

Three Minutes - 11

What does love know about sleep?

imaiyOrgaL kuzhAm
tozhuvadum sUzhvadum sey
tollai
mAlaik kaNNArak kaNDu
kazhivadOr kaAdal
uRRarukkum uNDO kaNgaL
tunjudalE !

(nammAzhvAr, tiruviruttam – 97)

இமையோர்கள் குழாம்
தொழுவதும் சூழ்வதும் செய்
தொல்லை
மாலைக் கண்ணாரக் கண்டு
கழிவதோர் காதல் உற்றாருக்கும்
உண்டோ கண்கள் துஞ்சுதலே !
(நம்மாழ்வார், திருவிருத்தம் - 97)

imaiyOrgaL = residents of mokSha
kuzham = in groups
sUzhvadum = (come and) surround
sey = (and) perform
tozhuvadum = prayers (and)
kaNDu = look (mesmerized)
kaNNArak = with the eyes completely
filled up (with)
mAlaik = Lord shrIman nArAyaNa
tollai = (who) has no beginning.
[Similarly]
kaAdal uRRarukkum = those who are in
love
kazhivadOr = spend the time (on
yearning).
uNDO = is it possible

kaNgaL = (even their) eyes
tunjudalE = close (for a second)?

This stanza (pAsuram) is found in the first hymn (prabandham) sung by nammAzhvAr, who is regarded as the chief among the AzhvArs (kUDasthar). nammAzhvAr's four prabandam-s are equivalent to four saMskR^it veda-s, and so he is called "vedam tamizh seyda mARan" (mARan who did the veda-s in tamizh). Both veda-s deal with the same fundamental ideas and arrive at the same conclusions that shrIman nArAyaNa is the ultimate Lord (para tattvam). Moreover, certain tamizh verses (pAsuram-s) are the exact translation of saMskR^it vedic verses.

The eternal bliss (mokSham) is filled with ever-free (nityasUri-s) and liberated (mukta) souls. They flock together and surround the Lord who is sitting in His serpent throne (AdisheShan). They praise, sing and deeply immerse in the ecstatic feeling of looking (darshan) at the Lord eye to eye. While, enjoying this bliss, they don't even blink.

Many male AzhvAr-s imagine themselves as a romantic lady love and Lord shrIman nArAyaNa as the lover (nAyikA bhAavam). Assuming they have been separated from their lover, they pour out their exasperated feelings of love, frustration and acts of desperation. Here nammAzhvAr, as a girl, finds herself so restless by the separation from the Lord and compares her sleeplessness to the un-winking

devotion of the residents of mokSham.

The beauty is that the Lord doesn't let you sleep while you are with Him (samshlESha dasai) or separated from Him (vishleSha dasai). AzhvAr implicitly describes how one should behave and enjoy the darshan of the Lord. Instead of engaging in other activities, we should concentrate on the scene and retain in our minds the beautiful idol (arcA mUrti) while inside the sanctum of a temple. AzhvAr gives here the literal translation of upaniShad saying "sadA pashyanti sUrayaH".

The AzhvAr girl passionately tries to join with her lover, sacrificing several things including sleep. Earthly souls are separated from the Lord and permanent pleasure because of their birth/death cycle (samsAra). They should also look frantically to break that cycle, get liberated and enjoy the eternal bliss.

No gift in life will last as long, or touch the heart as deeply as the special privilege of ever looking at the Lord happily.

What we learn from this –

- 1. Keep your eye on the ball.**
Remain focused on the target until it is completely fruitful, like the residents of mokSham.
- 2. Strive with endurance.**
Invest your full effort and avoid distractions. Sleep is a metaphor for engaging in other activities.
- 3. Aim high.**
Don't succumb to cheap temptations. Always remember what the ultimate goal is and be aware when you are sidetracked by other diversions. Even in mokSham, the target is only the best, the Lord. It's like the joke in which someone asked the robber why did you rob the bank? He replied that's where the money is.
- 4. Life is short, use it wisely.**