

PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI & ATHARVANA VEDAM



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॥ श्रीः ॥

॥ श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः ॥

॥ श्रीमते निगमान्त महादेशिकाय नमः ॥

SWAMY NAMMAZHWAR'S PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI & ATHARVANA VEDAM

THE ORIGIN OF PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI

Thiruviruttham and ThiruvAsiriyam are considered the anubhavams based on Swamy nammazhwar's Para Bhakthi and Para Jn~Anam respectively. Periya ThiruvandhAthi is the blossoming of the Parama Bhakthi anubhavam of Swamy NammAzhwAr. ThiruvAimozhi is about Bhagavath PrApthi.

In Thiruviruttham, AzhwAr's prayer to the Lord was to cut asunder the Deha-Sambhandham that stood in the way of the enjoyment of the Lord in Parama Padham through Moksham.

In ThiruvAsiriyam, Bhagavath SaakshAthkaram was realized and AzhwAr enjoyed the SvarUpam, rUpam and the GuNAs of the Lord in the spirit of Para Jn~Anam.

In Periya ThiruvandhAthi, AzhwAr is immersed in Parama Bhakthi and cries out to join without delay the Lord through the route of Bhagavath GuNAnubhavam. Swamy Desikan has described Swamy Nammazhwar's GuNAnubhavam as an intense wish to unite with the Lord to perform nithya kaimkaryam:

"SvakeeyAm Bhagavath-anubhavE spOdayAmaasa theevrAm aasAm"

Periya ThiruvandhAthi has 87 paasurams set in VeNN Paa style. It has been linked to Atharva Vedam just as Thiruviruttham and ThiruvAsiriyam has been linked to Rg and Yajur Vedam respectively. Periya ThiruvandhAthi is a moving dialog of Swamy Nammazhwar with his Manas. The dhvarai (paraparappu / impatience) of Swamy Nammazhwar to unite with the Lord is captured in these





dialogs. Eedu has identified the mental state of Swamy Nammazhwar in this Prabhandham as equivalent to BharathAzhwAr, who waited impatiently at NandhigrAmam performing PadhukA Aaradhanam and waiting for his union with the Lord of the Paadhukai.

THE FIRST REASON FOR THE NAME OF PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI (PTVA)

There are two views on why this prabhandham got its name, Periya ThiruvandhAthi or the Great/Big ThiruvandhAthi. There are other AndhAthi Prabhandhams with more paasurams like the ones by the three Mudhal AzhwArs (100 each) and Naanmuhan ThiruvandhAthi by Thirumazhisai with ninety-Six Paasurams. Why is Periya ThiruvandhAthi still called the Big ThiruvandhAthi?

According to the first view, the vishaya gouravam (the importance of the topic, Charama SIOkArtham) puts this prabhandham ahead of all other views.

The connection is in the 56th paasuram of PTVA:

varavu aaRu onRu illaiAl vaazhvu inithAl* yelle!

Oruvan oru aaRu puhA aaRu*--urumARum

Aayavar thAmm sEyavar thAmm anRu ulaham thAyavar thAmm

Maayavar thaamm kaattum vazhi

Here Swamy Nammazhwar says that Lord KrishNan has asserted that there is no need for the ChEthanam to seek other means (Bhakthi and other Yogams and dharmams) and that seeking Him alone as refuge (Performing Prapatthi) would be sufficient for Him to accept all responsibilities (burdens/Bharam) of protecting that ChEthanam. The key words in this paasuram containing these thoughts are:

"Oruvan oru AaRu puhA aaRu, urumARum Aayavar thaam kaatum vazhi"

Swamy Nammazhwar concludes this Paasuram with the spirit of MahA





visvAsam and declares his joy about his lot:

"Maayavar thaamm kaattum vazhi varavu aaRu onRu illai, Vaazhvu inithAI yelle!"

(This MaayAvi has asked us to adopt the path of Prapatthi. How it (this path) came to me and why He chose me is not relevant. What is relevant is that adiyEn considers the fruit of following that upAyam as BhOgyam (the most enjoyable).

The above distillation of the essence of Charama SIOkam and Swamy Nammazhwar's prayers for dhruva Smruthi (unceasing remembrance) of the Lord qualifies this AndhAthi to acquire the distinct name of Periya ThiruvandhAthi.

THE SECOND REASON FOR THE NAME, PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI

The clue for the second reason is found in the 75th paasuram of Periya ThiruvandhAthi; here, Swamy NammAzhwAr engages in a debate with the Lord, the Ubhaya VibhUthi Naathan, and asks Him to examine the issue of who is bigger (Periyan) between the two of them:

puvium iru visumpum ninnahattha* nee-yenn

seviyin vazhi puhunthu yennuLLAi--avivu inRi

Yaann periyann nee periyai yenpathai yaar ariyavaar?

Oonparuhu nEmiyAi! ULLU

(Meaning): Oh Lord! It is well known that you are the Master of the two great Isvaryams, Leela VibhUthi and Nithya VibhUthi. You hold the powerful ChakrAyudham, which cuts asunder the limbs of the Raakshasa Kulam. When you of such greatness made your entry (anupravEsam) into me through my ears, I caught you deftly and have kept You tightly in my heart lotus. Thou art now within me just as the entire world was once within you. Now tell me, who is the



bigger One (in glory)? Myself or Yourself? Who can comprehend this fact? Pray think about this.

This debate about "Periyar" makes this AndhAthi the "Periya ThiruvandhAthi". The many insightful descriptions of his (Swamy Nammazhwar's daasathvam to the Lord (Swamy) makes this Prabhandham, the Periya ThiruvandhAthi.

For instance, Swamy Nammazhwar says:

"Tadam KadalmEyAr Tamakku nizhalum adithARumAnOm"

(AdiyEn has become the shadow of His ThirumEni and Paadhukai for Him, who resides eternally in the expansive Milky Ocean)... Periya ThiruvandhAthi Paasuram: 31. In Paasuram Sixty, Swamy Nammazhwar salutes the Parathvam of the Lord unconditionally:

"Vemm Narahil sErAmal kAppathaRkku , maRRum ohr iRai illai kANN"

(Oh! My Mind! For SAVING US from falling into the terrible Narakam, please remember that there is NO ONE ELSE EXCEPT OUR LORD).

GOAL AND APPROACH OF PERIYA THIRUVANDHATHI

Sri K.C.VaradachAri points out that the purpose of this Prabhandham is to instruct the mind to recognize the unparalleled greatness of the Lord and worship Him. This prabhandham is therefore intended to make the mind attain SvaroopA Jn-Anam (knowledge of its true nature) and to make it "bathe fully in the flowing waters of divine goodness". This is "cleansing in the waters of divine infinity and greatness". Through Periya ThiruvandhAthi, SaThakOpan shows that "through God's grace, which is gotten through sincerest surrender in all respects, the Divine purifies the soul" and blesses it to approach Him and "finally infinitizes it by a mere look".

Among the four Prabhandhams of Swamy Nammazhwar, Thiruviruttham and ThiruvAimozhi are considered essentially as approaching the Lord in the Naayaka-Naayaki BhAvam (Love of a pathivrathai for her Lord); ThiruvAsiriyam and Periya ThiruvandhAthi are recognized to have the approach that emphasises the servant/slave/vassal relationship to the Master



(SwAmi). Either of these approaches has been pointed out as the means to acquire "Supreme felicity and liberation".

In the concluding section of Periya ThiruvandhAthi, adiyEn will summarize selected upadesams of Swamy Nammazhwar in Periya ThiruvandhAthi and attempt to connect them to Atharva Veda manthrams in particular. One certainly finds the echoes of the messages of Periya ThiruvandhAthi in the other three Vedams too, but we will confine our study to just Atharva Vedam.

In Periya ThiruvandhAthi, Swamy was filled with Parama Bhakthi that led to the theevra Upaasanaam (intense worship) and uninterrupted meditation (DhyAnam) of the Dhivya Mangala Vighram of the Lord and His KalyANa GuNams. Swamy NammAzhwaR went on to perform SaraNAGathi and celebrated the Prapatthi maargam revealed by GeethAchAryan using Arjuna as VyAjam. Swamy Nammazhwar recognized the Lord as the powerful medicine for curing the terrible disease of SamsAram (nangaL piNikkAm marunthu =Thou are the potent medicine to cure completely our disease named SamsAram: paasuram 62).

Swamy Nammazhwar pointed out to his manas that eulogizing the sacred feet of Lord KrishNaa is what it(manas) has to do for its salvation (KaNNan thALL vAzhtthuvathE kaNDai Vazhakku: Paasuram 12). He told his manas further: "KaNNan thALL vAzhtthuvathE kall" (Oh manas! The most auspicious kaimkaryam on this earth is to sing pallANDu to the sacred feet of KaNNan: paasuram 67).

Swamy Nammazhwar announced to us that the Lord, who is deeply attached to him, has entered inside his mind (MaalAr kudi puhunthAr yenn manatthE: Paasuram 22). He identified with Him as his Father and Mother and thanked Him for showing the wondrous way of Bhagavath-GuNANubhavam (peRRa ThAi neeyE, piRappittha Tanthai nee, yeRREyO NeeyammA kAttum neRi : Paasuram 5= Thou art my compassionate Mother, Thou art my Father performing Upadesam. Wonderful indeed is the way you showed me to eulogize you). Swamy Nammazhwar also pointed out that He is also the Father and the Mother of all Jeevans (Thai Tanthai yevvuyirkkum thAnn: Paasuram 23) and



acknowledged His Supremacy (Tann alappu onRilAthAn : paasuram 24 = He has no One equal to Him).

Swamy Nammazhwar asked for aparAdha KshAmaNam for insufficiencies in saluting Him adequately (seeRal nee : paasuram 2= Oh My Lord, Your ThiruvuLLam should not get angry over any lapses in your worship on my part).

Swamy Nammazhwar recognized the Lord's DayA SvarUpam and pointed out that He is impatiently waiting to see what else He can do for His BhakthAs (UnnadiyArkku yenna seyvAnanenRE irutthi Nee: Paasuram 53).

Swamy Nammazhwar appealed to his mind to do two things to receive His grace:

1. Eulogize the Lord of broad shoulders and offer fragrant garlands of verses (Sonn maalai): "Vilankal pOI thonmAlaik Kesavanai NaaraNanai Maadhavanai sonnmAlai yeppozhuthum soottu: Paasuram 65) and
2. Salute and praise the sacred feet of KaNnan, who banishes all our sins (nammEI vinai kadivAn mey KazhalE yEttha muyal) and assures us not to worry any more about our lot (aham thvA sarva PaapEbhyO MokshayishyAmi maa Sucha:) in this samsAra maNDalam. Thus ends the Maanasa SambhOdhanam of Swamy Nammazhwar with his manas.

Swamy Nammazhwar's tributes in Periya ThiruvandhAthi to the Lord regarding His Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Parama DayA GuNam, Sarva Seshithvam (Final reality = Uchchishta Brahman), Omniscience, SarvAntharyAmithvam, Jagath Kaaranathvam can be readily traced to different Atharva manthrams. A selected few of those manthrams are assembled below to illustrate the links of Periya ThiruvandhAthi to AtharvaNa Vedam.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ATHARVA VEDAM

Atharva Vedam consists of 5977 manthrams, which is largely in the form of poetry with a small portion in prose. It is the last among VedAs and as such has advanced philosophical conceptions about God. It fits very well with the mood of Parama Bhakthi of NammAzhwAr. It has been pointed out that Periya ThiruvandhAthi cleanses the soul in the waters of divine infinity and



greatness, just as the Atharva Vedam introduces us to several remedial manthrams to overcome the diseases of the mind and body. Atharva Vedam's recognizes the Lord as the Supreme Being and as the final reality (sarva Seshi/Ucchishta Brahman). One of the manthrams salutes the Lord as "uchcishtE naama roopam chOcchishtE IOka aahitha:" (Thou sustain the entire creation consisting of Name and Form).

Through the 601st Manthram, Atharva Vedam asks the question,
"Kasmai dEvAya HavishA vidhEma?"

It answers that question in a most majestic manner: "Through whose power exists the spacious Heaven, the mighty Earth and yonder ample Firmament between them, through whose power is yon Sun extends his grandeur, to That Supreme One, we offer our oblations. We offer our devotional worship to Him, the Illuminator and the Lord of lasting happiness. We meditate on Him."

Manthram 566 salutes His boon-granting power and Timelessness (anAdhi tatthvam):

SarvAn KaamAn pooraythyAbhavan prabhavan bhavan
aakUthi prOavidharthatha:sithi paannOpapadasyathi

(Meaning): "God the fulfiller of resolves, worshipped by the Soul, the same One in light and darkness, Omnipresent, mighty and ever-existent, satisfies all hopes and wants and never suffers decay."

Like Swamy Nammazhwar's UpadEsam to his mind to sing the glories of the Lord without let, another Atharva Veda Manthram (1291) says:

dhOshO gAya bruhadh gAya dhyumaddEhi
AtharvaNa sthuhi dEvam SavithAram

(Meaning): "Oh Worshipper of the Lord! Sing His glory day and night, sing loudly, and contemplate upon the refulgent Lord. Praise the all-creating Lord!"





His sarvAntharyAmithvam is saluted brilliantly in the 3695th manthram of Atharva vedam:

sO Agni: Sa u Soorya: sa u yEva MahAyama:

rasmibhiraabha aabrutham MahEndra yEthyAvrutha:

(Meaning): He is indeed Agni, the Omniscient; He is SooryA, the urger; He is MahAyaman, the great leader. This great Lord permeates all the Worlds with His refulgence.

His Unmatched Valour and status of Him not having any god equal or superior to him is saluted by another Atharva Manthram (3710):

Tamidham nigatham saha: sa yEsha yEka yEkavrudhEka yEva

Ya yEtham dEvamEkavrutham vEdha

(Meaning): "This Supreme Lord possesses the conquering might. He is the Sole, the Solitary One, and the One alone."

Atharva Manthram 5035 tells us that this Powerful Lord reveals Himself to the Yogis (like Swamy NammAzhwAr) in deep contemplation and shines like the mid-day Sun in their hearts.

Atharva Manthram 5185 reveals to us that He is the Almighty God, who suppresses the darkness of ignorance by His light of knowledge.

We will conclude this posting with two more Atharva Manthrams, which are echos of Swamy NammazhwAr's prayers to the Supreme Lord in his Periya ThiruvandhAthi Prabhandham:

(1) "Bhuri ta Indhra Veeryam--" (Manthram 5048):

"For great is Thy prowess, Oh Mighty Lord ! We are Thine. Oh Lord of Riches, fulfill the desires of this devotee of Thine. These vast heavens are mere





creations from Thy Energy. This Earth also bows to Thy Splendor."

(2) " Ya yEka iddhavyascharshaNI nAmeendhram--"(Manthram 5208):

"With these hymns, I worship that Mighty Lord, who alone is to be invoked by men, who is known to be the showerer of all blessings (VaradarAjan), All-powerful, True (Sathya Sankalpan), Lord of All Existence, Victorious, Full of Wisdom (sathyam, Jn~Anam , Anantham Brahma) and with wonderful powers of creation (JagathAdhAran and Jagath Kaaranan)".

These selected Manthrams of Atharva Vedham reveal thus their Saamyam to the meanings of some of the Periya ThriuvandhAthi paasurams of Swamy NammAzhwAr.

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