Means and Ends

paranda sindai onRi ninRu ninna pAda pankayam nirandaram ninaippadAga nI ninaikka vENDumE
(tirumazhisaiyAzhvAr, tiruccanda viruttam – 101)

AzhvAr is lamenting that his fragile mind is wandering in all directions. Powerful yet cheap earthly pleasures (shabdAdi viShayangaL – sensory pleasures) are attracting him. He, and everyone else knows that, in reality, they are all spontaneous, temporary (anityam) pleasures. Yet, however, no one can escape from them. Thus, he makes a desperate plea to the Lord to move his attention from those and to firmly concentrate only on the Lord's beautiful two lotus feet. He prays to Him to assure that his thoughts and the enjoyment will be eternal. That insurmountable feat can't achieved by the AzhvAr's effort, abilities, or for that matter, any one else's. It solely rests with the God. Only the Lord's desire (bhagavad sa~nkalpam), and nothing else, primarily determines when, where, and how one can attain this permanent pleasure.

The amazing experience (anubhavam) brought out by the AzhvAr here is the realization of the Lord as both the means and ends (upAyam and upeyam). To ride on an elephant, you first need to climb on it. For that, you need the help from the same elephant. First, as a means (hitam), the elephant bends down for you to climb on and then as a result (puruShArtham), it allows you to sit on it and gives you a ride.

The Lord as both the means and ends.
Bending down is the means (sAdanam) and giving you a ride is the rewards (sAdhyam).

In summary,

1. **One needs Lord’s blessing even to think about Him.**
   His unconditional grace without any specific reason (nirhetuka kR^ipA) on the individual soul (cit) is the trigger point. Then only comes the effect of soul’s accumulated good deeds and sins (karma), teachers' blessings (AcArya kaTAkSham), presence in a good community (sat sa~ngam) etc.

2. **Total surrender is the best means.**
   To get into the reward of meditating on Lord's feet permanently, one needs to surrender to the same feet as the means.

3. **Request utopia on earth itself.**
   Scripts (veda-s) proclaim, the eternals (nityasUri-s) who are abode in the permanent bliss (mokSha), where the concept of time is lost, look mesmerized at the Lord, without even blinking. AzhvAr is requesting that this utopia be granted to him on earth itself. We shrIvaiShnava-s, following his path, make the same prayer to have that enjoyment start from today and last forever.

**God - means (to) rewards**