



Profile of Author

Adi Sankara Perumal pursued his B.A. Music at the Annamalai University, Chidambaram, India during 1995 - 1998 and his M.A. Music during 2005 - 2007 at the Madras University, Chennai, India.

He is specializing in both Practical Music and Musicology.

Adi Sankara is working as a Lecturer in Vocal Carnatic at the renowned Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Republic of Mauritius.

REVIEWS & COMMENTS

*"I greatly admire the enthusiasm of Thiru. Adi Sankara Perumal in his efforts to bring out such a document. This book in English would be an inspiring and attractive introduction to the Saivite culture of the Tamizh country. And when we realise that the author is a citizen of Mauritius, our admiration goes up. Now we look forward to research writings on music from this young Post-graduate in music."*

- Dr. N. Ramanathan (Musicologist, India)

*"Adi Sankara's work is a valuable contribution to the world of Tamil culture and his book is another attempt to look back the singing tradition of South India. This book is supplemented with an audio CD of beautifully selected traditional devotional music. Singing with Saivite Saints will be a useful, enjoyable and educational tool for students and music lovers."*

-Dr. B. Balasubrahmaniyan (Adjunct Instructor-Wesleyan University, USA)

*"Thank you for taking us back to our source and the roots of our venerable Saiva traditions. 'Singing with Saivite Saints' explains and throws light on the origin and purpose of our Saiva Bhakti. I have heard Adi Sankara singing our Tirumurai, Tevaram, Tirumantiram and Nachintanai, have accompanied him on some of his yatrai and can testify to his unbounded love for God, Gods and Guru, expressed through music and teaching."*

- Mr. M. Mardemootoo csk (Senior Attorney, Mauritius)

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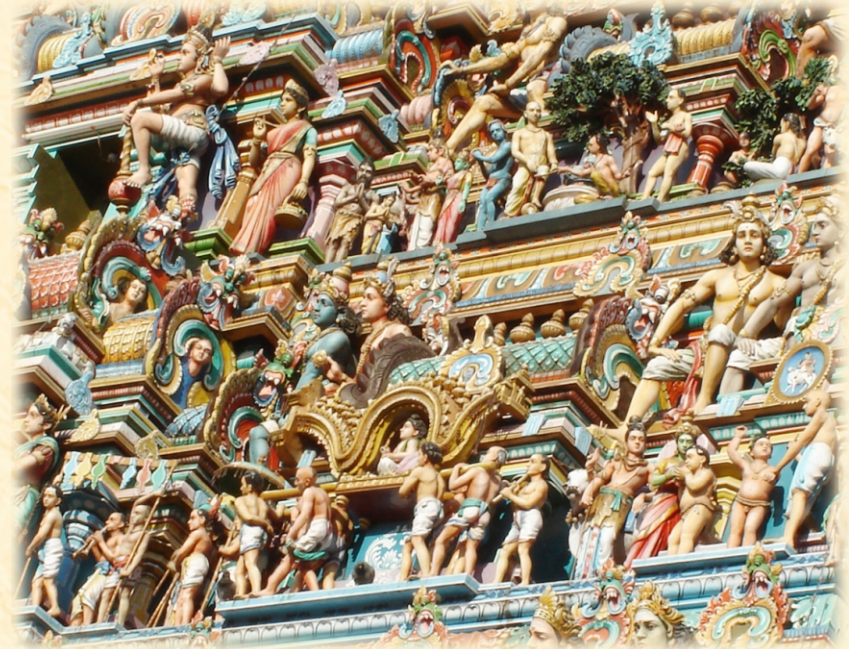
AS PRODUCTION

Singing with Saivite Saints

Adi Sankara Perumal

# Singing with Saivite Saints

*from Tirumurai to Natchintanai*



Adi Sankara Perumal



AS PRODUCTION



Language in India 18:11 November 2018

**SINGING WITH  
SAIVITE SAINTS**

*From*  
*Tirumurai*  
*To*  
*Natchintanai*  
**Adi Sankara Peruman**



AS PRODUCTION

Dr Adi Sankara

Singing with Saivite Saints

Language in India 18:11 November 2018

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Ph : 00 230 7501393  
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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this book to  
my loving  
Father and Mother  
Pragassen and Vimala  
for having always been there for me.*  
— Adi Sankara



*Special Thanks to*

Mr. MOOGOME PERUMAL  
NEUILLY SUR SEINE  
FRANCE

Mr. RUNGASAMY TIROUMALEY  
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MISSION CROSS ROAD  
BON ACCUEIL, MAURITIUS

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MRS. NALINI CHENGANNA AND  
FAMILY  
L'ESPERANCE, PITON, MAURITIUS

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## FOREWORD

Many blessings from the Kauai Aadheenam Pitham of the Kailasa Parampara on the publication of “Singing with Saivite Saints: From Tirumurai to Natchintanai.”

We are delighted to review this Saivite Song Book and applaud Adi Sankara Peruman’s effort to “capture and portray the sense of devotion, surrender and oneness that the Saivite saints felt for Lord Siva.”

Contrary to the understanding of many, Siva is not the God of destruction, but rather the God of love. As Saint Tirumular aptly wrote: *“The ignorant prate that love and Siva are two. They do not know that love alone is Siva. When men know that love and Siva are the same, love as Siva they ever remain.”*

Om Namasivaya.

**SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI**

Jagadacharya Nandinatha Sampradaya  
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, USA

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## REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

Thank you Adi Sankara for taking us back to our source and the roots of our venerable Saiva traditions.

*Singing with Saivite Saints -From Tirumurai to Natchintanai* explains and throws light on the origin and purpose of our Saiva Bhakti, is an invaluable tool for both students of Music and Fine Arts and seekers following the steps of our Nayanmar for spiritual advancement. We are guided through the great moments in the life of our Saiva Samaya Acharyas, and several other prominent saints, reviewing detailed accounts of their respective pilgrimages, their paths of devotion, and their diving outpourings to the Glory of Our Great Lord and Supreme God Siva... and the whole superbly depicted with graphics of temples, murals and Sanctuaries visited by the author.

Adi Sankara's book, besides exposing his sincere love of our Saiva Samayam, demonstrates his deep understanding of the intricacies and greatness of our noble music traditions; Adi Sankara had the unique opportunity of rendering and singing the appropriate songs at each stage of his pilgrimage to the different abodes of our Lord and Supreme Mahadeva.

I have heard Adi Sankara performing and singing our Tirumurai, Thevaram, Tirumantiram and Nachintanai, and have personally accompanied him on some of his *Yatrai* and can testify to his unbounded love for God, Gods and Guru, through music and teaching.

I am confident that our children and lovers of music at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius, where he is presently lecturing, and all abroad, institutions and individuals, will benefit immensely from his searches, talent and accomplishments.

aum namasivaya **Me Manon MARDEMOOTOO CSK**

*Senior Attorney 3rd*

Floor, Les Jamalacs Bldg.,

Vieux Conseil Street, Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius



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## REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

'*Singing with Saivite Saints*' is an account on the musical / poetical compositions, created in the Tamizh country, on the theme of Siva with emphasis on their composers. The main thrust is on the compositions from the Twelve Tirumurai-s. Brief biographical details of the saints and citing of select songs/verses with reference to the context of their composition, constitute the book. Meaning of the cited songs have also been provided. The post-Tirumurai songs have been taken from those of Muthut Thandavar, Marimutthap Pillai, Thayumanavar, Muthusvami Dikshitar, Gopalakrishna Bharati and Siva Yogaswami. The period covered is from Seventh Century to the Twentieth.

I greatly admire the enthusiasm of Thiru Adi Sankara Peruman in his efforts to bring out such a document. Accompanied by beautiful photographs of the paintings of the Saints and of the related shrines, this book in english would be an inspiring and attractive introduction to the Saivite culture of the Tamizh country. And when we realise that the author is a citizen of Mauritius, our admiration goes up. Now we look forward to research writings on music from this young Postgraduate in music.

**Dr. N.Ramanathan**

Musicologist

35/18, 4th Main Road, Raja  
Annamalai Puram,

Chennai - 600 028. India.

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## REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

Adi Sankara Peruman's *Singing with Saivite Saints* on the saint singers and composers of South India from the 7th through the 20th century, explores the richness of Saiva philosophy, Tamil culture, Tamil bhakti literature and the evolution of South Indian Music. Adi Sankara's work is a valuable contribution to the world of Tamil culture and his book is another attempt to look back the singing tradition of South India.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* reviews the ancient Pann Systems, precursors to the South Indian raga system. Peruman highlights the importance of the Tevaram songs, an early inspiration for musical composition since these songs were sung at the Saiva temples frequented by the Karnatak composers.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* will be a useful, enjoyable and educational tool for students and music lovers.

**Dr. B. Balasubrahmanian**

Adjunct Instructor in Music

Music Department, Wesleyan University,

Middletown, CT, 06459, USA

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### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Aum Tiruchitrabalam! Temples of South India have always fascinated me.

During my graduate studies in Carnatic Music at the Annamalai University, I was greatly attracted to the Chidambaram Temple and nearby *Sivasthalams*. I was always eager to know the importance of the sixty-three *Nayanmar*, who find a place in most *Sivakshetras*. After coming to India in 2005 to pursue post-graduation, I discovered more and more temples and their *puranams*.

Music and spirituality have been parallel paths to attain oneness with God. Singing in praise of Lord Siva or even hearing these songs brings us so much closer to the Supreme. The *Panniru Tirumurai*, the twelve-book compendium of devotional writings of Saivite saints, has immensely contributed towards the propagation of music in South India. The *Pann* system of music is the preceptor of the modern *Raga* scale of South Indian music. The Oduvars still sing the *Tirumurai* in the traditional *Pann*. By their devotion, willpower and hard work, the authors of the twelve *Tirumurai*, reached the ultimate goal in life – merger with Siva.

Following the *Panniru Tirumurai* are the works of *Mummoorthigal*, the trio who had composed inspiring songs on Lord Siva, despite their difficult situation. These songs are wellknown nowadays. Later, Thayumanavar contributed immensely by way of beautiful hymns to Lord Siva. Then came the 'Musical Trinity' who by their modern musical style and using the *Raga* system of music have performed great compositions on Lord Siva. Gopalakrishna Bharathi's *Charitrams* and Siva Yogaswami's *Natchintanai* are today being better exposed to the audience by many artistes, who sing them in concerts. Compositions on Lord Siva, from the 7th Century to the 20th Century, have held an important place in the repertoire of South Indian musicians.



*x Singing with Saivite Saints* I am much pleased to place before the reader this

the book titled, 'Singing with Saivite Saints - From Tirumurai to Natchintanai'. I have tried my best to capture and portray the sense of devotion, surrender and oneness that the Saivite saints felt for Lord Siva. I was inspired to write this book by including composers from the 7 to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and I have attempted to trace the path they walked towards Siva. Using stories I have heard and with recent pictures of temples at which they sang, my hope is to inspire others to visit these same places and to sing these same songs that have brought me so much joy.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

A book of this dimension requires much assistance in many ways. At this point, my heart is overwhelmed with deep gratitude for the blessings, in the form of the 'Foreword', from His Holiness Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Gurumahasannidhanam of Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii and 163 preceptor of the Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasa Parampara.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mrs. Sheela Venkatakrishnan who guided me and helped me at every stage of the book.

I would like to place on record my appreciation to Kulapathi M Mardemootoo csk, Senior Attorney, Republic of Mauritius; Dr. N. Ramanathan, Retired Head and Professor of Music Dept, Madras University and Erudite Scholar and; Dr. B Balasubrahmanian, Adjunct Instructor, Music Dept., Wesleyan University, USA for their reviews and comments.

I would also like to thank Mr. K. P. Nagarajan for having rendered able assistance in various areas connected with the book.

I wish to thank all those wonderful persons who have helped me in one way or another, to write and publish this book. Finally, I thank my family for their constant support towards completing this book.

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## **SAIVITE COMPOSITIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**

**7<sup>th</sup> PANNIRU TIRUMURAI** 7<sup>th</sup> Century Gnanasambandar Tevaram 4187 hymns 7<sup>th</sup> Century Appar Tevaram 3066 hymns 8<sup>th</sup> Century Sundarar Tevaram 1024 hymns 9<sup>th</sup> Century Manickkavasagar Tiruvasagam 1058 hymns 9<sup>th</sup> Century 9 Poets Tiruvisaippa Tiruppallandu 301 hymns C.a 200 BCE Tirumular Tirumantiram 3047 hymns 11th Century 12 Saints Anthology of Devotional poems 1391 hymns 12<sup>th</sup> Century Sekkizhar Periya Puranam 4286 hymns

### **ADI MUMMOORTIGAL (EARLY MUSICAL TRINITY)**

Muthu Thandavar 1560 – 1640 AD Arunachala Kavirayar 1711 – 1779 AD Marimutha Pillai 1712 – 1787 AD

**THAYUMANAVAR** 1705 – 1742 AD 1452 verses

### **MUSICAL TRINITY (LATER MUSICAL TRINITY)**

Syama Sastri 1762 – 1827 AD Tyagaraja 1767 – 1847 AD Muthuswami Dikshitar 1775 – 1835 AD

**GOPALAKRISHNA BHARATI** 1810 – 1896 AD

**SIVA YOGASWAMI** 1872 – 1964 AD

Pollappillaiyar in Tirunaraiyur Temple



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## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest movements of the world, the *Saiva Bhakti* movement, took place in Tamil Nadu between the 7th and the 10th century. It was at that time that saints composed hymns, set to music, which form the canonical literature of Saivism and were collectively named *Tirumurai*. The corpus of the devotional literature is called, *Panniru Tirumurai* which is a twelve-book compendium of writings of Saivite saints. It consists as the name reveals twelve major works, which are as the *Stotra, Hymns* in praise of Lord Siva.

The word *Tirumurai* is composed of two words namely, *Tiru* and *Murai*. The word *Tiru* means sacred and auspicious and *Murai* means scripture. The etymological meaning of the term *Tirumurai* refers to the scripture which disciplines the soul and paves the way through proper conduct for the ultimate union of the individual soul with Siva.

The spiritual outpouring of Tiru Gnana Sambandar is divided into three *Tirumurais*. Appar's hymns form the next three *Tirumurais*. Sundarar's songs are the seventh *Tirumurai*. These seven books are also called *Atankan Murai*. The eighth *Tirumurai* of Manikkavasagar consists of two different works namely, the *Tiruvasagam* and the *Tirukkovaiyar*. The ninth book is a collection of poems called the *Tiruvaisaiippa* and *Tiruppallandu* written by nine saints. *Tirumantiram* a unique book written by Saint Tirumular, some two thousand years ago, is acknowledged as the tenth *Tirumurai*. The eleventh *Tirumurai* is an anthology of devotional poems by twelve saints. The *Periya Puranam* of Sekkizhar, 11 century narrating the life story of the 63 Saiva Nayanmar saints, is the twelfth *Tirumurai*.

Of the twenty-seven poets who are the authors of the twelve *Tirumurais*, four are held in high esteem by Saivites. They are Tiru Gnana Sambandar, Tirunavukkarasar, Sundaramurti and



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 3 Manikkavasagar. These four Saints are called *Samaya Kuravars* or religious preceptors. The *Tevarams* and the *Tiruvagasam* are held as the Tamil Vedas.

This twelve-book anthology was compiled by Saint Nambiandar Nambi. He also arranged the musical notations for them with the help of another musician. There is a view that Nambi compiled only the first eleven Tirumurais and the twelfth one, was added in the 12th century by Sekkizhar.

The Tirumurais have a perennial appeal, as they are records of great spiritual experiences, rendered with wonderful rhythm and expression. Even today, after nearly a thousand years, they move us to tears of joy, give us comfort and solace, and also raise us to heights of ethereal peace.

In the history of music, the contribution of the *Panniru Tirumurai* is immense. These songs can, even now, be heard in temples and in concerts throughout the world.

**About the Tevaram** The Tevaram is the set of songs sung by saints Gnana Sambandar, Appar, and Sundarar in their seven Tirumurais. Together they have sung hymns to Lord Siva in 274 sacred places that they worshipped during their pilgrimage. 219 of these are found in South India. The Tevaram is more than a text. If one understands the meaning of these holy hymns, one will have a better understanding of the Saiva Samayam.

The Tevaram also guides us into the world of classical Tamil civilizations. The melodic setting of the hymns gives us clues to the ancient musical system of South India. The Tevaram is said to be the earliest musical compositions that we possess in the history of Indian Music. The importance of the Tevaram hymn lies in the fact that they belong to a period when there was a single system of music in the whole of India.

#### 4 *Singing with Saivite Saints* **The Oduvar**

The *Oduvars* are musicians who sing the *Tevaram* in a special traditional way. They have the responsibility to sing hymns from the *Tirumurai* during rituals and ceremonial occasions in temples. The *Oduvars* sing *Tevaram* hymns in a sophisticated free form, individualized singing style, called the *Viruttam*. The *Viruttam* is entirely improvisation and free in terms of melodic form. Sometimes the *Oduvar* will keep time with hand-cymbals (*talam*). It is often at the age of seven or eight, that the typical *Oduvar* gets his training under a teacher at one of the Saiva School Centers. During his studies, the young apprentice memorizes the hymns of the *Tevaram* and learns the techniques of musical performance.

For more than 800 years the district of Tanjavur was the brightest seat of South Indian Music. The *Tevarams* were so popular that kings, starting from the great Raja Raja Cholan, decided to nominate for the first time, musicians at the temples to sing these holy hymns. The Chola King, Raja Raja I appointed *Oduvars* to sing the *Tevaram* hymns together, with accompanying percussion musicians on the *Udukkaï* and the *Matthalam*.

South Indian Music is deeply immersed in devotion. The *Tevaram* form is known as *Vaidika Ganam* or Sacred Musical form.

The *Tevaram* was set to 24 specific *Panns* by the authors of the famous hymns. The *Panns* are the precursors of modern *Ragam*, and its classifications. In the ancient Tamil scaled types, the *Panns* were associated with particular times of the day. The classification of *Panns* were; to be sung during the day *Pagal Panns*; to be sung during the night *Iravu Panns* and to be sung at all times *Prdhu Panns*. The 24 *Panns* and their nearest equivalent to modern *ragam* are as follows:

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 5 **Pann Ragam**

1. Natta Paadai Gambira Nattai
2. Kolli Navaroj
3. Indalam
4. Nadanamakriya
5. Kurinji Harikambhoji
6. Senturutti Madyamavathi
7. Gandharam Navaroj
8. Megaragakkurinji Neelambari
9. Viyazhkkurinji Sowrasthram
10. Takkaragam Kambhoji
11. Takkesi Kambhoji
12. Pazhandakkaragam Suddha Saveri
13. Sevvazhi
14. Yadukula Kambhoji
15. Kausikam Bhairavi
16. Panchamam Ahiri
17. Saadhari Pantuvarali
18. Puranirmai Bhupalam
19. Pazhampanchuram Sankarabharanam
20. Seekhamaram
21. Mayamalavagaulai
22. Piyandaik Gandharam Navaroj
23. Nattaragam
24. Pantuvarali
25. Gandhara Panchaman Kedaragowla
26. Andhali
27. Kurinji Sama
28. Kollikkelavanam Navaroj
29. Yazhmuri
30. Atana

*6 Singing with Saivite Saints* In recent years, the musical tradition of the hymns of the *Tevaram* has undergone many changes. The tremendous developments of the South Indian Classical Music, the Carnatic Music from the 16 to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, have obviously had a great influence on the music of the *Tevaram*. Nowadays we find that the Pann system of the *Tevaram* has been irretrievably lost, having been replaced by Carnatic raga scales.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **TIRUMURAI 1-3 TIRUGNANASAMBANDAR (THEVARAM)**

Tiru Gnana Sambandar - Mylapore



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## TIRU GNANA SAMBANDAR

In sacred Sirkazhi, an important town in the Chola Kingdom, there lived, a pious devotee known as Sivapada Krudayar with his virtuous wife Bhagavathiar. Both of them were ardent devotees of Lord Siva and offered daily puja to Lord Siva. Sivapada Krudayar prayed to Lord Siva for the boon of a son who would reestablish the glory of Saivism. By His grace they became the proud parents of a boy whom they named Sambandar. They brought up the child with great love and devotion, knowing fully well that he was a purposeful gift from the Lord.

One day Sivapada Krudayar and his wife took their threeyear old child with them to the temple tank to bathe. Sambandar insisted to be taken with them. They left the child on the bank and went into the water. The small boy looked at the tower of the temple and began to cry for his parents. Siva appeared as Lord Thonniappar together with Goddess Parvati and asked her to feed Sambandar with the milk of divine wisdom. Mother Parvati fondled the child and suckled him the milk of wisdom. Thus Sambandar obtained His grace and divine knowledge.

After finishing their bath, the parents came to Sambandar and found a golden cup in his hands and milk overflowing from his mouth. Sivapada Krudayar thought that somebody had given milk to his son. Hence, he asked Sambandar, who gave him the milk. Sambandar pointed to the temple tower where Siva and Parvati appeared in the sky. It is here that Sambandar sang his first *padigam* I:1 in praise of Lord Siva in *pann* Nattapadai:

*“thodudaiyasevi yanvidaiyeriyor thuvemathisudi  
kadudaiyasuda laipodipoosiyen ullangkavarkalvan...”*

Sivapada Krudayar could not see the Lord, but guessed from his son’s behaviour that he must have had a vision of God

1. Sirkazhi is 20 Kms from Chidambaram

10 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Siva. On the way to the temple, Sambandar composed another

*Padigam* set to *pann* Takkesi, 1:74: “*naravanirairivann daraittharkondrai nayandbunayanathar*

*suruvajserivann kodiyonudalam podiyavizhiseydhhaan...*” From that moment, wherever he went, Sivapada Krudayar

carried Sambandar on his shoulders. The people decorated the town nicely and received Sambandar with great devotion.

2The next day Tiru Gnana Sambandar went to Tirukkolakka and composed the *Padigam* 1:23: by clapping his hands to keep rhythm, in *pann* Takkaragam:

“*madaiyil vaalai paaya maadbaraar kudaiyum poigai kolak kaavulaan...*”

Lord Siva was so pleased with the song that He blessed Sambandar with a pair of golden cymbals, bearing the fi ve-letter word *Namasivaya*. Sambandar began to sing with the help of the golden cymbals, and it is said that even Narada and the celestials were charmed.

Sambandar went to many sthalas and then returned to Sirkazhi. There, Tiru Nilakanta Yazhpanar, an ardent devotee of God Siva and an expert musician on the Yazh met Sambandar. As per the request of the latter, Nilakanta played the Yazh. The divine sound of the instrument melted Sambandar’s heart. Yazhpanar expressed his wish to accompany Sambandar and to play the Yazh wherever he would sing in praise of Lord Siva.

3Sambandar went on a pilgrimage to Tillai temple. Tillai is another name for Chidambaram, which means *Temple* by itself. It is one of the ‘*Pancha Bhuta Sthalas*’ representing *Akasha* (ether). It is also one of the fi ve places where Lord Nataraja danced. The Tirumurais are said to have been found and restored in Chidambaram. Sages Vyagrapada, Patanjali, Upamanya, Vyasa,

2. Tirukkolakka is about 2 kms west from Sirkazhi. 3. Chidambaram is 250 kms from Chennai.



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 11 Suka, Tirunilakanta, Tirunalaip-povar Nayanar, Kuruva Nayanar, Kanampulla Nayanar Cantanacharya and Manickkavasagar, attained mukti there. The Chidambaram temple's Gopurams are covered with sculptures, illustrating the 108 postures of the 'Natya Sastra'.

On his way, Sambandar saw the Andanars (priests) of Tillai who appeared to him as Siva Ganas (celestial servants of Lord Siva). He sang the *Padigam* III: 1 set to *pann* Gandhara Panchamam praising them and entered the temple:

*"aadinaianaru neiyodupaalthayir andanarpiri  
yaadba chitrambalam..."*

At Pennatakam<sup>4</sup>, where it is believed that Siva rested after consuming the poison to save the world, Sambandar rendered the *Padigam* I: 59 in *pann* Pazhandakkaragam:

*"odungum pinnipiravi kedendrivai udaiyathaai  
vaazhikai yozhiyattavam..."*

From there on, Sambandar refused to be carried by his father and decided to walk. The Lord wanted to alleviate Sambandar suffering by presenting him with a palanquin. God Siva appeared in the dream of the devotees of Tiruaratturai and told them that they would find a pearl palanquin to be taken to Sambandar who was then proceeding towards Tiru Aratturai.

The Lord appeared in Sambandar's dream too and informed him of the gift. Sambandar worshipped the palanquin and paid due respect by singing the *Padigam* II: 70 set to Gandharam *pann*:

*"piramanoor veynupuram pugali vengurup peruneer thonee puramannu  
poondharai ponna sirapuram puruvajn sannbai..."*

Tiruarathurai is also known as Tirunelvayil Arathurai. Here one can see that the Nandi is slightly turned. This is 4. Pennatakam is near Virudrachalam. 5. Tiruarathurai is between Virudrachalam and Toludur.

12 *Singing with Saivite Saints* because once, the Niva River was in flood and was a threat to the devotees staying there. Nandi turned his head and glanced at the river to protect the devotees. The flood immediately subsided.

Sambandar returned to Sirkazhi after visiting a number of shrines and sang in praise of Lord Siva everywhere during his journey. His parents performed the sacred thread ceremony (Upanayanam) at the temple in Sirkazhi where Sambandar taught the priests the essence of the *Panchakshara Mantra*. He sang in *Pann Gandhara Panchamam* the *Padigam* III: 22, in which he explained the importance of the *Panchakshara Mantra*.

*“thunjalum thunjali laadba pozhdinum nenjaga  
naindu ninaimin naalldhorum...”*

Meanwhile Tirunavukkarasar (Appar) who had heard about Sambandar, came to meet him at Sirkazhi. Sambandar received the other composer of Tevaram with due respects.

During the course of his pilgrimage, Sambandar came to Tirupachilasramam. The daughter of King Kollimalavan, who was a great devotee of Lord Siva, was suffering from an incurable disease. The King had tried all kinds of treatment but, in vain. In despair, he took her to the temple and placed her in front of the Lord. When Sambandar came to the temple, he saw the pitiable condition of the girl, who was lying unconscious. Praying for Lord Siva’s grace upon the girl, he sang a *Padigam* I: 44 in *pann* Takkaragam:

*“thuneevalar thingal thulangivilanga sudarsadai suttrimudithu paneevalar  
kolgaiyar paaridan soozha vaaridamum palithervaar...”*

When he completed the *Padigam* the King’s daughter was cured to the surprise of all who were amazed by this miracle.

6. Tirupachilasramam is 2 Kms from Mannargudi, in Tiruvarur district.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 13 At Senkunnur, during his pilgrimage, Sambandar found that the cold weather was the cause of severe fever and that many people were suffering on account of it. The people there entreated him to alleviate their sufferings. Sambandar sing the *Padigam* I: 116 in *Pann* Viyazhkkurinji:

*“avvinai kivvinai yaamendru sollu mahtariveer uyvinai naadaa  
dbiruppadbu mundhamak koonamanrey...”*

7Senkunnur was also known as Tirukkotimatak Senkunnur and is named Tiruchengadu nowadays. This temple is on a hill and is called Chengodu because of its reddish hue. From the 1200 steps reaching the temple, the 60th one is considered auspicious to take an oath which is said to be granted by Lord Siva.

8After worshipping at different sthalas, Sambandar came to Tiruvavadhaturai. His father wanted to perform a big *Yajna* and informed Sambandar about his financial constraint. Sambandar went to the temple and sing the hymn, III: 4 in *pann* Gandhara Panchamam:

*“idarinum thalarinu menaturunoi thodarinum  
munakazhal thozhuthbezhuvu...”*

At once a Siva Gana appeared and gave him a bag containing one thousand gold coins. The Siva Gana informed him that the gold coins would never deplete as the bag will replenish by itself. Sambandar glorified the Lord's grace and handed over the bag to his father.

According to the Siva Puranam, it is here that Tarumetevatai (Nandi) was blessed by Siva to become His

7. Tiruchengadu is in the Namakkal district and 30 Kms from Namakkal town.

8. Tiruvavadhaturai is found on the bank of river Kaveri. It is 16 Kms from Mayiladhaturai.

14 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Vahana. There is also a shrine dedicated to Rishi Tirumular who composed the Tirumantiram in this sthala. At Dharmapuram, which was the native place of Nilakanta Yazhpanar, the people glorified the Yazh player for his proficiency in music. But Yazhpanar felt that, it was due to Sambandar's grace that he was allowed to accompany him and that by himself, he was unable to reproduce on the Yazh the divine melody of the Saint's *Padigam*. To prove this, Sambandar sang a song in praise of the Lord, which Nilakanta was unable to play on his instrument. He wanted to break the instrument in desperation. But Sambandar prevented him and asked him to continue to play. From that time, this pann has been named as *Yazhmuri Pann*, which is the equivalence of today's Atana ragam. Some scholars attribute it to Neelambari ragam. There is a sculpture depicting Sambandar in a singing posture accompanied by Yazhpanar here.

Sambandar went to Tirumarugul<sup>10</sup> to worship, when he met a young woman in distress. She narrated to Sambandar that, while she and her husband were sleeping, a poisonous snake bit the latter and he died. The wife prayed to the Lord for His mercy. Sambandar consoled her and sang the hymn II: 18 in *pann* Indalam:

*“sadaiya yenumaal sarannee yenumaal vidaiya  
yenumaal veruvaa vizhumaal...”*

After completion of the song, the man was brought to life. The couple and all those present worshipped the Saint.

Sambandar went to Tiruppukalur<sup>11</sup>. There he met Muruka Nayanar. During his stay he learnt about the arrival of Appar from Tiruvarur and went to meet him. This was the second

9. Dharmapuram is near Karaikkal railway station and 2 kms from Tirunallar. 10. Tirumarugul is near Karaikkal town and, north of Tiruvarur district. 11. Tiruppukalur is around 7 Kms from Nannilam, situated in Tiruvarur district.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 15 time that the two saints met. At the suggestion of Appar, Sambandar visited Tiruvarur and had darshan of Lord Tyagaraja. He sang the hymns I: 91 in *pann* Kurinji:

*“chittan theliveergaal, attha naarooraip patthi  
malarthoovamutthi yaagumey...”*

Sambandar returned to Tiruppukalur and met Appar again. Both decided to travel further together. They went to Tirukkatavur, where they were received by Kunkiliya Nayanar. Sambandar composed here the *Padigam* III: 8 in *pann* Gandhara Panchamam:

*“sadauidai yaanunai yadalaanunjari kobvana udaiudai yaanumai  
yaarndhavonn kannumai keylvannum...”*

<sup>11</sup>Tirukkatavur is known as Tirukkadaiyur at present and situated in Nagapattinam district. Kungiliya Nayanar and Kari Nayanar attained moksha in this temple. This is the sthala where Lord Siva prevented Yama from taking the life of a young boy called Markandeya. The unique feature of this temple is that the Mrityunjaya Homam is held here to protect oneself from evil. Special pooja for the 60 and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays, that is, the *Sastyabdhapurti* and *Satabhisekam* are conducted in this temple.

<sup>12</sup>Appar and Sambandar went and stayed at Tiruvizhimizhalai for some time together. During this time a severe famine struck that region. Appar and Sambandar were so moved by the sufferings of the people that they offered prayers to the Lord. God Siva appeared to them in their dream and promised to give gold coins. Both Appar and Sambandar found a gold coin, at different entrance of the temple. Appar was immediately able to get provisions for his gold coin, whereas Sambandar could not, as the gold coins were not pure. He had to exchange his coins for pure gold coins, before he could obtain the provisions. Sambandar understood that this was due

12. Tiruvizhimizhalai is 10 kms from Puntottam railway station in Tiruvarur district.

16 *Singing with Saivite Saints* to Appar's sincere service to God Siva and sang the *Padigam* I:

92 *pann* in Kurinji. “*vaasi theerave, kaasu nalguveer*

*maasin mizhalaiyeer, yesa villaiye...*” Pleased with Sambandar, the Lord gave him also pure gold

coins. Food was served daily to the devotees of the temple. There are two circular platforms next to the inner gopuram where Lord Siva is said to have placed the gold coins.

By that time the Queen Mangaiyarkkarasi, of the Pandya Kingdom wanted to invite Sambandar to Madurai since the King had given up Saivism and embraced Jainism. The queen sent a message to Sambandar to come to Madurai to rescue the king and Saivism from the Jain influence. Appar advised Sambandar not to go to Maduram as he himself had been harassed by the Jains. He also informed Sambandar that the planets were unfavorable. The young saint immediately told Appar that planets effect has no consequence on Siva devotees and sang the *Padigam* II: 85 in *pann* Gandharam:

“*veyuru thobleepangan vidamunda kannndan miganalla veenai thadavi...*”

The news of the arrival of Sambandar reached the Queen, who sent her minister Kulacchirai to greet him. Kulacchirai welcomed Sambandar and directed him to the Alavai temple (Madurai Meenakshi temple). At the sight of the Gopuram from a distance, Sambandar sang the *Padigam* III: 120 set to in *pann* Puranirmai :

“*mangaiyark karasi valavarkohn paavai varivalaik kaimmada maani...*”

In the meantime Queen Mangaiyarkkarasi came to pay her respects to Sambandar at the temple. She explained the situation in Madurai and requested him to bring back the king and Saivism.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 17 The Jains went to inform the king about the arrival of Sambandar. They told him that bad times have come due to the Siva devotees who had entered the city, especially one young Saivite named Sambandar. They suggested to set fire to the house where Sambandar and his devotees were residing. As the fire was intense, Sambandar sang the *Padigam* III : 51 in *pann* Kausikam :

*“seyya neytiru aalavai meyvija ayya  
neyanjis alendrarul seiyenaip...”*

As soon as the fire subsided, the king was afflicted by burning fever all over his body and which proved to be incurable. Sambandar was requested to cure the king with the latter’s approval. In the palace, the Jains told they will cure the left side of the king’s body and Sambandar should do the same for the right side. The Jains failed to cure the king. Sambandar sang the *Padigam* II: 66 set to *pann* Gandharam :

*“mandhira maavadu neeru, vaanavar meyladu neeru sundara  
maavadu neeru, thudhikka paduvadhu neeru...”*

He then applied sacred ash on the right side of the King’s body and immediately the burning vanished. As per the king’s request, he cured the left side also.

The king was very embarrassed and acknowledged Sambandar’s greatness. He took the initiative to dismiss the Jains, but the latter did not accept defeat. They told the king that they wanted a contest with Sambandar where both parties would write down the principles of their religion on palm leaves and placed it into fire. The leaf, which remained unburnt would be accepted as the true religion. The king and Sambandar accepted the challenge. Sambandar took one of his *Padigam* I: 49, *Shogamartha Punmulaiyal* from the collection brought to him and put the leaf into fire. He sang the hymn III: 87 set to *pann* Saadhari:

18 Singing with Saivite Saints “*thaleerila valaroli thanatbezhiil tharuthigazh malaimagal*

*kulirila valaroli vanamulai inaiyavai kulavalin...*” The leaf came out unburnt, but for the Jains, immediately burnt up. Still the Jains were reluctant. They wanted a last contest. A palm leaf would be put into the Vaigai river. If it were to float, that religion would be declared victorious. The Jains wrote the most important mantra on the leaf and put it in the water. The scroll was rapidly swept away by the waters. On his part Sambandar wrote the *Padigam* III: 54 on a palm leaf and put it into the river. The leaf not only floated but, moved up against the current and was recovered upstream. Sambandar also sang this particular *Padigam* in *pann* Kausikam :

*“vaazhga andanar vaanva raaninam veezhga  
thanpunal vendanu ohnguga...”*

At the same time King Kunpandyan’s hump disappeared and he stood up tall and erect. The ruler and his people renounced Jainism and proclaimed the supremacy of Saivism. Thus Saivism was reestablished in Madurai.

Soon after, Sambandar left Madurai accompanied by Mangaiyakkarasi and Kulacchirai Nayanar for Tirupparamkundram near Madurai, and rendered the *Padigam* I : 100 in *Pann* Kurinji :

*“needalarjothi venpiraiyodu niraikondrai sudalanandi  
chudareriyeendi sudukaanil ...”*

Sambandar went to Appanur sthala where he composed the hymn III : 26 in *pann* Kolli:

*“pidiyelaam pinchela perungaima malartazhee vidiyaley –  
thadamoozhgi vithiyinaal vazhipadum...”*

This is the shrine where a priest is said to have worshipped Lord Siva during a severe famine and cooked rice using sand from Vaigai river. The sthala is known as Appudaiyar Koil now. Afterwards, Sambandar rendered the *Padigam* I: 64 in the temple



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 19 of Tiruppuvanam, near Madurai. The Nataraja deity here is magnificient. The *Tandava* is Brahmatandava in this sthala. This *Padigam* is set to *pann* Takkesi :

*“araiyaarpunalu maamaru maadaravaarchadaimeyl kuraiyaar  
mathiyar sudimaadbor koorudaiyaanidamaam ...*

On his way, he reached Tirunelveli which is an important town in Tamil Nadu and sang the hymn III : 92 in *pann* Saadhari :

*“marundhavai mandhira marumainan neriyavai matrumellaam  
arunthuyar kedumavar naamamey chindaisey nannenjame...”*

Here Siva is known as Nellaiyappar. Sambandar continued his pilgrimage and reached the seashore of Rameshwaram and sang a *Padigam* on the Tirukkonnmalai sthala, situated in Sri Lanka. This temple named as Tirukodaiswaram was destroyed by the Portuguese in 17 Century and was rebuilt. The Kumbabhisegum was performed in 1963 and again in 1981. Tirukkonnmalai is one of the *Pancha Easwaran Sthala* in Sri Lanka. Tirukkonnmalai is known nowadays as Trincomalee and is situated in the north eastern province of Sri Lanka. The Portuguese took the Siva Murti and hide it at Tampalakamam. At this place a beautiful Siva temple stand now. The *Padigam* III: 103, sung there is set to *pann* Puranirmai :

*“niraikazha laravaj silampoli yalambu  
nimalarnee rantiru meni...”*

**The Pancha Easwaran Kshetras in Sri Lanka are:**

- i Tiru Kodaiswaran - Trincomalee - Eastern Province
- ii Tiru Ketiswaran - Mannar - Northern Province
- iii Tiru Munneswaran - Chilaw - Western Province
- iv Tiru Naguleswaran - Keerimalai - Northern Province
- v Tiru Ponnambalavaneshwaran - Colombo - Western Province

20 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Sambandar continued his pilgrimage and proceeded to the Tirukollamputtur<sup>13</sup> temple, but arriving at the bank of the Kaveri River, he found it in flood. Boats could not cross the river. Sambandar sang the *Padigam* III : 6 in *pann* Gandhara Panchamam :

*“kotta meygamaḥhun kollam poodboor  
nattamaadiya nambanai yulgach...”*

Soon after the song, Sambandar crossed the river and reached the other side safely without oarsmen on the boat.

After visiting the sthala of Tiruttelichcheri<sup>14</sup>, Sambandar met some Buddhists who, after being defeated in a debate by him, converted to Saivism. At this place Sambandar sang the *Padigam* III : 22 in *pann* Kolli :

*“marundu vendillivai mandira kallivai  
Purinduke kappadrm punniya kallivai...”*

Hearing that Sambandar is coming in Tiruppunturuthi, Appar went to greet him. Without being noticed by the palanquin bearers, he joined them by carrying Sambandar on his shoulder. When Sambandar enquired about Appar, the latter responded from below “Here I am”. Sambandar got down and paid respects to Appar. Sambandar proceeded to Tiruvaiyarur near Tanjavur, and sang the *Padigam* I: 36 in *pann* Takkaragam

*“kalaiyaar madhiyo dooraneerum  
nilaiyaar sadaiya ridamaagum..”*

<sup>15</sup>Sambandar returned to Sirkazhi and stayed for a brief time. He went to Tiruvannamalai, after visiting many sthalas. This temple is one of the *Pancha Bbutha Sthalas* representing ‘Teja’ the fire element. There he sang the *Padigams* I: 10 in *pann* Nattapaadai:

13. Tirukollamputtur is 7 Kms from Koradachcheri. 14. Tiruttelichcheri is near Karaikkal and 65 Kms from Chidambaram. 15. Tiruvannamalai situated 185 kms from Chennai.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 21 “*unnamulai umaiyaalodu mudanagiya voruvan pennagiya perumaanmalai tirumaamani thigazha...*” and the hymn I:69 in *pann* Takkesi:

“*puaarmalarakon dadiyarthozhuvaar pugazhuvaaranorgal moovarapuranga lerittavandru moovarkarulseidbaar...*”

Sambandar then went to the Tiruvotturai<sup>16</sup> temple. It is said here that Siva, seated under a banyan tree, taught the Vedas to Devas and Rishis. There Sambandar met a Siva devotee who had a problem with his palm tree plantation. The trees which were for temple purpose were not yielding fruits. The Jains ridiculised the devotee. Sambandar composed the *Padigam* I: 54 in *pann* Pazhandakkaragam :

“*poothor thaayana kondunin ponnadi yebththa thaarillai yennungaal...*”

As soon as he finished the last line, the trees began to bear fruits. On seeing this miracle the Jains converted to Saivism.

Sambandar proceeded to Kanchipuram<sup>17</sup>. At the Ekambareswara temple, which is the earth element in the *Pancha Bhutha Sthalas*, he sang the *Padigam* II: 12 in *pann* Indalam :

“*maraiyaanai maasilap punchadai malguvann piraiyaanaip pennodaa nagiya pemmanai...*”

<sup>18</sup>After worshipping at several shrines Sambandar visited Tirukkalatti. This sthala is nowadays known as Sri Kalahasti. This *Pancha Bhutha Sthala* represent the element of ‘air’ *Vayu* evidenced by the flickering lamps in the main sanctum. Kannappa Nayanar attained moksha in this temple. Sambandar

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16. Tiruvotturai is 30 kms from Kanchipuram 17. Kanchipuram is 71 kms from Chennai. 18. Srikalahasti is around 150 Kms from Chennai. It is on the Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu border.

22 *Singing with Saivite Saints* sang the *Padigam* III: 69, set to Saadhari *pann* in which he praised

the devotion of Kannapa Nayanar to lord Siva. “*vaanavargal thannavargal vadhaipada vanthathoru maakadalvidam*

*thaanamudhu seitharul purindasivan meyvumalai thannaivinivil...*”

Sambandar continued his pilgrimage to Tiruvottriyur<sup>19</sup>. Saivite Saint Siddha Pathinathar attained mukti here. He composed the *Padigam* III: 57 in *pann* Panchamam:

“*vidaiyavan vinnumannum thoḻba nindravan venmaḻhuvaat padaiyavan paaipuliṭho ludai kobvanam palkarandhai...*”

Saint Sambandar proceeded to Mayilai now known as Mylapore situated in the center of Chennai. There was a devoted Siva family whose prayers had been answered by the birth of a girl named Poompavai.

Her father, Sivanesanar wanted her to marry Sambandar but unfortunately, she was bitten by a snake and died. Sivanesanar cremated her body and kept the ashes in a pot.

After worshipping Lord Siva at the Kapaliswara temple, Sambandar met Sivanesanar who related the death of his daughter. Sambandar told Sivanesanar to bring the pot. He then sang, “Oh Poompavai, the very purpose of human birth in this world is to serve the Lord and His devotees, and to feast the eyes by seeing the festivals of Lord Siva. If this is true, arise in the presence of all. Are you going away without seeing the festivals?” Here Sambandar sang the hymn II: 47 in *pann* Seekhamaram :

“*mattitta punnaiyang kaanan madamayilai kattittang kondaan kapaales saramamarndhaan...*”

When he finished the tenth stanza, the girl got her physical body and came out of the pot. It is in this sthala that Murugan (Singaravelan) received the spear from Parvati to fi ght  
19. Tiruvottriyur is 10 kms north of Chennai.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 23 Surapadman. It is believed that the temple was originally on the seashore near Santhome, but was demolished by the British. The present temple is about 300 years old.

From Mayilai, Sambandar went to Tiruvanmiyur at the Marundeeswarar temple and sang the *Padigam* II: 4 in *pann* Indalam:

*“karaiyu laangkada lirpoli sangamvell lippivan thiraiyu  
laangkazhi meenuga lunthiru vaanmiyoor...”*

According to the Siva Puranam the sacred cow Kamadhenu performed abhise gum with her milk here. The lingam bears the foot prints of the cow. It is also stated that God Siva instructed Saint Agastiyar on medical herbs here.

At Chidambaram, Sivapada Krudayar came to meet his son and requested him to come to Sirkazhi. His father planned to get him married on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to Tottir Purnampikai, daughter of Nambandar Nampi. The wedding was celebrated at Perumananallur sthala (now known as Atchalpuram), near the Panchakshara tirtham.

After the marriage rituals, Gnana Sambandar asked Lord Siva to grant him mukti by singing the hymn III: 125 in *pann* Andhali Kurinji:

*“kalloor perumanam veyndaa kazhumalam palloor  
perumanam paatumai yaayttbila ...”*

A large flame appeared and Sambandar sang his last hymn III: 49 known as the ‘Panchakshara Padigam’ in *pann* Kausikam :

*“kaadba laagki kasindhu kan neermalgi odbu  
vaarthamai nannerik kayppadbu...”*

He then walked into the fire with his wife. All those who attended the wedding are said to have attained liberation in this temple. Together with Sambandar and his wife, Tirunilanakka  
20. Atchalpuram is 5 kms from Sirkazhi.

24 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Nayanar, Muruga Nayanar, Tiruneelakanta Yazhpanar, Sivapada

Krudayar and Nambandar Nampi merged into the fire and attained Moksha. The sthala is known as Muktisthalam.

Tiru Gnana Sambandar is said to have sung 16,000 *Padigams* but only 4181 of these hymns are available nowadays. His songs are under the first three Tirumurais and are in the *Viruttam* musical form.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 25

**TIRU GNANA SAMBANDAR TEVARAM**

**Padigam II : 47 – “Matdhittha Punnayang...” (Mylapore) Pann:**  
Seekhamaram **Talam** : Tisra Tripura

matdhittha punnayangkanan madhamayilai  
kaidhittha khondhan kapali charamamarndan  
ordhittha pannpin uruttira palkanattar kutdhitthal  
kanade podiyo poompavai

maippayanda ongan madhanallar mamayilai  
kaipayanda nittran kapaliswaram amarndan  
aypassi onna vizhavu marundavargal  
thuipnavung kanade podiyo poompavai

urinchaya vazhkai amanudhaiye porkkum  
irunchakkiyar kalordhu turaiippa natthil  
karuncholai suzhnda kapaliswaram amarndar  
porunchandi kanade podiyo poompavai  
kanamar cholaik kapaliswaran amarndar tenamar poompavai  
patthaga senntamizhan gnana sambandan nalam pugazhnda  
pattumvalar vana sambandar avarodhum vazhvarai

*26 Singing with Saivite Saints*

**MEANING**

Will you go without seeing the beauty of feeding those who have merged with Siva's divine love as He resides in the charming gardens of the seashore when honeyed blossoms of "Punnai" bloom ?

Will you go without seeing the festivities of the Tiru Onam celebrated by great saints and sages to Lord Siva, who is adored by beautiful, bright - eyed, pure women that deck Him up with vibhuti ?

Will you go without seeing the '*Pavitrotsavam*' in June-JulyAugust of the Lord of Mylai, praised by those who look sheared because of shedding their clothes (Jains) ?

Those that sing these ten verses of praise to Lord Siva residing in the forests of Mylai composed by Gnanasambandar for Poombavai will find themselves among those who have attained moksha.







Gets cymbals -  
Tirukolakka  
(Gopuram)



Milk of wisdom from Parvati  
(Sirkazhi, Arch Water Tank)

Wedding and moksha - Achalpuram (Paintings)



**CHAPTER 2**  
**TIRUMURAI 4-6**  
**TIRUNAVUKKARASAR**  
**(THEVARAM)**

Tirunavukkarasar - Tiruvadikai Virattanam



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 31

## TIRUNAVUKKARASAR

<sup>th</sup>Tirunavukkarasar was born as Marunikkiyar at Tiruvamur in Tirumunaippadi region now corresponding to Villupuram and Cuddalore district) in the 7 century. He is one of the four *Saiva Samaya Acharyas*, Saivite Spiritual teachers. Pukalanar, his father and Matiniyar, his mother were ardent devotees of Lord Siva. Tiru Navukkarasar had a sister named Tilakavati, who later on, is said to have greatly influenced her brother's life.

<sup>i</sup>When Tilakavati, herself a great devotee of Siva, reached her twelfth year, she was engaged to Kalippakayar, a military commander in the Pallava army. Before the wedding could be solemnized, he was sent to the battle. At the same time Pukalanar and Matiniyar passed away. Meanwhile, Kalippakayar died on the field of the battle. Tilakavati decided to commit Sati, (dying on the husband's funeral pyre), but Tirunavukkarasar prevented her from doing so. Tilakavati decided to dedicate her life to Saivism and to look after her brother.

Tirunavukkarasar, affectionately called Appar, engaged himself in all kinds of charitable works. His involvement in social service led him to be influenced by Jainism. He went to the city of Pataliputtiram, where he was converted to Jainism. He also became one of the important religious leaders of Jainism and attained mastery over their scriptures.

<sup>2</sup>Tilakavati was hurt by the decision of her only brother. She went and settled in Tiruvadikkai Virattanam, to bring back Appar to Saivism. There, she implored Lord Virattaneswarar to shower His grace upon Tirunavukkarasar.

Appar was struck with an incurable disease called *Soolai* and experienced severe pain. He was advised by his sister, that in order to be relieved of his illness, he should sing hymns in

1. Pataliputtiram is now the town of Cuddalore, situated 183 kms from Chennai
2. Tiruvadikkai Virattanam is 2 kms from Panruti and around 180 kms from Chennai.

32 *Singing with Saivite Saints* praise of Lord Siva. Both went to the temple at Tiruvadikkai Virattanam and offered prayer to Lord Siva. Appar composed his first *Padigam* IV: 1 set to *pann* Kolli.

*“kootrayina vaaru vilakkagileer  
kodumaipala seidana naanariyen...”*

As soon as he rendered the song he was cured from the disease. It was then that Lord Siva’s voice was heard naming him as ‘Navukkarasar’ meaning ‘Lord of Speech’, and restored his faith in Saivism.

The Jains at Pataliputtiram were offended by Appar conversion and ashamed of not being able to cure him. So they concocted a plan to show Tirunavukkarasar as a traitor against the Jain King Mahendra and the royal religion. The King ordered to arrest Appar. The latter sang the *Tantakam* VI: 98:

*“naamaarkekum kudiyellaam namanai yanjom  
naragatthi lidarpattobm nadalai iyillobm...”*

In these verses, Appar explained that we are not subordinate to anyone. The King asked to put Appar into a burning lime kiln. Appar sang the *Kurun Thogai* V: 90:

*“maasil veenaiyum maalai madhiyamum veesu  
thendralum veengila veynilum...”*

The heat of the kiln transformed into a cool breeze and stayed that way even after one week. The Jains decided to give Appar poisoned milk but again the milk was changed into nectar. The Jains advised the King to let Tirunavukkarasar be crushed by an elephant. Facing the elephant, Appar sang the *Padigam* IV: 2 in *pann* Gandharam:

*“sunnavenn sandhanas saandhums sudarthingat soolaa maniyum  
vanna urivai yudayum valarum pavala niramum...”*

Soon as he finished the last line, the elephant turned away. The Jains were in disgrace. Another plan to end the life

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 33 of Appar was, to tie him to a stone and throw him into the sea. This was done with King Mahendra's approval. Appar praised the *Panchakshara Mantra* in the *Padigam* IV: 11 set to *Pann* Gandhara Panchamam.

*“sottrunai veydhiyan sothi vaanavan pottrunai  
thirunbadhi porundak kaitbozha...”*

By the grace of Lord Siva the stone began to float and reached the shores of Tiruppapuliur, which is near Cuddalore. There Appar rendered the *Tiruvirttam* IV: 94:

*“endraalum aayenak kendhaiyu mayudan thobndrinaraai moondra  
yulagam padaithukan dhaanmanat thullirukka...”*

Reaching Tiruvadikkai, Appar sang the *Tantakam* VI: 31:

*“veriviravu koovilanal thonga laanai  
veeratta thanaivell eytri naanai...”* The Pallava King who had remorse for all his misdeeds

fell at Appar's feet and begged his pardon. The King embraced Saivism and built a magnificent Siva temple called Gurubharavichuram there.

At the temple of Tunkanai in Pennakatam<sup>4</sup>, Appar begged earnestly Lord Siva to purify his body which has been involved with the Jains. He prayed Lord Siva to have the Trident and Nandi stamped on his body and sang the *Tiruvirttam* IV: 109:

*“ponnaar thiruvadi kondrundu vinnappam pobtriseyyum  
yennaavi kaappadbar kichchayun deyilirun kootragala...”*

At once, a Sivagana approached Navukkarasar and put the imprint of the Trident and Nandi on his shoulders.

Tirunavukkarasar proceeded to many shrines before reaching Chidambaram, where he sang the *Viruttam* IV: 81 “*Karunatta Kandhanai...*”, the *Padigam* IV: 23 in *pann* Kolli “*Pattanai*

3. Tiruppapuliur is around 45 kms from Chidambaram. 4. Pennakatam is 17 kms from Virudrachalam.

34 *Singing with Saivite Saints Padbam...*” and the *Tiru Kurunthogai* V:1 “*Annam Palikku...*” It

is at this point of time that Appar heard about Sambandar and went to Sirkazhi to meet the young Saint. Appar left and went to Tirunitur near Mayiladhuturai. It is in this sthala that Munaiyaduvar Nayanar attained moksha by feeding food to devotees of God Siva throughout his life. Here Appar composed the *Tirutantakam* VI: 11:

“*piravaadhey thondriya pemmaan thannai  
peynaadaar avarthammai peynaathaana...*”

After several sthalas, Appar went to Tirunallur which is near Papanasam, between Kumbakonam and Tanjavur. This temple is called the *Then Kailayam* meaning the ‘South Kailash’. It is in this sthala that Amaraniti Nayanar reached Kailasha with his wife and son. In this temple, Lord Siva placed his feet on the head of Appar, blessing him. Here Appar rendered the *Tirutantakam* VI: 14:

“*ninaindhurugum adiyarai neyya vaitbaar  
nillaamey theevinaigal neenga vaitbaar...*”

5After visiting some more places of pilgrimage, Appar went to Tingalur. This temple is one of the *Navagraba Sthala* representing the planet Chandra (moon). There, Appar noticed a lot of charitable work being done in his name. He was told that Appudi Adigal was devoted and greatly revered to him. Appar went to his house and revealed his identity. Appudi Adigal was full of joy and requested Appar to be his guest and invited him for food. When Appudi Adigal’s wife sent his son to fetch a banana leaf, a snake bit the latter and he died. Appudi Adigal named his son Tirunavukkarasu due to his devotion for Appar.

Appar noticed the absence of Adigal’s son and enquired. Appudi Adigal related the tragic situation. Immediately Appar

5. Tingalur is around 5 kms from Tiruvaiyur in Tanjavur district.



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 35 told them to bring the body of the boy and sang the *Padigam* IV:

18 set to *pann* Indalam: “*ondruko laamavar sindhai yuyavarai*

*ondruko lamuya rummadhi sooduvar...*” Appudi Adigal’s son was brought back to life after

completion of the *Padigam*. Appar went to Tiruvarur<sup>6</sup>. In this sthala, the Vinayaga Sannidhi is called *Vathapi Ganapathi* and, it is the first of the ‘*Sapta Vidanga sthala*’ where *Swayambhu Lingams* are worshipped. Here Nandi is seen in a standing posture. This temple possesses the *Panchamukha Vadyam*, a unique and rare percussion instrument. Viralminda Nayanar, Naminanti Adigal Nayanar, Serutthunai Nayanar, Kazharsinga Nayanar, and Dandi Adigal Nayanar attained moksha in this temple. Appar was received here with great joy by the Siva devotees and he composed the *Padigam* IV: 20 set to *pann* Seekamaram:

“*kaandaley karutthai ninaindhirundbeyn manampugundaai kazhaladi poondukon dozhindbeyn purampoyi naalaraiyoh...*”

Appar met Sambandar during his journey and both went to Vizhimizhalai and then to Tirumaraikkatu, known as Vedaranniyam nowadays. This temple is also one of the *Sapta Vidanga Sthala* and has the Navagrahas in a row. The special feature of this temple is that its name has been mentioned in all the seven Tirumurais of the Tevaram. It is also said in the temple’s Puranam that the four Vedas; Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva worshipped Lord Vedarameswara here.

When the two saints reached the temple entrance they found the doors of the main entrance closed. After enquiry, they were told that after the Vedas worshipped God Siva, no one chanted the Vedas.

People used to go inside the temple through

6. Tiruvarur is around 50 kms from Tanjavur.

36 *Singing with Saivite Saints* a small door. Appar sang the *Padigam* V: 10 in *pann* Gandhara

Panchamam: “*mulaikodbirilampirai muzhga vellanir*

*valaithezhu sadbeyinar mazhalai veenaiyar...*” When Appar sung the last line the doors opened. After

worshipping the Lord, Sambandar, sang the hymns “*Atal Kantati*” and the doors were closed.

Both went to Tiruvaymur. There, Lord Siva revealed His dancing Form to Sambandar and Appar. The latter rendered the *Tirukkurun Thogai* V: 50:

“*engey yennai irundbida tbedikkon dangey vandbadaiyaala marulinaar...*”

While Sambandar went to see the Queen Mangayakkarasi in Madurai, Appar went to Palaiyarai Vatatali. This place was one of the capitals of the Chola Kingdom in the past. Appar came to this Siva temple to worship the Lord, but to his astonishment he saw that the *Vimanam* was not the same. Upon enquiry, he was told that the Jains had taken over the temple and found that they had converted it into a Jain temple and they had moved the lingam to another place. Appar prayed to Siva to do justice. Appar sat down and vowed not to eat until this injustice was corrected by Lord Siva Himself. The Lord appeared in the dream of King Rajaraja Cholan and asked him to bring back the Lingam and restore the Siva temple. The Chola King went to the temple, drove away the Jains and fell at Appar’s feet. It is said that King Rajaraja Cholan renovated this temple and gave a lot of financial assistance. Appar sang the called *Tirukkurun Thogai* V: 58 there:

“*thalaiye llaamparik kunjamann kaiyarul nilaiyi naanmarai thaanmarai konnumey...*”

7. Tiruvaymur is 25 kms from Tiruvarur. 8. Palaiyarai Vatatali is near Kumbakonam and Darasuram

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 37 During his pilgrimage towards Tirupainzhili, near Trichy, Appar was afflicted by hunger and thirst. Lord Siva appeared in the form of a priest and offered him food and water. Both walked together towards Tirupainzhili. Arriving there, the priest disappeared and Appar realized that it was Lord Siva Himself. He left for Tiruvannamalai sthala, where he rendered the *Tirunerisai* IV: 53:

*“odbima malargal thoovi umaiyaval pangaa mikka sothiye  
thulangu mendbo sudarmazhup padaiyi naane...”*

Appar went to Kanchipuram<sup>9</sup>. This place is a very ancient city often called the ‘Golden City’ and has been mentioned in the epic *Manimegalai*. It is also known as one of the seven sacred places of India. There, Appar worshipped Lord Ekambreswara and sang the *Tirutantakam* VI: 97:

*“andan kadandba svadu mundo  
analangai yendhiya aada lundob...”*

From Kanchipuram, Tirunavukkarasar proceeded to Tiruvanmiyur, in Chennai, to the Marundeeswara Siva temple, where he rendered the *Tirukkurun Thogai* V: 82 :

*“vinnda maamalar kondu viraindbuneer anda  
naayagan thannadi soozhmeengal...”*

He proceeded to Mylapore, then to Tiruvottriyur<sup>10</sup>. It is in this sthala that Kaliya Nayanar and Siddha Pattinatar attained moksha. Here Appar composed the *Tirunerisai* IV: 45:

*“vellaithtai sadaiyil vaithta veydhabi thandran paadbam  
mellatthaa nadaiya vendin meitharu gnaana theeyaal...”*

From Kalahasti where he sang the *Tirutantakam* VI:8, *“Vitrunendri Ada...”* Appar went to Varanasi and worshipped Lord Viswanathan. He wanted to see the Lord at Tirukayilayam

9. Kanchipuram is 71 kms from Chennai. 10. Tiruvottriyur is 10 kms from Chennai.

38 *Singing with Saivite Saints* (Mount Kailash), though he was too weak to climb the

<sup>11</sup>Himalayas. Siva appeared to Appar and asked him to take a dip in the tank He created. Appar did what Lord Siva requested him to do. Hence, when Appar opened his eyes, after dipping into the water, he realized that he was actually in the tank of Tiruvaiyaru temple, hundred of miles away in the South. He entered the temple and saw Mount Kailash there. Till today, this event is celebrated in this temple as a festival, in the month of Aadi (mid July – mid August).

After visiting many sthalas, Appar went to Alavai (Madurai temple) and rendered the *Tirumerisai* IV: 62:

*“veydhiyob veda geetha vinnava rannaa vendren robdhiyey  
malargal thoovi yorunginin kazhalgal kaana...”*

He received a warm welcome in the Pandyan Kingdom, by King Nindrasir Nedumara Nayanar, the Queen Mangaiyakkarasi and Kulacchirai Nayanar.

From Tirunelveli, in the South of Tamil Nadu, Appar went to Tiruppukalur which is near Nagapattinam and Nannilam, in Tiruvarur district. He decided to remove the weeds which had grown all around the temple. He saw pieces of gold and precious stones. As all these had no value for Appar, he threw them all in the tank. Appar asked Lord Siva to take him by singing the hymn IV: 105 in the Tiruviruttam style:

*“thannai charanendru thaaladain theyndhan adiyadaiya  
punnaiṇ pozhilpuga loorannal seyvana keynmingalo...”*

In this sthala at the age of 81, in the month of *Sittirai*, *Sadayam* Nakshatra, Tirunavukkarasar attained moksha.

<sup>11</sup>Tirunavukkarasar is said to have composed 49,000 hymns out of which only 3066 are available. His hymns come under the 4, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Tirumurai. They are in the musical form *Viruttam*, *Tantakam*, *Tirumerisai* and *Tirukkurun Thogai*.

11. Tiruvaiyaru is 11 kms from Tanjavur.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 39

**TIRU NAVUKKARASAR TEVARAM**

**Padigam IV : 18 – “Ondrukola malar...” (Tingalur) Pann**  
: Indalam **Talam** : Adi

ondru kolamavar sindai uyarvarai ondru  
kolamuyarum madi sudhuvar ondru  
kolamidhu vendhalai kaiyadu ondru kola  
mavar urvadu tanai

irandu kalammaiyo tho zhu padam irandu  
kolamilan kunkuzhai pennan irandu kolamuru  
vanzhchiru manmazhu irandu kolamava  
reytina tamai.

onbadu polavar vasal vaguttana onbadu  
polavar marpinil nulizhai onbadu polavar  
kolak kuzhachadhai onbadu polavar  
paridha tanai  
pattu kolamavar pambingal pambinpal pattu kolameyiru nerindu  
kana pattu kolamavar kaya pattanralai pattu kolamadhiyar seygai tanai

*40 Singing with Saivite Saints*

**MEANING**

There is but One mountain (Kailash), only. He wears the crescent moon. He bears the skull of one of Brahma's head for Bhiksha and rides the single bull Nandi.

Two are His feet that are worshipped, two the earrings He wears two, the instruments in His hand, the deer and axe and two forms of male and female He has.

Nine are the openings on a living being He created. Nine are the strands of threads across His chest. His nine locks wave as He dances and permeates to nine continents.

Ten are the eyes of His hooded snake, which also has ten teeth. Ten also are the teeth and hair which fell down when Ravana was vanquished by Siva. Ten are the ways of expressing devotion.

*Singing with Saivite Saints 41*



Attached to a stone - Tiruppapuliur (Paintings)  
Removing weeds around the temple - Tiruppukalur (Paintings)



*42 Singing with Saivite Saints*



Appar Mandapam - Cuddalore  
Appar's sister Ilakavati - Tiruvadikkai Virattanam (Panruti)





**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 Tiruvennainallur<sup>1</sup> 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 Virattanam<sup>2</sup>, 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

<sup>3</sup>48 *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 Tirupachilasramam<sup>4</sup>. 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...”*

<sup>5</sup>As 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 pann*:

“*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 *pann* Takkesi.

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

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

7During 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 *pann* Nattaragam:

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

8Another 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 thiraikonarn 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...”*

<sup>9</sup>52 *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.

<sup>10</sup>Sundaramurti 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

*54 Singing with Saivite Saints*

**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



**CHAPTER 4**  
**TIRUMURAI 8**  
**MANICKKAVASAGAR**  
**(TIRUVASAGAM)**

Manickkavasagar - Chidambaram



*58 Singing with Saivite Saints*

## MANICKKAVASAGAR

Manickkavasagar was born in Tiruvadavur<sup>1</sup> in the Pandian kingdom to a couple who were great devotees of God Siva.

Madurai has a rich cultural heritage passed on from the great Tamil era for more than 2500 years old. Madurai was an important cultural and commercial center. It was the capital city of the Pandian kingdom.

<sup>1</sup>In the Siva Puranam, Madurai was originally a forest known as Kadambavanam. One day a farmer, Dhananjayan saw Indra worshipping a Swayambhu Lingam under a tree. King Kulasekara Pandian was informed and a temple was built around the Lingam. The city of Madurai was planned with the temple as its center. Lord Siva is said to have appeared here and drops of nectar from His hair fell on the town. So, the place was name Madurai (Maduram meaning sweetness). The Nayaks who ruled Madurai from 16 to 18<sup>th</sup> Century left a majestic imprint of their rule in the Madurai Meenakshi Sundaeswara Temple.

<sup>2</sup>Manickkavasagar was named as Tiruvadavurar. He proved to be a prodigy and before he reached his 16 year, he mastered all branches of knowledge, then available. The King of Madurai, Arimardana Pandian heard about Manickkavasagar's reputation and invited him to his court. King Arimardana was so pleased by the personality and talents of the young man that he immediately appointed him as his Prime Minister with the title *Tennavan Paramayara*. Being a very good administrator, Manickkavasagar conducted the administration of the Pandian Kingdom diligently and prosperity flourished in the state.

However, Manickkavasagar was not happy with himself. As days passed, he discovered the unreality of the world. He wanted to attain eternal bliss of *Sivanandam*. Soon, Manickkavasagar realized the need of a Satguru to attain real spiritual progress.

1. Tiruvadavur is situated near the river Vaigai about 20 kms from Madurai.



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 59 He longed for a Satguru and everywhere he went on duties he prayed to the Lord for a Satguru. One day the Prime Minister Manickkavasagar, was requested by Pandian king to go to the western part of the kingdom to buy some horses, as the equestrian wing of the army needed to be replenished immediately.

Manickkavasagar took the blessing of Lord Somasundarar and left for his mission, with a vast retinue. They reached Tiruperunthurai. The sthala is now known as Avudaiyarkoil in Pudukkottai district.

Near the temple, Manickkavasagar felt a holy vibration and heard a mystical sound as if thousands of people were singing divine songs. Manickkavasagar went into the temple to enquire about this mysterious strain. There he found a rishi sitting under a tree with a book, – the *Siva Gnana Bodham* in his hand and surrounded by many priests. Knowing from the meaning of the title, the book would enlighten the soul, Manickkavasagar dropped all his official attire and prostrated at the feet of the rishi. The latter initiated Manickkavasagar into the mystic mantra and the doctrines of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy.

Manickkavasagar became charged with spiritual fervor and gems of words wreathed themselves into gorgeous garlands and rained forth from his silver tongue. It was at this moment that the Satguru named him, *Manickkavachaka* meaning ‘He of ruby words’ and blessed him.

Manickkavasagar detached himself from worldly duties from that moment. It is said that the Saint sang the Sivapuranam “*Namasivaya Vazhga...*” here.

Manickkavasagar sent his men to the Pandian Kingdom telling them to inform the King that the horses will reach

2. Tiruperunthurai, about 180 kms from Madurai and 15 kms from Arantangi railway station.

60 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Madurai in one month. Meanwhile, he spent all the funds the King had given for the purchase of the horses, to feed the devotees of Siva and repair the temple at Tiruperunthurai. Here, there is no Lingam in the sanctum; only the *avudaiyar* (base) is there. It is said that Lord Siva gave darshan to Manickkavasagar below the Kurandai tree.

Before going back to Madurai, Manickkavasagar prayed to Lord Siva who appeared before him and placed a diamond in his hand, reminding him that Siva devotees are Lion - hearted. On seeing his Prime Minister without the horses, the King was very upset and ordered that Mannickkavasagar be tortured. The latter assured him that he had purchased the horses and they would reach Madurai on the auspicious day of Aavani Moolam. Miraculously the horses did reach the stable on that day. The King heard a voice telling him “Manickkavasagar spent his money on Me and instead of being grateful to him, you tortured him!”

The King understood that these were the words of Lord Siva, and immediately realized the greatness of Manickkavasagar, whom he found in the temple of Tiru Alavai (Madurai Meenakshi temple), absorbed in meditation. The King fell at his feet and apologized for his misdeeds, offering the Saint the rulership of the Pandian Kingdom. Manickkavasagar declined the offer at once and continued his pilgrimage.

3He went to Perunthurai, where he met his Guru again and worshiped Lord Siva there. At Tirupperunthurai, Manickkavasagar was directed by the Satguru to visit some sacred shrines and then to go to Chidambaram. During his journey he came to Tiru Uttara Kosamangai where he rendered the song *Neettal Vinnappam* meaning “forsake me not” (6.16).

3. Tiru Uttara Kosamangai is 72 kms from Rameswaram in the Ramanathapuram district.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 61 The Uttara Kosamangai sthala is an ancient Siva temple, where the presiding deity is carved in emerald. The saint proceeded to Tiruvidai Maruthur abode, which is between Kumbakonam and Mayiladuturai where he sang the *Tiru Vesaranu* (38.10) meaning “Have I indeed performed tapas?”. According to the Sthala Puranam, Siva appeared in the form of a jyoti (fl ame) from the heart of Ambal, who was performing tapas, before Agastyar and several other sages.

Manickkavasagar continued his pilgrimage to Tiruvarur, Tiruvannamalai, Sirkazhi and finally settled down in Chidambaram. Staying near the garden in Tillai, Saint Manickkavasagar rendered the famous *Tiruvagasam*.

One day an old priest hailing from Madurai reached Tillai and requested Manickkavasagar to repeat the whole *Tiruvagasam*. The Saint agreed to the request and wrote the *Tiruvagasam* which the old priest took down on palm leaves as fast as it was dictated. At the request of the priest, Manickkavasagar sang on the spot another spiritual work of 400 stanzas called the *Tirukkovaigar*. This is a spiritual classic written on the pattern of nuptial mysticism. After it was written down, the old man vanished.

The following early morning when the Dikshitar of Chidambaram went as usual to the temple, a bundle of palm leaves were found on the Panchakshara steps of the Ponnambalam shrine, another name for Tillai. It was found that the whole lot contained the *Tiruvagasam* and *Tirukkovaigar* with a message at the end saying “Written to the diction of Saint Manickkavasagar by Tiruchitrambalam Udayan.” The voice of Lord Nataraja was heard requesting the priests to go and meet Manickkavasagar, as he was the one who wrote these sacred poems. Manickkavasagar was invited to the temple where he was bestowed with all honors.

*62 Singing with Saivite Saints* The temple priests wanted to know the meaning of these verses from the saint. Manickkavasagar took them to the Chit Sabha and pointed with his forefinger to Lord Nataraja and said “This Chidambara Nataraja is the purpose of this”. Instantly, a glorious resplendent jyoti appeared in the sabha into which disappeared Saint Manickkavasagar.

The ‘*Tiruvagasam*’ has 51 cantos consisting of four *Agavals* or ‘Garlands of Praise to Siva’ and the 47 other cantos containing ten stanzas or *Padigams*. The *Tiruvagasam* is a collective name given to the works of Manickkavasagar namely the *Tiruvembavai*, *Tirupalliyezhuchi* and the *Kuyilpattu*. The 658 hymns of the *Tiruvagasam* together with the 400 hymns of *Tirukkovaigar* made up the eighth Tirumurai of the Saiva Siddhanta scripture. The contributions to Indian music and poetry that Manickkavasagar made through the *Tiruvagasam* and *Tirukkovaigar* is indeed immense.

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**MANICKKAVASAGAR – TIRUVASAGAM**

**Canto : 6.16 – ‘Neethal Vinnappam –  
Forsake Me Not’ (Uttara kosamangai)**

porulai tamiyen pugalidame ninpugazh igazhvar verulai  
yenaivithidhu tikandhai meimamai arvizhungum arulai  
anipozhil uttarakosamangai arasai irulai veliye igapara maagiyil  
irundavanai

**MEANING**

I wandered weary with none to say ‘Fear not’ ! Like lightning fl ash,  
Behold! Supernal Thou too hast forsaken me! Thou Truth Great  
Uttarakosamangai’s King! Incomparable one; My mother art Thou,  
my father Thou, My soul’s most precious wealth.

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Bestowed with honors by Dikshitaras - Chidambaram (East Gopuram)



**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. Senthanaar 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 Senthanaar's door and asked for food. On that day, Senthanaar 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. Senthanaar 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 Senthanaar.

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 Senthanaar'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 Senthanaar 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*.

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**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

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### 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!”



**CHAPTER 6**  
**TIRUMURAI 10**  
**TIRUMULAR**  
**(TIRUMANTIRAM)**

Tirumular





## TIRUMULAR

*Tirumantiram* is Nandinatha Sampradaya's oldest Tamil scripture, written ca. 200 Bce, by Tirumular. It is the earliest among the twelve Tirumurais, and is a vast storehouse of esoteric yogic and tantric knowledge. It contains the mystical essence of Raja yoga and Siddha Agamas, which in turn are the heritage of the ancient pre-historic traditions of Saivism. As the Agamas are now partially lost, the Tirumantiram is a rare source of the complete collection of Agamic lore. In fact, the Tirumantiram is the first Tamil work to contain the phrase *Saiva Siddhantam*.

The *Tirumantiram* contains 3047 verses and it is said that Saint Tirumular meditated for one full year to sum it up in a fourline verse. This allegory is said to mean that 3000 years of knowledge is compacted in this one book. The text is divided into nine parts called '*Tantiram*'s.

Saint Tirumular an illustrious Siddha Yogi, of the Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasha Parampara came from the Himalayas to Tamil Nadu and composed the *Tirumantiram*. Tirumular had seven disciples named: Malangan, Indiran, Soman, Brahman, Rudram, Kalangi and Kajamalyan. Often in his work, he addresses one or another of these disciples, to convey certain messages.

Saint Tirumular's story begins more than two thousand years ago in the Himalayas. Rishi Sundaranatha, as he was then known, was sent on mission to South India to spread the purest teachings of Saivism. During his journey down the South of India, the rishi reached Tiruvavadhuturai. The name Avaduturai itself means a place on the bank of a river where cows abound. In this temple, there is a shrine at the west side of the circumambulatory passage, where Tirumular

1. Tiruvavadhuturai is about 3 kms from Narasingam pettai railway station, 16 kms from Mayiladuthurai. This region is now known as Gomuktipuram.

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Chola King I revealing that during the month of Purattasi (mid September - mid October), a play on Saint Tirumular was conducted. The place is also known for the reputed Saivite mutt called Tiruvavadhaturai Adheenam.

Arriving on the bank of river Kaveri, Sundaranatha found a cowherd who was dead. The cows which were attached to their master, were deeply sad. Seeing this, Sundaranatha was deeply touched and decided to relieve the sorrow of the cows. Leaving his physical body in a safe place, the Rishi entered and brought back to life the body of Mulan, the cowherd. Tirumular took care of the cows and brought them back to their village. When he returned to the place where he had kept his body, he was unable to find it. He realized that this was Siva's will and from that time he was named Tirumular.

Tirumular stayed in Tiruvavaduturai for some time and recorded the wisdom of the Upanishads and Saiva Agamas in the Tamil language. He settled in Chidambaram and started his mission, composing the *Tirumantiram*. Having composed the *Tirumantiram*, the "Garland of Mantras", Rishi Tirumular travelled back through space to Kailash, sought the Primal One and attained the Sadasiva State, realizing divine Gnana and Grace. His work remains immortal and eternally fresh, condensing the entirety of Agamic wisdom in the nine *Tantirams*. The *Tirumantiram* is classified as the tenth Tirumurai.

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## TIRUMULAR – TIRUMANTIRAM HYMNS

**“Kadhavul Vazhttu...”** ondru avantanai irandu  
avan innarul nindranan mundrinul nangu  
unarthan iyndu vendranan aaru virindanan yezhu  
oumbar sendranan tan irundan unarndu yetthai

pottrisaittu innuyir mannum punitanai naal  
tisaikkum nalla madukku nadanai mel  
tisaikkul ten tisaikku oru vendanan kuttru  
udaittanai yan kurugindrenai

okka nindranai ulappu ili devargal nakkann endru yettidhum nadanai  
nalthorum pakkam nindrar ariyada paramanai pukku nindru unni yan  
pottri seyvene.

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**MEANING**

The One is He, the Two His sweet Grace, In Three He stood, in all the Four witnessed, The Five He conquered, the Six He filled, The Seven Worlds pervades, manifests the Eight And so remains.

The Holy One who all life sustains, Lord of Her, beloved of all the world, He who spurned Yama, the Southern Quarter's King Of Him I sing, His glory and praise.  
He who stands the same to all, The Pure One, whom immortal Gods adore, Whom, even they, that daily stand beside, know not, Him I seek, praise, and meditate.

*Singing with Saivite Saints 79*



Carved in Pillar - Chidambaram (East Gopuram)  
3000 years of knowledge



**CHAPTER 7**  
**TIRUMURAI 11**  
**12 SAINTS**  
**(DEVOTIONAL POEMS)**

Nambiandar Nambi - Tirunaraiyur Temple



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Karaikkal Ammaiyar - Karaikkal Temple





*Singing with Saivite Saints 83*  
Nakkirar - Tiruparamkundram



*84 Singing with Saivite Saints*

## THE ELEVENTH TIRUMURAI

The eleventh Tirumurai is an anthology of devotional poems by twelve Saints. It consists of 41 *Prabbandams* (garland of verses) set into 1391 verses. The authors of the eleventh Tirumurai are:

1. Tiruvallavayudaiyar
  2. Karaikkal Ammaiyar
  3. Ayyadigal
  - Kadavarkon Nayanar
  4. Kazharirru Arivar Nayanar (Cheraman Perumal)
  5. Nakkira Thevar
  6. Kallata Thevar
  7. Kapila Thevar
  8. Parana Thevar
  9. Ilam Peruman Adigal
  10. Adhira Adigal
  11. Pattinathu Pillaiyar
  12. Nambiandar Nambi
- Among these authors, Nambiandar Nambi, Ayyadigal

Kadavarkon Nayanar, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Kazharirru Arivar and Nakkirar are well – known.

**Nambiandar Nambi** Nambiandar Nambi lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century in Tirunaraiyur in the Chola kingdom. His father was a priest doing service at the Pollappillaiyar temple. One day, his father who had to go to do some other works, asked his son Nambi to host the shrine. Nambi did as his father requested. He did

1. Tirunaraiyur is 20 kms from Chidambaram on the way to Kaattu Mannargudi.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 85 the puja, offered fruits as well as sweet dishes to Pollappillaiyar and prayed to Pillaiyar to eat the *Naivedyam* (offerings). On seeing that Pillaiyar did not partake the offering, Nambi felt sore and started knocking his head against a stone. Pollappillaiyar appeared and accepted the offerings in front of Nambi. Pollappillaiyar named him as Nambiandar Nambi at this moment.

Nambi thus composed his first poem *Tiruvirattaimani Malai* on Pollappillaiyar after learning the Vedas and Sastras from Him. The Chola King Abayakulasekara Rajaraja who was ruling Tiruvarur at that time, heard about the miracles of Nambiandar Nambi. The Chola King was very pleased with Nambi and paid due respects to him. He requested Nambi to bring to light the Tevaram hymns of the Saiva Saints. Nambi went to Pollappillaiyar and asked for blessings to conduct the task. Pillaiyar told Nambi “There is at the back of the Golden Temple at Chidambaram, a room bearing the palm imprints of the three great apostles and there the Tevaram hymns are preserved”.

Both Nambi and the Chola King went to Chidambaram, took a bath in the Sivaganga and went to worship Lord Nataraja. Nambi composed the poem ‘*Koyirriuppanniyar Viruttam*’ there at the feet of Siva Peruman. The Chola King intimated the Andhanars of Tillai, called the Dikshitaras of Chidambaram temple about the purpose of his visit to Chidambaram. The priests told the King that if he could bring the three Saints, the room could be opened. Thereupon, the King conducted a big festival in honour of Lord Nataraja and took the ‘*Utsava Murtis*’ of the three *Samaya Acharyas* in procession and brought them back to the room containing the Tevaram hymns. The priests were pleased with the effort of the King and opened the door. It was a most heart-rending sight to see the palm leaves on which the hymns were written, all covered with white ants and earth. The palm leaves were carefully taken and cleaned with oil. King Abayakulasekara wept at seeing the destruction of a

86 *Singing with Saivite Saints* very large amount of palm leaves. It was at this moment that a voice from Sivaloka said “Only those hymns which are fit for this Age still remain”.

The King requested Nambi to compile the Tevaram hymns and other sacred utterances. Accordingly, Nambiandar Nambi compiled the hymns into eleven sacred books and thus composed the *Tiruvandhati* on the lives of the Saivite Saints, having as his original the *Tiru Thondathogai* retold by Pollappillaiyar. Furthermore Nambi composed another *Tiruvandhati*, *Tiruvulamalai*, and the *Tirukkalambagam*. He also composed the *Tirutthogai* in praise of Saint Tiru Gnana Sambandar and *Tiruvedgadhala malai* on Saint Tiru Navukkarasar. At the request of the Chola King the ten Prabhandams of Nambiandar Nambi were also included in the eleventh book of the Tirumurai.

<sup>2</sup>The palm leaves were taken to the sthala in Tiru Erukattampuliyur for restoration. Tiru Erukattampuliyur was found in the Chola Kingdom and is popularly known as Rajendra Pattanam. This is the birthplace of Tiru Nilakanta Nayanar, the Yazhpanar expert in playing the Veena.

The King and Nambi worshipped Lord Siva and prayed that the tunes of those hymns be known. A voice was heard telling them to go to a girl who was born in a musician family. Her parents were descendant of Tirunilakanta. So they took her to the Golden Temple to fix the Tevaram tunes. This mandate was accordingly carried out. Chola King Rajaraja Kulasekara went back to Tiruvarur and engraved the eleven Tirumurais on copper plates, which were carefully preserved at the shrine of Thiagesar, also known as Tyagaraja.

Nambiandar Nambi proceeded to his native Tirunaraiyur and after spending his life serving Lord Siva attained salvation.

2. Tiru Erukattampuliyur is about 12 kms from Virudrachalam.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 87 **Ayyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar**

Another saint whose poems were classified under the ‘*Panniru Tirumurai*’ was Ayyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar. He belonged to the ancient Pallava dynasty and was the King who reigned in Kanchi Kingdom as stated in his poem (Stanza 7). He conquered all his enemies and was a great poet too. He was an ardent devotee of God Siva and soon he got disgusted with worldly life. He renounced the world after placing his son on the throne.

Ayyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar undertook a pilgrimage to various Siva sthalas singing hymns in His praise. Lord Siva was highly pleased with his devotion and blessed him. Ayyadigal composed inspiring hymns in each shrine he worshipped. This collection of his verses is also classified under the eleventh Tirumurai.

**Karaikkal Ammaiya**r In the famous seaport town of Karaikkal, inhabited by

merchants noted for their virtue, veracity and wealth, there lived a merchant by the name of Danadathan. He was a wealthy merchant and a virtuous person. As a result of his great sadhana, he and his wife were blessed with a daughter whom they named Punitavathiar. Since her childhood, Danadathan’s daughter developed instinctively a love for Lord Siva and His devotees.

Punitavathiar was married to Paramadathan at Karaikkal. One day Paramadathan sent two mangoes to his house.

Punitavathiar kept them safely so that she could serve her husband later at meal time. Before her husband arrived, a Yogi appeared and asked her for food. She worshipped the Yogi and as she had nothing else to offer she gave one of the two mangoes. Later Paramadathan came home and had his meal. After partaking the food, he asked for a mango. As it was

88 *Singing with Saivite Saints* tasty, he asked for the second one also. Punitavathiar was upset and appealed to Lord Siva for help. Mysteriously a mango fell in the palm of her hand. She gave it to her husband who ate it. Paramadathan realized that the taste was exceptionally sweet, and wondered whether it was the same mango he sent home. Punitavathiar told him the truth.

Paramadathan understood that his wife must be divine and decided to leave her. Eventually he left his wife and settled in the Pandian Kingdom. Punitavathiar went to meet her husband, but the latter on seeing her, prostrated at her feet. He revealed that he regarded her, not as his wife, but as a Goddess. Punitavathiar understood and prayed to Lord Siva to deprive her of her present physical charm and let her have a disgusting form. Her prayer was immediately granted and her charming body was transformed into a skeleton.

3 Punitavathiar was named Ammaiyar while Lord Siva was telling of her greatness to Goddess Parvati. Karaikkal Ammaiyar went on a pilgrimage to the holy Kailash. Lord Siva granted her a boon that she will be present at places where He will have His Tandavam. Lord Siva requested Karaikkal Ammaiyar to proceed to Tiruvalangadu<sup>4</sup> to witness His dance. There is also a temple for Karaikkal Ammaiyar in Palaiyanur. Ammaiyar went to Tiruvalangadu and witnessed Lord Siva's dance. She spent her life here, singing in praise of the Lord. She composed her first poem *Athpuda Tiruvandhati* which is a wonderful *Andhati* of 100 verses. Karaikkal Ammaiyar attained moksha here in Tiruvalangadu.

3. Tiruvalangadu is 40 kms from Chennai, in the Tiruvallur district near Arakkonam.

The sthala is situated about 5 kms on the north eastern side of Alangadu.

4. Palaiyanur is 1 km from Tiruvalangadu.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 89 **Kazharirru Arivar Nayanar(Cheraman Perumal)**

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar was born as Perumakkothayar in the Chera Kingdom, which is now the Trissur district in Kerala. Cheraman Nayanar was born in royal family. He had a great devotion for Lord Siva even as a child. His devotion increased as he grew. He did not want to be king or to rule the Kingdom. He renounced the world and went to Tiruvanchaikkalam. There the saint worshipped Lord Siva. It is interesting to note that Lord Siva named Cheraman as *Kazharirru Arivar* because he was blessed with intelligence and abilities of a King. He was also an adept at judging intuitively the people around him. He acquired the foresight to know when they could become his enemies.

After some time Cheraman was requested by the then ruler Sengol Porayar to come and ascend the throne as there was no heir. Cheraman prayed to the Lord and was blessed by God Siva. The new King did a lot of service to Lord Siva and his devotees. By his many acts of devotion and piety he earned the grace of Lord Siva.

One day, at the time of his daily prayer, Cheraman did not hear the usual divine sound. He was deeply afflicted and was thinking that he must have done a big mistake. At once he heard Siva's voice telling him, "My dear friend, Sundarar has come to Tillai and was singing sweet songs. I was completely absorbed in that and hence the delay in blessing you with the musical sound of My ankle".

Cheraman at once started for Tillai to worship Lord Nataraja and to meet Sundaramurti Nayanar, the composer of the seventh Tirumurai. Reaching the temple in Chidambaram, Cheraman sang the *Pon Vannathu Andhati* on Lord Nataraja. Cheraman could not meet Sundarar, as the latter already left for Tiruvarur. So, he proceeded to Tiruvarur where he met Sundarar.

5. Tiruvanchaikkalam is 8 kms from Irinjalakuda railway station in the Trissur district, and 32 kms from Trissur Town.

*90 Singing with Saivite Saints* There, Cheraman composed the famous, *Tiru Mummainikovai* on

Lord Tyagaraja of the Tiruvarur temple. Together with Sundarar, he went to Tirumaraikkatu where he sang his *Pomannat Andhati*. This sthala is now called Vedaranniyam and is situated in the Nagapattinam district.

At a later period, Sundarar visited Kodungallur, the capital of the Chera Kingdom in Trissur, Kerala, again. He worshipped Siva at Tiruvanchakkalam along with Kazharirru Arivar. Both of them attained moksha at this sthala.

**Nakkira Thevar** Nakkira Thevar, popularly known as Nakkirar, was a chief

poet of the Sangam period in Madurai, in the Pandian Kingdom. He was very proud of his knowledge and became arrogant. One day a poet came to the court of Madurai and recited an unusual poem. Even though the poem was perfect, Nakkirar found a fault in the meter of the poem. Both had a heated exchange of views and did not want to accept defeat. Finally Siva showed His actual form to Nakkirar. The ego of Nakkirar was so much that he told the court even if it is Lord Siva, the mistake remains.

After this incidence, Nakkirar became very miserable and realized his mistake. He begged pardon from Lord Siva. As a God of Love, Siva requested Nakkirar to go on a pilgrimage. As commanded by Siva, Nakkirar started on his pilgrimage. On his way, Nakkira Thevar was captured by an '*asura*' (evil spirit) and kept in a cage. The poet found that he was not alone as there were 99 persons who had also been caught. According to these people the asura intended to wait for the cage to be filled with 100 people to commit his act. Since Nakkirar was the hundredth one, all the others were distressed. Nakkirar begged the Lord, particularly Lord Muruga. It is here that the poet composed his *Tirumurugatruppada*, 'Guide to Lord Muruga', in praise of Lord Muruga. The *Tirumurugatruppada* is the most important work of



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 91 the Sangam literature. Immediately Lord Muruga appeared as a warrior, vanquished the 'asura' and released all the devotees. The poems in this book were composed towards the end and 6<sup>th</sup>

of the Sangam period, between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Tirumurugatruppada*i is a collection of poems which from time onwards has been composed for the protection of the devotees. For this purpose it has become a daily liturgy. Besides the *Tirumurugatruppada*i, Nakkinnar composed like the *Kailaipadi Khaladipadi Andhathi Mummarikkovai*. These sets of poems form a part of the eleventh Tirumurai collection.

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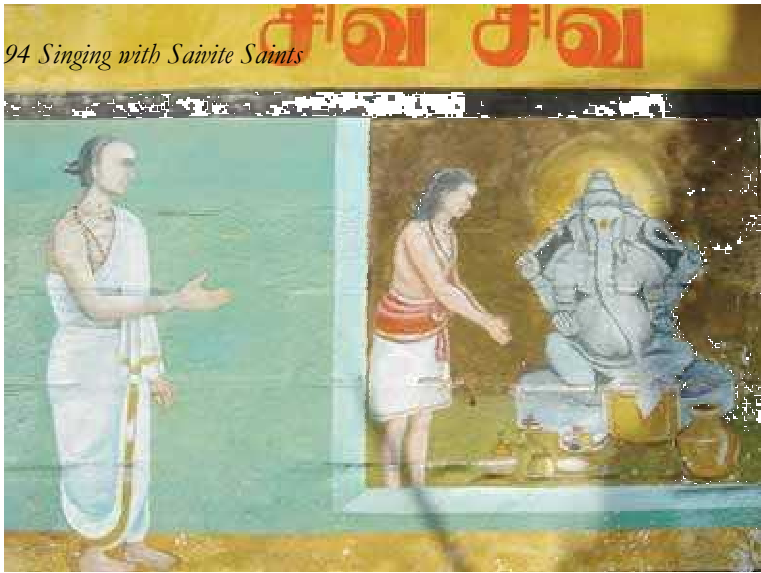
**NAMBIANDAR NAMBI  
TIRUVIRATTAIMANI MALAI**

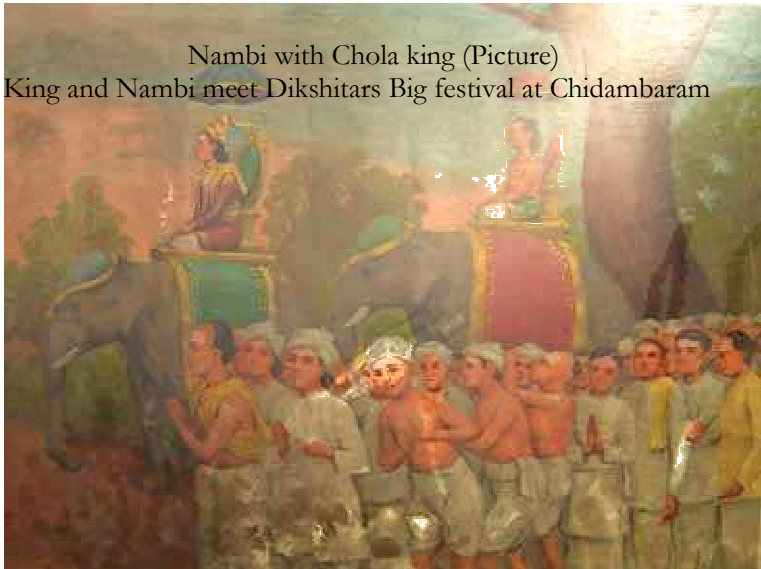
**Venba** ennai ninaindhadimai kondudan idarkedutthu  
thannai ninaiyath tharugindraan – punnai virasumagizh  
sohlai viyannarai yurmukkan arasumagizh atthimugat thaan  
**kattalaik kalitthurai** mugatthaar kariyanyen draalum thanaiye  
muyandravarkku migatthaan veliyanyen dreymeimmai unnum  
virumpadiyar agatthaan thigazhthiru naaraiyur ammaan payandha  
yemmaan ugatthaa navanthan udalam pilandha oru kombaney

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 93

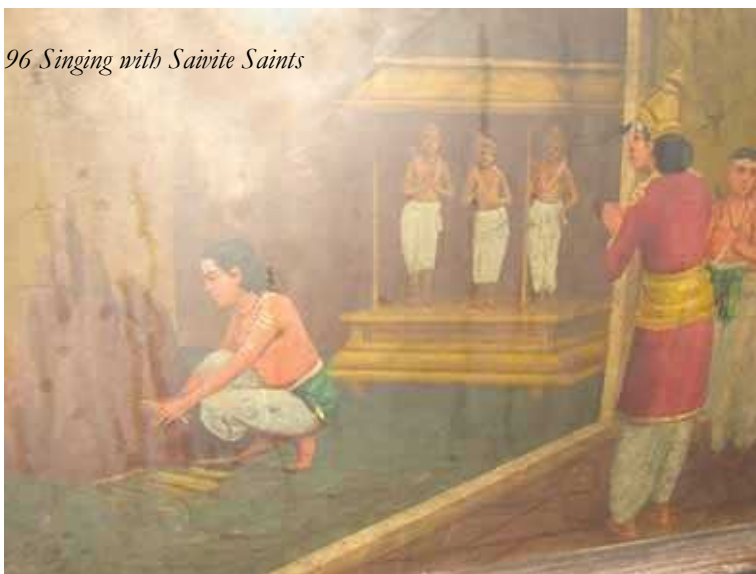
## MEANING

In the *punnai* and *magizham* groves of Thirunaraiyur abides the Three-eyed Lord Siva, whose beloved Son Ganesha sits under the peepul tree. Even before I had the ability to think of Him, Ganesha with great compassion removed my sorrows and bestowed on me the grace of being able to unceasingly think of Him, who is God. Of elephant-face, He is easily accessible to all who seek Him and fills the hearts of those that believe in His simplicity. He is the Son of Siva, who lives in Thirunaraiyur. He is the Incomparable One with a single tusk, who tore the asura Gajamukhasura apart and killed him.



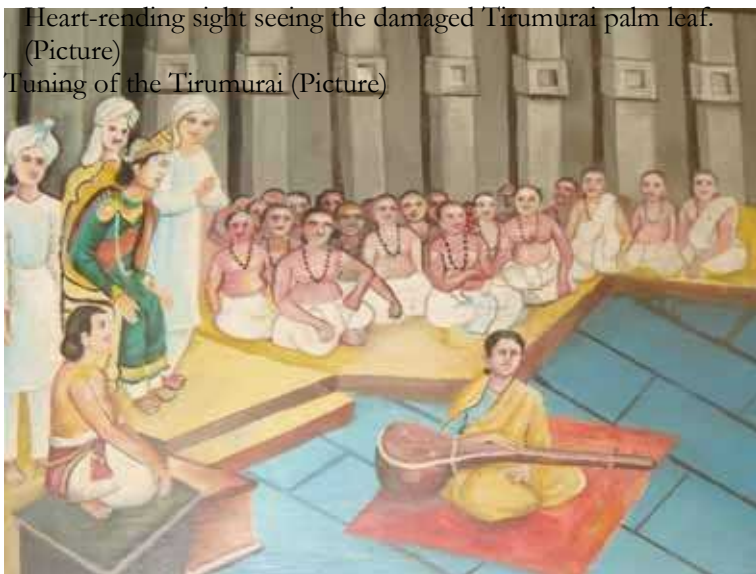


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Heart-rending sight seeing the damaged Tirumurai palm leaf.  
(Picture)

Tuning of the Tirumurai (Picture)





**CHAPTER 8  
TIRUMURAI 12  
SEKKIZHAR  
(PERIA PURANAM)**



Sekkizhar

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## THE TWELFTH TIRUMURAI

The twelfth Tirumurai is the *Periya Puranam*. Authored by Sekkizhar, it is also known as the *Tiru Thondar Puranam*. This Tirumurai is based on the *Tiru Thondar Thogai* of Sundaramurti Nayanar and *Tiru Thondar Tiruvandhati* of Nambiandar Nambi. It is to be noted that another work of the 13 century, *Tiru Thondar Purana Saram* of Saint Umapathi Sivacharya is also based on the *Tiru Thondar Tiruvandhati* of Nambiandar Nambi.

Nambiandar Nambi is said to have discovered and compiled the Tirumurai. The life history of Nambi has been dealt in the eleventh Tirumurai. *Periya Puranam*, the hagiology of 63 Saivite Saints is a precious work by Sekkizhar. The *Periya Puranam* is the most important of all the works relating to the lives of the 63 Nayanars. The twelfth Tirumurai contains more than 18,000 stanzas, and is the outpourings of sixty-three Nayanmars, who sang in praise of Lord Siva.

**Saint Sekkizhar Nayanar** Sekkizhar was born at Kunrathur in the Thondai Chola Nadu. This region was part of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and was ruled by the Pallava Kings. It corresponds to the present environs of Chennai with Chengalput district and its surrounding area in Kanchipuram district. At that time, Thondai Nadu was famous for its intellectuals.

Sekkizhar was born as Arulmozhi Thevar and his younger brother was Palaravayar. As he was learned, wise and righteous, he was the most famous in his family. Thus, he came to be called *Sekkizhar*. Sekkizhar was an ardent devotee of Lord Siva and use to offer prayer and do a lot of service. He was greatly devoted to the Tirunageswaran sthala in the Chola Kingdom, which is at present in the Kumbakonam district. This sthala is one of the most ancient temples in Kumbakonam and was known as

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 101 Kuvinvanam in ancient time. It is said that the temple is the master creation of early Chola art. The unique feature of this temple is that, the sun rays fall on the Lingam three times yearly, that is, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days in the month of Sittirai (April-May).

The Chola King Kulothunga II who was fascinated by the intelligence, honesty and excellence of Sekkizhar made the latter his Prime Minister and dubbed him as *Uttama Chola Pallavar*.

At a point of time during the Jain's rule, the Chola King was influenced by the scriptures of the Jains. Sekkizhar was worried about the path King Kulothunga II was stepping in. He prayed to Lord Siva to rescue and guide the King to Saivism.

Sekkizhar went to the Chola King and, as a dedicated Prime Minister advised the King to read great books like the *Tiru Thondhat Thogai* of Sundaramurti which was later sung by Nambiandar Nambi in his *Tiru Thondhat Tiruvandhati* of 89 verses. He inspired the King to read the life of the great devotees of God Siva and follow their principles. King Chola requested Sekkizhar to explain and expound the *Tiruvandhati*. Very much inspired by what Sekkizhar had compiled to his request, the King asked Sekkizhar to write in detail a work, in an easy style, elaborating the lives of the Saivite Saints.

Sekkizhar agreed and went to the Golden Temple (Chidambaram) and worshipped Lord Nataraja. He asked Lord Siva to give him the first word to begin his work on the lives of the Nayanars. The words *Ulagelam Unardu Ordath Kariyavan* was heard in Ponnambalam meaning, "Whom the entire world cannot know". Sekkizhar prostrated at the Holy Feet of the Lord and started writing the entire *Periya Puranam*. After completion of the work, the Chola King was informed. He proceeded to Chidambaram with his hosts, surrounded by chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry. Saint

102 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Sekkizhar, and the priests of Chidambaram temple welcomed King Kulothunga II. At the sight of the divine and saintly appearance of Sekkizhar, the King involuntarily prostrated at his feet. Afterwards, both proceeded to the Tillai temple. There a voice was heard saying “Oh! Chola King! With Our words as the front line, Sekkizhar has completed the lives of the Saints. So listen to them”.

The King immediately took it as Lord Siva’s command, sent invitation, to all erudite scholars, pandits, swamis, priests and everyone to come and hear the great Saint Sekkizhar at Chidambaram. The whole Golden Temple was decorated and a grand function was arranged.

Before the audience, the *Peria Puranam* was placed with great devotion on a pedestal with six legs covered with green and white silk cloths. Garlands of flowers were placed. After all ritual was done, the King requested Sekkizhar himself to explain the *Peria Puranam*. All present were mesmerized at hearing of the great devotion, sacrifice and the salvation of the lives of the Nayanmars. The King dubbed Sekkizhar with the *Thondaseer Paravumar* and then honored him with the crown of wisdom. The King included the *Peria Puranam* among the Tirumurais and made it the twelfth one. The Chola King had them engraved on copper plates and kept them at the temple.

Saint Sekkizhar spent his days in Chidambaram where he attained moksha.

**T H E 6 3 N A Y A N M A R S**  
**( S A I V A I T E S A I N T S )**  
**M o k s h a**

**Name Month Nakshatram (Star)**

1. Sundaramurti Nayanar Aadi Swati
- 2 Tiru Nilakanta Nayanar Thai Visagam

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3 Iyarpakai Nayanar Margazhi Uttiram 4 Ilayankudi Mara Nayanar Aavani Magha 5 Meypporul Nayanar Karthigai Uttiram 6 Viralminda Nayanar Sittirai Tiruvadirai 7 Amaranidi Nayanar Aani Puram 8 Eripatha Nayanar Maasi Hasta 9 Enadinatha Nayanar Purattasi Uttiram 10 Kannappa Nayanar Thai Tiruvadirai 11 Kungiliya Nayanar Aavani Mulam 12 Manakanchara Nayanar Margazhi Svati 13 Arivattaya Nayanar Thai Tiruvadirai 14 Anaya Nayanar Karthigai Hastam 15 Murthi Nayanar Aadi Krittika 16 Muniga Nayanar Vaighasi Mulam 17 Rudra Pasupathi Nayanar Purattasi Asvini 18 TiruNalai Povar Nayanar(Nandanar) Purattasi Rohini 19 Tiru Kurippu Thonda Nayanar Sittirai Svati 20 Chandeswara Nayanar Thai Uttiram 21 Tiru-Navukkarasar Sittirai Sadayam 22 Kulacchirai Nayanar Aavani Anusham 23 Perumizhalai Kurumba Nayanar Aadi Sittirai 24 Karaikkal Ammaiyar Panguni Svati 25 Appudi Adigal Nayanar Thai Sadayam 26 Tiru Nilanakka Vaigasi Mulam 27 Nami Nanti Adigal Nayanar Vaigasi Pusam 28 Tiru Gnana Sambandar Vaigasi Mulam 29 Eyarkon Kalikama Nayanar Aani Revati 30 Tirumular Nayanar Aypassi Asvini 31 Dandi Adigal Nayanar Panguni Sadayam 32 Murkha Nayanar Karthigai Mulam 33 Somasinara Nayanar Vaigasi Ayilam

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34 Sakkiya Nayanar Margazhi Puratham 35 Sirappuli Nayanar  
Karthigai Puratham 36 Siruthonda Nayanar Sittirai Bharani 37  
Kazharirru Arivar Nayanar (Cheraman Perumal) Aadi Svati 38  
Gananatha Nayanar Panguni Tiruvadirai 39 Kootruva Nayanar Aadi  
Tiruvadirai 40 Pugal Chola Nayanar Aadi Krittika 41 Narasinga  
Muniyaraiya Nayanar Purattasi Sadayam 42 Adipatta Nayanar  
Aavani Ayilam 43 Kalikkamba Nayanar Thai Revati 44 Kaliya  
Nayanar Aadi Jyestha 45 Chathi Nayanar Aypassi Pusam 46  
Ayyadigal Kadavarkon Aypassi Mulam 47 Kanampulla Nayanar  
Karthigai Krittika 48 Kari Nayanar Maasi Puradam 49 Nindrasi  
Nedumara Nayanar Aypassi Bharani 50 Mangaiyakkarasai Nayanar  
Sittirai Rohini 51 Vayilar Nayanar Margazhi Revati 52  
Munaiyaduvai Nayanar Panguni Pusam 53 Kazharsinga Nayanar  
Vaigasi Bharani 54 Serutthunai Nayanar Aavani Pusam 55  
Idangazhi Nayanar Aypassi Krittika 56 Pugazh Tunai Nayanar  
Aavani Pusam 57 Kotpuli Nayanar Aadi Jyestha 58 Pusalar  
Nayanar Aypassi Anusham 59 Nesa Nayanar Panguni Rohini 60  
Kochengat Chola Nayanar Maasi Sadayam 61 Tiru Nilakanta  
Yazhpanar Nayanar Vaigasi Mulam 62 Sadaiya Margazhi  
Tiruvadirai 63 Isaignaniyar Sittirai Sittirai

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## **PERIYA PURANAM - SEKKIZHAR**

### **Paayiram**

ulagelaam unarn dhohr kariyavan nilavu laaviya neermali  
veynyan alagil sohthiyan ambalaththaaduvaan malar  
silambadi vaazhthi vananguvaam ingithan naamam koorin  
iv ulagatthu munnaall thangarull irandil maakal sinthaiyul  
saarnthu nindra pongiya irulai eynai pura irul pohkku kindra  
seng kadhiraavan pohl neekum thiruth thondar puraanam  
enbaam

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## **MEANING**

We salute Him who is rarely known in the world, whose braids are adorned by the moon and flowing water, who dances in the cosmos with ornamented Feet.

Like the blazing sun, the story of the servitors to the Lord shall remove the darkness surrounding those minds that speak not His name.



**CHAPTER 9**  
**COMPOSITIONS ON LORD SIVA**  
**THE TAMIL MOOVAR**  
**(MUMMOORTHIGAL) EARLY MUSIC**  
**TRINITY**

Muthu Thandavar  
Marimuthu Pillai



### **THE TAMIL MOOVAR (EARLY MUSICAL TRINITY)**

After the compositions on Lord Siva in the 'Panniru Tirumurai' between the 7 and the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, those by the Tamil Moovar were very popular. The Tamil Moovar were also known as the Adi Mummoorthigal (early Musical Trinity) were three great composers during the 16 and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, they were about 200 years before the appearance of the modern Musical Trinity (Muthuswami Dikshitar, Tyagaraja and Syama Sastri). These three great musicians composed songs and were named as:

- i. Muthu Thandavar 1560 – 1640
  - ii. Arunachala Kavirayar 1711 – 1779
  - iii. Marimutha Pillai 1712 – 1787
- Muthu Thandavar and Marimutha Pillai have composed all

their songs in Praise of Lord Chidambaram Nataraja. Arunachala Kavirayar composed few but inspiring compositions on Lord Siva like the, *Sirkazhi Puranam*, *Sirkazhi Kovai*, *Sambandar Pillaittamizh*, and the *Tyagesar Varnam*.

**Muthu Thandavar** Muthu Thandavar was born in 1560 in Sirkazhi, near

Chidambaram in a family of musicians who served the temple. They were known as *Isai velalar*, those who cultivate music. The child was named Thandavan after the Lord at Chidambaram. During his young age, Thandavan was afflicted by an incurable disease and was not able to follow his family profession. He was also shunned by everybody and was neglected by his relatives.

Thandavan was an ardent devotee of Lord Siva. He used to go to the nearby temple and worshipped God Siva. Sometimes he visited the house of a priest, whose daughter named Sivabhagyam, used to sing the '*Sivanama Kirtana*' with great devotion.

*110 Singing with Saivite Saints* One day, Thandavan as usual went to the Sirkazhi Siva temple and prayed. Feeling very exhausted, he laid down beneath the 'temple car' and fell asleep. Without noticing Thandavan, the priests after the midnight puja locked the doors of the temple and went away. When Thandavan woke up, he realized his embarrassing situation. He went to the Lord's shrine and began singing the Tevaram hymns he had heard and learnt. At this moment, Goddess Parvati appeared as a small girl and gave him food to appease his hunger. Goddess Parvati asked Thandavan to go to the Chidambaram temple and worship Lord Nataraja. Goddess Parvati also assured him that he would be able to sing in praise of Lord Siva despite his physical inability and that he would compose songs everyday from the first words he heard from the mouth of the devotees there.

Thandavan proceeded to Chidambaram and worshipped Lord Nataraja. The first words that he heard from a devotee were "*Bhoologa Kailagiri Chidambaram*". Hence he composed his first song on Lord Siva in ragam Bhavapriya set to Misra Chapu talam. It was from that day onwards that Thandavan was called Muthu Thandavar.

Once day, Muthu Thandavar could not compose any song, as no words were coming from the devotees. He thus, composed a song without failing, titled "*Pesadhe Nenjame...*" meaning "Oh my heart, do not speak..." This kriti was composed in the ragam Suryakantam set to Misra Jhampa talam.

Once while Muthu Thandavar was on his way to Chidambaram he found the Kollidam River in flood and couldn't proceed further. He sang the composition *Kanamal vinile Kamal Kuzhittane* telling Lord Siva that it was a waste of time without His darshan. This kriti is in ragam Dhanyasi set to Misra Chapu talam. Immediately the water got reduced and he was able to go to the other bank of the river. Thandavar expressed his joy in composing the song *Darisanam Seyvene* in Vasanta ragam set

*Singing with Sainite Saints* 111 to Adi talam meaning, “Certainly I will have the darshan of the Lord”. Reaching Tillai safely, he sang the composition “*Kandapin Kann Kulirndain*” in Malayamarutam ragam set to Rupaka talam.

Some days after, travelling to the Nataraja temple, Muthu Thandavar was bitten by a snake. Knowing that all is Lord Siva’s will and that there is no point of being afraid, he sang “*Arumarudoru Thani Marundidu Ambalatil Kandene*” in Kambhoji ragam set to Rupaka talam and the poison was cleared.

Muthu Thandavar was a pioneer in composing *Padam* sung during dance performance. “*Teruvil Vaarano*” in ragam Khamas is a classic padam, which delights even today’s musicians and audience alike. He is also called as the ‘father and the founder of the traditional Kirtanai and Kriti’ and has written all his songs according to strict rules of musical prosody. Very few of Muthu Thandavar’s compositions have survived the test of time. Sixty of them have been collected and twenty – five Padams are also available. Some of his compositions that are sung in music concerts are *Unai Nambinen Ayya* in Kiravani ragam, *Isanae Koti Surya Prakasane* in ragam Nalinakanthi, *Darisithalavil* in ragam Lathangi, *Sevikka Vendum Ayya* in ragam Andholika, *Innum Oru Taram* set to Simmendra Madyamam, *Ambara Chidambaram* and *Innum Oru Stalam* in ragam Suruti and *Adi Kondar* in Mayamalavagowlai ragam.

The last composition of Thandavar in Kokilapriya ragam set to Rupaka talam was *Manickkavasagar Pernakku Thavallayo Ariyen*. This song relates the desire of Thandavar to attain moksha in Chidambaram as Manickkavasagar, the composer of the *Tiruvagam*. His wish was actually granted in 1640.

The compositions of Muthu Thandavar, both padams and kirtanais, were preserved and propagated by the musician Kuppayya Pillai who was from the same family. Later, the Pillai family settled in Tiruppampuram and preserved the songs and tradition of the great composer. The compositions of Muthu

112 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Thandavar are very popular and widely sung during concerts.

His songs create *sivabhakti* both in the singer and the listener.

### **Marimutha Pillai**

Marimutha Pillai, another great composer was born in 1712 AD, at Thillaividangam, near Chidambaram in a pious family of Siva devotees.

Marimutha Pillai was endowed with the ability to compose songs at an early age. After intense Sadhana, worshipping the Lord, he and his wife were blessed with three sons. According to information available, his eldest son was named after his grandfather Deivangal Pillai and his youngest son was called Kumaraswamy Pillai. There is no account of his second son. Pona Deivangal Pillai is said to have composed the Prabhandam '*Umaiyaval Malai*' at the age of twelve. Deivangal Pillai became seriously ill after he completed this Prabhandam. Marimutha Pillai got worried about the deterioration of his son's health and prayed to Lord Nataraja. One day Lord Siva appeared in Marimutha Pillai's dream and asked him to go and sing in praise of Chidambaram Nataraja and gave him the assurance that his son will be cured.

The next day Marimutha Pillai proceeded to Tillai and composed the famous Prabhandam '*Puliyur Venba*'. Puliyur is another name for Chidambaram. Soon after finishing the song, Deivangal Pillai was fully recovered from his illness.

Marimutha Pillai too, composed all his songs according to the strict rules of musical prosody. He has used many *Mudras* in his compositions relating to Chidambaram temple such as '*Tillai*', '*Then Kailasam*', '*Ponnambalam*', '*Bhoologa Kailasam*' and '*Puliyur*'. In his composition "*Orukal Siva Chidambaram*" in ragam Arabhi set to Aditalam, Marimutha Pillai stated confidently that in order to attain salvation, one has to utter the name 'Siva Chidambaram' once. He described the celestial Nandi and Narada playing the

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 113 Mridangam and Veena respectively in the piece “*Kalai Thookki Ninradum Deivame*” in Yadukula Kambhoji set to Adi talam. It is good to note that Narada has been the source of inspiration to many poets and composers. Narada the Veena and Yazh Maharishi, is a revered name in the history of Indian Music. The Veena that Narada performed upon is named as ‘*Mabati*’.

Just as with the compositions of Muthu Thandavar, some of Marimuthu Pillai’s compositions have been lost. Other famous works of the composer are: ‘*Chidambaresa Virali Vidu Thudu*’, ‘*Varunapuri Adimoolessar Kuravanji*’, ‘*Adimoolessar Nandi Natakam*’, ‘*Nagabandam*’, ‘*Puliyur Singaravela Padbigam*’, ‘*Rathabandam*’ ‘*Aneeth Natakam*’ and the fifty songs on Lord Nataraja. Today, only twenty-five kirtanais and padams are available.

Marimutha Pillai attained eternal bliss in 1787 AD. His contribution to Carnatic Music is indeed great. Though only a few of his compositions are available now, they are like precious gems.

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**MUTHU THANDAVAR COMPOSITION**

“ Darisanam Seyvene”

**Ragam :** Vasanta

**Talam :** Adi

**Pallavi :**

darisanam seyvene mukti kodukkum  
tiruvambalavananai

**Anupallavi :**

ariyayen iruvarum ariyada vimalanai kariyuri  
potrtanan karunai kadhalai thedhi

**Charanam :**

chendadhai madi gangaiyum tirumugamum siranda pankaya  
sengaiyum panjacharapadhiyum padattani silambum nenjarave  
tudittu nindranadu kannara



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## MEANING

### Pallavi

I will have the darshan of mukti-giving Tiruvambalavanan

### Anupallavi

He who could not known by the Two  
Seeking the Ocean of Compassion

### Charanam

The Holy Face adorned by red locks, crescent moon and  
Ganges

With palms the hue of a perfect, red lotus The steps with the  
sacred letters fi ve and Feet adorned  
with anklets With heart full of praise, my eyes behold Your Dance!

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**MARIMUTHA PILLAI COMPOSITION**

**Ragam : Aarabhi**

**Talam : Adi Pallavi**

oru kaal siva chidambaram endru sonnaal

irukkaathuzh vinaiyey

**Anupallavi** karukaannavarkithu theriyum pothuvilona

kaalaith thooki nindra kohlatthai manathil vaitthu (oru kaal)

**Char**

**ana**

**m**

soolv

azhiy

udan

panc

hagin

i

idaini

ndru

sorubam

karivaane

yn –

manai

vaazhvai

verutthu

kani

kaayum

sarugum

thindru

maathava

m

purivaane

yn – pala

velvigal

seythanth  
a  
homakun  
datthil  
neyyai  
veeviley  
sorivaane  
yn –  
kaadhun  
keylvi  
illatha  
muzhu  
monigalaa  
i thalaiyil  
kilaithittu  
sadaithana  
i  
valaitthitt  
u  
thirivaane  
yn

veda manthiram solli aayiram thandan puvi meethinil vizhuvaaneyn –  
iru paadham sivanthida thalangal thorrum thirinthu pala dheiyvam  
thozhuvaaneyn – kollan oothum thunatthi pohley vaayuvai  
kumbithudal yogatthil ezhuvaaneyn – ainthu boothangalum kalanga  
pradhakshinamaay purandu purandu mathi  
marundezhunthiduvaaneyn

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## MEANING

**Pallavi** If once you said “Siva Chidambaram” All bad karma will cease to exist

**Anupallavi** Those that do not know deeper meaning, To visualize the stance of the Raised Leg would suffice

**Charanam 1** Observing and interrupting the breath and control the five fires, why should Self be realized? Sacrificing family life and taking living on leaves and shrubs, why should great penance be performed? Constructing fire-altars and performing sacrifices, why should ghee be poured into them? Deaf to the world, in complete silence with matted locks, why roam?

**Charanam 2** Chanting mantras from the vedas why fall a thousand times in prostration? With sore feet visiting many temples why worship so many deities? Like the bellows, exercising the breath why rise in yoga? Startling the five elements by rolling around why have the mind go into trance?

Lord Nataraja - Chidambaram



**CHAPTER 10 HYMNS  
ON LORD SIVA  
THAYUMANAVAR**

Thayumanavar



## THAYUMANAVAR

There lived one of the greatest saints of South India and a great poet named Thayumanavar in the earlier part of the 18 century. He was born at Tiru Maraikkadu to devout parents. His father was Kediliappa Pillai and his mother was named Gajavalli Ammaiyar. Tiru Maraikkadu is found in the Nagapattinam district and is today called Vedaraniyam. It can be reached from Tiruvarur through Tirutturai-pundi. It is said that it was here that sage Agastya witnessed, the marriage scene of God Siva and Goddess Parvati. It is also at this sthala that Tiru Gnana Sambandar and Tirunavukkarasar sang in praise of Lord Siva to open the main door of the temple, which had remained closed for years.

Kediliappa Pillai and his family shifted to Trichy, where he worked as a treasurer in the Vijayanagar Kingdom of King Vijayaraghunatha Chokkulinga Nayak. Kediliappa Pillai and Gajavalli Ammaiyar had an elder son named Siva Chidambaram, who was under the care of their relatives. They named their second son Thayumanavar because of their great devotion to the ancient rock-cut Siva temple. The Rock now known as the Rock Fort is said to have been fl own down from Kailash hence, the name '*Dakshina Kailash*'. The famous shrine of Ucchi Pillaiyar is situated on top of the Rock Fort. The Lord is known as Thayumanavar because according to the Puranam, Siva came as a mid-wife to help a devotee at the time of her delivery.

After the death of his father, Thayumanavar took up his father's profession. His father's death intensified his yearning for spiritual freedom. Though he had free access to the King's palace, and was included in royal circles, Thayumanavar preferred to be alone. One day while he went to worship Lord Siva at the Rock Fort, he met Sage Sadasiva who belonged to the Parampara of Rishi Tirumular. He fell at the feet of the master who blessed him.

1. Rock Fort is situated in Trichy, originally known as Tiruchirapally, 319 kms from Chennai.



*122 Singing with Saivite Saints* Thayumanavar left the palace and went to live in a hermitage on the bank of river Kaveri. Sage Sadasiva who was on his way to Pudukottai met Thayumanavar. The final conclusion of their meeting was when Sage Sadasiva wrote 'Silence is Peace, Silence is Bliss, and Silence is knowledge'.

Thayumanavar left for Ramnad, accompanied by his disciple Arulayya where he was received with due respect by the Maravas (high ranking officials of the Pandian Kingdom). Ramnad was the name used by the British for Ramanathapuram. Thayumanavar left Ramanathapuram and proceeded towards Rameshwaram. On his way, he met again his Guru near Manamadurai and received his blessings.

Thayumanavar is said to have done long and deep meditation which brought forth spontaneous hymns. These hymns were written down by Arulayya on the spot.

Siva Chidambaram met Thayumanavar in Ramnad and persuaded him to come to Vedaranniyam. Thayumanavar agreed to the request of his elder brother and proceeded to his native place with Arulayya. They visited the Madurai temple and other Siva temples on their way.

Thayumanavar got married to Mattuvarkuzhali and later was blessed with a child called Kanagasabhapati. Unfortunately, Mattuvarkuzhali did not live a long life. Thayumanavar had to educate his son and afterwards left Kanagasabhapati with his elder brother. While meditating on the shores of Vedaranniyam, the Guru of Thayumanavar came. The words spoken by his Guru was transformed into hymns by him. Thayumanavar left for Chidambaram, the abode of Lord Nataraja, sanctified by holy Saints, and composed songs on Lord Siva Peruman. The Saint spent around two months in Chidambaram and then went on pilgrimage to Kanchipuram, Tiruvottriyur, Tiruvarur, Madurai and back to Rameshwaram.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 123 Severe drought and famine affected Rameshwaram at a certain period of time. Thayumanavar worshipped Lord Siva as Ramanathaswamy to get relief from this natural calamity. Thayumanavar's prayer was answered and soon it started raining in Rameshwaram. The King of Ramanathapuram was very pleased with the miracle of Thayumanavar. The latter was to be brought by the order of the King in a palanquin to be honoured. Thayumanavar rejected the King's offer and stayed in Rameshwaram and composed sublime verses. The hymns were written on palm leaves by Arulayya and Kodikkarai Gnani, his other disciple.

Thayumanavar has composed 1452 songs under 52 headings, following the sacred teaching of Rishi Tirumular, the composer of the *Tirumantiram* and the utter devotion and fervor of Saint Manickavasagar, the composer of the *Tiruvasagam*. In his poem *Chinmayananda Guru*, he places himself in the lineage of Rishi Tirumular, who was a Siddha Yogi of the Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasa Parampara. All his compositions are meant to be sung same as the hymns composed in the *Tiruvasagam*.

Thayumanavar believed that God reside everywhere, in everything and in everybody. In one of his songs he stated that he was unwilling to pluck a flower to worship the Lord as he found God Siva dwelling in it too. Thayumanavar had composed 771 '*Kannis*'. Each '*Kanni*' is made of two lines. These couplets are expressions of the great spiritual awareness of Thayumanavar. He composed the lines in such a manner that one can easily set them to ragam and talam. The poems of Thayumanavar are yet alive today and are sung lovingly in group gatherings. Thayumanavar the composer of 1452 verses, has contributed a lot to words bringing peace and joy to his hymns. The hymns of Thayumanavar bring high comfort in life when singing them. The songs are dynamic and were set in a simple literacy format that suit folk type melodies. Thayumanavar attained Samadhi on January 15, 1742.

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## **THAYUMANAVAR HYMNS**

### **Chinmayanandaguru**

angaikodu malarthoovi angmadhu pulagippa anbinnaa lurugivizhineer  
aaraaga vaaraadha mutthiyina dhaavesa aasaik kadarkul moozhgis  
sangara suyambhuvey sambhuvey enavumozhi thazhuthazhuth  
thidavinangunj sanmaarga neriyilaath thunmarkka neynaiyun  
thannarul koduthaalvaiyoh thungamigu pakkugas sanaganmudhal  
munivohrgal thozhutharugil veetriruppas sollariya neriyai oru sollal  
lunartthiyeh soroobanubhoothikkaattis sengamala peedamer kalla  
ladikkulvalar siddhaanta mutthimudhaley siragiri vilangavaru  
dakshinamoorthiyey chinmayaa nandaguruvey

### MEANING

With flowers in out-stretched hand, Hair standing on end in joyous thrill, Eyes melting in love, tears streaming as a river - Thus do I not immerse myself into the fervent Sea of Mukti. And so hail Thee not as "Oh! Sankara! Oh! Swayambu! Oh! Sambu!" And adore Thee not in faltering words of ecstatic joy; And pursue not the path of Sanmarga. When such indeed is my unholy condition Will you ever accept me in Thy rapturous Grace? With the holy munis, Sanaka and the rest, Seated by Thy side in prayer, Thou revealed the path indescribable by a single word And conferred the bliss of Svarupa Thou, who is seated on the crimson lotus At the foot of the wild banyan tree. Oh! Thou, the Primal Source of Siddhanta Mukti. Oh! Chinmayananda Guru! Dakshinamurthi! That is seated high on the hilltop of Sivagiri.





Thayumanavar at Rock Temple  
Thayumanavar Murthi - Trichy



**CHAPTER 11 KRITIS  
ON LORD SIVA  
THE MUSICAL TRINITY**

Muthuswami Dikshithar



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## THE MUSICAL TRINITY

During 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>  
16<sup>th</sup>

16<sup>th</sup> century lived the three great composers Syama Sastri, Tyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar in the district of Tiruvarur. This period is the brightest epoch in the history of Carnatic music, often called the 'Golden Age' of South Indian music. All three were great composers and were responsible for making Tanjavur popular as a seat of music. They were also known as the *Vaggeyakaratrayam* of South India. The three composers were also well versed in the Vedas, Sastras and sacred lore. They were highly skilled in astrology and Mantra Sastras. The 'Trimurtis' were contemporaries, who were born in Tiruvarur and lived in Tanjavur.

The Musical Trinity are : i. Syama Sastri 1762 – 1827 A.D. ii. Tyagaraja 1767 – 1847 A.D. iii. Muthuswami Dikshitar 1775 - 1835 A.D. Among the three great composers, Muthuswami Dikshitar

has contributed the most to the propagation of songs on Lord Siva. Syama Sastri most popular songs on Lord Siva are *Parakela* and *Jhambuphala*. Tyagaraja composed many songs on Siva like in his *Kovur Pancharatnam* he sang *Sambho Mahadeva* in Pantuvarali ragam set to Rupaka talam and *Sundareswaruni* in Sankarabaranam ragam set to Adi talam. In honour of Siva at Tiruvaigaru he composed the song *Ebi Trijagadisa* in Saranga ragam set to Misra Chapu talam. *Siva Siva Ena Radha* is his another popular song on Lord Siva.

**Muthuswami Dikshitar** Ramaswami Dikshitar and Subbulakshmi Ammal, parents of

Muthuswami Dikshitar, lived in Virinchipuram 1, near Kanchipuram.

1. Virinchipuram is about 71 Kms from Chennai.

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 131 In 1742, there was chaos and political instability in Kanchipuram.

Consequently, Ramaswami, who brought the Hamsadvani ragam into existence, migrated with his family to Tiruvadamarudur. Ramaswami got his vocal and veena training under Muddu Venkatamakhi, who was the collateral descendent of the great Venkatamakhi author of the work *Chaturdandi Prakasikai* in which he spoke about the 72 Melakarta ragams. Ramaswami Dikshitar, the renowned composer of the *Ashtothara Sata Raga Tala Maligai* (a garland of 108 Raga Tala compositions), went to Tanjavur, Mayiladhuturai and finally reached Chidambaram. After his veena performance at the Nataraja Golden Temple, a Yogi by name Chidambaranatha who happened to be there, requested Ramaswami to go and settle in Tiruvarur.

Muthuswami Dikshitar was born on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1775 in Tiruvarur after his parents worshipped Lord Muthu Kumaraswami at Vaitheeswaran temple. His parents named him Muthuswami after the deity of the Vaitheeswaran temple. Muthuswami Dikshitar was the eldest son of the family and had two brothers named Chinnaswami and Balaswami. His sister was named Balambal.

While his father was attending a function in Manali as the chief guest, Chidambaranatha Yogi came there and spent some time with Ramaswami. The latter sent his eldest son to Varanasi with the Yogi to stay there for five years. Muthuswami learned Hindustani music particularly the Dhrupad style, and continued learning the Mantras and Sastras. When he had attained Mantra Siddhi, Chidambaranatha Yogi told Muthuswami Dikshitar to stand in the Ganges River in hip-deep water, pray to the Lord and ask for anything with the palms facing the sky. Accordingly, Muthuswami went to the Ganges and after worshipping the Lord, he was gifted a *Yali Mukha Veena* (head-piece Veena) in his hands.

After the death of Chidambaranatha Yogi, Muthuswami returned to Manali. Following the request of the Yogi,  
2. Manali is found the North of India in the Himachal Pradesh State.

*132 Singing with Saivite Saints* Muthuswami Dikshitar went to the Tirugiri sthala, now known as Tiruttani's temple. The youngest of the Musical Trinity, stayed there for 45 days, praying and meditating on Lord Subramaniam. One day Lord Subramaniam appeared in front of him and put a piece of sugar candy in his mouth and disappeared. Instantly, Muthuswami composed his first song. *Sri Natadi Guruguha Jayati* in Mayamalavagaulai ragam set to Adi talam. He was also blessed by the Lord to use the word Guruguha as the mudra in his kritis.

Muthuswami then proceeded to Kanchipuram and sang in praise of Lord Siva at the Ekambareswara temple. The compositions sung on Lord Siva as Ekambaranatha are:

### **Song Ragam Talam**

- 1 Ekamranatham bhaja Purvi Kalyani Adi
- 2 Ekamranathaya Veera Vasanta Rupakam
- 3 Ekamranatheswarana Chaturangini Adi

Muthuswami composed four Ragamaligais (Garlands of ragams). The '*Sri Viswanathan*' Ragamaligai in 14 Ragas is called the '*Chaturdasa Bhuvana Rupa Ragamaligai*'. The *Pallavi* is in Sri and Arabhi ragams. The *Anupallavi* is set to Gauri, Natta, Gaulai and Mohana ragams. The ragams Sama, Lalita, Bhairavam, Saranga, Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji, Devapriya and Bhupalam made up the *Charanam*.

Dikshitar has composed many group Kritis among which, the *Pancha Lingam Kritis* of Tiruvarur and the *Pancha Bhuta Kshetra Kritis* are well known. The *Pancha Lingam Kritis* of Tiruvarur are:

### **Song Lingam Ragam Talam**

- 1 Sada Chaleswara Achaleswara Bhupalam Adi
- 2 Anandeswarena Anandeswara Ananda Misra Chapu      Bhairavi
3. Tiruttani is 86 kms from Chennai.

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3 Hatakeswara Hatakeswara Bilahari Rupakam

4 Siddhisvaraya Siddhiswara Neelambari Misra Chapu

5 Sri Valmikalinga Valmikalingam Kambhoji Ata

The *Panchabhuta Kshetra Kritis* are the five compositions Muthuswami has sung in praise of the five holy places of pilgrimage (Kshetra) where Lord Siva is the main deity and is found in South India. They represent the five elements namely, earth (Prithvi), water (Appu), fire (Tejas), air (Vayu) and ether (Akasha), Muthuswami has sung beautifully at all these sacred shrines and some of them has become very popular. The *Pancha Bhuta Kshetra Kritis* are:

**Song Ragam Talam Element Place**

1. Chintayam Bhairavi Rupaka Prithvi Kanchipuram
2. Jambupate Yamunakalyani Tisra Ekam Appu Trichy
3. Arunachalanatham Saranga Rupaka Tejas Tiruvannamalai
4. Sri Kalahastisa Huseni Jhampa Vayu Kalahasti
5. Anada Natanam Kedara Gowlai Misra Chapu Akasa Chidambaram

Another group Kritis Muthuswami composed is the '*Siva Navavarana Kritis*' consisting of eleven compositions in praise of God Siva as Tyagaraja for the Tiruvarur sthala. It is said that Muthuswami would sit at the entrance of the northern gopuram of the Tiruvarur Temple and compose those songs:

**Song Ragam Talam**

- 1 Tyagaraja Daryam Darbar Adi
- 2 Tyagarajam Bhajare Manasa Rudrapriya Adi
- 3 Tyagaraja Maha Sri Adi
- 4 Tyagarajam Bhajare Re Yadukula Kambhoji Misra Chapu

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5 Tyagarajam Bhajeham Neelambari Rupakam

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6 Tyagaraja Palaya Gaula Adi

7 Tyagaraja Namaste Begada Rupakam

8 Tyagaraja Krtya Saranga Jhampa

9 Tyagarajanesam Salaga Bhairavi Adi

10 Tyagaraja Virajate Athana Rupakam

11 Tyagaraja Yoga Vaibhavam Ananda Bhairavi Rupakam

Besides group kritis, Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed many famous compositions like '*Bhajarere Chitta*' in Kalyani ragam set to Misra Ekam at the Vaitheeswaran temple. He also sang '*Brihadeeswaram*' in Sankarabharanam set to Adi talam on Lord Siva at the Tanjavur Big Temple. Muthuswami also sang the composition 'Sundaramurthim Asrayami Siva' in Takka ragam set to Rupaka talam on Sundaramurthi Nayanar.

In the composition '*Sri Kalahastisa*' from the '*Pancha Bhuta Kshetra*' Kritis, Muthuswami makes reference to Kannappa Nayanar, another Saivite Nayanar. In the last part of the song he said, "*GnanaGuruguba Satchidanandaraya Murthe Hinajati Kiratakena Pujita Kirtē*" saying to Lord Siva "You are Pasupati - The Lord of all beings and received the Gnana Upadesa from Gurukula. You are the embodiment of existence, knowledge and bliss and, You have the fame of being worshipped by a hunter of low social status."

At Chidambaram Nataraja temple, Muthuswami has composed many songs and some well-known are:

**Song Ragam Talam**

1 Chidambara Nataraja Namasraye Kedara Gowlai Adi

2 Chidambara Nataraja Murtim Tanu Kirti Misra Chapu

3 Chidambareswara Dhunibhina Shadjam Adi

In Nagapattinam, Muthuswami Dikshitar composed the song '*Sundarajam Asraye*' in Brindavana Saranga ragam set to

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 135 Adi talam. He also sang on Lord Dakshinamurti the composition '*Dakshinamurti*' in Sankarabaranam set to Jhampa talam at the Tiruvarur sthala.

One day Dikshitar went to Tirukilvelur for having the Darshan of Lord Siva. Tirukilvelur is now known as Kivalur, situated between Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam. The temple is also known as Peruntirukkoyil. The unique feature of the temple is that God Siva appeared before Saint Agastya in the form of Lord Nataraja, with the right foot lifted in dance.

Just as Muthuswami Dikshitar was entering the temple the priest closed the doors asking him to come the next day as Lord Siva certainly would wait for him. Full of fervor he sang the composition '*Akshayalinga Vibho Swayambo*' in Sankarabharanam Ragam set to Chapu talam. Immediately after, the doors of the temple opened and Dikshitar had the blessing of Lord Siva.

Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed songs on almost all deities. On Lord Siva he has sung around 112 compositions. Generally there is only one Charanam in his songs, unlike those of Tyagaraja swami. Madhyamakala Sahityas are abundantly found in Dikshitar's kritis. The songs contain many decorative extra angas like *Gopucha Yati*, *Strotovaha Yati*, *Chittaswaram* and *Sollukkattus* which reveal his skill in Sahityam.

Muthuswami is the musician who perhaps visited the largest number of sthalas in South India and has sung on the presiding deity in each one of them. Muthuswami Dikshitar has composed around 500 songs, most of which are widely sung in music concerts today. Each of his compositions is unique and brilliantly crafted. His compositions also contain much information about musical instruments and history of the temples. Dikshitar had as disciples his two brothers Chinnaswami and Balaswami. The Tanjore Quartet namely; Sivanandam, Ponnaiya, Chinnaya and Vadivelu, composers of music for Bharatanatyam, learnt from Dikshitar. Suddha

136 *Singing with Saivite Saints* Mridangam Tamibiyappa is another prime disciple of the great composer. At Ettayapuram<sup>4</sup> on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1835, Muthuswami Dikshitar asked his students to sing. While they were singing the line “*Meena lochani paasa Mochan?*” in the Gamakakriya ragam, Muthuswami raise his hands, saying ‘*Sive Pahi?*’ and left his physical body.

3. Ettayapuram is 133 kms from Madurai, in the Tuticorin district, in South Tamil Nadu.



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**MUTHUSWAMI DIKSHITAR KRITI**

**“ Pancha Bhutha Kriti” (Chidambaram)**

**Ragam:** Kedara Gowlai **Talam:** Misra chapu

**Pallavi :** Ananda Natana Prakasam Chitsabhesam  
Asrayami Siva Kamavalli nesa,

**Anupallavi:** Bhanukoti Kotisankasam Bhukti  
Mukti Prada Daharakasam Dinajana  
samrakshana Canam Divya Pantanjali  
Vyaghrapada Darsitakunjit Abjajaranam

**Charanam :** Sitamsu Gangadharam Nilakandharam Sri Kedaradi  
Kshetra Dharam Bhutesam Sarddu Lacharmambaram Chidambaram  
Bhusura Trisahasra Muniswaram Visweshwaram Nava Nitahridayam  
Sadaya Guruguhamadyam Vedaredyam Vitaraginammaprimeya  
Advaita Pratipadyam SanGita Vidya Vinodatandavajata Bahutara  
Bhedacodyam

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**MEANING**

**Pallavi** Blissful dance of Light in the Halls of Consciousness I seek  
refuge in the Beloved of Sivakaamavalli

**Anupallavi** Of infinite brilliance Granter of salvation Protector of  
the weak The beautiful, divine Feet that Patanjali and Vyaagrapada To  
Him, I surrender.

**Charanam** On His Head he bears the Ganga, blue-throated is He  
He abides in such Holy shrines as Kedarnath As He does in the  
elemental temples, as Space in  
Chidambaram Lord of the Worlds Always in the heart of 'guruguha'  
Source of Vedas and Giver of knowledge The Non-dual Lord of  
music and dance In many ways can You be praised!



Siva Temple - Kivalur  
Tyagesar Temple - Tiruvarur

**CHAPTER 12**  
**CHARITRAMS**  
**GOPALAKRISHNA BHARATI**

Gopalakrishna Bharati

## **GOPALAKRISHNA BHARATI**

Gopalakrishna Bharati, also known as Gopalakrishna Bharatiyar, was the son of Ramaswami Bharathi and was born in 1810 in Narimanam near Nagappattinam. He lived in and around Mayiladhuturai and lead a celibate life. Bharathi was a genius in music since childhood and possessed great dexterity in composing songs. His ancestors were musicians and his father as well as his grandfather, were good Vainikas. Bharati was attracted towards the Chidambaram temple right from his childhood. He would visit Chidambaram sthala on all occasions, especially when Abishegam on Lord Nataraja was performed.

Gopalakrishna Bharati was ostracized by the orthodox people because he composed and performed a *Kathakalakshebam* on Tirunilakanta Nayanar one of the 63 Saivite Saints who was supposed to have belonged to an inferior community. His own people shunned him and made him an outsider in their community.

*Kathakalakshebam* is a story-telling from the Puranas, to the accompaniment of musical instruments with crisp musical dialogues, witty stories inserted at relevant places with songs. The impact of the Maratha culture on South Indian devotional music was primarily responsible for the development of the '*Hari Katha Kalakshebam*'. Gopalakrishna Bharati composed another opera named *Nandanar Charitram* which is well-known even nowadays and sung in concerts. It was Maha Vidwan Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, himself a great musician, who brought Bharati to one Vedanayakam Pillai. The latter was a great inspired poet popularly called *Varakavi* that is, one who has been blessed with a divine inspiration to compose poems. Bharati spent sometime with Vedanayakam Pillai composing his work '*Nandanar Charitram*'. Bharati had to bear again all the sufferings he was subjected from his people. The '*Nandanar Charitram*' was again an opera

*Singing with Saivite Saints* 143 describing the life of Nandanar also known as *Tiru Nalai Povar*

*Nayanar*, who is said to have belonged to the inferior community. Sekkizhar, the author of the *Periya Puranam* had written 37 verses about Nandanar in his '*Tiru Thondar Puranam*'.

*Nandanar Charitram*' is a great work left by Gopalakrishna Bharati to South Indian music. It describe the life of Nandanar who by his devotion to Lord Siva attained moksha in Chidambara Nataraja Temple.

The '*Nandanar Charitram*' was also referred to as '*Tiru Nalai Povar Charitra Kirtani*'. Many characters have been portrayed in this opera. *Kirtanai*, *Nondi Chindu*, *Ananda Kalippu*, *Irusol alankaram*, *Lavani*, *Khadga*, *Dandaka*, *Agaval* and *Savayi* are the musical forms that have been presented in this opera. By its musical and devotional aspect, '*Nandanar Charitram*' has acquired the position of being an equivalent of Tyagaraja's opera '*Nowka Charitram*' and '*Prabalada Bhakti Vijayam*'.

In addition to common ragams, Gopalakrishna Bharati has composed kirtanais, in rare ragams like Dwijavanti, Sengalam and Manji. Apart from the musical form kirtanai, he was also well versed in the *Chindu*, *Kummi*, *Kami* and *Dandakam* forms of music. Gopalakrishna Bharati through his knowledge in Hindustani music, which he learnt from Ramadas, was able to compose songs in the Marathi musical forms like *Panchapadi*, *Lavani*, *Abhang*, *Saaki*, *Dindi*, *Ori* and *Doba*.

The work '*Nandanar Charitram*' was printed in 1861 by the French collector Sisay of Karaikkal, who came to a '*Harikatha*' performance, held in Nagapattinam and was mesmerized by the great opera. Carnatic music maestro Dhandapani Desikar increased the popularity of the songs in the '*Nandanar Charitram*' by singing them in his concerts.

Gopalakrishna Bharati was a contemporary of Saint Tyagaraja. It is said that he visited Tyagaraja at Tiruvaiyur and

144 *Singing with Saivite Saints* composed the Kṛiti ‘*Sabbapatikku*’ in Abhogi ragam set to Rupaka talam. He is also the author of the ‘*Pancharatnam Kṛiti*’ in Tamil in the five ragams;

**Song Ragam** 1. Hara Hara Sivasankara Nattai 2. Charanagata mendru Gaulai 3. Piravada Varum Tarum Arabhi 4. Adiya Padame Gati Varali 5. Maravamal Eppadiyum Sriragam

Some of Gopalakrishna Bharati’s famous kirtanais are ‘*Tiruvadi Charanam*’ in Kambhoji ragam, ‘*Tillai stalam*’ in Sama ragam, ‘*Nadanamadinar*’ in Vasantha ragam, ‘*Kanakasabesan Sevadi*’ in Khamas ragam, ‘*Sivalokamengira*’ in Natakapriya ragam, ‘*Mahadeva Saranam*’ in Sarasangi ragam. Furthermore, besides the ‘*Nandanar Charitram*’ and the ‘*Tiru Neelakanta Nayanar Charitram*,’ Gopalakrishna Bharati composed the ‘*Iyarpagai Nayanar Charitram*’ and the ‘*Karaikekal Ammaiyar Charitram*’. But the ‘*Nandanar Charitram*’ became more popular than the other Charitrams. His Mudra, signature of a composer at the end of a song, was Gopalakrishna or Balakrishna.

It is said that Gopalakrishna Bharati composed more than a thousand songs. His 426 Opera songs and his ‘*Viduti Kirtanais*,’ and ‘*Kannis*’ 180 in number only are available now. Gopalakrishna Bharati attained eternal bliss in 1896 at the age of 86.

Since the Nandanar Charitram of Gopala Krishna is very popular here is a brief life sketch of Nandanar (Tiru Nalai Povar Nayanar).

**Tiru Nalai Povar Nayanar** Nandanar was born in Adanur in the Chola Kingdom. He was an embodiment of humility and devotion. Nandanar



*Singing with Saivite Saints* 145 was considered to belong to the inferior social class people.

He would supply hides, leather drums and strings for the musical instruments that were used in the temples. He took the opportunity to visit holy places at the same time and would always remain outside the temple and worship Lord Siva. Nandanar was a great devotee of God Siva.

One day Nandanar wanted to worship Lord Sivalokanathar at Tiruppunkur. Reaching Tiruppunkur, Nandanar stood in front of the temple. Nandanar was grieved because Nandi was always in front of the Lord and was hiding him. Nandanar prayed to Sivalokanathar with great fervor. Siva who was highly pleased with the devotion of this great soul, ordered Nandi to move aside so that Nandanar can see Him. Nandanar was delighted of the darshan of Lord Siva. Even today, in the temple of Tiruppunkur one can see the trace left and the position of Nandi which has moved aside. Before proceeding, to his native place, Nandanar dug a tank near the temple.

Some times later, Nandanar wanted to have the darshan of Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram. The love towards Siva had grown so intense that Nandanar would shed tears of love and tell his friends “Tomorrow I will go to Chidambaram”. This expression earned him the name ‘Tiru Nalai Povar’ (One who would go tomorrow).

Nandanar left for Chidambaram and did not want to enter the temple. He prayed to Lord Nataraja for several days begging His blessings to see His Cosmic Dance in the Nritya Sabha. One day Lord Siva appeared in his dream and requested him to go into the sacrificial fire which the Dikshitaras would make for him and then come to the Kanaga Sabha. At the same time Lord Siva appeared before the Tillai priests in their dream and requested them, to prepare a ‘Homam’ in which Nandanar will go into before coming to Him. The priests welcomed

1. Tiruppunkur is situated about 5 kms from Vaitheeswaran Koil.

*146 Singing with Saivite Saints* Nandanar and explained their dream to him. The fire was made as requested by Lord Siva. Nandanar went into it and emerged from the fire unharmed with a new holy body, with sacred ashes smeared all over, the holy thread and matted locks. Everybody realized the great devotion of Nandanar to Lord Siva. Nandanar was taken inside the Kanaga Sabhai where he worshipped Lord Nataraja. A dazzling light was seen and Nandanar disappeared. It was here in Chidambaram temple that Nandanar attained Moksha.

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## **GOPALAKRISHNA BHARATI COMPOSITION**

### **“Enneramum”**

**Ragam** : Devagandhari **Talam** : Adi  
(2-Kalai)

**Pallavi**: enneramum undhan sannidhiyiley naan  
irukka veyndum ayya – ponnaiyya

**Anupallavi** : thennancholai thazhaikkum then  
puliur ponnambalattarasey ennarasey

**Charanam** : thisai yenganum pugazhum sivagangaiyum theyva  
sabaiyum sivagaami dharisanamum pasi kodaadhu paarta peyrku  
kalakkangal parandhida magizhndu unnai paadi kondu

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**MEANING**

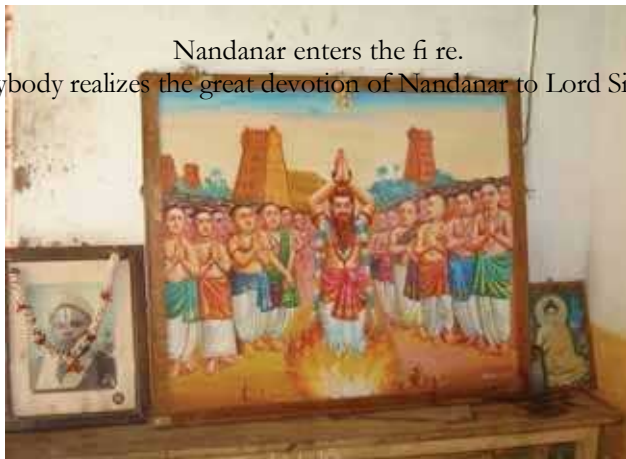
That I always remain in Your presence Is what I want,  
my Master, my precious Master!

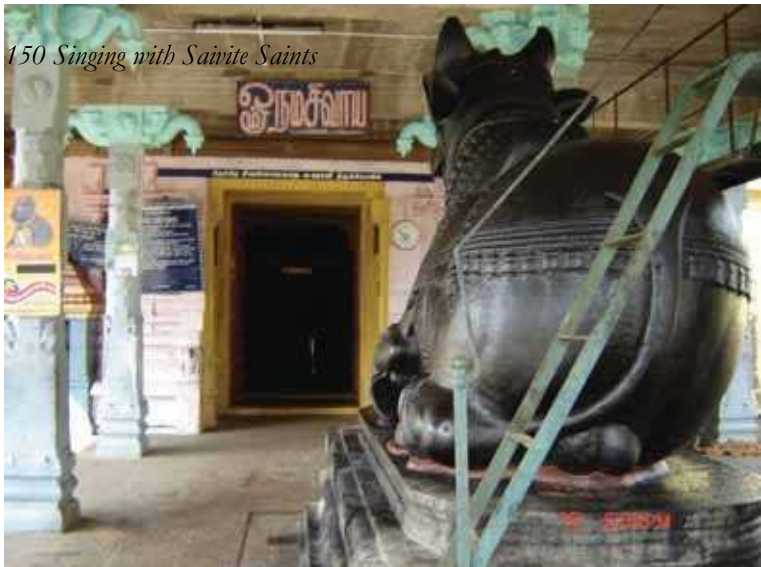
Coconut groves flourish in Thenpuliur In the  
Golden Hall rules my Lord , my Ruler!  
Ganga-bearing Siva that all worlds adore The celestials and the  
Goddess Sivagaaami Hunger and such needs vanish As we joyfully  
sing in praise of You!

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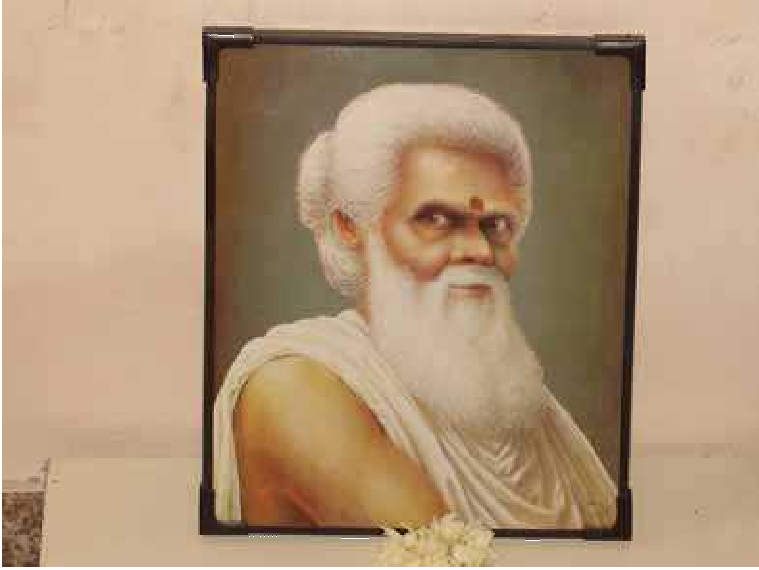
Nandanar enters the fire.  
Everybody realizes the great devotion of Nandanar to Lord Siva





**CHAPTER 13**  
**NATCHINTANAI**  
**SIVA YOGASWAMI**

Siva Yogaswami





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## **SIVA YOGASWAMI - MASTER OF YOGA**

1. Siva Yogaswami was born to Ambalavanar and Sinnachi Amma on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1872 in Maviddapuram near Nallur in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Jaffna peninsula is situated in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. Nallur was once the old capital of the Tamil Kings and now, is situated in a suburb of Jaffna town. There, is Lord Murugan abode which is the most important temple in Jaffna dedicated to Lord Kandaswami. Siva Yogaswami lost his mother at the age of 10 and was raised by his relatives. After leaving school, where he acquired a good knowledge of English, Yogaswami joined government service and was employed as a store-keeper in the irrigation section of the Public Works Department at Kilinochchi, a remote forest region South of Jaffna. Though he did honest and punctilious work, Sivayogaswami was prompted by an inner anguish and a yearning for the realization of God.

It is said that in 1905, Siva Yogaswami found his Guru by name Chellappaswami, who was sitting under a Bilva tree outside the Nallur temple. It was at this moment that Sivayogaswami gave up his job and surrenders himself completely to his Guru. This situation can be said to be so similar to that of Saint Manickavasagar who met his Guru under a Karunda tree in Tiruperunthurai, centuries ago and renounced the world.

After the Mahasamadhi of Chellappaswami in 1911, Siva Yogaswami practiced severe austerities and intense spiritual discipline. He was seen living under a huge olive tree at Columbuthurai on the outskirts of Jaffna town. People of all ages and from all walks of life came to meet Siva Yogaswami and none went empty handed. Yogaswami was persuaded by his devotees to occupy a small hut near the tree he was living. At times the great Yogi would visit the house of his followers or would receive them in his hut. Yogaswami, the Gnani would also walk regularly a long way to visit Chellachchi Ammaiyar, a saintly

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1. Kilinochchi is 64 kms South of Jaffna.

154 *Singing with Saivite Saints* woman immersed in meditation and tapas. Once there he would feed Ammaiyar and do regular service. Sage Sivayogaswami used to visit many temples and chant inspired hymns.

Sivayogaswami was always '*summa*', yet constantly 'on the move'. He was ready to give help to those who needed it. His whole life was spent in this way. Siva Yogaswami, who gave no lectures and held no classes, is said to be as firm as Mount Kailash. His teaching was given spontaneously as it came. In December 1934, he requested his devotees to start a monthly paper devoted exclusively to religious subjects. In every issue would appear one of his songs. These songs were named '*Natchintanai*' (Good Thoughts). These songs flowed from him spontaneously and were written down at the time by the devotees. He was the mouth piece of the Divine.

In 1953 he gave his blessings at the request of his devotees to establish a place in Jaffna town, where they would meet. This was developed into a center where they gathered to sing devotional songs and do many other activities. The name of the paper, the institution and the organization was called '*Sivathondan*' meaning 'Servant of Lord Siva'. Siva Yogaswami preserved the tradition of Sri Chellappaswami in his heart melting songs, and in the garland of hymns, composed by him at different period of encounter with his Satguru and in his '*Natchintanai*' songs which was published for the first time in 1958. In many of his *Natchintanai* songs, Siva Yogaswami has sung the glory of the *groups of devotees* of Sivathondar.

Siva Yogaswami's *Natchintanai* handles a variety of Tamil poetic meters and rhythm with ease and assurance, and most of his inspired utterances have been set to music and are sung with great devotion by a large number of devotees.

Sivayogaswami attained Mahasamadhi in March 1964. The greatest of the mystics that he was, Yogaswami has contributed a lot to music by composing the hymns of the *Natchintanai* dedicated to Lord Siva.

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## **SIVA YOGASWAMI – NATCHINTANAI**

**Sollu Sivamey** sollu sivamey  
sollu sivamey sugambera maarkkam ondr u sollu  
sivamey vellum pagaiy ozhiya sollu sivamey  
veyru porul illaiyendru sollu sivamey allum  
pagalumara sollu sivamey anbey sivam endru  
sollu sivamey kallung karaiyak kavi sollu sivamey  
kaayamey kohyilendru sollu sivamey

allalattru vaazha vazhi sollu sivamey agam  
piramaasmi endru sollu sivamey ellavarkku  
nallanendru sollu sivamey ellaam sivan seyalaay  
sollu sivamey nillaathiv vaazh vendru sollu  
sivamey neeyum naanum ondre ndru sollu  
sivamey pollaappu ingillaiyendru sollu sivamey  
putthadiyohm naangalendru sollu sivamey  
kollaamai perithendru sollu sivamey koosaamal evarmunnum sellu  
sivamey nalloor naduvirukka sollu sivamey naamey anaitthumendru  
sollu sivamey ullaasamaay engum sellu sivamey unmai muzhuthum  
endru sollu sivamey kallaarkkung gathiyendru sollu sivamey kattima  
naththaiyaalas sollu sivamey

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**MEANING**

Tell, O Siva, tell! Tell, O Siva, tell! The way to obtain happiness - tell, O Siva, tell That the overpowering foe may die - tell, O siva, tell That there is no second thing - tell, O Siva, tell That day and night may disappear - tell, O Siva, tell That Love is God Himself - tell, O Siva, tell A song that will even melt a stone - tell, O siva, tell That the body is a temple – tell, O Siva, tell

The way to live from sorrow free – tell, O Siva, tell *Aham brahmasmi* – tell, O Siva, tell That the Lord is good to all - tell, O Siva, tell That everything is Siva's work – tell, O Siva, tell That life is short and fleeting – tell, O siva, tell That there is nothing harmful here – tell, O Siva tell That we are new devotees - tell, O Siva, tell

That it is noble not to kill - tell, O Siva, tell Boldly go before all men - go, O Siva, go That we should keep good company - tell, O Siva, tell That we are all and everything - tell, O Siva, tell Joyously go everywhere - go, O Siva, go That everything that is, is real - tell, O Siva, tell That bliss is for the illiterate too - tell, O Siva, tell How to control and rule the mind - tell, O Siva, tell

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Nallur Kandaswami Temple - Jaffna, Srilanka



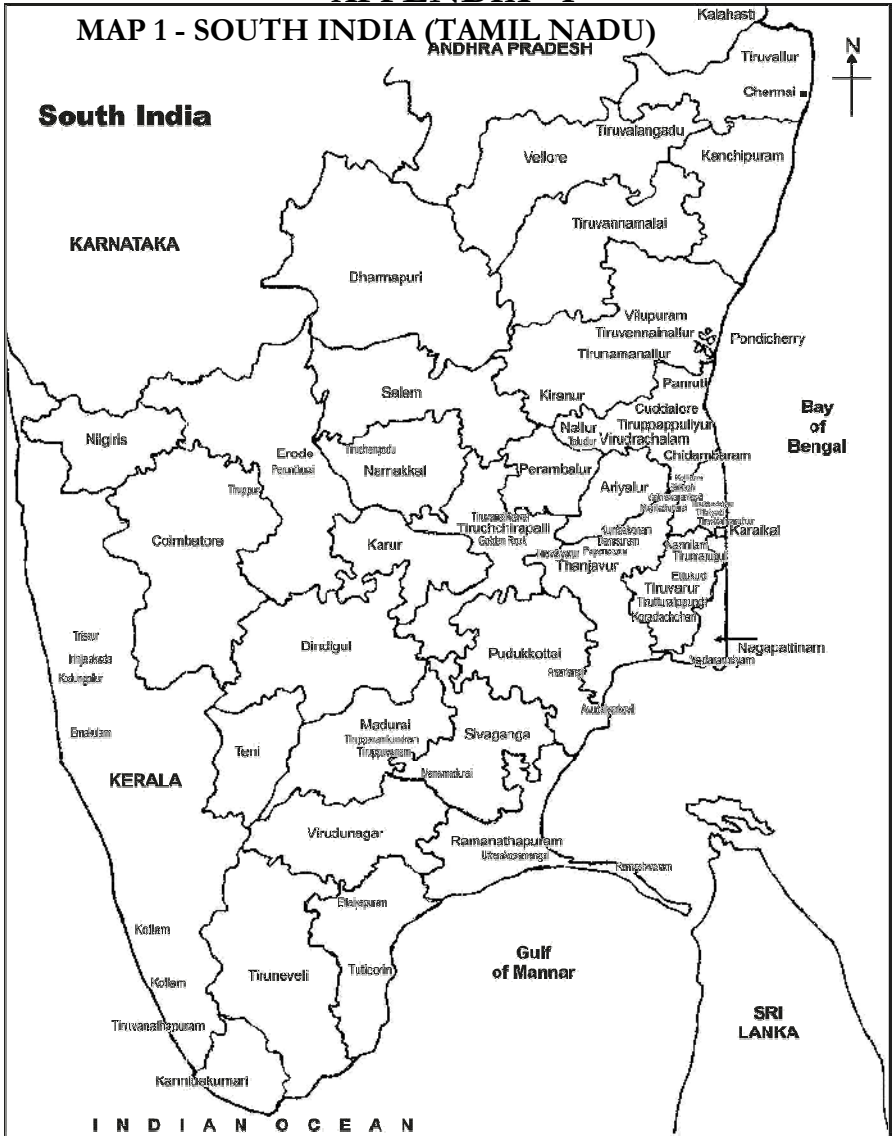
## **EPILOGUE**

I personally hope this book will be of great help to both musicians and devotees, as it holds much relevant information.

Readers who have patiently read this book will affirm the greatness of these composers. All of them had one thing in common – they worshipped at Chidambaram Temple, which is considered the center of the Universe.

It has been said that God is Nadabrahmam. Music is a form of God. May your lives be touched by this form, this affinity between God, music and musician!

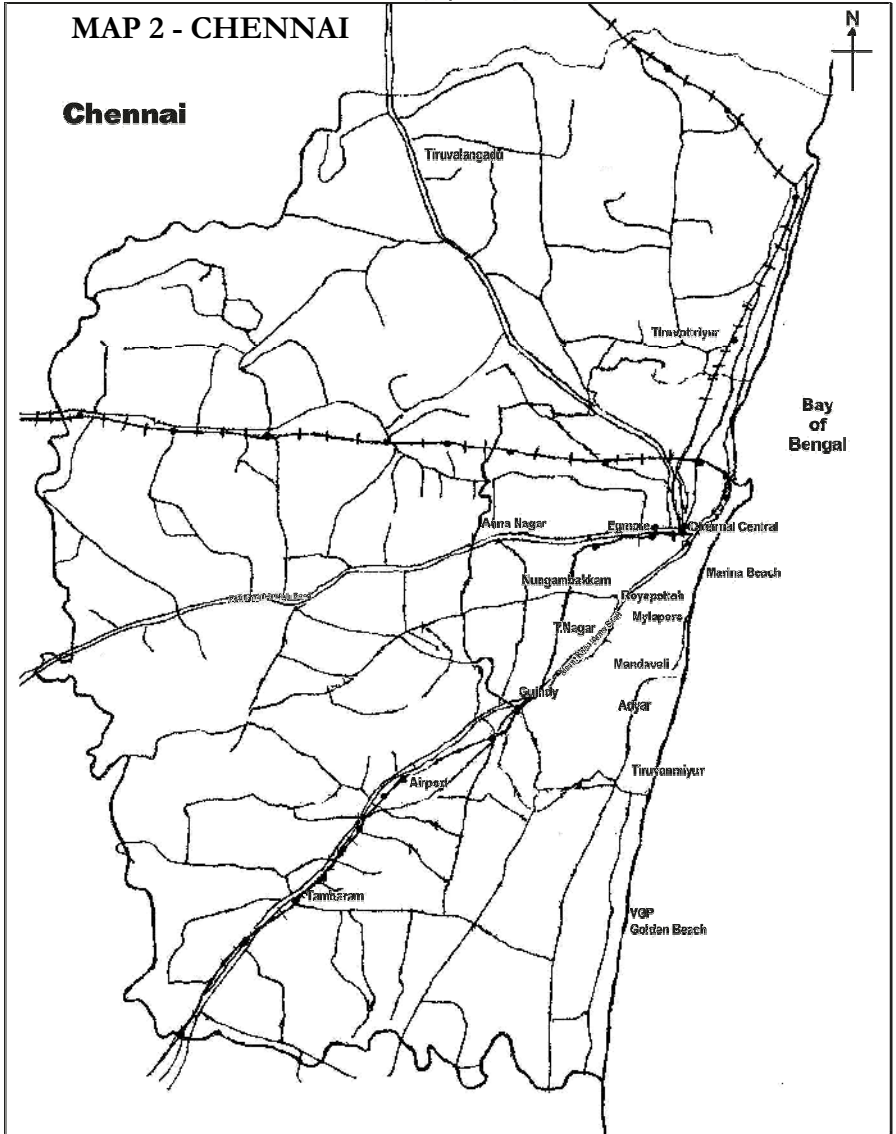
**APPENDIX - I**



**APPENDIX - I**

**MAP 2 - CHENNAI**

**Chennai**





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**APPENDIX - I**

**MAP 3. SRI LANKA**



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**APPENDIX - II**

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**RECOMMENDED READING**

**TITLE AUTHOR**

1. Sekkilar's Periyapuranam *JM Nallaswami Pillai*
2. History of Indian Music *Prof. P Sambamurthy*
3. Great Composers Book 1 *Prof. P Sambamurthy*
4. Periyapuranam *G Vanmikinathan*
5. Compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar – An Analysis *Prof. KR Rajagopalan*
6. Poems to Siva *Indira Viswanathan*
7. Splendor of South Indian Music *Prof. P Chelladurai*
8. Songs of the Harsh Devotee *David Dean Shulman*
9. Tirumantiram – A Tamil Scriptural Classic *A. B Natarajan*
10. Tiruvachakam of St. Manickavasakar *TKM Balasubramaniam*
11. Compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar *Dr. T K Govind Rao*
12. Slaves of the Lord *Vidya Dehejia*
13. Natchintanai *Siva Yogaswami*
14. Website :  
[www.shaivam.org](http://www.shaivam.org) [www.shaivam.net](http://www.shaivam.net) [www.himalayanacademy.com](http://www.himalayanacademy.com)