



ஆரணம் நான்கின் பொருளை ஆய்ந்தெடுத்துரைத்த
"பன்னிரு ஆழ்வார்கள்"



ஸ்ரீபொய்கையாழ்வார்



ஸ்ரீபுத்தகாழ்வார்



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ஸ்ரீதிருமங்கையாழ்வார்

E book on Azhwars
By
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NAMMAAZHWAR'S ANUBHAVAMS
A Peek into his enrapturing sentiments
(Serialized in S.V.D.D. Website from 15th June 2012 to 15th January 2013)
(except those marked (*))



AN INTRODUCTION

No work on any philosophy can be complete without an understanding of the architects who made it possible. This is even more so in the case of religious philosophy because the hagiographic background of the great savants who had the 'savoir faire' thereof would reinforce the credibility in the system, which they not only preached but also practiced in their lives.

The works of Azhwars stood mysteriously a replica of the Vedas themselves and therefore came to be known as Dravida Veda. In fact, there is a view that even the great Rishis are no match to the greatness of the Azhwars because these Rishis got their 'Jnaanam' (wisdom) as a result of their own '*Punyam*' (actions of spiritual merit) and therefore called '*Aarsham*', whereas the wisdom of the Azhwars was the direct result of the Lord's divine grace and therefore called '*Divyam*'. It is because of this that the works of Azhwars is called '*Divya Prabhandam*'. These works are non-pareil in every sense — be in sentiment, style, or syntax. They take even a casual reader on a guided tour into the esoteric exegesis of the Vedas without offending the provisions of exclusions and prohibitions enjoined in the study of the Vedas in original.

Nam-Azhwar is the foremost among the Azhwars and foremost among the Acharyas (that is, aside of Sriman Narayana, His Consort and Vishvaksena) as well. His four *Prabandhams* brim with devotion, love, poetic excellence, and literary flavor that hold in its grip the attention of anyone who cares to read. They explain the essence of *Vaishnavam*, *Thathva Thrayam*, *Artha Panchakam*, etc. and deservedly called the '*Tamizh Veda*'.

Nam-Azhwar is also known as Satakopa, Sataari, Paraankusa, Kurugai-Piraan, Vakulaabharanan, etc. His involvement with the wonderful experiences of Krishna Avathara was such that Parasara Bhattar observed that it is the thirst of the love for Krishna that had personified itself and came down to earth as Paraankusa.

The sentiments expressed in every single verse of his works kindle an insatiable interest and transport one to an enrapturing state of *Bhakthi* ecstasy. It is very difficult to select one verse over another for poetic excellence or the emotional content. But even one among the

any of his incomparable verses can bestow on the reader an unprecedented delectable experience.

We shall, in this series, savor the poetic excellence and devotional fervor of a few select verses from Nammazhwar's works. I hope this will not only draw the readers towards his own other verses but also prompt them to learn the import of the other Azhwars' verses as well.

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TIRU VIRUTTAM

LISTEN! OH! LORD!

1. Poi ninra Jnaanamum

In the very first verse, the Azhwar dramatically stops Bhagavaan, asking him to "Listen" to his petition.

*Poy ninra jnaanamum pollaa ozhukkum azhukkuDambum
Inn ninra neermai ini yaam uraamai, uyir aLippaan
En ninra yOniyumaaip piraanta ImaiOr talaivaa!
Mey ninru kETTaruLaay aDiyEn cheyyum viNNappame 1.*

The Azhwar for whom the Lord granted absolute wisdom by His grace (*mayarvara mathinalam*) starts Tiruviruttam with a plea to detach him from the endless chain of *samsaara*.

"Oh! Lord of *Nityasooris!* Lend me your ears" says the Azhwaar." You came down to earth several times on your own accord to save the Jeevas. But we are born with deep attachment to our filthy and impermanent bodies and despicable conduct. Thus, we are irrevocably immersed in misery. Only you can salvage us from this plight. You MUST listen to my petition. There is no other way for us.

*Poi ninra jnaanam: Viparita jnaanam = Misguided knowledge.
Pollaa Ozhukku = Conduct tainted by feelings of I, My and Mine
Azhukku UDambu = Body that is constantly subject to transmutation and deterioration.*

The Azhwar indicates all the five realities in this first stanza itself:

*Paramaatma Svaroopam: ImaiOr Talaivaa
Jeevaatma Svaroopam: ADiyEn
Upaaya Svaroopam: En ninra yOniyumaaip pirantaai (The Lord who takes
Avataras is Himself the means.
VirOdhi Svaroopam: Poi ninra jnaanm, pollaa Ozhukku, inninra neermai
Phala Svaroopam: Seyyum viNNappam i.e. Kainkaryam and UyiraLippaan.*



TIRUVASIRIYAM

2) WHY IGNORE MOTHER AND CELEBRATE A STONE!

6. Oh! Oh! Ulagattin iyalbE

Tiruvasiriyam is the essence of *Yajur* Vedam. In this, Swami Nammazhwar, wonders why people do not realize their goal of Moksha but waste their lives over futile things in life. He brings this out in the *Tiruvasiriyam Paasuram* which means:

The Lord created the entire universe. Once, He saved it by taking the form of a wild boar. At the time of deluge, He kept the whole universe with all its inhabitants in His tummy and when the time came, He released them for another lease of life. He takes care of all the needs of everyone. When such an all merciful Lord is there, it is intriguing why people ignore Him and run after petty deities mentioned in some insignificant contexts in the Saastras and thus are permanently condemned to the miserable cycle of existence.

It is like disregarding one's own mother who gave birth and celebrating a mere log of wood by giving it ceremonial bath and offering even meat by killing creatures!

They do so only in the false hope of securing some evanescent worldly benefits. Though they may at first appear pleasant, ultimately, they will lead to further misery by pushing them down into the mire of *Samsaara*

He feels sorry for such ignorant folk and exhorts them not to be misled but to return to the royal road to *MOksha* viz Devotion to Lord Narayana.

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PERIYA TIRUVANTADI

3) WHY DO YOU BELITTLE YOURSELF?

16. Seeraal Pirandu

*Seeraal pirantu sirappaal vaLarndu
pEr vaaman aakakkaal pEraaLaa!- maarbaarap
pulginee UNdu umizhnda Bhoomi neer ErpariithE
sollu nee yaam ariya Soozhndu (16)*

“How come” he asks “without living up to your numerous glorious names and being known as “well born” and “well bred”- you took the *Avatar* as a dwarf with the name of Vaamana - a despicable dwarf who cannot boast of any merit of birth or upbringing? Perhaps, you thought that only by assuming such a ridiculous form could you go a-begging for a gift of earth. And what earth?

- **Your** earth that you embraced
- **Your** earth that you gulped:
- **Your** earth that you released at the time of a new Kalpa.
- Even though such an earth was **your very own**, why on earth did you beg of Bali to gift it to you with the symbolic pouring of water?

I really need an explanation for this queer act of yours.

Pulgi: Embraced (Obviously a reference to Bhoodevi)

PEraaLan: Renowned with glorious names.

4) THE CONTAINER CONTAINED!

75. Buviyum iru visumbum

In Verse 75, he refers to “Container being contained”

*Bhuviyum iru visumbum ninakaththa nee yen
Seviyin vazhi pugunthu enn uLLaaai- avivinRi
Yaan periyaneer periyaa enpadanaai yaar arivaar
Oonparukku UNmaiyeY! uLLu.*

- Oh! Lord! You hold a discus capable of devouring all flesh; this world and *Paramapada* are contained in you.
- Thus, you are the Lord of both the worlds (*Ubhaya Vibhuti Naathan*).
- How come, while this being so, you chose to enter me through my auditory faculty, and you became contained in me and that too permanently?
- Now that you are contained in me irretrievably, who can say which one is greater than the other? **You OR Me?** If you know, you may yourself explain this conundrum (and admit your defeat!)

5) HOW CAN THEY HOPE FOR SALVATION?

86. Kaar kalanda MEniyaan

*Kaar kalantha mEniyaan kai kalantha aazhiyaan
Paar kalantha valvayitraan paambaNaiyaan
seer kalantha sol ninainthu pOkkaarEl soozh vinaiyin aazh thuyarai
en nenianthu pOkkuvaar ippOtu*

- People of the world are wasting their time without experiencing the bliss of the Lord's names.
- The Lord is of the color of the azure skies
- He has the divine discus in his hand
- At the time of deluge, he keeps the worlds in "safe custody" in his stomach and protects them
- He reclines on the serpent couch.
- If only people should talk of these facts, they can free themselves from all sins.
- Without doing this, why are they wasting their lifetime?
- I wonder how they do this and how else could they ever hope to rid themselves of sins.?



IMPORTANCE OF TIRUVOIMOZHI

Of all the *Divya Prabhandams*, *Tiruvoimozhi* occupies a special pre-eminent position. It is said that one should sit quietly in front of the Lord when *Tiruvoimozhi* is recited because the Lord would not like any disturbance while chanting of *Tiruvoimozhi* goes on.

Nammazhwar who is the foremost among Azhwars and foremost among the *Acharyas* is known as "Satakopa" or "*saTaari*". The *Sataari* that we respectfully receive in the temples is considered the placing of Lord's feet on our heads. The belief is that this very symbolic contact itself would redeem us.

Swami Desika says in *Paduka Sahasram Slokam 22* that it is not correct to say that only those who have studied the *Divya Prabhandams* of *Azhwars* will be welcome to the Lord and others would not be fit receive His grace. It is for saving even those who could not or did not study the *AruLicheyals*, that the "**miracle contact**" of *SaTaari* had been instituted. And, through this, Nammazhwar introduces and recommends the laity to the Lord for redemption. Hence, the importance of *Tiruvoimozhi*.

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TIRUVOIMOZHI 1

WHY THE FEET?

1.1.1: *Uyarvara uyar nalam*

Uyarvara uyar nalam uDaiyavan evan - avan
Mayarvara mathinalam aruLinan eva - avan
Ayarvarum amarargaL adhipathi evan?- avan
Thuyar aru SuDar aDi tozhudu ezhu mnanE!

MananE! Oh! My Mind!
Tozhudu Ezhu: Rise (Redeem) yourself by worshipping
SuDar aDI: at the resplendent feet of the Lord
Tuyar aru: This alone can obliterate grief.

Whose grief?

Poorvacharyas prior to Ramanuja used to refer it to the grief of devotees. Emperumaanaar explained that it was the grief of the Lord Himself which got obliterated when the grief of the devotees was removed "*aDiyaargaL tuyaram teera thun tuyar teerndaan aanaan*"

Uyarvara Uyar nalam uDaiyavan: The lord whose innumerable qualities are natural, auspicious, and unexcelled. It is not because of the paucity of His qualities but our own limitations to comprehend that we are not able to enumerate them.
Cf: *yatO vaachaa nivartantE apraapya manasaa saha*

Mayarvara mathinalam aruLinan: One who granted *Jnaana* and *Bhakti* which alone can dispel the foibles of sheer intellect. BhaTTar calls this "*Bhakti roopapanna Jnaanam*"

Ayarvarum amarargaL adhipathi: One who is the lord of even the tireless *Nityasooris*.

The substance of the verse is Sri Narayana is THE Paramaatma and worshipping at His feet alone can confer true bliss.

The 1st line describes His qualities

the 2nd, His grace

the 3rd His Omnipotence.

Thus, the 3 lines establish His Paratvam.

The 4th line depicts both *Parama Hitam (Tozhudu)* and *Parama Purushaartam (Ezhu)*.

Also, it establishes that the Lord has a *Subhaasrya Sareera* - an auspicious form (NOT the *Nirguna, Niraakaara, NirvisEsha Brahmam*) as projected by some, by a reference to His glorious feet (*SuDar aDi*)

TIRUVOIMOZHI 2

SO HIGH AND YET SO LOW!

1.3.1: *PattuDai aDiyavarkku eLiyavan (*)*

*PattuDai aDiyavarkku eLiyavan, pirarkaLukku ariya
Vittakan – Malar magaL virumbum namm arum peral azhagan
Matturu kaDai veNNai kaLavinil uraviDai aappuNDu
Ethiram uralinODu iNaindu irunda eLivE!*

Bhagavaan is easily accessible to his devotees. He cannot be reached by others. He is the beloved of Mahalakshmi who resides on lotus. It is a wonder that such a one should indulge in stealing butter and get caught red-handed and bound to the mortar exhibiting his utter helplessness! How is this possible? Asks Azhwar and answers it himself. Do we not see the massive pachyderm kneeling to enable even a lame person to climb on it and be seated?

If he were to do this to everyone, would it not result in their viewing him with derision as one among themselves and miss the bliss? Azhwar answers: Do not worry about this.

- As you start praying to him, he will confer "*Para-bhakti*" which means that what is known through Sastras would induce you to a desire to access it quickly.
- This will lead to "*Para-jnaanam*" which means acquiring virtual mental experience of Bhagavaan (*prathyaksha Samaanamaana maanasa anubhavam*).
- This will lead to "*Parama-bhakti*" which means that you will reach a stage when you feel that you cannot stay away from Bhagavaan even for split-second.

PattuDAI: Those with Bhakti. The word "*uDai*" is significant. The one who possesses is called the "owner" (*UDaiyavan*). Can Bhakti be a possession? Yes. "*LakshmaNO Lakshmi sampanna:*"

eLiyvan: If a prince were to pledge his possessions for a pittance, he cannot go back to redeem it with all the wealth he may acquire subsequently. When Bhagavaan gives himself up to his devotee, he would not back out by virtue of his opulence. Even if he were to be asked to go on errand or act as a chauffeur, he will willingly submit himself to the task.

Vittagan: *Bhagavaan* who is a terror to his enemies, becomes a subservient to *YasOda*.

Malar MagaL Virumbum: "*agalakillEniraiyum enru alarmEl manbgai urai maarbhaa*"

Arum peral aDigaL: Bhagavaan reveals at once even to us both his Supremacy and easy accessibility.

Mattu uruk kaDai veNNai: "*urukkaDaivadu*" means "Churning with great effort". *Bhagavaan* who is "*Avaapta Samastha Kaamaan*" (who has all his desires satisfied) had, however, one more desire!

What was that?

He wanted to taste butter even as it was arising from churning.

As he could not get it right away, he resorted to stealing it! Azhwar paints a pen portrait of how *Bhagavaan* was caught in the act.

UraviDai aappuNdu: "Uravu" means "Chest".

What kind of chest?

The chest that was embraced by "*Malar magal*"

uralinODu iNaindu irundu: Even if the mortar should breathe, KrishNa would not! He acted as if he were an "*achit*"!

yEngiya eLive: He was afraid that if he cried aloud, his mother may rain more blows! So, he had to control himself!

ethiram: Like Vedas that returned crestfallen unable to fathom his "*Paratvam*" **high above**, his "*Soulabhyam*" could not find a firm **ground below**.

Was it not enough for him to be born in the caste, Kulam and home of his beloved Gopis? Should he subject himself to this punishment and cry over it?

If we remember how he was bound, he will relieve us of our bondage of "*Samsaaram*"

TIRUVOIMOZHI 3

THE GREAT LION AND THE MAN LION

2.4.1: aaDiyaaDi agam karaindu (*)

aaDiyaaDi agam karaindu- isai
paDippaaDi kaNNeer malgi, engum
naadi NaaDi narasinghaa enru
vaaDi vaaDum ivvaaNudalE

When pent-up feelings of separation take over, they pour out in the form of a mother's anguish. She bemoans how her bright faced daughter moves hither and thither aimlessly, shedding copious tears and searching for her beloved everywhere prattling all the time "Narasinga, Narasinga". She feels disappointed that the Lord who rushed to rescue Prahlada had not thought fit to come to her rescue.

Azhwar asks "Famished by her separation, she suffers emotional disturbance in such a way to evoke the sympathy of onlookers. When she is steeped in sorrow, should you not show at least an iota of sympathy for her?"

- In "*anchiraya maDa NaaraaI*", she got disappointed on not getting the grace of the one who measured all the worlds but at least at that time she had stamina to depute a messenger.
- In "*vaayum Tirai ugaLil*", her misery in missing the company of Archaa standing at TirukkurunguDi was more poignant.
- In "*AaDiyaaDi*" her inability to enjoy the Lord along with Nityasooris makes her still more desolate.

It may be questioned why she did not approach the Nityasooris for help and why she should appeal directly to the Lord. Azhwar seems to answer: "When someone loses his precious gems in his possession in a forest, it is but natural for him to complain to the ruler"

As mother, she reminds the Lord as to how when they needed, he helped Prahlada, Aniruddha, Piraatti and the country revealing his "*Tvara*" in protecting them and asks whether he should not show the same sense of urgency in rushing succor to her daughter. Otherwise, he would risk the loss of his reputation earned during his various incarnations.

The suggestion is that she calls upon VishNu to exhibit his "*VaishNavatvam*".

What is this "*VaishNavatvam*"?

When a person sees the suffering in others, if he is a true *VaishNava*, he would empathize with them and rush to help. This is "*VaishNavatvam*".

But, if he feels that the sufferer should continue to suffer, it can safely be concluded that he is devoid of "*VaishNavatvam*"

Here my daughter is fretting and fuming because she cannot afford to give up such a precious company and cannot end her own life for not securing the same. Unable to do either, she is unable to stay put in a place but wanders hither and thither like a lizard that has its tail cut asunder. This is the import of the words "*AaDiyaaDi*".

Did not Kousalya undergo this kind of experience when she had to be away from her son, Sri Rama going on exile? Valmiki describes this as "*nrityanteem iva maataram*". A person standing on burning charcoal would be alternating his feet to avoid the scorching. Only cymbal for beating time in music was missing in this dance!

Agam Karaindu: The mind melting into a liquid. Like a thirsty person's craving for water

Isai PaaDippaaDi: Like musicians who sing aloud alternating with low voice. Earlier, only cymbal was missing. Because, she has such a melodious voice, even her wailing sounds like

music! Did not Rama refer to Sri Sita's voice s "*maduaa maduraalaabhaa kim aaha mama bhaaminee/ mad viheenaa varaarOhaa Hanuman! Katayasva mE*"

kaNNeer malgi: When the mind became liquified, it flowed in the form of tears after coming out in the form of song. Valmiki again says: "*Rama LakshmaNa Seethhartham Sravanteem vaari nEtram*"

BhaTTar asks " The eyes that should yield tears of joy shed tears of sorrow. Is this good?

Engum: Everywhere. She is searching everywhere. Why search in places where he was not likely to be? It is because Narasimha appeared in unexpected place. If we miss something, do we not search everywhere. We will search for an elephant even within a pot! (*PaanaikkuL yaanai*)

NaaDi NaaDi: After looking for his presence everywhere. Why not search for the one who helped Gajendra and why search for Narasimha? It is because he appeared suddenly from a pillar. The suggestion here is that let alone a pillar, even a twig of a plant was not there for this creeper-like girl to hang on!

She seems to ask the Lord:

- Will you help only those with clear knowledge and not an ignorant orphan?
- Will you help only an elephant and not a poor little girl?
- Will you help only when a father is inimical to his progeny?

Narasingaa enru:

- Oh ! Lord! You can appear anywhere.
- You saved Prahlaada when it was neither day nor night
- You did not have to use any weapon. Your nails were enough for you. In the case of my daughter even this is not necessary.
- You do not have to show your leonine appearance.

VaaDi VaaDum:

As the Lord did not appear even after such pathetic pleadings, she becomes too famished and weak like a leaf bud that has lost its support.

Ivva NudalE:

"vaal' means Light

"Nudal" means forehead.

When someone dies by being hit by an arrow or by drowning in water, the cause of death can be detected instantly needing no forensic investigation. You know why and how my daughter met with her death. She experienced what you should have experienced. May be, you are keeping mum thinking that if she were not there, you can create many like her! What a tragic scene, this.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 4

FAULTLESS SERVICE- IS IT POSSIBLE?

3.3.1: *Ozhivil Kaalamellaam*

*Ozhivil Kaalamellaam uDanaai manni
Vazhuvilaa aDimai seyya vENDum naam
thezhikuraL aruvi thiruvEnkaTathu
ezhikoL sOthai entai thantai tantaikkE*

This verse is the very life breath of *SrivaishNava Sampradaya*. The *Azhwar* desires that he should render faultless service (*vazhuvilaa aDimai*) without interruption (*ozhivu-il*), forever (*kaalam-ellaam*) being always with the Lord (*uDanaai manni*) like LakshmaNa.

***Kaalam ellaam* means including the past.**

How is it possible to do service retrospectively?

The implication is that the service done from now on should be **so intense** and so dedicated as to make up for the lost opportunity in the past.

How can LakshmaNa be cited as role model for *Kaalamellaam*, *uDanaai manni*, *vazhuvilaa aDimai* etc.

He did fail on every count. How?

First he did not stay with Sri Rama when Sri Rama went after the mysterious stag. Hence, he failed in keeping constant company as promised by him - *sarvadEsa*, *sarva kaala*, *sarva avasta* etc. Even when Sri Rama and Sri Sita were together privately, LakshmaNa stood outside possibly to avoid embarrassment to the couple enjoying each other's company.

In an imaginary dialogue, *Achaaryas* used to say, that LakshmaNa asked the *Azhwar* what he would have done in the circumstances. *Azhwar* replied that he would not leave the place but convert himself into a lamp (*Kuthu viLakku*) or a stepping stone (*PaDikka*) or some such inanimate object and would have stayed put there itself and thus avoided any embarrassment

Second, he did not render "*vazhuvilaa*" faultless service because when Sri Rama had specifically asked him to stay and guard Sri Sita, he left her when she uttered some harsh words. This indeed was a "*Dharma SankaTam*" for LakshmaNa but it is undeniable that he transgressed the specific orders of Sri Rama and his own promise. "*aham Sarvam Karishyaam*". The *Azhwar* is said to have replied that in this event, he would have split his personality one to guard Sri Sita and the other to accompany Sri Rama.

All this may look poetic fancy and imagination running riot, but the beauty of the imagination cannot go un-admired.

Vazhuvilaa also means devoid of *Ahamkaara*, *Mamakaara* etc, craving for name or fame, sense of competition or jealousy, *sva bhOghyataa* attitude (i.e.) sense of self gratification – Vide Sri Vachana BhooshaNam.

**Well. That was in *TrEta yuga*.
What about *Kaliyuga* when the *Azhwar* lived?**

Precisely for giving an opportunity to devotees like *Azhwar* that the Lord had come all the way “down to earth” in TiruvEnkaTam. The service one expects to do in SrivaikunTam can be done **here and now** and the Lord in His “*Soulabhyam*” will be prepared to accept it.

Ezhil koLL jOthi: His *Soundaryam*. Also, it means the one who shines in the company of *PiraaTTi*. *Ezhil*= *PiraaTTi* (*Mahaalakshmi*).
Also means the light atop the mountain top.

Entai: Swami, *Seshi*

tantaikkE: The emphasis on “**kE**” denotes “*akaaraartha eva*” (i.e.) for the sake of the Lord only.

It would appear that *Azhwar Tiruvaranga PerumaaL Araiyaar* while reciting this verse was so overwhelmed by emotion that he would go on repeating “*ozhivil kaalamellaaam, kaalamellaaam*” for long, without proceeding further.

Swami Desikan concludes his “*Nigamana Adhikaara of Srimad Rahasya Traya Saaram*” quoting the verse:

“*sarveswaran taaLinaik keezh ozhivil kaalam ellaam uDanaai manni vazhuvilaa aDimai seyya naam enra manOratathin paDiyE sarvadesa, sarva kaala, sarva avastOchita, sarva vidha kainkaryangaLaiyum etru vaazhwaargaL*”

TIRUVOIMOZHI 5

SERVE THE LORD’S SERVANTS

3.7.1: *Payilum suDar oLi-*

Payilum suDar oLi moorthiyai Pangayak kaNNanai
Payila iniya nam paar kaDal sernta paramanai
payilum tiruvuDaiyaarElum avar kanDeer
Payilum pirappiDai thOrri emmai aaLum paramarE

After establishing that service to the Lord is "*Parama Purushartham*" in "*Emmaa veeDu*", the *Azhwar* proceeds to explain the last post. "*Purushaartha kaashTa*" in this exercise of service. The "*ananya sEshatvam*" implied in "*u*" in the *PraNava mantram* "I am **not** *sEshan* to anyone" **excludes** not only all other deities but also one's own self. This, however, **includes** "*Bhaagavata sEshatvam*" (i.e.) Service to the servants of the Lord.

Emperumaanaar is said to have exemplified *Satrugnaazhwar* as the role model of this "*Bhaagavata sEshatvam*"

How?

He would cite:

*Gachchtaam maatula kulam BharatEna tadaa anaghah/
Satrugna nitya satrugnah preeti puraskritaa//
(VR Ayodhya KhaaNda 1.1)*

Satrugna was **taken** by Bharata to his uncle's house almost as if he were a piece of luggage or 'personal effects'. He had no choice, nor did he desire any. In serving Bharata, the *Bhaagavata* - Satrugna excelled even LakshmaNa who went with Sri Rama to the forest but is seen on occasions to have exhibited his individuality and personal opinions. Satrugna was "*anagha*" – blemishless. (i.e.) *vazhuvilaa*.

Cf also,

*"kEsavaa, PurushOttamaa, kiLar jOthiyaa, kuraLaa enru pEsuvaar
aDiyaargaL entammai virkavum peruvaargaLE" (4.4.10)*

WHO IS A BHAAGAVATA?

Anyone whose thought, word and deed are directed solely and **exclusively** towards Lord VishNu – they are *SrivaishNava Bhaagavataas*. *Azhwar* says that they are our masters who are empowered even to sell us!

Cf: TiruppaaN *Azhwar's* "*aDiyaarkku ennai aaT paDuthiya vimalan*".

The *Azhwar* says "I am a slave to the slaves of *Bhagavaan*-
"*Charamaavati daasa daasan*"

WHO IS BHAGAVAN?

VishNu purana 5.74 and 75 defines this:

"The following six qualities are denoted by the term "*Bhaga*" viz.,

- Absolute Lordship,
- Absolute valor,
- Absolute fame,
- Absolute prosperity,
- Absolute knowledge and
- Absolute determination".

It is the one who possesses all these six qualities can be called "Bhagavaan". It is Sriman Narayana alone who is the soul of all beings. All souls rest in Him. He is the cause and support of all. That is why He is called "*Bhagavaan*" which suits Him and Him **only**.

In the case of others, it can at best be used only as a matter of courtesy NOT because they deserve to be called so"

*Aiswaryam samagrasya veeryasya yasasaa Sriyah
Jnaana vairaaghyO chaiva shan naam 'Bhaga' iteerana /
Vasanti tatra bhootaani bhootaatmanya akhila aatmani
Sa cha bhootEshu asEshEshu vakararthas tatO vyayah//*

TIRUVOIMOZHI 6

A KING AND A DOG!

4.4.1 Our naayakamaai (*)

*Our naayakamaai Oda ulaguDan aaNDavar
Karu naai kavarnada kaalar, sidagiya paanaiyar – Odu
Peru naaDu kaaNa immayilE Pichai taam koLvaar
TiruNaaraNan taal kaalam pera sindithu uyminO*

Azhwar shows how power and pelf are ephemeral and evanescent by an illustrious illustration.

Even a person who becomes an emperor ruling over realms and regions, when defeated in a war, loses everything and is driven to eke out existence by begging. One such monarch is ashamed to beg during daytime. He sets forth at dead of night with a begging bowl. While trying to scale the tall rampart surrounding his erstwhile city, his grip slips and he falls to the ground. The mud bowl gets broken and as in the darkness he could not see that he had stamped on a dark pregnant dog. Instantly, the angry dog bites him. Though he could not bear the pain from his bleeding wound, he could not cry lest he should wake up his erstwhile citizens whom he wanted precisely to avoid seeing him in that condition.

- In "*Vidumun mutram*", he advised us to practice "*Bhakti YOgam*"
- In "*sonnaal VirOdam*", he asks poets to sing the praise of *Emperumaan*
- .In this, he asks us to fall at the feet of *Emperumaan* as our only resort.

This is because, other than PerumaaaL, everything else like wealth up to Kaivalyam might appear pleasant for a while but will contain within potent poison.

Our Naaykamaai:

One who rules over the entire world surrounded by the high seas without any challenge. *Azhwar* considers such a state of power as an incurable disease for which no medicine has been found. This would make the patient crave to enjoy everything all by himself. It can

make him alienate and antagonize even his own spouse, siblings, children, and parents. When power disappears, all those whom he ignored will now ignore him.

Oda: for an interminably long period of time. Did not Lord Acton say: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". We see rulers with autocratic powers for over 50 or 60 years have fallen to dust without a trace. In our own days, we have seen the rise and fall of Hitler, Mussolini, and such other dictators.

AaNDavar: Power and pelf can keep one in good stead only so long as he has a good time.

Karu naai: The erstwhile monarch wishing to ogle his erstwhile kingdom tries to climb the tall ramparts but loses his grip and falls to the ground disturbing the dog in the process. In Tamizh, it can mean both "a black dog" and "a pregnant dog". Such street dogs roam about. If in the intense darkness of midnight, someone disturbs them, they would pounce upon them, bite them hard so that flesh and blood would ooze out from the body of the victim. The fate of the monarch in this condition may better be imagined than described!

Kavarnda Kaalar: In such a predicament, he would not be able to cry in pain or conceal his wound !. The monarch used to wear an anklet to denote his victory "*Veerkkazhal*" is now wearing "Dog-bite". It is the practice with dogs to bark in chorus when a dog starts barking and he has no way to control the situation and avoid prying onlookers woken up by this noise!

Sidagiya Paanaiyar: He could get only a broken mud bowl for begging. In the melee, even this broken bowl got pulverized.

PerunaDu kaana: Once before, all subjects and even his tributaries had to wait for an appointment to meet with him. Now, on hearing the noise of barking of the dogs and breaking of the bowl, ordinary folk assemble at the spot to find out what had happened only to see his pitiable plight! What a shame!

Immayile: In the present life itself. If this were to happen in his next birth, no one will remember this plight. Earlier, he wore an armor all over his body. Now, he presents himself with his bare body as he has no clothes to cover himself up. That this should happen in his present life itself is indeed a tragedy!

Pichaitaam koLvaar: Azhwar uses the expression "*Pichaitaam koLvaara*" instead of "*Pichai koLvaar*" to signify that deserted by kith and kin, it is now his fate to seek food by begging. In the heydays, he would accept the offerings from subordinates through his deputies. Now, he himself is made to go abegging personally. Earlier, he used to feed others. Now, he moves from door to door seeking alms!

Tiru NaaraNan: Why "*Tiru*" before "*NaaraNan*"?
If such a situation should be avoided, it would be necessary to propitiate "*Tiru*" Mahaalakshmi.

Taal: Azhwar started his poem with the words "Thuyar aru SuDar aDi". If we wish to avoid misery, we should resort to "SuDar aDi"

Kaalam pera: Quickly. Do not delay. Tomorrow may be too late!

TIRUVOIMOZHI 7

YOUR TOGETHERNESS IS MY AIM

4.9.10 kaNdu kETTU urru mOnthu

kaNdu kETTU urru mOnthu uzhalum aingkaruvi
kaNDa inbam, therivariya alavillaah chitrinbam
oNN Thodiyaal tirumagaLum neeyumE nilaa nirpak
kaNda sadir kaNDu ozhindEn unn tiruvaDiyE

"Oh! Lord! By your grace, I have abandoned the limited mundane pleasures provided by the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch and even the purely self-gratifying self-knowledge called "Kaivalyam" or "Atma anubhavam" All these pleasures are the very anti-thesis of the incomparable experience of absolute happiness that you alone can grant?

oNN Thodiyaal tirumagaLum neeyumE nilaa nirpa:

I have found out the way to realize this happiness of serving you and your consort, the bangle-spangled *PiraaTTi* and I have reached your glorious feet - glorious because you both stand unique and unrivalled in *Sri VaikunTam*. This "Serthi" or "togetherness" is our "UpAya" (means) and "UpEya" (goal).

This togetherness is a favorite subject of Swami Desikan.

oNN Thodiyaal:

- In Tamizh literature, the hero tells his lady love that he has plans to go abroad. At the very mention of separation, the lady becomes so famished and thin that her bangles become loose and drop down.
- When he said that he would take her along with him, out of sheer exuberance, she regains more than her original form so that she now finds it difficult to put on the very same bangles and they break off!

Such is the "togetherness" of *Bhagavaan* and *Bhagavati*!

Cf: "agalakillEn iraiyum enru alarmEl mangai urai maabhaa"

kaNDa sadir: All the others are your "daasa-bhootas"-servants. This "sui generis" pre-eminence adored by *Nityasooris* is what I also seek.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 8

THE PRIMORDIAL GOD

4.10.1: *Onrum tEvum ulagum uyirum*

*Onrum tEvum ulagum uyirum yaadumillaa anru.
naanmugan thannODu dEvar ulagODu uyir paDaithaan
kunram pOL maNi maaDam neeDu tiruk kurugur tannuLL
ninra aadhi piraan nirka matrai deivam naaDudhirE*

In the beginning, the Lord was alone.
Neither Brahma, nor Shiva, nor any dEvas.
No human or other beings.
Nothing was there.

Cf: ChanDogya UP: - "*sadEva sOmya idam agra aseeth*"

Cf: Taittiriya UP: "*eKO hi saha naaraayaNa aaseeth, na Brahma, na eesaano, na imE dyaavaa prithvee*"

He started creating everything including the four faced Brahma, *dEvas*, the heavens where they live, the earth where all other beings live. It is this very same Lord who now stands as "Aadhipiraan" in Tiruk Kurugur in His *archaa* form exhibiting His "*soulabhyyam*" as much as His "*Paratvam*". When He is very much there waiting to grant whatever you want, (even *mOksha* on death)

"maraNam aanaal VaikunTam koDukkum piraan"

How come, you run after petty deities (*kshudra dEvatas*) who are as much His creations as you yourselves are??

This includes even the ordinary kings on earth.

Nampillai explains that *Bhagavaan* created the 4 faced Brahma who created the 5 faced Shiva who in his turn created the 6 faced one. Thus, the "*eka*" became "*bahu*". This also alludes to the story of "*kapaala mOksham*"

Udhanga asked KrishNa whether KrishNa could not have averted the Mahaa Bhaarata war. KrishNa is said to have replied: I have tried my best but DuryOdhana was bent upon destroying the PaaNDavas and swore that he would not live while *PaaNDavas* were alive, thus exhibiting extreme enmity towards PaaNDavas. So, I had to give up "peace offensives" and resort to "war offensives".

Similarly, the Lord tried His best to wean the *Samsaaris* and elevate them to the company of "*Nitya – Sooris*", but they were obstinately determined to be "*Nitya – Samsaaris*" and resisted the Lord so much that He had to give up and entrust the duty to *Azhwar!*

People are confused and misled into false determination by various *Saastras* and *PuraaNas* that seek to glorify certain petty deities in certain specific contexts, giving the impression that they are either equal or even superior to *Bhagavaan*. They do not have either the maturity or the patience to examine in what specific circumstances and for what specific reasons hyperbole was employed in the case of other deities. These people fail to understand how these hyperboles are never meant to detract from the "*Paratvam*" of *Bhagavaan*.

They do not understand how Agni, Shiva and others have been spoken of highly in "*Taamasa*" *PuraaNas* which are not authoritative at all and Brahma and others in *Raajasa PuraaNas* that are perhaps only a little more authoritative than the earlier ones. The most authentic "*Saatvika*" *PuraaNas* have never been tired of declaring *Bhagavaan* as the paramatma.

Perhaps, the Lord thought that the best person to disabuse their minds would be the *Azhwar*, instead of Himself making the effort that might be misunderstood as "self-glorification".

In this decad 4.10, the *Azhwar*, out of compassion, desires to correct those whom even the Lord could not!

- He first establishes how "*Sriyah Pathi*" is **the supreme lord** and yet He was so accessible taking His abode at Tirunagari, the birthplace of the *Azhwar* himself.
- Then, he points out how ignorant folks fall for the trivial and temporary benefits made available by petty deities.
- He then proceeds to implore them to realize the blend of supreme power with supreme mercy of "*Sriyah Pathi*" who would grant not only "*MOksha*" but also all that can be and those that cannot be granted by these petty deities.
- At the outset, the *Azhwar* established the "*Paratvam*"
- In: *Uyarvara* and in *TiNNan veeDU*, he established His "*Vibhavam*". But, to no avail.
- He now gives a clarion call saying that **here he** is standing in all His "*Soulabhyam*" in the *archaa* form waiting patiently for them to return to Him.

Tirukkurugaipiraan pillaan who wrote the 6000 PaDi, marshals un-rebuttable "*PramAaNams*" in support of this position while explaining the import of this hymn as also hymn 3 of this decad –"*deivam matrillai pesuminE*".

As the *PramaaNas* are inexhaustible, he concludes saying "We need not search for any more *PramaaNas* than what the *Azhwar* has declared in this hymn".

Ninra aadhi piraan: The one who stands foremost in the *PramaaNas*. The way *Aadhi piraan* stands looks as if He were doing a penance! The Lord seems to think "Oh! I have given these people soul, body limbs and *Saastras* to guide. But they do not seem to learn. May be, they will realize at some stage when they will become mature enough. Let me give them a long rope and wait patiently"

Tirukkurugaipiraan pillaan marvels referring to *Aadhi piraan* .

Can you ever imagine a "SEshi"(master) yearning like a "Saadaka"bird (that waits patiently for the fresh rainwater which alone it drinks) and waiting patiently for His "SEsha"(servant).

What a *Soulabhyam*?

When such a one is waiting for you to grant whatever you want, your running after petty deities **is like a person digging a well for water on the banks of the eternal flowing Ganges.**

Acharya hridayam comments that the *Azhwar's* poetic genius combined with his extreme compassion flows like water, milk and ghee and broke the banks of *Para Bhakti*, *Para jnaana* and *Parama Bhakti* and overflowed to save humanity in the form of this *Avaavil antadi* - the flood of eagerness to save humanity through this "anta Aadhi"

"*AzhwaaruDaiya kavi Bhakti praavaNyam, neer, paal, nei amudhaai nirambina, Eri mEnikku naLiyumaappOLE Para Bhakti, Para Jnaana, Parama Bhakti aaga viLangi, karai miDantu mozhippaTTu avaavil antadi enru peyar petradu*

TIRUVOIMOZHI 9

I DECEIVED GOD!

5.1.1: *Kaiyaar chakkarathu*

Kaiyaar chakkarathu enn karumaaNikkamE! Enrenru poiye kaimmai solli puramE puramE aaDi mettE petru ozhindEn, vidhi vaaikkinru kaappaar aar aiyO! kaNNapiraan! araiyO inip pOnaale

- In the 1st decad, the *Azhwar* established that *Bhagavad kinkaryam* to the Lord is *THE Purushaartam*.
- In the 2nd decad, he overcame the impediments.
- In the 3rd decad, he explained how *Bhagavad Kinkaryam* included *Bhaagavta kinkaryam*.
- In the 4th decad, he advised how to get rid of the vulgar pleasures as also *kaivalyam* that stood in the way of *kinkaryas* mentioned above.
- In this 5th decad, he establishes that it is *Bhagavaan* alone who can eliminate the hindrances

In this verse, he celebrates how by the unconditional grace of the Lord (*nirhEtuka kripa*) he got rid of all the sins accumulated over innumerable past lives (*Sanchita*) from the beginning-less time as also those currently indulged in and how he was made instrumental in correcting others too in the world.

“Oh! The black gem (*karu MaaNickamE*), who wields the divine *Chakra!*
Being immersed in sensual pleasures, I acted as if I loved you. I deliberately defrauded you
by uttering hypocritically false words of praise (*poyyE kaimmai solli puramE puramE aaDi*)

Kaimmaai: Huge lie. We feel it sacrilegious even to repeat what the *Azhwar* says here that he
cheated God! By no stretch of imagination could we ever hold *Azhwar* guilty of this
indiscretion.

It should be understood that these are spoken on behalf of us who constantly delude ourselves into believing that we are smart enough to deceive God, claiming credit for anything that we deem as good and blaming God whenever anything goes wrong in our perception.

If we detach ourselves deliberately from mundane interests and attach ourselves to Him as
our **only** refuge (*sarva vida Bhandu*) He, on His part, would suspend His omnipotence (*Sarva
Swaamitvam*) and independence (*Sarva Swatantratvam*) and become one with us in His
infinite mercy.

But, proceeds, the *Azhwar*, “You trusted even my falsehoods as true and showered your
grace and made me fit to be ranked among your servitors!”

Vidhi Vaaikkinradu: *Kaappaar aar?* “Goodness! Gracious! Who can prevent your grace and
how can you ever leave me now?”

Vidhi: Fortune, Fate. Even as fate or destiny is inevitable, *Bhagavad kripa* is also inevitable.
When it flows none can avert or alter it and nothing can be done about it. Once He decides
to show His grace on someone, He integrates Himself indistinguishably and therefore, **there
is no escape for Him even!**

Embar avers that even the Lord has *agjnaana* (ignorance), *vismriti* (forgetfulness) and *asakti*
(limitation to His omnipotence).

How?

Embar explains: The Lord said in the case of VibheeshaNa “Forgetting his faults, if any
(*vismriti*), ignoring his defects (*agjnaana*), when once VibheeshaNa has come seeking my
hand of friendship, I can never let him down (*asakti*)

*mitrabhaavEna sampraaptam na thyajEyam kadaachana/
dOshO yadyapi tasya syaath sadaam yEtad agarhitam
(VR Yuddha KhaaNda 18.3)*

- When a person surrenders to the Lord, the Lord forgets (*vismriti*) all sins committed by him/her.
- Even after surrender, if the *Prapanna* should commit any sins knowingly or unknowingly, the Lord would ignore them (*agjnaana*).

Why?

It is because of the Lord's inability to go back and change His mind from grace to justice (*asakti*).

When one surrenders to the Lord, the Lord Himself surrenders His *Paratvam*, *Swatantryam*, His *DaNDam* - **everything in favor of the *Prapanna***.

Oh! KaNNapiraan!

Where are you going?

Acknowledge your defeat at my hands before running away!

Shame! Shame! says the Azhwar.

aiyO!* and *araiyO! These are exclamations of jubilation uttered by the victor in a battle or in a game for putting the vanquished to shame.

Why KaNNapiraan? Because, as KaNNapiraan, the Lord had a track record.

Was he not beaten up by the cowherd girls as he was caught red handed while stealing butter? Did he not plead with them tearfully?

In the 10 verses of this decad, we can notice what is known as *Saatvika Ahamkaara* justified pride in having secured God's grace that even goes to the extent of challenging the *Swatantryam* of the Lord.

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TIRUVOIMOZHI 10

A TIGHT BANDAGE!

5.1.5: kaNNapiraanai viNNOr karu maaNickathai

*kaNNapiraanai viNNOr karu maaNickathai amuDai
naNNiyum naNNagillEn; naDuvE oru UdambiliTTu
tiNNam azhundak kaTTip pala seivinai van kayitraal
puNNai maraiya varindu ennaip pOra vaithaai puramE*

The *Azhwar* reflects on why despite learning what the Lord's grace could do, he did not turn to Him so far. He says that the culprit is his association with the body and the sensual interests. It is as if the body was tightly tied down with ropes of ignorance and *karma* over the layer of the skin, which concealed the **ulcer within** and locked the **Lord without**.

Who is responsible for this?

The very Lord Himself - says the *Azhwar*.

It was you who gave me the body and the skin to cover and then tied me with ropes and pushed me down the quagmire of sensual pleasures. Since you covered my knowledge thus, you only must uncover and release me to *Bhagavad anubhava*

Nampillai comments that the *Azhwar's* condition "before and after" was like Sri Sita in Ashoka vana waiting for the Lord to release her and her actual release.

ViNNOOr amudai: The darling of *Nityasuris* who enjoy Him afresh every moment.

NaNNiyum naNNagillEn: The *Azhwar* asks - Even though I got *aatmagjnaanam*, I wonder why I could not secure a *Baahya samslEsham*?

NaDuvE oru uDambil iTTu-tiNnam azhundak kaTTi - puNNai maraiya varindu:

It is because this tabernacle of flesh, blood, and marrow within is covered with a glossy skin making it appear as if everything was OK. When this deceptive façade is torn down, the ugliness of the body will be revealed with all its loathsome and nauseating rotten flesh fit only to be thrown to dogs. The *Azhwar* seems to ask whether it was proper on the part of the Lord to let him dwell in such a prison-like body in smug satisfaction so far.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 11

NEITHER HERE, NOR THERE NOR ANYWHERE!

5.7.2: AngutrEn allEn; ingutrEn allEn,

*AngutrEn allEn; ingutrEn allEn,
unnaik kaaNum avaavil veezhndu- naan
EngutrEnum allEn ilangai setra ammaanE!
TingaL sEr maNI maaDam needu
Sireevara mangala nagar urai
Sangu sakkarathai! tamiyEnukku aruLaayE*

Angu utrEn allEn: Oh! God! I have not practiced any *Saadana* to deserve a place **in your Sri Vaikuntam.**

Ingu utrEn allEn: Since I am always immersed in enjoying your beauty and qualities, I have not attempted to practice any means prescribed in the *Saastras* for observance **in this world.**

Engu utrEnum allEn: Thus, I do not belong to either or anywhere else. This is the interpretation given in 6000 *PaDi*, which was the **nirvaaham** of all Achaaryas **prior** to Emperumaanaar.

Or the first two lines, Periyavaachaan PiLLai explains:

The *Azhwar* pleads pathetically-

I am unable to come to your place and enjoy your proximity. Nor am I, one of those *Samsaaris* who have no thought or desire to reach you and therefore, do nothing about it. I have fallen between the stools having lost both the possibilities. I do not belong to the former; sure, as anything, I do not belong to the latter either. I am not able to forget you. I am not able to bear this miserable existence and this excruciating suspense anymore.

unnaik kaaNum avaavil veezhndu: I have only one irresistible urge to meet with you. The only thing that keeps me alive is my love for you. Your qualities have enslaved me. This is like LakshmaNa's saying that he was enslaved by the qualities of Sri Rama "*guNair daasyam upaagatah*" (VR Kishkinda KhaaNdam 12.4)

ilangai setra ammaane!

Periyavaachaan PiLLai explains the relevance of this reference.

- You asked LakshmaNa to bring you the bow and arrow.
- You had to build a bridge across Sethu.
- You had to organize a battalion; you took all these troubles all for the sake of redeeming Sri Sita.
- In my case, all this is not necessary.
- You can save me by mere *sankalpa*.
- Also, unlike in the case of Sri Sita who had TrijaTa to console her, I have nobody here to console me. I am desolate and forlorn.

There is a further hint in this reference:

The *Azhwar* seems to ask –

- Was it not you who told Sugreeva that if he were to die, you will find no joy even if you win the war and redeem Sri Sita?
- This shows how deep your concern is for the one who has surrendered to you.
- Here I am, having surrendered.
- Where is your concern and where is your compassion? (VR Yuddha KhaaNdam 41.4)

tingal sEr maNi maaDa needu sireevara mangaLa nagar urai:

You have taken your abode in the city of Sireevaramanagai tall ramparts of which touch the very moon?

sangu Sakkarathai: You have the famous conch and discus. Unlike Ramavataara, you stand here forever ready with your conch and disc. What are you waiting for?

TIRUVOIMOZHI 12

THE INSATIABLE NECTAR

5.8.1: Aaraa amudE!

*Aaraa amudE! ADiyEn uDalam ninpaal anbaayE
Neeraai alaindu karaiya urukkuginra neDumaalE!
Seeraar sennell kavari veesum tirukkuDantai
YEraar kOLam tigazhak kiDantaa kaNDEn emmaanE!*

When the Lord does not respond to his entreaties in Vaanamaamalai, the *Azhwar* turns to Aaraavamudan at TirukkuDantai but even here the Lord keeps mum. The *Azhwar* feels

exactly like a suckling baby that looks up eagerly at its mother for breast feeding but the mother looks the other way.

As Sri Rama did not pay heed to the pleas of Bharata, only for carrying out duties in keeping up his promise, the Lord did not respond to *Azhwar* only to further deepen his emotions to blossom into denouement of the *Prabandham*.

Like Bharata who came to the forest in the fond hope of securing Sri Rama's return, the *Azhwar* longs for Aaraavamudan to heed his prayers or at least give him a word of consolation.

But the Lord kept a studied silence.

How many doors of yours would I have to knock at and for how long? he asks in utter desperation.

Aaraa amudE! Oh! Lord! What is the secret of your charm that however many times and however long one enjoys your wonderful form, it always remains as fresh as ever and as insatiably sweet as it can be, as if it were eyed for the **first time every time?**

Amritam was obtained at a specific point of time when the milky ocean was churned and was made available to the *Devas* only. But your form **here** is always nectar available and to everyone alike?

ADiyEn uDalam ninn paal anbaayE neeraai alanindu karaiya urukkuginra:

My heart and mind simply melt away in my love for you. That you can bewitch the hearts of *chEtanas* (living creatures) is well known. How come, you can even bewitch and melt my body *which is an achEtana*, an inanimate object.

UDalam karaiya urukkuginra: It has not only melted but also flows like a flood. Like a goldsmith who melts the ornaments, you melt me, my mind, and my body alike?

NeDu maale! Having done this, why do you hide yourself far away?

Serrar senn nell kavari veesum: The red paddy grain stems grown tall in the fields waft in the winds as if they are doing fanning service for you!

The *Azhwar* draws a comparison between the prosperous greenery of TirukkuDantai and the cool eyes of the Lord.

YEraar kOlam tigazh kidantaai: Your reclining posture in the evergreen TirukkuDantai is an inexhaustible feast to my eyes.

KaNDEn emmaanE: I have only seen your form but have not had the *Baahya samsIsham* yet. I have understood you are my Lord.

Is it not natural for a baby to ask for breastfeeding, having known its mother??

It is said that one Loka Saaranga Mahaa munigaL who was living in the far north, happened to listen to the recital of this hymn by a few pilgrims. He was amazed at the felicity of the word *aaraa amudE* (insatiable nectar) to describe the Lord, when there are umpteen other names for the Lord, Narayana etc. He found the name so wonderful that he immediately decided to set forth to the Tamil speaking country (*Tamizh naDaiyaaDum dEsam*) where the language had such meaningful expressions never heard of before elsewhere. (Vide pages 466-467 of Azhwar Tiru uLLam Part I (3rd Collection) published by Sri VisishTaadvaita Research Centre, Chennai- Pub: 1994)

This verse is considered most important also because on a similar occasion Sri Naatha munigaL heard this decad and on enquiring where he could get the rest of it all. He was told to go to Tirukkurugur. He recited Madurakavi's *kaNNInuNN Siruthaambhu* and consequently Namaazhwar himself initiated him into not only Tiruvoimozhi but also the entire 4000 *Divya Prabandhams*. Thus, this decad held the key for unlocking the treasure of *Divya Prabandhams*, which had almost been lost to posterity.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 13

HUNGER AND THIRST PERSONIFIED!

Paasuram 6.7.1: *UNNUm sOru parugu neer thinnum vetrilayum*

UNNUm sOru parugu neer thinnum vetrilayum ellaam
KaNNan emperumaan enrE kaNgal neer malgi
MaNNinuL avan seer vaLam mikka avanoor vinavi
ThiNna menniLa maan pugum oor TirukkOLoorE.

In this decad, as in some others, the *Azhwar* simulates the role of the mother of a girl madly in love with the Lord. The mother and daughter were lying next to each other and sleeping.

At dead of night, the mother suddenly wakes up only to find that her daughter is not in her bed. She searches all over but could not trace her. In her maternal anxiety, she wonders whether ghosts would have abducted her. But, since she knows her daughter's intense devotion to the Lord of TirukkOLur, she decides that the daughter would have walked up to TirukkOLur to meet with the Lord.

The mother narrates how her daughter had missed so many things in life in her pursuit of the Lord - her mind, her beauty, her luster and even her sense of shame - in short, everything that is considered precious assets in young girls who have come of age.

The mother laments how her daughter had thrown to winds all these and walked away all alone without any escort to TirukkOLur in the conviction that the Lord therein who was everything to her would not let her down.

Nampillai graphically describes the trepidation of the mother who learns that her daughter had taken bold to go it alone to elope with her lover, disregarding all sense of decency and ignoring the possible blame of misconduct at the hands of the village folk who are only too willing to indulge in rumor mongering!

My daughter who is doe-eyed says that KaNNan is everything for her - the food she eats, the water she drinks and the betel leaves she chews. Repeating this frequently, she languishes tearfully. I am sure she will reach the uniquely prosperous TirukkOLur about which she has been inquiring.

sOru: That which sustains, that which nourishes.

Vettilai: That which is enjoyable.

Why not merely *sOru*, *Neer* and *Vettilai*?

Why adjectives for each?

Nampillai explains that these may not afford relish always . But there are times when they will be relished most - food, when very hungry, water, when thirsty; and for the one who enjoys pan, it is most delectable after food and water in that order.

Anantaazhwan accosted a *Sri ViashNava* stranger and inquired about his native place. The stranger replied TirukkOLur. Azhwaan wondered why at all did he leave TirukkOLur, where he could get all he wanted even if he lived by tending donkeys. Meaning that the Lord who *was UNNum sOru, Parugu neer and thinum vettilai* was in his native place itself.

Emperumaanaar similarly asked a girl where she came from (*enguninrum*) She replied that she was from TirukkOLur (*TirukkOLuril ninrum*). He wondered how a woman belonging to TirukkOLur could ever go out of that place (*avvooril penGaLum pOgak kaDavaraai iruppaargaLO?*)

Nampillai explains that if a girl was found missing, you can surely trace her in the TirukkOLur temple. Such was the charm of the Lord of TirukkOLur.

ivvooril piLLaigaLai kaaNaaviTTaal kOvilukkuL tEDum athanai anrO?

TIRUVOIMOZHI 14

WHEN IS THE FINAL CALL?

6.9.9: *Aavi tigaikka aivar kumaikkum*

Aavi tigaikka aivar kumaikkum sitrinbam
PaaviyEnaip pala nee kaaTTIp paDuppaayO?
taavi vaiyam koNDa TaDan taamariakatke
Koovik KoLLum kaalam innum kurugadO?

Referring to the various impediments to the realization of the Lord, the *Azhwar* points to the mischief played by the five senses, which stupefy the soul. He asks:

- Is it that I am a sinner that you subject me to the vagaries of the five senses for diverting my attention?
- Do you mean to ruin me?
- Don't you remember that I am destined to enjoy the ultimate happiness with you at your feet that measured the entire universe?
- Will not the time between now and the time of your call for me gets abridged?
- I cannot wait any more.

Aivar: The five senses of ear, eye, mouth, nose, and body.

Pillaan while in his deathbed undergoing physical pain was frequently muttering the question in the last line of this verse *Koovik KoLLUm kaalam innum kurugadO?*

Nanjeeyaer who was beside him at that time was beside with grief and wept his heart out. Pillaan asked him why he should feel sorry. After all, I am going to a place of ultimate happiness and therefore, death was not a matter to fear or fit to be mourned?

TIRUVOIMOZHI 15

EAT ALL YOU CAN!

6.10.1 *Ulagam uNDa peru Vaayaa (*)*

*ulagam uNDa peru vaayaa! Ulappil keerthi ammaanE!
nilavum suDar soozh oLi moorthi! neDiyaa! adiyEn aar uyirE!
thiladham ulagukkaai ninra TiruvEnkaTathu em perumaanE!
Kula thol aDiyEn una Paadam kooDum aaru koorayE*

Meaning:

Oh! Lord of TiruvEnkaTam, which is verily the crowning auspicious mark on the forehead of the world (*tilakam*)! You have such a huge appetite that you literally gobbled up with your huge mouth and held in safekeeping the entire universe! Your glory is without limit! You shine in pure *Suddha Satvam* both within and without! Not only now but also for generations have I been your slave. Remember this and instruct me the way to attain your feet.

Comments:

Peru Vaayaa:

The *Azhwar* seems to ask the Lord -

- Is my eagerness to reach you any less than the size of the world you swallowed?
- You saved the world at the time of the deluge. Can you not save me now from the deluge of Samsaara in which I am drowning?
- You saved the world when nobody sought your help. Here I am crying hoarse for your attention. Can you not show mercy on me?
- You enlarged your appetite for the universe, Have you enlarged also your indifference to

those who surrender at your feet?

- Did I ask you to save my body (*Sareera RakshaNam*)?

Did I not ask only for "SOS" (saving my Soul (*Aatma RakshaNam*)?)

Why this indifference?

Ulappil Keerthi ammaanE:

Your glory is limitless. How? Those who have surrendered to you can live even amid their enemies without fear because of your care. Did not the serpent live safely as an ornament to GaruDa, because you had granted protection to it? I am sure such a one can save me too!

neDiyai: refers to the *Svaroopo roopa guNa* etc. of the Lord as the Lord.

Kulathol aDiyEn: refers to the *svaroopam* of the Azhwar as His eternal slave.

Aaaru: Aarudhal in Tamizh. The reference is to the reassurance promised by the Lord "Maa Suchah in Charama Slokam.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 16

INSEPARABLE

6.10.10 agalakillEn iraiyum – enru (*)

agalakillEn iraiyum - enru alarmEl mangai urai maarbhaa!

nigaril pugahaai! Ulagam moonru uDaiyaa! ennai aalwaanE!

nigaril amarar muni gaNangaL virumbhum TiruvEnkaTathaanE!

pugal onrum illaa aDiyEn unn aDik keezh amarndhu pugunthEnE! 6.10.10

Meaning:

Oh! Lord of TiruvEnkaTam! Your fame in protecting your devotees is nonpareil. Your suzerainty over the three worlds is equally well known. You are my Lord. It is also known that Celestials and Sages come in droves yearning to have your *Darsanam*. The fact that the ever compassionate Thaayaar Mahaalakshmi always rests on your chest saying that she will never ever leave Her seat in your heart but will stay put there, This is so reassuring to me that I have taken the liberty to surrender at your feet as my TiruvEnkaTam! Only you have to save me."

You are my only refuge. I have no other go.

Comments:

- In the previous decad, the *Azhwar* invoked the Lord and therefore, it is considered the essence of *Tirumantram*.
- In this decad, he invokes the PiraaTTi who is always and without interruption residing in the heart of *Bhagavaan* to exercise her *Purushaakaara* and surrenders. This is, therefore, considered to be the essence of *Dvaya Mantra*.

Let us see how this Paasuram reflects the *Dvaya Mantra*:

Alarmel Mangai: Sri

Agalakillen: The intervening 'Math'

From ***Nigaril Pugazhaai*** to ***TiruvEnkadathaane***: Narayana

Unn Adik Keezh: Charanou

Pugunthu: Saranam

Amarndhu: Prapadhye.

(Acharyas used to explain this as alluding to the 2nd line of Dvayam – (SrimatE NarayaNaaya namah)

Agalakillen: cf. Dhyaana Sloka of Dvaya Mantra "*Srikaanthyya Aalingitham*". She never released the Lord from the grip of her embrace.

Venkatadri Swami of Arasaanipaalai in his *Lakshmi Sahasram* humorously remarks how even when the Lord appeared as *Vaamana Brahmachari* before Mahaabali, the *PiraaTTi* was still adorning the Lord's chest. He says that the Lord covered her up with His deer skin upper cloth. Why?

If the Lord had not done so, *PiraaTTi's KaTaaksham* would have fallen directly on Mahaabali, thus defeating the very purpose of the Lord in His attempt to dispossess Mahaabali!

It is this *Purushaakaaram* that saved the raven

It is the absence of *Purushaakaaram* that led to the downfall of Ravana

The word *AgalakillEn* suggests that *PiraaTTi* is inseparable from the Lord both in *Upaaya dasa* (means) and *Praapti dasa* (goal)

The word *PugundEn* is in Past tense.

Panneer aayirap paDi explains that as the *Azhwar* had already taken refuge at the Lord's feet, there was no occasion for him either to do anything else or to go anywhere else and was destined to stay put there doing eternal *kainkaryam*.

You will remember that the *Azhwar* started Tiruvoimozhi with the words "*Tuyar aru SuDar aDi*"-(the feet that dispel misery). It is worthy of note that in this Paasuram, he completes his surrender referring to the same feet as "*aDik keezh*".

Both the expressions at the alpha and omega of Tiruvoimozhi viz. *SuDar aDi* and *aDik keezh* blast the concept of the *niraakaara, niravayava Brahmam* espoused by Advaitins.

Another interesting point to note in this verse is to remind how the Lord of TiruvEnkaTam shows his feet with his right palm as the refuge and how His pose of protective embrace indicated by his left hand is so reassuring.

When BhaTTar was about to initiate Azhagiya Manavaala Araiyaar into *Dvaya Mantram*, he asked all the assembled Sishyas to move out. Nanjeeyar also went out with a heavy heart that even he had been asked to clear out. But BhaTTar endearingly inquired the whereabouts of Nanjeeyar, called him back and asked him to witness the initiation. Nampillai says that Nanjeeyar used to mention this incident with pride in his *KaalakshEpam* sessions.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 17

DO YOU NEED A PORTER?

8.3.3 : *AaLum aaLaar*

*AaLum aaLaar, aazhiyum sangum sumappaar taam
VaaLum villum koNDu pinselvaar matrillai
TaaLum tOLum kaikaLai aaraat tozhak kaaNEen
NaaLum naaLum naaDuvan aDiyEn jnaalathE*

This decad is said to describe Azhwar's MangaLaasaasanam.
This is also known as Nammaazhwar's Tirup PallaaNDu

Oh! Lord!

- How come you carry the entire load of your disc and conch and other weapons all alone with none to accompany or assist you in this?
- Cannot someone share your burden by carrying at least your sword, bow or arrows??
- Like LakshmaNa, he would like to assist the Lord to get an opportunity to admire the shoulders and arms of the Lord at close quarters all the time.
- The Azhwar seems to feel sorry for the lack of assistants for the Lord in this regard.

TIRUVOIMOZHI 18

DIVINE CANNIBALISM!

9.6.10: *Vaarik koNDu unnai vizhunguvaan*

*Vaarik koNDu unnai vizhunguvaan KaaNil enru
Aarvutra ennai ozhiya- ennil munnam
Paarithu taan ennai mutrap paruginaan
Kaar okkum kaaTkaraiyappan - kaDiyenE*

The *Azhwar* expresses a peculiar Bhakti experience in which he portrays vividly how the devotee is within God and God is within the devotee each devouring the other almost an instance of "Divine cannibalism" in which "the eater is eaten" as A.K. Ramanujam puts in his "Hymns for the drowning"

Oh! Lord! As soon as I saw you, I wanted to devour you whole. But you overtook me and completely drank me up.

In 9.6.5 the Azhwar said that under the pretext of showering His grace, the Lord entered his body, mind and soul and devoured his life.

TiruvaruL seibavan pOla ennuL puguntu uruvamum aaruyirum uDanE uNDaan

Nampillai explains the word "Paruginaan" to mean that while in 9.6.5, He **ate**, here he **drank**. While the Azhwar was considering KaNNan as his *uNNum sORu, parugu neer* etc., it was now the Lord's turn to reverse the roles considering the *Azhwar* as His *uNNum sORu, parugu neer* etc. By exhibiting His qualities, He literally liquefied the mind of the *Azhwar* and drank it even before the *Azhwar* could devour the Lord.

It can be inferred that between the two, the Lord seems hungrier and thirstier than the *Azhwar* in this game of eating up each other!

IN 10.8.2, the *Azhwar* says that *Bhagavaan*, who entered his mind as a non-immigrant visitor, fully occupied it and is now refusing to move out and claims citizenship on the grounds that "possession is nine points of law"!

A strange predicament indeed! How strange that the Lord who with His huge belly felt insatiable even after devouring the seven worlds, seven seas and seven mountains sought mere tenancy but was held virtually a prisoner without parole, in the heart of the *Azhwar*! **A case of "Container contained"**

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TIRUVOIMOZHI 19
THE ONLY NAME TO REMEMBER
10.5.1: *kaNNan kazhalinai*

kaNNan kazhalinai eNNum manam uDaiyeer
ENNum tiru naamam tiNNam naaraNamE

The great *Acharyas* of yore used to give invaluable and rare advice to near and dear ones right about the time when they are about to give up their mortal coils. Similarly, the Azhwar tenders his sage advice to all of us in this decad, which represents the grand finale of his immortal work.

Oh! Those who desire to attain the feet of the Lord, who is renowned for His accessibility to His devotees! The **ONLY** name you ever need to remember and meditate is that of **Narayana and nothing else. This is the only truth.** Take this seriously and in right earnest.

This is like Vyaasa's swearing- "*Satyam Satyam punah Satyam*" etc. Nampillai comments on the word "*NaaraNam*" thus:

Unlike other mantras in which mutilation of pronunciation or variation in intonation etc. are likely to result in disastrous repercussions like the perpetrator being born as *Brhma Raakshasa* etc. the efficacy of Narayana mantra never gets affected by any distortions if and when the letters "na", "ra" and "Na" are uttered whether with or without the ending "m" or the fourth case ending, **so long as they are uttered with sincerity and a pure heart. How reassuring, this!**

TIRUVOIMOZHI 20

JEEVAN MUKTI CONCEPT DEMOLISHED!

10.8.2: *SaraNam aagum tanataal*

*SaraNam aagum tanataal aDiantaakku ellaam
MaraNamaanaal vaikuntam koDukkum piraan
Aran amainda madil soozh tiruk kaNNapurathu
TaraNIyaaLan tanatanbarkku anbaagumE*

This verse confirms that the Lord out of His infinite compassion grants to **all** prapannas who surrender at his feet, moksham instantly on their death.

This gives the lie direct to the concept of "Jivan Mukti" contended by some.

The *Azhwar* exhorts us to surrender at the feet of the Lord of TirukaNNapuram.

Nampillai says that except when he is in a trance like state of devotion, the *Azhwar* during his awakened state never tires of exhorting us to reach for the Lord's feet.

The *Azhwar* avoids the word "*mantra*"; instead, he uses the word "*Tiru-naamam*" to indicate that there are no restraints or constraints either in the matter of *adhikaari* (fitness of the person) or *anganyaasa*, *karannyaasa* (gestural invocations) etc. It is like a child calling its mother in its baby talk and the mother feeling happy over this.

First do this "*Sabda anusantaanam*"; "*artha anusantaanam*" will follow the *Azhwar* seems to advise.



PRESENT CONTINUOUS AND PAST PERFECT

All of us know the difference in grammar between "Present Continuous" and "Past Perfect".

When you refer to a person who is a habitual lazy person, or inveterate sleeper, you call that person as "One who continues to be lazy all the time". This is a perfect example of "Present Continuous"

The Veda Samhitas called authorless (*a-pourushEyam*) the later *BraahmaNaas*, *AraNyakas* (Forest scriptures) and *Upanishads* also known as the end of the *Vedas (Veda-antha)* that came out in the [form](#) of Questions and Answers in intimate sessions by the *Maharishis* who became the seers of hymns (*Mantra dtrishTas*) for clearing the doubts and concerns of *Sishyas*.

How did they become seers?

They acquired this accomplishment only after undergoing strenuous efforts (*Tapas*), concentration, meditation etc. And their works were open only to a select few born in the so-called higher *VarNas* well versed in the divine language (*DEva baasha*)

At the other end of the spectrum

We find that *Azhwaars* continue to be immersed in "*Bhagavad GuNa Anubhavams*" all the time. And, that is why, perhaps, they are called *Azhwaars (aazhwaargaL)* - an expression in the "**Present Continuous**" (which perhaps includes Future Continuous also).

This also lends itself to the view that these Saint-Poets "continue" to save us from the cycle of births and deaths by teaching us the means to attain Godhead through their classic outpourings called "*AruLicheyals*" in a way that we could easily understand, citing anecdotes that we can readily relate to.

These are considered even more valuable than the *Vedas*.

The *Divya Prabhandams* (Divine lyrics) of *Azhwaars* are the result of the immaculate wisdom bestowed on them by *Bhagavaan* himself of his own volition (*mayarvara mathinalam aruLinan*) for the benefit of entire humanity without any discrimination on grounds of *VarNa*, age or sex, in a language that the commoner could easily understand.

(Of course, due to the constant evolution of language, the Tamil of the days of *Azhwaars* may appear to some modern readers as a little difficult to follow but perhaps, not as difficult as the *DEva Baasha* of Sanskrit especially for those who have had no exposure to that language)

The *Azhwaars'* contribution to Tamil literature was second to none and stand incomparable. The sentiments contained in the *Vedas* of the north were found expressed in their works earning the sobriquet of '*DraaviDa VEdam*'.

One Lokasaranga Mahamuni who was living in the north once inquired some travelers from the south about the happenings in the south. They narrated to him the phenomenon of Sage Nammazhwar and his *Tiruvoimozhi*. When they sang the verse 'Aaraa Vamudhe' meaning the delectability of the nectar that was insatiable at any stage (referring to the beauty of the deity of that name), he was so overwhelmed at the sentiment contained therein that he settled in the area that could coin and speak such felicitous expressions (so hard to find in any of the languages in the north.)

These *Srivaishnava* Saints echoed the contents of the *VEDas* so faithfully that it would be difficult to distinguish between the **Sanskrit VEda** in the **DEva Bhasha** and **the Draavida VEda** in the **DraaviDa Bhaasha**.

Thus, to the exclusion of all other *Dravidian* languages, Tamil came to be regarded as

"THE DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGE."

The parallel between the contents of the Vedas and the Divya Prabhandam is so striking that one can rightfully wonder if there had been a thread binding the two in a common fold albeit invisible.

The astonishing fact is that the texts of the Sanskrit Vedas were unavailable to the *Azhwars* to serve as any kind of role model for their sentiments.

Of the 12 *Azhwars*, only 1/3 were *Brahmins* (*Periyalwar*, his daughter, *Andaal*, *Madhurakavi* and *ToNDar ADip poDi*)

- One was an untouchable (*Tiruppaanazhwar*),
- One a woman (*Aandaal*) and
- Some others whose parentage was not known.

Still, like the Vedas, they spoke the language of *Bhakti* which the *Vedic* seers expounded earlier.

No wonder, the first *Bhakti* poets were born in the Tamil speaking areas.

"Tamil was the one Indian mother tongue with a long literary tradition going back to at least the 1st century BC. The spoken regional dialects that later became the modern Indo-Aryan languages such as Bengali, Gujarathi, Marathi and varieties of Hindi did not have any literary form until after the 10th c A.D".

There is however, one unique personality in the galaxy of *Azhwaars* who doubles as an *Avataara*. By now, you would have guessed the personality. She is "Andal".

ANDAAL- meaning "One who had ruled over". (Past Perfect?)

By her nectarine Tiruppavai and Nachiyaar Tirumozhi, she

- not only ruled over Tamil language,
- not only over ChEtanas like us but she also
- ruled over the Lord through both her garland of [flowers](#) (*Poomaalai*) and garland of poems (*Paamaalai*).
- Not only did she rule over all these during her sojourn on earth (being the reincarnation of Mother Earth),
- She **continues to do so**, to this day **and will continue to do so** - for all time to come. (Present Continuous and perhaps "Future Continuous also)

That is probably why she is considered as one of the *Azhwaars*. In fact, she is known as the heiress to the glorious tradition of *Azhwaars* who preceded her as well as those who succeeded her. (*Anju KuDikku our Santadi*)

The word "ANDaaL" in Tamil means one who ruled.

"Ruled"?

Does it sound as an example of "Past Perfect"?

Let us see a practical example.

A poor man had fixed the wedding of his daughter. He did not have the wherewithal to celebrate the marriage. He approached his friend who was not only rich but was of a philanthropic attitude and a "man of word" who was never known to retract from his pledge. When the poor man put forward his request, the rich friend, without any hesitation, assured him saying: "Don't worry. You can go rest, taking comfort in the thought that marriage is as good as celebrated" - An assurance of a "fait accompli".

This is for all intents and purposes a case of "Past Perfect".

Thus, "*gOdhaa piraATTi*" represents both "Past Perfect" and "Present Continuous" (and perhaps "Future Continuous also) in grammatical parlance.



G.03 WHO IS THIS AZHWAR?

Sometime ago, we posted a query as follows:

"A few days ago, the *Tirunakshatram* of an important *Azhwar* went unnoticed.

I was expecting someone to post on his greatness on the occasion.

But none did.

Can you guess who it is?

Keep guessing and stay tuned.

To help you guess, I give below two clues:

1. Though we celebrate "*Tirunakshatrams*" that, strictly speaking, are based on the birth stars, the birth of this *Azhwar* is based on Thithi as in the case of Sri Rama Navami, Sri Krishna AshTami etc.

2. He is NOT one of the 12 *Azhwars* or Amudanaar who together composed the 4000 holy collects.

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Several *Bhaagavatas* came up with different answers:

Some guesses (incorrect) are given below:

- *KambanaaTTaazhwar*,
- *ILaiyaazhwar*,
- *Bharataazhwar*,
- *Satrugnaazhwar*,
- *Sudarsanaazhwar*, and
- *VibheeshaNaazhwar*

=====

Sri Garudadwajan <kgdwajan@xxxxxxx wrote in reply:

Respected anbil swAmin,

My best guess is Lord Vynatheyar. His birthday is celebrated as *Garuda Panchami* - along with his cousin (step) brothers as nAga Panchami.

Regards

Garudadwajan

A few others, also, could identify the correct Azhwar viz. GaruDaazhwar.

Congratulations to those who guessed it right.

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"THE GLORY OF GARUDAAZHWAAR"

(This write up is based partly on KaalakshEpams attended while in India and partly from "Sri GaruDan Perumai"- a booklet by Sri S. Sundaram of Vasu Chemical Industries published on 14th May 1995 for free distribution on the occasion of "Kanchipuram GaruDa SEvai")
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THE EVENT

GaruDaazhwar's birthday (*Avani Sukla Paksha Panchami*) fell under the "*Swati*" *Tirunakshatram* of Periyaaazhwaar who is considered the amsam of GaruDaazhwar.

Village damsels used to observe *Vratam* on this day. *SrivaishNava* temples perform special pujas on this day to propitiate GaruDaazhwar.

THE AZHWAR

Sri GaruDan is the divine falcon, the mount of Lord Sri Mahaa VishNu. He is the very soul of the *Vedas* (*Vedaatmaa VihagEswara:*). His glory is beyond description and defies description. Like the Lord's disc "*Chakrath Azhwaar*", Sri GaruDan is known as "*GaruDa Azhwaar*", a rare tribute to them. Some esoteric aspects of *GaruDa Azhwaar* can be learned only from learned *Achaaryas*. We allude to some of these in this write up. *Bhaagavatas*, who are knowledgeable, may wish to add their tributes.

HIS OTHER NAMES:

GaruDaazhwar is also known by several other names like

• VihagEswara	• MangaLaalayar
• Garuthmaan	• KshEmakaaree
• SuparNan	• Periya TiruvaDi
• Pannakaasanan	• KrishNan
• KhagEndran	• JayagaruDan
• Pakshiraajan	• PuLLarasu
• Daarkshyan	• Kaluzhan
• MOdakaamOdar	• SuvarNan
• Pushpapiyar	• Giri etc. (Vide GaruDa Puraana)

SIGHT

We come across several omens in our life. Some bring auspiciousness when seen; other when heard. For example, it is considered good if one sights a fox (*nari mugathil vizhippadu*).

Forget, what is in store for one whom the fox sees!

When GaruDa is seen flying, elders used to recite mentally the words "*MangaLaani Bhavantu*". They would advise not to pat your cheeks and not to bring your palms together in *Anjali mudra*.

SOUND

As for sound, it is considered auspicious if one hears the donkeys bray, however, horrible the noise may be! There are certain others like the owl that forebode evil whether seen or heard!

But, in the case of GaruDa, whether one sees or hears or even if one thinks of it, one is assured of good fortune. The sound of GaruDa known as "*GaruDa Dwani*" is deemed to be the very sound of "*Saama Veda*".

In fact, Lord GaruDa is considered the very personification of the *Vedas* (*Vedaatma VihagEswara*:)

THE THOUGHT:

The very thought of GaruDa and meditation and recitation of *GaruDa mantra* are said to confer auspicious benefits especially at the time of going to bed, setting out for a long-distance journey, commencement of activities relating to wedding etc.

THE MANTRA:

There are several mantras dedicated to important deities called "*Gaayatri*". "*GaruDa Gaayatri*" is enshrined in the 4TH PRASNA OF TAITTREEYA UPANISHAD (MAHAA NAARAAYANA UPANISHAD).starting with the words "*Tat purushaaya VidmahE*". This must be secured only from a qualified *Acharya*, after due process, to be efficacious. Swami Desika obtained this mantra from his preceptor and he was blessed by Lord GaruDa with "*Hayagriva Mantra*". We know how prolific and effective Swami Desika became because of these mantras.

PAANCHARAATRA SAMHITA,

however, recommends reciting the following Mantra while offering obeisance at the Sannidi of GaruDa.

(This is NOT the GaruDa Mantra mentioned above)

*"GaruDaaya namas tubhyam sarva sarpendra satravE/
Vaahanaaya mahAAvishNO: Daarkshyaaya amita tEjasE//*

ISWARA SAMHITA avers that GaruDa mantra can confer strong memory power, knowledge of *Vedantas*, gift of the gab and whatever one desires etc"

*"Vaag siddhi mahatee BhavEt/
Jnaanam cha mahat aapnOti/
yat cha anyatadi kaankshitam //*

PADMA PURAANAM in 4 sIokas that start with the words "*Siddhayachayathaa poorvam*" catalogues the various super powers that GaruDa mantra can confer on the *Upasaka*:

- 1) winning over others
- 2) vanquishing enemies
- 3) making others forget their evil designs
- 4) making others oblivious to their surroundings
- 5) floating in air
- 6) playing safe and being fearless and unaffected amid hurricanes, forest fires, floods etc.

- 7) performing magical feats
- 8) acquiring concentration in studies and improving retention of what is studied
- 9) Being victorious in debates, arguments, and war.

ATHARVA VEDA:

GaruDa Vidya occupies the pride of place among the 32 *Vidyas* enumerated in the *Atharva Veda*.

SATHAPATA BRAAHMANA:

In the Vedas, he is known as "*Garutmaan*" that became "*GaruDa*" in the *PuraaNa* period. *Sathapata BraahmaNa* explains the word "*Garutmaan*" as "*Dheeran*" (i.e.) Valorous.

MATSYA PURAANA:

Matsya Puraana equates *GaruDa* with Lord Himself even as we speak of *Sudarsana Bhagavaan* as *Bhagavaan* Himself.

GARUDA PURANA:

This *PuraaNa* details a lot of information on *Dharma Rahasyas*, Laws of justice "*PrEta kalpam*" (disposal of corpses), "*VyaakaraNam*" (grammar), *Chandas* (metres), *JyOtisham* (astrology), "*Saamudrikaa lakshaNam*" (defining the characteristics of ideal physical shapes), "*Ratna pareeksha*" (evaluating precious gems) etc.

THE BELL:

You would have noticed the image of *GaruDa* on the top of the temple bell used at the time of *Tiruvaaradana*. This is one of the four images considered auspicious on top of the bell, the other three being "*AadOthyam*", "*Sri Sudarsana Jwaala*" and "*Araadhana MaNI*"

THE SHADOW:

Fields where the shadow of *GaruDa* falls are found to yield profuse bumper crops and render the very locations holy.

THE ROOT:

There is a root of a plant known as "*GaruDak kizhangu*". Elders used to hang a bit of the root on the front entrance of the house (Just like we hang mango leaves) and this is said to ward off poisonous creatures while conferring auspiciousness to the home.

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GLORY OF GARUDAZHWAR Part 2

SOME OTHER NAMES OF GARUDA:

Apart from the names mentioned earlier, GaruDaazhwar is also known as:

- *Kaasyapi (after his father),*
- *Vainateya and*
- *Vinataasuta (after his mother),*
- *Daakshaayana (after his maternal grandfather, Daksha),*
- *Saalmaalin,*
- *Vinaayaka (not to be confused with the elephant headed Ganapathi), and epithets like*
- *Sitaananaa (white faced),*
- *Raktapaksha (Red winged),*
- *Sweta-ROhita (the white and red),*
- *SuvarNakaaya (Golden bodied),*
- *GaganEswara (Lord of the sky),*
- *Naagaantaka (Slayer of serpents),*
- *Pannaganaasana (Destroyer of serpents)*
- *Sarpaaraati (enemy of serpents),*
- *Tarasvin (the swift one),*
- *Rasaayana (who moves like quicksilver),*
- *Kaamachaarini (who goes where he will),*
- *Kaamaayus (who lives at pleasure),*
- *Chiraad (eating long),*
- *VishNu-ratha (vehicle of VishNu),*
- *AmritaharaNa and*
- *Sudhaa hara (Stealer of Amrita)*
- *SurEndra-jit (Vanquisher of Indra),*
- *Vajra-jit (Subduer of thunderbolt) etc.*

KAARKODAKA:

There is a sloka that says:

*KaarkODagasya naagasya, Damayantya naLasya cha,
RituparNasya Raaja rishEh keerthanam kali naasanam*

Meaning

If you mention the name of the serpent, *KaarkoDakan, Damayanti, NaLa*, the *Raaja Rishi* called *RituparNa* - all ill effects of the 7 ½ year Saturn will be neutralized.

You will find that the name of the huge poisonous serpent, *KaarkODaka*, is mentioned first in this sloka. This *KaarkODaka* is said to be the vassal and under the control of Lord *GaruDa* and it is because of this that he is said to neutralize the poisonous effects of *Sani dOsha* associated with his 7½ years sojourn in everyone's horoscope.

GARUDA MANTRA:

In the *Japa* dedicated to GaruDaazhwar, there is a "*maala mantra*", a powerful mantra that should be recited with the "*Dhyaana Sloka*". For the 5 lettered "*GaruDa mantra*", the Rishi is "*Viswamitra*" and the *Devata* is "*Sriman Narayana*"

VYUHAM:

Like Sriman Narayana, he has also 5 *Vyuha* forms known as:

- *GaruDan,*
- *Satyan,*
- *SuparNan,*
- *Daarkshyan and*
- *VihagESwaran.*

TATTVATRAYAM:

When PerumaaL gives His *Darsanam* mounted on *GaruDa vaahanam*, the base is said to represent the insentient *achEtana*, the sentient *Garuda*, *ChEtana* and the Lord the All-sentient *Iswara*. Thus, this is said to be an allusion to the "*Tattva Trayam*".

VEHICLE TO THE VEHICLE:

Mostly the vehicles (*Vaahanas*) of the Lord have no vehicles for themselves. But, GaruDaazhwar is said to have his own vehicle. He is known as "*Vaayuvaahana*" - one who rides on air. Elders used to point out *Sri VishNu Sahasra naamam* in which a reference is made as "*SuparNO vaayu vaahanah*".

REFERENCES TO GARUDAAZHWAR:

MAHABHAARATA:

In 21st Chapter of *Anusaasana Parvam of Mahaabhaarata*, the form of GaruDaazhwar is literally equated with that of *Bhagavaan* Himself thus:

tvam hi sourEh mahaa bhaahO suparNa: prOchyatE puraa

The *PaaNDavas* won the battle ultimately while fighting with the formation known as "*GaruDa vyuham*"

BY AZHWARS:

POIGAI AZHWAR: says that the Lord with *SuparNan* will confer on us Infinite bliss.

PERIYAZHWAR:

Udavap pull oorndu angu urutuyar theertha

TIRUMANGAI AZHWAR:

Pon malai mEl ezhunda maa mugil pOnruLar vandu kaaNeer

KAMBANAATTAZHWAR:

In his verse "*Ponvarai*" says "*ennai aalUdAIYAVAN ThOLL ninru*"

BY ACHARYAS:

BHAGAVAD RAMANUJA in his VaikunNTa Gadhyam
vainateyaadhibhiih.yathaa yOgam sEvyamaanam

KOORATHAAZHWAN:

Laksmipriyaa: parijanaah pathakEndra mukhyaah

SWAMI DESIKA:

BhujagEndra Garutmatadhi labhyai:

From the above, we learn that GaruDaazhwar is one of the *Nitysooris* (eternal ones)

Swami Desika has eulogized the glory of GaruDaazhwar in two of his StOtras viz., *GaruDa DanDatakam and GaruDA Panchaasath*.(More, on these later).

He assures us that by his grace GaruDaazhwar would cure even prolonged and chronic ailments, mental depravity, gastric and other allied discomforts, heart diseases.

All auspicious aspirations would be fulfilled leading one to wonder how it was possible to achieve what was earlier considered impossible of achievement.

In his *Amritaaswaadinee*, Swami Desikan avers that GaruDaazhwar would show to his *Bhaktas* the two feet of the Lord that he holds in his hands -
chala chEtasaam paada aravindam harEh that san-darsayateeva

Swami further describes GaruDaazhwar as the presiding deity (*adishTaana dEvata*) of the five winds that activate our bodies. *mrith pancha aakaadeesa*

Because GaruDaazhwar is known to devour serpents, he is also called *Giri* - which also means "One who devours". Swami Desika refers to this aspect when he says *pakshavaan mandasaila*: meaning he is like the flying mountain.

BY OTHERS:

Even poets with allegiance to faiths other than SrivaishNavam are seen to have referred to GaruDaazhwar (e.g.) *karai aNi mookkuDaip piLLai kaDaavi*

SAINT THYAGARAJA:

GaruDaazhwar helped Lord KrishNa in his fight against BaaNan in the *Paataala IOka*. Referring to this incident, Saint Thyagaraja hails him as a great devotee of Lord KrishNa

NARAYANA TEERTHAR:

praises GaruDa in his work "*TarangiNi*"

GUNAADYAN:

Gunaadya was a poet in 1st century BC who wrote "*Brihad Kathaa*" in a language called "*Paisaacha*" (demoniac) based on "*Naaganandam*", a drama written by King Harsha vardhana who makes mention of the prowess and compassion of GaruDaazhwar in 4 Verses in Acts 4 and 5 of the drama.

SAIVA TIRU MURAI:

In Chapter 11, Kaarmali glorifies GaruDaazhwar's wings as "*siragin GaruDana*"

YAKSHAGAANAM:

A Telugu drama is said to describe in glowing terms the greatness of GaruDaazhwar.

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GLORY OF GARUDAZHWAR - Part 3

SHARED TIRUNAKSHATRAM:

We saw that the *Tirunakshatram* of GaruDaazhwar is *Swaati* and that this is also the *Tirunakshatram* of Periyazhwar. It was under this *Tirunakshatram* that the Lord took His Avatara as Nrisimha. The specialty of this star is that the Vedas praise it as *JyOtir nakshatram*. It is believed that girls whose weddings are celebrated in the *Subha muhoortam* of *Swaati* will live happily in their husband's homes. The Vedas aver this by saying "*nishTaayaam dadhyaath*".

MUKTA KALAAPAM:

When the Sun is in *Tulaa Raasi* and in conjunction with *Swaati nakshatram*, it is said that pearls appear in the shells. These pearls are known as "Swaati pearl" and "*Muktaakalaapam*"

KULA DEIVAM:

The *Kula devata* of GaruDaazhwar is *Brihaspati* otherwise known as Guru. We know the popular saying that the wedding bells toll when there is "*Guru Paarvai*" in the *Jaatakam* as per *JyOtish Sastra*. The inference is that if a *Jaataka* is a recipient of the blessings of Guru, he/she would get married soon.

THE FAMILY TREE:

GaruDa's father was Kaasyapa Maharishi, son of Sage Mareechi. His mother was Vinatai, daughter of Daksha. His elder brother Arunan who has no limbs below his waist and appears on the sky with a red glow before Sunrise. GaruDa had two wives called Rudrai and Sukeerthi.

VAALAKHILYAS:

Valakhilyas were a group of 60.000 Sages born to Brahma's manasa putra Kratu and his wife Kriya. They were as dwarfish in stature as to be no taller than the line across the middle finger. But they were great *Tapasvis*, who acquired great power by dint of their rigorous penance. They used to move in groups. When once they were proceeding to a sacrifice performed by Sage Kasyapa, they could not ford a small pit with a handful of water because of their physical stature and they did not like to invoke their spiritual powers just for this

small purpose. They were struggling to cross the waters when Indra came on his elephant. On seeing their plight, he made fun of them. Enraged, they cursed Indra that he would be defeated by a son of Kasyapa. Thus, they were born because of the penance of Valakhilyas and their curse on Indra. During the visit of GaruDa in search of nectar (amrita), Indra with his army came to fight and was defeated by GaruDa, son of Kasyapa. (We will revert to the story of "amritaapaharaNa" later)

GaruDa's IDs:

- As per the *Aagamas*, he wears a red garment below his waist.
- As per Azhwar's description, he has a mole on the top right portion of his nose.
- GaruDa birds have sharp eyesight and could identify even small objects with utmost clarity of vision. They are otherwise known as "Sem-parundu".
- Experts have identified 48 types of the species belonging to this kind of bird.
- The height of GaruDa birds ranges up to 1½ feet
- As per *Veda Vaakhyas*, however, generally for birds, the ground would appear at nights as a flame of fire. So, normally birds would not sit on ground during nights. GaruDa birds also do not sit down on ground at nights.
- When GaruDa birds fly, you can witness a special majesty in their gait. They fly without fluttering their wings and fly in an even manner reminiscent of the *Swastik* symbol.

GLORY OF GARUDAZHWAR Part 4

AN ANTIDOTE TO FEVER

Power of GaruDa's vision is praised in the 21st SIOkam of *Soundarya Lahari* thus:
jvara pLushTaan drishTyaa samayati sakuntaadipa iva
That his vision would greatly reduce fever and bring comfort.

GARUDA SEVAI:

It is considered a special blessing to meditate on the Lord as seated on GaruDaazhwar. When the Lord rushed to save Gajendra from the crocodile, the Lord rode on his shoulders, placing His holy feet on the palms of GaruDaazhwar. It was on an *Akshaya Triteeyai* day, which incidentally invests an importance to the *Akshaya Triteeyai* day.

AMRUTA HARANAM EPISODE:

There was a dispute between Vinata, (mother of GaruDa) and Kadru (mother of 1000 serpents) regarding the color of the tail of a cow. The tail was indeed white and Vinata stated the fact. And Kadru argued it was black in color. The wager was that whoever proved the color chosen would be the master and the other would be a slave to the master for life. Kadru made a secret arrangement whereby she made all her serpent sons that were black in color to wind themselves to the tail of the cow. When the time came for proof, the tail appeared black and Vinata had to become the slave of Kadru. When GaruDa wanted to secure her freedom from this slavery, Kadru laid a condition that she would free Vinata, if GaruDa could bring *Amritam* that was in the custody of Indra. Accordingly, GaruDa set out in search of *Amritam* and succeeded in taking possession thereof. Though he ultimately succeeded in bringing the *Amrita kalasam*, he could declare "Mission Accomplished" only

after a stiff fight with Indra. What helped him in succeeding in his mission is the SIOkam with which his mother blessed him. It reads as follows:

*Pakshou tE maarutah paatu, chandrah prushTam cha putrah /
Siras tu paatu tE Vahnih Bhaaskarah SarvamEva tu //
VisNuh sarvagatah sarvaaNi angaani tava chaiva hi //*

It is believed that when one sets out on a long journey reciting this *SIOka*, no harm can occur to the person. In fact, it was with this *SIOkam* that Kousalya blessed Sri Rama when he set out for his "*Vanavaasam*"

GARUDA'S RESPECT TO A SAGE:

When on his return bearing the pot of nectar (*amruta kalasam*), he had to engage in a fight with Indra. Though he had all the powers to vanquish Indra, when Indra used the weapon made of the backbone of Dadeechi Maharishi, out of deference to that great sage, he submitted himself, shed one of his wings and feigned defeat at the hands of Indra.

HOW GARUDA BECAME THE VEHICLE OF BHAGAVAN?

During this fight with Indra, the Lord in His role as Upendra fought with Garuda. When Garuda got defeated at the hands of the Lord, he prayed that he should be allowed to take the *Amrita Kalasam* and be accepted as the Lord's vehicle. From then on, Garuda has been acting as the chauffeur- cum - vehicle of the Lord.

VAIRA MUDI OR VAINA MUDI:

When Garuda was acting as a canopy for the Lord of the milky ocean (*Kseeraabdi naathan*), in what is known as *VeLLayam teevu* (white island) near "*Saaka island*" in the vicinity of the milky ocean, he came to know that the diamond studded crown (*VairamuDi*) of the Lord was stolen by an asura called VirOchana. As directed by the Rishis, he defeated VirOchana and recovered the crown. When the crown was placed on the *archaa vighrams* elsewhere, it would not fit. When it was placed on *Sri Ramapriya* of TirunarayaNapuram (*MEIkOttai*), it fitted Him snugly. Because it was brought by Vinata's son Vainteya, it came to be known as "*Vaina muDi*". Incidentally, he spilled the white clay clinging to the crown at that place. It is this white clay that *SrivaishNavas* wear on their forehead and other spots on their bodies to this day.

WHY SERPENTS HAVE SPLIT TONGUES?

When Garuda was bringing the nectar, a few drops were clinging to the reed called *Viswamitram* that stuck to the pot. The snakes tried to lick the nectar and the cutting edges of the reeds indeed cut their tongues and that is why, we are told, that snakes have cleft tongues.

AMRITA VEERYAM:

The reeds because of their association with nectar came to be known as "*Amrita Veeryam*" which today is being used as a purifier called "*Darbam*" in all our religious rites.

GARUDOTKAARAM:

It is said that GaruDa spat the bits of bones of Valaasura and these became emeralds (*maragatham*) also known as "*GaaruDamaNi*" or "*GaruDotkaaram*"

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GLORY OF GARUDAZHWAR Part 5

DO YOU NEED INSTANT RELIEF?

Sometimes, even the most compassionate *Bhagavaan* might put to test His devotees and might delay granting relief. But, when one prays to *Bhagavaan* in conjunction with His *GaruDa-dwaja*, it is said that He would give up this testing and hasten to provide immediate relief. Nammazhwar attests to this fact in his Tiruvoimozhi 1.6.10 "*parivatil eesanai Paasuram*" saying "*koDiyaa vaDu puLLuyarnda MaadavanaarE*"

In his *Vyaakhyaanam*, PiLLaan also confirms this fact by saying *piraaTTiyODu kooDa ninru Periya TiruvaDikkuk KoDuthu aruLumaap pOIE*. It is, therefore, clear that *Sri SuparNan (GaruDaazhwar)* is the one who compels the Lord to grant instant and real relief!

PROTECTING THE VIRTUOUS AND PUNISHING THE WICKED:

The Lord in *Bhagavad Gita* spelled out the secret of His *Avataatras* as follows: *paritraanaaya saadoonaam, vinaasaaya cha duskritaam*

Swami Desikan referring to this says that for protecting the virtuous, the Lord wears his *Paadukais* at His feet while for destroying the evil bedeviling his devotees, he mounts on His GaruDa vehicle and hastens with supersonic speed to their rescue

GARUDA DWANI - A UNIQUE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

As many as 16 auspicious musical instruments have been identified and grouped into what is known as "*AadOthyam*". The sound of music emanating from these instruments in the form of a symphony is said to represent the sound vibrations of *Saama Veda* and is also known as "*GaruDa Dwani*"

GARUDA DWAJAM:

In the fight against Sisupaala, the flag that flew on top of Lord KrishNa's chariot bore the image of GaruDa and was called "*GaruDa Dwajam*". The word "*Dwajam*" itself would mean "*GaruDa Dwajam*" only.

GARUDA PURI:

In the olden days, whenever people wished to build a new city, or construct a sacrificial altar (*YaagavEdi*), they would devise them in the form of the flying GaruDa. There are several

explanations for the naming of Thanjaavur as that. **The place was originally known as GaruDa Puri.**

GARUDA/ NAAGA PANCHAMI:

We saw that GaruDa's *Tirunakshatram* is *AvaNi Sukla Panchami*. Bucolic womenfolk used to observe on this day a "NONbu" called "*GaruDa Panchami*". Since GaruDa's brothers, the Naagas were also born on the same constellation, some used to observe it also as "*Naaga Panchami*"

GARUDA DANDAKAM:

Swami Desika wrote a panegyric poem called *GaruDa DaNDakam*. He mentions that there is no deity equal to "*GaruDa na kaschit sama: tE*". It is perhaps no coincidence that in English the word *SuperNan* echoes this sentiment when pronounced to mean that there is none superior to him - **Super None!**

KUMBAABHISHEKAM:

People thronging to witness *KumbaabhishEkam*, would invariably expect GaruDa bird to hover over the tympanum of the temple tower and GaruDa would never disappoint them!

THE MOST FAVORITE DEITY OF THE RENOUNCED:

Do you know who is the most favorite deity *Sannyaasis* (Ascetics)? It is none other than GaruDaazhwar.

APARNA AND SUPARNA:

Do you know that both Paarvati (wife of Lord Siva) and mother of GaruDa, Vinata were the daughters of Daksha and therefore, were sisters and both were known as "*DaakshaayaNi*" Thus, GaruDa is closely related to Paarvati. Elders used to say that perhaps this was the reason why Paarvati is called "*AparNa*" and GaruDa is called "*SuperNa*" to match in alliteration!

GARUDA'S ROLE IN KAALINGA NARTANAM:

It is said that it was GaruDa who transferred KaaLinga from the island of RamaNaka to the river Yamuna. We know the rest of the story as to how KaaLinga tormented the peers of Lord KrishNa and how the Lord humbled him by dancing on his hoods and how he was ordered to move over to the sea as prayed for by his wives.

SAVIOR OF DWARAKA:

When Lord KrishNa had to be away from Dwaaraka, it is said that GaruDaazhwar was assigned the duty to protect the city.

SAVIOR OF LORD RAMA AND LAKSHMANA:

During the Raama-RaavaNa war, they were bound by the powerful serpent weapon "*Naaga Paasam*" and were lying unconscious. Lord GaruDa used his wings to fan them and they were relieved of the trauma at a very crucial moment. Valmiki describes this: "*VainatEyEna samsprushTaa: tayO: samrooruhuh vraNaah*"

MALYAVAAN EPISODE:

As per *Uttara KhaaNdam of Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam*, when the Lord was fighting the powerful Maalyavaan, Lord GaruDa helped the Lord, struck Maalyavaan with his wings and literally pulverized him.

CHURNING OF THE MILKY OCEAN:

When the milky ocean (*Ksheeraabdi*) was churned to produce nectar (*amritam*) at the command of the Lord, GaruDa carried on his back the huge Mantara Mountain to the milky ocean to be used as the churn-dashery.

GARUDAACHALAM:

We have heard of the name *GaruDaachalam*, one of the seven peaks in TiruvEmkaTam.

Why is it so called?

It is because Lord GaruDa brought from *SrivaikunTam*, one of the eight peaks called "*KireeTaachalam*". It is this golden *Vimaanam*, *KireeTaachalam* that stands majestically on top of the temple at Tirupati with the name "*Aananda Nilaya Vimaanam*". In honor of this service, one of the peaks in Tirumalai is called "*GaruDaachalam*"



LET US VISIT A FEW KSHETRAMS ASSOCIATED WITH GARUDAAZHWAR:

SRIRANGAM:

While most of us may be familiar with the larger than life size image of GaruDaazhwar in the *ManTapam* in front of *AryabaTaal Vaasal*, the entrance to the Sanctum of the Lord, some may not know that there is a separate *Sannidhi of Amrita HaraNa GaruDa* on the way to *Chakrattaazhwar Sannidhi*. This must have been in use in the olden days but for quite some time remained enclosed away from public view. Only recently it was discovered, and Pujas resumed. Bhaagavatas visiting Srirangam will do well to visit this Sannidhi and receive the blessings of *Amrita HaraNa GaruDa*.

NAACHIYAAR KOIL:

There is a famous Sannidhi for GaruDaazhwar here and he is known as "*Kal GaruDan*". Science has not been able to explain the mystery underlying the fact that when the *Salagraama Vighram* of GaruDan is taken out for procession, it is so light that it could be carried by just 4 persons; As the "*Srimaan taangigal*" (bearers), cross the outer enclosures one by one, it becomes progressively heavier that it needs 8, 16 and 32 men to hold the vighram after each enclosure. Similarly, after the outing (*PurappaaDu*), when the *Vighram* is brought back to the sanctum, it seems to lose weight so that it need progressively lesser number of men to hold it - from 32 to 16 to 8 nd finally just 4 and in that order.

SRIVILLIPUTTUR AND TERAZHUNDUR:

In these *KshEtrams*, GaruDa shares the seat with the Lord (*Eka aasanam*) unlike in other temples where GaruDa's Sannidhi is positioned in front of the Lord's Sannidhi.

TIRUNARAYANAPURAM:

We have already seen how the *VairamuDi Seva* is the most celebrated event in this *KshEtram*.

MANNAARGUDI:

The peculiarity in this *KshEtram* is that the Sannidhi of "*SuparNee*", mother of GaruDa, is in front and facing the Sannidhi of Thaayaar (*Naachiyaar*). You do not find such positioning in any other *KshEtram*.

MAANKAADU:

In this temple, the pointed edges on the wings of GaruDa are sculpted separately and beautifully around the wings.

We will see in the next posting some historical facts and references to GaruDa within and outside the Indian subcontinent.

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GLORY OF GARUDAZHWAR Part 6

SOME HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO GARUDA:

VIDISA AND GARUDA:

A stone inscription at Vidisa shows that in the year 140 BC, a stone pillar was erected in Vidisa (Gwalior) and this transformed itself into a "*Garuda Sthambam*" GaruDa Pillar.

HELIODORUS AND GARUDA:

The Greek King who lived in Takshasila was a *Bhaagavata* who raised a pillar dedicated to *VaasudEva*, with the figure of GaruDa adorning the top of the pillar.

MAURYAS AND GARUDA:

The Maurya dynasty considered GaruDa as the most auspicious deity who they believed brought good luck to them.

SAMUDRA GUPTA AND GARUDA:

History reveals how the Gupta dynasty especially Kumaara Gupta and Samudra Gupta minted gold coins with the image of GaruDa embossed on them and believed that this would bestow prosperity on them.

GAJENDRA MOSHAM AND GARUDA:

During the 4th to 6th Centuries AD, Guptas are known to have inscribed the "*Gajendra mOksham*" episode in which GaruDa was prominently chiseled with the Lord riding on his shoulders.

CHANDRAGUPTA VIKRAMAADITYA AND GARUDA:

Chandragupta Vikramaadityan was the first to erect a "*Garuda Sthoopam*" in Delhi for blessing his kingdom with prosperity.

DEVAGIRI YAADHAVAS AND GARUDA:

The flag and the emblem of *Devagiri Yaadhavas* was GaruDa.

GARUDA IN ALIEN LANDS:

NEPAL AND GARUDA:

A famous festival in Nepal called "*Garuda- Naaga Yuddham*" is celebrated every year. During this festival, perspiration would appear on the face of the image of GaruDa. The priests would wipe off the perspiration with silk cloth and send the cloth to the King of Nepal. The King would save every strand of that cloth. It is believed that when the thread from the cloth is tied around the wrist of anyone suffering from snakebite, miraculously, the venom would lose its virulence and the patient would survive.

This is another mystery that Science has not been able to explain to this day.

U.S.A. AND GARUDA:

We all know the national bird of America is the bald eagle with a white band on its neck. This is none other than our very own GaruDa, as 44th PaTTam Azhagiya Singhar used to say. Thus, GaruDa is one more aspect that links India and America!

HOMER'S ILIAD AND GARUDA:

In the great Roman epic Iliad written by Homer, there is a reference as to how GaruDa bird circled over the skies holding a huge snake in its mouth.

KALSAN AND GARUDA:

He was considered a world-famous astrologer. He held that the sighting of GaruDa was the most auspicious omen for all.

MATHEW AND GARUDA:

The Christian apostle, St. Mathew in 6.2 of his Gospel advises his followers to look for GaruDa flying across the skies, as a good omen.

KAMBOJA AND GARUDA:

People in *Cambodia (KaambOja)* used to make the image of GaruDa first before constructing anything, because they believed that it was GaruDa who would bring to fruition any construction work.

BOUDDAS AND GARUDA:

GaruDa is a favorite deity with even the Buddhists. In Amaraavati, Buddhist sculptures, we find the image of GaruDa holding a flower bud like sphere on his right palm. This ball is believed to be the reputed pot of nectar *Amrita Kalasam*.

MATHANGA LEELA AND GARUDA:

"*Mathanga Leela*" a work written in North India (author unknown) mentions that GaruDa and SuparNa appeared at the dawn of time along with the wheel of time – "*Kaala Chakram*"

SRILANKA AND GARUDA:

There is a belief that Lanka (the present-day Sri Lanka) is a chip off the block of MEru Mountain that GaruDa pulverized and which accidentally fell in mid sea. We do not know, however, whether this is a fact or mere fiction!

