

Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar

தேறியமா ஞானமுடன் திருக்கோளூரிற்
சித்திரையில் சித்திரைநாள் வந்துதோன்றி
ஆறியநல் அன்புடனே குருகூர்நம்பிக்கு
அனவரதம் அந்தரங்க வடிமைசெய்து
மாறணையல் லாலென்று மறந்தும் தேவும்
மற்றறியேன் எனுமதுரகவியே நீ முன்
கூறிய கண்ணிருண் சிறுத்தாம் பதனிற் பாட்டுக்
குலவு பதி னொன்றுமெனக்கு உதவு நீயே.

Sri Vedanta Desika - Prabhandha saaram (7)

" O' Sri Madhurakavi! Fully endowed with clear and full knowledge, You took birth in the holy place of Thirukkooloor in the month of Chitthirai, on the day associated with the constellation of Chitthirai. Having ceaselessly served with supreme devotion, the Master of Thirukkurukoor, Sri Nammazhwar, You declared that you have not even unwittingly known of any other God except Maaran".

In the second part of the verse, Sri Desika seeks Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar's grace asking him to bestow him with the eleven verses which begin with the phrase "கண்ணிருண் சிறுத்தாம்பு" (Kanninun Chiruttaambu). This work of Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar forms the end of the முதலாயிரம் (the first thousand) among the collection of the four thousand verses of the Azhwars. These eleven verses of KanninunChiruttaambu, have been made part of the unique collection of the devotional philosophic poetry, நாலாயிர திவ்யப் பிரபந்தம் (Naalaayira Divya prabandham) by our Acharyas even though they were different from the works of all the other Azhwars. While all the other Azhwars' hymns were in praise of the Supreme Transcendental Lord, Sriman Narayana, these verses were sung by Sri Madhurakavi in praise of his Acharya (preceptor), Sri Nammazhwar.

Sri Manavala Maamuni declares in உபதேச ரத்தினமாலை (Upadesa Rattina Maalai) that our great Acharyas included these verses as part of the அருளிச்செயல் (Aruliccheyal, meaning the works of the Azhwars born of their grace) knowing its full import since it is like the middle word நமோ (Namo) of the Thirumantra (the Ashtaakshara Mantra- the mantra with eight syllables).

வாய்த்த திருமந்திரத்தின் மத்திமமாம்பதம் போல்
சீர்த்தமதுரகவி செய்கலையை - ஆர்த்த புகழ்
ஆசிரியர்கள் தாங்கள் அருளிச்செயல் நடுவே
சேர்வித்தார் தாற்பரியம் தேர்ந்து.

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The word நமோ "Namo" is derived from the words ந மம "na mama" meaning "not mine". It helps to remove the jeeva's (individual soul's) ahamkaaram or ego. It further brings home the message that the jeeva is not servant to its swarupa (form) sarira (body) or svabhava (attributes or nature) and that the jeeva is not also swatantarya (independent) but indeed dependent on the Lord, the Paramaatma. In other words, it instills clear knowledge of one's self and its relationship to the Supreme. The externalization of this is the act of bowing in obeisance and the internalization of this is the complete surrender of one's self or aatma, taking the Lord as the means.

Sri Vedanta Desika declares in his Sri Guruparampasaaram that the way shown by துன்பற்ற Madhurakavi (who is distress less), is தொல்வழியே நல்வழிகள் துணிவார்கட்கே, verily the ancient good path travelled by many in our hoary tradition, meant for those who are strong willed (who are not afraid of giving up the ephemeral world).

அன்பர்க்கே யவதரிக்கு மாயன் நிற்க
அருமறைகள் தமிழ் செய்தான் தாளே கொண்டு
துன்பற்ற மதுரகவி தோன்றக் காட்டும்
தொல்வழியே நல்வழிகள் துணிவார்கட்கே

Sri Guruparampara saaram –2

Taittiriya Upanishad clearly instructs us, ஆசார்ய தேவோ ப4வ "Acharya Devo Bhava" ("Let your preceptor receive divine honour"). The grand old mother of Tamil tradition ஓளவையார் (Auwaiyaar) goes beyond this and includes even our very first primary school teacher to be placed in the category of veneration that is accorded to the divine. "எழுத்து அறிவித்தவன் இறைவனாகும்" ("Ezhutthu Arivittavan Iraivan Aagum"). The true value of the குரு (guru – preceptor or Acharya) lies in the instantaneous spiritual awakening, dispelling the darkness of ignorance of the disciple.

குருரேவ பரம்பிரஹ்ம் குருரேவ பரம் த4னம்
குருரேவ பர: காம: குருரேவ பராயணம்
குருரேவ பராவித்யா குருரேவ பராகதி:
பஸ்மாத் ததுபதேஷ்டாஸௌ தஸ்மாத் குருதரோ குரு:

"Guru is verily the Parabrahman. Guru is verily the supreme wealth. Guru alone is to be sought. Guru alone is the greatest goal. Guru verily is the greatest knowledge. Guru alone is the best means, instructing us about that Supreme Reality thus becoming the greatest Master "

The guru of Sri Madhurakavi was Sri Nammazhwar, a peerless preceptor par excellence and a supreme பா4க3வத Bhagavata (devotee). It is often said that a great Acharya awaits the arrival of his chosen disciple before he reveals himself. Even in our own times, we read how Sri Ramakrishna was awaiting the arrival of young Narendra, his disciple to be (Swami Vivekananda). Sri Nammazhwar who was in deep meditation for many years under the tamarind tree in Thirukkurukoor was also awaiting the arrival of Sri Madhurakavi and responded only to him.

Sri Thirumazhisai Piran in Naanmukan Thiruvandadhi calls பா4க3வத ஸமாஸ்ரயணம் (taking the Lord's devotee as the guide and way) as the best among the three faultless means.

பமுதாகாதொன்றறிந்தேன் பாற்கடலான் பாதம்
வழுவாவகைநினைந்து வைகல் -தொழுவாரைக்
கண்டிறைஞ்சிவாழ்வார் கலந்தவினைக்கெடுத்து
விண்டிறந்துவீற்றிருப்பார்மிக்கு 89.

" I learnt of one faultless way. Those who choose to meet and live adoring the devotees who forever worship flawlessly the holy feet of the Lord of the ocean of milk, attain the supreme abode, rid of all effects of action and shine in excellence".

Azhwar further states that the lot of the recipients of the grace of the Lord's devotees (பா4க3வதாபி4மாநநிஜ்டை) to be even better than those who have taken the Lord as the way (ப4க3வத் ஸமாஸ்ரயணம்) for they become blessed with the devotional service of the divine.

வீற்றிருந்து விண்ணாளவேண்டுவார் வேங்கடத்தான்
பால்திருந்தவைத்தாரே பன்மலர்கள் - மேல்திருந்த
வாழ்வார் வருமதிப்பார்த் தன்பினராய் மற்றவர்க்கே
தாழ்வாயிருப்பார் தமர். 90.

"Living well in this world with a desire to reach the supreme abode are surely those who serve the Lord of Thiruvenkatam offering a variety of flowers at His holy feet. Living even better are those favoured by the Lord's devotees who following the Lord's will and acting with love remain in service of the Lord".

In fact, all of the Azhwars had similar views extolling பா4க3வத ஸமாஸ்ரயணம். Sri Nammaazhwar declares himself to be the servant of the servant of the devotee of the wondrous Lord, even extending the lineage to several generations.

அடியார்ந்த வையமுண்டு ஆலிலை அன்னவசம் செய்யும்
படியாதுமில் குழவிப்படி எந்தை பிரான்தனக்கு
அடியார் அடியார் தம்அடியார் அடியார்தமக்கு
அடியார் அடியார் தம்அடியார் அடியோங்களே. (3-7-10, Thiruvaimozhi).

Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar not only took to the holy feet of Sri Nammazhwar a parama Bhagavata and an incomparable Acharya but lived under his holy feet being the full recipient of his and the Lord's grace. கண்ணிருண் சிறுத்தாம்பு (Kanninun Chiruttaambu) is a beautiful piece of supreme guru Bhakti (devotion to the guru). In fact, tradition states that Sri Nathamuni obtained all the verses of the Azhwars by meditating on the Archa form of Sri Nammazhwar in Thirukkurukoor, chanting the Kanninun Chiruttaambu

about twelve thousand times. Thus, one can conclude that we might not have had the Naalaayira Divya Prabandham today but for the Kanninun Chiruttaambu of Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar.

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