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## **Saint Arunagirinathar and his Thiruppugazhs.**

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### **Abstract**

Whenever we think of songs or compositions in praise of Lord Murugan, it is Saint Arunagirinathar who comes to our mind first. He has composed Kandhar Anubhoothi, Kandhar Alankaram, Kandhar Andhadhi and Thiruppugazh on Lord Murugan. Thiruppugazh is the crown of all his compositions, with regards to its lyrical beauty, rich meaning and brilliant handling of rhythms called ‘Santhams’. A blend of two words, ‘Thiru’ denoting Wealth, Prosperity and Divinity, and ‘Pugazh’ meaning Glory or Eminence, Thiruppugazh has several aspects and facets to be analysed.. This study is an attempt to analyze the lyrical beauty and meaning rich words of Thiruppugazh..

Keywords: Saint Arunagirinathar

### **Saint Arunagirinathar**

Saint Arunagirinathar was born in the town of thiruvannamalai in Tamilnadu. His period can be dated around the 15<sup>th</sup> century from a few references in his Thiruppugazh. Though there are no authentic sources of his early life, it is said widely that he lost his father at his early age and was brought up by his mother and sister. They tried to imbibe in him the religious and traditional values, but he was seemingly attracted to the lust of prostitutes or dasis. Due to a life of debauchery, he was affected with leprosy and people began to avoid him in disgust (as explained in one of his Thiruppugazhs- ‘Anaivarum Marundu’). The distressed Arunagirinathar decided to end his life and fell off from one of the Gopurams of Thiruvannamalai temple. It is believed that Lord Murugan himself saved Arunagirinathar and blessed him with the poetic knowledge. Muthaithiru Patthithiru Nagai is said to be the very first Thiruppugazh composed by the great Saint. Apart from the Arupadai Veedu (Six abodes of Lord Muruga- Pazhani , Swamimalai, Thiruchendur, Thirupparankunram, Thiruthani and Pazhamudircholai), He travelled around a number of temples all over South India (evident from the Sthala Mudras or names of temples, at the end of many of his Thiruppugazhs) and composed about 16000 hymns or songs among which only 2000 remain. He has been hailed as ‘Muttamizharasu’, ‘Nar Kavi Raja’, ‘Sandha Pavala Peruman’, ‘Thaala Chelvar’ and so on.

### **Thiruppugazhs**

The word ‘Thiruppugazh’ has references in Tevaram (7<sup>th</sup> Century) and Dhivya Prabhandham (compiled in 9<sup>th</sup> century), but it was Saint Arunagirinathar who penned it into a proper format. These do not take the form of a normal Kriti or Keerthana, where there is a Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam. Thiruppugazhs are written in Padas or stanzas consisting of 4 lines or more, set to a particular rhythmic pattern called ‘Santhams’. Thiruppugazh have been composed not only in praise of Lord Murugan, but also in praise of Lord Vinayaka (Kaithala Niraigani, Pakkari Vichithramani, Umbar Tharu, Ninathu Thiruvadi and Vidamadaisu Velai). Though Thiruppugazh can never be analysed without explaining the beauty of Sandhams, there are various other stunning aspects of Thiruppugazh. A few are the lyrical beauty, grandeur and words rich in meaning.

The word at the end of first or second or third line is called ‘Thanichol’ or ‘Thongal’ and is a remarkable feature of Thiruppugazhs. For example:

**Thiruppugazh**

Kaithala Niraigani

Vadatthai Minjiya

Thunbankondu

Naada Pirappu

**Thanichol/Thongal**

Adipeni, Madhayanai, Panivene...

Vadivela, Marugone, Murugone....

Arulvaye, Ilaiyone, Perumale

Vinaiyaayi, Arulkoora, Varavenum

While considering the different meanings in which the Thiruppugazhs were composed, the prime one has been seeking for salvation. Saint Arunagirinathar details his sufferings and requests Lord Murugan to extend his Lotus feet for the poet's Sharanagathi (surrender). In the Thiruppugazh 'Ezhu Kadal Manalai'(Sthalam- Puliur or Chidambaram) the poet compares his countless sins to the sand in the shore of 7 seas and yields himself to the Almighty.

*Ezhu kadal maNalai* aLavidin adhikam

enadh idar piRavi ..... avathAram

ini unadh abayam enadh uyir udalum.....

kadan unadh abayam adimai un adimai

kadugi un adigaL ..... tharuvAyE

.....

rinil nata maruvu ..... perumALE.

puliyu

Also in the Thiruppugazhs 'Vinthathin Oori' (Sthalam-Tiruchendur) and 'Moola Nilam', he pleads the God to grant him a boon to not get separated from Him anymore. He asks Lord Murugan to exhaust all his Karmas (past activities) and grant him Eternal Bliss. In the thiruppugazh 'Moola Nilam' he requests the God to preach the secret to attain His Lotus Feet.

*Vindhadin ooRi* vandhadhu kAyam...

vandhu

vinAsa

mun

kali

theera

vaN

siva

nyAna

.....

vadivAgi

vanpadham

ERi

en

kaLaiyARa

vandharuL pAdha ..... malar thArAy...

*Moola nilamathin* mEIE manathuRu...

leelA

vithamuna

thAIE

kathipeRa

nEmA rakasiya ..... vupathEsam

needU

zhithanilai

vAdA

maNiyoli

neethA palamathu ..... tharuvAyE....

The great poet describes 'Swami Arunachala' and the Panchakshara Manthram 'Sivayanama' or 'Namasivaya' (The God of Thiruvannamalai) in his Thiruppugazh 'Jaya Jaya Arunadhthiri' (Sthalam- Thiruvarunai or thiruvannamalai). The handling of the word 'Sivayanama, in different ways (indicated in italics in the text below), by shifting the letters to and fro to hail (Jaya Jaya) Lord Murugan, is an epic example of his mastery in Tamil Language.

Jaya jaya aruNAdhdhiri *sivayanama*

jaya jaya aruNAdhdhiri *masivayana*

jaya jaya aruNAdhdhiri *namasivaya* ..... thirumUIA

jaya jaya aruNAdhdhiri *yanamasiva*

jaya jaya aruNAdhdhiri *vayanamasi*

dhdhiri *sivaya namasthu* ..... enamARi

Roopa Varnanai (description of appearance) of Lord Murugan has been beautifully explained in the Thiruppugazh ‘Sudaranaiya Thirumeni’ (Sthalam-Chidambaram). The poet narrates the radiant beauty of Lord Murugan, the beautiful garlands of flowers adorned by Him, the deep reddish gleam (Adarpavalavoli) around Him, the spear in His hand (Vel or Ayil) and the sound of His anklets (Paripuram).

Sudaranaiya thirumEni yudaiyazhaku muthugnAna  
 sorupakiri yidamEvu ..... mukamARum  
 surartheriya laLipAda mazhalaikathi naRaipAya  
 thukirithazhin mozhivEtha ..... maNamveesa  
 adArpavaLa voLipAya ariyapari puramAda  
 ayilkaramo dezhihOkai ..... mayILERi

The words used by Arunagirinathar asking Lord Murugan to grant him a few boons are fascinating. The Thiruppugazhs ‘Charana kamalAyayaththil’ (Sthalam- Swamimalai) and ‘Ainkaranai oththa manam’ (Sthalam- Konganagiri or Tiruppur) may be taken for explaining this.

CharaNa kamalAla yaththai arainimisha nEra mattil.....  
 tharuNam idhaiyA miguththa ganamadhuRu neeL savukya  
 sakalaselva yOga mikka ..... peruvAzhvu  
 thagaimaisiva nyAna muththi paragathiyu nee koduth  
 udhavipuriya vENu neyththa ..... vadivEIA  
 aruNadhaLa pAdha padhmam adhunidhamumE thudhikka  
 ariyathamizh thAn aLiththa ..... mayilveerA

He says “Lord Muruga, you have blessed me with an abundant knowledge of Tamil to compose songs in praise of you. This is the apt time for you (tharunam idhaiya), to grant me a long lasting happiness and good health (neeL savukya). Please bless my life with ample wealth (sakala selva), fortunes (yogam), respect (thagamai), knowledge of SivA (Siva nyana) and heavenly bliss (muththi)”.

The other Thiruppugazh ‘Ainkaranai oththa manam’ is phenomenal in the very aspect that the poet asks Lord Murugan to show him the way to the Moon (‘Chandira velikku vazhi arulvaaye’). It is said that Saint Arunagirinathar has achieved Ashtama Siddhis, (believed to be achieved by all the 18 Siddhars) or the Eight Super Natural Powers – Anima, Karima, Mahima, Lahima, Prathi, Prakaniyam, Esathuvam and Vasithuvam and is one of the magnificent souls who reached Moon and other celestial bodies. The Thiruppugazh also details a very old incident at the Thiruppukoliyur Avinasiappar temple (in Konganagiri or Avinashi or near Tiruppur), where a little boy got eaten by a crocodile, when he was about to take bath in a lake. The Sthala Puranam (story of the temple) details that, the boy came alive after a year’s growth from the mouth of the very crocodile, on Sundhara Murthy Nayanar (one of the Four Great Saivites) singing one of his Pathigams called ‘Avinashi Pathigam’. Arunagirinathar requests the God to bless him with the secret of Sundharar Murthy Nayanar’s super power of bringing the dead back alive (‘then karaiyil appararuL koNdu udalutra poruL aruLvAyE’).

Ainkaranai oththa manam...  
 thangiya thavath thuNarvu thandhadimai muththi peRa  
 chandhira veLikku vazhi ..... aruLvAyE  
 kongiluyir petru vaLar then karaiyil appararuL  
 koNdu udalutra poruL ..... aruLvAyE

Another significant Thiruppugazh in the life of Saint Arunagirinathar is ‘Adhala sEda nArAda’. In fact the period of the Saint is deduced from this Thiruppugazh. The poet narrates a scene from his life ,in this Thiruppugazh, where it is evident that he was a contemporary of the Vijayanagara Ruler King Prabuda Deva (‘Prabuda dheva marajan’). There was an argument between Arunagirinathar and Sambandhandan in the court of King Prabuda Deva, where the Saint was challenged by the latter. Arunagirinathar began to sing this Thiruppugazh describing the dances of all the Gods. When the great poet sang these very lines – “mayilum Adi nee Adi varavENum”, Lord Murugan appeared in the court with his glowing and glittering beauty ,dancing with his peacock. This is a perfect example of the power of Lyrics of Saint Arunagirinathar. The King and every other pupil in the court were stunned and amazed by the incident.

Adhala sEda nArAda akila mEru meedhAda  
 abina kALi thAnAda ..... avaLOd andru...  
 vanaja mAmi yArAda nediya mAma nArAda  
 mayilum Adi nee Adi ..... varavENum  
 udhaya dhAma mArbAna prabuda dhEva mArAjan  
 uLamum Ada vAzh dhEvar ..... perumALE.

There are a number of Thiruppugazhs elucidating the characteristic features of prostitutes or dasis, through which the poet enlightens the people about the fantasy of lust life. A few of them are:

Angai menkuzha lAyvAr pOIE  
 santhi ninRaya lOdE pOvA  
 ranpu koNdida neerO pORee ..... raRiyeerO  
 anRu vanthoru nALneer pOneer  
 pinpu kaNdaRi yOnA meethE  
 anRu minRumor pOthO pOkA ..... thuyilvArA....  
 arukku mangaiyar malaradi varudiye  
 karuththa Rinthupin araitanil udaithanai  
 avizhthum anguLa arasilai thadaviyum ..... iruthOLut  
 RaNaiththum angaiyin adithoRum nakamezha  
 uthattai menRupal idukuRi kaLumida  
 adikka Lanthanil mayilkuyil puRavena ..... mikavAyvit  
 turukkum angiyin mezhukena urukiya ....  
 viraiyodu patri vaNdu pAdutra  
 mrigamatham appi vandha Odhikku  
 miLiru maiyaich cherindha vElgatkum ..... vinaiyOdu  
 migu kavinittu nindra mAdharkkum  
 idaipadu chiththam ondruvEn utrun  
 vizhumiya poRpadhangaL pAdaRku ..... vinavAdhO

Thus Saint Arunagirinathar is undisputedly a ‘Navasara Nayakar’ and a ‘Narkavi Raja’ and his Thiruppugazhs are undoubtedly par excellence from the view point of its religious, moral, ethical and philosophical content.

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