

**Srī:**

## **Mudal āzhwārs and the concept of Purushakāratvam of Srī**

The *Nālāyira DivyaPrabhandam* comprising the four thousand sweet verses in Tamil by the twelve Āzhwārs Saints of TamilNādu is a special Tamil heritage of immense philosophic and literary value. It is accepted and treated as equal to the Védās and the Upanishads, the scriptures sacred to all Hindus. It is the loving experience of the Divine poured out in ecstatic poetry in the vernacular by the wise sages who revelled in the Divine and were immersed in the depths of the ocean of Divine Love. It inspired the great philosopher teacher Srī Rāmānuja (1017-1137 CE) to propound the philosophy of Visishta Advaitam "the Qualified Non-Dualism".

The authors of this unique collection of poetry generally hailed from the region surrounding the major rivers (Cauvery, Tāmarabarani and Pālāru) coursing through Tamil Nādu. Although they were from different walks of life and lived at different times, their mystic experience and their philosophical views were quite unique and similar. For them the causal principle underlying all existence is Srīman Nārāyana (meaning the support and abode of all souls) with all glorious and auspicious attributes, the most important attribute being His Compassion personified in his chest as "Srī". All of the cosmos is like the body of the Lord and the Lord is the life and soul of the physical world. The unconditional compassion (*Nirhétuka Kripā*) of the Lord is the means for liberation and the Lord is thus the goal and the means to the goal.

The origin of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabhandam* can be traced to one eventful stormy night when three of the pioneers among the Āzhwārs, called the Mudal Āzhwārs, namely Srī Poikai Muni, Srī Bhūdat āzhwār and Srī Pei Āzhwār, met and came to share a common shelter from the storm in the confines of a narrow corridor (இடை கழி) at the entrance of a small house in the village called Thirukkōvalūr on the banks of Pennai

river. Srī Poikai Āzhwār himself in his *Mudal Thiruvandhādhī* records this event.

நீயும் திருமகளும் நின்றாயால் .... காமர் பூங்கோவல்  
இடைகழியே பற்றி யினி (Mudal Thiruvandhādhī 86).

Thirukkōvalūr is one of the 108 *Divya désās* or holy shrines of the Lord. The Lord resident in this holy shrine is known as Trivikrama (Ulagamalandha Perumāl). The story pertains to the incarnation of the Lord as Vāmana when he came in the form of a celibate dwarf in order to repossess the worlds taken over from Indra, the chief of the celestials by the demon king Mahā Bali. Vāmana asked for three spaces as measured by his feet and when it was granted He changed His form to cosmic proportions (Trivikrama) and took the three giant strides to measure the worlds. This legend is well known. (தீர்ணிபதா<sup>3</sup>விசக்ரமே "Trivikrama by three steps covered all the worlds" – Yajur Véda – Ashta 2-8-16). The Lord is believed to have taken His abode in this holy *kshetra* (the holy place) acceding to the prayers of the sage Mrigandu in a bygone age.

On the stormy night in question when these three great devotees met, Lord Trivikrama from the local shrine along with His consort Srī (desiring to mingle with them) took His abode in their midst remaining invisible. All the three however felt a strange pressure in the small space and wondered who the intruder could be. Then the first among the three sages, Srī Poikai muni began singing the glory of the Lord as manifested in the cosmos lighting a lamp with the shining Sun as the flame, the Earth as the vessel and the surrounding oceans as the oil and offered it as a garland of one hundred verses in the *andhādhī* style.

வையம் தகளியா வார்கடலே நெய்யாக  
வெய்ய கதிரோன் விளக்காகச் --- செய்ய  
சுடராழியான் அடிக்கே சூட்டினேன் சொல்மாலை  
இடராழி நீங்குகவே என்று (Mudal Thiruvandhādhī 1)

This helped to dispel the outer darkness.

Then the second of the three sages, Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār lighted a lamp of knowledge (ஞானச்சுடர் விளக்கு) with devotion as the base, love as the oil, the sweet mind as the wick and the knowing self as the shining flame offering all of them in the form of a garland of verses to the Lord again in a similar *andhādhi* style.

அன்பே தகளியா ஆர்வமே நெய்யாக  
இன்புருகு சிந்தை இடுதிரியா --- நன்புருகி  
ஞானச் சுடர் விளக்கேற்றினேன் நாரணற்கு  
ஞானத்தமிழ்புரிந்தநான்

(Irاندām Thiruvandhādhi 1)

This dispelled the inner darkness as well and the Lord could no longer remain invisible.

The third Āzhwār Srī Pei Āzhwār described the resulting Divine vision with another garland of one hundred verses beginning with the statement

திருக்கண்டேன் பொன்மேனி கண்டேன் திகழும்  
அருக்கன் அணிநிறமுங் கண்டேன் - செருக்கிளரும்  
பொன்னாழி கண்டேன் புரிசங்கங் கைக்கண்டேன்  
என்னாழி வண்ணன் பாலின்று

(Mūndrām Thirivandhādhi 1)

"I saw Srī, the divine Mother first with my ocean like Lord. Then I saw His beautiful resplendent Form effulgent like the sun, with the dazzling discus fierce in battle in one hand and the curved conch in the other"

Srī Vénkata Nātha or Védanta Désika, the philosopher scholar of the 13th century CE, and the most famous āchārya of Srī Vaishnava tradition was inspired by this event and the works of these great and ancient Bhaktās (*ādhi Bhaktās*) to glorify the Lord who appeared in the narrow corridor in the threshold of a house ((இடை கழி - தே<sup>3</sup>ஹளீ in Sanskrit) in the form of a *stōtra* called the "Srī Déhalīsa Stuti" (referred to by the author). He metaphorically characterizes their beatific vision in one of the verses.

காஸார பூர்வ கவி முக்ய விமர்த்<sup>3</sup> ஜந்மா  
பண்ணா தடேக்ஷஹஸி<sup>4</sup>க<sup>3</sup>ஸ்ய ரஸோ ப<sup>3</sup>ஹு<sup>3</sup>ஸ்தே  
த்வத்பாத<sup>3</sup> பத்<sup>3</sup>ம மது<sup>4</sup>நி த்வத<sup>3</sup>ந்ய போ<sup>4</sup>க்<sup>3</sup>யே  
நூநம் ஸமாச்ரயதி நூதந சர்க்கராத்வம் (7)

The metaphor is as follows. The Lord Trivikrama of Thirukkōvalūr is like the plush sugar cane growing on the banks of the river Pennār. The three great poets were great devotees who had no other desires except the sweet nectar of the Lord's lotus feet. When they were intensely expressing their devotion, they were like the three wheels in the sugar cane crusher, squeezing out the sweet sugar cane juice from the sugar cane. Thus came out the Lord's (ஸௌஸ்ரீல்ய) *Sausheelya guna* (His gracious condescension). This resulted in the formation of a new form of sugar, like mixing honey with the sugar cane juice producing a rich and sweet experience of the Divine. This is a fascinating and apt description of what was revealed through Srī Pei Āzhwār in his *Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi*. When the beatific vision of the Supreme Person Nārāyana was actualized, His inseparable Consort Srī was seen first in His golden Form.

## Srī Poikai Pirān (ஸ்ரீ பொய்கை ஆழ்வார்):

Srī Poikai Pirān lived in the Dwāpara Age. He was the first of the Mudal Āzhwārs. He is said to have been born in a lotus flower in a pond (poikai) near திருவெஃகா (*Thiruvekha*) temple in *Kānchipuram*. He was the *amsa* (incarnation) of the *Pāncha Janya* or the Conch of Srīman Nārāyana. His avatāra took place on திருவோணம் (*Thiruvōnam Nakshatram*) in the month of ஐப்பசி (*Ippasi*) (Tula). His work முதல் திருவந்தாதி (*Mudal Thiruvandādhī*) like the similar works by his two companion Āzhwārs, is also set in the *andhādhī* style where the end word or the syllable of each verse becomes the beginning word of the succeeding verse. The end word of the hundredth verse becomes, in turn, the beginning of the first verse, making the hundred verses a true garland of verses. Āzhwār sees the *Purushōttama* (the Supreme Person) in the Lord of the seven hills, who is ever resident in the hearts of those who think of Him.

உளன்கண்டாய் நன்னெஞ்சே உத்தமனென்றும்  
உளன்கண்டாய் உள்ளுவாருள்ளத்துளன் கண்டாய்  
வெள்ளத்தினுள்ளானும் வேங்கடத்துமேயானும்  
உள்ளத்தினுள்ளான் என்றோர் 99

*"My good heart, The Supreme being is forever with us. He resides forever in the hearts of those who remember him. Know too, that He, who rests on the waves of the milk ocean and is present on the Vēnkata hill, is forever there in the inner recesses of your being".*

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(1) Srī Poikai Āzhwār's Mudal Thiruvandhādhī . Text with translation by Srī.N.Rajagopalan, 1999, Chennai, published by Srī.N.Rajagopalan

## Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār (ஸ்ரீ பூதத்தாழ்வார்):

Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār was the second of the Mudal Āzhwārs. His avatāra took place in திருக்கடல் மல்லை (Mahābalipuram), the day after that of Srī Poikai Āzhwār namely on அவிட்டம் (Avittam Nakshatram) in the Tula month. He was considered as the *amsa* (incarnation) of the Mace or *Gada* of Vishnu, born in a blue lilly. The work of this Āzhwār is இரண்டாம் திருவந்தாதி (Irandaṁ Thiruvandādhī) which is a poetic piece of high literary beauty and depth.

The Āzhwār points to the grace of the Lord as the underlying cause of the entire spiritual process.

அருள் புரிந்த சிந்தை அடியார்மேல் வைத்து  
பொருள் தெரிந்து காண்குற்ற வப்போது- இருள்திரிந்து  
நோக்கினேன் நோக்கி நினைந்தேன் அதுஒண்கமலம்  
ஓக்கினேன்என்னையும் அங்கோர்ந்து (59)

"When the Lord cast His benevolent glance at us, His devotees, showering on us the grace of constant remembrance, making some substance out of mere straw, my ignorance dispelled, I looked closely at the reality of God and Self, and meditated on His Feet resembling the lotus flower. I then offered my soul to those feet without a thought of any other recourse". (2)

## Srī Pei Āzhwār (ஸ்ரீபேயாழ்வார்):

Srī Pei Āzhwār is considered an "amsa" of the Lord's Nandaka, the Sword of Srī Maha Vishnu. He was born in the Dwāpara age, in the Tula month in the asterism of Satabhishak (satayam). He is believed to have been born in a red lilly in a well that is attached to the ādhiKésava temple in Mylapore in Chennai. One can see that huge well even today where there is a temple garden. He was known as Bhrānta –Yōgi or Pei Āzhwār since he was intoxicated by love of God.

"பேயரே எனக்கு யாவரும், யானுமோர் பேயனே எவர்க்கும்...

பேயனாய் ஒழிந்தேன் எம்பிரானுக்கே " (*Perumāl Thirumozhi* 3-8).

"All people seem to my mind to be crazy, even as all consider me mad. I am content to be mad after the Lord".

His *bhakti* is considered "Supreme Devotion" or *Parama bhakti*. The *MūndrāmThiruvandhādhi* gives us a unique view of the Āzhwār's heart and his intense devotion. In several verses, he instructs actively his mind and heart to follow him in his worship of the Lord and His *kalyāna gunās* (auspicious attributes). All his sense organs follow his love of the Lord.

காண்காணென விரும்பும் கண்கள் கதிரிலகு

பூண்டாரகலத்தான் பொன்மேனி - பாண்கட்

டொழில் பாடி வண்டறையுந் தொங்கலான் செம்பொற்

கழல்பாடி யாம்தொழுதும் கை. (*Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi* -35).

"My eyes hearken "See behold the golden frame of the Lord wearing dazzling jewels and garlands". Like the humming bees hovering around the garlands, my lips crave to sing in tune His glories and hands fold in prayer. Worship His crimson feet thus in all manner ". (3)

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(3). Srī Pei Āzhwār 's Moonram Thiruvandhādhi . Text with translation by. Srī. N.Rajagopalan,2004, Chennai, published by.N.Rajagopalan.

The uniqueness of the *Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi* lies in the clear expression of *Srīyapatitvam* of the Lord as well as the *Purushakāratvam* of Srī.

Srī Poikai Pirān as well as Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār also indicate these in their works. In *Mudal Thiruvandhādhi*, Srī Poikai Pirān refers to *Srīyapatitvam* many a time, and declares, that the inner consciousness revolves around the Consort of Lakshmi,

பெயருங் கருங்கடலே நோக்குமாறு ஒண்பு  
உயருங் கதிரவனே நோக்கும்--- உயிரும்  
தருமனையே நோக்கும் - ஒண் தாமரையாள் கேள்வன்  
ஒருவனையே நோக்கும் உணர்வு (Mudal Thiruvandhādhi –67)

"The river naturally flows towards the ocean with the surging waves. The beautiful lotus blossoms facing the rising sun in the sky. The life force looks for the deity of death at the end of life. Similarly the inner consciousness is naturally aware of the consort of Lakshmi residing in the lotus"

And those who worship Him find their way to liberation  
(மூப்புன்னைச்சிந்திப்பார்க்கில்லை திருமாலே நின்னடியை வந்திப்பார்  
காண்பர் வழி – Mudal Thiruvandhādhi -75).

Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār refers to "Srī" in many verses in *Irindām Thiruvandhādhi* and declares that the grace of Srī brings the vision of the golden Form of the Lord even before the Lord's own grace

காணக் கழிகாதல் கைமிக்குக்காட்டினால்  
நாணப் படுமென்றால் நாணுமே - பேணிக்  
கருமாலைப் பொன்மேனிகாட்டாமுன் காட்டும்  
திருமாலை நங்கள் திரு- (Irindām Thiruvandhādhi –56)



"When intense desire to have vision of the Lord grows into a passion, how can one curb the same and appear not impatient. Even before the Lord chooses to bestow the vision of His golden Form, Srī the divine Mother will reveal that to us"

திருமங்கை நின்றருளும் தெய்வம் நாவாழ்த்தும்  
கருமங் கடைப்பிடிமின் கண்டிர் - உரிமையால்  
ஏத்தினோம் பாதம் இருந்தடக்கை எந்தைபேர்  
நாற்றிசையுங் கேட்டிரே நாம் (Irandaṁ Thiruvandhādhī – 57)

Srī Pei Āzhwār however begins his *andhādhī* with a declaration at the very outset "திருக்கண்டேன்,பொன்மேனி கண்டேன்". He first saw "Thiru" which stands for "Srī" in Tamil and then only he mentions that he saw the golden Form of the Lord. Srī Pei Āzhwār confirms Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār 's assertion stated above. Finally Srī Pei Āzhwār ends his *Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhī* indicating the easy accessibility of Srī Lakshmi's grace for us,

சார்வு நமக்கென்றும் சக்கரத்தான் தண்டுழாய்த்  
தார்வாழ் வரைமார்பன் தான்முயங்கும் - காரார்ந்த  
வானமரு மின்னிமைக்கும் வண் தாமரை நெடுங்கண்  
தேனமரும் பூமேல் திரு 100.

" The glorious mother Lakshmi is held close in His heart by the discus wielding Lord Who has the chest wide as the mountain adorned by the cool Tulasi garland. She is like the permanent lightning streak in the dense dark clouds in the skies. She has long beautiful lotus eyes and is seated on the honey laden lotus flower. She is our refuge now and for ever".

## The concept of "Srī":

The concept of "Srī" in Visishta Advaitam has been extensively commented upon by eminent Srī Vaishanava āchāryās including Yāmuna, Srī Rāmānuja, Parāsara Bhattar, Nanjiyar and Vēnkata Nātha. Srī Yāmuna sings the glory of "Srī" in four verses (*Chatuslōki*) and the stōtrās of other āchāryās more or less follow the idea from these. Srī Nanjiyar's commentary on Srī Sūktam is considered as an authoritative treatise. In the Dvaya Mantra Adhikāra of *Srīmad Rahasya Traya Sāram*, Srī Védanta Désika commenting on the meaning of Srīman Nārāyana quotes the following slōka (of Srī Arulāla Perumāl Emperumānār)

"ஆகாரிணஸ்து விஞ்ஞானம் ஆகார ஞான பூர்வகம்  
தேநாகாரம் ஸ்ரியம் ஞாத்வா ஞாதவ்யோ ப<sup>4</sup>க<sup>3</sup>வான் ஹரி:"

*"The knowledge of a qualified object is possible only through the attribute. So knowing first Srī who is an Ākāra or Vishéshana, the Ākāri or Vishéshya – the Lord is to be known".*

He then gives six derivative meanings of the word "Srī" (*Shreeyathé* meaning She is sought, *Srayathé* meaning She seeks the Lord for the protection of the *jīvās*, *Srunōti* meaning She listens, *Srāvayathi* meaning She makes the Lord listen, *Srunāthi* meaning She destroys the faults of the devotees and *Sreenāthi* meaning She fills the worlds with her *gunās* which further illustrate her *Purushakāratvam*.

**Srī or MahāLakshmi is co-eternal with the Lord and ever resident in the chest of the Lord. She not only acts to bring the grace of the Lord to the *jiva* but also actively helps in the redemption of the individual souls. In this role, She is considered as a compassionate mediator (*Purushakāra Bhūthai*).**

The āchāryās point not only to the Védās but also to the Āzhwārs ' works as evidence or the *Pramāna* for this. ஹ்ரீஸ்ச தே லக்ஷ்மீஸ்ச பத்ந்யௌ (*Purusha Sūkhtam* 2-6)

"For Thee, Bhū Dévi and Srī Dévi are two consorts" The second ஃ (conjunction) indicates indirectly Neela Devi.

In *Srī Sūkhtam* we find Srī described as the Sovereign of all the souls (ஈச்வரீ ஸர்வபூ<sup>4</sup>தாநாம்). In Vishnu Purāna, the most authoritative among all the Purānās and so termed Purāna Ratnam (jewel among the Purānās), Srī is described as the divine mother who is eternal (நித்ய), inseparable from the Lord (அநபாயினி) and all pervasive (ஸர்வக்<sup>3</sup>த:). Srī is the personification of compassion or *Daya*. Bhū represents Bhūmi Dévi (Divine mother Earth) who stands for forgiveness (*Kshamā*) and Neela Devi is of the nature of enchanting beauty and represents the Lord's *anubhava –sukham* and is also personification of forgiveness or *kshama*.

Āzhwārs 's verses also refer to all the three consorts of the Lord.

திருமகளும், மண்மகளும் ஆய்மகளும் சேர்ந்தால்

(*Mudal Thiruvandhādhī* -42),

இன்துணைப் பதுமத் தலர்மகள் தனக்கும் இன்பன்  
நற்புவிதனக்கிறைவன் தன்துணை ஆயர் பாவை நப்பின்னை  
தனக்கிறை (Periya Thirumozhi 2-3-5)

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān addresses the Lord,  
உரத்திலும் ஒருத்தி தன்னை வைத்து உகந்து (*Thirucchandaviruttam* – 29), meaning "O' Lord, Thou art united with the divine mother Lakshmi

who for ever resides in Thy heart, "பொன்பாவை கேள்வா கிளரொளி என் கேசவனே (*Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī* -59) meaning "O' the Lord of Srī Lakshmi, whose halo adds lustre to Thee ". He further defines Brahman as the entity where Srī resides.

திருநின்ற பக்கம் திறவிது என்றோரார் கருநின்றகல்லார்க் குறைப்பர்.திருநின்ற மார்வன் சிரீதரன் (*Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī* - 62).

Srī Parāśara Bhattar (1123-1151 CE) makes a similar statement, அபாங்கா<sup>3</sup> பூ<sup>4</sup>யாம்ஸோ யது<sup>3</sup>பரி பரம் ப்<sup>3</sup>ரஹ்ம் தத<sup>3</sup>பூ<sup>4</sup>த் (*Srī Gunaratna Kōsha* -30) meaning whichever entity gets most of the grace of the divine mother Lakshmi that entity becomes Para Brahman. Thus, Srīman Nārāyaṇa is Para Brahman since Srī resides in His heart.

Also Srī Nammāzhwār refers to Nārāyaṇa as திருமகளார் தனிக்கேள்வன் in *Thiruvāimozhi* (1-6-9). He further points to the fact that her grace could remove the effects of the binding *karma* வேரி மாறாத பூமேலிருப்பாள் வினைதீர்க்குமே (*Thiruvāimozhi* 4-5-11). Āzhwārs make it immensely clear that the divine couple is the supreme goal (*Prāpya* ப்ராப்ய) for rendering eternal divine service and also they serve as the *Upāya* or the means. Her grace automatically brings the goal of eternal divine service தனமாய தானே கைகூடும் (*Mudal Thiruvandhādhī* - 43). The famous *Saranāgati* verse by Srī Nammāzhwār அகலகில்லேன் இறையுமென்று அலர்மேல் மங்கை உறை மார்பா (*Thiruvāimozhi* 6-10-10), in the act of self surrender made to the Lord of Thiruvēṅkatam is considered by the Srī Vaishnava āchāryas as the most appropriate example to follow for spiritual aspirānts since it is made to the Lord of Srī invoking first the grace of Srī who is eternally resident in the chest of the Lord.

In the *Saranāgati Gadyam*, Srī Rāmānuja first humbly approaches the divine Mother Srī and after gaining her grace only makes his surrender to the Lord.

However, the very first expression of *Srīyapatitvam* and *Purushakāratvam* of Srī goes to Srī Pei Āzhwār . "துன்னிய பேரிருள் நீங்க சோதி தோன்ற சேமமுடன் நெடுமாலைக் காணப்புக்கு திருக்கண்டேன் எனவுரைத்த தேவே" (Srī Védāntha Désika in *Prabhandha Sāram*).

When all ignorance vanished and the Divine Light began to shine, Srī Pei Āzhwār's description of his direct perception of the Lord, (ஸாக்ஷாத்காரத்வம்) of the Lord, revealed Srī first. As pointed out by the author, the state reached by Srī Pei Āzhwār is described by Srī Peria vacchaan Pillai as the highest and the most mature state of *Parama Bhakti* resulting in "*Bhagavat svarūpa Sākshā kāratvam*" or direct perception of the Divine. In the words of Srī Periyavācchān Pillai, "கடலைக்கண்டவன் அதற்குள்ளுண்டான முத்துமாணிக்காதிகளைத் தனித்தனி கண்டு உகக்குமாபோலே" it is like the person who saw the ocean perceiving and enjoying all the pearls and the gems that are hidden in it.

Srī Pei Āzhwār points out to us from his own experience that the Lord's grace is assured for us (அருளாதொழிமே ஆலிலை மேல் அன்று முன்—verse 19) and He will take His abode in the minds of those who love Him and who think of Him. Āzhwār describes his own mind and heart as good since they were along with him in his path of love divine.

## Mudal Āzhwārs and The Lord of Thiruvénkatam:

Srī Pei Āzhwār experiences the Lord as enshrined in the various holy shrines (*archa* Form of the Lord). Among these, however, the Lord of Thiruvénkatam appears to be his favourite, very similar to the other two of his companions in *Bhakti*. Srī Poikai Pirān sings on the Lord of Thiruvénkatam in at least 10 of the verses in the *Mudal Thiruvandhādhī* (வினைச்சுடரை நந்துவிக்கும் வேங்கடமே -verse 26; பழுதொன்றும் வாராத வண்ணமே விண்கொடுக்கும் மண்ணளந்த சீரான் திருவேங்கடம் – verse 76; வெள்ளத்தினுள்ளானும் வேங்கடத்துமேயானும் உள்ளத்தினுள்ளான் -verse 99) and Srī Bhūdat Āzhwār also is fond of Thiruvénkatam as seen in his verses in the *Irandaṁ Thiruvandhādhī* . (மனத்துள்ளான் வேங்கடத்தான் மாகடலான் –verse 28; வேங்கடமே யாம் விரும்பும் வெற்பு -verse 53). Srī Pei Āzhwār on the other hand, refers to Thiruvénkatam in 19 of the 100 verses. Āzhwār confirms that the Lord of all, the inner controller of this earth, the all pervasive Lord, He from whom all the Védās emanated, the One who forms the meaning and the substance of the Védās, the Lord of the eternal realm, the Lord of Thiruvénkatam has taken His abode in His heart

(பிறைவாய்ந்த வெள்ளத்தருவி விளங்கொலிநீர் வேங்கடத்தான் உள்ளத்தின்னுள்ளே உளன்–verse 39). It is of interest to note that Srī Thirumangai Āzhwār calls the Lord of Thiruvénkatam " செந்தமிழ் பாடுவார் வணங்கும் தேவர்", referring to the Mudal Āzhwārs and their *Thiruvandhādhies*. (*Periya Thirumozhi* II-8-2). Srī Thirumangai Āzhwār refers here to Mudal Āzhwārs as "செந்தமிழ் பாடுவார் " admiring the literary beauty of their Tamil verses.

Āzhwār's words confidently reiterate the way the Lord was made captive in his heart where He began to reside continually without interruption. He states that he achieved this by a meticulous search guided by the bright lamp of knowledge of true understanding that the Lord is the way.

உய்த்துணர்வென்னும் ஒள்கொள் விளக்கேற்றி  
வைத்தவனை நாடி வலைப்படுத்தேன் --- மெத்தனவே  
நின்றான் இருந்தான் கிடந்தான் என்னெஞ்சத்து  
பொன்றாமை மாயன் புகுந்து

—verse 94.

Such conviction and confidence expressed so succinctly arising from personal direct perception must have attracted the great Yōgi Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān. It is said that Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān, took to *Bhakti marga* being influenced by Srī Pei Āzhwār . The benedictory verse reads "பெருக்கமுடன் திருமழிசைபிரான் தொழுவோன் வாழியே". In fact one can see the *āchārya– sishya bhāva* in the shrine of ādhiKésava Perumāl in Mylapore even today between the two Āzhwārs depicting this association.

All the three *Thiruvandhādhies* by these ancient great souls expound the eternal Truth and shed bright light on superior devotion, true knowledge and afford the glimpses of that blissful *Bhagavatanubhavam* that they all felt. Perhaps for these reasons the first three *Thiruvandhādhies* are recited at the sanctum of the Lord of Thiruvénkatam on the day of the Kārthigai Deepam to represent the lights that they lit on that dark stormy night.

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