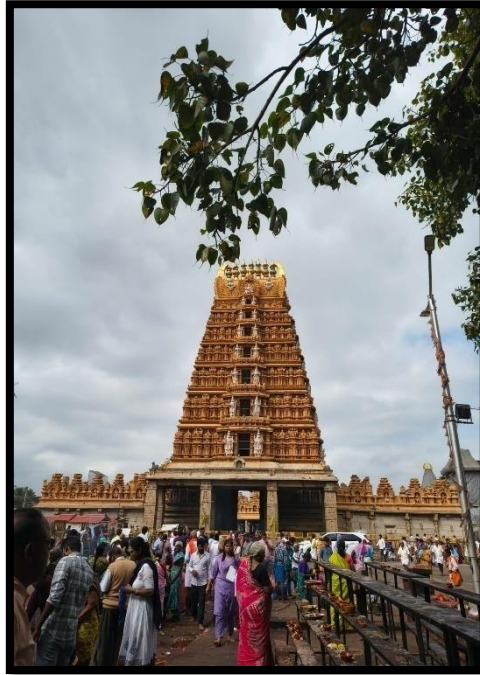


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WE HAIL THEE, O NANJUNDESHWARA!

Naganandhini N R

*IC & SR Research Assistant, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, TN,
India*



We hail Thee, O Nanjundeswara, the temple priests had lit
A couple of deepams at Thy Gopuram: a new tradition, perhaps?
What a heartwarming sight it was in the night
Under the glowing moon, O Chandrasekhara!
For us to behold this blessed, pristine gold divine duo,
O Digambara, thank you for arranging a cosy car for us,
For the money, food, lodging and a safe journey way back home too
Everything Thou took care of when we sat quietly meditating,” Shiva Shiva.”

Earnest Gratitude at Thy Glorious Feet, O Nataraja!
Phew, how sick my nose and throat were, remember?
I could barely walk or talk, yet Thou made me dress up in a turquoise bluish-green maxi gown,
Charged my body with Thy Shakti and made the pilgrimage an illuminating reality.
Especially I, who cried in April last ominously, on my 23rd birthday:
A 22-year-old self-stranded from last May for a year and a half until October next.

O Srikanteshwara, I pity my poor abilities.
Why couldn't I grasp Thy mute words?



Last December and April, Thou “forewarned” me about a series of disastrous consequences
When I meditated, taking Thy name with utmost devotion inside the temple,
An uncanny fear caught me unprecedented,
Then an inexplicable sense of terror wrapped my body, gripped and seized my inner temple! And O to my holy dread,
Some restive force conquered my mind from all four sides, O Shambu!
It shook my soul, stripped it bare, and left my spirit in smithereens.
Hardly could I muster up the courage to solder the pieces together,
Pale and unnerved, I felt after praying to Thee, what a strange episode that was!
At Nanjangud, Thy Holy Abode in Mysuru.

“Karma would catapult rocks and shards at me one by one in a row”; how well Thou had foreboded to me!
Thou even appeared in my “dream” just before the new year of 2025 dawned!
Where Thou presented Thyself in a shattered form: queer body with cracks and chinks and fractures all over
A walking *Bala Shiva* to my awe, the ground we shared had split too, severing us two apart: powerless, I gazed on
Thou had worn a puzzling smile, addling me even trebly!
Thou had encased a grin that only now, after a year, this December, I come to comprehend.
That smile, despite the damage Thy statue had wrecked, meant
A “deeper message”, not just for me, but for everyone who’s going through a similar phase as I am:
“Despite all the travails, thou should smile, my dear child!
For only such a smile, ensheathed in faith, can help you overcome
The toughest of tides, the roughest of rides!
You may feel that you have hit rock bottom,
But you shall not remain thus when I am here to prop thee up and reclaim thy honour and dreams.
Wake up, Nandhini! Wake up! Enlighten thyself!”

O Nanjundeshwara, thank you for shaping me into what I am today: an IC& SR Research Assistant at IIT Madras.
Yes, I cried for months: diurnal stress extended to sting me over and over again.
Yes, I tossed and turned in my bed for weeks: nocturnal depression swallowed my life-energy.
Yes, I had the urge to bid an eternal adieu to my beloved family multiple times.
But I remembered that “Thou” will come to me at the end of the day to save me...
That Thou will not let me go astray...
That Thou will absorb my darkness and splash Thy Light generously into my life...
It took so many months, Shiva, yes, but Thou still remembered me and blessed me profoundly!
Precisely, “a year and a half” it took for Thy Supreme Will to blossom fully!



For Thy Grace to act on my sinful patterns. Thou erased them and drew a beautiful picture for me to dwell my mind on...

It was Thou who changed my *karma*, O Nanjundeshwara, my *Kula Devta*,
How do I thank Thee for everything that You have bestowed upon me?
The list is incredibly endless, oh, where should I begin?
May Thou continue to love me and direct me on the path of *Dharma*.
Thou art my compass, my light, my strength, my everything... I bow to Thee!

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