



Abhayapradānasāra of Vedāntadeśika

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Abstract Among the many works by Vedāntadeśika, the *Abhayapradānasāra* (“The Essence of [Rāma’s] Bestowal of Protection”) provides a lucid outline of *prapatti* (“self-surrender”) by drawing on the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, above all the episode at the start of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* when Vibhīṣaṇa deserts Rāvaṇa and joins forces with Rāma. As one of the *Cillarai Raḥasyams* (“Minor Esoteric Works”), the *Abhayapradānasāra* is composed in a variety of Tamil mixed heavily with Sanskrit lexemes known as Maṇipravāḷam. The choice of both language as well as source text, the epic *ādikāvya* (“first poem”), signal that Vedāntadeśika intends his work to reach a wider audience than his scholastic works written in Sanskrit, which are generally inaccessible to the laity or non-Brahmins not only on account of their language but because they contain Vedic quotations. In the present article I will provide a translation of the first two sections of the *Abhayapradānasāra* along with an introduction and annotations. I will focus on the way in which Vedāntadeśika proves that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is by design a text for salvation and on the way epic texts, including the *Mahābhārata*, are elevated to be explanatory augments (*upabṛmhaṇa*) of the Vedas, whose true essence emerges from the former.

Keywords Vedāntadeśika · Tamil · Manipravalam · Abhayapradānasāra · Prapatti · Śrīvaiṣṇavism

Introduction

As my contribution to this volume, I provide an annotated translation of the first two chapters of Vedāntadeśika’s *Abhayapradānasāra* (“The Essence of [Rāma’s]”

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Bestowal of Protection”, hence APS),¹ one the *Cillarai Rahasyams* (“Minor Esoteric Works”) that were accessible to a wider audience since they excluded Vedic quotations. The work’s main objective is to exemplify *śaraṇāgati* “coming [to god] for refuge” by way of quotations from Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, which, along with the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas*, serves as an explanatory supplement (*upabṛmhaṇa*) to the Vedas themselves. The work, though still being taught today in Śrīvaiṣṇava circles,² has hardly featured in secondary scholarship, and little information about it is available in English. I will, therefore, give an overview of the APS itself and a more detailed analysis of the first two chapters. Thereafter follows my translation where various points of translation and doctrine are discussed in greater detail in the notes.

Vedāntadeśika (1269–1369), or Venkaṭanātha, composed a staggering number of works in Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakrit and Maṇipravāḷam, a corpus that forms one of the pillars of the Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine, especially in the *Vaṭakalai* school, a variety of the religion that looks more toward texts written in Sanskrit and which crystalized around certain doctrinal points during the last few centuries in opposition to the more Tamil oriented *Teṅkalai* school.³ Born in the village of Tūppul near the city of Kāñcīpuram, the great teacher lived a storied life, mounting the “lion’s throne” as chief *ācārya* in both Kāñcī and Śrīraṅgam before fleeing the latter when Ulugh Khān invaded. After Kumāra Kampaṇa, a prince of the Vijayanagara king Bukka Rāya, freed Śrīraṅgam and much of the Tamil country with the help of his general Gopaṇārya, Vedāntadeśika returned to Śrīraṅgam from Melkote to carry out the rest of his years in contemplation and teaching.⁴ Although the details of Vedāntadeśika’s life are at times difficult to disentangle from legend, his reputation as *kavi-tārkika-kesarin* “the lion-king of poets and scholars”⁵ and *sarvatantrasvatantra* “master of all the sciences” is well justified on the basis of the works he is to have written, which span several genres in four languages including commentaries on the works of Rāmānuja, independent treatises, praise poetry, epic poetry, and drama among others.⁶ He is to have composed 34 works in Maṇipravāḷam alone.⁷

¹ One occasionally encounters *pradhāna* “the chief matter” for *pradāna*, but this is likely a sort of hyper-Sanskritization amongst Tamil speakers.

² Online, one can find various resources, including a series of over twenty lectures (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Aefbp0pszo&list=PLqgh0vD4bt54QNFHq6mRyuO3XT7LWFj1k&index=22&ab_channel=prapatti last accessed 23/8/2022).

³ On the formation of the schools, see Raman (2007), who traces developments in the concept of *prapatti* (“self-surrender”) in successive commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli*, as well as Mumme (1988), who proposes that a signal difference in approach and purpose arose between the *ācāryas* at Kāñcī and Śrīraṅgam during the 13th and 14th centuries; the former is represented by the works of Vedāntadeśika and the latter by those of Mānavāḷamāuni.

⁴ See Hopkins (2002, pp. 48–75) and Mumme (1988, pp. 9–14) for the life of Vedāntadeśika as well as the sources available to us for his biography. See also Freschi’s article in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <https://iep.utm.edu/venkatan/> (last accessed 26/8/2022).

⁵ In this context *kesarin* “lion” means essentially *śreṣṭha* “best of” (*Amarakośa* 3.1.59) and derives ultimately from compounds of comparison like *puruṣavyāghra* “man like a tiger”, i.e., “a really great man”. I find the common translation “lion among poets and scholars” somewhat misleading.

⁶ A complete list of Vedāntadeśika’s works is not easy to come by, let alone weeding out any possibly spurious works. The bibliography in Hopkins (2002, pp. 313–315) is one of the most complete.

⁷ For a list see Venkatachari (1978, pp. 142–145).

As argued and demonstrated by Patricia Mumme,⁸ many of Vedāntadeśika's works were written for a learned audience that composed and debated in Sanskrit or Tamil/ Maṇipravāḷam, and they served to fortify the tenants and practices of Śrīvaiṣṇavism against attacks from rival schools of Vedānta. His poetry, though not a systematic exposition or defense of doctrine, is likewise infused with references to the theology of devotion he supported in his śāstric works.⁹ Furthermore, this northern school centered at Kāñci contrasted with the practices and texts of the *ācāryas* in the south at Śrīraṅgam, which were similarly conditioned by the target audience, namely, the larger Tamil speaking Śrīvaiṣṇava community as a whole. Their texts were inspired by "oral discourses" and focused on explicating the Tamil *Divyaprabandham*, a collection of 4000 hymns by the twelve *ālvārs* also known as the Tamil Veda. This justification for the different focuses does help to explain many of Vedāntadeśika's choices of textual genre and language although the reality is certainly somewhat more complex and fuzzy. Within this fuzzy area lie his collection of *cillaṅgai rahasyams* "Minor Secrets", written in a rather Sanskritized variety of Tamil (what is later called Maṇipravāḷam), and to which the APS belongs. These works are specifically geared toward those who cannot read the Vedas, a restriction that also excludes many of the Sanskrit works by Rāmānuja and Vedāntadeśika that bristle with Vedic quotations. This collection of minor works is sometimes further divided into two groups: *Amṛtarañjanī Rahasyams* and the *Amṛtāsvādinī Rahasyams*. The first group presents the basic theory behind Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine whereas the second concentrates on practice (here belongs the APS). To accommodate this non-Brahmin readership, Vedāntadeśika draws extensively on the epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and occasionally on *smṛti* as well as Pāñcarātra texts, in order to provide examples of Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrines but also to construct a narrative for his audience and prove the validity of his argument. I will turn to the use of these quotations below.

Before coming to the APS itself, a brief note about the language of the APS and a large number of other Śrīvaiṣṇava as well as Jaina and even a few Śaiva works. This language, a variety of prose Tamil with a significant number of lexical borrowings from Sanskrit, is nowadays consistently referred to as Maṇipravāḷam¹⁰ ("pearls¹¹ mixed with coral") and is characterized not only by having a relatively high frequency

⁸ See the "Conclusion" in Mumme (1988, p. 259). Raman (2007, p. 22.) builds upon her thesis, working on material prior to Vedāntadeśika.

⁹ Hopkins (2002) explores Vedāntadeśika's poetic works. See also Rao (2015, pp. 19–41) on the *Haṃsasandeśa*.

¹⁰ Cf. the title of Venkatachari (1978), *Maṇipravāḷa Literature*.

¹¹ The polysemic word *maṇi* in this compound is usually taken to mean "pearls" although it can refer to a variety of precious stones (usually nine are listed) and specifically to the sapphire. The only Tamil source known to me that disambiguates the word is verse 1.11 of the *Virāṭaparvamaṇipravāḷamañjarī* of Viśvanātha Sūri (c. 18th cent., North Arcot), which equates Tamil with pearls and Sanskrit with coral: *muttuḷaḷāḷum iva naḷ pavaḷaṅkaḷāḷum kottuk kalanta taṃiḷāḷ api saṃskṛtena* "[This composition strung] with Tamil as well as Sanskrit mixed in a cluster like pearls and good coral." I take the pairs *yathasaṅkhyam*. I have noted this verse from Ciotti's presentation given in Toronto on 6/1/2018. It is also quoted in Shulman (2016, pp. 259). The same verse is cited in Raman (2007, p. 199, n. 54) from Aruṇācalam (1973, p. 778) in a highly corrupted form. Rao (2015, p. 125, n. 1) refers to Raman *loc. cit.* but does not identify the verse or correct it. Freeman (1998) has discussed the ambiguities of the compound in the context of Malayalam poetics, where it is noted that *maṇi* should mean "ruby", but it is unclear how relevant these sources are to the early uses of this mixed language among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

of Sanskrit words inflected according to Tamil morphology but, more importantly, by Sanskrit words being written with an adequate script like Grantha.¹² As most scholars who write about the language and designation mention, none of the early Śrīvaiṣṇavas or other authors use any particular word to refer to this language or have any sort of explicit linguistic reflection about it.¹³ I find this more telling than an interpretation, often somewhat romantic, of the designation Maṇipravāḷam itself, the early uses of which are well-documented and scarce, with only a *single one* in Tamil in clear reference to a type of mixed language and there in the restricted context of poetry.¹⁴ Of greater interest, but what has mostly been neglected, is when the term comes into vogue, a topic that has recently been taken up by Giovanni Ciotti,¹⁵ who is documenting occurrences of *maṇipravāḷam* in titles and other explicit descriptions of the language employed in composing a text. This research, not all of it published,¹⁶ points toward two important conclusions: the use of a script for Sanskrit sounds (*bh*, etc.) appears to be a determining factor in what is labeled Maṇipravāḷam¹⁷ and the common use of the term within the Tamil tradition did not arise till the 18th or 19th century based on the data available at present. The need for a different script derives logically from the fact that the Tamil grammatical tradition has, from the time of the *Tolkāppiyam*, required that “northern” words (*vaṭa-mōḷi*, *vaṭa-col*) be modified when they enter into Tamil, i.e., when they *become* Tamil, both with regard to pronunciation as well as script.¹⁸ Simply the appearance of Sanskrit vocabulary was not enough to garner a new designation since there are a number of Tamil works that contain a good

¹² We unfortunately lack a detailed account of how such texts were written in manuscripts, and the habits of scribes no doubt varied. One should also bear in mind that the Telugu script was employed alongside Tamil and Grantha as is evidenced by several printed editions of Maṇipravāḷam works.

¹³ Cf. Venkatachari (1978, p. 4). How, when and by whom the term came to be applied to the prose commentaries of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas and others is elided in the passive expression: “in later times the term ‘Maṇipravāḷa’ is applied to the Tamil prose literature of the Vaiṣṇavas and Jains.” All subsequent discussions of the term Maṇipravāḷam are mostly derivative of Venkatachari. Cf. Rao (2015, p. 12).

¹⁴ Venkatachari (1978, 4 and 167) is perhaps the first to mention, without specific citations or translations, the three attestations of Maṇipravāḷam (two in Sanskrit, one in Tamil from *Vīracōḷiyam* 181), which are often repeated in later secondary literature. Raman (2007, p. 62), for example, lists them together in one place. She subsequently goes on to also apply the term to the prose of the *Pārataveṅpā* although such application does not seem old within the Tamil tradition. Casual reading of secondary literature might well give the impression that the term and category of language were more widely and explicitly recognized throughout the history of Tamil literature than they in fact were. A somewhat more nuanced discussion of Maṇipravāḷam can be found in Shulman (2016, p. 248), although again it is assumed that the Śrīvaiṣṇavas commentators, inter alii, thought they were writing in something called Maṇipravāḷam.

¹⁵ Ciotti (2021).

¹⁶ I draw also on a presentation by Ciotti in Toronto on 6/1/2018.

¹⁷ This is also part of the definition given in *Vīracōḷiyam* 181 but for *viraviyal*, whereas true Maṇipravāḷam has fully inflected Sanskrit words, and de facto Sanskrit sounds written in whichever script, as in the *Virāṭaparvamaṇipravāḷamañjarī* verse quoted in n. 11. Cf. Venkatachari (1978, p. 4). The script need not have been Grantha although this was likely the most common one used to write Sanskrit sounds in the Tamil country.

¹⁸ See TC 391, 395 and 396. Script and pronunciation are not clearly differentiated.

quantity of Indo-Aryan words¹⁹ but are not thought of as being written in anything but Tamil. A better understanding of the application of the term Maṇipravāḷam will of course not change the fact that Jainas, Śrīvaiṣṇavas and others wrote in a language that was clearly demarcated from classical Tamil (*ceṅ tamil*), but such an understanding may well help to more accurately grasp what the authors themselves believed they were doing within the context of India's complex linguistic landscape. Did they think they were making a statement about their religion of two Vedas or was it simply a necessity of their chosen topic as when one writes in academic German with a high percentage of *Fremdwörter*? What cultural and literary contexts compelled people to start using the term in the 18th/19th century down to today? This avenue of inquiry will help, I believe, to illuminate shifts in the perception of Tamil by those who composed in the language and even modern scholars who continue to use the term.

Returning to the work at hand, the APS is Vedāntadeśika's *rahasyam* that offers instruction on *śaraṇāgati*, or coming to the lord for protection, for those who are not initiated into Vedic study, a hallmark of the Śrīvaiṣṇava project.²⁰ To do so, Vedāntadeśika need not, in a sense, compose anything "new" since Vālmīki has already provided many such examples within the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, especially in the personage of Vibhīṣaṇa, who, after unsuccessfully advising his elder brother Rāvaṇa to return Sītā, defects and joins Rāma's army on the northern shore before they cross to Laṅkā. This scene at the beginning of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* and Vibhīṣaṇa's words pregnant with the vocabulary so central to Śrīvaiṣṇavism²¹ serve as the ideal example of one who seeks refuge in the lord.²² As such, Vedāntadeśika's task is to direct the reader to the relevant passages in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and weave them into a coherent narrative, with Tamil paraphrases along the way. Drawing on events from the *Rāmāyaṇa* to illustrate Śrīvaiṣṇava practices and doctrinal points was by the time of Vedāntadeśika already well established in the Maṇipravāḷam commentarial

¹⁹ Another piece to the puzzle that is missing is a comparison of the quantity of Sanskrit words in Maṇipravāḷam texts with that of Tamil texts from the 2nd millennium, most of which are neglected in modern scholarship. Cf. Shulman (2016, p. 335), who poignantly notes the deep rupture between modern interests in Tamil literature of the first and second millennia: "But the deeper gap—more like an impassable chasm—opened up only after the rediscovery and publication of the Sangam works. It is still in place today. Sometimes I think it is time to reverse the trend that overtook Tamil, beginning on October 21, 1880, and to recover or rediscover, without letting go of the Sangam classics, the forgotten *tūtus*, *kovaīs*, and *antātis* that the young Cāmināt'aiyar had studied."

²⁰ Cf. Raman (2007, p. 52): "[I]t was also recognized that Śrīvaiṣṇavism had to offer a soteriology which also took into account those who were incapable (through birth or otherwise) of arduous Vedic study and who were mired in sin."

²¹ Vibhīṣaṇa's opening speech ends with R. 6.11.14f. where he states *rāghavam śaraṇam gataḥ* "I have gone to Rāma for protection" and then calls Rāma *sarvalokaśaraṇyāya* "the one worthy of protecting the entire world". These verses are quoted in the second *adhikāra*, translated below.

²² The fourth *adhikāra* onward deal with the Vibhīṣaṇa episode. Rao (2015, pp. 56–64) discusses the episode in light of Govindarāja's commentary with additional reference to the APS, more on which below.

literature, especially on the *Tiruvāymoli*,²³ but what is striking about the APS is that the text does not simply dive into instruction but seeks to frame the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* as a composition written for the purpose of demonstrating *śaraṇāgati*, the true meaning of the Vedas, and that Vālimiki had this intention in mind when he wrote it. In this way, Vedāntadeśika makes a significant contribution to the process of transforming the *Rāmāyaṇa* into a vade mecum for any Śrīvaiṣṇava seeking salvation²⁴ and helps to pave the way for later commentators on the epic, like Govindarāja, as Rao (2015) has sought to demonstrate.²⁵

The APS is a lengthy text (approx. 60 full pages) in ten *adhikāras* “topics, sections”, for which I cannot provide here a detailed summary. After a brief overview, I will, therefore, limit my remarks to the first two sections that I have translated below. We may, however, at least note the title of the ten *adhikāras* that make up the APS:

1. *Prabandhāvatāraḥ* “The descent of the Text (*Rāmāyaṇa*)”.
2. *Paratattvopabṛmhaṇādhikāraḥ* “On Topic of the Explanatory Augmentation of the Supreme Reality”.²⁶
3. *Śaraṇāgatitātparyaprapaṇcaḥ* “An Elaboration on the Essential Meaning of Coming [to god] for Protection”.
4. *Prakaranatātpāryanirṇayaḥ* “Determining the Essential Meaning of the Topic”.
5. *Śaraṇyaśīlaprakāśaḥ* “The Illumination of the Habit of the One Worthy of Protecting [Others]”.
6. *Śaraṇyavaibhavaprakāśaḥ* “The Illumination of the Magnificence of the One Worthy of Protecting [Others]”.
7. *Paramadharmanirṇayaḥ* “The Establishment of the Supreme Duty”.
8. *Śaraṇyavrataviśeṣaprakāśaḥ* “The Illumination of the Unique Vow of the One Worthy of Protecting [Others]”.
9. *Śaraṇyaśaraṇāgatasāṅgamalābhaḥ* “Grasping the Union between the One Worthy of Protecting [Others] and the One who has come for Protection”.
10. *Prātiprakāraprapaṇcaḥ* “An Elaboration the Way to Reach [the Lord]”.

²³ For examples from Vaṭakkut Tiruvīti Piḷḷai’s *Ītu*, see Raman (2007, pp. 132–141). Piḷḷai uses two stories to discuss Sītā’s status as the mediatrix (*puruṣakāra*): the crow, Jayanta, who pecks Sītā’s breast but in the end successfully takes refuge in Rāma thanks to Sītā’s mere presence (R. 5.38 and 67), and the mercy Sītā shows to the demonesses after the battle at Laṅkā although Hanuman would prefer to destroy them (R. 6.113). Vedāntadeśika mentions the crow incident in a prefatory verse composed in Tamil and recounts it in the third *adhikāra*, APS pp. 7f. The episode with the demonesses is likewise referenced in the third *adhikāra*, APS p.11.

²⁴ Cf. APS p. 11: *ippaṭṭi āru kāṇḍattilum śaraṇāgatidharmamē aṅcuruvāṇiyāyk kōrkkappaṭṭatu*. “So the duty to come [to the lord] for refuge runs through each and every chapter [of the *Rāmāyaṇa*] as a linchpin.” *aṅcuruvāṇi* is a central axle or bolt that holds together the five tiers of a car அஞ்சு.

²⁵ Rao’s thesis in sections 2.7f., that Govindarāja is drawing on or even translating various Maṇipravāḷam texts, in particular the APS, is tantalizing, but the argument often lacks clear textual support with only a single reference to a passage of the APS, Rao (2015, p. 133, n. 111) which is neither quoted nor translated. The larger context of commentarial practices should be taken into consideration as many of the features that are highlighted as deriving from the spontaneous orations of the *ācāryas*, such as providing multiple meanings and grammatical analysis, are quite widespread.

²⁶ Only in the title of the second *adhikāra* is the word *adhikāra* presented as part of the title: *paratattvopabrahmaṇādhikāro dvitīyaḥ*. The others are presented in the format: *prabandhāvatāraḥ prathamō ’dhikāraḥ* and so forth.

As mentioned above, the heart of the APS is the episode in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* where Vibhīṣaṇa takes refuge in Rāma and joins his cause in vanquishing Rāvaṇa in order to retrieve Sītā. This act serves as the paragon of *śaraṇāgati* not only because Vibhīṣaṇa humbly seeks protection from Rāma but also on account of the various obstacles that arise regarding the acceptance of Vibhīṣaṇa into the camp of his once enemy.²⁷ These take form in the debate between Sugrīva, the other monkey generals and Hanuman who put forth in turn arguments for and against welcoming Vibhīṣaṇa.²⁸ Rāma's response in the following *sarga* starts to convince Sugrīva of his error and establishes that the lord will accept whoever comes to him for protection. Here is included the example of the dove who offered her own flesh to the hunter because he sought shelter even though he had killed her mate as well as the teachings of Kaṇḍu, son of Kaṇva, that one should save a defector even at the cost of one's own life.²⁹ Deśika uses these stories and various justifications for accepting Vibhīṣaṇa to describe the nature of the the lord's habits (*śīla*, *adhikāra* 5) and his might (*vaibhava*, *adhikāra* 6). Vibhīṣaṇa's unsuccessful advice that Rāma should seek refuge with the ocean serves to demonstrate the general principle that the inferior person must always approach a superior person for protection, not vice versa,³⁰ and Rāma's famous vow to offer fearlessness or protection (*abhaya*) to all beings³¹ provides the very name for the text itself and topic of *adhikāra* 8. As is summarized in the tenth and final section on *prapatti*, the Vibhīṣaṇa episode exemplifies the range of steps and actions involved in taking refuge both on the part of the devotee and the lord: Rāma removes Vibhīṣaṇa's fear of Sugrīva and the humiliation caused by Rāvaṇa; he forgives his sinful state, demonstrating his compassion once Vibhīṣaṇa has fallen at his feet and that one needs to perform *prapatti* only once. Vibhīṣaṇa also embodies the devotee's willingness to give up everything in seeking out the lord. As we will see in some detail for the first two chapters, Vedāntadeśika skillfully incorporates the quotations from the *Rāmāyaṇa* into a text that serves to narrate the process of *śaraṇāgati* as well as provide commentary on the verses and even individual words of the epic itself.³²

²⁷ See APS, p. 14 *perumāḷ tāmē ellā vighnaikaḷaiyūm śamippittu aṭimai koḷḷuvār* "After Perumāḷ removes all the obstacles himself, he accepts [Vibhīṣaṇa's] servitude."

²⁸ Sugrīva speaks up against Vibhīṣaṇa in R. 6.11.17–20 insisting that Rāvaṇa has sent him as a spy and that he should be tortured and executed. The other monkeys suggest more measured tactics to determine Vibhīṣaṇa's trustworthiness, but Hanuman closes out the *sarga* by providing his full-throated support for the demon (R. 6.11.59b *rākṣasasyārjanam*).

²⁹ R. 6.12.11–17. Deśika quotes these in the seventh *adhikāra*, pp. 25

³⁰ R. 6.13.13 and APS, pp. 10

³¹ R. 6.12.20 *sakṛd eva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācate / abhayaṃ sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmy etad vratam mama*. "This is my vow: I will give protection to all beings, to anyone who has approached [me for protection] even once, imploring, 'I am in your hands'." Deśika quotes the verse at the beginning of the eighth topic, p. 37.

³² Glosses on individual words occur, e.g., at the beginning of the seventh topic with R. 6.12.20.

Outline and Style of *Adhikāras* 1 and 2

Stripping away the verses in praise of Vedāntadeśika and those common to other works that are placed at the beginning of our printed editions and manuscripts,³³ the APS starts properly with a pair of verses in Tamil that “has poetic beauty and serves as well, as a concise introduction to the discussion in Maṇipravāḷa prose that follows.”³⁴ In the first verse, Deśika alludes to the main topic of the APS, *prapatti* as exemplified in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, by proclaiming that he will give the singular meaning of the Vedas, i.e., *prapatti*, and that Rāma is the refuge for all beings. He also works in the story of the crow Jayanta³⁵ as a way to highlight not only the lord’s inevitable mercy for his devotee but, by mentioning the destruction of the crow’s eye, also the challenges that one may encounter on the way to serving god. The second verse is an oblique reference to R. 6.12.20, the *abhayapradāna* verse, in that we find a number of Tamil phrases that match up with parts of the Sanskrit verse:³⁶ *orukkālē cāraṇāka vaṭaikiṇṇārkkum = sakṛd eva prapannāya; uṇakk’ aṭimai yākiṇṇēṅ eṅkiṇṇārkkum = tavāsmīti ca yācate*. The phrase *abhayaṃ sarvbhūtebhyo dadāmi* “I give fearlessness from all beings [to all beings]” is reworked as *aṇaivarkkum aṇaivarālum aṇcēl eṇṇ’ aruḷ koṭuppan* “I bestow grace to everyone by saying ‘do not fear anyone!’” with *aṇaivarkkum aṇaivarālum* together reflecting the ambiguous form *sarvbhūtebhyaḥ* as both an ablative and a dative.³⁷ The second sentence, as pointed out in the notes, validates Rāma’s vow to protect any refugee by way of the four authoritative means of knowing *dharma* as listed in Manusmṛti 2.12. The closing phrase with the repetition of *nilai* (“stability, resolution”) links Rāma, who is resolute in his vow to protect all beings, with “us”, who, after understanding Rāma’s resolution, become determined to perform *śaraṇāgati* and achieve our permanent state of bliss. The verses, in addition to introducing the APS, gain their poetic beauty through the oblique language alluding to specific phrases in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the nods to the *Manusmṛti* and, especially in the second verse, the rhythmic repetition of the dative case (*-kkum*) and the play on *nilai*.

The opening topic (*adhikāra* 1) of APS is the composition and propagation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, how the text came to be and why. For this Vedāntadeśika draws on the epic itself, which contains at its beginning a lengthy description of how Vālmīki came to tell Rāma’s tale and, toward its end, how he taught the epic to Rāma’s own sons, Kuśa and Lava. This creation story, though well known, bears repeating at the outset of the APS because it gives Deśika an opportunity to stress a crucial point in the Śrīvaiṣṇavas’ (and others’) view of the epic: it is equal to the Vedas and even

³³ I have translated all the verses found in the 1883 edition. The first three, two in Sanskrit and one in Tamil, are commonly found at the beginning of Deśika’s works. The fourth, *vālmīkivacasām...*, is not found in the other editions or elsewhere to my knowledge. The following two verses in Sanskrit are likely taken from other works by Deśika. See notes to the translation.

³⁴ Venkatachari (1978, p. 145). In this manner, he notes, Deśika generally commences his Maṇipravāḷam works.

³⁵ See n. 22 above.

³⁶ My initial hypothesis is supported by the commentator to the 1927 ed., p. 14 (the *tātparyam*), which I obtained rather late in writing this article.

³⁷ See my note to the translation.

helps one to understand the true meaning of the Vedas, a notion supported by both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. The key term, taken up as the second topic, is *upabṛmhaṇa*, which we may translate as “explanatory augment” and provides a response to why compose the text: the *Rāmāyaṇa* offers a way to understand the meaning of the Vedas even for those who cannot access the elite scriptures. Deśika describes what are essentially non-Brahmins as *alpaśruta* (“those of little learning”, borrowed from MBh 1.1.205a) who are “in need of an explanation of the Vedas” (*vedopabṛmhaṇasāpekṣar*) but does not take pains to further specify this group. We may also note that the very title *prabandhāvātāra* brings to mind the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu and like them the “descent” of the *Rāmāyaṇa* also occurs for the benefit of the world.

In reading the first section of the APS one finds, I would argue, that the syntax reflects the stepwise descent of the story of Rāma as it passes from Nārada to Vālmīki and is finally consigned to Kuśa and Lava before spreading throughout the world. Deśika achieves this effect by composing the entire section in a single sentence with one finite verb at the very end, *pravartippittān* (“promulgated”) to be construed with the subject, *śrīvālmīkibhagavān*, at the very beginning. In between, prior actions of the sage are expressed by a series of *viṇaiyecams*,³⁸ and subordinate sentences are introduced by temporal, causal and purpose clauses as well as an infinitive (*paṇṇa*), which serves to mark a change in subject. Although lengthy sentences are not uncommon in other sections of the APS, Deśika must have made an effort, as many authors do, to create a syntactic tour de force at the opening of his work, forcing the reader to “descend” down through the text to the very end before achieving closure. Deśika supports his narrative with a series of quotations from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (7), the *Bhagavadgītā* (1), *Mahābhārata* (1) and the *Sātvatasamhitā* (1). As many of these verses are cited to demonstrate that Deśika has good authority for his own statements, the quotes are often closed off by *eṅkiṛa paṭiyē* “in accordance with what is said [in a particular text]”. Other citations are concluded with *eṅru* as direct quotes of a person in the narrative or serve to give the content of another word incorporated into the syntax of a larger sentence such as *eṅkiṛa śāstrārthattai*; the meaning of the śāstra is given in the preceding quote. These dependent grammatical constructions, heaped one upon the other and imbedded inside each other lend a close-knit structure to the first section of APS and the foundation for the subsequent sections that delve into the details of *śaraṇāgati* and the events of Vibhīṣaṇa’s surrender.

In the second section, titled *Paratattvopabṛmhaṇādihikāraḥ* “On Topic of the Explanatory Augmentation of the Supreme Reality”, Deśika selects passages from the *Rāmāyaṇa* that help to reveal the true meaning of the Vedas, namely, that they instruct mankind about the supreme reality/the lord (*paratattva*). This is one prong of the twofold primary *upabṛmhaṇa* in the epic, the other being an elaboration of *śaraṇāgati*. In introducing the topic Deśika does not hesitate to mention a Vedic text that the *Rāmāyaṇa* addends, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. Although he does not quote any specific passages—unthinkable in a text intended to be read by non-Brahmins—Deśika is likely alluding to ŚU 3.17cd and/or 6.18 where the lord is described as the

³⁸ The Tamil equivalent for the Sanskrit *kvānta* or absolutes.

refuge (*śaraṇam*) and closely reflects the wording *sarvaśaraṇya-paratattva* used in the Maṅgīpravaṇam. Interestingly, the latter passage, ŚU 6.18ab, is given below in Tamil translation demonstrating that the content of the Vedas can be made accessible to anyone but not its sonic form.

The bulk of the section, however, contains proof that Rāma, here referred to as *perumāl* (“the great man”), is the supreme deity, mightier than Śiva and the progenitor of even Brahmadeva himself. To do so, Deśika draws on several episodes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* where it is revealed by others that Rāma is in fact divine even if he is unaware of it. After quickly proving his superiority to Śiva (R. 1.74.19), Deśika focuses on three speeches by Brahmadeva: one is a *stotra* from R. 6.105 in which Rāma is chastised for his treatment of Sītā after the battle because such behavior is not befitting of the supreme lord; the other two are sacred hymns (*viṅṅappam*) recited by Brahmadeva in R. 7.94 and 7.110. The first of these three demonstrates various aspects of the lord fundamental to Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, such as his status as *paramabrahma*, the cause of the world (*jagat-kāraṇam*), his body as the universe (*sarvaśarīratvam*), his paternity to even Brahmadeva, and that he is suited to protect all beings (*sarvaśaraṇyatva*). Each is backed up by an appropriate verse. The second passage is meant to convey the meaning found in ŚU 6.18a where it is stated that someone created Brahmadeva, and it goes on to describe the process of Viṣṇu’s incarnation. The third passage, almost at the very end of the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself, invites Rāma to return to his original form (*vaiṣṇavīm tanum*) and so brings full circle the description of the incarnation.

The sections translated here, though only a small part of the entire work, nevertheless are representative of the procedure that Vedāntadeśika follows throughout the APS and the general style he adopts. As we have seen, passages are quoted to build an argument often with Tamil summaries usually in somewhat lengthy sentences that contain a series of parallel constructions or coordinated objects.³⁹ There is, however, a larger logic to the sequence of the topics in the APS. The first section lays the very foundation for what follows in that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is shown to be a valid means of obtaining the secret wisdom held within the Vedas. Without this first step, the reader could remain in doubt that the story of Rāma has any validity for achieving liberation or understanding the nature of the lord. The second topic proceeds to establish the true nature of the lord but also more clearly links the content of the *Rāmāyaṇa* with that of the Vedas, in particular the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. The subsequent sections are similarly structured so as to build on the foundation laid in what precedes. Further study of the APS will no doubt continue to reveal the ingenuity of Deśika’s mind.

Editions

There is no lack of editions of the APS and three of them are easily available online for download, e.g., from archive.org. I have not noted any substantial differences in the text itself, although later editions do away with Grantha script in favor of Devanāgarī or Tamil script with superscripted numbers to indicate aspiration and

³⁹ For example, in the second *adhikāra*, the main verb *pēciṅāṇ* takes six accusatives, most of which are then associated with a quote and a Tamil explanation thereof.

voicing. I have, therefore, taken the earliest edition available to me, dating from 1883, as the basis of my translation. This edition by Śrīraṅkācāryar and printed at the Viyavahāratarāṅkiṇī Press, comes without commentary but presents the entire text of the APS accurately in a mix of Tamil and Grantha scripts. Most later editions come with commentary, often a word by word gloss (*patavurai*), that helps readers understand the Sanskrit quotations and more difficult or outdated Tamil words. Among these commentaries, I have found that by Narasimmācāryar in the edition by Jayā Yāmunatātācāryar (1927) to be the most learned and enlightening. The commentator has a mastery not only of the relevant Tamil literature but also of the Sanskrit śāstras. As I had come across this edition somewhat late in writing the article, I have unfortunately not been able to incorporate all of his insights into my notes. Future studies of the APS should take into consideration this commentary on the sections it covers.

Translation

Opening Verses

May the glorious, noble Veṅkaṭanātha, the lion-king of poets and philosophers, the greatest of the teachers of Vedānta, reside always in my heart.

I reverence Vedāntadeśika, the holy, noble lord of Veṅkaṭa, the worthy receptacle of Rāmānuja's compassion, the ornament of knowledge and dispassion.

Vedāntadeśika, who summarizes and analyzes the meaning of the Vālmīki's words in the *Abhayapradānasāra*, may he protect (us).

That brilliant sun [Rāma] accompanied by the goddess Sītā in the highest heaven is supreme. When he rises the darkness that is the fear of his devotees is destroyed.

May the hand of the lord of Śrīraṅgam, showing the sign of protection, protect me since it, as a rule, wards off rebirth for men once they have taken refuge in him.

May there be homage to that miraculous one [Rāma], whose fame greatly kindles the consecration that is for the protection of those miserable people (who take refuge in him),⁴⁰ to him, the dust of whose feet destroyed the stoney-state and misery of the wife [Ahalya] of the sage [Gautama] who was angered for a moment by the self-will of the lord of the gods [Indra].⁴¹

[Opening Verses to the APS]

⁴⁰ Cf. *pāda* b of the opening verse to Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya: vinatavividhabhūtarākṣaikaadikṣe [śrīnivāse]* "Viṣṇu whose sole consecration is to protect the hordes of various beings humbly bowed down."

⁴¹ Reference is to Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama. There are several versions of the story, but in the one that Deśika alludes to Ahalyā, after having an affair with Indra, was turned to stone by her husband and remained so till Rāma touched her with his foot. See Söhnen-Thieme (1996) for further details and the various versions of the story.

I will tell the one [true] meaning of the Veda that destroys grief.

Rāma, who caused the destruction of an eye, so that the crow, the son of Indra, could go free after growing haughty, is the refuge for the *nākam*⁴² and for the demons as well as for us.

To the ones who obtain [me] just once⁴³ as their refuge and to the ones who say, "I am your slave," and to all those without want, I, by saying, "Do not fear any of them!"⁴⁴ bestow grace. In this very way, we have gained dedication [to the means of salvation],⁴⁵ understanding the steadfastness⁴⁶ of the one who explains⁴⁷ the [true] way [of *prapatti*], saying that through the Vedic hymns that are recited,⁴⁸ through the thoughts [i.e., the *smṛti*-texts] of the lofty sages,⁴⁹ through the [ritual] performances of those who know such things [the *smṛtis*] as well as what pleases me⁵⁰ there is one imperishable, enduring vow for me.

⁴² The 1935 and 2002 commentators take *nākam* ("heaven", Skt. *nāka*) to refer to the gods by metonymy, glossing *nākantaṅkukum* with *svarkkavāsikaḷāṇa tēvarkaḷukkum* (p. 4) and *svarkkalōkattilulla tēvarkaḷukkum*, (p. 245), respectively. The 1927 commentator, however, understands Skt. *nāga* ("snake, elephant") and specifies the two animals who have taken refuge in Viṣṇu, the snake Sumukha held in Garuḍa's talons and the elephant Gajendra, whom Viṣṇu saved from a crocodile. Vedāntadeśika likely enjoyed the polysemy of *nākam*.

⁴³ Cf. R. 6.12.20a *sakṛd eva prapannāya*.

⁴⁴ How to construe the instrumental *aṅaivarālum* becomes clear when read in tandem with R. 6.12.20 as discussed in the introduction. The commentators, in glossing it with an ablative form, *ellāritamiruntum* (1935 ed., p. 4) and *oru prāṇiyiṇitattiliruntum* (1927 ed., p. 14), construe it with the verb of fearing. Together, the two forms of *aṅaivar* parallel *sarvabhūtebhyaḥ* in R. 6.12.20c, which is sometimes interpreted as both a dative and an ablative and construed with both *dadāmi* and *abhayaṃ*. Cf. Goldman et al., (2009, pp. 150 and 593 n. 20), who take it only as a dative in their translation. The 1927 commentator, p. 14, is explicit: *aṅaivarālum aṅcēl - sarvabhūtebhyaḥ eṅpataṅku aintāṃ vēṅrumaiyāka yoṅaṅai* "the construal of the word *sarvabhūtebhyaḥ* (= *aṅaivarālum*) as an ablative case." Govindarāja in commenting on the verse Rc vol. VI, p. 2139 likewise takes the form as an ablative with the action of fearing.

⁴⁵ The commentators have slightly different explanations for *nilai*. I follow here the 1927 commentator (p. 14), who glosses the word as *avvupāyattil niṣṭaiyai* "dedication to that means." The *upāya* is *prapatti* or, ultimately, the lord. The 2001 commentator glosses *nilai* with *amaiti* ("tranquility, peace"); the commentator to the 1935 ed., with *stiramāṇa nilaiyai* ("the permanent state"). Both presumably mean the permanent state of servitude and bliss in Vaikuṅṭha after performing *prapatti*. The 1927 commentator (p. 16) goes on to explain that the phrase essentially means (*tātparyam*): "we have come to be free of burden, free of doubts and exhilarated."

⁴⁶ I.e., Rāma's resolution to protect his devotees.

⁴⁷ A reference to Rāma/the lord (*śrī rāmapirāṇ, sarvēcvaraṅ*).

⁴⁸ As the 1927 commentator points out (pp. 13) the four instrumentals correspond to the four ways of knowing *dharma* (*dharmasya lakṣaṇam*) found in *Manusmṛti* 2.12ab *vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ*. They all support Rāma's duty to protect his devotees who take refuge in him (*prapannas/śaraṅāgatas*).

⁴⁹ The 1927 commentator understands this as a reference to R. 6.12.13ff., where Rāma tells of the song (*gāthā*) sung by Kaṅḍu that supports his choice to take in Vibhīṣaṇa.

⁵⁰ This corresponds to *svasya ca priyam ātmanaḥ* in *Manusmṛti* 2.12b.

On the Descent of the Composition

When the lord of the world had been incarnated during the Tretā Age as the son of the sovereign [Daśaratha], as it is told in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

In every age I am born to protect the good and destroy the wicked in order to establish righteousness,⁵¹ (BhG 4.8)

Vālmīki heard a short summary of this incarnation of Viṣṇu [i.e., Rāma] from the blessed Nārada, the son of Brahmadeva.⁵² He acquired divine speech, which was activated thanks to the grace of Brahmadeva, the husband of Sarasvatī, for as it is told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*:

Your eloquent speech, o Brahmin, has been activated by my will.⁵³ (R. 1.2.30ab [1.2.31ab]⁵⁴)

and he was given the following boon by Brahmadeva:

What the wise Rāma did in secret and in public together with his brother Lakṣmaṇa and all that the demons did, as well what Sītā, princess of Videha, had gone through, regardless whether in public or in private—all of this, even if unknown, will be known to you. Your speech will at no point be false in this poem. (R 1.2.32–34ab [1.2.33cd–35cd])

Vālmīki saw before himself, like an *āmalaka* fruit⁵⁵ in his hand, the story of this incarnation in its entirety by means of the divine eye that was produced by the might of his righteousness,⁵⁶ for as it is said:

Through the might of his righteousness he observes their laughter, conversations, where they went, what they did, everything just as it happened. ([R. 1.3.4])

⁵¹ The quote justifies the incarnation of Nārāyaṇa in each *yuga* (“eon”). The events of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, including Rāma’s birth, are traditionally said to have taken place in the Treta Yuga. Kṛṣṇa, a subsequent incarnation, was born in the following age, the Dvāpāra Yuga.

⁵² Reference is to the first sarga of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in which Nārada, prompted by Vālmīki, gives a summary of the epic.

⁵³ At this point, Vālmīki has returned to his hermitage after uttering his first *śloka* (“verse”) out of *śoka* (“grief”) at seeing the murder of the male *krauñca* bird. Brahmadeva appears before him and insists that he tell the full story of Rāma using this new form of composition.

⁵⁴ References are to the critical edition and then in square brackets to 1983 edition. The latter is elsewhere indicated by “Rc” (“*Rāmāyaṇa* with Commentaries”).

⁵⁵ Usually translated as the “Indian gooseberry”. The phrase is from Rc 1.3.6d as well as MBh 12.220.104d = 12.302.18d. See Goldman (2007: 283) for the R. passage omitted from the critical edition. This is a fairly common comparison for something that is directly and immediately perceptible.

⁵⁶ The translation is admittedly mechanical. *dharmavīrya*, which occurs below in the verse, does not occur elsewhere in the critical editions of the two Epics and seems fairly rare in other genres. The commentators on the *Rāmāyaṇa* give the following glosses ad Rc 1.3.4: *Tilaka* of Rāma *yogajabalena* “by the power born of his concentration”; *Rāmāyaṇaśiromaṇi* of Śivasahāya *raghunāthasmaranarūpabalena* “by the power that consists in remembering the lord of the Raghus (Rāma).” *Bhūṣaṇa* of Govindarāja: *brahmavaraprasādaśaktiā* “by the power of the grace that is Brahmadeva’s boon”.

Because of his own compassion he sought to publish the secrets of this incarnation, which are the supreme aid to those desiring liberation, in order to revive the world, for as it is said:

For the meditators [*yogin*], he [Rāma] pacifies with a volley of arrows that are none other than his discrimination the dreadful demon that is the mind and whose ten faces are the ten organs.⁵⁷ (*Sātvatasamhitā* 12.151)

Vālmīki graciously made this composition, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is tantamount to the four Vedas, for as it is said:

[the story of Rāma] brings good fortune and is equal to the Vedas. (R. 1.1.77b [1.1.98b])

with compassion for those of little learning who require an explanation (*upabṛṃhana*)⁵⁸ of the Vedas; [he made it] in order to quell the Vedas' fear about *pratāraṇa* "getting across" with regard to those [of little learning], after contemplating the meaning of the instruction (*śāstrārtha*) in:

One should magnify/explain the Veda with the histories and legends. The Veda fears a man of little learning. This [Mahābhārata] will bring me across.⁵⁹ (*Mahābhārata* 1.1.204f.)

⁵⁷ In the verse, which describes Rāma as a *vibhava*-deity, the demon Rāvaṇa is equated to the unruly mind and his ten heads to the ten *indriyas* which a *yogin* needs to restrain. The ten *indriyas* consist of the five *jñāna-indriyas* "senses of knowledge" (ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose) and the five *karma-indriyas* "senses of action" (speech, hands, feet, digestive tract, sex organs). The former allow one to acquire information from the external world whereas the later five allow one to interact with it. This kind of identification of concrete objects with the aspects of the mental or abstract struggle for liberation is found elsewhere in the *Sātvatasamhitā*. Cf. Bock-Raming (2002, p. 129). The present verse is quoted *op. cit.* n. 146, p. 131. The entire chapter 12 is translated in Hikita (1994).

⁵⁸ *upabṛṃhana* "increase, augmentation" is here usually taken in the sense of "explanation" or "giving the gist". Devabodha explains ad MBh 1.1.204: *upabṛṃhanaṃ arthāntarakalpanayā kṣīṇasya yathāvad vyākhyānena paripoṣaḥ*. "upabṛṃhana is nurturing, with a proper commentary, a [text] diminished by the fabrication of other meanings." Cf. the *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators ad Rc 1.4.6, cited just below. *Tilaka: vedopabṛṃhaṇārthāya vedānām upabṛṃhaṇam tātpāryabodhanam* "For the sake of *veda-upabṛṃhana*: the *upabṛṃhana* of the Vedas [means] imparting their gist"; and *Bhūṣaṇa: upabṛṃhaṇam nāma nānāśākhānusāreṇa nirṇūta-vedārthapratipādako granthaḥ*. "As for *upabṛṃhana*, it is a text that teaches the meaning of the Vedas as determined according the various schools."

⁵⁹ The idea is that an *alpaśruta* ("man of little learning") will not receive help from the Veda in obtaining liberation, but this (*ayam*) Veda (the *Mahābhārata*) will bring him to the other side, i.e., liberate him. I understand *ayam* in light of the next *pāda* in the MBh: *kārṣṇaṃ vedam imam*. Following this interpretation, we must then take *mām* as referring an *alpaśruta* and *pāda* d as the content of his thought. This seems to be close to Vedāntadeśika's take on the verse as well. Unfortunately, he does not provide much elucidation, but in what follows he asserts that Vālmīki has written the *Rāmāyaṇa* in order to quell (*śamippikkaiḥk' āka*) the Vedas' fear of helping people of little learning to cross over (*avarkalaip paṛa vēdāṅkalukk' unṭāṇa pratāraṇabhayattai*). This yields a slightly different reading of the verse: the epics and purāṇas provide the unlearned man with the ability to better understand the Vedas even if he has not or cannot read them himself. The Veda will then not fear helping such a man across. I note that the form *pratariṣyati* should be understood with causative value (*antarbhāvitanyartha*) since the simple verb is usually construed with a body of water as its direct object, e.g., in MBh 4.44.15c *samudraṃ pratared dorbhyām* "he should cross the ocean with his arms". Cf. Vedāntadeśika's *pratāraṇa*- and Oberlies (2003, pp. 253–255).

When he thought “Through whom might I propagate this composition?”, for as it is said:

The lord thought, “Who should propel this [story of Rāma into the world] through performance?” (R. 1.4.5 [R. 1.1.98])

Kuśa and Lava came and embraced his feet and then he propagated this composition, which acts as an explanatory augment, through these boys who are well suited to the task, for as it is said:

And the lord, seeing that the two boys had a good memory and were well-versed in the Vedas, accepted them to explain the Vedas. (R. 1.4.5 [1.4.6])

On the Topic of the Explanatory Augment of the Supreme Reality

Among the various explanatory augments to the Vedas that are thus made in this composition, the primary one is two fold: it deals with the supreme truth (*paratattva*, i.e., Nārāyaṇa) that is worthy of protecting all beings (*sarvaśaraṇya*),⁶⁰ as described in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*⁶¹ and other such texts, and it deals with the supreme benefit/means⁶² for mankind, namely, taking refuge in god (*śaraṇāgati*)⁶³ that is open to all (*sarva-adhikāram*).⁶⁴

When it comes to determining⁶⁵ the supreme reality [i.e., Nārāyaṇa] that is a worthy refuge for all, there are those who will be in doubt as to whether there are

⁶⁰ The meaning of *śaraṇya* is difficult to convey with a single-word translation but should, nevertheless, be distinguished from *śaraṇa*. Very often the two are conflated in secondary literature by using near synonyms such as “refuge” and “protection” though some translators simply use the same word for both. Goldman et al., (2009, p. 460) do justice to the morphological distinction: R. 6.105.16cd “The divine great seers call you fit for refuge and refuge itself.” The commentators provide appropriate glosses based on the available meanings of the *taddhita* (secondary) suffix *yaT*. See, ad Rc 1.57.17d, *Tilaka: śaraṇyān rakṣaṇasamarthān* “*śaraṇyān*, [you] who are capable of protecting”, *Rāmāyaṇaśiromaṇi: śaraṇyān śaraṇahitān* “*śaraṇyān*, [you] who are fit for protecting” and similarly *Bhūṣaṇa: śaraṇahitān*. The first can be justified by *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.4.98 *tatra sādhuḥ* “one who is skilled at it”, where *sādhu* = *samartha* “capable”. Cf. Haradatta’s remarks in the *Padamañjari*, where he glosses the *Kāśikāvṛtti*’s gloss *yogya* with *samartha* (*sādhu* = *yogya* = *samartha*). The meaning *hita* “beneficial” comes from *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.1.5 *tasmai hitam*. On the verse quoted below (Rc 6.117.17c), however, Govindarāja gives yet another gloss implicitly referencing *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.1.63 *tad arhati: śaraṇyam śaraṇārham. taducitajñānaśaktidayādi-sampannam ity arthaḥ. śaraṇam rakṣaṇopāyam*. “*śaraṇyam* is what is worthy of protecting [others]. The meaning is that he is endowed with the knowledge, ability, compassion and so forth that are suited to the task. *śaraṇa* is the means of protecting.”

⁶¹ See, e.g., *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.17cd *sarvasya prabhum iśānaṃ śaraṇam brhat*. “the lord, the ruler, the great refuge of all,” and R. 6.11.15ab *sarvalokaśaraṇyāya rāghavāya mahātmane*. Quoted in APS ch. 4 (p. 14).

⁶² On *parama-hitam* as the “greatest means”, cf. Raghavan (1985, pp. 87 and 163).

⁶³ Cf. R. 6.11.17 and APS ch. 4 (p. 14). On the two topics and pair of *Rāmāyaṇa* verses, see Rao (2015, 56–64).

⁶⁴ Each topic is further qualified by a relative clause (*peyareccam*) yielding a parallel construction which serves to highlight the difference between the two regarding their authoritative source. In the first instance a Vedic text, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is specified, whereas for the latter, the *parama-hita*, no textual reference is provided but rather the descriptive *sarva-adhikāram* “everyone’s right”.

⁶⁵ In Sanskrit dictionaries no such meaning is recorded for *niḥ* + *kṛṣ*, although s.v. *niṣkarṣa* we find “ascertainment” in Monier-Williams and “certainty, ascertainment” in Apte. The meaning of the former is

some [other deities] who are equal to the lord of all (*sarveśvara*) or superior to him. If they ask who these are, it is the son⁶⁶ and the grandson of the lord of all. When they say that among them the supreme lord is superior to Rudra,⁶⁷ who is his grandson, Vālimīki has made this clear with the speech of Paraśurāma:

After seeing the bow of Śiva unstrung by the attacks of Viṣṇu, the gods along with the sages then thought that Viṣṇu was superior.⁶⁸ (R. 1.74.19 [1.75.19cd–20ab])

When the gods arrived after Rāvaṇa was killed, and praised Perumāḷ [Rāma], Brahmadeva established Perumāḷ's superiority over all by saying:

The creator [of the deities Brahmadeva and so forth],⁶⁹ the best in the whole world, the lord of those with knowledge, how is it you ignore Sītā as she falls into the fire? How are you not aware of yourself, o foremost of the gods? (R. 6.105.5 [6.117.6])

Or⁷⁰ do you ignore the princess of Vidarbha like a normal man? (R. 6.105.8cd [6.177.9cd])

Thereafter, in the hymn of praise composed by Brahmadeva alone while the other gods abided, as Sītā was released from the hands of the enemy, he uttered the following: the fact that Perumāḷ is the unique supreme *brahman*,

You are, in truth, imperishable *brahman*. (R. 6.105.013ab [6.117.14ab])
the fact that he is the cause of the world defined as *brahman*,

For you are the primordial creator of the three worlds, entirely self-motivated.⁷¹ (R. 6.105.6cd [6.117.18cd])

the fact that he is the body of all beings,

Your body is the entire world. (R. 6.105.23c [6.117.25c])

Footnote 65 continued

likely lifted from the *Vācaspatyam*, which gives *niścaye* as the first meaning of *niṣkarṣa*. The Vaishnava Glossary s.v. *niṣkarṣikka* provides the correct meaning in Tamil: *uṟuti ceyya*.

⁶⁶ Brahmadeva, born from the Viṣṇu's lotus-navel, is his son.

⁶⁷ Rudra, born from Brahmadeva, is thus Viṣṇu's grandson. Cf. *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 1.8.

⁶⁸ The verse occurs during Paraśurāma's conversation with Rāma and forms part of the backstory to Śiva's bow, which Rāma had recently broken at Sītā's *svayamvara*. In sum, shortly after Viśvakarman gave equally invincible bows to both Śiva and Viṣṇu, the gods wished to know which of the two was mightier, wherefore Brahmadeva incited a quarrel between them. During the fight, Viṣṇu let out a loud *hum* (*humkāra*) that paralyzed Śiva and unstrung his bow.

⁶⁹ Vedāntadeśika prefaces the verse with the genitive *brahmādisarvadēvataikaḷ uṭaiya*, which I cannot but construe with *kartā* in the verse. This would seem to alleviate the syntactic peculiarity noted by Goldman, Goldman et al., (2009, p. 14444), namely, that *śreṣṭhaḥ* lacks a genitive.

⁷⁰ The APS alone reads *vā* in pāda c with a *ma-vipulā*. All other sources are reported as having *ca*.

⁷¹ Following the commentators' explanation of *svayam-prabhuḥ* as *ananyapreryaḥ*.

the fact that Brahmadeva is something created is based on the word *hṛdaya* (“heart”), which is a synonym for “son” in the usage of the Śrauta texts,⁷² through such statements as,

I am your heart [i.e., son], Rāma, the goddess Sarasvatī is your tongue. (R. 6.105.21c [6.117.23cd])

and how all the other deities are a part of his power and the fact that he is worthy of protecting all beings,

The divine sages say that you are worthy of protecting [others] and are the protection. (R. 6.105.16cd [6.117.17cd])

He has stated the meaning learnt in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, “Someone created Brahmadeva first,”⁷³ with the words of Brahmadeva in the last chapter of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Starting with:

Your agreement, great-armed Rāma, was to protect your own worlds. And long ago you yourself collapsed the worlds through your power of creative illusion and then created me first as you lay on the waters of the great ocean. (R. 7.94.3cd–4cd [7.104.3cd–4cd])

and ending with:

Then after also creating me in your divine navel that shone like the sun, you gave me the full task of creation. For I, so entrusted with this burden, worship you as lord of the world/creatures. Sir, as the maker of radiance, give protection to my beings! Then you, unassailable because of your eternal nature, became Viṣṇu for the sake of protecting all beings. You, the valorous son of Aditi, giving a thrill to your brothers, are fit to help the world when needs arise. You, now that the offspring of the world are frightened, wishing to slay Rāvaṇa, made up your mind [to be] among men. R. 7.94.7–11 [7.104.7–11]

Brahmadeva recited this hymn about how the lord of everything became the supreme cause, and how he then became an effect of him, dependent and lastly acquired a place subservient to him, and the fact that he incarnated through his own will among them as well as in a royal lineage just as he did among the fish, etc.⁷⁴

When he had graciously arisen toward his light, he made the following hymn:

Come, Viṣṇu! May you prosper! O Rāghava, how fortunate you have come! (R. 7.100.6cd [7.110.8cd])

⁷² None of the commentators I have consulted explain *hṛdayam* as meaning “son”. Rather, they take this to indicate that Rāma is the basis for everything (*sarvādhāratvam*).

⁷³ This is more a less a Tamil translation of ŚU 6.18a *yo brahmāṇaṃ vidadhāti pūrvam*. The verse in full suits the context: “I, desiring liberation, take refuge in god, manifested through his own mind, who first created Brahmadeva, who bestowed upon him the Vedas.” Because of his audience, Vedāntadeśika cannot quote the Vedic text. This passage is quoted by Rāmājuna in the *Śrībhāṣya* thrice: ad BrSū 1.3.12, 3.17 and 6.18.

⁷⁴ Reference is to the other incarnations of Viṣṇu, *matsya*, etc.

Together with your brothers who resemble gods, enter your own Vaiṣṇava body and the eternal sky,⁷⁵ you of great splendor. (R. 7.100.7 [7.110.9ab and 10ab])

For you, o god, are the way [to salvation] for the world; no one understands you except long-eyed Māyā, your first consort. (R. 7.100.8 [7.110.10cd–11ab])

Enter that body which you wish, o god of great brilliance! (R. 7.100.9cd [7.110.11ef]⁷⁶)

In this way he [Brahmadeva] made an explanatory augment for the portions of the Vedas that teach reality (*tattvam*) which is the supreme cause for even Brahmadeva, etc., being what is worthy of protecting [them].

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⁷⁵ One might assume that Vedāntadeśika understood *ākāśaṃ sanātanam* to refer to Vaiṣṇava as Govindarāja does in his *Bhūṣaṇa*. Rāma provides the gloss *brahman* (n.) in the *Tilaka*, which Goldmans follow in their translation, Goldman and Goldman (2019, p. 440).

⁷⁶ See the critical apparatus for the varied placement and reading of the hemistich.

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