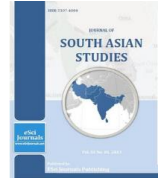




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CEKKILAR'S PERIYAPURANAM AND THE STORY OF KARAIKKAL AMMAI

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ABSTRACT

This article is a translation of the story of the life of Karaikkal Ammai, a sixth century saint poet of India. Her story has received considerable attention in the Tamil Saiva religious hagiography Cekkilar's "Periyapuram" which is a Hindu devotional text often referred to as the fifth Veda. It contains the lives of the 63 saints of the Tamil land. The story of Karaikkal Ammai is unique even in the bhakti movement since she is the only woman saint poet who transcends gender to attain the divine union with the Lord. This is a humble translation made by me in poetic form since most of the translations have been made in prose and also because Cekkilar's original composition was in a poetic form.

Keywords: Bhakti, Tamil Poetry, Saiva, Hagiography, Periyapuram, Karaikkal Ammai, Translation.

May the lofty and sublime Assembly,
Of the holy devotees who revel,
In the wealth and weal
-The pure flower words of Nayanmar
Who have of yore, hymned the Lord of Ambalam,
Whose matted hair sports the crescent-
For ever triumphantly flourish and run,
Their destined course illuminant in the world!

Invocation in *Periyapuram*, Trans. T.N.Ramachandran

If Cekkilar's *Periyapuram* had remained a mere historico-biographical record of the lives of 63 devotees, it would have long perished into grime. But its everlasting reputation rests in its poetic sublimity which transmutes the text into a work of perennial pride. The *Periyapuram* was composed nearly 200 years before the school of Saiva Siddhanta was systematically established by Umapati Civacariyar who wrote eight of the fourteen canonical philosophical works of the Saiva Siddhanta. Of the 63 saints whose lives are described in this hagiographical composition, Karaikkal Ammai is a preeminent figure whose life, glory and devotional compositions have a few parallels. Her story is contained in the *Periyapuram* or "The Great Purana" which is also called the *Thirutonttar Puranam*. Some of the lives

described in this Saivite magnum opus are elaborate while others are brief and at times sketchy. But the story of Karaikkal Ammai with 64 stanzas has received considerable attention from Cekkilar. This lofty composition was created when he was a minister and chief poet of the Chola king Kulothunga Chola II (1133-1150). The Chola regime was reputed for its Siva bhakti as it was for its antagonism against Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism.

Kulothunga Chola II was himself an ardent devotee of Siva in the form of Nataraja in Chidambaram. He arduously propagated Saivism that his ancestors had initiated. It is rather surprising then that a king of such a lineage was enchanted by a *Jaina* Tamil text-a courtly epic called *Jivaka Cintamani* - an interesting epic composed in the *sringara* mode. The hero Jivaka (in fact a prototype of Buddha/Mahavira) remains initially enticed to worldly pleasures, but later realizes eternal values and attains *Nirvana*. Cekkilar was disturbed by the king's enchantment with Jainism and contemplated a means to reverse the king's religious interest. Hence, he persuaded the king to read about the lives of the Tamil Nayanmars as exemplified in the works of Cuntarar and Nampi Antan Nampi. Cuntarar had earlier composed eleven stanzas called *Tirutontattokai* ("The History of the Holy Devotees") in which he gives a list of 62 saints. Karaikkal Ammai is only referred to as *Peyar* in this list (the revered one who is a demon). Later in the eleventh

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century, the poet Nampi Antar Nampi compiled the hymns of the Saiva devotional poets and narrated the stories of the sixty-three nayanmars or saints including Cuntarar. These hymns later formed the first eleven books of the *Tirumurai* or "The Sacred Text." When Nampi describes Karaikkal Ammai, he does not call her as *pey* as is done by Cuntarar and Cekkilar. The other facts of course remain the same.

Cekkilar later set out to compose a mammoth poem on the lives of the Saiva saints. His privilege as a minister of the state gained him access to collecting the requisite data to compose the hagiography. He composed the colossal epic at the famous Chidambaram temple in its Thousand Pillared Hall. This lofty composition transformed Kulottunga Cholan II who made a re-entry into Saivism in a full swing. It is considered a fifth Veda in Tamil and was made the last book of the *Saiva Tirumurai*. It encapsulates the essence of the religio-literary achievements of the Chola age. It is significant that this divine text contains an account of the lives of saints who were historical personages and not mythical. This *magnum opus* of Saivism contains 4,286 stanzas which are grouped into 70 cantos. A grand festival was organized on the release of Cekkilar's work. The work was exquisitely wrapped in silk and dedicated to Lord Siva with prayers at *Ponnambalam* (Golden Hall of Nataraja). The divinely-inspired Cekkilar expounded the poem to the public for one year from the thousand-pillared hall. The text offered a distinctive vision of Siva which had a great bearing on Saiva thought for centuries to come. It encapsulates certain key ideas of the Saiva tradition like *bhakti*, *saranagati*, and also offers benedictions to certain specific attributes of Siva: his swallowing of the ocean's poison, his *tandava* in the cremation ground, his overwhelming presence as a paternal figure, as a wearer of the crescent moon, as one with matted hair and also as one who bears the Ganga on his head. The devotee is often described as a servant of the lord, frequently invoking His holy feet.

The *Periyapuranam* was indeed multiply transformative at various levels. It transformed Kulothunga Chola II who re-bounced back to Saivism; it also transformed Cekkilar who renounced worldly life to embrace a life of religious devotion as it transformed the masses who were often wonder-struck on listening to the spiritual sagas embedded in the mammoth religio-poetic composition of Cekkilar. Fusing religious fervor with literary excellence, the magnificent poem is a tribute to

Tamil language and literature with its lofty use of poetic diction and its panentheistic tone that perceives religiosity in the entire universe. Highly democratic, it was created during an era of intense socio-religious and cultural reformation since it encompasses within its gamut, nearly all the subaltern classes of the Tamil society who were hitherto marginalized from the dominant mainstream brahminical hegemonistic Hinduism. Despite being reformatory in its tone, the *Periyapuranam* is still largely a male-dominated world. Of the 63 Nayanmars, only three were women: Karaikkal Ammai, Mangaiyarkkarasiyar and Isaiganianar (the mother of Cuntarar). The reasons could be owing to the fact that *bhakti* as both a poetic genre and as an experience continued to remain a male turf. Women were excluded from the mainstream *bhakti* rasa leave alone lofty poetic genres in the *bhakti* mode. It is therefore not surprising that women poets in bhakti literature are sparse. Women had to wage multiple diatribes in the gendered spaces to embrace bhakti and create bhakti poetry. Andal for instance is the only woman poet among the 12 Alwars. The other two women Nayanmars Mangaiyarkkarasiyar and Isaiganianar receive lesser treatment by Cekkilar probably both owing to the paucity of biographical materials and also because women continued to occupy liminal spaces in the realm of bhakti.

Mangaiyarkkarasiyar who was virtually Thiru Gnana Sambandar's foster mother had invited the child saint to Madurai to save the king from the clutches of Jain monks. The *Periyapuranam* also asserts that her breasts swelled with milk on beholding the child saint. As a flawless woman of the Chola dynasty she is equated with goddess Lakshmi. She is delineated in two and a half stanzas with the second half of the third stanza introducing the glory of Nesar Nayanmar the weaver. Isaiganianar is venerated in this hagiography on account of her having borne the illustrious Cuntarar. Cekkilar has nothing more than a single stanza to describe her. As the divinely opulent wife of Sataiyanaar and as a devotee of the lord who shattered the triple hostile citadels, the poet realizes the inadequacy of the poetic medium to extol her glory. Similarly, the biography of Cuntarar has a couple of lines for Isaiganianar the mother of Cuntarar who was born to redeem the world of evil. Nampi Andar Nampi also venerates her as a queen.

Kariakkal Ammai's venerable position even amongst the small group of women nayanmars is indeed remarkable.

She is the only woman saint poet in the *Periyapuranam* who received a considerable treatment since 64 verses have been dedicated to her. She is not venerated for her biological attributes like maternity and motherhood as is the case with Mangaiyarkkarasiyar and Isaignaniar. She gladly renounces her beautiful form to deliberately embrace ghoulish looks as a proof of her devotion to the Lord. It is her ghoulish body that is transformed into a vehicle for attaining the bejeweled feet of the Lord. Ammai thus presents a stark contrast to many poets of the bhakti movement. While Andal uses her body as a seminal medium to attain *moksha* in her *Tiruppavai* and *Nacchiar Tirumoli* Ammai renounces her very body to attain salvation. Cekkilar's story of Karaikkal Ammai runs thus:

Karaikkal is a prosperous coastal town, laden with wealthy and virtuous merchants. Punitavati was the daughter of Danatattan, a progeny born after her parents performed numerous penances. Like the later nayanmar Mangaiyarkarasi who is described as possessing the beauty of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, Punitavati was also beautiful. She displayed a deep devotion to Siva since her childhood which only augmented with passing times. At the appropriate age, she was given in marriage to Paramatattan from the town of Nakapattinam. Punitavati being his only child, Danatattan requested his son-in-law to live in a splendid house, next door to his house at Karaikkal, which he had lovingly constructed for his daughter. Punitavati continued to live an arduous life of austerity. One day, Paramatattan received two mangoes from his business client which he sent home. That afternoon, before Paramatattan could come home for lunch, a famished Siva servitor came to their house. As Punitavati had only cooked rice, she fed the servitor one of the mangoes and the cooked rice. She served the remaining mango to Paramatattan who was struck by its unusual taste and sweetness. Hence, he ordered for the other fruit also. A trembling Punitavati prayed to Siva who miraculously dropped a fruit into his hands. Now, the sweetness of the second fruit surpassed the first. When Paramatattan asked her for the truth, Punitavati made a frank confession. Paramatattan skeptically asked her to produce another mango. But when she did it, Paramatattan realized the divinity embedded within his wife and inwardly renounced all conjugal ties with her. On the pretext of business, Paramatattan left Karaikkal for another town, where he flourished in his trade. He married another woman and begot a daughter

whom he named as Punitavati. Meanwhile, Punitavati continued to live an austere life, as she remained blissfully unaware of the facts regarding her husband's life. When her parents discovered the truth, they took her to Paramatattan who fell at his wife's feet since she epitomized divine grace. When Punitavati realized that Paramatattan no longer considered her as his wife, she decided to renounce her physique and her present life as a *grihastini* (house holder) in quest of a life of eternal salvation at the feet of the Lord. She prayed to Siva to take away her beautiful appearance and instead bestow on her a ghoulish form. Her wish was immediately granted much to the benedictions showered on her by the celestials, although mortals feared her visage. With surging devotion, she composed her *Arputa Tiruvantati* ("Sacred Linked Verses of Wonder") and *Tiruvirettai Manimalai* ("Sacred Double Garland of Verses"). She undertook a pilgrimage to the Himalayas to see Siva and Parvati, walking on her hands up Mt.Kailasa, so as not to defile the abode of God. She was greeted there as *Ammai* (Mother) by Siva. This is indeed a significant tribute to this great soul, since all religious verses including the *Tevaram* praise Siva as the mother and the father of the universe. Perceived from this perspective, Ammai is labeled as the "mother" even by the eternal Lord. He beckons her to witness his cosmic dance at Tiruvalankatu. She reached the place with her head and watched Siva's *oorthuva tandava* (wondrous dance), sang the *Tiruvallankattu Muta Tirupatikangal* (Sacred Senior Songs of Tiruvalankattu) and remained forever his adoring servant. Her service to Tamil literature is also as yeoman as is her service to Tamil devotion. She was the first poet to have sung in the *antati* metre which was emulated by the later Nayanmars like Cuntarar and Sambandar. The fame of Karaikkal Ammai is unfortunately limited since few know her beyond Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. She is known as "Karaikkal Matha" in the western coasts of Kerala. Her temples are seen in Karnataka and on the banks of the Ganga. Besides, her icons could be traced in Indonesia, Java, Sumatra and Sri Lanka. To this day, the iconographic descriptions of Lord Siva performing the *oortuva tandava* depicts Karaikkal Ammai also in a skeletal form. The temple dedicated to her at Karaikkal was earlier her house where she had lived with Paramatattan.

Her biography as depicted by Cekkilar has seen many translations in English. One of the pioneering efforts in

this direction was undertaken by T.N.Ramachandran wherein he has translated the entire *Periyapuramam* into English in a poetic form. The translation of *Periyapuramam* in simple prose remains galore as those of the Yogi Suddhananda Bharathi, the Ramakrishna Math publication and most recently Mc.Glashan's new translation in simple but lucid prose. More particularly, Karen Pechilis has rendered a prose translation of the story of Karaikkal Ammai in her book *Interpreting*

Devotion (2011) which was originally published in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*. (Pechilis, 2006). I remain personally enchanted by the *Periyapuramam* and more particularly Kariakkal Ammai's life which has triggered me to work on the current translation. Since poetic translations of the *Periyapuramam* are few, I have embarked on this humble project, which I do not deem as being out of place owing to the perennial aura that these texts radiate.

SEKKILZHAR'S PERIYAPURANAM: THE BIOGRAPHY OF KAARAICKAL AMMAIYAAR IN TRANSLATION

Here lies the city of merchants galore,
Who are embodiments of immaculate dharma,
There, lie curled shells drifted by the waters
Multiply do they in the backwaters,
Such is the glory of Karaikkal.

Near such a sea-shore, strewn with merchant
vessels,
By virtue of the penance of Dhanadattar,
The chief of the merchants at Karaikkal,
Was born Punithavathiyar with immense beauty
As was the unblemished goddess Lakshmi.

Glowing was she, full of grace,
Born that the entire clan may prosper.
Nimble feet, bejeweled with lustrous gold,
Spoke she soft words,
With a heart brimming with love for the Lord
Adorned with snakes.

Fair grew the child, to the delight of all,
The affluent father performing the rites,
A tender shoot, admired by all,
Immersed deep in flawless devotion,
To the lord who rides the bull.

Playful though, articulated she in tongue sweet
The wearer of the crescent moon and matted locks
Adored she His servitors plenteous
Thus grew she, her slender waist quivering
Under the weight of her twin breasts.

Perfect was she in *Samudrika*,
Now entering the youthful stage,
Unable to cross her threshold.
As men of the mercantile class
Came seeking her hand.

Nitipati, a merchant renowned at Nagai,
Sent wise men to the rich Karaikkal,
To pursue the consent of Dhanadattan,
Seeking the bejeweled beauty in marriage.
For his chosen son Paramatattan

They entered the house of Dhanadattan,
Men of wisdom and age.
Broached they the subject of marriage,
the wearer of lustrous jewels,
With Paramatattan of a hoary tradition.

Consented then Dhanadattan,
With regards due to Nitipati.
The men apprised Nitipati the matter,
Who set forth for the grand wedding
Of his peerless son at Karaikkal.

On the approach of the wedding day,
They set forth with invitations and rites,
Decked with flowers that grew in bunches,
With the wedding drums that beat loud,
The groom and all entered Karaikkal.

They moved into the mansion grand,
Decked with flowers, buzzed by bees,
With the consent of the happy kin,
Married the peacock with flower-soft feet,
To the one who was a bull.

Lived they happily as man and wife,
In Dhanadattar's mansion at Karaikkal,
Lived there she, his only child,
Suffer he could not his daughter's separation,
If she went to Nagai, the city of vibrant seas.

Receiving he the wealth bounteous,
Nitipati's son and one of flawless grace,
Paramatattan, rejoiced exceedingly,
Grew he lofty in business and family secure,
In accordance with his clan's tradition.

A helpmate true and one with perfumed tresses,
Dwelted she in mounting devotion.
With ceaseless reverence for the rider of the bull,
Continued she with devotion unswerving,
True to the norms of domestic life.

With nectar-like food she fed them ,
The servitors of the Lord who thronged there.
Bestowed on them gems ninefold.
With soul-surging devotion for the feet of the lord,
Gave them garments fine and bright gold.

Men of trade who came to the town,
Called on Paramatattan, one in thriving business,
Gave him a pair of mangoes delicious,
Received he the fruits, and paid his respects,
Then bade his servants, "Take them to my house."

She with tresses fragrant and flowers attired,
Received the mangoes sent by her lord,
Stored them in its due place.
Then came a servitor of the Lord, adorned with
snakes,
Into the house, hungry and desired to be fed.

Perceiving the servitor as the Lord of Gospels,
Resolved she and thought "His hunger will I
appease".
Offering him water to cleanse his feet,
Spread she the tender plantain leaf,
Knowing that in him lay the panacea for all sins.

Seemed she like Lakshmi- the fragrant lotus
throned,
Had no curries, though rice she cooked.
Thought she thus: "The servitor of the Lord of bull is
my guest,
Who is laden with a deep quest."
Devoutly did she feed him thus.
One of the sweet and fragrant mangoes,
Sent by her husband to her care,
She took to serve the servitor,

In immense delight did she serve the same,
To the devotee, the dispeller of sorrows thus.

Bent with age, tired with ravenous hunger,
Came the divine servitor, clamoring
Immediate gratification and ate the fine meal,
Relishing the soft food and wondrous mango,
Blessed the woman of perfumed tresses and went
his way.

At sunset entered the merchant, the lord of the
house,
After the servitor left. Having cleansed his feet
And duly after a bath, he summoned her then
For his meal from his wife chaste.
Who duly attended her duty.

She of fragrant mane served him delicious food,
Curried dishes and other tasty meal.
The sweet smelling mango on his leaf,
One of the two mangoes sent to her,
By her husband who was ever glorious.

The garlanded merchant relished the heavenly
sweetness.
Desired for more of the sweet fruit;
Asked his wife: "There is one more of it
Give me that too." Moved she out
As though to secure the fruit.

Tremble she did and move away,
Procure she the unavailable fruit?
Meditated she at the feet of the Lord,
Who rescues when devoutly prayed,
Behold the marvel! A fruit descended into her palm.

Served she the fruit, in joy he ate,
Discovered that its sweetness surpassed the nectar,
Said he "This is not the fruit I gave
Since its sweetness exceeds the three worlds."
"Whence did you get this?"
Thus he questioned the bangled beauty.

Disclosed she not when thus confronted,
Of the Lord's grace.
Neither would she dream of concealment ,
From her husband and thus quivered in fear,
As one immersed in chastity.

Resolved to narrate what she had done,
She adored the feet of the Lord,
Encouraged by virtue of the mind,
She of perfumed hair and decked with flowers,
Narrated to him how the fruit came to be.

Skeptical was he, the lord of the house,
That it was grace which begot the fruit,
Addressed the one who was like Lakshmi,
"If it is by the effulgent Lord with the matted hair,
Grant another immaculate fruit with His grace!"

Moved away thus the wondrous wife, soliciting the
Lord,
With snakes as his jewels: "If thou bequeath it not to
me
With grace, untrue would be my words."
Lo! and behold His grace, she obtained a fruit,
Which she placed in his hands.
Received he the same, wonder struck.

Astonished and bewildered stood the merchant,
Unable to behold the fruit in his hand,
The beautiful woman must be wondrous!
Thus resolved, decided to depart,
Silently did he pass his days sans union.

Embarked he then on a merchant craft,
Built by his friends, the flawless merchants,
Resolved he to depart and declared his task,
"Set sail will I on the roaring seas,
Return shall I with wealth immense."

Boarded he on the vessel, firm and fit,
Filling it with goods for men living far,
Started he firm on an auspicious day,
On the vessel built for him,
By close kin and merchants blemishless.

Gained he thus wealth immense,
Sailed he the sea and traded in its ports,
Planned he the craft, and gained wealth vast,
Travelled he thus on the vessel,
And arrived at a Pandya town, filled with water.

Traded he in town, with goods immense,
Gained he thus in wealth huge,
Dwelt in joy the town's glorious men,

Married he later the beautiful daughter
Of that town's merchant.

Wedded he duly the Lakshmi-like woman,
In pomp and grandeur with a concealing mind,
Cloaked he the news of his former wife,
One with fragrant hair, dark as sand,
Led an otherwise virtuous life with joy.

Prospered he thus in maritime trade,
United was he with merchants of name,
Lived he happy in the town of fragrant groves,
Grew he in prosperity much like *Kubera*
Blessed with a daughter-the light of his life.

A christening ceremony, held he with pomp,
Named her after his chaste wife,
Whom he parted, filled with awe,
Never thought of union since he departed,
A lofty deity for him alone.

Lived he thus in the Pandya kingdom,
As at Karaikal lived Dhanadattan's daughter,
In a mansion, huge as an unassailable fort,
Performing ever her acts of charity,
With chaste and *dharmic* piety in her house.

Then came the news through radiant kinsmen,
To the lady who was like a vine of brilliant gems,
Of Paramatattan who sailed to the Pandya country,
Settled was he with wealth of immense bounty,
In the country of eternal glory.

The kin of the heavenly woman heard the news,
Sent they their folks and confirmed the same.
Received they the news with troubled mind.
Resolved to take the one with rounded breasts,
And leave her there to him.

Carried they far the coy beauty,
With gait like a peacock and visage like Lakshmi,
Seated on a lotus, they lowered the screen,
Of the attractive e palanquin, surrounded by
Sweet-voiced women for the travel long.

After a few days of travel far,
Reached they the land of pure Tamil,
Approached Paramatattan of garland fame,

Sent him the news of their arrival,
Also of having brought his adorable wife,
The gem of their clan.

Befuddled stood he, the merchant of grace,
Heard their arrival and resolved to go,
Himself with his banged second wife,
And with his daughter he went,
To the lady with fragrant tresses.

Prostrating at the feet of his wife immense,
With his new wife and toddling child,
She stood there like a tender doe,
To whom he said, "I flourish by your grace,
This child bears your name." Saying thus,
Homage paid he, in due reverence.

The beautiful deer beheld the adoring husband,
As the assembled kins moved away.
Muted by fear, yet questioned him thus,
"Oh wearer of fragrant garland,
Why do thou thus worship thy wife?"

Addressed he then, the astonished folks thus:
"Not a mere human is she,
One who's indeed a deity.
Aware of this truth I left her,
Named my daughter after her.
May we adore her golden feet and hail her!"

"What may this be?" the perplexed folk exclaimed;
As she of fragrant tresses hailed the feet,
Of the Lord of matted hair, *konrai* flower and anklet,
Spoke she then with an inner consciousness,
Her mind pure and merged to a divine union.

"Rid me oh Lord of this burden of flesh,
Centered in beauty, borne for him,
Fittingly bestow on me your servant,
A ghost's form to hail you in your world",
Thus prayed she and praised the feet of the Lord.

Lo! By the grace of the Lord Dancer,
She who stood in supreme consciousness,
Was taken away of all her flesh,
Stood she in her skeletal self,
A hallowed ghost, hailed by heaven and earth.

Adored they all, the flawless kinsfolk,
Moved they away, filled with wonder,
Flowers showered, the air reverberated
With celestial music, as *munis* stood elated,
Siva's sages danced *Kunalai*,
As celestial *tuntupi* echoed the world.

Praised she the Lord of Uma with
Arpuda Tiruvantati thus
With surging wisdom from within,
Drenched in devotion, sang she thus,
"Behold, I now hail the wondrous and divine feet of Siva
And henceforth remain a part of his good hosts."

Surging with a transcendental consciousness,
Sang she in choice *venpa* verse,
The glorious *Rettai Mani Malai*,
On her way to Kailasa,
The abode of the Lord who burnt the triple cities.

Fled they the folks, who saw her thus,
Terrified of her fearful form,
Unperturbed stood she despite this,
"What avail are these the remarks of mortals,
When the truth is known to the Lord immortal?"

Darting forth she, faster than the mind,
Travelled fast to the North near Mt.Kailasa,
The place of eternal radiance and the bearer of the
Trident,
Resplendent with a garland of *Konrai*,
Made not her holy journey with her feet,
But with her head in reverence due.

Ascended she thus, Sankara's lofty mountain,
With surging devotion, as Uma, Himmavant's
daughter,
One with a bow-like brow and also a half of the Lord,
Who is perennially young with a crescent on his
head,
Looked at her with grace.

Thus spoke the wondering goddess with an
immense heart,
"Behold oh Lord! The skeletal being,
Who ascends up with its head,"
To her spoke the Lord,
Laden with graciousness though.

“Oh Uma! She who cometh is verily our mother,
She was blessed with the glorious form,
Because she prayed for it.” Thus the Lord
Addressed her as “mother” the unique word
That redeems all the worlds.

“Mother” addressed He, and
“Father” addressed she as she fell,
At his ruddy lotus-like feet,
The Lord adorned with a earring of shells,
Beckoned her “What may your prayer be?”
For which the servitor bowed and spake.

First prayed she for devotion eternal,
Then prayed she again for birthlessness,
“Should I ever be born again, let me
Never forget you. Also let me pray for the boon,
Near your feet, when you dance.”

He graced her thus and said to her,
“You are blessed to witness The Great Dance,
In Alankadu, where the fields blaze south,
Filled with bliss, forever may you,
Compose us songs of glory and grace.”
Thus blessed by him, the master of the Vedas,
The Mother took leave of the Lord.
Adoring him thus with infinite love,

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She made her way to Thiruvankadu,
With her head, with reverence and glory.

At Alankadu, beheld she the Lord’s dance,
Thus blessed by him the master of the Vedas,
Adoring him thus with infinite love,
She made her way to Thiruvankadu,
With her head with reverence and glory.

Struck with wonder, she sang thus,
“*Etti, Elavam, Eekai*. . .dance thou
The beautiful one, to the beat of the drum.”
Her loving spirit surged in devotion,
To the Lord decked with fragrant *Konrai* blossoms.

Can one ever measure the glory,
Of she who was addressed as “Mother”
By the Lord himself who bears the flood,
She is the one ever-abiding,
At the glorious foot of the Lord of the cosmic dance.

Having narrated and praised,
The petal-soft feet of the Mother,
Who praises the dancer of infinite grace,
I now proceed to narrate the service of Appothi,
The enlightened saint of Tingaloor,
A town of lush fields and cool water.

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