

Sivavakkiyam- Songs of a Spiritual Rebel

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1. Introduction:

“*cittar civatthaik kandavar*” A Siddha- one who has “seen” Siva.

Tirumular, in his Tirumandiram, defines a Siddha as one who has “seen” Siva. If this is so then who is better qualified to talk about Siva, talk as Siva, or utter “Siva statements- Sivavakkiyam” other than a Siddha, Sivavakkiyar! Just like the Maha vākya or supreme statements, *Tat Tvam asi* (that are thou) and *Aham Brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman), Siva vakkiya (Sivavakkiyam in Tamil) is about Siva, the Universal consciousness, the Truth, the Ultimate Reality.

As it is with most of the Siddhas, nothing much is known about Sivavakkiyar or his life history. A verse from Sage Agasthya offers a reason for why this is so. According to him, most of the Siddhas’ works were lost in the floods and only a small collection of them were preserved. Also the Siddha poetry in circulation now is only a distortion of the original poems. Hence, great caution should be exercised while giving historical and biographical information on the Siddhas. Besides, the Siddhas were adepts who could enter another body at will. Thus, it is difficult to say “who is who” let alone give a biographical account of them. Also, one finds that more than one Agatthiyar or Pattinattar are referred to in Tamil literature. This shows that most of the names of the Siddhas are acquired ones.

Many names of the Siddhas are symbolic. According to tradition, each Siddha receives five different names, the first one given by the parents and the remaining four are appellations for the stages in the spiritual progress attained by the person concerned (1). Among these four names is the name given by the guru (the spiritual teacher) at the time he initiates the disciple. The name Agatthiyar means one who has kindled the inner fire in him (*agam*= inner, *ti*= fire) that is, one who has roused the fire of kundalini in him. One who has conquered sex and anger is called Gōraksha. *Matsya* means fish. In Tantra it stands for senses. Matsyendranāth means one who has mastery over the senses (*indriyas*). It represents one who has torn the fetters of bondage. In the same manner one may construe the name Pattinattār as *Patti+nāttar*, that is, a man who can save the souls. *Patti* in Tamil means “the pound (enclosure) for herding the cattle;” it may also mean, “herding of souls”, souls wallowing in the darkness of ignorance. Pattinattār is one who helps and guides these souls by providing a method to get out of “the world and the senses”, to get liberated. The name, Sivavākkiyar is an acquired one too. It was probably given because he used the word Sivāyam in more than sixty places in his work. The above discussion shows that it is very difficult to have an authentic account of the life of the Siddhas. Yet, in some works, one finds certain account of the biographies of the Siddhas.

First of all it is to be noted that in the several lists of the Tamil Siddhas (2) the name Sivavākkīyar is not found since he was considered to be a “rebel” and in his poem there is “a grand remonstrance almost against everything that was held sacred in his time.” Yet he was neither an atheist nor an agnostic. He was “a pious rebel” or a “spiritual rebel” whose poems have an element of unsophisticated bluntness. “There is a forceful clarity, shocking us sometimes by its forthright directness; he is not even afraid of using terms that prigs will call vulgar or obscene” says T.P. Meenakshisundaram in his book History of Tamil Literature (3). Further, there is a charge of vulgarity against him which is based on his constant reference, in a contemptuous tone, to sex and the biological facts of human birth. Sivavākkīyar was fond of using only the common words spoken by ordinary people- unpolished, crude, offensive, indecent and colloquial expressions. Vellaivananar goes to the extent of calling the languages of the Tamil Siddhas (and we may very well adopt it to Sivavākkīyar’s language) as “slum language”- *sérimoli yenppadum péccu vaḷakku* (4). These may be the reasons for his name being omitted in some of the lists of the Tamil Siddhas.

1. About Sivavākkīyar’s life:

Factual information such as dates of birth and death, the real name of the Siddha, the village where he was born, the caste in which he was born and the place where he lived cannot be obtained (5). In this connection mention may be made of M. Arunachalam’s interpretation of the term ‘*pāychalūr*’ in the songs of Sivavākkīyar (6). He construes *pāychalūr* as a place and connects it with Sivavākkīyar’s birth as being born of a Brahmin father and a harijan mother and feels that the mention of *pāychalur* in the songs of Sivavākkīyar may be fully autobiographical and connected with the *Pāychalur* Ballad’ (7). But a careful examination of M. Arunachalam’s thesis will show that it cannot hold water for the following reasons:

It would become a self-contradiction to uphold this view since M. Arunachalam in the article under reference has categorically stated: “nowhere do we find any autobiographical touch in their (Siddhas) songs as we find in the songs of the saints. (The word Siddha in brackets is mine).

The term *pāychalūr* does not refer to any place but to what happens in yoga, i.e., it stands for the gushing kundalini passing through the *ādhārās*. *Pāychalūr* is the gushing place of the kundalini sakti at the *cakras*. In Tamil Siddha literature kundalini is called a horse, *puravi* to indicate the galloping force of the kundalini energy as it passes through the *ādhāras*. This term found in verses 353, 364, 369 of Sivavākkīyam is closely connected only with yoga methodology and does not stand even by the remote possibility for any place on earth. The word *pāychalūr* which occurs in verse 594 of **Tirumantiram** also refers to the yoga method. This is an instance of the intentional language of the Siddhas, which is veritable Serbonian bog into which an army of philosophers have fallen and sunk.

It is said that Sivavākkīyar acquired this name because when he was born he came into this world uttering the name “Śiva” This is the view expressed in **Abithana Cintāmani** (8). There is a view that before he became a Siddha he embraced Buddhism for a few years. Similar views such as that he was closely associated with Islam and Christianity are to be taken only with a pinch of salt. Since there is a close similarity between some stanzas of **Sivavākkīyam** and those of Tirumalisai Alwar’s **Tirucchandaviruttam** it is believed that Sivavākkīyar and Tirumalisai Alwar may be one and the same person. The life of Sivavakkiyar is given in a Tamil work called **Pulavar Purānam** by Murugadāsa Swamigal. Another work called **Pulavar carittira Deepakam** summarizes the traditional accounts about the life of Sivavakkiyar. We may sum up by saying that the biographical history of Sivavakkiyar is often based entirely on word of mouth accounts and therefore is not always readily available (9). If available it is not authentic, for it is mixed only with local mythology and sentimental accounts. About the time when he lived, we may safely say that he lived during the 15th century A.D. As far as we are concerned, what Sivavakkiyar said is more important than what and where he said it, where he was born etc.

Sivavakkiyar does not specifically mention his *guru parampara* or lineage in his work (10). The only hint available is in verse 301 where he says “with the sacred feet of Mūlan who said the three, ten and the three as three I would say the five letters”. If the Mūlan mentioned here refers to Tirumular, the composer of Tirumandiram, he may be indicating to us that he belongs to the *mūlavarga*, the lineage that claims Tirumular as its preceptor. Then again, the Mūlan may very well refer to the Ultimate Reality, the root cause, the *mūlam*, of everything.

2. About Sivavakkiyam:

There is a general confusion about the number and order of verses of Sivavakkiyam. The version published by Aru. Ramanathan in the collection of Siddhar Padalgal (10) consists of 533 songs. The publication from The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing society, Tinnevely (1984) has 526 verses. B. Ratna Nayakar sons (1955) have published a version which contains 1012 verses. The last publication has verses on Siddha medicine and recommendations for curing fever besides several unrelated topics. These verses do not fit with Sivavakkiyar’s original intent and hence seem to be insertions at a later date.

Aru. Ramanathan’s publication was used as the source for this research work. Verses that were repetitions have been taken into consideration while numbering them. Translation and a commentary on individual verses is available as an e-book, “Truth Speaks by Yoga Siddha Sivavakkiyar at http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#shivavakkiyam_book.

3. About Sivavakkiyar’s teachings:

The *ārṛupadai* concept that we find in Tamil literature has acquired a social-philosophical meaning at the hands of the Tamil Siddhas, especially with Sivavākkīyar.

Āṛruppadai means “showing the path to the people”. This concept has two aspects in the teachings and philosophy of Sivavākkīyar- one positive and the other negative. In the negative aspect, Sivavākkīyar emphasizes “what one shall not do” in order to achieve self-realization. The concepts he admonishes are spiritual and social hypocrisies. In his list of “what one shall do” he recommends Siva yoga, respecting the guru, offering alms to the needy and living a life seeking realization. He not only gives a philosophical exposition on the concept of *pati*, *pasu* and *pāsam* but also a procedure to reach the state of realization, the state of Siva. He begins his composition stating clearly that he will be describing the rare mantra *namacivaya* which is the origin and terminus of everything, the mantra uttered by millions of celestials before, the “siva sentence” and that he plans to do so by contemplating on the curved letter (*aum*) so that sins and delusion will run away. Let us see below some of the sins and delusions that Sivavakkiyar wishes to chase away.

a. Sivavakkiyar’s dismissal of spiritual and social hypocrisies:

Sivavākkīyar vehemently reprimands practicing caste-based and gender-based discrimination, performing rituals mindlessly, cheating people in the name of spirituality/religion and holding on to illogical practices.

b. Caste-based discrimination:

“Who is a low class woman, who is a rich woman? Is it marked on the flesh, skin or bones?” he asks (verse 39). He even goes to the extent of asking, “Is enjoying a low class woman different from enjoying a rich woman?” He further comments that when one looks critically at a rich woman and a low class woman, one would realize that they both are none other than limited consciousness which is free from caste, creed or even gender and hence one should shun the evil practice of discriminating people based on their caste.

Sivavakkiyar brings up another situation to ridicule caste-based discrimination. He says that if a buffalo copulates with a cow, the offspring is a hybrid. It looks neither like the cow nor the buffalo. However, if a man born in a higher caste copulates with a lady from a low caste, the offspring is still a human child. He asks people how they are justified in talking about the offspring as different when it looks the same, as a human being! (verse 467). His intense satire is displayed when he says that everything in this world is nothing but semen, only fluid with motion (verse 46) and so people should look forward to the day when they will burn the *manudharma sastra* which preaches caste-based differentiation (verse 468). According to him all the Vedas, Agama, natural elements and scriptures only breed duality and discrimination. Hence, one should go beyond them and realize the truth (verse 469).

Besides dismissing the general caste-based discrimination, Sivavakkiyar scoffs at the Brahmins who claim that they are superior as (a) they do not eat meat or fish, (b) bathe in sacred waters and (c) perform twilight worship ritual. He sarcastically remarks that it is the same water

where the fish resides that the Brahmins use for bathing and drinking, the skin of the deer is customarily tied to the sacred thread they wear on their chest, the goat's meat especially the intestines is used as fire offering and the beef is used as fertilizer for plants by all (verses 157, 158). He asks them whether the loin cloth they wear, the sacred thread and the tuft they adorn accompanied them from the time of their birth or whether the four Vedas occurred in their minds when they were born (verse 192). He remarks with great distaste that the show they put up with their adornment, the fragrance, the lamps and the articles of worship, is like a butcher spreading the pieces of goat meat for sale. He asks them what kind of worship it is that they are supposedly performing (verse 194).

He comments about a common practice among Brahmins, the *sandhyāvandanam* or worship during twilight. Twilight is the meeting point of day and night. The day (light) represents wisdom while the night (darkness) represents ignorance. Sivavakkiyar says that when one raises the vital breath through yoga, one will be performing this twilight worship as one will reach the meeting point of ignorance and wisdom, the junction between the limited soul and the universal soul. This is the real twilight worship, not the temporal action (verse 473).

Sivavakkiyar also talking about another common practice where people clean their mouths from spit by drinking more water and spitting it out. Sivavakkiyar wonders how the same water in the mouth removes the same water, the spit. He asks "aren't all the mantras spit as they are recited by the mouth?" (verse 465). People through away the stone dish they eat on claiming that it has been tainted with spit. Sivavakkiyar questions "what would you do with the hand that ate the food? Even the Gods eat the same way isn't it?" He says that everything in this world is tainted by the Divine. All the scriptures, the mantras, knowledge systems, the bindu (the primordial point of emergence) and the wisdom, everything carries traces of the Divine (verse 41). All the life forms are also impure as the water element, the seminal fluid, causes their emergence (verse 149). The sacred honey used in worship rituals is tainted by the bee's spit and the milk collected by milking the cow is tainted by the hand that collects it (486). There is nothing in this world that is not tainted. Practicing untouchability is hence, ridiculous.

c. Gender-based discrimination:

Some of the Siddha verses seem to demean women. They are referred to as objects of desire, distraction and ghosts who pull one into worldly life. Sivavakkiyar dispels the belief that the Siddhas are against women. He says that there is no one in this world who has not associated himself with a woman. He says that people's life improves when they associate with the right woman. He adds weight to his statement by stating that Lord Siva is adorning River Ganga on his head for this very same reason (verse 512). He praises family life by saying that remaining as a *tapasvin* in the forest consuming dried leaves will only torture the body while leading a family life where one shares his food with guests is the best. He remarks that God will voluntarily come to that person's house as a guest and bless him (verse 515).

Just as how it is illogical to consider the Brahmins as superior, it is foolish to consider women as lowly and impure because they menstruate every month. Sivavakkiyar laughs at this hypocrisy saying that the menstrual cycle is nothing but God's step for creation. He says "You were in the womb that contained the defilement. When you found the way to emerge and came into this world you were (coated) with the same fluid. You emerged (from the fluid) from such a situation and are now reciting countless Vedas. Isn't it the defilement that assembled and became a form, even that of a guru? Did any life form emerge in another way in any of the worlds?" (verses 48,49,50, 134, 137). In the verse 212 he describes how a life occurs in the womb. The menstrual fluid in the mother's womb terminates its cycle for ten months, adorns the semen and becomes like a dewdrop. It remains within the fluid taking a form developing its limbs and other parts until it is born later. Besides, showing the satirical attitude of Sivavakkiyam, these verses tell us that the Siddhas were well aware of how a fetus is formed and how it grows in the uterus. Sivavakkiyar seems to be not only a Siddha but a scientist as well!

d. Spiritual hypocrisies:

After condemning social hypocrisies, Sivavakkiyar attacks spiritual hypocrisies such as mindless recitation of scripture, performing elaborate and showy worship rituals, running from one so called sacred place to another and from one so called sacred water body to another.

Sivavakkiyar speaks strongly against the practice of mindless recitation of scriptures. He says that reciting the four Vedas faultlessly smearing the sacred ash on one's forehead will not reveal the Divine. Only when the heart melts with true devotion and merges with the truth within, saying that one's upkeep is completely the Divine's responsibility, when one surrenders to the Divine completely, will one merge with the effulgence, the Lord, the Supreme Being (verse 105). He makes fun of those who engage in mere recital of scriptures by saying that when wheezing and sweating occur portending death mere scriptural knowledge will not help. One needs pills, *māttirai*. Probably, he makes a pun on this word by saying that if at least for a *māttirai*, a moment, one realizes and contemplates on the Divine, the diseases caused by the baggage of empty scriptural knowledge will not trouble one (verse 13). He calls people who seek textual knowledge as those who are searching for butter while the curds are remaining in the house (verse 75). He remarks with great disappointment that it is impossible to live with such fools.

Among the Tamil Siddhas we find Sivavākkiyar in particular condemning idol worship tooth and nail. He chides people saying that they are "cleaning the bell, taking the oral secretion from the bees and pouring it over a broken stone" (verse 33), "the whole town is getting together and pulling with a rope, a piece of copper placed on a chariot" (verse 242). He remarks that God is not in "brick, granite, red paint of mercury, copper or in spelter" (verse 34). He points out a situation where one stone is broken into two; one half of it is placed at the entrance of the temple as a stepping stone and the other inside the sanctum as the object of worship. He asks whether there is any difference between the two (verse 429). He points out yet another situation where

Godhead is made from the same tree branch that is used to make footwear. “Is there is any difference between them?” he asks (verse 527). He questions people whether a “stone planted as God with four flowers placed on it and circumambulated while chanting mantra talk, while the Lord is really within” (verse 503). He says that he could only laugh at such people who think that God is stone (verse 129).

He advises people that “The Lord made of wood, the Lord made of stone, the Lord made of coconut shell, the Lord made of turmeric, the lord made of cloth, the Lord made of cow dung are all none other than the supreme space.” (verse 517). He asks people why they are running to another place thinking that God is “there” and not “here”. He asks them, “If God is only there, then where does he live and how does he remain there?” He advises people that the only place where they will find the Lord is in the letters *ci* and *a* that represent mental clarity and ubiquity respectively (verse 431). Sivavakkiyar, in short, is against idol worship because his aim is to **have** that experience directly instead of feeling something **about** that experience. Idol worship, according to Sivavakkiyar is a negation (not a substitute) of genuine religious experience. He is one with the Baul of the Bengal who sing that the road to God is blocked by churches, mosques and temples (23). We find the echo of the same views in Ganapatidasar’s poems (verses 15, 63 and 75) Agasthiyar Jnanam- 4 (verse 5) and in Valmigar Jnanam (verse 4). Their aim is to have the religious experience directly instead of feeling something about the experience.

People consider rivers such as Ganga, Yamuna, Cauvery and temple tanks as sacred water bodies and bathe in them submerging themselves there. He asks people, “If they such an action will confer liberation, what will the toad that remains in the water day and night attain?” (verse 130). In this connection one is reminded of one of the verses of Kalin. He says that if bathing in the Ganga ensures liberation, then the fish that live permanently in Ganges are more appropriate candidates for liberation than once in a lifetime bathers are.

To the Tamil Siddhas the real temple and real *thirtha* (as thresholds of religious experience) are not outside but inside the individual. The place where the Lord resides is the temple. ‘koil= ko+il’. The residence of the Lord is the heart as the Divine is immanent. The *antaryami* form or the divine as the indweller is the supreme form of the Lord as in that form he functions as a witness and a guide- a guru within. Such a location of the Lord is beyond creation and destruction unlike the material temples and tanks. Instead of realizing this, people are engaged in all sorts of sacrifices, offerings and visiting water bodies as if they are sacred. It is not that Sivavakkiyar condemns performing worship rituals. He says that one should perform them with clear understand instead of merely cleaning the place, smearing sacred ash on oneself and performing austerities (verse 479).

Some people indulge in a practice wherein they offer goats, chicken and gruel to their family deity, usually Kali, to ward off their diseases. They believe that the deity consumes these, gets pacified and fixes their diseases. Sivavakkiyar questions how this can be true (verse 518). An authentic God, especially one’s family deity, will never let one waste away like this. It will

never get angry with the person but help him get out of his difficulties. Some people also perform esoteric worship rituals to appease ghosts and goblins expecting them to grant them various benefits or overcome some ailment. Sivavākkīyar questions whether any such ritual-based worship is valid at all. Neither the ghosts and goblins accept this worship nor does the Ultimate Reality, the primal eternal One accept the offerings. It is actually the priest or the man who performs these rituals who enjoys the things offered. All these worship rituals are hence useless (verse 252).

Sivavākkīyar does not leave us with only the ridicule but with a practical suggestion for how to perform austerities. In verse 199 he says, “Flower and sacred water are my mind, fitting temple my heart, the soul spreading as all-pervading lingam the superior five as fragrance and lamp, for the supreme dancer there is no dawn or dusk ritual.” Worship within oneself is far superior to any other external worship ritual. He says that one should get up early in the morning and through the eye of discrimination/knowledge, the third eye, one should contemplate on the Absolute. Only this will grant liberation (verse 130). The third eye is popular not only in the Eastern traditions but also in several Western traditions. The third eye, also known as inner eye, refers to the *ajna cakra* in the middle of the eyebrows. It is considered as the gate that leads one to higher conscious states. It symbolizes enlightenment, a state of non-dualistic perspective. The time between 4 AM and 5.30 AM is called the *Brahma muhurta* or the time of Gods. Waking up at this time for *sādhana* is highly recommended.

e. Condemnation of charlatans:

One of the common problems that a spiritual aspirant faces is being taken for a ride by charlatans who pose as guru or realized souls. Sivavākkīyar lists the types of cheats that people should watch out for. He grades them based on how seriously they trick people.

The most common swindlers are those who pose as priests and soothsayers offering to perform rituals that would expiate one’s sins and thus relieve one from bad situations in life. These crooks prey on people’s fears. They adorn themselves elaborately with sandalwood paste and sacred ash; they wear the black soot from the *homa* on their forehead and act as if they are pious god men. Sivavākkīyar says that these charlatans are interested only in other people’s money. He curses them saying that they will wallow in the most torturous hell; they will be cut up like a warhorse and burnt to cinders (verses 519, 520).

The next type of cheats prey on people’s greed. They pose as experts of alchemy and delude others by saying that they can turn base metal into gold. They demand materials and money from others. Sivavākkīyar says that these cheats will collect all the wealth and run away not to be seen ever again (verse 521).

The third type of cheats use people’s beliefs. They pretend to be yogis who can levitate. They will try to impress others with shows of insignificant magical prowesses. Sivavākkīyar says that this category of cheats will lose themselves seeking physical pleasures and women

(verse 522). These days, our newspapers are full of stories about these babus and gurus. Sivavakkiyar's study of people and their character is truly amazing.

The above three types of cheats live among people either as householders or renunciates. The next variety of cheats that Sivavakkiyar points out is generally in the garb of sadhus. This group claims that they have consumed *kāyakalpa* or concoctions that would prolong one's lifespan. They perform magical feat to everyone everywhere. However, they waste their lives smoking cannabis and consuming opium. In the end, they die lick and salivating like a dog (verse 523).

The fourth category of cheats is those who promise wisdom and liberation. Just as how we have instant coffee and instant tea they promise instant wisdom and instant realization! Sivavakkiyar says that they will advertise themselves extensively and usurp others' property (verse 524). Now-a-days we read about sadhus who offer *sakti path* and initiation over the internet. Those who go after them are left with nothing but disappointment. The devotees lose their life, their sanity and their wealth.

The last category of cheats is those whom we normally consider as genuine *sannyasins*. They are not interested in magical shows or other people's property. They are lazy folks who adorn themselves with ochre robe, rudraksha, and yogic staff. They go around begging for food carrying a water pot. Sivavakkiyar calls them cattle. Instead of seeking Goddess Sakti, they are seeking alms and food from everyone (verse 525).

Sivavakkiyar's elaborate description of cheats and charlatans makes one wonder whether they were common at his time also!

From the above section one may think that Sivavakkiyar asks people to refrain from supporting the poor and the needy. That is not so. He only warns people to not encourage charlatans. Through three verses (240, 241 and 511) he explains the greatness of food offering and helping others.

Sivavakkiyar says that any amount of wealth, not even great armies, can prevent one from dying. It is only the alms one has offered throughout one's life that come galloping like a directed horse in the way of one's death (verse 240). One is reminded of Karna's story in the Mahabharata, where Lord Krishna seeks the fruits of his alms so that Karna would die in peace. Sivavakkiyar recommends that one should offer sesame seeds, iron, blankets, cotton clothes and food to others (verse 241). He remarks that a place where the citizens have a hand but not the heart of offer things to others is like a void, the most agonizing hell (verse 511).

4. Who is a true yogi, a realized soul?

After elaborating on cheats and charlatans who pose as realized souls Sivavakkiyar explains the state of a true *jnāni* or a saint.

For a true saint, it does not matter where he is. Whether he is in the forest or in a physical relationship with a woman, it is all the same for him (verse 186). He remains firm like a pot filled with water; there are no fluctuations or vacillations (verse 202) in his mind. Realized beings have tethered their souls so that it does not move around like a kite (203). They remain as pure consciousness. For them, it does not matter whether they are sleeping or remaining awake, whether their senses are kept under control or not. They remain in a thoughtless state, a state of bliss, a state of *sat chith ananda* (verse 314). Their minds are free from all evil, burnt away by their austerities, like a forest fire (verse 84). Sivavakkiyar remarks with regret that people generally mistake such souls to be mad men (verse 513). The Siddhas also create such an impression intentionally as they do not want to be disturbed by people.

How does one attain the state of a realized soul? One has to first of all realize the impermanence of the body, the ephemeral nature of worldly life, understand the truth about the Divine, the universal conscious being (*pati*), the limited soul (*pasu*) and the attachments (*pāsam*). This is the theoretical aspect of realization while the practical aspect is Siva yoga.

5. **Pati, pasu and pāsam:**

a. **Pati**

To explain the esoteric principle of *pati*, *pasu* and *pāsam*, Sivavakkiyar asks a set of questions first. He seeks the answer from realized souls as he feels that experiential knowledge is far superior to textual knowledge.

He asks, “what is mind, what are thoughts, what is *Jiva*, what is *sakti*, what is *sambhu*, what is it that is free from differentiations, what is liberation, what is the origin of everything and what are mantras” (verse 44). In the next verse he provides some answers. He says that the universal conscious being, *sivayam* is the seed of everything (verse 45). It is beyond a defining character and hence is beyond description (verse 93). It is the state of *turiyātītha* or the state of consciousness beyond the *turiya* state the fourth state of consciousness (verse 296). It is like the lightning concealed within the cloud, butter hidden within the milk, oil present within an oil seed and the sight within the eye. It is not limited by a form, a size. It is not the space, not a measurable entity and not a product of transformation. It is not the “other” or the one “without” anything. It is the rarest of the rare, immanent and transcendent entity (verse 73). It is neither good nor bad. It is the middle ground. If one says it is good, it becomes good. If one says it is bad then it becomes so. Sivavakkiyar recommends that we call it good and praise its name (verse 505).

Like the mighty banyan tree which abides within a small seed and emerges as a fully grown tree later, the world abides within the Divine, the Origin (verse 94). It is the Origin that

takes up all the forms, as all the sentient beings and insentient entities (verse 111). It does not remain as a separate entity from the manifested but pervades all of them (verse 28). Hence, all the forms perceived in this world are none other than the Divine. Sivavakkiyar mentions an example to explain this concept. Just as how the different ear ornaments are only forms of gold, all the perceived, including the holy triad, are only forms of the Divine (verse 29). Hence, it is pointless to fight “my God is superior to yours” or whether Siva is superior to Vishnu or vice versa (verses 53- 55, 131). In the same way it is futile to claim that one person is superior to another as they are all forms of the Divine. We have already seen how vehemently Sivavakkiyar condemns discrimination among people.

If the Divine has no form then how can we know that it exists? Human beings can perceive entities only if they impinge on their senses. Sivavakkiyar says that he did not know about the Divine when it was formless. He only knew about it when it remained in a form. However, one should not stop here and consider the form to be the Divine. One should seek the truth, the faultless wisdom from a Guru and realize the Parabrahmam or the all-pervading supreme truth (verse 237). This verse gives us a clue to why Sivavakkiyar was so vehemently condemning temples and god forms. He did not want people to stop at the stage of worshipping the mere form but to go beyond the form and seek the ultimate truth.

We may ask the question, “If the Divine remains as all the manifested, then is it tainted by the *maya* just like the limited souls?” Sivavakkiyar says that the Divine or *Parāparam* remains like the lotus leaf which is not wetted by the water it remains in (verse 313). The faults of the world do not touch the Divine.

b. Ambalam, the supreme arena of consciousness:

The Siddhas call consciousness as *ambalam* or arena. It is the substratum on which everything leaves an impression and thus has an existence. The limited soul is called *ciṛṛambalam* and the Supreme soul or the Divine is the *pérambalam*. Sivavakkiyar has sung about *ambalam* in several of the verses. He also calls it *arangam* which means the same.

According to Sivavakkiyar, the *ambalam* remains as everything and everywhere. It is eternal. It is the beginning and terminus of everything; it remains concealed within everything (verse 418). The *ambalam* is a witness of everything, it “sees” everything. All the letters and expressions of thoughts occur here and all actions terminate here followed by a great silence. The universe is an expression of this arena. All the souls take a form in this *ambalam*. It is here they finally repose at the termination of the kundalini yoga (verse 97). According to him, the Divine dances at the junction of the *ambalam* (the *ciṛṛambalam* and *pérambalam*) and protects the aspirant valorously (verse 257). Hence, Sivavakkiyar advises people that instead of seeking the Divine in a stone or a piece of metal, they should understand their true nature. Then there will be singing and dancing by the Divine, the Lord of the *ambalam* (verse 35). People should look at the *arangam* of both, the limited soul and the Divine, and the way they became ‘*uruvarangam*’

or the arena of a form. If they manage to do so, they will go beyond the ‘*karuvarangam*’ or the womb (future births) and realize the ‘*thiruvarangam*’ the sacred arena (verse 76). He describes the kundalini yoga as the soul, placing its body in the *ambalam*, melting it through the fire of kundalini that dances in the *ambalam* and finally becoming one with the Divine, the Ādi.

While describing the state of a realized soul, Sivavakkiyar says that just as how the ocean will not become turbid even it commanded to become so, the *ambalam* will not waver even if bid with a controlling stick. That is, the mind of a realized soul will remain calm like the *ambalam*. The darkness of ignorance will not approach him (verse 43).

c. Nāda and bindu:

About creation, Sivavakkiyar says that the Supreme consciousness willed or gestated the idea to manifest and became all the manifested. It is thereby the material as well as the willing cause of the universe (verse 382). This is similar to the *mahavākhyā* “*bahusyāma prajāyēya*”. Creation happened when a movement occurred in the supreme space. The Divine, the Incomparable Effulgence then pervaded the world, adorning all forms (verse 175). This concept is similar to the *spanda* philosophy or the philosophy of movement of Kashmir Saivism. To explain the rarity of this phenomenon, Sivavakkiyar says that a “bull birthed three calves”. The bull is Siva and the three calves may be the three worlds or the three gunas of *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They could also mean the holy triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. He says that everything that emerged are “he and she”, Siva and Sakti. Their dance made the Jiva or the limited soul to occur. The seed, the Divine, the *chith*, the consciousness made the Jiva exist (verse 15). He says that like the light in the eye, the primordial sound *nāda* and form, *bindu*, Siva, Sakti and the five elements along with their subtle qualities became this world (verse 316).

Nāda represents the Light of consciousness. It is a compact mass of energy in its undifferentiated state, ready to create. *Bindu* is the primordial form that emerges from *nāda*. Sivavakkiyar says that the *bindu* and the *nāda* are the precursors for all the creation (verse 189). The *nāda* is the first veil of *māyā* (verse 351). It is represented by the letter ‘*hī*’ while *bindu*, represented by the letter *hū*, The *nāda* represents eternal bliss while the *bindu* represents the universal form. The *hū* and *hī* ultimately merge with the Absolute (verse 344). When kundalini sakti rises in the sushumna nadi, the *nāda* present in the muladhara also rises like steam. The soul is purified by this sound. When the force reaches the sahasrara, the Absolute merges with it.

Sivavakkiyar says that ashtanga yoga is a form of the *nāda*. The letters *a* and *u* in the *ashtākshara*, the eight lettered mantra also represent *nāda*. *a* and *u* are components of the *pranava*. As all the mantras are uttered with the *pranava* in the beginning they all represent the primordial sound, *nāda*. Sivavakkiyar says that the *nāda* travels through the stem of the “veena”, the sushumna nadi which hums with the sound, and remains with the Divine (verse 421).

Sivavakkiyar explains the five elements and their subtle qualities in verses 309 and 310. The earth has the five subtle qualities of smell, taste, form, sound, feeling; water has four it lacks

smell, fire has three, air has two and the space has one namely sound. He says that all the elements and their subtle qualities are none other than the Divine.

Sivavakkiyar says that the Divine is present as the 51 letters. These are letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The concept of Matrika is well explained in Kashmir Saivism. The Lord is concealed in all the letters as *nāda* is a manifestation of the Divine (verse 299).

The Divine became the substratum of the cakras or the lotus dais the six energy centers that help one to reach the unmanifested state from the manifested. The supreme reality remains within the body as the kundalini sakti, as the snake and helps in this process (verse 384).

d. Pasu or Jiva:

Having explained that the Divine is the cause of the Jiva, Sivavakkiyar explains how the Jiva is formed. He says that Sakti constitutes the body and Siva paused within the Jiva is the consciousness. The five *koshas* or sheaths form the different bodies that surround the soul like precincts (verse 399). The senses and the sense organs are none other than Siva. They ultimately merge with Siva.

While Siva is the material cause of the Jiva, how is a particular form decided for a specific Jiva? Sivavakkiyar questions whether the soul decided on its body or whether the body decided which soul should occupy it. If it is the body that decided on the soul, then what was the form of the body before the soul occupied it? Further, when the soul and the body separate, the soul does not die. It takes up another body. So it should be that soul decides the body it will take and not the other way around. Sivavakkiyar concludes so in verse 90.

Sivavakkiyar explains further that the soul took a body based on its good karma. He then questions where the soul and body were before they came together. He answers his own question by stating that the body remained in the *tejus* or light element, the soul in the water element and the desire which brought them together in the air element (verse 168). When a life form has to occur, the soul enters the *nāda*, the body the female sexual fluid and the desire the *muladhara*. They come together in a new life form (verse 221). He explains the *pranava* or *aum* in this context. He says that the soul remains in *akara* the male aspect while the body remains in *ukara* or the female aspect. It is Siva or pure consciousness that brings them together (verse 232). When the body is destroyed, the soul loses its material form and takes up a subtle form. In this way the soul works out its previous karma (verse 119).

e. Pāsam:

To explain the nature of *pāsam* or fetters, Sivavakkiyar uses a metaphor to explain it. He says that when the limited soul, the bronze that was covered with verdigris, contemplated and merged with the superior, the tarnish left it. The *pāsam* does not change the nature of the soul; it conceals its true nature, even from itself. (verse 154). When one develops the capacity to see the

Divine no delusions or *maya* remain. Everything will disappear within the fire (of kundalini) (verse 481).

Are the *pasu* and *pāsam* eternal like the pati? Sivavakkiyar says no. He says the letters, the limited soul, the five elements, the senses, all the scriptures and the sastra are not eternal. It is only the Truth, the Divine, that remains merged within them is eternal (verse 401). When true realization occurs there are no separate entities as the limited soul or matter. Only the truth, the Universal consciousness remains.

Based on the above mentioned concepts, we conclude that Sivavakkiyar, just like Tirumular, subscribes to the *suddha advaita* philosophy or monism as he says that everything is Siva, the supreme consciousness. However, this is not the advaita of Sankara according to which only the Divine is real and everything else is a delusion or *mithya*. For Sivavakkiyar, the limited soul and the world are real. They are manifestations of the Divine. All the manifested appear so only due to *pāsam* or attachment. When the *pāsam* is removed, there is none other than “mother and father” or the Divine (verse 424). Sivavakkiyar calls those who see this truth as *yogins* who have sublimated their senses. Others who do not know this are those with sluices that prevent them from reaching the Divine. Like the flood gates preventing the rushing waters from reaching the ocean the fetters and the senses prevent the limited soul from reaching the Divine. Once the gates are lifted up through the arousal of the kundalini sakti in the body the limited soul rushes and merges with the Supreme soul (verse 445). The kundalini sakti is the key to raise the sluice doors!

6. Caryā, kriyā, yoga and jnāna:

The Agamas recommend a four- fold path for realization. They are *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yogam* and *jnānam*. Among these *caryā* is outer discipline. Sivavakkiyar says that when one clears the heart of faults such as ego and pride, by sweeping and swabbing, lights the lamp of the soul and have the *prana* or vital breath under control and watchfully eliminates any faults from entering inside, one is performing *caryā* (verse 416).

A successful *caryā* will grant one the three siddhis, *kāya siddhi*, *vāda siddhi* and *yoga siddhi*. *Kāya siddhi* is making the body strong so that it can perform miraculous feat. *Vāda siddhi* is controlling the *prana*. *Yoga siddhi* are mystical accomplishments. In the verse 442, Sivavakkiyar states that *caryā* will grant one *Sālokam* or the boon to remain in the same space as the Divine. *Kriyā*, the worship, will grant *samepyam* or close proximity with the Divine. *Yoga* will grant *sārūpam*, a form like the Divine, the state of being consciousness and *jnāna* will grant *sāyujyam* or union with the Divine or the supreme conscious state. Through the verse 443 and 444 he lists all the benefits achieved by those who follow this four-fold method and calls those who do not believe in its efficacy as fools who are only wasting their time running to different places seeking the Divine instead of engaging in this method.

Carya and *kriya* develop *vairāgya* or dispassion and *vivek* or discernment in a person. These two qualities are pre-requisites for yoga. To develop these two qualities, one should understand what is permanent and what is not. This *viveka* will help one develop dispassion towards insignificant goal and motivate one to seek the ultimate.

The primary entity to which all the life forms, big and small, are attached is their body. We fail to realize that the body is not permanent. Sivavakkiyar calls our body as “that which will rot when the salt is removed” (verse 507). Without remembering “all that is born will die one day” (verse 508), that our body will be burnt with wood and fire one day, we hold on to our relations and material possessions as if they are going to be with us forever. He says that we build huge houses with massive doors as if the doors will keep death at bay. When death comes calling none of these will accompany us or protect us (verses 80, 22). The body from which the soul has departed will not be worth even the price of a broken piece of pottery. Sivavakkiyar says that when mud pots topple people arrange it back; when a copper vessel topples they rearrange it carefully saying “we need them”. However, when our body topples, when we fall down dead, people will quickly get rid of our body saying “it smells badly” (verse 79). A lover, so greatly attached to his beloved that he is ready to kill anyone who seeks her, will gladly hand over her body for cremation when the soul leaves it (verse 5). Hence, one should remember that the body and the pleasures associated with it are impermanent and seek the Divine.

As the body is impermanent should one ignore it, dismiss it? No. The Siddhas knew the value of the body, that it is the vehicle with which one should attain wisdom. Hence, they recommend that one should nurture the body and engage it in yoga.

7. Yoga, according to Sivavakkiyar:

Sivavakkiyar recommends kundalini yoga, which is similar to the Siva yoga described by Tirumular in his Tirumandiram. Siva yoga is the method by which the Jiva identifies itself with Siva. The yogin raises his kundalini sakti to the top or sahasrara and drinks the ambrosia there.

Mantra yoga, hatha yoga, laya yoga and Raja yoga are four forms of Siva yoga. Mantra yoga involves chanting of specific mantras and use of geometric patterns called *yantra*, *mudra* and *mandalas*. Hatha yoga is the process by which the physical body is conditioned so that the subtle bodies can be reached. Laya yoga is the method of deep concentration which takes one to the state of union with the Lord, the state of *Siva aikya*. Raja yoga is controlling the mind through the control of the prana. Sivavakkiyar talks about all these four forms without actually mentioning their names. As it is with other Siddhas, he also lays emphasis on laya yoga, the method of arousing the kundalini and uniting her with the Supreme consciousness.

a. Mantra yoga:

Sivavakkiyar stated clearly in his introduction that he is composing Sivavakkiyam to describe the five lettered mantra, *namacivaya*.

He defines what a mantra is in verse 92. He says that mantras are not secretions from the tree (toddy) that cause delusion. People recite mantras and get “drunk” on their special status, that they are able to recite them so well, that they are able to obtain special benefits. This is not the purpose of a mantra. It is useless if one recites a mantra without understanding either its purpose or what it denotes. Sivavakkiyar defines a mantra as “that which raises the prana in its path towards realization”. For those who have consumed this mantra there is no delusion. There is only deathlessness.

How should one chant a mantra? Not in a loud voice as if the whole world should hear it. It must be chanted under the breath like a hunter calling a bird (verse 31).

Sivavakkiyar fulfill his original intent sufficiently by explaining elaborately the auspiciousness of the five letter mantra, *namacivaya*. He says that everything in this world abide within the five letters of *namacivaya* (verse 2). It is the locus where the supreme consciousness resides. It is the best means for liberation. It is the doorway at which the Jiva and the Siva merge (*jiva-siva-aikyam*).

Sivavakkiyar describes how the *namacivaya* mantra forms one’s body parts. The letters *na* are the legs, *va* the mouth, *ci* the shoulder and *ya* the two eyes (verse 96). Such a body is called *mantra meni* in Siddha literature.

Sivavakkiyar says that if one becomes an expert of the five letters one will become a Deva and rule the sky. One will know entity in the sky and realize the truth (201). Sivavakkiyar relates the *namacivaya* mantra to the pranava or aum. In the verse 305 he says that the central letter of *namacivaya*, the letter *ci*, indicates the Divine. This entity is none other than the holy triad represented by the pranava or *a u* and *m*. Thus, pranava is none other than *namacivaya*. Sivavakkiyar says that when the pranava is “opened”, that is, it is split into the three letters (*a*, *u* and *m*) and the *ukāra*, the active part of the Divine is identified with the *makāra* the manifested world, then everything will appear as *akāra*, the Divine. He says that *akāra* is the eternal space, *ukāra* the truth and *makāra* the space which took a form. The letter *ci* represents the clarity when these principles are understood correctly (verse 410). Siddhas consider the *akāra* and *ukāra* as very sacred. They refer to it as eight and two. The letter *a* in Tamil indicates number 8 and the letter *u* the number 2. Hence eight and two indicate *a* and *u*. Sivavakkiyar also mentions eight and two and says that it does not matter whoever adds them, it will always add up to ten (verse 492). That is, they are universal truths.

Sivavakkiyar concludes his composition by stating that *namacivaya* uttered as *sivayavasi* is a “double headed fire.” The mantra *namacivaya* when uttered as *sivayavasi* is called *atisukṣma pañcākṣara* or the very subtle five letters. Sivavakkiyar says that this utterance will make one a ruler of the all the worlds. Kashmir Saivism defines Siva as *svātantrya* or complete freedom.

One who has complete freedom is the ruler of the universe. Thus, this mantra takes one to the state of Siva. This mantra is double headed fire because it burns away all the dualities, all the past and future karma.

There are several verses in Sivavakkiyam that describe the rama mantra. There is a conjecture that this section may have been inserted into the original text. However, there is no proof for it. Sivavakkiyar says that the rama mantra is the master of all mantra. All the mantras chanted during various rituals are in actuality, this mantra. It is capable of removing even the five most deplorable sins. It is all the manifested (verses 10, 11, 12). He also says that the five lettered namacivaya, the three lettered a u m and the one lettered om all are none other than rama nama (verse 58).

Sivavakkiyar says that one can utter the rama nama to destroy the nine apertures through which the soul disappears. That is, rama mantra will make the soul leave the body through the sahasrara. This sort of an exit is considered to be the highest accomplishment. However, one can utter the rama mantra only when one is pure. If a dirty one attempts to utter it, all the diseases will prevent him from doing so. For a good soul the rama mantra will remain embedded on his tongue (verse 210).

Besides the above mentioned three mantras, Sivavakkiyar also mentions the kechari mudra (verse 216) and says that those who practice it will never age. They will experience the Supreme Being everywhere.

Sivavakkiyar describes the three yantras, the *umāpathi yantra*, the *bhuvana yantra* and the *shatkona yantra*. The *umāpathi yantra* contains eight vertical and eight horizontal lines with the eight lettered mantra written to fill the squares. It is surrounded by aum. Thirumular has described this yantra in his Thirumandiram (verse 989).

Sivavakkiyar mentions the *bhuvana yantra* without giving any specific details about it. This may also represent the world which a power diagram itself (verse 326). He talks about the six pointed yantra or the *shatkona yantra* where the upward facing triangle represents Siva while the downward facing triangle represents Sakti. The nine triangles represent the nine apertures in the body. The *bindu* in the middle represents the state of ultimate union (verse 363).

b. Hatha yoga:

Sivavakkiyar has described only the padmasana while mentioning the kechari mudra. One does not find any other asana being mentioned in this composition.

c. Laya yoga:

After lamenting that millions have lost their lives seeking the Divine through fruitless paths, Sivavakkiyar describes the kundalini yoga through several verses. He says that when the prana that dwell in the sushumna is raised up to sahasrara in the cranium, even an old man will

attain eternal youth. He calls the sahasrara as the threshold of the Divine, the gateway where the soul and the Divine become one pure enjoyment, *ekabogam* (verse 17). He also calls it the *vatta vīdu* or circular house (verse 389) and as the “city of the arena man” (verse 97).

To sum up the process, Sivavakkiyar says that the aspirant sits in the lotus posture and raises his kundalini sakti with the help of the vital air. The prana which flows in the two *nādis*, *ida* and *pingala*, or (the two conches, according to Sivavakkiyar) should be made to flow through the sushumna (the drum) (verse 19). The breath should be blown like a bellow through the energy channels (verse 77) which would arouse the kundalini. He calls the breath the grass and says that one should reap four stacks of it, that is, practice breath control four times a day, waking up early in the morning (verse 153). Then one would remain as an eternal youth.

The fire of kundalini which generally remains curled up in the muladhara cakra, when aroused, travels through the sushumna with the sound of a conch and reaches the sahasrara. It does not travel slowly but gushes forth with a great force. Sivavakkiyar calls the path of the kundalini as the path of great speed or *pāicchalūr*. He says that the fire rushes forth melting the root, the muladhara (verse 388) when the Jiva experiences Sadāsiva, the first of the manifestations.

Then the breath, along with the kundalini, crosses the nine gates or apertures in the body. The aspirant holds the *kechari mudra*. The kundalini sakti go through the sushumna *nādi* which hums like the stem of the musical instrument *veena* when it crosses the cakras, “the temples of lotuses” (verse 370).

When the fire of kundalini reaches the ājñā cakra which is also called Kashi or the city of light, Siva teaches the rama nama as it is this mantra which helps the soul to cross from the state of Jiva to Siva (verse 107). The fire remains in the ajna cakra like a thick column. The five elements appear as five different colors and merging with each other (verse 390) and become one. The hobbling kundalini sakti displays various sounds here (verse 361).

Sivavakkiyar says that one need not perform any external fire sacrifice as the fire and the water are within oneself (verse 30). When one performs this *antharyāga* of raising the kundalini sakti, one overcomes the cycle of births and deaths.

Sivavakkiyar asks the question, “where does the Lord reside among the six cakras?” and answers that he remains in the ājñā cakra as the primal preceptor. When the yogin directs the prana from the muladhara cakra, Rudra, the fire of kundalini that resides there, rises. The two eyes are made to merge in the third eye in the middle of the brow. The Absolute appears at the ajna cakra in the form of the guru (verse 143). A blue light appears at this place. Sivavakkiyar advises the aspirants to remain there and look at it carefully. The blue light is the light of the soul. There is another light higher than this which is the light of the Divine (verse 164).

Sivavakkiyar advises that one should learn this yoga from a guru (verse 172) as it is impossible to attain realization unless one abides by the mantra received from the guru (verse 320). One has to swim the ocean with the mantra that the Guru gives. He says that otherwise one has to go through the tortures that cotton undergoes before becoming a dress. It is possible to see the Lord only when one submerges himself in the flood of the Guru, *gurupunai* (verse 440). A guru is like a mighty river that carries with it anything and everything. A guru carries with him all his disciples towards the Divine whether they deserve it or not.

d. Mental state during yoga:

Kundalini yoga consists of the two components, bodily states and mental states. It is important that a yogin remains in the right mental state while holding a particular physical pose. Sivavakkiyar says that one who should attain mental equanimity by bringing the fighting beasts, the senses, under control (verse 57) and perform the kundalini yoga with utmost sincerity as if one's bones are melting in the fire of kundalini (verse 76). One has to sacrifice the desire to seek anything- things, pleasures and even the desire for liberation (verse 138). He states that when one watches "that which is watching" then "the watching" will disappear in the "act of watching". That is, the seen, the sight and the act of seeing will all disappear and the only remaining entity will be consciousness (verse 163). Tirumular refers to this as *jñānam*, *jñeyam* and *jñyātha* becoming one.

One identifies shades of bhakti or devotion in some verses of the Sivavakkiyam. This is similar to Tirumandiram which declares that God is love and only fools think that they are different. Sivavakkiyar says that the Divine is attainable through love. If an aspirant is capable of singing the praise of the Divine and beseeching it, he will cut his further births and remain with the Divine (verse 43). He says further that this is not his conclusion but the advice of realized souls. The lord will be seen if he is sought by a heart melting with love. When this is done, the prana will be led in its course with the earth and the sky thundering; the Lord will come closer (verse 439).

Sivavakkiyar says that people climb mountains and visit oceans to realize the truth. All these attempts are only show of the ego. The right thing to do is to adorn the Divine's sacred feet, surrender to it, seeking it. Then the Jiva will automatically become Siva (verse 484). This technique is similar to the Anupāyam of Kashmir Saivism where the Divine grace descends without an effort on Jiva's part.

e. State of a yogin after yoga siddhi:

When one becomes an accomplished yogin, the mind disappears in maya (verse 38). There are no delusions caused by the mind. The yogin hears various sounds. Sivavakkiyar refers to this as "the shop in the ear opens" (verse 127). None of the scriptures can explain this state as it is beyond words (verse 139).

A yogin remains like a bee that swoons losing itself within the flower, having drunk the honey. He remains in the state of energy, the *lingam* (verse 498). When one practices the kundalini yoga intensely for twelve days, one will see a light with the rainbow like hue in the ajna cakra. This is the Divine, the Parabrahmam (verse 495). The fire of kundalini rises with the prana and opens the receptacle of honey in the sahasrara after piercing the three spheres, the sun, the moon and the *agni* mandala. The yogin learns to consume measured quantities of the ambrosia (verse 179). Sivavakkiyar says that *tapas* will happen, that is, all the actions that one performs will become one's *dharma* (verse 436).

When the kundalini reaches the saharara the body changes into a fragrant body. Sivavakkiyar calls this stage as “the tip of the branch that fruited” (verse 353) and says that the aspirant sees the seven worlds. While the Puranas describe the seven worlds as seven realms, they are nothing but different states of consciousness. When the aspirant raises his kundalini sakti, he experiences these states of consciousness. Sivavakkiyar says that the sky will glisten like rubies (verse 389).

Is this yoga easy to achieve? No. Sivavakkiyar says that even though the Lord is within our hearts it is as difficult to see him as it is to straighten a dog's tail (verse 405).

The kundalini that reaches the sahasrara does not remain there eternally. It falls back to the muladhara. Sivavakkiyar calls this as blessing and curse. During its ascent the kundalini blesses the aspirant with great experiences. When it comes down it brings him back to his worldly qualities (verse 358).

The kundalini yoga teaches one to realize the Divine that is within oneself. All of us are ignorant of this fact. By turning the focus inwards one realizes this truth, “one knows the one within”. Sivavakkiyar says that when he knew the one within (that it is an entity beyond perception) then no one was capable of seeing it (verse 6). Sivavakkiyar says that when one realizes this truth one will not lift his hands in supplication to worship a particular deity or a temple (verse 256). One will see the Divine everywhere. In this state there are no distinctions as a limited soul or the Divine, there is no directed or the directing (verse 23). Sivavakkiyar calls this as *samarasa* or “equivalent sentiment” (verse 126).

Sivavakkiyar explains how the Divinity brings about a super conscious state within in the Jiva. It initially places a speck of flame like a turtle placing its eggs on the shore. While the turtle goes back into the water and the eggs hatch by themselves in due course. Similarly, the Divine goes about its business after leaving the flame within us. The flame grows to a raging fire that turns us into the Ultimate Reality. Just as how the hatchlings return to the ocean, the Jiva returns to Siva (verse 98). He tells us another example that of a hornet embeds a worm in wet soil. Without any other thought than the intent the hornet buries the worm in the wet soil and goes away. Over time the wet soil breaks down and the worm flies away as a wasp (verse 106).

f. State of silence:

Silence is lack of sound. It is not only cessation of words but lack of mental fluctuations as well. Sivavakkiyar talks elaborately about the state of silence. He says that if the five senses are controlled within and if silence remains inside, the Lord will speak within and one will attain *brahma jnāna* (verse 103). Silence represents the state beyond *nāda*. **Vijnāna Bhairava**, a Kashmiri Saivism treatise on yoga calls this silence as Bhairava or universal consciousness. Sivavakkiyar reflects this idea when he says that silence is the river Ganga or wisdom, it is the moon (which again represents a state of wisdom) and it is the silence of Siva, the state of supreme consciousness (verse 339). The Siddhas call this state *cumma*, a state without any distinction. When the kundalini sakti reaches the sahasrara, the yogin experiences this state (verse 349). He experiences the Divine through all his senses. Sivavakkiyar says that the tainted thresholds, the senses, will become *samarasa* or the abodes of enjoyment of the Divine (verse 391).

He says that when one realizes the truth, the Divine, it does not matter, whether one is awake or sleeping, whether one's senses are functioning or remaining merged as one, whether the directions exist or not, one will have the inside and outside in unison, in harmony. Such wise ones, *jnāni*, will have no thoughts as the mind ceases to exist. This is the state of a realized soul (verses 314, 470).

8. Sivavakkiyar's sandhyā bhāsha:

Using esoteric language is a common feature in Siddha poetry. Sivavakkiyar has given us a taste of it in the following verses.

He describes the five senses as chickens and the soul as the mother hen. The chickens are fighting and making a lot of noise in the pen, the body. When the old jackal comes there, the Divine, all the chickens are dead. Only the mother hen remains (verse 152).

He describes the kundalini yoga in a verse which sounds as if he is describing a procedure in alchemy. With six parts of pure silver, four parts of copper, three parts of zinc, two parts of gold, one measure of the sound of the bow, if one blows on these one will reach the frontier (verse 185). Copper represents blood, silver the kundalini sakti or the seminal fluid. Three parts of zinc are the three faults or *malas*, two parts of gold are the breath flowing through the *ida* and *pingala nādi*. When all these are brought together they sound like the twang of the bow. One then reaches the frontier, the state of supreme consciousness.

In another verse, he calls the breath as the bellow and the kundalini sakti as the gold. If only one is capable of blowing the bellow it will expand as a pillar of fire. Then there will be nothing other than the dancing effulgence and oneself (verse 193).

Verse 504 has the last line as “tānatāna tatthathāna nāthanāna thānanā”. This looks like a musical note. However, this should be split as thān athāna thath, athāna nāthanāna thānan ā! It means “the *thath* that became that”, “the I that which became the Lord who became that” “the vital air”. This is the Mahavaakhya “Tat tvam asi”.

9. Play with numbers:

Siddhas use numbers to refer to esoteric concepts. Some of their songs contain only numbers. They leave it to the readers’ imagination to interpret them. Sivavakkiyar has used this technique in several of his verses. In verse 217 he says five, five, five and five are those that trouble; five, five and five are those that remain within; five, five and five-if you are capable of nourishing them, five and five will remain within as civayam. It is up to the reader to interpret what these different fives mean! In the verse 227 he says “in the primal five, in the eternal four, in the effulgent three in the formless two in the one the wisdom entity that remains pervading all- these are none other than the five letters.

Verses 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, are examples of this technique.

10. Conclusion:

From the above described topics one can safely conclude that Sivavakkiyam is an authentic text on Tamil Siddha philosophy. It subscribes to the *suddha advaita* or monism and not pluralism prescribed by Saiva Siddhanta the more popular philosophy in South India.

While the composition begins with a well-defined introduction, the concepts explained above are all spread over several verses in no conceivable order. This makes one wonder whether the original verses were collated by different people at different times. Repetition of some of verses lends credence to this conjecture. It may also be that the verses were composed at different time points and hence the same concept is repeated in several verses with mild modification of the lines. In any case, the ideas and the philosophy are consistent throughout the composition and hence verses from different authors who follow different philosophies have not been put together under one title.

In conclusion one may state that the philosophy of Sivavakkiyar with its social attitudes may well constitute the point of departure for a new humanism (for in Sivavakkiyar’s genuine mysticism, humanity and God is the point of reference) on a world scale with its format deeply embedded in a **Philosophy of the Spirit** which is not confined to any notion or nation, religion or community which indeed is the common spiritual treasure trove of the entire humanity.

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 - (ii) K.V.Zvelebil, The Poets of the Powers (London: Rider&Co, 1971) pp.132-33
 - (iii) Karai Siddhar, Kanaga Vaippu (Nungambakkam: Siddhasāram),p.126.
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 - (v) V.Balaramaiah, Chittar Meypporul, pp.55-56.
 - (vi) In Nijānandabhodam a list of places of the Siddhas is given, (Aru.Ramanathan, Chittar Padalgā, 2 vols. Madras Prema Prasuram, 4th edition, 1984) vol.II p.273.
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