

Thirupaan azhwar



The story of Thiru Paanaazhwar is most simple and yet profound and touching to the heart. Thirupaan Azhwar was born in a small village called "Alagapuri (Urayoor)" nearer to Sri Rangam, where lots of musical people are found. One small place named "Baanar Cheri" is found, where Baanar (or) musicians, who are capable of arresting the minds of all people and even the Devas and Rishis. They are categorised as the hamsam of the small mole, called as "Srivatsam" which is found in the chest of Sriman Narayanan, a small child born in this world in Purthurmadi year, Kaarthigai month, Wednesday in Rohini Natshatram and it is "Thirupaan Azhwar". His

Characters and all of his activities are same as that of a pure Vaishnavas have. Because of this, he is also named as "Paan perumal".

Thiruppan Azhwar was well versed in playing Veena and every day he sang songs in praise of Sri Ranganatha. He was born and raised among the Paanars who were considered of low class and were not allowed to enter into the temple. But since he was from a lower caste, instead of going to Sri Rangam, he used to go to banks of the Cauvery river and sing looking in the direction of the Sri Rangam temple. Azhwar on the other hand was completely immersed in divine love all his life with his mind fixed on the archa moorthy, Lord Sri Ranganatha. {Like Thiruppan Azhwar, KoorathAzhwar though born as a Brahmin lived only beyond the 7th Agrahara of Sri Rangam. Both of them, though very devoted considered themselves ineligible of living in a divine place like Sri Rangam}. Sri Ranganatha wanted to show Azhwar's devotion to the world and so played a small drama.

One morning as usual Azhwar was singing in the banks of Cauvery River. But this time he was too immersed in his Devotion that he did not feel the presence of a Archaka (Saranga Muni) asking him to move way, since he was from a lower caste. The Archaka had come to take water for Lord Sri Ranganatha. The archaka then takes a small

stone and throws at Azhwar, which brings back Azhwar to consciousness. Azhwar immediately moved away from the place to give way for archaka. Azhwar was afraid that he had committed apacharam and had delayed the service to Lord Sri Ranganatha.

The archaka goes back to temple with the water and seeing Lord Ranganatha he is shocked. Lord Ranganatha bleeds at the exact place where he hit Thirupaan Azhwar with stone. The archaka is terrified and requests the Lord to tell the reason for his bleeding. Sri Ranganatha says that the one he hit with the stone is his devout baktha. Sri Ranganatha says that He Himself was with Azhwar in his songs and when archaka hit him with stone He too was injured. Sri Ranganatha instructs the archaka to bring Azhwar on his shoulders.

The archaka then goes back to Azhwar and narrates the entire incident. Azhwar objects to be taken on archaka's shoulder, since he held archakas in a very high regard as they serve the Lord Ranganatha himself daily. But when the archaka says that it is the instruction of Lord Ranganatha to bring him on his shoulders, Azhwar accepts finally.

Saranga Muni starts walking towards him Sri Aranganathan through the Cauvery river. Everyone was surprised to see this scene and stood in silence. After reaching the

temple, Thiruppan Azhwar could not believe his eyes because he was seeing Perumal whom he thought that could never see him in his life. He raised his hands above his head and started to sing slokas on Sri Arangathan. He then started to see the whole thirumeni (body) of Emperumaan and he sung a total of ten paasurams which explain the beauty of Sri Ranganathar from his thiruvadi (foot) to thirumudi (head). He explains in his ten paasuram called amalanAdhipirAn First he saw was the Thiruvadi (lotus feet) of Aranganathan and started to sing the pasuram:-

"Neel madhil Arangathamman thrukkamalpadham vandhu en Kanninullana okkinrathe."

After seeing the beauty of the thiruvadi, he started to see step by step of the whole body of Emperumaan, he sung ten paasurams which explain the beauty of Sri Ranganathar from his thiruvadi (foot) to thirumudi (head).

He explains in his ten paasuram about the clean saffron cloth which is worn on the body of Ranganathar, his jewels the thiru vayiru (stomach) from where Lord Brahma originated, the broad chest, the red lips and finally on explaining the beauty of the two broad eyes, he fell down.

After singing the 10 paasurams (known as Amalanadhipiran) THIRUPPAN Azhwar merges with the Lord Sri Ranganathar.

Although Amalan aadipiraan consists of only ten verses, it is extremely beautiful and profoundly philosophic.

Thiru Paanaazhwar exemplifies this feeling. For him there was no other goal to be desired and he wished to see nothing else with the eyes that had seen the Lord. These verses of the Azhwar inspired three great acharyas to write commentaries on them as indicated by the author. Among them, Sri Swami Desikan must have been especially attracted to the Azhwar's work as suggested by the title of his commentary namely "Muni Vahana Bhogam". It is classified under his "rahasya granthas - secret works". This is particularly striking since he wrote no commentary on other Azhwars' works. In addition he also composed a devotional hymn in Sanskrit "Bhagavat Dhyana Sopaanam" somewhat similar to Azhwar's work. The beautiful step by step description of the Lord's resplendent form from His holy feet to His crown helps one to focus one's attention on the divine.

Thiruppaan Azhwar has sung only ten paasurams, but in that itself, he has explained about how a human should be. He explains in that ten paasurams tha Perumal is

the leader and our aim should be to reach Him and to get the complete Saranagathi (total surrender) in HIS thiruvadi, and that is the final place, where all of us has to reach.