

Srī:
Srīmaté Rāmānujāya Namaha

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's

VAIBHAVAM AND GRACE

வைபவமும் அருளும்

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Azhwārs' Utsavam
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Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's Vaibhavam and Grace

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Srī:

Srīmatè Rāmānujāya namaha

Srī Mangaivalli Thāyār samèta Srī Jagannātha Parabrahmanè namaha

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān Thiruvadigalè śaranam

நடந்தகால்கள்நொந்தவோ நடுங்க ஞாலமேனமாய்
இடந்தமெய்குலுங்கவோ விலங்குமால்வரைச் சுரம்
கடந்தகால்பரந்த காவிரிக்கரைக் குடந்தையுள்
கிடந்தவாறெழுந்திருந்துபேசுவாழிகேசனே (ThirucchandaViruttam -61)

ஸ்ரீ திருமழிசைபிரானின் வைப⁴வமும் அருளும்

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's Vaibhavam and Grace

I. Introduction:

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān was a great Yogi. He lived in the Dwāpara yuga (age) at the time of the Mudhal āzhwārs. He is described to have lived for 4700 years on this earth. He is considered an "amsam" of the discus (*chakram*) of Srīman Nārāyana. In Thirumazhisai (situated in the outskirts of Chennai) which is the birthplace of the āzhwār, there is a beautiful sannidhi for the Azhwār in the Temple of Srī Mangai valli Thāyār samèta Srī Jagannatha Perumāl. There is also a special shrine for the āzhwār in Thirukkudanthai in the Azhwār's *nandavanam* where Azhwār had lived for 700 years and had his āshramam there. In both the places, Thirunakshatram (the birth star) of the Āzhwār is celebrated as an utsavam for 10 days.

The verse given below is the Vāzhi Thirunāmam (Benedictory verse) on this great āzhwār, which provides us important details about him.

அன்புடன் அந்தாதி தொண்ணூற்றாறுரைத்தார் வாழியே
அழகாருந் திருமழிசை அமர்ந்த செல்வர் வாழியே
இன்பமிகு தையில்மகத்திங்குதித்தார் வாழியே
எழிற்சந்த விருத்தம் நூற்றிருபதீந்தார் வாழியே
முன்புகத்தில் வந்துதித்த முனிவனார் வாழியே
முழுப்பெருக்கில் பொன்னியெதிர் மிதந்தசொல்லோர் வாழியே
நன்புவியில் நாலயிரத்தெழு நூற்றார் வாழியே
நங்கள் பக்திசாரர் திரு நற்பதங்கள் வாழியே

anbudan andhādhi thonnūtrāruiraitthār vāzhiyé
azhagārum thirumazhisai amarndha selvar vāzhiyé
inbamigu thaiyil magaththingkudhiththār vāzhiyé
ezhil chandhaviruththam nūtrirupadheendhār vāzhiyé
munbugaththil vandhudhiththa munivanār vāzhiyé
muzhup perrukkil ponni edhir midhandha chollōr vāzhiyé
nanpuviyil nālāyiraththezhunootrār vāzhiyé
nangkal bhakthisārar thiru narpadhangkal vāzhiyé

Long live the One, who sang with love the andādhi of ninety-six

Long live the One who resided in the beautiful Thirumazhisai,

Long live the One who incarnated on Magham in the pleasant month of Thai,

Long live the One who gave the lovely Chanda Viruttam of one hundred and twenty

Long live the sage who came into this world in the previous Yuga,

Long live the One whose words floated upstream of the bulging river Cauvery,

Long live the One who spent four thousand and seven hundred years in this good Earth,

Long live the divine feet of our Srī Bhaktisārar.

Since he lived for many years, Azhwār must have authored many texts (*prabhandhams*). It is said that he threw all of his manuscripts into the Kāvèri river. Two of the *prabhandhams* floated against the stream. Azhwār kept only those for posterity. Of these two works, one is Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (NT) with 96 verses) was set in *andhādhi* style, where each verse begins with part of the last word of the immediately preceding verse. The final verse of the text connects back to the very first verse of the *prabhandhams* making the whole text like a string of verses similar to a garland of flowers. Recitation of such an *andhādhi* can be imagined to be like offering a flower garland to the Lord. The second text that āzhwār had graced us is Thirucchanda Viruttam (TCV) with 120 verses. It is a unique text set in a rhythmical style much like the Vèdic verses. Thus, we have been blessed to have these two beautiful Aruliccheyal texts of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān passed on to us through the compassionate Achāryas of our ancient Ubhaya Vèdānta tradition (twin stream of Vèdic texts and Tamizh Aruliccheyal verses of the *divya Prabhandham* forming the basis of Srī Vaishnava tradition of the South and *Srī Rāmanuja darśanam*), starting from Srīman Nātha Munigal.

Many illustrious Srī Vaishnava Achāryās and scholars have written and spoken about the glories of this famous āzhwār, whose Thirunakshatram is "Magham" in the auspicious Tamizh month of Thai (*Makara māsam*). In this current year (2024) it fell on the 28th of January (the 27th for us in Canada) of 2024. Swāmi Srī Dēsikan refers to him as "மழிசை வந்த சோதி mazhisai vandha jyōthi" meaning "the Beacon of Light from Thirumazhisai" in his *Prabhandā Sāram* verses. In

Ramanuja-Nootrandhādhi, Sri Arangatthamudanār describes as follows, "இடங்கொண்டகீர்த்திமழிசைக்கிறைவன் இணையடிப்போதடங்கும் இதயத்திராமானுசன் (idamkonda keerthi mazhisaiikkiraivan inaiadippō thadankum ithayaththirāmānujan), Swāmi Srī NammAzhwār has referred to him in the famous decad of verses on Thirukkudanthai "ஆராவமுதே அடியேன் உடலம்" āravamudhē adiyēn udalam" (Thiruvāimozhi 5-9). "திசைவில் வீசும் செழுமா மணிகள் சேரும் திருக்குடந்தை". "thisaivil vīsum chezhumā manigal chērum Thirukkudanthai", meaning "Thirukkudanthai which had in it precious gems, well known and famous in all directions". In the ஈட்டு ஸூசூக்தி (*Ettu Srī Sūkthi*) which is the commentary - *Vyākhyānam* of Thiruvāimozhi – graced by āchārya Sri Parāsara Bhattar, it is described as follows. "ஆராவமுதாழ்வார் திருமழிசைப்பிரான் போல்வார் புருஷரத்தனங்கள் சேரும் திருக்குடந்தை யென்று நிர்வகிப்பீர்கள். The gem indicated by Azhwār here refers to Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān and persons of his stature.". That is how all āchāryās in the *sampradāyam* have interpreted this text of this famous Thiruvāimozhi.

The life story of this Azhwār is covered in Guruparampara vaibhavam texts as well as in some of the published texts of the Divya Prabhandham. Azhwār's immense depth of *bhakti* (love and adoration of the Supreme Lord Srīman Nārāyana) to which the Lord in His *archa* form had responded leaving visible evidence even today at least in two divya dēsams namely Thiruvekha (*Yadōkatha kāri* -சொன்ன வண்ணம் செய்த பெருமாள்- *sonna vannam seitha Perumāḷ*) and Thirukkudanthai. His famous interaction with Lord Siva is revealed in his Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi text (NT verse-26). Similarly, his association with the Mudhal Azhwārs comes across clearly also in his *prabhandhams*. Adiyēn had previously referred to these in the Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi text and translation (see under references).

We are all blessed with beautiful Vyākhyānam of the āzhwar's two prabhandhams by the *Vyākhyāna Chakravarthi* (emperor among commentators) and *Paramakārunikar* (the most compassionate) Srī Periyavācchān Pillai (Srī PVP). We will not be able to understand the deep meanings of many of the verses in both the *prabhandhams* and especially Thirucchanda Viruttam text without the Vyākhyānams of the great Acharya. Learning under the guidance of an Achārya will be preferable and easier. But many in the modern days living in remote places of work, spread around the globe will not be able to access this traditional "one on one" learning. Self study is feasible. But one needs to have some basic language skills in both Tamizh and Sanskrit. In addition, one must have access to authentic "*vivaranam* texts (explanatory texts)" by well known Srī Vaishnava Scholars. Adiyēn will remain for ever grateful to Puthūr Swāmi Srī Krishnaswāmi Iyengar (Srī PSK) for his "*vivaranams*" to Srī PVP's commentaries of these two texts as well as others. Adiyēn actually had the bhāgyam of meeting and paying my obeisance to Srī PSK at his residence in Trichy (Puthur Agrahāram) due to the grace of the Lord.

Traditional *Vyākhyānams* of Srī PVP provide not only clear in depth meaning, they also show the connectedness of each verse with his preceding verse. It is referred to as "*sangathi*". That helps to put things in perspective of the line of thought of the Azhwār. Therefore, it is important that one reads the commentary with the explanatory notes at least once. Adiyēn's translations of these two prabhandhams into English which are housed in our web site <Azhwār.org > have preserved that format (links).

“வைப⁴வம் Vaibavam” means “Glories”. “அருள் Arul” means “Grace”. Adiyèn in this write up mainly wish to share both personal journey and travel notes as it were of the discovery of the beautiful *vaibhavam* of the Azhwār revealed through his *prabhandhams*. It is the வைப⁴வம் Vaibhavam (Glories) of the azhwar that is of utmost interest. Even his grace (அருள்) is part of his Vaibhavam To provide the background, adiyèn will record Azhwār’s Grace and adiyèn’s journey first.

II. Azhwār’s Grace and Adiyèn’s Journey:

Everything happens of course by the *samkalpam* of the Lord. If any thing good happens for us, it must always be due to the grace of the Lord. It could be initiated by the blessings of our forefathers. In this narrative of adiyèn’s journey and what I wish to share with you about Sṛī Thirumazhisai Pirān’s vaibhavam (glories), adiyèn wish to acknowledge first and foremost Azhwār’s grace. Adiyèn would like to share my own experience here about learning Thirucchanda viruttam. During one of our routine visits with our son and daughter when they were still small, to our family in India in 1975, we had been to Lord Sri Arā mudan’s sannidhi in Thirukkudanthai. The Archakar Swāmi who performed the *archana*, as usual recited the *mangalāshāsana pasurams* of the Lord of this famous divya Dēsam at the end. I heard for the first time, Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān’s verse, நடந்தகால்கள்நொந்தவோ நடுங்கஞாலமேனமாய். nadanthā kālgaL nonthavō nadungka jnyālam énamāy.

I was naturally captivated by Azhwār’s love of the Lord. I made a mental note to learn these verses when I got back to Toronto. I found them in Azhwār’s Thirucchanda viruttam of course. I read the entire work and tried a few times to memorize the six verses pertaining to Thirukkudanthai. I often had problem memorizing textual passages whereas I could memorize verses set in music. Many years after this visit, once I tried to sing these six verses in music on my own and felt that it came out quite well even though I was not formally trained in music. Encouraged by this, one day I decided to sing and record all of the verses of Thirucchanda viruttam. In the Tamizh month of "Thai" in 1990, one Sunday evening around 7.00PM, after "a long session with Perumāl earlier that day in our Perumāl room", I decided to sing the verses and record the same on a cassette recorder. I expressed a fervent prayer to the Lord that He should ensure that the music was of reasonable quality. Otherwise, He would end up hearing "bad music". To my delightful surprise, the very first session ended in recording of 35 verses in as many minutes, each verse following the other spontaneously. While I wanted to start the recording in the rāgam காண்டா (kānada), it actually got started in Brindāvana Sāranga rāgam. The verse beginning ஆதி யாதியாதி நீ ஓரண்டமாதியாதலால் *āthiyādhi āthi nee orandamāthiāthalāl* (TCV-34) which happened to flow in ரேவதி (Révathi) raga, led adiyèn to think of Periya Perumāl and caused me to feel "goose bumps" all over my body at the time. To my pleasant surprise, the remaining verses also got recorded in three more sessions later that week in a similar fashion, "almost effortlessly". It so happened the whole recording was completed just before Azhwār’s Thirunakshatram (Thai Magham) in the later part of January 1990. The rest of the month as well as the month of February that followed, were spent in listening daily to the recording and learning to sing the verses as recorded. Within a month of

recording this however, I had to take an urgent trip to Chennai because my oldest brother (who was like a father to me) required urgent heart surgery. It made me anxious and confused as to why that was happening after learning and singing Azhwār's *prabhandham* daily for almost for a month.

My brother underwent surgery on the 6th of March that year. His condition was somewhat unstable initially post-operatively but it began to improve later that week. Once he was stable, I wanted to visit Thirumazhisai. By then, we were in the Tamizh month of Māsi. Adiyèn at that time was staying in my immediate older brother's Sri Rajagopalan's home. I learnt from my brother's mother-in-law, Smt. Seetha Parthasarathy (very spiritual and loving person whom we all admired and respected) that Saturday of that week happened to be Pournami and the nakshatram was Magham. I immediately decided that I should go to Thirumazhisai on that Saturday to express our thanks to the Lord and, if possible, sing the newly recorded Thirucchanda viruttam seated in front of Azhwār's *sannidhi* there. As planned, that Saturday morning, after procuring some flower garlands, and fruits, I went to Thirumazhisai. Some of adiyen's family members (my third oldest brother, a couple of my sisters in law, my immediate older brother's mother-in-law and a couple of my nephews accompanied me). I also carried with me a cassette player so that I could sing along with my recording of Thirucchanda Viruttam. It was a sweltering hot day in Chennai. I could not even keep my top undershirt on comfortably. By the time we got to the Temple, and as we just stepped across the main Temple entrance into the area, where the *Dwaja Sthambham* (temple flag post) was located, a few clouds had gathered above. A cool breeze began to blow across the main entrance of the Temple. A few drops of rain not enough to drench also fell on me. It felt refreshingly cool and comfortable. *I believe that it probably was "a welcome arranged by the Lord in retrospect of what transpired subsequently that day"*.

There were signs of renovation work in the Temple. We went inside and met with Archakar Swāmi and told him adiyèn's desire to sing Thirucchanda viruttam seated in front of the main *sannidhi* (sanctum). Archakar Swāmi mentioned that he was performing the *āradhana* of Perumāl and once that was completed, I could sing Thirucchanda viruttam. The main *sannidhies* of Perumāl as well as that of the āzhwār were partially closed and all the utsava moorthies were together in "*balālayam*" outside the main sanctums.

After some waiting, as permitted, I was able to sit and sing the newly learnt Thirucchanda viruttam. I started with my recorded tape but later on I did not need the tape, I was able to sing without it. It was a fulfilling delightful experience due to Azhwār's grace. It was a special feeling to see all of the Utsava moorthies including Sri Jagannatha Perumāl, Thāyār, Sri Andāl as well as the āzhwār together. While I was singing the verses, without our knowledge, somehow words spread to the families and members involved in looking after the Temple for generations (I will refer to them as "trustees" for they in fact loved āzhwār very much and had served him throughout their lives for generations), who lived close to the Temple precincts came to know that someone was singing Thirucchanda viruttam. They all came and were interested in observing what was transpiring at that time in the Temple. When I finished the recitation, I felt very elated. I did *Shāshtānga namaskāram* to āzhwār and Perumāl. Adiyèn felt as if there was a

fulfillment of the purpose of this birth of mine. In fact, I mentioned that to the elders from our family who were there at the time. The "trustees" who had come over and heard my singing were very pleased. They took me into the Moolavar Azhwār sannidhi and honored adiyèn with āzhwār's *Pavithra mālai* (sacred silk thread woven as a garland) and other *prasādams* (offerings). Adiyèn felt very touched by the grace of Perumāl, Thāyār and āzhwār. They told us about the renovations and that they expected those to be completed before the *Thai Magham* Thirunakshatram of āzhwār the following year. They also bestowed on our family the *kaimkaryam* (service) of sponsoring Thirucchanda viruttam Sātrumurai utsavam which is usually held in the evening of Thai Magham, at Azhwār's *avathāra sthalam* (birthplace) in the neighbouring field.

When I returned back to Toronto, adiyèn wanted to sing for the first time Thirucchanda viruttam in our Richmond Hill Hindu Temple, which after many years had begun to take shape. It is a multideity temple with both Saivite and Vaishnavite traditions shared under one roof. Sri Vēnkateshwara Perumāl is the Moolavar Moorthy on the Vaishnava side. Just the year before, the main sannidhies were completed and the Moorthies were consecrated. There were sanctums for Sri MahaLakshmi, Sri Andal, Sri Rama and parivāram as well as Yoga Nrusimhar-Srī Sudarśanar together in one small sanctum. I believe around the springtime that year (1990), the Temple board had organized Sri Sudarśana Hōmam for the first time following the consecration of that Yoga Nrusimhar-Srī Sudarśanar altar. Adiyèn actually sang the Thirucchanda viruttam for the first time in our Temple sitting in front of that Srī Nrusimhar-SriSudarsanar facing Moolavar Perumāl sannidhi. Later that evening, we had invited the two Srī Vaishnava priests as well as one visiting Saivite priest over to our home for dinner. That Saivite priest had been invited to help in the Vēdic rituals during that occasion. That evening adiyèn was pleasantly surprised to find that Saivite priest was actually from Thirumazhisai and knew all about the Azhwār including the third eye he had on his big toe in his foot. Fascinating co-incidence!

Adiyèn returned to Chennai the following year (1991) for the āzhwār's *thirunakshatram* celebrations. It was a beautiful experience to watch. It started early in the morning, with Thirumanjanam of Moolavar, with recitation of *Taitthiriya Upanishad* and *Pancha sookthams*. Theerthakārar Swāmi recited Thirumanjana Kattiyam (praising the glories of the āzhwār citing various special events from āzhwār's life). After Thirumanjanam was completed, while alamkāram was being done, pārāyanam of Thiruppallāndu, Thiruppalliyezhucchi, Thiruppāvai followed by Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi took place. It was followed by the *kaiittala Sēvai* of Srī Jagannātha Perumāl and Thāyārs (carried in arms by regular devotees of Azhwār). During this special Sēvai Azhwār received honors from Perumal. This was followed by Sātrumurai with Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi. Subsequent to this, Utsavar āzhwār decorated with all ornaments and flower garlands was carried in procession. After Azhwār came out of the main entrance of the sanctums, he was seated on a swing (Oonjal). During this beautiful Oonjal Sēvai, many devotees showed their devotion and love to the Azhwār by their offerings of vastrams, jewels and other ornamental materials. After that Oonjal Sēvai was completed, Azhwār was carried along a corridor which was adjacent to the front prākāram (inner circular corridor). Here all of us were witness to a visual treat of Azhwār being carried in varying strides of movements like those of the lion, elephant and the serpent to the accompaniment of the appropriate rāgās and tālās (beats)

played by the Nādaswaram and Thavil vidvāns. I was told that it was reminiscent of Srī NamPerumāl's Sèvai in Srīrangam. When that Sèvai was completed, Azhwār's procession slowly went around the rest of the Temple prākāram and subsequently went outside the temple to the adjoining field where the *avathara sthalam* was located. Azhwār stayed in the *mandapam* (a small building which houses a hall and a small sanctum area) in the *avathara sthalam* for the rest of the day.

In the evening at the *avathāra sthalam*, Thirucchanda viruttam was recited traditionally followed by Sātrumurai. Many Srī Vaishnāvās from neighbouring areas like Srī Poovirundhavalli, Srī Perumpūthūr, Kānchipuram, Thiruvekha, Thiruvevvul, Thiruvallikèni, and Mylapore joined in the gōshti. After this, an elaborate distribution of prasādams took place. Later in the evening, Utsavar had Thirumanjanam in the *avathāra sthalam*. After completion of *alamkāram* (decoration), Azhwār then was carried in procession through the streets of Thirumazhisai and returned to the Temple late in the night. Our family has been participating in the *Thirunakshatram* celebrations from 1991 on and had been blessed with the *kaimkaryam* of sponsoring Thirucchanda Viruttam Sātrumurai at the *avathāra sthalam*. The following morning after the Thirunakshatram āzhwār usually has Thiruvaimozhi *sātrumurai* and receives honors from various divyadēsa Perumāls. This celebration is also very beautiful to watch. Adiyèn had the bhāgyam of participating in this utsavam during one of our trips back home.

Adiyèn began the practice of singing āzhwār's prabhandhams in Thirumazhisai temple that very first year of our participation after the utsavar Azhwār had finished the inside the Temple procession. That practice has been maintained by our family each year. We usually sit in front of the Garudāzhwār sannidhi in such a way that we are able to see both the Moolavar Azhwār as well as Sri Jagannatha Perumāl. At the completion of the very first year of our participation, before we were about to leave and return to Chennai, one of the "trustees" told me that I should also record Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (NT) in music. Adiyèn replied to him, if Azhwār were to bless, I would be able to record the same. Actually, the NT also got recorded somewhat effortlessly in about three sessions later the same year. Adiyèn recorded them singing in the viruttam style. They were all recorded in our Perumal sannidhi at home. The first session ended in the 38th verse. In the 30th verse, āzhwār declares that Periya perumāl in Srirangam on His own showered His grace on āzhwār. When I sang that verse, even adiyèn felt as if the overflowing grace of Periya Perumal would be there for all of us as well. Adiyèn recorded the 10 beautiful verses on Thiruvēnkata mudaiyān (verse 39 through 48) one early afternoon. The remaining verses all got recorded in one last session within a couple of days after. It started in the evening around 7.30 PM ending around 10.30 PM. I felt so touched by the verse 59 beginning with the words அன்பாவாய் ஆரமுதமாவாய் (recorded in Bahudhāri rāgam), I used to play those verses 59 through 63 as recorded every night for several weeks, listening to the same before retiring to bed. Invariably tears welled up in my eyes as I was listening to them.

After learning to sing and recite both the *prabhandhams* over a few months, it became adiyèn's habit to recite them almost daily along with my other daily *anusandhānams* (contemplation-recitation). Since my work involved clinical patient care inside a hospital which was located almost an hour's drive from where we lived in Toronto, it used to be my practice to recite

Thiruppāvai, Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam, and Srī Lakshmī Ashtōttaram while driving back and forth to work. Adiyèn just added these two prabhandhams to the list of the daily anusandhānams. Whatever verses were left over, adiyèn would finish reciting them at home in the evenings.

During that period, our current temple in Richmond Hill in Toronto was being built as a collective community project. The arrival of many devotees of Srīlankan origin facilitated the realization of that goal. Our Moolavar Perumāl Srī Vēṅkatēśwara Perumāl sannidhi was completed and consecrated I believe in 1990. Recording of the pasurams of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān and singing them kindled my interest in recording pasurams of other āzhwārs. Over the subsequent years, adiyèn recorded all of the Thiruvāndhādies as well as some of the verses from the works of all of the āzhwārs including the vāzhitthirunāmam verses. Adiyèn began to sing some of these pāsūrams in our temple locally during weekly Perumal Thirumanjanam Sēvai on Saturdays as well as during special occasions. The 5 verses beginning with அன்பாவாய் ஆரமுதமாவாய் in NT, the 10 Amlanādhī Pirān verses, as well as some of the Thiruvāimozhi verses became favorite of many of the devotees. They became part of our regular Saturday gōshti. During that period, our family back home was going through some rough time of having to look after a special child in his toddlers' age, who was suffering from a rare genetic neurologic disorder resulting in rapid progression to a comatose stage. That was a special calling for all of us to muster our collective strength as a family to deal with the same. Azhwār's prabhandhams provided much needed mental strength as well as divine solace. Adiyèn was making trips to Chennai some what more frequently.

During those trips, adiyèn along with my nieces used to visit some of the *divya dēsams* (special Srī Vaishnava temples) in and around Chennai and sit and recite āzhwār's *prabhandhams*. These included Thiruvallikēni, Thiruneermalai, Thruvevvul, Thiruvekha, Thiru Kanchi, Thirukkōvalūr, Thirukkadal Mallai (Mahabalipuram) as well as Thiruppathi. We also visited Srī Peiāzhwār's sannidhi in Srī Kēshava Perumāl kōvil in Mylapore often. In this sthalam, Srī Thirumazhisai pirān will be seen standing directly facing Srī Pei āzhwār with clasped hands in salutation to his āchārya. In this Kovil, adiyèn used to sit outside Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's sannidhi facing Sri Mayūravalli Thāyār while singing Azhwār's pasurams. During one of those visits, adiyèn happened to see a large coin mālai around Srī Kēshava Perumāl moolavar. Archakar Swāmi told me that it was a mālai with inscriptions of the verses of the Moondrām Thiruvandhādhi of Srī Pei āzhwār. Adiyèn felt that we should offer a similar mālai to our Perumāl in our temple in Toronto with pasurams of NT. Adiyèn chose about 25 verses from NT starting from the verse 39 though verse 63. This included all of the 10 Mangalāshāsanam verses of Thiruvēṅkatamudaiyān in NT (verses 39-48), the Mangalāshāsanam of the Sayana Perumāl in the divya dēsam of Kapisthalam (verse 50) as well as the 5 verses beginning with அன்பாவாய் ஆரமுதமாவாய். We made a coin pāsura mālai in silver with the inscriptions of the 25 verses from NT. Each of the coin was fairly large with Srī MahāLakshmi on one side and the verse from NT on the other. It was gold plated and dedicated to our Moolvar Perumal in September 1998. Although it is quite heavy, our Perumāl wears this mālai daily throughout the year from that very day of Samarpanam. It is only removed only once a week during Thirumanjanam for a couple of hours.

During one of those trips to Chennai from Toronto, may be a couple of years after my oldest brother's heart surgery, adiyèn felt that we should go to Thirukkudanthai as well as to Srīrangam and recite both Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī and Thirucchanda viruttam. That trip was a memorable one. We arrived by train in Thirukkudanthai from Chennai in the early morning hours. I was accompanied in that trip by my oldest brother late Srī Gopalakrishnan and my oldest sister-in-law Smt Padmāsani and my immediate older brother's mother-in-law Smt Seetha Parthasarathy. We checked into a local hotel to stay over for the day. After our morning bath and a light breakfast, we went to Srī Arāmudhan's temple. The temple was relatively quiet with only a handful of devotees visiting to have darshan or perform an archana. It was the time of the *pavithrōtsavam* in the Temple. One temple priest was performing a *homam* (fire ritual) at the time. Adiyèn talked to the Archakar śwāmi and expressed our desire to sit in the hall directly opposite the main sanctum of Moolavar and sing the two *prabhandhams* of the Azhwār. He gave us the permission for that. Adiyèn also gave some money to the Archakar and requested him to make a *Thayir Sādam prasādam* for Perumāl and we figured that would be our lunch afterwards that day. The ārchakar Swāmi gladly agreed. Over the next two and half hours Adiyèn sang both the *prabhandhams* watching as much as I could from that distance Arāmudha Perumāl. There were many moments during that period we had clear view of the sannidhi as well as the Perumāl. It was the most pleasant experience ever. After completing the Vāzhithirunāmam, we performed an *archana* for Perumāl and received the *prasādams*. The Archakar Swāmi took us to the area adjacent to *madappalli* (temple kitchen) and gave us the *Thayir Sādam*, which tasted heavenly. We thanked the Archakar profusely and were about to leave. Archakar Swāmi then told us not to miss visiting āzhwār's shrine in Sāttālan Theru that day. ***That was a special instruction from Perumāl for us for sure.*** Although we were all raised and brought up in the village Kodavāsai, which was only 12 miles away from Thirukkudanthai (Kumbhakonam) and our own maternal uncle and his family lived in Kumbhakonam, we were not aware of the special shrine of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in Thirukkudanthai. We were scheduled to leave for Srī Rangam the same evening by car. Adiyèn felt that we should visit Azhwār's sannidhi before we left Thirukkudanthai. We rested for a couple of hours during the hot sunny mid day in the hotel. By about 4 PM we left the hotel to have a darshan of Azhwār's shrine in Sāthhālan street. When we arrived there, we found that we could get into the Temple but the doors to the Sanctum were closed. Āzhwār's sannidhi was at a higher level with about 10 to 12 steps or so to climb. We sat on those steps. Adiyèn felt that I should at least sing Thirucchanda viruttam there before we left. I started to sing and others followed. Luckily for us the family involved in looking after the shrine lived next door. The lady of the house heard our singing of Azhwār's *prabhandham*. They immediately came and greeted us. They offered us some hot tea. They also arranged for the Archakar Swāmi to come as soon as he could to the Temple and open the *sannidhies* for us. We realised by that time that this was the *Brindāvanam* of Azhwār where he had his āshramam and lived for 700 years as per the *guru paramparai* legend. We had a lovely *darshanam* of Azhwār as well as Srī Vardaraja Perumāl and Thāyārs who have smaller sannidhi in the same Temple. We learnt that Perumāl came there to escort āzhwār personally to SrīVaikuntam at āzhwār's own request. We also learnt that āzhwār has ten days of utsavam every year in that temple also during his Thirunakshatram in Thai Magham. The beautiful outcome of that trip was that adiyèn learnt of the Azhwār's shrine in Thirukkudanthai for the first time that day. Since then, adiyèn became

quite attracted to this holy shrine, visiting the same whenever possible. We also were blessed with the *kaimkaryam* of participating in the Thirunakshatram utsavam annually.

That evening we left Thirukkudanthai may be almost after sunset. On the way we stopped at Kapisthalam and had darshan of ஆற்றங்கரை கிடக்கும் கண்ணன். Adiyèn saw and heard the rumbling flow of the stream of a tributary of the Kāveri river in front of the Temple for the first time. Adiyèn remembers that Sèvai of the Perumāl in Sayana Kōlam vividly to this day. We arrived in Srirangam that evening by about 9.30PM. My loving niece Dr. Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan had kindly made arrangement for us to stay in one of her contact person's home that night. She had also made arrangement for one of the local Srī Vaishnava to take us to the Temple the next morning. We had a lovely Thiruppaliyezhucchi Sevai of Srī Namperumāl as well as Periya Perumāl. The gentleman who escorted us and was the guide that morning, suggested that we could sit on the திண்ணை (raised platform adjoining the outer edge of the large inside prakāram – the inner circular corridor surrounding the main sanctum) located near the Bilva tree there and recite the *prabhandhams*. It was almost past 7.00AM when we arrived there and sat on the திண்ணை. Adiyèn started with Srī Rānganāthāshtakam (the composition of Srī Adhi Śankara). A slight digression here is worth mentioning about as to why this composition of Srī Rānganāthāshtakam was recited. The words of Srī Adhiśankara calling the Periya Perumāl as "Ananda Rūpè, Nija bhōdha Rupè, Brahma svarūpè and sruthi mūrthi rūpè" had attracted my heart very much. Adiyèn had recorded this as well as the "Lakshmī Nrtusimha Karāvalambha stōtram of the same āchārya for the same reason in music many years previously. I sang this for the first time in our own Temple in Richmond Hill in Toronto on the very first day of Perumāl Pratishtai after a special Thirukkalyanam utsavam of Moolavar Moorthy of Perumāl with the Moolavar moorthies of the two Thāyārs located directly opposite and facing Perumāl. That day is stuck in adiyèn's mind vividly. Just at the time adiyèn finished singing Sri Rānganāthāshtakam on that particular occasion, a lotus flower which was adoring the śhanku – conch – of our Perumal spontaneously fell. Adiyèn took that as a blessing of course. The Archakar Swami who was at the time in our Temple that day reminded me that Bhagavān's conch represents *Jnāna*. From that day on in our Temple in Toronto, this composition of Srī Adhi Śankara has been included in our pārayanam after Thirumanjanam on Saturdays. Adiyèn therefore started the Pārāyanam in Srīrangam also with this composition. This was followed with Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi and Thirucchanda viruttam. Everything was flowing well. As I was finishing the recitation of the mangalāshāsana verses of Srīrangam and Thirukkudanthai (verse 61 in TV), just then one SrīVaishnava of Southern tradition (தென்கலை) walked by and told us that we could not sit and sing there in that location. We decided to obey his instruction, left that area and came out of Perumāl's sanctum and moved into Thāyār's sannidhi. We stopped by Swāmi Srī Dèssikan's sannidhi and met with the "Bhattar" there and told him what had happened. He told us that we could comfortably sit and sing the pasurams as long as we want. All of us sat comfortably outside Swāmi Srī Dèssikan's sanctum facing the corridor outside Sri Nrusimha Bhagavān's sanctum. We resumed Thirucchanda viruttam recitation and finished the rest of the prabhandhams as well as the Vāzhi Thirunāmam. Adiyèn felt as though that the last episode here with the interruption leading us to arrive at Swāmi Srī Dèssikan's sannidhi was actually arranged by the Achārya who wanted to listen to the Azhwār's Thirucchandaviruttam sung in music.

Afterwards we had beautiful Sèvai of Sri Nrusimhar as well as Thāyār before we retired to the hotel where we had booked to stay for the rest of the day. Before leaving Srīrangam we also stopped and had nice darshanam in Thiruvellarai divya dèsam. Later that evening we headed back to Chennai by train. That whole visit was beautiful, divine and a memorable experience.

Although I learnt Thirucchanda viruttam completely in a few months and began reciting it daily, the meaning of all the verses was still quite difficult to follow. Some verses were relatively easy but the majority were not. A copy of an old edition of the book by Sri.S.Krishnaswamy Iyengar somehow reached my hands in July 1992 quite unexpectedly. But I was told that a revised edition was to be published but that was to be at least two years away. While I enjoyed reading the Vyākhyānam of Sri Periya Vācchān Pillai, it was somewhat difficult without explanatory notes. The newer edition published by the same author when it became available a couple of years later was most helpful for my own understanding. Encouraged by our son Shyam who was pursuing studies in Philosophy at the time, adiyèn also felt that translation of these divine verses based on the Achāryā's vyākhyānam is appropriate and actually might be useful to many young Srī Vaishnavās who had migrated to many distant lands in pursuit of economic security and in the process failed to gain language skills in Tamizh and Sanskrit. Adiyèn did study the vyākhyānam of Srī Periya Vācchān Pillai of both NT and as well as TV and made translations of these verses. The effort was very worth while for my own personal understanding and appreciation of these two beautiful prabhandhams. Adiyèn's immediate older brother Srī Rajagopalan brought out translations of the Thiruvandhādhies of the Mudal Azhwars. My niece Smt Radha Muralidharan translated verses of Amalanādhī pirān, Kanninun Chirutthāmbu and Vāranamāyiram of Srī Andāl. Later on, after several years, adiyèn also completed the translation of Periya Thiruvandhādhī of Srī Nammāzhwār.

Adiyèn also recorded over 920 pāsuras in music. Although adiyèn had no formal training in music, having been brought up in Tanjore district in Tamizh Nādu, I was exposed to classical Carnatic music from my young age. Listening to good classical Carnatic music has been one of our favorite pastimes going back to the early 1950s. With the grace of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān and that of the good Lord, the music in these recordings is of reasonably good quality. Adiyèn used to visit Srī Venkateshwāra Temple in Pittsburgh about 4 to 5 times a year before we had our own Perumāl sannidhi come to be established in Richmond Hill in Toronto. During one such visit, adiyèn happened to sing the famous Thirukkudanathai verses of Thirumazhisai Pirān from Thirucchanda viruttam standing near the Moolavar sannidhi in that Temple. After I finished singing and came out of the sannidhi, a lady who was standing just outside the entrance of the sannidhi, remarked that "what I sang was nice." I knew that she was referring to the way the music was set for those pāsuras. I was delighted to hear that. I did not know who she was. I was curious and did enquire with some local devotees who were present on the occasion. I came to understand that it was Lalgudi Srīmathi, sister of Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman (Srī LJ). She was at the time apparently a visiting teacher of Music in the Temple. On another occasion many years later, Srī LJ himself happened to visit our Temple in Toronto on a Saturday morning when we usually have Moolavar Perumal Thirumanjanam and ārādhana, when we chant Sahasranamam and Srī Lakshmi Ashtōttaram and also sing some of the āzhwārs' pasurams. He was at the time visiting Toronto for a special musical presentation that he had produced. We had actually hosted

him at our home the previous evening since we had known him from his previous visits and our grand niece also was training at the time under his tutelage back in Chennai. During the dinner conversations, adiyèn actually requested him to come and see our Perumal, the next morning which he did so graciously. When Srī LJ actually came that morning and sat next to me in front of our Moolavar sannidhi, we happened to be singing the Amalanādhī Pirān verses (which we even now do every Saturday in our Temple). Sri LJ after listening to it, said he liked the music and asked me as to who set the “mettu” (tune) for this. Adiyèn of course told him that adiyèn had done it with the grace of the azhwar. I am recording these two incidents in this write up mainly to thank āzhwār for all of his grace.

All of these audio recordings of the verses set in music as well as all of the translations are housed in our < azhwar.org > web site which adiyèn was fortunate enough to set up many years ago. In addition, translations of NT as well as TV have been kindly housed also in the famous web site < sadagopan.org > by Swami Srī Sadagopan. Recently “Vainavan Kural” one of the monthly Srī Vaishnava Publications from Chennai in English serially published the entire Thirucchanda Viruttam text with adiyèn’s translation based on Sri Periyavācchān Pillai’s Vyākhyānam.

Singing of āzhwār’s pasurams kindled interest in many of the devotees who regularly attend Perumāl arādhāna and utsavams in our own temple in Toronto. There was no planning to have a sannidhi for the āzhwār on Perumāl side of the Temple in Toronto, by the original building committee. We had to make a special appeal for it to the Temple board. However, due to the overwhelming support of many devotees (many of whom are of Srī Lankan origin), we were able to get the permission to establish a special sannidhi for azhwars in year 2000. Fortunately, there already was an empty room on the Perumāl side of the Temple. It was originally planned as a "Palli arai" for Sayanōtsavam after the completion of the annual Brahmōtsavam of Perumāl in the Tamizh month of Avani. It became our cherished āzhwār sannidhi. Obviously, this is the result of the Lord’s grace and samkalpam. The completed sannidhi holds all of the azhwars, Srī Rāmānuja as well as the two of our famous āchāryās namely Srī Vēdānta Dēsika and Srī Manavāla Māmuniḡal. ***All of these and more are attributable only to the abundant grace of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān. It all started after listening to his mangalāsasaam of Thirukkudanthai Perumāl*** (Verse 61 from ThirucchandaViruttam).

We celebrate each of the āzhwār’s Thirunakshatram every month with Thirumanjanam of the āzhwār along with Moolavar on Saturday together with pārāyanam of the relevant verses from the Aruliccheyal. In addition, we hold a three days utsavam specially dedicated to all of the Azhwars over the first weekend of the Tamizh month of Purattaāsi. This azhwar’s utsavam has been held annually over the last 22 years. It was held for the 22nd year on Sept,20 th through the 22 nd of the current year 2024. We also have been able to hold each year "Aruliccheyal utsavam" over 21 days when all of the 4000 verses are recited. This is our "Adhyayana utsavam". It is traditional to have this utsavam from Vaikunta Ekādasi day in the Tamizh month of Mārgghāzhi. We did start this in Marghazhi but after a few years of severe winter conditions in Toronto, we had to move this utsavam to the first 21 days of the Tamizh month Panguni (March 15 through April 15). It is being now regularly held in the Tamizh month of Panguni in our Temple in

Toronto starting on the first day of the month. These developments in a city literally closer to the North pole than to the sacred Kāveri river are not something that adiyèn ever imagined would happen here when we first moved into Toronto in 1968 and began our life here in 1970.

III. Vaibhavam (Glories) of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān:

Many Srī Vaishnava āchāryās as well as learned Srī Vaishnava Scholars have written as well as spoken about this great āzhwār and his works. The verse by the great āchāryā Swāmi Srī Vèdānta Dèśika will be our auspicious benedictory verse (*mangala ślōkam*) here.

தைமகத்தில் வருமழிசைப் பரனே மற்றைச்
சமயங்கள் பலதெரிந்து மாயோனல்லால்
தெய்வம் மற்றில்லை யென உரைத்த வேதச்
செழும்பொருள் நான்முகன் தொண்ணூற்றாறு பாட்டு
மெய்ம்மிகுந்த திருச்சந்தவிருத்தப் பாடல்
விளங்கிய நூற்றிருபதும் தப்பாமல் மெய்யே
வையகத்து மறவாமல் உரைத்து வாழும்
வகை அடியேனுக்கு அருள்செய் மகிழ்ந்து நீயே.

Thai maghatthil varumazhisaip paranè matraich
Chamayangal palatherindhu māyōnallāl
Deivam matrillai ena uraiththa vèdach
Chezhum Porul nānmukan thonnūtrāru pāttu
Meimikundha Thirucchanda viruttap pādāl
Vilanghiya nūrirupathum thappāmal meyyè
Vaiyagatthu maravāmal uraiththu vāzhum
Vakai adiyènuḱḱu arul chey makizhnthu neeyè

"O' Sri Pirān of Thirumazhisai! You took your incarnation in the month of Thai on Magham Nakshatram day. After acquiring full knowledge of all other faiths, you declared that there is no other God except Srīman Nārāyana, the Lord with the most wondrous deeds. You imparted this quintessence of the Vèdās, through the ninety-six verses of Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (NT) and the shining hundred and twenty verses of Thirucchanda Viruttam (TCV) rich in true philosophic content. Please bless me, your servant so that I will keep reciting and remembering these verses and their true meaning without fail and without forgetting as I live in this world."

Under this section of the **Vaibhavam of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān**, Adiyèn essentially wish to share the extraordinary gems and pearls which are found in the two prabhandhams that āzhwār himself chose to leave behind for posterity. It is often said that all of the āzhwārs speak with one voice. This is true in terms of the eternal truth and philosophy that they convey. However, the varied and beautiful poetic expressions and the hidden meanings often brought out by the invaluable commentaries of the great āchāryās are plentiful and will keep our interest in them alive for long time to come. The interesting feature of these two prabhandhams of the great āzhwār is that they cover many topics and some in great detail. Many verses are unique and beautiful. Azhwar's views and teachings as revealed in these two, precious and beautiful

prabhandhams will be covered in this section under the headings given below and shown also under the "Table of Contents".

1. Srīman Nārāyana - Para-Brahman - Supreme Reality

Azhwār establishes clearly the transcendental supreme reality to be no other than Srīman Nārāyana. Azhwār starts with this assertion in the first 5 verses of Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (NT-1 though 5) as well as concludes with the same assertion in the last verse (NT-96) of this glorious prabhandham.

Great Srī Vaishnava Achāryas have pointed out how closely mangalā slōkams (auspicious benedictory verses) of Emperumānār's Srī Bhāshyam relates to āzhwār's Srī Sūkthīs.

The words of Swāmi Védānta Déska in his "Srī Guruparamparāsāram" confirm also that the philosophic truths hidden in the *Védās* (மறைநிலங்கள் – Tamil word "*marai*" is applied to *Védās* since their meanings are hidden) are made clear by the *Aruliccheyal* verses of the āzhwārs.

என்றிவர்கள் மகிழ்ந்து பாடும்
செய்ய தமிழ்மாலைகள் நாம் தெளிய வோதித்
தெளியாத மறைநிலங்கள் தெளிகின்றோமே".

The first 5 verses from Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (NT) are given below.

நான்முகனை நாராயணன் படைத்தான் நான்முகனும்
தான் முகமாய்ச் சங்கரனைத் தான் படைத்தான் யான் முகமாய்
அந்தாதி மேலிட்டு அறிவித்தேன் ஆழ் பொருளை
சிந்தாமல் கொள்மின் நீர் தேர்ந்து (NT-1)
nānmuganai* nārāyanan padaiththān*nānmuganum
thānmugamāi* sankaranaith than padaiththān*yānmugamāi
andhāthi mēlittu* ariviththēn āzhporulai*
sinthāmal konmin nīr thērnthu

"Lord Narayana created Nānmukan, the four-faced Brahma who taking the lead brought forth Sankara. I brought out the deep meaning of this in the form of an andhādhi. Analyse and absorb this into your mind without losing its meaning."

தேருங்கால் தேவன் ஒருவனே என்று உரைப்பர்
ஆரும் அறியார் அவன் பெருமை ஓரும்
பொருள் முடிவும் இத்தனையே எத் தவம் செய்தார்க்கும்
அருள் முடிவது ஆழியான்பால் (NT-2)

thērunkāl dēvan* oruvanē endruraippar*
ārumariyār avanperumai*
ōrum porulmudivum iththanaiyē* eththavam seithārkkum*
arul mudivathu āzhiyān pāl

"On inquiry enlightened ones will state that Paramātma is only one. No one really knows His glories. The ultimate conclusion of all the Scriptural texts is also the same. Whatever discipline one follows, the result of divine grace arises only from the Lord carrying the discus."

பாலில் கிடந்ததுவும் பண்டு அரங்கம் மேயதுவும்
ஆலில் துயின்றதுவும் ஆர் அறிவார் ஞாலத்து
ஒரு பொருளை வானவர் தம் மெய்ப் பொருளை அப்பில்
அரு பொருளை யான் அறிந்தவாறு

(NT-3)

pālil kidanthathuvum* pandarangaṃ mēyathuvum*
āḷil thuyindrathuvum āravār*
jñāḷathu oruporulai* vānavar_ṭham meipporulai*
appil aruporulai yānarindhavāru

"That which reposed on the milky ocean, settled in ancient times in Srirangam and that which slept on the banyan leaf, the primordial cause of the cosmos, shining truth to the eternal stars and the principal force of the ancient waters, who can know Him as I do?"

ஆறு சடைக் கரந்தான் அண்டர்கோன் தன்னோடும்
கூறு உடையன் என்பதுவும் கொள்கைத்தே? வேறு ஒருவர்
இல்லாமை நின்றானை எம்மாளை எப் பொருட்கும்
சொல்லாளைச் சொன்னேன் தொகுத்து

(NT-4)

āru sadaikkaranthān* andar_kone thannōdum*
kūrudaiyan enpathuvum* kolkaiththē*
vēroruvar illāmai* nindrānai emmānai*
epporutkum chollānaich* chonnēn thoguththu

"To say that one who has hidden the river in his hair locks is equal to the transcendental Lord of all is not acceptable for He stands alone with no compeers for He is the inner meaning of all the words and things denoted by them. Thus, I described my Lord in short."

தொகுத்த வரத்தனாய்த் தோலாதான் மார்வம்
வகிர்த்தவளை உகிர் தோள் மாலே உகத்தில்
ஒருநான்று நீ உயர்த்தி உள்வாங்கி நீயே

அரு நான்கும் ஆனாய் அறி

(NT-5)

thoguththa varaththanāith* thōḷāthān mārvam*
vakirththavalai ukirthōḷ māḷē*
ukaththil orunāndru nīyuyarththi* ulvānki nīyē*
aru nānkum ānāi ari 5

"O' Lord with the sharp curved nails and broad shoulders which split the chest of the demon king who was undefeated on account of the many boons, know at the time of

dissolution withdrawing the cosmos unto You and again bringing them forth at dawn of creation, you become the four-fold lives.”

Azhwār confirms this truth again in the last verse of this prabhandham.

இனி அறிந்தேன் ஈசற்கும் நான்முகற்கும் தெய்வம்
இனி அறிந்தேன் எம் பெருமான் உன்னை
இனி அறிந்தேன் காரணன் நீ கற்றவை நீ கற்பவை நீ
நல் கிரிசை நாரணன் நீ நன்கு அறிந்தேன் நான்

(NT-96)

ini arindhèn* īsarkum nānmugarkum theivam*
ini arindhèn* emperumān unnai* ini arindhèn*
kāranan nī katravai nī* karpavai nī* narkirisai
nārana nī* nankarindhèn nān. 96

“O' my Lord, now I firmly understand that Thou art God to Siva and Brahma. Now I realize Thy real nature. Thou art the cause of everything. Thou art all that is known and to be known. Thou art Narayana, the support of all and the provider of unconditional protection. I understand all of this well.”

Several Vèdic statements can be given here to substantiate this as well.

ஏகோஹவை நாராயண ஆஸீத் நப்³ரஹ்மா

நேஸாநோ நேமே த்யாவா ப்ருதிவீ ந நகூத்ராணி (Mahōpanishad)

There was Nārāyana alone. There were not Brahma, Shiva, Waters, Fire and Soma, Heaven and Earth, Stars.

ததை³கூத ப³ஹுஸ்யாம் ப்ரஜாயேயேதி தத்தேஜோ அஸ்ருஜத (Chāndōgya Upanishad 6-2-3)

"That Brahman thought, "I shall become many. I shall be born". That created fire".

அஜாயமானோ ப³ஹுதா⁴ விஜாயதே

தஸ்ய தீ⁴ரா: பரிஜாநந்தி யோநிம் (Purusha Sūkhtham)

"Although birthless, He takes many births. Only the enlightened ones understand His incarnations well".

பதிம் விஸ்வஸ்யாத்மேஸ்வரகம் ஶாஸ்வதகம் ஶிவ-மச்யுதம் | நாராயணம் மஹாஜ்ஞேயம்

விஸ்வாத்மாநம் பராயணம் (Nārāyana Sūkhtham)

"The Suzerain Lord of the Universe, the Lord of all selves, the eternal being, all auspicious One who will not let go His devotees, the One most noteworthy, the indwelling spirit of all in the world and the highest of all means is Nārāyana"

நாராயண பரம் ப்³ரஹ்ம தத்வம் நாராயணபர:

நாராயண பரோ ஜ்யோதிராத்மா நாராயணபர: (Taittirīya- Maha Nārāyanōpanishad)

"Nārāyana alone is the supreme Brahman, Nārāyana alone is the ultimate Reality, Nārāyana alone is the supreme light. Nārāyana alone is the supreme Self (Paramātma)"

யச்ச கிஞ்சித் ஜக³த்யஸ்மிந் த்³ருஸ்யதே ஸ்ருயதே அபிவா

அந்தர் ப³ஹிஸ்ச தத் ஸர்வம் வ்யாப்ய நாராயண: ஸ்தி²த: (Taittirīya Nārāyana Sūkhtham 11)
"Nārāyana pervades both inside and outside of everything whatever may be, whether seen or heard in this universe"

யோப்³ரஹ்மாணாம் வித³தா⁴தி பூர்வம்
யோ வை வேதா³ம்ஸ்ச ப்ரஹிணோதி தஸ்மை
தம் ஹ தே³வம் ஆத்மபு³த³தி⁴ ப்ரஸாத³ம்
முமுகூர் வை ஸரணமஹம் ப்ரபத்³யே
(Śvetāsvatara Upanishad 6-18)

"He who created Brahma in the beginning and who indeed delivered Védās to him, in the very Deity (Lord) who is the revealer of knowledge regarding the Self, I being very desirous of liberation seek refuge"

In verse 7 of NT, āzhwār defines the word "Nārāyana"

இன்றாக நாளையேயாக இனிச் சிறிது
நின்றாக நின் அருள் என்பாலதே - நன்றாக
நான் உன்னை அன்றி இலேன் கண்டாய் நாரணனே
நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை

(NT-7)

"Today tomorrow or may be sometime later but assured is your grace for me. You know for certain I do not have any other refuge but Yourself, O' Nārāyana, you will not find anyone more in need than me."

ஆபோ நாரா இதி ப்ரோக்த: ஆபோ வை நர ஸூநவ:

தா யத³ஸ்யாயநம் பூர்வம் தேந நாராயண: ஸ்ம்ருத:

"Water is called Nāra. It originated from Nara, the Lord. That water became His first abode. Therefore, He is known as Nārāyanā" (Manusmriti 1-10)

நாரஸப்³தே³ந ஜீவாநாம் ஸமூஹப்ரோச்யதே பு³தை⁴:

க³திராலம்ப³நம் தஸ்ய தேந நாராயண: ஸ்ம்ருத:

"Nāra" refers to the entire host of Jīvās. For them, He is both the goal and the means, hence He is called "Nārāyāna".

நான் உன்னை அன்றி இலேன் கண்டாய் - "நாராணாம் அயநம் ய: ஸ:"- One who is the ultimate destiny for all Nāra samūhās (the host of jīvās)"

நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை - "நாரா: அயநம் யஸ்ய ஸ:" "One for whom the Nāra samūhās form the abode"

2. Sriyapatitvam ஸ்ரீய:பதித்வம்

The 6th (the last) mantram in the *uttara anuvākam* of Purusha Sūktham provides the most important defining feature of the Supreme Purusha identifying the Transcendental Reality, Paramātmā.

"For You 'The goddess Hrī and the goddess Lakshmī are the two consorts. The day and night are on your sides. Your form is resplendent like the array of stars. The Aswini dévās are your fully blossomed sacred mouth. Please grant us the boon of knowledge that we desire. Please grant us the divine service. Please grant us the bliss here and hereafter."

ஹ்ரீச் தே லக்ஷ்மீச் பத்ந்யௌ (hrīścha té lakshmīścha patnyau) (Purusha Sūktham 2-6).

"For Thee, Bhū Dévi and Srī Dévi are two consorts" The second ச ("cha"- conjunction) indicates indirectly Nīlā Dévi. Thus, revealing that the Parama Purusha is Srīman Nārāyana.

There are specific Védic hymns (sūkthams) for all the three divine mothers (the consorts of the Supreme Paramātmā Srīman Nārāyanā). This mantram also emphasizes that Bhagavat kaimkaryam (service to the Lord) needs to be performed to the Divine Couple who are always together.

Azhwār in his work Thirucchanda Viruttam (TCV) has the following verses.

பண்டுமின்றும் மேலுமாயோர் பாலனாகி ஞாலமேழும்
உண்டு மண்டி ஆலிலைத் துயின்ற ஆதிதேவனே
வண்டு கிண்டு தண் துழாய் அலங்கலாய் கலந்தசீர்ப்
புண்டரீக பாவை சேருமார்ப பூமிநாதனே

(TCV-22)

pandum indrum mēlumāyōr bālanāki jnyālamēzhum,
undumandi ālilai thuyindra ādhi dévané,
vandu kindu than thuzhāy alangkalāy! kalanthāseer
pundarīka pāvai sérumārbha!bhoomi nāthané!

“O' the ancient Lord! Being the controller of all the three periods of past, present and future, during the deluge of dissolution, in the form of an incomparable child, Thou protected the seven worlds, swallowing them with zest and reposing on the waters over a tender banyan leaf. Thou art adorned by the garland of cool Tulasi flowers swarming with honey seeking bees, Thy holy chest forming the eternal residence of the lotus born divine Mother (Pirāttiyār) with all auspicious qualities. O' Lord of the Mother Earth, "To say to Thee that Thou art fond of Thy devotees is hardly a compliment to Thy greatness".

பரத்திலும் பரத்தை ஆதி பௌவ நீர் அணைக் கிடந்து
உரத்திலும் ஒருத்திதன்னை வைத்து உகந்து அது அன்றியும்
நரத்திலும் பிறத்தி நாத ஞானமூர்த்தி ஆயினாய்
ஒருத்தரும் நினைது தன்மை இன்னது என்ன வல்லரே?

(TCV- 29)

paraththilum paraththai yāthi* pawva nīranai kidandhu,*
uraththilum oruththi thannai* vaiththuhandhu adhu anriyum,*
naraththilum piraththi* nātha ṛjyāna mūrththi āyināi,*
oruththarum nīnāthu thanmai* innathu enna vallaré!

"O'Lord, Thou art supreme form transcending all individual souls and beyond the primordial matter. Thou repose on the ocean, united with the divine mother who forever resides in Thy heart. Furthermore, thou art born in human form as Srī Rāma and Srī Krishna. Thou art the unconditioned Lord and the actual form of Knowledge. Neither the Védās nor the learned Védic scholars could truly measure the nature of Thy grace."

உரத்திலும் ஒருத்தி தன்னை வைத்து உகந்து (uraththilum oruththi thannai*vaiththuhandhu).
The greatness of the Lord is really **His Sriyapatitvam (being the Lord of Srī)**. The conjunction **உம் (and)** indicates that mother Lakshmī is united with the Lord forever, and She is co-eternal in

His form. The word "**ஒருத்தி**" (*oruththi*) indicates **that there is no one else like Her**.

In his Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī **Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān** emphatically declares, பொன்பாவை கேள்வா! * கிளரொளி என் கேசவனே!

ponpāvai

kélvā! * kilaroli en késavané! (NT- 59)

meaning, "O' the Lord of Srī, whose halo adds lustre to Thee, O' my Lord Késhava".

and further emphasizes that Her association with Nārāyana identifies Him as Brahman.

திரு நின்ற பக்கம் * திறவிதென்று ஓரார் *
கரு நின்ற கல்லார்க்கு உரைப்பர் ** - திருவிருந்த
மார்வன் * சிரீதரன் தன் வண்டுலவு தண் துழாய் *
தார் தன்னைச் சூடித் தரித்து

(NT- 62)

hiru nindra pakkam * thiravidhendru orār *

karu nindra kallārkkū uraiṅṅar ** - thiruvirundha

mārvan* sirīdharan than vandulavu than thuzhāi *

thār thannaich sūdith thariththu.

"Those who do not realize that Nārāyana is the transcendental Reality since Srī resides in Him, teach the ignorant, pointing to others limited by birth. For He is known as Srīdhara who bears "Srī" on His heart and wears lovely, cool garland of Tulasi swarming with humming bees."

Azhwār also refers to the consorts of Srīman Nārāyana in both of his works namely Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī (verses 33,40,53,59,62 and 92) and in Thirucchandaviruttam in 16 of 120 verses (Verses 24,29,65,97,103,105 and 118 refer to Srīdēvi alone, Bhūdēvi and Srī are referred together in verses 22, and 72. Nīlā Dēvi alone is referred to in verses 13, 33, 40, 41, 92, 99. In verse 53 of NT, Azhwār states திருவில்லாத் தேவரைத்தேறேல்மின் - not to seek or worship "dēvās" only in name but who have no connection to Srī Mahālakshmī.

In verse 55 of Thirucchandaviruttam all three consorts (Srī, Bhū and Nīlā) are mentioned.

3. Pundarikāksha புண்டரீகாக்ஷன்

In Srī Vishnu Sahasranāma adhyāyam, the 40 th thirunāmam of the Lord is
புஷ்கராக்கூ: Pushkarākshah. "The Lotus eyed"

The divine name (the 39th Thirunāmam) just before that is ஆதித்ய: ādityah." The Person in the Sun".

We will here refer to two verses from Sruthi (Chāndōgya Upanishad part of Sāma vèda), and their meaning (as given by Dr. N. S. Anantha Rangacharya in Principal Upanishads Volume -II, as per the famous Vyākhyānam of Sri Ranga Ramanuja muni)

य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुषो दृश्यते

हिरण्यश्मश्रुहिरण्यकेश आप्रणस्वात्सर्व एव

सुवर्णः ॥ १.६.६॥

ய ஏஷோ(அ)ந்தராதி³த்யே ஹிரண்மய: புருஷோ த்³ருஸ்யதே
ஹிரண்யஸம்ஸம்ருர்ஹிரண்யகேஸ ஆப்ரணஸ்வாத்ஸர்வ ஏவ
ஸுவர்ண: 1.6.6.

ya esho'ntarādityè hiranmayah' purusho dri'syatè
hiranyaśmashrurhiranyakèsha āpranasvātsarva èva
suvarnah' 1.6.6.

"Now this one, the golden Purusha who is seen in the Aditya is having golden whiskers, golden hair and is fully golden beginning from the tip of the nails"

The Hiranmaya means beautiful, resplendent and brilliant. In Taittiriya Upanishad, the Supreme Purusha is described as "Neelatōyada" like dark blue cloud. The brilliance is shed over His form by Srī Mahālakshmi residing in his chest.

Azhwār's words in verse #59 in NT are of interest here

"பொன்பாவை

கேள்வா கிளரொளியென் கேசவனே," meaning "O' Lord of Srī Lakshmi , whose halo adds lustre to Thee".

तस्य यथा कप्यासं पुण्डरीकमेवम क्षणी

तस्योदिति नाम स एष सर्वभ्यः पाप्मभ्य उदित

उदेति ह वै सर्वभ्यः पाप्मभ्यो य एवं वेद ॥ १.६.७॥

தஸ்ய யதா² கப்யாஸம்' புண்ட³ரீகமேவமக்ஷிணி
தஸ்யோதி³தி நாம ஸ ஏஷ ஸர்வேப்⁴ய: பாப்மப்⁴ய உதி³த
உதே³தி ஹ வை ஸர்வேப்⁴ய: பாப்மப்⁴யோ ய ஏவம்' வேத³ 1.6.7..

tasya yathā kapyāsam' pund'arīkamèvamakshinee
tasyoditi nāma sa èsha sarvèbhyah' pāpmabhya udita
udèti ha vai sarvèbhyah' pāpmabhyō ya èvam' vèda 1.6.7.

"Just like the full- blown red lotus, so are the eyes of this Purusha. He is called "ut" He has arisen above all evils or sins. He who knows thus rises above all evil or sins" The Upanishad elsewhere calls the parabrahman is opposed to all evils ("apahata papma")

कप्यासंपुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी कप्यासम् पुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी
kapyāsam' pund'arīkamèvamakshinee

Srī Rāmanuja did not agree with Adhi Sankara's interpretation of comparing to the hinder parts of a monkey.

कम् पिबति इति कपिः आदित्यः तेन अस्यते क्षिप्यते विकास्यते इति कप्यासम्

कम् पिबति इति कपिः- नालम् तस्मिन् आस्ते इति कप्यासम्

The descriptive words used by Srī Rāmānuja in Vēdārtha sangraha (VS-220) are as follows

गम्भीराम्भः समुत्भूत सुमुष्टनाल रविकर विकसित पुण्डरीकदलामलातेक्षणः are **"His pure eyes have the beauty of the petals of a lotus just unfolding under the rays of the sun and crowning a rich stalk that has sprung up in deep waters"**.

Srī Parāsara Bhattar who had blessed us with a beautiful Vyākhyānam of Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam gives the derivation of पुष्कराक्षः Pushkarākshah as follows:

सर्वैश्वर्य असाधारण लक्षणम् पुण्डरीकाक्षत्वम् सङ्गमयति- पुष्कराक्षः

Sarvaiśvarya asādhārana lakshanam pundarīkākshatvam sangamayati – pushkarākshah.

"The name Pushkarākshah associates bhagavān with the possession of lotus eyes which is specific indication that He is the Sole Ruler of the entire universe. This is a compound word ending with the "ach" suffix according to a grammatical rule that the word "Akshi" will take the "ach" suffix when it does not mean vision" (translation by late Sri Prof Srīnivasa Raghavan – Sri Visishtādvaita Pracharini sabha, Chennai- 600004, Publication -1983).

The thirunāmam "Pundarīkākhshah" appears again in Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam as the 112 th divya nāmam (divine name). Swāmi Srī Parāsara Bhattar defines that as follows,

पुण्डरीकम् परम् धाम नित्यम् अक्षरम् अव्ययम् तद्भवान् पुण्डरीकाक्षः ! इति पुण्डरीकाक्षः

It is translated as follows by Prof Srinivasa Raghavan. "The Eye of Pundarīka ie the Transcendental world. "Pundarīka is the transcendental world, which is eternal, indestructible and immutable. Thou art like the eye to that world and so Thou art known as Pundarīkākhshah".

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān addresses the Lord as Pundrīkanē पुण्डरीकने in 5 verses in Thirucchandaviruttam. (TV- 30,33,55,57 and 96).

வானகமும் மண்ணகமும் வெற்புமேழ்கடல்களும்
போனகம் செய்ததாலிலைத் துயின்ற புண்டரீகனே

(TCV-30)

vānakamum mannakamum verpuméz h kadalkalum
pōnakam seythālaith thuyindra pundareekané

"O' the lotus eyed Lord! Thou as a child reposed on the tender banyan leaf after ingesting the heavens and the earth along with its seven mountains and the seven seas."

மின் நிறத்தெயிற்றரக்கன் வீழ் வெஞ்சரம் துரந்து
பின்னவர்கருள் புரிந்து அரசளித்த பெற்றியோய்
நன்னிறத்தொரின்கொல் ஏழை பின்னைகேள்வ மன்னுசீர்ப்
பொன்னிறத்த வண்ணனாய புண்டரீகனல்லையே?

(TCV-33)

minniraththeyitrarakkan veezha vejncharam thuranthau,
pinnavarku arul purinthau arasaliththa petriyōy
nanniraththor insolézhai pinnai kélva! mannuseer
ponniraththa vannanāya pundareekan allaiyé?

"Thou art of fair and just nature. Thou made the demon king Ravana with teeth as white as the lightning to fall by discharging the fiery missiles and bestowed with compassion the kingdom to his brother Vibhishana. Thou art the darling of Sri Nappinaipirātti who has the most beautiful complexion, incomparable sweet words and who is ever attached to Thee. Thou art Pundarikaksha, with the auspicious eternal desirable gold like attributes."

பொன்னிறத்த வண்ணனாய புண்டரீகனல்லையே? -
ponniraththa vannanāya pundareekan allaiyé?

This is a literal translation of Sruthi from Chāndōgya Upanishad, which was referred to previously.

ய ஏஷோ(அ)ந்தராதி³த்யே ஹிரண்மய: புருஷோ த்³ருஸ்யதே
தஸ்ய யதா²கப்யாஸம் புண்ட³ரீகமேவமகூறிணீ
ya éshō 'ntarādityé hiranmayaha purushō drushyaté
tasya yathā kapyāsam pundareekamévamakshinee
(Chāndōgyam 1-6 and 7)

"The Person seen seated in the center of the sun, who is beautiful like gold - has two eyes that are like the lotus blossomed by the sunrays"

மன்னுமாமலர்க்கிழத்தி வையமங்கைமைந்தனாய்
பின்னுமாயர்பின்னைதோள் மணம்புணர்ந்ததன்றியும்
உன்ன பாதமென்ன சிந்தை மன்ன வைத்து நல்கினாய்
பொன்னி சூழ் அரங்கமேய புண்டரீகனல்லையே?

(TCV-55)

mannu māmalar kizhaththi vaiyamangkai mainthānāy
pinnum āyar pinnai thōl manam punarntāhandriyum
unna pātham enna sinthāi manna vaiththu nalkināy
ponni soozh arangkaméya pundarīkan allaiyé?

"Thou art the consort of Sri Devi (Periyapirātti) and Sri Bhoo Devi. Furthermore, Thou embraced in wedding Sri Nappinnai who was Neela Devi born as a cowherdess. In

addition, thou graced me so Thy holy feet for ever remain inseparable from my heart. Art not Thou the eternal "Lotus" in Thiruvaramgam surrounded by the soothing waters of Kāveri?"

பொங்குதண்குடந்தையுள்கிடந்தபுண்டரீகனே

(TCV-57)

pongku than kudanthāiyul kidantha pundareekané!

“Thou art the lotus Lord Who reclines in Thirukkudanthai of surging cool waters “

வரம்பிலாத மாய மாய வையமேழும் மெய்ம்மையே
வரம்பிலாழி ஏத்திலும் வரம்பிலாத கீர்த்தியாய்
வரம்பிலாத பல்பிறப்பு அறுத்துவந்து நின்கழல்
பொருந்துமாதிருந்த நீ வரஞ்செய் புண்டரீகனே

(TCV-96)

varambilātha māya māya vaiyam ezhum meymmaiye
varambil oozhi eththilum varambilātha keerththiyāi
varambilātha pal pirappu aruththu vanthau nin kazhal
porunthamāthu irunthā nee varam chei pundareekané

“O' lotus eyed Lord with wondrous powers! Thou control the limitless primordial nature. Thy glories are infinite and will be unfathomable even if all the people of the seven worlds with true understanding were to glorify Thee for countless aeons. O' Lord Who art very eager to seek out Thy devotees! Please grace me, so cutting asunder the endless cycles of many many lives, reaching Thy eternal realm through devotion, I shall for ever remain in service of Thy holy feet.”

4. Paramātmā-Parabrahman தேவன் ஒருவனே

தேருங்கால் தேவன் ஒருவனே என்று உரைப்பர்
ஆரும் அறியார் அவன் பெருமை

(NT-2)

"On inquiry enlightened ones will state that Paramātmā is only one. No one really knows His Glories". This is emphasized by Azhwār in these two prabhandhams in various ways.

i. The Primordial Cause, the Ancient Lord, ஆதிதேவன்

Azhwār identifies the Supreme Lord as **the Primordial Cause, ஆதிதேவன்** who is no other than Srīman Nārāyana from whom Brahma arose. Azhwār indicates that He is the same one Who is glorified in the Sāma Vēda and who took many divine incarnations as well as later stood as the Lord in Thiruvēkatam. Verses 5,14, 22, 34, 43, and 48 in TCV illustrate this clearly.

நின்றுயங்கும்மொன்றலா உருக்கடோறும் ஆவியாய்
ஒன்றியுள்கலந்து நின்ற நின்ன தன்மை இன்னதென்று

என்றும் யார்க்கும் எண்ணிறந்த ஆதியாய் நின் உந்திவாய்
அன்று நான்முகற்பயந்த ஆதிதேவனல்லையே?

(TCV-5)

nindriyanggum ondralā urukkal thōrum āviyāy,
ondri ul kalanthau nindra ninna thanmai innathendru,
endrum yārkkum ennirantha āthiyāy! ninnunthaiyāy
andru nānmukar payantha āthi dévan allaiyé?

"What is the wondrous nature of Thine by which Thou remain as the inner soul permeating all physical bodies of both the non-moving and moving kind, forever unfathomable even to the most knowledgeable ones. O' Primordial Cause! Art not Thou the only cause of the cosmos, the sporting Lord that brought forth the four - faced Brahma from Thy navel at the end of the dissolution? Who can comprehend Thee by their own effort?"

தூய்மையோகமாயினாய் துழாயலங்கல் மாலையாய்
ஆமையாகி ஆழ்கடல் துயின்ற ஆதிதேவ நின்
நாமதேயமின்னதென்ன வல்லமல்லவாகிலும்
சாமவேத கீதனாய சக்ரபாணி அல்லையே?

(TCV-14)

thooymai yōgam āyināy thuzhāyalangkal mālaiyāy,
āmaiāki āzhkadal thuyindra ādhi déva, nin-
nāmathéyam innathenna vāllamallavākilum
sāma véda geetanāya chakra pāni allaiyé?

"Thou bring forth the purified state (to the embodied souls), O' Lord adorned by the garland of the tender Tulasi leaves. As the ancient cause, thou took the form of the divine turtle and stayed under the deep ocean (at the time of the churning of the ocean of milk). I do not have the capacity to delineate the glorious attributes of thy divine incarnations. However, I know thee to be the Lord with the discus, glorified in Sama Veda (Chāndōgyam)".

பண்டுமின்றும் மேலுமாயோர் பாலனாகி ஞாலமேழும்
உண்டு மண்டி ஆலிலைத் துயின்ற ஆதிதேவனே

(TCV-22)

pandum indrum mēlumāyōr bālanāki jnyālamēzhum,
undumandi ālilai thuyindra ādhi dévané,!

"O' the ancient Lord! Being the controller of all the three periods of past, present and future, during the deluge of dissolution, in the form of an incomparable child, Thou protected the seven worlds, swallowing them with zest and reposing on the waters over a tender banyan leaf".

ஆதி ஆதியாதி நீ ஓரண்டமாதி ஆதலால்
சோதியாத சோதிநீ அதுண்மையில் விளங்கினாய்
வேதமாகி வேள்வியாகி விண்ணினோடு மண்ணுமாய்
ஆதியாகி ஆயனாய மாயமென்ன மாயமே?

(TCV-34)

āthiyāthi āthi nee orandamāthi āthalāl
sōthiyātha sōthi nee athunmaiyl vilanggināy
védhamāki vélviyāki vinninōdu mannumāy
āthiyāki āyanāya māyamenna māyamé?

"Thou art the material, the instrumental (the efficient) and the accessory cause. Thou form the cosmic spheres. Being the cause of the universe Thou art the supreme light worthy of worship, requiring no analysis. Thou shine in the eternal Vedas. Thou art the origin of the Vedas, the supreme deity worshipped through all Vedic rituals and the controller of both the eternal and the cosmic realms. What a wonder is the mystery of Thy birth as a cowherd inducing the interest of the Jīvas in the four-fold Purushārthas".

வெஞ்சினத்த வேழ வெண் மருப்பு ஓசித்துருத்தமா
கஞ்சனைக் கடிந்து மண்ணளந்துகொண்ட காலனே
வஞ்சனத்து வந்த பேய்ச்சி ஆவிபாலுள் வாங்கினாய்
அஞ்சனத்த வண்ணனாய ஆதிதேவன் அல்லையே?

(TCV-43)

vejnchinaththa vézhaven maruppu osiththuruththamā
kajnchanai kadinthau mannananthu konda kālané
vajnchanaththu vanthā péychchi āvi pālul vānggināy
ajnchanaththa vannaāya āthi dhévan allaiyé?

"Art not Thou the shining ancient cause, the dark hued Lord whose holy feet measured the earth and who broke the white tusks of the horrific mad elephant Kuvalayāpeeda, destroyed the angry and mighty Kamsa and took the life along with the milk of the deceitful ogress Pūtana?"

குன்றினின்று வானிருந்து நீள்கடற்கிடந்து மண்
ஒன்றுசென்றதொன்றையுண்டுஅதொன்றிடந்து பன்றியாய்
நன்றுசென்ற நாளவற்றுள் நல்லுயிர் படைத்தவர்க்கு
அன்று தேவமைத்தளித்த ஆதிதேவனல்லையே?

(TCV-48)

kundrinindru vānirunthau neel kadal kidanthu mun
ondru sendrathondrai undu athondridanthu pandriyāy
nandru sendra nālavatrul nalluyir padaiththavarkku
andru dhévamaithaliththa āthi dhévan allayé?

"Art not Thou the ancient supreme Lord, Who stood on the holy hills of Thiruvèkatam, going from thy eternal realm, reposed on the great ocean of milk, measured the matchless earth, protected it from destruction by swallowing and safe-keeping it in thy stomach, as the divine boar lifted it out of the deluging waters, and in that age of *Varāha kalpa*, created the good humans and looked after them by establishing the order of the dévās?"

ii. Srīman Nārāyanā, the Source of Brahma, Siva and all the Dēvās

Azhwār states clearly the ancient Supreme Lord Srīman Nārayana to be the source of origin of all the dēvās including Brahma and Siva. This is clearly indicated in both NT and TCV in many verses. Verse from TCV is of interest.

போதில் மங்கை பூதலக் கிழத்தி தேவியன்றியும்
போது தங்கு நான்முகன் மகனவன் மகன் சொலில்
மாது தங்கு கூறன் ஏறதூர்தி என்று வேத நூல்
ஓதுகின்றதுண்மைஅல்லதில்லை மற்றுரைக்கிலே (TCV-72)

pōdhil mangkai boothala kizhaththi dévi andriyum,
pōdhu thangu nānmukan makan avan makan solil
māthu thangu kooran ératoorthiyendru védha nool,
ōdhukindrathu unmai allathillai matru uraikkilé (72)

"The ever-youthful Srī Devi residing in the lotus and the Bhū Devi who is the head of this world are the consorts of the Supreme Lord. Furthermore, the four faced Brahma who is resident in the lotus born of His navel, is His son. If one were to state after analysis, the declarations in the Vedas which reveal that Siva who had given half of his body to his consort Parvathi and whose vehicle is the bull, is the son of that Brahma are true. Statements to the contrary are false".

iii. Reference to Parama Sivanār (Lord Siva)

Azhwār explains the position in relation to Lord Siva in great detail through many verses in both of his works. Azhwār refutes the misconception that Deity Siva is equal to the Supreme Lord Srīman Nārāyanā in verse 4 of NT.

ஆறு சடைக் கரந்தான் அண்டர்கோன் தன்னோடும்
கூறு உடையன் என்பதுவும் கொள்கைத்தே? வேறு ஒருவர்
இல்லாமை நின்றானை எம்மானை எப்பொருட்கும்
சொல்லானைச் சொன்னேன் தொகுத்து (NT- 4)

āru sadaikkaranthān* andar_kōn thannōdum*
kūrudaiyan enpathuvum* kolkaiththē*
vēroruvar illāmai* nindrānai emmānai*
epporutkum sollānaich* chonnèn thoguththu

"To say that one who has hidden the river in his hair locks is equal to the transcendental Lord of all is not acceptable for He stands alone with no compeers for He is the inner meaning of all the words and things denoted by them. Thus, I described my Lord in short."

த³ரவீ பூ⁴தஸ் ததா³ த⁴ர்மோ ஹரி ப⁴க்த்யா மஹா முனே -

ப³ஹூந் முமோச ததா³ ஹர:

"When Lord Nārāyana measured the earth, out of devotion for the Lord, Dharma became flowing stream. Brahma took that water and washed the Lord's feet. Siva took that holy water and placed in between his hair locks, and he would not let it out for many thousands of years." (Brahma describes thus in Eswara Samhita)"

Reference to Lord Siva comes up in many verses in both of Azhwār's works. (verses 4, 8, 9, 15, 17, 26, 31, 56, 58, 78 in NT and verses 7, 42, 53, 71, 72, 87 and 113 in TCV).

The points indicated in these verses are:

1. The glories of the Lord who is transcendental *parabrahman* can not be matched, NT- 4, TCV- 7
2. Brahma and Siva both pay obeisance to the Lord who took three giant steps to measure all of the worlds, NT- 9
3. Siva's Origin described as stated in the Vèdās, TCV- 72
4. Siva's Dhanus (bow) broken by the might of Lord Srī Rāmapirān, NT-8
5. Siva's praise of Srī Rāma Nāmam, NT-78
6. Brahma's curse and its relief by the Lord, NT- 31, 58 and TCV- 42,113
7. The story of Mārkaṇḍēyan, NT- 15
8. The story of Bānāsura, Siva's devotee NT- 56, TCV- 53,71
9. Siva's teaching to the ancient sages as Dakshināmoorthy NT-17
10. Siva's experience of Azhwar's steadfast love (bhakthi) of the Lord NT- 26

We will refer to the pertinent verses regarding the points 6,7,8, 9 and 10.

Brahma's curse:

The reference to the distress of Rudra resulting from his own unrighteous action of plucking one of the heads of Brahma resulting in Brahma's curse due to which the skull of that head of Brahma got stuck in his hands comes up in verses 31 and 58 in NT and 42 and 113 in TCV. That distress was relieved only by the compassion of the Supreme Lord Nārāyana. NT-58 and 113 in TCV are given here).

சலங்கலந்த செஞ்சடைக் கறுத்தகண்டன்வெண்தலைப்
புலன் கலங்க உண்டபாதகத்தன்வன் துயர்கெட
அலங்கல்மார்வில் வாசநீர் கொடுத்தவன் அடுத்தசீர்
நலங்கொள்மாலைநண்ணும்வண்ணம்எண்ணுவாழி நெஞ்சமே (TCV – 113)

chalang kalantha chejnchadai karuththa kandan venthalai
pulan kalangka unda pāthakaththan van thuyar keda
alankal mārivil vāsa neer koduththavan aduththa seer
nalankol mālai nannum vannam ennu vāzhi nejnchamé. (TCV-113)

"O' mind! Think of His compassion which is the ultimate means to reach the Supreme Lord with glorious kalyāna gunās (suited to His resplendent form), Who protected by giving fragrant water from His holy chest adorned by the divine garland and destroyed the

terrible distress of Rudra with red matted locks of hair full of waters of Ganga and with a bluish neck - who ate out of the white skull (of Brahma), agitating all his senses, on account of the fault which arose from harming Brahma. (O' my mind!). In you, let this firm thought remain always."

கண்டு வணங்கினார்க்கு என்னாம்கொல் காமன் உடல்
கொண்ட தவத்தாற்கு உமை உணர்த்த வண்டு அலம்பும்
தார் அலங்கல் நீள் முடியான் தன் பெயரே கேட்டிருந்து அங்கு
ஆர் அலங்கல் ஆனமையால் ஆய்ந்து? (NT-78)

kandu vananginārkkku* ennāngkōl* kāman udal
konda* thavaththārku umaiyunarththa vandalambum
thāralangal nīl mudiyān* thun peyè kèttirunthu* angu
ār alangal ānamaiyāl āyndhu.

"What will happen to those who get to worship Him directly, considering the exhilaration felt by the one who once reduced cupid to ashes by his penance, on listening to Uma recite the glorious name of the Lord with the long crown covered with flowers swarming with bees?"

This refers to an incident when Uma once was asking Siva as to which deity that he was meditating on during his tapas. கம் த்வம் அர்ச்சயஸே தே³வ. Uma apparently was singing the Lord's names sweetly and asking these questions. On hearing the Lord's names, Siva became extremely pleased. The exhilaration that he felt just listening to the Lord's names is what Azhwar refers to, in this verse.

பல தேவர் ஏத்த படி கடந்தான் பாதம்
மலர் ஏற இட்டு இறைஞ்சி வாழ்த்த வலர் ஆகில்
மார்க்கண்டன் கண்ட வகையே வரும கண்டிர்
நீர்க்கண்டன் கண்ட நிலை

pala_thèvarèththap* patikadanthān pātham*
malarèra vittirainjchi* vāzhththa valarāgil*
mārkkandan kanda vakaiyè* varum kandīr*
nīrkkandan kanda nilai (NT-15)

Life story of Srī Mārkaṇḍeya:

This is described in the 12th Canto of Srīmad Bhāgavatam and in the Aranya Parva in Sri MahāBhāratham. Mārkaṇḍeya was the young son of Sage Mrukandu.. Sage Mrukandu and his wife once heard a heavenly utterance that Mārkaṇḍeya was approaching the time of his death. When these words were heard, they were extremely distressed. Mārkaṇḍeya however consoled his parents and promised to return after somehow obtaining a long life. Markandeya worshipped

Lord Rudra faithfully for a long time. Pleased by his prayers when Rudra asked him to state his wishes Mārkaṇḍeya not only asked for a long life but also Moksha at the end of it. Lord Rudra told that Mōkshapradhan (one that bestows Mōksha) was Srīman Nārāyana. He himself then took Mārkaṇḍeya to Sri Janārdhana (Narayana) thereby fulfilling the wishes of his devotee.

Srī Nāmmāzhwar's Thiruvāimozhi is of interest here as well

கண்டும் தெளிந்தும்கற்றார்க் கண்ணற் காளன்றி யாவரோ (Thiruvāimozhi 7-5-7)

ஆராத⁴யந் ஹ்ருஷீகேஸம் ஜிக்³யே ம்ருத்யும் ஸுது³ர்ஜயம்
ārādhayan Hrushīkēsan jigye mruthyum sudurjayam

Having, worshipped the Lord Hrushīkēsa, (he) was able to conquer the unconquerable death.
(Srīmad Bhāgavatam XII-8-11).

The story of Bānāsura:

அவர் இவர் என்று இல்லை அனங்கவேள் தாதைக்கு
எவரும் எதிர் இல்லை கண்டீர் உவரிக்
கடல் நஞ்சும் உண்டான் கடன் என்று வாணற்கு
உடன் நின்று தோற்றான் ஒருங்கு
avar ivar endru illai* anangavèl thādhaikku*
evarum edhir illai kandīr*
uvarik kadal nanjam undān* kadan endru*
vānarku udan nindru thōtrān orungu.

(TCV- 56)

"Look! No one whether extraordinary or ordinary can match Kannapirān, the Lord who is the father of Cupid. Even the one who swallowed the poison that came out of the salty ocean, despite his word of offering protection to Bānā, fought along with him and lost"

அவர் இவர் என்று இல்லை avar ivar endru illai - அவர் refers to somebody at a distance like the dēvās including Brahma and Rudra who represent extraordinary knowledge and power. இவர் refers to somebody near meaning those ordinary individuals of this world.

Lord Krishna's son Pradyumna is considered an *amsa* of மன்மத² manmatha or Cupid.

கடன் என்று kadan endru " as a debt"- meaning " offering a word of protection and considering as bound to carry it out.

உவரிக் கடல் நஞ்சும் உண்டான் uvarik kadal nanjam undān - "salty ocean" is the word used here to describe the ocean of milk since all oceans are considered to be salty.

Bānāsura got Lord Siva to give him a word of protection. However, when he went to fight with Lord Krishna despite Lord Siva's assistance, he lost the battle and had to run away. This story is in Srīmad Bhāgavatham as well as referred to by Sri Nammāzhwār in Thiruvaimohzi (3-10-4)

வண்டு உலாவு கோதை மாதர் காரணத்தினால் வெகுண்டு

இண்ட வாணன் ஈரைஞ்ஞாறு தோள்களைத் துணித்த நாள்
முண்டன் நீறன் மக்கள் வெப்பு மோடி அங்கி ஓடிடக்
கண்டு நாணி வாணனுக்கு இரங்கினான் எம் மாயனே

(TCV-71)

vandulāvu kōdhai māthar* kāranaththināl vekundu
inda vānan īraijnnūru* thōlkalai thuniththa nāl
mundan nīran makkal veppu* mōdi angi ōdida
kandu nāni vānanukku iranginān em māyanē

"At that time when Bānā who came to battle, being enraged on account of his daughter (Ushā) adorned with flower garland hovering with bees, had his thousand arms severed, our Lord Sri Krishna, felt embarrassed seeing Rudra with shaven head and ash covered body, retreat in haste along with his people, the deity of fever, Kāli, and Agni dēva and took pity on Bāna."

Azhwar in this verse, states that Sri Krishna took pity on Bānāsura and allowed him to live thereby proving that the Supreme Lord is the ultimate friend who would come to one's aid at times of danger. The story of Bānā's fight with Sri Krishna is to be found in Srimad Bhāgavata in chapter 63 of the Skandha X. Bānā was the eldest of the one hundred sons of the great Bali who offered the earth as gift to Sri Hari in His incarnation as Sri Vāmana. He was a devotee of Lord Siva. He ruled over the country with the beautiful city Sonita as his capital. Lord Siva was gracious to him and offered to grant any boon that he desired. Bānā chose that Siva should become the guard of his palace. Bānā also was hot headed on account of his physical might since he possessed one thousand arms. He even boasted about his mighty arms to Siva. Angered by his words, the worshipful Siva said to Bānā "O'fool! When you find your flag staff breaking, know that the ensuing battle that will extinguish your pride is near at hand ".

Usha the beautiful daughter of Bānā fell in love with a handsome prince in her dreams. Her friend Chitralēkha who was endowed with Yogic powers, knew that prince to be no other than Aniruddha, the grand son of Sri Krishna. With the help of her Yōgic powers, she flew to Dwāraka by air and abducted Aniruddha while he was asleep and presented him to her companion. Aniruddha was made a captive in her friend's inner apartment in the palace. Usha was delighted to see the handsome prince and lavished all her love and attention over him. Aniruddha was also completely absorbed in the beautiful princess and failed to notice the passing of time. When tell tale signs of pregnancy appeared on Usha the princess, the guards reported the matter to Bānā. The enraged Bānā entered the inner apartment along with his troops with uplifted arms. Aniruddha fought back with a metallic mace. The powerful Bānā tied up Aniruddha with Nāgapāsa (the serpent noose) and imprisoned him. For four months of the rainy season, the relatives of Aniruddha mourned for his loss without knowing his whereabouts. They eventually came to know about Aniruddha's adventures and imprisonment from Sage Nārada. Then the Vrishnis went on an expedition to Bānā's Sōnitapura to rescue Aniruddha with Sri Krishna as their guardian angel accompanied by Sri Bala Rama and Pradyumna.

Āzhwār refers to the ensuing battle between Bānāsura and Srī Krishna here and concludes that the Supreme Lord is the ultimate saviour in times of danger. For did He not protect even the demon who came in the form of a crow and assaulted Srī Seethā.

Siva the Sage/Teacher:

ஆல நிழற்கீழ் அறநெறியை நால்வர்க்கு
மேலை யுகத்து உரைத்தான் மெய்த் தவத்தோன் ஞாலம்
அளந்தானை ஆழிகிடந்தானை ஆல்மேல்
வளர்ந்தானைத் தான் வணங்குமாறு

(NT-17)

āla nizharkīzh araneriyaī nālvarkku
mēlai yukaththu uraiththān meith thavaththōn jnālam
alandhānai āzhikidanthānai ālmēl
valarntthānai thān vanangumāru

"Under the shade of the banyan tree in a previous age, Rudra the true sage taught the path of dharma to four others, his practice of worship of the Lord reposing on the cosmic waters, who measured the earth and rested on the banyan leaf."

Lord Rudra is known for Knowledge (Jnāna)

ஈஸ்வராத் ஜ்ஞாநமந்விச்சேத் மோக்ஷமிச்சேத் ஜநார்த்த³நாத்
Esvarāth jnānamanvichchēth Mōkshamichchēth Janārdanāth

"Knowledge should be sought from Lord Siva and Liberation from Lord Janārdana"

Lord Rudra taught sages Agasthya, Daksha, Pulastyar and Kashyapa, the *dharmic* path that he himself was following which was one of worship of Lord Narayana - who eternally reposes on the cosmic waters and is ever ready to take "avatārās".who bestowed His grace on everyone without any discrimination when He spanned the three worlds with His feet and who at the time of Pralaya (Dissolution, deluge) lying as a child on a banyan leaf protected all jīvās by keeping them in his abdomen.

Lord Siva is known to have imparted his teachings to the ancient sages. He is often referred to as Lord **Dakshināmoorthy**. Adhi śankara has a stōtram on him. The word Dakshinā has two meanings: "South" as well as "Right". It is of interest to note that when Srī Krishna took the Visva Rūpam (Cosmic form) and revealed Himself to Arjuna, Siva was on the right side of Srīman Nārāyana. In fact, we see āzhwārs refer to Siva as "வலத்தான்" one who is on the right side of the Supreme Lord. In Sanskrit he is referred to as "vāma dēva" which means the same.

Azhwār's encounter with Siva:

Finally, Azhwār's encounter with Lord Siva is referred to by āzhwār himself in a verse in NT. Āzhwār refers to Siva being a witness to his steadfast devotion to the supreme Lord Nārāyana.

மற்றுத் தொழுவார் ஒருவரையும் யான் இன்மை
கற்றைச் சடையான் கரி கண்டாய் எற்றைக்கும்
கண்டுகொள் கண்டாய் கடல்வண்ணா! யான் உன்னைக்
கண்டுகொள்கிற்குமாறு

(NT-26)

matrutthozhuvār oruvaraiyum yān inmai
katraichchadaiyān kari kandāi etraikkum
kandukol kandāi kadal vannā yān unnaik
kandukolkirkumāru

"There is no other deity whom I worship you will see for the one with matted hair locks will bear witness to. Please see O'Lord with the hue of the ocean, such as I shall remain your devotee forever."

"That I do not worship any other deity is well known to you but if you need to know then Rudra is a witness to this". Here, Azhwār refers to an incident in his own life. When Azhwār was living in Thirumazhisai, one day when he was in yōgic meditation with his thoughts centered on Lord Narayana, Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi saw him as they were passing through the skies on their vehicle Nandhi. Parvathi enquired Lord Siva as to the identity of the Yogi in meditation. Siva replied that this great person was a devotee of Lord Narayana. Hearing this, goddess Uma insisted that they should also give "darshan" and grant some boons to him before leaving. Lord Siva accepted to fulfill her wishes. When they both appeared in front of the Azhwār, he was not paying any attention to them and remained indifferent stitching a torn cloth. To this Siva asked him how he could be indifferent to them when they have appeared in front of him to shower their grace. Azhwar replied that he did not need anything from them. Siva insisted that he should ask for something. Azhwār then asked for Mōksha, to which Siva replied that the person capable of granting Mōksha was Srīman Nārāyana. Then Azhwar wanted at least a long life to carry on spiritual practices to obtain Mōksha but even this Siva could not grant saying that the extent of one's life was governed by the law of Karma. At this, Azhwar asked for Siva to grant a boon so that a thread will always follow the needle which he was holding in his hands. Lord Siva felt insulted at such a silly request, and he opened his third eye of fire claiming that he would burn him to ashes as he did to cupid. To fight the flaming fire emitting from Siva's eye, Thirumazhisai Pirān turned on an eye that he had on the great toe of his right foot. This eye of the Azhwār was spitting out fire and heat which was more flaming and intense. To this Lord Siva let out from his hair locks, hosts of rain bearing clouds which began to shower intense rain and cause a deluge. Even then, Thirumazhisai Pirān remained calm and unperturbed and was immersed in a deep devotional meditation on Lord Narayana. Seeing the intense devotion of the Azhwar, Lord Siva was amazed, praised him by giving him the special name of ப⁴க்திஸாரர் "**Bhakthi Sārar**" and then retired to his abode along with goddess Uma.

It is important to note that āzhwār does not belittle Parama Sivanār. He refers to him as

மெய்த் தவத்தோன் meith thavaththōn meaning "true sage"

(NT-17)

Azhwār also points out that all dēvās and their respective sphere of control all arise from the will of the Supreme Lord , Srīman Nārāyana only.

வான் உலவு தீவளி மா கடல் மா பொருப்பு
தான் உலவு வெம் கதிரும் தண் மதியும் மேல் நிலவு
கொண்டல் பெயரும் திசை எட்டும் சூழ்ச்சியும்
அண்டந்திருமால் அகைப்பு
vānulavu thīvali* mākadāl māporuppu*
thānulavu vengathirum* thunmadhiyum*
mēnilavu kondal peyarum* thisaiyettum sūzhchchiyum*
andath thirumāl akaippu.

(NT-37)

“The sky, the moving fire, the blowing wind, the large oceans, the huge mountains, the moving hot Sun, the cool moon, the clouds above, the life forms, the eight directions and the seven planes and all this cosmos is result of the will of the Lord of Srī.”

வான் - The sky or the ether . உலவு தீவளி மா கடல் - the ever moving fire, wind and water (the three tatvas) மா பொருப்பு-- the huge mountains (represent the tatva the earth)
தான் உலவு வெம் கதிரும் தண் மதியும் - the moving hot Sun, the cool moon.
மேல் நிலவு கொண்டல் - the moving clouds above திருமால் அகைப்பு - The will of the Lord of Sri indicating thereby that Periya Piraatti has equal role in Jagat Srishti .

அகைப்பு இல் மனிசரை ஆறு சமயம்
புகைத்தான் பொரு கடல் நீர் வண்ணன் உகைக்குமேல்
எத் தேவர் வாலாட்டும் எவ்வாறு செய்கையும்
அப்போது ஒழியும் அழைப்பு
agaippil manisarai* āru samayam
pugaiththān*porukadalnīr vaan* ukaikkumēl
eththēvar vālāttum* evvāru seygaiyum
appōthu ozhiyum azhaippu

(NT-38)

“The Lord with the hue of the surfing waters of the ocean caused men of undistinguished wisdom to be caught in the six faiths. Should He be a trifle indifferent, whoever may be the dēvās, their ego, sacrifices and invocations will vanish in a trice.”

Azhwār seems to remind us of the Upanishad statement.

பீ⁴ஷோதேதி ஸூர்ய: - Out of fear of Him, the Sun rises (Taittiriya Upanishad Brahmānanda valli-8)

The six faiths (systems) referred to are those established by Sākya, Ulukkiya, Akshapāda, Kshapana, Kapila and Pathanjali, namely “Bhauddha, Naiyāyika, Vaiśēshika, Jaina, Sāṅkhya and Yoga. Sometimes Naiyayika and Yōga are dropped and instead Chārvaka and Pāśupada are taken.

5. Supreme Lord with Infinite Auspicious and Flawless Attributes, Visishta-advaita Vision

i. Limitless glories and auspicious attributes:

Azhwār refers to the Supreme Lord Nārāyanā's limitless glories and auspicious attributes in many of the verses in both of his works. (Verses 2,13,14, 20, 29, 32, 38,71, 73, 74, 80, 93, 96 in NT and verses 5, 7,11, 13,14,16,31 in TCV and declares that no one (neither the deity Brahma Dēvan with eight eyes nor Rudhra with the matted hairs and bluish neck) can fathom them.

ஆரும் அறியார் அவன் பெருமை (NT-2)
ārumariyār avanperumai

"No one really knows His glories."

மெய்ப்பொருள் தான் வேத முதற்பொருள் தான் விண்ணவர்க்கு (NT-13)
நற்பொருள் தான் நாராயணன்
meypporulthān* vèda muthar_porulthān*
vinnavarkku narporul thān* nārāyanan

"The true means for liberation, is the foremost Lord as declared by the Vèdas, the loving Lord of the eternal stars, Srīman Narayana."

உகப்பு உருவன் தானே ஒளி உருவன் தானே (NT-29)
ukappuruvan thānè* oliyuruvan thānè*

"His is the form desired by all, the form all effulgent"

சேயன் அணியன் சிறியன் மிகப் பெரியன் (NT-71)
ஆயன் துவரைக் கோனாய் நின்ற மாயன்
sèyan aniyān* siriyan migapperiyan*
āyan thuvaraikkōnāy* nindra māyan*

"Unfathomable and yet easily accessible, small but yet great is the Lord, who was born as a cowherd"

ஆரே அறிவார் அனைத்து உலகும் உண்டு உமிழ்ந்த (NT-73)
பேர் ஆழியான் தன் பெருமையை

ārè arivār* anaiththu ulagum undumizhndha*
pèrāzhiyān thun perumaiyai*

"Who can know the greatness of the One who is like an ocean, who swallowed all the worlds and brought them forth again."

ஒரு நாள் வெள்ளம் பரக்க (NT-80)
கரந்து உலகம் காத்து அளித்த கண்ணன்

oru nāl vellam parakka
karanthu ulakam kātthu alittha Kannan

"Hurry and reach the protective fold of Lord Krishna who aeons ago protected all the worlds from the deluge of waters at the time of dissolution."

ஆக்கை

கொடுத்து அளித்த கோனே குணப்பரனே உன்னை

விடத் துணியார் மெய் தெளிந்தார் தாம்

(NT-93)

ākkai koduththu aLiththa* kōnè gunapparanè*

unnai vidaththuniyār* meythelindhār thām.

"O' Lord with the most auspicious qualities! Those who understand your real nature will not let go of you."

இனி அறிந்தேன் ஈசற்கும் நான்முகற்கும் தெய்வம்

இனி அறிந்தேன் எம் பெருமான் உன்னை இனி அறிந்தேன்

காரணன் நீ கற்றவை நீ கற்பவை நீ நல் கிரிசை

நாரணன் நீ நன்கு அறிந்தேன் நான்

(NT-96)

ini arindhèn * īsarkum nānmugarkum deivam*

ini arindhèn* emperumān unnai*

ini arindhèn* kāranan nī katravai nī* karpavai nī*

narkirisai nārān nī nangu arindhèn nān.

"O' my Lord, now I firmly understand that Thou art God to Siva and Brahma. Now I realize Thy real nature. Thou art the cause of everything. Thou art all that is known and to be known. Thou art Nārāyana, the support of all and the provider of unconditional protection. I understand all of this well."

ஒன்று இரண்டு மூர்த்தியாய் உறக்கமோடு உணர்ச்சியாய்

ஒன்று இரண்டு காலம் ஆகி வேலை ஞாலம் ஆயினாய்

ஒன்று இரண்டு தீயும் ஆகி ஆயன் ஆய மாயனே

ஒன்று இரண்டு கண்ணினானும் உன்னை ஏத்த வல்லனே?

(TCV-7)

ondrirandu moorththiyāy urakkamōdu unarchchiyāy

ondrirandu kālamāki vélai jnālam āyināy,

ondrirandu theyumāki āyanāya māyané

ondrirandu kanninānum unnaiyéththa vallané?

"O' Lord, thou art the prime form of Vishnu as well as the other two forms of Brahma and Siva. Thou art the controller of both the waking and the sleeping states of knowledge and ignorance and the time formed by the three gunās of satva, rajasa and tamasa. Thou art the ruler of the earth surrounded by the oceans and Thou art the inner controller of the three types of fire. O' Wondrous Lord, born in the cowherd's family! Can even Rudra who

bestows knowledge, sing Thy glories adequately?"

சொல்லினால் தொடர்ச்சி நீ சொலப்படும் பொருளும் நீ
சொல்லினால் சொலப்படாது தோன்றுகின்ற சோதி நீ
சொல்லினால் படைக்க நீ படைக்க வந்து தோன்றினார்
சொல்லினால் சுருங்க நின் குணங்கள் சொல்ல வல்லரே?

(TCV-11)

sollinaāl thodarchchi nee solappadum porulum nee
sollināl solappadādhū thōndrughindra jōthi nee
sollināl padaikka nee padaikka vanthu thōndrinār
sollināl surungka nin gunangkal solla vallaré?

"Thou stimulate the interest in humans in all goals of life obtainable through the scriptures. Thou art the inner controller of all the dévas mentioned in Sruti and Smrithi. Thou art the light unfathomable even by the Vedas. Are the dévās including Brahma who had originated from Thee for the purposes of creating the world using the Vēdas (given by Thee), ever capable of even describing in brief, Thine auspicious qualities?"

இன்னை என்று சொல்லல் ஆவது இல்லை யாதும் இட்டிடைப்
பின்னை கேள்வன் என்பர் உன் பிணக்கு உணர்ந்த பெற்றியோர்
பின்னை ஆய கோலமோடு பேரும் ஊரும் ஆதியும்
நின்னை யார் நினைக்க வல்லர் நீர்மையால் நினைக்கிலே?

(TCV-13)

innai yendru sollal āvadhu illaiyādhūm ittidai
pinnai kēlvān enbar un pinakkunarnta petriyōr
pinnai āya kōlamōdu pērum oorūm ādhiyūm,
ninnai yār ninaikka vallar neermaiyaīl ninaikkilē!

"To state that Thou art of such and such nature is not possible. The enlightened sages who understand the argument between Thy devotees and the non-devotees would state that Thou art the beloved of Nappinnai with the slender waist. When Thou do take birth along with the rest and yet remain different with the most beautiful and divine form, it will be impossible to understand Thee, thy auspicious names, the glories of Thy birth place and the underlying transcendental form, by any self effort unless revealed by Thy accessible nature."

தூய்மை யோகம் ஆயினாய்
thooymai yōgam āyināy

(TCV-14)

"Thou bring forth the purified state (to the embodied souls)"

கலைக் கணங்கள் சொற் பொருள் கருத்தினால் நினைக்கொணா
மலைக் கணங்கள் போல் உணர்த்தும் மாட்சி நின்தன் மாட்சியே

(TCV-16)

kalaik kanangkal sor porul karuththināl ninaikkonā,
malaik kanangkal pōl unarththum māṭchi nindran māṭchiyē

"However, the eternal Vèdas and its limbs cannot fully fathom Thy divine incarnations by either direct meaning of words or by the implied purport or significance. The beauty of Thy avatārās is like the mountain (hard to scale) and they essentially reflect Thy greatness."

காலநேமி காலனே கணக்கு இலாத கீர்த்தியாய் (TCV-31)
kālanémi kālané! kanakkilaātha keerththiyāy

"O' Lord with innumerable auspicious glories, Thou were the God of death for the demon Kālanémi."

அச்சுதன் அனந்த கீர்த்தி ஆதி அந்தம் இல்லவன் (TCV-117)
achchuthan anantha keerththi* ādhi andham illavan, *

"Who is of infinite glory, who will not ever let down His devotees, Whose grace towards them has no beginning or end"

உகப்பு உருவன் தானே ஒளி உருவன் தானே
மகப்பு உருவன் தானே மதிக்கில் மிகப் புருவம்
ஒன்றுக்கு ஒன்று ஓசனையான் வீழ ஒரு கணையால்
அன்றிக்கொண்டு எய்தான் அவன் (NT-29)

ukappuruvan thānè* oliyuruvan thānè*
makappuruvan thānè mathikkil*
mikappuruvam ondrukkondru* ōsanaiyān vīzha orukanaiyāl *
andrikkondu eithān avan

"His is the form desired by all, the form all effulgent, His is the form most wonderful, if one were to think, the Lord who taking hold of great anger hit with one arrow at one with eyebrows spanning almost a mile from each other".

அன்றிக்கொண்டு எய்தான் andrikkondu eithān –
he took hold of great anger. In nature Sri Rama was very peaceful and had no anger against anyone. But Kumbakarna was the enemy of his devotees.
(கோபமாஹாராயத் தீவ்ரம் Kōpamaharayat thīvram – Srīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyanam)

Azhwār refers to the *sausheelya guna* (gracious condescension) of the Lord in reference to the practitioners of Yōga as well as those who seek Him in various divya dēsās.

நன்றிருந்து யோகநீதி நண்ணுவார்கள் சிந்தையுள்
சென்றிருந்து தீவினைகள் தீர்த்த தேவதேவனே
குன்றிருந்த மாடநீடு பாடகத்துமூரகத்தும்
நின்றிருந்து வெ.:கணைக் கிடந்தது என்ன நீர்மையே 63.
nandirunthau yōga needhi nannuvaarkal chinthaaiyul
chendrirunthau theevinaigal theerththa dhéva dhévané

kundrirunthaa maada needu paadakaththum oorakaththum
nindrirunthau veqqanai kidanthaadhu enna neermaiye

“O’ Lord of the eternal stars! Thou eliminate the effects of all unrighteous actions by getting into the minds of those who want to attain Thee by means of the Yoga of meditation practiced in the appropriate way. Amazing is Thy Sausheelya in that Thou stand and stay in Thiruppaadakam and Thiru-oorakam with houses as large as hills and also repose in Thiruvekkha”

In Patanjali’s Yōga śutrās, under Sādhana Pāda (Practice of Yōga), certain niyāmās (observances) are prescribed.

“शौचसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायईश्वरप्र णधानानि नियमाः (Chapter 2- Śādana Pāda-verse 32)

ஸௌச ஸந்தோஷ ஸ்வாத்⁴யாய ஈஸ்வர ப்ரணிடா⁴நாநி நியமா:

saucha-santōsha tapah, svādhyāya Eśvarapranidhāni niyamah. They are respectively purity, contentment, austerity, self- study, (study of scriptures), and surrendering to the Lord.”

" O' Lord of the eternal stars! Without considering Thy supreme status and despite the fact that the mind has been indulging in various things from time immemorial, thou reaching their minds, remain seated there and remove all obstacles arising from ignorance, evil actions, and indulgence in sense derived pleasures and make them attain Thee"

ii. Immaculate and Flawless

Azhwar also clearly states that the Supreme Lord has no flaws whatsoever (Verses 9, 78 and 103 in TCV).

தாது உலாவு கொன்றை மாலை துன்னு செஞ்சடைச் சிவன்

நீதியால் வணங்கு பாத நின்மலா நிலாய சீர்

(TCV-9)

thādhulāvu kondrai mālai thunnu chenjadai sivan

neethiyāl vananggu pādha! ninmalā! nilāya seer

"O’ immaculate Lord, Thy holy feet are propitiated with all Vedic rites by Siva with red matted locks and adorned with garlands of Kondrai flowers laden with pollen."

சோர்வு இலாத காதலால் தொடக்கு அறா மனத்தராய்

நீர் அராவணைக் கிடந்த நின்மலன் நலங்கழல்

(TCV- 78)

sōrvilātha kādhalāl thodakkarā manaththarāy

neer arāvanai kidantha ninmalan nalang kazhal

"Those who worship the auspicious holy feet of the immaculate Lord Who reposes on the serpent bed in the ocean of milk."

திருக் கலந்து சேரும் மார்ப தேவதேவ தேவனே

இருக் கலந்த வேத நீதி ஆகி நின்ற நின்மலா
thirukkalanthu chéru mārba! déva déva dévané
irukkalantha védaneethi āki nindra ninmalā

(TCV- 103)

"O'Lord with the holy chest where Sri Dèvi (Periya Pirāttiyār) eternally resides ! O' Supreme ruler of the Nityasūris, sought after by all the dèvas! O' Immaculate Being! The revelation of the Vèdas with their characteristic hymns is Thy nature"

iii. The body-soul (śarīra-ātmā) relationship

The body-soul relationship (śarīra-ātmā) which is the defining feature of the *Visishta advaita* Vision (qualified non-dualism) of *Srī Emperumānār Darsanam* is expressed clearly in many verses in Azhwār's works especially in TCV. Verses, 5, 10, 12, 27 and 94 in TCV and verse 20 in NT are shown here.

நின்று இயங்கும் ஒன்று அலா உருக்கள் தோறும் ஆவியாய்
ஒன்றி உள்கலந்து நின்ற நின்ன தன்மை இன்னது என்று
என்றும் யார்க்கும் எண் இறந்த ஆதியாய் நின் உந்திவாய்
அன்று நான்முகற் பயந்த ஆதிதேவன் அல்லையே?

(TCV-5)

nindriyānggum ondralā urukkal thōrum āviyāi,
ondri ul kalanthu nindra ninna thanmai innathendru,
endrum yārkkum ennirantha āthiyāy! ninnunthaiivāy
andru nānmukar payantha ādhi dévan allaiyé?

“What is the wondrous nature of Thine by which Thou remain as the inner soul permeating all physical bodies of both the non-moving and moving kind, forever unfathomable even to the most knowledgeable ones. O' Primordial Cause! Art not Thou the only cause of the cosmos, the sporting Lord that brought forth the four - faced Brahma from Thy navel at the end of the dissolution? Who can comprehend Thee by their own effort”

தன்னுளே திரைத்து எழும் தரங்க வெண் தடங்கடல்
தன்னுளே திரைத்து எழுந்து அடங்குகின்ற தன்மை போல்
நின்னுளே பிறந்து இறந்து நிற்பவும் திரிபவும்

நின்னுளே அடங்குகின்ற நீர்மை நின்கண் நின்றதே
thannulè thiraitthethum* tharanga ven thadang kadal*
thannulè thiraitthethundhu* adangukindra thanmai pōl *
ninnulè Pirdhirandhu* nirpavum thiribavum*
ninnulè adanggukindra* nīrmai ninkan nindrathè.

(TCV-10)

"Similar to the nature of the large ocean containing within itself the whiteness and the waves which surge from and settle into itself, all the non-moving and the moving entities and their worlds which rise and die, rise from Thee and ultimately rest in Thee alone."

It is conceivable that this example of the ocean and the waves may have been used from the ancient times. Āzhwār is probably the first one to put it in a beautiful verse form more than five thousand years ago. Āzhwār's words are very instructive.

தன்னுள்ளே திரைத்து எழும் தரங்க வெண் தடங்கடல் -
நின்னுள்ளே பிறந்து இறந்து நிற்பவும் திரிபவும்.

Sruti declares: காரணம் து த்⁴யேய: kāranam tu dhyéyaha (Atharva Sikha).

"That which is the material cause of the universe, should be sought after and meditated upon"

In this verse, the first part is the example to the actual nature of the Supreme Lord which is given in the second part of the verse. Azhwār points out that the Lord is also the material cause (upādāna kāranam). Giving the example of the ocean proves that the material cause of the universe is also the Lord. Just as the waves of the ocean and their rise and fall are innate to the ocean, all 'the sentient' and 'the insentient' entities which form the body of the Lord and the activities of creation and destruction are contained in the Lord's nature. The still ocean gives rise to surges of large white waves due to the sea winds. The whiteness does not move whereas the waves do. Similarly, the Lord gives rise to both the non-moving insentient matter and the moving sentient jīvās by His will or samkalpa (denoted in the example as the winds) and absorbs them back to Himself at the time of dissolution. Brahman with the insentient matter and the sentient jīvās without names and forms is the material cause and the same Brahman is the efficient cause when by His will the insentient matter and the sentient jīvās take the names and forms. This example of the ocean and the waves which rise and fall in it is often used by many modern advaitic teachers who give discourses on Vedānta. They mention waves. However, they do not mention the whiteness of them.

உலகுதன்னை நீ படைத்தி உள் ஒடுக்கி வைத்தி மீண்டு

உலகுதன்னுள்ளே பிறத்தி ஓரிடத்தை அல்லையால்

உலகு நின்னொடு ஒன்றி நிற்க வேறு நின்றி ஆதலால்

உலகில் நினை உள்ள சூழல் யாவர் உள்ள வல்லரே?

(TCV-12)

ulagu thannai nī padaiththi ullodukki vaiththi, meendu

ulagu thannulé Piraththi ōridaththaiyallaiyāl

ulagu ninnōdu ondri nirka véru nitri yāthalāl,

ulagil ninnai ulla soozhal yāvar ulla vallaré?

"Thou create all the worlds, all "jīvas" and all "matter" and protect them during deluge and dissolution by absorbing them into Thyself and yet Thou take birth in this world like ordinary humans, thus making it difficult to determine Thy real nature. Although the entire universe stays inseparable from Thee forming Thy body, Thou stand yet separated with the most divine and beautiful form. Who in this world can actually comprehend Thy immeasurable and wondrous nature?"

விண் கடந்த சோதியாய் விளங்கு ஞான மூர்த்தியாய்

பண் கடந்த தேசம் மேவு பாவநாச நாதனே

எண் கடந்த யோகினோடு இரந்து சென்று மாணியாய்
மண் கடந்த வண்ணம் நின்னை யார் மதிக்க வல்லரே?
vin kadantha jōthiyāy vilanggu jnāna moorththiyāy,
pan kadantha dhésamévu pāva nāsa nāthané,
en kadantha yōghinōdu iranthu sendru māniyāy,
man kadantha vannam ninnai yār mathikka vallaré?

(TCV-27)

"Thou art the self radiant Form beyond the Moola Prakrithi. The self-luminous conscious Jīvās form Thy body. Thou art effulgent and beyond all the Vedas characteristic for its sounds and Thou art the transcendental Lord, destroyer of all flaws. Who could fathom the nature of Thee, who as a dwarf celebrate with innumerable glorious attributes went begging for alms and measured this earth?"

ஊனின் மேய ஆவி நீ உறக்கமோடு உணர்ச்சி நீ
ஆனின் மேய ஐந்தும் நீ அவற்றுள் நின்ற தூய்மை நீ
வானினோடு மண்ணும் நீ வளங் கடற் பயனும் நீ
யானும் நீ அது அன்றி எம்பிரானும் நீ இராமனே
ūnin méya āvi nee urakkamōdu unarchchi nee
ānin méya ainthu nee avatrul nindra tūymai nee
vāninōdu mannum nee valang kadar payanum nee
yānum nee adhandri empirānum nee iraāmané

(TCV-94)

"Thou art the five vital airs in the body. Both sleep and wakefulness are under Thy command. The five purifying substances originating from the cows and their purifying quality are under Thy control. The eternal abode and the mundane world are under Thy will. Thou art the source of the various useful and precious things contained in the ocean. Also myself who is bound in this samsāra is Thy possession. Furthermore, O' Sri Rama! Thou art our benefactor"

In this verse, Azhwār clearly states that he is the possession of the Supreme Lord. The whole world and all the life forms not only from the body of the Lord and they are His possessions, and He therefore is their Master.

நீயே உலகும் எல்லாம் நின் அருளே நிற்பனவும்
நீயே தவத் தேவ தேவனும் நீயே
எரி சுடரும் மால் வரையும் எண் திசையும் அண்டத்து
இரு சுடரும் ஆய இவை
nīyè ulakelām* ninnarulè nirpanavum*
nīyè thavaththèva thèvanum*
nīyè erisudarum mālvaraiyum* en thisaiyum*andatthu
irusudarum āya ivai

(NT-20)

"Thou art all the worlds. Thy grace sanctions permanence. Thou art the Lord of all who became dèvās by penance, Thou art the fire and the great mountains and all eight directions, and Thou art the sun and the moon of the universe".

The last verse in TCV is of interest for it clinches this body- soul relationship.

இயக்கறாத பல்பிறப்பில் என்னை மாற்றி இன்றுவந்து
உயக்கொள் மேகவண்ணனண்ணி என்னிலாயதன்னுளே
மயக்கினான் தன் மன்னுசோதி ஆதலால் என்னாவிதான்
இயக்கெலாம் அறுத்தறாதவின்பவீடு பெற்றதே
iyakkarātha palPirappil ennai mātri indru vanthu
uyakkol mégha vannan nanni ennilāya thannulé
mayakkinān than mannu chōthi āthalāl en āvithān
iyakkelā aruththu arātha inba veedu petrathé.

(TCV-120)

“In order to liberate this ignorant "me" from the continuous chain of many births and to uplift me today, reaching me unconditionally, the Lord with the hue of the dark clouds, inseparably mixed His eternal resplendent divine form in my heart (fixed on His self). Therefore, my ātma cutting asunder all the continuous cause and effect chain of ignorance and actions, attained the eternal bliss of Mōksha.”

Unlike mounting on the elephant by self-effort, Lord Sri Ranganatha instilled His divine form inseparably into the Azhwar (unconditionally), with the result Azhwar freed of all obstacles, obtained the eternal service to the Lord along with the full divine experience (ப்³ரஹ்மமானந்தத்தோடு கூடிய கைங்கர்யம் brahmānandhatthōdu kūdiya kaimkaryam).

In this last verse of the Azhwār’s prabhandham, āzhwār uses the words "[என்னிலாயதன்னுளே](#)".

[நானாயிருக்கும் தனக்குள்ளே](#) . In His Self, who also contains "myself". The word "I" and the knowledge arising from it indicating not only myself but all the way to my Lord Who is the inner controller "antaryāmi".

[Sri Periyavācchān’s pillai’s commentary is of interest here.](#)

"தத் த்வமஸி என்று உபதேசித்து அஹம் ப்³ரஹ்மாஸ்மி என்று அநுஸந்தி⁴த்துப்போந்த அர்த்த²மிறே இவர் இங்குச் சொல்லுகிறது. இந்த ஸரீராத்மஸம்ப்³ந்த⁴ம் இங்கு சொல்லுகிறது - tatvamasī endru updésiththu aham brahmāsmi endru anusandhitthuppōndha arththamiré ivar ingku chollukirathu. Intha śareerātmasambandham ingku chollukirathu".

Here Azhwar gives the meaning of the famous Vēda Vākyās, indicating the Sarīra ātma (Body-Soul) relationship between the jeeva-ātma and the Lord. தத் த்வமஸி tat tvamasī (Chāndōgyam 6-8-7) "O' Svétakétō! Thou art That" This is the word of the teacher (Acharya). அஹம் ப்³ரஹ்மாஸ்மி aham brahmāsmi (Kausheedakee Upanishad) "I am Brahman". This is the word of the one who is liberated.

Azhwar indicates here that his "self" is the body of the Lord, and the Lord is the ātma. Azhwar says that "The Lord helped with my work considering it as His own".

6. Azhwār on the Five Modes of the Supreme Reality:

Azhwar refers to the Five well defined Aspects of the Supreme Brahman, Srīman Nārāyaṇa (TCV- 17). Azhwār states clearly that even the Vēdās and its limbs can not adequately describe the greatness of the divine incarnations of the Supreme Lord and points out His easily accessible nature in the Archa forms. (TCV -16 and 17)

The “Pāncharātra Āgama” texts describe five aspects or modes for the Supreme Reality "Srīman Nārāyaṇa". They are **Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmi and Archāvatāra**.

The “**Para**” is the Transcendental beatific non- material "Suddha Satva" immaculate and pure form accessible only to the nityās (the eternal attendants or nitya Suris like Srī Ananta, Garuda Vishvaksēna and others) and the mukthās (the liberated souls) in the Eternal Realm (Nitya Vibhūthi). (TCV -3)

The “**Vyūhas**” are emanations from the same Supreme exercising control over the cosmic spheres and all their resident sentient beings as well as the insentient matter, thus involved in creation, sustenance as well as destruction. (TCV-20, 23, 29).

The “**Antaryāmi**” is the resident Lord who pervades and is the inner controller of all the sentient beings (jīvās) as well as the insentient matter of the entire cosmos. (TCV-64, 65 and NT-54, 57, 58, 65 and 66).

The “**Vibhavās**” refer to the various descents of the Supreme which happen from time to time at His own Will. They are unlimited although for illustrative purposes, our Āchāryas refer to about ten of them as the main ones including the avatārās of the Lord as Srī Rāma and Srī Krishna. The Lord describes clearly when and why He takes his avatārās in Srimad Bhagavat Geetha, (Chapter 4 –Verses 5-9)

The “**Archa**” is the icon forms in which the Supreme Lord is invoked and consecrated in various holy shrines, as worshipped with love and devotion. in temples and in our own homes. Azhwār’s life story details how his deep bhakthi evoked physical response from the Archa mūrthies in more than one divya dēsam.

We shall refer to some of these verses here both from TCV and NT. Azhwār refers to all of these five in his Thirucchanda Viruttam verse 17.

ஏக மூர்த்தி மூன்று மூர்த்தி நாலு மூர்த்தி நன்மை சேர்
போக மூர்த்தி புண்ணியத்தின் மூர்த்தி எண் இல் மூர்த்தியாய்
நாக மூர்த்தி சயனமாய் நலங் கடற் கிடந்து மேல்

ஆக மூர்த்தி ஆய வண்ணம் என் கொல்? ஆதிதேவனே
èka mūrththi mūndru mūrththi nālu mūrththi nanmai sèr
pōka mūrththi punniyaththin mūrththi* ennil mūrththiyāy*
nāka mūrththi sayanamāy* nalangkadal kidandhu, mēl
āka mūrththi āya vannam* en kol? ādhi dēvanè!

(TCV-17)

"O' Lord the ancient cause! Thou art the form of Vāsudéva in the supreme abode. Thou take the three forms of Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Anirudda in the Vyūha mode. Thou art the basis of the four entities namely the pradhāna (primordial matter), the purusha (the jīva), avyakta (the unmanifest primal nature) and kāla (the time). In the Vibhava mode, thou take unlimited incarnations to bring Thy good grace to embodied souls and become the ultimate fruit of the righteous actions of Thy devotees. Furthermore, thou take the reclining form reposing on the serpent ādhiśèsha in the good ocean of milk (awaiting the return of all the jīvas to Thee). In addition to all these, thou also become the Archa mūrthies in the forms desired by Thy devotees. What a wonder this is?"

The "Para":

ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஆகி அல்லவற்று உளாயுமாய்
 ஐந்து மூன்றும் ஒன்றும் ஆகி நின்ற ஆதிதேவனே
 ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஆகி அந்தரத்து அணைந்து நின்று
 ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஆய நின்னை யாவர் காண வல்லரே?

(TCV -3)

aindhum aindhum aindhumāki* allavatru ulāyumāi,
 aindhu mūndrum ondrumāki* nindra ādhi dhèvanè
 aindhum aindhum aindhumāki* andharaththanaindhu nindru
 aindhum aindhum āya ninnai* yāvar kāna vallarè?

“O' the ancient cause, the sporting Lord remaining at the end of dissolution! In the cosmic realm, thou art the five elements, the five sense organs, the five organs of action. Thou art the inner controller of the sentient beings, the five subtle essences, the three causative principles (the ego, the intellect and the primordial nature) as well as the mind.

In the eternal realm, Thou art the inner controller of the five divine powers, and its five organs of knowledge and five organs of action. Thou form the abode of enjoyment, the five types of experience, their instrumental means, the eternal attendants, the sages as well as the liberated beings. Who can see Thee in Thy two-fold realms by their own effort?"

In the second half of the verse, Azhwar describes the Lord as revealed to him in His நியதி விபூதி nitya vibhūthi (eternal manifestation or aspect).

ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஆகி ainthum ainthum ainthumāki -

In the supreme abode of the Lord, the non-material resplendent self-luminous divine form of the Lord characterized by suddhasatva which has only purity (satva) with

பஞ்ச ஶக்தி panchaśakthi - five powers, together with its five senses of knowledge and five organs of action.

பரமேஷ்டி² புமாந் விஸ்வோ நிவ்ருத்தி ஸர்வ ஏவ ஹி
 பரமேஷ்டி²ஸ்மருத: ஶப்³தே³ ஸ்பர்ஸேதுபுருஷ: ஸ்மருத:
 விஸ்வாத்மாதேஜஸிப்ரோக்தோ நிவ்ருத்த்யாத்மா ரஸே
 ஸ்மருத:

ஸர்வாத்மாகதி³தோக³ந்தே⁴ விஷயே புருஷஸ் ஸ்மருத:

paraméshti pumān viśvo nivrutthi sarva éva hi
paraméshtismrutaha śabdé sparśetu purushaha smrutaha
viśvātmātejasiproktho nivrutthyātmā rasé smrutaha
sarvātmākathitogandhé vishayé purusha smrutaha
(Pāncharātram)

"Paraméshti, Pumān, Visva, Nivritti, and Sarva are said to be five upanishads. Paraméshti is said to have sound, Pumān, the touch, Visva, the form, Nivritti, the taste, Sarva, the smell, and Purusha the vishaya"

அந்தரத்து அணைந்து நின்று antharaththu anainthu nindru -
In His supreme abode, the Lord stands as

ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஆய ainthum ainthu āya -

the non-material form of five types of experience (ஸப்³தா³தி போ⁴க்³யங்கள் sabdhāthi bhogyangkal) of bliss and, also as the five others including the abode of enjoyment (போ⁴கஸ்தா²நம் bhogasthānam), the instruments of enjoyment (போ⁴கோ³பகரணம் bhōgōpakaranam), the eternal attendants and the sages of Vaikunta (வைகுந்தத்தமரரும் முனிவரும் vaikunthatthamararum munivarum -Thiruvaimozhi 10-9-9) and the liberated beings.

The Vyūhas:

கூசம் ஒன்றும் இன்றி மாசுணம் படுத்து வேலை-நீர்
பேசு நின்ற தேவர் வந்து பாட முன் கிடந்ததும்
kūsam ondram indri māsunam paduththu vélai neer
pésa nindra dévar vanthau pāda mun kidanthadhūm

(TCV-20)

"Thou have been lying on the serpent bed in the waters of the ocean, from the beginning of creation so that all the dévas including Brahma could approach Thee and sing Thy praises."

நானிறத்த வேதநாவர் நல்ல யோகினால் வணங்கு
பானிறக் கடற்கிடந்த பற்பநாபன் அல்லையே?
nāniraththa véda nāvar nallayōghināl vananggu
pānirak kadal kidantha parpa nābhan allaiyé?

(TCV-23)

"Art not Thou the Lord Padmanābha who reposes on the ocean of milk and who is sought as the ultimate refuge, by those well versed in the esteemed and the valid source of knowledge, the Vedas with the four types of "swaras"?"

பரத்திலும் பரத்தையாதி பெளவ நீரணைக் கிடந்து
உரத்திலும் ஒருத்திதன்னை வைத்துகந்ததன்றியும்
paraththilum paraththai yāthi pauva nīranaik kidanthu
uraththilum oruththi thannai vaiththuganthathandriyum

(TCV-29)

"O'Lord, thou art supreme form transcending all individual souls and beyond the primordial matter. Thou repose on the ocean, united with the divine mother who forever resides in Thy heart."

பெளவ நீரணைக் கிடந்து pauva nīranaik kidanthu -

As Aniruddha Nārāyana, the Lord reposes on the ocean of milk directly for the sake of providing refuge to all sentient.

அந்த⁴காரே அதிதீவ்ரே ச நரஸிம்ஹமநுஸ்மரேத்
தரத்யகி²ல து³க்கா²நி தாபார்த்தோ ஜலஸாயிநம்
andhakāre athiteevré cha narasimhamanusmaréth
taratyakhila dhukkhāni tāpārththō jalaśāyinam
(Vishnu Dharmam 41-30)

"When stuck in pitch dark surroundings, one must think of Lord Sri Nrusimha. When saddened by misery, one must think of the Lord reposing on the milk ocean. Then all difficulties will be surmounted."

Here Sri Aniruddha is inclusive of the Vyūha Avatāra of Sri Sankarśanan, and Sri Pradyumnan. They are all manifestations of Vāsudevā. By these avatārās, the Lord provides at the time of creation, form and name to the sentient who had lost their nature during deluge of dissolution, provides the scriptures, and protects the dévas including Brahma and Rudra from the menace of the demons.

i. Azhwār and Antaryāmi:

Azhwār in several verses refer to the indwelling paramātma in all sentient jīvās and insentient entities in the entire universe and enjoys the same Lord pervading his own self and seated in his heart. (NT- 20, 54, 57, 58,65, 66, 82, 86, TCV- 64,65).

நீயே உலகும் எல்லாம் நின் அருளே நிற்பனவும்
நீயே தவத் தேவ தேவனும் நீயே
எரி சுடரும் மால் வரையும் எண் திசையும் அண்டத்து
இரு சுடரும் ஆய இவை

(NT-20)

nīyè ulakelām* ninnarulè nirpanavum*
nīyè thavaththèva thèvanum*
nīyè erisudarum mālvaraiyum* en thisaiyum*andatthu
irusudarum āya ivai

This verse was cited earlier in śarīra-ātma relationship. It is applicable also here since Srīman Nārāyana pervades as well as controls all of the sentient as well as the insentient parts of the entire cosmos - being the *sarvāntaryāmi tatvam*.

தேவராய் நிற்கும் அத் தேவும் அத் தேவரில்
மூவராய் நிற்கும் முது புணர்ப்பும் யாவராய்
நிற்கின்றது எல்லாம் நெடுமால் என்று ஓராதார்
கற்கின்றது எல்லாம் கடை

(NT-54)

thèvarāi nirkum aththèvum*
aththèvaril mūvarāi nirkum* mudhupunarppum*

yāvarāi nirkinndrathu ellām* nedumāl endru ōrādhār*
karkindrathu ellām kadai.

"Among the dēvās as one of them, among all of them as one of the three Mūrthies, being His first Avatāra taken of His own will and also as all sentient beings and insentient matter stands Narayana. If not understood as such by one, then all one's learning is in fact futile".

ஒருங்கு இருந்த நல் வினையும் தீவினையும் ஆவான்
பெரும் குருந்தம் சாய்த்தவனே பேசில் மருங்கு இருந்த
வானவர் தாம் தானவர் தாம் தாரகை தான் என் நெஞ்சம்
ஆனவர் தாம் அல்லாதது என்?

(NT-57)

orungirundha nalvinaiyum* thīvinaiyum āvān*
perungurundham sāyththavanè pèsil*
marungirundha vānavar_thām thānavar_thām* thāragaitthān*
en nencham ānavar_thām* allāthathu en?

"Truthfully speaking, the Lord who broke the large kurunda tree is the ruler of the effects of good and bad actions of the embodied soul. The near dēvās, the demons, the earth and the one in my heart are the same Lord of all. Is there anything that is not of Him".

என் நெஞ்சம் மேயான் இருள் நீக்கி எம்பிரான்
மன் அஞ்ச முன் ஒருநாள் மண் அளந்தான் என் நெஞ்சம்
மேயானை இல்லா விடை ஏற்றான் வெவ்வினை தீர்த்து
ஆயானுக்கு ஆக்கினேன் அன்பு

(NT-58)

en_nencha mēyān* irul nīkki empirān*
man_ancha munnoru nāl* man alandhān*
en_nencham mēyānai* illā vidai ètrān*
vevvinaī thīrthu āyānukku ākinèn anbu.

"The Lord who forever resides in my heart, who removes all ignorance, my benefactor, once measured this earth terrifying all kings. He rejoiced only after removing the effect of the unrighteous act of the one who rides the bull, who failed to place Him in his heart. I spread the love for such a Lord".

It is worth noting the Vyākhyānam (commentary of) of the Achārya of this verse, It shines on the Lord as well as on āzhwār.

எம்பிரான் - The Lord is called the compassionate benefactor since He is the benefactor of all. In Azhwar's case He of His own volition came into his heart and helped remove all his ignorance இருள் darkness.

இல்லா விடை ஏற்றான் - Lord Rudra who rides the bull suffered "brahma hatthi do`sha" when he clipped off one of the heads of Brahma in anger. The Brahma's skull got stuck to his hand and he could not get rid of it. Finally, when He propitiated Lord Narayana, he was relieved of this woe.

Azhwar says that Rudra had performed this act when his “satva” was lost due to the fact, that he had not placed (இல்லா - illā) Lord Narayana in his heart. That means the action was performed under the influence of rajas and tamas. Lord Narayana troubled by the curse on Rudra removed the skull from his hand thereby freeing him from this do`sha (blemish). Only after this Lord Narayana is described to have rejoiced as if He became full (ஆயான் – āyān) again.

ஆக்கினேன் அன்பு ākkinēn anbu - Azhwar states that he has spread love for such a Lord who is a great benefactor for all.

Sri Nammāzhwar states that he will stimulate love for the Lord in others

நின் கண் வேட்கை ஏழுவிப்பேனே (nin kan Vētkai ezhuvippēnē) (Thiruvirutthan-96).

Azhwār here states that he has already carried this out.

இடம் ஆவது என் நெஞ்சம் இன்றெல்லாம் பண்டு
பட நாகணை நெடிய மாற்கு திடமாக
வையேன் மதிதடி தன்னோடு அயனை நான்
வையேன் ஆட் செய்யேன் வலம்

(NT-66)

idamāvathu* en_nencham indrellām* pandu
padanākanai* nediyaṁārku* thidamāga
vaiyēn* mathisūdi thannōdu* ayanai nān
vaiyēn* ātcheyyēn valam.

"Henceforth for the supreme Lord who has been hitherto lying on the bed formed by the multi-hooded serpent, my mind will be the residence. I will not consider Rudra with the crescent moon on the head and Brahma as transcendental. Due to my wisdom and strength, neither will I serve them."

கலந்தான் என் உள்ளத்து காம வேள் தாதை
நலம் தானும் ஈது ஒப்பது உண்டே? அலர்ந்தலர்கள்
இட்டு ஏத்தும் ஈசனும் நான்முகனும் என்றிவர்கள்
விட்டு ஏத்த மாட்டாத வேந்து
kalandhān en ullaththuk* kāmavēl thāthai*
nalandhānum* Ithoppathu undē*
alarndhalargaL ittēththum* īsanum nānmuganum*
endru ivargal vittēththa* maāttātha vēnthu.

(NT-82)

"The father of the beautiful cupid and the Lord of all dēvās, whose glories cannot be sung fully even by Siva, the four-faced Brahma as well as the other dēvās who all worship Him with fresh flowers, has merged completely in my heart. Is there anything better than this?"

உளன் கண்டாய் நல் நெஞ்சே உத்தமன் என்றும்
உளன் கண்டாய் உள்ளுவார் உள்ளத்து உளன் கண்டாய்
தன் ஒப்பான் தான் ஆய் உளன் காண் தமிழேற்கும்

என் ஒப்பார்க்கு ஈசன் இமை

(NT-86)

ulan_kandāi nan nenche* uththaman endrum ulan kandāi*
ulluvār ullaththu ulan_kandāi *
than oppān thānāi* ulan_kān thamiyèrkum*
en oppārkku īsan imai.

"O' my good mind, the Supreme Lord is always there to protect us without expecting any return. Note that He resides permanently in the hearts of those who let their minds dwell on Him. Note that the same Lord who is comparable to only Himself, is my refuge and for others like me, who have no recourse."

நின்றதெந்தை ஊரகத்து இருந்ததெந்தை பாடகத்து
அன்று வெஃகணைக் கிடந்தது என்னிலாத முன்னெலாம்
அன்றுநான் பிறந்திலேன் பிறந்தபின் மறந்திலேன்
நின்றதுமிருந்ததும் கிடந்ததுமென் நெஞ்சுளே
nindrathenthai oorakaththu irunthathenthai pādakaththu
andru veqkanai kidanthathu ennilātha munnelām
andru nān piranthilén piranthapin maranthilén
nindrathum irunthathum kidanthathum en nejnchulé.

(TCV- 64).

"My Lord and Master stood in Thiru-oorakam, stayed in Thiruppādakam and reposed in Thiruvekkha long before I was born. Once (I was) born (however), I could never forget. My Lord now stands, sits and reclines in my heart".

ஸர்வஸ்ய சாஹம் ஹ்ருதி³ ஸந்நிவிஷ்டோ - sarvasya chāham hridi sannivishtō (Gīta 15-15)
"And I am seated in the hearts of all".

நின்றதும் இருந்ததும் கிடந்ததும் என்னெஞ்சுளே
nindrathum irunthathum kidanthathum en nejnchulé –

நிற்பதுமோர் வெற்பகத்து இருப்பும்விண் கிடப்பதும்
நற்பெருந்திரைக் கடலுள் நானிலாத முன்னெலாம்
அற்புதன் அனந்தசயனன் ஆதிபூதன்மாதவன்
நிற்பதுமிருப்பதும் கிடப்பதுமென் நெஞ்சுளே
nirpathumōr verpakaththu iruppum vin kidappathum
nar perunthirai kadalul nānilātha munnelām
arputhan anantha sayanan āthi boothan mādhan
nirpathum iruppathum kidappathum en nejnchulé.

(TCV- 65).

"The Lord took to standing on the incomparable holy hill, sitting in the eternal abode and reposing on the milky ocean with wide, large waves in the former days when I was not awakened. (Now), The wondrous Lord, who reclines on ādhiSèsha, the ancient cause, the consort of Lakshmi stands, sits and reposes in my heart".

We read in His life story, in Sirupuliyūr in order to quell the pride of the priests who were helping in the vèdic rituals who were objecting against the honor being bestowed on him by the

chief priest, at Azhwar's request, Srīman Nārayana seated in azhwār's heart revealed His majestic form beautifully decked with all ornaments as well as āyudhams (His eternal attendants).

ii. Azhwār and The Vibhava Avatārams:

Azhwār refers to 8 of the 10 well known dasāvathārams (ten divine incarnations). Srī Parasurāma and Sri Bala Rāma were not referred to. However, Azhwar refers to two others namely ஹம்ஸ Hamsa (TCV- 19) and வடபத்ரஸாயீ Vatapatra śāyī (NT- 3 and TCV- 22, 30).

புள்ளதாகி வேதநான்கும் ஓதினாய் அதன்றியும்

pullathāki vēda nānkum othināi –

"The Lord took the form of a swan and taught Brahma all the four Vedās ("Hamsa" avatāram)

பாலில் கிடந்ததுவும் பண்டு அரங்கம் மேயதுவும்
ஆலில் துயின்றதுவும் ஆர் அறிவார் ஞாலத்து
ஒரு பொருளை வானவர் தம் மெய்ப் பொருளை அப்பில்
அரு பொருளை யான் அறிந்தவாறு?

(NT-3)

pāḷil kidanthathuvum* pandarangam mēyathuvum*
āḷil thuyindrathuvum ārarivār*
Jnāḷaththu oruporulai* vānavar_ṭham meipporulai*
appil aruporulai jnān arinthavāru? 3

"That which reposed on the milky ocean, settled in ancient times in Srirangam and that which slept on the banyan leaf, the primordial cause of the cosmos, shining truth to the eternal stars and the principal force of the ancient waters, Who can know Him as I do? "

பண்டும் இன்றும் மேலுமாய் ஓர் பாலனாகி ஞாலம் ஏழ்
உண்டு மண்டி ஆலிலைத் துயின்ற ஆதிதேவனே

(TCV-22)

pandum indrum mēlumāi ṛr bālanāki jnālam èzhum,
undumandi āḷilai thuyidra ādhi dēvanē,!*

"O' the ancient Lord! Being the controller of all the three periods of past, present and future, during the deluge of dissolution, in the form of an incomparable child, Thou protected the seven worlds, swallowing them with zest and reposing on the waters over a tender banyan leaf."

வானகமும் மண்ணகமும் வெற்பும் ஏழ் கடல்களும்
போனகம் செய்து ஆலிலைத் துயின்ற புண்டரீகனே
vānakamum mannakamum verpum èzh kadalkalum,
pōnakam seithu āḷilai thuyindra pundarīkanē

(TCV-30)

"O' the lotus eyed Lord! Thou as a child reposed on the tender banyan leaf after ingesting the heavens and the earth along with its seven mountains and the seven seas."

We will refer to the verses that pertain to all the main Ten avatārās (divine incarnations) and refer to some of them with text and translations.

மத்ஸ்ய Matsya (NT-22 and TCV -35) and **கூர்ம Kūrma avatārāms** :
(NT-49 and TCV- 14, 20, 35, 88)

குழவியாய்த்

தான் ஏழ் உலகுக்கும் தன்மைக்கும் தன்மையனே

மீன் ஆய் உயிர் அளிக்கும் வித்து

(NT-22)

kuzhaviyāith tāt̃n èzhulakukkum* thanmaikkum thanmaiyanè*

mīnāi uyiralikkum viththu

"Worship the feet of the same ancient Lord who both as a child and as a fish protected all life forms. He alone is the cause and the abode of all the seven worlds and its nature".

அம்பு உலாவு மீனும் ஆகி ஆமை ஆகி ஆழியார்

தம்பிரானும் ஆகி மிக்கது அன்பு மிக்கதன்றியும்

(TCV-35)

ambulāvum mīnumāki* āmaiyaiki āzhiyār,*

thambirānumāki mikka anbu* mikku adhandriyum*

"Thy descent in the aquatic form of a fish and a turtle out of Thy love for the jīvās in distress are ever honoured".

மலையாமைமேல் வைத்து வாசுகியைச் சுற்றி

தலையாமை தான் ஒரு கை பற்றி அலையாமல்

பீறக் கடைந்த பெருமான் திரு நாமம்

கூறுவதே யாவர்க்கும் கூற்று

(NT-49)

malaiyāmai mēlvaitththu vāsukiyaich chutri

thalaiyāmai thānorukai patri*

alaiyāmal pīrakkadaintha* perumān thirunāmam*

kūruvathè yāvarkkum kūtru

"Uttering the auspicious names of the Lord alone is best action for everyone. The Lord who as a turtle placed the mountain on His back, supporting the mountain top with His hand and using Vasuki, the snake as the rope churned carefully the ocean of milk."

வராஹ Varāha avatāram (NT- 70, TCV-48, 102,114)

Azhwār in NT-70 refers to this avatāram along with the Vāmana- Trivikrama avatārāms. indicating the Lord' s ஸௌஸீல்ய Sausheelya, (the gracious condescension of the Supreme Lord and mixing easily with ordinary human beings) and ஸௌலப்⁴ய Saulabhya (the easily accessible nature) and வாத்ஸல்ய Vātsalya (loving compassion) gunās.

In TCV-114), Azhwar clearly states that the holy feet of the Lord, Who came as Sri Varāha (divine boar) and lifted this whole earth, which was submerged in the deluging waters, are the true means for all of our needs starting from giving us the right spiritual knowledge all the way to our final beatitude.

ஈனமாய எட்டும் நீக்கி ஏதம் இன்றி மீதுபோய்
வானம் ஆள வல்லையேல் வணங்கி வாழ்த்தெந்நெஞ்சமே
ஞானம் ஆகி ஞாயிறு ஆகி ஞால முற்றும் ஓர் எயிற்று
ஏனமாய் இடந்த மூர்த்தி எந்தை பாதம் எண்ணியே

(TCV-114)

īnamāya ettum nīkki* Ethamindri meedhupōi,*
vānamāLla vallaiyēl* vanangi vāzhthu en nenjamē,*
Jnānamāki Jnāyiru āki* Jnāla mutrum ōr eyitru,*
Ènamāi idantha mūrththi* enthai pādham enniyē.

“O' my mind! If you desire to cut the eight-fold chain of human predicament, become free of all sorrows and going beyond the manifest world (through the path of light) attain the final beatitude, then take the holy feet of the Lord, Who took the divine, auspicious form as Sri Varaha, uplifted this whole Earth with His incomparable teeth, Who is the giver of spiritual enlightenment, Who like the Sun is the dispeller of all darkness (the light of all sensory knowledge) - as the means and worship and adore them”

ஈனமாய எட்டும் நீக்கி -

eliminating all eight defects or faults of the beings who are caught in the mundane world are: 1. Ignorance or avidya 2. karma or actions (both "punya and pāpa" righteous and unrighteous) 3. "vāsana" or tendencies towards material things from time immemorial 4. desires in the same, prompted by those tendencies 5. association with the physical body (material) 6-8 Tāpatrayam namely the triple distress, one is ādyātmikam –self inflicted ādhibhautikam –arising from others on this earth and finally ādhidaivikam- arising from the devas.

All these eight shrink one's knowledge and therefore considered as faults (since they can cause the downfall).

நரஸிம்ஹாவதாரம் Nrusimha avatāram :

Azhwār describes the beauty of the glorious நரங்கலந்தசிங்கம்.

Srī Bhūdat āzhwār, who was a contemporary of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān called the lotus feet of the Lord who took this form as the nectar of this great Earth.

நரம்கலந்த

சிங்கமாய்க் கீண்ட திருவன் அடியிணையே,

அங்கண்மா ஞாலத் தமுது.

naram kalandha

singamāik kīnda thiruvan adiyinaiyē

anganmājnālath thamuthu

(Irindām Thiruvandhādhi -84)

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's words about this special avatāram are in the following verses, NT- 5, 21 and 22 and TCV- 23, 24 and 25).

இவையா பில வாய் திறந்து எரி கான்ற
இவையா எரிவட்டக் கண்கள் இவையா
எரி பொங்கிக் காட்டும் இமையோர் பெருமான்

அரி பொங்கிக் காட்டும் அழகு

(NT-21)

ivaia! pilavai* thirantheri kandra*

ivaia!* erivattak kankaL* ivaia

eripongik kattum* imaiyōr perumān*

aripongik kattum azhaku ?

“Is this the mouth of the cave spitting wide flames of fire? Are these the eyes that are like fire balls, flaming red? Is this the beauty displayed by the Lord of the eternal stars as Nrsimha with a body effulgent like the flame?”

அழகியான் தானே அரி உருவன் தானே
பழகியான் தானே பணிமின் குழவியாய்த்
தான் ஏழ் உலகுக்கும் தன்மைக்கும் தன்மையனே

மீன் ஆய் உயிர் அளிக்கும் வித்து

(NT-22)

azhakiyān thānē* ariyuruvan thānē*

pazhakiyān* thālè panimin* kuzhaviyāyith

thān ezhulakukkum* thanmaikkum thanmaianāi*

mīnāi uyiralikkum viththu

“Beautiful is the Lord who came in Nrsimha form. Worship the feet of the same ancient Lord who both as a child and as a fish protected all life forms. He alone is the cause and the abode of all the seven worlds and its nature”

ஆபத்ஸக⁴ன் ஆனவனே அழகியான்

பழகியான் தானே பணிமின்

The ancient Lord (unlike the embodied souls) is fully aware of the affliction that the current body is to the soul as well as of the future states of embodiment. In addition, He is fully aware of the effects of all karma the embodied soul must endure and that the source of ultimate relief is merely His compassion. If one were to surrender to Him realizing that He is the means and the end then He will surely protect and bestow liberation. Hold on to Him like the afflicted patient seeks the help of the physician for He is both the medicine and the medical doctor. பே⁴ஷஜம் பி⁴ஷக்

தான் ஏழ் உலகுக்கும் தன்மைக்கும் தன்மையனே

refers to the five major elements "Pancha Bhūtās", the principle, Mahat and Ahamkāram. All these have their bases on their தன்மாத்ரை (தன்மை). For instance, the Pancha Bhūtās namely space or ether, air fire, water and earth have their essential nature in five "gunas" (qualities) namely ஸப்³த³ sound, ஸ்பர்ஸ touch sensation, ரூப -form, ரஸ - taste and க³ந்த⁴ - fragrance or

smell. தான் ஏழ் உலகுக்கும் also refers to the seven worlds. It means all the sentient and the insentient materials contained in the seven worlds.

ஸதே³வ ஸோம்ய (Chāndōgyam 6-2-1) He is the threefold cause of all things namely efficient cause (நிமித்த), material cause (உபாதா³ன) and concomitant cause (ஸஹகாரி)- "He is the pot maker, the clay that forms the pot and the potter's wheel".

வாமன Vāmana avatāram

Azhwār refers to this avatāram in three verses. (NT- 70 and TCV- 26 and 74). In verse NT-70 āzhwār refers this along with the Varāha avatāram.

தான் ஒருவன் ஆகி தரணி இடந்து எடுத்து
ஏன் ஒருவனாய் எயிற்றில் தாங்கியதும் யான் ஒருவன்
இன்றா அறிகின்றேன் அல்லேன் இரு நிலத்தைச்
சென்று ஆங்கு அடிப்படுத்த சேய்

(NT- 70)

thān oruvanākith* tharaNi idanthu eduththu*
èn oruvanāi * eyitiril thāngiyathum*
yān oruvan indrā* arikindeèn allèn* irunilaththaich*
chendrāngu adippaduththa sèi.

“Taking the beautiful form, going as a mendicant celibate, this small boy who measured this huge world, once took the form of a boar brought forth this whole earth from under the deluging waters holding it by His teeth. Only I alone did not know this fact until now.”

Azhwar says that while he learnt of this Vèdānta rahasya (the secret of vèdānta namely the substantive meaning of Vèdānta) only now, it has been known to all wise people for a long time.

தான் ஒருவன் ஆகி - The incomparable Vāmana . The matchless level for the Sausheelya, Saulabhya and Vatsalya gunas (ஸௌஸீல்ய, ஸௌஸல்⁴ய, வாத்ஸல்ய) of the Lord is manifested in His Vāmana Avatāra. The One who is the supreme Lord of all stood low and small in front of Mahabali. One who has no wants went as a mendicant celibate. When He took the Trivikrama form, He showered His grace on everyone by stroking gently with His lotus foot.

சென்று ஆங்கு - While the Lord could have gotten rid of Mahabali merely by His Will, instead He chose to visit him in person for the reason that Mahabali had one important guna which was charity.

இரு நிலத்தை அடிப்படுத்த சேய் - He measured this whole huge earth with His foot. This is an incomparable act.

In verse 26, āzhwār refers to this divine dwarf celebate along with Srī Krishna, the cowherd, Both avatāras bring out the beauty of the Lord and His easy accessibility to all without any distinction.

அறிந்து அறிந்து வாமனன் அடியிணை வணங்கினால்
செறிந்து எழுந்த ஞானமோடு செல்வமும் சிறந்திடும்
மறிந்து எழுந்த தெண் திரையுள் மன்னு மாலை வாழ்த்தினால்
பறிந்து எழுந்து தீவினைகள் பற்று அறுதல் பான்மையே

(TCV-74)

arindharindhu vāmanan* adiyinai vanangināl,*
cherinthezhuntha Jnānamōdu* selvamum siranthidum,*
marindhezhuntha thenthiraiyul* mannu mālai vāzhththināl,*
parindhezhunthu thīvinaikaL* patraruthal pānmaiye.

“If one were to worship the holy feet of the Lord Who came as the divine dwarf, with the understanding that they are the means and the goal, then true revealing knowledge and devotion will reach one in full measure. If one were to sing the glorious names of the loving Lord Who resides eternally in the ocean of milk with wide surging clear waves, then the effects of all unrighteous actions will leave one's “self ” along with their latent tendencies on their own accord quite naturally.”

Azhwar says that the grace of the Lord will reach one quite naturally if one were to hold the holy feet of Sri Vāmana as the sole refuge or sing the glorious names of the Lord of the ocean of milk.
வாமனன் அடியினை வணங்கினால் vāmanan* adiyinai vanangināl –

The Lord came in the form of the divine dwarf mendicant (SrīVāmana) to repossess what belonged to Him. We should seek His holy feet as the refuge.

அறிந்து அறிந்து arindharindhu - "understanding" mentioned twice to indicate that His holy feet are the goal as well as the means. (*"Upèyam and Upāyam" or "Prāpyam" and "Prāpakam"*)

செறிந்து எழுந்த ஞானம் cherinthu ezhuntha jnānam– true knowledge with reference to one's "ātma" which is revealing. True knowledge is that the "ātma" is the possession of the Lord and thus His servant-

செல்வம் chelvam – wealth - refers to the devotion that arises as a result of this true knowledge.

It is of interest to note here that in Thiruvāimozhi, Srī Nammāzhwār has a pathikam (decad) addressing Srī Vāmana

மாயா! வாமனனே! (TV-7-8)

த்ரிவிக்ரம Trivikrama avatāram.

This avataram is referred to by the āzhwār in many verses (NT- 9- 25- 58) and (TCV-26,32,66 and 109). Āzhwār also clearly indicates that the Supreme Lord eliminates the bad gunās of those with swollen head and Ego (like Mahābali and others).

குறைகொண்டு நான்முகன் குண்டிகை நீர் பெய்து
மறைகொண்ட மந்திரத்தால் வாழ்த்தி கறைகொண்ட
கண்டத்தான் சென்னிமேல் ஏறக் கழுவினான்
அண்டத்தான் சேவடியை ஆங்கு

(NT-9)

kuraikonda nānmukan* kundikainīr peythu*
maraikonda manthiraththāl vāzhththi* karaikonda
kandaththān* chennimēl èrak kazhuvinān*
andaththān cèvadiyai āngu

“Feeling incomplete the four-faced Brahma once washed the feet of the Lord of the Universe pouring water from his kamandal uttering benediction with the holy hymns and sprinkled the holy water on the head of Neelakanta.”

வகையால் மதியாது மண் கொண்டாய் மற்றும்
வகையால் வருவது ஒன்று உண்டே? வகையால்
வயிரம் குழைத்து உண்ணும் மாவலி தான் என்னும்
வயிர வழக்கு ஒழித்தாய் மற்று
vakaiyāl mathiyāthu* mankondāi* matrum
vakaiyāl* varuvathondrundè* vakaiyāl
vayiram kuzhaiththunnum* māvalithānn ennum*
vayira vazhakkozhiththāyi matru.

(NT-25)

“Without undue concern for means you repossessed the earth. Furthermore, such actions of yours have no personal gain. You destroyed the enmity of Mahabali who had a big ego and who by special means used to ingest diamond extract.”

சுருக்குவாரை இன்றியே சுருங்கினாய் சுருங்கியும்
பெருக்குவாரை இன்றியே பெருக்க மெய்து பெற்றியோய்
செருக்குவார்கள் தீக்குணங்கள் தீர்த்த தேவதேவன் என்று
இருக்கு வாய் முனிக் கணங்கள் ஏத்த யானும் ஏத்தினேன்
churukkuvārai indriyē churungkināi churungkiyum
perukkuvārai indriyē perukkaméythu petriyōi
cherukkuvārkal thīk gunangkal thīrththa déva dévanendru
irukkuvāi munik kanangkal éththa yānum éththinén. (109)

(TCV-109)

“By Thy nature, Thou became a Vāmana with no one inducing Thee to take a dwarf form and while still in that dwarf form, assumed the gigantic form of Trivikrama with no one inducing Thee to become so. Thus, the Vedas and the sages sang Thy glories as the Lord of all dēvās (Who measured all the three worlds as Trivikrama) as one Who eliminated the bad gunās of those with swollen head and big ego (like Mahābali and others). Seeing that, I also sang Thy glories.”

ஸ்ரீ ராம *Srī Rāma avatāram:*

Azhwār refers to this glorious avatāram in many verses in both of his works. (NT- 8, 28, 29, 53, 77,78 and 85). (TCV- 15,21,30,31,32,33,39, 49, 50, 51, 54, 73, 91, 93, 104,116)

The verses of interest from Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi, are shown below.

Azhwar addresses his mind and says that there is no other support for him except Sri Rama.

இலை துணை மற்று என் நெஞ்சே! ஈசனை வென்ற
சிலை கொண்ட செங்கண் மால் சேரா குலை கொண்ட
ஈர் ஐந்தலையான் இலங்கையை ஈடு அழித்த
கூர் அம்பன் அல்லால் குறை
ilāithunai matrennenjè* īsanai vendra*
siilaikonda chenkanmāl chērā* kulaikonda
īr ainthalaiyān* ilangaiyai īdazhiththa*
kūramban allāl kurai

(NT-8)

“O'mind, no other support is there at times of distress except the lotus eyed Lord with bow which won against Rudra and whose sharp arrows destroyed Lanka of the ten-headed Rakshasa who refused to yield.”

Azhwar visualizes directly all the deeds performed by the Lord in Srī Rama avatāram.

இது இலங்கை ஈடு அழியக் கட்டிய சேது
 இது விலங்கு வாலியை வீழ்த்தது இது இலங்கை
 தான் ஒடுங்க வில் நுடங்க தண் தார் இராவணனை
 ஊன் ஒடுங்க எய்தான் உகப்பு (NT- 28)
 ithuvilankai Idazhiyak* kattiya sèthu
 ithu vilanku vāliyai vīzhththathu* ithu ilankai
 thānodunka vil nudanka thun thār irāvananai
 ūn odunka aithān ukappu

“This bridge built to forewarn the doom of Lanka, this felling of animal Vāli, this destruction of Lanka, were all the sport of the One, who arched His bow "Sārnga" and shot the arrow that broke the back of the proud Rāvana, wearing a cool flower garland.”

In this next verse, Azhwar enjoys the most beautiful form of Lord Sri Rama who killed Kumbakarna, the enemy of his devotees.

உகப்பு உருவன் தானே ஒளி உருவன் தானே
 மகப்பு உருவன் தானே மதிக்கில் மிகப் புருவம்
 ஒன்றுக்கு ஒன்று ஓசனையான் வீழ் ஒரு கணையால்
 அன்றிக்கொண்டு எய்தான் அவன் (NT-29)
 ukappu ruvan thānè* oli uruvan thānè*
 makappu uruvan thānè mathikkil* mikap puruvam
 ondrukku ondru* ōsanaiyān vīzha* our kanaiyāl
 andrikkondu aithān avan.

“His is the form desired by all, the form all effulgent, His is the form most wonderful, if one were to think, the Lord who hit with one arrow in great anger at one with eyebrows spanning almost a mile from each other”

Azhwār, like Hanuman, declares in verse #53, that his mind will not think of anything other than Srī Rama.

கல்லாதவர் இலங்கை கட்டழித்த காசுத்தன்
 அல்லால் ஒரு தெய்வம் யான் இலேன் பொல்லாத
 தேவரை தேவர் அல்லாரை திருவில்லாத்
 தேவரைத் தேறேல்மின் தேவு (NT-53)
 kallāthavar* ilangai kattazhiththa* kākuththan
 allāl* oru theivam yān ilèn* pollātha
 thèvarai* thèvar allārai* thiru illāth
 thèvaraith* thèrèlmin thèvu.

“No one else is my Lord except Sri Kākustha who destroyed the ramparts of Lanka, which was abode to the ignorant demons. Do not consider as Lord those inauspicious of form and lacking divine qualities unworthy of adoration and those merely dēvās in name but have no connection whatsoever to Srī”.

In this verse #77, Azhwār refers to the special grace of the Lord.

தற்பு என்னைத் தான் அறியானேலும் தடங் கடலைக்
கல் கொண்டு தூர்த்த கடல் வண்ணன் எற்கொண்ட
வெவ்வினையும் நீங்க விலங்கா மனம் வைத்தான்
எவ் வினையும் மாயுமால் கண்டு

(NT-77)

tharpu ennaith* thān ariyānēlum* thadang kadalaik
karkoNdu* thūrththa kadal vannan* erkonda
vevvinaiyum nīnga * vilangā manam vaiththān*
evvinaiyum māyumāl kandu.

“Not recognizing my faults, the Lord who is blue like the ocean and Who built a bridge across the broad sea with rocks, mentally willed so that effects of all my bad karma would vanish and graced me so His heart would never turn away from me. What a wonder, all bad karma would vanish.”

In this verse, Azhwār describes the special grace that the Lord has showered on him

கண்டு வணங்கினார்க்கு என்னாம்கொல் காமன் உடல்
கொண்ட தவத்தாற்கு உமை உணர்த்த வண்டு அலம்பும்
தார் அலங்கல் நீள் முடியான் தன் பெயரே கேட்டிருந்து அங்கு
ஆர் அலங்கல் ஆனமையால் ஆய்ந்து?

(NT-78)

kandu vanangnārkkku* ennāmkol* kāman udal
konda* thavaththārku umaiyunarththa* vandu alambum
thār alangal nīl mudiyān* thun peyarè kèttirunthu* angu
ār alangal ānamaiyāl āindhu

“What will happen to those who get to worship Him directly, considering the exhilaration felt by the one who once reduced cupid to ashes by his penance, on listening to Uma recite the glorious name of the Lord with the long crown covered with flowers swarming with bees?”

This refers to an incident when Uma once asked Siva as to which deity that he was meditating on during his tapas,

கம் த்வம் அர்ச்சயஸே தே³வ (kam tvam archchayasè dēva)

Uma apparently was singing the Lord's names sweetly and asking these questions. On hearing the Lord's names, Siva became extremely pleased. The exhilaration that he felt just listening to the Lord's names is what Azhwar refers to, in this verse. In Srī Vishnu Sahasranāma Adhyāyam, in the “phalasaruti” part, we all are familiar with the famous question of divine mother Parvathi and the answer given by Lord Siva.

தொழில் எனக்குத் தொல்லை மால் தன் நாமம் ஏத்த

பொழுது எனக்கு மற்று அதுவே போதும் கழி சினத்த
வல்லாளன் வானரக் கோன் வாலி மதன் அழித்த
வில்லாளன் நெஞ்சத்து உளன்
thozhil enakkuth* thollai māḷ_ thun nāmam yēththa*
pozhuthu enaku matru athuvè pōthum* kazhi sinaththa
vallālan* vānarakkōn vāli mathan azhiththa*
villālan nenjaththu ulan. 85

(NT-85)

“My main avocation is to sing the glorious names of that ancient Lord for me that alone is enough to spend the time. The great archer Lord Rama who vanquished the pride of the mighty and angry monkey king Vali, has graced me by residing in my heart”.

In this beautiful verse (#85), Azhwar says that all his time is spent in recalling the beautiful story of Sri Rama and His valiant deeds and that he has hardly any time left for anything else.

We will refer next to the verses of interest from Thirucchanda viruttam.
(TCV 15,21,30,31,32,33,39, 49, 50, 51, 54, 73, 91, 93, 104,116)

வானகமும் மண்ணகமும் வெற்புமேழ்கடல்களும்
போனகம் செய்ததாலிலைத் துயின்ற புண்டரீகனே
தேனகஞ்செய் தண்ணறு மலர்த்துழாய் நன் மாலையாய்
கூனகம் புகத்தெறித்த கொற்றவில்லி அல்லையே?
vānakamum mannakamum verpumézh kadalkalum
pōnakam seythālilaith thuyindra pundareekané
thēnakajnchey thannaru malar thuzhāy nan mālaiyāy
koonakam pukaththeriththa kotra villi allaiyé

(TCV-30).

“O' the lotus eyed Lord! Thou as a child reposed on the tender banyan leaf after ingesting the heavens and the earth along with its seven mountains and the seven seas. O'Lord adorned by nice fragrant garland of freshly blossomed cool Tulasi flowers full of honey! Art not Thou the Lord with the victorious bow, who straightened the hump of the hunchback using the toy bow.”

கூனகம் புகத்தெறித்த koonakam pukaththeriththa – straightened the hump of the hunchback internally, with the children's play bow.

Here Sri Periyavāchchān Pillai refers to Kooni (the hunch back maid of Queen Kaikéyi) who figures in Sri Ramavatāra. This refers to the incident in Sri Ramavatāra, when as a child in a playful way Sri Rama hits Kooni with his play bow. Kooni is supposed to have been upset at this and that is the reason given why Kooni turns against Sri Rama and stops His coronation and poisons the mind of Queen Kaikeyi and induces her to ask for the boon from King Dasaratha resulting in His exile. Sri Periyavāchchān Pillai observes that even this playful act during this avatāra results ultimately to the destruction of all the demons including Ravana and to the protection of the world.

In the Achārya's own words, "ரக்ஷகவஸ்துவானால் அதிலுள்ளதெல்லாம் ரக்ஷகமாயிரேயிருப்பது rakshakavastuvānāl athilullathellām rakshakamāyiré iruppathu"- **"If the entity is the real shelter, then everything in It is protective"**.

மின் நிறத்தெயிற்றரக்கன் வீழ் வெஞ்சரம் துரந்து
பின்னவர்கருள் புரிந்து அரசளித்த பெற்றியோய்
நன்னிறத்தொரின்கொல் ஏழைபின்னைகேள்வ மன்னுசீர்ப்
பொன்னிறத்த வண்ணனாய புண்டரீகனல்லையே?
minniraththeyittrarakkan vīzha vencharam thuranthau,
pinnavarku arul purinthu arasaliththa petriyōy
nanniraththor insolézhai pinnai kélva! mannuseer
ponniraththa vannanāya pundareekan allaiyé?

(TCV-33)

"Thou art of fair and just nature. Thou made the demon king Rāvana with teeth as white as the lightning to fall by discharging the fiery missiles and bestowed with compassion the kingdom to his brother Vibhishana. Thou art the darling of Sri NappinaiPirātti who has the most beautiful complexion, incomparable sweet words and who is ever attached to Thee. Thou art Pundarikaksha, with the auspicious eternal desirable gold like attributes."

ஸோஅஹம் பருஷிதஸ்தேந தா³ஸவச்சாவமாநித:
த்யக்த்வா புத்ராம்ஸ்ச தா³ராம்ஸ்ச ராக⁴வம் ஸரணம் க³த:
so aham parushitas téna dāsavac cāvamānitaha |
tyaktvā putrāmśca dārāmśca rāghavamsharanamgataha ||
(Sṛīmad Ramayanam YuddhaKāndam 17-16)

"Abandoning my sons and wife, when spoken to harshly and treated with disrespect like a slave by him, though wishing him well, I have sought Sri Rama (scion of Raghu) as my refuge"

வத்⁴யதாம் ப³த்⁴யதாமபி vadhyatām badhyatāmapi-

"This Vibhishana be beaten and bound " is what Sugreeva and other Vānara chiefs advised.

மித்ரபா³வேந ஸம்ப்ராப்தம் ந த்யஜேயம் கத²ஞ்சந
தோ³ஷோயத்³யபிதஸ்யஸ்யாத் ஸதாமேத த³க³ர்ஹிதம்
mitra bhāvēna samprāptam na tyajéyam kathajncana |
dosho yadi api tasya syāt satām etad agarhitam ||
(Sṛīmad Ramayanam Yuddhakāndam 18-3)

"I can not refuse to receive under any circumstances him who has come to me in a friendly spirit. Even if there is any wickedness in him, his acceptance is not reprehensible in the eyes of good people"

ஸக்ருதே³வ ப்ரபந்நாய தவாஸ்மீதி ச யாசதே
அப⁴யம் ஸர்வபு⁴தேப⁴யோ த³தா³ம்யேதத் வ்ரதம் மம
sakrid éva prapannāya tava asmi iti ca yācate |
abhayam sarva bhuutebhyo dadāmi étad vratam mama||
(Sṛīmad Ramayanam Yuddha Kāndam 18-33)

"I vouchsafe security against all living beings to him who comes to me only once and seeks protection (from me) saying " I am yours", such is my vow".

கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனுலாவு கூனிகூன்
உண்டைகொண்டரங்கவோட்டி உள்மகிழ்ந்த நாதனார்
kondai konda kōthai meethu thēnulāvu kooni koon
undai kondu arangka vōtti ulmahizhnhā nāthanoor

(TCV-49)

“The place of residence of Lord Rama, who rejoiced in throwing a soft arrow from a toy bow to straighten the hunched back of Mantara, with hairlocks adorned by flower garlands hovering with honeybees, is no doubt Thiruvaramam”

கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனுலாவு கூனி கூன் -
kondai konda kōthai meethu thēnulāvu kooni koon

Kooni (Mantara) was the maid of Queen Kaikeyi. She was referred to as Kooni since she had a hunched back. Kooni refers philosophically to all embodied (புத்த³த⁴ baddha) jeevas. The hunched back கூன் (koon) refers to the defect of the embodied jeeva whereby it mistakenly identifies itself with the physical body. Azhwar reminds here of the ego or Ahamkāram whereby one considers oneself as " I am dēva, I am man " creating a false notion of the Self. The real nature of the jeeva however is blemishless and quite attractive to the Lord as indicated by "கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனுலாவு kondai konda kōthai meethu thēnulāvu " (with hairlocks adorned by garland of flowers hovering with honey bees).

உண்டைகொண்டரங்கவோட்டி undai kondu arangka vōtti - The playful act of Lord Rama (throwing a soft arrow from the toy bow to straighten the hunched back of Mantara) refers to the great power of the Lord which can eliminate the ego of the jeevas easily as in playing.

உள்மகிழ்ந்த நாதன் ulmahizhnhā nāthan - The Lord also rejoices in removing the defect (ahamkāram) of His devotees.

மரம் பொதச் சரம் துரந்து வாலி வீழ முன்னோர்நாள்
உரம் பொதச் சரம் துரந்த உம்பராளி எம்பிரான்
வரம் குறிப்பில் வைத்தவர்க்கலாது வானமாளிலும்
நிரம்பு நீடுபோகம் எத்திறத்தும் யார்க்கும் இல்லையே

(TCV-73)

maram podha charam thuranthu vāli veezha munnōr nāl,
uram podhachcha charam thurantha umparāli empirān,
varam kurippil vaiththavarkkalāthu vānam ālilum,
nirampu needu pōkam eththiraththum yārkkum illaiyé.

“Undiminished eternal bliss of service will be possible for no one even if they were the rulers of the heavenly worlds, unless they are the recipients of the grace of our Lord, the Master of the Nityasuris, who as the divine son of the emperor (Dasaratha), in the by gone age of the Trèta yuga, discharged the arrow that pierced the seven large trees at once and made (the mighty Vānara king) Vali fall by piercing his chest with another arrow.”

ஊனின்மேய ஆவி நீ உறக்கமோடுணர்ச்சி நீ
ஆனின்மேய ஐந்துநீ அவற்றுள் நின்ற தூய்மை நீ

வானினோடு மண்ணூநீ யானூநீயதன்றி
எம்பிரானும் நீ இராமனே
oonin méya āvi nee urakkamōdu unarchchi nee
ānin méya aintu nee avatrul nindra thoymai nee
vāninōdu mannum nee valang kadar payanum nee
yānum nee adhandri empirānum nee irāmané

(TCV-94)

“Thou art the five vital airs in the body. Both sleep and wakefulness are under Thy command. The five purifying substances originating from the cows and their purifying quality are under Thy control. The eternal abode and the mundane world are under Thy will. Thou art the source of the various useful and precious things contained in the ocean. Also myself, who is bound in this samsāra is Thy possession. Furthermore, O’ Sri Rama! Thou art our benefactor.”

மாறுசெய்த வாளரக்கன் நாளூலப்ப அன்றிலங்கை
நீறுசெய்து சென்றுகொன்று வென்றிகொண்ட வீரனார்
வேறுசெய்து தம்முள்ளென்னை வைத்திடாமையால் நமன்
கூறுசெய்து கொண்டிறந்த குற்றமெண்ண வல்லனே
māru cheytha vālarakkan nālulappa andrilangkai
neeru cheythu chendru kondru vendri konda veeranār
véru cheythu thammul ennai vaiththidāmaiyaḷ naman
kooru cheythu kondirantha kutram enna vallané. (116)

(TCV-116)

“Is Yama capable of even counting the unexhausted karmas, separating me from Lord Sri Rama, Who has not considered me (who has sought His sole refuge), different from Himself- the valiant and the victorious Lord who at the time when the demon Ravana with the sword, opposed Him (and separated Him from Sri Seetha), terminated his life by invading Lanka with the army of monkeys, reducing it to ashes and killing Ravana along with all his relatives?”

ஸ்ரீ க்ருஷ்ண Srī Krishna avatāram:

Azhwār refers to this avatāram in many of his verses in both of the prabhandhams (NT-16,24,32,33,74,83,87,93; TCV- 13,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,43, 47, 52, 53, 70, 71, 80, 86, 89, 92, 99, 106, 107,111)

We will refer to some of these verses here. TCV-Verses 52 and 53 are in reference to the Lord of Srirangam. Azhwār identifies the Supreme Lord (Parabrahman) very early in his Thirucchanda viruttam as no other than Srī Krishna whom Azhwār fondly refers to as the consort of Srī Nappinnai Pirāttiār.

இன்னையென்றுசொல்லலாவதுஇல்லையாதுமிட்டிடை
பின்னைகேள்வனென்பர் உன்பிணக்குஉணர்ந்தபெற்றியோர்
பின்னையாய கோலமோடு பேருமூருமாதியும்
நின்னையார்நினைக்கவல்லர்நீர்மையால்நினைக்கிலே?
innai yendru sollalāvadhu illaiyādhum ittidai

(TCV-13)

pinnai kélvan enbar un pinakkunarnthā petriyōr
pinnai āya kōlamōdu pērum oorum ādhiyum,
ninnai yār ninaikka vallar neermaiyaḷ ninaikkilē! (13)

“To state that Thou art of such and such nature is not possible. The enlightened sages who understand the argument between Thy devotees and the non-devotees would state that Thou art the beloved of Nappinnai with the slender waist. When Thou do take birth along with the rest and yet remain different with the most beautiful and divine form, it will be impossible to understand Thee, thy auspicious names, the glories of Thy birth place and the underlying transcendental form, by any self effort unless revealed by Thy accessible nature.”

இட்டிடை பின்னை கேள்வன் என்பர் ittidai pinnai kélvan enbar –

slender waisted Nappinnai Pirātti's beloved. (Nappinnai was Sri Neela Devi's incarnation during Sri Krishna's Avatāram. She was the daughter of Kumban, brother of Yashoda and brother-in-law of Sri Nanda Gopa, the chieftain of the cowherds).

Azhwār refers to **Srī Krishna as பின்னை கேள்வன்** and refers to this Thirunāmam in verses 33 and 99 in TCV and when he performs his śaranāgati he does so invoking Srī Nappinnai Pirāttiār (TCV – 92).

Azhwār refers to the leelās (the sporting deeds) of Srī Krishna in many of the verses. Verse # 33 in NT, and TCV verses 36,37,38,39, 40, 41, 43, 70, 71, 80, 86, 89, 106, 107 and 111. Verses # 70 and 71 refer to Bānāsura's story. Verse #33 in NT reminds of a similar verse (#54) of Sri Poikai Pirān from Mudhal Thiruvandhādi.

அடிச்சகடம் சாடி அரவாட்டி யானை
பிடித்தொசித்து பேய்முலை நஞ்சுண்டு வடிப்பவள
வாய்ப்பின்னை தோளிக்கா வல்லேற்று எருத்திறுத்து
கோப்பின்னுமானான் குறிப்பு

(NT-33)

adichchagadam chādi* aravātti* yānai
pidiththosiththu* peimulai nanjundu* vadippavala
vāippinnai thōlikkā* vallètru eruththiruththu*
kōppinnu mānān kurippu.

“He kicked Sakata with His holy feet, made the serpent dance, broke the tusk of the elephant, drank the poison off the breasts of the ogress and for the sake of Nappinnai with coral-like lips and beautiful shoulders broke the horns of the wild bulls and by His will became the Lord.”

வெற்பெடுத்து வேலை-நீர் கலக்கினாயதன்றியும்
வெற்பெடுத்து வேலை நீர் வரம்புகட்டிவேலைசூழ்
வெற்பெடுத்த இஞ்சிசூழ் இலங்கை கட்டழித்த நீ
வெற்பெடுத்து மாரிகாத்த மேகவண்ணனல்லையே?
verpeduththu vélai neer kalakkināy adhandriyum,
verpeduththu vélai neer varambu katti vélai soozh,

(TC-39)

verpeduththa ijnchi soozh ilangkai kattazhiththa nee
verpeduththu māri kāththa mégha vannan allaiyé!

“Thou churned the ocean waters with Mandara mountain. Using the mountain rocks with the help of the monkeys, Thou built a bridge over the sea and destroyed the fortress of Lanka and its ramparts, located on the Trikuta hills surrounded by the moat of sea waters. Art not Thou the same Lord with the hue of the dark clouds, Who protected the cowherds from the heavy rains by lifting the Govardhana hill?”

ஆனைகாத்தோராணைகொன்று அதன்றி ஆயர்பிள்ளையாய்
ஆனைமேய்த்தியாநெயுண்டி அன்று குன்றமொன்றினால்
ஆனை காத்து மையரிக் கண் மாதரார் திறத்து முன்
ஆனையன்று சென்றடர்த்த மாயமென்ன மாயமே

(TCV-40)

ānai kāththōr ānaikondru adhandri āyar pillaiyāy,
ānaiméyththi ānaiyundi andru kundramondrināl,
ānai kāththu maiyarikkan mātharār thiraththu mun
ānaiyandru sendradarththa māyamenna māyamé?

“Thou protected Gajendra. As the son of the cowherd clan, killed the mighty elephant Kunalayāpeeda, tended the cows, ate the clarified butter made from the cows' milk and at the time when Indra released the heavy hailstorm, thou sheltered the cows using the nearby hill. What a wonder that was, once for the sake of Sri Nappinnai Pirātti with beautiful eyes and eye lashes decorated with collyrium, right in her presence Thou killed the seven bulls”

வெஞ்சினத்த வேழ வெண் மருப்பு ஓசித்துருத்தமா
கஞ்சனைக் கடிந்து மண்ணளந்துகொண்ட காலனே
வஞ்சனத்து வந்த பேய்ச்சி ஆவிபாலுள் வாங்கினாய்
அஞ்சனத்த வண்ணனாய ஆதிதேவன் அல்லையே?
vejnchinaththa vézhaven maruppu osiththuruththamā
kajnchanai kadinthau mannananthu konda kālané
vajnchanaththu vanthā péychchi āvi pālul vānggināy
ajnchanaththa vannanāya āthi dhévan allaiyé?

(TC-43)

“Art not Thou the shining ancient cause, the dark hued Lord whose holy feet measured the earth and who broke the white tusks of the horrific mad elephant Kunalayāpeeda, destroyed the angry and mighty Kamsa and took the life along with the milk of the deceitful ogress Pūtana?”

கறுத்தெதிர்ந்தகாலநேமி காலனோடுகூடஅன்
றறுத்தவாழிசங்குதண்டு வில்லும்வாளுமேந்தினாய்
தொறுக்கலந்த ஊனம்து ஒழிக்கவன்று குன்றமுன்
பொறுத்தநின்புகழ்க்கலாலோர் நேசமில்லைநெஞ்சமே
karuththethirnththa kāla némi kālanōdu kooda andru
aruththa āzhi changku thandu villum vālum énthināy
thorukkalantha oonamaqthu ozhikka andru kundram mun
poruththa nin pukazhkkalāl ōr nésam illai nejnchamé (106)

(TC-106)

“Thou bear the discus that severed the head of the enraged demon Kālanēmi, who came to combat, dispatching him to join Yama, at that time (when the dēvas faced the threat from him), along with the other divine weapons like the conch, the mace, the bow and the sword. My heart has no love for anything other than Thine protective guna with which once previously Thou bore the Govardhana mountain in order to eliminate the danger faced by the cows, before any harm was caused.”

தொறுக்கலந்த ஊனம்து ஒழிக்கவன்று குன்றமுன்
பொறுத்தநின்புகழ்க்கலாலோர் நேசமில்லைநெஞ்சமே

All of the azhwars including Srī Andāl refer to this as the most important and desired attribute of the Lord.

Azhwār also points out that “good time” is when we dwell on the auspicious qualities of the Lord.

கதைப் பொருள் தான் கண்ணன் திருவயிற்றினுள்ள
உதைப்பளவு போதுபோக்கின்றி வதைப்பொருள் தான்
வாய்ந்த குணத்துப் படாததடைமினோ
ஆய்ந்த குணத்தான் அடி

(NT-32)

kathaipporuLthān* kannan thiruvayitrinullal
uthaippalavu pōthupōkkindri* vathaip poruLthān
vāyntha gunaththup* padāthathadaiminō
ayntha gunaththān adi

“Ithihasapuranas and Smrithis describe Lord Krishna's will. To spend even a moment in other things without dwelling on the Lord's auspicious qualities is only harmful. Fall at the holy feet of the ever-glorious Lord.”

iii. Azhwār on Srī Krishna, the Jagat Achāryan:

Azhwār’s verses with regard to Srī Krishna being the Jagat Achāryan and the substantive meaning of the charama slōkams of Gītā are of special interest. The verses of interest are **NT-50, 71, 72.**

கூற்றமும் சாரா கொடு வினையும் சாரா தீ
மாற்றமும் சாரா வகை அறிந்தேன் ஆற்றங்
கரை கிடக்கும் கண்ணன் கடல் கிடக்கும் மாயன்
உரை கிடக்கும் உள்ளத்தெனக்கு

(NT-50)

kootramum sārā* koduvinaiyum sārā*
thī mātramum* sārā vagaiyarindhēn*
ārangkarai kidakkum* kannan kadalkidakkum*
māyan uraikkidakkum* ullaththenakku.

“I understood the way so fear from death will not arise in me and results of sinful actions and ill name will not follow me since the words of the wonderful Lord Krishna, are firmly embedded in my mind, the Lord who reposes on the ocean and on the banks of the river.”

The divya dēśam referred to in this verse is Kapisthalam, where the Lord is in reposing position on Adhi Sēsha. It is on the banks of a tributary branch of the river Cauvery. The *charama ślōkam*, of Srī Krishna in Gīta is what Azhwār refers to here.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्या म मा शुचः ॥ १८-६६॥

ஸர்வத⁴ர்மான்பரித்யஜ்ய மாமேகம்' ஸரணம்' வ்ரஜ .

அஹம்' த்வா ஸர்வபாபேப்⁴யோ மோக்ஷயிஷ்யாமி மா ஸாச: (Bhagavat Gītā 18-66)

sarvadharmānparityajya māmekam' sharanam' vraja .

aham' tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokshayishyāmi mā shuchah'

“Discarding all other means take me as your sole refuge and I shall liberate you from all sins and do not grieve”

சேயன் அணியன் சிறியன் மிகப் பெரியன்

ஆயன் துவரைக் கோனாய் நின்ற மாயன் அன்று

ஓதிய வாக்கதனைக் கல்லார் உலகத்தில்

ஏதிலராம் மெய்ஞ் ஞானம் இல்

(NT-71)

sēyan aniyān* siriyan migapperiyan*

āyan thuvaraikkōnāy* nindra māyan* andru

ōthiya* vākkathanaik kallār* ulagaththil

ēthilarām mei jnānamil.

“Unfathomable and yet easily accessible, small but yet great is the Lord, Who born as a cowherd became the great king of Dwāraka. He taught then those words which many in this world have not learnt and remain without true " knowledge " considering Him as their enemy”.

Azhwar asks, "Why talk of not knowing Him rescuing this earth from under the deluging waters? Do we know the words that He gave in order to rescue us from the deluge of this cycle of birth and death (samsāra)?"

சேயன் மிகப் பெரியன் -

"unreachable and very great"

யதோ வாசோ நிவர்த்தந்தே அப்ராப்ய மநஸா ஸஹ

(Taitthiria Upanishad Anāndavalli)."Yato Vachō Nivartantè"- "Where mind and words can not reach" - unfathomable to even Brahma and other dēvās.

அணியன் - easily accessible to those who love Him.

சிறியன் - because of His compassion, He chooses to become very easily available to His devotees and comes in many humble and lowly forms such as taking birth in a cowherd's family.

ஆயன் துவரைக் கோனாய் நின்ற மாயன் āyan thuvaraikkōnāy* nindra māyan - cowherd boy who stood as the king of Dwāraka.

Sri Periyavācchān Pillai refers to two examples of His saulbhya guna. Although unreachable and very great, he came as the cowherd boy and stood as the Lord of Dwāraka. Srī Krishna wanted also Bheemasēna (the second of the Pandavas) to achieve glory. He arranged so that Bheema could kill Jarāsandha, the demon king in a duel. In order, for this to happen Krishna let Himself defeated by Jarāsandha and hid away from him by staying in Dwāraka.

It is of interest to note that we find the same terms being used by Srī Nammāzhwār and Thirumangai āzhwār in their prabhandhams.

Srī Nammāzhwār uses the same terms, “சேயன் அணியன் “ in his Thiruvāimozhi 1-9-6

மாயன் என்னெஞ்சின் உள்ளான் மற்றும் எவர்க்கும் அஃதே,
காயமும் சீவனும் தானே காலும் எரியும் அவனே,
சேயன் அணியன் எவர்க்கும் சிந்தைக்கும் கோசரமல்லன்,
தூயன் தூயக்கன் மயக்கன் என்னுடைத் தோளிணை யானே. (TV-1-9-6)

Sri Thirumangai āzhwār uses the same words also in his *pathikams* (decads of verses) on Thiruvēṅkatamudaiyān (Periya Thirumozhi 1-10-8 and 2-1-8) as well as in his *Pathikam* on Srirangam (5-4-9). We will give here one of those verses Periya Thirumozhi 1-10-8

சேயன், அணியன், என சிந்தையுள் நின்ற
மாயன், மணி வாள், ஒளி வெண் தரளங்கள்
வேய் விண்டு உதிர் வேங்கட மா மலை மேய
ஆயன் அடி அல்லது, மற்று அறியேனே. (Periya Thirumozhi 1-10-8)

மாயன் அன்று ஓதிய வாக்கதனைக் கல்லார் -

Refers to the Lord who taught Arjuna at the time of Maha Bharatha war those words - refers to the *charamaślōkam* சரமஸ்லோகம் - referred to above.

In the very next verse (NT-72), Azhwār gives the true meaning of the *charamaślōkam*

இல்லறமில்லேல் துறவறமில்லென்னும்
சொல் அறம் அல்லனவும் சொல் அல்ல நல்லற
மாவனவும் நால் வேத மாத்தவமும் நாரணனே
யாவதீதன்றென்பார் ஆர்? (NT-72)

illaram illèl* thuravaramil' ennum*
sol aram allanavum* sol alla*nallara
māvanavum* nālvèdha māththavamum* nārananè
yāvathu ithandru enbār ār?

“Statements proclaiming the path of action suited for the householders, the path of knowledge for those who want to renounce and the other paths such as those of devotion to be the means for liberation are not truly valid. For these good paths as well as the paths stressed in the vèdas bear fruit only through the grace of Narayana. Who can refute this truth?”.

In this verse, Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān describes the meaning of the Charamaśloka of Gīta (the final and most definitive instruction of Lord Krishna in Srimad Bhagavat Gīta forming the last śloka in the discourse). [This verse also is like a charamaśloka for this Thiruvandhādhī](#) as stated by Achārya in his commentary.

இல்- This refers to house and also "way " or "means" to achieve.

உபாயே க்³ருஹ ரக்ஷித்ரோ: ஶப்³த³: ஶரணமித்யயம் வர்த்ததே -

In describing words "means", "house" and "Protector" ஶரண is used. By this rule the word இல் is taken to indicate or the way or means.

இல் என்னும் சொல் சொல் அல்ல - Statements which claim these to be the means are not truly valid. This phrase is combined with others such as இல்லறம் துறவறம் அல்லன அறம் to get the respective meaning.

இல்லறம் இல் என்னும் சொல் சொல் அல்ல - The statements which claim validity for karma yoga (path of action) suited for the householders as the means for achieving Mōksha or liberation are not truly valid. Several verses can be quoted from Geetha Karma Yōga all of which claim that Karma Yoga is a good means for obtaining Mōksha.

அஸக்தோ ஹ்யாசரன்கர்ம பரமாப்னோதி பூருஷ:

asaktō hyācharankarma paramāpnoti pūrushah' (Gītā 3-19)

“person carrying out actions without attachment obtains His great Self

துறவறம் இல் என்னும் சொல் சொல் அல்ல- The statements which claim the path of knowledge (Jnāna Yōga) to be a useful means to obtain Mōksha are not truly valid.

துறவறம் - means the path of knowledge since it requires to renounce action.

யதை²தா⁴ம்'ஸி ஸமித்³தோ⁴(அ)க்³நிர்⁴ப⁴ஸ்மஸாத்தகுருதே(அ)ர்ஜுன .

ஜ்ஞாநாக்³னி: ஸர்வகர்மாணி ப⁴ஸ்மஸாத்தகுருதே ததா² (Gītā 4-37)

yathaidhām'si samiddhō'gnirbhasmasātkurute' rjuna .

jñānāgnih' sarvakarmāni bhasmasātkurutè tathā

"Just as burning fire reduces logs of wood into ashes, similarly the fire of knowledge burns all actions into ashes."

அல்லன அறம் இல் என்னும் சொல் சொல் அல்ல-

Refers to the other paths such as those of devotion (Bhakti), Nāmasamkeerthana (singing the names of the Lord) which are stressed in the Itihāsās and Purānās.

ப⁴க்த்யா த்வனன்யயா ஶக்ய bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya (Gītā 11-54)

Azhwar points out that Karma, Jnāna and Bhakti yōgas are not the direct means to obtain Mōksha unless the results of these practices are conferred by the Lord. Thus, ultimately what gives the results is the true உபாயம் or "the way or means".

Thus, the true means for obtaining Mōksha is Srīman Narayana who alone can bestow the same. நல்லறம் ஆவனவும் - refers to action carried out with no desire for results. This includes Nāmasamkeertana.

நால் வேதம் மா தவமும் - Karma yoga stressed in the Vedas and Jnāna and Bhakti stressed in the vedānta namely the Upanishads

நாரணனே - He Who is the abode and destiny of all Narasamūhas or sentient forms, alone is the means. If He showers His grace, then one does not need anything else.

ஈது அன்று என்பார் ஆர்? Who would refute this truth?

That the Lord is the way, is indicated in vēdas, upanishads, Itihāsās and in sayings of rishis, saints and other Azhwars.

நாராயணம் .. பராயணம்

ராமோ விக்³ரவாந் த⁴ர்ம: Ramō vighrahavān dharmaha (Sṛīmad Rāmāyanam - Aranya Kādam 37-13)

க்ருஷ்ணம் த⁴ர்மம் ஸநாதநம் (Mahābhāratham- Vana- 71-123)

மாமேகம் ஸரணம் வ்ரஜ (Gītā)

நெறி வாசல் தானேயாய் நின்றானை (Sṛī Poikai Pirān)

நாராயணனே நமக்கே பறை தருவான் (Thiruppāvai)

As to how, this verse indicates the charamaślōkam of Gītā is given by Sri Appillai

In this verse the words,

"அறம் அல்லனவும் சொல் அல்ல" gives the meaning of ஸர்வத⁴ர்மான்பரித்யஜ்ய

Giving up all Dharmas,

the word நாரணனே indicates the words “மாம்” “அஹம்”, and the "ஏகாரம்" indicates the word "ஏகம்"- "alone".

iv. Azhwār and the Archāvatārams:

Azhwār’s interaction with Archāvatāra mūrthies and how they responded to him physically are well known and described in guru Parampara vaibhavam of the āzhwār. Two divya dēsams which stand out in this respect are of course Thiruvekha and Thirukkudanthai. சொன்னவண்ணம்செய்த பெருமாள் Yathōktha kārī in Thiruvekha and Arāmudhanāzhwān in Thirukkudanthai stand as witness to āzhwār’s exalted love of the Lord.

The verses which refer to Archāvatāra mūrthies in Azhwār’s works are the following:

In Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi, Thirukkōttiyur in NT-34, Thiruvallikēni in NT- 35, Thirukkudanthai, Thiruvekha, Thiruvevvul and Thiruvarangam (Sṛīrangam) in verse NT-36, NT-60, Thiruvēkatam in NT- 39 through to 48, Kapisthalam in NT- 50

In Thirucchanda viruttam, Srirangam is referred to in verse 21, 49, 50 through 55,62,64 93, and 119, Thirukkudanthai in verses 56 through 61, Thirukkurungudi in verse 62, Thiruppādakam, Thiru ūrakam and Thiruvekha in verse 63 and 64 and Thiruvēkatam in verse 84.

Azhwār’s heart goes out to the Lord resting on His serpent bed of Adhi Sèsha. The verse in NT-35 is like the one on Arāamudha peruamāl in Thirukkudanthai (TCV- 61).

நடந்தகால்கள்நொந்தவோ நடுங்க ஞாலமேனமாய்
இடந்தமெய்குலுங்கவோ விலங்குமால்வரைச் சுரம்
கடந்தகால்பரந்த காவிரிக்கரைக் குடந்தையுள்
கிடந்தவாறெழுந்திருந்துபேசுவாழிகேசனே
nadanthā kālkal nonthāvō nadungka jnālaménamāi
idanthā mey kulungkavō vilangkumāl varaichchuram
kadantha kāl paranthā Kāviri karai kudanthāiyul
kidanthāvāru ezhunthairunthau pésu vāzhi késané!

(TCV-61).

“Did Thy feet which walked all over the forests (as Sri Rama) ache? Did Thy body feel exhausted having lifted the earth as the divine boar? O'Lord Késhava! Please get up and pray tell the reason why Thou repose in Thirukkudanthai on the banks of river Cauvery with wide torrential flow overcoming all obstructions caused by huge hills and forests. Let all be auspicious to Thee”.

In this verse, on Thirukkudanthai, Azhwār actually expresses “திருப்பல்லாண்டு வாழ்த்துக்கள்” (வாழிகேசனே vāzhi késané!)

தாளால் உலகம் அளந்த அசைவேகொல்?
வாளா கிடந்தருளும் வாய்திறவான் நீள் ஓதம்
வந்து அலைக்கும் மா மயிலை மாவல்லிக் கேணியான்
ஐந்தலை வாய் நாகத்தணை
thālāl ulagam* alandha asaivèkol*
vāLākidandharuLum* vāythiravān* nīlōdham
vandhalaikkum māmayilai* māvallikkèniyān*
aindhalaiāy nāgaththanai? 35

(NT-35)

“Perhaps tired from measuring the world with His holy feet, not uttering a word and lying still, on the bed formed by the serpent with five heads and mouths is the Lord residing at Thiruvallikèni near the great Mylai where large waves of the ocean strike the shore”.

In this verse, Azhwar's heart goes out for the Lord Himself. Azhwar fears that the reason that the Lord has chosen to reside and lie down on his serpent bed in Thiruvallikèni near the seashore is because of His physical tiredness due to His deeds during the Trivikrama avatāram when He measured this world. Azhwar feels that the Lord is tired and this is perhaps why He is lying still and not even uttering a word.

நாகத்தணைக் குடந்தை வெஃகா திரு எவ்வுள்
நாகத்தணை அரங்கம் பேர் அன்பில் நாகத்த
தணைப் பாற்கடல் கிடக்கும் ஆதி நெடுமால்
அணைப்பார் கருத்தன் ஆவான்

(NT-36)

Nāgaththanaik kudandhai* vekhā thiruvevvul*
Nāgaththanai arangam pèranbil* nāgath
thanaip pārkadal kidakkum* ādhi nedumāl*
anaippār karuththan āvān.

“On the serpent bed in Thirukkudanthai, ThiruVekhā and Thiruvevvul, on the serpent again in Thiruvarangam, Thiruppèr, Thiruanbil and on ādhiSèsha in the ocean of milk lies the ancient cause, the loving Lord with the sole intention to get into the minds of His devotees”.

v. Azhwār and Thiruvèkatham:

Azhwār’s verses on Thiruvèkatham are 10 among 96 verses of NT and one in TCV. Azhwar refers to the festival of Thiru-ōnam in verse #41, describes that both Brahma and Siva do kaimkaryam offering lotus flowers to the divine feet of the Lord and carrying umbrellas decked in pearls (verses 42 and 43). Azhwār also refers to the ancient incident that was revealed to only to the azhwars not described in any purānās in which aeons ago, taking the form of a child lying on the lap of Brahma, Srīman Nārāyana counted the ten heads of the demon Rāvana, as he was receiving his boons. Azhwār points out further that the same Srīman Nārāyana has come to reside on the holy hills of Thiruvèkatham (verse 44). Azhwār describes the natural beauty of the kshètram and the peaceful and sātvic nature of all beings resident on the holy hills (verses 46 and 47). Azhwār urges all of us to go and worship the great peaks of Thiruvèkatham. The verse in which Azhwār describes his desire to go and see this special divya dèsam referring also to the utsavam of Thiruvōnam (NT-41) is of interest. The Brahmotsavam in the holy hills must have been in practice from the ancient times. The concluding verse on this divya dèsam from NT namely verse #48 and a special one from TCV namely verse # 81 will also be given here.

காணலுறுகின்றேன் கல்லருவி முத்துதிர
ஓண விழவில் ஒலி அதிர பேணி
வரு வேங்கடவா என்னுள்ளம் புகுந்தாய்
திருவேங்கடமதனைச் சென்று
kānalurukindrèn* kallaruvi muththu udhira*
ōna vizhivil oliyadhira* pèni
varuvèngkadavā!* ennullam pugundhāy*
thiruvèngkadam adhanaich chendru.

(NT-41)

“I desire to go and see Thiruvèkatham, rumbling with streams rolling down pearl stones and resounding with hymns of the devotees on Thiruvōnam, although you have moved into my heart, O' Lord of Vèkatham.”

வேங்கடமே விண்ணோர் தொழுவதுவும் மெய்ம்மையால்
வேங்கடமே மெய் வினை நோய் தீர்ப்பதுவும் வேங்கடமே
தானவரை வீழ்த் தன்னாழிப் படை தொட்டு
வானவரைக் காப்பான் மலை

(NT-48)

vèkatomè* vinnōr thozhuvadhuvum*
 meymmaiyaḷ vèkatomè* meyvinainnōi thīrppadhuvum*
 vèkatomè thānavarai vèzhath* thannāzhip padaithottu*
 vānavaraik kāppān malai

“Vèkatom alone is worshiped with true devotion by the eternal stars. Vèkatom alone eliminates effects of actions and disease afflicting life. Vèkatom alone is the mountain of the Lord, who destroys the demons with a mere touch of his Chakra for the protection of the dèvās”.

கடைந்த பாற்கடற் கிடந்து காலநேமியைக் கடிந்து
 உடைந்த வாலி தந்தனக்கு உதவ வந்திராமனாய்
 மிடைந்தவேழ் மரங்களும் அடங்கவெய்து வேங்கடம்
 அடைந்த மாலபாதமே அடைந்துநாளும்உய்ய்மினோ
 kadainthā pārkadal kidanthau kāla némiyai kadinthu,
 udaintha vāli thun thanakku udhava vantha irāmanāy,
 midainthā ézh marangkalum adangka véythu,vèkatom
 adaintha māla pāthamé adainthu nālum uymminō

(TCV-81)

“Live in peace forever, taking as the sole refuge, the holy feet of the loving Lord, Who has taken His gracious abode in Thiruvèkatom, Who had reposed on the ocean of milk which was churned (for the nectar), destroyed the demon KālaNémi and Who came as Sri Rama and helped the brother of Vāli (the monkey king), and Who pierced with one arrow the seven great Sāla trees (as well as the seven mountains and the seven nether worlds).”

It is interesting to note āzhwār’s words here. It shows clearly that the divya dèsam Thiruvèkatom is very ancient and must have been existent at least from Srī Rāmā avatāram period. If we were to take āzhwār’s words literally, the Lord must have decided to settle in as Thiruvèkamudaiyān after eliminating Vāli. It would mean of course that the elimination of all the other Rākshasās including Rāvana must have been completed by Thiruvèkatomudaiyān. Verse NT-48 given above might even support that view. It might be intriguing for us to think of that even but it is merely a child’s play for the Supreme Lord.

vi. Azhwār and Thiruvarangam (Srīrangam):

There are many interesting verses in Azhwār’s two prabhandhams related to Periya Perumāl and the divya dèsam of Srīrangam. (NT-3, 30, 36,60, TCV- 21-35, 47-49, 50-55,93, 118,119 and 120) Azhwār often is seen to engage the Lord in conversation with him. Āzhwār points out that the primordial cause of the cosmos Srīman Nārāyana settled in the divya dèsam of Srīrangam in ancient times (NT-3)

பாலில் கிடந்ததுவும் பண்டு அரங்கம் மேயதுவும்
 ஆலில் துயின்றதுவும் ஆர் அறிவார் ஞாலத்து
 ஒரு பொருளை வானவர் தம் மெய்ப்பு பொருளை அப்பில்
 அரு பொருளை யான் அறிந்த ஆறு?

(NT-3)

pāḷil kidanthathuvum* pandarangam mēyathuvum*
āḷil thuyindrathuvum ārarivār* jnāḷaththu
oruporulai* vānavar_tham meipporulai* appil
aruporulai nānarinthavāru? 3

“That which reposed on the milky ocean, settled in ancient times in Srirangam and that which slept on the banyan leaf, the primordial cause of the cosmos, shining truth to the eternal stars and the principal force of the ancient waters, who can know Him as I do?”

Thirumazhisai Pirān says in this verse that he has been blessed with the knowledge of the Lord through His grace and it is impossible to know Him otherwise.

அவன் என்னை ஆளி அரங்கத்து அரங்கில்
அவன் என்னை எய்தாமல் காப்பான் அவன் என்னது
உள்ளத்து நின்றான் இருந்தான் கிடக்குமே
வெள்ளத்து அரவு அணையின்மேல்?
avan ennaiyāli* arangaththu arangil*
avanennai eithāmal kāppān* avan_ennathu
ullaththu* nindrān irunthān kidakkumè*
vellath tharavanaiyin mèl.

(NT-30)

“The Lord of Srīrangam, who has taken me over in His grace will protect me and not let me into the theater of life's drama. He has stood and stayed in my heart. Will that Lord repose any more on the serpent bed in the ocean?”

(NT- 36),

"நாகத்தணைக் குடந்தை வெஃகா திரு எவ்வுள்
நாகத்தணை அரங்கம் பேர் அன்பில் --"

was already referred to previously. “On the serpent bed in Thirukkudanthalai, ThiruVehka and Thiruvevvul, on the serpent again in Thiruvaramangalam, Thiruppèr, Thiruanbil and on ĀdhiSēsha in the ocean of milk lies the ancient cause, the loving Lord with the sole intention to get into the minds of His devotees”.

Azhwār expresses his deep love of the Lord of Srīrangam in NT- verse 60, which is given here.

ஆள் பார்த்து உழிதருவாய் கண்டுகொள் என்றும் நின்
தாள்பார்த்து உழிதருவேன் தன்மையை கேட்பார்க்கு
அரும் பொருளாய் நின்ற அரங்கனே உன்னை
விரும்புவதே விள்ளேன் மனம்
Āl pārththu uzhiharuvāi* kandukol endrum* nin_
thāl pārththu uzhiharuvèn* thanmaiyaï* kètpārkku
arum porulāi nindra* aranganè* unnai
virumbuvathè* villèn manam

(NT-60)

“You are very eager to seek out your devotees. Grace so my thirst for the sight of Your sacred feet shall be everlasting. O’ the Lord of Srirangam, the Ultimate Truth, unfathomable by any seeker on his own, my heart never stops pining for You.”

நாயமாத்மா ப்ரவசனேன லப்⁴யோ
ந மேத⁴யா ந ப³ஹுனா ஸ்ருதேன .
யமேவைஷ வ்ரு⁴ணுதே தேன லப்⁴ய:
தஸ்யைஷ ஆத்மா விவ்ரு⁴ணுதே தனூம் ஸ்வாம்.

nāyamātmā pravachanēna labhyo
na mēdhayā na bahunā śrutēna .
yamēvaisha vrinutē tēna labhyah'
tasyaisha ātmā vivri'nutē tanoogum svām (Katōpanishad 2-23)

“The ātma cannot be known by through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Paramapurusha that the aspirant prays to; this inner Self of that seeker reveals its true nature.”

(Whom so ever Paramapurusha chooses, to him alone He becomes reachable and only to that person He becomes revealed)
Azhwār indicates in this verse that the unreachable Paramātmā has chosen to be easily available and accessible for everyone at Thiruvarangam.

In Thirucchanda viruttam, āzhwār’s mangalāshāsanam (auspicious benediction) of Srī Ranganam are the verses 49 through 55 which just precede the mangalāshāsanam verses of Thirukkudanthai Arāmudha Perumāḷ. Before we get to those verses, TCV verses 21-25, 47-48 are of interest and they also relate to Periya Perumāḷ. TCV verse 21 is actually addressed to the Lord of Srīrangam and the verses (22 through 35) which follow feel connected in that address. Adiyēn will refer here to TCV- verse 21 and verse 35.

அரங்கனே தரங்க நீர் கலங்க அன்று குன்று சூழ்
மரங்கள் தேய மாநிலம் குலுங்க மாசுணம் சுலாய்
நெருங்க நீ கடைந்தபோது நின்ற தூரர் என் செய்தார்?
குரங்கைஆள் உகந்த எந்தை கூறுதேற வேறிதே
arangkané! tharangka neer kalangka andru kundru soozh,
marangkal théya mānilam kulungka māsunam sulāi,
nerungka nee kadaintha pōdhu nindra sūrar enseythār?
kurangkaiyāl ugantha enthai! kūru théra vérithe

(TCV-21)

O’ Sri Ranganatha, the Lord Who were gracious towards the monkey army! At that time, when Thou churned with the Mandara mountain tying the serpent Vasuki as a rope around it tightly, for the purpose of obtaining the nectar, agitating the ocean with the great waves, thinning the trees around the mountain and shaking the surrounding big island, what did the dévas and asuras who were present there actually do? Pray tell me this in detail so that I can understand clearly.

In TCV verse 21, Azhwār connects The Lord of Srīrangam to the vibhava avatāram of Srī Rāma. In TCV-22, to Vatapatrasāyi (ஆலிலை கண்ணன்), in TCV- 23 to Srī Nrusimha and Srī Padmanābha lying on the serpent bed in in the ocean of Milk, in TCV-24 to Srī Trivikrama who measured this universe, from whose divine feet arose the celestial river Gangai and in TCV- 25 to Srī Krishna, Sri Nrusimha and Srī Vāmana the divine dwarf. By these connected verses, Azhwār indicates that the Lord of Thiruvarangam is the ultimate source of all the avatārās. Swāmi Dēsikan also indicates this truth in the first verse of his Daśāvatāra Stōthram.

தே³ வோ ந³ஸ³ப⁴மாதனோது த³ஸ³தா⁴ நிர்வர்தயன்பு⁴மிகாம்
 ரங்கே³ தா⁴மனி லப்³த⁴னிர்⁴ரரஸைரத்⁴யசூ³தோ பா⁴வுகை: |
 யத்³பா⁴வேஷு ப்ரு²த²க்³விதே⁴ஷ்வனு³கு³ணான்பா⁴வான்ஸ்வயம் பி³ப⁴ரதீ
 யத்³த⁴ர்மைரிஹ த⁴ர்மிணி விஹரதே நானாக்ருதிர்நாயிகா.
 Dēvona shubhamathanōthu dasadha nirvarthayan bhoomikām,
 Rangē dhāmani labdha nirbhara rasaii adhyakshitho bhāvukai,
 Yad bhāveshu pruthak vidēshva anugunān bhāvān swayam bibrathee,
 Yad dharmair iha dharmini viharathē nanā krithir nāyika.

அம்புலாவு மீனுமாகி ஆமையாகி ஆழியார்
 தம்பிரானுமாகி மிக்கதன்பு மிக்கதன்றியும்
 கொம்பராவு நுண்மருங்குல் ஆயர் மாதர் பிள்ளையாய்
 எம்பிரானுமாயவண்ணம்என்கொலோ?எம்மீசனே
 ambulāvum meenumāki āmaiyaiki āzhiyār
 thambirānumāki mikkatanbu mikkadhandriyum
 kombarāvu nunmarunggul āyar māthar pillaiyai
 embirānumāya vannam en kolō em èsané!

(TCV-35)

“O’ our Lord! Thou art the ruler of Sudarshana Chakra, indicative of Thy supreme Lordship. Thy descent in the aquatic form of a fish and a turtle out of Thy love for the jeevas in distress are ever honoured. Furthermore, how was it, that Thou as the son of the cowherdess Yashoda with a waist slender as a twig and beautifully curved as a snake, became our benefactor!”

TCV- verses 49 through 55 are of course the mangalāshāsanam verses of Thiruvarangam. TCV-verse 46 and 47 are of interest. In TCV- verse 46, Azhwār requests the Lord to remove all further obstacles so that he could attain Him.

தோடு பெற்ற தண் துழாய்-அலங்கல் ஆடு சென்னியாய்
 கோடு பற்றி ஆழி ஏந்தி அஞ்சிறைப் புள் ஊர்தியால்
 நாடு பெற்ற நன்மை நண்ணம் இல்லையேனும் நாயினேன்
 வீடு பெற்று இறப்பொடும் பிறப்பு அறுக்குமா சொலே
 thōdu petra thun thuzhāy alangkalādu senniyāy
 kōdu patri āzhiyēnthai ajnchirai pullūrthiyāl
 nādu petra nanmai nannamillaiyēnunāyinēn
 vīdu petru irappōdum Pirapparukkumā cholé. (46)

(TCV-46)

“O’ Lord, with the garland of cool and fully blossomed Tulasi flowers and the holy crown always tilting in favour of the devotees! Thou art mounted on the divine eagle Garuda with the beautiful wings, carrying the conch Sri Panchajanya and the divine discus (indicating Thy readiness to protect Thy devotees from their adversaries). Although the good sight of Thee witnessed by the people of yonder age is not available for me to experience, Thou should tell me the means so that this lowly (dog like) self would attain the status of the Nitya suris giving up this body and breaking the cycle of rebirth”.

In the next verse **TCV-47**, Azhwār asks the Lord to show where to seek Him.

காரொடொத்த மேனி நங்கள் கண்ண விண்ணின் நாதனே
நீரிடத்தராவணைக் கிடத்தி என்பர் அன்றியும்
ஓரிடத்தை அல்லை எல்லை இல்லை என்பர் ஆதலால்
சேர்விடத்தை நாயினேன் தெரிந்து இறைஞ்சுமா சொலே
kārodoththa méni nangkal kannā! vinnināthané
neeridaththarāvanai kidaththi enbar andriyum
ōridaththai yallai ellai illai enbar āthalāi
sérvidaththai nāyinén therinthairajjnchu mā cholé.

(TCV-47)

“O’ our Lord Krishna! Thy form has a hue similar to the dark clouds. Thou art the Lord of the Nityasūris. Vedas and the exponents of the Vedas declare that Thou repose on Sri Ananta in the milky ocean. There is no place that Thou art not, nor can there be any limit to Thy frontier. So please tell me where this lowly self can seek and find Thee.”

To Azhwar who requested the Lord, "சேர்விடத்தை நாயினேன் தெரிந்திறைஞ்சுமாசொலே"-
sérvidaththai nāyinén therinthairajjnchu mā cholé, ("The place this lowly self can seek with understanding, please tell"), the Lord reveals His beautiful reclining form as He appears in Srirangam, with all His glorious nature as well as His easy accessibility.

கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனுலாவு கூனிகூன்
உண்டைகொண்டரங்கவோட்டி உள்மகிழ்ந்த நாதனூர்
நண்டையுண்டு நாரைபேர வாளைபாயநீலமே
அண்டைகொண்டுகெண்டைமேயும்அந்தணீரரங்கமே
kondai konda kōthai meethu thénulāvu kooni koon
undai kondu arangka vōtti ulmahizhntha nāthanūr
nandai undu nārai péra vālai pāya neelamé
andai kondu kendai méyum anthaneer arangkamé

(TCV-49)

“The place of residence of Lord Rama, who rejoiced in throwing a soft arrow from a toy bow to straighten the hunched back of Mantara, with hairlocks adorned by flower garlands hovering with honeybees, is no doubt Thiruvarangam with beautiful cool waters, where the crane walks slowly having swallowed the crab, the Vālhāi fish scared of the crane splatters the water while the Kendai fish gently swim fearlessly under the shade of the blue lilies.”

Kooni (Mantara) was the maid of Queen Kaikeyi. She was referred to as Kooni since she had a hunched back. Kooni refers philosophically to all embodied (ப³த³த⁴ baddha) jeevas. The hunched back கூன் (koon) refers to the defect of the embodied jeeva whereby it mistakenly identifies itself with the physical body. Azhwār reminds us of the ego or Ahamkāram whereby one considers oneself as "I am dēva, I am man " creating a false notion of the Self. The real nature of the jeeva however is blemishless and quite attractive to the Lord as indicated by "கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனுலாவு kondai konda kōthai meethu thēnulāvu " -with hairlocks adorned by garland of flowers hovering with honeybees.

உண்டைகொண்டரங்கவோட்டி undai kondu arangka vōtti - The playful act of Lord Rama (throwing a soft arrow from the toy bow to straighten the hunched back of Mantara) refers to the great power of the Lord which can eliminate the ego of the jeevas easily as in playing.

உள்மகிழ்ந்த நாதன் ulmahizhnthā nāthan – The Lord also rejoices in removing the defect (ahamkāram) of His devotees. ஊர் oor – The Lord's residence here of course refers to Srirangam. Azhwar indicates that the Sausheelya guna of Lord Rama is also to be found in Lord Sri Ranganatha.

நண்டையுண்டு நாரைபேர nandai undu nārai péra - the crane walks slowly having swallowed the crab

நாரை nārai - crane - refers to all embodied jeevas living in this mundane world indulging in நண்டு nandu - refers to all sense derived pleasures

வாளை பாய vāhai pāya – the Vāhai fish scared of the cranes jumps up and down on the water. Here Vāhai refers to all those seekers of liberation from the dread of the samsāra, who actively pursue various paths relying on their own self effort

நீலமே அண்டைகொண்டுகெண்டைமேயும் - Neelamé andai kondu kendai méyum - while the Kendai fish gently swim fearlessly under the shade of the blue lilies.

The action of the Kendai fish reflects the state of the Prapannās (those that have taken the Lord as their sole refuge) who enjoy the Lord's gunās and live fearlessly under the Lord's protective shade taking Him as the sole refuge. This is devoid of all defects like the ego of the Samsāris and the self- effort of the spiritual practitioners.

அந்தணீர் அரங்கமே anthāneer arangkamé – The divya dēsam Srīrangam is like the cool waters that quench all thirsts (will eliminate all sufferings). The three Tāpas (sufferings) are ஆத்⁴யாத்மிகம் ādhyātmikam that arise from one's own body, ஆதி⁴தை³விகம் ādhi dhaivikam - those arising from the dēvās, ஆதி⁴பௌ⁴திகம் ādhi baudhikam - those arising from other jeevas நீலமே அண்டைகொண்டுகெண்டைமேயும் – **refers to the enchanting beauty of Lord Sri Ranganatha, which becomes the means for Prapannās and the joy derived from it becomes their desired goal as well. (He is both the means and the goal).**

TCV- verses 50 through 55, In verse 51, Azhwār indicates that this Perumāḷ was worshipped by the four faced Brahma himself.

அரங்கம் என்பர் நான்முகத்து அயன் பணிந்த கோயிலே arangam enbar nānmuhaththu ayan panindha* kōyilē (TCV-51).

Azhwār refers to both Srī RāmaPirān and Srī Krishna alternatingly. It is no surprise that the Utsavar Srī Namperumāl is considered Srī RāmaPirān and the śayana Perumal (Periya Perumāl) is Srī Krishna in our sampradāyam. TCV -verse 54 is of interest. Azhwār describes the beauty of the Kāveri River known as “Ponni” (பொன்னி) in Tamizh. Swāmi Sri Periyavācchān pillai’s Vyākhyānam of this verse is of interest. Achārya refers to Srī Bhattar’s ślōkam from Rangaraja stavam. (ref to 2nd Edn of the Translation). He further concludes that the distance Kāviri travels to serve the Lord is much shorter (from Sahya hills to Srirangam) than the distance that the Lord takes to receive her service. This is because of His partiality towards His devotees. In this samsāra (mundane life), to induce love in those who do not have love for Him, to be easily accessible to those who love Him as well as to remove the obstructing ego, the Lord has taken His abode in Srirangam. This pāsura is also recommended to be recited while taking our bath in the morning (as per our Nityānusandhānam).

இலைத் தலைச் சரம் துரந்து இலங்கை கட்டழித்தவன்
மலைத் தலைப் பிறந்து இழிந்து வந்து நுந்து சந்தனம்
குலைத்து அலைத்து இறுத்து எறிந்த குங்குமக் குழம்பினோடு
அலைத்து ஒழுகு காவிரி அரங்கம் மேய அண்ணலே (TCV-54)

ilaiththalai charam thuranthu ilangkai kattazhiththavan
malaitthalai piranthu izhinhau vanthu nunthu santhanam
kulaiththu alaithu iruththu erintha kungguma kuzhambinōdu
alaiththozhuku kāviri arangkamēya vannalé. (54)

“Sri Rama who destroyed the ramparts of Lanka by discharging arrows sharp like the tips of leaves is the Lord ever resident in Thiruvarangam, wherein flows the river Kāveri arising from the peak of Sahya hills, splashing down, dragging the sandal trees and saffron flower creepers, breaking them and mixing with the released saffron petals and powder.”

The TCV-verse 55 is of interest and we will refer to the same here. In this verse, all the three Thāyārs (divine mothers/consorts of the Lord) are mentioned and the Lord Himself is addressed as **Pundarikākshan**. We had covered this previously but briefly refer to it.

மன்னுமாமலர்க்கிழத்தி வையமங்கைமைந்தனாய்
பின்னுமாயர்பின்னைதோள் மணம்புணர்ந்ததன்றியும்
உன்ன பாதமென்ன சிந்தை மன்ன வைத்து நல்கினாய்
பொன்னி சூழ் அரங்கமேய புண்டரீகனல்லையே? (TCV-55)
mannu māmalar kizhaththi vaiyamangkai mainthānāy
pinnum āyar pinnai thōl manam punarnthāhandriyum
unna pātham enna sinthāi manna vaiththu nalkināy
ponni soozh arangkamēya pundareekan allaiyé?

“Thou art the consort of Srī Dēvi (PeriyaPirāttiār) and Srī Bhoo Devi. Furthermore, Thou embraced in wedding Srī Nappinnai who was Neela Devi born as a cowherdess. In addition, thou graced me so Thy holy feet for ever remain inseparable from my heart. Art not Thou the eternal "Lotus" in Thiruvarangam surrounded by the soothing waters of Kāveri?”

7. Azhwār on Pranavam, Dwādasāksharam

Azhwār refers to the Pranavam and Dwādasā aksharam Mantram together in TCV-verse #4.

மூன்றுமுப்பது ஆறிதனாடு ஓர் ஐந்தும் ஐந்தும் ஐந்துமாய்
மூன்று மூர்த்தி ஆகி மூன்று மூன்று மூன்று மூன்றுமாய்
தோன்று சோதி மூன்றுமாய் துளக்கம் இல் விளக்கமாய்
ஏன்றன் ஆவியுள்புகுந்தது என் கொலோ ? எம் ஈசனே (TCV-4)

moondru muppadhu ārinōdu ōr ainthum ainthum ainthumāi
moondrumoorththi āki moondru moondru moondru moondrumāi
thōndru jōthi moondrumāi thulakkamil vilakkamāi,
éndren āviyul puhunthādhen kolō? em eesané!

“O' Lord, Thou art the source of the fifty-four alphabets -the thirty three consonants, the sixteen vowels and the five letters beginning with 'lhakāra', forming the basis of all the Vedas. Thou art the very form of the Vedas formed by these three categories of letters. Thou art the substratum of the Vedas as enshrined in the holy twelve letter mantra. Thou art the light of the Pranava. Thou art the meaning of the "akāra". Great is Thy grace for Thou had revealed Thy real self by entering my mind on Thy own accord.”

In this verse, Azhwar marvels at the grace of the Lord who had revealed Himself to him on His own accord even though he did not worship him through the Vedas and the mantras which were created by the Lord.

மூன்று மூன்று மூன்று மூன்றுமாய் mūndru mūndru mūndru mūndrumāy -

The Lord is the substratum and substantive meaning of the Vedas as enshrined in the holy mantra of twelve "aksharās" or letters (திருத்³வாத³ஸாசு³ர மந்திரம் Thiru dwādaśākshara mantram) namely

"ஓம் நமோ ப⁴க³வதே வாஸுதே³வாய"

"Ōm Namō Bhagavaté Vāsudévāya".

Sage Narada taught this mantra to child Dhruva on his way to the forest to do penance.

ஐப்பயஸ்ச பரமோ கு³ஹ்ய: ஸ்ருயதாம் மே ந்ருபாத்மஜ

யம் ஸப்தராத்ரம் ப்ரபட²ந் புமாந் பஸ்யதி கே²சராந்

"ஓம் நமோ ப⁴க³வதே வாஸுதே³வாய"

Japyaścha paramō guhyaha srūyatām mé nrupātmaja yam saptarātram prapatan pumān paśyathi kécharān "Ōm Namō Bhagavaté Vāsudévāya"

"Also hear from me, O' prince, the most secret formula (which should be muttered along with the meditation and) by repeating which for seven days and night a man is able to behold the Siddhas

moving in the air. The mantra is "ஓம் நமோ ப⁴கவதே வாஸுதே³வாய" (Obeisance to Lord Vāsudéva)".

(Srimad Bhagavata, Skandha IV –8-53).

தோன்று சோதி மூன்றுமாய் thōndru jōthi moondrumāy - The Lord is the light and the effulgence of the "Pranava" ப்ரணவ or ஓங்காரம்

"ஓங்காரோ ப⁴க³வாந் விஷ்ணு: " -The Lord Vishnu is indicated by the Ōmkāra.

துளக்கம் இல் விளக்கமாய் -The letter " அ " (akāra) forms the basis of the Pranava which itself is the basis of all Vedas. The Supreme Lord is indicated by this akāra since it remains causeless and steady and still.

யத்³ வேதா³தே³ள ஸ்வர ப்ரோக்த: வேதா³ந்தே ச ப்ரதிஷ்டி²த:

தஸ்ய ப்ரக்ருதி லீநஸ்ய ய: பர: ஸ மஹேஸ்வர:

yad védādaṁ swara prōktaha védānté cha prathishtitaha

tasya prakruthi leenasya yah parah sa mahéswaraha

"The Supreme Lord is the meaning of the akāra which is the basis of the Ōmkāra sung at the beginning and the end of the Vedas" (Taittiriya Upanishad)

அகர முதலேழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதிபகவன் முதற்றே உலகு akara mutalézhutthellām ādhi bhagavan mutatré ulaku- திருவள்ளுவர் - திருக்குறள். "அக்ஷராணாம் அகாரோஸமி "

"akshrānām akārōsmi - Bhagavat Gītā.(10-33)

"Of the letters I am the letter 'a' ".

8. Azhwār on Bhagavān Nāma Vibhavam and Ashtāksharam:

Azhwār talks about Bhagavan Nāma vaibhavam in both NT and TCV. NT verses 64,69,85 as well as TCV- verses 77 and 78 will be given here.

போதான இட்டு இறைஞ்சி ஏத்துமினோ பொன் மகரக்

காதானை ஆதிப் பெருமானை நாதானை

நல்லானை நாரணனை நம் ஏழ் பிறப்பறுக்கும்

சொல்லானை சொல்லுவதே துது

pōthāna ittirainchi èththuminō* ponmagarak

kāthānai* ādthip perumānai* nāthānai

Nallānai nārananai* nam_èzh Pirapparukkum

sollānai* solluvathè sūthu.

(NT-64)

“Offer any kind of flower and worship the One with ears adorned by beautiful jewels, the primordial cause of all, the glorious Lord of all compassionate Nārāyana with sweet names that will cut asunder our seven-fold births. Reciting His glorious names is the best means.”

செவிக்கு இன்பம் ஆவதுவும் செங்கண் மால் நாமம்
புவிக்கும் புவி அதுவே கண்டீர் கவிக்கு
நிறை பொருளாய் நின்றானை நேர்பட்டேன் பார்க்கில்
மறை பொருளும் அத்தனையேதான்

(NT-69)

sevikku inbam āvathuvum* sennkanmāl nāmam*
puvikkum puviyathuvè kandīr* kavikku
nirai porulāy nidrānai* nēr_pattèn* pārkkil
maraip porulum* aththanaiè thān

“Also pleasing to the ears is the name of the lotus eyed Lord. His name is the refuge for all earthly beings. By a stroke of luck, I have gained Him who alone is full and worthy of praise in poetry. On closer reflection, the substratum of vedas is also the same.”

நேர்பட்டேன் -

"நிர்ஹேதுக க்ருபா". I obtained without any effort on my part and by His grace alone

பார்க்கில் - In the ultimate analysis

மறைப் பொருளும் அத்தனையேதான் - It is also the ultimate meaning of all vedas and upanishads. In Sri Achārya PeriyāVācchān Pillai's words. (வேதா³ந்தரஹஸ்யம்). it is the secret of all vedānta.

தொழில் எனக்குத் தொல்லை மால் தன் நாமமேத்த
பொழுது எனக்கு மற்றதுவே போதும் கழிசினத்த
வல்லாளன் வானரக்கோன் வாலி மதனழித்த
வில்லாளன் நெஞ்சத்துளன்

(NT-85)

thozhil enakkuth* thollai māl_than nāmamèththa*
pozhuthu enakku matrathuvè pōthum* kazhisinaththa
vallāLan* vānarakkōn vāli mathan azhiththa*
villāLan nenchaththuLan

“My main avocation is to sing the glorious names of that ancient Lord for me that alone is enough to spend the time. The great archer Lord Rama who vanquished the pride of the mighty and angry monkey king Vali, has graced me by residing in my heart.”

எட்டும் எட்டும் எட்டுமாய் ஒர் ஏழும் ஏழும் ஏழுமாய்
எட்டும் மூன்றும் ஒன்றுமாகி நின்ற ஆதிதேவனை
எட்டினாய் பேதமோடு இறைஞ்சி நின்று அவன் பெயர்
எட்டு எழுத்தும் ஒதுவார்கள் வல்லர் வானம்ஆளவே
ettum ettum ettumāy ōr ézhum ézhum ézhumāy
ettu mūndrum ondrum āki nindra ādhi dévanai
ettināya bhédhamōdu iraijnchi nindru avan peyar

(TCV-77)

ettezhuththum othuvārkal vallar vānam ālavé.

“Those who worship the Lord, who is the ancient cause and the inner controller of the twenty-four non-sentient entities, the seven prime continents, the seven mountains, the seven seas and the twelve Adityās, standing in obeisance to Him with ashtānga pranāmam and chanting among His names, the holy eight syllable mantra, are capable of reaching His transcendental realm.”

எட்டினாய பேதமோடு - ashtānga pranāmam

எட்டும் எட்டும் எட்டுமாய் ettum ettum ettumāi – As the inner controller of the twenty four (three times eight) non-sentient principles namely

1. மூலப்ரக்ருதி Mūla Prakriti (the primordial nature) 2. மஹாந் Mahat (the cosmic intellect)
3. அஹங்காரம் Ahankāram (ego) 4. மனம் manam (mind) 5-9 the five organs of knowledge namely, the skin, the mouth, the eyes, the nose, and the ears. 10-14 the five organs of action namely the tongue, the hands, the feet, the organ of excretion and organ of generation 15-19 the subtle essences or *tanmātrās* of the sound, the touch, the form, the taste and the smell and 20-24 the five gross elements namely the space, the wind, the fire, the water and the earth.

By this phrase, is indicated the primordial creation of the cosmos.

ஓர் ஏழும் ஏழும் ஏழுமாய் ṛ ézhum ézhum ézhumāi – the seven continents, the seven mountains and the seven seas.

This phrase is used here to indicate all the worlds in the universe as well as all the sentient jeevas living in them

எட்டும் மூன்றும் ஒன்றும் ஆகி ettu moondrum ondrum āki – the twelve Adityās. This is given here to represent all the devas

ஆதிதேவனை ādhi dévanai

- the ancient cause, the Lord of all the devas (Who is the efficient, the material and the accessory cause)

எட்டின் ஆய பேதமோடு ettināya bhédhamōdu – By "ashtānga pranāmam"

மநோபு³த³யபி⁴மாநேந ஸஹ ந்யஸ்ய த⁴ராதலே

கூர்மவச்சதூர: பாதா³ந் ஸிரஸ் தத்வை பஞ்சமம்

manōbuddhyabhimānéna saha nyasya dharātalé

koormavachchaturaha pādān śiras tatvai pajnchamam (Sātvasamhitai 6-187)

"Prostrating like the turtle placing one's mind, intellect, ego, the four extremities as well as the head down on the floor is called Ashtānga namaskāram"

அவன் பெயர் எட்டு எழுத்தும் ஒதுவார்கள் avan peyar

ettezhuththum othuvārkal – refers to Sri Narayana Mantram " ஓம் நமோ நாராயணாய ṃ namō Nārāyanāya". Azhwar indicates this since he is referring to the ancient Cause.

ஆபோ நாரா இதி ப்ரோக்தா ஆபோ வை நரஸூநவ:

தா யத³ஸ்யாயநம் பூர்வம் தேந நாராயண: ஸ்ம்ருத:

āpō nārā ithi prōktā āpō vai narasoonavaha

tā yatasyāyanam pūrvam téna Narayanah smruthaha (Manusmriti 1-10)

"Water is called Nāra. It originated from Nara, the Lord. That water became His first abode. Therefore, He is known as Nārāyana"

நராஜ்ஜாதாநி தத்வாநி நாராணீதி ததோ விது³:
தாந்யேந சாயநம் தஸ்ய தேந நாராயண: ஸ்ம்ருத:
naraājṅtāni tatvāni nārāneethi tatō viduh
tānyéna chāyanam tasya téna Narayanah smruthaha (Bharatham Ānushāsanam 186-7)

"All tatvās originated from Nara, the Lord. Wise know them as "நாரங்கள் " (Nārān). They became His abode. Therefore, He is termed Nārāyana".
Azhwār actually defines the ashtāksharam in **NT- verse 7**

இன்றாக நாளையேயாக இனிச் சிறிது
நின்றாக நின்னருள் என்பாலதே நன்றாக
நானுன்னை அன்றி இலேன் கண்டாய் நாரணனே
நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை (NT-7)

indrāga* nālaiyèyāga* inichchirithu
nindrāga* ninnarul en pālathè*
nandrāga nān unnai_andri* ilèn_kandāy* nārananè
nī yennai andri ilai

“Today tomorrow or may be sometime later but assured is your grace for me. You know for certain I do not have any other refuge but Yourself, O' Narayana, You will not find anyone more in need than me.”

நன்றாக
நானுன்னை அன்றி இலேன் கண்டாய் நாரணனே
நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை

நார ஸப்³தே³ந ஜீவாநாம் ஸமுஹபரோச்யதே பு³தை⁴
க³திராலம்ப³நம் தஸ்ய தேந நாராயண ஸ்ம்ருத:

"Nara " refers to the entire host of Jeevas. For them, He is both the goal and the means hence He is called "Nārāyana" The line before and after நாரணனே bring out the meaning of the word "Narayana".
நானுன்னை அன்றி இலேன் கண்டாய்

"One who is the ultimate destiny for all Nara samūhas (the host of Jeevas)"

நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை

"One for whom the Nara samūhas form the abode"

Swāmi Srī Alavandhār has graced us with the meaning of this verse in his famous Stōtra ratnam

தத³ஹம் த்வத்³ருத ந நாத²வாந்

மத்³ருதே த்வம் த³யநீயவாந் ந ச
விதி⁴நிர்மிதம் ஏதம் அந்வயம்
ப⁴கவந் பாலய மா ஸ்ம ஜீஹப:

(Stōtra ratnam -51)

Tad aham tvadrutè na nāthavān
madrutè tvam dayanīyavān na ca |
vidhi nirmitam ètam anvayam
bhagavan pālaya mā sma jīhapa: ||

Swamy Adidèvānanda's translation:

“Therefore, without You I am lost for a Lord, and without me You are lost for a worthy recipient for Your compassion. Preserve, Oh Lord! this relation (of Your Lordship and my pitiableness), which is ordained by fate, and spurn me not”

சோர்விலாத காதலால் தொடக்கறா மனத்தராய்
நீராவணைக் கிடந்த நின்மலனலங்கழல்
ஆர்வமோடு இறைஞ்சி நின்று அவன் பேர்எட்டுஎழுத்தும்
வாரமாக ஓதுவார்கள் வல்லர்வானமாளவே
sōrvilātha kādhalāl thodakkarā manaththarāy
neer arāvanai kidantha ninmalan nalang kazhal
ārvamōdu iraijnchi nindru avan peyar ettezhuththum
vāramāka ōthuvārkal vallar vānam ālavé.

(TCV-78)

“Those who worship the auspicious holy feet of the immaculate Lord Who reposes on the serpent bed in the ocean of milk, with faultless love, with uninterrupted contemplative mind, taking as refuge and chanting the Lord's holy eight syllable name are capable of reaching the supreme realm.”

9. Azhwār and Thiruppallāndu

Azhwār in his prabhandhams does express Thiruppallāndu to the Lord in TCV verses 61 and 101 as well as in NT-11.

We had referred to verse 61 in TCV previously which is the last verse on Thirukkudanthal Arāmudhan Perumāi. TCV- 101 will be referred to in the next section. We will also refer here to the beautiful verse #11 in NT.

வாழ்த்துக வாய் காண்க கண் கேட்க செவி மகுடம்
தாழ்த்தி வணங்குமின்கள் தண் மலரால் சூழ்த்த
துழாய் மன்னு நீள் முடி என் தொல்லை மால் தன்னை
வழா வண் கை கூப்பி மதித்து

(NT-11)

vāzhththuka vāy kānka kan kētkā sevi makudam
thāzhththi vananguminkal than malarāl chūzhthththa
thuzhāy mannu_nīlmudi en thollaimāl thannai
vazhāvankai kūppi mathiththu

“Let the tongue praise (utter auspicious benediction), the eyes see and the ears hear. Uninterruptedly worship with your head lowered and folded hands with cool flowers meditating on the Lord, whose long crown is adorned by Tulasi garlands and who has love for His devotees from time immemorial.”

Azhwar advises others to use all their respective sense organs to serve the Lord who is so easily accessible to His devotees.

ஸா ஜிஹ்வா யா ஹரிம் ஸ்தௌதி - That which praises Hari is the tongue.

Eyes are to be used for seeing the Lord and ears in listening to the holy stories of the Lord.

தொல்லை மால் தன்னை மதித்து வணங்குமின்கள் - Meditating on the Lord's names.

மகுடம் தாழ்த்தி வணங்குமின்கள் The head swollen with self pride is heavy like the head that is crowned. "As a sign of giving up the ego, bend the head and worship".

வாயவனை யல்லது வாழ்த்தாது கையுலகம்

தாயவனை யல்லது தாந்தொழா - பேய்முலைநஞ்

சூணாக வுண்டான் உருவோடு பேரல்லால்

காணாகண் கேளா செவி.

(Mudal Thiruvandhādi -11- by Srī Poikai Pirān)

vāyavanai allathu vāzhthāthu kaiyulakam

thāyavanai allathu thānthozhā – peimulainanj

jūnāka undān uruvōdu pèrallāl

kānā kēlā sévi.

10. Azhwār on “Bhakthi”:

Azhwār talks about Bhakthi (loving devotion of the Supreme Lord) as well as reveals the intensity of his own Bhakthi to the Lord and to the *divya dampathies* (divine couple) in his prabhandhams.

TCV- verses # 76,78,79,80,81, 82 and 83 are on Bhakthi. Azhwār declares that he attained true knowledge about the Lord through His grace. (NT-63).

தரித்திருந்தேனாகவே தாராகணப் போர்

விரித்துரைத்த வெம் நாகத்து உன்னைத் - தெரித்தெழுதி

வாசித்தும் கேட்டும் வணங்கி வழிபட்டும்

புசித்தும் போக்கினேன் போது

(NT-63)

thariththirundhènāgavè* thārā kanappōr*

viriththuraiththa* vennāgaththunnai* theriththezhudhi

vāsiththum kèttum* vananggi vazhipattum*

pūsiththum pōkkinèn pōthu.

“True knowledge about You who are the soul of Sri ādhiśèsha who has expounded in detail the great movements of the stars, has reached me through Your Grace, spending all my time meditating, writing, reading, listening, and worshipping.”

Azhwar further describes the good, the Lord has blessed him with.

வெம் நாகத்து உன்னை- means the one who is the inner controller or ātma of Sri ādhiśeṣha.

புன் புல வழியடைத்து அரக்கிலச்சினை செய்து
நன் புல வழி திறந்து ஞான நற் சுடர்கொளீஇ
என்பில் என்கி நெஞ்சருகி உள் கனிந்ததெழுந்ததோர்
அன்பிலன்றி ஆழியானை யாவர் காண வல்லரே?

(TCV-76)

punpula vazhi adaiththu arakkil achchinai cheythu,
nanpula vazhi thiranthu jnāna narchudar kolee
enbil elki nejnuruhi ul kaninthu ezhunthāthōr,
anbil andri āzhiyānai yāvar kāna vallaré?)

“Who can see the discus carrying Lord, unless by blocking the lowly ways to the senses and sealing with lacquer all tendencies from arising, opening them up to the spiritual paths and igniting the spark of knowledge that lights up surging waves of devotional love which touches one's bones and melts the heart?”

மட்டுலாவு தண் துழாய் அலங்கலாய் புலன் கழல்
விட்டு வீழ்விலாத போகம் விண்ணில் நண்ணியேறினும்
எட்டினோடிரண்டெனும் கயிற்றினால் மனந்தனைக்
கட்டி வீடலாது வைத்த காதலின்பமாகுமே
mattulāvu thun thuzhāy alangkalāy pulan kazhal
vittu veezhvilādha bōgam vinnil nanni érinum
ettinōdu irandenum kayitrināl mananthanai
katti veedilādhu vaiththa kādhal inbam ākumé.

(TCV-83)

“O' Lord! adorned by the garland of cool Tulasi flowers full of honey! Even if one were to obtain the bliss of liberation reaching the supreme abode where there is incessant delight of experience of Thy holy feet, will that ever equal the loving delight that accrues to one with the mind that is steadfast and bound by the rope of devotion and placed forever at Thy holy feet?”

பிறப்பினோடுபேரிடர்ச் சுழிக்கணின்றும் நீங்குமஃது
இறப்பவைத்த ஞானநீசரைக் கரைக்கொடேற்றுமா
பெற்றகரிய நின்னபாத பத்தியான பாசனம்
பெற்றகரிய மாயனே எனக்கு நல்கவேண்டுமே
Pirappinōdu péridar chuzhikkan nindrum nīnggum aqthu
irappa vaiththa jnāna neecharai karai kodétrumā
perarkariya ninna pātha patthiyāna pāsana
perarkariya māyané enakku nalka véndumé

(TCV-100)

“O' Wondrous Lord, who art difficult to attain (without Thine unconditional grace). Please grace me with the wealth of the most supreme devotion towards Thy holy feet, the means declared in the Vedānta for bringing ashore the unenlightened followers of the Vedas, who

have concealed their true import - one that helps to liberate from the endless cycle of samsāra with its triple miseries.”

இரந்துரைப்பதுண்டு வாழி ஏம நீர்நிறத்தமா
வரந்தரும் திருக்குறிப்பில் வைத்ததாகில் மன்னுசீர்
பரந்த சிந்தையொன்றின்று நின்ன பாதபங்கயம்
நிரந்தரம் நினைப்பதாக நீ நினைக்க வேண்டுமே
iranthu uraippadhu undu vāzhi émaneer niraththamā
varam tharum thirukkurippil vaiththathākil mannu chīr
paranthā chinthāi ondri nindru ninna pātha pangkayam
nirantaram ninaippathāka nee ninaikka vendumé

(TCV-101)

“O' Lord of the hue of the large ocean! My close relative! Long live Thee. This servant begs to make a plea. In Thy divine will which has the nature of bestowing goodness and blessings to the jīva, if Thou decide to bless me with the eternal good, then Thou should will so that my wandering mind will centre its focus without any distraction and always without any break think of Thine lotus feet.”

We shall here refer to one more verse of interest.

அழைப்பன் திருவேங்கடத்தானைக் காண
இழைப்பன் திருக்கூடல் கூட மழைப் பேர்
அருவி மணி வரன்றி வந்து இழிய யானை
வெருவி அரவு ஒடுங்கும் வெற்பு
azhaippan thiruvēnkadaththānaik kāna
izhaippan thirukkūdal kūda mazhaippèr
aruvi manivarandri vandhizhiya* yānai
veruvi aravodungum verpu.

(NT-39)

“I call the Lord of Thiruvēnkātam so my eyes can feast. I draw the chance circles so I can unite with that mountain where large streams in rains wash down many glittering gems, feared by the elephants and snakes hurrying to hide”.

“இழைப்பன் திருக்கூடல் கூட izhaippan thirukkūdal kūda - refers to a particular method of determining the prospect for union with one’s chosen companion. It involves drawing a large circle and then drawing smaller circles inside the large one. If the smaller circles inside tally to an even number then it is considered a good omen portending union. This practice as per Tamizh literature is an expression of love of a “Nāyaki” (love stricken maiden) seeking union with her lover (Nāyaka). Azhwār’s deep love of the Lord in this verse can be therefore considered as an expression of “Nāyaki Bhāvam”. We see more elaborate expression of this in Nāchiyār Thirumozhi as well as in the works of Srī Nammāzhwār and Srī Kālian. Thirumazhisai pirān seems to be the first one to express it.

11. Azhwār's śaranāgati:

ஆநுகூல்யஸ்ய ஸங்கல்ப: ப்ராதிகூல்யஸ்ய வர்ஜநம்
ரக்ஷிஷ்யதி இதி விஸ்வாஸோ கோ³ப்த்ருத்வ வரணம் ததா²
ஆத்மநிசேஷபகார்ப்பண்யே ஷட்³விதா⁴ ஸரணாக³தி

Anukūlyasya samkalpah prātikūlyasya varjanam
Rakshyati iti viśvāsah gōptruptva varanam tathā
Ātmanikshēpa kārpanyè shadvidhā śaranāgati

1.ஆநுகூல்யஸ்ய ஸங்கல்ப: - Determination to do what is right 2. ப்ராதிகூல்யஸ்ய வர்ஜநம் - Giving up what needs to be given up 3. ரக்ஷிஷ்யதி இதி விஸ்வாஸோ – Trusting and having faith that He will protect 4. கோ³ப்த்ருத்வ வரணம் ததா² - Seeking protection 5. ஆத்மநிசேஷ – Surrendering one's (ātmā) self 6. கார்ப்பண்யே – declaring one's lack of merit and one's lowly helpless state.

More importantly the definition of Absolute Surrender (śaranāgati) is defined as follows.

அஹ்மஸ்யபராதா⁴நாமாலய: அகிஞ்சந: அக³தி: த்வமேவ உபாயபூ⁴தோ மே ப⁴வேதி
ப்ரார்த்த²நாமதி: (Ahirbhudnya samhita 37-30).

""śaranāgathi" is the prayerful submission that I am the abode of all faults, have no means of protecting myself, have no other recourse except yourself. Please you, be my means".

These statements are worth remembering when contemplating or performing our śaranāgati. In this section, adiyèn will refer to verses of Azhwār that are relevant for our daily practice.

Śaranāgati as per our Srī Vaishnava tradition, is to be done at the lotus feet of the *divya dampathies* (the divine couple). Divine mother acts as a compassionate mediator (*purushakāra bhoothai*) on behalf of the jīva. She ensures in securing forgiveness of all our transgressions and flaws. She is eternally associated with the Lord. Srī Nammāzhwār does śaranāgati to Srī Alarmel mangai mānālan Srī Thiruvènkata mudiyān in (TV-6-10).

அகல கில்லேன் இறையும் என்றலர்மேல் மங்கை யுறைமாற்பா,
நிகரில் புகழாய். உலகமுன்றுடையாய். என்னை ஆள்வானே,
நிகரில் அமரர் முனிக்கணங்கள் விரும்பும் திருவேங்கடத்தானே,
புகலொன் றில்லா அடியேனுன் அடிக் கீழமர்ந்து புகுந்தேனே. (TV-6-10-10)
akala killèn iraiyum endru*alarmèl mangai urai mār bhā,
nigaril pugazhāy! ulagamoondru udaiyāy! ennai ālvānè,
nigaril amarar munikkanangal virumpum* thiruvènkadaththānè
pugal ondrillā adiyèn* un adikkeezh amarndhu pugunthènè.

Azhwār (Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān) identifies for us in the initial verses of TCV that Supreme Paramātmā is no other than Srī Krishna (பின்னை கேள்வன் – the consort of Srī Nappinnai Pirāttiar – TCV- 13.). It was referred to earlier. Adiyèn wish to make a few important points.

Nappinnai Pirāttiar is the *amsam* of Srī Neelā dèvi.

It is of interest here to read the words of Swāmi Srī Periyavācchān Pillai.

“ஆஸ்ரிதர் குற்றத்தை பொறுப்பிக்கும் பெரிய பிராட்டி
குற்றம் காண்பானென், பொறுப்பானென் என்றிருக்கும் பூமிப்பிராட்டி
கூடிமை வடிவமாக இருப்பது நப்பின்னைப்பிராட்டி.

“āsritar kutratthai poruppikkum periya pirātti
kutram kānpānén poruppānén endrurikkum bhūmi pirātti
kshamai vadivamāka iruppathu nappinnai pirātti”

“பெரிய பிராட்டியார் இவனுக்கு ஸம்பத்தாயிருக்கும். அது விளையும் தரை பூமி. அதனை அனுபவிக்கும் போக்தாவாயிருக்கும் நப்பின்னை.”

(Srī Periyavācchān Pillai’s vyākhyānam of Thiruvirruttham- 3).

Srī MahāLakshmi Thāyār forgives our faults (“na kaśchināparādhyati”- “who does not commit offence”). Srī Bhūmi Dèvi does not look at our offences. Neelā Dèvi however took avatāram in the cowherd family (அறிவொன்றுமில்லாத ஆய்க்குலம் simple innocent folks). She does not even know that there is such a thing as “குற்றம்” (offence). She is the form of “Kshama - (forgiveness)”.

Neelā Dèvi took birth as the daughter of Kumbhan, (Yashoda’s brother). In Srī Krishna avatāram, she had a prime role, Srī Andāl seeks Srī Neelā Devī (Nappinnai piāttīār) as *purushakāra* (compassionate divine mediator) in Thiruppāvai. Azhwār who came long before her, did the same for his śarānāgati.

Achārya Swāmi Srī Dēsikan in his “Dayā śatakam” also has a verse invoking the grace of Neelā Dèvi.

நிசாமயது மாம் நீளா யத்³போ⁴க³ படலை: த்⁴ருவம்
பா⁴விதம் ஸ்ரீநிவாஸஸ்ய ப⁴க்த தோ³ஷேஷ்வ த்³ர்ஸனம்

Niśāmayathu mām nīLā yadh Bhōga patalai dhruvam
Bhāvitam srīnivāsasya bhakta Doshēshva darśanam

(Dayā śatakam-8)

“May Neelā Dèvi cast her merciful glances on me (adiyèn)- (the Supreme) Lord Srīnvāsa disabled by her enchanting glances, has been unable to perceive the faults (offences) of the chētanās” (sentient beings-humans)”.

There are separate Vèdic Sūkthams for each of the three “thāyārs”. Srī Sūktham, Bhū sūktham and Neelā Sūktham. However, only when Neela Sūktham is recited, we start with

நீளாம் தே³வீம் ஸரணமஹம் ப்ரபத்³யே

“Neelām Dèvīm śaranam aham prapadyè”.

“I surrender to Neelā Dèvi”.

This practice indicates the importance of her special *purushakāratvam*.

Azhwār does śaranāgati to Srī Krishna and Nappinnai Pirāttiar (TCV-92). Invoking Thāyār (divine mother) assures for her Purushakāratvam for us when we recite and contemplate on the meaning of this beautiful verse and the verses which follow namely TCV 93 through to 97. All these six verses can be taken together as representing Azhwār's śaranāgati. All these verses will be given here to enjoy the connectedness.

In TCV-93, Azhwār addresses the Lord of Srirangam, the ancient Lord who took the Vibhava avatārams of Srī Krishna and Srī Rāma. As per our sampradāyam (tradition) Periya Perumāl is considered to be no other than Srī Krishna and the Utsavar Srī Namperumal is considered to be Srī Rāma. Azhwār reminds the Lord about He being our benefactor and we being His Possessions.

In TCV-94, Azhwār points out that since there is nothing that is independent of the Lord, His grace alone when obtained would bring into fruition his thirst for the divine experience ப⁴க³வத் அநுப⁴வம் ("Bhagavat Anubhavam").

In TCV-95, Azhwār expresses his steadfastness of purpose in seeking the Lord, taking Him as the sole refuge. He further acknowledges that the Lord removed his senses from indulging in material things, completely destroying all desires in them along with their tendencies and made him seek the service at His holy feet alone.

In TCV-96, Azhwār requests the Lord to grace him so that he will reach His holy feet freed for good from this "samsāra" (the endless cycles of life in the mundane world).

விடைக்குலங்கள் ஏழடர்த்து வென்றி வேற்கண் மாதரார்
கடிக் கலந்ததோள் புணர்ந்த காலி ஆய வேலை நீர்
படைத்தடைத்து அதிற்கிடந்து முன்கடைந்து நின்றனக்கு
அடைக்கலம்புகுந்தவென்னை அஞ்சலென்னவேண்டுமே (TCV-92)
vidai kulangal ezhadarththu vendri vérkan mātharār
kadik kalantha thōl punarntha kāli āya vélai neer
padaiththu adaiththu athil kidanthu munkadainthu nintanakku
adaikkalam pukuntha ennai ajnchal enna véndumé (92)

“O' Lord, who came as a cowherd! In ancient times Thou created the wavy oceans of waters, reposed on one of them and churned the same (for the sake of the devas) and (as Sri Rama) built a bridge across another. For the sake of embracing the beautiful and fragrant arms of Nappinnai Pirātti with eyes sharp as the victorious spear Thou vanquished the seven types of bulls. Please pray tell me who had taken refuge in Thee, "Do not fear".”

சுரும்பரங்கு தண்துழாய் துதைந்தலர்ந்த பாதமே
விரும்பி நின்று இறைஞ்சிவேற்கு இரங்கரங்கவாணனே
கரும்பிருந்த கட்டியே கடற்கிடந்த கண்ணனே
இரும்பரங்க வெஞ்சரம் துரந்த வில்லிராமனே (TCV-93)
churumparangku thun thuzhāy thuthainthālantha pāthamé

virumbi nindru iraijnchuvérku irangkarangka vānané
karumbiruntha kattiyé kadarkidantha kannané
irumparangka venjncharam thurantha villirāmané

“O' the Lord of Srirangam! Please show compassion to me who always worship with zeal Thy holy feet covered with blossoms of cool Tulasi flowers hovering with bees. O' sweet benevolent Lord Kanna! Thou art all (naturally) sweet like the sugar crystal, reposing as Thou art on the milky ocean. O'Lord Sri Rama with the bow that discharged the terrific arrows piercing the steel like frames of the adversaries!”

ஊனின்மேய ஆவி நீ உறக்கமோடுணர்ச்சி நீ
ஆனின்மேய ஐந்துநீ அவற்றுள் நின்ற தூய்மை நீ
வானினோடு மண்ணுநீ வளங்கடற் பயனும் நீ
யானுநீயதன்றி எம்பிரானும் நீ இராமனே
oonin méya āvi nee urakkamōdu unarchchi nee
ānin méya ainthu nee avatrul nindra thooymai nee
vāninōdu mannum nee valang kadar payanum nee
yānum nee adhandri empirānum nee irāmané

(TCV-94)

“Thou art the five vital airs in the body. Both sleep and wakefulness are under Thy command. The five purifying substances originating from the cows and their purifying quality are under Thy control. The eternal abode and the mundane world are under Thy will. Thou art the source of the various useful and precious things contained in the ocean. Also, my-self, who is bound in this *samsāra* is Thy possession. Furthermore, O' Sri Rama! Thou art our benefactor.”

அடக்கரும் புலன்களைந்தடக்கி ஆசையாமவை
தொடக்கறுத்துவந்து நின்தொழிற்கணினறவென்னை நீ
விடக்கருதி மெய்செயாது மிக்ககோராசையாக்கிலும்
கடற்கிடந்தநின்னலாலோர்கண்ணிலேன்எம்மண்ணலே
adakkarum pulan kal ainthadakki āsaiyām avai
thodakkaruththu vanthau nin thozhir kan nindra ennai nee
vidak karuthi mei cheiyāthu mikkōr āsai ākkilum
kadal kidantha ninnalālōr kannilēn em annalé

(TCV-95).

O' my Lord! Even if Thou Who had helped me thus far, enabling me to achieve the control of the five senses, rooting out all my other desires along with their tendencies and made me firm in seeking Thy service, were to let me go (now) leaving my spiritual uplift incomplete and allowing other desires to spring in me, I consider none else as my redeemer but Thee, Who reposes on the ocean of milk.

வரம்பிலாத மாய மாய வையமேழும் மெய்ம்மையே

வரம்பிலாழி ஏத்திலும் வரம்பிலாத கீர்த்தியாய்
வரம்பிலாத பல்பிறப்பு அறுத்துவந்து நின்கழல்
பொருந்துமாதிருந்த நீ வரஞ்செய் புண்டரீகனே
varambilātha māya māya vaiyam ezhum meymmaiye
varambil oozhi eththilum varambilātha keertthiyāi
varambilātha pal Pirappu aruththu vanthau nin kazhal
porunthaumāthu irunthā nee varam chei pundareekané

(TCV-96)

“O’ lotus eyed Lord with wondrous powers! Thou control the limitless primordial nature. Thy glories are infinite and will be unfathomable even if all the people of the seven worlds with true understanding were to glorify Thee for countless aeons. O’ Lord Who art very eager to seek out Thy devotees! Please grace me, so cutting asunder the endless cycles of many many lives, reaching Thy eternal realm through devotion, I shall for ever remain in service of Thy holy feet.”

வெய்யவாழிசங்குதண்டு வில்லும்வாளுமேந்துசீர்க்
கையசெய்ய போதில்மாது சேருமாற்ப நாதனே
ஐயிலாய ஆக்கை நோய் அறுத்துவந்து நின்னடைந்து
உய்வதோருபாயம் நீ எனக்கு நல்க வேண்டுமே
veyya vāzhi shanku thandu villum vālum énthu seer
kaiya cheiya pōthil māthu chérum mār̥bha nāthané
aiyilāya ākkai noy aruththu vanthau ninnadainthu
uyvathōr upāyam nee enakku nalka vendumé

(TCV-97)

“Thou art with beautiful arms which carry the divine weapons such as the Thiru Chakra the discus, Sri Pāñchajanya the conch, Sri Kaumōdaki the mace, Sri Sārnga the bow and Sri Nandaka the sword, all terrifying to the enemies. The divine mother Lakshmi (Periya Pirātti) seated on the red lotus is ever resident in Thy heart. O’ Supreme Lord! Thou (Who art the owner) should show me (Thy possession) a way by which cutting asunder this disease in the form of this physical body naturally filled with phlegm, I could reach Thee in the eternal abode and live in service of Thee.”

Azhwār in this verse, indicates that the divine mother Lakshmi is ever resident in His heart, and furthermore the Lord carries with Him the various divine weapons, all of them together would be able to eliminate all obstacles and adversaries in his way.

Azhwār actually points to the “*saulabhyam*” of the Lord and His ever-loving Protective nature. Before performing his śaranāgati to the Lord Azhwār also declares clearly his *Ananyagatitvam* as well as *Akinchanyatvam*. We will review some of the verses which bring out these three points.

- i. **Rakshisyati Viśvāsaha:** “ரகூஷிஷ்யதி இதி விஸ்வாஸ:”–
(Trust and Faith in the Lord’s protective Nature).
- ii. **Ananyagatitvam:** அநந்யக³தித்வம்: “Having No other Refuge”
(வேறு புகலில்லாமை)

iii. Ākinchanyatvam ஆகிஞ்சந்யம் “Having no other means” (கைம் முதல் ஒன்றுமில்லாமை)

i. Rakshisyati Viśvāsaha: “ரக்ஷிஷ்யதி இதி விஸ்வாஸ:”–
(Total Faith in the Lord’s protective Nature)

Azhwār in many verses reassures us the “all protective nature” of the Lord pointing out to his *saulabhyam* (“Easily accessible nature”).

NT- Verses – 12, 14, 19, 23, 30, 50, 61,74, 77, 83, 87, 88, 92. TCV -Verses 39, 40, 106, 115,117.

மதித்தாய் போய் நான்கின் மதியார் போய் வீழ்
மதித்தாய் மதி கோள் விடுத்தாய் மதித்தாய்
மடுக் கிடந்த மா முதலை கோள் விடுப்பான் ஆழி
விடற்கிரண்டும் போய் இரண்டின் வீடு
mathithhāy pōy nānkin* mathiyār_pōy vīzha*
mathithhāy mathi kōL viduthhāy* mathithhāy
madukkidantha* māmuthalai kōLviduppān* Azhi
vidarkirandum pōy irandin vīdu

(NT-12)

“You willed those with no knowledge of You to be born among the four. You willed to erase the sorrow of Chandra. You willed to deploy Your discus to release the grip of the mighty crocodile residing in the pond resulting in the liberation of both”.

Azhwar describes how the Lord protects those who take refuge at His feet. The story of Gajendra is alluded to in this verse.

தவம் செய்து நான்முகனால் பெற்ற வரத்தை
அவம் செய்த ஆழியாய் அன்றே? உவந்து எம்மைக்
காப்பாய் நீ காப்பதனை ஆவாய் நீ வைகுந்தம்
ஈப்பாயும் எவ்வுயிர்க்கும் நீ
thavamseythu* nānmukanāl petra varaththai*
avamseytha* āzhiyāyandrè* uvanthu_emmaik
kāppāy nī* kāppathanai āvāynī* vaikuntham
Ippāyum* evvuyirkkum nī

(NT-19)

“Boons obtained by penance from the four-faced one destroyed by the discus carrying Lord that You are, you protect us with zeal. You are also the will to protect, and You bestow Vaikuntam to all living beings”.

தவம் செய்து நான்முகனால் பெற்ற வரத்தை

The lord destroyed the bad effects of the boons conferred by Brahma and others to rākshasās like Hiranyakasipu, Rāvanā and others by taking Avatārās especially for the purpose of protecting the devotees and even offering protection to the very same dēvās that conferred the boons.

வித்துமிடவேண்டுங்கொலோ விடையடர்த்த
பத்தி உழவன் பழம் புனத்து மொய்த்தெழுந்த

கார்மேகமன்ன கருமால் திருமேனி
நீர் வானம் காட்டும் நிகழ்ந்து
viththumidal vèndung kollō* vidaiyadarththa*
paththi uzHAVAN* pazhampunaththu* moyththezhuntha
kārmèkamanna* karumāl thirumèni*
nīrvānam kāttum nikazhnthu. 23

(NT-23)

“Is there any need to sow the seed in the ancient field of the Lord, Who tamed the wild bulls and Who kindles devotion towards Him? The black hued Lord whose form is like the dark dense clouds, the rain bearing dark sky would show us directly.”

In this verse, Thirumazhisai Pirān says that the Lord's essential nature is to protect us in all states whether we are aware of it or not. Therefore, there is very little we need to do. The life is like an ancient field whose owner is the Lord and He looks after it as the owner and farmer. He Himself takes a lot of effort kindling devotion in all sentient beings towards Him so that they can reach Him. **The only thing we need to do if we like is to think of the Lord. Even that is easy since His beautiful Form is like the dark dense clouds which is shown directly by the rain bearing dark sky.**

அவன் என்னை ஆளி அரங்கத்து அரங்கில்
அவன் என்னை எய்தாமல் காப்பான் அவன் என்னது
உள்ளத்து நின்றான் இருந்தான் கிடக்குமே
வெள்ளத்தரவணையின் மேல்?
avan ennaiyāli* arankaththu arankil*
avanennai eythāmal kāppān* avan_ennathu
ullaththu* nindrān irunthān kidakkumè*
vellath tharavanaiyin mèl.

(NT-30)

“The Lord of Srīrangam, who has taken me over in His grace will protect me and not let me into the theater of life's drama. He has stood and stayed in my heart. Will that Lord repose any more on the serpent bed in the ocean?”

In this verse, Azhwar reiterates that Lord Sri Ranganatha has on his own accord showered His grace on him. Azhwar feels that he would not be let down by the Lord who would protect him from being reborn into the life' s drama. He has taken abode in Azhwar's heart which is most pleasing to Him since the Lord loves His devotees and prefers the heart of the devotees to His abode in Vaikunta.

வேந்தராய் விண்ணவராய் விண்ணாகி தண்ணளயாய்
மாந்தராய் மாதாய் மற்றெல்லாமாய் சார்ந்தவர்க்குத்
தன்னாற்றான் நேமியான் மால் வண்ணன் தான் கொடுக்கும்
பின்னால் தான் செய்யும் பிதிர்
vèndharāy vinnavarāy* vinnāgith thannaliyāy*
māndharāy mātāy* matrellāmāy sārndhavarkkuth
thannātrān nēmiyān* mālvanan thān kodukkum*
pinnal thān cheiyum pithir

(NT-83)

“The Lord who carries the discus and who is the very form of love, Himself provides help in many ways to those who seek Him by becoming the ruling king, the dēvas, the heaven, the joys of heaven, the relatives and even the mother and yet being not content with what He has done, bestows the ultimate bliss of liberation.”

அத்தனாகி அன்னையாகி ஆளுமெம்பிரானுமாய்
 ஒத்தொவ்வாத பல்பிறப்பொழித்து நம்மையாட்கொள்வான்
 முத்தனார் முகுந்தனார் புகுந்து நம்முள் மேவினார்
 எத்தினாலிடர்க்கடற் கிடத்தி ஏழை நெஞ்சமே

(TCV-115)

aththanāki annaiyāki ālum emPirānumāy,
 oththōvvātha pal Pirappozhiththu nammai ātkolvān,
 muththanār mukunthanār pukunthu nammul mévinār,
 eththināl idark kadal kidaththi ézhai néjnchamé

“He, who is beyond Samsāra, who bestows Mōksha, destroying our many births- alike in its conscious nature but different in its forms- in order to take us under His divine service, becoming as our father, mother as well as our endearing Lord, has entered inside us and has become one with us. O' Ignorant mind! Why are you immersed in the ocean of sorrow?”

In this verse, Azhwār gifts "freedom from fear" to his mind (and by implication to all of us) which was sinking into the depths of despair thinking of the multitudes of accumulated karmas which are often the cause of many more births to come, wondering whether the Lord Who is "avākya nādara" ("devoid of speech and Who has no hankering") would actually come to our rescue the moment we think of His holy feet as our "upāya"(means).

அச்சம் நோயொடல்லல் பல்பிறப்பவாய மூப்பிவை
 வைத்தசிந்தைவைத்தவாக்கை மாற்றிவானிலேற்றுவான்
 அச்சுதன் அனந்தகீர்த்தி ஆதியந்தமில்லவன்
 நச்சு நாகணைக்கிடந்த நாதன் வேத கீதனே
 achcham nōyōdu allal palPirappu āya mūppivai
 vaiththa chinthai vaiththa vākkai mātri vānil étruvān
 achchuthan anantha keerththi ādhi antham illavan
 nachchu nākanaik kidantha nāthan véda geethané.

(TCV-117)

“The Supreme Lord, Who reposes on the bed of the serpent Adhiśēsha (which emits poison to destroy all the adversaries of His devotees), Who is of infinite glory, Who will not ever let down His devotees, Whose grace towards them has no beginning or end, Who is sung thus in the Vedas, is by nature inclined to sending us to the supreme abode eliminating fear, disease which causes discomfort to the body, the mental anguish, many births, old age and all of these which are experienced by the mind and the body which houses the mind.”

ii. **Ananyagatitvam: அநந்யக³தித்வம்: “Having No other Refuge”:**

Azhwār declares to the Lord that he has no other refuge in TCV verses -87,88 and **89**, before expressing his absolute surrender.

பார் மிகுத்த பாரம் முன் ஒழிச்சுவான் அருச்சுனன்
தேர் மிகுத்து மாயமாக்கி நின்று கொன்று வென்றிசேர்
மாரதர்க்கு வான்கொடுத்து வையம் ஐவர் பாலதாம்
சீர்மிகுத்தநின்னலாலோர் தெய்வம்நான்மதிப்பனே (NT-89).
pār mikuththa bāram mun ozhichchuvān aruchchunan
thér mikuththu māyamākki nindru kondru vendri chér
māratharkku vān koduththu vaiyam aivar pālathām
cheermikuththa ninnalālōr deivam nān madhippané (89)

“Will I even consider any other deity other than Thee, Who in order to get rid of the unbearable weight of Mother Earth, Thyself stood ahead, drove the chariot of Arjuna and worked wonders and remaining as the charioteer, killed the adversaries, sent Duryōdana and other great warriors who thought of themselves as victorious to the heavens and brought this Earth under the rulership of the Pāndavās, expanding their glories?”

Azhwar in this verse, states how he would consider no one else as his Lord except Sri Krishna, similar to the Pāndavās, who considered Him alone as their refuge.

iii. **Ākinchanyam ஆகிஞ்சந்யம் “Having no other means”**

Azhwār declares his “Ākinchanyatvam” in TCV- verse **90**.

குலங்களாயவீரிரண்டில் ஒன்றிலும் பிறந்திலேன்
நலங்களாய நற்கலைகள் நாவிலும் நவின்றிலேன்
புலன்களைந்தும்வென்றிலேன் பொறியிலேன்புனிதநின்
இலங்குபாதமன்றிமற்றோர் பற்றிலேன் எம்மீசனே (TCV-90)
kulangkalāyaveerirandil ondrilum piranthilén
nalangkalāya nar kalaikal nāvilum navindrilen
pulankal ainthum vendrilén poriyilén punitha, nin
ilanku pātham andri matrōr patrilen em eesané!

“I have not been born among one of the four classes. I have not learnt the four Vedas which inculcate goodness. I have not achieved victory over the five senses. I have been caught in the net of the material world. O' my Lord! Thou art all purifying. I do not have any other refuge except Thine holy resplendent feet.”

குலங்களாயவீரிரண்டில் ஒன்றிலும் பிறந்திலேன் -

Azhwār although was born of the sage Bharghava, he considered himself to have been born to the family of the wood cutter who raised him. This is very similar to how Sri Krishna considered Himself as born among the cowherds of Gokulam being raised by Nanda and Yashoda.

அயம் ஸ க³த்யதே ப்ராஜ்ஞை:புராணார்த்த²விஸாரதை³:
கோ³பாலோ யாத³வம் வம்ஸம் மக்³நமப்⁴யுத்³த⁴ரிஷ்யதி

ayam sa gatyaté prājñai: purānārttha viśāradaihi
Gōpālō yādavam vamsam magnamabhyuddharishyati
(Vishnu Puranam 5-20-49)

"The great scholars who know the real meaning of Puranas, sing Him as Gopala, who uplifted the downtrodden descendants of Yadu".

நற்கலைகள் நாலிலும் nar kalaikal nāililum – the four Vedas
நாவிலும் நவின்றிலேன் nāvilum navindrilén – have not learnt (to recite with my tongue)

நலங்களாய nalangkalāya – showing the righteous path
The Vedas show the righteous path.

த⁴ர்மேண பாபமபநுத³தி dharména pāpāmanudati
(Taittiriya Upanishad 50)

"By meritorious actions, gets rid of sins"

தஸ்மாதே³வம்வித் ஸாந்தோ தா³ந்த உபாதஸ் திதிசூஸ்
ஸமாஹிதோ பூ⁴த்வா ஆத்மந்யேவாத்மாநம் பஸ்யேத்
tasmādévamvit śāntō dānta upāās titikshus
samāhitō bhootvā ātmanyévātmānam paśyét
(Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 6-4-23)

" He who knows thus, remains dispassionate with controlled internal and external senses, with mind at peace and unperturbed, sees in his self the antaryāmi Paramātmā"

புலன்களைந்தும் வென்றிலேன் pulankal ainthum vendrilén – Have not achieved victory over the five senses

யததோ ஹ்யபி கௌந்தேய புருஷஸ்ய விபஸ்சித:.

இந்த³ரியாணி ப்ரமாதீ²னி ஹரந்தி ப்ரஸப⁴ம் மன:

yatato hyapi kauntéya purushasya vipaśchitaha
indriyāni pramaātheeni haranti prasabham manaha
(Geetha 2-60)

"The turbulent senses, O' Arjuna, do carry away perforce the mind of even a wise man though he is ever striving"

பொறி இலேன் poriyilén – have been housed inside the trap (caught in the net of the material world)

புனித punitha – the all purifying

இலங்குபாதம் ilangku pātham – the resplendent holy feet (capable of removing all darkness)

12. Azhwār's Naichiyanusandhānam:

Ordinary people like us must apologize for our errors of omission and commission. Azhwārs and Achāryas often apologize for praising the Lord declaring their “lack of qualification and merits”. This of course demonstrates their humility.

Azhwār calls himself “a lowly dog” in 5 verses in TCV (46, 84, 98, 110 and 111).

பின்பிறக்க வைத்தனன்கொல் அன்றிநின்று தன்கழற்கு
அன்புறைக்க வைத்தநாள் அறிந்தனன் கொலாழியான்
தன் திறத்ததோரன்பிலா அறிவிலாத நாயினேன்
என்திறத்திலென்கொல்எம்பிரான்குறிப்பில்வைத்ததே (TCV-84)
pin pirakka vaiththanan kol andri nindru thun kazharku,
anburaikka vaiththa nāl arinthanan kolāzhiyān,
thun thiraththor anbilā arivilātha nāyinén,
en thiraththil en kol empirān kurippil vaiththathé?

“Has my Lord willed so I would be born again after the end of this mortal life, or has He willed so the day of eternal deep love of His holy feet arise in me? What is in the intention of my Lord, who carries the discus, about the lowly dog like self of mine with no devotion or the right knowledge towards Him?”

மறந்துறந்து வஞ்சம் மாற்றி ஐம்புலன்கள் ஆசையும்
துறந்து நின்கணாசையே தொடர்ந்துநின்ற நாயினேன்
பிறந்ததிறந்து பேரிடர்ச் சுழிக்கணின்று நீங்குமா
மறந்திடாது மற்றெனக்கு மாய நல்க வேண்டுமே (TCV-98)
maram thuranthu vajnacham mātri aimpulankal āsaiyum
thuranthu nin kan āsaiyé thodarntu nindra nāyinén
Pirthiranthu péridar chuzhikkanindru neengkumā
maranthidāthu matrenakku māya nalka vendumé

“O' Wondrous Lord! This lowly dog, self of mine, thy servant has come before Thee in thirst of love of Thee alone giving up all anger, deceit and passions arising from the five senses. Without forgetting, thou should grant me (who is incapable), the service of Thy holy feet, freeing me from the vicious cycle of births and deaths.”

தூயனாயுமன்றியும் சுரும்புலாவு தண்துழாய்
மாயநின்னைநாயினேன் வணங்கிவாழ்த்துமீதெலாம்
நீயுநின் குறிப்பினில் பொறுத்துநல்கு வேலை நீர்ப்
பாயலோடுபத்தர் சித்தம் மேய வேலைவண்ணனே (TCV-110)
thūyanāyum andriyum churumpulāvu than thuzhāy,
māya ninnai nāyinén vanangki vāzhththum eethelām,
neeyum nin kurippinil poruththu nalku vélai neer
pāyalōdu paththar chiththam méya vélai vannané (110)

“O’Wondrous Lord, adorned with cool Tulasi flowers hovering with bees! O’ Lord with the hue of the ocean, who reside in the bed formed by the ocean waters as well as in the hearts of the devotees! Also Thou (Who art merciful by nature), should shower Thine divine grace and forgive in Thine divine heart all these acts of worshipping and singing glories to Thee (Who art all purifying) by the lowly dog like myself, thinking of my purity (by the knowledge of the self), not paying attention to my faults (as a result of "I and Mine- ness”).

வைதுநின்னைவல்லவா பழித்தவர்க்கும் மாறில்போர்
 செய்துநின்னசெற்றத்தீயில் வெந்தவர்க்கும் வந்துனை
 எய்தலாகுமென்பராதலால் எம்மாய நாயினேன்
 செய்தகுற்றம் நற்றமாகவே கொள் ஞால நாதனே
 vaithu ninnai vallavā pazhiththavarkkum māril pōr
 cheythu ninnai chetra theyil venthavarkkum vanthunai
 éythalākum enbarāthalāl emmāya! nāyinén
 cheytha kutram natramākavé kol jnāla nāthané (111)

(TCV-111)

“Sages declared that even those who ridiculed and called Thee (Who is all worshipful) names and those who fought incomparable combats and came to be burnt by the fire of Thine anger, could still attain Thee. Therefore, O’ my Lord with wondrous attributes and the natural Master of this world! Thou should treat all misdeeds committed by this lowly self as good deeds”.

13. Azhwār and Bhāgavata śèshatvam:

Being a devoted servant of the Lord eventually achieves fulfillment only in serving His devotees. All of the Āzhwārs, in fact considered, service of the devotees of the Lord (*bhāgavatha śèshatvam*) to be in fact the most preferred goal (*parama purushārtham*).

"The true devotees are those who have the understanding and attitude that they are the servants of Srīman Nārāyana, 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"

Srī Thirumangai āzhwār, the youngest of all the Azhwārs states "நின் திருவெட்டெழுத்தும் கற்று நான் உற்றதும் உன்னடியார்க்கடிமை"- (Periya Thirumozhi 8-10-3). "To be servant of such devotees is in fact the central core, the sum and the substance of the eight-syllable holy Thirumantram". (Sri Thirumangai āzhwār's Periya Thirumozhi 8-10-3)

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān who lived several centuries before in Srī Kālian has three verses in NT praising "Bhāgavata śeṣhatvam " (taking the Lord's devotee as the guide and way) (NT- 18, 89 and 90)

மாறாய தானவனை வள்ளுகிரால் மார்விரண்டு
 கூறாகக் கீறிய கோளரியை வேறாக
 ஏத்தியிருப்பாரை வெல்லுமே மற்றவரைச்
 சாத்தியிருப்பார் தவம் (NT-18)
 mārāya thānavanai* vallukirāl* mārvirandu
 kūāakak* kīriya kōlariyai* vēṛāka
 èththiyiruppārai* vellumè* matravarai
 chārththi iruppār thavam

“The devotees with special adoration of the mighty Lord Nrsimha, whose sharp nails spilt into two the chest of the demon who remained opposed, will even be excelled by the effects of devotion of those who live adoring the very same devotees”

In this next verse (NT- 89), he calls “Bhāgavata samāśrayanam”, as the faultless means.

பழுதாகா தொன்றறிந்தேன் பாற்கடலான் பாதம்
 வழுவாவகை நினைந்து வைகல் - தொழுவாரைக்
 கண்டிறைஞ்சிவாழ்வார் கலந்தவினைக்கெடுத்து
 விண்டிறந்து வீற்றிருப்பார்மிக்கு (NT-89)

pazhuthākāthu ondrarindhèn* pārkadalān pātham*
 vazhuvā vagai ninainthu* vaigal thozhuvārai*
 kandu irainchi vāzhvār* kalantha vinaikeduththu*
 vinthirandhu vītru iruppār mikku.

“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”

Azhwār 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 ப⁴க³வத் ஸமாஸ்ரயணம் for they become blessed with the devotional service of the divine.

வீற்றிருந்து விண்ணாள வேண்டுவார் வேங்கடத்தான்
 பால்திருந்தவைத்தாரே பன்மலர்கள் - மேல்திருந்த
 வாழ்வார் வருமதிப்பார்த் தன்பினராய் மற்றவர்க்கே
 தாழ்வாயிருப்பார் தமர் (NT-90)

vītrrirundhu* vinnāla vēnduvār* vēnkadaththān
 pālthirundha* vaiththārè panmalarkaL* mēlthirundha
 vāzhvār* varumathi pārththu anbinarāy* mtravarkkè

thāzhvāy iruppār thamar*

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

The following phrase in this verse is worthy of our attention.

வரும் மதி பார்த்து - Following the will of the Lord
அன்பினராய் - with love and devotion.

It means accepting all of the Lord's dispensation with equanimity and love.

14. Azhwār on "Puram Thozhā Mānthar"

This special term appears uniquely in Azhwār's prabhandhams. It is used by āzhwār in **NT-68**

திறம்பேன்மின் கண்டீர் திருவடிதன் நாமம்
மறந்தும் புறந்தொழாமாந்தர் - இறைஞ்சியும்
சாதுவராய் போதுமின்கள் என்றான் நமனுந்தன்
தூதுவரைக்க்கூவிச்செவிக்கு

(NT-68)

thirambènmin kandīr* thiruvadithan nāmam*
maranthum puramthozhā mānthar* iraijnchiyum
sāthuvārāyp* pōthuminkal_endrān* namanumthan
thūthuvaraik kūvich chevikku.

"Do not ever fail to carry out this command of mine. You must salute and be gentle like Sādhus towards all people, who despite forgetting the Lord's name do not worship other dévās" thus said Yama calling his close attendants and speaking into their ears".

In this verse, āzhwār actually brings home the point that only thing that offers strength is the association with the Lord. He then illustrates this by narrating an incident which is referred to in Srī Vishnu Purānam. The particular incident referred to is the conversation that Yama déva (the deity of justice) has with his attendants.

"ஸ்வபுருஷமபி⁴வீக்ஷய பாஸஹஸ்தம் வத³தி யம கில தஸ்ய கர்ணமூலே பரிஹர
மது⁴ஸுத³ந்ப்ரபந்நாந் ப்ரபு⁴ரஹநயந்ருணாம் ந வைஷ்ணவாநாம் (Vishnu Purānam-3-7-14)

"Looking at his attendants, Yama said the following into their ears, "Leave those who have taken refuge at the feet of Madhusūdana. I am the Lord for everyone except Vaishnavās".

திருவடிதன் நாமம் மறந்தும் புறந்தொழாமாந்தர் - they are Madhusūdana prapannās. Azhwār stresses here the true nature of those who have taken refuge at the lotus feet of Madhusūdana. They will not be after other goals and therefore will not go after other dévās. This will be like their second nature, meaning that they will not do it even subconsciously.

In order, to understand this phrase in this verse, it will be useful to look at the preceding verses so that the sequence and continuity of ideas are appreciated. In the five verses starting from NT-

59 (அன்பாவாய்) through verse NT-63 (தரித்திருந்தேனாகவே), Āzhwār clearly expresses the nature of *Brahman* and what ought to be our goal and the means suited to our own inherent nature or *swarūpa* of "self". Āzhwār defines *Brahman* (or *parāmātma*) as "திருவிருந்த மார்வன் சிரீதரன்" ("He is known as Srīdharan who bears "Srī" on His heart") and is no other than "அரங்கன்" (the Lord enshrined in the *divya kshétram* - the holy place - of Srīrangam) and His inherent nature is "Love sublime". He also indicates that those who do not understand this are confused and mistakenly point to others limited by birth as transcendental reality. Āzhwār describes himself as (*adiyén*) (அடியேன் நான் ஆள் - "I am your servant, your eternal possession"). This defines the nature of our own *swarūpa* (real nature). The preferred goal (*purushārtham*) is actually being in the service of the Lord Himself and āzhwār indicates his eagerness to serve Him eternally by reminding Him of his relationship to Him (என் கேசவனே, கேடன்றி ஆள்வாய் அடியேன் நானாள்) and points further that his heart never stops pining for Him (விரும்புவதே விள்ளேன் மனம்). Āzhwār points here to the *nirhétuka kripā* (unconditional love) states (எனக்கேதான் இன்றொன்றி நின்றுலகையேழ் ஆணையோட்டினான்) "the Lord who sustains the seven worlds on His own bestowed the great wealth of His grace by entering his mind". Āzhwār further goes on to declare that no sorrow will befall the one who has taken refuge at the holy feet of the Lord *Madhusūdhana*. (மனக்கேதம் சாரா மதுததன் தன்னை தனக்கே தான் தஞ்சமாக்க கொள்ளில்) (NT- 61). It is of interest to note that āzhwār uses the *Thirunāmam* "*Madhusūdhana*" instead of the other *nāmās* of the Lord here. That suggests indirectly that āzhwār has already planned to refer to the "*Madhusūdhana prapannās*" with reference to the *Yamā's* instructions to his attendants regarding how they should act towards them later in the text. In the intervening verses, āzhwār describes his own daily activities (NT-63), encourages us to recite the names of the all compassionate Nārāyana which will cut asunder our seven-fold births (NT-64).

In verse (NT-67), āzhwār reiterates his steadfastness of purpose and declares loud and clear that he will never give up his nature of worshipping *Nārāyana*, who governs his tongue, who is the Lord of knowledge and who is full of auspicious qualities (நாரணனை நாபதியை ஞானப்பெருமானை சீரணனை ஏத்துந்திறம்).

Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān elsewhere has referred to the *prapannās* of the Lord allegorically as follows.

கொண்டைகொண்டகோதைமீது தேனூலாவுகூனிகூன்
 உண்டைகொண்டரங்கவோட்டி உள்மகிழ்ந்தநாதனூர்
 நண்டையுண்டுநாரைபேர வாளைபாயநீலமே
 அண்டைகொண்டுகெண்டைமேயும்அந்தணீரரங்கமே
 kondai konda kōthai meethu thēnulāvu kooni kūn
 undai kondu arangka vōtti ulmahizhnta nāthanoor
 nandai undu nārai péra vālai pāya neelamé
 andai kondu kendai méyum anthaneer arangkamé

(TCV-49)

“The place of residence of Lord Rama, who rejoiced in throwing a soft arrow from a toy bow to straighten the hunched back of Mantara, with hairlocks adorned by flower garlands hovering with honeybees, is no doubt Thiruvaramangam with beautiful cool waters, where the crane walks slowly having swallowed the crab, the Vālai fish scared of the crane splatters the water while the Kendai fish gently swim fearlessly under the shade of the blue lilies.”

In this verse, Kūni (the hunched back Mantara) refers to all embodied *jīvās*. The hunched back refers to their defects such as "*ahamkāram*" with the false notion of one's self. The Lord rejoices in removing those defects.

நண்டை உண்டு நாரைபேர – the crane walks slowly having swallowed the crab. This refers to all embodied *jīvās* indulging in pleasures of the material world. வாளைபாய – The vālai fish scared of the crane splatters jumping up and down. This refers to those *jīvās* afraid of the mundane world actively pursue on their own various paths to seeking liberation from the *samsāra* relying on their own self effort.

நீலமே அண்டை கொண்டு கெண்டைமேயும் – Kendai fish gently swims fearlessly under the shade of the blue lilies. This reflects the state of the true *prapannās*, who enjoy the Lord's *gunās* and live fearlessly under the Lord's protective shade taking Him as the sole refuge.

Āzhwārs do not seek the other deities or *dēvatās*, but they do not disrespect them. For instance, Āzhwārs use respectful words when they refer to Śiva. The terms used include NakkaPirān, நக்கபிரான், (Thiruvāimozhi 4-10- 8) முக்கண் பிரான் (Thiruvaimozhi 7-6-4) மெய்த்தவத்தோன் – "true sage" (NT-18)

To understand the term "*Puram Thozha*" however, we have to look at the following verse in TCV and its Vyākhyānam by Srī Periya vācchān Pillay.

ஆணினோடுபெண்ணுமாகி அல்லவோடுநல்லவாய்
 ஊனொடோசையுறுமாகி ஒன்றலாதமாயையாய்
 பூணிபேணுமாயானாகிப் பொய்யினோடுமெய்யுமாய்
 காணிபேணுமானியாய்க்கரந்துசென்றகள்வனே
 āninōdu pennumāki allavōdu nallavāy,
 ūnōdōsai ūrumāki ondralātha māyaiyāy
 pūnipēnum āyanāki poiyyinōdu meiyumāy
 kānipēnum māniyāy karanthau chendra kalvané

(TCV- 26)

“Thou art the inner controller of all male, female and the neuter of the sentient beings as well as the best amongst them. Thou art the inner controller of the various gunās such as that of taste, sound and touch. In addition, thou control the nature of Prakrithi which gives rise to all matter and forms. Thou were the cowherd who tended the cows, transparent to Thy devotees and cryptic to those with pride and ego. Weren't Thou the Vāmana celebrate who protected the earth taking on the role of a deceitful thief?”

Āchārya Sri Periyvācchān Pillai in his commentary indicates clearly the meaning of the words "பொய்யினோடு மெய்யுமாய்" in this verse.

பொய்யினோடு - remaining hidden and unrevealed to those who seek material things, like the Duryodhanās.

மெய்யுமாய் - transparent and revealed to the devotees like the Pāṇḍavās. Āchārya also refers to Sri Nammāzhwār's Thiruvāimozhi (9-10-7) which is the decad of verses on the famous *divya désam* of Thirukkannapuram.

மெய்யனாகும் * விரும்பித் தொழுவார்க்கெல்லாம் *
 பொய்யனாகும் * புறமே தொழுவார்க்கெல்லாம் **
 செய்யில் வாளை உகளும் * திருக்கண்ணபுரத்து
 ஐயன் * ஆகத்தணைப்பார்கட்கு அணியனே

(TV 9-10-7)

meyyanākum virumbith tozhuvārkkellām
 poiyanākum puramè tozhuvārkkellām
 cheyyil vālai ukalum thirukkannapuratthu
 iyan ākatthanaippārkatku aniyane

"For those who consider him alone as the goal and seek him with love, he will remain true. To those who have other fruits in mind and seek him somewhat superficially, He will remain unrevealed. For those who keep in their mind the Lord enshrined in Thirukkanapuram surrounded by fields in which the Vālai fish happily live and swim he will remain near to them."

விரும்பித் தொழுவார்க்கெல்லாம் மெய்யன் virumbith tozhuvārkkellām

– Here it refers to all those who do not seek anything other the Lord like the āzhwārs who are true *prapannās*. They have no desires for material or other benefits. They are “அந்நயப்பிரயோஜனர் *ananyaprayōjanar*” with true love and devotion.

புறமே தொழுவார்க்கெல்லாம் பொய்யன் puramè tozhuvārkkellām poiyan - those who seek worldly and other benefits. The Lord will bestow them but will stay aloof from them.

க்ரு'ஷ்ணாப்ரயா: க்ரு'ஷ்ணப³லா: க்ரு'ஷ்ணனாதா²ஸ்ச பாண்ட³வா:।

க்ரு'ஷ்ண: பராயணம்' சைஷாம்' ஜ்யோதிஷாமிவ சந்த³ரமா:॥

(Mahābhāratham _Drōna parvam -183-24)

Pāṇḍavās surrendered and sought refuge at the feet of Srī Krishna. They considered Sri Krishna as their sole help and their Lord. For the Pāṇḍavās He remained மெய்யன் (Real and true). To Duryōdhana who sought Srī Krishna for the help of his army, he gave them what he desired but stayed away from him. But He stood for the Pāṇḍavās all along. For Duryōdhana, he was பொய்யன் (unreal and aloof). Āchāryā further illustrates this by quoting the incident from Srīmad Rāmāyanam. Srī Rāma addresses Sage Vishvāmitra on the way to Mithiḷa thus,

इमौ स्म मुनि शार्दूल कंकरौ समुपस्थितौ |

आज्ञापय मुनिश्रेष्ठ शासनम् करवाव कम् ||

இமெள ஸ்மமுநிஸார்த்தூல கிங்கரௌ ஸமுபஸ்திதௌ

ஆஜ்ஞாபய யதேஷ்டம் வை ஸாஸநம் கரவாவ கிம்

(Srīmad Rāmāyanam -Bāla kāṇḍam 31-4)

"O', tigerly-sage, here are your attendants, sir, available in your attendance, what order is to be carried out further, eminent saint, that you may order us."

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in one of the verses in Thirucchandaviruttam clearly summarizes the points for us to remember.

முத்திறத்து வாணியத்து இரண்டிலொன்று நீசர்கள்
மத்தராய்மயங்குகின்றது இட்டதிலிறந்துபோந்து
எத்திறத்துமுய்வதோர் உபாயமில்லையுய்குறில்
தொத்திறுத்ததண்டுழாய்நன்மாலைவாழ்த்திவாழ்மினோ
muththiraththu vaaniyaththu irandil ondrū neecharkal
maththarāy mayanggukinrathu ittathil iranthu pōnthu
eththiraththum uyvathōr upāyamillai uykuril
thoththiraththa thunthuzhāy nanmālaivāzhththivāzhminō

(TCV-68)

"The lowly ones pursue the path of one of two of the three gunas to wallow in a life of misery till death intervenes, only to return to the same path. There is no other way, if you must cut this vicious cycle, except to live your life in praise of the Supreme Lord wearing the cool densely strung garland of Tulasi".

Āzhwār indicates that the people of this world vary in their *gunās*. Those who are predominantly "*rajasic and tamasic*" go after material happiness by propitiating the deities that suit their *gunās*. If however, one wants the liberation of the "*self*" from the cycle of rebirths, then there is no other way except to seek the refuge of the Paramapurusha.

Srī Krishna in Gīta cautions and advises Arjuna thus,

த்ரைகு³ண்யவிஷயா வேதா³ நிஸ்த்ரைகு³ண்யோ ப⁴வார்ஜுந (Gīta 2- 45)

"The Védās have the three gunās for their sphere O'Arjuna, you must be free from the three gunās".

The declaration by the āzhwār in this verse "எத்திறத்துமுய்வதோர் உபாயமில்லை" rings the tone of the *mantra* from the Purusha sūkhtham,

நாந்ய: பந்தா² அயநாய வித்³யதே | (Pūrvānuvākam -17) meaning,

"There is no other way for liberation".

The words from the āchārya Srī Periyavācchān pillai interpreting this line here are worth noting. They read as follows: "ஆகையாலே ஸ்வபௌருஷத்தாலும் இதரதே³வதைகளை ஆஸ்ரயணியராகப்பற்றினாலும் ஈஸ்வரன் தன்னையே ஐஸ்வரயார்த்த²மாகப்பற்றினாலும் உஜ்ஜீவிக்மைக்கு வழியில்லை"

meaning –

"Therefore, neither self-effort, nor seeking the other dévās and nor seeking the Lord Himself for material things will lead to liberation from the Samsāra".

15. Azhwar's Paramèkantha bhākthi

Azhwār was absolutely the personification of true devotional love of the Paramātma Srīman Nārāyana. Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān was a “Paramèkānṭhi” (absorbed and immersed in the depth of love of the Devine alone). We all know how the Lord responded to his glorious loving devotion even in the archāvātāra state. He was a “Madhusūdhana prapanna like all the āzhwārs, and “மறந்தும் புறந்தொழாமாந்தர்” (NT- 68) to use his own term.

Azhwār's bhakthi can be appreciated in NT- verses 26, 27, 63, 92 and TCV verses **100,101,102** and **118**

All of the āzhwārs are “மயர்வற மதிநலம் அருளப்பட்டவர்கள்” (graced by the Supreme Lord) The word, "மதிநலம்" refers to this "*knowledge in the form of Supreme love of the divine*". Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān states "கவிக்கு நிறை பொருளாய் நின்றானை நெற்பட்டேன்" (that he found the proper and apt material for his poetry namely the Lord Himself who is full. "விதையாக நற்றமிழை வித்தியென்னுள்ளத்தை நீ விளைத்தாய் கற்றமொழியாகிக் கலந்து (NT-81) "meaning that the Lord himself brought forth this garland of verses from his heart".

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān tells the Lord that he is not after devotion as “a means” to liberation (*Mōksha Sādhanam*). He has been singing His glories not as a spiritual aspirant but as one who is inspired and stimulated by the wondrous *gunās* and deeds of the Lord, like the Védās and the Védic sages.

சுருக்குவாரையின்றியே சுருங்கினாய் சுருங்கியும்
பெருக்குவாரையின்றியே பெருக்கமெய்துபெற்றியோய்
செருக்குவார்கள் தீக்குணங்கள் தீர்த்ததேவதேவனென்று
இருக்குவாய்முனிக்கணங்களேத்தயானுமேத்தினேன் (TCV-109)
churukkuvārai indriyē churungkināy churungkiyum
perukkuvārai indriyē perukkaméyṭhu petriyōy
cherukkuvārkal theek gunangkal theerththa déva dévanendru
irukkuvāy munik kanangkal éththa yānum éththinén.

“By Thy nature, thou became a Vāmana, with no one inducing Thee to take a dwarf form and while still in that dwarf form, assumed the gigantic form of Trivikrama with no one inducing Thee to become so. Thus, the Vedas and the sages sang Thy glories as the Lord of all dēvas (who measured all the three worlds as Trivikrama) as one Who eliminated the bad *gunās* of those with swollen head and big ego (like Mahabali and others). Seeing that, I also sang Thy glories.”

தீக்குணங்கள் – the bad *gunās* are faults in the form of the feelings of "I and mine" அஹங்காரம் (*ahamkāram*) and மமகாரம் (*mamakāram*).

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān has a verse word for word in his NT-55 similar to what Srī Bhūdat āzhwār expresses in his Irāndām Thiruvandhādi (IT- 11)

கடை நின்றமரர் கழல்தொழுது நாளும்
இடைநின்றவின்பத்தராவர் - புடைநின்ற
நீரோதமேனி நெடுமாலே நின்னடியை
யாரோதவல்லாரவர்

(NT-55)

kadai nindru amarar* kazhal thozhudhu* nālum
idai nindra inbaththar āvar* pudainnindra
nīrōdha mēni* nedumālē* nin adiyai
yārōtha* vallār avar?

"Many stand daily at the thresholds and fall at the feet of various deities to obtain short lasting happiness as with reaching higher worlds. O' Lord, with the hue of the oceans which surround this earth, is there anyone to fall at your feet and sing your glories?"

Azhwār goes one step even further and tells the Lord that he worships no other deity and Rudra with the matted hair locks will bear witness to it, referring of course to the incident in āzhwār's own life, when he encounters Lord Śiva who pays a visit without āzhwār's request and ends up very impressed by āzhwār's deep *bhakthi* for *Nārāyana* and leaves him after giving him the special name of "*Srī Bhakthi Sārar*" (one who is the essence of devotion) by which name āzhwār is known till today.

மற்றுத்தொழுவார் ஒருவரையும் யானின்மை
கற்றைச்சடையான் கரிக்கண்டாய் -எற்றைக்கும்
கண்டுகொள் கண்டாய் கடல்வண்ணா யானுன்னைக்
கண்டுகொள்கிற்குமாறு

(NT-26)

matruth thozhuvār* oruvaiyum yāninmai*
katraich chadaiyān* karikkandāy* etraikkum
kandukol kandāy* kadalvannA* yān unnaik
kandu kolkirkumāru

"There is no other deity whom I worship you will see for the one with matted hair locks will bear witness to. Please see O'Lord with the hue of the ocean, such as I shall remain your devotee forever".

Āzhwār seeks the blessing of the Lord so that he will be able to experience Him always. In the very next verse, Azhwār reveals the blessing that He received from the Lord.

மால் தான் புகுந்த மட நெஞ்சம் மற்றதுவும்
பேறாகக் கொள்வனோ பேதைகள்! நீறாடி
தான் காண மாட்டாத தாரகலச் சேவடியை
யான் காண வல்லேற்கு இது?

(NT-27)

mālhān* pukuntha madanencham* matrathuvum
pērākak* kolvanō pèthaikāl* nīrādi
thān_kana mātātā* thārakalach chēvadiyai*
yān_kāna vallèrkithu

“Will I consider anything else desirable O' fools, than my blessed heart wherein the Lord entered Himself so I can see His broad holy feet covered with flowers which even Rudra with ash covered body can not see.”

தரித்திருந்தேனாகவே தாராகணப்போர்
விரித்துரைத்த வெந்நாகத்துன்னை - தெரித்தெழுதி
வாசித்தும் கேட்டும் வணங்கி வழிபட்டும்
பூசித்தும்போக்கினேன்போது.

(NT-63)

"True knowledge about You who are the soul of Srī ādhisēsha who has expounded in detail the great movements of the stars, has reached me through Your grace, spending all my time meditating, writing, reading, listening, and worshipping."

In this verse, Azhwār describes [his daily calendar of activities](#) which are all centred on the thought of the Lord.

என்றும் மறந்தறியேன் என் நெஞ்சத்தே வைத்து
நின்றும் இருந்தும் நெடுமாலை என்றும்
திரு இருந்த மார்பன் சிரீதரனுக்கு ஆளாய்
கரு இருந்த நாள் முதலாக் காப்பு
endrum marandhu ariyyèn* en nenchatthè vaiththu*
nindrum irundhum nedumālai* endrum
thiruvirundha mārban* sīdharanukku ālay*
karuviruntha nāl mudhalāk kāppu.

(NT-92)

“I will never ever forget that Lord to whom I am a servant keeping Him always in my heart standing, sitting and in all other states, Lord Sridhara in whose heart forever resides mother, Lakshmi, having been under His protective fold from the days of my sojourn in the womb.”

Azhwār declares clearly in other verses, his sustained devotion only to Srīman Nārāyana.

கேடில்சீர்வரத்தனாய்க் கெடும்வரத்தயனரன்
நாடினோடுநாட்டமாயிரத்தன் நாடுநண்ணினும்
வீடதானபோகமெய்தி வீற்றிருந்தபோதிலும்
கூடுமாசையல்லதொன்றுகொள்வனோகுறிப்பிலே
kédil seer varaththanāy kedum varaththayan aran,
nādi nōdu nāttam āyiraththan nādu nanninum,
vīdathāna bōgam éythi vītriruntha pōthilum,
kūdum āsai allathondru kolvanō kurippilē

(TCV– 108)

“Even if I obtained the combined wealth of Brahma with unending riches and Siva with the wealth of the destructive power, who both are capable of favoring their devotees with boons, along with the wealth of the thousand eyed Indra and reaching the highest state of liberation, remained full, will I ever entertain any desire other than being with Thee?”

The question of āzhwār seeking the other deities does not arise at all.
Azhwār expresses his intense and ceaseless love in TCV verses 102 and 118.

சொல்லினும் தொழிற்கணும் தொடக்கறாத அன்பினும்
அல்லும் நன் பகலினோடும் ஆன மாலை காலையும்
வல்லி நாண் மலர்க் கிழத்தி நாத பாத-போதினைப்
புல்லி உள்ளம் விள்விலாது பூண்டு மீண்டதில்லையே (TCV-118)
chollinum thozhirkkanum thodakkarātha anbinum
allum nanopakalinōdum āna mālai kālaiyum
valli nān malar kizhaththi nātha pātha pōthinai
pulliyullam vilvilāthu pūndu meendathillaiyé

“O’Lord of Sri PeriyaPirātti (divine mother Sri Lakshmi) who resides in the wide soft freshly blossomed lotus! In words, in all physical activities of the body and in unending love, during the good night along with the evening twilight hours as well as during the good day along with the morning twilight hours, my mind which was inseparably attached to and immersed in Thy lotus feet never retracted (from the same).”

The very next verse TCV-119 is also of interest since Azhwār explains to the Lord about his intense love of Him.

பொன்னிதழ் அரங்கமேய புவைவண்ண மாயகேள்
என்னதாவி என்னும் வல்வினையினுட் கொழுந்தெழுந்து
உன்ன பாதமென்ன நின்ற ஒண்குடர்க் கொழுமலர்
மன்ன வந்து பூண்டு வாட்டமின்றி எங்கும்நின்றதே (TCV-119)
ponni choozh arankaméya pūvai vanna māya kél
ennathāvi ennum valvinaiyinut kozhunthu ezhunthu
unna pāthamenna nindra on chudar kozhu malar
manna vanthu pūndu vāttamindri engkum nindrathé

“O’ Wondrous Lord with the hue of the Poovai flower! Who has taken abode in Thiruvarangam surrounded by Cauvery! Kindly listen. A tender shoot arose in my ātma full of hosts of unrighteous karmas, reaching Thy divine form, described in Vèdānta as having matchless effulgence and softness like the fully blossomed flower, immersing permanently, without any defect, spread into Thee everywhere.”

In this verse, Azhwār replies to the query posed by the Lord as to how in the mind that is insentient and an instrument of the jeeva such an intense and immense love arose for Him which is unseen in this mundane world. Azhwār states that it is all the result of the Lord's own efforts and His display of His beauty and graciousness.

பொன்னி தூழ் அரங்கமேய ponni choozh arankaméya – One Who has taken abode in Thiruvarangam surrounded by the river Kāveri.

புவை வண்ண poovai vanna – soft and blue like the Poovai flower (endearing and attractive by its softness and colour)

மாய māya – wondrous Lord! (no one else is so easily accessible and generous)

கேள் kēl – please listen as to what type of desire was induced in me by Thy divine beauty and graciousness.

என்னதாவி என்னும் வல்வினையினுள்கொழுந்து எழுந்து - ennathāvi ennum valvinaiyinul kozhunthu ezhunthu – spark of interest arose towards Thee in my so called Ātma which was full of bad karmas (mainly due to Thy divine beauty which kindled this in me even though I had hosts of "pāpa").

கொழுந்து kozhunthu – tender shoot or spark or flame

உன்ன பாதம் என்ன நின்ற ஒண்கடர்க் கொழுமலர் - unna pātham enna nindra on chudar kozhu malar – (பாதம் pātham - here refers to the Lord's divine form) in Thy divine form described in Vedānta with matchless effulgence and softness like the fully blossomed flower

மன்ன வந்து பூண்டு manna vanthu pūndu – immersing steadily and permanently

வாட்டமின்றி vāttamindri - without any flaws (unswerved and untouched by any sensory distraction)

எங்கும் engkum – in Thee everywhere (in all Thine ஸ்வரூப svarooopa - essence, ரூப roopa - form, குண guna -attributes and விபு⁴தி vibhūthi - manifestations)

நின்றதே nindrathé – spread or pervaded.

[Here Achārya's commentary is of interest.](#)

In the case of Sri Nammazhwar, the Lord induced "bhakti" as indicated by his own words in the final verse of Thiruvāimozhi (10-10-10),"தூழ்ந்ததனில் பெரிய என் அவா அறச்சூழ்ந்தாயே chūzhnthathanil periya en avā arachchūzhnthāyē". In Thiruneduntāndakam verse 30 (which is the சரமப்ரபந்தம் charamaprabhandham - the final prabhandham), Sri Thirumangai Azhwar states "அடிநாயேன் நினைந்திட்டேன் adināyēn ninainthittēn " from which one can state that the Lord allowed growth of நைச்சியாநுஸந்தானம் naichchiyānusandhānam (professing one's lowly and unworthy state with humility) - in his case.

The Lord caused both to develop in the case of Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān, நைச்சியாநுஸந்தானம் naichchiyānusandhānam - as indicated by என்னதாவி என்னும் வல்வினை ennathāvi ennum valvinai and bhakti - as indicated by கொழுந்து எழுந்து kozhunthu ezhunthu..வாட்டமின்றி எங்கும் நின்றதே vāttamindri engkum nindrathé .

16. Azhwar's Pasurams – Our Perfect Daily Prayers:

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's prabhandhams (both NT and TCV) were actually selected by āzhwār himself for us. We are told in the benedictory verses on Azhwār that he threw all of the manuscripts into the bulging Kāveri river. But apparently only two of those manuscripts floated against the stream which Azhwar kept for posterity. We do not hear this type of incident in other azhwar's life stories. Sri Thirumazhisai Pirān indeed was unique in many respects. Adiyēn will never forget his unconditional grace and cherish the same in this life and beyond. Adiyēn wish to conclude with a few beautiful verses from Azhwar's two prabhandhams worthy of our daily recitation and reflection.

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī verses.

அன்பாவாய் ஆரமுதமாவாய் அடியேனுக்
கின்பாவாய் எல்லாமும் நீயாவாய்- பொன்பாவை
கேள்வா கிளரொளியென் கேசவனே கேடின்றி
ஆள்வாய்க்கடியேன்நானாள். (NT-59)

"You are Love sublime, the unsatiating nectar. You are my, your servant's Bliss and every kind of happiness. O' the Lord of Sri Lakshmi, whose halo adds lustre to Thee. O' my Lord Sri Kēshava, I am your servant, thy eternal possession"

ஆள்பார்த் துழிதருவாய் கண்டுகொள்ளென்றும் நின்
தாள்பார்த் துழிதருவேன் தன்மையை கேட்பார்க்
கரும்பொருளாய் நின்ற அரங்கனே உன்னை
விரும்புவதேவிள்ளேன்மனம். (NT-60)

"You are very eager to seek out your devotees. Grace so my thirst for the sight of Your sacred feet shall be everlasting. O' the Lord of Srīrangam, the Ultimate Truth, unfathomable by any seeker on his own, my heart never stops pining for You."

மனக்கேதம் சாரா மதுததன் தன்னை
தனக்கேதான் தஞ்சமாக் கொள்ளில்- எனக்கேதான்
இன்றொன்றி நின்றிலகையேழ் ஆணையோட்டினான்
சென்றொன்றிநின்றதிரு. (NT- 61)

"No sorrow will befall the one that has taken refuge at the holy feet of the Lord Madhusūdhana. Today the Lord, who sustains the seven worlds, has on his own bestowed the great wealth of His Grace by entering my mind."

திருநின்றபக்கம் திறவிதென்றோரார்
கருநின்ற கல்லார்க்குரைப்பர்- திருவிருந்த
மார்வன் சிரீதரன் தன்வண்டுலவு தண்டுழாய்
தார்தன்னைச்சூடித்தரித்து. (NT- 62)

"Those who do not realize that Nārāyana is the transcendental Reality since Srī resides in Him, teach the ignorant, pointing to others limited by birth. For He is known as Srīdhara who bears "Srī" on His heart and wears lovely, cool garland of Tulasi swarming with humming bees."

தரித்திருந்தேனாகவே தாராகணப்போர்
விரித்துரைத்த வெந்நாகத்துன்னை - தெரித்தெழுதி
வாசித்தும் கேட்டும் வணங்கி வழிபட்டும்
புசித்தும்போக்கினேன்போது.

(NT-63)

"True knowledge about You who are the soul of Srī ādhisēsha who has expounded in detail the great movements of the stars, has reached me through Your grace, spending all my time meditating, writing, reading, listening, and worshipping."

என்றும் மறந்தறியேன் என் நெஞ்சத்தே வைத்து
நின்றும் இருந்தும் நெடுமாலை என்றும்
திரு இருந்த மார்பன் சிரீதரனுக்கு ஆளாய்
கரு இருந்த நாள் முதலாக் காப்பு

(NT-92)

"I will never ever forget that Lord to whom I am a servant keeping Him always in my heart standing, sitting and in all other states, Lord Sridhara in whose heart forever resides mother, Lakshmi, having been under His protective fold from the days of my sojourn in the womb."

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān's Thirucchandhaviruttam verses

விடைக்குலங்கள் ஏழடர்த்து வென்றிவேற்கண்மாதரார்
கடிக் கலந்ததோள்புணர்ந்த காலியாயவேலைநீர்
படைத்தடைத்ததிற்கிடந்து முன்கடைந்துநின்றனக்கு
அடைக்கலம்புகுந்தவென்னை அஞ்சலென்னவேண்டுமே

(TCV- 92)

"O' Lord, who came as a cowherd! In ancient times, thou created the wavy oceans of waters, reposed on one of them and churned the same (for the sake of the *dēvās*) and (as Srī Rāma) built a bridge across another. For the sake of embracing the beautiful and fragrant arms of Nappinnai Pirātti with eyes sharp as the victorious spear, thou vanquished the seven types of bulls. Please pray tell me who had taken refuge in Thee, "Do not fear".

இரந்துரைப்பதுண்டு வாழி ஏமநீர்நிறத்தமா
வரந்தருந்திருக்குறிப்பில் வைத்ததாகில் மன்னுசீர்
பரந்தசிந்தையொன்றின்று நின்னபாதபங்கயம்
நிரந்தரம்நினைப்பதாகநீநினைக்கவேண்டுமே

(TCV-101)

"O' Lord of the hue of the large ocean! My close relative! Long live Thee. This servant begs to make a plea. In Thy divine will which has the nature of bestowing goodness and blessings to the *jīva*, if Thou decide to bless me with the eternal good, then Thou should, will so that my wandering mind will centre its focus without any distraction and always without any break think of Thine lotus feet."

திருக்கலந்துசேருமார்ப தேவதேவதேவனே
இருக்கலந்தவேதநீதி ஆகிநின்றநின்மலா
கருக்கலந்தகாளமேக மேனியாயநின்பெயர்
உருக்கலந்தொழிவிலாதுஉரைக்குமாறுரைசெயே

(TCV - 103)

"O' Lord with the holy chest where Srī Dévi (Periya Pirāttiyār) eternally resides! O' Supreme ruler of the nityasūris, sought after by all the dévas! O' Immaculate Being! The revelation of the Védās with their characteristic hymns is Thy nature. O' Lord Kanna, the cowherd with the form bright as the gold and the hue of the dark clouds! Bless me so I can recite continually Thy holy names portraying Thine beauty."

Paramakārunīkar Swami Srī Periyavāchān Pillai Thiruvadigalè śaranam

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān Thiruvadigalè śaranam

adiyén rangathan.

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