



Glory of Bharath » Santh Darsan

Nammalvar



Nammalvar was born in a clan "Vellalar tribe" under the star "Vishakha", during the sukla pakshi, chatur dashi, in kataka lagna, in the month of vrushabha (May-June), in vasantha ruthu, in the year of Pramadhi, in Thiru kurugoor (near Thirunelveli) of Tamil Nadu, to kariyar and Udayanangayar. The child was extraordinary. For several days, it lived with eyes closed in perfect health, without food (neither breast fed milk nor any other). For days together, it never spoke. Distressed at this, the parents place the child at the shrine of Aadinathar, the deity of Kurugoor, surrendering into Him the entire burden of upbringing the child.

As the child was totally different from the general human nature, he was named Maran. He was also called "Sadagopan" as, unlike other children, he did not allow earthly ignorance to envelope him.

For sixteen long years, Maran sat motionless under the tamarind tree in Adinathar temple without food or drink, eyes closed, in padmasana (one of the meditative postures), in utter silence. He was verily a sun in human form with an aura encompassing the universe. He is believed to be the Avatara of Vishwak-Sena, chief of the hosts of Sriman Narayana in Vaikuntam.

Madhurakavi Alwar:

During that period, an elderly Brahmin scholar named Madhurakavi was on his pilgrimage to north Indian shrines. At Ayodhya, the pilgrim saw an extraordinary sweet glowing light as a star on the southern sky. Keen on knowing the source whence it emanated he traveled southward. Even when he reached Srirangam, (near Trichy in Tamil Nadu) the light was visible in far south. He continued his quest till he reached kurugoor, where the light merged with the person in Nammalvar, seated blissfully under the tamarind tree.

Getting Nammalvar to speak:

With great difficulty, Madhura kavi succeeded in drawing out Nammalvar from his deep samadhi. He learnt from Nammalvar the secrets of all the shastras by becoming his disciple. Thenceforward, he remained at his lotus feet, recording the divine poem swelling out of the heart of Nammalvar in great ecstasy of Krishna Bhakti, sometimes rapidly and other times slowly, depending on the intensity of intuition and inspiration. At the very thought of the birth and beauty of Sri Krishna, the Alwar used to go into deep trance for months together. Nammalvar is the seer of Dravidian Vedas. He sang four immortal poems as the Tamil version of the four Vedas - Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharvanda. Nammalvar stayed on earth in flesh and blood only for a brief thirty-five years. His return back to Vaikuntam through the Archaradhi gathi has also been sung by him in the penultimate portion of Thiruvaimozhi.

KANNI-NU CHIRUTHAMBU:

Madhurakavi composed "kanni-nun chiruthambu"-a short prabandha of just eleven poems, in praise of Nammalvar, which in tradition occupies a very central place. Madhurakavi spread the music of the poems of Nammalvar far and wide. During those days, it is said that everyone-be he an oarsman, or trader, a chieftain or a Brahmin, reached the transcendent state by merely singing these verses.

The "Sataari" placed on the heads of all the devotees in Vishnu temples is supposed to be Nammalvar himself. All other Alvars are his limbs as brought out in the following invocatory verse:

**"Bhootam Saraschya, mahadaavya Bhattanatha
Sri Bhakti sara kulashekharaya yogi vahaan
Bhakataangri-renu parakala yateendra mishran,
Srimath paraangusa munim pranatosmi Nityam."**

It was Sri Rangathaswamy of Sri Rangam who fondly referred to "Sadagopan" as Nammalvar (meaning, my devotee).

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In the ninth century, when the Divya Prabhandam, composed by all the Alvars was lost to human memory, through yogic contact with Nammazhwar, Srīman Nadhamunigal resuscitated all the paasurams (verses) and systematized their singing at the Vishnu Temples. The great Ramanuja fostered this practice universally. He wrote 'Sri Bhashya' keeping the Sri-Sukthis of Nammalwar in mind. Manavala maamunigal and Vedanta desikar, by their compositions and discourses, gave the pride of place - Thiruvaimozhi occupies in Sri Vaishnavam. Nammalwar's Works:

Nammalwar gave the Tamil version of the Vedas in the following works:-

1. THIRU-VIRUTTAM

This constitutes the essence of Rig Veda. Thiru means "Sri". It is a poem of 100 stanzas each a quadrate. Viruttam is a style of poetry. Viruttam literally means an event. The event of 'falling in love with the Supreme being' is narrated poetically. 'Bridal Mysticism' is symbolized in a mellifluous way.

2. THIRU-ASIRIYAM

This constitutes the essence of Yajur Veda. It is a poem in seven sections or seven poems of unequal length. The breathless flow of the continuity of expression of the sun-lit beauty of the lord takes the reader to ethereal heights. In all, it has 71 lines.

3. PERIYA THIRUVANDADI

This constitutes the essence of Atharvana Veda. It is a poem of 87 lyrical stanzas. The style is at once simple and direct, moving and inspiring and transports one to see god face to face.

4. THIRUVAIMOZHI (literally means Divine words)

This is the magnum opus of Nammalwar-the treasure of Vaishnavism. It consists of 1102 four lined verses or paasurams. These appear in groups of eleven. One group, which is an exception has thirteen paasurams. Each group is known as a Thiruvaimozhi. Ten such groups is called a pathu (meaning ten in Tamil). Thiruvaimozhi therefore has 10 pathus that is 100 thiruvaimozhis and 1102 paasurams. The melody produced by chorus singing of these paasurams by devotees is a feast to the ears.