

English - Group 5

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar

Cheraman Perumal Nayanar was born in Kodunkolur. It was the capital city of Malai Nadu or the present Kerala. He was born in the royal family of Kothayars, otherwise known as the Uthiyan family. The name Cheraman was the common name for all Cheras. Perumal was the title adopted by him after his coronation. His original name was Perum-Ma-Kothayar. He was endowed with good Samskaras. He had great devotion to the Lord even as a child. As he grew, his devotion also grew. He had a remarkable degree of dispassion and discrimination. He did not like to rule the country: and so, when he came of age, he renounced the world and went to Tiru Anchaikalam and engaged himself in the worship of the Lord there. The country was ruled by Sengol Porayan. He, too, soon realised the evanescence of worldly life and renounced the world! He had no issues and the throne was vacant. They went to Tiru Anchaikalam and requested Perum-Ma-Kothayar to ascend the throne. Though he was reluctant, lest it should interfere with his daily worship, he bowed to the divine will. He went to the temple and offered a prayer. The Lord permitted him to accept the rulership. By the Lord's grace he ascended the throne and ruled the country justly and wisely. He could understand all languages, even the language of the birds. The Lord had bestowed upon him all the Aiswaryas, great strength, royal vehicles, etc.

After the *coronation*, he went to the temple and after worshipping the Lord he was returning to the palace. On the way, he saw a washerman whose body had been smeared with white sand and mud. The very sight enraptured Cheraman who saw in him the image of Lord Siva with the sacred ash smeared all over the body. He was raised to God-consciousness. He descended from the elephant and fell at the feet of the washerman, in spite of the latter's protest. All were wonderstruck to witness the supreme devotion of Cheraman.

By his many acts of devotion and piety, he earned the grace of Lord Siva. The Lord sent to him a renowned musician and devotee, Banapatirar, with a palm leaf on which was the Lord's own song in praise of Cheraman! It read: 'Oh king who honours great poets with rich presents, who rules his subjects with love! Glory to you! I am very highly pleased with your devotion and charitable nature. The bearer of this message is Banapatirar who is a great devotee like you. He is a great musician and always sings My glories on his favourite instrument, Yazh. He has come to see you. Welcome him with due respect and honour him with plenty of riches.' Cheraman welcomed the musician with great

love and devotion. When he read the song of the Lord, he was overjoyed and rolled on the ground. He said to Banapatirar: 'Oh noble soul, kindly take possession of all these and accept my kingdom also.' Banapatirar was astounded to witness the king's devotion and said: 'Oh king, I am highly pleased with your Darshan. I shall accept only what is absolutely necessary for me, for that has been the command of the Lord.' He took what he needed and left Kodunkolur on an elephant. Cheraman escorted him up to the border.

Cheraman was greatly devoted to Lord Nataraja. He had surrendered his body, mind and soul to Him. He would daily worship the Lord: and, by His grace, at the time of his prayer, he would hear the musical sound produced by the Lord's anklets during His dance. One day, however, at the time of the prayer, he did not hear the usual divine sound. Cheraman was greatly afflicted at heart. He thought that he must have been guilty of a great crime and decided to end his life, with his sword. At once he heard the divine sound and a voice in the sky explained: 'Oh noble soul, My friend Nambi Arurar has come to Tillai and he was singing sweet Tamil songs. I was completely absorbed in that and hence the delay in blessing you with the musical sound of My anklet.' The Lord wanted to create a friendship between Sundarar and Cheraman and so spoke highly of Sundarar to Cheraman. Cheraman, desirous of worshipping Lord Nataraja and also of meeting Sundarar, at once started for Tillai. The very sight of the Lord in Tillai entranced him. He sang 'Pon Vannathu Anthadi' on Lord Nataraja. In appreciation, the Lord blessed him with the musical sound of His anklets. Cheraman was swimming in divine bliss.

Before Cheraman reached Tillai, Sundarar had already left the place. Cheraman proceeded to Tiruvarur where he met Sundarar. They embraced each other and fell at each other's feet. They became fast friends. At Tiruvarur Cheraman composed the famous 'Tiru Mummanikovai' on Lord Thiagaraja.

Then they went to Vedaranyam. There Cheraman sang his 'Tiru Anthati' on the Lord. After visiting many shrines on the way they came to Madura. The Pandyan king welcomed them. The Chola prince who was staying with the Pandyan king also welcomed them. In their company the great saints visited many shrines. Taking leave of the kings, Cheraman and Sundarar returned to Tiruvarur. From there, at the request of Cheraman, Sundarar accompanied him to Kodunkolur. There Cheraman took Sundarar on an elephant and went round the city in procession.

When Sundarar returned to Tiruvarur, he had instructed Cheraman to rule the country justly and wisely. Cheraman obeyed the saint's commands. On the next occasion when Sundarar visited Kodunkolur one day Sundarar suddenly left the place and went to the sacred shrine at Tiru Anchaikalam where he sought the

Lord's grace and attained Liberation. By intuition, Cheraman learnt of Sundarar's release and he also attained the Lotus Feet of the Lord, as we have already seen, while dealing with Sundaramurthi Nayanar's life. In Kailasa, Cheraman became the chief of Lord Siva's Ganas (servants).