

OUTLINES OF  
**SAIVISM**

M. ARUNACHALAM

PEEPS INTO TAMIL CULTURE-2

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**Gandhi Vidyalayam**

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## CONTENTS

PRFFACE	...	5
WHAT IS SAIVISM	...	13
Saivism - Antiquity of Saivism - Saiva Religion- God is love - Saiva Philosophy - Saiva Society - The Concept of Beauty.		
SAIVA SCRIPTURES	...	24
The Goal - The Sanskrit Scriptures - The Tamil Scriptures - The Saiva Canon - The Siddhanta Sastras - The Bhakti cult.		
SAIVA PRECEPTORS	...	32
The Supreme Guru - The Saiva Acharyas - Saint Jnanasambandhar - Saint Appar-Saint Sundarar - Saint Manikkavacakar - The Santana Acharyas - Chandesa - Siva Bhaktas - Sivacharyas.		
SAIVA WORSHIP	...	44
Temple worship - The Sequence in worship - Congregational worship - Idol worship.		
SAIVA RITUALS	...	51
Significance-Domestic rituals-Rituals in worship -The background.		
SAIVA ETHICS	...	60
Ethics - Attachment - Purusharthas - Non - attachment - Varna - Ashrama - Virtues.		
SAIVA SADHANA	...	68
The Four Paths - charya - kriya - yoga - jnana - Bhakti Marga - The Saiva Emblems - The Guru and his Initiation.		
SAIVA PHILOSOPHY	...	76
Pati God - Soul: Pasu - The Bonds: Pasa - The Dance of Nataraja - Deliverance : Mukti - Grace: Sakti.		
NOTES AND REFERENCES	...	88
GLOSSARY	...	99
ERRATA	...	107





## PREFACE

This short book on Saivism deals with the theory and practice of the Saiva religion as it *was* lived a long time back and as it continues to be lived by discerning Saivas, the worshippers of Siva, in the Tamilnad today. The Saivas live not only in Tamilnad and the other parts of India, but also in the other parts of the world such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa, the Fiji islands and several other places; in fact, wherever the Tamil people live, there we have Saivism. We may also add that some form of Saivism is the religion of the Hindus of Kashmir; and of a large part of the Hindus of Bengal, although their religion has been known as Saktism, worship of Sakti, the consort of Siva, as the supreme being. But it has to be regretfully accepted that a good majority of those that profess to be Saivas do not know the basic tenets of Saivism. This book is an attempt to tell all such people the outlines of the *Saivism of Tamil nadu*.

An illustrious son of India from the North, who happened to visit Tamilnad for the first time a decade ago, is said to have asked his friends : “ You said that Saivism is the chief religion practised in this part of the country. But I do not see any one going about with a string of skulls round his neck! ” So this is the impression that even the knowledgeable people of the North have about the Southern Saivism - that it is a sect of Bhairavas, Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, Pasupatas and the like, who indulge in many uncouth practices like the wearing of a string of skulls.

Fortunately, the Saivism of Tamilnad is none of these and has not been any of these at any period in its history. It is not a ritual- or superstition-ridden religion given to unclean ways of living and primitive practices. The Saivism of the South, that is, of Tamilnadu, is a religion based on a higher philosophy of Truth and Love. Known as the *Saiva Siddhanta*, it does not



have any of the dubious practices of the other so called Saiva sects found in some other parts of India, in the bygone days. It has its own system of metaphysics, its own system of philosophy and its own distinctive practices of formal religion, which can yet be a model for all mankind. Other religious in South India sprouted in the remote past from a basic Saivism which yet continues to maintain its classical purity through several millennia.

The great virtue about the Saiva religion is that it has the greatest volume of philosophical and religious literature *in the language of its people, Tamil*, while at the same time possessing an equally large volume of writing in the Sanskrit language. It can even go further and claim that the basic classical scriptures for *all its philosophy* are in the spoken language of the people, the modern Tamil language, a claim which other *vaidika* religious sects cannot make.

The Saiva Siddhanta is a revealed religion; it has not been established or propagated by any prophet or seer. We do now know that even in the earliest books on Saivism in the Tamil language, several schools of Saivism have been mentioned - six schools intimately related, such as Sivasamavada, Sivadvaita etc. and six other schools not so intimately related viz., Pasupata, Mahavrata, Kapalika, Vama, Bhairava and Aikyavada Saiva. However, these play a role only in dialectical disputation and it is doubtful whether any of them were actually followed at any time by any large segment of the Saiva society in the Tamilnadu. The only school that was current in Tamilnad from at least the beginning of the Christian era is the Saiva Siddhanta school which we call here simply Saivism. The treatment of Saivism given is only the *vaidika* or the orthodox concept and no radical views have been attempted.

One has to take note of certain trends today, where fashion sways religion. It is indeed a very broad and liberal view to say that God can be worshipped in any form one likes, or any form which catches one's fancy. But unless there is a right understanding and a certain conservatism in matters of religion, the average man is certain to be swept off his feet by the

smallest wave of religious fashion and, without any proper moorings, he is left adrift on the sea of life. Where people have money and have the whim, new temples are springing up every alternate day. In the past, only a temple for Ganesa may be consecrated anywhere under any circumstances. But the others? Mature minds find it hard to approve of the others. The craze for the modern *Sasta* cult seems to give an outlet for all that is bizarre and outlandish, and for the hippidom in the modern Hindu society which is modelling itself on the latest American trends. This leads one nowhere. New temples for *Mari*, for forms of Sakti, and so on are being consecrated. It is meaningless to argue that the revolutionary modern life alone is the sanction for all these. Our actions and our moral and spiritual affiliations should be rooted on good and firm soil and should be founded on the bedrock of the right philosophy and scientific reasoning, and sound and elevating religious practices. Such is not the case today.

*Sasta* and *Mari* do not have a place in Saiva philosophy or the practice of the religion by the informed. Hundreds of glorious ancient temples in Tamilnad are in an uncared for condition because many people do not attend the worship there. Migration of large sections of the rural population to the urban areas in search of employment and the amenities of life may be one reason. And the organised administrative looting of the temples with the sanction of the law in the last decade has left there nothing for administration now. In the circumstances, the construction and consecration of new temples for *Sasta*, *Mari* and the like, though laudable as an expression of devotion, is a step in the wrong direction, since this means less people for the ancient temples which may have to be closed in course of time. To put it crudely, this is something like presenting a welcome address to the door-keeper when the door of the chamber of the King of Kings is wide open for our entry. *Sasta* and *Mari* are less than door-keepers, because they have no place at all inside a Siva temple.

A temple is the structural portrayal of an abstract philosophy. Every Siva temple and every little part in it have an esoteric significance. But these new temples? They have no



philosophy; there is nothing to be said about them. So what fine sentiments or lofty thoughts can they evoke in the congregation? People go to these temples because it has become a fashion; because stars of the silver screen congregate there. In the circumstances, it is our view that a constant re-emphasis and a re-statement of our religion and its elevating spiritual values is a prime need of the day.

Such being the modern trend, it is indeed remarkable that there are yet thousands of middle class families who scrupulously adhere to the path of their forefathers of a thousand years back in meticulously following the orthodox Saiva path. They perform worship for Siva, observe the special *vrata* days, attend temple worship, conduct festivals, put on the sacred ash, feed some Siva bhaktas, read the hymn books and attend religious discourses. We can only marvel at their discipline in life, when factors like the spiralling prices, inflation, scarcity of essential articles, ordeals of travel, and crowding and jostling in every walk of life pull man the other way round and test his strength and dedication and his very faith. We have the greatest admiration for such people. But a large majority, born to the Saiva culture and religion, do not know what these mean and float as it were on the surface of life. Even the disciplined set do not know their religion, their place in what is called the *Hindu* religion, and do not realize what a great culture they are heir to. But they are eager to learn and it is to them that this book is addressed. All technical details have been avoided here. Initiation and the Yoga have not even been touched upon here, as that is a subject to be learned and practised under a competent *guru*.

And speaking of *gurus*, we may find that this is a day of *gurus* galore. There is a *guru* round every corner, a *guru* for *mannra*, a *guru* for *tantra*, a *guru* for working miracles, a *guru* for securing any desired objects and so on. The more science advances, the more the realm of reason extends, the greater is the trade of the miracle maker. (We do not utter a single word in derision of the *real yogi* or the *real siddha*, who is overflowing with his own spiritual experiences and love of humanity, but such a person has nothing

to do with any exhibitionism.) The average man is easily bamboozled out of his normal wits, simply because he does not have any strong foothold in his own religion. This book will just tell him what his religion is and will help the earnest and discerning Saiva to withstand the lure of false gurus and miracle mongers.

The main purpose of this book is to define Saivism and introduce it even to those who say they are Saivas, followers of Siva, but do not know anything of Saivism. Putting on the sacred ash and the *rudraksha* beads does of course matter, but it is not everything; it is neither the beginning nor the end. The follower of the Saiva religion should be able to *see Sivam in everything* and everywhere. He is heir to the declaration of the poet that 'all places are my place and all people are my kin',<sup>1</sup> and the philosophy of the mystic who declared that 'mankind is one and God is one'.<sup>2</sup> He should be able to understand the basic strains of the Saiva *dharma* namely that Saivism does not consist merely in worship but in living the really virtuous Saiva life. He should also remember that he is heir to one of the richest religious legacies in the whole world and that the redemption of the entire world depends on living the Saiva life. The Buddhist Sakkiya, 1500 years ago, lived that life and was counted a Saiva *nayanar* (man of God) and today Mahatma Gandhi lived amidst us, the greatest of the *nayanmar*, the '*Appalum adiccharndar*'<sup>3</sup> (those who worshipped from beyond) mentioned by the Saiva acharya St. Sundaramurti.

Saivism is not a mere religion with age old beliefs and practices, it is not mere worship, it is not any abstract philosophy; it has been all these and more; it *was* and *is* a way of life. That Saivism has been a way of life is a statement which requires the greatest reverence and attention. The Tamil language possesses the greatest volume of devotional songs which have not been equalled by any other language in the world, both in depth and in volume. These songs belong to the two sects Saivism and Vaishnavism, but the major portion, from the fifth century to the present day relates to Saivism. The songs of the acharyas in the seventh to the ninth centuries had converted the Chola monarchs of



the period 9-13 centuries to be the greatest temple builders the world had ever seen. They had patronized all the arts, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance and poetry. The Tamil people have a rich and proud legacy in all these which date back to more than two thousand years and that is the glory of the Saivism in the land. Unlike Greece and Rome where such a culture once existed but now does not, the ancient culture continues to exist in the Tamilnad. Each of the thousands of temples built by the Pallava and the Chola Emperors requires the study of a full life time. It is a happy augury that the Tamilnad sculpture and architecture are getting greater recognition in the modern day. An outline of the Saivism which was responsible for all this art and culture to sprout and to bloom is being attempted in this small book.

This book will also help to introduce the Saiva religion of Tamilnad to persons who do not know the Tamil language. It is our fervent hope that the Tamil people will be enabled to carry the image of Siva in their hearts and shine as beacon lights to the others in their voyage through life.

The book gives only the barest outline of some aspects of this Saivism, under eight different heads. Trying to answer 'What is Saivism', the first chapter explains that it is more a way of life and that life is a life of love to *all* creation which, in the primary analysis of practice, reduces to non-killing and non-meat-eating. The next two chapters on the Preceptors and the Scriptures deal with the history of these and indicate the scope under both. Today when anything is quoted as a scripture and anyone is acclaimed as a preceptor, it is necessary to define these which come from a hoary past, more hoary and ancient than most of the religions *practised* today. The chapters on Worship and Rituals focus attention on the *one world* and the *one God* concept and state that the one God is the one Absolute, the Nameless and Formless Being, called here Siva for purposes of comprehension. It has been specifically explained that Saivism is not idolatry nor is it pantheism. The next two chapters on Saiva Ethics and on Sadhana deal with Saivism as a way of life and the several pathways to God in it

and set a goal before the individual. The last chapter on the Philosophy of Saivism i.e., Saiva Siddhanta, outlines briefly the doctrines of this philosophy which has been called by different names as Qualified Monism, Non-dualism and Suddha advaita.

Merely knowing about the scriptures and adopting the Saiva emblems will not give the spiritual experience. These are just steps or disciplines which in the fulness of time may lead on to the experience.

Visitors from the north have quite often remarked that the South maintains the soul of Hinduism, its depth, purity and universality. Political conditions might have helped the South in this regard, but it has also to be asserted that the greater catholicity of the Saiva religion here and its foundation on some basic serene and unassailable eternal values have contributed in no small measure to the preservation in a purer state, of the true and intrinsic Tamil culture of the past, and that of the Vedas and the Upanishads, which are even today throbbing with life and vitality.

It is to be regretted that eminent historians of Indian Philosophy have not done justice to this ancient religion which had been guiding the entire Southern area of the Indian sub-continent for many millennia. Such a great savant as Dr. Radhakrishnan who had been born in Tamilnad, had lived in Tamilnad and had spent the major part of his life in Tamilnad, has devoted only a few pages (eight) to all the schools of Saivism in his *Indian Philosophy*<sup>4</sup>, including the Agamas in Sanskrit and the Saiva Hymns and the Siddhanta Sastras in Tamil. But Professor S. N. Das Gupta of Calcutta wrote elaborately on Saivism but died before he could complete the subject. His writing is contained in the posthumous publication (1922) of Volume V of his *History of Indian Philosophy*, which deals with the Southern schools of Saivism. Here he has discussed the Saiva Siddhanta from the Agamas, *Tiruvacakam*, Sri Kantha, Meykandar, the *Puranas* etc. in about 130 pages.<sup>5</sup> The Saiva world of Tamilnad is under a deep debt of gratitude to him for this treatment. It is a marvel

that Dr. Das Gupta had been able to do this much for Saivism in spite of the fact that he did not know the Tamil language or the *grantha* script in which many of the Saiva agamas of South India had then been published. There are a few books of a later day on the subject of Saivism. But excepting Dr. Das Gupta's book, there seems to have been an organized black out on the Tamilnad Saivism among the scholars, upto the first half of the 20th century. That will explain the need for more informed books on Saivism.

This book is only an elementary treatise on the Saiva religion. Philosophy is treated here only incidentally in the course of a few pages. The book has been adapted from my Tamil book entitled *Saiva Samayam* (Saiva Religion) published some years ago. There are many books today dealing with the outlines of Hinduism, at varying levels of exposition, but there is no popular book on the outlines of Saivism. This book is just an attempt to supply that want.

The original lines in the Saiva canon and the other books in the Tamil language for some of the thoughts expressed in the text have been appended for the enlightenment of those who know the Tamil language. A glossary of the technical terms is also added to help those that are not familiar with them.

## WHAT IS SAIVISM ?

Saivism is a way of life. It is not mere religion; it is not mere philosophy: it is a way of disciplining oneself as a member of a family, a member of society, as a citizen, as a servant of God, as one of God's creation, in harmony with the entire creation.

### *Saivism*

Saivism is one of the oldest religions of the world and is still a living religion. It took shape when the culture and civilization of man took shape: its origins have been pre-historic. Saivism is a concept of culture as understood in India in the distant past.

*Sat-Chit-Ananda* is said to be the definition of God in Saivism. It is Truth, Knowledge and Bliss - Life, Light and Love. We know in the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi considered Truth as God and emphasized through all his speeches and writings, and his very living, that Truth and Love are just like the two faces of a coin and that God is the coin. His life is a luminous example to show that it is really possible to translate this highest philosophy into a way of living. Saivism indicates that way of living.

The term *Sivam* is a vedic term,<sup>6</sup> and it means that which confers happiness. Even other religious books had termed the state of eternal bliss as *Siva-gati*<sup>7</sup>, the State of Goodness. Thus, *Sivam* may be taken to have signified a state of perfect goodness and happiness for which everyone has to strive. That has been personified as the Supreme Reality, *Siva*, and those who strive to attain it had been called the *Saivas*.

The traditional definition of *Saivam* also conforms to this view. Saivism is always an open religion; it absorbs all things into its fold; it does not rail at others. The goal is one; it is the same for all; the paths leading to it are many. Saivism

has no quarrel with people who follow paths other than its own. 'Cows are many coloured; but their milk is all white.'<sup>8</sup> "Even when narrow minded persons speak of other religions out of spite, our Lord does not disapprove of them. Still, He is beyond all and every one of them."<sup>9</sup> "When one religion asserts this is my religion, this is my philosophy, and this is my Book, and *not* any thing else, then that religion is not any of these. That which seeks to harmonise all differences and to synthesize them into one - that is the true religion, and philosophy and book. Saivism aims at bringing about this integration."<sup>10</sup> These are statements from the Saiva scriptures.

Saivism is a universal religion and has been such from the remote past. It shows the way to all mortals to strive consciously for liberation from bonds and for attaining *moksha*. It teaches man that he can reach it by purity of action. Here, ends and means have to be pure. It has devised different ways of seeking God, to suit the different moulds in which human beings are cast. Man may worship God in any form and Siva's Grace is bestowed on him through that form. Externals do not matter much, if the seeking heart is earnest and pure. Saivism does not revile at other religions, nor does it say that there is only one pathway to God and that it is that path. Its universality is based on its general tolerance and the firm conviction that God is one and He dwells in all.

Again, as in the other branches of Hinduism, Saivism does not differentiate between man and woman in the matter of spiritual progress. Woman has as much right as man in the realm of the spirit, which recognises no sex difference.

### *Antiquity of Saivism*

Saivism is one of the oldest religions of the world, older than even what is now called Hinduism. Hinduism, if we look at the derivative meaning of the word, is no definite religion at all. The river Indus (Sindhu) marked the western boundary of the ancient country, *Bharata varsha*. Invaders entering this land from the west through the Khyber pass, called this country the land beyond the Indus, India; the people beyond the river



Sindhu were the Sindhus or Hindus, and their religion, Hinduism. The people in this vast sub-continent at one time in the remote past were Tamils and they had a religion which probably then had no name; because there was no need to specify it by a name. Long after the admixture of Sanskrit in the language and the Vedic cult in the culture of the people, the necessity to denominate it arose; God, the Absolute, the one, came to be called Siva, and the religion was called Saivism. The point worth emphasizing is that the religion was there; its principles and philosophy were there, its concept of God was there; only the name was given later. The relics excavated at Mohenjadaró and Harappa point to a civilisation millennia before Christ some where the figure of modern Siva is seen and Siva worship inferred. All these point to the great antiquity of the Saiva religion.

When the Tamil literary convention classified geographical regions as *kurinji* (hills), *mullai* (forest), *marudam* (plains), *neidal* (coast) and *palai* (desert) and fixed their deities, no mention is made of Siva, while the other deities such as *Muruha*, *Vishnu*, *Indra*, *Varuna* and *Kotravai* are mentioned. This was obviously because Siva was held supreme and considered as the deity for *all* the regions, and so no one region was set apart for Him, Siva is found referred to as He under the ficus tree, the blue-throated One, the One who is half woman, He with the bull banner, He with the matted locks, He with the bull mount, He with the crescent moon, the three-eyed One, He who destroyed the three forts and the like.

All these indicate the existence of the Siva cult from very ancient times in the Tamilnad and the whole of India. Two more evidences may be cited. One is the predominance of Siva shrines in the Tamilnad. Temples here were first constructed with mud walls, then perhaps in timber, then with bricks, and latterly in granite. The number of Siva temples is to be counted in thousands while the others only in tens. Attention may also be drawn here to an unusual reference in the Tamil Vaishnava canon where *Tirumangai Alvar*, one of its canonised saints, mentions, while singing at the *Tiru Naraiyur* temple of Vishnu built by *Ko-Chengan Chola*, that he had

built seventy *madak - koil* (temples on an elevated base) to Siva.<sup>11</sup> Again, the *Velli ambalam* of Madurai (as the Silver Dance Hall of Nataraja) is referred to in the books written immediately after the Sangham age.<sup>12</sup> According to all traditions, the Silver Hall was a later innovation made after the more ancient Golden Hall of Chidambaram. These traditions also testify to the great antiquity of Siva worship and to its being the religion of the Tamils, throughout the Bharata varsha more than two thousand years ago.

### *Saiva Religion*

According to western spiritual traditions, philosophy and religion are distinct and different. Philosophy according to them is an objective science, the product of logic and reason. Religion is based on revelation and faith, and so reasoning is not possible here. But this view is not fully accepted in any system of Indian philosophy or in any section of religion in India. There is always a blending of the two here; philosophy is not mere abstract dry science; it has the goal of lifting up man; religion also is not mere superstitious faith: it is founded on scientific, logically established truths and it lays down the means for lifting up man. This attitude towards both amidst us has helped to save philosophy from becoming a purely metaphysical gymnastics and religion from degenerating into blind superstition.

This happy blending is responsible for the outlook of the Hindu as well as the Saiva religion, on life in general. While other religions have said that the very life is beset with sins, the Saiva religion does not agree. It does not say that life is evil or that life is itself sinful. It finds a supreme purpose in life and in living. Life is not unreal but is transcendent, and so the happiness it offers is also transcendent. Discarding the transcendent, man should always strive to attain that which is Permanent. Such a view towards life emphasizes the correct attitude even towards transcendence. If, even through this transcendence he is to proceed to permanence, he should follow a moral code of conduct, a *dharma* or righteousness even in this life. This sets before him a goal to live for and strive for. Viewed in this

light, we shall find that Saivism plain and simple reduces itself to a way of life. All *sastras*, all devotional books, and the lives of all the saints who had lived till this day, point to only one eternal truth and that is that God is Love and Truth. Different religions look at Him from different angles, and therefore have seen only some aspect of the Godhead, and naturally they emphasize only that aspect. He is all that, and beyond that, and more.

### *God is Love*

As far as Tamilnad is concerned, Saivism means vegetarianism, non-meat-eating. There are two words widely understood throughout this land - *Saiva* and *Asaiva*. In ordinary parlance they signify a vegetarian and a meat-eater respectively. This meaning is well understood in any society - rural or urban, educated or illiterate, men or women, high class or low, capitalist or labour, orthodox or radical. Without entering into religion at all, we find this meaning to be rather the only and more widely known meaning for the word. And there is also the general feeling that the *Saiva* (as defined above) is always superior to the other: this is also recognised by the *Kural*: "The whole world folds its hands in homage to Him who kills not and abjures meat."<sup>13</sup> This has been practised in the *Saiva* society: the non-meat-eater has always been held in great esteem. This is the greatest tribute to the cult of *Siva*. It is negatively one of non-killing, and positively one of love.

The highest concept of all philosophy is that God is Love, In Saivism, not only God, but even a godly man, a *Saiva*, means love. One who aspires to reach Him, should also overflow with love. Love when associated with God is termed Grace. The *Kural* asks: "How can he feel any pity, who eats another's flesh to fatten his own flesh?"<sup>14</sup> Two thoughts in this verse are noteworthy. One is that for the sense of pity, it employs the word *arul*, grace; the second is that when referring to flesh, it does not distinguish between man's flesh and the flesh of an animal: the implication is that all creation is one. Here ethics or personal conduct has been raised to the highest level of philosophy.

The abjuration of meat has been enjoined by all the religions which arose on the Indian soil. Saivism as the *oldest* religion, a religion which was not made later, has as its basic philosophy, non-meat-eating. But even as there is untruth all around Truth, and as darkness prevails all around Light, meat-eating has also existed around the vegetarian way of food. Yet popular custom and usage show in what high esteem abjuration of meat was held. This has, so to say, become part of not only religion, but of all life, of all culture, and even of language at illustrated above.

Non-meat-eating is a negative term. Mentioned positively, it is love of all creation. Worship of God is in two forms: one is the temple worship; the second is love of all creation wherein God abides. Of the two, many scriptures and legends say, the second is superior. The Saiva history of the Saints, *Periya Puranam*, arose to emphasise the truth that Love of God is really love of all beings, and that all humanity is one. 'God is Love' said Tirumular.<sup>15</sup> When applied to Him, we call it Grace (*arul*). When applied to man, we call this selfless love (the common term *anbu*), as love of all mankind and service to mankind.

A Saiva worshipper of Siva is also in fact a non-meat-eater. Millions of families have remained vegetarian through several thousand years and they had kept themselves as separate groups or communities. They are today known as *Saivas* in the Tamilnad. In parts of North India, the term *Vaishnava* has this connotation. This may be correct sociologically, but from a religious point of view, a Saiva means a worshipper of Siva. Here the term does not mean a community but refers to one's religious persuasion.

The lives of the Saiva Saints tell us that the worshippers of Siva have hailed from all sects of the community. The Saiva religion did not set much store by caste. Sambandha, the brahmin boy-saint, had in his troupe not only brahmins but also the Nilakantha Yalppana couple and their kinsmen, all harijans. The brahmin priests of the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram and the Harijan Saint Nanda whom they admitted into the Divine Presence are all Saivas. Sendanar

the singer of a *pallandu* poem on Nataraja at Chidambaram was a harijan. Instances can be multiplied. Among the devotees of Siva, no caste restriction seems to have been observed. Love of God at heart, and godly ways of outward living such as reverence for all life, had united them all into one family.

Parallels can be seen in the Vaishnava religion also. Tiruppanalvar, the singer of *Amalan-adipiran*, Maraner nambi whose funeral rites were performed by Periya Nambi, one of the preceptors of Ramanuja, Vilancholaip-pillai who taught *Tiruvaymoli* to the acharya Tiruvaymolip-pillai, were all harijans.

### *Saiva Philosophy*

We shall state here briefly the salient doctrines of the Saiva system of philosophy, called the Saiva Siddhanta in South India. The last chapter of this book deals with this subject elaborately. The Supreme Reality is the one called Siva. He is eternal and all-pervasive. He performs the five fold functions of creation, preservation, dissolution, obscuration and liberation (grace). Siva is the Absolute of metaphysics and the One God of religion as well. Siva in relation to the objects is conceived of as Sakti.

The souls are also eternal and are an infinite host and range from the lowest in the vegetable kingdom to the highest in the human kingdom. The soul is distinct from the body, which is only gross matter. It has the functions of willing, thought and action. It becomes one with the thing in which it dwells, with which it is associated, for the time being. According to its *karma*, past as well as present, the soul is given bodies. In inhabiting the bodies, it undergoes the cycle of births and deaths.

The bonds are the third entity and they are three in number, the *anava*, *karma* and *maya*. *Anava* is one in all beings, eternal, dense and varied. *Karma* is the cause of the union of the conscious soul with the unconscious body. *Maya* is the material cause of the universe, and non-sentient in

nature. It is the base for the activities and the experiences of the soul. The soul, in order to attain eternal bliss or inseparable union with Siva, has to get rid of the *anava* which darkens the light of the soul, to reduce to nought all its *karma*, good and bad *by experiencing each*, so that there can no longer be any residuary *karma* causing a rebirth, and shake off *maya* which is the cause of all impurities.

All this can be achieved only through the uplifting grace of God. When man makes a complete surrender to God, He is there always ready to help him and release him from all bonds which bind him to gross matter. Complete trust in Him, nay absolute surrender, and a self-effacing pilgrimage through life, dedicating everything to Him and doing all things as His work, will help man to get over the hold of *karma*. Service to godly men and temple worship will help to ward off further *karma* from attaching itself to him. When there is no more birth, *maya* also automatically ceases. These usher in the state of ripeness for the removal of *anava*. With the three bonds thus reaching a stage of subdual and removal, God's grace settles on him. All his organs are now His, his will is His will, His thought, desire and action all become His. In due time, when the soul leaves the body, it is pure and eternal and all-pervasive; it is all light, and it merges in an inseparable union with Siva, *ever enjoying the bliss which He is bestowing*. This is the state of *mukti*, from which there is no return.

### *Saiva Society*

Saiva religion has always directed its efforts at a synthesis of all mankind, at social unity, amidst all the prevalent classes and creeds. The stories of the canonized saints will well illustrate this truth. The Buddhist born Sakkiya is reckoned a Saiva saint; not only that; when Sundara sang that he was the 'servant of the worshippers beyond' he extended the Saiva fold in space as well as in time, crossing all caste barriers and creeds, climes and languages. Man had freedom to worship; but there should be love at heart; sweetness in words; and righteousness in action and humility in conduct.

This idea is best summarised by Tirumular : "Any one can offer at least a bit of a leaf to God (in the place of a flower when a flower cannot be had); any one can give a handful of grass to a cow; any one can give a morsel of rice to the needy (out of his own food); and any one can speak a kind word to another."<sup>18</sup> This takes us on to the more liberal view of Saivism. This religion shows reverence to all life, not only to the human life. 'A handful of grass to the cow' is symbolic of service to animals. Siva the Omnipresent and the All-pervasive Being does not require a vehicle or a mount for Him. But the bull is said to be His mount, and it is held in great veneration. This only symbolises the veneration to be shown to all animals. Similarly a temple tree (*sthala vriksha*) is held sacred in all the Siva shrines and it is worshipped. This again signifies that the Saiva should serve all life and that animals and plants also, being part of God's creation, command his reverence and love. Thus the universality of Saivism may be seen to go deeper and be more significant.

Again, Saivism does not see any difference between man and woman so far as spiritual aspirations are concerned.<sup>19</sup> It extols the householder's state where woman plays a prominent part, not a secondary part. There are several women amongst the canonized saints. Their independence, courage, saintliness and unswerving devotion to God along with their loyalty to their husbands are proverbial. The story says that Siva, the one without a father and without a mother, addressed Karaikkal Ammai as 'Oh Mother'.<sup>20</sup> Man and woman are equal, and woman has as much right to lead a spiritual life, achieve progress therein and attain *moksha*, as man.

### *The concept of Beauty*

In Saivism, the cosmos itself is considered to be a sport or *lila* of Siva. Siva is considered as *Sundara*, and *Somasundara* in Madurai, meaning the Beautiful (Sokkan in Tamil). The *lila* or the sports of Siva mentioned in the puranas are the creative expression of the abundance of Siva's Love called Grace. The sports of Somasundara at Madurai and of Tyagaraja at Tiru



Arur are the legendary expressions of the concept of Grace, and Beauty. His Beauty is unparalleled in all the three worlds, as is illustrated typically in the name of a shrine called *Trailokya sundaram*.

Beauty is beyond intellectualism, but still it can be realized in the perfect concord and harmony that reigns in the known universe. St. Tayumanavar sings of this great harmony in his famous verse, beginning with the words, "Are not the oceans held in check even without any bunds?" Saint Appar had an experience of this cosmic form of Siva as in Kailas, at Tiruvaiyaru where he saw the whole universe and all creation as the Beautiful, the manifestation of Siva and Sakti. Lord Nataraja's Dance in the Golden Hall of Chit, Knowledge, the heart beat in all creation, and the dance of the electron with in the atom - all point to the great dance of Beauty of God in the macrocosm and the microcosm. The *ananda tandava* of Lord Nataraja illustrates the concept of beauty as joy. This *ananda* is something that can be enjoyed as it is more something more attractive than even abstract good or truth. When the mystic enjoys the vision of God, he perceives the *ananda*, the joy and the beauty. The universe displays to him an artistic workmanship and for him nature itself is a thing of great beauty as we see in the songs of Saint Tiru Jnanasambandar, it is symbolic of the great beauty that is Siva.

The Lord's primal beauty is implanted in the inner being of the individual. Reality is essentially the beautiful but the finite self has created all the unbeautiful in the world.

The problem of evil taxes all religions. Evil is sorrow and sorrow is ugliness, while the opposite, joy is all beauty. In the Grace of the Lord there is no ugliness. One story in the sixty four sports of Sundaresa at Madurai claims that Siva's grace purifies one even from the most heinous crime. This is as it should be. Whatever be taken away from the Infinite, it yet continues to be Infinite. Whatever is touched by Grace, the Supreme Beauty, becomes beautiful, all ugliness removed. It is significant to note that even heterodox religions call their

ultimate goal as *Siva gati*, a state of perfect goodness, perfect Beauty.

Religion sublimates all emotions and spiritualizes them, just as poetry itself sublimates experiences and puts them into words to become a beautiful work of art. Saivism equates the Absolute of metaphysics with *satchitananda*, in a sense, Beauty and Bliss. Siva is pure and perfect and what is pure and perfect is Beauty even according to worldly standards.

This is the picture of Saivism not as only as it is laid down in the Books, but also as it was practised in the past and as it is practised today, by the truly devout and the truly thinking.

## 2. SAIVA SCRIPTURES

### *The Goal*

Literature from the very ancient times in the Tamil country has been predominantly religious and the major part of it was influenced by Siva worship. The goal of all human endeavour in India in general had been set as the four - living a righteous life, securing worldly goods, enjoying the pleasures of life and finally securing liberation from all bonds which bind man to matter and obscure his higher vision.<sup>21</sup> Such had been the aim also of education from the very ancient past. No wonder therefore that all literature has had a religious vein running through it.

The Tamil people are in a sense in a distinctly different position from the people of the other languages in this, that they have a vast body of religious and philosophical literature, not only in Sanskrit, but in their own language, from an early period. Saiva philosophical literature in Tamil dates back to at least the fifth century A. D.<sup>22</sup> and that itself reflects the thought that had been current in the land in the Tamil language probably for more than a thousand years earlier.

### *The Sanskrit Scriptures*

Although the language had had a glorious past, the entire bulk of its most ancient literature shows considerable influence of Sanskrit and Sanskritic thought. Speaking of Saivism, this religion had adopted the Upanishads as the foundational scripture for its tenets.<sup>23</sup> The Saivas believe that the upanishads are a later collection of eternal truths revealed by Siva to enlightened seers of the ages past. These seers were called the *rishis*. The rishis passed on the upanishads by word of mouth and since these were learnt through hearing, they were called *srutis*. The srutis or the upanishads represent some of the highest spiritual flights of the human mind and put

down in words the spiritual experience of the enlightened souls in their search for Truth.

Saivism of the Tamilnad was not founded by any prophet or seer. It is as old as Man himself. The Truth was revealed to him by Siva and he had handed it down to posterity. Hence, the Saiva religion takes its name from the all-knowing Siva himself and not from any human prophet or *acharya*. The Sanskrit Vedas are sufficiently known and they do not require here any description. We shall be content to say that the concluding part of the Vedas, viz., the Upanishads, are the important part, as they deal with matters relating to the spirit. The matter dealt with in the Upanishads also varies with the context of their utterance, their approach and the peculiar problem which each upanishad handles.

Although the general body of the Vedas is accepted as scriptural authority in Saivism, there are considerable reservations. The content of the Vedas had been classified into three sections; the *karma kanda* or the ritualistic section; the *upasana kanda* or the invocatory and meditational section; and the *jnana kanda*, the knowledge or philosophy section. The Saiva is always to strive for the realisation of the Truth, the attainment of One-ness with the Supreme Siva; hence the other things mentioned in the Vedas are not for him. His own scriptures enjoin him to ignore those parts of the *karma kanda* which are calculated to secure material benefits, those parts of the *upasana kanda* which extol other mantras over the *Panchakshara mantra* of Siva, and those parts of the *jnana kanda* which deal with the *absolute identity* of the self and the Self, as against the *non-dual union* (or qualified monism) of Saiva Siddhanta.<sup>24</sup>

Among the Upanishads, the thoughts in the *Svetasvatara upanishad* approximate to the Saiva Siddhanta system of philosophy. This system does *not* accept the authority of the *smritis*. Instead it holds the *Saiva Agama* as having equal authority with the Vedas. The principal Saiva agamas are twenty eight in number. Like the four Vedas, the Saiva

Agamas had been revealed by Siva to enlightened seers of the past and have been handed down by them through the centuries by word of mouth. There are, besides, the secondary agamas, (*Upagamas*) numbering 207. A few of the agamas have been printed, sometimes with Tamil translation also, but the majority of them have not yet seen the light of print. Several centuries back some learned *Sivacharyas* had written commentaries on some of the agamas, explaining their meaning, scope and application. The Saivas consider the Vedas to be a general scripture for all branches of the *vaidika* religion, which now goes by the name of Hinduism, and the Agamas to be a special scripture for the Saiva Siddhantin.

This system of Philosophy is also called the *Agamanta* (perhaps to distinguish it from some other systems which call themselves Vedanta); nonetheless it is also Vedanta, in the sense that it accepts the Upanishadic (Vedanta) doctrines and interprets them in its own way. Each agama consists of four parts, each complete in itself. The first is the *vidyapada*, dealing with the three entities, God, soul and matter, and the efforts of the soul to liberate itself from the bonds and attain inseparable union with Siva. The *kriya pada* deals with personal worship and congregational temple worship, festivals in temples, installation and the like subjects; this part is the basis for all sculpture, architecture and dance in our country. In this sense, the agamas may be said to have made the greatest and most significant contribution to the art and culture of the people of India; it is at the same time strange that a religious treatise has made this contribution. The other two parts are the *yoga pada*, dealing with the *ashtanga yoga* and the other yogas and similar subjects, and the *charya pada*, dealing with the daily religious observances and austerities to be practised by a Saiva.

Many of the subjects dealt with in the agamas had been expanded into separate treatises in Sanskrit by *Sivacharyas* from about the tenth century. The *Ashta prakaranas*, eight philosophical treatises, mostly deal with the philosophy, and the *Paddhatis*, traditionally eighteen, deal with the ritual part of the *kriya pada*.

Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva wrote different commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras* and they had given rise to different schools of Vedantic thought as Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita respectively. Srikantha (also called Nilakantha) Sivacharya wrote a Saiva commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* which the Saivas adopt with certain reservations. The Saivas claim their religion was not established by any individual *acharya* like the above schools of Vedanta. Saiva Siddhanta is also a School of Vedanta and it used to call itself the *Sudha advaita* to distinguish itself from the other three. Scholars are of the opinion that the *Brahma Sutras* differ in their philosophic concepts from the Upanishads themselves.

Saivas accept these two - the Upanishads and the *Brahma Sutras* also as their scriptures; but they do not accept the *Bhagavat Gita* which is accepted by all the others.

*Puranas* and *Itihasas* have religious currency in all branches of Hinduism. Of the 18 puranas, ten are Saiva puranas. Some of them have been done into Tamil verse some centuries ago, and they are part of the long line and the rich heritage of Tamil literature. Particular mention may be made of the *Suta Samhita* which is part of the *Skanda purana*. Tradition has it that Sankara read it eighteen times before he wrote his *Brahma Sutra bhashya*; this will illustrate the great importance attached to this purana. The number of important Tamil puranas which elucidate some aspects of *Siva dharm* and *Siva punnya* legends is legion. It is not possible even to mention them here. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are no doubt national epics for the whole of India. But viewed from the religious angle, the *itihasas* or epics for the Saivas are the *Siva mahapurana*, the *Siva rahasya* and the *Skanda purana*.

#### *The Tamil Scriptures - The Saiva Canon*

This exhausts the main authorities in Sanskrit. We shall now pass on to the texts in the Tamil language. The Saiva canonical Books in the Tamil language are twelve and they are also known as the Tamil Veda. Saints like Tiru Jnana

Sambandhar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavacakar had toured the Siva shrines in the Tamil country and song sung there. By their devotional songs they had captured the minds of the Saivas all over the land and people hail these four saints as the four Saiva acharyas (spiritual preceptors). Their songs are sung in all the temples even today. Since the songs are in the people's own language, are on places with which the people are familiar, since their language is simple, having a direct appeal to the heart of the worshipper and since they are all set to music, the songs have an everlasting appeal to the masses. Singers and the masses join together in chanting the hymns in the divine Presence. They are the richest legacy of the Tamil people and have moved the people as nothing else had moved them, earlier or later. The first seven books constitute the *Devaram*, the hymns of the first three *acharyas*, while the eighth is the *Tiruvacakam* from the fourth acharya. The tenth is the *Tirumantiram*, which is a hymn as well as a scripture; it is considered to be the greatest mystic utterance in the Tamil language and is also referred to as the Tamil *agama*. The twelfth Book is the Saiva hageology: it gives in 4286 quatrains the lives of the Saiva men of God. It is the glory of the Saiva world that the author has here fused together the sublime concepts of Saiva philosophy and the most intense devotion to Siva and rendered them in the most elegant and moving poetry. The author, Sekkilar was a minister under the Chola emperor of the 12th century and so he is able to narrate every incident with the appropriate historical background. All these factors have made this Book known as the *Periya puranam* (the story of the *Great Bhaktas*) a unique treasure of the Saivas. The ninth and the eleventh books of the Saiva canon are anthologies of other occasional devotional poetry, earlier than the eleventh century: the ninth consists of musical pieces while the eleventh consists mostly of poetic pieces.

### *The Siddhanta Sastras*

We shall now pass on to the Saiva *Sastras*. Saivism in Tamilnad has the unique honour of having all its *jnana sastras* written originally in the Tamil language. Thoughts on the three entities-God, soul and matter-are found scattered all over

the utterances of the Saiva acharyas in their hymn books mentioned already. It was given to an young boy visited by Divine Grace to collect those thoughts and codify them in logical sequence into the basic text for Saivism, since known as the *Sivajnana Bodham*. It contains twelve aphorisms (*sutras*) running to a total of forty lines, and deals with the nature of the three entities, their nature and attributes, the means of knowing them and of finally attaining oneness with Siva. The author Meykandar has himself added detailed notes for the twelve aphorisms, in the shape of illustrative *venbas* which make his thoughts clear. This work is the basic text, THE SCRIPTURE for Saiva Siddhanta. In the later centuries, the aphorisms had been translated into Sanskrit also.

The esteem in which the Tamil Sastras had been held will be evident from a familiar verse : "The Vedas are the cow. The Agamas are its milk. The hymns sung by the four Saiva Acharyas are like the ghee contained in the milk. The essence of the Tamil Book (*Sivajnana Bodham*) written by Meykandar of Vennainallur is like the sweetness of that ghee."<sup>25</sup>

His chief disciple Saint Arulnandi has written a very large metrical commentary on the aphorisms. This is known as the *Sivajnana siddhi*. Its first part of 301 verses is dialectical in character and is a refutation of fourteen alien schools of thought, and its second part, with 328 verses, is a brilliant exposition of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy in all its intricacies and comprehensiveness. Another disciple of Meykandar wrote a small treatise explaining the 36 *tattvas* (real principle) of Saivism. Umapati in the same line, disciple of Maraijnana sambandha who was a disciple of Arulnandi, wrote several books of which the *Siva prakasam* in 100 verses is the most important while another, the *Tiru arul payan* in 100 *kural* couplets, is the most simple. The other books of the Siddhanta sastras are the following: Six others by Umapati: *Vina venba* where he asks some questions of his own guru, on the Sivajnana bodha sutras; *Potripahrodai*, a long poem in praise of the guru; *Nenjuvidu duu*, a long poem, in the



manner of a love theme, asking his own heart to go to the guru and obtain his love; *Unmai neri vilakkam* dealing with three *dasakaryas* and *Sankalpa nirakaranam*, refuting nine schools of thought being a logical sequence to the *parapaksha* of *Sivajnana siddhiyar*. *Irupa-irupadu* by Arulnandi, in the form of questions answered by his guru Meykandar is another. Lastly, there are two more books the short *Tirumndiyar* by Tiru Viyalur Uyyavandar giving forth the inner spiritual experience of the author, and an enlargement of the work by Tirukkadavur Uyyavandar, that author's disciple's disciple, called *Tiruk - Kalitruyyad yar*. The two were written some time earlier than Meykandar. All these books have been later collected into a group of fourteen and they are known by the collective name of the 14 *Sidhanta Sastras*. These together constitute the entire body of the Sastras for the Saivas. Some later treatises, which elaborated some of the points made in the original texts, are also studied by the Saivas.

### *The Bhakti Cult*

The *bhakti* cult had long been in existence among the Saivas, centuries before Christ. But however, songs are available to us today only from about the fifth century A. D.; the Saiva canon brings together devotional songs from that period through the songs of Karaikkal Ammai and Tiru Mular. All the twelve books preach the doctrine of *bhakti*, or absolute surrender to the will of God. The acharyas by their words and their lives had been shining examples of what is generally known as the *bhakti marga*, the path way to God through love and surrender. Special mention has to be made here of two great *bhakti* poets of a later age in the same tradition - Arunagirinathar and Tayumanavar (14th and 18th centuries.) Saint Arunagiri was a devotee of Muruga, who is in Saiva philosophy, just another manifest form of Siva Himself. His songs are sung along the length and breadth of the land by scholars, *bhaktas*, men, women and children, by wandering minstrels and pedlars and by musicians in concerts. Even today, his songs have helped gifted *bhaktas* to sing and keep order over large multitudes of people whenever millions are gathered for a temple festival. The singer begins a

familiar song of Arunagiri and the entire mass of humanity follows and the result is a pindrop silence among a surging sea of humanity numbering a million. The cadence and rhythm, the elegance of his diction, the meaning and sweetness, the lilt and dance of his words have even today such a magical effect. The choice use of Sanskrit by the Saint heightens the effect.

Saint Tayumanavar is also a poet of the masses, by virtue of the simplicity of the language and the loftiness of the thoughts expressed. He has clothed the most sublime thoughts in the simplest language. His songs always seek to integrate the various conflicting schools of thought and they dwell on the universal Self as the embodiment of Love. The songs of both Arunagiri and Tayumanavar have scriptural sanction among the Saivas, in so far as the *bhakti marga* is concerned.

Political bias in the modern day had made a section of the Saivas in Tamilnad ignore their great Sanskrit heritage and acclaim only the Tamil Books as their religious scripture. Such a position is most unfair to the Saivas themselves and to their own rich legacy in the two languages. Those who wrote the several Saiva manuals like the *paddhatis* were Sivacharyas and Saivas; there were no Brahmins among them. Caste prejudices should not cloud the minds of the Saivas to the extent of making them deny their own rich and colourful heritage.

### 3. SAIVA PRECEPTORS

#### *The Supreme Guru*

The spiritual teacher or *acharya* has the highest place of honour in Saivism (as also in Vaishnavism). The Sastras say that Siva Himself appears as the *acharya* at the proper moment and directs the *bhakta* on the godward path. *Dakshinamurti* in the Siva temple is the visual representation of the Supreme Guru. Under the spreading ficus tree (*kallaal*) in Kailas, this *murti* was seated in the pose of perfect peace and bliss; His form was that of a youth of sixteen years: four aged *rishis* (sages) Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara came to Him for spiritual instruction. He did not utter a word: but his very pose gave them all the instruction they needed and they departed, enlightened and all their doubts dispelled.

The pose of the right hand of *Dakshinamurti* is known as the *Chin-mudra*: the *mudra* of supreme knowledge. The right hand rests on the right knee, palm up; the forefinger bends, to touch the base of the thumb, itself released from contact with the other three fingers, which stand out each separately and also separated from the forefinger. The thumb is the symbol of the Supreme God, the forefinger the soul, seeking eternal rest at the feet of God. When the forefinger touches the base of the thumb it automatically separates itself from the other three fingers: these three fingers represent the three bonds *anava*, *karma* and *maya*, and signify that the soul overcomes the bonds and attains final union with god.<sup>26</sup>

*Dakshinamurti* is installed in this pose in a niche in all the Siva temples.

#### *The Saiva Acharyas*

Siva as *Dakshinamurti* is the *Parama-acharya*, Supreme Guru in Kailas. In the terrestrial plane, the four Saints

Sambandhar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavacakar are called the Saiva Samaya Acharyas. They had lived in the 7th to 9th centuries in Tamilnad, and the first three in particular had toured the innumerable Saiva shrines and by their songs helped the people to have greater faith and solace in their religion and in God. Ungodly faiths were subdued by them. They preached the gospel of love and surrender to God, and service to God and godly men. "Learning and a high position in life are immaterial. Only true love and devotion to God can obtain His Grace. God is One, and He is Siva. The human souls should get over their bonds which keep them in ignorance and in the worldly fetters, and obtain inseparable union with Him through His own Grace. This in brief is the substance of their philosophy and teaching.

*Saint Jnana Sambandhar*

He was born in Sikali in the Chola country and at the young age of three, Divine Grace visited him. It is said that *Parasakti* fed him mother's milk in a cup and immediately he acquired supreme knowledge and also the gift of poesy. He travelled from early childhood through the entire country, visiting temples, singing songs, helping people even materially and directing them to a godly way of Life. He received golden cymbals from God for marking time while singing as a little child in the temple, a pearl palanquin on which to ride on his travels, a pearl umbrella and canopy, and such other articles of comfort; they were given to him by God, to help him, child that he was. He always prayed to God for the relief of people from suffering. His prayers had worked many miracles: they had helped the daughter of a local chief to get over a painful bodily affliction, helped the devotees of God to get over fevers during a spell of cold; helped a young damsel to bring back to life her lover who had died of a snake bite; helped the people to get over a scourge of famine by grant of gold; enabled the devotees to cross a river in an unmanned boat; and helped a follower of Siva by making all his male palmyra trees bear fruit. He gave his father a purse of gold from God, to perform a sacrifice, for overcoming evil and for speaking good.<sup>27</sup> His most

glorious achievement was his struggle with the Jain priests at Madurai in the presence of the Pandiya king. At the request of the Pandiya queen he went there, had several contests with them in philosophic discussion, and came out successful with the help of God in all of them. The king's fever was cured by him, the palm leaf on which his song was written was fresh and unscorched when placed on the fire, and another such leaf of his floated on the water against the current of the river Vaihāṭi. His miracles won the king back to the Saiva faith. Appar, an elder saint of the same period, heard of his love of God and of the miracles performed on his account, saw him and the two became friends. One Nilakantha, a low caste musician playing on the *yaal*, himself a saintly soul, accompanied his songs on the instrument. Sambandhar once demonstrated to him the superiority of his vocal music over the instrumental, holding that the voice was God - made music, while the other was only man-made. At Mayilapur, through Divine Grace again, he caused the bones of a dead girl to come back to life as a full grown girl, for the love of her father. Returning home from his travels, he took part in his own wedding function, and clasp- ing the hand of his bride, entered a huge Divine Effulgence along with all those assembled for the wedding function, and attained final beatitude.

The incidents in the life of Sambandhar are many. To help suffering people, he caused miracles to happen. He never asked for anything for himself but always prayed for divine intercession for relieving the suffering of mankind. That was the keynote of his life, quite in consonance with his young and impulsive age. His mission in life was, besides the spreading of Saivism by his songs, to restore the Tamil culture and Tamil music in Pandināḍ and to help suffering humanity.

#### *Saint Appar*

Appar was a senior contemporary of Sambandhar. Born at Tiru Amur a village in the South Arcot district in a velalar family, he was a very learned man in his early years. His elder sister Tilakavati was betrothed to a young soldier who died on the battle field; as both their parents had died by that time,

she was prepared to give up her life after her betrothed, but did not do so, and lived on, at the request of her young brother who was then an young boy without a proper guardian. This young man however strayed into the Jain fold forsaking his own sister and his own ancient faith. She prayed to Siva enshrined at Tiru Adhihai to redeem him and, on her account, Siva caused a painful colic to afflict the young man, who unable to cure it by all the medicine and *mantras* of Jainism, returned in the darkness of the night to his sister. She took him to the temple and placed the sacred ash on his forehead. When he worshipped at the temple, his pain ceased and he was also granted the gift of poesy. He sang such sweet songs there that Siva gave him the title, the Prince of the Tongue, *Navukkarasu*. He went about singing the praise of Siva in all the shrines, at the same time performing manual service like clearing the premises etc., in each shrine with a hand shovel. As he was now considered to be a renegade dangerous to Jainism, the Jain priests induced the Pallava ruler, Mahendra Varma, to kill him. Accordingly, Appar was in turn placed in a lime kiln, given poisoned food, placed before an elephant for being trampled under its feet; but he came out of all of these unscathed. Then they tied him to a stone and dropped him into the sea. Uttering the Lord's name as usual, he floated on the stone and reached the shore safely. The king realised the greatness and devotion of Tirunavukkarasu to God and embracing Saivism, became his follower. He pulled down Jain temples and constructed many Siva temples. The Saint then toured the land visiting temples, singing the praise of Siva and doing manual service in each temple. At Tiru Nallur, he had the holy feet of Siva planted on his head. At Tingalur, his songs brought back to life the son of Appudi, who had died of a snake bite. He befriended Sambandhar and at Tiruvilimilalai received gold from Siva at a time of famine there in order to help his followers. At Palayarai, a former Chola capital city, finding that the Siva temple was closed and fully covered up with sand by the Jains there, he went on a fast and the local ruler thereupon caused the temple to be unearthed. His *satyagraha* if we may call it so had the desired result. At Paijneeli, as he was walking along much fatigued in body, Siva appeared and gave him food. Trying to walk up to Mount Kailas the abode of

Siva, he had a vision of the cosmic parenthood of God as manifest in all creation as Sakti-Sivam, at Tiru Aiyaru. He was called Appar (the father) by Sambandhar and thereafter he came to be known by that name. He lived on to a ripe old age. When he was cleaning the temple premises at Puhalur, his spade turned up sparkling gems and glittering gold from the earth: he threw away everything as so much potsherd. Celestial nymphs danced before him but he saw in them not enticement but only a manifestation of the Grace of God. Finally, he entered final beatitude at the feet of Siva, the Lord of the Puhalur shrine.

### *Saint Sundarar*

He was the legendary companion of Siva in Kailas. As his mind strayed towards two nymphs who were attendants of Sakti Parvati there, he was caused to be born on earth. He was born at Tiru Navalur in a Sivacharya family. Siva appeared before him as a brahmin, stopped a marriage arranged for him and made him sing His praises. Touring Siva shrines, he went to Arur and there married one of the celestial nymphs now born there as Paravai. He had a huge mound of rice, presented to him by an admirer, removed to her house with the help of Siva's forces. At Puhalur, he prayed for gold for the sake of Paravai, and the bricks which he used as a head-rest (pillow) were found changed into gold ingots. He dropped the gold given to him by Siva at Mudukunru into the river there and recovered it later in the tank at Tiru Arur, some seventy miles away. On his way to Kuruhavur he had food served to him by Siva. Again at Tiruk - Kachur, Siva begged for alms along the streets and brought him food! He went to Tiru Otriyur and there married the second damsel from Kailas who was born there as Sangili, with the promise that he would never leave her. But actually when the memory of the festivals at Arur came to him, in the month of March, he left her and started for Arur. He had now broken his promise to Sangili and this resulted in the loss of the vision of both of his eyes. His prayers to God to restore his vision did not help him then. On his way, at Tiru Venbakkam he received a blind man's staff and at Kanchipuram, he received the vision of his left

eye. At Tirut - Turutti his physical ailment was removed by the grace of Siva. At Arur again, Siva gave him the vision of his right eye also. When he went home to the house of Paravai, she refused him admission, as she was enraged at him for his second marriage with Sangili. Acting as Sundara's messenger of love, Siva pacified her and re-united the two. Kalikkama, a bhakta in distant Perumangalam, was enraged at Sundara for his daring to use Siva as his messenger of love. Again Siva intervened and by working a miracle made Kalikkama and Sundara friends. Seraman Perumal from the west coast came to Arur and became the bosom friend of Sundara. The Kaveri floods parted to permit them to cross and go over to Seraman's place. Returning from there, Sundara's treasures gifted to him by Seraman were snatched away by Siva's forces. He sang on the Lord there and recovered them. At Avinasi, he caused a crocodile to bring back to life a young brahmin boy whom it had devoured years back. Again he went to Seraman's place a second time and from there went to Kailas, riding on a white elephant sent by Siva to fetch him. Seraman also followed, by the practice of yoga.

*Saint Manikkavacakar*

He was born in Tiru Vadavur in the Pandiya kingdom and by his great learning rose to be the Prime Minister of the King. He was given a large sum of money and asked to purchase Arab steeds on the east coast for the king's cavalry. On his way to the port Siva appeared before him as a spiritual *guru*, in the shade of a *kurunda* tree and by His *diksha* made him his servant. From that moment, the minister knew nothing on earth except his *guru*. He sang such moving lyrics on Siva that the *guru* called him Manikkavacaka, he of the gem-like utterances. He spent all the money he had brought from the king in building a temple there. Finding that the horses did not arrive, the Pandiya sent a messenger to enquire. As instructed by his *guru*, Manikkavacaka sent back word that the horses would arrive on the *Avani mula* day. Finding still no sign of the horses, the king subjected him to many kinds of punishment and torture. But Manikkavacaka had set his



heart on Siva and so he bore all the pain with stoic patience. But Siva did bring the horses to the king's presence on the appointed day. He had converted the jackals in the jungles into steeds and now paraded them before the king! The king was pleased and released Manikkavacakar from prison but his freedom was short-lived. By night the horses again turned into jackals, bit all the real horses in the stables and also the people of Madurai and ran away into the jungles. The enraged king naturally punished Manikkavacaka more severely. Siva was moved by the songs sung by Manikkavacaka while he underwent the king's punishment, and in order to show the true devotion of Manikkavacaka to the king, he caused the river *Vaihai* to overflow into the city, breaching all bunds. The king allotted portions of the bund washed way to be rebuilt by the citizens and the breach to be closed up. A small portion allotted to an old woman, *Vandi* a baker, was left unattended. Siva appeared before her as a labourer, undertook to do her portion in return for broken cakes, but did not do it. The king saw this during his inspection of the breaches and thrashed the labourer. But lo! the thrashing that he gave, fell not only on the labourer, but on all beings including himself. The king now realised that Siva had enacted this little drama to show the greatness of Manikkavacaka and immediately released him from prison, and from service under him, fell at his feet asking for his forgiveness, and sent him on his way. Manikkavacaka left Madurai, visited many shrines and finally reached Chidambaram, where Buddhists from Ceylon engaged him in a philosophical contest. He overcame them by causing the *dumb* daughter of the Ceylonese King to speak and to refute their arguments. Later, Nataraja The Lord of Chidambaram came before him to write down his songs, which He placed on the steps of *Chit Sabha* (dance hall). When the temple priests saw the songs and the signature of Nataraja, the next morning, they went to Manikkavacaka and asked him for an elucidation of the songs. He took them to the presence of Nataraja and saying, "He is the elucidation of the songs", entered the sanctum and become one with Him.

Saivism as we know it today in Tamilnad is the spiritual legacy handed down to us by these four Saints. All of them

are historical figures.<sup>28</sup> The first two lived in the first half of the 7th Century A.D., Sundarar lived by 700 A.D. and Manikkavacakar lived in the second half of the 9th Century A.D. The four are supposed to have exemplified in their lives the four paths to God realisation, according to Saivism - Appar, the path of service of the servant, the *charya marga*; Sambandha the path of ritualistic worship of the spiritual son, the *kriya marga*; Sundara, the path of the comrade and friend, the *yoga marga*; and lastly Manikkavacaka, the path of the disciple, the *jnana marga*. The four paths are known also as the *dasa marga*, the *satputra marga*, the *saha marga* and the *san marga*. In the wake of the tour of these saints, Saivism took on a new life and countless numbers of temples were built and rebuilt in stone along the entire Tamilnad.

#### *The Santana Acharyas*

The above four are known as the Saiva-Samaya Acharyas. They preached the *bhakti* cult of absolute surrender to God, by their countless hymns. But they had not laid down the Saiva philosophy in the form of a systematic treatise or manual. About three centuries after Manikkavacaka there was a succession of spiritual preceptors one after the other as master and disciple and the first four of them are known as the *Santana acharyas*. We shall see here a brief account of their lives.

The first of the Saiva spiritual preceptors and the writer of the basic text of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy was Meykandar (one who realised the Truth). He was born as the son of a *velala* of Pennagadam by divine guidance, at Tiruvenkadu. When he was three years, a sage from Kailas came to him and taught him the Truth about God, matter and man. In due course, he wrote out the philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta in a small treatise of twelve aphorisms of forty lines in all. It has since come to be known as *Sivajnana Bodham*. The philosophy propounded by him here is now known by the name of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. He had many disciples, including Sakalagama Pandita, who was his own father's guru.

Arulnandi is the name of the next acharya. As Sakalagama Pandita, he was the guru of Meykandar's father and it was he who directed him to go and worship at Tiruvenkadu so that he might get a son by the grace of Siva enshrined there. The legendary account says that when he saw his own disciple's son Meykandar expounding his system of philosophy to some disciples, Pandita in his great vanity, asked him, "Define *anava*." *Anava* is the first of the three bonds: shortly put, it is the ego., ignorance which causes finiteness to the soul. Meykandar smiled, and without opening his lips, pointed with his forefinger to Pandita himself. Pandita immediately came to his senses: he got over his false ego, fell at the feet of Meykandar and thereafter became his first disciple. Thence he was known as Arulnandi. He has written two books, the first of which is the most valuable Saiva Siddhanta treatise in the Tamil language, known as *Sivajnana Siddhi*: its second part contains 328 stanzas and this is in fact an exhaustive metrical commentary on his master's short aphorisms.

He was the second in the line of preceptors. His disciple Maraijnana Sambandha was the third. One day, as he was going along the streets of Chidambaram, he saw in daytime Umapati Sivacharya, one of the privileged class which had the right of worship of Nataraja riding on a palanquin, with a lighted torch and other insignia of spiritual headship, going in front. Maraijnana exclaimed to his disciples: "Look at the day - blind man riding dead wood!" When the words fell on the ears of Umapati, he jumped down from the palanquin, fell at the feet of Maraijnana and begged to be taken as his disciple. In order to test whether Umapati was really mature enough in spiritual evolution, Maraijnana stopped at a weaver who was starching his yarn for preparing his warp, got some of the starch in solution poured into his cupped hands and sipped it. Umapati received in his hands the drops of the starch dripping from Maraijnana's elbow and drank it. Maraijnana was greatly pleased and then and there took him as his disciple.

Umapati became the head pontiff after Maraijnana. His life is teeming with incidents. But suffice it to say here that

he had written several treatises<sup>29</sup> on Saiva Siddhanta which have been included in the Siddhanta Sastras along with the works of Meykandar and Arulnandi. Chief among them is the *Sivaprakasam*, a very valuable supplement to *Sivajnana Siddhi*. Besides he is considered to have written a bhashya on the Paushkara agama and an exposition of one hundred verses collected from the agamas known as *Sivaratna samgraha*.

These four are the Saiva spiritual preceptors. Different lines of spiritual leadership among the Saivas emerged from these. Important among the centres of such leadership are Tiru Avadurai mutt and Dharmapuram mutt, both on the banks of the Kaveri, in the Tanjavur district. These mutts have produced in the later centuries valuable treatises on the Saiva Siddhanta religion and philosophy.

A word may be necessary here on Sivagra yogi. The Meykandar school is called the Nandi School. Siva had taught supreme knowledge to Nandi and Skanda. The Meykandar school descends from Nandi. The Skanda school is different and following Skanda it goes on upto Sivagrayogi, who was the second head of the mutt of that school founded by his adi gurus at Suriyanarkoil on the Kaveri in the same district. Sivagra yogi was a great writer in both Tamil and Sanskrit. He has written many large and valuable original works in Sanskrit and his Tamil *Sivaneriprakasa* expounds succinctly his own system of Saiva siddhanta which has same points of minor differences with the Meykandar school. Along with the lines of Meykandar, his line also is considered a line of preceptors for the Saivas.

#### Chandesa

Though not a preceptor, the life of Chandesa is important for the Saivas. He was born in a brahmin family, was found unfit to study, and so was given at his own request the work of tending the cows. Under his loving care, they thrived well and gave an enormous quantity of milk. Milk was always flowing from their udder. He used this surplus milk for bathing a *Sivalinga* which he made out of sand near the grazing

meadows on the banks of the River Manniyaru. Rumours were afloat that he was wasting good milk and so his father set out to discover the truth. He actually saw his son bathing the sand-*linga* with milk and enraged at what he saw, he kicked the milk pot. The young boy, deeply immersed in his worship, saw the hindrance caused to his worship, took a stick lying near by and slashed the offender's foot with it, cutting it into two. Siva was much pleased at the single minded devotion of the young boy and raised him to the celestial sphere to be a leader of His forces. Today in Saiva worship, personal or congregational, Chandesa *puja* is the last item and, without it, the *puja* is not complete. Only the *darsan* of Chandesa will confer all the benefits of Siva *puja*. He might have lived in the early centuries B. C.

### *Siva Bhaktas*

The lives of the Siva bhaktas or *nayanmar* had been sung into a large volume of 4286 verses by Sekkilar in his *Periya puranam*. The *nayanmar* are sixty three in number. The first three samaya acharyas and Chandesa are included in the list of 63. Saivas are to celebrate the anniversary days of these bhaktas and do a poor feeding or feeding of Siva bhaktas on that day. It is known as *maahesvara puja*: this is even superior to Siva *puja*. This is also called *guru puja* in the sense that every bhakta is a *guru*, serving as an example to lead man on the pathway to God.

### *Sivacharyas*

Lastly, a word may be said about the *sivacharyas*. They are the priests who have been specially empowered by society and by a long tradition of several thousand years, to perform *paraartha puja* (congregational worship) in the temple. They are the class referred to by Sundara as the "community which is privileged to touch the image during the three times of worship."<sup>80</sup> They are not brahmins; the agamas call them Siva-brahmins. Siva is called the Anadi Saiva (without a beginning) and these are called *Adi saivas* (the earliest). Through several millennia they have been the custodians of the

Saiva cult. They know of no god but Siva. The general run of brahmins worship any god - Siva or Vishnu or even sundry deities like Mari, Sasta and some others. Hence one who calls himself a Saiva can have as his *guru*, not only for spiritual matters but even for all family rituals and secular affairs, only the Sivacharya as his *guru*. The brahmin who worships any deity has not the competence to officiate as such a *guru* for a worshipper of Siva.

#### 4. SAIVA WORSHIP

Worship is an important duty in Saivism. The Saiva scripture says: "...Let him mix with the lovers of God. Let him worship the emblems worn by those lovers of God, and the temple itself as God."<sup>81</sup> Even an enlightened soul may occasionally incur the pollution of 'I' and 'mine', because of his mixing with the fettered world; hence he is enjoined always to cultivate the company of Siva *bhaktas* and to worship the Siva emblems and the Siva temple as Siva Himself. "Thou shalt not live in a place without a temple" is a proverbial Tamil injunction.<sup>82</sup>

##### *Temple Worship*

Every one cannot evoke for his contemplation a mental image of God; hence external worship of the concrete image in the temple is prescribed. The temple is the place set apart for community worship and it has been sanctified by the worship of many hundreds of generations. We are unable to perceive milk in the body of the cow, but it flows through its udder when the calf applies its mouth to it.<sup>83</sup> In like manner, God the Omnipresent and yet the unperceivable and unapproachable, manifests Himself through the *Sivalinga* in the temple.

Siva worship and legends have been existing in the Tamilnad from time immemorial. The advent of the Saiva mystics and Saints who toured the temples and sang hymns on Siva enshrined in them gave an added impetus to temple worship, which had been developed as a special but very popular cult. Innumerable are the Siva temples that dot the Tamil country, particularly the Kaveri delta, and more than 300 of them have songs from the Saints, all set to music. Other temples celebrated in legend and history are more than one thousand. The Chola emperors who ruled from the middle of the ninth century to the end of the thirteenth century built hundreds of such temples in stone as massive structures, in effect transporting huge hills and hillocks to places which had

not a single piece of stone for a hundred mile area around. Sizes may vary with the place and the legends, but all the temples had most features in common.

There was a large outer wall enclosing spacious yards. The wall had central openings on each direction, mounted later by a majestic and tall ornamental tower. Each temple had a sanctum for Siva and for Sakti, large halls, beautiful corridors all round, a dance hall for Nataraja, and many minor sub-temples for various other deities. Some had thousand-pillared halls and gold plated tiles and *kalasa*. Wonderful works of art in the form of sculptures adorned the walls, pillars and niches: the images themselves, in stone and bronze, were the greatest pieces of symbolic art the world had ever seen or the human mind could ever invent.

With the house of God in such magnitude and grandeur, naturally people were proud to worship in such places, and the agama ritual of worship, laid down perhaps more than one thousand years earlier than the temple construction, was fully implemented. The temple houses many icons and many practices but every one of them has a deep esoteric significance. Usually town planning in the past had the temple as the centre; the streets around the four walls of the temple are holy to the Saiva. The *gopura* is the *sthula* (gross) *linga* while the Sivalinga in the sanctum inside is the *sukshma* (subtle) *linga*. The glorification of the tower in this manner had two purposes, one was to create for all people the feeling of God even from a distance and the other was to afford a satisfaction of worship even to those who were probably not permitted by usage to enter the temples in those days.

### *The Sequence in Worship*

There is an order and sequence in the worship of the several inner shrines in the temple. Worship is first offered to Ganesa: He is just another form of the formless Siva, and traditionally he is considered to be the power of Siva that removes all obstacles confronting the worshipper in the various activities of his life. The physical form of the mightiest creature in creation, namely, the elephant is given to Ganesa, the



powerful destroyer of all obstacles, His physical form is esoterically the symbolic representation of the primordial sound, the *pranava*, OM:

The Sivalingam in the sanctum is next worshipped. This is the Siva for whom the temple stands and all the other shrines and rituals are merely adjuncts to Him and His worship. The linga consists of a cylindrical piece of stone rounded at the top, inserted into the middle of a larger circular piece of stone, having a spout at the northern side. Both together have a base, lotus-like in shape, and the three, known respectively as the *bana*, the *avudaiyar* and the *pitha*, together are called the *linga*. This is a *rupaarupa* (formless form) representation of the Absolute installed in the temple in order to help the devotees to concentrate their mind on God. The worshipper is present for a *darsan* of Siva in this presence during the fixed times of the worship (four times or six times a day.) He goes to the presence with the usual articles for worship, such as flowers, fruits, coconut, betels and camphor. After a light is waved, a floral *archana* reciting His various names is done, verses from the Vedas and the Saiva canon are sung as prayer, and the worship ends with a benediction.

The next is worship or *darsan* of Nataraja. He is the symbolic representation of Siva in the aspect of performing the fivefold functions for the upliftment and deliverance of the souls from bonds. The five functions are creation by the sounding of the little drum held in a right hand, preservation through the arm held even, dissolution by the left hand holding the fire, obscuration by the right foot planted on ignorance, and lastly the bestowal of Grace by the lifted left foot.<sup>84</sup> This dance of Nataraja is the *panchakritya* dance of the five functions. The concept of His Grace is given a form and placed by his side as His inseparable Sakti. The form of Nataraja is a visual portrayal of the philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta. The dance is also called in this sense the *Panchakshara* dance, or dance symbolic of the five lettered mantra. The drum is symbolic of the removal of *maya*, the fire the scorching of *karma*, the planted right foot removal of *anava mala*, the benedictory hand showers Grace, and the lifted

left foot confers under its auspices infinite and eternal bliss to the liberated soul.<sup>56</sup> Nataraja is always installed as a bronze icon in a separate hall facing south, in front of the main sanctum.

After Nataraja, the worshipper goes to the presence of Sakti who is enshrined in a separate subtemple, for purposes of our own understanding and worship. We separate the power and grace of Siva, give it the distinctive form of the Mother, and worship it as Sakti; otherwise She is inseparable and not apart from Siva. The same details of worship are done here also. Next the worshipper goes to the presence of Muruha (Subrahmanya) called also Karttikeya: He is also just another form of Siva but invested with a separate form and attributes by legends and *puranas*. The three saktis of Godhood, *ichcha*, *kriya* and *jnana* - willing, doing and knowing - are worshipped separately along with Muruha as His consorts Valli and Devayanai and as His spear.

. The last homage is done in the temple to Chandesa, the boy who was raised to be a celestial and the head of Siva's forces, through his unwavering and unequalled devotion to Siva: he is one of the sixty three canonised saints and he has been invested with the power to grant the fruits of the Siva worship done. Siva worship is not complete without his worship. The story of Chandesa is one which is a source of inspiration to mankind for all time. Born as a frail little boy, he has been raised to the celestial regions and worshipped in all Siva temples from days of yore. A last worship is done to the four Saiva Samaya Acharyas, Sambandhar, Appar, Sundarar, and Manikkavachakar.

This is the usual routine of worship in the Sivalaya. All murtis here, except Nataraja, are in stone. Dakshinamurti as the Supreme Guru is worshipped in the western most niche on the southern wall on the outer side of the sanctum.

Besides, there are a few more principles to be observed in the temple worship. The bull or *Rishabha* is the mount of Siva; he is also considered to be the incarnation of the *Dharma*

*devata*, Vishnu, and is an object of the greatest adoration. Every temple has a *sthala vriksha* : a tree sacred to that particular place. In the remote past several millennia ago, Lord Siva manifested Himself under the shade of a tree in this particular place, in the form of a mere stone. When that stone was evolved into a *Sivalinga* and a temple built in the course of the centuries, the tree was also honoured as the *sthala vriksha*, the temple tree, and as the abode of Siva. Very often the tree is just an insignificant plant, like the grass or a thorny bush,<sup>36</sup> but still this is worshipped. The point seems to be to bring home to the worshipper the fact that God abides in all creation, be it man, animal or plant, however humble.

Besides, the temple tank is also an object of reverence. A bath in the tank is meritorious. After the bath, the worshipper puts on the sacred ash, prostrates in front of the *gopura*, goes in, worships the *murtis*, again prostrates, sits near the *gopura* for a few minutes chanting the Lord's name and meditating on Him, and then returns home.

### *Congregational Worship*

Congregational worship is particularly stressed in Saivism. There have always been two simultaneous trends in this religion - one, the efforts of the individual through *bhakti*, through spiritual instruction, through ritualistic worship and through various other means, to get over the cycle of births and deaths, and attain inseparable or non-dual union with the Absolute; and two, the upliftment of the entire community in the path of spiritual progress. The first is served by study, instruction by a guru and by *atmarthā puja* (personal worship). The temple worship is intended to serve the second purpose. According to the importance of the temple - historically, politically, economically and devotionally - times have been fixed for worship therein as three, four or six. Ceremonial worship is a long process and where the temple is large, there are several temple priests with a number of helpers to carry water, to prepare sandal, floral wreaths, food offerings etc., for offering music, and so on. Each temple employs one or more *oduyar* for singing the Tamil *d varam* hymns and also some vedic

brahmins to recite the vedas, during worship. People in the locality, men, women and children attend the puja in large numbers. Pilgrims from various places also throng the temple during important festivals. Thus, the temple worship caters to the spiritual needs of vast hordes of people distributed all over the country in a very effective manner. The minds of different people in the congregation are concentrated on the puja and a mental and emotional integration is effected for the moment which will linger on perhaps for the whole day. The atmosphere of integration automatically continues day after day, and knits together all the various elements of society, men and women, high and low, the learned and the unlettered, young and old, rich and poor. This has a lasting effect, bringing solace to the individual and peace to the community.

Apart from daily worship, the worship during the annual festivals in the more important temples attracts several hundred thousand people from all over the Tamilnad. Here all the people, young and old, men and women, are emotionally united in the worship. Caste, class and even creeds are subordinated to the one thought of the *darsan* before them and everyone is beside himself in a religious transportation of joy and wonder. 'I' and 'mine' are forgotten at least for the moments of the puja. In this sense, the unifying value of congregational worship cannot be overemphasized,

#### *Idol worship*

It is true that idols find a place in Saiva worship. But the Saivas *never* worship the idol : their worship reaches beyond and goes farther to the Supreme Idea that is sought to be invoked in the idol. The mind of man which functions only through the senses and the other internal organs cannot at all reach the *Suddha Siva*, the *Nirguna* (without attributes), the Absolute. Hence, to satisfy these organs and to give them some concrete object on which they can focus the senses and the organs to begin with, the Form of Siva the *Saguna* (with attributes) had been invented by our forefathers. This is installed in different forms in the temple so that the limited mind of man may comprehend the Unlimited Being in the symbol. Conceptually, the image or the Sivalinga is only a symbol. It is not God or

Siva. It is a symbol intended to point to the Being beyond. All thought goes to that Being through the symbol. When man worships the symbol as the abode of the Universal Being, he is able to think and contemplate on Him to the extent his training and evolution in spiritual matters have made him competent therefor. Only the wholly ignorant think that the image is God.

But devotionally the image is Siva. It is the manifest form of Siva. Nobody thinks of the image as a piece of stone or of metal. It is indeed the Absolute Siva the Formless, dwelling here in this Form to receive the supplication of the ardent devotee and shower His grace on him. When many concentrate their thoughts on the image in the temple, the concentrated thought effect of a large mass endows it with a great potency for grace and succour. It gets haloed as the abode of Divinity and as generations roll by, this potency for aid and succour is indeed felt by succeeding generations of worshippers who come to have greater faith in the grace of god.

The images, to give a crude illustration, serve like the algebraic symbols of letters and the like; the letters by themselves have no meaning; but yet they help man to solve many problems in higher mathematics; they have helped man to land on the moon! This is on the material plane. The images serve a similar purpose on the spiritual plane.

## 5. SAIVA RITUALS

Ritualism is the practice of religious rites and ceremonies. Some one said very aptly that the rituals may be compared to the legs of the human body which is religion; its hands being ethics or morality, worship being its heart, and philosophy its head. Man cannot walk without his legs, though these be his lowest extremities. Similarly, religion can thrive, at any rate among the non-intellectuals, only on rituals. Many other analogies may be given to illustrate the relationship between rituals and religion. Rituals are the cloak which covers the matter inside. Most people see only the cloak; very few care to notice or could notice the form inside the cloak. In the same way, rituals and ceremonies exist in all religions. Without these, nowhere in the world did religious beliefs or abstract philosophy influence people and make them proceed along a godward path.

. . .

### *Significance*

A very familiar analogy from Tamil literature may be employed to illustrate this further. Ritualism is the husk which covers the rice, religion. Without the husk, the rice will not germinate. The husk helps to retain the vitality of the rice. In the same manner, ritualism helps to maintain the vitality of religion. Ritualism is thus needed to help people at different levels of understanding to progress spiritually. Only the *jnani* may be able to perceive ritualism as the valueless husk. In religious language, we may say that the *jnani* roasts the rice and eats it up; for him it no more germinates; for him there is no more *karma* and no more births and deaths. But the others, the ordinary human beings, want the grain; they sow it and reap a harvest, again and again. They want the pleasures of life. For them, the husk is important. So, they preserve the whole grain with the husk. Hence ritualism is quite essential for them.

Ritualism has served many purposes in Saivism. Saivism is principally a religion which gives the greatest emphasis on the practice of congregational worship. Thousands of huge temples in granite dot the Tamil country. Hundreds of local Saivas throng the temples for collective worship at various times of the day. Here rituals play a prominent part and help to unify the collective thought of the masses and keep the thought focussed on the Being. Rituals help to relate the faith of the people today with the rich heritage of the faith of the past and they also lay down a faith for the future. They bind together the faith of vast hordes of people. The Dance of Nataraja at Chidambaram is an annual ritual attracting people from all over India and even from overseas. It helps them to overcome any number of barriers - physical ailments, hazards of travel, uncongenial food, exchange, passport and so many others. The temple rituals thus achieve a national and emotional integration, which no other institution has succeeded in preserving in the past or in bringing about in the present.

Many rituals require the worshipper to go to holy places for the completion of some rituals in his own life. The *sradha* ceremony requires him to go to Gaya if he can; to have a sea bath at the estuary of the Kaveri, if he can, on certain days; to have a sea bath at Kodikkarai and Ramesvaram on certain days. Similarly, when the first anniversary of the birth of a new born child is celebrated, people are asked to take the child to a holy place like Palani or Swamimalai (for shaving off the hair on its head). It is also usual to say that the Saiva should visit the birth place of the four Samaya Acharyas, the places where Siva's Grace was bestowed on them, and the place where they finally attained beatitude. In every one of these places, the stories connected with the Saints are re-enacted in the form of temple festivals. Such historical association brings to the mind of the pilgrim a richer and more satisfying feeling of religion, and literature also gains a new dimension by such association. Pilgrims not only travel in space, but also in time; distance in time is mentally and ritualistically bridged, and man is helped to re-live the life of a thousand years or more back and re-capture the best values in the culture of the past.

Rituals have also an important psychological function. They always help to unite the mass mind and channelize it in one direction towards a common purpose. Feelings of joy and elation get an emotional expression in shouting the name of God *en masse* in a congregation, even in carrying temple idols in procession. In pulling the temple chariot along the streets and so on, Nataraja in heavy metal placed on a pedestal and lifted on the shoulders of forty men will still be very heavy. But yet we find in the *Ardhra darsana* festival of Chidambaram (December-January), the bluest blood of Chidambaram jostling with one another in an attempt to secure a place among the Nataraja bearers. The feeling of elation is the only thing that counts; I and mine, my caste, my dignity, and my status, all drop off for the moment. The integration effected by such temple festivals, is not achieved in any other manner. In the struggle for existence, external integration pledges are a mere farce, without any spiritual urge.

Ironically, we may say that the only other occasion which brings about such an integration, is war.

The Saiva rituals had been through the centuries sentinels of Tamilian culture and art. The temples had fostered all the branches of art - music, dance, poetry, architecture, sculpture painting and the like; even agriculture, metal works and weaving and tailoring had received fresh impetus from the rituals. It is needless to elaborate on this well known theme.

Rituals are a symbol of the religious faith of the people. The food offering is in a sense an expression of our gratitude, to mother Nature, to God. *Abhisheka* and *dhupa - dipa* are measures indicative of a purification of man, internally and externally. Unless *bhakti* is given an external outlet in these forms, there is no satisfaction for the mass mind. This is a psychological fact.

Again, rituals had been largely responsible for building national character. The discipline, humility, sincerity, spirit of service, dedication and sacrifice, and unity brought about by rituals have bound together Saiva society. A spirit of national patriotism has brought together all peoples and made every individual a hero; it had made heroes out of clay. Religious



rituals had done the same thing when regional patriotism was narrower. Men and women had undergone the greatest of sacrifices, and rituals were the visual inducements in religion.

Rituals of course are not religious experience. Only a spiritual experience can take man nearer to God and confer ultimate oneness. Rituals have a place in bringing about that experience by creating an internal and external peace and calm therefor: they provide the requisite climate. The Unlimited Being cannot be fully comprehended by man with his limited tools. Rituals are a pointer to many aspects of the Unlimited; they do not pretend to show it.

### *Domestic Rituals*

Now we shall proceed to mention a few of the rituals held important in Saiva society. Society is a community of householders, and rituals begin with the householder's life. They begin even before birth. Pregnancy calls forth a number of rituals, chief among them being the *valaiyal-kappu* or *raksha-bandhan* (seventh month or earlier) for the pregnant mother, where special worship is done to propitiate all *devatas* for a safe delivery of the child, and the mother is served with various dishes of food. The implication is that thereafter she shall desist from heavy eating and keep her stomach lighter, providing the required space for the development of the child in the womb. Then after the child is born, a general cleansing and purification ritual for the entire household is gone through on the sixteenth day; the rite of naming the child is done that day itself, or on the first anniversary of the birth of the child.

The *kappu* is a very meaningful and ancient rite. In ancient times the people framed two claws of the tiger in silver or gold, and placed it on a chain or string round the neck of the child. This was known as the *tali* in the past. A sense of valour and heroism was sought to be instilled in the child by the use of the tiger claws. In later times, this was accompanied by or gave place to a golden ornament on which was engraved the five weapons of Vishnu, the God of Preservation and Protection. Today, the *tali* (*tirumangalya*) tied by the bridegroom round the neck of the bride to signify union in wedlock is a symbol comprising the five weapons.

Two other rituals in the life of the child, not very significant today, are the placing of the child on the crib and later the admission of the child in the school. The first now generally passes off unnoticed, but the second is still an important event in many rural areas. Where the parent can afford, he gives many presents to the teacher and also presents the poorer school children with slates and books and sweets on the occasion.

The first major function in the life of any individual is of course his wedding. According to all traditions, the young man has now finished his studies under his master as a pupil and enters the second stage in life as a householder. Tamil literary traditions say that marriage is of eight categories; but among the Saivas only one category has been practised, namely the *kannika daanam*, a variation of the *brahmana manam* of yore. Parents of the bride choose a groom of the same family, status and traditions, arrange the marriage in the presence of the elders of both the parties and their kin, after ascertaining the agreement of the horoscopes, and celebrate it on the auspicious occasion in the presence of the Agnideva. Usually marriages are performed in the house of the bride groom and the bride's parents give many presents, to enable the new bride to set up a new family. Dowry was never demanded among the Saivas and was never a condition for the marriage, as is now being done in the latter half of the twentieth century. The bride is invited into the house with a measure of paddy in her hand in a new brass (or silver) vessel on which a lighted lamp is placed; the bride carries it, signifying that she is bringing the *Dhaanyalakshmi* and other *Lakshmis* into the house. New garments for both, exchange of garlands, uttering the *Saptapati* mantras, tying the *tali* round the neck of the bride, going round the fire, and looking at the star Arundati keeping the right foot on the grinding stone (*ammi*) - are the various parts of the ritual. The marriage function is a grand social event.

The funeral rites constitute the last important ritual. These are performed on the day the body is removed to the cremation ground, both in the house and in the place of cremation, and on the next day. The first day rites are intended to take the departed soul to the feet of Siva. On the second day, the

bones are collected with the appropriate rites and thrown into a sacred river. Two weeks are allowed for mourning and on the next day, the rituals are again gone through, presents are made to the brahmins, a house purification is done with the invocation of Agni, and temple worship culminates these rituals.

On the anniversary of the day of death, further rituals are performed with Agni, presents and poor feeding are made. This is a token of the esteem and love of the descendants to the departed soul.

In all these rituals, the local community takes adequate part; these are therefore communal rites.

#### *Rituals in worship*

There are others, personal. They are principally the ceremonial worship of the personal form of Siva. Generally this is a *Sivalinga murti*. The worship is a very elaborate ritual. The deity is invoked and requested to abide in the Sivalinga, accept the *puja* offered and bestow His grace on the worshipper. Thought, word, and action harmoniously combine to perform the *puja*. The details of this *puja* are very many. Every Saiva is enjoined to perform Siva *puja* after proper initiation. The all-pervasive Omniscient Being is requested through suitable rituals including mantras to be present before the worshipper and accept the worship.

The Saiva worships only the Supreme Siva. He does not worship minor deities. Worship of deities like Mariyamman, Pidari or Aiyanar and the like is not for him. All the acharyas have sung that they worship only Siva the Supreme, and that they have nothing to do with minor deities.<sup>87</sup>

The daily duties of a Saiva have been said to be five : study of the Saiva canon and of the lives of the Siva bhaktas and listening to them when others tell them; worship of Siva with *flowers dhupa, dipa* and *neivadya*; offering of *tarppana* to the manes this being done during daily *anushtana*; feeding a handful of grass to a cow, symbolising love and kindness to all creation of God; feeding of guests and the poor,, this being evidenced by the history of all *nayanmar*.

Fasting and penance also form part of the religious duties of the Saiva to a limited extent. Fasting helps him to turn his faculties inward at least for a short period. We have seen in our own time in the life of Mahatma Gandhi how fasting and penance had been of immense help to him in self control and discipline. Some days are held sacred to Siva and His various forms. *Sivātrī*, *Somavara* (Monday) and *Pradosha vratas* are specially dedicated to Siva. *Sukravara* (Friday) and *Navaratri vratas* are special to Sakti. *Vinayaka chaturthi* and *Skanda sashti* are sacred to the respective deities. Bhaktas usually fast on these days.

Besides these, there are special monthly festivals which are occasions for celebration in the temple and in the household. We shall mention some of them in the order noted by Jnana Sambandha.<sup>38</sup> The following list begins with the month of *Purattasi* (September-October) and goes on to the twelfth month *Avani* (August-September). *Purattasi* - feeding of Saiva devotees; but this is not in vogue now. *Sarasvati puja* and *ayudha puja* are celebrated in the month; *ayudha puja* is symbolic of the dignity of labour. *Aippasi* - *Dipavali*, *Kartikai* - the festival of lights. *Margali* - Singing the *Tiru Empavai* and the *Palli-eluchi*; *Ardra darsana*. *Thai sankranti* (*Pongal* and *Matu-Pongal*); also *pusam*. *Masi magham* and *Sivaratri*. *Panguni-Uttiram*. *Chitrai* - New Year's Day and Full Moon Day. *Vaikasi-Visaka*, celebrated for *Muruha*. *Ani-Pavitrotsava*, *Adi* - the 18th day festival for the Kaveri. *Avani-Vinayaka chaturthi*. Thus festivals were celebrated every month, both at home and in the temple, to remind one of God.

Every temple celebrates besides the above, annual festivals lasting for ten days. There is a different celebration on each of the days and every celebration has an esoteric significance of Siva's grace in helping the soul on its onward march. The festivals begin with a hoisting of Siva's flag and conclude with a lowering of the flag. The whole purpose of festivals is experience of God. The image, its decoration, the puja materials like flowers, incense, camphor and *neivedya*, the mudras and the mantras - all together help the concentration of the senses in a god-directed thought. For the moment, the

presence becomes indeed the Divine Presence and helps to elevate the thought of the worshipper.

### *The Background*

The *puranic* stories are no doubt one of the important basis for ritualistic worship. Most worshippers are ordinary men and women for whom only faith matters, and cold reason and logic do not count; they cannot understand the subtleties of philosophy nor do they want it. Hence rituals and puranic theology have a great meaning here. The word *purana* means old story; and old stories become religious faith with the passage of time. In Saivism, the puranic stories are the background for a moral life and for a religious faith and devotion. The temples had been evolved as an effort at synthesising the highest philosophy with puranic beliefs, somewhat crude perhaps. The gross meaning of temple worship is only puranic belief; but its soul, the subtler meaning, is the elaboration of that philosophy. The puranas seek to make clear to the ordinary people the higher concepts of philosophy. When an illiterate man prostrates himself before his deity with flowers, incense, camphor, coconut and the other offerings, we see the unification of philosophy and blind ritualistic faith. He instinctively feels that the deity is the Being. It is this characteristic which has helped to keep alive the timeless and ancient Saivism, even today, when great religions and cultures had ceased to exist long, long ago.

The temple festivals have also helped to solve many economic problems. When thousands of people congregated, there were indeed many types of business transactions. People from the remote rural parts brought their agricultural produce to be sold on the occasion. With the sale proceeds they purchased their annual requirements of things which could not be had in the villages. Thus this was also a social purpose which the temple festival fulfilled.

A bath in a temple tank or in a sacred river is also part of the ritual of worship.<sup>89</sup> Every temple has its own tank either within its outer walls or without, in front of the temple. The worshipper is asked to bathe in it at least on special occasions.

Temple legends have elaborate accounts of persons who did so receive the Grace of Siva.

Apart from all these, there are certain minor rituals or disciplines which when implemented rightly bespeak the culture of the home. There are many such beginning from the cleaning of the front yard in front of the entrance and decorating it with kolam just before dawn and down to its repetition at sunset, with lighting a standing ornamental lamp (kuthuvilakku) near the main entrance. These little acts, not great rituals, are characteristic of the culture and beauty in the Saiva life.

*Vratas* or religious observances on special occasions are also part of the Saiva way of life. The devotee takes only one meal on the previous day, sometimes keeps a vigil for the night, and fasts the whole day attending the temple worship at the due hours. Eight such *vratas* are so prescribed, the most important of them being the annual *Sivaratri*, occurring on the fourteenth day of the waning moon in the month of *Masi* (February - March). Similar *vratas* are prescribed for Sakti, Ganesa and Subrahmanya.

## 6. SAIVA ETHICS

The Purusharthas, or goals of life are the four, which are common to all the branches of the Hindu religion. They are held to be virtue, wealth, pleasure and salvation. The Saiva hymn says that the four values or goals were taught to the learned sages by Siva himself. It is significant that the first goal is virtue (called *dharma* in Sanskrit and *aram* in Tamil, the latter term being considered an absolute or supreme value).

Every religion has a code of conduct, as basic for the practice of its tenets. Ethics is the study or examination of what is generally considered right and good not for the individual alone but for the community also. So far as South India is concerned, the people followed a particular code of conduct in public as well as in private life and with the growth of society and its territorial expansion, the code was given a definite demarcation and came to be fixed as religion. This was the early Saivism; it was built upon the thesis, any place is my place, any people are my people; the good and the ill are not done by another.<sup>40</sup> The evolution of this code dates back to pre-historical times. This had an inherent and universal truth in it which came later to be absorbed into the basic tenets of Saivism, as also of all the other branches of the vaidika religion.

### *Ethics*

Ethics in a broader sense is *dharma* i.e., duty or right action. This has no absolute standards; it is conditioned by place and time and circumstances; it is also based on the ideals of the society. Animal sacrifices were the order of the day in Hindu society some millennia back; they are no longer so now; rather the opposite is the order of the day; on that account we may not say that ethical standards had fallen or that the ethical standards of the ancients were lower; we can only say that they have changed. The ideal of abstract humanism gradually developed into religious humanism. Love and war

were the only themes for poetry some millennia ago; but as war was gradually discounted in human transactions, this slowly gave place to love of man, love of the man of god and love of God. More place was given to matters of the spirit, and advancement in the spiritual sphere became the accepted goal. Spiritual advancement naturally pre-supposed an order and a law on the material or worldly plane. This is the ethics we are speaking of.

In common parlance, *dharma* merely signifies charity, distribution of alms. But we mean by that term duty, moral and just behaviour, a high sense of responsibility to oneself, to the family and to the society at large, to the nation. The Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word is *aram* and it connotes all that its counterpart means; and even a little more; it even signifies *absolute dharma*; it has been established in the language for over two thousand years to convey that meaning. Man has reached a higher level from the animal living and therefore has a duty to follow and to display right and good conduct in all his behaviour; this pre-supposes purity in thought, word and deed.

#### *Attachment*

When man discharges his earthly duties, the problem of the fruits of his action has to be faced. Man often sees before his eyes the suffering of the good and the prospering of the bad. Why? This question is not easily answerable through the testimony of perceptual experience. Religion comes to the rescue; it posits the theory that the soul does not die; and on this basis, establishes that the fruits of an action, good or evil, continue to affect the person even in subsequent births. By person we mean the soul, not its physical body. This accepts the theory of rebirth. In Saivism, as well as in all branches of Hinduism, it is accepted that birth includes the vegetable and the animal kingdoms also. Any of these births may result. As our actions are all result-oriented, man has inevitably to experience the result of action. This is the *karma* cycle. But only the *jnani*, the really enlightened soul, does his duty without any attachment towards the result thereof. The effect of his action does not bind him. Until this enlightenment dawns,



attachment will not cease and the fruits of action done now go on mounting. Moral instruction and ethical training are just intended to help man to break this cycle of action and effect, and thereby redeem him from the resultant cycle of births and deaths, and also to lift him up or free his soul. Even when doing good things, this training will teach him to detach himself from the action and its result.

### *Purusharthas*

As in the other branches of Hinduism, Saivism also considers the goal of life or the values in life to be the attainment of the four objects. 'The aim of all learning is the attainment of the four objects - *aram* (*dharma*), *porul* (*artha*), *inbam* (*kama*) and *vidu* (*moksha*) is an old saying<sup>41</sup> in Tamil. They may be considered to signify the ethical, economic, pleasure-seeking and spiritual values in life. Righteousness is the ethical or moral goal of life. Practice of *dharma*, leading of a virtuous life, has the first place in the scheme of things. As the ultimate end of all action is the attainment of final *moksha* or deliverance of man from his bonds, the virtuous life is also conditioned by this thought. A righteous life has per force to be a godly life.

The second is *artha*, securing the worldly goods. Man has to live a full life in order that he may yet rise higher and march towards the final goal. To achieve this, he is generally expected to lead a householder's life, which is one of service and succour to society at large. Hence engaging oneself in the pursuit of wealth is considered normal; but this is not the end of life; it is just an inevitable and natural step to be gone through. Scriptures lay down that wealth secured is to be shared by several limbs of society.

*Kama* is the enjoyment of the good things of life. Again this is no end in itself: enjoyment should teach one that such pleasures are transcient, and therefore man can save himself only by renouncing them and by trying to tread the path leading to the eternal path of *moksha* or deliverance.

Summing up, we may say that man is expected to live a virtuous life, secure worldly goods by righteous means, enjoy

them in common with society, and ultimately, realising the transcendence of that life, renounce all these, in the pursuit of a higher life leading to *moksha*.

### *Non-Attachment*

Selfless service is the greatest of *dharma*s. When man does every act as a service to God, without any concern for the result thereof, when he effaces himself and considers himself as a mere instrument, with no will of his own, to execute God's mission, the effect of his action does not attach itself to him, and he is thereby cutting in two the line of future births. This is the only way to ultimate deliverance from bonds, to *moksha*. Man is expected in this life to strive in the path of righteousness, earn and enjoy a righteous life, and ultimately realise that this enjoyment is transcendent, and strive to attain the permanent bliss. The pathway to this permanence is the severance of attachment to the others. Death is not an end to the soul's experiences. When man realises this, he seeks permanent release, from the human bonds. This is the teaching of all branches of Hinduism.

Saivism does not approve of materialism, which considers the perceived world an end in itself. In the same way, righteousness is not an end in itself; this philosophy does not give a soul-satisfying answer to many problems. What is the end of *dharma*, or righteousness? It is for the independence or liberation of the spirit, for the removal of its ignorance and for its deliverance from its fetters. Freedom from ignorance, freedom from fetters, results in an independent, all-pervasive state.

Besides, so long as man lives in society, his actions affect society. In order that the effect may always be to the good of society, he is constrained to lead a righteous life.

### *Varna*

Considered on this basis, we find Saivism has always preached the one world concept. 'God is one and mankind is one family' says Tirumular<sup>42</sup>. When all creation is God's own, one cannot be high and another cannot be low, merely by the accident of birth. The four *varnas* have not been accepted in

principle by Saivism. The distinction sought to be made as *brahmin*, *kshatriya* etc., was the result of the profession adopted by one and it was not a matter of birth; and on that account one was not to be deemed high and another low. One who dedicated himself to *syadhyaya* and *pravachana* - to learning and instruction - was a brahmin. The agamas have laid down that he who had initiation into the religious ritual and philosophy was a brahmin. The theory of varna by birth, whatever be its status in Hinduism, had never been wholly conceded in Saivism.

Mankind is one. One is a Saiva by his way of life, by his religious observances, by his attitude of mind, and by his worship; another is not. The sixtythree *Nayanmar* exemplify in their lives the Saiva way of living: 'high caste' brahmins mingling freely with 'low caste' people; love of God is the one thread which had strung together the multi-coloured gems, which represented men in the various walks of life and various degrees of God-realisation; no one was discarded from the stringing. (Early Vaishnavism is on a parallel footing with Saivism in this regard). In the same way, women enjoyed equal privileges in the Saiva society, also in the religious sphere - in the right to worship, the right to have spiritual initiation, and the right to surrender and to final deliverance. This was indeed a feature common to the Tamil society; only alien inroads into the Tamilnad in the early centuries of the Christian era did not recognise this right.

There is no untouchable, no outcaste in Saiva society. Every one is a servant of God, and "the lowliest if he has God in his heart, is worshipped by me as my God" says Acharya Appar;<sup>13</sup> he is an outcaste who has expelled God from his heart.

### *Ashrama*

The stages in life, or *ashramas* are said to be four: *brahma-chaari* the student, *grahasta* the householder, *vanaprasta* the recluse in the forest, and *samyasi* the ascetic who has renounced everything. The first is the student, unmarried, who lived as a member of the teacher's household, all the hours of

the day and the night and for a number of years, till he was pronounced fit to marry and settle down in life. The second is the married householder's state where he has settled down in life and lives as a prop to men in the other stages of life also; this is a full life. After this full span of life he retires, settling the family burden on his progeny and lives the life of a recluse with his wife; this is the *vanaprasta* stage. The last is the *sannyasi*, absolute renunciation; with no worldly attachment of any kind, considering all the world as a single family, and working for its collective welfare, and for his own personal advancement and deliverance from the bonds of births and deaths. Of the four, the second and the fourth had received special emphasis in Saivism.

Worship of the *guru*, *linga* (the deity in the temple) and *jangama* (God's worshippers) is a scriptural injunction for the Saiva and in order to perform these fully, he has to remain in the married state. Many rituals have to be done by man and wife. Man and wife are one unit and together they have the authority to perform rites and rituals. Without his wife man alone has no authority. Besides, giving food to the needy and to the Saiva ascetics is enjoined on him. In this sense, he sustains the administration of the state and the Saiva society. Hence in all books, the householder's stage has been specially extolled. As laid down in the Upanishads also the duty of producing food and of feeding the guests devolves on him.

The saffron robe of the ascetic has always come for special reverence in Saivism. The *sannyasi* holds aloft the banner of Siva, His emblems and mantras, and he symbolises in his life the high principle of serving only God, and of sacrificing everything else before that idea. Freeing himself from all attachment, he is ready to help the entire world in the name of God, as a service to God and, by his own shining example, he upholds the freedom of the spirit, which bows only before the One Being.

Saivism gives equal emphasis to both the householder's and the ascetic's stages in life. The two stages are to show reverence equally to all creation. Reverence to the cow is a symbolic expression of this concept. 'Any one can worship God with a

bit of a green leaf, can give a handful of grass to a cow, can give a morsel of food to the hungry, and can speak a kind word to others<sup>4 5</sup> is the message of Tirumular which envelopes every thought in its fold.

### *Virtues*

Feeding Siva *bhaktas* is a special feature in Saivism (as also in Vaishnavism). '*Athithi devo bhava*' says the Upanishad. Siva resides in all human beings; and so, appeasing the hunger of fellow men is particularly pleasing to Siva: it is even more meritorious than worshipping Siva direct. This has been evolved as a special ritual, namely *Maahesvara puja* in Saivism.

The virtues to be developed and the vices to be guarded against, which are prescribed generally in all the branches of Hinduism are also prescribed in Saivism. Love of fellow beings takes another form, made familiar in modern days by Mahatma Gandhi as *ahimsa*; it is also non-meat eating, and this has been dealt with earlier. Lord Siva is the Eternal Truth, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Hence a Saiva very strictly adheres to Truth in thought, word and deed. Fetters do not bind God. Hence one who desires union with God, has to overcome all thought of I and mine as the first step to freedom from the bonds. He tries to retrieve the mind going outward through the senses and to turn them inward. Instead of being at their mercy, he controls them and makes them instruments for his way of thinking, as they should really be. There is no fear or despair and he is ever at peace with himself and with the world. He acquires an integrity and rectitude in thought, word and deed. The traditional vices - desire, anger and confusion - drop away from him.

Summing up, we may say that Saiva ethics definitely lays down the conquest of the senses and the vices that they stimulate, the development of the divine attributes of Love and Truth, and the discharge of all functions as God's work without any personal attachment to the fruits thereof, and the complete surrender to the Divine will and purpose. The function of the senses is to be sublimated and made to serve the higher

purposes of the spirit - to perceive God in all things, to serve Him, and to surrender to His will.

The basis for all Saiva ethics may be summarised in a few words : God is. He is the All-merciful. His Grace does envelop everyone at the proper time and according to his readiness to receive It. We cannot gauge the measure and the reason of His Grace. We have no yardstick to measure it. We have no power or qualification to compel It. All that we can do is to make ourselves fit to receive It.

Ethics is a moral and spiritual code of conduct. What has been said may appear to be a lofty ideal, not easy of attainment. On that account it is not to be brought down. We have to strive for its attainment, however distant and however lofty it may appear to be.

The destiny of man is to rise up and reach the superman stage. In the process of rising up, there may naturally be a set back or retardation. But the destiny is to rise up. It is the function of ethics to point to this destiny.

## 7. SAIVA SADHANA

*Sadhana* is the path. The paths to realization in Hinduism are many. In Saivism they take certain well laid out directions. We speak of course of the pathways to God-realization and final deliverance from bonds. Saivism teaches us to lead a life of righteousness and acquire purity of the soul. Such a life may be termed one of high moral values. But morality by itself does not give the sense of completeness which arises out of perfection; it is no more religion, than ritualism is religion. Morality is just a pre-requisite for religion.

Religion is a godward life. The most complete and almost perfect conception of God is as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, Life, Light and Love - Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. The easiest approach to that perfection is through the last - Love; this has been recognised in all branches of Hinduism as the *bhakti marga*. This means simply love of God and absolute surrender to His Will. All the great teachers of the world have preached this path and many had also trodden it. In Saivism also, all the saints have gone along this path. The lives of the sixty three canonised saints are but an illustration of this way of life in all its different facets

The greatest *bhakta* loves God because he cannot but do it; he does not ask for any material benefits or for welfare in this world. He converts his whole body into a temple for God and his heart as the sanctum thereof. Worldly pleasures or pains do not exist for him. He craves only for Him, in adversity as well as in prosperity. His presence is his prosperity and His absence is his adversity. He moves and lives in a world of his own, made radiant by an inward light shed by the spirit enshrined in his heart. "To him the potsherd and the golden ingot look alike; prosperity and adversity have both ceased to exist for him; his one desire is to direct all his thought, word and deed into one endless love to Him; even deliverance from bonds seems to have no appeal to him over this joy of endless *bhakti*<sup>46</sup>. This love is a surging from within, which cannot be

controlled but only be experienced; severing of all attachment and knowing that God is the only refuge, are only adjuncts, but they by themselves do not produce this stage of *bhakti*.

#### *The Four Paths*

Such a *bhakti* or supreme surrender is itself a gift of God's grace and it is hard to cultivate in consciously. So when such is the case, some line of action which can be consciously developed becomes necessary for man who struggles for deliverance. To help him progress godward, some paths have been indicated. They are called the four paths : *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana*. The life of a Saiva is one dedicated to Siva. In this, *charya* is dedication of the body to Siva, *kriya* dedication of the *indriyas*, *yoga* of the internal *karanas* (organs), and *jnana* of the self. These four are again considered the worship of Siva in different ways : *charya* is the external worship of the image of Siva *rupa* in the temple; *kriya* is the worship, internal and external, of the formless form (*ruparupa*) of Siva, i.e., the *Sivalinga*; *yoga* is the internal worship of Siva the formless (*arupa*); and lastly, *jnana* is the worship of Siva who transcends the three stages of *rupa*, *arupa* and *ruparupa*, not by internal or external processes, but only through the intellect. All the four paths, or *padas* as they are called, are to be construed as parts of the *jnana marga*. These four again are not separate independent compartments; they are part of a synthetic whole, which is here represented separately for purposes of easy understanding and observance.

Leaving apart these philosophical concepts, we shall now examine what each denotes and how the *sadhaka* (aspirant) functions through each.

#### *Charya*

*Charya marga* is manual service in the Siva temple. It includes sweeping the temple floor, washing it, providing lamps, maintaining the flower garden, gathering flowers and preparing floral wreaths, and supplying other puja materials, burning incense, singing His praises, dancing in ecstasy, and also doing service to His devotees. Siva *bhaktas* are also to be worshipped.



Offering *puja* on the anniversary day of Saiva *acharyas* and saints and Siva *bhaktas* is called *Maahesvara puja*. On such days a poor feeding is organised. This is in effect a kind of social service. Feeding does not apply to one's own friends and relatives. The spirit of service and surrender to God is sought to be developed through this way of life. The stories of the Saiva *nayanmar* exemplify one or the other of these various acts of the *charya marga*. The story of Abu ben Adam<sup>47</sup>, which places love of fellow beings even higher than love of God, in another tradition, will illustrate this aspect of the spiritual conduct of the *bhaktas*.

### Kriya

The *kriya marga* is the most elaborate one. In essence it is the worship of Siva on the lines laid down in the Sivagamas. The aspirant gathers fragrant flowers for worship and performs a Siva *puja* in his own house for a personal deity, his *atmārtha murti*. He prepares incense, lamp, water for bath, sandal, food offerings and the like. At the commencement of the *puja*, he sits on a prescribed *asana* (posture) and performs a fivefold purification ritual for the elements, the place, the materials gathered, the *mantras* to be said and even for the *murti* to be worshipped. He invokes his favourite deity by *mantras* specifying what is known as the *asana*, the *murti* and the *murtiman*. *Asana* is seat and *murti* is the image (*linga*). *Mula* or *murtiman* is the universal Self, whom he invites to be present on the image for the duration of the *puja*. This has a great significance in this that it clearly indicates that it is not the image or the idol that is worshipped, but the Spirit beyond, which is just invoked on the idol. Siva is imagined to be a bright light and His worship is done through thought, word and deed, namely contemplation (*dhyana*), *mantra* and *kriya*. A floral archana and a food offering are made, prayers are said and with an offering on the fire, the *puja* is concluded. This *puja* is a very elaborate one and at every stage the worshipper focusses his mind on the transcendental Being as immanent and enshrined in the immediate presence and offers his worship. Here he does not pray for any material benefits or for any personal gain. The prayer is all for his ultimate union with

God, thereby ending the cycle of births and deaths in which he is entangled, and for the welfare of humanity. This is not for ordinary material *bhoga*, but for *Sivabhoga*, eternal bliss.

### Yoga

The third path is the path of *yoga*. This is very difficult of comprehension to the layman. The *ashtanga yoga* with eight steps is merely a pathway to the *yoga* which seeks to vitalise the Sakti inherent in the individual and take it to the higher levels and make it experience the divine Presence. Books say that the mystic power in man called *Kundalini Sakti* which lies coiled like a serpent at the base of the spinal column is roused and made to ascend through the six *adharas* or nerve centres - *muladhara*, *svadhishtana*, *manipuraka*, *anahata*, *visuddhi* and *ajna*, and then reach the highest, the *sahasrara*, which is beyond the region of the brain and there enjoy the bliss conferred by oneness with the Absolute. This process exercises both the mind and the body and therefore can be gone through only under the expert guidance of a realised *guru*. Not all can follow this path.

What has been said here is the *yoga* generally known as *kundalini yoga*. The *Saiva yoga marga* is called the *Praasaada yoga*. It considers the range from *mula adhara* to *brahma randra* as the sphere of sixteen *kalas* and has evolved a scheme of exercises for the realisation of the respective stages. The soul reaches beyond the sixteen *kalas* and attains an inseparable union with the All-pervasive Self there. This is the *Saiva yoga* leading the oneness with Siva. This is even more difficult than the *kundalini yoga*. What is generally known as the *ashtaanga yoga* consists of eight steps; but that *yoga* is not an end itself; it is merely an accessory process to both the *Kundalini yoga* and the *Praasaada yoga*.

### Jnana

The *jnana marga* is an intellectual process; the *pati jnana* is sought to appear in the *pasu* and thereby confer the competence for the oneness. The aspirant studies the scriptures, realising what is the ultimate Truth and adopts the five

processes of study, instruction, learning from the master, imparting of the learning, and contemplation; as a result, the knower, the knowing intellect, and the subject of knowledge, become an inseparable One, merging with Him who is just *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Penances, *japa* and *dhyana* are progressively higher, one over the other; but even these will confer only material benefits; he who desires ultimate union, should go beyond these, and worship Siva through *jnana*.

The pathways to God realisation have been mentioned also differently in the different schools of Hinduism. Vedanta schools in general mention them as *yogas*—the Karma yoga, the Raja yoga, the Jnana yoga and the Bhakti yoga. *Karma yoga* is said to be a moral discipline directing the individual will towards God; it is said to signify *nishkama karma*, doing one's duty without setting the heart on the fruits of action, but dedicating them to God. Here man is not a slave of the senses, but has conquered and sublimated them. This may be said to correspond to the *charya marga* and partly to the *kriya marga* also. The *Raja yoga* is said to signify control of the mind. *Ashtaanga yoga* also is said to form the steps in this yoga. It is supposed to impart knowledge of the self and control over it. This may be considered to correspond in part to the *yoga marga* in Saivism. The *Jnana yoga* is the path of a philosophical enquiry into the nature of the soul and of God. Enquiry leads to knowledge which leads to realisation. Thus, of the three *yogas* considered, the *jnana yoga* seems to have the highest place. This corresponds to the *jnana marga* of Saivism.

### *Bhakti Marga*

Lastly, we have the *bhakti marga* or the path of love towards God. It consists of complete renunciation and a total surrender to God in a spirit of absolute love and humility. Although the *bhakti yoga* is mentioned as a separate path higher than all the others, Saivism does not mention it as a separate *marga*, but considers it as the basic mental state permeating all the four *margas*. *Bhakti* pervades them all and there is no *charya*, or *kriya*, *yoga* or *jnana* without *bhakti*.

The Saiva Nayanmar (Saints) have all gone along one or the other of the four paths detailed here. But in every walk that they chose, bhakti and absolute surrender to Siva were the chief governing factors guiding their lives. Among all the stories, two are very ancient - the story of Kannappar and the story of Chandesar. The first was an unlettered hunter, who, unable to bear the sight of blood oozing from the eyes of the *Sivalingam* he was worshipping, dug out his own eyes to replace the affected eyes of the *lingam*. The story goes that Siva Himself caused the incident to happen in order to show the local Sivacharya priest there that the hunter's love for Him was in no way inferior to the ritualistic worship the priest was performing. The other story is about a brahmin boy who was pouring forth milk from the cows left to his care, on a Sivalinga as *abhisheka* and, when his own father kicked the milk pot, he cut asunder the offending foot of his father, and by this unequalled devotion was raised to the land of the celestials. These two stories demonstrate the limits to which absolute surrender will take the *bhakta*.

#### *The Saiva Emblems*

The Saiva emblems are intended to plant the *bhakti* of the devotee more firmly. They are usually three - the visual emblems, the sacred ash and the *rudraksha* bead, and the mental one of the *panchakshara mantra*.<sup>48</sup> The sacred ash is called *vibhuti*, the supreme prosperity. Elaborate rules govern its preparation and application to the several parts of the body. It is a symbol of reducing to ashes the bonds that fetter the soul. It should always adorn the forehead of the devotee; <sup>48A</sup> it is to be respected as Siva Himself. Many were the saints who gave up their lives upholding the cause of this emblem.

The *rudraksha* beads are the seeds of a tree<sup>49</sup> now found in the Himalayan region. Legendarily they are symbolic of the tear drops which fell from the eyes of Siva when His heart was moved to hear the misery caused to the celestials by the *asuras* of Tripura. The Saiva should always wear the beads; he must wear them at the time of worship and whenever he is performing any rituals. They are also the rosary for

the *japa*. The *rudraksha* beads are the sign of the bestowal of His Grace.

The *Panchakshara* is the Five syllables *Na ma si va ya*. This is a symbol or formula taught by the *guru* to the disciple at the time of initiation. It is a *mantra*, capable of helping him who utters it. The phrase simply means, 'I bow to Siva'. But each syllable is endowed with considerable esoteric significance and mystic powers. The syllable *ya* is the soul which has to attain oneness with *Si*, Siva, through the aid of Grace, *Va*, which is placed next to it in the arrangement of the syllables. But its knowledge is fettered by *ma* the bonds, which letter is also placed by its side; *na* is the power of obscuration which causes the soul *ya* to be fettered and which obscures its vision. Through the help of the *guru*, the individual rises in his *sadhana* of *bhakti* and knowledge, drops *ma* and *na* and progresses forward with the help of Grace *va* - towards *Si* through *va*. The *guru* studies the stage of the aspirant's spiritual evolution and transposes the syllables in the *mantra* in an appropriate manner. The aspirant is enjoined to chant the *mantra* with the *pranava OM* systematically during his daily ritualistic austerities; it is up to him to contemplate on the significance of the *mantra* and raise himself step by step. The *mantra* is the subject of an esoteric science, on which many volumes have been written.<sup>50</sup> These remarks will be sufficient for our purpose here.

The *Siva mula mantra* mentioned here is the heart and soul of all the Vedas. It is chanted with the *pranava* in the form *OM Namah Sivaya* in the *Rudradhyaya*, in the fifth *prapataka*, of the fourth *kanda* of the *Taittiriya Samhita* of the *Krishna Yajur veda* and is considered to be the very centre and heart of all the Vedas (*OM Namas Sivaya cha, Sivataaraaya cha*).

#### *The Guru and his Initiation*

An initiation is prescribed for the Saiva to qualify him to proceed on the path of a *sadhana* for release. This is called *diksha*. This is in essence the Gracious Look of the realised

*guru*, who is considered to be no less than Siva Himself. *Diksha* means preparing the ground for the conferment of Grace, by the removal of ignorance. There are several categories of the *diksha* and different grades also. The first befits him to perform the daily austerities including *japa* and the second to perform his personal worship of a *murti*; and the third helps him onward in his effort to overcome the cycle of births and attain union with God. The daily rituals, *Sivapuja* and the *japa* instructed by the *guru* are to be performed for life. A Siva *gayatri man'tra* is also taught for the *puja* which is calculated to protect him.

The spiritual *guru* occupies the highest place in the spiritual progress of the *sadhaka* (aspirant). The scriptures enjoin a three fold worship : *guru*, *linga* and *jangama* - the preceptor, the *murti* which is God, and the godly men. The worship of the latter two had been dealt with earlier. Worship of the *guru* is prescribed in all branches of Hinduism. Although realised souls are becoming rarer, the *guru* is to be worshipped as Siva Himself,<sup>51</sup> whatever may be the stage of his evolution. The human form of the *guru* is immaterial. The *sadhaka* has to conceive of the Supreme *Guru* as abiding in the human form and guiding him. This conception is necessary for the progress and for the emancipation of the *sadhaka*. *Bhavana*, *mantra* and *kriya* are the three interwoven factors in worship; just as a piece of stone functions for God as the *linga*, so also the human person functions for the *Parama* (Supreme) *Guru*. *Bhavana* is the source of all pleasure even in the ordinary planes of human living. A man considers a photograph of his lady love as she herself; he never thinks of it as a piece of bromide paper. This *bhavana* is indispensable for one's own upliftment. No *sadhaka* would call the Sivalinga, 'Oh this is a mere piece of stone !' So also, no disciple shall call his *guru*, 'Oh, this is after all Mr. So-and-So !' It is only the mind that conceives of the higher things and uses them as steps for further progress.

It was the great good fortune of Vivekananda to have had a highly realised soul as his *guru*, in Sri Ramakrishna

Paramahamsa. The *bhavana* of the disciple should always see beyond the mortal form, should see the Supreme *Guru*.

The Vaishnava tradition is more emphatic in declaring that the disciple shall not look into the character of the guru but should simply make an absolute surrender to him.

The scriptures lay down that the Saiva emblems, the devotees and the temple itself are to be worshipped as Siva.<sup>52</sup> Temple worship has already been extensively dealt with in an earlier section. The emblems and service to the devotees have been discussed in this section.

## 8. SAIVA PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of Saivism in Tamilnad has been known by the name of Saiva Siddhanta. The term means that Saivism is the proven conclusion of all systems of thought. Systems of philosophy had been evolved emphasizing various aspects and conclusions from the days of Sankara (9th century). All the systems of philosophy codified after Sankara are theistic systems. The Saiva system of thought had its roots in the pre-historic past. Archaeologists like Marshall had asserted that Siva worship was found in the Mohenjadaró and Harappa excavations and that Saivism could be considered as the most ancient of all living religions.

That the *mantra*, *OM Nama-sivaya*, is found in the very centre of all the Vedas has been pointed out earlier. The famous Rig Veda quotation, *Ekam sat viprah bahuda vadanti* signifies that there is one Supreme Being, which the learned speak of in many ways. In the context, that *Sat* has been interpreted by learned scholars as the Unnamed One, Siva. The Vedas worship many gods such as Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Vayu, Agni, Hiranyagarbha, Soma, Surya, Chandra, Vishnu and Rudra. These represent the various powers of a Supreme Being, the One who is the *Sat*, the *Ekam* of the quotation. This concept of the One and the Supreme is also implied in the Tamil poetic conventions beginning from the *Tolkappiyam*. Describing the four regions<sup>58</sup> in poetic convention, this treatise mentions Muruga, Vishnu, Varuna and Indra as the presiding deities of the four regions and has by implication and inference left the suggestion of a Supreme Power which is One and immutable and naturally the Director of all the others. That Supreme is Siva, who is not mentioned by name but whose attributes are all described in sufficient detail in the earliest available Tamil literature.

The term Saiva Siddhanta is first mentioned by Tirumular in his *Tirumantiram* : "The Saiva Siddhantins have studied the



scriptures, walked the path of *yoga* and *jnana* shed their *anava* and finally realised the Self in themselves.”<sup>54</sup> Tirumular lived in the 5th century. Although the Samaya Acharyas do not mention the term, we learn from inscriptions that the Pallava King Rajasimha (665-705) who ruled from Kanchi and built the famous Kailasanatha Temple there, calls himself a follower of Saiva Siddhanta.<sup>55</sup> These make it clear that historically Saiva Siddhanta, was a well established term in those days, as the distinct name of the philosophy of the Tamil people. Summing up, it can be seen to be the earliest system of philosophy, centuries before Sankara.

It was given to the young Saint Meykandar with the help of the divine guidance and instruction received by him from Siva, through his guru, Paramjoti munivar, to collect all the thoughts current before him in the *Tirumantiram*, in the other canonical Books, and in the Sanskrit Agamas, codify them under various heads and enunciate them as the famous twelve aphorisms, his *Sivajnana bodham*, probably by the middle of the 12th century. This short treatise has been the basic text for the Saiva Siddhanta system of philosophy from that day to this. It may also be remarked here that Saint Umapati, fourth in the line of acharyas from Meykandar, says that Saiva Siddhanta is the essence of the Vedanta (the Upanishads).<sup>56</sup> St. Kumaraguruparar of 17th century says: “Saiva Siddhanta is the nectar extracted from the rare and delicious fruit borne on the topmost branch of the Vedanta tree.”<sup>57</sup>

With this historical background, we shall now proceed to state some of the doctrines of the Saiva philosophy.

All philosophies deal with the three entities—I (the soul), Mine (matter and the bonds), and God. Terminologies may differ but the substance is the same. Atma, jivatma, chetana, anu, jiva pasu are all different terms used to denote the *soul* indicated by I. The second is *matter* which is the subject of perception and experience by the senses of man and it is called the external nature, material object and its derivatives, and the relationship, which is subtle and called variously as *maya*,

*pasa* etc. The difference in the concepts will be evident even in the terms employed. The third entity is called differently as the Supreme, the Absolute, God, Brahman, Pati, the Self, Vibhu etc. Differences in the philosophical systems arise only in defining these, their mutual relationship, the pathway to reach God and the manner of the ultimate union.

### *Pati (God)*

The Absolute in Saivism is given the name Siva (that which confers good). Briefly said, God is one, the all-Pervasive, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, self-luminous one. The other two categories are under His control, through His all-pervasive power, termed Chit Sakti. These attributes of God may be elaborated for purposes of better understanding on the following lines. God is Pati, beyond the fettered souls and the fetters. He is also called Pasupati, He who protects the souls (*Pasu*). He has neither form nor is He formless. He is *tnirguna*, attributeless. Yet eight attributes are attached to Him,<sup>58</sup> so that the mind of man may be able to contemplate on Him. He is the cause of the origin and the end of everything but He has no beginning and no end. He is all-pervasive, always immanent in all things, at all times. He has no body. The Chit Sakti or His own Consciousness-Force, His Grace, is His Body. He causes the bonds to fetter souls according to their *karma* but He is not bound by them. He causes the functions such as creation, preservation and dissolution to be performed by Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra by his direction, but He does not do anything. He is the soul's soul, causing consciousness or knowledge in the individual soul. He is the infinite and the infinitesimal. He cannot be comprehended by the senses or the mind, yet He is the refuge for all things created. He is One without a second. He causes everything to be bound by *karma* but no *karma* attaches to Him.

His true form is Sat-Chit-Ananda; existence (Truth), knowledge and bliss, in other words, Life, Light and Love. He can be perceived only through His own Grace; otherwise, He cannot be pointed out as 'this is God'.<sup>59</sup>

Saivism does not accept the doctrine of *avatara* or incarnation. What brings about *avatara*, incarnation or birth is *karma*. For Siva there is no *karma*. No where, in no legend or *purana*, has it ever been said that Siva was born. He is always the Transcendental Being and as such He has never limited that nature by being born in flesh and blood. He takes forms to help mortals, out of His own Grace, but never restricts Himself to the body which is a mere outcome of the *panchabhutas* (the five elements). He just manifests Himself to the devotees according to their stage of spiritual evolution. The scriptures speak of Him as Visvadhika, Visvakarana, Visvarupi and Visva-antaryami (One who transcends the Universe, who is the cause of it, who has it as His form, and who is its prime Director). In all Saiva legends, He has never limited His nature. Siva has no name, no form and no attribute, but He assumes all these out of His infinite mercy to help the mortals.

The functions attributed to Him are said to be His sport, intended to redeem the souls which are steeped in ignorance and in *karma*.

### *Soul (Pasu)*

The souls are infinite in number, have no beginning and are eternal; they are not the creation of God. He creates only their bodies, organs and spheres of activity and experience and the objects therefor. Souls are born in any manner of births from the vegetable kingdom onwards. From the very beginning they are bound by the three classes of bonds. The nature of the soul is to identify itself with the environment. When associated with matter, it loses as it were its inherent consciousness and behaves like matter. When associated with the spirit, it regains its consciousness and exercises it. The soul's consciousness is limited by an inherent pre-cosmic bond called *anava*. The *Chit Sakti* helps the soul to assume a body and enter the orbit of births and deaths in nature, subject to its inexorable laws. Association with the body results in action. Action brings always its own fruits, good and bad, and to enjoy the fruits further birth becomes necessary, resulting in further action, and so the cycle goes on endlessly. Siva in His infinite mercy, appears before the soul at the proper time in the form of a

guru helps the soul to sever the bonds and break the cycle and directs the soul along the path of final deliverance from bonds and of union with God.

### *The Bonds (Pasa)*

The bonds which fetter the soul are classified as three : they are *anava*, *karma* and *maya*. They are collectively known as *mala* (impurity) and *pasa* (bonds).

*Anava* is said to be an inherent pre-cosmic evil; it is not the nature of the soul but only an accretion or impurity. It is referred to by several terms such as ignorance, darkness, the ego etc. It obscures the consciousness of the soul. Material darkness conceals all other matter but makes itself known. But this *anava*-darkness obscures everything and obscures itself also,<sup>60</sup> with the result that the soul does not realise that it is enveloped in this darkness. It is also called simply *mala* and *mulamala*.

*Karma* both good and bad is the cause of all births and deaths. According to its nature, births vary and the consciousness of the soul also varies. *Karma* attaches itself to the soul even in the disembodied state in a subtle form. God's grace links the *karma* to the soul which goes on experiencing the fruits of past *karma*; In the process, its actions give rise to further good and bad deeds, and further *karma* goes on mounting, through the functioning of thought, word and deed. Thus *karma* itself is resolved into three categories - the *prarabdha*, the part out of the large mass of accumulated *karma* that is being currently experienced; *sanchita*, the balance of that mass which is to be experienced in further births; and *agamyā*, *karma* accumulating afresh through our current actions. This is usually explained on the analogy of rice that is being cultivated for food. The paddy harvested formerly and stored in the granary is *sanchita*, that which we have taken out, dehused into rice, cooked and have served on the plate for eating now is *prarabdha*, and lastly, the paddy that is now maturing in the field for a future harvest is *agamyā*. Just as these categories are different, so also the process of their removal also is different.

*Maya* is the third of the bonds. The concept of this *maya* is totally different from the *maya* of Vedanta. There *maya* is non-existent, mere illusion. But in Siddhanta, it is ever existing; it is the *material* cause, the cause from which all things are evolved and into which all things are dissolved; It is the first cause for creation. From the subtle principle of *maya*, all matter is created; God's *sakti* is the *instrumental* cause and God is the *efficient* cause. The objects and tools of experience are created and provided for the souls from *maya*. The soul is bound by *anava* in the primordial stage; its consciousness does not function. *Maya* constitutes the body and the tools for the soul, helping its consciousness to function. *Maya* in Siddhanta helps the soul to experience its *karma* by providing it with the body and other tools and areas for experience. It remains as the subtle principle, producing gross material for the experience of the soul. The *maya* of Vedanta on the other hand is mere illusion which obscures the consciousness of the soul and, on its removal, the soul sees *itself* as the Brahman.

Religions vastly vary in defining the three causes—the material, the instrumental and the efficient causes.

*Maya* in Siddhanta is referred to in three stages and their definition will help to comprehend the 36 principles or *tattvas* of the system. The lower level of *maya* is the *mula prakriti* or the *prakriti maya*, which is the last of the seven reals of the *vidya tattvas*. It gives rise to the twenty four *atma tattvas*—the five elements, the five perceptions smell, taste, light, touch and sound, the five *karmendriyas* (tools of action), the five *jnanendriyas* (tools of perception) and the four *antah-karnas*. This *maya* is responsible for the five afflictions of the soul—ignorance (*avidya*), conceit, covetousness, desire and anger. The three *gunas* are contained in this *maya* in an unmanifested condition.

Souls in Saiva Siddhanta are classified into three categories, according to the stage of their spiritual evolution. The lowest order is *sakala*—those which are bound by the three bonds *anava*, *karma* and *maya*. These exist in the *prattalriti maya*. We ordinary human beings, are all *sakalas*.

The next is *asuddha maya* which gives rise to the seven *Vidya tattvas*—*kaala* (time), *niyati* (order and sequence of *karma*) *kalai* (action), *vidya* (intelligence), *raga* (desire) the *purusha* (perception of the senses) and *maya* (doubt and ignorance). *Purusha* here is not an insentient *tattva*, but only the state of the soul in combination with the earlier five *vidya tattvas* ready for experiencing. Souls in this area are considered to have the two bonds only, *anava* and *karma* and are called *pralayakalas*.

*Suddha maya* is the region of Siva's five fold functions. It is eternal and all-pervasive and does not obscure intelligence. The five *Suddha tattvas*, *suddha vidya* (more intelligence than action), *isvaram* (more action than intelligence), *sadasivam* (both equally), *Sakti* (action alone) and *Sivam* (intelligence alone). This is the region of the souls with the one bond, *anava*; these souls are called *vijnanakalas*.

All human beings are in the grip of the three bonds and are *sakalas*; we are not concerned here about the two other classes of souls, as they are beyond our normal comprehension,

### *The Dance of Nataraja*

Any exposition of the Saiva siddhanta philosophy will not be valid or complete without an explanation of Nataraja. Nataraja is not a mere murti or form of Siva or deity; Nataraja is a concept in philosophy.

The Cosmic Dance of Siva as Nataraja has the supreme purpose of redeeming the souls from their state of bondage and of giving them deliverance and bestowing on them eternal bliss or non-dual union with Himself. This purpose is achieved by His Dance in the Nataraja form which is just a symbolic conception of His five fold function. This has been explained along with Saiva worship (vide pages 46 -7).

The soul and the subtle cause of matter are, like the Absolute, eternal and all-pervasive. This is a basic concept of Siddhanta; it is called the *sat - karya vada*; i.e. what exists

cannot perish and what is not cannot be created. Just as the potter makes pots from the earth with the help of his wheel, so also God the efficient cause creates the universe from *maya* the material cause, with the help of His *Chit Sakti*, the instrumental cause. This is creation and it is going on for ever. All objects are born, they live or stay for some period, and then cease to exist. The universe affords them a place for existence. In the pre-cosmic stage, the souls were all bound up with their *karma*, with their consciousness obscured by *anava*. Siva created the universe and the objects therein for the enjoyment of the souls and gave them their births and the senses for perception, in order that their *karma* might be reduced to nought through experiencing, that their *anava* might be removed, and that they might attain bliss. This is creation, and the riddance of the three bonds is the aim of creation.

The second function is *sthiti* or preservation. The significance is to preserve the bodies and other objects of experience till the time allotted, in order to aid the soul to enjoy the fruits of its *karma*. The soul in the embodied state in the course of its enjoyment of life naturally does further *karma* which goes on giving further and further births. While swinging in this cycle of births and deaths, the consciousness of the soul is awakened to the extent of its *karma*, impelling it forward on the spiritual path. The providing of the body and objects is preservation.

The next is dissolution (*samhara*), not destruction. The spirit and matter co-exist with God. Dissolution is the giving of enforced rest. This means that the souls which get wearied through endless births and deaths, but yet do not have their own consciousness fully woken up to the necessity of seeking deliverance are given a period of rest and kept in the subtle state for some time; then again the objects of their experience are re-created out of *maya* and they are allowed further births for again going through the balance of *karma* and for seeking deliverance.

Obscuration, *tirobhava*, helps the soul to experience the fruits of its *karma* and thus in course of time to prepare the ground for completely reducing the balance of *karma* to nought; this is essential for the maturity of the *anava mala* and its ripeness for removal.

The last function is bestowal of Grace, *anugraha*. When *karma* is reduced to nought and *anava* is removed, Grace settles on the soul. Deliverance or oneness with Siva results.

This fivefold function goes on in the presence of Siva, in various grades of competence in the souls. The Dance of Siva as Nataraja symbolises this function.

#### *Deliverance (mukti)*

A few words on the *mukti* state may be necessary. According to the *sat karya vada* of Saiva Siddhanta, the three entities are eternal; *pati*, *pasu* and *pasam* exist in the pre-cosmic stage and so they do exist even after final liberation. This latter position does not appear to be easily understandable. On liberation the soul does not merge with Siva and become absolutely one, though we speak of oneness; but it is said to be in a non-dual union. It is true that it has been liberated from bonds, from births and deaths. The state of union is said to be *advaita*, non-dual; not *ekam* or one, but just not-two. The Siddhantin always calls this a non-dual union; not two, of course, but also not one. If it is one, then the souls cannot be distinct and eternal. The released soul is experiencing infinite bliss without in any way taking part in the fivefold functions of Siva. Siva is the giver and the soul the receiver, of bliss.

In such a state, the *anava mala* no longer binds the released soul. Like a fried seed which has lost its power of germination, *anava* exists but no longer obscures the consciousness of the released soul in the *mukti* state; it continues of course to cause obscuration to the bound souls. At the time of total dissolution it is involuted in *maya*, but on creation again, it attaches itself to the unliberated souls and continues its usual function. Hence, *anava mala* is said to exist even in the *mukti* state and so it is also said to be one eternal entity.



The means for liberation have also to be understood. The analogy of the prince in the hunters' camp is used to illustrate the procedure of release. The king's son by some cause had got separated from his natural habitat and got entangled amongst hunters who brought him up as a hunter. He considers himself to be just a hunter. Years pass by. One day the king sees him, recognizes him as his own son, separates him from the hunter's group, takes him to the palace and makes him a prince.<sup>61</sup> In like manner, the *atma* does not know its real nature nor does it know its master; it is in the meshes of the five senses which are like the hunters. The master appears before him in due time in the form of a guru, makes him perceive that he is not the senses and so on, teaches him their true nature, removes his ignorance, gives him supreme consciousness, and lifts him up to His holy feet. Siva who goes to him as a *guru* purifies him by His *diksha*. Of the three classes of karma, *sanchita* is burnt away by His *diksha*; *prarabha* is experienced so long as the soul is in the embodied state, and ceases with the body; when he goes about his life in the firm conviction that all his action is Siva's, no *agamiya karma* accrues. Thus all *karma* is reduced to nought. The instruction by the *guru* helps to remove *anava mala*. Grace settles on the soul, which attains final bliss.

The four paths *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana* had been separately dealt with.<sup>62</sup> While proceeding on the spiritual path, the company of similar seekers and men of God is essential. Whatever charity is done is best done to *Siva jnanis* and their worship will take the individual to the feet of God. He should unceasingly utter the name of Siva. Siva's emblems - the sacred ash and the *rudraksha beads* are to be worn always. He should also worship the Siva temples. When he worships his *guru* as Siva Himself, He does appear through this *guru* and help him to attain release.

### Grace (Sakti)

The concept of Sakti and Grace is unique in Saiva Siddhanta. The Consciousness-Force of Siva is separately termed His Sakti. Both are one without being two; just as fire

and heat are not separate, Siva and Sakti are not separate. The worldly concept of considering the two as the father and the mother of the world is just a puranic terminology employed for mass understanding, but not valid in a philosophic discussion. Sakti is considered as many, according to the nature of its functions. Sakti's form is just pure consciousness, bestowing Grace on the souls; this is *Parasakti*. In the process of the fivefold functions, it is called *Tirodhana Sakti*, when it seeks to remove the bonds from the souls. The will of Siva to redeem them and direct them to final release is *Icha Sakti*. The will of Siva calculated to reduce the bonds to nought is *Jnana Sakti*. The same Force when it creates the worldly and other objects of experience for the souls is called *Kriya Sakti*. These are just instruments to Siva for the five fold functions.

Grace is the Supreme Mercy of Siva to redeem the souls. This causes dissolution and then creation. The fish living in the ocean of milk does not drink the milk for its food but feeds on the smaller fish and the insects therein.<sup>68</sup> In the same way, the souls do not realise the all-pervasive Siva, but run after the transient worldly pleasures. The provision of bodies and the objects for sense perception is to redeem the souls from such hankering. Wordly pleasures can only serve as the dung and soda ash which the washerman uses to wash dirty linen. In life, these are pleasures and pain. Both are God's dispensations calculated to nullify *karma*. Painful experiences are the surgical operations of the capable surgeon, intended ultimately to cure the patient of his ailment. In another sense we may say that this is like the caning by a parent when the child misbehaves; even caning is born out of the love of the parent.<sup>64</sup> So also the hard travails and sufferings in life are God's way of helping the soul to overcome its accumulated *karma*.

But yet, the ways of God's mercy are imponderable and immeasurable. We may not be able to understand His ways.<sup>66</sup> All that we can do is to surrender ourselves to Him absolutely, attune ourselves and our ways of living to His ways, and await His Grace. Striving and Grace cannot be equated. But striving has to go on. God in His infinite Mercy bestows His Grace when it pleases Him; but we should be prepared and fit, when it arrives.

## NOTES and REFERENCES

1. *Purananuru* verse 192 by Kaniyan Pankunran :

யாதும் ஊரே யாவரும் கேளிர்,  
தீதும் நன்றும் பிறர்தர வாரா,  
நோதலும் தணிதலும் அவற்றோர் அன்ன.

2. *Tirumantram* by Tiru Mular verse 2104 :

ஒன்றே குலமும்; ஒருவனே தேவனும்;  
நன்றே நினைமின்; நமனில்லை, நாணமே  
சென்றே புகும்கதி இல்லை; நும் சித்தத்து  
நின்றே நிலைபெற நீர் நினைந்து உய்ம்மினே.

3. *Devaram, Tiru Tondattohai* by Saint Sundaramurti: verse 10:

அப்பாலும் அடிச்சார்ந்தார் எல்லார்க்கும் அடியேன்  
ஆருளில் ஆரூரன் அம்மானுக் காளே.

4. *Indian Philosophy* volume 2, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan  
pages 722-731.

5. *A History of Indian Philosophy* by S. N. Das Gupta  
volume V.

6. *Santam Sivam advaitam chaturtham sa manyante sa atma  
sa vijneyaha : Mandukyopanishad. Namas Sivaya cha Siva-  
taraya cha - Krishna yajur Veda Khanda 4, prapataka 5,  
anuvaka 7, mantra 11.*

7. *Sivagati* - Vide verses 355, 2075, 2626 of *Culamani*; verses  
140, 159, 172, 299 in *Perumtohai*. Even the place of final  
salvation is named Sivapuram - verse 164 in *Perumtohai*.

8. *Tirumantram* verse 2193 :

பசுக்கள் பலவண்ணம் பால்ஒரு வண்ணம்,  
பசுக்களை மேய்க்கின்ற ஆயன் ஒரு வண்ணம்,  
பசுக்களை மேய்க்கின்ற ஆயன்கோல் போடிற்  
பசுக்கள் தலைவனைப் பற்றி விடாவே.

9. *Devaram* by St. Appar, *Tirunerisai* on Tirupperu velur Book 4.60.9 :

விரிவிலா அறிவினார்கள் வேறொரு சமயம் செய்தே  
எரிவினாற் சொன்னா ரேனும் எம்பிராற்கு ஏற்றதாகும்,  
பரிவினாற் பெரியோர் ஏத்தும் பெருவேளூர் பற்றி னானை  
மருவிநான் வாழ்த்தி உய்யும் வகையது நினைக்கின்றேனே.

10. St. Arulnandi sivacharya, *Sivajnana siddhi, supakkam* verse 295 :

ஓது சமயங்கள், பொருள் உணரு நூல்கள்,  
ஒன்றோடொன் றெவ்வாமல் உளபலவும், அவற்றுள்  
யாது சமயம், பொருள், நூல், யாதிங்கு என்னில்,  
இதுவாகும், அதுஅல்லது எனும் பிணக்கது இன்றி,  
நீதியினால் இவையெல்லாம் ஓரிடத்தே காண  
நின்றதுயா தொருசமயம் அதுசமயம், பொருள்  
நூல்;  
ஆதலினால் இவையெல்லாம் அருமறைஆ கமத்தே  
அடங்கியிடும்; அவையிரண்டும் அரனடிக்கீழ்  
அடங்கும்.

11. St. Tiru Mangai alvar, *Periya Tirumoli* 6.6. Tiru Naraiyur verse.8 :

முருக்கிலங்கு கனித்துவரவாய்ப் பின்னை கேள்வன்  
மன்னெல்லாம் முன்னவியச் சென்று வென்றிச்  
செருக்களத்துத் திறழியச் செற்ற வேந்தன்  
சிரந்துணித்தான் திருவடிநும் சென்னி வைப்பீர்,  
இருக்கிலங்கு திருமொழிவாய் எண்தோள் ஈசற்கு  
எழில்மாடம் எழுபது செய்து உலகம் ஆண்ட  
திருக்குலத்து வளச் சோழன் சேர்ந்த கோயில்  
திருநறையூர் மணிமாடம் சேர்மின்களே.

12. *Silappadhikaram* edited by Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyar, 1927, *padikam* lines 30-41 :

மதுரை மூதூர்க்  
கொன்றையம் சடைமுடி மன்றப் பொதியிலில்  
வெள்ளியம் பலத்து நள்ளிருட் கிடந்தேன்.

The commentator Adiyarkkunallar explains that we have here a mention of a Silver Hall, because there was already a Golden Hall. The two Dancing Halls of Lord Nataraja had been famous in literary tradition, the Golden Hall being the more ancient of the two.

13. *Tirukkural* verse 260:

கொல்லான் புலாலை மறுத்தானைக் கைகூப்பி  
எல்லா உலகும் தொழும்.

It is well known that even the meat eaters here abjure meat on sacred days as a religious duty. This will also indicate the superiority of the vegetarian over the meat eater in popular esteem.

14. *Tirukkural* verse 251 :

தன்னூன் பெருக்கற்குத் தான்பிறிது ஊன்உண்பான்  
எங்ஙனம் ஆளும் அருள்?

15. *St. Tiru Mular Tiru mantram* verse 270:

அன்பு சிவம் இரண்டு என்பர் அறிவிலார்;  
அன்பே சிவமாவது ஆரும் அறிகிலார்;  
அன்பே சிவமாவது ஆரும் அறிந்தபின்,  
அன்பே சிவமாய் அமர்ந்திருந் தாரே.

16. Sendanar's *Tirup-Pallandu* is the last poem (29) in the Ninth Book of the Saiva Canon. Vide also verse 26 of poem 32 in the Eleventh *Tirumurai* :

பூந்தண் பொழிக்குழ் புலியூர்ப் பொலிசெம்பொன் அம்பலத்து  
வேந்தன் தனக்கன்றி ஆட்செய்வ தென்னே, விரிதுணிமேல்  
ஆந்தண் பழைய அவிழை அன் பாகிய பண்டைப்பறைச்  
சேந்தன் கொடுக்க அதுவும் திருஅமிர் தாகியதே.

17. Vide *Guruparampara -prabhavam, Arayirappadi* by Pin-balahiya Jiyar 1878 edition.18. *St. Tiru Mular, Tiru mantram* verse 252 :

யாவர்க்கு மாம்இறை வற்கொரு பச்சிலை;  
யாவர்க்கு மாம்பசு வுக்கொரு வாயுறை;  
யாவர்க்கு மாம்உண்ணும் போதொரு கைப்பிடி;  
யாவர்க்கு மாம்பிறர்க் கின்னுரை தானே,

19. This is best exemplified in the lives of the women saints Karaikkal ammai and Mangaiyarkkarasi (besides Tilakavati) in Saivism (and Andal in Vaishnavism).
20. Vide *Periyapuranam*, Karaikkal Ammaiyan verse 58 :

‘வருமிவன்நம்மைப்பேணும்அம்மைகாண், உமையே,மற்று இப் பெருமைசேர் வடிவம் வேண்டிப் பெற்றனை’ என்று,பின்னை அருகுவந் தணைய நோக்கி, ‘அம்மையே’ என்னும் செம்மை ஒரு மொழி உலகமெல்லாம் உப்யவே அருளிச் செய்தார்.

21. These four are generally known as the four purusharthas-*dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha* in Sanskrit, and *aram*, *porul*, *inbam* and *vidu* in Tamil - virtue, wealth, pleasure and liberation. St. Tiriujnana sambandar says that Siva taught the four to the sages :

அறம் பொருள் இன்பம் வீடு மொழிந்த வாயான்  
முக்கண் ஆதி மேயது முதுகுன்றே—

Tirumurai. 1.53.6; vide note 41. This concept that the four *purusharthas* are the goal of all life is common to all religions. Vide the Buddhist grammarian (11th century) Buddha mitranar in his *Virasoliyam* 181 : “செய்யுளின் பயன் - அறம் பொருள் இன்பமொடு வீடு என அறி;” also the Jain grammarian (13th century) Bhavanandi Munivar in his *Nannul* 12 : “அறம் பொருள் இன்பம் வீடு அடைதல் நூற் பயனே.” This line extracted in the prefatory portion of *Nannul* is believed to be taken from works earlier by several centuries.

22. From the period of *Tirumantram* by Tirumular in the fifth century A. D.
23. Vide *Sivaprakasam* by Umapati Sivacharya (the fourth Santana acharya) verse 7 : பிறிவரும் அத்துவிதமாகும், சிறப்பினதாய் வேதாந்தத் தெளிவாம் சைவசித்தாந்தத் திறன் இங்குத் தெரிக்க லுற்றும்; verse 9) : “வேதத் தலை தரு பொருளாய் இன்பாய்த் தாவில் சற்காரியத்தாய்.”

Here *vedanta* and *vedat-talai* mean the Upanishads.

24. Vide *Saiva Bhushanam* of Panchakshara Yogi :

25. Anonymous verse in praise of *Siva Jnanabodham* :

வேதம் பசு; அதன் பால் மெய் யாகமம்; நால்வர்  
ஓதும் தமிழ் அதனின் உள்ளுறு நெய்; —போதமிகு  
நெய்யின் உறுசுவையாம் நீள்வெண்ணெய்மெய்கண்டான்  
செய்த தமிழ் நூலின் திறம்.

26. The concept of *Dakshinamurti* explained here is beautifully given in a verse in his praise in the *Tiru Anaikka-puranam* :

மும் மலம் வேறுபட் டொழிய மொய்த்துயிர்  
அம்மலர்த் தாள்நிழல் அடங்கும் உண்மையைக்  
கைம்மலர்க் காட்சியில் கதுவ நல்கிய  
செம்மலை அவதுஉளம் சிந்தி யாதரோ.

27. Vide *Periya puranam*, *Tirujnana sambandhar puranam* verse 429 :

ஆதிமாமறை விதியினால் ஆறுகுழ் வேணி  
நாதனரை முன் னாகவே புரியும் நல் வேள்வி  
தீது நீங்க, நீர் செய்யவும் திருக்கழு மலத்து  
வேத வேதியர் அனைவரும் செய்யவும் மிகுமால்.

28. Saint *Tiru Jnana sambandhar* lived in the days of the *Pandiya* king *Arikesari Nedumara* (630-668 A. D.) Saint *Appar* lived in the days of the *Pallava* king *Mahendra Varma* (590-630) and was also a senior contemporary of *St. Tiru Jnana sambandhar*. Saint *Sundara* lived in the days of the *Pallava* king *Rajasimha* (*Narasimha* II, 686-70:). *St. Manikkavacakar* lived in the days of the *Pandiya* king *Varaguna* II (862-880).

29. Vide pages 29-30 *supra*.

30. *St. Sundarar*, *Tiru Tondattotthai* 10 : முப்போதும் திருமேனி  
தீண்டுவார்க்கு அடியேன்.

31. *St. Meykandar*, *Siva Jnanabodham*, *sutra* 12 : section 2, 3 :  
இனிச் சிவபத்தர்களோடு இணங்குக என்றது இனிப் பத்தரது

திருவேடத்தையும் சிவாலயத்தையும் பரமேசுவரனெனக் கருதி வழிபடுக என்றது.

32. Proverb : கோயில் இல்லா ஊரில் குடியிருக்க வேண்டாம்;

33. Vide *Sivajnana siddhiyar, supakkam* 325 :

திருக்கோயி லுள்ளிருக்கும் திருமேனி தன்னைச்  
சிவனெனவே கண்டவர்க்குச் சிவனுறைவன் அங்கே;  
உருக்கோலி மந்திரத்தா லேநினையும் அவர்க்கும்  
உளனெங்கும் இலன்இங்கும் உளனென் பார்க்கும்  
இருப்பாய வடிவாகி இந்தனத்தின் எரிபோல்  
மந்திரத்தின்: வந்துதிப்பன், இருஞ்சரபிக் கெங்கும்  
உருக்காண வொண்ணாத பால்முலைப்பால் விம்மி  
ஒழுக்குவதுபோல் வெளிப்பட்ட டருளுவன் அன்பர்க்கே.

34. *Unmai Vilakkam of Manavasakam kadandar* (a siddhanta sastra) verse 35 :

தோற்றம் துடியதனில், தோயும் திதி அமைப்பில்,  
சாற்றியிடும் அங்கியிலே சங்காரம், — ஊற்றமா  
ஊன்று மலர்ப்பதத்தே உற்றதிரோ தம்; முத்தி  
நான்ற மலர்ப்பதத்தே நாடு.

35. Ibid, verse 13 :

மாயை தனைஉதறி வல் வினையைச் சுட்டு, மலம்  
சாய அழுக்கி, அருள் தான்எடுத்து; — நேயத்தால்  
ஆனந்த வாரிதியில் ஆன்மாவைத் தான்அழுத்தல்  
தான் எந்தை யார்பரதம் தான்.

36. For example, the grass (*darbha grass*) is the temple tree in Tiru Nallaru; the cactus in Tiruk-Kallil and some other places; the thorny *carissa* (*kala*) in Kari valam vanda nallur.

37. Saint Appar, Book 6.98, poem beginning நாம் ஆர்க்கும் குடியல்லோம், 5th verse :

சென்று நாம் சிறு தெய்வம் சேர்வோம் அல்லோம்  
சிவபெருமான் திருவடியே கேரப் பெற்றோம்.

Saint Appar Book 5.100, verse 2 :

செத்துச் செத்துப் பிறப்பதே தேவென்று  
பத்திசெய் மனப் பாறை கட்டு ஏறுமோ—



அத்தன் என்றிரி யோடு பிரமனும்  
துத்தியம் செய நின்றநற் சோதியே.

Saint Manikkavacakar, *Tiruvacakam* 10.5 :

அத்தேவர் தேவர் அவர்தேவர் என்றிங்ஙன்  
பொய்த்தேவு பேசிப் புலம்புகின்ற பூதலத்தே  
பத்தேதும் இல்லாதென் பற்றறநான் பற்றிநின்ற  
மெய்த்தேவர் தேவுக்கே சென்றாதாய் கோத்தும்பி.

38. Saint Tiru Jnanasambandhar *Devaram* Book 2 poem 47, the whole poem of 11 verses.

39. Every *sthala purana* celebrates the *tirtta*, the temple tank. The puranas on Kumbakonam and Mayuram celebrate the Mahamagham bath festival and the Tula Kaveri bath festival respectively. The large *Magha purana* celebrates the bath in the river on the Masi magham day. The Tamil *Brahma Vaivartta purana* speaks of the glory of the Kaveri.

40. Vide note 1.

41. Vide Tiru Jnanasambandar *Devaram* Book 1, 53.6 :

சுழிந்த கங்கைதோய்ந்த திங்கள் தொல்லரா நல்லிதழி  
சுழிந்த சென்னிச் சைவவேடந் தான்நினைத் தைம்புலனும்  
அழிந்த சிந்தை அந்தணுளர்க்கு அறம்பொருள் இன்பம்வீடு  
மொழிந்த வாயான் முக்கணதி மேயது முதுகுன்றே.

Here the saint says that Siva Himself is teaching the four *Purusharthas* to the highly enlightened sages; vide also note 21.

42. Vide note 2. Also compare St. Manikkavacakar *Tiruvacakam* poem 4 lines 164-165 :

தென்னு டுடைய சிவனே போற்றி  
எந்நாட் டவர்க்கும் இறைவா போற்றி.

43. St. Appar *Devaram* Book 6.95.10 :

அங்கமெலாம் குறைந்தழகு தொழுநோயராய்  
ஆவுரித்துத் தின்றுழலும் புலையரேனும்  
கங்கைவார் சடைக்கரந்தார்க்கு அன்பராகில்  
அவர்கண்டீர் நாம் வணங்கும் கடவுளாரே.

44. Vide Taittiriya Upanishad : *annam bahu kurvita;...tasmat-yaya cha kaya cha vidhaya bahvannam prapnuyat.* (Grow more food; so by some means or other may you produce more food.) Also *athithi devobhava* (May your guest be your god).

45. Vide note 18.:

46. Sekkilar, *Periya Puranam* verse 143 :

கேடும் ஆக்கமும் கெட்ட திருவினார்  
ஓடும் செம்பொனும் ஒக்கவே நோக்குவார்  
கூடும் அன்பினில் சும்பிடலே அன்றி  
வீடும் வேண்டா விறலின் விளங்குவார்.

47. The story of Abu ben Adam is briefly as follows. He was a leader of Jews. In a dream he saw an angel drawing up a list of the men of God. Not finding his name in the list he prayed to the angel to put him down at least as one who loved his fellow men, and lo! his name topped the list of the men of God.

48. \*St.\*Tiru Jnanasambandar has sung two decads on the panchakshara (Devaram Book 38 padikam 22 and 49) and one on the sacred ash (Book 2 padikam 66). Saints Appar and Sundarar have each sung one decad on the panchakshara (Book 4 padikam 11 and Book 7 padikam 48)

48A. Vide the agama injunction :

Dig bhasma rahitam palam,  
Dig grama asivalayam,  
Dig anisarchanam janma,  
Dig vidyam asivasrayam,

Burn the forehead with out the sacred ash; burn the village without a Siva temple; scorch the birth that does not do Siva puja; and scorch the learning that is not dedicated to Siva-Sakalagama sara samgrahai. நீறில்லா நெற்றி பாழ் - Mudurai.

49. Rudra-aksha = the eye of Rudra; the seed of the tree *eloeocarpus ganitrus*,

50. *Unmai Vilakkam*, one of the 14 Siddhanta sastras, dwells at length on many of the significances of the Panchakshara mantra.

51. *Tirumantram* verse 1581 :

குருவே சிவமெனக் கூறினன் நந்தி;  
குருவே சிவமென் பதுகுறித்து ஓரார்;  
குருவே சிவனுமாய்க் கோனுமாய் நிற்கும்;  
குருவே உரையுணர் வற்றதோர் கோவே.

52. *Sivajnanabodham* 12th sutra :

செம்மலர் நோன்றான் சேரல் ஓட்டா  
அம்மலங் கழீஇ அன்பரொடு மரீஇ  
மாலற நேயம் மலிந்தவர் வேடமும்  
ஆலயந் தானும் அரனெனத் தொழுமே.

53. *Tolkappiyam Poruladhikaram* Sutra 5 :

மாயோன் மேய காடுறை யுலகமும்  
சேயோன் மேய மைவரை யுலகமும்  
வேந்தன் மேய தீம்புனல் உலகமும்  
வருணன் மேய பெருமணல் உலகமும்.

54. *Tirumantram* verse 1421 :

கற்பன கற்றுக் கலைமன்னு மெய்யோகம்  
முற்பத ஞானம் முறைமுறை நண்ணியே  
சொற்பத மேவித் துரிசற்று மேலான  
தற்பரங் கண்டுளோர் சைவசித் தாந்தரே.

55. The Kailasanatha temple inscription of Rajasimha Pallava (665-705 A.D.) mentions this fact — vidita bahunayah Saiva Siddhanta marge Sriman atyanta kamah kshata sakala malah durdarah Pallavanam.

56. *St. Umapati, Sivaprakasam* verse 7 :

புறச்சமயத் தவர்க்கிளுநாய் அகச்சமயத் தொளியாய்ப்  
புகல் அளவைக் களவாகிப் பொற்பணிபோல் அபேதப்  
பிறப்பினதாய் இருள்வெளிபோல் பேதமும் சொற்பொருள்  
பேதாபேதமும் இன்றிப் பெருநூல் சொன்ன [போல்  
அறத்திறனால் விளைவதாய் உடலுயிர்கண் அருக்கன்  
அறிவொளிபோல் பிறிவரும் அத் துவித மாகும்

சிறப்பினதாய் வேதாந்தத் தெளிவாம் சைவ  
சித்தாந்தத் திறன்இங்குத் தெரிக்கலுற்றும்.

57. St. Kumara guruparar, *Pandara mummanikkovai* verse 11 :  
lines 32-45 :

ஓரும் வேதாந்தமென் றுச்சியிற் பழுத்த  
ஆரா இன்ப அருங்கனி பிழிந்து  
சாரங் கொண்ட சைவ சித்தாந்தத்  
தேனமுது அருந்தினர் சிலரே.

Vide also Ibid verse 5 lines 32-35 :

திவ்வியம் பழுத்த சைவ சித்தாந்தத்து  
இறவா நிலைமை பெற்று இன்ப மார்ந்திருக்கும்  
பிறவா நன்னெறி.

58. Vide *Tirukkural* verse 9, Parimelalahar's commentary:  
The eight attributes are : self dependence, immaculateness  
in form, intuitive wisdom, omniscience, inherent freedom  
from bonds, infinite grace, omnipotence and infinite bliss—  
தன்வயத்தனாதல், தூய உடம்பினனாதல், இயற்கையுணர்வின  
னாதல், முற்று முணர் தல், இயல்பாகவே பாசங்களினிங்குதல்,  
பேரருளுடைமை, முடிவிலாற்றலுடைமை, வரம்பிலின்ப  
முடைமை.

59. St. Appar *Devaram* Book 6.96.10.

அப்படியும் அந்நிறமும் அவ்வண்ணமும்  
அவனருளே கண்ணாகக் காணின் அல்லால்  
இப்படியன் இந்நிறத்தன் இவ்வண்ணத்தன்  
இவன்இறைவன் என்றெழுதிக் காட்டொணாதே.

60. St. Umapati, *Tiru-Arutpayan* verse 23 :

ஒரு பொருளுங் காட்டாது இருள்; உருவங் காட்டும்;  
இரு பொருளுங் காட்டாது இது.

61. St. Arulnandi, *Sivajana siddhiyar supakkam* verse 253 :

மன்னவன்தன் மகன்வேடர் இடத்தே தங்கி  
வளர்ந்தவனை அறியாது மயங்கி நிற்ப,  
பின்னவனும் என்மகன்நீ என்றவரிற் பிரித்துப்  
பெருமையொடும் தானாக்கிப் பேணுமாபோல்,  
துன்னியனும் புலவேடர் சுழலிற் பட்டுத்  
துணைவனையும் அறியாது துயருறும்தொல் லுயிரை

மன்னும்அருட் குருவாகி வந்தவரின் நீக்கி  
மலமகற்றித் தானாக்கி மலரடிக்கீழ் வைப்பன்.

62. These four paths are respectively known also as the *dasa marga*, the *satputra marga*, the *saha marga* and the *san-marga*; vide page 39.

63. St. Umapati, *Tiru Arutpayan* verse 34 :

பாலாழி மீன் ஆளும் பான்மைத்து அருள் உயிர்கள்  
மால்ஆழி ஆளும் மறித்து.

64. St. Arulnandi, *Sivajnana siddhiyar supakkam* verse 106 :

தந்தைதாய் பெற்ற தத்தம் புதல்வர்கள் தம்சொ லாற்றின்  
வந்திடாவிடின், உறுக்கி வளாரினால் அடித்துத் தீய  
பந்தமும் இடுவர், எல்லாம் பார்த்திடின் அருளே யாகும் :  
இந்த நீர் முறைமை யன்றோ இறைவனார் முனிவும் என்றும்.

65. St. Tiru Jnanasambandhar *Devaram* Book 3, 54, 4, 5:

ஆட்பா லவர்க்கருளும் வண்ணமும் ஆதிமாண்பும்  
கேட்பான் புகில் அளவில்லை, கிளக்க வேண்டா;  
கோட்பா லனவும் வினையும் குறுகாமை எந்தை  
தாட்பால் வணங்கித் தலை நின்றிவை கேட்க தக்கார்.

ஏதுக்க ளாலும் எடுத்த மொழி யாலும் மிக்குச்  
சோதிக்க வேண்டா, சுடர்விட்டுளன் எங்கள்சோதி;  
மாதுக்கம் நீங்கலுறுவீர், மனம்பற்றி வாழ்மின்,  
சாதுக்கள் மிக்கீர், இறையேவந்து சார்மின்களே.

## GLOSSARY

Abhiṣeka	Bathing the image of god with water etc.
āchārya	spiritual preceptor
ādhāra	mystic nerve centre
ādi-Saiva	sivacharya
Ādi-Sakti	primal Energy of Siva
advaita	non-duality
āgama	Saiva scripture like the Veda
āgāmya	karma; results of present action to be experienced in the future
ahimsa	non-violence
ālvār	a Vaishnava saint
ammai	mother
Anādi Saiva	Siva who is beginningless.
ānanda	bliss
āṇava	smallness; the ego; one of the three bonds in Saivism; the first impurity of the soul
antah-karaṇa	the inner seat of thought, feeling and volition.
anugraha	grace of God
anuṣṭhāna	daily religious rites of the initiated persons
aṣam	dharma, righteousness, virtue
arcana	floral offering accompanied by mantras
artha	wealth, prosperity
arūpa	the formless
āsana	seat, posture
aṣṭāṅga yōga	yoga consisting of the eight steps
āśrama	stage of life
ātma	soul
ātmārtha pūja	worship of a personal god in the home
āvāhana	invocation

avatāra	incarnation of god
avidyā	nescience
āvūḍaiyār	the circular piece on which the bana of the Siva image is mounted.
Bāṇa	the pillar-like cylinder part of the Sivalinga
bhakta	devotee, worshipper
bhakti	devotion
bhāṣya	commentary on a religious treatise
bhāvana	representation, contemplation
brahma-carya	the stage of a student in life
brahma randra	the aperture on the crown of the head through which the liberated soul is said to escape.
Carya	observance or discipline; the first of the four pathways to God in Saivism
cit	consciousness
cit sabhā	the Dancing hall of Jnana in Chidambaram for Natārāja.
Darsan	seeing, vision of God
dāsa mārṅa	the pathway to God through service as servant
Dēvāram	the first seven books of the Saiva canon
dēvatā	deity
dharma	righteousness, duty, virtue
dhūpa	offering of incense
dhyāna	meditation
dikṣa	initiation by a spiritual master.
dvaita	dualism
Ēkam	one
Gaṇeśa	Vignesvara; also called Vinayaka, the elephant headed son of Siva in the puranas.
gāyatri	a sacred mantra used in daily japa and prayer
gōpura	the tall tower over the gateway to a temple.

grahastha	the house holder : the second stage in life.
guṇa	quality
guru	spiritual preceptor.
Harijan	a member of the lowest class.
Hinduism	a name given later to the vaidika religions of India
Ichhā śakti	Siva's Energy of will
inbam	pleasure
indriya	organ of sense
itihāsa	epic
Jainism	the religion that follows Mahavira
jangama	a Siva bhakta mendicant
japa	repeating a mantra in prayer.
jiva	the individual soul
jñāna	divine knowledge
Jñāna śakti	Siva's Energy or Knowledge
jñāna kāṇḍa	Vedic sections dealing with knowledge
jñāna mārga	pathway to god through knowledge.
jñānēndriyas	organs of knowledge
jñāni	an enlightened soul
Kailas	the legendary abode of Siva, a peak on the Himalayas.
kalai	steps in praasaada yoga; also one of the seven vidya tattvas.
kālam	the principle of time
kalasa	pot, small potlike dome, cupola
kāma	pleasure, desire
kannikā dānam	gift of the bride in marriage to the bridegroom.
kāppu	protection
karma	action
karma kāṇḍa	vedic sections dealing with rituals
karmēndriyas	organs of action
kriyā	action; religious rites, ritualistic worship.
kriyā śakti	Siva's Energy which functions by providing objects for the souls' experience



kōlam	floral decoration done with rice flour on the floor of the house
kṣatriya	the warrior caste in the four varna concept.
kuṇḍalini	mysterious nerve power in man.
Lakṣmi	Goddess of prosperity, consort of Vishnu.
linga	the symbol of Siva in the temple, which is a formless form
lila	sport
Mala	impurity; anava.
māhēśvara pūja	worship of the devotees of Mahesvara (Siva)
mantra	mystic syllable, sacred formula.
mārga	path
māri	tutelary deity wrongly considered to be a form of Sakti, worshipp- ed by people in the lower levels of society.
māya	illusion in vedānta; the principle of matter in Saiva Siddhānta.
mōkṣa	liberation
mudra	posture of the hand and fingers used in Siva puja and in dance.
mukti	liberation, salvation
mūrti	a form of God, image
Naivēdyam	food offering to God.
nāyanār	canonised devotee of Siva (plural - nayanmar).
nirguṇa	without attributes
niṣkāma karma	action without interest in the results
niyati	a tattva, a principle of destiny
Pāda	part, path
paddhati	manūal of Saiva rituals
pañca bhūtas	the five elements - earth, water, air, fire and ether
pañcākṣara	the five mystic syllables of Siva - na ma si va ya.
pañca kritya	the fivefold functions of Siva -

	creation, preservation, dissolution, obscuration and grace.
paṇḍita	scholar
parama	supreme
parārtha pūja	the congregational worship in the temple.
parā śakti	the supreme energy of Siva
pāśa	bond
paśu	the bound soul
pati	the Lord Siva
Periya purāṇam	the metrical biography of the Saiva Saints
pīṭha	the base of the Sivalinga
poruḷ	wealth
prakṛiti	matter, the creative power in matter.
prakṛiti māya	the creative power in matter which gives rise to the twentyfour,atma tattvas.
praḷayākala	souls who have only the two bonds karma and anava
praṇava	the primordial sound O M.
pravacana	exposition
prārabda karma	results of past actions now experienced in this life.
prāsāda yōga	a type of yoga special to Saiva Siddhanta which consists of sixteen kalas or steps.
pūja	ritualistic worship.
purāṇa	ancient legends
puruṣa	the state of the soul in union only with the tattvas.
rāga	desire
ṛṣi	sage, enlightened seer.
ṛṣabha	bull mount of Siva
rakṣā bandhan	protective string tied round the wrist
rudrākṣa	the seeds of the eleocarpus used by the Saivas as sacred beads
rūpa	form
rūpārūpa	formless form

<b>Sādhaka</b>	learner, spiritual aspirant
<b>sādhana</b>	discipline, the practice which leads to final release.
<b>saguṇa</b>	having attributes
<b>saha mārḡa</b>	the pathway of comradeship to God
<b>sahasrāra</b>	mystic nerve centre beyond the crown, a lotus which a thousand petals
<b>sakala</b>	the class of souls who have all the three bonds.
<b>Saiva</b>	follower of Siva
<b>saivism</b>	the religion which holds Siva as the Supreme Being.
<b>śakti</b>	the consort of Siva, the Energy of Siva personified as the Goddess, the universal mother,
<b>śāktaism</b>	the religion which holds Sakti as the supreme Being
<b>samhāra</b>	dissolution
<b>sañcita karma</b>	results of actions which have accumulated from past births and are waiting to be experienced.
<b>sanmārḡa</b>	the pathway to god, of a disciple
<b>sannyāsa</b>	renunciation of the world.
<b>sāsta</b>	Harihara putra, Aiyandar.
<b>sāstra</b>	scripture
<b>satkāryavāda</b>	the principle that that which is cannot be destroyed and that which is not cannot be created.
<b>sat</b>	existence
<b>sat chit ānanda</b>	the Absolute conceived as True Existence, Intelligence and Bliss.
<b>satputra mārḡa</b>	the pathway to God of the son, or filial devotion.
<b>satyāgraha</b>	holding fast to Truth
<b>siddha</b>	a realised soul

siddhanta	the proven end, the philosophy of Saivism
Siva	the Absolute, the Brahman, the Supreme Being in Saivism
śivagati	state of goodness, Eternal Bliss
Sivachārya	the <i>gurukkal</i> , the priest entitled to perform the puja to Siva in the temple from the remote past.
Sivalinga	the symbol of Siva in the sanctum of the temple.
Smṛiti	code of law, secondary scripture.
śraddha	annual ceremony in honour of the dead on the anniversary day.
sṛṣṭi	creation
Sṛuti	the Veda, revealed scripture
stha alvrikṣa	tree sacred to the temple
sthūla	the gross form
sūtra	aphorism
sūkṣma	the subtle form
svādhyaya	learning
Tāli	symbol of marriage worn round the neck by women
tāṇḍava	dance.
tarppaṇa	libation of water to the manes
tattva	the real principles, 36 in Saiva Siddhanta.
tirō bhava	obscurator
tirumāngalya	tali
Upāgama	secondary agama
upanishad	the philosophical part of the Vedas
upāsana	inner worship of a form.
upāsana kāṇḍa	vedic sections dealing with inner worship and meditation.
Vaidika	follower of the veda.
Vaiṣṇava	follower of Vishnu
vānaprastha	the third state of life, a recluse
varṇa	caste

<b>Vāda</b>	the most sacred books of divine knowledge for the Hindus, revealed scripture
<b>Vēdānta</b>	the school of philosophy based on the upanishads, which are the last part of the vedas.
<b>vibhūti</b>	the sacred ash.
<b>viṣṭu</b>	mukti, liberation.
<b>vidya</b>	right knowledge.
<b>vijñānakala</b>	the class of souls who have only the anavamala binding them.
<b>Viśiṣṭadvaita</b>	the philosophy of Ramanuja, organised monism
<b>vrata</b>	religious observance
<b>Yāl</b>	an ancient musical instrument of Tamilnad, like the vina
<b>yōga</b>	union, thought and mind control.
<b>yōgi</b>	one who strives for realisation through the process of yoga.

## ERRATA

Page	line	for	read
15	12-13	millennia before Christ some where	some millennia before Christ where
16	4	Sanghum	Sangham
19	2	harijan.	harijan <sup>16</sup>
	9	funral	funeral
	12	harijans	harijans <sup>17</sup>
22	19	more something	something
28	2	song sung	sung songs
30	3	dasakaryas	dasaskaryas; <i>Kodikkavi</i> a short poem of four verses;
30	12	Kalirruyyadiyar	Kalirrupadiyar
41	7	Sivaratna	Sataratna
	24	succintey	succinctly
	25	same	some
2	32	previleged	privileged
44	13	menta	mental
46	1	from	form
48	17	an	on
49	23	It this	In this
	27	warship	worship
63	2	transcience	transience
	14	transcient	transient
	28	an man	as man
64	19	wilh	with
65	25	him	him <sup>44</sup>
79	17	tnirguna	nirguna
	20	hing	thing
82	36	prattalriti	prakriti
83	12	flive	five

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