

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SAIVAISM

The author of this book, Mr. M. Eliathamby is a trained graduate and taught in three schools in Sri Lanka for a number of years. In recognition of his meritorious service he was awarded a Grade I Special Post by the Public Service Commission in Sri Lanka. He was promoted to the position of Deputy Principal of Karainagar Hindu College from where he retired at the age of 60 years.

Mr. Eliathamby lives in Sydney, Australia, and is active in writing even at his old age. He spends his time in prayer, meditation and in reading religious books. He spent most of his leisure time in literary pursuits, which enabled him to become the Author of eight books and articles in the fields of History and Philosophy. His books reveal his profound knowledge in these fields. Some of the books are being used as text books in schools and universities.

The Philosophy of Saivism is written by the experienced author to explain the essence of Saivism in simple terminology. It must be read by all Saivites who are living in all parts of the world to understand and appreciate the concepts of their great religion. This book will no doubt helps the non-Hindus to acquire the basic knowledge on the Saivism, which is a popular form of Hinduism among Tamils. It is appropriate that The Philosophy of Saivism is the first publication of the Saiva Manram Inc.

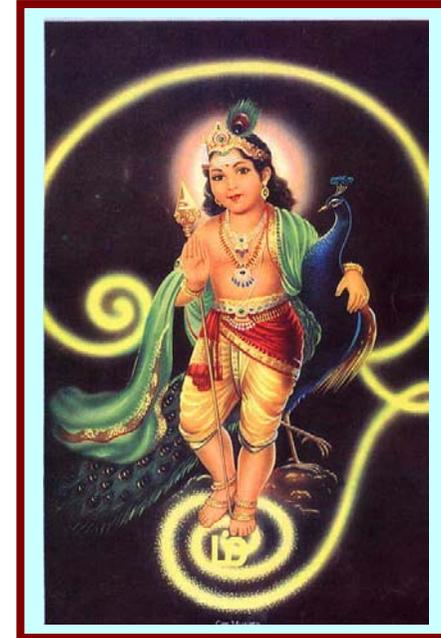
The following list shows some of his books:

- (1) Ceylon and World History for Standards 6, 7 and 8
- (2) World History for the G. C. E. (Ord. Level)
- (3) History of Ceylon 1505 - 1948 for G. C. E. (Adv. Level)
- (4) Mupporul Unmai Vilakkam (1978)
- (5) Mupporul Unmai Vilakkam Part 1 (1996 in Australia)
- (6) The Philosophy of Saivism (1999 in Australia)

Dr. R. Sri Ravindrarajah (Editor, Aum Muruga Journal)

Aum Namshivaya

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SAIVAISM



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INTRODUCTION

Saivism is the religion of those who worship Siva. The ultimate goal of life is union of the soul with god, in which state the soul enjoys eternal bliss. Saivism explains how the soul can attain that state.

Siva is the supreme god and is formless. It is not possible to give a definition or a description of something that is beyond perception. When can a soul reach such a state as to become one with God? Human beings have six senses by virtue of which they may be considered as supreme beings among all other living beings. Besides, man is endowed with the power of reasoning. Man also knows what is Truth, Righteousness, Love and Sympathy which are the basic and noble qualities not found in other living beings. He can think of God and pray for His Grace.

God has given living beings a physical body but no mental faculties. Man should be able to understand his capacity to realize his inborn abilities which could enable him to attain self-realization. Truth is indefinable. Truth does not undergo any change with time. It is eternal. Truth is God. Man has to observe certain laws of nature in order to achieve his goal of human birth. There is the Law of *Dharma* which is the law of nature. Water is cold, fire is hot, and each element is the subject to a law of *Dharma*. Similarly man is subject to a law applicable in accordance with human nature. Love towards all living beings, devotion to God, morality in society, purity of mind are all aspects of Human Dharma. It is a matter for regret that man deviates from the path of righteousness and wanders in the wilderness of *adharma*. The fundamental truths revealed through the 14 Saiva Siddhantha and the Sastras and the 12 Thirumuris are a source of guidance for the seeker of truth. This emphasizes how human beings should liberate themselves from rebirth.

Saivism owes its origin to the *Vedas* and *Agamas* which are revelations of God. Saivism gives a sound knowledge of the three fundamental truths, *Pathi*, *Pasu* and *Pasam* (God, Soul and Illusion) which explains how liberation from rebirth takes place. Saivism affirms that the fact that the souls are many. At the beginning the soul is constricted by *anava* (ego) and hence it loses its power of cognition, conation and affection. So God

out of compassion for the souls, has endowed man with a physical body and mental faculties, the world and the things of the world for their enjoyment. The main purpose is to help the soul free itself from “ego” through the worldly experience. The man while experiencing the ups and downs of life acquires an understanding that the qualities emanating from “ego” is detrimental to his progress. He finds that the animal qualities in man such as jealousy, anger, revenge, immorality and egoistic tendencies should not be allowed to predominate the mind. It feels that the human qualities such as sympathy, love and service to others and purity of mind should be developed from spiritual progress. Above all these, the divine qualities would only lift a person to great heights of spiritual advancement. The mere sight of the suffering of another person should evoke feelings of pity and there should be readiness to render voluntary service. Help in time of need is a magnanimous quality. The heart should melt at the sight of suffering of others. These are some of the divine qualities. Divine qualities alone will not bring the required elevation in the spiritual plane. So the *anavic* decadence, the ethical transcendence and spiritual illumination are the important states, which could help on towards liberation.

My first book *Mupporul Unmai Vilakkam* which was released in Sri Lanka in 1978 gives a clear exposition of the basic and fundamental truths explained in *Saiva Sidthantha* in Tamil and was popular in both Sri Lanka and India. Students of the advanced level and those of university who offer Hindu civilization as a subject and others interested in the study of *Sidthantha* philosophy find it a suitable book to study.

At the request of a number of men who are keen to know about Saivism, the first part of the book was released in Australia on the 30th of June 1996. As there is a strong need for a book on Saivism in English, I have made an attempt to write the present book entitled, *The Philosophy of Saivism*, which I hope will receive the appreciation of the General Public, the students and teachers of philosophy. It gives it a nutshell the basic facts of the Siddhanta philosophy written in simple English which I hope will facilitate the understanding of an abstruse philosophy.

Dr. Arunai Palaravayan M.A., PHD, Tamil Professor, Loyala College, Chennai during his short stay in Australia complied with my request to write

a foreword for this book. In spite of pressure for time he was able to find sometime to go through the book and write a Foreword in which he has expressed the salient points in it and also about the need for such a book in Australia, where a large number of Saivites have settled. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Palaravayan for writing a suitable foreword for this book.

Reference:

1. The fourteen Sidthantha Sastras and the twelve Thirumurais
2. Natchinthanai by Sivayogaswamy
3. Mupporul Unmai Vilakkam by M. Eliathamby.

The author, Mr. Murugesu Eliathamby who was born on the 23rd July 1909 in Maviddapuram, Jaffna, Sri Lanka passed away on the 21st August 2002 in Sydney, Australia at the age of 93 years. He is survived by a daughter and three sons. His demise is a great loss to the Saivite community of Sydney.

FOREWORD

**Professor Arunai Palaravayan, M. A., Ph. D.
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I had an opportunity to read *The Philosophy of Saivism* by Thiru M. Eliathamby of Sydney, Australia. His mastery over *Saiva Sidthantam* sparkles right from the beginning. Generally, we know that *Saiva Sidthantam* is a difficult concept to understand. It is all the more difficult to make it simple.

**எண்பொருள் வாகச் செலச்சொல்லித் தான்பிறர்வாய்
நுண்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு.**

This Kural is quite appropriate to the principles and concept of *Saiva Sidthantham*. Eliathamby has reduced *Saiva Sidthantham* in a simple language frame.

Saiva Sidthantam is so sophisticated and complex that each of its concepts can be elaborated extensively. The impressive dimension of *The Philosophy of Saivism* is that Eliathamby has successfully offered each complex topic in a succinct way. I realise that such an achievement is possible only by people of age and maturity of mind. I am familiar with his earlier publication முப்பொருள் உண்மை விளக்கம். It too is an excellent introduction to *Saiva Sidthantam*.

Saiva Sidthantam discusses *Maya* and *Sittam* separately and offer a distinct meaning, unlike other beliefs of Hinduism. Eliathamby has taken immense pains to bring out the explanation for these concepts brilliantly. The reader needs to take these explanations very seriously.

This volume illustrates the philosophical meanings of the terms such as, *Pati*, *Pasu*, and *Pasam*, and thus forms a sound basis for the 14 *Sastras*.

It is remarkable to understand that Eliathamby's effort is important for the Hindus settled abroad. The English edition is key to thus. I sure all-overseas Hindus will read this introductory volume to *Saiva Sidthantam* and remain benefited.

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1. SAIVAISM

Saivism is the religion of those who worship Siva. It is one of the oldest religions of the world. The Indus Valley civilization existed more than 12,000 years before the dawn of the Christian era. The excavation done in the modern times at Harappa and Mohanja-daro, which were towns of the Indus Valley, are an ample evidence of the existence of a religion, the adherents of which were worshippers of Siva. Sivalingam and other symbolic forms related to Saiva religion were some of the important findings of the excavations. John Marshall a western researcher said, "among all the religions of the world, Saivism is the most ancient religion. It goes back to Paleolithic age (the period from 3 million to 12,000 BC). The first Prime Minister of India, Jawarharlal Nehru, had mentioned in his book, *Discovery of India*, about the excavations of Harappa and Mohanja-daro that the people of those areas were worshippers of Siva.

There are references to the worship of Siva in the works of the poets of the Third Tamil Sangam. Besides, *Thirumurukattupadai* sung by Nakkirar of the Third Sangam in praise of Lord Murugan corroborates the fact that the worship of the Gods of this faith existed in the ancient time. *Thirumanthiram* gives an exposition of the essence of Saivism in its various aspects. Thirumoolar, the author of this book and the greatest Saint of the post-Sangam period has bequeathed to the world gems of thought in spiritual aspects enshrined in the Saiva religion. The existence of temples for Siva, Murugan and Pillaiyar in different parts of India in the ancient period is a vital indication that Saivism flourished at that time, though there were setbacks in the early centuries of the Christian era due to the inroads of alien culture. The dawn of the new era since the sixth century B.C. led to the awakening of the pristine glory of Saivism with the appearance of the four great Saints of the high order, Appar, Sambanthar, Sundarar and Manickavasagar. The sacred hymns of these four Saints known as, the Samayad Kuravar, were a source of inspiration to those dedicated to this religion. The 14 *Sidthantha Sastras*, which codified the Saiva doctrines written by a number of Saints beginning with Meikanda

Thevar, made it very authentic in the exposition of the sublime ideas in their true perspective.

Saivism is a religious system, which teaches us about the ultimate goal in life, the cause of pain and pleasure in this life and the relationship of God and man. It also speaks about the rites and rituals and the form of worship. Saivism speaks about Siva and about His compassionate actions for the salvation of the souls.

The books that tell us about Saivism are the 12 *Thirumurais* and the 14 *Saiva Sidthantha Sastras*. The collection of the sacred hymns known as *Thirumurais* sung by Gnana Sambanthar are the first three *Thirumurais*. The next three were those sung by Thirunavukarasar. The seventh *Thirumurai* is that of Sundarar. The *Thiruvagasam* and *Thirukkovaaiyar* sung by Manickavasagar belong to the eighth *Thirumurai*. The ninth is the *Thiruvisaippa* and *Thiruppallandu* sung by Senthanar. The tenth one is the *Thirumanthiram* sung by Thirumoolar. The eleventh one is a collection sung by Karaikal Ammaiyar, Seraman Cholar, Paddinath Adigal etc. *Periya Puranam* is the twelfth one sung by Sekkilar.

Among the 14 *Sidthantha Sastras* the foremost one is *Sivagnana-potham* written by Meikanda Thevar. *Sivagnana Sithiyar* and *Irupa Irupakuthu* were the works of Arulnandhi Sivachariar. *Unmai Vilakkam* was written by Thiruvathikai Manavasakam Kadanthar who was a disciple of Meikanda Thevar. *Thiruvunthiyar* and *Thirukalittupadiyar* were written by Thiruvalluvar Uiyavantha Thevanar and Thirukkadavoor Uiyavantha Thevanar, respectively. The other eight *Meikanda Sastras*, including *Sivappirakasam* were written by Umapathy Sivachariar.

2. LIVING BEINGS

There are seven kinds of living beings. They are the human beings, heavenly beings, animals, birds, trees, those that crawl on earth and those that live in water. Souls that take a physical body are innumerable. The Soul exists in three states namely *Kevala*, *Sakala* and *Sudtha* states. *Kevala* is the state of inertia without knowledge, desire, and actions. The Soul in that state is constricted by a power inherent in it called *anava*. It causes ignorance to the Soul. When the Soul is afflicted thus, God out of compassion gives the Soul *Thanu*, *Karana*, *Puvana*, and *Pokam*. *Thanu* is the physical body, the instruments of thought are called *Karana*. *Puvana* is the world. *Pokam* is enjoyment of all the things, which are found in the world.

Thanu, which is the physical body, is composed of the five elements, water, fire, wind, earthly substances and the heavenly space. The sources from which the different species of living beings spring are the *Andersam* (egg), *Suvathasam* (sweat) *Utpicham* (seed, root, yams) and *Sarasaram* (womb). The Souls that take the seven kinds of physical bodies are not endowed with all the five senses namely, hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling. The trees have only one sense, the sense of touching. The shark and similar marine beings have two senses namely, touching and tasting. The ants and white ants have three senses namely, touching, tasting, and smelling. The beetles and wasps have four senses. They are touching, tasting, smelling, and seeing. The animals and birds have five senses namely, touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, and hearing. Human beings are endowed with not only the five senses but also the power of reasoning.

Man is superior to all other beings. He can differentiate between right and wrong. He can express his ideas to others. He can acquire knowledge with the help of the five senses and also think of God. The aim of a human being is to worship God and to work for the liberation from rebirth and to attain eternal bliss. Thayumanavar, a great Saint says, "of the innumerable Souls, it is rare to be born as a human being. If that is missed, I do not know what sort of a being I would be born and what I shall be destined to

be". Auvaiyar, a great poetess says, "it is very rare to be born as a human being".

What we gather from these noble utterances is, we having been born as human beings, should lead a good and pure life which would help us attain the highest goal which is to free us from the bondage of rebirth. We should conform to the principles and tenets enunciated in our sacred religion. We should refrain from committing the five kinds of sins namely, killing, stealing, becoming an addict to liquor and drugs, lust and speaking lies. In order to get the grace of God, a pure life free from any blemishes helps us pursue a righteous life. The vicious qualities such as, jealousy, desire, irritation, and painful words make one deviate from the path of righteousness. They impair the mind and deter our progress.

Man, who is considered as the highest being of all other living beings commits consciously or unconsciously good and bad actions. He has to reap the fruits of his actions in his subsequent births. The Law of Karma is a natural law, which never fails to work in respect of our actions. Hence, there is the cycle of births. All processes continue to work until a man attains spiritual perfection. As all the beings of lower species do not have the faculty of reasoning, they are neither capable of thinking about God in this birth, nor in the next births. It was the acts of Karma which those Souls had committed in the past births cause ignorance of the present and the future.

3. THE THREE CONCEPTS

Saivism postulates three cardinal concepts namely, *Pathi*, *Pasu*, *Pasam*. *Pathy* is God, *Pasu* is the Soul and *Pasam* comprises *Anava* (Ego), *Karma* (Past actions) and *Maya* (Illusion). The *Saiva Sidthantha* explains these three concepts. The word *Sidthantha* means the final conclusion derived from the knowledge of the 4 *Vedas* and 28 *Agamas*, which are considered as revelations of God. They are fundamental truths, which cannot be contradicted by reasoning or by the change of time. The three concepts are everlasting truths. There is no beginning or end for these three concepts. Thirumoolar, a great Saint and the author of the *Thirumanthiram* says 'that the three concepts *Pathi*, *Pasu*, *Pasam* have no beginning and are everlasting".

Though these three concepts are eternal truths, they are not visible to us. Therefore, the question arises whether we could speak about these. There are reliable and convincing reasons that could help us to prove the existence and nature of these concepts. They are (i) perception, (ii) inference, and (iii) the words of the great Saints and Sages.

Through evolution, existence and involution of the world, we could conclude that an invisible power exists for the changes to take place. We realize that the invisible power is God. Similarly when a man experiences pleasure and pain he realizes that his past *Karma* is the cause of that life experience. The second is Inference. Everything in the world has some natural traits. If there is fire there will be smoke. So if a person sees smoke at a distance, he infers that there is a fire. The third refers to the words of the men of Wisdom. If Thiruvalluvar or any other Saint is quoted we believe it. Those are indisputable truths. Therefore, we find that there are credible reasons to prove the existence of these three concepts.

Of these three cardinal concepts, we as human beings are more concerned with the Soul and its redemption, which is the realization of the goal of life. Human beings only can attain the Feet of God and enjoy eternal bliss. We should therefore pursue paths that would pave the way to achieve that goal. The following will be helpful to attain spiritual perfection.

Moral Rectitude: One has to maintain a high moral standard in one's actions throughout one's lifetime. A pure life eschewing evil and sinful

actions enhances man's honour. When immersed in *Maya* one is bound to go astray by deviating from the righteous path. In the young age one is unable to understand the illusion which this world of *Maya* presents itself. Life is transient. As a person advances in age he begins to realize the ephemeral nature of this mundane world. Such experience is gained through knowledge acquired through books and through one's association with good men. Any wrong in the moral life of a man detracts him from the high ideal, which he tries to attain. Every being in the universe has the potentiality of transcending the senses.

Piety: Piety and devotion helps a man repose absolute faith in God. That would pave the way for a man to realize the truth. Though truth cannot be defined it is possible to feel its existence through Prayer and meditation. It is through piety one can achieve spiritual advancement. Jnana Sambanthar says that one can achieve bliss by offering flowers at his feet with utmost piety. Flowers fall into two groups. Eight different flowers like the jasmine and lotus etc. belong to one group. Few are capable of offering flowers of the other group. They are (1) *ahimsa* (2) meditation (3) charity (4) prayer (5) love (6) control of the senses (7) speaking truth and (8) patience. "Those who seek to acquire steadfastness of faith must first acquire the strength to bear pain, insult and injury", so says a great Saint.

Service to humanity: God abides in the heart of all beings. This body is the residence of God. In the lowest worm as well as in the highest human being the same divine nature is present. We show our love to God in the service of the poor, sick, the deformed and the needy. Human sympathy should manifest itself where necessary. To refrain from committing the five kinds of sins such as killing, stealing, lust, liquor and speaking lies is the noble quality of a person who intends to serve humanity. The sacred name of God: Uttering the sacred name of God leads one on the path towards perfection. His name is known by the five sacred letters *na, ma, si, va, ya*. The great Saints have often mentioned that the constant utterance of the five letters helps one to attain liberation from birth. It helps one to overcome the illusion of *Maya*. *Anava*, which is the ego in man gradually loses its power and the effects of Karma also become reduced.

4. THE LATENT POWERS IN MAN

God has endowed man with a physical body and with certain latent powers to enable him to attain the goal of life which is enjoying eternal bliss. The human body is like a machine, the components of which help to perform its functions. A machine is a lifeless object. Its contact with an electric current makes it work. Similarly it is the Soul urged into action by God makes the latent powers in the body perform their functions.

Man is curious to know the secrets of nature by continuous research in the outside world. Why can't he endeavor to know the secrets regarding the functions of the body and mind? There are 96 latent powers called *tatvas* in Tamil of which 36 are important and they work in a mysterious way. They are the instruments of thought and action.

Of the 36 *tatvas* the manifestation and function of the 24 are apparent and they are, (1) five senses - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, (2) five organs through which the senses function - eye, ear, nose, tongue, and skin of the body, (3) five instruments of action - mouth, leg, hand, anus and genitals, (4) five functions of the instruments of action - speaking, walking, giving and receiving, excreting and enjoying, and (5) four instruments of the mind known as *anthakaramas* in Tamil - *manam, puththi, siththam, akamkaram*. These are the traits of the mind, the functions of which emanate from what the Soul acquired in its previous births.

Of the four instruments of the mind, the *manam* causes the power of thinking. It is receptive to the messages brought by the five senses. The *puththi tatva* ascertains the reality of the objects brought by the senses. The *siththa tatva* reflects over it and causes pleasure and pain. The *akankara tatva* stimulates into action.

The root cause for the 24 *tatvas* is called *pirakrathimaya* in Tamil which manifests itself in three forms of behaviour namely *saathveekam* (good and genial disposition) *rasatham* (behaviour dominated by animal quality), *thamathum* (indolent and inactive behaviour).

Apart from the 24 latent powers, there are five *Siva tatvas* and seven *Vidthiya tatvas*. All the 36 *tatvas* are the outcome of *Maya*, which is the Reserved Energy of God. The *Maya* is formless, eternal and is used to create the universe. *Maya* is the primary cause, *Sakthi* (Grace) is the secondary cause and *Siva* is the chief cause for the creation of the Universe. *Maya* falls into two kinds namely the *sudthamaya* and *asudhamaya*. *Sudtha Maya* is not tainted by *anava* (ego) and *Karma* whereas *Asudha Maya* is affected by both *Anava* and *Karma*.

The five *Siva tatvas* are classified as, (1) *natham* (2) *vindthu* (3) *sadthakiam* (4) *maheswaram* and (5) *sudthavidthai*. It is necessary to know their functions. *Siva tatva* pertains to *Siva* and is called *natham*, which bestows knowledge. *Vindthu* pertains to *Sadthi* who bestows compassion. *Sadthakia tatva* bestows divine grace. *Iswara tatva* known as *Maheswaram* gives life experience, which reduces *Karma* and *Anava*. *Sudtha Vidthai* is the destructive force and is known as *Urudthiran*.

The seven *Vidthya tatvas* are the outcome of *asudthamaya* and are tainted by *anava* and *Karma*. This *Maya* is formless, lifeless and is subject to the will of *Siva* and it is His Reserved Energy. The physical body its latent powers, the different worlds, the varied experiences and the illusions are due to this *Maya*. The souls, affected by *Anava* are enticed by the worldly illusions. It is due to the *vidthiya tatvas*. They are *Kalam*, *Niyathi*, *Kalai*, *Vidthai*, *Arakam*, *Purudan* and *Maya*. The *Kalai tatva* is stimulated into action by *Sadthi*. It reduces the force of *Anava* and induces the Soul into action. *Vidthai* which is induced by *Sudtha Vidthai* (one of the five *Siva tatvas*) reveals knowledge. *Arakam* induced by *Iswara tatva* (one of the *Siva tatvas*) arouses desire. *Kalam* induced by *Sadthi* imposes the period of time which the Soul has to experience pain and pleasure. *Niyathi* too induced by *Sadthi* determines what *Karma*, the Soul has to experience and to see that the *Karma* of one person cannot affect another. The Soul when it experiences the past *Karma* under the influence of the said *Tatvas* is called *Purudan*. *Maya* is part of *Asudha Maya*. It infects the Soul with illusory thoughts.

5. PATHI (GOD)

Pathi is *Siva*. Those who worship *Siva* are called *Saivites* and their religion is called *Saivism*. It tells us that there is a cause and effect for changes that take place in the universe. The Evolution, Sustenance and Involution cannot take place without the help of a Supreme power. The dance of *Siva* is the cause for all the changes in the universe. His dance is eternal. Where does his dance take place? The rotation and revolution of the earth, the movements of other planets, the spontaneous functions of the seasons and of the mental and spiritual faculties etc. are the places where his dance takes place. The most important place where his dance takes place is called *Sith* which is the subtle state of the Soul. Everything in the world denotes the manifestation of *Siva*. Therefore we should worship Him within us and outside us.

His nature is *Sath-Chith-Ananda*. Anything that is eternal and not affected by time is called *Sath*. *Chith* is omniscience, *Ananda* is eternal bliss. Creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe is a cyclic process which is done with a purpose. That is the salvation of the Souls. The object of our birth as human beings is realization of the Truth, which is to attain the Feet of the God. It means the Soul becomes one with him. This is what the *Saiva* Scriptures say. Out of compassion for the Soul God has endowed human beings with a physical body, the mental faculties, the world and material things of the world for them to enjoy. These are the instruments with the help of which man could overcome the obstacles on his path towards the realization of God.

The utterance of the sacred letters *na, ma, si, va, ya* (*namasivaya*) brings solace to the mind and also for the Souls redemption which is becoming one with God. This inseparable union with *Siva* is the goal of human life. Our thought, word, and deed springing through our faith in Him illumine the heart. *Sadthi* is part of *Siva* and it is through *Skate* the grace of God descends on the enlightened Soul. It is the *Skate*, which by different devices reduces the power of *Anava* which conscripts the Souls and also helps to bear the past effects of *Karma* and also from the illusions of the

world (*Maya*). *Sadthi* and Siva are inseparable like the sun and its rays. There cannot be sun without rays and there can't be rays without sun.

Sadthi is embodiment of *jnana* (knowledge) and is called *Parasadthi*. *Parasadthi* gives such experiences in life, which could reduce the force of *Anava*, which taints the Soul. It is then called *Thirothana-sadthi*. When the Soul attains a stage fit for liberation from the bondage of birth, this *Sadthi* is known as *Thiruvarusadthi*, which bestows its grace to enable the Soul to attain the Feet of God. This *Sadthi* is the chief cause for the five compassionate acts namely, creation, sustenance, destruction, life experience and endowment of Grace. The same *Sadthi* is responsible for the cosmic dance of Siva, who performs it for the liberation of the Souls from birth.

Siva is beyond human perception. Though He is not visible to us it is possible to realize the existence of a Supreme Being through life experience and by the observation of nature. It is quite evident that the inanimate world cannot cause the changes which it undergoes such as appearance, existence, and disappearance. Therefore it is possible to infer that there is a Supreme Being to effect these changes. The evolution after Destruction becomes necessary to help the Souls reduce the force of *Anava*, which causes ignorance to the Souls. "There's no God comparable to Siva," says Thirumanthiram. Siva is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He's present everywhere. Those who are able to see the presence of God in everything will have love towards all living beings, as they are all God's creations.

6. PASU (SOUL)

Pathi, *Pasu*, *Pasam* are eternal. Of these three *Pathi* (God) and *Pasu* (Soul) have knowledge inherent in them. Whereas, *Pasam* is inanimate. The Soul acquires knowledge by the Grace of God as it hasn't got the capacity to act by itself. So it has to go with either *Pasam* or *Pathi*. This defect in the Soul is the cause for the lack of permanent joy. God is identified with eternal bliss.

The soul works in conjunction with the faculties of the mind namely *manam*, *pudthi*, *chidtham* and *Akamkaram*, which correspond to cognition, conation, and affection. The senses bring information to the mind and the brain serves us a receptacle for all the information. The perception whether inner or outer is due to sense reproduction. Acquisition of knowledge is due to perception. The intelligence differs from person to person chiefly due to the knowledge and enlightenment accrued from previous births. Even the mind is tuned to act and behave in the way one has behaved in the previous births. To be more precise, it is the *karmic* effects of the past births which are experiences in this birth.

The Souls are innumerable. The Soul undergoes the different states of existence namely *kevala*, *sakala*, and *sudtha*. In the *kevala* state the Soul is constricted by *anava*. The *anava*, which is inherent in the Soul causes ignorance. The Soul in that state has no physical body and is in a helpless state without any knowledge to illuminate it. Out of compassion God endows the Soul with a physical body, faculties of the mind and a world with things for the Soul's enjoyment. The *sakala* state is the world experience of the Soul. God in order to enlighten the Soul induces *kalai*, *Vidthai* and *Arakam* to function. *Kalai* induces the Soul to action, the *vidthai* to knowledge, and *arakam* to create desire. All living beings, which undergo worldly experiences, are in a *sakala* state. Human beings are only aware of it.

After repeated worldly experiences through the cycle of births, the Soul becomes disgusted with the transient nature of life and with the impermanence of things in the world. It yearns to lead a spiritual life. That is the third state known as *Sudtha*. The next state is the attainment of the

Summum Bonum which is becoming one with God, called *Muthi* in Saiva *Sidthantha*. When by the Grace of God the power of *anava* becomes reduced and when one attains a state which helps him consider pleasure and pain alike with equanimity, the Soul is on the right path to attain *Muthi*.

Karma is the effect of our good and bad actions, done in the previous births. The accumulated *Karma* of all our previous births is the cause for rebirths. Out of the seven kinds of living beings, a Soul takes a birth determined by its *Karma*. The human beings are only aware of the effects of *Karma*. We experience the effects of *Karma* until it is exhausted. It is obvious that in our present birth we should strive to refrain from committing sins. Acts done in this birth bear fruits in the subsequent births.

Apart from *Karma*, one finds it difficult to overcome *Maya*. *Maya* in different forms entices one to be immersed in it. *Maya* is illusory. It is so powerful that it is difficult to overcome the temptations it gives. To enjoy happy life one has to overcome the temptations of *Maya*. One has to exercise his will power to overcome it.

A spiritual aspirant should know the way of life he should lead throughout his lifetime. One should be free from jealousy, greed, anger, revenge, lust etc. to have purity of mind. We should have love towards living beings. Our service to others in time of need produces a good effect. Doing no harm, not hurting the feelings of others, freeing oneself from lust are some of the traits which should be cultivated to keep our mind unperturbed. Inner light begins to shine in the hearts of such man. A spiritual aspirant therefore should lead such a life, which would at the end make him, achieve the inseparable union with God.

The knowledge we gather from reading, listening, pondering over the acquired knowledge and perceiving them with insight are called *Aparajnanam*. To achieve a state for the Soul to have spiritual insight is *Parajnanam*, when the inner vision of God within us becomes possible. After attaining *Parajnanam* the Soul is on its way to become one with God. When the Soul loses its egoistic feelings about its actions such as knowing, desiring and doing, God manifests Himself by bestowing His Grace. As we are unable to see Him with our physical eyes, we should

strive to gain perception of Him with our inner eye. The light of the Grace is found between God and the Soul. After the Divine Grace descends on the Soul, that person should constantly pronounce the sacred letters to restrain the mind from going astray. The immense love and piety which the Soul bears towards God and the compassion which God shows towards the Soul helps the Soul to become merged with God. When the Soul enjoys the eternal bliss, the Soul knows no difference between itself and God. Therefore, identity with God without any difference leads to the attainment of *Muthi*.

The question arises whether all human beings attain *Muthi* (eternal bliss) in this present birth. The destiny exerts its irrevocable force on every living being. Destiny differs from person to person according to the accumulated Karma done in the previous births. With absolute faith in God and by leading a pure and spiritual life, it is possible for one to achieve success.

7. PASAM (ILLUSION)

Anava, *Karma* and *Maya* are classified as *Pasam*. To be free from the malign influence of *Pasam* is Soul's liberation. It is the Grace of God, which could liberate the Soul from the affliction caused by *Pasam*. The Grace of God, which does it, is called *Thirothanasadthi*.

Being inhibited by the five *malams* namely *anavam*, *karma*, *maya*, *majeyam* (the products of *Maya*) and *Thirothanasadthi*, the Soul is subject to the cycle of births. *Thirothanasadthi* is not a *malam* but it is classified with the rest, as its function is the same as that of the other four. The characteristics of *anava* are, (1) obstinacy, (2) insatiable desire, (3) irritation, (4) ignorance, (5) tendency to kill, (6) perturbed mind, (7) self-conceit, and (8) jealousy.

The nature of *Anava* is viewed in two ways namely general and specific. Its conspicuous specific quality is to cause ignorance in the *kevala* state. Its general nature is to function in conjunction with the faculties of the mind and thought. It causes confusion by making the Soul consider something that is not its own, as its own. It makes the Soul think that it sees what the eye sees.

Anava was inherent with the Soul whereas, *Karma* and *Maya* began to exert their influence later. These two begin to remove the ignorance of the Soul gradually. God activates these two to diminish the power of *anava*. Both are inanimate and therefore could not function by themselves. The *Thirothana-sadthi* resorts to several devices to reduce the force of *anava*. When *anava* becomes ineffective to influence the Soul, the *Thirothanasadthi* changes as *Arusadthi* and bestows its Grace to the Soul for it to attain the Feet of God. The eight qualities of *anava* cannot have full display in human experience if not for the *Thirothanasadthi*.

The evolution and involution of the world takes place for the three *malams* (*anava*, *karma*, and *maya*) to fulfil their tasks to the full. By the evolution, the *anava* becomes powerless and ineffective after taking different births. Similarly, by involution the *Karma malam* is given time to fulfil the task of making the mind to consider pain and pleasure with equanimity. After

taking several births only one will attain such a state of mind. To give a suitable physical body according to their state, Involution is necessary. Besides it gives respite to Souls which are tired of taking several births. Sustenance (existence) is for the *maya malam* to lose its force. *Maya* makes one believe unreal things as real. It causes delusion. It is after a varied experience, the Soul reaches a stage to feel the impermanence of the things in the world. Therefore sustenance is for the *Maya malam* to lose its effect.

Maya, the reserved energy of God is used to function whenever God wills. *Maya* is the primordial cause for the Evolution of the world. It can be compared to a seed and the world its shoot. The world appears out of *Maya* when God wills for that to take place. *Maya* is formless and inanimate. *Maya* falls into three categories, namely *sudtha maya*, *asudtha maya* and *pirakrithi maya*. Letters, words and *mantras* are evolved from *sudtha maya*. It is also the source for the manifestation of *kalai*, *puvanam* and *tatvas*. *Sudtha maya* is not tainted by the *anava* and *kanma malams*.

Asudtha maya is tainted by the *anava* and *kanma malams*. The word *asudtha* means, "not clean". This *Maya* gives the physical body, the inner faculties and the world to the Souls to enable the *malams* to become ineffective. The physical body is composed of the five elements, earth, fire, water, wind and ethereal space. The elements are perceptible but the senses are imperceptible.

This world evolves from *Maya* and at the time of dissolution it rests in *Maya*. The world is impermanent, but *Maya* is eternal. When the Soul experiences its past *Karma* it believes that the *thanu*, *Karma*, *puvana*, *pokam* (body, inner faculties, world, the worldly things respectively) are real though they are unreal. *Maya* cannot exercise its deceptive influence on those who are free from *Karma*. The *putthi tatva* of the inner faculties to which actions cling rest in *Maya* at the time of Dissolution. *Maya* being inanimate cannot cause Evolution and Involution to take places. It is the *Sadthi* (Grace) of God which makes *Maya* functions. The characteristics of *Maya* are, (1) sense of illusion in spite of learning, (2) stealing, (3) disbelief even in perceptible things, (4) denial of even known things, (5) uncharitable

mind, (6) disturbed by the wealth of others, and (7) jealousy. The desire for the tempting things of the world will urge one to commit sins. The mind becomes deceptive by being impelled by desire and greed.

Karma, which is one of the three *malams*, needs elucidation. Likes and dislikes caused by *anava*, which is inherent with the Soul, are called original *Karma*. *Karma* is the cause for the rebirth. *Karma* is of three kinds. The action, which one performs in this birth, is called *ahamiya Karma*. The accumulated *Karma* of several births in the past is called *sanchitha Karma*. That part of the *sanchitha Karma* which had been the cause for the present birth is called *pirarathva Karma*. The characteristics of *Karma* are: (1) poverty; (2) absence of joy; (3) lack of charitable acts; (4) acts of sin; (5) inactivity; (6) disrespecting God; and (7) committing right and wrong actions. Without realizing that pleasure and pain which one experiences is due to the past *Karma* one thinks that they are due to his present actions or due to the actions of others. Thereby one becomes subject to desire, likes and dislikes.

The inanimate body is not affected by pleasure and pain but, it is the Soul that experiences pain and pleasure. *Karma* cannot by itself affect the Soul but it is God who sees that it affects the doer of the actions. It is not possible to nullify the effects of evil actions by good actions. The effects of both good and evil actions should be experienced by the doer. If one could lead a life according to the tenets and teachings of the *Vedas* and *Agamas*, a greater part of the effects of the Sins could be reduced. The Grace of God could liberate us from the sufferings of *Karma*, which is revealed in the works of great Saints namely, Thayumanavar, Yoga Swamikal, and other Saints.

8. PATH TO LIBERATION

Of all the living beings man alone is capable of self-realization. God resides in the hearts of all. Yet many fail to realize Him in their lifetime. The ego in the man, the deceptive influence of *Maya*, the lack of devotion and piety to Him who has bestowed on us things that we enjoy in our life time may be cited as the chief reasons for our failure. So the *anavic* decadence, ethical transcendence and spiritual illumination are the important states which could help one towards liberation. *Saiva Sidthantha* philosophy explains how these states exalt a man to realize the main objective.

The *anava* (I and mine) which exerts its influence on the Soul hinders our spiritual progress. The feelings of I and mine and the passions that arise out of these grow with intensity in man. As the *anava* constricts the Soul, it causes ignorance due to which feelings of jealousy, anger, greed, lust arise in the mind. Experience in one's life, leads to the gradual attrition of *anava*. It is with God's Grace one can reduce the power of *anava*. The *anavic* decadence is of vital importance to get spiritual illumination.

The ethical transcendence is another contributory factor for enlightenment and liberation. Purity of thought and action, our behaviour in the society, the unblemished way of life we had and the love we bear towards others exalt our position. Breach of the law of *Dharma* causes the cycle of births and deaths.

Karma and *Maya* are two other factors, which help the Soul achieve spiritual advancement. *Karma* is the doctrine, which holds that one cannot escape the effect of our actions. It lays down the moral law of cause and effect. The *Law of Karma*, which is the law of cause and effect, lays down that death does not end the chain of cause and effect. The Soul does not die with death, as it is immortal but it takes another body, which is one that suits the form or shape, the Soul has worked itself into. We perform actions through the mind, speech and body. The law of cause and effect is unalterable. The effect is inherent in the cause, as the tree is potential growth from seed. Every act will produce its result. One cannot escape from the result. The thoughts, the words and deeds done will produce the appropriate effect. *Karma* means work and *vithi* means law. *Karma* is not

fatalism. As a result of our actions and thoughts and the attachment that spring from them, we take a fresh birth, with certain tendencies. A man evolves himself according to his actions and tendencies, the process being unbroken by death and passing into the next birth. The *Law of Karma* does not preclude the free will. Industry and character will have their reward and the *Law of Karma* guarantees this.

Our experiences are the result of three factors namely, *piraradhvam*, *sanchidham*, and *agamiyam*. *Piraradhvam* is the *Karma* we have to experience in this birth. *Sanchidham* is the accumulated *Karma* of several births in the past. *Agamiya* is the *Karma* we perform in this birth. The effect of these cannot cancel one another. Pain and pleasure are the consequences of wrong and right *Karma*, respectively. The Soul does not suffer these consequences immediately after these actions are performed. It is by the will of God that the pain and pleasure are given to the Soul at a time when its experience will give it the maximum benefit. Joy and sorrow we experience are the fruits of our actions.

We should also know about the ultimate cause of the physical universe. In *Saiva Sidthantha* philosophy it is called *Maya*. *Maya* is the doctrine of illusion and has no material form. It makes one think what is unreal as real. It is deceptive. The transient pleasure of this world induces temptations, which drag one into great depths from which one finds it difficult to extricate himself. Duty is rooted in *Maya* and the only way of escaping the power of cause and effect is to do one's duty for its own sake, without hoping for the results. One should be free from all desires. God is the in-dwelling spirit which makes all beings live. Every movement of the individual Soul is an activity of God. Enlightenment helps us to overcome *Maya*. Self-control, faith, discipline, ordered life and vigilance bring about enlightenment. It is not easy to wake up from the sleep of worldly life. Our mental disposition must change entirely. The desire to wake up must dawn in the heart. The power to do it is in its yearning. Without this yearning for realization nothing can be achieved. Perpetual vigilance over one's mind is necessary to escape slipping back into the world of false values, attachments and desires. Impelled by ignorance we seek temporary pleasurable sensations arising out of sense contact and proceed to do

things to obtain pleasure. Failure to obtain these, results in anger, hatred and grief. This causes pain and intensifies our ignorance.

The evolution of the Soul consists of five elements. One of these is the Soul taking a body that it may perform *Karma*. This element is called Creation. The body that the Soul takes is such that it is fit to experience that portion of the past *Karma* called *piraradhvam*. The body will be maintained till the whole *piraradhvam* is exhausted. This is called Maintenance. *Piraradhvam* is that part of the past *Karma*, which is experienced, in a particular birth. When *piraradhvam* is exhausted the body is destroyed. This is called Dissolution.

The weakening of the *anava* grip that took place during that life is called Suppression. The power that grants divine bliss, after the total removal of the *anavic* barrier is called Liberation, by virtue of which the Soul undergoes evolution, is called *Sadthi*. That which performs the four acts called the *Adhisadthi*, or *Thirodhanasadthi*. That which performs the fifth act is called *Arusadthi*. The two *Sadthis* are really one but are given different names due to different acts.

The seeker after good never comes to grief. Desisting from a course, which prevents us from getting nearer to the truth, is the path towards liberation. For this purity and humility are essential. The very exertion to obtain light helps us to avoid faults and enables us to escape from sinful deeds. The mental effort to get realization raises us to a higher plane of life. In the case of some Souls, it reaches the form of ecstasy, a sustained joy arising out of detachment. Every Soul without exception will ultimately attain divine bliss. Repenting and surrendering to God paves the way for the Grace of God to descend on the repentant. The granting of Divine bliss after the removal of *anavic* veil is called Liberation.

Many people hold the view that there is no need to worship God as they think they can perform their functions according to their conscience. Conscience is not a dependable factor, as their decisions are based on their ideals, knowledge, environment and social conditions. A person who is a strong addict to liquor and meat eater at one time becomes a teetotaler and strict vegetarian at another time. So conscience differs in the same

person at different times depending on his attitude and circumstances. A boy who has seen the slaughter of animals daily has a heart hardened by the frequent sight of it but such a sight is unbearable to another boy who is brought up in a family of vegetarians. So conscience is not a reliable guide in making our decisions. Our moral conduct depends on religion, which speaks about God. The Vedas speak about one God but the sages call Him by different names. God is an eternally - knowing source and is called *Chith* which means knowledge. He is all love and this infinite love leads the infinite Souls to liberation. He is also *sath*, which means changeless and eternal. Soul is *sath* and *malam* is *asath*.

Saivism regards various religions as the rungs of a ladder, the top most rung of which reaches the Feet of God which is Divine bliss. Saivism is a bright and elevating religion, which regards all men as good. Though they may do wrong, they do no evil, as it is impossible to do evil in the world, which is under the power of God. Wrong - doing leads to painful experience, which leads to spiritual advancement. When a person attains *jnana* he attains complete deliverance from *anava* and through spiritual illumination becomes one with God.

The philosophy of life for the individual Soul is to march from good to better by conscious effort from birth to birth. The necessity posits free will without which there can be no moral responsibility. Man has his mastery over his own future. There are three postulates namely existence of God, the immortality of the Soul and the freedom of the will. The Soul while moving in *Maya* attains a stage of eligibility to *jnana*, which results in emancipation. *Saiva Sidthantha* speaks about *chariya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana* through which it reaches the Feet of Siva. We acquire spiritual advancement by wearing sacred ashes, pronouncing the sacred letters called *Panchasaram*, by worshiping and by singing sacred hymns of the four great Saints, Appar, Sundarar, Manickavasagar and Sampanthar.

9. THE DANCE OF SIVA

Creation, Sustenance, Destruction, life experience and grace are the outcome of the dance of Siva. Where does he dance and what for are these five acts done, are questions that should arise in the minds of any student of philosophy.

Out of compassion for the Souls, this never-ending continuous dance takes place in space. Where there is continuous and unremitting movement, it is named dance in space. The movements of the earth and other planets, of the five elements, of the five senses, of the mind and the functions of the inner faculties are evidences of the dance of Siva which is called Cosmic dance. This is also called the Divine dance, which is the cause for any movement or action in the Universe.

This space (*Ampalam* in Tamil) falls into two groups namely, *Perampalam* and *Sittampalam*. All things that are connected with visible objects such as, earth, moon etc. belong to the group called *Perampalam*. Those, which belong to the invisible and the ethereal such as the mind, senses etc., are called *Sittampalam*. Of all the latter, the essence of the Soul called *Sidth* is the most incomprehensible and delicate. So this subtle state of the Soul becomes the important place for his dance.

It is clear that the power of God's Grace pervades the entire Universe. *Sivan* and *Sakthi* (His Grace) occupy the subtle state of the Soul called *Sittampalam* or *Sithamparam*. So everything in the Universe is the appearance of Siva. So it is obvious that in the hearts of all Souls *Sithamparam* or *Sittampalam* is found. Therefore it becomes necessary for us to worship God in us and outside us always.

Sivan executes this dance with the five letters, *na, ma, si, va, ya*. The hand that holds the drum denotes the letter *si*, the hand that stretches out denotes the letter *va*, the hand that indicates protection denotes *ya*, the hand that holds fire denotes *na*, the foot placed over *Mujalakam* (Tamil) denotes *Ma*. *Ma* denotes how the *anava* is gradually eliminated.

It is necessary to examine the outcome of this dance. They are Evolution, Sustenance, Destruction, Suppression and Liberation which are performed

out of compassion for the Souls which take, births after births, until union with God takes place. The whole universe is the place for this Dance. His dance permeates everywhere. If his dance stops everything in the world will be standstill. This happens at the time of Destruction. At that time the Souls rest in *Maya* which is the reserved Energy of God. Again His mere thought leads to the Evolution of the Universe.

This process can be evinced in the visible world of ours. All beings take their birth, which is Evolution and exist till the time destined for their exit from this world. Their stay for a fixed period is called Sustenance. Their disappearance is named Destruction. During the period of existence one undergoes pleasure and pains, resulting from the actions of the past births. This experience leads to the gradual attrition of *anava* and this experience is called Suppression. Then piety, devotion to God and the life we lead in conformity to *dharma* in the various births lead one to spiritual advancement. This consummates in a certain birth when the Soul's union with God takes place. Then the Soul enjoys eternal bliss.

10. MEDITATION

There is a glow on the faces of some but some look very gloomy. What is the difference due to? The glow and brightness are due to the reflection of the inner-light. Light dispels darkness. The darkness of the mind is due to the presence of harmful emotions such as jealousy, anger, lust, revenge etc. "One who hides a dark Soul benighted walks in the mid day sun". True to the remarkable words of a great thinker. Men are ailing from a mind charged with deleterious feelings. Illumination of the mind is necessary. Electric light illuminates the outside world. Is there a light within the human heart to dispel the darkness of the mind? The seat of our thoughts is the mind. The mind has the power to reach out anything in the Universe. The mind is the product of several centuries of conditioning. So it has a tendency to think in the way it had been conditioned. Consistent efforts are needed to overcome the nature of the mind, already attuned to certain ways of thinking. The thoughts emanating from the mind find expression in words or speech. The senses always bring some information to the mind, which becomes restless except in deep sleep. So, is it possible to concentrate on anything? It is extremely hard to control the mind. Why should one control the mind to acquire the ability to see God within us? It is said that it is not possible for the physical eyes to get a glimpse of the Divine within us but we should strive to have inner vision with the help of the eyes, which we develop through *jnana*.

The external appearance is not the real person. The reality is beyond the body and senses. The reality is the effulgent Divine within us. The heart is the abode of the Divine. Each one should see Him within his heart. Baba says "Easwara dwells in the region of the heart of every living Being. Easwara is the Lord of the heart". *Veda* has proclaimed the identity of the heart with Easwara (God).

Death relates to the body and not to the *atma* (Soul). *Atma* is eternal. To experience permanent bliss one has to develop firm faith in God. The love we show to all beings is the love we show to God. What use is human birth if we do not manifest unsullied love towards all beings. Love of God comes from the depth of the heart. True devotion means elimination of all the

animal tendencies in man. The one supreme spirit dwells in all beings. Everyone should endeavour to experience the Divine. Man should realize the eternal Divine within him, which is the primary purpose of human life. The man who is able to get rid of attachment and hatred and egoism will recognise his divine nature. One who yearns to get a vision of God should experience the Divine. One has to converse with God and experience the Divine. "One must realize God, see God, feel God and talk to God". So says Baba. The purpose of life is to experience the Divine that is subtle and invisible. God's grace alone can free man from fear. All should strive to secure Divine Grace by developing firm faith in God.

The spiritual quest involves the churning of the heart by meditation. Those who are involved in meditation often complain of the uncontrollable nature of the senses. Senses are an obstacle. Besides past reminiscences occur in the mind one after the other. How is it possible to pray to God? Undisturbed meditation becomes almost impossible. Is there a way to overcome these difficulties? There are some men with self-surrender and with absolute faith in God had secured some success in spiritual advancements.

Peace of mind, purity of heart, and true faith in God are the real requisites for meditation. The first stage should be to make the mind vacant and inactive for a few seconds which is possible through practice. Then it becomes possible to increase the length of time by a few more seconds and later by minutes. During the period of such practice the person feels the pleasure of the Divine for a moment. After along period of practice the person feels that the senses are not an obstacle. Finally one is able to have a momentary vision of the effulgent Divine within oneself.

11. TRUE SAIVITES

The *Saivites* worship Siva, the Supreme God. Hence, their religion is called Saivism. A *Saivite* leads a life consonant with the greatness of the Supreme being he worships. He has a dignity to maintain and has to observe certain principles enunciated in his religion. A *Saivite* never deviates from the path of *Dharma*, which is a natural law. He leads a life of character and integrity. He bears love to all the living beings like Siva who is a lover of all beings and the giver of bliss. God's love for us is infinite. Everything that takes place in this world is the result of His *Law of Love*. A *Saivite* cannot act contrary to His Laws.

There are certain observances, which help the worshipper to attain liberation. Wearing Holy Ash on our forehead is one of them. Sacred ash is the image of the love of God and *Sakthi*. No one is a *Saivite* who does not wear it. Jnana Sampantner has extolled the sacredness of the Holy Ash in his hymns. In that *Thiruppathikam* (a section of 10 hymns) he described the 54 characters of *Thiruneeru* (Holy Ash) which are attributes of *Siva* and *Sakthi*. It is said that it gives liberation to the Soul. It gives *jnana* (enlightenment). When we wear *Thiruneeru*, we repeat the mantra *Siva, Siva, Thiruneeru* induces right thoughts and right feelings. The three lines of the Sacred Ash worn on our forehead stands for *Ichchasakthi, Kriyasadthi, and Jnanasadthi*. Then our actions, desires and understanding get sublimated. No wrong desires or thoughts can arise. Those who do not respect *Thiruneeru* are regarded as unholy persons. All true *Saivites* adore the Feet of Siva and wear Holy Ash.

Saint Manickavasagar said that he dreads those who do not wear sacred ashes and those who do not worship Siva. The sixty three Saints mentioned in the *Saiva* Text called *Periyapuranam* by Sekkilar always wore *Thiruneeru* pronouncing the Sacred *Mantras, Siva, Siva*. Every *Saivite* before his prayer in the mornings and evenings apply holy ash on his forehead and begins to chant the holy hymns known as *Thevaram* and *Thiruvacakam*. Their conviction is that Holy Ash and the sacred hymns are necessary for the invocation of the Grace of Siva. This enhances their faith in God who alone can free them from the cycle of births. Divinity in Sacred Ash is more pronounced when it is used to bathe the Siva Lingam or any

sacred image. Sacred Ash is obtained from the burnt dung of the cow, which is an animal held in veneration by the *Saivites*.

The next in importance to a Saivite is *Panchacharam* literally means five letters namely, *na, ma, si, va, ya*. Siva is called by thousands of names but *Namasivaya* is pronounced often by devotees as it is the most appropriate name for Him. *Namasivaya Pathikam* of Sampanthar corroborates this. Of these five letters *na* denotes the Grace which exhausts the energy of *malam*, *Ma* stands for *malam*, *si* stands for Siva, *va*, denotes His Grace which unites the Soul with Him. *ya* stands for the Soul. This *na, ma, si, va, ya* is intended for those who are world minded. By pronouncing these letters daily, a devotee will gradually become God - minded and Spiritual progress becomes possible. It is a power by itself. One who contemplates on this mantra gets the power to protect himself from the effect of the *anava*. The word *mantra* means that which protects those who pronounce it. The worshipper makes up his mind to be out of the reach of *anava*. There is a second form called *si, va, ya, na, ma* called *Muthi panchacharam*. It leads the Godly minded to oneness with God.

Our body is a product of *Maya*. The material Universe and the mental Universe are all products of *Maya*. *Maya* is insentient and inanimate. The products are transient. They come and go and finally involve into primordial *Maya*. Man realizing his superiority over the other things of the world makes up his mind not to become a slave of the *Maya* products (anger, lust, etc.). The contemplation of *Panchacharam* resolves to give up the dangerous products of the *Maya*. He would make use of only those products of *Maya* which are indispensable to him. He is tempted by wealth, lust etc. He despises the lifeless, inert, transitory non-entity. He is *chit* capable of knowledge whereas those are *achit*. *Panchacharam* helps one to see God who is the source of all knowledge and power, the Infinite Being. He showers on him infinite love to make him infinite *chit* (knowledge) and makes *Sadthi* illuminates him to make him overcome *anava* and confer on him the external Bliss of being one with God.

This *Panchacharam* gives a philosophy, a religion and a way of life, which takes him close to the ultimate goal of *Muthi* (liberation). *Panchacharam* must be repeated 108 times at a time. Repetition is called *japam* and

contemplation is called *dhyanam*. Our Saints have all sung praises of *Panchacharam*. It is like a boat, which carries the Soul through the sea of worldly life to the Feet of God. *Panchacharam* is the essence of the four *Vedas*. It is repeated in three ways: (1) It is not audible to oneself, while repeating; (2) It is audible to the person, when he repeats it; and (3) Those who stand closely could hear the sound, when it is repeated. Of these three the first one is the most effective. Experience gives ample proof of the supreme potency of *Panchacharam*. If one wants to resist any temptation or to free oneself from unpleasant feelings, repetition of *Panchacharam* saves one from such stressing situation. A *Saivite* does his work as service to God. He does not allow his senses to run off. He is proof against *anavic* allurements. A *Saivite* may belong to any class or caste. Work and worship must go together. They repeat *Panchacharam* even while working.

There is a section of *Saivites* who have no idea of the content of the *Saiva Sastras*. Their knowledge of religion consists of *Puranic* stories and of the religious beliefs current in the midst of their own standard. Most of them wear Holy Ash, attend temples and observe fasts. They are devotees of astrology, which causes them endless suffering. Their behaviour is due to ignorance of Saivism. Very few go to temple daily. A good number go to temple on Mondays or on Fridays. They go with a request or with a special *puja* or *archanai* to get their prayer granted. God gives only those things which the worshipper actually needs and which can ultimately help his spiritual progress. God administers the law of *Karma* in such a way as will give the Soul the maximum help for its recovery from *anavic* illness. A true *Saivite* will always refrain from doing immoral acts. All the religious and devotional books emphasis the need for a life of purity to get the benediction of God. Killing, stealing, speaking lies, lust and liquor are avoided by the true devotees of Siva. Though the ultimate goal of all the beings is to attain *Muthi*, it is not possible for all to attain that in this birth. Human beings only are capable for redemption in this birth provided they achieve self-realization. A large number out of ignorance lead such a life which would cause rebirth. The Saints of the *Saivite* religion attained union with God. The life they led and their sacred hymns are adequately enough for others to make spiritual progress.

12. STAGES OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

In the world of materialism, man is always engaged in securing happiness for himself and for others closer to him. Of the body, mind and Soul, all are concerned about physical health without paying much regard to intellectual or spiritual advancement. Though a great number of people devote some time for intellectual pursuit, there are very few people who think of Soul, which alone makes body and mind to perform their functions. Soul cannot by itself carry out these functions without the help of the creator. There is a natural tendency for the Soul to be attached with Maya or the illusory things of the world.

The Grace of the God alone can induce Soul of the man to action with a view to make the Soul attain perfection, which is the unseparable union with God. Besides, the performance of good actions and the true devotion to God in one's previous births persist in this birth, making one think of God. It is a gradual progress from birth to birth, as the Soul is eternal and immortal, unlike the perishable and impermanent things of this world.

Saiva Sidthantha speaks of four steps, which are very essential for a devotee to follow, in order to make spiritual progress. The four steps mentioned are *Sariai*, *Kriyai*, *Yoga* and *Jnana*. An exposition of these are necessary as a spiritually minded man should practise these from one to the other till the *Summum Bonum* is attained. The first one *Sariai* is said to be practised by one who collects flowers, cleans inside and outside premises of temples which are supposed to be the initial step in the pursuit of spiritual path. They go to the Holy cities and Holy temples and perform worship with love and devotion. They sing holy hymns praise of God Siva who will make their hearts and minds His abode.

The second stage is *Kriyai*, which is worshipping the image of the God in their heart and outside. The devotees should observe eight noble qualities such as non-killing, sense control, patience, compassion, good understanding, truth, love and meditation. In a similar way, they offer eight kinds of flowers singing Holy hymns adoring the Holy feet of God. Such devotees get His blessings. The third stage is *Yoga*, which is of eight kinds which have to be learnt under a Guru (teacher), as it is difficult to learn by

oneself. This step is successful to those who lead a life of good morals and conduct.

After observing these three stages only, the dawn of the *jnana* is possible. At that stage, the devotee begins to realize that the knowledge gained from *Vedas*, *Agamas* and other religious books pave the way to achieve *jnana*. He begins to realize that worship by intuition, which is *jnana* is superior to external worship. One, who aims at achieving *jnana*, will have to practise certain high values such as non-violence, adherence to truth, not coveting the things of others, observe the principles of celibacy, not receiving things of any kind from others, and not to injure the feelings of others by thought, word or deed.

Purity of thought, word and deed, an unblemished character, devotion to God, love towards all beings, eschewing evil thoughts, help a person to observe the various stages in the spiritual life, which finally helps him to attain the final goal, the union with God. The Soul, which attains inseparable union with God enjoy eternal bliss, which gives freedom from birth. *Saiva Sidthantha* says that there is one God and the Souls are innumerable and each Soul works for its own liberation which could be attained only by the Grace of the God.

13. WORSHIP

Worship of God brings solace to the mind. Of all the thoughts, thought of Him is the sweetest. A Saint directs all his thoughts towards Him. It is not possible for an ordinary person to renounce all worldly pleasures and direct his whole attention to think of God. Though he cannot experience the joy of a Saint, he could get at least some joy by thinking about Him daily. To a great extent, both the physical and mental suffering can be overcome by means of prayer.

The impermanent nature of the things in this world makes one think of eternal bliss. The infinite love, which God bestows on us should cause the manifestation of our love towards all beings, as He dwells in the hearts of all. We should realize that our redemption depends on the way of life we lead. We must think of His endless love that makes him perform five great acts namely, creation, protection, destruction, providing experience for attrition of *anava* and the final liberation by bestowing His Grace, which gives eternal bliss. We can perform worship in different ways, (1) offering flowers with piety, (2) meditation, (3) freeing us from being immersed in *Maya*, (4) leading a virtuous life, and (5) adoration.

A true and an ardent devotee is granted eternal bliss by *Para-Sadthi* who is with us and finally unites us with *Parama Sivam*. Home and Temple are usual places of worship. To a religious man, any place is good enough for worship. For many people, worship at home is convenient. Some sing a few sacred Hymns. Some repeat mantra with their minds fixed on God. Some perform *puja* just before each meal. Some have a short form of worship. The common practice is to wash the face, hands and feet and wear *holy ash*. Some pray to God before going to bed and after raising from bed in the morning. Worship at the temple is the best form of worship for both educated and the illiterate.

The mind gets attuned to worship in a temple. Our Saints regarded the temple as the life centre of the village or town. Thirunavukkarasar says, "the village or town without a temple is not fit for human habitation". Adherents of all religions regard the temple as a sacred place, which serves as a place for worship. A *Saivite* goes to a temple after bath and

before meals. A light stomach is helpful for concentration and self-control. When he enters the temple, he prostrates and worships keeping his body and mind towards the deity. The image is divine. It captivates his mind, which helps him to control his senses and meditate on Him. We identify God with a *vigraham* (image). The image signifies God. The ring that circles Nadarajah (Siva) is *Pranava*. The *Pranava* consists of five sounds namely God, *Parasadthi*, Soul, *Adhisadthi* and *Malam*. The drum on the right hand indicates Creation. The other right hand indicates Protection. The fire in one hand shows destruction. The right foot pressing down the giant (*Mujalakan*) shows crushing of *anava*. The uplifted foot denotes divine bliss. The smile is the welcome offered to the worshippers. The uplifted hand tells that there is no fear at all. Other images have two hands, one called *abhyam* offers protection and the other called *varadham* offers divine bliss.

The Siva Lingam is intended for the more advanced Souls. The Lingam indicates *Jnanam* (knowing) and its seat indicates *Kriya* (doing). The former shows that it is the Lord who performs *Panchakrityam* (the five acts of compassion). As *Parameswaran* He is beyond us. As *Pathi*, He is in us and with us, as a liberator and bliss giver. He liberates us by *Srishti*, *Sthithi* and *Samharam*, *Thirobhavam* and *Anugraham*. The Lingam is compound of *Layam* and *Gam*. It means involution and evolution.

Another significant image of God is the sun. It gives us the idea of the greatness of God. In its presence, the living beings are born, live and die in this earth. It is clear that in the mere presence of God, the whole universe undergoes Evolution and Involution. The worship of God in the sun is the first item of *Siva Puja*.

The daily *puja* performed in the temples is an important event. The items are bathing the image, making the offerings of flowers and *naivedhiyam* (rice and fruits) and adoring it. Bathing the God with milk and ghee symbolizes our love. Offering rice and fruits symbolizes our mind. Incense and light are intended for the illumination of our Soul by *Siva jnanam*. Incense is intended to suppress *anava* and the light indicates the spiritual illumination. Out of piety we offer flowers and leaves. The camphor light

indicates becoming one with the God. Adoration consists of the hymns sung by the Saints. Love and *Jnanam* radiating from the image destroy *anavic* power and gives us bliss and spiritual knowledge.

Self-surrender is the object of one's worship. We worship God to satisfy our desire, which arises out of intense love for God. This kind of worship is said to be *niskamiya*, which means without any object to be gained. At the end of the *puja*, we worship Chandeswarar and obtain through Him the reward for our *puja*.

14. THE GUIDANCE FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

The understanding of the *Vedas* and *Agamas*, which are revelations of God is a real guide for spiritual illumination. All the *Saivaites* accept the supreme authority of the *Vedas* and *Agamas*. The four *Vedas* are *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharvana Veda*. The *Agamas* are 28 in number but many of them were lost within the last two centuries. The *Vedas* and *Agamas* are the authoritative books for understanding of the Saiva religion along with *Jnana* portion of *Agamas* bequeathed to us by Tamil Saints.

Thirumoolar who lived three thousand years ago has given some portion of the *Jnana* section of the *sivagama* through his Holy book named *Thirumantiram*. *Sivajnana Bhodham*, which is a portion of *Raurava Agama* was written by Meikanda Devar. Arulnandhisivam who was disciple of Meikanda Devar wrote *Sivajnana Siddiyar*, which is a more comprehensive and detailed work. Commentators of this book refer to seventeen *agamas*. The same author wrote another book named *Irupa Irupthu*. His disciple Umapathi Sivam wrote eight works namely, *Siva Prakasam*, *Thiruvardupayan*, *Vinavemba*, *Nenju Vidu Thoothu*, *Unmai Neri Vilakkam*, *Sankalpa Nirakaranam*. *Thiruvunthiar* and *Thiru Kalitru Padiyar* were written by Thiruvilaloor Uiyya Vanda Thevanar and Thirukadavur Uiyya Vantha Thevanar respectively. These 14 *Sidthantha sastras* are genuine authoritative books on *Saiva Siddhanta Sastras*. The observances prescribed in the *Agamas* have been codified into *Paththathies* for ready use and reference.

Of four great Saints *Jnana Sampanthar*, *Thirunavukkarasar*, *Sundarar* and *Manickavaskar*, the sacred hymns sung by the first three are called *Thevarams*. The sacred hymns sung by *Manickavaskar* are called *Thiruvacakam*. It is both praise of God and philosophy. It consists of 51 *pathikams* containing 658 stanzas. It is difficult to discover the philosophical truths contained in the *pathigams*. We can only understand the surface meaning. The hymns thrill with the Grace of God and melt the hearts of singers. Dr. G. U. Pope of Oxford University saw its great value and translated it into English. There were other Saints like *Pattinathar* and

Thaumanavar whose hymns are pregnant with lofty ideas, which could instill love of God in the minds of those who chant them with true piety. There are *puranas*, which too enhance the ideas enshrined in the books on *Saivism*.

The ethical conduct and high morality are indispensable factors to achieve spiritual illumination. One who swerves from the right path fails to realize the chief objective in life. In addition to this, there are other factors which contribute to the sublime life expected to be led by those who yearn for liberation from rebirth.

Manifestation of love not only towards fellow men but also towards all beings is necessary. The love we bear towards others is love directed towards God. Love is God. Few understand this. Our constant prayer and meditation enable us to know of God and His Grace.

The *Law of Dharma* governs the whole universe and the travesty of which brings sufferings and hardships. Book knowledge is not adequate enough to understand this principle but the dawn of Jnana could help any one to perceive the Truth. The Natural qualities of the elements do not change. They retain their qualities in spite of change of time. Water is cold. Fire is hot. Earth is hard. Air is in motion. Space is expansive. Similarly there are inborn qualities in man such as love, sympathy, spirit of service etc which should manifest themselves in daily life but he fails to exhibit these magnanimous qualities. That shows that he is violating the *Law of Dharma*.

15. WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Our world presents us daily with sights of different nature. Sun, sky, mountains, rivers, forests are some of the beautiful sights of nature. Towns and cities are the results of man's efforts. We gain varied knowledge from both the nature and man's efforts. When we walk along the road, we see the trees, which stand for several years in spite of the changing weather. We see workmen doing hard work, pedestrians walking long distances without adequate protection and some going in cars comfortably. There are some who have immense wealth but not knowing how to spend the time, and some not being satisfied with the wealth in their possession and yearn for more and thereby lose their peace of mind. Animals and birds eat in the day and enjoy undisturbed sleep in the night.

Though man is endowed with the power of leading a happy life, he is not happy. There must be some mysterious reason. All men are not enjoying a life of happiness. Among men, there are good men and sinners too. There are rich and poor men. There are educated and illiterate men. There are some spiritually advanced people and some lead only a secular life. There must be a reason for the Souls to be born as low beings and human beings. A Soul has to experience the consequences of its actions in each birth. The *Karma* done in each birth, the ego in man, the unfulfilled desires in this world of illusion are obstacles for Souls to attain salvation in one birth and therefore the Soul has to overcome those obstacles in each birth.

Among men we find some enjoying all comforts, health, wealth and power where as some are poor and sick. It is due to this effect of *Karma*. Those who are in the affluent circumstances in this birth should not presume that they will experience happy life in the next birth also as it depends upon the good and bad actions performed in this birth. The longevity of the life and the pleasure and pain are experiences depending on the Karma done in the previous births. Man is capable of understanding his natural qualities such as desire, fear, will power, memory, love, hatred, sympathy, jealousy, anger, courage, joy, pain, perseverance, egoism etc and also to attain self realization and final union with God.

Among men some pay attention to physical health and some to intellectual pursuits, but only a few think about the salvation of the Soul. Prayer and devotion to God in the previous births induces one to pursue a spiritual path in this life. The world we see daily and quality of life led by different types of people should give us sufficient knowledge and make us think why there is such a difference. Some people are industrious and some are indolent. Intelligence, desire for learning, health, wealth and life span differ from person to person. Those who realize the truth for such difference will refrain from doing evil in this birth. The Soul that is entangled in this world of illusion is unable to understand the truth. But devotion to God, piety, association with good people, religious knowledge should help one have clear perception of what has been acquired and should enable one to understand the impermanence of the worldly things of *Maya*. The whole universe including the heavenly bodies is the creation of God. Though we are aware of it, we fail to think that everything we do are done with His help. We take pride of having done them due to our ego.

It is possible for the Souls to free themselves from illusions of *Maya* through the worldly experience only. It is possible for man only to cross the barriers of worldly life to attain salvation but not for other beings. Those who feel strongly about their own faults and pray to God for atonement could get relief. Saint Manickavasagar says, “if the tears tickle down my eyes while repenting for any wrongs done by me, it is possible to receive His Grace”. It is quite obvious that worldly experience could help a man realize that ethical conduct, love for all beings, purity of mind, devotion to God etc bring redemption to man. But many fail to understand the nature of life which a man ought to live during his life time. It is a pity that man, a rational being, lead an ignorant life without understanding the purpose of human life. Insatiable desire, the ego in man, selfishness, revenge and anger etc. hinder the correct understanding of the purpose of life as human beings. *Maya*, the illusory nature of this world conceals the truth that things of the world and the man’s stay in this world is transient. He fails to yearn for the eternal bliss which should be the goal of human life. It is clear that this world affords opportunity for a human being to work for the liberation from rebirth. God’s grace alone could help one achieve liberation.

16. THE FOUR GREAT SAINTS

Jnana Sampanthar, Thirunavukkarasar, Sundaramoorthy Swamigal and Manickavasagar, the great Saints of Saiva religion have revealed to us, through their sacred hymns, the inexplicable mysteries that lead to the spiritual advancement and final union with God. They instil in our minds an inner awakening for the Soul, which lies dormant being merged in the illusions of the world. The pious recitation of those holy hymns prods the devotees to action opening new vistas of thought not known before. Let us examine them one by one.

Saint Sampanthar at an early age of three years was blessed by Siva along with His Grace by appearing before him and *jnana* dawned in the mind of the little child. As love and devotion to the supreme in one birth continues in the succeeding births, his communion with God in his previous births led to the spontaneous overflow of thousands of hymns before his inseparable union with God at the age of sixteen. The ideas enshrined in his holy hymns known as *Thevaram* gave an incentive and practical path towards spiritual advancement to those who have an urge for it.

It is evident from his sacred hymns that the true devotees who yearn for the attainment of the ultimate goal should lead a righteous and austere life. To us who take births after births, he exhorts us to study the sacred books and to worship Siva with true devotion, which would help us achieve the *Summum Bomum*. His hymns are spontaneous outpourings of the heart with inspiration. Those were the words of the God through the mouth of the inspired Saint. By reciting them daily, we can get benefits of a rare kind. They soften our hearts, inspire devotion, afford relief to the suffering mind, converts human heart to be the abode of the Divine. In order to attain equanimity of mind, God has given us a life including both pain and pleasure. Love and hatred are common qualities of the human beings. To consider both with equanimity of the mind, the Holy hymns are of immeasurable help by causing purity of mind both in the word and deed. It helps us overcome the effects of our past sins. Sampanthar says that by pronouncing the name of the God *na, ma, si, va, ya*, those who are

immersed in the world of Maya can get the blessings of His Grace. He became one with the God at the age of sixteen.

Let us examine the ideals enshrined in the works of Thirunavukkarasar. In his young age, realizing the transient nature of the things in this world he began to renounce the world. Having a strong desire to understand the religious ideals of other religion, he became a convert to the religion of the Samanar. His sister's fervent prayer to Siva was for a change of heart to take place in his brother to come back to the worship of Siva. As he was suffering from a disease of serious nature and the Samanars failed to give any relief. Thirunavukkarasar had to seek refuge with his sister Thilgavathi, who gave him Holy ash and advised him to pray to Siva for his redemption. He surrendered himself to Lord Siva and began to sing in praise of Him, sweet *Thevarams*. He was finally cured of his terrible disease. The king of the Samanars was in full of rage for giving up the faith in Samana religion and imposed punishments, which were overcome by Thirunavukkarasar in a miraculous manner. When he was thrown into the sea with a stone tied to him, the stone floated and brought him safely to the shore. When he was locked in a room heated with lime for a week without food and water, he survived, to the shock and the surprise of the king and his evil advisers. He came unscathed out of several evil acts of the king.

He sang thousands of sacred hymns, which inspire piety and devotion to Siva. Those who recite those hymns get relief from the onset of danger. His aim in life was service to God. He led a life of piety and devotion till his union with God at the age of eighty one. His ideal and aim of life was to be in the service of God and even in his old age he never failed to perform that devotional service. He is an example for others to follow. Every one should perform his duty without entertaining the fruits of his actions. He worshipped God through service which led him to his union with God. He made it clear that constant prayer can bring benefits of the life in this birth and freedom from rebirth. Through his holy hymns, we understand that we cannot have perception of God except through His grace. God, whose abode is our heart, can only be perceived by meditation. Besides, we understand through his hymns that the Saiva religion is tolerant towards other religions and any one who is devotee of Siva should be held in

veneration despite one's social position. It is obvious from his holy hymns that Holy ash and His holy name *na, na, si, va, ya* are effective means by which devotees can have their past sins forgiven.

The other great Saint who sang *Thevarams* was Sundaramoorthy Swamigal. Sekkilar who wrote about greatness of the 63 Saiva Saints, when writing about Sundaramoorthy Swamigal says, "Sundarar has taken birth for the salvation of all human beings". Sundarar was able to see with his own eyes the dance of Siva in space and was overwhelmed with joy. He felt that his human birth has benefited him and so saying began to pour forth spontaneously his feelings of his love of God in his *Thevarams* with his eyes overflowing with tears. It is said that Siva out of love for Sundarar carried a message to Sundarar's wife Paravaiyar. Whenever the true devotees of Siva think of Him, he bestows his benediction. Throughout his holy hymns, he makes us understand that Siva is the Supreme God who grants us eternal bliss. The truth of Saivism are realized through his holy hymns and he is seen as the teacher of Saivism and enabled it to be a prominent religion of all the other religions.

Sundarar asserts that by pronouncing the name *na, ma, si, va, ya* devotees will have their sins forgiven. They become free from rebirths. He says that God who makes the mind of devotees His abode, gets trapped in the net of piety.

Saint Manickavasagar who sang *Thiruvacakam*, the sweetness of which is often compared with honey is unique in several aspects. He was a great scholar, prime minister to the king and a strong devotee of Siva and is free from all the worldly desires. While executing the duties as prime minister with perfection, his mind was always centred in God. He was in search of a Jnana Guru who could initiate him into spiritual wisdom, which would help him get God's Grace.

When pleasure and pain are considered with equanimity, *anava* loses its grip. When the equanimity of mind relating to pain and pleasure and when the attrition of *anava* takes place, the Grace of God descends on the Soul. Attainment of such state leads to the union with God. This state is classified into four groups. Having a great desire to attain God's feet and

eschewing worldly pleasures and freeing oneself from egoistic tendencies is the first step. Realizing the way to attain the feet of God and adhering to it is the second step. To get rid of all worldly desires from the mind and to attend worldly duties is the third step. To renounce the world completely and to go in search of a *Jnana Guru* is the fourth step. Manickavasagar, having attained the fourth step, was in search of *Jnana Guru*.

After attaining the state of enlightenment at Thiruperunthurai, at the Feet of Siva, who appeared as His Guru in the human form, he was devoid of all the ego in him and was not aware of anything in the world except his Guru. Like a devotee who has tasted a drop of nectar and is denied any of it afterwards, Siva who appeared before him and offered him his sacred feet ordered other devotees who were with him to enter the sacred flame appearing before him but made Manickavasagar to go to Thillai (Chidambaram). This caused disappointment and an unbearable confusion of mind. Perhaps God had willed him to stay so that he might give His sweet *Thiruvacakam* to the world. Through his holy hymns, he has explained the eternal truths. God is always with us and grants solace when we experience pain and suffering. In one hymn he says, "I can reach you if I shed tears invoking your compassion". Those who have intense love for God will enjoy His grace, which will finally lead them to the union with God.

17. THE ETERNAL TRUTHS

All that we perceive in this world are transient and they exist for a certain period of time. What can be called eternal? God, the supreme beings and the Souls are eternal. But the both cannot be perceived with our senses. So can we believe them? There is air everywhere in all parts of the world always and at the same time. Can we see air? Has it a form? Can we hold it with our hands? Yet we know that there is air everywhere. Similarly, God is omnipresent. There is no place where he is present. Without air no living being can exist. In the same way he is not present within us and outside us. He guides us and is witness to all our actions. There is no beginning or end for him. The movements of the earth, the sun, the moon and the other planets are due to him. All things in the nature are subject to His will. The evolution and the involution of the world are too subject to His will. He is responsible for the evolution of the world after destruction, which is an evidence to His external presence.

The Souls are also eternal. According to the *Sidhantha* philosophy Souls are many and they too are eternal. The power of cognition, conation, and affection of the Soul is dormant before taking a birth. It is due to *anava* which is inherent with it. So out of compassion, God enables the Soul to exercise its power of thought, action and feeling by granting him physical body, mind, the world and other worldly things of enjoyment. The Soul cannot act independently but requires God's grace for action. The Soul is eternal but depends on the Grace of God. Though the Soul is subject to rebirth due to *Karma*, it is eternal and requires God's illumination. Its knowledge is limited whereas God has unlimited knowledge, God is omniscient and omnipotent. That is the difference between the two eternal entities, God and Soul.

Man is one of the seven species of living beings. By virtue of having been born a human being, man is capable of achieving the goal of life, whereas the Souls of other living beings, due to past *Karma* don't possess the capability for self-realization. Yet being Souls they are eternal and will take a human birth by the Grace of God. It is obvious that the Souls being born as lower species of living beings lose their chance of God-realization.

Karma is the root cause for being born as big or low living beings. The physical bodies of the human beings and of the other living beings are destined to perish at a pre-destined time. But the Souls being eternal are born with body appropriate to the past *Karma*.

According to *Saiva Sidthantha* philosophy, *Maya* though inanimate is eternal subject to divine will. Out of *Maya* the world is created. The various objects of the world including the animate and the inanimate are products of creation. Their existence not permanent but destined to perish. Human being, though they understand the luring nature of the things of the world are steeped more and more in them like a person stuck in deep mud. Absolute faith and surrender to God helps one realize the fleeting nature of the things of the world. The weakness of the human mind takes a long time to realize the mistakes. So it is vital that children should be helped to understand that God's Grace is necessary for them to overcome the difficulties in life.

Of the eternal entities God, Soul and *Maya* the position of the Soul requires an elucidation. After it takes a human birth it is attached either to *Maya* or to God. It is after a stupendous effort, it emerges out of the tempting *Maya* and attains the feet of God. It requires the guidance and help in all its efforts to reach him. Other living beings are unable to attain the goal of life as they are born without the power of thinking.

18. GIFT OF NATURE

Light alone can dispel darkness. The sun, the moon and the stars dispel the darkness by their lustre, affording light to the outside world. The inner darkness of the human mind requires illumination. The creator of this world has endowed the living being with senses from one to six. Human beings are supreme among all other beings with rational power, which distinguishes them from animals.

To sustain the life of all beings, air is indispensable without which no living being can exist for a moment. Nature is kind enough to provide all with water, fire, air, earth and sky without which life cannot exist on land, sea or sky. Among the other bounties of nature are mountains, rivers, and the hard and soft soils. The unlimited space is another wonder of the nature.

Movements and activities of all are due to a hidden power who is responsible for the creation sustenance and destruction. All the living beings are mortal. To be immortal they will have to become one with God, the creator. Desires and attachments are the chief barriers to be crossed over to attain the goal of life. Attachments to the members of one's family and of the friends and relations make one forget God whose Grace alone could bring redemption to the Soul. Attachments to the things of the material world cause rebirth.

Service to all in time of need is manifestation of love, which is natural to men. It alone can help men achieve divinity. Worldly life is something which nature provides for the betterment of the human beings. One who experiences life with moderation and doing things in such a way as to get the blessing of God will get the benefit of being born as a human being.

Man is gifted with the five senses in addition to the faculties of the mind, to acquire knowledge both worldly and spiritual. Man who endowed with powers denied to other living beings deviates from the spiritual Path which leads to liberation from enticement of the illusory things of *Maya*. Though human birth alone can help one achieve the goal of becoming one with God, man behaves like one who gropes in the darkness. When the animal qualities such as anger, hatred, jealousy predominate in the mind of man is

found incapable of paving the way for liberating oneself from birth. Devotion to God, good moral character, manifest action of love to all things in the form of service are requisites that lead one to reach a higher plane. Jealousy, revenge, hatred and anger obstruct the power of reasoning and the feeling of human sympathy. Love and kindness are like milk sucked by a baby whose health depends on it. These qualities being gifts of nature should help one nurture the weak, the sick and the disabled. Those who enjoy prosperity should render help to those in adversity.

Association with good people, devotion to one who will lead us from darkness to light. Adoration of the one who is our guide and liberator and acquaintance with the holy utterances of the great Saints, undoubtedly help us realize the good of having been born as a human being. One has to lead a worthy life by making use of the bounties of nature. A haphazard life does not bring any desired benefit.

The beautiful flowers, luscious fruits, the birds, the animals, the mountains, the valleys, the grassy meadows, the perennial flow of rivers, the waterfall are some of the nature's endowments reminding us of the presence of the Creator. Among all these, the human being is the most magnificent one. The love we bear towards all living things is an indication of our love to God, whom we should thank for these gifts. We are blind and indifferent in our attitude to who bestowed his blessings.

The dark nights and bright days remind us of our ignorance and enlightenment. The twittering of the birds in the early mornings, the sunrise with all its splendour tell us that we should not grope in darkness but think of the everlasting joy we could enjoy at the holy feet of our creator.

19. PEACE

A child has an undistributed mind but when it grows up, it loses peace of mind due to some extraneous causes. Stone thrown into a pool of water causes ripples. The mind is so disturbed by illusory things of this world of *Maya* followed by pleasant and unpleasant thoughts and desires. The pleasant thoughts breed self-elation, complacency, and egotism. Unpleasant thoughts give rise to worries, jealousy, anger, hatred, vengeance and sadistic tendencies. Both cause perturbation of mind. *Shanthi* (peace) prevails in an undisturbed state of mind. We long for what we cannot reach. We have a bundle of desires. Fulfillment of them brings happiness. Failure brings sorrow. The mind loses its clearness in both situations. The state of mind is reflected on the face. The face is the index of mind.

Certain events disturb the mind like a storm that sweeps over a country. The causes for such disturbances should be known to restore calmness of mind. Lack of proper mental attitude towards the ups and down in life and the lack of contact with the men of worldly experience and wisdom can be attributed to mental disturbance. Absolute faith in God enables one to maintain peace of mind in times of prosperity as well as in adversity. Besides, the mental caliber of each person helps one maintain a mental equilibrium.

The serene and calm mind is conducive to hold communion with God. Prayer and meditation are impossible without peace of mind. The *yogis* and spirituality advanced men enjoy tranquility of mind as they are able to discipline their senses in order to direct their minds fully toward the realization of the self. Though it is not possible for a man who leads a worldly life to control his senses it is possible to maintain peace of mind by eschewing evil thoughts from one's heart. Permanent peace prevails in some families due to certain inherent qualities, such as self-contentment, absence of *anavic* and sins, and noble qualities. The power of reasoning should help one follow a righteous path. We should share the joy and sorrow of others and exhibit the human qualities of sympathy in time of need.

Without peace one cannot get worldly or other worldly bliss. Peace should pervade the heart. It should not be shaken for any reason. In times of prosperity and adversity one should maintain the same state of mind. The discipline of the mind is the basic foundation for successful living. *Shanthy* co-exist with a pure heart. It will flee away from the selfish and the sensual. Genuine *Shanthy* is derived by the control of the senses only. Mental agitation leads to likes and dislikes, joy and sorrow, should be calmed. *Jnana* shows the way to eternal happiness and eternal peace. Happiness and joy prevail under *Shanthy*. Peace is the light that illumines the world. It leads to the understanding of the supreme being.

As the mind is *Maya* mould good and bad, right and wrong contest for supremacy. Real peace and joy are fruits of our attempts to distinguish the eternal from the transitory. *Shanthy* should be enjoyed through thought, word and deed. There must be a real exchange in the daily conduct and behaviour of man. Those who think of God with devotion can overcome any type of *karmic* effect. With his grace he can experience even unattainable joy. Unshaken devotion will win the grace of God.

It is through *Shanthy* piety expands and *Jnana* begins to dawn. *Jnana* is the means of living the full life or the life that knows no death. To preserve *Shanthy* one should not give room for anger as anger enslaves man. *Shanthy* and devotion are the best paths for attaining eternal bliss or everlasting joy. *Shanthy* gives the fortitude needed to bear all the calumny and torture. When anger and greed are suppressed *Shanthy* shines. An unruffled mind gives strength and happiness. A man without agitation has a lustre on his face and a joyous outlook which are the marks of a person in whom *Shanthy* has taken root.

The path of *Jnana* is possible only for one in a million. Piety is fountainhead of *Shanthy*. Steady faith is what is wanted. Mind should keep away from contact with worldly objects. When that is done man can grasp his real identity. The realization of that reality is the state called *Muthi*. One has to give up all impure impulses and cultivate a pure mind. Those who want to attain *Shanthy* have to practice a virtuous life constantly. *Shanthy* is the very basis of the urge towards liberation, bliss of realization of the self

is proportional to the decline of ego. If one rids himself from attachment, *Shanthy* can never be disturbed. If there is the constant remembrance of God and it is practised, *Shanthy* can be attained and evil tendencies of the lower nature can be conquered. *Shanthy* means the giving up of the activities of the senses. The idea that the world is impermanent gets deeply rooted in the mind, all attachments cease automatically. That is renunciation.

20. TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUAL LOVE

Knowledge acquired through reading and through worldly experience cannot be considered perfect. Such knowledge is enhanced by the thrilling achievements in the various fields of science and technology, which have transformed the way of life today. Food and mental acumen and outlook can be acquired by education and by one's association with men of learning and culture. All these accomplishments are inadequate if one fails to gain spiritual knowledge. The progress one makes in this field goes to make one a full man.

Human beings considered as the highest of all living beings should strive to know about the supreme being and his mysterious ways. Inner perfection of the divine being within us could only help us reach the goal of life which is the attainment of the eternal bliss.

We are expected to lead a life compatible with the laws of nature also called the *Laws of Dharma*. Nature provides ample evidence to understand those laws. The sun the moon, the rotation and revolution of the Earth never fail in their duties ordained by nature. The same Dharmic Laws demand from the human beings, the discharge of duties expected of them. It implies good behaviour by pursuing the path of righteousness. Any deviation from that path is a breach of the *Laws of Dharma*. Spiritual progress can be achieved by the strict observance of those laws.

What is termed love in ordinary worldly life is attachment based on human relationships in the family or in society. All worldly attachments are transient. Spiritual love should be distinguished from love or attachment related to the body, the mind or the intellect. Pure love is an expression of Divinity. It is only when the worldly attachments are expelled from the heart, real love will abide in it. It is pure and selfless. Pure love cannot be expressed in words. It is beyond description.

To experience the Divine Love one has to develop certain sacred qualities. The spirit of service is an important quality. Man should strive to realize the inner reality by the manifestation of love and service. Selfless service destroys the ego, rendering help to the needy, to the poor and the helpless should be free from gaining any prominence for the doer. The physical and

material help rendered to others together with the true prayer on behalf of them brings relief and solace to them. Our hearts should be free from evil thoughts even against those whom we do not like. Sai Baba says "manifest your love regardless of how others behave. Make love the basic impulse for all your actions. Share your love with others. Love for the Divine is only true love."

Love is the basis of all the values such as, truth, righteousness, peace, non-violence and honesty. The truth we speak must emanate from the heart and it should be filled with love. Where there is love there is truth. Love is God. Truth is God. God is present in all living beings. If anyone harms another person or any other being he is not a lover of God. "Help ever, hurt never" is a good maxim to be followed in daily life and such a person becomes a real lover of God. Each person loves himself more than anybody else. He avoids anything that jeopardizes his own interest. But his attitude is entirely different when he finds his neighbour confronted with some serious problem.

A true lover of God will experience no sorrow. No condition is miserable if one has faith in God. Difficulties and worries are due to the minds not surrendered to God. That is possible, if one is free from ego sense. Ego is the root cause of all the troubles. One can overcome it by the Grace of God, which descends on him who surrenders himself totally to Him in whom he has absolute faith. The quality of true love is to give and not to receive. God alone is the infinite giver and love therefore is a divine quality.

Those who are capable of overcoming ego in them and at the same time consider pleasure and pain alike will be able to see the inner light within them. Man's heart is the temple of the divine. True happiness consists in the union with God, which is the goal of life for which everyone who has taken birth should endeavour to achieve. Failure to do it leads to rebirth.

Divine love emerges from the heart when ignorance disappears. Love is the manifestation of the self-illuminated. When sublime thoughts and benevolent feelings dawn in the minds love springs in the bottom of the heart. True love is an expression of divinity. The love which people show to others is love shown to God.
