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AN OVERVIEW OF OUR SCRIPTURES

Saiva Siddhanta Peedam, Canada

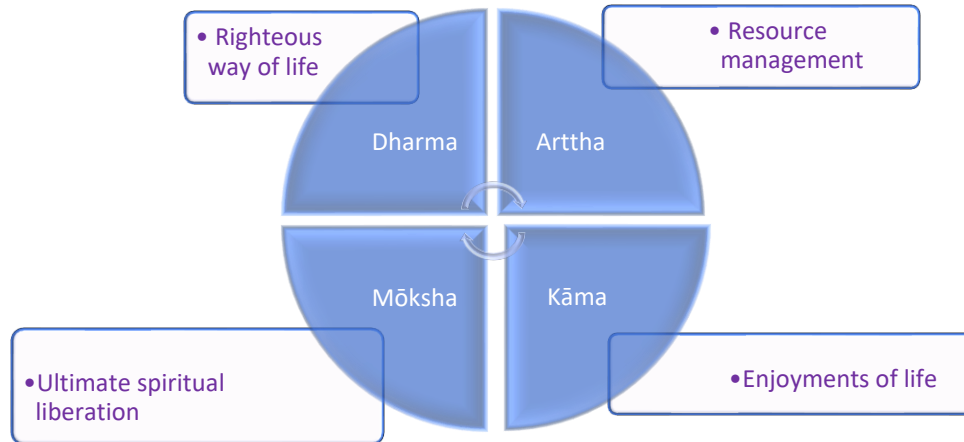
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Edited by S.Senthuran



1. VĒDAS:

Vēdas are general scriptures that instruct the four goals of human life. They are, **dharmā** - the righteous way of life, **arttha** - resource management, **kāma** - enjoyments of life, and **mōksha** - the ultimate spiritual liberation. Any texts that instruct on these can be considered as **vēdas**.



The four goals of human life

Hindu vēdas

Hindu **vēdas** are classified into four. They are **Rig, jayur, sāma** and **adharvaNa**. Each one has two divisions: **karma kāNda**, which has songs of praise and rituals, and **jnāna kāNda**, which explains the philosophical truth for spiritual liberation. This **jnāna kāNda** is also called **Upanishads** or **Vēdānta**. **Upanishads** are many, among them 108 are well known.

Ancient **vēdas** have two main contents:

A. **Stōtras**,

The songs of praise of God(s). **Stōtra**, by definition should have one or many of the following six.

guNinishta guNapithānam stōtram
namaskāras thathāseechcha siddhānthōkthi parāgrama
vibhudhi prārthanāsethi shad vidham stōtra lakshaNam

These six are salutation, well wishing, declaring faith, praising the greatness, wondering the Grace, and petitioning the requests. We can see these in the Tamil **ThirumuRai** songs. The songs of twelve **Saiva Thiru muRai**, including **thēvāram** and **thiru vāsakam** are considered as **Tamil vēdas** as they are the songs of praise.

B. **Purushārttha:**

Explaining the four goals of Human life, **purusha** means human.

They are: **aram/ dharma, poruL/arttha, inpam/ kāma** and **Veedu/ mōksha**.

They describe general duties and responsibilities pertaining to each goal. We will see them briefly, one by one.

➤ **aram/ dharma**

General duties and responsibilities in the four stages of life as

1. **brahmacharya - student life** – sheltered dependent life focusing on learning knowledge and skills for livelihood.
2. **gruhasta/ illaRam** – married life of a householder with a focus on maintaining ancestral duties, duties to god(s), family, guests and the self.
3. **vānaprastha – retired life** - reduced family and occupational responsibilities, focusing on giving back to the community and spirituality.
4. **sanyāsa** – committed 24/7 ascetic life for the spiritual quest and search.

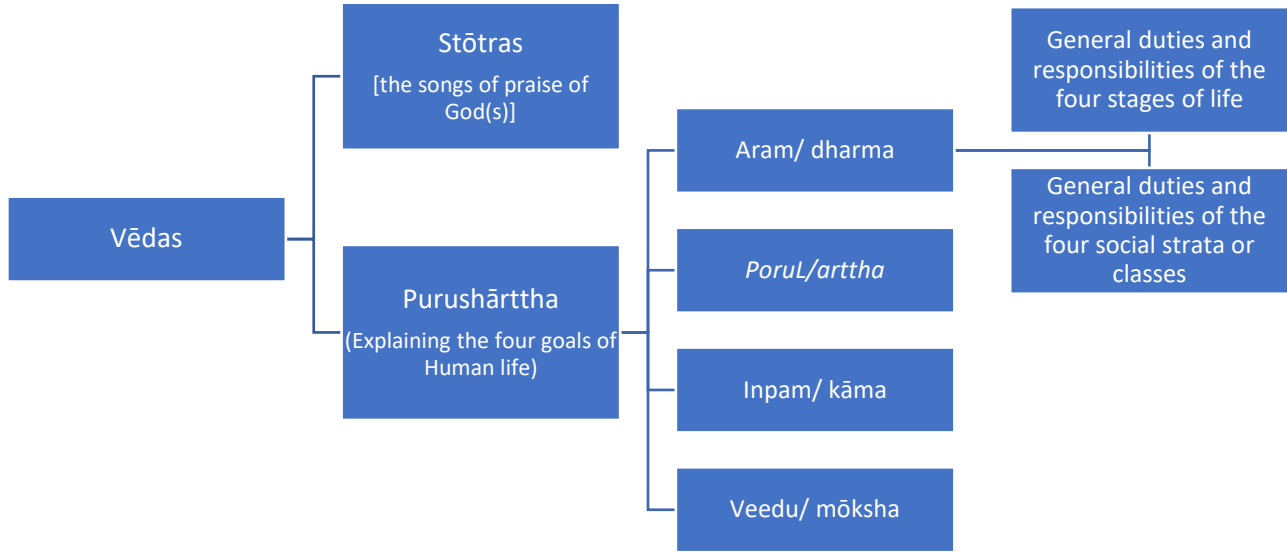
General duties and responsibilities of the four social strata or classes are:

1. **brahmana** – the intellectual class responsible for research, documentation and teaching.
2. **kshatriya** – the ruling class including politics, government and forces, responsible for defense, law and order in the society.
3. **vaishya** – business class responsible for trade, production and distribution.
4. **sūtra** – constitutes the labour force, both the skilled and un-skilled labour class. This is a vital force in society, holding everything together like a thread in a pearl string. **Sūtra** means holding thread.

➤ **poruL/arttha** – resource management

- **inpam/ kāma** – sensual enjoyment
- **veedu/ mōksha** – path of release with spiritual inclination

ThirukkuRaL by **ThiruvALLuvar** in Tamil elaborates on goals of human life as **aRam, poruL and inpam** in three dedicated sections and **veedu** in general. As such **ThirukkuRaL** is celebrated as the **Tamil veda** and **ThiruvALLuvar** as the informal **nayanār/ Saiva** saint.



2. SIX : AUXILIARIES OF VĒDAS:

Pre-requisite understanding of the six auxiliaries in the vēdas called shad-angās are important for the correct interpretation and day to day application of vēdic scriptures.

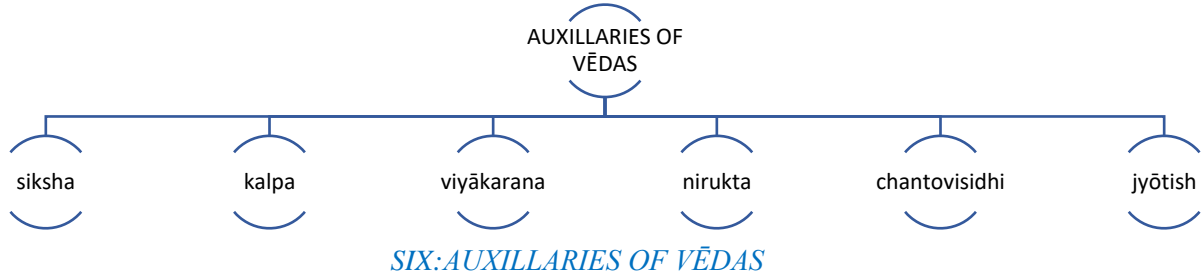
Unfortunately, many of the available translations of **vēdic scriptures** are done by scholars who are not versed or familiar with these pre-requisites. **Shad** means six, **anga** – means auxiliaries. Rituals as per these six auxiliaries are called **shadangu**.

They are

1. **siksha** – Phonetics and pronunciation
2. **kalpa** – Rituals for day-to-day life. Agamic schools of Hinduism like **Saiva** and **VaishNava** traditions override rituals prescribed in the **kalpa sutra** in many places while accepting some. Non- Agamic traditions like **smārta vedānta**, are entirely dependent on kalpa sutras for their ritual traditions. There are three main traditions of kalpa sutras, namely **Āpastamba**, **Baudhāyana** and **Hiranyakesin**.
3. **viyākarana** – Grammar and thesaurus

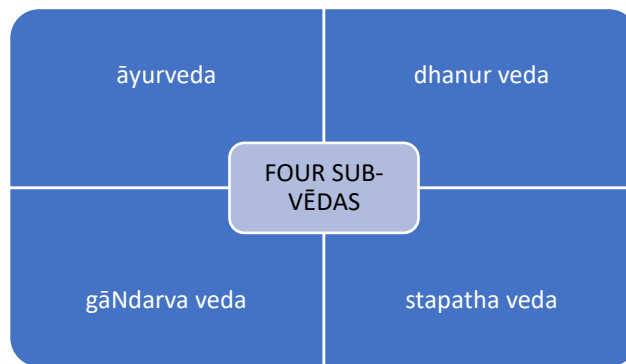
4. **nirukta** – Philology and etymology
5. **chantovisidhi** – Meter and prosody of poems and prose in literature
6. **jyōtish** – Astronomy and its application astrology for the calculation of appropriate timing.

Among these six, grammar, phonetics, etymology and literature constitute the current field of language, linguistics and literature.



3. FOUR SUB- VĒDAS:

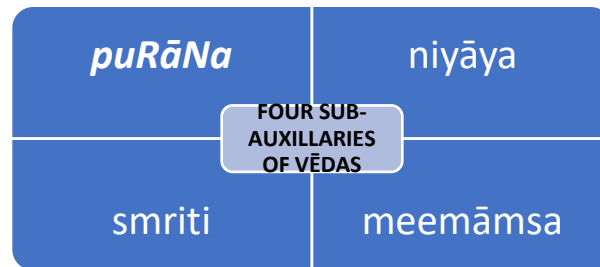
1. **āyurveda** – The field of medical science contributing to a long and healthy life
2. **dhanur veda** – Weaponry science and military warfare texts
3. **gāNdarva veda** – Entertainment, culinary texts and fine arts including music and dance.
4. **stapatha veda** – Fields of Architecture, Engineering and construction. some consider **arddha vēda** - resource management as the fourth sub veda.



4. FOUR SUB-AUXILLARIES OF VĒDAS:

Four sub-auxiliary texts of **vēdas** are called **upa-angās**. They are:

1. **puRāNa** – Documentation of eighteen mega stories of pre-historic events embedded with spiritual values and truths with mythology. There are 18 **sub-purānas** too. The epics - **ithikāsa** (means thus it happened) **Ramāyāna** and **Mahā Bhārat** are also considered as **purāNas**. **Siva Rākāshya** is also an **ithikāsa**
2. **niyāya** – Application of logic in discerning the truth. This is comparable to current scientific ways in research.
3. **meemāmsa** – Application of Vedic mantras with elaborate rules and rituals for the actualization of individual goals both in this life and after.
4. **smriti** – Application of rules, regulations, by-laws and laws pertaining to a particular period for the particular society are recorded in the eighteen **smriti** texts. Among the eighteen, **Manu smriti** and **parasara smriti** are well known. Some of their laws and rules are not applicable today as they are absurd and overtly discriminatory. They may be part of emergency rules and regulations of that time or laws safeguarding the interest of the dominant people of the time. Some of them are admirable, like laws of women rights to property, right to divorce and re-marry, right to have children out of marriage etc. The Hindu law governing the family and property in the Indian constitution is based on these.



Now we know that any field or branch of knowledge is considered a veda. As such, every human being has the right to access these vedas as per their needs and choice. It is impossible to master all these. So, families with the knowledge and expertise of the particular field or branch are entrusted to maintain, develop, teach and train that particular branch. These families are comparable to current universities. Kids born and raised in these families having had the natural advantage of long exposure and association with the field have excelled in the field. Everyone is expected to learn and associate themselves with the vested branch or field of knowledge before they venture or experiment in any other field. There are exceptions, exploitations and discriminations that we see time to time.

Crossing over to another field was possible but rare. We see many examples. Visvāmitra, who was a king born in a royal family of warriors – Kshatriya, became a Brahmin sage. He revealed the Gayatri mantra that every Brahmin chants today. DhroNa, the Guru of weaponry and martial arts in Mahabharata, was a Brahmin. Many authors of Vedic hymns are labourers.

Siruthondar, one of the 63 nayanārs, was a born brahmin but became a military commander. MāNikka Vāsagar was a brahmin and served as a minister to the King.

Vedas also have the knowledge and teachings of spirituality. This section of Vedas is called the Upanishads. There are many Upanishads, among them 108 are widely available. This part of the veda is called Jnāna kāNda. These are the essence of spiritual knowledge shared in the Vedas, and therefore are called Vedanta, meaning the ultimate truth of the Vedas. The portion of Vedas dealing with mantras and rituals are called karma kānda.

God, the Omniscient one with complete knowledge is the basis of all this knowledge. He is Omniscient, the source, and cause of all the knowledge. Humans who perceive, explore, expose and discover any particular branch of knowledge or truth is the seer. They are called Rishi, equivalent to modern day scientists and explorers discovering many things. That's why in each and every branch of knowledge, whether it is music, dance, medicine, the Upanishads or Kamasutra, it starts with Siva as the first revealer. Every branch or field of knowledge comes from Him. He has the sole proprietorship and patent rights for everything. As such, we, His children, have all the rights and access to them. As such, **Vedas are described as General texts in Saivam.**

5. TWENTY-EIGHT ĀGAMĀS AND 207 SUB ĀGAMĀS:

Āgamās are special scriptures that further elaborate on mōksha, the ultimate spiritual liberation explained in the upanishats through a God centric four step path of chariya, kriya, yōga and jnāna. These are the steps to personalize and internalize the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent Truth as the personal realization, experience and enjoyment in our life. In this process of searching or reaching the TRUTH, you become one with the TRUTH, ultimately you become the TRUTH. This state of non-dual realization is called advaita. Twi – means two; adding a prefix of “a” gives different interpretations in different schools of Hinduism. The interpretation in Saiva Siddhanta tradition is a unique one. As it prevails only among the Tamils, it is considered as the philosophy of Tamils. G.U.Pope even went on to say “Saiva Siddhanta is the choicest product of Dravidian intellect”. As such, many feel that Agamas are the texts, written by Dravidians in the common Language – Sanskrit. Some say the original Agamas in Tamil were lost in deluges, and the content was re-written in Sanskrit as current Agamas. Neither of these two have any scientific evidence to date. Unlike the vēdas, the Āgamās are intended for serious spiritual seekers only. Any scriptures that elaborate on the theo-centric approach to realize the Ultimate Truth can be considered as Āgamās, though it is rare to find them as exclusive texts. The essence of the Āgamās was graced in Tamil in Thiru Mantram, the 10th Thiru muRai and in MeikaNda Sāththiram, the fourteen Texts of the Truth Revealed..

The four steps for the actualization of your goal/ truth prescribed in Agama are Chariya, kriya, yoga and jnana.

Chariya – Approach and action enforced from others or outside. Here, we do things mechanically, out of compulsion, command, pressure or fear of others. This is like a student

studying out of pressure from parents and teachers or fear of poor marks. Going to the temple and praying to ward off the ill effects of the bad astrological prediction is also an example for this. Observing the fasts and feasts just for the sake of tradition, culture and habit also come under this.

Kriya – Approach and action by the self, but still in need of intermittent external prompts, rewards, reminders and supervision. A student studying on his/her own, but is still in need of intermittent guidance, reminders and rewards comes under this category.

Yoga – Entirely self-motivated, self-dependent genuine action and approach without any external pressures, fears and compulsion. A self-motivated student with genuine efforts is an example of this. A devotee relating to God without any external fear and pressure comes under here.

Jnana - Exponential exploration, excavation, exposition and expounding of new discoveries, meanings, dimensions, expressions, and applications of the Truth in any field, not necessarily in spirituality, is truly a spiritual journey and experience. This is called jnana. Those who are in this category are called Rishis.



6. FOUR STEP PATH OF AGAMAS:

All of our actions and approaches in our life come under these four categories.

Ego-centric lifestyle / loga dharma or sāmānya dharma:

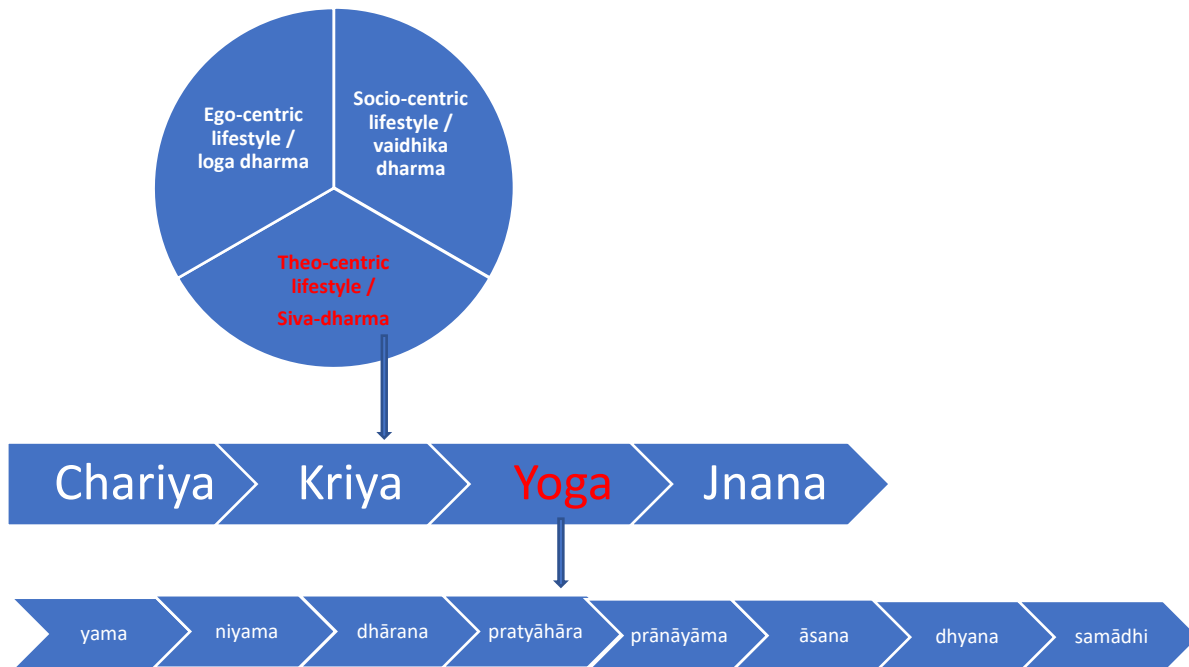
When our approach and actions are focused on secondary gains like fame, wealth, power and success etc., they are called upāya chariya, upāya kriya, upāya yoga and upāya jnana. Myself, my wife, my children, my family, my friends, my relatives, my team, my village, my race, my religion, my temple, my country are all examples of our ego-centric focuses. Our actions on this plane are governed by General Dharma of the time defined as rules, regulations, laws and by-laws, all executed by the forces and governed by the government. We must all abide by these. These are like traffic rules and tax laws and have little or no spiritual merits. As such, this is called loga dharma or sāmānya dharma. This is necessary for the smooth functioning of the society. Breaching these may result in punishment in the courts of law. “Hurt never” is the simple way to express this dharma.

Socio-centric lifestyle / vaidhika dharma:

When our actions and approaches are focused on others more, rather than on us, it is called socio-centric dharma or vaidhika dharma. Helping others and putting other's needs before ours are examples of this category. This is not an obligation, but it is a choice. No one is going to blame you or accuse you if you don't do this. This will earn spiritual merits. Helping others will gain puNya – the good karma. This will yield you good either in this birth or in another. These will get exhausted as you enjoy. Hurting others will earn pābha – bad karma. This will give you pain and suffering, either in this birth or in another. This socio-centric vaidhika dharma is prescribed in Vedas as well as in moral Tamil texts by the poetess Aouvai and others. Everyone has a judgement for these on their death. According to Saivam, Lord Yama is the judge. Chitragupta is his assistant. All our deeds of bad and good are registered and stored deep within our conscious called citta. These are read and interpreted to the judge Yama by his assistant Chitragupta. Yama will give the final judgment.

Theo-centric lifestyle / Siva-dharma:

When our actions and approaches are focused on the God or the Truth, it is called theo-centric Siva-dharma. These merits never exhaust. These are the ones giving us spiritual liberation – Mukti. When we mature by going through these previous Ego-centric loga dharma and socio-centric vaidhika dharma in our lives, we will ultimately turn into theo-centric Siva-dharma, doing all these but without expectations or gains. This is the stage of unmai Chariyai, unmai kriya, unmai yogam and unmai jnanam. Until that time, we are focused on other gains, and therefore they are called upāya Chariyai, upāya kriya, upāya yoga and upāya jnana.



our actions and approaches in our life

Siva-Agamas prescribe four types of Siva-dharmic actions and approaches. They are:

Chariya – Spiritual service and actions in physical ways such as cleaning the temple, maintaining the flower gardens for the temple, making garlands, service to devotees etc.

Kriya – Spiritual service and actions involving both mind and body, such as doing puja, rituals etc.

Yoga – Spiritual approach and actions with mind. This has eight steps or folds. They are:

1. **yama** – physical disciplines such as sitting straight, staying in one place without wondering etc.
2. **niyama** – mental disciplines such as ceiling of desires
3. **dhāraṇa** – concentration
4. **pratyāhāra** – focusing inside instead of seeking out,
5. **prāṇāyāma** – control and direction of breath with awareness and awakening of inner centers – chakras and opening up of energy channels – nādis
6. **āsana** – practice of some stretches and postures to ease the body to be conducive to our spiritual practice -sadhana
7. **dhyana** – meditation
8. **samādhi** – experiencing the union of body-mind-soul within

Jnana - When our individual intelligence, the intelligence of the soul, matures enough to realize that the perfection cannot be achieved by self-effort alone, however much and however long we try, the attitude of surrender ensues.

Then with the sundering of all the obscuring clouds binding to the soul, the Supreme comes as Guru or spiritual mentor and reveals Himself and imparts the soul with the non-dual advaita union with Him, the Ultimate Truth.

With this, the soul's individual intelligence/knowledge, love and joy also become one with the Supreme Intelligence – Jnana, the Supreme unconditional, unlimited Love – aruL and Supreme Bliss of unlimited and unending Joy.

Limited knowledge, love and joy experienced by the soul until this time in its multitude of births are nothing but just a fraction of the Supreme Intelligence, Love and Bliss. This is revealed time to time, as far as the clearance of our fetters, as per our maturity gained by education and experience through the cycles of births and deaths. The ultimate state of final liberation is Mukti in Saiva Siddhanta.

All these four stages can be intertwined with each other and expanded into sixteen, such as Chariya-in-Chariya, Kriya-in-Chariya, Yoga-in-Chariya and Jnana-in-Chariya, Chariya-in-Kriya and so on.

Ultimate realization and release are possible only through Jnana, not by any other means. All other stages are individual steps towards that.

Appar attained liberation by Chariya, meaning he attained this state by Chariya-in-Jnana.
Sambandhar attained liberation by kriya, meaning kriya-in-jnana.
Sundarar attained liberation by yoga, meaning yoga-in-jnana.
MāNikka vāsagar attained liberation by jnana, meaning jnana-in-jnana.

When the individual intelligence matures enough to realize that the perfection cannot be achieved by self-effort alone, the attitude of surrender comes.

There are many intermediate states of liberations, padha-mukti and penultimate states of liberation, apara-mukti before this ultimate liberation of siva-chāyujya Mukti. There is unending Bliss after this. There are no more returns to births and deaths. These souls are called Jnanis. Those who attained this stage while alive are called jivanmuktas, meaning liberated while alive. 63 of such Jnani's biographies were revealed in periyā purāNam, the 12th ThirumuRai.

7. ONLY TWO SCRIPTURES, VĒDAS AND ĀGAMĀS

*வேத நூல் சைவ நூல் என்று இரண்டே நூல்கள்
வேறு உரைக்கும் நூல் இவற்றின் விரிந்த நூல்கள்
ஆதிநூல் அனாதி அமலன் தரு நூல் இரண்டும்,
ஆரண நூல் பொது; சைவம் அரும்சிறப்பு நூலாம்;
நீதியினால் உலகர்க்கும், சத்தி நிபாதர்க்கும்
நிகழ்த்தியது; நீள்மறையின் ஒழிபொருள், வேதாந்தத்
தீதுஇல் பொருள் கொண்டு உரைக்கும் நூல் சைவம்; பிற நூல்
திகழ்பூர்வம்; சிவாகமங்கள் சித்தாந்தம் ஆகும்.*

vētanūl caivanūleṅ riraṅṅē nūlkaḷ
vēruraikkum nūlivarriṅ virinta nūlkaḷ
ātinūl anātiama laṅṅarunū liraṅṅum
āraṅṅanūl potucaivam aruṅciṅṅappu nūlām
nītiyīṅṅāl ulakarkkum cattinipā tarkkum
nikaḷttiyatu nīlmaṅṅaiyi nōliporuḷvē tāntat
tītilporuḷ koṅṅturaikkum nūlcaivam piṅṅanūl
tikaḷpūrvam civākamaṅṅkaḷ cittānta mākum

Revealed scriptures are only two, vēdas and Āgamās;
All others are derivatives of these;
These were revealed from the time eternal by the unblemished God;

Of them the vēdas are general, graced for general public,
The Āgamās are special, revealed for the inclined spiritual seekers;
These Āgamās expound the secrets of the sacred Truth
Spoken in the vēdas and its essence vēdānta, the upanishads
Hence all other texts are pūrva - paksha - the penultimate scriptures,
Siva-Āgamās alone are Siddhānta - the ultimate scriptures.

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், சிவஞானசித்தியார், பாடல் 267
MeikaNda Sāththiram, Siva Jnāna Siddhiyār Song 267

8. VĒDA -ĀGAMĀS ARE NOTHING BUT COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES BOTH SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL, OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

*அருமறையா கமமுதனூல் அனைத்தும்உரைக் கையினான்
அளப்பரிதாம் அப்பொருளை அரனருளால் அணுக்கள்
தருவர்கள்பின் தனித்தனியே தாமறிந்த அளிவில்
தர்க்கமொடுத் தரங்களினாற் சமயம்சா தித்து
மிருதிபுரா ணம்கலைகள் மற்று மெல்லாம்
மெய்ந்நூலின் வழிபுடையாம் அங்கம்வே தாங்கம்
சுருதிசிவா கமம்ஓழியச் சொல்லுவதொன் றில்லை
சொல்லுவார்த் மக்கறையோ சொல்லொ ணாதே.*

arumaraiyā kamamutaṇṭul aṇaittumuraik kaiyiṇāṇ
aḷapparitām apporuḷai aranaruḷāl aṇukkal
taruvarkaḷpiṇ taṇittaiyē tāmarinta aḷavil
tarkkamoṭut taraṅkaḷiṇār camayamcā tittu
mirutipurā ṇamkalaikaḷ maru mellām
meynnūliṇ vaḷipuṭaiyām aṅkamvē tāṅkam
curuticivā kamamoḷiyac colluvatoṇ ṛillai
colluvārta makkaraiyō collo ṇātē

Vēdas and Āgamās expound the TRUTH in total.
As such they are called muthal nool, unbiased revealed texts.
Their immeasurable meanings are given out duly by the graced souls.
Followers who try to interpret them as per their
individual understanding and capacity, establish various religions.
smirtis and purāNas and all other arts and sciences (kalā Sāstrās) are just vazi nool, guide texts.,
Six auxiliary texts of vēdas (vēdānga or shadānga) and
the four sub auxiliary texts of vēdas (upāngas) and
four sub-vēdas (upa vēdas) form appendages, sārbhu nool
But nothing is comparable to the messages in the vēda-Āgamās.
We cannot find anything to say to those who would assert otherwise.

- மெய்கண்ட சாத்திரம், சிவஞானசித்தியார், பாடல் 266
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Dr. Lambotharan, the founder of Saiva Siddhanta Peedam and its wing Knowing Our Roots, is committed to sharing the wisdom of Saiva Siddhanta, the choicest theology of Tamils. He is doing this by conducting Sunday classes for kids and youth, weekly Satsang meetings, radio talk shows, speeches, writings, regular pilgrimages and field visits. He has written many articles in Tamil and English on this subject. He is carrying this out as directed by his Jnana Guru Chidamparam A. Krishnamurti (Deeksha name - Kunchithapaatha naathan) of Sivakkudil tradition in 2005. He was furnished further by Saiva scholar S. Shanmugavel of Thiruvaavaduthurai Adheenam. It is worth to mention that he is also the grandson of Saiva Siddhanta Viddhagar V. Nagalingam JPUM of Vaddukoddai who presided the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam conference in 1953 in Chennai. Dr. Lambotharan is also the Founder and former President of the International Medical Health Organization – Canada (IMHO- Canada) www.imhocanada.org, a worldwide charity mostly working among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and Co-founder of the Toronto Tamil Sangam www.torontotamilsangam.ca. He is also one of the founders and board of directors of the Tamil Community Centre project www.tamilcentre.ca in Toronto. He can be reached on weekly zoom meetings every Saturday 7.30 pm EST Toronto time on the following link. Meeting ID: 984 429 0374; Passcode: satsang.



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