

# THE THREE



# WISE MEN

**P**oigai a:lwa:r, Pu:daththa:lwa:r and Pe:ya:lwa:r are the 3 a:lwa:rs who appeared before the other 7 a:lwa:rs and benedicted the world with their divine Tamil devotional literature. It is because of this glorious act they came to be popularly known as “mudhal a:lwa:rs” (the first a:lwa:rs). There is a beautiful incident that happened in their lives. Let’s learn about it !

It was a dark, stormy evening in the temple of Thirukovulu:r. Three strangers had entered town. No one knew about their past, and it was said none of the three had parents or even a home. They simply wandered from town to town, visiting temples and leaving behind an important message of hope for the world.

Looking for a way to get out of the heavy rain, the three men found a home having a very small front porch with an awning. The three looked over the spot. They realized if only one of them stayed on the porch, he could lie down and sleep there; if two of them stayed on the porch, each could find a comfortable seat. If they decided to take the spot each of would have to stand

side by side, very little room between them. Being friends and fellow wanderers, they decided to share the porch.

As the rain and the night went on, the men exchanged stories about the greatness of the Lord at the various temples together and separately. Suddenly, each of them felt the presence of a fourth person standing on the porch with them. Night had arrived hours before, so it was virtually pitch dark. Without matches or lamps, none had the capacity to find out who this fourth stranger was. But, they still lit lamps.

What those lamps were made of and how they were lit is the subject of this series on the three wise men, whom we call the mudhala:lwa:rs, the first a:lwa:rs

Poigai a:lwa:r, the senior most of the three, decided he would first attempt to light a lamp to identify the stranger who was crowding the already over-crowded space on the small porch in which the three a:lwa:rs stood. He said:

Let the Earth be the lamp, the ocean the  
ghee, the warm rays of the Sun the light !

To the One who Holds the Bright  
Sudarashana Chakra in His Hand, I offer  
this garland of words

May it free from my bonds of ignorance !

The meaning is odd, isn’t it? How can one use the ocean and the Earth for a lamp? Our great teachers, the pu:rva:cha:ryas have explained the symbolism behind these words. It is to them a reminder of the existence of God, which can be taken as fact simply by observing this world.

Despite the randomness and chaos of life, the waters of the ocean never drown the land. The Sun rises and sets every day, witness to the chaos which humanity creates. The rays of the Sun is reminiscent of rays the Great Sudarshana Chakra, the great discus. This immediately reminds of the One Bright Sun Who maintains the balance between land and water



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