



Achaarya Vruksham

MONTHLY E MAGAZINE OF
SRIMATH ANDAVAN ASRAMAM COIMBATORE



VANDE GURU PARAMPARAM
BHAGAVAN - THE FIRST ACHARYA

BOOK 1

Art and Article by
Smt. Malathi Balaji



Sri Varaha Mahadesikaya nama:

Malathy Balaji, one of the aasthanas writers for Achaarya Vruksham for the last 6 years, has been contributing, excellent drawings and articles, in the monthly issues of Achaarya Vruksham, for the benefit of the readers.

Her earlier e-book “Bhagavat Geeta Quick Book”, was released a couple of years back. This featured the quiz, that appeared as quiz- Q & A, in the monthly AV e-magazine.

This time, her e-book on Bhagavan contains the serial from AV, which was highly appreciated by the AV readers.

An asset to the Vaishnavite community, she has been rendering yeoman service through different organizations and journals.

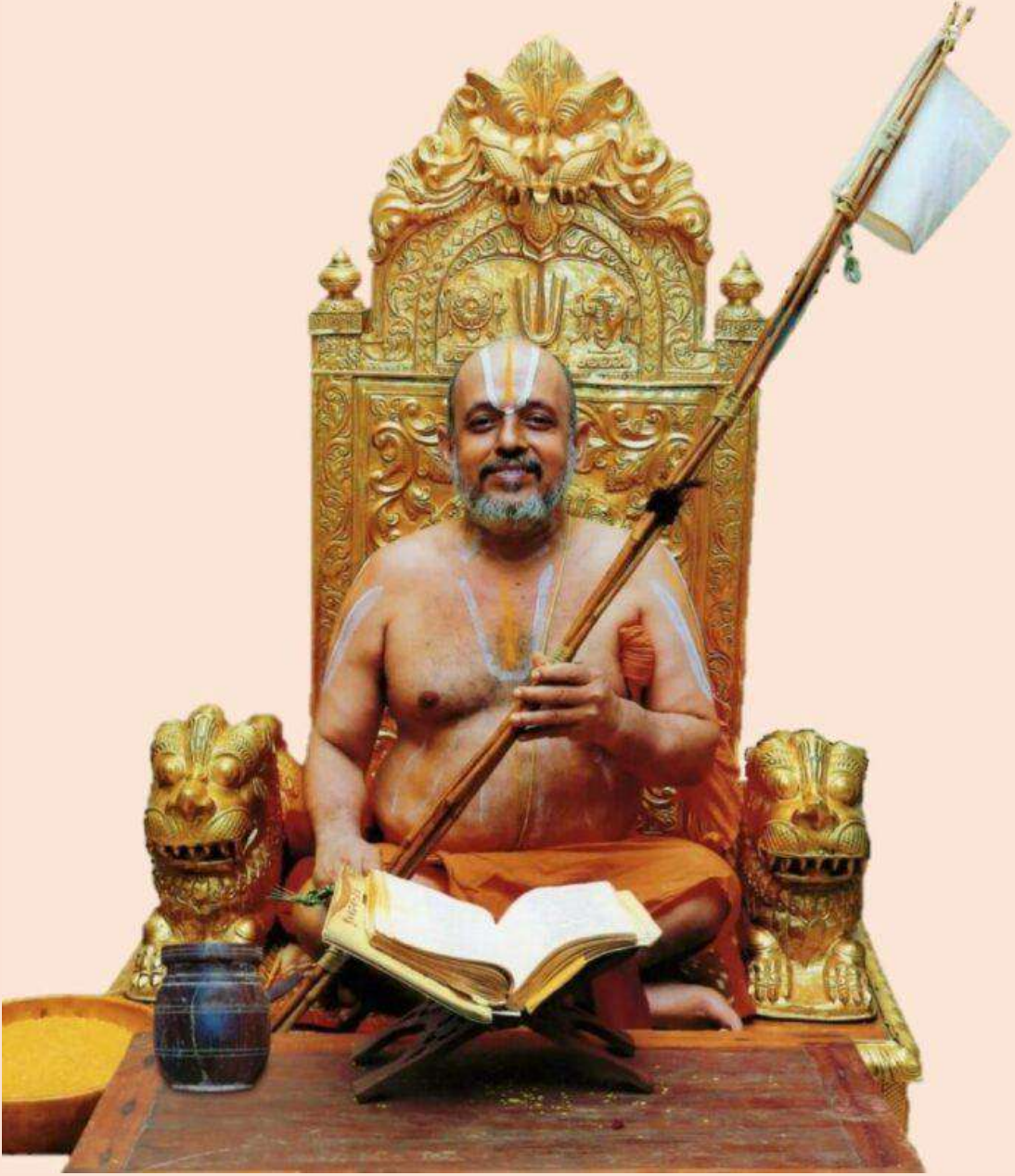
With blessings from HH and Bhagavan, she is set to reach pinnacle heights, in the service to Bhakthakotis.

With blessings

**Keezhayur Paravasthu
Raghavachari Vijayaraghavan**

WITH THE BLESSINGS

HH PRAKRTAM ANDAVAN SHRI VARAHAMAHADESIKAN SWAMI



श्रीमद्वेदान्त रामानुज यतिकृपया रङ्गिणी न्यस्तभारं
तस्सम्प्राप्तागमान्त द्वितयमनुगणं शिष्टतापूर्णमग्र्यम् ।
श्रेष्ठ श्रीरङ्गरामानुजमुनि करुणालब्ध मोक्षाश्रमं तं
सत्त्वस्थं श्रीवराहं यतिवरमनघं देशिकं संश्रयामि ॥

॥ श्रीः ॥



Harikatha Pravachana Praveena, Harikatha Sudha Nidhi, Sangeetha Upanyasa Tilakam, Bhagavatha Kula Divakara, Harikatha Ratnam, Harikatha Vachaspathi, Harikatha Kalasagara, Sunaada Harikatha Sarvabowma, Madhura Kala Praveena, Sangeetha Kala Sikhamani, Sangeetha Kala Nipuna, Harikatha Choodamani, Sangeetha Samrat, Asthana Harikatha Vidwan of Srirangam Srimad Andavan Ashramam, President Awardee (Sangeet Natak Akadami)

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In the Srivaishnava (Visishtadvaita) philosophy Acharya occupies the Supreme position and Sriman Narayanam is the FIRST ACHARYAN. In his Stotram YATHIRAJA SAPTATHI Swami Desikan describes the Guruparampara with Sriman Narayanam as the Prathama (First) Acharya.

சரீரயதிராஜ சப்தத்தி
சுவாமி டிசிகானார்

Swami Desikan, in his Rahasya trayasaram states "I don't consider any devata (deity) either equal or greater than an Acharya. It is our poorvacharyas' contention that the purpose of Krishnaravata was to fulfill Sriman Narayanam's desire to be an Acharya (Geeta charyan)

Malathi
Srimathi Balaji has brought out an excellent book on this subject, giving detailed quotations from Vedas, Alvar paasurams and various other granthas of Poorvacharyas. It is indeed a great service to our Sampradaya. Smt. Malathi belongs to a family of scholars and her forefathers hailed from Velamuri. Her mother Smt Ramamani Narayan has been giving discourses on Srimathi Bhagavatam. No wonder she has written so beautifully on this subject. With best wishes

Mangalani Bhavanku

7/1/2
30-04-2026

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

वेदान्त लक्ष्मण मुनीन्द्र कृपात बोधम्
तत्पाद युग्मसरसीरुह भृंगराजम् ॥
त्रय्यन्त युग्म कृतभूरि परिश्रमं तं
श्रीरङ्ग लक्ष्मण मुनिं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥

Adiyen offers my humble pranaamams to Shri Harikatha Kalyanapuram Aravamudachariar Swami for his kind and gracious foreword for Book 1 of Vande Guruparamparam.

Adiyen was initiated with samashrayanam and bharanyasam by the divine grace of HH Srimad Srimushnam Andavan Swamigal. My forefathers hailed from the quaint town of Velamur, the seat of Samavedam once upon a time. A traceback of my roots revealed that my paternal great grandfather was Shri Chandogena Vidusha Naduvakkarai Velamur Desikacharyar Swami (Author of Samaveda Ahnikam), and my maternal great grandfather Shri Ariyakudi Madabhusi Sowmyavaradan Swami was in Shri Sannidhi kainkaryam of Lord Prahlada Varadan at Ahobilam kshetram. My mother Smt. Ramamani Narayanan has been giving discourses on Shrimad Bhagavatam for 17 years now. Surely, my ancestry is the reason why I was drawn into this sublime cause of likhita kainkaryam for sampradAyam.

A cost accountant by profession, I had a brief stint at TI Cycles of India, Ambattur and Reliance Township, Jamnagar after which I had taken to full time parenting of my young children. Away from hometown, my pastime was reading articles and yahoo threads of my grand uncle, Shri Nrusimha Seva Rasikan Oppiliappan Koil Dr. Varadachari Sadagopan Swami, USA who has made available more than 450 e-books on vaishnava sampradayam at sadagopan.org. He has been the inspiration behind my writing style.

In 2010, I had the opportunity to curate contents for the website <https://samskaaram.com/>, which is a guide for nitykarmas and samskaaras. This was the vision of my husband Srivaikuntam Kidambi Shri Balaji Aravamuthan, (Chartered Accountant, CXO Advisor).

Since 2020, I am contributing articles and artwork for "**AchArya Vruksham**", the monthly magazine of Coimbatore Andavan Ashramam. I am grateful for the encouragement given by Shri Keezhayur Paravastu Raghavachari Vijayaraghavan Swami who advised me to write on the topic Guruparampara! It is indeed his idea.

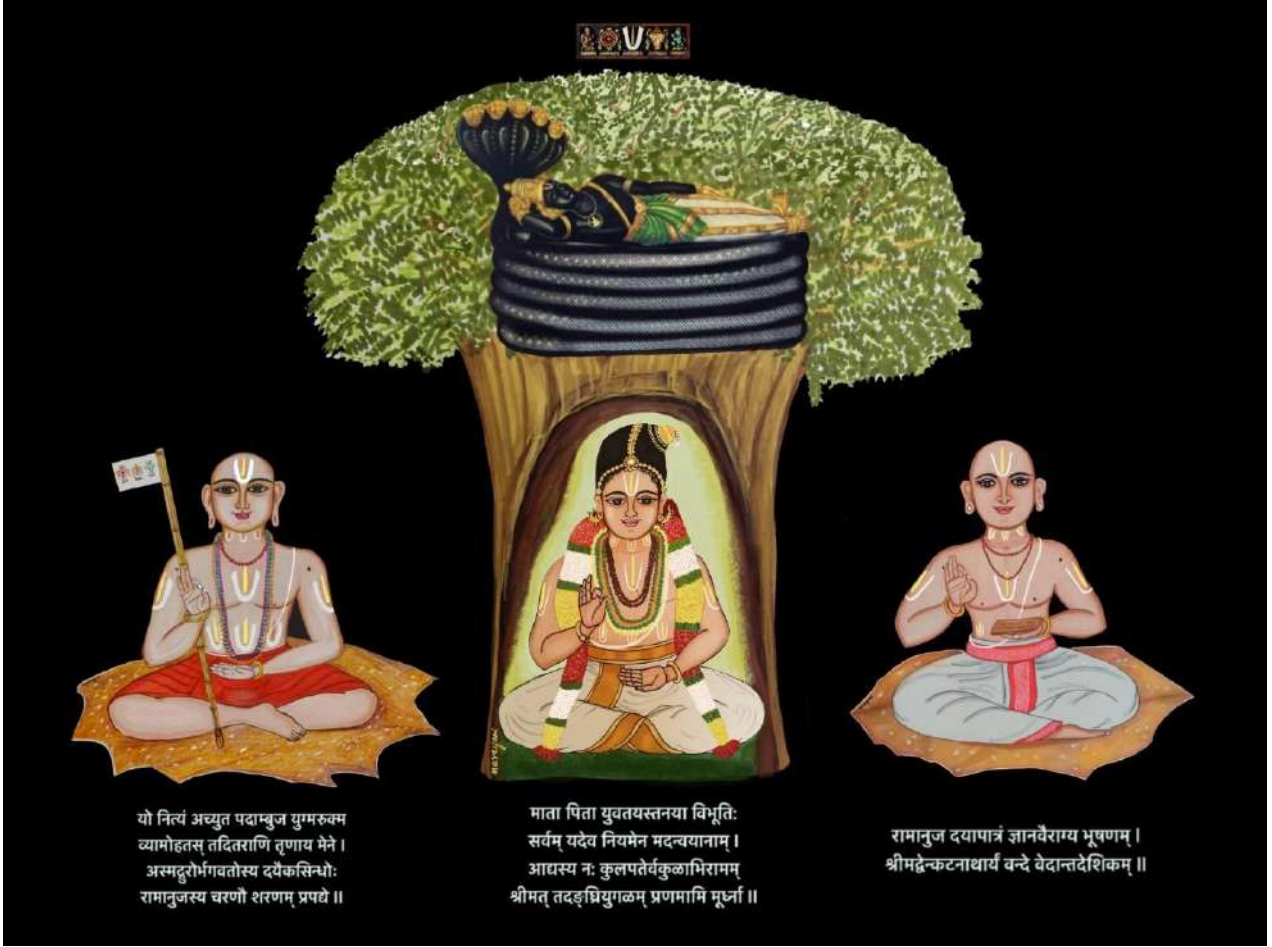
From 2020 to 2024, my friends and I learnt divyaprabandham from Guru Smt. Seetha Saranathan, Mumbai. As a group project, five of us wrote concise English meanings for the same under the guidance of Smt. Prabha Senesh. The audio lessons of our Guru and the meanings are available at <https://devamrutam.blogspot.com>. AzhvArs' prabandhams provoked me to illustrate the pAsurams in art form. I have contributed around 300 drawings in the pen name 'narayani' and they are available along with the pAsurams.

Since June 2024, I have been contributing articles for the Children's monthly E-magazine "**Baala Vaani**" published by SPVST SABHA, Chembur under the supervision of Shri Nagai Narasimhan Swami.

This book BHAGAVAN - THE FIRST ACHARYA has three parts – ACHARYA MAHATMYAM, BHAGAVAN, BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AS A GURU. Happy Reading!

Vande Guruparamparam!
Smt. Malathi Balaji.

ACHARYA MAHATMYAM



Our VishiShTAdvaita ShreevaishNava SiddhAntam was first propounded by BhagavAn Shreeman NArAyANa. He is the supreme Lord of the entire universe and has ShreevaikunTham or Paramapadam as His permanent abode. Shreeman nArAyANa expounded the vishiShTAdvaita philosophy to His consort shreedEvi (pirATTi). PirATTi then instructed this knowledge to Lord VishwaksEna (sEnainAthan). VishvaksEna passed it on to NammAzhvAr. NammAzhvAr then taught the same to Shree NATHamuni. Likewise, our vaishNava siddhAntam was preserved, practised, and transmitted to us through successive sadAchAryas through one-to-one mentorship, up to our immediate AchArya (OrAn vazhi sampradAyam). This lineage of AchAryas is called GURU PARAMPARA OR GURU VAMSHA or ACHARYA PARAMPARA or ACHARYA VAMSHA. When teachings are passed down authentically and accurately through successive generations of AchAryas and shishyas, the integrity and continuity of our rich tradition is maintained, making it - “avichChinna guruparamparA” अविच्छिन्न गुरु परम्परा (unbroken lineage of preceptors).

SwAmi KUrattAzhvAn glorifies our guruparamparA with mangalAcharaNam:

लक्ष्मीनाथ समारंभाम् नाथ यामुन मध्यमाम् ।

अस्मदाचार्य पर्यन्ताम् वन्दे गुरु परम्पराम् ॥

lakshmeenAtha samArambhAm nAtha yAmuna madhyamAm|
asmadAchArya paryantAm vandE guruparamparAm||

I worship the Guru ParamparA, the lineage of AchAryas, that starts with Shreeman nArAyaNa (the husband of Lakshmi), has nAthamuni and yAmunAchArya in the middle, and extends up to my immediate or present AchArya. (For koorattAzhvAn, his Acharya was emperumAnAr, for the devotees reciting this shloka, it will refer to their AchArya)

SwAmi ParAshara BhaTTar's KriyA deepa: Shloka 2:

पूर्वाचार्यान् नमस्तोमैरर्चयेद्भक्तिभावितैः ।

यत्पादभक्तिर्वैकुण्ठपदप्रास्यधिरोहिणी ॥

poorvAchAryAn namastOmairarchayedbhaktibhAvitai: |

yatpAdabhaktirvaikuNThapadaprAsyadhirohiNee ||

PoorvAchArya-s are to be worshipped with bhakti-filled prostrations at their feet, which aid us as a ladder to ascend VaikunTha.

SwAmi dEsikan salutes the illustrious lineage of vaishNava AchAryas starting from his immediate AchArya upto Shreeman NArAyaNa (the prathamAchArya) in his Desika Prabandham titled "adhikAra sangraham".

என்னுயிர் தந்தளித்தவரை சரணம்புக்கு யானடைவேன் அவர்குருக்கள்
நிரைவணங்கி பின்னருளால் பெரும்புதூர் வந்தவள்ளல் பெரியநம்பி ஆளவந்தார்
மணக்கால்நம்பி நன்னெறியை அவர்க்குரைத்த உய்யக்கொண்டார் நாதமுனி
சடகோபன் சேனைநாதன் இன்னமுதத் திருமகள் என்றிவரை முன்னிட்ட
எம்பெருமான் திருவடிகள் அடைகின்றேனே.

en uyir tandaLittavarai sharaNambukku yAnaDaiveEn avargurukkaL niraivaNangi,
pinnaruLAl perumbUdUr vandavaLLal, periyamb, ALavandAr, manakkAlnambi,
nanneRiyai avarkkuraitta uyyakkoNDAr, nAthamuni, saDakOpan, sEnainAthan,
innamuda tirumagaL enRivarai munniTTu emperumAn tiruvaDigaL aDaiginREnE.

Paying my humble obeisances to my immediate AchArya (who initiated me into samAshrayaNam and bharanyAsam); and to all his preceptors in ascending order; then to the auspicious and compassionate Acharya shreeperumbUdUr swAmi ramAnuja; periya-nambi; ALavandAr; manakkAlnambi; uyyakoNDAr who taught him the vaishNava sampradAyam; nAthamuni; shaThakOpan (nammAzhvAr; vishvaksEna (sEnainAthan), and seeking the recommendation of our utterly sweet and divine mother mahAlakshmee, I attain the lotus feet of our foremost AchArya shreeman nArAyaNa.

SwAmi Desika emphasises the importance of Guru in his GuruparamparA sAram:

गुरुभ्यस्तद्गुरुभ्यश्च नमोवाकमधीमहे ।
वृणीमहे च तत्राद्यौ दम्पती जगतां पती ॥
gurubhyastadgurubhyashcha namovAkamadhlmahE |
vRuNlmahE cha tatrAdyau dampatee jagatAM patee ||

We utter the salutatory word “नमः nama:” unto our AchAryas, their AchAryas, and up to the supreme Lord who is the principal AchArya. The divine couple MahAlakshmee and NArAyaNa, the masters of the universe, are our prApya (goal) and prApaka (means to attain the goal).

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF VISHISHTADVAIT/VAISHNAVISM

VishNu who has for his body all the sentient (chit) and non-sentient (achit) beings, is the immanent self (antarAtmA) of everything. He is ever associated with Goddess ShreedEvi. He is the ocean of unblemished and unlimited bliss. The Lord is possessed of a host of auspicious qualities. He is the principal cause of creation and redemption of the universe. He is the highest goal for souls bonded endlessly to this material universe. He can be attained by bhakti yOGa or prapatti yOGa, prapatti (surrender) being the easiest means. Once the soul reaches vaikuNTham, the permanent abode of Shreeman NArAyaNa, it never returns to samsAra. In short, Lord nArAyaNa is the tattva (supreme reality), hita (means) and purushArtha (goal) of life.

MEANING OF THE WORD ‘GURU’

The benevolent Guru who enlightens us on the above principles and clarifies our doubts, is our sampradAya AchArya. He is learned enough to teach vEdas and vEdArthams, and write authoritative commentaries on vEdas, smRitis, purANas, itihAsas, Agamas and shreesooktis of sAdhvAchAra-s.

‘गु’ शब्दः तु अन्धकाराख्यो ‘रु’ शब्दः तत् निरोधकः ।
अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् “गुरुः” इति अभिधीयते ॥
'gu' shabda: tu andhakArAkhyO 'ru' shabda: tat nirOdhaka:
andhakAra nirOdhitvAt "guru:" iti abhidhlyate ||

The letter “gu” means darkness that is ignorance. The letter “ru” means to destroy the darkness, that is to illuminate. The one who removes ignorance by enlightening the shishya with divine knowledge is revered as a “GURU”.

The vEdas proclaim:

AchArya is equal to God (आचार्य देवो भव AchArya dEvO bhava|).

Worship the AchArya like God (देवं इव आचार्यं उपासीत dEvaM iva AchAryaM upAseet) |

Madhurakavi AzhvAr revered his guru NammAzhvAr as God and declared in kaNNinun sirutAmbu 2 – “தேவு மற்றறியேன் குருகூர் நம்பி, பாவின் இன் இசை பாடித் திரிவனே - dEvu maRRaRiyEn kurugUr nambi, pAvin inniSai pADi tirivanE” - I don't know any other God. I shall wander singing my Guru's divyaprabandhams in sweet tunes.

SwAmi dEsikan says in Srlmad RahasyatrayasAram:

अध्यासीन तुरङ्ग वक्त्र विलसत् जिह्वाग्र सिम्हासनात् |

आचार्यात् इह अन्यां देवतां समधिकां न मन्यामहे ||

adhyAsIna turanga vaktra vilasat jihvAgra simhAsanAt |

AcAryAt iha anyAM devatAM samadhikAM na manyAmahe ||

Lord Hayagriva shines forth seated on the throne constituted by the tip of the tongue of the AchArya. Hence, in this world, there is no deity equal to or greater than the AchArya.

ACHARYA, THE DISPELLER OF DOUBTS.

शास्त्रज्ञानं बहुक्लेशं बुद्धेश्चलनकारणम् ।

उपदेशाद्धरिं बुद्ध्वा विरमेत् सर्वकर्मसु ॥

shAstragnyAnaM bahuklEshaM buddhEshchalanakAraNam |

upadEshAddariM buddhvA viramEt sarvakarmasu ||

Scriptural knowledge involves difficulty and can confuse the mind. Hence, may you shun all other ways of learning the shAstras and realize Hari through the upadEsha or teachings of the AchArya.

QUALITIES OF AN ACHARYA

अचिनोति च शास्त्रार्थ आचारे स्थापयत्यति ।

स्वयमप्याचरेदस्तु स आचार्यः इति स्मृतः ॥

AchinOti cha shAstrArtham AchArE sthApayatyati |

svayamapyAcharEdastu sa AchArya: iti smRuta: ||

One who accumulates the knowledge of the shAstras, works relentlessly to establish them, and follows the AchAra-s himself is called as AchArya.

AchArya is righteous and establishes righteousness around Him. The guru initiates the devotee with panchasamskAram, teaches him the rahasya mantras that would

grant him mOksha, watches the progress of the disciple and out of compassion, forgives and corrects him when he drifts away from his duty and devotion. To such an AchArya, the shiShya surrenders with utmost humility and requests him to conduct the ceremony of “prapatti or “bharanyAsam” or “sharaNAgati” or “AtmanikshEpanam”. The disciple surrenders to Shreeman nArAyaNa, giving up his ego and all other means to attain mOksha. Such a shishya who adopts “prapatti” as the means to mOksha is referred by the name “prapanna”, “sharaNAgata”.

SwAmi dEsikan sums up the characteristics of a sadAchArya in NyAsa Vimshati 1:

सिद्धं सत्संप्रदाये स्थिरधियमनघं श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं

सत्त्वस्थं सत्यवाचं समयनियतया साधुवृत्त्या समेतम् ।

डम्भासूयादिमुक्तं जितविषयगणं दीर्घबन्धुं दयालुं

स्खालित्ये शासितारं स्वपरहितपरं देशिकं भूष्णुरीप्सेत् ॥

siddhaM satsaMpradAyE sthiradhiyamanaghaM shrotriyaM brahmaniShThaM
sattvasthaM satyavAchaM samayaniyatayA sAdhuvRuttyA sametam |

DambhAsUyAdimuktaM jitaviShayagaNaM deerghabandhuM dayAluM sKAlityE
shAsitAraM svaparahitaparaM deshikaM bhUShNureepsEt ||

The fourteen guNas of a sadAchArya are:

- 1. siddha: sampradAyE - Deep rooted in tradition*
- 2. sthira dhee: Firm knowledge*
- 3. anagha: Free from blemish*
- 4. shrOtriya: Well versed in vEdas*
- 5. brahmaniShTha: - Mind seated in Brahman*
- 6. sattvastha: - Fixed in the mode of goodness*
- 7. satyavAk – Truthful speech*
- 8. Samaya niyatA sAdhu vRuttyA samEta: - Follows rules prescribed by noble gurus from time to time*
- 9. Dambha asUyAdi mukta: - Free from pride, jealousy, etc.*
- 10. jita viShaya gaNa: - Controller of all senses*
- 11. deerghabandhu: - A friend forever*
- 12. dayAlu: - Compassionate*
- 13. skhAlityE shAsitA – Guides and corrects shishyas*
- 14. sva para hita para: - Ensures welfare of his self and his shishyas.*

ACHARYA IS DESHIKA

AchArya or Guru is referred by the name “dEshika”:

देवानुग्रहदायित्वात् शिष्यानुग्रह कारणात् ।

करुणामय रूपत्वात् उच्यते देशिको बुधैः ॥

dEvAnugrahadAyitvAt shiShyAnugraha kAraNAAt |
karuNAmaya rUpatvAt uchyatE dEshikO budhai: ||

dEshika (देशिक) – This revered title is composed of three elements:

- **dE (दे)** – representing the grace of God (dEva)
- **shi (शि)** – showering such divine grace to a disciple (shishya – shi शि)
- **ka (क)** – having abundant compassion (karuNA – ka क),

Thus, one who receives the grace of God; selflessly transmits it to his disciples, and embodies boundless compassion is honoured by the wise as “**dEshika**”.

ACHARYA SAMBANDHAM – ASSOCIATION OF AN ACHARYA

The association of an Acharya (AchArya Sambandham) is quintessential to attain liberation.

पापिष्ठः क्षत्रबन्धुश्च पुण्डरीकश्च पुण्यकृत् ।

आचार्यवत्तया मुक्तौ तस्मादाचार्यवान् भवेत् ॥

pApiShTha: kShatrabandhushcha puNDareekashcha puNyakRut |
AchAryavattayA muktau tasmAdAchAryavAn bhavEt ||

Kshatrabandhu was the worst sinner (pApiShTha:) and in contrast, puNDareeka was full of virtuous deeds (puNyakRut). Both had to wait until they were graced by a Guru. Kshatrabandhu met a group of seven sages in the end of his life and learnt gOvinda nAma from them after which he was liberated. PuNDareeka also was emancipated only after he met Sage nArada and learnt the ashTAKshara mantram from him.

AchArya-sambandha bhAgyam: It is not easy to get a sadAchArya. If we have AchArya sambandham, it is a great and rare fortune. Six factors (hEtu shaDgam) work together to bestow us an AchArya.

ईश्वरस्य च सौहार्दं यदृच्छा सुकृतं तथा ।

विष्णोः कटाक्षमद्वेषं अभिमुख्यम् च सात्त्विकैः ।

संभाषनं षडेतानि ह्याचार्यप्राप्तिहेतवः ॥

eeshwarasya cha sauhArdaM yadRuchChA sukRutaM tathA |
viShNo: kaTAKshamadvEShaM Abhimukhyam cha sAttvikai: |
saMbhAShanaM ShaDEtaani hyAchAryaprAptihEtava: ||

1. *The kind heart of ParamAtmA.*
2. *Some good deed done by the devotee.*
3. *The compassionate glance of Lord ViShNu.*
4. *Having no hatred towards the Lord.*
5. *Approaching the Lord.*
6. *Conversation with sAttvik people – satsangam.*

ACHARYA KATAKSHAM – THE GRACE OF THE ACHARYA

The contribution of Guru in our life is immeasurable, indescribable, and unreturnable.

(SHUBHASHITA NEEVI 8.10)

एकयैव गुरोर्दृष्ट्या द्वाभ्यां वापि लभेत यत् ।

न तत्तिसृभिरष्टाभिः सहस्रेणापि कर्हिचित्॥

ekayaiva gurOrdRuShTyA dvAbhyAM vApi labhEta yat |
na tattisRubhiraShTABhi: sahasrENApi karhichit||

The merits obtained from one or two glances of the Guru cannot be obtained even from a glance of the three eyed Shiva, the glance of the eight eyed BrahmA, or the glance of the thousand eyed Indra or BhagavAn.

ADHIKARA SANGRAHAM 38 OF SWAMI DESIKAN

ஏற்றி மனத்து எழில் ஞான விளக்கை இருள் அனைத்தும்
மாற்றினவர்க்கு ஒரு கைம்மாறு மாயனும் காண்கில்லான்
போற்றி உகப்பதும் புந்தியில் கொள்வதும் பொங்கு புகழ்
சாற்றி வளர்ப்பதும் சற்று அல்லவோ முன்னம் பெற்றதற்கே.

ERRi manattu ezhil gnyAna viLakkai iruL anaittum
mARRinavarkku oru kaimmARu mAyanum kANagillAn
pORRi ukappatum pundiyil koLvatum pongu pugazh
chARRi vaLarppadum chaRRu allavO munnam peRRadaRkE.

The AchAryan lights the lamp of true knowledge and removes all the darkness of ignorance in the shishya. Even the all-knowing Lord nArAyaNa cannot show the way to pay back for the upakAras received from the AchAryan. Even what we do in terms of praising the AtmaguNams of the AchAryan, meditating on Him and spreading is glory all around are just a bit when compared to what has been received from Him before.

ACHARYA PARAMPARA ANUSANDHANAM – REMEMBERING THE LINEAGE

AchAryas acquired with such a rare combination of the above-mentioned blessings, should always be revered with gratitude and devotion. One should always meditate on his Guru's name and utter His taniyan. (गुरोर्नाम सदा जपेत् । gurOrnAma sadA japet). One should know the whole lineage of his AchAryas and learn about their life history (AchArya Charitrams) to get inspiration and practical guidance for one's own spiritual journey (स च आचार्य वंशो ज्ञेयः | sa cha AchArya vamshO ngyEya: |). One

should lovingly repeat his Guru's holy names, prostrate, praise, worship and delight his Guru (ध्यायेत् जपेत् नमेत् भक्त्या भजेदभ्यर्चयेत् मुदा dhyAyEt japEt namEt bhaktyA bhajEt api archayEt mudA). One should meditate upon the lotus feet of his Guru (गुरु पदाम्बुजं ध्यायेत् guru padAmbujam dhyAyEt).

गुरुं प्रकाशयेत् धीमान् मन्त्रं यत्नेन गोपयेत् ।

अप्रकाश प्रकाशाभ्याम् हीयेते संपदायुशी ॥

gurum prakAshayet dheemAn mantram yatnEna gopayEt |
aprakAsha prakAshAbhyAm heeyEtE sampadAyushee||

It is the primary duty of a devotee to glorify his AchArya and keep secret the mantra taught to him. If he does the opposite, his wealth and longevity will decline.

KrishNa says in BG 4.34

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

tadviddhi praNipAtena paripraSnaena sevayA |
upadekShyanti te ngyAnaM ngyAninastattvadarshina: ||

We should learn the supreme truth by prostrating (praNipAtEna), asking questions with reverence (pariprashnEna), and serving (sevayA) at the feet of a Guru, the one with perfect knowledge. (BG 4.34)

BhagavAn who possesses all auspicious qualities is the ParamAchAryA who originally taught the supreme truth to us solely out of compassion. Hence AchArya - paramaparA-anushandhAnam must be fulfilled up to Shreeman nArAyaNa, who is referred as the foremost preceptor or prathamAchArya or prathama pravartaka of our VishishTAdvaita sampradAyam. Whenever bhagavAn feels that the chain of divine knowledge is broken and is not being passed down to the newer generations, He, with His divine will, incarnates as AzhvArs or AchArya Purushas to re-instate the VaishNava SiddhAntam and redeem the world. Lord Achyuta fulfils this wish by entering those who are already born (अनुप्रविश्य कुरुते यत् समीहितं अच्युतः anupravishya kurutE yat sameehitam achyuta:).

AchArya's tiruvaDis (divine feet) are the sole refuge for people yearning to attain the supreme Lord.

The AchArya plays a pivotal role in upliftment of the jeevAtmA (AtmOjjeevanam). Gratitude towards such AchAryan must not stop with him alone but extend to all his relatives as well. One should reverence the AchArya and his family members. **SwAmi NammAzhvAr, the head of all AzhvArs, echoes this sentiment in his divya prabandham TiruvAymozhi 9.7, in the voice of a woman yearning to see her beloved Lord KrishNa.**

எம்கானல் அகம்கழிவாய்* இரை தேர்ந்துஇங்கு இனிதுஅமரும்*
செங்கால மடநாராய்!* திருமூழிக்களத்து உறையும்*
கொங்குஆர் பூந்துழாய்முடி* எம்குடக்கூத்தர்க்கு என்தூதாய்*
நும்கால்கள் என்தலைமேல்* கெழுமீரோ நுமரோடே.

engAnal agamkazhivAy irai tErnduingu inidamarum
senkAla maDa nArAy! tirumUzhikkaLattuRaiyum
kongAr pUntuzhAy muDi enkuDakkUttarkken tUdAy
numkAlgaL en talai mEl kezhumeerO numarODE.

The red-legged crane bird (sengAla maDanArAy) in this pAsuram indirectly refers to AchAryas, the messengers of God, who possess the power to take us to the divine feet of bhagavAn. That is the reason we hear the words “AchAryan tiruvaDi aDaindAr” when a prapanna leaves the mortal world. NammAzhvAr (ParAnkusha nAyaki) says: “Oh red-legged gentle cranes standing with ease in search of prey on the salty shores of our gardens! The Lord who does nityavAsam in tirumUzhikalam divyadEsam wears the mesmerising, honey-laden tulasee wreath on His crown. He is KrishNa, the one who dances with pots. If you go as my messenger to Him and come back, please place your divine feet and your relatives’ feet on my head.

Let us conclude this introduction to the series on GURUPARAMPARA with AchArya Shree NaDAdUr ammAL’s verses from guru upAsana paddhati, Prapanna PArijAtam.

गुरुरेव परं ब्रह्म गुरुरेव परं धनम् ।

गुरुरेव परा विद्या गुरुरेव परायणम् ॥

गुरुरेव परः कामः गुरुरेव परागतिः ॥

gururEva paraM brahma gururEva paraM dhanaM |

gururEva parA vidyA gururEva parAyaNam ||

gururEva para: kAma: gururEva parAgati: ||

Guru alone is the supreme Brahman. Guru alone is the supreme wealth. Guru alone is the supreme knowledge. Guru alone is the one to be worshipped. Guru alone is the highest desire, and Guru alone is the highest goal.

यस्मात्-तद्-उपदेष्टा असौ तस्माद्गुरुतरो गुरुः।

अर्चनीयस्य वन्द्यश्च कीर्तनीयश्च सर्वदा ॥

yasmAt-tad-upadEShTA asau tasmAdgurutarO guru:|

archaneeyasya vandyashcha keertaneeyashcha sarvadA||

Because He instructs about the “Brahman”, He is the best of all gurus. He should always be worshipped, revered, and praised.

कर्णधारमतो देही गुरुणा संस्कृतिं तरेत् ।

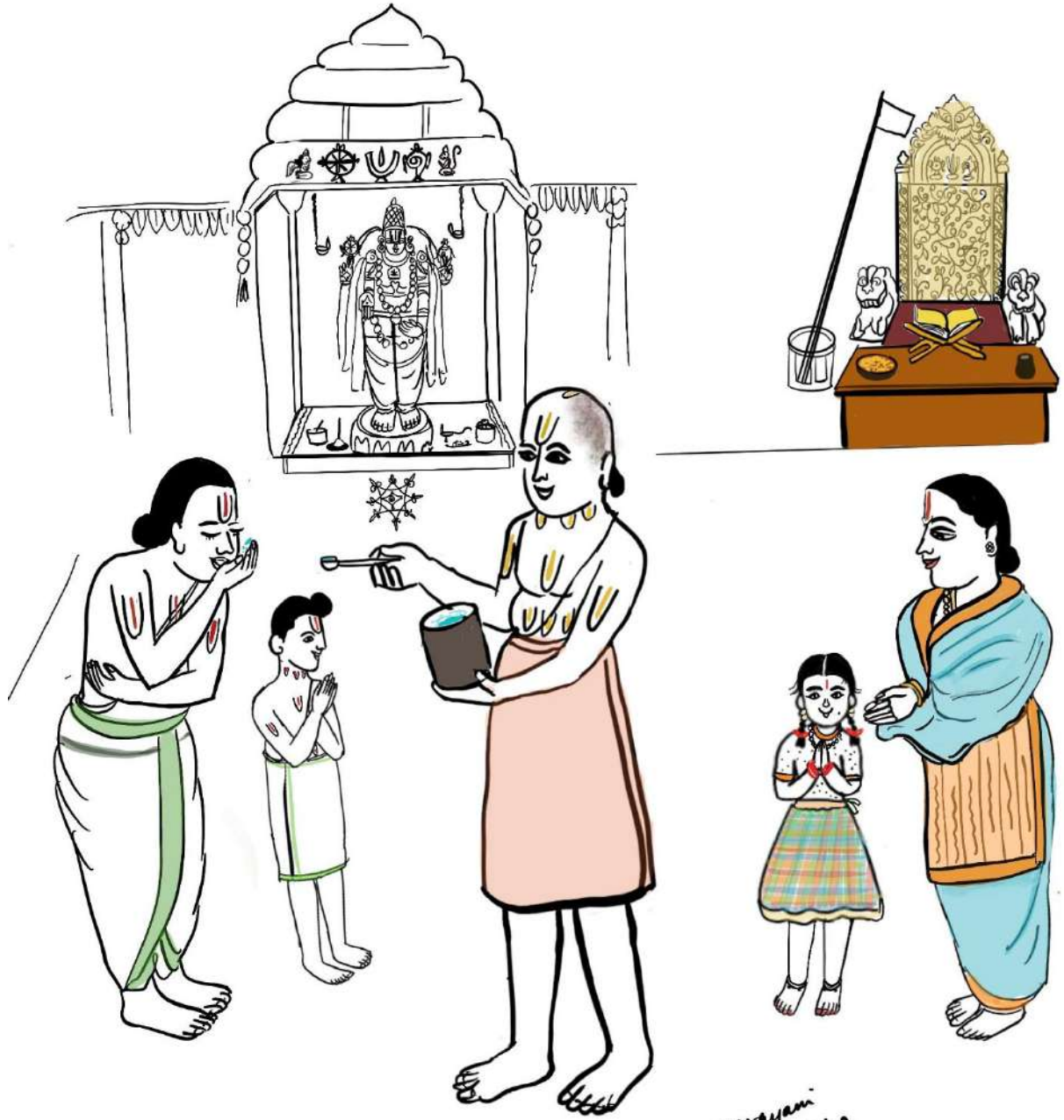
नृदेहमाद्यम् प्रतिलभ्य दुर्लभं प्लवं सुकल्पं गुरुकर्णधारं ।

karNadhAramatO dEhee guruNA saMskRutiM tarEt

nRudEhamAdyam pratilabhya durlabhaM plavaM sukalpaM gurukarNadhAraM |

This human body is a rarely obtained boat captained by a helmsman called Guru (karNadhAra – boat captain who steers the wheel). The soul can swim across the ocean of bodily existence only with the help of the Guru.

|| VandE Guru ParamparAm ||



narayani
21/9/23

॥ श्रीः ॥

॥ VANDE GURUPARAMPARAM ॥

BHAGAVAN - THE FIRST ACHARYA – PART 1

BHAGAVAN

BHAGAVAN SHREEMAN NARAYANA is the first preceptor (prathamAchArya), and foremost preceptor (paramAchArya) of our GuruparamaparA. He is the supreme self (paramAtmA or parabrahman), the supreme reality/truth/principle (paratattva), the supreme being (parama purusha), the supreme effulgence (paranjyoti), and the supreme Lord of the entire universe (paramEshwara). He is the primordial Lord (AdidEva) who is the principal cause (moola kAraNa) of sRushTi (creation), sthiti (maintenance) and samhAra (dissolution) of the multiverse. He is the material cause (upAdhAna kAraNa), instrumental cause (nimitta kAraNa) and supportive cause (sahakAri kAraNa) of all things and processes of the myriad universes. He is eternal (nityam), existing in the past, present and the future. He is the protector of all (sarvarakshaka). Lord nArAyaNa is fondly called in tamizh as “emperumAn”. He is the beloved husband of ShreedEvi alias Lakshmi and hence is always referred with a prefix “Shree” - Shreeman nArAyaNa or Shriya:pati or Lakshmeepati. The vedas praise Him as the ‘purusha’ who has more than thousand heads (sahasrasheershA purusha:), thousand eyes (sahasrAksha:), thousand legs (sahasrapAt), and extends beyond the ten directions. Lord nArAyaNa pervades all movable and non-movable entities and hence he is called “ViShNu”. (The root word “vish” means to pervade, the suffix “knu” means the person who has the said quality innately.). Lord nArAyaNa is the tattva (supreme truth), hita (path or means) and purushArtha (goal) of life.

BHAGAVAN – PARAMATMA – HIS PARATVAM

The term ‘para’ means supreme. He is the ultimate and there is nothing beyond Him.

NARAYANA SOOKTAM

नारायणं महाज्ञेयं विश्वात्मानं परायणम् ॥

नारायण परं ब्रह्म तत्त्वं नारायणः परः ।

नारायण परो ज्योतिरात्मा नारायणः परः ।

नारायण परो ध्याता ध्यानं नारायणः परः ॥

nArAyaNaM mahAgyeyaM viShvAtmAnaM parAyaNam ॥

nArAyaNa paraM brahma tattvaM nArAyaNaH paraH |

nArAyaNa paro jyotirAtmA nArAyaNaH paraH |

nArAyaNa paro dhyAtA dhyAnaM nArAyaNaH paraH ॥

nArAyaNa is the one to be known, the one to be worshipped as the soul of the universe (collectively and individually), the supreme brahman, the supreme truth, the supreme effulgence, the supreme soul, supreme meditator and the supreme meditation.

MAHOPANISHAD:

1. ऐको ह वै नारायण आसीत्, न ब्रह्म, न ईशान"

"Eko ha vai nArAyaNa Aseet, na brahma, na eeshAna..."

In the beginning, before any creation, there was only nArAyaNa, neither brahmA nor eeshANa.

NArAyaNOpanishad says,

2. अथ पुरुषो ह वै नारायणोऽकामयत प्रजाः सृजेयेति ।

atha puruSho ha vai nArAyaNO &kAmayata prajA: sRujEyEti |

The supreme being nArAyaNa willed to create beings.

3. नारायणादेव समुत्पद्यन्ते।

nArAyaNAdEva samutpadyantE|

All beings including devas like brahmA, rudra, indra, vasu, Aditya, vEda chandas etc. emerged from nArAyaNa.

4. नारायणात्प्रवर्तन्ते ।

nArAyaNAt pravartantE|

Everyone / everything is directed by nArAyaNa to perform specific duties to sustain the universe.

5. नारायणे प्रलीयन्ते।

nArAyaNE praleeyantE|

Everyone / everything merges into nArAyaNa finally.

6. MahAbhArata, anushAsana parava 178.11

आलोड्य सर्वशास्त्राणि विचार्य च पुनः पुनः ।

इदमेकं सुनिष्पन्नं ध्येयो नारायणः सदा ॥

Having thoroughly studied all the scriptures and reflected again and again, this one conclusion is firmly established: Nārāyaṇa alone is to be meditated upon always.

THREE MEANINGS OF NARAYANA SHABDAM:

1. “nAra” means water. “ayana” means resting or reclining. Lord VishNu rests on water and hence the name nArAyaNa.
2. “nAra” means beings. “ayanam” means movement. He pervades every being inside and outside (nAra: ayanam yasya) - Hence the name ‘nArAyaNa’.
3. “ayanam” means abode or resting place. He is the abode for the jeevAtmAs called “nAra” (nArANAm ayanam yasya) - Hence the name nArAyaNa.

JAGATKARANA - SHRISHTI KARTA

VISHNU PURANAM 1.2.66

सृष्टि स्थिती अन्तकर्णीं ब्रह्म विष्णु शिवात्मिकां।

स संजां याति भगवानेक एव जनार्दनः ॥

sRuShTi sthiti antakaraNIM brahma viShNu shivAtmikAm |
sa sangyAm yAti bhagavAneka eva janArdana: ||

JanArdana is the one single God who creates, sustains and destroys the universe in the form of brahmA, Vishnu and Shiva respectively.

DEVADIDEVA – THE LORD OF ALL DEVAS

Lord nArAyaNa is the Lord of all dEvas (dEvAdidEva). They perform their duties and report to Him like His subordinates.

The taittireeya upanishad says:

भीषास्मात् वातः पवते। भीषोदेति सूर्यः।

भीषास्मात् अग्निइन्द्रश्च। मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः।

bheeShAsmAt vAta: pavate| bheeShodeti sUrya:|
bheeShAsmAt agni indrashcha| mRutyur dhAvati panchama: |

It is out of fear of the Supreme Brahman that the wind, vAta is blowing; out of fear of Him that soorya, the sun regularly rises and sets; and out of fear of Him that agni, the fire is burning. It is only due to fear of Him that the devas like the Chandra (moon) and indra (king of devas), and yama (death) perform their respective duties.”



NARAYANA TATTVAM OR VISHNU TATTVAM

BhagavAn Shreeman nArAyaNa is the supreme soul (paramAtmA) and all other sentient beings (chEtanas) and non-living things (achetana-s) found in this universe are His body (shareeram).

VEDANTA SARAM

समस्तचिदचित्वस्तुशरीरायाखिलात्मने ।

श्रीमते निर्मलानन्दोदन्वते विष्णवे नमः ॥

samastachidachitvastushareerAyAkhilAtmanE |

shreemate nirmalAnandOdanvatE viShNavE nama: ||

Swami rAmAnuja says: I bow to viShNu, who has for His body all sentient and insentient beings, who is the soul of all things, who is always associated with Goddess Shree, who is without any blemish, and who is the ocean of endless bliss.

BHAGAVAT SWAROOPAM: NATURE

His nature or divyAtma swaroopam (**svarUpam**) is truth (satyam), self-effulgent (gyAnam), blissful (Anandam), all auspicious (kalyANaikatAna, shivam), infinite (anantam), imperishable (avyayam), permanent (shAsvatam) and distinctly different from all others (samasta-vastu-vilakshaNam).

BHAGAVAT ROOPAM: BEAUTY

Shreeman nArAyaNa's divine form is called the divya mangaLa vigraham (**rUpam**). **This divya mangaLa vigraham** is unique (Eka rUpam), divinely wonderful (divyadbhutam), imperceptible (achintyam), eternal (nityam), faultless (niravadya), incomparable (niratishayam), resplendent (oujvalyam), charming (saundharyam), well-built (IAvaNyam), fragrant (saugandhyam) gentle (saukumaryam), and ever youthful (yauvanam). (The divya mangaLa vigraham is called 'ShubhAshrayam', having both auspiciousness and protectiveness - He has both shubhatvam and Ashrayatvam).

BHAGAVAT GUNAM: QUALITIES

He is called "bhagavAn" because He has the six supreme characteristics (shaDguNa-s or bhaga-s) namely knowledge (gyAnam), will (balam), lordship (aishwaryam), stamina (veeryam), power (shakti), and splendour (tEjas). He is the treasure trove or the ocean of countless auspicious qualities (**ananta/asankhyEya kalyANa guNas**) like motherliness (vAtsalyam), graciousness (sausheelyam), ease of access (saulabhyam), mArdavam (lenience), Arjavam (sincerity), compassion (kAruNyam), generosity (audhAryam), friendliness (sauhArdam), sweet (mAdhuryam), stableness (sthairya), courage (dhairya), shaurya (valiant), victorious (parAkramam), profound (gAmbheeryam), successful (satyakAmam) and promising (satyasankalpam), ever active (kRutitvam), and thankful (kRutagnyatA). He is the sole granter of mOksha which can be attained by following the path of bhakti yOga or prapatti yOga.

SHARANAGATI GADYAM

अखिलहेयप्रत्यनीककल्याणैकतान ! स्वेतरसमस्तवस्तुविलक्षण

अनन्तज्ञानानन्दैकस्वरूप ! स्वाभिमतानुरूप एकरूप अचिन्त्य दिव्याद्भुत

नित्यनिरवद्य निरतिशय औज्ज्वल्य सौन्दर्य सौगन्ध्य सौकुमार्य लावण्य

यौवनाद्यनन्तगुणनिधिदिव्यरूप !

स्वाभाविकानवधिकातिशय ज्ञानबलैश्वर्य वीर्यशक्तितेजस्सौशील्य वात्सल्य मार्दव आर्ज सौहार्द

साम्य कारुण्य माधुर्य गाम्भीर्य औदार्य चातुर्यस्थैर्यधैर्यशौर्यपराक्रमसत्यकामसत्यसङ्कल्पकृतित्व

कृतज्ञताद्यसङ्ख्येयकल्याणगुणगणौघमहार्णव !

akhilAheyapratyanika-kalyANaikatAna ! svetara-samastavastuvilakshhaNa

ananta-gnyana-AnandaikasvarUpa ! svAbhimatAnurUpa ekarUpa achintya

divyAdbhuta nitya-niravadya niratishaya aujvalya saundarya saugandhya

saukumArya IAvaNya yauvanAdy-anantaguNanidhi-divyarUpa !

svAbhAvikAnavadhikAtishaya gnyana-bala-aishvarya veerya-shakti-tejas-

sausheelya vAtsalya mArdava Arjava sauHArda sAmya kAruNya mAdhurya

gAmbhIrya audArya-chAturya-sthairyA-dhairyA-shaurya-parAkrama-satyakAma-

satyasankalpa-kRutitva kRutagnyatA-Adi-asankhyEya-kalyANa-guNagaNaugha-

mahArNava!

BHAGAVAT AISHWARYAM: SUPREMACY OF LORD NARAYANA

Shreeman NArAyaNa is the supreme Lord of the entire universe. His supremacy or lordship over everything and everyone is referred by the term “aishwaryavatvam” or “Ishvaratvam”. In other words, everything belongs to Him. We, the jeevAtmAs are just enjoying His wealth on this earth.

ISHAVASYOPANISHAD 1

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

IshA vAsyamidaM sarvaM yatkinjcha jagatyAM jagat|

tEna tyaktena bhunjeethA mA gRudha: kasyasvid dhanam ||

Whatever is present in the whole universe, be it sentient or insentient entities, everything is possessed by Ishwara. Hence, renouncing them, keep enjoying them. Do not desire to have them as they do not belong to anyone. Do they?

BHAGAVAN - THE ADVITEEYA

He is one without a second (adviteeya). He is totally independent (svatantra). He is the ultimate director (prEritA) under whose orders all things and processes work.

NARAYANOPANISHAD:-

देव एको नारायणः | न द्वितीयोस्ति कश्चित् ॥

dEva EkO nArAyaNa:| na dviteeyO asti kashchit||

nArAyaNa is the only God. There is no second at all.

VISHNU SOOKTAM:-

परो मात्रय तनुवा वृधान । न ते महित्वमन्वश्नुवन्ति ।

parO mAtraya tanuva vRudhAna | na tE mahitvamanshnuvanti|

You transcend all physical measurements; none can ever know or experience Your complete glory.

SHVETASHVAROPANISHAD:-

न तत् समश्च अभ्यधिकश्च दृश्यते

na tat samashcha abhyadhikashcha dRushyatE -.

There is no one equal to or greater than Him

SARVAVYAPAKATVAM: OMNISCIENCE OF LORD NARAYANA

nArAyaNa is referred as ‘vishvAtmA’, the soul of the universe and “AtmEshvara”, the ruler of the individual souls – nArAyaNa sooktam

NARAYANA SOOKATAM

यच्चं किञ्चिज्जगत्सर्वं दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ॥

अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

yachcha kinchit jagatsarvaM dRuShyate shrooyate api vA |

antarbahiShcha tatsarvaM vyApya nArAyaNa: sthita: ||

Whatever manifestation is seen or heard in all the worlds, nArAyaNa pervades within and outside of it and remains established in that.

EXPANSIONS OR FORMS OF SHREEMAN NARAYAANA

The purusha sooktam declares: “ajAyamAnO bahudA vijAyatE” अजायमानो बहुधा विजायते | Lord KrishNa says in Bhagavat GeetA 4.6 :

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।

प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥ ६ ॥

aja: api san avyayAtmA bhootAnAmIshvarO api san|

prakRutiM svAmadhiShThAya sambhavAmi AtmamAyayA ||

Although I am unborn, the Lord of all living entities, and have an imperishable nature, yet I appear in this world by virtue of my mAyA, My divine power.

Shreeman NArAyaNa takes up myriad forms for the functioning of the universe. These forms are broadly classified into five main categories -**panchaprakAra**. They are:

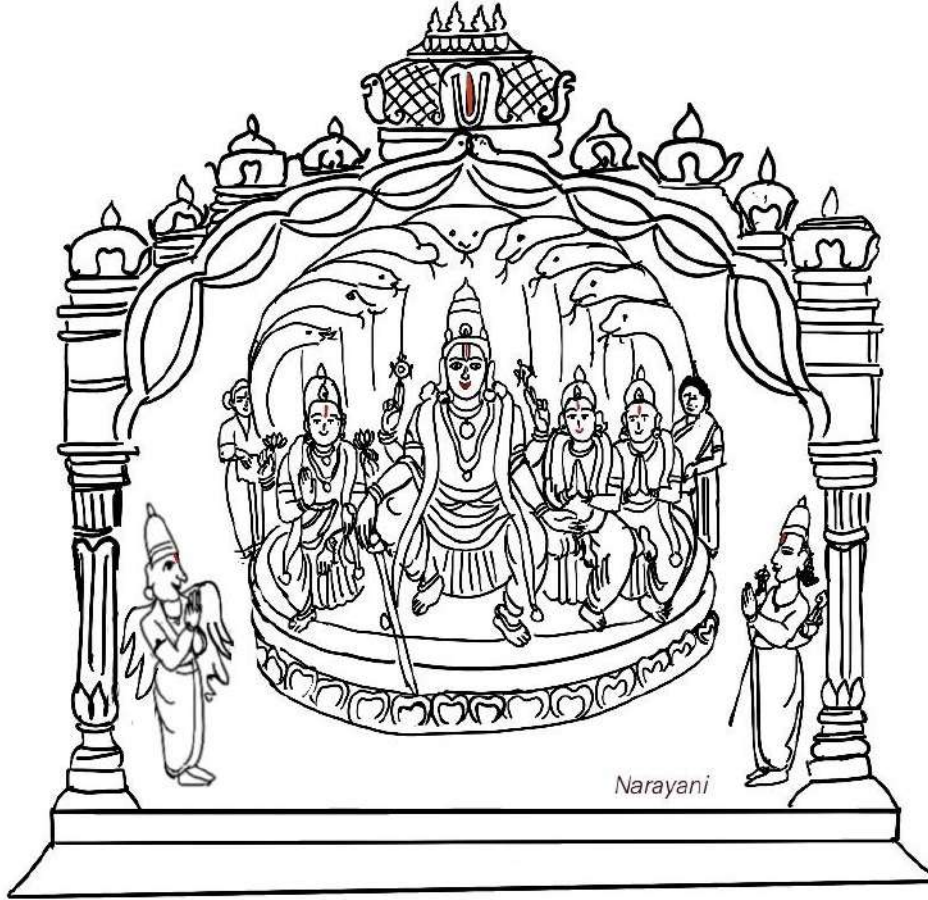
1. para (supreme state), पर
2. vyUha (expanded state), व्यूह
3. vibhava (incarnated state), विभव
4. archA (worshipable state - as idols in temples), अर्चा
5. antaryAmi (immanent state inside the AtmA). अन्तर्यामि

Let us delve into the five forms of VishNu one by one.

FIVE FORMS OF NARAYANA

Let us read about the five forms or Roopam-s of Lord nArAyaNa:-

1.PARA ROOPA – PARAVASUDEVA



Shreeman nArAyaNa is called ParavAsudEva in His highest form. He is called “**ubhaya-vibhooti-nAtha**” – the proprietor of two realms nityavibhUti and leelA vibhUti. He independently controls the entire material universe consisting of sentient and insentient beings (**leelA vibhUti**) from his divine, non-material, permanent and divine abode called Paramapadam (**nitya vibhUti**). Paramapadam is also called VaikuNTha, paramavyOma, paramAkAsha, tirunADu, or mOkshapadam. Para means supreme or highest. VikunTha means unlimited bliss. VaikunTha is situated beyond the fourteen worlds, on the upper banks of the divine river virajA. VaikunTha is so vast that it does not have an upper limit. It has a divine pond called “airamada” filled with golden lilies and lotuses. The glory of this divine realm is beyond the comprehension of dEvas like BrahmA and Shiva and sages like Sanaka. In that eternal abode made of pure goodness (Shuddha sattva), having no limitation of time and space, the bejewelled four-armed Lord ParavAsudEva of extra-ordinary splendour of a thousand suns, holding the weapons like shankh and chakra, is seated on the serpent AdishEsha, and is flanked by His three divine consorts (divya mahiShees) Shreedevi, BhUdevi, and NeeLA dEvi. He is surrounded by nityas and muktas. Nityasooris are eternally free souls like ananta, garuDa and vishvaksEna who are ever in servitude of bhagavAn. Muktas are liberated souls who have reached the Lord from leelA vibhooti to serve Him eternally (nityakainkaryam). The

main aim (parama puruShArtham) of all shreevaishNavas or mumukshu-s is to attain VaikunTha through the glorious archirAdi mArga and do eternal service (ananta kainkaryam) at the divine feet of Shreeman nArAyaNa. The mumukshus-s attain BhagavAn, Bhagavat anubhavam and Bhagavat kainkaryam that are continual and eternal.

The vEdas praise Lord vishNu's highest abode called Paramapadam:

तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः । दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ॥

तद्विप्रासो विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते । विष्णोर्यत्परमं पदम् ॥

tadviShNo: paramaM padaM sadA pashyanti sUraya: | divIva chakShurAtatam ||
tadviprAso vipanyavo jAgRuvAMsa: samindhate | viShNoryatparamaM padam ||

The wise ever contemplate that supreme abode of VishNu just as the eye watches over the sky. The wise, ever vigilant and diligent in praise, amply glorify that supreme abode of VishNu.

PARAVASUDEVA DHYANA SHLOKAM – PANCHARATRA RAKSHA

सव्यं पादं प्रसार्य श्रितदुरितहरं दक्षिणं कुञ्चयित्वा

जानुन्याधाय सव्येतरमितरभुजं नागभोगे निधाय ॥

पश्चात् बाहुद्वयेन प्रतिभटशमने धारयन् शङ्खचक्रे

देवी भूषादिजुष्टो जनयतु जगतां शर्म वैकुण्ठनाथः ॥

savyaM pAdaM prasArya shritaduritaharaM dakShiNaM kunjchayitvA
jAnunyAdhAya savyEtaramitarabhujam nAgabhOgE nidhAya ||
pashchAt bAhudvayEna pratibhaTashamanE dhArayan shankhachakrE
dEvi bhUShAdijuShTO janayatu jagatAM sharma vaikuNThanAtha: ||

Lord VaikuNThanAtha, the remover of afflictions of the surrendered devotees, is seated with his left leg hanging down and right leg folded; right hand placed on his right knee and left hand resting on AdisEshan's body; His hind hands holding the discus and conch that are capable of vanquishing enemies; flanked by shreedevi and bhoodevi; and adorned with divine ornaments. May He bestow the universe with eternal bliss.

PARAVASUDEVA STUTI – PARATVADI PANCHAKAM - 1

परवासुदेवस्तुतिः

उद्यद्भानुसहस्रभास्वरपरव्योमास्पदं निर्मल-

ज्ञानानन्दघनस्वरूपममलज्ञानादिभिष्पङ्गुणै- ।

र्जुष्टं सूरिजनाधिपं धृतरथाङ्गाब्जं सुभूषोज्ज्वलं

श्रीभूसेव्यमनन्तभोगिनिलयं श्रीवासुदेवं भजे ॥१॥

udyad-bhAnusahasra-bhAsvara-paravyomAspadaM nirmala-
ngyAnAnanda-ghana-svarUpamamala-ngyAnAdi-bhiShShaDguNai: |
juShTaM sUrijanAdhipaM dhRuta-rathAngAbjaM subhUShojjvalaM
shree-bhU-sevyam-anantabhogi-nilayaM shreevAsudevaM bhaje ||1||

I worship Shree vAsudeva, whose divine abode is the supreme sky that glows like a thousand rising suns; whose very nature is purity, knowledge and bliss in its fullest; who has six innate divine qualities like spotless knowledge, strength, wealth, vigour, power and brilliance (ngyAna, bala, aishwarya, veeryam, shakti and tejas); who is the Lord of the eternal souls and the liberated souls (nitya-s and mukta-s); who holds weapons like discus and lotus in His hands, and shines with splendid ornaments; who is served by shreedevi (Lakshmi) and bhoodevi and resides on the serpent Ananta.

VAIKUNTHA DHYANA SHLOKAM

कूर्मादीन् दिव्यलोकं तदनु मणिमयं मण्डपं तत्र शेषम्
तस्मिन् धर्मादिपीठं तदुपरि कमलं चामरग्राहिणीश्च ।

विष्णुं देवीं विभूषायुधगणमुरगं पादुके वैनतेयम्

सेनेशंद्वारपालान् कुमुदमुखगणान् विष्णुभक्तान् प्रपद्ये ॥

koormAdeen divya IOkaM tadanu maNimayaM maNDapaM tatra sheSham
tasmin dharmAdipeeThaM tadupari kamalaM chAmaragrAhiNeeshcha |
viShNuM devIM vibhUShAyudhagaNamuragaM pAduke vainateyam
sEnEshaM dvArapAIAn kumudamukhagaNaan viShNu bhaktAn prapadyE||

I bow to the Lord ViShNu who is seated on the dharmapeeTham called AdisEshan, in the gem-decked hall in the divine world called vaikunTha IOka, with his consorts shreedevi, bhoodevi and neelAdevi adorned with ornaments and weapons, with GaruDa (vainateya), and Vishvaksena (army commander), sitting at the foot of the serpent, surrounded by the gate keepers Jaya and Vijaya, and the guardians of the eight directions starting from Kumuda, and all the vishNu bhaktas present there.

वैकुण्ठे तु परे लोके श्रिया सार्धं जगत्पतिः ।

आस्ते विष्णुरचिन्त्यात्मा भक्तैः भागवतैः सह ॥

vaikunThE tu pare lokE ShriyA sArdhaM jagatpati: |

AstE viShNurachintyaAtmA bhaktai: bhAgavatai: saha ||

In the supreme realm vaikuNTha, the Lord of the universe Lord VishNu resides with Shree/Goddess Lakshmi. He whose nature is inconceivable, dwells there along with bhaktas (the Rshis who have reached VaikunTha through deep meditation - bhakti yOga), and bhAgavatas (the mumukshus who have reached VaikunTha through the sharanAgati mArga – prapatti yOga).

TATTVA PADAVI

प्रसादात् देशिकेन्द्राणां परावर विभागवित् ।

प्रपन्नः परमात्मानं प्राप्नोति परमं पदम्॥

prasAdAt dEshikEndrANAm para avara vibhAgavit |
prapanna: paramAtmAnaM prApnOti paramaM padam||

SwAmi dEsikan says: - One should learn the difference between para and avara** tattvas through AchArya anugraham and surrender to ParamAtmA, in order to attain the supreme abode, Paramapadam.*

*para tattva – The superior entity Shriya: pati. He is bhagavAn shreeman nArAyaNan who is sarvagya, sarvashaktya, paramOdAra paravyoohAdi panchaparakAra- shubhAshraya-divya mangala vighraha vishiShTha.

**avara tattva – The inferior tattvas are chit and achit tattvas.

NAMMAZHVAR'S TIRUVAYMOZHI 10.9.9

வைகுந்தம் புகுதலும் வாசலில் வானவர்
வைகுந்தன் தமர்எமர் எமதுஇடம் புகுதஎன்று
வைகுந்தத்து அமரரும் முனிவரும் வியந்தனர்
வைகுந்தம் புகுவது மண்ணவர் விதியே.

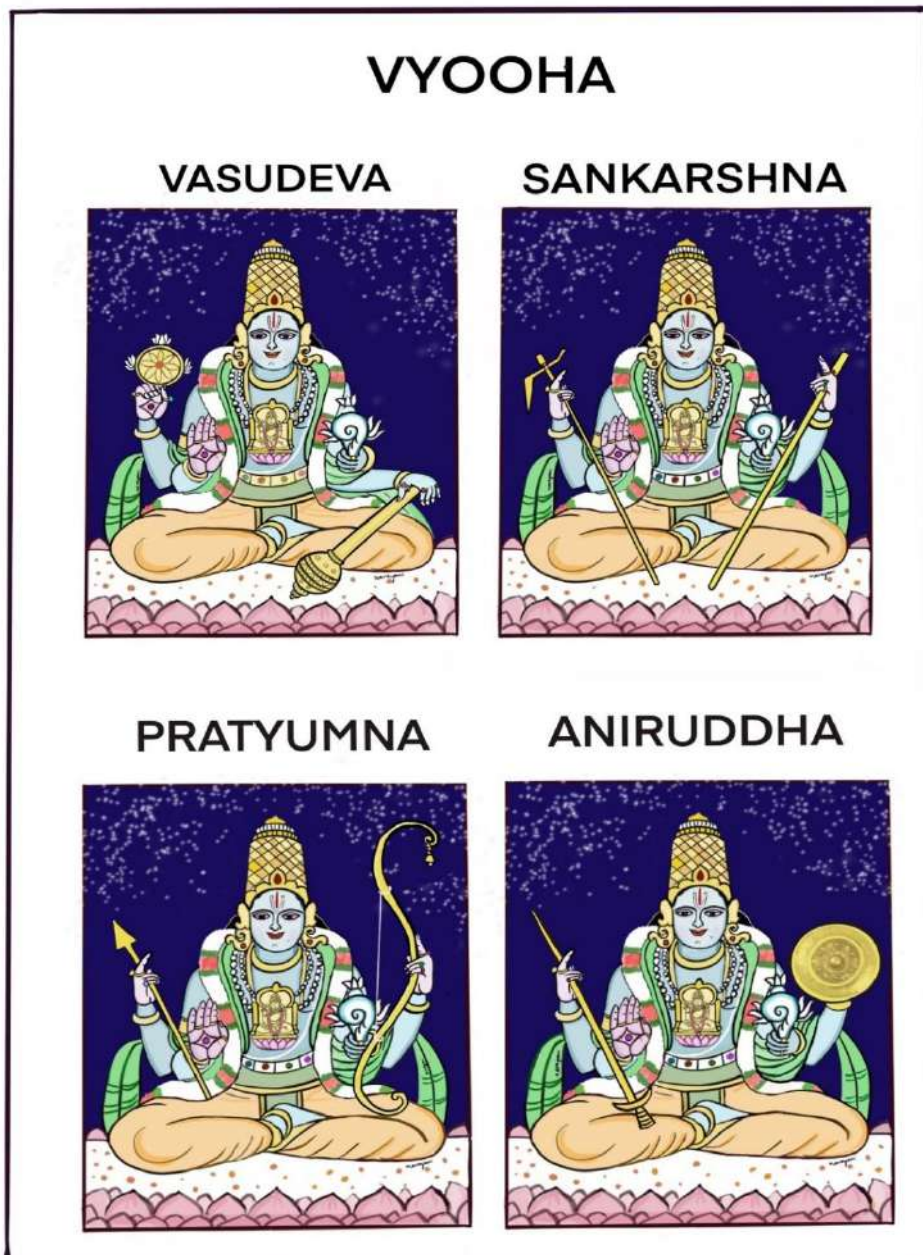
Vaikuntam pugudalum vAsalil vANavar
Vaikuntan tamar emar amadu iDam puguda enRu
Vaikuntattu amararum munivarum viyandanar
Vaikuntam puguvadu maNNavar vidiyE.

When NammAzhvAr and gOshThi arrived at VaikuNTham, the dvArapAlakas were overwhelmed to see them. They said to themselves, "May our favourite people enter our abode". The immortal dEvas and rishis were pleased with their arrival and exalted them saying: - "It is great fortune that men of earth have finally entered vaikuNTham, the ultimate goal" - "vaikuntam puguvadu maNNavar vidiyE".

2. VYOOHA

Vyooha means to divide and expand. When ParavAsudeva decides to create the world, four vyUha forms emanate from Him. This chaturvyooha (four-fold expansion) has **vyooha vAsudeva, sankarshaNa, pratyumna and aniruddha.**

Alongside, His six principal qualities or shaDguNas namely gnyAna, bala, aishwarya, veerya, shakti and tEjas get activated. Vyooha vAsudEva has all six guNas in full measure. In Sankarshana, gnyAna and bala are manifest, the other four qualities are hidden. In pratyumna, aishwarya and veerya are manifest, the other four qualities are hidden. In aniruddha, shakti and tEjas are manifest, the other four qualities are hidden.



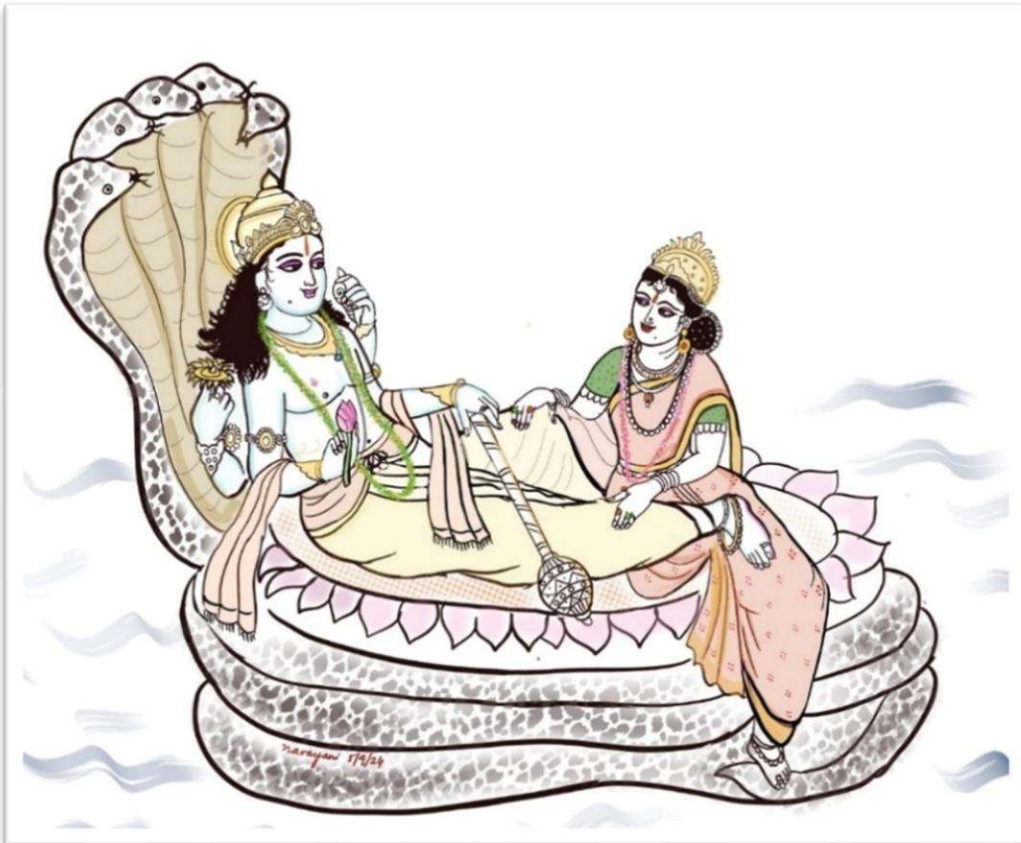
A summary chart of the chaturvyoohas is given below:

CHATURVYUHA – VYOOHA VASUDEVA HAS ALL ATTRIBUTES

OTHER 3 VYUHAS	MANIFESTED QUALITIES	ROLE	INFLUENCE	REWARDS
SANKARSHANA	gnyAnam (knowledge) balaM (strength)	samhAram (destruction)	AtmA (soul)	shAstra gnyAnam (understanding the shAstras)
PRATYUMNA	aishvaryaM (lordship) veeryaM (will power)	shRuShTi (creation)	manas (mind)	shAstra anuShThAnam (following the shAstras)
ANIRUDDHA	shakti (power, skill) tEjas (brilliance)	sthiti (maintenance)	ahankAra (ego)	phalam (fruits derived out of anuShThAnam)

KSHEERABDINATHA

The vyooha vAsudEva manifests as ksheerAbdinAtha reclining on the serpent AdisEsha that floats on the milky ocean. The following verses offers a vivid portrayal of SeshasAyi's serene and majestic form, symbolizing his eternal divine presence and the cosmic order He sustains.



PANCHARATRA AGAMA

अथापश्यत्परं देवं क्षीरसागर शायिनम्।
अनन्तभोगशय्यायां शयितं पङ्कजेक्षणम्।
शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मान् धारयन्तं चतुर्भुजम्।
श्रिया चरणयोर्जुष्टं श्यामलं पीतवाससम्।
श्रीवत्साङ्कं प्रसन्नाभं कौस्तुभोज्वल वक्षसम्।
सेवितं वैनतेयेन सन्निविष्टेन पार्श्वतः।

athApashyatparaM devaM ksheerasAgara shAyinam|
anantabhogashayyAyAM shayitaM pankajekshaNam|
shankhachakragadApadmAn dhArayantaM chaturBujam|
shriyA charaNayOrjuShTaM shyAmalaM pltavAsasam|
shrlvatsAnkaM prasannABaM kaustuBojvala vakshasam|
sevitaM vainateyEna sanniviShTena pArshvata:|

"Then he beheld the supreme Lord reclining on the ocean of milk. He was lying on the bed of the serpent Ananta and had eyes like lotus. His four arms were holding the conch, discus, mace, and lotus. Goddess Lakshmi was serving His feet. His complexion was dark blue, and he was adorned in yellow garments. On his chest was the Shreevatsa mark, and his face radiated with joy. His chest was resplendent with the Kaustubha gem, and he was attended by Garuda, who was seated nearby."

VHOOHA KSHEERABDINATHA DHYANA SHLOKAM

PARATVAADI PANCHAKAM (2) -Shree NaDAdoor ammAL

आमोदेभुवने प्रमोदउत संमोदे च संकर्षणम्।

प्रद्युम्नं च तथानिरुद्धमपि तान् सृष्टि स्थितीचाप्ययन्।

कुर्वाणानतिमुख्यषड्गुणवरैर्युक्तास्त्रियुग्मात्मकैः।

व्यूहाधिष्टितवासुदेवमपितं क्षीराब्धिनाथं भजे।

AmOdEbhuvanE pramoda-uta sammOde cha saMkarShaNam|
pradyumnam ca tathAniruddhamapi tAn sRuShTi stitheechApyayan|
kurvANAnati
mukhyaShaDguNavarairyuktAstriyugmAtmakai:|
vyUhAdhiShTitavAsudevamapitam kShlrAbdhiAtham bhaje|

I worship KsheerAbdinAtha, the manifestation of vyooha vAsudEva who rules over the three vyoohas namely 'pratyumna of AmOdana IOka', 'aniruddha of pramOdana IOka', and 'sankarshaNa of sammOdana IOka. They are the embodiment of the three pairs of qualities arising from the six main qualities. They govern the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe by performing their respective duties.

VYUHANTARAS - SUB VYUHAS – DWADASHA VISHNU

Three sub-vyooahas emanate from each of the four above mentioned chaturvyooahas, to make a total of twelve sub-vyooaha vishNus or vyUhantaras. These twelve vyooahantaras are the leaders of the twelve Adityas and the twelve months beginning from mArgazhi.

VASUDEVA – KESHAVA, NARAYANA, MADHAVA
 SANKARSHANA – GOVINDA, VISHNU, MADHUSOODANA
 PRATYUMNA – TRIVIKRAMA, VAMANA, SHREEDHARA
 ANIRUDDHA – HRUSHEEKESHA, PADMANABHA, DAMODARA

A chart showing their names, color, weapon, directional position, body part where they are manifest, and their consort's name are given below:-

DWADASHA NAMAS	COLOR	FOUR WEAPONS	BODY PART	DEVI NAMES
KESHAVA	RED GOLD	CONCH – shankh	FOREHEAD	SHREE
NARAYANA	BLACK	DISCUS – chakra	STOMACH	AMRUTOTBHAVA
MADHAVA	BLUE	MACE – gada	CHEST	KAMALA
GOVINDA	MOON	BOW – shArnga	CENTRAL NECK	CHANDRASODARI
VISHNU	LOTUS POLLEN	PLOUGH - hala	RIGHT STOMACH	VISHNUPATNI
MADHUSUDANA	LOTUS	PESTLE – musala	RIGHT SHOULDER	HARIVALLABHA
TRIVIKRAMA	FIRE	SWORD – nandaka	RIGHT NECK	VAISHNAVI
VAMANA	FIRST SUN	THUNDER BOLT – vajra	LEFT STOMACH	VARAROHA
SHREEDHARA	WHITE LOTUS	BENT KNIFE – paTTasa	LEFT SHOULDER	SHARNGINI
HRUSHEEKESHA	LIGHTNING	HAMMER – mudgara	LEFT NECK	DEVADEVIKA
PADMANABHA	SUN	CONCH, DISCUS, SWORD, BOW, MACE	CENTRAL LOWER BACK	SURASUNDARI
DAMODARA	FIRST SUNRAYS	NOOSE - pAsha	BACK OF NECK	MAHALAKSHMI

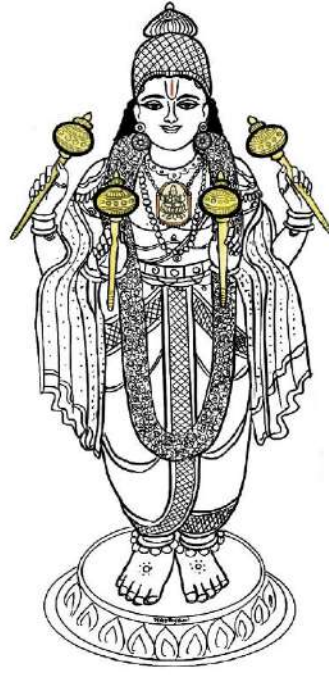
DWADASHA VISHNUS - VYUHANTARAS



KESHAVAYA NAMA:



NARAYANAYA NAMA:



MADHAVAYA NAMA:



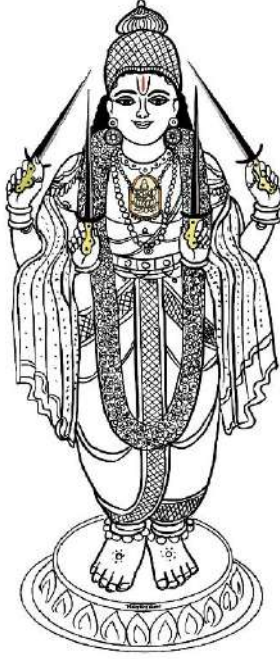
GOVINDAYA NAMA:



VISHNAVE NAMA:



MADHUSOODANAYA NAMA:



TRIVIKRMAYA NAMA:



VAMANAYA NAMA:



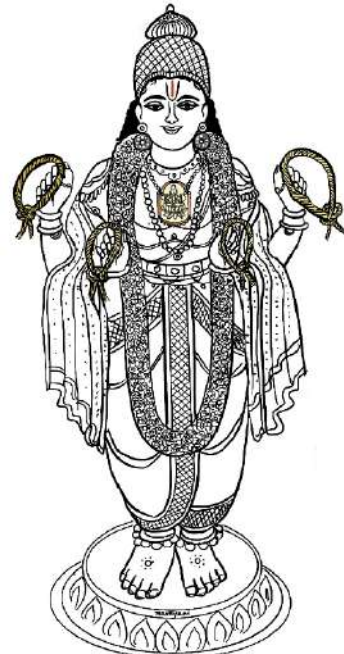
SHREEDHARAYA NAMA:



HRUSHEEKESHAYA NAMA:



PADMANABHAYA NAMA:



DAMODARAYA NAMA:

URDHVAPUNDRAMS

UrdhvapunDra dhAranam means wearing the tiruman shreechoornam or nAmam. Urdhva means "upright", punDra means "a mark". The upright mark that elevates oneself from the earth to the highest abode VaikuNTha is called

“Urdhva PuNDra” ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्र. Everyone should wear the UrdhvapuNDram daily, be it brahmachAri (student), gRushasta (house holder) or sanyAsis (ascetic). When a vaishNava applies the twelve white tirumaNs on his body, He recites these twelve names of Lord VishNu. The names of the respective dEvis are recited while applying the twelve red or yellow shreechoornams in the middle.

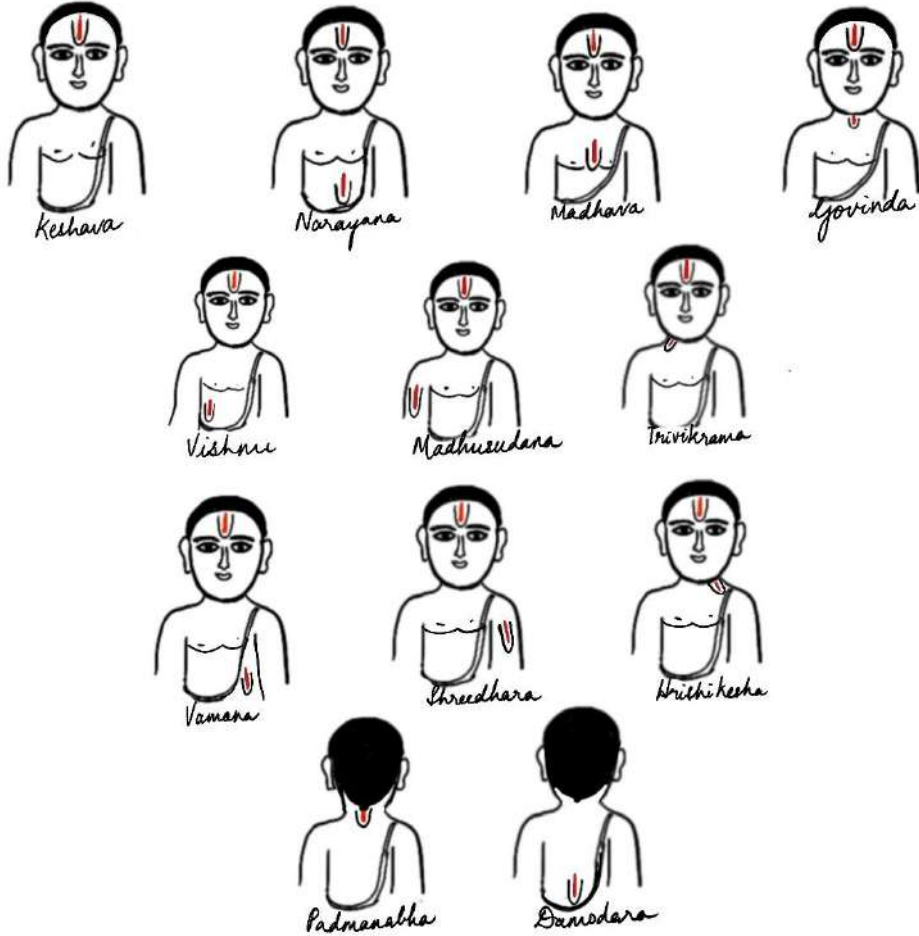
MAHOPANISHAD

घृतोर्ध्वपुण्ड्रः परमेशितारं नारायणम् सान्ख्ययोगाधिगम्यम् ।

ज्ञात्वा विमुच्येत् नरस्समस्तैः संसारभारैरिह चैति विष्णुम् ॥

One who wears the UrdhvapuNDra thinking of NarayaNa is relieved from all responsibilities and attains VishNu on this earth itself.

PANNIRUNAMAM DWADASHA URDHVAPUNDRAM



3. VIBHAVA



Vibhava means to 'incarnate or manifest'. On the milky ocean called ksheerAbdi or pArkaDal, the supreme Lord reclines as Lord ViShNu on the serpent AdisEsha. He is also called vyooHa ksheerAbdinAtha. He is said to be in yOga nidrA which means "contemplative sleep". This yOga nidrA is mentioned by ANDAL in tiruppavai 22 - **kingkiNi vAYch seyda tAmaraiP pUP pOIE, sengaN chiRuch chiRidE, em mEl vizhiyAvO** - *Oh Lord!, with your exquisite eyes resembling a half-opened lotus, just like a half opened kingkini with a jingling round bell inside, won't you open your eyes little by little and cast your benevolent glance on us?* While he appears to be sleeping, He is always thinking of means and ways to uplift the people of the world from the quagmire of samsAra.

On request from the dEvas or His consorts, He decides to descend on this earth by taking on various incarnations. These incarnations of God are referred by the word "avatAra" or "vibhava" or "prAdurbhAva". It is also said that the incarnations arise from His four vyooHas. It is to be noted that all the descensions of NaaraayaNa are also replete with all His divine powers; they are all complete and eternal. "*sarve pūrṇāḥ śhāśhvātāśhcha dehāstasya paramātmanaḥ* (Padma Purāṇa) [v6]". In his avatAraS, bhagavAn may choose to keep some powers and qualities latent, and reveal certain powers based on the objectives He wishes to attain in the concerned

avatAram. Hence, we should not differentiate between the avatAra-s and say that one avatAra is powerful, the other is not and so on.

KrishNa Himself says in Bhagavat GeetA 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8:

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥ 6॥
यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥7॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥8॥
ajah api san avyayAtmA bhootAnAm eeshvarOpi san |
prakRutim svAmadhiShThAya sambhavAmi AtmamAyayaA ||
yad yadA hi dharmasya glAnirbhavati bhArata|
abhyutthAnAmadharmasya tadAtmAnaM sRujAmyaham ||
paritrANAYa sAdhoonAM vinAshAya cha duShkRutAm |
dharmasaMsthApanArthAya sambhavAmi yugE yugE || (8)

Although I am unborn, I am the Lord of all beings, and I am imperishable (I never deteriorate). I incarnate through my innate transcendental power (not out of karma sambandha). (6)

Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjuna, at that time I manifest Myself on earth. (7)

To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to re-establish the principles of dharma I appear on this earth, age after age. (8)

AVATARA RAHASYAM – SIX SECRETS OF BHAGAVAN’S INCARNATION:

(TATVA TRAYA CHULAKAM OF SWAMI VEDANTA DESIKA)

There are six secrets associated with the avatArams of BhagavAn:-

1. BhagavAn’s avatArams are real and not magic (indrajaAlam).
2. His inherent attributes do not part with Him during the avatArams.
3. His avatAra tirumEni or form is made of suddha-sattva (pure goodness) and is aprAkRuta (extra-ordinary, not material).
4. He incarnates wholly out of His own sankalpam, not out of karma.
5. When dharma deteriorates, He descends on His own.
6. Protection of the sAdhus (noble people) is the end goal of his incarnation.

KrishNa says in Bhagavat GeetA 4.9:-

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥ 9॥
janma karma cha mE Divyam EvaM ya: vEtti tattvata: |

tyaktvA dEhaM punarjanma na Eti mAm Eti sa: arjuna: ||

All the birth and activities of BhagavAn are divine (Divyam). Those who understand this truth, do not take birth on leaving this body but come to me.

VIBHAVA STUTI – PARATVADI PANCHAKAM - 3

विभवस्तुतिः

वेदान्वेषण मन्दराद्रिभरण क्षमोद्धारण स्वाश्रित-

प्रह्लादावन भूमिभिक्षण जगद्विक्रान्तयो यत्क्रियाः।

दुष्टक्षत्रनिर्बर्हणं दशमुखाद्युन्मूलनं कर्षणं

कालिन्द्या अतिपाप कंसनिधनं यत्क्रीडितं तं नुमः ॥३॥

vedAnveShaNa mandarAdribharaNa kshmoddhAraNa svAshrita-
prahlAdAvana bhUmibhikshhaNa jagadvikrAntayo yatkriyAH|
duShTakShatranibarhaNaM dashamukhAdyunmUlaNaM karShaNAM
kAlindyA atipApa kaMsanidhanaM yatkreeDitaM taM numaH ||3||

We bow down to that Lord whose divine sports include:

- the retrieval of the Vedas (Matsya, hayagreeva)
- the lifting of Mount Mandara to churn the ocean (koorma)
- the rescuing of earth (varAha),
- the protection of His devotees like Prahlāda (Narasimha)
- the accepting of earth as alms (as Vāmana),
- the measuring of the universe (trivikrama),
- the destruction of evil Kṣatriyas (parashurAma)
- the uprooting of the ten-headed rAvANa and company (rAma),
- the dragging of the river yamunA (balarAma)
- the slaying of the utterly sinful Kamsa (krishNa)

DASHAVATARA-S



MATSYA



KOORMA



VARAHA



NARASIMHA



VAMANA



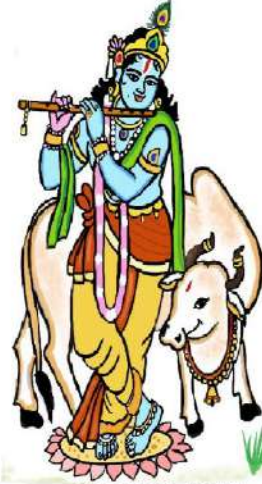
PARASURAMA



RAMA



BALARAMA



KRISHNA



KALKI

Ten incarnations or dashAvatAras are well known to us and they are to be meditated upon by seekers of mOksha. They are Matsya, koorma, varAha, Narasimha, vAmana, parashurAma, rAma, balarAma, kRuShNa and kalki.

SwAmi dEsikan says in his dashAvatAra stOtram 12:

इच्छामीन विहारकच्छप महापोत्रिन् यदृच्छाहरे

रक्षवामन रोषराम करुणाकाकुत्स्थ हेलाहलिन्

क्रीडावल्लव कल्कवाहनदशा कल्किन्निति प्रत्यहं

जल्पन्तः पुरुषाः पुनन्ति भुवनं पुण्यौघपण्यापणाः ॥१२॥

ichChAmeena vihArakachChapa mahApOtrin yadRuchChAhare

rakShAvAmana roSharAma karuNAkAkutstha helAhalin |

kreeDAvallava kalkavAhana daShAkalkinniti pratyahaM
jalpanta: puruShA: punanti bhuvanaM puNyaugha paNyApaNA:

SwAmi dEsikan declares that devotees who contemplate every day on Lord VishNu's various avatAras namely the "the wilful fish meena", "the sportive turtle koorma (kacchapa)", "the great boar varAha (pOtrin)", "the incredible lion (hari)", "the protective dwarf vAmana", "angry parashurAma", "the compassionate rAma (kAkutstha)", "wielder of the plough balarAma", "the playful cowherd krishNa", "the horse rider kalki", are "puNya" personified. These virtuous devotees are themselves worthy of worship as they sanctify the world they live in. (10)

Tirumangai AzhvAr in Periya Tirumozhi 8.8.10, KaNNapuram mangalAshAsanam:

மீனோடு ஆமை கேழல் அரி குரளாய் முன்னும் ராமனாய்
தானாய் பின்னும் ராமனாய் தாமோதரனாய் கர்கியும் |
ஆனான் தன்னை கண்ணபுரத்து அடியன் கலியன் ஒலிசெய்த
தேனார் இன் சொல் தமிழ் மாலை செப்ப பாவம் னில்லாவே || (10)
meenODu Amai kEzhal ari kuraLAi munnum rAmanAi
tAnAi pinnum rAmanAi dAmOdaranAi karkiyum |
AnAn tannai kaNNapurattu aDiyAn kaliyan oliseida
tEnAr in sol tamizh mAlai seppa pAvam nillAvE || (10)

The Lord who incarnated Himself as Fish-matsya (meen), Tortoise -koorma (Amai), Boar – varAha (kEzhal), Man-lion - Narasimha (ari), Dwarf – vAmanA (kuRaL), ParashurAma (munnum rAmanAy), Sri Rama (tAnAy), BalarAma (pinnum rAmanAy), KrishNa (dAmOdaran) and Kalki (karki) is the presiding deity of tirukaNNapuram divyadesam. Tirumangai AzhvAr (kaliyan), who has dedicated himself to the service of this Lord, has composed these tamizh pAsurams. Sins shall not befall devotees who recite these verses. (10)

THIRTY-EIGHT AVATARAS OF VISHNU

Shreemad BhAgavatam mentions around thirty-eight important avatAras. (24 avatArams + 14 manu-s = 38).

- **Twenty-four incarnations are mentioned in SMB 1.3 and few other chapters. They are quoted in brackets as follows:**
 1. Hayagreeva (appeared with a horse's face to restore the vEdas from the madhu kaiTabha demons back to BrahmA) SMB 7.9.37
 2. SanatkumAras (mind born sons of BrahmA. They remained celibate sages and never engaged in material life)
 3. Hamsa (appeared as a royal swan to teach dhyAna yOga – "Concentration on Hari" to sanatkumAras and BrahmA) -SMB 11.13.19
 4. varAha (wild boar from BrahmA's nose, to rescue bhUmi dEvi from the ocean, and taught the shAstras to her)

5. nArada (incarnated as sage among the devas (dEvarshi) and compiled the PAncharAtram, a guide to worshipping Lord nArAyaNa with naishkarma karma – non-fruitive action)
6. nara-nArAyaNa (born to mUrti and dharma to teach sAnkhya yOga and Bhakti yOga)
7. kapila (son of dEvahUti and Kardama maharshi, taught bhakti yOga to his mother dEvahUti)
8. dattAtrEya (combination of Brahma, VishNu and Shiva)
9. urukrama/rishabhadEva (king born to merudevi and nAbhi to guide people to follow the varnAshramas)
10. pRuthu (the king who chased the earth and made her grant all crops and gave her the name Prithvi) SMB – 4.18
11. matsya (appeared as fish in the pralaya of chAkshusha manvantara, and carried Satyavrata in a boat to make him the vaivastamanu of next manvantara)
12. kUrma (appeared as a tortoise in the chAkshusha manvantara to hold the mandara mountain used for churning the milky ocean to obtain amRutam – samudra manthan)
13. dhanvantari (emerged from ksheerAbdi as a physician with the much-awaited pot of amRutam, the immortal nectar)
14. mOhini (appeared as an attractive woman to regain the amRutam snatched away by the asuras and grant it to the devas)
15. Narasimha (Appeared from a pillar in a man-lion form to prove His omnipresence and saved prahlAda from the clutches of HiraNyakashipu)
16. vAmana/upEndra (A dwarf brahmachAri begged for three feet of land from mahAbali but grew huge as trivikrama to measure the whole universe in three huge steps and restored the worlds to Indra.
17. parashurAma (An angry sage who killed kArtaveeryarjuna and 21 generations of kshatriyas who slayed his father jamadagani)
18. vyAsa (born to Satyavati and ParAsara maharshi to segregate the vEdas into four parts – Rg, yajus, sAma and Atharva in order that it enlightens dull minds.
19. rAma (born to KaushalyA and dasharatha to destroy the wicked lankA king rAvaNa)
20. balarAma (born to rOhini (foster mother) and vasudEva to assist his brother krishNa in saving the world)

21. krishNa (born to vasudEva and dEvaki, brought up by nandagOpa and yashOdha, killed kamsa and the demons, assisted the pANDavas in winning the war, and delivered the Bhagavat GeetA to the world)

22. buddha (born to anjanA to divert the asuras from following the vEdic rituals and weaken them)

23. kalki (He will be born to vishNu yashas at the end of kali yuga)

24. prishNigarbha, druvapriya (born to sutapA and pRshNi, showed Himself to Druva)

- Fourteen Manu-s (administrators of the universe) as incarnations of Lord VishNu in the fourteen manvantaras: (SMB 8.1, 8.5 and 8.13)

1. Yagnya, suyagnya as Svāyambhuva Manu (born to AkUti and ruchi)

2. Vibhu as Svārochiṣa Manu (born to tushitA and vEdashiras)

3. Satyasena as Uttama Manu (sUnRutA and dharma)

4. Hari as tAmasa Manu (born to hariNi and harimEdhas, saved gajEndra from the crocodile)

5. VaikuNTha as Raivata Manu (born to vikuNThA and Shubhra)

6. Ajita as Chākṣuṣa Manu (born to dEvasambhUti and vairAja)

7. ShraddhAdEva as Vaivasvata Manu (born to sagnya and vivasvAn, sun god)

8. Saarbhauma as Saavarṇi Manu (born to chAyA and vivasvAn)

9. Ṛṣabha as Dakṣasāvarṇi Manu (born to ambudhArA and AyushmAn)

10. Viṣvaksena as Brahma-sāvarṇi Manu (born to vishUchi and vishvashrathA)

11. Dharmasetu as Dharma-sāvarṇi Manu (born to vaidhRutA and AryakA)

12. SvadhAmA as Rudra-sāvarṇi Manu (born to sUnRutA and satyasAhasa)

13. Yogeśvara as Deva-sāvarṇi Manu (born to bRuhati and dEvahOtra)

14. Bṛhadbhānu as Indra-sāvarṇi Manu (born to vitAnA and satrAyaNa)

Tirumazhisai AzhvAr sums up the multiform of BhagavAn in one terse verse in his prabandham Tiruchchandaviruttam 17.

ஏகமூர்த்தி மூன்றுமூர்த்தி* நாலுமூர்த்தி நன்மைசேர்,*
போகமூர்த்தி புண்ணியத்தின் மூர்த்தி* எண்ணில் மூர்த்தியாய்*
நாகமூர்த்தி சயனமாய்* நலங்கடல் கிடந்து ,மேல்*
ஆகமூர்த்தி யாயவண்ணம்* என்கொல்? ஆதி தேவனே!*

Eka mUrti mUnRu mUrti nAlu mUrti nanmai sEr
bhOga mUrti puNNiyattin mUrti eNNil mUrtiyAi
nAga mUrti sayanamAi nalaNkaDar kiDandu
mEl Aga mUrti AyavaNNam enkol Adi dEvanE ||

Oh, primordial Lord (Adi dEvanE), You are the unparalleled paravAsudEvan residing in the nitya-vibhUti called paramapadam (EkamUrti). As vyUha Vasudevan, you assume three more vyUha forms namely sankarshana, pratyumna, and aniruddha for managing the cosmic functions. (mUnRru mUrti). You form the basis of four entities pradhAna or mUla prakRuti (cause), purusha (jeevas), avyakta (unmanifested) and kAla (time)- (nAlu mUrti). You take on innumerable, divine vibhava avatAras like Matsya, kUrma, varAha, etc. on the earth to protect the jeevas. (bhOga mUrti). You recline on the blessed cosmic ocean as ksheerAbhi-nAthana, ever worshipped by the dEvas. (nAga mUrti sayanamAy, nalankaDal kiDandu). And it is again You who have entered the idols in temples in your archAvatAram to be easily accessible by the devotees of the earth. (Aga mUrti). What a wonder!

4. ANTARYAMI OR HARDA



The supreme self or the paramAtmA is also the in-dweller of all beings (jeevas) and hence He is called “antaryAmi”. *Whatever manifestation is seen or heard of, nArAyaNa pervades everything from within and without, and stays established inside that for ever.*

Lord nArAyaNa rests within our self, in the region of the heart (hrudaya) and hence, the antaryAmi roopam of the Lord is called “hArda हार्द”. He is also called “suhRud सुहृद्” because He dwells inside the heart as a good companion of the jeevAtmA. He lives inside every AtmA permanently and watches everything that happens. The moment a person thinks about something, He knows about it. He is the same paramAtmA who hugs the jeevAtmA and carries the jeeva to VaikuNTha in his final journey too.

The heart resembles an inverted lotus-bud surrounded by arteries. Within it, there is a subtle space. In that space is the undiminishing, omni-faced, great fire called jaTharAgni जठराग्नि, which has flames on every side. The fire enjoys the food presented and metabolizes it in the body. The rays of that fire spread out, upwards and downwards warming the whole body. In the centre of that fire which permeates the whole body, there abides a thin tongue of golden flame which is subtle. It is dazzling like a flash of lightening that appears in a dark rain cloud. It is as slender as the awn (bristle) of a paddy grain which serves as a comparison to illustrate its subtlety. The Supreme Soul or paramatmA or parabrahman dwells within that flame. The supreme brahman, the absolute reality, is the supreme being who is dark-blue and yellowish in color, absolutely chaste, and possessing extra-ordinary eyes. It is this antaryAmi form that yOgis practising bhakti yOga meditate upon vigorously. At the end of their meditation, they get the vision of Parabrahman glowing in the size of the thumb.

NARAYANA SOOKTAM

सन्ततं शिलाभिस्तु लम्बत्या कोशसन्निभम् ।
तस्यान्ते सुषिरं सूक्ष्मं तस्मिन् सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥
तस्य मध्ये महानग्निः विश्वार्चिः विश्वतो मुखः ।
सोऽग्रविभजन्तिष्ठन् आहारं अजरः कविः ॥
तिर्यगूर्ध्वमधश्शायी रश्मयः तस्य सन्तता ।
सन्तापयति स्वं देहमापादतलमास्तकः ।
तस्य मध्ये वह्निशिखा अणीयोर्ध्वा व्यवस्थिताः ॥
नीलतोयद-मध्यस्थ-द्विद्युल्लेखेव भास्वरा ।
नीवारशूकवत्तन्वी पीता भास्वत्यणूपमा ॥
तस्याः शिखाया मध्ये परमात्मा व्यवस्थितः ।
स ब्रह्म स शिवः स हरिः स इन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ॥
ऋतं सत्यं परं ब्रह्म पुरुषं कृष्ण पिङ्गलम् ।
ऊर्ध्वरेतं विरूपाक्षं विश्वरूपाय वै नमो नमः ॥

ANTARYAMI STUTI – PARATVADI PANCHAKAM - 4

अन्तर्यामिस्तुतिः

यो देवादि चतुर्विधेषु जनिषु ब्रह्माण्डकोशान्तरे

संभक्तेषु चराचरेषु निवसन्नास्ते सदान्तर्बहिः।

विष्णुं तं निखिलेष्वणुष्वणुतरं भूयस्सु भूयस्तरं

स्वाङ्गुष्ठप्रमितं च योगिहृदयेष्वासीनमीशं भजे ॥४॥

I worship Lord ViShnu, the supreme ruler who resides within the four types of beings beginning from the dEvas (deva, manushy, sthAvara, tiryak); in all created beings within the cosmic egg (brahmANDa), and in all beings, both movable and immovable, dwelling always both inside and outside everything. He is subtler than the subtlest atom, greater than the greatest, and seated in a size no larger than a thumb in the hearts of yogis as their inner controller.

ANTARATMA NARAYANA MANASA ARADHANA SHLOKAMS

The following are shlokams to worship antaryAmi bhagavAn in the mind. (mAnasa ArAdhanam)

आराधयामि हृदि केशवं आत्मगोहे

मायापुरे हृदय पङ्कज सन्निविष्टम् ।

स्रद्धानदी विमल चित्त जलाभिषेकैः

नित्यं समाधि कुसुमैः अपुनर्भवाय ॥

ArAdhayAmi hrudi keshavaM AtmagEhE

mAyaapurE hRudaya pankaja sanniviShTam |

sraddhaanadi vimala citta jalaabhiShekai:

nityaM samAdhi kusumai: apunarbhavAya ||

I worship Keshava (Lord Vishnu) in my heart, in the temple of my own self (आत्मगोहे). He is seated in the lotus of my heart, which is free from the illusions of mAya (the material world). I perform His abhisheka with the pure waters of faith (श्रद्धा) flowing from my purified mind. I offer him flowers of constant meditation (समाधि), seeking liberation from the cycle of rebirth (अपुनर्भव).

सौवर्णे स्थालिवर्ये मणिगणखचिते गोघृताक्तान् सुपक्वान्

भक्ष्यान् भोज्यान् च लेह्यान् परममथ हविः शोष्यमन्नम् निधाय ।

नानासाकैरुपेतं सदधि मधुघृतं क्षीरपानीय युक्तं

ताम्बूलं च आत्मनैः अस्मै प्रतिदिवसं अहं मानसं कल्पयामि ॥

sauvarNe sthaalivarye maNigaNakhachitE goghRutaaktaan supakvaan

bhakShyaan bhojyaan ca lehyaan paramamatha havi: shoShyamannam nidhaaya |

naanaasaakairupetaM sadadhi madhughRutaM kSheerapaaneeya yuktaM

taamboolaM cha Atmanai: asmai pratidivasaM ahaM maanasam kalpayaami

In a golden vessel embedded with precious jewels and gems, I place well-cooked delicacies, prepared with clarified butter (ghee), consisting of various items to be eaten (bhakshya), chewed (bhOjya), and licked (IEhya), along with the supreme offering (havis) and dry foods. The food is served with a variety of vegetable curries along with curd, honey, ghee, milk, and water, followed by betel leaves (tamboolam). With my mind (mAnaseekam), I offer all these to the 'antarAtmA bhagavAn' every day.

5. ARCHA



Tiruvarangam, Tirumalai, Tirukachchi, Tirunarayanapuram

सौलभ्यं अधिकं यस्यां पश्यन्ति कृतबुद्धयः ।

सैषा पञ्चात्मनो जीयादर्चा भगवतो हरेः ॥

saulabhyaM adhikaM yasyAM pashyanti kRutabuddhaya: |

saiShA panchAtmanO jeeYAd archA bhagavatO harE: |

May the worship of the archA form of bhagavAn Hari, which is seen by the wise as being extremely easy among the five forms, always triumph.

(ARCHAVATARA VAIBHAVAM, PANCHARATRA AGAMAM).

ARCHA means worshipable form. The supreme being also takes on a physically visible, tangible form as idols or images, allowing devotees to access and worship him easily, and establish a personal connection with Him. The deity is worshipped by devotees in temples, maThams and homes.

ARCHA STUTI – PARATVADI PANCHAKAM - 5

अर्चास्तुतिः

श्रीरङ्गस्थल वेङ्कटाद्रि करिगिर्यादौ शतेऽष्टोत्तरे

स्थाने ग्रामनिकेतनेषु च सदा सान्निध्यमासेदुषे ।

अर्चारूपिणमर्चकाभिमतितः स्वीकुर्वते विग्रहं

पूजां चाखिलवाञ्छितान् वितरते श्रीशाय तस्मै नमः ॥५॥

shreerangasthala venkaTAdri karigiryAdau shate-aShTottare

sthAne grAmaniketaneShu cha sadA sAnnidhyamAseduShe |

arcArUpiNamarchakABimatitaH sveekurvate vighrahaM

pUjAM cha akhilavAnjchitAn vitarate shrISaya tasmai nama: ||5||

Salutations to Shreesha, the Lord of Shree, who makes His eternal, divine presence in the 108 divyadesams starting from Shreerangam, VenkaTAdri and kAncheepuram (karigiri), as well as in villages and homes, by assuming the form of an idol/moorti (archAroopam) as desired by the devotee, and offers Himself for worship in order to grant all desired blessings.

There are 5 kinds of archAvatAras: 1. svayam-vyaktam 2. daivam 3. ArSham 4. Saiddham and 5. mAnuSham

1. svayam-vyaktam (self-manifested) स्वयम्-व्यक्तम्

When BhagavAn appears on his own, He is called svayam-vyaktam. There are eight svayam-vyakta kshetrams:- srlrangam, tiruvEnkatam, srlmushnam, vAnamAmalai, shAlagrAmam, badari, naimishAraNyam, pushkaram

2. daivam दैवम् (consecrated by dEvas)

3. ArSham आर्षम् (consecrated by Rushis)

4. saiddham सैद्धम् (consecrated by siddha purushas), and

5. mAnuSham मानुषम् (consecrated by humans).

In a temple, the idol of the Lord is enshrined according to Agama ShAstras. The vimAnam or the kumbha above the sanctum sanctorum is consecrated with holy water (kumbhAbhishEkam). The prANa pratiShThA or the life-giving ceremony is performed according to Agama shAstras in order to energize the idols/vighrams. PanchakAla prakriyA (poojA-s) is then performed every day for the idols. They include tirumanjanam, tiruvArAdhanam, pushpArchanam, dhoopa deepa Arati, recital of vEdas and Prabandhams, prasAda samarpaNam, Sayana Arati, etc. Daily (nityOtsavams), Fortnightly (pakshOtsavams), monthly (mAsOtsavams) and annual utsavams (samvarOtsavams) are conducted for the deity. There are lakhs of VishNu temples spread across the world out of which the 108 divya dEsams of India are of prime importance as they get the credit of being extolled in the 4000 sacred tamizh poems or divya prabandhams of the twelve great saints. The twelve saints are called AzhvArs as they were always engrossed in Lord VishNu. Out of the 108 divya desams, the first and prime divya desam is SHREERANGAM or TIRUVARANGAM which stands on the banks of the river kAveri. In this temple, Lord

ShreeranganAtha aka Ranga is seen reclining in bhOgasayanam on the serpent Adishesha.



The greatness of Shreerangam temple can be understood from the following two shlokas which was heard by Kili Chola, one of the descendants of Chola king Dharma Varma.

कावेरी विरजा सेयं वैकुण्ठं रङ्गमन्दिरम्।
स वासुदेवो रङ्गेश प्रत्यक्षं परमं पदम् ॥
विमानं प्रणवाकारं वेदशृङ्गं महाद्भुतम्
श्रीरङ्गशायी भगवान् प्रणवार्थप्रकाशकः ॥

kAverI virajA sEyaM vaikuNThaM rangamandiram|
sa vAsudEvO rangEsha pratyakShaM paramaM padam ||
vimAnaM praNavAkAraM vEdashRungaM mahAdbhutam
shreerangashAyI bhagavAn praNavArthaprakAshaka: ||

The river kAveri is verily the virajA river of VaikuNTha. The shreerangam temple is VaikuNTham itself. Lord RanganAtha is none other than VaasudEva Himself. The temple is indeed Paramapadam, the Lord's supreme abode. Its vimAnam is in the form of the praNava, Om. Enshrined beneath the kumbams that are extremely marvellous like the vEdas, Lord RangashAyee eternally radiates the essence of PraNava.

SwAmi Desikan extolls Shreerangam in his tamizh prabandham called “AdigArasangraham”- 42.

ஆராத அருள் அமுதம் பொதிந்த கோயில் -
அம்புயத்தோன் அயோத்தி மன்னற்கு அளித்த கோயில்
தோலாத தனி வீரன் தொழுத கோயில்
துணையான விபீடணற்குத் துணையாம் கோயில்
சேராத பயன் எல்லாம் சேர்க்கும் கோயில்
செழு மறையின் முதல் எழுத்துச் சேர்ந்த கோயில்
தீராத வினை யனைத்தும் தீர்க்கும் கோயில்
திருவரங்கம் எனத் திகழும் கோயில் தானே - 42

ArAda aruL amudam podinda kOyil –
ambuyattOn ayOddhi mannaRku aLitta kOyil
tOIAda tani vIraN tozhuda kOyil
tuNaiyAna vipeeDaNaRkut tuNaiyAm kOyil
sErAda payan eIlAm cErkkum kOyil
chezhu maRaiyin mudal ezhuttuch chEr~nda kOyil
tIrAta vinai yanaittum tIrkkum kOyil
tiruvarangam enat tikazhum kOyil tAnE

The divya dEsam SrIrangam is called “kOyil”. It is filled with Lord RanganAtha’s compassion which is insatiable nectar. SrIrangam was bequeathed to King IkshvAku by Brahmadeva, the lotus born. The temple and the Lord were worshipped by the valorous and undefeatable king Raama. This temple is the support for VibhIshaNa who gave his support to Lord Raamachandra in the fight against his brother. It is the Koyil which can bless the worshippers with anugrahams that cannot be obtained anywhere else. It is the koyil which has the vimAnam in the shape of PraNavam. This is the koyil that has the power to destroy all kinds of sins. This koyil is hailed as Tiruvarangam, which is the topmost among all divya dEsams.

Four divya desams are special in our vaishNava sampradAyam:-

1. Shreerangam (Lord rAnganAtha), 2. Tirumala (Lord Venkateshwara, vEnkaTAdri), 3. Kaancheepuram/Tirukkachchi (Lord VaradarAja, hastishaila) and 4. MelukoTe (Lord tirunArAyaNa, yadushaila, yadugiri). The following shLOka is a short prayer for the above mentioned four deities.

श्रीरङ्ग मङ्गळ निधिं करुणा निवासम् |

श्री वेङ्कटाद्रि शिकरालय काळ मेघम् |

श्री हस्तिशैल शिकरोज्वल पारिजातम् |

श्रीशं नमामि शिरसा यधुशैल दीपम् ||

Shreeranga mangaLa nidhiM karuNA nivAsam |

Shree vEnkaTAdri shikaRAlaya kALa mEgham |

Shree hastishaila shikarOjvala pArijAtam |
Shreesham namAmi shirasA yadhushaila deepam||

I bow my head in reverence to Lord RanganAtha who is the auspicious treasure of Srirangam and the abode of compassion; to Lord Srinivasa who is the dark cloud atop the Venkata Hill; to Lord VaradarAja who is the radiant celestial tree atop the Hastigiri hill, and to Lord TirunArAyaNa who is the bright lamp on the Yadugiri Hill.

AchAryas quote the following example to explain the five forms of bhagavAn with respect to accessibility.

Param is like AvaraNa jalam (the waters beyond satyaloka)
Vyooham is like Samudra saara jalam (the milky ocean)
Vibhavam is like river floods.
Haardam is like spring water.
ArchA is like well water.

If we want to see the Lord of VaikunTha, it is next to impossible, almost like searching for water in the end of satyaloka. If we want to see His vyooha ksheerAbdi form in milky ocean, it is difficult to cross the milky ocean just as the sea water is near but is salty and difficult to consume. If we want to see His avatArams, they have come and gone away in a short while like flash floods of big rivers. If we want to peep into our heart and see His antaryAmi swaroopam, it is difficult to follow bhakti yOGa which is rare like the spring water. It is only the archA moorti that is available so easily to us near our house, inside a temple which is like the easily consumable water from a nearby well.

SHALAGRAMA SHILA

One more deity that is special is the shAlagrAma moorti in our homes. The shAlagrAma shilA which is obtained from the “gaNDaki river गंडकी नदी” of Nepal is also one among the archA forms of the Lord. Every vaishNava home having a shAlagrAma shilA is indeed a divya dEsam. ShAlagrAma ArAdhanam is a simple procedure of worshipping the shAlagrAma moorti. Materials like water, sandal paste, flowers, tulasee leaves, simple prasaad of fruits or cooked rice, incense and light/deepam are enough to perform the daily pooja. Lord VishNu is self-manifest (svayam vyakta) in the shAlagrAma shila-s and is constantly present in them. Since there is nitya sAnnidhyam, there is no need for installation (pratiShTA), or invocation (AvAhanam). If doubts arise about the occurrence of any apachAra or dOsha to the shAlagrAma moorti, an abhishEkam with pure cow milk is enough to remove the blemish and hence no other atonements (prAyashchittams) are needed. Even if there is a break in nitya tiruvArAdhanam of shAlagrAma moorti, it causes no harm. The benefits of worshipping shAlagrAma moorti are immeasurable. They confer the devotee with bhOGam and mOksham.

PadmapurANam:-

शालग्राम शिलास्पर्शात् कोटि जन्माघ नाशनम्।

किं पुनर्यजनं तत्र हरि सान्निध्य कारकम् ॥

shAlagrAma shilAsparshAt kOTi janmAgha nAshanam|

kiM punaryajanaM tatra hari sAnnidhya kArakam ॥

Simply by touching the shAlagrAma shilA, all of one's sins accumulated for crores of lifetimes, are destroyed. What can be said about those who regularly worship the shAlagrAma shilA? They certainly attain the permanent association of Lord Hari.

तत्रापि आमलकीतुल्या सूक्ष्मा चातीव य भवेत् ।

तस्यामेव सदा ब्रह्मन् श्रिया सह वसाम्यहम् ॥

tatrApi AmalakeetulyA sookshmA chAteeva ya bhavEt |

tasyAmEva sadA brahman shriyA saha vasAmyaham ॥

BhagavAn says: Oh BrahmA! I reside along with my beloved consort Lakshmi within those shAlagrAma shilA-s that are small like the gooseberry/Amalakee fruit.

Two dhyAna shIOkas are recited before the shAlagrAma at homes:

ध्यायामि देवं लक्ष्मीशं शङ्ख-चक्र-गदाधरम्

पीताम्बर परिधानं पद्मसन्निभ लोचनम् ।

मन्दस्मित मुखांभोजं मदनायुत सुन्दरम्

मायानिर्मित लोकोघं मेघश्यामळ विग्रहम् ॥

श्री लक्ष्मी नारायणं ध्यायामि ।

dhyAyAmi dEvaM lakshmeeshaM shankha-chakra-gadAdharam

peetAmbara paridhAnaM padmasannibha IOchanam |

mandasmita mukhAMbhOjaM madanAyuta sundaram

maayAnirmita IOkOghaM mEghashyAmaLa vigraham ॥

shree lakshmee naarAyaNaM dhyAyAmi |

"I meditate upon the divine Lord, the consort of Lakshmi,

who holds the conch, discus, and mace in His hands.

draped in a yellow garment, whose eyes resemble lotus petals.

whose face, adorned with a gentle smile, is as beautiful as a thousand cupids,

whose form is deep blue like a rain-filled cloud,

who manifests the countless worlds through His divine Maya.

I meditate upon Sri Lakshmi Narayana."

नमो नमस्ते करुणालय नमो नमस्ते कमलाधवाय
नमो नमस्ते जगताम् च स्रष्ट्रे नमो नमस्ते नतशोक हर्त्रे।
त्राहि मां करुणासिन्धो ! पाहि मां कमलापते!
त्वयि भक्तिः सदैवास्तु मम सर्वार्थदायिने ॥
(प्रणवम्) नमो नारायण – शुभमस्तु |

namO namastE karuNAlaya namO namastE kamalAdhavAya
namO namastE jagatAm cha sraShTrE namO namastE natashOka hartrE|
trAhi mAM karuNAsindhO ! paahi mAM kamalApatE!
tvayi bhakti: sadaivAstu mama sarvArthadAyinE ||
(praNavam) namO naarAyaNa – shubhamastu |

Salutations to You, O Ocean of Compassion!
Salutations to You, O Consort of Goddess Lakshmi!
Salutations to You, the Creator of the Universe!
Salutations to You, the remover of the sorrows of the devotees.
Protect me, O Ocean of Mercy! Save me, O Lord of Lakshmi!
May my devotion always remain steadfast in You, for it grants all prosperities.

The presentation on the five forms of BhagavAn is concluded herewith.

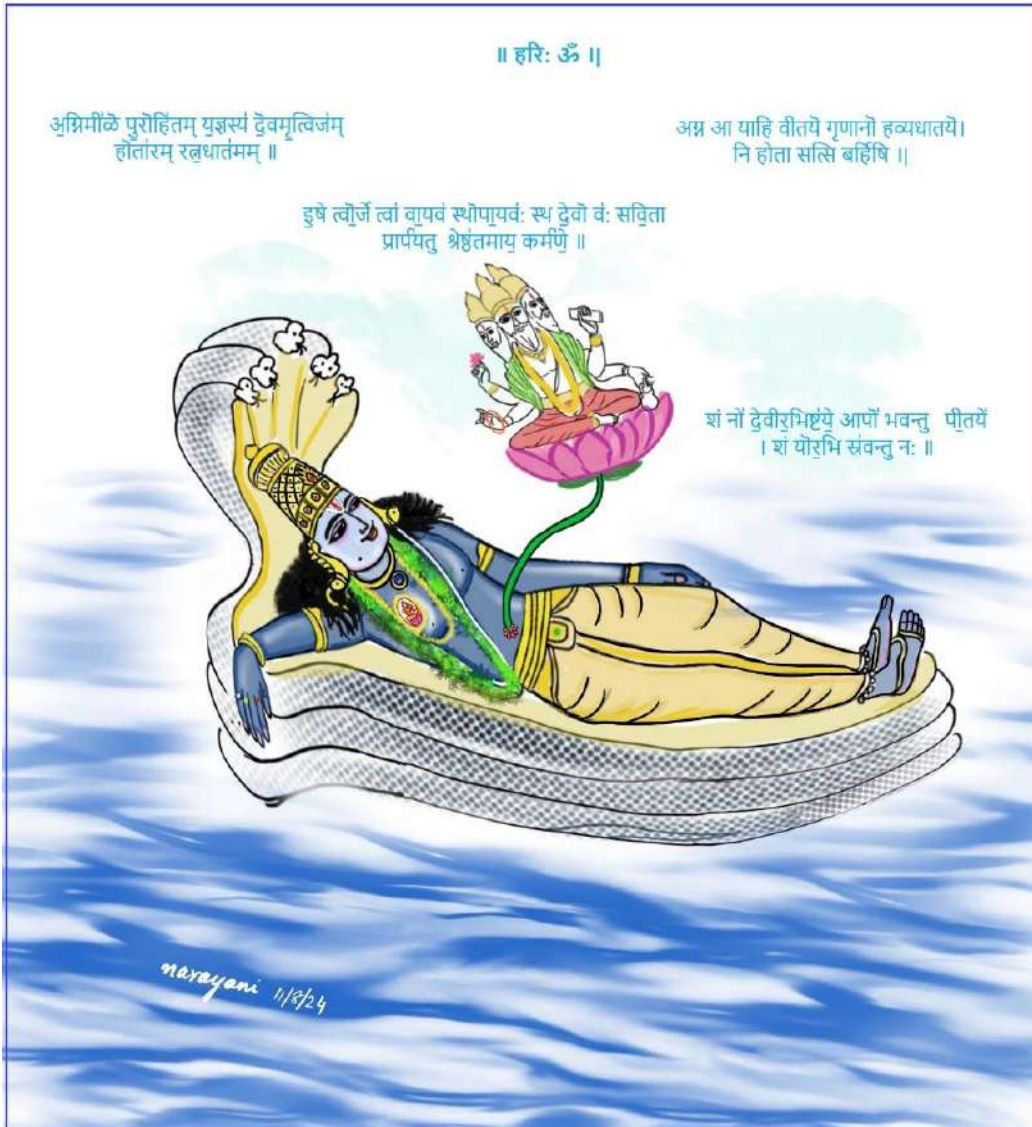
The supreme Lord of such multiform, magnificence and opulence, out of causeless mercy (निर्हेतुक कृपा nirhEtuka krupA) for the ever-bonded souls, incarnates in every age (sambhavAmi yugE yugE संभवामि युगे युगे), to protect the righteous (paritrANaya sAdhUnAm परित्राणाय साधूनां), destroy the wicked (vinAshAya cha dushkRutAm विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्), and re-establish the principles of dharma (dharma samsthApana arthAya धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय). He also incarnates to teach the dharmashAstrams, and vEdArthams through His own absolute incarnations as avatAra-s, Rshi-s, AzhvAr-s, and AchArya-s so that the chain of transcendental knowledge (adhyAtma sampradAyam अध्यात्म सम्प्रदायम्) remains unbroken. Thus, various yOgic sciences suitable to the respective ages were instructed by BhagavAn in various situations through his multifarious forms. Holy sages like nArada, manu, vishNu, harita, ushana, yama, Apastambha, samvarta, kAtyAyana, bRushaspati, shankha, daksha, shatatapa, shaunaka, parAsara, vyAsa, and Shuka, vAlmeeki, vashisTha, vishvAmitra, atri, brugu, kutsa, likhita, kashyapa, gautama, angeerasha, pAraskara, and yAgyavalkya have contributed immensely to the establishment of ancient knowledge and transmission of spiritual wisdom to the inhabitants of the world. Their teachings are contained in the vEdas (shrutis), upanishads, purANas, itihAsas, Agamas (tantras), dharmasootras, dharmashAstras (smRutis), divya prabandhams, and the shreeshooktis and vyAkhyAnams of our sadAchAryas.

BHAGAVAN – THE FIRST ACHARYA - PART 2

BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AS A GURU

BhagavAn Shreemann nArAyaNa who is sarvalOkahita (concerned about the welfare of the world), is the first teacher (प्रथम प्रवर्तक prathama pravartaka) of the vishiShTAdvaita sampradAyam. Our sampradAyam is called adhyAtma shAstram अध्यात्म शास्त्रम् because it talks about supreme spiritual knowledge. It is called sharaNAgati shAstram शरणागति शास्त्रम् because it is based on the foundation of *surrender to the supreme Lord*. Shreeman nArAyaNa is the prathamAchArya or paramAcharya of our vaishNava sampradAyam. Let us travel through different ages to see how BhagavAn nArAyaNa appeared as a Guru and taught the vishishThAdvaita sampradAyam in different formats suitable to different ages, beginning from primeval times to the current yuga.

1. LORD VISHNU, (CREATOR OF BRAHMA), AS GURU



Lord VishNu is the first Guru because He gave the four vEdas to Lord brahmA who arose from the lotus of His navel for the purpose of creation and procreation. “vEda” means knowledge. The vEdas are the very foundation of righteousness - vEdOkhilO dharmamoolam ‘वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम्’ | In ancient times, the vEdas were one single text having a combination of poetry, prose and poetry, hymns, and mantras. Sage vEdavyAsa thought they must be organised properly so that they are preserved and used practically. He broadly classified the knowledge under four different heads namely Rg, yajus, sAma and atharva vEda respectively. Hence, vEdas were collectively termed as ‘chaturvEda’. Rg vEda contains hymns and praises of deities. Yajur vEda contains instructions and mantras for sacrificial rites. Saama vEda contains musical chants. Atharva vEda contains mantras for casting spells as well as health, healing and practical aspects.

Lord ViShNu is eternal. The vEdas are also eternal. The vEdas are called “apauruShEya” meaning “not arising from a person”. Vedic knowledge was passed down from master to student only through oral format for generations, until they were written in palm leaf scripts in later periods. Hence, the vEdas are referred as “*Shruti*” – *that which is heard*.

References: -

1.ShwEtAshwarOpanishad 6.18:

यो ब्रह्माणं विदधाति पूर्वं यो वै वेदांश्च प्रहिणोति तस्मै ।

तं ह देवं आत्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणमहं प्रपद्ये ॥

निष्कलं निष्क्रियं शान्तं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम् ।

अमृतस्य परं सेतुं दग्धेन्दनमिवानलम् ॥

yO brahmANaM vidadhAti pUrvaM yO vai vEdAMshcha prahiNOti tasmai |

taM ha dEvaM AtmabuddhiprakAshAM mumukShurvai sharaNamahaM prapadyE||

niShkalaM niShkriya shAntaM niravadyaM niranjanam |

amRutasya para sEtuM dagdhEndanamivAnalam||

Lord nArAyaNa who first created BrahmA was the one who granted the vEdas to Lord BrahmA. To the Lord who enlightens the soul and intellect, I, the seeker of mOksha, take refuge and surrender. He who is unparalleled, actionless, tranquil, faultless and stainless is the bridge that transports us to the supreme world of immortality after the fire has burnt all the fuel.

2. निरुक्तम्: ब्रह्मेन्द्र वरुणादीनाम् गुरु वेदोपदेशनात्

niruktam: brahmendra varuNAdeenAm guru vEdOpadEshanAt

Lord nArAyaNa is considered as Guru because He taught the vEdas to dEvas like brahmA, indra, varuNa, etc.

3. VishNu purANam 3.7.5

हरि-गुरु-वशगो अस्मि

hari-guru-vashagO asmi

BrahmA says: - I am sub-ordinate to Hari, my guru.

4. VishNu PurANam 5.1.14

मम अपि अखिललोकानां गुरुः नारायणो अगुरुः

mama api akhilaOkAnAM guru: nArAyaNO aguru:

BrahmA says:- NaaraayaNa is the guru for me as well as the entire universe; He has no Guru.

5. MahAbhArata SabhA Parva 41.20

तमिमं सर्वसम्पन्नं आचार्यं पितरं गुरुं

tamimaM sarvasampannaM AchAryaM pitaraM guruM

This supreme Lord who is all-virtuous is the preceptor, father and teacher.

7. tiruvAymozhi 6.6.5 of NammAzhvAr

பண்ணுடை வேதம் பயந்த பரனுக்கு

paNbuDai vEdam payanda paranukku –

The supreme Lord compassionately taught the vEdas to BrahmA.

6. ALavandAr's Stotra Ratnam 60

गुरुरसि गतिश्चासि जगतां

gururasi gatishchAsi jagatAM

Oh, Lord, You are the preceptor of the universe. You are verily the goal.

8. YatirAja Saptati of SwAmi Desikan

कमप्याध्यं गुरुं वन्दे कमलागृहमेधिनम् ।

प्रवक्ता छन्दसां वक्ता पञ्चरात्रस्य यः स्वयम् ॥

kamapyAdhyaM guruM vandE kamalAgRuhamedhinam |

pravaktA ChandasAm vaktA pancharAtrasya ya: svayam ॥

SwAmi desikan says: - I venerate the most auspicious primordial preceptor (Adiguru) who is the householder of Goddess Lakshmi's house, who imparted the vEdas to BrahmA and himself taught the pancharAtra Agamas with his own mouth.

2. HAMSA AVATARA AS GURU



When BrahmA began the role of procreation, at first, four sons were born from his mind - sanaka, sanAtana, sanandana and sanatkumAra. They were collectively called sanakAdi rishi-s or brahmA's mAnasa putra-s. BrahmA taught them the shAstras and wanted them to aid him in the creation process, but they refused to take part in this materialistic life. They renounced the samsAra and became ngyAnis. They remained celibate young sages. They questioned brahmA on how to overcome the materialistic pleasures hindering man's progress towards liberation. BrahmA who was himself indulged in the karmA of creation, sought Lord nArAyaNA's help to clear the doubts. Lord nArAyaNa took on the hamsa avatAra - as a white, lustrous swan, and expounded the supreme knowledge that the only means to salvation is a focused contemplation on Lord Hari (bhajata mA – All of you worship me – SMB – 11.13.33). These teachings are collectively called as “**HAMSA GEETA**”.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM-11.13.19

स मामचिन्तयद् देवः प्रश्नपारतितीर्षया ।

तस्य अहं हंस रूपेण सकाशमगमं तदा ॥

sa mAm achintayad dEva: prashna pAratiteershayA|

tasya aham Hamsa rUpENa sakAshamagamaM tadA||

BhagavAn said.” BrahmA meditated upon me to know the answer for the question asked by sanaka munis. At that time, I appeared near him in the form of a swan”.

Tirumangai AzhvAr records this story in his Periya Tirumozhi 5.3.8

முன் இவ் ஏழ் உலகு உணர்வு இன்றி*
இருள் மிக உம்பர்கள் தொழுது ஏத்த*
அன்னம் ஆகி அன்று அரு மறை பயந்தவனே!*
எனக்கு அருள்புரியே.

mun ivvEzh ulagu uNarvu inRi*
iruL mika umpargaL tozhutu Etta*
annam Agi anRu aru maRai payantavanE! *
enakku aruLpuriyE.

Tirumazhisai AzhvAr records this story in his Tiruchchandaviruttam 19 - puLLadAgi vEdam nAngum OdinAi adanRiyum... புள்ளதாகி வேதம் நான்கும் ஓதினாய் அதன்றியும். Hamsa taught the four vEdas to BrahmA.

3. HAYAGREEVA AVATARA AS GURU



ज्ञानानंदमयं देवं निर्मलस्फटिकाकृतिम् ।
आधारं सर्वविद्यानां हयग्रीवमुपासमहे ॥

Brahmā became proud of possessing the sacred vEdas and delayed the activity of creation. Bhagavān wanted to correct Brahmā. Two dew drops fell from the lotus sprouting from VishNu's navel. One drop was soft, and the other was hard. So, they were called Madhu and KaiTabha. They were the embodiment of rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance). The two demons climbed up Lord Vishnu's lotus stem and reached Brahmā and stole the vEdas from him and ran away. Consequently, the vast earth along with its mountains, oceans, skies and all the living beings including the dAnavas, vanished into the darkness. Brahmā realised his mistake and pleaded Lord VishNu to help him. Lord Hayagreeva then appeared in a huge resplendent form, with a horse face, shining like crystal, and seated on the white lotus. He fought with the strong demons for more than 1000 years and vanquished them. Thus, the vEdas were restored to Brahmā. As Bhagavān killed the demon madhu, He is called 'madhusoodana मधुसूदन'. As He killed the demon kaiThabha, He is called 'kaiTabhAri कैटभारिः'. The vEdas are embodiment of Sattva guNa and hence are quintessential knowledge required to create the world. This story of Hayagreeva is recorded in MahAbhArata, Shanti Parvam, Mokshadharmā, NaaraayaNeeyam, Chapter 357.

References:

SHREEMAD BHAGAVATAM 7.9.37

तस्मै भवान्हयशिरस्तनुवं हि बिभ्रद्

वेदद्रुहावतिबलौ मधुकैटभाख्यौ ।

हत्वानयच्छ्रुतिगणांश्च रजस्तमश्च

सत्त्वं तव प्रियतमां तनुमामनन्ति ॥

tasmai bhavAnhayashirastanuvaM hi bibhrad

vedadruhAvatibalau madhukaiTabhAkhyau |

hatvAnayachChrutigaNAmscha rajastamashcha

sattvaM tava priyatamAM tanumAmananti ||

HAYAGREEVA AVATARA IN DIVYA PRABANDHAM

Tirumangai AzhvAr records this story in Peirya Tirumozhi 5.3.2

வசை இல் நான்மறை கெடுத்த அம்மலர் அயற்கு அருளி* முன்பரிமுகமாய்*

இசை கொள் வேதநூல் என்று இவை பயந்தவனே!* எனக்கு அருள்புரியே*

vasai il nAnmaRai keTutta ammalar ayaRku aruLi* munparimukamAy*

isai koL vEdanUl enRu ivai payantavanE!* enakku aruLpuriyE*.

Long ago, taking the form of the horse faced Hayagreevan (parimuganAy), You graciously retrieved the four faultless (vasaiyil nAn maRai) vEdas, when Brahma lost them, and handed it back to him, saying that they were indeed the vEda Shastras set in the musical format. (isai koL vEda nool). Hayagreeva's speech is said to be sAma gAnam.

4. MATSYA AVATARA AS GURU



By Padma PaaTTi

MATSYA AVATARA

Long ago, at the end of svAyambhuva mantvantara, when brahmA was overcome by sleep, the four vEdas in his custody wandered around in the form of four beings (puruShas). The powerful demon called Hayagreeva carried them away and hid them under the waters of praLaya. Knowing this, Lord VishNu, the supreme controller, incarnated as a fish (sapharee rUpam), swam into the waters, and restored all the four vEdas to BrahmA.

SHREEMAD BHAGAVATAM 8.24.9

ज्ञात्वा तद् दानवेन्द्रस्य हयग्रीवस्य चेष्टितम् ।

दधार शफरीरूपं भगवान् हरिरीश्वरः ॥

gnyatvA tad dAnavendrasya hayagrIvasya cheShTitam |

dadhAra sapharIrUpaM bhagavAn harirISvara: ||

(*In Matsya purANam, the asura's name is mentioned as "sOmakAsura". He was defeated by VishNu who took on the form of a huge whale. It is said that the Lord also took from him the vEdas and his dakshiNAvarti shankh (right coiled conch – valampuri shangu).

TEACHINGS OF LORD MATSYA:

In chAkshusa manvantaram, the Lord took on matsyAvatAra again and showed himself to a king called Satyavrata. The three worlds bhU: bhuva: and suva: were going to dissolve in a huge expanse of water. Lord VishNu, the primordial Lord, appeared as a huge whale and asked Satyavrata to carry all types of herbs and seeds, the saptarshis, and all kinds of living beings of the earth, in a huge boat sent by him. He then asked him to tie the boat to His horn using the huge serpent vAsuki as the rope. After saving everyone, while moving in the waters of inundation, the ancient Lord revealed to rAjarshi Satyavrata, the absolute truth and the mystery of His own self in the form of Matsya purANa. It had a detailed explanation of sAnkhyayOga and its branches.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM 8.24.54, 55.

इत्युक्तवन्तं नृपतिं भगवानादिपूरुषः ।

मत्स्यरूपी महाम्भोधौ विहरंस्तत्त्वमब्रवीत् ॥

ityuktavantaM nRupatiM bhagavAnAdipUruSha: |

matsyarUpI mahAmbhOdhou viharaMstattvamabravit ||

पुराणसंहितां दिव्यां साङ्ख्ययोगक्रियावतीम् ।

सत्यव्रतस्य राजर्षेरात्मगुह्यमशेषतः ॥

purANasaMhitAM divyAM sAnkhyayogakriyAvatIm |

satyavratasya rAjarSherAtmaguhyamasheShata: ||

MATSYA AVATARA IN DIVYA PRABANDHAM:

PERIAZHVAR TIRUMOZHI 1.9.10 – AzhvAr says that after rescuing the lost vedas, Matsya took the form of a swan (annam) and imparted the knowledge of the vedas again.

துன்னிய பேரிருள்* சூழ்ந்து உலகை மூட*
மன்னிய நான்மறை* முற்றும் மறைந்திடப்*
பின் இவ் உலகினில்* பேரிருள் நீங்க* அன்று-
அன்னமது ஆனானே! அச்சோ அச்சோ*
அருமறை தந்தானே! அச்சோ அச்சோ.

NANMUGAN TIRUVANDADU 22 – Tirumazhisai AzhvAr hails Matsyaroopas as -
மீனாய் உயிரளிக்கும் வித்து meenAy uyiraLikkum vittu – *the one who saved all the AtmAs during pralaya.*

5.VARAHA AVATARA AS GURU



TIRUVIDAVENDAI DIVYA DESAM

SHREEMAD BHAGAVATAM 3.13.17

In primeval times, BrahmA thought: "While I have been engaged in the process of creation, the earth has been inundated by a deluge and has gone down into the depths of the ocean. What can we do who are engaged in this matter of creation? It is best to let the Almighty Lord direct us. While he was thinking thus, a minute boar came out of his nostril. The size of the creature was not more than the upper portion of a thumb. While BrahmA was observing Him, that boar manifested into a gigantic,

wondrous boar - the varAha. With a tumultuous roar resounding in all directions, varAha dived into the ocean and lifted the earth on his tusks. He also killed HiraNyAksha who was responsible for pushing the earth down. BhUmi devi was pleased and relieved of her misery. She requested the Lord to advice the jeevAtmAs. Lord varAha is said to have explained various shAstras to Bhoomi dEvi including sharaNAgati shAstra.

VARAHA PURANA 114.64–65

Lord varAha's message to bhUmidEvi: This is also called "varAha charama shIOkam" or "shIOka dvayam":

स्थिते मनसि सुस्वस्थे शरीरे सति यो नरः ।

धातु-साम्ये स्थिते स्मर्ता विश्वरूपं च मामजम् ॥

ततस्तं म्रियमाणं तु काष्ठ पाशाण सन्निभं ।

अहं स्मरामि मद्भक्तं नयामि परमां गतिम् ॥

sthitE manasi susvsthE shareerE sati yo nara: |
dhAtu-sAmyE sthite smartA vishwarUpaM cha mAmajam ||
tatastaM mriyamANaM tu kAShTha pAshANa sannibhaM |
ahaM smarAmi madbhaktaM nayAmi paramAM gatim ||

Oh BhUmi Devi! The entire universe is my body (shareeram). I do not have births or deaths. For my bhakta-s who surrender to me with faith when they are having sound mind and healthy body and contemplate on Me as the cause of the whole universe, I think of them in their last moments when they lay in death bed totally unconscious like a log or a stone and lead them to my Supreme Abode (parama padam).

6. KAPILA AVATARA AS GURU



Lord VishNu was born as Kapila to SvAyambhuva Manu's daughter dEvahUti and Kardama maharshi. After initiating the child with the childhood samskAras, kardama maharshi went back to perform tapas. Kapila was an exceptionally brilliant and spiritually advanced son. DevahUti felt sad after Kardama's departure and asked Kapila to give her transcendental knowledge. "KapilOpAkhyAnam" or **KAPILA GEETA** contains the excellent teachings of Lord Kapila to His mother devahUti about sAnkhya yOga, aShTAnga yOga and finally the easy bhakti yOga (devotional service). DevahUti followed his teachings strictly and finally attained the supreme Lord. The kapila geetA contains 365 verses which are found in Shreemad BhAgavatam 3.25.7 to 3.33.11.

SHREEMAD BHAGAVATAM 3.32.22

तस्मात्त्वं सर्वभावेन भजस्व परमेष्ठिनम् ।

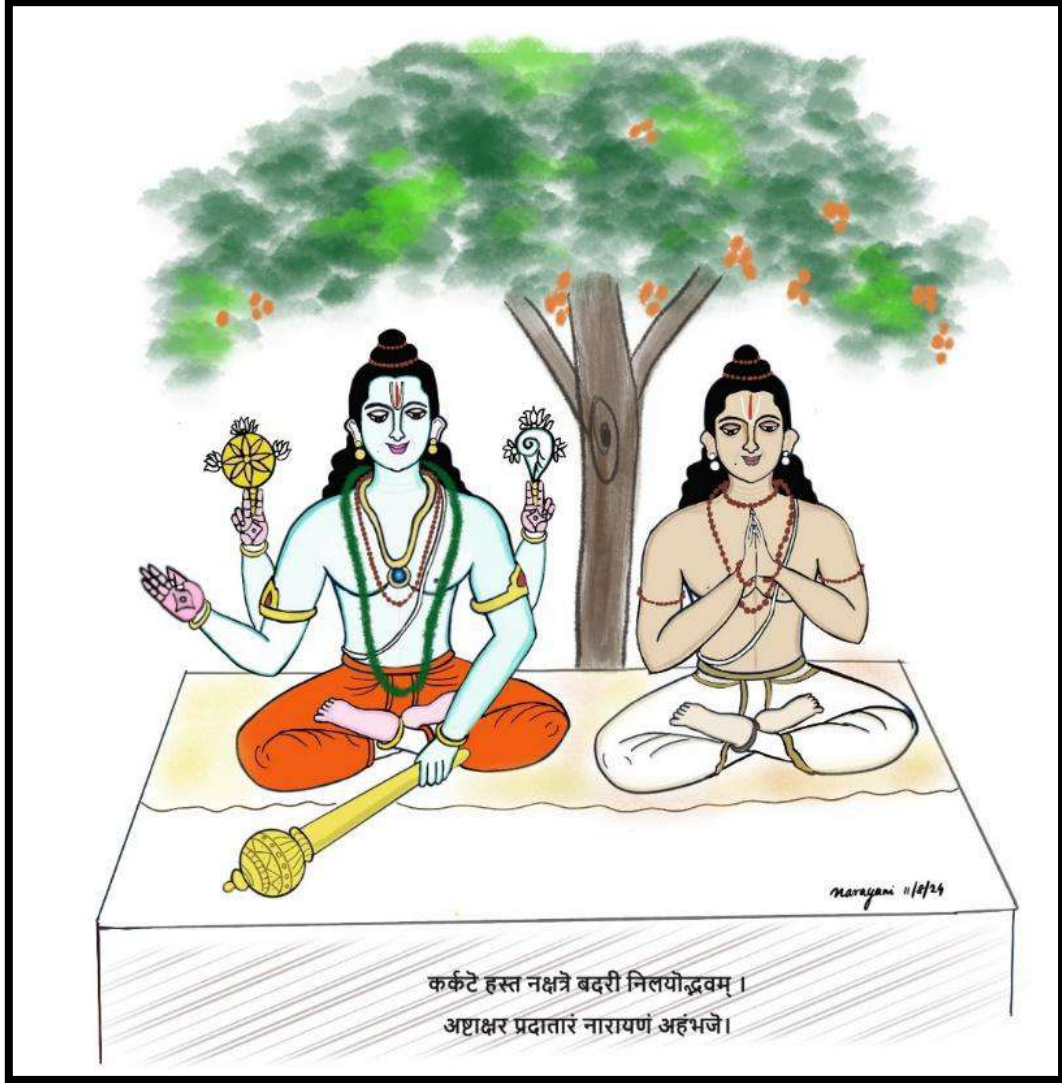
तद्गुणाश्रयया भक्त्या भजनीयपदाम्बुजम् ॥

tasmAttvaM sarvabhAvena bhajasva parameShThinam |

tadguNAshrayaya bhaktyA bhajanIyapadAmbujam ||

My dear mother, I therefore advise that you take shelter of the Supreme Lord, for His lotus feet are worth worshiping. Accept this with all devotion and love, and thus you can be situated in transcendental devotional service.

7. NARA-NARAYANA AVATARA AS GURU



Once upon a time, the supreme Lord nArAyaNa of inconceivable glories, incarnated as Nara-nArAyaNa sages in the bhArata varsha in BadarikAshrama. Nara-nArAyaNa were twin brothers born to Dharmadeva and mUrti, one of the daughters of daksha. One brother was Lord nArAyaNa Himself, and the other was Nara, His close disciple. NaaraayaNa Rshi taught the most sacred knowledge and the "aShTAKshara mantra" to Nara, his shishya. Both NArAyaNa and Nara performed austerities, preached the knowledge of perfect devotion to Lord nArAyaNa, and practiced the knowledge to perfection. They undertook penance of 1000 years in order to annihilate an asura called Sahasrakavacha who was covered by a thousand

coats of armour. Thereafter, they spent their life teaching humanity on subjects such as religion, knowledge, renunciation, self-realisation and God-realisation.

SHREEMAD BHAGAVATAM 5.19.9

भारतेऽपि वर्षे भगवान्नरनारायणाख्य आकल्पान्तमुपचित

धर्मज्ञानवैराग्यैश्वर्योपशमोपरमात्मोपलम्भनमनुग्रहायात्मवतामनुकम्पया तपोऽव्यक्तगतिश्चरति

॥

bhAratE-api varShe bhagavAn-naranArAyaNAkhya AkalpAntamupachita dharmagnyana-vairAgya-aishvarya-upashamoparamAtmopalambhanam-anugrahAyAtmavatAmanukampayA tapo avyaktagatishcharati ||

Naarada maharshi once visited the village called kalApa near badarikAshrama, where nara-nArAyaNa were surrounded by many sages. When nArAda bowed to them and requested that he be taught the highest secret of the absolute self, nArAyaNa Rshi reminded nArada that he had already visited them long ago in ShwEtadweepa and learnt the Shruti GeetA from his shishya sanandana kumAra. SHRUTI GEETA is a collection of twenty-eight laudatory hymns on nArAyaNa sung by the vEdas (shruti) to awaken Lord nArAyaNa who was sleeping on the cosmic ocean after a praLaya. Naarada then passed on this knowledge to his shishya Veda vyAsa. (Shruti GeetA from Shreemad BhAgavatam 10.87.14 to 10.87.41). Naarada thus recollected and by-hearted the knowledge again.

The nara-nArAyaNa Rshis thus lived for a thousand mahAyugas (equal to one kalpa) to uphold and preach the shAstras to generations of human race. It is also said that it was the nara-nArAyaNa Rshis who appeared in the form of KrishNa and arjuna in the Yadu and kuru dynasties respectively to mitigate the burden of the world.

8.RAMA AVATARA AS GURU



The very mention of the name “rAma” evokes the image of perfection. He was an ideal son, disciple, husband, brother and friend. Lord rAma was the personification of dharma (rAmO vighrahavAn dharma रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः |).

VALMEEKI RAMAYAANA 1.1.14

रक्षिता स्वस्य धर्मस्य स्वजनस्य च रक्षिता |

वेदवेदाङ्गतत्त्वज्ञो धनुर्वेदे च निष्ठितः ||

rakshitA svasya dharmasya svajanasya cha rakshitA |

vEdavEdAnga tattvangyO dhanurvEda cha niShThita: ||

Raama is the preserver of his own righteousness (dharma) and also the righteous protector of His subjects. He is a scholar in the essence of Vedas and their ancillaries (vEdAngas). He knows the truth. He is an expert in dhanurvEdam (Archery).

NammAzhvAr says in his tiruvAymozhi 7.5.1

கற்பார் இராம பிரானை அல்லால்* மற்றும் கற்பரோ?,*
 புல்பா முதலா* புல்எறும்புஆதி ஒன்றுஇன்றியே,*
 நல்பால் அயோத்தியில் வாழும்* சராசரம் முற்றவும்,*
 நல்பாலுக்கு உய்த்தனன்* நான்முக னார்பெற்ற நாட்டுளே? (2)
 kaRpAr irAma pirAnai allAI * maRRum kaRparO? *
 puRpA mudalAp * pulleRumbAdi onRinRiyE **
 naRpAl ayOddiyil vAzhum * charAcharam muRRavum *
 naRpAlukku uytanan * nAnmuganAr peRRa nATTuLE 1

Will seekers learn about someone other than rAma? All of brahma's worldly creation without any difference of size or intellect, be it the movable entities starting from the small ant (pul erumbu), or the immovable entities starting from the extensive grass (pul pA) that were present in the noble city of ayOdhyA, were uplifted to the supreme city of paramapadam (narpAl) by Lord rAma.

Raama, Himself being the supreme personality, assured protection to vibheeshaNa when he surrendered to Him. The following verse uttered by rAma is one among the three charama shIOkams.

VALMEEKI RAMAYANA, YUDDHA KANDAM 18.33

सकृद् एव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते |

अभयं सर्व भूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम||

sakRud Eva prapannAya tavAsmeeti cha yAchate
 abhayaM sarva bhootEbhyO dadAmyEtad vrataM mama.

He who seeks refuge in me just once, telling me that 'I am yours', I shall give him assurance of safety against all types of beings. This is my solemn pledge".

So, as a successful king, rAma demonstrated the practical application of dharma and lived upto the highest standards of dharma, fit to be emulated by mankind. His role as a spiritual teacher is not popular but a hymn called "RAMA GEETHA" is found in Sage VedavyAsa's adhyAtma rAmAyaNa in uttarakhANDa, Chapter 5. Raama GeetA is considered to be the essence of the Upanishads. It contains rAma's teachings to his brother lakshmaNa on "samAdhi yOga", the yOga of meditation.

अहं प्रपन्नोस्मि पदाम्बुजम् प्रभो

भवापवर्ग तव योगिभावितम् |

यथा अन्जसा अज्ञानम् अपारवारिधिं

सुखं तरिष्यामि तथा अनुशाधि माम्||

ahaM prapannosmi padAmbujam prabhO

bhavApavarga tava yOgibhAvitam |

yathA anjasA agnyanam apAravAridhiM

sukhaM tariShyAmi tathA anushAdhi mAm||

LakshmaNa pleads: Oh, Lord! I am surrendering at Your lotus feet upon which yOgis contemplate, and which can liberate one from the bondage of samsAra. Please

teach me the quickest means by which I can cross the shoreless ocean of ignorance comfortably.

In reply to LakshmaNa, Lord rAmA explains the yOga procedure in 62 verses, the crux of which is the following shLOka:

ऐवं सदा अभ्यस्त समाधि योगिनो

निवृत्त सर्वेन्द्रियगोचरस्य हि ।

विनिर्जित अशेषरिपोः अहं सदा

दृश्यो भवेयं जित षड्गुणात्मनः ॥

Evam sadAbhyasta samAdhi yOginO

nivRutta sarvEndriyagOcharasya hi |

vinirjita ashESha ripO: ahaM sadA

dRshyO bhavEyaM jita ShaDguNAtmana: ||

He who thus sincerely and regularly practices this yOga of contemplation, he who has withdrawn himself from the entire world of perceived objects, he who has conquered all the senses and the six enemies namely kAma (desire), krOdha (anger), IObha (greed), mOha (lust), mada (delusion), and mAtsarya (envy), to him alone, I become directly perceptible always.

9.KRISHNA AVATARA AS GURU



The very name KrishNa reminds us of “**BHAGAVAT GEETA**”, a collection of the 700 verse teachings of Lord KrishNa to arjuna who stood helpless, and reluctant to fight the war at kurukshEtra. KrishNa decided to discard “shastra” (weapon) and use the “shAstra” to protect the world. KrishNa as “geetAchArya” expounded in detail many yOgas like gnyAna yOga, karma yOga, dhyAna yOga, and bhakti yOga, finally concluding with two prerequisites for liberation – 1. “sharaNAgati – surrender” and 2. “sAttvika tyAgam – sacrifice of all actions and fruits of actions to the supreme Lord.

GeetA dhyAna shIOkam - 4

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

sarvOpaniShadO gAvO dogdhA gopAlanandana: |

pArtho vatsa: sudhIrbhOktA dugdhaM gltAmRutaM mahat ||

The Upanishads are the cows, Shree Krishna the cowherd boy who milks them, Arjun is the calf, the wise person is the one who drinks, and the great nectar called GeetA is the milk.

Bhagavat GeetA 18.66 is one of the three charama shlokams granted by BhagavAn.

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वां सर्व पापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

sarvadharmAn parityajya mAmEkaM sharaNaM vraja |
ahaM tvAm sarva pApEbhyO mOkShayiShyAmi mA shucha: ||

KrishNa promises arjuna - Give up all dharmas and seek Me alone as your refuge. I will liberate you from all sins. Don't worry.

UDDHAVA GEETA (23 chapters - Chapters 11.7.1 to 11.29.49 of BhAgavatam)

KrishNa taught brahma-vidyA a second time, to His nephew, great friend and devotee Uddhava, just before He departed from the earth. While the Bhagavat GeetA taught arjuna to surrender to God, and continue his svadharma, the Uddhava GeetA taught uddhava to serve Him with devotion and get liberated even after krishNa would be no more in this world.

A third geetA called **UTTARA GEETA** is known to have existed, but the exact context is unavailable. This is supposed to be a conversation between BhagavAn and arjuna.

10. NARAYANA AS AGAMA GURU

A verse from the kulArNava-tantram says:

कृते श्रुत्युक्त आचारः त्रेतायां स्मृतिसम्भवः ।

द्वापारे तु पुराणोक्तः कलौ आगमसम्भवः ॥

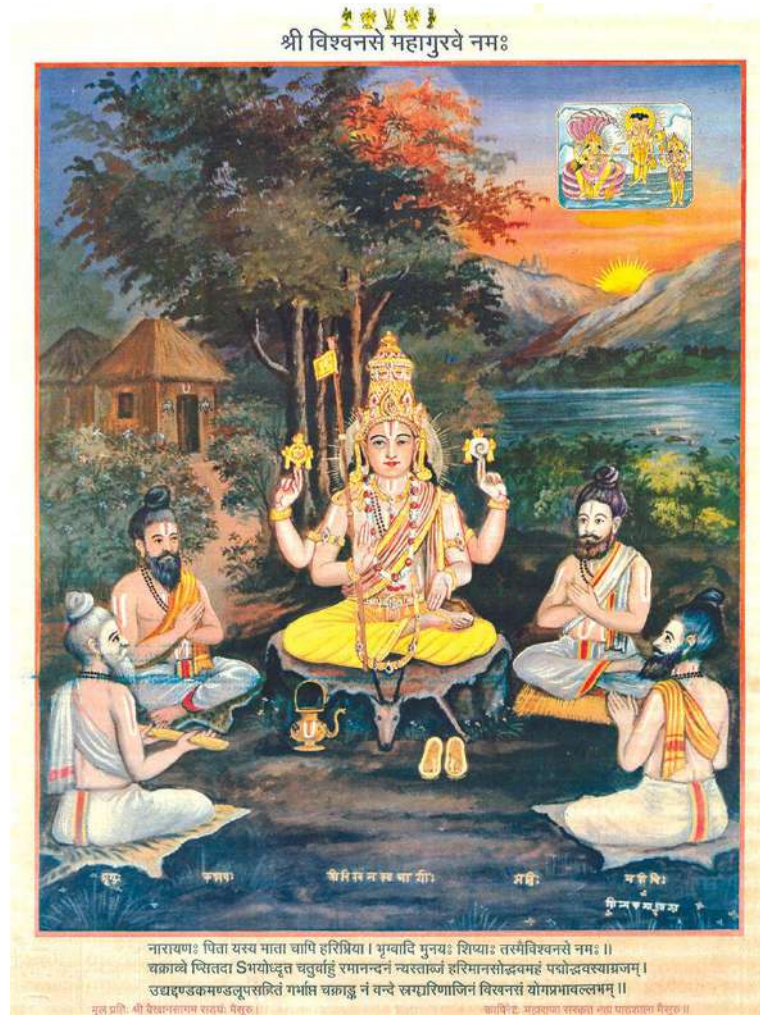
kRutE shRutyukta AchAra: trEtAyAM smRutisambhava: |

dvApArE tu purANOkta: kalua Agamasambhava: ||

In kRuta yuga, AchArams/duties are followed according to vEda-s; in trEtA yuga, according to smRuti-s (dharamashAstrams); in dvApara yuga, according to purANa-s, and in kali yuga, according to Agama-s.

Agama-s are practical procedures to worship God. Agama-s are also called tantra-s. Agama-s are so called because they have come down to us (Asamantat gamayatee-iti Agama:). The vEda is called nigama(that which is truth and eternal). There are two vaishNava Agamas – vaikhAnasa Agama and pAncharAtra Agama. The subject matter of the Agama-s is dealt under four heads namely: **1. ngyAna** (Knowledge of existence and mOksha), **2. Yoga:** Concentration on the subject of ngyAna. **3. Kriya:** Rules for construction of temples, installation and consecration of deities in temples **4. Charya:** Procedure for performance of daily worship.

VAIKHANASA AGAMA



Sage Vikhanasa is said to be the manifestation of VishNu. Shreeman nArAyaNa taught vaikhAnasa Agamas to his favourite shishya Vikhanasa muni. Having learnt the Agamas from bhagavAn, Vikhanasa Maharishi came down to earth's most holy place Naimisaaranyam and composed the VaikhAnasa Kalpasootram. He had nine disciples namely atri, bhRugu, kAshyapa, pulastiya, mareechi, vashishTa, angeerasa, pulaha, and kratu. Out of these, He taught the vikhAnasa kalpasootram to four disciples namely atri, bhRugu, kAshyapa and mareechi who in turn spread the bhagavat ArAdhana shAstram to the world.

PANCHARATRA AGAMA



पाञ्चरात्रस्य कृत्स्नस्य वक्ता नारायण स्वयम् |

pAncharAtrasya kRutsnasya vaktA nArAyaNa svayam

(mahAbhArata – shAnti parva)

Shreeman nArAyaNa Himself delivered the pAncharAtra Agamas in five consecutive days (pancha rAtri) to five Gods namely ananta (AdisEshan), Garuda, VishwaksEna, Brahma and Shiva respectively, in His supreme abode called vaikUNtha. Hence, the pAncharAtra Agamam is said to be as old as the vEdas. The knowledge of pAncharAtra Agamas are found in ancient texts like Shatapata BrAhmaNa and ChAndOgya Upanishad. PaancharAtra Agama contains a total of 1,50,00,000 – once crore fifty lakh verses. It covers five facets of knowledge – paratattva परतत्त्व, mukti मुक्ति, bhukti भुक्ति, yOga योग, and viShaya विषय. It is the essence of the great Upanishads. The pAncharAtra Agamas also contain knowledge on five subjects namely vedam, bhAratam, Shilpam, vaidyam and jyOtisham.

The first shisyas of pAncharAtra in turn taught the shAstras to five mahaRshis (panchaRshi) namely shANDilya, aupagAyana, maunjyAyana, kaushika, and

bhAratvAja. The five brahmaRshis were amsha-s of the panchAyudha-s (five weapons) of viShNu. They further propagated the shAstras to later AchAryas.

चतुर्वेद समन्वितं पाञ्चरात्रनुशब्दितं महोपनिषदं इदम्.. ..भक्तानुकम्पया भगवत हरिण सङ्ग्रहितम्

॥

chaturvEda samanvitam pAncharAtranushabditam mahOpanishadam idam..
...bhaktAnukampayA bhagavata harina sangrahitam ||

The virtuous Lord, out of compassion for His devotees, has Himself collated and taught the PaancharAtra Sastra which can be revered as a great Upanishad, on par with the four vEdas.

11. AZHVARS AS AMSHAS OF LORD NARAYANA

Whenever bhagavAn feels that the chain of divine knowledge is broken and is not being passed down to the newer generations, He, with His divine will, incarnates as AzhvArs and AchArya Purushas to re-instate the VaishNava SiddhAntams and save the deluded jeevAtmAs suffering in this samsAra. Lord Achyuta fulfils this wish by entering those who are already born. (अनुप्रविश्य कुरुते यत् समीहितं अच्युतः anupravishya kurutE yat sameehitam achyuta:).

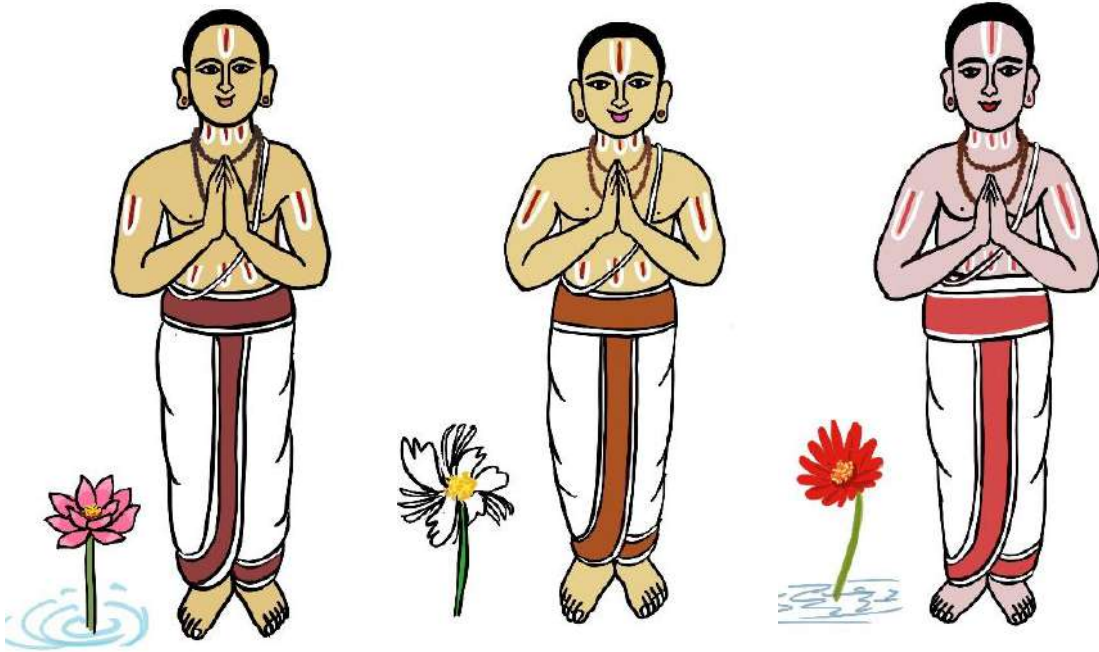
TWELVE AZHVARS



In the period between dwApara yuga and the beginning of kali yuga, Lord VishNu sent divine AzhvArs to liberate the people of the earth from the bondage of samsAra. There were twelve tamizh AzhvArs who were highly realised VaishNava saints, intensely devoted exclusively to Lord VishNu. They travelled all around India and visited many VishNu temples. Captivated by the beauty of the archA tirmEni of Shreeman nArAyaNa, they composed several tamizh hymns which are together called “nAIAyira (4000) divya prabandham”. The hymns called pAsurams extoll Lord VishNu's divine form (divya mangaLa vighram), His supernatural deeds (atimAnusha leelAs) and divine qualities (kalyANa guNas). Every prabandham has a phalashruti blessing the reciter of the poem with happiness in this world and beyond, and promising mOksha. The nameS of the 12 great AzhvArs in order of incarnation on this earth are:

1. POIGAI AZHVAR (KASARA YOGI, SAROYOGI)
2. BHOODATTAZHVAR (BHOOTAHVAYA)
3. PEYAZHVAR (MAHADAHVAYA)
4. TIRUMAZHISAI AZHVAR (BHAKTISARAN, TIRUMAZHISAI PIRAN)
5. NAMMAZHVAR (SHATAKOPAN, PARANKUSHAN)
6. MADHURAKAVI AZHVAR
7. KULASEKARA AZHVAR (CHERALAR KON)
8. PERIYAZHVAR (BHATTAR PIRAN, BHATTANATHA, VISHNU CHITTAN)
9. ANDAL (KODAI NACCHIYAR)
10. TONDARADIPUDI AZHVAR (BHAKTANGRIRENU)
11. TIRUPPANAZHVAR (PANAR, PANANATHAN)
12. TIRUMANGAI AZHVAR (KALIYAN, PARAKALAN)

1.2.3. MUDAL AZHVARS - The first three AzhvArs poigaiyAzhvAr, bhoodattAzhvAr and pEyAzhvAr were born on consecutive asterisms of aippasi tiruvONam, aviTTam, and sadayam nakshatras respectively. They were ayOnijas as they were found in a lotus, hiptage, and lily flower in tiruvekkA, tikaDalmallai and tirumayilai divyadesams respectively. They were the incarnations of the Lord's divine weapons pAnchajanya, gadA and nandakam respectively. The three wandering yOgis met in the porch or dehalee of a house in tirukOyilUr on a rainy night. They had space only for one to sleep, two to sit and three to stand. While they were standing together, Lord ulagaLanda perumAL came in-between the three AzhvArs as the fourth person and gave them darshanam. Each AzhvAr sang 100 pAsurams in praise of Him. Thus, we got the three beautiful tamizh prabandhams namely mudal tiruvandAdi, iranDAm tiruvandAdi and moonRAM tiruvandAdi respectively.



POYGAIYAZHVAR

BHOODATTAZHVAR

PEYAZHVAR



SHANKHA



GADA



NANDAKAM

4. TIRUMAZHISAI AZHVAR (BHAKTISARAN, TIRUMAZHISAI PIRAN) – He was born in Tirumazhisai near Chennai on 'tai magam' as the incarnation of the sudarshana chakra. As a newborn child, he was not well-formed. With Lord

JagannAtha's grace, he slowly regained health and shape. He grew up to be a bhakti yOgi and lived for more than 4700 years on this earth. He explored all other religions and became a vaishNava due to the grace of pEyAzhvAr. He gave us two prabandhams 'tiruchchandavirtuttam' – (120 pAsurams) and 'nAnmugan tiruvandAdi' (96 pAsurams). His devotion was so strong that He moved even the moolavars of temples. In response to his pAsuram 'naDandakAlgal nondavO.. ezhundirundu pEsu?', Lord ArAvamudan of tirukkuDandai got up and acknowledged in utthAna sayanam. In another instance, Lord sonna vaNNam seyda perumAL of tiruvekkA got up from his archA state and followed tirumazhisai AzhvAr along with AdisEsha when AzhvAr left the kingdom due to the king's pressure.



TIRUMAZHISAI AZHVAR



SUDARSHANA CHAKRA

5. NAMMAZHVAR (SHATAKOPAN, MARAN, PARANKUSHAN) – He was born in Tirukkurugoor (AzhvAr Tirunagari) on 'vaikAsi vishAkam' as the incarnation of Vishvaksena. He was a child who did not move, eat or sleep for 16 years until Madhurakavi AzhvAr woke him up. Lord VaikunThanAtha arrived in garuDa vAhana along with Lakshmi and blessed nammAzhvAr. The nityasooris also joined them from paramapadam. The deities of thirty-six divya dEsams assembled there in a line to give darshaNam to NammAzhvAr and get prabandhams from him. NaamAzhvAr composed 1296 pAsurams in total.

1. tiruviruttam - 100 (rig vEda sAram - vishNu sooktam)

2. tiruvAsiriyam - 7 verses - (yajur vEda sAram - nArAyaNa anuvAkam)
 3. periya tiruvandAdi - 87 verses - (atharvaNa vEda sAram - muNDakAdi upanishad)
 4. tiruvAymozhi - 1102 - (sAma vEda sArsAram - chAndOgya upanishad).
- NammAzhvAr lived only for 35 years and attained Paramapadam.

As time passed the divyaprabandhams were lost. A great bhakti yOgi called nAthamuni heard some brAhmaNas recite Shree NammAzhvAr's ten pAsurams on Lord TirukuDandai ArAvamudan perumAL starting with 'ArAvamude' and ending with" **kuzhalin maliya chonna OrAyirattuL ippattum**'. When he curiously inquired about the origin of the prabandham, he was advised to go to Kurugoor, the birthplace of saint nammAzhvAr to find more details. At AzhvArtirunagari), he met ParAnkushadAsa, a descendent of Madhurakavi AzhvAr (nammAzhvAr's shishya). ParAnkushadAsa advised NAthamuni to recite the Madhurakavi AzhvAr's prabandham 'KaNNinuN SirutAmbu' 12000 times. Naathamuni did so and NammAzhvAr appeared in his vision and taught him all the 4000 Divya Prabandhams. Hence NammAzhvAr is revered as the head of all AzhvArs.



NAMMAZHVAR



VISHVAKSENA

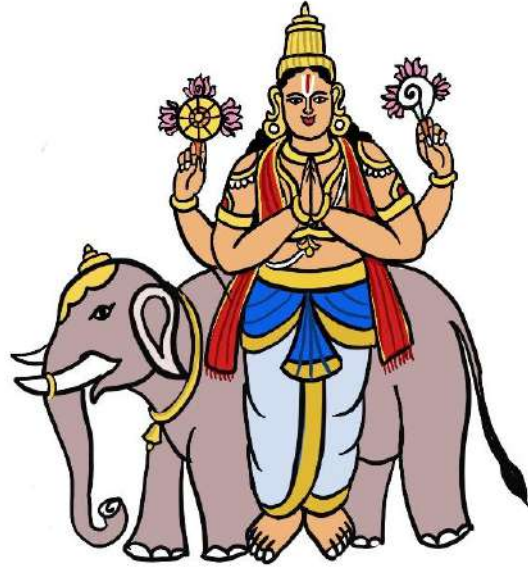
5.MADHURAKAVI AZHVAR - He was born in tirukOLoor near AzhvAr-tirunagari on 'chittirai month, chittirai nakshatra' as the incarnation of 'kumuda' one of the attendants of vishvaksena. He mastered the vEdas, shAstras, sanskrit and tamizh languages in his young age and became a devout vishNu bhakta. At the age of 80, he went to ayOdhyA for a pilgrimage and decided to stay there. One day, a bright light appeared on the sky. He followed the light which travelled up to AzhvAr tirunagari and met NammAzhvAr who was sitting unmoved under a tamarind tree.

Madhurakavi AzhvAr woke him up by throwing a stone in front of him and asked செத்ததின் வயிற்றில் சிறியது பிறந்தால், எத்தை தின்று எங்கே கிடக்கும்?"

NammAzhvAr opened his eyes for the first time and answered அதைத்தின்று அங்கே கிடக்கும்!" Though he was much older to nammAzhvAr in age, Madhurakavi immediately bowed with folded hands and begged nammAzhvAr to accept him as His shishya and servant. He considered NammAzhvAr as God and spent the rest of his life serving Him. He composed just 11 pAsurams on NammAzhvAr, called "KaNNinuN siruttAmbu".



MADHURAKAVAI AZHVAR



KUMUDA

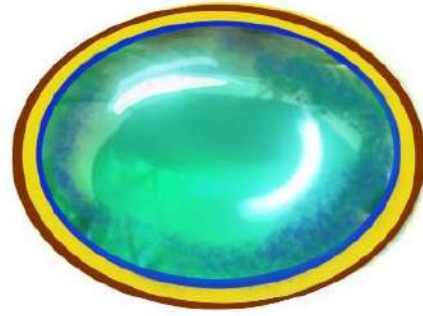
8. KULASEKARA AZHVAR (CHERALAR KON)

He was born in tiruvanjikalam, Kerala on 'mAsi punarpoosam' as the incarnation of the kaustubha maNi in the royal chera dynasty and ruled chEra, pANDya and chOla dynasties. KulasEkara AzhvAr was deeply attached to Lord rAma. He would immerse himself into rAma while hearing rAmAyaNam. Lord rAma appeared in AzhvAr's dream and gave him the title "kulasEkara perumAL". KulasEkara was also known for his unparalleled bhAgavata kainkaryam (serving devotees). His ministers who were against his increasing bhAgavata bhakti hid a necklace (hAram) from the

statue of rAma and reported to the king that one of the bhAgavatas had stolen it. He could not bear the blame on the bhAgavatas. To prove the purity of the bhAgavatas, Kulasekhara put his hand into a pot containing a poisonous snake. To the astonishment of the ministers, the snake spared him from biting. Such was KulasEkara's reverence towards bhAgavatas. He gave us one prabandham called PerumAL tirumozhi (105 pAsurams).



KULASEKARA AZHVAR



KAUSTUBHA MANI

8. PERIYAZHVAR (BHATTAR PIRAN, BHATTANATHA, VISHNU CHITTAN)

PeriyAzhvAr was born on 'Ani swAti' in Shrivilliputtur as the incarnation of GaruDa. PeriyAzhvAr used to offer fresh garlands daily to Lord VaTapatrashAyee, the presiding deity of Shrivilliputtoor. The pANDya king Vallabhadeva wanted to know the supreme path by which He can attain a supreme life after death. His family priest Selvanambi arranged a competition among scholars to get the answer to the king's question. Lord vaTapatrasAyl appeared in PeriyAzhvAr's dream and told him to submit the answer to the king. He also assured that He would help AzhvAr with the explanations. PeriyAzhvAr went to Madurai and presented to the king that

Shreeman NArAyaNa is the supreme being and hence He should be meditated upon to get a supreme life in VaikunTha. The porkizhi or the bag of gold coins which was hung, fell before PeriyAzhvAr, proving that His explanation was the best. King Vallabhadeva was overwhelmed and gave the title 'BhaTTar pirAn" to PeriyAzhvAr. When PeriyAzhvAr was taken along the streets on the royal elephant as a gesture of felicitation, Lord VishNu appeared on GaruDa vAhAna to bless him. PeriyAzhvAr immediately sang the verses "pallANDu pallANDu" so that no evil should touch perumAL. He composed PeriyAzhvAr tirumozhi (473 pAsurams).



PERIYAZHVAR



GARUDA

9.ANDAL (KODAI NACCHIYAR, GODA DEVI)

Kodai was the daughter of PeriyAzhvAr and the only female AzhvAr among the twelve AzhvArs. She was found beneath a tulasee plant in Shrivilliputtoor on 'ADi pooram'. She was the incarnation of Bhoomi devi. She assisted her father in making garlands for vaTapatrasAyl. She listened to the amazing tales of krishNa that her father narrated and fell in love with krishNa. She used to wear the garlands made and look at the mirror to see how it would look on Lord vaTapatrasAyl. One day, she was caught red-handed by PeriyAzhvAr, who became upset that an 'apachAra' has been made in bhagavat kankaryam. He did not send the garland to the temple that day. VaTapatrasAyi appeared in PeriyAzhvAr's dream and questioned why he discarded ANDAL's garland. PeriyAzhvAr was moved and understood her true

devotion which was acknowledged by the Lord Himself. Hence, she was called ANDAL, the one who ruled over the Lord. ANDAL was determined to marry only KrishNa. Lord RanganAtha also appeared in his dream and told PeriyAzhvAr that He wishes to marry her. Hence, PeriyAzhvAr took ANDAL to shrlrangam. To everyone's surprise, ANDAL just merged into Lord RanganAtha. ANDAL gave us two prabandhams – tiruppAvai (30 pAsurams) and nAchchiyAr tirumozhi (143 pAsurams).



ANDAL NACHCHIYAR



BHOODEVI

10. TONDARADIPODI AZHVAR (BHAKTANGIRENU)

VipranArAyaNa was born in a village called "tirumanDangkuDi", Tanjore district, on 'mArgazhi kETTai' as the incarnation of the "VanamAIA" or "Vaijayanti mAIA" – the garland of VishNu. Vipranarayana studied all the four vEdas and the six shAstras and emerged as a prolific scholar. Not interested in family life, he set up a nandavanam (garden) in Shreerangam and grew tulasi and beautiful flowers. He collected flowers in a basket and spent his days doing mAIA kainkaryam and tiruttuzhAy kainkaryam to Periya PerumAL. A beautiful woman called devadevi disguised herself as a servitor of God and slowly convinced him to be her partner. Vipranarayana agreed and started living with her. He spent all his money on her and eventually became poor. The divyadampatis of Shrlrangam could not bear the deteriorated state of such a devout AzhvAr. They chalked out a plan to help AzhvAr.

Ranga went to devadevi's house like the servant of vipranArAyaNa and gave a golden cup to her. At the same hour, the temple authorities complained that a golden vaTTil was missing. VipranArAyaNa was found and imprisoned. The Lord appeared in the king's dream and said that it was His leelA and vipranArAyaNa is faultless and he be relieved. VipranArAyaNa wanted to atone for his mistakes and asked vedic scholars about the prAyashchittam. They advised him to purify himself with the pAda teertham of the bhAgavatas worshipping Lord Ranganatha. From that day onwards, he named himself "tonDar-aDipoDi-AzhvAr". (The AzhvAr who wears the feet dust of bhagavatas) - bhaktAngrireNu in sanskrit; bhakta- devotee, angri – feet, rENu - dust). He lived up to 105 years in SrIrangam offering garlands for Periya PerumAl and applying the dust of the devotees' feet on his head. He sang two prabandhams tirumAlai (45 pAsurams) and tiruppaLLiyezhuchchi (10 pAsurams).



TONDARADIPODI AZHWAR



VANAMALA

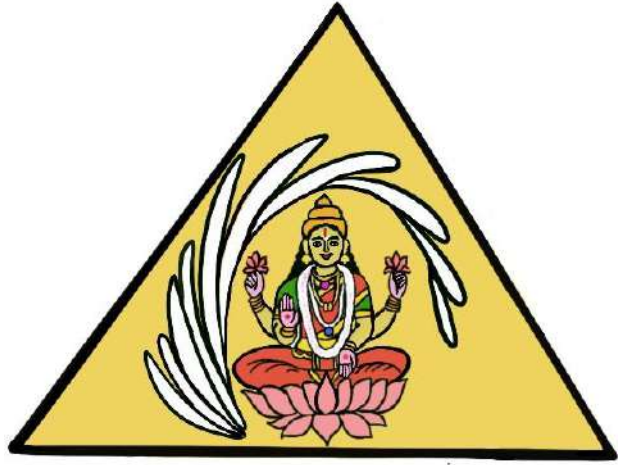
11. TIRUPPANAZHVAR (PANAR, PANANATHAN)

TiruppAnAzhvAr who was born in uRaiyUr near Shrirangam on 'kArtigai rOhini' as the incarnation of shreevatsa (the holy mark or maru on VishNu's chest). TiruppANar was an ardent devotee of Lord RanganAtha and was also adept in playing the lute, according to the tradition of the paaNar community. One day, the temple priest and scholar, IOkasAranga muni came to the river to fetch water for perumAl's kainkaryam and saw pANar engrossed in singing. Muni's appeal went unnoticed and so, he threw a small stone to catch pANar's attention. It hit him on his forehead and he started bleeding. PaaNa realised that he was obstructing the priest's path and hurriedly moved away. Meanwhile, the chief priest was alarmed to see blood oozing from Perumal's forehead. NamperumAL appeared in IOkasAranga muni's dream and ordered him to carry His bhakta tiruppANar on his shoulders and bring him to the temple. Muni carried pANar on his shoulders and brought him to the sanctum. PaaNa came to be known as *munivAhanan*. Once they reached the

sanctum, AzhvAr was overwhelmed by the darshan of RanganAtha and composed 10 beautiful pAsurams titled 'amalanAdipirAn' describing the pAdAdikESha beauty of Lord RanganAtha. Just like ANDAL, tiruppAnAzhvAr also merged into Ranga.



TIRUPPANAZHVAR



SHREEVATSA

12. TIRUMANGAI AZHVAR (KALIYAN, PARAKALAN)

Tirumangai AzhvAr was born in Tirukuraiyaloor near the divya desam, TiruvAli Tirunagari, AlinADu as the son of the army commander of the chOzha kingdom on kArtigai month, kArtigai nakshatra. He was named Neelan. He was the incarnation of the 'shArngam' bow of Lord VishNu. Due to his exceptional skill of archery and battle winning, he was called 'parakAlan' the defeater of evil. He was later coronated as the king of Tirumangai kingdom. In the nearby town of TiruveLLakuLam (aNan kOyil), there was an incredibly beautiful girl called Kumudavalli. Tirumangai Mannan spotted her at shwEta pushkarini, fell in love, approached her father and asked her hand in marriage. Kumudavalli expressed that she would marry only a VaishNava who bears the twelve tirumaN kAppu (dwAdasha Urdhva puNDram) and the tiruvilachchinai (marks of shankh and chakra - samAshrayanam). He went to the nearby tirunaRaiyUr and got himself consecrated with panchasamskAram from Nambi PerumAL. But the test was not over for the smart king. Kumudavalli imposed another condition. She agreed to marry him on the

promise that Tirumangai Mannan feeds 1008 shrivaishNavas daily for one year, consumes their pAda teertham as prasAdam and partakes the left-over food (bhAgavata ArAdhana shEsham). Tirumangai Mannan was moved by her dedication to bhAgavatas and immediately agreed to that condition also. They were finally wedlocked in a grand marriage ceremony and began a majestic life. Days passed by and Tirumangai Mannan lost all his wealth in providing food for devotees in huge quantities. He started robbing people to feed the bhAgavatas. In one such heist at tirumanankollai, he tried to rob the ornaments worn by a newly wedded couple. But they were none other than vayaAli maNavAlan perumAL and amRutavalli tAyAr from tiruvAli tirunagari. He took all their jewellery and pulled perumAl's toe-ring with his teeth tactfully. PerumAl called him "nam kaliyanO!" – the smart one. When he tried to carry all the jewellery in a bag, he could not lift it. He asked PerumAL whether there is some mantra to lift the bag, perumAL recited the ashTAKshara mantram and asked him if he remembered it. Tirumangai Mannan recollected that it was taught to him by TriunaRaiyUr Nambi. Nambi apologised and surrendered. The divyadampatis blessed him and ordained that he travels to all divyadesams and sings their glories. Thus, he became Tirumangai AzhvAr.

Tirumangai AzhvAr sung six prabandhams having a total of 1253 pAsurams:-

- 1) periya tirumozhi (1084),
- 2) tirukkuRuntAnDakam (20),
- 3) tiruneDuntAnDakam (30),
- 4) tiruvezhukkooRRirukkai (1),
- 5) siriya tirumaDal (40),
- 6) periya tirumaDal (78).



TIRUMANGAI AZHVAR



SHARNGA

ABHINAVA DASHAVATARAMS

These 12 AzhvArs are also collectively referred as 'padinmar பதின்மர்' which means '10 AzhvArs'. The reason why two AzhvArs are left out in this term is because ANDAL is said to be a part of her father and Acharya PeriyAzhvAr. Madhurakavi AzhvAr is said to be a part of His AchArya NammAzhvAr (The two AzhvArs are said to be antargatam).

SwAmi Desikan opines that the ten avatArams of Lord VishNu incarnated as ten AzhvArs to uplift the people of the world. In his rahasya literature, 'Rahasya-trayasAram - Guru-paramparAsAram' chapter, he refers to 'padinmar AzhvArs' as 'abhinava dashAvatArams' or the 'naveena dashAvatArams', meaning 'the new dashAvatArams'.

'பராங்குச பரகாலாதி ரூபத்தாலே அபிநவ தசாவதாரம் பண்ணி உய்யவித்தான்'
'parAnkusha parakAlAdi roopattAlE abhinava dashAvatAram paNNi uyyavittAn'

The new dashAvatarams of Lord VishNu are mapped with the former dashAvatArams as follows:

poygai AzhvAr - Matysa avatAram
bhoodattAzhvAr - Koorma avatAram
pEyAzhvAr - VarAha avatAram
tirumazhisai AzhvAr - Nrusimha avatAram
nammAzhvAr - VAmāna avatAram
kulasEkara AzhvAr - ParashurAma avatAram
periyAzhvAr - RAma avatAram
toNDaraDipoDi AzhvAr - BalarAma avatAram
tiruppANAZhvAr - KrishNa avatAram
tirumangai AzhvAr - Kalki avatAram

Every AzhvAr is an '**amsha**' of Lord VishNu's eternal associate (nityasoori), or divine weapon (Ayudha), or divine ornament (AbharaNa). Although they were amsha-s, as far as their divine experience is concerned, every AzhvAr saw VishNu with their physical eyes and felt His presence inside their heart. This is evident from their tamizh poems which have phrases like "ennuL pugundAn", ennuL manni, "ennuL kalandAn", etc.

PERIYAZHVAR – PERIYAZHVAR TIRUMOZHI 5.4.8

அனந்தன்பாலும் கருடன்பாலும் ஐதுநொய்தாகவைத்து என் மனந்தனுள்ளே
வந்துவைகி* வாழச்செய்தாய் எம்பிரான்!

anandan pAlum garuDan pAlum aiedu noydaaga vaittu en manam tanuLLE
vanduvaigi* vAzhachcheydAy embirAn!

Oh, merciful one who gave me a divine life! You chose to come all the way from Your abode to reside in my heart, probably even reducing Your affection for GaruDa and AdisEsha who are ever close to You.

NAMMAZHVAR – TIRUVAYMOZHI 2.7.3

மாதவன் என்றதே கொண்டு* என்னை இனி இப்பால் பட்டது,*
யாது அவங்களும் சேர்கொடேன் என்று* என்னுள் புகுந்து இருந்து,*
தீது அவம் கெடுக்கும் அமுதம்* செந்தாமரைக் கண் குன்றம்,*
கோது அவம் இல் என் கன்னல் கட்டி* எம்மான் என் கோவிந்தனே.
mAdavan enRadE koNDu * ennai ini ippAl paTTadu *
yAtavangkaLum sErkoDEn enRu * ennuL pugundirundu **
tItavam keDukkum amudam * sentAmaraikkaN kunRam *
kOtavamil en kannarKaTTi * emmAn en gOvindaN.

The moment I uttered the name mAdhavA (the Lord who is the beloved of Lakshmi), my Lord vowed that He will not allow any misery to affect me there-after. He, the divine nectar, entered inside me, and stayed there removing all my chronic, manifold sins one by one. He is my lotus eyed gOvinda (govardhana krishna), who out of compassion, is still standing inside my heart, as firm as a hill, to protect me from all vagaries of samsAra. Oh, He is the unadulterated and flawless sugar candy who gave Himself for me to relish.

Every VaishNava should consider himself abundantly blessed to learn and recite the hymns contained in the 4000 divya prabandhams composed by the twelve AzhvArs. The 4000 divine hymns called pAsurams, contain all knowledge about ParamAtmA, jeevAtmA, samsAra, bhakti, sharaNAGati, bhagavat-bhAgavata sEshatvam, and mOksha.

A taniyan of prabandha sAram of SwAmi Desikan says:

ஆரண நான்கின் பொருளை ஆழ்வார்கள் ஆய்ந்து அடைவே
-யன்புடனே யம்புவியோர் அனைவரும் ஈடேற வென்று
நாரணனார் தாள்களிலே நாலாயிரம் தமிழால்
-- நண்ணி யுரை செய்தவற்றை நாடி வகை தொகை செய்தாய்.

AraNa nAngin poruLai AzhvArkaL Ayndu aDaivE
-yanpuDanE yampuviyOr anaivarum eeDERa venRu
nAraNanAr tALgaLilE nAIyiram tamizhAl
naNNi yurai cheytavaRRai nASi vakai togai cheydAy

The most merciful AzhvArs examined the deep meanings of the four Vedas to create the 4000 Paasurams in tamizh language with the sole purpose of uplifting the jeevas of this beautiful earth through sharaNAGati (prapatti) at Shreeman nArAyaNa's sacred feet.

12. SADACHARYAS AS AMSHAS OF LORD NARAYANA

The jayAkhya Samhita 1.63 reads:

साक्षात् नारायणो देवः कृत्वा मर्त्य मयीं तनूम् ।

मग्नानुद्धरते लोकान् कारुण्यात् शास्त्र पाणिना ॥

sAkShAt nArAyaNo dEva: kRutvA martya mayeeM tanUm |

magnAnuddharate lOkAn kAruNyAt shAstra pANinA ||

Lord NArAyaNa Himself keeps incarnating in the form of AchAryas on this earth from time to time. Out of compassion, He imparts the shAstras through our AchAryas in order to uplift people sunken in this material world.

ACHARYA NATHAMUNI



Nathamuni meditates on KaNNinun Siruttambu prabandham while Nammazhvar and Madurakavi Azhvar appear and bless him with the 4000 divya prabandhams

After AzhvArs' period, the precious 'divya prabandhams' were lost due to passage of time. In the beginning of kali yuga, a vaiShNava AchArya called 'Nathamuni' of kATTu mannAr kOyil (veeranArAyaNapuram), heard some brAhmaNas recite Shree NammAzhvAr's ten pAsurams on Lord TirukuDandai ArAvamudan perumAL.

The recitation started with TiruvAymozhi 5.8.1

ஆரா அமுதே! அடியேன் உடலம்* நிற்பால் அன்பாயே*
நீராய் அலைந்து கரைய* உருக்குகின்ற நெடுமாலே*
சீர் ஆர் செந்நெல் கவரி வீசும்* செழு நீர்த் திருக்குடந்தை*
ஏர் ஆர் கோலம் திகழக் கிடந்தாய்!* கண்டேன் எம்மானே!* (1)

ArAvamudhE aDiyEn uDalam ninpAl anbAyE

neerAy alaindu karaiya urukkuginRa neDumAIE!
seerAr sennel kavari veesum sezhuneer tirukkuDandai
ErAr kOlam tigazhak kiDandAy kaNDEn emmAnE (1)

*Oh, Unquenchable nectar (ArAvamudE!) Oh, Lord of infinite greatness (neDumAIE!)
Your love has drawn me towards You, thereby melting me and putting me to tears,
making me feel like water. I am blessed to have a vision of You, Oh Lord ArAvamuda
reclining beautifully in the city of TirukkuDandai that is abundant in water resources
and filled with tall paddy crops that appear like fans.*

.....And the phala shruti verse ended with the 11th pAsuram thus:

உழலை என்பில் பேய்ச்சி முலையூடு* அவளை உயிர் உண்டான்*
கழல்கள் அவையே சரண் ஆகக் கொண்ட* குருகூர்ச் சடகோபன்*
குழலின் மலியச் சொன்ன* ஓர் ஆயிரத்துள் இப் பத்தும்*
மழலை தீர் வல்லார்* காமர் மான் ஏய் நோக்கியர்க்கே*.

uzhalaiyenpin pEychchi mulaiyUDu * avaLai uyir uNDAn *
kazhalgaL avaiyE saraNAgak koNDa * kurugUrch saDakOpan **
kuzhalin maliyach sonna * OrAyirattuL ippattum *
mazhalai teera vallAr * kAmar mAnEy nOkkiyarkkE (11)

*KurugUr SaThakOpan took refuge at the divine feet of krishNa who sucked the life
while feeding from pootanA whose bones were strong like logs. AzhvAr composed
these ten pAsurams which is a part of the thousand pAsurams which are melodious
like the music from the flute. Devotees who recite these pAsurams well with the
intent to destroy their ignorance, shall be adored by the doe-eyed divine apsaras.
(They shall be regarded with great esteem in the assembly of ShreevaishNavas).*

Naathamuni was inquisitive about the phrase "**kuzhalin maliya chonna
OrAyirattuL ippattum குழலின் மலிய சொன்ன ஓராயிரத்துள் இப்பத்தும்**" - **this
set of 10 among the 1000 verses.** He was wonderstruck that such devotional
verses in tamizh language existed at one point in time. When he curiously inquired
about the origin of the prabandham, he was advised to go to Kurugoor, the
birthplace of saint nammAzhvAr (saDakOpan) to find more details. At kurugoor
(AzhvArtirunagari), he met ParAnkushadAsa, a descendent of Madhurakavi AzhvAr
(nammAzhvAr's shishya). ParAnkushadAsa advised NAthamuni to recite
Madhurakavi AzhvAr's prabandham 'KaNNinuN SirutAmbu' 12000 times.

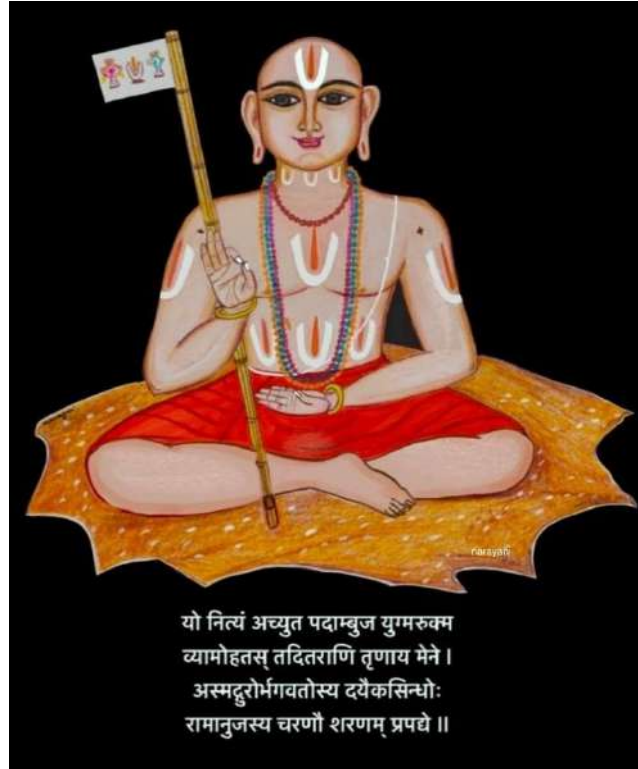
Naathamuni, being an acclaimed practitioner of bhakti yOga, sat in meditation
reciting the 'KaNNinuN SirutAmbu' prabandham composed by Shree Madurakavi

AzhvAr in praise of Shree NammAzhvAr. NammAzhvAr appeared in his vision and taught him all the 4000 Divya Prabandhams. NAthamuni decided to propagate this precious scripture. He taught the Divya Prabandhams to his nephews MelaigattAzhvAn and KeezhaigattAzhvAn. He also tuned the entire prabandham to rAgas and created a musical format called '**dEvagAnam**'. He choreographed dance steps to match the tune and devotion of the poems and instituted a divine style of performance called '**araiyar sEvai அரையர் சேவை**', which is still being performed by 'araiyars' during the '**tiru adhyayana utsavam**' in Shreerangam.

The restoration of 4000 divya prabandhams by Acharya nAthamuni was the greatest contribution to vaishNava philosophy. The term vaishNavam was reframed as '**ubhaya vEdAntam**' as it was now founded on two authentic sources of absolute truth viz. 'The sanskrit vEdas' and 'The tamizh divya prabandhams', (ubhaya meaning originating from two). AchArya NAthamuni is hence revered as 'The Founder of Shree VaiShNavam'.

Naathamuni taught vaishNava sampradAyam to his shishyas kurugai kAvalappan and uyyakkoNDAR. ManakkAI Nambi learnt it from uyyakoNDAR and taught the same to ALavandAr, the grandson of Naathamuni. AlavandAr passed it on to Periya Nambi. Periyambadi taught the same to Raamaanuja.

BHAGAVAT RAMANUJA



The eminence of swAmi rAmAnuja is truly indescribable in words (pORRa aRuseelattu irAmAnusa). He was not only an outstanding proponent of shrIvaishNava philosophy but also brought in cultural and social cohesion among devotees. He wished that the supreme knowledge of sharaNagati must be made available to anyone who has the strong desire to know. RAmAnuja appointed 74 simhAsanAdhipatis as his successors and ordained them to propagate the vaishNava siddhAntam and sharaNagati shAstra all over the world. Endowed with sharp intellect and logical acumen, rAmAnuja refuted adversaries in philosophical debates with unbelievable self-confidence. When great philosophers misinterpreted the Bhagavat gltA verse 18.66 - “sarvadharmAn parityajya सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य” to mean “All nitya karmas should be abandoned”, swAmi rAmAnuja quoted chapter 18.9 - “sangam tyaktvA phalaM chaiva sa tyAga sAttvikO mata: सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः” and clarified that “NityakarmA should not be abandoned at all. It should be duly performed but the attachment to the rewards of nityakarma should be relinquished. This is called “sAttvika tyAgam”. True to his words, swAmi performed his nityAnuShThAna-s sincerely until his last age of 120 years. Although rAmAnuja was orthodox, he made himself affable and approachable to all people without any discrimination. And this exceptional quality is what makes Him emperumAnAr (The Lord of everyone). One should always visit his AchArya, and bow to his tirumEni with reverence. **SwAmi dEsikan describes the auspicious tirumEni of ramAnuja in YatirAja Saptati 11.**

उपवीतिनं ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्रवन्तं त्रिजगत्पुण्यफलं त्रिदण्डहस्तम् ।

शरणागतसार्थवाहमीडे शिखया शेखरिणं पतिं यतीनाम् ॥ ११ ॥

upavltinaM oordhvapuNDravantaM trijagatpuNyaphalaM tridaNDahastaM ||
sharaNagata sArthavAha mIDE shikhayA shEkhariNam yatInAm || 11

Hail the king of ascetic yatirAja!! He wears the sacred thread yagnyOpavltam hanging from the left shoulder, the resplendent tirumaN and shrIchoornam (UrdhvapuNDram) on his forehead, carries the staff tridaNDa in his hand, the tuft shikhA on his crown. With a countenance of the sum of all penances of the three worlds, rAmAnuja flourishes as the leader of the sharaNagatas.

9. Although rAmAnuja was orthodox, he made himself affable and approachable to all people without any discrimination. And this exceptional quality is what makes devotees call him by the name emperumAnAr (my Lord).

After rAmAnuja, we have a huge tree of AchAryas about whom we will be learning in the upcoming part of this book series “VANDE GURUPARAMPARAM”. We are ever indebted to the vyAkhyAnam-s (commentaries) and shreeshUkti-s (literary contributions) of our immensely compassionate pUrvAchArya-s (earlier Acharyas) and vartamAnAchArya-s (present AchAryas) due to whom we have access to the

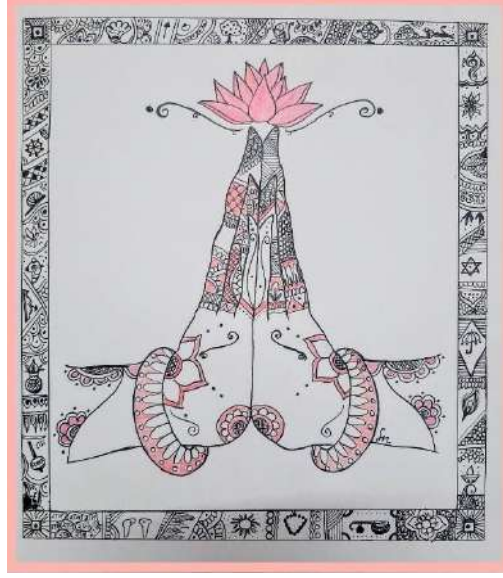
supreme spiritual knowledge, the sharaNAgati shAstra which is the easiest means for mOksha in kali yuga.

The next series on Vande GuruparamparAm will be continued in Book 2.

Namo Narayanaya!

Namo Hayagreeva!

DhanyAsmi.



यदक्षरपदभ्रष्टं मात्राहीनं तु यद्भवेत्।
तत्सर्वं क्षम्यतां देव नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते॥
विसर्गबिन्दुमात्राणि पदपादाक्षराणि च।
न्यूनानि चातिरिक्तानि क्षमस्व पुरुषोत्तम॥
अपराध सहस्राणि क्रियन्ते हर्निशं मया।
तानि सर्वाणी मे देव क्षमस्व पुरुषोत्तम॥

Prostrations to You, NaaraayaNaa! Please forgive me for all those defects in the letters, words or phonetics that I have uttered. PurushOttama ! Please forgive me for all those defects in using the visarga (:), the bindu (.) or intonation of words, phrases or alphabets. I have committed thousands of sins day and night. Please forgive me for all that, PurushOttama!

SHUBHAM