

## Three Minutes – 16

### A loyal servant

nivAsa shayyAsana  
pAdukAMshuko-  
padhAna varshAtapa  
vAraNAdibhiH  
sharIra bhedaistava  
sheShathaM gathaiH  
yathocitam sheSha itlrite janaiH  
*(svAmi ALavandAr,  
stotraratnam – 40)*

*nivAsa = (Assumes the form of)  
residence  
shayyA = soft bed  
Asana = beautiful throne  
pAdukA = nice footwear  
aMshuka = garments  
upadAna = pillow  
vAraNa = umbrella,  
varShAtapa = (to protect from) rain and  
sun light  
AdibhiH = more and more  
sharIra = of forms  
bhedaiH = (with) a variety of  
tava = of You  
sheShatAm = being as supplies  
gataiH = attained  
yatha = as  
ucitam =pleasingly appropriate  
sheSha = servant  
itlrite = this is called  
janaiH = by people*

This verse is found in stotraratnam composed by yAmunAcAriAr, commonly known as svAmi ALavandAr. Five of ALavandAr's disciples later went on to become svAmi rAmAnuja's teachers (AcArya). ALavandAr is considered to be one of the foremost AcArya-s

in the shrIvaiShNava lineage. He firmly believed and spread the idea of service to the Lord (kaiMkaryam) as the only ultimate goal (puruShArtham) and total surrender (prapatti) is the only plausible means (upAyam), which liberate one from the bondage of birth/death cycle (samsAra)

Here, ALavandAr describes the service rendered by ananta (Adi sheShan), usually denoted as Lord's serpent bed. The name sheSha perfectly suits him. Why? The definition of sheSha is "one whose existence is merely for the service to another". No one can ever serve the Lord as much or as close as him. He transforms himself into to that serviceable form; as a home, bed, throne, sandals, clothing, pillow, umbrella, and other material to protect shrIman nArAyaNa from water, sun and and other elements. He is not separated from the Lord by time (kAla), space (desha), or state (avasthAi). The Adi sheSha is like a shadow who waiting eagerly to perform the service.

Eternals (nityasUri-s) who reside in shrIvaikuNTham have no attachment to accumulated deeds (karma). They stay ever in their abode of hrlvaikuNTham and are beyond birth/death cycles (samsAra) like us. They are called bond-free. Even among them, ananta is mentioned first before anyone else; like Lord's vehicle bird (GaruDa), Lord's chief operating officer (Vishvaksena). You may ask why such a high honor is given to him? ALavandAr describes

here that because you can't separate ananta from the Lord. Whatever the Lord wants to do, ananta changes himself immediately to that posture and serves Him. When the Lord descends down to the earth, ananta accompanies Him. When Lord came as rAma and KR^iShNa, he too came down as lakShmaNa and balarAma. In nR^isimha avatAra, ananta was serving as Lord's sandals (pAduka) and so on. Poigai AzhvAr (first shrI vaiShaNava saint) has composed a similar verse in Tamil (senRAI kuDaiyAm....).

There is a story about rAma that when rAma was born He was crying continuously to the point that no one could pacify Him. All the doctors, nurses, maids tried to no avail. Finally they called the guru VasiShTha. VasiShTha looked for a moment and said, "This is easy. Bring lakShmaNa and put him next to rAma in His crib. rAma's problem is separation from ananta". Baby rAma stopped crying once lakShmaNa was next to him. Thus ananta gives the true meaning for "through thick and thin".

What we learn from here

**1. True servitude is void of any self-emotion or self-use.**

No point in saying "aDiyEn" or "dAsan" without following what it entails.

**2. Service should be at all times, places and states.**

Don't restrict yourself serving the parents or elders at certain times only. Don't be afraid; True bhAgavata-s, as receivers of your service, will always look ahead and won't do anything to hurt you or your things.

**3. Take pride in service.**

It is not a menial task; It takes great honor, a great mind to bend down.

**Only a life lived for others  
is a life worthwhile.  
(Albert Einstein)**