Thondaradipodialvar

This biography is about thondaradippodiazhwar, who called himself as "the Dust at the feet of Bhagavatals", was born to a vedic brahmin by name, vedavisarathar in Thirumandangudi in the month of Margazhi and in "kettai" nakshathram, in the family of sozhiya vaishnava. He was an incarnation of vanamala (Divine Garland of Lord Maha vishnu) and he was named "Vipranarayana". He was taught Tamil, Sanskrit, vedas, upanishds, etc., at an early age and he mastered them with no effort and shone like a bright tejasvi. He was also well versed in writing and singing Tamil poetry and was fully well versed in Shastras. He had no pride (vidhya garvam) and was humble and modest to the core and hence, he was respected by everyone in the locality.

Once, he left Mandangudi on a pilgrimage and headed towards Srirangam, the foremost among divya desam.

Sri Ranganatha captivated his mind in the very first darsan and the Alvar who came on a tour remained there in a grove near the temple permanently. He could not bear to go away from the Lord whose beauty and grace he describes in his verses.

He became highly devoted to Sriman Narayana and he took a vow to stay as a bachelor throughout his life so that he could devote his full time and energy to perform kainkaryam to the Lord Sriya: patih. Like Periyazhwar, Vipranarayana too was interested only in poomalai kainkaryam.

He made a beautiful nandhavanam with nice trees to give shadows and cool breeze, flower creepers which yield excellent sugandha flowers,which can be offered to Sriman Narayana, like, Lotus, karunkuvalai, Alli (lily), Thulasi, etc., stream of water flowing in the middle as an offshoot of Cauveri where swans swim gracefully, and so on and so on. It was a serene divine atmosphere in the Nandhavanam and our Vipranarayana stayed there within the garden in a small hermitage. It used to allure anybody walking down there to visit and get a divine experience. Not only that, our Vipranarayana's singing pasurams in praise of Arangan along with the sruthi of bees and birds humming add beauty to the place.

One day, two sisters were coming back after performing a dance performance in front of Chozha king and were attracted by the beauty of our azhwar's nandhavanam. When they saw him closing his eyes and meditating on the Lord, they were captivated by his tejas and charm. He ignored their beauty. Especially the more beautiful younger sister, by name devadevi got more offended and in fact, challenged the other sister that she would make our azhwar her slave with her beauty.

In spite of her sister's warning and caution not to enter into such an apacharam and endanger herself, deva devi was adamant and decided to embark on it. Disguised and dressed as a sannyasini, she requested him to accept her service to him at his place. Unaware of the plot, he agreed; However he did not let her stay inside his hermittage. He maintained the distance and was as usual performing his kainkaryams unaffected by her presence. She was desperate and felt sad that she was getting nowhere near her vow.

One day, when it rained heavily she got drenched and was shivering. Vipranarayana could not say no for her coming into his hermitage (which he avoided till then) and devadevi slowly aroused his sensual desires and our poor Vipranarayanar was hooked!. She virtually made him a slave for her beauty and he forgot all sorts of kainkaryam and singing. His thoughts were only about devadevi and he became so engrossed in his desire for her that he could not bear even a moment separation from her.

When she achieved what she wished, she went back to her place in uttamarkoil (near srirangam). Her mother didnot allow Vipranarayana to see her unless he brought some money, true to their profession (which he did not have naturally). Vipranarayana felt isolated and was heavily lamenting the separation from devadevi and did not know what to do. In the meanwhile, our Lord Tiruvarangan felt it was enough for Him to playwith His bhakta and hence, appeared as a servant of Vipranarayana calling Himself "Azhagiya manavala dasan" and went to deva devi's house.

He handed over the Big Golden vessel (Thanga vattil) saying that Vipranarayana asked him to give this to her. Devadevi's mother went in search of our Vipranarayanar and let him meet her daughter(without telling him why she allowed now; azhwar, too did not ask). Next morning, the archakas found one of the "vattils" missing in the Lord's Sannidhi and immediately informed the king. The servant maid of deva devi informed in the meanwhile other homes where she used to work for about this Golden vattil in deva devi's house and the news reached the king.

The king after knowing the story arrested our Vipranarayanar without listening to his pleas that he was not at all aware of any Golden vattil; nor did he have any servant working for him, since he himself was so poor. No amount of request or plea helped and he landed up in a dark cell! There he realised everything; his mistakes, his follies, his apacharams of not performing kainkaryams to the Lord etc..

The Lord appeared in the king'd dream and narrated the whole incident and said that Vipranarayana, His dearest Bhakta, was innocent and he was at no fault at all. Immediately, the king released Vipranarayana and prostrated at his feet and begged for his pardon. Vipranarayana felt greatly moved by the Lord's mercy and daya and sang pasurams full of bhakti .

Having gone through a traumatic experience with devadevi, he never looked back and since then, he became a staunch bhakta and called himself the dust at the feet of bhakas (thondaradippodi azhwar). He composed two poems namely., Thirumalai (a garland for the Lord) and thiruppalliyezhucchi (waking up the Lord). His pasurams are really excellent marvellous compositions and one is certain to get moved by the bhakti and longing for the Lord Ranganatha. He did not sing any other sthalam; He sang only in praise of srirangan.

Before concluding Just one look at one of his GREAT PASURAMS and let us get blessed by Him.

"Oorilen Kaniyillai; Uravu Marru Oruvar Illai;

Paril Nin Patha Moolam Parrilen Parama Moorthee;

Karoli Vannane (En) Kannane! Kadharuginren;

Arular Kalaikan Amma! Arngama Nagarulane!"

Meaning: I have no place; no properties; no relatves; none other than you; I know only your Lotus feet; O Lord of Blue hued sky colour! You only are my refuge. Can you not hear my cries? Is there any one else to save me except you?"

An excellent pasuram and how aptly it matches with our lives! May Lord Sri Ranganatha and His azhwar thondaradippodiazhwar shower Their grace and blessings on us, poor mortals, to help us get rid of this viscious circle of samsara sagaram.

REFERENCE:

Poigayar Boodhathar Peyar Pugazhmazhisai

Ayyan Arulmaran Seralarkon – Thuyyabhatta

Nathan Anbar Thal Thooli Narpanan Narkaliyan

Eedhivar Thorrrath Thadaivamingu

In this pasuram, Manavala Mamunigal explains the order of incarnation of the Azhwars on this earth. The first three azhwars to incarnate in this world were poigai azhwar, bhoodhathazhwar and peyazhwar. Then came the reputed Thirumazhisai azhwar, the illustrious grace of nammazhwar, Kulasekara azhwar, the spotless periyazhwar, thondaradippodi azhwar, the epitome of humility – thiruppan azhwar and Thirumangai Azhwar.

Manniyaseer Margazhiyil Kettaiyindru Manilaththeer

Ennidhanukku Yerramenil Uraikken – Thannu Pugazh

Mamaraiyon Thondaradippodi Azhwar Pirappal

Nanmaraiyor Kondadum Nal

O’ the people of this world! If you ask me what makes today (Margazhi month, kettai star) a glorious day, I will tell you. It is on this day that the scholars well versed in the four vedas celebrate the birth of the illustrious Thondaradippodi Azhwar into a vedic brahmin family.

Thondaradip Podiyar Thondriya Oor Thol Pugazh Ser

Mandangudi Enbar Mannulagil – Yendisaiyum

Yeththum Kulasekaran Oor Endru Uraippar

Vaiththa Thiruvanjikkalam

The elders used to say that Thondaradippodi azhwar incarnated in Thirumandangudi – a town with a hoary past. According to legend, the incarnation of Kulasekara azhwar, an event which is celebrated by people residing in all the eight directions, took place in the beautiful town of thiruvanjikkalam.

THANIYAN

Thirumalaiyandan Arulich Seydhadhu

Tameva Matva Paravasudevam

Rangeshayam Rajavadarhaniyam |

Prabodhikim YokrIta Suktimalam

Bhaktanghrirenum Bhagavantamide ||

Thiruvarangka Perumal Araiyar Arulich Seydhadhu

Mandangkudi Enbar Mamaraiyor Manniya Sir

Thondaradippodi Thonnagaram - Vandu

Thinarththa Vayal Thennarangkaththu Ammanai Palli

Unarththum Piran Udhiththa Ur

HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS WORKS:

Azhvar showed that attachment to this world was no good in "adhalal piravi

Venden" (Thirumaalai 3).

• He showed that he had gained the true knowledge in "ponagam seydha sedam

Tharuavrel punidham" (Thirumaalai 41).

• He showed that he had understood the nature of this world in "ichchuvai thavira

Yan venden" (Thirumaalai 2).

• He showed that he had won over his senses in "kavalil pulanai vaiththu"

(Thirumaalai 1).

• He showed that he had given up other means in "kuliththu munranalai Ombum

Kurikol andhanamai thannai oliththitten" (Thirumaalai 25)

• And He showed that he had gained the true knowledge of the means in "unnarul

Ennum Asai thannal poyyanen vandhu ninren" (Thirumaalai 33).

• He awakened Azhvar who was asleep in ignorance for countless time, in Thirumaalai; having thus woken, Azhvar wakes Him up in Thiruppalliyezhucchi.

• In Thirumaalai, Azhvar spoke about Him accepting his vocal service as sweet

("punkavidhaiyElum empirARku iniyavARE"); in Thiruppalliyezhucchi, Azhvar

talks about His accepting his bodily service as sweet ("thodaiyoththa

thuLabamum kUdaiyum polindhu thOnRiya thOL thoNdaradippodi ennum

adiyanai aLiyan enRaruLi").

• In Thirumaalai, Azhvar obtained that service which is sweet to Him ("empirARku

iniyavARE"); in Thiruppalliyezhucchi, Azhvar prays for that service which is

sweet to His devotees ("adiyArkku AtpaduththAy").

• In Thirumaalai, Azhvar speaks of His attempt to get Azhvar; in

Thiruppalliyezhucchi, Azhvar says that He succeeded in that attempt.

• In Thirumaalai, Azhvar asks for His grace ("eLiyathOr aruLumenRE en

thiRaththu"); in Thiruppalliyezhucchi, Azhvar asks Him to give His grace to

others ("avarkku nAL Olakkam aruLa").