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Nanjeeyar Vaibhavam



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Nanjeeyar Vaibhavam

namo vedAnta vedyAya jagatmangaLa hetave |
yasya vAkamruta sArapUritam bhuvanatrayam ||

Sri Nanjeeyar was the disciple of Sri Parasara Bhattar, the son of Sri Kurattazhvan and the acharya of Sri Nampillai. He was the first acharya to write vyakhyanam for both Thiruvaymozhi as well as prabandhams of other Azhvars. He was the first to write vyakhyanam in the style of explaining each word and phrase of the azhvars and quoting other acharyas in detailing their meanings.

It is believed that Nanjeeyar lived from 1113 CE to 1208 CE (95 years). He was born in the city of Thirunarayanapuram, near Mysore in Karnataka. He grew up in the town of Kankorai. He was the direct disciple of Parasara Bhattar and it was to him that Bhattar handed over the sampradhayam before attaining paramapadham. Bhattar's acharya was Sri Embar (as well as Kurattazhvan who was his father). One of Nanjeeyar's greatest contributions was the identification of Nampillai and his appointment as the next acharya of the sampradhayam.

Nanjeeyar's original name was Madhavacharyar. Since he had outstanding knowledge of the Vedantas, he was called as Vedanti. He was renowned as an acharya in the Advaitic tradition initially. Swami Ramanuja before leaving this world called Bhattar and told him about Vedanti and asked that Bhattar correct him and bring him into the Srivaishnava sampradhayic fold. This shows the greatness of Nanjeeyar. Ramanuja had already done a similar act with the advaitin Yajnamurti, who was renamed Arulala Perumal Emperumanar. However, due to old age Ramanuja was unable to do the same with Madhavacharyar and therefore gave the task to Bhattar.

As Vedanti, Nanjeeyar lived with great fame in Thirunarayanapuram. Once a Brahmin from Srirangam met him and told him about Bhattar's greatness. From that time on, Vedanti was eager to meet Bhattar. When the brahmin met Bhattar and told him the incident, Bhattar asked him what he told Vedanti. The Brahmin replied that he told Vedanti that Bhattar knew all sastras. Bhattar then told the Brahmin that he should have told Vedanti that Bhattar also knew Thirunedunthandagam. The next time the Brahmin met Vedanti he repeated that to him. Vedanti was then wondering about this work that he had not come across before.

Bhattar then later traveled to Thirunarayanapuram to challenge Vedanti. He went there in a palanquin, surrounded by his disciples, in a procession. Upon seeing that the local people told Bhattar that he would not be able to meet Vedanti if he went like that. They advised him that Madhavacharyar was in the habit of feeding brahmins each day and if he went as one of those brahmins, he will be able to meet him quickly. Therefore, Bhattar dressed as a poor brahmin and went to his place. There Bhattar met Madhavacharyar who asked him why he was waiting there. Bhattar replied that he was waiting for some alms. Madhavacharyar asked him why he was not eating with the other brahmins then. Bhattar replied that he did not come there for food but that he wanted the alm of philosophical

debate. Madhavacharyar instantly recognized that it was Bhattar who was thus challenging him.

He accepted the challenge and a debate raged for nine days between them. On the tenth day, Vedanti agreed that he had lost and that Visishtadvaitam was the true philosophy. He surrendered at the divine feet of Bhattar who then performed pancha samskaram to him and returned to Srirangam.

Madhavacharyar then continued to live in Thirunarayanapuram with his two wives and all his wealth. Once a few brahmins came to his house and his wives sent them away without food. Upon returning to his house and hearing the news, Madhavacharyar grew greatly dejected with his wives in their failure to feed the poor. He therefore divided his wealth into three portions, gave two of the portions to his wives and took one portion to give to Bhattar for service to the Lord. He then renounced this world and took sanyashrama dharma and left for Srirangam to meet Bhattar.

On the way, he was met by Sri Anandahzvan, a disciple of Ramanuja. Anandahzvan told him that if he continued to live as usual by eating when hungry, taking a bath when sweating and surrendered at Bhattar's feet, that he would not have been rejected from paramapadham. There was no need to become a sanyasi. Anandahzvan then blessed him saying that having done it he should now be born in Thirumantra and grow in Dvaya and recite nothing but Dvaya.

When Vedanti reached Srirangam he fell at the feet of Bhattar. Bhattar then picked him up calling him "nam jeeyar" (Our Jeeyar) and embraced him. From that day forward, Vedanti came to be known as Nanjeeyar. This event must have occurred around 1137 or 1138 CE.

Nanjeeyar then continued to live with Bhattar in Srirangam and became a close disciple to him. There are countless stories in Guru Parampara Prabhavam, Vyakhyanam, Varttha Mala, etc which recount events of interaction between Bhattar and Nanjeeyar. These events bring out the best in the Srivaishnava Sampradhayam. Nanjeeyar would ask very many questions to Bhattar and Bhattar would answer them with amazing dexterity. So much so, it became known in the sampradhayam that there was no one to ask questions like Nanjeeyar and that there was no one to answer them like Bhattar. These stories also show the immense devotion that Nanjeeyar had for his acharya, Bhattar.

After Bhattar attained paramapadham, Nanjeeyar took over the leadership of the sampradhayam in Srirangam. At this time he selected Nambur Varadarajar, a disciple of his, to write down his works in silk sheets. He then gave his works in palm leaves to Varadarajar who then left for his home town of Nambur to write them down. Varadarajar lost the palm leaves as he tried to swim across the Cauvery river. As he was mourning the great loss, the Lord appeared in his dream and told him to write them again from his memory.

When Varadarajar returned the silk sheets to Nanjeeyar, Nanjeeyar was amazed to see that the sheets contained his words but also additional references that he had made in discourses but had not put down in writing. When he questioned Varadarajar about the same, Varadarajar fell at his feet and told him what had happened. Nanjeeyar then picked him up and embraced him and called him "nam piLLai" (Our Son). From that day on, Nambur Varadarajar was known as nampiLLai. NampiLLai would go on to inherit the sampradhaya leadership from Nanjeeyar and become the next great acharya of the tradition.

Nanjeeyar was the first acharya after Thirukkurugaippiran Pillan, to write vyakhyanam in maNi pravALam (a mixture of Tamil and Saskrit) for Azhvars prabandhams. It is interesting to note that while Pillan wrote his work under the order of Ramanuja, Nanjeeyar did his work under the order of Parasara Bhattar. In Upadesa Ratthinamalai, Manavala Mamunigal mentions that Nanjeeyar wrote several vyakhyanams - "nanjeeyar seytha viyAkkiyaigaL nAliraNdukku".

His works are:

- Thiruvaymozhi OnbathinAyirappadi Vyakhyanam
- Thiruppavai IrAyirappadi Vyakhyanam
- Kanninun Sirutthambu Vyakhyanam
- Thiruppallandu Vyakhyanam
- Vyakhyanams for the Thiruvandhathis
- Saranagati Gadya Vyakhyanam

Of these works, only OnbathinAyirappadi Vyakhyanam and Kanninun Sirutthambu Vyakhyanam are available now.

When Nanjeeyar was old and not well, a person called Petri came to see him and asked him what he wished for. Nanjeeyar replied that he would like to hear Arayar recite the Periya Thirumozhi pasuram "thUviriyamalaruzhakki" and also see the front and behind beauty of Namperumal as He comes in a procession. This was arranged for and Varamtharum Perumal Arayar recited the pasuram. It is said that when Arayar recited the fourth pasuram of the pathigam, Nanjeeyar spoke a few words about its meanings and attained paramapadham. Guru Parampara also records that Nanjeeyar saw Namperumal in a procession as per his wish and then speaking a few words of good advice to his disciples including Nampillai, he reached His abode.

Azhvar Emberumanar Jeeyar Thiruvadigale Sharanam