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srImathE rAmAnujAya nama:



**Vedanta Desikan aruLich seydhha  
Vairagya Panchakam  
Vyakhyana Saram**



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**Vairagya Panchakam Vyakhyana Saram**

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**Avatharikai**

श्रीमान् वेङ्कटनाथार्यः कवितार्किक केसरी।

वेदान्ताचार्यवर्यो मे सन्निधत्ताम् सदा हृदि ॥

**shrImAn ve~NkaTanAthArya: kavitArkika kesarI |  
vedAntAchAryavaryo me sannidhattAm sadA hrudi ||**

May the acharya known as Vedantacharya, who is named Venkatanatha, who possesses the wealth such as bhagavat njAna, bhagavat bhakti and bhagavat kankarya which are the hallmarks of a Srivaishnava and who is like a lion to other poets and philosophers, always reside in my heart.

One of Vedanta Desikan's thaniyam says that he was both gnAna bhUshaNa as well as vairAgya bhUshaNa. There is no doubting the vast knowledge of Swami. However, the latter description is not just a poetic statement - Desikan indeed showed a phenomenal indifference to matters of this world. This quality of Desikan was brought out in the event of his life which resulted in his writing the Vairagya Panchakam shloka. Let us spend time in reading and learning the basic meanings of this wonderful shloka and pray to our pUrvAchAryas to help us demonstrate at least an iota of such vairAgyam in our lives.

Like the great Kooraththazhvan, Desikan too was taking care of his family only through unja vrutti, at Kanchipuram. Swami's friend from childhood days was a vidwan called Vidhyaranya. Hearing of Desikan's meager lifestyle, he decided that he would try to help him gain some wealth. So, he invited Desikan to come to the court of the Vijayanagara king, where he was the Asthana Vidwan. When Desikan saw the invitation, he sent a reply back to Vidhyaranya with one shloka. That shloka would later become part of the Vairagya Panchakam. The shloka was

न मे पित्रार्जितं किञ्चित् न मया किञ्चिदार्जितं।

अस्ति मे हस्तिशैलाग्रे वस्तु पैतामहं धनं ॥

**na me pitrArjitam kinchit na mayA kinchidArjitam |  
asti me hastishailAgre vastu paitAmaham dhanam ||**

Here Swami says that there is nothing (kinchit Arjitam) that his father (pitr) has earned for him nor has he (mayA) earned anything for himself; the only thing (vastu) that he has is the wealth (dhanam) that his grandfather (paitAmaha) has earned, which resides on top of the Hastigiri hill.

The word paitAmaha can be considered in two ways - one, as the ancestor of a person (a father may be free to distribute what he has earned, but a grandfather's or ancestral wealth would automatically come to the descendants); and two, as Brahma. Since it was in Brahma's yAga that the wealth on top of the Hastigiri appeared, the use of this word is most delightful in this shloka.

Another famous pitAmaha one comes across in our itihAsas is Bheeshma. In his deathbed, he gave us the wonderful Sahasranama Stotra. When Yudishtra asks him, what is the greatest Dharma of all, he points out Krishna standing by their side and says Krishna is "sAkshAt dharmā".

That Krishna is the one who is standing on top of Hastigiri. Just as Krishna touched His chest and said "mAm ekam sharaNam vraja", so too Devap Perumal touched His chest and told Ramanuja "aham evam param tattvam". And does not HastigirIsha have the words "mA sucha", given to us by Krishna, on His abhaya hasta.

So, He is none other than Sri Krishna, who too is "paitAmaham dhanam".

Vidhyaranya was not going to be dissuaded so easily. So, he sent a second invitation to Desikan insisting that he come to the court of the king. Rejecting this invite as well, Swami Desikan sent back the magnificent Vairagya Panchakam shloka.

This quality of vairAgyam has been shown by all our pUrvAcharyas and Desikan's work is a tribute to all of them. It is here that we can remember and reflect on the amazing life history of Alavandar, Swami Ramanuja, Kooraththazhvan, Bhattar, Pillai Lokacharyar, Vedanta Desikan, Manavala Mamunigal, et al. It is their vairAgyam that has carried and continues to carry our sampradhayam in this 'iruL tharumA njAlam'.

In this context, it is useful to study Azhvar's Thiruvaymozhi padhigam 3-9 - "sonnAl virOdham idhu".

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## Shloka 1

क्षोणी कोण शताम्शपालनकला दुर्वार गर्वानल  
क्षुभ्यत क्षुद्र नरेन्द्र चातु रचना धन्यान् न मन्यामहे।  
देवं सेवितुमेव निस्चिनुमहे योसौ दयालुः पुरा  
धानामुष्टिमुचे कुचेलमुनये दत्तेस्म वित्तेशतां ॥

**kshoNI koNa shatAmshapAlanakalA durvAra garvAnala  
kshubhyat kshudra narendra chAtu rachanA dhanyAn na  
manyAmahe |  
devam sevitumeva nischinumahe yosau dayAlu: purA**

**dhAnAmuShTimuche kuchelamunaye dattesma vitteshatAm ||**

**Meaning:**

We do not even bother (na manyAmahe) with those who consider themselves fortunate (dhanyAn) for having praised (chAtu rachanA) the petty lords (kshudra narendra) who protect (pAlana kalA) one portion (shata amsha) of this world's land (kshoNI koNa) whose minds are confused (kshubhyan) with pride which is like fire (garva anala). We are determined (nischinumahe) to only worship (sevitum eva) that (ya: asau) merciful Lord (dayALu: devam) who once (purA) gave (datte sma) Kuchela Muni (kuchela munaye) Kubera's wealth (vitteshatAm) in exchange for one fistful of rice (dhAnA muShTi muche).

**Vyakhyana Saram:**

Here, Desikan is stating that not only we look to Sriyapathi for giving us Moksha, but even for things of this world we don't go to anyone else. This is a valuable lesson to people who worship anya devatas but say that they do so because it is ok to seek them for material things (after all, one does not go to a king and ask for one rupee - so the argument goes). It is indeed true that we do not go to the supreme Lord who can give the greatest benefit and ask for simple things. And that's not what Desikan is saying. What is being said is, for things big or small, we don't seek anyone else; we only worship Sriman Narayana. We leave it to Him to give us what He wishes.

The kings spoken here are not just the human kings and the world is not just this world. It also applies to anya devatas who are like small kings and who have been given small portions of this universe or small activities to rule over.

Here we can think of Azhvar's words:

unakkup paNi seydhirukkum thavam udaiyEn inippOy oruvan  
thanakkup paNindhu kadaiththalai niRkai ninsAyai azhivu kaNdAy

Periyazhvar Thirumozhi 5-3-3

Azhvar's thiruvuLLam is fully reflected by Vedanta Desikan.

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**Shloka 2**

सिलं किमनलं भवेत् अनलं औदरं बाधितुं

पयःप्रस्रुति पूरकं किमु न धारकं सारसं।

अयत्नमलमल्लकं पथि पटच्चरं कच्चरं

भजन्ति विबुधा मुधा ह्यहह कुक्षितः कुक्षितः ॥

**silam kimanalam bhavet analam audaram bAdhitum**

**paya:prasruti pUrakam kimu na dhArakam sArasam |**

**ayatnamalamallakam pathi paTachcharam kachcharam  
bhajanti vibudhA mudhA hyahaha kukshita: kukshita: ||**

**Meaning:**

To satisfy (bAdhitum) hunger (analam) of the stomach (audaram), is it not (bhavet kim) sufficient (analam) to gather grains spilled in the fields (silam)? Could not (kimu na) a handful (prasruti pUrakam) of water from a well (sArasam paya:) be enough to survive (dhArakam)? Is not (ayatna malamallakam) a piece of dirty cloth (kachcharam paTachcharam) lying in the wayside (pathi) enough? Alas! (ahaha) In spite of this, these scholars (vibudhA) are praising (bhajanti hi) these kings (kukshita:) for the sake of their stomachs (kukshita:).

**Vyakhyana Saram:**

Here Desikan is instructing us what Smriti tells us. Manu Smriti speaks of how a Brahmin should survive - that he should be satisfied with making just enough for his and his family's survival. And yet, many of them, for the sake of food and water have descended from their level and are praising mere kings.

In this day and age, many wonder about castes and whether a person is a Brahmin by birth or not. Let us forget about that. The question is how many of us are Brahmins by action. Pretty much all of Brahmins have become Vaishyas - bartering their wares for money. There may be one in a million or billion such as Desikan who live the true life of a Brahmin.

For a Srivaishnava, whatever the Lord makes available, he should be satisfied. To approach other beings who are similar to them (anya devatas too are jIvAtmas) for anything is destruction of their true nature (svarUpa), which is being a sesha to Him alone. Pillai Lokacharyar too says "bhagavath sEshathvaththilum anya sEshathvam kazhigaiyE pradhAnam".

It is good to reflect on Thirumazhisai Azhvar's pasuram here:

thiRambElmin kaNdIr thiruvadi than nAmam  
maRandhum puRanthozhA mAndharai - iRainjchiyum  
sAdhuvarAyp pOdhumingaL enRAn namanum than  
thUdhuvaraik kUvich sevikku

Nanmugan Thiruvandhadhi 68

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**Shloka 3**

ज्वलतु जलधिक्रोड क्रीडत् कुपीड भवप्रभा

प्रतिभट पटुज्वालामालाकुलो जठरानलः ।

त्रुणमपि वयं सायं सम्पुल्ल मल्लिमतल्लिका  
परिमल्लमुचा वाचा याचामहे न महीश्वरान्॥

**jvalatu jaladhikroDa krIDat krupIDa bhavaprabhA  
pratibhaTa paTujvAlAmAlAkulo jaTharAnalaH |  
truNamapi vayaM sAyaM sampulla mallimatallikA  
parimaLamuchA vAchA yAchAmahe na mahIshvarAn ||**

**Meaning:**

Like the huge fire (krupIDa bhava) that burns in the middle of the ocean (jaladhi kroDa), let this fire known as hunger (jaThara anala:) with its row of (mAlA Akula:) flames paTu jvAlA) burn (jvalatu). We will not ask (na yAchAmahe) for even a blade of grass truNam api) from the kings (mahIshvarAn) using our words (vAchA) which have the fragrance (parimaLa muchA) of the just blossomed evening jasmine (malli matallika).

**Vyakhyana Saram:**

It is believed that a giant fire burns in the middle of the ocean which burns away the excess water, which is why the ocean does not exceed its boundaries. Similar to that, a fire burns in our stomach called Jataragni which consumes all the food put into it. Swami Desikan is saying, let this fire burn as much as can - that is, let our hunger know no bounds. Even then we will not go to any small king or devata and ask for anything - not even the smallest or slightest of things (truNam).

Azhvar too says "en nAvil in kavi yAn oruvarkkum kodukkakillEn". Thirumazhisai Azhvar says "nAk koNdu mAnidam pAdEn".

Here Desikan is saying that his words have the fragrance of jasmine flowers in the evening that have blossomed. Azhvar too had said "in kavi" when describing his words. Is this ahankAram on their part? Not really. This is known as "sAttvika ahankAram". Because their words are used to praise the Lord, it is ok for them to use such adjectives. Thondaradippodi Azhvar said "iLaiya pun kavidhaiyElum empirARku iniyavARE". The words gain their greatness because of the subject matter and because it is pleasing to Him.

Embar too said "illai enakkedhir illai enakkedhir illai enakkedhirE" - not because he thought he was great on his own, but because Ramanuja was inside his heart - "epozhudhum ethirAsan vadivazhagu en idhayaththu uLadhAl".

There is a story about Embar. One time some people heaped some praise on him. People around him thought he would display naichchiam and decline such praise, but were surprised when Embar said "okkum" and accepted the praise. So, they went to Ramanuja and told him what happened. Ramanuja said let's go ask Embar himself. When they did, Embar replied "All this praise was given to me because I am your disciple. If I decline it, it would mean that I am denying your greatness. I cannot do that and hence I accepted it".

## Shloka 4

दुरीश्वर द्वार बहिर्वितर्दिका  
दुरासिकायै रचितोयमञ्जलिः ।  
यदञ्जनाभं निरपायमस्ति मे  
धनञ्जय स्यन्दन भूषणं धनं ॥

**durIshvara dvAra bahirvitardika**  
**durAsikAyai rachitoyama~njali: |**  
**yada~njanAbham nirapAyamasti me**  
**dhana~njaya syandana bhUShaNam dhanam ||**

### Meaning:

Because I have (me asti) that eternal (nirapAyam) wealth (dhanam) which is as dark as the eyeliner (a~Njana Abham) and which stood as an ornament to the chariot (syandana bhUShaNam) of Arjuna (dhana~Njaya), a salute with folded hands (good bye) (ayam a~njali) is given to waiting (durAsikAyai) at the doorsteps (dvAra bahir vitardika) of the lowly kings (durIshvara).

### Vyakhyana Saram:

Here Vedanthavasiriyar is pointing out the fact that if one goes to see someone high then they are at the mercy of the door-keepers and have to wait at the doorstep. This is true apparently even for Sriman Narayana, as Andal too waits at the doorstep of Nandagopa - nAyaganAy pasuram - "thOrana vAsal kAppanE, maNik kadhavam thAL thiRavAy". We may do that at His doorstep, but we will never stand at the doorsteps of anyone else.

So he is giving a big goodbye to even the possibility of such thoughts. We may not even go to His doorstep, but we certainly are not going to go to anyone else's doorstep. Pillai Lokacharyar too said "bhagavath sEshathvaththilum anya sEshathvam kazhigaiyE pradhAnam".

And when we have that wonderful wealth that made Arjuna's chariot beautiful (He adds beauty to anything; nothing adds beauty to Him - recall what Hanuman said when he first saw Rama; Perumal is described as "AbaraNangaLukku azhagu sErkkum perumAL"), why seek any other wealth or go stand in front of anyone else. As said before, it is the same Krishna standing on Hastigiri. We go to Him only and we ask for Him only ("enakkE thannaith thandha kaRpagam" says Azhvar; "unnai aruththiththu vandhOm" says Andal). Unlike the transient wealth of this world which typically tends to be pale, this wealth is dark and eternal.

Anjali is a beautiful word and it has been treated by our Acharyas in their works. Am jalayati iti anjali: - Some may state that our hearts melt when we fold our hands and that is Anjali; however, our acharyas show that it is He who melts seeing us with folded hands

and that is the meaning of Anjali. Bhattar says, when He sees us with folded hands, His grace flows like a river from His eyes toward us. He also says that Thayar is unable to give anything to match the folded hands of a devotee. The 28th shloka of Alavandar's Stotra Ratnam shows the greatness of Anjali and Vedanthachariar has given a detailed commentary on this shloka and the vaibhavam of Anjali.

## Shloka 5

शरीरपतनावधि प्रभुनिषेवणापादनात्  
अबिन्धनधनञ्जयप्रशमदं धनं दन्धनं।  
धनञ्जयविवर्धनं धनमुदूढ गोवर्धनं  
सुसाधनमबाधनं सुमनसां समाराधनं॥

**sharIrapatanAvadhi prabhuniShevaNApAdanAt  
abindhanadhana~njayaprashamadam dhanam dandhanam |  
dhana~njayavivardhanam dhanamudUDha govardhanam  
susAdhanamabAdhanam sumanasAm samArAdhanam ||**

### Meaning:

Wealth (of this world) (dhanam), which reduces (prashamadam) the Jataragni (dhana~njaya) that has water as food (ab indhana), will make us praise Kings (prabhu niShevaNa ApAdanAt) till this body drops (sharIra patana avadhi). Therefore it is useless (dandhanam). That eternal wealth (abAdhanam) which built up Arjuna (dhana~njaya vivardhanam), which lifted the Govardhana mountain (udUDha govardhanam), which gives happiness to those of good heart (sumanasAm samArAdhanam), which is the means to achieve anything (susAdhanam), is the true wealth (dhanam).

### Vyakhyana Saram:

Vedantha Asiriyar is showing both his poetic skill as well as His virakthi to the worldly things in this final shloka of Vairagya Panchakam.

He is playing on the word Dhananjaya. In one part 'ab indhana dhana~njaya' refers to the Jataragni - the fire that burns in our stomach and asks us to feed it all the time - thereby making us run after the lowly Kings, bowing to them, praising them and seeking the ephemeral wealth of this world. In another part, it refers to Arjuna - who was propped up by Sri Krishna and who was used as the reason for Him to give us the grand Charama Shloka which is one of the Rahasya Traya.

In beautiful poetic fashion, the word dhanam itself repeats eleven times in the shloka. Of these, it repeats seven times in the second part of the shloka - showing us that He is our true wealth in all our seven births ("eRRaikkum Ezh Ezh piRavikkum undhannOdu uRROm"). This is the wealth that always stays with us. It is a wealth that will not leave

us even if we do not wish to have it; nor even if He wishes it - "undhannOdu uRavu ... ozhikka ozhivAdhu".

In other sampradhayams, they wish to renounce everything in their path to salvation. However, in the Srivaishnava Sampradhayam, we don't renounce everything - we actually hold on to one wealth - that wealth stood on the chariot of Arjuna and which stands on Hastigiri. Ramanuja Nutrandhadhi says "kaNNanukke Amadhu kAmam". Ramanuja actually has kAmam (desire) - not for material things, but for the dark hued Lord, Sri Parthasarathy. After all, did not the sanyasi Ramanuja have a sister, a brother, a daughter, and so on. Srivaishnavas consider all other Srivaishnavas as Atma bandhus.

Nammazhvar too said "nalla padhaththAl manai vAzhvar koNda peNdir makkaLE". The next pasuram of Azhvar talks about the troubles caused by the near and dear. Idu vyakhyanam here clearly shows the distinction between the two - driving home the point that relationship between Vaishnavas is not to be given up. Everything else is 'tyAjyam'.

Thus, the vairAgyam that Swami Desikan showed and spoke of is the great quality of our pUrvAvharyas - under all circumstances to hold on to Him and to hold on only to Him (and His devotees) - "unakku At seyvOm, unakke At seyvOm, maRRai nam kAmangaL mARRu".

**Vedanta Desikan Thiruvadigale Sharanam**  
**Azhvar Emberumanar Jeeyar Thiruvadigale Sharanam**