

TIRUPPAVAI

A Spiritual Odyssey



A rendering in English by

RANEE KUMAR



TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
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A Rendering in English

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T.T. DEVASTHANAMS

TIRUPATI

2004

English
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Translated from Tamil by
RANEE KUMAR

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Dedication

In the Loving Memory of My Guru

Late **Sri V.S. RAGHAVAN**

Nellore.

PREFACE

The holy Tiruppavai is an ocean of nectar from where one can go on churning the sweetness of meaning and gain wisdom for ages to come. I have made a humble attempt to derive, in the simplest form, the divinity running within the thirty verses of Tiruppavai rendered by saint-poet Andaal

My objective in giving an English translation to each of these verses along with the underlying spirituality is to appeal to the modern mind which is preoccupied with a host of problems both material and mental. My book is directed specifically to all those non-resident Indian Vaishnavites who have great regard for Indian religion and tradition but are handicapped with an English background right from primary schooling and hence unable to appreciate the mother-tongue, except perhaps the spoken language

Though there are myriad ways of explaining the Tiruppavai (Muvvayirappadi 3,000 ways and Aarayarappadi - 6000), I deliberately chose a brief and lucid style in order to ensure that my reader, (with time being a vital factor) does not get diverted delving through reams of explanatory notes and at the end of it miss the essence. I wanted to capture the modern mind and make it dwell on the divine wealth of Tiruppavai. I will consider my attempt fruitful if my objective is realized.

I am grateful to Dr. Kandada! Ramanuja charya Principal, SVVVS Kalashala without whose guidance this book would not have been possible.

- Rane! Kumar

FOREWORD

Smt Ranee Kumar has done a commendable job in rendering a truthful translation of the Tiruppavai Pashurams in English. This is indeed a sincere attempt to inculcate the spirit of Indian vedanta in the minds of modern youth.

This work is a worthy gift to all those readers who have difficulty in reading the vernacular be it Tamil, Telugu or Sanskrit.

Tiruppavai is a vedantic treasure house whose depths are inexplorable. In giving a true and lucid summary, Ranee Kumar has not only simplified a complicated philosophic content but has also bridged the gap between the material and spiritual thus touching at the essence of Tiruppavai.

May God shower Ranee Kumar with health, happiness and long life to undertake many more such noble deeds in the service of mankind

Dr. Kandadai Ramanujachary,

Principal,

S.V.V.V.S. College,

Secunderabad - 11.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Minstrels of God whose mission is to help devotees to overcome the ill-effects of worldly life are a class by themselves. They are not concerned about wealth, power and creature comforts. They call upon the aspirants to wake up from the slumber of nescience and seek the Grace of God. These divine messengers, realised souls as they are, emphasise the need for surrender to make our lives blissful.

Among such great apostles who spread the glory of Sriman Narayana, Andal shines like a polestar. Of the twelve vaishnava saints called Alvars, Andal was the only lady whose love towards the Lord of Srivilliputtur transcended all barriers of time and place. "Tiruppavai" is considered one of the most exquisite devotional poems ever written. In this work of enduring charm, Andal advises everyone to sing the namas and glories of the Lord always and do all duties as His services.

I am extremely happy to present an English version of "Tiruppavai" by Smt. Raneekumar and hope the devotees will derive spiritual benefit by reading this book.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

TIRUPPAVAI

A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY

(A Rendering in English)

Tiruppavai, the one score and ten divine stanzas rendered by the Alwar saint, Kodai (Goda Devi) more popularly referred to as Aandaal, are allegorical in nature and reflect the spiritual seeker's visionary journey to Vaikuntam (the sacred abode of Lord Vishnu). Through the bhakti margam (path) the atma yearns to reach the Paramatma. Aandaal propagates the Vaishnavite vedantic concept of Vishistadvaitam (modified dualism) wherein the atma in human form and the Paramatma in divine form are two entities which in a spiritual merger become one whole (Poorna Aaikyata). The philosophy of Vishistadvaitam as propounded by the great seer Shri Ramanuja, advocates four stages of liberation (mukti): Saalokyam (residing where God dwells), Saameepyam (closeness to God), Saaroopyam (taking a similar form) and Saayujyam (merging with the Lord). In utter Sharanagathi (self-surrender), the soul stays in the presence of God and enjoys this four-fold state of bliss.

Vivid with imagery, the Tiruppavai can be broadly divided into three stages, representing the soul's progress in its spiritual odyssey. The underlying concept is bhakti (worship) in its purest form. Aandaal, it may be noted like all Vaishnava saints belongs to the bhakti cult.

Through the Tiruppavai Aandaal inculcates the "Pavai nombu" or 'vratham of maidens' to be observed for a period of thirty days (one month) during the Tamil calendar month of Marghazhi (falling in Dakshinaayanam dating approximately between December, 15 and January, 15), culminating in the harvesting festival of Pongal or Sankranti celebrated for four consecutive days in the southern part of India. Belief and astrology has it that this thirty-day period is inauspicious for undertaking new ventures by the householders. It is only with the onset of Uttarayanam, closely following Pongal that the auspicious days commence. It is not inappropriate to mention here that the great Bheeshma (Gangeya of Mahabharatha) who was wounded in the war chose to die on a fixed auspicious day after the onset of Uttarayanam. With due regard to custom, and perhaps to ward off the ill-effects, if any, of this particular month that Tiruppavai advocates a 'daiva

Kaarayam' (divine duty), to relieve the mind from fear of untoward happenings and uplift it in the service of God. In other words, Tiruppavai implores the mind to leave the material plane and dwell on the divine plane. Vaishnavism does not favour imploring God for any worldly possessions, be it happiness, health or other material comforts. It advocates a philosophy which spells out that the Creator knows what best to give without asking. Wishes not fulfilled are best forgotten. Disappointments and disillusion are but the way of life and have a far-reaching effect which may not be appreciated at the moment due to man's inherent short-sightedness. Therefore, desires are not exactly desirable.

Tiruppavai advocates a wish-fulfilling vow which on the surface sounds contrary to the very tenets of Vaishnavism. The ritual of a vratam (or nombu) has been propagated for the householder to appease his /her personal wishes or desires through beseeching the deity to whom the vratam is directed. However, the nombu promoted by Aandaal through Tiruppavai, has a wider connotation. This song celestial, advocates community invocation in the place of individual wish

- fulfilling worship to the Lord for the good and welfare of the entire human race as opposed to selfish interests. On the spiritual plane, it represents the soul's inward journey towards Godhead

As history testifies, Aandaal belonged to Srivilliputtur (the then Villiputtur) which lies amidst the hills on the Tamilnadu - Kerala borders. It can be inferred from certain descriptions and literary evidences that Aandaal, the foster daughter of Vishnuchitta (Perialwar), chief priest of the local Vatapatra Sai (Krishna) temple was born into a predominantly Keralite religious tradition which emphasizes Krishna bhakti cult. In this connection, it is worthy to remember that even Adī Sankara's ancestral temple in Kalady (believed to be his birthplace) also belonged to Lord Krishna. The geographical placement of (Sri) Villiputtur accounts for the Tamil mother tongue and the Krishna predominance all rolled into one. The popular Aandaal hairdo is reminiscent of Kerala again!

Tiruppavai phase one runs into five cantos (pashurams) which illustrate the norms or guidelines of the nombu (vratham) to be undertaken by the maidens of Villiputtur which in Aandaal's vision is Gokula itself (native place of Krishna and

the Gopikas). The cantos also vividly picturise the Receiver to whom this particular vratam is being performed and dedicated. He is the Lord Krishna who is also the Giver of 'Phala' (fruit / returns).

The sixth canto onwards is an allegorical awakening of the soul which is in a state of stupor, engulfed as it is in materialistic pursuits. The ensuing canto up to the fifteenth canto are a gentle persuasion to the sleeping soul to come to its real senses and embark on the divine journey to the Almighty's home

Cantos six to thirty, the last phase of the Tiruppavai gradually unveil the vision of the Lord Krishna in all His glory. The last verse is a signature in poetic sweetness of the author, in which she claims to be utterly devoid of cunning or worldly wise. Her single - minded pursuit of her beloved Lord Krishna elevated her to supreme heights of divine aspiration and sealed her in union with her Lord. Aandaal is a personification of purity.

Those of us who would invoke her and tread the path laid by her will certainly win her grace in our search for a tranquil existence and realization at the end of life's journey.

TIRUPPAVAI

**Annavaḡai pudhuvai Aandaal Arangarku
pannu tiruppavai pal padhiyam
Innisaiaal; paadi koduthaal narpaamaalai,
poomaalai choodi koduthalai chollu
Shoodi kodutha shudar kodiye! thoi
paavai, paadi arulavalla
palvalaiyaay; Naadinee Venkatavarkennai vidhiyendra
immaatram, Naamkadava vannamey nalghu**

Sri Aandaal Tiruvadigale Sharanam

Blessed be the holy feet of

Sri Aandall Jeer thirvadigale sharanam

Blessed be the holy feet of Jeer Guru

Let us recite the Tiruppavai, the garland of thirty pashurams (verses) dedicated to the lotus feet of Sri Ranganatha in the form of a song, by Aandaal of the fertile Srivilliputtur soils where swans waddled through the waters of the lush green paddy fields; the Aandaal who stealthily adorned herself with the Lord's garland of flowers and having tasted its fragrance, first and on being satisfied herself, sent it to the Lord Vatapatrasayee (the Krishna temple where her father Periyalwar was the chief priest.)

O golden creeper, who had experience the perfume of that divine garland meant for the Lord, O Aandaal, whose bracelets - adorned hand has created the ancient song of Tiruppavai, through which you could mesmerize the Cupid (Manmatha - God of Love) to help you to win over the love of Sri Venkatapathi (Sri Ranganatha), O Devi! Bestow unto us the same devotion to be able to reach our Lord, our eternity.

The opening stanza is a call of the dawn, in the wee hours of the morning to the young maidens of Villiputtur (which is Gokula in Aandaal's poetic imagination) to arise and embark on the worship of the Lord.

1. Marghazi (ii) thingal madi niraindha nannaallaal,
Neerada podhu veer, podhu meeno, nerillaiyeer!
Seermalgum, aai paadi selva siru meer kaal!
Koor vel, kodun tholilan nandagopan kumaran,
Yerraarnda kanni yasodai elam singham,
Kaar meni shengan kadir madhiyam pol mughathan,
Narayana, ney, namakke parai tharuvaan,
Paaror, pugazha (hal) ppadin delo rem pavaai

"O ye maidens (whose hair reveals a center parting) of the affluent soil of Sri Krishna's abode, awake,

the month of Margali has set in The full moon (poornima) falls in the zodiac sign of the star Mrigashirsha (Mrigashira) The brahma muhurtham time (pre-dawn) is the apt time to start our vratam This month is ideal to begin our ceremony with a ritualistic bath, which will cleanse the physical as well as spiritual impurities We are going to worship none other than the mighty lion, the son of the dove - eyed mother, Yasoda His father, Nanda is the headman of the Gokula tribe He is none other than our beloved Lord Krishna bearing the sharp spear that slayed many a demon Our Lord personified the ultimate beauty The lotus-eyed Sri Krishna's physical form is like the blue of the skies and the clouds, with a countenance is as radiant as the sun and glows like the moon O Narayana, O savior and protector of mankind, born amidst us as our beloved Krishna, we are undertaking this nambu (ritualistic form of worship) to seek your grace and reap the fruits of our diligent worship Let this divine service rendered by us, maidens of your land be acclaimed, accepted and emulated by the entire world "

The Hindu scriptures underline the potency of the pre-sunrise hours (called the brahma muhurtham around 3.45 a.m.) as being highly suitable for meditation when the mental and physical planes are at their best and can easily transcend the earthly diversions Nature and surroundings are extremely conducive during this ideal time

2. *Vyethu vaai veer kaal! Naamum nampavaikku
Seyyum kirisaiggal, kayleero! Paarkadalul
Payyathu indra parama nadi paadi,
Neyunnom, paalunom, naatkale neeraadi
Maiyittu yeludhom, malarittu naam mudiyom,
Seyyadhana seyyom, theekuralai sendrothom,
Aiyyamum, picchalyum, aandhanaiyum kaikatnti,
Vuyyumaarenni, vugandhelo rem paavai.*

Aandaal goes on to explain the ritualistic pattern of the worship (nombu or vratam) she and her co-maidens are embarking upon

"O fortunate ones of the blessed land of Krishna, pray pay heed to the rites of the ritual. In order to worship the lotus feet of the Supreme One (Mahavishnu) reclining on his couch upon the milky ocean, we have to sanctify ourselves by foregoing a number of comforts "

Being born of the cowherd ilk, milk, and milk products are naturally the mainstay of its fold. Hence, Aandaal implores her friends, the Lord's devotees to undergo the purifying bath, abstain from adorning themselves - not even darken the eyes with black paste or decorate the hair with flowers (a south Indian custom) - not be tempted to eat rich food made of milk or ghee (clarified butter) and finally not to flout the injunctions of the scriptures "We will not speak ill of others, respect the wise and the brahmacharis (bachelors practicing celibacy), we will lead the floundering mankind to the path of reality and justify our existence in observing this vratam"

The mind is being awakened to shed its dreariness and in doing so be indifferent to adornment, subdue the senses and in undiluted purity look towards the fountain of Godhead

3. *Vongi ulagalandha uttaman paer paadi,
Naanghal nam paavaikku saatri neer aadinaal,
Theengindri naadellaam thingal mummari peydhu
Ongu perunjenne loodu kayalugala,
Poonguvalai podhil, porivandu kanpaduppa,
Thengaadhe pookhirundhu seertha mulaipatri,
Vaanga kudam niraikkum vallai perum pasukkal,
Neengaada selvam niraindelo rem paavai.*

Here Andaal evokes one of the avatars (forms) of the Lord Mahavishnu, namely the Vamana (dwarf) avatar. The Lord manifested himself as a young lad seeking charity by way of just three footsteps. The first foot occupied the entire earth, the second step covered the heaven in its entirety "It is in the praise of such a divine one that our worship is directed So with the sacred name as our motivating force of our ritual, let us take the holy dip in the waters We do not seek selfish material benefits in performing this vratam We have the good of the entire community at heart Let the rains pour on our land but then not so forcefully as to destroy our crops Let there be water enough for beautiful flowers and plants to flourish Let the milching cows, reminiscent of a mother's caress, bring forth excess to feed and protect suckling babies Let there be such wealth in our land as to grant us a happy life."

The picturesque description of tiny flowers, half immersed in water, nodding their little heads with every waft of cool breeze, of the inebriated bee having drunk of the honeyed flowers almost in slumber amidst the downy bed of petals are testimonials to the saint - poetess imagery. The vision of prosperity Aandaal conjures up expands itself before the reader. Humanitarian outlook is the dominant strain of this verse. A communal pattern can be discerned in Aandaal's thought process. The nobility of this vratam or nombu is that it is devoid of any personal gains. On the other hand, it is the welfare of the community as a whole that is of real importance. It reflects the social set up of those days where individual benefits were subordinated to the overall good of the society.

4. *Aazhi(li) mazhai (lai) kannal ondru nee kai karavel
Aazhi yul pookhu mukhandhu kodaar theyri,
Vooli mudhalvan vooruvamphol maikharathu
Paazhi(li)yan tholudai, parbhanabhan (padmanabhan) kaili,
Aazhi (li) pole minni, valampuri pole nindra athrandhu,
Thazhathey saarngam vudhaitha saramazhai pole,
Vaazha(la) vulahanil peithidai, naanzhal(ghal)um
Marghazi(li) neerada mahilindhailo rem paavai*

Continuing her appeal to the Lord for the welfare of her land and her co-inhabitants, Aandaal entreats the God of rain (Varuna) to grace her land with his heavenly showers. "O powerful lord of rain whose supremacy cannot be undermined, do not hesitate to bestow your piercing prowess (the rainfall in sheaths) on our soil. Let

the dark clouds swell with the vapors of the ocean that they have sucked up and retrace their way back to the sky above our soil and shower upon us Your billows remind us of the Dark complexioned One (Krishna is said to be dark complexioned) reposing on the milky ocean who is none other than our Lord Padmanabhan (the Lord with a lotus springing from his navel) The sharp sheaths of rain that touch our earth are reminiscent of the splash of arrows from Lord Vishnu's mighty bow, the Sharanga The thunder and lightning you put forth, O Lord of rain, are like the sparkling radiance of our Lord's all-engulfing Shanku (the sacred conch) and the Chakra (the divine disc representing the continuous process of creation) Your potency is such that you can sway the entire earth But then, we implore you to shower us with enough rain as to allow us (the maidens) to have our holy bath (in our ponds) and enable us to proceed with our celestial vow Since we have undertaken this vratam for the welfare of our land, kindly shower Your blessings on us innocent minds in the form of rain"

From the pre-vedic ages, the five elements of nature have been deified Among them, rain has been personified as the giver of prosperity, since land and agriculture was the mainstay of the people Even today, a drought can cause havoc in the country no matter how progressive it is technologically or scientifically So also, unseasonal, torrential rains can be equally devastating Hence, Aandaal's plea for seasonal and reasonable amount of rain for the land Such was her pristine purity

and devotion that to this day, Srivilliputtur is said to be sufficient in food and water all through the year, when neighbouring towns sometime fall victims to the vagaries and calamities of nature

**5. *Maayana! mannu vada madhurai maiandhanai,
Thooya Peru neer Yamunai thuraivanai
Aayar kulathinil thondrum man vilakkai,
Thayai kudal vilakkam seitha damodharanai,
Thooyomai vandhu nam, thoomalar thoovitholudhu
Waayinaal paadi, manathinaal sindhikka,
Poya pilaiyum pughun dharuvaan nindranavum,
Theeyinil thoosahum seppeilo rem paavai***

This strophe pictures Lord Krishna as envisioned in young Kodar's (Aandal) mind, which was brimming with childhood tales of His glory

"O Krishna, You are the "maya" (transcendent vision) incarnate You are the absolute and the unreal You seem to be one amongst us and at the same time You are far beyond us. O Son of the soil of Mathura (northern India), You are the jewel of the Yaadava (cowherd) community You were bred in the land of the river Yamuna Your childhood pranks were such that none could exert their will and none control Your naughtiness You were their (the Yaadavas) little boy but in reality You were the avatar (incarnation), their rescuer, Damodara Being the child of Yashoda, You willingly submitted Yourself to the mother when she chose to punish Your little pranks, like restricting Your movement by roping You to a grindstone "

Immediately after dwelling on this childhood description of her beloved Krishna, Andal assures the Lord that she and the maidens are invoking Him without doubting His existence "We join our hands in prayer, singing Your glories whole-heartedly and have no other thought but that of You "

Vishishtadvaita (a sect in Vaishnavism) advocates unquestioning and total surrender to God in word, deed and action. The Supreme being can be sought only by the purest of the souls. Andaal, in all humility implores her Lord Krishna to condone all the omissions and commissions, which are but the outcome of human ignorance. Just as a metal full of impurities is cleansed by the fire, so too are the ignorant purified by the grace of God. The devotee's mind is made to dwell on certain episodes from the "Bhagavatam", which would take him/her to higher realms wherein the mind gets cleansed and concentrates on the Divine in totality.

**6. Pullum silambinakaan, pullaraiyan koi,
Vellai vili shankin per aravam kettilaiyo?
Pillai! Yelundirai, pay mulai nanzhundu,
Kalla chagaam kalakaleeya kaalochi,
Vellatharuvil thuyila marndha vitthinai,
Vullathu kondu munivargalum, yogigalum,
Mella yelundhu (H)ari yendra peer aravam,
Vullam pugundu kulirndhelo rem paavai.**

This stanza sets the tone to Tiruppavai recital wherein Aandaal gives a call to each one of her companions, by knocking at the doors of their respective dwellings and imploring them to congregate in order to proceed for the ritualistic nombu (vratam)

Assuming all the maidens to belong to Lord Krishna's own community, she awakens them one after another, from their deep slumber Here is the first house she chooses to knock at saying

"O young maiden, arise, the birds are astir already at the approach of the dawn. Don't you hear the sound of the white Shanku (the celestial conch) in the abode of the Master of the Garuda (the holy eagle on which Lord Vishnu is astride) The blowing of the conch indicates the call for worship Our Lord, who had suckled poisonous milk from the breast of the demon Poothana in His infancy and with His tender foot crushed the asura (demon), Shakatasura, is reclining on Adishesha, the thousand headed serpent (a mythological cobra) Hark, the sages and saints are already on their way to the temple with the blessed name of Sri Hari on their lips Ye maiden, come out of your deep sleep uttering Hari's name It's me to follow the path to His abode We are setting forth to pray to our protector Sri Hari

Goda Devi draws a picture of saints and seers walking towards God's abode in the dark hours of pre-dawn, even when other householders are sleeping,

since saints are the Brahmajñanis, the only ones who have realized Him through wisdom and knowledge. To them, time is of no consequence and the comfort of sleep is no deterrent. The thirst for union with God is the only goal.

**7. Keesu keesendru engumanaichatthan khalandhu,
Pechina pecharavam kaytilaiyo pey penny?
Kaasum, pirappum kalakalappa kaiperthu
Vaasa nurungulal aayicchiyar mathinaal,
Osai padutha thairaravam kaytilayo? Nayaka pennpillal!
Narayananmurthi, Kesavanai paadavum Nee kayette kidathiyo?
Thesa mudaiyai! Thiravelo rem paavai.**

Here, Aandaal chides the next house friend, "O Sleepy devil of a girl, O dullard, we are to embark on worship, get up! Are you not able to hear the holy, sweet chatter of the male and female Bharadwaja birds?" These birds are said to wake up in pre-dawn time and start twittering.

"The sun is about to rise. The air is rent with a melodious rhapsody of tingling bangles and chains of maidens churning, butter early in the morning together with the fragrance emanating from their dark tresses. O, leader of our tribe! O chief maiden, thou most beautiful one among us! Are you still asleep. Don't you know that we are to go singing the praises of Keshava, the demon killer, the all-pervading Narayana.

Aandai as a harbinger of godliness is reapproaching the mind, which is veiled in dullness and hence is asleep

8 *Keelvaanam vellendru, yerumai siru veedu,
Meyvaan parandhana gaan, mikkulla pillaigalum,
Povaan pohindrara!, pohamal kaathu vunnai
Koovuvaan vandhu nindrom, kodhukalam udaiya,
Paavaa! Yelundhirai, paadi paraikundu!
Maavaai pilandhanai, mallarai maatiya
Devadhi devanai sendru naam sevithaal,
Aavaavendru aaraayandhu arul yelo rem paavai.*

As she is proceeding from one household to another, waking up her friends, Aandaal paints the pre-dawn picture of milky white cows grazing on tender dewy grass on the eastern side of the village

"The others of our clan are already on their way to the house of the Lord I have stopped them enroute and arrived here at your house, O friend, to wake you up O adorable one, arise! We are to sing in praise of the God of Gods, the killer of demons, the omnipotent Krishna. He will bless us, shower His grace upon us, since we went beseeching Him for it, He did not come in search of us to bestow His mercy Therefore, ye incomparable one, awake!

The rural backdrop lends the aura of rustic simplicity in which devotion thrives since the mind and body are free of worldly cunning and craft that is often

found in a more competitive urban surroundings. The atmosphere Aandal conjures up intensifies the devotion and makes the heart and body yearn for a glimpse of God

- 9. *Thumanı maadathu sutrum -villakkeriya,
Dhoopam, kamala thuyilanai mel kanvalarum
Maamaan magale! Manikkadhavam thaal thiravai;
Maameer! Avalai Yellupeero? Vun magal thaan!
Voomalyo! Andri chevido, anandhalo?
Yema perunthuyil mandira pattalo?
Maamaayan, Madhavan, Vaikunthan! Yendrendru
naamam, palavum, navindrelo rem paavai.***

Aandaal has now arrived at the fourth house, her maternal uncle's home to call her cousin for joining the maidens in the nombu. The first half of this stanza is directly addressed to her cousin while the latter part is to her aunt

"O, precious one, who is in deep sleep on a decorated gem-decked mansion! The glittering lamps around you are extending their glow to your visage. A pleasant aroma is permeating the bedecked room. O darling daughter of mine own uncle! Open the door of your precious bedroom. O aunt, atleast you wake her up. Is your daughter suddenly bereft of hearing or is she dumb? Is a guard posted at her door to ensure her an undisturbed sleep? Here we are, right in front of her room calling her and she seems not to deaf to our voice. Or has she fallen into a swoon? Has some evil spell been

cast at her to make her fall into a trance that she is not able to answer us? if that is so, we shall chant the innumerable names of Madhava, Mahamaya, Vaikunta to dispel the evil spirit and awaken our cousin out of her infinite sleep "

This stanza clearly brings out the inner meaning of Aandaal's sacred utterings. The Atma that is glowing like a lamp in a bejewelled abode (the body which is a gift of God) has fallen into a sort of a trance, supremely overconfident that it belongs to Him and hence is in no hurry to rush to Him. The materialistic world around it is creating this illusion and the Atma is unable to ward off this evil influence and open its inner eye to catch a glimpse of the Paramatma, its real self. The soul has become both dumb and deaf and can only realise its true existence when the blessed names of Lord Vishnu are uttered.

10. Notrhu, chuvarkam, puhukindra ammanai!

Maatramum thaaraaro, vaasal thiravaathaar?

Naatra thulai mudi naarayanan nammal

Pottra paraitharuv, punniyya naal, pandorunaal,

Kuttrathin, vaayvilindha kumbhakarnanum,

Thotrum vunnakke perundhuyil thaana thanthaano?

Aatra ananthai vudayai! Arunghalamei?

Thotramai vandhu thiravelo rem paavai.

By now Aandaal and her little group of friends have arrived at yet another home. Here is the late riser being aroused for the morning ritual of the vratam. "O loved one, mistress of our clan, don't you know that our nombu aims at nothing less than entry into the

heavens after the completion of this birth? Please awake and open the door We have something to share with you The adorable and kind Narayana has taken the divine form of Krishna who adorns Himself with the fragrant Tulsi garland and is born and bred amongst us His presence is in itself the path to Godhead O beauty, you are sleeping like Kumbhakarna Sri Rama, had blessed Kumbhakarna with undisturbed eternal sleep when He had embarked on a war to rescue his consort Seetha and free her from Ravana's demonic clutches We are sure that this sort of unending sleep has taken over you O lazy girl! O jewel amongst us, arise fast and open your door "

These calls at each and every household, is to be interpreted as repeated entreaties to awaken the inner consciousness that is in a deep slumber It has been put to eternal sleep Unless and until the mind's doors are opened one by one and the inner being is jolted out of this stupor, it will not be able to find its source and will be floundering in the ocean of samsaara (world) through the chain of births and deaths Hence the need to consistently be in communion with the Lord

11. *Katru karavai kananghal palakarandhu;*

*Chettrar thiralaliya chendru sheru cheyyum,
Kutram ondru ilidha kovalardham porkodiye,
Putrara valghul punamayile! Podharai,
Chutrathu tholimaar yellarum vandhu nin
Mutram puhundhu, muhivannan payerpaada
Sittradey, paishadhey, selva pendhatti, nee
Yettru, kuranghum poruleilo rem paavai.*

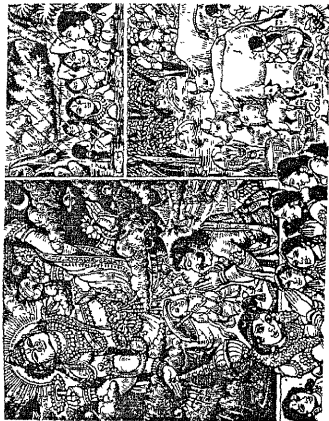
Pictures of Pasurams



Pasuram I



Pasuram 2



Pasuram 3



Pasuram 4



Pasuram 5



Pasuram 6



Pasuram 7



Pasuram 8



Pasuram 9



Pasuram 10



Pasuram 11



Pasuram 12



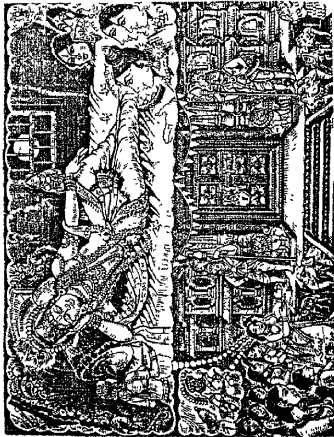
Pasuram 13



Pasuram 14



Pasuram 15



Pasuram 16



Pasuram 17



Pasuram 18



Pasuram 19



Pasuram 20



Posuram 21



Pasuram 22



Pasuram 23



Pasuram 24



Pasuram 25



Pasuram 26



Pasuram 27



Pasuram 28



Pasuram 29



Pasuram 30

Stopping over to give a call at the sixth house, Aandaal with her other friends addresses the inmate thus: "O affluent child born in the mighty clan that abounds with cattle wealth, and whose threshold is overflowing with milk, arise! Relatives, your friends and we are here awaiting your arrival. Do join us in singing the glories of one who is as dark as the clouds of the blue sky. Awake ye peacock of the woods, thou charming one whose beauty is as regal as the cobra's hood. We are not able to hear your voice in response to our call. Are you really asleep or feigning sleep so as to turn a deaf ear to our pleas. For, nobody can wake up a person who feigns sleep.

The verses take an ascent, in keeping with the slight transformation that is taking place in the state of mind of the devotee, which is beginning to open up in an attempt to realize its true self. The physical self is bestowed with an affluent birth by some divine blessing. Aandaal says that such a human being should be grateful to her noble birth and utilize it for a greater purpose in life. She should not become a slave to ego (aham) and remain deaf to her inner consciousness. On the other hand, she should take note of the deeper yearning of her soul and move towards a plane of higher realization.

**12. Kanai thilanghu, kattruyerumai, kandru kirangi,
Ninaithu mulai valiye nindru paal shora,
Nanaithillam serakhum narselvan thangai!
Pani thalai veelha nin vaashal kadai pattri
Sinathinaal thennilangai komaana! setra**

**Manathu kinlyaana! paadavum nee vaay thiravaay?
Innithaan yelundhirai, eedenna paerurakkam?
Annaithilla thaarum arindheylo rem paavai.**

This verse is undoubtedly one of the most poetic with brilliant alliteration exemplifying young Aandaal's literary / poetic genius. Her melodious call to yet another maiden of Gokula is replete with picturesque imagery of young girls awaiting at the doorstep, unmindful of the morning mist drizzling over their heads and settling on their black tresses like tiny pearl drops.

This household belongs to the dearest of the Lord's devotees. Hence, it is an ocean of milk with weaning buffaloes moving hither and thither in response to their new-born's call. The entire place is like a pond of milk. Says Aandaal, "So wealthy is the owner of this house whose sister thou art, O friend of mine! We are thoroughly soaked in dew holding on to the beam of your threshold, waiting for you. Have pity on us. We are chanting the name of your beloved Lord Rama. Alas, you have not responded to our call while the whole neighborhood is awake by our voice. Are you so sunk in slumber not to have heard us at all? Come on, arise at least now and follow us."

The mind is again and again persuaded, through chanting the myriad names of the Lord to shed its stupor and come to realization. Those whom God loves are usually bestowed with endless wealth and physical comfort. But, it is for the human beings to understand that this is but a divine boon for which they should be ever grateful and not wallow in pride blinded by riches.

**13. Pullinvaay keendanai, polla arakkanai,
 Killi kalaindhanai keerthimai paadi, poy
 Pillaighal yellarum paavai kalam pukkaar,
 Velli yelundhu, vyaala murunghittru;
 Pullum shilambhinakaan! Podari kanninai!
 Kulla, kulira, kudainthu neeradathe,
 Palli kidathiyol Paavai! Nee nannalaal
 Kallam thavirnthu kalanthelo rem paavai.**

"We maidens", explains Aandaal "have taken a vow to begin this nombu (vratham) in praise of Him, namely, Sri Rama, the Avataara purusha (God in human garb), who had plucked the ten-headed Ravana, the great demon (Rakshasa) as freely as one plucks flowers off their stocks This mighty One also sliced the mouth of another demon."

The morning star in the east is still visible, which means the darkness prior to sunrise has not yet disappeared, while the vesper (pole star) is slowly melting in the western horizon. The earliest risers, the birds are heard twittering "We girls, in all our innocence have come to pray for His mercy O Lotus - eyed companion of mine, it is time up Don't you want to partake of the ritualistic bath with the rest of us and go to the Lord Krishna with a heart and body devoid of any impurities whatsoever Only then can we have a glimpse of the Lord Now, do not lie still and think of praying to the Lord all by yourself Get rid of such selfish thoughts if you have any Join us and proceed "

The stress on community worship for the welfare of the entire society is quite evident. Not to assume that Aandaal was opposed to singular, personal puja (worship). Worship is to be understood in a broader perspective. Here the nombu denotes a vow to worship, undertaken for a said period of thirty days. It can be done in perfect privacy. Yet, if there are some good returns to be gained by the performance of this vratam, then Aandaal feels that the positive effects should be experienced by one and all. Individual worship like prayer and meditation are of course advocated on a personal plane too. Whatever be the form of worship, when it comes to the atma's quest for its abode, the Paramatma, the relation between the two is the most private and personal.

14. *Vunghal phulai khadai thottathu vaviyul,*

Shenghalu neer vai nehlinthu, aambhal vai koombhina kaan!

Shenghal podikkorai vepal thavathavar,

Thanghal thirukkoil shangiduvaan pohindraar;

Yenghalai munnam yellupuvaan vaipesum,

Nangai! Yelundhirai, naanaa dhai! Naa vudaiyaai!

Shangodu, chakkaram yendhum thadakkayan,

Pankaya kannaanai paadelo rem pavai.

Passing on with her group of friends to the next house, she calls, "O lovely maiden! Have you any idea that the lotus adorning your pond is unfolding itself, getting ready to bloom even as the water lilies are folding up since the dawn is drawing closer. The white - toothed (sign of purity) seers in brick coloured (kaashayam) robes are on their way to their respective temples, blowing their holy

Shanku (conches), denoting the morning call to prayer O, you sweet, but sharp-tongued maiden, you promised to wake us up and here we are trying to wake you up instead Arise! Let us sing of the Lotus-eyed Lord adorned by the Shanku (conch) and Chakra (disc, wheel) on either side of His shapely shoulders

The oft-repeated thought and description of her beloved Lord Sri Krishna is not to be misunderstood as being monotonous which the modern mind is prone to judge going by the present day standards Spiritual salvation cannot be achieved within a particular time frame It requires rigorous training and self-discipline to conquer the temptations around us and try to rise above these It is by no means an easy task. Even the Bhagavad Gita, a holy scripture acknowledged by the entire world as incomparable in philosophic content, is replete with repetitive thought But then, as the Kathopanishad rightly states, 'the sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over, so too, the wise say, the path to salvation.' Constant perseverance is mandatory in matters of the mind, especially with regard to the metaphysical

If we were to quote a similar example of grooving on a grosser plane, we are all aware in this high-tech world, regular brainwashing and brainstorming sessions are the order of the day in any corporate sector job or even educational coaching centres The content, as every employee will confide, is the same being said again and again in hundred different ways for a hundred times So also, on a much more difficult terrain like the spiritual path, it is obligatory that the thought-provoking process is constant and continuous

15. Yelle ilangiliye! Innam vuranghudhiyo?
Silleindraayenmin, nangaimeer! Podhargindren!
Vallai vun katturaighal! Pande vun vaalaridhum!
Valleerghal neenghaley, naanethan naayiduga!
Ollai nee pondhai, vunakkenna verudaiyai?
Yellarum pondharo? Pondhar, pondhu yennikkhol!
Vallanai, Kondranai, Maatrarai, Maatralikka
Vallanai, Maayanai, paadelo rem paavai.

This strophe is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. It shines like a brilliant star of first magnitude in the galaxy of Tiruppavai. Here, the poem is in the form of a dialogue, between Aandaal and her neighbouring friend, who is supposed to be still behind the bolted doors of her house.

Tender satire directed towards an egoistic friend in order to make her humble, underlies the eight lines wherein Aandaal uses the dialogue form, a stylistic deviation. "Is your sleep a pretence?" she questions. "What has happened to your non-stop prattle (like a parrot) now?" she asks of her friend who is mute as if in deep sleep while the other maidens are at her doorstep awaiting her arrival. To this, at last comes the reply from the inmate, "I am getting ready. Have all of you come?" Upon hearing this, Aandaal teases her thus: "Of course, come out and count for yourself. You must be considering yourself as the leader of this team. Now, no more lame excuses, we are well aware of your lashing tongue." Not to be outdone in repartee, the maiden hurls back the same accusation at her friends and finally relents, admitting her faults. Aandaal wholeheartedly forgives her friend.

An artistic rendering of excellent poetic sense-frivolous on the surface yet with deep connotations. It refers to the material mind and the spiritual mind in a verbal duel, each trying to outwit the other. The former, unable to shed its ego is forever questioning authoritatively the latter's superiority. Finally, the ego is humbled in the combat and the supremacy of the spirit is established.

**16. Naayakanaai nindra nandagopanudaiyya,
Koil kaappaane! Kodithondrum thorana
Vaasal kaappaane! manikkadavam thaal thiraval;
Aayar chirumiyarommukku aryai para!
Maayan, manivannan nennalei vayinerandhaan;
Thocoyamai vandhom thuilala paaduvaa;
Vaayaal munnamunnam maatradei ammai Nee
Nesa nilalkkadhavam neekkelo rem paavai.**

There is a change of scenario starting with this stave, which can be said to be the beginning of Phase-III. So far Aandaal has awakened the young maidens by directing their mind towards the goal. She and her friends have now arrived at the threshold of her Lord Krishna. But, the entrance is by no means easy. There are any number of hurdles to cross. The Supreme Being is one who is visible only to a dedicated devotee.

Having arrived at the gateway of the temple that houses Lord Krishna, Goda Devi and her group of young maidens are barred from entering the divine portals by the guard. They start pleading thus: "O sentry of the

temple where our Lord Nandagopala is residing, kindly open the lock to the precious doorway to the dwelling of our Lord. We are the guileless young maidens of the Gokula clan. Our Creator of this illusory world, our Protector has already given us His word to bestow us with a small musical drum (an external accessory to worship). We have come to awaken Him from his rest. But do not fear, we will sing in the softest of tones an awakening hymn (the Suprabhatam). We request you not to refuse us this honour and allow us into the temple.

The hurdle in the form of a guard at the doorstep indicates barriers between man and God, atma and Paramatma. The underlying thought of this stanza is that despite cleansing ourselves of all impurities, reaching God is by no means a cakewalk. It requires us to overcome the tough tests thrown at us on the spiritual path and in order to succeed we have to totally shed our gross human nature and rise to the realms of supreme consciousness.

17. *Ambaramey, thaneerey, chorey aranjeeyum*

*Yem perumaan! Nandagopala! Yelundhirai,
Kombhanaarku yellaam kolundhey! Kulavilakhe!
Yem perumaatti! Yasodaa! arivurai;
Ambaram vudarathongi; vulaghalantha
Umbarkomaney! Uranghad yelundhirai;
Chembor kalaladi selva! Baladeva!
Vumbeeyum, neeyum, urangelo rem paavai.*

Having persuaded an, unyielding and tough temple-keeper at the portal, Aandaal and her friends are now standing in front of the closed doors of Krishna's abode. Trusting the inmates to be asleep yet, Aandaal calls forth each of the elders by name before she brings herself to address her Lord. "Wake up O Nandagopala, the protector of our clan and provider of our daily needs," she calls out to Lord Krishna's sire, she then enjoins mother Yasoda, the queen and beacon of our tribe (the Yadavas) saying, "you are our guide and one who is to lead us, it is dawn already!" Next she addresses Krishna who is asleep in his quarters, "O Trivikrama, who rose to mighty heights spanning across the three worlds, O destroyer, of the wicked, awake! Last of all, O Baladeva (i.e. Balaram), sporting red gold anklets on your precious feet, O brother of Our Lord, may you and your younger brother (Krishna) arise out of your beds."

Aandaal follows the protocol of waking up the head of the house first, then his consort, who is the universal mother, then the elder son of the household and lastly the youngest and the divine avataara purusha, to bless the young maidens who have undertaken this vratam. The Bhagavatam has it that Lord Krishna being the foster son of Nanda and Yasoda of the Yadava clan. The poetess in Aandaal recreates the mythological characters through visual description in order to create the right mood amongst the devotees.

She ensures that sincere, single-minded devotion and entreaties bring in the desired result in the end.

**18. Undhu madhagaliitran vodatha tholvaliyan,
 Nandagopalan marumagzhale! Nappinnal!
 Gandham, kamalum, kulhall! Kadal tiravai!
 Vandhenghum kolhi aliathanagaan! Madhavee
 Pandhameil palkaal kuyilinchal koovinaghaan,
 Pandhaar virali! Vun mythunan paerpaada,
 Chendaamarai kaiaal seeraar valai ohlipa
 Vandhu thiraval, mahihandheylo rem paaval.**

Now, in this stanza and the one to follow, Aandaal makes special reference to Lord Krishna's consort and Nanda's daughter-in-law who was not referred to in the previous stanza. Aandaal specifically addresses Krishna's consort Nappina so as to impress upon her, her predominant position with regard to the Lord. Since He is in the company of his beloved, it is but proper to implore her to inform her husband about the arrival of a group of young girl devotees at his doorstep.

"O Nappina, daughter-in-law of the mighty, elephantine-prowessed Nandagopala, please open the door. Your thick tresses are emanating a fragrance that is sweet and lovely. The cocks are crowing, the Madhavi (a particular flower jasmine family) creeper is crowded with kokila (the Indian nightingale) cooing in chorus to wish a good morning. We are well aware of your wits in outsmarting your husband in the ball game. He is not at your beck and call. But do not let ego take the better part of you. He being omnipotent is a dear to all of us as to

you. But he is not yours alone. We are eagerly waiting to hear the musical chime of your bangles as you open the doors of your quarter. It will then be our immense pleasure to sing the praise of our Lord. Kindly heed to our pleas."

The soft but steady declaration of the universality of God is evident here. By a direct and imaginary reference to Lord's consort and family, Aandaal also has hinted indirectly to all devotees that God is an all-enveloping love to one and all. There are not gradations and distinctions among those who are His true devotees. No one can claim to own God by being in closer proximity to Him as He recognizes no such differences. He is accessible to each and every human being who craves to reach Him. What is significant is the depth of the desires and the purity of intention.

19. Kuthu viaikeriya kottukaal kattil mell

*Methondra pancha chayanathin mel yeri
Kothahlar poonghulal Nappinnal konzghal mell
Vaithu kidantha malarmaarbhal Vaal thiraval,
Mythadangh kanninal! Nee vun Manaalanal
Yethannal podhum thuyillelha vottaikaan,
Yethannal yealhum pirivaatra killayaal,
Thathuvam andru thaghavello rem paaval.*

The imagery of the divine couple is carried forward further in this verse with emphasis on Nappina. The wedded couple is asleep on an ivory-footed cot. The five Gunas (elements) are interwoven in the soft and downy bed on which the divine husband and wife are

resting Krishna's head is on the petal soft bosom of Nappina "O loving hearted Krishna, please lend your voice (open your mouth) O lovely, dark-eyed lady, we know that you would never allow your beloved out of your sight even for a split second. You cannot bear a moment's separation from Him. You have bound Him to yourself. This is not fair. It does not befit you to nurture such a selfishness. Allow us to share Him with you and worship Him by singing in His praise. He is the all-pervading Paramatma and to enjoy His presence all by yourself is improper. Hence open the door and allow us in to also partake in the experience of the Divine.

True to her Vaishnava roots, Aandal advocates collective mukti (release from human bondage of the cycle of births and deaths). The cult of Vaishnavism emphasizes that the entire mankind has access to the Supreme Being and no single caste or creed is privileged to possess Him, discriminating the rest. His precincts (temples) are open to all and sundry. It only requires purity in thought and action and no other physical attributes to be eligible to experience His divine presence.

20. Muppathu moovar amararkhu munchendru

Kappham thavirkum kaliye! Thuyilelai!

Cheppam vudayai! Thiraludayai! Chetraarkku

Veppam kodukkum vimala! Thuyilelai!

Cheppanna menmulai sevvai sirumarunghul

Nappinnai nangaai! Thiruvey! Thuyilelai!

Vukkamum, thatoliyum, thandhun manaalanai

Ippothey yemmai neeraatteylo rem paavai.

After using her powers of persuasion with Krishna's beloved Nappina, Andaal now feels it fit to implore the Lord directly "O Lord, who has vanquished the demons (asuras), enemies of the thirty-three angels (devatas) who were rescued by You when in distress O protector of all those who seek refuge in You, please open Your eyes so that we who have been standing at your threshold all the while, will come under Your divine gaze that has scorched the wicked like fire but soothed and protected the faithful, annihilated the treacherous and yet is full of kindness to bless us O sacred eyed One awake "

. "O worthy Nappina," she says coming back to the Lord's wife, "whose breasts are soft but firm like the treasure pot, whose beautiful small mouth is a red as a flower. O grace personified, we hope at least you are able to hear us call Arise, awake your husband Get us a mirror and a fan so that we will bathe in the holy waters of His divinity."

The mirror and fan analogy has a deeper connotation denoting the dwayamantram (two-pronged) and the Tirumantram (the Lord). The holy fan (vinjamara waved at the Lord in temple worship) when waved gives breeze on either side; it has a double-edged effect It destroys the ego and simultaneously lifts the spirit to realize Him The mirror reflects the true self, which is the Paramatma (Tirumantram or Supreme self) for after all our self (meaning the atma) is but a manifestation of the Paramatma Once God's grace is upon the atma, all impurities will melt and His gaze will be the holy bath that cleanses everything that is gross in us

21. *Yetra kalanghal yedhir ponghi meedhalippa,
 Maatrادهey paal choreeyum vallai perum pasukkal,
 Aatra padaithaan maghaney! arivurai!
 Ootram vudalyai! Periyaa! Vulaginil,
 Thotramaai nindra shudarey! Thuyilelai!
 Maatraar unnakku vazhi tholaindhunvaasarkann,
 Aatraadhu vandhun adipaniyuma polay,
 Pottriyaam vandhom puhghalndhelo rem paavai.*

"O son of a household abounding in cattle and milk overflowing endlessly from dripping bountiful udders! O offspring of such a wealthy sire, arise out of your sleep! The wisdom that the four Vedas pour forth is on your fingertips In fact the Vedas are nothing else but the chanting Your name, O Lord, because you are the essence of the Vedic mantras (holy syllables). You have assumed this avataar (form) and have emerged out of this world O glorious One, awake! Unable to withstand Your super power, Your overpowered opponents stand at Your threshold in abject admission of Your strength, ready to fall at Your feet We, youthful maidens of Your own Gokulam are also waiting but with a different purpose We have not come as those vanquished, we are the loving ones entreating Your grace Bestow Your all-pervading love on us and purify our souls so that we may be absorbed in You "

The poetess exemplifies that God's mercy has no bounds His abode is open to all-be it the saint or the sinner, provided both seek solace at His feet and yearn

for the grace of the Lord A sinner is as much pardoned as a saint is blessed. The atheist and the devotee are given equal opportunity to realize God and get His clemency It is for the seeker to finally take the right path and attain salvation God always gives a long rope for the errant to mend his ways Is not true that to err is human and to forgive is Divine?

22. Anganmaa jnalath arashar abhimaana

***Bhanghamal vandhu nin palli kattil keez(l)hey
Sangham Irruppaar pole, vandhu thalapaeidhom;
Kingkhini vaaicheydha, tamarai poo poley,
Shenghan chiruchirudey yemmel wiliyaavo?
Thinz(g)halum, aadityanum yelhundhaar pole,
Anghkanlrandoongh kondenghal mell nokkudhiyel
Yenghal mell saapam lihindeylo rem paaval.***

Many a saint has deemed this hymn to be one among the most fragrant of this garland of thirty blossoms It paints the picture of a scene in Mahabharatha where the Pandava hero Arjuna and the Kaurava leader Duryodhana both come to Lord Krishna to seek support The Lord was in slumber when both the cousins entered. Arjuna in his usual humility takes his seat at the foot of Lord Krishna's bed while Duryodhana in super inflated ego sits at the head of the bed. As Krishna opened his eyes, they naturally fell on Arjuna at the foot of the bed and as if on second thoughts perceived Duryodhana behind His head.

Aandaal recreates the scene thus "O Krishna, who shattered the vanity of many a despot and humbled them to obeisance, many great kings have been made to wait for Your benevolence thus annihilating their arrogance We, neither conceited nor ignorant, are at Your doorstep awaiting Your darshan We are chaste in our love for You Thy lovely pair of eyes are the sun and moon to this world, showering life and light, kindness and compassion on mankind Your eyes open mildly like the petals of the lotus unfolding one by one. Let those divine eyes rest on us so that all our sins are washed away in their brilliance."

There is profound thought within these lines which on the surface seems to be just a mythological sequence Ego is something that even the most exalted human being cannot escape Like it has been said the desire for fame (another manifestation of ego) is the last infirmity of a noble mind There is every possibility of the spiritual seeker falling into a delusion about his lofty endeavour and become egoistic. The moment he (even if he is a great devotee of God) succumbs to pride, vanity or ego, the very purpose of his devotion, his prayer, his spiritual power is defeated No matter what position one holds in life, no matter what heights he has scaled on the spiritual plane, humility is the only ornament a true seeker should possess. Sans humbleness, he remains on the mundane plane whatever be his sadhana or jnana (spiritual practice or wisdom)

**23. Maari malhai mulainhil manni kidandhuraigkum,
 Seeriya singham arivutru theevillithu,
 Werl mayir pongha, yeppadum pernthudhari,
 Moorl nimirandhu mulhangl purapattu
 Potharuma poley, nee, poovai poovanna! Vuun
 Koil nin dringghaney pondharulhi koppudaiyya
 Seeriya singhasanathirundhu yaam vandha
 Kaariyam aaraayndu arulyelo rem paavai.**

Drawing a parallel to the king of the forest with the use of a metaphor, Aandaal addresses her Lord Krishna, "O dark hued One! Your complexion brings to mind the blue bells (a bluish-violet flower)! Just as the lion resting in a cave during monsoon is rudely disturbed from its siesta by a thundering sky gets up dusting its regal mane and stretches itself from inactivity, emerging out of its dwelling with red burning eyes (due to incomplete sleep), so do You come towards the main entrance from Your inner quarters and be seated on this divine throne. Only then can we petition our cause to Your divine sanction "

Though He is their beloved Lord Krishna, when it comes to entreaties, it is a formal procedure. Waiting for the king of kings in the durbar (public meeting hall) and presenting grievances or wishes as the king is seated on his throne and is ready to hear his people is expected of the subjects. The metaphor of the lion, so realistically depicted reveals Aandaal's poetic proficiency. That one so young should be endowed with both immeasurable devotion and incomparable means of expression only goes to testify that Aandaal was divinity personified.

**24. Andri vulagham alanthai! Adi potri,
 Sendranghu thennilangai chettraai! Thiral pottiri,
 Pondra sakadam vudaithai! Phu(z)ghai potri,
 Kandrū kunilha yerindhāi! Kalahai potri,
 Kundru kudaiyaa yeduthai! Gunam potri,
 Vendru pagh(z)ai keodukkum nin kaiyil veilpotri,
 Yendrendrun sevakhamey yethiparai kolh(z) vaan
 Indru yaam vandhom, irangelo rem paavai.**

Adopting poetic alliteration in this verse with rhythmic beauty, Aandaal synthesizes Krishna's life in these eight lines

Thou art the Lord who obtained bounty from Mahabali and with that took the entire earth under one foot, the heavens under the other and with the third footstep crushed down Bali Our salutations to Thy lotus feet!

O Lord, who conquered the lovely Lankapuri in the south where Sita was kept captive, a thousand salutations unto Thee!

O Lord, who booted and killed the demon of the wheel (Shakatasura) along with his cart, O mighty One! our salutations to Thee!

When the God of thunder (Indra) threatened the world with hailstorm, You lifted the Mount Govardhana like an umbrella with Your little finger and provided shelter to men and cattle alike O Protector of one and all, salutations to Thy mercy!

Our salutations to those Blessed Hands that have
vanquished all the enemies of mankind

Unlike others, we have no motive We have come
seeking only Your blessing with the permission of our
elders, our guardians. O Krishna! shower Your immense
grace on us

The purity of purpose is underlined There is no
room for selfishness in the appeal of a true love of God If
at all there be a desire it should be for the good of the
entire mankind but never for oneself, for Vaishnavism
upholds that God best knows what is good for his child
and gives it without asking If something wished for does
not fructify, there is no reason to plunge into despair. One
should learn that what is denied is what is not required
In doing so, one rises above petty problems, which can
cause mental agony and be detrimental to the physical
and mental well being of a person. In either case, such a
state of mind cannot be of any good to the person or to
the society in which he/she is living. Hence the need to
enlighten the mind and try to realize the futility of being
bogged down by earthly attachments

**25. Oruthi maghanaal pirandhu, oriravil,
Oruthi maghanaal ollithu valz(h)ara,
Tharikkilaan aahi thaana theenghu ninaindha
Karuthai pilzai pitthu kanjan vayattril,
Nerupenna nindra nedumaaley! Vunnai,**

***Aruthitthu wandhom, paraitharui yaahl,
Thiruthakka selvamum, sevakhamum yaam paadi,
Varutthamum theerndhu maghilendelo rem paavai***

Continuing in the Bhagavatam trend this stanza too highlights instances in Krishna's life "O Krishna, who was born of one mother and blossomed in the care of another namely, Devaki, the natural mother and Yasoda the foster mother Blessed were both of them by Your birth Your maternal uncle, King Kamsa refused to foresee his end, even as it was predicted by great sages, in Your divine hands You were a veritable live fire in Kamsa's entrails He however, attained salvation when destroyed by Your hands "

"We are aware that whenever distress seizes this world, You arrive from Your abode in the Vaikunta (heaven, abode of Lord Vishnu) and bestow peace on mankind. We have come to seek a favour of You. O consort of the Goddess of wealth, Sri Lakshmi! dispel our woes, grant us our humble desires and bless us with eternal happiness "

In order to keep the mind concentrated on the Lord and Lord alone, Aandaal constantly reminds us of anecdotes from Krishna's life, His childhood feats, youthful valour and the divine form that created illusions and also disillusion to his devotees and detractors alike, all of whom finally attained salvation. By making the mind and soul to dwell in the thought of God and identifying His human avatar with that of our own, there is no place for

distraction from the path of spirituality It is only when the mind starts wandering, will it lose its track and sense of purpose.

**26. Maaley manivanna! marghali neeraduvaan
Melaiyaar seyvanaghal venduvana kettiyaal,
Jnalathai yellaam nadunga muralvana
Paalanna vannathun paanchajanniyamey,
Polvana shankanghal, poyppadudai anavey,
Saala perumparraiye, pallandisai paarey,
Kola villakke kodiye, vidhaaname,
Aalinilayaay! Aruleylo rem paavai.**

"O Saviour of all those seeking Your grace, O Krishna whose divine body shines like a sapphire (referring to His bluish tinged complexion or neela varnam), we maidens have finished our ceremonial bath, purified ourselves each day of this auspicious month of Marghazi. We have been following our forefathers in traditionally singing praises of You Now, we have come to ask You for the fruits of our prayers, a gift in return for our worship of You Kindly bestow on each of us a 'Shanku' (conch) resembling Your milky white Panchajanyam (the divine conch), the symbol of divine wisdom We can then blow our own Shankus while on our way to the temple. Also gift us a drum on which we will sound Your name to a thousand beats. We would also care for an umbrella (to protect us from the early morning dew in the cold month of Marghazi) and a burning torch to light up the pathway leading to Your abode (in the pre-dawn darkness)."

Trivial though such wishes seem to be to the modern mind, it must be noted that each of these - the drum, the umbrella and the torch are symbols of customary public worship. The umbrella signifies the extent of the Lord's protection of His creations. The torch is symbolic of the devotee's bhakti (piety). The sound of a drum should drown all other earthly passions in the seeker and make his quest a single - minded one. The Shanku (conch) represents the highest form of wisdom. External devices of worship are necessary in as much as they lend the right mood leading to the right frame of mind which in turn leads to single - minded objective the fountainhead of divinity.

**27. Koodaarai vellum seer Govinda! Vundhannai,
Paadi paraikundu yaam perum sammanam;
Naadu puhaz(i)um parisinaal nandraaha,
Soodhagamey tholwalaie thodey sevippuvey,
Paadagamey yendranaiyya palghalaunum yaam anivom;
Aadai uduphom; adhanpinney paalchoru,
Mooda ney peydu muz(i)hangai vaz(i)hiwaara
Koodi irundhu kulirndheylo rem paaval.**

By just uttering the name Govinda, one is washed away of all sins committed knowingly or unknowingly. Hence Aandaal addresses thus "Govinda, You have subdued all Your opponents. The high and mighty has been subjugated to worship You, having realized Your power. Your very name purifies all the pollution in the world. We have come to sing about One who is the lord of the universe. We have come to solicit favors. Let our

homeland turn prosperous through our prayers. Let there be no dearth of milk in our homes. Since we are young girls, confer upon us the ornaments like anklets, bangles, beautiful earrings and many more as we may come adorned in these for Your darshan (see You). You should also come and sit amidst us while we partake of the prasadam (a sweet ghee - flavored milk rice). Together we should share this divine prasadam. Grant us the boon of being with You at all times."

Aandal looks upon God not as someone beyond human reach, but as someone who takes a human form just to be close to His devotees, to save them and protect them, to please them and love them and receive their love in turn. Her devotion has all the essence of a pure soul innocent in its desires like that of an infant. Beneath the innocence of the young Aandal is the enlightened spirit of the devotee which has realised its goal. There is a yearning to be one with the creator. There is also this simple message that God is not only accessible to us but also responds to our appeals if we only call out in all sincerity.

**28. Karavaigal pinchendru kaanam cherndhunbom,
Arivondrum illadha aayarkulathu vundhannai,
Piravi perundhanai punniyam yaam vudaiyome;
Kurai vondrum illadha Govinda! Vunn dhannodu,
Vuravel namakkingu kozh(1)ikka vozhiyaadhul
Ariyadha pillaihalome, annbinaal vundrannal
Sirupayer allaithanavum seeri aruladhe,
Iraivaa, nee thaarai paraiyelo rem paavai.**

In utter humility the pious soul implores the Lord saying, "O Govinda! We belong to the clan that ekes out a living by cattle. We girls are cowherds, illiterate and ignorant. It is a blessing in disguise that You are also born in the same clan as we are and the ties between us cannot be snapped even through the ages. It is a relationship that defies definition. We beg forgiveness for having addressed you by Your nicknames. We are naive and bear no malice. We have nothing but immeasurable adoration for you in our hearts. Considering this, won't You come and shower upon us Your choicest blessings."

No matter how knowledgeable the human mind might be, it comes to naught if there is no humility and affection within the heart. No amount of worldly wisdom or knowledge of scriptures will ever get a man/woman anywhere close to realization. No matter how one calls upon God, He will respond. For Him there is no distinction between an illiterate and literate soul, the prosperous and the penniless. In front of the wealth of implicit faith and love, all riches of the world are meaningless and cease to exist.

**29. Chittrum chirukkale vandhunnal sevitthun,
Potramarai adiye potrum porul kelaai;
Pettram maithunnum kulatthil pirandhu, nee
Kuttreal yengalai kollamai pohaadinu,
Ittrai paralkolvaan nandrukaan Govinda!
Yetraikkum yeleai piravikkum vundhannodu,
Vuttromae aavom, vunakke naam aatseivom,
Matrai nam kaamanghal maatreylo rem paavai.**

O Govinda! We have come in the wee hours of the morning to pay obeisance to Thy golden, lotus feet We are innocent lasses of Your own Gokula, come to see You after going through all the prescribed rituals You were born amidst us You are our lord and master and we Your humble sevaks (servants) It's not enough If You gift us all that we asked for We are clinging to You with our hands stretched Do not drop us back into this mundane world Be our sheath of anchor so that we do not get drowned We are enslaved by unending love for You. Confer upon us that boon whereby we will remain to be Your humble and true devotees through all the cycle of births and rebirths, ordained in human life You are manifestation as an 'avataar' in every century Our deep desire is to worship You and be born with every avatar of Yours as Your true slaves Hence give us this blessed chance to be born again and again in all our births as Your devotees only, never to be enveloped in the darkness of ignorance "

Unquestioning surrender (saranagathi) coupled with implicit devotion, like that between a slave and master, is the essence of Vaishnavism Most alvars (gurus) attained realization in this ecstasy of utter self-deprivation Not to be misunderstood as want of self-respect, this unique form of worship is humility personified in which there is no trace of ego or self-esteem The utterly purified atma, oblivious of its human frame, merges into the Paramatma and attains oneness with the latter. This particular stanza is the most passionate cry of a human soul for union with the Divine.

30. *Vaanga kadal kadaindha Madhavanai, Kesavanai,
Thinghal tirumughatthu seillaiyaar sendirainji*
 Angha paraikonda aatrai, anipudhuvai
 Paingamalath thandaerial Pattarpiraan Kodai sonna
 Sangha tamil maalai muppadhum thappamey
 Inghi parisuraipaar, eerirandu maalvaraithol
 Shenkhan thirumughatthu selva thirumaalaal,
 Yengum thiruvarul pettrinpuruva rem paavai

The final stanza - a signatory by 'Kodai' (Goda Devi / Aandaal), daughter of Pattabiran (Perialwar) who was penned these thirty songs in chaste Tamil-takes us into the Lord's presence. Each of the earlier verses is a milestone illuminating the path leading to the divine home.

"Whosoever in this world contemplates on the Lord Krishna by reciting these thirty devotionals sung in His praise by Kodai with zeal will attain peace in this world and bliss in the next. Hard rock - like hurdles will just melt away and peace will dawn on all those who go by Kodai's Tiruppavai. The pains/pleasures of this samsara (mundane life) will vanish and they will glimpse the Lord's divine visage. Here is Kodai, the child born in Krishna's home land, Villiputtur, making an offering of her garland of thirty blossoms whose fragrance lingers on as eternally as her love for Madhava, the consort of Sri Lakshmi (who was born when the nectar (amritam) was churned out of the mythological ocean. This daughter of Perialwar, is

hereby offering her devotion along with her team of beautiful and bedecked friends, to seek the grace of Kesava, the destroyer of evil.

The fervor with which Aandaal implores her beloved Krishna to lift her, as well as all mankind from the mire of Samsaara (world) and grant mukti (salvation), is emulative. The same passion should catch on, to all those of us who are floundering in this ocean called samsaara, to release ourselves from this illusory world and embark on the path to salvation. In this alone is ensured everlasting peace and tranquility.

Blessed be the holy feet of Sri Aandaal





'Thiruppavai' consisting of thirty verses is a rare lyrical beauty, revealing efforts to win Lord Krishna. Aandaal's outpourings in sweet and simple Tamil are marvellously divine, 'Thiruppavai' sets forth conditions that facilitate the attainment of Divine grace through complete surrender (prapathi) unto Him, the Beloved. It brings out the liting beauty, unassailable truth and the immeasurable glory of Srimannarayana

Ranee Kumar captures the original beauty and grandeur of 'Thiruppavai' Hailing from a Vaishnava background Ranee Kumar is a freelance journalist, She was on the editorial staff of several reputed dailies like The Indian Express, Deccan Chronicle and Newstime for over 12 years Her husband Sri R.R. Girish Kumar is a senior IPS Officer

