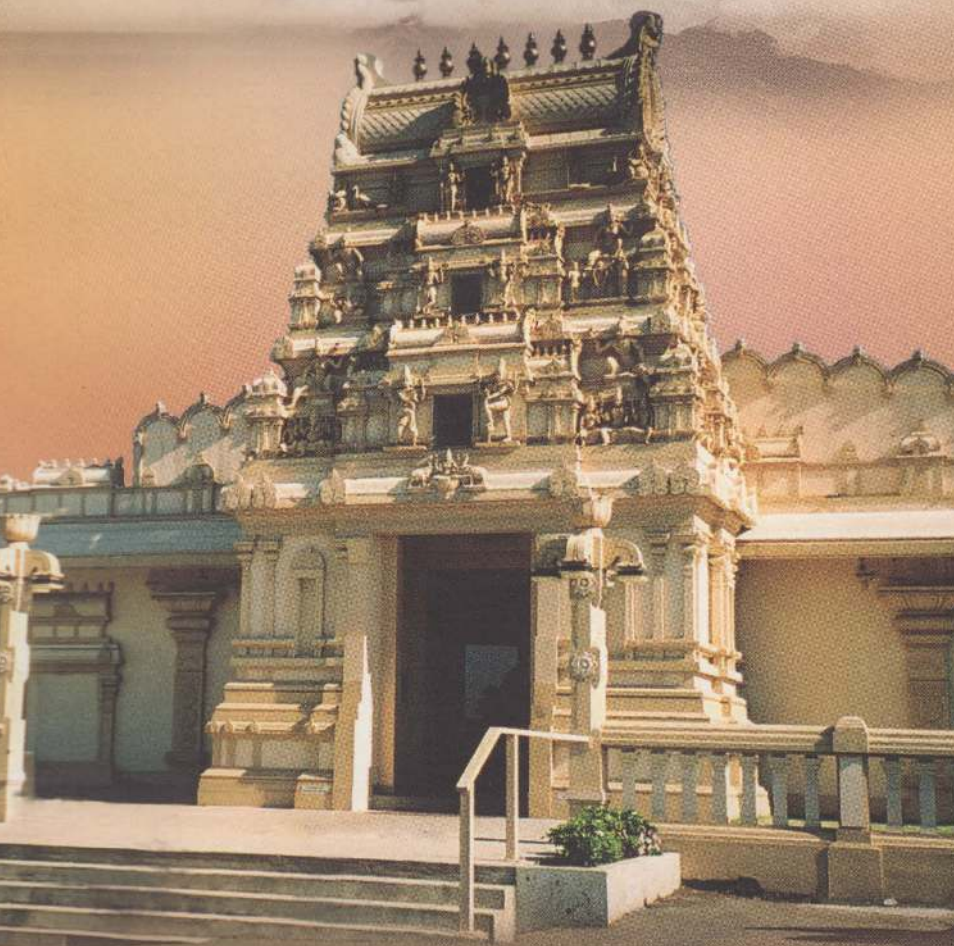


Aaru.Thirumurugan's Spiritual Lectures in Australia Life and Philosophy



Sivapoomi Publication

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S *Aaru Thirumurugan's* **Spiritual lectures**

On

Life and Philosophy

Sivapoomi Publication

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PEREFACE

Vanakkam.

Greetings to all our patrons both at home as well as abroad.

We feel singularly blessed that Lord Shiva the Almighty has made it possible for us to publish this book in response to the requests made by the admirers and followers of Sir Aaru. Thirumurugan, Our Founder - President, who has dedicated his life to Service of humanity.

We are grateful to Ms.Bavani Bragatheesan for her faithful and excellent translation of these Spiritual lectures on Saiva Siddhantha delivered by Mr.Aaru. Thirumurugan at the Sydney Murugan Temple during his visit to Australia in 2000.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr.T.N.Punjaksharam, Retired Teacher and English Scholar for his Valuable Suggestions and guidance in bringing out this book and for his succinct note of appreciation of Mr.Thirumurugan's multifaceted personality.

Our thanks are also due to Mr.K.Sivaji, Principal, Skanda Varodaya College for his well-thought out foreword commenting on the central points of Mr.Thirumurugan's lectures.

We also thank Mr.S.Shivasaravanabavan, Chitpi Retired Principal and a well-known writer in Tamil, for his write -up on our Founder President, which appears on the last cover page.

Finally we appeal to all to extend their patronage to such books of ever lasting values which we propose to publish in due Course and to the Shivabhodhini Trust which aims at making this world a better place to live in in-peace and harmony.

Mannil Nalla Vannam Valalam

மண்ணில் நல்லவண்ணம் வாழலாம் - வாருங்கள்

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APPRECIATION

Sri Aaru Thirumurugan, B.A., Deputy Principal of Chunnakam Skanthavarodaya College, Jaffna, (Sri Lanka) an inimitable speaker needs no introduction or eulogies in praise of his erudition or versatility on "SAIVA SIDDHANTHAM, HINDU THOUGHT AND PRACTICE".

Besides his one - man crusade on religion, he is a pioneer, a fore runner, a veritable king - pin of more than one charitable and social service institution in the Jaffna Peninsula.

An ardent devotee of **Tellipalai Annai Dhurka**, he remains a sheet anchor of this Devasthanam. It is not surprising that he has made his impact over seas as well.

This book which is a beautiful translation in English is an exposition - a **trilogy** - of his talks in Tamil delivered at THE SYDNEY MURUGAN TEMPLE, AUSTRALIA, in 2000.

This translation, it is hoped, will inspire our expatriate Tamil - Hindu youth. A Basic Guide in English to our expatriate youth who are not well - proficient in Tamil, should prove a boon to many.

All praise to **Sri Aaru Thirumurugan** and to those who are responsible for this publication!

God Bless them all!

Mr.T.N.Punjaksharam
Retired Teacher
Neervely,
Jaffna.

FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in giving this forward to the publication of the English translation of Aru Thirumurugan's religious discourses. It has been translated into English by Mrs. Bavani Bragatheeswaran, tax officer presently a resident in Australia.

Aru Thirumurugan is known to me from his young days. He is now the deputy principal of Skandavarodaya College. He hails from a respectable and pedigreed Hindu family. He illuminates the religious activities of the peninsulas for over twenty years with his arresting personality and organizing acumen. He has a heart of gold from which the warmth of human kindness always flow. He is sympathetic to those who are less fortunate in life. People who visit his home, be they rich or poor, big or small are never sent away without having a meal and this is practically a daily routine and feature. The hospitality of his family knows no bounds.

Aru Thirumurugan is the founder of the Sivapoomy School for the mentally handicapped children at Kondavil and Sivapoomy Elders Home at Tholpuram. The establishment of these two homes is a Herculean task. He shoulders the responsibility of running these homes successfully. These two homes are milestones in the history of Jaffna peninsula as far as the charitable institutions are concerned.

The world today is witnessing a decline in ethical and moral values resulting in increase of crime and violence. Continuation of this trend to the next generation is unavoidable unless human values are respected and upheld. Religion can play a key role in arresting the decline in human values and in reversing the present trend. Religion has been alive from time immemorial because of the saints and sages who exemplified our religious principles by their way of living Mr. Aru

Thirumurugan practices what he preaches. Hence he is a wonderful beacon of light for the Hindu society.

When Aru Thirumurugan visited Australia he delivered a lecture on Hindu philosophy at Sydney Murugan Temple in 2000. Mrs.Bavani who was inspired by Thirumurugan's discourses wanted to translate them into English. After eight years since then, it has come to a reality now. Translation pertaining to religious philosophy is an immense task. But Mrs.Bavani has done it in such a manner that it will definitely win the appreciation of all the readers. Mrs.Bavani's effort is highly commendable and praise - worthy.

Many intellectuals in various countries praise the philosophy of Saiva religion because of its great ideals. Mr.Aru Thirumurugan gives acceptable explanation to every aspect of life both worldly and spiritually. To the younger generation who are residing in foreign countries since their birth without any knowledge of Hindu Philosophy, this translation will be a great treasure. An endeavour of this nature is a gift to Hindu parents in foreign countries who worry about their children's lack of knowledge about Hindu philosophy.

Swami Vivakananda's English speeches in Chicago received great applause from the audience. The translation of E.U.Pope's Thiruvashagam in English is world famous and is appreciated by the various religious dignitaries all over the world.

I hope that Mrs.Bavani's translation too will certainly find a niche among the English speaking Hindu Community all over the world and enlighten their minds.

K.Sivaji
Principal,
Skandavarodaya College,
Chunnakam.

OUR TRANSLATOR



Mrs. Bhavani Brahatheesan, tax officer who is responsible for this English version of the course of lectures delivered in Tamil by Mr. Aaru Thirumugan on 'Saiva Siddhantha' at the Sydney Murugan Temple during his visit to Australia in 2000.

She is married to Mr. Brahatheesan a grandson of Mr. Thiruchitampalam Mudaliyar, author of Suththa Posana Pahasastram and Vaidya Kaimuraihal. Who had his ancestral home at Kandarodai, Jaffna.

- Sivapoomi Trust



**THIRUMURAI-
LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY**

THIRUMURAI- LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

I prostrate at the feet of the all encompassing Lord Muruga, for his infinite grace. I bow to the honourable Sivacharyas, the Sydney Murugan Temple committee members and to all the devotees of Lord Muruga who are present here today. I have been given another opportunity to speak to you people on divine life in this holy place of Lord Muruga. I thank all the divine Gods for this opportunity and I am pleased to be here again.

Yesterday, I spoke on the importance of Dharma for divine living. Many spoke with me over the phone on this significant principle of life, a 'Dharmic life'. You people who live in Sydney, I am happy to see you giving such great honour for our religion. I also appreciate your kindness and encouragement.

On the subject of divine life, I was asked by the committee, to speak on the essence of life as revealed by our Thirumurais.

The greatest wealth of Saivism lies in our Thirumurais. At a very young age, our elders daily imbibed the essence of our Thirumurais into our lives. As soon as a child begins to speak, our elders take it upon themselves as their divine duty. Importantly, they taught the children how they should praise the All Mighty God. We should know how to pray to God. We must learn to pray with words of praise. In the self-surrendered praise of words lie the divine power, essential for the uplift of mankind. If, our elders could teach at least one

Thevaram to a child, that in itself is enough to be one of the greatest services one can do to Saivism. If it is taught at an early age, we can be assured that our children would grow praising God, which is essential to lead a happy life.

The Thirumurais are not only sung as a mere praise to God or for any divine favours but are sung for one's own uplift to enable one to understand the important principles of life. The Thirumurais reveal the eternal fundamental principles essential for happiness, happy life and good living. It for this reason, the 6th century old Thirumurais are still being sung in the 21st century by the Saivites, as the very core of their life. The Thirumurais are songs of intense love, bhakthi poured upon God. As shown by the Nayanmars, through absolute devotion one is able to attain that 'oneness' which is the essence of life eternal.

The Thirumurais are sung not only for the purpose of establishing a relationship with God or for seeing, having darshan, visions of God but fundamentally to raise one's consciousness to the state of divine consciousness. The devoted ones realized that the Thirumurais awaken man to rise in wisdom. The great ones experienced what they believed and realised its essence fully. Therefore, mothers and elders please do not ever forget in your lives the divinity, the greatness of our Thirumurais. Through devotion, unfold the secrets of happiness that lie hidden in the Thirumurais and find happiness.

I can speak for hours on Thirumurais, but it is not possible to do so and therefore I will do my best to bring out some of the essence contained in some of the Thirumurais.

The country from which you people originated, whether it be Sri Lanka or India, we all know that there is a 'saying' repeated many

times by our elders. "நாலு பேர் சொல்வதை கேட்டுநட!" *Naalu-per solluvathai ketu:nada*". "*Naalu-per solluvathai ketu nada*". Live by the teachings of the four great ones'. Initially, I was confused at this; my mother, my teachers all repeat, 'Live by the teachings of the four great ones', I thought to myself, why shouldn't it be 'Live by the teachings of the five or six'; why four? Why not increase the number and say 10?

I have my mother and father next to me, why not them? Shouldn't they be the 'two' to follow? Parents are your first teachers, why is it that they go beyond themselves and keep repeating 'Live by the teachings of the four great ones'. One day, I asked an elderly, wise person, "Sir, there are so many great people, why is that everyone keeps repeating 'Live by the teachings of the four great ones". What is the meaning behind this saying"?

To my question, this wise man explained, "Thevarams are given to this world by Sambandhar, Sundarar, Appar and Thiruvachakam by Manikkavasagar. These four, have revealed to us the principles for happy living. Our elders lived based on these principles and taking it to their heart, taught the young. For this reason, it is said over and over again, 'Live by the teachings of the four great ones'. If anyone can show you the path to these fundamental principles of life as revealed by these four great ones, sit with them and learn it by heart. Live by these principles for the attainment of happiness".

Today, we do not understand what is meant by the 'four great ones'. Now, please understand what is meant by 'Live by the teachings of the four great ones'. It is the principles of life shown by Sambandhar, Sundarar, Appar and Manikkavasagar. Though, there are so many people on earth, these four have been sent to earth by God. Special beings are sent by God in the form of ordinary humans to achieve certain outcomes. Sambandhar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavasagar

have all come in the form of ordinary humans to reveal the principles of divine life for the benefit of mankind.

Once they fulfill their mission, the Nayanmars, Saints, Servitors to the Lord merge with the divine, leaving behind the eternal principles for the benefit of mankind. The few, who have perfectly understood the lives of these Nayanmars proclaim, "தீது அகன்று உலகம் உய்ய திருஅவதாரம் செய்தார்!" *"Theethu ahanru ulagam uyya, thiru avatharam seithar"*. "To banish evil and to benefit mankind they take holy incarnation". When evil predominates, the great ones incarnate to uphold and bring back divinity to the world.

Serkilar, in his Periya Puranam speaks of the birth of Sambandhar. How did Sambandhar incarnate on earth? Unlike other children, Sambandhar did not come as an ordinary child; he was the result of severe austerity/ - thavam of his parents brought down to benefit mankind. The great ones that have given us the Thevarams, Thiruvachakam, Thirupallandu and the other divine works are no ordinary human beings, though they appear to be ordinary humans. Their lives were ordinary but their hearts were extraordinary. They lived with us and revealed the principles of life for our benefit.

What is the meaning of "Thevaram"? "Aram" means garland, and "Thev" means God, Thevaram means Garland of God. Garland the Lord with sacred songs. When we sing Thevarams, we all observe an important tradition. That is, in order to recognise the greatness of these Nayanmars that have given us these valuable principles of life, the word "திருச்சிறம்பலம்" *"Thiruchitampalam"* is mentioned before we begin the Thevarams. Many people do not know the reasons behind this wonderful tradition of mentioning *'Thiruchitampalam'* before we begin our Thevarams.

The Thevarams praise so many sacred places of worship. There is reference to many places in India and Sri Lanka. For example, in Sri Lanka, Thirukonneswaram, and Thiruketheeswaram are mentioned. However, regardless of so many powerful places, we always mention the sacred place of '*Thiruchitampalam*' before singing the Thevarams. Why? So many are struggling to answer.

Thevaram originated in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. They were kept in a private place in Chidambaram in India, away from the public eye. Thevarams were written in palm leaves and were kept in private by the servitors to God of Thillai. The Servitors to God of Thillai believed that the efficacy of these Thirumuaris would be lost if made public and therefore, kept them in a secret place in Thillai.

However, it was the Lord's intention that for the world to rise shiningly and to benefit mankind, pure and noble thoughts need to be imbibed into people. Therefore, to protect the sacredness and the valuable principles contained in the Thevarams, the Lord decided to stage a divine play. This divine drama is that of Nambiandaar Nambi.

A devotee of God had a child by the name of Nambiandaar Nambi. This child's father is an ardent devotee of Ganapathy who is referred to as Polla-p-Pillayaar. Without fail, he daily performs pujas to Lord Ganapathy, called 'Polla-p-Pillayaar' at the temple. Daily, the father goes to the temple and offers his services by performing the pujas and offering prasadam to the Lord. One day, the father due to an emergency could not go to the temple to perform his daily puja to the Lord. He called his son, Nambiandaar, a little boy of five years and said "Son, we cannot let Polla-p- Pillayaar go without food. I am unable to make the daily offerings of food to the Lord. Therefore, my son, today you will have to go and do the necessary rites to the Lord".

The little boy, as per instructions of his father left for the temple to perform the sacrificial rites. The boy's father daily offers food to the Lord in the temple and freely distributes the sacred food to everyone around, including the birds. Always, his father returns with an empty dish home after distributing the food to all in the temple. Now, this little boy is under the impression that the food offered to Lord Ganapathy is eaten by the Lord. The boy believed that all the food offered is taken by the Lord.

We also have a belief, a belief that all the food that we offer will not be taken by the Lord. Even now, when we offer food to the Lord and light the camphor, every child including the adults eagerly wait for the camphor to disappear so that they could get their hands into the prasadam. For Thai Pongal, the traditional food, pongal is offered to the Sun God, all the children circumbulate around the fire at a faster speed so that they can quickly have a bite on the food. If all the food that we offer to the Lord is taken by the Lord, just imagine our state? The purpose of divine manifestations is to give life to us and to give us happiness and for no other purpose.

The boy took the prasadam and went to the temple. The little boy standing at the altar of Ganapathy, lovingly garlanded the Lord, lit the lamp, chanted the sacred syllable and pleaded "Lord I am a little boy, I have done the duty of my father, please Lord, accept my food offerings before you". The Lord did not move. The Lord, in the image of a stone was unmoved. The boy repeated "Lord you must accept my food, please have this food". The Lord did not accept. The boy burst out "O' Lord, please accept my offering, if you don't, my father will punish me for not doing my duty properly; please Lord tell me whether I have made any mistake in the performance of this puja. Please forgive me Lord; please accept my food offering".

The Lord was unmoved; the boy cried repeatedly for a long time. The Lord was motionless; after a few minutes, the boy went near the Lord and slammed his little head against the Lord's feet and cried, "Lord, if you do not eat this food then I will not leave from here" So saying the little boy now banged his head against the floor.

Polla-p- Pillayar, Lord Ganapathy is personification of wisdom and the Lord of all the Ganas. He is worshipped first before any other for the attainment of success in one's endeavors. Lord Ganapathy is prayed to first as the embodiment of wisdom as represented by his elephant trunk. Lord Ganapathy is the remover of obstacles and grants success to his devotees in every aspect. At the sight of this little boy's unflinching devotion, the Lord was moved with compassion. The Lord placed the trunk on the boy's head, stroking the boy's head, said " Son, do not worry, I will accept your food". Nambiandaar Nambi was startled, the Lord took what was offered and blessed the boy by placing the trunk on his head. The little boy, innocently was witnessing everything what was happening. After a while, the boy realised that time had passed and he was now late for school. He feared that his teacher would punish him for being late to school. The little boy in fright cried " O' Lord, will you not protect me, I am scared; I have missed school and I will be punished". This little boy was once blessed with the darshan of the Lord, the Lord spoke again, "My son, do not worry, I will give you all the wisdom you will ever need". So saying, the Lord once more placed his trunk on the little boy's head. Through divine grace, the boy was now filled with wisdom; he mastered everything that was there to be mastered and that was the end of his earthly education.

When one succeeds in obtaining wisdom through the grace of God, that person becomes omniscient; he is able to perceive anything and everything all around. We should understand this through

Nambiandaar Nambi's life. What we try to comprehend from science and experiments is immediately perceived by the one who has had the darshan of the divine through divine grace. Through wisdom one becomes omniscient as shown by Nambiandaar's life. After receiving the grace of the Lord Polla-p- Pillayar, Nambiandaar Nambi, through divine insight came to know sacred information as to. Sheer and how it can be accessed. The five year old boy, through divine powers knew about the 200 year's old Thevarams which are being locked up in a secret room at Thillai.

Immediately, Nambiandaar went to Chidambaram and queried the servitor to God of Thillai, " The Thirumurais sung by the great Nayanmars are here and they are being locked up; I want to see them and adore the Lord by singing these Thevarams. Can I please have access to them? The servitors to God of Thillai, annoyed at this young boy's request replied, "This is very sacred; we do not show this to anyone; it is; a tradition that we have observed for many years. You may listen to the Thevarams when they are being sung, but we do not show these Thirumarais to the public. You are only a little boy, please leave". Nambiandaar could not bear to hear what was said. He prayed to the Lord that blessed him with wisdom, "O' Lord, please impart these Thirumurais to the world". Now, this little boy's prayer and wish reached the presiding King, Raja Raja Cholan. The King accompanied by Nambiandaar was at Thillai standing at the entrance to the private room where the Thevarams were kept. The king ordered that the door be unlocked. The Servitors to God, reverently pleaded and said to the King the reasons as to why it was being kept secret. They said to the king that it will be made available to the public only if the Nayanmars themselves came in flesh and blood wishing it to be released. Later, the King returned with the four carved images of the Nayanmars and placed them at Thillai and asked that the door be now opened as the Nayanmars have arrived. The servitors to God looked at the images

and said to the King; "They have no life". The king replied "Is that so, in that case, does not your Lord at the sanctorum also have no life? The servitors to God shuddered; the door was opened that day; the King cried; Nambiandaar cried; and all present cried. To everyone's shock, the room contained only a few Thirumurais that were in a readable state; the rest were destroyed by white ants. Everyone cried seeing its condition, Knowing the heartache of his devotees, the compassionate Lord spoke; " Whatever is needed for the benefit of mankind is here in these few Thirumurais; stop worrying" .

The Thirumurais that were once kept locked in Thillai were now made public for everyone's benefit. Therefore, as a mark of honour and gratitude to the place of release, we mention "Thiruchittampalam" before we sing the Thirumurais. This is the tradition eternally we follow, to be thankful and to honour the place of Thillai.

When I said to my students the fact that only a few Thirumurais are left in a readable state, one student said, " It is our good karma that only a few are left". I questioned " Why do you say this". The student replied " We are unable to cope with the current volume of Thirumurais, just imagine if all the written Thirumurais were found intact!".

As time goes by, it is becoming increasingly difficult to teach the younger generation. Once I spoke about the great city Madurai and sadly said that due to the great oceanic deluge, many important Tamil literatures have been lost. One student said that it was due to good karma; that this was the case, as everyone was finding it difficult to finish the available syllabus let alone regret about the works that are lost. It is sad that today one finds great solace in ignorance.

Our elders having understood the greatness of the Thirumurais, revered it as their greatest merit. The Thevarams,

preceded by the word "Thiruchittampalm" is praised as the 'Tamil Vedas' by the great ones. Another important point is that, when we sing Thevarams, everyone observes another very significant tradition "நம பார்வதி பதியே" *Nama Parvati Pathiye*. "Glory to Parvati's Lord". Just as we offer our gratitude to Thillai by saying 'Thiruchittampalm', the Saivites, first give importance to the 'Mother' of all by chanting "*Nama Parvati Pathiye*". Mother Parvati is mentioned first, then Siva. This is the tradition of the Saivites. In all key aspects, first place is to the mother and then comes the father. The Thevarams bring forth this fundamental truth. Therefore, before singing the Thevarams, we call upon Mother Uma first, then Lord Siva and seeing both as our eternal parents, we offer our gratitude and surrender to the Lord.

We sing the five puranams called the '*Pancha Puranam*'. Thevarams, Thiruvachakam, Thiruvissaipa, Thirupallandu and Thirupuranam; these are the five puranams. The last category of the puranam is referred to as 'Sekkizhaar's Periya Puranam' and is sung last. The order of singing is important and it is adhered to at all times. The same applies to Thirumurais. Nambiandaar Nambi compiled the Thirumurais into an order and the rest was compiled by others. Now, let us hear what these Thinimurais bring forth.

Thirugnana Sambandhar was the first to sing Thevarams. But prior to Sambandhar's Thevarams, Karaikkal Ammayar sang the Pathikam. The era of Karaikkal Ammayar is during early post "Sangamariviya" period and Sambandhar belonged to the Pallava era. The first Thevaram was sung by Sambandhar and the Saivites know this first song of Sambandhar well. It is important to remember the situation that led Sambandhar to sing his first Thevaram. One must understand that, it is the circumstances in which Sambandhar sang this particular Thevaram that led to the revelation of the significant principles of the Thevaram.

During the Pallava era, in Tamil Nadu, there was much confusion. For example, the husband belonged to one tradition of worship; the wife belonged to another tradition of worship. Even today it remains the same. Husband goes to one temple, the wife to another. In those days, one religion had many branches but the only difference was in terms of philosophy and practice.

Tamil Nadu was badly in need of 'a Sambandhar', a divine incarnation was needed to bring back Saivism to people's lives. Pandi-Ma-Devi was of one religion and her husband belonged to another religion; Jains, Buddhists and Saivites. There were no problems with the different types of religions or the many Gods but of course there were many problems among those who followed the different religions and their Godheads. Buddhists destroyed Hindu temples and the Hindus destroyed Buddhist temples and so on. The Jains made a mockery of the Saivites and made them suffer in their hands. Everyone in utter desperation cried and prayed to the Lord. 'O Lord where are you". When the Saivites were suffering day and night at the torture of their religion by the Jains and Buddhists, the Lord decided that someone had to be sent to earth to wipe away the tears of the devoted ones. Sambandhar was the answer, born as a beautiful child to Bhagavati and Sivapada-virudhayar, are the Lord incarnated on earth in the form of Sambandhar to revitalise the essence of Saivisim. He was born as an ordinary child.

One morning, the three year old Sambandhar was begging his father to take him to the temple. He was adamant that he visit the temple with his father. His father said" Son, I am going to the temple to do my daily sacrificial rites under water in the temple tank; therefore, you must be a good boy and stay at home". In those days and even now, the Nayanmars perform sacrificial rites in the temple tank in the early hours of the morning. In those days, as you know, the temple tank is

much larger than the temple itself. Larger than the temples were the places of free inns.

Even in Jaffna, in some areas, the temple tanks and the free inns are larger than the temple itself. There is a hidden significant divine principle behind temple tanks, free inns and the temple. It is to daily remind us of divine life. Sambandhar's father daily goes to the temple along the streets of Seerkazhi to take his holy bath in the temple tank. He performs sacred rites and takes 108 dips under water while chanting the sacred mantras.

Sambandhar refused to stay at home and was urging his father to take him to the temple. His father, for the second time said " Son, I have my sacred bath in the temple tank and at times I take longer dips than usual; this could frighten you and thinking of you I may not be able to pray in peace; therefore, my son, please stay at home". Sambandhar refused and cried, begging that his father take him to the temple. The father refused again but Sambandhar was determined to go the temple.

Unable to persuade his son to stay at home, the father, immediately, placed his child on his back and took him to the temple. At the temple, the father asked his son to take a seat at the steps near the water tank, while he performed his sacred rites under water. The father went under water while chanting the sacred syllable 108 times and remained under water in prayer for a lengthy period. Not knowing where his father was, the three year old boy was frightened and shocked. He looked everywhere but could not find his father. Sambandhar did not know that his father was performing his sacred rites under water. Sambandhar, gazing at the water tank, cried for his father. Though, Sambandhar was born a saint, his emotions were human. He feared as an ordinary child would under similar circumstances.

Sambandhar frightened, screamed and cried for his father. Seeing the agony of this little boy, the compassionate Lord that sent Sambandhar to earth was instantly at the spot to console him. With all the auspiciousness and splendor of his consort Parvati next to him, Lord Siva revealed himself to Sambandhar.

Lord Siva, garlanded by a snake, dressed in a tiger skin and armed with divine objects stood before Sambandhar. This little boy should have cried even harder at the appearance of this strange person, whom he has not seen before. Born with the human emotions, this child should have cried louder, but he did not. Well, if it was one of our children the situation would be different. Sambandhar was special, divinely incarnated and therefore through divine intuition, he immediately felt the presence of divinity before him. The crying stopped. Sambandhar was consoled by Mother Parvati. Mother Parvati out of compassion expressed milk out of her breast and fed Sambandhar.

As a child, Sambandhar had the same emotions as an ordinary human being. What are the emotions of an ordinary being? Anger, fear, greed and the like. However, in the case of Sambandhar, these ordinary human emotions were immediately transcended into divine feelings. Sambandhar was inundated with divine emotions in the presence of Mother Parvati and Lord Shiva. The milk of the Mother turned into an ocean of wisdom. Sambandhar was blessed with supreme wisdom. Earlier Sambandhar cried as a human being out of fear but his crying stopped the moment he was blessed with wisdom.

We are the same. As humans, we cry in fear, but through absolute devotion, once we are able to establish a close relationship with God, the fear vanishes. In detached devotion, one is able to overcome the mind and remain at peace in both happiness and sadness.

In that frame of mind, neither do we cry nor are we elated at things. Sambandhar, through the grace of the Divine Mother in the form of her milk, attained supreme wisdom for the perfection of life on earth to benefit mankind.

The father, after finishing his ritual bath came out of the temple tank and was shocked to see milk spilling from the corner of the mouth of his dear child. The father was very angry at Sambandhar. He took a stick to beat him firstly for, refusing to stay at home and secondly, being a brahmin, for having had milk from a stranger. Now, an ordinary child would immediately react by saying, 'Father, please do not beat me, a couple came, the man had a snake around his neck and he was wearing a garment made of tiger skin and the lady was nice; she fed me with milk' and so on. But this little boy did not utter a word about what had happened. In the height of wisdom, one speaks less. Today, we find a lot of talking and no wisdom.

When wisdom dawns one achieves both inner and outer silence. Arunagirinathar in praise of Lord Muruga, in Kandhar Anubhuthi "சும்மா இருசொல் அறவென்றனுமே அம்மா பொருள் ஒன்றும் அறிந்திலனே! "*Summa iru sol aravenralumay! Amma porul onrum arinthilanay!* "Be still without any words says Murugan, what a surprise, I have transcended the material world".

Everything that we ever need is within us, within our divine self. The outside world, thoughts, words and actions are nothing but a projection of our own self. In the stillness of divine bliss one transcends both inside and outside and remains as "Sat Chit Anandam". The state of eternal supreme love.

A man of wisdom is unaware of the world as he is merged in the bliss of supreme wisdom. A great saint indeed. For example, in

Sellvachannithi, there was a swami by the name of Mouna Swami. A person of great wisdom, he carried with him a slate and only wrote one or two words. One can absorb a wealth of knowledge in those few words. He did not enter into discussions or engaged in public talks. Wisdom is imparted in these few words and blessed are the ones who understood.

Sambandhar, having tasted the milk of Parvati attained supreme wisdom. In reply to his father's question he is providing an explanation through signs, through symbols. Wisdom is imparted through symbols, which has no language barriers. In our religion, wisdom is revealed through the use of symbols. As education expands, people abbreviate what needs to be said using symbols. In those days, people write in paragraphs to show a particular place but now you do not need all that, all you need is a sign.

Symbols are a universal language to indicate one's intentions. In our religion, the symbol Shiva Lingam reveals a fundamental principle. It reveals that the ultimate state is, '*ShivaShakthi*', oneness, essence of life immortal. This significant principle, in the form of Shiva Lingam was revealed to the world more than 5000 years ago.

Looking at Sambandhar who is shining with supreme wisdom, the father asks "Who is it that gave you milk". Sambandhar without having the need to speak, raised his index finger to reveal the highest truth. The truth, that not only everything is one but fundamentally it is one. That one, one without a second, the one supreme Lord. The father looked at the direction of his little son's finger and he too was blessed with the darshan of the Lord. Sambandhar's reply to his father's question was in the form of a Thirumurai. The little boy who once feared to sit near the temple tank is now revealing to mankind in his first Thevaram, the principles of life. He begins his first Thevaram

"தோடுடைய செவியன்" *"Thodudaiya Seviyan"* 'He who is with an ear-ornament'. Sambandhar beginning his first Thevaram 'Thodudaiya-seviyan' revealed that both mother and father, 'is' the essence of creation. Mother is worshipped first, joining both mother and father, Sambandhar began his Thevaram, beginning with the word 'Thodu' in the feminine and ended with 'Seviyan' in the masculine. 'Thodu' the ear-ornament is a sign of auspiciousness and reveals Mother Parvati. Sambandhar having seen Lord Siva adorned with so many ornaments referred only to 'thodu'. Why? Because, 'Thodu', the ear-ornament reveals mother Parvati. Ending with 'Seviyan' he referred to the father 'Lord Siva'. Thus, in the first Thevaram he reveals the essence of all life as 'Shivashakthi'. The little boy of three years of age, sang as a man of great experience and wisdom. In the just two words, 'Thodudaiya Seviyan', the entire essence of our religion is revealed.

Sambandhar, later describes Lord Siva as காடுடைய சுடலைப் பொடிசியென் '*one who is smeared with the ashes of the cremation ground*'. This little boy who does not know what a temple is, let alone a cremation ground, is referring to ashes of the cremation ground. How is it that a three year old knows about ashes and cremation ground? When wisdom dawns one is able to perceive everything instantly. In his first Thevaram, he reveals another significant principle, the finality and immortality of everything, revealed as ashes. Why do we adorn ourselves with *holy ash*, the ash represent the finality of all matter and thus gains the status of 'Sivam' 'immortality'. *Ash* is the final state of all matter and when you burn *ash*, all you find is *ash* and thus it is indestructible and attains the status of 'Sivam'. Everything originates and finishes in *ash*. Mother earth gives birth to everything and then she takes us back in the end.

In the temples we also offer flowers to Gods, why? Not only because flowers are beautiful but importantly flowers symbolise life.

In the early hours, we pick the beautiful fresh flowers and gently arrange them on a plate and offer at the feet of the Lord. Next day we go to the shrine, what do we see? Yesterday's flowers, all withered, dry and ugly. Our lives are like these flowers; when young and fresh, everyone gathers around, kissing the child, handling softly and admiring his or her beauty, but at the time of death everything is changed. We are dumped into the furnace, ready to be burnt into ashes. Just like the morning fresh, beautiful flowers ready to be thrown away the next day without any gentleness and admiration,

When we offer flowers at the feet of the Lord, we ought to pray, 'O Lord, may our lives be fresh, beautiful, and gentle like these flowers gathered in morning, because one day we will be like the withered flowers, our bodies too will be dry, and ugly. Therefore, may we live our lives fully by your grace in happiness and peace.

Sambandhar in his first Thevaram reminds us of the cremation ground. Why? So that one will remember his or her final state, every moment. Man fears death, that is why many are fearful to do wrong. If not for death, people's lives will be filled with sins. The fear of death cautions man and leads him in the right direction.

Sambandhar, seeing the Lord, smeared with ashes from the cremation ground reveals to us of the final state of all matter, the inevitability and the sublimation of all matter into the spirit of immortality. The holy ash we apply on our foreheads cannot be seen by us, but others are able to see. The ash we apply reminds everyone of our final state. From ash we come and into ash we merge ..

May the holy ash remind us of pure life and when holy ash is applied onto our foreheads our destructible bodies serve to illuminate the light of Sivam, light of God to all. This is the significance 'of the

holy ash, Sambandhar reveals a great truth, the truth that the finality of everything is immortality, the oneness of ash and Sivam.

As one great person sang, 'O' Lord, one day this body will wither away into death, upon death, mercilessly this body is thrown into fire'. In the end, what you find is ash, body turned into ash.

In the first Thevaram, Sambandhar reminds us of the inevitability and the immortality of life and death as revealed by Lord Shiva smeared with the ashes of the cremation ground. The cremation ground is a holy place, although, it is not the common view, nevertheless, it is a very holy place. Despite ashes found elsewhere, Lord Siva willingly smears the ashes found in the cremation ground. Why? Today many go to the temples with two minds, no hearts. Without inner purification. Their prayers do not reach God, as God dwells in the heart. A dead man has no inside and outside, he is pure and therefore the ashes of a dead person is superior to that of the offerings of a living person. This is the reason in funeral rites, the dead person is purified and made divine with lit lamps and sacred chants, so that the ashes of the dead person becomes pure and divine. This is what is revealed in the first Thevaram.

Sambandhar then sings 'உள்ளங் கவர் கள்வன்' *'the stealer of my heart'*. Sambandhar in his first Thevaram fearlessly calls Lord Siva 'a stealer'. How is that he calls the Lord a 'stealer'. How can he use such words. Well, Sambandhar calls the Lord 'a stealer' in the first Thevaram. He who steals the inside, the *'stealer of my heart'*. The first Thevaram reveals the principles of life and Sambandhar audaciously calls the Lord a *'stealer'*, a *'stealer of my heart'*. No matter how often we go the temples, how elaborately we do the offerings, the Lord is not impressed by our outer sheathes, he goes straight to the heart and looks at the purity, sincerity of the heart of the devotee. Without inner purity, one is not able to see God.

The mirror imitates whatever you do, because it is the same subject on both sides. The mirror reflects the outside appearance of the person, but the Lord's mirror reveals the inside of a person. This is what is revealed in Sambandhar's first Thevaram, the Lord expects your heart, the purity of your heart. Great saints and sages are able to at once take a snap shot of your inside, they go by your inside; state rather than the outward gesture.

In Jaffna, there was a great sage by the name of Yogaswami. Through grace of God, he was able to perceive the inner state of his devotees. Once a man at a fish market heard about Yogaswami from another and desired to see him. With fresh fish in his bag he approached the Ashram, leaving the fish and his bicycle outside the gate. Inside the Ashram there were many devotees engaged in bhajans and satsang. This man could not concentrate on God, he was restless. He was constantly thinking about the fish he had left outside. Among so many devotees, Yogaswami looked at him and called him near to him. Yogaswami said ' Boy, you have left a huge baggage outside and you are here inside with another huge baggage, thinking about the baggage left outside. You had better go at once and attend to that matter, in case the crows start picking your fish that is left outside'. This man was in utter shock. He cried', Swami please forgive me I will not do this again'. He immediately left the place and came back as one of the key disciples of Yogaswami.

The great saints/ sages expect the sincerity and purity of your hearts and this is what is revealed by Sambandhar in his first Thevaram. Regardless of the outer state, position, money and dignity, a person should come with a clean, pure heart. A sincere heart is the only offering, the Lord will accept. To that pure one, automatically the grace of God flows. The magnetic attraction of the two hearts into one ensures happiness to the devotee, the ultimate object of every prayer.

This is only possible through a sincere heart. To attain divine happiness, sincerity is essential.

In the temple, we take '*theertham*' '*holy water*', offered to us by the priests. This water having touched the Lord's feet is charged with divine vibration and has the power to purify our hearts when taken with devotion. When it is taken internally, this holy water purifies our tongues and hearts and makes us fit to be in the presence of God to receive his blessings. Watching our elders, one can see how reverently they take this holy water, knowing its potency fully, its ability to purify our five senses and five bodies.

A person with one pointed devotion and absolute surrender to God is able to fight with God and win his grace. Once, Sambandhar and Appar on their way to a temple stopped to take rest at a nearby shelter. That evening, they heard a female voice crying for help. Coming to the story of this lady, once there was a wealthy man who had five daughters of marriageable age. He found a suitable man but instead of giving one of his daughters to this man, the father used him in such away to become wealthier. He kept on promising this innocent man that he would marry one of his daughters but the father never kept his promise but married his first four daughters elsewhere. The youngest daughter felt deeply sorry for this innocent man. She knew that her father was cheating him and one day she approached this young man and said boldly, 'I feel deeply sorry for you, my father is using you to accumulate wealth, before he finds another man for me I want to get married to you. Come, let us leave this village and go and live happily somewhere'. That night, they both left the village without the knowledge of anyone. The young couple made a vow that they would only touch each other after the rites of marriage at a near by temple. They stopped to take rest at a near by shelter and it was the same shelter where Sambandhar and Appar were taking rest. Both parties were unaware of each other's presence, as many people took refuge at the shelter. In observance of their vow, the young

man and girl slept without any physical contact. The next day in the early hours, the girl approached the young man who appeared to be fast asleep. Without touching him, from a distance, the girl called out for the boy to wake up. The boy did not wake up. She went near him to try and wake him but the girl was in utter shock to find his whole body turned blue. This man had died of a snake bite in his sleep. Just imagine the state of this young girl, she who had come to have a new life, a happy life, leaving everything and everyone was now stunned to find her lover dead beside her. The girl full of tears was struggling to wake him not knowing fully what had actually happened. She cried to the Lord 'O ' Lord don't you have any mercy. Look at my plight, for a happy life I came to live with this man leaving everyone. Please help O ' Lord'. Everyone quickly gathered around her and looked at her surprisingly. They were curious to know her status, as she did not look like a married women, no kumkum and no sacred thaali around her neck.

The girl next to the boy was crying ' My life, my life'. People were confused, not knowing the girl's relationship to the boy, they wondered who this girl was; they knew it was not his wife.

Now, Sambandhar and Appar after their morning rites got ready to worship the Lord at the temple at Thirumaruka. Just as they were about to leave, they heard someone crying for help. Sambandhar turned his gaze toward the direction of the cry. The people around the shelter said to Sambandhar 'We can hear someone crying for help but we are in a hurry to go to the temple'. Sambandhar at once said 'Stop'. "How is that you people can worship God without offering comfort to the person who is crying for help? Will your God look at you?". It is a shame, we too behave like this at times, say anything to get out of the situation. By posing the question, Sambandhar reveals a key dharma. First you help the man in need, this is the first duty and only after that should we question the acceptance of God. Both Sambandhar and Appar immediately left the place to help the crying woman. Sambandhar approached the young girl, she wailed 'my life, my life' looking at her dead lover while everyone was gossiping about her marriage status without giving any comfort.

In those days, according to our religion, tradition and practice, the wives address their husbands by many names. I do not know what you people call your husbands today. In those days, the Saivite wives addressed their husbands as 'Prana-nada'. 'Prana' means vital breath; life force, nada means Lord. For life, prana or life force is essential. Without it, life is impossible. A wife's happiness lies in the well being of her husband and therefore she addresses her husband as 'Prananada'. If the husband's life is in jeopardy, it destroys the happiness of the wife. A wife's auspiciousness and splendor are all affected. A wife's life is in the hands of her husband, As time went by, the wives started addressing their husbands as 'Aththaan'. A deep meaning lies behind the word 'Aththaan'. It is 'Athhaa' that becomes 'Aththaan'. Aththaan means God. As intensity deepens, the Lord becomes the husband; this is the meaning of 'Aththaan'.

Sambandhar approached the girl who was wailing 'my life, my life'. Sambandhar asked the girl "Lady, what is the problem?" She poured everything on Sambandhar. Sambandhar feeling deeply sorry for this innocent girl, right then and there questioned Lord Siva. He sang 'சடையாய் எனுமால் சரணாநீ எனுமால்' *'Sadaiyaai Yenumaal Sarannee Yenumaal'*. 'O my owner, is it proper that this girl suffer? Sambandhar sang this Thevaram in anger and remorse, fighting with Lord Siva over this young girl's pathetic situation. He sings 'Lord is this situation justified, is this proper?'. Sambandhar prayed to the Lord to bring back this young girl's lover to life even if it be at the expense of taking away all his merits. Immediately, the snake that took away this young man's life returned and absorbed the poison into itself. The man stood up; the girl was speechless and everyone was delighted at the mercy of the Lord of Thirumarukal. Both the girl and young man prostrated at the feet of Sambandhar and expressed their gratitude.

The principle shown by Sambandhar here is that one must always pray on behalf of the person who is suffering and to that one, the Lord's blessings flows unceasingly.

In those days when people were suffering with disease, the Nayanmars would approach them and apply holy ash praying to the Lord for their well being. To day, all we do is to take out a bottle of tonic and leave it on the table beside the sick person. We have now done our so called benevolent action. Our Nayanmars prayed to the Lord, fighting with the Lord at the innocent plight of women, children, the sickly and the starving, demanding the Lord to open his eyes and show his grace right then and there. That was how our elders saved the sickly and the needy by intervening on behalf of the unfortunate, through devotional communication with God. They were able to do this because of their great thavam, merit and above all due to the unceasing flow of divine grace.

In Sambandhar's Thevarams, the message is very clear; the Thevarams continuously show how one should live. How does one live? Pray for the unfortunate, the needy and the sickly; it is the highest service a man can do to another. Pray for the other man's salvation not only for yourself. But, today we do not give due importance to the Thevarams; we do not believe and are unaware of the efficacy, the power that lie in the Thevarams. Sambandhar's Thevarams healed the sick, relieved the suffering and consoled the unfortunate. With faith and devotion we too can benefit from these sacred songs.

Once in Jaffna, due to the ongoing war there were bombings everywhere. Unfortunately a bomb fell on a house in Kokkuvil. The husband, wife and two young children immediately took shelter in a muddy place underground in fear of their lives. This family unable to speak, unable to move or do anything remained like statues underground sobbing for help. One child was a toddler; the other was a pre schooler; the pre schooler looked at his sobbing mother and said 'Mother, we were taught in school to sing Thevarams when in fear'. The child started singing but not the mother.

Now, the place became extremely hot to bear and the toddler unable to bear the heat started to cry loudly. In utter desperation, the mother panicked. Unable to move and not knowing what to do, the mother cried. After a few moments, the toddler's gaze fell on his mother's ring finger and was fascinated by the ring. The toddler reached out to his mother's finger and grabbed hold of the ring. The mother saw the child pulling the ring out of her finger and the elder boy at once said 'Mother, the baby has got your ring'. The mother cautioned the elder boy and said not to disturb the baby as he has now stopped crying. Sadly, after a few moments, the toddler put the ring in his mouth and swallowed the ring. The baby was struggling to breathe. The mother, unable to bear to see her child choking and gasping for breath came out of the shelter to get help.

The officials around were shocked at the mother's carelessness and admonished the mother to refrain from such actions. Of course, the people were not in a position to understand the situation the mother had gone through underground. The toddler was rushed into a near by hospital for treatment. The doctors did all they can but was not successful in getting the ring out of this little boy's throat. The mother cried in agony.

Next to the children's ward was the ward for the elderly women. One devoted lady who was highly spiritual approached the children's ward to comfort the family. She had in her hand the sacred book of Thevarams. The doctors had given up on the child and time is ticking away; the lady came near the child and prayed to the Lord, 'Lord, why is it that you make this toddler suffer. He has not committed any sins. Don't you have any mercy, Lord' cried the lady. She then took out her sacred book of Thevarams and sang the Thevarams that Sambandhar sang. She sang with deep sorrow for the child and with full of devotion to God. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she cried

and begged the Lord to save this toddler. The doctors who were unable to understand the power of Thevarams approached the lady and said "Look lady, this is not a temple, this is a hospital, please sing your Thevarams in the temple'. How can the finite grasp the infinite? All science and matter are subject to the one infinite law of God, Love. In the infinite, you find the finite and unless you see everything as one infinite whole, you will not be able to comprehend divinity. The lady replied, 'You have now given up hope on this child. You say that it is up to God to save the child; now I am here, praying to God for help and I have a right to do so' spoke the lady. She sang again with deep devotion, crying to the Lord and as she was singing, the child coughed and the ring came out of the child's mouth.

Divine power is contained in the Thevarams; it is life; it is an expression of one's love to God. Sung by God in human form, it is all powerful and saves us from unfortunate situations. The only way to know its efficacy is to sing with absolute devotion, knowing fully the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord.

Now, let us look at Saint Thirunaavukkarasar, known as Appar. Appar's life is very different. Sambandhar attained wisdom at the age of three, whereas, Appar gained wisdom past the age of seventy. Appar, like us, comes from an ordinary family of the peasantry class. Appar was born to Pukazhanar and Maathiniyar and the name given to him was Marulneekkiyaar. He had a sister by the name of Thilakavathiyar. She was betrothed to a man who was employed in the army. Sadly both her parents died before marriage and also her future husband too died in a battle.

Thilakavathiyar, shocked and unable to understand the tragic situation where her loved ones were taken by sudden death cried uncontrollably. Thilakavathiyar, a young woman was impatiently

waiting for the arrival of her future husband. In a moment of flash, found death all over. Now, the tradition is that when a husband dies, the wife must also fall into the same funeral pyre. She had no life to live anymore and thus decided to fall into the funeral pyre. As she approached the funeral pyre, she heard a little voice of her young brother crying 'Sister, I have no one; if you go, who will look after me'. So saying the little brother begged, holding her sister's hands. The sister knew the customs and traditions of the village and realized that the society would not accept her decision to live in the event of the death of her husband. Not knowing what to do she sobbed bitterly looking at her brother who was holding her hands tight and crying 'Sister, please do not leave me and go'.

It was an unbearable state. Everyone must endeavor to read the life story of Appar. Today, the great ones all praise Thilakavathiyar for her bravery in changing some of the ill traditions prevalent on those days. The custom was that a widow had to follow by force. But, even today, you can see these ill practices in some parts of India. For example, in Gujarat, as soon as the husband dies the wife is forcibly pushed into the funeral pyre. It is Thilakayathiyar, that fought against such ill practices and contributed towards the significant shift required to wipe away the ill traditions. Others like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mira Bai/ all fought against such criminal practices and contributed significantly towards the change.

She decided that she was not going to achieve anything out of her life but looking at her little brother she was moved with love and pity. Knowing fully of our religious principles, she decided against ending her life and chose to live for the sake of her little brother. She spent her time in bringing up her brother, educating him and performing services to the Lord.

Marulneekkiyaar, grew in all forms of learning and attained manhood. Despite all his learning, he forgot the most valuable lesson and did something unforgivable. He neglected his sister who sacrificed everything to give him the education, learning, joined the Jains to acquire knowledge of Jainism. The Jains took advantage of his learning and provided every material comfort. The material possessions brought pride which made him forget his sister who had devoted her life for the well being of her brother.

Thilakavathiyaaar cried and prayed to God with deep pain at her brother's separation from her and the religious faith he was brought into. Now, Marulneekkiyaar was a key person in the Jain religion. He had changed his name to Dharmasenaar and was in the forefront, plotting against the Saivites and taking part in the destruction of Saivite temples. Unable to bear her brother's actions, she cried to Lord 'O'! Lord you took away my mother, my father and my future husband. You did not allow me to end my life but to live for my brother. Now look at him, he is working against my faith. Did you preserve my life to witness this horror?" she wailed. She prayed with great pain to the Lord to bring her brother back to the faith they were both born into, as a devotee of Lord Siva.

The Lord in order to bring Dharmasenaar back to his fold decided to stage his divine play and made him subject to a severe colic. The Jain monks tried all types of medicines, mantras and magic, but nothing could relieve his pain.

Sometimes, knowledge can be an obstacle. The great ones, in our Thirumurais have said about knowledge; they sang, "I do not want people of education, knowledge". It seems awkward as to why our sacred Thirumurais disregard people of education and knowledge. It is so, because at times, education and knowledge reduce compassion. As

education, and knowledge expands, compassion decreases. Whether it be secular or spiritual, one can be overruled by the ego and lose compassion. Dharmasena who was taken over by his education, learning and wealth forgot the fundamental values of life. When everything was going well, the Jains were there but when Appar got sick they put him aside without rendering any further care. One can judge the quality of the people around, only when one is sick. In the end, it is your family members that come for help, remember this. When we are hurt or in pain, the first word that comes out of our mouth is 'amma', it is the mother that comes first to help. But in the case of Dharmasena everything to him was the sister, the sister was the mother and the father. When he was in excruciating pain he cried 'akka, akka, sister, sister!.

In great pain Dharmasena approached the ashram's cook and begged him to pass a message to his sister that he was under great suffering and that he requested her nursing immediately. The message reached the sister who cried thinking of her brother's suffering. But, on account of principles, she refused to go to the monastery of the Jains as she was a devotee of Shiva and a widow. The sister cried and prayed to God for her brother's health and her wish to see him again. Dharmasena came to know his sister's predicament and decided to leave the place immediately in search of her. He dragged himself out of the place and inch by inch set foot in search of her. The sister at once took him to the temple of Lord Siva and prayed 'O' Lord, my brother, whom I have not seen for many years, who betrayed me, who has committed sins against the Saivites has now come back. Please Lord he is suffering from great pain; have mercy on him and save him. I kept my life for him, for his benefit Lord' she wailed.

Dharmasena in pain and in deep regret looked at Lord Siva at *Thiruathikai-Veerattaanam* and cried bitterly for his intolerable

actions. Dharmasena and his sister bathed themselves with holy ash while chanting the name of the Lord. The holiness of the ash inundated the whole place and the Lord's blessing fell upon Dharmasena who through divine grace became known as 'Naavukkarasar' by singing' கூற்றா யினவாறு விலக்ககிலீர் '*Kuutrraa Yinavaaru Vilakkakileer*'. He sings "Lord, the God of death has approached me and this suffering you do not relieve me from". கொடுமைபல செய்தன நானறியேன் '*Kodumaipala Seithana Naanariyeen*'. I do not remember committing many wickedness". Naavukkarasar in deep remorse and in deep pain, cried and sang this first Thevaram asking for the Lord's grace. Asking for His blessing to take him away from the sins that he has committed not only in this life but sins of his past lives. This is what Naavukkarasar brings forth in his first Thevaram. Naavukkarasar in his first Thevaram reminds us that our present life is nothing but the past. What you 'are' is because of what you 'were' in your past life. Your actions now will determine your future. Naavukkarasar pleads with the Lord not only to pardon the sins committed in his current life but in previous lives as well. The sins, he is unaware of but nevertheless has had its effect in his current life. His childhood and manhood is indeed evidence of this. This Thevaram of Naavukkarasar was sung in deep remorse and pain, crying to the Lord for his grace and forgiveness. Today the musicians sing this Thevaram heartily.

When we sing Thevarams we must understand the predicament in which the Thevarams were sung by the Nayanmars. The potency of the Thevarams is in fact, the bhavam, the disposition of the signer and we must realise this, if we are to benefit. We must refrain from giving mere lip service to Thevarams but must sing with feeling and devotion in order to have the blessings of the divine. We must sing this Thevaram of Naavukkarasar, crying to the Lord to take away our sorrows, pain and to shower his blessings. Cry to the Lord to give you strength to overcome the pain and suffering, the pain unbearable, the

suffering that would not go away. Cry to the Lord to forgive the sins committed in your present and past lives and pray to him to shower his grace so that you will remain eternally at His lotus feet. The wheel of birth and death, the three karmas, Aagaami, Sanchita and Prarabdha that we are constantly subject to can only be freed by the Lord's Grace; this is what Appar reminds us in his first Thevaram. All the Thevarams sung by the Nayanmars convey important messages, fundamental truth for good living.

Appar's Thevaram are songs of Tamil set in beauty and devotion. Another one of his Thevarams, that you people know is சொற்றுணை வேதியன் சோதி வானவன் "*Sotrrunai Veathiyan Soathi Vaanavan*". In contemplation of his golden feet in one's heart". This Thevaram was sung by Appar with smiles. The Jains came to know that Dharmasena had gone back to the Saivite faith and they did everything possible to torture and kill Dharmasena, Appar.

It was Appar's worst and the last torture suffered in the hands of the Jains. The Jains ordered that Appar be tied to a granite stone and be thrown into the sea. The Jains believed that Appar would sink into the sea and die. Appar did not fear; he was full of smiles with faith and hope. He was blessed with the grace of Lord Siva; there was nothing to fear anymore.

Appar in his Thevaram sang in praise of the Lord. What the Jains did was, they tied Appar's hands joined together as in anjali mudra. This mudra depicts the prayer mode of the devotee. Appar sings that he is not in fear anymore as both his hands are joined in prayer, worshipping the Lord. நற்றுணை யாவது நமச்சி வாயவே. "*Natrrunai Yaavathu Namachchi Vaayavea.*" What becomes a saving grace to one is Na-Ma-Chi-Vaa-Ya only. Appar is blessed, his hands joined, chanting Na-Ma-Chi-Vaa- Ya, Na-Ma-ChiVaa- Va.

What is revealed in this Thevaram is that one's hands, heart and mind must always be worshipping the Lord, internally and externally. Our religion shows us how to worship and the various modes of worship. For example, when one is worshipping the Lord, one's hands must touch the heart. When worshipping one's mother, the hands must touch the abdomen. The Guru must be worshipped with closed fists touching one's mouth. We also worship the Lord with hands over our heads, to indicate that our life is at his feet, our destiny, our karmas are all at his feet.

Appar's Thevaram shows us that when one's hands are joined in prayer, one need not fear. When one's lips are ever chanting Na-Ma-Chi-Vaa- Ya, one need not fear. We must realise that life is contained in this Thevaram, சொற்றுணை வேதியன் சோதி வானவன் "*Sotrrunai Veathiyar Soathi Vaanavan*". 'In contemplation of his golden feet in one's heart', Truth is contained in this Thevaram. In continuous thought of God, there is no fear and in the absence of fear, there is peace and happiness. A surest path to God is to contemplate unceasingly in the name of God.

In Thirumaraikkaadu, Appar, sang another moving song to unlock the long since closed door of the temple. In his song, he questions the Lord as to how it is possible for him to have had the temple door closed without granting darshan to his devotees. The Lord answered his prayer. Sheer devotion of Appar, made the door open. Later, Appar sang a verse in praise of temples to reveal the significance of the form of the temple to that of the human body.

The temple is a replicate of the human body, that is why the human body is called the 'Temple in which God resides'. The structure of the temple, its rituals, and the divinity in the Sanctum Sanctorum are a replicate of the human body, which is endowed with the spirit of God. Appar's Thevaram reminds us of the greatness of the human body and glorifies it as the temple in which God resides. The body with its nine

entrances is endowed with spirit, with life. The spirit is eternal and therefore it is not confined to a body. Anytime, it can choose to leave the body. In death, what you see is the body only, a body with no life, no soul, no spirit, no light, no God. The all encompassing spirit, consciousness, the eternal life principle is covered by the five sheathes of man; physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual. Appar, elaborately sings in praise of the manifestation of divinity in the five bodies of man. He sings that the Lord that created the human body with so many entrances, limbs and organs has only one life, one spirit. The body may have many features but is only endowed with one life, one consciousness, one spirit. One can live with malfunctioning limbs and organs but cannot function in the absence of spirit which is the very essence of life. When this light, spirit leaves, it is the end of earthly life and is called death.

The temple is a constant reminder of the sacredness of our body. The Lord in the Sanctum Sanctorum reveals the divinity of the human body and the spirit in us is symbolised in the temple. This is what Appar reveals in his stanza, the exactness of the temple in every aspect to that of the human body. What is done in the temple is done to the human body. When one understands the principles behind the temple structure, one is able to clearly see the link between the temple and the human body. The Lord in the Sanctum Sanctorum is a symbol of our divinity within. What we do in thought, word and action ultimately settles in us. It is from 'within' that takes shape 'without'.

Let us look at Sundarar. The lives of the Nayanmars are all different to one another, so was that of Sundarar. As Sundarar was brought up by a King, his wedding ceremony began with the blessings of the people of high thought and commenced with utmost princely glamour. Just before the auspicious time for the marriage began, that is just before the tying of the sacred 'thaali', an old man, in the form of a brahmin walked straight to the ceremonial spot of the bride and groom and said " Stop the wedding, all of you listen to me".

Now try and picture the state of the bride and the groom. The auspicious time has arrived for the tying of the thaali and while everyone was happily witnessing the ceremony someone yells 'Stop'. Our religion, our Thirumurais is based on real life situations. It is the situation, the circumstances the great ones were facing that enabled them to bring out the best of conduct, best of lessons. Through experience you learn.

Everyone at the ceremony was dumbfounded. The bride and the groom were shocked and speechless. The person that appeared as an old man was no old man, but was Lord Shiva himself in disguise. The chief priest said to this man "Who are you?". The old man said "Because of a dispute based on a long ago agreement involving his grandparents, Navaloorar Sundarar is my slave. Due to this unresolved dispute, he is a slave to me and therefore he cannot get married without my approval".

When queried as to the reason for the dispute, the old man said that he has a deed of agreement which proves the indebtedness of his grandfather. Navaloorar was extremely angry as his dignity was exposed in front of many. Confused and in shock, he stood up and said 'Who are you, I do not know you'. The old man said "It does not matter whether you know me or not; the point is that you are indebted to me; here is the agreement to prove it", Navaloorar, in anger took the agreement and without even reading it, tore it into bits.

'Lord Shiva in disguise as the old man laughed and said" Son, what you tore is a copy, I have the original document with me at Thiruvennai Nalloor, come with me I will show there". On hearing this, Navaloorar was determined to disprove the falsehood of the documents to verify his forefather's signature. Everyone was shocked when found that it was the signature of Navaloorar's grandfather. The chief elder

declared the genuineness of the document and instructed Navaloorar that he obey the old man's commands. They also requested the old man about his aboard in that place, The old man said "Stop the wedding and come with me",

Everyone who had gathered to witness the grand wedding was hurt and disappointed at this sudden upheaval. They all followed the old man. The old man took them to the temple Arulthurai of Vennainalloor and entered the Sanctum Santorum. The Lord in disguise, requested them to follow him to his place of residence in the temple. Everyone stood bewildered seeing the old man entering the inner sacred place of the Lord. Navaloor followed him and was speechless to see the old man standing at the sacred spot of the Lord, at the Sanctum Santorum. The old man stood next to the Shiva Lingam and said " This is me" and disappeared. In a moment of flash at the spot, stood Lord Shiva, the Lord of compassion.

Navaloor Sundarar, was a liberated soul and hence there was no compulsion for him to take birth on earth. As an eternal devotee, he prays incessantly to the Lord and thinks only of him constantly whether he be on earth or heaven. His prayer was that, one day he should have the darshan of the Lord. We all should be praying like Sundarar, seeking to have the Lord's darshan. But, we don't pray in this manner. No one prays to the Lord to have his darshan. Who prays "Oh' Muruga, please Lord, I want to see you, please come in front of me and grace me with your beautiful presence." No one. Why? Because we have no faith, no intense devotion, no one- pointed determination. We have firmly made up our minds that it is impossible to have the Lord's darshan. In that attitude of the mind, surely it becomes an impossibility. It is in the magnetic pull of the devotee's heart that God is able to descend.

Sundarar and the Nayanmar's deep yearning and devotion was like a magnet that drew the Lord to their sight. Nothing could have achieved it other than intensity of their love for God.

Sundarar, shivered, thinking of his many angry gestures toward the Lord and the various unpleasant names he had called the Lord in confusion. Sundarar, in the presence of God, cried and asked the Lord for forgiveness for calling him a 'mad man'. He was unaware of the old man's identity. In tears Sundarar asked the Lord, "What is it that I have to do to redeem myself of this unholy act?" At his question, the humble Lord did not ask for any grand act such as building temples or doing something magnificent. The compassionate Lord looking at Sundarar said "Sing for me and may your song be a dedication to me". Imagine the state of Sundarar, he is in fear, he is in pain, he is confused, how can a man in such a predicament sing?

Sundarar in shock cried 'O' Lord, how will I sing, I am confused; What words will I use; How do I sing Lord". The Lord said "How is that you are struggling for words now, is it not you that a while ago called me by many names, a mad man, crazy one? Sing to me as the crazy one".

Sundarar in shock at the Lord's request stood helpless. In great pain he sang his first Thevaram "பித்தா பிறைகூடி பெருமானே அருளாளா", *Piththa Piraisuudi Perumaanea Arulaalaa* "O" Crazy one! "O" the one adorned with the crescent moon! "O" great Lord, shower thy grace". This sentence alone warranted pages and pages of extensive elaboration by the commentators. In this first sentence, Sundarar seeks the mercy of the Lord. How? He says, "O" the great Lord!. Here, Sundarar reminds us of the magnanimity, the greatness of the Lord. The Lord's heart is big, great and compassionate. It is the human beings that have small hearts. The Nayanmars always address the Lord as 'The

Great One', 'The compassionate one', 'The merciful', to reveal the ever forgiving nature of the Lord.

Sundarar in this Thevaram is seeking the Lord's grace, his mercy and addresses him as the 'Crescent moon-adorned one'. Why? The Moon, according to Puranas, neglected all his other wives with the exception of Rohini. At his father in-law's curse, the Moon started to wane, waning to such an extent, the Moon almost extinguished. At his plight, the Moon ran to the feet of Lord Shiva asking for his forgiveness. What did the compassionate Lord do? The Lord adorned himself by placing the tiny almost extinguished Moon on his head as a sign of forgiveness. The Moon got his life back and lived eternally as a tiny crescent adorning the Lord's Head permanently. Sundarar in this Thevaram is reminding the Lord of his big heart, his compassion. If the Lord is able to forgive the blemished Moon and place him on his head when asked for forgiveness, what is it that he would not do for Sundarar.

In the first line of his first Thevaram Sundarar reminds us of the Lord's compassionate nature in forgiving the faults of his devotees who surrenders at this holy feet. "பித்தா பிறைசூடி பெருமானே அருளாளா" *Piththa Piraisuudi Perumaanea Arulaalaa* "O" Crazy one! "O" the one adorned with the crescent Moon! "O" great Lord, shower thy grace".

Later he sings "அத்தா உனக்காளாய் இனி அல்வேன் எனலாமே", *"Aththaa Unakkaalaayini Alleam Enalaamea"* I am your slave, can I ever deny it". This is the perfect relationship, where the devotee worships the Lord in the Husband-wife bhavam. To the wife, the husband is everything and she serves him as her Lord in complete surrender, in love. In Sundarar's Thevaram, the compassion, mercy and forgiveness of the Lord is felt beyond question. This is what Sundarar

reveals, the ever merciful Lord's grace that flows to those who have surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

Coming to Manikkavachakar, he sang the Thiruvachakam. His first line reveals his life story. It is only through the blessings that flowed to him from the darshan of the holy feet of the Lord that enabled him to compose the Thiruvachakam. Manikkavachakar in his Thiruvachakam praises the feet of Lord Shiva over and over again. "ஈசன் அடி போற்றி எந்தை அடி போற்றி தேசன் அடி போற்றி சிவன்சேவடி போற்றி" *Easan adi portti Enthai adi portti, Thesan adi portti Sivan sevadi portti*."

We must always worship the feet of the Lord and surrender ourselves to the feet only. In his first line Manikkavachakar sang "நமச்சிவாய வாழ்க நாதன் தாள் வாழ்க!" *Namachivaya varlga Nathan thal varlga* "Long live" *Na Ma Chi Va Ya*", Long live the feet of the Lord". Beginning his first line in praise of the Lord's feet, in more than sixty places glorifies the feet of the Lord to reveal to mankind the place of ultimate happiness; **'the feet of the Lord'**. The feet is the crowing glory of devotion. Therefore, seek eternally the feet of the Lord and you shall attain everlasting happiness.

Thiru Arumuga Navalar in Jaffna said that there is infinite blessings that flow to the person who daily sings the Sivapuranam. Manikkavachakar sang "சொல்லிய பாட்டின் பொருள் உணர்ந்து சொல்லுவார்!" *Sollia paattin porul unarnthu solluvar* "Understand the meaning of the song when singing". With devotion, by the grace of God, you will be able to understand the meaning of the words and benefit.

In his next line, one experiences the intensity of Manikkavachakar's devotion "இமைப்பொழுதும் என் நெஞ்சில் நீங்காதான் தாள் வாழ்க!" *Imaip poluthum en nencil Neengathan thaal varlga*".

Long live thy feet that abides in my heart always, without a moment of abandonment!. He prays to the Lord to protect him always and never abandon him for a moment. He urges the Lord not to abandon him and to be present even between the moments of the eyelids opening and closing. He prays that the Lord be enshrined in his heart even in that split second of opening and closing of the eyes. A man is prone to error and all that he needs is a split second. Here, Manikkavachakar's yearning for God's continual protection and presence is intensely described. Manikkavachakar has sung many beautiful verses and his songs reveal to man that in deep continual devotion to God, man finds ultimate true happiness. Nothing can take one closer to God than the thought of God.

The Thirumurais are not mere emotional outpourings of the Nayanamars, they are indeed bhakthi at its peak, love that is divine, oneness that is inseparable. Those who are able to melt in love have indeed attained the highest. This is what is revealed in our beautiful Thirumurais, life based on total love for God. Nothing else is wanted, not even mukthi. This is perfect love, oneness, inseparable. Divine love is true mukthi. The proof of this lie in the very lives of the Nayanmars, the revivers, the instillers, the path makers of our Saivite faith, which fundamentally is life divine itself.

"தென் நாடுடைய சிவனே போற்றி! எந்நாட்டவருக்கும் இறைவா போற்றி!
*"Thennaaduudaya Shivane Portti! Ennataivarkum Iraiva Portti!.
 "Nama Parvati Pathiye"!*

"Praise to Shiva, the Lord of the Southern Continent who is the Lord of all the Continents""Prostrations to Parvati's Lord".

May God bless you with peace and happiness . Thank you all.



THIRUMANTIRAM

ஓம் முருகா
"Aum Muruga"
அன்பே சுவம்
"Love is God"

THIRUMANTIRAM

Thirumoolar

I prostrate at the feet of the all encompassing Lord, Muruga and the divine beings for giving me the opportunity to speak to you people on divine life. I appreciate your devotion and thank you all for your encouragement and presence.

Yesterday, I was happy to see many of you eagerly awaiting past midnight to have your questions answered. It gives me great pleasure to be here and to mingle with many devoted people in this holy place.

Today, I wish to speak to you people on a great spiritual work called, the "Thirumantiram". Included as a significant part of our Thirumurais, it brings out the essence of our religion 'Saiva Siddhantham'. The greatness of the Thirumantiram lies, in its capacity .to draw people from all walks of life to God. The Thirumantiram has the power to tap anyone and pour its content to fit the capacity of the seeker, devotee, disciple, bringing him/her to the feet of the Lord.

The author of this great divine work is Thirumoolar. Divine works like the Thirumantiram are not the effort of an ordinary human being. Even though, Thirumoolar, appeared as an ordinary human being, he was in reality, a self-realised, God-realised divine being, taken form to wipe out the miseries of the world. Thirumoolar was a great siddha, a yogi, a mystic, a gnani brought down to earth to benefit mankind.

One is able to better understand and appreciate the work of Thirumoolar, when the reasons for his descent on earth are known. The self-realised ones are in the bliss of God and the distinction of earth and heaven vanishes to such ones. The entire universe is contained within them and they move without any distinction, fully realising the oneness of spirit regardless of time and space.

In India, there was a village called Sathanur. This village was famous for great musicians. In that village lived a young man named Moolan, who was a cowherd. He was a religious man, morning and evening dedicating himself to serving God. During the day he looks after the village cattle by feeding them, taking them to the near by river Kaveri for water, plays with the young calf and takes care of the injured. All done with love and compassion for the animals. In the evenings, he returns to the village with the cattle and takes them to their respective homes.

Moolan, was a young married man and had a beautiful wife. He was a religious man and daily adorned himself with sacred ash. The villagers had high regard for Moolan. Even though, he had no formal education, he was endowed with divine qualities. Everyone was happy to see Moolan. The villagers worshipped Moolan for his divine qualities. He was very kind to everyone including the animals. Daily, the cows felt their master's love and compassion. As usual, one morning after bidding farewell to his wife, Moolan led the herd of cows to the field. He fed the cows, quenched their thirst from the water of river Kaveri and played with the calves. In exhaustion, Moolan took rest under a tree. Destiny is such that everything happens according to God's time and not man's time. While resting, Moolan passed away. The cattle, unable to find Moolan to take them to their respective homes moved frantically. Later, finding their master under a tree, they gathered near him. The little bells tingling, the cows approached

Moolan's dead body trying to wake him. There was no sign of Moolan waking. Endowed with the five senses, the cows felt alone and helpless.

In return to the good natured man's bhakthi, the five sense animals provide endless service to the six sense man. Man thinks he is the most useful being on the planet, but think again. The great ones say that it is the animals that are most useful, even after death the animal's bodies are used. The compassionate ones use it for beneficial purposes. When a man dies, his body is of no use. But the animals, serve man in both life and death. After death, parts of its body are used for various purposes. For example, the skin, tooth, nails, fur etc are used. When a man dies who benefits? No one, even his remains would be a handful of ashes. That is man's life.

The cattle, instead of finding their way home, gathered around the dead body of Moolan and wept in sadness. Every matter, endowed with life force or prana has feelings. The ability to sense the same lie in the frequency of perception and receptivity. If one is sensitive enough, one can intuitively feel the feelings of humans animals and plants.

The villagers were worried, as the usual hour of return of Moolan was well passed. Moolan's wife, after cooking a sumptuous meal awaits for him anxiously at the door-step gazing at the direction of her husband's return.

Gathering around their master, the herd rolled on the ground, gazing at the sky and wept in sadness as if in seeking divine intervention. Speaking of the divine qualities of cows, abishekam is done for God and 'Nandi' and the cow in front of the Lord is first worshipped. Maha Lakshmi is seen with the cow, showering her prosperity to devout householders. We see all this in the temples in the form of sculptures and paintings.

As God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, the cattle's torment, its agonising pain and cry stirred the Lord. The compassionate Lord looked at the direction of the helpless cows. The Lord, feeling the agony of the cows, decided to free the animals from their pain of separation. The yogis, siddhas and sages are ever in communion with God for the benefit of the world. They live with us, right here and are only accessible to the blessed few. In order to free the dumb animals, the Lord directed his gaze at a siddha, who was in deep contemplation of the infinite and questioned him "Don't you see this agonising state?" Saying, thus, the Lord in a vision revealed to the yogi, the painful state of the cows roaming restlessly, unable to bear the separation of their dead master.

This yogi, siddha, who was in deep meditation engulfed in the bliss of God was seated under a tree in a forest. A renunciate, having transcended the mundane world of pleasure and pain, good and bad, happiness and sadness, life and death was now instantly, moved with compassion by this tragic scene. The Lord, instead of granting him the vision of the eternal blissful abode of Kailas as a boon to his great thavam, showed the painful state of the cows.

The distinctive mark of a great yogi/ siddha/ gnani is compassion. The yogi was moved with pity and decided to free the cows from their pain of separation. As an embodiment of compassion, he was able to feel the pain of the cattle.

The compassionate yogi, prayed 'O' Lord, did you send me here to witness this tragedy? Take if you want, all my merits but please save the cows. Please Lord, the cows can only be freed if the cowherd Moolan gets up. Please help".

Our compassion toward the cows helps us in the end. It is called "Pasu Punyam", the "Saving grace of the cow". The cows are ever grateful to man.

Once in Ramanathan College in Jaffna, there was a famous teacher by the name of Mr. Kanavathy. He was specially sent by Mr. Ramanathan, from India to Jaffna. Mr. Kanavathy's only request was that he be allowed to take his dear cow Maha Lakshmi to Jaffna. Mr. Ramanathan agreed. After some years, Mr. Kanavathy died and his only son Sri Raghavan was left to look after the cow. Sri Raghavan was a musician and plays many instruments, particularly, the flute and Nathaswaram. He was a highly educated man and I was fortunate enough to be one his students. As a devout man, he daily pays his respects to Maha Lakshmi, the cow, and enjoyed playing the flute for her. One day, as he was milking Maha Lakshmi, she turned and by sheer accident the horn cut through Sri Raghavan's eye, ripping it apart. Maha Lakshmi witnessed all what had happened and in utter desperation started to scream. Tears rolling, the cow whined. Bleeding all over, Sri Raghavan was rushed to the hospital but the doctors could not save his eye and he was left permanently blind. While he was in hospital, the cow, Maha Lakshmi was in pain. She did not eat anything that was placed in front of her. Everyone did everything possible to feed her but she refused. Every single day she rolled on the floor and damaged the horn that took away her beloved master's eye as a mark of regret. Finally on the eleventh day, Maha Lakshmi died. Sri Raghavan returned from hospital with one eye blind and called for his Maha Lakshmi. He was told of the death of the cow. Unable to bear the separation of his beloved cow, Sri Raghavan refused to play his flute. Just a day prior to his death, in the early hours, at 2.00 a.m. he had a vision of Maha Lakshmi. Immediately, he took out his flute and started to play. Everyone was surprised to hear him play the flute after so long. The next day he passed away.

It is amazing to see this divine bond between a cow and a man. Truly, I say, the cow is endowed with divinity. It is the reason that she stands permanently in front of Lord Shiva, as the great Nandi. Worship Nandi and obtain divine blessings. This Yogi, was sent specially by God to free the cows from the pain of separation. Unlike humans, the cows have no power of speech, but these dumb cows had so much power, the power to move the compassionate Lord for rescue. He realised that he was sent specially by God to this very spot to relieve the agony of the cows.

This yogi knew that the cows would only find solace in Moolan and no one else. He prayed to the Lord that Moolan's life be brought back, even if it be at the sacrifice of his very own life. Praying thus, by his yogic powers, His spirit, his 'Jiva Shakthi' entered into the dead body of Moolan. Yogis have the power of transmigration, where they are able to change into various shapes and forms to help the needy for the benefit of the world. When the yogi's soul entered the body of Moolan, he became alive. The soul of the yogi was now in the body of Moolan. To everyone it was Moolan but in reality it was not Moolan but a Yogi. The cows were delighted to see their master and happily followed the yogi to the village.

Inside the body of Moolan was the spirit of yogi. The yogi, having entered the village, walked straight past Moolan's wife. The yogi does not know anything about Moolan's life. Moolan's wife had been at the door-step for hours looking for her husband. As soon as she heard the tingling bells of the cattle, she was overjoyed and ran outside to greet him. But, the yogi in Moolan's body walked straight past Moolan's wife without any acknowledgment. The wife was annoyed a little at Moolan's odd behaviour. Not only was he late, but he walks straight past her without a word. She thought it was strange of Moolan to behave in this manner. She ran after Moolan, stopping him said"

Where are you going? Come let us go home". The yogi in Moolan's body worshipped her and said" Please move away from me mother, I do not speak with anyone". Moolan's wife said" What happened? You were all right this morning" saying she cried. The yogi said" Lady, please do not come near me I am a brahmachariya, please leave". Moolan's wife cried bitterly and soon the villagers gathered to see what had happened. After hearing, the villagers advised Moolan not to behave in this strange manner but to go home with his dear wife who has been waiting on him without a meal since morning.

The yogi said that he realises that this woman was Moolan's wife but insisted that he is not Moolan but a yogi. He told them all what had happened and that through divine will he has come to save the desperate cows by taking temporarily Moolan's body while his body is kept hidden near a tree. Now that he has done his duty, he was retiring to the forest. The villagers shocked, did not believe this to be true and tried to stop the yogi from going anywhere. The yogi asked them to follow him to the forest that he will show them his body. But the Lord had different plans; the yogi was shocked to find his body missing. Moolan's wife crying, held onto the yogi and everyone asked the yogi what he was up to by acting this way. The yogi, realising what God had done, looked up in the sky and prayed to the Lord to save him from this predicament. The yogi prayed to the Lord to do something so that the villagers would understand that he is a renunciate, a yogi and not Moolan. Instantly they heard a voice up, above that said" This man is not Moolan but a renunciate, a yogi in Moolan's body, Moolan is dead". Moolan's wife cried and the villagers stood in disbelief. All fell at the feet of the yogi and after obtaining his blessing, they left the place.

The yogi realised that it is far more important to serve the people who are suffering from the wheel of birth and death, suffering from want of love and care, who are in misery and pain than to live in

seclusion, The yogi deeply felt the need to reveal the purpose of life, birth and death, the secret of the soul and God, the principles of love, to the world. He realised that the only way to achieve this is to be in the world. A God-realised person is in the bliss of God whether he or she is in the world or out of the world. Being in the world, mingling with the ordinary, the divine person through their radiating divine physical presence is able to reach out to the suffering human hearts more effectively than by mere seclusion. Therefore, this yogi decided that if the secrets of life, death, soul, love and God are to be revealed, then he must appear to live as an ordinary human and reveal the supreme wisdom to the world. It was this yogi whom we call 'Thirumoolar'.

Thirumoolar prayed to God to bless him with wisdom to reveal the essence of life and living to the world. Through the grace of the Lord, Thirumoolar composed 3000 verses for the benefit of mankind. This work of Thirumoolar is praised as the Tamil Agamas and is called the 'Thirumantiram'. It forms an essential part of our Thirumurais, the basis of 'Saiva Siddhantham'.

This divine work of Thirumoolar, the Thirumantiram provides remedy for the suffering heart. It shuns no one. To the one that opens the pages of Thirumantiram with faith and devotion, an immediate answer lies.

It is important to realise that the words of the great ones are filled with divine love and wisdom.

The comfort is immediate, as the grace of God flows as the vibrational power of 'Words' uttered by a divine person. Words have power, both constructive and destructive. Hearing the words of divine persons, one is able to instantly come within the vibrational frequency of such divine persons. The company of holy people, reading of pious

books, listening to divine words and sounds have beneficial effects. In essence, what is revealed is the bhavam of the utterer, the divine feelings of the utterer. Divine love that lies in the heart is transformed into words of healing and comfort. Through devotion one can benefit.

This yogi, Thirumoolar, the great siddha now begins to describe God. How is it possible to describe the All Mighty? In his 3000 verses, called the Thirumantiram, Thirumoolar states ஆரறி வார் எங்கள் அண்ணல் பெருமையை! யாரறி வார் இந்த அகலமும் நீளமும்! பேரறி யாத பெருஞ்சுடர் ஒன்றதின்! வேரறி யாமை விளம்புகின் றேனே! *"Who can know the greatness of our Lord! Who can measure his length and breadth! He is the mighty nameless flame! Whose unknown beginnings I venture to speak! This verse reveals the infinite nature of the Lord "Of such nature you are God, am I worthy, how can I sing of you? How can anyone speak of God, describe God, Thirumoolar states. The truly great ones are the most humble.*

Thirumoolar thus beginning to describe the indescribable God, now defines the indefinable God. How? ", "அன்பே சிவம்", "Love is God". "அன்பே சிவம்" "Love is God", this principle alone governs all evolution and involution. In it, one becomes one, one without a second. It is the climax of action and inaction. This inexhaustible bliss of the heart, mind and body is "அன்பு", "Love" which is the spirit of all spirit. It is this supreme principle that transcends life and death, happiness and sadness, pain and pleasure, man and God; ultimately, 'being love' 'as love' and 'love' alone. When one realises that love and God ARE one and that love is God, then one remains as love forever and ever. This great yogi siddha Thirumoolar has revealed to us the principles of eternal life, a life that is only love. "அன்பே சிவம்" Love is God" is the foundation of 'Saiva Siddhantham".

This is the greatest wisdom proclaimed by Thirumoolar which forms the basis of all religions. This is true mukthi, true liberation. To

such one, life, death and karma have no affect. This love is the highest. When our ordinary human love is purified through divine bhavam it transcends to divine love. When we reveal divine love towards every being including the animals, the purpose of life is realised. This love must be seen in every action, even in the way we write letters. We, as Tamils have a beautiful way of writing. We begin our letters with the word "அன்பு", "Love".

Thirumoolar shows in many instances the supremacy of love and the way it can be achieved through the path of Yoga. The yoga that Thirumoolar refers to is the all consuming path of bhakthi, love. In the end, all forms of discipline are of no avail without love, bhakthi. The royal road to God is love. Through the sincere practise of yoga, one can come to understand this fundamental principle of life. Thirumoolar, reveals it as the supreme Yoga; the practise of the scientific art of truth and God in perfect union.

To attain this divine state of love, Thirumoolar in many places in his Thirumantiram reminds us of the transcendence of desire, anger, greed and lust through the control of the senses. How does one achieve perfect self-control? Thirumoolar says, the only way to overcome the senses is to realise oneself. In the realisation of the self, one transcends all matter and spirit, and attains final perfection, 'siddhantham'.

We know about everyone but ourselves. Thirumoolar says that, first, one must realise oneself and when one realises oneself nothing else remains. Through yoga, when one realises oneself, one becomes divine.

Thirumoolar speaks of capacity as an essential element toward the attainment of self-realisation. The capacity varies depending on the individual's state. The capacity you had when you were an infant is not

the same when you are old. Again, capacity varies among people of similar status. Everyone is not able to realise God. There must be effort, there must be sincerity, there must be determination and faith and above all there must be the grace of God. All of this is 'adhikaram' or capacity. Therefore, capacity is essential for God realisation.

When one achieves perfect self-control through the grace of God, one is able to hear the inner sound. We hear every other sound except our own inner sound. The siddhas, yogis show, through the control of the senses; one is able to hear the inner sound within. At night, in that calmness, you are able to hear the clock ticking away, but the same clock is ticking at noon, but no one hears it. Why? In peace and silence one is able to hear the smallest sound. Likewise, when inner silence is practised, one is able to hear the deep sound within. This is the sound of the soul's union with spirit. The eternal sound of God that one is able to hear in our bodies. This divine vibration, transforming as sound and word is God. God as the great sound of "AUM" ஓம். The eternal vibration of God.

We must always be alert of our senses, mind and direct them in the proper manner. We must be reflective of our thoughts, words and action. Gandhi is called Mahatma Gandhi. Why? Because Mahatma Gandhi, revealed the truth about his life. He truly regretted the mistakes made. Many things that we would not dare even acknowledge among ourselves, Mahatma Gandhi wrote for all to know. When he dared to face the truth among millions of people, everyone started to worship him as God. How does a human being become divine? It is through the grace of God that flows to the one with sincere yearning for God, truth.

One becomes divine when one realises oneself. Self-realisation is God-realisation."தன்னை யறிந்திருந் தத்துவ ஞானிகள்!

முன்னை வினையின் முடிச்சை யவிழ்ப்பர்கள்! பின்னை வினையைப் பிடித்துப் பிசைவர்கள்! சென்னியில் வைத்த சிவனரு ளாலே!" *"The self realised Grananis, the wise! They cut the knot of past karma! Future karma, they capture and crush! Through the grace of Siva, whom they place on their heads!"*.

This verse reiterates the great truth of absolute freedom. To the one who is self-realised, karma has no effect. Past, present and future are all burnt away in the fire of wisdom obtained through the grace of Siva. To know God is to be God. Knowing and being are one.

For man to realise God, he must first control his thoughts, words and deeds. How does one control his mind and senses? One must be all loving, compassionate, forgiving and acquire such divine qualities. Wisdom dawns to the one that is compassionate. Wisdom is no different to 'Love'. They are both one. Supreme wisdom is to know that "Love is God".

It is not difficult to control the senses of the animals but in the case of man, it is extremely hard. Man needs five ropes to tie his senses. Even though he has a small frame, his senses are dangerous. Unless properly controlled, they could be destructive.

There are some people who find pleasure in another's misery. In fact, some do not even care about their own misery but find pleasure in another's greater suffering. It is shocking but you do find people of this nature. I like to mention a story often told by Mr. Radhakrishnan of Jaffna. Once, there was a king who wanted to do something different to pass his leisure time. He ordered that, "Whoever, brings a fruit that I have not tasted will be the recipient of a generous reward. By the same token whoever brings a fruit that I have tasted, will find the fruit pushed down his or her throat". Everyone thought this would be the easiest

way to make money and each stood in line with a fruit. One person stood in line with an woodapple, the King was furious. He ordered that the fruit be showered down his throat. While the fruit was being pushed down, this man's throat, bleeding and in pain this man thinks of the plight of the one standing behind him with a Jack fruit and laughs. He laughs, thinking of the pain this man is going to endure when the jakfruit gets to him. You find people of this nature, who instead of doing something about their own pain and misery, find joy in another man's greater pain.

The yogis, gnanis, and siddhas declare that the greatest virtue is compassion. To be compassionate, one must first realise oneself, realise love, realise God. In that realisation, in that wisdom, one is able to live the way God intended. When one develops love, one becomes compassionate to all. The greatness of compassion is that it is unconditional. A divine person does not analyse whether it is appropriate to help. Whatever may be the cause, whoever be that person he or she helps regardless. God does not see anyone as a friend or an enemy but a being in need of help ..

The self-realised man is free of karma. "தன்னை யறிந்திடுந் தத்துவ ஞானிகள்! முன்னை வினையின் முடிச்சை யவிழ்ப்பார்கள்! பின்னை வினையைப் பிடித்துப் பிசைவர்கள்! சென்னியில் வைத்த சிவனரு ளாலே!"

"The self realised Jnanis, the wise! They cut the knot of past karma! Future karma, they capture and crush! Through the grace of Siva, whom they place on their heads!"

In the fire of wisdom, the seeds of past, present and future are burnt away. In the presence of divine love, no karma can take effect. A person that is blessed with divine grace cannot go wrong. When nothing can go wrong, you have peace and happiness. The siddhas, yogis live in this divine presence every moment.

What you were is love, what you are is love, what you will be is love, from joy you come, in joy you live; into that great joy you melt. This is absolute freedom.

The move, change, time and space are all relative and it is in the eye of the beholder. This is what the great scientist, Albert Einstein declared in his Theory of Relativity. There is no real difference in flux and stillness, both are one. The movement is only an appearance. The gnanis, yogis call it Maya and the scientist call it relativity. Realise that everything is God and to that one, everything is love forever and ever. This is true liberation. Siddhas, yogis and gnanis are an example of this perfect state of divine love.

Thirumoòlar states that to attain this perfect state of self-realisation, one must seek a Guru. The Wisdom needed to attain this divine state can only be imparted by a Guru. Therefore, success in one's undertaking lies in the feet of the guru. Without the guru's grace, our effort is fruitless. The guru washes away the disciple's impurity and makes it pristine for the light of God to settle in. The words of the guru form one's guiding light of life. Guru can come in any shape or form. Guru is God.

Generally, anyone whom you admire, anyone who shows you right conduct, anyone who shows divine love is a guru. It could be anyone, a neighbour, a teacher, a mother, a friend. The importance of the company of holy people is vital. The mind, body and heart of a divine person is filled with divine vibration. The blessings of God is with you when you are in the presence of holy people.

Swami Ramakrishna was great a gnani. Swami Vivekananda was his disciple. Before a person is accepted as a disciple, he or she has to pass many tests. Based on it, the guru initiates the disciple. This is

what Thirumoolar refers to as the 'capacity' or adhikaram'. As the depth of the cup, so is the quantity of liquid. Initiation must be given to fit the capacity of the disciple, if success in spiritual effort is to be ensured.

Once in an Ashram in India, one man approached the guru and said, "O" guru, please accept me as a disciple". The guru refused saying that it takes a lot of self-discipline, self control and detachment. This man cried and said that he be somehow accepted and to test him if need be. The guru agreed. After shaving his head and wearing the ochre robe, this man asked the guru "O" guru, everyday I see you tapping the heads of many people that come here to have your darshan; you seem so tired doing this day after day. Why don't 'you let me do it". The guru gently replied" Son, it is not easy as you think; everything happens at the appropriate time and when the time comes you will be able to do it". One day, the guru asked him to bless the people with the mantra "Namaya Sivaha". This disciple touched the devotees, using this mantra but he took longer than usual when it came to blessing young women. This was his first test.

Later the guru placed a cloth bag full of valuables at the side of his door and asked the disciple to shut the door. This man spotted the cloth bag and was elated to find so many valuables and took it to his room. This was his second test.

The omniscient guru knew that the time has not arrived for his initiation, as the disciple's mind was full of worldly desires that he could not overcome. Later another man came to the ashram to be accepted as a disciple. He said to the guru, I can meditate for long, I do a lot of thapas, sadhana and therefore, I have no problem fitting into ashram routines. The guru agreed and decided to test him for discipleship. One day, the guru asked the disciple to bring him a pot of water to drink. The disciple gave him the pot of water and the guru took

some water into his mouth. Without drinking, he spat it into the pot and asked the disciple to drink from it. The disciple, annoyed said "What is it that you have done, how can I drink this water?". The guru said " Son, the sacred syllable that is in my mouth, I desired to give it you through this water. All the power of the mantras are contained in this water. Now that you have refused initiation, the time has not arrived for discipleship".

Thirumoolar refers to unconditional devotion of the disciple to his or her guru. Guru is God. Wisdom is only imparted by God through a guru. Therefore, the guru-disciple relationship must be based on unconditional love and total surrender for the attainment of self-realisation. This is guru bhakthi. Bhakthi to guru is bhakthi to God. Guru is the personification of God. To be in the presence of a guru is to be in the presence of God.

Thirumoolar in his Thirumantiram, after speaking of life and living revealed one fundamental point. He reminds us of the inevitability of birth and death and therefore, reminds that one should do good actions and gain merit now in this life before death. It is not one's wife, husband, wealth, relatives or education that follows one after death but only one's good actions. Therefore, Thirumoolar urges man to accumulate good actions. One's actions are the foundation of one's next life and good actions gives good karma. Actions based on divine love, wisdom, liberates man from karma, as actions performed with the thought of God is free from desire. In the absence of desire, karma cannot take effect. This is the perfect state achieved by gnanis, yogis and siddhas.

When you die, no one really cries for you but cry to help their own pains and sorrows. Thirumoolar in his Thirumantiram states that people cry only for themselves and not for the dead. "உள்ளெலாந் கூடி

ஒலிக்க அழுதிட்டுப்! பேரினை நீக்கிப் பிணமென்று; பேரிட்டுச்! சூரையங் காட்டிடைக்
கொண்டு போய்ச் சுட்டிட்டு! நீரினில் மூழ்கி நினைப்பொழிந் தார்களே!

*"The neighbours gathered together wailing loud and long!
Denied him now a name, called him corpse! And bore him to the
burning ghat and the body burnt! Then did a ceremonial dip in water
and be devoid of his memory!"*. No matter how close the bond is
between the dead and living, in the end the dead person's name is
changed and a new name is given. Just hours before death people
would address you as Sir, Doctor, Boss, but once dead, you are called"
Pinam" "Body". No one calls the dead by his or her name but refers to
as the 'body'. This is the common name that every human being takes
upon death. Remember, no matter what you have been and what you
were called, in the end your name will be changed. Not only that, the
body is taken away to a place called a cemetery, away from your home.
You find only ash as the remainder. Later, everyone takes a bath, so that
the sins of the dead, do not touch them. As time goes by, you are
forgotten and only remembered for anniversaries. This is what the
siddhas, gnanis and yogis remind us, that one day, all will be consumed
by death. But one thing will ever remain, that is all our good actions. In
the wheel of birth and death, the good actions that we do now will
determine our future, where ever it may be.

Many yogis and siddhas meditate on the Thirumantiram, in the
words of wisdom, considered essential for emancipation. At the Nallur
Kandaswamy temple in Jaffna, near Bhairavar, you see yogis and
siddhas. They wander at midnight appearing as madmen. But this is
only a disguise. They wish to remain anonymous and be thought mad
than to give away their true identity. Only in silence and peace one can
work toward the uplift of the world. The great yogis, siddhas all appear
as madmen and this is in fact the give away sign of their greatness.

One day in the early hours of the morning, after the puja, a man walked near by a siddha who was busy scribbling on the sand. When this man went near him, he was shocked at what he saw. The siddha was doing complex mathematics quicker than a computer. This man approached the siddha and asked how he could do such complex mathematics. The siddha replied "Just as you see it". Later this man asked questions in English and the siddha replied in English. When asked about religion, he gave answers. Puzzled, this man asked "Who are you". The siddha replied "Why do you want to know". No one saw the yogi after that day. The siddhas, yogis are hard to identify because of their deliberate outer appearance. They look and act like beggars, madmen, just to keep the curious away.

This is a true story. Once there was a rich man that became rich out of robbing the poor. If anyone did not obey him or did not pay what was due, he would harass them and put them out of homes. This man's wife daily goes to the temple and prays for her husband .. A yogi approached this lady and being omniscient, said "Lady you look auspicious with kumkum, you must not put people out of their homes, you must try to accommodate as best as you can". Remember lady, the suffering of these people will hit your family. So please go and advise your husband to do good actions and to help people as much as he can". When she told her husband, the husband got angry and said that she was a fool to advise him about what he should do based on a poor madman's words. After sometime, this rich man contracted a painful disease and was suffering greatly. He had all the riches but none could help and in the end the doctors gave up. The wife cried bitterly. She ran to the yogi for help and cried "Swami, please help; my husband is very ill, he cannot speak, he cannot move. Everyone has given him up. Please protect, my husband". The yogi said "Madwoman, I told you to acquire merits by good action. Only good actions help. Listen to me carefully now, take two big pots from the temple and cook rice in them.

One must be an offering to God; the other kept aside. Make sure the rice is well cooked and hot. Bring your husband, wrapped in leaves to the temple".

Yogis, and Siddhas are experts in medicine known as 'Siddha vaidhyam". Having controlled their sense and obtained the grace of guru, the siddhas through deep meditation, in the light of wisdom discover the state of the five bodies and its functions. That is how they discover diseases and treatment. It is not through the study of the books but directly through wisdom. The doctors know only the physical body, but the gnani's know not only the functions of the physical body but its counter part, the astral/energy body and the functions of the mind in relation to the five bodies.

The wife appealed to all that they should help her by bringing her husband to the temple in the manner instructed by the yogi. Everyone looked at her as if she had gone mad and said "It is utmost outrageous to do this to a man who is alive. We will wrap him in leaves once his spirit leaves the body but cannot do that now". She cried and begged everyone to save her husband. When her relatives refused, she got her children to help. They took him wrapped in leaves to the temple to see the yogi. They placed him near a tree at the temple. Two big pots full of rice was now being cooked in the temple. The yogi in a loud voice called everyone around the temple premises to come and have a rice meal. The place was filled with the poor and the homeless. The yogi said to the lady that if her husband is to be protected, she must serve these beggars, these madmen and all the poor who are present here for a meal. When you give food to a person, his or her blessings flow to you and gives you good karma. The lady, full of tears served everyone rice.

Giving food to people is one of the greatest services one can do. People are never satisfied with anything. They want more and

more. No one ever says 'enough'. But the only instance where one says 'enough' is when food is served. Even a man dying of hunger can only eat so much but cannot go on eating. One can expect that satisfaction with the word 'enough' only when food is served.

Once in Jaffna, the Durga Temple orphanage children were suffering during hard times without food. Because of Abhayakaram and other charitable organisations in Australia and overseas, the children were fed and looked after. When one feeds the poor, the unfortunate, one acquires great merit. The word 'enough' is very pleasing to God. Therefore, serve food to all and please God. 'Anna dhanam, Maha Dhanam' "Giving food is the greatest service".

The yogi, after instructing the lady to feed the poor, asked her to bring the other pot full of hot rice and pour it on to a mat. Then he requested the people to bring this lady's husband and to hold him above the boiling rice. As they were holding him, the heat from the rice got through the pores of his body and the disease started to melt away. The man got up and started crying "Muruga, Muruga". The man who could not utter a word for weeks was now crying in front of the Lord, at repeating the Lord's name. This man and his wife immediately fell on the feet of the yogi and cried.

You find at the Kandaswamy Temple, a symbol to remind everyone the greatness of this yogi and the miracles performed by him. It is almost 230 years old. All because of this Gnani, who walked the streets of Jaffna with a single piece of loin cloth. People worshipped this yogi as the one sent by Thiruchendur Muruga and devotees have built places in honour of this great yogi. A samadhi was built in memory of this yogi and a temple built called the Arunagirinathar temple as a mark of honour. Not only this yogi, many yogis appear on earth to save the suffering. All due to Thirumoolar and his great work.

These great yogis, gnanis unlike the ordinary people live forever and are ever in the hearts of the devoted ones. The works of the great ones live forever. They are indestructible and there will always be a 'Thirumoolar' taking form to revive it for the benefit of the world regardless of age and time. The work of Thirumantiram dates back to 3000 years. It is said that Thirumoolar uttered one verse per year and this gave him an age of 3000 years. The siddhas, yogis and the gnanis are physically immortal and appear whenever there is a need for revival. This is how the great works of thousands and thousands of years are protected. Nothing is lost. Truth is not created nor it is destroyed, it is only revealed by the gnanis, siddhas and the great ones.

Thirumoolar speaks of dharma as the key to overcome one's mistakes. He speaks of the importance of dharma in family life and why it is important for a man to uphold the virtues of a householder. "ஆத்தமனையாள் அகத்தில் இருக்கவே! காத்த மனையானைக் காமுறுங் காளையர்! காய்ச்ச பலாவின் கனியுண்ண மாட்டாமல்! ஈச்சம் பழுத்துக் கிடருற்ற வாறே!" *The dear, wedded wife pines within the home! But the lusting youth covets the guarded neighbour's wife! Even as one, declining the luscious ripeness of the jak! Yearns for the tamer taste of the thorny date!*". In this verse, Thirumoolar reminds that it is a great folly for a married man to covet another woman and that it is even worse to look at another man's wife. The sweetness and happiness is in one's home, it is 'she', the wife, one wedded. Unhappiness stands in the way to the one who covets another man's wife.

Another significance of this verse is the reference to the thorny date tree. Thirumoolar was an expert in medicine. Through yogic powers he was able to diagnose and cure diseases. He cautions the person who covets. He states that the body of such a one is bound to have spots like that of a prick from a thorny date. What Thirumoolar revealed thousands of years ago is only known to mankind relatively

recently. The diseases caused by such unworthy acts are in the form of visible spots, likened to that of a prick of a thorny date known today as venereal diseases.

In Thirumoolar's Thirumantiram one can find answers to all questions. The wisdom for life, living and liberation is in it. That is why it is one of the greatest works of all. There are no missing links but an answer lies to every question, if one cares to look. It is the work of Thirumoolar, that is being spoken of by many yogis, siddhas over and over again as a means of salvation.

Once there lived a rich man. He was a selfish and inconsiderate person. He fights daily with his wife over a meagre rupee. He does not speak lovingly to his wife and children. He does not do anything for anyone and treats the poor in disgust. His wife goes to the temple everyday and prays for her husband. At the temple, she saw a yogi seated. She prostrated at the feet of the yogi and told everything. She prayed to the yogi, asking him to bless her husband so that he would become a loving husband and a good person to all. The wife intensely prayed that at least for one day, he should be a good husband and a father. The yogi blessed and said "All is well lady, go home".

One day this man met a fortune teller. This man was very selfish and he did not want to part even a penny. This fortune teller forced him to listen to what he had to say for absolutely no money. This fortune teller told this man to show his palm and immediately asked him to close it as he would not read his palm. This rich man got angry and said that "Didn't you force me to have the reading? Now read no matter what". The fortune teller said that the God of death has approached him and that too in a matter of days. This rich man asked him how he knew and the fortune teller showed the black mark on his little finger as the sign of death.

The man deeply regretted his wicked and selfish ways. It is only at the time of death that people think about their actions. He immediately took a taxi and rushed to be with his beloved wife and children. He spoke lovingly to the children and said that he would take them shopping and buy them anything they liked. He looked at his dear wife and spoke lovingly for the first time. The wife and the children were very surprised to see their husband and father this way. Later the husband cried and asked his wife to forgive him for being a selfish and an uncaring husband and father. He placed all the money and valuables in front of her and said that it is for her. As he was going to die soon, he told all about his business dealings and wealth to his wife. Later he carried his little son and cried, saying that his little boy is going to lose him very soon. The wife came running and asked why he was speaking of death to his little son. He said that he only has a few more days to live and that he likes to spend every moment with his children. He told the wife about the premonition of the fortune teller. The wife immediately asked him to show the little finger which had the black mark. She laughed and said that is not a death mark it is only the ink dot from the previous voting day. The husband immediately took some water and rubbed it thoroughly, the ink vanished. He was very angry and said to his wife, "Listening to that stupid fortune teller, I told you everything. How stupid am I?" The wife said to him "I prayed to the Lord to make you a good person. I worshipped at the feet of the yogi to help you. I prayed that at least one day you must change and be a good person. You did change today. Today is the day for you to change, if not you can do whatever you like". So saying the wife cried. This man from that moment onwards became a better person. He helped many and gave abundantly to the poor. He had also donated money to the Kailasa Ashram in Bangalore and to so many other charitable organisations.

One must understand that everything happens in a split second. The problems of our lives and the sufferings can be wiped

away by the grace of God. God comes to us in the form of yogis, gnanis. Even though they appear to be isolated and look like madmen, they are in truth personifications of God. One must realise that yogis, through their perfect self - control and grace of God have attained the highest wisdom. Therefore, they are one with God. The blessings of siddhas, gnanis and yogis flow to us through their gaze, through the words of wisdom and gestures of love. It is these divine vibrations of the yogis that come in the form of blessings of God to the receptive persons and help them to overcome their obstacles. One needs to have faith and devotion to be able to receive divine vibration. The receptivity of the devotee must be unconditional for the divine vibration to take effect and healing to take place. Through deep yearning and sincerity, one develops devotion necessary for transformation.

Yogaswamy often quoted the words of wisdom of Thirumoolar in many of his speeches. The devotees of Yogaswamy are all over the world. I have taken part in many ceremonies of Yogaswamy in Canada and London. The words of Yogaswamy vibrate all over the world. He was a great yogi, gnani. His divine presence purified and blessed many as he walked along the streets of Jaffna. This is the reason that many desire to have darshan of the divine. Why? Because of the blessings of God flow through the yogi's eyes to the devotee and this vibration heals and comforts many. This is the reason we feel calm and happy in the presence of divine people. Seek the company of the divine. There is nothing so powerful than their physical presence. All the bodies are contained in the physical body. It is indeed a great merit for one to be in the physical presence of a divine person. Books, sadhana, meditation, and other spiritual practices help one to attain perfect visualisation of God until the actual presence of God is finally felt within oneself. The quickest way to achieve this is through the gaze of a divine person.

Yogaswamy had many great disciples. He stated that duty is God. One cannot find God by neglecting one's duty. One must feel the

divine in every action, in every word and in every thought. There must be continual thought of God, no matter what we do. This continual thought of God is the practising of the presence of God. Once, a wealthy businessman came to see Yogaswamy at his ashram. There were hundreds of people at the ashram. The poor, the rich, the sick, the healthy, women, children were all waiting to have darshan of Yogaswamy. Yogaswamy called in a few people and spoke to them lovingly. The businessman stood there almost a half day waiting for his call but Yogaswamy did not even glance at him. After all had gone, Yogaswamy went outside and sat. This man in tears approached Yogaswamy and said " Swami, I have been waiting to speak to you since morning. What wrong have I done ? Why is it that you did not speak to me"? Yogaswamy said " Why are you here". The man replied "To see and speak with God". Yogaswamy asked him to follow him that he will show God. So saying he took this businessman to a place up the hill and showed a very poor man engaged in doing simple work. He was sweeping the streets and collecting the rubbish. Yogaswamy said to the businessman " You see this man; he is God. Worship him". The businessman at once prostrated at this poor person's feet. Yogaswamy then said to him, " You are highly educated, honoured and a wealthy businessman. God has given you plenty. Do you realise that there are so many people awaiting for you to get their work done? The businessman then realised that he was in front of divinity, in the presence of supreme wisdom and light.

The words of supreme wisdom are contained in the Thirumantiram. It is praised as the Tamil Agamas, as the Tamil Vedas. It is through Thirmoolar's Thirumantiram that many became great siddhas, yogis and gnanis. The words of Thirumantiram are imparted to the disciples by their gurus as the 'Maha Vakyam', the "greatest sayings". Freedom is sure to the one who deeply contemplates on the words of Thirumantiram. To such ones the words reveal the essence of divinity. The vibrational power enveloping the word reveals God.

When one's heart is vibrating with the love of God, then one is able to see the infinite in the finite. Due to Mayashakthi the infinite appears as the finite. Through wisdom, one is able to transcend Mayashakthi and realise that there is only "Oneness" .. The wave and the ocean are one. It is the ocean that becomes the wave and the wave goes back to the ocean. The wave cannot remain without the ocean but the Ocean can remain without the wave. See infinity in everything and behold God.

Once in Jaffna, there lived a great siddha called Kadaiswamy, whom due to the great merits of ours lived in Jaffna. Kadaiswamy's disciple was Chellappaswamy and then Yogaswamy and then Vadivelswamy. The gurus had many great disciples. Kadaiswamy, a great gnani said that, "The day one realises oneself, is the day he becomes a siddha". Kadaiswamy was born in Bangalore, India and was a judge by profession, practising in Malaysia. Once while he was hearing a case, through manipulation and fraud, an innocent person was being subject to the death penalty and as a judge he had to give his judgement based on the submissions before him. He was feeling very uncomfortable with the unfair process of law and deeply regretted. He sat alone and thought for a while about the judgement he was about to deliver the next day. It went against his conscience. His daughter and wife approached him and asked him why he was sad. He told them the situation. The next day instead of being at the Court, he tendered his resignation to the head of the Court. While everyone was waiting outside to hear the verdict, they heard the news that the judge had resigned. The Head of Court instructed that he and his family leave the residence provided within one week as he was out of duty. He left Malaysia and landed in India. His daughter and wife were very unhappy at his decision and quarrelled with him daily. He immediately made out a will and gave all his wealth to his wife and child and left the place in search of a gnani for the attainment of peace. He found his guru and the guru initiated him into the sacred syllables. To call his own, he

had only a few pieces of loin cloth. His guru blessed him and showed him a boat near the shore and asked him to get into the boat and to get off where ever it lands. The boat landed at Allaipiddy shore in Jaffna. That is where he landed. He came to Jaffna as a great yogi, gnani.

Everyone in the streets thought that a madman had arrived in Jaffna and did not pay their respects to him. He then came across a near by hut of a fisherman. The fisherman's wife was a devoted lady and always offers food to Bhairavar before doing anything else. This yogi, said to this lady, "Look lady, you are a kind, innocent and a loving person. There are many big mansions around here, but I will not go to their houses. I will only take the food you provide". The lady gave him food and he ate happily.

He sleeps on the streets, suddenly appearing and disappearing. To everyone, he was a madman. One day, when this yogi came to this lady's house for food her husband asked his wife . why she was daily giving food to this madman. The wife said that he was not a madman but a great gnani. As usual, one day, this lady's husband, went fishing but due to extreme wind conditions the boat lost its way and he was stranded in the middle of the ocean for three days unable to find his way home. His wife worried, daily waits for his return without eating anything. The yogi comes for food and she reverently serves him.

The villagers thought the fisherman had died and were preparing for the death ceremony. They gave 'the white saree' to his wife to wear, as a symbol of widowhood. The lady cried and said that her husband would come and to wait for a few more days. At this time, the yogi approached this lady's house and asked for food. The villagers scolded him for being unsympathetic as she is mourning her husband's death. The yogi said "She is Mahalakshmi and I will only eat from her hand". She gave him food and the yogi after eating started to dance,

calling the Lord's name. Everyone was furious at his behaviour. Later he said to the lady that he would be coming for food tomorrow and left the place.

The fisherman who lost his way at sea, suddenly saw a little boat with a white flag. It was this yogi who went to rescue him in the boat. He asked the fisherman to get in. The fisherman was now safely at the shore. The fisherman prostrated at the yogi's feet and went home. The villagers were shocked to see the fisherman walking towards his house. The wife was delighted to see him. The villagers asked what had happened and he looked at his wife and said "That elderly person whom you feed daily, the one that I call a madman, had saved my life". After that incident no one saw this yogi but everyone was anxiously waiting to seek his blessings.

This is the tendency of the human mind, often it only sees the surface of things and fails to capture the real essence. A gnani knows when one needs help most and is there for that purpose. This gnani, yogi walked along the streets of Jaffna and helped many. Once he helped a man who was in need of money to buy clothes for his children for Deepavali. Kadaiswamy does not speak with everyone. At times he turns his face away from people who are full of ego and selfishness. Kadaiswamy felt the pain of this man's heart and helped him. The yogi called him and said not to worry that his sins are now washed away and gave him a wet cloth. This man prostrated at his feet and took the wet cloth. While walking, he suddenly bumped into a cloth bag. When he picked it, he was in utter shock. It was full of gold and valuables. This man later became one of the wealthiest persons through this yogi's help. When asked how he became wealthy, he said that it was all due to the grace of Kadaiswamy.. Kadaiswamy was a great siddha.

Once, due to a sudden loss of wealth, a family was suffering and were preparing to leave the village. As a protection, Kadaiswamy

instructed the wife to feed the poor before leaving the village. Later through Kadaiswamy's grace they were helped abundantly. A piece of iron ornament that was in the lady's house turned into gold through the grace of Kadiaswamy. All were speechless at this great miracle performed by Kadaiswamy. At his mercy, this family gave abundantly to everyone and the wife helped the poor in many ways. The wife was called Ponnamma and You find a place in honour of her great deeds called the 'Ponnamma Mill" Junction. Kadaiswamy always said that no one loses anything if people remembered to feed the poor. One acquires great merit through feeding the poor.

There were many siddhas and gnanis that walked along the streets of Jaffna. There were many that remained unknown and silently helped the needy. The mere presence of a gnani, siddha is enough to purify the place with divine feelings. This is how the poor, the unfortunate and the sickly were helped. It is through the grace that flows from the presence of the divine person. If we are able to live in Jaffna today, it is all due to the divine vibrations of the great siddhas, yogis and gnanis who had lived in Jaffna. It is due to the vibration of the Thirumantiram that is ever lingering.

The yogis of all yogis, the siddhas of all siddhas, is whom we call Thirumoolar. Thirumoolar's Thirumantiram helped many ordinary beings to become great yogis and siddhas. Who are these siddhas, yogis, gnanis? They are the compassionate, the self-realised, the ever helpful, the ones that are sincere in thought, word, and deed, the ones that seek the mercy of the Lord are the one's that live in the presence of God .. To the ones with such qualities, the grace of the Lord flows and they attain supreme peace and happiness.

Yogis, gnanis appear, to show us, how we should lead our lives. What Thirumoolar wrote thousands of years back helped many to

become great yogis and gnanis. They performed many, 'so called' miracles and showed the path of right living. To the self-realised ones, it is no miracle but the natural employment of innate forces by virtue of wisdom obtained through the grace of God.

Behind the words of Tirumantiram lie the divine power of God and in order to tap into this divine vibration, one requires the grace of guru and God. To those ones who are extremely fortunate, the word itself is the guru. The intensity of one's devotion attracts divine grace that enables one to perceive the infinite in the apparent finite.

Mother 'Parashakthi' is worshipped by all the great siddhas, yogis and gnanis as the supreme. Only the great, realise Shakthi, as the means and the end. She is the way and the goal and therefore envelops everything, from inert matter to the spirit of God. She, as the revealer of Shiva, is the supreme state of 'Sat Chit Anandam'. The consciousness, existence and bliss, that is Shiva is Shakthi. Thirumoolar sings:

"அளியொத்த பெண்பிள்ளை ஆனந்த சுந்தரி!
 புளியுறு புன்பழம் போலுள்ளே நோக்கித்!
 தெளியுறு வித்துச் சிவகதிகாடடி!
 ஓளியுற வைத்தென்னை உய்யவுண் டாளே!"

*She is the Lady, full of compassion
 She is Bliss-Beauty (Ananda Sundari)
 Like tamarind fruit encased in cover hard
 Is my wavering heart;
 Into it She poured Her graceful glance
 And made it pure;
 She showed me the way to Siva-state
 She made me radiant (in Jaffna)
 And redeemed me;*

Shivashakthi is one and is everything, everywhere. It is one, but appears as two and as many under the influence of mayashakthi,

which is again Her. Until and unless one overcomes mayashakthi, liberation is impossible. Only through the grace of Parashakthi, can one transcend mayashakthi. Siddha Thirumoolar sings of Mother Parashakthi:

"அவளை யறியா அமரரும் இல்லை!
அவளன்றிச் செய்யும் அருந்தவம் இல்லை!
அவளன்றி ஐவரால் ஆவதொன்றில்லை!
அவளன்றி யூர்புகு மாற்றி யனே!

*"None the divine beings that know Her not!
None of the tapas rare, that is not for Her!
Except Her, I know not!
How to reach Liberation!"*

The underlying essence of Thirumoolar's Thirumantiram is summed up in just one verse " அன்பே சிவம் " 'Anbe Shivam'. 'Love is God'. These supreme words of wisdom of Thirumoolar always shine in the hearts of the blessed ones. As 'love' they remain and instil 'wisdom'.

With that thought in mind I conclude my speech for today and may God bless you all with peace and happiness. Thank you all.



*These are the goals
Achieved from the
Delivery of
Sri Aaru Thirumuzugan's
Spiritual Lectures,
Sivapoomi School for
the Intellectually
Challenged Children &
Sivapoomi Elders Home*



3

MANNIL NALLA VANNAM VALALAM

ஓம் முருகா
"Aum Muruga"
அன்பே சுவம்
"Love is God"

MANNIL NALLA VANNAM VALALAM

I prostrate at the feet of the all encompassing Lord, Muruga, for his blessings and for giving me this opportunity to share with you all about divine life. Today, I wish to expound on a very significant Thirumurai sung by the great Tamil saivite saint, Thirugnana Sambandhar,

மண்ணில் நல்ல வண்ணம் வாழலாம் வைகலும்
எண்ணில் நல்ல கதிக்கு யாதுமோர் குறைவில்லைக்
கண்ணில் நல்லஃதுறும் கழுமல வளநகர்ப்
பெண்ணில் நல்லாளொடும் பெரும்தகை இருந்ததே.

*"Mannil nalla vannam vaazhalaam vaihalum
Yennil nalla kathikki yaathumoar kurivilaik
Kannil nalla thurum kazhumala vallanaharp
Pennil nallaa lodum perunthahai irunthathea"*

*"One could, on earth live' good living' always
To the one with good intentions, nothing else is needed
When one's eyes ever see the auspicious place of Kazhumala
The greatness of Him, revealed by the lady next to him".*

Sambandhar in this Thirumurai, after having seen the beautiful sight of the marriage of the divine couple, Parvati and her Lord, Siva, revealed to the world, the principles of 'good living'.

We have all come into this world, to enjoy the fruits of this life and therefore, life must be lived. To live life in happiness, we need to understand the principles of 'good living' as expounded by Thirugnana Sambandhar in his Thirumurai. When Sambandhar, sang 'Mannil nalla

vannam vaazhalaam, he is revealing a fundamental truth, the 'choice' of individuals. The choice, to accept or reject good living. Some could deviate from the path of good living, some could embrace good living. It is your choice.

In this Thirumurai, Sambandhar revealed that, if mankind is to lead a good life, one ought to find the secret behind the principles of good living. "Mannil nalla vannam vaazhalaam vaihalum", "Yennil nalla kathikki yaathumoar kurivilaik", pure /good intentions are essential for good living, for example, some people can never think of pure/ good intentions, they start the day negatively and can only see negativity. People of such nature cannot find happiness. If you constantly think of accidents while you are learning to drive a car you will not be able to accomplish the task of learning. Likewise, in life, a person's intentions, must be pure and sincere; good intentions enable a person to live life happily.

'Kannil nalla thurum kazhumala vallanaharp', 'kann' these eyes must always be seeing auspicious/good sights. When one's eyes are focussed on seeing good things, only then, these eyes can guide us to good conduct/good living.

In those days, our elders made it a point to visit the temple the first thing in the morning. They go in anticipation of having the darshan of the divine, to see the glory of the divine in the temple. It is only after seeing the blissful Lord in the temple, they began their day and engaged themselves in other tasks. In the temple, you can see the garland bearing Lord in the blessing mode, surrounded by offerings/prasadams, the glow of lamps and other inspiring sights of the divine. This is an auspicious sight/ good sight and if ones eye, constantly see such auspicious sights, then, the grace of the divine flows unceasingly and becomes the eye's focal point towards 'good living'. One is then, sure to accomplish all tasks with ease and live the

day well. This is the reason our elders went to the temple the first thing in the morning, to see the ever auspicious sight of the Lord.

'Pennil nallaalodum perunthahai irunthathea'. Sambandhar also went to the temple to see the auspicious sight of the Lord. What did Sambandhar see? Sambandhar was seeing the ever graceful sight of the divine mother, Uma, next to her Lord, Shiva.

When you visit a house, the splendor and happiness of that householder and his wife are immediately felt and that light of good living is reflected in every nook and corner of the house. Sambandhar reminds everyone that, if this light of God is to ever remain in every home, the woman of the house must ever be graceful, radiating that inner light of God. Then only a man could attain greatness. This is the reason, in every divine piece of work, whether it be Thirumurai, Thiru Valluvar's Thiru Kural, or the Shastras, the essence of our religion bring forth a powerful and a significant divine principle, "divinity of a woman". The highest position is given to the woman, extreme regard and honour being given to the woman of the house. A devoted woman is able to purify everyone and is able to protect the truth of the house and for this reason Sambandhar places the divine mother Uma in the forefront for the benefit of mankind. Only through a devoted woman, can a man attain the highest state of life.

Our religion, gives extreme importance to women by placing her at the very top. Only in one instance, our religion avoided to give her that importance. Mother, Shakthi is always worshipped first. Next to Lord Siva, there is Mother Uma. Next to Lord Vishnu there is Maha Lakshmi, there is a woman next to all manifestations of God. Wisdom is given by Saraswati, happiness by Lakshmi, strength/valor by Durga. The significance and divinity of women are seen everywhere, except in one place. This is in fact done with a purpose, not to undermine the great honour for women. The only place one will not find her is, next to

Yama. Everywhere she is a consort to the Lord but to Yama. Why? This question was posed by a young lad to his master. His Master replied "It is so because, it is a mark of honour to a woman".

In great suffering and pain everyone calls for the mother. On deathbed suffering too people call for their mother. If you place a woman next to Yama, the God of Death, out of motherly compassion she would come running to save you. If this is the case, no one would see death. This is the reason our religion has not given a consort to Yama. A mother will always come running to protect her children. As the effect of Karma has to take its own course, *and Yama has to fulfill his duty, he is not afforded a consort.*

She is addressed as 'Shakthi'. When electricity was discovered, the Tamil experts got together to find a suitable name, the name given was '*Min Shakthi*', meaning electricity. When queried as to why this particular name was chosen, the experts replied, "The qualities of '*Min Shakthi*' is identical to the nature of a woman. It is the woman that lights the lamp in the house, gives light to everything and also when touched in error, mercilessly puts the person in danger".

To provide protection for everyone and to illuminate everything, electricity runs up wherever called for. Observing very closely At our religion, culture and tradition of India, believing the divine mother Uma as the Eternal Shakthi, the experts realised that it was proper to call electricity '*Min Shakthi*' in Tamil, as electricity has the qualities of a woman. A woman lights the house and in doing so lights the world, so is electricity, lights the world and sustains it with its energy.

Hence, Sambandhar sang, a man beside a woman, attains the highest position in life and is dignified. Many a time, **Sekkizhaar** in his Periya Puranam compared the woman to the root of a tree. Family

ties are comparable to branches of a tree and when the branches are in danger, nothing happens to the life of the tree, but the entire tree is nourished, protected and given life by its roots. As long as the root is protected the tree lives, regardless of external dangers. But if the root is in danger, the entire tree is wiped out. For this reason Sekkizhaar emphasized that the essence of good living/happiness in the world lies in the woman and living with her, a man attains the highest.

Speaking of the greatness of women, I would like to mention briefly the life story of a devotee of God and share with you all some of the ways in which we can contribute to 'good living'.

Periya Puranam talks about many devotees of God. One such devotee is Thiru Neelakandhar. Sekkizhaar places him at a high level. A young man, and a potter by profession, engaged himself daily in doing a lot of devotional service in the local temple. He respected the elders and was devoted to his profession. He was quick enough to win the respect and praise of local villagers, for his exemplary 'good living'. Soon, a marriage was fixed and the young couple lived happily as husband and wife. Even after marriage, he continued his normal duties, making a living out of his pottery sales and on some occasions donating his pottery to devotees of God.

As usual, one morning he went to the local temple to serve the Lord and on his way back, something unexpected happened. Unknowingly, a woman on the other side of a fenced path, threw dirty dishwater over the fence which accidentally splashed all over Neelakandhar's body. A deeply pious man, whom the villagers respect and praise, wearing the sacred rudraksha garland, and holy ash, illumined with the light of God found dirty dishwater all over him.

This is understandable, as it is customary even today for people to throw dirty dishwater over the fence away from their own yards. Further, have we not heard of the so called educated people,

placing harmful/dangerous materials in places other than their own paths.'

The villagers were utterly shocked to find dirty dishwater splashed all over on a devoted person like Neelakandhar whom they praised and honoured. "Who is it behind the fence? "Who is it that splashed dirty dishwater on this devoted man's body?" shouted the villagers. Neelakandhar was a pious man; he calmed them down and pleaded, "Not to worry, as the day was meant to be like this". He said to them that he would clean himself when he gets home.

However, the woman who splashed the dirty dishwater on Neelakandhar, saw Neelakandar in this horrible state and was in utmost regret to see such a sight. She came running, prostrating at his feet asked for forgiveness. She lamented that it was a mistake and that it was not her intention to splash dirty water on him. Neelakandhar pacified the woman and asked her not to worry that he would go home and clean himself. The woman refused to let him go saying that everyone would speak ill of her and unduly accuse her for what had happened. The woman pleaded that he clean himself at her place and that she would draw water from the tank for this purpose. Neelakandhar refused again but she insisted on him to come.

Reluctantly, Neelakandhar agreed; she drew water from the tank and gave him water to wash off the dirt. Neelakandhar was a little confused of the surrounding of the place. This woman later, urged him to take a seat in the patio. Many young women lived in that house and immediately he knew that this was a place where women of ill fame lived. The woman who splashed dirty water over Neelakandhar was a beautiful woman and spoke enticingly to him. Like a flash of lightning, Neelakandhar stepped out of his deep devotional state and went inside the house, accompanied by this woman.

Everyone, outside was anxiously waiting for Neelakandhar's return but he did not return as expected. Villagers were well aware of this house and the type of women who lived there. The villagers immediately went to see Neelakandhar's wife and advised her to come and save herself from her husband's plight. Neelakandhar's wife shrieked, but did not speak disrespectfully about her husband; instead asked the villagers to leave. She said to them that her husband is God and that he would return home soon. Neelakandhar's wife is of great character and she did not give away her pride in her husband.

Similar situation happened in Kannaki's life where people approached her and said that her husband had gone to Madhavi's house, and she should go in search of him, but, Kannaki refused to leave the house. The people insisted that Kannaki should come along but she refused and said "If I come looking for my husband, then everyone's doubts would be confirmed and therefore, I do not want to give room to show away my husband". Neelakandhar's wife was also like Kannaki, she refused to go in search of him but instead pleaded that they leave.

After sometime, Neelakandhar was on his way home. His mind unsettled and in deep thought of his young, beautiful wife, who always waits upon him from dawn to night. Upon waking, she worships his feet and attends to him reverently in every way. He felt guilty and hurt at the mere thought of his dear wife, whom he married in front of the elders and all the divine beings with their blessings.

In deep regret, Neelakandhar neared his house; his wife, as usual welcomed him by washing his feet and serving him with his favorite food. Neelakandhar could not eat but with deep pain looked at his wife. Neelakandhar could not bear for a moment but told her all what had happened. His wife did not say a word, after finishing his meal, Neelakandhar got up to wash his hands thinking that his wife had

forgiven him as she had made no comment. He approached her taking her hand, immediately, his wife shook his hand away and snapped, "will you ever touch me again my Neelakandhar, everyone who sees you as their honour and pride, a pious one you are, who wears the sacred rudraksha with ashes smeared all over, do you think God will ever look at you, I promise upon the great God Thiru Neelakandhar, never will you touch me again." Thus, she made a sacred promise upon the Lord Thiru Neelakandhar, Lord Siva.

Our religion gives great importance to vows/words/ truth, Neelakandhar shuddered at her anger, her words and the seriousness of the vow taken in the name of the Lord. He is fully aware of the sacredness of vows and truth; he looked at his dear wife and said, "with such fearlessness you have made this vow in the name of God, I will not touch you and never again will I touch another woman, not even in thought".

In life, not only do we need to practice right conduct but it is also essential that we are mindful of all the pitfalls of life. In those days, after marriage, everyone wishes the young couple with, sweet benevolent words and sing '*mammil nalla vannam vaazhalaam*. As a part of the traditional marriage ceremony, the bride and the groom sit in a swing, a few married women get together and gently push the swing, up, above, with sweet songs inundated with words of blessings. The symbol behind the couple sitting in the swing is that, through everyone's praise, the couple can raise the *themselves in* life as shown by the upward/pushing of the swing. If no one pushes the swing, it comes down to the bottom, to its original position. In life, if one needs to live life well, it is vital to get the well wishes and the praise of good people.

Another symbol of the swing is that, for a smooth ride in the swing, there must be a balance; this balance is only maintained if the

couple is in equal seating position. If one is out of balance the swing is shaky and the purpose is lost. Likewise, in health and sickness, in pain and pleasure, in happiness and sadness, the couple should equally be supportive of each other, remain in perfect balance and this is 'good living'. Today, we do not seem to have this tradition but in some parts of India it is still practiced. What we do today is that, people get the blessings of elders who bless the couple with flawless, benevolent words.

Mahakavi, Subramania Bharathi was a person of great wisdom. He was an ardent devotee of Divine Mother, Para Shakthi. He sang many verses in praise of Shakthi. Once, Bharathi as a young lad was playing with the other boys and one day he took a young boy and entered the local temple. The temple elders beat the young boy who accompanied Bharathi. This little boy's name was Kanakalingam and Bharathi queried as to why this little boy was beaten. They snapped at Bharathi "You are wearing the sacred thread around you but this boy does not have one; he belongs to some other caste". Bharathi, speechless, comforted the crying boy and took him away. Later, Bharathi placed a thread around the boy's neck and both returned to the temple. This time, the elders not only beat the boy but beat Bharathi as well and threw them both out the temple premises. Bharathi did not return to the temple.

Bharathi, an ardent devotee of Para Shakthi, was in pain to witness such inequality. He was determined to make a difference, to bring back divinity into religion and people. This resulted in his composing many inspiring verses of divine love.

Once after having lost his job, he came home in despair; his wife looked at him and said "You seem hungry, let me go and borrow some grains from next door to cook for you". While his wife was preparing a rice meal, Bharathi was seated outside, he saw a few birds

around him. Bharathi reached out for some grains and fed the birds. His wife, Sellamma was furious and annoyed with Bharathi for not realising the extent she had gone to get grains to prepare food for him. Bharathi without saying a word left the place and sat on a rock near a paddy field. He appreciated such natural surroundings and found peace of mind and heavenly beauty.

Bharathi was in deep contemplation, he was thinking about the creation of man, the necessity for food, clothing, children and the never-ending responsibilities of human life. He thought to himself that it would be better not to be born a human. While seated there, he saw some cows grazing with utmost freedom, a mother feeding its calf, male and female mating. Having witnessed such freedom and happiness of the cows around, Bharathi, thought it would be great to be born a cow and prayed to 'Para Shakthi' for a boon to be born a cow in his next life. He prayed to the Divine Mother saying that, as human life is complicated with never ending individual and social responsibilities, it would be best to be born a cow.

Taken up by such freedom of the animals, Bharathi, followed the cows. He then saw something tragic; the cows were dragged and tied to a stone by the village people, some took away the calf from its mother, tying its legs, started milking the cow while the calf was looking. Turning again, Bharathi witnessed the villagers tying the cow to a cart, beating the animal so that the cart could go faster. Seeing all the cruelty, Bharathi in utter desperation, immediately turned to Mother, Para Shakthi, asking for forgiveness at his earlier foolish boon to be born a cow.

He then prayed to Mother to bless his present life abundantly with wisdom so that he could contribute to humanity. Bharathi realised that it is a waste of one's life and God endowed wisdom if nothing beneficial was done to humanity.

Bharathi prayed again to the Mother, "O! Mother as this human life is precious and it must be used in the best manner. Born with the six senses, a man is endowed with wisdom for 'good living', it is a sin to live a life dominated by the five senses alone" and sang a verse in praise of Mother, Para Shakthi.

நல்லதோர் வீணை செய்தே - அதை
நலம் கெட புழுதியில் எறிவதுண்டோ?
சொல்லடி சிவசக்தி- எனைச்
சுடர் மிகு அறிவுடன்
படைத்து விட்டாய்.

*"Nallathornaveai seithe - Athai
Nalam keda puzhuthiyil erivathooundu
Solladi Siva Sakthi - ennai
Sudarmikhu Arivudan
Padaithu vittai"*

"After making a beautiful veena
Does one abandon it by throwing it away in the dust
O' tell me 'Mother, Siva Sakthi'?
You who have created me with such burning love and wisdom"

Bharathi did not stop there, he prayed to the Mother with deep devotion, asking her blessings and guidance for him to live as a human endowed with wisdom, asking her to guide his life in the proper direction at all times, free of lust/greed or else to take his breath away that very second.

Similarly, many years ago Saint Mannickavachakar, in his Siva Puranam, beginning his verse "நமச்சிவாய வாழ்க நாநன் தாள் வாழ்க"
"Nama sivaya vaazhga naathan thaal vaazhga 'Long live Nama Sivaya, long live the feet of the Lord', then sang, வேகம் கெடுத்தாண்ட வேந்தன் அடிவெல்க 'Vekham keduthu aanda, venthan adi vezhga' . He prayed to the Lord for guidance to overcome the power, the strength of

impurities, the surge of thoughts/emotions, a man is constantly subject to; greed, lust, anger and desire and so on.

Returning to the story of Neelakandhar, it was said that he had to suffer this way, for letting his mind drift away for a flickering moment. What a life, enclosed by four walls in the same house, where everything appearing wonderful to the outsiders, a home without happiness and peace. Both husband and wife have lived for many years without physical contact, honouring the pledge taken.

The 'all mighty God, the Omniscient, felt the agony of Thiru Neelakandhar and decided to reveal his life story to the world and show the world the depth and sincerity of his pledge. The Lord appeared himself as an old man at the doorstep of Neelakandhar's home. The Lord at the doorstep, in pretense, questioned Neelakandhar whether this was the house of Neelakandhar. Neelakandhar taken by surprise, saw an old, feeble man, a sanyasi, with no teeth carrying a cloth bag. He immediately prostrated at the feet of the devotee of God and graciously welcomed the old sanyasi to his house and requested the devotee of God to dine with him. The Lord in the form of an old man said to Neelakandhar. 'O' devotee of Siva, I have heard so much about you and your devotional activities, your wife who looks happy is like Maha Lakshmi, Parvati, you are asking me to dine at your house but unfortunately I have to keep going soon and therefore, I am unable to accept your offer. The reason I am here today is that I have come to give you something for safe keeping in your house".

The Lord spoke "On my way back I shall stop over at your place to collect my property". Neelakandhar reverently, asked the Lord, "What is it Lord that you want me to safe guard?" The Lord said "Will you protect what I am going to give you and return it safely to me". Neelakandhar replied "Definitely my Lord I will do anything to protect your property" .

The Lord, began unwrapping his cloth bag and took out an old clay pot. Neelakandhar smiled and murmured, "I am a potter by profession and I have made many pots like these and have also donated my pots to the devotees of God". The Lord in human form looked at Neelakandhar and said "Do not speak like a madman, this clay pot is no ordinary clay pot, this pot has gone to places unseen and touched by the great sages", Saying those words, the Lord handed the pot to Neelakandhar for safe keeping, The Lord warned him, that this property of his must be protected at all times and returned to him. Neelakandhar reverently took the pot inside and placed the pot in the safest place in the house. The Lord bid him farewell and left the spot.

Although, Neelakandhar and his wife were not in talking terms, they welcomed and tried to be most hospitable to their guests at all times. A home ought to be auspicious, filled with happiness but at times it is filled with sadness. In the case of Neelakandhar and his wife, it is unfortunate. A great person once said, when suspicion enters into one's mind happiness flees. That is why it is reiterated over again, for a man to attain happiness, it is essential that he makes his home a temple. An essential element of 'good living'.

One day, after many months, the Lord was once again standing at the doorstep of Neelakandhar's house. The Lord called out to him "Thiru Neelakandhar". Neelakandhar came out, he immediately recognised the old sanyasi. The Lord asked him whether he remembered him. It was a tradition, in those days for many such venerable sages to visit the homes of pious ones to shower their blessings. Once in Jaffna, there lived a saint by the name of 'Kudaiswami'. In Kondavil you find his samadhi. He would have his meals at people's houses, would sleep in the yard and appear to others as an eccentric person but he has performed many miracles.

By being hospitable to the devotees of God and obtaining their blessings, one acquires divine merits in this life. That is why

Sekkizhaar in his Periya Puranam observed that one must offer their hospitality to the devotees of God, regardless of their appearance. In those days, the pious, do not portray themselves as the owners of anything. They truly fear to say words like 'this house belongs to me or it is my house'. They mention their guru's name and say that 'this house was given to me and it is the Lord's house'.

Our elders gave in abundance to all those who asked. When they see the devotees of God, they offer their hospitality in abundance without ever using words such as, 'my' or 'mine'. As a mark of great respect to their guests and knowing that nothing is ever their's they offered everything to the guest saying 'This is for you', 'This is yours'. We do not have this wonderful tradition anymore.

In Jaffna, there were so many free inns, people built these places in memory of their departed loved ones. The purposes of these places were to afford hospitality to everyone who was in need of rest and food. Also, they have built stone walls by road sides to help people who carry heavy weights to rest their loads on such walls. Many people have benefited by these acts of goodwill. The pious acquire merit by their benevolent deeds, offering help to the suffering and the needy. There were so many places, for example, Marudanarmadam, Pootharmadam, Kandarmadam etc for the use of the needy, but you do not find them any more, in those places you now find food outlets and bars. Where are you going to find peace? In Sellvachannithi, there were 41 places, today you would be lucky, if you could find four surviving.

It is sad today, people do not try to understand how our elders lived in those days. People must observe, read and learn from these great monuments as to how one should live a dharmic life.

Thiru Neelakandhar, having seen the venerable person, prostrated at his feet and offered his hospitality. He insisted that the

Lord dine at his house, but the Lord in human form said to him, "I am unable to accept your offer again, as I have finished my pilgrimage and I am in a hurry to get back, I have only come to collect my property that I gave you for safekeeping" .

Neelakandhar went inside the house to get the Lord's clay pot, he shrieked, he could not find the clay pot in the place he had kept. In utter dismay, Neelakandhar gasped, "Oh! Lord I kept the pot in the safest place inside the house, it is now gone, Oh! Lord, where has it gone, Oh! Lord". Neelakandhar's wife came running, she too was shocked to find the pot missing.

Neelakandhar in fear approached the Lord and said "Oh! Servitor of God, what you gave me for safekeeping, I had kept in the safest place and now it is missing. I cannot find it there, please Lord, I have many clay pots, you are welcome to take whichever one you like. Which one do you want Lord?". The Lord angrily said "Neelakandhar, don't you know to protect the property of others given for safekeeping? "I know Lord", cried Neelakandhar. "I kept it very safely but it is not there now". The Lord exclaimed "Neelakandhar you are cheating me, knowing that this clay pot has special qualities, you are hiding it for your own benefit, go and fetch the pot right now and until you return with my pot, I will be staying right here" .

Neelakandhar, for the second time, went inside the house to the place where he had kept the clay pot, but could not find it. Returning, he burst out, "I cannot find the pot. I am telling the truth, I live a life of truth and I never lie". The Lord said gravely, "you who wear the sacred rudraksha, with ashes lighting up your face, whom everyone respects, go and fetch the property" .

Neelakandhar went in again for the third time in search of it. The Lord said "Did you look everywhere in the house?.. Neelakandhar

answered "Yes Lord, please come in and have a look, the pot is not in the place I had kept. Please Lord tell me what I have to do to rectify this unfortunate situation. Please tell me Lord what you want me to do" choked Neelakandhar. "Are you truthful, do you live a life of truth, then do this for me, ask your child to come here and promise by your child that the property that was given for safekeeping is lost" commanded the Lord.

Both husband and wife do not touch each other in honour of each other's pledge. Neelakandhar and his wife looked at each other and burst out, "Lord we do not have any children". The Lord himself moved with pity, placing his hands over his head said "I am a madman, a fool, how could I have asked for such a thing from a childless couple, it is wrong, it is wrong".

Sekkizhaar in his Periya Puranam says that 'Lord Siva was shattered at his own request on a childless couple. In this world, it is said that, children are the greatest wealth. A lot has been said about the wealth of having children by the great saints and sages. Ramakrishna Paramahansa once said "In this world, it is a blessing to have children and it is also a blessing not to have any children". Why did he say this? Many visited his Ashram and prayed to Ramakrishna that they be blessed with children. Ramakrishna blessed them and directed them to mother Kali. Later, the couples returned with their children asking Ramakrishna to give a suitable name. Ramakrishna gave suitable names and blessed the children.

Like wise, many came to Yogaswami for his blessings to beget children. He blessed them. Once the child is born, the parents, took their newly born child to Yogaswamy for naming and blessing. The parents thanked Yogaswamy for his grace. But Yogaswamy always goes to the source of all grace and reminded them that it is all due to the grace of Lord Siva.

Once in, Ramakrishna's ashram, a student questioned Ramakrishna; "So many people from so far away come to you for your blessing so that they could have children but in our own ashram there is a couple who sweep the place day and night but do not have children, Why haven't they got any children?". Ramakrishna looked at the student and answered, "you see, this couple has never asked me for anything, in the case of some people, it is a blessing to have children and in the case of others, it is a blessing not to have children. This couple, almost exhausted their karma in their previous births and have now come to clear the rest, for this reason they do not have any children. Why do you ask, look at Sarada devi and myself, even though, we live together, yet we are separate, we do not have children. That is why, in the case of some that have only a small fraction of karma left do not have any children. With bond comes desire and desire causes bondage and thus life and death goes on. Some due to the sins committed in the previous life, having everything, do not have any children. Likewise, due to the merits in the previous life, some do not have children. There are two sides to having and not having children" said Ramakrishna to his student.

Once, a couple came to Yogaswamy for his blessings to have children. Yogaswamy, at once realised through his divine powers, that the couple due to their ill health should not be having any children. In front of a huge crowd, Yogaswamy said "Once, I was coming across Thaddatheru junction, there was a house, I saw, three or four monkeys being born to this family, human in form, one points his finger at his father, the other is on the tree, and another is twisting his mother's arm, it is so much better to not give birth to children like these" spoke Yogaswamy. The couple that came for his blessings to have children fled the place. A sage is able to see through everyone and advise them accordingly.

Thiru Neelakandhar and his wife with tears looked at the sanyasi bursting out "We have no merit in this life to have children" wept in front of the Lord. The Lord moved with compassion looked at the couple and soothingly said "It is wrong of me to ask you to promise on a child that you do not have. But now I am going to ask you to take a vow/pledge and you will have to do this. Once it is done, I shall leave this place" said anxiously the Lord. Neelakandhar asked "what is it Lord, tell me I will do it. The Lord said "Your wife who looks like Parvati, promise upon her by placing your hand on her head, that you cannot find the property I gave you for safekeeping".

Thiru Neelakandar shattered, as he has taken a pledge, a promise made in honour of his wife's request; not to touch her again, now how could he obey the sanyasi's command? Neelakandar looked at the sanyasi and cried in fear "I will promise on anything but do not ask me to promise on my wife". The Lord snapped, "What? surrounded by these four walls you two live, I can see your wife, ever auspicious, with the 'thaali' around her neck, with a happy face welcoming guests. Are you playing the fool with me by saying that you two do not touch each other? You must promise on your wife now, that you cannot find the property", commanded angrily the Lord. Neelakandhar pleaded that he would do anything but touch her.

The Lord exclaimed "You are cheating yourself by your, 'so called' pious services to the Lord, we have to immediately go and get help from the 'Servitors to the Lord of 'Thillai' for a proper reconciliation. Let's go and see the 'Servitors to the Lord of Thillai".

"தில்லை வாழ் அந்தணர் தம் அடியார்க்கும் அடியேன்"

Thillai-vaazh-anthanasar-tham atiyaarkkum adiyen" "I am a Servitor to the Servitors of the Lord of Thillai' claims Sundara Moorthy Swamigal, in his 'Thiruthondar Thokai'. To whom does he offer his first praise? None other than the 'Servitors to the Lord of

Thillai. The 'Servitors to the Lord of Thillai' in the early hours, perform all their daily spiritual rites and bless everyone present with long and prosperous life. Apart from temple duties, they also perform marriage rites in people's houses.

The Lord said to Neelakandhar "I should go and speak to the servitors of God at Thillai and ask them why is that you and your wife do not touch each other. The servitors of God should know about the two of you, as your sacred marriage was initiated in front of them. Come with me now, let's go in front of the priest and to get a verdict to rectify this situation'.

Both husband and wife followed the Lord to the great 1000 pillared temple at Thillai, where the servitors of God live. The Lord at the 1000 pillared temple spoke loudly, "O! servitors of God, hear this, do you know that in this town the things that go on, wearing the sacred rudraksha, smeared with sacred ash, hear this, what comes out of this man's mouth is nothing but lies".

The 'servitors of God at Thillai alarmed at what they heard, came out and said, "Devotee what is that you are saying?" "Hear this", said the Lord "In front of all the sacred rites, see what this man has done, on my way on a pilgrimage, I gave him a sacred clay pot for safekeeping and I have now come back for my property, he tells me that he has lost the property. Before I gave him the property, I asked him several times whether he would, protect it at all times as it is of great spiritual value. This man promised me many times that he would keep it safe and return it on my way back. Knowing that this property is of significant spiritual value he has kept it for himself and now cries that he has lost it. To test whether he is speaking the truth, I asked him to promise on his child but he cried that he has no children. I then, asked him to touch his wife and promise by her that he had lost the property and do you know what Neelakandhar said, he said, that he

does not touch his wife. This man is playing the fool with me. Oh! the servitors of God, you judge this situation and give us your verdict" said the Lord.

The servitors of God at Thillai, turned to Neelakandhar and said "Neelakandhar, did this person give you a valuable property for safekeeping?" "Yes Lord" said Neelakandhar in fear. "Did you keep it in a safe place or not" queried the servitors of God, "Yes I did Lord" responded Neelakandhar. "Then why don't you give it to this person", said the servitors of Lord. "The property is not there anymore Lord, it is gone, it is not there", cried Neelakandhar. "What is it that this man is asking from you in return, all he wants you to do is that you should promise on your wife, that the property is lost, why don't you do that and settle the matter", asked the servitors of God. "Listen" said the servitors of God to Neelakandhar, "you should not lie in this holy place in front of elders, you and your wife get into the sacred water tank immediately. We want you and your wife to take a dip in the sacred tank to wash off your sins. While inside the sacred tank, promise on your wife", demanded the servitors of God looking at Neelakandar. 'Water', is a powerful element, it can punish as well as wash off you sins. That is the reason our elders worship water, worship mother earth in the morning, light fragrant incenses waving it in the air, offer flower worship to mother earth and worship the elements of nature. Mother nature is divine. Water is divine, our elders, before their bath, first pray and pay their respects to water before doing anything.

In many places, we have experienced the divinity of water. Once, we ended up in a refugee camp at Kokkuvil Hindu College. We were all dying of thirst, but could not go out of the camp as per instruction of the army, if anyone did dare, they would have been shot. Everyone was crying for water, children crying for water but right in front of us we are able to see the water tank, but nothing could be done. Everyone was powerless to do anything. That day, we all realised, the

element of 'life' contained in water. Our elders worship water for this reason, water gives life and protects us. That is why, the five elements of mother nature, earth, water, fire, air and space, which give life to all beings are acknowledged and worshipped as the essential life principle by our elders. In our religion, as a symbol of truth, water is worshipped, Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathi, Kothavari, Kaveri and so on. In all sacred rites, these rivers are mentioned because these rivers are a symbol of truth.

Now, obeying the command of the servitors of God, Neelakandhar and his wife, went _ inside the sacred tank of Thillai. Neelakandar, determined to keep his sacred promise even at this moment reached out for a stick across the sacred water tank. He asked his wife to take one end of the stick, while he held on to the other side of the stick and promised using the stick saying "I promise upon my wife, the pot is lost".

Lord Siva, in the form of an old sanyasi shuddered and said "Servitors to the Lord of Thillai, listen, in front of you all and before sacrificial rites, this man is cheating me. See, what he is up to, after having dipped in the sacred waters, he uses a stick to make a promise. What a joke, Servitors to the Lord. See this for yourself".

The servitors to the Lord of Thillai, were shocked to see Neelakandhar using a stick between him and his wife and was annoyed at the manner in which Neelakandhar made his promise. "Neelakandar please stand" said the servitors to the Lord. Neelakandar got up, "Come here, what have you done" queried the servitors of the Lord. Neelakandar could not bear it anymore, he took this opportunity and decided to let go of his long kept secret to everyone present, the reasons behind the great pledge. He burst out, "I have committed a great sin against my wife and as a result of it and in honour of my wife's pledge, we both have not been touching each other for the past so many

years. To protect the pledge under all circumstances, as it is made in the name of the Lord Thiru Neelakandar' I had to use this stick between us" spoke Neelakandhar.

Lord Siva in the form of a sanyasi and the servitors to God were both were moved at what Neelakandar had to say. The Lord said to Neelakandar "I want you to go inside the tank again". Both husband and wife got into the tank "Now take a dip"demanded the Lord. Both took a dip, but when they came out, to everyone's amazement, the couple had changed into their youthful and beautiful form of a bride and a groom. The old sanyasi's form changed and instead, there was the form of Lord Siva. The Lord, looked at both and spoke these words of truth, "When a man realises his mistake and sincerely seeks forgiveness, he is granted salvation and blessings without a question, right then and there". Bringing forth this significant principle to the world, the Lord, blessed the couple and showered his blessings on them for the attainment of 'Kailasa', the eternal abode of the Lord.

Thiru Neelakandhar's life story was thus mentioned by Sekkizhaar, in his Periya Puranam. The reason I chose Thiru Neelakandhar's life to elaborate on 'Mannil Nalla Vannam vaazhalaam', is that, when a man lives a righteous life, with deep devotion to God all his mistakes in life will be forgiven by the grace of God provided he sincerely seeks forgiveness. This will lead him towards the path of spirituality. This is what is revealed in our religion and spoken of by our elders in many instances, 'a sincere man, regardless of the number of mistakes made is able to get back, right on track as long as he truly regrets his mistakes before the Lord'. Sincerity is the key, when a man, before the Lord, is truly sorry for his wrong doings, the Lord instantly showers his eternal grace on the devotee. To reveal this key principle, it is sung;

*"Mannil Nalla Vannam Vaazhalaam Vaihalum
Yennil Nalla Kthikki Yaathumoar Kurivilaik*

*Kannil nalla thurum Kazhumala vallanaharp
Pennil nallaa lodum perunthahai irunthathea"*

Sekkizhaar in his Periya Puranam, revealed the fundamental essence contained in this Thirumurai of Thirugnana Sambandhar to the world through the life story of Thiru Neelakandhar.

In many places, various examples are given as to how one can strive toward the path of 'good living' on earth. If a man is to live 'good living' on earth, if he wants to see glorious sights, if he wants to have pure and sincere thoughts, then he must first direct his vision towards 'Shakthi' Mother, the ever auspicious consort of Siva.

'Good living' is for everyone and is not limited to the householders. The great ones have stated in many places over and over again the importance of adopting the principles of 'good living' in respect of all walks of life.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa reiterated this principle many times and said, "One who fails to learn, fails to live". He mentioned that for 'good living' it is essential that people learn the fundamentals of life. When people came to him for knowledge, he would say to them to learn good things, beneficial things from good, pious persons. Ramakrishna said to them that knowledge obtained from good people, would direct them to 'good living' on earth.

If one does not want to learn anything, does not want to understand anything but egoistically portrays himself as a 'learned man' as a knower of everything, that one cannot be expected to attain 'good living' /happiness on earth.

Experience is the greatest wisdom. Spending five minutes with a man of wisdom, one is able to absorb his wisdom. Elders are experienced and thus have first hand knowledge, but today people do

not seem to have any regard for the elderly and do not wish to enter into conversations with them.

If I am talking to you today for hours, it is because of the lessons I learnt from my superiors and the elderly. Elders, who have passed the age of eighty. I sit beside them and hear what they have to say about many things. What they have said has taken me to many places. Their experience is my greatest teacher. Refusing to see beyond ourselves and saying that we know everything is a huge mistake. For such people, their ego acts as a hindrance for 'good living' on earth. If one is to live 'good living' then one must seek the company of the pious, experienced people and acquire knowledge through them. One must learn from others experience, hear the words of truth and have an understanding of our religion.

Education helps us towards good living' - Only proper education helps us towards 'good living'. Proper education, is to understand the principles behind, 'mother, father, guru and god. To worship mother is important, through her blessings we are sure to live a life of 'good living' on earth. One worships the father for not only his blessings but to obtain his praise as well. But today, this tradition is fading away. Now, people have to teach and remind us how to honour our mother and father.

I have seen in many places where our religion gives importance to this great tradition of honouring mother and father. It is one of the many important ways to 'good living' but today, we do not see children worshipping the feet of their parent's.

We see this in other religions but very rarely do we see this in our religion. The reason for this is because, we have failed to learn the lessons of 'good living'. Today, whether it be in India or Jaffna, the children are hesitant to worship the feet of their parent's. It is a shame,

at wedding ceremonies, the person videoing has to remind the couple to fall at their parent's feet for the completeness of the videoing of the ceremony and even before the bride falls at her parent's feet, others rush in and hold her to protect the expensive saree from being soiled. When as toddlers, having fallen many times, who was it that cared and carried them every time they fell? It is the parents. A child's position in every aspect is due to the parent's care and upbringing. It is sad that others have to remind the children to fall at their parent's feet.

I have been to many graduation ceremonies at Jaffna University and twice, I was invited to graduation ceremonies at the Peradeniya University. Apart from the misunderstandings and the unnecessary tensions between the Sinhala and Tamil communities, there is something valuable that we all can learn from the Sinhalese people. At the ceremonies that I attended at Peradeniya, I noticed that the Sinhalese children, before accepting their awards, first make it a point to fall at their parents feet. But, so far, never have I seen a Tamil child falling at his or her parent's feet at any Jaffna University graduation ceremonies.

The reason I say this is because, it is essential for 'good living' that children worship their parents. The Lord's blessings flow to the child through their parents and therefore, it is a vital foundation for a child's 'good living' on earth. The elders must set an example to their children by worshipping their parents, there is no other way to teach a child than by setting good examples.

For 'good living' it is also essential that, apart from worshipping one's parents and respecting the elders, children should learn to live according to the tradition and culture of our religion. I know it is difficult for children who are brought up in a foreign country to appreciate this great tradition and culture of ours. I have been to many countries, I have observed the situation well.

Today, the parents have to beg their children to come and say 'hello' to guests. They would come and leave immediately after a quick wave and a glance. I am not blaming the children at all and neither am I blaming the parents, what can I say, obviously it is meant to be this way. When I go to houses, the parents have to beg their children to come and say 'hello', I eagerly look forward to their warm welcome, hoping that they would greet me in the traditional way with folded hands but none of that happened.

But all I got was a mere hand wave in the air. I am not saying this to run you down or to find fault with you. I enjoy your country, your homes, your learning, your talents and so on but I am doubtful as to whether these children would ever call another speaker after I am gone. I have seen this in many countries and not only here, therefore, I am not blaming you people at all. It is the environment, the surrounding that is the cause of all this. Science and religion both say that a man is affected by his environment, which is very true. There are certain, core fundamental principles that one has to embrace unconditionally, regardless of anything. When someone visits your house, you should greet them with a warm welcome, does not matter what language, words and gestures, but it must be warm and friendly. If we fail to do this, we are not humans.

A mother that carried the child for 10 months, feeding the child, giving everything she can and bringing the child to this position, does not expect anything from a child but only finds joy in his or her smile. This beautiful smile is divine, it is a gift that God gave only to humans. You can make an elephant dance, make a horse jump, make a parrot talk, for example, the other day I went to a park to find a talking bird, I said 'Hello' and the bird greeted me with a 'hello'. But, try and go in front of any animal and smile, you will not find that smile returned. Maha Lakshmi, has given this great gift of smile only to humans. When we meet people, we must smile, this smile can give great relief to us. To

live with smiles, we endlessly pursue material wealth, education and so on in order that we may continue to live with smiles/happiness. If you cannot smile at another person whether be at a temple or elsewhere, but instead keep thinking to yourself as to why you should be smiling at this stranger; well, you are making a great mistake. Greet everyone with a smile, including strangers, they are not strangers they are human beings. People feel good to see smiling faces. It is very healthy.

In Jaffna, we go to different places to collect funds for various activities. For example, the temple priests were facing many difficulties without a job and were placed in Chavakacheri due to the decline in temple worship as a result of the ongoing war. At that time, Sivathamil Chelvi Thangamma Appakutti Ammayar, a few others and myself felt that we need to do something about it. Unlike others, who can survive doing other tasks, the temple priest cannot do these type of work to survive. They were struggling for food. To help them with funds, we visited each and every house in Thenmaraadchi, Paruthithurai. I had a friend who came along with me to people's houses and after we were greeted by the hosts, this friend of mine would make kind remarks about their family. The hosts are obviously happy to hear good things about themselves. They would bring their children's album and put in front of us happily and eagerly wait for more good comments from us. After talking about their children, they would later talk about their pets and all we do is to listen attentively to their stories. There is always something positive, if you care to look, and of course after an hour of praise, kind words, encouragement and smiles, we would get a cheque for a meager Rs. 100.00. We then go to the next house.

'Good living' also means that one must be successful in their endeavors. Praise all. It brings success to your tasks.

*'A green leaf to God,
A mouthful to the cow,
A handful of food to another,
A kind word to everyone.*

Today, the biggest obstacle for 'good living' is the absence of kind words. No one knows to talk properly, if they do open their mouths nothing positive comes out but arguments. You greet them warmly and ask them how they are keeping; they do not reply positively with good words, instead talk negatively and start arguing about various matters. When your words are kind and positive, it is good for the country, good for the family and good for one's ownself. Thiru Valluvar in his Thiru Kural, as a principle of 'good living' stated that one should always speak kind words. Thirumoolar in his 'Thirumanthiram speaking of kind words stated that, "Nothing is left, but kind words to everyone".

When you speak to some people, you can obviously see the negative remarks and gossips coming out about others. Questions that make them feel good by putting the others down. Unwarranted questions such as 'when and how did you get the chance of coming overseas, did you come as a refugee'; these useless, pathetic questions take one nowhere in life. You see, why don't people for once realise that we are all human beings, it is human beings that have come. The principle of life is that, human beings should help human beings. What is the use of knowing when anyone arrived, does it matter whether it is earlier, later or in-between? We all have come to this world in-between and we shall all depart from this world in-between.

Therefore, for 'good living', not only should we speak kindly to one another but also move well with everyone. Some do not even know their neighbours. Why? Are they not humans that live next-door, surely they are not animals. Regardless of their colour, race, religion, language, speak to them. Call them over and say to them that we are all

humans and we should be of help to each other. It is funny that we speak with strangers and greet them while travelling in a public transport, but do not wish to speak to our neighbours. You all have come to live in this neighbourhood, why is that you do not wish to speak? Some say 'we do not move with them' or make comments such as 'there are so many Tamil people around here, so we are moving out of the place'. Now, is this something to be proud of? Not only here, even in other countries, there are people who feel good and are proud of this. If anyone thinks that this is something to be proud of, think again, they have no pride in them whatsoever. These are all marks of shame, and not pride.

Our life is short and so to be sure of 'good living', first worship God, be kind to others, have a pleasant face, forget anger, be united and helpful to others. We must cultivate these key, vital qualities in us. This is divinity. Through these divine principles, one is assured of 'good living' on earth.

Today, guru bhakthi, respect to one's teacher is in fast decline. I have observed this situation in Australia, as well as in London. I have a friend who is a teacher in London and he said that they address him by name. Even here I asked Brother, Eelalingam, he said the same, they call by name. I guess it is O.K. It could be the country, the environment. But, during our days, guru bhakthi, respect to one's teacher is placed at higher level, sadly it is now fading away. Without the guru's blessings, one's life is wasted. A teacher's blessings have made many people live. To all those who have come here, please place your hands on your hearts and tell me, has not our religion revealed to us the fundamental concept of 'Mother, Father, Guru and God. Guru is placed third, to show you all that, if not for your teachers/gurus, you could not have come to this position as a learned person. Therefore, it is said that, you should respect your guru/teacher, respect your school/

college/university. Why? because they have helped you to have food on the table today. My teacher has taught me a lot on guru bhakthi.

My teacher, Thiruvati Mahadeva who is here today has just arrived from another country. He once wrote an article in the Jaffna newspaper 'Eelanadu', about the changing nature of our society. The title of his article, 'Good Bye To Teachers'. He wrote about a teacher who started his career in teaching when he was 18 years of age. Once, this person, at the age of 28, was at the Thataatheru junction waiting for a bus, a student of him got out of his bike, approached him and touched his feet. The student said to him, "Sir you taught me, you beat me, my father did not have any education, he cannot even sign his name. But, today, I am a Doctor, in-charge of a big hospital in Jaffna. When patients come to me with great pain for help, I think of my teachers like you, who have tirelessly taught us". He touched his feet, saying "You are God". The teacher was pleased and blessed him.

One day at the age of 38, in the same place, he met another student. This boy, a smoker, threw his cigarette and approached his teacher. No respect whatsoever stood in the same place and greeted him. Ten years ago, a student fell at the feet of his teacher and greeted him that way. This student too, said "Teacher, you taught me in Keerimalai, I am doing well, my family is well, all due to your grace". Teacher blessed the student.

Another 10 years later, another student approached him again with a cigarette in his hand. He did not want to throw it away but instead held it behind his back letting all the smoke behind him. He said to the teacher, "I am your student and I am holding a good post". It is a mark of disrespect to smoke cigarettes in front of one's teachers. You can clearly see the crisis of guru bhakthi, the fading away of guru bhakthi. The teacher blessed him as well.

Another 10 years later, another student, from overseas came in a motor bike, breaking right in front of his teacher. The student greeted "Sir do you know me", he did not have the slightest courtesy to get off his bike. The teacher shocked, asked this person to take the pot off his head, the helmet. After the usual exchange of greetings, the student while seated on his bike asked the teacher, "Sir could I borrow a box of matches from you", the teacher was speechless. Later, this great man passed away.

You can see how society is changing for the worst. No regard for one's teachers, no guru bhakthi. Guru bhakthi is fast fading away everywhere. Our true education is based on our religious principle of "Mother, Father, Guru, God". How are we to convey this fundamental principle to our next generation? Only, if everyone adheres to this principle unconditionally would it be easy to convey this message to our younger generation. True leadership is exemplary. It is futile to give lip service to God everyday in the morning by chanting "Mother, Father, Guru, God"; it would be nothing but only a poetic imagination. But, if we are to embrace this vital principle, in thought, word and deed, it would cease to be a mere imagination but the core of our life.

Therefore, if we are to be assured of 'good living' on earth, people from all walks of life, must come to realise that our lives could be subject to pain and suffering depending on how we act. Life could be lived in any country, Swami Vivekananda's discourses on divine life, which he spoke 100 years ago in the city of Chicago has lit thousands of people's lives, who in turn have purified this world. I can see no deficiency for material things anywhere in the West. In Australia you can get anything, also in London and Canada. Then, what is the real deficiency? What we lack is good people. We cannot easily find good people, in numbers.

A man of great wisdom in the west, was once walking around with a lamp in hand in broad daylight, people looked at him as a madman. One man approached him and said "You have written many books and guided many by your words of wisdom, but, why is it that you go around carrying a lit lamp in this broad daylight?" He answered "Yes, the sun has risen, but man has not yet risen and I am still looking for a good human being?". You can see this great symbol in many places in England, the carved images of a man with a lamp in his hand. The wisdom behind this great symbol is that, keep looking for a good person.

Today we too have to be going around with a lit lamp. First we should hold the lamp in front of us and sincerely ask the question 'am I a good person? Is the light of wisdom shining in me?' After we have answered these questions, we can see the world with it.

Therefore, prepare yourselves to live 'good living' on earth. The ones that have proclaimed this great truth of life belong to our religion. One should try to understand the essence of our religion through the life stories of those great ones. Please teach your children, the essence of our religion and try to practice the essence of our religion, respect the elders, understand your religion. When we make it a habit to practice our religion, then our children will automatically learn by our examples and would be set in the right path toward 'good living' on earth. This will always ensure that our true inner essence live.

My prayers to the Al mighty God that you may all live happily; may our holy country attain freedom and may the world attain peace with divine blessings to all, I conclude my talk for today and hope to see you all tomorrow.

Thank you!



Mr.Aaru Thirumurugan is a teacher by profession, a social worker by choice and a speaker par excellence.Vowed to a life of celibacy, he firmly believes in the dictum that **“service to humanity is divinity”**. He spends the whole of his waking hours by turns, at his school, instructing and enlightening his students and at the various charitable institutions set up by him, catering to the needs of the orphaned, the handicapped, the aged and the displaced. At times one could also find him at temples and public halls delivering speeches on Hinduism and Tamil culture, in his own inimitable style.

The present book contains an English rendering of his speeches made in Sydney on Saiva Siddhantha as revealed in the Thirumanthiram and the Thevarams. Some fundamental tenets of the world's oldest religion are presented in a simple but impressive language. The book provides an interesting reading.

Mrs.Bavani Brahatheeswaran deserves the praise and gratitude of the readers for her faithful and excellent translation.

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