Singing to God, Educating the People:
Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of *Stotra*s

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APPAYYA 100, APPAYYA 500

The writing on the walls of Kālakaṇṭheśvarar Temple in Adayapalam, a village near Vellore in the northern Tamil country, celebrates Appayya Dīkṣita (1520–1592), the village's main claim to fame, as a man of outstanding achievements. The inscription begins with a Sanskrit verse, highlighting Appayya's association with the Vellore-based king Cinnaboma ("whose glory he spread"), his resurrection of Śrīkaṇṭha's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* ("in order to fortify the Śiva school"), and his construction of the very temple on which the verse is inscribed. A prose passage in Tamil further elaborates his deeds, mentioning, among other details, two impressive figures. Appayya is said to be the author of no less than one hundred books (*nūṟu prabandhaṃ paṇṇina*) and to have taught Śrīkaṇṭha's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* and his own subcommentary on it, the *Śivārkamaṇidīpikā*, to a crowd of five hundred scholars.[1]

One hundred, a neatly round figure, is a well-known count for Appayya's many works, and a testimony to his fecundity.[2] But the other number of a five-hundred-strong body of students may be related to an equally important yet less appreciated dimension of Appayya's career: his pedagogical vocation. Indeed, the two dimensions of Appayya's scholarly life are tightly connected. A closer inspection of his rich written legacy reveals that many of his

1. The inscription is listed in *Report on South Indian Epigraphy, G.O. No. 919, 29th July* (Madras: Government of Madras, 1912), as item 395 of 1991. The actual text is reproduced by Mahalinga Sastri, "Age and Life," 148–49, and Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Diksita*, 25–26. The number five hundred appears twice in the inscription, referring to teachings in both Adayapalam and Vellore, Cinnaboma's capital.

2. One hundred is the figure also mentioned several times by Appayya's grandnephew, Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita. For instance, in his *Śivalīlārṇava* (1.6) he says that Appayya, an embodiment of Śiva, was an expert on all sixty-four arts, lived for seventy-two years, and wrote one hundred books. Other sources give the auspicious numbers of 104 or 108 works. The actual count of his books fluctuates significantly and is very difficult to determine. Various writers have attempted to produce lists of exactly 100 (or 104) works, which include lost texts and texts of dubious authorship. In a note to a recent essay, Sheldon Pollock tallied as many as sixty-two works based on the list in the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* and forty-one that the Srimad Appayya Deekshitendra Granthavali Prakashan Samiti in Hyderabad was planning to publish in fifteen volumes (Pollock, "The Meaning of *Dharma*," 795, n. 2). At any rate, the authorship of about a hundred (100, 104, or 108) books was clearly attributed to a highly prolific author, regardless of the exact number of works he wrote. After all, the Adayapalam inscription is dated to 1582, after which Appayya lived for another decade. During this last decade of his life, he composed several works, some of which are discussed below. That Nīlakaṇṭha, writing some years after Appayya's death, did not "update" the 1582 statistics of his granduncle is a clear indication that we should not take the attribution "author of a hundred books" too literally.

compositions were textbooks, summaries, and commentaries, intended for students and employing innovative pedagogical methods.[3] Indeed, there are several traditions concerning Appayya's self-established "Sanskrit college" or *pāṭhaśāla*, located in Adayapalam and hosting, at any given time, five hundred students.[4]

This paper examines the relationship between Appayya's scholarly identity and his role as an educator, the "Appayya 100" and "Appayya 500" eulogized in the Adayapalam epigraph, by looking at the subgroup of his literary corpus that may initially seem least relevant for such a study—his poetry. Appayya is mostly known for his erudite works in *vedānta*, *mīmāṃsā*, śaiva philosophy, and *alaṃkāraśāstra*. Yet a significant portion of his books—at least a quarter of his one hundred works—is comprised of hymns to various divinities. The titles and colophons of many of these compositions include the word *stotra*, or its synonyms *stuti* and *stava*, often translated as 'praise' or 'eulogy'. Such labels supposedly place these works within a reasonably well-defined genre of devotional poetry, thus setting them aside from Appayya's scholastic output.

We must note, however, that the *stotra* genre—dubbed "the most prolific and popular among the branches of Sanskrit literature"[5]—is virtually uncharted. Sanskrit poetic theorists have not addressed it as a topic of discussion, and only a handful of modern scholars have turned their attention to this immense corpus of hymns. The scant literature on *stotra*s consists mostly of cursory surveys, wherein frustration at the impossibility of defining the very category is occasionally made explicit.[6] For instance Gonda, in what is perhaps the most detailed study, acknowledges the difficulty in classifying *stotra*s "because the eulogistic element often alternates, not only with prayers, litanies and strings of names but also with philosophical—especially Vedāntic—passages. Moreover, some hymns and passages are argumentative rather than eulogistic in character." Diversity in form further complicates the category, for whereas some *stotra*s are "poetry in a very simple style," others are "complicated compositions of the *kāvya* genre, in a variety of difficult meters and overladen with stylistic ornament" (Gonda, 236).

Given this fluidity, neither Gonda nor his colleagues have even supplied a clear definition of the genre. We can say that *stotra*s are relatively short works in verse, whose stanzas directly and repeatedly address a divinity in the vocative case.[7] Furthermore, *stotra*s are typically not divided into chapters or sections and tend to consist of a round or auspicious number of verses (e.g., 8, 16, 50, 100). Yet beyond this lean characterization their spectrum of stylistic and thematic possibilities seems almost commensurate with that of Sanskrit writing as such, to the point where one begins to wonder whether it is at all useful to think of them as a single genre. Of course, the *function* of *stotra*s, and not just their form and content, may be crucial to our understanding of them. Although scholars have occasionally acknowledged that *stotra*s were added to liturgies and therefore could have been a "powerful means for propagating religious ideas" (Gonda, 235), no historical study of these and other

3. For a detailed discussion of Appayya's innovative pedagogical practices in one particular textbook, the *Kuvalayānanda*, see Bronner, "Back to the Future," 55–60.

4. Harinārāyaṇa Dīkṣita, *Śrīmadappayadīkṣitacaritam*, 30–32.

5. Raghavan, in his introduction to *Stotrasamuccaya*, x.

6. For a descriptive discussion of various works belonging to this genre see Bhattacharyya, "The Stotra Literature of Old India"; Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature*, 232–70; and Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 128–50. For works studying Sanskrit *stotra*s from South India, see Hardy, "The Philosopher as Poet"; Nayar, *Poetry as Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja*; and Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*.

7. There are, however, a few *stotra*s in prose. See Gonda, 250, 257.

public dimensions and functions of the genre exists. Indeed, *stotra*s are typically viewed as a form of direct communication between devotee and God, involving no third party.

Perhaps Appayya Dīkṣita's rich literary legacy can shed some light on our understanding of this genre and its functions—if only in one place and at a certain point in time. Even a superficial examination of Appayya's long list of *stotra*s seems to illustrate the genre's impressive elasticity. Some of Appayya's *stotra*s appear to be abstract and theoretical in nature, for instance the *Brahmatarkastava* and the *Hariharābhedastuti*. These *stotra*s are hardly distinguishable from similarly short, scholarly treatises, such as his brief *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā*, which is, indeed, found in collections of *stotra*s. Yet other *stotra*s are personal pleas related to incidents in the author's life. One such example is the *Apītakucāmbāstava*, a prayer to the Goddess composed, we are told, when Appayya fell ill with fever on a trip to Tiruvannamalai.[8] Appayya's *stotra*s thus treat a variety of topics and correspond, as we shall see, with numerous types of intertexts belonging to different genres, from *purāṇa*, to *śāstra*, to *kāvya*. In fact, this variety makes it hard to determine the exact number of *stotra*s composed by Appayya, which is estimated to be anywhere between twenty-five and forty.[9]

Beyond this diversity, however, a cursory observation of Appayya's list of hymns also reveals a rather striking fact. Many of his *stotra*s are paired by design with auto-commentaries (*vivṛtti, vivaraṇa*), which often look to be lengthy expository works in their own right. This very phenomenon of self-authored commentaries on *stotra*s is, as far as I can see, a new development of the late medieval period. These commentaries seem to call into question some of our major assumptions about the genre's addressees and functions. After all, one would not expect the divinities of the Hindu pantheon, whom the *stotra*s directly address, to require elaborate annotation. Therefore, at least some of Appayya's *stotra*s seem consciously to address a wider audience and serve purposes other than those sought in a direct communication with the divine. Let us, then, use this rather simple observation about the commentaries as a starting point for an exploration of Appayya's use of hymns. Why did a person of so many activities and intellectual achievements dedicate so much of his creative energy to composing *stotra*s and their *vivṛtti*s? For whom were they intended? What purposes did they serve?

In an attempt to answer these questions this paper focuses on three of Appayya's *stotra*s: the *Durgācandrakalāstuti*, the *Śrīvaradarājastava*, and the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*.[10] This sample is

8. Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Diksita*, 113. Likewise, his *Kāṇigrāṣṭa* is said to be a prayer "against the molestation of his persecutors" (Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet," 82).

9. For instance, out of the one hundred works Ramesan attributes to Appayya, he lists numbers 64 through 89 as *stotra*s and their commentaries. Yet in addition to the works so classified, others including the word *stotra* in their title or colophons appear under different headings. For example, the *Śivamahimakalikāstuti*, the *Pañcartanastuti* and its commentary, as well as the *Rāmāyaṇatātparyasārasaṃgrahastotra* and its commentary, are all classified by Ramesan as *Śivādvaita* works (Ramesan, 112–15; on the latter work see Bronner and Loewy Shacham forthcoming). No study of Appayya's *stotra*s exists, although Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet" and "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet—II," as well as Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Diksita*, 119–25, offer an evaluative discussion of some of these works.

10. As noted already by V. Raghavan, "Appayya Dīkṣitas II and III," Appayya had a nephew and a grand-nephew by the same name, who also composed several works. Let me give evidence to support the ascription of this sample of works to "our" author, called Appayya Dīkṣita I by Raghavan. The *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and its commentary each come with a colophon identifying their author as "the *kaustubha* gem of the ocean which is the blessed Bhāradvāja clan, the teacher who brought to prominence the position of Śrīkaṇṭha, the author of 104 works, the performer of great sacrifices, Śrīmad Appayya Dīkṣitendra." These references are specific and point unmistakably to the same Appayya eulogized in the above-mentioned Adayapalam epigraph (Appayya I). The *Ātmārpaṇastotra* ends with the same colophon, while that of the commentary on the *Varadarājastava* specifically identifies the author

intended to be representative of the diversity of its larger pool. The three *stotra*s address different divinities, vary significantly in length, and differ in their degree of textual autonomy—while the first two are accompanied by auto-commentaries, the third was left to stand on its own. It is against this variety, presented in greater detail below, that I hope to show that all three nonetheless betray a similar awareness of a wider audience and reveal a strong pedagogical agenda. In making this point I hope to expand the current understanding of the *stotra* genre and its potential functions while simultaneously enhancing our appreciation of their author's pedagogical mission. Given this purpose and the paper's limited scope, my analysis of the sampled *stotra*s will not be exhaustive. Rather, I will concentrate on aspects that are directly relevant to the aforementioned questions, and try to corroborate my arguments by appealing to evidence from other pertinent sources.

SUMMARIZING THE DEEDS OF *DEVĪ*: APPAYYA'S *DURGĀCANDRAKALĀSTUTI*

The *Durgācandrakalāstuti* is a very brief work consisting of sixteen verses, all of which are in the *vasantatilaka* meter.[11] There are also two framing stanza, one at the beginning and one at the end, both in the *anuṣṭubh* meter. Brevity is paired with simplicity in this work. The verses are in easy Sanskrit, with no unusual grammatical forms or syntactic constructions. The work is very straightforward and lacks complex figuration. Appayya Dīkṣita, the scholar who had such a profound impact on the *alaṃkāra* discourse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has, by and large, refrained here from the use of ornaments of speech.[12]

If one expects that the theologian in Appayya would use the *stotra* as a platform for his philosophical agenda, one is bound for a disappointment. The power of the Goddess is, of course, an important theme, yet the work is totally devoid of complex arguments. Any expectation that a *stotra* should contain personal sentiments[13] will also be unfulfilled, for the author seems totally absent from his work. Though many of the verses contain statements in the first person, invoking the Goddess and calling for her protection,[14] these are highly formulaic and impersonal. Indeed, the closing verse indicates that these statements are intended for the *stuti*'s imagined consumer, who is given the following instructions (vs. 18):

> *deśakāleṣu duṣṭeṣu devīcandrakalāstutiḥ |*
> *saṃdhyayor anusaṃdheyā sarvāpadvinivṛttaye ||*

> During ill-times and in unfriendly places,
> [this] *Devīcandrakalāstuti*,
> is to be recited dusk and dawn,
> for the removal of all types of trouble.

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as the son of Śrīraṅgarājādhvari, the father of Appayya Dīkṣita I. The verse portion of the *Varadarājastava* is not accompanied by such a detailed colophon; however, its authorship by Appayya I is beyond doubt, as he himself repeatedly identifies it as his own in his *Kuvalayānanda* (see below, n. 35). Note also that the works by Appayya II and III, as Raghavan calls them, have colophons that clearly specify their descent from the great Appayya I (Raghavan, 177–79). The paper also refers to external sources linking the *stotra*s discussed to Appayya Dīkṣita I (e.g., the mention of the *Ātmārpaṇastotra* by his grandnephew Nīlakaṇṭha, mentioned below). There is thus little doubt that all of these works were composed by one person, Appayya Dīkṣita I (1520–1592), with the secondary literature on Appayya unequivocally upholding this ascription (e.g., Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet," "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet—II," Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Diksita*).

All three stotras are quoted in what follows according to the text given in *Collection of Stutras*, ed. Dikshitar and Sarma.

11. Each of the sixteen verses represents one of the digits (*kalā*s) of the moon (*candra*) that is Durgā.

12. The commentary, to which we will turn shortly, identifies not a single *alaṃkāra*.

13. See Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature*, 243–44, for the frequent use of first person pronouns in *stotra*s.

14. E.g., *mātā mamāstu mahiṣāntakarī purastāt* (vs. 3), *ambā sadā samabhirakṣatu māṃ vipadbhyaḥ* (vs. 9).

All in all, the *stuti* contains, at first sight, little more than a list of loosely connected epithets, in simple, nonornate, unphilosophical, and impersonal language. Considering its linguistic, metrical, figurative, and thematic leanness, it may seem extraordinary that Appayya Dīkṣita chose to accompany it with a commentary (*vivṛtti*), and a relatively lengthy one as such. Against the eighteen verses of the *stuti* (sixteen plus two), the commentary contains approximately two hundred quotations from an impressive pool of sources. This commentary, for its part, seems not to conform to the norms of its own genre, since it provides little or no glossing of the actual words of the *stuti*.

So what is the purpose of this exercise? To be honest, there is very little mystery involved. The only source of confusion is the expectation that what we have here are two distinct works, one of which is a poem and the other commentary. In fact, the two are part of one single project, the goals of which Appayya states at the very beginning of his *vivṛtti*, following vs. 1, in the clearest possible way:

> śrīdevīmāhātmyavarāhapurāṇaharivaṃśabhāgavatādipratipannadevīmahimasaṃgh-ṛkṣayā idam stotram āripsitam.

> What led me to compose this *stotra* was the desire to summarize the greatness of the Goddess as it is attested in [works] such as the *Śrīdevīmāhātmya*, the *Varāhapurāṇa*, the *Harivaṃśa*, and the *Bhāgavata*.

This is not just an abstract desire but the very program of the *stotra*, as pointed out repeatedly by the author. Following each and every verse we are told which sources were just summarized. The references are very specific. After the second stanza, for instance, we are told that it summarizes the Goddess's killing of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, as narrated in chapter one of the *Śrīdevīmāhātmya*. The following verse sums up chapters two through four. By the end of the eighth verse the essence of the entire *Devīmāhātmya* has been captured, and the author turns to the *Varāhapurāṇa* (verses 9–11), the *Harivaṃśa* (12–14), and the *Bhāgavata* (15–16), before concluding with a verse alluding to the relevant portion of a Vedic text, the *Sāmavidhibrāhmaṇa* (17). This design follows the expressed intention of showing that the Goddess won the praise of the trinity of Brahma (in the *Devīmāhātmya*), Śiva (in the *Varāhapurāṇa*), and Viṣṇu (in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Bhāgavata*).[15] This compendium in the form of a *stotra* thus follows a careful design and an unambiguous system of references.[16]

The fourth verse of the *stotra* illustrates this point well:

> prāleyaśailatanayā tanukāntisampat
> kośoditā kuvalayacchavicārudehā |
> nārāyaṇī namadabhīpsitakalpavallī
> suprītim āvahatu sumbhanisumbhahantrī ||

> Daughter of the snowy mountain, she who emerged from the sheath—that treasure of her bodily complexion, she whose lovely body color is dark water lily, Nārāyaṇī, that wish-granting creeper for those who bow to her, may this slayer of Sumbha and Nisumbha yield supreme pleasure!

In the commentary following this evocation of the Goddess, Appayya feels no need to gloss any of the verse's words. Rather it is the textual references he sets out to elucidate:

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15. The very first words of the *stotra* read: *vedhoharīśvarastutyām*, on which the commentary expands: *vedhaḥkṛtā devīstutiḥ devīmāhātmye prasiddhā; harikṛtā harivaṃśe; īśvarakṛtā varāhapurāṇe*.

16. For other *stotra*s that form "a résumé of a well-known story," see Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature*, 239–40. Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 137–38, likewise mentions that the *Ṛṣimaṇḍalastotra* supplies detailed biographies of certain Jain saints and patriarchs.

*anena ślokena pañcamādhyāyaprabhṛtibhiḥ ṣaṣṭhādhyāyaiḥ pratipāditasya
sabhṛtyabāndharavasumbhanisumbharūpasya devyā uttamacaritasyārthaḥ saṃgṛhītaḥ.
devīmāhātmye sumbhanisumbhahantrī kauśikī siddhavatkṛtya varṇitā, viśiṣya
tadāvirbhāvo na varṇitaḥ. sa tu śivapurāṇe vāyusaṃhitāyāṃ varṇitaḥ.*

This verse summarizes the contents of [the episode of] "Devī's Later Deeds," wherein she kills Sumbha and Nisumbha and all their relatives and attendants, as is narrated in chapters five through ten [of the *Devīmāhātmya*]. In the *Devīmāhātmya*, the slayer of Sumbha and Nisumbha is called "Kauśikī" as an epithet already established, but the source [of this epithet] is not described in any detail. It is recounted, however, in the *Vāyusaṃhitā* of the *Śivapurāṇa*.

The *vivṛtti* now turns to quote at some length from the *Śivapurāṇa*, spelling out the narrative portions that are only laconically referred to in the *Devīmāhātmya*. We are told of the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha and the boon they received from Brahma, according to which no man could kill them. The boon allowed, however, for the possibility of their slaying by a maiden who would emerge out of the sheath (*kośa*) of another woman's body. The subsequent quote from the *Śivapurāṇa* contains the exchange between the Goddess and the other gods begging for her help. Appayya then intervenes with a brief prose section where another part of the story is summarized. The Goddess, he reports, went to Gautama's ashram, where, practicing austerities, she attained her bright (*gaura*) color by shedding her dark skin or sheath. It is from that sheath (*kośa*) that the dark Kauśikī sprang. Appayya then returns to quote a few additional verses from the *Śivapurāṇa*, which clarify the meaning of the epithet of this new manifestation of the Goddess (as well as the name Gaurī for Pārvatī). He also narrates the realization of the other stipulations Brahma made when he granted the boon. Finally, some additional verses are cited wherein the Goddess herself praises her appearance as Kauśikī and predicts her slaying of the two demons.[17]

The primary role of the "commentary" is thus not to comment on the verses but to reveal the fact that they embody a larger textual corpus and to make that corpus present. Indeed, in the case of the *Devīmāhātmya*, the commentary sets to fill the narrative gaps of this target-work by citing a set of further purāṇic works.[18] The *stuti* and the *vivṛtti* are therefore part and parcel of the very same project of encoding and decoding a large body of literature. Once the exposition in the *vivṛtti* is given, the *stuti* can indeed serve as the highly compact synopsis it aims to be, something like *The Appayya Companion to the Goddess*.

What we have here, then, seems very similar to a class-plan, or a short course on the *Devīmāhātmya* and related works. The summary mode, the simple language, and the brevity of the *stuti* all suggest that the intended audience for this kind of *purāṇic* instruction were not scholars, but people not formally trained in Sanskrit and its textual traditions. The instruction to chant this short *stotra* "dusk and dawn" may also suggest the laity, not free for recitation at other times. One can perhaps imagine a scene at a local temple, where an eager crowd has gathered to listen to the teachings of Appayya Dīkṣita, the great scholar, on the greatness of the Goddess. Appayya provided them with a product of dual efficacy: an easily memorized summary of Devī's feats in the *Devīmāhātmya* and other texts, and a *stotra* useful against "all kinds of trouble."

An anecdote from the later hagiographic literature about Appayya may support this imagined scene. It is said that on his deathbed Appayya gave several of his most cherished

17. For a summary of the narrative in the *Devīmāhātmya* and the *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*, see Brown, *The Triumph of the Goddess*, 113ff.

18. For the brief, telegraphic version of the *Devīmāhātmya*, see *Durgāsaptaśatī* 5.85–87.

belongings to his grandnephew, Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, who went on to become a famous scholar and poet in his own right. Among the items were Appayya's personal *liṅgam*s, his *rudrākṣa* rosary, and his own copy of the *Devīmāhātmya* (as well as a copy of the *Raghu-vaṃśa*). On this occasion Appayya is said to have predicted Nīlakaṇṭha's successful career as a minister of the Pandya king. Nīlakaṇṭha then "proceeded to Madurai and started giving discourses on the *Devīmāhātmya*." Coming to the notice of the king through these discourses, Nīlakaṇṭha was appointed, as prophesied, to be his minister.[19] I take this story to corroborate my argument that Appayya was highly invested in the teaching of the *Devīmā-hātmya*, and perhaps even encouraged others to do so. It seems no coincidence that the story insists that it was his lectures on the *Devīmāhātmya* that put Nīlakaṇṭha's illustrious career on the right track.

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ORNAMENTING GOD AND TEACHING OF ORNAMENTS:
THE *ŚRĪVARADARĀJASTAVA*

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Appayya's more popular *Śrīvaradarājastava* is a work meant for local consumption, and was surely performed within the confines of a specific point on South India's sacred map, the Varadarājasvāmin Temple in Kāñcī. Like Appayya's praise of Durgā, this *stava*, dedicated to Viṣṇu Varadarāja, is accompanied by a self-authored commentary, or *vivaraṇa*, and its verses are also in *vasantatilaka* meter.

So much for the similarities between the two works, which otherwise show remarkable difference in almost every aspect. To begin with, the *Śrīvaradarājastava* is much longer, consisting of 105 verses, and its style is far more elegant and poetic. Moreover, the organization of the *stava* does not depend upon a set of texts it attempts to summarize. More accurately, the text determining the structure of the *stava* is not verbal but visual, for the work consists of an extended meditation on the image of Viṣṇu Varadarāja. After a brief introduction, the *stava* gradually zooms in on the temple by describing the city of Kāñci and in it, Hastigiri Hill (vss. 5–10). Then Appayya describes the steps leading up to the temple, and entering it, as it were, through its *vimāna* (11), he depicts the image of the God facing east (12). The following verses portray the overall beauty and ornaments of the deity as they first strike the onlooker (13–34). The bulk of the *stava* consists of a detailed meditation on the limbs of the Varadarāja, starting, as is customary, with his toes, and traveling up the feet, thighs, navel, chest, arms, hands, mouth, nose, eyes, and forehead (35–104).[20]

Indeed, one of the most striking features of the *stava* is the slow and steady eye movement, first into the temple and then along the body of the deity, from the bottom up. The work repeatedly calls attention to this special act of looking, as in vs. 17:

aṅgāni te nikhilalokavilocanānāṃ
saṃbhāvanīyaguṇa saṃsaraṇāni satyam |
yeṣv ekam āpya na purādhigataṃ smaranti
vāñchanti nānyad api labdhum ado vihāya ||

19. Unni, *Nilakantha Diksita*, 17; see also Wujastyk, "La Bibliothèque de Thanjavur." I have yet to locate Unni's source, which appears to mention specifically the names of the books Appayya handed Nīlakaṇṭha, although the tradition seems widely known. A painting of the scene, where a pair of books figures prominently, is found at: *http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/s/i/v/Pattamadai-K-Sivaswami/PHOTO/0011photo.jpg* (no source given). I am indebted to H. V. Nagaraja Rao for first mentioning this story to me, and to Dominik Wujastyk for helping me locate references to it.

20. Again, this structure is carefully designed and made explicit on several occasions in the commentary. The plan of the *stava* is most openly discussed in the comments to vs. 34.

Oh you of praiseworthy features!
For all the eyes in the world, your limbs
are quite a journey. That certainly is true.
For as soon as they arrive at one place,
they forget their previous place of resting,
and have no desire to depart from it and reach another.

As the *stava* is, in many ways, about this act of looking, it involves not only the object of the gaze but also its subject.[21] The speaker repeatedly reports to Varadarāja, his addressee, the wonderful experience of his visual tour, and constantly interprets and amplifies his impressions through a series of tropes and fancies (*utprekṣā*s) typical of Sanskrit poetry. Many verses include verbs such as "I imagine," or "I see" (*manye*, *paśyāmi*, etc.). Thus, whereas in the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* Appayya's voice was that of a teacher, in his *Śrīvaradarājastava* he assumes the role of a poet (*kavi*), conscious of his artistic reworking.[22]

Moreover, the work begins with several introductory verses (2–5) where Appayya discusses the goal of his composition and his own credentials for composing it. Like many poets before him, he places himself within the larger tradition of *kāvya*, calls upon the precedents set by great poets, (*mahākavīnām*, *kavipuṅgavāḥ*), and appeals to the goddess of speech, Sarasvatī, but the poetic ideal invoked by Appayya is intentionally contrasted with the mainstream of poetry. Appayya begins by questioning the very capability of understanding god, let alone describing him (vs. 2):

jāto na vetti bhagavan na janiṣyamāṇaḥ
pāraṃ paraṃ paramapūruṣa te mahimnaḥ |
tasya stutau tava taraṅgitasāhasikyaḥ
kiṃ mādṛśo budhajanasya bhaven na hāsyaḥ ||

Unborn, Lord, and never will be
is the knower of the farthest shore of your might.
O Supreme Soul!
Will not the likes of me,
overwhelmed by an impulse to praise you,
become the laughingstock of the wise?

The poet's task of praising god is impossible, entailing an inherent fault. Even the goddess of speech herself finds this problem inevitable (*avarjanīyam*), and hides herself in the body of great poets in hope of avoiding blame (vs. 3). Nonetheless, the ask of praising god is to be taken up by poets. Ultimately, it leads not to a fault but to the unique benefit of meditating on the name, form, and qualities of the divine (vs. 4: *tvannāmarūpaguṇacintana-lābhalobhāt*).

Indeed, such a gain is far greater than what even the most skillful poet can claim (vs. 5):

manye sṛjantv abhinutiṃ kavipuṅgavās te
tebhyo ramāramaṇa mādṛśa eva dhanyaḥ |
tvadvarṇane dhṛtarasaḥ kavitātimāndyād
yas tattadaṅgaciracintanabhāgyam eti ||

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21. See also Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet—II," 130: "This *divya saundarya* of Varadaraja [*sic*] is the subject of the poem. The poet is filled with rapture at the comprehension of his poetic vision of this beauty and pours out his admiration of it . . ."

22. As is also apparent from the distinct style of self-reference of the commentaries accompanying both works. In commenting on his *Durgācandrakalāstuti*, Appayya refers to himself simply by the third person pronoun implied in verbs such as "[he] summarizes," "[he] shows," and so forth. In his commentary on the *Śrīvaradarājastava*, however, the commentator Appayya refers to the author Appayya as "the poet" (*kavi*) from the very outset (vs. 1, *iha khalu kaviḥ . . . maṅgalam ācarati*).

Let the master poets compose their hymns to you!
The likes of me are better off than they, Lakṣmī's Lover.
My poetry is so slow. Yet I take pleasure in describing you,
as I gain the good fortune of an unhurried contemplation of you, limb by limb.

The great poets are not fit to compose hymns since they are over-qualified. They will depict the divine like any other subject matter with their swift style and smooth words, and in so doing will miss the whole point. Our poet, on the other hand, presents himself as sluggish. And yet, this liability turns into a unique asset when it comes to describing god. If words are incapable of capturing his true nature, the slow hand at least earns the good fortune of a deliberate, detailed meditation on each and every divine detail. The poet therefore reaps not mockery but good fortune.[23] Thus Appayya's brief introduction concludes in an enthusiastic endorsement of using *kāvya* for praising god.

So while the skills and sensibilities involved in singing about god are unique, the project as a whole is clearly conceived as a *kāvya*, and it is only within the context of that tradition that it gains distinction. Moreover, the *stava* pays tribute to one particular poetic intertext, a work by Vedānta Deśika. This "lion among poets and philosophers," as Appayya himself called him,[24] also composed a *stava* in honor of Varadarāja.[25] Appayya's poem corresponds with Vedānta Deśika's work on the same topic in complex ways, which are beyond the scope of this paper.[26]

All these factors emphasize the distinction between the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and the *Śrīvaradarājastava*, only the latter of which is considered by its author to be a work of poetry.[27] As such, the *Śrīvaradarājastava* allots a central place to a whole variety of *alaṃkāra*s, those ornaments of speech largely absent from the Durgā *stuti*. The deity itself is time and again compared to an ornament, decorating the town and the temple (e.g., vss. 4, 6ff.); its ornaments are described at great length; and the poet's task seems to be to come up with an adequately ornate language. Indeed, in his capacity as a poet, it seems that Appayya's main tools for interpreting and reworking the object of his gaze are these *alaṃkāra*s, which occasionally come to the foreground in explicitly metapoetic verses (e.g., vs. 14):

yasmin jahāty atiśayoktir alaṃkṛtitvaṃ
nyūnopamātvam upamā samupaiti sarvā |
sūkṣmasvabhāvakalanāpi ca na pratarkyā
tad varṇayāmi bhavataḥ katham ābhirūpyam ||

When it comes to you, hyperbole is no longer a trope.
The similar becomes deficient—as all possible standards are inherently inferior.
And even a minutely detailed, factual depiction, is out of the question.
How, then, am I to sing of your beauty?

Three major *alaṃkāra*s are here examined by the poet—*atiśayokti* (hyperbole), *upamā* (simile), and *svabhāvokti* (speaking of things the way they are)—only to be rejected as

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23. Indeed, in the commentary Appayya provides an alternative reading of his above-quoted poem, according to which it is the unwise rather than the wise who would mock his poetry (*abudhajanasyeti vā padavibhāga*, 173).

24. Vedāntadeśika, *Yādavābhyudaya*, 1, vs. 13 of the introduction to the commentary.

25. This famous *Varadarājapañcāśat* is, at least today, part of the temple's liturgy (Raman, *Srī Varadarājaswāmi Temple*, 99–100). For a discussion of this work, see Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God*, 172–97.

26. I am not aware of a comprehensive study of Appayya's indebtedness to Vedānta Deśika's *stotra*. A few of his more obvious borrowings are discussed in introductions to several editions of the *Śrīvaradarājastava* (e.g., that of *Caukhambā Amarabhāratī Granthamālā*, 10–14).

27. Indeed, the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* does not aspire to the same slow-flow poetic quality (*kavitātimāndya*) that the *Śrīvaradarājastava* proudly heralds and its pace seems intentionally hurried.

useless for the task of singing of Varadarāja's beauty.[28] Nonetheless, the verse as a whole is a carefully crafted poem, which echoes similar statements by many previous poets. Thus, like the introductory stanzas, this verse ironically amounts to a vindication of the very project it doubts. Indeed, as the commentary indicates, this denial of the value of the three *alaṃkāra*s is in itself an instance of a fourth ornament of speech: *kāvyaliṅga*.[29]

The impression that *alaṃkāra*s are in some way central to the *Śrīvaradarājastava* intensifies when considering Appayya's auto-commentary. The *stava*'s commentary is full of extended and learned treatments of everything from the paradoxical nature of the Brahman in the Upaniṣads to a humorous citation of Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*,[30] as well as quite a few passages from the *purāṇa*s. In this vast range of topics and sources, the exposition of *alaṃkāra*s and references to the poetic discourse are especially prominent.[31] There are certain features of Appayya's treatment of poetic devices in his commentary that warrant attention. First, the sheer volume they occupy. In commenting on the beginning six verses of the *stava*, for instance, Appayya identifies some twenty-seven poetic devices. Whenever one of these devices is first introduced, he cites a definition and an example, and refers to a variety of texts and opinions, often quoting lengthy passages from *alaṃkāraśāstra* sources.[32] All in all, the commentary defines and exemplifies more than forty ornaments, many of their subtypes, and quite a few other poetic elements (*guṇa*s, *rasa*s, types of *dhvani*, etc.).

Even more significant than the sheer volume of the discussion on poetics is the fact that most of the citations are from "hot-off-the-press" works written by Appayya himself. Appayya composed the *Śrīvaradarājastava* in what we may call his "*alaṃkāra*-period." It was during his later years—between 1585 and his death in 1592, under the patronage of Veṅkaṭapati—that Appayya composed his *Exposition on Semantic Capacities* (*Vṛttivārttika*) and his extremely popular primer, *Joy of the Water Lily* (*Kuvalayānanda*), and started his incomplete magnum opus, *Investigation of the Colorful* (*Citramīmāṃsā*).[33] The relevance of the *Śrīvaradarājastava* and its commentary to these books on poetics can be shown by the intricate pattern of cross-references between them. The verses of the *stava* are frequently quoted as illustrations of poetic ornaments in both the *Exposition* and the *Joy*.[34] The *stava*'s commentary, in turn, frequently refers to both of these works—particularly the *Joy*, from which it quotes a few dozens of verses.[35] The *stava*'s commentary also summarizes some

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28. Interestingly, these are three of the four main types of *alaṃkāra*s mentioned by Rudraṭa in his *Kāvyā-laṃkāra* (the fourth is *śleṣa*). I am grateful to David Mellins for calling my attention to this fact.

29. For a discussion of this ornament see Appayya Dīkṣita, *Kuvalayānandaḥ*, 137–40.

30. See verse 1 for the former and 36 for the latter.

31. Again see Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet—II," 130: "The stotra scintillates with gems of alamkaras [*sic*] and Sri Dikshita's gloss over it pays special attention to the embellishments being brought out clearly in the light of the definitions."

32. Recall, for instance, the above-quoted verse discussing the incapability of poetic language to capture Viṣṇu's beauty, where hyperbole (*atiśayokti*), simile (*upamā*), and factual description (*svabhāvokti*) are mentioned. In the commentary Appayya defines and exemplifies the first and last device. The middle one, *upamā*, was already defined and exemplifies the first and last device. The middle one, *upamā*, was already defined in connection with an earlier verse, but at this point Appayya explains and illustrates the specific case of a "deficient simile" (*nyūnopamā*), wherein the standard fails to match its subject (*Collection of Stotras*, 382–83, ad vs. 14).

33. The *Vṛttivārtika* was recently edited and translated by Gerow. For a discussion of the *Citramīmāṃsā*, see Bronner, "What Is New and What Is Navya"; for the *Joy*, see Bronner, "Back to the Future."

34. Eleven verses from the *stava* are quoted in the *Exposition*, by far the larger source of quotes in this short work; the verse numbers are given in Gerow's edition. I have identified seven of the *stava*'s verses in the *Joy*. These references are sometimes explicit, when Appayya repeatedly says "*yathā madīye varadarājastave . . .*"

35. Again, the references are clear and explicit. For instance: "*asmābhis tu kuvalayānande . . .*" (*Collection of Stotras*, 369).

of the *Joy*'s new arguments.[36] This pattern of references may suggest that Appayya first composed the *Śrīvaradarājastava*, then the *Exposition*, then the *Joy*, and then returned to compose a commentary on the *stava*.[37]

We thus may consider all these works—written within a span of no more than seven years and under the same patronage—in the context of Appayya's overall project of rethinking and teaching the ornaments of speech. In particular, the *stava*'s commentary can be seen as a sister project to the *Joy*. The *Joy* was intended as a formal textbook for schoolboys in an institutionalized setting and designed to appeal to professional teachers on poetics anywhere in the Indian subcontinent. However, the *stava*'s commentary contained, among other things, a less formal introduction to the very same topic, appealing to an audience of lay adults— learned yet not necessarily trained in poetics—from the local community in and around Kāñcī. Indeed, the *Joy* quickly became a standard textbook throughout South Asia, while the *Varadarājastava* was known only locally.[38] Seen in this light it is no surprise that both the *Joy* and the combination of the *stava* and its commentary were intentionally paired by the following practice of "framing": both share the same opening benediction (*udghāṭya yoga- kalayā*) and end with an identical "signature" verse (*hetuhetumator aikyam*).

Let us conclude by emphasizing that the *Śrīvaradarājastava* is an autonomous poem, another aspect setting it apart from the *Durgācandrakalāstuti*. Whereas the Durgā *stuti* depends on an additional textual "key" for its encoded summary, the *Śrīvaradarājastava* does not *require* a commentary. The commentary, for its part, has its own style of discursive prose and enjoys some degree of autonomy from its root text. The commentary may have been written some time after the poem; it has an individual title (*Gūḍhārthavivaraṇa*, unlike the generic *Vivaraṇa* for the Durgā digest) and its own benedictory verse. Indeed, the dis- crepancy between the two benedictions is worth noticing. Whereas the poem's opening verse invokes Viṣṇu, the god it eulogizes throughout, the commentary begins with an appeal to Śiva, the author's personal deity.

Yet it is precisely this relative independence that serves to highlight Appayya's peda- gogical drive. Even if the poem was originally conceived independently of its author's teach- ing of *alaṃkāra*s, it quickly became engulfed by this project. If Appayya first envisioned only a poetic contemplation on Viṣṇu's limbs and ornaments, this notion was quickly fol- lowed by the educator's impulse to use the depiction of these limbs as a platform for ex- pounding verbal ornaments. The resulting duo of poem and commentary was clearly intended to disseminate their author's knowledge of *alaṃkāra*s. This combination obviously addresses not just Varadarāja, who surely has a solid knowledge of similes and hyperboles, but his less omniscient devotees as well.

TOTAL SURRENDER AS TEACHING: APPAYYA'S *ĀTMĀRPAṆASTUTI*

The last work we shall look at, Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* (or *stotra*), differs in many respects from those previously examined. To begin with, both the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and the *Śrīvaradarājastava* are in the *vasantatilaka* meter. Conversely, the fifty-verse-long *Ātmārpaṇastuti* is in *mandākrāntā*, a meter used for major statements, often of a personal

36. A case in point is Appayya's new understanding of *samāsokti*, summarized in the commentary to vs. 6 (ibid., 371; cf. *Kuvalayānandaḥ*, 69–75).

37. Another possibility, however, is that all of these works were written concurrently by Appayya. I am grateful to H. V. Nagaraja Rao for his helpful suggestions about the works' relative chronology.

38. The *Joy* was an extremely popular textbook throughout the subcontinent (Bronner, "Back to the Future," 47, n. 1). The *Varadarājastava* on the other hand did not travel much. Aufrecht (*Catalogus Catalogorum*, 551) mentions only a handful of manuscripts, all from the South.

sort.[39] The work is appropriately addressed to Appayya's personal deity, Śiva. Indeed, whereas the *Śrīvaradarājastava*, with its subject-object distinction and its gestures to Śrīvaiṣṇava texts and practices, brings to mind the Vaiṣṇava doctrine of *viśiṣṭādvaita*, Appayya's verbal submission to Śiva is rooted in the Śaiva theology of non-dualism (*śaivādvaita*). The poem addresses not an externally visible deity depicted in rich and colorful detail, but an invisible divinity found within his self. Appayya surrenders his self (*ātma*) to the Self (*ātma*) that is Śiva's ultimate form. Hence, the title "*Ātmārpaṇastuti*" is intentionally ambiguous, and the work consists of an intimate conversation between god and devotee as well as between different aspects of the same identity.

Unlike the Durgā *stuti*, where the author is absent from the verse altogether, and the Viṣṇu *stava*, where his persona as a poet is dominant, Appayya the devotee pervades the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*, occupying a place equal to that of Śiva. The very first verse of the *stotra* hints at its dual subject matter:

> *kas te boddhuṃ prabhavati paraṃ devadeva prabhāvaṃ*
> *yasmād itthaṃ vividharacanā sṛṣṭir eṣā babhūva |*
> *bhaktigrāhyas tvam iha tad api tvām ahaṃ bhaktimātrāt*
> *stotuṃ vāñchāmy atimahad idaṃ sāhasaṃ me sahasva ||*

> Who has the capacity to comprehend, Lord of Lords, your supreme capacity,
> by which this creation—so fabulously multifaceted—came to be?
> And yet, you can be grasped by means of devotion in this world,
> so it is only out of devotion, that you I
> seek to praise.
> Forgive this enormously reckless act of mine.

The impossibility of understanding god's power is a common theme, already observed in the opening verses of the *Śrīvaradarājastava*. Yet here the speaker is concerned not with the jeer of his peers but with the reaction of god himself. Thus, he begins by declaring his pure intentions ("it is only out of devotion") and asking, or rather demanding (note the second person imperative), impunity for his rash act. One feels exposed to a private dialogue, and the level of intimacy is suggested by the juxtaposition of the first and second person pronouns tvām aham, "you I," highlighted by their placement immediately following the *yati*-break of the verse's third *pāda*.[40]

A rather troubled relationship between the two personas continues to occupy the author's mind (vs. 6):

> *dhyāyantas tvāṃ katicana bhavaṃ dustaraṃ nistaranti*
> *tvatpādābjaṃ vidhivad itare nityam ārādhayantaḥ |*
> *anye varṇāśramavidhiratāḥ pālayantas tvadājñāṃ*
> *sarvaṃ hitvā bhavajalanidhāv eṣa majjāmi ghore ||*

> Some cross the unsurpassable sea of being, by meditating on *you*.
> Others follow the scriptures, and immerse themselves in worshiping *your* lotus-feet.
> And there are those who respect the conventions of caste and life-stage.
> In doing so they are taking their orders from *you*.
> *I* paid no heed to all of this, god, and now I'm drowning,
> in the terrifying ocean of being.

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39. Verses 1 through 42 are in *mandākrāntā*, and the work ends with a series of verses using several other meters. For a precedent of a poet using *mandākrāntā* for a personal statement, see Bilhaṇa, *Vikramāṅkadevacaritam*, whose last canto switches to this meter for the poet's autobiographical account.

40. For a similar combination of pronouns in Vedānta Deśika's *Haṃsasandeśa*, see Bronner and Shulman, "A Cloud Turned Goose," 27.

The 'I' tried to avoid 'you' only to find himself drowning. One cannot get away from one's Self, an impasse that eventually leads Appayya to surrender himself to god \ him-Self. Before doing so, however, the speaker repents his shameful neglect of Śiva (vs. 7):

> *utpadyāpi smarahara mahaty uttamānāṃ kule 'sminn*
> *āsvādya tvanmahimajaladher apy ahaṃ śīkarāṇūn |*
> *tvatpādārcāvimukhahṛdayaś cāpalād indriyāṇāṃ*
> *vyagras tuccheṣv ahaha jananaṃ vyarthayāmy eṣa pāpaḥ ||*

> I was born, Slayer of Smara, in the best of families.
> I was exposed to your infinite greatness,
> And yet, a slave to my capricious senses,
> I turned away from worshiping your feet,
> and engrossed myself in nonsense.
> Ahahaha, I wasted my life. I've been bad.

Sentiments of penitence and regret appear repeatedly in the *stotra*, coupled with a constant reminder that no matter how low and undeserving the devotee, god simply ought to show compassion and accept his submission. In the following verses Appayya turns to the *yoga* idiom, emphasizing his feelings of helplessness and enslavement *vis-à-vis* the objects of the senses (vss. 8–10), and then to *bhakti* imagery, for his sense of being flooded by the over-powering Śiva (e.g., vs. 12). The only way out of this dire situation, Appayya realizes, is to totally yield to Śiva.

Then there is the question of timing. Some schools recommend the moment of death as an opportunity for seeking god; yet Appayya realizes that may be too late. During the death rattle, amongst the doleful wails of relatives, can one truly maintain the awareness required to seek and find god (vss. 13–14)?

> *adyaiva tvatpadanalinayor arpayāmy antarātmann*
> *ātmānaṃ me saha parikarair adrikanyādhinātha |*
> *nāhaṃ boddhum śiva tava padaṃ na kriyāyogacaryāḥ*
> *kartuṃ śaknomy anitaragatiḥ kevalaṃ tvāṃ prapadye ||*

> Now is the time,
> On Inner Self, I thrust my self and those around me,
> at your lotus feet, Husband of the Daughter of the Mountain.
> I cannot understand your rank, Śiva.
> I cannot do the rites, observe the vows, or practice yoga.
> There is no other way for me but this: I surrender to you.

In this statement (vs. 15) is the heart of the *stotra*, for it contains the actual act of submission. The very fact that the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* includes such a statement further distinguishes it from the two other works we discussed. Unlike the benedictory *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and the descriptive *Śrīvaradarājastava*, the conversational *Ātmārpaṇastuti* hinges upon speech acts of great personal and theological consequences, and several of its verses echo each other by ending with the all-important verbal deed *prapadye* ("I surrender").[41]

Interestingly, though, the *stotra* does not end here. The brief train of thoughts culminating with Appayya's surrender is followed by a long coda expressing conflicting sentiments and emotional upheaval. It is almost as if Appayya is not completely certain about his own act, and in the following verses he alternates between the *advaita* ideal of an indistinguishable merger with god in the form of the universal Self (e.g., vss. 35, 38), and the *bhakta*'s desire

41. In addition to vs. 15 just quoted, also vss. 16–17, 49.

to be reborn in order to remain god's servant (e.g., 36–37, 45). This internal debate continues, with arguments going back and forth. There is little wonder that the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* does not follow a careful design or plan of the type observed in the previous two works. Given its personal dimension, the fact that Appayya did not supply a commentary for this *stotra* seems fitting.[42] Unlike his summary of the *Devīmāhātmya* and related works, and unlike his poetic visualization of Varadarāja, Appayya's conversation with and surrender to Śiva do not appear to belong in the public domain.

Or do they? While the *stotra* does not come with a commentary, it is famously accompanied by a story. According to this framing narrative, Appayya once informed his disciples that he had taken a hallucinatory substance made of the juice of the datura plant in order to test his devotion to Śiva. He requested his students to remain attentive and write down whatever he uttered during his trance. What came out of his mouth were the fifty verses of the *Ātmārpaṇastuti*.[43]

Obviously, this story comments on the unstructured nature of the *stotra*, its trance-like quality, and its central act of personal submission.[44] But a more striking aspect of this story is the central role it allots Appayya's disciples. The most personal act of devotion nonetheless requires witnesses. Indeed, looking back at the central verse of surrender, Appayya is fully conscious even there of the presence of others around him, and, in fact, his submission is collective, as it includes his extended circle of attendants (*saha parikaraiḥ . . . prapadye*). It should not surprise us, then, that Nīlakaṇṭa Dīkṣita, Appayya's aforementioned student and grandnephew, later wrote in one of his poems that Appayya, when uttering the *Ātmār-paṇastuti*, also surrendered his entire family (*svakulaṃ samāstam*) including Nīlakaṇṭha.[45] The datura story seems also to reflect on Appayya's awareness of the collective nature of his act of submission.

In light of this *stotra*'s public dimension—its built-in consciousness of spectators whom tradition identifies as Appayya's students—the possibility that it too was meant to teach some lesson merits consideration. One of the *stotra*'s themes is the utter humility of the speaker. Appayya says that he had wasted his life on rubbish, bemoans his profound incapacity to perform vows and sacrificial rites, and laments his failure in upholding social norms and maintaining his devotion. In addition, he calls himself a sinner (*pāpa*), indeed the worst of all sinners (*pāpiṣṭha*, vs. 28), and likens himself to a worm (e.g., 21, 37). It is worth noting that this humble self-image of the devotee, although not untypical,[46] stands in stark contrast to Appayya's famous public record: the scholar who composed a century of works, the performer of lavish sacrifices, the teacher of hundreds of students, the devotee who sang to god and built a temple for him, and the recipient of grants from various kings.[47] When Appayya, whom king Cinnaboma bathed in gold in recognition of his fortification of the Śaiva school, publicly calls himself a worm, his humility takes on special, exemplary proportions.

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42. A later commentary by the nineteenth-century biographer of Appayya, Śivānandayati, is printed along with the edition I have been using throughout.

43. See Ramesan, *Sri Appayya Diksita*, 113, for an account of this famous story.

44. Thus, according to Mahalinga Sastri, "Srimad Appayya Dikshita as a Poet," 84, the *stuti* "is also known as the *unmatta pachasat*—'fifty verses composed during a state of madness'."

45. Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, *Ānandasāgarastava*, 43: *tavyy arpitaṃ prathamaṃ appayyayajvanaiva, svātmārpaṇam vidadhatā svakulaṃ samāstam | kā tvaṃ maheśi kuladāsam upekṣitum māṃ, ko vānupāsitum ahaṃ kuladevatāṃ tvām*. I am grateful to H. V. Nagaraja Rao for referring me to this verse.

46. Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, 243.

47. Many of these remarkable achievements are mentioned in the colophon to this very work, quoted in n. 10 above.

Think, then, of Appayya's *Ātmārpaṇastuti* as a performance, stated in front of his close circle of disciples, and disseminated, through their faithful transcribing, to a larger audience. The performer, India's greatest intellectual of the sixteenth century and the religious leader of the Śaiva community in the Southern peninsula, sets in his *stotra* an outstanding example of piety and submission. Within this performative context, the *Ātmārpaṇastuti* is yet another form of instruction, a teaching of self-surrender to Śiva as the supreme soul. The story of Appayya's datura trance may be seen as a commentary added by the tradition in order to emphasize the *stuti*'s main teachings, not unlike the commentaries composed by Appayya himself. Indeed, the inner logic of the story confirms a tendency we have already identified: even if taking the hallucinatory substance was originally intended solely for the spiritual purpose of testing one's self, it seems to have been reconfigured to reach out to one's disciples and teach them something through this speech-act. Datura may momentarily alter one's subjectivity, but apparently it does not inhibit the educator in it. Once a teacher, always a teacher.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This brief discussion of three of Appayya's *stotra*s only scratches their surface and does not do them justice. It suffices, nonetheless, to illustrate the *stotra*s' impressive variability. The works examined address three different divinities; Durgā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. They allude to three different theologies (*śakti*, *viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *śaivādvaita*) and thus appeal to the three sectarian communities associated with them. The *stotra*s also vary considerably in their contents, their tone and mode (invocation, visualization, conversation with god and, within it, the speech act of surrender), their poetic quality, their length and structure, their requirements from the audience, and their relationship to an auto-commentary (in the case of the first two works) or the absence of one (in the latter). All of this confirms initial impressions about the immense flexibility of the *stotra* genre. Indeed, it also allows us to realize that this genre's multiformity did not simply result from the accumulation of numerous works composed by different historical agents with different affiliations and writing styles, and that, at least by the sixteenth century, the vast spectrum of *stotra* possibilities was readily available to a single author who could select among them according to his needs.

The real question, then, is why the elusive *stotra* form was so attractive to Appayya, such that he used it for so many different works? Here, I believe, this study suggests a possible answer. One thing that seems to be common to all three works discussed is their attempt to reach out to some community of listeners and instruct them on a variety of topics: from purāṇas to speech ornaments to piety and surrender. At times this outreach is explicit, as in the commentary of the *Durgācandrakalāstuti*, and at times it is subtler, as in the commentary-less *Ātmārpaṇastuti*. But once we train our eyes to see it, we cannot fail to observe the public, didactic dimension of Appayya's prolific *stotra*-writing. As both oral anecdotes and words inscribed in stone confirm, whenever Appayya 100 is seen, Appayya 500 cannot be too far behind him.

Why were *stotra*s so useful for Appayya's pedagogical agenda? *Stotra*s hold an important place in the communal rites of temples, where they are part of everyday as well as holiday liturgy.[48] They also occupy a prominent position in family and private rituals, performed

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48. The role of *stotra*s in temple liturgy seems in need of a systematic study. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that *stotra*s did play an important role in temple festivals (see n. 26 above) on the performance of Vedānta Deśika's *Varadarājapañcāśat* in Kāñcī's Varadarājaswāmi Temple.

either "dusk and dawn" or on special occasions.[49] *Stotra*s are short and believed to be efficacious and hence quite likely to be memorized. All of these functional aspects make *stotra*s a uniquely effective format for spreading a message. Moreover, in a sectarian society like South India during the late Vijayanagara period, *stotra*s tailored to the needs and beliefs of different sects must have had a powerful appeal for such communities. Finally, it seems that in Appayya's case *stotra*s served to supplement his more academic writing. Think, again, of his works on poetics. His incomplete *Investigation* (*Citramīmāṃsā*) is a highly sophisticated series of essays meant for professionals in *alaṃkāraśāstra* and other highbrow consumers of literary theory. His *Joy* (*Kuvalayānanda*) is a textbook intended to initiate schoolboys into the same field. But only the *Varadarājastava* had the potential of popularizing ornaments of speech among those without a professional claim or aspiration.

What I am suggesting is that the marketability and community appeal of *stotra*s may explain, at least in part, the immense popularity of this genre. Furthermore, their mode of consumption as well as their function in delivering public messages to certain groups or communities may be taken as important components of the definition of the *stotra* genre, beyond the minimal formal features identified at the outset. This conclusion, I should hasten to add, is tentative. For one thing, it does not exclude other explanations for the genre's flourishing, including, of course, genuine feelings of devotion, but also other motivations such as political struggle within or between sects. None of these motivations necessarily cancels the others. For another, such conclusions must be seen as highly provisional given the tiny sample of works, all by the same author, discussed in this paper, and also—perhaps primarily—because of the lack of any serious study of the genre's deeper history. Given the dismal state of our knowledge of the genre's earlier roots, there is simply no way of generalizing our conclusions to a period prior to the late pre-colonial era, and ascertaining the degree to which Appayya's use of the genre was original. Clearly, much more research is in order.[50]

But the above conclusions certainly suggest possible avenues for study. One such avenue consists of problematizing and expanding the naïve and prevalent model of "singing to god." Clearly, speakers in *stotra*s address not just god but also appeal to, instruct, and construct communities of devotees. As Appayya's *stotra*s demonstrate, the very modes of address can differ significantly from one work to another. In the *Durgācandrakalāstuti* and its commentary, the direct audience seems to be those who hear Appayya's public lecture on the Goddess, and it is through their voices that he may also reach her ears. In his act of surrender, however, Appayya directly converses with god, and only through god with his own disciples.

Semiotic analyses of Sanskrit *stotra*s do not seem to exist, though thought has been given to such matters in discussing poetry in other South Asian languages. Here I am primarily thinking of Norman Cutler's *Songs of Experience*, which sketched various possible relations between poet, god, and audience in the Tamil *bhakti* corpus (pp. 19–38). Clearly, something along these lines should be proposed for the vast body of Sanskrit *stotra*s—a model flexible enough to account for the works discussed above as well as many others. Think, for instance, of Appayya's *Rāmāyaṇatātparyasārasaṃgrahastotra*, which is nothing but a

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    49. For the relationship between the popularity of *stotra*s and their daily use by families and individuals, see Bhattacharyya, "The Stotra Literature of Old India," 344ff.
    50. A sentiment shared by many (e.g., Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature*, 232; Nayar, *Poetry as Theology*, 15).

short polemic essay, twenty-five verses accompanied by a prose exposition, arguing for the supremacy of Śiva as the ultimate purport of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. That this work too includes an occasional address to Śiva in the vocative, the most minimal requirements of the *stotra* template, indicates not just the genre's marketing advantages, but also the role *stotra*s could have played in the very formation of communal identities.

Indeed, even beyond these issues of modes of address and dissemination, we must begin to scrutinize the unique cultural fusion found in Appayya's writings, and examine it in its political, sectarian, and social contexts. His work was deeply involved in the creation of a new local identity, which expanded to include a variety of sectarian groups. Appayya's body of *stotra* works created an overall synthesis that has remarkable affinities with today's Hinduism, even before this religion was supposedly invented by the encounter with colonialism.[51] Our understanding of India's present will be significantly enriched if we turn our attention to local, pre-colonial scenes, such as the South in the sixteenth century, and the activities of their prominent agents such as Appayya Dīkṣita.

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51. I am indebted to Ajay Rao, whose forthcoming work on the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect and its influence in Vijayanagar helped to formulate my ideas on this point.

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