

STHO:THRA:S

Part-3

Three Rathnas (priceless jewel or gems) are adored with great reverence in our tradition. They are *Pura:na rathna* i.e. Sri Vishnu *Pura:na* compiled by the great sage *Para:sara, Manthra rathna* i.e. *Dvaya Manthram* i.e. the manthra that was revealed by Lord *Na:ra:yana* to Universal Mother Lakshmi and *Stho:thra Rathna* of Sri *Ya:muna:cha:rya*. 'Stho:thra' in this context means hymn of eulogy and 'rathna' means an invaluable gem or jewel. *Stho:thra rathna* is indeed the crest jewel of all hymns. This *Stho:thra* is lauded by the leading personalities of all the schools of *Veda:ntha*.

Stho:thra rathna comprises sixty five verses and has *prapatthi* as its theme. *Prapatthi* means unconditional surrender to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. According to the tradition it is the easiest means of attaining spiritual perfection and eternal bliss. The Supreme Lord Himself has declared the same during His incarnations as *Vara:ha, Rama* and *Krishna*. Treading on the path shown by *A:lwa:rs* and *Na:ttha muni*, *Ya:muna:cha:rya* too embraces *prapatthi* as the means to reach the Lord.

It is definitely reckless to judge the greatness of this hymn by

our standards. The diction, the loftiness of ideals explained in this hymn and the manner in which *Ya:muna:cha:rya* has expressed His emotions are exceptional. This poem can evoke devotion and love towards the Supreme Lord in any person who simply reads it. In all probabilities this might be the first *Stho:thra* of its kind and is unequalled even to this day. *Ya:muna:charya* has conspicuously explained the cardinal tenets of the *Visishta:dvaitha* philosophy in this hymn. It was these works of *Ya:muna:cha:rya* that formed the basis for *Bhagavad Ramanuja* to establish a full fledged system of Sri *Vaishnavism* in later years.

Ya:muna:cha:rya was a man of extraordinary intellect. Even as a boy he had defeated the court scholar of the *Pa:ndya* king and had obtained half of the kingdom as a reward from the king. He was leading a life of a king until Sri *Rama Misra* showed the deity of Lord *Ranganatha* reclining at Sri *Rangam*. Immediately after seeing the deity of Lord *Ranganatha*, he renounced his kingdom and family and accepted the renounced order of life. He started to reside in Sri *Rangam* and to serve the Lord. Barring two occasions He had never left Sri *Rangam* till he attained the eternal abode of the Lord. By this we can gauge His intellectual capacity, the

intensity of His devotion and religious fervor.

Ya:muna:cha:rya mastered a vast treasure of spiritual knowledge that was bequeathed to him by his grand father *Sri Nattha muni*, through his disciples. He was greatly influenced by the teachings of the *A:lwa:rs*. Sri *Namma:lwa:r's Thiruvaimozhi* in particular had a indelible impact on him. The same is reflected in all the works of *Ya:muna:cha:rya* including *Stho:thra rathna*.

It is certainly difficult to express the intangibilities of one's emotions in words. Yet *Ya:muna:cha:rya* has poured his heart out in this poem. *Ya:muna:cha:rya* was an intellectual genius and an expert mystic who had reached the zenith of devotional ladder. Each and every verse is filled with spirit of devotion and intense yearning for communion with the Supreme Lord. Unless a reader understands the enlightened state in which the author was, he will not be able to appreciate this poem in the right spirit. In fact, *Bhagavad Ramanuja* was captivated by merely listening to the recitation of this *Stho:thra* by *Maha pu:rna*. The impact of this hymn on *Ramanuja* is reflected in most of the works of *Ramanuja*.

The *Guru Parampara* speaks about one more anecdote that highlights the greatness of this *Stho:thra*. It is said that *Govinda* (also known as *Embar*) the first cousin of

Ramanuja had adopted *Saivism*. *Ramanuja* had deputed *Sri Saila Purna* to reclaim him to *Vaishnavism*. *Sri Saila Purna* went to the place in which *Govinda* was staying and started to recite the 11th verse (i.e. *Sva:bha:vika:navadika*) of this *Stho:thra*. *Govinda* realized the greatness of Lord *Vishnu* and returned to *Sri Vaishnava* fold by just listening to that single verse of *Stho:thra Rathna*.

In the concluding two paragraphs of the first part of this article we had raised a valid question for debate and had left it to the readers to deduce a right answer for it. The question was: can we really glorify the Lord who is the source of everything and who is beyond the reach of word and thought? *Sri Ya:muna:cha:rya* provides the right answer to this question in the 21st verse of *Stho:thra rathna*. He refers to the Supreme Lord as the one beyond the reach of speech and intellect and one who is the sole object of speech and mind. Many devotees even in modern times are mesmerized by this *Stho:thra*. One meaningful verse is sufficient to excite emotions in a devotee. Such is the greatness of this hymn.

It is beyond our limited capacities to describe the glory of this *Stho:thra*. Hence let us directly try to understand *Sri Ya:muna:cha:rya's Stho:thra rathna* and its intricacies in the coming issues.