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A Life Sketch of Sri Nampillai



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**Srimathe Ramanujaya Nama:
Srimathe Baladhanvi Mahagurave Nama:
Srimad Varavaramunaye Nama:**

A Life Sketch of Sri Nampillai

(By Sri U Ve Bhuvarahachariar Swami, M.A., Rtd. Prof. of Sanskrit, Alwar Thirunagari)

Part 1

A unique and distinctive feature of our Sri Vaishnava Sampradayam is its unbroken chain of successive great Azhwars and Acharyas. Sri Vedanta Desika in his "Yathiraja Sapthathi" waxes eloquent as regards this uninterrupted appearance (Avataram) of Acharyas and metaphorically compares it to a beautiful garland of gems.

a muna tapaniti sayee bhumna
yathirajena nibadha nayaksri |
mahati gurupankthi hara yashtihi
vibhudhanaam hrida yangama vibhati ||

In this stanza, he compares our Acharya Parampara to a garland of gems for which the central sapphire is Sri Ramanujar. The diamond chain embellishes only the body where as this Acharya Parampara haram adorns the soul.

Many of us, nowadays are not aware of the Guruparampara (succession of Acharyas). Hence I give their order of appearance.

1. Periya Perumal. (Lord Sri Ranganatha, the presiding deity reclining on the serpent bed at Srirangam)
2. His consort Sri Ranga Nachiyar
3. Senani (Sri Vishwaksenar, The chief commander of all beings)
4. Nammazhwar
5. Nathamunikal
6. Uyyakondar (Pundarikaksha)
7. Manakkal Nambi (Sri Rama Misrar)
8. Alavandar (Sri Yamunachariyar)
9. Periya Nambigal (Sri Parankusa Daasar)
10. Emberumaanar (Sri Ramanujar)
11. Embar
12. Parashara Bhattar
13. Nanjeeyar
14. Nampillai
15. Vadakku Thiruvedhi Pillai
16. Pillailokacharyar
17. Thiruvazhmozhi Pillai
18. Manavala Mamunigal

Of these 18 Acharyas, the fourteenth one is Swamy Nampillai. An attempt is made to sketch the biography of this great stalwart following the Guruparampara Prabhavam text, written by Swamy Nampillai's earnest and deeply devoted disciple Sri Pinbazhahiyaram Perumal Jeeyar (Pinbazhahiyaram Perumal is the name of Lord Ranganatha namely Periya Perumal, as His back view is more fascinating than the front view).

During the period of our Acharyas, Srirangam was the capital of our Srivaishnava Kingdom. All our Acharyas though born at different places finally came to live at Srirangam to propagate our sampradayam. Under their leadership, Srivaishnava sampradayam spread far and wide and was at its zenith.

Nanjeeyar ascended the throne of Acharyas after Sri Parashara Bhattar. Though at Karnataka, after he was vanquished by Sri Parashara Bhattar at the wordy duel (Vaada sadas), he became a devoted disciple of Sri Parashara Bhattar & learnt Nalayira Divya Prabhandam etc at his holy feet. After his arrival at Srirangam to live in the company of Sri Bhattar he renounced all worldly pleasures and became a recluse (Sanyasi). He was affectionately called by Bhattar as "Nam Jeeyar"(Our Sanyasi). [His] Acharya's blessing was mainly responsible for his writing the superb commentary on Tiruvazhmozhi which is called "Ombadinaayirapadi".

In those days our Acharyas used to write the commentary on palm leaves. After completing the writing Sri Nanjeeyar desired to preserve it for the posterity. He wished to have a scribe who is highly skilled in writing it on palm leaves legibly and neatly. His close attendants who were always with him drinking his nectarine discourses told him that there was a gentleman by name Nambur Varadarajan (Nambur is the name of a village on the southern bank of Cauvery river at Trichy. Now the village has vanished, eroded by Cauvery flood waters) who used to attend Swamy Nanjeeyar's Kalakshepam regularly.

"He has very good handwriting" they said. Nanjeeyar lost no time in inviting Sri Varadarajan and ordering him to write a shloka on a palm leaf so that he might check out his good handwriting. Observing the neat performance of Sri Varadarajan, Nanjeeyar became highly pleased and he read out the commentary on holy stanzas of Thiruvaymozhi and wherever it was necessary he also explained it to him so that he might write the commentary without any mistake with clear cut meanings of the commentary.

At the bidding of the Acharya, the disciple took the manuscript with great reverence and departed to his village, where he could write the commentary with great concentration and relaxation. He had to cross the river Cauvery on the way. In the midst of the river there was a place which he had to cross by swimming. As the manuscript was very holy and respectable he fastened it to the turban on his head but as ill luck would have it a strong wave of the river dashed his turban and carried away the manuscript. All his attempts to retrieve it were in vain. Highly dejected he swam across the river and reached the shore. Somehow he calmed himself and thinking of the holy feet of his Acharya, Sri Nanjeeyar, he recapitulated the entire commentary as read out to him by his Acharya. As he was highly shrewd and adept in Tamil language and literature, he wrote the

commentary from his memory and added in some places highly relevant parallel ideas, etc. from Tamil literature and thereby enriched the commentary, the 9000 padi. (Padi means 32 syllables, 9000 padi means the commentary contained 9000 X 32 syllables; Padi equals a measure).

After completing it without loss of time, Sri Varadaraja submitted the manuscript reverently for the perusal, comments and corrections of his Acharya. The Acharya went through that carefully and was able to observe in some places magnificent and highly suited meanings for the words and sentences of Thiruvaymozhi which he had not made. Though he was highly pleased with the commentary he wished to know what transpired after handing his commentary over to his disciple. So he asked Sri Varadarajan – "Why this addition?"

Sri Varadarajan was afraid to narrate the unfortunate incident but being encouraged by his revered teacher he told the truth.

The acharya was struck with wonder at the amazing, sharp and retentive memory power of his pupil and praised him to the skies. He embraced him and declared - "He is my dear child – Nam Pillai". Thereafter his original name Nambur Varadarajan became something unheard of. The Acharya abhimana – the sole means of salvation - can be understood from this episode.

From that day onwards, Sri Nanjeevar kept his dearest disciple under his benevolent care and without allowing any lapse of time he taught him all the secret doctrines of Sri Vaishnavism and Visishta Advaita philosophy with all the Rahasya Granthas and made him a full fledged scholar.

He also named him "Thirukkalikanri Daasar". Kalikanri is the name of Thirumangai Azhwar. Nampillai was also born on the same day as that of Thirumangai Azhwar. (i.e Karthika month and Kritthika nakshatram). Therefore Nampillai is looked upon as the incarnation of Thirumangai Azhwar by our Acharyas, for which, a very aesthetic explanation is also given by them. Thirumangai Azhwar is known for his deep-rooted love towards Archa Avatara. Hence in the course of his ramblings to all Archa Avatara temples, he once reached Thirukkanna Mangai. He sang in praise of Lord Krishna there. Lord Krishna, the presiding deity became highly pleased by the sweet divine songs of the Azhwar, expressed his desire to learn the Divya Prabhandam. Sri Kaliyan told Him "vensangam onru endiya kanna, nin thanakkum kurippagil karkalam kaviyin porul thane" (Oh Krishna! wielding white conch, if you are so very particular about learning the Divya Prabhandam, you may do so. But in this state of your Archa Avatara it is possible for you to learn only the meaning of the text). Sri Krishna understood the implied sense of this statement. In the state of Archa Avatara idol, He can grasp only the meaning of the stanzas. If He has to learn and understand both the text and its inner meaning in its depth, He should be born in this world and learn it under the guidance of a superb master. So Sri Krishna was born as Sri Periyavachan Pillai on a Sri Jayanti day and becoming the pupil of Sri Nampillai, studied all the 4000 hymns along with Vedavedantam, Ithihasam,

Puranam etc along with their commentaries from Sri Nampillai – who was born on the birthday of Sri Thirumangai Azhwar.

Part 2

Hereafter the narrative account of Nampillai's life history is interspersed with a series of serious questions posed by him to his revered Acharya, Sri Nanjeeyar and the latter's crisp and clear cut answers which dispel several doubts lingering in our mind for a very long time as a result of which it is well nigh impossible to erase them from our poor hearts. So the remaining part in this essay assumes greater importance. It is worthwhile to bestow the best attention on this question and answer section.

Question 1.

Once Sri Nampillai questioned his preceptor " There are so many means of salvation (upayas) prescribed by the shastras as Karma yoga, Gnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, offering garlands to the deity Sriman Narayana, lighting lamps in His temple, residing at the Divya Desams like Srirangam, chanting His sweet names, Purushothama vidya, the knowledge of the secret cause of Sriman Narayana's incarnations etc. There are also innumerable pramanas (Authoritative Supporting Statements) in the shastras for all these upayas. The followers of these upayas (means of salvation) are also in majority in this world. But for Saranagathi (accepting Sriman Narayana as the sole, safe, secured means of salvation) the pramanas are less in number and the followers are to be traced.

The Rishi (sage), chandas, devathas (the deities) are mentioned in the case of other upayas namely Karma yoga etc.; whereas they are missing in Saranagathi. Why this disparity between the two, when Saranagathi is the easiest means of salvation?

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

There is no need for any pramana in the case of Saranagathi, because it is something that is self-evident and therefore requires no proof or pramana. Let me explain it by an example: Two men are crossing a river. One has fallen into the depth of the river and is sinking. Does the other man go in search of a Pramana to lift up and save the sinking one? He saves him automatically. All the Jeevatmas who have fallen into the ocean of samsara are equal to the sinking man. Sriman Narayana lifts them up by stretching forth His merciful hands. Therefore it is nothing but common sense and requires no pramana.

Here are the pramanas if you still insist upon getting some pramanas. In the Vedanta a very well known statement runs as follows:

Pramana 1:

"yo brahmanam..mumukshurvai saranamaham prapadye" (sweta asvatara Upanishad)

Meaning: "First, Sriman Narayana created Brahma. He taught him the entire Vedas. He has given me the clear knowledge with reference to Him. I take refuge under Him desiring salvation" says Veda Purusha.

Pramana 2:

"tasmath nyasa mesham tapasam atriktham ahu:" (Taitriya Narayana – 50)

Meaning: "Therefore this Nyasa namely Saranagathi excels all other penances".

Pramana 3:

"nyasa ithyahuhu maneeshino brahmanam" (Taitriya Narayana - 50)

Meaning: Wise men declare that Saranagathi is the Brahman (Sriman Narayana) Himself.

Pramana 4:

"nikshepa aparaparyayo nyasa: panchangasamyutha sanyas: styaga ithyuktha
saranagathirithyapi" (Lakshmi Tantram 17-74)

Meaning: Surrendering to God (nikshepa) has five accessories. The word "nikshepa" has several synonyms like Nyasa, Sanyasa, Thyaga and Saranagathi.

Thus, pramanas are readily available and they are also many. There is no dearth of such pramanas. You should not judge the superiority of other upayas by the majority of people opting for them. Among the worldly men only some can become sanyasins. On that score, can you say that the sanyasins are inferior to others?

I will give you another example said Nanjeeyar. "jyothishtomena suvarga kamo yajetha" is a Vedic statement. This means perform a sacrifice by name Jyothishoma if you wish to reach Heaven (Indra's world) and enjoy celestial pleasures there. But not everyone performs the sacrifice. Very few who are interested in reaching heaven perform it. Do you mean to say that those few men are inferior to others? Certainly not.

Comparatively speaking the pleasures in Indra's world is far inferior to the indescribable, unimaginable and endless pleasures of Sri Vaikuntam, the heavenly abode of Sriman Narayana. In the case of Swarga (Indra's abode) the pleasures are limited and have an end. Those who go there return to this mortal world after exhausting their punyas (merits), whereas those who go to Vaikunta Loka will never return. Only very few people are interested in going to swarga (Indra Loka) even though all people come to know that pleasures of heaven are most enjoyable and superior. That being the case there is no wonder if a very few people resort to Saranagathi. Therefore, the majority or the minority of followers does not decide the issue. The greatness of Saranagathi cannot be measured or estimated by the availability of numerous pramanas or by the number of people opting for it.

Oh! Nampillai, you asked me another question - Why there is no prescription of Rishi, Chandas, and Devatha etc. in the case of Saranagathi, while find them in the case of other upayas. The answer is this: "rishya adheencha karanyasam anganyasancha varjayet". This is a famous dictum ruling out the prescription of Rishi, Anganyasa, and Karanyasa, which are laid down as accessories for other upayas. Hence you find the surrenderers not desiring all preliminary rites. I wish to add one thing more. The lord who is Saranya has an aversion to accept any kind of assistance while saving the surrenderer. He is called

Nirapeksha upaya. This is the meaning of "eka" sabda in "sarvadharmam parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja". Nirapeksha upaya means He does not expect any other help in salvaging the souls of this world. That being the case with regard to the Lord, there is no wonder that the saranagathi, which is synonymous with Him, will also not tolerate Anganyasa, Karanyasa etc., This is my strong faith.

Nampillai listened to his Acharya with rapt attention and thought that he was very fortunate in getting such a holy preceptor.

Question 2.

Nampillai asked his teacher: "How can a man understand that he has the qualities of a Srivaishnava?" (It means what are the special identifying characteristics of a Srivaishnava).

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

(a) If a man comes to know that the Lord Sriman Narayana in his Archavatara (in his idol form in temples and other places) does possess all His supreme powers as in Srivaikunta Loka, he can consider himself to be a Srivaishnava. (That means it is very difficult for an ordinary person to have great faith in Archavatara. The moment he thinks that Archavatara has both paratva and soulabhya, he becomes a Srivaishnava. Archavatara Pravanya as Thirumangai Alwar possessed is a very important criterion for a Srivaishnava, which is very difficult to get).

(b) A man in general loves his son and wife very dearly. If he possesses that much love and affection towards a Srivaishnava, he can consider himself as included in the list of Srivaishnavas. (The man is expected to shower more love on a Srivaishnava than he does toward his family members. Here it is amusing to see that some concession is allowed by Sri Nanjeeyar.)

(c) When abused by a Srivaishnava, if a man does not become angry, but on the contrary receives his wrathful words with a cheerful countenance and as an enjoyable pleasure he is a Srivaishnava.

Therefore a man should possess these three important qualities as explained before. They are:

1. Archaavatara Paratva Buddhi
2. Bhaagavatha Prema
3. Bhagavatha Katinokthi Bhogyatha Buddhi

If any one after close examination of him finds that he is in possession of these three virtues, he can conclude within himself that he is a Srivaishnava (Author's note: Please check yourself).

Question 3.

Sri Nampillai was studying Sri Bhashyam (Sanskrit commentary of Sri Ramanuja on

Brahma Sutras composed by Vyasa) under the guidance of Sri Nanjeeyar. At that time the food was ready for the offering of the Lord. Sri Nanjeeyar was informed about this so that he may perform "Tiruvaradhanam"(Pooja) to his deity at his mansion. The teacher ordered the pupil, Sri Nampillai to perform the pooja. The disciple respectfully and humbly told the teacher that he was ignorant of the manner of performing as it would be performed by his Acharya.

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

The teacher quipped, "Do you think that I know very well the procedure? Can you not simply chant the second half of Dwaya Mantra (Srimathe Naraayanaya Namaha) and wash the holy feet of the Lord (the idol called Chokka Thevar at my residence) and offer the cooked food to him with due respect. (Note: This answer points towards the Saulabhya of the Lord unlike the demigods. It is easy to satisfy him by a very simple Pooja. No elaborate and painful procedure is needed. "parivadil eeshan" says Sri Nammazhwar in his Tiruvaimozhi. Parivadu means distressing, painful and agonizing procedure of pooja. It means there is not. The Lord, Sriman Narayana is known for His simplicity.)

Question 4.

Sri Nampillai got another doubt. So he asked the teacher: "Respected Swamin, there are 108 Divya Desas. We have to perform pooja to all the presiding deities in all the holy shrines but we perform pooja only to God in our house. Are we not expected to do this service to all 108 Gods? If that is so, how to do it? Is it not humanly impossible? By offering food to one deity, at our residence are we not allowing the 108 deities to starve?

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

Sri Nanjeeyar smiled and replied with affection "The remedy for this, my dear son! is as follows: First, chant the purva vakya (i.e. the former sentence of Dwaya). After that and before pronouncing the uttara vakya (the latter sentence of Dwaya) you include the word 'Sarva Mangala Vighrahaya'. Now all the deities in all 108 Temples appear before you in the form of the deity at your house. Thereby you are considered to have performed pooja to all those deities." From this question and answer it becomes evident to us that our illustrious Acharyas never wash the holy feet of the deities in their respective mansions without uttering the Dwaya Mantra. That means Dwaya Mantra stands supreme.

Question 5.

Sri Nampillai, one day further questioned his teacher, "Dear Swamin, why is the Lord born in this world?" (i.e. What purpose do the incarnations of Sriman Narayana serve).

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

"O My dear son! The Lord takes several births in this world and performs Herculean tasks even as a wild elephant does by dragging huge and heavy trees. It is in order to inflict severe punishment on those wretched souls who have committed several offences towards His earnest devotees."

Question 6.

Now this answer of the Guru tempted the disciple to know what are all the Bhaagavatha Apachara (i.e. offences towards the devotees). Accordingly he put the question to his preceptor- "what is Bhaagavatha Apachara?"

Sri Nanjeeyar's Answer:

The first and foremost of Bhaagavatha Apachara is equating a Srivaishnava to himself on seeing him. Why it should not be done? It is because the Alwars have vociferously praised SriVaishnavas to the skies and never equated them (SriVaishnavas) to themselves though the Alwars are SriVaishnavas par excellence by the graceful blessings of Lord Sriman Narayana. By this we understand that if we consider that SriVaishnavas are equal to us that is Bhaagavatha Apachara.

Nanjeeyar in this context quotes numerous passages from Nalayira Divya Prabhandham of Alwars to substantiate this view. (It is better to hear them from one's Acharya; otherwise giving a long list of them here will not be conducive to the narrative interest).

Part 3

Bhagavadanubhava: Enjoying the virtues, acts and Handsome appearance etc., of the Lord	Vishayaanubhava: Enjoyments of worldly pleasures or objects of senses. (Bhagavadanubhava and Vishayaanubhavam are always at loggerheads. They can never go together. This is very well enunciated and substantiated by Alvars in their Divya Prabhandams)
a). A Srivaishnava should become the target of the eyes of the Lord. (Vasudevan valayule says Nammazhvar.)	a). He should not be ensnared by the net of bewitching eyes of beautiful damsels. {Madaraar kayarkan yennum valai. (Valai – net, kayal – a kind of fish) kayal like eyes of women says Thondaradipodi Azhwar}
b). A Srivaishnava should always admire the strong shoulders of Madhavan who churned the milky ocean, erecting the Manthara mountain as a churning rod and used Vasuki, the serpent king for the rope. Thus fulfilled the desire of angels deity of Thirumalirumsolai malai by name Sundarabahu. ("Mantaram Naatti" etc – Sri Andaal's Nachchiyar Thirumozhi.)	b). As opposed to this he is not expected to be lured away by the charming shoulders of ladies whose soft bosom is covered by thick perfuming sandal paste. (Chanthenthu menmulaiyar tadantholile akappadudal) Thirumangai Azhwar.
c). A Srivaishnava should consider Lord Ranganatha alone as his intimate and pleasant companion and guard. (Arangathuraiyum inthunaivan – Kaliyan)>>	c). As opposed to this he should not think that the teenaged damsel's fatty bosom is the companion. ("Aviye amude panai mulai thunaiya" – kaliyan)
d). A Srivaishnava should quench his thirst by drinking the ever sweet nectar namely Aravamudan of Thirukkudandhai alone is his intimate pleasant companion and guard. (Arangathuraiyum inthunaivan – Kaliyan) Aravamudhan of Thirukkudan Dai (Kumbakonam) ("appozhuthaikkappozhudu ennaravamuDame" – Nammazhvar's Thiruvaimozhi)	d). On the other hand if he tastes the lips of ladies by kissing them taking it to be nectar, he would only secure his downfall. ("pavaiyar vayamudam" – kaliyan)
e). A Srivaishnava should always consider the Lord as the fruit of four Vedas ("Nanguvedappayan...")	e). Quite against this he thinks that he has taken a birth in this world only to enjoy the enchanting breasts of ladies, he is digging his own grave. ("Madaraar vanamulai payan"- kaliyan)

To conclude, Azhwars have thus clearly chalked out the path to be walked by the Srivaishnavas. Thirumangai Azhwar has categorically declared that a Srivaishnava should first reject by all means the company of girls of graceful gait like swans and then only have recourse to the Lord's Holy feet. He also exhorted them to eschew first all the carnal desires. Hence my dear son, (said Nanjeeyar to Nampillai) a Srivaishnava should give up completely all petty worldly pleasures and then only he will be acceptable to God.

On hearing this advice of his teacher, Sri Nampillai was overwhelmed with great jubilation and became more and more devoted to his Acharya and never left his company even for a while. Sri Nanjeeyar conducted discourse (kalakshepam) on Tiruvaymozhi while at Srirangam and completed 100 times of the same. As this is a rare phenomenon in the life of a man, the disciple Nampillai celebrated it by conducting Satabhishekam Festival with due pomp and glory.

All Srivaishnava sampradaya doctrines dwelt in the heart of Nampillai more than the heart of his teacher. Thus he shone like a bright illuminating torch lighted in a lamp and so he was able to guide all the Srivaishnavas in the proper manner. Observing this, Sri Nanjeeyar thought that he had fulfilled his mission in life.

Several Srivaishnavas admiring the great traits of Sri Nampillai were attracted towards him as bees to the flowers and bats to the fruits and became his ardent disciples. Among them 1). Peria Vaachchan Pillai, 2). Vadakku Tiruveedhi Pillai, 3). Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jeeyar 4).Eyunni Madhava Perumal etc. were the foremost.

Among the four important disciples of Sri Nampillai, Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jeeyar did not care for either his food or sleep. He served his Acharya, Sri Nampillai without any lapse. At one time he became bedridden afflicted by a certain disease. Consequently he summoned some of his close associates and requested them as follows "O, My dear friends, I do not wish to die now. I would like to live for some more time. Hence you please go to Sriranganatha's Temple and going round in circumambulation, recite the divine songs of Sri Kaliyan "Ezhai Edalan" and that of swamy Nammazhwar's "Azhiyezha" etc., and pray to Him for the longevity of my life." They did so and Sri Jeeyar's normal health was restored to him by the grace of Lord.

On hearing this some Srivaishnavas went to Sri Nampillai, saluted him with obedience and requested him to enlighten them in this regard. They said, "O, Dear Master! Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jeeyar is famous for his supreme knowledge and he is also aged. Does this kind of seeking longevity of life suit his swarupa? The mortal should always leave it to the sweet will and pleasure of the Lord. Why this unusual behaviour of our Jeeyar?" Sri Nampillai answered this query: "I do not know his mind. Sri Pillai Engal Azhwan understands the inner meaning of all sastras without an iota of doubt. All of you please go to him and get it clarified."

As per the order of the Acharya, Srivaishnavas approached Pillai Engalazhwan and beseeched him to explain the cause for the odd behaviour of Pinbazhagiya Jeeyar. Engalazhwan came out with an explanation "It may be due to his strong attachment for

Sri Ranganatha and desire to live at Srirangam, enjoying all festivals in the company of Srivaishnavas."

Sri Nampillai, duly reported by the Srivaishnavas said, "Well! This is good. The Araiya Swamy gave an explanation that it may be due to non-completion of the service to Lord which the Jeeyar had commenced."

Sri Nampillai not being satisfied by this reasoning directed the Srivaishnavas to search for an answer from Sri Ammangi Ammal. Sri Ammangi Ammal said "Can a Srivaishnava attending the lectures on Bhagavadvishaya by Sri Nampillai evince an interest in departing to Sri Vaikunta Loka?"

Sri Nampillai listened to this also and commanded the Sri Vaishnavas to get a clarification from Sri Ammangi Periya Mudaliar. Sri Ammangi swamy also came out with his own explanation: "Sri Parashara Bhattar said to Sri Namperumal when He granted him Moksha, that he (Sri Bhattar) would go to SriVaikunta but if he did not see the bright charming face with Kasturi Tilaka on the forehead as that of Sri Namperumal, he would cut asunder a corner of the sky and would jump down to Srirangam. Perhaps our Jeeyar, remembering Sri Parashara Bhattar's strong conviction, is not ready to go to Paramapada where he is sure to miss the bright and charming face of Sri Namperumal along with Kasturi Tilaka."

Sri Nampillai having heard all these explanations looked at the face of Sri Pinbazhagaram Perumal Jeeyar and with a smiling face questioned him "Do you agree with all these explanations?" The disciple humbly submitted to the teacher "No. Certainly all these are not in my heart."

Sri Nampillai observed, " I know your heart". Sri Jeeyar on hearing this submitted humbly "O, Revered Master! There is nothing that is unknown to you as you are omniscient. However if you so desire that I should give an explanation to my strange conduct, I will do so at your behest". Permitted by the teacher, the pupil continued. "Holy Swamin! Your revered self used to take your holy bath every day according to the prescribed rites. After that your good self used to wear very pure and immaculate clothes and then wander about at your mansion. At that time beads of perspiration used to appear on your very charming and illuminating face. I used to go round your good self, fanning you all that time. How I can forego this rare service by going to the other world. Hence I requested the Srivaishnavas to pray to Lord Almighty to elongate my stay here in your company".

Hearing this, all Srivaishnavas exclaimed with great astonishment. They remarked unanimously, "This body which is made up of five elements is dead against all virtuous acts. Our Jeeyar swamy has vanquished this enemy and is doing wonderful service to our Acharya which is really the greatest wealth for a disciple."

Note: This particular episode is recorded by Sri Swamy Manavala Mamunigal in his "Upadesa Ratna Malai". Please read stanza no 66 "Pinbazhagaram Perumal Jeeyar" along with its great commentary by Sri Pillai Lokam Jeeyar.

Part 4

One day Sri Nampillai concluded his Bhagavad Vishaya Kalakshepam and the assembly got dissolved. His earnest disciple, Sri Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jeeyar requested him to clear a doubt. "What is the Swarupa (Nature of the soul)? What is the best means of salvation suited to the nature of the soul (Upaya)? What is the fruit (Purushartha) that the soul is expected to derive from God, suited to his Swarupa?"

Thus being questioned Sri Pillai answered: "Ichchai (the desire to serve God is the Swarupa of the soul), Irakkam (the mercy of the Lord) is the sole means of salvation, Inimai (the happiness that the Lord gets by the service of the soul is the fruit) namely Purushartha."

Having heard this answer, Sri Jeeyar, the pupil said humbly. "The answer is not acceptable to my mind". The teacher with a smile said "If so, you have some special definitions for these three - namely, Swarupa, upayaa Purushartha, of the soul? Please tell me your different line of thinking". Sri Jeeyar submitted humbly - "My swarupa (Nature of soul) is being servant of your devotees. The means of salvation (Upaya) is their affection for me. By my service to them, if their lotus like faces blossom, that is the end or fruit that I achieve (Purushartha)". On listening to this, Sri Pillai's joy knew no bounds.

Note: The Acharya's idea of Swarupa, Upaya and Purushartha are in relation to Sriman Narayana, whereas Sri Jeeyar's concept of the three is in relation to his Acharya's devotees or disciples. The first one is called "Prathama Parva Nishtai" - initial stage or first stage as regards to these three. The latter one is called "Charama Parva Nishtai" or final stage.

Every day Sri Nampillai's kalakshepam or discourse was conducted at Srirangam Temple. On a certain day the discourse was over and the huge assembly got dispersed. The Chola king who was a Srivaishnava happened to visit the temple at that time on that day. He beheld the huge crowd of Srivaishnavas and exclaimed with great wonder - "Are these Srivaishnavas returning after listening to Sri Nampillai's Kalakshepam or after attending the great festival of Sri Namperumal?" From this we understand that this kalakshepam attracted a huge crowd even as Sri Namperumal's fascinating appearance attracted the people.

Thus, Sri Nampillai was happily spending his days at SriRangam with the great wealth of Srivaishnava attendance. There lived at SriRangam at the same time Sri Mudaliandan's (nephew of Sri Ramanuja) grandson and the son of Sri Kandadai Andan by name Sri Kandadai Tholappan. Unfortunately, he was seized by jealousy on seeing the popularity and greatness of Sri Nampillai, which were at their zenith. One day, near the Sanctum Sanctorum of SriRanganatha, as Sri Tholappan was worshipping Him, Sri Pillai also arrived on the scene accompanied by a huge host of Srivaishnavas. Sri Tholappan could not brook this sight of grandeur and became crimson in his face. Possessed by anger, he scolded Sri Pillai by using very harsh and bitter word. Sri Pillai heard this with a

trembling frame. After worshipping the Lord, he retraced his steps towards his home silently.

This news reached the ears of Tolappar's wife who was gifted with more wisdom than her husband. She became extremely sorry for her husband's misconduct. She got disgusted with her husband and ceased to attend to her domestic chores. Sri Tolappar returned to his mansion duly after worshipping the Lord. The wife did not accord as usual a warm welcome to him and also did not do any service to him as she used to do every day. Sri Tolappar, struck with wonder addressed his wife; "From the marriage day onwards you used to revere me as your Acharya. Today you have disregarded me. Why this strange behavior?" She replied, "Sri Nampillai is supposed to be the very incarnation of Swamy Nammazhwar by the entire SriVaishnava world. Further he is the very life of Sri Namperumal. You have abused him in His very presence unhesitatingly using very bitter and cruel words. After that you are not even stricken with remorse for your misconduct. Still you hope to achieve salvation. Therefore, I have no truck with you. If you are disgusted with me, you can do whatever you like with my body. Only that was handed over to you after being reared up by my parents. I am well off with my soul, as my Acharya already accepts it. You know very well the verdict of Sri Varaha Perumal as expressed to his consort Sri Bhumi Devi: 'My devotee may belong to the family of a Chandala (outcaste). However if people abuse him, I will not spare them for any length of time.' (Madbhaktam, etc – Sri Varaha Purana). Even though you know very well this dictum of the Lord, you pretend to not be aware of this. Hence, I have no association with you. It is humanly impossible to stitch the earth that got divided into two parts by the earthquake. So also it is impossible to control the ebbing sea by the construction of a huge and high wall. Similarly the tall mountain breaks in the middle and falls down, the consequent devastation is unbearable. Similar to all these is the sin of the Bhaagavatha apachara and that too without repentance after its commitment. You cannot wash it (Bhaagavatha Apachara) by having recourse to any expiatory act or ceremony. Therefore please permit me to live the life according to my own sweet will and pleasure."

Sri Tolappar was also taken aback by the advice of his wife for a while and pondered over the whole incident as he was an erudite scholar and was the scion of an illustrious family. The confusion that was the result of his jealousy vanished. With a clear mind he approached his wife and said, "All that you have said is quite correct. I have committed a great blunder. What shall I do now?" The wife also feeling sad for his condition observed, "If one has lost his property while bathing in a river, he cannot search for the same in a pond. It is common sense that he has to search for it in the river only. So also you have to beg the pardon of Swamy Nampillai who is the very receptacle of mercy and thereby safeguard your interest". Sri Tolappar replied "Sri Nampillai is in the presence of Sri Ranganatha and that too in the midst of huge congregation of Srivaishnavas. Now how can I approach him to seek his pardon without fear or shame? You please accompany me and request him on my behalf to pardon me". She also agreed to this and both of them quickly started to go to Sri Nampillai's mansion.

Meanwhile, Sri Nampillai went to his mansion after this unfortunate event in the temple. After bidding farewell to all Srivaishnavas who accompanied him to the temple, Sri

Nampillai fasted the whole day and stayed within his mansion. When the evening came, he performed all the due rites (like Sandhyavandana etc) and covering his body from head to foot with a single cloth came to Sri Tolappar's mansion and slept on the verandah of Sri Tolappar's house. Sri Tolappar and his wife lighted a lamp and come out of their house with the intention of going to Sri Nampillai's mansion. On coming out of the house they saw some white object lying on the pial. Sri Tolappar asked, "Who is there lying?" Sri Pillai replied, " I am Thirukkalkanri Dasar". Sri Tolappar suspected him and observed, "Oh! You have come here to create a scene thinking that you are a highly reputed person and is it proper on the part of Sri Tolappar to insult me in the august assemble of Sri Ranganatha." Sri Nampillai with a trembling tone told him, "Swamin! Certainly it is not so. I have not come here as you imagine me to be". Sri Tolappar retorted, "Then why should you come here and sleep?" Sri Pillai replied, "I am a great sinner. I am totally responsible for the mental confusion of your revered self, the grandson of Sri Mudaliyandan and that too in the presence of Sri Namperumal (whose presence will quell all mental disorders). For such a worst sinner, (myself) there is no other place to which I can resort except your noble self's mansion."

Sri Tolappar who came out of his house with a firm resolve to apologize to Sri Nampillai was astonished to see the pathetic condition of Sri Nampillai. He was also moved very much by his words of humility. With overflowing affection, he lifted up Sri Nampillai from the ground and having embraced him tightly, exclaimed, "So far, I was under the impression that you are an Acharya to some Srivaishnavas at Srirangam. Only today I understood that you have every qualification to be the Acharya of the entire world. So saying he named him 'Lokacharyar'. " He took him with great respect inside his mansion and along with his wife he entreated him in manifold ways and thus made him highly pleased. He put several questions to Sri Nampillai and cleared his doubts as regards Sampradaya Rahasya Arthas. (Secret messages hidden in the doctrines of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya) and became a devoted disciple to him.

Sri Nanjeeyar, the revered Acharya was immensely pleased to see the ascending glory of Sri Nampillai, his dearest disciple. The Acharya completed 100 years. Then towards the close of his life, he was afflicted with a disease and was bedridden. One of his disciples by name Kutti Kuri Ilaiyazhwar came to him. He beseeched him, "May I now request you Swamin to chant "Dwaya Mantra"? Sri Jeeyar who was also known as Periya Jeeyar asked "Why do you recommend the chanting to me? Is it (Dwayam) to be chanted only by a bedridden man and not by a wandering soul?" The disciple on hearing this became dumbfounded and felt ashamed of himself. From this episode we understand that "Dwaya Mantra" is to be chanted by all times irrespective of their condition.

Sri Terkashwan Bhattar, a disciple of Sri Nanjeeyar happened to hear this (i.e. the dialogue between Sri Nanjeeyar and Sri Kuttikuri Ilaiazhwar) he thought that there was some secret desire lingering in the mind of Sri Nanjeeyar. He approached him and asked respectfully what his longing was? Sri Jeeyar replied, "I have a strong desire to behold Sri Namperumal's Archavatara body. This is what I think that He can give me and it is equal to the wealth of the entire world." Sri Terkashwan Bhattar carried this news to Sri Tirumalai Thandha Perumal and he in turn reported this humbly to Namperumal.

Namperumal accordingly set out of his Sanctorum with due pomp and grandeur and arrived in front of the Sri Mutt of Sri Nanjeeyar. And He having cast off his garments exhibited his very exhilarating divine Archa Vighraha to Sri Nanjeeyar that was "Sarvasvam"(the wealth of entire world) for him. Sri Jeeyar too enjoyed with great exuberance of joy, the Archa Tirumeni with unblinking eyes. Then he turned round and looking at his disciples Sri Nampillai etc and addressed them. "Namperumal has fulfilled my wish by displaying His Archa Tirumeni to me which is the wealth of the world for me. Now I am prepared to do Sarvaswatana to you all. (Here Sarvaswatana means whatever knowledge I came to possess by the blessing of my learned Acharya Sri Bhattar, is my wealth that is sarvaswam). Those who have thirst for knowledge can quench their thirst by questioning me."

Sri Nampillai requested him, "Oh! Swamin! Tell me something which I should ever remember as the sole refuge". Sri Jeeyar said, "Your question is just like using thorns while decorating the body of a bride at the time of marriage with jewels. I have not kept any message handed down to me by our ancestors. I have already disclosed every thing to you and thereby decorated your soul with the ornament like Sampradaya doctrines. (Therefore your question is distressing to me), However I reiterate the following – Do not think that the Lord is for the sake of the soul but think that the soul is for the sake of the Lord."

But Sri Nampillai was not pleased by this exhortation and so kept silent. The Guru understood the displeasure of his disciple from his facial expression and silence and demanded his pupil to speak out his expectation. Sri Nampillai then posed this question: "What should be the feeling and behavior of Srivaishnavas when they get separated from the company a Srivaishnava by his departure to Sri Vaikunta Loka from this mortal world?"

Nanjeeyar replied: "Hereafter there is no need for you to spend your time trying to acquire knowledge. There is enough to spare in your case. Hence, perform the service of the Lord by gathering all Srivaishnavas together and propagating our Srivaishnava sampradaya. At the same time however I wish to pass onto you a very important message. Sri Parasara Bhattar having told all important and essential subjects relating to the welfare of my soul finally advised me: 'Do not be swelled with pride for the following reasons – 1. I am by name Vedanti(one who has learnt vedantas to its core). 2. I have for my Acharya, Sri Parasara Bhattar. 3. I have given by way of Guru Dakshina (Tuition fee to the teacher) plenty of wealth. Think always that Sri Emberumanaar's i.e. Sri Ramanuja's holy feet are the sole means of salvation and take refuge unto him.' I tell you now in a similar fashion - you also take refuge under Emberumanar. Do not be elated that you got the sobriquet Lokacharya, that you are capable of bringing out the esoteric meanings of 4000 hymns of Azhwars and that you are the propagator of Sri Bhashya (Beware of these pitfalls)".

Afterwards Sri Nanjeeyar begged the pardon of Nampillai and other Srivaishnavas (for any fault committed unknowingly, as it is very difficult for a soul with this body to be free from any fault). He then purified himself by having "Sri Paada Thirtha" (the holy

water after washing their holy feet) of Srivaishnavas and then hosted a dinner in their favour (Tadiyaradhana).

Note: The exchange between Acharya and sishya is note worthy. Our behaviour towards our Acharya and other Srivaishnavas should be done while keeping all these in our minds. This is a lesson, both Acharyas and sishyas should learn.

Subsequently, Sri Jeeyar kept his head on the lap of Sri Senapathi Jeeyar and his holy feet on the lap of Sri Pinbazhagiya Jeeyar and slept facing towards the temple and remained thus inside his mutt. Then, meditating on the holy feet of Sri Parashara Bhattar, he began his journey to Sri Vaikunta Loka (i.e. passed away).

Sri Nampillai could not bear the separation from his Acharya and with his eyes full of tears, he fainted for a while and thus grieved very much. All other Sri Vaishnavas consoled him saying "Is it proper for your noble self to grieve in this manner?". On hearing this, Sri Nampillai somehow consoled himself. He offered garland, clothes etc. that were sent by Lord Ranganatha through the Temple priest to the mortal remains (Charama Vighraha) of his Acharya and performed the last rites for the departed soul according to the prescribed rites for an ascetic. He also performed the Tiruvadhyayana festival for his Acharya.

Among our Acharyas, Sri Nanjeeyar's greatness is outstanding. We do not find such special and extraordinary happenings that took place in the life of Sri Nanjeeyar. He also exhibited exemplary characteristics. What are they?

1. Sri Namperumal of his own accord showered this grace on SriNanjeeyar and towards the close of his life came out of His temple and displayed His Archa vighraha which was Sarvaswam (the entire world of wealth) to Sri Nanjeeyar. This is a special event in the life of SriNanjeeyar.
2. Sri Nanjeeyar conducted Tiruvaimozhi Kalakshepam (Discourse on Tiruvaimozhi of Sri Swamy Nammazhwar) 100 times and therefore "shatabhishekha festival" was celebrated. This is a rare phenomenon which contributes to his greatness and which the other Acharyas cannot have a claim.
3. He gave up the company of his wife, children, house, friends, wealth and his native place which were detrimental to the service of his Acharya, Sri Parasara Bhattar.
4. Having snapped all worldly relations, Sri Jeeyar did not go to any other place. He directly came to Srirangam where he could enjoy the company and service of his Acharya. And thereby he proved that the proper place of dwelling for a disciple was the near his Acharya.
5. He placed his entire wealth at the disposal of his Acharya.
6. He thought that his life mission was serving Sri Parasara Bhattar.
7. His main stay of life was the service of his Acharya.

These rare features are to be found only in the case of Sri Nanjeeyar (Note: Can we try to emulate at least one or two special qualities of Swamy Nanjeeyar?)

Sri Nanjeeyar's birth day is phalguna month and the star Uttaram, as that of Sri Ranga Nachchiyar.

His Taniyan is
namo vedanta vedyaya jaganmangala hetave
yasya vag amruthasara puritam bhuvana trayam

Meaning: Salutation to that Vedanti who has contributed to the welfare of the world and the three worlds are submerged by whose nectarine speeches.

Another Tanian runs as follows:
yad vachasakalam sastram yatkriya vaidico vidhi:
yatkataksho jagatraksha tam vande madhavam munim

Meaning: I salute that saint by name Madhava whose words are the sastras and whose acts are the prescribed rites in Veda and whose glances secure the safety of the universe.

In the narrative account it comes across that Sri Namperumal gave Sarvaswa dana to Sri Nanjeeyar. What does this mean? That is showing off His entire charming body, i.e. Archa Tirumeni.

Sri Nanjeeyar also gave us sarvaswa danam. His sarvaswa dana is giving out all secret principles of our Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya without any reservation.

Part 5

On one occasion, Sri Nampillai was returning to Srirangam, after worshipping Sri Nachchiyar Sengamalavalli, the divine consort of Sri Pundarikaksha at Tiruvellarai, along with his disciples. When he neared the river Kaveri to reach Srirangam, it was in high spate with eddies and several aquatic animals. The fury of the floods was immeasurable. The river Kaveri resembled Ganga which with its floods used to dash against the banks and uproot the trees standing there majestically. By the current of the river Ganges, the Himalaya mountain shook and whole earth used to tremble and the ocean used to dread the Ganga joining him. On seeing the river Kaveri in a similar condition Sri Nampillai and others became very much worried about crossing the river.

They could not obtain a comfortable and strong boat to cross the river. They could get only a small boat called "Tazhi". They ascended the Tazhi and as it reached the middle of the river the whole horizon was enveloped by thick dark column of clouds; the darkness engulfed all the directions. They could not see both the banks and judge the directions. The Tazhi started slowly sinking unable to bear the heavy weight of the crew. At that juncture the ferry man shouted on seeing the alarming state of affairs. "If 2 or 4 people could jump out, all others including Sri Nampillai could be saved. If not, all of us have to drown." But no one was prepared to leap out as it was the middle of the river and owing to fear of their death.

At that moment a pious old woman addressed the ferry man "Oh! Gentleman, you will live for 100 years. Bestowing your best attention make Sri Nampillai, the very life of the entire humanity, take him to shore." Blessing him thus, she jumped out of the ferry without caring for the pitch darkness and the floods. By this timely act of the woman, the ferry's weight became less and it reached the shore. Sri Nampillai became very much distressed at the loss of this lady on his account. The sacrifice touched him to the quick and he repeatedly mourned the loss of a life for his sake. At that time the lady who jumped into the river was carried away by the current of the river to a very small distance. There she could find a sandy mound and standing upon that she heard the moaning of her Acharya Sri Nampillai which was clearly audible as it was a notional voice. She quickly responded to her Acharya "Oh! My respected swamy! I am alive and very near to the bank. Kindly do not grieve for my sake."

Immediately Sri Nampillai asked the ferry man to go and fetch her which he did so. She came and prostrated at his feet. As the lady was not aware of any other protector except her Acharya, Sri Nampillai, she remarked, "Oh! Protector, I suppose that you have appeared there in the river bed as a huge sandy mound in order to save me from finding a sea grave". Sri Nampillai replied "If that is your strong faith I have nothing to say against it. Let it be so".

The moral of this episode is as follows: If a man wishes sincerely to save his preceptor by sacrificing his body, wealth and life, he will be saved by Sriman Narayana at that juncture.

Later on, while Sri Nampillai along with his disciples was guarding the Visishtadwaita sampradaya with all his might, a lady disciple of Swamy lived in her house which was adjacent to Sri Nampillai's mansion. A Srivaishnava gentleman who used to attend Sri Nampillai's discourses along with her and thus who became very friendly with her advised her very often to donate her house to swamy Nampillai as Sri Nampillai's mansion could not accomodate all Srivaishnavas during the discourse. She replied in the negative, stating that who would get even a small house at the holy Srirangam and therefore she would not part with her property till the end of her life time. The Srivaishnava gentleman duly reported this to Sri Nampillai. Sri Nampillai invited this lady and addressed her, "You require a small portion of the house to live in. During the discourse, my house is hardly sufficient to accommodate all Srivaishnavas. Therefore you please donate your house for the sake of the Sri Vaishnava assembly". On hearing this, the lady submitted humbly "I will do so, but on one condition. Swamin! You have to assure me a berth at Sri Vaikunta in exchange of this accommodation". Sri Nampillai replied, "This could be done only by Srivaikuntanatha as it is under his jurisdiction. I can only make a humble requisition to him and then I can do so if he permits me". The lady continued, "I am an innocent woman. Therefore I am not satisfied with your vocal assurance. May I request you Swamin to put it in writing." Sri Nampillai became highly pleased at this request. So he took a piece of paper and wrote on it, after affixing the date, month and year, as follows- "I, Tirukkalikanri Dasar (Nampillai) have granted a berth for this lady at Srivaikuntam today. It is therefore the duty of Srivaikuntanatha to register the same and grant a place in Srivaikuntam to this devoted lady". He also put his signature as

Tirukkalikanni Dasar and handed it over to the lady. The lady received the letter with due respect and while bearing it on her head she also partook Sripaada Thirtha (Holy water after washing the holy feet of her teacher) and the prasada (food etc). She spent the next two days serving Sri Nampillai and on the third day she started her sojourn to Sri Vaikunta Loka.

We understand from this event, that a man is expected to have absolute faith in his Acharya and he has to totally depend upon what the Acharya grants to him by his mercy. The Acharya has absolute authority over the two worlds i.e. Nitya vibhuti (Sri Vaikunta Loka) and Lila vibhuti (this mortal world meant for His sport).

Sri Mahabhashya Bhattar, a Srivaishnava wishing to dispel his doubt, put a question to Sri Nampillai: "How is a sentient soul sure of getting salvation at the end of his life?" Sri Nampillai gave a convincing answer: "The soul (a Srivaishnava) firmly believes that he would reach only the abode of Lord Sriman Narayana at the end of his life owing to the following reasons:

1. He has unflinching faith in Lord's Sriyapathi's upAya bhAva (the sole means of salvation) and the upeya bhAva (sole goal).
2. He has very strong faith in his Acharya, who is solely responsible for his upliftment while he was losing the enjoyment of God's vicinity for a very long time.
3. He has absolute faith in Visishtadwaita siddhantha as enunciated by Sri Ramanuja in his Sri Bhashyam.
4. He meditates upon the pious virtues of Lord Sriman Narayana as found in Sri Ramayana (i.e. spending his time by the study of Sri Ramayana in order to enjoy the special amiable qualities of Sri Rama and not as a means of salvation)
5. Spending his life time by the study of Alwar's Divya Prabhandams.

On account of these, a soul (Srivaishnava) need not entertain even an iota of doubt as regards his emancipation at the end of his life as per the assurance given by Swamy Nammaazhwar in his Tiruvaimozhi – "mitchi yinri ---- matradu kaiaduve" (He who studies Divya Prabhanda will hold in his palm the Vaikunta Loka).

The gist of this answer is worth remembering for every Srivaishnava - determination of upaya and upeya in a very clear cut manner, possession of absolute faith in Acharya and in Visishtadwaita philosophy and a very strong appetite for the covetable virtues of the Lord are the most requisite essential qualities of a Srivaishnava, which would ensure him liberation from worldly bondage at the end of his life.

On one occasion, some Srivaishnavas belonging to Pandiya Desa came to Sri Nampillai and requested him to tell them some important messages of Srivaishnava Sampradaya on which they could repose their confidence. Sri Pillai exhorted them to remember always "The magnificent sea shore". Confused at this answer, they exclaimed, "Are we expected to remember the sandy hillocks and huge regions of 'Rose Apple' forests (Jumbolana) on the sandy seashore?" Sri Nampillai smiled at this quietly and told them, "Sri Rama accompanied by a huge host of monkey army encamped on the sea shore before crossing

it. The night came. As all the monkeys were very much attached to Him, they kept a close watch over securing His safety even at the cost of their lives. Sri Rama slept while the monkeys were keeping awake and guarding him. He woke up when the monkeys had gone to sleep. Then He along with his brother, Sri Lakshmana fastened the quiver at the back of their shoulders, strung the bow and holding the sharp arrow in their hands, went round the entire army throughout the night in order to ward off any catastrophe that may befall them. Hence there is no other protector except Sri Rama. This is what you have to remember always."

Therefore, if we give up the mental worry with regards to our safety and resign ourselves to His benevolent care, He is sure to take care of us.

A certain person, on another occasion put a question to Sri Nampillai, "Swamin, all Srivaishnavas say in one voice that all celestial beings other than Sriman Narayana are not to be worshipped. But all those gentlemen do worship them in their daily rituals (Nityakarma like Sandhyavandana, Amavasya tharpana etc., and on other occasions in their nimithika Karma (like Grahana (eclipse), tarpana (debatory rites)) prescribed by sastras. What is the taboo in the worship of these deities in their respective temples dedicated to them?"

Sri Nampillai answered, "Though the fire in Agnihotra (the daily fire worship ritual) and the fire used for cremating the corpse in the crematorium are one and the same, the former one is considered to be holy and the latter one unholy. Same is the case with the worship of the deities prescribed in the veda sastras and divinities consecrated in their respective temples. In the Nitya and Nimittika karmas, Srivaishnavas do worship the other deities like Indra, Varuna, Vayu, Agni etc. but there is a special rule stating that even though they worship those deities they do so not as separate entities, but as the body of Lord Sriman Narayana. Hence it is permissible and it results in the worship of Sriman Narayana only who is their inner soul. But in the respective temples of these deities they are according to the holy scripture Veda, subordinate to Lord Sriman Narayana. Hence there is a change in the order (Paravaratavvyatyayam). Moreover these deities are consecrated there by the people who are full of Tamo Guna and they have done so using the mantras and tantras (mode of performance) as found in Saiva Agamas which are opposed to vedic principles. To add to that, there is no special rule laid down in the Vedas that these deities in the temples should be considered as part and parcel of Sriman Narayana (body) as they are considered in the case of Nitya Nimittika rituals. In the group of these deities, especially Siva is to be abandoned by all means. This is because that siva is charged with Tamo Guna in full which is at logger heads always with Satwa Guna and therefore in the temples dedicated to him, he should not be worshipped as part and parcel of Sriman Narayana."

So the deities like Siva etc., though they are considered to be part and parcel of Sriman Narayana according to Veda (sa agni, angaranya Devata – He is the soul, the other demigods are His body) are consecrated in their respective temples not according to the prescription of Veda and Vedanta. Hence they are not to be worshipped in these temples

by Srivaishnavas who have an earnest desire to liberate themselves from the worldly bondage.

This particular question and answer is to be understood in its proper perspective. It does not mean that Srivaishnavas hate the other demi Gods. According to the Holy Scripture Veda, the heavenly beings are also souls just like any one of us. These souls enjoy a very good healthy body, bereft of disease, decrepitude and decay etc. owing to their virtuous deeds. The mortals in this world have inferior bodies. Any mortal by performing several sacrifices etc. as per the prescription in the Veda can become Indra, Siva, Brahma etc. But there is no means for any soul to become Sriman Narayana. In short, all the so called demi Gods belong to the category of chetanas. They do have the power to grant boons and pronounce curses etc., but those powers are given to them by Lord Sriman Narayana. Srivaishnavas main goal is in getting liberation from the cycle of birth and death and thereby reaching the abode of Sriman Narayana and serving Him in the company of His consort, calculated to bring happiness to the divine couple. This purushartha (aim of life) cannot be granted by anyone else except Sriman Narayana. To cite an example, the celestial beings like Indra etc. are class A prisoners and we are in the class B prison. To seek release from the jail, a prisoner has to surrender to king of the land and not to another class prisoner. Hence Srivaishnavas neither have disregard nor regard for the other deities. They always cherish a spirit of tolerance in their heart and hence no animosity towards the other Gods or their devotees as they have absolute faith in the Vedas and follow the doctrines enunciated in the holy scriptures as the creation of Sriman Narayana. Therefore they do not despise them while prohibiting the worship of other Gods. This underlining principle is to be remembered by all the readers.

One day, a Sri vaishnava approached Swami Nampillai and remarked "O, Swamin! Your respectable body has become very lean and emaciated." Sri Pillai quipped, "While one wanes, the other one waxes; this is the general rule. Don't you know this?"

The sum and substance of this proverb is to be understood clearly. When knowledge (of God), devotion (to Him) and detachment (to other worldly objects) increase, naturally the body of that person who comes to possess these traits becomes very lean - owing to his devotion to the Lord, he always contemplates on the great qualities of the Lord, His heart melts, and consequently, he loses his taste for food, etc. This results in the welcome weakness of the body. Whereas the worldly man, who identifies his body with his soul, eats well, and maintains the health of the body. Thus his physical stature waxes and the soul naturally wanes.

Another Srivaishnava approaching Sri Nampillai enquired, "Are you hale and healthy?" Sri Pillai retorted, "Are we going to wage war? No, the necessary health to serve the Lord is available in plenty. There is nothing that is wanting". We understand from this reply of Sri Swami that a Srivaishnava need not go in quest of health.

Once Sri Nampillai had an attack of some disease. A Srivaishnava who was very much attached to him came and saw him and became very much vexed in his heart on seeing

Swamy's condition. Sri Pillai on observing the Srivaishnava's lamentation said, "I consider the disease to this body as a welcome guest. Why do you worry like this?"

Sri Nampillai's heart is to be understood here. Normally a dangerous disease will result in death. Who is afraid of death? Only a person who has not done his duty as prescribed by the sastras. On the other hand, a person who has discharged his duties entertains death as a welcome guest.

After some time Sri Nampillai was suffering from some disease once again. At that time Engalazhwan and Ammangi Ammal, two celebrated Srivaishnavas came to see Sri Nampillai to enquire about his health. At the behest of Sri Engalazhwan, Sri Ammangi Ammal, full of affection for Sri Nampillai, tried to touch the body of Sri Nampillai having kept in his hand a yantra (a copper plate which possess magical powers effected by incantation), which would cure Sri Nampillai. But Sri Nampillai unable to bear this, withdrew his body from being touched by Ammangi Ammal. Both of them became very sad at this behaviour of the teacher.

Quoting some scriptural lines, both of them addressed Sri Nampillai, "If you endeavor to annihilate your disability by having recourse to other mantras and tantras, it brings discredit to you (swaroopahani), as you are entirely depending on Sriman Narayana for the safety of your body and soul. If we, on your behalf, commit some acts for nullifying the evil effect of disease, it does not bring discredit to you. Hence, why do you prevent us from doing so?" Laughing at this, Sri Nampillai said, "You are quoting some scriptural lines to prove the validity of your behaviour. I also know all these. Apart from that I know a particular and special scriptural dictum to which I pin my strong faith."

Both of them expressed their desire to know that special authoritative scriptural mantra. Sri Nampillai categorically declared, "My most respected Acharya, Swamy Nanjeeyar, towards the close his lifetime told me very clearly that all other mantras except Dwaya mantra are equal to the kshudra mantra sivapanchakshari (Om nama sivaya)". At this both of them questioned, "Grand Sire! What will then happen to Tirumantra?" (Is it also equal to Sivapanchakshari?)

Note: kshudra mantra does not mean despicable and detestable. All other mantras including sivapanchakshari will yield only insignificant and temporary fruits. They are all kshudra mantras in the sense that they are kshudra phala prada mantras – kindly avoid any misconception here.

Sri Nampillai replied, "Tirumantra is the one mantra that is being elaborately explained in Dwaya Mantra. That is, Tirumantra is vivarini (that which needs elaboration) and Dwaya mantra is vivarana (that which brings out clearly all the hidden meanings of Tirumantra). Therefore owing to "vivarana – vivarani" bhava in the case of Tirumantra and Dwaya, this question does not arise. Tirumantra is not a kshudra mantra. It is part and parcel of Dwaya mantra".

Then the two srivaishnavas asked Sri Nampillai, "In that case, why can't we make use of Dwaya mantra to eradicate your disease? Is it also objectionable?" Sri Nampillai replied, "A man drinks water only to quench his thirst. He does not make use of water as a medicine to drive away his disease. Similarly Dwaya mantra is to alleviate the taapa (the burning sensation caused by the afflictions of life). It can never be used to quell the disease. That does not mean that Dwaya mantra lacks efficacy to quell the disease. But a prapanna (who has taken refuge under Sriman Narayana) by making use of it for driving away his disease loses his swarupa and paratantriya (total dependence upon the Lord). On the other hand, if a surrenderer makes use of Dwaya mantra for the sake of another, he is taking law into his hands. Lord Sriman Narayana alone is the saviour. Therefore, a Srivaishnava is not expected to make use of Dwaya mantra for ensuring the health of any other person. If he does so, it brings discredit to the supreme knowledge and matchless prowess of Lord Sriman Narayana. That is an encroachment into the realm of God who alone is the protector. Hence using Dwaya for any purpose is totally prohibited in the case of Prapannas (surrenderers)."

Days passed on. Sri Nampillai recovered his health. As usual, he was conducting discourses and thus he was the uncrowned monarch of Srivaishnava kingdom. During that period Sri Koorathazhwan's grandson by name Naduvil Thiruveedhi Pillai Bhattar grew very jealous of Sri Nampillai and was highly intolerant of his Gyana (supreme scholarship), Bhakthi (Devotion), Vairagya (renouncement of all other worldly desires) the wealth of Srivaishnava attendance, his popularity among the public, the huge host of honest disciples etc. One day as he was proceeding to the court of chola king. On his way he met Sri Pinbazhagiya Perumal Jeeyar and addressed him, "O Jeeyar Swamy! I am on my way to king's court. Would you mind accompanying me?". Invited thus, Sri Jeeyar too thought that he should accompany him as Sri Bhattar hailed from the family of his paramacharya, Sri Koorathazhwan. So, both of them were very soon at the Royal gate. The king entertained them with great warmth and affection, offered a respectable seat to Sri Bhattar and stood by his side with great reverence in his august assembly.

As the king had the good luck of listening to several eminent scholars of Srivaishnava Sampradaya (He was bahushrutha) and by himself possessed very high knowledge, he wished to examine the deep erudition of Sri Bhattar. He questioned him, "O Revered master! How did Sri Rama, who took special care in concealing his divinity by his categorical declaration 'atmanam manusham manye' – (Meaning: 'I consider myself not the incarnation of Sriman Narayana as you all proclaim but only as the son of Dasaratha and a mortal being'), in the presence of all celestial beings headed by Brahma after slaying Ravana, forgot all about this and granted 'mukthi' to the vulture king Jatayu by pronouncing 'gatchcha lokam anuttaman' (Go to the supreme world by my order)?"

Sri Bhattar got perplexed at this query and needed some time to ponder over this problem and answer it. Luckily for him, the king at that time had to attend some other important royal business. This interval was god sent to Sri Bhattar. He turned round to Sri Jeeyar and asked him, "What is the solution offered by Sri Nampillai for this intriguing matter of granting salvation to Periya Udaiyar (another name for Jatayu as he is the uncrowned king of all vultures, periya- great, udaiyar – king) by Sri Rama being a mortal (by doing

so the cat was out of the bag)?" Sri Jeeyar replied with all humility, "Sri Nampillai used to quote the line `satyena lokan jayathi' (SriRama conquers all the worlds by speaking truth always), thereby solving this conflicting and incongruous matter."

Sri Bhattar pondered over this solution of this intriguing problem and arrived at the conclusion that it was just and proper. The king after completing his official duty looked at Sri Bhattar, "You have not yet answered my question." Sri Bhattar replied, "You were otherwise engaged. How could I answer your question? Now with your mind focused towards the subject on hand listen to me with rapt attention. The citizens of Ayodhya while eulogizing the extraordinary and exemplary qualities and rare virtues of Sri Rama sang the following song:

satyena lokan jayati deenan danenas raghava:
gunin shushrushaya veera: dhanusha yudhi shathravan

(Sri Raghava possesses control over all the worlds by speaking the truth always. He captivates the mind of the distressed by giving them sufficient donations {to quell their agony}. He attracts the mind of elders by his sincere service to them. The hero vanquishes his foes by the eminent display of wielding His bow.)

The king lent his ear to this wonderful explanation and became highly pleased. He nodded his head by way of ascent and saluted Sri Bhattar by falling at his holy feet and repeatedly praised him to the skies. The monarch honoured him by presenting several invaluable ornaments, several costly clothes and also huge wealth and stood there amazed at his explanation. He bid adieu to him with great respect and requested him to get back to Srirangam. Sri Bhattar received all the ornaments and clothes offered by the king and proceeded from there catching hold of the hand of Sri Jeeyar. He appealed to Sri Jeeyar to take him along with the gifts to Sri Nampillai and recommend them to Sri Pillai. He thus entreated him in manifold ways. Sri Jeeyar also did so.

Sri Nampillai was amazed at the unexpected arrival of Sri Bhattar and rose to receive him as the latter belonged to the family of his paramacharya, Sri Veda Vyasa Bhattar. Sri Nampillai prostrated before him and asked looking at all the presents offered to him "What are all these?" Sri Bhattar answered, "O Swamin! This is the value for your single supreme sukthi (Divine speech) among ten thousand crores of other inestimable divya sukthis. Therefore please accept both myself and these gifts." Sri Nampillai said, "Let it be so. But I think it is not proper on your part to do like this being the grandson of Sri Koorathazhwan". Sri Bhattar replied, "This is the gift offered by the king, who is after all merged in worldly pleasures for time immemorial, having been enraptured by your one single and superb statement. I have nothing else to offer you suited to the superior relationship with Sri Koorathazhwan. Living in the adjacent house to your mansion, I lost the golden opportunity of serving your holy feet; not only that, unable to bear your grandeur I became the very generating station of jealousy towards you and thus was wasting the precious span of life offered to me by Sri Ranganatha. For such a wretched soul there is no other expiatory act than taking refuge under your holy feet. Hence you

must take me into your fold." So saying, Sri Bhattar fell at the feet of Sri Nampillai, tears welling out of his eyes and imploring his pardon.

Sri Pillai lifted him up with much affinity and embraced him. He looked at him with eyes full of mercy and posted him with all Srivaishnava Sampradaya doctrines at his command without anything left behind. At this Sri Bhattar thought that he had fulfilled his mission in life and thereafter never getting separated from his Acharya enjoyed every minute of his life time by listening to the sweet words of his teacher and serving him always.

During that period, Sri Nampillai invited Sri Bhattar into the esoteric meaning of Tiruvaimozhi by conducting kalakshepam. Sri Bhattar too listened to his teacher with rapt attention and absorbed in his heart every single syllable of his exposition with a very steady mind. Through out the night he wrote everything he heard and thus completed the work. He took them all to his teacher and presented them before him respectfully. Sri Pillai asked what it was. "This contains the meaning of Tiruvaimozhi as given by your venerable self for my sake" replied Sri Bhattar. Sri Pillai took the grantha and went through the same and found that the book contained 125000 granthas (one grantha = 32 syllables) in the order of Mahabharatha. (Note: Tiruvaimozhi of Sri Nammazhwar has at present 5 commentaries called 6000 padi, 9000 padi, 36000 padi and 12000 padi written by Sri Tirukkurugai Piran Pillan, Sri Nanjeeyar, Sri Periyavachchan Pillai, Sri Nampillai [the scribe being Sri Vadakku thiruveedhi pillai] and Sri Azhagiya Manavala Jeyar respectively. 32 syllables constitute one padi which is also called grantha). This book brought displeasure to the master instead of joy. He looked at Sri Bhattar and asked him, "Why did you write this commentary without my permission and according to your whims and fancies?"

Sri Bhattar politely replied, "I wrote this commentary as per your explanation and nothing in excess". Sri Pillai said with disgust, "O My dear sir! You wrote whatever I expressed in words. But did you understand the inner meanings of Tiruvaimozhi treasured up in my heart? During the period of Sri Udaiyavar (Sri Ramanuja) Sri Thirukkurugai Piran Pillan, the devoted disciple of Sri Ramanuja toiled to obtain the permission for writing Tiruvaimozhi commentary 6000 padi. But during my period you wrote the commentary without getting sanction from me and that too such an elaborate one - 125000 padi. This is unbecoming of the relationship between the teacher and the taught and will become a precedent." So saying he took the manuscript and having dipped it in water he put it inside an ant hill. Thus the commentary was lost.

Later, Sri Nampillai commanded his dearest disciple Sri Periyavachchan pillai (Sri Krishna Pada) who had learnt all Srivaishnava Sampradaya texts without an iota of doubt under his tutorship to write a commentary on Tiruvaimozhi. He wrote a commentary called 24000 padi on par with the number of shlokas in Sri Ramayana (24000 verses).

Another disciple by name Sri Vadakku Thiruveedhi Pillai (who subsequently became the Srivaishnava Sampradaya leader) listened to Sri Nampillai's Tiruvaimozhi kalakshepam during the day time and put everything to paper during the night (He too was otherwise known as Sri Krishnapada. The popular saying at that time was that Sri Nampillai had

"Iru Kannargal" (two eyes) in his assembly referring to these two pupils). After completing the entire commentary on 1102 stanzas of Tiruvaimozhi, he submitted the same to his revered Guru. Sri Pillai asked, "What is this?" "This manuscript contains your oral commentary on Tiruvaimozhi during this time" humbly replied the disciple. Sri Nampillai went through the commentary. It was neither very brief nor very elaborate and was so charming even as a well decorated elephant (elephant itself is very pretty to look at, so is the Tiruvaimozhi text. If the elephant after bathing is well decked with ornaments and silken clothes, it is sure to be more attractive, so also is the commentary). Sri Pillai became immensely pleased at this super commentary 36000 padi which was in the order of Suta Prakashika, the super commentary on Sri Bhashya of Sri Ramanuja. Staring at his pupil, Sri Nampillai applauded him saying "No doubt you have written it in a most commendable manner with your remarkable and surprising memory power. However you have written it without getting my permission. Therefore, hand it over to me". Having said so he took it from him and kept it under his custody.

Iyuni Madhava Perumal who was an eyewitness to this happening entreated Namperumal (the utsava murthy at SriRangam) by going round in circumambulation and prostrating before Him several times. One day Sri Namperumal asked him through the temple priest, "Why do you pressurize me like this by your worship?". He too made a humble submission "There is a very entertaining and educative commentary on Tiruvaimozhi, styled "Idu Muppatharayirappadi" in the possession of Sri Nampillai. Your supreme self should order him to give it to me mercifully". Sri Namperumal too kindly consented to do so. One day Sri Nampillai went to the temple to worship Him. Sri Namperumal honoured him with presents like Thirtham, prasadam, pariyattam and Sri Satakopan and through the priest commanded him to hand over the super commentary, Idu to his disciple Sri Iyuni Madhava Perumal. Sri Pillai too received this order with his bent head as a very rare and rich gift. He came back to his mansion and handed over Idu to his devoted disciple Sri Madhava Perumal.

The greatness of Sri Nampillai is beyond the realm of language. His disciples unanimously panegyricized his greatness in a tamil verse whose meaning runs as follows: "Who will care for the speech of Brahma (the four faced God), Ishan (Shiva), Indra and Skandan (Subramanya), after listening to the sweet words of Sri Nampillai? Sri Nampillai's words resemble priceless pearls. With one pearl picked up from the midst of other pearls that got scattered in his mansion, a man could buy a whole kingdom."

Azhvar Emberumanar Jeeyar Thiruvadigale Sharanam