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srImatE nigamAnta mahAdEsikAya nama:

Meaning & Significance of the term "Taniyan"

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At the beginning of every prabandham of the 4000 Divya Prabandham, one or two select songs (pAsurams) are designated as 'tanians'. It is the sampradAytic tradition to first worship the taniyan before starting the prabandham.

What is the taniyan? What is the significance of the taniyan?

According to Tamil grammatical usage, there are songs called 'pAyiram' (prefatory verses). In Vaishnava sampradAyam, we call these as tanians.

No matter which prabandham (text) is written or read or worshipped, it is the norm to first recite the pAyiram (taniyan) before the prabandham. That is, there can be (and neither should there be) no text without the pAyiram.

'Aayiram mugatthAn aganRadhAyinum
pAyiram illAdhu panuval anRE'

says the grammar maxim, indicating that there can be no text without the pAyiram.

The pAyiram or taniyan is not counted as part of the text, but stands on its own. The term 'taniyan' is a reference to the fact that it stands by itself ('tani'), combined with the affectionate suffix of 'an'.

pAyirams (tanians) are of three types - tharsirappu pAyiram, sirappu pAyiram and podhu pAyiram.

Tharsirappu pAyiram: This type of preface is written by the author of the text himself, about the text. The 'Divine Invocation' ('kadavuL vAzhtthu') falls under this category.

Sirappu pAyiram: This type of preface is written by a student or a teacher of the author of the text, or by an expert in the subject matter of the text.

Podhu pAyiram: This type of preface praises the specialty of the text or otherwise introduces the text; or speaks to the specialty of the author, the town of his birth etc. Anybody who has special regard for the text can write a podhu tania.

Our humble prostrations to: Sri U.Ve. NAlpAkkam JagannAtha ThAthAchArya swamy, ThiruvallikkEni, for blessing us with this material.

