

CHAPTER 5
TIRUMURAI 9
9 SAINTS
(TIRUVISAIPPA AND TIRUPALLANDU)

Senthanar - Chidambaram



Singing with Saivite Saints 67

THE NINTH TIRUMURAI

The ninth Tirumurai comprises of a collection of *Padigams* of 9 poets called *Tiruvisaippa* and *Tiruppallandu*.

The composers of the ninth Tirumurai are Tirumaligai Thevar, Saint Senthanaar, Saint Karuvur Thevar, Saint Punturutti Nambikatanambi, Saint Kandaraditar, Saint Venattadigal, Saint Tiruvaliyamudanar, Saint Purushothama Nambi and Sedhirayar.

The ninth Tirumurai consists of 301 Padigams distributed as follows:

1. Tirumaligai Thevar - Tiruvisaippa - 1- 45
2. Senthanaar - Tiruvisaippa - 46 - 79
3. Karuvur Thevar - Tiruvisaippa - 80 - 182
4. Punturutti Nambikatanambi - Tiruvisaippa - 183 – 194
5. Kandaraditar - Tiruvisaippa - 195 – 204
6. Venattadigal - Tiruvisaippa - 205 – 214
7. Tiruvaliyamudanar - Tiruvisaippa - 215 – 256
8. Purushothama Nambi - Tiruvisaippa - 257 – 278
9. Sedhirayar - Tiruvisaippa - 279 – 288
10. Senthanaar - Tiruppallandu - 289 – 301

Of the nine poets, Senthanaar was very popular. He not only composed the *Tiruvisaippa*, but he is the only one who wrote the *Tiruppallandu*.

Senthanaar Senthanaar was born in a village near Chidambaram and was considered to be from one of the lowest classes of society. He used to go to the temple and worship Lord Siva from outside. He always had a vision of Lord Nataraja dancing inside his heart. The inner worship of Senthanaar was so

68 Singing with Saivite Saints profound and soulful, and yet so simple and trusting, that Lord Nataraja was deeply moved by it. Senthonar was a woodcutter by profession. He used to go to the forest and gather some wood and sell it in Tillai (Chidambaram). Though the income he earned was meagre, he used to purchase cereals, make a porridge, and offer it to Lord Nataraja. The rest of the food, he would share with some poor mendicants who happened to pass by.

During the Arudra Darisanam festival (Nov. - Dec.) in Chidambaram, a mendicant appeared at Senthonar's door and asked for food. On that day, Senthonar had very little food as it was a rainy day and he could not sell his wood. Cheerfully he welcomed the poor man and offered him all the food he had made. Senthonar had nothing to eat but was very glad that his guest enjoyed the humble food he had offered. Little did he know that the guest was none other than Lord Nataraja Himself, bent upon securing public recognition to the humble worship of Senthonar.

At that time the kingdom was under the Chola Emperor, King Gandar Aditta, who was a great devotee of Lord Nataraja. Everyday he would perform a special puja in his palace for Lord Nataraja. At the end of the puja, he used to hear the anklet bell of Lord Nataraja. However, on this day, he did not hear the sound of the bell. The King was deeply perturbed. Lord Nataraja appeared in the King's dream and told him that he was partaking food in Senthonar's hut.

At the same moment in the temple, the priests found drops of porridge strewn all around Lord Nataraja in the Sanctum. They reported this to King Aditta. The latter sent his troops in search for Senthonar to honor him, but could not find him. The next day as thousands of people began to tug at the big ropes, the chariot could not be moved. The King sent his

Singing with Saivite Saints 69 soldiers and even the elephants, but failed to move the chariot.

Just then, a voice was heard telling “Santha, sing a Pallandu”. A Pallandu is a benedictory poem, blessing the person concerned with long life and lasting glory. Senthanaar began singing new verse which burst out spontaneously from him and he became a gifted singer of hymns. Words of delicious music, in thirteen verses set to the *Panchamam pann* flowed from his lips. At the end of the song, the chariot moved gently and majestically.

The Chola King noticed Senthanaar, rushed to him with folded arms, bowed at his feet and told him about his dream. Senthanaar was bestowed with great honor.

The humble porridge offered by Senthanaar to Lord Nataraja came thereafter to be a symbol of devotion on the Arudra Darisanam festival. The *Pallandu* sung by Senthanaar are being sung during the evening puja by the temple musicians. In three other temples where Senthanaar worshipped, he sang a collection of songs known as the *Tiruvaisaiippa*.

70 Singing with Saivite Saints

SENTHANAR TIRUPPALLANDU

“Mannuga Tillai...” (Chidambaram)

Pann: Panchamam **Talam :** Adi

mannuga tillai valarganam bhaktargal
vanchagar poyakala ponninsai mandhapa
tullai pugundu buvani yellam vilakka
annanadhai madhaval umaikon adhi yo mukkarul purindu pinnai
piraviyarukka neridanda pittarku pallandu kurudumai

Singing with Saivite Saints 71

MEANING

May Thillai prosper! May devotees increase! May the destructive ones be removed! Entering the golden hall Shine forth in the World! Lord of the graceful Uma Bless me! To the crazy ones that showed the path to stop future births, Say, “Many years!”

Those with blind-folded mind, go away! True devotees, come fast! Taking and Giving (brides and grooms) generation after generation be devoted to Lord Ishwara! Getting into the company (of devotees), tell, “Many years”, saying, “The Thing beyond Universe! The unlimited flood of Bliss! The Thing That is there in the beginning, now and forever!”

