Ibid., 49. This is the same copper plate inscription discussed in footnote 6, above.

one of his most renowned philosophical works and arguably his central work in Śivādvaita thought, the *Śivārkamaṇidīpikā* ("Illuminating the Jewel which is the Sun of Śiva"), a sub-commentary on Śrīkaṇṭha Śivācārya's *own* commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*s under the patronage of Cinna Bomma. Duquette makes clear that Appayya also wrote a ritual manual, the *Śivārcanacandrikā* ("Illuminating the Homage to Śiva"), for the same, further stating that "it is most likely that he also composed all his other Śaiva works under Cinna [B]omma's patronage."[273] He further quotes Ajay Rao in concurring with Rao's opinion that the relationship between Appayya's Śaiva works and Cinna Bomma's patronage, like that between his Vaiṣṇava works and Vaiṣṇava patrons (such as Veṅkata II), "[were] not incidental."[274] I am also in agreement, in a broad sense, with this statement, but as we will see with his major *stotra*s, he continued to think of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava themes and theologies almost interchangeably *throughout* his intellectual and poetic life, independent of his particular patrons during specific periods. Broadly speaking, this is indicative of the fact that poetry cannot be reduced to its social and political contexts; it is of course *of* these contexts, but it also stands as an independent work of art created by an inspired individual mind.

Appayya's completion of the *Śivārkamaṇidīpikā* not only earned him praise and reward from Cinna Bomma, it showed a new hermeneutic depth in his writing and inaugurated a new phase in his intellectual and theological career. As Duquette shows, up to this point Appayya had only written polemical works claiming Śiva's superiority over Viṣṇu, this by using scriptural exegesis, though not in an overly systematized way. Subsequently,

> Appay[y]a begins a new, more extensive exegetical project in which he articulates the view that the canonical *Brahmasūtra*s centre on Śiva as the conceptual and semantic equivalent of Brahman, the absolute reality eulogized in the Upaniṣads. From here on, Appay[y]a shifts his focus from plain polemics to establishing a new theological position

[273] Duquette, *Defending God*, 2, footnote 4.
[274] Ibid., 4.

> (*siddhānta*) combining Śaiva doctrine with the orthodox theology of non-dual Vedānta—a position he refers to as Śivādvaita Vedānta. Although he relies on Śrīkaṇṭha's commentary as his main textual source in this endeavour, Appay[y]a approaches the latter with an unusual degree of freedom, substantially reinterpreting its core teachings along the lines of Advaita Vedānta […]. In this sense, Appay[y]a truly positions himself as the founder of a new school.[275]

To synthesize his knowledge and exegesis, and to consolidate it into this theological position was an incredible achievement in that it moved beyond mere polemics by developing a new system. At the same time, it undoubtedly sharpened the gaze of his Vaiṣṇava interlocutors and rivals while increasing the reach of his thought in South India more broadly. Before Appayya's work, Śrīkaṇṭha was relatively obscure, and undoubtedly for Appayya to follow Śrīkaṇṭha's lead and essentially equate Śiva with Brahman as the singular cause and essence of the cosmos was an incredibly provocative step in this sectarian climate.[276] Naturally, Vaiṣṇavas would dispute or even take offense to such a bold assertion. Being Śaiva himself and having a local patron who was staunchly Śaiva meant that, for a time, Appayya was fortunate to have a buffer against these countervailing social and political forces. However, as Duquette notes, by Cinna Bomma's death in 1578, the Aravīḍus had taken over what was left of Hampi Vijayanagara and replaced Virūpākṣa (a form of Śiva) with Viṭṭhala (a form of Viṣṇu) as the state deity of (what remained of) the Vijayanagara Empire.[277] Even if Appayya hadn't served in person at the Vijayanagara court at Hampi or communicated with the Aravīḍus directly at this time, Duquette reasons that Appayya's "militant defense of Śaiva religion was [nonetheless] tied to the rise of Vaiṣṇava religion in the imperial capital."[278] With this in mind, we can now examine the response from Vaiṣṇava leaders, how Appayya responded in turn, and more broadly how Appayya's intellectual

[275] Duquette, *Defending* God, 3.
[276] For further philosophical detail on this subject, see Duquette, *Defending God*, 77-84.
[277] Ibid., 5.
[278] Ibid.

and poetic life grew and changed after his Śivādvaita achievements, doing so by engaging both Jonathan Duquette's work and key passages from his *stotra*s as guides.

Summarily, Duquette details two important if conflicting strains in Appayya's thought: on the one hand, there is "an increasing concern for positioning Śrīkaṇṭha's theology above Rāmānuja's" Vaiṣṇava-based Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism) theology, but on the other hand, there is also an evolution of "a more tolerant attitude" toward Viṣṇu himself and the worship of him.[279] Duquette attributes this shift in attitude to Appayya's "leaning toward *pure* non-dualism and its tenet that all deities are ultimately manifestations of the same attributeless Brahman."[280] Generally speaking, I agree with Duquette's outline of these two strains of thought. At the same time, *how* exactly we understand Appayya's commitment to the Śivādvaita philosophy of Śrīkaṇṭha on the one hand, and to 'purer' Advaita non-dualism on the other, is still very much an open question (and may perpetually be).[281] In his conclusion, Duquette is inclined to accept that Appayya was ultimately "at heart" an Advaitin (thus giving him the ability to be more theologically and philosophically flexible), *but* his book nonetheless goes to great lengths to illustrate Appayya's deep and lifelong commitment to a less conciliatory Śaiva theology.[282] I think at this point it is difficult if not inconclusive to determine whether the Śivādvaita or Advaita Appayya is the more 'authentic' Appayya. I also believe that, in addition to Appayya's polemics and philosophical literature, his poetry can give us valuable insight into who he may have been at heart.

[279] Duquette, *Defending God*, 174.
[280] Ibid. Italics are my own.
[281] See my review of Duquette's book for some of my further thoughts on the details and the implications of this: https://readingreligion.org/9780198870616/defending-god-in-sixteenth-century-india/.
[282] Ibid., 220.

Furthermore, it stands to reason that if Appayya was also more purely an Advaitin (without specific theological commitments to Śiva), then his works perhaps would not have created such a vociferous response from his contemporary opponents and those who followed. Duquette references two Vaiṣṇava contemporaries of Appayya who respond similarly in their counterarguments to Appayya's Śiva-centric views. The first, Vijayīndra (c. 1514-1595), was a dualist philosopher, mentioned above in Sevappa Nāyaka's copper plate inscription. The second, a philosopher named Puruṣottama, was a student of Vallabhācārya's non-dualist system and lived roughly from the early 1660's to 1725. In brief, both thinkers take the approach of refuting or minimizing Śrīkaṇṭha's Śiva-centric reading of the *Brahmasūtra*s on the account that these readings are a mere "rehash" of Rāmānuja's earlier exegesis, the *Śrībhāṣya*, (which to some degree identified Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa with Brahman).[283] Other Vaiṣṇava intellectuals include one Māhācārya, presumably also a contemporary of Appayya's, who was arguably the first to respond to Appayya's Śivādvaita philosophical works and who advanced similar arguments to Vijayīndra and Puruṣottama.[284] Later, there was the *Pañcamatabhañjana* ("Destroying the Five Views"), commonly attributed to Pañcamatabhañjana Tātācārya, but which was in actuality likely written by his student Raṅgarāmānuja (c. late 17th century), and it similarly attacks Appayya's views of Śiva's superiority.[285] However, one interesting aspect of Raṅgarāmānuja's work is that his own commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*s appears to be heavily indebted to Appayya, and he seemed to rely on Appayya's work more generally as a highly reliable and even authoritative resource on the subject.[286] One final and noteworthy response is that of the modern Vaiṣṇava scholar Varadācārya, who in the 1960's wrote the *Śrīkaṇṭhasamālocana* ("A

[283] For Vijayīndra, see Duquette, *Defending God* (176-177) and for Puruṣottama see the same (184-186).
[284] See Duquette, *Defending God*, 190-193.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid., 194-195.

Consideration of Śrīkaṇṭha"), in which he provocatively asserts that Appayya "invented" the personage of Śrīkaṇṭha and composed Śrīkaṇṭha's *Brahmamīmāṃsābhāṣya* himself in order to refute Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita teachings.[287] It is fascinating on its own that Appayya's work would elicit this kind of direct response some four hundred years later, to say nothing of the invective ostensibly contained in Varadācārya's work. Ultimately, these works speak to the gravity of these philosophical and religious debates during Appayya's own era and their enduring significance. They also show that his interlocutors, both contemporary and well into the future, certainly did not see him purely as an Advaitin.

III. Religious Identity and Blending Theologies in Appayya's *Stotra*s

For Appayya, polemics, philosophical musing, and the relationships between contemporaneous religious culture and the Vedic past were not limited to prose alone, they could also find expression in his *stotra*s. Two *stotra*s that speak to this are the *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā* ("An Examination of the Three Jewels," hereafter *RTP*) and the *Śivamahimakalikāstuti* ("The Praise of a Digit of Śiva's Greatness, *ŚMKS*). The *RTP* is a short hymn of eight verses that examines the relationship between the 'three jewels' of Śiva, Śakti (the Goddess), and Viṣṇu, illustrating how they collectively relate to the nature of Brahman.[288] As Duquette's table outlining the 'esoteric' theology in the poem's commentary makes clear, Śiva is identified/homologized with bliss and the supremely divine state, but the worship of both Umā/Śakti and Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa are counted

[287] Duquette, *Defending God*, 194-195.

[288] The following discussion uses as its source Duquette's analysis of the poem (*Defending God*, 130-139) and his translation in Appendix 3 (234-236). Another poem of interest, the *Brahmatarkastava* ("Hymn on the Inquiry of [Śiva as] Brahman") also has a philosophical/polemical nature to it (arguing for the supremacy of Śiva and for his identity with Brahman; it is discussed in part by Duquette (51-59), and it could form the basis of future work. Presently, I think the *RTP* is the more interesting poem in that it allows for greater nuance and reflects Appayya's evolving views on the relationship of the major Hindu deities and Brahman, and the *BTS* largely follows views already elucidated in Appayya's polemics and Śivādvaita philosophy, outlined above.

as "indirect" means by which one can arrive at this state.[289] Appayya thus makes clear that the worship of Viṣṇu is important, perhaps even essential (which Duquette characterizes as a "considerably tolerant" move on his part), but it is nonetheless *less* efficacious than the worship of Śiva alone.[290] This mutually beneficial but still hierarchical relationship between the deities (and, by extension their devotees) is articulated fully in the poem's last two verses, the final verse being particularly emphatic in expressing this:

> 8. Having contemplated Śaṃkara [i.e., Śiva] very intensely, by means of His name and with their own self, wise men—who are firmly established in their heart because of the latent impressions [produced] by [their] worship of Śaṃkara, [a worship] enhanced by the [recitation of] scriptures and reflection [on these scriptures]—reach, never to return again, a far-off place made of bliss [and] blazing like ten million suns, in a region beyond the supreme place of Viṣṇu, the uppermost part of Kṛṣṇa's heaven.[291]

In this poem Appayya does not deny a level of efficacy to the worship of Viṣṇu, nor does he deny the existence of a supreme abode of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa (*golokasyordhvabhāgād api paramapadād vaiṣṇavād*), but he does state that the abode of Śiva, made of bliss (*ānandarūpam*), rests in a region *beyond* this (*ūrdhvadeśe*). Although there is a strain of openness to Viṣṇu and his devotees in this poem, it nevertheless consists in less than a full embrace of the same. It exemplifies, as Duquette said of Appayya's philosophy, a considerable amount of tolerance, but his tolerance here retains certain limits. The efficacious qualities of the worship of Viṣṇu are evident, but for Appayya here, they do not go beyond that of the worship of Śiva, *nor* are they equal to it.

In the *Śivamahimakalikāstuti*, Appayya simultaneously worships Śiva and extols the Soma sacrifice and the ritual universe of the Vedas. Here, Appayya's Śaivism does not supersede the Vedas, nor is it subordinated to the Vedas; the two religious streams are blended primarily

[289] Duquette, *Defending God*, Table 4.2 (132-133).
[290] Ibid., 137-138.
[291] This is Duquette's translation of the verse, Appendix 3 (236).

through the use of *śleṣa*. In this way, Appayya carves a unique poetic and theological path, one different than prior Śaivas whom Elaine Fisher described as having their worship of Śiva transcend the authority of the Vedas, and different than those Hindu adherents who, as described by Brian K. Smith, look to the Vedas for legitimizing authority. We will examine the opening two verses of the poem along with selections from the helpful later commentary of Tyāgarāja Śāstri.[292] Rendering them in both the Śaiva and Vaidika perspectives, the first two verses state:

1. We worship that light, Śiva, being with Umā, the one who has the form of all the gods, the one who is celebrated for having the property of being the eater in all the sacrifices, and the one who is the giver of the fruits of sacrifices everywhere.
   //
   We sit near that firelight, being Soma, having the form of all the gods, the one who is celebrated for being the consumer of all the sacrifices, and the one who is the giver of the fruits of sacrifices everywhere.

2. O Śiva, the one with Umā, you are immutable, having as your limbs all *mantra*s which are sung in the all the Āgamas; but all those gods beginning with Brahma, being like cattle and so on, are products of a modification of you.
   //
   O Soma, you are immutable, having as your limbs all mantras which are sung in the all the Vedas; but all those gods beginning with Brahma, being like cattle and so on, are products of a modification of you.[293]

The crux of the extended double meaning is Appayya's use of the word "*soma*" to mean both 'Soma' and 'the one with Umā' (*sa-umā*), being Śiva. In the first verse, both Śiva and Soma are offered and subsequently consume sacrifices, and bestow the fruits of these sacrifices everywhere. In his commentary, Tyāgarāja cites a passage from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* to

[292] My study of the *ŚMKS* began during my field research in India in early 2023, during which I obtained a modern edition of the text from the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Pondicherry and a *Grantha* manuscript from the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library at the University of Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram. I am part of an ongoing project in studying and translating the *stotra* and the commentary with Hugo David, Jonathan Duquette, and others, and my commentary on the opening verses of the *stotra* here is indebted to their insights and expertise.

[293] *yat sarvatra kratuphaladaṃ yadakhilayajñāditāmahitam |*
yat sakaladevarūpaṃ jyotis tad upāsmahe somam || ŚMKS 1
avikāraḥ soma bhavān akhilāgamavinutasakalamantrāṅgaḥ |
brahmādyās tu gavādivadamarāḥ sarve vikārās te || ŚMKS 2

substantiate this: "That which dwells within the sun, which is other than the sun, which the sun does not know, the body of which is the sun, [that is the immortal inner controller]."[294] The implication, from a Śaiva view, as Tyāgarāja explains, is that Śiva possesses the body of all the gods, he is ultimately the inner controller (*antaryāmi*) of the gods and the enjoyer of the sacrifices. This is reinforced in the second verse, as both Śiva and the Soma sacrifice are understood as the source of the gods, and by extension all things, because all these other things are products (*vikāra*) or modifications of the first source. In Vedic terms, for someone to attain cattle (prosperity) or to attain heaven or anything else, one must perform the Soma sacrifice and other necessary rituals at the proper times and with the correct resources. Just as all these things from cattle to divine gods are products of Śiva (the body of all), they too are products of the Soma sacrifice. In these examples we are able to see how Appayya creatively unites the veneration of Śiva with a sense of reverence for Vedic tradition, combining his personal religiosity with the roots of Hindu authority and practice.

In addition to the *RTP* and *ŚMKS*, Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* and *Varadarājastava* also shed significant light on his theological background and pragmatic approach. From the beginning it is quite clear that Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* is steeped in Appayya's personal devotion to Śiva and his Śivādvaita philosophy, but the poem's devotional thrust also owes a significant debt to the Vaiṣṇava soteriology of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika. For me, there are two main points of tension that Appayya tries to resolve over the course of the poem. The first is a question that is key to all monistic philosophies: how does a manifold and diverse universe arise from a singularity (in this case, Śiva)? The second point of tension arises from Appayya's own doubts

[294] *yaḥ āditye tiṣṭhan yaḥ ādityāt antaro yam ādityo na veda yasya ādityaḥ śarīram* [*taḥ ātmāntaryāmiaṃrtaḥ*], *BṛU* 3.7.9.

and anxiety.[295] Not only is he fearful of his own physical and spiritual state and prospects of salvation, he also seems to doubt his very knowledge and abilities and, perhaps, at times, even his own Śivādvaita philosophy. For at its outset, the poem is rich with the thought and terminology of Śaiva non-dualism; yet, as we will see, as the poem progresses and Appayya's crisis grows more acute, his thought takes a surprising turn. The poem opens in the following way:

1. Who is able to perceive your might, O Supreme God of gods? This creation in its diverse arrangement arose from that. Even so, here you can be grasped through devotion. I wish to praise you from a place of complete devotion. Please put up with my incredible intemperance.

2. It is determined that things having parts, made up of earth and so on, have a birth. Furthermore, various created things cannot be devoid of the basis of a creator. Anything void of life would not be able to govern, and even no being who is not God. Because of that, you must be the prime refuge and creator of the world at its origin.

3. They call you, "Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Brahma, Viṣṇu, Īśa," O Supreme Śiva when they are bewildered with your illusion. Along with them, absolutely everything comprises merely a minute portion of the energy of that one which is you, God. You are known as the god Śambhu and so on in the Vedas.

4. Having undertaken a thickening which is some form, from an ocean of joy, desiring continual supreme enjoyment together with Umā, your energy, you roam this first place radiant with the horns of radiant suns, where there are no paths , O Matted-haired One, always attended by your lords and hordes.[296]

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[295] It is interesting to think how a paradigm as simple as anxiety or a personal crisis has produced such significant poetry in Western literature too; one could almost read this poem as a sort of crisis-ode like those of Shelley, Whitman, Eliot, and others.

[296] *kaste boddhuṃ prabhavati paraṃ devadeva prabhāvaṃ*
yasmādittthaṃ vividharacanā sṛṣṭireṣā babhūva |
bhaktigrāhyastvamiha tadapi tvāmahaṃ bhaktimātrāt
stotuṃ vāñchāmyatimahadidaṃ sāhasaṃ me sahasva || ĀAS 1
kṣityādīnāmavayavavatāṃ niścitaṃ janma tāvat
tannāstyeva kvacana kalitaṃ kartradhiṣṭhānahīnam |
nādhiṣṭhātuṃ prabhavati jaḍo nāpyanīśaśca bhāvas
tasmādādyastvamasi jagatāṃ nātha jāne vidhātā || ĀAS 2
indraṃ mitraṃ varuṇamanalaṃ padmajaṃ viṣṇumīśaṃ
prāhuste te paramaśiva te māyayā mohitāstvām |
etaiḥ sārdhaṃ sakalamapi yacchaktileśe samāptaṃ
sa tvaṃ devaḥ śratiṣu viditaḥ śaṃbhurityādidevaḥ || ĀAS 3
ānandābdheḥ kamapi ca ghanībhāvamāsthāya rūpaṃ
śaktyā sārdhaṃ paramamumayā śāśvataṃ bhogamicchan|

Here, the opening verses show that the entirety of creation (*sṛṣṭiḥ*) in its manifold arrangement (*vividharacanā*) arises from the power (*prabhāvaṃ*) of Śiva, and this occurs by means of a 'thickening' or solidifying (*ghanībhāvam*) into form when Śiva is joined in bliss with the primordial and dynamic energy of Śakti/Umā (verses 1-4).[297] This fluctuation between fluidity and solidity is significant in non-dual Śaivism. In her discussion of Śiva as "*jaganmūrti*," the embodiment of the world, Lyne Bansat-Boudon states that, "no gross determinism is implied by this solidification of consciousness, but rather the Lord's free and sovereign, indeed playful, will to manifest himself without precondition […] The Lord's freedom is itself the one cause of phenomenal manifestation."[298] However, for Appayya, this experience is anything but playful, as the following verses make clear:

5. You are that manifold greatness O leader of the universe sung by the Upanisads. You are worshipped by Brahmins and everyone by means of all their actions, O Boon-giver (*Varada*)! You are that which is contemplated by multitudes of yogis who lack thirst for even a measure of joy from the objects of hearing and seeing for the purpose of dissolving the knots inside.

6. Some meditators cross over the unconquerable world to you, others according to rule constantly strive for the lotus of your feet. Others who perceive you observe their vows, enamored of the rules of caste and life stages. Having left all aside, I am drowning in this awful sea of being![299]

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adhvātīte śucidivasakṛtkoṭidīpre kapardin
ādye sthāne viharasi sadā sevyamāno gaṇeśaiḥ || *ĀAS* 4

[297] The (simpler and more literal) translations here are my own; however, Yigal Bronner has an excellent translation of the *ĀAS* found in *"Self-Surrender" "Peace" "Compassion" & "The Mission of the Goose:" Poems and Prayers from South India* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[298] Lyne Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology: Some Key Issues of Understanding," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42 (2014): 41.

[299] *tvaṃ vedāntairvividhamahimā gīyase viśvanetas*
tvaṃ viprādyairvarada nikhilairijyase karmabhiḥ svaiḥ |
tvaṃ dṛṣṭānuśravikaviṣayānandamātrāvitṛṣṇair
antargranthipravilayakṛte cintyase yogivṛndaiḥ || *ĀAS* 5
dhyāyantastvāṃ katicana bhavaṃ dustaraṃ nistaranti
tvatpādābjaṃ vidhivaditare nityamārādhayantaḥ |
anye varṇāśramavidhiviratāḥ pālayantastvadājñāṃ
sarvaṃ hitvā bhavajalanidhāveṣu mañjāmi ghore || *ĀAS* 6

In contrast to all the Brahmins, yogis, meditators, and those who fulfill their vows in accordance with Śiva's wishes, Appayya finds himself cut off: having foolishly thrown everything aside (*sarvaṃ hitvā*), he is drowning (*majjāmi*) in this terrifying sea (*eṣa ghore jalanidhi*) of being (*bhava*), which etymologically here, is also a name for Śiva. Appayya doesn't have the basic rectitude of those lay devotees who faithfully follow their vows and follow the correct pursuits for a given stage of life, much less the highly developed resolve and fortitude of the ascetics who have stamped out any thirst for the pleasures of the senses. This realization forces him into a moment of profound crisis.

Having forsaken his noble birth and the sweetness of Śiva earlier in life, even knowing what he must do and still failing to do it, he has become a sinful, weakened sensualist (*eṣa pāpaḥ*, *karaṇavivaśo bhūyas*), injurious to himself (*ātmadrohī*) *and* to Śiva who is his *true* Self:

7. Having been born, O Slayer of Kāma, in this great family of the highest, having even tasted the fine particles of spray of the ocean of your greatness, my heart turned away from the adoration of your feet and was distracted because of the unsteadiness of my senses. Ah!—I have made this birth useless in empty things. This is sinful!

8. Worship should be done for you with flowers beginning with vessels of Arka plants. The fruit to be obtained by that [worship] is the wealth and dominion of liberation. Even knowing this, O Śiva, O Self, I am wasting time. Hostile to myself, under control of the senses, I fall exceedingly to hell.[300]

He acknowledges both his awareness of proper religious conduct *and* simultaneously his conscious embrace of sensual and ultimately meaningless pursuits throughout his life. Here,

[300] *utpadyāpi smarahara mahatyuttamānāṃ kule 'sminn*
āsvādya tvanmahimajaladherapyahaṃ śīkaraṇūn |
tvatpādārcāvimukhahṛdayaścāpalādindiyāṇāṃ
vyagrastuccheṣvahaha jananaṃ vyarthayāmyeṣa pāpaḥ || ĀAS 7
arkadroṇaprabhṛtikusumairarcanaṃ te vidheyaṃ
prāpyaṃ tena smarahara phalaṃ mokṣasāmrājyalakṣmīḥ |
etajjānannapi śiva śiva vyarthayan kālamātmann
ātmadrohī karaṇavivaśo bhūyasādhaḥ patāmi || ĀAS 8

knowing how sensual, sinful, and selfish he has been makes him all the more wretched (and perhaps also all the more pitiable). He knows this path will only drag him down to infernal places (*adhaḥ patāmi*), but this realization is a prelude to a transformative realization.

This realization occurs in the following two verses:

9. What can I do? I've been bound in this body with my enemy, the one possessing knots in the heart, free-roaming in rough sense-objects; a calf laboring together in one place in a yoke with a running bull who delights in bearing affliction and pride, what can it do?

10. I cannot control the unruly heap of my senses. The memory that is the disease of repeated births, O Lord, I am sunk with fear! What can I do? What is proper here? Where can I go now? Ah! I can see no way except surrendering to your lotus feet.[301]

"*Kiṃ vā kurve*/What can I do?" he repeatedly asks. He compares his conscience to a calf yoked and laboring together with the rampaging bull of his senses, and he acknowledges that like the inability of the calf to rein in the bull, he is unable to control his senses and worldly attachments. Completely lost, completely at a loss, and completely powerless, it is only now that he understands that his sole chance at redemption is to surrender to Śiva.

As Yigal Bronner has pointed out, this act of surrender (*prapadanam*, elsewhere *prapadye*) is doubly significant in that it is the transformational crux of the poem, and that it is *not* necessarily a Śaiva act; it is in fact a borrowing from Śrīvaiṣṇava theology.[302] The concept of *prapatti* (from the root *pra√pad*), which Srilata Raman understands as being "synonymous with self-surrender," has its roots in Rāmānuja's writings and informs major disputes concerning

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[301] *kiṃ vā kurve viṣamaviṣayasvairiṇā vairiṇāhaṃ*
baddhaḥ svāmin vapuṣi hṛdayagranthinā sārdhamasmin |
ukṣṇā darpajvarabharajuṣā sākamekatra naddhaḥ
śrāmyan vatsaḥ smarahara yuge dhāvatā kiṃ karotu || ĀAS 9
nāhaṃ roddhuṃ karaṇanicayaṃ durnayaṃ pārayāmi
smāraṃ smāraṃ janipatharujaṃ nātha sīdāmi bhītyā |
kiṃ vā kurve kimucitamiha kvādya gacchāmi hanta
tvatpādābjaprapadanamṛte naiva paśyāmyupāyam || ĀAS 10

[302] See Introduction to "*Self-Surrender" "Peace" "Compassion" & "The Mission of the Goose"* l, and "Singing to God, Educating the People," 13.

Śrīvaiṣṇava soteriology in the following centuries.[303] In this context Appayya's choice of the word "*upāyam*" is also significant: in discussing Vedānta Deśika's Tamil poem, the *Meyviratamāṉmiyam*, Steven Hopkins states that for Deśika, an *upāya* is "a formal ritual of surrender," and a "'means' to salvation," even if this was highly debated among Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas of his time.[304] Indeed, according to Piḷḷai Lokācārya, the founder of the opposing *Teṅkalai* sect, to think of surrender as an *upāya* would be sinful, owing to his view that all human acts are caused by God, hence salvation cannot be "earned" by any specific means; grace is a "sheer gift" from God.[305] From the beginning of the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* up to now, it is quite clear that Appayya feels that Śiva's power, mischief, and grace are pervasive, whereas his own thoughts and actions account for very little, if anything.[306] A later verse amplifies this, stating: "You cannot be reached by worldly knowledge O Śiva, except through your own grace."[307] Although he held Vedānta Deśika in high esteem, I would argue Appayya's ode to Śiva at crucial points seems to borrow more from Piḷḷai Lokācārya's *Teṅkalai* model of salvation rather than Deśika's. It is, of course, doubly ironic in that this is a poem to Śiva, not Viṣṇu.

Even though Appayya calls out for Śiva's grace, his crisis is by no means resolved by the end of the poem. His tone veers from humility and self-reflection to accusatory anger and even to dismissiveness toward his own work. He describes Śiva as an all-knowing, boundless ocean of compassion (*sarvajñastvaṃ niravadhikṛpāsāgaraḥ*, verse 31); however, he asks what pleasure Śiva gets in beating him up (33), whether he has any compassion left (*kimiti na kṛpā*, 34), and

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[303] Srilata Raman, *Self-surrender (Prapatti) To God In Śrīvaiṣṇavism: Tamil cats and Sanskrit monkeys* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 11.
[304] Steven Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 86.
[305] Ibid.
[306] At the same time, Appayya's surrendering to Śiva's feet and his later exclamation, "I'm your slave!" (*dāso 'smi*) are reminiscent of the Vaiṣṇava *caṭakōpaṉ/sadagopan* crown (with feet) ritually placed on the devotee's head (Caṭakōpaṉ also the given name of Nammāḻvār, Viṣṇu's "slave"). The crown is a ritual element, but it is also "the vehicle of the Lord's grace, a conductor of consecrated energy" (Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 85).
[307] Verse 26: *vijñānaṃ ca tvayi śiva ṛte tvatprasādānna labhyaṃ*.

lastly, summarizes his *stotra* as "mere words" (*vācāpi kevalam*, 50) from a wretch. This pain, crippling self-consciousness, and uncertainty, which he has articulated throughout, is quite startling; if he were as unshakable a Śivādvaitin (*or* Advaitin) as he was purported to be, why does this poem show such self-doubt and estrangement from Śiva? Why would he resort to borrowing from his theological rivals hoping to reestablish a personal connection with his own God? The story of his ingesting Datura (a powerful and even toxic hallucinogen) is well-known, but does that alone account for the tone and content of this poem? We may not be able to pin down his exact experience, but Appayya's use of both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava terminology nonetheless makes the poem a more expressive and poignant work. Here, we see someone who is staunchly devoted to Śiva, but who is nonetheless also experiencing extreme deprivation and doubt, coupled with a sense of his own smallness and fragility in a tumultuous universe. He borrows important terminology from Vaiṣṇavism to express his love for Śiva, despite this acute experience. Here also, perhaps more so than in his philosophical work, we get a rich and vivid illustration of what Appayya was experiencing at a moment of religious and poetic inspirations.

In his article, "Singing to God, Educating the People," Yigal Bronner characterizes the *Varadarājastava* as a "descriptive" poem, in contrast to the "conversational" and personally/theologically consequential *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, a classificatory judgment that I believe generally holds to be true; and yet, the description of Varadarāja at his temple in Kanchipuram has a profound meditative dimension as well.[308] It is focused, vivid, and vigorous, all the more so because it too enmeshes Śaiva theology and Vaiṣṇava imagery. The poem is also at various points reflective, intellectual, and passion-driven, rather than being only descriptive.[309] The

[308] Bronner, "Singing to God, Educating the People," 13.
[309]Comparing the later *VRS* to the earlier *ĀAS* to some degree calls to mind the long meditative poems Wallace Stevens wrote later in life in contrast to his earlier poetry.

eleventh verse of the *VRS*, for example, ties an illustration of the twenty-four stairs leading up to the temple (*mahāvimānasopānaparvacaturuttaraviṃśatiryā*) to the "scope of realities" (*tāmeva tattvavitatiṃ*) experienced by a person or Spirit (*puruṣo*) seeing the Lord (*bhagavantam paśyan*) and approaching the further shore of being, *or*, notably, Śiva (*bhavābdhipāram upayāti*).[310]

> 11. At the jeweled peak//tusk of the elephant hill, a conscious man, who has twenty increased by four steps on the staircase which is the great vehicle, seeing you, approaches the far shore of the ocean of existence, having ascended that very length of realities.[311]

Here, as in many other stanzas, Appayya blends the locale of the temple with the infinite breadth of cosmic realities. The twenty-four *tattva*s have Śaiva and Sāṃkhya connotations, and here the *puruṣa*-Spirit passes through them as he ascends the temple steps, finally approaching the Supreme Lord as he simultaneously approaches the main temple shrine. It is interesting that the language of the ocean of being/*bhava* occurs both here and in the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*. In the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* Appayya is of course in great distress. However, here in the *Varadarājastava* he is perhaps a wiser, more matured poet who, instead of drowning (*majjāmi*), can chart the soul's path from impurity to transcendence. This is to say that the *Varadarājastava* here, in a way not so unlike Vedānta Deśika's poems before, "direct[s] us not to heaven but to earth, which has become the locus of [liberation]."[312] The *activity* of climbing the stairs here, the perceiving of Varadarāja as one reaches the top, and the enmeshing of the locale with the cosmos makes this verse a meditation on the rigors and processes of religious practice, the goal of liberation, and the importance of the terrestrial present at the temple itself. As Hopkins points out, this "localization" is more than just a "Tamil phenomenon;" it is significant in both the development

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[310] The commentary also states, "indeed, the soul, having seen the Supreme Being (*parameśvara*) overcomes samsāra;" Parameśvara being an epithet of Śiva (*khalu puruṣaḥ parameśvaraṃ dṛṣṭvā saṃsāraṃ tarati*).
[311] *mataṅgaśailamaṇiśṛṇga mahāvimānasopānaparvacaturuttaraviṃśatirvā |*
tāmeva tattvavitatiṃ puruṣo vilaṅghya paśyan bhavantamupayāti bhavābdhipāram || VRS 11
[312] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 94, quoting David Shulman.

of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, in Sanskrit and the vernaculars, and as the *Varadarājastava* shows, it continued as a potent force in South Indian religiosity, influenced by Vedānta Deśika but taken to new horizons by Appayya Dīkṣita.[313] Here Appayya illustrates for us a particular 'transcendent localization' to be seen at the approach to Varadarāja in the heart of Kanchi, and his Śaiva background gives him a unique and augmented vocabulary to articulate this, rather than if it had been written from a purely Vaiṣṇava perspective.

Another significant section of verses, verses thirty and thirty-one, imagines Varadarāja as a cosmic totality, rendering the splendorous innumerable world-eggs (*jagadaṇḍasahasraśobhām*) as the pearls adorning Varadarāja's limbs. The verses state:

30. O lord of the mountain of snakes I see you as all people, able to do all things, by means of your universal form; you whose entire appearance is made manifest together with a heap of ornaments and jewels, and you who are to be seen by way of the reflections in the gods and the rest who have come because of their taste for devotion.

31. O God the adorning pearls on your limbs, which have as one part a yellow-red luster that becomes bright gold, make visible your splendor belonging to the innumerable world-eggs which are thick and reposed in each pore [of your skin].[314]

Lyne Bansat-Boudon makes clear the significance of the *aṇḍa*s in Śaiva cosmology and philosophy in that they not only represent "the whole of Creation," and the gradual solidification of consciousness (which must be undone through liberation), but also serve as "metaphors for the different grades of experience or subjectivity," all of which are pertinent to the *Varadarājastava*.[315] As the *stotra* progresses, it's clear that Appayya continues to meditate on Varadarāja, his mind and perception are loosened and transformed. Appayya's placement of the

[313] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 94.
[314] *sevārasāgatasurādyanubimadṛśyaṃ bhūṣāmaṇiprakaradarśitasarvavarṇam |*
tvāṃ viśvarūpavapuṣeva janaṃ samastaṃ paśyāmi nāgagirinātha kṛtānrthayantam || VRS 30
śṛṅgīsuvarṇarucipiñjaritaikabhāgānyaṅgeṣu deva tava bhūṣaṇamauktikāni |
pratyakṣayanti bhavataḥ pratiromakūpaviśrantisāndrajagadaṇḍasahasraśobhām || 31
[315] Lyne Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology," 62-63.

*aṇḍa*s in the pores of Varadarāja's skin is also noteworthy. In his prior *stotra* of the same name, Kūreśa states that the *aṇḍa*s reside in Varadarāja's stomach, thus being associated with cosmic creation through Brahma and the lotus rising from Viṣṇu's navel.[316] Seeing them here in the pores of the skin gives the poem a more Śaiva cast: as Śiva's body itself *is* ostensibly the universe, the *aṇḍa*s of creation are here seen as radiant but infinitesimal, residing in pores all over his body rather than only in his stomach.

Throughout the poem, the power of sight and Varadarāja's radiant ornamentation are highly significant; however, our knowledge of Appayya's deep understanding of Śaiva philosophy and practice sets this imagery in a new light. On the one hand, Appayya's vision is assuredly indebted to Vedānta Deśika and Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Like Deśika's hymns to Varadarāja, Appayya's poem "is not an encounter entirely lost in visionary devotional space," it also partakes of the Lord's luminosity through "the poet's 'devotional eye'" within the "cultic context of temple and ritual."[317] Appayya also understands Varadarāja to be self-manifest and consisting of *śuddhasattva*, or pure/spiritual material.[318] However, in another context, this kind of radiance and singularity is intimately tied with Śiva's primordial energy and his generative and salvific power. We can compare a verse-section from the *Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta, translated by Lyne Bansat-Boudon: "Once the connection with the bondage of birth is severed, the sun of Śiva *shines* with its rays unhindered."[319] The verb employed here, *bhāti*, its variants

[316] See Nancy Ann Nayar, *Praise Poems to Viṣṇu and Śrī*, 146-147. It is also noteworthy that a purely Vaiṣṇava poet (as far as I understand) such as Kūreśa employs the imagery of the *aṇḍa*s here; I understand them to primarily be a Śaiva term.
[317] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 147-148. The body of God is also in the heart, as Hopkins points out, and this too is significant in the context of Appayya's understanding of *daharavidyā* (see, for example, the articles of Ajay Rao and Jonathan Duquette in "Appayya Dīkṣita and his Contexts." Special issue, Journal of Indian Philosophy 44, no. 1 (March 2016) ed. Christopher Minkowski).
[318] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 101-102.
[319] *gatajanmabandhayogo bhāti śivārkaḥ svadīdhitibhiḥ* (Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology," 51, italics are hers). The sun and solar imagery are also widespread in the *VRS*.

and related verbs, occur repeatedly throughout the *Varadarājastava*, and grant a specific dynamism to Varadarāja as seen through Appayya's 'devotional eye.'

In verse sixty-five, Appayya describes the rubies of Varadarāja's gold necklace as being undifferentiated from the disc of the newly risen sun (*padmarāgāḥ pratyagragharmakara-maṇḍalanirviśeṣaḥ*), shining on His chest (*tava vakṣasi bhānti*). His chest is also Lakṣmī's resting place (*lakṣmyāḥ paryaṅkake vakṣasi*), upon which the rubies' hues are like reddish marks upon pillows of erotic play (*krīḍopabarhatilakā iva*). The entire verse is as follows:

> 65. Varada, the rubies which have arrived at your necklace, which are identical to the disc of the newly risen sun, shine on [your] chest, the bed of Lakṣmī, as if they are nail-marks on pillows of play, sharing your ribs.[320]

It remains uncertain if Appayya is *purposefully* employing Śaiva-resonant words here, but it is noteworthy that at least some of his verbiage and imagery clearly resonate with Abhinavagupta's verse above. In addition to this, the passion between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī is reminiscent of the Śiva-Śakti dynamic which accounts for the universe's creation. As a lifelong Śaiva, here praising Varadarāja, Appayya has an expansive lexicon which draws on both traditions. In the final verse of the poem, Appayya concludes thus:

> 105. Your body, from the tuft of hair to the foot, altogether, having enthralling eyes, being boundless, and being a glittering heap of joy; may this body, the hill on which the elephant rests, O Lotus-eyed One, O Inner Self, always manifest in my heart.[321]

Regardless of whether or not Appayya intends to give this verse a Śaiva flavor (his commentary simply glosses '*sphuratu*' as '*prakāśatām*,' 'may it shine or manifest') the verb √*sphur* has clear

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[320] *prālambikāmupagatāḥ tava padmarāgāḥ pratyagragharmakaramaṇḍalanirviśeṣāḥ |*
paryaṅkake varada vakṣasi bhānti lakṣmyāḥ krīḍopabarhatilakā iva pārśvabhājaḥ || VRS 65
[321] *āpādamācikurabhāramaśeṣamaṅgamānandabṛndalasitam sudṛśāmasīmam |*
antar mama sphuratu saṃtatamantarātmanambhojalocana tava śritahastiśailam || VRS 105

Śaiva connections, specifically to the *Spanda* (vibration) doctrine in Kashmir Śaivism.[322] The sense of the *totality* of Viṣṇu's body also parallels the sense of Śiva's body *as* the universe. Here, the form of Varadarāja reverberates from the core of Appayya's heart through the temple itself, to the boundless cosmos beyond, and in my view, his utterance of veneration for a Vaiṣṇava deity *combined with* his deep knowledge of Śaivism makes this verse especially resonant, and it is one quality that makes the *Varadarājastava* a truly unique religious expression.

By employing the language that he does in both the *Varadarājastava* and the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, I do not believe Appayya purposefully sought to undermine Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava orthodoxies, but I do believe that as a poet he tried to enlarge and enliven the perspectives of his readers and challenge the rigidities that commonly inhere in orthodox views. Occupying the unique social and intellectual position that he did, Appayya Dīkṣita understood that poetic *stotra*s were the only medium in which opposing (and quite literally warring) ideologies could be enmeshed and mutually invigorated by their shared presence in a single poem. To be sure, for much if not all of his mature intellectual and poetic life, Appayya either overtly or at some level under the surface bore the identity of a persistent defender of Śaivism and Śrīkaṇṭha's Śivādvaita philosophy. Yet over time, he nonetheless found room in his poetic oeuvre for Vaiṣṇava imagination and religiosity.

Taking into account the wider political, cultural, and social milieu of South India, it is in some ways remarkable that Appayya Dīkṣita was as prolific as he was. On all accounts, although he of course polemicized against those he disagreed with, he never grew implacably embittered toward his rivals; and, in the end, he perhaps transcended such rivalries entirely. In both his philosophy and his poetry, he had a deep and even sympathetic understanding of core tenets of

[322] See Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology," 55, and Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany, SUNY Press: 1987): 17-22.

Vaiṣṇava theology (as seen especially in the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*), and simultaneously, we find Śaiva language coupled with his creative inspiration to describe and venerate the deity Varadarāja of Kanchipuram and the religious life of the Varadarājaswāmi Temple, as seen in the *Varadarājastava*. To me, it is insufficient to explain (or explain away) the cross-fertilization of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva theologies in his poetry as the product of a pure Advaitin who sees all deities and their respective traditions with equanimity. It is also not reducible to questions of patronage or other social contexts either. Further research of mine will seek to better understand what motivated the relatively few and unique non-dualist philosophers in South Asia who wrote praise poems to multiple deities of different traditions or commentaries on them, and who engaged with devotional literature. At the same time, this chapter makes clear that Appayya Dīkṣita possessed a unique intellectual and poetic consciousness, and he lived in a turbulent but fruitful period in which he provided a voice that both reflected on the religious, cultural, and intellectual life of his era while actively seeking to shape them. By embarking on a close reading of his poetry, furthermore, we see deeply and more clearly into his heart and his character than we otherwise would by only considering his philosophical and theological works, and his sociopolitical and sectarian contexts. Since poetry is, in a way, a language of the heart along with the intellect, it can grant us a deeply reflective and vivid portrait of those who create it.

Chapter Five: Appayya's Poetry in Relation to South Indian Temples and the Wider Tamil Landscape

I. Introduction

From the early eras of the Tamil Pallava and Cōḻa dynasties, through the Vijayanagara era to the present, the Hindu culture of religious worship and devotion (*bhakti*) in Tamil Nadu has grown and evolved in distinctive ways while also serving as one of the strongest of nexuses of pan-Indian religiosity. Along with the worlds of Sanskrit *kāvya*, Sanskrit poetics, and the late Vijayanagara empire, the world of *bhakti* in the Tamil country is the last important contextual lens through which we must examine Appayya Dīkṣita's praise-poetry. In the previous chapter, by examining some of Appayya's *stotra*s in context, we were able to glimpse the tumultuousness of the late-Vijayanagara world, the localized and capricious nature of political power, the growing power of religious sects and its implications, and the political, polemical, and interreligious dynamics that Appayya encountered during his lifetime. So too, in this chapter, by examining such *stotra*s as the *Hariharābhedastuti* (the "Hymn on the non-difference of Hara and Hari," *HHAS*), the *Apītakucāmbāstava* ("Hymn to the Mother whose Breasts are Full," *AKAS*), and the *Varadarājastava* (*VRS*), we can elucidate much about Appayya's impressions of temple life and religiosity in Tamil Nadu, along with his relation to the wider Tamil religious and cultural world, including his engagement with direct religio-poetic predecessors like Vedānta Deśika (c. 1268-1369 CE) and Kūreśa (a contemporary and disciple of Rāmānuja, c. 1017-1137 CE).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Appayya lived much if not all of his life in the northeast and north-central regions of Tamil Nadu. The fractious politics of his time aside, this region is arguably one of the richest in the world in terms of the antiquity and preponderance of

its temples and other religious sites, the multitude of religious artworks and artifacts (some of which continue to be unearthed and rediscovered up to this day), and the centuries-long development of one of the most unique religious landscapes anywhere.

The 11th century CE Bṛhadīśvarar Temple in Thanjavur, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (author's photo).

The above photo of the Cōḻa-constructed Bṛhadīśvarar Temple in Thanjavur is only a small illustration of the labor-intensive richness and plentitude of Hindu temple culture in Tamil Nadu. The Vimana (pictured), the tower beneath which is housed the innermost shrine of the temple (*garbhagṛha*), is over sixty meters (approximately 200 feet) tall, and is constructed of granite. The sheer verticality of the Vimana is breathtaking, and it was an architectural achievement in its time; the temple itself is dedicated to Śiva, is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, *and* is an active temple today, accepting devotees, pilgrims, and tourists from all over India and beyond. From the picture alone one can see the wealth needed, along with the requisite planning, coordination, artistry, and dedication, to construct such a temple. Throughout history, the construction and maintenance of temples such as this, and the activities and rituals within and

around them, were crucial to South Indian religiosity and religious identity, and they remain so to this day. One of the main objectives of this chapter is to understand Appayya's poetry in relation to this highly developed religious world. Although all of Appayya's writings were composed in Sanskrit, they have both Tamil and Sanskrit antecedents, and within his *stotra*s he shares his experiences of visiting particular temples and religious sites within the Tamil world. Reading them through the lens of Tamil temple culture, religious literature, and religious history, this along with considering the implications of Tamil religious architecture and art, will allow us to better appreciate the artistry of the poems themselves and will shed new light on the religious world of South India during Appayya's lifetime.

II. The *Hariharābhedastuti* and the History, Art, and Ritual Life of the Temple(s) at Chidambaram

In the previous chapter we had briefly encountered the opening verse of Appayya's *Hariharābhedastuti* and noted that the locus of the *stotra* is the Śiva Naṭarāja/Śrī Govindarāja Temple complex in Chidambaram. In the poem, Appayya, using a series of epithets for the deities along with highly poetic descriptions, signifies that he (and by extension the reader/listener) is able to worship forms of both Viṣṇu and Śiva at this old and venerable temple complex. Like the Bṛhadīśvarar Temple in Thanjavur, the Naṭarāja Temple[323] in Chidambaram is one of the largest premodern Hindu Temples in India. Also, like Thanjavur (roughly seventy miles to the southwest), Chidambaram resides in the Kaveri River delta, whose fertile floodplains were the home of the Cōḻa dynasty. The Naṭarāja Temple has a long and layered history and seems to have been a predominantly Śaiva site of worship, even though Vaiṣṇavas

[323] For clarity I will refer to the temple complex as a whole as the Naṭarāja Temple, and the area specific to Vaiṣṇava worship within the larger complex as the Govindarāja Temple.

take the site to be sacred, as well. Paul Younger in his study of the temple's traditions states that it is the *only* temple complex in India in which the main presiding deity is Śiva in his dancing form (Naṭarāja, "Lord of Dance"), this as opposed to Śiva represented as a Śiva-liṅgam or by still other anthropomorphic or aniconic forms.[324] Over time, Cōḻa artisans crafted numerous bronze images of Śiva, Pārvatī, many other deities major and minor, as well as saints and other religious figures. By far the most recognizable and renowned are the bronzes of Śiva performing the *Tāṇḍava* dance symbolizing the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe.

An 11th century Cōḻa bronze image of Naṭarāja from the village of Patteeswaram, housed in the art museum at the Thanjavur Maratha Palace (author's photo).

What became for a little over four hundred years the Cōḻa Empire was founded by Vijayālaya (c. 850-907 CE) and included important rulers such as Rājarāja I (985-1014 CE), and this period

[324] Paul Younger, *The Home of Dancing Śivaṉ: The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Chitamparam* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 3.

was one of great "literary and religious revival" in South India, including the canonization of Tamil Śaiva works into the *Tēvāram* by Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi (during the reign of Rājarāja I) and the writing of the elaborate Śaiva hagiography, the *Periyapurāṇam*, by Śēkkiḻār, in the 11th or 12th century CE.[325] The bronze of Śiva Naṭarāja shown above, one of many artifacts from this period of cultural and religious flourishing, dates from the 11th century and was recovered in the village of Patteeswaram, near Kumbakonam and about eighteen miles east-northeast of Thanjavur.

According to Paul Younger, the temple has roots that possibly go as far back as the Śaiva *bhakti* poets Tirumūlar (c. 3rd century CE, according to Śaiva tradition) and Māṇikkavācakar (c. 5th century), but it was nonetheless firmly established as a place of worship by the time of the leading *Tēvāram* poets (Śaiva poets writing in classical Tamil) of the seventh and eighth centuries CE.[326] The central shrine at the heart of the temple, known as the "Cit Sabhā," dates to about this period, and although it is not entirely clear how early the Naṭarāja image itself was worshipped here, this shrine was in its origins a Śaiva place of worship.[327] Younger discusses the possibility of early Vaiṣṇava worship at, or more likely in the vicinity of, this site, mentioned in the roughly contemporaneous (c. 7th-8th centuries CE) *bhakti* poems of the Vaiṣṇava poets Tirumaṅkalai and Kulacēkara. The poets are not specific about the image they worshipped here, but Younger speculates on two possibilities: one, that at that time sectarian affiliations were not as rigid as they became, and the temple grounds were home to both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava worshippers; or, two, that there could have been a *third* shrine to Viṣṇu in the vicinity of the shrines to Śiva and the Goddess, which was serviced by the same temple priests.[328] Apart from

[325] See K.A. Nilakantha Sastri's introduction to *The Cōḻas* (Chennai: University of Madras, 1955), 12.
[326] Younger, *The Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, 82-83.
[327] Ibid., 87-88.
[328] Ibid., 90-92.

the hymns of Tirumaṅkalai and Kulacēkara and the later accounts of the actions of Kuluttuṅga II (see below), there seems to be no other evidence of Vaiṣṇava worship during this period. That does not mean that it was non-existent; it was likely present in some way; but as best as can be judged, at its core, the temple was predominantly Śaiva in its origins.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Naṭarāja Temple of Chidambaram was, like many other places, a site of sectarian tensions during Appayya's lifetime. The Cōḻas were exclusively Śaiva, and allegedly the king Kuluttuṅga II (1133-1150) had thrown a Viṣṇu image into the sea that had previously resided in the temple.[329] Whether this is specifically true or not, Vaiṣṇava worship was nonetheless banned at the temple at this time, and there was likely no Vaiṣṇava worship here up until the 16th century, a time coinciding with Elaine Fisher's description of Śaiva priests' threat of mass suicide in protest of the attempted installation of a Viṣṇu image at the temple in 1598.[330] According to Younger, the Vijayanagara king Acyutadevarāya (ruled 1530-1541) succeeded in having a small Viṣṇu-Govindarāja image installed in a corner of the wall surrounding the Cit Sabhā main shrine in 1539, which is by all accounts the same Vaiṣṇava image worshipped both in Appayya's time and up to today.[331] Other texts mention polemical battles between Appayya as a Śaiva and his Vaiṣṇava rivals, including his supposed defeats and their connection to the installation of Govindarāja at the temple, as Ajay Rao notes, but Appayya himself leaves no record of this.[332] Chidambaram was nonetheless a place of great importance for Appayya during his life; Rao and N. Ramesan both mention that Appayya spent the last years of his life there, signaling also the significance of Śaiva worship in

[329] See Younger, *The Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, 111 and Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 44, no. 1 (March 2016): 46.
[330] See Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 46, and Elaine Fisher, *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2017), 19.
[331] Younger, *The Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, 112. Rao also notes that Tamil inscriptions from around this time confirm the installation and reconsecration of the image, see "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 47.
[332] Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 46-47.

the temple.[333] Ramesan even mentions what may be a deathbed (half-)verse, in which Appayya is alleged to have stated, "The Golden Hall, being a newly risen sun made of light, shines in my mind, O Lotus-footed Dancer!"[334] The verse definitely has verbiage and alliteration (*taruṇāruṇo*) similar to that which Appayya had employed elsewhere, but whether or not he wrote it, his presence in Chidambaram alone (by all accounts) shows that his worship of Śiva (and possibly Viṣṇu in the form of Govindarāja) at the Naṭarāja temple was of paramount importance for him to the end of his life. Whatever sectarian tensions there were in Chidambaram and elsewhere, and whatever monist-Advaita philosophical views Appayya may have held at this time, his decision to remain in Chidambaram shows that devotional practice, and a connection to Śiva in particular, were things that Appayya never abandoned toward the end of his life. As I explained in the previous chapter, a full embrace of Advaita Vedānta philosophy ultimately leads to the collapse of distinction between Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava worship into a monist singularity (*nirguṇa brahman*), and Appayya's decision to live out his life in such a key religious center shows that *bhakti* and particular temple-centered devotional practices to *specific* deities remained important to him. Broadly speaking, it is important not to forget to consider people's actions (i.e., Appayya's choice to live in Chidambaram) along with their *entire* oeuvre (not just his philosophy and theology) in order to gain the fullest picture of their ideas, beliefs, and character. To my knowledge, up to this point, this chapter is the first piece of scholarship in English to consider Appayya's written works (here, a selection of *stotra*s) in connection to specific temples he frequently visited and the surrounding communities in which he resided.

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[333] Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," 46-47, also N. Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Dikshita* (Hyderabad: Srimad Appayya Dikshitendra Granthavali, 1972), 134-136.

[334] Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Dikshita*, 135.
ābhāti hāṭakasabhā naṭapādapadma
jyotirmayo manasi me taruṇāruṇo 'yam |

Although the ramifications of political upheaval and sectarianism are shown elsewhere in Appayya's poetry and other work, the *Hariharābhedastuti* itself is of particular interest, for perhaps somewhat idiosyncratically, it is a peaceful and worshipful poem, honoring *both* Śiva and Viṣṇu, in which these worldly tumults are not mentioned. Structurally, the verses of the poem are repetitive, almost as if they are meant to be memorized, chanted, and sung (Hari being an epithet of Viṣṇu, and Hara a name of Śiva, respectively), with the verb *vande* ("I praise…") recurring at the same place in the second half of each of the eight verses. The poem also features a great deal of alliteration and wordplay (as we should expect from Appayya), as well as detailed and poetic illustrations of the characteristics of Śiva-Naṭarāja and Viṣṇu-Govindarāja, their spouses and retinues. The first verses state:

1. I worship [both] the lover of Mā (Lakṣmī) and the lover of Umā; the one whose couch is a serpent and the one who is fit for serpents; the slayer of Mura and the crusher of the Three Cities; the enemy of Bāṇāsura and the enemy of the one with an odd number of arrows (Kāmadeva).

2. I worship the cattle herder and the leader of the earth; the one whose eyes are the sun and moon and the one whose eyes have the fire of the sun and moon; the one whose son is Smara (Kāmadeva) and the one whose son is Skanda; the one of Vaikuṇṭha and the one whose crest is the moon.

3. I worship the one whose body is dark and the one whose body is half Umā; the one who is a householder at his father-in-law's and the one who resides at the summit of Mt. Meru; the one having 10 forms and the one whose body consists of the Vasus; the one whose wife is the earth and the one who is the lord of the earth in its entirety.[335]

The syntax of the opening verse is purposefully sonorous and seemingly repeats numerous words, when in fact there are slight but significant differences therein ("*māramaṇam*

[335] *māramaṇamumāramaṇaṃ phaṇadharatalpaṃ phaṇādharakalpaṃ |*
muramathanaṃ puramathanaṃ vande bāṇārimasamabāṇārim || *HHAS* 1
gonayanamilānayanaṃ raviśaśinetraṃ ravīnduvahnyakṣam |
smaratanayaṃ guhatanayaṃ vande vaikuṇṭhamuḍupaticūḍam || 2
kṛṣṇatanumumārdhatanuṃ śvaśuragṛhasthaṃ sumeruśṛṅgastham |
daśavapuṣaṃ vasuvapuṣaṃ vande bhūjānimakhilabhūpālam || 3

umāramaṇaṃ," for example). Here, Appayya states that he worships both the lover (*ramaṇa*) of Mā (an epithet of Lakṣmī, consort of Viṣṇu) and the lover of Umā (Pārvatī, Śiva's wife). Likewise, he worships both the one whose couch (*talpa*) is a serpent (*phaṇadhara*), alluding to Viṣṇu reclining on the serpent Śeṣa, and the one who is fit (*kalpa*) for serpents, or Śiva, the lord of the serpent-deity Nāgas.[336] He similarly worships the slayer (*mathana*) of Mura, who is Kṛṣṇa, and the destroyer (*mathana*) of the (three) cities ([*tri*]*pura*), or Śiva. Finally, Appayya worships both the enemy (*ari*) of the Asura Bāṇa, which is again Kṛṣṇa, and the enemy of the one having an odd number of arrows (*asamabāṇa*)—that is, Kāmadeva, who possesses an odd number of arrows, and whom Śiva destroys for disturbing his meditation and austerities. One can see a subtle understanding of sound and meaning employed here as Appayya toggles between words like "Mā" and "Umā," "*talpa*" and "*kapla*," "*mura*" and "*pura*," and the like.

The second and third verses follow the first in style, arrangement, and content, but as the poem unfolds there are two important aspects to observe: first, the relative clarity or ambiguity regarding which characteristics are being applied to which deity, and, second, the relationship (and relative superiority or equality) *between* the two deities. In the first verse it is quite clear which aspects and descriptions belong to Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively, and in general the remaining verses follow this arrangement:

> [aspect of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa] [aspect of Śiva] [Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa] [Śiva]
> [Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa] [Śiva] [I worship/praise (*vande*)] [Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa] [Śiva]

[336] Etymologically, the word for 'serpent' can be written as "*phaṇadhara*" or "*phaṇādhara*;" "*phaṇa*/*ā*" denoting a serpent's hood, and regardless of how we read the latter half of the compound, both the roots √*dhṛ* and *ā*√*dhṛ* mean "to bear," or "to carry." The word means the same in both cases, and Appayya artfully employs both versions of it in order to conform to the meter of the verse.

However, Appayya also plays with this arrangement and the repetition of words with interesting and perhaps telling results, as in verse two. At the end of the first hemistich, Appayya describes "One having eyes that are the sun and moon" (*raviśaśinetram*), and "One whose eyes have the fire (*vahni*) of the sun and moon" (*ravīnduvahnyakṣam*). Following the structure of the verses, the first compound would nominally be applied to Viṣṇu and the second to Śiva, and this appears to be the case. Iconographically, Śiva is commonly depicted as *bearing* the moon in the locks of his matted hair (described above as "*uḍupaticūḍam*," or the "One whose crest is the moon), while in the *Bhagavad Gīta*, Kṛṣṇa in his terrifying, all-pervading form (*viśvarūpa*) is described as having eyes that *are* the sun and moon (*śaśisūryanetram*, *BhG* 11.19). Śiva, then, following the arrangement of the verse, is the one whose eyes have the *fire* of the sun and moon. Appayya is perhaps subtly suggesting that although Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa in his most powerful and omnipresent form has eyes that are the sun and moon (which illuminate the entire earth), it is Śiva whose eyes possess the *essence* of these entities. And yet, in the same verse of the *BhG*, Kṛṣṇa is described as having *mouths* (*vaktram*) that heat or illuminate the universe (*viśvamidaṃ tapantam*) with their blazing fire (*dīptahutāśa-vaktram*), so the quality of fire and burning is not solely characteristic of Śiva. Nevertheless, and again on the other hand, Śiva is known as the Lord of *tapas*, signifying practices of austerity and the building up of inner heat; just as he is famously known as the slayer of Kāmadeva (alluded to in verse one) by using the power of his *tapas* in the form of a blazing fire emerging from his third eye to incinerate him. Given as much, I would argue that the association of fire and the eyes is more characteristic of Śiva than of Viṣṇu (if not entirely, however), and furthermore, given that fire makes up the essence of the sun and moon, Appayya is giving a subtle nod of superiority to his personal deity Śiva in this section of the verse, rather than to Viṣṇu. But this is so even while he poetically partially homologies the two

deities, allowing for a reader knowledgeable of the iconography and textual traditions of the two deities to appreciate subtle overlaps and ambiguities in their descriptions.

Something similar appears at the end of verse three; Appayya here describes Viṣṇu as the "One whose wife is the earth" (*bhūjānim*) and Śiva as the "Lord of the earth in its entirety," or, simply, the "King of All" (*akhilabhūpālam*). This description of Viṣṇu in all likelihood refers to Rāma and Sītā, the main personages of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma of course being an *avatāra* or incarnation of Viṣṇu (like Kṛṣṇa) and Sītā, his wife, being one whose name means "furrow" and who was discovered and adopted by Janaka, the king of Videha, *in* such a furrow. The word "*bhū*," or "earth," is what connects these two descriptors, and a "*bhūpāla*" is a protector of the earth, or a king. The word "*akhila*" means that without (*a-*) waste or remainder (*khila*), and it interestingly occurs in the same place in describing Śiva in the four verses that follow. Here, Appayya seems to draw a contrast between Viṣṇu as Rāma, the one whose wife is (of) the earth and who is the daughter of a king, on the one hand, and the one who *is* the king and lord of all the earth, Śiva, on the other hand. The verse itself gives numerous excellent descriptions of both deities, recalling their mythologies: the one who *is* Kṛṣṇa or dark-skinned, the one who has ten forms (the ten *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu), and the one whose body is half-Umā (referring to depictions of Śiva and Pārvatī together as one body, *ardhanārīśvara*), but here too there is perhaps a slight privileging of Śiva's divinity over that of Viṣṇu in ultimately describing him as the lord of the entire earth without remainder.

There are also some slight ambiguities in this verse and possible deviations from the verse-structure discussed previously. It is possible, for example, to read "*bhūjānim*" as referring to Śiva's wife Pārvatī and not Sītā. Pārvatī (or Umā) is the daughter of the Himalaya mountains, and therefore has earthly connotations of her own. Supporting this interpretation is the fact that,

later in this poem, Viṣṇu's wife, Lakṣmī, is described as coming from the ocean (*jaladhisutā*, and *jaladharakāntī*) rather than from the earth itself. Both of these facts complicate my reading and interpretation of the verse; however, I would argue that, with regard to the earth (*bhū*/*bhūmi*), especially in the sense of its material, terrestrial, and "earthy" qualities (which figure heavily into the Sanskrit term), Sītā is the female figure that tradition associates with this above all others. She is born *directly* from the earth, and she dramatically returns to the earth again at the end of the *Rāmāyaṇa* after having been exiled a second time by Rāma, all while raising their two sons.

Another challenge the verse presents is deciding how to read the descriptions of the one who is "a householder for his father-in-law" (*śvaśuragṛhasthaṃ*) and the one who "resides on the summit of Mount Meru" (*sumeruśṛṅgastham*). Śiva is generally known as a (sometimes reluctant) householder, and the inversion of him being a householder for his wife's father (rather than the other way around) has a Śaiva resonance, but this would alter the verse structure so that it is: [aspect of Viṣṇu] [aspect of Śiva] [**Śiva**] [Viṣṇu]. At the same time, any number of deities can be associated with the heavenly summit of Mount Meru, including Śiva, but it is of course the mythology of Viṣṇu as his Kūrma (tortoise) *avatāra* who is most closely associated with the mountain: he uses it to churn the waters to reveal the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) for the benefit of the gods.

I highlight these examples to show that even as I think my readings are plausible, there are still places in the poem with (perhaps deliberate) ambiguities and resonances associable with the qualities of *both* Śiva and Viṣṇu. These resonances are themselves reflective of the poem's title and are meant to play with and sometimes dissolve the barrier of distinct identity between the two gods. I therefore think that with this poem Appayya adroitly uses poetic, mythological, and religious language to blur the boundaries between Viṣṇu and Śiva, while also, in certain

instances at least, articulating a subtle preference for his own personal deity (Śiva) over Viṣṇu. It is, of course, only *poetic* language that would allow him to articulate this in such a subtle form of expression.

In the remaining verses of the poem, there is one more significant illustration of the dynamic relationship of worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva, along with interesting examples of poetic wordplay and even (in the case of Viṣṇu) references to the temple and icon of Varadarāja in Kanchipuram. The poem concludes with the following:

4. I worship the one who bears a mountain and the one bearing an upward fire; the one desired by the ocean's daughter and the one desired by the mountain-born one; the one for whom Garuḍa is standing by and the one for whom the bull is standing by; the one who has five missiles and the one who is wholly unclothed.

5. I worship the one who begot Brahma and the one praised firstly in the Vedic hymns; the one whose dwelling is the elephant hill and the one clothed with the skin of the lord of elephants; the one who is the refuge of the gods and the one who is the refuge of Hari; the one whose wife is the earth and the one whose wife is wholly the earth.

6. I worship the one who is the friend of Arjuna and the one for whom sacrifices are received; the one who has a lovely woman from the ocean and the one who is the slayer of the Asura, Jalandhara; the one whose son is the creator and the one whose son is Skanda; the one who is the dark lord and the one who is the lord of all beings.

7. I worship the one clothed in yellow and the one with tawny twisted hair; the one whose body is fragrant and the one whose limbs are purified; the one who holds a lotus and the one who holds the Ḍamaru drum; the one dwelling in yoga, and the one to be praised by all yogis.

8. I worship the one who holds a Chakra and the one whose hand removes fear; the one whose ornaments are made of jewels and the one whose ornament is the serpent's hood jewel; the one who grasps his bow and the one whose bow is on a mountain; the one who is Govinda and the one whose bull and cows are faultless.[337]

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[337] *kudhradharamudagnidharaṃ jaladhisutākāntamagajākāntam |*
garuḍasthaṃ vṛṣabhasthaṃ vande pañcāstramakhiladigvastram || *HHAS* 4
brahmasutamṛgādinutaṃ gajagirivāsaṃ gajendracarmāṅgam |
suraśaraṇaṃ hariśaraṇaṃ vande bhūdāramakhilabhūdāram || 5
pārthasakhamupāttamakhaṃ jaladharakāntiṃ jalandharārātim |
vidhitanayaṃ guhatanayaṃ vande nīleśamakhilabhūteśam || 6
pītapaṭamaruṇajaṭaṃ parimaladehaṃ pavitrabhūtyaṅgam |
jalajakaraṃ ḍamarukaraṃ vande yogasthamakhilayogīḍyam || 7
cakrakaramabhayakaraṃ maṇimayabhūṣaṃ phaṇāmaṇībhūṣam |

In verse five, Appayya states that he worships the one who is the refuge of the gods (*suraśaraṇaṃ*), likely referring to Viṣṇu, and immediately following he states that he worships the refuge of Hari (*hariśaraṇaṃ*). Following the *Purāṇa*s, the word "*hariśara*" can be treated as an epithet of Śiva; Viṣṇu (Hari) having helped Śiva by being the arrow shaft (*śara*) by which he burnt the triple city of the demon Maya. It is evident here that Appayya is engaging in wordplay by enveloping "*hariśara*" within the compound "*hariśaraṇaṃ,*" but nonetheless, "*śara*" and "*śaraṇa*" (refuge, protector) should not be mutually confused. The wordplay aside, this section of the verse seems to indicate that while Viṣṇu is the refuge of the gods, Śiva himself is the refuge or protector of Viṣṇu. Here again, even as the poem's title indicates the non-difference (*abheda*) between Hari and Hara (Viṣṇu and Śiva), it seems that Appayya, by describing Śiva as Viṣṇu's *own* refuge (and by extension the refuge of the refuge of all the gods), is granting Śiva a greater level of power or efficacy in comparison to Viṣṇu.[338]

The same verse, along with a brief part of verse seven, alludes to the Varadarāja Temple in Kanchi in its description of Viṣṇu as the one "whose dwelling is the elephant hill" (*gajagirivāsaṃ*). This is followed by a description of Śiva as the one "whose limbs have the hide (*carma*) of the Lord of elephants" (*gajendracarmāṇgam*), which refers to a mythological story in which Śiva killed a demon in the form of an elephant and made his hide into a garment; the story

vidhṛtadhanuṃ giridhanuṣaṃ vande govindamanaghagovāham || 8

[338] This is also reminiscent of Appayya's unique reading and commentary on the *Rāmāyaṇa* in which he makes ingenious if at times somewhat far-fetched arguments that the destruction of Rāvaṇa is brought about through the power of Śiva even though Rāma is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu; see B.N. Bhatt "An Analysis of the Rāmāyaṇasārasaṃgrahavivaraṇa of Appayya Dīkṣita," *Journal of the Oriental Institute, University of Baroda* 32, no. 1 (September 1982): 150-161, and Yigal Bronner, "A Text with a Thesis: The Rāmāyaṇa from Appayya Dīkṣita's Receptive End," in *South Asian Texts In History: Critical Engagements With Sheldon Pollock*, ed. Yigal Bronner et. al. (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2011): 45-64.

is alluded to in the *Kūrmapurāṇa* and elsewhere.[339] In verse seven, Viṣṇu is also described as the one who has a yellow cloth (*pītapaṭaṃ*), and this parallels verse fifty-seven of the *Varadarājastava* in which Varadarāja is described as having clothes that bear a yellow color (*varavarṇinī*). This is contrasted with Śiva's description as the one having tawny, matted hair (*aruṇajaṭaṃ*).

As mentioned previously, the word "*akhila*" reoccurs in the same position in verses three through seven, which leads to interesting descriptions of Śiva especially as they contrast with Viṣṇu. In verse six, for example, Viṣṇu is described as the "dark lord" (*nīleśam*), referring to the dark complexion of Kṛṣṇa or even in some degree to Viṣṇu himself. Śiva is then described as the "lord of all beings without remainder" (*akhilabhūteśam*), and there is a Śaiva inflected pun on the word "*bhūta*" in that it can refer to "beings" in general, or it can refer to impish, ghostly spirits commonly found in cremation grounds who are attendant on Śiva in his terrible form (Bhairava), as an ash-smeared, skull-bearing ascetic. In verse seven, Viṣṇu is described as one abiding in yoga (*yogastham*), but Śiva is described as the one "praised by all ascetics/ practitioners of yoga without remainder" (*akhilayogīḍyam*). All of the above descriptions are fitting for Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively, but the use of "*akhila*" in these descriptions of Śiva (as at the end of verse three) is an interesting one, for in using this term to describe Śiva, Appayya is giving him a greater, universal, and unending scope that he does not also grant Viṣṇu in the *HHAS*. At no point does he use the word "*akhila*" to describe anything related to Viṣṇu.

In the final verse of the poem, Appayya ends on a note of equanimity—both are overseers of cattle (Kṛṣṇa as Govinda, Śiva as Paśupati), both have legendary bows and other weapons, and both are beautifully adorned, Viṣṇu (as Varadarāja perhaps?) in jewelry and Śiva either with a

[339] See Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare transl., *The Kurma Purāṇa* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 253 (Part I, 32.18).

serpent's hood jewel or a jewel that *is* a serpent (around his neck)—but at a number of different points in the poem Appayya grants Śiva certain powers and a greater divine scope in comparison to Viṣṇu. Perhaps, then, in composing this *stotra*, and therefore perhaps even later in his life when residing in Chidambaram, Appayya still felt a personal connection to Śiva that outweighed other religious considerations even as he acknowledged and described the significance of Viṣṇu and his *avatāra*s.

III. Ill on a Journey: Appayya's Fever and the Cure of Āpitakucāmba of Thiruvannamalai

Like Chidambaram and Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai is an ancient, temple-centered city located in northeast Tamil Nadu, roughly sixty miles inland from Pondicherry, and it was a place frequently visited by Appayya Dīkṣita. Thiruvannamalai is a unique city in that it lies at the base of the solitary Arunachala ("Red Mountain") hill, which dramatically rises to about 2,600 feet, rising suddenly out of the broad surrounding plains. Annually, during the Tamil month of Kārttikai (November-December), there is a large festival of light (*dīpam*) involving the Śaiva-Śakta temple at the base of the mountain, the Arunachaleśwarar Temple, which features a large procession up the mountain itself by which a large cauldron is carried to the top, filled with ghee and other offerings, which is subsequently lit afire (as depicted in the image here following).[340]

[340] For a description, see V. Narayanaswamy, *Thiruvannamalai* (Chennai: Manivasagar Pathippagam, 1992), 84-85.

The lighting of the cauldron at the top of Arunachala Hill during the Kārttikai Dīpam festival on November 30, 1982 (photo courtesy of the Institut Français de Pondichéry and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient).

The festival is a popular religious event in Tamil Nadu, and like the Naṭarāja Temple in Chidambaram, the Ekāmbaranātha Temple in Kanchipuram, and others elsewhere, the Arunachaleśwarar Temple has a long and important history as a center of Śaivism in South India. It is mentioned in the *Tēvāram* as a site of pilgrimage for the poet Cambandar (c. 7th century CE), among others.[341] Inscriptions in the innermost part of the temple show that it was an important religious site for the Cōḻa kings, including Rājarāja I and Rājendra I (ruling in the early 11th c. CE), also that the later Vijayanagara rulers (especially Kṛṣṇadevarāya, who ruled from 1509-1529 CE) made significant additions to the temple, among them the Śivagaṅgā tank and the thousand pillared *maṇḍapa* hall.[342] The main deities of the temple are Śiva in the form of Aruṇācaleśvara and Umā/Śakti in the form of Uṇṇāmulaiamman or Apītakucāmbā. The shrine

[341] Narayanaswamy, *Thiruvannamalai*, 74.
[342] Ibid., 68-69.

for the goddess is, interestingly, a separate structure from that of the main shrine that houses Aruṇācaleśvara, but the two deities are physically brought together for numerous observances, processions, and festivals.[343] The *Apītakucāmbāstava* ("Praise of the Mother with Full Breasts") is the only direct piece of evidence of Appayya's worship at the temple, but it is significant. In his biography of Appayya, N. Ramesan doesn't mention anything about Appayya's travels to Thiruvannamalai outside a small description of the poem itself. It's clear Appayya was suffering from a fever or an illness of some sort when he wrote the poem, and it doesn't seem to be connected to any of the various accounts of his difficulties with the Tātācaryas and the Vaiṣṇava communities.[344] The poem, in eight verses total, is nonetheless beautifully written and gives insight into the richness of his temple experience in Thiruvannamalai. Let us see how these themes progressively develop in these eight verses.

The *stotra* begins with a description of the beauty of the goddess, the beauty and vitality of the temple, and a description of Appayya's illness:

1. O Mother having full breasts (Apītakucā), I call to mind your form: a cluster of flowers wet with nectar from a clump of joyful creepers, which is a collyrium made from *amṛta* for the two eyes of those who attend on you, and which is a wave in a flood of joy from the crest of rays of *amṛta*.

2. O Mother Apītakucā, may you at once place for an instant thy foot on this inflamed forehead of mine, having a sickness and fever caused by fainting; [thy foot] which eternally rains heaps of nectar and which is a lovely tender red lotus which does not sleep.

3. O Mother, bathe me instantly at the venerable red-dawn mountain by means of your glances, which are cooling like the *suṣumna* rays at its peak, and the cool-rayed moon, full of waters which are the essence of compassion without deceit, pouring out in all directions like camphor dust.[345]

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[343] Narayanaswamy, *Thiruvannamalai*, 27.
[344] See, N. Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Dikshita*, 113.
[345] *ānandasindhulaharīmamṛtāṃśumauleḥ āsevināmamṛtanirmitavartimakṣṇoḥ |*
ānandavallivitateramṛtārdraguccham amba smarāmyahamapītakuce vapuste || AKAS 1
nirnidrakokanadakomalakāntamamba nityaṃ sudhānikaravarṣi padaṃ tvadīyam |
mūrchākarajvararujā mama tāpitasya mūrdhni kṣaṇaṃ sakṛdapītakuce nidhehi || 2
śītāṃśukoṭisuṣumāśiśiraiḥ kaṭākṣaiḥ avyājabhūtakaruṇārasapūrapūrṇaiḥ |

Here, the beauty of the form of Apītakucāmbā is identified with both a clump of flowers, fragrant and wet with the immortal nectar of *amṛta*, and a collyrium or an eye-salve made from *amṛta* itself. The mere sight of the goddess purifies the eyes of the devotees, both inwardly (as they contemplate the salvation and immortality given by Apītakucāmbā) and outwardly as they gaze on her. From my own experience, the imagery of wetness and freshness of the flowers, creepers, and nectar here is evocative of the different temples I have visited in Madurai, Thanjavur, Pondicherry, and elsewhere, particularly the numerous sellers of garlands, flowers, and fruit offerings ever present as one enters the temple grounds. It also evokes the fragrant garlands that the temple priests place on one's shoulders, which have been blessed by the presiding deity, which are fresh, moist, and cool to the touch, especially in the hot climate.

Images of Aruṇācaleśvarar (left) and Uṇṇāmulaiamman/Apītakucāmbā (right) in procession in Thiruvannamalai, December 2, 1982 (photo courtesy of the Insitut Français de Pondichéry and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient).

The images of the god and goddess above, ornately ornamented and decked in thick and fragrant garlands as they pass through the streets of Thiruvannamalai during the Kārttikai Dīpam festival

karpūradhūlimiva dikṣu samākiradbhiḥ amba kṣaṇaṃ snapaya māmaruṇādrimānye || 3

also recall the richness and splendor detailed in Appayya's opening verse, and the fragrance, sights, and sounds of such processions occurring throughout South India up to the present day are unmistakable and all-encompassing for those who are there.

The second verse contrasts the coolness and relief of the foot of Apītakucāmbā and the intensity of Appayya's illness. He describes himself as distressed (*tāpita*), sick (*ruj*), and feverish (*jvara*) while alarmingly having periods of fainting (*mūrchā*). Besides the sixth verse of Mayūra's *Sūryaśataka* (discussed in chapter two), it not always common for a Sanskrit poet to write about illness and health. In various traditions there can be *mantra*s, spells, rituals, or other practices and utterances aimed at dealing with sickness (as seen in Ellen Gough's *Making a Mantra* in the introductory chapter, for example), but descriptions of this in *Kāvya* are relatively rare. They are especially rare in the case here in which Appayya is discussing *his own* illness and health. Nonetheless, the goddess' foot rains nectar and is described as a 'sleepless' (*nirnidra*) lotus that keeps its flower unclosed day and night. For relief Appayya asks to be bathed (*snapaya*) in her soothing and cooling (*śiśira*) glances, which are said to be like the sun's *suṣumna* rays and the 'cool-rayed one' (*śītāṃśu*), the moon, which pour out like camphor dust in all directions, and which contain the essence of compassion given naturally (*avyāja*). The term "*avyāja*" is noteworthy in that it recalls (and contrasts with) the "pretext" (*vyāja*) that Vedānta Deśika views as necessary for the grace of a divinity to save oneself.[346] As Steven Hopkins has noted, for Vedānta Deśika, "God never acts arbitrarily to save his devotee," for otherwise he could be said to be partial and capricious; however, once "even the smallest gesture (*alpavyāja*) is made, there arises in the Lord a spontaneous compassion," which allows for grace and

[346] Steven Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God: The Hymns of Vedāntadeśika in Their South Indian Tradition* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press: 2002), 87.

ultimately salvation.[347] Appayya, on the other hand, seems to indicate through this word choice that the grace of Apītakucāmbā is more freely given, perhaps given *completely* freely to all.

With this in mind, let us consider the next verses. Wracked by fever and sickness, Appayya surrenders his body to the mercy of Apītakucāmbā, hoping for her grace and a cure to his ailment:

4. O Mother Apītakucā, I must offer up this heated body of mine instantly before your presence, bathed in the stream of nectar which is a mass of light at your foot, as I am distressed with a great fever.

5. Calm this excessive fainting which has been brought on with fevers and agitations instantly O Apītakucā, with the fragrance of a red lotus and Palāśa blossoms which enjoy the play of fingertips, and which are manifold and produced in a pond where lotuses arise.

6. The poison in the throat, the snakes who discharge poison in the matted hair and along the ribs, the lords of Bhūtas and the terrible Gaṇas—Having approached the mighty red mountain, O mother, should the smells received in the nose partake of [their] presence if in the vicinity?[348]

By surrendering and offering himself up in her presence, Appayya hopes that she can calm (*ā√śvas*) his fainting and fevers, this through her grace which is freely given. By engaging the senses of smell and touch in these verses, Appayya evokes a greater sense of the tangibility and immediacy of his predicament. The fragrance of the flowers and herbs present, which are manifold, arisen from a fecund lotus pond, and which have been touched by the fingertips (*karāgra*) of priests and devotees, helps to bring him to his senses. The fragrance brings a vision of Śiva to his mind (perhaps a sort of fever-dream), recalling Śiva's mythological aspects and

[347] Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 87.
[348] *āvirbhava kṣaṇam apītakuce purastāt amba jvareṇa mahatā mama tāpitasya |*
yena tvadaṅghrirūcijālasudhāpravāhe magnastadaiva tanutāpamamuṃ tyajeyam || AKAS 4
nānāvidhairnalinajātaliprakḹptaiḥ ānītamūrchamadhikaṃ kṣubhitaiḥ jvarādyaiḥ |
āśvāsaya kṣaṇam apītakuce karāgra- krīḍākanatkanakahallakasaurabheṇa || 5
kaṇṭhe viṣaṃ viṣamuco bhujagāḥ kaparde pārśveca bhūtapatayaḥ pramathāś ca bhīmāḥ |
śoṇācaleṣam upasṛtya bhajeta ko vā nasyāttavāmba savidhe yadi sannidhānam || 6

adornments: the poison lodged in his throat, the snakes in his matted hair, the Bhūtas and terrifying hordes of Gaṇas in his presence, and Appayya asks, if by inhaling the calming and pleasant fragrances of Apītakucāmbā's presence, should he also partake of the (terrifying and transgressive) presence of Śiva when he is in such a weakened state. This also likely explains why the poem itself is addressed to Apītakucāmbā rather than Aruṇācaleśvara/Śiva. In a state of sickness, Appayya seeks out the tenderness of the Goddess rather than the energy of the more unpredictable but efficacious Śiva.

The potential of Śiva's presence is a catalyst for a broader meditation on the cosmic relationship between God and Goddess in the final verses of the poem. The verses seem to indicate a return to health for Appayya, and they state:

7. The power in the creation of worlds, nourishing when there are breakages, [which is also] the divine queen of the crest with the moon and tree-blossom in the serpent's hoods, the perfection, being the wife of Śiva the doer, which is your ambit—the destruction of these does not arise, O Apītakucā.

8. You are the witness of the dances of Bhairava's destruction.
   You are the emaciator of all created things of Brahma at [the time of] destruction.
   You are the liberator of multitudes of transmigratory souls.
   I bow to you O Apītakucā, you who are the consciousness of Brahman.[349]

In verse seven Appayya meditates on the creative, nourishing, and sustaining power (*śakti*) of the goddess Āpitakucāmbā; even though there are breakages (*bhañjana*) and entropy in the universe, the Goddess still supports and nourishes life. She is the wife of the primeval doer or actor (*kara*), who is Śiva, but nonetheless he needs her power in order to act. Thus, the mutual dependence of Śiva and Umā, God and Goddess, is emphasized in the final verse: the Goddess witnesses Śiva's

[349] *śaktirjagajjanana pālana bhañjaneṣu bhogeṣu divyamahiṣī tarujendumauleḥ |*
siddhiḥ karapraṇayinī tava sannidhānaṃ yannāsi tasya tadapītakuce na jāte || *AKAS* 7
tvaṃ sākṣiṇī pralayabhairavatāṇḍavānāṃ tvaṃ śoṣiṇī sahāridhātṛcarācarāṇām |
tvaṃ mocinī sakalasaṃsṛtijālakānām tvāṃ brahmasaṃvidamapītakuce namāmi || 8

cosmic dances, which lead to destruction; at the time of destruction, she saps all created things; and thus it is she who liberates all souls. By describing her as the consciousness of Brahman in addition to elucidating her cosmic power and her ability to cure him here and now, Appayya grants the goddess Apītakucāmbā incredibly efficacious abilities, which more commonly are attributed to Śiva himself. The Arunachala hill and the temple have together long been renowned as places for religious contemplation, ritual, and healing, and here Appayya gives a personal poetic account of his own experience, which combines descriptions of the temple and its locale with descriptions of the goddess Apītakucāmbā. The curing of Appayya's illness further invites him to reflect on Apītakucāmbā's cosmic qualities, which are enmeshed with his more localized descriptions, and this is a model that he would go on to employ to great effect in the *Varadarājastava*.

IV. Networks of Worship and Praise in Kanchipuram, the City of Temples

Kanchipuram is an ancient city, and as numerous scholars make clear, it was constructed in such a way that temples and processional routes defined the social, cultural, and economic life of the city. As in other ancient and significant South Indian settlements, in particular Madurai, Thanjavur, Chidambaram and others, the temples in many respects *made* the city as we know it today. For as Emma Natalya Stein notes, the Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang, visiting Kanchipuram in the seventh century CE, was impressed by the city's prosperity and infrastructure, and in particular the numerous religious sites; but as she points out, the most productive period of urban planning and building under the Pallava and Cōḻa dynasties (from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries) had yet to begin.[350] Nonetheless, the city in the seventh

[350] Emma Natalya Stein, *Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2021), 26-27.

century already boasted a robust, temple-driven urban core with a wealth of agricultural and pastoral infrastructure in its surroundings, which would continue to be developed. Stein further notes that "Temples [themselves] remained religious institutions, but they served more than religious functions," they managed community resources and services such as food distribution, education, and medicine, and she states that,

> The rise of temples in Tamil Nadu was representative of a *distinct change* in South India's socioeconomic makeup that included the consolidation of urban centers and the creation of robust agrarian estates. In previous centuries, temple worship focused on deities that were connected with landscape and sustenance. The seventh and eighth century saw instead the institutionalization of temples dedicated predominantly to Shiva and Vishnu.[351]

Many cities came to be centered around a *single* temple complex, the Aruṇācaleśvarar Temple in Thiruvannamalai, the Mīnākṣī Ammaṉ Temple in Madurai, to offer but two examples; but Kanchipuram is unique in that it hosts *multiple* large temple complexes with large throughfares between them. In addition to the Varadarājaswāmi/Varadarāja Perumāḷ Temple that was praised by Appayya and the Ekāmbaranātha Temple (the largest Śaiva temple in the city), Kanchi also contains the Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ Temple, which is dedicated to the Goddess, and the Kailasanātha Temple, another Śaiva temple that dates to the Pallava dynasty. If, then, it is fair to say that the temple networks and infrastructure of the Tamil country is unique when compared to what is present in the rest of India, so too is the layout and infrastructure of Kanchi *itself* unique to Tamil Nadu. The advancement in constructing and expanding on temple centers devoted to Śiva and Viṣṇu (and the Goddess) paralleled the profusion of poetry and other religious literature created in Tamil during this time; many of the most significant Vaiṣṇava Aḻvār poets and Śaiva Nāyaṉār

[351] Stein, *Constructing Kanchi*, 29. (Italics are mine.)

poets lived between the sixth and tenth centuries CE and wrote of these temples.[352] At the same time, this does not mean that worship of deities representing "landscape and sustenance" disappeared in South India. Temple worship, festivals and processions involving deities such as Mariyamman (a goddess of rain, agriculture, and prosperity) continue to the present.



A local Mariyamman procession in the Madurai North Taluk neighborhood in July 2018 (author's photos).

The above photos show a Mariyamman procession in the summer of 2018 in a Madurai neighborhood; at first glance it is like many other temple processions commonly seen in South India, but the headwear of the women who follow the Goddess in the procession illustrates the significance of the land, good weather and fertile conditions, and agrarian prosperity that remains a significant part of the religious imaginations of Tamil people to this day. Even as the reverence for deities tied to the land and sustenance continually remains strong in South India, the projects

[352] See Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987), 2-7. For an example of the connection between Nāyaṉar poetry and the Ekāmbaranātha temple complex, see Emma Natalya Stein, *Constructing Kanchi*, 54-56.

and developments spearheaded by the Pallava and Cōḻa dynasties had lasting ramifications, especially for the urbanization and cultural development of Kanchipuram.

During the Cōḻa period, the urban core of Kanchipuram shifted slightly eastward from the previous Pallava settlement (centered on today's Krishnan Street/Sathan Kuttai Street westward to the Kailāsanātha Temple), and today's Kamarajar Street marks the main north-south axis on which the Cōḻas constructed their city. The modern city center is the same as that which the Cōḻas constructed. As Stein shows, the Cōḻas established a new "royal road" (Kamarajar Street) during their heyday, and the temples constructed and expanded during this time faced east toward the main axis when they were west of it, and faced west if they were east of it.[353] This orientation, coupled with the widening of temple patronage and involvement outside the domain of the royal ruling families during the Cōḻa period, makes Kanchi a unique temple city in South Asia. Since there were multiple major temples rather than a single temple at the city core, the Cōḻa planners oriented their constructions toward this main axis. (This likely accounts for the uncommon westward-facing entrance to the Varadarāja Temple and the westward-facing main temple icon.) As Stein details, the original Pallava route ran through the western edge of today's Kanchi, from the Kailāsanātha Temple south to the village of Māmaṇṭūr across the Palar River.[354] Although there were surely religious processions during the Pallava period, one of the greatest advantages of the Cōḻa reorientation of the city was the construction of wider avenues (including Kamarajar Street and today's Gandhi Road/TK Nambi St which connects the Varadarāja Temple to Kamarajar), allowing for numerous large processions that became central practices during the Cōḻa period and thereafter.[355]

[353] Stein, *Constructing Kanchi*, 104-105.
[354] Ibid., 120. For a map illustrating the shift between Pallava and Cōḻa cities see Illustration 38 (121).
[355] Ibid., 129.

Processions served a number of important functions: they allow for the deities to survey their surroundings and to visit other gods, reenacting mythological and other religious narratives; they also significantly allowed the *public* at large to view the deities (*darśan*).[356] This built popularity for the deities, priests, and temple networks by way of an enacted visibility of the same, which ultimately strengthened community ties. Public access to the temple images increased widespread devotion to them, and the event of a procession brought people out into the streets in close proximity to each other, all partaking in the music, dancing, food, and worship available and taking place. In my own experience witnessing temple processions in South India, they are events that involve *entire* neighborhoods and wider communities; people are eager to participate, and they are incredibly welcoming. In these aspects, the kinds of processions and festivals in Kanchipuram during the Cōḻa period would have been very much like what we continue to see today.

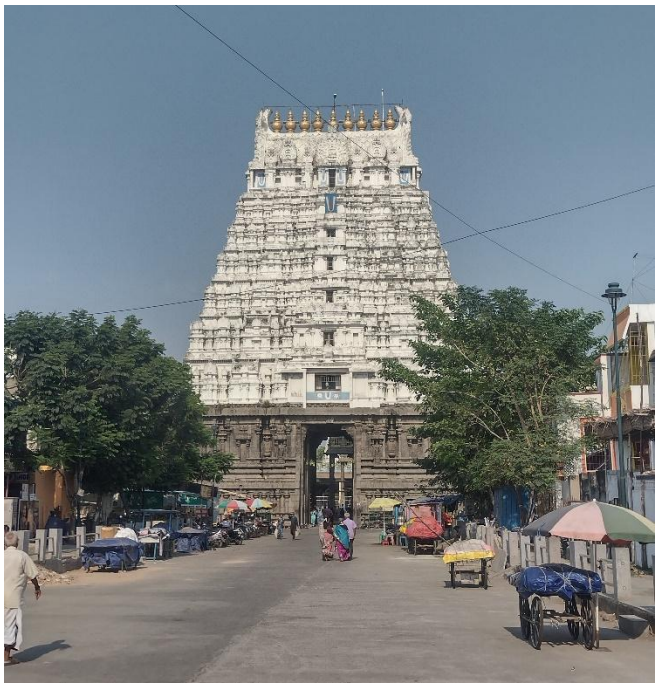
Indeed, Stein highlights the importance of *movement* that inheres in processions: the sacred space is "transmitted outwards," toward a greater audience and the community at large, and at the same time, devotees rush inward toward the temple and its inmost sanctum.[357] This dynamism is perhaps also reflected in the expansion of the patronage and involvement in the temples of Kanchi during the Cōḻa period. Stein notes that the shift away from exclusively royal patronage and administration of temples during Cōḻa rule led to an increase in the number of temples in Kanchi, and in all likelihood, increased participation in temple life for larger segments of the local and regional populace.[358] Understanding these expansive historical trends are key in

[356] Stein, *Constructing Kanchi*, 129.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid., 143.

contextualizing the history, layout, and architecture of the Varadarāja Temple itself, and, therefore, in Appayya Dīkṣita's poetry, which depicts its vibrant religious life.

The Varadarājaswāmi/Varadarāja Perumāḷ Temple may have roots in the Pallava period, but the earliest inscriptions are datable only from 1073 CE, in other words during a period of Cōḻa rule.[359] K.V. Raman outlines four main stages of physical development of the site, which expand outwardly, from the inner sanctum to the three walled courtyards that surround it.[360] After the first stage of construction (for which there are little if any remains) the second stage of construction occurred from the eleventh to the early twelfth centuries CE, and much of the Cōḻa architecture of this period is still visible. The structure that encloses the *garbhagṛha* and the second and third *prākāra*s (walled enclosures) date from the Cōḻa period. Later, during the Vijayanagara period, the temple was expanded and renovated to accommodate the growing interest in large-scale festivals and ritual practices; various *maṇḍapa*s (pillared gathering halls) were constructed, but Raman dates the large thousand-pillared *maṇḍapa* in the northeast corner of the third enclosure to the beginning of the 14th century due to its simpler style in comparison to Vijayanagara architecture.[361] Arguably the most significant addition during the Vijayanagara period is the Eastern *gōpuram* (gateway tower), which is the tallest structure in the temple grounds. However, the slightly smaller Western *gōpuram* is the main temple entrance.

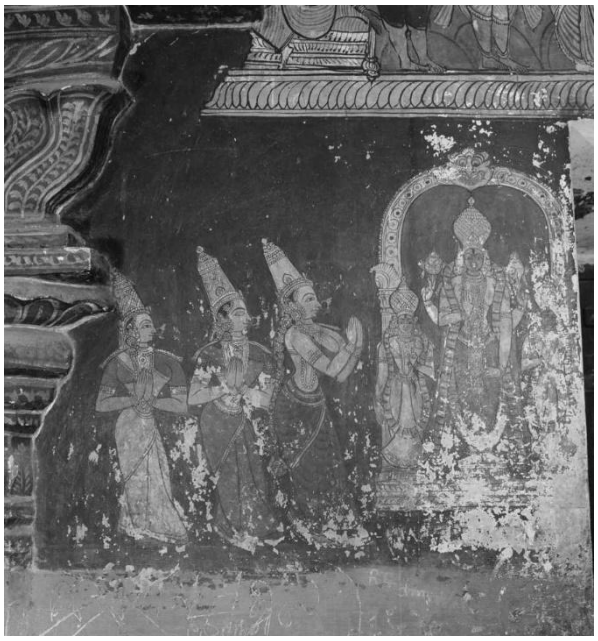
[359] K.V. Raman, *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple, Kāñchi: A Study of its History, Art, and Architecture* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1975), 43.
[360] This discussion is based on the beginning of the fifth chapter of K.V. Raman's study, 147-158.
[361] Ibid., 152.



The Western *gōpuram* and entrance to the temple, April 2023 (author's photo).

Passing through the main entrance and the various courtyards, devotees come to what is called the *Vayyamāḷigai* or the "earthly palace" of Viṣṇu/Varadarāja, which contains the *mūrti* of Varadarāja within the innermost sanctum of the temple. K.V. Raman states that the term "*Vayyamāḷigai*" dates to the thirteenth century, and that there is an inscription using the term from 1560 CE, meaning Appayya likely would have been aware of it.[362] He also mentions that this area (besides the innermost shrine) was likely an open courtyard before the Vijayanagara period, but that they enclosed it in a pillared hall with architecture and paintings characteristic of their style during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[362] Raman, *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple, Kāñchi*, 44.



A painting depicting Varadarāja and devotees coming for worship in the interior of the temple (photo courtesy of the of the Insitut Français de Pondichéry and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient).

Regarding temple activities and administration, K.V. Raman also makes historical observations that are useful for understanding the temple contexts of Appayya's *Varadarājastava*. The Tātācāryas, Appayya's rivals, were important administrators for the late-Vijayanagara king Veṅkata II. They administered the temple during Appayya's lifetime and after. Raman states that both the *Varadarājapañcāśat* of Vedānta Deśika and the *stotra*s of Kūreśa (including his *Varadarājastava*) are recited at the temple on various occasions.[363] The Tamil *Divya Prabandham* (the collection of the Vaiṣṇava Āḻvār poets) is also recited frequently and with great inspiration during *pūjā*s and festivals.[364] Unfortunately, there is no evidence of any of Appayya's religious poetry being recited at the temple, but it is also reasonable to surmise why this is so: simply, the temple was administered by rival Tātācāryas, descendants of whom are still involved with the temple at present. Raman also notes the temple employed numerous musicians,

[363] Raman, *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple, Kāñchi*, 64, 70-71.
[364] Ibid., 98-99.

dancers, artists, and singers (including a 1558 epigraph mentioning *Vidwān* musicians specifically), which shows it to have historically been a center for the arts in Kanchipuram.[365] Like Kūreśa and Vedānta Deśika before him, Appayya also contributed his own poetic brilliance to the vibrant artistic and cultural scene of the Varadarājaswāmi Temple.

One of the most unique and well-developed aspects of Appayya's *Varadarājastava*, especially in comparison to Vedānta Deśika's and Kūreśa's *stotra*s to the same deity, is the attention it gives to the city of Kanchi and the devotees at the temple. Also striking is Appayya's evocation of the simple but vivifying experience of simply *being* in the temple, engaged in contemplation of Varadarāja's form and abode. The poems of Vedānta Deśika and Kūreśa, by contrast, while brilliant and impassioned in their own right, generally lend a greater focus to the authors' *own* personal devotion to Varadarāja, along with broader cosmic and theological themes and imagery (all the poems in one way or another meditate on and illustrate the *mūrti* of Varadarāja present at the temple with all his regal beauty and adornments), and with this narrowed lens they miss something of the broader, social picture of the life of the temple community. Indeed, one of the great qualities of Appayya's poem is the way in which it is more simply and nakedly observant of the temple, deity, devotees, and their activities, and the way in which it enlivens these observations through the styling of Sanskrit *kāvya*. For example, relatively early in the poem, Appayya admires the beauty of Kanchi as a sacred but terrestrial city while also addressing Varadarāja:

6. O Lord of the wise, adorning the earth is Kāñcī, the very picture of an abode//whose variegation is houses of priceless gold and jewels, shining at the crest of the elephant hill with the crest jewel of your devotees and with an expansion of bright radiance.

7. A wise person, seeing you everywhere in Kāñcī, in a well-established ocean of milk and in the middle of the disc of the three-fold sun, abandons desire for even the three abodes and for the well-made heaven of Brahma below.

[365] Raman, *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple, Kāñchi*, 136.

8. In this place, which is unconquered and unrivalled among cities, O lord of immeasurable qualities, people—having seen you, the son of the water buffalo within a golden house, in the vicinity of the divine ocean having the best holy fig tree—don't go again to the pain of rebirth.[366]

Verse six describes the almost heavenly brilliance of Kanchi, which may very well have been a prosperous place during Appayya's lifetime, but its brilliance ultimately comes from the presence of Varadarāja and his devotees. Kanchi is described as the ideal image (*citram*) of a place of abundance and radiance, and in verse seven, wise people who witness Varadarāja in Kanchi are so enthralled by his brilliance that they lose curiosity in the afterlife and the wider heavens. In verse eight, however, Appayya makes clear that Kanchipuram is not simply a city of great beauty and prosperity, it is a place of salvation and liberation from the pain of rebirth (*bhavāntarārtim*). Here, Appayya observes that simply *being* in Kanchi consists in being in touch with the divine; an experience of an abode of otherworldliness in an earthly setting, and the seeds of a full experience of liberation from the chain of suffering.

In a selection of verses that immediately follows this section, Appayya gives voice to the sensory experience of the temple and the bewilderment of encountering Varadarāja in his brilliance:

9. O lord whose banner is Garuḍa, the good and pure ones who have come to your abode, the pure river of milk which gives your worship, [they] obtain a scent and flavor of you attached to the blossoms, Tulsi leaves, and water at your feet.

10. O lord of the thirteen, some wealth, having entered the enclosures of golden walls that are like treasuries, presents itself as your beautiful form which is like the divine fruits that arise from the blissful creeper.

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[366] *kāñcīmahārghamaṇikāñcanadhāmacitrā viśvaṃbharāṃ vibudhanātha vibhuṣayatī | bhātā gajādriśikahre tava bhaktacintāratnena rājatitarāṃ śubhavigraheṇa* || *VRS* 6
asyāṃ bhavantam abhitaḥ sthitadugdhasindhau madhye trayīmayamahāravimaṇḍasasya | paśyannadhaḥ kutacaturmukhaviṣṭapāyāṃ dhāmatraye 'pi kutukaṃ vijahāti vidvān || 7
asyāmameguṇa puryaparājitāyām aśvatthavaryajuṣi divyasaraḥ samipe | madhye hiraṇmayaguhaṃ mahiṣīyutaṃ tvāṃ dṛṣṭvā jano na punareti bhavāntarārtim || 8

[…]

13. O Lord of the elephant hill, those facing inwards//westward, having drunk in your westward facing form with their eyes for a long time, obtain certainty regarding this miraculous place not to be deduced from the words of the elders.

[…]

20. O Lord of all, having taken on this form in order to remove the delusion of the beings of the three worlds in corporeal form, with that boundless ocean of the flavor of beauty, you amplify the bewilderment of sunken glances (from looking at you).

21. Those who narrate the destruction of delusion from a single pointed awareness, how are they not false speakers? Having drunk in your beauty with the eyes, O Lord, from that, the young one establishes the highest bewilderment.[367]

Those who have reached (*saṃprāpya*) Varadarāja's abode in Kanchi are able to obtain both a scent (*gandham*) and a taste (*rasam*)[368] of the Lord, this by way of the various flowers and Tulsi leaves ever present in the waters at Varadarāja's feet. This verse is highly evocative of the ways in which being in a South Indian temple engages *all* the senses, and it is reminiscent of my own experiences in temples, which I had described previously in this chapter. In verse thirteen in particular, Appayya describes the gaze of the devotees drinking in the sight of Varadarāja, which in the final two verses in the selection above (verses 20-21) is said to lead to the complete bewilderment or intoxication (*moham*) of the devotees, which in turn serves to release them from

[367] *saṃprāpya dugdhataṭinīvirajāṃ viśuddhāḥ santo bhavadbhajanadāṃ padamāgatāste |*
tvatpādatoyatulasīkusumeṣu lagnaṃ gandhaṃ rasaṃ ca garuḍadhvaja te labhante || *VRS* 9
sauvarṇasālavalayān samanupraviśya kośāniva tridaśanāyaka ko 'pi dhanyaḥ |
ānandavallyuditadivyaphalānurūpaṃ rūpaṃ tvadīyam avalokayate 'bhirūpam || 10
pratyaṅmukhaṃ tava gajācalarāja rūpaṃ pratyaṅmukhāścitaraṃ nayanairnipīya|
asthānamāptavacasāmavitarkaṇīyamāścaryametaditi niścayam āvahantate || 13
mohaṃ jagattrayabhuvāmapanetumetadādāya rūpam akhileśvara dehabhājām|
niḥsīmakāntirasanīradhinābhunaiva mohaṃ vivardhayasi mugdhavilocanānām || 20
ucchedam ekaviṣayāt kathayanti bodhāt mohasya ye khalu kathaṃ na mṛṣāvadāste |
lāvaṇyamīśa tava yannayanairnipīya tatraiva mohamadhikaṃ dadhate taruṇyaḥ || 21

[368] The term *rasa* also denotes the 'essence' of something and has an extensive history in aesthetics, performance, and poetics in Sanskrit.

the bewilderment or delusion (again, *moham*) caused by embodiment, by human corporeal realities (*dehabhāj*). Having drunk in Varadarāja's endless beauty with a single pointed awareness (*ekaviṣayāt bodhāt*), devotees go to a state of the highest intoxication (*adhikaṃ moham*). In all these verses we can see reflected the beauty and release one witnesses while residing in Varadarāja's earthy palace and paradise (*Vayyamāḷigai*), a beauty that is enhanced by poetic description and centuries of development in art, architecture, and religious practice at the Varadarājaswāmi Temple and throughout Kanchipuram.

In this chapter we have seen the ways in which temple life, worship, history, and community have registered in Appayya's poetry. In the *Hariharābhedastuti* we see how a temple with a complex but predominantly Śaiva history has nonetheless allowed Appayya and other worshippers to venerate both Śiva and Viṣṇu in one place during his lifetime. Furthermore, the construction and aggregation of the temple from the Pallava period through the Vijayanagara period (and up to the present) is characteristic to the development of many major South Indian temple complexes. Likewise, the *HHAS* acknowledges the presence of both Śiva and Viṣṇu, and sings their praises in great iconographic and mythological detail, while also subtly acknowledging the significance of the site as a center for Śaivism. In the *Apītakucāmbāstava* we see a uniquely poetic account of personal illness and eventual cure in the presence of the Goddess of the Arunachaleśwarar Temple of Thiruvannamalai. Here he also explores the relationship between the micro and macrocosm, the local and cosmic, that later informs his *Varadarājastava*. Subsequently, in the *VRS* itself, Appayya describes the religious life of the temple and the wider life of Kanchipuram with a patient and detail-oriented eye, in a notable departure from the passionate and deeply individualized devotional lyrics of his predecessors Kūreśa and Vedānta Deśika. Not only does Appayya describe Kanchi as a unique and beautiful

place (accentuated, to be sure, by its long development as an urban center with *multiple* core temple complexes), he states that simply being in Kanchi has a liberative effect. Throughout these *stotra*s Appayya provides unique insights and visions such as this, along with the vivid cataloguing of his experiences in these temple cities. Only through the creative and imaginative medium of poetry is such vividness able to be achieved.

Chapter Six: The Poetry at the Heart of the *Varadarājastava*

I. Close Reading of the *Varadarājastava*

This concluding chapter has two main objectives: (1) to provide a close and detailed reading of the *Varadarājastava* of Appayya Dīkṣita, taking into account the information and insights gleaned from previous chapters, and (2) through this close reading, to show the value in understanding this poem as a literary statement and work of art, crafted in the liminal and imaginative space between authority and freedom, and one that has much to say about the rich and creative tradition of *stotra* literature and poetry as a whole. Here, we will see the poem as it is, an original *expression* of Appayya Dīkṣita; not as an intellectual curiosity, or a religious object for future generations, and certainly not as the mere summary outcome of the various contexts of the poet. Especially in South Asian studies and Sanskrit scholarship, the language we employ in describing and explicating poetry can feel impoverished. As a work of poetic art, the *Varadarājastava* in numerous ways is bound by the dynamic relationship of authority and freedom; it is something that speaks to the religious, political, and cultural contexts of its time and afterward, but as a work of art it also contains a level of autonomy from this and it speaks to a large poetic tradition.

In the opening of his commentary, Appayya interestingly offers praise to Śiva in a short benediction, while also signifying that in this poem he will elucidate his compulsion to venerate Varadarāja. He begins as follows:

> Having honored the primordial one whose crown is the moon,
> the one who is Pārvatī's friend, the supreme light,
> I explain the praise of Varadarāja which is accomplished by me,
> having a hidden meaning//mystic sense.

Here indeed the poet with a desire to show favor toward the worshipper, points out the purpose, having a supreme bliss produced by the investigation into all the [body] parts beginning with his lotus feet and up to that which bears his hair, desiring to make a *stotra*, praying for fruit desired for himself. He performs the *maṅgala* verse of the *stotra* he wanted to make in the form of the recollection of that [image] whose purpose is the removal of the complete collection of obstacles.[369]

There are interesting ways in which Appayya's Śaiva background enfolds itself into the content of the poem at various points, through word choices, the auto-commentary, and his mode of expression, but as he makes clear here, the poem's ultimate purpose is to venerate Varadarāja both for the benefit of others and for his own benefit. The recollection (*anusmaraṇa*),[370] elucidated in the *stotra* of the investigation or exploration (*anusaṃdhāna*) of the parts of Varadarāja form the core material of the poem, but as we will see, the poem is not just a matter-of-fact cataloging of his limbs, clothing, ornaments, and the various parts of his form, nor is it a simple petition asking to receive his grace. Just as a *mūrti*, when it is blessed and consecrated, becomes the dwelling place of the divine spirit, so too does this material, both the *form* of Varadarāja and the *act* of calling him to mind, become the dwelling place for broader and more dynamic reflections, both poetic and religious. These reflections are amplified all the more because of the uniqueness of Appayya's mind—an idiosyncratic poet and intellectual who has a deep background in Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, poetics and philosophy, and hermeneutics and

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[369] *abhindya candraśekharamadyaṃ gaurīsakhaṃ paraṃ jyotiḥ |*
vyākurve svena kṛtāṃ gūḍhārthāṃ varadarājanutim ||

iha khalu kaviḥ bhaktānujighṛkṣayā svīkṛtadivyarūpasya bhagavato varadarājasya pādāravindaprabhṛti-kuntalabharaparyantasakalāvayavānusaṃdhānajanyaparamānandaṃ prayojanamuddiśya stotraṃ cikīrṣamāṇaḥ svābhimataṃ phalamāśāsāna eva cikīrṣatastotrasya nirantarāyaparipūraṇapracayagamanārthaṃ tadanusmaraṇarūpaṃ maṅgalamācaratī.

[370] The power of recollection, signified by verbs such as *manye*, or *śaṅke*, is an important part of the *daharavidyā* meditation, see Ajay Rao, "The Vaiṣṇava Writings of a Śaiva Intellectual," Journal of Indian Philosophy 44, no. 1 (March 2016): 56-61), but is also a core component of poetic composition. Though the two poets of course lived and wrote in massively different worlds, the tangible power of recollecting and calling to mind present here in Appayya's poetry is, to me, not so unlike that of William Wordsworth in his own work.

theology. His poem and commentary draw on all these facets while at the same time building on and transcending the poetry of his predecessors.

The poem opens with the following verses:

1. Having opened the storehouse of the lotus of the heart by means of a small bit of yoga, apprehending [the heart] as one desires for a long time along with the virtuous ones; the one who shines forth unceasingly having a perfect and complete form, may he, Mukunda, show me eternal good fortune.

2. O Lord, one who is born does not know the utmost totality of your greatness, nor one who will be born, O supreme man. I, who have an overflowing rashness, in praise of your greatness—why wouldn't there be laughter of the wise toward one like me?

3. O Deva, having been seated in the forehead of another, I think on the unavoidable fault of my own stammering, desiring to be outside myself. The goddess of speech, having taken possession of the tongues of the great poets, nonetheless spreads your praise.[371]

These opening verses, a benediction to Varadarāja and a statement of poetic humility, can summarily be thought of as introducing the motifs of meditation, smallness, and speech, respectively. One can see Appayya's logic take shape has he proceeds through these verses: initially made aware of the importance of meditation and self-discipline, the poet glimpses the vision of unceasingly vibrant divinity, which is capable of revealing what is eternally good and meritorious. From this, the poet perceives both the minuteness of his own being in the face of this divinity and the rashness of his praise or thanks in comparison to the more finely articulated words of scripture and his predecessors. This invites a potential loss of confidence and the mockery of others, a desire to be as far away from oneself as possible so as to disassociate from one's own puerile stammering. However, even Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, is lauded for

[371] *uddhātya yogakalyā hṛdayābjakośaṃ dhanyaiścirādapi yathāruci gṛhyamāṇaḥ |*
yaḥ prasphuratiaviratataṃ paripūrṇarūpaḥ śreyaḥ sa me diśatu śāśvatikaṃ mukundaḥ || VRS 1
jāto na vetti bhagavan na janiṣyamāṇaḥ pāraṃ paraṃ paramapūruṣa te mahimnaḥ |
tasya stutau tava taraṅgitasāhasikyaḥ kiṃ mādṛśo budhajanasya bhavenna hāsyaḥ || 2
manye nijaskhalanadoṣamavarjanīyamanyasya mūrdhni viniveśya bahir bubhūṣuḥ |
āviṣya deva rasanāni mahākavīnāṃ devī girāmapi tava stavamātanoti || 3

granting the abilities to spread the Lord's praise, and because of this a sense of resolve and perseverance is born.

This poetic resolve is articulated in the following verses, and it evolves into a reflection on and appreciation for the temple city of Kanchipuram, which then brings Appayya to the steps of the Varadarājaswāmi/Varadarāja Perumāḷ Temple itself.

4. O Lord, your image, the ornament-jewel upon the elephant hill, still honored by unselfish people; O Vaikuṇṭha, I am one who holds an intention to describe it because of my intense desire for apprehending and reflecting on your name, form, and qualities.

5. O Ramāramaṇa (husband of Lakṣmī) I think that the best of poets must pour forth your praises, and someone like me is blessed because of them. One like me, whose reverent attention is fixed upon your image obtains good fortune from a long reflection on [your] various parts because of an excessive poetic indolence.

6. O Lord of the wise, adorning the earth is Kāñcī, the very picture of an abode//whose variegation is houses of priceless gold and jewels, shining at the crest of the elephant hill with the crest jewel of your devotees and with an expansion of bright radiance.

7. A wise person, seeing you everywhere in Kāñcī, in a well-established ocean of milk and in the middle of the disc of the three-fold sun, abandons desire for even the three abodes and for the well-made heaven of Brahma below.

8. In this place, which is unconquered and unrivalled among cities, O lord of immeasurable qualities, people—having seen you, the son of the water buffalo within a golden house, in the vicinity of the divine ocean having the best holy fig tree—don't go again to the pain of rebirth.

9. O lord whose banner is Garuḍa, the good and pure ones who have come to your abode, the pure river of milk which gives your worship, [they] obtain a scent and flavor of you attached to the blossoms, Tulsi leaves, and water at your feet.

10. O lord of the thirteen, some wealth, having entered the enclosures of golden walls that are like treasuries, presents itself as your beautiful form which is like the divine fruits that arise from the blissful creeper.

11. At the jeweled peak//tusk of the elephant hill, a conscious man, who has twenty increased by four steps on the staircase which is the great vehicle, seeing you, approaches the far shore of the ocean of existence, having ascended that very length of realities.

12. O Lord I am not able to obtain that [joy] directly without the horse sacrifice of old times even with the whole lotus earth; how is that joy born from looking at your form to be obtained by others, having not obtained the crore of merit of yours?

13. O Lord of the elephant hill, those facing inwards//westward, having drunk in your westward facing form with their eyes for a long time, obtain certainty regarding this miraculous place not to be deduced from the words of the elders.[372]

In chapter three I had highlighted the significance of Appayya laying out his intent in the fourth verse, along with broader discussions of *rasa* (emotional flavor), and I had also highlighted Appayya's commentarial discussion of the stark contrast between Varadarāja's unworldly and unselfish (*nirmama*) devotees and the mocking laughter (*apahāsa*) of obstructive people (*pratibandhaka*). In one respect, the intensity of Appayya's desire to describe Varadarāja and the wider community, over and above any tensions and obstructions that might be present, provides the kind of 'irritant' or impetus needed to compose the *stotra*. Appayya also articulates a contrast between himself and his predecessors, both poetic and religious, in the verses above; he is, for example, both blessed *because of* the greatness of prior poets, and also (in a clever irony and inversion) perhaps better suited than them to describe Varadarāja due to his excessive poetic

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[372] *netastathāpi tava nirmamalokasevyāṃ mūrtiṃ madāvalamahīdhararatnabhūṣām | vaikuṇṭha varṇayitumasmi dhṛtābhilāṣastvannāmarūpaguṇacintanalābhalobhāt* || *VRS* 4
manye srjantvabhinutiṃ kavipuṃgavāste tebhyo ramāramaṇa mādṛṣa eva dhanyaḥ | tvadvarṇane dhṛtarasaḥ kavitātimāndyādyastattadaṅgaciracintanabhāgyameti || 5
kāñcīmahārghamaṇikāñcanadhāmacitrā viśvaṃbharāṃ vibudhanātha vibhuṣayatī | bhātā gajādriśikahre tava bhaktacintāratnena rājatitarāṃ śubhavigraheṇa || 6
asyāṃ bhavantamabhitaḥ sthitadugdhasindhau madhye trayīmayamahāravimaṇḍasasya | paśyannadhaḥ kutacaturmukhaviṣṭapāyāṃ dhāmatraye 'pi kutukaṃ vijahāti vidvān || 7
asyāmameguṇa puryaparājitāyāmaśvatthavaryajuṣi divyasaraḥ samipe | madhye hiraṇmayaguhaṃ mahiṣīyutaṃ tvāṃ dṛṣṭvā jano na punareti bhavāntarārtim || 8
saṃprāpya dugdhataṭinīvirajāṃ viśuddhāḥ santo bhavadbhajanadāṃ padamāgatāste | tvatpādatoyatulasīkusumeṣu lagnaṃ gandhaṃ rasaṃ ca garuḍadhvaja te labhante || 9
sauvarṇasālavalayān samanupraviśya kośāniva tridaśanāyaka ko 'pi dhanyaḥ | ānandavallyuditadivyaphalānurūpaṃ rūpaṃ tvadīyamavalokayate 'bhirūpam || 10
mataṅgaśailamaṇiśṛṇga mahāvimānasopānaparvacaturuttaraviṃśatirvā | tāmeva tattvavitatiṃ puruṣo vilaṅghya paśyan bhavantamupayāti bhavābdhipāram || 11
nāpāri labdhumaravindabhuvāpi sākṣādyaṃ pūrvamīśvara vinā hayamedhapuṇyam | anyairanāpya sa kathaṃ tava puṇyakoṭiṃ prāpyastvadākṛtivilokanajaḥ pramodaḥ || 12
pratyaṅmukhaṃ tava gajācalarāja rūpaṃ pratyaṅmukhāścitaraṃ nayanairnipīya | asthānamāptavacasāmavitarkaṇīyamāścaryametaditi niścayamāvahante || 13

indolence or slowness (*kavitātimāndya*). This sort of anxiety or struggle to set oneself apart from one's poetic predecessors is also a sort of 'irritant' and impetus for the poem, and one that is visible not only here, but throughout poetic traditions.[373] A significant way in which Appayya acknowledges the *community* around Varadarāja and distinguishes himself from precursors like Vedānta Deśika and Kūreśa is that he turns his gaze onto Kanchipuram itself, rooting his poem and praise in this distinct and dynamic locale. As mentioned in the previous chapter, neither Vedānta Deśika nor Kūreśa explicitly acknowledge the city of Kanchipuram in their respective *stotra*s to Varadarāja, and discussing Kanchi itself is perhaps also a way in which Appayya either directly or indirectly folds Tamil sources into his work, particularly Tamil-language *māhātmyam* and *talapurāṇa* (= *sthalapurāṇa* in Sanskrit) literature.[374] He describes the radiance of Kanchi, crested by the gem of the Lord and his devotees at *Hastagiri* itself, as a city unrivalled and, especially pertinent due to the sacking of Hampi Vijayanagara during his lifetime, unconquered. When one is in these environs, he suggests, one loses the desire to seek any otherworldly abodes elsewhere, since one knows it is all *right here*.

The senses play a crucial role in the poem, along with the various figures and agents that come and go within the strands of Appayya's verses. In verses nine and ten above, we get a taste of the sensory experience of being in the temple: the pungent water and milk used to bathe the temple image, now at his feet, full of fragrant blossoms and Tulsi leaves, and the wealth of

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[373] See Harold Bloom's, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975). Summarily, Bloom sees poetic history as being "indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves," 5. Strong poets must *wrestle* with their indebtedness to their predecessors, whereas weaker poets merely idealize them (Ibid.). Here in the *VRS* (and in many other places throughout his oeuvre) we can see Appayya wrestling with such precursors as Vedānta Deśika and the rich Vaiṣṇava tradition of which he was a part, while simultaneously seeking to bring his own novel description of Varadarāja and his community to bear on this tradition.

[374] This is an avenue for further research, but for some insight into these texts, see "*Sthalamāhātmyas* and *Talapurāṇas* of Kanchipuram: A Network of Texts," by Jonas Buchholz, in *Temples, Texts, and Networks: South Indian Perspectives*, edited by Malini Ambach, Jonas Buchholz, and Ute Hüsken (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, 2022), 11-40.

offerings that have been brough to the temple, with the resulting "divine fruits" (recalling the offering and receiving of *prasāda*), which all leave a vivid impression. In her study of the *stotra*s of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar (disciples of Rāmānuja), Nancy Ann Nayar states that the temple image and its surroundings, "[are] free from *rajas* ([misplaced] passion, activity) and *tamas* (darkness, inertia), [and] composed of a 'non-material substance' the perception and enjoyment of which are liberating rather than binding."[375] She further argues that "the senses are themselves neutral: the binding or liberating effect of any sense perception is dependent on the inherent nature of the object perceived," and she adds that the spirituality of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar are rooted in this notion.[376] In my study of Appayya's *stotra*, I think he, too, views the senses as at the very least neutral, and he certainly views the perception of Varadarāja as liberating, but I also think there is somewhat of a greater immediacy and intimacy in his verses (in the way he invokes the locale of Kanchi, the temple, and the image of Varadarāja, for example) that sets him apart from these poets. He also, for example, does not get caught up in the desperate thought of his own wretchedness and hope for salvation, as Kūreśa or Vedānta Deśika do (just as he himself does in his earlier *Ātmārpaṇastuti*), which itself is in some ways a distraction from the moment, and which is also why I tend to view this poem in broad terms as more a meditative utterance than a purely devotional one. This immediacy (and its significance) is further emphasized in verse thirteen, which states that a feeling of certainty (*niścayam*) is most readily obtained firsthand by means of the eyes drinking in[377] Varadarāja's form in this "miraculous place" (*āścaryam āsthānam*) rather than through deductive reasoning or intellectualization arising from the study

[375] Nancy Ann Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, 167.
[376] Ibid.
[377] The imagery of the eyes "drinking in" the sight of the divinity is not uncommon either.

of scripture or other manuals of worship. Here, the immediacy of the senses is what is most necessary, and it takes precedence over the secondary faculties of thought and reasoning.

Following Appayya's train of thought and poeticization, we even see him momentarily question the ability of poetic description itself to convey such an experience in a way that could be alive with bewildering intimacy such as this, before confronting this experience directly in the following verses:

14. Regarding that [your beauty], hyperbole (*atiśayokti*) abandons its poetic capacity, all simile (*upamā*) becomes defective, and even an understanding which is genuine and precise cannot be clearly formed; so how can I describe your beauty?

15. O Vaikuntha, you are beloved of Lakṣmī, you are made to be a father by the play of love//[your son] Kāmadeva, and you are the divine source of the flavor of the singular bewildering of all people. You are the grounds of the dwelling of all the best qualities; who could illustrate the outline of your form?

16. O Lord at the crown of the elephant hill, you are the best of all, you are the abode of all thirty, you are furnished with a wheel made of a mass of light, you are the wealth of *śṛṅgāra*, and you have an illustrious form—what is flashy, marvelous speech to you?

17. O One with honorable qualities, your limbs truly are the paths for the gazes of all people, having obtained one among them, they (the glances) no longer remember another limb that had been seen before, and having turned away they do not strive to obtain any other at all.

18. You previously begot Kāmadeva with Lakṣmī at one time, what is there new that the wise ones can say? Today too, in women whose smiles are sweet and satisfied, do you not also beget him?

19. O Lord, one who has cast his heart into you is freed; he does not get his heart back. Thus, this [heart] is not discernable in you. You are the one who, having forcibly stolen the hearts of the doe-eyed women and having hidden them in this way, abides on the mountain peak.

20. O Lord of all, having taken on this form in order to remove the delusion of the beings of the three worlds in corporeal form, with that boundless ocean of the flavor of beauty, you amplify the bewilderment of sunken glances (from looking at you).

21. Those who narrate the destruction of delusion from a single pointed awareness, how are they not false speakers? Having drunk in your beauty with the eyes, O Lord, from that, the young one establishes the highest bewilderment.

22. O Moon-faced One, the flood of the lotus eyes of doe-eyed women are set out from the pleasure of obtaining the auspicious scope of eyesight. Your light, having now descended in a stream, bears deep love and bewilderment, [as] divine thoughts produce fruits abundantly.[378]

Appayya's internal debate over the capacity of poetry and poetic ornamentation to describe an experience such as this, in verse fourteen, was discussed in chapter three. In verses fifteen and sixteen, Varadarāja is described as the god of the singularly bewildering *rasa*, which is pervasive (*viśvaikamohanarasasya devatāsi*), and as the treasure (*śevadhi*) of *śṛṇgāra*, the erotic, and Appayya wonders with such bewilderment, who could describe Varadarāja's form (*kas tava rūparekhām varṇayatu*)? These verses also are the first explicitly to mention Viṣṇu's consort Lakṣmī and their son (in some mythologies), Kāmadeva, the god of love and erotic desire. The presence of these two helps to blend the sense of devotion (*bhakti*) with a flavor of *śṛṇgāra*, and Kāmadeva especially interacts with Varadarāja/Viṣṇu in interesting ways that bridge the erotic sentiment and the transfixed gaze of the devotees (as discussed in chapter two). Furthermore, just as Kāmadeva was begotten at one time by Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Appayya states that even now

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[378] *yasmin jahātyatiśayoktiralaṃkṛtitvaṃ nyūnopamātvamupamā samupaiti sarvā |*
sūkṣmasvabhāvakalanāpi ca na pratarkyā tadvarṇayāmi bhavataḥ katham abhirūpyam || *VRS* 14
lakṣmyāḥ priyo 'si ratikelikṛtaḥ pitāsi viśvaikamohanarasasya ca devatāsi |
āvasabhūmirasi sarvaguṇottamānāṃ vaikuṇṭha varṇayatu kastava rūparekhām || 15
sarvottaro 'si sakalatridaśāśrayo 'si jyotiśchaṭāghaṭitacakrapariṣkṛto 'si |
śṛṇgāraśevadhirasi dvipaśailamaule kalyāṇarūpa iti kastvayi citravādaḥ || 16
aṅgāni te nikhilalokavilocanānāṃ saṃbhāvanīyaguṇa saṃsaraṇāni satyam |
yeṣvekamāpya na purādhigataṃ smaranti vāñchanti nānyadapi labdhumado vihāya || 17
ekatra manmathamajījanidindirāyāṃ pūrvaṃ bhavāniti budhā kimapūrvamāhuḥ |
adyāpi taṃ na janyasyaravindanābhakāsu prasannamadhurasmitakāminīṣu || 18
nikṣipya hṛttvayi punarlabhate na ko 'pi niryāta ityadhipa na tvayi citrametat |
hṛtvā haṭhānmṛgadṛśāṃ hṛdayāni yastvamevaṃ nilīya kila tiṣṭhasi śailaśṛṅge || 19
mohaṃ jagattrayabhuvāmapanetumetadādāya rūpamakhileśvara dehabhājām |
niḥsīmakāntirasanīradhinābhunaiva mohaṃ vivardhayasi mugdhavilocanānām || 20
ucchedamekaviṣayāt kathayanti bodhāt mohasya ye khalu kathaṃ na mṛṣāvadāste |
lāvaṇyamīśa tava yannayanairnipīya tatraiva mohamadhikaṃ dadhate taruṇyaḥ || 21
śubhrāṃśuvaktra śubhagocaralābhatoṣāt saṃprasthito mṛgadṛśāṃ nayanāmbujaughaḥ |
tvadbhāḥ sarityatha nipatya bibharti mohaṃ prāyaḥ phalanti viphalanti ca daivacintāḥ || 22

(*adyāpi*), and perpetually, Kāmadeva is born in the hearts of those stolen by love. This bewilderment and initial infatuation frees people's hearts, but they are also captured by Varadarāja, not to be returned. This is not to be lamented, though, because ultimately the hearts of those who come to Varadarāja are merged with him completely.

Being intoxicated and bewildered in such a way perhaps leads to a loss of self-control and a shattering of sensible perception, but Appayya shows that returning to the breath is helpful as one contemplates the splendor and expanse of the universal form of Varadarāja/Viṣṇu, as it slowly refocuses oneself on the temple image and one's surroundings:

23. The minds of the self-controlled ones who enjoy the control of the breath enter your image, O Mādhava, by means of the *Kumbhaka* breath exercise. It is this that I know to be a raft crossing over the lovely waters, being a great river overflowing its channels.

24. O Lord beyond perception, from your particular form on this earth, which is an ocean of beauty, I can guess at the manifestation of the daughter of the ocean of milk. Since you bear this earth with your entire body, you need only hold up Lakṣmī with your chest.

25. Having gazed at the earth which is a lotus face, which is the Sarasvatī River, and at the earth of the feet which is the stream associated with the three rivers (the Ganges), of yours, O Lord, how much more is the beauty of [your] body which is the Yamunā constantly flowing from the treasure heap that represents all.

26. I know your beautiful heap of royal jewels that is the net of filaments of young brides whose hearts are inflamed by passion for you, that by which the belly of the three worlds is filled, which is also the swiftly expanding the ocean when dissolution has been obtained (at the end of an age).

27. Lord, you have the color of the moon, and logically and scripturally your ground is the collection of a large quantity of the property of pure *sattva* extracted. From bearing the weight of the waters of compassion, you emanate a sapphire splendor. Although a white cloud, it is indeed seen as being darkened.

28. O Singular Lord of All, I see by means of a desire for [your] qualities, your bearing of ornaments joined with affection, adorned by an innate and supreme brilliance, which is an ocean of boundless happiness.

29. Shining resplendently in the center of the circumference of the Makara doorway is the one whose every limb is adorned with gold ornaments. The Lord, up to the tips of his toes by means of reflection, equals the gold found in the disk of the sun at this very minute!

30. O lord of the mountain of snakes I see you as all people, able to do all things, by means of your universal form; you whose entire appearance is made manifest together with a heap of ornaments and jewels, and you who are to be seen by way of the reflections in the gods and the rest who have come because of their taste for devotion.[379]

In verse twenty-three, Appayya identifies the *Kumbhaka* exercise as a means to control the breath and meditatively enter into the image of Varadarāja, crossing over the tumultuous waters of passions, longings, and ultimately *saṃsāra*. In the verses that follow we see Varadarāja described on a cosmic level, as Mahāviṣṇu, the one who churned the cosmic milk ocean, who bears the earth and the entire universe (and simultaneously a sleeping Lakṣmī on his chest as he reclines himself), and who is also described as pure *sattva* (being, radiance) extracted and separated from *rajas* and *tamas*.[380] We then gradually come to be situated in the temple, again, with the image of Varadarāja described as gleaming or pulsating (*sphuran*) near what Appayya describes as the Makara (sea-creature) doorway (*makaratoraṇa*), and what Ute Hüsken identifies as "golden lizards" (house lizards, *Hemidactylus frenatus*) in relief on the ceiling along the

[379] *yat prāṇasaṃyamajuṣāṃ yamināṃ manāṃsi mūrtiṃ viśanti tava mādhava kumbhakena |*
pratyaṅgamūrcchadativelamahāpravāhalāvaṇyasindhutaraṇāya tadityavaimi || VRS 23
lāvaṇyasāgarabhuvi praṇayaṃ viśeṣād dugdhāmburāśiduhitus tava tarkayāmi |
yat tāṃ bibharṣi vapuṣā nikhilena lakṣmīmanyāṃ tu kevalamadhokṣaja vakṣasaiva || 24
sārasvataṃ vadanapadmabhuvaṃ pravāhaṃ traisrotasaṃ ca tava pādabhuvaṃ nirīkṣya |
sarvapratīkanikarāt pravahantyajasramīrṣyāvatīsa yamunā kimu kāyakantiḥ || 25
āpūritatribhuvanodaramaṃśujālaṃ manye mahendramaṇivṛndamanoharaṃ te |
*tvadrāgadīpitahṛdāṃ tvaritaṃ vadhūnāṃ prāpte saritsahacaraṃ pralaye 'bhivṛddham ||*26
yuktyāgamena ca bhavan śaśivarṇa eva niṣkṛṣṭasattvaguṇamātravivartabhūmiḥ |
dhatte kṛpāmbubharatastviśamaindranīlīṃ śubhro 'pi sāmburasitaḥ khalu dṛṣyate 'bdaḥ || 27
sarvātiśāyisahajadyutibhūṣitasya viśvaikanāyaka vibhūṣaṇadhāraṇaṃ te |
āvaddhasauhṛdamapārasukhāmburāśeḥ vīkṣe tavaiva viṣayādikutūhalena || 28
madhye sphuran makaratoraṇamaṇḍalasya cāmīkarābharaṇabhūṣitasarvagātraḥ |
ādityabimbagatamā prapadāt suvarṇaṃ bhāsā bhavananukaroti bhavantameva || 29
sevārasāgatasurādyanubimadṛśyaṃ bhūṣāmaṇiprakaradarśitasarvavarṇam |
tvāṃ viśvarūpavapuṣeva janaṃ samastaṃ paśyāmi nāgagirinātha kṛtānrthayantam || 30

[380] Nancy Ann Nayar cites a verse of Bhaṭṭar's *Śrīraṅgarājastava* that identifies Viṣṇu's abode as "a place free from *rajas* and *tamas*" (*Poetry as Theology*, 161) in her analysis I discussed previously; Appayya may not have been aware of this specific verse or *stotra* when making his own composition but it's clear they are interrelated parts of a larger textual tradition. In his commentary, Appayya does mention the *Kūrmapurāṇa*, the *Vāmanapurāṇa*, and the *Harivaṃśa* as relevant sources.

corridor (*prākāra*) near the temple's inmost sanctum.[381] As Hüsken herself says, the lizards (or Makaras) likely date from Vijayanagara times, and remain incredibly popular with temple visitors up to the present.[382] Whatever they are exactly, it appears that Appayya was fully aware of their presence and included them in his poem. They are also not present in either Vedānta Deśika's *VRPŚ* or Kūreśa's *VRS*, making the claim to a Vijayanagara-period date even stronger. In this part of the temple there are also bronze discs representing the sun and the moon respectively, and Appayya could be alluding both to the light of the actual sun *and* this disc when he states that Varadarāja's radiance is equal to the gold (*suvarṇam*) found in the disc of the sun (*ādityabimbagatam*). In tying the temple imagery of this verse to verse thirty, Appayya illustrates the way in which he *sees* (*paśyāmi*) the complex interrelationship between the temple image of Varadarāja and the universal/pervading form (*viśvarūpavapus*) of Viṣṇu, which manifests in all people but especially in those who have a desire for worship and service. It is an interrelationship that encompasses both a sense of identity *and* distinction. Just as Varadarāja is ornamented with jewelry, so too is Viṣṇu adorned by those who have had their hearts stolen by him and who serve him.

It is here, after this preparation and meditation on Varadarāja, the temple, and Kanchipuram, that Appayya turns his gaze to the body, limbs, clothing, and adornments of Varadarāja himself. In numerous places these descriptions invite greater imaginative and poetic leaps, some of which we have analyzed in previous chapters, and which we will continue to encounter. Appayya describes the ornaments of Varadarāja in the following verses:

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[381] See her essay, "Two Lizards in Kanchipuram's Varadarāja Temple," in *Temples, Texts, and Networks: South Indian Perspectives*, edited by Malini Ambach, Jonas Buchholz, and Ute Hüsken (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, 2022): 159-214.
[382] Ibid., 168-169, 180-186.

31. O God the adorning pearls on your limbs, which have as one part a yellow-red luster that becomes bright gold, make visible your splendor belonging to the innumerable world-eggs which are thick and reposed in each pore [of your skin].

32. O One of the three abodes, I count the mantra syllables of the One with a Makara banner, which are bewilderments belonging to the sight of lotuses//young women; which are also pure shards of diamonds, and are revered in rows that are fixed on your ornaments.

33. O God the large sapphire jewels shine on the jeweled ornaments that are borne [by you] from feet to the crown of the head; having been joined to your various limbs they are like the glances of beautiful women in the world.

34. O One who grants liberation, since the people, having seen you, would indeed pierce their benevolent friend, the sun [with their look]; I imagine the rubies in your ornaments cast off for some time the gazes of the people [who have come for darśan] with their rays, having forgotten your capacity for liberation only from that.[383]

Verse thirty-one like those before it, again intimately connects the universal and particular; the world-eggs (which are a significant piece of Śaiva rather than Vaiṣṇava cosmology) are minute enough to reside in the pores of Varadarāja's skin.[384] From what I have seen, the stone temple icon itself has a porous appearance in certain places, which amplifies this poetic conceit. The sapphire gems (*nīlamaṇi*) he wears as ornaments are described as being like the glances of beautiful women (*lokasudṛśām iva locanāni*), and along with these glances they are adhered to (*upetya lagnāni*) his limbs. It is interesting to speak of people's glances as *adhering* to the object of their gaze, but in the following verse, those who have seen Varadarāja (*tvām vīkṣya*, referred to

[383] *śṛṅgīsuvarṇarucipiñjaritaikabhāgānyaṅgeṣu deva tava bhūṣaṇamauktikāni |*
pratyakṣayanti bhavataḥ pratiromakūpaviśranti sāndrajagadaṇḍasahasraśobhām || *VRS* 31
ābaddhapaṅktimahitāni tava tridhāman vīdhrāṇi hīraśakalāni vibhūśaṇeṣu |
saṃmohanāni sarasīruhalocanānāṃ mantrākṣarāṇi kalaye makaradhvajasya || 32
āpādamaulividhṛteṣu vibhānti deva sthūlendranīlamaṇayo maṇibhūṣaṇeṣu |
rāgādupetya tava sundara tattaṅga lagnāni lokasudṛśāmiva locanāni || 33
tvāṃ vīkṣyamuktida janāstaraṇiṃ sakhāyaṃ bhindyuḥ kileti tava bhūṣaṇapadmarāgāḥ |
śaṅke ciraṃ janadṛśaḥ svakaraiḥ kṣipanti tanmatrato 'pi tava muktidatāmabuddhvā || 34

[384] Lyne Bansat-Boudon, "On Śaiva Terminology: Some Key Issues of Understanding," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42 (2014): 62.

here in the second person) might pierce their friends (*sakhāyam bhindyuḥ*) with such a gaze, which underlines the tangibility, power, and magnetism of such a connection.

The feet of Varadarāja are then described in exacting and resplendent detail in the next nineteen verses, a selection of which will illustrate Appayya's poetic inventiveness and capacity for metaphor. Here, for example, the radiance of his feet is compared to the sun:

> 39. Here, the mass of lotuses—a tribute gift of the sun who is intent on stealing the pile of gems which are like the beauty of that [your two feet]—due to the morning light, joins the expanded interior space of your two feet with radiance.
>
> 40. Nightly, the sun warms his mass of rays right up to the dawn from a desire for the splendor of the rays of the Lord's feet, and when the quickly disappearing redness is taken from that [fire] which conveys oblations, he [the sun] distributes heat each day, for he is a dull father.[385]

The sun is perhaps jealous, or intent on stealing the radiance of Varadarāja's feet, because even its own rays at daybreak are inferior. However, the mass of lotuses laid at the deity's feet become one with them in the blinding morning light, much like (in the latter verse) the redness of the sacrificial fire along with its oblations is transported to the gods.

Later, Appayya explores the trope of "lotus-feet" in novel ways and he even goes as far as blending the imagery of the radiant nails on Varadarāja's toes with crescent moons. Skipping ahead to verse forty-three, Appayya states:

> 43. O Lord, I imagine that your foot is itself a lotus to be caressed in a lake of lotuses which are possessed of beauty, having Haṃsa birds who are fully devoted and beautiful sounding to the ear, and beloved of bees brought near by a soft, fragrant breeze.
>
> 44. Ahalyā, who was [trapped in] the earth, immediately became one whose every sin had been taken away, having acquired the touch of those two feet. How could it be possible for a lotus dwelling in mud since birth to be the equal to those two feet of the Lord?
> //

[385] *aṅghridvayasya tava saṃtatam antaraṅgamambhojavargamiha yojayati śriyā yat | utkocadānamidamuṣṇakarasya bālyāt tatkāntiratnacayacoraṇatatparasya* || *VRS* 39
bhānurniśāsu bhavadaṅghrimayūkhaśobhālobhāt pratāpya kiraṇotkaramāprabhātam | tatroddhṛte hutavahāt kṣaṇaluptarāge tāpaṃ bhajatyanudinaṃ sa hi mandatātaḥ || 40

How could it be possible for Indra's thunderbolt, dwelling in sin from its inception, to be equal to those two feet?

[…]

49. O Lord Ramādhipa your moon-toenails adorn your foot with light, and they satisfy the wise ones and attendants; they also cast away layers of darkness, and yet they dry up the ocean composed of worshippers//ocean of *saṃsāra* for [your] worshippers.

50. O Lord, because of the friction of the world-egg going upwards, a particle of light from the tip of your toenail which had issued forth by means of the sincerity of the Gaṅgā, which had fallen into the ocean; having surely seen that and having stirred the ocean, the gods caught it, having the form of the moon.

51. May the delightful moon-like quality of your nails along with your toe-tips furnish everyday a scintillating natural mass of light, made of pearls, and the reddish color of the crested lotuses and jewels of the living gods of your two feet.

52. Having surrendered to your lotus foot, which is praised by the one whose seat is a lotus (Brahma), the fortunate ones become liberated at once, O Lord. This wealth of being liberated is suitable for those continually worshipping that [foot],
who are seekers of liberation and are like an anklet of heavenly jewels.
//
Having arrived at your lotus foot, praised by Brahma, the pearls are treasures, O Lord. The beauty of the *Atimukta* vine is suitable for those pearls, being an anklet of heavenly jewels partaking of that [foot].

53. O Lord, the small bright particles adhering to the water cleansing a toenail on your foot have entered into the ocean. Now, becoming thick by means of the churning of that ocean, these droplets take refuge in your abode, the moon.[386]

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[386] *kalyāṇaśālikamalākaralālanīyamāsevakaśrutimanoharanādihaṃsam |*
āmodameduramarunnamitālikāntam śaṅke taveśvara padaṃ śatapatrameva || *VRS* 43
sparśaṃ yayoḥ samadhigamya jhaṭityahalyā devī ca bhūrabhavadujjhitasarvapaṅkā |
tābhyāṃ ghaṭeta samatā bhavataḥ padābhyāmājanmapaṅkavasateḥ kathamambujasya || 44
bhāsā padam tava ramādhipa bhūṣayanti saṃsevakāmśca vibudhān paritoṣayanti |
nātha kṣipanti ca tamāṃsi nakhendravaste saṃśoṣayantyapi tu bhaktabhavāmburāśim || 49
gaṇgācchalena tava niḥsṛtamūrdhvagāṇḍasaṃghaṭṭanāt padanakhāgramayūkhaleśam |
ālokya nūnamamarāḥ patitam payodhāvāmathya taṃ jagṛhurīśa tadindurūpam || 50
pādānamatsuraśiromaṇipadmarāgān sadyaḥ sphuratsahajarukprakarān karāgraiḥ |
muktāmayān vidadhatāṃ prakaṭaṃ murāre jaivātṛkatvamucitaṃ nanu te nakhānām || 51
yatte padāmburuhamamburuhāsaneḍyam dhanyāḥ prapadya sakṛdīśa bhavanti muktāḥ |
nityaṃ tadeva bhajatāmatimuktalakṣmīryuktaiva divyamaṇinūpuramauktikānām || 52
nātha tvadaṅghrinakhadhāvanatoyalagnāstatkāntileśakaṇikā jaladhiṃ praviṣṭāḥ |
tā eva tasya mathanena ghanībhavantyo nūnaṃ samudranavanītapadaṃ prapannāḥ || 53

Like "moon-face," "lotus-feet" is a common, almost clichéd trope in Sanskrit poetry, but Appayya imagines the environment that such a pure lotus would inhabit, surrounded by masses of other flowers, waterfowl, and pollinating bees. The alliteration present in the verse—the compounds *kalyāṇaśālikamalākaralālanīyam* ("to be caressed in a lake of lotuses which are possessed of beauty") and *āmodameduramarunnamitālikāntam* ("beloved of bees brought near by a soft, fragrant breeze"), for example—adds a further sensuousness to the already peaceful imagery.

Verse forty-four contains a clever *śleṣa* but also offers a more profound meditation on Viṣṇu's efficacy and the seemingly paradoxical relationship between purity and impurity expressed both through the imagery of Ahalyā and Rāma and through the imagery of a lotus born from mud. The story of Ahalyā, the wife of the sage Gautama, has numerous variants, but in the *Bāla Kāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* she had been cursed by her husband for an illicit tryst with the god Indra (disguised as Gautama while the sage was away), set by that curse to be trapped as a stone in the earth until the feet of Viṣṇu/Rāma stand upon her stony form and thus liberate her. (There are different versions of Gautama's curse on Indra, but in the *Rāmāyaṇa* he loses his testicles, and hence his power and virility.) Here, following and linked with the previous verse (*ca*), it is asked, how can there possibly be an equality (*katham samatā ghaṭeta*) between a lotus dwelling in mud since its inception and the divine feet of Viṣṇu/Rāma/Varadarāja?[387] Somehow, miraculously, Ahalyā, as sinful, impure, and imprisoned as she was, was liberated by the mere touch (*sparśam*) of Rāma's feet. Just so, perhaps the mere sight of Varadarāja (which as previously stated, has an intimate and even *tactile* quality) is every bit as liberating. Furthermore, in alluding to the *Rāmāyaṇa* here, Appayya adds to the *stotra*'s literary heritage, as the

[387] Alternatively, it asks, how can the thunderbolt of Indra (*ambuja*) which has dwelt in sin (*paṅka*) be equal to these two feet.

Rāmāyaṇa was well known as the '*adikāvya*' (the 'first/primordial poem'). Here, in the *VRS*, Varadarāja/Viṣṇu is the pinnacle of purity, but nonetheless he reaches out to touch those ensnared in the mire of sin, pulling them out. Appayya registers his amazement at this, evocatively juxtaposing the purity and blissfulness of verse forty-three with the unclean, sinful, and broken world of verse forty-four. A lotus, like a person with Varadarāja in his or her heart, thrives in both places, unhindered in the latter.

Even such inconspicuous things as the nails on Varadarāja's toes invite veneration along with poetic reflection. Appayya plays on the resemblance of their shape with the crescent moon, and as they cast away darkness, like the moon, they also drink up the ocean of his devotees (as the moon can be a reservoir of *soma* or water).[388] The particles of light emanating from his nails are further described cosmologically; the rising of world-eggs and the agitation of the cosmic ocean (a significant piece of Vaiṣṇava mythology and cosmology) are made possible by this scintillation of light.

This imagery reaches its zenith in verses fifty-two and fifty-three, which combine clever wordplay with allusions to core elements of Vaiṣṇava soteriology. The strong interplay between Varadarāja and his devotees at the temple is expressed in verse fifty-two, in which there is an elaborate paronomasia involving the pearls (*muktā*)[389] around the ankles of Varadarāja and the people who are liberated (*mukta*) through worship of him. The key word, *muktāḥ*, can be both feminine, nominative, plural and masculine, nominative, plural; so, it can simultaneously be read as "pearls" or "liberated ones." Furthermore, just as the pearls themselves are draped around Varadarāja's ankle, as is a vine around a tree, so too is he surrounded by his worshippers,

[388] There may also be some overlap with the mythological story of the demon Rāhu and his thirst for *amṛta* nectar, and the lunar and solar eclipses that result.
[389] We can also point to verse fifty-one which contains the compound '*muktāmayān*', "made of pearls" as contextual justification for this reading.

swooning, swaying, and praising him, and who thus are as it were "draped" around him in this way. The word "*atimuktalakṣmīḥ*" can also be simultaneously read to refer to the "wealth of complete liberation" and "the beauty of *atimuka* creeper." In one breath Appayya articulates the detailed physical qualities of Varadarāja's feet and adornments, while also describing the liberation of those who have surrendered themselves to Viṣṇu. In both verses, the words "*prapadya*" and "*prapannāḥ*" stem from the verbal root *pra√pad*, meaning to enter into or to take refuge in. This notion of 'surrender' or 'refuge' (*prapatti*, discussed in chapter four) is central to Vaiṣṇava theology, and although Appayya in essence surrenders *himself* to Śiva in the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, he does not do so here. Nonetheless, the devotees of Varadarāja have themselves taken refuge (*prapadya*) in him, and we have seen in various ways the presence of his dynamic power, grace, and efficacy.

In chapter two I discussed the section of the *Varadarājastava* that described Varadarāja's waist and navel, along with his accompanying clothes and ornaments, and the presence of Kāmadeva. Here, we will focus on Appayya's poetic descriptions of the upper body of Varadarāja, his arms and weapons, and details of his face and head, which lead to the poem's conclusion. Verses sixty-four through seventy-three focus on his upper torso, verses seventy-four through eighty focus on his arms, his hands, and what he is holding, and verses eighty-one through one hundred four move from Varadarāja's throat to the crown of his head. In the following stanzas we get an image of Varadarāja/Viṣṇu's chest (upon which Lakṣmī is reclined) before moving on to his arms, hands, and divine weapons:

65. Varada, the rubies which have arrived at your necklace, which are identical to the disc of the newly risen sun, shine on [your] chest, the bed of Lakṣmī, as if they are nail-marks on pillows of play, sharing your ribs.

    […]

72. O Varada, this saffron color//tree of paradise shines in the midst of these [arms], located in the heavenly Nandana grove which is your chest; I fancy the creepers of that [grove] are your arms, O Four-armed One, whose tips have been softened by the lotus petals which are hands.

73. O Varada, I imagine that since this jewel has the redness of a bud by its very nature, and since it has been placed into a bracelet, being cherished by the Lord; therefore, having reached a state of blind intoxication, it creates contempt even for the very sun before one's eyes.

74. From below, in one place, the discus has the radiance of Indra's sapphire and has as its stalk [your] long arm, and in the other hand the swan that is a conch shell [also have these qualities]; having seen that, how can we not imagine the two upward hands of yours who are an ocean of beauty, as two fully opened lotuses?

75. I imagine you, Lord, as one bearing the form of the Great Soul, as one having the charming form of the nine pearls to be seen [also] in the constellations, and as one having a pair of flanks which are of the nature of night and day, due to the conch and discus—the most beloved of the sun and moon.

76. I see the king of discuses in your right hand, which is hard to look at like the sun opening from the clouds at the dissolution of the universe; the discus, which is the light of your arm—a mountain churning in the ocean a host of demons, blazing, having attained a state full of heat and radiance.

77. O Deva, O Acyuta, the conch which is pure and white inside and out blazes, grasped in your left hand. It blazes for the purpose of learning the Upaniṣads by way of making a deep resounding sound, as if it were dwelling near a dense throat//near the teacher's throat.

78. The mace Kaumodakī gleams in your fingertips, which is like that Sarasvatī changed into the speech of Brahma, flowing out from your lotus hand, having desired the special property of the Ganges which is the earth at your lotus feet.

79. In that hand of yours, which makes the gesture not to be afraid [and] which is a graceful heap of light bearing a tender sincerity, shines a heap of light of diamond finger-rings, white like a flood of water anointing the diadem of the lord of lotuses.[390]

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[390] *prālambikāmupagatāstava padmarāgāḥ pratyagragharmakaramaṇḍalanirviśeṣāḥ |*
paryaṅkake varada vakṣasi bhānti lakṣmyāḥ krīḍopabarhatilakā iva pārśvabhājaḥ || *VRS* 65
vakṣaḥsthalam varada nandanamāśritaste yeṣām vibhāti haricandrana eṣa madhye |
ete csaturbhuja bhujāstava tasya śākhāḥ śaṅke karābjadalakomalitāgrabhāgāḥ || 72
jātyaiva yad varada pallavarāga eṣa yallālyate ca bhavatā kaṭake niveśya |
manye maṇistadupagamya madāndhabhāvaṃ sākṣādayaṃ savitureva karotyavajñām || 73
aindropalaprabhamadho bhujadaṇḍanālamekatra cakramaparatra ca śaṅkhahaṃsam |
dṛṣṭvā katham na kalayemahi kāntisindhorutphullapadmayugamūrdhvakaradvayam te || 74
candrārkacārutaraśaṅkharathāṅgaśobhāsaṃbhāvyarātridivasātmakapārśvayugmam |
nakṣatradṛśyanavamauktikahārirūpaṃ manye mahāpurūṣarupadharaṃ bhavantam || 75

The erotic tone is quite manifest in verse sixty-five, and this helps to illustrate again the blending of *bhakti* with the sentiment of *śṛṇgāra rasa*. However, later on, Varadarāja's chest and arms are also described as a peaceful grove in which Lakṣmī, and any temple-going worshipper can rest. In a way this deeply well-formed metaphor (seen in verse seventy-two especially) does an excellent job of *illustrating* the concept of *prapatti*, or refuge/surrender, while simultaneously (to my mind) recalling the kinds of lush, descriptive natural scenes in earlier *mahākāvya*s and dramas, particularly the opening of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* in which the king, Duṣyanta, spies the maiden Śākuntalā in her foster father Kaṇva's hermitage and falls in love.

Verse seventy-three, which was discussed in chapter two (and which alludes to a verse describing the redness of the setting sun in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃsa*), transitions the reader's gaze from Varadarāja's chest to his limbs, and verse seventy-four imagines Varadarāja's two upward arms (he is "four-armed," *caturbhuja*) as lotus stalks at the top of which two hands, described as fully opened lotuses, clasp Viṣṇu's discus, Sudarśana, in his right hand, and his conch shell, Pāñcajanya, in his left. In verse seventy-five, and in the verses immediately following it, the temple image of Varadarāja and the cosmic form of Viṣṇu are beautifully merged by way of the imagery of the sky and constellations, night and day. As Appayya mentions in his auto-commentary, Varadarāja has been imbued with this cosmic, diurnal quality because here the poet

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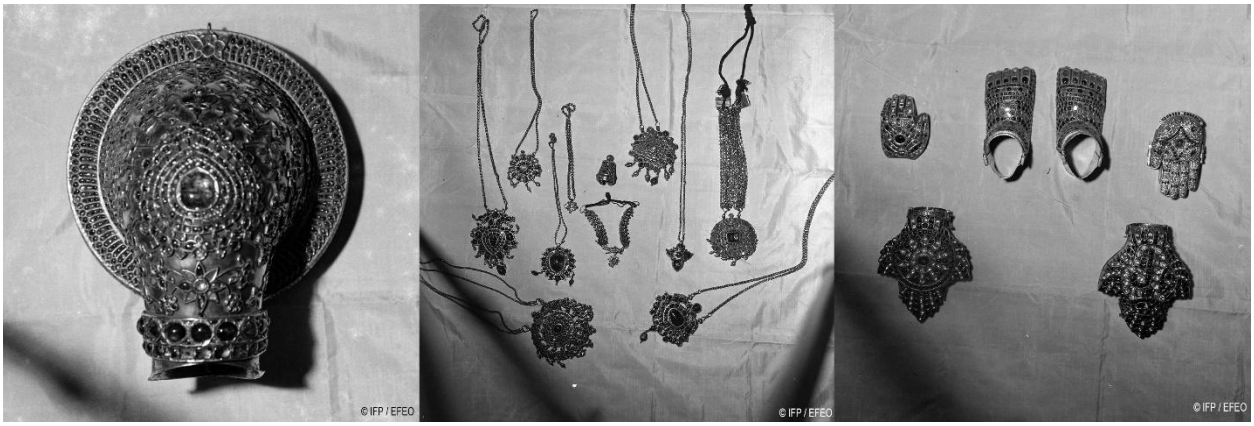
saṃvartajṛmbhitavikartanaduḥ nirīkṣam paśyāmi dakṣiṇakare tava cakrarājam |
daityaughasindhupatimanthamahācalasya bāhoḥ pratāpaghanamiddhamivodgataṃ te || 76
ābhāti deva vidhṛtastava savyapāṇāvantarbahiśca śuciracyuta pāñcajanyaḥ |
antevasanniva galasya gurorgabhīradhvānakriyopaniśatadhyayanārthameṣaḥ || 77
kaumodakī sphurati te karapallavāgre vairiñcavākyavikṛteva sarasvatī sā |
trisrotasastava padāmbujabhuvo viśeṣamākāṅkṣya pāṇikamalāttava niḥsarantī || 78
haste virājati tavābhayamudrite 'sminnavyājakomalaruciprakarābhirāme |
vajrormikāṃśunikaraḥ kamalādhirājyapaṭṭābhiṣekasalilaugha ivāvadātaḥ || 79

metaphorically identifies the disc of Sudarśana with that of the sun and the curved shell of Pāñcajanya with the crescent moon.

In verse seventy-seven, Appayya also compares the deep and resonant sound of the conch to the Upaniṣadic teachings of venerable sages. Viṣṇu's mace, Kaumodakī, is held in Varadarāja's lower left hand, and it "flows out" from it down to the sacred ground at his feet. Varadarāja's ornamented bottom right hand is upright, palm facing out, in the *abhaya mudrā*, or gesture of non-fear, though as discussed in chapter three, Appayya goes on to explain in verse eighty why Varadarāja does not need to make the *varadā mudrā* here with any of his hands, which further accentuates the feeling of tenderness and refuge emanating from the deity.



Pictures of the crown and various ornaments of Varadarāja, including the discus and conch at the right (photos courtesy of the of the Insitut Français de Pondichéry and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient).

Appayya's explanation of Varadarāja's name along with the lack of need for the gift-bestowing gesture in verse eighty serves as a transition from viewing the deity's limbs to observing his face and head. These verses, which conclude the poem, begin at his throat and proceed up to the crown of his forehead and the locks of his hair. A selection of verses maps out this progression:

81. O Lord, your throat blazes, encircled with blue lotuses and with numerous braided strings of pearls which are like thunderclouds sounding near the limits of that [abode], having ascertained the abode of the clouds of destruction.

82. O Storehouse of Virtues, thy beautiful face, dear to Lakṣmī and the birthplace of that Brahma of yours, which has earrings and which has a rival in the moon; with these qualities how does it not obtain [an offering of] a lotus?

83. O Lord of Lakṣmī, a lotus which has been surpassed by your face, was surely that, not entirely pervading the sound "being from [your] navel," wishing to remove scandal for the people from your famous navel because of a trick of sound.

84. O Varada, the ray of light which is the ambrosia of your face shines forth, illuminating the passion of the best of women, destroying the affliction of samsara borne unequally, lighting up the [elephant] hill, and opening the water lily.

85. O Upendra, that moon, which adheres to the *cāndrāyaṇa* vow, appearing nourished and [alternatively] thin on its two sides, desirous of the light of your lotus face, will do penance eternally, making a circumambulation [of] Mount Meru//the temple.

86. O Lord, since the earth is always pleased, having drunk up thy spotless moon-face—because of that, how was the moon, having a part in the middle made dark by a stain, the one moving the waters of the well-flowing nine [planets]?

[…]

93. O Supreme Soul, your moonlit smile shines like the light of poetry because of the speech always dwelling in your lotus mouth, as if to grasp the highest knowledge which is without precedent in your exhalations, made themselves of knowledge.

94. Rays of light wander on the surface of the long-lived one, the moon, which are spread about like heaps of straw on it by means of the wind which is a slow exhalation of your smile, being the choicest herb [to cure] the three-fold affliction.

95. When in in the vessel of your lower jewel, the divine herb conquers the three-fold affliction at once, and sprinkled with that, one is liberated. O shell-eyed one, I imagine the cold-rayed one, the moon, as a clod of dirt, on account of being joined to a particle of the qualities of that [herb].

96. O Varada, may the beauty of this languid smile of yours, which is the pure heap of the moon's rays, and the ground of repose for the frequent goings and comings of the eyes of young women, of garments, and of those who are joined [to you] on your limbs, purify me.

97. O Lotus-eyed One, I imagine your two beautiful nostrils always residing in the two spring months, with diffuse and abundant fragrance, and with a sprout [carried] on the Malaya wind, which is a languid breath.

[…]

100. Whither your two eyes, O Lord, and whither the white lotus? Even now the Vedas speak of their resemblance. That [Veda] surely describes the all-pervading sky of your entire soul from the perception of a very real abundance of sameness.[391]

In verse eighty-one, Varadarāja's throat is encircled with lotuses and strings of pearls, and metaphorically identified with a thunderstorm, signified by raindrops (blue lotuses), lightning flashes (pearls), and thunder (Viṣṇu's divine voice), which also recalls the process of cosmic destruction. Here and in the following verses, Viṣṇu's cosmic form is once again merged with the temple image of Varadarāja, his face being identified with the universal light that is drawn upon by all the heavenly bodies. Upstaging the well-worn cliché of comparing a face to the moon, Appayya asserts here that the moon itself, desirous of the light of Viṣṇu's face, circumambulates him in reverence. The word "*surālayam*" refers both to the cosmic mountain of creation, Mount Meru, *and* to a temple, which means that the moon draws its reflected light from both the cosmic

[391] *ābhāti mauktikaguṇagrathitaiḥ analpaiḥ nīlotpalairvalayitastava nātha kaṇṭhaḥ |*
saṃvartameghavasitaṃ dhvananaistadantairniścitya tannikaṭagairiva meghaḍimbhaiḥ || *VRS* 81
yadbrahmaṇaśca janibhūḥ priyamindirāyāḥ saspardhamoṣadhipatau ca sakarṇikaṃ ca |
etairguṇairguṇanidhe katamastvadīyaṃ vaktraṃ manojñamavagacchatu nāravindam || 82
vaktreṇa te yadabhibhūtamabhūt sarojam tannābhibhūtamiti śabdam avyāpyanūnam |
śabdacchalādapaninīṣu janāpavādaṃ nābherabhūt tava ramādhipa viśrutāyāḥ || 83
unmīlayan kumudamujjvalayan girīśamunmūlayan viṣamavāhabhavābhitāpam |
uddīpayan varavadhūjanatānurāgamuddyotate varada te vadanāmṛtāṃśuḥ || 84
pakṣadvayakraśimapoṣavibhāvyamānacāndrāyaṇavrataniṣevaṇa eṣa nityam |
kurvan pradakṣiṇam upendra surālayam te lipsurmukhābjarucimeva tapasyatīnduḥ || 85
nātha tvadīyamakalaṅkamimam mukhendumāpīya tṛpyati sadā vasudhā yataste |
tenaiva kiṃ navasudhārasarocaro 'bhūt induḥ kalaṅkamalinīkṛtamadhyabhāgaḥ || 86
vidyāmayeṣu tava niḥśvasiteṣvapūrvaṃ vidyāviśeṣamiva śikṣitumantarātman |
vāṇyāḥ sadā tava mukhāmburuhe vasantyāḥ kāvyaprabheva lasati smitacandrikā te || 93
tāpatrayauṣadhavarasya tava smitasya niḥśvāsamandamarutā nibusīkṛtasya |
ete kaḍaṅgaracayā iva viprakīrṇā jaivātṛkasya kiraṇā jagati bhramanti || 94
siddhauṣadham jayati te 'dhararatnapātre tāpatrayī jhaṭiti muñcati yena siktam |
manye tuṣārakiraṇam guṇaleśayogādasyaiva vārijavilocana kalkapuñjam || 95
ātanvatāmavayaveṣu gatāgatāni yuktātmanām varada yauvatacakṣuṣām ca |
viśrāntibhūrvidhukaraprakarāvadātā mandasmitacchaviriyaṃ tava māṃ punātu || 96
niḥśvāsamandamalayānilakandalena nirhāriṇā bahutareṇa ca saurabheṇa |
nāsāpuṭau nalinalocana te manojñau manye sadaiva madhumādhavayornivāsau || 97
netre tava kva bhagavan kva ca puṇḍarīkam brute tayortadupamānamathāpi vedaḥ |
sarvātmanastava samādhikavastvalābhādākāśavat sa khalu sarvagatatvamāha || 100

form of Viṣṇu and the temple form of Varadarāja. The moon is depicted as a reverent ascetic who has undertaken the vow of *cāndrāyaṇa*, in which every fifteen days one's allotment of food is reduced from fifteen mouthfuls to zero (and back up again) following the lunar cycles. In verse eighty-six, Appayya even wonders how the moon has any power of its own to influence the movement of the heavens, given that it is entirely dependent on the light of Viṣṇu.

The metaphorical and poetic play builds in the succeeding verses in which Varadarāja's smile (again recalling the moon's crescent shape) flashes like the light of poetry itself (*kāvyaprabhā*), connected to the utterances from his divine lotus-like mouth. The light that illuminates the moon also provides cooling and healing properties for those afflicted, and here in verse ninety-five, Appayya shows that even the jewelry of Varadarāja bears a connection to these healing herbs. In verse ninety-seven, the nostrils of Varadarāja perpetually reside in the fragrant spring months of Caitra and Vaiśākha (*madhumādhavayornivasau*), which languidly bring seeds and further fragrances on the easterly Malaya wind from the Malabar coast and the Western Ghats, blowing across the Tamil country. The verse itself is evocative, and the mention of this wind from the Western Ghats (*malayānila*) also gives it a rootedness in the greater South Indian landscape and environment. The final verse here shows that Varadarāja's two eyes are identical to two white lotuses, and as the eyes are windows into the soul, this abundant resemblance reveals the breadth, purity, and sanctity of Viṣṇu/Varadarāja's being.

The profusion of these rich images, metaphors, and comparisons highlights Appayya's poetic skill. We further see the ordering impulse of authority and the experimental impulses of freedom also at play. Vivid images of the moon, lotuses, flowers, faces, and features are stock-in-trade in the world of Sanskrit poetry, but Appayya's experimental play and his unique spin on these tropes are both wholly evident. The rays of light on the moon's surface being compared to

flickering gold bits of straw and the dwelling of Varadarāja's nostrils in the fragrant spring months are but two of many examples of Appayya's artistic ability to *transform* our perception of objects (here specifically, of heavenly bodies and facial features), our understanding of religious contemplation (on the body and qualities of Viṣṇu/Varadarāja), *and* our apprehension of poetry itself (the well-worn tropes of the moon and the face, respectively). Here, as throughout the poem, we see a poetic achievement at its fullest; one which is not reducible to any one of its contexts and one which is greater than the sum of its verbal and contextual parts.

The last handful of verses describe Varadarāja's large and piercing eyes, his forehead, and his hair, and give a final benediction. Here, perhaps, we have the fullest experience of *darśan* with Varadarāja, and it makes sense in the end, for poets who author Sanskrit *stotra*s or vernacular hymns to describe a deity proceed from foot to head rather than head to foot, the latter being reserved for descriptions of mortals. Oddly, Kūreśa's *Varadarājastava*, written three to four hundred years before Appayya, describes the deity from head to foot, but in describing his form in the other direction, we are confronted with his divine gaze at the very climax and conclusion of the poem, greatly strengthening its impact on the reader. The concluding verses underscore the incredible significance of this:

101. O Enemy of Danuja, your right eye, from a confusion of resemblance due to a lack of modesty, bears the beauty of a raised lotus//Lakṣmī of a raised lotus. Even the other one diffuses an abundant beauty of that [lotus]. There, that very right one is the root.

102. O Lord of the hill of the snakes, my particular likeness does not shine in you and in your eye as Prakṛti, being black, white, and red; [your eye] which reaches to the edge of the ear, which has the form of a revered fish, and which dwells on a red lotus//on the passion of Lakṣmī.

103. "That Prajāpati is born from my sight—!" Another line of water droplets in the hot season, arisen from the forehead of yours, the mind of the creator, appears as a trick, being a line of pearls inlaid at the bottom of [your] diadem.

104. O Lotus-eyed One, the choicest of sapphire jewels, on your diadem made of collections of priceless jewels, do not appear as such. Having smelled the scent at the end of your locks of hair, [they] appear as bees, clinging all around that diadem due to a desire to be pervaded [with that scent].

105. Your body, from the tuft of hair to the foot, altogether, having enthralling eyes, being boundless, and being a glittering heap of joy; may this body, the hill on which the elephant rests, O Lotus-eyed One, O Inner Self, always manifest in my heart.[392]

The eyes of Varadarāja are magnetic and abundant in their beauty, and Appayya recalls classic tropes in South Asian poetry and art, which depict the eyes (especially of divine or semi-divine beings) as being wide (to the edge of the ears), fish-shaped, and radiant. In verse one-hundred-and-two, Appayya cannot see his likeness in Varadarāja's divine eye, because his body, as *prakṛti*, basic matter, does not exist on the transcendent plane of Viṣṇu's divinity. In a way, then, Appayya, like all devotees, quite literally loses himself in the penetrating and divine gaze of Viṣṇu.

[392] *sāmyabhramādavinayena samunnatasya savyaṃ tavākṣi harati śriyamambujasya |*
tasyāpi tāṃ samadhikāṃ tanute yadanyaddākṣiṇyameva danujāhita tatra mūlam || *VRS* 101
padmānurāgajuṣi lohitaśuklakṛṣṇāmāseduṣi prakṛtimādṛtamīnarūpe |
śrutyantabhāsini madāvalaśailanātha tvatllocane tvayi ca bhāti na me viśeṣaḥ || 102
muktaḥ prajāpatirayam mama darśanādityanyaṃ vidhātumanasastava bhālajātā |
gharmāmbubindutatireva kirīṭamūlapratyuptamauktikatatticchalato vibhāti || 103
rājantyanarghamaṇisaṃghamaye kirīṭe rājīvalocana na nīlamaṇipravekāḥ |
āghrāya gandhamalinastava kuntalānāmantaḥ praveṣṭumanasaḥ parito nilīnāḥ || 104
āpādamācikurabhāramaśeṣamaṅgamānandabṛndalasitaṃ sudṛśāmasīmam |
antarmama sphuratu saṃtatamantarātmanambhojalocana tava śritahastiśailam || 105

The largeness of the eyes is evident in this painting of a reclining Viṣṇu from the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple in Kanchipuram (photo courtesy of the of the Insitut Français de Pondichéry and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient).

In some respects, as in the earlier verses of the poem, a sense of bewilderment returns, and the poet conflates a line of pearl ornaments on Varadarāja's forehead with beads of sweat. Black colored bees are mistaken for sapphire gems, buzzing around the fragrant locks of Varadarāja/Viṣṇu's hair and his ornamented crest. The final verse offers a benediction for the poet himself and for the reader: Appayya asks that Varadarāja's form in its entirety may always be present in his heart so that he may continually meditate on the deity whose boundless power and love pulsate (√*sphur*) both within the devotee's heart and throughout the cosmos.

II. Conclusion

Over the course of this dissertation, I have observed and discussed the ways in which the poetry of Appayya Dīkṣita (and especially his *Varadarājastava*) interacts with the broader Sanskrit traditions of *kāvya* and *alaṃkāraśāstra* (poetry and poetics), we have seen how his poetic and intellectual life was touched by the social, religious, and political world of his time,

and how these things came to be reflected in his poetry, and we have seen his deep love and affinity for the temples and the wider religious culture of his native Tamil country. It is *through* his poetry that such topics and themes are most vividly, precisely, and acutely expressed. Of course, his poetry is demonstrably much more than the "dry sediment" of religious hymnology, but even more so, it is the unique efflorescence of a peculiar individual mind, deeply aware of and steeped within the poetic, intellectual, and religious traditions he inherited (along with their authority), but ultimately not constrained by them. Within the medium of *stotrakāvya*, he found much that was useful from the *kāvya* tradition (and others) in crafting his own expressions, but he nonetheless found the freedom to experiment, innovate, and breathe fresh vitality into the verse forms of this tradition whose roots predated him by over a millennium.

This expressive freedom is also entirely in keeping with his overall intellectual and religious character, as the work of other scholars has shown.[393] There is a strong element of *śṛṇgāra rasa* at points in the poem, but by the end we have also in a way transcended it, entering into a plane of heartfelt reverence, gratitude, openness, and awe both at the divinity and splendor of Varadarāja himself and at Appayya's own ability to describe this. Over the course of the poem, Appayya also employs the rhetoric and language of prayer and devotion without being limited by them. In this way he contrasts with and ultimately transcends the poetry of his much-respected predecessors, particularly Kūreśa and Vedānta Deśika.

This is the reason why I ultimately conceive the poem as more of a meditation than a purely prayerful or devotional utterance; the word 'meditation' here implies both an exercise in mental focus, dexterity, and discipline well-known in a South Asian context (√*dhyai*/*dhyāna*), *and* a sort of poetic reflection or contemplation, not so unlike the word 'meditation' or

[393] See the special issue of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* on Appayya, 44.1 (March 2016), edited by Christopher Minkowski.

'meditative' that I used in my working definition of poetry in my introduction, or its use in elucidating the long-form poetry of figures like Wallace Stevens or William Wordsworth (among others). Although they are at a far remove temporally and culturally from Appayya, Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," or Stevens' "The Man with the Blue Guitar" or "Auroras of Autumn" (along with John Keats' eminently comparable "Ode on a Grecian Urn," mentioned in chapter three) are poems in which the contemplation of an object, a place, or an idea leads to much more penetrating reflection on the nature of the relationship between the poet's self and the surrounding world (or universe), just as in the *Varadarājastava*.

I think in more recent decades, the scholarship on South Asian art, history, and literature has grown in its capacity to recognize and speak to these things, but at times it still possesses some of the deterministic tendencies (like those of Kosambi or Pollock) that have the potential to flatten the people and phenomena we are trying to better understand and explain. I believe here, over the course of this dissertation—although I have of course examined and explained Appayya's poetry *within* a variety of contexts, traditions, and situations, having been informed by various historical, intellectual, cultural, social, and religious trends—that I have nonetheless kept his poetry, being the creative and unique expression that it is, at the *center* of my analysis and work. This is also, in the simplest sense, why the body of my dissertation opens with an analysis of his poetry *within* the world of Sanskrit poetry, and concludes with a close reading of the *Varadarājastava*, his longest, most sustained, and most well-developed poetic expression.

We can say that, whatever his religious and political contexts, whatever his ultimate projects were, Appayya Dīkṣita authored the *Varadarājastava* because he was inspired as a poet to do so. The poem, taken together with his other work and his idiosyncratic intellectual and religious life, suggests to me that Appayya had a revelatory experience of Viṣṇu's presence in

Kanchi, and he perhaps was spontaneously inspired to transcend the sectarian conflicts, the politics, and the tensions of his day to creatively and introspectively commemorate this experience. There is a constant interplay in the poem between the microcosm (the physical details of the temple image and its ornaments), the mesocosm (the temple itself, the devotees present, and the locale of Kanchipuram, and the broader region), and the macrocosm (involving cosmological and mythological views of Viṣṇu, Śiva, the universe and the cycles of time and eternity). Varadarāja inhabits all these places simultaneously (in one's heart, at the temple, enriching and enlivening Kanchi, in his Vaikuṇṭha heaven, and encapsulating the entire cosmos), and his devotees are duly enveloped within him and transformed by him, actively and thoroughly so. Appayya Dīkṣita, through his poetry alone, captured and articulated this experience in a way that no other poet or artist has before or since, and in doing so, he vividly recreated his rapturous and meditative impressions of Kanchipuram, the Varadarājaswāmi Temple, and Varadarāja himself, making them accessible to those he wished to reach with his words.

Appayya's *Varadarājastava* is a hymn of praise, but unlike numerous other *stotra*s it encompasses far more than that. As the close reading in this chapter and analyses in other chapters have shown, the direct praise of a deity (here, Varadarāja) is not Appayya's sole objective in composing the poem. Although praise, and by extension, prayer are important parts of the poem, reading it solely through such a lens would cause us to miss the originality and vividness of the descriptions of the city of Kanchipuram, Appayya's experimentations and meta-poetic reflections *within* the poem, and the novelty of Appayya's descriptions of his experience in proximity to Varadarāja. The best and most productive way to read poetry (and, by extension, numerous other genres of text and art) is to foremost take it on its own terms. There is certainly also an element of devotion within Appayya's interactions with Varadarāja and his descriptions

of his divinity, but especially when compared to his own *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, and the *stotra*s of Kūreśa and Vedānta Deśika (and many others), it is clear that Appayya takes *poetic* inspiration from his subject along with (if not more than) religious inspiration. He was undoubtedly prompted to write the *Varadarājastava* (along with his other *stotra*s) not only as a religious act, but because it satisfied a previously unfulfilled creative impetus within him. For this reason, reading the *Varadarājastava* and other poems of his perhaps gives us a more authentic view of his thoughts, temperament, and experiences in comparison to his theological and philosophical prose. In Appayya's experience, perhaps the 'mocking laughter' of others (discussed in chapter three, itself possibly a marker of the sectarian tensions present in South India in the sixteenth century) is the 'irritant' that embedded itself in Appayya's mind, thereby setting in motion the creative and aggregative process that brought forth the 'pearl' of the *Varadarājastava*. However, poems themselves are not reducible to contexts; they are both a part of and apart from contemporaneous milieus and wider social histories. Ultimately, the artistic and verbal creativity that inheres within poetry gives us deep insight into the minds of those who have written it, and altogether it illustrates the unbounded possibilities of imaginative language in shaping us as readers and in enhancing our perception of ourselves and our surroundings.

Appendix: Selected *Stotra*s of Appayya Dīkṣita

Ādityastotraratna

1. With one thousand *yojana*s and ten vast lengths traversed; located in a six-fold shining ring, having a threefold hub and five spokes on its wheel; may the chariot of the hot-rayed one, having a yoke for conveyance placed on horses who are the seven meters and whose parts are wholly fixed, break forth before me with an appearance of the *trivarga* (decline, stability, and increase) during respective parts of the year!

2. The disc of the hot-rayed one which is the revolving light of Brahman, having a form thickened into the collection of scripture, sets alight the middle of the sky like the jewel standing upon what is to be pervaded, and sets alight the whole of the chariot, pervading the tenth part [of the sky] with the Gandharvas, the Bālakhilyas, holding a raft for the villagers, the Ādityas, the Apsarases, and sages, who are the best of the sun.

3. Stalks coming forth, which have entered into the tubes of tenderness of the births of the entire disc of light, arisen in various directions [on account] of the sweetness of that [sun] which is a multitude of spokes//gems being the host of Vasus and others, shine forth. Waters, which are sprouts of beauty, shine forth, made of the sap of the immortal nectar of herbs which are oblations offered by ancestors for the fathers and others, drinking in and raining water, heat, and even cold all around.

4. When a thousand of the most beautiful of those [sunbeams] of heaven and earth illuminates the fullness of the five directions, and illuminates the five faces of Mercury, the flood of stars, and the moon,
   being the seven suns, chief among them Āroga and Bhrāja, at the fiery destruction of the three worlds; may the sun beams, the beginnings of the Suṣumna rays (which illuminate the moon), destroy all my afflictions here!

5. Rays, joined with thousands of qualities of the ninety-six, resting in the Ādityas, which are divided between a month and another month, illuminate the abode of the three worlds, purifying it.
   The good actions of those which have risen as the seven rays, made for the protection of the world, in going forth in the future, appearing as rites and sacrifices are *not* done in the intercalary month [of] Saṃsarpa.

6. I take refuge in the sun; the rising remover of fear everywhere, to be honored before one's eyes by Brahma and others; the way from above, to be obtained by, arrived at, and known to the highest of the wise ones;
   to be honored by songs and sacrifices which appear distinctly at the regular time in the midst of daybreak; the margin of the disc pervading all with brilliance, having the beautiful form of the trembling dawn.

7. The entirety of the Ādityas without remainder, superintending with the power of that [sun], having fixed authority with measureless wealth, appears in the world, letting loose wetness, cold, and heat.
   The twelve-fold[394] Lord who is even his own preeminence having been in those [Ādityas], manifests [as] the salutary sun, the supreme divinity, and root of the three worlds.

8. The Yakṣas, Gandharvas, heavenly women, demons, and those who have gone to the arms of the best of sages, spread the eternal grace of the sun by means of singing, dancing, worship in his presence, and by bearing the reverence of the planets and rays of light; measureless multitudes of Bālakhilyas [also] spread this grace by means of affectionate speech having a path to that twelve-fold one. I worship that sun, the controller of the world.

9. That which has the form of the one begotten from the mouth of the Supreme Spirit, fit to be meditated on, which has risen in its origin at dawn, in the primordial egg of that [spirit] with three utterances of enjoyment from the foot to the head; having the form of the eternal sun, seeing that [pronouncement] "Brahman is truth," daily said; that one having a share of subtle breath, the ground of [all] beings and of those dwelling in places commencing with heaven and the atmosphere—

10. —I take refuge in that beneficent (Śambhu)[395] Brahman which is produced at the rising of the sun, rising and shining over all, being the loving lord of the world, shining and unsurpassed; to be praised in the chants of the Ṛg and Sāma Vedas, having a pair of eyes visible as a beautiful lotus split in two, manifesting as a shining image of pure gold; the two eyes of the world, placed in the sun and being visibly joined to [his] chariots.

11. May the Supremely auspicious One//the Supreme Śiva who is to be meditated on, the physician of mine and that of those beginning with Yama, steal away the afflictions of all; just as vows/acts of penance which are alone chief of the worship of that [one], destroy evil completely.
    The worship of that One, dwelling in both the sun and moon, which is that syllable of attainment, carries away all sin [and] leads [one] on the path of a portion of worship, being the sacred chant of *Om*.

12. I ceaselessly take refuge with Śiva, having three eyes and a dark throat, dear to Umā, and having the form of one's own mind; impelling in the entire mind of a person the Gāyatrī mantra to be employed; a flaming disc in the sun blazing with the light of the navel and limbs of the earth-protector, which is the enjoyment of the path of the eye, [and blazing] with the divisions of Puruṣa, the cosmic man, at the source of the beginning, middle, and end.

13. The twelve [Ādityas] garlanded and honored through the unfolding majesty of that [3] and that [4], are those who have taught the three of the primordial god, who is the jewel

[394] There are twelve Ādityas.
[395] Also a well-known epithet of Śiva.

of day, and afterward the four, one by one; the thousand-fold divisions of rays in them, highly praised by the seven scriptures, are a disc made of firm speech, having a hundred limbs and an ornament of a cloud, and some lesser mark.

14. A man, having recited this jewel of praise, at once removes relentless and immovable beings beginning with wicked ghosts and demons, troops of demons born from disorder, miseries, and sins; and even removes incurable diseases, along with discomforting bad omens and nightmares completely. He obtains prosperity here, and enters into liberation at the summit.

Apītakucāmbāstava

1. O Mother having full breasts (Apītakucā), I call to mind your form: a cluster of flowers wet with nectar from a clump of joyful creepers, which is a collyrium made from *amṛta* for the two eyes of those who attend on you, and which is a wave in a flood of joy from the crest of rays of *amṛta*.

2. O Mother Apītakucā, may you at once place for an instant thy foot on this inflamed forehead of mine, having a sickness and fever caused by fainting; [thy foot] which eternally rains heaps of nectar, and which is a lovely tender red lotus which does not sleep.

3. O Mother, bathe me instantly at the venerable red-dawn mountain by means of your glances, which are cooling like the *suṣumna* rays at its peak, and the cool-rayed moon, full of waters which are the essence of compassion without deceit, pouring out in all directions like camphor dust.

4. O Mother Apītakucā, I must offer up this heated body of mine instantly before your presence, bathed in the stream of nectar which is a mass of light at your foot, as I am distressed with a great fever.

5. Calm this excessive fainting which has been brought on with fevers and agitations instantly O Apītakucā, with the fragrance of a red lotus and Palāśa blossoms which enjoy the play of fingertips, and which are manifold and produced in a pond where lotuses arise.

6. The poison in the throat, the snakes who discharge poison in the matted hair and along the ribs, the lords of Bhūtas and the terrible Gaṇas—Having approached the mighty red mountain, O mother, should the smells received in the nose partake of [their] presence if in the vicinity?

7. The power in the creation of worlds, nourishing when there are breakages, [which is also] the divine queen of the crest with the moon and tree-blossom in the serpent's hoods, the perfection, being the wife of Śiva the doer, which is your ambit—the destruction of these does not arise, O Apītakucā.

8. You are the witness of the dances of Bhairava's destruction.
   You are the emaciator of all created things of Brahma at [the time of] destruction.
   You are the liberator of multitudes of transmigratory souls.
   I bow to you O Apītakucā, you who are the consciousness of Brahman.

Hariharābhedastuti

1. I worship [both] the lover of Mā (Lakṣmī) and the lover of Umā; the one whose couch is a serpent and the one who is fit for serpents; the slayer of Mura and the crusher of the Three Cities; the enemy of Bāṇāsura and the enemy of the one with an odd number of arrows (Kāmadeva).

2. I worship the cattle herder and the leader of the earth; the one whose eyes are the sun and moon and the one whose eyes have the fire of the sun and moon; the one whose son is Smara (Kāmadeva) and the one whose son is Skanda; the one of Vaikuṇṭha and the one whose crest is the moon.

3. I worship the one whose body is dark and the one whose body is half Umā; the one who is a householder at his father-in-law's and the one who resides at the summit of Mt. Meru; the one having 10 forms and the one whose body consists of the Vasus; the one whose wife is the earth and the one who is the lord of the earth in its entirety.

4. I worship the one who bears a mountain and the one bearing an upward fire; the one desired by the ocean's daughter and the one desired by the mountain-born one; the one for whom Garuḍa is standing by and the one for whom the bull is standing by; the one who has five missiles and the one who is wholly unclothed.

5. I worship the one who begot Brahma and the one praised firstly in the Vedic hymns; the one whose dwelling is the elephant hill and the one clothed with the skin of the lord of elephants; the one who is the refuge of the gods and the one who is the refuge of Hari; the one whose wife is the earth and the one whose wife is wholly the earth.

6. I worship the one who is the friend of Arjuna and the one for whom sacrifices are received; the one who has a lovely woman from the ocean and the one who is the slayer of the Asura, Jalandhara; the one whose son is the creator and the one whose son is Skanda; the one who is the dark lord and the one who is the lord of all beings.

7. I worship the one clothed in yellow and the one with tawny twisted hair; the one whose body is fragrant and the one whose limbs are purified; the one who holds a lotus and the one who holds the Ḍamaru drum; the one dwelling in yoga, and the one to be praised by all yogis.

8. I worship the one who holds a Chakra and the one whose hand removes fear; the one whose ornaments are made of jewels and the one whose ornament is the serpent's hood

jewel; the one who grasps his bow and the one whose bow is on a mountain; the one who is Govinda and the one whose bull and cows are faultless.

Varadarājastava

1. Having opened the storehouse of the lotus of the heart by means of a small bit of yoga, apprehending [the heart] as one desires for a long time along with the virtuous ones; the one who shines forth unceasingly having a perfect and complete form, may he, Mukunda, show me eternal good fortune.

2. O Lord, one who is born does not know the utmost totality of your greatness, nor one who will be born, O supreme man. I, who have an overflowing rashness, in praise of your greatness—why wouldn't there be laughter of the wise toward one like me?

3. O Deva, having been seated in the forehead of another, I think on the unavoidable fault of my own stammering, desiring to be outside myself. The goddess of speech, having taken possession of the tongues of the great poets, nonetheless spreads your praise.

4. O Lord, your image, the ornament-jewel upon the elephant hill, still honored by unselfish people; O Vaikuṇṭha, I am one who holds an intention to describe it because of my intense desire for apprehending and reflecting on your name, form, and qualities.

5. O Ramāramaṇa (husband of Lakṣmī) I think that the best of poets must pour forth your praises, and someone like me is blessed because of them. One like me, whose reverent attention is fixed upon your image obtains good fortune from a long reflection on [your] various parts because of an excessive poetic indolence.

6. O Lord of the wise, adorning the earth is Kāñcī, the very picture of an abode//whose variegation is houses of priceless gold and jewels, shining at the crest of the elephant hill with the crest jewel of your devotees and with an expansion of bright radiance.

7. A wise person, seeing you everywhere in Kāñcī, in a well-established ocean of milk and in the middle of the disc of the three-fold sun, abandons desire for even the three abodes and for the well-made heaven of Brahma below.

8. In this place, which is unconquered and unrivalled among cities, O lord of immeasurable qualities, people—having seen you, the son of the water buffalo within a golden house, in the vicinity of the divine ocean having the best holy fig tree—don't go again to the pain of rebirth.

9. O lord whose banner is Garuḍa, the good and pure ones who have come to your abode, the pure river of milk which gives your worship, [they] obtain a scent and flavor of you attached to the blossoms, Tulsi leaves, and water at your feet.

10. O lord of the thirteen, some wealth, having entered the enclosures of golden walls that are like treasuries, presents itself as your beautiful form which is like the divine fruits that arise from the blissful creeper.

11. At the jeweled peak//tusk of the elephant hill, a conscious man, who has twenty increased by four steps on the staircase which is the great vehicle, seeing you, approaches the far shore of the ocean of existence, having ascended that very length of realities.

12. O Lord I am not able to obtain that [joy] directly without the horse sacrifice of old times even with the whole lotus earth; how is that joy born from looking at your form to be obtained by others, having not obtained the crore of merit of yours?

13. O Lord of the elephant hill, those facing inwards//westward, having drunk in your westward facing form with their eyes for a long time, obtain certainty regarding this miraculous place not to be deduced from the words of the elders.

14. Regarding that [your beauty], hyperbole (*atiśayokti*) abandons its poetic capacity, all simile (*upamā*) becomes defective, and even an understanding which is genuine and precise cannot be clearly formed; so how can I describe your beauty?

15. O Vaikuntha, you are beloved of Lakṣmī, you are made to be a father by the play of love//[your son] Kāmadeva, and you are the divine source of the flavor of the singular bewildering of all people. You are the grounds of the dwelling of all the best qualities; who could illustrate the outline of your form?

16. O Lord at the crown of the elephant hill, you are the best of all, you are the abode of all thirty, you are furnished with a wheel made of a mass of light, you are the wealth of *śṛṅgāra*, and you have an illustrious form—what is flashy, marvelous speech to you?

17. O One with honorable qualities, your limbs truly are the paths for the gazes of all people, having obtained one among them, they (the glances) no longer remember another limb that had been seen before, and having turned away they do not strive to obtain any other at all.

18. You previously begot Kāmadeva with Lakṣmī at one time, what is there new that the wise ones can say? Today too, in women whose smiles are sweet and satisfied, do you not also beget him?

19. O Lord, one who has cast his heart into you is freed; he does not get his heart back. Thus, this [heart] is not discernable in you. You are the one who, having forcibly stolen the hearts of the doe-eyed women and having hidden them in this way, abides on the mountain peak.

20. O Lord of all, having taken on this form in order to remove the delusion of the beings of the three worlds in corporeal form, with that boundless ocean of the flavor of beauty, you amplify the bewilderment of sunken glances (from looking at you).

21. Those who narrate the destruction of delusion from a single pointed awareness, how are they not false speakers? Having drunk in your beauty with the eyes, O Lord, from that, the young one establishes the highest bewilderment.

22. O Moon-faced One, the flood of the lotus eyes of doe-eyed women are set out from the pleasure of obtaining the auspicious scope of eyesight. Your light, having now descended in a stream, bears deep love and bewilderment, [as] divine thoughts produce fruits abundantly.

23. The minds of the self-controlled ones who enjoy the control of the breath enter your image, O Mādhava, by means of the *Kumbhaka* breath exercise. It is this that I know to be a raft crossing over the lovely waters, being a great river overflowing its channels.

24. O Lord beyond perception, from your particular form on this earth, which is an ocean of beauty, I can guess at the manifestation of the daughter of the ocean of milk. Since you bear this earth with your entire body, you need only hold up Lakṣmī with your chest.

25. Having gazed at the earth which is a lotus face, which is the Sarasvatī River, and at the earth of the feet which is the stream associated with the three rivers (the Ganges), of yours, O Lord, how much more is the beauty of [your] body which is the Yamunā constantly flowing from the treasure heap that represents all.

26. I know your beautiful heap of royal jewels that is the net of filaments of young brides whose hearts are inflamed by passion for you, that by which the belly of the three worlds is filled, which is also the swiftly expanding the ocean when dissolution has been obtained (at the end of an age).

27. Lord, you have the color of the moon, and logically and scripturally your ground is the collection of a large quantity of the property of pure *sattva* extracted. From bearing the weight of the waters of compassion, you emanate a sapphire splendor. Although a white cloud, it is indeed seen as being darkened.

28. O Singular Lord of All, I see by means of a desire for [your] qualities, your bearing of ornaments joined with affection, adorned by an innate and supreme brilliance, which is an ocean of boundless happiness.

29. Shining resplendently in the center of the circumference of the Makara doorway is the one whose every limb is adorned with gold ornaments. The Lord, up to the tips of his toes by means of reflection, equals the gold found in the disk of the sun at this very minute!

30. O lord of the mountain of snakes I see you as all people, able to do all things, by means of your universal form; you whose entire appearance is made manifest together with a heap of ornaments and jewels, and you who are to be seen by way of the reflections in the gods and the rest who have come because of their taste for devotion.

31. O God the adorning pearls on your limbs, which have as one part a yellow-red luster that becomes bright gold, make visible your splendor belonging to the innumerable world-eggs which are thick and reposed in each pore [of your skin].

32. O One of the three abodes, I count the mantra syllables of the One with a Makara banner, which are bewilderments belonging to the sight of lotuses//young women; which are also pure shards of diamonds, and are revered in rows that are fixed on your ornaments.

33. O God the large sapphire jewels shine on the jeweled ornaments that are borne [by you] from feet to the crown of the head; having been joined to your various limbs they are like the glances of beautiful women in the world.

34. O One who grants liberation, since the people, having seen you, would indeed pierce their benevolent friend, the sun [with their look]; I imagine the rubies in your ornaments cast off for some time the gazes of the people [who have come for darśan] with their rays, having forgotten your capacity for liberation only from that.

35. O great lord your most delicate two feet constantly emit what is like a red color because they bear ornaments, and moreover in all the three worlds they touch all objects with their rays as if to know whether there is a tenderness that is thus (i.e., equal to that of the feet).

36. O Lord, the heap of foot-beams adorn your image, how could Jaimini refute or overcome it? For the sage is frustrated in the subject of the red color by that [mass of rays] which causes the joining of redness everywhere.

37. O Lord, a certain garland of light rays from your two feet, which are two suns//rafts on the ocean of *saṃsāra* for the best of devotees, conquers [all]; removing the darknesses within the self-restrained ones, and causing all their heart lotuses to blossom.

38. O Destroyer of Mura, the thief who is the sun steals every day at daybreak the brilliance of your two feet, [yet] a cutting off of that [brilliance] is not obtained by it. Surely here [is found] the cause [that] awakens the very state of being the morning sun.

39. Here, the mass of lotuses—a tribute gift of the sun who is intent on stealing the pile of gems which are like the beauty of that [your two feet]—due to the morning light, joins the expanded interior space of your two feet with radiance.

40. Nightly, the sun warms his mass of rays right up to the dawn from a desire for the splendor of the rays of the Lord's feet, and when the quickly disappearing redness is taken from that [fire] which conveys oblations, he [the sun] distributes heat each day, for he is a dull father.

41. O Mukunda, the poets who are bewildered by thy foot should talk about the weight of the buds of the trees. Those buds, from emulating the lower lip of that, at that time experience a trembling, and indeed exhibit an identity with you.

42. Since the earth, a storehouse of jewels, is born from your two feet, which are like a lotus, they say that it has a form resembling a lotus; for we generally see in the world the effect does not exceed the qualities of the cause, O One whose mount is Garuḍa!

43. O Lord, I imagine that your foot is itself a lotus to be caressed in a lake of lotuses which are possessed of beauty, having Haṃsa birds who are fully devoted and beautiful sounding to the ear, and beloved of bees brought near by a soft, fragrant breeze.

44. Ahalyā, who was [trapped in] the earth, immediately became one whose every sin had been taken away, having acquired the touch of those two feet. How could it be possible for a lotus dwelling in mud since birth to be the equal to those two feet of the Lord?
//
How could it be possible for Indra's thunderbolt, dwelling in sin from its inception, to be equal to those two feet?

45. O One whose diadem is the jewel of the elephant hill, in considering a resemblance to your two feet out of delusion, a mistake has been done; I imagine, having approached the lotus of both of these feet, one offers worship continually by means of a sincere line [of lotuses].

46. O Acutya, that lotus composed of lines on the bottom of [your] foot, which is a patient thief of the blossoms in the grove of the supreme lord of the gods, we know to be a lotus which is the playful abode of affectionate Lakṣmī//of a wealth of redness, who//which is fond of repose there [in that foot].

47. Your image, O Great Soul, which is the form of the entire world, is proclaimed to be right and proper. The lord of tortoises dwells at the root of that [image], endowed with a power made from the same qualities as his own image, from emulating [your] two lotus feet.

48. The moon harbors envy for the twelvefold sun, and from that, it wants to obtain the state of being more abundant [than the sun], O Lord. Here, these ten toes on your very own feet shine. How was it that I was born from the oceans of the mind and eyes?

49. O Lord Ramādhipa your moon-toenails adorn your foot with light, and they satisfy the wise ones and attendants; they also cast away layers of darkness, and yet they dry up the ocean composed of worshippers//ocean of *saṃsāra* for [your] worshippers.

50. O Lord, because of the friction of the world-egg going upwards, a particle of light from the tip of your toenail which had issued forth by means of the sincerity of the Gaṅgā, which had fallen into the ocean; having surely seen that and having stirred the ocean, the gods caught it, having the form of the moon.

51. May the delightful moon-like quality of your nails along with your toe-tips furnish everyday a scintillating natural mass of light, made of pearls, and the reddish color of the crested lotuses and jewels of the living gods of your two feet.

52. Having surrendered to your lotus foot, which is praised by the one whose seat is a lotus (Brahma), the fortunate ones become liberated at once, O Lord. This wealth of being liberated is suitable for those continually worshipping that [foot],
who are seekers of liberation and are like an anklet of heavenly jewels.
//
Having arrived at your lotus foot, praised by Brahma, the pearls are treasures, O Lord. The beauty of the *Atimukta* vine is suitable for those pearls, being an anklet of heavenly jewels partaking of that [foot].

53. O Lord, the small bright particles adhering to the water cleansing a toenail on your foot have entered into the ocean. Now, becoming thick by means of the churning of that ocean, these droplets take refuge in your abode, the moon.

54. The one whose bow is sugarcane, who is capable of loosing arrows left and right, mistaking your two lower legs for his own quivers because of a trick of light from [your] foot bracelets, having laid down his own arrows nearby, beholds this state of resemblance.

55. O Lord of the three worlds, I fancy your two knees becoming a mirror of Kāmadeva, made of jewels which are objects of play. This one (Kāmadeva), seeing that (Varadarāja's knees) having a pure and delightful appearance, considers his own inverted form.

56. What else could be comparable to the thigh, apart from the right of the left and that [left] of that [right] one; how can Rambhā and the rest of the Apsarases suitably be similar? Even Urvaśī herself is but a particle of the power of that thigh, O Subhaga!

57. O Lord, the clothes worn by you contain the seat of passion of the fairest women//an abode of yellow colors. How can the glory of the touch of those clothes be with [your] loins which are themselves an abode of the essence of beauty?

58. Having reached the eastern mountain's surface with its middle zone, making smooth the middle sky with reddish rays of light, obtaining the cessation of the night cycle; this Sun which is a Jewel is perceived by the virtuous ones.
//
Having reached the eastern edifice [Varadarāja] at the level of the middle girdle, making smooth the middle clothes with reddish rays of light, this Jewel which is a Sun is perceived by the virtuous ones who obtain the cessation of the night of *saṃsāra*.

59. O Four-armed One, the middle sky was not *from* your navel, thus that very navel was that sky; [Since we have] "from the navel," [a case in which] two case endings are interchangeable in scripture; the *sūtra* of Jaimini beginning with "and the cow" [also] observed that.[396]

[396] *MīS* 12.2.33: *paśośca viprakarṣastantramadhye vidhānāt* ("And there is a separation of the animal sacrifice because of the precept in the middle of the ritual manual").

60. And, O One resting on the ocean, without an intermediate dwelling that is superimposed at this, your navel, the water's level could in no way reach a state of agitation. For it is not a supposition that this birthplace of the lotus exists right before the eyes, O Lord.

61. At the end of Kalpas, an abundant energy//pollen dust pervades as if making a great expanse of lotus seats; this lotus that rose up from the cavity of your navel, O Murāri, may it perennially be that which engenders me!

62. O Unmovable One, this line of flowers which are rays from divine rubies tied to the belly chain illuminates the radiance of a line of opening lotus buds risen from the navel which is the womb of the creator of countless hundreds of Kalpas to come!

63. Up from the navel-lotus of yours which is the abode of Brahma; higher than the darkness dwelling in the hair above the navel; I see the highest level itself directly, O God, which is the radiant place of the chest adorned with a mass of pearls.

64. With a garland of forest flowers budding thick and shining forth, rich in long necklaces of jewels in heaps of expanding rays which are enclosures, this broad chest of yours, which is the inner chamber of the maiden of the king of the ocean, shines intensely.

65. Varada, the rubies which have arrived at your necklace, which are identical to the disc of the newly risen sun, shine on [your] chest, the bed of Lakṣmī, as if they are nail-marks on pillows of play, sharing your ribs.

66. May your threefold body be an enduring sun, even concealing the hanging tubes of jewels, for the true ones who have reached the dwelling; thus, what capacity, O Lord, is it that makes concealment?

67. O Lord, even when [his] ashes were lost in the forest, burnt by the lord of the mountain, the pearls in [your] necklaces brought Kāmadeva//passion back to life in the heart of women. How can your pearls not conquer Śukra, he by whom the reawakening of Kaca was done in a heap of ashes.
//
How can your pearls not conquer the color white, that by which the awakening of beauty is made in a heap of ashes.

68. The charming garland shining on the pair of rib areas illuminates the breast; it illuminates the trembling row of white foam on both sides with glittering streams of the beauty of that place, and with heaps of light.

69. O Acutya, that Vaijayantī necklace which has gone to you who are made of all and in whom all the colors are dwelling, having all good fragrances; because of that, O singular great giver of the three worlds, how can a resemblance to you which is to be rejoiced over by all, even be procured?

70. O Deva, the full-moon Kaustubha gem that has reached your breast—having the darkness of a *tamāla* flower, the air of autumn, and camphor appearing at the delightful circumference with pearls//stars—possesses a full line of beauty, O Supreme Person!

71. Your chest shines, sprinkled with the particles from [your] navel-lotus, with the lights of the king of jewels, and also with your own radiance; it shines as if surrounded with *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* of *Prakṛti*, being the enjoyment of the shape of a curl of chest hair.

72. O Varada, this saffron color//tree of paradise shines in the midst of these [arms], located in the heavenly Nandana grove which is your chest; I fancy the creepers of that [grove] are your arms, O Four-armed One, whose tips have been softened by the lotus petals which are hands.

73. O Varada, I imagine that since this jewel has the redness of a bud by its very nature, and since it has been placed into a bracelet, being cherished by the Lord; therefore, having reached a state of blind intoxication, it creates contempt even for the very sun before one's eyes.

74. From below, in one place, the discus has the radiance of Indra's sapphire and has as its stalk [your] long arm, and in the other hand the swan that is a conch shell [also have these qualities]; having seen that, how can we not imagine the two upward hands of yours who are an ocean of beauty, as two fully opened lotuses?

75. I imagine you, Lord, as one bearing the form of the Great Soul, as one having the charming form of the nine pearls to be seen [also] in the constellations, and as one having a pair of flanks which are of the nature of night and day, due to the conch and discus—the most beloved of the sun and moon.

76. I see the king of discuses in your right hand, which is hard to look at like the sun opening from the clouds at the dissolution of the universe; the discus, which is the light of your arm—a mountain churning in the ocean a host of demons, blazing, having attained a state full of heat and radiance.

77. O Deva, O Acyuta, the conch which is pure and white inside and out blazes, grasped in your left hand. It blazes for the purpose of learning the Upaniṣads by way of making a deep resounding sound, as if it were dwelling near a dense throat//near the teacher's throat.

78. The mace Kaumodakī gleams in your fingertips, which is like that Sarasvatī changed into the speech of Brahma, flowing out from your lotus hand, having desired the special property of the Ganges which is the earth at your lotus feet.

79. In that hand of yours, which makes the gesture not to be afraid [and] which is a graceful heap of light bearing a tender sincerity, shines a heap of light of diamond finger-rings, white like a flood of water anointing the diadem of the lord of lotuses.

80. Your very name, O Varada, explains being the giver of boons; for this reason you do not have the boon granting gesture. For a sage, who has the essence of the spoken scriptures, does not accept what is to be known by means of a sign; the meaning [already] accomplished in the scriptures.

81. O Lord, your throat blazes, encircled with blue lotuses and with numerous braided strings of pearls which are like thunderclouds sounding near the limits of that [abode], having ascertained the abode of the clouds of destruction.

82. O Storehouse of Virtues, thy beautiful face, dear to Lakṣmī and the birthplace of that Brahma of yours, which has earrings and which has a rival in the moon; with these qualities how does it not obtain [an offering of] a lotus?

83. O Lord of Lakṣmī, a lotus which has been surpassed by your face, was surely that, not entirely pervading the sound "being from [your] navel," wishing to remove scandal for the people from your famous navel because of a trick of sound.

84. O Varada, the ray of light which is the ambrosia of your face shines forth, illuminating the passion of the best of women, destroying the affliction of samsara borne unequally, lighting up the [elephant] hill, and opening the water lily.

85. O Upendra, that moon, which adheres to the *cāndrāyaṇa* vow, appearing nourished and [alternatively] thin on its two sides, desirous of the light of your lotus face, will do penance eternally, making a circumambulation [of] Mount Meru//the temple.

86. O Lord, since the earth is always pleased, having drunk up thy spotless moon-face—because of that, how was the moon, having a part in the middle made dark by a stain, the one moving the waters of the well-flowing nine [planets]?

87. The ones of immortal splendor, the moons, having at once taken refuge at your foot//in your ethereal sky, during the decay of their body from facing the divine foot which is grasped; [the moons] which are broken down monthly, go to the sun, having placed in your friendly mouth a heap of sacred beauty.

88. That moon, sending forth a step and even having obtained a likeness of your face by means of a ray of light brought near from the beautiful sun of that [face], and which had received a fragment of the seal of a store of lotuses on the full moon day,
praises the beauty which is the quick disappearance [of] collected iniquities.

89. O Mukunda, having seen your lotus-face, with a brightness additionally arisen from two tender moons//deer-like eyes which are [your] two eyes, and even additionally here, I imagine your very face being a winter moon that bears a deer upon itself.

90. Both the spot on the moon and the bee on the lotus are black, but still put the innate beauty of [their] visible marks on your face. Just so, O Lord, you say there is a

misapprehension and deception in the quality of speaking somewhere where there is an encounter with darkness.

91. O Varada, we imagine a pair of lotuses closely joined [with] thy face, whose innate radiance has sprung up above your body; continually and uniformly bearing beauty and fragrance, enjoyed by multitudes of twice-born ones and many gods.

92. That lower lip of yours is perpetually joined with its mirror image in the mental mirrors//eyes and minds of young women; so much so that you are described by poets as "*bimbādharaḥ*," but not because of any resemblance to low-hanging fruits.

93. O Supreme Soul, your moonlit smile shines like the light of poetry because of the speech always dwelling in your lotus mouth, as if to grasp the highest knowledge which is without precedent in your exhalations, made themselves of knowledge.

94. Rays of light wander on the surface of the long-lived one, the moon, which are spread about like heaps of straw on it by means of the wind which is a slow exhalation of your smile, being the choicest herb [to cure] the three-fold affliction.

95. When in in the vessel of your lower jewel, the divine herb conquers the three-fold affliction at once, and sprinkled with that, one is liberated. O shell-eyed one, I imagine the cold-rayed one, the moon, as a clod of dirt, on account of being joined to a particle of the qualities of that [herb].

96. O Varada, may the beauty of this languid smile of yours, which is the pure heap of the moon's rays, and the ground of repose for the frequent goings and comings of the eyes of young women, of garments, and of those who are joined [to you] on your limbs, purify me.

97. O Lotus-eyed One, I imagine your two beautiful nostrils always residing in the two spring months, with diffuse and abundant fragrance, and with a sprout [carried] on the Malaya wind, which is a languid breath.

98. O Lord of the elephant hill, I imagine an utterance bearing a mystical doctrine and endowed with movement, in a breath of yours, which is the essence of the Vedas and Itihāsas in their entirety, and which is the disc of a new dawn produced in the lake of the navel, to be a multitude of bees//honeyed vows.

99. O One whose lotus feet are to be praised by the lord of gods, the sages describe the birth of sesame seeds from thy body. O Nārāyaṇa, this here named "nose," is fit to be made manifest as a divine sesame flower.

100. Whither your two eyes, O Lord, and whither the white lotus? Even now the Vedas speak of their resemblance. That [Veda] surely describes the all-pervading sky of your entire soul from the perception of a very real abundance of sameness.

101. O Enemy of Danuja, your right eye, from a confusion of resemblance due to a lack of modesty, bears the beauty of a raised lotus//Lakṣmī of a raised lotus. Even the other one diffuses an abundant beauty of that [lotus]. There, that very right one is the root.

102. O Lord of the hill of the snakes, my particular likeness does not shine in you and in your eye as Prakṛti, being black, white, and red; [your eye] which reaches to the edge of the ear, which has the form of a revered fish, and which dwells on a red lotus//on the passion of Lakṣmī.

103. "That Prajāpati is born from my sight—!" Another line of water droplets in the hot season, arisen from the forehead of yours, the mind of the creator, appears as a trick, being a line of pearls inlaid at the bottom of [your] diadem.

104. O Lotus-eyed One, the choicest of sapphire jewels, on your diadem made of collections of priceless jewels, do not appear as such. Having smelled the scent at the end of your locks of hair, [they] appear as bees, clinging all around that diadem due to a desire to be pervaded [with that scent].

105. Your body, from the tuft of hair to the foot, altogether, having enthralling eyes, being boundless, and being a glittering heap of joy; may this body, the hill on which the elephant rests, O Lotus-eyed One, O Inner Self, always manifest in my heart.

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