

TAMIL HUMANISM

A MEANINGFUL LIFE IN THIS WORLD



*Biographies:
Tamil Prophet
and
Tamil Saints*

SEENIVASA - MOODALI VERSION
Seenivasa (1861) & R.M. Moodali (1907)

THIRU MOODALI

Biographies: Tamil Prophet and Tamil Saints

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P.O. Box 153

Desainagar

South Africa

4405

Email: thiru@tamilhumanism.com

Website: www.tamilhumanism.com

Facebook: Thiru Moodali

Facebook group: Tamil Humanism

Facebook page: Tamil Humanism

Twitter: @Tamil Humanism

Linkin: Thiru Moodali

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DEDICATED

To Tamil Humanists

The Tamil Humanist symbol

A is the first letter and with other letters forms the Tamil alphabet. It is also the first letter of the word 'Anbe'. 'Anbe' means love. So the letter A is a symbol of love.

The circle around the letter A symbolizes the earth. This emphasizes the universality of love and the philosophy of Tamil Humanism.

The shape of the heart around the earth is a symbol of love and healthy living.

The two rings overlapping together is a letter from the Indus Valley script. It is the symbol of humanism, human unity and cooperation.

This Tamil Humanist symbol defines Tamil Humanism's unique identity and its philosophy's continued existence since the inception of the Indus Valley civilization to the present times.

Red, Black and yellow are traditional Tamil colours. Blue is the colour of the earth from space.

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1. Thiruvalluvar

Thiruvalluvar is a Messenger of God, a Prophet and a celebrated Tamil poet who wrote the Thirukural. He is also known by other names like Theiva Pulavar, Valluvar and Poyyamozhi Pulavar.

Thiruvalluvar was born on 15 January 31 BC or the second day in the month of Thai during the Pongol Festival. His father was Mayilaikizhar, the Vellala Chieftain in Mayilapur in Tamil Nadu. Mayilaikizhar and his wife had a happy marriage. They were immersed in joy when Valluvar was born.

Thamizhavel, his relative, occupying the post of Valluvar (chamberlain) under the Pandyan King at Madurai, named the male child as Valluvan.

Valluvan as a youth grew into a student, farmer and State Advisor. He was a textile weaver by profession.

While returning from the farm, Valluvan met Vasuki. She was the daughter of the Vellala Chieftain Vazhithunaivar of Kavithipakkam who owned a thousand ploughs. Both fell in love and the marriage was solemnised.

She was a chaste, devoted and an ideal wife. Thiruvalluvar showed by example that a person can lead the life of a householder and at the same time lead a life of purity and sanctity.

A beautiful daughter was born. They named her Mullai and brought her up with loving care.

As soon as she awoke at dawn, Vasuki offered respects to her husband without worshipping multiple Gods.

A poet suffering from poverty with his ailing wife and hunger stricken ten children came for help. Valluvar told Vasuki that poverty is the root cause for many miseries found in this world.

Some years passed since the demise of their parents. Though he became poor, he gave presents to Panan and Padini, the minstrel couples from Pandya kingdom. The man said that ascetic life is the best. The woman said that domestic life is the best. Valluvar asked them to stay with them for some days and he will tell them latter which is best.

Nagavel, son of his late relative Etti and merchant of Madurai came to him with nine gems. He did not pay proper wage to the palanquin bearer. Valluvar told Nagavel to give him the proper wage. He did give because he was told to.

An old man came to Valluvar. His daughter is pretty but because he has no money to get her married she is becoming aged. He said only Valluvar alone can help. Valluvar had nothing except very few jewels of Vasuki and Mullai who knowing his mind handed over them to the old man.

Nagavel told his Auntie that his uncle Valluvar ruined himself by giving charity. She told Nagavel that his principle is her principle. It is her duty to adhere to it.

Nagavel became infatuated with Mullai. Valluvar sent him back refusing the present of nine gems he offered.

When Valluvar was about to vacate his mansion to the rich man who purchased it, a poor girl requested him to spare two gold coins to give medical treatment to her mother who is on her death bed. Valluvar asked the rich man to lend him two gold coins. The rich man asks for a surety. He said he has sold his mansion to him and the price is surety. He asked him to give to this girl. The rich man gave the girl.

Leaving the mansion, Valluvar lived in a mud house resorting to weaving for his livelihood.

In 300 BC, Elala Chola, the King of the Tamil country ruled over Eelam. Elalasingan was his descendent and ship merchant of Mayilapur. Valluvar went to his house regarding his profession. Valluvar enquired if Elasingan is available. The man that opened the door said he is praying in the next room. Valluvar asked him if he is praying or in the port. Then Elalasingan came to welcome him into the house. He said that even though he was praying, his mind was worried over his ship stranded in the port. Valluvar found out what was in his mind. He then accepted Valluvar as his teacher. He is his first disciple.

Elasingan said that the people of Mayilapur suffer due to failure of monsoon. He asked his Master in what way shall he help them. Valluvar said to mitigate the killing hunger of the poor, throw open your paddy barn at once.

He told Valluvar that he has faith that his stranded ship will be restored if his revered hands touch the rope. He asked him to come to the port with him. Valluvar touched and pulled the rope saying 'Eliah, Elelo'. Elalasingan and the boatmen did the same thing. The ship was restored.

One day in the evening, Elalasingan and Mullai met in a garden and became lovers.

Elalasingan said: 'Master you worship Siva and the various other names of God as one and the same God. Valluvar said: 'There is only one God, but religions are many.'

He then called for his wife Vasuki. She was drawing water from the well and she left the pot half way up and ran to attend to her husband. He told her the old rice is hot. Bring the fan. She came and fanned the hot rice. Moved by Valluvar eating old rice, Elalasingan invited his family to be his household. But he did not agree. Elalasingan said that he is eating little rice with more water. Why should he eat that food? Valluvar replied that he got this food out of his labour. There is nothing more delicious than this.

While Valluvar was spinning, the shuttle fell below. He told Vasuki to bring the lamp to search the shuttle. She brought it to him gladly.

Mayilapur Chieftain sent his priest with a bag of gold to Valluvar to eulogize him by composing poems. Valluvar told the priest, that he is not a poet to eulogise mortals. His principle is to eulogise immortal truths. He told him to return the gold to the Chieftain.

Valluvar was elucidating his principles to Elalasingan and other students. A stranger came to him. The stranger said his name is Koodal arasan. He asked him to accept him also as a student. Valluvar accepted him. A Brahmin student objected. He said that he is an untouchable. It is

against his caste to study with an untouchable because he is Brahmin. Valluvar said that all people are equal. Differences are only in their occupations. The Brahmin asked if one's duty is enjoined by caste? Valluvar said that duty is enjoined by all that is good and not caste. The Brahmin boy asked do not the Brahmins belong to a higher caste. Valluvar said that one with morality is higher in piety. There is no such thing as caste. Brahmins and Tamil people are equal.

The rich boy asked how he of higher status in wealth can study with him of lower status in poverty. Valluvar answers that the higher are not higher if they don't possess higher qualities. The lower are not lower if they don't possess lower qualities. He asked them if they understood his teachings.

One Saiva saint came to Valluvar with poetess Avvaiyar and Kabilar to know about the secrecy of Saint Siva's dance. How does a poor weaver licking the thread know the secrecy of Saint Siva who dropped his earring. While dancing Saint Siva's earring fell. He picked it up sprawling his foot and fixed his ear lifting his leg as a form of dance unnoticed by Saint Kali.

He began to dance lifting his leg. Kali stopped due to shyness. Saint Siva danced with Saint Kali at Thiruvallangadu to put down her pride.

Thamizhavel passed away. He was asked by the King to kindly accept his post of Valluvar and guide him in administration of the State. Valluvar accepted the post as an opportunity given by God to accomplish his principles.

The minstrel couple were the first people to proclaim this good news in Pandya Kingdom.

Valluvar asked them if they had doubt about their original question whether domestic or ascetic is better. The man minstrel answered that they understood. If a woman gets a loving husband who treats her like you and the woman said if a husband gets a modest wife like Mother Vasuki, domestic life is better. Valluvar said that the domestic life of virtue and of making others also virtuous is better than renunciation of ascetics. People are social beings.

Elelasingan asked his Master when he shall see him again. The king Vegevel said to Valluvar that Elelasingan and he are friends. Nagavel said to Valluvar that they leave for Madurai tomorrow. Valluvar understood why Nagavel came that day with nine gems.

Valluvar took over the post of Valluvar at Madurai. The confidential State Adviser post was superior to the Minister. The King forsaking the minister gave the post to a mendicant.

The minister was upset. He together with Nagavel and Karkuzhali started to cause a disturbance.

The minister prompted other religious leaders to instigate religious feud in the country. The Vedic saint Nalgar Velviyar came to the King. He told the King his rule should embrace Vedic tenets. The king replied that only sometime before the saints belonging to Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism came and compelled him that his rule should embrace their religions.

The king went to Valluvar and said: 'You alone can show me a Path.' Valluvar said in politics you should hear tenets whoever tells and find the truth. You need not hear a particular tenet only. Valluvar's Path was Tamil Humanism, the Path of Virtue which was secular.

Karkuzhali tried to entice Valluvar. He told Karkuzhali: 'there is nothing greater than a woman with chastity. Oh woman of two minds, reform and live with one mind hereafter'.

Elelasingan came to Madurai due to ill treatment of Mayilapur chieftain. Uggiraperuvazhuthi requested him to continue his trade in Pandya Kingdom. Nagavel pretended to be friendly with Elelasingan. Nagavel appointed his mercenary Villavan as a bodyguard to the King.

Vengaimarpar, ruler of Kanapair, a vassal of Pandiya kingdom planned to invade Madurai and persuaded the ruler of Nanjilnadu, another vassal to join him. Valluvar detected this by sending spies and dissuaded him by a letter. But Vengaimarpan did not abandon his plan. Valluvar took a decision.

He advised the king to immediately invade Kanapar. The disgruntled Minister wanted to leave his post. Valluvar told Alavayar: 'when a scheme is entrusted to a person make him entitled to it'. Alavayar told the Commander to beat the war drum.

Making all gold earned at Korkai as one gold bar, Elelasingan inscribed 'Thiruvalluvar' on it but had to throw it into the sea to protect it from Aryan pirates. He told Valluvar his Master, that his mind is not at ease regarding the gold bar. Valluvar told him 'Things not your own cannot be preserved even with utmost care and things of your own cannot be lost even if thrown away.'

In the battlefield of Kanapar, Vengaimarpan was killed by Uggiraperuvazhuthi. Poet Aiyyoor Moolankizhar and Valluvar eulogized his victory.

One day Nagavel and Karkuzhali left the king in semi consciousness in Madurai palace garden after heavy drink. Elelasingan who found the King in the garden carried him secretly to the queen.

Valluvar in the morning urged the king in his senses. He told him that if he drinks he will lose respect from revered people. He should live with Kopperundhevi with decorum. That is dignity. The king vowed to Valluvar that he will not drink nor touch other women.

Devoid of wealth due to vices, Nagavel demanded ten thousand gold coins from the king who refused. Nagavel asked his Uncle Valluvar to at least tell the king, that he is now a pauper. Valluvar said: 'Wealth will come to those who don't covet others' wealth.'

A friend of the king came over to the palace. He overheard what Valluvar said. He told Valluvar to stop his preaching's in Pandiyan's palace. The palace is not a refuge for recluses. The king asked 'Are you insulting Valluvar' and stood up. Valluvar replied: 'are you beating your dearest friend.'

One evening in the palace prayer room, Villavan stood before Uggiraperuvazhuthi with folded hands and tears. The king inquired Villavan: 'why are there tears in your eyes. What happened?' Valluvar replied: 'In his folded hands, a knife is hidden and in his tears, your blood.'

Valluvar asked Villavan who incited you to assassinate the king. Villavan said that he had no money for drink. Nagavel gave him ten gold coins. He got him appointed as king's bodyguard to murder him.

Valluvar said he is an unscrupulous person, unfit for anything. He sold himself to Nagavel for ten gold coins for the pleasure of drink.

After the murder of the king, Nagavel's plan was to hide the blood stained knife in Valluvar's house and entangle him and Elelasingan in it. He coveted Mullai. The King punished him for his crime.

A fisherman came to Valluvar. He caught a big shark at Korkai while fishing. The gold bar was found in its stomach with Valluvar name on it. Elelasingan said: 'Master your word has come true. The wealth of his own has come to him'. Valluvar said: 'Elelasingan's wealth will not be lost even in seven seas.'

Deifying Valluvar from that event, Elelasingan hesitated to marry the daughter of the God as his wife. Valluvar elucidated that he was only a mortal and solemnized his marriage with Mullai. He was not God, he was a Prophet and a messenger of God.

Valluvar said: 'Elelasingan what is decreed as virtue is domestic life only, and it is the best if blameless. Mullai, a wife should have the excellence of home virtues and befit her husband's means'.

In 21 BC Uggiraperuvazhuthi decided to send a delegation of merchants to Augustus Caesar and strengthen the trade link. Incidentally, his envoy gave a letter requesting permission for immigration of Roman merchants at Madurai.

King Uggiraperuvazhuthi granted the Envoy permission. He told the Romans that he is also sending a delegation of merchants to Rome with Elelasingan as leader. Elelasingan said to Valluvar His Majesty has honoured him too much. Elelasingan left for Rome taking leave from Mullai. He left in the month of July and he promised Mullai he will return in December.

Uggiraperuvazhuthi understood from spies that the Chola king Karikalan was planning to invade Pandya kingdom and convened the council. He was anxious to invade his country before that. Alavayar instigated it. Valluvar said to the king: 'To Karikalan, Chera King Selvakadungo is an ally.' The king asked how to forestall the invasion.

Valluvar said: 'To change the enemy as friend.' The Council nominated Valluvar as the ambassador to the court of Karikalan. They also awarded him the title of 'Perunavala' (Great Orator) for his rhetoric.

At Kavirippompattinam, Valluvar explained to Karikalan the characteristics of the Good State, the Golden State envisaged by him. He told Karikalan it will be free from poverty, hunger, disease and hostility. The Chola king asked what is the assurance that if he doesn't invade Pandya kingdom, that the Pandyan will not invade Chola kingdom. Valluvar showed the king's poem in Madurai Tamil Academy as assurance which says that Vazhuthi will not swerve from his word even if the whole world changes its course.

The Chola Country awarded the title of "Senna podhaar" (Judicious tongued). Valluvar said: "All are my places and countries." The Chera king Selvakadungo also sent a communication seeking alliance.

Successfully completing his trade mission, Elelasingan returned from Rome to Madurai.

The King rendered two poems due to his real love life now with Kopperundhevi.

The Vedic priest Nalgur Velviyar came to him. He said: 'Oh King, Your predecessor, Peruvazhuthi perform a thousand animal sacrifices and rituals and came round this land with the title 'Palyagasalai Mudhukudumi'. So you should also perform a thousand sacrifices and rituals. Valluvar said: 'it is better not to kill one creature or to perform a thousand sacrifices'. The priest said: 'We should perform sacrifices for the God'. In turn, they will give us heaven. Valluvar said to him: 'Even if one does not get heaven, it is good to give only. Benevolence seeks nothing in return. What does the world give back to rain? One living on earth as he should live will be placed among other souls dwelling in heaven. The priest said: 'You are a real ascetic in domestic life, without tonsure like a Buddhist monk or tangled hair like me.' Valluvar said: 'Tonsure and tangled hair are outwardly. To avoid that condemned by the enlightened is holy.' The king was then convinced he will not perform animal sacrifices and rituals. Valluvar rejected Hindu rituals.

Alavayar invited Valluvar to his house that night as he has doubts to discuss. He wanted to fetch him but Valluvar said: 'Friend, it's my duty, I'll come myself.'

That night Alavayar said 'Valluvar the Great, warm welcome to you'. Valluvar thanked him.

The King asked Valluvar: 'Perunavalar what is the benefit of penance.' Valluvar said 'Those excelled in the power of penance can even conquer death.'

The king offered Valluvar milk which is sweeter than anywhere.

Valluvar said: 'is that milk sweeter than virtue, wealth and love', and drank the milk.

The Minister Alavayar said: 'Valluvan, you drank milk mixed with poison.' Valluvar said: 'Your culture is to give your loving friend poison mixed with milk.'

Valluvar fell unconscious. Alavayar said: 'Power of penance, will conquer death. With Valluvar out, his post is for me.'

The king drew out his sword, and said 'My doubt has been proved correct. I should take him to the palace physician at once.' Valluvar regained consciousness and told King Uggiraperuvazhuthi to put his sword into the sheath.

Valluvar refused to take treatment but survived by his power of penance. The king was particular about punishing Alavayar.

Valluvar said that the king's punishment to Nagavel is royal justice.

My method to punish Alavayar is, and the king interrupted saying: 'Order me, I'll carry it out.' Valluvar said: 'give my post to him. You have given word.'

The king was sad and that Valluvar was leaving him.

Valluvar said: 'I am leaving political life. Time has come for me to accomplish the duty in this world for which I was waiting. Life is compressed into three parts as Virtue, Wealth and Love. Now people in this world are living without understanding what they really mean. Hence I have

decided to travel propagating my principles to them and write down a book called Tamil Marai (Muppai).’ ‘I have received a revelation from God, The Eight Divine Virtues. It is the Path of Virtue, the Tamil Religion which is Tamil Humanism.’

He returned to Mayilapur and depended on God’s grace.

The learned persons blessed him by saying: ‘Long live Valluvar, Long live Tamil Marai.’

He lived for a short while in Madurai. He then moved to Jaffna. Jaffna means “the city of the lord of bards”. The city was named after Thiruvalluvar as he was the most celebrated poet and the lord among the bards. He spent some time in Jaffna with his disciple, the grandson of Ellalan Chola, the King of Eelam. Valluvar with Vasuki travelled to Eelam and then to Varanasi, Patalputhiram and Himalayas preaching his principles.

After completing his travel, Valluvar stayed in his mud house in Mayilapur and began writing his book Tamil Marai (Muppai) under an LLuppai tree.

After completing the Tamil Marai (Muppai) he travelled to Madurai to submit his work to the Pandyan king. The Pandya kings ensured that many Tamil poets flourished. The Tamil Sangam of Madurai which is an assembly of eminent poets, scholars and researchers introduced the Thirukkural to the world.

Kapilar presided in the Madurai Tamil Academy to hear Tamil Marai. (Muppai). Valluvar was requested to sit on the Sangam Plank instead of with the other academicians who felt that they did not deserve to sit with him as equals.

Valluvar said: ‘I have dealt with virtue, wealth and love the three vital divisions of life in Tamil Marai verses (couplets). Kapilar said: ‘you have not dealt with Hindu liberation or fatalism?’

Valluvar said it is not Tamil literary tradition. He began reading his book of divine revelation the Tamil Marai (Muppai): ‘A’ is the first of letters...’ He continues to the end of the book. Valluvar asked the academicians to express their views.

The academy praised him. The saints owned Valluvar as belonging to their respective religions. The foreign scholars compared him to Zorathustra, Socrates and Confucius. Accepted and admired by Madurai Tamil Academy, the book Tamil Marai henceforth was called as Thirukkural, Poyyamozhi, Thamizhmarai, Podhumarai, Ulagapodhumurai, Dheivanool and Muppai. Valluvar was called as Thiruvalluvar having prefix Thiru and also Mudhapavalar, Dhevar and Dheivapulavar.

Valluvar said to the king: ‘a small dew drop depicts even a Palmyra tree, so also the Tamil Marai. Oh king, spread these spotless couplets. Preach to every Tamil the message of God.’

Uggiraperuvazhuthi donated ten million gold coins to Thiruvalluvar who declined requesting to divert the same for charity.

One day, Thiruvalluvar had to give asylum to a servant maid of Kalaimangal temple from the priest who came chasing and abusing her. She said to Valluvar: ‘Master you saved my chastity.’

The ruler of Nanjilnadu, joining with the ruler of Padhiyil hills invaded Madurai. Uggiruperuvazhuthi requested Thiruvalluvar to come to his military camp. Uggiruperuvazhuthi was in serious condition. Valluvar said: 'My heart is bleeding.'

The king said: 'The tears of my leader on my chest. If a hero can die with tears of his leader, such death should be begged and got. Long live divine Tamil Marai.'

A commander said to Valluvar: 'Dhevar, I took precautions to protect the king's life but...'
Valluvar said: 'What powers so great as of circumstances? Even if one contrives some other thing, it is beforehand.'

Mayilapur Chieftain repented to Thiruvalluvar regarding his mistakes after his return. Elelasingan expressed to him his grievance. He said: 'I am worried that I don't have a child in spite of possessing millions in wealth. Valluvar said: 'Children are a blessing.'

Vasuki fell sick and became bedridden. She asked Valluvar about the one doubt she had. She said: 'You requested me to place a needle and a cup with water while serving food to you. I did accordingly. But you had not touched them even once. My mind wants to know the reason.'
Valluvar said: 'Many people starve for want of food. I requested so to inform the world that nobody should waste food. While serving food, you never scattered even one grain of rice. Hence there was no use for the needle and water.'

She asked Valluvar: 'Dhevar, last question, can woman attain heaven?'

Valluvar says: 'Had the woman been dutiful and devoted to her husband, she will attain heaven.'

She said: 'I was seeking a boon to breath my last on the lap of my Prophet, hearing the Divine Tamil Marai. That is granted to me. Oh my dear...'

Valluvar said: 'Oh giver of good food, obedient ever to my word, caressing my feet, last to sleep, first to rise, Oh innocent one, have you gone? By night henceforth what sleep to my eyes?'

Thiruvalluvar renounced mentally also and after some days passed away in the month of February.

Mullai cried: 'Oh father, father'.

Elelasingan said Thiruvalluvar's body has returned to Nature since his duty was over.

The Mayilpur Chieftain said: 'Oh Light of the World has departed? Elelasingan we should bury this uncrowned king of Tamil Nadu in a grand manner.'

Elelasingan said: 'But he has ordered me some days before to bury him in a simple manner.'
Valluvar said: 'Elesingan, bury me in a simple manner according to my wish.'

Elesingan built a Tamil Sangam and a Memorial centre in Mayilapur at the place where Thiruvalluvar and Vasuki were buried. He, Mullai, Mayipaur Chieftain and the people worshiped at that Tamil Sangam.

Elelasingan said in memory of Thiruvalluvar: 'Who on earth has lived domestic life as he should live will be placed among the Prophets dwelling in heaven.'

Mullai said in memory of Vasuki: 'Not worshipping Gods through idols, rituals and superstition but doing her family duties, rain falls instant at her word.'

The Tamil Calendar is dated from the birth of Thiruvalluvar and is called Thiruvalluvar Aandu. The Tamil New Year begins on the 14 January with the Pongal Festival. The next day is celebrated as Thiruvalluvar Day.

2. Avvaiyar 1

Avvaiyar 1 was a Tamil saint, a woman born in 5 BC. Avvaiyar means “a respectable woman who is old in wisdom”. She was an old lady in the Tamil country in ancient times. She was well known and the people popularly called her ‘Avvaiyar’. She was a very popular bard who went about the courts of local chieftains singing their praises and make friends with them.

The occasion of her very birth was significant and tragic. There was famine in the Tamil country and food scarcity. Her parents could not afford to feed her. They agreed to give the baby up for adoption to a wandering singer. The mother could not easily pull herself from the baby.

At that time, the baby Avvaiyar 1 comforted her with the words: ‘Lord Siva who brought me forth into this world has not disappeared, Oh mother! Even though dire famine stalks the land, the burden of supporting me is for God. Do not be afraid to leave me alone.’ The baby was brought up by a wandering singer or minstrel, one of the lowest classes in society according to Hindu laws. This caste system created the food shortages and caused Avvaiyar 1 to be separated from her family. The caste system is a system of economic and social oppression introduced by the Hindus into Tamil society. She grew up into womanhood and in course of time attained old age. Although she has always said that the married state is the best, she remained a spinster all her life. In all the numerous historical stories connected with her life, she is always referred to as the Grandma Avvaiyar.

Adhikaman, a village Chieftain, gave her amla fruits which confer longevity on the eater and knowing that a long life Avvaiyar 1 would be of immense use for the country and enrich the world with her song and services. She ate mostly a fruit diet and lived to a very old age.

Early upbringing by a wandering minstrel seems to have given her the desire to travel and made her a singer and a poet. Her early life had left its impression upon her throughout her life. Though she was respected, feared and courted by royal princes, she always identified herself with the meek and the oppressed. She was ever grateful for the little acts of kindness shown to her by humble people. She thanked her benefactors in songs. The moment she sang about any one all worldly possessions was showered on that person in abundance.

Once when asked to define the four goals of human life, she replied: Giving charity is Virtue; earning in the righteous path is Wealth; perfect Love between man and woman is physical and emotional pleasure, non-attachment to all these with the heart set on God is liberation.’ She preached The Path of Virtue, ‘Tamil Humanism’, the ancient religion of the Tamils.

On another occasion she explained the essence of Tamil Religion as: ‘That is true religion which perceives unity in all things; that is true valour which has conquered the senses. That is true

learning which enables one's name to be kept alive for ever; and that indeed is true sustenance which does not make one a slave to another.'

Avvaiyar 1 was also a friend to Thiruvalluvar. She visited him and learnt from him the Path of Virtue. Just like Thiruvallvar she composed books on Virtue.

She visited the Ragasiyam in Chidambaram. She meditated on the the Space of the Ragasiyam which is a symbol of God. Thereafter she mediatated on the Tamil alphabets which hangs in the Ragasiyam and using each of those alphabets she wrote the Aaththisoodi. Each ethical maxim begins with the letter of the alphabet.

She always make friends with the poor, sharing their fortunes and laying down ethical maxims for people to follow and lead a righteous life.

She composed a book called Aaththisoodi.

3. Maanikkavaasagar

Maanikkavaasagar was born in 40 AD in Thiruvaathavur in the neighbourhood of Madurai, which is the Capital of the Pandya Kingdom. His father belonged to a clan from which usually the King's ministers were chosen. He was called Vaathavuraar after his birthplace. When he was barely sixteen years old, he had mastered the scriptures. Even the learned scholars admired his wit and wisdom.

The King of Madurai, Arimarththana Pandiyan heard of Vaathavuraar's abilities, took him into the State services and discovered in him a proficiency in administration and organisation. The King made him his Prime Minister. He entrusted the entire responsibility of the government of the country in his hands. He proved to be quite an efficient administrator. Vaathavuraar shone with extraordinary brilliance.

However, Vaathavuraar in his heart was longing to spend his life in pursuit of spiritual perfection. His devotion to Namasivaya grew and he was constantly in search of a Teacher.

One day as the King was holding court in his palace, a messenger brought the news that fine horses for sale had arrived at a seaport. The Pandiyan Kingdom had trade relations with the Roman Empire. Their main export to Rome was spices and gold. The King at once commissioned his Chief Minister to proceed with the necessary money to Thirupperunthurai to buy the horses.

Thiruvaathavuraar started on the mission with a large entourage. As he approached Thiruperunthurai, the sea port town, he heard the sound of the Holy Name 'Namasivaya' He proceeded in the direction from which the call came and halted at a grove where he saw a Teacher seated beneath a sacred tree and surrounded by devotees. The Teacher was none other than Saint Siva who was a master to give salvation to Thiruvaathvuraar.

Saint Thomas, the apostle of Jesus, together with other followers arrived on a ship in 53 AD from the Roman Empire. He learnt the Tamil language and religion. He integrated concepts of Christianity into the Tamil Religion. Because of purity, leadership and devotion, the Tamils gave him the name Siva. Thereafter he is called Saint Siva. Many Tamil believe that Maanikkavaasagar met Saint Thomas.

The Chief Minister recognised his Teacher at once. With overflowing love and devotion, he ran to Saint Siva and prostrated before him. He prayed to Namasivaya to allow Saint Siva to accept him and bless him. Saint Siva initiated him into the Tamil Religion of Siva Gnaanam. Vaathavuraar realised that he should surrender all wealth, body, mind and soul in the service of Namasivaya. He marked his body with holy ashes.

He sang the Siva Puranam padigam, 'Namachivaya Vaazhga'. Saint Siva was greatly pleased and gave him the title 'Maanikkavaasagar'. Saint Siva then left. Maanikkavaasagar joined the group of Siva's devotees, and fed Siva's followers and built a Tamil Sangam in Thiruperunthrai.

Separation from Namasivaya and Teacher made Maanikkavaasagar suffer intense pain and anguish. To console himself he sang the padigam ‘Meythaan Arumbi’ and lived in the remembrance of Namasivaya.

The Kings’ messengers who had accompanied him thought that he had forgotten the mission to buy the horses and they gently reminded him. Maanikkavaasagar requested them to inform the King that the horses would reach Madurai within a month.

When the King was informed of this he became furious and sent a stern note to him commanding him to return immediately with the horses or the money.

Maanikkavaasagar waited for his only Master, his spiritual Teacher. Saint Siva advised him to go to Madurai and inform the King that the horses would arrive on the day of Aavanni Mulam. Saint Siva left after giving the devotee a rare ruby which should be given to the King as a present. Maanikkavaasagar thanked Namasivaya and sang ‘Naadagaththaal Unnadiyaar’.

Maanikkavaasagar donning his ministerial robes again appeared before the King. He handed over the present of the Teacher to the King and informed him that the horses would reach the capital on the day of Aavanni Mulam. The King was highly pleased with his Chief Minister. But his pleasure did not last long. The King’s ministers reported that there was no sight of the horses either at Thiruperunthurai or anywhere else. The King ordered Maanikkavaasagar to be imprisoned and punished.

In the meantime Maanikkavaasagar prayed and sang the padigam ‘Vellan Thaazh Virisadaiyaal’ invoking Namasivaya’s grace.

The torture inflicted on him by the soldiers was unbearable. Fixing his mind on God, he sang ‘Tharikkilen Kaaya Vaazhkkai’.

As promised the horses on the Aavanni Mulam day were delivered. Accordingly the horses arrived in Madurai City led by strange looking foreigners from the Roman Empire. They were all dressed in their Roman clothing.

Saint Siva appeared as a merchant and their leader. When the King saw the fine horses, he was happy and immediately ordered Maanikkavaasagar’s release. He also apologised to him. To thank Namasivaya, Maanikkavaasagar sang ‘Anbinaal Adiyen Aaviyodu Aakkai’.

Maanikkavaasagar lost no time and tended to the King’s Court as he was anxious to see Saint Siva who had come to his rescue. Searching questions were put by the King to the horse dealer and the King asked his experts to satisfy themselves about the quality of the horses. And they did so. However, the horses that had cost the King a fortune were lost by midnight. They ran out of their stables into the streets, created pandemonium, wrought havoc and disappeared.

When the King heard the news he became furious again. He was now convinced that his Chief Minister had played a trick upon him. He ordered his arrest and torture to recover the lost money. Maanikkavaasagar was led to the sands of the river Vaigai under a scorching sun and was tortured. Again he prayed to Namasivaya and sang the padigam ‘Paarodu Vinnaay’ and ‘Sodhiye Sudare’.

The river rose abnormally and flooded the city. The people could not guess the cause of the untimely flood. The astonished and bewildered King and his courtiers realised that it was a punishment for ill-treating Maanikkavaasagar. He ran to Maanikkavaasagar and pleaded for mercy and help.

The flood gradually receded. Under his direction orders were given to the inhabitants to repair the embankment. Each one was ordered to repair an allotted portion.

Everyone except an old woman named Vanthi, who sold Pittu, a sweet edible, was engaged in the repair work. She was so much devoted to Namasivaya that she would make an offering of thanks first to God and then sell to others. She was too old to do her share of the repair work. As she was in distress she appealed to Namasivaya for help. A labourer who was also a Saint Siva out of compassion appeared before her and offered his services in return for Pittu.

With a basket on his head he sang, danced and then flung the mud on the banks of the river. He ate her offering sat idle for a while and then sang and danced while the others were seriously engaged in their task. The King's servants found the breach in the portion of bank where Saint Siva was working and reported the matter to the King.

The King who personally supervised the work noticed the negligence of the labourer and beat him on the back with his cane. A basketful of mud that he bore on his shoulders fell and closed the breach. To his astonishment the blow was felt by all people as they sympathised with the labour that was mentally ill.

The King at once realised his mistake. The labourer left. The King again realised the greatness of Maanikkavaasagar.

In the meantime, Maanikkavaasagar had reached the Tamil Sangam and was in deep meditation. Through the Grace of God, he too felt the blow. He got up from his meditation and sang the padigam 'Pannsumandha Paadarr Parisu'. He thanked God for all his guidance and help and sang the padigam 'Thandhathu Undhanay'

The King went in search of Maanikkavaasagar. He came to the Tamil Sangam and prostrated before him and requested him to accept the offer to rule the Pandya Kingdom. Maanikkavaasagar politely declined the offer but asked for permission to go to Perunthurai.

At Perunthurai he sang the padigam 'Potri Yen Vaazh Muthal' when Namasivaya commanded him to proceed to Chidambaram.

On his way to 'Thiru Uththara Kosa Manggai' he had the vision of Namasivaya. He sang the padigam 'Kadayavanai'. From there he went to several holy places. At Sirkaazhi he sang 'Ammayee Appaa' and latter 'Paal Ninayindhu' padigams.

A Teacher who was also Saint Siva appeared at Thiru Annamalai and requested Maanikkavaasagar to compose Thiruvembhavai. It was the month of Mhargazhi the month that is most auspicious. During this month the maidens rise early go to the sacred tank in groups for bathing, worship in the Tamil Sangam and sing God's praises in chorus, the song, 'Aadiyum Andhamun'. After visiting Thirukkachchi Yekambam he came to Thirukkazhkundram and sang the padigam 'Pinnakkilaatha'.

As soon as he reached Chidambaram, he entered the Tamil Sangam. He sang several hymns in praise of Namasivaya. Some of the padigams were 'Puttril Vaazh Aravum Agnjen' and 'Kanngall Irandum'

One day the King of Eelam with his daughter who was dumb visited Chidambaram. The Buddhist guru and some of his priests also accompanied the King. They had come here to meet exponents of Saivism and defeat them in debate.

Namasivaya appeared in a dream to the Saivite devotees and asked them to request Maanikkavaasagar who lived in the outskirts to agree to a debate with the Buddhist Priests. Maanikkavaasagar agreed and the debate took place in the Tamil Sangam where the Chola King was also present.

The Buddhists expounded their doctrines, and Maanikkavaasagar dwelt on the greatness of Namasivaya. Having been defeated the Buddhists began to insult Namasivaya. Maanikkavaasagar prayed to the Lord. The Buddhists were struck dumb. The King of Eelam rightly seized this opportunity and requested him to make his dumb daughter speak. Maanikkavaasagar acceded to this and prayed to God that the girl gives proper answers raised earlier by the Buddhists on Namasivaya.

By the Grace of God, the dumb daughter who was now not only able to speak but also sing and correctly answer the questions put to her. The Buddhists were wonder struck of the Grace of God. He sang the Padigam 'Pusuvadhum'.

The King of Eelam embraced the Path of Virtue, 'Tamil Humanism' or Tamil Religion. He entreated Maanikkavaasagar to show mercy on the Buddhist priests and restore to them the power of speech. Regaining this power they too became Tamil Humanists. His mission being fulfilled, Maanikkavaasagar returned to his hermitage.

A wise man who also was a Saint Siva called on Maanikkavaasagar. He expressed a desire to copy the hymns that Maanikkavaasagar has already composed and sung. He recited them and Saint Siva copied them. This book that Maanikkavaasagar composed was called Thiruvagasam. The Thiruvagasam were written down on palm leaves. Saint Siva took the scripts and left.

Saint Siva wanted to immortalise Maanikkavaasagar and to spread his glory. He kept the scripts on the steps of the Ragasiyam of the Tamil Sangam. The wise men of Thillai were surprised to see them lying there. They opened the leaves and read the contents. In the end it was written 'Maanikkavaasagar sang these verses and were recorded by Saint Siva of Chidambaram. The wise men wanted to know the meaning of these verses. He took them to the Tamil Sangam and sang the 'Achchop Padigam', 'Muththinerri Arriyaadha'. Maanikkavaasagar declared 'Namasivaya is the inner meaning of my songs'. His soul left this world and returned to the spiritual world.

4. Ilanko

Ilanko was a Tamil saint, born in 250 AD. Ilanko means “the younger prince”.

Ilanko was the younger son of King Ceralatan, and his elder brother was the Cera King Cenkuttuvan, celebrated in the Silappatikaram. This young prince belonged to a distinguished family connected by marriage alliances with the other ruling dynasties of the Tamil country and was blessed with fortune and wealth.

One day when the King Ceralatan was sitting in the audience hall, there came to the court an astrologer who predicted the immediate death of the reigning monarch and the passing of the throne to his younger son. It was a time where people had faith in astrology and superstition. The prediction was a rude shock to Cenkuttuvan, the elder son of the king and the heir apparent to the throne. Ilanko noticed this and in order that his brother might enjoy the honour attached to the throne, became a monk so that he could not be king. Becoming a monk was to assure his brother that he would not stand in the way of his hopes and aspiration. As a monk should, he left his palace for the kottam (usually situated in a suburb); and his residence came to be called Kunavayir-kottam.

Ilanko led a secluded life but a few scholars visited him (now and then). His friend and companion was Kulavanikan Cittalai Cattanar, the celebrated Sangam poet and the great author of the Manimekalai.

Well qualified for the task as a member of an important royal family of the Tamil land, Ilanko, in his retirement wrote what may be called a contemporary history of the three chief Tamil dynasties, and even planned to continue the epic Manimekalai himself. But having heard that Cattanar had begun and completed the work, he contended himself with the composition of the Silappatikaram. Like the other poets of his age, he did not go from court to court eulogizing one chieftain after another.

Ilanko’s task was to write a history, and if we bear in mind the impartiality with which he has described the Chola and the Pandiya chiefs one has to conclude that he has in no way exaggerated the achievements of his brother.

He details the life story of Saint Kannagai who was the first woman freedom fighter for the Culture of Human Rights. She abolished the caste system, rituals, superstition and mythologies in a revolution that saw the city of Madurai burn. She brought dignity and freedom to woman and ended the Ancient Hinduism in the year 240 AD. Tamils were free from Hinduism for many centuries only to be colonised by the Nayak Hindus in 1300’s and to finally embrace Modern Hinduism in the 1800’s. Ilanko reveals her greatness.

Ilanko composed a book called Silappatikaram.

5. Thirunavukarasu (Appar)

Thirunavukarasu was a Tamil saint, who was born in 573 AD and died in 654 AD. He was born at a time of Buddhist and Jain colonisation of the Tamil country.

In a village called Thiruvaamur in the South Arcot District, in the Tamil country there lived a couple Pugazhanaar and Maadiniyaar. They had two children, the first born a daughter, Thilakavathiyaar and then a son Marullneekkiyaar. Marullneekkiyaar was later known by the name Thirunavukarasu.

Thilakavathiyaar an ardent servant of God was engaged to be married to a military commander. Before the wedding however he was sent by the king to fight another king and he died in the battle. Meanwhile at Thiruvaamur, Pugazhanaar passed away and his wife Maadiniyaar also passed away. Thilakavathiyaar was not being able to bear this triple tragedy and went into depression. Marullneekkiyaar, the younger brother of Thilakavathiyaar, suspecting the peculiar behaviour of his sister told her that she was the only guardian alive to him and hence she should drop the ideas causing her depression. Thilakavathiyaar regained her normality for the sake of her brother.

Marullneekkiyaar, dispeller of ignorance was a rare prodigy of culture, character and appropriate manners. He in search of what was everlasting read sacred books of all religions. He gave up wealth and pleasure. He distributed all his possessions among the poor. He built wells, constructed tanks and planted groves. He catered liberally for the needs of learned scholars.

He was very much influenced by the teachings of the great Tamil saints. However the principles of non-violence of Jainism attracted his attention most. Jainism was the State religion in those days. Marullneekkiyaar embraced Jainism. He joined the Jain College and attained mastery over their scriptures. His learning and ascetic virtues raised him to a high position. The Jains accepted him as a great master and called him Dharumasenar. He soon became a prominent protagonist of Jainism and a valiant fighter for its cause.

Thilakavathiyaar was greatly disappointed at the changed religious attitude of her brother for whose sake she was living. She retired to the sacred shrine at Thiruvadigai Veerattaanam, lived there the life of a recluse, worshipped God and actively took part in the temple services. Her one prayer to God was that her brother should be reclaimed.

It was in response to Thilakavathiyaar's appeal that the Grace of God happened. The Lord appeared in her dream and promised that her brother's mind would change. She thanked God and kept on praying for the redemption of her brother.

Dharumasenar suffered from an acute colic pain and the Jain monastery was gloomy with sorrow. Doctors administered drugs, priests prayed and some even tried black magic cures. Nothing could make him better and Dharumasenar was struggling for his existence when his sister's memory came. He felt intuitively that it was an eye opening experience. He lost faith in Jainism black magic cures. He threw away the Jain garb and without anybody's knowledge returned to his sister. He begged for her protection. She understood that it was divine arrangement. She said that by the grace of God he would be all right.

He smeared the Holy Ashes on his forehead and repeated 'Namasivaya'. The holy ashes gave him sublime sense of peace. She led him to the temple of Siva and stood before the sanctum solemnly.

Now he received a Divine Gift, the ability to compose poems. The very first padigam that flowed out of his heart breathed the fresh air of repentance was 'Kutraayinavaarru'. He begged for forgiveness of sins committed by him and referred to the colic pain and said that it was unbearable. After he had finished singing this Padigam his pain disappeared and the voice of God was heard giving him a new name 'Thirunavukarasu' meaning the 'King of speech' and that His glory would spread everywhere. God's grace restored his faith in the Tamil Religion. He lived in the Path of God by repeating the mantra 'Namasivaya'.

The Jain teachers were angry at the turn of events. They would not permit Thirunavukarasu to go out of their fold so easily. They concocted a story to show him up as a traitor to the king and the royal religion Jainism.

The king ordered his Ministers to bring Thirunavukarasu to his court. The Jains went to his place to bring and present him before the king. Thirunavukarasu sang 'Naamaarkkum Kudiyallom' meaning that he was no longer a subject of the King and that he did not fear death as long as he was under God's protection.

Out of supreme compassion and to establish the supremacy of the Path of Virtue (Tamil Religion), Thirunavukarasu accompanied them. The very sight of him enraged the king and he asked the Jain heads to decide upon the proper punishment to be meted out.

They suggested that he should be thrown into a burning lime furnace. Accordingly he was put in a furnace for seven days. He remained there fixing his mind on God and sang the Padigam 'Maasil Veennaiyum' and kept chanting Namasivaya. The fumes of the kiln did not harm Thirunavukarasu. They were like the evening moon, the fanning breeze from the south, the tune from a harp, and the pond that was beset by the honey bees. At the end of seven days the Jains to their surprise found Thirunavukarasu alive and absorbed in deep meditation.

The Jains advised the king to poison him. Again by the grace of God, the poison was transformed into nectar. To get rid of Thirunavukarasu, the Jains advised the king to have him trampled by an elephant. The royal elephant was incited. The bold Thirunavukarasu sang the Padigam 'Sunnnavenn Santhanach Chaandham'. The royal tusker humbly saluted him with its trunk came round and prostrated at his feet. The elephant then made an angry attack on the enemies who ran for their lives.

The king was grievously worried. Finally the Jains advised him to have Thirunavukarasu tied to a stone and thrown into the sea. The king's orders were fully obeyed.

Thirunavukarasu fixed his mind on God and sang the 'Namasivaya' Padigam 'Sottrunnai Vedhiyan'. The stone floated and sailed like a boat taking him to the shore. The Tamil Matham devotees at Thirupaadirippuliyur accorded him a joyous welcome. The trials were now over. He went into the temple and worshipped God pledging his loyalty and devotion.

The king who had persecuted Thirunavukarasu recalled the Grace of God which he had witnessed and was convinced of the superiority of the Tamil Religion. The King became Tamil

in religion again and made his contribution to the re-establishment of the Path of Virtue in the Tamil country.

Thirunavukarasu spent the rest of his life in the service of God and the devotees. He went from temple to temple singing padigams in praise of God. He cleaned the holy environment with the hoe which he carried and planted trees. He protected Nature and was environmentally conscious. The hoe was a symbol defending Nature's Rights. By this simple act of revitalising the environment, Tamils were able to replace the trees that were chopped by the Jains, Buddhists and Hindus.

At Thiruththungaani Maadam he sang the Padigam 'Ponnaar Thiruvadi' and prayed to God that his arms should be impressed with the figures of the sacred trident and the Nandi so that his body might become sanctified. Through the Grace of God the desired marks was placed on his arms. He experienced supreme bliss immediately.

At Chidambaram, the very sight of the temple tower sent him into a trance. He sang the soul stirring songs 'Paththanaayp Paadamaaten', 'Annam Paalikkum' and 'Ariyaanai Andhannartham' in praise of and dedication to God in Thillai.

Thirunavukarasu left for Seerkaazhi to see the gifted child Thirunyaanasambandhar who was blessed by Saint Siva and Saint Sakthi at the age of three. The news of the coming of Thirunavukarasu reached the child. Sambandhar was overjoyed. He set out with his followers to welcome him. When they met they fell at each other's feet and Sambandhar called out 'Appar Appar' and embraced him. From that day the name Appar became more popular than Thirunavukarasu.

Then he proceeded to Thingallur. There by the Grace of God he revived Saint Appuudi Adigall's son who was bitten by a snake. He overcame their superstitious belief of the effect of the eclipse. He sang the Padigam 'Ondruu Kolaam avar' He was given a rousing welcome by Tamil devotees at Thiruvaarur. His heart overflowed with love. He shed tears of love. He danced with joy and was immersed in divine bliss and sang 'Kattravargall Unnum' a 'Thiruththaandagam' praising God.

At Thiruveezhimizhalai both Appar and Sambandhar were deeply touched by the sufferings of the people and prayed to God for relief. The famine vanished soon. They went to Thirumarraikkaadu where the main doors of the temple had remained closed for years. They heard of this when they went there. Appar sang 'panniner mozhiyaall' and by the Grace of God the doors were opened. They went in and worshipped God. When they returned to the same entrance, Sambandhar sang a padigam and by the Grace of God the doors could close.

Sambandhar's presence was required at Madurai because Jainism was spreading there. Appar told him what had happened to him and tried to stop him from going there but Sambandhar's eagerness was great and he took leave of Appar and left for Madurai.

Appar was on his way to 'Thiruppaigneeli'. He was seized with an uncommon thirst and hunger. Yet he staggered on with a will to see the Temple. Saint Siva as a wise man wearing sacred ashes appeared before him and offered him ready food. Appar partook of the divine food, drank water from the tank by the Grace of God and proceeded to Thiruppaigneeli. Saint Siva

went with him and on reaching the sacred place left. Appar now realised that God serves him through the Saints and offered his tribute to God.

After visiting Thiruvaannamalai Kancheepuram and Kaallahasti he felt a desire to go to Kailaas. He went to Vaarannaasi then he turned northwards on his journey to the Himayalas, Kailaasa. His feet were cracked and sore. He crawled on his hands, his elbows began to bleed and ribs began to break. Still Appar wanted to go to Kailasa. Saint Siva appeared to him as a wise man. He told him that he still had to sing and serve God. He pointed out to a tank nearby and asked him to enter it and assured him that he would be granted a vision of Kailas at Thiruvaiyaaru. Appar entered the wonderful tank. His wounds healed. He rose up in a tank at Thiruvaiyaaru.

He had a glorious vision there of Mount Kailasa and was lost for a time in that bliss. He sang the padigams 'Maadharipiraik Kanniyaanai' and 'Osai Oliyelaam' describing how he saw God everywhere. The vision was then withdrawn by God. Appar was at first sorry but soon found consolation when he realised that it was all a display of God's grace. Kailas is not in the physical mountainous region of the Himalayas but in the spiritual world.

At Thirupunthuruthi he built a Tamil Sangam and remained there. He sang the Thiru vangamaalai beginning with 'Thalaiynee Vannngaay.'

Sambandhar in the meantime defeated the Jains at Madurai and went to Thirupunthurthi. Appar went to receive him. Without Sambandhar's knowledge, Appar quietly joined those who were carrying his palanquin. When Sambandhar reached Thirupunthuruthi and found out that Appar was in their company, he jumped out of the palanquin and fell at the feet of Appar.

After this meeting Appar went to Madurai and met the Pandya king, his Queen and the prime minister and complimented them for their services to the Tamil Religion, the Path of Virtue. He stayed at Madurai under royal patronage and then visited all the temples on his way to Rameswaram and then returned to Thirupugalur.

While he was cleaning the temple premises at Pugalur by removing the weeds with his hoe, by the Grace of God gems, gold and pearls were given to him but Appar gave them away. Beautiful women sang, danced and smiled with affectionate looks and tried to distract him but he stood firm with his thoughts fixed on God.

After eighty years, his mission was over and he approached the end of a life's journey. After singing his final song 'Enngen Ensolli' his soul returned to the spiritual world. Appar passed away but his songs are immortal. They are the voice of his soul.

Appar defeated the Buddhist and Jain colonisation of the Tamil country. He restored Tamil sovereignty, and revived the Path of Virtue, the Tamil Religion.

Appar composed the book called Thevaram.

6. Tamil Thirunyaanasambandhar (Tamil Sambandhar)

Thirunyaanasambandhar was a Tamil saint, who was born in 638 AD and died in 654 AD. He was born in Sirkaazhi in Thanjaavur District in the Tamil country. He was born at a time of Buddhist and Jain colonisation of the Tamil country.

His parents, Sivapaadahirudayar and Bhagavathiyar were ardent servants of Namasivaya. It was only after a long period of penance that Sambandhar was born.

He was known as Thirunyaanasambandhar as he attained Divine Wisdom by the Grace of God.

One day the boy was taken to the tank near the temple by his father. His father left him sitting on the steps and went to take a bath. When he failed to get a glimpse of his father after a short while he began to cry, gazing at the temple tower. He called out “Ammaa Appa” with flowing tears and quivering lips.

Just then Saint Thonniappar (also called Saint Siva) responding to the request of the child, appeared with his wife Saint Sakti. He asked her to feed the child with milk in a golden cup. Saint Sakti immediately filled the golden cup with the milk from her breasts.

A few minutes later, the father came out of the tank and saw the child with the golden cup and milk trickling from his lips. He waved a stick to punish the child for he feared he had accepted milk from strangers. Children are taught not to accept anything from strangers. Surprisingly the child pointed to the sky in the direction of the temple and burst into the wonderful song ‘Thodudaiya Sevian’, proclaiming that he had been saved by Saint Siva and God.

Sivapaadahirudayar could not see God but he was convinced from the child’s behaviour that he must have had a vision of God. He followed the child to the temple. By this time the news spread all over the town and a crowd gathered and accompanied the child saint into the temple. The child continued to sing the praise of God. When the child came out the father took him on his shoulders and carried him home. He was three years old.

From then on he began a ceaseless spiritual campaign. He also came to be known and called ‘Aalludaiya Pillai’, the son who had been saved. Accompanied by his father, Sambandhar visited the sacred shrines in the Tamil country singing devotional songs.

The Grace of God was seen wherever he went. These were regarded by him not as a manifestation of his own powers but as a sign of God’s grace. God blessed the boy and through him made the true faith, Tamil Matham or Tamil Religion take deep roots in the hearts of the people. The Tamil Religion or Tamil Humanism is the Path of Virtue.

The father now carried Sambandhar to ‘Thirukkolakaa’ near Sirkaazhi. The child of three years sang a thrilling song ‘Madaiyil Vaallai’ beating time with his tender hands. A pair of gold cymbals with the Holy Name of God, ‘Namasivaya’ inscribed on them came into his hands by Divine Grace and he happily sang to the beat of the cymbals.

Thiruneelakantha Yaazhpaannar came with his wife and offered instrumental accompaniment to the melodious voice of Sambandhar. Paannar was a master in playing the lute and his wife had a

melodious voice. Sambandhar treated them very kindly and they enhanced the effect of his inspired songs. The chorus thrilled the hearts of Tamils. During the long pilgrimage the child would either walk or be carried on his father's shoulders. The temple at Thirunelvaayil Araththurrai presented the child with a pearl palanquin and a pearl umbrella. Sambandhar thanked God and sang the padigam 'Endhai Eesan Emberumaan'. This symbolised the ascension of the saint to the status of a spiritual teacher. People proclaimed his glory and he in turn proclaimed God's glory.

He cleared the doubts of those scholars and priests who were astonished at the wisdom possessed by the young eight year old saint. He taught them the essence of the Five Lettered Namasivaya Mantra, in his padigam, 'Thunjalum Thunjalil'

The next great event was the meeting of Sambandhar and Thirunavukkarasar, an older Saint. Sambandhar called him 'Appar' and Arasu said 'Adiyen' (I am a servitor), while exchanging courtesies. They joined hands with each other in popularising the Tamil Religion, the Path of Virtue by songs and services.

During the course of his tour, Sambandhar came to Thiruppaachchil-Aachchiraamam. There the daughter of the King Kollimazhavan was suffering from an unknown disease. The King who was a great servant of God took her to the temple and laid her there. Sambandhar prayed and sang the padigam 'Thunnivallar Thinggall' appealing to God to have mercy on the girl. Through the Grace of God the girl was cured.

It was winter when he arrived at Kongunadu where the people suffered from a peculiar type of fever. He sang the padigam, 'Avvinaik Kivvinai' By the Grace of God the fever disappeared. The hot summer at Thirupatteechcharam afflicted the devotees. By the Grace of God, a canopy of pearls was set up affording a refreshing shade to Sambandhar and his party. He sang the padigam 'Paadan Marrai Sudal' and thanked God. The heat in that region also diminished.

Sivapaadahirudayar, the saint's father needed money for worship. Sambandhar prayed and sang the padigam 'Idarinum Thallarinum' Through the Grace of God, a person of faith brought and placed on the alter a thousand pieces of gold which he gave to his father.

The father returned home and the son went onward to many places including Dharumapuram, the home of Yazhpaannar's mother. The people glorified Yazhpaannar for his proficiency in music. When he found that he could not reproduce on the Yazh the melody of Sambandhar's padigam 'Maadhar Madapidiyum' he felt humiliated and tried to break the instrument in despair. But Sambandhar prevented him from doing so and asked him to be content with what he had achieved.

At Thiru Marugal pitying a young snake bitten merchant, he sang the padigam 'Sadaiyaay Enumaal'. The unconscious merchant was brought back to life by the Grace of God. The snake bite was symbolic of the superstitious belief in the eclipse.

Appar and Sambandhar were moved by the sever famine and the suffering of the people at Thiruveezhimizhalai. This famine was created by the Jain and Buddhists oppression of Tamils.

They offered prayers to God who commanded them to go to the temple every day and find enough money to distribute to the famine stricken people. By singing the padigam

‘Vaasitheerave’, Sambandhar was able to exchange his coins for pure gold before he could obtain the provisions. The Tamil coins had little value because the Buddhists devalued them through mismanaging the country’s economy. They had to exchange for pure gold and that was used as payment to buy food from foreign countries like the Eastern Roman Empire. By the Grace of God this went on till the rains came and there was plenty in the land again.

The main doors of the Siva temple at Thirumaaraikkaadu remained closed for a long time because of Buddhist and Jain threats. Sambandhar requested Appar to sing a padigam to open the doors. When Appar sang a hymn appealing to God’s Mercy to revive the temple, the doors flew open and all the Tamils cheered the act of the saint. They entered the temple through its main entrance. Sambandhar sang the padigam ‘Sadhuram Marrai’ and the doors were closed. Thereafter the devotees were able to use the entrance to worship God.

In Madurai at that time the Jains were powerful. They had converted the Pandya King, Kun Pandyan and many of the people followed the example of the King. But the Queen Manggayarkkarasi and the Prime Minister Kulachchirrai were not influenced by Jainism. They were Tamils by inner conviction and religion. They had heard the glory of Sambandhar and without the knowledge of the King they sent some wise men to persuade Sambandhar to rescue Tamils from the Jain influence. He readily agreed.

Appar disapproved of his visit to Maduari and drew his attention to the fact that the position of the planets was not auspicious. But Sambandhar reminded him that while God’s Grace was there, nothing untoward would happen and sang the well-known padigam ‘Veyurru Tholli Pangan’ and left for Madurai. There is no place for superstition in the Tamil religion.

The news of his arrival reached the Queen. She immediately proceeded to the temple accompanied by the Minister. Sambandhar sang the glories of God and prayed for the success of his divine mission. He developed inner strength to face the situation. The Queen and her followers prostrated before Sambandhar for his blessing.

The Jains set fire to Sambandhar’s camp and the Tamils fled and informed the saint. He sang a padigam expressing the wish that the fire for which the King was responsible should proceed against him. By the Grace of God, the king experienced a burning sensation all over his body. The Jain priests failed to make him better. The Queen and the Minister approached Sambandhar and appealed to him to alleviate the Kings sufferings and defeat the Jains in argument and thereby convince the King of the superiority of Tamil Saivism or the Tamil Religion.

Sambandhar went to the temple and invoked Divine Grace to grant victory to his faith, the Tamil Religion. He obliged the Queen and the Minister by visiting the palace. The King received him with all the honour. The Jains challenged Sambandhar for a discussion.

It was decided that the King be cured first. The Jains slid the left side of the Kings body with peacock feathers and sprinkled mantra water on him. The burning fever increased. Their superstition failed to cure him.

Sambandhar sang his famous padigam ‘Mandiram Aavadhu Neerru’ praising the glorious holy ashes. By the Grace of God the King was cured while the saint uttered the name of God. To the surprise of everyone, the King recovered completely.

The King and the Queen bowed at the feet of Sambandhar.

Thereafter were two more tests for Sambandhar. In each case it was the Jains who stipulated the conditions. Firstly there was the test of scriptures against fire. The Flames were lit. The Jains threw into flames a palm leaf containing their doctrines. It was reduced to ashes.

Sambandhar chose a leaf containing the song 'Phogamaarththa Punmulai' and sang the padigam 'Tharllirillavallarolli' and placed the palm leaf in the flames. By the Grace of God it was not burnt.

The Jains wanted to have another test again. All including the King followed the saint to the Vaigai River which was flowing rapidly. The Jains' scroll, containing the words Asti-Nasti was thrown into the river. It was lost in the river.

Sambandhar wrote his famous song 'Vaazhga Andannar on the palm leaf and while singing the padigam ' Vanniyum Maththamum' cast it into the river and by the Grace of God it moved gracefully without sinking or getting lost. The writing on the leaf was "Let the King prosper" – Vendanum Onguka. The king who suffered a birth deformity (hunch back) was also cured by the Grace of God and was able to stand erect and walk up straight.

Sambandhar followed by the Royal Family and others went to the temple; worshipped God and sang the Padigam, 'Veedalaala Vaayilaai'

The victory for the Tamil Religion was now complete. The King became a Tamil in religion again and along with him the people of the Kingdom, in large numbers retained faith in their original Tamil Religion.

At one place during the journey he made the entire party cross a swollen river in a pilotless boat. No boatman could venture into the flood. Sambandhar seated his group in the boat and sang the Padigam 'Kottame Kamzhum'. By the Grace of God, the boat sailed smoothly to the opposite shore where the people received them with loud cheers.

Entering Bodhimangai, a Buddhist centre, Sambandhar's devotees were blowing the trumpets. This annoyed Saint Buddhanandi, the powerful Buddhist monk, who arrogantly demanded them to stop blowing the trumpets. Sarannaalayar a disciple of Sambandhar sang the padigam 'Buddhar Samann Kazhukkaiayar of Sambandhar. Saint Buddhanandi was struck by lightning.

At Thiruppunthuruththi Appar Swamigal saw Sambandhar being carried in a palanquin. He silently and unnoticed mingled with the palanquin bearers. When Sambandhar discovered this, he was shocked and there upon alighted and fell at the feet of the elder saint. Appar bowed to Sambandhar and in turn praised him for his victory at Madurai.

Sambandhar returned to Sirkazhi and then went to a place called Thiruvotthtur. There he assisted a Tamil by replacing the sterile Palmyra into cultivating fruitful ones. He sang the padigam 'Puththernthaayana'. Then he proceeded to Tiruvottriyur.

At Mylapore there was a merchant named Sivanesar. He had a daughter called Pumpaval. Hearing about the greatness of Sambandhar, he resolved to give his daughter in marriage to him.

But unfortunately she was bitten by a snake one day, which resulted in her unconsciousness or being spiritually dead because of the superstitious belief in the eclipse.

Sivanesar accorded a grand reception to Sambandhar and related the story of Poompavai's death and requested him to revive her. After offering respects to Saint Kapaliswarar at the Mylapore Temple, he requested Sivanesar to bring his daughter before the temple. He sang the padigam 'Mattitta punnai' and by the Grace of God the girl became spiritually alive. Sivanesar asked the saint to marry her. Sambandhar declined the proposal stating that as he was instrumental for her spiritual rebirth, he assumed the role of a father.

Sambandhar returned to Srikazhi and arrangements for marriage were made. At first Sambandhar rejected the proposal but latter agreed to please his parents and relatives. A bride was chosen. She was the daughter of Nambiyandaar Nambi of Nallur. At the conclusion of the marriage ceremony Sambandhar took the bride and everyone assembled there into the Siva Temple. He sang the padigam 'Kallurp Perumannam' praying for non-attachment.

Then Sambandhar sang the padigam 'Kaathalaagik Kasinthu' known as the Panchakshara Padigam, the redeeming sacred mantra. The effulgence of the light lit the shrine. Then all those who were present there, their minds merged in the Light of God, leaving a voice vibrating with the unique mantra: 'Namasivaya'.

Sambandhar defeated the Buddhist and Jain colonisation of the Tamil country. He restored Tamil sovereignty, and revived the Path of Virtue, the Tamil Religion.

Sambandhar composed the book called THIRUK-KADAI-KAAPU.

7. Sundharamoorththi (Sundhara)

Sundhara was a Tamil saint, who was born in 807 AD and died in 825 AD. He was born at Thirunaavalur in Thiruunaipaadi Nadu in the Tamil country.

He was born at a time of when many Hindu sects were converting Tamils. Hindu Brahmins were permanently settling in Tamil Sangams and converting it into temples with Hindu rituals. The cultural colonisation of the Tamil country begins.

His father was Sadayanaar and his mother was Isai-Gnaaniaar. They named their child 'Nambi-Aaruraar'. The term 'Sundhara' came to denote him because he was extra ordinarily handsome. His parents were ardent servants of God. His village had an atmosphere full of spiritual vibrations. Tamil Religion in the Tamil country was well established and the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains were minority communities.

One day the child was playing with the toy cart outside his house. King Narasinga Munaiyaraier who was passing saw the charming child. His heart yearned for the child. He requested the parents to leave the child under his foster care. The parents agreed. Although he was brought up in the royal household he was also taught the Tamil Vethas and Tamil Agamas. He looked like a prince and lived like a saint. His mind was set in God. When it was time for his marriage his father Sadayaanaar proposed the daughter of Sadangavi Sivaachaariyaar of Puththur. Elaborate arrangements were made.

Sundhara was about to be married. At the time when the preliminary ceremonies were to be performed, Saint Siva as an old man appeared. Sacred ashes were smeared on his body and a Rudraaksha maalai hung around his neck. Saint Siva told the gathering that he had a suit against the bridegroom. His claim was that Sundhara was his bond slave according to a deed executed by the latter's grandfather. Thus he could not marry without his consent. Sundhara disputed this claim and rebuked Saint Siva saying that he was mad. Those present at the marriage place, expressed their view that Sundhara's argument was sound. Saint Siva produced a document. Sundhara snatched it from his hand and tore it to pieces. That put an end to the ceremony; but the arguments continued. The people who were assembled there wanted to know who Saint Siva was.

Saint Siva replied that he belonged to Thiruvevney aallur. Sundhara called him a mad man and demanded that they should go to Thiruvennai allure and have the dispute settled with the help of the wise men there. Before the assembly, Saint Siva presented his case. He also said that the document destroyed by Sundhara was only a copy and he could produce the original to prove his case. He produced the original deed which was read out to the assembly. A close examination of the document revealed that it was a genuine one. The signature and the agreement proved true. They were now interested to know the place from where he came. He told them that he lived in Nalluur and asked them to follow him, walking at first fast and then faster and faster.

Sundhara felt the decent of a sudden force. He had the vision of Saint Siva and Saint Parvathi. Sundhara ran forward in ecstasy and saluted the splendid vision. He then realised the truth. He was now a true slave of God. He cried aloud in rapture, only God can possess his soul.

Because Sundhara had quarrelled with him, Saint Siva himself called him 'Vanthondar', the servant who used harsh words and asked him to sing. Sundhara hesitated and did not know how to begin and sing. Since Sundhara had called him a Pitathan (a mad man) during the quarrel, he asked him to begin with the word 'Piththan'. Immediately the inspiration to sing came to Sundhara and he sang the Padigam "Piththaa Pirraisudi", the 'mad one'.

The bride who had been selected for him did not marry Sundhara.

Sundhara returned to Navalur and there he engaged himself in the worship of God.

After some days, he decided to go to Chidambaram. On the way was Thiruvadhigai, the sacred place, where Thirunavukarasu was reconverted into the Tamil Religion and therefore he stayed in a Tamil Sangam in the outskirts of the village.

That night when Sundhara was asleep Saint Siva as an old man entered the Tamil Sangam. He lay close to where Sundhara was and pretended to sleep. He then placed his feet on the head of Sundhara. When Sundhara objected to this, Saint Siva apologised. Sundhara went to another corner of the room. There too Saint Siva repeated the same action. Sundhara did not lose his temper. He calmly asked him who he was because of his unusual behaviour. After that Saint Siva left. Sundhara realised that it was again Saint Siva. Since he had not gone to the temple to see Saint Siva, Saint Siva had come out to where the devotee was. Sundhara prayed in jubilation and sang the Padigam "Thammaanai".

Sundhara continued his pilgrimage to Chidambaram, the city of Saint Nataraja, which vibrated with hymns and the Holy Name. Sundhara praised Saint Nadaraja again in the sanctum. His eyes rained tears of joy. His mind had no other thought. His concentration was fixed on Saint Nadaraja. There he heard the voice of Saint Nadaraja, commanding him to go to Thiruvaarur.

He reached Seerkazhi, the birth place of Sambandhar. Sundhara would not tread the sacred soil but dedicated a song "Saathalum Pirrththalum" from the border of the town. He saw in a vision Saint Siva and Saint Uma who gave milk and wisdom to Sambandhar.

The citizens of Thiruvaarur accorded Sundhara a rousing reception and the people called him 'Thambiraan Thozhan', meaning a friend of God. Here too occurred a great event in the life of Sundhara.

Kamalini was born at Thiruvaarur. She bore the name Paravaiyaar. She would go to the temple daily to worship God with faith, devotion and songs. It was there that she met Sundhara with his followers. The marriage was prearranged by God himself. God appeared in a dream and requested the devotees at Thiruvaarur to arrange for the marriage of Sundhara to Paravaiyaar. The marriage was accordingly performed, and Sundhara settled down to the routine of a family life.

Sundhara visited the temple daily and he offered songs. One day he saw saints assembled in the Devasiriya Mandapam. Seeing them, he prayed to God to make him fit to live among those Saints. God ordered him to compose a poem in honour of the devotees. Sundhara prayed for inspiration and intuition. Then God gave him the first line, 'I am the servant of the servants of the Anthannars that reside in Thillai' Sundhara took the cue and sang a song extolling the virtues

of the sixty three saints. It is this Padigam 'Thillaivaazh Anthannartham that is called the 'Thiruth thonndath Thogay' which was the source book for 'Sekkizhaar's Periya Puraanam'.

A farmer was an admirer of Sundhara at Kundaiyar, and he supplied him and the devotees with rice and other items of food. The rains had failed and there was famine. This farmer took to prayer and fasting. God appeared in his dream and said that he had arranged for an adequate supply of gains. The farmer was very happy.

He conveyed the news to Sundhara in Thiruvaarur. Sundhara saw the heaps of grains and he glorified God in the Padigam 'Neella Ninainthadiyen'. Saint Siva helped him to have the grains removed to Thiruvaarur. Granary in every home of Thiruvaarur was filled with grains.

Once Paravai was in need of gold to feed thousands of Tamils and to hold concerts during the summer festival at Thiruppugalur. Sundhara appealed to God who through divine Grace intervened. Sundhara rested in a monastery nearby with bricks as his pillows. Next morning he found bricks of gold. He then sang 'Thammaiye Pugazhndhu' and returned to Thiruvaarur where he entertained the devotees that came for the festival.

Sundhara went to Thiru- Mazhappadi. He sang a touching padhigam 'Ponnaar Meniyane' giving a vivid description of Saint Siva and Saint Sakthi. At Thiruppaandikkodumudi, Sundhara composed and sang the famous 'Namasivaya Padigam', 'Matrrup patrruu'. At Thirukkudalai Yaattrur he sang 'Vadivudai Mazhuvendhi' and thanked God for having shown him the way.

At Thirumudhukunram Sundhara prayed again for money and was given 12000 pieces of gold. God inspired him to throw the pieces into the river Manimuththaru and recover them from the tank at Thiruvaarur. Then he proceeded to Chidambaram and thence to Thiruvaarur. The gold reappeared and he sang the Padigam 'Ponsey tha Meniane', while the original quality of gold was restored.

The life of Sundhara was a continuous song offering pilgrimage and Divine Grace. He sang the glory of previous Saints like Appar, and Sambandhar. He adored the holy places where they lived and spread the glory of God to the world.

After paying his homage to Sambandhar at Seerkazhi, Sundhara reached Thirukkurukaavur, in hot summer. He and his followers were worn out with hunger and thirst. Saint Siva as an old wise man appeared in a watershed with plenty of food. After a sumptuous meal Sundhara and his companions rested for a while. When he awoke, the saint was not there and the water shed disappeared. He sang the Padhigam 'Ithanaiye Maatri' expressing that it was certainly an action of God's Grace.

A similar intervention of God's Grace happened at Thirukkachchur where he was tired and hungry. Saint Siva in the form of an Anthanaar, begged from house to house in the hot sun and fed Sundhara and his group. After feeding him, Saint Siva left. Sundarar sang in gratitude and devotion in a touching padigam 'Maruvaar Kondrai' and the 'Thirukkedaarm', 'Vaazhvaathu Maayam', a hymn which stresses the fact that the physical body is perishable and the elements which the body is composed are returned to its source.

After visiting some of the Siva Shrines, he reached Thiruvottriyur. 'Anindithaiyaar' in the spiritual world was born as Sangiliyaar. She had refused to marry anyone except a Tamil Saint.

She engaged herself in making flower garlands daily in the temple. One day while Sundhara was in the temple he saw 'Sangiliyaar' and fell immediately in love with her. So he asked Saint Siva to arrange for this marriage with Sangiliyaar. Saint Siva agreed. Sangiliyaar had no objection, provided that he did not desert her. Sundhara promised her that he would not part from her under any circumstances. He was instructed by Saint Siva to take the vow beneath a sacred tree. The vow was taken and the wedding took place. Sundhara dwelt happily for some time with Sangiliyaar at Thiruvottriyur. Their hearts united in their love for God and in the songs they sang.

At Thiruvaarur, Vasantha Utsavam was being celebrated on a grand scale. Sundhara remembered the festival and longed to go there. He also remembered that Paravaiyaar would dance and sing there. At the same time he could not part from Sangiliyaar. For a time he struggled between the two conflicting desires. Finally he decided to go.

When he crossed the borders of Thiruvottriyur he became totally blind. Undaunted, he walked on receiving directions from passer-by. At Thiruvennbaakkam, Saint Siva gave him a walking stick. He realised his fault and prayed to God for his forgiveness and asked for the restoration of his sight. He sang and struggled on his way from temple to temple singing hymns of lamentation. At Kancheepuram he offered tribute Saint Kamatchi and expressed his suffering to her. He then paid tribute to Saint Ekaambareswarar. Through the Grace of God the vision to Sundhara's left eye was restored. He sang the Thirukkachchi Egambam "Aalandhaan Ugandhu" padigam and thanked God for having restored his sight in one eye.

At last he reached Thiruvaarur. He went to the temple and prayed for the restoration of sight to his other eye. He sang the padigam, 'Meellaa Adimai' telling God that he was his bond slave. He had no other desire besides God's Grace. His heart was torn with grief and agony. He now appealed to God for mercy. God out of compassion opened the other eye and Sundhara sang songs of gratitude.

The next hard task was to appease Paravaiyaar. She thought that Sundhara had betrayed her by marrying another lady. She refused to receive him. Sundhara implored Saint Siva to undertake the mission of appeasement. Saint Siva as a priest went to Paravaiyaar and pleaded with her on behalf of Sundhara. She would not listen. God showed a glorious form this time. Paravaiyaar fell down and asked for pardon. She received Sundhara with love and reverence and the two lived happily thereafter.

Western part of South India was known by the name Chera Nadu. The capital city of that country was called Magothai. The king that reigned the country was Seramaan Perumal. He was a servant of God. He used to perform Siva worship daily and at the end of the worship he used to hear the sound of the anklet of the Dancer Saint Nataraja in his mind. One day he did not hear the sound. He was filled with grief. To relieve his distress, Saint Nataraja said, "Oh king! Don't become aggrieved. My beloved devotee Sundhara was extemporising songs. I was immersed in the sweetness of his songs hence the delay." On hearing this, Seramaan longed to go to Chidambaram, offer tribute to Saint Nataraja and meet Sundhara.

Accordingly he went to Chidambaram, worshipped God by singing a minor poem 'Ponvannaththu Andhthaadhi', proceeded to Thiru Aarur met Sundhara sang a minor poem

‘Thiruvaarur Mummannikkovai’; went on a tour to Madurai and neighbouring cities along with Sundhara, returned to Thiru Aarur and went back to his country.

Sundhara also went with him stayed in the Chera capital for some time and returned to Thiru Aarur with large presents offered by King Seramaan. On his way to Thiru Aarur he was approaching a place called ThiruMurugapunndi. Thieves robbed Sundhara of all his belongings. Sundhara went to the temple and improved a stanza ‘Kodugu Vegnjilai’. By the grace of God he got back all the articles which he lost and reached Thiru Aarur.

He took leave of Paravaiyaar and all the devotees. He was passing through Thirupukkoliyur Avinaasi. He heard wailings from one house and shouts of joy from the house opposite. On inquiry he was told that two boys both of them about five years old went together to bathe in a lake nearby. One was swallowed by a crocodile and the family of that boy was immersed in sorrow. The other boy escaped and the elders had arranged for him the traditional ceremony and there was much rejoicing.

Sundhara wanted to console the bereaved family. He was prompted by God to assist. They went to the lake where Sundhara sang a padigam ‘Yetraan Marrakken’ praying to God to revive the boy. By the Grace of God the crocodile let the boy free. The parents thanked Sundhara. The news of God’s Grace spread far and wide. Sundhara was now eighteen years old.

He desired to go back to Kailasa, the spiritual world. He sang the padigam ‘Thalaikkuth Thalaimaalay’.

Sundhara sang the ‘Thirunodiththaan Malai’ ‘Thaanenai Mun Padaithhaan’ padigam and departed for spiritual world, in his spiritual body. In due course of time, Paravai and Sangagili too reached the spiritual world.

In Sundhara’s life, God was his Master and he was an eternal servant. He referred every happening of his life to God and invoked God’s help when human strength was weak. God stood by his side for he always remembered God. He sang 3800 padigams but only a few are left to us.

Sundhara wrote the Thiru Thondath Thogai. It simply mentions the names of the sixty three Saiva saints and the nine groups of saints.

It was elaborated by Saint Nambi Andaar Nambi in a poem called Thiru Thondar Thiru Anthaathi which consists of 84 verses. Saint Nambi Andaar Nambi compiled the Thirumurais during Rajaraja Chola I.

Sekkilar’s Periya Puranam was based on these two texts and the Thevaram of the three canonised saints as well as of Karaikal Ammaiyar, Seramaan Perumaal and others.

Sundhara composed the book called THIRUPATTU.

8. Avvaiyar 7

Avvaiyar 7 was a Tamil saint, a woman born in 800 AD. Avvaiyar means “a respectable woman who is old in wisdom”.

She was an old lady in the Tamil country and a very popular bard who went about the courts of local chieftains singing their praises and making friends with them.

Once while she was going her way along a lonely path, she saw a Jambu tree in the Tamil country which is known as the land of Jambu trees. Looking up to see if the tree was in fruit, she saw a shepherd boy perched on the branches and coolly eating the fruits. As usual, she called, ‘My little fellow, will you give me a fruit?’

The boy very calmly replied: ‘Yes Grandma; But do you want a hot fruit or a cold one’? Nevertheless she said, ‘Give me a hot fruit’. The boy plucked a large ripe fruit and threw it down with a little force so that the fruit gathered some particles of sand from the earth due to its impact. When Avvaiyar 7 picked up the fruit, she naturally blew on the fruit with her mouth to remove the particles of sand.

The boy mocked her: ‘Grandma, blow well, it is a hot fruit and will cool only on blowing’

Avvaiyar 7 was very annoyed. ‘Oh God am I thus to be mocked by a shepherd boy?’ she cried.

The boy thereupon jumped down and to her surprise it was Saint Muruga with his spear in hand and his peacock in the background.

He consoled her with the words, ‘Grandma, do not worry. I desired to hear something from you and so performed this sport. Will you answer a few questions?’

She was very much relieved. ‘With pleasure’, she replied. Thereupon Saint Muruga posed four questions before her.

‘What is hard?’

‘Poverty is hard; poverty in young age is harder. Harder still is incurable disease. Exceedingly hard is faithless woman and the hardest is, to take food from her.’

“What is sweet?”

‘Solitude is sweet. Sweeter is worship of God. Still sweeter is the company of saints and sweetest is moving with them always, in the waking hours and in the dreams’.

‘What is great?’

‘The world is big and the creator is bigger. Siva is contained in the hearts of the Tamil servants. The greatness of these Tamil servants is indeed indescribable.

‘What is rare?’

‘Rare is the human birth and rarer is birth without any deformity. Even after such birth, it is rare for one to be interested in culture and wisdom. Even if one has such an interest, it is rare to find one performing penance and doing charity. If one does penance and charity, then certainly the gates of Heaven will be thrown open to one.’

Saint Muruga was pleased with the replies and blessed her.

The life of Avvaiyar 7 revealed her deep trait of godliness and devotion. She was an old woman and this entitled her to certain liberties in society which could not be indulged in by others. Once while taking part in a social gathering that promoted the Tamil Religion, in the precincts of a temple, she squatted on the floor as usual and stretched her legs in front of the idol. The temple priest got annoyed. “How dare you do this?” he scolded her. ‘Your old age does not entitle you to take liberties in God’s presence. You shall not stretch your legs in the direction of the idol’. The priest considers the idol as God.

Avvaiyar 7 quietly listened to his outburst and without the least uneasiness replied: ‘My friend, please excuse this old woman. Show me a direction where God is not, and I shall stretch my tired limbs that way, without disrespect to God.’ The priest felt mollified. There was no equal to Avvaiyar1 in wit and quick repartee.

Avvaiyar 7 thereafter lived for a long time traversing the country far and wide enjoining the people to live a good life, dedicated to God. All her words were pearls of wisdom and godliness, helping the people towards a higher spiritual life.

Finally her life on earth drew to a close. One day while praying as usual she saw through her inner vision that her friend Saint Sundara had completed his mission on earth and was being taken back to Siva, to the spiritual world. She also completed her mission and her days were drawing to a close and she was also going to go along with Sundara. After her prayer her soul returned to the spiritual world.

She composed a book called Nanneri.

9. Meikandar

Meikandar was a Tamil saint, who was born in 1180 AD.

He was born at a time of when Islam was gaining popularity in North India and Hindu Brahmins were relocating to the Tamil country and permanently settling in Tamil Sangams and converting it into temples of Hindu rituals. The cultural colonisation of the Tamil country was accelerated in this century.

He was initiated by Paranjyothi Munivar. He wrote the 12 sutras of 'Siva Jnana Bodham' which is the foundation of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. The 12 sutras have complementary verses that explain the nature of the Divine, the nature of the soul, the universe, the nature of Bondage and their relationship with each other. Meikandar spread the philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta and had 49 disciples whose primary objective was to preach and teach the message.

10. Arul Nandi Sivachariyar

Arul Nandi Sivachariyar was a Tamil saint, who was born in 1100 AD.

He was born at a time of when Islam was gaining popularity in North India and Hindu Brahmins were relocating to the Tamil country and permanently settling in Tamil Sangams and converting it into temples of Hindu rituals. The cultural colonisation of the Tamil country was accelerated in this century.

Saint Meikandar's parents were childless for a while. They approached their Teacher, who was Arul Nandi, who directed them to pray at the temple of Thiruvengadu and bath in the temple tank for one and a half months. In this way Saint Meikandar was born and was named by Arul Nandi.

Arul Nandi was a very learned scholar. He carried all the manuscripts in a palanquin wherever he went and was revered by learned scholars.

Meikandar started preaching the Sivagnana Botham. People were attracted to his teachings and his house became the shelter of philosophers and seekers of truth. On hearing this, Arul Nandi was curious to see the child and went to that village. On entering his house, Meikandar's eyes overflowed with love to the elderly scholar. Arul Nandi fell at the feet of Meikandar and accepted him as his Teacher.

His work 'Sivagnana Siddiyar' is an elaboration of the Siva Jnana Bodham, and explains Saiva Siddhanta. He became one of the senior disciples of Meikandar and taught the philosophy to his disciples.

Some scholars are of the opinion that Thirumular accepted Arul Nandi as his guru.

Thirumular glorifies Arul Nandi, his teacher in the following verses:

Verse 67

Seek you the Masters who Nandi's grace received,

First the Nandi's Four, Sivayoga the holy next,

Patanjali and Vyaghrapada, who in Sabha's (Cidambaram) holy precincts worships,

And including me to complete the number Eight.

Verse 68

By Nandi's grace I became Nathan,
By Nandi's grace I entered into Moolan,
By Nandi's grace what can I perform not?
Nandi guiding, I here below remained.

Verse 70

The Four, each in his corner, as Master ruled,
The Four, each his diverse spiritual treasure held,
Each gave to the world whatever they had attained,
And thus the Four, Masters became.

Verse 74

Flashed in my mind the mystic name of Sivagama;
Straight I rose to **Arul Nandi's holy feet**,
These eyes witnessed, enthralled
The surpassing Dance in Holy Sabha (Citrambalam)
Thus I lived and joyed for seven crore yugas.

Verse 99

Three Thousand Holy Hymns, Mula in Tamil composed,
Did he, Nandi, reveal for all the world to know,
Those who wake early at dawn and sing understanding the meaning,
Will win the splendid soft repose
Of the bosom of the Lord.

Verse 1478

The peerless Master Nandi
Of Saivam honoured high,
He showed us a Holy Path,
For souls redemption true,
It is Siva's Divine Path, Sanmarga's Path
For all world to tread,
And for ever be free.

Verse 1592

He assumed human form,
Discarding divine forms four,
And himself as exalted Guru came,
Signifying the Mudra of Knowledge
He Nandi, my good Saviour,
Blessed me,
It was he who of yore,
Planted his feet of grace on me.

Verse 1594

My divine preceptor Nandi
Seized life's forms all three
He assumed the Mudra of Knowledge
And drew me to his feet so benign,
Bereft of speech, I melted in bliss
Thus did he work my redemption eternal.

Thirumular wrote these words about Arul Nandi in his book the Thirumanthiram.

11. Thirumular

Thirumular was a Tamil saint, born in the year 1150 AD in the village of Tiruvavaduthurai. He was a Tamil scholar as well as he studied Sanskrit theology.

In his early days, he took care of cows. Later Thirumular became a theologian, a siddhar and an accomplished yogi. He is one of the originators of Siddhanta and the first saint to use the word Siddhanta in his book. He summarized the final conclusions of the Siddhanta sect which was a response to the growing strength of the many Sanskrit Brahmins sects among the Tamil people.

However his writings on the Tamil Religion were separate and remained universal for all Tamils.

In North India, the Sanskrit people settled down. The rishis, yogis and Brahmins formed ashram communities in the Himalayas. These ashram communities would send out its members to the Tamil country to convert Tamils to Hinduism. They demonised Tamils and believed that the Tamil Religion is not conducive for promoting the Hindu caste system. The rishis would travel long distances by foot spreading the message of Hinduism to the Tamils.

Sundaranatha was such a Himalayan Sanskrit rishi. He was sent to the Tamil country from the Himalayas where the great rishis had congregated. Rishi Sundaranatha came to spread the teachings of Hinduism to the Tamil people.

Rishi Sundaranatha had to walk all the way. Along the way he stopped near the village of Tiruvavaduthurai as he noticed the unconscious body of a cowherd. The dairy cattle were aimlessly wandering around and they loved the cowherd. They sensed that their unconscious master was not well. Rishi Sundaranatha was emotionally moved by the cows' affection, and he decided to help. Rishi Sundaranatha used his siddha medicine to revive the unconscious body of the cowherd.

When the cowherd came to consciousness Rishi Sundaranatha inquired as to his name. The cowherd replied that his name is Mulan. Rishi Sundaranatha said that he thought he had died in the fields. Mulan followed the Tamil Religion and a spiritual discussion took place between Mulan and Rishi Sundaranatha. Rishi Sundaranatha summarised Sanskrit concepts and beliefs. Mulan had a powerful memory and remembered Rishi Sundaranatha's book.

A profound change occurred in Mulan and he gave up his material life and chose to lead a spiritual life. In that field his old lifestyle died. He was very close to his cattle. He comforted them and cared for them in a loving way and gradually led the cattle back to the village.

Then he returned to the fields. He was unable to find Rishi Sundaranatha. He searched everywhere but was not able to find him. He simply vanished. Mulan was deeply confused. He sat in meditation to arrive at an understanding.

He realised that it was Siva's message to serve and promote Tamil Saivism. It was Siva's will. Everyone in the village realized that some extraordinary change had taken place in him. He no longer was a cowherd. He was holy Mular. He was then called Thirumular.

He was proficient in the Tamil Language and he knew the Tamil culture. He also had a deep understanding of the Tamil Religion. He stayed in the village and recorded the Sanskrit scripture of Rishi Sundaranatha in Tamil. Thirumular gave the book its original Sanskrit name which was called 'Mantra Mala' meaning 'Garland of Mantras'. 'Mantra Mala' are mantras that highlight Sanskrit Yoga practices and Vedic theology.

However he was not satisfied and still had firm faith in the Tamil Religion. Saint Thirumular began his mission of establishing the Path of Virtue.

He moved to Chidambaram, an ancient Siva temple where Saint Nataraja, the King of Dancers used to reside. He sat in deep meditation near a Banyan tree. It was in Chidambaram that he began composing the book called Thirumanthiram . Thirumanthiram means 'Sacred Prayers' The Thirumanthiram is verses that highlight the Path of Virtue.

Later on Thirumular retired to a cave where he would sit in meditation without moving for long periods of time. Then he would break his meditation to speak out a single Tamil verse giving the essence of his meditation.

It seems that his mediation was to place his attention on a particular thought until it matured into a perfect verse. He composed verses in this way of four lines long which contains boundless wisdom. He wrote 3000 verses.

The verses of the Sanskrit concepts and beliefs of Rishi Sundaranatha was a separate book composed earlier in the village.

Saint Sekilar in the year 1000 AD included during the compilation of the Thirumanthiram the verses of the book 'Mantra Mala' into the book 'Thirumanthiram'. Hence Thirumanthiram has a mixture of Tamil religious concepts with Sanskrit religious concepts.

In Thirumular's time there was a rise of many Hindu sects in the Tamil country. Each promoted a chanting of a different name of God. This caused confusion among Tamils. Some were just chanting the first few letters, 'Nama' of Namasivaya. Thirumular realised that soon the name of Siva will be forgotten if this trend continues. He rearranged the Five Letters. He told people they can chant Sivayanama. In this way if people chanted just Siva the name of God is still preserved. If they chanted Sivayanama continuously it eventually becomes Namasivaya.

Thirumular composed the book called Thirumanthiram.

12. Marai Jnana Sambandhar

Marai Jnana Sambandhar was a Tamil saint, who was born in 1190 AD. He was born at Marudur.

He was born at a time of when Islam was gaining popularity in North India and Hindu Brahmins were relocating to the Tamil country and permanently settling in Tamil Sangams and converting it into temples of Hindu rituals. The cultural colonisation of the Tamil country was accelerated in this century.

Marai Jnana Sambandhar studied the Tamil Religion. He was a disciple of Arul Nandi, who was a disciple of Meykandar. He was initiated into Saiva faith by Arul Nandi and this initiation took place in Kadandai.

Marai Jnana Sambandhar was very knowledgeable and learned. He was sitting in the porch of a house when Umapati's entourage passed by. Umpati held the post of performing rituals for the Nadaraja idol at Chidambaram. Chidambaram has Hindu temples built around the Tamil Sangam of the Ragasiyam. It was a custom to carry the priest in a palanquin with torch bearers leading the procession.

On seeing this, Marai Jnana Sambandhar remarked: 'There goes a man, blind, who cannot see the light, to worship dead wood.' This was his only words that sum up the Tamil Religion's teachings. He indeed believed less is more. He was against rituals and idol worship by Tamils.

It was a poignant message and Umpati stopped the palanquin, jumped out and walked towards his Teacher who had awakened him. Marai Jnana Sambandhar just moved on to the road which housed the weaving community and asked for food at one house. Thiruvalluvar's profession was also weaving.

They served some rice gruel in his palm which he drank. The remains of the gruel slid down his elbow and that was drunk by Umpati who had followed him. This act was intended to teach two truths to Umapati, first that idol worship must be rejected and second that the poverty amongst Tamils is unacceptable. Opulent foods was served to idols and eaten by Brahmins while Tamils eat rice gruel and live in poverty and suffer from starvation.

Marai Jnana Sambandhar went to Cirrampalam, offered Praises of devotion to God and to Saint Nadaraja and settled down at Thirukkalanjeri. Umapati became a disciple of Marai Jnana Sambandhar.

Marai Jnana Sambandhar passed away at Thirukkalanjeri.

13. Umapati

Umapati was a Tamil saint, who was born in 1244 and died in 1320. He was born in Cidambaran and his father was Nataraja Diksita. He was a scholar in religious scriptures. Umapati studied all books of the Tamil Religion and contemporary religions of his times. He was well versed in Tamil literature and the Tamil language. He also studied Sanskrit language and Sanskrit theology because the Sanskrit Brahmins were becoming an economic and religious power in the Tamil Country. Hindu religious sects were having a devastating influence on the Tamil people and he sought to counter it with the Saiva Siddhantha philosophy.

He was one of the earlier Thillaival antanar. When Umapati was going to the temple with temple honours to perform rituals for the idol Nadaraja, he heard a remark from a passer by:

Text

“Patta kataiyil pagal kurudu pogudu par”

Translation

“There goes a man, blind, who cannot see the light, to worship dead wood.”

Umapati, on hearing this, realized that the passer by was the teacher for whom he was waiting all along.

He was Saint Marai Jnana Sambandhar. Marai Jnana Sambandhar wanted to test the ripeness of his disciple and drank the rice gruel which was being thrown away. Umapati unhesitatingly drank the gruel which trickled down from his teachers’ fingers.

Marai Jnana Sambandhar did not write any books, his only words were his remarks above. He taught the scriptures to his disciple Umapati Sivam. Marai Jnana Sambandhar then initiated Umapati into the Saiva faith and taught him the Siva Jnana Bodham. Umapati became a disciple and received the saving knowledge (Tamil Religion) from him.

The Brahmin priests were angry with Umapati’s behaviour as he had taken food from a person belonging to a lower caste. Umapati was ostracised by the Brahmin community of Chidambaram Temple for his casteless act. When Umapati’s turn to do puja came, he went to the temple, but was prevented by the priestly Sanskrit Brahmin community from entering the temple.

Umapati returned to his exiled Tamil Sangam at Korravangudi and did worship mentally. Tamils were earlier allowed to do worship in the temple alongside the small Brahmin community. They were given turns to do the worship. Umapati was expelled from the temple because he was

following the Tamil Religion. At the Temple, the Brahmin's heard Saint Nadaraja's voice saying that he would not reappear if Umapati was not summoned. Idol worship was practised alongside with Praises to Saint Nadaraja and God.

Since Umapati came to live at Korravangudi he came to be known as Korravangudi Umapati or Korrangudi Umapati. Umapati eulogises the greatness and compassion of his teacher and describes his encounter, 'seeing others paying their respects to him, I also did. By mere look he destroyed all my demerits and bonds at one stroke and made me realize – the lie, emptiness, that is over self-indulgent family life and unspent wealth.' In younger days Umapati lived a householder's life.

In order to make the world realise Umapati's greatness, Saint Nadaraja disrupted the flag hoisting ceremony done before the temple celebration. He asked them to invite Umapati to raise the flag who sang the 'Kodi Kavi'. The temple flag which refused to go upwards was hoisted by Umapati. The flag song (Kodikavi) ends with the refrain to the effect that he hoisted the flag.

An incident took place between Umapati and Perran Samban. Perran, an untouchable as classified by the Brahmin Hindu caste system served Umapati by providing fuel to his Tamil Sangam. Saint Siva gave a letter of introduction to Perran asking Umapati to give him immediate release from bondage (in a dream). Perran Samban preserved the letter and one day he came late to the Tamil Sangam due to heavy rain. Umapati came to know of Perran and the letter and gave him release of bondage by performing a ceremony. The exiled Chidambaram Tamil Sangam did not practice the caste system or ritualistic worship and accepted untouchable Tamils as equals.

Umapati wrote many Saiva Sidanta texts, the pinnacle of which is 'Thiruvartupayan'. Umapati wrote the Thiruvartupayan in the metre of the Tamil Marai (Thirukkural). He quotes the Tamil Marai (Thirukkural) verbatim in the Nenju Vidu Tudu. He calls Thiruvalluvar, 'the Divine Prophet', and his words as the words speaking the Truth of God in couplet 25. Umapati uses the ideas as well as expressions of Thirumurai in his writings. This is evident from his arrangement of the topics in his 'Thevara arul murai tirattu', where he classifies the Thevaram under the ten headings on the basis of the chapters given in the Thiruvartupayan.

Umapati wrote six works in Tamil viz. 'Koilpuranam, Thiruttondar purana saram, Thirumurai kanda puranam, Sekkilar puranam, Thiruppadikkovai and Thiruppadikakkovi. Koilpuranam speaks of the history of Cidambaram and the greatness of God and of Divine Grace. Umapati was influenced by Sekkilar who emphasised the greatness of Grace and its functioning in various ways. Umapati wrote the exclusive work Tiruttondar purana Saram on the essence of the Periyar puranam. Thirumurai kanda varalaru speaks of the recovery of the Thirumurai in the Cidambaram Temple.

Thiruppadikkovai gives the account of the decads of poems or stanzas of poems sung by the Thevaram authors in praise of the holy centres mentioned in Thiruppadikovai. In these two books Umapati follows Sekkilar very closely.

Umapati first uses the term Saiva Siddhanta in Sivaprakasam. Thirumular also made use of the term Siddhanta earlier but he did not use the term 'Saiva' along with Siddhanta. Arulnandi also uses this expression Siddhantam.

The term 'Saiva Siddhanta' also occurs in the inscriptions of Raja Simha I (690 – 715).

The evolution of the concept 'Siddhantam' in the 11th century by Arulnandi and 'Siddhanta' by Thirumular also in the 11th century, to the final conclusion of 'Saiva Siddhanta' by Umapati in the 12th century provided a theology to resist other Hindu sects in the Tamil country. Although the word 'Saiva Siddhanta' appears in a 6th century built temple, it could possibly be inscribed on it in the 13th century. All previous Tamil saints identified themselves as Tamil, spoke the Tamil language and followed the Path of Virtue.

THIRUVARUTPAYAN

The term 'Thiruvarutpayan' means 'the Fruit of Divine Grace'. Umapati's Thiruvarutpayan seeks to expound the knowledge aspect by explaining Divine Grace. Umapati explains the essence of Saiva Siddhanta in the Thiruvarutpayan, viewing it from the perspective of Grace. Umapati has ten chapters in this book and they are:

1. The nature of God
2. The nature of Soul.
3. The nature of Sin
4. The nature of Grace
5. The nature of the Teacher
6. The way of knowing reality
7. The manifestation of the essential nature of the soul
8. Methods of obtaining bliss
9. The significance of the Five Letters
10. The nature of Liberated Souls

Thiruvarutpayan deals in detail with Grace and the importance of the sacred Five Letters; the name of God: Sivayanama or Namasivaya.

Umapati encouraged people to chant Sivayanama instead of Namasivaya. The reason for him doing this is that most people chanted only the first few letters and not the whole name of God. This resulted in people chanting Nama alone or Na only. The other Hindu sects associated Nama with a female goddess and confusion arose. Siva as God was forgotten. Hence Umapati in keeping with Saint Thirumular and Saint Avaiyar 8 insisted people chant Sivayanama. If they chant only the first few letters, they will say Siva and the name of God is still maintained. If they chant Sivayanama fast, it will sound as Namasivaya.

In his book 'Nenju vidu tudu', Umapati mentions the following ten insignia which are similitudes of Saint Siva. They are: righteousness is his mountain; bliss is his river, the land which cannot be reached by the Agamas is his country, Siva Jnana is his city, Grace is his garland, Sakti consisting of iccha, jnana and kriya are his horses; knowledge is his elephant; his banner is beyond the reach of the six religions and removes pain; the eternal sound is his drum; His reign extends beyond the world of Brahma and Vishnu. This work emphasises the difference between God and soul and stresses the eternity of both. It also makes mention of the immanent and transcendent aspect of Siva.

In the preface to the 'Sivaprakasam' Umapati says: 'whatever is old cannot be deemed good (on account of its antiquity alone) and whatever book published today cannot be judged as bad because of its newness.' He said this as the Tamil Religion continues to add to the body of knowledge generation after generation. The books on the Path of Virtue increase day by day. Whatever new that comes forward should not be judged negativity. The Brahmins claimed that because the Sanskrit theology is old therefore it is good. They encouraged people to follow blindly Hinduism because it claims to be the oldest religion, therefore Umapati objects to such irrationality.

Umapati also wrote a number of Sanskrit books, to counter the arguments in the language of the oppressor. However by the end of the 1377 AD Tamils lost all political power and the Tamil religion was completely eliminated by the Nayak Hindu Brahmins. All economic wealth and political power was in the hands of Sanskrit Brahmins and Tamils were forced into Hinduism by conversion. Those who did not convert faced starvation from famine, diseases such as small pox and death in the 1600 AD. This gave rise to the life of Saint Mariamman who assisted in curing surviving Tamils from small pox in the 16th century.

In 1690 AD, 2999 Bengali Brahmins with their Bengali Prince arrived at the Chidambaram temple. They became the three thousand Dikshidars and the Bengali Prince a Nayakar General. The symbol of Siva dance Natasera became renamed as Saba Nayakar and Nadaraja became a presiding idol of worshipped with Vedic Rituals. The idol in the Chidambaram temple is popularly known as Nadaraja. The original Tamil Saints name of Natasera is lost and forgotten. The Saint Siva that conducted the dance of Siva was no more. The pure worship of Siva as an Invisible Energy was contaminated by the Brahmins. Coming from North India they brought

with them idols of Shakti, Vishnu, Ganesha and built temples in Chidambaram. The word Shakti, Ganesha, Om are Sanskrit words borrowed by the Hindu Tamils.

The complete transformation of the Chidambaram Tamil Sangam to a Hindu temple happened during the Telegu Nayak Hindu rule of oppression from 1377 to 1736. The Tamils were forced to become Hindus giving up their own religion.

Umapati guided and trained many disciples and students. He is recognised as a great thinker, poet and saint and his contribution to Saiva Siddhanta literature is priceless. Umapati composed a book called Thiruvartupayan which promotes the Tamil Religion.

14. Sekkilar

Sekkilar was a Tamil saint, born in 1200 AD. Saint Sekkilar lived in a time where Sanskrit Brahmin sects were influencing Tamil people to believe in superstition, miracles, rituals, mythology and promoting anti-social behaviour as acceptable and glorious.

Saint Sekkilar was the Prime Minister of King Anapaya. It was at the request of King Anapaya and his cabinet ministers, that Saint Sekkilar wrote the hagiography of the Tamil saints.

Saint Sekkilar was a poet. His book deals with the lives and times of the glorious 63 Tamil saints whose lives were in different centuries. Most of those Tamil saints lived between 500 AD to 900AD.

The Tamil Saints celebrated in this book Periya Puranam are historic. They are authentic saints who made a difference to the Tamil nation. Sekkilar in his book promoted the religion of the Path of Virtue, The Tamil Religion.

The historical account should be read literally and those parts that appear contrary to human experiences should be understood that a principle is illustrated in exaggerated poetic language. He made use of verses that contain similitudes and are metaphorical. The foreign influence of the age in which he was writing should also be taken into consideration. The Sanskrit Brahmins in Chidambaram kept the writings of the saints in a locked room and banned it from public consumption. As most of the books were written on palm leaves there was great loss because ants and termites ate most of them. Saint Sekkilar saved what he could.

Sekkilar shows that the caste system was rejected by early Tamils and that all people are equal. Tamil saints arose from all walks of life inspite of the Hindu caste system imposed on them by Sanskrit Brahmins.

He composed a book called Periya Puranam.

15. Arunagirinathar

Arunagirinathar was a Tamil saint, born in 1500 AD at Kavirippumpattinam. His father was Thiruvenkadar and his mother was Muthammai. Their village was colonised by the Telegu Nayak Hindus who financed Hindu conversion of Tamils.

Soon after his birth, his father Thiruvenkadar went on pilgrimage to North India and he permanently settled at Kasi (Varanasi). His mother moved to Thiruannamalai, the residence of her daughter, Aathi Lakshmi. His mother fell ill and passed away. The rearing of the child Arunagiri fell upon his sister Aathi Lakshmi.

Arunagiri grew up and studied Thevaram, Thiruvachakam, Thirumanthiram, Thirumurugatrappadai and other religious literature and became a scholar of repute.

Though an erudite scholar, Arunagiri did not act according to his scholarship but indulged excessively in sinful life. Hence he lost his wealth and reputation and fell ill. He went wandering in the streets of Thiruannamalai.

One day, the Saint residing at Thiru Annamalai, bade him to sing songs in praise of Saint Kumara, who has six abodes of residence. Arunagiri did not pay heed to the advice but went on wandering as before.

By the grace of God, he began to mediate on Saint Kumara taking to penance in the Northern Tower of the Temple. As he went on meditating his evil deeds began to vanish and he became transformed into a virtuous man.

Though he was practising penance for a long time, he could not have the vision of Saint Muruga. Hence he wanted to put an end to his mortal bodily life. With this end in view he ascended the temple tower and called the Saint by his names 'Kantha, Kumara and Muruga' but his prayers were not heard. He then jumped down from the top of the temple tower.

Saint Muruga came to his rescue and holding him in his arms, gave him the vision of his consort Valli and himself. Then he initiated him with the word "summa iru sol ara" (Don't talk, keep quiet).

Accordingly Arunagiri began to be in the state of silence and spent his time in meditating upon Saint Kumara. One day Saint Muruga called him by 'Arunagirinatha' and bade him to sing songs on him and God. Arunagiri expressed his diffidence to sing on him. Saint Muruga gave him the clue 'Muthu' and with this he began his Thiruppugal "Muththaith tharu". Thereafter, he continued to sing incessantly on Saint Muruga and God.

The name and fame of Arunagirinathar, spread far and wide. The Chieftain of that terrain was called Prabuta Deva Maharaya who hearing of his erudition and grace bestowed by Saint Muruga, came to him, prostrated before him, heard his divine songs and felt extremely glad.

The Chieftain longed to have the vision of Saint Muruga and expressed this desire to Arunagirinathar.

There was a Nayak Hindu Sanskrit Brahmin, called Sambanthandaan, a follower of Hinduism, and worshipped the Goddess Sakthi and he was favoured financially by that ruling Chieftain. Sambanthandaan came to know about the respect shown to Arunagirinathar by the Chieftain.

He disliked this and wanted to separate them. Hence he approached the Chieftain and told him, 'Oh king! I will make my Goddess to appear before you by my devotion. In the same way Arunagirinathar should make his Saint Muruga to appear. Then alone he may be accepted as a devotee having none to equal him.'

At first the Chieftain was reluctant to this challenge. But as Sambanthandaan persisted he expressed this to Arunagirinathar who accepted the challenge with humility.

The Tamil Assembly was called for. Sambanthandaan came, performed Hindu rituals of worship in pomp and grandeur and evoked his Goddess to appear. But in vain, the Goddess did not appear.

Arunagirinathar's turn came. He worshipped Saint Kumara with intense devotion and Saint Kumara gave his vision of himself and the peacock, and then vanished from sight.

All were amazed. Sambanthandaan was defeated.

Arunagirinathar desired to go on pilgrimage, to visit all the shrines of Saint Muruga and worship God by his songs. He made extensive tour throughout India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. He went to Eelam, worshipped the shrines at Kathirkamam, Thirukkonamalai and Jaffna and sang the Thiruppugazh.

At Chidambaram, he worshipped the dance of Saint Nataraja and at Thiruchendur the dance of Saint Muruga.

At Swamimalai he was initiated with the "pranava" mantra.

At Viralmalai he was blessed with the Eight Divine Virtues.

At Vayalur on hearing the sweet Thirupugazh songs, Saint Muruga wore the poems as a jewel on his chest.

At Sennimalai he received money as subsistence allowance and at Palani beads for the chanting of the Holy Name.

In Haradwar at the foot of the Himalayas, he was fortunate to meet his father who was filled with ecstatic joy.

One day he met a poet, a follower of Hinduism, who worshipped the God Vishnu who was known by the name of Villipuththur Alvar. He used to rend the ears of those who were defeated in literary combat with him. The Alvar was unable to expound a stanza extemporised by Arunagirinathar for that purpose and hence he was fully defeated. According to the contract, the Alvar's ears had to be rended. But Arunagirinathar, pitying him, asked him not to cut thereafter the ears of the defeated and Villipuththur Alvar threw away the ear cutter. This proves that most of the Alvars lived in the 1500's to the 1700's.

After finishing the Pilgrimage, Arunagirinathar returned to Thiru Annamalai and the chieftain welcomed him all honours.

The gifted poet went into deep mediation in the northern temple tower and slowed his heart rate. Sambanthandaan, the Nayak Brahmin went to the king and told him that Arunagirinathar was dead and that his corpse was found in the temple tower. The chieftain believed him and ordered the corpse to be cremated. He died in the month of June.

He sang many songs on the glories of Saint Muruga and in praise of God. Arunagirinathar composed the book called Thiruppugal.

16. Mariamman

Mariamman was a Tamil saint, a woman born in 1600. She was a respectable woman who is old in wisdom. She was an Avvaiyar of her time. She was a woman draped in a yellow sari.

She was born in the town of Samayapuram in the district of Thiruchy, which was under military colonisation by the Telegu Nayak Hindus during the 16th century.

Mariamman is a combination of two words, Mari and Amman. Amman means 'Mother'. The word Mari means 'rain'. Mari is also a name for Jesus's mother in Hebrew 'Miriam' or Aramaic 'Maryam'. Mariamman could mean 'Mother of Rain' or 'Mother Mary'. Here again we can see the positive influence of Christainity in the 16th century on the Tamils.

There was severe drought and heat in the Tamil country. People were plagued by diseases such as small pox, mumps and measles. This drought and diseases were caused by the severe exploitation of the Telegu Nayak military rulers and Hindus Brahmins of the Tamil country. This famine and poverty of Tamils continued until the British colonised the Tamil country in 1781.

Mariamman was praised for her humanitarian services. She was a glorious lady who went into villages nursing the sick people and advising them to eat hygienically prepared food. She carried a pot of fermented porridge and syringe leaves. She provided them with liquid porridge mixed with onions and syringe leaves. She personally fed the infected persons with fermented porridge. She nursed them by applying a mixture of the syringe leaves and turmeric paste. Once she healed all her patients, she returned to live in the forest.

At the peak of Nayak oppression of Tamils, poverty and famine prevailed. The Temple Priests called Brahma and Vishnu were the gods of the land and the Brahmins lived in opulence whilst the Tamil people suffered from diseases and starvation. She challenged these human gods of her time. They were powerful and so she was exiled to the forest. Most Tamil saints were exiled to the forests and were not permitted to live in the villages by Hindu Brahmins, a situation which even Saint Umapati in the 12th century experienced in Chidambaram.

She sang a song to little children 'Marriamman Thalaatu' which her patients who survived this disease continued to sing.

Mariamman composed a book called 'Marriamman Thalaatu'.

17. Vallalar

Vallalar was a Tamil saint, born in Chidambaram on 5 October 1823. His father, Ramiah Pillai was an accountant by profession. He was a man of learning and of a charitable disposition and he gave free tuition to the poor children in the neighbouring villages. His mother was Chinnammai. They named their child as Ramalinga. He was born during the British Colonisation of the Tamil country.

When the child was five months old his parents took him to the Nataraja Temple.

When Vallalar was six months old, his father died and the duty of maintaining the family fell on the shoulders of the eldest brother, Savapathi. The family decided to move to Madras.

The receptive and retentive capacity of the boy now five years old was a marvel. He repeated many poems of ancient poets. Before he was nine, he became a perfect master of the Tamil language and was expert in mathematics.

At the age of eight Vallalar was given formal instruction by his brother but the boy's response to formal teaching was disappointing. So he was sent to Conjeeveram to study under a learned Tamil scholar. Here to, Vallalar took little interest in formal education. Instead he spent a great deal of time in temples to worship God. Having found him to be spiritually advanced, Vallalar was sent back home with a note from the teacher that the boy had nothing more to learn from him.

Upon his return home he spent the greater part of the day in a temple to the annoyance of his brother. One day, in the presence of the youth, Savapathi enjoined his wife not to give him any food until he mended his ways. But his sister in law was too compassionate to heed the husband's instruction. She always gave him something to eat secretly. On one occasion the sister-in-law came to him with tears rolling down her cheeks. She begged him to do as the brother wants. Vallalar promised to remain at home from then onward. He asked to be given a separate room, a lighted lamp and a mirror. Here he prayed with great devotion to God. He was nine years old.

The knowledge that he acquired was assimilated into his life. Deep compassion for fellow creatures, tender love to all, kindness of speech, gentleness of manners, humility, simplicity, uprightness of heart, purity of conduct, truthfulness and music of words, restraint from vain talk, self-control, aversion to show and vanity, sublime devotion and above all, a passion to probe deeper and deeper into the secret treasure of the self in that formative period characterized him as the great saint to be. He used to read daily Thiruvagam, the sacred work of Saint Manickavasakar. The atmosphere of the house was surcharged with piety and poetry.

Vallalar was now a youth of sixteen, when he visited the temple of Thyagesa, a Siva temple at Tiruvotrioor near Madras. Praying in frantic ecstasy, he stood entranced when the words of God fell on his ears: "I am ever with you. Vallalar, fear not! Worship me every day with sweet poems. My grace shall pour into you."

A significant milestone was reached when Vallalar was sent by his brother, to a meeting to express Savapathi's regrets that he would not be able to take part in a discussion as arranged earlier. Vallalar was told that he might render a few devotional songs on the occasion. Vallalar however delivered a lecture on Tamil Saivism with such consummate skill that he captivated the audience. His worth as a spiritual leader was now known.

Vallalar now set out to various temples to give his message on untouchables, social discrimination and religious divisions. In 1865 he started a society called Samarasa Sudha Sangham. His aim was to abolish rituals, religious sacrifices and superstitious beliefs, to eradicate caste and communal differences and thus to bring about unity of Tamils. Vallalar rejected Hinduism as a religion of the Tamils.

About this time his friends got together and published Vallalar's poems under the name of Arutpa. In 1867 he founded the Sathia Dharma Sabha designed to feed the poor without distinction of caste or creed. He wore a two- piece garment of immaculate white and walked about with folded arms indicating his humility.

He never liked people calling him as Swami as that is a Sanskrit word as well. All attempts to take his photograph failed. He condemned the worship of his picture and personality. "Worship me not; I am nothing. Let all worship be done to God, the lord of Light and Truth. I am only a humble servant of this Spiritual communion that God has inspired me to organise. Meditate, adore, realise God in the Self."

Vallalar insisted upon real practice of the spiritual knowledge and gave little room to the mental gymnastics. He taught that God is Universal Love. God is equal to all and all embracing.

During his last days, he was living in a thatched hut.

On 30 January 1874, Vallalar locked himself in a room which he used for meditation as usual and instructed his disciples not to open it for some time. When the door was opened the room was empty. He has never been seen since. Some say he was killed by the Hindu Brahmins who believed his teachings were a threat to the continued domination of Hinduism amongst the Tamil people. Brahmins still benefited by their economic exploitation of Tamils.

Vallalar composed the books called Agaval, Thiruvarutpa and others.

18. Periyar E. V. Ramasamy

Periyar was a Tamil saint, born on 17 September 1879, in the town of Erode in Tamil Nadu. His birth name was Raghav Erode Venkata Ramasami Naicker.

Periyar's father was Venkatappa Naicker (or Venkata), and his mother was Chinna Thayammal, alias Muthammal. He had one elder brother named Krishnaswamy and two sisters named Kannamma and Ponnuthoy.

His followers called him Periyar, Thanthai Periyar or E. V. R. "Periyar" means 'respected one' or 'elder' in Tamil.

Periyar attended formal school for only five years. Thereafter he joined his father's trade at the age of 12.

He used to listen to Tamil Vaishnava gurus who gave discourses in his house enjoying his father's hospitality. At a young age, he witnessed numerous incidents of racial, caste and gender discrimination.

In 1904, Periyar went on a pilgrimage to Kasi to worship in the Siva temple of Kashi Vishwanath. He witnessed immoral activities, begging, and floating dead bodies. His frustrations extended to Hinduism in general when he experienced Brahmanic exploitation.

He experienced an incident in Kasi which had a profound impact on Periyar's ideology and future work. At the place of worship there was free meals offered to guests. To Periyar's shock, he was refused meals at guesthouses which exclusively fed Brahmins. Due to extreme hunger, Periyar felt compelled to enter one of the guesthouse disguised as a Brahmin with a sacred thread on his bare chest, but was betrayed by his moustache. The gatekeeper at the temple concluded that Periyar was not a Brahmin, as Brahmins are clean shaven. He prevented Periyar's entry and violently pushed him into the street.

As his hunger became intolerable, Periyar was forced to feed on leftovers from the streets. He researched and found that the guesthouses which had refused him entry was built by a wealthy Tamil from Tamil Nadu. This discriminatory attitude dealt a blow to Periyar's regard for Hinduism, for the events he had witnessed at Kasi were completely different from the picture of Kasi he had in mind, as a holy place which welcomed all. Periyar was a theist till his visit to Kasi, after which his views changed and he became an atheist.

At a young age, he began questioning the apparent contradictions in the Hindu mythological stories. He found them to be lies spread by the Indo-Aryan race. As Periyar grew, he felt that people used religion only as a mask to deceive innocent people and therefore took it as one of his duties in life to eradicate superstitions and priests.

Periyar married when he was 19, and had a daughter who lived for only 5 months. His first wife, Nagammai, died in 1933. Periyar married for a second time in July 1948. His second wife, Maniammai, continued Periyar's social work after his death in 1973.

Periyar joined the Indian National Congress in 1919 and held the chairmanship of Erode Municipality.

He undertook constructive programs of picketing toddy shops, boycotting shops selling foreign cloth, and eradicating the caste system. In 1921, Periyar was imprisoned for picketing toddy shops in Erode.

In 1922, Periyar was elected the President of the Madras Presidency Congress Committee.

He advocated strongly for reservation of civil servant jobs and education for the low castes. His attempts were defeated in the Congress party due to a strong presence of Brahmin discrimination and indifference. This led to him leaving the party in 1925.

In Vaikom, a small town in Kerala state, there were strict laws of prohibition of low castes in and around the temple. Low castes were not allowed into the streets around and leading to the temple. They were also forbidden from entering temples.

In 1924 Vaikom was chosen as a suitable place for an organized Passive Resistance Campaign. Under Periyar's guidance a movement had already begun with the aim of giving all castes the right to enter the temples. Thus, agitations and demonstrations took place. On 14 April, Periyar and his wife Nagamma arrived in Vaikom. They were arrested and imprisoned for participation.

Periyar continued to give support to the movement till it was withdrawn. He received the title Vikkom Veeran, mostly given by his Tamil followers who participated in the Passive Resistance.

He was a social activist, politician and businessman, who started the Self-Respect Movement or the Dravidian Movement. He is also the founder of political party, Dravidar Kazhagam.

Since 1925 Periyar was dedicated full time to the propagation of the philosophy of self respect.

A Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu started in 1925, while the English journal Revolt started in 1928 carried on the propaganda among the English educated people.

The Self-Respect Movement began to grow rapidly and received the sympathy of the leadership of the Justice Party.

The object was not just to introduce social reform but to bring about a social revolution and to foster a new spirit and build a new society.

In 1929, Periyar announced the deletion of his caste surname Naicker from his name at the First Provincial Self-Respect Conference of Chenggalpattu.

In 1937, when Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari became the Chief Minister of Madras state, he introduced Hindi as a compulsory language of study in schools. This ignited a series of anti-Hindi protests. Sir A. T. Panneerselvam of the Justice Party and Periyar organized anti-Hindi protests in 1938 which ended with numerous arrests.

In 1939, Periyar became the head of the Justice Party, and in 1944, he changed its name to Dravidar Kazhagam. The party later split and one group led by C. N. Annadurai formed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1949, while continuing the Self-Respect Movement.

The Dravidar Kazhagam vehemently fought for the abolition of the caste system. It also focused on the liberation of women, women's education, willing marriage, widow marriage, orphanages and mercy homes.

Periyar and his followers campaigned constantly to influence the government to take measures to remove social inequality. The Self-Respect Movement was dedicated to the goal of giving Tamils a sense of pride based on their historical past.

In 1952, the Periyar Self-Respect Movement Institution was registered with a list of objectives as follows: “for the diffusion of useful knowledge of political education; to allow people to live a life of freedom from slavery to anything against reason and self respect; to do away with needless customs, meaningless ceremonies, and blind superstitious beliefs in society; to put an end to the present social system in which caste, religion, community and traditional occupations based on the accident of birth, have chained the mass of the people and created "superior" and "inferior" classes... and to give people equal rights; to completely eradicate the caste system and to establish a united society based on brother/sisterhood; to give equal rights to women; to prevent child marriages and marriages based on law favorable to one sect, to conduct and encourage love marriages, widow marriages, inter caste and inter-religious marriages and to have the marriages registered under the Civil Law; and to establish and maintain homes for orphans and widows and to run educational institutions.”

In 1956, Periyar organized a procession to the Marina to burn pictures of the Hindu God Rama. Periyar was subsequently arrested and imprisoned.

Periyar went to Bangalore in 1958 to participate in the All India Official Language Conference. There he stressed the need to retain English as the Union Official Language instead of Hindi.

Periyar propagated the principles of rationalism, self-respect, women's rights and eradication of caste. He opposed the exploitation and marginalization of the Tamil indigenous peoples of South India and the imposition of, what he considered, Indo-Aryan India. His work has greatly revolutionized Tamil society and has significantly removed caste-based discrimination.

Periyar spent his entire life giving speeches, propagating the realization that everyone is an equal citizen. He said that the differences of caste and creeds were man-made to keep the innocent and ignorant as oppressed.

Periyar viewed reasoning as a special tool which all people have. Reasoning was used when dealing with subjects of social interest. The foundation of Periyar's principles was rationalism. Periyar explained that wisdom lies in thinking and that thinking is guided by rationalism.

On caste, he stated that the differences, hatred, enmity, degradation, poverty, and wickedness, now prevalent in the society are due to lack of wisdom and rationalism and not due to God or the cruelty of time.

Rationalism has to lead the way for peaceful life to all.

He stated that there is no use of simply acquiring titles or amassing wealth if one has no self-respect and scientific knowledge.

An example he gave was, the Western society sending space crafts to the planets, while the Tamil society were sending rice and cereals to their dead forefathers through the Brahmin fire rituals.

Periyar said to the Brahmin community "in the name of god, religion, and Sanskrit scriptures you have duped us. We were the ruling people. Stop this life of cheating us. Give room for rationalism and humanism". He added that "any opposition not based on rationalism, science, or experience will one day or another, reveal the fraud, selfishness, lies and conspiracies".

Periyar's philosophy of self-respect was based on his image of an ideal world and a universally accepted one. His philosophy preaches that human actions should be based on rational thinking.

Periyar advocated that women should be given their legitimate position in society as the equals of men and that they should be given good education and have the right to property. He was keen that women should realize their rights.

Periyar fought against the Hindu traditions of marriage as suppression of women in Tamil Nadu. Arranged marriages were manipulated to enslave women and a much worse was the practice of child marriages. Hindus believed that it would be a sin to marry after puberty. Periyar also spoke out against child marriage.

Another Hindu practice is the dowry system where the bride's family is supposed to give the husband a huge payment for the bride. This abuse has turned into the exploitation of the bride's parents wealth, and in certain circumstances, lead to dowry deaths. Wives have been murdered, mutilated, and burned alive because the father of the bride was unable to make the dowry payment to the husband. Periyar stood up against this abuse of women. Women in India also did not have rights to their families' or husbands' property.

Periyar advocated for the women to have the right to separate or divorce their husbands under reasonable circumstances.

Periyar advocated for birth control not only for the health of women and population control, but for the liberation of women.

Periyar advocated to get rid of the Devadasi system. It was an example of a list of degradations of women attaching them to temples for the entertainment of others, and as temple prostitutes.

Periyar advocated for the right of women to have an education and to join the armed services and the police force.

Periyar held that in matters of education and employment there should be equality.

He wanted Social reform and eradication of caste system.

Periyar wanted thinking people to see their society as far from perfect and in urgent need of reform. Periyar stated that while Christian and Islamic religions were fulfilling this role, the Hindu religion remained totally unsuitable for social progress.

One of the areas of Periyar's focus was on the upliftment of rural communities.

Periyar advocated for town locations where neither its name nor the situation or its conditions imply caste differences among people. He wanted the modernization of villages by providing public facilities such as schools, libraries, radio stations, roads, bus transport, and police stations.

Periyar stated that the caste system in Tamil Nadu is due to Sanskrit-Aryan influence, linked with the arrival of Brahmins from the north. Ancient Tamil Nadu had a different stratification of society in four or five regions, determined by natural surroundings and adequate means of living.

Periyar argued that birds, animals, and worms, which are considered to be devoid of rationalism, do not create castes, or differences of high and low in their own species. But Tamils considered to be a rational being, was suffering from these because of the Hindu religion and discrimination.

Periyar showed that Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada came from the same mother language of Tamil. Periyar also stated that if Sanskrit words are removed from Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam, only Tamil will be left.

Periyar stated that using the Tamil script that is useful to the people in their life and foster knowledge, talent and courage, and propagating them among the masses, will enlighten the people.

Periyar's is also responsible for bringing new changes to the Tamil alphabet.

In stone inscriptions from 400 or 500 years ago, many Tamil letters are found in other shapes.

As a matter of necessity and advantage to cope with printing technology, Periyar said that it was sensible to change a few letters, reduce the number of letters, and alter a few signs. He further explained that the older and the more divine a language and its letters were said to be, the more the script needed reform. Foreign words and their pronunciations have been assimilated into Tamil quite easily.

Modern transport and international contact, and happenings, have attracted words and products from many civilized countries.

Periyar said it was essential to change the shape of letters, creating new symbols and adding new letters and similarly, dropping those that are redundant. Sanskrit words were redundant and rejected because it opposed rationalism and made the Tamil people backward and primitive.

The glory and excellence of a language and its script depends on how easily they can be understood or learned.

Periyar hailed the Tamil Marai (Thirukkural) as a valuable Tamil scripture which contained many scientific and philosophical truths.

He also praised the secular nature of the work. Periyar praised Thiruvalluvar for his description of God as a formless entity with only positive attributes. He also suggested that one who reads the Tamil Marai (Thirukkural) will become a Self-respecter. They would be absorbed in knowledge of politics, society, and economics. According to him it permitted social changes for modern society.

Periyar said that the ethics from the Tamil Marai (Thirukkural) was comparable to the Christian Bible.

Periyar attacked the evils of Temple Priests and Brahmin religious influence on society. Periyar was a radical advocate of anti-Brahmanism.

At a young age, he felt that some people used religion only as a mask to deceive innocent people. His life's mission was to warn people against superstitions, rituals and priests.

Periyar cannot be called an atheist philosopher. Periyar said: "...The thing I call god... that makes all people equal and free, the god that does not stop free thinking and research, the god that does not ask for money, flattery and temples can certainly be an object of worship. For saying this much I have been called an atheist...".

Periyar a born Tamil was vehemently opposed to Hinduism. Periyar was against incompatibility of faith with social equality.

Periyar believed that Hinduism was a religion of an imaginary faith preaching the "superiority" of the Brahmins, the inferiority of the Tamils Shudras, and the untouchability of the Adi Dravidar.

In 1955, Periyar was arrested for his public agitation of burning the pictures of Rama at public places, as a symbolic protest against the Sanskrit domination and degradation of the Tamil leadership according to the Ramayana epic.

Periyar also shooed the images of Krishna and Rama, stating that they were Sanskrit-Aryan gods that considered the Tamil Shudras to be "sons of prostitutes".

An award was given to Periyar by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 27 June 1970. The citation awarded by the UNESCO described Periyar as "the prophet of the new age, the Socrates of South East Asia, father of social reform movement and arch enemy of ignorance, superstitions, meaningless customs and base manners."

On 19 December 1973 he held his last meeting at Thiagaraya Nagar, Chennai where he called for action to gain social equality and a dignified way of life.

Periyar died on 24 December 1973 at the age of 94. Periyar Thidal at Vepery is where Periyar's body was buried.

19. Subramani Baaradhiyaar

Subramani Baaradhiyaar was a Tamil saint, born on 11 December 1882, in Ettayapuram. His father was Chinnasami Iyer and his mother was Lakshmiammal. He was born during the British Colonisation of the Tamil country.

He studied at the M.D.T. Hindu College in Thirunelveli. He learnt music at an early age. At 11 years old, he was able to compose songs so well that he was given the title 'Baaradhiyaar'.

His mother died when he was 5 years old and his father passed away when he was 16 years old. His father wanted him to learn English and mathematics. He wanted him to become an engineer. Baaradhiyaar married Chellamal in 1897.

In 1898, he went to Benares and was discovering other parts of India. He found a country in turmoil. He became a social activist. Baaradhiyaar found work as a teacher at Madurai Sethupathy High School.

During this time he decided to write poetry to bring about transformation of the Tamils. The poems promoted a progressive revolutionary ideal. His writing style and imagery are a forerunner to modern Tamil poetry. It combined the classical with the contemporary. He wrote many verses on varied topics. He wrote songs on God and Religion. He was an admirer of Kannagi, a saint of the Tamil Religion and freedom fighter who lived in the year 250 AD. He wrote songs on nationalism, love songs, children's songs, songs of nature and songs on the glory of Tamils and the Tamil language. He also wrote sonnets on freedom fighters like Tilak, Gandhi and Lajpat Rai.

Through his poems, he showed his love for his country. He criticizes the Tamils for the social evils they allowed. He criticizes them for their attitude of fear and cowardliness in dealing with the rulers. He called for national unity, removal of the caste system, and the liberation of women.

He is the greatest Tamil poet of modern times. His poems had a religious, social and political theme. He was an outstanding writer, poet, journalist, social activist and freedom fighter of independence. Because of this he was called Mahakavi Baaradhiyaar.

His social revolutionary ideas led him to reject the caste system of Hinduism. He fought against it even though he faced opposition from the ruling class of Hindu Brahmins. He was born in a Brahmin family but he gave up his caste identity. All human beings are equal. He rejected the teaching of caste hostility between people to the children by the elders. Ancient Tamil society had no caste system. Saint Kannagi abolished it in the year 250AD. It is evil to divide people because of caste. He said those who belong to a higher class are people who are just, intelligent, educated, loving and hardworking.

He campaigned for the emancipation and liberation of women. He advocated the principles of Women Rights. They should be given the best education. Women are the vanguard of society. He said that human civilization will flourish in knowledge and intellect if men and women practice equality. Women can make scientific discoveries as well as remove backward superstitious rituals. They are the guardians of Tamil culture.

It was in this time, that he took interest in journalism and the Western print media. In 1904, he became the Assistant Editor of the Tamil daily, 'Swadeshmitran'. In 1907, he edited the Tamil weekly, 'India' and the English newspaper 'Bala Bharatham'. He used these newspapers to express his creativity. He published his poems in these papers.

He was the greatest Tamil freedom fighter of India. He was an active member of the Indian National Congress. In 1908, British India issued an arrest warrant for him because of his revolutionary activities. The owner of the newspaper 'India' was arrested in Madras. This forced him to go into exile to Pondicherry. Pondicherry was ruled by the French.

While in exile he edited the 'India', 'Vijaya', 'Bala Bharatha' and 'Suryothayam' a local weekly newspaper of Pondicherry. British India tried to shut down the newspapers by stopping payments and letters. The newspaper 'India' and 'Vijaya' were banned in British India in 1909.

In exile he mixed with leaders of the revolutionary wing of the Independence movement such as Aurobindo, Lajpat and V.V.S. Aiyar who had sought asylum in Pondicherry. Mahatma Gandhi was still an emerging force. Gandhi lived in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, a period of 21 years. Gandhi's principles of Satyagraha were completely formulated in South Africa. He returned to India in 1915.

From 1910 to 1920, Baaradhiyaar spoke of a new and free India with no castes. He called for a new order amongst states and the sharing of natural resources between them. He called for the redistribution of excess water to needy regions.

He lived in Pondicherry until 1918. In November 1918, Baaradhiyaar entered British India through Cuddalore. He was arrested and imprisoned at the Central prison in Cuddalore. He was in jail from 20 November to 14 December, a period of three weeks. The prison badly affected Baaradhiyaar's health. He was struggling when a General Amnesty Order removed restrictions on his movements.

In 1919, Baaradhiyaar met with Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi took leadership of Indian National Congress in 1920.

Baaradhiyaar delivered his last speech at Karungalpalayam Library in Erode on the topic, 'Man is Immortal'.

He was struck by an elephant that he fed regularly at Parthasarathy temple in Chennai. The elephant that was usually docile became wild and aggressive because of provocation by the

temple Hindu Brahmins. The temple was managed by conservative Hindu Brahmins who objected to Baaradhiyaar's rejection of the caste system and the freedom of women.

He was badly injured and within a few months later, he died on 11 September 1921. He died before India's independence and the creation of the Tamil Nadu state.

Baaradhiyaar is a people's poet, a nationalist, a freedom fighter and a revolutionary of the social system.

Subramani Baaradhiyaar composed the Poems on liberation, freedom and God.

20. Siva Subramonia

Siva Subramonia was a Tamil saint, born in Tongaat in the North Coast of Natal, South Africa on 10 May 1910 of a very spiritual Veera Saiva family.

Siva Subramonia conducted intensive studies in the Thevaram and Thiruvagasam and the lives of Tamil Saints.

In order to communicate the spiritual message in a simplified way to the many people, he composed his own divine hymns and lyrics. The singing of these simple and yet eloquent hymns with deep devotion, gives the Tamils a spiritual experience.

He brought together a group of young, pious and dedicated men. He guided and influenced them in the spiritual pathway.

In the 1900's, Tamil Saivism was on the decline in South Africa. The lofty teachings of the Tamil Saints had been cast away. In the name of religion, Tamil people followed the footsteps of misleading Priests, performing meaningless rituals, animal sacrifices and believed in superstition. The community was in dire need of a Tamil revivalist, a teacher and a saint.

During this critical period when cruelty, degeneration and unrighteousness prevailed, Siva Subramonia conducted his lectures. It was his mission to abolish priest craft, rituals and to restore morality and to disseminate the message of equality, unity and love. The arrival of a teacher like Siva Subramonia saw the dawn of a spiritual awakening in South Africa.

He conducted outdoor lectures and lantern services at the corner of Brook and Victoria Streets, Bus Ranks, Magazine Barracks, Railway Barracks, Tram Barracks, Congella Barracks and Avoca Barracks.

He stood out as one of the early pillars of Tamil Saivism in South Africa and helped to emancipate the lives of many people in the Tamil community whose religion and culture were sinking into the depths of degradation. He established the Saiva Sithantha Sungum in 1937. He died on 5 May 1953.

Siva Subramonia composed the book called Subramonium.

21. FOUNDER OF TAMIL HUMANISM

❖ Thiruvalluvar



Thiruvalluvar is the founder of Tamil Humanism and is the author of the Tamil Marai. He is an internationally celebrated Tamil humanist. Thiruvalluvar's Path of Tamil Humanism is the Path of Virtue.

Thiruvalluvar was born in Mayilapur in Tamil Nadu on 15 January 31 BC. It is the day after the Tamil New Year.

Thiruvalluvar as a youth grew into a student, farmer and state advisor. He was a textile weaver by profession. Thiruvalluvar fell in love with Vasuki and their marriage was solemnised. She was a chaste, devoted and an ideal wife. Thiruvalluvar showed by example that a person can lead the life of a householder and at the same time lead a life of righteousness and with respect. A beautiful daughter was born. They named her Mullai and brought her up with loving care.

In 300 BC, Elala Chola, the King of the Tamil country ruled over Eelam. Elelasingan was his descendent and ship merchant of Mayilapur. He accepted Thiruvalluvar as his teacher and was his first disciple. One day in the evening, Elelasingan and Mullai met in a garden and they fell in love with each other. Thiruvalluvar solemnized his marriage with Mullai.

In 21 BC, Uggiraperuvazhuthi, the Tamil King, decided to send a delegation to Augustus Caesar and strengthen the trade link. He told the Romans visiting him that he is sending a delegation of merchants to Rome with Elelasingan as leader. Elelasingan left for Rome taking leave from Mullai. He left in the month of July and he promised Mullai he will return in December.

Thiruvalluvar saw that many people in this world are living without understanding humanist principles. He stayed in his house in Mayilapur and began writing his book under a LLuppai tree.

He formulated the concepts based on the 70 000 year old oral tradition of humanism and the 5000 year old Indus valley civilization, and the civilization of the four Tamil kingdoms of Pandya, Chola, Chera and Eelam. He wrote the philosophy of humanism into couplets in a book which he called Tamil Marai (Tamil Humanist Scripture). Thiruvalluvar also called it 'Muppai'. Muppai means three kinds of subjects which are righteousness, wealth and love. Thereafter he decided to travel propagating humanist principles to all people.

He travelled to Madurai to submit his work, 'Muppai', to the Pandya king. The Pandya kings ensured that many Tamil poets flourished. The Tamil Sanggam of Madurai which is an assembly of eminent poets, scholars and researchers called his work 'Thirukural'. The Tamil Sanggam introduced the Thirukural to the world. The Tamil Marai is considered as the 'Sacred Word of God'. Thiruvalluvar is regarded as a Tamil prophet by the Tamil community.

Thiruvalluvar said to the King: 'a small dew drop depicts even a Palmyra tree, so also the Kural. Oh King, spread these spotless couplets. Preach to the world the humanist message of the Tamil Marai.'

The Tamil Calendar is dated from the birth of Thiruvalluvar and is called Thiruvalluvar Aandu.

The Tamil New Year begins on the 14 January which is the 1st day of the 1st month (Thai) of the Tamil calendar. The next day is celebrated as Thiruvalluvar Day as the 15 January is the birthday of Thiruvalluvar. This celebration of New Years Day and Thiruvalluvar Day is the Pongal Festival.

22. LEADERS OF TAMIL HUMANISM

The two important leaders of Tamil Humanism are Mr. Seenivasa and Mr. R.M. Moodali. They are the two main authors of the books on Tamil Humanism. Therefore the books on Tamil Humanism are called the 'SEENIVASA - MOODALI VERSION'. They are the revivalists of Tamil Humanism.

❖ Seenivasa

Seenivasa Padayachi was a great advocate of the Tamil Religion. He tirelessly propagated Tamil Spirituality in Tamil Nadu and in South Africa.

The story of Seenivasa Padayachi is but a legend. The life of Seenivasa Padayachi and what we know is largely derived from oral traditions. What remains of his existence is the Tinley Manor Ragasiyam which he built in 1889 and the scriptures he recited with his last breathe in that Sanggam.

Seenivasa Padayachi was born in 1861 in Chidambaram. His father was Sabapathi. He was 28 years old when he arrived in Durban. He was educated in Tamil and English. His wife was Valliammal and she was born in 1867 in Chidambaram. Seenivasa and Valliammal had three children.

Seenivasa's father Sabapathi was a learned scholar and a Priest at Chidambaram. Some say he was a great yogi in Chidambaram. Sabapathi was born around 1801. Sabapathi taught Seenivasa the Tamil religion and culture in its purest form. He believed in Tamil Humanism and the Ragasiyam is the highest form of worship. He wanted all Tamils to worship in the Ragasiyam. Sabapathi's vision is: 'A Ragasiyam in every town and village'. However the Nayak Brahmins resisted and did not want all people to have the Truth.

Legend says that Sabapathi's grandfather who was born around 1681 was also a Priest at Chidambaram. He promoted the Tamil religion and the freedom of all to worship the Ragasiyam. The Ragasiyam is a Meditation and Cultural Hall. He resisted and challenged the Nayak Military rule.

However the Nayak Hindu Brahmins still dominated the villages and Tamil Religion was still forbidden. This led to a conflict between the Nayak Hindu Brahmins and Seenivasa Padayachi when he promoted the Path of Virtue, the Tamil Religion.

He condemned the village chief and Nayak Brahmins in Chidambaram for promoting South Indian Hinduism. He encouraged the villagers to follow Tamil Humanism which is the Tamil religion. The villagers protest was increasing against the Nayak Brahmin priests.

This conflict forced him into exile. If he continued living there his life and his family's safety was in danger. The Nayak Brahmin persecution forced him into exile. His exile brought him to the shores of South Africa, keeping the Tamil religion alive.

He took his only priceless possession the Tamil Marai and together with his family boarded the ship headed for South Africa.

Sabapathi gave Seenivasa his blessings to go to South Africa to protect the faith. He encouraged him to travel abroad to save the Tamil beliefs.

When Seenivasa arrived the first thing he did was to go and search for land to build the Ragasiyam as per his father's wishes. He found many Tamils living in the North Coast of Natal.

Seenivasa built the first Ragasiyam outside of India for the Tamils in Tinley Manor, Natal, South Africa. It was built out of wood and iron around July 1889. Alagiri also helped Seenivasa with the construction of the Ragasiyam.

The Ragasiyam is the Hall for the Praise of God. The congregation in Tinley Manor assembled there and in front of them is a room of empty space. In this room hangs the golden leaves with the Tamil alphabet on it. This Ragasiyam is the purist form of Tamil worship. Tamils worship God in this way for thousands of years. They recited the Tamil Marai and other scriptures and conducted their ceremonies in this Ragasiyam.

Seenivasa was involved in promoting the Tamil religion and culture in Tinley Manor. When his indentured contract expired after 5 years he moved to Germiston in 1894, Transvaal now called Gauteng. Seenivasa moved to Transvaal (Gauteng) because he knew there were many Tamils living here. In 1895 he built another Ragasiyam in Germiston. His vision was that wherever there is a Tamil community there should be a Ragasiyam.

During his stay in Germiston, he opened a cigar factory. He would travel from Germiston to Ottawa, Tongaat then to Tinley Manor to buy the Tobacco leaves and bring them to Germiston. It was a flourishing business as he supplied the mines and shops with cigars. He hired a factory manager to manage the cigar manufacturing while he was away in Tinley Manor. He was a highly spiritual person always in meditation and study of the Tamil religion. Around 1900, while he was away in Tinley Manor, his wife Valliammal made a mistake and had an affair with the factory manager.

On his arrival back to Germiston he came to know of it. He was disappointed but he forgave her. So he divorced her and decided to move back to Tinley Manor in Natal, KZN.

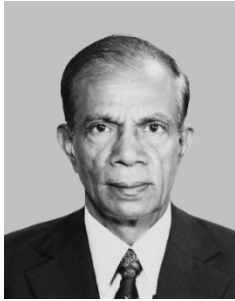
He gave her the house and the cigar business which made her financially independent. The children were well provided for and even their grandchildren still were financially well off. Seenivasa moved to Tinley Manor permanently in 1900. He lived there in meditation and study in the Tinley Manor Ragasiyam and established a Tamil Sanggam. He remarried to Alamalu and they had four children.

Alamalu was born in 1872. Alamalu was an excellent caregiver and took care of Muniamma like her own child. Alamalu together with Muniamma, Lutchmana and Subbu visited the Tinley Manor Ragasiyam in 1901. Seenivasa met Alamalu and admired her caring and family qualities. She lived with the Lutchmana Naik's family until she got married to Seenivasa Padayachi in 1901. When Seenivasa married Alamalu, she moved to Tinley Manor. She eventually lived in Tinley Manor for the rest of her life.

He propagated Tamil Humanism amongst the indentured labourers. He spent the rest of his life promoting the Tamil religion and culture in the Tinley Manor Ragasiyam.

His last day on earth was unforgettable. He took his wife and children to the Tinley Manor Ragasiyam. He entered the Sanggam. Seenivasa Padayachi sat down in the Tinley Manor Tamil Sanggam, facing the congregation, his friends, his family and children for the last time. He smiled at his loving wife, Alamalu, and his children and began to speak about Tamil Humanism. He praised God through words, recited all the Tamil scriptures in English and Tamil and while chanting 'Namasivaya' in the Sanggam he collapsed and died peacefully. And now the essence of Seenivasa Padayachi's recitation of Tamil Spirituality is presented to you.

❖ **R.M. Moodali**



R.M. Moodali is a political activist and an internationally renowned humanist. He made an immense contribution to the transformation of South Africa.

Rajoo Munisami Moodali was born on 31 October 1907. He was the son of an indentured labourer Thayi. Thayi came from a district called South Arcot in Tamil Nadu. In 1914, Thayi died at the age of 41 years and R.M. Moodali was placed in an orphanage.

From 1918 to 1930, he worked on Apartheid farms for a Mr. G. Duncan. In 1931 he worked as a waiter at Victoria hotel. In 1935, he worked for the Hulletts family as a chauffeur. In later years he did part time bookkeeping for small companies as White businesses did not give him work because of the Job Reservation Act.

He went to the Wesleyan Missionary School in 1912, and had to leave school at Standard Four to work on the farm. In 1931 he completed a Bookkeeping course part time through correspondence. In 1940's he join the Study Circles and learnt politics and economics. This was the beginning of his political career.

In 1940, he joined the South African Communist Party. Latter he joined the ANC and the NIC. In the 1980's he joined the UDF in the anti- Apartheid struggle. He continued to be involved in politics until 1994, that's a total of 53 years struggling for Human Rights.

R.M. Moodali witnessed the rise and fall of Apartheid and participated actively in the Anti-apartheid struggle. Throughout his life, he was a Human Rights activist. He attended the protest meetings. He received pamphlets, posters, listened to Radio Freedom, the Voice of the ANC and distributed the pamphlets and messages from door to door. He was a freedom fighter against colonialism and Apartheid. His response is the way millions of people responded to the leaders, until the disbanding of the Natal Indian Congress and UDF structures.

R.M. Moodali was also a cultural activist. He belonged to various cultural organisations such as Stanger Youth Orchestra, Stanger Debating Society, The Rationalist Association of South Africa, Pretoria Tamil Rationalism Society, The Humanist Association of South Africa, Natal Buddhist Society, The Thirukural Society, International Movement for Tamil Culture: South Africa and many others. In the 1980's he suggested to his family and Babs about forming a Tamil humanist international society. He encouraged Mr Rowley Arenstein his old friend from the liberation struggle to join. R.M. Moodali was a loving person who went about his daily life with the universal principles of humanism. He was a humanist and a convinced atheist. He was talkative and an eloquent speaker.

He was also a cultural activist who promoted the reformation of Tamils by rejecting the caste system, superstition, rituals and fatalistic beliefs. The most important thing that had to change was the Tamil belief system in order for them to become progressive. He was involved in promoting the Tamil culture and language. His understanding of the Tamil Marai was from a Tamil perspective which is the concept of the Moodali version.

He promoted the Tamil language and he advocated other cultural and linguistics groups to promote theirs in unity and harmony as South Africans. He advocated South African multiculturalism to enrich the cultural fabric. The various cultural and linguistic identities of the world are the elements that make the world's multicultural social fabric beautiful and joyful.

R.M. Moodali has personally helped many people by providing them with financial, emotional support, advise and assisted them with legal issues. He helped people overcome their material needs. He was always helping people.

R.M. Moodali married Kamatchi Moodali, the granddaughter of Seenivasa Padayachi on 22 January 1944. She was a dutiful wife to R.M. Moodali and a loving mother. She was an exceptional cook and always generously took care of others. They lived mostly in Bull Bull Drive and Desainagar. They had two daughters and a son Thiagesan (Babs) Moodali who was a successful businessman and philanthropist. He read a lot of health books and how to prevent diabetes. He did not drink alcohol nor did he smoke. He led a healthy lifestyle.

R.M. Moodali conducted much research into Seenivasa Padayachi and reunited the two families from Gauteng and Natal, KZN. He retold the story of Seenivasa Padayachi to all who visited him.

He had many major achievements. In 1931 he became a certified Bookkeeper. In the mid 1930's he was expert at playing the Violin and the Banjo. From 1936 to 1941, The Safety First Association awarded him 6 Diplomas, a Bronze medal, then finally a Gold Medal for Driving. He always owned a vintage Borgward car. In 1960's he bought a 6 ¼ acre farm in Bull Bull Drive. On 3 October 1998 at Technikon Natal, R.M. Moodali was honoured for his role in the human rights struggle. In 1994, he was 53 years involved in political activity in the ANC, NIC and SACP. On 23 September 2007, he celebrated 60 years of marriage to Kamatchi. On 1 January 2001, he was 71 years involved in cultural activity. On 31 October 2007, he celebrated his 100 years birthday. He passed away on 9 April 2008 in Tongaat.

❖ Thiagesan Rajoo Moodali (Babs)



Thiagesan Rajoo Moodali, known to family and friends as Babs, was born on 26th April 1951. He is the son of R.M. Moodali. Babs was an outstanding entrepreneur and a successful businessman and a great philanthropist.

His philosophical religious outlook was similar to that of his father. He was a committed Tamil Humanist. He never performed any rituals nor did he believe in any superstition. He tirelessly kept the flame of humanism alive by advocating it among family members and the South African community. He began writing the Biography of R.M. Moodali but did not see its publication.

He had a quiet personality who never complained about anything. His disposition was always pleasing others and even making sacrifices at his own expenses. He was hardworking, honest, generous and a charitable person. He valued punctuality. He always had a smiling face and a unique laughter.

He completed his schooling at Chatsworth High School. He enjoyed drawing and sketching as a hobby. His other interests were baking and he made the best Christmas cake and pudding. He also specialised in making sweetmeats and his favourite was Chana Margan and Burfi. On Sundays he also made scones for tea time and he helped his mother Kamatchi Moodali to make queen cakes.

He started off his career when he was in school by repairing cars. He enjoyed fixing things at home. He repaired the Borgward car engines and did welding and spray painting. He worked as a manager of a Bus company in Durban. He thereafter took a career in the field of instrumentation.

He was a highly skilled person with great entrepreneurial skills. He became the CEO of Zimbali Engineering and he negotiated many contracts with SAB.

He bought land at Desainagar, Tongaat and built a big family house and owned a luxury Mercedes Benz. He loved his gardening and spent hours maintaining it. He took care of both his parents giving them the best lifestyle and health care. He was always conscious of his health, eating correctly and exercised. He also read a lot of health books and how to prevent diabetes. He did not drink alcohol nor did he smoke and also led a healthy lifestyle. Although he had excellent qualities as a father, he never married nor did he have any children.

He supported many charities and NGO's such as the Association of Mouth & Foot Painters. He also supported the Charity Circle. He made donations to Childline, The Avril Elizabeth Homes of South Africa, Age-in-Action, and St John. Childline offers counselling and support to children. Age-in-Action makes a difference in the lives of the aged. The Avril Elizabeth Homes allows the mentally handicapped to live their lives in a warm and nurturing environment. St John provides medical assistance.

He was involved in community projects of Desainagar. He attended Civic meetings and strove to keep high standards of maintaining the suburb. He was also a member of the ANC of the local Tongaat branch. He helped organise feeding schemes in the informal settlement and held meetings with their leaders.

In October 2013 he was diagnosed with leukaemia and was hospitalised for three weeks undergoing chemotherapy. On 2 December 2013, he sadly passed away. His death at an early age was a great loss for the Tamil Humanist community.

23. ABOUT THE WRITER



Thiru Moodali is an academic, a researcher, a Life Coach, and a social and cultural activist.

After high school he completed a B.Admin degree from the University of Durban-Westville (UKZN). He successfully completed his post graduate qualifications at the University of South Africa, graduating in a Honours Degree, Hons. B.Admin (Unisa), and a Master's Degree, M.Admin (Unisa).

He belonged to the University SRC publications committee and SANSCO which was affiliated to the UDF during the anti-apartheid campaign. He participated in many mass marches and protest activities.

He took part in various social and cultural activities and assisted many community projects such as creating awareness of Human Trafficking, feeding schemes, clothes distribution and book distributions to promote the 'culture of reading'. He assisted the aged, the orphans, and the homeless in these drives as well as the HIV/Aids homes. He has been on many committees of charity that supported feeding schemes.

Thiru Moodali spent the past 25 years in Marketing and as a Senior Manager involved in coaching and mentoring employees to reach optimal performance. This experience meant that he came face to face with the concerns and challenges facing employees at all levels up to top management level.

After he read Tamil literature, and understood its true meaning, he discovered that his purpose in life is working with people one on one or in groups to transform their lives so that they can develop their full potential. He believes that every person should live a life of excellence and quality.

As a qualified and certified life coach, Thiru Moodali holds the following certificates:

Life Coach

Negative Emotional Therapy Practitioner

Neuro-linguistic Programming Practitioner

Transformation Coach

He is actively conducting workshops that campaigns for a humanist lifestyle and creating support groups that will sustain a humanist culture.

He has written and edited several books. As a spirit-writer (ghostwriter) for R.M. Moodali, he recorded the oral tradition of humanism and wrote the following books:

1. Tamil Humanism
2. Tamil Spirituality
3. Tamil Humanist Scriptures
4. Writings of the Tamil Saints
5. Biographies: Tamil Prophet and Tamil Saints
6. Humanist Meanings in Tamil Religious Literature
7. Tamil Humanist Ceremonies
8. Tamil Humanist Readings
9. Tamil Calendar
10. Diacritic Tamil
11. Timeline of Tamil History
12. UNKNOWN CITIZEN: A Biography of R.M. Moodali

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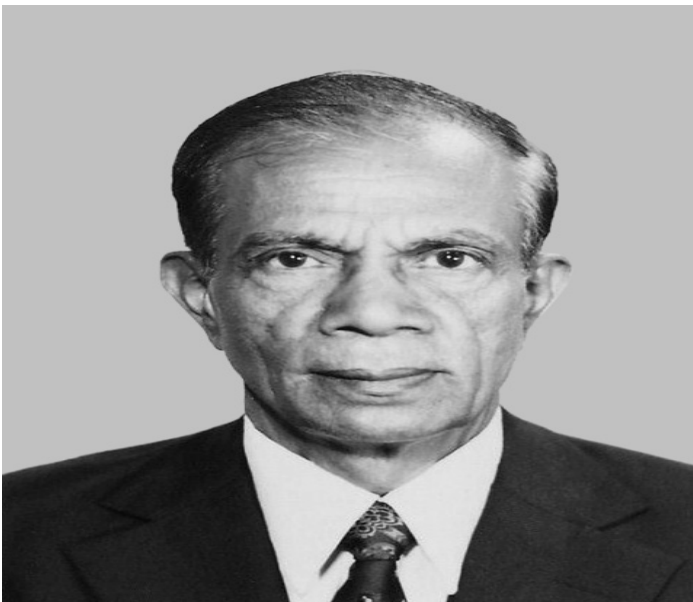
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Life Coach



Thiru Moodali

Thiru Moodali is a Life Coach helping those who want a meaningful life in this world. The counseling and coaching given is based on the principles of Tamil Humanism.

He provides coaching for all life situations such as:

- Relationships, Family and Marriage issues
- Finances and business issues
- Work, Career and Entrepreneur challenges
- Health and Wellness issues
- Parenting and early childhood development issues
- Educational challenges
- Retirement challenges
- Death, Divorce and loss of loved ones
- Anger Management
- Low self-esteem
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol And Drug Abuse

Life Coach

Negative Emotional Therapy Practitioner

Neuro-linguistic Programming Practitioner

Transformation Coach