



āṅgīrasaśreṣṭha @GhorAngirasa

17 May 20 · 30 tweets · [GhorAngirasa/status/1262051853811908608](https://twitter.com/GhorAngirasa/status/1262051853811908608)



I have often wondered how to express this: In what concrete way can you become better as a result of reading शास्त्र-s or any other sacred texts? An insight dawned upon me when I was reading one of the writings of आरुमुग नावलर् - the legendary शैव-महाविद्वान् of Jaffna.

The piece in question is titled “नल्लूर-कन्दस्वामि-कोविल्” (नल्लूर-स्कन्दस्वामी-आलय). It is essentially a long diatribe in the form of a letter, addressed to the administrators in charge of the स्कन्दस्वामी temple of नल्लूर (Nallūr) in the year 1875.

The piece essentially tears apart every deviation & ill-practice in the temple. श्री-नावलर् was a feisty scholar, known for his fierce loyalty to शास्त्र, formidable scholarship, his conscientiousness & for wearing his heart on his sleeve.

This letter (actually, there is a second such letter as one letter was probably not enough to contain the passionate criticisms & righteous indignation of नावलर्!!) runs for a good 40 pages, with 50 numbered points. We shall see one of those points shortly.

To give you all some context first, every आगमिक temple (as established in the south & by extension, Jaffna in Lanka, which is culturally part of the दक्षिणाभारत-मण्डल) has two important मूर्ति-s; namely, 1. The मूलमूर्ति & 2. The उत्सवमूर्ति.

The मूलमूर्ति is the deity in the innermost sanctum, the गर्भगृह. It is, by right, immovable (अचलमूर्ति).

The उत्सवमूर्ति is the movable “version” of the मूलमूर्ति, who gets taken around in processions around the town or village. Hence, he is a movable मूर्ति.

All these forms are not crafted arbitrarily. Creativity has its place, but within the confines of the presiding आगम/तन्त्र of the temple. Now, we come to the specific issue of the नल्लूर-कन्दस्वामि-कोविल्. What was the problem with this temple?

In this temple, the मूलमूर्ति & उत्सवमूर्ति are both the वेल् (vel), the weapon that is almost always in the hands of स्कन्द in temples, as we see below:

Image source:





Vel Symbol of Murugan Worship

Murugan is one of the important gods worshiped by Hindus. In epics Muruga or Subramanya is described as the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess ...

<https://www.hindudevotionalblog.com/2013/01/vel-symbol-of-murugan-worship.html>



Now, when नाबलर points this, the first issue that came to my mind was the idea that मुरुगन/Murugan (that is, स्कन्द) & his वेल् (the शक्ति-आयुध) are installed (प्रतिष्ठित) with separate प्रतिष्ठा-विधि. ++

And नाबलर does cite this technical argument, but only after he unleashes a far more piercing take. Something that reveals his profound sensitivity in divine matters that only comes because of a genuine devotion towards sacred scriptures.

Now, again, the reader must have a little more context. The temple was built by the local शैव community, who had historically professed allegiance to the शैव religion as explained in the various आगम-s & the rich तमिळ् (tamizh) शैव canon.

This tamizh Canon includes the peerless text of the कन्दपुराणम्, a 17th century tamizh पुराण on स्कन्द written by कच्चियप्प (कश्यप) शिवाचार्य, an अर्चक of the कुमारकोट्टम् (kumārakoṭṭam) shrine for स्कन्द in काञ्चिपुरम्, TN. ++

It is not just a work containing the stories of the deity **मुरुगन्** but is filled with many references to rituals & even philosophical concepts.+

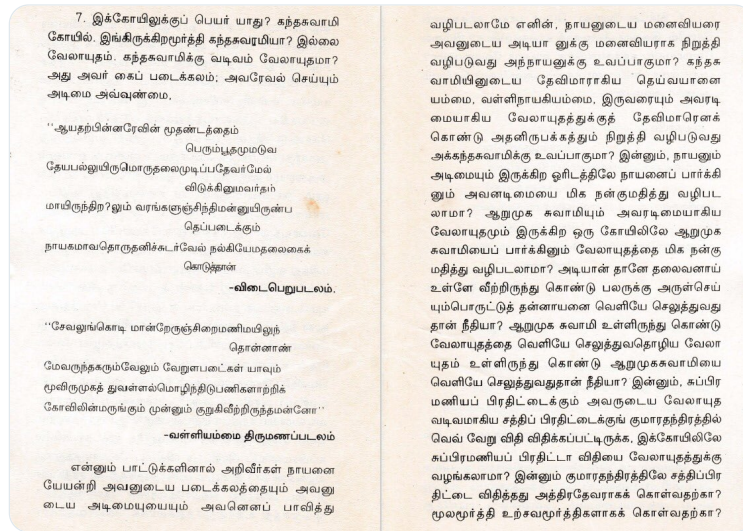
Given that the author was a revered **अर्चक** who was a master of the **सिद्धान्तागम** rites, if there is any book that should be revered by one purporting to be a devotee of **स्कन्द** & also following the **सिद्धान्त**, that book is the **कन्दपुराणम्**. So, why do I say all this?

नावलर quotes two passages from the **कन्दपुराणम्** including a particularly delightful verse, where the rooster, the chariot, sheep, peacock, the **वेल** weapon & **स्कन्द**'s troops all carry out works for the 6-faced god after his marriage with **वलि**-**देवी**.

And this is where **नावलर** offers us a stunning insight, that shows how sensitive his devotion really was. He raises the following question:

“To have the two wives of the master, **देवसेना-माता** & **वलि**-**माता** standing on both sides of his servant (who carries out works for him), the **वेल**-weapon as if they were the latter's **देवी**-s; would this be pleasing to that master, that **स्कन्द**?!!”

The original here:



And it occurred to me that I never saw it this way! His scholarship shows in the way that he was able to quote an appropriate verse from the lengthy **कन्दपुराणम्** but his devotion shows in the way that he applies this learning.

Most of us may see a **वेल** in the place of **स्कन्द** & not be disturbed by it at all. “Ah, this is just the unique way they do it!” or “Why are you so rigid?!” may be our reactions. I may think, “there are separate procedures for their **प्रतिष्ठा**”.

But how many will pick up on the fact that such an arrangement violates the sanctity of the **देव-पत्नी** relationship?. This is the fruit of real **भक्ति** & reading sacred texts with deep reverence.

This is the real fruit of learning sacred texts. They allow us to develop a better intuition as to what is appropriate & what is jarring.

When we, like **नावलर**, read with proper devotion a verse that portrays the **वेल** weapon as a servitor carrying out works for the sake of **स्कन्द** & his wives, we get the following

insights:++

1. The வேல் has its own individuality. It is not சக்தி himself.
2. It exists in a state of subservience to both சக்தி & his wives.

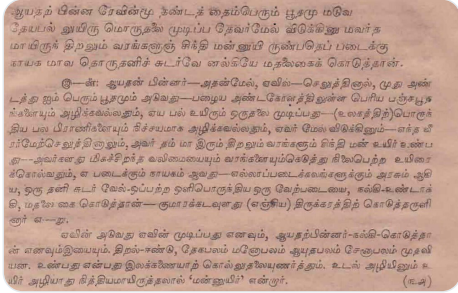
When we internalize these principles, we develop a genuine appreciation for what is right & what is wrong. How might many of us see it instead?

We might not see the weapon as an individual, as another deity.

“Oh, it’s just a symbol of சக்தி. They are one; all is one”. I call this the masāla-advaita perspective. It masks intellectual laziness & a lack of respect in semi-profound language.

Real devotion should instead require some effort & rigor on our parts. We care to make distinctions where they matter & not lump them into some nebulous oneness.

I will add the two verses that நாவலர் cited from கந்தரூராமம் with commentaries for those interested to know them. //End



சேவலுங்கொடிமான்றேருஞ் சிறைமணிமயிலுந்தொன்னான்
மேவருந்தகரும்வேலும் வேறுபடைகளயாவ
மூவிருமுகத்துவள்ளன்மொழிந் திருபணிகளாற்றிக்
கோவிலின்மருங்குமுன்னும் குறுகிவீற்றிருந்தமன்னோ

இ-ள். சேவலும் கொடி மான் தேரும் சிறை மணி மயிலும் தொல் நான் மேவு அரும் தகரும் வேலும் வேறு உள் படைகள் யாவும் - (கொடியாகிய) கோழிபுகுகொடியையுடைய குதிரை (புண்ட) தேரும் சிறையையுடைய கருமயிலும் பண்டைக்காலத்து (வாகனமாக) மேவிய அரியதகரும் வேலாயுதமும் மற்றுமுள்ள படைகளயாவும், மூவிரு முகத்து வள்ளன் மொழிந்திரு பணிகள் ஆற்றி - ஆறுதிருவதனங்கனையுடைய சுப்பிரமணியப்பெருமான் திருவாய் மலர்ந்தருளும் பணிகளை இயற்றிக்கொண்டு, கோவிலின் மருங்கும் முன்னும் குறுகி வீற்றிருந்த - அத்திருக்கோயிலின் பக்கங்களிலும் முன்னிடத்துஞ் சார்ந்து வீற்றிருந்தன. ஏறு.

மேவரும், பிறராலடைதற்கரியஎன்னுமாம். வேறுபடை, மற்றைப் பதினொருபடைகளும் மற்றைய தெய்வத்தன்மை பொருந்திய அம்புகளுமென்க. மன்னும் ஓவும் அசைநிலைகள் (260)

*வேல்

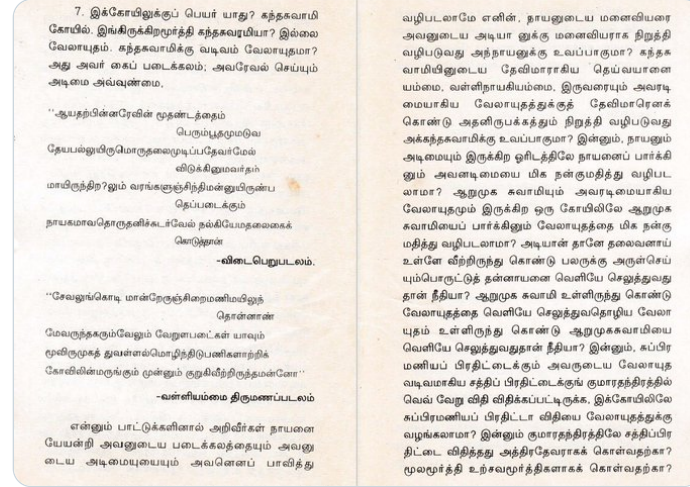
Some seem to feel that the great சைவ scholar is very rigid. Honestly, lay Hindus should exercise some basic self-awareness & humility & think mouthing off about महाविद्वान्-s; especially one who gave his life to नैष्ठिक-ब्रह्मचर्यम् to combat missionaries & guard धर्म.

To such people, I will ask this: In daily life, can you bear your individuality being eroded, ignored or conflated with that of another? Will you stand your marks/scores in school being given away to another, let alone have your spouse being mistaken as that of another?

If you are that sensitive (& rightly so) about yourself, is it not true devotion to exercise such sensitivity for our deities? It is that profound sensitivity that the great நாவலர் demonstrates here:

for him), the vul-weapon as if they were the latter 5 days, would this be pleasing to that master, that स्कन्द?!!”

The original here:



4:06 PM · May 17, 2020

25 See āṅgīrasaśreṣṭha's other Tweets

No, नावलर is not rigid. You just don't care at all.

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