

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

Sekkizhar

100 Singing with Saivite Saints

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 11th, 12th and 13th 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

Singing with Saivite Saints 103

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

104 Singing with Saivite Saints

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
Muniyaraia 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
Munaiyaduvar 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

Singing with Saivite Saints 105

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 kadhiravan pohl neekum thiruth thondar puraanam
enbaam

106 Singing with Saivite Saints

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.