



Govindan's words and Govinda Damodara Swamigal's life

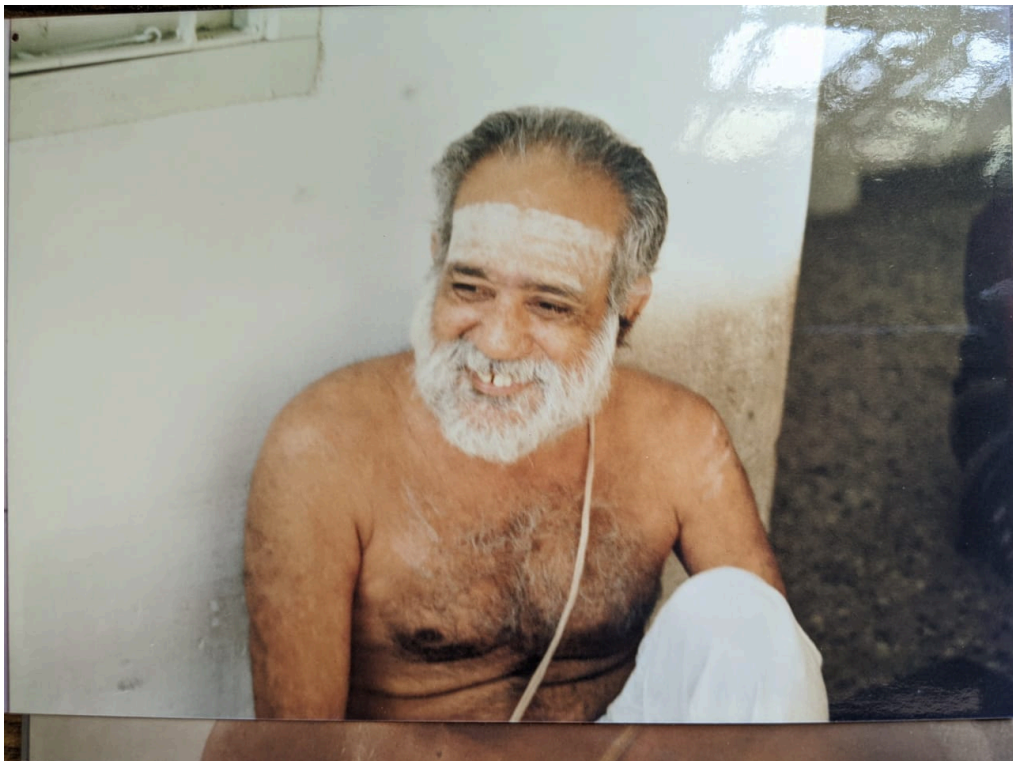
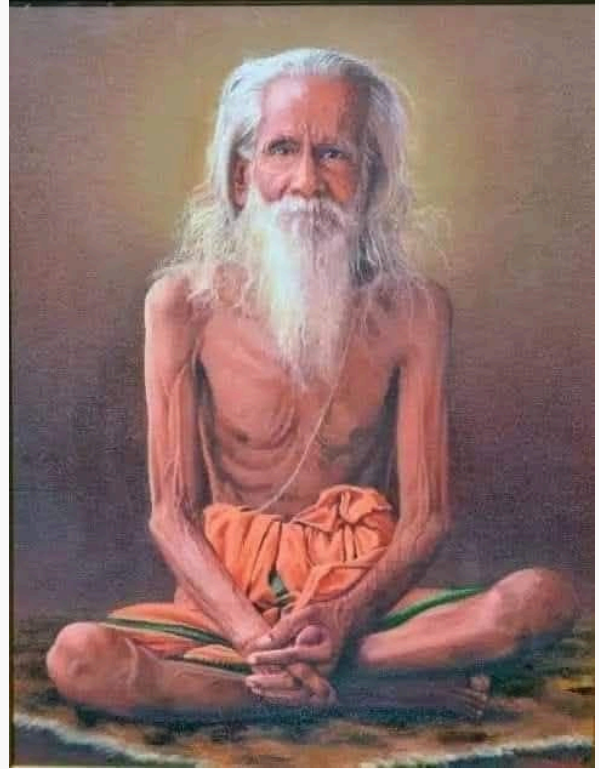


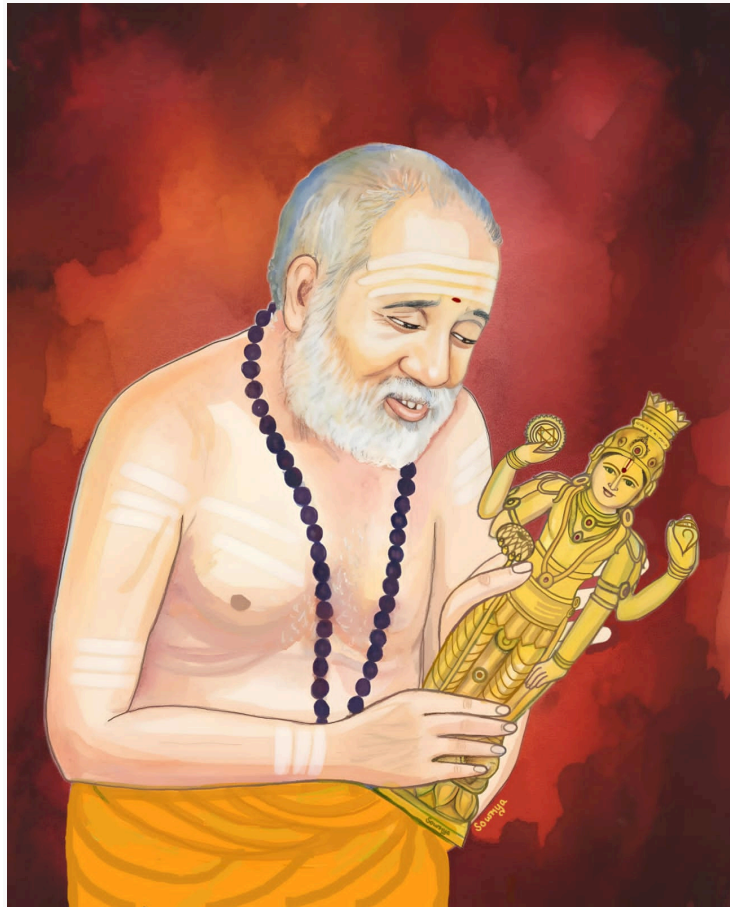
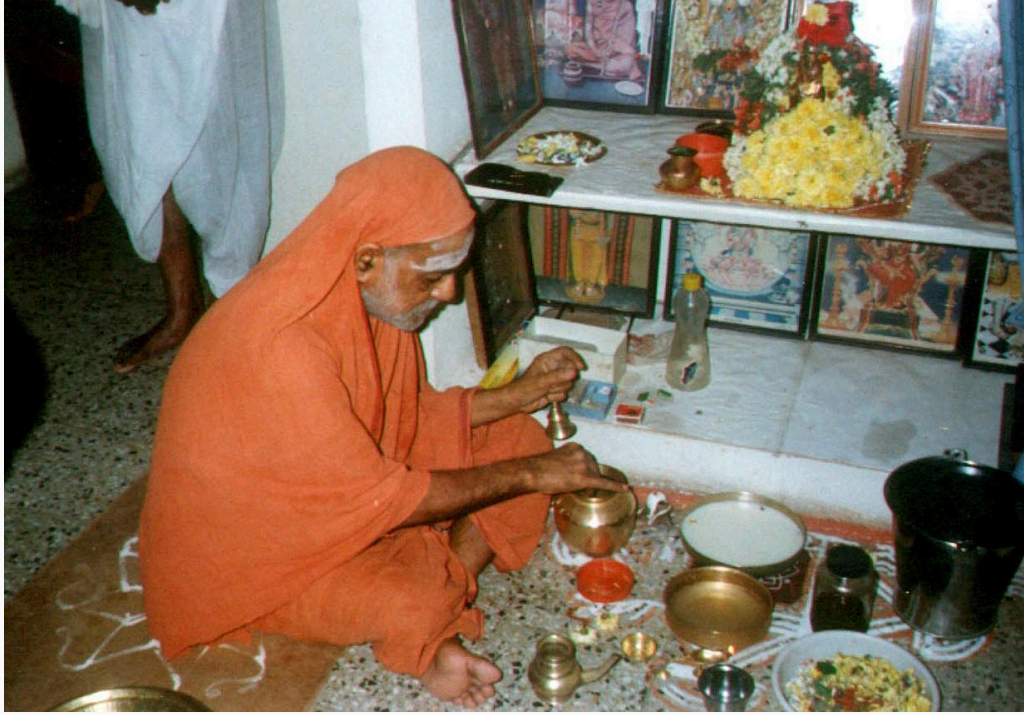


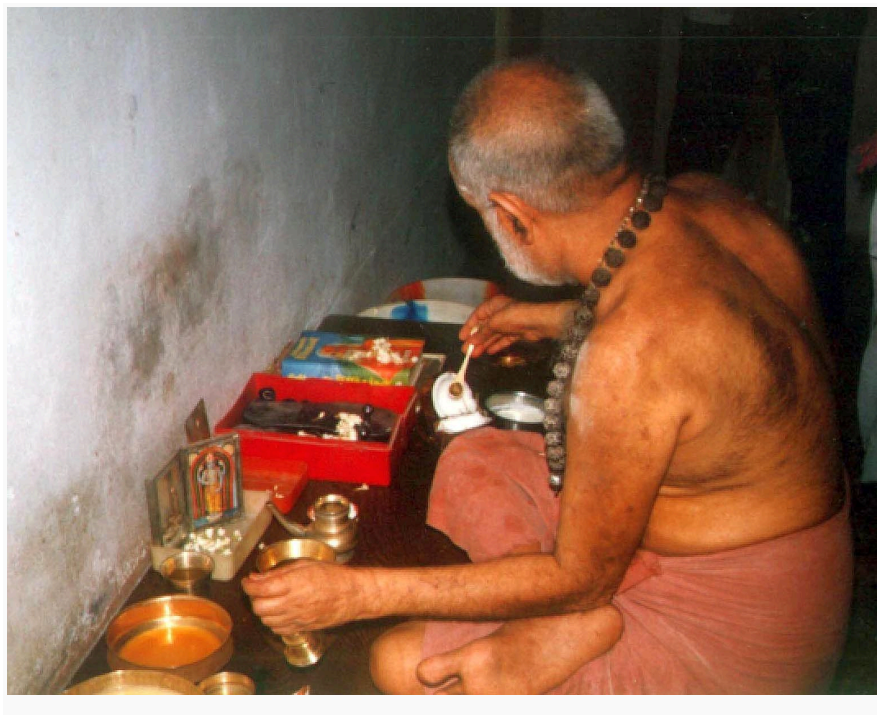
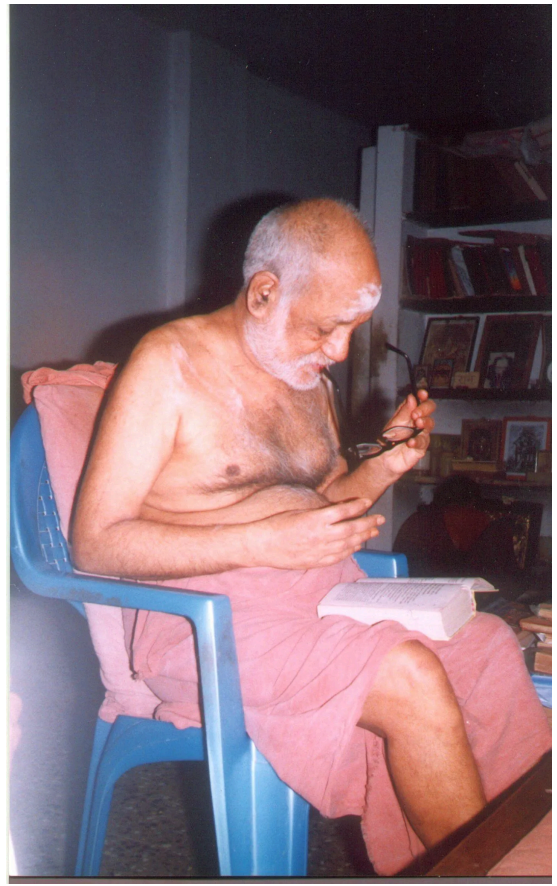
**gOvinda gOvinda harE murArE
gOvinda gOvinda mukunda kR^iShNa |
gOvinda gOvinda rathA~NgapANE
gOvinda dAmOdara mAdhavEti ||**

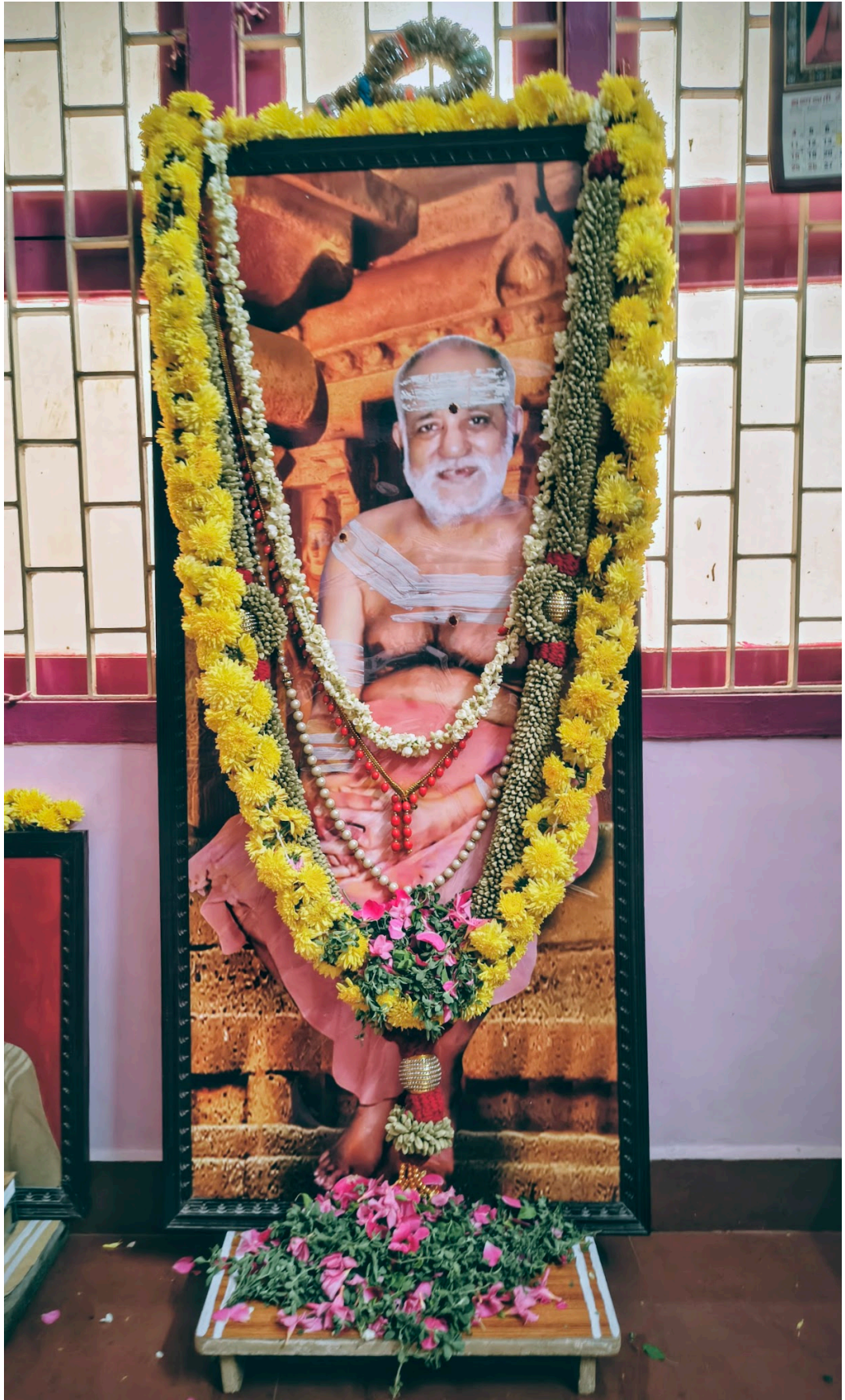


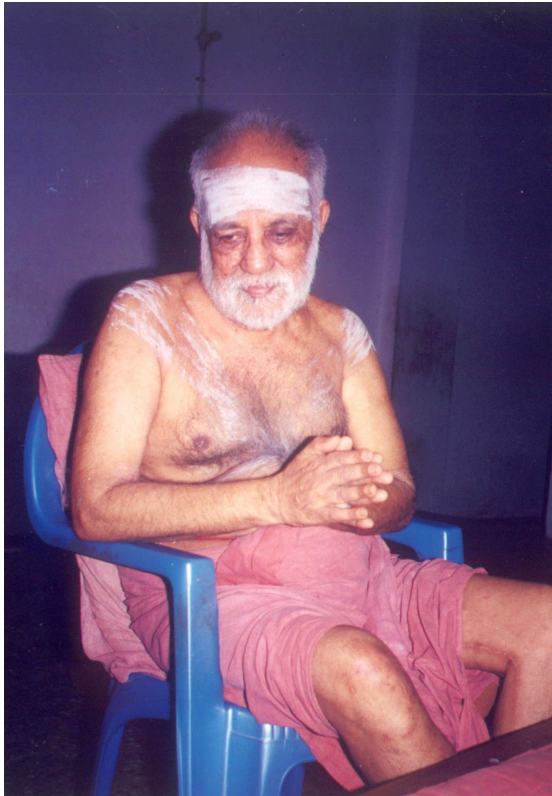
गोविन्द गोविन्द हरे मुरारे
गोविन्द गोविन्द मुकुन्द कृष्ण ।
गोविन्द गोविन्द रथाङ्गपाणे
गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥











Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal



We revere Sri Kanchi Maha Periyava, who lived amongst us for a hundred years as a true Sannyasi and guided us, as a living God. Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal was a Mahatma, who dedicated his entire life to learning and teaching Srimad Ramayanam and Srimad Bhagavatam, as directed by Maha Periyava. Not only did he teach them but he lived his entire life as the very embodiment of the Dharmas found in them.

In his pre-monastic life (Purvashrama), Swamigal was known as Angarai Sri Kalyanarama Bhagavathar. He was born in 1930 to Sri Venkatarama Sastrigal and Srimati Balambal in a Brahmin family distinguished for its learning and traditional way of life. Swamigal was a child prodigy who could fully read and understand Ramayanam and Bhagavatham even in his early teens. He further

gained clarity on our Veda Shastra Puranas from his father and scholars like “Shastra Ratnakara” Polagam Rama Sastrigal. He finished his high school and came to Chennai and worked for a short time in the Postal Department. At the age of thirty-six, with the blessings of Sri Maha Periyava, he left his job; thereafter, Swamigal spent every day of his life chanting (Moola Parayanam) Ramayanam and Bhagavatam. In the evenings, he would give discourses (Pravachanam) on those Puranic stories in his mellifluous voice; he would be totally immersed in them, forgetting this world and himself.

Considering the Parayanam and Pravachanam of Ramayanam and Bhagavatam as his divine duty and a great blessing, he would never demand any remuneration for it. He would never speak in praise of mere mortals on stage. Saying, “I wish to remain near the feet of Sri Parthasarathy Perumal,” he lived among the simple people with humble means in Triplicane, supporting his family by accepting only what people offered out of reverence and love.

Once, as Swamigal’s discourse at the Hindu High School was concluding, a devotee came forward and said, “Kalyanarama Bhagavathar, who just delighted us all with a discourse citing thousands of shlokams, is in deep debt. All of you should generously offer money in the collection plate.” Swamigal stopped him and recited the following Mooka Panchashati verse:

धनेन न रमामहे खलजनान्न सेवामहे न चापलमयामहे भवभयान्न द्वयामहे ।
स्थिरां तनुमहेतरां मनसि किं च काञ्चीरत-स्मरान्तककुटुम्बिनीचरणपल्लवोपासनाम् ॥

dhanEna na ramAmahE khalajanAnna sEvAmahE
na chApalamayAmahE bhavabhayAnna dUyAmahE |
sthirAM tanumahEtarAM manasi kiM cha kA~nchIrata-
smarAntakakuTumbinIcharaNapallavOpAsanAm ||

Which means “We do not rejoice in wealth. We will not serve the wicked. We will not harbor desire for worldly things. We will not wither from the fear of worldly existence. Because, we hold firmly in our hearts the worship of the

flower-like feet of Kamakshi Devi, the consort of Ekamranatha who resides in Kanchipuram.”

Swamigal then said, “The purpose of sharing and listening to Ramayanam and Bhagavatam is to fulfill the purpose of this human birth (*Janma Labham*). It is not earning money. Though I told him not to, he said a few things. Please do not mind them.”

Later that night, when that devotee and other friends asked Swamigal, “Do you think you are Thyagaraja Swamigal?”, he humbly replied, “I am not Thyagaraja Swamigal. But I desire to become like him.” At that moment, a stranger arrived, bowed to Swamigal, and said, “I am from Kanchipuram. Today, you delighted my heart by reciting the Mooka Panchashati verse on Kamakshi Devi,” and then departed. Swamigal’s friends then bowed to him and praised him saying, “The grace of Kamakshi Devi is upon you. You too shall shine like Thyagaraja Swamigal.”

Accordingly, Swamigal lived as the very essence of Ramayana. Through his dedication to Srimad Bhagavata, he shone with wisdom and dispassion (Jnanam and Vairagyam). Disregarding material comforts, family welfare, money, and fame as trivial, he undertook the singing of Srikrishna’s glory as his life’s sacred mission.

Pleased with Swamigal’s commitment to Dharma, for 19 consecutive years, Kanchi Maha Periyava, invited Swamigal to wherever He was staying, ahead of Gokulashtami. He requested Swamigal to read Bhagavatam during the day for seven days and give discourses at night, sitting nearby and listening with rapt attention. Just as Srirama listened to his own story, it seems Srikrishna himself desired to hear his own story! Maha Periyava praised Swamigal wholeheartedly, saying: “The Bhagavata Saptaham is a humongous task. While Bhagavathar bears all the strain and difficulties, the joy is shared by all of us. The reading is sweet; the discourse is even sweeter. (பாகவத

ஸப்தாஹம் மலை போன்ற கார்யம். பாகவதருக்கு தான் ச்ரமம். நமக்கெல்லாம் ஆனந்தம். படனம் மதுரம். ப்ரவசனம் மதுரதரம்”).

Maha Periyava blessed our Swamigal in many ways on several occasions, saying: “He is one who follows my words in spite of many hardships,” “A Mahatma who does not put a price on Ramayanam and Bhagavatam,” and “He has made his life purposeful; there is no rebirth for him.” Sri Shivan Sar, who was Maha Periyava’s younger brother in his poorvashrama and lived as an ascetic, celebrated him saying: “Triplicane Swamigal is a genuine Sannyasi. Just by meditating on him, one can attain progress in the divine path.”

Due to such a pure life of penance and the blessings of great souls, Govinda Damodara Swamigal attained many spiritual powers (Siddhis) and shone as a saint with nigraha and anugraha powers (powers to discipline and to bless). The words he spoke came true like the words of God (Eashwara Vaaku). However, hiding those powers so as not to attract crowd or money, he prayed to Maha Periyava every day: “Protect me from seeking fame, profit, and praise. Grant me Bhakthi at your lotus feet.” As a liberated soul (Jivanmukta) having attained wisdom and dispassion through Uthama Bhakthi, he accepted the order of Sannyasa at the age of 63. He offered solace in the name of Bhagavan to everyone who came to him, without discrimination between the learned, the unlettered, the poor, or the rich.

“With a melting heart, chanting Bhagavan Namas like ‘Saravanabhava, Siva, Rama, Govinda, Narayana, Mahadeva’ in solitude, Bhakthi will germinate, and through incessant worship (Bhagavat Bhajanam), one will be blessed with the deepening of Bhakthi, detachment from the worldly affairs, and the true knowledge of Bhagavan.” Let us treasure the memory of our Sadguru, Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal, who taught this supreme truth by living it through his sublime life.

Govindan's Word and Govinda Damodara Swamigal's Life

Book Introduction

Every year, Sri Maha Periyava would invite our Govinda Damodara Swamigal to perform Srimad Bhagavatha Moola Parayanam (recitation of the original verses) during the day and deliver discourses in the evening right in His presence, concluding on the auspicious day of Gokulashtami. Maha Periyava would himself sit and listen to it completely. When the eleventh Skandham containing the Uddhava Gita commenced, Maha Periyava would specifically send word for the other Sannyasis in the Math to come and listen. Also, on the very cover of the book 'Vyasa Poornima' published by Maha Periyava, "bhavabhayaM apahantuM j~nAna-vij~nAna-sAraM" (भवभयं अपहन्तुं ज्ञान-विज्ञान-सारं), the final verse of the Uddhava Gita was printed. Such was Maha Periyava's deep affinity and regard for the Uddhava Gita.

The teachings given by Srikrishna Bhagavan to His dear friend and ardent devotee Uddhava, shortly before the completion of His avatara, are celebrated as the 'Uddhava Gita'. It contains very clear answers to several questions such as how to progress on the spiritual path while remaining in worldly life, how to overcome sorrow, fear, and attachments, what constitutes true surrender to God, and what the marks of an exemplary devotee are.

This book of mine is a humble effort to share with you the essence of the Uddhava Gita, as succinctly presented by Sri Narayana Bhattathri in Dashakas 91 through 97 of Sriman Narayaneeyam, along with the manner in which our Swamigal exemplified it through his own life. Swamigal's Nishkama Bhakti, incessant Bhagavat Bhajanam, Vairagyam, simplicity, compassion, daily conduct and speech, all served as a direct living commentary on the teachings of the Uddhava Gita.

Janaka Maharaja tells the Nava Yogis that "the Darshanam of saints is like a treasure; even if that Darshanam is granted for half a second, one can cherish and rejoice in its memory for a lifetime." I received such a sublime treasure. I wish to share that with all of you. The guidance and solace Swamigal granted me at various stages of my life, along with his personal life experiences and teachings, fill this book completely.

I have not written this book as an author, but merely as a humble devotee of Swamigal. I believe reading this will foster Bhakthi and clarity, and a keen desire to engage in regular Bhagavat Bhajanam. I also trust that this book will spark a desire to embody a few of Swamigal's divine qualities in our own lives and give us the enthusiasm to continue our journey on the spiritual path.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped bring this work into book form. May Srikrishna's compassion and Swamigal's grace protect us all forever.

jAnakI jIvanasmaraNaM jaya jaya rAma rAma !
gOpikA jIvanasmaraNaM gOvindA ! gOvindA !
sadguru svAminaH jay !
A~njanEya svAminaH jay !

With regards,
Ganapathy Subramanian
Triplicane, Chennai
(📞 91-98407-57994)

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ध्यान श्लोकाः

सुमुखश्च एकदन्तश्च कपिलो गजकर्णकः । लम्बोदरश्च विकटः विघ्नराजो विनायकः ॥
धूम्रकेतुर्गणाध्यक्षः फालचन्द्रो गजाननः । वक्रतुण्डः शूर्पकर्णः हेरम्बः स्कन्दपूर्वजः ॥

इन्दुकुन्दतुषाराभा भक्तचित्तानुवर्तिनी । वाणी मे रसनारङ्गे करोतु नटनं सदा ॥

मनीषां माहेन्द्रीं ककुभमिव ते कामपि दशां प्रधत्ते कामाक्ष्याः चरणतरुणादित्यकिरणः ।
यदीये सम्पर्के धृतरसमरन्दा कवयतां परीपाकं धत्ते परिमलवती सूक्तिनलिनी ॥

योऽन्तः प्रविश्य मम वाचमिमां प्रसुप्तां सञ्जीवयति अखिलशक्तिधरः स्वधाम्ना ।
अन्यांश्च हस्तचरण-श्रवणत्वगादीन् प्राणान् नमो भगवते पुरुषाय तुभ्यम् ॥

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने । प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥

ध्येयं सदा परिभवघ्नमभीष्टदोहं तीर्थास्पदं शिवविरिञ्चिनुतं शरण्यम् ।
भृत्यार्तिहं प्रणतपाल भवाब्धिपोतं वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥

त्यक्त्वा सुदुस्त्यजसुरेप्सितराज्यलक्ष्मीं धर्मिष्ठ आर्यवचसा यदगादरण्यम् ।
मायामृगं दयितयेप्सितमन्वधावद् वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥

भवे भवे यथा भक्तिः पादयोस्तव जायते । तथा कुरुष्व देवेश नाथस्त्वं नो यतः प्रभो ॥

नामसङ्कीर्तनं यस्य सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् । प्रणामो दुःखशमनः तं नमामि हरिं परम् ॥

dhyAna shlokaH

sumukhashcha Ekadantashcha kapilO gajakarNakaH |
lambOdarashcha vikaTaH vighnarAjO vinAyakaH ||
dhUmrakEturgaNAdhyakShaH phAlachandrO gajAnanaH |
vakratuNDaH shUrpakarNaH hErambaH skandapUrvajaH ||

indukundatuShArAbhA bhaktachittAnuvartinI |
vANI mE rasanAra~NgE karOtu naTanaM sadA ||

manIShAM mAhEndrIM kakubhamiva tE kAmapi dashAM
pradhattE kAmAkShyAH charaNataruNAdityakiraNaH |
yadIyE samparkE dhR^itarasamarandA kavayatAM
parIpAkAM dhattE parimalavatI sUktinalinI ||

yO.antaH pravishya mama vAchamimAM prasuptAM
sa~njIvayati akhilashaktidharaH svadhAmnA |
anyAMshcha hastacharaNa-shravaNatvagAdIn
prANAn namO bhagavatE puruShAya tubhyam ||

kR^iShNaya vAsudEvAya harayE paramAtmanE |
praNatakIEshanAshAya gOvindAya namO namaH ||

dhyEyaM sadA paribhavaghnamabhIShTadOhaM
tIrthAspadaM shivaviri~nchinutaM sharaNyam |
bhR^ityArtihaM praNatapAla bhavAbdhipOtaM
vandE mahApuruSha tE charANAravindam ||

tyaktvA sudustyajasurEpsitarAjyalakShmIM
dharmiShTha Aryavachasa yadagAdaraNyam |
mAyAmR^igaM dayitayEpsitamanvadhAvad
vandE mahApuruSha tE charANAravindam ||

bhavE bhavE yathA bhaktiH pAdayOstava jAyatE |
tathA kuruShva dEvEsha nAthastvaM nO yataH prabhO ||

nAmasa~NkIrtanaM yasya sarvapApapraNashanam |
praNAmo duHkhashamanaH taM namAmi hariM param ||

The greatness of the 11th skandham of Srimad Bhagavatam

In the Eleventh Skandham of Srimad Bhagavatam, appears the sections known as the "Nava Yogi Upakhyanam" and the "Uddhava Gita". Melpathur Narayana Bhattathri has meticulously condensed these sections—without missing even a single important detail—into seven Dashakams (from the 91st to the 97th dashakams) in the Narayaneeyam, presenting them to us through exquisite verses. In this book, using these 70 verses, let us reflect briefly upon the spiritual teachings that Srikrishna imparted to His intimate friend Uddhava to reach Him, how our Master, Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal, practiced them in his own life, and how we too can attain liberation by following his path.

At the Sannidhi of Maha Periyava, Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal used to perform Bhagavata Saptaham once every year. During those discourses, when the Parayanam reached the 11th Skandha, Periyava would send someone to request the other Sannyasis (monks) residing in the Math to come and listen as well. Periyava believed that this 11th Skandham of Bhagavatam was an essential portion that even Sannyasis ought to hear.

Swamigal shared another incident that illustrates the depth of Bhakthi Maha Periyava had for this Uddhava Gita and for Srikrishna. It was Maha Periyava who first codified how Vyasa Puja should be performed on Vyasa Purnima and published it neatly as a book. On the front cover of that book, the following verse appears:

भवभयं अपहन्तुं ज्ञान-विज्ञान-सारं निगमकृद्-उपजहे भृंगवद्-वेदसारम्।
अमृतमुदधितश्च अपाययद्-भृत्यवर्गान् पुरुष-ऋषभं-आद्यं कृष्णसंज्ञं नतोऽस्मि॥

bhavabhayaM apahantuM j~nAna-vij~nAna-sAraM
nigamakR^id-upajahrE bhR^iMgavad-vEdasAram |

amR^itamudadhitaścha apAyayad-bhR^ityavargAn
puruSha-R^iShabhaM-AdyaM kR^iShNasaMj~naM natO.asmi ||

The meaning of this verse is: "I bow to that primeval foremost Supreme Being, known by the name of Srikrishna, who churned the ocean of milk to extract the nectar for His devotees to drink. Just as a bee gathers honey from flowers, He, the Moola purusha who revealed the Vedas, has gathered the quintessential nectar of knowledge and realization from the entire body of vedic wisdom—and gave us (through this teaching to Uddhava), in order to remove the fear of our worldly existence."

Besides placing this verse on the front cover of the book, Periyava had it printed on the first inner page as well, right after opening the cover. Periyava took such immense care to ensure that even if the outer cover wore out over time, this verse would never be lost. Do you know where this verse appears? It is the final verse of the Uddhava Gita. Periyava had complete faith that this Uddhava Gita is Veda Saram, (the essence of the Vedas), Jnana Vigjnana Saram (the core of spiritual knowledge and realization), and (amrutham) pure nectar. He chose to include this verse specifically so that this message would reach everyone.

In the second part of his book Enippadigalil Maanthargal (Gradation of human levels), Shivan Sar wrote: "Our divine religion (Deiva Matham) has taught the qualities, virtues, and pathways that human beings ought to adopt to elevate in purity, establishing them as timeless practices across generations, and also explaining them through the Ithihaasas and Puranas. Those who read Ramayanam and Bhagavata Puranas sincerely can realize these truths and elevate themselves." Reading this brought me great joy. This is because, in the first part of Enippadigalil Maanthargal Sar spoke about Ramayanam and wrote that everyone should read it regularly, but he had not mentioned Bhagavatam. When reading the first part of Sir's book, one gets many doubts about what he accepts and what he rejects within the Bhakthi marga. In that part, he mostly condemned the hypocrisy that has crept into

Bhakthi these days. A fear arose as to what he actually accepts in Bhakthimarga. However, upon reading this line in the second part of Enippadigalil Maanthargal, along with his celebration of Srimad Bhagavatam in two or three other places, his real intent became clear to me.

Our Swamigal has told many devotees that they should recite all seven dashakams (91 to 97) of the Narayaneeyam every day with an understanding of their meaning. He once mentioned to Sri Sundarkumar Anna: "Bhattathri has beautifully transformed Srikrishna's teachings into heartfelt prayers across these seven dashakams. If one recites one dashakam a day, it completes a full cycle every week. If one continues this practice, Guruvayurappan will heed those prayers and, in due course, grace us so that all the profound truths of this Ekadasha Skandham become real living experience for us."

Why do I wish to speak on Uddhava Gita?

An audio recording of our Swamigal's discourse on the Srimad Bhagavatam is available and can be found on YouTube as well. I have also listened to discourses by a few other scholars. Among them, Brahmasri Sundarkumar Anna has delivered a discourse on this topic in a wonderful manner, starting from the 13th minute of Episode 49. (Search for "Sundarkumar Narayaneeyam" in YouTube) He takes up a theme, narrates the relevant background story, sets the context, chants three or four shlokams from Bhagavatam, identifies the corresponding Narayaneeyam shloka, and explains with remarkable clarity how the Narayaneeyam distills the essence of Bhagavatam. Offering further illustrations to illuminate the theme, he continues seamlessly. Simply by listening to the ten hours of discourses from Episode 49, one can grasp all the core concepts of the eleventh Skandham. He has presented it so beautifully. It is indeed a great blessing for the community of devotees.

Can words ever truly describe our Swamigal's Bhagavatam discourses? Was it not the very voice of Ishwara, celebrated by Maha Periyava himself? His

chanting of the Shlokams flows like pure honey, and the discourse itself is absolute nectar. This is because he lived every single teaching—embodying the Bhagavata Dharma taught by the Nava Yogis and the Uthama Bhakthi that Srikrishna imparted to Uddhava. Living that truth, he transcended all sorrow, delusion, and fear, radiating absolute dispassion and supreme wisdom. Therefore, his words flowed directly from his own experience. Merely by regularly listening to Bhagavatam discourses flowing from the lips of such a great soul, we can elevate ourselves spiritually.

Given that many of these wonderful accounts are already available, why do I wish to speak on this topic once again? The reason is, whenever I read a shloka from these seven dashakams, it brings back vivid memories of incidents from Swamigal's life, making me think, "Aha! Swamigal exemplified this so beautifully!" I felt that we, as well as future generations, ought to know that even in this Kali Yuga, a Bhagavathothama lived in our midst, strictly according to Srikrishna's word. So I studied and understood these Shlokams deeper and weaving them with Swamigal's life and teachings, I now share them with you in my own childish words.

A friend who frequently saw me in Swamigal's presence once remarked, "Why do you keep repeating about Swamigal and his words? Wouldn't it be enough to just follow his advice and elevate yourself?" To be honest, he has a valid point. However, living up to Swamigal's teachings is exceedingly difficult! He says, "If attachments are to drop away, one must engage in continuous Bhagavat Bhajanam of Srikrishna. If five hours a day does not dissolve attachments, chant for eight hours; if even that does not work, devote all twenty-four hours to Bhajanam." I simply cannot manage that. Just doing a few hours of Parayanam leaves me feeling exhausted. Yet, if I scroll through something on my phone, hours slip by unnoticed. But when I set a goal to say, read Mooka Panchashathi fully, and begin chanting in the morning, it is already night by the time I manage to complete.

Whereas, speaking about Swamigal gives me energy and motivation to persist with these few hours of Parayanam without squandering time on pointless pursuits. Many of you listen so eagerly whenever I speak about Swamigal, and I consider that my great fortune. After all, Swamigal's life story brings us inexplicable joy and solace, doesn't it?

There is a song in Tiruppugazh

“பக்தர்கணப் ப்ரிய நிர்த்த நடித்திடு பட்சி நடத்திய குக பூர்வ
பச்சிம தக்ஷிண உத்தர திக்குள பக்தர்கள் அற்புதம் என ஓதும்
சித்ரகவித்துவ சத்தமிகுத்த திருப்புகழைச் சிறிதடியேனும்
செப்பென வைத்துலகில் பரவத் தெரிசித்த அனுக்ரஹம் மறவேனே”

“bhaktargaNap priya nirtta naTittidu paTchi naTattiya guka pUrva
pachchima dakShiNa utara dikkuLa bhaktarkaL aRputam ena Odum
chitrakavittuva sattamikutta tiruppukazhaich siRitadiyEnum
cheppena vaittulakil paravat terichitta anugraham maRavEnE”

'Chitrakavi' means exquisite poetry. Through these verses, devotees in all four directions are moved to exclaim in wonder and celebration, "Aha! How magnificent this is!" The phrase 'sathamigutha' means rich in rhythm and meter in this context. Every single song in the Tiruppugazh is set to beautiful poetic meters. 'Sirithu adiyenum seppena vaithu' signifies, "You made even an insignificant devotee like me sing at least a small portion of your boundless glory through the Tiruppugazh," followed by 'Therisitha anugraham maravene' ("I shall never forget the grace of your divine vision"). This can be understood in two ways: "I am able to behold your divine vision even within my song," or "It is only because I was blessed with your divine vision that I am able to sing your praise."

Granting a glorious darshan, my Guru made me his devotee

Similarly, Swamigal allowed me his association for a long time and blessed me with a wondrous vision. Entering my life when I was just fifteen years old, he doted on me like a child, laughed and interacted with me like a close friend,

and took an active part in all the joys and sorrows that naturally came with every stage of my growing years.

व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां भृशं भवति दुःखितः । उत्सवेषु च सर्वेषु पितेव परितुष्यति ॥

vyasanEShu manuShyANAm bhR^ishaM bhavati duHkhitaH |
utsavEShu cha sarvEShu pitEva parituShyati ||

Valmiki says ‘Srirama looked upon his subjects as his own children, standing by them to comfort them in their sorrow, and celebrating their happiness as his own, just like a loving father’. Swamigal was like that as well. Whenever I passed an examination, he was the first person I would share it with; when I got a job, it was to him that I broke the news; right after getting married, we went straight to him wearing our wedding garlands to offer our Namaskarams; and when my child was born, I informed him first. He would celebrate each of these milestones with joy, as though it were a festive occasion taking place in his own home. I would also confide all my worries in him. When I was living in the United States, he told my parents, "Whatever happens to him, Ganapathy would like to tell me." He actually listens with such patience.

I truly relish reminiscing and speaking about how Swamigal so lovingly graced me with his darshan, sharing countless things with me—the priceless gems he drew from the Ramayana, his personal experiences with Maha Periyava, and even the everyday challenges he faced. Be it these Narayaneeyam Shlokams or any other theme whatsoever—whether it is the Ramayana, Mukunda Mala, Sivananda Lahari, or Kandar Anubhuti—no matter what subject is given to me, I will speak only of Swamigal. This is because he himself is the subject closest to my heart. Therefore, this topic has served as a wonderful opportunity for me to speak about him. I sincerely hope that you enjoy this as well.

The brahmana curse on the Yadava race

Srimad Bhagavatham has 12 skandhams. We can think of these 12 Skandhams as 12 books, and the adhyayams within them as chapters. The first adhyayam of the eleventh Skandham narrates about a curse placed on the Yadava clan by the sages. Dressing up Krishna's son Samba as a pregnant woman, they bring him before the sages and mockingly ask, "What child will be born to this person?" Would the sages not see through it? They pronounce the curse, "musalam kulanashanam"—that an iron pestle would be born, and that it would destroy their entire clan. When they remove his disguise, there is an iron pestle in his hands. Whenever trouble struck, they would immediately go and tell Krishna. But this time, for some reason, it did not occur to them to approach him. Instead, they go straight to King Ugrasena. He tells them, "Grind this iron pestle into fine powder and cast it into the sea."

Avvaiyar beautifully expresses in a verse that with one's intellect, one cannot alter destiny: "shivAyaNama enRu chinthithTiruppArkkku abAyam orunALum illai, upAyam idhuvE madhiyAgum." It means that only by trusting Bhagavan and chanting 'Shivayanama:', can we transcend our destiny; if you attempt to devise clever schemes on your own, "vidhiyE madiyAi vidum." Destiny will sit within your intellect and bring to pass whatever is fated to occur.

Anyway, the Yadavas devise a plan. However, the powder of that iron pestle washes ashore, sprouts as sharp Erka grass, and eventually becomes the weapons with which the Yadavas slaughter one another. The sages' curse comes true. The final Shloka of the eleventh Skandha's first chapter states, "Srikrishna, the embodiment of Time (kAlarUpi), did not wish to alter this outcome."

In contrast to this, the opening Shloka of the second chapter says, "Narada Bhagavan, longing for Krishna's association, stayed in Dwaraka for months on end." Narada had a curse that he cannot stay in one place for more than a single day. Yet, Krishna lifted that curse for him.

Drawing upon this, Swamigal would say: "Some people ask me, 'Wherever you go and recite Ramayanam and Bhagavatam, everyone there prospers; but why is there so much hardship in your own family?' I would usually refrain from arguing and simply reply, 'You say everyone is doing well wherever I go; that itself is more than enough for me.' But if they persisted, I would say, 'I do not recite Bhagavatam to resolve my financial troubles or to end my family's hardships; I recite Bhagavatam so that I am never born again into this worldly existence!' Let them understand it if they can."

As an example of this "prosperity wherever he went," Swamigal visited our home twice after taking up Sannyasa. There were about ten of us at home, and around ten devotees accompanied Swamigal. My parents, deeply steeped in the Bhagavata Sampradaya, welcomed Swamigal at the doorstep with Poornakumbham, seated him on a decorated chair in the hall, washed his holy feet and performed Pada Puja. We all did Pradakshinams, offered Namsakarams, and performed karpooa harathi. I was singing songs like,

“திருவடியும் தண்டையும் சிலம்பும் சிலம்போடு உருவப்
பொருவடிவேலும் கடம்பும் தடம்புயம் ஆறிரண்டும்
மருவடிவான வதனங்கள் ஆறும் மலர்க்கண்களும்
குருவடிவாய் வந்து என் உள்ளம் குளிரக் குதிகொண்டவே”

“thiruvadiyum thaNdaiyum silambum silambu Uduruvap
poru vadivElum kadambum thadambuyam ARiraNdum
maruvadivAna vadhanangkaL ARum malark kaNgkaLum
guruvadivAi vandhu en uLLam kuLirak kudikoNdavE”

(Muruga Peruman's Sacred Feet, adorned with thandai and silambu (anklets) with tinkling jewels within, the sharp Vel which pierced through the krauncha-hill, the garlands of kadambu-flowers adorning His twelve broad shoulders, and the His beautiful Six Sacred Faces with lotus-flower-like eyes graciously appeared in the form of my Guru and joyfully danced bringing a refreshing feeling to my mind.)

“பத்தித்திருமுகம் ஆறுடன் பன்னிரு தோள்களுமாய்த்
தித்தித்திருக்கும் அமுதுகண்டேன் செயல்மாண்டடங்க
புத்திக்கமலத்து உருகிப் பெருகிப் புவனமெற்றித்
தத்திக்கரைபுரளும் பரமானந்த சாகரத்தே”

“paththith thirumugam ARudan panniru thOLgaLumAith
thiththiththu irukkum amudhu kaNdEn seyal mANdu adangkap
budhdhik kamalaththu urugip perugip buvanam etRith
thatththik karaipuraLum parama Anandha sAgaraththE.”

(I saw the sacred vision of the row of six beautiful faces and twelve shoulders
of Muruga Peruman in the shore-less ocean of Supreme Bliss as the eternally
sweet nectar that arose in the lotus-flower-like-intellect, transcending the
shores of all the worlds, when the soul's past deeds were subdued.)

Singing many such verses from Kandar Alankaram, the atmosphere there was
one of festive bliss. After that, Swamigal read a few chapters from
Bhagavatam. Everyone had their meal, and they departed. My family had
been trying to arrange my marriage for a few years; within two or three
months after he visited and recited Bhagavatam, I got married. Then, the
second time, the exact same scene played out! Swamigal came, we performed
Pada Puja for him, he read Bhagavatam, and within two to three months, my
younger brother's marriage was arranged as well. Like this, it was very true
that prosperity followed wherever he went. His devotees often testify that his
anugraham continues to bless their families across generations. Yet, regarding
the hardships within his own body and his own family, Swamigal simply
surrendered them, saying, "Just as Srikrishna, in the form of Time, allowed the
tragedy that befell His own clan to take its course, let whatever He wills come
to pass."

Beginning of the Navayogi Upakhyanam

This second chapter begins with Devaki and Vasudeva offering their Namaskarams to Bhagavan Narada and praying, "Please bestow noble spiritual teachings upon us so that we may attain Moksham. Bhagavan Narada replies, "You have given me an opportunity to remember Bhagavan, who is the embodiment of Parama MangaLam (supreme auspiciousness) and who is Punya Shravana Kirtanaha (by speaking and hearing about whom, merit is gained)!"

Narada is one who remains incessantly immersed in the Bhagavat dhyanam. Yet, speaking with such humility, he begins the narrative of the Nava Yogis. He himself knows the Bhagavata Dharma and could have described it directly; nevertheless, he narrates the account of how "the nine Yogis imparted these teachings to King Janaka."

These Nava Yogis incarnated in the Satya Yuga; they imparted this Bhagavata Dharma to King Janaka in the Treta Yuga; Narada recounted it to Vasudeva and Devaki in the Dvapara Yuga; and Suka Brahma Rishi narrated it to King Parikshit at the dawn of the Kali Yuga! Thus, it is a magnificent story that traverses all four Yugas.

In the lineage of Svayambhuva Manu belonging to the Solar dynasty, Bharata was born as the son of Rishabhadeva, followed by nine younger brothers who became great Yogis; those nine Yogis arrived and granted their Darshanam during a yagna conducted by King Janaka. Immediately, the king and all the sages gathered there rose to welcome them. It is said that even the sacrificial fire rose upward to receive them. After honouring them with Arghyam, Paadyam and offering them exalted seats, King Janaka says, "The Darshanam of great saints is like discovering a priceless treasure! Even if one receives that Darshanam for just a fraction of a second, one can rejoice remembering it for an entire lifetime; such a rare Darshanam has been bestowed upon me. If I am deemed worthy, please expound to me that sacred Bhagavata Dharma through which Bhagavan Himself can be attained."

Notice that at this juncture, he asks, "If I am deemed worthy!" Someone who had witnessed Swamigal delivering discourses at a few places went to a prominent cultural sabha and said, "A Bhagavathar in Triplicane delivers discourses exquisitely. Thousands of people gather to listen to him." A letter arrived for Swamigal from that sabha. It read: "Please write back to us listing the topics on which you can deliver discourses, all the places you have spoken before, the attendance figures at those venues, and testimonials about you from some of the attendees; based on this information, we will evaluate and select you." Swamigal remarked to V.J.R. Mama: "Look at King Janaka asking the Nava Yogis, 'If I am worthy, please instruct me'; across all our Puranas, this is the consistent tradition. Nowhere is it recorded that anyone asked a teacher, 'What are your credentials?' They will not understand all this; simply ignore the letter." (V.J.R. refers to Sri V. Janakiraman Mama, whom Swamigal affectionately called V.J.R. He had the rare fortune of rendering close personal service to Swamigal for over forty years. After Swamigal attained Siddhi, he played a key role in establishing his Adhishthanam and conducting the annual Aradhana observances.)

When the King of Thanjavur sent a large amount of gold and riches to Tyagaraja Swamigal and invited him to sing in the royal court, he refused the offer and sang, "nidhi chala sukhamā, rAmuni sannidhi seva sukhamā?" ("Does abundant wealth bring true happiness, or does serving in the divine presence of Srirama bring real joy?"). Like that, Swamigal possessed extraordinary Vairagyam. The secretaries of these various sabhas usually maintain networks among themselves; only by pandering to them can one attract ever-increasing money and larger crowds. However, Swamigal never harbored the slightest interest in those things. From the very beginning, he was crystal clear in his conviction: "My reading and expounding of Bhagavatam and Ramayanam are solely for the ultimate spiritual fulfillment of this human birth." That is why Maha Periyava himself invited him to recite Bhagavatam, and listened to it with deep devotion.

91st Dashakam: Bhagavata Dharma redeems even the lowest

Let us begin with the first Shloka of the 91st Dashakam of the Narayaneeyam.

श्रीकृष्ण, त्वत्पदोपासनं अभयतमं, बद्ध-मिथ्यार्थ-दृष्टेः,
मर्त्यस्य आर्तस्य मन्ये, व्यपसरति भयं, येन सर्वात्मनैव ।
यत्तावत् त्वत्प्रणीतान्, इह भजनविधीन्, आस्थितो मोहमार्गे
धावन्नपि, आवृताक्षः, स्खलति न कुहचित्, देवदेव, अखिलात्मन् ॥

In the Srimad Bhagavatam, the narrative unfolds with King Janaka sequentially asking questions to the Nava Yogis and each Yogi offering his response. Bhattathri presents the profound philosophical truths contained within those teachings as heartfelt prayers to Bhagavan.

shrIkR^iShNa, tvatpadOpAsanaM abhayatamaM "O Krishna! Worship of Your feet (Pada Bhajanam) is 'Abhayatamam'." 'Abhaya' means removing fear; 'Abhayatamam' means eradicating fear at its very root. In this world, we experience different fears at different times; through our own worldly contrivances, we might mitigate them to some extent. However, Bhagavat Bhajanam alone can eliminate fear once and for all.

baddha- mithyArtha- dR^iShTEH Why does this fear arise in the first place? It arises because we harbor deep attachment to illusory worldly pursuits. Due to this attachment of ours, countless anxieties are born, driving us to repeat the same worldly actions over and over, trapped in an endless cycle of birth and death.

vyapasarati bhayaM, yEna sarvAtmanaiva Devotion to Your feet dispels this fear completely. **yattAvat tvatpraNIItAn iha bhajanavidhIn** —while all other scriptures were expounded by sages, this Bhagavata Dharma (the path of Bhakthi and Bhagavat Bhajanam that is about to be expounded in the

subsequent Shlokams and chapters) was revealed directly by the Bhagavan Krishna Himself. **dEvadEva, akhilAtman** O Divinity above all! O Indweller of all living beings! **AsthitO mOhamArgE dhAvannapi, AvR^itAkShaH, skhalati na kuhachit** Holding fast to this path of Bhagavat Bhajanam, even if one runs blindly along the path of delusion with eyes closed, he will never stumble or fall. He will surely attain You.

A simple explanation of this is: While speaking about the boundless glory of the Bhagavan Nama, Maha Periyava said, "You have a tongue, and there is Bhagavan Nama; why then should there be any fear?" Is that not a monumental assurance to attain fearlessness? As long as we possess the power of speech and continuously chant the Bhagavan Nama, we will experience no fear whatsoever in life.

The expression 'with both eyes tied or blindfolded' signifies that the Vedas are one eye and the Dharma Shastras are the other. Nowadays, we hardly understand what either of these truly means. We are merely chasing after money and material comforts. Even while running in such pursuit, if we hold on to Bhagavat Bhajanam in a steadfast manner, we can certainly attain ultimate well-being.

The essence of the Vedas and Dharma Shastras is encapsulated in books like 'Deivathin Kural' and 'Enippadigalil Maanthargal'. I read them in my youth. A profound confusion gripped me: "Goodness, what is this! What relevance can this hold for my generation, and how can I ever practice this in my daily life?" It was during the same period that I was blessed with the divine Darshanam of Swamigal. I had already witnessed my parents living with noble virtues such as honesty, patience, simplicity, and compassion—unfazed by poverty, living with sheer contentment and joy. Swamigal went even beyond that, remaining utterly undisturbed no matter what hardship arose, radiating tranquility, divine wisdom, and dispassion. Therefore, as I observed him closely to understand his path, I came to realize that he was living strictly in accordance with this Bhagavata Dharma.

A person following Bhagavata Dharma will never go in vain. Even if one does not know the Dharma Shastras or the Vedas, as long as there is absolute faith that “Bhagavan will protect us,” one will face no lack. To firmly establish this teaching in our minds, Mayavaram Periyava used to narrate a story. Swamigal would recount this story in his discourses without fail.

There was once a young Brahmachari. He did not possess much scholarly learning. He managed to get by solely through *bikshacharyam* (seeking alms as a student). Someone even gave their daughter in marriage to him. Swamigal playfully remarks, “It happened back in those days!”

Since he was now married, he could no longer beg for alms as a householder (Grihastha). So, he went to a scholar and requested, “Please teach me something.” Looking at him, the scholar thought, “What can I possibly teach him after this age?” and taught him just a single phrase: *‘Srikrishnaya Namaha’* (Salutations to Srikrishna). The scholar told him, “Chant this continuously and practice Unchavritti (gathering grain offered by households); Bhagavan will protect you.” He too believed this whole-heartedly and set out every day for Unchavritti, tying his traditional cloth pouch on head. A few people would drop rice into his bag, which he would bring home and hand over to his wife. This was how his days passed.

One day, because the sun was scorching, he felt very thirsty while walking past a house. Overcome by the exhaustion of that thirst, instead of saying *‘Srikrishnaya Namaha’*, he mistakenly chanted *‘Sri-Thrishnaya Namaha’* (Thrishna means thirst or intense longing).

The owner of that house was a grammarian (Vyakarana Pandita). He flared up in anger. He yelled, “You don’t even know a single verse; you chant just one simple phrase, and you mispronounce even that!” Our Unchavritti Brahmin could not understand what was happening. Thinking, “It seems he does not

wish to offer rice, which is why he is angry,” he simply moved on to the next house. Someone else offered him rice, and he returned home.

That night, Hanumanji appeared in the grammarian’s dream and dealt him seven or eight blows! Shivering with fear, the scholar cried out, “Oh Bhagavan! I don’t even know what mistake I made!”

To this, Hanuman replied, “You scolded that Unchavritti Brahmin this morning—what was wrong with what he said? He chanted *‘Sri Thrishnaya Namaha’*, didn’t he? It can be interpreted like this as well: ‘Sri’ refers to Lakshmi devi. *‘shriyAm jaganmAtari sItadEvyam, thrishna, atyanta Aasaktihi yasya Saha, tasmai rAmaya namaha’*—Salutations to that Srirama who, upon separation from Sita devi—the incarnation of Lakshmi and the Mother of the Universe—longed for her (Thrishna), crying out in agony, ‘Oh tree, did you see her? Oh deer, did you see her?’ Instead of Krishna, he is simply addressing Rama; that is all! How could you scold him so harshly for that?”

Trembling with fear, the scholar said, “I committed this act out of ignorance; please forgive me. When he comes tomorrow, I will offer him eight Marakkals (a large traditional measure) of rice.”

Swamigal concludes saying, “Like this, if one places trust in Bhagavan, He will certainly protect.” At this point, he would highlight a crucial principle: “Bhagavan protects someone who merely learned and uttered a single phrase. If Bhagavan has graced someone with the blessing to master Sanskrit, study the Ramayana, and the talent to explain it to others, is it correct to put a price on their knowledge and sell it? Are not Ramayanam and Bhagavatam veritable wish-fulfilling trees (Kalpakavriksha) and wish-granting cows (Kamadhenu)? We must develop absolute faith in what great souls like Kambar have proclaimed: ‘(nAdiya poRuL kaikUdum) Whatever is sought shall indeed be attained by reading the story of Rama.’”

Swamigal himself brimmed with that faith. As I mentioned earlier, Swamigal visited our home twice and after both of his visits, marriages materialized in our home for both me and my younger brother. On both of those occasions, he read the ‘Rukmini Kalyanam’ chapter from the Srimad Bhagavatam.

We never placed any such request or prayer before him. We merely requested, “Please visit our home; your holy feet must grace our house.” However, because he knew our family well, he would have felt, “Ganapathy has already reached thirty years of age,” and recited the Rukmini Kalyanam with a prayer in his heart. Bhagavan granted the fruit of that prayer immediately. Such was his unshakeable faith, and such was the power of his spiritual practice (Upasana Balam)!

Karma Yoga, the first step towards Bhakthi

In the next few verses, Bhattathri explains what Bhagavata Dharma is. In this verse, he speaks about Karma Yoga, which is the first step towards Bhakthi.

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 2:

भूमन् कायेन वाचा, मुहुरपि मनसा, त्वद्वलप्रेरितात्मा,
यद्यदकुर्वे समस्तं तदिह परतरे, त्वय्यसौ अर्पयामि ।
जात्यापि इह श्वपाकः, त्वयि निहितमनःकर्मवागिन्द्रियार्थ-
प्राणः, विश्वं पुनीते, न तु विमुखमनाः, त्वत्पदात् विप्रवर्यः ॥

**bhUman kAyEna vAchA, muhurapi manasA, tvadbalaprEritAtmA,
yadyadkurvE** “O Krishna! Whatever I do through my body, speech and mind,
driven by natural instincts, **samastaM tadiha paratarE, tvayyasau arpayAmi**
I surrender it entirely unto You, the Supreme Being.” Be it at the end of
Sandhyavandanam, Amavasya Tharpanam, or the recitation of Sundara
Kandam, we conclude every prayer with this Kayena Vacha verse, don’t we? It
actually originates from the Srimad Bhagavatam.

We recite it as: “kAyEna vAchA manasEndriyairvA buddhyAtmanA vA
prakR^itE: svabhAvAt | karOmi yadyat sakalam parasmai nArAyaNAyEti

samarpayAmi ||* (I surrender all that I do...) However, in the original text, it appears as an instruction: *...karOti yadyat sakalam parasmai nArAyaNAyEti samarpayEt tat*—meaning, "One should surrender everything." Some great saint beautifully adapted this teaching into a personal prayer of surrender for our daily practice.

Former President of India, R. Venkataraman, was deeply devoted to the Maha Periyava of Kanchi. When he once asked Periyava, "What should I do?", Periyava advised him, "Every night before going to bed, recite *Kayena Vacha*, surrender everything you did throughout the day to Bhagavan, and sleep; you will have peace of mind." Performing our duty without attachment and surrendering its fruits to Bhagavan—this Karma Yoga is the very first step towards progressing in Bhakthi.

In today's fast-paced world, life is hurtling in entirely new directions with advancements in AI and Robotics. In such times, how do we interpret the concept of *Maa Phaleshu Kadachana* (do your duty without expecting the fruits)?

This is how I see it. Setting a goal and deciding to achieve it by hook or by crook, abandoning truth and righteousness, is fundamentally wrong. Instead, we must perform our duty with the mindset: "I will put in my best efforts, I will remain ethical, and I will be honest," and then accept whatever outcome follows.

As the Tirukkural states, 'Let a man not knowingly lie; for if he lies, his own conscience will torment him.' If we resort to deceit and lies, our own conscience reprimands us. If we ignore it and continue down that path, our mind gets tainted and our intellect becomes corrupted. That is detrimental to developing Bhakthi. Therefore, to practice true Bhakthi, our mind must remain pure at all times, and for that, we must live with integrity.

Furthermore, when we give something to our loved ones—be it a son-in-law or our grandchildren—we would never give them something spoiled, would we? We always offer them the very best. Even if we do not keep it for ourselves, we set aside the finest things for them. Similarly, under the principle that "one must offer only the best to those they love," when we tell Bhagavan, "I surrender everything I do unto You," the deeds we perform and offer must be noble, honest, and pure.

Therefore, rather than setting a goal and resorting to shortcuts to achieve it, we should walk an upright path, work honestly for the salary we earn, and keep our minds clear. Only then can we truly understand Bhakthi. I understand this verse to mean that ethical clarity is the very first step to develop Bhakthi.

There is an excellent example of *Maa Phaleshu Kadachana* in the Ramayana. Srirama was assisting his father, Dasharatha, with the affairs of the kingdom. Because of this, people of Ayodhya were extremely pleased with him. When Dasharatha asked the royal assembly, "Shall I crown this Rama as the crown prince?", the entire hall erupted in thunderous applause, with everyone clamouring, "By all means, please do it; crown Rama as the king!" This was what transpired on the first day.

The very next morning, when Kaikeyi summoned Rama and declared, "There is no coronation for you, only exile to the forest!", Lakshmana was enraged. However, he did not say anything inside Kaikeyi's palace; once he arrived at Rama's palace, he unleashed all his fury against Kaikeyi. Rama calmed Lakshmana down and said:

"O Lakshmana! Until yesterday, how affectionate Mother Kaikeyi was towards me! I too served her with devotion and love. If such a noble-hearted Kaikeyi now speaks such harsh words to me in front of her husband, and her mind has undergone such a drastic transformation...when we plan one thing and something entirely unexpected occurs, it means that it is the hand of destiny (Daiva Sankalpam). We cannot fight it; we simply have to accept it."

No matter how meticulously we plan and pour in our complete effort, when destiny turns everything upside down, we must accept it with equanimity. Had Rama intended to seize the throne by any means, he had the unanimous backing of the people of Ayodhya; even Dasharatha told him directly, "Imprison me and take over the kingdom." Yet Rama firmly replied, "Appa, I will never do such a thing; your word must remain true." In this manner, even amid numerous challenging circumstances, Rama never opted for the convenient path, but instead exemplified living strictly by righteousness (Dharma). It appears that this is precisely what Krishna describes in the Bhagavad Gita as a Sthitaprajna (a person of steady wisdom), illustrating it as Karma Yoga.

One does not attain purity merely by birth

In the second line of the 2nd verse of the 91st Dashakam, Bhattathri highlights some insights found in the story of Prahlada. **jAtyApi iha shvapAkaH, tvayi nihitamanaHkarmavAgindriyArtha- prANaH, vishvaM punItE** Even if one is born into the lower strata of society, whoever surrenders everything they do through their mind, actions, speech, and senses unto You, purifies the entire world. **na tu vimukhamanAH, tvatpadAt vipravaryaH** On the other hand, a person devoid of Bhakthi to You, even if born as an exalted Brahmin, cannot purify the world.

We have had great saints like Nandanar and Tiruppaanazhwar, haven't we? Even today, do we not read their sacred life stories to purify ourselves?

A barber used to visit Swamigal. Sitting before him, he would sing songs like ***Orumaiyudan ninadhu thirumalaradi ninaikindra uththamar tham uravu vendum*** (Grant me the sangam of sadhus who contemplate Your sacred lotus feet with single-minded devotion). Swamigal would offer him betel leaves along with ten or twenty rupees. He would do Namaskaram, accept the offering, and leave. He continued to visit even after Swamigal had taken up ***Sannyasa***.

Once, Swamigal told me, "I often feel like doing Namaskaram to him, but he would become alarmed, which is why I refrain from doing so." I was utterly amazed: "My goodness! What remarkable spiritual maturity Swamigal possesses! He sees that this barber has genuine Bhakthi, and therefore considers him sacred"—this profound conviction of Swamigal filled me with wonder!

What brings me solace in this is that, although I was born into a Brahmin family, I lack the Vedic education required to follow my *Svadharmā* (prescribed duty), nor do I possess the detachment (Vairagya) to sincerely practice it and live on the meager income it might yield. Influenced by an English education, I harbor an attraction towards Western culture, a fascination with modern technological gadgets, and a strong attachment to money. Even though I lack the virtues traditionally befitting my lineage, the sole conviction that reciting *Stotrams* and chanting the Bhagavan Nama with faith is enough to earn a place in Swamigal's heart, has been the crutch supporting me to continue along the Bhakthi Margam.

What is the cause of fear?

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 3:

भीतिर्नाम द्वितीयाद्भवति, ननु मनःकल्पितं च द्वितीयं,
तेन, ऐक्याभ्यासशीलो, हृदयमिह यथाशक्ति बुद्ध्या निरुन्ध्याम् ।
मायाविद्धे तु तस्मिन् पुनरपि, न तथा भाति, मायाधिनाथं,
तत् त्वां भक्त्या महत्या, सततमनुभजन्, ईश, भीतिं विजह्याम् ॥

bhItirnAma dvitIyAdbhavati Bhattatri stated earlier that this Bhagavata Dharma is meant for dispelling fear, right? Next, he explains what fear truly is. Where does "fear" originate? **nanu manaHkalpitaM cha dvitIyaM** Fear arises only when we perceive the existence of a second entity. This is an Upanishadic teaching. In this world, the idea that there is an entity other than ourselves—other than the Self (Atma)—is purely a mental construct (Manah-kalpitam); it is the mind that imagines all of this. While asleep, we

perceive nothing; the moment we wake up, fear of one person and anger towards another immediately sets in. **tEna, aikyAbhyAsashIO, hR^idayamiha yathAshakti buddhyA nirundhyAm** I try my best to control that mind using my intellect and understand that nothing else exists. But what makes the Self appear as distinct and separate is none other than Your Maya.

mAyAviddhE tu tasmin punarapi, na tathA bhAti In a mind veiled by Maya, this truth is not realized. Although it remains known to the intellect as a piece of information or knowledge, I struggle to put it into actual practice.

mAyAdhinAthaM Yet, O Master of Maya! As Bhagavan Himself declares in the Gita, दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया । मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥ “**daivI hyEShA guNamayI mama mAyA duratyayA | mAmEva yE prapadyantE mAyAmEtAm taranti tE ||**” — “This Maya cannot be overcome so easily,” Bhagavan states, “Only those who surrender to Me can cross over this Maya.” Bhattathri prays: **tat tvAM bhaktyA mahatyA, satatamanubhajan, Isha, bhItiM vijahyAm** O Krishna, through intense and unceasing Bhakthi to You shall I transcend this Maya and overcome this fear.”

Swamigal shares a beautiful analogy for this. A magician conjures the illusion of a snake; all of us watching it begin to tremble, while the magician’s son stands beside him, smiling. This is because his father has taught him how the trick works, so he knows it is merely an illusion. Similarly, through Maya, Bhagavan presents to us the illusion called this world. That is why we weep and laugh through it all. If we have the grace of that magician—meaning the grace of Bhagavan—just as that boy remains free from sorrow and fear, we too can live without fear. He concludes that by practicing such intense devotion, we can completely free ourselves from all fears.

Nowadays, when people face hardships, they worry that their troubles might grow even bigger and end in catastrophe. Seeking solace, they turn to fake holy men who advertise that they can wipe away past karmas. However, these frauds only amplify their fears and recommend expensive remedies

(Pariharams). Swamigal would illustrate through a story from the Srimad Bhagavatam that instead of going down that path, placing faith in Bhagavan and doing rigorous Bhajanam will dispel that fear and remove the suffering.

To test Krishna, Brahma uses his illusory power (Maya) to hide the calves. Krishna, wishing to carry on the divine play (Leela), walks away as though searching for them. Brahma immediately hides the cowherd boys as well. But Srikrishna Himself becomes all those cowherd boys, all the calves, the horn, flutes, the ropes, and everything else, and returns to Gokulam in the evening. For an entire year, without even realizing it, the Gopis bathe, decorate, and feed the parabrahma thinking He is their own child, the cows nurse Him believing He is their own calf, and all of them attain direct contact with the Supreme Reality (Brahma-sparsham).

Swamigal would say, "Brahma intended for the Gopis and the cows to suffer in anguish for a year, separated from their children. Instead, they experienced Krishna Himself as their child. Similarly, even if an astrologer reads the fate Brahma wrote on a devotee's forehead and warns that a hardship is on the way, the devotees, through ardent Bhajanam, will not only escape that suffering but also attain great bliss."

Arunagirinathar has beautifully expressed in a Tiruppugazh starting with the words "Andho Maname" that the fear of worldly existence (Bhava-bhayam), will vanish if one holds firmly onto Bhagavan's feet.

அந்தோமனமே நமதாக்கையை நம்பாதெ இதாகித சூத்திரம்
அம்போருகனாடிய பூட்டிது இனிமேல் நாம்
அஞ்சாதமையா கிரியாக்கையை பஞ்சாடிய வேலவனார்க்கியல்
அங்காகுவம் வா இனி தாக்கையை ஒழியாமல்
வந்தோமிதுவேகதி யாட்சியும் இந்தாமயில் வாகனர் சீட்டிது
வந்தாளுவம் நாமென வீக்கிய சிவநீறும்
வந்தே வெகுவா நமையாட்கொளுவந்தார் மதமேதினி மேற்கொள
மைந்தா குமராவெனுமார்ப்புய மறவாதே

andhOmanamE namadhAkkaiyai nambAdhe yidhAgitha sUththiram
ambOrugan Adiya pUttidhu inimElInAm
anjAdhamaiyA giriyAkkaiyai panjAdiya vElavanArkku iyal
angAguvam vA inidhAkkaiyai ozhiyAmal
vandhOm idhuvE gathiyAtchium indhA mayilvAhanar seettidhu
vandhALuvam nAmena veekkiya sivaneeRum
vandhE veguvA namai yAtkoL uvandhAr madham Edhini mErkoLa
maindhA kumarA enum Arppuya maRavAdhE

O mind! Do not be deceived into believing that this body will last a long time and that we can enjoy worldly pleasures through it. Brahma has locked you up inside this prison called the body to experience Hitam and Ahitham - pleasure and pain. You cannot escape. (He states that this is a prison sentence given to us to exhaust our past karmas; this is the root cause of the fear of worldly existence, or Bhava Bhayam.) Besides this, as old age sets in, the fear of when this body is going to perish will also take hold.

Come, let us cultivate everlasting love for the lord who wields the Vel, the one who pulverized the Krauncha mountain like cotton! This is the path of true bliss; without wasting this body away, we have surrendered to Muruga Peruman. This is the path to liberation (Moksham). This is the exalted word of the wise sages, so listen to it. This is the entry pass granted to us by Murugan, the rider of the peacock! There is also the auspicious Vibhuti sent by bhagavan as a promise that He will soon come to claim us as His own; receive that as well.

Muruga Peruman is waiting to shower His grace and make us His. What other purpose or duty do we have beyond this? Do not forget to call out loudly, "O son of Shiva! O Kumara!" and sing His sacred Tiruppugazh every single day.

It appears that Arunagirinathar has captured the very essence of Bhagavata Dharma in this song.

Satsangam, Satkatha Shravanam

Next one, Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 4:

भक्तेः उत्पत्तिवृद्धी, तव चरणजुषां सङ्गमेनैव पुंसां ,
आसाद्ये पुण्यभाजां, श्रिय इव जगति, श्रीमतां सङ्गमेन ।
तत्सङ्गो देव, भूयान्मम खलु सततं, तन्मुखात् उन्मिषद्भिः,
त्वन्माहात्म्यप्रकारैः भवति च सुदृढा, भक्तिः उद्धूतपापा ॥

Bhattathri says, **bhaktEH utpattivR^iddhI, tava charaNajuShAM sa~NgamEnaiva puMsAM** "For the meritorious men, the best way to awaken and nurture Bhakthi, is the satsangam (noble association) with devotees who constantly keep their minds fixed on Your feet. **AsAdyE puNyabhAjAM, shriya iva jagati, shrImatAM sa~NgamEna** Just as wealth accumulates to those who associate with wealthy people, associating with devotees will awaken and foster Bhakthi in us as well."

An example can be cited to show how wealth comes to those who keep company with the wealthy. In our times, people often talk about how Infosys Narayana Murthy gave company shares even to his firm's drivers and domestic helpers, turning all of them into crorepatis. Like this, just as wealth reaches those who move closely with the rich, Bhakthi will develop in us if we continuously associate with noble devotees. **tatsa~NgO dEva, bhUyAnmama khalu satataM, tanmukhAt unmiShadbhiH** May I always be blessed with the Sangam of such exalted devotees. **tvanmAhAtmyaprakArAiH bhavati cha sudR^iDhA, bhaktiH uddhUtapApA**, By constantly listening to Bhagavan's avathara Leelas and divine glories flowing from their lips, firm Bhakthi will awaken in me, and as a result, all my sins will be wiped away.

When I was 20 years old, I heard Maha Periyava's voice for the very first time. Back then, Periyava's voice had just been released on cassette tapes. In that recording, using the Mooka Panchashati verse *shiva shiva pashyanti samam* Periyava explained the true signs of having received KarunA Kataksham (the

compassionate grace) of Goddess Kamakshi. That nectar-like speech (*amrita vAkku*) completely changed the course of my life.

Another one was a discourse by Maha Periyava on the Mahabharata. I felt great bliss listening to it. His voice, the way He recited verses, and His style of explaining things, everything was divine. It felt just like a casual conversation. Yet, it would imprint itself so beautifully upon the mind. Hearing this single verse recited once in His divine voice etched it on my heart.

जयति पराशर-सूनुः सत्यवती-हृदयनन्दनो व्यासः ।
यस्यास्य-कमल-गलितं वाङ्मयममृतं जगत्पिबति ॥

“jayati parAshara-sUnuH satyavatI-hR^idayanandanO vyAsaH |
yasya-Asya-kamala-gaLitaM vA~Nmayam-amR^itaM jagatpibati ||”

“Victory to Bhagavan Vyasa, the son of Parashara and the delight of Satyavati’s heart, whose speech—the nectar flowing from his lotus face—is eagerly drunk by the entire world!”—this is a verse about the Mahabharata. Periyava mentioned that this was found inscribed on a stone tablet somewhere in Cambodia. He continued “In those days, places called ‘Gangai Kondan Mandapam’ existed in every town specifically for delivering discourses on the Mahabharata and the Ramayana; Pallava kings had even granted endowments to conduct discourses there. Because people listened to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata regularly, the thought that “We too must walk the path of Dharma*!” arose in them, and everyone lived as good human beings. We too must listen to these Puranas regularly.”

When He remarked, “Karna for charity, Yudhishtira for Dharma, and Arjuna for dignity and honor,” I felt, “Aha! How wonderful that Periyava highlights ‘Arjuna for dignity and honor!’” Usually, do we not know Arjuna as a romantic prince who married many women, including Draupadi, Subhadra, and Ulupi? Periyava calls him the epitome of dignity based on the incident in Indraloka, where, when Urvashi offered herself to him, he refused saying ‘you are like my

mother'. That's when I realized that only by listening to the correct interpretation of the Ramayana, and Mahabharata can we learn the right lessons.

Finally, what Periyava says in that discourse is: "Therefore, none of us should ever speak lies. We should never accept bribes." It was truly remarkable how He began with a verse on Vyasa and concluded with a message so relevant for our times.

Thus, just as it is described as the nectar-like speech flowing from the lotus face of Vyasa, listening to the glories of Bhagavan flowing from the lips of great saints will awaken Bhakthi in us and make it flourish.

Our Swamigal possessed the remarkable ability to deliver discourses by reciting thousands of Shlokams entirely from memory. Even so, he would actively seek out and listen to the discourses of other venerable elders. He listened to Sri Anantharama Deekshithar's Ramayanam and Sri Mayavaram Periyava's Bhagavatam discourses extensively.

He would also listen to Bhagavatam discourses of Anjan Namboodiri and Krishnan Namboodiri, who came from Guruvayur. They used to visit Chennai once a year. In their family tradition, one was permitted to deliver discourses in public only after completing the Parayanam (recitation) of Bhagavatam a thousand times! Such was their rigorous Tapas (spiritual discipline). Their method was to conduct the discourse from six in the morning until six in the evening. The elder brother would chant 50 Shlokams, and the younger brother would explain their meaning in Malayalam; if the younger brother chanted, the elder brother would provide the meaning. In this manner, they would complete the recitation of all 18,000 Shlokams within those seven days. Swamigal was extremely pleased with this method. Setting aside all his physical discomforts, he visited the Sai Samajam every year for 35 years to listen to this Bhagavata discourse by Anjan Namboodiri. When Sri Sundarkumar Anna requested, "I

am also delivering a discourse there; you must please come, listen, and shower your blessings," Swamigal went in person to listen to his Bhagavatam as well. Likewise, Swamigal had immense love for the traditional Sampradaya Hari Bhajan. There was a great saint named Pudukkottai Gopalakrishna Bhagavathar; it is said that he performed Bhajanai on all 365 days of the year! No one needed to invite him. If invited, he would perform at their home; otherwise, he would simply start the Bhajanai in the evening wherever he happened to be. Swamigal listened to his Bhajans on numerous occasions.

Also, there was Sithalapathi Soundararaja Bhagavathar—who later became Swamigal's son-in-law. He continuously performed Hari Bhajanai for 50 to 60 years. Though he had poor eyesight, he could sing all 24 Ashtapadis of Jayadeva along with every accompanying Shloka, with impeccable pronunciation (Akshara-shuddhi) and in beautiful ragas. He would sing for five hours! Swamigal eagerly listened to this many times.

The same way, he would invite Sadhuram Swamigal and S. V. Subramaniam, disciples of Vallimalai Swamigal, to his home; they would deliver a five-to-six-hour discourse exclusively through Tiruppugazh songs on the theme of 'Valli Kalyanam', which he listened to with great delight. Sathkatha Shravanam of Bhagavan is that vital.

In this day and age, we can regularly listen to the words of Maha Periyava and Swamigal. Amidst everything else, discerning carefully what constitutes genuine Sathsangam, we can keep our minds focused on and consistently listen to those teachings that foster Bhakthi. Reciting the divine works of saints who possess (sAshvatha puNya kIrthi) eternal spiritual glory—such as the Mooka Panchashati, Narayaneeyam, Adi Shankara's Stothras, Thevaram, Thiruvagasam, Tiruppugazh, and the NalAyira Divya Prabandham—is itself true Sathsangam.

Bhakthi is the safest path to attain Bhagavan

Next one, Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 5:

श्रेयोमार्गेषु भक्तौ अधिकबहुमतिः, जन्मकर्माणि भूयो
गायन्, क्षेमाणि नामान्यपि तदुभयतः, प्रद्रुतं प्रद्रुतात्मा ।
उद्यद्भासः कदाचित्, कुहचिदपि रुदन्, क्वापि गर्जन्, प्रगायन्,
उन्मादीव प्रनृत्यन्, अयि कुरु करुणां, लोकबाह्यश्चरेयम् ॥

shrEyOmArgEShu bhaktau adhikabahumatiH, Among the paths that bestow spiritual elevation, saints give the highest place to Bhakthi. This is because when practicing other paths such as Karma, Jnana, and Yoga, there is a chance of running into two major pitfalls. One is pretension or hypocrisy, and the other is a holier-than-thou attitude—the arrogance of believing that one is purer than everyone else.

If we observe a spiritual discipline (Niyama), and an ego arises that "no one does this nowadays, only we are doing it," we might end up speaking in a way that hurts other good-natured, gentle souls (Sadhus). As a result, our spiritual progress gets obstructed. Alternatively, people sometimes undertake difficult disciplines and end up merely putting an outward show of performing them without actually doing so sincerely.

There is ample scope to commit that same mistake in the path of Bhakthi as well. In other paths at least, if one claims, "I perform Sahasra Gayatri," one cannot simply lie; after all, won't others see whether that person is sitting and doing it for an hour and a half? If one says, "I perform Aupasana," everyone knows whether it is being done or not. But in Bhakthi, if one says, "I am meditating on Bhagavan in my mind," who can truly know? Therefore, hypocrisy can easily creep into this marga as well. We ourselves must remain sincere to ourselves. That is why Swamigal would say, Bhakthi is simple, but it is certainly no bed of roses; one must work just as hard in this as one does in the path of Jnana." Sri Shivan Sar went a step further, declaring, "One who plunges into Bhakthi while setting aside honesty is a sinner."

In this path of Bhakthi, **janmakarmANi bhUyO gAyan** one should continuously read about the avatharaams of Bhagavan, His divine Leelas,

from sacred narratives such as Ramayanam, Bhagavatam, and SkAnda Purana, **kShEmANi nAmAnyapi** and constantly chant the auspicious names of Bhagavan that bestows ultimate well-being.

The signs of Bhakthi

Bhattathri prays to Guruvayurappan, "Grant me that supreme, ecstatic state of Bhakthi **tadubhayataH, pradrutaM pradrutAtmA** where I continuously read the stories of Bhagavan and sing His namas **udyaddhAsaH kadAchiT, kuhachidapi rudan, kvApi garjan, pragAyan, unmAdiva pranR^ityan, ayi kuru karuNAM, IOkabAhyashcharEyam** sometimes laughing, sometimes weeping, sometimes singing aloud, roaring, and dancing like a madman, so much so that the worldly people cast me aside thinking, 'He has gone mad!'" Swamigal would narrate a few charming stories to illustrate this state of laughing, weeping, singing, dancing, and being immersed in spiritual ecstasy.

Once, Krishna entered the house of a Gopi and dipped his hand into a butter pot. The lady of the house walked in, saw him, and asked, "Krishna! What are you doing there, boy?"

To this, the young child replied, "Our household calf went missing, Mami; Amma asked me to search and bring it back, so that is what I am looking for."

Laughing, Mami asked, "Why, boy, will a calf be inside a pot of butter?"

"Well, it's not here, Mami, so I'm leaving," Krishna said, trying to slip away. Mami caught his hand firmly. "Whenever I complain to your mother, she always says, 'I will believe it only if you catch him red-handed.' Come, today I will hand you over to her," she insisted, dragging him along.

Krishna immediately feigned fear and pleaded, "No, Mami, my mother will thrash me black and blue; please let me go, Mami, please let me go!"

"Nothing doing, come along, you are caught today!" she said, hauling him over and standing him before Yashoda. "Yashoda! Come and see the mischief of your darling son!" she called out.

Yashoda came out, looked, and burst into laughter. Do you know why? The Krishna standing there appeared in the exact form of that mami's own son!

When Yashoda remarked, "What is this? You bring your own son by the hand and call him a thief!", everyone gathered around erupted in laughter.

The Mami got frightened, exclaiming, "Oh no?!?" Taking the boy, she returned to her own house, only to find Krishna in her grasp once again. She started heading back towards Yashoda's place. Krishna said, "Mami, I let you off once. If you drag me over this time, I will appear in the form of your husband!" Terrified, the Mami immediately replied, "O No, Krishna, please! Ask whatever you want, and I will give it to you myself!" Swamigal would narrate such childhood Leelas of Krishna with infectious laughter.

Arunagirinathar speaks in many places about chanting the names of Murugan with goosebumps, a melting heart, tears, and total surrender:

“முருக சரவண மகளிர் அறுவர்முலை நுகரும் அறுமுக
குமர சரணமென அருள்பாடி யாடிமிக மொழிகுழற”

*muruga saravaNa magaLir aRuvar mulai nugarum aRumuga kumara
saraNamena aruLpADi ADimiga mozhikuzhaRa*

He says that if your speech falters as you weep, pray, and dissolve in tears, wetting Murugan's feet with those tears while chanting His names, Murugan will "call out 'come' and take you into His divine embrace" (*varugavena araikooṇi āḷuvadam*).

“வாழியென நித்த மறவாது பரவிற் சரண வாரிஜமளிக்கும்
உபகார்க்காரனும்” *vAzhienā nitham maRavAdu paravir*—if you praise Him daily without forgetting, “charaNa vArijamaLikkum upakArakkAranum” He is a benefactor who grants His lotus feet itself; *vAzhī* means *jayatu* (victory). Reciting Subramanya Bhujangam, if we rise and dance when this verse arrives,

“jayAnandabhUman jayApAradhAman

jayAmOghakIrṭE jayAnandamUrṭE |

jayAnandasindhO jayAshEShabandhO

jaya tvaM sadA muktidAnEshasUnO ||” as the line goes—“charaNa vArijamaLikkum upakArakkAranum”—He will readily bestow His own lotus feet unto you.

“முடியா பிறவிக் கடலில் புகார் முழுதும் கெடுக்கும்
மிடியார் படியில் விதனப்படார் வெற்றிவேல் பெருமாள்
அடியார்க்கு நல்ல பெருமாள் அவுணர் குலமடங்கப்
பொடியாக்கிய பெருமாள் திருநாமம் புகல்பவரே”

mudiyAp piRavik kadalil pugAr, muzhudhum kedukkum
midiyAl padiyil vidhanappadAr, vetRivEl perumAL
adiyArkku nalla perumAL avuNar kulam adangkap
podiyAkkiya perumAL thirunAmam pugalbavarE

Arunagirinathar lists countless benefits like this, declaring that if one continuously chants the names of Bhagavan, “mudiyA piRavik kadalil pugAr”—meaning they will never fall into the vast sea of worldly existence!

“படிக்கின்றிலை பழநித் திருநாமம் படிப்பவர் தாள்
முடிக்கின்றிலை முருகா என்கிலை முசியாமலிட்டு
மிடிக்கின்றிலை பரமானந்தம் மேற்கொள்ள விம்மி விம்மி
நடிக்கின்றிலை... நெஞ்சமே தஞ்சம் ஏது நமக்கு இனியே?”

padikkindRilai pazhanith thirunAmam, padippAr thAL
mudikkindRilai, murugA engilai, musiyAmal ittu
midikkindRilai, paramAnandham mERkkoLa vimvivimmi
nadikkindRilai, nenjameE thanjam Edhu namakku iniyE?

Here, *‘nadithal’* means to dance. He laments, “you never rose to dance with uncontrollable sobs, feeling completely unable to remain seated, as supreme bliss overflows!” Just as Bhattathri describes—*unmādiva pranṛtyan*—one ought to dance in that manner. Seeing that you refuse to do any of these things, Arunagirinathar gives a warning of sorts: *Nenjame thanjamethu namakku iniyE* (“O heart, what refuge remains for us hereafter?”). This means that only when we practice all of this will we attain the divine refuge of Bhagavan.

Greatness of Bhagavan Nama

Swamigal had unshakable faith in this principle of Kshemani Namani (the auspicious names that bestow supreme well-being). He would often say, "In this day and age, yantras, tantras, and esoteric manthras are not necessary. Bhagavan Nama is enough." When he first said that, I was a bit skeptical. However, when our Shivan Sar drew those spiritual ladders in his book and explained the levels like *Paapi* (sinner), **Pamaran** (ignorant), **Viveki** (the vigilant), **Sadhu** (the altruist), **Deiva Viveki** (the true brahmin), **Deiva Sadhu** (zealous devotee), **Mahan** (saint), **Thuravi** (the hermit) **Gnani** (the enlightened) etc. only then did the truth firmly register in my mind that only **Deiva Vivekis** have the competence to handle pure manthras.

Swamigal had complete mastery over Sri Vidya. It became clear to me that only those who are totally detached possess the eligibility to practice pure manthras like Sri Vidya. Yet, he himself told me, "Let all that be; if someone chants them, let them do so, for they are truly blessed! Let us read the Mooka Panchashati."

Speaking about the glory of the divine Nama (Nama Mahima), Periyava states with great conviction: "Remain very humble, thinking, 'If others are able to perform Yoga, Yagnas, and Pranayama, they are fortunate and blessed! All I know is to chant the names of Bhagavan.' But hold onto this Nama Japam with an unyielding grip. Then, whatever fruits those Yoga, Yaga, and Pranayama bestow, this Nama Japam itself will grant you that result." Swamigal, too, held the steadfast conviction that Bhagavan Nama bestows supreme auspiciousness!

When my son was born, it was Swamigal who named him 'Raghuraman'. Within two to three days after birth, he developed a slight bout of jaundice. I went to Swamigal and explained the situation. He chanted a sanctifying prayer over sacred ash (Vibhuti) and gave it to me. I asked him, "What manthram did you chant?" To that, he replied:

कुमारेऽसूनो गुह स्कन्द सेनापते शक्तिपाणे मयूराधिरूढ ।
पुलिन्दात्मजाकान्त भक्तार्तिहारिन् प्रभो तारकारे सदा रक्ष मां त्वम् ॥

kumArEshasUnO guha skanda sEnApatE
shaktipANE mayUrAdhirUDha |
pulindAtmajAkAnta bhaktArtihArin
prabhO tArakArE sadA rakSha mAM tvam ||

He had recited these divine namas of Muruga found in the Subramanya Bhujangam 36 times, sanctified the Vibhuti, and gave it to me. We applied it to my son. He was cured.

From that day until today, whenever any child in our family falls ill, it has become our practice to apply Vibhuti while reciting *Kumāreśasūno*. In this manner, Swamigal would instill within us deep faith and Bhakthi for that Shloka. Later on, my boy developed febrile fits and the same medicine was applied. Today, he has grown as a healthy adult! Thus, if any bodily ailment strikes any kid in the family, it is "Kumāreśasūno".

What a stressful task it is to raise a child! When a child cries continuously and we don't even understand the reason, fear overtakes us, doesn't it? During such times, Swamigal recommends chanting

नारायण नारायण जय गोविन्द हरे । नारायण नारायण जय गोपाल हरे ॥
nArAyaNa nArAyaNa jaya gOvinda harE |
nArAyaNa nArAyaNa jaya gOpAla harE || for a few minutes

When grown up kids do lot of mischief, He recommends chanting this shloka from kamaladayitaashtakam 12 times

कर्मसु आत्मोचितेषु स्थिरतरधिषणां देहदार्यं तदर्थं
दीर्घं चायुः यशश्च त्रिभुवनविदितं पापमार्गाद्विरक्तिम् ।
सत्सङ्गं सत्कथायाः श्रवणमपि सदा देवि दत्त्वा कृपाब्धे
विद्यां शुद्धां च बुद्धिं कमलजदयिते सत्वरं देहि मह्यम् ॥

karmasu AtmOchitEShu sthirataradhiShaNAM dEhadArDhyaM tadarthaM
dIrghaM chAyuH yashashcha tribhuvanaviditaM pApamArgAdviraktim |
satsa~NgaM satkathAyAH shravaNamapi sadA dEvi datvA kR^ipAbdhE
vidyAM shuddhAM cha buddhiM kamalajadayitE satvaraM dEhi mahyam ||

The meaning of this shloka is

karmasu AtmOchitEShu – a steadfast intellect ***sthirataradhiShaNAM*** in performing the duties appropriate to each person according to their ***varna*** and ***ashrama***;

dEhadArDhyaM tadarthaM – the bodily strength required for that purpose;

dIrghaM chAyuH – a long lifespan to attain Jnanam in this very birth itself;

yashashcha tribhuvanaviditaM – fame across all three worlds. Swamigal would say, "In this world, one can buy fame by pasting posters. But fame across all three worlds is not that easy. 'The devas are all-witnessing (Sarva-sakshi); they know even our innermost thoughts. Only if one possesses noble conduct can one earn a good name with the devas.'" It is that kind of elevated renown he is praying for.

pApamArgAdviraktim – total aversion from sinful paths, so that the intellect never strays towards wrongdoing. What should one do for that? **Satsa~NgaM** – one must remain in the company of noble souls (Sadhus). One should take refuge in saints like Govinda Damodara Swamigal, Maha Periyava, and Shivan Sar. Even if such a Sathsangam is not available in person, ***satkathAyAH shravaNamapi*** – one must listen to their nectar-like words and listen to accounts about them. Just like listening to the Ramayana, constantly listening to the divine experiences of Maha Periyava is also ***satkatha shravanam***.

sadA dEvi datvA – O Mother, constantly bestow all of these upon me.

kR^ipAbdhE – O ocean of compassion!

vidyAM shuddhAM cha buddhiM – Self-knowledge (Atma Vidya) and a pure intellect—that is, purification of the mind (Chitta Shuddhi).

kamalajadayitE – O Goddess Sharada, beloved consort of Brahma who arose from the lotus, *satvaraM dEhi mahyam* – grant me atma vidya and chitta suddhi swiftly.

If anyone approached him troubled by Chevvai Dosham (Mars affliction), he would suggest reading this shloka 108 times daily

सर्वमंगल मांगल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थ साधिके । शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरी नारायणी नमोऽस्तुते ॥

sarvamangala mAMgalyE shivE sarvArtha sAdhikE |
sharaNyE tryambakE gaurI nArAyaNI namO.astutE ||

To get a good bride or groom for oneself or one's child, he would advise lighting a lamp in the evening during the Pradosham time (between 4:30 PM and 7:30 PM) and chanting the line: शिव शङ्कर सर्वात्मन् श्रीमातर्जगदम्बिके “shiva sha~Nkara sarvAtman shrImAtar-jagadambike” 1008 times.

To gain relief from issues at work, court litigations, and similar troubles that cause severe mental agony, he would tell people to sit in one place and chant: अपराजित पिङ्गाक्ष नमस्ते रामपूजित “aparAjita pi~NgAkSha namaste rAmapUjita” 336 times, and thereafter chant it whenever they found free time throughout the day. That will grant us immense mental strength and patience; ultimately, it will bestow a favourable outcome as well.

In this manner, Swamigal had complete faith in “kShemANi nAmAni” (that the divine namas of Bhagavan always bestow auspiciousness and well-being). By chanting the Nama manthrams taught by him, with faith in his words, we have witnessed their auspicious results countless times.

Doing Bhagavat Bhajanam in solitude is the best

Swamigal would strongly emphasize that Bhagavat Bhajanam should be done in solitude. He would say, “If many people gather together, conflicts will inevitably arise. If people establish associations (Sanghams) to conduct Bhajans, needless ego clashes like ‘Why are they not giving me a chance to lead? Are you better than me? Should I only sing the chorus?’ will emerge.”

Well, One might think, "How can I do Bhajanai all alone? Should there not be at least one person to provide the shruti (drone accompaniment)?" and tell a friend, "Come to this temple by eight o'clock." That friend will arrive a bit late at eight-thirty. As soon as he arrives, when asked, "Why are you late?", they will spend time until ten-thirty just talking about why he was late and gossiping about his office matters! In this way, the entire time will simply be lost in idle talk. Even if there are just two people, time gets wasted in pointless chatter. Swamigal used to say, "Doing Bhagavat Bhajanam in solitude is truly most beneficial." Even the Acharya (Adi Shankara) states in the Sopana Panchakam: "ekAnte (in solitude) sukhamAsyatAm (find your peace) paratare (upon the Supreme Being) chetaH samAdhIyatAm (fix the mind steadfastly)", does he not?

However, we are unable to sit alone and do Bhajanam. We are able to do 'binge-watching' on Netflix all alone for hours together; but doing Parayanam sitting alone for even one hour, tastes like bitter medicine for us. Do you know why? We are afflicted with a fever called moham, 'delusion and attachment towards worldly matters.' To a tongue afflicted with fever, even a sweet delicacy tastes bitter, does it not? It is just like that.

Periyava understood this very well and said that just as bitter medicine is taken along with honey, one can initially join a satsangam to perform Bhajans together. However, the sacred words of great sages possessing eternal and auspicious glory, like Valmiki and Vyasa, constitute the true satsangam. Even when we are reading alone, we must feel that we are reading along with Sage Valmiki; Swamigal always read the Srimad Bhagavatam with the constant awareness that Krishna Himself is listening and Maha Periyava Himself is listening!

When Swamigal was 43 years old, Maha Periyava seated Swamigal right by His side for the very first time and asked him to read Bhagavatam. After having read in the divine presence of Periyava, wherever he read Bhagavatam

or delivered a Pravachanam thereafter, the enduring remembrance that "Periyava is with me and listening to me" would always dwell within him, isn't it! One must read in solitude with a melting heart and such a divine awareness. Only then can one attain that exalted state of Bhakthi described in the upcoming verses.

What is true Satsangam?

Swamigal would share a beautiful insight from Ramayanam to explain what true satsangam really is. In the Ashoka Vatika, Sita Devi felt immense joy upon hearing the divine story of Rama narrated by Hanuman from atop the tree. Hanuman climbed down and asked, "Who are you?", to which Sita also replied. A sense of trust began to develop in her.

However, the moment Hanuman took a step forward, a sudden fear gripped her: "Could it be that Ravana himself has come in this disguise?" She immediately fell silent. Hanuman kept doing Namaskarams. When someone offers Namaskarams, one must bestow a blessing, right? Sita Devi said, "If you are truly Rama's messenger, may you be well and prosperous!" Swamigal would say, "This alone is more than enough for us; we are Bhakthas of Maha Periyava who is 24-carat pure gold; what worry do we have?"

Sitadevi tells Hanuman, "If you are a Rama Bhaktha, may you be blessed" Then Sita said, "That day, Ravana arrived in the guise of a Sannyasi. Yet, looking at him, my heart trembled in fear. Today, you have come in the form of a monkey. The world considers seeing a monkey in the morning inauspicious, and I, too, am deeply distressed. However, beholding you brings contentment and profound peace to my mind."

Using this incident, Swamigal taught us a lesson: "When we associate with a group under the name of 'satsangam', we must examine whether our mind attains genuine peace because of it." If he shared this teaching with others, those who approached him would naturally put it to the test with him first,

right? He was willing to undergo that test. We must examine in such a manner and associate only with genuine satsangam.

Nowadays, everyone has money, but nobody possesses true peace of mind. A constant, underlying restlessness always persists. Yet, whenever one entered Swamigal's presence, that anxiety would instantly subside. Even if someone arrived carrying unbearable sorrows, Swamigal would begin recounting divine stories, saying, "Listen, I will narrate the Dhruva Charitram; its phalasruti states that listening to it brings complete peace of mind." By narrating some divine aspect of Bhagavan in this manner, he would restore peace and tranquility to their hearts.

Uthama, Madhyama, and Prakrutha Bhakthi

In the next two to three Shlokams, the definitions of who an Uthama Bhaktha is and who a Madhyama Bhaktha is, are described. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, they did not use the term 'Adhama Bhaktha' (inferior Bhaktha); because once Bhakthi has entered someone's heart, that person can never be considered inferior (adhama). A term called 'Prakrutha Bhaktha' has been used instead—meaning a beginner-level Bhaktha.

Seeing Bhagavan everywhere and in everything

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 6:

भूतान्येतानि भूतात्मकमपि सकलं, पक्षिमत्स्यान् मृगादीन्,
मर्त्यान् मित्राणि शत्रून्पि, यमितमतिस्त्वन्मयानि, आनमानि ।
त्वत्सेवायां हि सिद्ध्येत्, मम तव कृपया, भक्तिदार्ढ्यं विरागः,
त्वत्तत्त्वस्यावबोधोऽपि च, भुवनपते, यत्नभेदं विनैव ॥

bhUtAnyEtAni bhUtAtmakamapi sakalaM, pakShimatsyAn mR^igAdIn,
martyAn mitrANi shatrUnapi, yamitamativanmayAni, AnamAni I shall
behold and worship only you in the five primordial elements, in the universe
formed by their combination, in fishes, birds, and animals, in friends, and in
foes—in each and everything.

Next, he describes the quintessential qualities of an Uthama Bhaktha. "The one who beholds the divine everywhere and in everything is an Uthama Bhaktha." Saints have sung about this state of 'the divine everywhere and in everything' in various ways. In Thiruvagasam:

"வானாகி மண்ணாகி வளியாகி ஒளியாகி
ஊனாகி உயிராகி உண்மையுமாய் இன்மையுமாய்
கோனாகி யான் எனது என்று அவரவரைக் கூத்தாட்டு
வானாகி நின்றாயை என் சொல்லி வாழ்த்துவனே!"

vAnAgi maNNAgi vaLiyAgi oLiyAgi
Ungki uyirAgi uNmaiYumAy inmaiYumAy
kOnAgi yAn enadhu enRu avaravaraik kUththATTu
vAnAgi ninRAYai en solli vAzhththuvanE!

Thus Manikkavasagar sings: "Becoming the sky, the earth, the wind, and the light; becoming the flesh and the life-breath; becoming truth and untruth; becoming the ruler of all this and orchestrating the dance of each individual under the notion of 'I' and 'mine'—standing as all this, in what words shall I praise you?"

Arunagirinathar expresses the same:

"வானோ புனல்பார் கனல் மாருதமோ
ஞானோதயமோ நவில் நான்மறையோ
யானோ மனமோ எனையாண்டவிடம்
தானோ பொருளாவது ஷண்முகனே"

vAnO punalpAr kanal mArudhamO
njAnOdhayamO navil nAnmaRaiyO
yAnO manamO enaiyANdaviDam
thAnO poruLAvadhu shaNmukanE

He says, "O Shanmukha! Is the ultimate reality the sky, the water, the earth, the fire, or the wind? Is it the dawn of wisdom, or the renowned four Vedas? Is it myself, the mind, or the divine realm that has taken dominion over me?"

To our Mooka Kavi, the entire universe of moving and unmoving beings appears as Kamakshi.

चराचरजगन्मयीं सकलहृन्मयीं चिन्मयीं गुणत्रयमयीं जगत्त्रयमयीं त्रिधामामयीम् ।
परापरमयीं सदा दशदिशां निशाहर्मयीं परां सततसन्मयीं मनसि चिन्मयीं शीलये ॥

charAcharajaganmayIM sakalahR^inmayIM chinmayIM
guNatrayamayIM jagattrayamayIM tridhAmAmayIM |*
parAparamayIM sadA dashadishAM nishAharmayIM
parAM satatasanmayIM manasi chinmayIM shIlayE ||

Appar Peruman sets out wishing to go to Kailasam. He travels with immense difficulty. At one point, unable to walk, he crawls on the ground; his hands and legs bleed profusely. Nevertheless, making every effort, he continues without giving up. At that moment, Bhagavan Shiva grants him darshan in the form of an elderly man and tells him, "Take a dip in this nearby Surya Theertham tank." Appar Peruman takes a dip in that tank and emerges. To his astonishment, he arrives at the sacred kshetram of Thiruvaiyaru!

There, the temple gopuram of the grand Thiruvaiyaru temple becomes visible. He goes to have darshan of Aiyarappar. At that time, he sings:

"மாதர் பிறைக் கண்ணியானை மலையான் மகளோடும் பாடிப்
போதொடு நீர் சுமந்தேத்தி புகுவார் அவர்பின் புகுவேன்"

"mAdhar piRaik kaNNiyAnai malaiyAn magaLOdum pADip
pOdhodu nIr sumandhEththi pukuvAr avarbin pukuvEn"

He says, "I shall follow right behind those who enter the temple, singing in praise of Eashwara and Ambal, carrying theertham for abhishekam and fresh blossoms for archana."

"யாதும் சுவடு படாமல் ஐயாறு அடைகின்ற போது"

yAdhum suvaDu paDAmal aiyARu aDaiginRa pOdhu

"Without leaving any trace of footsteps as I reach Aiyaru." He conveys: "I did not arrive by straining myself to walk; I suddenly found myself at Thiruvaiyaru." As he arrives like that:

A male elephant and a female elephant come ambling playfully. The moment he looks at them, they appear to Appar Peruman as Parvati and Parameshwara. He melts in Bhakthi, exclaiming,

காதல் மடப்பிடியோடும் களிறு வருவன கண்டேன்
கண்டேன் அவர் திருப் பாதம் கண்டறியாதன கண்டேன்!

kAdhal maDappiDiYODum kaLiRu varuvana kaNDEn
kaNDEn avar Tirup pAdham kaNDaRiyAdhana kaNDEn!

"I beheld his sacred feet! There, I attained a divine vision never before experienced in all my life." In the same manner, whether as a rooster and a hen, or as a swan and its mate, he beholds the darshan of Parvati and Parameshwara in every pair. He witnesses the entire universe as the unified embodiment of Shiva-Shakti.

Similarly, Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada has a cosmic vision in Srisailam. Though he visited and sang at many sacred shrines (Kshetrams), it seems he had a special fondness for Srisailam. I say this because, he authored a work titled Yoga Taravali. It is a Vedantic treatise on how to dissolve the mind completely—that is, how to quiet the mind entirely and abide in a state of absolute Samadhi. In that book, a verse says, "When will I sit in a cave in Srisailam, absorbed in Samadhi as motionless as a tree trunk (SthAnu), to the point where birds come and build nests in my ears?" Such was his love for Srisailam. In the Stothram Shivananda Lahari, which he composed, he mentions Srisailam a few times. It looks to me that from the 50th verse to the 55th verse, he has sung about the cosmic vision he experienced.

One day, Acharya would have remained in a state of Samadhi in a cave in Srisailam from morning until evening like he wished. Emerging from the cave, he would have smelled the rich fragrance of jasmine flowers and seen them in the plants around. Immediately, with the words Sandhyarambha Vijrmbhitam,

(shloka 50) he sings of Mallikarjuna Swamy as the jasmine flower itself. Then, many bees arrive and settle on those jasmine blossoms; with the shloka Bhrngiccha, (shloka 51) he sings of Bhagavan as the bees. Later, clouds gather gently in the sky; he sings of Parameshwara as the cloud. (shloka 52) Seeing that cloud, a peacock spreads its feathers and dances; he sings of Parameshwara as the peacock (shloka 53). Then many more peacocks arrive, and in the following shloka, he again sings of Bhagavan as the peacock (shloka 54). In the next two shlokams, (shloka 55 and 56) he sings of Shiva's dance of bliss. In this way, seeing Parameshwara in everything around him, the entire scene would have appeared to him as the *Ananda Tandavam* of Bhagavan, and thus a cosmic vision in this material world itself.

Vairagyam and Jnanam can be attained through Bhakthi alone

Next line of the shloka says,

tvatsEvAyAM hi siddhyEt, mama tava kR^ipayA, bhaktidArDhyaM virAgaH, tvattatvasyAvabOdhO.api cha, bhuvanapatE, yatnabhEdaM vinaiva By your boundless grace, solely through the devotional services offered to you, I will attain steadfast Bhakthi, dispassion (Vairagyam) that grants freedom from worldly desires, and the knowledge of your true nature (Tatva Jnanam).

There is a beautiful analogy for this in Bhagavatam. Say, a person who has been starving for two to three days gets some food. He eats it morsel by morsel. As he eats, his hunger is appeased, he feels satisfied and his energy returns. His body receives nourishment and grows. He performed only a single act—eating the food. Just as he gained all three benefits through that one action, simply by practicing Bhakthi, our Bhakthi becomes firm, Vairagyam arises, and knowledge of the supreme is realized.

Swamigal would emphasize this phrase, *yatna bheda vinaiva* (without separate, distinct efforts). He held that there is no need to practice Ashtanga Yoga separately, nor is there a need to attend Vedanta lessons. Simply engaging in intense Bhagavat Bhajanam through Puja, Nama Japa*, and Parayanam of the scriptures itself will bring about Vairagyam and Jnanam.

Seeing him practice Bhakthi alone and shine with Vairgayam and Jnanam instilled deep faith in me, in the above premise.

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 7:

नो मुह्यन् क्षुत्तृडाद्यैः, भवसरणिभवैः, त्वन्निलीनाशयत्वात्,
चिन्तासातत्यशाली, निमिषलवमपि त्वत्पदात् अप्रकम्पः ।
इष्टानिष्टेषु तुष्टिव्यसनविरहितो, मायिकत्वावबोधात्
ज्योत्स्नाभिः त्वन्नखेन्दोः, अधिकशिशिरितेन, आत्मना सञ्चरेयम् ॥

He further elaborates on the quintessential attributes of an exalted bhakta.

nO muhyan kShuttR^iDAdyaiH, bhavasaraNibhavaiH Having been born into this world, hunger and thirst affect everyone. However, they do not affect an exalted bhakta. Bhattathri has beautifully transformed what is stated there in Bhagavatam into a personal prayer unto Bhagavan here, praying, "May it not affect me!" **tvannilInAshayatvAt** May hunger and thirst remain unfelt by me by perpetually anchoring my mind unto you alone.

chintAsAtatyashAI, nimiShalavamapi tvatpadAt aprakampaH My mind must not wander away from your holy feet even for a single moment.

iShTAniShTEShu tuShTivyanavirahitO, mAyikatvAvabOdhaT An exalted bhakta is one who, with clear discernment, remains aloof from dualities like pleasure and pain, understanding that differentiating people with thoughts like "I like this person; I dislike that person," and the resulting notions—"If events happen this way, it brings joy (Tushti); if they happen that way, it brings grief (Vyasana)"—are all caused solely by maya.

jyOtsnAbhiH tvannakhEndOH adhikashishiritEna, AtmanA sa~ncharEyam Does he experience no worries at all? If one wonders whether concerns about spouse, children, and finances exist for him—they certainly do! However, because his mind is perpetually kept cool and serene by the moonlight radiating from the toenails of Bhagavan's holy feet (Nakhendu), worldly worries do not perturb him. He wanders through the world immersed in boundless bliss.

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 8:

भूतेषु एषु त्वदैक्यस्मृतिसमधिगतौ, नाधिकारोऽधुना चेत्
त्वत्प्रेम, त्वत्कमैत्री, जडमतिषु कृपा, द्वित्सु भूयात् उपेक्षा ।
अर्चायां वा समर्चाकुतुकं, उरुतरश्रद्धया वर्धतां मे,
त्वत्संसेवी तथापि, द्रुतमुपलभते भक्तलोकोत्तमत्वम् ॥

bhUtEShu EShu tvadaikyasmR^itisamadhigatau, nAdhikArO.adhunA chEt "O Guruvayurappa! Even if you say that I do not possess the eligibility right now for that exalted state of Jnanam (Uthama Bhakthi) of beholding Bhagavan in all living beings, it does not matter; let me at least attain the characteristics of a Madhyama bhakta. **tvatprEma** May I be blessed with intense love towards you, **tvatkamaitrI** noble friendship with your bhaktas, **jaDamatiShu kR^ipA** compassion towards ordinary people who are spiritually inert without wisdom, **dvitsu bhUyAt upEkShA** and an attitude of indifference towards those who harbor hatred towards you." This alone is the mark of a Madhyama bhakta.

archAyAM vA samarchAkutukaM, urutarashraddhayA vardhatAM mE Some people often say, "I am not good at socializing with bhaktas; I love to have darshan of Parthasarathy Perumal. My Pillaiyar is there for me. It is enough for me to just keep watching water being poured over his head (witnessing the abhishekam)," don't they? In that manner, may my longing and fondness for vigraha aradhana (deity worship) keep growing with deep faith.

tvatsaMsEvI tathApi, drutamupalabhatE bhaktalOkOttamatvam If one continues as such a Prakrutha bhakta by performing deity worship, one will elevate oneself very quickly into an Uthama bhakta.

How beautifully Bhattathri has expressed this! He says, "First, practice Prakrutha Bhakthi; then friendship towards bhaktas will arise in you (Madhyama Bhakthi); after that, Uthama Bhakthi, which enables you to see Bhagavan everywhere, will naturally become yours."

In the sixth, seventh, and eighth Shlokams, we learnt about Uthama Bhakthi, Madhyama Bhakthi, and Prakrutha Bhakthi. Let us summarize that once more. Whoever forgets even hunger and thirst because his mind is deeply immersed in Bhagavan is an Uthama bhakta—just like Shivan Sar.

Whoever does not detach his mind from the feet of Bhagavan even for a single moment, even if offered the wealth of all three worlds, is an Uthama bhakta—just like Swamigal.

Whoever has no pride whatsoever regarding education, wealth, or high birth is an Uthama bhakta. Whoever displays neither delight nor distress towards others is an Uthama bhakta.

Speaking of this brings an incident to mind. If someone came to Swamigal and shared their hardships, he would offer them a remedy, saying, "Chant this Shloka." But when they came the next time, he would never ask on his own, "Did you chant it?" If we asked him about this, he would simply say, "We convey it; if Bhagavan wills (Prerana), they will chant, and Bhagavan will bestow the corresponding fruit." He never expected them to return and thank him. If they were destined to receive Bhagavan's grace through him, it would happen; that was all.

Generally, we see elderly people complaining, "Nobody tells me anything; nobody consults me." Well, even if someone comes and takes advice, they keep inquiring later whether the other person accepted their suggestion. If they do not, they get angry that, "people take my advice, but they do not follow them." Because of this, nobody asks them for advice. The world is like that. But our Swamigal would never feel distress or delight with anyone like this. He would remain grounded with the clarity: "Everything is Ishvara Sankalpam; all this is the play of Maya." I have witnessed the pinnacle of this directly.

There was a person who, like V.J.R. Mama was closely associated with Swamigal for about ten to twelve years, learning everything from him and performing Parayanam regularly. Later, he and his family distanced

themselves from Swamigal, saying, "He is unyielding in his principles. That is why financial difficulties keep compounding. All this will not work in this modern times; he is too stubborn."

Sri Sundarkumar Anna, had darshan of Swamigal in the sannidhi of Maha Periyava and subsequently visited Swamigal regularly and learnt many things. He started speaking about Swamigal's greatness every day in his Pravachanams; Upon hearing this, that former family returned to Swamigal. When they came and offered Namaskarams after about thirteen years, Swamigal showed no difference at all and welcomed them affectionately. Not only that, he subsequently participated in the joys and sorrows in their family. Everyone present there was utterly amazed! Everyone wondered in awe, "They said all kinds of things and abandoned you; When they returned, how is it possible to interact with them just like before without any anger?" That is the quintessential quality of an Uthama bhakta.

Bhattathri prays, "If I have not yet attained the eligibility for such an Uthama Bhakthi, for that state of universal oneness (Aikatmya Bhava), grant me deep love (Prema) towards you, friendship towards your bhaktas, mercy towards those who are spiritually inert, and indifference towards adversaries." This is Madhyama Bhakthi. He adds, "Even if I lack that, Bless me a deep yearning for vigraha aradhana." This is the foundational stage of Bhakthi (Prakrutha Bhakthi). Bhattathri concludes beautifully in the eighth shloka that if one begins to perform Prakrutha Bhakthi in this manner, they themselves will evolve into Uthama bhaktas with the passage of time.

Pancha Kruthya Parayana

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 9:

आवृत्य त्वत्स्वरूपं, क्षितिजलमरुदाद्यात्मना विक्षिपन्ती,
जीवान् भूयिष्ठकर्मावलिविवश गतीन्, दुःखजाले क्षिपन्ती ।
त्वन्माया माभिभून्मां, अयि भुवनपते, कल्पते तत्प्रशान्त्यै
त्वत्पादे भक्तिरेवेत्यवदत्, अयि विभो, सिद्धयोगी प्रबुद्धः ॥

AvR^itya tvatsvarUpaM, kShitijalamarudAdyAtmanA vikShipantI, jIvAn bhUyiShThakarmAvalivivasha gatIn Your Maya conceals your true nature (Svarupa) and projects this universe in forms such as Kshiti (earth), Jalam (water), and Marut (wind) etc. May your maya—which enjoins births to Jivas according to their respective karmas **duHkhajAI kShipantI tvanmAYa mAbhibhUnmAM** and casts them into a web of sorrow—not overpower me.

ayi bhuvanapatE O Jagannatha! **siddhayOgI prabuddhaH** The yogi named Prabuddha has declared that **kalpatE tatprashAntyai tvatpAdE bhaktirEvEtyavadat, ayi vibhO** Bhakthi unto your holy feet alone has the power to dispel that maya.

The phenomenon wherein Maya conceals the Brahman and presents it to us as the world is called Tirodhanam (concealment). Bhagavan performs five cosmic functions: Srishti, Sthiti, Layam, Tirodhanam, and Anugraham. Bhagavan alone carries out these five cosmic actions: creating the universe (Srishti), sustaining it (Sthiti), dissolving it into himself at the time of dissolution (Layam), concealing through this Maya the truth that everything is indeed Parabrahman (Tirodhanam), and bestowing grace upon blessed bhaktas by removing that veil of Maya (Anugraham). Ambal is revered as Panchakritya Parayana, and Parameshwara is also hailed as such. If their grace is present, we can be liberated from the grasp of maya.

In the next Shloka, he describes a means (Upaya) for how one can attain the supreme blessedness of beholding God in everything one sees.

Narayaneeyam dashakam 91, Verse 10:

दुःखानि आलोक्य जन्तुषु, अलं उदितविवेकः, अहं आचार्यवर्यात्,
लब्ध्वा त्वद्रूपतत्त्वं, गुणचरित कथाद्युद्धवत् भक्तिभूमा ।
मायामेनां तरित्वा, परमसुखमये त्वत्पदे मोदिताहे,
तस्यायं पूर्वरङ्गः पवनपुरपते, नाशय अशेषरोगान् ॥

duHkhAni AlOkya jantuShu, alaM uditavivEkaH In this world, everyone has various kinds of sorrows. When going to school, there is the anxiety about securing good marks; after that, one needs to get a good job. After securing a job, there is the worry about earning a good name there. Following that, once married, diverse anxieties seize hold. Worry about children; worry about grandchildren; worry about money is unending throughout one's entire life. In this manner, anxieties and tribulations abound in manifold ways for everyone.

Contemplating this, even though it is true that "through Bhakthi, all desired objects will be attained," we must develop the discernment (Vivekam) that even if we ask and receive from Bhagavan this and that, Paramashanti (the supreme peace) is not found in them.

If so, inquiring into how that Paramashanti, Vairagyam, and Jnanam can be attained, **ahaM AchAryavaryAt** I must learn from an exalted Guru—an exalted Guru is not merely one who has studied Vedanta, but one who has experienced the truths in Vedanta. **labdhvA tvadrUpatatvaM** If one listens to and understands the truth of your divine form (Roopa Tattvam) from such an exalted Guru, **guNacharita kathAdyudbhavat bhaktibhUmA** and listens to your divine qualities, your sacred stories, abundant Bhakthi will arise.

mAyAmEnAM taritvA, paramasukhamayE tvatpadE mOditAhE After such Bhakthi arises, transcending maya, I shall revel in that supreme bliss. **tasyAyaM pUrvara~NgaH pavanapurapatE, nAshaya ashESharOgAn O** Guruvayurappa, as the preliminary step towards that, please eradicate all my ailments; thus concludes this dashakam.

Sadguru charaNAravindAbhyam namah

The phrase "Acharyavarya" comes in this shloka, right? After having the darshan of Swamigal and understanding him, I held onto his holy feet firmly. Until then, I used to wander here and there in search of a Guru. But after meeting Swamigal, understanding him in a short while, and surrendering unto him, I made a firm decision never to go seeking anyone else.

Because he instructed me to, I had darshan of Shivan Sar. Shivan Sar told me, "Swamigal is a saint who has surrendered his body, wealth, soul, and everything to Ramayanam and Bhagavatam; it is impossible to see such an exalted soul. Write down whatever he says. Gaining his refuge is greater than securing a job worth 2000 rupees." On Swamigal's 63rd Jayanthi, I was with Shivan Sar. When I mentioned, "Today is Swamigal's Janma Nakshatram (birth star)," placing his joined palms over his head, Sar said, "I too pray that he remains well," thereby nurturing my Bhakthi towards Swamigal.

I have had the darshan of Maha Periyava; I have had the darshan of Shivan Sar. People would say, "If you visit Sri Matam, go and meet the other Sannyasis there as well." But I never felt the urge to go and see anyone else. I told Swamigal directly, "I am happy being with you, That is enough for me."

In Thiruvagasagam there is a verse:

"கற்றறியேன் கலைஞானம் கசிந்துருகேன் ஆயிடினும்
மற்றறியேன் பிறதெய்வம் வாக்கியலால் வார்கழல்வந்து
உற்று இறுமாந்திருந்தேன்"

kaRRaRiyEn kalaijnAnam, kasindhurukEn Ayidinum,
maRRaRiyEn piRadheyvam, vAkkiyalAl vArkazhalvandhu
uRRu iRumAndhirundhEn

It means "I have not studied scriptures. Neither do I melt with emotion when practicing Bhakthi. Yet, holding firmly onto your feet with the conviction that "You alone are my deity," I remain proud and confident. I remained content with the thought, "Swamigal is there for me; that is sufficient." Swamigal used to say, "He hero-worships me." If one remains like that, do you know how their grace flows? எம் பெருமானே அடியேற்குப் பொற்றவிசு நாய்க்கிடுமா
றன்றேநின் பொன்னருளே

em perumAnE! adiyERkup poRthavisu nAykkiDumARu anRE nin ponnaruLE

He says, "If someone has a dog they are fond of, they might even provide a golden throne for it, wouldn't they? Like that, he says: "You have bestowed such golden grace upon me." Actually, if one maintains unswerving,

single-minded Bhakthi towards the Guru, Bhagavan will shower blessings far beyond one's qualifications.

As the very embodiment of the term "Acharyavaryah," what I witnessed in Swamigal was a state where his mind would not deviate from Bhagavan's feet even for a moment, even if offered the wealth of all three worlds. In my life, as far as I have seen, he was the only one who lived with utter dispassion towards money, wholeheartedly and honestly practicing until the age of 75 what he declared at the age of 28: *dhanena na ramAmahe* (We do not rejoice in wealth). For that single virtue alone, I resolved that he is my Sadguru.

Shivan Sar also sent many seekers who visited him to Swamigal, saying, "Triplicane Swamigal is truly qualified to be a Guru. Learn whatever he teaches you and conduct yourself as he directs."

To those who listen to me, I say, "All the quintessential attributes of a Guru reside in Swamigal. Understand him and take him as your Guru." Many people follow this and receive his blessings. Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal lived as such an exalted Guru, Acharyavarya, and he continues to remain so even today.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये एकनवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।

श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE EkanavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |

shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |

shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

92nd Dashakam: Karma and Bhakthi

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 1:

वेदैस्सर्वाणि कर्माणि, अफलपरतया वर्णितानीति बुद्ध्वा,
तानि त्वय्यर्पितान्येव हि समनुचरन्, यानि नैष्कर्म्यमीश ।
मा भूत् वेदैर्निषिद्धे, कुहचिदपि मनःकर्मवाचां प्रवृत्तिः,
दुर्वर्जं चेत् अवाप्तं तदपि खलु, भवति अर्पये चित्प्रकाशे ॥

vEdaissarvANi karmANi, aPhalaparatayA varNitAnIti budhvA, tAni
tvayyarpitAnyEva hi samanucharan, yAni naiShkarmyamIsha Bhattathri
says, "Many meritorious deeds (punya karyas) are prescribed in the karma
kanda sections of the Vedas. Understanding that all of them are taught solely
for achieving naishkarmya siddhi (performing actions without attachment to
their fruits, attaining purity of mind, and thereby gaining spiritual knowledge),
I will observe and practice them, offering them entirely unto You, Bhagavan."
mA bhUt vEdairniShiddhE, kuhachidapi manaHkarmavAchAM pravR^ittiH
Regarding actions forbidden by the Vedas, he prays: "May my inclination
never veer towards them through my mind, words, or deeds
(manah-karma-vacham); grant me such a benediction." If the scripture says,
"Do not consume intoxicants," one must never do so under any circumstance.

He continues, durvarjaM chEt avAptaM "If circumstances beyond my control
force me into doing something like that, tadapi khalu, bhavati arpayE
chitprakAshE I shall surrender even that into Your light of pure consciousness
(chit-prakasha)." In this modern day and age, bound by constraints, we often
end up doing things that are not endorsed by the Shastras. All of those, too,
must be surrendered unto Bhagavan.

Bhakthi towards God in a form fosters Bhakthi

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 2:

यस्त्वन्यः कर्मयोगस्तव भजनमयः, तत्र चाभीष्टमूर्ति,
हृद्यां सत्त्वैकरूपां, दृषदि हृदि मृदि, क्वापि वा, भावयित्वा ।

पुष्पैः गन्धैः निवेद्यैः, अपि च विरचितैः, शक्तितो भक्तिपूतैः
नित्यं वर्या सपर्या विदधत् अयि विभो त्वत्प्रसादं भजेयम् ॥

yastvanyaH karmayOgastava bhajanamayaH Within this Karma Yoga itself, there is a form of Karma Yoga that takes the shape of worshipping You. **tatra chAbhIShTamUrtiM, hR^idyAM satvaikarUpAM** That means meditating upon a form of yours, dear to oneself, and that form should be of a Sattva nature. It should be Hridayam —the moment one sees it, love must well up, and every time one looks at it, joy must grow. **dR^iShadi hR^idi mR^idi, kvApi vA, bhAvayitvA** It is visualizing that divine form in a consecrated idol (Vigraha) of stone or clay, or within the mind itself. In modern times, we perform worship using pictures, and that too is entirely appropriate.

Swamigal gave a 6x4 size picture of Pillaiyar to my friend, named it "Jaya Sri Ganapathi," and instructed him: "Frame this picture and keep it in Puja. Every day without fail, spend ten minutes doing archana with a few blades of Arugampul (Bermuda grass) , and offer some dry raisins as Naivedyam." Beside that brief time spent in daily ritual on one hand, one should cultivate the habit of informing this Pillaiyar before starting anything, and whenever a good delicacy is obtained, he must partake of it only after offering it before Him or remembering Him. In this way, by directing the mind towards our chosen deity, we should perform deeds that nurture our Bhakthi towards Him or Her. Swamigal used to say that developing Bhakthi is far more important than elaborate Puja.

Swamigal's own Guruvayurappan was a beautiful idol about one foot tall, resembling Bhagavan in Guruvayur Himself. It was exceptionally charming with the same conch, discus, mace, lotus, those sacred feet, that enchanting smile, and a peacock feather adorning the head. Every day, he would perform Abhishekam with milk and sandalwood paste while reciting the Narayaneeyam. Then he would wipe it dry, apply sandalwood paste and Kumkum, adorn it with garments and ornaments, and perform Archana by chanting the Krishna Ashtothram. He would hold the idol in his hands and

pamper it just like one fondles a little child, and then ward off the evil eye (Drishti). He used to perform Puja with such immense affection.

If anyone offered milk for the Abhishekam, he would accept it. Other than that, he was firm in his principle that we must perform our worship relying entirely on our own means without accepting anything from outside. He would plainly say, "There are temples and Maths to perform Puja with grand offerings; donate there. For our household worship, we should not take anything from outsiders."

puShpaiH gandhaiH nivEdyaiH, api cha virachitaiH, shaktitO bhaktipUtaiH
Flowers, sandalwood paste, and Naivedyam should be offered in worship according to each person's individual capacity. As for how pure these offerings should be, one should not scare everyone in the name of extreme orthodoxy (Aacharam); rather, one must worship using articles purified through Bhakthi (Bhakthipoothai).

nityaM varyAM saparyAM vidadhat Worship must be performed every single day. That constancy is what matters most in Bhajanam. **ayi vibhO tvatprasAdaM bhajEyam** Through this, I seek Your Prasada, your grace.

Stothra Parayanam is greater than Pooja

There is a Shloka which begins with "kOTipUjAsamaM stOtraM" Its essence is: a Stothra is equal to koti (one crore) Pujas; Japa is equal to koti Stothras; Dhyana is equal to koti Japas; and Laya (complete absorption in the divine) is equal to koti Dhyanas. One need not over-analyze this. However, Swamigal placed great importance on Stothra Parayanam. Everyone associated with Swamigal prioritized the recitation of Stothrams.

He would say that reciting the Shloka

सुमुखश्च एकदन्तश्च कपिलो गजकर्णकः । लम्बोदरश्च विकटः विघ्नराजो विनायकः ॥
धूम्रकेतुर्गणाध्यक्षः भालचन्द्रो गजाननः । वक्रतुण्डः शूर्पकर्णः हेरम्बः स्कन्दपूर्वजः ॥

“sumukhashcha Ekadantashcha kapilO gajakarNakaH |
lambOdarashcha vikaTaH vighnarAjO vinAyakaH ||
dhUmraKEturgaNAdhyakShaH phAlachandrO gajAnanaH |
vakratuNDaH shUrpakarNaH hErambaH skandapUrvajaH ||” 63 times is
equivalent to chanting the entire Ganapathi Sahasranamam. In the case of
the Ganapathi Sahasranamam from the Puranas, one has to find a proper
place to sit with the text, and it requires dedicated time to read through it
completely. He would assert with conviction, “Recite this Shloka 63 times.
You can chant it anywhere, at any time and you will attain the same benefit.”
We visit temples, offer coconut, fruits, and Dakshina to the priest, and ask him
to perform an Ashtotharam Archana to Ganapathi. Swamigal used to say that,
likewise, if we recite a Sahasranamam ourselves for our own sake, it will
certainly yield beneficial results.

Practice Bhakthi without wasting time

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 3:

स्त्रीशूद्राः त्वत्कथादिश्रवणविरहिताः, आसतां ते दयार्हाः,
त्वत्पादासन्नयातान् द्विजकुलजनुषो, हन्त शोचामि अशान्तान् ।
वृत्त्यर्थं ते यजन्तः, बहुकथितमपि त्वामनाकर्णयन्तः,
दृप्ताः विद्याभिजात्यैः, किमु न विदधते, तादृशं मा कृथा माम् ॥

strIshUdrAH tvatkathAdishravaNavirahitAH, AsatAM tE dayArhAH “Women
and people of the fourth varna do not find the time to listen to Your divine
stories.” This might have been true during Bhattathri’s lifetime—in those days,
because they were constantly engaged in labour, they might not have had the
time or the opportunity to listen to stories of Bhagavan. He says, “Alas, they
are truly deserving of Your compassion.”

However, that is not the case in modern times. Today, everyone has time, and
there are abundant opportunities to listen to all those stories. I observe that
many women observe severe fasts (upavasa). “Upa-vasa” literally means
dwelling close to Bhagavan. Therefore, at least while fasting, or even daily,

one must do whatever is necessary to remain close to Bhagavan. One must listen to stories of Bhagavan. What occurs to me is that if women observe a vow of silence (Mouna Vrata), that would be even better than fasting. That is indeed the hardest thing. Even harder than that is staying without a mobile phone. We can try that for a day; let us at least try it for an hour. All of these are indeed great austerities (Tapas). Is it not true that undertaking what is difficult rather than what is easy constitutes Tapas? Only when one steps out of their comfort zone does it become real Tapas.

tvatpAdAsannayAtAn dvijakulajanuShO, hanta shOchAmi ashAntAn
"However, even after being born in a dvija (twice-born) lineage, because they lack Bhakthi at Your lotus feet, I grieve seeing them without peace of mind."
vR^ityarthaM tE yajantaH, bahukathitamapi tvAmanAkarNayantaH They do all sorts of things for their livelihood and perform Pujas for others. Yet, they refuse to listen to Your divine stories. Even when Your glory is extolled, they refuse to pay attention.

dR^iptAH vidyAbhijAtyaiH, kimuna vidadhatE They harbor pride, thinking, "We are so educated, we belong to the upper caste." Be that as it may, Bhattathri prays, **tAdR^ishaM mA kR^ithA mAm** "Please do not let me become like that." He prays that it is enough if he is spared from turning into such an arrogant person.

Never revile or criticize Bhakthas

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 4:

पापोऽयं कृष्ण राम इत्यभिलपति, निजं गूहितुं दुश्चरित्रं,
निर्लज्जस्यास्य वाचा, बहुतरकथनीयानि मे विघ्नितानि ।
भ्राता मे वन्ध्यशीलो, भजति किल सदा विष्णुं, इत्थं बुधान् ते
निन्दन्ति, उच्चैर्हसन्ति, त्वयि निहितमतीन्, तादृशं मा कृथा माम् ॥

itthaM tE nindanti uchchairhasanti Wicked people ridicule and mock those
budhAn tvayi nihitamatiIn wise and noble souls who know the true purpose of
life and keep their minds fixed upon You, saying, **bhrAtA mE vandhyashIO,**

bhajati kila sadA viShNuM "Take my brother, for instance—he is always busy doing Puja and Parayanam. He is not a good fellow; **pApO.ayaM kR^iShNa rAma ityabhilapati, nijaM gUhituM dushcharitraM** he keeps chanting 'Krishna, Rama' only to conceal his bad qualities. **nirlajjasyAsya vAchA, bahutarakathanIyAni mE vighnitAni** Because of his shameless conduct, all my work gets ruined." Actually, this guy wants to assign his brother some errand, and because his brother is always doing Parayanam and not giving him that chance, he gets angry at him. Bhattathri prays, **tAdR^ishaM mA kR^ithA mAm** "Please do not turn me into someone who reviles such Bhakthas and Sadhus."

Even if others do not criticize us, there is a chance that we might feel self-pity by dwelling on our own shortcomings, causing our enthusiasm for Bhajanam to diminish.

कुसुमशरगर्वसम्पत्कोशगृहं भाति काञ्चिदेशगतम् ।
स्थापितमस्मिन्कथमपि गोपितमन्तर्मया मनोरत्नम् ॥

kusumashara garvasampatkOshagR^ihaM bhAti kA~nchidEshagatam |
sthApitamasmin kathamapi gOpitamantarmayA manOratnam ||

Swamigal would quote this 65th Shlokam from the Arya Shatakam of Mooka Panchashati and say, "Deposit the jewel of your mind secretly inside the safety locker named Kamakshi." I would say, "My mind is not a jewel at all." He would reply, "Your mind too is a jewel because you read Mooka Panchashati. If you feel some blemish or dirt has accumulated on it, place your trust in the dictum of Dharma Shastra which states, 'Chanting *Srirama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama* 21 times dispels even sins as severe as Brahmahatya, chant it, and continue your Parayanam.'" He would add, "Spiritual wisdom will dawn; the ultimate truth will become clear. Keep reading the Mooka Panchashati Stothram five times again and again." Swamigal even wrote this down in my Mooka Panchashati book. He would instruct, "Do not think about anything like, 'What did I gain by doing Parayanam? Has there been progress in worldly life?"

Has there been spiritual progress? Is there a divine glow on my face? Do others respect me?' Just keep doing Parayanam; the result will be evident in the end."

I went to America. Within a few months of being there, I realized clearly that I could not bear to be separated from Swamigal. I used to write letters to him. In one of those letters, I wrote the 94th verse of Padaravinda Shatakam.

सदा स्वादुंकारं विषयलहरीशालिकणिकां समास्वाद्य श्रान्तं हृदयशुकपोतं जननि मे ।
कृपाजाले फालेक्षणमहिषि कामाक्षि रभसात् गृहीत्वा रुन्धीथास्तव पदयुगीपञ्जरपुटे ॥

sadA svAduMkAraM viShayalaharIshAlikaNikAM
samAsvAdya shrAntaM hR^idayashukapOtaM janani mE |
kR^ipAjAIE bhAIEkShaNamahiShi kAmAkShi rabhasAd
gR^ihItvA rundhIthAstava padayugIpa~njarapuTE ||

"O Mother Kamakshi, Consort of the Three-Eyed Shiva! The fledgling parrot of my heart has grown weary, having constantly gorged on the broken rice grains of worldly pleasures; casting the net of Your grace, capture me swiftly and keep me confined within the cage of Your pair of sacred lotus feet." I sent this Shloka. After reading it, Swamigal said, "Come back; enough of America for you! Do not think, 'Let me earn a little more and return, let me enjoy life a little more.' You cannot extinguish a fire by pouring ghee on it. (The feeling of contentment never comes by earning more money.) Greed is the gateway to hell. Only when the mind is turned away from it can we perform actions that benefit our Atma. Having been born as Sundaram's son (your Appa revels in Muruga Bhakthi, leads a simple life with complete fulfillment in that alone, and brings joy to everyone; look up to him), why are you sitting over there—come back." I returned immediately. Catching me in the net of his grace, he sheltered me under the shade of his holy feet.

When I went abroad, I did not seek his blessing before leaving. I am his beloved disciple. So I did not want to put him in a predicament where he has to bless me for something he did not approve of. But after I returned he

remained as compassionate towards me as always. He did not say anything like, "Ganapathy has gone abroad, he has lost *aacharam*, he is not a Brahmana at all." After returning, I asked him, "Am I still qualified to perform these Parayanams?, he simply said, "Keep doing the Parayanams." He remained affectionate, just as before.

There was another guy who also studied under Swamigal for many years, and could chant the Narayaneeyam as exquisitely as Swamigal himself. That boy had also gone abroad. One day, he visited Swamigal after returning to town. However, Swamigal did not show much warmth towards him. After he left, I asked Swamigal directly, "When I returned from abroad, you did not show any anger towards me; why were you so indifferent towards him?" To that, he replied, "No, child, it was only his friends who compelled and brought him here, saying, 'You should not leave without seeing him.' But he says, 'I will not do Namaskaram to him; whatever he does is merely a waste of time.'" Good heavens! A wave of fear gripped me. *tAdrisham ma krithA mAm*—I prayed, "O Bhagavan! Please do not ever make me like that!"

Worship of Bhagavan across the four Yugas

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 5 :

श्वेतच्छायं कृते त्वां मुनिवरवपुषं, प्रीणयन्ते तपोभिः
त्रेतायां सुक्स्तुवाद्यङ्कितं अरुणतनुं, यज्ञरूपं यजन्ते ।
सेवन्ते तन्त्रमार्गैः, विलसदरिगदं द्वापरे श्यामलाङ्गं,
नीलं सङ्कीर्तनाद्यैः इह कलिसमये, मानुषाः त्वां भजन्ते ॥

shvEtachChAyaM kR^itE tvAM munivaravapuShaM, prINayantE tapObhiH
trEtAyAM sruksruvAdya~NkitaM aruNatanuM, yaj~narUpaM yajantE |
sEvantE tantramArgaiH, vilasadarigadaM dvAparE shyAmala~NgaM,
nIlaM sa~NkIrtanAdyaiH iha kalisamayE, mAnuShAH tvAM bhajantE ||

In the Krita Yuga (Satya Yuga), people please You through Tapas (austerity) in the form of a white-complexioned sage. In the Treta Yuga, they worship You,

who possess a reddish complexion and embody the form of Yajna (sacrifice), bearing the marks of sacrificial ladles such as Sruk and Sruva. In the Dvapara Yuga, they serve You—who are radiant dark-blue (shyamala) in complexion and wield the shining discus and mace—following the paths of ritual worship prescribed in the Tantra Shastras. In this Kali Yuga, human beings worship You, who are blue-complexioned, primarily through Nama Sankirtanam (chanting of divine namas) and related practices, as spoken by the sage Karabhajana Yogi.

To put it concisely—people worship Bhagavan through austerity and meditation in Krita Yuga, through sacrificial rituals (yajnas) in Treta Yuga, and through ritual worship (Puja) in Dvapara Yuga; however, in this Kali Yuga, one can very easily attain Bhagavan solely through Nama Sankirtanam.

At this point in the Srimad Bhagavatam, two Shlokams appear describing how people praise and worship Srirama in the Kali Yuga.

ध्येयं सदा परिभवघ्नम् अभीष्टदोहं तीर्थास्पदं शिवविरिञ्चिनुतं शरण्यम् ।
भृत्यार्तिहं प्रणतपाल भवाब्धिपोतं वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥

dhyEyaM sadA paribhavaghnamabhIShTadOhaM
tIrthAspadaM shivaviri~nchinutaM sharaNyam |
bhR^ityArtihaM praNatapAla bhavAbdhipOtaM
vandE mahApuRuSha tE charaNAravindam ||

त्यक्त्वा सुदुस्त्यजसुरेप्सितराज्यलक्ष्मीं धर्मिष्ठ आर्यवचसा यदगादरण्यम् ।
मायामृगं दयितयेप्सितमन्वधावद् वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम् ॥

tyaktvA sudustyajasurEpsitarAjyalakShmIM
dharmiShTha AryavachasA yadagAdaraNyam |
mAyAmR^igaM dayitayEpsitamanvadhAvad
vandE mahApuRuSha tE charaNAravindam ||

"dhyeyaM sadA paribhavaghnam" — He who dispels the shortcomings and afflictions of those who meditate upon Him. "abhIShTadoham" — He who bestows all desired boons. "tIrthAspadam" — He who is equal to sacred holy waters (merely remembering Srirama is equivalent to taking a holy dip in the Ganges). "shivaviri~nchinutam" — He who is worshipped by Parameshwara (Shiva) and Brahma. "sharaNyam" — Srirama is, after all, the ultimate refuge for all the worlds (sarvalOka sharaNya)! "bhRtyArtiham" — He who removes the afflictions of His devotees. "praNatapAla" — He who protects His devotees who surrender to Him. "bhavAbdhipotam" — He is like a boat that enables one to cross this ocean of worldly existence (samsara). "vande mahApuruSha te charaNAravindam" — O mahApuruSha, I bow to Your lotus feet.

"tyaktvA sudustyajasurepsitarAjjalakShmIm" — Having renounced the kingdom of Kosala and the city of Ayodhya, a supreme sovereignty that even the Devas covet and which is exceedingly difficult to give up; Why did He renounce it? To obey His father's word and to uphold the promise made by his father, "dharmiShTha AryavachasA yadagAdaraNyam" — I bow to the lotus feet of the most righteous One who departed for the forest. "mAyAmRgaM dayitayepsitamanvadhAvad" — He who ran after the illusory golden deer because His beloved wife Sita desired it, "vande mahApuruSha te charaNAravindam" — O mahApuruSha, I bow down to Your lotus feet.

At the conclusion of Srirama's ritual Puja, we can offer these two beautiful Shlokams from Srimad Bhagavatam as Prarthana. In this second Shloka, it is described that He came to the forest obeying His father's words and that He chased the illusory deer because Sita wished for it. Swamigal would narrate it straightforwardly as it is, without indulging in elaborate esoteric interpretations.

Simply reading the stories of Bhagavan as they are is enough

Listening to Bhagavatam and Ramayanam from Swamigal is very easy; he narrates them in a manner that melts one's heart. He presents the story exactly as it is in the original text. While discussing a particular point, he

connects it with a relevant reference from another place within the same original source. He never says anything merely to dazzle or impress others.

Now, at this point where Srirama suffers separation from Sita, he is completely desolate. He keeps searching for her. He arrives at the spot where Jatayu and Ravana fought. It is a scene of bloodshed: the chariot is shattered, and the charioteer lies dead on the ground; Jatayu is nowhere to be seen, having fallen far away at a distance. As soon as he sees this, all the grief, hunger, thirst, physical exhaustion, and the deep sorrow of missing Sita that Srirama bore until that moment instantly turn into monumental fury.

He says: "These Devas are mocking me. Because I am gentle and virtuous, they are insulting me. I am going to avenge this; I will turn the three worlds upside down." With intense fury, he takes up his bow and arrows in hand. Since he possesses formidable celestial weapons like the Brahmastra, Srirama is truly capable of doing so. At that moment, Lakshmana clings to His feet.

This is the greatest testament to the pure, genuine love Lakshmana had for Srirama. Sita had spoken harsh, unbefitting words and sent Lakshmana away. The moment Srirama saw Lakshmana, he severely reprimanded him, saying, "Why did you come here defying my order? Did I not leave Sita behind trusting you?" Yet, Lakshmana harbored none of that in his heart. Out of pure love, holding on to Srirama's feet, he says: "Brother, even Mother Earth experiences earthquakes. The sun and the moon undergo eclipses. Even Sage Vashistha suffered the sorrow of losing his sons. Who in this world does not face hardships? Shouldn't noble and exalted beings like you endure this with patience? In a hurricane, trees may fall, but does a mountain fall? Be courageous like that. Please do not lose your temper. Just because of one person's misdeed, is it right to say that you will annihilate the entire Rakshasa race and turn the whole world upside down? So many people place their faith in Srirama, believing that He will protect them! Please remain patient for a while."

Immediately, "pUrvajopi" — even though he was the elder brother, "uktamAtrastu" — the moment those words were spoken, "sAragrAhI" — Srirama, who would grasp the essence even if spoken by a little child. "lakShmaNena subhAShitam" — Lakshmana imparted such beautiful, wholesome words of wisdom. "mahAsAraM pratijagrH rAghavaH" — Raghava immediately accepted those profoundly meaningful words. He then asks, "All right Lakshmana, tell me, what shall we do now? Where do we go?"

At this point, Swamigal would say: "The very Srirama whom Valmiki describes as 'uttarottarayuktInAM vaktA vAchaspatiryathA' — when discussing how to solve a problem, if someone suggests an idea, Srirama would propose an even superior solution, being as intellectually brilliant as Brihaspati (Vachaspati) in offering wise counsel; that very Srirama weeps before Lakshmana, saying, 'I truly do not know what to do, my intellect has become completely clouded! Tell me, what should we do?'" Saying this, Swamigal would move us to tears for Srirama as well. That is Swamigal! Listening to Ramayanam and Bhagavatam from him is a distinct, supreme bliss. It awakens Rama Bhakthi and Krishna Bhakthi within us!

The 35th Shloka of the Mukundamala:

दारा वाराकरवरसुता ते तनूजो विरिञ्चिः स्तोता वेदस्तव सुरगणो भृत्यवर्गः प्रसादः ।
मुक्तिर्माया जगदविकलं तावकी देवकी ते माता मित्रं बलरिपुसुतस्तत्त्वतोऽन्यन्न जाने ॥

"dArA vArAkaravarasutA te tanUjo viri~nchiH
stotA vedaH tava suragaNAH bhRtyavargaH prasAdaH |
muktiH mAyA jagadavikalaM tAvakI devakI te
mAAtA mitraM balaripusutaH tvayyataH anyaM na jAne ||"

Your consort is Lakshmi, the daughter of the ocean born from the milk ocean ("vArAkaravarasutA"). One should fondly remember the story of how Lakshmi emerged from the milk ocean and garlanded Bhagavan. "te tanUjo viri~nchiH" — The lotus sprouted from Your navel, from which Brahma appeared,

representing that sacred pastime. "stotA vedaH" — The Vedas are Your eulogizers. "tava suragaNAH bhRtyavargaH" — The celestial Devas are Your attendants. "prasAdaH muktiH" — The grace that You shower is liberation (mukti) itself. "mAyA jagadavikalaM tAvakI" — This entire universe in its entirety is Your Maya. "devakI te mAtA" — Your mother is Devaki; immediately, one ought to recall the childhood pastimes (bala leelas) of Krishna shared with Devaki and Yashoda. "mitraM balaripusutaH" — Your close friend is Arjuna (the son of Indra / Balaripu)—one should meditate on Him standing as the Gita Acharya at the sacred kshetra of Tiruvallikeni. "tvayyataH anyam na jAne" — Beyond this, I know nothing else regarding You.

Like this, by reading and listening to all these leelas of Krishna, one can meditate upon Him effortlessly. How can we directly comprehend and meditate upon the abstract Brahman? That's why Swamigal would advise us to meditate upon His divine attributes through the sacred stories of Srirama and Srikrishna. This is what lies within our capacity. Caught deeply in worldly affairs, where do we have the mental power to meditate upon the unmanifest Brahman? Swamigal would teach us that if we continuously listen to these divine stories, Bhagavan will seat Himself within our hearts on His own accord.

The greatness of Kali Yuga

Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 6:

सोऽयं कालेयकालो जयति, मुररिपो यत्र, सङ्कीर्तनाद्यैः
निर्यत्नैरेव मार्गैः, अखिलदा, न चिरात्, त्वत्प्रसादं भजन्ते ।
जाताः त्रेताकृतादावपि हि किल, कलौ सम्भवं कामयन्ते
दैवात् तत्रैव जातान्, विषयविषरसैः मा विभो वञ्चयास्मान् ॥

sO.ayaM kAlEyakAlO jayati, muraripO yatra, sa~NkIrtanAdyaiH

niryatnairEva mArgaiH, akhiladA, na chirAt, tvatprasAdaM bhajantE

O Muraripu! This glorious Kali Yuga reigns triumphant. This is because, in this Kali age, through effortless and simple paths such as Sankirtanam, human

beings attain Your grace completely within a very short time (nacirāt — very swiftly, akhilada - completely, tvatprasādam bhajante - attain Your grace).

The Nama Manthram given by Govinda Damodara Swamigal

In 1990—that is, 36 years ago—Swamigal wrote this down for me on a sheet of paper:

Recite "gurumUrte tvAM namAmi kAmAkShi" four times. After that, Bilvamangala Acharya composed a work called the Govinda Damodara Stotram. Swamigal loved it very much. That is why everyone refers to him as 'Govinda Damodara Swamigal'. Here is a Shlokam from that Stothram:

ध्येयः सदा योगिभिरप्रमेयः चिन्ताहरः चिन्तितपारिजातम् ।
कस्तूरिकाकल्पितनीलवर्णः गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥

"dhyeyaH sadA yogibhiraprameyaH chintAharaH chintitapArijAtaH |
kastUrikAkalpitanIlavarNaH govinda dAmodara mAdhaveti ||"
— Recite this once.

"dhyeyaH sadA yogibhiH" — He who is ever meditated upon by yogis;
"aprameyaH" — He who is boundless and immeasurable; "chintAharaH" — He who dispels all worries and anxieties; "chintitapArijAtaH" — He who, like the wish-fulfilling Parijata tree or Kalpavriksha, bestows all desired boons upon those who contemplate upon Him; "kastUrikAkalpitanIlavarNaH" — He who possesses a dark-blue complexion resembling musk—chant those divine namas of that Srikrishna: "Govinda, Damodara, Madhava." This Shlokam is to be recited once. After that:

गोविन्द गोविन्द हरे मुरारे गोविन्द गोविन्द मुकुन्द कृष्ण ।
गोविन्द गोविन्द रथाङ्गपाणे गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ॥

"govinda govinda hare murAre govinda govinda mukunda kRShNa |
govinda govinda rathA~NgapANe govinda dAmodara mAdhaveti ||"

Swamigal instructed to chant this 72 times. When recited this way, there are 14 divine namas of Vishnu Bhagavan in this Shloka. $72 \times 14 = 1008$. It is equivalent to chanting the Vishnu Sahasranamam once. There are no restrictions whatsoever for this Nama Japa; anyone can chant it, anywhere, and at any time. One can even chant it lying down on a bed with a pillow under the head and another under the feet. Swamigal would say, "chintitapArijAtaH" — just like the Parijata tree, these divine namas of Bhagavan will grant us everything we ever wish for.

"Do you desire happiness? If you keep chanting these divine namas, you will experience a bliss superior even to that of Indra and the celestials. Do you have unbearable suffering, do you feel like crying, does your mind find no solace no matter what you do? If you keep chanting these Govinda-Damodara names, peace will descend upon your mind. Practice from right now itself so that even at that final moment when this physical body is about to fall, this Govinda-Damodara Nama comes naturally upon your tongue. If the end of this physical body occurs while chanting the divine namas of Bhagavan in this manner, Bhagavan will lead us to Goloka, or, if one is a Shiva Bhaktha, to Kailasa."

"O tongue! All my life, I have treated you to all your favourite delicacies like badam halwa and dahi vada. The only humble request and obligation I ask of you is that when Yama approaches and terrifies me by brandishing his staff, the divine Nama of Bhagavan must roll off my tongue. At that final moment, we cannot predict who will be by our side. The tongue is always present right here in the throat; therefore, O tongue, I make this plea directly to you!"—Swamigal would express this with delightful humor. In this way, we ought to train ourselves to chant the divine namas of Bhagavan without interruption.

A gentleman named Viswanatha Iyer used to visit Swamigal. By the divine grace of Swamigal, he became very wealthy. He had deep love for Ramayanam. Wherever Swamigal gave a discourse on Ramayanam,

Viswanatha Iyer would set aside his social status, go and sit there to listen till the end, and take his leave only after offering his Namaskarams to Swamigal. One of his business partners once remarked to him, "You are constantly occupied with all these Parayanams. I do not wish to disturb Bhagavan like that. God has already given me everything I need, and I am peacefully minding my own business." Viswanatha Iyer conveyed this conversation to Swamigal. Swamigal replied to him:

"Pleasure and pain (sukha-duhkha) are entirely different from true inner contentment (santushti or lasting joy). In this world pain and pleasure merely chase and cancel each other out. But true joy can arise solely from inner peace and mental equanimity. It is for that purpose that we engage in Bhagavat Bhajanam. If someone asks: 'Will doing Bhajanam increase my bank balance? Friends who went abroad have bought a house there, a house here, and acquired everything needed for an opulent life; will all of that come by simply sitting and reading like this?', the answer is: whatever is genuinely necessary for us will certainly be provided. Along with that, one will attain 'Paramam Shantim'—the highest peace; ultimately, one will attain Bhagavan Himself. The first two (receiving what is truly needful and attaining inner peace) will be realized directly in one's personal experience. As for the third, the promise that one can be liberated from the bondage of rebirth, one simply has to perform it with steadfast faith," Swamigal would say.

At this point, Bhattathri includes another beautiful prayer in the latter part of the Shloka. **jAtAH trEtAkR^itAdAvapi hi kila, kalau sambhavaM kAmayantE** "Even those born in the Treta Yuga and the Krita Yuga desire to be born in the Kali Yuga, because one can attain Bhagavan through the effortless path (of Nama Sankirtanam) in this Kali age." **daivAt tatraiva jAtAn, viShayaviSharasaiH mA vibhO va~nchayAsmAn** "Having been born in this Kali Yuga by some stroke of merit (unyPa), O Bhagavan, do not deceive us by casting us into these worldly matters and sensual objects that act like poisonous illusions (Maya)," he prays. In Kali Yuga, these worldly allurements are indeed abundant; therefore, Bhattathri prays: do not push us into them.

The glory of the Tamil land

Next is Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 7:

भक्तास्तावत्कलौ स्युः, द्रमिलभुवि ततो भूरिशः, तत्र चोच्चैः
कावेरीं, ताम्रपर्णीं, अनु किल कृतमालां च, पुण्यां प्रतीचीम् ।
हा मामपि एतत् अन्तर्भवं, अपि च विभो, किञ्चिदञ्चद्रसं त्वयि,
आशापाशैर्निबध्य, भ्रमय न भगवन्, पूरय त्वन्निषेवाम् ॥

bhaktAstAvatkalau syuH, dramilabhuvi tatO bhUrishaH In this Kali Yuga itself, there will be many Bhakthas. Especially in the Tamil country (Dravida land), Bhakthas will appear in very large numbers. **tatra chOchchaiH kAvErIM tAmraparNIM, anu kila kR^itamAlAM cha, puNyAM pratIchIm** On the banks of the sacred Kaveri River, by the shores of the Tamraparni, along the Kritamala (the Vaigai River), and near westward-flowing rivers like the Bharatapuzha—numerous Bhakthas will take birth. Is it not here that the Azhwars and the Nayanmars were born!

Nammazhwar's divine birth was at Azhwar Tirunagari. When the grand festivals of *Pagal Pathu* and *Raa Pathu* take place for Nammazhwar there, Swamigal would meditate upon him right here. Andal appeared in Srivilliputhur, and here in our own Kanchipuram, how many Bhakthas have lived near Mother Kamakshi! In holy kshetras like Tiruvannamalai, how many Siddhars and elevated sages! The Trinity of Carnatic Music took birth in Tiruvarur and created so many exquisite kirtanas for our benefit! Do you like the Kalyani raga? All three masters have composed magnificently in Kalyani. Do you like Kambhoji, or do you prefer Shankarabharanam? In all of them—and even in rare, unique ragas—Thyagaraja Swamigal composed countless gems. Listening to them, one can comfortably immerse oneself in blissful meditation of Bhagavan.

For everyone born in the Tamil land, Arunagirinathar is a huge blessing. How beautifully Arunagirinathar weaves the entire philosophical essence of the 11th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam together with Muruga Bhakthi and bestows it upon us!

Moreover, what profound love he held for the divine namas of Bhagavan! He says, (*maivarum kaṇḍattar mainda, kandā, enru vāḷttum indak kaivarum toṇḍu anṛi marṛu aṛiyēn*) "O Son of the dark-throated Shiva! O Kanda! Aside from this readily accessible service of praising You by these names, I know nothing else" He says.

Generally, whenever Arunagirinathar spoke about Vishnu Bhagavan, he would narrate stories from Ramayanam and Bhagavatam; for Parameshwara, he would vividly describe His divine form; but whenever Ambal's thought arose, the divine namas of Ambal would pour forth from his words like a flooded river breaching its banks. It was pure Nama Archana! In the song beginning with *Kamala Mātudan*, Arunagirinathar sings:

"குமரி காளி பயங்கரி சங்கரி கௌரி நீலி பரம்பரையம்பிகை
குடிலை யோகினி சண்டினி குண்டலி எமதாயீ
குறைவிலாளுமை மந்தரி அந்தரி வெகுவிதாகம சுந்தரி தந்தருள்
குமர மூஷிக முந்திய ஐங்கர கணராயன்
மம விநாயகன் நஞ்சுமழ் கஞ்சுகி அணிகஜானன விம்பனாரம்புலி
மௌலியானுரு சிந்தையுகந்தருள் இளையோனே
வளரும் வாழையும் மஞ்சளும் இஞ்சியும் இடைவிடாது நெருங்கிய மங்கல
மகிமை மாநகர் செந்திலில் வந்தருள் பெருமானே"

*kumari kāḷi bhayaṅkari shaṅkari gauri nīli parambaraiyambikai
kutilai yōgini chaṇḍini kuṇḍali yemadāyī
*kuṛaivilāḷ umai mandari andari vehuvidhāgama sundari tandaruḷ
kumara mūṣhika mundiya aiṅkara gaṇarāyan
*mama vināyakan naṅjumaḷ kaṅjuki aṇigajānana vimbanorambuli
mauliyāṇuru chintaiy ugandaruḷ ilaiyōnē
*vaḷarum vāḷaiyum maṅjaḷum iṅjiyum iḍaiviḍādu neruṅgiya maṅgala
makimai mānagar sendilil vandaruḷ perumāḷē.

In the *Seer Pada Vaguppu*, he chants: யுவதி பவதி பகவதி மதுரவசனி
பயிரவி கவுரி உமையாள் த்ரிகூலதரி வநஜை மதுபதி அமலை விசஜயை

திரிபுரை புனிதை வநிதை அபிநவை அநகை அபிராம நாயகிதன் மதலை
 *yuvati bhavati bhagavati madhuravachani bhairavi gauri umaiyāl
 trisūladhari vanasai madhupati amalai vijayai tripurai punidai vanidai
 abhinavai anagai abhirāma nāyaki tan madalai.* The *Devendra Sangha
 Vaguppu*, which begins with the phrase *dharaniyilaraniya*, a Stothram on
 Kamakshi, is celebrated by enlightened sages as a grand maha-manthram
 equivalent to the *Indrakshi Stotram*, comprising 16 lines capable of
 conferring all 16 forms of wealth and auspiciousness.

My Appa had a deep love for Tiruppugazh. Having listened to a lot of
 Tiruppugazh in our home since childhood, it became etched in my heart. Every
 year, they conduct the *Padi Vizha* (Step Festival) at Tiruttani. There, in the
 raga Karaharapriya, they sing:

"திருத்தணி மேவும் பெருமானே! உனைப்பல நாளும் திருப்புகழாலும்
 உரைத்திடுவார் தம்குளிமேவி உணர்த்திய போதம்
 தனைப்பிரியாதொண் பொலச்சரணானும் தொழுவேனோ — திருத்தணி
 மேவும் பெருமானே"

tiruttaṇi mēvum perumāḷē! unaip-pala nālum tiruppugazhālum

uraittiḍuvār tam-kuzhī-mēvi uṇarttiya bōdham

tanaip-piriyādhon polacharaṇānum tozhuvēnō — tiruttaṇi mēvum perumāḷē.

Hearing everyone sing it together on the temple steps amidst the crisp,
 refreshing December chill is pure bliss. Its meaning is equally sublime. "Having
 joined the company of Bhakthas, without forgetting the spiritual wisdom
 (Bodham) they imparted, absorbing it within my heart, practicing it in daily
 life, may I attain Your divine feet." Prayers like these beautifully emphasize
 the Bhagavata Dharma.

It is stated in the Srimad Bhagavatam that those who are born on the banks
 of the Kaveri and drink its waters will naturally attain Vishnu Bhakthi. At this
 point, Swamigal would say with a smile, "In the Shloka, Maharishi placed the
 word *'prāyasaḥ'* (generally), and that is what saved me." Swamigal would

humorously remark, "Because those born on the banks of the Kaveri are the ones migrating abroad in large numbers these days; if someone were to ask me, why not all of them are Bhakthas, what would I tell them?"

Here as well, Bhattathri includes a beautiful prayer. **hA mAmapi Etat antarbhavaM, api cha vibhO, ki~nchida~nchadrasaM tvayi** I too have taken birth in this Tamil country. By some grace, a little bit of Bhakthi towards You has also blossomed in me. **AshApAshairnibadhya, bhramaya na bhagavan, pUraya tvanniShEvAm** Do not bind me with worldly desires and attachments, tossing me here and there. "O Krishna, bless me so that I may bring Your worship to complete fruition," he prays.

The danger of Kali Yuga

Next shloka, Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 8:

दृष्ट्वा धर्मद्रुहं तं कलिमपकरुणं, प्राङ्महीक्षित् परीक्षित्,
हन्तुं व्याकृष्टखड्गोऽपि, न विनिहतवान् सारवेदी, गुणांशात् ।
त्वत्सेवादि आशु सिद्ध्येत्, असदिह न तथा, त्वत्परे चैष भीरुः,
यत्तु प्रागेव रोगादिभिः अपहरते, तत्र हा शिक्षयैनम् ॥

dR^iShTvA dharmadruhaM taM kalimapakaruNaM, prA~NmahIkShit parIkShit This is a story from the First Skandham. After Krishna Bhagavan ascended to Vaikuntam, King Parikshit was touring his kingdom. On the banks of the Saraswati River, a bull was standing on just a single leg, a cow was beside it, and Kali Purusha was relentlessly beating the bull. This bull is none other than Dharma. In the earlier yugas, Dharma stood on four legs, namely: Tapas (austerity), Shaucha (purity), Daya (compassion), and Satya (truth). Now, in the Kali age, only truth lingers to a small extent. Kali Purusha strikes that bull standing on its lone single leg. The cow standing beside it is Mother Earth (Bhumi Devi), and she too is weeping inconsolably. Upon witnessing this, fury surges within Parikshit. He draws his sword to slay Kali Purusha. However, Kali Purusha immediately falls at Parikshit's feet, surrendering to him. Kshatriyas do not slaughter those who have surrendered at their feet.

Parikshit commands, "You shall not reside in my realm." Kali Purusha replies, "My designated time has arrived; nevertheless, I shall obey your word. Grant me some place where I may reside." Thereupon, Parikshit instructs, "Go and dwell in slaughterhouses, drinking taverns, gambling dens, and brothels." "In each of these, there are specific defects: cruelty (Himsa) in slaughterhouses, intoxication (Mada) in liquor, falsehood (Anrita) in gambling, and lust (Kama) in prostitution." Later, when Kali Purusha pleads, "Grant me a little more space," Parikshit decrees, "Go and dwell in gold."

Swamigal would offer an insightful explanation for this: "These days, Upanyasakas carefully mention this as 'Kali resides in gold'. They ought to say 'Kali resides in money' instead; only then will it strike a chord with people. It is through the greed for money that Kali thrives." These four defects—cruelty, intoxication, falsehood, and lust—are all inherently present in money. If someone gambles or drinks alcohol, society despises them. However, if a person amasses wealth, the world applauds him, saying, "Aha. look how he has piled up riches!" Yet, this sacred scripture known as the Srimad Bhagavatam thoroughly rejects materialism from its very front cover to its back cover, delivering the core message that one must withdraw the mind from worldly pursuits and fix it upon Bhagavan; Swamigal would emphasize that one must proclaim this fearlessly.

hantuM vyAkR^iShTakhaDgO.apI Even though King Parikshit drew his sword to slay Kali, who was tormenting Dharma, **na vinihatavAn** he did not kill him. This was because, **sAravEdI, guNAMshAt** being a discerner of essence, he saw the underlying merit in Kali. He spared him solely because this Kali Yuga possesses one great virtue.

tvatsEvAdi Ashu siddhyEt That virtue is that through service to You, through practices such as Bhagavan-Nama Sankirthanam, one can easily attain Your grace, and that liberation (Mukthi) can be attained purely through Bhakthi. **asadiha na tathA** In all other Yugas, merely conceiving a sinful thought in the

mind was counted as an actual sin, and supporting evil deeds was considered a grave sin. But in this Kali Yuga, that is not the case. In Kali Yuga, an action is counted as a sin only when it is committed physically. **tvatparE chaiSha bhIruH** Moreover, this Kali Purusha fears those who have Bhakthi towards Bhagavan.

All of these are the redeeming qualities of Kali. **yattu prAgEva rOgAdibhiH apaharatE, tatra hA shikShayainam** "However, by inflicting diseases, this Kali steals away all my vitality so that I cannot even perform Bhakthi towards You; for this one offense alone, please administer some punishment to him"— prays Bhattathri to Guruvayurappan.

Ganga Gita and Gayathri

Next Shloka, Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 9:

गङ्गा गीता च गायत्री, अपि च तुलसिका गोपिकाचन्दनं तत्,
सालग्रामाभिपूजा, परपुरुष तथा, एकादशी नामवर्णाः ।
एतानि अष्टापि अयत्नानि, अयि कलिसमये त्वत्प्रसादप्रवृद्ध्या,
क्षिप्रं मुक्तिप्रदानीति, अभिदधुः ऋषयः, तेषु मां सज्जयेथाः ॥

**ga~NgA gItA cha gAyatrI, api cha tulasika gOpikAchandanaM tat,
sAlagrAmAbhipUjA, parapurusha tathA, EkAdashI nAmavarNAH |**

Great saints state that liberation (Mukthi) can be attained easily through eight specific spiritual means: "Ganga, Gita, Gayatri, Tulasi, Gopichandanam, Salagrama Puja, Ekadashi Vrata, and the Bhagavan Nama."

In this context, devotees of Shiva can substitute Tulasi with Bilva, Gopichandanam with Vibhuti, and Salagrama Puja with Shiva Linga Puja. The phrase Nama-varnah generally means the divine namas of Bhagavan. Swamigal used to say, "The very syllables of that divine Nama possess an inherent power; when chanting the Rama Nama, meditate upon the very letters of 'Rama'." He would also explain that 'Ra' represents the Muladhara and 'Ma' represents the Sahasrara, so chanting Rama Nama is itself a form of

Kundalini Yoga. EtAni aShTapi ayatnAni, ayi kalisamayE
tvatprasAdapravR^iddhyA, kShipraM muktipradAnIti, abhidadhuH
R^iShayaH Rishis have declared that because Your grace (Prasadam) is
abundant in them, these eight easily bestow liberation in this Kali Yuga
without requiring intense exertion. tEShu mAM sajjayEthAH Bhattathri prays
to Bhagavan to ensure that his mind remains devoted to these eight means.

I often mention that I received the invaluable treasure of "Swamigal's
Satsangam," do I not? In folk stories, if one wants to find buried treasure,
someone must divine its location with mystical collyrium, dig up that spot,
confront the guardian spirit (Bhuta) guarding the treasure, chant manthrams
to drive the spirit away, and then deal with a giant snake coiled around it.
Many such strenuous efforts are required to unearth a treasure. In my case,
my Appa performed all these arduous tasks himself for me to get the treasure
mentioned earlier (to put it light-heartedly).

My Appa arrived in Chennai in 1954 at the age of nineteen. From that time
onward, he associated closely with sadhus, spending all his evenings attending
Tiruppugazh Bhajans or Hari Bhajans, and listening to the spiritual discourses
of venerable elders like Ki. Va. Ja. and Thanigaimani in Satsangams. At home,
he fulfilled all the needs of his mother, and after his marriage, he took care of
things for his wife and children quickly; all his remaining time was devoted
exclusively to the company of sadhus. In the mornings, he would grind
sandalwood paste while reciting Vedic Suktas. After that, he would conduct
Shiva Puja for an hour, chanting the Sri Rudram and Chamakam. He did
everything with calm deliberation. He conducted this Shiva Puja consistently
for 50 years. In this manner, he invested all the relentless effort required to
unearth this treasure. When I went and offered my Namaskaram to Swamigal
for the first time, he looked at me and said, "Oh, are you Sundaram's son?
Come, come!" and warmly took me into his fold. Because of all the spiritual
labour my Appa put in, I was blessed with the treasure of Swamigal's
sathsangam.

Just as the text mentions *tulasika gopIchandanaM sAlagrAmAbhipUjA*," my Appa always wore Vibhuti on his forehead, went to the office dressed only in a Veshti, and never wore trousers in his life. After retiring from his service, he even gave up wearing shirts. He lived the remainder of his life wearing only a Veshti and Angavastram. On the night of Maha Shivaratri, he would perform Shiva Puja across all four quarters of the night, reciting the Sri Rudram eleven times during each quarter. The discipline and sanctity of his spiritual observances were truly extraordinary.

One who has done poorna Sharanagathi is liberated from all debts

Next Shloka Narayaneeyam dashakam 92, Verse 10:

देवर्षीणां पितृणां, अपि न पुनः ऋणी किङ्करो वा स भूमन्,
योऽसौ सर्वात्मना त्वां शरणमुपगतः, सर्वकृत्यानि हित्वा ।
तस्योत्पन्नं विकर्माणि, अखिलमपनुदस्येव चित्तस्थितस्त्वं,
तन्मे पापोत्थतापान्. पवनपुरपते रुन्धि, भक्तिं प्रणीयाः ॥

dEvarShINAM pitR^INAM, api na punaH R^iNI ki~NkarO vA sa bhUman,
yO.asau sarvAtmanA tvAM sharaNamupagataH, sarvakR^ityAni hitvA |

Here, an exalted Dharma is elucidated. By our very birth, we are indebted to the Devas, the Rishis, and the Pitrus (ancestors). However, as stated in "yo'sau sarvAtmanA tvAM sharaNamupagataH"—whoever surrenders entirely to You with all their heart and soul—and "sarvakRtyAni hitvA" (abandoning all worldly duties), which is the key emphasis here: such a person must not engage in other worldly pursuits, whether it is working to earn wealth or chasing sensory pleasures. Bhattathri declares that for someone who renounces everything in this manner, surrenders unto You with the conviction that "You alone will protect me," and remains engaged solely in Your service, there remains no debt to the Devas, the Pitrus, or the Rishis, nor is he a servant (kinkara) bound to them.

It was by placing faith in this truth that Swamigal took Sannyasa. Prior to that, he used to perform Shraddham etc. very sincerely. During the

Gokulashtami Saptaham held in the presence of Maha Periyava, his mother's Shraddham would fall on the sixth day. He would perform that Shraddham ceremony and then conclude the Parayanam. Normally, the concluding session (Bhagavata poorthi) on the following day would be around 10:00 AM. But in Periyava's presence, by the time the Avabhritha snanam (a bath at the end of this Jnana Yagnam) was completed, it would be 3:00 PM. Because, following the Bhagavata Poorthi, Swamigal would recite the entire Bhagavad Gita, then the Vishnu Sahasranamam, followed by the Krishna Ashtottara Stotram, and only then proceed for the Avabhritha Snanam. Maha Periyava too would remain present throughout all of this. The evening discourse (upanyasam) would conclude at midnight. At 12:00 midnight, Periyava would ask Swamigal himself to perform the Krishna Puja. In this manner, both of them rejoiced in Krishna together for so many years!

Maha Periyava once said to Srikantan Mama (Swamigal's maternal cousin), "Your aunt has certainly attained Moksham; look how many times Bhagavathar has performed Shraddham for her in this Mokshapuri (Kanchipuram)!" Swamigal used to thus perform Shraddham, Sandhyavandanam, and all prescribed rituals with full sincerity. After accepting Sannyasa from Maha Periyava's padukas, he ceased performing Shraddha; by making purna sharanagati, he received dispensation from all ritual duties. It should also be noted that he accepted Sannyasa only with the permission of Shivan Sar.

In a certain sense, this shloka applies to us as well, but it must be understood very carefully. There is the famous Gita shloka (Chapter 18, Verse 66) that states:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज । अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामी मा शुचः ॥

"sarvadharmAnparityajya mAmeKaM sharaNaM vraja |
ahaM tvA sarvapApebhyo mokShayiShyAmi mA shuchaH ||"

It is the same principle that is being referred to in this Narayaneeyam shloka. Vedanta Desika has presented a beautiful commentary on this Gita Shloka. Swamigal liked that interpretation a lot. People generally understand

"sarvadharmAn parityajya" to mean "renounce all prescribed Dharmas and surrender to Me." However, another verse in Gita says, "anityamasukhaM lokaM imaM prApya bhajasva mAm." Bhagavan says that having born in this world, which is transient (having come here, we are going to remain only for a short time) and devoid of true happiness (during the time spent here, there is abundant sorrow)—having attained such an existence (imaM prApya)—worship Me (mAM bhajasva), and you will not have to take birth again. Would anyone interpret this to mean, "You must definitely take birth in this transient and sorrowful world"? Surely its meaning is only, "Since you have already taken birth here, engage in the worship of Bhagavan!"

In the same way, "sarvadharmAn parityajya" does not mean "abandon all your Dharmas." It means, "You have already missed out on all your Dharmas." If a person goes to study Vedanta lessons at the age of seventy, Adi Shankara's Sopana Panchakam teaches: "vedO nityamadhyIyatAm, taduditaM karmasvanuShThIyatAm." This means: "Study the Vedas daily, and perform all the religious duties enjoined in them." Can that person go and begin studying the Vedas now? If his wife has already passed away, can he perform the daily sacred fire rituals like Aupasana? Which prescribed karma can he possibly observe now? You have already missed out on performing all those duties. If you truly repent, "Will I ever attain Mukthi?", then do not worry: "mA shuchaH (do not grieve), surrender unto Me; mAmekaM sharaNaM vraja, ahaM tvA sarvapApebhyo mokShayiShyAmi"—Vedanta Desika has interpreted this as: "I shall liberate you from the sin of having failed to perform all those prescribed Dharmas."

In one of his discourses, Maha Periyava casually referred this shloka and observed, "Bhagavan says, 'ahaM tvA sarvapApebhyo mokShayiShyAmi mA shuchaH'; He does not say that no hardships or perils will ever befall you again; He only says, 'You will no longer commit sins, I will liberate you from your past sins.'" This is something that requires deep reflection.

I observed this directly in Swamigal's life. Hardships kept befalling him continuously, yet he never wavered in the slightest from Dharma, nor did he commit a single sin; as the very embodiment of purity, he continued to perform only meritorious deeds. However, looking at the immense difficulties in his life, outsiders might think, "He must have committed grave sins in past births, which is why he is suffering so much." It might have been the fruition of past karma; or it might have been that when devotees came, and prayed for relief from their afflictions, he took on their sins and experienced the suffering himself. Because of this, his life outwardly appeared to be filled with sorrow. The ordinary world does not appreciate or comprehend such a life.

Swamigal was a phenomenon beyond worldly people's judgment. Placing his absolute faith in Bhagavan and surrendering completely, he lived without a trace of sin. Therefore, he was never perturbed even in the slightest, nor did he ever grieve. Living a life rooted steadfastly in Dharma, constantly engaging in Bhagavat Bhajanam, amid such relentless hardships, was itself like performing a Panchagni Tapas. In that manner, Bhagavan liberated him completely from all sins.

If we reflect on this carefully, we will realize that we too can bear the hardships that come our way and move forward. The mind suffers deeply only when we commit sins. If we simply lead a righteous and disciplined life to the best of our ability, we can endure all difficulties and pass through life in peace. In this way, the simple insight shared by Periyava combined with the interpretation given by Vedanta Desika elevates the meaning of this shloka to another level. In this manner, we too can apply the principle in this Shloka to our lives.

The next line of the 10th shloka explains **tasyOtpannaM vikarmANi, akhila mapanudasyEva chittasthitastvaM** even if a mistake happens after surrendering to Bhagavan, because you constantly remember Him, He resides within your heart and dispels all those sins.

Even though this is so, to emphasize that after surrendering to Bhagavan we must not continue repeating our old mistakes, Swamigal would impart a lesson by citing an episode from the Ramayana. The rakshasis terrify Sita Devi in various ways and make her weep. Seeing that, a rakshasi named Trijata stops them, saying, "I had a dream. In it, it is revealed that Sita will be reunited with Rama and attain a happy life, while Ravana and the other rakshasas will meet their destruction. Therefore, do not torment Sita. If Rama comes to know that you have tormented His beloved wife, He will certainly punish you as well. So, bow down to her and ask for forgiveness. This Sita is compassionate towards those who surrender to her." They too act accordingly.

From the fact that Trijata tells the rakshasis, 'From now on, you must not speak harsh words to her at all,' Swamigal would explain that after surrendering to Bhagavan, rather than remaining in our old ways, we must rectify our mistakes. When Trijata speaks to the rakshasis, she tells them, "Sita is compassionate towards those who surrender to her." As proclaimed, later in the Yuddha Kanda, when Hanuman wants to punish those rakshasis after the fall of Ravana, Sita Devi intervenes and restrains him.

tanmE pApOtthatApAn. pavanapurapatE rundhi, bhaktiM praNIyAH
"Guruvayurappa! Dispelling all the afflictions born of my sins, please foster and enhance Bhakthi within me."

Conclusion of Navayogi Upakhyanam

Thus Narada instructed Devaki and Vasudeva in profound principles, such as: "If one entrusts all actions to Bhagavan and performs wholehearted surrender, even their debts (Runas) to the Devas, Rishis, and Pitrus come to an end." Thereafter, he imparted this teaching before departing: "Do not remain deluded by thinking of Srikrishna merely as your child. He is verily Bhagavan Vishnu Himself! He has descended in this incarnation to relieve the Earth of its burden and to protect the virtuous (Sadhus). Worship that Srikrishna and attain ultimate spiritual well-being." Vasudeva and Devaki engaged in incessant worship, transcended their delusion, and attained supreme wisdom;

with this, the Nava Yogi Upakhyanam concludes. With that, the 92nd Dashakam reaches completion.

The primary teaching of the Nava Yogi Upakhyanam is that in this Kali Yuga, we can attain Bhagavan solely through Bhakthi and Bhagavan-Nama sankirthanam.

Adi Shankara's Vishnu Sahasranamam Bhashyam

When speaking of this, I am reminded of the commentary (Bhashyam) written by Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada on the Vishnu Sahasranamam. In the Upodghata (introductory section) of the Stothram, while providing commentary on the shloka, *eSha mE sarvadharmANAM dharmo'dhikatamo mataH | yadbhaktyA puNDarIkAkShaM stavairarchEnnaraH sadA ||* ("Worshiping the lotus-eyed Bhagavan with Bhakthi through Stothrams, is above all other Dharmas"), as well as on verses celebrating the greatness of Bhagavan's divine namas such as *mangalANAM cha mangalam,* He cites thirty to forty verses from various Puranas and beautifully establishes the supreme glory of chanting Bhagavan nama.

Let us look at some of the shlokams he cited:

कळौ कल्मषचित्तानां पापद्रव्योपजीविनाम् । विधिक्रियाविहीनानां गतिः गोविन्दकीर्तनम् ॥

kalau kalmaShachittAnAM pApadravyopajIvinAm |
vidhikriyAvihInAnAM gatiH govindakIrtanam ||

(In the Kali Yuga, humans do not possess pure minds; they sustain their lives through numerous sinful means; they are unable to live in the manner prescribed by the Shastras. In such a circumstance, the only refuge and path to salvation for human beings is the chanting of the name of Govinda.)

ध्यायन् कृते यजन् यज्ञैस्तेतायां द्वापरेऽर्चयन् । यदाप्नोति तदाप्नोति कलौ संकीर्त्य केशवम् ॥

dhyAyan kRte yajan yaj~naiH tretAyAM dvApare'rchayan |
yadApnoti tadApnoti kalau sangkIrtya keshavam ||

(Whatever fruit was attained through meditation (Dhyanam) in the Kruta Yuga, through sacrificial rituals (Yajnas) in the Treta Yuga, and through ritual worship (Achanam) in the Dvapara Yuga, is attained in the Kali Yuga purely by chanting the divine namas of Keshava.

चिन्त्यमानः समस्तानां क्लेशानां हानिदो हि यः । समुत्सृज्याखिलं चिन्त्यं सोऽच्युतः किन्नु चिन्त्यते ॥

chintyamAnaH samastAnAM kleshAnAM hAnido hi yaH |
samutsRjya akhilaM chintyaM so'chyutaH kinnu chintyate ||

(When merely meditating upon Him destroys all afflictions, why should one not meditate upon that Achyuta, casting aside all other worries?)

हरेः नामैव नामैव नामैव मम केवलम् । कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥

harer nAmaiva nAmaiva nAmaiva mama jIvanam |
kalau nAstyeva nAstyeva nAstyeva gatiranyathA ||

(The name of Hari alone, the name alone, the name alone is my very life. In the Kali Yuga, there is no other refuge, none whatsoever, none whatsoever.)

एकोपि कृष्णस्य कृतः प्रणामः दशाश्वमेधावभृथेन तुल्यः ।
दशाश्वमेधी पुनरेति जन्म कृष्णप्रणामी न पुनर्भवाया ॥

eko'pi kRShNasya kRtaH praNAmaH dashAshvamedhAvabhRthena tulyaH |
dashAshvamedhI punareti janma kRShNapranaMI na punarbhavAya ||

(Even a single reverent Namaskaram offered to Krishna is equal to the concluding purificatory bath (Avabhritha Snana) of ten Ashvamedha Yagas. One who performs ten Ashvamedha Yagas takes birth again, but one who did a Namaskaram to Krishna is never subject to rebirth.)

This Vishnu SahasraNama Bhashyam is truly wonderful. Although Adi Shankara established Advaita Vedanta, his intense Rama-Bhakthi and Krishna-Bhakthi shine forth magnificently throughout this commentary. For instance, when commenting on the Nama SuvrataH, he interprets it as: 'Rama, who took the sublime vow to protect anyone who surrenders to Him even once from all perils, pleading: "O Rama! Consider me as Yours and protect me!"' For the name SumukhaH, he explains: 'Rama, whose countenance remained

adorned with an unchanging, gracious smile even when told to go to the forest today after being promised coronation as yuvaraja yesterday.' For the name ShurasEnaH He explains "Rama, who commanded the army of Vanaras composed of valiant warriors like Hanuman,' thus skillfully weaving in diverse Puranic narratives. Similarly, the name VasupradaH appears consecutively twice. While providing commentary, it brings immense joy to read his interpretation, where for the first VasupradaH he writes 'The one who generously bestows material wealth,' and for the next VasupradaH he writes 'The one who bestows the supreme treasure of liberation (Moksha).'

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये द्विनवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।
श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE dvinavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |
shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

93rd Dashakam: Prayers and lessons to shed attachments

Before beginning the 93rd Dashakam, I shall narrate the story part to set the context. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, Brahma and the other Devas pray to Srikrishna: "O Krishna! Accepting our prayers, You descended upon this Earth and relieved the burden of the world. By merely meditating upon Your divine plays (Leelas), people are freed from their sins and relieved of all worldly attachments; such were the manifold wondrous deeds You performed. Now we pray to You that You ascend to Vaikuntam and protect all of us."

Krishna responds, "Yes, I too hold that same intention. These Yadavas possess immense power and strength. If they remain on this Earth, they might overstep boundaries. Therefore, by the curse of the Brahmanas, this Yadu clan is destined to perish. After concluding that, I shall arrive at Vaikuntam." Then, speaking to His kinsmen, He says, "Inauspicious portents are now appearing in this city of Dvaraka. Therefore, let us all depart for the sacred Prabhasa Kshetra." Immediately upon Him saying this, everyone enthusiastically prepares for the journey.

The Sharanagathi performed by Uddhava

Uddhava has been observing all of this. He understood everything clearly. He had been by Krishna's side right from the time Krishna was fifteen years of age. He was Krishna's intimate companion, charioteer, counselor, and above all, an Uthama Bhaktha. Therefore, when Krishna was alone, Uddhava approached Him and pleaded, "O Krishna, I understand that You are preparing to ascend to Vaikuntam. I cannot bear to exist separated from You even for a single moment; please take me along with You." At that juncture, Srikrishna tells him: "Seven days from today, the ocean will submerge the city of Dvaraka. Renouncing all attachments to your kinsmen, retreat to a secluded place and meditate continuously upon Bhagavan," and proceeds to impart the spiritual teachings that form the essence of the first shloka of this 93rd Dashakam.

Bhattathri here transforms the instruction of severing attachment to kinsmen into a heartfelt prayer: Narayaneeyam dashakam 93, Verse 1:

बन्धुस्नेहं विजह्यां, तव हि करुणया, त्वय्युपावेशितात्मा,
सर्वं त्यक्त्वा चरेयं, सकलमपि जगद्वीक्ष्य मायाविलासम् ।
नानात्वात्, भ्रान्तिजन्यात्, सति खलु गुणदोषावबोधे, विधिर्वा
व्यासेधो वा, कथं तौ त्वयि निहितमतेः, वीतवैषम्यबुद्धेः ॥

bandhusnEhaM vijahyAM, tava hi karuNayA By Your grace, letting go of affection towards kinsmen, **tvayyupAvEshitAtmA** fixing my mind steadfastly upon You alone, **sakalamapi jagadvIkShya mAyAvilAsam** realizing that everything in this world is merely the play of Your Maya, **sarvaM tyaktvA charEyaM** and renouncing any remaining attachments, such as craving for material possessions, I shall wander throughout this world. **nAnAtvAt, bhrAntijanyAt, sati khalu guNadOShAvabOdhe** Having realized that all the manifold appearances of this world are nothing but mental projections, I shall not dwell upon or judge the dualities of virtue and vice.

vidhirvA vyAsEdhO vA, kathaM tau tvayi nihitamataEH, vItavaiShamyabuddheH Because they cast aside discriminatory notions and perceive everything with equanimity (sama-Darshanam), scriptural injunctions and prohibitions (the Shastraic rules of what must be done and what must not be done) no longer apply to such exalted beings. Once they have transcended the distinctions of 'this person is favoured, that person is unwelcome' and 'this is good, that is bad,' no partiality or prejudice remains in them; this is the essence conveyed in this shloka.

Srikrishna imparts such an exalted spiritual teaching to Uddhava. Uddhava says, "O Krishna! From a young age, We have been playing with You, dining and sleeping alongside You, adorning ourselves with the flower garlands You cast aside, anointing ourselves with the sandalwood paste You used, partaking of the leftover of Your meals, and sipping the sacred water of Your holy feet

(pada-tirtham). By living with You in this intimate manner, we easily crossed Maya. But if You depart from here, please instruct me in a way so that this experiential realization remains firm within me and I ultimately reach You. What You have just stated in brief, please explain to me in extensive detail so that I can clearly comprehend." Pleading thus, Uddhava declares, "nArAyaNaM narasakhaM sharaNaM prapadye" ("I take refuge in You, Narayana, the eternal friend of Nara"). Just as Arjuna said in the Bhagavad Gita, "shiShyaste'haM shAdhi mAM tvAM prapannam" ("I am Your disciple; guide me, I surrender unto You"), here too, only after Uddhava performs complete and unconditional surrender (prapatti) does Bhagavan begin his spiritual instruction to him.

Darshanam of the divine form of Avatara Purushas

The tirumeni Darshanam or the physical presence of these divine incarnations is truly extraordinary. When we look at those who were intimate Bhakthas of Kanchi Maha Periyava, I believe their horoscopes must have contained great Raja Yogas or even superior spiritual Yogas. That is why all of them lived in constant, joyous meditation alongside that great saint and passed on in that blissful state.

Veezhinathan Mama used to say frequently, "Whatever one might say, being physically present with Periyava in that physical body was an experience in a class of its own, wasn't it?"

A verse from Mooka Kavi's Padaravinda Shatakam comes to my mind:

जगन्नेदं नेदं परमिति परित्यज्य यतिभिः कुशाग्रीयस्वान्तैः कुशलधिषणैः शास्त्रसरणौ ।
गवेष्यं कामाक्षि ध्रुवमकृतकानां गिरिसुते गिरामैदम्पर्यं तव चरणपद्मं विजयते ॥

"jagannedaM nedaM paramiti parityajya yatibhiH
kushAgrIyasvAntaiH kushaladhiShaNaiH shAstra-saraNau |
gaveShyaM kAmAkShi dhruvam-akRtakAnAM girisute
girAm-aitadamparayaM tava charaNa-padmaM vijayate ||" (Verse 24)

In this shloka, it is said, ‘certain ascetics who are seeking what the Supreme Reality is, set aside everything in this world one by one, declaring, ‘This is not Brahman, this is not Brahman’ (neti neti). The saying ‘what the eyes see is illusory, what the ears hear is illusory, and only deep inquiry reveals the Truth’ is precisely this principle of neti neti. In that way, those Sannyasins, endowed with intellects as sharp as the tip of sacred kusha grass, engage in scriptural inquiry, study the Upanishadic commentaries, and search for the definitive inner import (idam param) of the Vedic words. Mooka Kavi declares, “O Kamakshi! O Daughter of the Mountain! That very higher truth they seek is none other than Your lotus feet! It reigns with glorious victory.” For Bhakthas, by simply meditating continuously upon the divine feet of Amba, that innermost truth of the Vedas is attained with ease. In the same way, for those blessed to be in the company of great saints, that experiential realization becomes accessible just as effortlessly. That is what Uddhava talks about. “Yogis starve themselves and perform diverse severe austerities (Tapas) to cross beyond Maya. Yet, we crossed beyond Maya effortlessly just by joyfully living with You”.

Right in this physical universe, great saints attain that cosmic vision (PraPancha Darshanam). Just as rishis describe the cosmic dance (praPancha tandavam) in the divine form of Nataraja, they behold the five divine cosmic activities—creation (Srishti), sustenance (Sthiti), dissolution (Laya), concealment / veiling (Tirodhana), and grace (Anugraha)—as eternally encapsulated within that divine dance. They declare, “If you fix your mind on this and meditate upon it ceaselessly, you will comprehend the play of Ishvara’s Maya (Maya-vilasam), transcend it, and receive His divine grace as well.”

Such saints alone pray, “Grant me the boon of no rebirth, O Bhagavan; yet if I must take birth, grant me the boon of never forgetting Your holy feet.” It was upon beholding such a divine cosmic vision that Appar Peruman sang, “Even human birth is to be earnestly desired upon this great Earth!”

குனித்த புருவமும் கொவ்வைச் செவ்வாயில் குமிண்சிரிப்பும்
பனித்த சடையும் பவளம்போல் மேனியில் பால்வெண்ணீறும்
இனித்தமுடைய எடுத்த பொற்பாதமும் காணப்பெற்றால்
மனித்த பிறவியும் வேண்டுவதே இந்த மாநிலத்தே!

kuniththa puruvamum kovvaich chevvaYil kumiNchirippum
paniththa saDaiyum pavaLampOl mEniyil pAlveNNIRum
iniththamuDaiya eDuththa poRpAdhamum kANappeTRAI
maniththa piRaviyum vENDuvadhE indha mAnilaththE!

"With arched brows, a budding gentle smile on coral-red lips, matted locks moist with dew, milk-white holy ash smeared on a coral-hued form, and that sweet uplifted golden foot—if one is blessed to behold this, even human birth on this Earth is something to be yearned for!"

He expresses this in the spirit: "If I have to remain here on Earth, I will gladly stay. But if that cosmic vision, instead of being a fleeting experience, becomes an eternal, permanent realization within me, I am prepared to take any number of births. Rather than dwelling somewhere far away in Kailasa, this Darshanam of Chidambaram itself is an experience of supreme bliss!"

In the same manner, Uddhava too pleads, "The bliss I experienced while living with You was far more delightful to me than this abstract Vedanta You are teaching me now! Therefore, please instruct me how to crystallize that experience and make it my permanent state. Teach me in words that I can comprehend clearly. Please do not say, 'Seek explanations from someone else.' Instruct me Yourself in comprehensive detail."

The instruction imparted by Krishna to Uddhava truly commences only from the second shloka of the forthcoming 93rd Dashakam. The question would naturally arise in our minds, "Are not all these elaborate narrative portions found in Bhagavatam present in the Narayaneeyam?" Our Bhattathri tries to

cover every detail! Have those connecting links—that 'the Nava Yogi Upakhyanam was instructed by Narada; Uddhava learned many wonderful philosophical truths directly from Krishna'—been left out? Is it that 'Brahma and the other Devas came and offered Stothrams prior to Bhagavan's ascent to Vaikuntam' not there? If one asks, the answer is — it is certainly present!

In the 88th Dashakam, he sings: *evaM nAnAvihAraiH, jagadabhiramayan*—O Krishna, delighting the world in this manner through Your diverse divine sports (Leelas); *vRShNivaMshaM prapuShNaN*—nurturing and expanding the Vrishni dynasty; *IjAno yaj~nabhedaiH*—performing various sacrificial rituals (Yajnas); *atulavihRtibhiH, prINayan eNanetrAH*—bringing supreme joy to the doe-eyed gopis and the 16,008 queens through peerless sports; *bhUbhArakShepadambhAt*—You relieved the burden of the Earth under this pretext. It is precisely all of this that the Devas proclaim during the Brahma Stuti. If one merely meditates upon the slaying of Kamsa, the slaying of Jarasandha, the Rasa Kreedha, and Your Bala Leelas, he will be delivered from delusion; all worldly attachments will fall away. *padakamalajuShAM mokShaNaya avatIrNaH*—You descended upon this Earth solely so that Bhakthas, by meditating upon Your divine plays in this way, would attain liberation (Moksha). *pUrNaM brahmaiva sAkShAt, yaduShu, manujatArUShitaH, tvaM, vyalAsIH*—he sings, 'You, who are verily the embodiment of the Para-Brahman Himself, shone forth disguised in human form amidst the Yadu clan.' The Devas pray, 'You must now ascend to Vaikuntam.' Bhattathri summarizes this here with exquisite beauty.

In the next shloka, he states: *prAyeNa dvAravatyAm avrutat, ayi tadA nAradaH, tvadrasArdraH*—Narada resided in Dvaraka for some time purely yearning for Your holy company (Sangam). *tasmAt, lebhe kadAchitkhalu sukRtanidhiH, tvatpitA tattvabodham*—Your father Vasudeva, a repository of great spiritual merits (Punya), along with Devaki, received the teaching of philosophical truth (Tattva-bodham) from Narada. This indeed is the Nava Yogi Upakhyanam.

bhaktAnAm, agrayAyI, sa cha khalu matimAn—Uddhava, the disciple of Brihaspati, was a wise soul (Matiman) and foremost among Bhakthas. *uddhavastvatta eva prApto, vij~nAnasAram*—received that essence of experiential spiritual wisdom (Vijnana-Saram) is none other than the Uddhava Gita. Having received it directly from You, *Sa kila janahitAya, adhunA(A)ste badaryAm*—he continues to reside even today at Badarikashrama according to Your divine command! Blessed souls can travel there even today, have Uddhava’s Darshanam, receive these teachings directly from him, and attain Vaikuntam. When we study this Uddhava Gita, we too should study it with the heartfelt prayer: “First, may we be blessed with the Darshanam of Uddhava; thereafter, may we attain the Darshanam of Krishna Himself in Vaikuntam.”

The supremacy of human birth

Now let us look at how Krishna’s spiritual instruction commences: Narayaneeyam dashakam 93, Verse 2

क्षुत्तृष्णालोपमात्रे सततकृतधियो, जन्तवः सन्ति अनन्ताः,
 तेभ्यो विज्ञानवत्वात्, पुरुष इह वरः, तज्जनिः दुर्लभैव ।
 तत्रापि आत्मात्मनस्स्यात् सुहृदपि च रिपुः, यस्त्वयि न्यस्तचेताः,
 तापोच्छित्तेरुपायं स्मरति स हि सुहृत्, स्वात्मवैरी ततोऽन्यः ॥

kShuttR^iShNAIOpamAtrE satatakR^itadhiyO, jantavaH santi anantAH
 There are countless living creatures in this world that are constantly wandering about merely to satisfy their hunger and thirst. **tEbhyO vij~nAnavatvAt** All living beings experience joy and sorrow. Everyone thinks, “I should always be happy, and no sorrow should ever come to me.” But how is that possible? “I have endowed only this human birth with the rare privilege of discerning through its intellect how to dispel sorrow and how to attain everlasting bliss. **puruSha iha varaH, tajjaniH durlabhaiva** Therefore, man is superior to all other living beings. In this context, Krishna remarks, “Hence, in all of My creation, it is man whom I cherish the most.” Thus, this human birth is exceedingly rare.

tatrApi AtmAtmanassyAt suhR^idapi cha ripuH In such a human birth, one's own self alone is one's true friend (suhrit); one's own self alone is also one's enemy (ripuH). That is to say, a person's own mind acts as their friend, and it also acts as their enemy. **yastvayi nyastachEtAH, tApOchChittErupAyaM smarati sa hi suhR^it** Whoever fixes their mind upon Bhagavan and contemplates the means to extinguish his worldly afflictions truly accomplishes what is beneficial for his spiritual welfare; he alone is a true friend to himself. **svAtmavairI tatO.anyah** Bhagavan declares that one who does not do so is verily his own enemy.

Only in human birth can one reflect upon what must be done to avoid being born again and unlock the gateway to liberation (Moksha). Ignoring this, one must not squander one's lifespan merely in searching for food, accumulating wealth, and indulging in sensory pleasures like other animals. One who behaves in that manner is like a person who climbs all seven storeys of a mansion to reach the terrace, only to jump and fall from there. Therefore, Bhagavan says, "One must make purposeful use of this blessed opportunity attained after traversing countless births."

Variyar Swamigal used to articulate this profound truth through a simple play on words: "Along with seeking irai (இரை), seek Irai (இறை) as well." While irai with the soft 'ra' denotes food, Irai with the hard 'RRa' denotes God.; seeking food is fine, but alongside that, one must also seek Bhagavan, he would say.

Even a hundred years ago, our society was an agrarian-based setup. In that era, a wealthy person was simply one who owned a bullock cart and had accumulated a modest reserve of grains and wealth. The present-day culture of "earning money and depositing it in a bank" did not exist back then. What is the difference between other animals and human beings? The only difference is that a human being can attain Jnanam through his discerning intellect. However, it appears as though animals live more peacefully than

most of the humans in this world. This is because they have no 'bank balance'; consequently, they are free from many anxieties.

Arunagirinathar expresses this exquisitely in his Tiruppugazh song beginning "aRRaikiRai thedi athathilum Asai": Atham means money. We search for our daily food, and alongside that, a craving arises saying "I must accumulate a little more wealth," we torment ourselves over it. He asks Murugan, "Without agonizing over wealth, will I ever obtain attachment unto You?" Only then can we turn away from this relentless worldly race and move towards the Truth.

அற்றைக் கிரைதேடி அத்தத் திலுமாசை
பற்றித் தவியாத பற்றைப் பெறுவேனோ
வெற்றிக் கதிர்வேலா வெற்பைத் தொளைசீலா
கற்றுற் றுணர்போதா கச்சிப் பெருமானே!

aRRaik kIraithEDi aththath thilumAsai
paRRith thaviyAtha paRRaip peRuvEno
veRRik kathirvEIA veRpaiith thoLaisIIA
kaRRuR RuNarbOthA kachchip perumALE!

("Searching for daily food, yet driven by desire for wealth Will I ever attain that unyielding attachment that frees me from such agony, O wielder of the victorious, radiant Vel! O Noble One who pierced the Krauncha mountain! O Supreme Wisdom realized by the learned! O Perumal of Kanchipuram!")

Look at how profound a philosophy he has encapsulated within such a small song! Does it not contain the entire essence of the shloka we just examined? Such is the divine, blessed utterance of Arunagirinathar!

The truly great are always humble

Having said this, Krishna narrates a story to Uddhava:

"King Yadu, the ancestor of our lineage (kutastha), once saw an ascetic (yogi). In the Bhagavata, he is referred to merely as an 'Avadhuta Yogi.' However,

elders and Swamigal mention 'Dattatreya Yogi.' That yogi was immersed in supreme bliss, unconcerned about anything. King Yadu approached him and asked: 'You appear robust, healthy, and exceptionally intelligent. Yet, while all the people of the world are tormented by lust (kama), anger (krodha), and greed (lobha)—just as all the forest creatures agonizingly suffer in a wild forest fire, while a single elephant manages to escape and blissfully bathes in the cool pool of the Ganga—how is it that you remain ever so blissful? What is the cause of this joy of yours?' That yogi replied, 'I have learned from twenty-four gurus in this world.'"

Having gurus here does not mean that he approached them, offered Namaskarams, and received manthra initiations from them. It simply means learning by observing everything surrounding us in this world. If we are to learn a valuable lesson from whatever we see in this world, we must be really humble. That humility itself will arise only with the grace of God.

Narayaneeyam dashakam 93, Verse 3:

त्वत्कारुण्ये प्रवृत्ते, क इव नहि गुरुः, लोकवृत्ते विभूमन्,
सर्वाक्रान्तापि भूमिः, नहि चलति ततः, सत्क्षमां शिक्षयेयम् ।
गृह्णीयामीश तत्तद्विषयपरिचयेऽपि, अप्रसक्तिं समीरात्,
व्याप्तत्वं चात्मनो मे गगनगुरुवशात्, भातु निर्लेपता च ॥

tvatkAruNyE pravR^ittE, ka iva nahi guruH, lOkavR^ittE vibhUman
Bhattathri says that if Your grace is secured, everything observed in the affairs of this world turns into a guru for you.

At this juncture, an incident that occurred when Kanchi Maha Periyava went on a pilgrimage to Kashi comes to mind. Periyava was accorded a magnificent reception there. A few scholars there approached Periyava and questioned him, "Everyone celebrates You as 'Jagadguru.' We have not accepted You as our guru, so how can You be a Jagadguru?"

To that, Periyava reportedly replied with great composure, "No, no, you have misunderstood. 'I am not the guru to this Jagat (world); rather, this whole Jagat is my guru!' That is why I am a Jagadguru." Having said that, he explained: "Look at that sparrow building a nest on the ledge over there. That sparrow possesses a creative power (Kriya Shakti) to build a nest like that. I learned that from that sparrow. In this manner, whatever I observe in this world, I learn something from it. Therefore, this Jagat is truly my guru; I am not the guru to the Jgat." Hearing this, those scholars were astonished and offered their Namaskarams to Periyava, saying, "We spoke out of arrogance." Such was the profound humility that Periyava possessed.

Periyava was always filled with an eagerness to learn something new. Whoever visited him, he would ask them questions and acquire knowledge from them. Once, Periyava sent word inviting the nuclear research scientist Raja Ramanna, and he came to have Darshanam. Raja Ramanna was surprised that Periyava had called for him! When he wondered, "What connection do I have with Periyava?", Periyava said, "You had written an article about your mother, hadn't you? I liked it very much. That is why I wished to see you. That is all, nothing else." Having said that, he inquired and learned many details from him regarding nuclear research. Afterward, he gently steered the conversation towards spiritual matters. Knowing that Ramanna had an interest in Buddhism, Periyava recommended, "There are these two books on Hinayana Buddhism; read through them, they will be useful to you." The one whom the entire world celebrated as an omniscient being (Sarvajna) remained ever eager to learn something from everyone—that indeed is the real wonder!

A similar question was posed by some people to the Sringeri Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swamigal as well: "How can You be a Jagadguru? We belong to a different Matam." When they said this, he reportedly replied, "It is not so. 'Jagadguru' means that if anyone from anywhere in the world approaches me and like Arjuna says, 'shishyastEham shadhi mam tvAm prapannam' ('I am your disciple; instruct me, who have surrendered unto

you'), we are duty bound to guide them as a guru. Even if a little child comes and asks a question, we should answer them. That is our duty. Therefore, this title 'Jagadguru' is neither an honorific title nor a matter of pride; it is a name given to constantly remind us of what our duty is." He was such a great jnani, yet so humble! Like that, only if Bhagavan's grace is present can we learn something from everything in the world.

The Twenty-Four Gurus of Dattatreya Yogi

Avadhuta yogi speaks about the twenty-four gurus from whom he learned valuable lessons. Let us look at them one by one now:

1. The Earth

sarvAkrAntApi bhUmiH, nahi chalati tataH, satkShamAM shikShayEyam No matter how much hardship human beings inflict upon Mother Earth, it endures everything with patience and continues to bestow only benefits upon humanity. Humans plow the Earth, yet it yields crops; they dig wells, and it gives pure water; they lay foundations, and it provides a home to live in. It provides cotton to weave garments; it gives trees and fruits. Even when blasted open with explosives, it offers up the treasures within itself, such as gold and silver. "Thus, even when we cause harm to it, I learned the noble virtue of absolute forgiveness and endurance (Sat-kshama) from the Earth, which bears everything patiently."

In the Narayaneeyam, only the Earth is mentioned here. However, in Bhagavatam trees and mountains are also included as gurus alongside it. The yogi says that he learned the practice of selfless service (Paropakara) from trees. Trees give us fruits. Even when cut down, bearing that injury patiently, they provide timber to build houses. Under this topic, our Sri Sundarkumar Anna shared two delightful perspectives:

He asked, "Do you know why the plantain tree is named Vazha Maram (the tree that fosters life)?" and explained, "Other trees may yield either a fruit or a vegetable. But this banana tree provides everything without exception—its

stem, leaves, flower, ripe fruit, and unripe fruit—for the benefit of human beings. Not only that, even as it falls to the ground, it leaves behind four banana saplings beside it to grow continuously generation after generation (*vazhaiyadi vazhaiyaga*). It is precisely because it lives entirely for the sake of others that it is called Vazha Maram."

"Do you know why we tie plantain trees at weddings? It is to convey the lesson: 'As a bachelor all these days, you lived carefree. From now on, you are going to be responsible for a woman; next, children will be born to you, and you will become responsible for all of them. Just like this plantain tree, you too must learn to give bountifully to your family and society.'"

Then, Sundar Kumar Anna narrated a story, told by Swami Sivananda: There was a poor woodcutter. He had gone to the forest to cut firewood. He had not eaten for two days. Exhausted, he lay down under a tree. When he looked up, he noticed a mango tree there with two fine mangoes on it. Thinking, 'Well, let me try throwing a stone,' he picked up a stone and hurled it. Both mangoes fell to the ground. Relieved, he was eating them to satisfy his hunger.

At that time, the king of that country came there on a hunt. Riding swiftly on his horse, he had left all his soldiers behind and arrived ahead all alone. The stone thrown by the woodcutter unexpectedly struck the king on his head! Blood began trickling from his head. The soldiers arriving behind immediately saw this and searched all around, asking, 'Who did this to the king?' There, this woodcutter was eating his mangoes, appeasing his hunger. When they asked, 'How did you get this mango?', he innocently replied, 'Out of hunger, I threw a stone on the tree.' Immediately, they arrested him and presented him before the king. As soon as they reported, 'He is the one who threw the stone at you,' the ministers present there debated, 'What punishment should be given to him?' One minister said, 'He must be locked up in prison and tortured'; another said, 'His head must be severed.'

However, the king listened to everything and ordered: 'Deliver a basket of mangoes to his house every day for him.' When everyone wondered in astonishment', the king explained: 'Even a tree with just one sense gave two delicious mangoes to the one who threw a stone at it! Being endowed with six senses and ruling as a king with so much wealth, should I not give in the same manner?' This proves that if only someone has the intent to give to others, one can practise Paropakara. Also, the Avadhuta states that he also learned to remain firm and unshakeable in Dharma like a mountain.

2. Wind

gR^ihNIyAmIsha tattadviShayaparichayEspi, aprasaktiM samIrAt The air (vayu) blows everywhere. When it passes through a jasmine garden, it carries the fragrance of jasmine flowers; when it comes through a rose garden, it carries the aroma of rose blossoms; if it passes through a place with a foul odour, it carries that stench as well. But does the wind ever lament, "Alas, my jasmine fragrance is gone!"? No. Each experience belongs only to that respective moment, that is all. The wind does not suffer by clinging to that fragrance. I learned from the wind that even as we engage in worldly interactions, we must not suffer by holding onto those experiences in our minds and accumulating latent mental impressions (vasanas).

3. Sky

vyAptatvaM chAtmanO mE gaganaguruvashAt, bhAtu nirLEpatA cha Next is space/sky (aakasham or gaganam). Air enters and exits our nostrils, and we can feel it because it blows cool against the body. But isn't space too all-pervading (vyaptatvam) like the air? Space is present both inside us and outside us, is it not? In the same way, Bhagavan too is all-pervasive. Even though space fills everything, it does not cling to or get contaminated by any object (nirlepata). I learned through space that we too must remain detached and untainted by anything in the world.

Next is 93rd dashakam 4th shloka:

स्वच्छः स्यां पावनोऽहं, मधुर उदकवत्, वह्निवत् मा स्म गृह्णां,
सर्वाङ्गीनोऽपि दोषं, तरुषु तमिव मां, सर्वभूतेषु अवेयाम् ।
पुष्टिर्नष्टिः कलानां शशिन इव तनोः, नात्मनोऽस्तीति विद्यां,
तोयादिव्यस्तमार्ताण्डवत्, अपि च तनुषु एकतां त्वत्प्रसादात् ॥

4. Water

svachChaH syAM pAvanO.ahaM, madhura udakavat Water, per se is always pure and clear (svachcham). The very sight of a water body brings joy to our minds, isn't it? Like that, our very sight should bring happiness in the hearts of others. Water is sweet (madhuram) and quenches our thirst (dAha shAnti). In the same manner, by sharing matters related to Bhagavan and speaking about great saints with those who associate with us, we must provide them with peace of mind and joy. Just as bathing with water purifies the body, we must constantly chant the divine namas of Bhagavan so that our sins and the sins of those who associate with us are cleansed away.

5. Fire

vahnivat mA sma gR^ihNAM, sarvAnnInO.api dOShaM Fire (agni) burns everything that falls into it to ashes and purifies it completely. I learned from fire that we must cultivate and strengthen our spiritual austerity (Tapas) to such a degree that no matter what we eat or what circumstances we find ourselves in, no defect or sin (dosha) attaches to us. **taruShu tamiva mAM, sarvabhUtEShu avEyAm** Just as fire remains latent and hidden within pieces of wood, may I realize that the Atman dwells within all physical bodies.

6. Moon

puShTirnaShTiH kalAnAM shashina iva tanOH, nAtmanO.astIti vidyAM It is only the phases of the moon (Kalas) that wax and wane, whereas the moon itself neither waxes nor wanes. In the same manner, this human body waxes and wanes; it undergoes transformation at every stage of age. However, I learned the truth from the moon that the Atman dwelling within us has neither such decay nor growth.

7. Sun

tOyAdivyastamArtANDavat, api cha tanuShu EkatAM tvatprasAdAt
'mArthANdaH' means the sun. The sun reflects in the water contained within a tub. If you pour that tub's water onto the ground, the reflection of the sun seen inside the tub disappears; but does that mean any danger has befallen the real sun residing in the sky? Same way, Bhagavan alone reflects within all bodies. Even if all these individual living beings (jJvas) perish, I understood that Bhagavan is imperishable (Akshaya) and the indestructible Supreme Truth (Parabrahman).

Wealth drifts like the rise and fall of a river

Using the example of the sun, Swamigal taught me yet another lesson: the sun draws water from the earth unto itself, and then releases it elsewhere as rain. Does the sun worry at all about that water? It does not fret over thoughts like, "These people gave me water, and those people took it away." In the same manner, money comes from someone, and someone else receives and spends it; Swamigal said that we should not bother ourselves too much about it.

I was telling you about my Appa. My Appa used to perform numerous charitable and altruistic deeds (Paropakaram). Just as the Tamil saying goes, 'pon malar nARRamudaithu'—how marvelous it would be if a beautiful golden flower also exuded a sweet fragrance—his Bhakthi was similarly anchored upon noble virtues. That is why Swamigal was pleased with my Appa. Swamigal would often praise him, saying: "If one practices Muruga Bhakthi and recites the Tiruppugazh, whatever noble qualities one ought to possess, your Appa has them all. He has no envy thinking that his brothers are all well-off; he remains composed in everything and does extensive service for others."

After completing my college education, I took up a job for one year. During my college days, I had the great fortune of spending a lot of time with Swamigal. Because of that, I felt that the unceasing divine worship performed

by Swamigal was the only right path, and that I also should do the same thing. One day, I quit my job, went to Swamigal and said, "I will stay here with you and keep performing Parayanam at all times. Bhagavan will certainly protect me too, considering me as one of your own children."

Swamigal told me, "It cannot be like that, my boy! Your Appa has retired from his job. Your younger brother has enrolled in a computer class. Your younger sister is pursuing her studies. Your Appa has educated you this far. You have certain duties to fulfill. You should not remain like this right now. If you wish, stay like this for a few days, and then go back to work."

Agreeing to this, I stayed with Swamigal for one year. When I looked for a job after that, I could not find one. Thus, I continued sitting beside Swamigal for another full year. It was during that period that I was blessed with the darshan of Shivan Sar as well. That was the golden period of my life.

Around that time, my Appa came to visit Swamigal once. Swamigal told him, "I keep telling this boy, 'You must search for a job, you must go back to work, you cannot continue like this.'"

To that, my Appa replied, "I have read in the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana... 'The prey caught in the jaws of a tiger can never escape from it. In the same way, if one has fallen under the grace-filled glance of a Sadguru, he is saved.' He is under your protective gaze. I have no worries about him."

Such extraordinary Vairagyam and Jnanam dwelt within my Appa. In the shloka we are going to see next, the 'ocean' appears as a Guru. The ocean shows us only empty shells on the outside; however, it conceals priceless gems deep within itself. Likewise, the verse explains that we must keep all our Bhakthi and Vairagyam hidden within, without displaying them externally. My Appa was exactly like that. When he heard this, Swamigal was immensely pleased. Afterwards, he told me, "In life, you should aspire to become like your Appa. That alone is more than enough for you." In other words, he conveyed

without explicitly saying: "There is no need for you to become a Sannyasi like me. If you attain noble, saintly virtues like him, your life's purpose is fulfilled."

Subsequently, I secured a good job and went to America. I earned a lot and gave it to my Appa. At that time, Shukra Dasa (Venus period) commenced for my Appa. But he simply transformed all the money I earned into spiritual merit (Punyam); that was all. He remained just as he always was, with the same traditional veshti, the same vibhuti, and the same Shiva pooja; he never altered his daily spiritual observances (nitya niyamas). When I handed over my earnings to my Appa and he spent it, I never once asked for an account, "I earn this much and give this much; what are you spending it on?" Even after getting married and having children—when my Appa was around 60 to 75 years old—I would hand over my salary to him and take money from him only for my personal expenses. That was the counsel Swamigal gave me. It was a reward my Appa received for the profound Bhakthi he held towards Swamigal.

However, once more money started coming in, my Appa told me, "Ganesh! After this money arrived, I no longer have that peace of mind I used to possess earlier." He had such profound clarity! Then, after some time, he said, "Ganesh! You don't need to give me money anymore; keep it yourself. You have grown up now, and look after your own family." Within a few years after that, he attained the holy feet of Muruga Bhagavan.

In his youth, he had witnessed some poverty; having overcome it, when a little money came during his later years, he performed charities, distributed it to relatives, and enjoyed it together with them. The Sannyasi-like nature within him was not visible to anyone outside; he would play and rejoice merrily with his grandchildren. He was always cheerful, but he spoke very little. Only through that silence could one recognize that he was a true 'muni' (sage).

During his final days, he was admitted to a hospital due to failing health. Directly facing the bed he lay on, there was a picture of Muruga Peruman. When I went to see him one morning, he told me:

"mAgathai muTTi varumneDu~N kURRan vandAl en munne thOgaip puraviyil thOnRi niRpAy...!" (Meaning: "When the towering Yama arrives reaching up to touch the skies, appear and stand before me riding upon your peacock mount.!")

That same evening, he attained the sacred feet of Muruga Bhagavan.

Here, let me clarify one thing to you once again. That Bhakthi, that generosity, or that simplicity which my Appa possessed—not even a small fraction of it is present in me. Just because I speak so much about Swamigal and about my appa, please do not mistake anything great about me. It is just that I was blessed with the supreme fortune of having the darshan of all these great souls; that is all. Sri Shivan Sar used to say, "Appreciating Bhakthi is one thing; practicing Bhakthi is entirely another." I pray to Bhagavan every single day that true Bhakthi should dawn in me.

Saying, "I learned many lessons in this world from twenty-four gurus," Dattatreya elaborates on the teachings he gained by accepting natural elements like the Sun and the Moon as his gurus. We, too, have been examining them one by one. Next is the 5th Shloka of the 93rd dashakam.

स्नेहात् व्याधास्तपुत्रव्यसनमृतकपोतायितो, मा स्म भूवं,
प्राप्तं प्राश्रन्, सहेय क्षुधमपि शयुवत्, सिन्धुवत्स्यां अगाधः ।
मा पप्तं योषिदादौ शिखिनि शलभवत्, भृङ्गवत्सारभागी
भूयासं, किन्तु तद्वत् धनचयनवशात्, माहमीश प्रणेशम् ॥

8.Pigeon

snEhAt vyAdhAstaputravyasanamR^itakapOtAyitO, mA sma bhUvaM A
pigeon finds a mate and they live and search for food together. (When mentioning this in his discourse, Swamigal would humorously say, "Just like both husband and wife go to work in modern times"). Little fledglings are born to them. Feeding them, they live happily. One day, a hunter casts a net. The little chicks get trapped in it. Seeing this, the mother pigeon wails, "What do I

need this life for without my children?", and dives into the net herself. Unable to bear this, the male pigeon too thinks, "After my entire family is destroyed, what remains for me?", and falls into the net as well.

What this demonstrates is that we must not get overly entangled in the net of worldly attachments (Samsara). Swamigal would share an example for this: A son or daughter lives abroad. Upon hearing that the daughter is pregnant or that the son is struggling with cooking, the mother immediately goes abroad. Wondering, "What will I do here alone after she leaves?", the father too sets off right behind her. Because of this, the Tarpanams and Shraddhams meant to be offered to the ancestors (Pitrus) end up being neglected. We must not abandon our prescribed duties (Dharmas) for any reason.

In this day and age, it is not even necessary that one has to travel abroad; this web called materialism has seized the entire globe like the "World Wide Web" and continues to tighten its grip around us more and more. A valuable lesson from the pigeon story is that we must not immerse ourselves excessively in worldly affairs. Instead of meddling in everything, we must hand over responsibilities to the next generation, saying, "You know better. You can take care of it", and spend more of our time in Bhagavat Bhajanam.

9. Python

prAptaM prAshnan, sahEya kShudhamapi shayuvat The python does not wander about in search of food for itself; it stays wherever it is. If a goat or some other animal comes its way, it takes it whole, spends up to a month digesting it, and remains completely still. If food is not available, it fasts; if food comes, it consumes it. In the same manner, a renunciate (Sannyasi) should never worry whether food is available or not.

Swamigal used to say, "One who worries about food should never take up Sannyasa in the first place." If, after taking Sannyasa, one starts an institution, thereby taking upon oneself the burden of a large family instead of a small one, what is the point of it all? Shivan Sar has written in his book that 'only one who functions in solitude is a true man of dispassion (vairagya).' Only after transcending all anxiety about food should one become a monk.

Similarly, Shivan Sar has written, "A Sannyasi must not touch money, nor accumulate it. That is a major blemish on ascetic life." If you ask, "How is this possible?", he responds, "In that case, do not take up Sannyasa at all. Stay in household life itself, wear white (i.e. a householder's) clothes, remain detached from family affairs, and live with vairagya." His conviction is that if there is an association with money, it is not genuine Sannyasa.

10. Ocean

sindhuvatsyAM agAdhaH

When viewed from the outside, the ocean reveals only ordinary seashells; however, within its profound depths, priceless gems lie concealed. Like that, without flaunting our sublime virtues such as Bhakthi and Vairagya outwardly, we should conduct ourselves normally in appearance. Internally, however, we must constantly deepen our yearning to attain Bhagavan.

11. The moth

mA paptam yOShidAdau shikhini shalabhavat The moth mistakes a burning flame for some delectable fruit, gets enticed by its brilliance, falls into the fire, and destroys itself. In the same manner, enticed by fleeting external beauties perceived by the eyes, man must not forfeit his mind and life.

Swamigal's Bhagavata discourse, which is now available on YouTube, was delivered by him in December 1996. At that time, he observes: "When the New Year arrives, people buy and hang some calendars." Even though he did not state it explicitly, he was referring to pictures of actresses. If we keep looking at such things with our eyes, they get deeply etched into the mind. If that comes to mind in the final moments of life, the next birth will be shaped accordingly. Therefore, he says that we must be extremely cautious about what we see. Back then, he cited a calendar as a simple example. Today, countless allurements have arrived right in our hands on our mobile phones. Therefore, we should be careful. I learned from the moth that one must not become a slave to the senses by gazing at sights alluring to the eyes.

12. Honey bee

bhR^i~NgavatsArabhaGI bhUyAsaM, kintu tadvat dhanachayanavashAt, mAHamIsha praNEsham The honeybee visits many flowers and absorbs only

the sweet nectar present within them. In the same way, whatever we read or listen to, we must extract and assimilate only the essence from it.

At the same time, the honeybee gathers and hoards honey; however, it neither consumes it itself nor shares it with others. In the end, a honey-gatherer comes and carries it away. In the same manner, we must not go on hoarding money with a miserly attitude. Keeping wealth without using it for oneself and without giving it to others will only end in utter waste. Through this, we can understand that we must share our wealth with our family and with those in need.

Next is the 6th shloka in the 93rd Dashakam:

मा बद्ध्यासं तरुण्या, गज इव वशया, नार्जयेयं धनौघं,
हर्तान्यस्तं हि माध्वीहर इव, मृगवत्, मा मुहं ग्राम्यगीतैः ।
नात्यासज्जेय भोज्ये, झष इव बडिशे, पिङ्गलावत् निराशः
सुप्यां, भर्तव्ययोगात् कुरर इव विभो, सामिषः अन्यैः न हन्यै ॥

13. Elephant

mA baddhyAsaM taruNyA, gaja iva vashayA The elephant has an acute sense of touch. That is why mahouts dig a deep pit, cover it with foliage and twigs, and station a female elephant on the other side. Drawn by the desire to touch the female elephant, the male elephant rushes forward and falls into the pit. Thereafter, inflicting countless hardships upon it, man subdues and tames it under his control. The elephant, which possesses a thousand times more strength than man, is reduced to a state where it must obey human commands, simply due to its craving for a single sensory pleasure.

14. Honey-collector

nArjayEyaM dhanaughaM, hartAnyastaM hi mAdhvIhara iva Bees labour with immense effort to collect and store honey. Yet, the honey-collector smokes all the bees away, and effortlessly takes that honey away. In the same manner, even if we accumulate wealth with painstaking effort, some stranger will snatch it away. In modern times, we witness money being stolen online

through digital scams. Wealth behaves just like a river flowing across elevations and depressions; profits and losses will constantly keep occurring. If one remains obsessive about accumulating money, vast amounts of precious time will be squandered away.

15.Deer

mR^igavat, mA muhaM grAmyagItaiH The deer has a fondness for listening to music. The hunter plays an instrument and produces melodious music. When the deer stands spellbound in that music, the hunter shoots an arrow and kills it. Same way, we must not direct our minds towards vulgar, mundane music (Gramya gGetam). Swamigal would say “Gramya Geetam means cinema songs.” If we keep listening to them, our minds will get corrupted.

16.Fish

nAtyAsajjEya bhOjyE, jhaSha iva baDishE The fish can live peacefully by eating the food naturally available in the river. However, coveting the tiny piece of meat attached to the fishhook, it gets trapped and loses its life. Like that, man should not ruin his life by becoming a slave to the palate. At this place, a statement appears in Bhagavatam: “One who has conquered the tongue has conquered all the senses.”

17.Pingala the courtesan

pi~NgalAvat nirAshaH supyAM There was a courtesan named Pingala. One night, waiting and watching at her doorstep for a long time in the hope that some wealthy customer might come to bring her income, she is met with disappointment. Because no one turns up, a profound sense of disillusionment (virakthi) arises within her. That disillusionment itself was the grace that Bhagavan bestowed upon her.

She speaks to herself: “Ignorant as I am, forgetting the Paramatman dwelling within me who bestows imperishable supreme bliss, I sought after these trivial mortal men who yield only grief and sorrow! What foolishness this is!” Having

attained such dispassion (Vairagya), she renounces both greed for wealth and attachment towards men, and sleeps peacefully.

Referring to this realization, the Shloka stating, "AshA hi paramam duhkham, nairAshyam paramam sukham" appears in Bhagavatam. Desire alone is boundless sorrow; desirelessness is the highest happiness.

18.Osprey

bhartavyayOgAt kurara iva vibhO, sAmiShaH anyaiH na hanyai The Kurara bird (osprey/hawk) flies holding a piece of meat in its beak. Seeing this, other eagles and crows chase and peck at it. That bird is unable to endure the attack. Immediately, it drops the piece of meat. At once, the other birds go after that piece of meat; the Kurara bird is at peace.

In the same way, if we hoard possessions and money, numerous sorrows come seeking us. If we renounce them, we can live peacefully. Swamigal used to say, "When Provident Fund money arrives after retirement from work, someone or other will constantly pester you asking for loans. If you tell them, 'I have pledged that money for Bhagavan,' no one will trouble you."

The biggest distraction, especially for men, on the path of Bhakthi is money. Obsessing over whether to invest it in the stock market or buy gold or real estate etc. becomes an intoxicating addiction that squanders golden time and mental energy.

Once, someone told Swamigal, "Whenever you give a discourse, you criticize money; that is why money does not come to you. Other pundits doing Upanyasam are showered with wealth!" To that, Swamigal replied, "If it is showering riches, let them collect it; I have time only for my Parayanams." We spend a major portion of our lifespan in accumulating money, counting it, and safeguarding it. Those who intend to walk the path of Bhakthi should not harbour desire for money. After all, did not Bhagavan Himself come as his son and impart the wisdom to Pattinathar saying, "Even an eyeless needle will not

accompany you on your final journey”?

Next is the 7th Shloka of the 93rd dashakam:

वर्तेय त्यक्तमानः सुखम्, अतिशिशुवत्, निस्सहायश्चरेयं,
कन्याया एकशेषो वलय इव, विभो वर्जितान्योन्य घोषः ।
त्वच्चित्तो नावबुध्यै परं, इषुकृदिव क्षमाभृदायानघोषं
गेहेषु अन्यप्रणीतेषु, अहिरिव निवसानि, उन्दुरोर्मन्दिरेषु ॥

19. Little child

vartEya tyaktamAnaH sukham, atishishuvat Only a little child and an enlightened sage (jnani) who has renounced everything, abide in true bliss in this world. A tender infant has no sense of honor or humiliation. It doesn't love or hate saying "this aunt fondled me while that one bumped into my cradle." Like the saying goes, "God and a child are one," I learned from that child that one should always remain joyful with a smile.

20. Girl wearing bangles

nissahAyashcharEyaM, kanyAya EkashEShO valaya iva, vibhO varjitAnyOnya ghOShaH There was a ten-year-old girl. Around seven or eight people arrived from a groom's side to see her with a marriage proposal. At that time, her parents were not at home. Wanting to cook and serve something to the guests who had arrived, she went into the kitchen. There was no polished rice there, only unhusked paddy. She began pounding the paddy in a mortar.

Since she wore many bangles on her wrists, a loud jingle was generated while pounding the paddy. Reflecting that "if the visitors realize we do not even have rice in our house and are pounding paddy, our poverty will be exposed," she kept only two bangles on each hand and took off the rest. Even then, those two bangles struck against each other and made a clinking sound. Immediately, (since Shastra prescribes that women must wear at least two bangles), she kept one bangle on her wrist and pushed the other above her forearm/elbow, pounding the paddy without making any noise.

What we learn through this is that where many people gather, conflicts arise; where two people are present, time is squandered in idle gossip. Therefore, Bhagavat Bhajanam in solitude is the best path.

21. Arrow-maker

tvachchittO nAvabudhyai paraM, iShukR^idiva kShmAbhR^idA yAnaghOShaM An arrow-maker was sharpening an arrow with undivided concentration. At that time, the king of that realm went in a royal procession along that street accompanied by musical instruments and fireworks. After the king had passed, the bystanders asked him, "The king passed by with such grand fanfare, did you see him?" To that, he replied, "I did not notice at all; my entire attention was focused solely on sharpening this arrow."

Swamigal would say: "In this modern era, if one wants to survive in the spiritual path, one must be like this arrow-maker. We must perform our Bhajanam and Parayanam with such single-minded one-pointedness."

Once, someone approached Swamigal to express the idea, "Abuddhyapi Mukundakirtanam" (even chanting the divine Nama of Mukunda inadvertently or without awareness yields spiritual merit). To that, Swamigal advised, "You are a well-educated person with knowledge of Sanskrit. Why should you think like that? You must read with wholehearted concentration. If the Paduka Pattabhishekam chapter in the Ramayana is approaching today, you should eagerly anticipate it, immerse your entire mind when that section arrives, read it, and rejoice. Instead, one should not realize only after reaching the story of Anasuya, 'Oh! Is the Paduka Pattabhishekam already over?'"

I have been adhering to this advice to some extent. When reading Stothras like the Narayaneeyam, one can anchor the mind through the flow of the narrative and the poetic beauty itself. When reading Mooka Panchashati, I keep one Shloka as a checkpoint for every ten verses. Between verses 41 and 50, it is "Kundali Kumari Kutile"; between 51 and 60, it is "Mukopi"; and between 61 and 70, it is "Kim va phalati." While doing Parayanam, if these verses pass by without registering deeply in my mind, I read those ten Shlokams all over again. Simply reciting with the mouth does bestow spiritual

merit, of course, but it is not sufficient, right? One can periodically change that one marker verse among the ten. After all, isn't our aim to read all 500 Shlokams with attentive focus? Isn't every single verse a precious jewel?

I am fond of certain Shlokams, and I read them repeatedly. In Mandasmita Shatakam, verses 31, 32, and 33, beginning with "Chetashshitalayantu nah", "Karmaughakhya", and "Kuryurnah Kulashailarajatanaye"... believing that these verses bring peace to the family, I read them twice. Similarly, with a prayer that fear in the mind should be dispelled, I read the Shlokams from 52 to 56 in Stuti Shatakam two to three times. For their rich depth of meaning, I read verses 15 through 18 of Kataksha Shatakam twice. There are many such instances.

22. Serpant

gEhEShu anyapraNItEShu, ahiriva nivasAni, undurOrmandirEShu The serpent does not build a home (griha) of its own; it enters and resides within the burrow dug by a rat. Like that, we should not waste our precious time and effort excessively in the project of having a "own house." In modern times, they construct and deliver apartments/flats. Even so, some people spend a lot of their time furnishing it and upgrading it. After all, a house is merely a place to dwell, isn't it?"

In this context, the 48th Shloka from the Padaravinda Shatakam of Mooka Panchashati comes to mind:

नखाङ्कूरस्मेरद्युतिविमलगङ्गाम्भसि सुखं कृतस्नानं ज्ञानामृतममलमास्वाद्य नियतम् ।
उदञ्चन्मञ्जीरस्फुरणमणिदीपे मम मनो मनोज्ञे कामाक्ष्याश्चरणमणिहर्म्ये विहरताम् ॥

nakhA~NkurasmEradhyutivimalaga~NgAmbhasI sukhaM
kR^itasnAnaM j~nAnAmR^itamamalamAsvAdya niyataM |
uda~nchanma~njIrasphuraNamanidIpE Mama manO
manOj~nE kAmAkShyAshcharaNamaNiharmyE viharatAm ||

(O Kamakshi! The white light emanating from Your toenails is like the pure waters of the Ganga. I joyfully take my holy bath in it every day. I partake fully of the nectar of wisdom flowing from Your sacred feet. The rubies on Your anklets radiate like the lustrous red lamps of this palace. In such a gemstone mansion that is Your sacred lotus feet, may my mind always reside.)

Whenever this Shloka came up, Swamigal would tell me, "No matter which flat you reside in, let your mind always dwell upon the palace called sacred lotus feet of Ambal." Perhaps because the word 'flat' came from his divine lips that day, I have lived only in apartments all my life. Look how even the casual words of great saints turn into absolute truth!

Next is the 8th Shloka of the 93rd dashakam:

त्वय्येव त्वत्कृतं त्वं क्षपयसि जगदिति, ऊर्णनाभात् प्रतीयां,
त्वच्चिन्ता त्वत्स्वरूपं कुरुते, इति दृढं शिक्षये, पेशकारात् ।
विद्भस्मात्मा च देहो भवति, गुरुवरो यो विवेकं विरक्तिं
धत्ते, सञ्चिन्त्यमानो मम तु, बहुरुजापीडितोऽयं विशेषात् ॥

23.Spider

tvayyEva tvatkR^itaM tvaM kShapayasi jagaditi, UrNanAbhAt pratIyAM
The spider secretes a fluid from its own mouth and weaves a beautiful web. Having played in it, it later takes its web back into itself. In the same way, Bhagavan creates this universe with what is inherent in Himself (srishti), preserves it (sthiti), and ultimately absorbs it back into Himself (laya).

Kambar has sung this exquisitely in the very first invocation verse (Kadavul Vaazhthu) of his Ramayanam:

"உலகம் யாவையும் தாமுளவாக்கலும்
நிலைபெறுத்தலும் நீக்கலும் நீங்கலா
அலகிலா விளையாட்டுடையார் அவர்
தலைவர் அன்னவர்க்கே சரண் நாங்களே."

ulagam yAvaiyum thAmuLavAkkalum nilaipeRuththalum nIkkalum nIngala
alagila viLaiyAttudaiyAr avar thalaivar annavarkkE saraN nAngaLE

"The One who brings all the worlds into being, sustains them, and dissolves them without ever departing from His boundless divine sport—He is the Supreme Leader, and unto Him alone do we surrender."

We must appreciate the beauty of this creation and the wonders contained within it. Just lying down on the open terrace and gazing at the sky expands the mind. We should never miss the full moon. The new moon night possesses its own unique charm as well; on that day, the stars shine so brilliantly. How vast this cosmos is! The Earth spins on its own axis and revolves around the Sun; we, too, reside upon it. Even though the Earth rotates so rapidly, we do not fall off—what a wonder! How precise is the distance between the Earth and the Sun! If it moved a few percentage points closer, we would be scorched to ashes; if it moved a few percentage points further away, we would freeze into ice. So impeccably is the Earth positioned at that exact sweet spot. Within this, how many mountains, rivers, and marvels exist! As Bharatiyar sang, "How many crores of joys have You bestowed?", this is indeed the wondrous creation of Bhagavan.

At this juncture, another beautiful poem of his comes to mind:

"பக்தியுடையார் காரியத்தில் பதறார் மிகுந்த பொறுமையுடன்
வித்து முளைக்கும் தன்மை போல் மெல்லச் செய்து பயனடைவார்
சக்தி தொழிலே அனைத்துமெனில் சார்ந்த நமக்கு சஞ்சலமேன்
வித்தைக்கிறைவா கணநாதா மேன்மைத் தொழிலில் பணியெனையே"

BhakthiyudaiyAr kAriyaththil padhaRAr migundha poRumaiyudan
viththu muLaikkum thanmai pOl mellach cheydh payanadaivAr |
sakthi thozilE anaiththumenil sArndha namakku sanjalame
viththaikkiRaivA gaNanAthA mEnmaith thozilil paNiyenaiyE ||

"Those endowed with Bhakthi never panic in their endeavours; with immense patience, they act steadily just like a seed sprouting and reap the fruit; if all activities are the work of Shakti, why should we, who depend on Her, be anxious? O Gananatha, Lord of all arts and learning, engage me in noble pursuits!"

24. Wasp

tvachchintA tvatsvarUpaM kurutE, iti dR^iDhaM shikShayE, pEshakArAt A worm is placed inside a wasp's nest. The wasp keeps returning from time to time and stinging it. Fearing, "Alas! The wasp is going to come and sting me," that worm, continuously contemplating the wasp over time, undergoes metamorphosis and transforms into a wasp itself.

From this, we can understand the scriptural truth of "Yadbhavam tadbhavati"—we become that which we constantly contemplate. Therefore, if we constantly contemplate Bhagavan, we can transform into Bhagavan Himself.

Speaking on this subject, Maha Periyava would quote the couplet from the Tirukkural, *Patruga patratran patrinai appatraip patruga patru vidarku*, and explain, "If we hold fast to Bhagavan, who is devoid of all attachments, all worldly attachments will fall away from us." What occurs to me is that we do not know Bhagavan directly; however, we see great saints living without attachment in this world. Therefore, if we develop devotion towards those saints, Bhakthi, Vairagyam, and all virtues will naturally take root within us.

Swamigal would repeatedly read the life histories of great saints. He would read books such as the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the book written on Bhagavan Ramana by Ki. Va. Ja., the life history of Vallimalai Swamigal, and similar works numerous times. I bought a book about Seshadri Swamigal written by Kuzhumani Narayana Sastrigal from a roadside vendor in Triplicane for twenty rupees and gave it to him. Swamigal must have read that book a hundred times. He remarked with deep emotion, "It was only because I read this biography that I attained Sannyasa." To that extent, he would read the biographies of great saints over and over again. If we, too, frequently read the sacred lives of saints, we can progress on the path of Bhakthi.

We saw earlier that, like the python, one must remain free from anxiety about food. At home, delicious food is readily available three times a day. In modern times, if we wish to go on a pilgrimage, we first ascertain, "Will they serve

good coffee there like the coffee at our home?", and travel comfortably through travel agencies. In those days, however, undertaking a pilgrimage to Kashi, or people from the North traveling down to Rameswaram, was a monumental austerity (Tapas). Unless one possessed the dispassion (Vairagyam) that pays no heed to hunger, one could not accomplish it. One must be ready to put into practice the many disciplines taught by these twenty-four gurus. That very austerity turned into desireless action (Nishkama karma) and supreme Bhakthi, bestowing the highest spiritual fruit, just as Thayumanavar sang: *vArthai solla sadguruvum vaaykkum parApamE* (a noble Sadguru will appear to impart the saving word). The sole purpose of pilgrimages in those days was Darshanam of the Divine and bathing in sacred waters (Teertha Snanam). Even today, several pilgrimages like the 'Narmada Parikrama', where one does Pradakshinam of the whole Narmada river on foot, remain a profound austerity (Tapas).

The 25th Guru: Our Own Body

viDbhasmAtmA cha dEhO bhavati, guruvarO yO vivEkaM viraktiM dhattE
Finally, after speaking about the twenty-four gurus, Dattatreya says, "This very body of mine is also a guru." In the end, this body will turn to ashes. Or, if buried in the ground, it becomes food for worms and turns into excrement. We harbor egotistic pride, considering this body as 'I' and 'mine.' However, many are waiting to claim this body. The mother and father who gave birth, the employer who demands work—everyone claims ownership; in the end, the consuming fire of the pyre awaits as well.

If we often reflect upon this, dispassion (vairagya) will dawn within us. When we apply sacred ash (vibhuti) on our forehead daily, chanting "Shivaya Namah", it is precisely to remind ourselves that 'in the end, this body is destined to turn into ash.'

Bhattathri observes: **sa~nchintyamAnO mama tu, bahurujApIDitO.ayaM vishEShAt** "It is not only after death that it teaches a lesson. Even while I am alive, this body, afflicted by the severe pain and distress of rheumatic disease (vata roga), has been teaching me a lesson every day." These days, everyone

experiences some bodily ailment or other. Therefore, the body itself is an excellent guru for most of us.

Bhattathri's heartfelt prayer to remove attachment to body

Bhattathri prays most poignantly in the last two Shlokams, saying, "O Krishna! I must shed this attachment towards the physical body, and You alone must bestow Your grace for that."

Next is the 9th Shlokam of the 93rd dashakam.

ही ही मे देहमोहं त्यज, पवनपुराधीश, यत्प्रेमहेतोः,
गेहे वित्ते कलत्रादिषु च विवशिताः, त्वत्पदं विस्मरन्ति ।
सोऽयं वह्नेश्शुनो वा, परमिह परतः साम्प्रतञ्च, अक्षिकर्ण-
त्वग्जिह्वाद्या विकर्षन्ति, अवशं अत इतः, कोऽपि न त्वत्पदाब्जे ॥

hI hI mE dEhamOhaM tyaja, pavanapurAdhIsha, yatprEmahEtOH,
gEhE vittE kalatrAdiShu cha vivashitAH, tvatpadaM vismaranti |
sO.ayaM vahnEshshunO vA, paramiha parataH sAmprata~ncha, akShikarNa-
tvagjihvAdyA vikarShanti, avashaM ata itaH, kO.api na tvatpadAbjE ||

"O Guruvayurappa! You must graciously remove my infatuation with this body and the delusion that everything associated with it is 'mine.' It is only because of this delusion that people become captivated by their homes (grihas), money, and wives, entirely forgetting Your sacred lotus feet. After death, this body will merely belong to the fire or to the dogs. Yet, while still alive, not even one of my five senses—the eyes, ears, nose, or tongue—draws me towards Your lotus feet! Instead, they pull me in all different directions; what shall I do? 'Alas!' (hI hI), please save me!"—thus he prays.

Not a single sense organ seeks Bhagavan who resides within. The moment a sound is heard, the ear instantly takes an interest in it; the moment a fragrance wafts by, the attention of the nose immediately turns there. In this

manner, all five of our senses remain perpetually turned outward. Looks like Brahma created us in this way. Arunagirinathar appeals to Muruga Himself:

“கோடாத வேதனுக்கு யான் செய்த குற்றம் என்? குன்று எறிந்த
தாடாளனே தென் தணிகைக் குமர! நின் தண்டை அம் தாள்
சூடாத சென்னியும் நாடாத கண்ணும் தொழாத கையும்
பாடாத நாவும் எனக்கே தெரிந்து படைத்தனனே”

kODAdha vEdhanukku yAn seyda kutram en? kunRu eRinda
thADALanE then thaNigaik kumara! nin thaNdai am thAL
sUDAdha senniyum nADAdha kaNNum thozAdha kaiyum
pADAdha nAvum enakkE therindu padaiththanane

("What offense did I commit against Brahma, the unerring creator of the Vedas? O mighty One who cleaved the Krauncha hill, O Kumara of Southern Tiruttani! Knowingly, he fashioned for me a head that does not wear Your anklet-adorned lotus feet, eyes that do not seek You, hands that do not offer worship to You, and a tongue that does not sing Your praises.")

Driven by that infatuation with the body (deha moham), thoughts such as 'I, my family, my wealth, and my home' seize us tightly. Thereafter, we become completely subservient to them. For example, if a child asks for something and we forget to buy it, the child begins to cry. The moment we see that, we cannot bear it. We somehow procure and give it; immediately, the child smiles and rejoices. In this way, if we wish to fulfill what we desire, money is required. For that reason, we earn money. Even if we cannot accomplish everything we wish with money, the drive to earn money keeps increasing rapidly within us. He prays, "O Guruvayurappa! Dispel this delusion (moham) and bestow upon me Bhakthi towards You."

Next one, 93rd Dashakam, 10th shloka:

दुर्वारो देहमोहो यदि पुनः, अधुना तर्हि निश्शेषरोगान्
हत्वा, भक्तिं द्रढिष्ठां कुरु तव पदपङ्केरुहे पङ्कजाक्ष ।

नूनं नानाभवान्ते, समधिगतमिमं मुक्तिदं विप्रदेहं,
क्षुद्रे हा हन्त, मा मा क्षिप विषयरसे, पाहि मां मारुतेश ॥

durvArO dEhamOhO yadi punaH, adhuna tarhi nishshESharOgAn hR^itvA
"Even if I do not currently possess the eligibility to attain such exalted spiritual wisdom immediately, please cure all my afflictions and diseases, **bhaktiM draDhiShThAM kuru tava padapa~NkEruhE pa~NkajAkSha** O Lotus-Eyed One, and firmly establish my Bhakthi at Your sacred lotus feet. **nUnaM nAnAbhavAntE, samadhigatamimaM muktidaM vipradEhaM** Even after attaining this Brahmana body—which has been gained at the culmination of countless births through some extraordinary spiritual merit (punya) and serves as the vehicle for liberation (Mukthi) **kShudrE hA hanta, mA mA kShipa viShayarasE, pAhi mAM mArutEsha** do not cast me into trivial worldly pleasures. You alone must protect and save me," he prays.

In this Brahmana body, the power of intellect is sharp, and the senses are keen. For that very reason, there are ample opportunities for it to head in either direction. If one decides to earn wealth, one can earn; if one decides to indulge in worldly pleasures, one can indulge. However, only by using that very intellect can we also redirect our senses towards Bhagavan. Arunagirinathar expresses this sentiment, saying, (புத்தியை வாங்கி நின் பதாம்புயத்தில் புகட்டி அன்பாய் முக்தியை வாங்க அறிகின்றிலேன்) **buddhiyai vAngi nin padhAmbuyaththil pugatti anbAy Mukthiyai vAnga aRikindrilEn** "I do not know how to withdraw my intellect, fix it lovingly upon Your lotus feet, and attain Mukthi." That is to say, Bhagavan has bestowed upon us such a discerning intellect solely to direct our mind and senses towards Bhagavan and practice Bhakthi. Therefore, Bhattathri prays, "Grant me unwavering Bhakthi."

Salvation through Bhakthi alone

I mentioned earlier that a person named Viswanatha Iyer used to visit Swamigal, and that he had immense Bhakthi towards the Ramayana. He had started a new project in Kochi, and five crore rupees was due to him from the

government. But it did not arrive and kept getting delayed. He had been executing that project only by mortgaging his house and all his family's jewelry.

One day, while listening to Swamigal's BhagavataM discourse, he heard the words spoken by Swamigal: "One can buy a bed with money, but cannot buy sleep. Peace of mind is something that Bhagavan alone can bestow." Immediately, he came to Swamigal, prostrated before him, and pleaded, "I am caught in such a critical situation, and I am unable to get much sleep. You must bestow your grace upon me." To that, Swamigal replied, "If one reads the Sundara Kandam, even intractable difficulties will be resolved." He said to Swamigal, "Please come with me and read the Sundara Kandam for my sake. I will do whatever is possible for me, for your family," and took him along.

In a room in Kochi, every morning Swamigal would recite the entire Sundara Kandam in a single day (Eka-dina Parayanam). Viswanatha Iyer would prepare food, keep it ready, and head to work. He would return in the afternoon, serve food to Swamigal, he would eat too, and return to his work again. Swamigal would read something else and rest for a while. In the evening, when Viswanatha Iyer returned, Swamigal would tell him stories from Ramayanam and Bhagavatham. Staying there for ten months in this manner, he read the Sundara Kandam daily. As a result of that, the five crore rupees due to him arrived as eight crores! He came out of his difficulties. Thereafter, he established an apartment promotion company in Chennai under the name 'Madhuras Builders' and became a very wealthy man.

He and another devotee named Marutidasar in Hyderabad—Marutidasar had built a Hanuman temple in front of his house. Swamigal went there too and performed Sundara Kanda Parayanam for 68 days, completing 68 recitations. Viswanatha Iyer and Marutidasar decided together that they must find a permanent solution to Swamigal's financial difficulties. Intending to start a foundation called the 'Maruti Trust' and raise a substantial fund for it, they

prepared the trust deeds and legal documents and, accompanied by V.J.R. Mama, came to speak to Swamigal.

Swamigal declined it, saying, "I do not need any trust. I trust Maruti. One should depend on Bhagavan for daily sustenance; that is true Brahmana Dharma."

Just as Mathur Babu was to Sriramakrishna Paramahansa, this Viswanatha Iyer was to Swamigal. He was exceptionally intelligent. He was a state-level first-rank holder in school as well as college levels. After fifty, he learned Sanskrit grammar (Vyakarana). When Swamigal and he read the Narayaneeyam together, Swamigal would point out and explain all the grammatical peculiarities in it, and he would appreciate them with great delight. It was a sweet sight just to watch the two of them read the Narayaneeyam together. In that manner, he was blessed with the Satsangam of Swamigal.

In Viswanatha Iyer's advanced years, Swamigal had told him, "Chant the *Vishnu Sahasranama* 21 times daily"; he, too, had been practicing it regularly. While on a pilgrimage to the North, he had the Darshanam of a Baba (a realized Siddha purusha) in a cave. Seeing that everyone was going, he too went, prostrated, and sought his blessings. To that, the Siddha looked at him and said, "You are already reciting the *Vishnu Sahasranama* 21 times every day, so what worry do you have?" What a great blessing that was!

Even in his old age, he would climb the stairs to have Swamigal Darshanam. Swamigal would ask him, "You have listened to the Ramayana and Bhagavatam for so long, and you are studying them yourself as well. Why then do you strain yourself like this when your body is unwell?" To that, he would reply, "I come to witness the zeal you have for doing Parayanam, and to draw inspiration from it."

It was Viswanatha Iyer who, at Swamigal's own suggestion, had purchased the land in Pazhur where Swamigal's Adhishtanam stands today. However, he had stated beforehand, "I am going to reach Bhagavan soon; Swamigal must remain for a very long time and bless everyone." After Swamigal attained Siddhi, his Adhishtanam was established precisely on the land purchased by Viswanatha Iyer. Later, his sons and other devotees joined together and built that Adhishtanam as a grand structure today. Pazhur Agraharam is situated on the Tiruchirappalli-Karur route, ten kilometers from Trichy on the banks of the Kaveri.

It is said that the Jeeva Samadhi of saints is like a lamp (deepam) that burns eternally without a wick and without oil. If one goes there, boons are obtained and all the afflictions of our mind are dispelled. If one sits there and does Parayanam, one can understand its power for oneself. Even if we do Parayanam for hours together, we would feel no strain like in the real presence of Swamigal. Time flies and the Parayanam gets completed. That place has become a Punya Kshetram. The people of that village also celebrate him with great affection, saying, "Because of the advent of this great soul, immense welfare and prosperity have come to our village." During Swamigal's Aradhana, they treat the visiting devotees with splendid hospitality; during the procession (Purappadu) of Swamigal, they welcome him with Haarathi in front of every house.

The reason I shared this account of Viswanatha Iyer is that he was a man in worldly life, like all of us, who came to Swamigal solely to resolve his difficulties. Yet that Satsangam, as Bhattathri prays in these two Shlokams, bestowed upon him steadfast Bhakthi and bestowed Sadgathi to him.

We are unable to let go of the notion of 'I' in this physical body so easily. Even at an age when we can no longer indulge, we still desire to vicariously enjoy through our children and grandchildren. Even if we cannot eat because our teeth are gone, we prepare delicacies for them and feel happy watching them eat. In this way, the desires within us do not leave us easily. This prayer for

steadfast Bhakthi towards Bhagavan will help us to get rid of those attachments.

Viswanatha Iyer is one example. Like him, many individuals associated with Swamigal, walked the path shown by him, and attained exalted Bhakthi and Vairagyam. In appearance they were just like ordinary householders, but I have witnessed in person the steady growth of Bhakthi within them.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये त्रिनवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।

श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE trinavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |
shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

94th Dashakam: Knowledge of the self and Bhakthi

Next is the 94th dashakam. In this, he concludes by explaining the philosophical wisdom (Tattva Jnana) expounded in the Upanishads and how we can attain it. Krishna Bhagavan explains this to Uddhava. The first Shloka of the 94th dashakam:

शुद्धाः निष्कामधर्मेः, प्रवरगुरुगिरा, तत्स्वरूपं परं ते,
शुद्धं देहेन्द्रियादिव्यपगतं, अखिलव्याप्तं आवेदयन्ते ।
नानात्वस्थौल्यकार्श्यादि तु, गुणजवपुस्सङ्गतोऽध्यासितं ते,
वहेः दारुप्रभेदेष्विव, महदणुतादीप्तता, शान्ततादि ॥

shuddhAH niShkAmadharmaiH In this world, everyone must perform all meritorious deeds—such as their respective Svadharma (prescribed duty), worship of deities (murti), visiting holy places (kshetra / sthala), and sacred bathing (tirtha)—in a 'nishkama' manner (without expecting any fruits or rewards). 'Shuddhah'—those whose minds have thus attained purification of consciousness (chitta shuddhi) **pravaragurugirA** should approach an exalted Guru. He must be a Guru who has not merely studied Vedanta, but has assimilated it into his own personal direct experience. **tatsvarUpaM paraM tE** From him, they come to know of Your supreme philosophical nature, which is the undivided, formless essence of Brahman (Nishkala Brahma Svarupa). **shuddhaM dEhEndriyAdivyapagataM, akhilavyAptaM AvEdayantE** They realize that this attribute-less Brahman (Nirguna Brahman) is pure, completely transcends the physical body and sensory organs, and all-pervading.

nAnAtvasthaulyakArshyAdi tu, guNajavapussa~NgatO.adhyAsitaM tE, vahnEH dAruprabhEdEShviva, mahadaNutAdIptatA, shAntatAdi Everything we perceive in this world is solely the Supreme Reality. However, the reason it appears with so much diversity is 'Maya'. Bhagavan resides within everyone. Yet, it appears to us as though one person is stout, one is thin, one is intelligent, and another is dull. How is that? If a large wooden log burns in fire, it appears like a massive flame. If a small twig burns, it appears like a small flame. If a fire blazes intensely, it looks bright and radiant; if it is on the verge

of extinguishing, it appears dim and subdued. In reality, is there any distinction in fire such as a dull fire or a stout fire? No. Like that, the Atma is comparable to that fire. Just as fire appears in varying dimensions and forms depending on the shapes of the wooden logs, the Atma appears to us in this world in diverse forms, attributes, and traits.

94th dashakam 2nd Shlokam

आचार्याख्य-अधरस्थारणि, समनुमिलच्छिष्यरूप-उत्तरारणि-
आवेधोद्भासितेन, स्फुटतर, परिबोधाग्निना दह्यमाने ।
कर्मासीवासनातत्कृत, तनुभुवनभ्रान्तिकान्तारपूरे,
दाह्याभावेन, विद्याशिखिनि च विरते, त्वन्मयी खलु अवस्था ॥

AchAryAkhyA-adharasthAraNi, samanumilachChiShyarUpa uttarAraNi
AvEdhOdbhAsitEna, sphuTatara, paribOdhAgninA There is an object known as an Arani fire-stick. In it, there are two parts: the 'lower Arani' (adhara-arani) and the 'upper Arani' (uttara-arani). When one is churned against the other, fire is generated. In the same manner, by uniting the 'Acharya' (the Guru), who serves as the lower Arani, with the 'disciple', who serves as the upper Arani—through the spiritual instruction (Upadesha) imparted by the Guru—a radiant and luminous 'fire of knowledge' (Jnanagni) is sparked.

From the perspective of Vedanta, that instruction consists of Maha Vakyas such as 'Tat Tvam Asi' (That Thou Art) and 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am Brahman). In the path of Bhakthi, that sacred word can come from anywhere.
dahyamAnE karmAIvAsanAtatkR^ita, tanubhuvanabhrAntikAntArapUrE
Through its constant contemplation (manana), a lucid fire of knowledge is ignited, which burns down to ashes the bundles of latent tendencies (vasanas) residing within our mind, along with the entire 'forest of delusion' (bhranti vanam)—comprising the physical body and the material world—born from those impressions.

dAhyAbhAvEna, vidyAshikhini cha viratE Thereafter, when nothing remains left to burn, that fire of knowledge also extinguishes by itself. In the end, what remains standing alone is solely that Parabrahman. **tvanmayI khalu avasthA** That is, You Yourself, are realized as That, as the attribute-less Brahman (Nirguna Brahman).

In this manner, it is exclusively through Jnana that one can dispel all sorrows. Adi Shankara states in the Bhaja Govindam, "Jñānavihīnaḥ karmaśatena muktiṃ bhajati na janmaśatena." That means, no matter how many rituals or karmas you perform, you can attain liberation (mukti) only when you attain Jnana. The intense yearning to attain this Jnana exists strongly only in spiritually ripened jivas. They alone will seek it with genuine earnestness.

The divine life story of Vallimalai Sachidananda Swamigal

An excellent example of this is Vallimalai Sachidananda Swamigal. People also refer to him as 'Tiruppugazh Sachidananda Swamigal.' It is only because of him that people all over the world are singing the Tiruppugazh today. At birth, his name was 'Ardhanari.' Although born into an impoverished family, he was very intelligent; however, he lacked the means to study. Therefore, he learned the culinary arts in Mysore alongside his maternal uncle.

He cooked so exquisitely that even the Maharaja of Mysore was very happy with him. As he was also a well-built wrestler (Pahelwan), he used to engage in traditional wrestling. For him, who was thus endowed with intellect (Buddhiman) and physical prowess (Shaktiman), time showed a pathway to transform into a great devotee (Bhakthiman). In his fortieth year, his wife and only daughter passed away. On top of that, he developed severe abdominal pain.

At that time, someone advised him, "Go to the Pazhani hill and perform dedicated service (Kainkaryam) to Muruga." In those days, facilities like cable cars were not available as they are today. One had to balance a Kavadi and carry milk, flowers, and everything else up the hill right from the base. He, too,

carried water from the foothill daily, ascended the hill, and performed Kainkaryam by offering it for Abhishekam of Bhagavan. Miraculously, his stomach ailment was cured completely! Consequently, extraordinary Bhakthi towards Pazhani Muruga was kindled in him.

As his Muruga Bhakthi kept growing in this manner, one day a dancer performed a dance in that temple. She danced to the lines, *Singara roopa mayilvahana namo namena.. Kanda kumara siva desika namo namena.* (from the song beginning with *Vangara marbilani*). These lines captivated Ardhanari's heart immediately. He inquired, "Who composed this?" When told, "This is the Tiruppugazh composed by Arunagirinathar," he requested, "Please write down this song and give it to me," and obtained it.

He possessed neither formal literacy nor schooling. Therefore, he would hand that sheet of paper to visitors coming to the temple, request them, "Please read this out to me," and memorized the entire song merely by listening to it. Later, he learned that V. T. Subramania Pillai in Chennai had published the Tiruppugazh as a printed book. Procuring a slate and slate-pencil from a young boy, he learned the Tamil alphabets ('a, aa, i, ee'), and with that book, he began reading the entire Tiruppugazh. He developed boundless love for it.

Subsequently, he was married a second time, but that wife also passed away. Thereafter, he undertook numerous pilgrimages. In Northern India, a great saint gave him spiritual initiation (Deeksha) and conferred upon him the holy name 'Sachidananda.' Even so, while he was grieving that he had not yet attained complete spiritual wisdom (Poorna Jnanam), Pazhani Muruga appeared in his dream and commanded him, "Go to Tiruvannamalai."

He arrived in Tiruvannamalai; there, he had the Darshanam of Bhagavan Ramana. Feeling delighted as though he had seen his own Pazhani Muruga in person in the form of a loincloth-clad ascetic (Kovanandi), he began rendering personal service (Kainkaryam) to him. He stayed alongside Bhagavan at Skandashramam.

One day, Bhagavan Ramana stood up abruptly and said, "Run, run! Go down the hill!" Wondering, "Why is Bhagavan saying this?", he came down the hill. Approaching directly opposite him on the path came Sri Seshadri Swamigal. Seshadri Swamigal stopped him, held him in an embrace, and asked, "Isn't Tiruppugazh your manthram?" He was filled with wonder! When he replied, "Yes, Swamigal," Seshadri Swamigal recited the verse Atma tvam Girija matih and asked, "Is there anything like this in Tiruppugazh?" Then Vallimalai Swamigal recited the lines from the song beginning with Amalavayu: "எனது யானும் வேறாகி எவரும் யாதும் யானாகும் இதய பாவனாதீதம் அருள்வாயே" *Enadhu yaanum veraagi evarum yaadhuma yaanaagum idhaya bhaavanadheetam arulvaaye.* That is to say—the meaning is: "Bestow upon me that transcendent inner state beyond mental conceptions (Bhavanadheeta Nilai) wherein the notion of 'I' and 'mine' in this physical body dissolves, and the realization dawns that 'everyone and everything is myself' (all beings and all objects are myself alone; everything is indeed the Atman)."

Hearing this, Seshadri Swamigal was immensely pleased, blessed him saying, "Tiruppugazh itself is your manthram; proceed to Vallimalai," and send him on his way. He too arrived at Vallimalai and expanded a cave on top of the hill by scooping away the earth with his bare hands. At that time, three skeletons were unearthed there. Having constructed three Samadhis over them, he sat inside that sacred cave and continuously meditated on the Tiruppugazh as his manthram. If any local Kuravas brought and offered porridge (Kanji), he would consume it. Paying no heed even to food in that manner, he performed intense penance (Tapas) for twelve long years.

During that time, he was blessed with the divine vision (Darshanam) of Valli Ammai, and through Her grace, the Darshanam of Muruga. He was not formally trained in musical grammar, yet in later years, he would sing with exquisite melody (Ragam) and rhythm (Talam). Using Tiruppugazh songs itself, he formulated a beautiful and systematic worship tradition (Paddhati) for Muruga Peruman. Thereafter, he came to Chennai and established twelve

sabhas named after the twelve divine weapons held in the twelve hands of Muruga. It is through these efforts, Tiruppugazh's fame spread far and wide and so many across the world sing the Tiruppugazh today. In this manner, a single word uttered by a noble preceptor (Acharya) kindles the fire of wisdom (Jnanagni) within, eradicates the delusion concerning this physical body and the world, and elevates one to the sublime state of Samadhi.

Our Swamigal's Bhagavatha Nishtai

Our Swamigal's life is also like that. In the 35th Shlokam of the Padaravinda Shatakam of Mooka Panchashati:

वषट्कुर्वन्माञ्जीरजकलकलैः कर्मलहरी- हवींषि प्रोद्धण्डं ज्वलति परमज्ञानदहने ।
महीयान्कामाक्षि स्फुटमहसि जोहोति सुधियां मनोवेद्यां मातस्तव चरणयज्वा गिरिसुते ॥

vaShaTkurvan-mA~njIrajakalakalai:, karmalaharI-
havIMShi, prOddaNDaM jvalati, paramaj~nAnadahanE |
mahIyAnkAmAkShi, sphuTamahasi jOhOti, sudhiyAM
manOvEdyAM mAta:, tava charaNayajvA girisutE ||

This Shlokam describes how Ambal's holy feet serve as the Yajva (priest of a ritual sacrifice), casting all the karmas of her devotees into the fire of Jnanam and burning them. Similarly, from the day Maha Periyava said, "He is reading Bhagavatam, he will get Jnanam, and his birth will reach fruition," Swamigal held firmly onto Bhagavatam, recited it a thousand times, and eradicated all his karmic bonds using that very fire of wisdom (Jnanagni).

Bliss, fully devoid of sorrow, comes only through Jnanam

94வது தசகம் 3வது ஸ்லோகம்

एवं त्वत्प्राप्तिः, अन्यो नहि खलु निखिलक्लेशहानेरुपायः,
नैकान्तात्यन्तिकास्ते कृषिवत्, अगदषाड्गुण्यषट्कर्म योगाः ।
दुर्वैकल्यैरकल्या अपि निगमपथाः, तत्फलान्यप्यवाप्ताः,
मत्ताः त्वां विस्मरन्तः, प्रसजति पतने, यान्त्यनन्तान् विषादान् ॥

EvaM tvatprAptitaH, anyO nahi khalu nikhilakIEshahAnErupAyaH Except for attaining You through wisdom and becoming free from Maya in this manner, there is no other path whatsoever to eradicate all afflictions (kleshas).

naikAntAtyantikAstE kR^iShivat, agadaShADguNya ShaTkarma yOgAH We engage in agriculture. There, one must plough the land, sow the crops, irrigate with water, ensure pests do not infest, and erect fences so that cattle and goats do not graze upon them. Only after performing so much labour does one obtain the harvest. Afterwards, we finish eating that food; hunger arises again, and we repeat this exact same cycle. Those who maintain a garden at home will also easily understand this!

In this exact manner operate all other worldly remedies, the six ritual acts (shat-karmas), and the six policies of statecraft (shad-gunyas). These do not eradicate our sorrow fundamentally from the root; nor can it be said that sorrow will never return again. This is just like taking medicine. This example applies very much to the modern allopathic medical system. It is uncertain whether taking medicine will eradicate the disease entirely from the root, but it brings numerous side effects. They administer harsh, potent drugs; the relief obtained from them is minimal indeed. In the same way, whatever other expiatory rites (prayashchitta) one performs, they will not eradicate sorrow fundamentally. It is conveyed in this shloka that only a pleasure intermingled with sorrow will remain.

Maha Periyava has explained this nicely through a simple illustration. In the darkness, mistaking a rope lying on a staircase for a snake, a person is terrified to step down. He tries ringing a bell. He tries chanting the Garuda manthram. Will that snake slither away? Only if it were truly a snake would it slither away. Is it not just a rope? Only when light appears and it is recognized that it is not a snake will that fear depart, enabling him to step down and cross the stairs. In the same manner, one can cross beyond sorrow solely through the light of wisdom (Jnanam). It cannot be achieved through ritual remedies (pariharas).

durvaikalyairakalyA api nigamapathAH, tatphalAnyapyavAptAH If we think of performing meritorious Vedic rites such as Ishtis—in this modern era, assembling pure ritual ingredients (dravyas), finding a suitable place, securing a ritually pure performer (kartha), and aligning with the auspicious time and place is itself exceedingly difficult. **mattAH tvAM vismarantaH, prasajati patanE, yAntyanantAn viShAdAn** Even if one manages to perform it with great difficulty and attains some worldly pleasure as its fruit, arrogance creeps in, and they forget Bhagavan. Furthermore, as soon as that accrued spiritual merit (Punyam) is exhausted, they fall back to their previous state; sorrow arises all over again. Sandhyavandanam, Tarpana, Shraddha, and the forty Samskaras—these alone are the obligatory duties we must perform. When the mind must be turned away from worldly objects in order to attain Bhagavan, if one attempts to utilize Vedic rituals merely to enjoy more and more worldly pleasures, how can wisdom (Jnanam) ever be attained?

Life abroad appears like a realm of sensory enjoyment (bhoga-bhumi) attained by those with merit; it seems as though those living there are experiencing life as if in heaven. However, can it be called a bliss, free from the admixture of sorrow? Or can it be asserted that it will remain permanently as it is? No. They harbour conceit (mada) regarding their wealth; there certainly exists the constant fear that some calamity might endanger their comforts, along with diverse anxieties. In that regard, anything other than wisdom will inevitably remain a joy tinged with sorrow.

In the 66th shloka of the Padaravinda Shatakam, it is stated:

अशोकोल्लासं नः प्रचुरयतु कामाक्षि चरणः विकासी वासन्तः समय इव ते शर्वदयिते ॥

"ashokollAsaM naH prachurayatu kAmAkShi charaNaH
vikAsI vAsantassamaya iva te sharvadayite ||"

"May Amba's lotus feet, which resemble the vibrant spring season, bestow upon us 'ashokollasam'; that is to say, may they cause the Ashoka trees to

bloom." The true inner meaning of this is—"May they bestow a joy that is completely devoid of grief (Shoka)." Swamigal would explain, "That is verily wisdom (Jnanam)."

In the next shloka, he explains that wherever we go, fear remains ever-present: 94th Dashakam, 4th shloka:

त्वल्लोकादन्यलोकः क्वनु भयरहितो, यत् परार्धद्वयान्ते,
त्वद्भूतस्सत्यलोकेऽपि, न सुखवसतिः पद्मभूः, पद्मनाभ ।
एवं भावे तु, अधर्मार्जितबहुतमसां का कथा, नारकाणां
तन्मे त्वं छिन्धि बन्धं वरद, कृपणबन्धो, कृपापूर सिन्धो ॥

tvallOkAdanyalOkah kvanu bhayarahito, yat parArdhadvayAntE,
tvadbhItassatyalOkE.api, na sukhavasatiH padmabhUH, padmanAbha

"O Padmanabha! Even Brahma, who was born from the lotus (in this creation, transcending several ascending planes beyond human joy, such as the joy of the Devas and the joy of the Gandharvas, there exists that joy of Brahma.) Even that Brahma who creates everyone is said to harbor the anxiety, 'I have already reached fifty-one years of age (will my lifespan come to an end?)'" Looking at it from this perspective, there is no one in this world who is free from fear; You alone are the fearless One.

EvaM bhAvE tu, adharmArjitabahutamasAM kA kathA, nArakANAM When even the joy experienced by meritorious souls has sorrow intermingled within it, what is there to say about those who commit numerous sins and suffer in hell? Therefore, only sorrow ultimately remains through this physical body; one cannot expect that true happiness will ever come from it.

tanmE tvaM Chindhi bandhaM varada, kR^ipaNabandhO, kR^ipApUra sindhO "O Ocean of Mercy! O Kinsman of the destitute! O Bestower of Boons! Severing these bonds of karma for me and dispelling the 'I'-notion identified with this body, please bestow wisdom (Jnanam) upon me."

Jivan Mukthi is not a mere textbook theory

Next Shlokam 94th Dashakam, 5th shlokam:

याथार्थ्यात्त्वन्मयस्यैव हि मम न विभो, वस्तुतो बन्धमोक्षौ,
मायाविद्यातनुभ्यां, तव तु विरचितौ, स्वप्नबोधोपमौ तौ ।
बद्धे जीवद्विमुक्तिं गतवति च भिदा, तावती तावदेको
भुङ्क्ते, देहद्रुमस्थो विषयफलरसान्, नापरो निर्व्यथात्मा ॥

yAthArthyAttvanmayasyaiva hi mama na vibhO, vastutO bandhamOkShau,
mAyAvidyAtanubhyAM, tava tu virachitau, svapnabOdhOpamau tau This is
a classic illustration of Advaita philosophy frequently cited in the Upanishads.
If the individual soul (Jiva) and Brahman are one, in absolute reality, there is
neither bondage (bandha) nor liberation (Moksha) for me. Bondage is brought
about by Maya, and liberation is brought about by wisdom (Jnanam). This is
comparable to the dream state and the waking state. We perceive all kinds of
things in a dream; yet the moment we wake up, nothing is there.

baddhE jIvadvimuktiM gatavati cha bhida, tAvatI tAvadEkO bhu~NktE,
dEhadrumasthO viShayaphalarasAn, nAparO nirvyathAtmA The same way,
if we realize that this entire world is merely a dream, a phantom projection
displayed by Maya, that realization itself is the 'awakening of wisdom' (just
like waking up from a dream). This is the only difference between a person in
bondage and one who has attained liberation. One perches upon the tree of
the physical body and consumes the fruits of worldly objects (the results of
meritorious and sinful deeds); the other remains purely as a witness
(sakshi-matra) without consuming them. All of these are allegories found in
the Upanishads. However, Bhattathri asks, "what is the use of merely studying
what Jivanmukti means, if it just remains a theory?" That is not sufficient.

94th Dashakam, 6th Shlokam:

जीवन्मुक्तत्वं, एवंविधमिति वचसा किं फलं, दूरदूरे,
तन्नाम अशुद्धबुद्धेः, न च लघु मनसश्शोधनं, भक्तितोऽन्यत् ।

तन्मे विष्णो कृषीष्ठाः, त्वयि कृतसकलप्रार्पणं भक्तिभारं,
येन स्यां मङ्क्षु, किञ्चिद् गुरुवचनमिलत्त्वत्प्रबोधः, त्वदात्मा ॥

**jIvanmuktatvaM, EvaMvidhamiti vachasA kiM phalaM, dUradUrE, tannAma
ashuddhabuddhEH, na cha laghu manasash-shOdhanaM, bhaktitO.anyat**
"What benefit is there in merely speaking about this state of living liberation
(Jivanmukti) in words alone? If our intellect is not purified, if mental
purification (chitta shuddhi) has not taken place, it simply means that such a
state remains very distant from us. Therefore, one must purify the mind. For
that purification of mind, there is no path other than Bhakthi!"

It is possible to purify the mind solely through the Bhakthi offered to
Bhagavan. **tanme viShNO kR^iShIShThAH, tvayi kR^ita-sakalaprArpaNaM
bhaktibhAraM** Therefore, I dedicate all the actions I perform unto You alone.
Please bestow such exalted Bhakthi upon me.

**yEna syAM ma~NkShu, ki~nchid guruvachana-milat-tvatprabOdhaH,
tvadAtmA** If such pure Bhakthi arises within us, then through a single
instruction imparted by the Guru, the 'awakening of wisdom' will dawn within
us, and we shall attain Sarupya Mukthi. Just as it was solely due to his Bhakthi
towards Pazhani Murugan that Vallimalai Swamigal received that single
transformative word from Sri Seshadri Swamigal and was able to attain
liberation in that very lifetime!

Merely studying vedanta texts is not sufficient. One must eradicate the ego
(ahamkara) through Bhakthi. Swamigal would explain through a beautiful
illustration that only then does the knowledge of Brahman (Brahma Vidya)
become an experiential realization.

"Ambika, who is the very embodiment of Brahma Vidya, underwent gestation
in the womb of the divine mother Yashoda, and incarnated upon this Earth. In
accordance with the command of Bhagavan, Vasudeva took the infant
Krishna, placed Him beside Yashoda, and brought back that female child.
Since Yashoda was in a state of exhaustion and deep sleep, she did not discern
the gender of that child—that is, the distinguishing mark of whether it was a

boy or a girl. As soon as she woke up, she scooped up Krishna lying beside her into her embrace, caressed Him, fed Him, doted upon Him, and rejoiced."

Drawing upon this incident, Swamigal would say: "Brahma Vidya was with her; yet, not even the slightest external trace or self-conscious identity of it was visible in her. Like that, one must study the Gita. However, if one harbors ego, thinking, 'I have listened to Vedantic expositions from many scholars,' or 'I have read multiple commentaries on the Gita,' that Vedantic wisdom will never become an experiential reality for them. Only when one remains humble with the thought, 'I may have read some books; however, am I not still struggling with desires and attachments just like everyone else?' and practice Bhakthi, will that experience be bestowed. It is difficult to understand this. He would say, 'One must study and know Vedanta; yet, if one remains free from even the notion of "I have studied," then just as Yashoda attained the direct experience of Krishna (Krishnanubhavam), one will attain that experiential wisdom (Jnananubhavam)!"

The story of Latu Maharaj and Guru kripa

Another example of this is Latu Maharaj (Swami Adbhutananda), a direct monastic disciple of Sriramakrishna Paramahansa. He was a poor boy who used to herd goats in Bihar. He came to Bengal to earn a livelihood. There, he joined the household of one of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's devotees as a domestic servant. That devotee handed him fruits and sent him off, saying, "Go deliver this to Sri Ramakrishna."

He went once, and he went a second time as well. Afterward, he remained adamant, insisting, "I will not go back; I will stay only with Sri Ramakrishna." Observing his Bhakthi, they too agreed, saying, "Alright, let him stay and continue serving the Mahatma." He said to his master, "They will provide me meals at the temple. Will you not give me two dhotis a year? That is all I need," and remained with Paramahansa, rendering service to him.

Because he was an unlettered village boy, he was somewhat rough in his manners; at times, he would speak harshly to the devotees visiting there. At that juncture, Sri Ramakrishna called him over and taught him, "I will teach you two things. First—you must not speak even a single word that hurts anyone; if you speak in that manner, you will not attain Bhagavan. Second—chant the Rama Nama one hundred thousand times every day. Sit inside the mosquito net at night and chant it without anyone knowing." Faithfully doing so precisely as instructed, he attained Uthama Bhakthi and Jnanam! Later on, when Swami Vivekananda directly initiated sixteen disciples into Sannyasa and founded the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Latu Maharaj was one among those sixteen disciples!

While residing at the Math, he remarked, "If you set institutional rules like 'food will be served only when the bell rings,' I will not stay here; I cannot follow all these regulations." To this, Vivekananda held onto him tightly, saying, "No, no, it is more than enough if you simply remain here. Your very presence is a blessing for us." After a few years, he moved to Kashi. Marvelling that Paramahansa had transformed an ordinary boy who did not know a single letter into an exalted sage of the highest order, Vivekananda gave him the monastic name 'Adbhutananda' (one whose bliss is astonishing).

In this way, when the grace of a genuine Guru is present, when that single transformative word of instruction is received, and when Guru-Bhakthi unites harmoniously with Deiva-Bhakthi, there is no doubt whatsoever, that a human being attains liberation (Mukthi) in that very lifetime.

Having elucidated the concepts of the attributeless Para-Brahman and the state of living liberation (Jivanmukti) as expounded in the Upanishads, the Narayaneeyam reminds us: "What is the use of merely knowing all of these in theory alone? If purification of the mind (chitta shuddhi) is not achieved, will not this wisdom remain an unattainable fruit, far beyond our reach! Purifying that mind is possible solely through Bhakthi."

In the 6th shloka of this Dashakam, Bhattathri prays: "O Krishna! Bestow upon me unwavering Bhakthi. Grant me the noble intellect to surrender everything unto You alone. When that Bhakthi flourishes, the true inner import of the words instructed by the Gurunatha will become clear, the philosophical wisdom (Tathva Jnanam) about You will be attained by me, and I shall merge and become one with You."

Is it beneficial for householders to study Vedanta?

Here, a delightful incident comes to my mind. Some Sannyasins were studying the Brahma Sutra Bhashya under the Jagadguru of Sringeri, Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati Swamigal. Along with them, a few householders (Grihasthas) had also been listening to those lessons for many days with deep earnestness (shraddha).

One day, one of those householders asked the Acharya a doubt: "Swami, Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada states that 'Only Sannyasins possess the eligibility (yogyata) to study the Brahma Sutra Bhashya'; is that truly so?" To that, Chandrashekhara Bharati Swamigal replied, "Are you questioning what Acharya stated by asking if it is truly so? What counter-argument can there be beyond his words? It is precisely as he said."

Immediately, that householder asked with longing, "Please forgive me, Swami, I did not mean it in that sense. We too have been listening to the lessons from you sincerely for so many days; is there no benefit for us from this?"

To that, Acharya answered most beautifully: "As stated by Adi Shankara, there is no change in the fact that this wisdom is directly and immediately fruitful only for Sannyasins. However, your listening to the lessons now will not go in vain. In some birth, when you attain purification of the mind (chitta shuddhi) through the Bhakthi, acquire all the noble virtues of the Self (atma Gunas), and accept Sannyasa, the lessons heard in this birth will support you as an imprint of past (Poorva Janma Vasana). On that day, when you listen to Vedanta, all of this will be comprehended effortlessly," he graciously stated.

What we must understand from this is that we may certainly learn about Jivanmukti and Vedanta; however, we must not spend all our time solely in that pursuit. One should engage in the actions that foster Bhakthi. As declared in "yadyat karma karomi tattadakhilaM shambho tavArAdhanam", it becomes evident that we must dedicate everything we perform unto Bhagavan and wait for His grace.

One must do Bhakthi alongside chanting the Vedas

Next one, 94th Dashakam, 7th shloka:

शब्दह्ण्यपीह प्रयतितमनसः, त्वां न जानन्ति केचित्,
कष्टं, वन्ध्यश्रमास्ते चिरतरमिह गां बिभ्रते, निष्प्रसूतिम् ।
यस्यां विश्वाभिरामाः, सकलमलहराः, दिव्यलीलावताराः,
सच्चित्सान्द्रं च रूपं, तव न निगदितं, तां न वाचं भ्रियासम् ॥

shabdbrahmaNyapIha prayatitamanasaH, tvAM na jAnanti kEchit,
kaShTaM, vandhyashramAstE chirataramiha gAM bibhratE, niShprasUtim
The Veda is Shabda Brahman (the Supreme Reality manifested as sound). Therefore, no one should misinterpret this shloka as belittling the Vedas. It is stated in numerous places across the Thevaram and Divya Prabandham that the four Vedas and their six ancillary limbs (Vedangas) are verily the forms of Bhagavan. Swamigal used to say that every single word in the Vedas is itself a divine Nama of Bhagavan (Bhagavan-nama). However, some individuals cling merely to the phonetics and sound of the Vedas without remaining devoted with Bhakthi unto You, who are the ultimate entity revealed by the Vedas (Veda-pratipadya); nor do they ever lend their ears to listen to the sweet narratives concerning You. Bhattathri terms such recitation of the Vedas devoid of Bhakthi as vandhyashramaH (a futile and barren exertion). However much feed one offers to a barren cow, one will not obtain any milk from it, will one?

At the same time, sachchitsAndraM cha rUPaM, tava na nigaditaM, tAM na vAchaM bhriyaSam Bhattathri prays that he does not wish to possess speech

that does not speak of Bhagavan's divine sports (Leelas) **yasyAM** **vishvAbhirAmAH** which bring joy to the entire universe and **sakalamalaharAH** destroy all sins, **divyaIIAvatArAH** such as the glory of the Rama and Krishna incarnations—as well as Your sacred form composed of Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss (Sacchidananda). That is to say, Bhattathri prays that he should speak of Your divine Leelas and sacred form to his heart's content with his tongue.

To those engaged in officiating Vedic rites (Vaidikas), Swamigal would advise, "You conduct Vedic rituals for others. Do not stop with just that; perform a daily Shiva Puja or a daily recitation of the Sundara Kandam for the spiritual upliftment of your own soul (Atma Labham)."

In those days, the very way of life was structured like that, was it not? My son-in-law studied the Vedas at the Allur Veda Patashala. Whenever I go to Pazhur to have Darshanam at Swamigal's Adhithanam, I would visit the nearby village of Allur, meet Sri Seshadri Ghanapatigal, and offer my Namaskarams. One day, he was speaking about his appa, Sri Yagnesha Ghanapatigal. According to the divine command of Maha Periyava, Yagnesha Ghanapatigal ran a Veda Patashala in that village, teaching his own children along with several other young boys.

Even while running a Veda Patashala, he would deliver beautiful discourses on Bhagavata Saptaham and Ramayana Navaham. Whenever he went to neighbouring towns to deliver a Navaham discourse, he would take the students of the Pathashala along with him and conduct their Vedic lessons there as well. Whether they were scholars studying and teaching the Vedas or priests performing Vedic rituals for others, so many of them diligently observed daily disciplines such as bathing in the sacred Kaveri River, have Darshanam at the local Shiva and Perumal temples, and returning home to perform heartfelt personal Puja, did they not?

In this modern age, for everyone treading the Vedic path, Maha Periyava is the essential catalyst and inspiration for studying the Vedas. Therefore, everyone cherishes deep Bhakthi towards Periyava. It is in the holy name of Periyava that countless Vedic activities and Veda Parayanams continue to take place magnificently even today. That itself is more than enough! Merely meditating upon Periyava is itself an immense Punyam.

Therefore, Bhattathri beautifully transforms into a prayer what Krishna instructed to Uddhava: that those who study the Vedas must also nurture Bhakthi by listening to the divine stories of Rama and Krishna.

Never dismiss anything as mere blind Bhakthi

Next, Krishna says, "It is not that I am pleased only when one performs Bhakthi with profound scriptural knowledge. Even if one knows nothing at all, if he offers Bhakthi with unwavering faith in Me, he too is My foremost Bhaktha." 94th Dashakam, 8th shlokam:

यो यावान् यादृशो वा त्वमिति किमपि, नैवावगच्छामि भूमन्,
एवं च, अनन्यभावस्त्वदनुभजनमेव, आद्रिये, चैद्यवैरिन् ।
त्वल्लिङ्गानां त्वदङ्घ्रिप्रियजनसदसां, दर्शनस्पर्शनादिः,
भूयान्मे, त्वत्प्रपूजानतिनुतिगुणकर्मानुकीर्त्यादरोऽपि ॥

yO yAvAn yAdR^ishO vA tvamiti kimapi, naivAvagachChAmi bhUman, EvaM cha, ananyabhAvastvadanubhajanamEva, AdriyE, chaidyavairin "O Enemy of Shishupala (Krishna)! I do not know how to analyze how immense You are or what Your true nature is. However, with exclusive devotion (ananya-bhava, without any other distracting thought), I shall continuously perform Your worship alone," he prays.

Did not Shabari Maatha perform Bhakthi? In the Ramayana, Valmiki writes, "shabaryA pUjitaH samyak". It means, Rama was very well worshipped by Shabari. If one asks what extraordinary Puja Shabari performed, elders explain that the dedicated service (Kainkaryam) she rendered for all those

years to Maharishi Matanga and his disciples—who were great Bhakthas of Rama—itself served as the highest worship offered to Rama.

Kannappa Nayanar is another example of this. Did he ever study the Shastras? Adi Shankara marvels at the Bhakthi of Kannappa in his Shivananda Lahari and sings:

"mArgAvartitapAduKA pashupater-angasya kUrchAyate
gaNDUShAmbu-niShechanaM puraripor-divyAbhiShekAyate |
ki~nchid-bhakShita-mAMsa-sheSha-kabalaM navyopahArAyate
bhaktiH kiM na karoti aho vanacharo bhaktAvataMsAyate ||"

The worn leather footwear he walked in became like the sacred Kurcha grass placed upon the holy head of Pashupati. The water carried in his mouth and spat out is accepted by the Destroyer of the Three Cities (Shiva) like the divine Abhishekam performed by sages with holy Ganga water. The mouthful of meat that he tasted beforehand to ensure "this is delicious" turns into a fresh, sacred offering (Naivedyam). "bhaktiH kiM na karoti aho vanacharo bhaktAvataMsAyate"—What indeed can Bhakthi not accomplish! Ah, a simple hunter roaming the forests became the crest jewel among all Bhakthas!

Therefore, it is not that only one who knows many things is a true Bhaktha. We must not lightly dismiss the Bhakthi of those unacquainted with scriptural rules as 'blind faith'. Who knows which anthill harbors which snake, or what past merits (Punyam) an individual carries! Bhakthi may at times smolder quietly within like embers concealed beneath ash, without showing itself outwardly.

We witness countless such Bhakthas across our land. In Tiruvannamalai, on full moon days (Pournami), lakhs of people perform the Pradakshinam of the holy hill (Girivalam). In Tirupati, lakhs of people climb the steps on foot to have Darshanam of Bhagavan; they offer whatever modest money they possess as an offering to Bhagavan. What an unwavering faith people place in

bathing in sacred rivers! Enduring numerous hardships, they complete that holy bath.

People undertake the Kailash Yatra; It is always biting cold there, and the oxygen levels drop to a point where breathing becomes difficult. Even so, they go there and perform the (parikrama) Pradakshinam of Mount Kailash itself. Those whose health permits do this parikrama on foot; others travel on mules or jeeps; some Bhakthas do Kailash parikrama through Anga-Pradakshinam, performing a Namaskaram, standing up, taking a step, and prostrating again. It is solely through the steadfast Bhakthi of such common people and the spiritual guidance of saints sent by Bhagavan that our Sanatana Dharma continues to endure imperishably even today.

Speaking of climbing the steps of the Tirupati hill, an incident involving Maha Periyava comes to mind. Once, Periyava was ascending the Tirupati hill on foot by climbing the steps. Along that path, there would be a stretch of flat walkway, followed by a flight of steps, and then a flat path again.

Periyava had instructed the attendant accompanying him, "Inform me whenever the steps approach." While Periyava walked along immersed in continuous meditation on Perumal, the companion kept alerting him every time steps appeared, saying "Padi, padi" (step, step / also meaning study, study in Tamil). After walking a short distance, Periyava remarked, "I have grown old. What am I going to study now, and what is going to register in my mind? Therefore, do not say 'Padi, padi' (study, study); say 'Govinda'."

The next time steps appeared, the attendant shouted "Govinda!" in a startling manner. Smiling gently, Periyava said, "No, do not say it like that. Say it melodiously as 'Govinda Govinda Govinda...'" Swamigal had a devoted disciple, who sang very well. Throughout the half-hour during which Swamigal took his meal (bhiksha), that devotee would continuously chant the Namavali "Govinda Govinda Govinda... Govinda Govinda Govinda... Govinda Govinda Govinda..." in a sweet manner.

Association of sadhus and spiritual experiences

The next line: **tvalli~NgAnAM tvada~NghripriyajanasadasAM, darshanaspashanAdiH, bhUyAnmE, tvatprapUjA natinuti guNakarmAnukIrtyAdarO.api** "May I be blessed with the holy association (Sangam) of Bhakthas who cherish Bhakthi towards Your consecrated iconic forms (Archa Murtis) and Your divine lotus feet. May I frequently attain their Darshanam, and Sparshanam (touching their feet reverently). May I ever possess an immense longing to worship You wholeheartedly, to offer Namaskarams (Nati), to sing hymns of praise (Nutu), and to chant the divine glories and divine sports (Leelas) of Yours"—thus he prays.

I am currently residing in Triplicane. Here, the grand procession (Purappadu) of Parthasarathy Perumal takes place frequently. He enjoys Nityakalyana Utsavam. Because many people have moved to Chennai, the congregation (Goshti) reciting the Nalayira Divya Prabandham is now larger in Triplicane than even in Srirangam. All of them move along singing the Divya Prabandham together. Their Darshanam is itself a great blessing.

Swamigal will say: "In the early years of their youth, they might have walked along casually looking around while reciting the Divya Prabandham. However, when they continuously recite those nectarine verses every day alongside Bhagavan for thirty or forty years, the deep spiritual melting of the heart and the radiant divine glow that manifest in them in their advanced age prove how immense the spiritual power of that nectarine words truly is. One can recognize it simply by looking at them," he would say. He would offer his Namaskarams to them.

Reciting Stothrams with a focused mind

If we memorize the Stothrams, we can recite them anywhere, at any time. When visiting temples, we can chant the respective Stothras dedicated to the specific deities in their respective sanctums. I was mentioning earlier that "while reciting the Mooka Panchashati, out of every ten Shlokams, one must

pay close attention to at least one Shloka and recite it so that it registers deeply in the mind; otherwise, one should recite all ten all over again".

Similarly, in the Mooka Panchashati, one can mark all the Shlokams wherever Namaskarams occur, and during Parayanam, when those Shlokams arrive, one can perform a Namaskaram if possible, or sincerely fold one's hands. One can also perform appropriate gestures (abhinayas) in accordance with the meaning.

Govinda Damodara Swamigal would relate all these Stothras to his own personal life. To me, he has recited the Mooka Panchashati more than 500 times. Every single time certain specific Shlokams came up, he would narrate their background with a lot of emotion. I, too, would eagerly wait for the moment he would share it.

The 18th Shloka of the Kataksha Shatakam in the Mooka Panchashati is,

कुण्ठीकरोतु विपदं मम कुञ्चितभू- चापाञ्चितः श्रितविदेहभवानुरागः ।
रक्षोपकारमनिशं जनयञ्जगत्यां कामाक्षि राम इव ते करुणाकटाक्षः ॥

kuNTIkarotu vipadaM mama ku~nchitakhrU-
chApA~nchitaH shritavidehabhavAnurAgaH |
rakShopakAramanishaM janaya~njagatyAM
kAmAkShi rAma iva te karuNAkaTAkShaH ||

When Swamigal was 10 years old, he was sitting with the Mooka Panchashati book and reading it. As soon as this Shloka appeared, he ran to his Appa and joyfully showed it to him, saying, "Appa, our Rama is mentioned even in this Shloka on Ambal!" (In this Shloka, it is stated that Kamakshi's compassionate glance protects the universe just like Bhagavan Rama).

At that time, an elderly gentleman who was present there, while preparing to leave, called out, "Kalyanam, come here," and took Swamigal to the nearby

Amman temple. There, he told him, "Dear boy, consider this Mooka Panchashati itself as your mother. Recite this daily without missing even a single day. Kamakshi will protect you as a mother, since you are a motherless child (Swamigal lost his mother when he was just three years old); hold on to this firmly," and then departed.

Swamigal would tell me: "I got the Narayaneeyam only when I was 25 years old; earlier, I knew only a few Shlokams. I came to know the complete Narayaneeyam only at the age of 25. However, I have been reciting this Mooka Panchashati right from my childhood."

The 45th Shloka of the Stuti Shatakam in the Mooka Panchashati:

कृपाधाराद्रोणी कृपणधिषणानां प्रणमतां निहन्ती सन्तापं निगममुकुटोत्तंसकलिका ।
परा काञ्चीलीलापरिचयवती पर्वतसुता गिरां नीवी देवी गिरिशपरतन्त्रा विजयते ॥

kRupAdhArAdroNI kRupaNadhiShaNAnAM praNamatAM
nihantrI santApaM nigamamukuTottaMsakalikA |
parA kA~nchIIIAparichayavatI parvatasutA
girAM nIvI devI girishaparatantrA vijayate ||

In this Shloka, the phrase "nihantrI santApaM" (She who destroys afflictions) appears. Swamigal would say: "Whenever someone hurts my feelings, I will go and sit under a peepal tree in the village. I did not know rules such as one should not sit under a peepal tree at night. I would go sit there and sing this 'kRupAdhArAdroNI' Shloka loudly so that the entire village could hear.

Whenever I recite that Shloka, the memory of my mother comes to me. When I was an infant, because I suffered from an illness called 'mAntham' (infantile colic/spasms), my body would stiffen, and while nursing from my mother, I would bite her breast; blood would come out. To alleviate my mother's pain, my step-grandmother would pinch my thigh. Seeing that, my mother would panic and plead, 'Do not pinch chithi, do not pinch, it is turning

red, the child is crying!' Later in life, my step-grandmother would tell me, 'In this entire world, the only soul who ever felt that you should never cry was your mother, my dear boy!' Every time he recited this Shloka, Swamigal would weep, remembering his mother.

Once, Swamigal was reading the Mooka Panchashati to me. He had just finished reading the line "kAmAkShi tAvaka kaTAkSha yatIshvaro.asau" from the 51st Shloka of the Kataksha Shatakam. The meaning of this is, "Kamakshi's compassionate glance shines like a Yatishwara (a king among ascetics)."

Right at that exact moment, Sri Narayana Iyer entered. He did Namaskarams to Swamigal and shared, "I am arriving just now after having the darshan of Shivan Sar. Sar told me, 'One should not refer to Swamigal merely as a Sannyasi; one should address him as Yatindral! (a king among ascetics)'" The line of the Shloka that Swamigal was reciting and the words spoken by Narayana Iyer aligned so perfectly. In this manner, there existed a profound, soulful connection between numerous Shlokas and Swamigal's life.

In the story of Kaliya Mardanam in Narayaneeyam, all the trees along the banks of the Yamuna are scorched by the poisonous fumes of Kaliya. On one occasion, the cows and cowherd boys drop dead after drinking that poisoned water. Krishna revives them with His compassionate glance (Bhattathri calls it "shrI-kaTAkShaiH"). Afterwards, it is mentioned that He climbs up a leafy Kadamba tree situated on the bank and leaps into the pool.

A question arises there: "If all the trees were scorched by the poisonous fumes, how did that single tree alone remain lush green without getting charred?" Elders have offered various commentaries for this. One explanation is, "When Garuda was carrying the pot of nectar (amrita), a single drop of nectar fell on that tree, and therefore it was not scorched." However, in the Sridhara commentary (Sridharyam), it is written, "When it was predestined that the holy feet of Bhagavan were to touch it, how could that tree be scorched?"

Swamigal would say: "Because I was destined with the blessing of narrating Bhagavatam to Acharyal, I am still alive despite countless tribulations that passed through my life like poisonous gusts of wind. Therefore, I like this Sridhara commentary better." In this manner, whether reading the Ramayanam or Bhagavatam, he would delightfully relate everything to his own life.

Thus, solely through Stothras, we can nurture and deepen our Bhakthi.

Bhakthi must be practiced without deceit

Next one is 94th dashakam 9th Shloka:

यद्यल्लभ्येत तत्तत्तव समुपहृतं देव, दासोऽस्मि तेऽहं,
त्वद्देहोन्मार्जनाद्यं भवतु मम मुहुः, कर्म निर्मायमेव ।
सूर्याग्निब्राह्मणात्मादिषु, लसितचतुर्बाहुमाराधये त्वां,
त्वत्प्रेमाद्रित्वरूपो, मम सततमभिष्यन्दतां, भक्तियोगः ॥

yadyallabhyEta tattattava samupahR^itaM dEva, dAsO.asmi tE.ahaM,
tvadgEhOnmArjanAdyaM bhavatu mama muhuH, karma nirmAyamEva
Krishna continues to describe the virtues of exalted sadhus to Uddhava. "He alone is a sadhu who offers whatever he receives first unto Bhagavan. O Krishna, I too am Your humble servant (Dasa). Please shower Your Anugraham (grace) so that simple services (Kainkaryams), such as sweeping and cleaning Your temple sanctum, are bestowed upon me constantly without any deceit or lack," he prays.

We too must practice Bhakthi without any hypocrisy or pretense. One must not practice Bhakthi merely to take photographs and share them on WhatsApp. Swamigal would say: "Performing Puja is easy; demonstrating to the world that 'I am performing Puja' is what is difficult. A Puja can even be performed purely within the mind (manasika Puja)."

A magnificent Shloka appears in Bhagavatam illustrating what an ideal, foremost devotee is like:

निरपेक्षं मुनिं शान्तं निर्वैरं समदर्शनम् । अनुव्रजाम्यहं नित्यं पूयेयेत्यङ्घ्रिरेणुभिः ॥

nirapekshaM muniM shAntaM nirvairaM samadarshanam |
anuvrajAmyahaM nityaM pUyeyetya~NghrireNubhiH ||

"A devotee who expects nothing (Nirapeksham), who is free from worldly cravings, observant of contemplative silence (Munim), peaceful, without enmity towards anyone (Nirvairam), and endowed with equal vision seeing Bhagavan in everything across the world (Samadarshanam)—I constantly follow behind such a devotee (Anuvrajamyaham Nityam). Do you know why? So that when the dust of his holy feet (Anghri-renu) falls upon Me, all the universes residing within Me may become purified (puyeyet iti)," Bhagavan Krishna Himself proclaims.

Maha Periyava was such an exalted, foremost devotee and a genuine ascetic. When the entire world celebrated him, he stepped away from Math and walked hundreds of miles, resided in forests and remote villages. He instructed, "Only two people must accompany me." Every single day, he would perform the Chandramouleeswara Puja mentally. Not only He, but even his close attendants could accompany Him only if they remained completely detached from desires. Periyava would consume only a small measure of puffed rice (pori) each day. Whenever he arrived at a village, hundreds of blessed souls, coming to know of it somehow, would arrive and fall at his feet. No matter how impoverished they were, feeling an earnest urge to offer something to Periyava, they would bring and offer fruits or grains harvested from their own lands.

Periyava would distribute all of it right there to everyone present. Even if something remained, those accompanying him were forbidden from saving it thinking, "We do not know what will be available when we go to the next village, let us keep a few fruits aside." Whatever was received on that day was

the only food. If nothing was available in the next village the following day, they had to seek alms (bhiksha) nearby and eat. It was under such stringent disciplines that attendants like Srikantan Mama, Balu Mama, Vedapuri Mama, and Chandramouli Mama followed Periyava; that is why many of them later became Sannyasis themselves. Periyava has also blessed many such that they forgot hunger and thirst while they were in his divine presence.

Next line of the shloka **sUryAgnibrAhmaNAtmAdiShu, lasitachaturbAhumArAdhayE tvAM, tvatprEmArdratvarUpO, mama satatamabhiShyandatAM, bhaktiyOgaH** I worship Your four-armed divine form in the numerous abodes (which Bhagavan mentions in Bhagavatam) such as the sun, fire, and the brahmana. He prays that “the Bhakthi Yoga, in which the heart melts and softens through the Divine Love (Prema) placed in You, should continuously swell and grow within me at all times.”

Arunagirinathar, too, frequently prays for the same thing in the Kandar Anubhuthi:

"முருகன் குமரன் குகனென்று மொழிந்து
உருகும் செயல்தந்து உணர்வென்றருள்வாய்
பொருபுங்கவரும் புவியும் பரவும்
குருபுங்கவ எண்குண பஞ்சரனே"
"murugan kumaran guganendru mozhindhu
urugum seyal thandhu uNarvenRaruLvAy
porubungavarum puviyum paravum
gurubungava eNguNa PancharanE"

He asks: please grant me the state where my heart melts upon uttering Your divine namas, and bestow true spiritual awareness upon me.

"ஆடும்பரி வேலணி சேவலெனப் பாடும்பணியே பணியாயருள்வாய்
தேடுங்கயமா முகனைச்செருவில் சாடுந்தனியானை சகோதரனே"
"AdumparivEl aNi sEvalenap
pAdumpaNiyE paNiyAyarLvAy"

thEduMkayamA muganaichcheruvil
sAdunthaniyAnai sagOdharanE"

Singing thus, he prays: please bless me with the sole service of singing about You constantly, so that my Bhakthi may flourish.

"மகமாயை களைந்திட வல்லபிரான்
முகமாரும் மொழிந்து மொழிந்திலனே
அகம் மாடை மடந்தையரென்றயரும்
சகமாயையுள் நின்று தயங்குவதே"

"magamAyai kaLaindhiDa vallapirAn
mugamARum mozhindhu mozhindhilanE
agam mADai maDandhayarenRayarum
sagamAyaiyuL ninRu thayaNguvadhE"

He yearns: "Shanmukha Peruman possesses the power to destroy the great cosmic illusion (Mahamaya). I constantly chant His divine name, 'Arumugam, Arumugam'. Yet, I have not freed myself from being ensnared and troubled by the exhausting worldly illusions of home, wealth and gold, and sensual attachments."

The Uthamothama Bhakthi of the Gopis

10th Shloka in the 94th Dashakam:

ऐक्यं ते, दानहोमव्रतनियम तपस्सांख्ययोगैर्दुरापं,
त्वत्सङ्गेनैव गोप्यः किल, सुकृतितमा प्रापुः, आनन्दसान्द्रम् ।
भक्त्येषु अन्येषु भूयस्स्वपि, बहुमनुषे, भक्तिमेव त्वमासां
तन्मे त्वद्भक्तिमेव द्रढय, हर गदान्, कृष्ण वातालयेश ॥

aikyaM tE, dAnahOmavrataniyama tapassAMkhyayOgairdurApaM,
tvatsa~NgEnaiva gOpyaH kila, sukR^ititamA prApuH, AnandasAndram
Attaining oneness (Aikyam) with You, who are the very embodiment of
supreme bliss, is exceedingly difficult to achieve through acts of charity
(Danam), sacrificial fire rituals (Homam), religious vows (Vratam), strict
observances (Niyamam), severe penance (Tapas), Sankhya philosophy, or

Ashtanga Yoga. However, the Gopis attained that sublime state of oneness with utter ease, purely through the intimate closeness they shared with You, did they not?

Krishna Himself declares: "Constantly meditating upon Me, they merged into Me." In the Narayaneeyam, Bhattathri depicts each stage beautifully—beginning with the introduction of the Gopis, caressing Krishna as a child, the Katyayani Puja, and the Rasa Krida. Uddhava travels to Vrindavan, is astonished upon witnessing the Bhakthi of the Gopis, and consoles them. He comforts them, saying, "Even in separation, having the constant memory of Krishna is itself a spiritual gain; you will see Krishna very soon."

Later, in the 84th Dashakam, when the Gopis meet Krishna at Kurukshetra, the moment Krishna imparts the spiritual teaching, "May the wisdom that I am the Sachidananda Supreme Reality dawn in your hearts," they attain Jnanam instantly. After that, separation from Him or union with Him become one and the same to them; they merge seamlessly into Bhagavan.

bhaktEShu anyEShu bhUyassvapi, bahumanuShE, bhaktimEva tvamAsAM
"Even though You have numerous devotees, O Krishna, it is the Bhakthi of these Gopis that You celebrate most profoundly. Therefore, please bestow upon me, too, an unwavering Bhakthi akin to that of the Gopis," prays Uddhava.

In Bhagavatam, when describing the Gopis, the phrase appears: "gopInAM sa guruH gatiH" Using that as a premise, Swamigal would state beautifully: "To the Gopis, Bhagavan Himself was the Guru; it was Bhagavan Himself whom they attained. Therefore, for some souls, Bhagavan Himself manifests directly as the Guru. Some may assert, 'One cannot attain Bhagavan without a Guru'; but for certain exalted Mahatmas, Bhagavan Himself becomes the Guru. Did not Muruga Bhagavan Himself appear directly to Arunagirinathar, instruct him 'Be still, cease all speech' (summA iru, sol aRa), and bestow upon him supreme divine experience (Anubhuthi)?

The uniqueness of the Gopis' Bhakthi is that while the rest of us bear all sorts of worries about food, spouse, and children, and meditate on Bhagavan alongside those concerns, they, lamenting 'Alas, we are unable to forget Krishna!', continually meditated upon Bhagavan without letting even a single fraction of a second slip by. Therefore, they merged into Bhagavan effortlessly. This is just like rivers running and merging into the ocean. Initially, they carry different names like Krishna, Godavari, and Cauvery; each has its own distinct form and taste. However, once they enter and merge into the Bay of Bengal, everything becomes salt water; everything turns into ocean water. The same way, the Gopis became one with Bhagavan. That is why even Sage Narada, in his Narada Bhakthi Sutras, cites them as the ultimate benchmark for the pinnacle of Bhakthi: "yathA vrajagopikAnAm" (just like the Gopis of Vraja). Swamigal would often say, 'Let us pray that such exalted Bhakthi dawns within us as well.'

Did the Gopis perform charity, fire rituals, vows, or strict spiritual observances? Did they engage in penance? Or did they practice Yoga? None of these! Yet, after Akrura came and took Krishna away to Mathura, without forgetting Him for even a fleeting moment, they remained immersed in the constant contemplation of Krishna and became totally one with Him. That alone is known as 'Para Bhakthi.' Our Swamigal resided in precisely that sublime state.

tanmE tvadbhaktimEva draDhaya, hara gadAn, kR^iShNa vAtAlayEsha
Praying, "O Krishna! Guruvayurappa! Strengthen my Bhakthi; eradicate all my ailments and shower Your grace!", Bhattathri concludes this Dashakam.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये चतुर्नवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।

श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE chaturnavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |
shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

95th Dashakam: Meditating on the divine form

1st shloka in the 95th Dashakam:

आदौ हैरण्यगर्भी तनुं, अविकलजीवात्मिकामास्थितस्त्वं,
जीवत्वं प्राप्य, मायागुणगणखचितो, वर्तसे विश्वयोने ।
तत्रोद्बुद्धेन सत्त्वेन तु गुणयुगलं, भक्तिभावं गतेन
छित्वा, सत्त्वं च हित्वा पुनः, अनुपहितो वर्तिताहे, त्वमेव ॥

Adau hairaNyagarbhIM tanuM, avikalajIvAtmikAmAsthitastvaM, jIvatvaM prApya, mAyAguNagaNakhachitO, vartasE vishvayOnE Here, he addresses Bhagavan as 'Vishwayoni.' Vishnu Bhagavan alone is the Mother of the entire universe, the Jagadamba. Beyond polarities like Shakti/Shiva and Purusha/Prakriti, Bhagavan stands beyond all these as the Parabrahman. Yet, by His own Maya, He Himself manifests as all these varied appearances. He says, "Assuming a subtle cosmic body in the form of Hiranyagarbha, You exist as the collective cosmic soul (Samashti Jivatma), and then, assuming the nature of the individual soul (Vyashti Jivatma), You shine endowed with the manifold qualities (Gunas) of Maya."

This is somewhat difficult to understand, isn't it? In the 5th, 6th, and 7th Dashakams of the Narayaneeyam, he has explained this in great detail. The account of the creation of this universe described in our Puranas is remarkably profound, scientific, and wondrous. If one compares the Genesis stories found in other religions with this, they appear quite childish. Our Rishis realized and articulated all of this purely through their yogic insight.

To understand this shloka easily: "O Bhagavan! You alone manifested as Brahma, and through him, using Maya, You created the worlds imbued with the Gunas of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. I too am an individual soul (jiva) within that creation; hence, all those Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—exist within me as well."

tatrOdvR^iddhEna satvEna tu guNayugalaM, bhaktibhAvaM gatEna ChitvA
If we continuously cultivate the Sattva Guna by practicing Bhakthi towards Bhagavan, that Sattva Guna itself will cut down and destroy the other two Gunas. **satvaM cha hitvA punaH** After that, we will renounce even that Sattva Guna and **anupahito vartitAhE, tvamEva** merge into our own self, which remains unconditioned and uncovered by any of the Gunas.

All of this was the spiritual instruction given by Krishna to Uddhava. Bhagavan says: "First, cultivate the Sattva Guna through Bhakthi. Through that alone, you can eliminate the Rajas and Tamas Gunas. Thereafter, relinquishing even that Sattva, you will merge into My divine form." It is precisely this teaching that Bhattathri beautifully frames here as a heartfelt prayer.

To understand this, Bhagavan Sri Ramana has given an analogy. The person tending a funeral pyre continuously rakes the burning corpse with a wooden pole. That raking stick also burns down and becomes smaller gradually. When the corpse finishes burning, he casts that stick too into the fire. In the same manner, at the final culmination, even the Sattva Guna of Mahatmas dissolves away, and they merge completely into Bhagavan.

Hamsopakhyanam: Liberation from the grip of the Gunas

The next shloka narrates the episode known as the 'Hamsopakhyanam.' That is to say, the narrative where Bhagavan manifested in the form of Hamsa (a divine swan) and imparted spiritual teachings to Brahma and his mind-born sons, the Sanakadi sages.

The Sanakadi sages pose a question to their father, Brahma: "This mind propels the senses towards worldly objects; the senses engaged in sensory objects bring back those impressions and imprint them onto the mind as latent tendencies (Vasanas)—in this manner, both of these continuously feed each other in a vicious cycle! How can a seeker yearning for liberation (Mumukshu) break free and emerge from this?"

At that moment, even Brahma does not know the answer. This is because he himself exists as the creator engaged in the realm of active cosmic manifestation. Therefore, he meditates upon Bhagavan. Krishna says, "At that time, he meditated upon Me. I appeared there in the form of a Swan (Hamsarupi)." This Hamsa bird possesses a unique virtue: it is endowed with the power to separate water from milk and drink only the milk. Likewise, wise men who know how to discern that which is real (Sat) from that which is unreal (Asat) are known as 'Paramahamsas.' Bhagavan revealed His divine vision in such a swan's form. After doing Namaskaram to Him, Sanakat Kumaras presented this question to Him. In the 2nd shloka of the 95th Dashakam, Bhattathiri presents that question and its answer:

सत्त्वोन्मेषात् कदाचित् खलु विषयरसे, दोषबोधेऽपि भूमन्,
भूयोऽप्येषु प्रवृत्तिः, सतमसि रजसि प्रोद्धते. दुर्निवारा ।
चित्तं तावद्गुणाश्च ग्रथितं, इह मिथः, तानि सर्वाणि रोद्धुं,
तुर्ये त्वय्येकभक्तिशरणमिति भवान्, हंसरूपी न्यगादीत् ॥

satvOnmEShAt kadAchit khalu viShayarasE, dOShabOdhE.api bhUman,
bhUyO.apyEShu pravR^ittiH, satamasi rajasi prOddhatE. durnivArA When
the Sattva Guna increases within us, at times we clearly recognize the defect
(flaw) present in these worldly matters. However, we perceive it merely on an
intellectual level. Because Rajas and Tamas remain intermingled with the mind
itself, with that very chitta (inner consciousness), whenever they pull us, we fall
back into them once again. This happens because, owing to the merits and
sins (punya and papa) of past births, all those latent impressions (vasanas)
are imprinted within the mind, pulling us back into worldly activities. It is
'durnivArA'—impossible to resist, impossible to escape; this indeed was the
question posed by the Sanakadi sages.

Our Swamigal would provide an analogy for this: A person may remain deeply
sattvic, and devout until the age of 40. Then, all of a sudden, he turns into an
atheist. Similarly, even if someone had been irreligious for a long time,
suddenly Bhakthi dawns upon him, and becomes intensely immersed in

Bhagavan. Where does all of this originate from? It stems purely from those past impressions (purva samskaras) lying latent within.

What occurs to me is that one need not even look across 30 or 40 years; when we perform a little Parayanam in the morning, an 'unmesha' (awakening) of the Sattva Guna occurs, yet by evening, all of it completely changes! In the evening, when we listen to sacred discourses like Swamigal's Bhagavatam Upanyasam, it feels as if we have understood everything. When the next morning dawns, we find ourselves running after some other worldly affair. In this manner, faith (theism) and doubt (atheism) alternate back and forth; the latent vasanas deep within are the sole cause of it all. When they asked how to break free from this, Bhagavan revealed:

chittaM tAvadguNAshcha grathitaM, iha mithaH, tAni sarvANi rOddhuM, turyE tvayyEkabhaktishsharaNamiti bhavAn, haMsarUpI nyagAdIt That mind (chitta), the Gunas, and consequently the senses are intertwined with one another in such a manner. They are locked together so tightly that neither can escape the other. Bhattathri says that You, in the form of Hamsa, taught that if one must arrest and overcome all of this, one must realize that Bhagavan exists in the fourth, 'Turiya' state, distinct from these three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas)—meaning that Bhagavan is Gunatita (transcending all Gunas)—and solely by practicing Bhakthi towards Him can we be redeemed from this.

Reading this brings an incident to my mind. I read a book containing the letters written by Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In it, a devotee writes a letter to Swamiji asking: "I have been chanting every day the manthrams you imparted. Even so, my mind keeps wandering restlessly; what should I do?" To that, Swamiji replied: "Your mind is composed of the Gunas of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. However, that manthram which I imparted to you is the very embodiment of Bhagavan. He is beyond these three Gunas. Therefore, whenever you chant that manthram, you are directly in the presence of Bhagavan Himself. Thus, without worrying about

the mind's restlessness, continue chanting it incessantly; you will certainly be liberated from this."

When I read that, I understood clearly: 'Aha! That Bhagavan whom we worship is transcendent and superior to these three Gunas. The contemplation of Bhagavan (Bhagavat dhyana) performed through the Parayanam taught by Swamigal is the only thing that will redeem us from the grip of this mind.' Indeed, can a person drowning in water escape unless he takes hold of something that exists outside the water?

How Swamigal guides and the greatness of Bhajanam

Before proceeding to the next shloka, I must mention something about Swamigal. When interacting with Swamigal, only after associating for a long time and recognizing a person's sincerity—feeling "this person relies entirely on me"—would he offer anyone any personal guidance. When giving such guidance, if someone went to him and asked, "May I do this?", he would say, "Please do," if it was in accordance with the Shastras. If it was contrary to the Shastras and fostered Tamas, he would firmly say, "Do not do that." If it involved other Rajasic activities, he would remain indifferent, thinking, "People are pursuing something or the other in the world." However, what he genuinely celebrated from the bottom of his heart—exclaiming "Aha! A truly noble deed, you must certainly do it!"—were unostentatious, virtuous acts that cultivated the Sattva Guna. Above all, he celebrated Bhagavat Bhajanam! This is because that alone serves as genuine support for the blossoming of Bhakthi.

Regarding sattvic matters that are directly connected to Bhagavan—for example, if someone said, "I am reading the Ramayana," he would encourage them saying, "Aha, do it!" I have observed that it was Bhajanam alone that he celebrated so profusely. Otherwise, if someone proposed a vedic ritual for some worldly distress (like some Dosham in their horoscope), "I want to perform this Shanti Homam," he would simply let it pass, saying, "Alright, why should we hinder the dakshina going to those Vaidikas?" Yet, at the same time, if someone asked, "What should be done for the expiation of this affliction

(Dosha Nivritti)?", he would prescribe an easy remedy through the path of Bhajanam, such as: "Recite the *Durga Chandrakala Stuti* 21 times every day for 48 days." That would yield tangible results.

The peerless bliss of Bhakthi

Next is the 3rd shloka in the 95th Dashakam:

सन्ति श्रेयांसि भूयांसि, अपि रुचिभिदया, कर्मिणां निर्मितानि,
क्षुद्रानन्दाश्च सान्ताः, बहुविधगतयः कृष्ण, तेभ्यो भवेयुः ।
त्वं चाचख्याथ सख्ये, ननु महिततमां श्रेयसां, भक्तिमेकां,
त्वद्भक्त्यानन्दतुल्यः खलु विषयजुषां, सम्मदः केन वा स्यात् ॥

santi shrEyAMsi bhUyAMsi, api ruchibhidaya, karminAM nirmitAni Those who perform ritual actions (karmas) teach various practices according to the differing tastes and dispositions of people who say, "This is a noble deed, that is a noble deed." kShudrAnandAshcha sAntAH The fruit derived from them yields only a meager and fleeting joy, which comes to an end very quickly.

bahuvidehagatayaH kR^iShNa, tEbhyO bhavEyuH "O Krishna! Let all those paths be manifold as they are, tvaM chAchakhyAtha sakhyE, nanu mahitatamAM shrEyasAM, bhaktimEkAM but what did You impart to Your dear friend Uddhava?" You taught that Bhakthi is "mahitatamAm"—the most sublime and superior of all paths. Therefore, I desire only that Bhakthi. tvadbhaktyAnandatulyaH khalu viShayajuShAM, sammadaH kEna vA syAt Can the joy derived from worldly pursuits ever equal the joy born of Bhakthi towards You? Never! In that manner, there is a distinct joy inherent in Bhajanam itself. It is like a 'developed taste' that blossoms through long and sustained practice. Once one becomes accustomed to it, missing even a single day of Bhajanam will feel like a profound void. Only when that happens does it mean that a little Bhakthi has truly dawned within us.

Here, the story of Sri T. K. Sundaresa Iyer comes to mind. When he was young, hearing that "a great sage resides at Skandashramam," he went, had the

darshan of Ramana Maharshi, and prostrated before him. There, everyone was seated and reciting the Thevaram. When Ramana looked at him and asked, "Do you know any Thevaram song?", he sang Sundarar's Thevaram: "maRRup paRRinRi nin TiruppAdhamE... naRRavA unai nAn maRakkinum sollunA namachchivAyavE" (Even if I were to forget You, may my tongue forever chant Namashivaya). The moment he sang this, Ramana remarked, "That is enough! This verse is more than enough!" Through this, he revealed that if the tongue continually chants the divine Nama of Bhagavan, that itself is a great penance.

Sundaresa Iyer felt immense joy having had the darshan of that great Mahatma. Every day, he would climb the hill to have Ramana's darshan. However, after a few days, the thought arose within him, "What is this? We go every day, but there seems to be no tangible gain from this," and so he stopped going. Yet, unable to endure the agony of separation from Ramana, he suffered deeply. One night, he wept bitterly, soaking his pillow with tears. The moment dawn broke, he rushed up the hill.

When Ramana asked him, "What happened? Why did you not come for so many days?", he replied, "Thinking that there was no gain for me in coming, I stopped." To that, Ramana said, "What does it matter whether there is a gain or not? Not seeing each other felt like an aching void, did it not? Therefore, keep coming." Ramana even kept count and said, "It has been 100 days since you last came!" After that, Sundaresa Iyer performed extensive Parayanam of the Ramayana and Bhagavatam. He beheld Rama and Krishna directly in Ramana himself. Ultimately, he became an exalted Jnani. In this manner, there is an innate joy in Bhakthi itself, and there is a unique joy in satsangam itself. Our mind needs to cultivate the habit of enjoying the bliss in this joy and become accustomed to it.

The fulfilled state of a Bhaktha

Next is the 4th shloka in the 95th Dashakam:

त्वत्भक्त्या तुष्टबुद्धेः, सुखमिह चरतो विच्युताशस्य च, आशाः,
सर्वाः स्युः सौख्यमय्यः, सलिलकुहरगस्येव तोयैकमय्यः ।
सोऽयं खलु, इन्द्रलोकं, कमलजभवनं, योगसिद्धीश्च हृद्याः,
नाकाङ्क्षत्येतदास्तां, स्वयमनुपतिते मोक्षसौख्येऽपि अनीहः ॥

tvatbhaktyA tuShTabuddhEH, sukhamiha charatO vichyutAshasya cha,
AshAH, sarvAH syuH saukhyamayyaH, salilakuharagasyEva
tOyaikamayyaH To one who is thus content purely in Bhakthi and moves
about with supreme bliss, all other worldly cravings fall away naturally on their
own. Just as a person submerged deep under water perceives only water on
every side, everything in this world appears blissful and permeated with
Bhagavan to such a devotee!

sO.ayaM khalu, indralOkAM, kamalajabhavanaM, yOgasiddhIshcha
hR^idyAH, nAkA~NkShatyEtadAstAM, svayamanupatitE mOkShasaukhyEpi
anIhaH Even if one were to tell him, "I will grant you Indraloka, or
Brahmaloka, or all the Ashta Siddhis starting with Anima," he would not desire
any of them. Let alone all those, even if the bliss of liberation (Moksha
saukhyam) were to land right in his lap unasked, he would have no craving
even for that! This is because, to him, this bliss of Bhajanam (Bhajananda)
surpasses even the bliss of liberation (Mokshananda).

Next is the 5th shloka in the 95th Dashakam:

त्वद्भक्तो बाध्यमानोऽपि च, विषयरसैः, इन्द्रियाशान्तिहेतोः,
भक्त्यैव आक्रम्यमाणैः पुनरपि खलु तैः, दुर्बलैः, नाभिजय्यः ।
सप्तार्चिः, दीपितार्चिर्दहति किल यथा भूरिदारुप्रपञ्चं,
त्वद्भक्त्योघे तथैव प्रदहति दुरितं, दुर्मदः केन्द्रियाणाम् ॥

tvadbhaktO bAdhyamAnO.api cha, viShayarasaiH, indriyAshAntihEtOH,
bhaktyaiva AkramyamANaiH punarapi khalu taiH, durbalaiH, nAbhijayyaH
Even if sensory objects—which cause restlessness to the senses—affect Your
devotee slightly during the initial stages, as time passes and that Bhakthi

deepens and grows, he is completely overtaken by Bhakthi itself and becomes entirely unconquerable by those enfeebled sensory attractions, does he not!

saptArchiH, dIpitArchirdahati kila yathA bhUridAruprapa~nchaM, tvadbhaktyOghE tathaiva pradahati duritaM, durmadaH kvEndriyANAM

It is just like how a blazing, leaping fire reduces even an enormous heap of firewood to ashes; similarly, once the surge of Bhakthi towards You intensifies abundantly, it completely eradicates all his sins and latent tendencies (vasanas). After that, the arrogance and haughtiness of these senses can never hold any sway over him! They will subside naturally on their own.

The auspicious traits of pure Bhakthi

Next is the 6th shlokam in the 95th Dashakam:

चित्तार्द्रिभावं, उच्चैर्वपुषि च पुलकं, हर्षबाष्पं च हित्वा,
चित्तं शुद्ध्येत्कथं वा, किमु बहुतपसा, विद्यया वीतभक्तेः ।
त्वद्वाथास्वादसिद्धाञ्जन, सततमरीमृज्यमानोऽयमात्मा,
चक्षुर्वत्तत्त्वसूक्ष्मं भजति, न तु तथा, अभ्यस्तया तर्ककोट्या ॥

chittArdrIbhAvaM, uchchairvapuShi cha pulakaM, harShabAShpaM cha hitvA, chittaM shuddhyEtkathaM vA, kimu bahutapasA, vidyayA vItabhaktEH While practicing Bhakthi, the heart must melt, tears of joy must flow from the eyes, and one must experience Romanchanam (ecstatic thrill.) Only when one practices Bhakthi in this manner will the mind become purified. Apart from this, in what other way can one possibly purify the mind? This alone is the path! Without Bhakthi, performing severe penance (Tapas) in large measure or mastering numerous intellectual disciplines (vidyas) serves no purpose whatsoever.

tvadgAthAsvAdasiddhA~njana, satatamarImR^ijyamAnO.ayamAtmA chakShurvattatvasUkShmaM bhajati, na tu tathA, abhyastayA tarkakOTyA
'Anjana' means collyrium (kohl). 'Siddhanjana' refers to a magical collyrium. There is a belief that if one applies it to the eyes, the exact location of hidden treasures will become visible to the eyes. Similarly, whichever person applies

the mystical collyrium of Your delectable divine stories to his mind, to that mind immersed in Your sanctifying stories, Your 'subtle ultimate reality' (Tattva Sukshmam), akin to a hidden treasure, will reveal itself on its own!

Setting this aside, even if one practices a million logical debates and dialectics, one cannot comprehend the essential truth of Bhagavan. Bhattathri declares that if one's heart melts, tears well up in the eyes, and one sings His divine namas with a choked voice while listening to His sacred stories, the intuitive knowledge of the Supreme Truth (tattva Jnanam) will shine forth naturally on its own.

Tiruppugazh quote: Melting love full of humility

When mentioning this, a Pazhani Tiruppugazh Arunagirinathar comes to my mind, which begins as "IththAraNikkul...". In that:

“சட்டா நவப்பறைகள் கொட்டா வரிச்சுடலையேகிச்
சடம்பெரிது வேகப் புடஞ்சமைய இட்டே
அனற்குளெரி பட்டா ரெனத்தமுவிநீரிற் படிந்துவிடு பாசத் தகன்று”

"saTTa navappaRaigaL koTTa varichchuDalaieyEgich
saDamperidhu vEgap puDanjamaiya iTTE
anaRkuLeri paTTAr enaththazhuvinIrir paDindhuvidu pAsath thaganRu"

When someone dies, they beat the funerary drums (parai), carry the body to the burning ground, and burn it to ashes on the funeral pyre. Then, having cremated the body, they immediately take a bath in the water and move on to their next worldly duties. That worldly attachment ends right there. Moving away from this worldly bondage that causes repeated rebirths,

“உனது சற்போதக பதுமமுற்றே தமிழ்க் கவிதை பேசிப் பணிந்துருகு
நேசத்தை இன்று தர இனி வரவேணும்!”

“unadhu saRpOdhaga padhamumuTRE thamizhk kavadhai pEsip
paNindhurugu nEsaththai inRu thara ini varavENum!”

"Reaching Your true wisdom-bestowing lotus feet, chanting Your Tamil verses, and bowing before You—You alone must bestow upon me today that melting, loving affection; You must graciously come to grant it to me today,"—that is an exquisite prayer.

In the second half of this song:

“ஏதத்து இலங்கையினில் ஆதிக்கமுண்டதொரு
முட்டாளரக்கர் தலையிற்றே விழக்
கணைகளே தொட்ட கொண்டல் உருவாகி...”

"Edhaththu ilangaiyinil AdhikkamuNDadhoru
muTTAlarakkar thalaiyirRE vizhak
kaNaigaLE thoTTa koNDal uruvAgi..."

The One who possesses the dark hue of a raincloud and who discharged arrows causing the heads of the foolish demon Ravana—who ruled over sinful Lanka—to be severed and fall,

“சுமந்ததிக மட்டார் மலர்க்கமலமுற்றாசனத்திருவை
மார்பில் புணர்ந்த ரகுராமற்கும் அன்புடைய மருமகனாகி...”

"sumandhadhiga maTTAr malarkkamalamuRRAsanaththiruvai
mArbil puNarndha raghurAmaRkum anbuDaiya marumaganAgi..."

He concludes by addressing: O Muruga, the beloved nephew of Raghurama, who embraces upon His chest Sri Devi (Sita), the daughter of Janaka, seated upon the fragrant, honey-laden lotus flower throne! In this manner, in the same song, there is the prayer, "You must come graciously today and bestow the melting love that makes me speak of You and bow to You." The story of Rama also appears. The truth that if one reads and absorbs the stories of

Bhagavan within one's heart, the supreme tattva will reveal itself purely through that Bhakthi, is also present here.

Roopa dhyanam (Meditating on the divine form) of Bhagavan

In the next three Shlokams, Bhattathri explains how Krishna taught Uddhava to meditate upon the divine form of Bhagavan (roopa dhyana): The 7th Shlokam in the 95th Dashakam:

ध्यानं ते शीलयेयं, समतनुसुखबद्धासनो, नासिकाग्र-
न्यस्ताक्षः, पूरकाद्यैः जितपवनपथः, चित्तपद्मं तु अवाञ्चम् ।
ऊर्ध्वाग्रं भावयित्वा, रविविधुशिखिनः, संविचिन्त्य, उपरिष्ठात्
तत्रस्थं भावये त्वां, सजलजलधरश्यामलं कोमलाङ्गम् ॥

dhyAnaM tE shIlayEyaM, samatanusukhabaddhAsanO, nAsikAgra-
nyastAkShaH, pUraKAdyaiH jitapavanapathaH, chittapadmaM tu avA~ncham |
UrdhvAgraM bhAvayitvA, ravividhushikhinaH, saMvichintya, upariShTAt
tatrasthaM bhAvayE tvAM, sajalajaladharashyAmalaM kOmala~Ngam ||

In this, Bhattathri explains the systematic yogic disciplines for practicing meditation. He prays: "Seated in a comfortable posture (sukhasana), keeping the body upright and aligned, fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose, regulating the breath through the pranayama methods of kumbhaka, rechaka, and pooraka, causing the downward-facing lotus of the heart (hridaya kamala) to blossom upward through the power of meditation, visualizing above it the spheres of the sun, the moon, and fire (surya, chandra, and agni mandalas), and visualizing You in their midst possessing a dark complexion like a water-laden raincloud (shyamala varna) and a captivating divine form, may I practice meditation upon You."

Our Swamigal would often speak about this meditation on the divine form of Bhagavan (roopa dhyana). Whichever story he narrated, if it was the story of Krishna, he would describe the roopam of Bala Mukunda; later, in the episode of Rukmini Kalyanam, he would describe the well decked Rukmini and Krishna,

the newlywed couple. Same way, if it was the story of Rama, he would depict Baala Rama, setting forth with Vishvamitra exquisitely, describe Kalyana Rama from head to toe, describe Rama departing to the forest in the guise of an ascetic (Tapasvi), and describe Rama in His coronation majesty (Pattabhishekam)—in this manner, descriptions of the divine form would keep coming regularly in his discourses.

When he arrived at this Shloka, he would say: "You might wonder why I keep repeating these descriptions over and over—a moon-like forehead, curved eyebrows, lotus-petal eyes, a glance showering compassion, an exquisite nose, bimba-fruit lips, an enchanting gentle smile upon them, and a conch-like neck. If you hear it numerous times, won't it register deeply in the mind at least once? It is for that reason that I repeat it again and again." It is stated in a subsequent Shloka that through such meditation on the form, Bhagavan Himself can be attained directly. It is because Swamigal experienced and realized it firsthand that he conveys it to us as well.

Whichever deity we are drawn to, we can meditate upon the divine form (divya roopam) of that very deity. Do you like Pillaiyar (Ganesha)? In the Vinayagar Agaval, Avvaiyar beautifully describes the meditation on His divine form. Do you like Murugan? In Tiruppugazh, meditation on Murugan's form appears in numerous places. There is this song,

சீரான கோலகால நவமணி மாலாபிஷேக பாரவெகுவித
தேவாதிதேவர் சேவைசெய்யுமுக மலராறும்
சீராடு வீர மாதுமருவிய ஈராறு தோளும் நீளும் வரியளி
சீராக மோது நீப பரிமள இருதாளும்
ஆராத காதல் வேடர் மடமகள் ஜீமூதமூர் வலாரி மடமகள்
ஆதாரபூதமாக வலமிட முறைவாழும்
ஆராயு நீதி வேலுமயிலும் மெய்ஞ்ஞான அபிராம தாப வடிவமும்
ஆபாதனேனும் நாளும் நினைவது பெறவேண்டும்!

"sIrAna kOlakAla navamaNi mAlAbhishEka bhAraveguvidha
dhEvAdhidhEvar sEvaiseyyumuga malarARum

sIrADu vIra mAdhumaruviya ErARu thOLum nILum variyaLi
sIrAga mOdhu nIpa parimaLa irudhALum
ArAdha kAdhal vEDar maDamagaL jImUdhamUr valAri maDamagaL
AdhArabhUdhamAga valamiDa muRaivAzhum
ArAyu nIdhi vElumayilum meyj~nAna abhirAma thApa vaDivamum
ApAdhanEnum nALum ninaivadhU peRavENum!"

The meaning of this Tiruppugazh song goes like this

The six blossoming flower-like faces, adorned with splendid, grand garlands of nine precious gems and receiving elaborate ritual ablutions (Abhishekam), reverently served by the devas of the heavens;

The twelve majestic shoulders graced by the Goddess of Valour (Veera Lakshmi), and the two fragrant holy feet adorned with Kadamba flowers around which swarms of striped bees gently hover and hum;

Flanked gracefully on the left and right by the youthful daughter of the hunters (Valli) filled with insatiable love, and the tender daughter of Indra, the lord of rainclouds (Deivayanai), who reside as His very foundation;

Along with the discerning, righteous Spear (Vel), the Peacock mount, and His enchanting divine form radiating pure wisdom and Tapas—may even a lowly one like me be blessed to meditate upon this glorious form daily from head to foot (*ApAda-mouLi*.)

Look how beautiful it is! Resplendent alongside Valli and Deivayanai, bearing six faces, that 'all-captivating, ascetic form of true wisdom'—describing everything exquisitely from head to foot, he prays: "ApAdhanEnum nALum ninaivadhU peRavENDum"—"I must be blessed to meditate daily in my mind upon this form of Yours from head to foot; I must attain this divine vision." In this way, each person can meditate upon their own Ishta Devata's roopam.

The exalted Roopa Dhyanam in Narayaneeyam

The meditation on Srikrishna's divine form (roopa dhyana) is expressed so exquisitely in two Shlokams in the second Dashakam of Narayaneeyam. Although meditation on His form appears in numerous places throughout

Narayaneeyam, nowhere else is it found as comprehensively and as concisely as in these two Shlokams. For that reason, I like them very much.

सूर्यस्पर्धिकिरीटं, ऊर्ध्वतिलकप्रोद्भासि, फालान्तरं,
कारुण्याकुलनेत्रं, आर्द्रहसितोल्लासं, सुनासापुटम् ।
गण्डोद्यन्मकराभ, कुण्डलयुगं, कण्ठोज्ज्वलत्कौस्तुभं,
त्वद्रूपं, वनमाल्यहारपटल, श्रीवत्सदीप्रं, भजे ॥ १ ॥

sUryaspardhikirITamUrdhvatilakaprotbhAsibhAlAntaraM
kAruNyAkulanetramArdrahAShitollAsaM sunAsApuTam |
gaNDodyanmakarAbhakuNDalayugaM kaNThojjvalatkaustubhaM
tvadrUpaM vanamAlyahArapaTalashrIvatsadIpraM bhaje ||

केयूराङ्गद, कङ्कणोत्तम, महारत्नाङ्गुलीयाङ्कित,-
श्रीमद्बाहुचतुष्क, सङ्गत, गदा, शङ्खारि, पङ्केरुहाम् ।
काञ्चित् काञ्चनकाञ्चि, लाञ्छितलसत्, पीताम्बरालम्बिनीं,
आलम्बे, विमलाम्बुजद्युतिपदां, मूर्तिं तव, आर्तिच्छिदम् ॥ २ ॥

keyUrA~Ngadaka~NkaNottamamahAratnAN^gulIyAN^kita-
shrImadbAhuchatuShkasa~NgatagadAshaN^khAripa~NkeruhAm |
kA~nchit kA~nchanakA~nchilA~nChitalasatpItAmbarAlambinIM
Alambe vimalAmbujadyutipadAM mUrTiM tavArtichChidam ||

(I meditate upon Your divine form possessing a crown that rivals the sun in brilliance, a forehead adorned with the radiant Urdhva Tilakam, eyes brimming with overflowing compassion, the charm of an affectionate gentle smile, a shapely nose, a pair of fish-shaped earrings (makara kundalas) shining against the cheeks, the Kaustubha gem glowing at the neck, and a chest resplendent with forest flower garlands (Vanamala), pearl necklaces, and the Srivatsa mark.

I take refuge in that divine form of Yours which destroys the afflictions of those who surrender to You, possessing four glorious arms adorned with keyuras, angadas, the finest kankanas, and gem-encrusted rings, bearing the

mace, conch, discus, and lotus, draped in a shining yellow silk garment (pitambara) held by a golden waist-girdle, and possessing holy feet that carry the radiance of pure, flawless lotuses.)

In the preceding Dashakam, it is mentioned as "netraiH shrotraishcha pItvA"—which means, "The fortune of drinking in Your divine beauty through both the eyes and the ears is attained only by taking birth on this earth. Even though there are numerous hardships, this human birth is truly blessed, because only in this birth can one drink in this embodiment of wisdom of Yours through the eyes and ears."

‘Drinking in the form through the eyes’ is easily understandable. However, I wondered how one could ‘drink in the form through the ears’. When we recite or listen to these Shlokams, doesn’t that form emerge as a vivid portrait in our minds without us even realizing it? In that manner, we can drink in this divine form through our ears.

यत्, त्रैलोक्यमहीयसोऽपि, महितं, सम्मोहनं मोहनात्,
कान्तं, कान्तिनिधानतोऽपि, मधुरं, माधुर्य, धुर्यादपि ।
सौन्दर्योत्तरतोऽपि, सुन्दरतरं, त्वद्रूपं, आश्चर्यतोपि,
आश्चर्यं भुवने, न कस्य कुतुकं, पुष्पाति, विष्णो, विभो ॥ ३ ॥

yat trailokyamahIyaso.api mahitaM sammohanaM mohanAt
kAntaM kAntinidhAnato.api madhuraM mAdhuryadhuryAdapi |
saundaryottarato.api sundarataraM tvadrUpamAshcharyato-
pyAshcharyaM bhuvane na kasya kutukaM puShNAti viShNo vibho ||

If someone gets enchanted by an object and says, "It was so breathtaking!" Bhattathri says, "my Krishna is far more captivating than that!" If one says, "This sweet is so delicious," my Krishna is sweeter than that! If someone says, "I saw a woman, she was so beautiful," my Krishna is far more charming than that! If someone says, "I saw Niagara Falls, what an incredible wonder!", my Krishna is far more wondrous than that! In this manner, Bhagavan possesses

beauty and splendor that surpass everything in this entire universe. Bhattathri asks: whose joy will this divine form of His, not nurture and swell?

Merging with the self through Roopa Dhyanam alone

In the next two Shlokams, he further describes the divine form of Vishnu Bhagavan. The 8th Shlokam in the 95th Dashakam:

आनीलश्लक्ष्णकेशं, ज्वलितमकरसत्कुण्डलं, मन्दहास-
स्यन्दार्द्रं, कौस्तुभश्रीपरिगतं, वनमालोरु हाराभिरामम् ।
श्रीवत्साङ्गं सुबाहुं, मृदुलसदुदरं, काञ्चनच्छायचेलं,
चारुस्निग्धोरुं, अम्भोरुहललितपदं, भावयेऽहं भवन्तम् ॥

AnIlashlakShNakEshaM, jvalitamakarasetkuNDalaM, mandahAsa-
syandArdraM, kaustubhashrIparigata, vanamAlOru hArAbhirAmam |
shrIvatsA~NkaM subAhuM, mR^idulasadudaraM, kA~nchanachChAyachElam,
chArusnigdhOruM, ambhOruhalalitapadaM, bhAvayE.ahaM bhavantam ||

May I meditate upon You, who possess deep-black lustrous hair, gleaming fish-shaped earrings (makara kundalas), a countenance brimming with melting tenderness from a gentle smile, a chest adorned with forest-flower garlands surrounded by the radiance of the Kaustubha gem, long divine arms, a soft, shapely abdomen, a waist clad in golden-yellow silk attire, well-rounded thighs, and holy feet as exquisite as fresh lotuses.

95th Dashakam 9th Shlokam:

सर्वाङ्गेषु, अङ्गं रङ्गत्कुतुकं, इति मुहुर्धारयन्, ईश चित्तं
तत्रापि एकत्र युञ्जे, वदनसरसिजे, सुन्दरे मन्दहासे ।
तत्रालीनं तु चेतः, परमसुखचिदद्वैतरूपे, वितन्वन्,
अन्यत्रो चिन्तयेयं, मुहुरिति समुपारूढयोगो भवेयम् ॥

sarvA~NgEShu, a~Nga ra~NgatkutukaM, iti muhurdhArayan, Isha chittaM
tatrApi Ekatra yu~njE, vadanasarasijE, sundarE mandahAsE |
tatrAlInaM tu chEtaH, paramasukhachidadvaitarUpE, vitanvan,

anyannO chintayEyaM, muhuriti samupArUDhayOgO bhavEyam ||

Meditating on Your divine form again and again in this manner—from head to toe and from toe to head—fixing my mind upon it in firm concentration, I will ultimately anchor my mind on that face blossoming with a gentle, enchanting smile. While meditating in that manner, my mind will dissolve into Your non-dual form of Sachidananda, reaching a state where no other thought remains. Please bestow Your anugraham so that, by meditating repeatedly in this way, I may attain spiritual perfection.

Attaining Bhagavan by renouncing Siddhis

95th Dashakam 10th Shloka:

इत्थं त्वद्भ्यानयोगे सति पुनः, अणिमाद्यष्टसंसिद्धयस्ताः,
दूरश्रुत्यादयोऽपि हि, अहमहमिकया सम्पतेयुः मुरारे ।
त्वत्सम्प्राप्तौ विलम्बावहं, अखिलमिदं नाद्रिये, कामयेऽहं
त्वामेव, आनन्दपूर्णं, पवनपुरपते पाहि मां सर्वतापात् ॥

itthaM tvaddhyAnayOgE sati punaH, aNimAdyaShTasaMsiddhayastAH,
dUrashrutyAdayO.api hi, ahamahamikayA sampatEyuH murArE |
tvatsamprAptau vilambAvahaM, akhilaMidaM nAdriyE, kAmayE.ahaM
tvAmEva, AnandapUrNaM, pavanapurapatE pAhi mAM sarvatApAt ||

When meditating like this, the eight supernatural powers (Ashta Siddhis) starting with Anima, as well as powers such as clairaudience (hearing distant voices right here in one's ears), will rush towards us, vying with one another to arrive first. However, Bhattathri beautifully teaches us Dhyana Yoga in this 95th Dashakam through the prayer: "O Bhagavan! Since all these will only serve as major obstacles and cause delays in attaining You, I shall neither esteem them nor desire them! I desire to attain You alone, the embodiment of complete bliss. O Guruvayurappa! Please remove all my afflictions and protect me at all times."

We have witnessed that Swamigal possessed numerous siddhis. He held the wheel of time (Kala Chakra) in his hands. Yet, whenever someone placed a prayer before him, he would never make claims like, 'I am there; I will resolve this for you.' Instead, he would invariably say, 'I possess no power whatsoever. Let us perform this Parayanam to make ourselves worthy of His anugraham. However, this is not a commercial transaction of give-and-take. If His compassion is present, our prayers will bear fruit.'

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये पञ्चनवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।
श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE pa~nchanavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam
| shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

Bhagavan's divine Nama, Bhagavan's divine form, His divine stories

In the 95th Dashakam of Sriman Narayaneeyam, we learned about Dhyana Yoga. In the final four Shlokams, Bhattathri taught us that meditating upon the divya mangala roopa (auspicious divine form) of Bhagavan will itself bestow Advaita siddhi.

In the Shlokam preceding that, he stated that just as applying magic collyrium (siddhanjanam) to the eyes makes hidden treasure visible, simply listening to the divine stories of Bhagavan will reveal the Brahma Tattva with great ease. A few dashakams earlier, he also mentioned "kShemANi nAmAni," conveying that the divine namas of Bhagavan will redeem us and bestow the highest, good.

Thus, the divine namas of Bhagavan, the divine form of Bhagavan, and His sacred stories—these are extolled in Bhagavatam as the best means for Bhakthi to arise and grow day by day. Bhattathri presents this beautifully and consistently from the very beginning to the end. Do you know what he says even in the first Shlokam of the third Dashakam?

पठन्तो नामानि, प्रमदभरसिन्धौ निपतिताः,
स्मरन्तो रूपं ते, वरद, कथयन्तो, गुणकथाः ।
चरन्तो, ये भक्ताः, त्वयि खलु, रमन्ते, परममून्,
अहं, धन्यान् मन्ये, समधिगत, सर्वाभिलषितान् ॥ १ ॥

paThanto nAmAni pramadabharasindhau nipatitAH
smaranto rUpaM te varada kathayanto guNakathAH |
charanto ye bhaktAstvayi khalu ramante paramamUn
ahaM dhanyAn manye samadhigatasarvAbhilaShitAn ||

"O Granter of boons (Varada)! Those devotees of Yours who wander in this world singing Your divine namas, constantly meditating upon Your divine form, narrating Your auspicious virtues (Kalyana Gunas), and thus plunge into the ocean of bliss—they alone are the most blessed souls in the entire world. I consider them alone to have fulfilled all their desires," he declares.

96th Dashakam: vibHUtI yOGam

When Uddhava asks Krishna, "O Bhagavan! I yearn to hear about Your boundless vibhutis (divine glories)," Krishna smiles and begins to describe His vibhutis, saying, "O Uddhava! On the battlefield of the Mahabharata, Arjuna too asked Me in the same way. Today, you are asking the same thing." Therefore, this Dashakam is named "Vibhuti Yoga."

Bhattathri presents this to us as a hymn of praise (Stothram) to Bhagavan:
The 1st Shloka in the 96th Dashakam:

त्वं हि ब्रह्मैव साक्षात् परं, उरुमहिमन्, अक्षराणामकारः,
तारो मन्त्रेषु राज्ञां मनुरसि, मुनिषु त्वं भृगुः नारदोऽपि ।
प्रह्लादो दानवानां, पशुषु च सुरभिः, पक्षिणां वैनतेयः,
नागानां अस्यनन्तः, सुरसरिदपि च स्रोतसां विश्वमूर्ते ॥

tvam hi brahmaiva sAkShAt paraM O Krishna, You alone are the manifest Brahman; You alone are the Supreme Reality.

urumahiman You are endowed with boundless glory. We fondle You affectionately as Unni Krishna, a little child; but You shine as 'anoraniyan mahato mahiyan' (subtler than the subtlest atom, grander than the greatest grandeur). There is no limit to Your glory.

Speaking of this brings an incident to my mind. Once, I was telling Shivan Sar something about Maha Periyava. At the end, Sar said, "Periyava is far greater than anything you can ever imagine!" That is the precise meaning of the term "urumahiman." It is a grandeur that lies far beyond all our imaginations.

akSharANAmakAraH Among letters (aksharas), You exist as the letter 'A' (A-kara). **tArO mantrEShu** Among manthrams, You are the Pranava (Omkaara). **rAj~nAM manurasi** Among rulers, You are Manu. **muniShu tvam bhR^iguH nAradO.api** Among sages, You shine as Bhrigu and as Narada.

prahlAdO dAnavAnAM Among the Danavas, You are Prahlada. **pashuShu cha surabhiH** Among cows, You are Kamadhenu. **pakShiNAM vainatEyaH** Among birds, You are Garuda Bhagavan. **nAgAnAm asyanantaH** Among serpents (Nagas), You are Ananta (Adisesha). What manifold services that Adisesha renders unto Bhagavan! He serves as the bed, serves as the umbrella, and serves as Paduka when Bhagavan walks! The delightful wonder in this Shloka is that in the real world, Garuda and the serpent would never be near one another. Yet, in the Shloka describing Bhagavan's divine vibhuti, Garuda and Ananta appear side by side, one after the other! **surasaridapi cha srOtasAM** Among flowing rivers, You are the Ganga. **vishvamUrE** This entire cosmic universe is verily Your own divine form.

96th Dashakam 2nd Shloka

ब्रह्मण्यानां बलिस्त्वं, क्रतुषु च जपयज्ञोऽसि, वीरेषु पार्थः,
भक्तानामुद्धवस्त्वं, बलमसि बलिनां, धाम तेजस्विनां त्वम् ।
नास्त्यन्तस्त्वद्विभूतेः, विकसदतिशयं वस्तु सर्वं त्वमेव,
त्वं जीवस्त्वं प्रधानं, यदिह भवदृते तत्र किञ्चित् प्रपञ्चे ॥

brahmaNyAnAM balistvaM Among the devotees of brahmanas, You shine as Emperor Mahabali. **kratuShu cha japayaj~nO.asi** Among yajnas, You are the Japa Yajna.

The glory of Japa Yajnam (sacrifice done by chanting bhagavan nama)

Reading this passage brings to mind what Adi Shankara has specially remarked about Japa in his Vishnu SahasraNama Bhashya.

एष मे सर्वधर्माणां धर्मोऽधिकतमो मतः । यद्भक्त्या पुण्डरीकाक्षं स्तवैरर्चेत्रः सदा ॥

eSha me sarvadharmANAM dharmo.adhikatamo mataH |
yadbhaktyA puNDarIkAkShaM stavairarchennaraH sadA ||

Bhisma Pitamaha instructs Yudhishtira: "To constantly worship Bhagavan Krishna, the lotus-eyed Pundarikaksha seated upon the lotus of our heart (Hridaya Pundarika) with hymns of praise (Stothrams), is, in my considered view, the highest Dharma surpassing all Dharmas."

Writing the commentary for this, Acharyal raises a question: "asya stutilakShaNasya archanasya Adhikye kiM kAraNam?" Meaning, what is the reason for giving such high prominence to worshiping Bhagavan by singing Stothras?

To that, he provides the answer himself: "hiMsAdi puruShAntara dravyAntara desha-kAlAdi niyamAnapekShatvaM Adhikye kAraNam." If we take other yajnas, there may be some form of violence (Himsa) involved, numerous ritual substances (Dravyas) must be gathered, many eligible people will be required to assist, and one must observe strict rules regarding place and time (there are mandates that it must be performed only in a specific sacred shrine or during a specific auspicious muhurta). However, Japa Yajna requires none of these restrictive rules! This is the reason for its exalted status. We have a tongue, and we have the divine Nama of Bhagavan; we can chant it anywhere, anytime! As authority for this, Acharyal cites another Shloka:

जप्येनैव तु संसिद्ध्येद् ब्राह्मणो नात्र संशयः । कुर्यादन्यत्र वा कुर्यान्मैत्रो ब्राह्मण उच्यते ॥

japyenaiva tu saMsiddhyedbrAhmaNo nAtra saMshayaH |
kuryAdanyanna vA kuryAnmaitro brAhmaNa uchyate ||

Whether a brahmana performs other rituals or not, he will attain complete spiritual perfection solely through Japa; there is no doubt about this.

You shine as that exalted Japa Yajna. **vIrEShu pArthaH** Among warriors, You are Arjuna. **bhaktAnAmuddhavastvaM** Among Your devotees, You are Uddhava. **balamasi balinAM** You are the strength present in the mighty.

dhAma tEjasvinAM tvam You are the radiance (tejas) found in luminous beings. **nAstyantastvadvibhUtEH, vikasadatishayaM vastu sarvaM tvamEva,** In this way, there is no end to Your divine glories. If any entity in this world is perceived as extraordinary or wondrous, one should know that it is verily Your divine manifestation (vibhuti). If so, are wondrous objects alone Bhagavan? No, everything is Bhagavan. He is Vishwamurti! **tvaM jIvastvaM pradhAnaM** You alone are the jiva (individual soul); You alone are the foundational Mula Prakriti (primordial nature) behind it. **yadiha bhavadR^itE tanna ki~nchit prapa~nchE** In this entire cosmos, there is nothing whatsoever other than You!

Varnashrama Dharma and gradual growth of Bhakthi

Next, Uddhava asks, "O Bhagavan, please teach me about the Varnashrama Dharmas." Taking two chapters, Krishna too explains in great detail what the duties of the four varnas are and what the rules of the four ashramas are. One should know that it is celebrated in Bhagavatam as well.

96th dashakam 3rd shloka:

धर्मं वर्णाश्रमाणां श्रुतिपथविहितं, त्वत्परत्वेन भक्त्या,
कुर्वन्तः अन्तर्विरागे विकसति शनकैः, सन्त्यजन्तो लभन्ते ।
सत्तास्फूर्तिप्रियत्वात्मकं, अखिलपदार्थेषु भिन्नेष्वभिन्नं,
निर्मूलं विश्वमूलं, परममहमिति, त्वद्विबोधं विशुद्धम् ॥

dharmaM varNAshramANAM shrutipathavihitaM If one duly practices the Varnashrama Dharmas prescribed in the Shruti (the Vedas) and **tvatparatvEna bhaktyA** continually performs them with Bhakthi as an offering unto You, **kurvantaH antarvirAgE vikasati shanakaiH, santyajantO labhantE** dispassion (vairagya) gradually blossoms within them. After dispassion sets in, they slowly relinquish their Varnashrama duties, attain supreme Bhakthi, and gain Jnana—thus Bhattathri leads the thought forward.

I have seen this in my own experience; Swamigal would never let anyone do anything revolutionary. He would say, "The path of Bhakthi is an evolution

(gradual growth); it is not a revolution." Evolution means progressing upward little by little, step by step. Upon joining certain spiritual organizations, some people renounce everything and abruptly become Sannyasis all at once; later, after some time, unable to bear it, they return right back to their old worldly lives. Swamigal would never permit those closely associated with him to make such mistakes.

Householder life is not an impediment to developing Uthama Bhakthi

Swamigal's horoscope is quite similar to that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa—Kumbha rasi (Aquarius moon sign), Kumbha lagna (Aquarius ascendant), with Guru Bhagavan placed in the fourth house without any affliction and casting his aspect on the tenth house. That is why he shone as an exemplary teacher, reading and explaining the Srimad Bhagavatam to Maha Periyava himself, and guided many people onto the righteous path in accordance with Periyava's divine command; throughout his life, he was continuously reading Bhagavatam, Ramayanam , Mooka Panchashati, and Narayaneeyam, while also teaching them to others. Because Mars was exalted in the twelfth house, he possessed extraordinary Vairagyam and attained Moksham.

At the same time, the Sun and Venus were placed in the ascendant. The Sun, who is the lord of the seventh house, aspects the seventh house, and Venus also aspects the seventh house. Therefore, Swamigal got married and had children. I often feel that he lived such an exemplary life in this incarnation precisely to demonstrate that "grihastha ashrama (family life) is never an impediment to attaining the highest state of Bhakthi."

Some people ask me whether it is necessary to speak about his Poorvashrama (pre-monastic) personal life after Swamigal has taken Sannyasa. However, Swamigal's Poorvashrama life serves as an invaluable lesson for us on how one can cultivate Bhakthi even while remaining within the bonds of marriage. That is why I feel I should speak about that as well.

Swamigal's Dharmapatni (wife) came from a traditional Vaidika family. For up to five years after their marriage, she would always wear the madisar, arrange everything needed for Swamigal's daily pooja, and support him in his ways. But after that, due to some past karma, her mental health was affected. Incidents like screaming and throwing things around used to happen. Yet, when we saw her, we never witnessed any such angry behavior. She would welcome everyone kindly and host them warmly, asking, "Would you like to eat something? Would you like to drink some coffee?"

Once, when Swamigal was reading the Mooka Panchashati to me, he read the shlokam

क्षणात्ते कामाक्षि भ्रमरसुषमाशिक्षणगुरुः
कटाक्षव्याक्षेपो मम भवतु मोक्षाय विपदाम् ।
नरीनर्तु स्वैरं वचनलहरी निर्जरपुरी-
सरिद्वीचीनीचीकरणपटुरास्ये मम सदा ॥

kShaNAttE kAmAkShi, bhramarasuShamAshikShaNaguru:,
kaTAkShavyAkShEpO mama bhavatu, mOkShAya vipadAm |
narInartu svairaM, vachanalaharI, nirjarapurI-
saridvIchI, nIchIkaraNapaTurAsyE mama sadA || (stuthi shatakam 49)

The meaning of the first line here is, "O Kamakshi! May your compassionate glance dispel the dangers befalling me in an instant." Swamigal said, "Once, in the grip of hysteria, my wife threw a large brass plate towards me. Its edge was very sharp. It fell right near my foot; had it landed on my foot, it would have severed it. I was chanting this shlokam at that time. It was Kamakshi's Kataksham that saved me from that danger on that day."

Swamigal lived heartily with his wife for 30 years and they were blessed with eight children. The reason for this was that doctors had advised, "If you are affectionate to your wife and keep her appeased, her hysteria will be under control"; Swamigal held the conviction that using contraception is contrary to

Dharma Shashtra, and so many children were born. Maha Periyava has remarked, "All the children born to him have come solely to attain Moksha."

Swamigal honouring this marriage and leading a householder's life for so many years shows his steadfast commitment to the vow of monogamy (Ekapatni Vratam) and his extraordinary patience.

What is even more astonishing is, when he was about sixty years old, I was reading the life history of Sri Tyagaraja Swamigal to him. It was his favourite and so he was listening with great joy. In that, I read the passage: "One day, Sri Tyagaraja Swamigal's Dharmapatni came, bowed before him, and said, 'Dharma Samvardhani Ambal is calling me. I was blessed with the fortune of serving you in this birth. I now take your leave,' and that same night she reached the sacred feet of Ambal."

Hearing this, Swamigal said, "the world only knows of the suffering the person living downstairs (referring to his wife) underwent due to illness and the hardship it caused to others. Only I know the immense love she had for me and the reverence she held for the work I do." I was left in complete awe. Like Thyagaraja Swamigal's Dharmapatni, that mami, an ardent devotee of Muruga, also attained Skanda sayujyam (union with Muruga Bhagavan) on an auspicious Aadi Krithigai day.

How many hours do we spend brooding over thoughts like "My life partner does not behave the way I like, does not understand me, does not respect me etc"? Swamigal spent all that time in Bhagavat dhyanam, that he did not even remember the hardships of the householder life he had passed through. Instead, he only remembered the love his wife had shown him. Swamigal proved time and again that what is required for peace is not peaceful external circumstances; rather, it is removing ego through Bhakthi and accepting the divine will of Bhagavan without complaining.

After a certain stage, his wife stopped coming upstairs at night. For the next ten years, after verifying that lust did not arise in his mind or body either in

dreams or in waking reality, and subsequently receiving permission from Shivan Sar, Swamigal embraced Sannyasa at the age of 63.

At the same time, because he fully understood the spiritual maturity of the people who came to him, he guided everyone in a manner where they consistently performed their respective duties, practiced Bhakthi in their available time, and gradually deepened it as their maturity grew.

Maha Periyava also guided Bhakthas in the same manner. Let me share an example of this. Once, during a Bhagavatha Saptaham, Maha Periyava kept asking V.J.R. Mama's younger brother, Seetharama Iyer, "Has your elder brother come? Has your elder brother come?" Knowing that Periyava was asking for him, Swamigal sent Mama the following morning, saying "Let your younger brother take care of things here this morning; you go and have darshan of Periyava,". That day, Periyava spoke with V.J.R. Mama for an hour. He blessed him, saying, "Subhashrayam! Do you understand? You have caught hold of a sturdy branch like a tamarind bough (meaning: this Guru of yours will serve as your unfailing support and refuge)." In addition, he spoke for a long time, saying, "It is my bhagyam even to behold all of you who have gathered here to listen to the Bhagavatham."

In the end, V.J.R. Mama asked Periyava, "I am considering resigning from my railway job, Periyava." To that, Periyava replied, "Let it remain as it is." Because his superior in that railway job was very supportive, Mama was able to render excellent service to Swamigal. Later, he also received a pension. Whenever anyone wished to have darshan of Periyava, he would help them get train tickets. Because he remained in that job, he was able to perform many such Kainkaryams!

The gracious guru who rid me of my twin karmas

I will share my own experiences as proof of how many wonderful things happen in life when one has the grace of a saint. For six years after returning from America, I would visit Swamigal every single day in the evening. I was

working in the IT sector in Tambaram. I would finish my work by 5:15 in the evening and leave. It was during those years that I got married and had children; even so, I never stopped visiting Swamigal, and Bhagavan made it possible. If saints bless us, we will certainly be able to perform Bhajanam.

Once, at the age of 23, I told Swamigal, "I desire to quit my job and spend all my time doing Parayanams just like you." But he refused and said, "No." Swamigal had an astrologer look at my horoscope. Simha lagna (Leo ascendant), with the Sun in the ascendant, Jupiter and Mercury in the second house. Mercury is exalted, Mars is in the fourth house, and the Moon is in the fifth house. It is solely because of past meritorious deeds (poorva Punyam) that I have received the Darshanam of saints without struggle. Venus is placed in the eleventh house. Swamigal told me, "The astrologer says that you will be a very wealthy person like Viswanatha Iyer." I did a Namaskaram to Swamigal and prayed, "Periyava, here I am speaking at this spiritual extreme; please do not push me to that other (materialistic) extreme! You must never forsake me."

It is solely due to his anugraham that I did not drift too far in that direction. When I resigned from my job in America and returned, Swamigal would happily tell everyone, "He left America and came back the moment I asked him to; is this not the eighth wonder of the world?" Once, in the presence of Swamigal, I told someone with a touch of pride, "I left America and came back." As soon as that visitor left, Swamigal called me aside privately and said: "You should not speak about yourself with such pride. When you were there, was it not because you prayed, 'If I remain here, I will go astray, O Bhagavan; remaining here, I cannot just close my eyes and ears and only earn money; all these worldly attractions will corrupt my mind, so please save me,' that Ambal brought you back here!"

When I first met Swamigal at the age of 15, for my prayer seeking the boon of sweet speech, he taught me a beautiful shloka from Mooka Panchashathi.

मनीषां माहेन्द्रीं ककुभमिव ते कापि दशां प्रधत्ते कामाक्ष्याश्चरणतरुणादित्यकिरणः ।
यदीये सम्पर्के धृतरसमरन्दा कवयतां परीपाकं धत्ते परिमलवती सूक्तिनलिनी ॥
manIShAM mAhEndrIM kakubhamiva tE kAmapi dashAM
pradhattE kAmAkShyAH charaNataruNAdityakiraNaH |
yadIyE samparkE dhR^itarasamarandA kavayatAM
parIpAkAM dhattE parimalavatI sUktinalinI ||
(the 100th shloka of Padaravinda Shatakam)

In its second part of the shloka, it says, "When the sun known as Ambal's lotus feet rises in our heart, wholesome, eloquent speech blossoms from our mouth just as a honey-dripping lotus blooms on sunrise." Even today, whenever I have to deliver a discourse anywhere, I begin only after reciting this Shloka.

Recalling that incident when I returned at the age of thirty, Swamigal said: "When you first came to me first at the age of fifteen, you learned a Shloka, didn't you? You learned it for the second part (sweet speech); In its first part, it says, 'When the sun of Ambal's holy feet rises in the mind, a certain maturity dawns in the intellect just as the eastern sky brightens at dawn.' Granting you that maturity, it is Ambal who bestowed Her grace upon you to leave America and return here. Therefore, you should not speak of this as your own accomplishment." In other words, he subtly conveyed, "I have brought you back and redeemed you by reducing some of your good karmas as well." From that day on, I became very careful. I understood that we must always continue practicing Bhakthi with humility; we should never speak with pride under any circumstance.

We saw earlier that one should gradually perform Bhagavat Bhajanam and attain Him, isn't it? At the end of that Shloka, Bhattathri concludes beautifully. **sattAsphUrtipriyatvAtmakAM** You are the embodiment of Satchidananda; **akhilapadArthEShu bhinnEShvabhinnaM** although perceived as diverse worldly objects, in reality, You alone exist as the undivided unity within them all. **nirmUlaM vishvamUlaM, paramamahamiti, tvadvibOdhaM vishuddham**

You being the causeless, supreme primal source and yet the ultimate cause of this entire universe, those who do your Bhajanam attain that pristine knowledge of their true nature (Svaroopā Jnanam)—the realization that "I am the Parabrahmam."

Choosing the path most suited to oneself

96th Dashakam 4th Shloka:

ज्ञानं कर्मापि भक्तिः, त्रितयमिह भवत्प्रापकं, तत्र तावत्
निर्विण्णानां अशेषे विषये, इह भवेत् ज्ञानयोगे अधिकारः ।
सक्तानां कर्मयोगः, त्वयि हि विनिहितः. ये तु नात्यन्तसक्ताः,
नापि अत्यन्तं विरक्ताः, त्वयि च धृतरसाः भक्तियोगो हि अमीषाम् ॥

j~nAnaM karmApi bhaktiH, tritayamiha bhavatprApakaM "O Bhagavan! You have declared three paths in the Gita to attain You: Jnana, Karma, and Bhakthi." **tatra tAvat nirviNNAnAM ashEShE viShayE, iha bhavEt j~nAnayOgE adhikAraH** Among these, eligibility for 'Jnana Yoga' belongs exclusively to those who have completely withdrawn their minds from all worldly matters and achieved a state of total detachment. Even if there is a faint desire for wealth or worldly attachments in the mind, there is no place in the path of Jnana.

saktAnAM karmayOgaH 'Karma Yoga' is prescribed for those who still have attachments to worldly affairs. One must perform their duties as an offering unto Bhagavan. **tvayi hi vinihitaH. yE tu nAtyantasaktAH, nApi atyantaM viraktAH, tvayi cha dhR^itarasAH bhaktiyOgo hi amIShAm** But for those who hold immense love for You, whose worldly attachment is not very deep (not running around believing 'money alone is God'), while at the same time not completely despondent, and who cherish an affection for You—for such people, this 'Bhakthi Yoga' is meant.

This Bhakthi Yoga alone is most suited for us! Swamigal was well-versed in the Vedas. He would regularly perform Brahma Yajna. He fulfilled every single

vedic duty, and shone with wisdom attained through Bhakthi. Still when he did Namaskaram before Periyava, he used to chant the slokam:

viditA na mayA vishadaikakalA
na cha ki~nchana kA~nchanamasti guro |
drutameva vidhehi kRupAM sahaJAM
bhava sha~Nkara deshika me sharaNam ||

("I do not know any Shastra, nor do I possess any wealth; O Shankara Guru, you alone must shower your innate grace upon me"), What standing do we have? Bhakthi Yoga alone is the refuge.

Next, the 5th Shloka in the 96th Dashakam:

ज्ञानं त्वद्भक्ततां वा लघु, सुकृतवशान्मर्त्यलोके लभन्ते,
तस्मात्तत्रैव जन्म स्पृहयति भगवन्, नाकगो नारको वा ।
आविष्टं मां तु दैवात्, भवजलनिधिपोतायिते मर्त्यदेहे,
त्वं कृत्वा कर्णधारं गुरुं, अनुगुणवातायितः, तारयेथाः ॥

j~nAnaM tvadbhaktatAM vA laghu, suKR^itavashAnmartyalOkE labhantE
For those who are born in this mortal realm (Martya Loka), spiritual wisdom (Jnanam) and Bhakthi are attained very easily with minimal effort due to past meritorious deeds (Poorva Punyam). **tasmAttatraiva janma spR^ihayati bhagavan, nAkagO nArakO vA** That is why even those dwelling in heaven (svarga loka) and those suffering in hell (naraka) yearn and wish, "Will we not be born again in this earthly realm?"

I have lived abroad in the US. Life there is comfortable. There is money in the bank, and every modern luxury is available. However, the physical labour and mental stress there are very high. If snow accumulates over the car, waking up in the morning, scraping it off, and taking the car out takes two hours by itself. On weekends, one must rush around to purchase all the household supplies; without a car, one cannot take even a single step there. Thus, that life appeared to me like a golden cage. A few fortunate souls render immense service to Sanatana Dharma even from there, which is a great blessing

indeed! However, generally speaking, whether it is an exceedingly luxurious life of comfort or severe, grinding poverty, their respective worries will constantly gnaw away at a person. Free from both of these extremes, the most conducive place to perform Bhagavat Bhajanam in peace is this sacred land of Bharata.

Manikkavacakar also sings that taking birth on this earth is a great blessing:

புவனியில் போய் பிறவாமையில் நாள் நாம்
போக்குகின்றோம் அவமே இந்த பூமி
சிவன் உய்யக் கொள்கின்ற வாரென்று நோக்கித்
திருப்பெருந்துறையுறை வாய் திருமாலாம்
அவன் விருப்பெய்தவும் மலரவன் ஆசைப்
படவும்நின் அலர்ந்தமெய்க் கருணையும் நீயும்
அவனியிற் புகுந்தெமை ஆட்கொள்ள வல்லாய்
ஆரமுதே பள்ளி எழுந்தருளாயே

"bhuvanhiyil pOy piRavAmaiyl nAL nAm
pOkkuginROm avamE indha bhUmi
Shivan uyyak koLginRa vARenRu nOkkith
TirupperundhuRaiyuRai vAy thirumAlAm
avan viruppeydhavum malaravan Asaip
paDavumnin alarndhameyk karuNaiyum neeyum
avaniyiR pugundhemai ATkoLLa vallAy
AramudhE paLLi ezhundharuLAyE"

Even devas like Brahma and Vishnu yearn, saying, "We are languishing in this higher realm; if only we were born as mortals on the earth in Tirupperunthurai, Shivaperuman would have easily taken us under His grace!" To that extent, taking birth on this earth and practicing Bhakthi is an exalted path.

The boat, the helmsman, and the breeze of Anugraham — all three are necessary

AviShTaM mAM tu daivAt, bhavajalanidhipOtAyitE martyadEhE, tvAM kR^itvA karNadhAraM guruM, anuguNavAtAyitaH, tArayEthAH By some divine providence and the fruit of past merits (poorva punya), I have taken birth on this earth. Like a boat that assists in crossing this ocean of Samsara, this human body has been bestowed upon me. You Yourself must show me a Sadguru as the finest boatman to steer this vessel, make the favourable wind of Your grace (anugraha) blow, and safely ferry me across this ocean of worldly existence (bhava sagara)!

During every Aradhana of Swamigal, Sri Sundarkumar Anna would speak about Swamigal for ten to fifteen minutes. I have listened to it every single time; in those talks, he has quoted this Shloka at least four or five times. He would say, "We have attained an exalted Guru, and we have also received this human birth. Let us pray that Bhagavan somehow ferries us across."

We must always remember that merely possessing a healthy body and attaining an exalted Guru are not enough; we can reach the shore only if the favourable wind of Bhagavan's anugraham blows upon us. Even though Guru Bhakthi alone is sufficient to make progress in spiritual life, we should never speak lightly of the deities.

To illustrate this, there is a beautiful Shloka in the Mooka Panchashati—the 97th Shloka of the Arya Shatakam:

सत्कृतदेशिकचरणाः सबीजनिर्बीजयोगनिःश्रेण्या ।
अपवर्गसौधवलभीमारोहन्त्यम्ब केऽपि तव कृपया ॥

satkRutadeshikacharaNAH sabIjanirbIjayoganiHshreNyA |
apavarga saudhavalabheem Arohanti amba kEpi tava kRupaya ||

Swamigal taught that this should be recited as:

"amba kEpi tava kRupayA satkRuta deshikacharaNAhA
amba kEpi tava kRupayA sabIjanirbIjayoganiHshreNyA
amba kEpi tava kRupayA apavarga saudhavalabheem Arohanti
amba kEpi tava kRupayA"

The meaning of this is: "O Mother! Only if Your boundless grace is present will one attain a noble Guru; only then will the noble intent to render service (Kainkaryam) at the holy feet of that Guru arise. Only with Your boundless grace can one climb carefully, without slipping and falling, on the ladder of Saguna and Nirguna Upasanas (Sabeeja and Nirabeeja Yoga) along the path shown by him. Until one finally reaches the balcony of the mansion of Moksha (liberation), the gentle breeze of Your anugraham must keep blowing."

There was an individual named 'Kashi Kannan' who served Maha Periyava for over forty years; he was exceptionally intelligent. In one of the audio recordings where he shared his experiences with Periyava, he mentioned, "Maha Periyava taught me to recite this Mooka Panchashati Shlokam in this rearranged manner." Upon hearing that, I felt very happy; I felt that it could have been Periyava who revealed this secret to our Swamigal as well.

Therefore, we must always pray to Bhagavan with humility so that we receive his anugraha breeze. We see some people who, despite being disciples of great saints, later go astray; that simply means they did not receive that breeze of divine grace.

The 6th Shlokam in the 96th Dashakam:

अव्यक्तं मार्गयन्तः, श्रुतिभिरपि नयैः, केवलज्ञानलुब्धाः
क्लिश्यन्ते अतीव, सिद्धिं बहुतरजनुषां अन्त एव आप्नुवन्ति ।
दूरस्थः कर्मयोगोऽपि च परं अफले, नन्वयं भक्तियोगस्तु
आमूलादेव हृद्यः, त्वरितं अयि भवत्प्रापको, वर्धतां मे ॥

avyaktaM mArgayantaH, shrutibhirapi nayaiH, kEvalaj~nAnalubdhAH Some people seek mere Jnanam alone, reading the Upanishads, analyzing the Nyaya and Mimamsa Shastras, and wandering in search of that unmanifest reality (Avyakta). **klishyantE atIva, siddhiM bahutarajanuShAM anta Eva Apnuvanti** However, the suffering and toil they undergo are immense; they attain You only at the end of countless births.

Enough of studying Vedanta; read Thiruvagasagam

Swamigal used to say, "We must also know about Jnana; we should not remain ignorant in spiritual matters." For that reason, in accordance with Periyava's command that one should listen to Vedanta on Vijayadashami, Swamigal would invite an accomplished scholar to read Shankara Bhashya or something pertaining to Vedanta for an hour, and he would sit and listen to it himself. We too must learn; however, merely listening to Vedanta lectures all the time is not enough.

Manikkavacakar sings in the Thiruvagasagam:

"உற்றாரை யான் வேண்டேன் ஊர் வேண்டேன் பேர் வேண்டேன்
கற்றாரை யான் வேண்டேன் கற்பனவும் இனி அமையும்..."

"utrArai yAn vENdEn Ur vENdEn pEr vENdEn
katrArai yAn vENdEn karpanavum ini amaiyum..."

He says, "I desire neither relatives, nor a town, nor a name; I desire neither the learned, and let my learning suffice with this... all I desire is that my heart melts at Your holy feet, O dancer residing in Kutralam, just like a cow melting with affection at the thought of its calf; that alone is enough; let all my studies end here, what else is there left to learn hereafter?"

Rather than listening to a Vedanta lecture for two hours, reciting the Thiruvagasagam in its entirety (Muttrodhal) with a whole heart will completely melt even the hardest heart of stone. If you do not understand Tamil, look at

its meaning alongside the recitation just once; it will wring your heart! That is precisely what Bhattathri conveys in this Shloka.

However, intellectuals often ask, "Is it enough to just keep dancing through the night in the name of Bhajanai?" Because Bhajanai has turned somewhat into entertainment nowadays, they say this. But only when one actually sees someone, like our Swamigal, engaged in Bhagavath Bhajanam and attained supreme Jnanam and Vairagya through that very practice, will they understand its true greatness.

Even our Swamigal did not appreciate this practice of singing Bhajanai all night; Swamigal would say, "Sadguru Swamigal did not say so either. One must begin the Bhajanai in the evening, and finish well within the night, and put Bhagavan to sleep. We too must wake up at 4 o'clock in the early morning; one should not sing Bhajanai all night long and then put Bhagavan to sleep at four in the morning when it is actually time to wake Him up."

dUrasthaH karmayOgO.api cha paraM aphale The fruit of Karma Yoga is merely celestial enjoyments like Svarga; attaining the Supreme Reality through it is a very distant goal. **nanvayaM bhaktiyOgastu AmUIAdEva hR^idyaH** However, Bhakthi Yoga is delightful to the heart (hRudyaH) right from its inception (AmUIAdeva). The second we open and begin reading the Ramayana book, bliss wells up in our hearts, doesn't it? **tvaritaM ayi bhavatprApakO, vardhatAM mE** may such exalted Bhakthi, which swiftly enables one to attain You, grow within me every day!

The 7th Shloka in the 96th Dashakam:

ज्ञानायैवातियत्नं मुनिः अपवदते, ब्रह्मतत्त्वं तु शृण्वन्,
गाढं त्वत्पादभक्तिं शरणमयति यः, तस्य मुक्तिः कराग्रे ।
त्वद्भ्यानेऽपीह तुल्या पुनः, असुकरता चित्तचाञ्चल्यहेतोः,
अभ्यासात् आशु शक्यं तदपि वशयितुं, त्वत्कृपा चारुताभ्याम् ॥

j~nAnAyaivAtiyatnaM muniH apavadatE While speaking about Jnana Yoga, Vyasa Bhagavan does not celebrate putting excessive effort into mere Jnanam alone without Bhakthi. **brahmatatvaM tu shR^iNvan, gADhaM tvatpAdabhaktiM sharaNamayati yaH, tasya muktiH karAgrE** He says that if one listens to the Brahma Tattva of Bhagavan and then practices Bhakthi towards You, liberation (mukti) will be attained very easily, just like a gooseberry held in the palm of one's hand.

Where is the reference for saying Bhakthi leads to Mukthi?

There is evidence for this in the Bhagavad Gita itself.

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् । कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् । ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥
तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थम् अहमज्ञानजं तमः । नाशयाम्य आत्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

macchittA madgataprANA virodhayantaH parasparam |
kathayantashcha mAM nityaM tuShyanti cha ramanti cha ||
teShAM satatayuktAnAM bhajatAM prItipUrvakam |
dadAmi buddhiyogaM taM yena mAmupayAnti te ||
teShAmevAnukampArtham ahamaj~nAnajaM tamaH |
nAshayAmyAtmabhAvastho j~nAnadIpena bhAsvatA ||

A set of three such Shlokams appears in the 10th chapter.

The meaning of these Shlokams is:

macchittAH – Those who have fixed their minds on Me,
madgataprANAH – Those whose senses and entire life-breath exist solely for My sake,
bodhayantaH parasparam – Enlightening one another about My divine nature,
kathayantaH cha mAM nityam – Constantly speaking of Me without engaging in mundane worldly talk,
tuShyanti cha ramanti cha – Finding contentment and rejoicing in this alone,

teShAM satatayuktAnAm – To those who are perpetually united in this manner, adopting my service as their sole pursuit; Like how Arunagirinathar prays "Grant me as my sole duty the task of singing of the dancing peacock, spear, and adorned rooster,"

bhajatAM prItipUrvakam – To whichever devotees perform My Bhajanam with loving Bhakthi,

dadAmi buddhiyogam taM yena mAmupayAnti te – I bestow upon them that Yoga of intellect (buddhi Yoga) through which they come to attain Me.

teShAm eva anukampArtham – Purely out of compassion for them,

aham aj~nAnajam tamaH nAshayAmi – I destroy the darkness born of their ignorance. How so?

AtmabhAvasthaH – By dwelling within their hearts,

j~nAnadIpena bhAsvatA – By kindling the luminous lamp of Jnanam in their minds, I thereby dispel that darkness of ignorance.

Arunagirinathar beautifully ridicules those who merely speak words of Jnanam without having Bhakthi. Do you know how they are?

நீர்க் குமிழிக்கு நிகர் என்பர் யாக்கை நில்லாது செல்வம்
பார்க்கும் இடத்து அந்த மின்போலும் என்பர் பசித்துவந்தே
ஏற்கும் அவர்க்கு இட என்னின் எங்கேனும் எழுந்திருப்பார்
வேல் குமரற்கு அன்பு இலாதவர் ஞானம் மிகவும் நன்றே!

"nIrk kumizhikkunikar enbar yAkkai" – They discourse on the impermanence of the body, saying that this body is just like a water bubble and its lifespan is very short.

"nillAdhu chelvam pArkkum idaththantha minpOlum enbar" – They philosophize that wealth is transient, appearing and disappearing like a flash of lightning.

However, if someone comes to the doorstep of those who talk like this, holding out their hands and pleading, "I am hungry!", "engEyum ezhundhiruppAr"—lacking the heart to offer them alms, they will immediately get up, go inside, and hide!

Arunagirinathar laughs at them, saying, "vErkumararkku anbu illAdhavar j~nAnam migavum nanRE" ("exalted indeed is the wisdom of those devoid of love for the spear-wielding Kumaran!"). Because of the absence of Bhakthi, their hearts remain hard. Only when one practices Bhakthi does a tenderness arise in the heart, and it should.

Our Swamigal used to say frequently: "If tenderness does not well up in one's heart after reading the Ramayana, what is the use of reading it?" When Sita Devi speaks of Bhagavan Rama, she says:

AnRushaMsyaM paro dharmaH tvatta eva mayA shrutaH ("I heard only from You that showing compassion to others is the highest Dharma"). Swamigal would emphasize that if we read the Ramayana, compassion and tenderness must inevitably seep into our hearts.

tvaddhyAnE.apIha tulyA punaH, asukaratA chittachA~nchalyahEtOH
However, even meditation and Bhakthi towards You are not easy in the beginning, because our mind remains constantly restless. **abhyAsAt Ashu shakyaM tadapi vashayituM, tvatKR^ipA chArutAbhyAm** Nevertheless, through relentless practice, that mind can certainly be brought under our control. This is because, in this path of Bhakthi, Your anugraham is present, and the captivating beauty of Your divine form is also present!

Do you know how Swamigal would explain this based on Bhagavatam? He would say, "In Bhakthi, our own effort is merely one-third (1/3). The next one-third is Bhagavan's anugraham, and the remaining one-third consists of His divine plays (leelas), stories, and divine form. Because they are so extraordinarily beautiful, they draw us towards Him even without our realizing it. If we put in that initial one-third effort and begin to read, Bhagavan's grace along with the sweetness of His form and sacred stories will join in and easily ferry us across the shore."

Arunagirinathar prays for this beautifully in Tiruppugazh:

"இரவு பகல் பல காலும் இயலிசை முத்தமிழ் கூறித்
திரமதனிற் றெளிவாகத் திருவருளைத் தருவாயே

பரகருணைப் பெருவாழ்வே பரசிவ தத்துவஞான
அரனருள் சற்புதல்வோனே அருணகிரிப் பெருமானே”

“iravu pagal pala kAlum iyalisai muththamizh kURith
thiramathanil theLivAgath thiruvavuLaith tharuvAyE
parakaruNaip peruvAzhvE parasiva thaththuvaj~nAna
aranaruL saRputhalvOnE aruNagirip perumALE”

He says, "Singing of You night and day, at all times, through the threefold Tamil of prose, poetry, and drama, please grant me Your divine grace so that the ultimate Truth becomes perfectly clear to my mind.; O embodiment of supreme compassion, O noble Son blessed by Hara who is the supreme knowledge of Shiva Tattva, O Great One of Arunagiri!"

“பக்தியால் யானுனைப் பல காலும் பற்றியே மா திருப்புகழ் பாடி
முத்தனாமாறேனைப் பெருவாழ்வின் முக்தியே சேர்வதற்குள்வாயே
உத்தமாதான ஸற்குணனையா ஒப்பிலாமாமணி கிரிவாஸா
வித்தகா ஞானசத்தி நிபாதா வெற்றிவேலாயுத பெருமானே”

“BhakthiyAl yAnunaip pala kAlum patriyE mA Tiruppugazh pADi
muththanAmARenaip peruvAzhvin MukthiyE sErvadhaRkaruLvAyE
uththamAdhAna saRguNanEyA oppilAmAmaNi girivAsA
viththagA j~nAnasakthi nipAthA vetrivelAyudha perumALE”

"O Muruga! holding the victorious vEl and residing on the incomparable, jewel-like hill of Ratnagiri! You are the ultimate master, the bestower of divine wisdom, and the close companion of virtuous souls. Please bless me with Your grace so that I may hold onto You tightly with unwavering devotion, continuously sing Your glorious Tiruppugazh, transform into a liberated soul, and ultimately attain eternal salvation."

That constancy—unbroken, continuous Bhajanam—is very important.

One must sing His praise every single day, morning and evening. Swamigal would say: "It is enough if we simply initiate a Poojai or Parayanam; after that, Bhagavan will never ever abandon us. Even if we happen to miss it for about ten days due to some circumstance, He Himself will keep prompting us from within, urging, 'Resume the recitation again.' Therefore, only beginning it is difficult; once we begin, Bhagavan will guide us forward and take us under His grace."

I am unable to shed attachments! What do I do?

The next Shloka gives us immense hope. It is the 8th Shloka of the 96th Dashakam:

निर्विण्णः कर्ममार्गे खलु, विषमतमे त्वत्कथादौ च, गाढं
जातश्रद्धोऽपि, कामान् अयि भुवनपते, नैव शक्नोमि हातुम् ।
तद्भूयो निश्चयेन, त्वयि निहितपराः, दोषबुद्ध्या भजन्स्तान्,
पुष्पीयां भक्तिमेव, त्वयि हृदयगते, मङ्क्षु नङ्क्ष्यन्ति सङ्गाः ॥

nirviNNaH karmamArgE khalu, viShamatameE tvatkathAdau cha, gADhaM
jAtashraddhO.api, kAmAn ayi bhuvanapatE, naiva shaknOmi hAtum

"O Bhagavan! Realizing that the paths of karma are difficult, I have turned my mind away from them. I have developed a deep faith in and fondness for Your stories. Yet, I am still unable to completely give up the worldly desires that arise in my mind!" laments Bhattathri.

tadbhUyO nishchayEna, tvayi nihitaparAH, dOShabuddhyA BhajanstAn,
puShNIyAM bhaktimEva, tvayi hR^idayagatE, ma~NkShu na~NkShyanti
sa~NgAH "Even so, without losing heart, keeping my mind fixed on You, and experiencing those worldly pleasures with the awareness of their flaws—knowing that 'this is transient and causes sorrow'—I will continue to nurture my Bhakthi towards You. Once You come and reside within my heart, all my desires and attachments will soon vanish!" he says. Whenever we feel weary on the spiritual path, we can recite this Shloka and rekindle our enthusiasm for Parayanam.

Bhikshu Gita

The next Shloka is a summary of the "Bhikshu Gita." There lived a brahmana in the country of Avanti; he toiled immensely and earned a vast fortune, but he was an utter miser. Past a certain age, his sons and kinsmen snatched away all his wealth and drove him out of the house. It was then that a profound revulsion towards wealth arose in him.

Earning money is difficult; safeguarding it from thieves is difficult; if any loss occurs to it, it causes great anxiety; even spending it is difficult! You may ask, "What is so difficult about spending it, doesn't it bring joy?" The moment after we eagerly purchase an item, its market price drops; immediately, mental distress sets in, making us regret, "Alas, I bought it in haste," doesn't it? Thus, any association with money inevitably brings stress one way or another.

A deep distaste for that wealth was born within this Brahmana. At this point, Swamigal would emphatically say: "Unless the immense grace of Bhagavan is present, true distaste for money and genuine dispassion (vairagya) will never arise in a person."

Having attained such dispassion, he took up Sannyasa and left his home. Even then, the townsfolk mocked him as a madman, pelted him with stones, and tormented him in numerous ways. Even in that state, remaining completely unperturbed, he sang the Bhikshu Gita. The 9th Shloka in the 96th Dashakam:

कश्चित् क्लेशार्जितार्थक्षयविमलमतिः, नुद्यमानो जनौघैः,
प्रागेवं प्राह विप्रः, न खलु मम जनः, कालकर्मग्रहा वा ।
चेतो मे दुःखहेतुः, तदिह गुणगणं भावयत्, सर्वकारी-
त्युक्त्वा शान्तो गतस्त्वां, मम च कुरु विभो तादृशीं चित्तशान्तिम् ॥

kashchit kLEshArjitArthakShayavimalamatiH, nudyamAnO janaughaiH,
prAgEvaM prAha vipraH After losing all his hard-earned money, that
brahmana, having attained a purified mind through the grace of Bhagavan,

proclaimed this truth to the world even as people humiliated and chased him away: **na khalu mama janaH, kAlakarmagrahA vA** "Neither these people, nor time, nor my karma, nor the navagrahas (nine planets) are the cause of these afflictions happening to me! **chEtO mE duHkhahEtuH, tadiha guNagaNaM bhAvayat, sarvakArItyuktvA shAntO gatastvAM** My mind alone is the sole cause of all my sorrows!" Realizing that it is the mind that falsely superimposes qualities such as agency (kartritva) onto the Atman and impels actions, he subdued that mind and attained You, the very embodiment of peace.

Swamigal would share a few simple analogies for this. To show that "we do not suffer because of people"—a grandpa lies down and tells his grandson, "Dear boy, step on my legs and press them." The grandson climbs up and presses them; the grandpa feels relief and joy. If someone else from outside comes and says "I will kick you", would the grandpa rejoice? The touch of the feet is the same; yet because it is the grandson pressing, it brings comfort, and because it is an outsider, it brings anger. If so, isn't our mind the true reason for this?

Next, to show that "time" is not the cause—if all endeavors turn out well for someone this year 2026, he declares, "This is a golden period for me." If another person incurs severe losses and hardships in the same year, he says, "This is an iron age, a period of testing for me." That year or time has done no harm to anyone; it is our state of mind that perceives it that way.

Swamigal would narrate a beautiful illustration from the Ramayana for this. Overjoyed by the decision of Rama's coronation, Dasharatha goes to Kaikeyi's palace. There, Kaikeyi demands two boons; Dasharatha is profoundly shocked and shattered. That night turns into a 'Kalaratri' for him (like the night preceding a person's death); the next morning, his minister Sumantra arrives to wake Dasharatha and announces, "**gatA bhagavatI rAtriH**" meaning, "The auspicious night has passed delightfully!" As far as Sumantra was concerned, rejoicing in the anticipation of Rama's coronation the next day, that night had

passed most delightfully. The night is one and the same; yet for Dasharatha it was a night of death, while for Sumantra it was an auspicious night!

The same applies to planetary influences (grahas) and the fruits of actions (karmas). Our mind alone is the cause for everything. If we subdue that mind, we can rise above all the miseries of the world. **mama cha kuru vibhO tAdR^ishIM chittashAntim** “O Guruvayurappa, please bestow upon me, too, that sublime peace of mind akin to that of the bhikshu”, prays Bhattathri.

“chetO mE duHkhaHetuH” - When reading this Shloka meaning, “Neither these people, nor time, nor Karma, nor the Grahas (planets) are the cause of my sorrow; my mind alone is the cause. If I turn my mind away from the external world and establish it firmly in Bhagavan / the Atman, these worldly affairs can do nothing to affect me,” these splendid lines of our Arunagirinathar come to my mind:

“நாள் என் செய்யும்? வினை தான் என் செய்யும்? எனை நாடி வந்த கோள் என் செய்யும்? கொடுங்கூற்று என் செய்யும்? குமரேசர் இருதாளும் சிலம்பும் சதங்கையும் தண்டையும் ஷண்முகமும் தோளும் கடம்பும் எனக்கு முன்னே வந்து தோன்றிடினே”

“nAL en cheyyum? vinai thAn en cheyyum? enai nADi vandha
kOL en cheyyum? koDungkURRu en cheyyum? kumarESar iru
thALum silambum sadhangaiyum thaNDaiyum shaNmugamum
thOLum kaDambum enakku munnE vandhu thOnRidinE”

See how the factors of time (Kala), Karma, and planets (Grahas) expressed there in Sanskrit appear verbatim here as well! What can an auspicious day or an inauspicious day do to me? What can good or bad karma do? What can the planets do? People say, ‘this planet is in this position in the horoscope, the other planet is placed there’ etc. What can cruel Yama (death) do to me? Once the two holy feet of Kumaresa, along with His anklets (silambu, sadhangai, and thandai), His six divine faces, His shoulders, and His garland of Kadamba flowers appear before me, I have no worries whatsoever, he declares.

The rationale behind choosing auspicious time to do things

Our Swamigal would commence all important activities in an auspicious day and time. Both for himself and for his devotees, he would look for an auspicious time for everything. (However, if a new Parayanam can be started the very next day after concluding one, there was no need to check for an auspicious day, so his Parayanams would go on uninterrupted). Otherwise, he would consult the Panchangam for tasks like traveling along with V.J.R. Mama. In this matter, V.J.R. Mama was an expert.

Swamigal would jokingly say, "V.J.R. has brains all over his body! He is someone who should have been a minister, such is his sharp intellect!" I would think to myself, "You are a Yatindra (king among ascetics); having attained the fortune of being a minister to you, he has attained the very fulfillment of his human birth." V.J.R. Mama would calculate and suggest an auspicious date, and Swamigal would give his approval. In this manner, they would carry out activities only after picking an auspicious day.

Once, I asked Swamigal, "Why should we check the day and nakshatra (star) for everything?" To that, Swamigal gave a beautiful explanation: "This practice of checking for an auspicious day brings divine blessings and also moderation into our lives."

For instance, when planning a wedding or any auspicious ceremony, if we fix an auspicious date and schedule it, say three months later, we develop the habit of 'waiting' during that intervening period. From that, a sense of patience and moderation develops in life. Nowadays, however, everything has turned into instant gratification. If we are promised delivery in ten minutes and it takes fifteen minutes instead, we get upset!

We demand 'everything right now.' The pleasure derived from such immediate attainment lasts only for a short while, after which that pleasure vanishes. This is how we keep rushing through life. However, rather than making all major life decisions in great haste, if we give them their due time and carry them out

calmly after selecting an auspicious date, it will bestow well-being. Swamigal said that it is for this reason that elders have maintained the tradition of checking auspicious days.

When I asked, "Arunagiri asks 'What can an inauspicious day do?' (nAL en cheyyum)", Swamigal said: "That is true. The one who sang that song exists in an exalted state of wisdom without fear even towards Yama, the god of death."

"தண்டாயுதமும் திரிகூலமும் விழத் தாக்கி உன்னை திண்டாட வெட்டி விழவிடுவேன், செந்தில் வேலனுக்குத் தொண்டாகிய என் அவிரோத ஞானச் சுடர் வடிவாள் கண்டாய் அடா!"

"dhaNDaYudhamum thirisUlamum vizhath thAkki unnai
thiNDAda vetti vizhaiviDuvEn, sendhil vElanukkuth
thoNDaGiya en avirOdha j~nAnach chuDar vadivAL kaNDaYaDA!"

"I possess Bhakthi towards Bhagavan and the radiant sword of true wisdom. O Antaka (Yama)! Just try coming anywhere near me!"—he challenges thus. Furthermore, he is the one who sang, "செங்கோடைக் குமரனென எங்கே நினைப்பினும் அங்கே என் முன் வந்து எதிர் நிற்பனே" "sengODaik kumaranena engE ninaippinum angE en mun vandhu edhir niRpanE." Whenever he thinks of Him, Murugan Peruman manifests right there and gives him darshan. That is an exceptionally elevated state. To that extent, he possessed the strength of Bhakthi and Jnana. Those who are in such an exalted state can freely say, "What can an inauspicious day do?"

However, when we are leading a worldly life, we must do things at auspicious hour, Swamigal replied. Thus, Swamigal was a 'Suyuktavadi'—one capable of giving the most fitting and well-reasoned answers for everything.

Similarly he would unhesitatingly resolve the doubts arising in the minds of his devotees. Once, when V.J.R. Mama mentioned, "Some people are asking why

you do not hold a danda (staff) and kamandalu (water pot) after taking Sannyasa," Swamigal did not cross-question him asking, "Who is saying this?" He simply said, "Is that so? All right, you go and ask Pudhu Periyava." "Since Maha Periyava has attained siddhi, it is Pudhu Periyava who initiates and grants the danda and kamandalu to Sannyasis; therefore, you go and request him," V.J.R. Mama went to Pudhu Periyava and asked about this.

Pudhu Periyava replied, "I have known Bhagavathar for more than thirty years. From the very first day I saw him, he has been like a Sannyasi. He is a 'Bhagavata Sannyasi.' He does not need to strain himself with the danda and kamandalu; he is constantly reciting Bhagavatam all the time, that alone is more than enough."

The song of Pururavas, son of Ila (aila geetham)

The final Shloka of the 96th Dashakam is the story of Pururavas (the Aila Gita):

ऐलः प्राक्, उर्वशीं प्रति अतिविवशमनाः, सेवमानश्चिरं तां,
गाढं निर्विद्य भूयो, युवतिसुखमिदं क्षुद्रमेवेति गायन् ।
त्वद्भक्तिं प्राप्य पूर्णः, सुखतरमचरत्, तद्वदुद्धूयसङ्गं,
भक्तोत्तंसं क्रिया मां, पवनपुरपते, हन्त मे रुन्धि रोगान् ॥

ailaH prAk, urvashIM prati ativivashamanAH, sEvamAnashchiraM tAM,
gADhaM nirvidya bhUyO, yuvatisukhamidaM kShudramEvEti gAyan
Pururavas (the son of Ila), having developed boundless infatuation for an apsara named Urvashi, lived with her for a long time. One day, when she parted and left him, a profound dispassion (virakthi) arose within him. Realizing, "This pleasure derived from women is utterly trivial and results only in misery," he withdrew his mind from worldly pleasures.

At this point, Swamigal would articulate a thought beautifully: after gaining wisdom, Pururavas reflects, "What wrong did Urvashi commit? She is an apsara; her nature itself is to bestow pleasure upon those who seek her. Was it

not my own mistake to regard her as an object of sensual enjoyment and waste my time? If a person trembles in terror mistaking a rope for a snake, what can that rope do? The fault does not lie with the rope; it is within his own mind that fear, lust, or anger arises upon seeing it. Therefore, realizing there is nothing wrong with that object itself, he declares, 'I have renounced my anger towards her.'"

Generally, in failures of romance, people succumb to anger, frenzy, or weeping, going to extremes such as suicide; the root cause for this is simply that lust has not yet left them. After all, isn't anger merely an alternate manifestation of desire?

When Vishvamitra performs penance, Menaka arrives. He spent several years with her which passed away like ten minutes. However, when the time arrives to part ways, he sends her away without directing anger towards her. Next, when Rambha arrives and begins to dance, he loses his temper and curses her, to turn into a stone!" After that: "indriyaiH ajitaiH rAma na lebbe shAntimAtmanaH" says Valmiki. Realizing that because he had not yet completely conquered his senses, he had not attained complete inner peace, he engages once again in intense penance. Therefore, anger is also an expression of desire. If anger arises within us towards someone, we must recognize that the defect of desire still lingers within us, and we must perform intense Bhagavath Bhajanam to eradicate it.

I am always filled with wonder, reflecting on how subtle our Swamigal was. One day, speaking casually, Swamigal remarked: "In this context, an elder (I do not wish to mention his name), while delivering a discourse, would say, 'At least with Menaka there was some pleasure, but with Rambha even that was not there.' However, I would never say such a thing," said Swamigal.

I was utterly amazed! Do you know what kind of elevated soul Swamigal was? Just as Arunagirinathar experienced:

"குமரனை மெய்யன்பினால் மெல்ல மெல்ல உள்ள
அரும்பும் தனிப் பரமானந்தம் தித்தித்து அறிந்த அன்றே
கரும்பும் துவர்த்து, செந்தேனும் புளித்து அறக் கைத்ததுவே"

"kumaranai meyyanbinAl mella mella uLLa
arumbum thanip paramAnandham thiththiththu aRindha anRE
karumbum thuvarththu, sendhEnum puLiththu aRak kaiththadhuvE"

The day Arunagirinathar tasted the sweetness of that supreme bliss blossoming gently from within by meditating on Kumara Peruman, even sugarcane tasted astringent to him, and pure honey felt bitter to him! In the same way, worldly objects had turned entirely bitter to our Swamigal. Therefore, the statement that 'there is some small pleasure in worldly matters' would never slip out of his mouth even by mistake. It was precisely because he lived with such exalted dispassion that he took Sannyasa.

tvadbhaktiM prApya pUrNaH, sukhataaramacharat Thereafter, establishing unwavering Bhakthi in You, that Pururavas attained spiritual perfection (fulfillment). He wandered upon this earth with far greater joy than before. **tadvaduddhUyasa~NgaM, bhaktOttamSaM kriyA mAM**, please shower Your grace so that I, too, may eradicate all my worldly attachments and become Your foremost devotee. **pavanapurapatE Krishna O Krishna! Guruvayurappa! hanta mE rundhi rOgAn** Please remove the afflictions in my body and the worldly desires in my mind, and take me under Your grace!

With this, the 96th Dashakam concludes.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये षण्णवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।
श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE ShaNNavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |
shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

97th Dashakam: Nirguna Nishta and Markandeya Charithram

97th Dashakam, 1st Shloka:

त्रैगुण्याद्वित्ररूपं भवति हि भुवने, हीनमध्योत्तमं यत्
ज्ञानं श्रद्धा च कर्ता, वसतिरपि सुखं, कर्म च आहारभेदाः ।
त्वत्क्षेत्रत्वन्निषेवादि तु यदिह पुनः, त्वत्परं तत्तु सर्वं,
प्राहुर्नैर्गुण्यनिष्ठं, तदनुभजनतो मङ्क्षु सिद्धो भवेयम् ॥

traiguNyAdbhinnarUpaM bhavati hi bhuvanE, hInamadhyOttamaM yat It is well known that Bhagavan taught Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita about the three Gunas (qualities of nature). In that, everything can be categorized as superior (Uthamam), middling (Madhyamam), and inferior (Adhamam)—that is, Satvikam, Rajasam, and Tamasam.

For instance, if we take food:

Food that is easily prepared, digests well, and imparts sound health to the body is Satvikam. Food that is eaten with an intense craving for taste and subsequently plunges us into worldly pursuits and intensifies lust and anger, is Rajasam. Food that is impure and unhealthy is Tamasam.

However, Bhagavan explains in the Uddhava Gita how to practically implement what He told Arjuna — “**nistraiguNyo bhavArjuna**” (transcend the three Gunas, O Arjuna): “That with which a connection to Bhagavan is established becomes ‘**Nairgunyam**’ (transcendental / beyond the Gunas).”

If the same food mentioned earlier is offered as Naivedyam to Bhagavan and then consumed, it becomes ‘**Nairgunyam**!’

In the same manner, He categorizes everything:

Dwelling place: A forest is Satvikam; the house where we reside is Rajasam; places like gambling dens are Tamasam. But the temple of Bhagavan is ‘**Nairgunyam**’.

j~nAnaM shraddhA cha kartA, vasatirapi sukhaM, karma cha AhArabhEdAH
In this manner, Bhagavan expounds in detail in Bhagavatam, the differentiations inherent in each aspect—wisdom (Jnanam), faith (Shraddha), the doer (KartA), dwelling place (Sthanam), happiness (Sukham), action (Karma), and food (Ahara). Explaining what is Satvikam, Rajasam, and Tamasam, He says, "Hold firmly onto that fourth state, which is Nairgunyam."

If we consider books, books that cultivate noble virtues are Satvikam; books that teach how to succeed in worldly transactions are Rajasam; books that teach how to bring down and harm others are Tamasam; at the same time, books that speak of the divine attributes of Bhagavan, such as Ramayanam and Bhagavatam, are 'Nairgunyam'.

tvatkShEtratvanniShEvAdi tu yadiha punaH, tvatparaM tatttu sarvaM, prAhurnairguNyaniShThaM Whatever is performed holding You as the highest goal—treating it as Your holy abode (Kshetram) and Your worship—that alone is "nairgunya nishtha" (steadfast abidance in nirguna). Bhattathri states, **tadanubhajanatO ma~NkShu siddhO bhavEyam** "Adopting that, I shall swiftly attain spiritual perfection (siddhi)." If we too transform all our daily actions into services performed for Bhagavan, we can become spiritually perfected beings (siddha purushas).

The state of seeing Bhagavan everywhere

97th Dashakam, 2nd Shlokam:

त्वय्येव न्यस्तचित्तः, सुखमयि विचरन्, सर्वचेष्टास्त्वदर्थं,
त्वद्भक्तैः सेव्यमानान्, अपि चरितचरान्, आश्रयन् पुण्यदेशान् ।
दस्यौ विप्रे मृगादिष्वपि च सममतिः, मुच्यमानावमान-
स्पर्धासूयादिदोषः, सततमखिलभूतेषु संपूजये त्वाम् ॥

tvayyEva nyastachittaH, sukhamayi vicharan, sarvachEShTastvadarthaM, tvadbhaktaiH sEvyaManAn, api charitacharAn, Ashrayan puNyadEshAn
"Fixing the mind upon You alone, reveling in supreme bliss, performing all

actions solely for Your sake, and visiting the sacred pilgrimage realms revered and served by Your Bhakthas." It means places praised in song by the Nayanmars and sacred spots celebrated by the Azhwars (Mangalashasanam). Our Swamigal would visit and conduct Bhagavata Saptahams at holy shrines where Maha Periyava stayed, and locations where he observed Chaturmasyam. Alongside that, we must also endeavour to conduct ourselves as those saints lived.

dasyau viprE mR^igAdiShvapi cha samamatiH, muchyamAnAvamAna spardhAsUyAdidOShaH Beholding Bhagavan in everything without harbouring any discriminatory perception (bheda buddhi) towards anyone—be it a thief, a brahmana, or an animal; disregarding honor and dishonor; eradicating all inner blemishes such as malice (spardha, ill will towards others) and envy (asuya, jealousy) **satatamakhilabhUtEShu saMpUjayE tvAm** "I shall continuously worship You alone manifest in all living beings."

97th Dashakam, 3rd Shloka:

त्वद्भावो यावदेषु स्फुरति न विशदं, तावदेवं हि उपास्तिं
कुर्वन्, ऐकात्म्यबोधे झटिति विकसति, त्वन्मयोऽहं चरेयम् ।
त्वद्धर्मस्यास्य तावत् किमपि न भगवन्, प्रस्तुतस्य प्रणाशः,
तस्मात् सर्वात्मनैव प्रदिश मम विभो, भक्तिमार्गं मनोज्ञम् ॥

tvadbhAvO yAvadEShu sphurati na vishadaM, tAvadEvaM hi upAstiM kurvan "Until that wisdom of beholding You everywhere dawns within me, I shall continuously keep performing Your meditative worship (upasanas)."

At this juncture in the Bhagavata, Bhagavan extols the high merit of actions that foster Bhakthi towards Bhagavan, such as constructing temples, performing kumbhabhishekams, and conducting monthly and annual festive celebrations (utsavams).

Swamigal would emphasize that while organizing such sacred works (Kovil Tiruppanigal), festivities, upanyasams etc. one must remain cautious to prevent a specific mistake. Whatever noble work one undertakes, money is certainly required for it. However, those who organize these projects must not excessively flatter the donors in a way that fuels their pride and arrogance. If done so, it creates room for them to commit sins out of the conceit of wealth. Swamigal would explain this through the story of the Govinda Pattabhishekam found in Bhagavatam.

It was Bhagavan who installed Indra in that exalted office and assigned him the duty of bestowing rain upon the world. Yet, when the sacrificial offering to Indra was stopped, he was enraged and sent down a torrential deluge for seven days, attempting to destroy Gokulam entirely. Krishna lifted the Govardhana hill as an umbrella and safeguarded those cows and cowherds. Had He not done so, would not the sin of slaughtering so many cows and cowherds have accrued to Indra? Kamadhenu, the divine mother cow, showered her milk in profound gratitude and performed abhishekam for Krishna. Indra too bowed before Krishna, begging for forgiveness. Bestowing the divine Nama 'Govinda', he anointed Bhagavan with the celestial Ganga water brought by Airavata.

Krishna says to Indra, "I performed this leela solely to destroy your arrogance. You may continue in the office of Indra, but do not harbour arrogance." In the same manner, those who organize sacred works—even if wealth and human exertion are readily present—must always keep in mind that undertakings culminate successfully only if Bhagavan wills it, and they must never flatter donors excessively. Those who contributed their wealth must also remain humble with the realization that Bhagavan merely granted them an opportunity to serve Him with the very resources He Himself provided.

At this juncture, Swamigal would narrate in detail the story of Pusalar Nayanar, who built a temple and performed its Kumbhabhishekam entirely

within his own mind, emphasizing: "Bhagavan looks solely at the heart. We too must exert great effort to establish Bhagavan firmly within our inner heart."

aikAtmyabOdhe jhaTiti vikasati, tvanmayO.ahaM charEyam "Soon, that Advaitic wisdom of beholding You everywhere will shine forth within me; I shall move about in this world as the very embodiment of Yourself."

tvaddharmasyAsya tAvat kimapi na bhagavan, prastutasya praNAshaH
"O Bhagavan! If a person has commenced this Bhagavata Dharma of Yours, thereafter he will never suffer any deficiency, he will not go to waste, nor will he ever perish."

Bhagavan expresses the same in a single line in the Gita as well:

"nahi kalyANakRt kashchit durgatiM tAta gachChati"—one who performs noble and righteous deeds will never meet with an ill fate. **tasmAt sarvAtmanaiva pradisha mama vibhO, bhaktimArgaM manOj~nam**
"Therefore, shower Your grace upon me so that I may remain ever wholly absorbed in that path of Bhakthi, which is always delightful to the mind."

Bhajanam grants health and longevity

97th Dashakam, 4th Shloka:

तं चैनं भक्तियोगं द्रढयितुं, अयि मे साध्यं आरोग्यमायुः,
दिष्ट्या तत्रापि सेव्यं, तव चरणमहो, भेषजायेव दुग्धम् ।
मार्कण्डेयो हि पूर्वं, गणकनिगदितद्वादशाब्दायुः, उच्चैः
सेवित्वा वत्सरं त्वां, तव भटनिवहैः द्रावयामास मृत्युम् ॥

taM chainaM bhaktiyOgaM draDhayituM, ayi mE sAdhyaM ArOgyamAyuH, diShTyA tatrApi sEvyaM, tava charaNamahO To firmly establish this Bhakthi Yoga in this manner, I require sound health and a long life. But how can we earn that? For that as well, the chanting of Your divine namas (Bhagavat Bhajanam) is the only path!

Generally, those who are unwell lament in despair, saying, "I have become weary of life itself." However, once a person enters this path of Bhakthi and tastes its divine sweetness, a longing arises within him to live longer. Do you know why? It is solely so that one can practice Bhakthi and attain Bhagavan in this very lifetime! Mere longevity alone is not sufficient; one must also possess good health. If one asks what should be done for that, there also the answer is, one must engage in Bhagavat Bhajanam.

अच्युतानन्द गोविन्द विष्णो नारायण मृत । रोगान्मे नाशयाशेषान् आशु धन्वन्तरे हरे ॥

"achyutAnanda govinda viShNo nArAyaNAmRta |
rogAnme nAshaya asheShAn Ashu dhanvantare hare ||"

Taking some water in a copper vessel, reciting this shloka 336 times, and drinking that water will eradicate diseases.

अस्मिन् परात्मन् ननु पादकल्पे त्वमित्यमुत्थापितपद्मयोनिः ।
अनन्तभूमा मम रोगराशिं निरुन्धि वातालयवास विष्णो ॥

"asmin parAtman nanu pAdmakalpe
tvam-ittham-utthApita-padmayoniH |
ananta-bhUmA mama rogarAshiM
nirundhi vAtAlayavAsa viShNo ||"

Swamigal would sing this verse so melodiously. He would write down and give this shloka, assuring that if one recites it continuously, all illnesses will vanish. For gaining good health, is it not more than enough to simply study and recite the Narayaneeyam? Does it not conclude with the benediction, "Ayur-Arogya-Saukhyam" (longevity, health, and happiness)?

There is a distinct reason why Swamigal placed such firm faith in the Narayaneeyam. In his youth, when Swamigal suffered from severe abdominal pain, a doctor examined him and instructed, "Come tomorrow, we must perform a surgery on you." Swamigal spent that entire night reciting the

Narayaneeyam and went back the following morning. Upon examining him, the doctor was astonished and asked, "There is much improvement from what I saw yesterday! Your stomach pain has subsided as well; no surgery is needed, and it can be cured with medication alone. What did you do? This is truly miraculous!"

When Swamigal replied to him, "I was reciting the Narayaneeyam throughout the entire night," the doctor was deeply moved, called his wife and children to offer Namaskarams to Swamigal, and honoured him with betel leaves and fruits. Swamigal had such profound faith in the Narayaneeyam.

bhEShajAyEva dugdham Do you know what it is like when Your Bhajanam itself bestows both longevity and health? A person visits a doctor because he feels unwell. He happens to love milk a lot. If that doctor prescribes a medicine, "Boil fresh milk until it thickens, add almond powder, saffron, and palm sugar candy to it, and drink it morning and evening," imagine how joyful and delighted he would be! Bhajanam for the sake of health is similar to this.

There is a Malayalam proverb: "acchan icchicchatum pAl, vaithyan kalpicchatum pAl" (What father craved was milk, and what the physician prescribed was also milk). That is what Bhattathri uses here. It has become delightful and convenient for us that Your Bhajanam which is inherently sweet, itself is going to serve as the booster for our health as well!

Uddhava's farewell and Krishna ascending to Vaikuntam

Markandeya Charithram comes next. In the Bhagavata, this narrative of Markandeya commences only from the 10th chapter of the 12th Skandha. Bhattathri leaps directly from here to that section. In between, there are several stories such as Bhagavan's ascent to Vaikuntam (Vaikuntam Arohanam) and King Parikshit attaining Moksham.

The very first story segment of Bhagavatam begins with the Varaha Avatara, and he narrates it in Dashakams 11, 12, and 13. The final story section found in

the Bhagavata, is the Markandeya Charithram. Narrating that too, he concludes the story portion of the text. The first three Dashakams and the final three Dashakams are entirely Bhattathri's own personal contributions. If one searches for where these are located within the Bhagavata, one will not find them. However, they elevate the Bhakthi rasa of this epic poem even further.

After Krishna finished imparting the spiritual instructions to Uddhava, He asked, "Did you understand all that I told you? Do you still have any questions?" Uddhava prostrated before Bhagavan and said, "Just as one who stands beside fire has no worry regarding darkness or biting cold, through Your divine Darshanam and these nectarine teachings, my ignorance has been eradicated completely. The worldly attachment I harboured towards these relatives has also left me. I have realized that aunt, uncle, paternal uncle, and elder uncle are all merely attachments created by You solely for increasing the population of this world."

"नमस्तुते महायोगिन् प्रपन्नमनुशाधि माम् । यथा त्वच्चरणाम्भोजे रतिः स्यादनपायिनी ॥"

"namo'stu te mahAyogin prapannam-anushAdhi mAm |
yathA tvachcharaNAMbhoje ratiH syAd-anapAyinI ||"

"O Mahayogin! I bow before You. Guide me, correct me from time to time, and accept me as Your own so that my Bhakthi to Your lotus feet remains eternally steadfast"—saying thus and offering Namaskarams, he receives the holy wooden sandals (Padukas) of Krishna. One cannot count how many times he did Pradakshinam and Namaskarams to Krishna!

Krishna tells him, "Go to Badarikashrama and keep practicing all these Dharmas that I have instructed." Uddhava kept repeating, "I shall take leave now... I shall take leave now...", but he had no heart to depart at all. After Uddhava departed with a heavy heart, the destruction of the Yadava clan and Bhagavan's Vaikuntam Arohanam took place.

While Bhagavan was seated under a tree, the arrow of a hunter named Jara struck His foot. His chariot, divine weapons, and all else vanished from here and reached Vaikuntam. Next, He too disappeared from here and reached Vaikuntam. If one asks why Bhattathri did not narrate this ascent to Vaikuntam, it is because of his firm conviction that Bhagavan is still granting His Darshanam right here as Guruvayurappan! Bhattathri declares, 'He did not go away to Vaikuntam; behold, He is right here!'

The latter half of the 4th shloka: **mArkaNDEyO hi pUrvaM, gaNakanigaditadvAdashAbdAyuH** In our Shiva Puranas, we have read that Markandeya was endowed with eternal youth of 16 years of age, and when Yama arrived seeking to snatch his life away, Parameshwara kicked Yama away with His foot and made Markandeya an immortal (chiranjeevi). **uchchaiH sEvitvA vatsaraM tvAM, tava bhaTanivahaiH drAvayAmAsa mR^ityum** However, here in the Bhagavata, astrologers state that his lifespan is only 12 years. Because he spent all those 12 years immersed purely in meditation on Bhagavan, the emissaries of Yama (Yama-dutas) arrive, unaware that time spent in contemplation of Bhagavan does not count in the calculation of lifespan. Even at that moment, he is engaged in the continuous chanting and worship (Bhajanam) of Bhagavan. The emissaries of Vishnu (Vishnu-dutas) drive those emissaries of Yama away.

Markandeya's penance and Indra's trial

97th Dashakam, 5th Shloka:

मार्कण्डेयश्चिरायुः, स खलु पुनरपि त्वत्परः, पुष्पभद्रा-
तीरे नित्ये तपस्यन्, अतुलसुखरतिः षट् तु मन्वन्तराणि ।
देवेन्द्रः सप्तमस्तं, सुरयुवतिमरुन्मन्मथैः मोहयिष्यन्,
योगोष्मप्लुष्यमाणैः न तु पुनरशकत्, त्वज्जनं निर्जयेत् कः ॥

mArkaNDEyashchirAyuH, sa khalu punarapi tvatparaH, puShpabhadra tIrE ninyE tapasyan Therefore, having attained a long lifespan, he was engaged in penance (Tapas) on the banks of the Pushpabhadra River in Himachal

Pradesh, **atulasukharatiH ShaT tu manvantarANi** fixing his mind upon You alone and reveling in supreme bliss. In this manner, he performed Tapas for six Manvantaras! **dEvEndraH saptamastaM** In the seventh Manvantara, a new Indra arrived. Wondering, "Who is this person surviving for such a long span of time through the power of his Tapas? I shall disrupt his Tapas,"

surayuvatimarunmanmathaiH mOhayiShyan Indra sent the Apsara celestial damsels, the spring season (Vasanta Ritu), and Manmatha (the god of desire) to enchant and infatuate him. **yOgOShmapluShyamANaiH na tu punarashakat** However, unable to withstand the scorching heat of the fire of his penance, they fled in utter fear. Bhattathri exclaims, **tvajjanaM nirjayEt kaH** "Who can ever conquer Your Bhakthas?"

The vision of Maya and the child Krishna on the banyan leaf

The ones who conquered Manmatha in this manner were Nara-Narayana, who are divinities. Knowing that a human sage had conquered Manmatha in this way, they granted their divine Darshanam to Markandeya.

97th Dashakam, 6th Shloka:

प्रीत्या नारायणाख्यस्त्वमथ नरसखः, प्राप्तवानस्य पार्श्वं,
तुष्ट्या तोष्टूयमानः, स तु विविधवरैः लोभितो, नानुमेने ।
द्रष्टुं मायां त्वदीयां किल पुनः अवृणोत्, भक्तितृप्तान्तरात्मा,
मायादुःखानभिज्ञः, तदपि मृगयते, नूनं आश्चर्यहेतोः ॥

prItYA nArAyaNAkhyastvamatha narasakhaH, prAptavAnasya pArshvaM
The moment they approached him, **tuShTyA tOShTUyamAnaH** he rejoiced, performed ritual worship (Puja), and offered hymns of praise (Stothram) to them. **sa tu vividhavaraiH IObhito, nAnumEnE** Even though they tempted him with diverse boons, he declined, saying he required nothing. Look at the beautiful word used to describe him **bhaktitR^iptAntarAtmA** Because his mind was completely content with Bhakthi alone, he declined the boons.

draShTuM mAyAM tvadIyAM kila punaH avR^iNOt However, he asked for one boon: that he wished to witness the Maya of Bhagavan. **mAyAduHkhAnabhij~naH, tadapi mR^igayatE, nUnaM AshcharyahEtOH** Not knowing how full of sorrow Maya truly is, he requested it as a boon out of sheer curiosity.

97th Dashakam, 7th Shloka:

याते त्वय्याशु वाताकुल, जलदगलत्तोयपूर्णाति, घूर्णत्-
सप्तार्णोराशिमग्रे, जगति स तु जले सम्भ्रमन् वर्षकोटीः ।
दीनः, प्रैक्षिष्ट दूरे वटदलशयनं, कञ्चित् आश्चर्यबालं
त्वामेव श्यामलाङ्गं, वदनसरसिजन्यस्त पादाङ्गुलीकम् ॥

yAtE tvayyAshu vAtAkula, jaladagalattOyapUrNAti, ghUrNat-
saptArNOrAshimagnE, jagati sa tu jale sambhraman varShakOTIH
The moment Nara and Narayana vanished, a fierce gale began to blow. Water engulfed everything on all sides. He was tossing and drifting about in the deluge of the ocean for one crore years. **dInaH** He became helpless and exhausted. **praikShiShTa dUrE vaTadalashayanaM, ka~nchit**
AshcharyabAlaM At that moment, he saw a banyan tree at a distance. Upon a banyan leaf of that tree, he beheld a wondrous infant—the divine Krishna on a banyan leaf (Alilai Kannan)! **tvAmEva shyAmala~Ngam,**
vadanasarasijanyasta pAdA~NgulIkam He saw the infant of dark-complexioned hue (shyamala varna) placing the big toe of His left foot into His lotus-like mouth.

कराविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
वटस्य पत्रस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥

"karAravindena padAravindaM mukhAravinde viniveshayantam |
vaTasya patrasya puTe shayAnaM bAlaM mukundaM manasA smarAmi ||"
—They have articulated this beautifully as a shloka in this manner.

97th Dashakam, 8th Shlokam:

दृष्ट्वा त्वां हृष्टरोमा त्वरितं ,अभिगतः, स्प्रष्टुकामो मुनीन्द्रः,
श्वासेनान्तर्निविष्टः, पुनरिह सकलं दृष्टवान् विष्टपौघम् ।
भूयोऽपि श्वासवातैः, बहिरनुपतितो, वीक्षितस्त्वत्कटाक्षैः
मोदात् आश्लेष्टुकामः, त्वयि पिहिततनौ, स्वाश्रमे प्राग्वदासीत् ॥

dR^iShTvA tvAM hR^iShTarOmA tvaritaM Upon beholding the child, the sage experienced romanchanam, an ecstatic thrill **abhigataH, spraShTukAmO munIndraH** He rushed swiftly towards Him. He tried to touch You (the infant). **shvAsEnAntarniviShTaH, punariha sakalaM dR^iShTavAn viShTapaugham** But along with the breath of Bhagavan, he was drawn inside Him! Going inside, he beheld all the fourteen worlds existing there too.

bhUyO.api shvAsavAtaiH, bahiranupatitO With the next outgoing breath, he came out. **vIkShitastvatkaTAKShaiH** When Bhagavan looked at the sage with His cool, compassionate glances (kataksham), the sage attained supreme bliss (paramananda). **mOdAt AshlEShTukAmaH, tvayi pihitatanau, svAshramE prAgvadAsIt** When he came close, longing to embrace this child, the divine form of Bhagavan vanished! He found himself seated once again in his ashram as usual. That vision of Maya came to an end.

These days, in cinema they portray so many illusions. If mere humans can accomplish so much, is it any wonder that the Maya of Bhagavan displays such astounding illusion?

Non-difference between Shiva and Vishnu and Markandeya Puranam

97வது தசகம், 9வது ஸ்லோகம்:

गौर्या सार्धं तदग्रे, पुरभिदथ गतः, त्वत्प्रियप्रेक्षणार्थी,
सिद्धानेवास्य दत्त्वा, स्वयमयं अजरामृत्युतादीन् गतोऽभूत् ।
एवं त्वत्सेवयैव, स्मररिपुरपि स प्रीयते येन तस्मात्,
मूर्तित्रय्यात्मकस्त्वं, ननु सकलनियन्तेति सुव्यक्तमासीत् ॥

gauryA sArdhaM tadagrE, purabhidatha gataH, tvatpriyaprEkShaNArthI

After that, Ambika and Parameshwara were travelling across the skies seated upon the bull mount (Rishabha Vahana). Ambika suggested, "Let us bestow some boon upon this sage," Parameshwara said: "He is completely immersed in Krishna-Bhakthi, 'one whose inner soul is fulfilled by Bhakthi' (bhakti-triptantaratma); he will not ask for anything. Nevertheless, beholding such an exalted Bhaktha is a fortune for us as well," and both of them went together and granted their Darshanam.

Because he was sitting with his eyes closed, meditating upon Vishnu Bhagavan, he did not realize that Swami and Ambal had arrived in front of him. At that moment, Vishnu Bhagavan Himself manifested within his inner vision as Parameshwara seated upon the sacred bull. Astonished, he opened his eyes immediately and saw Shiva and Ambika standing before him and properly worshipped them with Arghyam, Paadyam, etc.

When Parameshwara said, "Ask me whatever boon you desire," Markandeya, so as not to transgress the divine command of Shiva, prayed: "Please bless me with unswerving Bhakthi towards Vishnu Bhagavan, unswerving Bhakthi towards His devotees, and the exact same Bhakthi towards You as well."

That is to say, he prayed that the same joy he experiences when performing worship chanting 'Srikrishnaya Namaha, Vasudevaya Namaha, Sanatanaya Namaha' should be felt by him when worshipping You chanting 'Shivaya Namaha, Maheshwaraya Namaha, Sambhave Namaha, Pinakine Namaha'.

Furthermore, Shiva said, "I, Vishnu Bhagavan, and Brahma are of one and the same form; there is no difference whatsoever among us," and saying, "I have granted what you asked for," bestowed the eight classical mystic perfections (ashta-maha-siddhis). **siddhAnEvAsya datvA, svayamayaM ajarAmR^ityutAdIn gatO.abhUt** He blessed him, saying, "You shall remain an immortal (chiranjeevi), and old age will never touch you. Furthermore, you must compose a Purana for my sake and become an Acharya of the Puranas."

It is for that reason that we received the text known as the Markandeya Purana. It is within that text that the Durga Saptashati (Chandi Parayanam) appears.

EvaM tvatsEvayaiva, smararipurapi sa prIyatE yEna tasmAt, "In this manner, Shiva too becomes exceedingly pleased with Your Bhakthas. **mUrtitravyAtmakastvaM, nanu sakalaniyantEti suvyaktamAsIt** Therefore, it is clearly evident that You alone exist as the Trimurtis and as the controller (niyanta) of them all," says Bhattathri. In this context, our Swamigal would explain citing numerous shlokams: "One must not harbour distinctions between Shiva and Vishnu. Harboursing hatred (dvesha) towards any divine form of Bhagavan is a grave sin."

Paramapadam and Sharanagathi

97வது தசகம், 10வது ஸ்லோகம்:

त्र्यंशोस्मिन् सत्यलोके, विधिहरिपुरभिन्मन्दिराणि ऊर्ध्वमूर्ध्व,
तेभ्योपि ऊर्ध्वं तु, मायाविकृतिविरहितो भाति, वैकुण्ठलोकः ।
तत्र त्वं कारणाम्भसि, अपि पशुपकुले, शुद्धसत्त्वैकरूपी,
सच्चिद्ब्रह्माद्यात्मा, पवनपुरपते, पाहि मां सर्वरोगात् ॥

tryaMshEsmin satyalOkE, vidhiharipurabhinmandirANi UrdhvamUrdhvaM,
tEbhyOpi UrdhvaM tu, mAyAvikR^itivirahitO bhAti, vaikuNThalOkah Beyond the Satya Loka of Brahma, Kailasa, and Vishnu Loka, completely detached from Maya, lies Vaikunta Loka (Paramapadam). **tatra tvaM kArANAmbhasi, api pashupakule** "O Krishna, Guruvayurappa! You alone shine as the embodiment of pure Sattva (Suddha Sattvaika roopa) in that Vaikunta Loka, in the causal waters (Karana Jalam), and in Ayarpadi." Andal Nachiyar sings this beautifully in Tiruppavai:

"மாயனை மன்னு வடமதுரை மைந்தனைத்
தூய பெருநீர் யமுனைத் துறைவனை
ஆயர் குலத்தினில் தோன்றும் அணிவிளக்கைத்
தாயைக் குடல்விளக்கம் செய்த தாமோதரனைத்

தூயோமாய் வந்துநாம் தூமலர்தூவித் தொழுது
வாயினால் பாடி மனத்தினால் சிந்திக்கப்
போய பிழையும் புகுதருவான் நின்றனவும்
தீயினில் தூசாகும் செப்பேலோ ரெம்பாவாய்”

”mAyanaim mannu vaDamadhurai maindhanait
thUyap perunIr yamunaith thuRaivanai
Ayar kulaththinil thOnRum aNiviLakkaith
thAyaik kuDalviLakkam seydha dhAmOdharanaith
thUyOmAy vandhunAm thUmalarthUvith thozhudhu
vAyiAl pADi manaththinAl chindhikkap
pOya pizhaiyum pugudharuvAn ninRanavum
thIyiniI thUsAgum cheppElOr embAvAy”

When we sing with our mouths and meditate in our minds on You—who took birth as Krishna in Ayarpadi—all our past and future sins (“pOya pizhaiyum pugudharuvAn ninRanavum”), which are our Agami and Sanchita karmas, will turn to ash like dust in a fire. Let us pray: “Within our Prarabdha karma, grant us a good lifespan and good health, create a pathway to practice Bhakthi towards You and attain You; we ask for nothing else.”

The 30th Shloka in the Kataksha Shatakam of the Mooka Panchashati:

उद्वेल्लितस्तबकितैर्ललितैर्विलासैः उत्थाय देवि तव गाढकटाक्षकुञ्जात् ।
दूरं पलाययतु मोहमृगीकुलं मे कामाक्षि सत्वरमनुग्रहकेसरीन्द्रः ॥

udvellitastabakitairlalitairvilAsaiH
utthAya devi tava gADhakaTAKShaku~njAt |
dUraM palAyayatu mohamRugIkulaM me
kAmAkShi satvaramanugraha-kesarIndraH ||

This is a beautiful prayer: “O Kamakshi! May the king of lions, which is your anugraham, shake its mane, emerge gracefully from the dense cave of your

compassionate glance, and swiftly chase far away the herd of deers that is my delusion (moha)."

Moha is a mental delusion where we deceive ourselves into believing there is pleasure in something that actually brings us suffering. We have an abundance of such moha. Even so, no matter how many deer there are, isn't a single roar of a lion enough? Won't they scatter in fear? Like that, once the lion of Kamakshi's compassion steps forth, all the delusions within us will vanish in an instant.

Vaishnavas celebrate the Tiruppavai pasuram beginning with "Sitranchiirukale" as the very essence of Saranagati (surrender).

"எற்றைக்கும் ஏழேழ் பிறவிக்கும் உன்றன்னோடு
உற்றோமே ஆவோம்! உனக்கே நாம் ஆட்செய்வோம்
மற்றை நம் காமங்கள் மாற்றேலோ ரெம்பாவாய்"

"Etraikkum EzhEzh piRavikkum unthannODu UtrOmE AvOm unakkE nAm AtcheyvOm Matrai nam kAmangaL mATRElOr embAvAy (For all time and through all our sevenfold births, we shall be bonded only to You! We shall serve only You!)" Bhagavan incarnates in the form of saints specifically to take hold of those who pray like this. If we perform actions that are pleasing to them, affirming "we shall serve only You," we can truly feel that we belong entirely to them, living up to the words "we shall be bonded only to You."

However, what stops us from doing so are our other desires (matrai kamangal). We wonder, "Is it possible to remain immersed in Bhajanam throughout the day?" Through the fruit of some merit—a glimpse of a temple tower (Gopura Darshanam), a Japam, a Parayanam, the Darshanam of a saint, seeing him in a dream, or listening to his words of grace—we develop a taste for it at some moment. Realizing that there is a supreme bliss in Bhakthi that does not exist in worldly pleasures, we yearn to cultivate it and engage ourselves in it.

Like drops of water on a lotus leaf, saints remain completely unattached to the world and are perpetually immersed in experiencing Bhagavan. However, we are unable to remain in that state. It is only because we see such saints that we clearly understand such a state truly exists. Even sensory pleasures like food and music, which give us joy and satisfaction, become unnecessary to them. Doesn't Tulsidas pray:

नान्या स्पृहा रघुपते हृदयेऽस्मदीये सत्यं वदामि च भवानखिलान्तरात्मा ।
भक्तिं प्रयच्छ रघुपुङ्गव निर्भरां मे कामादिदोषरहितं कुरु मानसं च ॥

nAnyA spRuhA raghupate hRudaye.asmadIye
satyaM vadAmi cha bhavAnakhilAntarAtmA |
bhaktiM prayachCha raghupu~Ngava nirbharAM me
kAmAdidoSharahitaM kuru mAnasaM cha ||

O Raghupati! I speak the absolute truth—and You, being the indwelling soul of all beings, already know this—I harbor no other worldly desires in my heart. O best of the Raghu dynasty, please grant me intense, unwavering devotion toward You, and cleanse my mind completely of flaws like desire and ego.

Even after saints become firmly established in their direct experience of Bhagavan, they pray on our behalf with the generous spirit of "May the world attain the supreme bliss that I have received." Let us also pray continuously: "unthannODu UtrOmE AvOm unakke nAm AtcheyvOm Matrai nam kAmangal mATRElOr embAvAy (We shall be bonded only to You, we shall serve only You; please remove all our other material desires.)" We will certainly attain the grace of the Guru and the grace of Bhagavan.

shuddhasattvaikarUpI, sachchitbrahmAdvayAtmA, pavanapurapatE, pAhi mAM sarvarOgAt Bhattathri concludes the dashakam: O Guruvayurappa, You alone are that form of pure Sattva, the Supreme Reality of Sachidananda, and the non-dual Parabrahman! Please protect me from all afflictions!

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमन्नारायणीये सप्तनवतितमं दशकं समाप्तम् ।
श्री हरये नमः । रमा रमण गोविन्द गोविन्द । श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ।

OM tatsaditi shrImannArAyaNIyE saptanavatitamaM dashakaM samAptam |
shrI harayE namaH | ramA ramaNa gOvinda gOvinda |
shrIkR^iShNArpaNamastu |

Concluding remarks

The Uddhava Gita extends only up to the 4th shloka of the 97th Dashakam. However, our Swamigal would advise : "Recite these Dashakams 91 to 97 of the Narayaneeyam daily; recite them with the understanding of their meaning; if not, at least read their meaning alone." It is purely by Swamigal's grace that we had the blessed opportunity through this book to study those shlokams, comprehend the exalted philosophical truths embedded in them, and contemplate (Mananam) upon them.

If one asks, "What is the core message of this book? What should I practice from today?" my answer would simply be: "Perform Govinda Nama Japam."

Chant the Nama manthram given by Swamigal:

"govinda govinda hare murAre govinda govinda mukunda kRShNa |
govinda govinda rathA~NgapANe govinda dAmodara mAdhaveti ||"

seventy-two times every day. This constitutes one cycle. If possible, chant several cycles every day. I am saying this because Swamigal has expounded extensively upon the glory of Govinda Nama in the following manner.

One meaning of 'Go' is the Earth (bhumi). Chanting the Govinda Nama bestows everything we require to live happily on this Earth. 'Go' has another meaning as the sensory organs (indriyas). If one chants the Govinda Nama, our senses will travel solely along the righteous path. 'Go' also signifies speech (Vak). That experiential realization of Brahman which one perceives after

studying Vedanta, receiving the Maha Vakyas from an authentic Guru, and engaging in deep reflection (Mananam) and sustained meditation (Nididhyasanam)—that very experiential realization of wisdom can be attained through the grace of Bhagavan solely by chanting the Govinda Nama. One who partakes of food while chanting the Govinda Nama with every single mouthful verily becomes a Jivanmukta.

In the rite of Achamanam, it appears at the beginning as "AchyutAya namaH, AnantAya namaH, GovindAya namaH". It appears again in "Keshava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda". In Tiruppavai, the Govinda Nama appears in all three verses immediately preceding the concluding verse (phala-shruti). It is precisely because it possesses such immense glory that our Acharya gave us the direct injunction: 'Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam'.

मङ्गल श्लोकाः

श्रीरामचन्द्राश्रितसद्गुरूणां पादारविन्दं भजतां नराणाम् ।
आरोग्यमैश्वर्यमनन्तकीर्तिः अन्ते च विष्णोः पदमस्ति सत्यम् ॥

कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा बुद्ध्यात्मना वा प्रकृतेः स्वभावात् ।
करोमि यद्यत्सकलं परस्मै नारायणायेति समर्पयामि ॥

Mangala Shlokams

shrIrAmachandrAshritasadgurUNAM pAdAravindaM bhajatAM narANAm |
ArOgyamaishvaryamanantakIrTiH antE cha viShNOH padamasti satyam ||
kAyEna vAchA manasEndriyairvA buddhyAtmanA vA prakR^itEH svabhAvAt |
karOmi yadyatsakalaM parasmai nArAyaNAyEti samarpayAmi ||

GOpiKA jIva^na smaraNam gOvinda ! gOvinda !
jA^nakI jIva^na smaraNam jaya jaya rAma rAma !
nama: pArvatI patayE, hara hara mahAtEvA!
sadkuru svAmina: jay ! A~nchanEya svAmina: jay !

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Website link	QR Code
Srimad Bhagavata Pravachanam by Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal	
Audio recording of Sriman Narayaneeyam by Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal	
Sriman Narayaneeyam discourse by Brahmasri Sundarkumar	
Sri Maha Periyava's discourse on 'Shiva Shiva Pashyanti Samam'	
A few full-length discourses delivered by me over the past two years	
A few more e-books concerning Sri Govinda Damodara Swamigal	

Sri Shankara Charitham (in sixteen parts)	
Srimad Valmiki Ramayana daily meditation (Valmiki Ramayanam daily ERC)	
My experiences with Sri Shivan Sar	
Audio recordings of Tiruppugazh, Thiru-vaguppukal, Kandar Anubhuthi, Kandar Alankaram, and Subrahmanya Bhujangam	
Commentary elucidating the meaning of Seer Pada Vaguppu written by Arunagirinathar	
Narayaneeyam audio recording	
Commentary on select shlokams from Mooka Panchashati	



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A practical guide to understanding the essence of the 'Uddhava Gita' and the 'Navayogi Upakhyana' revealed in the Eleventh Skandham of Srimad Bhagavatam.

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