

The meaning of the word "நம:" ("Namaha") and *Kanninun ChirutthAmbu*

Sri ParAsara Bhattar was one of the Sri Vaishnava AchAryas from the 11th Century C.E. He was the son of Sri KurEsha, an intimate disciple of Sri Ramanuja. According to all accounts, Sri Bhattar had the fullest blessings and grace of the *Divya Dampathies* (the divine couple Sri Ranganatha and Sri MahaLakshmi). He functioned as the *Purohithar* (the chief priest) for the Srirangam temple, directly looking after the various *kainkaryams* (services of worship) for the Lord. He was a great poet and an erudite scholar of all the *Vedic ShAstrAs* and the hymns of the Azhwars. He wrote a famous commentary on *Sri Vishnu SahasranAmam*. He was known to have recited extempore many *sloKas* (verses) before Lord Sri Ranganatha at Srirangam. Some of those verses are still recited on special occasions including during *Thirumanjanam* (sacred bath) of Lord Sri Ranganatha. These verses are called Sri ParAsara Bhattar's *thirumanjana kattiyam*. On one such occasion when Sri Bhattar was in the presence of the Lord Sri Ranganatha after His sacred bath, clad in wet yellow robe and a single garland of *Tulasi* (holy basil), lit by the shining lamp at the altar, the sight stimulated him to compose the following verse. It is composed as a dialogue between the *Lord* and the individual *self* (*Jeeva*) and it runs as follows.

த்வம் மே அஹம் மே. குதஸ்தத் தத³பிகுத: இத³ம் வேத³முலப்ரமாணாத்
ஏதச்ச அநாதி³ஸித்³தா⁴த் அநுப⁴வவிப⁴வாத் ஸோடபி ஸாக்ரோஸ ஏவ
க ஆக்ரோஸ கஸ்ய க³தாதி³ஷு மம விதி³த: கோடத்ர ஸாக்ஷீ ஸுதீரஸ்யாத்
ஹந்த த்வத்பக்ஷபாதீ ஸ இதி ந்ருகலஹே ம்ருக்³யமத்⁴யஸ்த²வத் த்வம்.

The meaning of the verse when translated:

The Lord: த்வம் மே "you are mine (possession)"

The Jeeva: அஹம் மே " I am mine"

The Lord: குதஸ்தத் "How is that?"

The Jeeva: தத³பிகுத: "What is the reason behind what you said?"

The Lord: இத³ம் வேத³முலப்ரமாணாத் "What I said is settled in the *Pranavam* of the Vedas"

The Jeeva: ஏதச்ச அநாதி³ஸித்³தா⁴த் அநுப⁴வவிப⁴வாத் "What I said is based on the strength of the eternal experience"

The Lord: ஸோ஽பி ஸாக்ரோஸ ஏவ "That experience has been objected to"

The Jeeva: க ஆக்ரோஸ கஸ்ய "Who had objected and where?"

The Lord: கீ³தாதி³ஷு மம விதி³த: "By my statements in *ShAstAs* (scriptures) like *Geetha*"

The Jeeva: கோ஽த்ர ஸாக்ஷீ "Who is the witness for that"

The Lord: ஸுதீரஸ்யாத் "The *GnAnI* (the man of knowledge) is the witness"

The Jeeva: ஹந்த த்வத்பக்ஷபாதீ "Lo! How can he, who is partial towards you?"

Sri Bhattar, goes on to conclude:

இதி : "thus"

ந்ருகலஹே: "when the *Jeeva* is in tussle (with you)",

ம்ருக்³யமத்⁴யஸ்த²வத் த்வம்: "since there is no other mediator available, it looks as if You are giving a "*satya PramAnam*", (word of oath) (wearing the wet dress)".

The struggle between the soul and the Supreme Lord has been endless through the ages due to veil of ignorance clouding the mind of the human being. Our erudite and compassionate *AchAryAs*, have through their practice, teachings, texts, treatises and *stOtras* (hymns), have been and are a constant guiding light for us in understanding and living life with a higher purpose and the goal of liberation from mundane life (*samsAra*), etched in our mind and spirit. The term "*namaha*" which we often use in our daily prayers connotes the essence of this understanding and forms the subject of this article.

The following is an attempt at bringing out the meaning of the word "நம:" ("*Namaha*") in the eight syllable திருமந்திரம் ((*Thirumantram*) (holy *mantram*), "ஓம் நமோ நாராயணாய" "*Aum NamO NARayanaya*") as per the commentary of the great *AchArya SwAmi Sri VedAntha Desika*. The beautiful and the elegant explanatory notes for this work of the *AchArya* have been written by Sri Ubhya VedAnta VidwAn Oppiliappan sannidhi navaneetham Sri RamaDesikAchAryar SwAmi. This is available in the book "*Chillarai Rahasyangal - Second Part* சில்லரை ரஹஸ்யங்கள் இரண்டாம் பாகம், published by Srimad Andavan Sri Pundarikapuram SwAmy Asramam, Srirangam, 2001_2nd Edn by Sri PArthasArathy SwAmi – Sri Desika Sathanam, Besant Nagar Chennai). This article is based on this wonderful resource. Some portions of the actual text from the commentary of SwAmi Desika are also given in Tamil script.

Often a hidden rule that seems to be followed in scriptural texts is that any given sentence tends to emphasize the meaning it intends to bring out denying all other opposites. In the *Pranavam*

(the word which refers to the mystic syllable "ஓம்" "Aum"), it has been established that the individual self is the servant and the possession of the transcendental Lord, the consort of Sri and not of any others. Following the same idea, the middle word "நம:" ("Namaha") arises as well. All the great seers considered the meaning of this word to be quite important and supported its implications.

In *PAncha RAtra ShAstra* (Vaishnava Agama, an authoritative source book) three different derivative meanings have been given for this word "Namaha". One is *Sthoolam* (gross meaning) which is derived grammatically. According to this, the word will refer to the physical salutation of the *jeeva* (the individual self) towards the Lord as well as the physical aspect of one's surrender (*prapatti*) to the Lord. The *Sookshma* (the subtle) meaning is arrived at by using *Niruktam* (etymology). Based on this, it will reveal that *one's self* and one's possessions are not one's own. It will also indicate that the *jeeva* is not independent. The third meaning is derived from mystical teachings. By this, the goal to be reached by surrendering to the Lord, is actually the Lord Himself.

இவற்றில் ஸூக்ஷ்ம யோஜனை விரோதி⁴ஞானத்துக்கும், அனிஷ்ட நிவ்ருத்தி ப்ரார்த்த²னைக்கும், பரதந்த்ர ஸ்வரூபநிஷ்கர்ஷத்துக்கும், பா⁴கவத ஶேஷத்வ ப்ரதிபத்திக்கும், உபாய விசேஷ ஶித்³தி⁴க்கும் உபயுக்தமாகயாலே இத்தை விசேஷித்து ஆசார்யர்கள் அநுஸந்திப்பார்கள்

"Of these three, the AchAryas favour the subtle meaning for the following reasons. It helps one to discern the adversaries for realizing the real nature of one's *self*. It also helps one to pray for relief from one's own adversaries. It also helps one to strengthen the understanding of the real nature of the *self* as dependent and belonging only to the Supreme Lord. It also helps to realize that one's *self* is also the servant of the Lord's devotees. Furthermore it also helps to understand clearly about the best means namely "*prapatti*" (surrender)".

The word *Namaha* can be taken as a sentence with two words namely *na* (ந) and *maha* (ம:) . For one who has understood the real nature of one's *self*, here is indicated the elimination of its own adversaries. For *one-self*, the pre-existing adversaries are the thoughts and ideas that "I belong to myself and everything around me is mine". The adversaries that are likely to arise after attaining the eternal realm as described in the word, "நாராயணாய" "NArAyanaya", will be the wrong idea of considering all of that experience as "I am experiencing them and I am enjoying them for myself alone". Since it is important to get rid of all these, even before the word "*maha*" which describes the adversaries, the word "*na*" that describes its negation or elimination appears.

The word "ம:" ("*maha*") is the 6th case singular for the word, "ம்" ("*m*") The latter refers to the individual *self* ("*jeeva*") and it gives the meaning for the word "I" when used. The 6th case singular of this, "*Maha*", will give the meaning "mine" "எனக்கு". Both the "I" sense and "mine" sense are the adversaries that will not fit the real nature of the individual *self*. Unless one

understands one's true adversaries, one will not be able to pray for their destruction and elimination.

Thus when considering the meaning for the word *Namaha*, one needs to include the third letter of the *Pranavam*. ("Aum"). The third letter "ம்" ("m") refers to the individual *self* ("jeeva"). The 6th case suffix "mah" ("ம:"), is generally used to indicate ஸம்பந்தம், "relationship". Here it must be taken to indicate the individual *self* to be the servant of the Lord. When this is extended to the word *Namaha*, it will give the meaning. "நான் எனக்கு அடியனல்லேன்" (" I am not the servant of my *self* "). This is particularly striking since it changes ones' view of one *self*.

"அஹம் மே" என்று அநாதியாக ப்⁴ரமித்தவன், இப்போது "ஆத்மாஸபி சாயம் ந மம" என்கிறான்.

"From a previous misconception and self declared independence that "I am the servant of my own *self* ", the contrast of a proper understanding of one's *self* arises that," I am not the servant of my *self* ".

"ஆத்மாஸபி சாயம் ந மம ஸர்வாஸபி ப்ருதி²வீ மம

யதா² மம ததா² அந்யேஷாமிதி ப ச்யந் ந முஹ்யதி"

(*MahAbhAratham ShAnthi Parvam 25-19*)

"My "*self*" is not mine. Misconstruing that which does not belong to one's *self* as one's own, will lead to the thought that the entire world is one's possession. Similarly one is not also the servant of others. One who understands this will not get confused."

The objection that may be raised is how one can be considered the servant and the master at the same time, which will be implied by the statement that "I am not the servant of my *self* ". AchArya cleverly points out that the character of the servant ("*SEsha*" சேஷன்) is always to do things which bring glory to the Master ("*SEshi*" சேஷி). The master therefore is the recipient of such acts of the servant. Since it is entirely possible for one to engage in actions that add to one's own fame and glory, the statement that "I am not the servant of my *self* " has no defect in formation. The corollary of this when one says that the word "*Namaha*" gets rid of this misunderstanding has also no defects in formation.

தான் தனக்குப் பண்ணிக்கொள்ளும் அதி ச்யமும் பரார்த²ம் என்று அநுஸந்திக்கக்காக்க இங்கு "தான் தனக்கு சேஷனல்லன்" என்கிறது.

The result of this proper understanding is that even when one does actions which happen to bring glory to one-*self*, one will be able to consider the results of such actions also to belong only to the Lord.

1. The word "Namaha" eliminates the sense of "I" and "Mine":

Since for the individual *self*, the "*jeeva*", its real nature is not its own possession, the implicit meaning is that it cannot be the master of anything. If one adds an extra word, "கிஞ்சித்" "*kinchit*", one can say as follows:

"ம:" "For me the *jeeva*", "கிஞ்சித் ந" "nothing is mine".

This provides both meanings namely "I am not my possession" and " I have no ownership to anything that I happen to have". Thus the sense of "I" and "Mine" get destroyed. They are after all the root cause of this bondage in the mundane life.

AchArya refers to ThiruvAimozhi of Sri NammAzhwAr here. "யானே என் தனதே என்றிருந்தேன்" என்கிற ஸம்ஸார மூலங்கள் சேதி³க்கப்படுகின்றன.

யானே என்னை அறியகிலாதே

யானே என் தனதே என்றிருந்தேன்

யானே நீ என்னுடைமையும் நீயே

வானேயேத்தும் எம்வானவரேறே (திருவாய்மொழி - *ThiruvAimozhi* 2-9-9)

"Not understanding myself, I was thinking that I was the master and all were my possessions. Myself and mine are all Yours. O' my Lord the Almighty, who is worshipped by all the celestials".

2. The word "Namaha" also implies that the *Jeeva* has no independence.

The middle letter உ ("*u*") in the *Pranavam*, has already indicated that the *jeeva* is not the servant of any others except the Lord. Thus in the *Pranavam* itself, it is clear that the *jeeva* who is other than the Lord, is therefore not the servant of itself. So if the word "Namaha" were to bring out the same meaning it will suffer the defect of repetition. This is addressed in two ways. The first is by invoking கோ³ப³லீவர்த³ந்யாயம் (the logic of *Gobaleevardha*). In the statement "Bring the cattle, bring the bulls", although the bulls belong to the class of cattle, it also can indicate that the first part refers to all animals in the class except the bulls, and therefore the latter is specified separately. By this logic, it will imply that the letter "உ" ("*u*") excludes relationship to all others

except the "jeeva" and in "Namaha" the relationship with the *self* is specifically excluded. Another explanation is that the repetition is meant to reinforce the idea that, "I am not the servant of my *self*". Finally it is also useful to add the word, "ஸ்வாதந்தீர்யம்" (independence) and state, "ம: ஸ்வாதந்தீர்யம் ந" ("no independence for me"). This helps to get rid of the misunderstanding of one's independence.

AchArya refers here to Sri NammAzhwAr's verse in *ThiruvAimozhi* 5-8-3

என் நான் செய்கேன் யாரேகளைகண் என்னையென் செய்கின்றாய்

உன்னாலல்லால் யாவராலும் ஒன்றும் குறை வேண்டேன்

கன்னார்மதிள் சூழ்குடந்தைக்கிடந்தாய் அடியேனருவாணாள்

சென்னாள் எந்நாள் உனதாள் பிடித்தேசெலக்காணே.

"O'Lord!, Without your grace what can I do? Who is the refuge for me except you?"

3. The Jeeva's agency.

Jeeva has the ability to act. Along with the understanding that the *self* is the servant of the Lord, it is also important to know that the ability to act is also something bestowed upon the *self* by the Lord. This is different from the situation in life where one sees "masters" and their respective subordinates where the ability to act is not conferred by their bosses. Whereas here, only the Lord is totally independent. For the *jeeva*, the ability of agency is conferred by the Lord and the resultant benefit also is only the Lord's.

காரணத்வம் தத்வத்ரய ஸாதா⁴ரணம். கர்த்தருத்வம் ஜீவ ஈஸ்வர ஸாதா⁴ரணம். இதில் பர அதீ⁴ந கர்த்தருத்வம், த்ரிவித⁴ சேதந ஸாதா⁴ரணம்.

"All three principles namely சேதநர் ("*ChEthanar*") the sentient, அசேதநம் ("*achEthanam*") the insentient and ஈஸ்வர ("*Easwara*") the Lord share in causations. Ability to act (agency) is shared by the sentient *jeevas* and the Lord. The ability to act is conferred by the Lord to all *jeevas* whether they are பத்தர் ("*Baddhar*") the bound, முக்தர் ("*Mukhthar*") the liberated or the நித்யர் ("*Nityar*") the eternal. Only the Lord's agency is independent".

The truth being this, one gets the feeling of independence in actions. The reason for this is the eternal *karma* (கர்மம்). In addition, being interested only in the benefits to be obtained during the current life, people become involved actively with the world and drawn only to the scriptural texts that deal with this aspect alone (ப்ரவ்ருத்தி ஸஸ்தீரங்கள் "*pravrutti shAstrAs*") and that

too superficially. Getting rid of this misunderstanding of one's own independence in actions, is the true import of all the scriptural texts that teach about the withdrawal from action (renunciation) paying more attention to the life after (நிவ்ருத்தி ஸாஸ்த்ரங்கள் "nivrutti shAstrAs").

4. BhAgavatha kainkaryam. (Service to the devotees):

இப்படி ததே³க ஸேஷபு⁴த மாகவும் ததே³க நியாம்ய மாகவும் பத³த³வயத்தாலே ஸ்வரூபம் சிக்ஷிதமானால்

"யதே²ஷ்டவிநியோகா³ர்ஹம் ஸேஷ ஸப்³தே³ன கத்²யதே

ஈஸ்வரேண ஜக³த் ஸர்வம் யதே²ஷ்டம் விநியுஜ்யதே

என்று அபி⁴யுக்தர் (கற்றபெரியோர்) சொன்னபடியே ஸ்வதந்த்ர ஸ்வாமி விநியோக³த்தாலே பா⁴க³வத ஸேஷத்வம் ப்ராப்தமாகிறது.

By the "*pranavam*", it becomes established that the *jeeva* is the servant of the Lord and by the word, "*Namaha*" it becomes clear that the *jeeva* is under the control of the Lord. By these two words, the real nature of the *jeeva* is made clear.

The Master can use his servant as he sees fit. Thus the independent Lord, who is the master when he wants to use his servants the *jeevas* as He chooses to do, is able to make them the servants of His devotees as well. He has the authority and power to do so on account of His independence.

ஞானீ த்வாத்மைவ மே மதம் என்ற இவனுக்கு ஸ்வ அதி ஸயத்தைக் காட்டிலும் ஸ்வ ஆஸ்ரித அதி ஸயம் அபி⁴மதமாகையாலே தத்- ஸேஷத்வம் தத³ய ஸேஷத்வ- பர்யந்தமாயிற்று.

In *Bhagavat Geetha*, the Lord Sri Krishna talks about the person with wisdom and great devotion towards Him, as one close to His very heart. Thus He considers the fame of His devotees to be greater than His own.

Sri Krishna says in *Bhagavat Geetha*, (7-16) that "Four types of men of good deeds worship Me. O' Arjuna! These are the distressed, the seekers after knowledge, the wealth –seekers and the men of wisdom".

ப்ரியோ ஹி ஞானினோ அத்யர்த்²மஹம் ஸ ச மம ப்ரிய: (*Sri Bhagavat Geetha* 7-17)

Of these, "I am very dear to the man of knowledge and he too is dear to Me"

உதாரணம்: ஸர்வ ஏவைதே ஞானீ த்வாத்மைவ மே மதம் (*Sri Bhagavat Geetha 7-18*)

"All these are indeed generous, but I deem the man of knowledge to be My very self"

AchArya here refers to words of sage NArada as well as the AzhwArs.

ப்ரப⁴வோ ப⁴க³வத் ப⁴க்தா மாத்³ரு ணம் ஸததம் த்³விஜ:

"உன்னடியார்க்கு ஆட்படுத்தாய்", "அடியார்க்கு என்னையாட்படுத்த விமலன்" என்கிற அநுஸந்தாநம் ஸர்வ பா⁴க³வதருக்கும் ஸமாநம்.

(Sage NArada says, "ப்ரப⁴வோ ப⁴க³வத் ப⁴க்தா மாத்³ரு ணம் ஸததம் த்³விஜ:"

O' Brahmin! The devotees of the Lord are my masters always").

தோன்றியதோள்தொண்டரடிப்பொடியென்னும்

அடியனை, அளியனென்றருளி உன்னடியார்க்கு

ஆட்படுத்தாய்! பள்ளியெழுந்தருளாயே. (திருப்பள்ளியெழுச்சி-*Thiruppalliyezhucchi* -10)

Sri Thondar Adippodi AzhwAr requests the Lord in the last verse of his work *Thiruppalliyezhucchi*, to consider him as someone fit to be protected and assign him to be in the service of His devotees.

அமலனாதிபிரான் அடியார்க்கு என்னையாட்படுத்த

விமலன், விண்ணவர்கோன் விரையார்பொழில் வேங்கடவன்

நிமலன் நிம்மலன் நீதிவானவன் நீள் மதிளரங்கத்தம்மான், திருக்

கமலபாதம் வந்துஎன் கண்ணினுள்ளனவொக்கின்றதே

(அமலனாதிபிரான்- *AmalanAdhiPiran*-1),

Sri ThiruppAnAzhwAr in the first verse of his work, *AmalanAdhi pirAn* says that the lotus feet of the ancient and immaculate Lord, who made him the servant of His devotees (who consider Him alone as their sole goal), who is the suzerain Lord of the celestials, who is resident in ThiruvEnkatam with fragrant and plush gardens, who is pure and who does not expect anything in return, who is faultless and rules over the righteous realm of the eternal stars, who reclines in Srirangam surrounded by tall walls, appeared to come inside his eyes of their own accord.

Thus being a devoted servant of the Lord eventually achieves fulfillment only in serving His devotees.

(Please note that is where lies the significance of the traditional Sri Vaishnava practice of ததீய ஆராதீநா (*Thadeeya ArAdhanA* – worship of the devotees).

இப் ப்ரதிபத்தி ஒத்திருந்தாலும் ப்ரவ்ருத்தி சிஷ்ய ஆசார்யாதிகளுக்கு போலவே ஸ்வதந்த்ர ஆளுயாலே வ்யவஸ்தி²தை யாயிருக்கும்.

While this mental attitude will be similar between devotees, the mode of conduct will be somewhat governed by the scriptural injunctions ordained by the Lord. This is exemplified for instance in the respective prescribed conducts of a disciple and his/her preceptor, as per the scriptures ordained by the Lord.

5. Who are BhAgavathAs?

இங்கு அடியார் என்கிறது ப⁴க³வத் ஷேஷத்வ ஞாநவான்களான ப்ரதிபு³த்³த⁴ரையும், நித்யரையும், முக்தரையும்,

"The true devotees are those who have the understanding and attitude that they are the servants of the Lord SrIman NArAyana, considering Him alone as the ultimate Reality. If a devotee even when still in this mundane life has such an attitude, he is to be included in the same category as the eternal attendants of the Lord and the ones who are already liberated".

"நின் திருவெட்டெழுத்தும் கற்று நான் உற்றதும் உன்னடியார்க்கடிமை" (திருமங்கை ஆழ்வார் - பெரியதிருமொழி- 8-10-3) என்கையாலே இதுவே திருமந்திரத்துக்கு உயிர் நிலை.

"To be servant of such devotees is in fact the central core and the sum and the substance of the eight syllable holy Thirumantram". (Sri Thirumangai AzhwaR's Periya Thirumozhi 8-10-3)

6. Evidence for the word "Namaha" also indicating 'Prapatti':

இப்படி ஸ்வதந்த்ர ஸ்வாமி இட்ட வழக்கான தனக்கு அவன் நடத்தின நல் வழியாலே அவனைப் ப்ரஸந்நன் ஆக்கி புருஷார்த²ம் பெற வேண்டுகையாலே யதா²தி⁴காரம் த்³வ்யத்திலும் சரம ஸ்லோகத்திலும் சொன்ன வசீகரணம் இங்கே அர்த² ஸித்³த⁴ம்.

Thus as shown above the *jeeva* being under the control of the independent Lord, is placed in a position to carry out what has been assigned to him by the Lord. Carrying out the best means under the guidance of the Lord, the *jeeva* is poised to please the Lord thereby obtain the fruit

there of. Thus pleasing the Lord becomes important. The best means to do so is through surrender or *SharanAgati* or *prapatti* . This has been indicated explicitly in the words "ஈரணமஹம் ப்ரபத்³யே" "I am seeking refuge" in the *Dvaya mantram* and in the words of the Lord in *Bhagavat Geetha Charama SIOkam*, "மாமேகம் ஈரணம் வ்ரஜ" "Seek Me alone as your refuge". The same meaning is implied in the word "*Namaha*".

The Acharaya cites several *pramAnAs* here.

ஈரணம் ப்ரதி தே³வாநாம் ப்ராப்தகாலம் அமந்யத (*MahAbhAratham Aranya Parvam* (48-16) :

"After carefully thinking and analysing in many ways, Damayanthi, "thought that it was time to seek refuge at the Devas". When she did seek the refuge of the Devas, she used the word "*Namaha*"

ஸர்வேஷாமேவ லோகாநாம் பிதா மாதா ச மாத⁴வ:

க³்ச²த்⁴வமேந ஈரணம் ஈரண்யம் புருஷர்ஷபா⁴:

(*MahAbhAratham- Aranya parvam- 161-55*)

"The consort of Lakshmi, the Lord is the mother and father for all the worlds. O' PANDavas! Considering Him, the protector (of all) as the means, seek His refuge". (Sage MArkandeya's advice)

ஏவமுக்தாஸ்த்ரய: பார்தா² யமௌ ச ப⁴ரதர்ஷப⁴:

த்³ரௌபத்³யா ஸஹிதா: ஸர்வே நமஸ்சக்ருர் ஜநார்த்³நம்

(*MahaBharatham_ Aranya Parvam 161-56*)

"Thus addressed, the three sons of Kunthi, along with Nakula, Sahadeva and Draupadi, all sought refuge at Sri Krishna."

It needs to be noted that Sage Sri MArkandeya advised the PANDavas to do *SharanAgati* to Sri Krishna and in the very next verse here, it says that the PANDavas did "*Namaha*" to Sri Krishna implying clearly that the word "*Namaha*:" intrinsically conveys the meaning of *Prapatti*.(*sharanAgati*).

In the Mantra Raja Pada Stotram on Sri Nrsimha Bhagavan ("Lord Sri Nrsimha") by Lord Siva, the word "நம:" is used clearly to indicate "ஆத்மநிவேதந பரம் " of "surrendering of one's own self "

Also in explaining the meaning of the eight syllable holy *Thirumantram*, one of the various meanings given for the word "*Namaha*" is that it indicates directly "the act of surrender that we need to perform".

Also it has been accepted by ancient knowers that just as the word "Swaha" indicates the "offerings into the fire", the word "Namaha" indicates "the offering of one's own *self*".

நம: ஸப்³த³ம் தானே தன் துவக்கற ஸாங்க ப⁴ரந்யாஸத்தைக் காட்டுகிறதாகவுமாம்.

The AchArya states here that the word "Namaha" clearly shows "ப⁴ரந்யாஸம்" (the "BharanyAsam") with all its integral parts, consists of "breaking the relationship with *one's self* and submitting the burden of *one's self* on the Lord"

7. The internalisation and understanding of the true relationship with the Lord is the inner meaning of *Prapatti*.

தாஸ இதி ப்ரபந்ந இதி ச என்கிற அடைவே ப்ரணவத்திலே ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴ ஞாநமும் நமஸ்ஸிலே உபாயமுமாகச் சொன்னவர்கள் தாமே ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴ ஞாநமே உபாயம் என்கிற இது இதன் ப்ராதா⁴ந்ய விவகையாலேயாமத்தனை. இதுக்கு ப்ராதா⁴ந்யம் ஆத்ம-அபி⁴மாந-அநுகு³ண- புருஷார்த²- வ்யவஸ்தையாலே ஐஸ்வர்யாதிகளை - அருவருப்பித்து ஸ்வரூப அநுரூபமான பரம புருஷார்த²த்திலே ருசியையும் த்வரையையும் விளைப்பித்துத் திருநாரணன் தாள் காலம் பெறச்சிந்தித்து உய்யும்படி பண்ணுகை.

Sri Alavandar states in his சது ஸ்லோகி (*Chatussloki*) glorifying Sri MahALakshmi, that he is coming forward feeling encouraged to glorify Her in his *stOtram* for he is Her servant and that he has taken refuge under Her.

The understanding of *one's self* as the servant "தா³ஸ" ("*dAsa*") arises from the understanding of the relationship between the self and the Lord (ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴ ஞாநம்). The understanding of *one's self* as the ப்ரபந்ந ("*prapanna*") (one who has surrendered) necessarily implies the understanding that comes from the word "Namaha", which indicates the means (உபாயம்) which is *prapatti*" (surrender). Thus some therefore rightfully conclude and state that understanding of *one's self* as the servant of the Lord actually is *prapatti* (surrender).

If one looks into this in depth, there will be no conflict that is inherent in the last statement. For it is the understanding of the relationship of *one's self* to the Lord, the Supreme to be the nature of the servant to a Master, that becomes the kindling and starting point for performing the action of surrender. Thus this ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴ ஞாநம் ("*Sambandha Jnanam*") ("understanding of this relationship") becomes quite essential. That is why the wise even called this to be the means. If one understands that the real nature about *one's self* is being the servant of the Lord, then it will lead to the thoughts regarding what is the most suitable fruit consistent with that. It will obviously show that the material gains of the world are not consistent with this nature and will lead to a distaste and even hatred towards them. It will also reveal that the true goal consistent

with this *self understanding* is "MOKsham" or "liberation". It will also instill a desire towards this goal and cause a thirst for early attainment of this goal. This therefore leads one to surrender to the Lord and obtain the lotus feet of Sriman NArAyana, thereby enabling one to perform eternal service to the Lord. For all of this sequence, the starting point is the understanding of the relationship of *one's self* as the servant of the transcendental Lord. That is why some called it the means for liberation.

8: Conclusion.

The AchArya concludes the section with the following verse.

யான் எனதென்பது ஒன்றில்லை என்செய்வது அவனையல்லால்
ஆனதறிந்திடும் தன்னடியார்க்கு என்னையாட்படுத்தி
தான்என்னை நல்கி நடத்துகின்றான் தன்னருள் வழியே
நானுனை வீடு செய்வேனென்ற நந்திருநாரணனே

"Our Lord Sriman NArAyana who gave the word that He will liberate (us) from the shackles of the mundane worldly life and give (us) the eternal freedom, showing love towards me, making me the servant of His devotees who know all that is good, guides me the way of His Grace. There is nothing that is "I" or "Mine". Aside from my Lord, what is there and what needs to be done?"

Sri Madhura Kavi AzhwAr and his work Kanninun ChirutthAmbu:

தேறிய மாஞானமுடன் திருக்கோளுரிற்
சித்திரையில் சித்திரைநாள் வந்துதோன்றி
ஆறியநல் அன்புடனே குருகூர்நம்பிக்கு
அனவரதம் அந்தரங்கவடிமை செய்து
மாறையைல் லாலென்று மறந்தும் தேவும்
மற்றறியேன் எனுமதூரகவியே நீ முன்
கூறிய கண்ணிநுண் சிறுத்தாம் பதனிற் பாட்டுக்

குலவு பதினொன்றுமெனக்கு உதவு நீயே

Sri VedAnta Desika - *Prabhanda sAram* (7)

" O' Sri Madhurakavi! Fully endowed with clear and full knowledge, You took birth in the holy place of ThirukkOloor 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 MAran".

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 "கண்ணிநுண் சிறுத்தாம்பு" (*Kanninun ChiruttAmbu*). 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 *KanninunChiruttAmbu*, have been made part of the unique collection of the devotional philosophic poetry, நாலாயிர திவ்ய ப்ரபந்தம் (NAIAyira 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 MAmuni declares in உபதே³சரத்தினமாலை (*UpadEsa Rattina MAlai*) that our great AchAryas included the verses of Kanninun ChiruttAmbu of Sri Madhurakavi AzhwAr 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 *Thirumantram* (the *AshtAkshara Mantra*- the mantra with eight syllables).

வாய்த்த திருமந்திரத்தின்மத்திமமாம் பதம் போல்

சீர்த்தமதுரகவிசெய்கலையை- ஆர்த்த புகழ்

ஆசிரியர்கள் தாங்கள் அருளிச்செயல் நடுவே

சேர்வித்தார் தாற்பரியம் தேர்ந்து.

Sri Vedanta Desika declares in his *Sri Guruparampara sAram* 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 sAram -2*

The guru of Sri Madhurakavi was Sri NammAzhwAr, a peerless preceptor par excellence and a supreme பா⁴க³வத Bhagavata (devotee). Sri NammAzhwAr who was in deep meditation for many years under the tamarind tree in Thirukkurukoor was awaiting the arrival of Sri Madhurakavi and responded only to him.

Sri Thirumazhisai PirAn in NAnmukan ThiruvandAdhi calls பா⁴க³வத ஸமா ஸ்ரயணம் (taking the Lord's devotee as the guide and way) as the best among the three faultless means.

பமுதாகா தொன்றறிந்தேன் பாற்கடலான் பாதம்

வழுவாவகை நினைந்து வைகல் - தொழுவாரைக்

கண்டிறைஞ்சிவாழ்வார் கலந்தவினைக்கெடுத்து

விண்டிறந்து வீற்றிருப்பார்மிக்கு *(NAnmukan ThiruvandAdhi -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 (பா⁴க³வதாபி⁴மாநநிஷ்டை) to be even better than those who have taken the Lord as the way (ப⁴க³வத ஸமா ஸ்ரயணம்) for they become blessed with the devotional service of the divine.

வீற்றிருந்து விண்ணாள வேண்டுவார் வேங்கடத்தான்
பால்திருந்தவைத்தாரே பன்மலர்கள் - மேல்திருந்த
வாழ்வார் வருமதிப்பார்த் தன்பினராய் மற்றவர்க்கே
தாழ்வாயிருப்பார் தமர்

(NAnmukan ThiruvandAdhi -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 ஸமா ஸ்ரயணம் (*BhAgavatha SamAsrayanam*). 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 பிரான் தனக்கு

அடியார் அடியார் தம்அடியார் அடியார்தமக்கு

அடியார் அடியார் தம்அடியார் அடியோங்களே *(ThiruvAimozhi 3-7-10)*

Sri Madhurakavi AzhwAr not only took to the holy feet of Sri NammAzhwAr a பரம பா⁴க³வத (parama BhAgavata- devotee parexcellence) and an incomparable AchArya, but lived under his holy feet being the full recipient of his and the Lord's grace. "கண்ணிநுண் சிறுத்தாம்பு" (*Kanninun ChiruttAmbu*) is a beautiful piece of supreme *Acharya Bhakti* (devotion to the preceptor, 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 ChiruttAmbu* about twelve thousand times. Thus, one can conclude that we might not have had the NAlAyira Divya Prabandham today but for the *Kanninun ChiruttAmbu* of Sri Madhurakavi AzhwAr.

Adiyen ranganathan

