

NATURE OF GOD, WORLD AND HUMAN BODY AS SEEN IN TIRUMULAR'S *TIRUMANDIRAM*

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ABSTRACT

Tirumandiram is considered to be a seminal Saiva Siddhanta work by Tirumular. It speaks of God (Siva), His nature, His attributes and His relationship with the World and Human Beings. It speaks of the thread of unity that binds God, Nature and Human Beings together.

The aim of this research paper is to probe into the mystical and speculative thoughts pertaining to Divine self as manifested in the visible world and how it is related to human self.

KEYWORDS: *Tirumular, Tirumandiram, Saiva Siddhanta, Divine Self, Human 'Self' Siva*

INTRODUCTION

Thirumular's *Tirumandiram* is a seminal work in the Saiva Tradition of Tamil Nadu. It is also known as *tamil Agamam*. Saiva tradition in Tamil Nadu has twelve *Tirumurais*. The *Twelve Tirumurais* are called *tottiram*s (stotras devotional literature) observes Dr. R. Jegadeesan in the chapter titled "Tirumandiram kurum Valkkai Nerigal" in *Ilakkiya Pudupunal* (1). These constituted the Bakthi Literature of Tamil Saivism. The philosophical literature of Tamil Saivism is called *cattiram* (sastras – philosophical treatises). Tirumular's *Tirumandiram* is held at the Tenth *Tirumurai* and it enjoys the unique status of being both *tottiram*s (stotras – devotional literature) and *cattiram* (sastras – philosophical treatises) (*Tirumandiram*. www.thirumandiram.net/intro-to-essays.html).

Tirumular's *Tirumandiram* is voluminous text. It contains a little more than three thousand stanzas. It was written in Kaliviruttam meter, which is close to speech rhythm. Siddalingaiah, in charge of the Department of Panniru Tirumuraikal and who was formerly Professor of Saiva Siddhanta at the Madurai Kamaraj University and had also taught at Calcutta University and Banaras Hindu University in *Saiva Siddhanta in Historic Perspective* states that *Tirumandiram* is unique in its form and content. He also adds that the language of *Tirumandiram* is simple but at the same time more difficult to follow because it uses symbolic language (50)

Tirumular's *Tirumandiram* contains nine sections titled *tantrums*. The length and subject matter of the *tantrums* vary. The naming of the different sections as *tantrums* is unique only to Tirumular's *Tirumandiram*. The word 'tantrum' in Sanskrit meant elaborate statement. Each *tantrum* contains several *adhikarams* (sections) which show the method of attaining the state of Bliss. There are 232 *adhikarams* in all. The whole work has been classified into three parts namely *tantra*, *mantra*, and *upadesa*.

The first three *tantrums* of *Tirumandiram* deal with Karma; the second three *tantrums* deal with *Upasana* or worship, and the last three *tantrums* deal with *jnana*.

Tirumular is the author of *Tirumandiram*. “Tirumula-deva Nayanar Puranam” in Cekkilar’s Periya-Puranam Nambi-yandar Nambi’s *Tiruthondar Tiruvanandhi Nambi-yandar, Agattiyar Vaittiya rattina curukkam – 300, Caturagiri tala Puranam* present varying biographical accounts of Tirumular. One common observation by all these biographical accounts written in different time by different authors is the reference to the name ‘Tirumular’ which is held by all biographers as a given name to Cundaran, the disciple of Nandi Devar because of his act of entering into the body of Mulan, a resident of a village called Cattanur (Tiruvavaduthurai), a herdsman who died and left his herd mourning. This legend is considered to be the play of Siva. The name of the Siva Yogin in the body of Mulan became Tirumular. *Tiru*, the prefix in the Tamil language means ‘Holy’. The change in the name of the Yogin from Mount Kailash to Mulan denotes a transformation from one’s mortal self into self which is detached from this world in all its aspects.

Tirumular’s Tirumantiram is divided into nine chapters. They are named as *tantras* (*tantrums*). The contents of the nine *tantras* can be summed up in the following way: The first *Tantra* presents the philosophical views and divine experience, impermanence of the physical body, love, education etc.; The second *Tantra* deals with Shiva’s glory, His divine acts, classification of souls etc.; The Third *Tantra* discusses Yoga practices according to the eight-angled way of Patanjali.; The Fourth *Tantra* explicates Mantra, tantra, etc; The Fifth *Tantra* speaks of Various branches of Saiva religion; the four elements of Saiva Siddhanta.; The Sixth *Tantra* presents Shiva as *guru* bestowing grace and speaks of the devotee’s responsibility.; The Seventh *Tantra* deals with Shiva Linga, Shiva worship, and self-control; The Eight *Tantra* briefs on the various stages of soul experience.; The Ninth *Tantra* explain the meaning of *Panchatchara manthiram*, the nature, and implication of Siva’s dance, the state of Samadhi, etc (“*Tirumantiram.*”) (“*Thiru Mantra - Tantras Brief (of Thirumular).*”)

The whole of *Tirumandiram* can be summed up in the Three Mahavakias or three great statements. The first states that Love is God (Verse 270, *Tantra 1*). The second presents the desire of Tirumular to communicate to all the beings in the world ways to attain the bliss that he has experienced (*Special Introduction (In Praise of God)*, Verse 85) of *Tirumandiram*). The third holds that the whole of mankind is but one family and that there is only one God (Verse 2104, *Tantra 7*). All these three statements seem to center on Love which is Bliss. This Love or Bliss can be attained by anyone and Tirumular who is a Yogin holds that Bliss or Oneness with God can be attained through Yogic practice which demands personal integration and self-discipline.

Tirumular holds Siva as the Supreme Being. In *Special Introduction (In Praise of God)*, Verse 81 of *Tirumandiram*, Tirumular says that the purpose of this birth was to sing the praise of Siva in Sweet Tamil.

If in a former birth one does not do penance,

Who can say what the next birth will be,

The Lord, however, gave me a good birth,

So that I may sing His glory in sweet Tamil. (13)

Tirumular’s *Tirumandiram* holds that God is One. He is seen as the creator of all the Beings in this Universe and

He presents himself in two different forms - Siva and Sakti. Siva is the Static principle and Sakti is the dynamic principle. Hence the combination of Siva and Sakti is life forms. (https://s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/erbuc/files/5165_85d4d4d0-efd0-4937-8a00-7474ef77234e.pdf)

Tirumular sums up the arguments stated above in *Special Introduction* (In Praise of God), of *Tirumandiram*:

*The One is he, the Two His sweet Grace,
In Three He stood, in all the Four witnessed,
The Five He conquered, the Six He filled,
The Seven Worlds pervades, manifests the Eight
And so remains. (3)*

Tirumular holds Siva as "He-She" and presents the created world as a play by Siva who is "He-She". The idea that the Holy Union of He and She produced all diverse forms is stated in Verse 386, Tantra 2 of *Tirumandiram*

*He and She commenced play
The play of Two produced all;
With seasons changing, diverse the produce;
When He and She in holy union join
Complete be the act of creation. (61)*

Tirumular was a Mystic. He saw God as a being which encompasses all beings. God pervades in all beings, henceforth, he is fully present in Nature and Human Beings. Verse 31 in the section *Special Introduction* (In Praise of God) of *Tirumandiram* affirms the presence of God in all created beings. Thus it could be deduced that the mysticism of Tirumular is God Mysticism.

*The Earth is He, the sky is He! Well, He is!
The Heaven is He, truest gold is He! Well, He is !
Sweetest song's inmost rapture is He!
Him my love besought, from heart's central core. (07)*

Tirumular in *Tirumandiram* speaks about God (Siva) as immanent and imminent being. The Tamil equivalent for the English word 'God' is 'Kadavul'. This word 'Kadavul' is made up of two words 'Kada' and 'vul' which conveys the meaning that God is 'beyond' and 'within'. This nature of God is a paradox. The Paradox is only for human beings, for they see God in terms of human knowledge and understanding which are limited in nature. God is limitless being. He is all powerful, omniscient, omnipotent and all-pervasive in nature. God is perceived by Tirumular in verse 896, Tantra 4 of *Tirumandiram* as a Being who is all by himself without a Cause and who needs none to complement and supplement His existence.

Himself as His Lord stands;

Himself as His Mountain stands;

Himself as Pervasive Himself stands;

As Lord that is Himself. (143)

Thus, God is conceived to be a Being slave to none, but master of all. He resides in His Sacred Mountain which is Kailash in the Himalayan Mountains.

Tirumular sees God (Siva) as Love. He asserts this in Verse 270, Tantra 2 of *Tirumandiram*.

The ignorant prate that Love and Siva are two,

But none do know that Love alone is Siva

*When men but know that Love and Siva are the
same,*

Love as Siva, they ev'er remain. (42)

Tirumular is of the opinion that it is the ignorance or Maya of human beings is that which makes human beings to see Love and Siva to be two different entities. At the dawn of enlightenment or self-realization, one would come to know that Love and Siva are but one entity.

Tirumandiram speaks of the relationship that exists between God and man. Verse 432 and 433, Tantra 2 of *Tirumandiram* states that Siva is the Primal One, the architect who fashioned a framework and clothed human beings flesh and skin and blessed them with the sweet life. The sense organs were subtly inbuilt and the body was endowed with mind and the power of cognition and wisdom to discriminate between good and bad. Thus human beings and the human body was the artifact of God, well fashioned and executed. Thus, every human being is precious and has a moral responsibility to preserve the physical body because it has treasures unfathomable that God has enshrined. (67)

Tirumular in Verse 443, Tantra 2 of *Tirumandiram* presents God as a potter who mounts the clay on the Wheel to create a fashion that he has conceived in his mind. Thus the whole of creation is presented as the artwork of God bears his mark and is to be mused upon so that one could experience God intimately.

Tirumular is unique among the Saiva Siddhas because of his ideological conception of the human body as the Temple of God. This is being stated in Verse. 511, Tantra 2 of *Tirumandiram*:

The Lord is within them,

Yet they know Him not,

They of Faith false;

Limitless the flow of their evil deeds;

Down the deep drain, it goes,

Never its destination to know. (78)

In Verse 2866, Tantra 9 of *Tirumandiram*, Tirumular presents Human body as a gambling board where God is the master player who is involved in a mysterious play with five dice (sense organs), using three channels (Mala: Anava, Maya, and karma) and fifty-one letters of nada pervading the game (440). This clearly explains the relationship that exists between God and Human Beings.

Tirumular in *Tirumandiram* celebrates the human body even when he states that the nature of the human body is transitory. Tirumular speaks of Body as a bag (Kaayapai) which contains many ingredients. The body contains within it another bag that is a Maya bag. When the air or jiva leaves the body like a thief the Maya bag becomes like dust. The analogy of air leaving the body bag to a thief secretly entering the house and leaving swiftly without the knowledge anybody is startling down to earth. It is utilizing common day happenings to drive home some great truth, in this context it is teaching the devotee the truth that air or jiva may leave the body anytime. Thus Tirumular like any other enlightened being disowns body in favor of the spirit. (Verse 2122, Tantra 8) (332). The verse quoted above conveys an idea that is communicated by another Siddha song, "Kaayamae Idhu Poiyada/ Verum Kaatradaitha Paiyada" (The human body is just an illusion and it is just an air-filled bag, empty and useless), which is often cited by religious leaders to teach their followers to disown their body in favour the spirit stating that the body is transitory.

Tirumular after attaining the supreme realization that the body is the temple of God began to think in this line "Kaayamae Idhu Meiyada/ Adhil Kannum Karuthum Vaiyada" (The body exists in reality, so take the utmost care to maintain it carefully).

Tirumular in *Tirumandiram* presents Human heart as the abode of God. He states that human beings are unaware of this fact because of the power of Maya or Pasam (attachment). He stresses on absolute concentration as the prerequisite to reaching God. Concentration is possible only when the five senses are controlled and turned inward. Thus Tirumular in *Tirumandiram* advocates interior journey as a means to realize one's real Self or supreme realization. The ideas stated above are communicated by Verse 140 in Tantra 1 of *Tirumandiram*:

Surely then the senses five under your control come,

Surely then the senses five back to their native

Homes retreat,

Surely then the senses five turn inward

When the soul meets the Lord. (22)

Tirumular in Verse 190, Tantra 1 of *Tirumandiram* states that Lord Siva is the Lord of this human body and adds that the body is an empty vessel without God. God fills the vessel with his spirit and hence he comes to know as "Vengada Nadan" (Lord of the Body). God himself is the player inside the human vessel and when the play of life gets over departs leaving the human body which henceforth is called a corpse. God is also called "Kuuthan" (Player). The word 'Kuuthadi' in Tamil Tradition meant "Player". Thus God is seen as the one who plays the dual role – the Playwright and the Player. The implication of this verse may be that Human Body without the indwelling spirit is nothing.

Since God is both imminent and immanent, Tirumular in verse 2349, Tantra 8 of *Tirumandiram* states that God is to found within and must be realized within one's Self Soul. He tells that if one does not realize God within one's self, one would never be able to see Siva. (367)

Love and worship are presented as margas (paths) by Tirumular in Verse 274, Tantra 1 of *Tirumandiram* to hook the Divine to the human soul. He tells,

Worship the Lord with heart melted in love;

Seek the Lord, with love

When we direct our love to God

He too approaches us with love. (43)

Breath control, concentration, and Yoga are presented as other margas (paths) to reach God. Tirumular in verse 1785, Tantra 7 of *Tirumandiram* foretells that the people who have realized that their heart is Siva's temple by means of breath control and concentration are the ones who would enjoy the company of the saints who die to this earth and reborn to eternal life, people who lack this awareness are sure to be in the company of ghosts of the dead who are eternally damned. (279)

Since God presents himself in the human body through breath to be realized by human beings, human beings are duty bound to preserve their body and thereby prolong the spiritual encounter with the Divine. To achieve this, Tirumular presents Yoga and breathing exercise as a means to live healthily and live as long as 166 years in verses 727 and verse 728, Tantra 3 of *Tirumandiram* (114). Yoga demands breath control and concentration. The yoga that Tirumular upholds is Kundalini Yoga. God according to Kundalini Yoga is seated on a thousand petals Lotus on the Siras (head) and he could be reached through breath control and concentration. (Verse 796, Tantra 3) (125)

Yoga is presented both as a physical and spiritual exercise through which one can attain immortality here on earth. Verse 2885, Tantra 9 of *Tirumandiram* speaks of practicing Kundalini Yoga and chanting 'Aum' with utmost concentration which makes the nectar of the flower gush out (443). Yoga must be learned perfectly and practised in order to preserve one's health. He cautions the devotee that the body would perish if Yoga is not practised properly. He gives a very practical example, which involves his knowledge of the land and the animals that inhabit it.

From the Bamboo arose a Margosa tree

Close on Margosa was a Palmyrah,

Knowing not to drive that Snake and eat it,

The Margosa tree withered away. (Verse 2887, Tantra 9) (443-44)

In the verse cited above Bamboo represents Karma, Margosa tree represents the body, Palmyra represents Sushumna, and the snake represents kundalini. This verse appears in the section titled "Sunya Sambhashana" (Dialogue of Symbolism).

In Verse 2889, Tantra 9 of *Tirumandiram*, Tirumular speaks of breath control involved in Kundalini yoga using the symbolism of controlling two bulls in a hamlet. The two bulls stand for the right breath (Pingala) and the left breath (idea). The hamlet mention in the verse is a human body (444).

God according to Tirumular is the breath that human beings inhale and exhale. The process of inhaling and exhaling air happens naturally most of the time human beings are completely unaware of the movement of air into their body and the movement of air out of the body. Concentration and awareness are essential for following the movement of the air inside of one's body. Tirumular tells that Nandi like the air the air we breathe in and out is subtle. The subtlety of Nandi is compared with the fragrance that is within flower by analogy. Singleness of thought is the means by which one can realize god within oneself and end the cycles of births and deaths. (Verse 1460, Tantra 5) (226)

Thus, *Tirumandiram* the seminal Saiva Siddhanta work written by Tirumular speaks of God (Siva), His nature, His attributes and His relationship with the World and Human Beings in mystical and speculative language. It speaks of the thread of unity that binds God, Nature and Human Beings together. It presents how the divine self is manifested in the visible world and how it is related to the human self. It also presents ways and means to attain oneness with Siva through Love, worship, and Siva Yoga.

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This research paper is not comprehensive but an attempt to trace the mystical and speculative thoughts embedded in Tirumular's *Tirumandiram* pertaining to the nature of God and presence of God in the world and human body.

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