



STUDY ON THE ESSENCE OF SAIVA SIDDHANTA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WAY OF LIBERATION

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ABSTRACT :

Shaiva Siddhanta is a school of thought and ritual practice based on twenty-eight Shaiva agamas or Tantras, authoritative scriptures in Sanskrit that proclaim their origins as divine knowledge revealed by Shiva. The system was originally grounded in a dualist doctrine that regards Shiva (pati or Lord) and souls (pasu) as eternally distinct, divine entities; materiality (pasha/pasa), which makes up the rest of the universe, is inanimate, but also real. Rites of initiation and the daily worship of Shiva were understood as necessary acts leading to liberation. The earliest known Siddhantin agamas are first seen in northern India around the 6th century CE. From then until the 12th century, the school spread across India, its members connected with monastic institutions and temples; a number of its preceptors became royal gurus. After this period, however, Shaiva Siddhanta remained active only in the southern Tamil country, where its doctrines developed along such different lines that some scholars mark it as a separate system. From the 12th to the 14th centuries, preceptor-scholars wrote a series of doctrinal works in Tamil and Sanskrit that together came to be called the Meykanda Cattirankam (Meykanda Shastras). This collection became the new Shaiva Siddhanta "canon" in the Tamil country, containing a number of features that move away from the doctrines of the earlier Sanskrit agamic literature. While the Brahmin priests focused on the rituals, especially those performed "for the sake of others" (pararthapuja) (i.e., temple rituals), high-caste, non-Brahmin preceptors practiced Shiva worship "for one's own sake" (atmarthapuja), established monasteries, wrote theological works and commentaries on the Meykanda Cattirankam, and embraced as part of their tradition not only the agamas but also the Vedas (and especially the medieval devotional literature of the Tamil Tirumurai, so that the distinction between Shaiva Siddhanta and Tamil Shaiva bhakti has become blurred. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Dravidian cultural nationalists attempted to appropriate Shaiva Siddhanta by portraying it as the original, "pre-Aryan" religion of the Tamil people, a move that led to the common but inaccurate view that the school is essentially or originally a Tamil tradition. Today, Shaiva Siddhanta is seen mostly in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, in the ritual traditions of the Gurukkam temple priests and Otuvar singers, and in monastic institutions, as well as in temples and monastic organizations in the Hindu.

KEYWORDS : Lord Siva, Pati, Pasu, Pasa, Siddhanta Principles, liberation.

INTRODUCTION

The Saiva Siddhanta School is one of the most ancient schools of Saivism. It has a history of more than 2000 years. Its roots can be traced back to both Kashmir and southern India. It gained popularity in the south and established itself as a dominant sect of Saivism. In the past it had sizeable following in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. But currently it is popular mostly in the south. Saiva Siddhanta believes in the three eternal entities of God, Soul and Bondage (materials of bondage). These are called Pati, Pasu and Pasam respectively in Siddhanta philosophy. Pati means Lord (of the souls) who is

God. Pasam means bondage. Pasu means that which is under bondage. All things known and perceived are included in these three categories. According to Saiva Siddhanta God is one, Souls are many and Pasam consists of three impurities (malams) called Anava (anavam), Karma (kanmam) and Maya (mayai). Like Pati who is real and eternal, Pasu and Pasam are also real and eternal. Existence of God and other eternal entities is established by various epistemological means. Logical arguments, based on sense perception, inference and scripture are important means of proving their existence. Anything that has a beginning, existence and decay is made by someone. It has a maker. Our physical body including the mental and psychological equipments, the world and the worldly things had a beginning. They exist for a certain period of time and then decay. They, therefore, have a maker who is God. Existence of God is thus established by inference. The existence of other entities is also established similarly by various means.

GOD

Siva (Sivam) is the name given to their God by the Saivites. Siva means One who is perfect and or auspicious. His inherent nature is wisdom. He is with infinite love to benefit the souls. It is His Grace which is part of Him. Like the sun and its light, He remains inseparable with his Sakthy which is Grace. Sakthy literally means power or energy. He is omnipresent. The Tamil word for God, Kadavul, meaning One who resides outside and inside, indicates his omnipresence.

SOUL

According to Saiva Siddhanta, Souls are many. No two persons or beings are alike. We may therefore, conclude that every living being has a soul of its own. Anma and uyir are other names for soul. Soul has the capabilities to know, act and desire. These are called its Gnana sakthy, Kriya Sakthy and Iccha sakthy respectively. These capabilities are impaired by the associated entity called Anava. Soul has a dependant nature and behaves like the one on which it depends. When it depends on the worldly things, it behaves like them. When it depends on God, it behaves like a divine being. This nature of dependency is called in Tamil as 'Sarnthathan Vannamathal'.

ANAVA

Anavam is the cause of all negative qualities of the soul. It is the source of ego, ignorance, hatred, etc. Anavam is associated with the soul from beginning-less time. Like verdigris on copper, or the husk on paddy, it has a natural association with the soul. Obscuring soul's power to know is the inherent nature of Anavam. It is its special nature, called 'sorupa lakshana'. In association with karma and Maya, Anavam misleads the soul to know mistakenly. This nature of anavam is called 'Thadastha lakshana'. Anavam's actions on the soul are summarized under seven categories in Saiva Siddhanta. Anavam is spoken of only in Saiva Siddhanta and not in any other Indian philosophies.

KARMA

Karma means action "Vinai" is the Tamil word for it. Every action has its own result and everyone has to experience the fruit of his action. This is the theory of karma. 'Good and evil do not come to us from others' is a phrase in an early Tamil work, Sangam literature. This is expressive of the Karmic theory. In philosophical language, both action and its result are called karma. Many incidences in life escape reason for them. Cause of them is not known. Law of karma offers explanations to them. The results of one's action or karma in a particular life come to experience in the same life or in another life, and get exhausted. Good actions results in good or pleasant experience and evil action result in bad or painful experience. Fruit of one's karma is fed to the soul to come to experience by God, at a suitable time and surrounding decided by Him.

MAYA

Maya is the subtle entity which is the first cause of all material things. It is real, and not an illusion as in Vedanta philosophy. To perform any karma or action, material objects such as the physical body and worldly things are required. These are created by God from Maya. This is akin to a potter making pots from the clay. The physical body is made from Maya and given to the soul. Soul taking birth is obtaining the physical body. At death its body disintegrates to Maya. Thus birth and death are mere transformation from one state to another, from Maya to gross body and vice versa. According to Saiva Siddhanta, only that which is in existence comes out in another form. Nothing comes out from the void. This is an important concept in Saiva Siddhanta, called 'Satkariya Vatham'. 'Sat' means that which is real; 'Kariya' means the product and 'Vatham' means concept. When the material things originate from Maya, they first originate as evolutes of Maya, called tatvas.(Thaththuvangkal) Most of the Indian philosophical systems speak of twenty four Tatvas. Saiva Siddhanta speaks of thirty six Tatvas.

Although maya is a single entity, by nature of its actions, it is divided into two parts, as Suddha (pure) Maya and Asuddha (impure) Maya. Out of the thirty six tatvas, five tatvas belong to suddha maya and they are called Siva Tatvas. Sivasakthy, the divine power of Lord Siva acts directly on them. Thirty one Tatvas belong to Asuddha Maya. Of these, seven Tatvas are necessary to awaken the soul's capabilities and to drive it to gain experience. These seven tatvas are called Vidya tatvas. The other twenty four Tatvas are necessary for the formation of physical body and its functions and experiences. They are called Prakrti maya Tatvas and are formed from Moola Prakrti which again is a product of Asudha Maya. Prakriti means nature, and is in the form of guna (gunam). Guna is of three kinds, Sathva, rajas and Thamas. Our experiences of happiness, pain, confusion etc., are in the form of varying combination of these three guns. The twenty four tatvas of prakrti are also of this form. The soul is under bondage of the triple Malams (impurities) of Anava, Karma and Maya. When this bondage is broken, it gets liberation or Mukthy.

THE NATURE SOUL

Before taking any birth, the soul was in a state, enmeshed in the darkness of Anavam, unable to exhibit its capabilities to know, act and desire. This state of the soul is called 'Kevalam'. Lord Siva, out of His immense love to help the soul, provided it with a subtle body formed with eight Tatvas of Maya. This subtle body is called 'Puriyatakatyam'. With this body, the soul, for the first time showed some movement. This movement became the first karma of the soul and it had its own result. For the result of this karma to come to experience God Siva provides a suitable gross body created from Maya. This is a new birth for the soul, in the world. On taking birth, the soul acts or performs new karma, and the result of the past karma comes to experience through it and get exhausted. But its action gives rise to another karma which again has to come to experience and get exhausted. For this to happen, it has to take another birth. Thus karma and birth follow one after another, till the soul gets liberation. The state of the soul with the body on earth is called 'Sakalam'. In every birth, the soul, through its action, gains experience, and through experience gains knowledge. As it gains knowledge, the grip of Anava, which is the source of its ignorance, gradually gets loosened, and it evolves towards liberation. In its path of spiritual evolution, it passes through various stages, called Malaparipakam, Iruvinai oppu and Saththinipatham. These are states where Anava Malam gets ripened to be removed, mental equipoise to consider pain and pleasure as same is developed and Grace of Siva descends.

LIBERATION (MUKTHI)

According to Saiva Siddhantha school, liberation is attained through the means of Charya, Kriya, yoga and Gnana. These four paths are not complimentary. A guru decides the suitable path based on his study and observation of his disciple and according to the latter's ability and inclination.

- **THE PATH OF CHARYA** involves serving Lord Siva in a temple or religious place by performing such tasks as cleaning, cooking, carrying water, gathering flowers etc. This is called dasa-marga or the path of the servant. By this path one gains entry into Kailas or the world of Siva.
- **THE PATH OF KRIYA** involves performing devotional tasks such as worshipping the idol of Siva, singing devotional songs, reciting the mantras, narrating stories about Siva or doing personal service to Siva like a son does to his father. This is called sat-putra-marga or the path of a good son. By following this path one gains close proximity to Lord Siva.
- **THE PATH OF YOGA** involves practicing yoga exercises (Asanas) and meditation and contemplation (Dhyana). By following this path one gets an opportunity to live constantly in the company of Siva and become his spiritual companion. Hence this path is called Sakha-Marga or the path of friendship.
- **THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE** is the fourth path. It is the best and most direct path to the world of Siva. The other three are actually considered inferior to it. On this path, Gnana or knowledge is the means. It is called Sat-Marga because it takes the Jivas closer to Sat or Truth and makes it possible for them to experience or become aware of their true Siva consciousness.

After liberation, the liberated soul knows that its intrinsic nature is that of Siva but that it is not Siva or the Supreme Self. Thus in its liberated state it continues to experience some form of duality, while enjoying Siva (Pati) consciousness as its true consciousness free from all bonds (Pasas).

BHEDA-ABHEDA

In Saiva Siddhanta, liberation of a Jiva does not mean that its existence as an individual soul is lost forever. After liberation the Jivas enjoy a special relationship with Siva called Bheda-Abheda (separation and non-separation), which essentially means the duality between the two (the Linga and the Anga) linger, one being the whole and the other being the part, but the unity of experience prevail. The relationship is not of oneness but of sameness. In their liberated state the Jivas experience unlimited bliss and freedom from the bonds (Pasas) of Samsara. The Siva-Gnana-Bodham cautions the individual Jivas who have become free while still living on earth to maintain inner purity and practice austerities so that, when they finally depart from here, the fruit of their previous actions do not interfere with their final liberation. Saiva Siddhanta recognizes three types of Jivas or souls based on their degree of bondage to the Pasas or Impurities. In the first category are the souls that are bound by all the three bonds (Pasas) namely Anava, Karma and Maya. In the second category are souls that free from two bonds namely karma and Maya and are bound by Anava alone. In the third category are souls that become free from Maya only during Pralaya or the dissolution of the entire creation.

CONCLUSION

The Saiva Siddhanta system is the distilled essence of Vedanta. It prevailed in Southern India even before the Christian era. The way to the attainment of Shivatva (God-Realization): You must free yourself from the three bonds (described above), if you want to attain salvation. You must annihilate Maya, which is the root of all sins. You must destroy all Karmas which produce rebirth. You must remove the erroneous notion of a finite self. The three bonds can be removed only through rigorous Tapas, proper discipline, guidance from a Guru, and, above all, the grace of Lord Siva. Charya (Observance), Kriya (Rites), and Yoga (Yama-Niyama) constitute the discipline. When the aspirant practices in right earnest Charya, Kriya and Yoga he obtains the grace of Lord Shiva. Then the Lord instructs the Soul, reveals himself to him, and illumines him. Then the soul realizes its nature as Siva. The way of liberation in Saivasiddhanta is unique identification of the realization of Soul.

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