

## Press Release

### Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit addressed at the function being organised in honour of Sekkizhar by the Chennai Tamil Sangam

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit addressed at the function being organised in honour of Sekkizhar by the Chennai Tamil Sangam. The fact that the function is being celebrated on the birthday of Sekkizhar i.e. the day of the Poomam star in the month of Vaikasi adds a special flavour to the celebrations.

Sekkizhar lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Kulothunga Chola II. He is specially remembered for his great service to the Tamil language and Hinduism. His famous book Periyapuramam is ranked as the fifth veda in Tamil and is a part of the Shaivaite canonical texts.

The Periyapuramam is a poetic account of the lives of the sixty three Nayanmars. It is said that Sekkizhar composed the Periyapuramam in the 1000 pillared hall of the temple of Nataraja at Chidambaram. The first Verse came as a divine revelation to Sekkizhar as he sat at the temple not knowing how to begin his composition. Periyapuramam is seen as the epitome of high standards of the Chola Culture because of the high order of the literary style that is practiced. It is therefore considered to be a masterpiece in Tamil literature. That the composition provides a realistic and lofty account of all the Nayanmars without any discrimination on the basis of caste makes it even more praise worthy. I am sure that everyone in the audience is aware that the Nayanmars lived in different times and belonged to different castes and were also from different economic backgrounds.

To understand the greatness of the Periyapuramam I must take you back to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century when the Pallava dynasty was in power. The conversion of Mahendravarma Pallava by the great Nayanmar Appar to Shaivism changed the whole course of Tamil history. The Bhakthi movement set in motion by Appar and other Nayanmars saw a re-awakening of Shaivism in Tamil Nadu. So much so that Parenjoti the famous general of Nirasimhavarma Pallava, the greatest king of the Pallava dynasty, became a Nayanmar himself by the name of Siruthonda Nayanar. Parenjoti's exploits on the battlefield matched his extreme devotion to Lord Shiva. But the humility that he practiced in his daily life in spite of having been a military general of a great empire stands out as an exemplary virtue. Thus each one of the Nayanmars was a model to be followed by society. Their life accounts compiled into a single book by Sekkizhar gave Tamil Society rejuvenation in literature, religion and in the practice of Virtues. That is the greatness of the Periyapuramam. Being a factual account it is inspiring. Being a literary masterpiece it is elevating. Being a

religious gospel it is salutary. Not many compositions in any language in the World can lay claim to such a combination of traits.

The high evolution of Tamil language to attain the literary style found in the Periyapuram is proof of the antiquity and versatility of the language. No wonder the classical greatness of Tamil has been a matter of praise all through history. The patriotic poet Bharati says this of Tamil “Among all the languages known to me the Tamil language is undoubtedly the sweetest”. Recently in Feb 2018 our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modiji echoed the words of Bharati by saying that Tamil is a beautiful language. At that time he was interacting with students who were receiving useful tips from him on how to counter examination stress. That programme was called “Pariksha Pe Charcha”. Subsequently for the benefit of students in Tamil Nadu the deliberations at the interaction were translated and distributed to 5000 students in Chennai city. The Tamil compilation was titled ‘Theruvukkana Thenmozhiyal’

On the birth anniversary of Sekkizhar the Chennai Tamil Sangam has also combined the celebration of literature, music and dance in Tamil with the celebration of the Periyapuram. What a great thought. Periyapuram a masterpiece in literature was composed in the Chidambaram temple, the home of music and dance. Music, dance and literature are inseparable and form the foundations of the Tamil language. I was at the Chidambaram temple in February and was amazed at the architecture and antiquity of this famous sthalam of Hindu worship.

The name of the town Chidambaram is derived from the word ‘chit’, which means consciousness and the word ‘ambaram’, which means ether. For the devotees of Lord Siva, Nataraja is the manifestation of the Lord representing the element of ether. Similarly there are other special locations where Lord Siva manifests himself to represent a particular element of nature such as Thiruvannamalai for the fire element, Sri Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh for the wind element, Thiruvanaikkaval in Trichy District for the element of water and Ekambareswarar Temple in Kancheepuram District for the element of earth.

The Chidambaram temple was built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by the Chola dynasty and even by conservative calculations it is more than 1000 years old. The temple has been designed to represent the human system in a scientific manner. The main shrine is covered by 21600 tiles of golden hue, which is equal to the number of times a human being inhales and exhales in a day. The ‘viman’ of the temple has 9 ‘kalash’ which stand for the ‘navadwaras’, the nine openings of the human body. The ‘kanaka sabha’ represents the important systems of the human body such as the respiratory system, nervous system,

circulatory system, etc. and the cosmic dance represents the heartbeat of the living organism. In a capsule, the temple represents the universe as a whole.

Lord Nataraja is also known in Tamil as 'Sabesan', which means 'Sabayil Aadum Easan'. Thus dance takes centre-stage as far as the Chidambaram Temple is concerned. It is therefore most apt and appropriate that the various dance forms are dedicated to the Lord and every dance recital begins with an invocation to Nataraja.

May I make a request to you? For a moment please close your eyes and imagine where Tamil and Tamil Culture world have been if it had not enjoyed the royal patronage of the Pallava and Chola dynasties for nearly 600 years between the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. There would have been no Mamallapuram, no kamar, no temple building activity and no Sekkizhar and no periyapuram. The seed for this was sown by a Shaivite Saint Appar who cured Mahendra Varma Pallava of a serious illness. Such in the power of religion, the power of spirituality and the power of Shaivism. The Nayanmars followed Appar. The Cholas followed the Pallavas. Dance followed music and the rest is history. Let us thank God for the tremendous blessing that he gave to Tamil Culture by giving us Sekkizhar.

At this moment we should not forget the contribution of Thilakvathi Ammaiyar the sister of Appar who gave him the guidance for being devoted to Lord Shiva. As they say, behind every successful men there is a women. That is so true in the case of the revival of the Tamil Cultural and Bhakthi movement in the second half of the first millenium.

On this occasion Thiru. Kadambur Raju Hon'ble Minister for Information and Publicity, Thiru. K. Pandiarajan, Hon'ble Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture and Archaeology, Thiru Sevvoor S.Ramachandran, Hon'ble Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Thiru. C.Rajendran, Dr. T.Elangovan, Thiru. S. Baskar, Dr. K.K. Nithi were present.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai-22  
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Joint Director (PR)