As per Hindu legend, Nammazhwar remained speechless from his birth sitting in a tamarind tree and he first interacted with Madhurakavi, who saw a bright light shining to the south, and followed it until he reached the tree where the boy was residing.

Early life

Madhura Kavi aazhwar was born in a Brahmin family, in the month of Chittirai and in chitra star in Thirukkolur near Azhwar Thirunagari. The presiding deity in the temple is called Vaitha Maanidhi, meaning the storage of great wealth. Madhura kavi aazhwar is considered to be the representation of Garuda.

Note: Madhura Kavi Aazhwar was born before Swami Nammazhwar

At one stage in his life, he decided to abandon all the chains of samsara and strive towards moksham. In this pursuit he undertook a pilgrimage to the Vada naattu divya desams like Ayodhya, Mathura.

Meeting Nammazhwar

When Madhura Kavi aazhwar, after long tour had reached Ayodhya and completed the mangalaasasanam of the enchanting forms of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman and others, he noticed a glowing ball of fire in the sky. However much he tried, he could not understand the reason for this phenomenon. He also noticed that the ball of fire started moving southwards. He decided to follow the light which led him to Aazhwar Thirunagari and finally disappeared.

Madhurakavi already heard about a sixteen-year-old youth [Nammalvar] who spent his life since birth under a Tamarind tree without eating anything and emitting a divine glow. Madhurakavi proceeded straight to the seat of Nammalvar who was in a trance. In order to test Nammalvar, Madhurakavi dropped a stone. Unable to elicit any reaction from the child, he asked him a riddle:

Seththathin vayitril siriyadu pirandaal Eththai thindru enge kidakkum?

(literal translation – If the small one is born inside the dead one, what will it eat and where will it lie?)

Swami Nammzhwar's reply was: Aththai thindru ange kidakkum

(literal translation – It will eat that and lie there)

Madhura Kavi Aazhwar instantly recognized the greatness of Swami Nammazhwar and fell at his feet and resolved to become Swami Nammazhwar's disciple. Madhura Kavi aazhwar remained with Swami Nammazhwar for the rest of Swami Nammazhwar's life.

The philosophical meaning of this conversation is as below.

The question: If the jeevatma (soul) is born in the body which is attached to the samsara, what will it feed on and where will it live?

The answer: The soul will eat the alternating fruits of good and bad deeds done through the body and enjoy its existence in the samsara.

Two important idols:

When Nammalvar was ready to go to vaikunta loka, Madhurakavi asked Nammalvar with full of tears what to do next. Nammalvar advised Madhurakavi to boil the waters of Tamraparni and he said that an idol will form during boiling of the water. Madhurakavi did as per Nammalvar's advice. When he had boiled the waters of Tamraparni, He got an idol of Bhagavad Ramanuja. He was surprised to see that the idol was different from what he had expected. He went to Nammalvar with the idol and the latter told him that this idol was Bhavishyadhacharya (Future Guru) and that he will be born 4000 years from then. He again advised to boil the waters of Tamraparni. Madhurakavi once again boiled the waters of Tamraparni and finally got the idol of Nammalvar.

Works:

Madhurakavi azhwar who is the main disciple of nammazhwar (who is the prapanna jana kutasthar – leader of the prapanna kulam), compiles kanninun chiruthambu amount to 11 among the 4000 stanzas in the Nalayira Divya Prabandam.

These verses were chanted by Swami Nathamuni 12,000 times to propitiate Swami Nammazhwar and re-obtain the lost Nalayira Divya Prabandham from Swami Nammazhwar.

Note: All of us know that in the whole of the Nalaayira Divya Prabhandam only the 11 paasurams of Madurakavigal doesn't praise the Bhagavan. Instead it talks about the magimai of Sri Nammazhvar, Aacharya of Madurakavigal.

Reference:

mamunigaL explains the glories of Madhurakavi Azhwar in his upadhesa raththina malai.

26th pasuram

Vayththa Thirumanthiraththin Maththimamam Padham Pol

Chirththa Madhurakavi Chey Kalaiyai

Arththa Pugazh Ariyargal Thanggal Arulicheyal Naduve

Cherviththar Tharpariyam Thernthu

Pillai lokam jiyar gives beautiful explanation for this pasuram. Nama: padham in thirumanthram is taken as an example here for kanninun chiruthambu. Thirumanthram is gloried as the one which will relieve the reciter from bondage in this samsaram. In this thirumanthram, nama: padham is the most important word – it clearly establishes that we have no involvement in protecting ourselves and we have to fully depend on our master (Emperuman) to protect us. This same principle is explained by Madhurakavi azhwar (who himself is great because of his acharya nishtai) in his prabhandham that we should fully depend on our acharyan to protect us. It is because of this fact that it brings out the essence of sasthram, our purvacharyas included this prabhandham in to the collection of 4000 dhivya prabhandham. Just like Madhurakavi azhwar is born in chithrai thirunakshathram which comes in the middle of the 27 nakshathrams, his prabhandham is also considered the center piece of the dhivya prabhandha rathan haram (necklace).

Thaniyan

Avidhitha Vishayantharas Chatarer Upanishadham Upagana Mathra Boga:

Apicha Guna Vachath Thadheka Seshi Madhurakavir Hrudhaye Mamavirasthu

" Here is one who knew none other than Nammalwar; the one who made it his mission in life to sing the Tamizh upanishadam of Nammalwar; The one being overwhelmed by Nammalwar held him as his very God; Let such Madhurakavi fill my heart"

Veronrum Naan Ariyen Vedam Tamizh Seitha

Maaran Sadakopan Van Kurugur - Yeru Engal

Vaazhvaam Enru Ethum Madhura Kaviyaar Emmai

Aalwaar Avare Saran

" I do not know anything other than Nammalwar also known as Maaran (original name of NammAzhwar) who rendered in Tamil the essence of the Vedas and who is the head of Tirukkurugur. This Madhurakavi is our master. He is the guardian of the group of Prapannaas."