

**CHAPTER 3
TIRUMURAI 7
SUNDARAMURTI
(THEVARAM)**

Sundaramurti - Tiruvennaiallur



SUNDARAMURTI

Sundaramurti Nayanar was born in Tirunavarur to Sadaiyanar a Saivite priest and his wife Isaigani. The sthala was called Tirutturaiyur and now is known as Tiruttalur. It is situated on the Villupuram-Cuddalore rail route. Sundarar was then named Nambi Arurar after his grandfather.

According to the Siva Puranam, Sundarar is said to be the celestial that collected the poison (Halahala) in his hand and gave it to Lord Siva who absorbed it to protect the world. According to Lord Siva's wish, Sundarar was to be born as a human being to sing the *Tiru Thondat Thogai* for the benefit of mankind. So, when the servants of Goddess Parvati, Aninditi and Kamalini were gathering flowers in Mount Kailash, Sundarar gazed at them. They too, reciprocated his love. God Siva sent them to Earth to take human birth.

It happened that one day, King Narasinga Munaiyar who was passing by, noticed the cute child playing with a temple car toy on the streets. The King was at once attracted by the child. He told the parents of Sundarar that he wanted to bring up the small boy. Sadaiyanar and Isaigani agreed to the King's wish, as they were not attached to anything in the world. Sundarar grew under royal care and was brought up like a prince. When Sundarar attained the age to get married, his father arranged the marriage with Sandakavi Sivacharya's daughter. When the ceremony was about to start, a priest came and said to Sundarar that he was his slave and he had no right to get married. Everybody was stunned. The priest said that he also had a written agreement signed by Sundarar's grandfather. Sundarar and the priest had a heated argument and Sundarar on the spot called the priest 'Pitta' (mad man). He was very furious and wanted to tear the written paper. The elders verified the paper and certified its authenticity.

46 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Sundarar had no choice other than to follow the priest.

Both proceeded to Tiruvennainallur¹ which is near Villupuram town, in Villupuram district. Reaching the sthala, the priest vanished. Siva and Parvati appeared to Sundarar and explained the purpose of his life. When Sundarar asked God Siva how he could sing about Him, the Lord told him to start his first *Padigam* with the word he first called Him. Sundaramurti composed his first Tevaram hymns VII: 1 set to *pann Indalam*:

*“pitthaapirai soodiperu maaneyaru llaallaa ethaanmara
vaadbedhinaike kindrenmana thunnai...”*

From then onwards Sundarar started his pilgrimage and composed songs on Lord Siva. Sundarar went to his native place, Tirunavalur and rendered the *Padigam* set to Takkaragam VII: 13 at the temple.

*“malaiyaar aruvitthiramaal maniyundike kulaiyaara
konarnthettri yobr pennai vadapaal...”*

He then proceeded to Adikkai Virattanam², and where Appar was cured of his illness. At the temple entrance one can see the sculptures depicting the 108 Karanas of Bharata Natyam dance. Sundarar composed the *Padigam* VII: 38 after the incident where Siva was in the form of an old man put His feet near Sundarar’s head. This *Padigam* is set to Kollikkkelavanam.

*“thammaanai yariyaadha saadhiyaa rularey sadaimerkol
piraiyaanai vidaimerkoll vigirdhan...”*

Sundarar then continued his journey to Tiruvarur, through Chidambaram, Sirkazhi, Tirukkolakka, Mayiladhuturai, and Pukalur. Reaching his destination he had a warm welcome from Siva’s devotees who called him as *Tambiran Thozhar* (Friend of God). There Sundarar’s marriage was fixed to Paravai who was

1. Tiruvennainallur is 7 Kms from Arasur on the National Highway from Trichy to Chennai.

2. Adikkai Virattanam is 2 kms from Panruti.

Singing with Saivite Saints 47 Kamalini reborn and the ceremony was held with Lord Siva's blessings. During his stay in Tiruvarur, an old man by name Kuntaiyur Kilar out of devotion, use to provide Paravai grains and groceries for Sundarar and his devotees. At one point of time, a severe famine struck the region. Kuntaiyur was very afflicted at heart as he couldn't supply the needs of Sundarar. The old man implored Lord Siva to help him. It is said that Siva requested Lord Kubera to fill the region with enough paddy for everyone. Being informed by Lord Siva, Sundarar sang the *Padigam* VII: 20 set to *pann* Nattaragam at Tirukkoli temple asking the Lord to arrange for the transportation of the grains in all Tiruvarur. By the grace of Lord Siva, the paddy grains got transported by the Bhutas. Thus famine came to an end. This *Padigam* is:

*"neela ninaidhadiyen umainitthalung kaitbozhuveyn
vaallana kannmadavaall avallvaadi varundaamey..."*

After visiting some sthalas, Sundarar on his way back, was told by Paravai that the devotees were in need of financial assistance in order to celebrate the famous *Panguni Uttiram* festival. Immediately Sundarar went to Tirupputkalur, to pray to Lord Siva, for a solution to the problem. This temple is the place where Appar attained moksha and is between Nannilam and Nagapattinam. At that time the temple was under repair and lots of bricks were scattered. Sundarar slept there that night with his head on one of the bricks. On waking up the next morning he found all the bricks had been transformed into gold. Sundarar sang and thanked the Lord by rendering the hymns VII: 34 in *pann* Kolli :

*"thammaiye pugazhn thicchai pesinunj
saarvinuntbondar tharugila..."*

During his pilgrimage Sundarar reached Tiruvalampolil where he stayed. During the night, he dreamt of Lord Siva

³48 *Singing with Saivite Saints* asking him whether he has forgotten the Mazhapadhi sthala. The next day Sundarar went to Tirumazhapadhi and sang the *Padigam* VII: 24 in *pann* Nattaragam:

*“ponnaar meyniyaney pulittholai araikkasaindbu minnaar
senjchadaimeyl millirkondrai janindavaney...”*

Afterwards Sundarar reached Tirupachilasramam⁴. The special feature of this temple is that Lord Nataraja is unique here. Instead of the usual depiction of *Muyalakan* under His foot, there is a serpent. Here Sundarar worshipped the Lord to obtain gold coins and sang the *Padigam* VII: 14 in *pann* Takkaragam:

*“vaitthanan tanakekey thalaiyummen naavum
nenjamum vanjchamon drindri...”*

⁵As soon as the *Padigam* was completed, he received a large amount of gold from Lord Siva. In Pandikkodhumudhi, Sundarar sang the *Padigam* VII: 48 set to *pann* Pazhampanchuram in which he continuously affirmed that he would never forget the mantra ‘Namasivaya’.

*“mattrupattrena kindrininthirup paadbameymanam
baavitttheyn pettralumpiran dheyinippira vaadhanmaivan
theidhineyn...”*

Sundarar left for Tirumulukunram now known as Virudachalam found in the district of Cuddalore. It is said that this sthala is as holy as Kasi of North India.

Here Sundarar asked the Lord to grant him some gold by singing the *Padigam* VII: 63 set to *pann* Takkesi: requesting Siva to deposit them at Tiruvarur temple tank:

*“meiyvai muttrappodi poosiyobr nambi
vedhamnaan kumviri thoddiyobr nambi...”*

3. Mazhapadhi is 6 kms from Tiruvaiyaru, Tanjavur. 4. Tirupachilasramam is 12 kms from Trichy. 5. Pandikkodhumudhi is 40 kms from Erode.

Singing with Saivite Saints 49 In the meantime, Sundarar went to Tillai the famous temple at Chidambaram, where he composed the *Padigam* VII: 90. This hymn is set to *Kurinji panna*:

“*madithaadum adimaiykkann andriye mananeynee vaazhunaallum thaduttbattith tharumanaar thamarsekki lidumpobdhu thaduthaatkolvaan...*” When he was travelling from Tirupalimani Patikkarai in Nagapattinam district, Sundarar forgot to worship the Lord in Tiruvazhkoliputtur. Sundarar came back and rendered the *padigam* VII: 57 “*Talai Kalan Talai*” in *panna* Takkesi.

After worshipping at some temples Sundarar came to fetch the gold in the Tiruvarur water tank. He rendered the *Padigam* VII: 25 in *panna* Nattaragam:

“*ponnseyda meyniyineer pulittholai araikkasaittheer munseyda mueyilum yeritheer mudhu kundramarndbeer...*”

7 During his spiritual journey, Sundarar and his followers came to Tirukkukurukavur, which is now called Tirukkadaiyur. They reached there very tired and hungry. Siva disguised as a priest gave them rice, water and shelter. The tirtham which Lord Siva made to provide water can still be seen in this sthala. After taking rest Sundarar realized that the priest and the *pandal* (shelter) had disappeared. He realized that it was Lord Siva Himself. He rendered the *Padigam* VII: 29 set to *panna* Nattaragam:

“*itthanai yaamaatrai arinthaaley nemperumaan pittharey yendrummaip peysuvaar pirarellaam ...*”

8 Another incident in the life of Sundarar where Lord Siva gave him food was at Tirukkachur. It is said that in this sthala, Lord Vishnu worshipped Lord Siva in the form of a tortoise.

6. Tiruvazhkoliputtur is 8 kms from Vaitheeswaran temple. 7. Tirukkadaiyur is 7 kms from Sirkazhi. 8. Tirukkachur is around 16 kms from Tambaram, Chennai.

50 Singing with Saivite Saints There also Sundarar was very hungry and tired. The Lord again came as a priest and offered food to Sundarar. Sundaramurti Nayanar rendered the *Padigam* VII:41 set to *Pann* Kollikelavannam :

*“mudhuvaayobri kadharamudbuaat
terikondaadal muyalvaaney...”*

After offering prayers at Kanchipuram and Kalahasti, Sundarar came to Tiruvottriyur. According to the Puranam, Sundarar saw Sangilyar (Aninditi who was born there) and expressed his wish to Lord Siva to marry her. Sundarar got married to Sangilyar under the sacred Makila temple tree at Tiruvottriyur. It is said that here all the 27 Nakshatras (stars) came to worshipped Lord Siva. Therefore, the 27 lingams are named after each Nakshatram.

Afterwards, Sundarar decided to go to Tiruvarur. When he crossed the border of Tiruvottriyur, he lost his eyesight and fell down. Accompanied by other Siva devotees, Sundarar reached Kanchipuram and begged Lord Siva to restore his sight. Lord Ekambaranatar blessed him with eyesight for the left eye after which Sundarar sang the *Padigam* VII: 61 in *pann* Takkesi:

*“aalan thaanugan thamudhusey thaanai
aadhiyai amararthozhu theythunj...”*

On his way to Tirutturutti which is between Kumbakonam and Mayiladhuturai, Sundarar suffered from high fever. He rendered the *Padigam* VII: 74 in *pann* Gandharam:

*“minnumaa megangal pozhindhibin tharuvi
vedipadak karaiyodun thiraiikonarn thetrum...”*

Sundarar appealed to Siva to cure him. His health was restored after he had a dip in the temple water tank. It is said that the Sapta Rishis worshipped Lord Siva in this sthala. At Paravaiyulmantali near Tiruvarur, Sundarar worshipped at the temple and sang VII: 95. This *Padigam* is set to Senturutti *pann*.

Singing with Saivite Saints 51 “*meelaa adimai umakkey aalaayp pirarai veyndadhey*

moolaath theppohl ulley kanandru mugatthaal migavaadi...”

Immediately after this he was blessed by Siva and his eyesight restored. Lord Siva requested Sundarar to go to Tiruppunkur, near

Vaitheeswaran Koil to cure one of His devotees of his illness. It is said according to the Puranam that God Siva appeared here to bless the devotees with rain, thus ending a very long period of drought and famine. The devotee whom Sundarar was going to meet was none other than Eyarkon Kalikama Nayanar who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Chola army. Reaching Tiruppunkur, Sundarar wanted to see Eyarkon. The latter, a great devotee of Siva, had an enmity with Sundarar. He believed that asking Lord Siva to act as a messenger, Sundaramurti had been disrespectful towards Lord Siva. Eyarkon did not want to meet Sundarar, hence ended his life. He believed that it would be an insult to be cured by Sundarar. When Sundaramurti Nayanar arrived at Kalikama house, he found Eyarkon’s dead body. Sundarar rendered the *Padigam* VII: 55 and brought him back to life. This *Padigam* is set to *pann* Takkesi:

*“andha naalanun adaikekalam puguda
avanai kaappadhu kaarana maaga...”*

During his journey Sundaramurti met another royal devotee of Siva in the person of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. The latter accompanied Sundarar and worshipped at different sthalas together. He became a very good companion to Sundarar.

Reaching Tiruvaiyaru, Sundarar was caught in the river Kaveri which was in flood. He sang the *Padigam* VII: 77. It is said that the river parted and gave way to Sundaramurti Nayanar. This *Padigam* is set to Gandhara Pranchamam *pann*:

*“paravum parichon drariyeynnaan pandeyummai payilaadheyv iravum pagalum
ninainthaalum eydha ninaiya maattennaan...”*

⁹52 *Singing with Saivite Saints* He continued his way to Tirupukoliyur. This temple is now known as Tiruavinachi in the Coimbatore district. There he met the parents of a boy who were devotees of God Siva. They told Sundarar that while bathing their son was swallowed by a crocodile in the river. Moved by their devotion to Lord Siva, Sundarar went to the spot and sang the *Padigam* set to *Kurinji panna* VII: 92

*“ettraan marakken ezhumaikekum emperu maanaiye
utraayen drunnaiyey ulugin dreynunardbullatthaal...”*

On completion of the hymns, the crocodile regurgitated the boy, whom it had swallowed.

¹⁰Sundaramurti wanted to see his friend Cheraman Nayanar at Kodungallur, which was the Capital of the Chera Kingdom and now situated in the Trissur district, in Kerala. Cheraman received Sundarar with great love. They went to worship in many shrines and reached Tiruvanchakkalam. This temple has magnificent woodwork architecture built in Kerala style. There, Sundarar implored God Siva to take him to Kailash by singing the *Padigam* VII: 4 set to *panna* Indalam:

*“thalaikkut thalaimaalai anintha thenney
sadaimergangai vellam tharittba thenney...”*

By the blessing of Lord Siva it is said that the Devas came and took Sundarar on a white elephant. Sundarar was very happy but constantly thought of his friend, Cheraman. On the way to Kayilai, Sundarar rendered his last *Padigam* VII: 100 in *Panna* Panchamam:

*“thaaneyenai munpadaithaa nadharindhuthan ponnadikkeey
naanena paadalandho naayinenaip porutpadutthu...”* It is said that

Cheraman also ascended to Kailash by following Sundarar at Tiruvanchakkalam in Trissur, Kerala.

9. Tirupukoliyur is 20 kms from Tiruppur. 10. Tiruvanchakkalam is 8 kms from Irinjalakuda railway Station, in the Trissur district, and 32 kms from Trissur town.

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SUNDARAMURTI TEVARAM

Padigam VII : 48 – “Matruppattrena...”
(Pandhikkodhumudhi)

Pann: Pazhampanchuram **Talam :** Misra Chapu
matruppattrena kindrinin tirupadame manam pavitten
pettralum pirandhen inippira vadatanmai vandaitinen kuttrovar
thozhude thunjizkaraiyuvil pandhikkodhumudhi natravavunai
nanmarakkinum sollum nan namasivayave

itthan ummadhi yettuvarigazh titthanal marantithanal
ketthanalvaiyen endralal karuten kilar puna kaviri vatthava sikai
kondhadhi thozhudettu pandhikkodhumudhi natthava vunai
nanmarakkinun sollum nan namasivayave

saranandrandai yempiranai indai tambiranai ponmamaniyendru
peronayira kudhidevar pidattrinindru pirikilar naranan piranaan
thozhunkaraiyuri pandhikkodhumudhi karanavunai nanmarakkirum
sollum nan namasivayave
koniyaipirai sudhiyekkaraiyuril pandhikkodhumudhi peniya perumane
pinniagap pittanai pirappilliyer panulavari vandarai kondrai
tharanaippatta ponparai nananai thondanuran sollivai solluvar killai
thunbame

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MEANING

You who resides in the holy temple of Tirupandikkodumudi in Karaiyur are my only companion. With this belief I became human and was freed from future birth. Even if I were to forget You, my tongue shall ceaselessly chant the sacred letters fi ve, *namasivaya*.

My sweet God, who abides at Tirupandikkodumudi, I worship Your Feet with waters from the Kaveri river and adorn Them with fragrant garlands. The days that I forgot You and the days I was ill-treated by the world were not good days. Even if I were to forget You, my tongue shall ceaselessly chant the sacred letters fi ve, *namasivaya*.

My Lord, who is also Lord of my father and who is the Source that resides in Tirupandikodumudi in Karaiyur, Your Feet are my refuge. You are my treasure, my gem. I thus sing Your praise many times over. Such a Great One, even if I were to forget You, my tongue shall ceaselessly chant the sacred letters fi ve, *namasivaya*. You who wears the crescent moon, You of infinite grace, You who are without beginning, You who are adorned by great garlands of honey-filled kondrai flowers, You who wears the hooded-snake as your waist-belt, You who has risen at Tirupandikodumudi in Karaiyur, bless us that all obstacles be removed for those who sing these verses.

Singing with Saivite Saints 55



Gold bricks - Tiruppukalur
(Paintings)

Sundarar Mandapam -
Tiruvannamalai

Priest stops wedding -
Elders certify

authenticity of papers

