

Njanappana

Commentary by Savitri Puram

Introduction

Njanappana can be considered as the Bhagavad Gita of Malayalees. This is a Darshanika kaavyam or philosophical poem expressed in the simplest Malayalam language for ordinary people. Poonthanam Nambudiri, an ardent devotee of Shri Guruvayurappan transformed his unbearable sorrow from his infant son's death into a "yogavishesham". He used this sad experience to build his Bhakthi soudham or house of devotion and opened it for all devotees of all the time. Even though the language is very simple, this njaanappana or song of wisdom deals with the essence of all vedas and upanishads. May Bhagavan Guruvayurappan, Bhagavathy Saraswathi Devi and Sri Poonthaanam Nambudiri bless us to become wiser by going through this great Song of Wisdom!!

Njanappana 1

Gurunaadhan thuNa chaika santhatham thirunaamangal naavinmel eppozhum
Piriyaatheyerikkanam nammude nara janmam saphalamaakkiduvaan

May my Gurunathan help me (thuna chaika) to keep the auspicious names of Lord continuously on my tongue (naavinmel eppozhum) and to make this human life (naranjanmam) meaningful and fruitful!(saphalamaakkituvaan).

The only way to to make the human life fruitful and meaningful is to constantly chant the auspicious names of Lord. So the poet is seeking the blessings of his Gurunaathan to help him retain the naamam on his tongue for ever. Who is Poonthanam's Guru? He is considering Guruvayurappan as his Guru because Lord is both the remover of the darkness of Anjaanam or avidya (Guru) and the protector and saviour of all (Naathan). After innumerable births in lower species, we finally got naranjanmam in Kaliyuga. Kalisantharanopanishad and many other scriptures reinforce the importance of naamasankeerthanam in Kaliyuga. Naamasankeerthanam can be done any time anywhere.

Harernaama Harernaama Harernaamaiva kaevalam

kalau naasthyeva naasthyeva naasthyeva gathiranyadha





Sri LakshmiNarayana

Njanappana 2

Innaleiyolam enthennarinjeela Ini naaleyum enthennarinjeela
Innikkanda thadikku vinaashavum Inna neramennaethumarinjeela

We really do not know what happened until yesterday or what would happen tomorrow. Neither do we know when this body we see today will perish.

When we look at the literal meaning, we may feel like responding: "I know what happened until yesterday and I can roughly guess what will happen in the coming days. I am hail and healthy and unless I get into an accident or so I should be able to live many more years".

Poonthaanam is putting his forefinger on his nose with an expression of "what a pity?" because he meant much more than the literal meaning of yesterday, tomorrow and our present body. He persuades us to think deep about the uncertainty of life. Yesterday and today also means previous janmaas and future janmaas. We do not know about our previous janmaas or good and bad karmaas we have accumulated. A great part of our good and bad experiences in this janma is the direct result of our past karmaas. We cannot undo the sins or suffering by anything other than sincere prayers. Bhagavaan is the only one who can change the results of our praarabdha karmaas and in Kaliyuga, naamasankeerthanam pleases Bhagavan more than anything. We do not know what is in store for us tomorrow. How can we make sure that our future is in safe hands? Only by offering ourselves in His strong and kind hands. Then what about today? At present we live in this body and the moment jeevathma leaves the body, it becomes lifeless like a log of wood. We have absolutely no idea when that will happen. Here Poonthaanam used the word "thathi" for body to specifically tell us that body is like a log of wood or worse than a log of wood when it is lifeless. A dead body that is not preserved starts deteriorating in a few hours where as a log of wood may remain intact for several months or even years. Poonthaanam advises us to think deep about these truths and use every moment available to worship Lord with naamams like

*Krishna!Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana! Krishna! Govinda! Naarayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava! Sachidaananda! Naarayana! Hare!*

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also said that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting naamaas. Anytime one can chant and under any circumstances one is allowed to chant. "Shuchir va ashuchir va sarva avasthaasu sarvada" meaning in any condition clean (purified) or dirty (impure) one can chant the auspicious names of Lord.

Njanappana 3

Kandukandangirikkum janangale Kandillennu varuthunnathum bhavaan
 Randu naalu dinam kondorutthane Thandiletti nadathunnathum bhavaan
 Maalika mukaleriya mannante Tholil maaraappu kettunnathum bhavaan

If Bhagavan wishes, those people whom we see today may disappear (may be dead) by tomorrow. Again if Bhagavan decides, with in a few days (two or four days) a healthy man's dead body may be carried to the funeral pyre. In the same way, by God's wish, a king sitting in a palace (maalika) can become a beggar with a dirty bag (maaraappu) hanging from his shoulders (tholil). Poonthaanam explains how transient our life, wealth, poverty, sorrows and everything that we see in this world. A man walking and having fun this moment can embrace death the next moment. Everything is Lord's wish! In Kerala, usually dead body is tied to a wooden ladder or a piece of long wood and carried by relatives (normally by sons) to the funeral pyre. However hail and healthy one may be, when the time decided by Lord approaches chaitanyam or jeevan disappears leaving the dead body to be carried to the funeral pyre. It can happen any time, in one day, two days or four days (randu naalu dinam kondorutthane). Here Poonthanam used the word "mannan" for king (mannante) because "mannan" also means "drushtan" or "aviveki". He advises that those people who have money and power should have the vivekam to use both dharmically remembering that they came to this world with nothing and would go from this world with nothing. Bhagavan can take it any moment from anybody.

By Lord Krishna's blessings, Kuchela or Sudama became wealthy overnight. What about Ravana? He lost everything that he held dear and finally he lost his life too at the hands of Lord Rama. Even if we are destined to go through sufferings due to our past karmaas, surrendering to Lord will lessen the negative effects and lead us to Satgathi. "Bagavan says in Gita: "na hi kalyaanakruth kashchid durgathim thaatha gacchathi" meaning "If you do good, it will definitely lead you to satgathi or protect you from any harm". Poonthaanam tells this truth from his own experience of the tragic and sudden death of his infant son.

I have heard several versions of the story. But the following is the one I heard from my parents. Poonthaanam's son was 5 months old and anna praasham (giving rice for the first time is called "choroonu" in Malayalam. Usually it is done either the 5th month or 7th month) ceremony was fixed. He invited several relatives and that morning after feeding the baby his wife made a bed in the room next to the hall where ceremony was to be conducted. Usually there will be an entrance to that room from the kitchen also. Baby was sleeping and his wife was busy with all the preparations. It was morning and one namboothiri lady finished her bath and put the wet clothes in the same room where the baby was sleeping. That room was dark even during day time and she did not see the baby and unfortunately wet clothes were put on the baby's face. (I can very well believe this because in my house, there is a room on the north side called Vatakkini which is very dark even in day

time. So when our parents told us this story, we listened with tears in our eyes and we felt it could happen in any Nambudiri house.) Then the next lady came after bath and seeing the wet clothes in a corner she also put hers on the top of it. One after another a few ladies unknowingly put wet clothes on and around the baby. Nobody noticed and it was about muhurttham time and Poonthaanam asked his wife to bring the baby. She was shocked to see what happened to her helpless baby and we can imagine the rest.

This sorrow gave birth to Njanappana and Poonthaanam advises us to realize the uncertainty of everything in this world and persuades us to think of God by continuous chanting of His auspicious names.





Sri Ananthapadmanabhaswamy

Njanappaana 4

Kandaal ottariyunnu chilarithu Kandaalum thiriyaa chilarkkethumae
Kandathonnumae sathyam allennathu Mumbe kandangariyunnithu chilar

Some people see this truth, understand it or internalize the truth. But some people cannot comprehend the truth even when they see it everyday. But there are some others who know that all that they see are not real and it is all Maaya.

Here Poonthaanam divides humans into three categories. Utthama purushaas (or wise people or perfect human beings) are able to understand the transient nature of this world. People like Shankaraacharyar, Sreeraamakrishna Paramahasar are examples who belong to this category. Then there are Madhyama purushaas (or reasonably wise people) who understand it when they themselves or people near, dear and around them experience the ups and downs of life. Then the third category of people known as Adhama Purushaas (people with low level of wisdom) do not understand or even do not have the attitude to think more about it even if they or their beloved ones go through the negative as well as the positive experiences including successes, death, suffering and disease. Yudhishtira Maharaj says to the Yaksha who asks “what is the biggest wonder in the world?” Even though everybody who is born embraces death eventually, the living people refuses to believe that death will eventually embrace them also. What is more surprising than this? Even though we see it everyday we live as if death is only for somebody else.

ahanyahani bhUtAni gachChanti yamAlayam |
sheShAH sthAvaramichChanti kimAshcharyamataH param ||

Again Poonthanam indirectly tells us that only with Bhagavan's blessings we can have this vivekam or power of discrimination. So we should pray Bhagavan to include us in that category of few people (the word "chilar" indicates that these kind of people are rare) who is capable of seeing the truth. In this Kaliyuga, the most doable form of worship is naamasnakeerthanam and he encourages everybody to chant auspicious names like the few given below to purify our mind and elevate ourselves from the state of Adhama Purushas to the state of Uttama Purushas:

Krishna!Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana! Krishna! Govinda! Naarayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava! Sachidaananda! Naarayana! Hare!

Njanappaana 5

Manu jaathiyil thanne palavidham
Manassinnu vishesham undorkanam

We should remember (orkkanam) that even among human beings (manujaathiyil thanne) mentality or mental faculties and attitudes (manassinnu vishesham) vary. (palavidham)

These two seemingly simple lines tells about how man is blessed with the power of discrimination (vishesha budhhi) and has the power to choose what is good (Shreyas) and not what is pleasing ("preyas"). When poet says "manujaathiyil thanne", it implies that there are thousands and thousands of species of beings in this world. Humans are one of them and even among humans each individual is different from others. Difference between man and other beings is in man's ability to change his mind and attitude to become a better person. For example a snake will never become a friend of a mongoose or it cannot go against it's natural instincts. Similarly a hungry tiger can never develop a kind attitude towards a helpless fawn. It cannot change his mind and think: "I will leave this poor, helpless fawn and will fill my stomach with an old or at least an adult deer". It cannot seek the company of good natured animals like cows and goats and refrain from violence. But man can choose the company of good people (sajjanasamsargam) and elevate oneself to higher spiritual level.

Shabari's path to moksham (Ramayana) is an example of the result of satsangam.

Narada in his previous janma was born as a maid servant's son. His mother was helping the sages in a near by ashram. The association of great sages gave him the knowledge and maturity to know the greatness of Lord even before he was five years old. Soon his mother was bitten by a snake and died leaving him alone in this world. Because of the spiritual knowledge he acquired from the sages, he wandered all over the world seeking Lord with sincere meditation and prayers. Once Bhagavan appeared before him for a short while and disappeared soon. Later he could not see His divine form how ever hard he tried. Finally Bhagavan told him that he would have to be born one more time to reach Him. Since Narada experienced the taste of bliss once, he spent the rest of His life chanting naamam and in the next Kalpa he was reborn as Brahma's son Narada. As a chiranjeevi (who lives for a long long time) Narada can have darshan of Lord any time he wants and he can freely travel in all the 14 worlds spreading the greatness of Namasankeerthanam. All his blessings started with the satsangam of the sages. Then Narada's association gave moksham to so so many souls including Prahlada and Dhruva.

What would bring us closer to sajjanaas? Only prayers and naamasnakeerthanam will help us to have satsangam and this association will help us to develop an attitude of complete surrender to Bhagavan. . In other words, to have an auspicious mind (to have the vishesha budhhi) let us chant the auspicious naamams with Shri Poonthaanam:

*Krishna!Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana! Krishna! Govinda! Naarayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava! Sachidaananda! Naarayana! Hare!*



Sri Devarajan of Kanchi

Njanappana 6

Palarkkum ariyenam ennittallo
Pala jaathi parayunnu saastrangal

Many people (palarkkum) want to know (ariyenam) about all these (including the power of discrimination of human beings, about the mystery of God, how to go beyond Maya and attain salvation etc) and hence so many saasthraas (saathrangal) tells (parayunnu) about or explain these subjects in so many different ways (pala jaathi).

Which saasthra or which philosophy appeals to each one depends on each individual's nature, attitude and circumstances. Some people like certain approach where as others like a totally different approach. Saasthraas contain so many different philosophies to satisfy the varied interests of ordinary people. Just like we all choose different professions or jobs for the sole purpose of survival, different people accept different saasthraas to advance spiritually and increase the awareness of parmaathma chaithanyam or God. There are Vaishnavaas, Shaivaas, Shaaktheyaas or another group who worship all 33 million gods alike etc. Goal is the same and only paths are different. There is a saying that "vitthamaeva param nrunaam janmaacharakalodaya:" meaning people choose different ways and methods for the sole purpose of acquiring wealth.

Outwardly each and every philosophy may appear different, but once the essence is understood, the differences slowly disappear and all the paths unite to become one path. The word Saasthraas (saathrangal) is used because they advise to follow certain restrictions and rules to advance smoothly in the spiritual path. How is it possible to choose the right path and who will guide us through? Poonthanam has only one solution: chant the auspicious names of God and He will guide us through the right path:

*Krishna!Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana!
Krishna! Govinda! Naarayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava!
Sachidaananda! Naarayana! Hare*

Njanappaana 7

Karmathiladhikaari janangalkku
Karma saasthrangalundu palavidham
Saankhya saasthrangal yogangal enniva
Sankhyayillyathu nilkkatte sarvavum

For those people (janangalkku) who are authorized to do karmaas like yaaga or yanja, homam, poojaas etc (karmaathil adikaari- it can even mean those who desire to do karmaas or those who are entrusted with the duty of performing karmaas) several different (palavidham) karma saasthraas are available (karma saasthrangalundu) . Saankhya saasthra, yoga saasthra etc are among the innumerable or countless (sankhyayillya) saasthraas available. But for the time being, let us keep aside (nilkkatte) all of them (athu sarvavum)

Just like the diversity of the world and its inhabitants, saasthraas also are diverse. Different types of yanjaas, poojaas, homams etc are described very clearly in many scriptures. Initially even though devotees perform them with some specific desire, as the Bhakthi bhaavam matures, Bhagavan's blessings help them to do Nishkaama karma or do karma with out expecting anything in return. There is a small conversation between Jabali Muni and a vartthaka or business man called Thulaadhaara. Even though Jabaali Muni was an embodiment of kindness, he was proud of his achievements and considered himself as the greatest Dharmishttan. Then he heard an 'ashareeri" or wise words from God to visit Thulaadhaara. He visited him and Thulaadhaara explains to him how we all should do our swadharmam with out expecting anything in return. Thulaadhaara told him that Yanjaas and poojaas are done to show our gratitude to God, Forefathers, Rishis and other Maahaathmaas for what blessings they have already bestowed on us. Renunciation of the results of the karma is nishkaama karma and Nishkaama karma purifies our mind. God's chaithanyam gets reflected only in pure minds.

Maharshi Kapila's Saankhya philosophy regards Universe as consisting of two eternal realities Purusha and Prakriti. Pathanjali Maharshi's yoga saasthra describes different types of yogas like Hatha yoga, Raja Yoga etc. They all lead one to the knowledge of Brahman, but those paths are very difficult and with out an able Guru (in every sense of the word) it is impossible to follow those paths. But in this Kaliyuga, Bhaktha Kavi Poonthaanam advises us to set aside those difficult paths (which are as sharp and dangerous as the edge of a razor) and follow the most simple and enjoyable path of Bhakthi or devotion. What is the first and final step in the path of devotion? Naamasankeerthanam. Bhakthi starts with Naamam and ends with Naamam. It is for ordinary people as well as for self realized souls. No question of whether you are authorized, whether you have enough knowledge to pursue; whether you have the right comes in this way of worshipping Lord. Anybody can do naamajapam, anytime, anywhere.



Lord Vishnu blessing Sri Dhruva

Njanappaana 8

Chuzhannitunna samsaara chakratthil
Uzhannitum namukkarinjeetuvaa
Arivulla mahatthukkal undoru
Paramaartham arul cheythirikkunnu
Eluthaayittu mukthi labhippaanaay
Chevi thannithu kelppin ellaavarum

We are restlessly moving (uzhannitum) up and down in this rotating (chuzhannitunna) wheel of material world (samsaara chkratthil). For us to know (namukkarinjituvaa), great njaanis(arivulla mahatthukkal) have preached (arul chythirikkunnu) the paramaartham (Supreme truth). All of you listen to this (kelppin ellaavarum) because to attain salvation (mukthi labhipaanaay) easily (eluthaayittu) God has given you the sravanaedriyam or ears (chevi thannithu). The meaning of "chevi thannithu" can also be taken as "give your ears" or listen to what Mahaathmaas told us.

Getting human life is rare and even after getting human life; very few people are blessed to pursue the spiritual path. But great sages of the past realized this pitiable condition of ordinary souls and have prescribed easy ways to know the Supreme Truth. One of the easiest methods for Kaliyuga suggested by them is Naamasankeerthanam. Since this is the opinion of self-realized bhakthaas, Bhagavan Himself approves this method and tells in Bhagavad Gita: "yajnaanaam japayajnosmi" or Among all the sacrifices, sadhanas, austerities or forms of tapas, I am represented by japa" and thus supporting the words of Mahaathmaas.

(Bhagavan always supports Bhakthaas. When Poothaanam once read Amaraprabhu as Maraprabhu while chanting Vishnusahasra naamam, a few Sanskrit scholars made fun of him. Bhagavan could not take his dear devotee's grief and told from the sanctum sanctorum: "I am Amara prabhu as well as Maraprabhu, meaning I am also the lord of trees or in Malayalam maram".)

We are all going up and down on the wheel of material world rotating with extreme speed and it is very difficult to escape from that. But once we know the Supreme Truth, we will be relieved from the samsaarachakra. This Brahma jnanam is possible by sincerely chanting the auspicious names of God because Naamam or names of Lord are even greater than Naami or Lord Himself. Hanumanji had to just chant Raama naamam to cross the ocean where as Lord Raama had to construct the bridge to cross the ocean to Lanka!

Also as explained in the previous lines, anybody can chant naamam anytime and anywhere. So Poonthaanam is asking us to listen carefully to what Mahaathmaas have told us about Supreme Truth. Like sravanedriyam or ears can be used for hearing the greatness of Lord, all other indriyaas should be used for the purpose of serving God. Sankarrachaaryar also gives this idea in a very beautiful sloka in Soundarya Lahari:

*JapO jalpa: shilpam sakalam api mudraa-virachanaa
 Gathi: praadakshiNya- kramanam ashanady aahuthi-vidhi:
 PraNaama: samvesha: sukham akhilam aathmaarpaNa -drushaa
 Saparyaa paryaya: thava bhavathu yan mae vilasitham*

Let my spoken words become manthras, let all my hand gestures become mudraas, let all my steps become circumambulation or pradakhinam to you, let my lying down to sleep become prostration to you, let the food I consume be an offering to the sacred fire lit for you, let what ever I do become a worship to you.

P.S: I cannot help quoting the last sloka of chapter 98 of Naaraayaneeyam :

*durvaaraM dvaadashaaraM trishataparimilatSh aShTi parvaabhiviitaM
 sambhraamyat krooravegaM kshaNamanu jagadaachChidya sandhaavamaanam |
 chakraM te kaalaruupaM vyathayatu na tu maaM tvatpadaikaavalamba M
 viShNO kaaruNya sindhO pavanapurapate paahi sarvaamayaughaat*

Thy invincible wheel of Time has the 12 months as spokes, the 360 days of the year as teeth, whirls at a fierce speed and runs on cutting down the universe every moment. May it not torment me for whom thy feet are the only refuge. O! Vishnu! Ocean of compassion! Lord of Guruvayur! save me from all the hosts of ailments! (By S.N Sastriji)

Njanappana 9

Nammeyokkeyum bandhicha saadhanam
Karmam ennariyendathu mumbinaal

First and foremost (mumbinaal), we should know (ariyendathu) that karmam is the thing (saadhanam) that binds (bandhiccha) all of us (naameyokkeyum) to this world.

Even before telling us more about the easiest path for salvation, poet starts with the big word: Karma" and how we are all bound in the cycle of birth and death by karma. Both good and bad karmaas are binding and hence we have to know what is the root cause for making us do karmaas and eradicate the root cause. In this context, an example of a burning stick is appropriate. If we move a burning stick in a circle, a burning circle will seem to appear. In reality (understanding the reality is njaanam) the circular movement of the stick causes the illusion. Likewise the wheel of time is moving with very high speed dragging us along with it and forcing us to do good as well as bad karmaas with ego (or feeling of "I am the doer). This causes the illusion of bondage. So we have to have the njaanam or knowledge to go beyond this illusion or Maya to escape from the bondage. Also the famous example of seeing a rope and misunderstanding it as a snake is appropriate. Until we know that it is only a rope, we will be scared and stressed. What will lead us to this knowledge of Brahman? Continuous remembrance of Lord through Naamasankeerthanam will help us to detach us from the karma-bound cycle and lead us to Njaanam and moksham.

Law of Karma is a law of justice and it is straight forward, impartial and inescapable. The only thing that can nullify the effects of Karma is Bhagavan's grace. Bhagavan's blessings loosen the tightly bound law of Karma and makes the otherwise impossible escape possible for us. In Kaliyuga the easiest way to obtain Bhagavan's blessings and grace is naamasankeerthanam.

In Mahabharatha, Sahadeva advises his elder brother Yudhishtira on the subject of Karma. He says that when ever we do Karmaas with the feeling of "I am the doer" or "mine (two letter sanskrit word "mama") those karmaas lead us to the cycle of birth and death. But when we do karmaas thinking that we are not the doer, the results of the karmaas also will not be ours. This feeling is called "I am not the doer" or not mine (in Sanskrit, it is expressed in three letters "na mama"). Karmaas performed with this attitude are not binding and free us from the eternal cycle of birth and death. Again, how can we develop this attitude in Kaliyuga? Poonthanam assures us along with Bhagavan that Nammasankeerthanam will eventually give us this "na mama" attitude and lead us to njaanam and moksham.



Sri Unnikrishnan

Njanappana 10

Munnam ikkanda viswam aseshavum
 Onnaayulloru jyothi swaroopamaay
 Onnum chennangu thannodu pattaathe
 Onnilum chennu thaandum valayaathe
 Onnonnaayi ninakkum janangalkku
 Onnukondariyaavunna vasthuvaay
 Onnilum urakkaattha janagalku
 Onnu kondum thiriyaatha vasthuvaay
 Onnu pole onnillaathe ullathil
 Onnaayulloru jeeva swaroopamaay
 Ninnavan thanne viswam chamachu pol,
 Moonnum onnil adangunnu pinneyum

During pralaya or dissolution (word "munnam" refers to pralayam) this whole world (viswam aseshavaum) becomes the one and only one (onnaayulloru) jyothi swaroopam or parama thejopunjam. This jyothiswaroopam is only a witness, this is neither attached to anything in this world (line four) nor let anything in the world get attached to this (line 3). Those Jnanis and Bhakthaas (predominantly of saatwic and raajasic nature) who try to figure out one by one (onnonnaayi ninakkum janangalkku) using "nethi, nethi" process or "not this, not this" process, perceive "It" as one thing through which everything is known (onnukondariyaavunna vasthuvaay). For those people whose minds are restless, fickle and out of control (onnilum urakkaattha janangalkku -predominantly of Thaamasic nature) "It" cannot be comprehended or understood by any means (onnukondum thiriyaattha vasthuvaay). Outwardly each and every being is different (oonu pole onnillaathe), but the spirit or jeeva swaroopam in all beings are the same (ullatthil onnaayulloru jeevaswaroopamaay). The same jeeva swaroopam that exists in everything (ninnavan thanne) created the whole universe (viswam chamacchupol) and "It" again (pinneyum) contains all the three. (Moonnum onnil adangunnu)

During pralaya or dissolution, everything is merged in Lord and nothing remains except the parama jyothi swaroopam or light of lights (or paramaathma chaithanyam). This is compared to the disappearance of stars and moon at sunrise. Likewise, the whole universe including the sun, moon, stars and all planets dissolve and become part of that great Jyothi swaroopam. One of the prayers we chant during aarathi or deepaaraadhana expresses the same idea:

*Na thathra suryo bhathi, na chandratharakam
 nema viddhutho bhanthi kuthoyamagni:
 Thameva bhantham anubhaathi sarvam,
 thasya bhasa sarvamidham vibhathi.*

"There the sun does not shine, nor the moon nor the stars; these lightnings also do not shine - how then (can) this earthly fire?

Verily, everything shines after Him reflecting His glory. This whole world is illuminated with His light."

But this light of lights is "Anaadimadhyaantham" or beginningless, middleless and endless. At the end of the dissolution phase, each individual soul again takes birth depending on the accumulated karmaas. These individual souls with accumulated karmaas do not get salvation during dissolution, but just remains hidden in Easwara Chaithanyam and then takes birth again to experience the results of their good and bad karmaas.

These lines specifically explain how Bhagavan is not tainted by our karmaas. Even when we disappear in to the jyothi swaroopam, that jyothi swaroopam remains unaffected. So our sorrows and happiness do not affect Bhagavan and Bhagavan is not responsible for our sorrows and happiness. Our experiences are the direct results of our own karmaas. Then how does Bhagavan help us? When we realize that the jyothi swaroopam with in all of us is the same as the paramaathmachaitanyam, all our actions become an offering to the Light of Lights, "mama or mine" attitude disappears, and "na mama or not mine" attitude arises. But only in a pure mind this realization happens and in Kaliyuga, Nammasnakeerthanam is the most practical method to attain purity of mind.

"Onnukondariyaavunna vasthu" indicates that for ordinary people like us, Brahman can be known only through the path of Bhakthi. Bhakthi leads to Njaanam. Little Prahlada believed that everything existing was Naarayana swaroopam and when he told his father that God is omnipresent, Lord did come out from the lifeless pillar to protect Him. Gopikaas were ordinary housewives and just because of their intense and blind devotion to the Lord of Vrindavan they attained Jnaanam and moksham. Fickle minded ordinary people who are distracted every moment with the the various temptations of life cannot comprehend the greatness of Bhagavan. First the aasuric or thaamasic or demonic characteristics of our mind has to be reduced by the constant remembrance of Lord and the power of Naamam will elevate us to purer and purer levels.

Last line talks about the number three. This three can refer to several things: Prakrutthi, mahatthathvam, Ahamkaaram or Satva Gunam, Rajo Gunam, Thamo Gunam or Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswaran or three worlds. At the time of dissolution, everything merges into the paramachaitanyam and this explains the transient nature of everything we see or feel in this world. Poonthanam explains this to develop an attitude of detachment in our mind and hence perform Nishnkaama karmam and attain the Lotus Feet of Lord by chanting His names:

Njanappana 11

Onnu konu chamachoru viswatthil

Moonnayittulla karmangalokkeyum

Punya karmangal paapa karmangalum

Punya paapangal misramaam karmavum

Moonu jaathi niroopichu kaanumbol

Moonnu kondum thalakkunna jeevane

In this universe (virtually) created (chamachoru viswatthil) by our own Avidya or ignorance (here "onnu konu" means "due to avidya or ignorance"), all karmaas (karmangalokkeyum) can be divided into three categories (moonnaayittulla) . They are namely Punya karmaas, Paapa karmaas and Punya-Paapa- misra karmaas. (lines 2 and 3) When we think (niroopichu kaanumbol) about the above three types of karmaas (moonnu jaathi), we can see that jeevaathma (jeevane) is bound (thalakkunnu) by all three types of karmaas (moonnu kondum).

Just like the moon is lit by the reflected light of the Sun, we are alive by the chaithanyam or light lit by the Light of Lights, Paramachaithanyam. A person who is ignorant of the fact that sun' light causes the moon-light, thinks that it is moon's own light. Similarly, this whole universe is not different from the paramaathma chaithanyam itself and with our inability to comprehend this and internalize the truth, we do three types of karmaas with "ahambhaavam" or feeling of "I and mine" and these sakaama karmaas (result oriented actions) bind us to the eternal cycle of birth and death. It is difficult to exactly differentiate punya karmaas and paapa karmaas. Some of them can be labelled with out any doubt. But, some of the karmaas can be classified only according to the context. That is why Poonthaanam mentions about the third type called mixed karmaas.

There is a small story to illustrate this point. Once a very pious sage was resting in his hermitage in the forest. A just and righteous King followed by a group of robbers entered the forest. King was running about one mile ahead of the robbers and turned east near the sage's hermitage. (Hermitage was in junction near a river and one can go in any direction from there). While running, he specifically told the sage not to disclose which way he ran to the robbers following him. As expected robbers came and asked the sage about the direction in which the King ran. This sage who had never spoken untruth in his life did not want to say a lie to the robbers. He could have either said "I do not know" or to save the King's life he could have even said "west or south or north". Instead he told them "east" to save his sathyavatham or vow of truth. Later he had to experience the negative results of his paapa karma because in that particular context, saying the truth was not a punya karma or dharmam. By saying an untruth he would have saved the life of a righteous king and his country. But he cared more for his own vow of truth than saving

the life of a just and righteous King. Because of his selfishness, even though he told the truth, it became a paapa karmam.

Since all the three types of karmaas bind us, only destruction of all karmaas can free us from bondage. But it is impossible for ordinary people to live without doing any karmaas. There is not even a moment when we are not doing karma either by body, by words or by thoughts. So the only solution is to do karmaas with renunciation of the fruits action which is called Nishkaamakarmam. Bhagavan says in Bhagavad Gita;

yasya sarve samarambha:

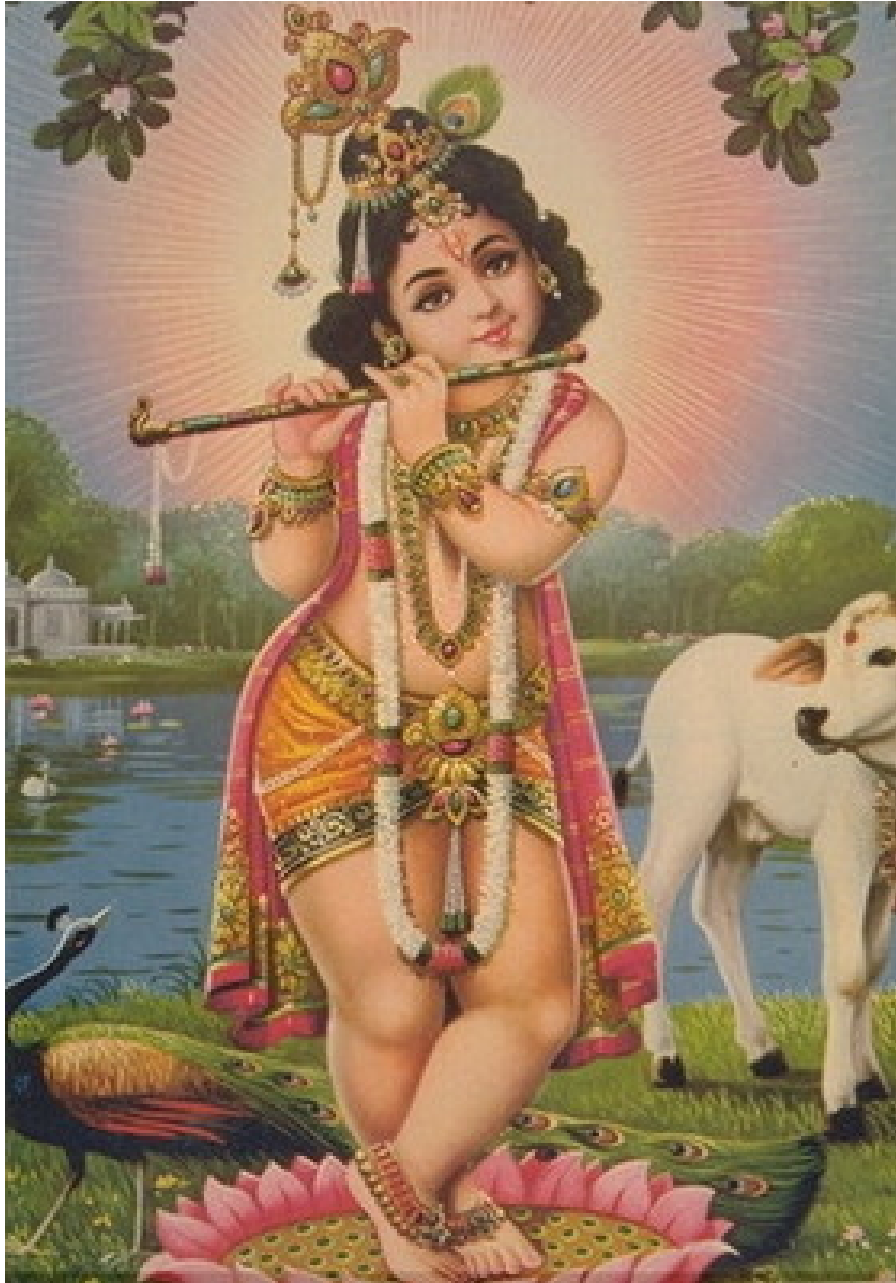
kama-sankalpa varjitha:

jnanagni dagdha karmanam

tam ahu: panditham budha:

He, all whose undertakings in this world are free from the bondage of expectation, who has sacrificed all the results of his actions in the fire of knowledge, is a pandithan or scholar -so says intelligent people or (great seers).

Even though all these philosophical concepts are mind boggling to ordinary people like us, Poonthanam assures that Naamasnakeerthanam will clear our mind and help us to develop an attitude of surrender and intense devotion. Then Bhagavan takes over and assures us: Na mae bhaktha pranashyathi- my devotees will never perish. Bhagavan's grace will lead us from Rakthi ---> Bhakthi----> Mukthi.



Sri Venugopalan

Njanappaana 12

Ponnin changala onnipparanjathil
onnirumbu kondennathre bhedangal
Randinaalumeduthu panichaiytha
Changalayallo misramaam karmavum

Bondage comes from three types of karmaas and one string (changala) formed as a result of satkarmaas or punya karmaas or good deeds is made of Gold (ponnin), another one (onnu) formed as a result of paapa karmaas or negative karmaas or dushkarmaas is made of Iron (irumbu) and the third string (formed as a result of the mixture of the above two types of karmaas-misrakarmam) is made of a mixture of both Gold and Iron (randinaalumeduthu pani cheytha).

Even though Gold and Iron are different metals with entirely different properties, when they are used for tying or binding some one it hardly makes any difference for the bound victim. The word "changala" and "thalakkuka" are usually used for chaining elephants. By using these words, Poonthanam brings out the fact that breaking the strings of bondage is as difficult for us as it is for an elephant to break its thick iron chain. But with lot of effort, sometimes elephants do break and run to freedom. So with continuous and sincere effort human beings blessed with the power of discrimination, can break all three binding chains. Even people with predominantly satva gunaas find it hard to break the bondage effortlessly. As long as their satkarmmas are result oriented, they will not be freed from the cycle of birth and death. They live to enjoy the results of satkarmaas, again do satkarmaas to be born again and again. Only renunciation of the fruits of action can break the bondage for Punyaatmaas (great souls), Paapis (sinned souls) and those punyaathma-paapaath ma combination souls. The only difference is that when we do Paapa karmaas we are subjected to negative experiences and punya karmaas yield positive experiences and mixture of both will give both positive and negative experiences. But eternal freedom from this cycle calls for Nishkaama karmam.

Even if a cage is made of Gold, a bird sees it only as a cage in which it is trapped. It does not enjoy the beauty of Gold. It only wants freedom. Likewise our souls crave for eternal freedom to join the Parmaathma. Because of the avidya or ignorance, jeevathma goes after transient pleasures and with egoistic actions accumulate all three types of karmaas. Poonthanam advises us to do naamasnkeerthanam which removes ignorance and makes us realize that we are trapped in this eternal cycle of birth and death. Naamam persuades us to strive with the determination and force of a "matthagajam" or mad elephant to break this chain of bondage. Poet assures that this force to break the chain can be derived from chanting Lord's name. By the power of Naamajapam even an athiest (who does not believe in God or in prayers) goes through different stages of Bhakthi or devotion and reach the highest state of Uttama Bhaktha or perfect devotee. A Bhaagavatotthama (the highest type of devotee) is one, who sees the glory of Bahgavan in all animate and

inanimate beings, and also perceives all beings as dwelling in Him. So all his karmaas become an offering to God and practically becomes a Jeevanmuktha. Then he discards the body when the results of the accumulated karmaas are exhausted and merges with the Paramaathma.

Where does God live? Bhagavan says to Narada:

*Naham vasami vaikunte na yogi hrudaye ravau
Mad bhaktha: yatra gayanti tatra thishtami narada.*

"I dwell not in Vaikundha, not in the hearts of yogis, nor in the Sun, I live where my devotees sing my glory and divine names."

Njanappaana 13

Brahmaavaadiyaay eecchayirumbolam
 karmabaddhanmaar ennatharinjaalum
 Bhuvanangale srishtikkayennathu
 Bhuvanaantha pralayam kazhivolam
 Karmapaasatthe lamkhikkayennathu
 Brahmaavinnumelutha lla nirnayam
 Dikpaalakanmaarum avvannam ororo
 Dikku thorum thalachu kitakkunnu

Know the fact that (ennatharinjaalum) starting from Brahamadevan and other devaas (Brahmaavaadiyaay) to flies and ants (eeccha irumbolum), all of God's creation are bound by Karma (karmabaddhanmaar). Creation of universe (bhuvanangale srushtikkayennathu) continues until the dissolution or pralayam of the universe (bhuvanaantha pralayam) is completed (kazhivolam). That means it is definitely (nirnayam) not easy (eluthalla) even for Brahmadevan (Brahmaavinu) to break (lamkhikkayennathu) the binding thread of karma (karmapaashatthe). In the same way (avvannam) eight devaas ruling the eight zones or quarters of the universe also (dikpaalakanmaarum) are lying bound (thalacchu kitakkunnu) in their own directions (dikku thorum).

In these lines, poet says that there is **no body** (it literally means any jeevaathma dwelling in any type of body) in this world that is not bound by karmaas. Even Brahmadevan dwelling in a body continuously does srushti or creation and then of course Vishnu Bhagavan has to maintain the universe and Mahadevan has to take care of annihilation. When Dharma declines, Vishnu Bhagavan incarnates in different forms, perform necessary karmaas **with out attachment** and goes back to Swadhaamam or home discarding the body used temporarily. Only the Nirguna Brahman or Paramajyothi swaroopam, who is only a witness of all these, is free of this bondage of Karma. But thrimurthis (Brahma-Vishnu- Maheswara) know that they are none other than the Brahman and they are neither attached to the karmaas or the fruits of their karmaas. Because of their knowledge of the essence of srushti-sthithi- samhaaram (creation, maintenance and annihilation) they do not experience the uncertainties of life like other demigods or mortal human beings. They just perform karmaas with out attachment. (Vaikundhavaasi, ananthashaayi Vishnu Bhagavan and Bhagavaan's all incarnations are not Jeevathmaa occupying a body, but Paramaathma Himself. With apaara kaarunyam or ocean of mercy, that Paramachaithanyam is letting us worship in any form (sagunam) we prefer. Even though in incarnations, Bhagavaan discards the body after the purpose of incarnation, He would appear before us in any form we worship because He is eternal with form and with out form. In one of the stories, He even takes the form of a "male buffalo" to please his devotee. Bhagavaan appeared as the minister Mangaattacchan to save Poonthaanam from robbers!)

Even Thrimurthis (brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) do not break the chain of Karmam. So where do we stand? By their actions, Thrimurthis are demonstrating this truth to the

world. The word "Nirnayam" indicates that to destroy the karmaas each and every individual should strive. In the spiritual world there is no proxy and each person should take responsibility for their own advancement. **A Guru or satsangam can help to initiate one's effort and the rest is in each individual's sincere effort.** Above all of these, we need Bhagavaan's blessings every moment and Poonthaanam's only solution in this Kaliyuga is chanting of naamam. It is interesting to note that Poonthaanam used the words "thalacchu kitakkunnu" for the eight devaas who rule the eight directions. Dikpaalakaas are not as detached to the karmaas as Brahmadevan or in other words they are not Brahmajnaanis and hence they are helplessly lying bound in the eight directions. Ordinary human beings are far inferior to this dikpaalakaas. To elevate ourselves from the Maanava state to Maadhava stage, Poonthanam recommends Naamasankeerthanam. In Bhagavatam, Sri Shuka Maharshi tells King Parikshit:

*Kalair dosha nidhe rajan astihyeko mahaan gunaan
Kirtanaad eva krishnasya mukta sanga: param vrajet*

My dear King, although Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, there is still one good quality about this age: Simply by chanting Hari keerthana, one can become free from material bondage and attain salvation.

Shankarrachaaryar's explanation on the importance of Naamajapam is very interesting. He says Naama japam gives us mukthi or salvation faster than any other form of worship or prayer because of two main reasons:

1. It is very simple and can be done by anybody, anywhere and anytime. No restrictions have to be followed.
2. Second one is the most important reason. We are not asking God for any favours or special blessings or anything in particular when we worship with naamasankeerthanam. We only glorify God with his auspicious names and try to continuously remember His divine form. Naamasankeerthanam promotes Nishkaama Bhakthi which leads us to salvation or mukthi.



Sri LakshmiHayagreevan

Njanappaana 14

Alpakarmikalaakiya naamellaam
alpakaalam kondororo janthukkal
Garbha paathrathil pukkum purappettum
Karmam kondu kalikkunnathingane

We are all (naamellaam) alpakamikal or our duration of one life to do karmaas is short (when compared to the celestial beings). Hence with the karmaas accumulated in this short period we take birth in different animal's' womb (kondororo janthukaal garbhapaathrathil pukkum), come out (purappettum), live for a short period (alpakaalam) and continue playing this karma-bound game (karmam kondu kalikkunnathingane)

"Alpakarmikal" include all animals and human beings we are all "alpakarmikal" when compared to celestial beings because one celestial year is 365 human years. What about Brahmadevan? One day time of Brahma is one chaturyugam which is equal to 4,320,000,000 human years. Then night also is as long as the day. So one full day is 8,640,000,000 human years. So if we multiply with 365 and then by 100 years of Brahma's life it becomes beyond comprehension for us. So let us not go further to Paramapurusha's time scale because Bhagavan's one moment is Brahma's whole life duration which is 311,040,000, 000,000 human years!

We perform karmaas continuously during our short life and then take birth in different animal wombs or human wombs based on our sukrutham or dushkrutham or mixture of both. For example, some say one cat year is equivalent to seven human years. So when born as a cat, results of the accumulated karmaas get exhausted in a short time. We believe that before getting a human birth or naranjanmam, we go through millions of lives in the lower species with short durations of life. If we are born as a fire-fly (in Malayaalam, Iyyaampaatta) duration of life to exhaust karmaas is only about 21/2 hours or so. As a crocodile, it may be more than 100 years and as an elephant it may be 60 years. Also we see early deaths in all species and the only explanation for all these untimely deaths and diseases is the results of poorvajanma or previous janmaa's karmaas. Poonthaanam expresses this numerous cycles of birth and death as a karma-bound game. Only Jeevathmaas in the form of different species of animals and humans are involved in this karma-bound game. Paramaathma is only a witness.

When we are finally blessed with a human birth, Poonthaanam advises us to use the power of discrimination bestowed on us by Lord. Only humans have the "vishesha buddhi" to change the course of our life by surrendering to God and offering all our karmaas at His Lotus feet. Continuous chanting of Bhagavaan's auspicious names will help us not only to understand the real meaning of the famous sloka, but also to practice it in our daily life:

*Kaayena vaacha manasendriyairvaa
budhyaathmanaa vaa prakruthe swabhaavaath
karomi yadyath sakalam parasmai
naaraayanaayethi samarppayaami.*

Whatever I do with my body, speech, mind or with other senses of my body, or with my intellect and soul or with my innate natural tendencies I offer (dedicate) everything to Lord Narayana.

With the complete surrender or Sharanagathi, we can escape the terrible cycle of birth, death and sufferings and attain His Lotus feet. Naamasankeerthanam destroys desires and tendencies and helps us to do all karmaas without expecting anything in return.



Njanappaana 15

Narakatthil kitakkunna jeevan poy
 Durithangal otungi manassinte
 Paripaakavum vannu kramatthaale
 Narajaathiyil vannu pirannittu
 Sukrutham cheythu maelppottu poyavar
 Sukhicheetunnu sathyalokattholam
 Salkarmam kondu maelppottu poyavar
 Swargatthinkal irunnu sukhikkunnu

Until the consequences of the the multitude of sins gets exhausted (durithangal otungi) Jeevan stays in Naraka or hell (narkatthil kitakkunna jeevan) and when slowly mind attains maturity (kramatthaale manassinte paripaakavaum vannu) jeevan moves (poy) to take birth as human being (narajaathiyil vannu). After taking birth as humans (pirannittu) , those who do sukrutham or good deeds in abundance goes all the way up (sukrutham cheythu melpottu poyavar) to the sathyalokam (sathylokattholam) and remains there happy and peaceful (sukhicheetunnu) (never to return and take birth again). Those who do satkarmaas go up to heaven and remain there (for sometime) enjoying the heavenly comforts.

Can we differentiate sukrutham and satkarmam? (I came across two definitions. Please correct if you see any mistake and add your understanding about it and how it applies to Poonthaanam's lines). Sukrutham is the result of dhaarmic punya karmaas. In other words sukrutham is Nishkaama satkarmam or good deeds with out expecting anything in return. All actions performed with purity of mind is Sukrutham. Sukrutham is satkarmaas done for the Kalyaanam or mangalam of all. Bhagavaan assures in Gita "the doer of good (kalyaanakruth) , never comes to grief" or "sukruthis never come to grief". According to another definition Sukrutham is the results of the satkarmaas accumulated from one's own past karmaas or sukrutham can even be passed on from ancestors.

What is satkarmam? Satkarmaas are definitely good deeds, but the purpose of action may or may not be pure and also good actions can be performed with selfish motives These satkarmaas with out purity of mind do not become Sukrutham. But the results of these satkarmaas are experienced in Swargam or heaven and when they are exhausted soul is subjected to rebirth.

Another word for sathyalokam is "yatharthalokam" or real world and once we have realisation, no more suffering, sorrows or rebirth.

Life after death is not to punish the souls by sending them to hell or reward them by sending them to heaven. These experiences are given to remind the soul of it's true purpose of life. Of course the soul's journey to mukthi or salvation, or heaven or hell depends on the sukrutham or good deeds done. Experiences in heaven and hell are supposed to impart knowledge and wisdom so that when they take rebirth, they can strive

to do more good deeds and attain salvation. That is why poonthaanam says about maturity of mind (manassinte paripaakam). But often Maaya masks this realisation and again jeevan goes after transient pleasures and ahdarmic deeds. But because of the Vishesha Buddhi and power of discrimination, humans have the choice to acquire good and bad karmaas. It is only in human birth jeeva gets this opportunity to go beyond the bondage of karma as a whole and attain salvation. Poonthaanam recommends Naamasankeerthanam as the most easy and enjoyable path to salvation.

In this context Njaanaanada Saraswathi's description about the fate of souls after death may help us to understand this better. In this book called Vedantha Vinjaanam, he compares the soul's journey to a bouncing ball. When we throw a ball to the ground with lot of force, it bounces very high. But when it is thrown with less force it bounces only to a lower height. When it is thrown with hardly any force it hardly bounces and leaves the ground. Here the force with which we throw the ball is compared to sukrutham of the soul. After the death of the body, depending on how much sukrutham one has accumulated, soul goes to Sathylaokam, or Swargam (heaven) or chandralokam or Parjanya lokam, pithrulokam or in the vicinity of earth called prethalokam. Souls that go to Sathyalokam never returns to take janma because they have either attained saalokyam, saropyam, saameepyam or saayujyam with Paramaathma. (In sathyalokam soul can unite with paramaathma and this is Saayujyam. Souls can reside for ever in God's abode and this is called saalokyam. Next is soul's assumption of God's form called Saaroopyam. Staying near to God is Saamipyam.) Poonthannam here mentions about only sathyalokam, heaven and hell. In all other worlds except Sathyalokam, soul stays until the consequences of satkarmaas or dusshkarmaas or a mixture of both are exhausted, and then with the remaining inherent vaasnaas or tendencies takes birth in an appropriate womb determined to improve oneself.

Several different explanations are given for the journey of the soul after death. Dvaita and Advaita school of thoughts view these differently. One group believes in attributeless or impersonal God and other group sees God as a personality endowed with glorious qualities. But Mukthi or liberation is unanimously defined as the release from the repeated cycle of birth and death. With the abundance of good deeds or sukrutham, mind becomes pure and "sama-darshanam" or Jeevathma-Parmaathm a unity happens. This realization is called enlightenment and enlightened souls eventually get liberated.



Njanappaana 16

Sukruthangalumokke otungumbol
Paripaakavumellolam illavar
Parichodangirunnitt u bhoomiyil (jaatharrayi)
duritham cheythu chatthavar pinneppoyi
narkangalil vevvaere veezhunnu

When the results of the good karmaas are exhausted (sukruthangalokke otungumbol), souls remaining in heaven (parichotangirunnitt tu) are reborn on earth (bhoomiyil jaatharrayi) . When their previous good and bad experiences do not impart any maturity and knowledge (paripaakavum ellolam illa-not even as much as little sesame seed), they end up doing more and more bad karmaas (duritham cheythu). Again after death (chatthavar) they suffer the consequences of their various negative karmaas in different ways or in different types of hells. (In one old version the word "jaatharaayi" is not there and with out that meaning can be interpreted in a different way. In that case, the word "parichotangirunnitt u" can be for the life on earth or bhoomi itself. When the the good results of the past sukrutham experiencing in this life on Bhoomi is exhausted, with out any realisation of how transient the pleasures are, some commit more sins to end up in different hells)

In this stanza Poonthaanam explains how important “pascchaatthaapam” or atonement is. Even when we enjoy a good life here on earth, we tend to forget how blessed we are and keep hurting others in several ways. When subjected to miseries also, some people often do not realize the sins or mistakes they have committed and refuse to learn and correct themselves. Poonthaanam is talking about such people and he says that they commit more and more sins with out atonement and go through more suffering. If we realize our mistake and do "praayascchtham" sincerely, we will not be tempted to do more sins. Famous story of the prostitute Pingala is an example for purifying one's mind with "pascchaatthaapam". She realized how wrong it was to sell her body for a living and later with deep atonement surrendered herself at Bhagavaa's feet and attained Mukthi.

"Aviveka: paramaapadaam padam" is illustrated in this stanza. This means "avivekam" or lack of wise discrimination is the root cause of all miseries. When there is no maturity of mind, the power of discrimination will not be there. So instead of going after "sreyas" or what is good, we go after "preyas" or what gives pleasure. Swami Desikan describes nine steps for a spiritual aspirant and vivekam is the first step. Poonthaanam used the word "paripaakam" of the mind to indicate this vivekam or wise discrimination. Lack of Vivekam or paripaakam of mind leads us to hell by performing adhaarmic and bad deeds.

Purity of mind is very important in spiritual advancement. Only from a pure mind knowledge is emerged. With all temptations around us, it is harder to purify our mind in Kaliyuga.

Kalau kalmasha chitthaanaam

Paapadravyopajeevan am

vidhikriyaavihinaan aam

Gathir Govindakeerthanam

In Kaluyuga, mind of ordinary human beings are tainted by Kaamam, krodham, madam, moham etc (kalamsha chittham) and often end up doing adharmam (paapam) to make money (dravyam) for living (for upajeevanam) . Ordinary people do not have the time or inclination to do good karmaas as prescribed in vedaas (vidhikriyaheenam) . The only thing that can give relief from the sufferings of Kaliyuga is Govinda naama sankeerthanam. Bhagavaan and Bhagavaan's naama are never separated. Naamam is called Kalpa vruksham of the earth.

Njanappaana 17

Suralokathil ninnoru jeevan poi
 Naraloke maheesuranaakunnu
 Chandakarmangal cheythavan chaakumbol
 Chandaala kulathinkal pirakkunnu
 Asuranmaar suranmarayeetunnu
 Amaranmaar marangal aayeetunnu
 Ajam chathu gajamai pirakkunnu
 Gajam chathangajavum aayeedunnu
 Nari chathu naranai pirakkunnu
 Naari chathutan oriyai pokunnu
 Kripa koodaathe peedippicheetunna
 Nripan chathu krimiyaai pirakkunnu
 Eacha chathoru poocha yayeetunnu
 Easwarante vilaasangalingane

A jeevan or soul from heaven or land of Devaas (suralokatthil ninnoru jeevan) is born as a Brahmin on earth (narakatthil maheesuranaakunnu) . People who do extremely cruel actions becomes "chandaala" or a member of a despised caste. Demons or Asuraas become Suraas or Devaas. People who are eternal or immortal or deathless (amaranmaar) are born as trees (marangal aayeetunnu) . A goat (ajam) is born as an elephant (gajam) and vice versa. A tiger (nari) after death is born as a human being (naran) and a woman (naari) is born as a fox (oriyaai). A king who mercilessly tortures (kripa koodaathe peedippicchitunna) his citizens takes birth as a worm (krimi). A fly is reborn as a cat and all these are Bhagavaan's leelavilasam or playful divine drama.

After death, to experience the results of the residual karmaas, jeevan takes birth in appropriate womb. The passage of a soul from body to body is determined by the force of one's actions, or karma. If an individual performs good deeds, the next birth will be rewarding, and if not, the person may degenerate into a lower life form. In the above lines, Poonthaanam shows several examples of the effect of karmaas on the soul when it is separated from the body after death. A jeevan from heaven comes to earth to experience the results of his residual negative karmaas. Likewise after experiencing negative results by taking birth as beings in several thousands of species, finally a tiger, for example, gets the life of a human being. Humans bestowed with the power of "wise discrimination" along with the grace of God, can perform good karmaas and advance spiritually. But when a human being resorts to unkind, hurtful, and negative actions, he will again be pushed back to be born in lower life form like a worm. Poonthaanam says: A king who mercilessly tortures (kripa koodaathe peedippicchitunna) his citizens takes birth as a worm (krimi).

There are several examples in our puraanaas to illustrate this law of karma. A good example of how an "amara" or immortal being becomes a "maram" or tree is the story of Nalakoobara and Manigriva who were the sons of Kubera, the lord of Yakshaas or the Lord of wealth. Once Nalakoobara and Manigriva were enjoying themselves playing in a

lake with women. They were intoxicated and oblivious of everything around them. Sage Narada passed by the lake during this time and the ashamed ladies immediately covered their body with clothes and showed their respect to Narada with folded hands. But both Nalakoobara and Manigriva, intoxicated with pride and drinks ignored Narada Muni. Narda Muni cursed them to become "maruthu trees". They had to remain as trees for a very long time until Krishna as Damodara came out of Gokulam and touched them with the wooden mortar.

Another example is the story of Gajendra moksham. King Indradyumana was born as a "divine elephant". I am quoting below the words of our own respected S.N Sastriji (from the Naaraayneeyam commentary) : "The njana and devotion which he (King Indradyumnan who became an elephant by sage Agasthya's curse) had acquired in his previous life came back to him under the stress of the suffering caused by the attack of the crocodile. He then worshipped Thee with lotus flowers plucked by his trunk, while singing continuously a great hymn addressed to the Nirguna brahmam which he had learnt in his previous life." Even though King Indradyumna had to be born as an elephant, his residual good karmaas led him to salvation. (Also the crocodile was Huhu, a gandharvan in the previous janma.)

As a "Bhoktha", the experiencer, one does not have the freedom of choice in experiencing the results of accumulated bad karmaas. (Bhagavaan and His naamam are the only solution to lessen or erase our suffering due to accumulated bad karmaas). But as a "Karthā" or doer, one has freedom of choice to some extent. If we have a lighted lamp, we can use it to read and enjoy a book or use it to burn and destroy the book. We have the choice to draw the life circle with Bhagavaan and His naamam as the center and kindness and love as radius of the circle. Also we can draw the life circle with "I" and "mine" as center and a combination of kaama, krodha, lobha moha, mada, maasthrya aadi negative qualities as radius of the circle

Poonthaanam advises us to use the lighted lamp inside us, lit by the Light of Lights, to walk through the path of Bhakthi and Naamasankeerthanam.



Sri Gajendravaradan

Lord Vishnu rescuing Gajendra from Samsaraa

Njanappaana 18

Keezhmelingane mandunna jeevanmaar
 Bhoomiyeennathre naetunnu karmangal
 Seemayillatholam pala karmangal
 Bhoomiyeennathre naetunnu jeevanmaar
 Angane cheythu nedi marichudan
 Anya lokangal oronnil oronnil
 Chennirunnu bhujikkunnu jeevanmaar
 Thangal cheythoru karmangal than phalam
 Odungitum athottunaal chellumbol
 Udane vannu naetunnu pinneyum
 Thante thante grihathinkal ninnutan
 Kondu ponna dhanam kondu naamellam
 Mattengaanumoredath irunnittu
 Vittoonennu parayum kanakkeine

These jeevaas run (mandunnu) between the lower worlds and upper worlds (keezmelingane) of the universe. But it is said (athre) that they get to do karmaas (karmangal naetunnu) only in Bhoomi. It is said that only in Bhoomi these jeevaas get to do various (pala) and limitless (seemayilaatholam) karmaas. Thus (angane) they accumulate karmaas (naeti) and after death (maricchutan) spend time (chennirunnu) in different worlds one by one (lokangal oronnil oronnil) and experience or enjoy (bhujikkunnu) the results of (good) karmaas (karmangal than phalam) done by themselves (thangal cheythoru). These experiences end (odungitum-with the exhaustion of accumulated good karmaas that can be experienced in worlds other than earth) in a little while (athottunaal chellumbol) and again (pinneyum) jeevaas come (vannu) to earth and collect (netunnu) karmaas. When a person goes to some unknown place and spends prodigiously all the money he collected and brought from his own house, can be called "vittunnunnavan". Exactly in the same way, jeevaas accumulate all the karmaas from earth and experience the results in another world.

It appears that a literal translation of some of the verses may not make much sense. Therefore, it seems appropriate to explore the metaphysical meaning that the lines convey.

In Vedanta, earth is often referred to by another name "karma-kshethra". This name came because souls can experience the results of karmaas performed ONLY on earth and not in any of the other 13 worlds. Whatever experiences any jeeva go through in any other world is the result of karmaas done on earth. If good karmaas outweigh the bad karmaas, we go to heaven, experience the results of good karmaas that can be experienced in heaven until those results are exhausted. Then it goes to hell to experience the results of bad karmaas that can be experienced in hell until those results are exhausted and comes back to earth with some residual good or bad (or both good and bad) karmaas that can be experienced only on earth. But no new accumulation of karmaas can happen in any other

world. "otungeetum ottunaal chellumbol" (line 5, first part) means that the karmaas that took the soul to heaven (or hell) will be exhausted in heaven (or hell) by enjoyment (or suffering). Every action we perform is like sowing a seed. It remains vibrant and at a later time we reap the results. It is not possible for ordinary people like us to link the past karmaas and what we experience now by any reasonable method. The same karma performed with different attitude can lead us to heaven, hell, or salvation. Bhaavam is very important.

Poonthaanam has used the word "bujikkunnu" for experiencing the results. The word "bhojanam" is defined as "sukhena anubhuyathe iti bhojanam" or "what is experienced happily". So "bhujikkunnu" may apply only for the experiences of our good karmaas. When the good karmaas that can be enjoyed in heaven are over, we come back to earth. To experience the results of different types of karmaas, our subtle body goes to different worlds and then with a gross, physical body comes to earth and experience what ever residual karmaas are left as well as to perform new karmaas and the cycle continues. The word "Vitttoonnu" is a characteristic of a spendthrift. Origin of the word spendthrift is some one who has spent his accumulated wealth from predecessors or ancestors. Poonthannam compares jeevan's enjoying the results of the accumulated karmaas from the past (from earth) to a person's enjoying life by spending all the wealth acquired over a period of time. Just like wealth gets exhausted by spending, results of karmaas gets exhausted by experiencing. Life in heaven is not eternal, it is transient. It is interesting to note that jeevans in subtle body and gross body welcome the end of suffering, but definitely want the enjoyment of the results of good karmaas to last for ever when both are transient Only Nishkaama karmam (with out expecting anything in return) leads to eternal peace and happiness or salvation.

Since every action we perform, and every thought that comes to our mind has a result or consequence, Poonnthaanam used the word "Seemayillatholam" or limitless or endless karmaas. Wheel of karma continues on and on. Nobody can remain Karma-free. There is one and only one solution to get out of the wheel of Karma and all scriptures and our great seers suggest to surrender to God and do karmaas with renunciation of the fruits of actions. Poonthaanam gives an easy solution to develop this attitude of complete surrender -Naamasankeertthanam.

Njanappaana 19

Karmangalkku vilabhoomiyaakiya
Janmadesamibhoomiya rinjaalum
Karmanaasam varuthenamenkilum
Chemme mattengum saadhiyaa nirnnayam

Know (arinjaalaum) that this earth (bhoomi), our birth place or mother land (janmadesaham) is the field where we sow the seeds of all karmaas (karmangalkku vilabhoomiyaakiya). Definitely (nirnnayam) it is not possible (saadhiyaa) to exhaust the residual karmaas (karmanaasham varutthenamenkilum) anywhere else other than here.

These four lines may seem to contradict the idea expressed in the previous lines. In the last stanza poet said that karmaas can be performed only on earth (there is no contradiction on this part) and results of the karmaas are experienced in appropriate worlds like heavenly worlds or worlds of hell. Now this stanza says that "karmanaasham" or exhaustion of karmaas is possible only on earth. Let us explore what poet means by "karmanaasham" in this context.

In this context, by the word "karma" poet means residual karmaas. After death, subtle body (jeevan or soul) experiences the results of all karmaas that can be experienced by subtle body in the worlds other than earth. But some results can be experienced only by the gross body. So jeevan comes back to earth with those residual karmaas, takes an appropriate form of life in an appropriate circumstance to exhaust the remaining karmaas and to do new karmaas. Jeevan thus enjoys or suffers the results of all the residual karmaas on earth. So in the time between births, subtle body experiences the results of good and bad karmaas and during the life on earth, gross body experiences the results of remaining different set of good and bad karmaas. It is to be noted that in the time between births, subtle body does not accumulate any karmaas. Only during the life time on earth, jeevan in gross body accumulates karmaas.

Swami Sivananda says about residual karmaas: "If all karmas bear fruit after death, there will be no cause for rebirth after life in heaven or hell or in animal bodies, because in these there is no means of virtue or vice. You need not be afraid that if any karmas are left in store there will be no salvation, because knowledge of Self will annihilate all karmas. Therefore it is an established conclusion that the souls descend to the earth from heaven with a remainder of works (Anusaya). After the fruits of the meritorious acts have completely been enjoyed in heaven, the remaining other set of works (good and bad) whose fruits are to be enjoyed in this world forms the Anusaya with which the souls come to the earth." Bhagavan says: "njaanagni: sarvakarmaani bhasmasaat kuruthe" or "the fire of knowledge burns all karmas in to ashes".

In short, sum total of all our past lives led us to where we are now. To realize the goal of salvation, soul undertakes many many lives in gross body or physical body. Those who take responsibility for one's karmas and do one's best to free from the cycle of birth and death is defined by scriptures are wise and strong willed. Those who blame others are

defined as unwise and weak. How can we become wise and strong-willed in this Kaliyuga? Poonthanam suggests chanting of naamam and surrendering to Bhagavaan as the best method. Chanting naamam helps us to remember Lord's greatness continuously and from there Bhagavan takes over because He has promised in Bhagavad Gita:

*Ananyaschintayanto mam ye jana: paryupasate,
Tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-kshamam vahamyaham*

"Those devotees who think of me continuously, making me the sole object of their worship, I myself will provide for their every need and safeguard their yogakshemam.





Sri Yashodanandana

Njanappaana 20

Bhakthanmaarkkum mumukshu janangalkkum
Saktharaaya vishayee janangalkkum
Ischicheedunnathokk e kodutthitum
Viswa maathaavu bhoomi siva siva

Siva! Siva! This Bhoomi Devi who is the mother of the whole universe (Viswamaathaavu bhoomi), fulfills all the wishes (Inchikkunnathokke kotukkunnu) of devotees (Bhakthanmaarkkum), people who aspire liberation or salvation (Mumukshu janangalkkum) and desire-bound materialists (saktharraya vishayee janangalkkum) alike!

This earth fulfills the wishes of all kinds of people. It is interesting to note that Bhoomidevi lets any aspirant to advance in their chosen path. The only condition is sincere effort to reach the goal. May it be the desire to feel the presence of God everywhere and in everything, may it be the desire to attain salvation, or may it be the desire to succeed in the material life, our Mother Earth fulfills the wishes of everybody alike.

As per Shri Neelakandhan Nambisan, Poonthaanam used the word "bhakthanmaarkkum" as the first word because Bhagavan is Bhakthadaasan and devotees are more dear to him than those who desire mukthi or salvation. We have several stories to illustrate Bhagavan's bhaktha vathsalyam or love for devotees. To make Prahlada's words true, He took incarnation from the pillar as Narasimha, to make Bhishmaachaaryaa's words true, He broke His own vow and took weapon in His hands, and He became the charioteer of Arjuna. Then as Paartha Sarathi he assures us through Arjuna: "na mae bhaktha: pranashyathi" , "my devotees will never perish".

The word "Viswamatha" means the mother of the whole universe. There is one more reason to call Bhoomidevi Viswamatha. "Viswam" also means Bhagavan. (Viswam Vishnu: Vashatkaara). In one sense, Bhoomidevi is mother of Bhagavan also because all the incarnations happened in Bhoomi. So Bhagavan is Viswam and as His mother is Viswamaatha. So the name Viswamatha is apt for Bhoomidevi.

Sankaraachaaryar says “kuputhro jaayetha kwachidapi kumaatha na bhavathi” or “there could be a bad son but never a bad mother”. This mother of the Universe, Bhoomidevi sets an example and underlines the above statement by supporting and fulfilling the wishes of all her three types of children-bhakthaas, mumukshus and worldly people.

Were the divine naamaas "Siva! Siva" used to express poet's surprise when he observed Bhoomidevi supporting the Vishayee's worldly desires or to indicate Bhoomidevi's apaara kaarunyam or limitless mercy towards the Vishayees? As a mother, Bhoomidevi may be letting Vishayees fulfill worldly desires for sometime in the hope that in course of time, with the satsangam of the Bhakthaas and Mumukshus, Vishayees will develop detachment towards worldly desires. A mother is an ocean of love and kindness!

Another interpretation is that the poet used these names to express Bhoomidevi's sorrow to see how Vishayees go after never ending transient pleasures even after achieving their righteous and dhaarmic goals. This earth is karmakshethra and even after taking birth as a human on this earth, it is sad to see some one not trying to attain salvation. In kaliyuga this can be easily achieved by chanting Bhagavan's divine names and people are still reluctant to turn their mind to the higher power. This might be another reason for Bhoomidevi's sorrow. Those who do naamsankeerthanam are set on the path of Bhakthi and knowledge and eventually attain moksha.

Njanappaana 21

Viswanaathante moolaprakrithi thaana
Prathyakshena vilangunnu bhoomiyaay

Moolaprakruthi, creation of Lord of the Universe (Viswanaathante) appears (vilangunnu) as Bhoomidevi who is visible by direct senses or direct perception (prakthyashena) .

Let us explore more about creation. Bhagavan initiates creation. The first cause is Bhagavan or Viswanathan who is beginningless and endless. First effect is Moola Prakruthi. Second effect is Prakruthi which is the avyaktha or undifferentiated cosmic substance. Then comes the effect of Prakruthi, Mahat thatva. From this Ahamkaaram or feeling of "I-Ness" emerges, next is cosmic mind, five Njaanedriyas or knowing senses from mind, then five karmendriyas or working senses also from the same mind, Pancha tanmathras or five objects of njaanedriyas and finally the physical manifestation of the Pancha tanmathraas, the five visible material substances. These are called Pancha bhoothaas. Of this the last one formed is Bhoomi. First is Aakasham or space , next is Vaayu or air, third is Agni or fire, Fourth is Apa or water and then comes our Bhoomidevi or Prithvi or earth. So we can see that Bhoomidevi is the gross and visible form (prakthyaksham) of Moola Prakruthi.

We can compare the relation between the Moola Prakruthi and Bhoomi to a mount of mud and an earthen pot made of mud. Here we can say that mud is the Moola Prakruthi and the earthen pot made out of mud is a manifestation of mud. So earthen pot can be compared to Bhoomi. Similarly all the different golden ornaments are made from the same basic substance Gold. Once you melt the ornament, it becomes the basic gold again. Likewise, before dissolution Bhoomi dissolves in water, water is evaporated by fire, fire is put out by air and air disappears in space and everything goes back and dissolves in Moola Prakruthi and in turn Moola Prakruthi dissolves in Paramaathma or Viswanathan.

Shri Nilakandhan Nambishan has given an interesting interpretation for the word "Viswanathan". One meaning for "Vi" is bird and "swaa" can mean a dog. So he says that name Viswanathan indicates that Bhagavan's limitless mercy reaches the whole universe including the birds and dogs and hence undoubtedly He is the Lord of all!

Poonthaanam says that Jeevaas who took birth in this Kaliyuga on this earth as human beings are very blessed because just by chanting Bhagavan's naamam, we can attain moksham. Naama sankeerthanam is powerful enough to burn all our sins and Poonthaanam invites us to chant the following naamaas (or any naama of Bhagavan) along with him and millions of other devotees;

*Krishna! Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana!
Krishna! Govinda! Naaraayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava!
Sachidaananda! Naaraayana! Hare!*



Lord MahaVishnu

Njanappaana 22

Avaneethala paalanathinnallo
 Avathaarangalum palathorkkumbol
 Athukondu visheshicchum bhoolokam
 Pathinnaallilumutth amamennallo
 Veda vaadikalaaya munikalum
 Vedavum bahumaanichu chollunnu

Several incarnations (avathaarangalum palathu), when you think about them (orkkumbol), are for protecting (paalanatthinallo) earth or Bhoomidevi (avaneethalam). Because of this (athukondu), earth is considered very special (bhoolokam visheshicchum) and best (utthamam) among all fourteen worlds (pathinnaalilum). Not only munis who have the knowledge of Brahman (Veda vaadikalaaya munikalum), but also Vedaas say this (chollunnu).

All incarnations of Bhagavan including the Poornaavathars or incarnations with full glory, of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna happened on earth. Bhoomi got this special blessing and privilege to become the mother of Bhagavan's incarnations. These incarnations were to protect her from cruel, unrighteous and demonic kings. Bhagavan promised: "Whenever there is a fall in Dharma and a rise in Adharma, I manifest to protect the good, to destroy evil and establish Dharma" and kept his promise.

When ever Bhoomidevi is subjected to endless suffering at the hands of cruel and demonic people, she approaches Brahma and with Brahma and Devaas they approach Bhagavan. Bhagavan never ignored her prayers but solved her problems and took care of her with love. So Bhoomi is special for Bhagavan. Also as said in previous lines, Bhoomi is the Karma Kshethra and Karmaas can be done only by taking a physical form of life on earth. Bhoomi is special for this reason too. In addition to this, to exhaust residual karmaas from other worlds, jeevan has to take birth on earth. So Bhoomi is the divine place where you can accumulate karmaas, exhaust all results of residual karmaas and this is the only place where you can do Nishkaama karma or "actions with renunciation of fruits" and attain Moksha.

Because of all these reasons realized souls like sages and vedaas consider Bhoomi as the perfect world or the most desirable place to be born in for any living being. "Veda vaadikalaaya munikalum" can be interpreted in two ways:

1. Those who are experts in Vedaas.
2. Word Veda also means "brahman". So this can mean those who have realized brahman or those who always meditate on brahman.

The fact that Bhoomi is the best of all worlds is approved by Vedaas and great seers. It is said that even inhabitants of swarga or heaven desire to come to earth so that with

Nishkaama karmam they can attain salvation. Scriptures and our ancient sages say that Naamasankeertthanam is the first step and best method to realize God in Kaliyuga.



Sri Ram

Njanappaana 23

Lavanaabudhi madhye vilangunna Jambu dweeporu yojana lakshavum Saptha
dweepukaluntathil ethrayum Uthamamennu vaazhthunnu pinneyum

An island called Jambu dweep with an area of one lakh yojana (one yojana is about 10 miles) stands (vilangunna) in the middle of the salty ocean (lavanaabudhi madhye) and is praised again and again (vaazhthunnu pinneyum) as the best of all (ethrayum utthamamennu) the seven existing islands (saptha dweepukaluntathil). There are seven islands and Jambudweepam is the best and most blessed of all islands. Other islands are Plaksha dweepam, Shaalmala dweepam, Kusa, Krouncha, Shaaka and Pushkara dweepams. There are seven different types of oceans and Jambu dweepam is surrounded by the salty ocean. The other oceans are of sugar cane juice, wine, ghee, milk, curds and pure water. In one description, Jambudweep is not only in the middle of the salty ocean, it also forms the center island. Jambudweep is surrounded by salt water and after this body of salt water is Plaksha dweep, surrounded by an ocean of sugar cane juice. Then comes Shaalmala Dweep surrounded by an ocean of wine. Then comes Kusha dweep surrounded by an ocean of ghee, next is Krouncha dweep, surrounded by an ocean of milk. The last but one is Shaaka dweep, surrounded by an ocean of curd. The outermost and seventh dweep is Pushkara dweep which is surrounded by pure water. There is an interesting story behind the birth of the seven seas and seven islands. The below quotation is taken from our own respected KVGji's and S.N.Sastriji's translation of Bahktharanjini interpretation of Naarayaneeyam published by Bhaktharanjini Trust. "Puranams say that the earth is in the shape of a lotus bud in the center of which stands the mountain Mahameru or Sumeru. Once, King Priyavratha observed that the Sun God shines only on one half of the earth's surface in the course of his circuit around Sumeru and leaves the other half in darkness. The King thought that it was not good to waste half of the day as night. Therefore he made seven circuits around earth, in his effulgent car, following the Sun at its speed determined to turn night into day. The tracks that were sunk by the fellies of the wheels of his chariot came to be the most celebrated seven oceans which divided earth in to seven islands." Poonthaanam glorifies Jambudweep because this island has nine regions or parts and one of them is Bharatha varsha. Bharata varsha is the best and blessed of all nine regions of Jambudweep. It is the only place where one can perform good karmaas and attain moksham. So we can even say that because of the Bharata varsham, Jambu dweep became the holiest of all islands! Poonthaanam again tells us to remember the importance of Naamasankeerthanam, especially for those who are fortunate to be born and fortunate to live in this Bharatha varsha of Jambu dweep. It is Karma Kshethra, it is Punya Bhoomi and with Nishkaama karmam one becomes Punyavaan and attains moksham.



Lord MahaVishnu

Njanappaana 24

Bhoopadmathinnu karnikayaayittu
Bhoodharendranathil allo nilkunnu
Ithilombathu ghandangaluntallo
Athiluthamam bhaaratha bhoothalam

If we consider Earth (Jambudweep) as a lotus (Bhoopadmatthinnu) , then the King of Earth (Bhoodharendran- Mahaameru mountain) occupies the center or pericarp (karnika) of the lotus. In this lotus like Jambudweep, there are nine regions (ompathu ghandangal untallo) or continents. Of all these regions (athil), the land of Bhaaratham (Bhaaratha bhoothalam) is the perfect region (utthamam).

Jambudweep is divided into nine regions separated by mountains. Bhagavan's manifestation and mode of worship in nine regions or continents of Jambu dweep are different. A simple description follows:

1. Ilavrita Region: Only women live here and Shree Parvathi is the chief. Bhagavan's manifestation here is as Sankarshana murthi and mode of worship is chanting namam and praising by Shtuthis.
2. Bhadrasha Region: As Lord Hayagriva and praised by Bhadrashravas through veda manthras.
3. Harivarsha Region: As Narasimha and praised by Prahlada and other devotees by chanting naamam.
4. Kethumaala Region: As Kaamadeva or Pradyumna and praised by Lakshmi Devi and sons of Prajapathi.
5. Ramyaka Region: as Matsya (Fish incarnation)) worshipped by Vaivasvatha Manu.
6. Hiranmaya Region: As Kurma (Tortoise incarnation) and worshipped by Aryama.
7. Kuru Region: As Varaaha (boar incarnation) and praised by Jnaanis or realized souls by sthothraas and manthraas.
8. Kimpurusha Region: As Lord Rama, worshipped by Hanuman and other devotees by chanting and meditation.
9. Bhaaratha Region: As Lord Naaraayana, worshipped by Narada and other great devotees of this region by Naamasankeertthanam and by chanting hymns.

This specially blessed ninth region got the name Bhaaratha Bhoothalam (Land of Bharatha) because the great devotee King Bharatha ruled this region. In this Bhaaratha

varsha, Lord Narayana along with Lord Nara did penance in Badari situated on the top of Himalaya mountain. Here in this punya bhoomi, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna took birth to protect Bhoomidevi. This same Lord Naarayana is in Guruvayoor as Guruvayurappan, in Thiruppathi as Venkatachalapathi, in Uduppi as Krishna, in Trivandrum as Padmanaabha Swamy, and in every temple in Bhaaratha varsha Lord Naraayana is manifested in different forms. (Also because of Lord's unlimited kindness, He appears in the hearts of all His devotees and all temples in the whole universe manifesting Himself in what ever form devotees want to think of Him. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient! *Jale Vishnu: Sthale Vishnu: Vishnur Aakaasam Uchyathe Sthaavaram Jangamam Vishnu: Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath*)

Here Narada and other great devotees like Vasishta, Parashara, Vyaasa, Suka worship Lord Narayana by chanting naamam and hymns. Bhaaratha varsha is the punya bhoomi of all regions because Lord manifested here several times in several forms to include the Paripoorna Punyaavatharaam of Lord Krishna (incarnation with full glory). Taking birth in this region is a blessing in any yuga, but it is all the more auspicious to take birth here in Kaliyuga. It is all the more auspicious because salvation can be attained in Kaliyuga just by chanting the divine names of Bhagavan.

Njanappaana 25

Sammathanmaaraaya maamuni sreshtanmaar
Karmakshethramennal lo parayunnu

Great sages (mamuni shreshtanmaar) who are acclaimed (sammamthanmaar) say (parayunnu) that this Bhoomi is the field for performing karmaas or actions (Karmakshethra).

Even distinguished, respected and knowledgeable sages consider Bhaaritha as karmakshethra. So there is no room for any doubt or difference of opinion about our Mother India's greatness. "Thatraapi Bhaarithavarshameva Karmakshethram". Swami Vivekananda says:

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality it is India. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualise the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be."

In the next few lines Poonthanam explains why Bhaaritha bhoomi is called Karmakshethram.

Some of us can only claim that Bhaaritham Bhoomi is our Janma Kshethra and not our Karma kshethra. Even then poet assures that Naama sankeerthanam will purify our mind where ever we live because Bhagavaan is beyond time and place (kaaladeshaavadhiva yaam nirmuktham-Naaraaya neeyam). So, irrespective of where we live, let us chant divine names of Bhagavaan along with Shri Poonthanam and millions of other devotees:

*Krishna! Krishna! Mukunda! Janaaradana!
Krishna! Govinda! Naaraayana! Hare!
Achyuthaananda! Govinda! Maadhava!
Sachithaananda! Naaraayana! Hare!*



Sri Govindarajaswamy

Njanappaana 26

Karma beejam atheennu mulakkendoo
 Brahma lokathirikkunnavark alkkum
 Karma beejam varattikkalanjutan
 Janmanaasam varutthenamenkilum
 Bhaarithamaaya ghandamozhinjulla
 Paarilengumeluthall a nirnnayam

The seed of karmaas (karmabeejam) of the souls dwelling even in Brahmaloaka (brahmalokatthirikk unnavarkalkkum) has to be sprouted (mulakkendoo) from that place or Bhoomi (atheennu). Instant (utan) freedom from or destruction of the cycle of birth (and death) (janmasaasham varutthenamenkilum) by frying (varattikaalanju) the seed of karmam (karmabeejam) is definitely(nirnnayam) not easily done (eluthalla) in any other region than Bhaaritha khandam (Bhaarithamaaya khandamozhinjulla) .

The fact that seeds of the souls dwelling in all the other 13 worlds have to be sprouted in Bhaaritha indicates the greatness of Bhaaritha bhoomi. Poet says that this Bhaaritha is actually greater than even the Sathya loka. The word "seed" or "beejam" reminds us how a tree grows from a small seed, matures over a period of time and then gives fruits. Even though the fruits appear on the branches of the trees, the invisible seed is the source of all the visible fruits. Likewise, we enjoy or suffer the fruits of our karmam that was sown by ourselves. When the results of these karma seeds mature to be ready to be experienced we experience them in this bhoomi or in any other worlds. Some results can be experienced only in Bhoomi and some are experienced by our subtle bodies in the other worlds.

Just as karmaas can only be done and accumulated here, destruction of karmam by frying the seeds also is possible only here. A fried seed will not sprout even in the most desirable conditions. Seeds of karma fried in the fire of knowledge will never sprout and mature anywhere and will not yield any fruits. In other words, when the seeds of karma are fried in the fire of knowledge, then all our karmaas become Nishakaama karmam (actions with renunciation of fruits) and we become free from the bondage of karma. Freedom from the bondage of karma is moksham. Bhagavan also says in Gita: "Njanaagni: sarvakarmaani Bhasmasaath kurutherjuna". Here "bhasmasaath kuruthe" indicates complete destruction of the karmaas at the seed level. Shankaraacharyar says that the seed of karmam is Kaamam or desire. So if we destroy the desire, resulting karmam will be "Nishakaama Karmam". So bhagavan says:

"Jahi sathrum Mahabaaho! kaamaroopam duraasadam" - Hae! Mahabaho! Win over Kaama or desire, the unbeatable enemy!

With the death of kaamam, karma also dies and death of karma instantly (utan) leads souls to salvation. Word "nirnnayam" assures the validity of the statement because this is approved by scriptures and great Njaanis.

Since we are fortunate enough to be born in such a great place on earth, we should not hesitate to start our spiritual journey with out delay. Poet says that the very first and easiest step of the journey is chanting Bhagavan's divine names. With chanting of each naama, we progress in our path to salvation and we can never go wrong in this path. Chanting instantly starts frying the karmabeejaas or seeds of karma one by one and eventually free us from sorrows and sufferings.



Njanappaana 27

Athra mukhyamaayulloru bhaaratha-
mipradesamennellaru morkkanam
Yugam naalilum nallu kaliyugam
Sugame thanne mukti varuthuvaan

Everybody should remember (ellaarumorkkanam) that this place known as Bhaaratham (bhaarathamipradesh am) is such an important place (athra mukhyamaayulloru) . Out of the four yugaas (yugam naalilum), Kaliyugam is the best (nallu) to attain salvation (mukthi varutthuvaan) easily or enjoyably (sugheena).

Bhaaratham is a great place and people who are fortunate to be born in this land should always remember Her greatness. By saying "ellaarum orkkanam" or everybody should remember, poet means that we should live up to the expectations of our mother land where ever we are and we should be proud of her. In this punya bhoomi, in this Kaliyuga, one can attain moksham through the most enjoyable path of Bhakthi and naamasankeerthanam. This path, unlike other paths is very easy. There is no sacrifice, no vratham, no yanjnam, no fasting, no specific place, time or mentality is necessary to do naamajapam. Repeated chanting purifies one's mind and the power of naamam leads him all the way to Bhagavaan. Valmiki is an example of starting chanting with "mara" and to become one of the greatest Brahmarshi who taught us the greatness of the "tharaka manthram" Rama.

Some people may wonder that even though Bhaaratham is considered to be better than Sathyalokam, how can one attain moksham in Kaliyuga where performing sacrificial rites and yanjaas are difficult due to many reasons. Satsamgam is difficult in Kaliyuga because most of the people are materialistic and pursue any straight or crooked means to attain their selfish motives. Attaining salvation is the last thing in the minds of most of the people. Often worship of God is compared to elephant's bath or gajasnaanam. An elephant takes bath in a river or lake and with a clean body he gets out of water. But at the very first chance it will shower himself with the dry mud and makes himself dirty. Often we go to the temple for prayers or do pooja at home to purify our mind and next moment we knowingly or unknowingly dirty them with negative feelings of Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Mathsarya.

But Poonthaanam says that our worry about the effectiveness of Kaliyuga prayers is baseless. He swears on scriptures that Kaliyugam is the best yugam to advance easily in the spiritual path and attain salvation.

*Karmadoshanidhe Rajan! asthihyeko mahan guna:
Keetthanaadeva Krishnasya mukthasamga: param vrajeth*

"Even though, Kaliyuga has many negative qualities, there is one good thing about this yuga. Just by chanting Krishna's keerthanam and naamam, one can attain salvation".

In kaliyuga, it is said that Namasankeerthanam makes anything possible. We have heard many real life experiences of devotees about how they were saved from great calamities, how they were cured of diseases that doctors gave up on etc. Our own Melpatthoor was completely cured of his rheumatism at the young age of 26 by offering thousand manthra flowers at the feet of Bhagavaan. Then he lived as a devotee until his eighties spreading the glory of Bhagavan.

Neelakandhan Nambishan gives a very interesting point in his interpretation. He says that chanting naamam is as easy as breathing because with each breath you can chant one small naamam out of the thousand of names of Bhagavan. This air or oxygen in the air, keep us alive and we are experiencing its presence every moment. This Praana Vaayu or breath of life is alive because of the Supreme Bhagavan's power. So we are actually experiencing Lord through Vaayu Bhagavaan every moment and we should thank Bhagavaan with each breath chanting a naamam and then we will definitely very easily attain salvation.



Sri Kaliamaradhana

Njanappaana 28

Krishna! Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana!
 Krishna! Govinda! Rama! enningane
 Thirunaama sankeerthanamenniye
 Mattaethumilla yathnamarijaalum

Know (arinjaalum) that there is no other effort or attempt (that lead to salvation--mattaeth umilla yathnam) other than chanting of the divine names (naamasankeerthanam enniye) like (ingane) Krishna! Krishna! Mukunda! Janaardana! Krishna! Govinda! Rama! etc (ennu).

It is interesting to note that the word "arinjaalum" means more than just "know. The truth of his statement that there is no other effort or yathnam other than naamasankeerthanam that leads us to moksham in Kaliyuga is stated in several authoritative scriptures and proclaimed by several great sages. Because of this scriptural support Poonthaanam is able to emphatically glorify the greatness of naamam. He says there is nothing superior to japayanjam and what does Bhagavan say in Gita: "Yanjnaanaam japayanjosmi".

Now, let us look at the great meanings of each naama. Krishna naamam can have many meanings and we will take different meaning for each Krishna naamam. (There are several meanings for each naamam and one is chosen for convenience)

Krishna- "One who ploughs the field. Here field is our heart or mind. If we sow the seeds of Krishna naamam, all other dangerous weeds of Kamam, krodham, lobham, madam, moham and maathsaryam will be destroyed.

Krishna- "Karshathi ithi Krishna" means one who attracts. He is the Parmaathma who is constantly attracting the Jeevathmas. But unfortunately most of the time we swim against the current of spirituality right into the deep ocean of samsaaram.

Mukunda: "Mukthim dadaadeethi Mukunda" means one who gives salvation or moksham. Mukunda is ever ready to give freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Janaardana: One who is prayed to (ardana) by all people (jana). He hears the prayers of all people and redeems the sufferings of His bhakthas.

Krishna: "Krushyathi-ithi Krishna" meaning one who imparts Sat-Chit-Anandam or Existence- Knowledge- Bliss

Govinda: "Gam vindathi ithi" Govinda means one who protects cows or land or one's senses.

Rama: "Ramayathi ithi Rama": One who gives joy or one who attracts others. (Rama naamam is formed by taking the beejaksharaas "RA" and "MA" - seed letters that give

meaning to the word- from the two divine names of Vishnu Bhgavaan and Shiva Bhagavaan namely NaRAyana NaMAssivaya.) Rama namam helps the union of Jeevaathma and Paramaathma

By chanting the above naamas one clears all the impure weeds of one's mind (**Krishna**), moves towards Paramaathma (**Krishna**), become eligible to attain salvation (**Mukunda**) protected from the sufferings (**Janardana**) and attains bliss (**Krishna**) with the blessings of the protector of cows, land and senses (**Govinda**) and finally merges with the Paramaathma (**Rama**).



Njanappaana 29

Athu chinthichu mattulla lokangal
 Pathimoonnilumulla janangalum
 Mattu dweepukalaarilumull orum
 Mattu khandangalettilumul lorum
 Mattu moonnu yugangalilullorum
 Mukti thangalkku saadhyamallaykayaal
 Kalikaalthe, bhaaratha khandathe
 Kalithaadaram kaivananageedunnu

Thinking about that (athu chinthichu) (truth about Bhaaratham)) all the living souls in the other thirteen worlds (lokangal pathimunnillulla janangalum), those who are living in the other 6 islands (mattu dweepukalil aarilumullorum) , those who are living in the other eight continents (mattu khandangalettilumul lorum) and all who lived in the other three yugaas (mattu moonnu yugangalilullorum) , realizing that salvation is not possible for them (mukthi thangalkku saadhyamallaykayaal), pay respect both to Bhaaratha and the Kalikaala or Kaliyuga with folded hands (kalikaalatthe, bharathakhanadatthe kalithaadaram kaivanangunnu) .

What does "athu chinthichu" or "thinking about that" mean? In the 27th Stanza poet reminds us: "Everybody should remember that this place known as Bhaaratham is such an important place. Out of the four yugaas, Kaliyugam is the best to attain salvation." So thinking about these two factors, all the souls lived outside Bhaaratha varsha and all who lived in the other three yugaas paid respect to this auspicious time and this auspicious land.

Other thirteen lokaas or worlds are: 1. Sathya lokam 2. Thapolokam 3. Janalokam 4. Maharlokam 5. swarlokam 6. Bhuvvarlokam 7. Athalam 8. Vithalam 9. Suthalam 10. Thalaathalam 11. Mahathalam 12. Rasathalam 13. Paathaalam. The first six worlds are above Earth and the last seven are below earth.

Other six islands or dweepams are Plaksha dweepam, Shaalmala dweepam, Kusa, Krouncha, Shaaka and Pushkara dweepams.

Other six continents or regions are 1. Ilavrita Region 2. Bhadrasha Region 3. Harivarsha Region 4. Kethumaala Region 5. Ramyaka Region 6. Hiranmaya Region 7. Kuru Region 8. Kimpurusha Region.

Other three yugas are 1. Krutha Yuga 2. Thretha Yuga 3. Dwapara Yuga.

Why all of them think that salvation is not possible or "mukthi saadhyamallaykayaal" in their time and place? Scriptures depict Dharmam as a bull or "vrusham", and it has four legs in Krutha yuga (chathushpaadam) . They are: Tapa, Soucha, Daya, Sathya or Religious austerity, Purity, Compassion and Truth respectively. In Krutha yuga people

had all these qualities and Dharma was completely stable. All people were saathwic or pious and only through severe penance one could realize god.

In Thretha, people have only three qualities except Tapa. Dharma was somewhat stable on three legs. One has to strive less than Krutha Yuga, but had to observe strict purity of mind and body along with compassion and truthfulness. They had to perform difficult yanjnaas and distribute their possessions with kindness. In Dwapara yuga people have only Daya and Sathya and Dharma had to balance with effort to survive on two legs. In this yuga also it was much harder to attain salvation than in Kaliyuga. They had to do Yaagaas like Raajasoom, poojaas using different mantras and thantras etc.

In Kaliyuga, only one leg is there for Dharma which is Sathya, and it is trembling insecurely on one leg. Kali encouraged by falsehood tries to destabilize the bull called Dharma.

So why do they think that they cannot attain salvation? They can actually attain salvation in any yuga. But the effort is many many times the effort or yathnam that one has to make in Kaliyuga. When compared to how effortless it is in Kaliyuga, they feel that it is impossible to get salvation in other yugaas. "Not possible" really do not mean that it is not possible but means that practically it is much harder to attain salvation. So they all desire to be born in Kaliyuga in Bhaaraatha so that they can get salvation just by chanting Bhagava's naamam. In other yugaas so much penance has to be done, so many Yanjnaas have to be performed along with daana (giving away) and purity of mind and body has to be strictly observed. But in Kaliyuga, naamasankeerthanam can be done anytime, anywhere, clean or unclean, knowingly or unknowingly and one can attain salvation by the power of Naamam.

If we are truthful, Kali cannot do anything to us and Naamasankeerthanam helps us to be truthful and strong. Leading a dharmic life we can easily progress in our spiritual path by chanting namam and eventually attain salvation. But negative temptations are all around us and it is hard to resist those. But once we step on the ladder of Naamasankeerthanam, our upward journey to merge with Bhagavaan becomes safe and trouble free with the blessings of Naami (one who bears the naamam) and the power of Naamam!



Lord MahaVishnu

Njanappaana 30

Athil vannoru pullaayittenkilum
Ithukaalam janichukonteeduvaan
Yogyatha varutheetuvaan thakkoru
Bhaagyam poraathe poyallo daivame!
Bhaaratha khandathinkal pirannoru
Maanusharkkum kalikkum namaskaaram

They (people who are in other worlds) think: Oh God! (Daivame!) (We) are not lucky enough (thakkoru bhaagyam poraathe poyallo) to be qualified (yogyatha varutheetuvaan) to be born even as a blade of grass (pullaayittenkilum) in that land (athil or in Bhaaratham), in this time (ithukaalam or Kaliyugam), (we) do namaskaaram to both the people who are born in Bhaaratha varsha (bhaaratha khandathinkal pirannoru manushyarkkum) and to Kali himslef (kalikkum).

Here word "athil" indicates Bhaaratham and "ithukaalam" indicates Kaliyugam. Calling God "Daivame" indirectly shows their sorrow and they wish that at least in their next birth, they will be fortunate to be born in Bhaaratha. Brahma Vaiavarttha Purana says: "satajanma tapa: puto janmedam Bhaarate labhet" means "after performing austerities for hundreds of births, one is born in Bhaarahta Varsha". So poet is indirectly telling us that even after getting a human birth in Bhaaratha, it is really unfortunate for some one to forget God and waste his life going after material pleasures. In Kaliyuga Bhaaratha, attaining salvation is as easy as chanting divine naamaas.

What is the use of being born as a blade of grass? Sometimes even a blade of grass that is growing near sajjanaas may get a chance to hear divine names of Bhagavaan and may be born as a pious human being and eventually attain salvation. There is a story about Poonthanam himself. There were two jack fruit trees in the poet's back yard and those trees were very fortunate to hear Namasankeerthanam and Bhagavatha paaraynam (reading) by Poonthanam for several years.

Once Poonthanam wanted to write about Vaikundham (Vishnu Bhagavan's eternal abode) and he was worried how he could realistically describe Vaikundham when he had not actually seen it. That night Bhagavan gave him a real vision of Vaikundham and in that vision or dream two resident devotees of Vaikundham showed special hospitality with lot of affection. They told him that they were the jack fruit trees in his back yard which broke and fell a few days ago due to severe wind and rain. Since they were lucky to have satsangam with Poonthaanam for several years, they attained salvation. Poonthaanam was very surprised to see that even trees can get salvation by listening to Naama sankeerthanam and stories of Bhagavaan. This story justifies the desire of the people in other worlds to be at least born as a blade of grass in Kaliyuga Bhaaratha.

People in the other worlds not only wish to be born here but they actually bow with respect and folded hands to all who are born here. Poet is telling this to us to remind how lucky we are and we should start naamsankeerthanam with utmost devotion with out a moment's delay. God has blessed us to be born in Kaliyuga Bhaaratha and (even if we are

not born in Bhaaratha,) Namasankeerthanam will purify our mind and satsangam will elevate us to higher states of spirituality.



Njanappaana 31

Ennellam pukazhtheedunnu mattullor
 Ennathathenthinu naam paranjeedunnu?
 Kaalaminnu kaliyugamallayo
 Bhaarathamipradesha vumallayo
 Nammalellam naranmaarumallayo
 Chemme nannai nirooppippenellarum
 Hari naamangalillathe pokayo
 Narakangalil pedi kurakayo
 Naavu koodaathe janmamathaakayo
 Namukkinni vinaasamillaykayo
 Kashtam kashtam! Niroopanam koodaathe
 Chuttu thinnunnu janmam pazhuthe naam!

Why should we tell that others are praising us like this? (first two lines) Don't we know that this kaalam is Kaliyugam, this land is Bhaaratham and we are all human beings? (lines three, four and five) Are we short of Hari's or Bhagavan's names? Are we not afraid of different types of hells? Are we born with out tongue in this janma? Do we believe that we will never be perished? (line seven, eight, nine and ten) We all should think about this in detail (chemme nannai nirooppippenellaarum - line six). Alas! alas! (Kashtam! Kashtam!) with out proper contemplation (niroopanam koodaathe) we are wasting our lives in vain (last line).

In this stanza poet blames us for wasting our precious lives by going after transient pleasures. He asks: what is the use of saying over and over again about how people in the other worlds praise us? We do not deserve any respect from anybody unless we live up to the expectations of those people and our own mother land. They pay respect to us thinking that we are fortunate to be born in this punya karmakshethra and we will make use of the great opportunity God bestowed on us.

Poet is wondering what is wrong with all of us! We are intelligent enough to know from the scriptures that this is Kaliyuga and it is easy to attain salvation in Kaliyuga Bhaaratha just by doing Naamasankeerthanam. Kali Santharanopanishad tells us explicitly that in Kaliyuga only Naamasankeerthanam is the solution to all problems. ("Kalau naasthyeva naasthyeva gathiranyadha") Why are we hesitating to chant Naamas? Is there any shortage of divine names? Vishnu shasranaamam has thousand names and we can choose any one that appeals to our mind. We can choose the simple "Rama" namam or a complicated one like "Vishvaksena". Are we not afraid of the sufferings in the hell? If we are not afraid of hell, we should not desire heaven also. We should have "samabhaavana" or we should see both sukham (happiness) and dukham (sorrow) alike. Are we not afraid of the fruits of bad karmaas? Bad Karmaas will only give rise to suffering. Why are we going deep into the samsara (materialism) by sowing wrong seeds and still expect to reap good fruits?

Why is the tongue that is used for non-stop talking become hesitant to chant divine names of Bhagavan? We act as if we do not have tongue when it comes to Naamasankeerthanam. We are shy to chant loudly because of the powerful ego. But don't we have the power of discrimination (bestowed on us by Lord) to know that once namasankeerthanam is started, power of naamam will easily take over the power of ego and our mind will get purified. Do we think that our body is eternal? If we realize how uncertain our life is and if we contemplate how helpless we are when death comes and knocks on our door, we should not waste not even one moment of our life. He sympathizes with those people who completely forget about this truth and wastes their life going after transient material pleasures with out ever turning their mind towards God.

In this context, let us remember what Sage Narada sked Bhagavan and Bhagavaan's reply. Sage Narada asked Lord where His permanent abode was. Is it Vaikundham? Is it Golokam? Is it Bhoomi?

Bhagavan said:

*"Naham vasami Vaikundhe, Na yogi hrudaye ravau, Math bhaktha: yathra gaayanthi
thathra thishtaami Narada"*

He would not reside in Vaikunta, the celestial abode, nor in the hearts of great tapasvis [sages], nor permeate in the Solar system, but would stand in attention wherever His devotees do sing His name [sankeertanam] .

Bhaktha Mirabai says:"This treasure of Bhagavaan's naamam, none can rob, this treasure does not reduce if you draw from it, and in fact, it grows at a compound rate"

Njanappaana 32

Ethra janmam prayaasappettikkaal am
 Athra vannu pirannu sukruthathaal
 Ethra janmam malathil kazhinjathum
 Ethra janmam jalathil kazhinjathum
 Ethra janmangal mannil kazhinjathum
 Ethra janmam marangalai ninnathum
 Ethra janmam marichu nadannathum
 Ethra janmam parannu natannathum
 Ethra janmam mrugangal pashukkalai
 Marthya janmathin mumbe kazhichu naam

How many previous lives (Ethra janmam) we struggled (prayaasappettittu) to be born in this time(ikkaalam) and because of the good deeds done in the past ((sukruthangal) we are born here (athravannu pirannu). How many lives we would have spent in human and animal excretions, how many lives we would have spent in water (line three and four), how many lives we would have spent in mud, how many lives we would have spent as trees (lines five and six), how many times we died, how many lives we would have spent flying in the sky as a bird (lines seven and eight), how many lives we would have spent as cows and other animals before we took birth as a human being (lines nine and ten)?

The word "ikkaalam" or "this time" refers to Kaliyuga and word "athra" indicates Bhaaritham. First line says that only after several lives of suffering and struggle one gets the opportunity to be born in this Kaliyuga. Birth in Kaliyuga is considered to be very near "Moksha praapthi" or getting salvation because even the mere chanting of naamam leads us to moksham. Poet also says that only good deeds performed in the past make one eligible to be born in Bhaaritham. Even the inhabitants of heaven want to be born in Kaliyuga Bhaaritha so that they can free themselves from the repeated cycle of birth and death by performing "Nishkaama Karma" or karmaas with renunciation of results. Results of the accumulated good karmaas and bad karmaas that can be experienced by the subtle body are experienced in heavens and hells respectively. So, to take birth in Bhaaritha, one should have accumulated some good deeds in the previous janmaas, results of which can only be experienced by a human body born in Bhaaritha. So poet says that it is a very unique opportunity to get a life in Kaliyuga in Bhaaritha.

Before getting here, we do not know how many lives we lived as amoebas, worms and small insects in animal and human excretions. After that we may have promoted to the state of inhabitants of water. Even there, as a small fish we would have lived with fear of larger fishes. Then we might have spent miserable lives in mud in constant fear of being consumed by birds and other larger and cruel animals. Afterwards, we might have spent lives as trees suffering rain and shine and heat and cold. How many times our subtle body

would have experienced the time lapse between one death and next birth? That time might have been filled with horrifying experiences in the hell owing to the sins committed. Who knows how many lives we would have spent as animals knowing nothing better than "animal instinct"?

It is interesting to note the effect of fall from human life when compared to the effect of fall or going backward from lives of lower species. Let us take the example of a high rise building with, say, 40 storeys. Imagine fortieth storey is where Jeevathma merges with Parmaathma.

Imagine that we climbed the first two storeys and we happen to fall. The impact and momentum of the fall will be less than the fall from any higher storeys of the building or in other words, the impact will be directly proportional to the height of the building. Scriptures say that in the spiritual world also the effect of the fall from highest species, human beings are much more serious than falling from other species. The reason is that human beings are blessed with the power of discrimination or vivekam and animal species are guided only by instincts. Other living beings like trees also have no choice other than following the commands of Prakruthi or Nature. When we choose wrong direction deliberately ignoring our ever guiding conscience, repercussions are disastrous. Animals are just experiencing the results of the past karmaas and after exhausting those through several janmaas in different species and kinds, finally gets the chance to be born as a human being. Poet says that human life is so precious and sought after by souls in all other worlds that we should cherish every moment of our life and devote it for knowing God by any prescribed method. In Kaliyuga the prescribed method is Naamasankeerthanam.

In this context, it is appropriate to remember the one sloka from Mukundamala to reinforce the importance of Shri Poonthaanam's advice-

*ashcahryam etaddhi manushyaloke
Sudhaam parithyajya visham pibanthi
Naamani Naaraayna gocharaani
Thyaktvanya vaacha: kuhaka: pathanthi*

"The greatest wonder in human society is this: People reject the life-giving nectar of Bhagavaan's names and instead drink poison by speaking about everything else".



Lord Sri Krishna

Njanappaana 33

Ethrayum panippettingu maathaavin
Garbha paathrahil veenatharinjaalum
Pathu maasam vayattil kazhinju poy
Pathu pantheeraandunniyaa yittum poy
Thannethaanabhimaan ichu pinnedam
Thannethaanariyaath e kazhiyunnu

Please understand or know (arinjaalum) that after a lot of struggle and effort (ethrayum panippettingu), finally we come or end up in a human mother's womb (garbhapaathratthil veenathu). Ten months we survive in her womb (patthu maasam vyattil kazhinju poy) and about ten to twelve years we spend in childhood (patthu pantheerantuunniyaa yyittum poy). Rest of the life (pinnedam) we live identifying the body as "I" (thannetthaanabhima anichu) (separate from Paramaathma) and with out really knowing who we are (thannethaanariyaat he kazhiyunnu).

As explained in the previous stanza, after spending several janmaas in different animal forms, a soul gets a unique chance to be born as a human and takes birth in a mother's womb. It is said that the baby in the womb remembers all the previous janmas. During the ten months of pregnancy, the baby is trapped inside the womb with no space to move around and during that time it contemplates about his existence and promises God to lead a life completely surrendering to Him when he gets out of the womb. But during of the trauma of birth, memory of the previous janmaas is completely wiped out and the baby becomes a slave of Maya. Here the poet says "patthumaasam vayattil kazhinju poy" and this indicates that even though the child remembered and took decision to lead a detached life with attachment only to God, all the good intentions were lost during his arrival on earth. So poet describes that as a waste of time or loss of time.

Then the next ten to twelve years are spent as a playful child. Here also the word "poy" at the end of line four indicates the loss of his childhood years doing nothing to move towards God. When the baby is born he forgets about all the sufferings of the past janmaas and then starts building attachment to material things and relations influenced by the parents. Each day baby gets attached more and more to the people and things around him. If the parents do not teach him to think of God and surrender to God in the form of prayers, then the unfortunate child will never get a chance to remember or follow what he had promised God when he was in the womb. Swami Vivekananda stresses the importance of parent's role in reminding the children, their hidden love and attachment for God through daily prayers. So parents can lessen the loss of precious time as a child by giving them the faith in God which they will carry all through their life. This faith in God and love of God given during the childhood years will help them to use their precious time as adults in youth and old age more effectively to advance spiritually amidst their other material commitments.

Fifth line says that the rest of the life we live with terrible ego with out the real knowledge of who we are. So in our youth, we forget ourselves and take credit for all the success we meet with and blame others for every failures we encounter. So youth also is lost with out any contemplation about our own existence and we go after transient material pleasures. When one spends almost all of one's life with out ever thinking of a higher power who controls everything in the universe, at the fag end of life one gets depressed and confused by the material world. Because of the lack of training of the mind to think and surrender to God, we get lost in the material world. Thus the most precious human life we obtained after a lot of struggle is wasted, ready to repeat the never ending cycle of birth and death. Poet says that God gives us a chance to escape from this and it is unfortunate that we are not making use of the golden opportunity given to us.

I happened to read an explanation by an unknown author about the word "soham" and ego and I would like to share that in this context. What does "soham" mean?

It is split as

sa: + aham

He or That + I

Sa: means He, That or God and Ham means "I".

"It is the identification or dissolution of the ego with "that" or God. "I" merges with God or Easwara of the Vedas, Brahman of the Upanishads or Bhagavaan of the puraanaas. The meaning of the phrase might be expressed as follows: "I" am obviously not this body because the physical constituents of the body are changing every moment. Ultimately, the body dies. Atman the soul or self never dies – it is "That". "That" is Absolute Reality. It is the witness of all; it is what the mind does through the body. This self is always on the path of progression, which is the consciousness. This is called spiritual awareness. "

Poet says that we live all our life and die with out this spiritual awareness "soham". That is the meaning of the last line. What is the method to know ourselves or to identify ourselves with Parmaathma for materialistic people like us in Kaliyuga? Poonthaanam has one and only one solution: Naamasankeerthanam. **This solution is easily accessible to all sadhakaas or yearning devotees and can be practised anywhere at anytime. One does not need any initiation or training.**

(During praanaayaamam some people say "so" while inhaling and "ham" while exhaling. While inhaling we take God or God's power as praanavayu and leave out ahamkaaram or I while exhaling. This happens 21,600 times a day and that means we are welcoming God and driving out ego that many times- Saibaba)

Njanappaana 34

Ithra kaalamirikkuminiyen num
Sathyamo namukkethumonnillal lo

We do not know how long we will live (first line) or what is the truth (behind this world we see) (second line)

In the above two lines poet says how incapable we are of predicting the time of death. Astrologers, palmists and other future telling scientists might predict a time and physicians and nutritionists might provide advices to prolong life. But nobody who is born can avoid death. Whoever is born has to die. That is the reason we are called "marthyas" or mortals. Only Bhagavan is immortal. Even if we keep the best of health, we have seen healthy people meeting death in accidents. Life is uncertain. It can end the next moment or it can prolong for several years, sometimes more than we expect it to last. There is no rule that older people die first. Of course we all know this truth, but we never internalize the truth and make desirable changes in our life style and attitude.

Pandavaas were exiled by Kauravvas and during that time they were wandering in the forest. It was the peak of summer and all of them were very thirsty. Nakula was asked to bring some water from a nearby pond. When Nakula did not come back in a reasonable time, Sahadeva went. He also did not come back and Arjuna and then Bheema also went and did not come back. Finally Yudhishtira went and saw all of them lying dead near the pond (they were all revived later). He was about to drink water and a Yaksha told him not to drink before answering his questions or else he would have the same fate as his four brothers. Yudhishtira did not drink water and agreed to answer his questions. One of his questions was:

"What is the greatest wonder in the world?"

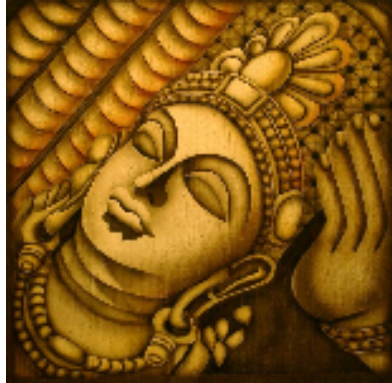
Yudhishtira answered: "The greatest wonder is that although people see living beings die everyday, they still try to live forever"

So, this mentality is not new to Kaliyuga. But in any yuga this attitude does not help. Poonthaanam is not telling us to think of death every moment and live with fear. He is reminding us not to waste time going after transient pleasures, instead he is persuading us to go after eternal happiness or eternal Truth.

When we put the second line in prose order, it reads "sathyamo onnu namukkaethumillallo" or we do not have (any knowledge of) "that one" which is the truth or sathyam. This world is not real. To say that, we should know about something that is real. Shri Nambishan gives the famous example of a rope and snake. One may misunderstand a rope as a snake. Here snake is not real, but we see the unreal snake because of the real thing rope. Once the misunderstanding is cleared, he sees the rope only as a rope. Basis of an unreal thing is a real thing. Here Poonthaanam says that Brahman is the rope or truth and because of ignorance or avidya or ajnaanam, we are not

able to see the truth. Also any time death can knock at our door. In this predicament we should not waste any moment of our precious life by going after seemingly real pleasures.

How to get started our spiritual journey in such a complicated, so called unreal world, which seems to be hundred percent real to us? The good thing is, Poonthaanam says, any saadhaka or yearning devotee at any stage of his spiritual journey can confidently travel in the path of devotion just by chanting Bhagavaan's names. Repetition of Bhagavaan's names purifies our mind and guides us to the Ultimate Truth.





Upanayanam of Lord Vamanaswamy

Njaanappaana 35

Neerppola poleyulloru dehathil
 Veerppu maathramundigane kaanunnu
 Orthariyaathe padu pedunneram
 Nerthu pokumathenne parayavoo
 Athra maathramirikkunna nerathu
 Keerthicheedunnathi Ila thirunaamam

We can see that body is like a breathing water bubble (first line). While struggling, oblivious of everything (orthariyaathe paadupedunneram), we can say that breathing becomes slow and stops (nerthu pokumathenne parayaavoo). This limited time span of life is not used for chanting divine names (last line)

Poet has compared our body to a bubble of water. There are three points of comparison. First obvious comparison is that bubbles form and die soon. We "marthiyas" or mortals take birth, live for a while and die just like the water bubbles.

Secondly, a bubble breaks with the escape of the air trapped in it. A human body is dead with the last exhalation of praanavaayu. Also this can happen any time due to several reasons just like a bubble can break any moment with the disturbances around it.

Thirdly, if we look into a water bubble, we can see our reflection in that. Even we stand still, if the bubble moves in the wind or due to some disturbance, we can see that our reflection in the bubble also shakes or moves. Also it is to be noted that even when the bubble dies, nothing happens to us or we remain unaffected. Now poet says that the relationship between our body (which is like a breathing water bubble) and Aathma or soul is exactly like this. Aathma is real and eternal. Irrespective of the body's birth or death, Aathma remains unaffected.

With out ever thinking about the uncertainty of our existence, we go after material pleasures building attachment to all sources of sorrow. Real source of happiness is the eternal Paramaathma. Influenced by maaya, or ignorance, we try to find happiness going after insignificant transient pleasures. While immersed in this search for happiness, old age and diseases weaken the body and death quietly arrives. Poet says that it is a real pity that we do not use this very short span of human life we received with lot of punyam, to chant Bhagavaan's divine names.

What makes us forget about our mortality? Desires and the extreme eagerness to achieve the material desires pushes behind our yearning for the eternal happiness. To guide our mind through the right path, Poonthaanam begs us to start naamasnkeerthanam.

I am reminded of the story of Pingala, the prostitute, in Bhagavatham. In an article by Nitin Kumar, he has described how Pingala's despondency caused by her anxiety of not getting any clients later became the cause of her happiness. Then she sang this inspirational song and these words:(this is taken from the article by Mr Nitin Kumar).

"Asha hi paramam dukham, Nairashyam paramam sukham"- Hope (aasha) indeed is misery greatest, Hopelessness (niraasha) a bliss above the rest

Pingalaa's disappointment and eternal happiness

Alas, do look at my delusion immense,
I am but a slave of the organs of sense.

Expecting fulfillment of desires did I cherish,
Men who are transitory and will but perish.

Ignoring my ever proximate eternal lover,
The indwelling soul I never did uncover.

Of true love wealth the One and only giver,
Instead I courted men who couldn't deliver.
Who cannot quench any desire became my lover,
Rather, only misery grief on me did they confer.

Selling myself uselessly afflicting my soul,
To lusty men, contemptible on the whole.

Pillared on crooked bones a shaky frame,
The human body is its famous name.

Stretched over with skin, nails and hair,
It has nine doors, regularly from where,
Pours out impurity stored inside there.

Now will I sell myself only for the price of god,
Sporting with him like Lakshmi and her lord.

Truly with me is happy Vishnu the Lord,
Perhaps of some past merit is this reward,
Inside my heart with vicious hope abroad.
He gave me disenchantment which is the sword,
Which cuts away asunder the attachment cord.

Thus giving voice to her emotion, Pingala, doing away with all hope, closed her door,
went to bed and slept peacefully and attained liberation.

Njanappaana 36 -A

Sthaana maanangal cholli kkalhichu
 Naanam kettu nadakkunnithu chilar
 Mada malsaram chinthichu chinthichu
 Mathi kettu nadakkunnithu chilar
 Chanchalaakshimaar veeduakalil pukku
 Kunchi Raamanaai aadunnithu chilar
 Kolakangalil sevakaraayittu
 Kolam ketti njeliyunnithu chilar
 Saanthi cheythu pularthuvaanaayittu
 Sandhyayolam nadakkunnithu chilar
 Ammaikkum punarchhanum bhaaryakkum
 Unmaan polum kodukkunnilla chilar
 Agni saakshini aayoru pathniye
 Swapnathil polum kaanunnilla chilar

Some people walk around shamelessly talking and quarrelling about their status (sthaanam) and pride (maanam) (first two lines). Some people walk around thinking too much about ego (madam) and rivalry (rivalry) and loose their mind (mathi) over that (lines three and four). Some people visit coquettish women's house (chanchalaakshimaar veetukalil pukku) and dance to their tunes like a circus monkey (kunchiramanaai aatunnu). Some people serve in King's palaces and show off (lines seven and eight). Some people do pooja all day for survival (lines nine and ten). Some people do not even give food or feed own mother, father and wife (lines eleven and twelve). Some people do not see their wife whom they married with the fire as witness, even in their dream (lines thirteen and fourteen).

"Shtaanam" has more than one meaning: title or status or place. "Maanam also has two meanings: pride and measure. Some people are very conscious of their status, title, their birth in a good family etc and do not want to socialize with people whom they think belong to lower status in the society. With undue pride and arrogance they fight with everybody to make the life of themselves and the lives of everybody around miserable. Also fights break out about issues such as what belongs to whom, about how much area of land belongs to one, about the correct and incorrect measurements of different things etc. Finally these immature people when they meet with failures or disappointments or undesirable results, they shamelessly walk around as if nothing has happened.

When one becomes proud of his status and accomplishments, arrogance and rivalry also takes birth in his mind. This leads one to act with out the power of discrimination. "mathi" is intelligence which gives a balanced mind. So Poonthaanam says that with arrogance and an attitude of unhealthy competition, one turns off their lamp of intelligence and moves in the darkness of ignorance.

Some immature people driven by lust become womanizers and act like circus monkeys dancing to the tune of pretty women. Some others take pride in serving and pleasing the

rich kings and landlords and decorate themselves lavishly to express their status. The word "Njeliyunnu" indicates that they forget themselves and show off like a fool.

Some other people use prayers, worship and any knowledge they have acquired as a means to make both ends meet. They do pooja, homams and yanjnaas only with the remuneration in mind. They do it like a business for survival. These group of people make Sankaraachaaryar's words meaningful: "udaranimittham bahukrutha vesham" - different outfits to feed the stomach. These people go from house to house doing pooja mechanically from dawn to dusk and with never ending desires negotiate for money and other gifts or Dakshina. The word "shanthi" indicates the job as a priest with fixed income. If the priest is not doing the pooja sincerely, then it is just like any other job for survival. Some priests accept "shanthi" in several temples and then everything is done in a hurry. Poonthaanam is teasing these types of people in lines nine and ten.

Another group of people do not even care for their parents, wife and children. They do not worry about their welfare or feeding them properly with nourishing food. This selfish and irresponsible people make the lives of their families miserable. According to Hindu Dharma, parents are "prathyaksha daivam" or God personified in the form of parents and Poonthaanam says that forgetting that truth is one of the greatest sins. All Hindu marriages are performed with Lord Agni as witness. While taking saptapadi or seven steps with the bride, bridegroom promises:

"O dear damsel, by the first step may Lord Vishnu bless us with plenty of food, by the second step with bodily strength, by the third step success in the performance of all vows, by the fourth step happiness, by the fifth step cattle and all other wealth, by the sixth step may all the seasons be favourable to us, by the seventh step may Lord Vishnu bless that we may together perform all the ordained Vedic rites successfully. By taking seven steps with me you have become my most intimate friend and well-wisher. I shall never swerve from this relationship. God has united us. We shall perform all our actions together with mutual love and full faith in each other. We shall always be of one mind. We shall perform all our religious duties together. We are complementary to each other. May we have good progeny and prosperity" (with immense gratitude, I have taken this part from respected S.N Sathriji's Geocities site)

It is deplorable to ignore the wife after all these promises one made in front of Agni bhagavan. If they do not take care of their own wife, definitely we can guess what they are up to. "Even in dream they do not think of their wives" indicates the seriousness of the situation.

Poonthaanam expressed all these ideas in a teasing or ridiculing way, but he brings the seriousness back by reminding us to chant Bhagavaan's divine naamam so that we will not belong to the above group of people. Nammasankeerthanam will purify our mind and take us far away from these kind of people. Naamasnakeerthanam will bless us with satsangam.

Njnanappaana 36 B

Sathukkal kandu sikshichu chollumbol
 Sathruveppole krudhikkunnoo chilar
 Vandithanmaare- kkaanunna nerathu
 Nindichathre parayunnithu chilar;
 Kaanka nammude samsaaram kondathre
 Viswameevannam nilpuvennum chilar
 Brahmanyam kondu kunthichu kunthichu
 Brahmavu-meni- kkokkayennu chilar
 Ardhaasaykku viruthu vilippaan
 Agnihothraathi cheyyunnithu chilar
 Swarnangal navaratnagale- kkondum
 Ennam koodaathe vilkkunnithu chilar

Sajjanaas or good people see this and advise them; they see them as enemies and get angry with them (lines fifteen and sixteen). Some people when they see individuals who are worthy of respect, behaves disrespectfully (lines seventeen and eighteen). Some people think that the whole universe has a stable existence because of their capability to talk (lines nineteen and twenty). Some people think that they are better than even Brahma because of their undue pride as a Brahmana (lines twenty one and twenty two). Some people do Yanjnas like Agnihothram to get money and titles (lines twenty three and twenty four). Some people sell huge quantities of gold and gems (to make money with out limit) (last two lines).

Who is satthukkal or sajjana or good people? "Sajjanasya hrudayam navaneetham, yadvadanthi kavayashtadaleekam, anyadehavilasath parithaapa sajjano dravathi no navaneetham"- "the heart of sajjanaas or good people are softer than even butter. Butter melts only when it gets heated. But the hearts of sajjanaas melt when they see the sufferings of others or by the heat of other's suffering".

Sajjanaas try to advise when they see others following the wrong path. They want to save them from disaster and miseries. But because of the lack of knowledge to understand the good intentions behind their advice, fools see them as their enemies. They only want to hear what is pleasing or "preyaskaram" and give a deaf year to the words that are good or "sreyaskaram". The most surprising thing is that even when these fools get angry, sajjanaas do not get angry at their anger. They peacefully pray Lord to give them good mind (satbuddhi) and stay away from them.

We should be very blessed to meet mahaatmas or great souls. When we get such a chance we should pay respect to them and seek their advice and blessings to advance ourselves in our spiritual path. Instead some egoistic people treat them disrespectfully. Poonthanam is hurt to see such people wasting their precious life in ignorance.

When somebody tries to act like he is the most indispensable individual, often he is compared to a house lizard sitting on the ceiling. If the lizard thinks that he is the one who supports the ceiling, what is more ridiculous than this? But in real life, Poonthanam says there are people who really think and act as if they are the architects of the destiny of everybody in this world. He ridicules them saying that they think the stability of the universe rests in the words that come out of their mouth.

A Brahmin is a person who has the highest spiritual knowledge (brahmavidya) . It is a very difficult process of discipline of body, mind and senses, and people irrespective of their birth or class, who successfully completes this spiritual training are recognized as brahmins. Athri maharshi says:

"By birth, every man is a Shudra (an ignorant person). Through various types of disciplines (samskaras), he becomes a dwija (twice born). Through the studies of scriptures, he becomes a vipra (or a scholar). Through realization of supreme spirit (brahmajnana), he becomes a brahmin."

Poonthanam says that some who are not Brahmins in the real sense of the word (with out spiritual knowledge), takes pride in their false Braahmanyam and acts as if they are superior even to Brahma Devan!! In other words, they raise their false Brahminhood even above Brahma!

When people perform yaagas or yanjnaas, they get different titles. These titles are only to show how knowledgeable they are. Because of their knowledge ordinary people show lot of respect for them by giving gifts and money as dakshina. But some people do yaagaas and get the titles like Agnihothri for the sole purpose of collecting money and gifts. They see it as a money making business. Desire for money (arthaasha) eliminates the element of spirituality in performing the yaagaas like Agnihothram.

When one sells things like rice, vegetables etc for profit, their desire for money can be some what justified because they are at least selling things people need to survive. As long as they do not exploit the clients, we can see an element of "helping others attitude" or "Paropakara manasthithi" in that. But what if somebody sells limitless quantity of gold and gems? They are doing this only to make money and in reality they are encouraging client's attachment to those material possessions. They who sell these in abundance are actually pulling ignorant people more towards materialism and Poonthanam says there is no dharmam or punyam in their action.

Poonthanam ridicules several kinds of people that he see around him. He is sad that they are wasting their precious time. He hopes these lines ridiculing different kinds of people will help to open the eyes of at least some fortunate and blessed people and they will turn to Bhagavan. He begs us to start chanting naamam and promises that it will guide us through out our journey of life and lead us to salvation.



Sri BhooVarahaswamy

Njanappaana 37

Mathebham kondu kachavadam cheythu
 Uthama-thuragangala thu-kondum
 Athrayumalla kappal vechittu-
 methra nedunnithardham siva! siava!
 Vrithiyum kettu dhoortharaayepozhu m
 Ardhathe kothichathre nashikkunnu
 Ardhamethra valareyundaayaalum
 Thripathiyaakaa manassinoru kaalam

Some people do business with elephants and the best breed of horses (line one and two) and some others use ships for business (athrayumalla kappal vecchittu). Alas! alas! how much money they earn like this? (ethra netunnithartham siva siva) Extreme attachment towards wealth makes them forget about their own jobs and responsibilities and they become spendthrifts l(lines five and six). Some minds are never contented even if they have abundant wealth (line seven and eight).

This fact of owning elephants and horses solely for the purpose of making money is more true now (especially in Kerala) than in Poonthaanam's time. We see that elephants owned by private citizens are shuttled back and forth in trucks from temple to temple during festival season. Most of the time they are deprived of sleep and enough food and are on their feet continuously for days together. Many see the elephants as a source of income and during other seasons, they are used for moving tree trunks from forests and other heavy objects around. If Poonthaanam lived today, not being able to see the atrocities he would have definitely gone to Himalayas never to come back. (he would have attained moksham there by doing penance) . Then we would never have been fortunate to read this beautiful poem describing the essence of vedaantha!!

We know how horses are used for races and they persuade people to gamble until they are broke. Of course using ships for business also is more popular in recent times. With the globalisation, now business across oceans is flourishing and as Poonthaanam exclaims, they all are million dollar businesses!

The definition of greed is "an extreme or excessive desire for resources including money". Rabindranath Tagore says:

"The greed of gain has no time or limit to its capaciousness. Its one object is to produce and consume. It has pity neither for beautiful nature nor for living human beings. It is ruthlessly ready without a moment's hesitation to crush beauty and life out of them, molding them into money".

Money is never enough for greedy people and that is what Poonthaanam says in the last two lines. There are a few sayings about what money can and cannot buy. In this context, it is interesting to go over and contemplate on the meaning of those words:

"Money can buy a house, but not a home. Money can buy a bed, but not sleep. Money can buy a clock, but not time. Money can buy a book, but not knowledge. Money can buy food, but not appetite. Money can buy position, but not respect. Money can buy blood, but not life. Money can buy medicine, but not health."

Let us add what Poonthanan says to the above sayings. Money can buy all transient pleasures, but not eternal happiness and peace of mind! What can buy eternal happiness and shaanthi or peace? Bhagavan is the only person who sells eternal happiness and peace and he sells it to all who surrender to Him irrespective of their status, title, birth or anything. Poonthananam says that the first and last step of surrender is Naamasankeerthanam. A forest dweller like Ratnakaran who was at the lowest step of the spiritual ladder became sage Valmiki by the power of Naamam, and Jeevanmukthas like Sage Narada and Sanaka brothers who are at the top of the spiritual world residing with Bhagavaan also chants Bhagavaan's divine names continuously.

Njanappaana 38

Pathu kittukil nooru mathiyennum
Sathamaakil sahasram mathiyennum
Aayiram panam kayyil undaakumbol
Aayutha-maakil- aascharya- mennathum
Aasayaayulla paasamithin- keennu
Ver pidaathe karerunnu melku mel

If one gets ten, he wants hundred. When he sees hundred, he wants thousand. When he gets thousand, he thinks that it will be wonderful to have more money. (Like this) One is going higher and higher on the rope of desire by strongly holding on to it.

Here desire is compared to a never ending rope. As we know the comparison tells us that even though the rope is of endless length, it is not stable. Even if the greedy person holds on to it tightly, he can fall with the rope or fall leaving the hold on the rope. Let us remember the story of a woman selling "malarpoti" or popped-rice powder (It is different from puffed rice). This woman made a living by selling popped- rice powder. She was greedy and always dreamt of making more money. While she was walking with the container with the powder on her head, she started day-dreaming about how rich she would be one day. In the day-dream she saw a beautiful house fully furnished, with nice garden, very nice kitchen and lot of servants to attend her, lot of ornaments and lot of money in the bank etc. Immersed in this dream, she walked and hit on a tree trunk. What happened next is sad. She fell and broke her arm and container fell down and broke spilling the popped- rice powder in the entire area. Dream was shattered and food for the day became her priority.

This lady's climbing was only in her dream. But if some one tries to climb higher and higher on the rope of desire treading on and knocking everybody on his way, repercussions will be much more serious and irreversible.

When greedy people climb higher and higher on this rope of desire, fall is inevitable. Sankaraachaarya says:

*Ma kuru dhana jana youvana garvam
Harathi nimeshaath kaala: sarvam*

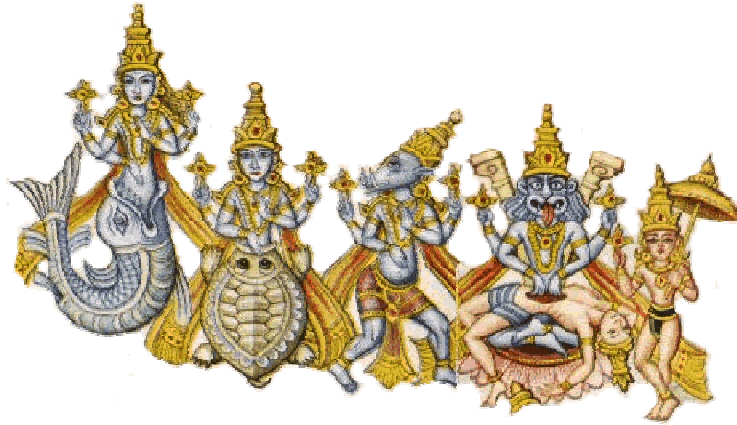
"Do not be proud of wealth, kindred and youth, time will take away all these in a moment."

Furthur Sankaraachaarya explains the pathetic condition of ordinary people like us:

*Angam Galitam Palitam Mundam
Dasanaviheenam Jaatam Tundam
Vriddho Yaati Griheetvaa Dandam
Tadapi Na Munchatyaasaapindam*

The body has become worn out. The head has become bald or turned grey. The mouth has become toothless. The old man moves about with the support of crutches. Even then the attachment is so strong that he clings firmly to the bundle of (fruitless) desires.

How can we control our ever rising desires? Poonthaanam's solution is Naamsankeertthanam. Naamasankeertthanam purifies our mind and helps us to control all the six negative emotions that entangle us in this world namely: kaama, krodha, lobha, mada, moha and maathsarya.



Njanappaana 39

Sathhukkal chennirunnaalaayrdh athil Swalpamaathram kodaa chila dushtanmaar

When sajjanaas approach for financial help, some cruel (and unkind) people do not part with even a small portion of their income.

Shri Nambishan gives a beautiful definition for sajjana or satthukkal: "theerthee thurvanthi theertthaani swanthasthena gadaabrutha" meaning "sajjanaas make the theertthams pure by the Chaithanyam or brilliance of the Bhagavaan residing in their heart". Sajjanaas or Satthukkal approach for financial help only for the good of the world and not for themselves. But some wealthy and unkind people forget about the importance of offering help to deserving or needy people. "Paathraadanam" or giving to deserving people is considered to be a punyakarma. But these greedy people do not know that sajjanaas will help them distribute their God given fortune to deserving people or help them utilise their wealth for good purposes.

Instead of pleasing these well wishers of the world, they treat them with disrespect. Real sajjanaas do not even get upset with the strange behaviour of these ignorant people.

"dukkheshu anudhvigna manaa: sukheshu vigathaspruha: veetharaaga bhaya krodha: stithadhee: mniruchyathe" meaning " He whose mind is not perturbed in pain , who has no longing for pleasures , who is free from desire , fear and anger--he is called a sage of firm wisdom ". Sajjanaas exemplify this statement and never get annoyed by their arrogance, instead they pray for them.

We may belong to any one of the above groups of people or we may have many of the negative qualities of different groups of people Poonthaanam described. But Poonthaanam consoles us and tells us how we can slowly get rid of the negative qualities of our impure mind and purify them. He says that Naamasnakeerhtnam washes away all the impurities and helps to set our priority to serve Bhagavaan and His devotees.



Udipi Sri Krishna

Njanappaana 40

Chatthupom neram vasthramathu polum- othidaa kondu povaan orutharkkum

At the time of death, none (jeevaathma) can take even the clothes that one wears.

It is very interesting to look at the very first word "chatthupom" which can be split into two small words "chatthu" and "pokum" ("pom" is a short form of "pokum"). Obviously the meaning of "chatthu pokum neram" is at the time of death. But let us ask this question: Who is dying? Who is going? The answer that comes immediately in our mind is "I die and go". But if we think a little bit deep, we can see the answers for the two questions are different.

The answer to the first question "who is dying?" is "body or shareeram". It is the Dharmam of body to die because it is born. For anything that is born, death is inevitable. Answer to the second question "who is going?" is "I" or jeevathma who is a part of Paramaathma. Dharmam of Jeevathma is to exhaust the experiences of karmaas and join Paramaathma as soon as possible. So, the body dies and jeevathma escapes the body when the prarabdha karma is exhausted and the body falls. Does the dead body care what it is wearing? Does the dead body care what is burnt along with it? It can be sandalwood, gold and silver or any junk we see in our yard. So, body does not take anything with it when it is burnt, and all are burnt to ashes along with the body.

Now does the jeevathma take anything with it? Yes, it takes the punya and paapa karmaas with it and wait to experience the results of those when it takes birth again or if it has done enough punyam to join Bhagavan it will merge with Paramaathma which is it's final goal. Jeevathma does not take anything other than the punya, paapa karmaas and not even the clothes we are wearing at the time of death. Poontaanam says that absolutely no material belongings can be taken with us when the body dies and jeevathma escapes the body.

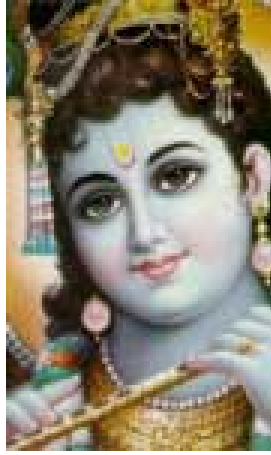
The basis of world or samsaaram is "dehabhimaanam" or the feeling that "I am the body". To reinforce the fact that we are not the body, Poonthaanam brought the word "vasthram". Our body is only a "vasthram" or clothes of our soul and just like a cloth gets old and worn out by use, body gets old and worn out with time. At this context, it is apt to remember Bhagavaan's words in Bhagavad Gita:

"Vsansi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grihnati naro aparnai, thata sarirani vihaya jirnanyanyani sanyati navani dehi"-The soul changes the bodies after their decay as a person changes his old and dirty clothes.

In Tamil language, instead of "chatthu poy", "satthu poy" is used and in one of his Naaraayneeyam or Bhaagavatham discourses, Shri Nochur Venkitaraman said that actually the Tamil "satthu poy" is the correct usage because it is the "satthu" or jeevaathma chaithanyam that leaves the body. I was reminded of that when expanding the expression "chatthu poy".

Poonthaanam is sad that even when we know and see everyday that we cannot take anything except punyam and paapam with us when we die, we still try to accumulate wealth and possessions and hold on to them until they are forcefully removed from us by death of the body. How to overcome this extreme attachment and save ourselves from the cycle of repeated birth and death?

Let us surrender to that person who controls the Kaala chakram, who is beyond Kaalam or time by chanting His divine names with Shri Poonthaanam and millions of devotees all around the world.



Njanappaana 41

Pashchathapam oru ellolam illathe
Viswasa paathakathe karuthunnu
Vitthathil aasha pattuka hethuvayi
Sathyatthe thyajikunnu chilaraho!

With out feeling a speck of remorse or repentance (first line), some consider breaching the trust bestowed on them (second line). Alas! (aho!). Due to desire for wealth (line three), some people give up on truth (sathyatthe thyajikkum chilar).

Let us look at the word Pascchaatthaapam. It can be broke into: Pascchaath + thaapam. This means remorse (thaapam) after (pascchaath) committing the sin. This pascchatthaapam or remorse demands a specific attitude of the mind. Mind should feel sorry for the sin one committed and should be eager to compensate or make a difference through atonement. So we can see that pascchatthaapam or remorse is the first step of atonement.

Poonthaanam says that some people do not have even an iota of remorse. They do not repent after ridiculing and hurting sajjanaas when they ask for help. In addition to this attitude, they cheat people left and right to reach where they want to reach. Some are vicious enough to resort to any crooked ways to meet their goal and do not hesitate to step on anybody to climb up their ladder or rope of desire. They do not know the meaning of "pascchaatthaapam praayascchtham" or feeling remorse is atonement.

There is no apt word in English for the Sanskrit word "sathyam" because the Vedic definition of "sathyam" is "sathyam bhoothahitham priyam" or words that bring benefit to all living beings are called sathyam. What we usually use is the English word "truth" and this actually is the correct translation for the Sanskrit word "rutham". "Rutham" or "truth" is describing things exactly as you see them.

Here Poonthaanam says that because of the extreme desire for wealth, some people are not hesitant to give up sathyam or they resort to harsh words and actions that are harmful to all living beings or they become adharmic. (If we take the regular meaning for sathyam, Poonthaanam means that due to extreme greed some people give up on truth to achieve their goal.) The word "aho" or "alas" expresses Poonthaanam's sympathy for the unending desire and ajnaanam or ignorance of some people around him. There is a saying "the servant of desire or asha is the servant of all. But all are his servants whose servant is asha or desire.'

At this context I want to share what I read about King Yudhishtira's "arappoli" or "half-truth". Bhima killed the elephant called Aswatthaama that belonged to King Indravarma. All Pandavaas acted as if Dronaachaarya's son Aswatthaama was killed. Then Drona asked King Yudhishtira who is dharmam or righteousness personified, to confirm his valiant son's death. First King Yudhishtira told "Aswatthaama hatha"(ashtaama is dead) loudly and then he said "kunjara" (elephant) in a low voice. Because of the noises of all

the conches and other loud noises in the battle field Drona could not hear the last part "kunjara" or elephant and he believed that his beloved son was dead. Then Drona sat on the floor and meditated Krishna with with this manthra:

Anaayaasena maranam, vina dainyena jeevanam

Dehi mae krupaya Vishno! thvayi bhakthim achanchalam.

"A life with out hardships and an end that is peaceful, this is all I ask of you, Krishna and unswerving devotion for you."

It is said that Yudhishtira did not break sathya when he said the first part "Aswatthaama hatha" because he had to say that to win the war and establish dharma. But when he said with a calculated mind "kunjara" in a low voice with the intention of misguiding Drona which was against dharma, he and his ever floating chariot touched the ground. Even though technically he did not tell a lie, it was adharma to make Drona believe that his son was dead. So it became asathya. This is one interpretation of the incident.

Poonthaanam is very observant of all the people around him and he explains the characteristics of them to warn us. He advises "beware of all these kinds of people I mentioned above who are not sajjanaas and do not ever belong to those groups". Because he experienced the power of naamam, he is an advocate of Naamam and begs us to start Naamasankeerthanam with out a moment's delay to make desire our most obedient servant.



Lord MahaVishnu

Njanappaana 42

Sathyamennathu brahmam-athu- thanne

Sathyamennu karuthunnu satthukkal

Sathyam or Reality is Brahman and knowledgeable people or jnanaanis consider Brahman as the only Reality

In this stanza, the word "sathyam" means "reality". The only reality is Brahman. Avidya or ignorance masks this truth and makes us identify ourselves with the body. So we take body and its surroundings as real and separate from the one essential reality.

Advaita vedantins always quote the metaphor of clay and a pot made of clay. Clay existed before the pot maker processed and made the pot. And after the pot is broken, clay, of which it is made of, is still there. So "Sathyam" or "real" exists in past, present and future periods of time. Pot was not there in the beginning and pot does not exist anymore after it breaks. Here clay is the only Sathyam or real. Pot is "mithya" or it has only a dependent reality. We cannot say that pot is unreal or false because it is made of clay and clay is present there. So pot is not "asathyam" or "unreal" or false, but it is "mithya". There is no exact equivalent word in English for "mithya".

Vedantins say that Brahman and this world have a similar relationship of clay and clay-pot. So world has a dependent reality on Parabrahma or world is "mithya". Sankaraacharya's words are "brahma sathyam jaganmithya". During Mahapralaya or great floods, world did not exist and present world will again perish after billions of years at the time of next dissolution. Brahman existed before that, it is existing during the existence of the world and will exist after the dissolution of the universe. So in reality world and brahman are the same. It is nothing but Brahman in essence. So everything in the world including all living and nonliving beings are "mithya".

Further Vedantins say that only in the Vyaavaharika dasha we can even say "brahma sathyam jaganmithya". According to Sankaraacharya, there are three levels or planes 1. Paramarthika or transcendental sattha 2. Vyavaharika or empirical sattha 3. Prathibhasika or illusory sattha. Brahman or Sathyam is Paramarthika sattha that exists always (in past, present and future) as changeless consciousness. World is Vyavaharika sattha with birth, death and several changes. Imagining a rope as a snake is Prathibhasika sattha because when the illusion is removed we understand that it is only a rope. When we take the definition of sathyam, we can see that Brahman is the only thing that is sathyam and world is "mithya".

Poonthaanam expressed the same idea in the above two lines. But he tells us affectionately patting us on our shoulders that we need not break our head about what is real, unreal or mithya etc. We do not need to know all these complicated words of vedantins. We sincerely feel that the world is real and ignorance or avidya causes this feeling in us. But Poonthaanam has a vidya or solution to remove the ignorance. He says

that when the deepam or lamp of Naamasankeerthanam is lit on our tongue or in our mind, all the darkness of ignorance or avidya slowly disappears giving way to the paramaathma chaithanyam and all these difficult terms dissolves in that light to give us realization of the Sathyam.



Sri Bala Krishna

Njanappaana 43

Vidya kondariyendathariya athe
Vidwaanennu nadikkunnithu chilar
Kumkumathinte gandhamariyaathe
Kumkukumam chumakkum pole garddabham

Some do not even know knowledge of "what" has to be acquired by vidya and still act as if they are vidwaans or scholars. This is like a donkey carrying kumkumam or saffron with out knowing the smell of it.

Let us look at the meaning of the first word "vidya". The root word for Veda and Vidya is "vid" means "to know". Kanchi Kamakoti Shri Chandrasekhara Saraswathi says that "Vidya means a work that imparts knowledge, that sheds light on the truth of religion. Even though "vid" means "to know", the word does not connote every type of knowledge. The "vid" in vidya means knowledge of the truth".

We normally use "education" to translate Vidya. But actually Vidya is "that knowledge by knowing which one comes to know everything or we can call that Brahma Vidya". So Brahma Vidya only deserves to be called Vidya. When we do not know what is vidya, how can we know what needs to be known by vidya and how to acquire vidya? Poonthanam says that some self -proclaimed Vidwaans or scholars do not know even the real meaning of vidya and what knowledge is their goal.

At this context, it is nice to explore the word "avidya" or ignorance also. When Vidya does become Avidya? This happens when the education we pursue dissolves the "wisdom" in knowledge pertaining to transient world, when knowledge ends with information about the world we see and experience everyday and when spirituality completely dissolves in the materialism. At this point, one seeks only material pleasures which are far from eternal happiness. Avidya is often described as a deep rooted tree with six branches namely: kama, krodha, moha, mada, lobha and maastharya. Only with Vidya or knowledge of the Brahman, one can cut off the branches and destroy the tree of Avidya along with its deep roots.

Poonthaanam compares the ignorance of a self -proclaimed scholar to a donkey which carries the sweet smelling saffron. The donkey has no clue that it is carrying such a sweet smelling bundle on his back. Even though the smell of saffron permeates his nostrils, he does not know how to discriminate and appreciate the sweet smell of saffron from the smell of a bundle of nasty and dirty clothes he was carrying the previous day. Poonthanam used this metaphor to reinforce that these false scholars who has no knowledge about Paramaathma are as stupid as a donkey.

In Mundaka Upanishad, a disciple called Shaunaka is asking Sage Angiras about Vidya. Angiras explains about two types of Vidya: Para vidya and Apra vidya. According to Swami Atmananda saraswathi: "Apra Vidya encompasses the entire spectrum of 'objects', that is, anything that can be objectified by our senses or mind. Anything that can

be 'seen' is an object of Apra Vidya. Under this category comes all our worldly knowledge, science, arts, commerce, management, technical knowledge etc. Apra Vidya shall help us to make a living, have a dignified & respectable life, have a thoughtful intelligent mind, but never ever hope that you shall move towards omniscience. This is not the way for the fulfillment of such an aspiration. The second category of knowledge is the so called Para Vidya, or Higher Knowledge. The teacher says that by Para Vidya is meant 'that knowledge' by which the imperishable is known."

Paravidya leads us to that "self" we reach after negating everything-"nethi, nethi" or "not this, not this". It is the knowledge of that "self" from which this world and the world itself springs forth.

Poonthaanam assures that Namasankeerthanam removes avidya from our minds and leads us from apra vidya to para vidya in the most easy and enjoyable way. Naamasankeerthanam will make us aware of the paramaathma dwelling in us and we will never be again like the ignorant donkey carrying the saffron.

Njanappaana 44

Krishna Krishna! Niroopichu kaanumpol Thrishna konde bhamikkunnithokkey um

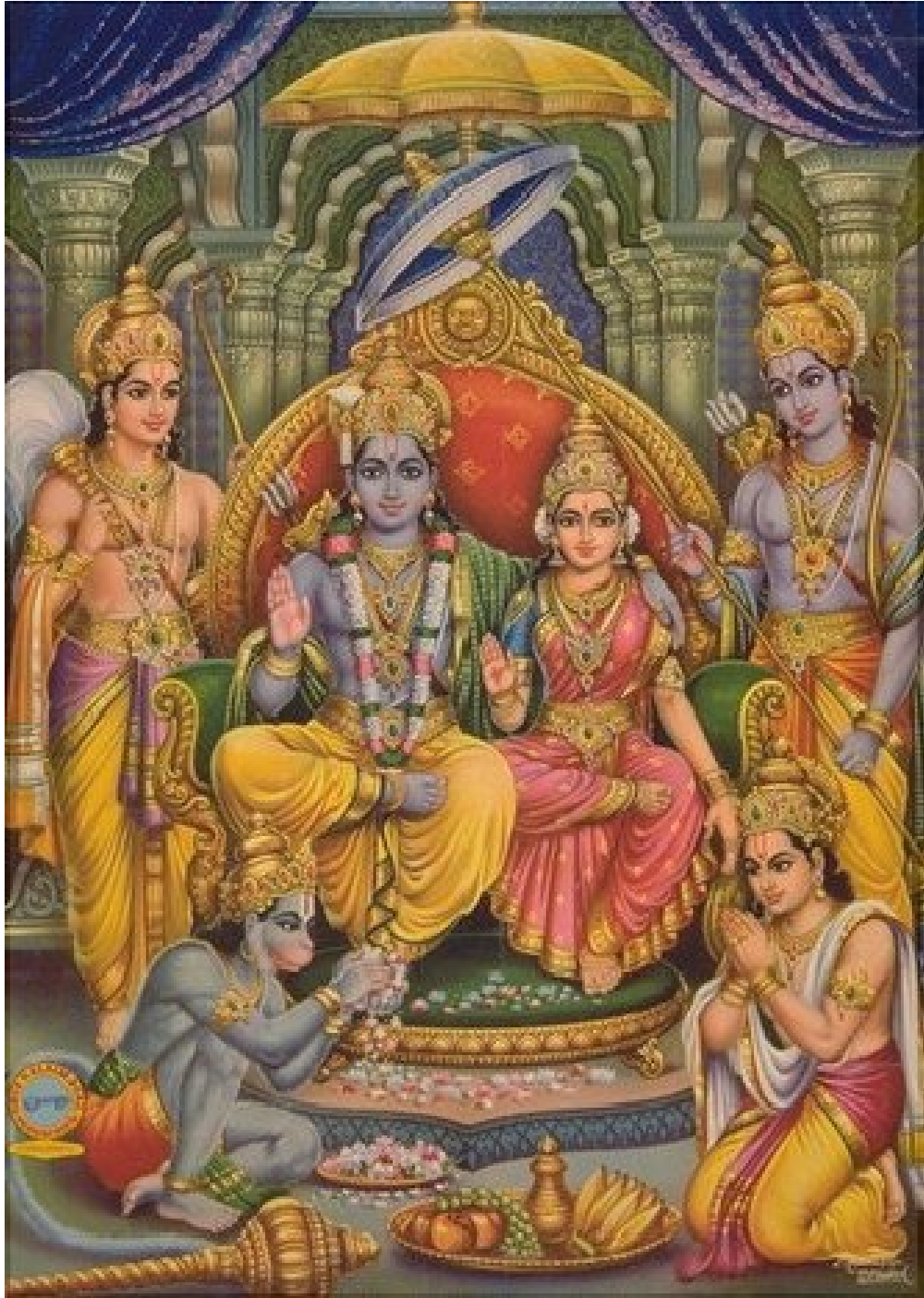
1. When one thinks deeply about all these, one can see that desire is the root cause of all illusion or
2. When we think of Krishna and try to see Him in everything, we understand that desire is the root cause of all illusion. .

We can take the meaning of the above two lines in two ways. If we take first meaning, Poonthaanam is repeating the name of Krishna at the beginning to express his opinion that only Bhagavaan's namam can remove the root cause of illusion, "desire" from our mind. Even if people feel or understand temporarily that desire is the root cause of all problems, they do not do anything about that. We can say that Poonthaanam used Krshna! Krshna! as an expression instead of "Oh! God", to show how sad he was!

If we take the second meaning, Poonthaanam says that the constant or uninterrupted thought of Bhagavaan will dawn in us the realisation that desire is the root cause of all illusion. (I personally like this meaning better than the first one).

When our mind is filled with Bhagavaan's sweet presence, where is the room for any other material desires? So just by chanting Bhagavaan's divine names, mind gets purified and slowly refuses to become a servant of desires.

Here Poonthaanam repeated the naamam "Krishna" to express how, only Bhagavaan's namam can help us to remove the root cause of illusion from our heart. We can connect these two lines with the previous stanza by saying that once we understand that desire is the root cause of illusion, we become real vidwaans or scholars. This realization tells us that vidya is that knowledge by knowing which one comes to know everything. From apara vidya one can slowly progress towards achieving para vidya.



Sri Ramachandra Pattabhisekham

Njanappaana 45

Enniyenni kurayunnithaayussum
 Mandi mandi karerunnu mohavum
 Vannuvonam kazhinju vishuvennum
 Vannillallo thiruvaathirayennum
 Kumbha maasathilaakunnu nammude
 Janma nakshathram aswathi naalennum
 Sradhamundaho vrischika maasathil
 Sadyayonnum eluthalliiniyennum
 Unniyundaai velpichathiloru
 Unniyundaayi kandaavoo njaanennum;
 Konikkal thanne vanna nilamini
 Kaanamennum ozhippikkaruthennum

Count of every moment reduces our life span (first line) and desires are running up fast (second line). Onam has come, Vishu is over (third line), Thiruvathira is yet to come (fourth line), nakshathram or star "aswathi" in the month of "Kumbham" is my birthday (lines five and six), there is a death anniversary in the month of "Vruschikam" (line seven). there are several feasts (coming) (line eight), after getting a son, I will get him married and I will see his child (lines nine and ten), we should not get rid of the tenants who pay us rent from the lands we own.

These are the thoughts of a person climbing higher and higher up the ladder of desire. He does not realise that as he is climbing up the ladder of desire his count down to death also is progressing. If all our desires are fulfilled, is it possible that we can die peacefully with no lingering desires? The answer given by several knowledgeable people is "no" because nobody ever attains this state of mind after fulfilling one's material desires. Here let me use the metaphor of ghee and fire as suggested by respected S.N. Sastriji. Fire is burning and if we pour ghee to put out the fire, it only helps the fire to burn higher and higher. Fulfilling the material desires only increases the desire and attachment to worldly things. In Mahabharatham king Yayaathi says:

“Desire never ends; desire grows with feeding, like sacrificial flames lapping up ghee. Become the sole Lord of the world's paddy fields, wheat fields, precious stones, beasts, women”..... still not enough. Discard desire. This disease kills. The wicked cannot give it up, old age cannot lessen it. True happiness lies in controlling it. (Translation by Mr. P. Pal, Aadiparva 85- 12-14)

Desires are never ceased by fulfilling and experiencing them, just like how flames are increased by adding ghee to the burning fire, desires increase as one fulfills them.

People like us who are immersed in the material world think exactly like what Poonthaanam says: about Onam, Vishu, Thiruvathira, next year's Onam, Vishu Thiruvathira, birthdays, sraaddhaas, having a son and even about having a grandson. There is no end to our calculations and imaginations, eagerly waiting for events one after

another. The biggest surprise is that we are all doing all these perfectly knowing that we are not eternal and end can come any time. But that knowledge is always pushed back by the biggest optimism that "death will not knock at my door that soon".

We are all ordinary human beings immersed in material world, finding pleasure and pain in our daily lives and how can we even think of escaping this cycle of birth, death and suffering? We do not even have the "saavakaasham" or leisure to think of anything other than meeting the deadlines. What should we do? Poonthaanam assures that Naamasankeerthanam is for people like us who are fortunate to be born in this Kaliyuga. Just by chanting the divine names of Bhagavvaan, with or without sraddha, clean or unclean, before eating or after eating, while walking, sitting, driving or doing things, one can reach Bhagavaan. Poet assures that when we take one step towards Him, Bhagavan takes ten steps towards us.

Njanappaana 46

Ittharamoronnu chinthicchirikkave
Chathu pokunnu paavam Siva! Siva!

While thinking about all these things, Siva! Siva! Poor fellow falls dead.

Poonthaanam has all sympathy towards people who forget about the uncertainty of life and go after never ending material pleasures. Nobody knows when death will knock at the door. Along with doing all mundane things in life, he advises to spend at least a small amount of time to think of God and chant His divine names. In his opinion, those who are not fortunate to think of God at least by chanting His divine names deserves all sympathy. That is why he uses the words "paavam Siva! Siva!"

Let us try to elaborate on the uncertainty of life. On a daily basis lot of things happen as expected and so we feel that things are under control. Then one day something completely unexpected happens like a fast descend of an airplane. Then we realize that we never had control over the outcome of situations. To cope with these situations all religions suggest "complete surrender to God". This attitude of surrender helps to accept the uncertainty that life holds. This helps us to accept any situation regardless of our individual desires and their fulfilment. This attitude of total surrender never leaves us in the "paavam siva siva" situation. We can still dream about the most preferred outcome and work towards our dharmic materialistic goals. But when something happens differently than expected, attitude of surrender helps you accept a direction decided by a power greater than us.

How can we develop this great attitude of surrender? Poonthaanam has the perfect solution. Naamasankeerthanam will help us to surrender to God and he promises that it will bring supreme joy and peace.

Njanappaana 47

Enthinitra paranju visheshicchum Chinthicheeduvu aavolam ellaarum
 Karmathinte valippavum ororo Janmangal palathum kazhijnennathum
 Kaalaminnu kaliyugamaayathum Bharatha khandathinte valippavum
 Athil vannu pirannathum ithranaal Pazhutte thanne poya prakaaravum
 Aayussinte pramaanamillathathu m Aarogyathotirikkunn a avasthayum
 Innu naamasankeerthanam kondutan Vannu kootum purushartham ennathum
 Iniyulla naraka bhayangalum Innu vendum niroopanam okkeyum

Why did I say all these things in detail (line one)? Think (about these points as much as possible (line 2) : about the large amount of karmaas you did (line 3), about numerous births you took previous to this human birth (line 4), about the fact that this is Kaliyuga (line 5), about how big our country Bharatha is (line 6), about the fact that we are born here (line 7), about how we wasted our time (line 8), about our ignorance of how long we will live (line 9), about how we are able to keep our health (line 10), about how naamasankeerthanam will bless us with (all four) purusharthas (lines 11, 12), about the fearful hell (line 13). Please think about all these today (line 14)

Poonthannam used many lines to describe about all different kinds of ignorant people and how they waste their time. The second line tells us why he took the trouble to explain all these. Just to make us think about all he said before and in addition to think deeply about eleven important points he tells after the second line.

Let us take about karma and its effects. We came through so many janmaas and could not attain salvation. But now we have got human life and we should strive to get salvation in this precious janma with out wasting a moment. Human form is the most convenient life form to get salvation. Kaliyuga is the most suitable time to attain moksham easily. Kaamyas karmam or karmam expecting results is the root of this universe. Now let us look what prompts us to do karma? We can see that desire is behind every kaamyas karma. Unless the desire behind the karma is removed, we cannot escape from this cycle.

"Kaamyasanaam karmanaam nyaasam sanyaasam kavayo: vidu:" - "Knowledgeable people say that sanyaasam is offering all the kaamyas karmaas (karmaas expecting results) at the feet of the Lord."

Poet says in the third line that we came through many janmaas. May be we have gone through many janmaas as humans. Bhagavaan says in Gita: "After several janmmas, only realized souls come to me." So we should think that this present janma is the saadhya janmam or salvation is possible in this life itself, and strive towards that goal.

He reminds us again about our fortunate birth in Kaliyuga Bharatha, about how uncertain life is and how important it is to use every second of it wisely by thinking God through the easiest method of Naamasankeerthanam. Poonthannam says that

Naamasankeerthanam will not only remove sins, but also bless us with dharma, artha, kaama and moksha.

What is purushaartha? Here Purusha can mean either Paramaathma Chaithanyam or human being and artha here means objective or goal. So purushaartha means objectives of uniting with Purusha or objectives of man. If we take the first meaning of Purusha, the meaning of Purushartha becomes moksha and if we take the second meaning, it will include Dharma, Artha and Kama and moksha. The order of words dharma, artha, kama ad moksha are viewed differently by different scholars. One of the explanations I like best is Swami Dayanada Saraswathi's where he puts Dharma first "because the pursuit of security or artha and pleasures or kama, need to be governed by ethical standards. Artha comes second and kama comes third. Moksha is ranked last because it becomes a different pursuit only when one has realized the limitations inherent in the first three pursuits."

Poonthanam tells us that we can lead a dharmic life and work for artha or security of life in a dharmic way, desire for the righteous pleasures of life and if we incorporate Naamasnakeerthanam in our daily life, power of Naamam will bless to realize the limitations of the first three pursuits and lead us to salvation. Poonthaanam is telling this from his own experience.





Sri Geethaacharyan

Njanappana 48

Enthinu vridhaa kaalam kaalyunnu Vaikuntathinu poikkolvinellavarum

Why waste time unnecessary? All of you proceed to Vaikundham.

With extreme affection and kindness, Poonthaanam tells us to chant divine names of Lord with out wasting anytime and then start experiencing the bliss of Vaikundham. Here by the word "Vaikundham" Poonthaanam means not only the original Vaikundham where Ananthashaayi dwells, but also indirectly means that our mind becomes Vaikundham or we experience uninterrupted peace and joy when we lit the lamp of Naamasankeerthanam in our mind.

Now let us look at the meaning of the word "vaikundha". It can be defined as "one with vigatha kundha bhaavam" or we can say that it is derived from "Vikundha". Kundha means, stupid, indolent, lazy, foolish etc. The prefix "vi" means "vigatha" or departed, disappeared, ceased, gone, dead, deceased etc. So absence of Kundha bhaava (stupidity, foolishness, laziness, indolence etc). is Vaikundha or Vaikundha is a state of mind free from all limitations or conditioning. To put it in our everyday language, Vaikundha is a blissful state of mind free from all anxieties. A place filled with people whose minds are free from anxieties and worries is called Vaikundham. It s a place of uninterrupted bliss. It is a state beyond time, space and causation.

Poonthaanam assures again and again that naamasankeerthanam will lead us to Vaikundham, the ever blissful Kingdom of Bhgavvan. To say it differently, Naamasankeerthanam will transform our mind mind to Bhagavaan's "swadhamam" or permanent abode.

Njanappaana 49

Koodiyalla pirakkunna neratthum
Koodiyalla marikkunna neratthum
Mandhyeyingane kaanunna neratthu
Mathsarikkunnathent hinnu naam vridhaa?

We were not born together (line one), we are not going to die together (line two), Why should we compete each other when we meet in between (birth and death) (line three and four)?

These lines are probably one of the most famous lines from Njanappaana. In the most simple language poet is giving us one of the greatest advices in this world. If everybody understood the real meaning of these lines and if we apply that in our life, Vaikundham will be here. But unfortunately we are far from understanding anything beyond the literal meaning and poet is very sad about it.

Even twins are not born at the same time, they do not have the same destiny, they do not die together. We all meet for a very little time in this world and leave our bodies to pursue the path led by our karmaas.

Our life journey can be compared to a train journey. Different people board the train in different stations, and some travellers are together for some time and each one gets down when their station of destination comes. Likewise, we all come here at different times, stay as a family or friends together for some time, when death knocks on the door we leave the body and continue our journey with out ever having a chance to meet or live together again. Poonthaanam is sad that people fight, compete and cheat each other in this very short and precious time allotted to them by God. He wants us to think about this reality over and over again to remove any rivalry towards anybody or about anything.

In Bhagavatham, Krishna is very subtly teaching us this lesson. Krishna spent lot of time with gopikaas and they were very happy. Later they became vane and they started feeling jealous of each other. Because of vanity and pride, each one thought that she was the most beloved of Krishna. At that point Krishna disappeared leaving everybody except Radha. Finally he even left Radha when she became proud of Krishna's love for her. After some time, by God's grace, Gopikas continuous remembrance of Lord removed all their negative feelings and then Krishna appeared again. He is indirectly telling us that this short life span as humans is not for breeding rivalry and negative feelings, but it is given by Him to strive with a pure heart towards the unity of Jevaathma with Paramaathma.

Also it is interesting to note that once Krishna left Vrindavanam, he never came back there through out his life. Much later, after Kamsavadham (or killing of Kamsa) and all, He met Gopikaas for Njaanopadesham at Syamanthapanchaka theertham. What does this say to us? All material relations, even the closest relations such as mother and children, husband and wife, brothers, sisters etc have to end. Those relations are not eternal. When

Gopikaas reached the state of Njaanam, then they could unite with Paramaathma. This action of Bhagavaan also tells us to utilize our precious time not to nurture material relations, but to nurture our relationship with Him, which is eternal.

Poonthannam says that Naamasankeerthanam is the best way to plant and nurture our relationship with Bhagavaan. Naamam is the seed, it is the fertilizer, it is the water and food, it is the plant and it is the fruit because Naamam becomes Naami, (or one who represents Naamam) and hence one who chants naamam becomes one with Naami.

Njanappaana 50

Arthamo purusharthamirikka ve
Arthatthinnu kothikkunnathenthun naam
Madhyaahnaarkka prakaasamirikave
khadyothattheyo maanichu kollendu

When the wealth of purushartham or mukthi or salvation is available, why desire for (material) wealth? When the bright light of the afternoon sun is available, who will respect the (insignificant) light of a firefly?

In the first line, when we look carefully we can see that the word "artham" comes twice. First one with in the word "arthamo", then "artham" within the word "purusha-artham". The first "artham" can have two meanings, one is wealth and the other meaning is that which is to be earned, or requested or purpose. When we take the first meaning, the meaning of the line is "When the wealth of purushartham or mukthi or salvation is available". If we take the second meaning, we can say: "when the thing to be earned namely purushartham is available". Practically both means the same, but expressed differently.

Here "purushartham" means moksham or salvation. Let us see how we can split the word purushartham and see how the meaning of salvation comes. Purusha + Artha. "Purusha" means Pure Consciousness or Paramaathma Chaithanyam, "artha" means Purpose or meaning or that which is to be earned. So Purushartham is the purpose of attaining Purusha or fulfillment of life. Even though the way to attain Purusha has three more previous steps namely Dharma, Artha and Kama, the final goal is Moksha. (liberation, through renunciation or detachment, after following Dharma, using Artha righteously and enjoying Kama righteously.)

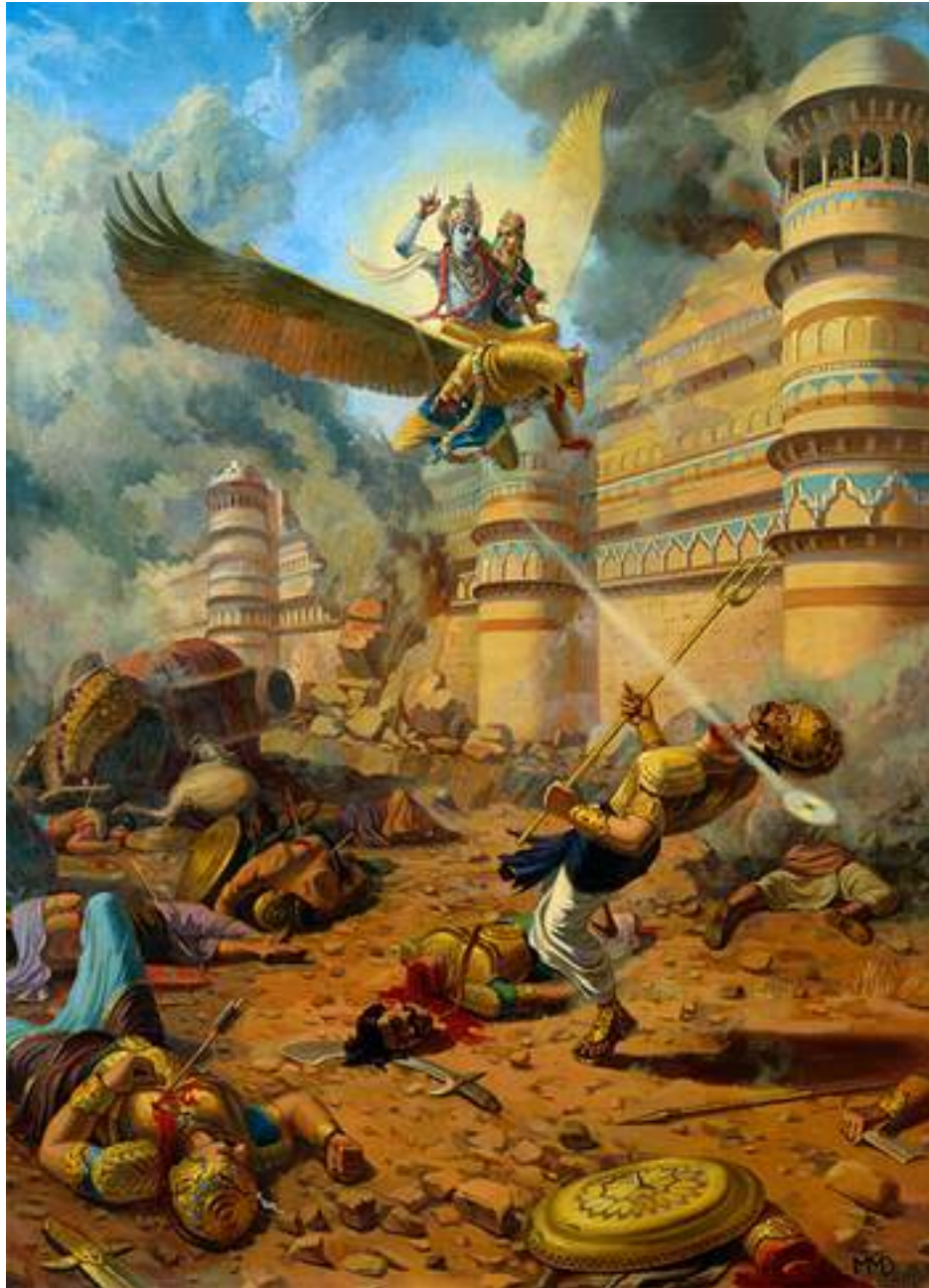
Mahatma Gandhi defines Purushartham as "that which is pursued for the sake of the spirit or the immortal soul. Any human pursuit that deliberately excludes a reference, however remote, to the Purusha is considered not beneficial to human well being." So Purushartham is the ultimate goal to achieve and when that can be achieved just by chanting divine names of Bhagavaan, why go after material, transient wealth? In the second line the word "artham" comes again and here it means material wealth. Poet compares our going after material wealth to the stupid idea of depending on the light of a firefly when ample sunlight is available. Or is it wise to close doors during day time, bring darkness and then depend on the dim light of a firefly? Poet says we are shutting the doors to the bright Pramaathma within us and then going after the small fireflies of material desires.

Purushartham can have one more meaning. Purusha can mean humans, and then Purushartham can mean "the goals to be attained or aspired by humans".

Poet says that Naama sankeerthanam is the key to Moksham and that key is readily available for us. Once we open the Moksha dwaaram or door to salvation with that divine

key, Bhagavaan leads us all the way to moksham. There are several doors to Moksham and in Poonthaanam's opinion, Naamasankeerthanam opens the door to Bhakthi Margam and then the journey itself becomes as enjoyable as the goal.





Narakasura-vadham

Njanappaana 51

Unni Krishnan manassil kalikkumpol
Unnikal mattu venamo makkalai?
Mithrangal namukkethra Siva Siva
Vishnu bhakthanmaarille bhuvanatthil?

When Unni Krishnan (Bhagavaan Himself) plays in our mind, do we need to have children of our own? (lines one and two) Siva! Siva! How many friends we have because don't we have Vishnu devotees in this world? (lines three and four)

Poonthaanam uses the word Unni Krishnan to tell us that Guruvayurappan in the form of baby Krishna plays in his mind. When Bhagavaan himself plays in his mind, he does not crave for a child of his own. It is well known that Poonthaanam lost a baby boy who was around six months old in a very sad accident. Because of the intense sorrow, he became detached to this world and his attachment to Guruvayurappan became intense. Baby Krishna started playing in his mind and he could see those pastimes of Krishna clearly with his inner eye. Enjoying the bliss of watching the pastimes of Bhagavaan, he forgot completely about his earthly son who was taken away from him at an early age. He sincerely felt that there is no need to have an earthly child of his own when baby Bhgavaan is with Him all the time. He realized that Bhagavaan is eternal and so also his joy of seeing his leelaas. His own son would have given him happiness for some time in his life, but that baby would grow and eventually that body which was the source of his temporary happiness would perish. Of course, it was perished earlier than expected. Then he realized and asked himself "why invest all attachment in somebody who is not eternal, when my baby Krishna who is the eternal supplier of happiness is dwelling in my heart?" Only after experiencing this realization, he put together the above words in Njanappana and gave it to us. It is his own ripe experience he is passing to us and advises us to redirect our attachment slowly to Bhgavaan by chanting His divine names.

Why do we own children when Krishna is always with us taking care of our "yogakshemam"? After asking this question, he extends this concept first to friends and then to family. Who are his friends? He considers all devotees of Vishnu or Krishna as his friends. He says that there is no shortage of friends because there are so many Bhakthaas of Krishna in this world.

Now let us look at the definition of the word "mithra". Mithra is one of the twelve Aadithyaas. "Mithra represents friendship, integrity, harmony, and all other qualities necessary to maintain order among us." (from Sanskrit Encyclopedia) . So word Mitra represents all the above qualities and one who has these qualities is a mithram or friend. The proverb "a friend in need is a friend indeed" is well known. Poonthaanam says Vishnu Bhakthaas are indeed friends because they help everybody who needs help to advance in the spiritual path. All other friends pulls us away from Bhagavaan and they are not real friends. Here Poonthaanam brings the importance of satsangam also.

From his own experience of a tragedy, Poonthaanam reinforces the importance of Naamasankeerthanam and satsangam to attain eternal happiness.

Njanappaana 52

Maaya kaattum vilaasangal kaanumbol
Jaaya kaattum vilaasangal goshtikal

When we observe the tricks played by Maya or Illusion, tricks played by a woman or wife are very silly.

Alternately, we can also say: if we fall for the insignificant moves of a fickle woman, how can we expect not to be a victim of Maya's tricks? Let us look into the power of Maya and then we will understand how silly are some of the daily scenes we see around us. Also it will help us to realize how hard it is for worldly people like us to go beyond the power of Maya.

Let us look at the word Maya. One meaning of "Ma" is "not there" and "Ya" means "that which is". So Maya means "that which is not there" or not real or Mithya. Maya plays the trick first on us. Maya makes us identify ourselves with the body and then beautifully builds attachment to everything that is "mine". The feeling of "I" itself is an illusion and there Maya starts it's tricks. Once she puts that veil on us, we see everything through that veil. This veil changes color to represent lust, greed, pride, hatred, jealousy and egoism. When the color represents greed, for example, with a greedy mind, we see the world and proceed to fulfill greed. This colored veil prevents us from remembering our genuine nature of love, cooperation, humility, purity, kindness and truth. Also this veil decreases our power of discrimination or nithyanithyavivekam. That is why it is said that Bhagavaan gives long rope to us to develop these satwa gunaas hidden in us and known to our Jeevaathma.

Maya not only hides truth, but misrepresents truth. Maya's power is maximum in Kaliyuga because of our inadequacy of Aathma njaanam or knowledge of the self. We are connected to destiny through Maya because we take actions under the influence of Maya. There is a small story illustrating the effect of Maya. There lived two sisters called Sathyam or truth and Asathyam or Untruth. They were swimming and having a nice time in a lake. After bath, Truth came out of water first and by mistake wore the clothes of Untruth and walked away. Untruth came out and could not find her clothes. So she put on Truth's clothes and walked away. It is said that since then Truth is appearing as Untruth and Untruth as Truth to those who do not have the power of discrimination or those who only look at the appearance.

There is a story that says even self realized souls like sage Narada can come under Maya's influence for some time. Here is one version of the story. Once Narada and Lord Krishna were walking together in a hilly area. Narada told Bhagavaan that he did not

know what Maya was because he never experienced it. Krishna did not say anything about it. Then he said: "Narada, I am so thirsty, can you get me some water"? Narada was more than happy to serve Bhagavaan and immediately left in search of a home with a well or a river. Soon he spotted a house a little far from there. He walked in the burning sun and reached there and knocked at the door. A beautiful maiden opened the door and invited him inside and served him with cool and nourishing drinks and introduced her widowed mother also to him. Narada fell for this girl's hospitality and ravishing beauty. They talked for a while and became good friends and she requested him to stay back because she and her mother were alone there. Narada completely forgot why he came there and agreed to everything she said. After a few days, he married her and eventually they had two children and they lived happily.

One day a big storm came and they lost their house in the floods and they ran for their life. Then water level started rising and old mother was lost in the flood water. They were also fighting with the rising water and Narada had his two children holding his hand and the wife was flowing far away in the water. He was also drowning and gasping for breath and he lost the children also in a few moments. He was sad, stressed and cried for Bhagavaan and in one moment he was with Bhagavaan near the hills. Narada was still gasping for breath and Bhagavvan asked him what happened and where was the drinking water He was waiting for. Then Narada understood that Bhgavaan was showing him how powerful was Maya's power.

How can we break the veil of ignorance? Only by knowing the true nature of God. Naamasankeerthanam and remembrance of Bhgavaan will help us to tear off the veil of ignorance and then Ponnthaanam says, we will see the whole world and all that is happening here, including the silly acts (goshtikal) of Jaaya, as a sport or pastime or leela of Bhagavaan.



Sri Narasimhaswamy

Njanappaana 53

Bhuvanathile bhoothikalokkeyum Bhavanam namukkayathithu thanne

All the wealth of the Universe belongs to us because our Bhavanam or house is Bhuvanam or Universe itself.

"Bhooti" does not mean wealth, or prosperity, but it is "Aishwaryam" and I do not know any equivalent English word for Aishwaryam. Universe is filled with all types of wealth and if we consider Universe as our house, we will never feel the shortage of anything. Poet wants us to feel "vasudhaiva kumtumbakam" or "the entire world is one family". Mahopanishad says:

*ayam bandhu: ayam neti gananaa laghu chethasaam
udaara charitaanaam thu vasudhaiva kutumbhakam*

"This one is my relative and that a stranger' – is the calculation of the narrow-minded for the magnanimous hearts however, the entire earth is but a family".

The next few lines in Njanappaana also reinforce the importance of considering the whole Universe as our home. This concept is present through out our prayers also. The prayer "Loka: samastha: sukhino Bhavanthu:" is also an extension of this concept.

This attitude of "vasudhaiva kumtumbakam" encourages sharing what one has with less fortunate people.

Poonthaanam says that once we start feeling Bhgavaan's presence in every animate and inanimate things in the world, we become a world citizen loving everybody and everything equally. Then one sees the same Bhagavaan who dwells in Himself in others and this realization leads to salvation.

Naamasankeerthanam is the best way to purify our mind and power of naamam will guide us through the path of Bhakthi to Njaanam and moksham. In Kaliyuga, this is the method prescribed by scriptures and seers. Towards the end of Dwaapara yugam, Brahma Devan told Narada Maharshi:

*Bhagavatha Aadipurushasya Naaraayanasya naamocchaarana maathrena nirdhootha
kalirbhavathi-* just chant Naarayana naamam in this Kaliyuga.

Njanappaana 54

Viswanaathan pithaavu namukkellam
Viswadhaathri charaachara maathaavum
Aschanum punar ammayum undallo
Rakshicheeduvaanull a naalokkeyum

Lord of the Universe is our father and mother of the Universe is our mother. (lines one and two). We have both father and mother to take care of us as long as we live. (lines three and four).

Above lines (also) remind us the concept of "Vasudhaiva Kumtumbakam". If we consider the Universe as our home, Lord of the Universe (Guruvayurappan or Lord Krishna or Vishnu Bhgavaan) is the father of all and Prakruthi Devi through whom Bhgavaan created the world is the beloved Mother of all. Why should we worry about anything when these Universal Parents who are capable of bestowing all blessings are watching us for ever? They are eternal parents. We may discard this body and come back to earth with another body. But they are always there immersed in taking care of our "yogakshemam".

If we consider ourselves as members of the world family, then we will no fight each other in the name of God, politics, power and money. Poonthaanam wrote this because he experienced the joy of seeing everybody as his own family members. We can see poet's attitude of complete surrender when he says: "we have both Universal father and Universal mother to take care of us as long as we live. Because of his intense devotion and attitude of surrender, Bhgavaan came to him when he needed His help.

Once Poonthaanam started his journey to Guruvayur for that month's darshan of the Lord. He started later than usual and started walking as fast as he could to reach Guruvayur before dusk. On the way, he had to pass through a forest and it was about to get dark; He had a small bag of essential things and was walking fast. Suddenly a few robbers appeared from no where and jumped on him and asked for his possessions. He pleaded and told them that he had nothing except a few clothes in his bag and was going to Guruvayur. But they would not leave him and wanted the thin golden ring on his finger (which he used to count the namam he chanted) and what ever he was carrying in his bag. Poonthaanam was sad and afraid that he would be delayed to reach Guruvayur. He called Guruvayurappan at the top of his voice and chanted this prayer from the bottom of his heart:

*Ya thvara Draupadi thraane Ya thvara gajarakshane
Mayyaarthe karunaasindho! Sa thvara kva gathaa Hare!*

Hare! how quick you came to protect Draupadi, how quick you came to protect the elephant (from the crocodile), now in deep sorrow, I am calling you and where did disappear your quickness (of action)?

He continued chanting Narayana naamam and suddenly they all heard the noise of a horse's footsteps. In no time the minister of the then King of Cochi, Mangaattacchan appeared and robbers ran for their life. Mangaattacchan consoled Poonthaanam and accompanied him until he crossed the danger zone. Poonthaanam was so moved by his timely help and to show his gratitude presented the minister with his golden ring. He reached Guruvayur and it was late and he could just pray only from outside of the temple. That night, chief priest (melshaanthi) had a dream and in the dream Guruvayurappan told him that when he removed "Nirmaalyam" in the morning he should look for a golden ring on His ring- finger and he should give it to Poonthannam because it belonged to Poonthaanam. Next morning Poonthannam came to the temple for nirmaalya darshanam and Melshaanthi gave this ring which was the same ring he presented to Mangaattacchan the previous day. So who was Mangaattacchan? Poonthaanam just wept and wept thinking of Bhagavaan's kindness. Then he knew that Bhgavaan who is the father of all 'Charaacharam" or animate and inanimate things, came and rescued him.

His words in the above lines are the direct result of his experience and so he assures us that Bhgavaan will take care of us like a father and Bhgavathi will take care of us like a mother. The only thing we need to do is to chant His name and remember Him.



Lord Hayagreevan

Njanappaana 55

Bhikshaannam nallorannavum undallo
Bhakshicheeduka thanne paniyullu

There is good food that is given as alms and the only effort left is to eat it.

Literal meaning of this verse taken by itself may not make much sense. So let us go deeper into it. One thing we have to remember is that this type of thinking with complete detachment to the material world comes from a real realized soul. He does not mean to encourage laziness and does not recommend living by exploiting the good will of others.

Real sadhus are not attached to any material possessions and people consider giving alms to such deserving persons, a punyam. They never ask for anything and they do not get angry or sad when anybody ignores them denies their request. True sajjanaas are happy with what God gives through good people and spends most of their time in prayers and meditation. They do not go out of the way to collect food or process it. They just eat what they get and rest of the time is spent in naamasnaakeerthanam and meditation.

The word "nallorannam" here means that Bhikshannam is good. One does not do any ahimsa in obtaining it. At this stage, their first dharmam becomes ahimsa or nonviolence. They follow "ahimsa paramo dharma:" Alms are given voluntarily and there is no compulsion from anybody. Also these sajjanaas are not after the desire to collect and save even for the next day.

Through the above lines Poonthaanam wants to tell us that we should be satisfied with what we get by leading a dharmic life. Greed is dangerous and pulls us down to deep sorrow and suffering. Contentment is the key to happiness. There is a quotation in English "Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have".

Ponnthanam advises us to start Naamasankeerthanam with out wasting any more of our precious allotted time and power of naamam will remove our negative qualities like greed, lust, jealousy etc. This will help us to live a contented life remembering Bhgavaan and his leelaas.

Njanappaana 56

Sakthi kootaathe naamangal eppozhum Bhakthi poondu japikkenam nammute
 Siddhi kaalam kazhivolam ee vannam Sradhayote vasikkenam evarum
 Kaanaakunna charachara jaathiye Naanam kaivittu kooppi sthuthikkanam
 Harishaasru paripluthanaayittu Purushaadikalokke sahichudan
 Sajjanangale kaanunna nerath Lajja koodaathe veenu namikkanam
 Bhakthi thannil muzhuki chamanjudan Mathane ppole nritham kunikkanam
 Paarilinagane sancharicheedumbol Praarabdhangal ashesham ozhinjidum

Until we become unconscious or until death, we should chant naamam with out attachment or desire and we have to lead our life carefully (with out digressing from the path of devotion) (lines one through four). With out hesitation we should pay our respect to all animate and inanimate beings we see (lines five and six). When we see sajjanaas or good people, with out any hesitation, and tolerating any harsh words or action, we should pay respect to them with eyes filled with tears (of joy) (lines 7-10). Immersed in Bhakthi one should dance like a drunkard (lines 11, 12). In this (material) world when we travel like this, we will be free from all the results of our past karmaas (that are ripe for reaping the fruits) (prarabdha karmaas) (lines 13, 14).

Even if we have done limitless papaas, if we do Naamasankeertthanam with out any material desire, Bhagavaan will free us from all the results of the paapaas. Also poet says that we have to be careful not to accumulate any more paapa karmaas. If we do karmaas with renunciation of fruits, it will not bind us and we have to be very careful not to digress from the blessed path of spirituality.

Poonthaanam further explains how we should see Bhagavaan's chaitanyam in all animate and inanimate things so that we can do pranaamam or namaskaar with out hesitation to everything we see in this world. Since Bhagavaan dwells in anything and everything, we are actually paying obeisance to the Bhagavaan in people, things and places. Our way of greeting others with folded hands definitely expresses our respect to the Bhagavaan in others.

What about sajjanaas? We have to respect them all the more because association with sajjanaas helps us tremendously on our spiritual advancement. Bhagavaan him self praises saajjnaas in Bhgavatham: "Fire, sun, moon, stars, earth, water, sky, wind, words, mind or any other beings do not destroy paapam as soon as sajjanaas do" - "naagnir na sooryo na cha chandratharakana bhoorjalam kham,svasanotha vaang mana: upaasithaa bhedakrutho haranthyakham vipaschithognanthi muhurtha sevaya".

The famous story of how Narada's nearness made positive influence on several animals illustrates the importance of the association of sajjanas. Once Narada asked Vishnu Bhagavan about sajjana samsargam or association with enlightened people. Vishnu Bhagavan told him to go to earth and meet a worm which would explain the importance.

Narada reached there and as soon as he saw the worm the worm fell dead. He came back and Vishnu Bhagavaan asked him to go a new born calf on earth which will explain what he wanted to know. As soon as Narada went near it, it also fell dead. Again Narada came back and this time Bhgavaan asked him to go a palace where a new baby was born who would explain Narada about sajjana samsargam. Narada reached the palace and to his surprise the new born welcomed him and told him (nobody else could hear or understand the language of the new born) that the worm and calf he visited earlier were only him. Just the proximity of an enlightened soul like Narada was enough for the liberation of both worm and calf from their janmaas and now he got the most precious human life.

If you fry your mind in the fire of Bhakthi, that mind will see everything and do everything with Lord as the center. A devotee immersed in devotion may even dance in ecstasy. Noble souls like Chaithanya Mahaprabhu, Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa etc have done that. Ordinary people may even think that they are out of their mind. Intense devotion to God makes them forget about everything around and Poonthaanam says that if one has such intense devotion he will not be subjected to any sufferings, even the results of the (ripe and ready to be experienced) praarabdha karmaas. In other words, single minded devotion will erase all our praarabdha karmaas and in Kaliyugam just by chanting Bhagavaan's naamam Poonthaanam assures that we can change the fate or "ready to be reaped" results of our past karmaas.

Dharmaputhra asked Bheeshma, What is the best way for one to cross this ocean of life and escape from this never ending cycle of birth and death? Bhishma told him:

Jagath prabhum deva devamanantham Purushotthama: shtuvannaama sahasrena purushaa: sathathothhitha:





Sri Ksheerabdhinaathan

Njanappaana 57

Vidhicheetunna karmam odungumbol Pathichidunnu deha moretathu
Kothicheetunna brahmathe kandittu Kuthicheetunnu jeevanum appozhe

When the karmaas allotted for that particular body ends, body falls dead (line 1,2) and Jeevathma realizing (the oneness with) Brahman immediately merges into it. (line 3,4).

"Vidhicheetunna karmam" is the same as "prarabdha karma". There are three types of karmaas and some scholars mention a fourth one. They are

1. Sanchita karmaas: These are the accumulated karmaas of all our past lives that were not exhausted by experiencing. Some people call this "cosmic debt". Every moment we are either depositing into or withdrawing from this account of karmaas!

2. Prabdha Karmaas: These karmaas are actually sanchitha karmaas which are ripe and ready to be experienced by the present body. We cannot escape the results of these karmaas because they are already in motion towards us. Only one person can help us from suffering the results of these karmaas. That is Bhagavaan. By surrendering to Him completely, we can change our so called "fate" or at least reduce the severity of the suffering. Naamasankeerthanam in Kaliyuga nullifies the negative effects of our past karmaas.

3. Aagama Karma or Agaami Karma: These are some of the kaamyas karmaas (result oriented karmaas) we do that will get added to the sanchitha karma and results of those will be experienced in future janmaas.

4. Kriyamaana Karmaas: Karmaas that we do in this life whose effect will be experienced in the present life itself either immediately or in a few months or years time.

Njaanananda Saraswathi has given an analogy which helps us to understand the different types of karmaas. A hunter has several arrows in his quiver. Sanchitha karmaas (sum total of all the past karmaas) are like this collection of arrows in the quiver. The one arrow hunter has already aimed at and already sent represents Prarabdha karmaas. He cannot recall it and it will hit the target **unless** somebody comes in between and redirects or takes it on him. **This somebody is Easwaran who can stop it, or change the direction of it or take it on himself.** The arrow which he plans to send is Aagama karmaas. So one has perfect control of agama karmaas like the hunter can decide not to send the arrows or or decide to send them anytime. Also Sanchitha karmaas can be nullified by naamasankeerthanam or other nishkaama karmaas and we can say that one can take control of that also with the blessings of the Lord. But God and only God has to intervene (or can intervene) to change the praarabdha karmaas that are already set in motion.

As soon as the body falls, noble souls realize the truth "aham brahmasmi" and with in moments unite with Paramaathma. In other words, he realizes that the jeevaathma that

was covered with his body is actually Paramaathma Himself. This realization is salvation or moksham and he will not be subjected to the cycle of birth and death any more. The word "kuthiccheetunnu" indicates that Jeevaathma is always yearning to merge with Paramaathma. So the moment body falls, Jeevan mukthaas rush to unite with Parmaathma.

Njanappaana 58

Sakthi verittu sancharicheedumbol Paathramaayilla ennathu kondethum
 Parithaapam manassil muzhukkonda Thiru naamathin maahaathmyam kettaalum
 Jaathi paarkiloranthayana akilum Vedavaadi maheesuranaakilum
 Naavu koodaathe jaathanmaaraakiya Mookareyangozhichul la maanushar
 Ennamatta thiru naammullathil Onnu maathram orikkal oru dinam
 Swasthanaayittirikk umbozhenkilum Swapnathil Thaanariyatheyenkil um
 Mattonnayipparihasi cchenkilum Mattorutharkkum ventiyennakilum
 Ethu dikkilirikkilum thannude Naavu kondithu cholliyennakilum
 Athumalloru neram oru dinam Chevi kondithu kettu vennakilum
 Janma saaphalyamappozhe vannu poi Brahma sayoojyam kitteedumennallo
 Sredharaachaaryan tha anum paranjithu Baadaraayanan tha anum arul cheythu.

When one does not attain salvation even after living a detached life, he need not feel sad about that. Please listen to the greatness of naamam (lines 1-2). It does not matter whether one belongs to the class of Vedic scholars or the so called lowest caste of Chandaalaas (lines 3). All except those who are born with out a tongue can choose a divine name out of the countless names of Bhagavaan available, and chant it when one gets some leisure time or chant involuntarily in a dream or even utter it mockingly or chant naamam for other's sake (lines 4-7). Irrespective of where one lives, one can either chant naamam by oneself or can listen to somebody chanting the naamam (lines 8,9). This naamasankeertthanam immediately leads one to the ultimate purpose of life which is Brahma saayujyam or salvation or merging with Paramaathma (lines 10). This truth is unequivocally stated by Vyaasa Bhagavaan and Sreedharaachaaryar (lines 11).

Sometimes even great devotees are subjected to physical suffering and do not attain salvation quickly. This is only because of the residual praarabdha karmaas that have to be exhausted in the same janma. But the power of Naamam frees them from the sufferings and helps them to attain salvation quickly. Naamam destroys the paapam of anybody who chants it irrespective of his status, family or any other man made limitations. In fact it is said that Naamasankeertthanam destroys the results of all bad as well as good deeds so that soul can attain Paramaathma with out going through the cycle of birth and death. (Even good kaamyas karmaas -result oriented good karmaas- do not free us, It leads to heaven or swarga and when the results are exhausted we are born again. Nishkaama karmam do not bind us and with zero results to be experienced, a soul attains salvation.)

Can we chant naamam mockingly? Poonthaanam says that even chanting Naamam as a joke is better than not chanting at all. When we take a medicine, even if we do not believe in the power of the medicine, an appropriate medicine will cure one's ailment. When a baby touches a burning flame, it burns it's hands irrespective of the baby's ignorance about the heat of the

flame. Same way, even if one chants naamam with out devotion or sarcastically or without an attitude of surrender, only good results will follow. The power of Naamam will change his mind and make him a sincere devotee. Valmiki Maharshi was only a forest dweller Ratnaakaran and just by chanting "Mara, Mara" or "aa maram, ee maram" he became the greatest Rishi who gave us the greatest Puranam, Raamaayanam. Ajamila was only calling his son by the name Naarayana and Bhgavaan sent his assistants and rescued him from the assistants of Yama.

Even listening to the naamam chanted by somebody is punyam. In Bhagavatha, Bhaktha Prahalada says about nine types of Bhakthi and one of them is Sravanam or hearing. Here Sravanam means not just hearing or listening, it means experiencing the greatness of God through hearing or listening. We listen to Sapthaaha reading of Bhagavatham, Raamyam, Naaraayaneeyam etc by great scholarly devotees. King Parikshith attained salvation by listening to the Bhagavatha Sapthaaham by Suka Maharshi.

There is no need to have any special qualifications to chant naamam. Anybody can do it any time. The result is "kaivalya chathushtayam- saalokyam, saameepyam, saaroopyam, saayujyam" or four types of salvation namely live in the same world as Bhagavaan, live near Him, resemble Bhagavaan in form, salvation or union with Bhagavaan.

*Jihwe Sreekrishna manthram japa japa
Sathatham janmasaaphalya manthram.*

Let the janma saaphalya manthram or Sreekrishna manthram always remain on our tongue!

To establish the authenticity of the power of Naama Sankeerthanam, Poonthaanam assures us that Jeevan Mukthaas like Vedavyaasa Maharshi and Sreedharracharyar also sated the same truth that Naamasankeerthanam is the best way to attain salvation in Kaliyuga.



Lord Dhanvanthari

Njanappaana 59

Geethayum paranjeedunnathenga ne
Vedavum bahumaanichu chollunnu

Bhagavad Gita and Vedaas also say the same thing (that naamasankeerthanam is the easiest way to attain salvation)

Let us look into a few words mentioned in Gita and Vedaas about Naamasankeerthanam

In Bhgavad Gita Bhagavaan says: Yanjnaanaam japayanjnosmi - Of all the Yanjnaas, I am Japayanjnam or Naamasankeerthanam. So Lord Krishna considers naamasankeerthanam as one of the most sacred and easy way to think of God.

In Bhaagavatham, the conversation between King Nimi and Navayogis or nine sages explains Bhaagavatha dharma and this is one of them:

Srunvan subhadraani rathaanga paane: janmaani karmaani ca yaani loke
gitaani naamaani tat arthakaani gaayan vilajja: vicaret asanga: (11.2.39)

One should listen to the sanctifying stories of ChakrapaanI's incarnations in this world and His actions. They should sing His names and songs. One should do this without any shame (which comes out of "I" feeling) and move around without any attachment. (with gratitude, taken from Kanchi forum site)

Melpatthoor in his Naarayaneeyam, took the essence of the meaning of the following lines from Rigvedam and expressed it in the third slokam of Chapter 99.

*tam u shothaa : poovyam yathaa vidha ruthasya garbham janushaa piparthana
aasya janantho naama chidh vivarthana: mahas te Vishno sumathim Bhajaamahe*

Meaning of the third sloka of chapter 99 of Melpatthoor's Naaraayneeyam:

O bards! (singers) Foremost among poets! May you all praise Him here by (singing) the stories of His sportive incarnations the same way you have understood (them). O you great men who understand the gist of the Vedaas clearly, chant repeatedly His names, realizing that they confer well-being on all. O Lord MahaVishnu! May I too, attain the knowledge of the true nature of Brahman by extolling your glories, great you are! (taken with gratitude from Bhaktharanjini translation of Naaraayaneeyam)

The same ideas, our Bhakthakavi Poonthaanam expressed in simple Malayalam for ordinary people like us to understand. With the support of scriptural texts he tried to establish the greatness of Naamasankeerthanam one more time.

Njanappaana 60

Aamodam poondu choolluin naamangal
Aanandam poondu brahmathil cheruvaan

Chant (divine) names happily and enjoy the bliss of merging with the Brahman.

The words "aamodam poondu" indirectly suggests that all other paths for salvation are harder than this path and Naamasankeerthanam is the most enjoyable path. What is the result of happily chanting divine names? You attain the bliss of Brahmasaayujyam or the bliss of being one with the Supreme. By chanting naamam we attain eternal happiness.

Naama sankeerthanam is capable of burning even the ten types of naama aparadhams or offenses against Lord's name. Chaitanya Charithamrutham says that there is a great difference between other sins and offense against Bhagavaan and His divine names. Even a glimpse of devotion destroys heaps of other sins as fire easily burns heaps of cotton. But offense against divine names and Lord are not destroyed easily and the best way to absolve these offenses is to accept one's mistake and repent deeply by chanting Bhgavaan's divine names.

The ten offences are

1. Showing disrespect to devotees or sajjanaas
2. Differentiating among divine names or Hariharabhedabudhi
3. Irreverence to the chosen Guru
4. Speaking lightly or jokingly about scriptures
5. Performing bad actions under the cover of Naamam
6. Not believing in the greatness of Naamam
7. Belittling divine names
8. Talking about the greatness or power of Naamam to atheists
9. Lack of interest in Naamam even after knowing the greatness of chanting it.
10. Ego and pride or the feeling "I" and "mine".

There is a good possibility that ordinary human beings like us purposely or inadvertently will lapse in to any of the above or all of the above sins and Poonthaanam along with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu tells us that Naamamsankeerthanam is the best atonement for all sins committed and we will finally enjoy the divine bliss of the Lord.



Lord Venkateshwara

Njanappaana 61

Mathiyundenkilokke mathiyithu Thiru naamathin maahathmayamaamithu
Pizhayaakilum Pizhakedennakilum Thiruvullamarulka bhagavaane !

Njanappaana (ithu) which explains the greatness of Naamam is enough if one has desire (for Brahma saayujyam) or one has the intelligence to understand. Hae! Bhagvaan! let this, which may or may not have errors, be blessed from the bottom of your heart!

Why did Poonthaanam give the name Njanappaana to this collection of verses? How butter is all-pervasively hidden in the milk, like wise, knowledge or thathva njaanam is dissolved in Njanappaana. "Paana" here means song. So that song which contains Njaanam or knowledge is named Njanappaana. Even though Poonthaanam used simple everyday Malayalam language, this collection of verses expresses the great essence of Vedaantha.

In the second line he says that this Njanappaana mainly talks about the greatness of Thirunaamam or Divine Names and those who desire mukthi can benefit from this poem. When one understands the greatness of Naamam and starts daily Naamasankeerthanam, his path to mukthi or salvation will have no obstacles. (The first "mathi" means either desire or buddhi (intelligence). Second "mathi" in "mathi ithu" means enough. Here "ithu" means "this Njanappaana". Learning this Njanappaana is enough to attain moksham for those who are intelligent or for those who desire moksham).

Finally Poonthaanam offers the whole collection called Njanappaana at Bhagavaan's feet and requests to bless it irrespective of it's quality. He begs Bhgavaan to accept it as it is.

It is interesting to note that poet finished Njanappaana by addressing "Bhgavaane!" He concluded the poetry with the best word Bhagavaan as the last word. Who is Bhagavaan? Bhgavaan is one who has all six Bhagaas or divine attributes or opulances namely all strength or power, all fame, all wealth, all knowledge, all beauty, and all asceticism or vairagyam. (Aiswaryasya samagrasya viryasya yashasa: sriya: jnaaa vairaagya yoshchaiva shannaam bhaga itheethaam -Vishnu .Puranam).

Poonthaanam recommends Bhakthi margam through naamasankeerthanam for ordinary people like us. Vyaasa Bhgavaan found Shaanthi or peace of mind only after writing Srimad Bhagavatham which contains stories of intense devotion. Before writing Bhagavatham he had written 17 puraanaas, Brahmashuthram and Mahabhaaratham. Only when he praised Bhgavaan with Bhakthi he could experience the peaceful, continuous bliss of Bhagavaan's presence in his mind. Shankaraacharyar also advised us "bhaja Govindam". With all the scriptural support, in simple Malayalam language, Poonthaanam inspires us to chant naamam and attain moksham.



Sarvam Sri Krishnaarpanamastu