

Sri Kulasekhara Azhwar:

This Azhwar was the son of a Chera king born in the capital city Kollinagar on the Punarvasu Nakshatram day in month of Masi. He was the *amsa* (incarnation) of *Kaustuba* or the Gem of the Lord. He actually became the emperor of all the three Tamil regions of the day namely the Chozha, Pandya and the Cheranadu. "கொல்லிகாவலன் கூடல் நாயகன் கோழிக்கோன் குலசேகரன்" (கொல்லி or Kollinagar was the capital of the Cheras, கூடல் refers to Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas, கோழி refers to Uraiur, the capital of the Chozhas (*Perumal Thirumozhi* 2-10).

There is a saying, "பெருமாளை அறியாதார் பெருமாளை அறியாதாரே. " It means that those who do not know of Sri Kulasekhara Peruman will not know Sri Rama, the Perumal. The Azhwar shared the same asterism Punarvasu with Sri Rama. Like Sri Rama he was also born in a royal lineage and became himself an emperor. Like Sri Rama he also did aradhana of "PeriyaPerumal Sri Ranganatha". This Azhwar is therefore respectfully called Sri Kulasekhara Peruman and his *pasurams* called the பெருமாள் திருமொழி (*Perumaal Thirumozhi*). Azhwar like Sri Bharatha had full measure of Bhagavath Seshatvam and desired only the holy lotus feet of Lord Rama to be his royal crown.

அரசமர்ந்தான் அடிசூடும் அரசையல்லால்
அரசாகவெண்ணேன் மற்றரசுதானே
(*Perumal Thirumozhi* 10-7).

Like Sri Satrugna, he always served the devotees of the Lord (Bhagavatha kainkaryam)

இனிதமர்ந்த அம்மாளை இராமன்தன்னை
ஏத்துவார் இணையடியே யேத்தினேனே.
(*Perumal Thirumozhi* 10-6).

He spent many hours listening and immersing himself in the divine story of Srimad Ramayanam. Several instances can be cited when he had totally lost the sense of time and felt himself involved in the actual incidents of Sri Rama's life. When the Pauranikar or the official story teller narrated the incident of Sri Rama facing the Kara and Dooshana and their fourteen thousand demons all alone by himself, Azhwar not only got himself armed with the bow and arrows and was ready to fight but also ordered his commander-in-chief of the army to get immediately ready to go and fight with the rakshasas. His palace was always open to all devotees of Sriman Narayana and he fed them and served them himself.

To prove the righteousness of the true devotees of the Lord who were unfairly named as thieves and blamed thus by his ministers, Azhwar took an open vow and put his hands into a pot containing poisonous snakes. The invocatory single verse by Sri Manakkal Nambi refers to this incident.

ஆரங்கெடப் பரனன்பர் கொள்ளாரென்று அவர்களுக்கே
வாரங்கொடு குடப்பாம்பிற் கையிட்டவன் - மாற்றலரை
வீரங்கெடுத்த செங்கோற் கொல்லிகாவலன் வில்லவர்கோன்
சேரன் குலசேகரன் முடிவேந்தர் சிகாமணியே.

"When (by the conspiring ministers) the necklace was lost (and Sri Vaishnava devotees were blamed and branded as the thieves), declaring that devotees of the Lord will not touch others' materials and taking their sides, he stuck his hand into the pot with the poisonous snakes to prove their righteousness. Sri Kulasekhara was the gem of the Chera dynasty, the crown jewel of all kings, who quelled the valour of his adversaries, the head of all kings, the righteous ruler and the protector of Kollinagar".

Azhwar was a great Sri Rama Bhakta. Even in his *paasurams* on the Lord of திருக்கண்ணபுரம் (Thirukkannapuram), his bhakti towards Lord Sri Rama is evident for his *pasurams* on this shrine starts with “மன்னுபுகழ் கோசலைதன்மணிவயிறு வாய்த்தவனே.” referring to the Lord here as the precious son of the famous Kausalya. His love of Lord Srinivasa of Thiruvenkatam and his ardent desire to be born in the Thiruvenkata hills is expressed in many ways in the 4th decad of *Perumal Thirumozhi*. The thought of becoming an insentient entity like a door step at the entrance of the Lord's sanctum looks very attractive to the Azhwar since he would then be able to have constant joy of being with the Lord of Thiruvenkatam. (“படியாய்க் கிடந்து உன் பவளவாய் காண்பேனே.”).(*Perumal Thirumozhi* 4-9). To honour the desire of the Azhwar, the door step at the inner sanctum of the Lord is called “குலசேகரப்படி” (“Kulasekhara" door step”).

Sri Ramanuja (*Emperumanar*) admired Sri Kulasekhara Azhwar and has also paid tribute to the Azhwar in a single verse.

இன்னமுதமுட்டுகேன் இங்கேவா பைங்கிளியே
தென்னரங்கம் பாடவல்லசீர்பெருமாள் - பொன்னின்
சிலைசேர் நுதலியர்வேள் சேரலர்கோன் எங்கள்
குலசேகரன் என்றேகூறு

"O' green Parrot! I will feed you sweet nectar, come near me and say "Capable of singing on the Southern Arangam, the one known as Perumal, with eye brows beautiful like the bow, attractive like cupid (to women), the head of the Chera dynasty, is "Sri Kulasekhara Peruman" who indeed is the crown jewel of our devotees' group."

In தில்லை நகர் (Thillainagar-Chidambaram), Azhwar visualizes Sri Rama to be reclining as Sri Govinda Raja Perumaal along with Maaruthi who is considered an *amsa* (incarnation) of Lord Siva. In the last decad of பெருமாள் திருமொழி (*Perumal Thirumozhi-10*), the Azhwar describes the entire Srimad Ramayanam beautifully like Sri Valmiki Bhagavan.

In order to celebrate Sri Kulasekhara Peruman this year and as a fitting dedication to the Azhwar and his works, during our annual Azhwars festival in September 2008, silver malais made of silver coins with the inscriptions of the verses from the Thillainagar pasurams of Sri Kulasekhara Peruman, describing the entire Srimad Ramayanam in beautiful Tamil, will be offered individually to Sri Rama, Sri Seetha and Sri Lakshmana in our Sri Ramar sanctum and we will also offer a similar silver malai for Sri Hanuman with inscription of "Sri Ram and Jaya Ram ". The latter will have 24 coins to represent the 24000 *slokas* of Srimad Ramayanam and the 24 *Aksharas* of *Sri Gayathri mantram*. We like to point out that in our temple, the configuration of Sri Venakateshwara Perumal and Sri Nadaraja Peruman's sanctums is somewhat similar to the Chidambaram temple, at right angles to each other. If one stands near our Perumal Sannidhi and look North, one can have darsanam of Sri Nadaraja swami. Thus Azhwar's pasuram is very apt for our temple also.

We express our sincere thanks to all the devotees for their donations for this kainkaryam. We invoke the blessings and grace of Lord Sri Rama, mother Sri Seetha, Sri Lakshmanar and Sri Hanuman as well as those of all the Azhwars and Acharyas on all devotees and their families and friends on this beautiful occasion.

By Dr.N.Ranganathan