

# Devotional Norms Featured In *Periyapuranam*

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and determine the devout expression in *Periyapuranam*. Devout expression is mainly distinguishing a soul's love towards god. Completely sacrificing everything one owns to god is the basis called pure selfless devotion. Conscious based worship towards god through the endless love will definitely helps to form a bridge connecting the god and mankind. Materialistic qualification like race, ethnicity and practical rules does not required to perform devotion towards god. Moved by his extreme and true devotion, Kannappa Nayanar proves deep love and being pure at heart is far more enough to gain blessings from god. The four ways of attaining mukthi (*Sariyai, Kiriya, Yogam and Nyanam*) which clearly underlined by Saiva Siddhantha were shown in the way of living by Kannapar. Sivanadiyar, the devotee with uncomparable dedication and love towards god cook his own loving son for the sage to have food. The marvellous dedication of Siruthondar goes to the extreme as he called his son being present to enjoy the meal with the sage. Arrivatayar who put the luminance of his worship like a torch was continued to have the wealth worship even in the absence of materialistic wealth. He continues the routine to feed the god with rice, spinach and mango buds shows his determination to do the service in spite of any serious problems in mind. Ilayankudi Mara Nayanar who has the real service motto was able to serve whoever came to him with the love for the Supreme, were given pleasant welcome with his folded hands, blossomed face showering with sweet words. He would clean their feet, give them the comfortable seat and serve the food which is rich in all the six tastes. His real service motto become stronger even after his wealth shrunk, he find all the possible ways to continue the service was at no time second in quality.

Keywords: *Periyapuranam*, devotional, norms, bhakti, Epic Literature, Tamil Literature, Bhakti, Hinduisme

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## Introduction

Opus *Periyapuranam* of Sekkizhar forms the 12<sup>th</sup> and final book of the *Thirumurai* is the Tamil shaivite sacred canon. *Periyapuranam* means 'Great Purana' or great ancient story which being the backbone for *Shaiva Siddhantha* (Nilakanda Pillai, 2010:6). These stories were originally recorded from *Thirutonda Thokai* and *Thiruthonda Thiruvantathi*. Composed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the book tells the stories of the 63 nayanmars and 9 sages or *shaivitesaints* (Saminathaiyar, 1962:22).

*Periyapuranam* gives a clear picture of the lives of the saints who lived in all different regions of Tamil Nadu, who belongs to various strata of society, men and women, high and low literate and illiterate. A deep faith and overflowing love which is above the capability of a normal human is portrayed well in all the verses of all the saints and is also very well brought out in the lives of the saint sung by Sekkizhar (Vellaivaranan, 1994:16). This paper presents the devotional norms featured in the *Periyapuranam*.

## Study of the problem

*Periyapuranam*, the greatest work of epic in the world of *Shaivism* which hold a unique position as an encyclopedia and reference for culture to be followed in daily life. *Periyapuranam* showcase and support the establishment of Indian society in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. As sung by the poet Sekkizhar, *Periyapuranam* is a nectar that makes us the immortal spirit of worship (Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai). Thus, the article designed to explore exposed the devotional norms in *Periyapuranam*.

## Aim of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows.

- (a) To identify devotional norms in *Periyapuranam*
- (b) To study the ability of devotion revealed by nayanmars

## Devotional norms

The *Bhakti Iyakkam* is in the best period in the history of Tamil literature. *Bhakti* is the submission of the deep loving feelings of a devotee's heart for his beloved God (Irasamanikkanar, 2011:112). Devotion is a strap that connects humans with God. Devotional worship support mankind in his attempt to gain a victory, walking in ethics, to get away from worldly suffering (Vellaivaranan, 1994:67). Venkateswara Natarajan (1982:8) explains devotional worship is to surrender body, object, spirit and self and everything to god. Salvation is the goal of human life. Therefore, on the basis of purity of mind gives a man devotional experience. Clear thinking becomes the basis good thoughts (Arumuganavalar, 1993:59).

There are no evil intentions in a place of which fill with devotion and love (Njanacambanthan, 1999:79). Joy, sorrow, knowledge, ignorance, and all packets are like two parallel lines. Both will grow together. Another one is the exception. Their functions are such as the two sides of a coin (Mizhalai Thondan, 1998:4). Devotees are those who serve as mediator to bring god's grace, discipline, and sense of pure devotion values. Therefore, elders who lived their life in the way of devotional were cited as a model of devotion demonstrated in opus *Periyapuranam* (Arumuganavalar, 1993: 47).



## Kannappa Nayanar

Kannappa Nayanar's devotion to Lord *Shiva* is the best example in the history of literary exist to this day. According to Paul Mirapail (1996:4), the Western scholar, the great story of Kannappar may continue from the time frame of certain BCs. Consequently, those hearsay tradition stories of Kannappar may be earlier than Sekkizhar (12<sup>th</sup> century AD) and at least eight centuries ago (Sudarshan, 2005:232). The great scholars praise one hunter who never read any holy scriptures and whose disciplines were just to kill-hunt, who become a splendid model of devotion. Simple but unparalleled was his passion. Ma: nikkavasagar the renown scholar and devotee exclaimed Kannappa Nayanar's unconditional love as something very difficult when one tries to visualize (Somacunthara Tambiran, 1966:343). Chuntharar's songs of praise are called *Thiruthondathogai* depicted Kannappa Nayanar as '*Kalai malintha cinambi Kannaparku adiyen*' (Mutukumarasamy Tambiran, 1992:107).

Worship towards god would never consider race, religion or caste but only the unconditional love. *Shaiva Siddhanthas* showed four states for the humans to progress in spirituality. They are named as *sariyai*, *kiriyai*, *yogam* and *gnanam* (divine wisdom) (Vellaivaranan, 1994:185). His life history clearly shows all the four states of Hindu spirituality.

Vēṭātipati yuṭuppūr vēnta nākaṇ  
 Viḷaṅkiyacēy tiṇṇaṇār kaṇṇi vēṭṭaik  
 Kāṭatilvāy maṇcaṇamuṇ kuṇcitaru malarum  
 Kāycaṇa menṇiṭu tacaiyum kāḷatti yārkkut  
 Tētarumaṇ piṇilāru tiṇattalavu malippac  
 Cīruciva kōcariyum tēliviluppuṇṇir  
 Ōṭavoru kaṇṇappi yorukaṇṇappal  
 Oḷikaveṇu maruḷkōṭārukuraniṇ rārē  
 - Tiruṭṭonṭar purāṇa cāram 13

These verses say that Kannappa Nayanar pluck one of his eyes with the sharp arrow to paste it on God statue. Tinnan – Kannappa Nayanar might come in the tradition of killing animals, simply by his deeds he is far above the sacred people in the heaven. But the lovely lord desired to show the limitlessness of devotion through Tinnan.

Lord *Shiva* who was not able to bear Tinnan's great action, holding Him tight in his called "*Aiyyane*" (*Periyapuranam*, 10:178). Is he trying to specify the upper limit for devotion? Tinnan reach for the God within just six days while the Rishis hardly doing too many rituals to reach Him (*Tiru. Vi. Kaa*, 1928:86). With the presence of such a sacrificial love Lord *Shiva* blessed him immediately, "Oh! Incomparable! Stay to my right" (*Periyapuranam*, 10:180).

## Chiruthonda Nayanar

Maṇattukkaṇ mācilan ātal aṇaittu aṇaṇ  
 Ākula nira pira  
 (Thirukkural 34)



Tamil scholar and researcher who was instrumental in bringing many long-forgotten works of classical Tamil literature to light; (Caminataiyar 1962:72) stresses love and devotion as a superior way to remove arrogant, nature of revenge and mental delusion. According to Venkateswara Natarajan, 'Grace of Lord will never exist in the heart which immersed in greed, fear, sadness, lust, fatigue, anger, selfishness, arrogance and deception' (1982:19). Efforts in knowing, researching, understand and following the philosophies passed by the prophets, scholars and rishis are ways to serve them (Njanacampantan, 1999:66).

Attending to the devotees of the deedless, Chiruthonda Nayanar undertook the office of the chief of the king's army (*Periyapuramam*, 36:11). Then, he got married to the girl Venkattu Nangkai who stood for the precepts of the devotees. The god who runs the entire cosmos, acting as if He was terribly hungry came to the devotee's house (*Periyapuramam*, 36:36). This time the sage was wanting a life to be cooked that too a human in an age not exceeding five, having no physical impairments, should be the only child in the family and the parents should cook it together (*Periyapuramam*, 36:51). The couples decided to cook their loving young son for the devotee to have food.

Now the sage told him to take his son (*Periyapuramam*, 36:81). Highly anxious the patient devotee went outside and called out his son loudly (*Periyapuramam*, 36:82). Who knows the grace of God? Their son came as if he returns from the school. This is the wonderful dedication of Chiruthonda Nayanar to God which bring alive his son.

### Arivattaya Nayanar

Arivattaya Nayanar, leading a married life with the goal of it to stand by the moral values, doing the profession of feeding the world by plowing the earth – agriculture was as rich as his broad head. His discipline was to offer to the Lord every day the best rice food along with fresh spinach and budding mango (*maavadu*) (Njanasambanthan, 1999:91). He continued to hold the wealth of worship and service even in the absence of what others consider the wealth (*Periyapuramam*, 13:10). He started doing the farm work for others, from the rice grains he gets as the pay for that, he used to make the best of them the food for the formless.

He would drink water and feed others of his family with the rice grains that are low in quality (*Periyapuramam*, 13:12). One day as the routine, he carried in a basket the rice that is as pure as his love and the tasty spinach and mangobuds. Unfortunately, while walking nayanar spilling the food on the ground. He felt very bad for not his state but about the inability to do his duty as he has split the food for the Lord *Shiva*. He felt miserable for not being blessed with offering the food for the lord. He took his dagger, started cutting his neck (*Periyapuramam*, 13:14). The giver of boons appreciated their love and took the couples to reside with Him (*Vellaivarayanam*, 1994:124).

### Ilaiyankudi Maranayanar

Ilaiyankudi Maranayanar his whole heart to the Lord; has the widening wealth out of the hard work in the farm field and the wide heart that seeks to achieve the infinite in the selfless service to the worshippers (*Periyapuramam*, 4:1). Whoever went into his mansion with the love of the wet matted haired Supreme, were given an appealing



welcome with his folded hands on the head, blossomed face showering flowers of nice words and his humble deeds making the red carpet. He would cleanse their feet in the scented water, give them the comfortable seat and then serve the food which is rich in all the six tastes for those fans who enjoy the taste of holy five letters than anything else (*Periyapuranam*, 4:4).

To testify to the human kind about his real service motto which was strong that even the absence of wealth, God slowly change his wealth to poverty (Arumuganavalar, 1993: 58). At that time God came to Ilaiyankudi Maranayanar house in a form of his devotees. Nayanar happily welcomed Him. He gave enough clothes to change and nice place to relax to the sage (Irasamanikkanar, 2011:129). With the enthusiasm to host to the devotee he asked his equally devotional wife what they can do to assuage the hunger of the sage. His loving wife suggested that if he could bring the rice grain seeds that they sewed in the noon, she could make food out of that (*Periyapuranam*, 4:13). In the darkness and rain, he went inside the farm land.

He piled up the seeds that had been promoted to the corners by the rain along with the mud. He filled the basket he had brought and rushed back (*Periyapuranam*, 4:17). His wife washed the mud off of the seeds. To cook the food there was no firewood. That great man who had cut down the strong wooden beam of his house to burn (*Periyapuranam*, 4:19). After cooking the rice, the chaste wife worried what could she do for the side dish. He went immediately to the land where spinach cultivated. He pulled the plants (*Periyapuranam*, 4:21).

Maṇṇiyavē ḷaṇṭonmai ilaical mārar  
Varumaiyāl uṇvumika maṇantu vaiki  
Uṇṇarunaḷ ḷiruḷ maḷaiyil uṇṭi vēṇṭi  
Umparpirāṇ aṇaiyavayal ulutu vittum  
Cennelmuḷai amutumāṇai alakkā lākkic  
Ciṟupayiriṇ kaṟiyamutu tiruntac ceytu  
Paṇṇalarum uṇavu'aruntarku eḷunta cōtip  
Paralōka mulutāṇṭa pāṇmaiyaṛē.

- Tiruttonṭar purāṇa cāram 7

*Narayakkam* means service to the people (Vellaivaranan, 1994:96). Ilaiyankudi Maranayanar showed his worship towards the God even in adversity. His devotion to the God revealed to grant facilities to the people.

## Conclusion

*Shaivism* is a religion which holds *Shiva* as the supreme Lord. Sekkizhar, is the author of *Periyapuranam*, the 12<sup>th</sup> and finest book of the Tamil *Shaivite* scripture, the *Thirumurai*. Sekkizhar had the true knowledge, he had the best of poetic expression, he sustained the neutrality in his sayings, he received the devotion to the 63 Tamil *Shaivite* saints, and above all he had the true love of God. The paths of devotion to Lord *Shiva* emerge in *Periyapuranam* summarized as follows:

1. High devotion to God in the context of *Shaivism* has given love to all life.
2. The devotees feel lord *Shiva* as a giant mountain that tightens you with the immortal love.



3. We will be award of holy God if our devotion is true towards God, the symbol of patience, harmony, knowledge.
4. The devotees of the God *Shiva* proved worship beyond limits and caste.
5. Appreciate the superiority of God in the heart, think of God in mind, reciting his mantras vigorously will certainly achieve His worship.
6. It serves to remind people, who read *Periyapurānam* to know about the 63 Tamil *Shaivite* saints, about their great deeds, it has found the use that is intended.

A person who never ever tasted the honey of devotion, when taken read to the *Periyapurānam* it would definitely give a great experience; great heights that love for the lord, who is the purest kind of love. The 63 Tamil *Shaivite* saints irrespective of their background, all of them anointed Lord *Shiva* with the perennial spring of love and enjoyed the bliss of His grace especially saints like Kannappa Nayanar, Chiruththonda Nayanar, Arivattaya Nayanar, Ilaiyankudi Maranayanar by the principle of praising with love.

மேன்மைகொள் சைவநீதி விளங்குக உலகமெலாம் !

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