



THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE BASIC TENETS OF SAIVA SIDDHANTA

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Abstract:

The Philosophy behind the basic tenets of Saiva Siddhanta is something unique and different from the understanding of other faiths. But at the same time it is very essential to comprehend and to explain the individuality of the great philosophical nature of Pati, Pasu and Pasam which are indispensable for the liberation of the soul to attain its eternity. It is because of the realization of the Divine reality one attains nirvana and detaches himself from Pasu – Pasam and seeks Him true. The Ultimate reality 'Pati' stands untouched by Pasu-Pasam though they are equally supreme like 'Pati'. But in the Divine presence the Pasu – Pasam would vanish completely and only the Lord you seek is Eternal.

Key Words: Pati (God), Pasu (Soul), Pasam (Bondage), Mala (Impurity), Supreme Reality, Liberation, Indispensable, Realization, Contemporary, Interpretation, Relationship, Rebuild, Revisit, Bondage & Enlightenment.

Introduction:

There are numerous religions and various philosophies in India and in the world and among these the Saiva religion and Siddhanta philosophy occupy a prominent place. Saiva Siddhanta philosophy is considered to be one of the most perfect, clearest and cleverest systems of human thought. Not only it gives logical explanations but also opens up a new stratum to revisit and to 'rebuild' contemporary belief and understanding about GOD.

Pati, Pasu and Pasam are the most important truths (basic tenets) of Saivism. They are common to all Schools of Saivism and regardless of their differences in the interpretation of the relationship between Pati, Pasu and Pasam. 'Pati' means Lord or the Supreme Self in Saivism. 'Pasu' means animal or a being in animal state. We, the human beings, are also considered as animals because they are deceived and ignorant and all the more they do not know who they are actually. 'Siva' is the Lord and shepherd of these deluded beings and with His support, sustenance, enlightened grace and power souls attain liberation from the bondage. It consists of Anava which creates ignorance and egoism to the souls. Karma gives experience to souls. Maya helps the souls to get away from ignorance. It is therefore, indispensable and constructive to figure out and to explain the individuality of the great philosophical nature of Pati, Pasu and Pasam in this paper.

History of Saiva Siddhanta:

Saiva Siddhanta is the old prehistoric religion of south India, truly and essentially existing from Pre-Aryan times and holds sway over the hearts of the Tamil people. "The early beginnings of Saivism are lost in obscurity. But it is generally admitted that the history of Saivism is a blend of two lines of development, the Pre-Aryan and the Aryan or Vedic. About the Pre-Aryan origins our knowledge is still scanty. The excavations of the sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro have given us some valuable insights into the Pre-Aryan civilization and religion of India. Through Sir John Marshall's arguments regarding the existence of the phallic cult, the worship of the mother goddess and of pasupati among the people of Mohenjodaro remain still inconclusive, they are being confirmed by further researches. Fr. Heras confirmed the conclusions of Sir John M and concludes that the Modenjadro people were Proto-Dravidians and that their chief deities were Siva and Sakti"¹

Saiva Siddhanta system flourished during the time of propaganda campaign of Materialism, Jainism and Buddhism in south India. When the Hindu faith were shaken by the Materialist philosophy of no-caste, the followers of both Vishnu and Siva found it necessary to campaign their own particular cause. Nayanmars were involved in this process of campaigning and they effectively composed hymns in praise of Siva. Alvars sang in praise of Vishnu. After the suppression of materialism and Jainism and Buddhism, the Saivas and the Vaisnavas continued the debate between themselves. The basic difference between Sankara and Siddhanta is that the Sankara's philosophy is the identification of the supreme spirit with human but the Saiva philosophy is that these two are distinct entities and can never become one in substance. In order to establish their position of Siddhanta philosophy they have their primary sources in the Vedas and the Agamas, which are revealed by Siva

¹ Chacko Valiaveetil, Liberated Life: Ideal of Jivanmukti in Indian Religious Specially in Saiva Siddhanta, Madurai St. Joseph's press, 1980, P.69

himself and this accepted by this system as a valid source of knowledge. “The canonical literature of the poets was compiled in the eleventh century by Nampi-yandar –nampi, a collections known as the Twelve Tirumurai. This canonical literature of the philosophers was written sometime between AD1000 and 1400, and this collection is known as the fourteen Meikanda Sastras which teach the Divine Truth”.²

The Meaning of Saiva Siddhanta:

The term ‘Siddhantam’ was first used by great Saint Tirumular in his great work, Tirumantiram verse 1421.

“Having learned all that learned must be.
Having practiced all yoga that has to be,
They, then, pursue the path of Jnana in graduation sure,
And so pass into the world of Formless Sound beyond;
And there, rid of all impurities,
Envision the Supreme, the Self-created;
They, forsooth, are the Saiva Siddhantis true”.

It is stated here that the goal of Saiva Siddhantam is to get rid of all impurities

The Saiva Siddhanta of south India is one of the classical products of the Tamil mind and it is of the first systems of Hindu thought and life. “The word ‘Saiva’ is of course derived from ‘Saivam’ – the name the Saivites use for the Supreme Being. It indicates that this school of Hindu thought which interpret Siva to mean ‘the auspicious’ or ‘the blissful Lord’. The word Siddhanta is a compound word made up of ‘Siddha’ and ‘anta’. The first means ‘established truth’ while the other means ‘end or end of ends’”.³ The Saiva Siddhanta thus allies itself with other systems of Hindu thought, while at the same time it claims to set itself apart from the other religious truth. It accepts truths of the other systems while differentiating the real truth of Siddhanta.

The Siddhantians therefore look at the field of varying religions and they define the true religion as follows “the true religion is the one which compresses reasonably everything within its own fold”.⁴ And thus Saiva Siddhanta, in other words, mean the conclusion of conclusions and by its very name it claims that nothing higher exists.

The Basic Tenets of Saiva Siddhanta:

The ultimate philosophy of Saiva Siddhanta system is clear and specific exposition of higher truth realized by enlightened souls in the most ancient past in this country. The Siddhanta system recognizes three ultimate realities or categories, ‘God’ the supreme, the ‘Soul’ and the ‘Bonds’ which fetter the soul. In Tamil they are called as Pati, Pasu and Pasam respectively. Pati (God) is the supreme reality, independent, blissful, immutable and perfect. Pasu (souls) are numerous things with life and limited wisdom suppressed by Pasam. The Pasam (Bondage) are also called as Mala (impurity). Though all the three are equally ultimate and eternal Pati (God) includes the other two under his vast infinite consciousness force and dominates and controls them.

Pati (God):

The Siddhanta is positive that God is the one, and this indicated severally as He or She or It. He is neither with form nor formless. He is the supreme reality and is a single super conscious being with unlimited wisdom. He is beyond the reach of the senses and mind. Thus it is said that God cannot be comprehended but the love of God can be experienced in our lives. “Supreme has no avatara because the form of the avatara is comprised of matter which is an end i.e., birth and death has no place in God in Saiva Siddhanta”.⁵ “The word ‘irai’ in Tamil refers to the Lord (Pati) who is Siva here, Pati is the central reality and the other realities though considered eternal but they depend on Him. The words in Tamil representing God are philosophic in content. The ‘Kadavul’ is made up of two parts namely ‘Kada’ which means beyond or transcendent and ‘ul’ means immanent. ‘Iraivan’ means residing in everything. His attributes are traditionally eight that are self existence, purity, absolute intelligence, omniscience, independence, boundless grace, omnipotence and infinite bliss. These eight attributes can be summed up in these words namely, ‘Sat – Cit – Anaddam’.⁶ With reference to the word and soul, the fivefold function is attributed to Siva namely, Creation, Sustenance, Dissolution, Obscuration and Grace. These are said to be a game of Siva. The theory of creation in Siddhanta is unique and Pati is the efficient cause for the world.

Pasu (Soul):

The world being insentient cannot know or experience God. It is only the soul that can have cognition of both the world and God. Since the soul is enmeshed by the pre- cosmic and pre –existent spiritual darkness, God as act of Grace undertakes the function of creation in order to free the soul from the clutches of the spiritual impurity and enables it to realize its true nature and to lean on Him the blissful. It is said that “the

² John Piet H., A Logical Presentation of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy, Chennai Diocesan press, 1952, P. 4

³ Ibid, p.1

⁴ Ibid. p.2

⁵ Mahadevan T.M.R., “ Concept of God in Saiva Siddhanta”, Indian Philosophical Annual, Vol. 7, Chennai, University of Madras, 1971, p.174

⁶ C.N.Singaravelu, “Saiva Siddhanta Hindu Philosophy”, Saiva philosophy, Vol.22. p.121

stereological goal of the Siddhanta as of most other Indian religions, is liberation is thought to occur at the time of death, which means that he becomes omniscient and omnipotent like Siva but ontologically distinct from him. The soul could never become one with Siva, but could become a Siva".⁷

Pasam (Bondage):

"This word Pasam is used in two ways, and that, something in a confusing manner. It is sometimes used as a synonym for anava, in which case it stands for the source of the soul's ignorance and arrogance. Anava is that which eternally encases the soul until it has realized Siva. The second use of pasa is as a synonym for the three malas as a combination of binding principles, namely, the anava mala, karma, and maya. Anava is as described above. Karma is the fruit of deeds, the accumulation of the merit and demerits which are the cause of future experience, birth, joy and sorrow. Mayas is primordial matter or the seed of the phenomenal world, that which forms the body and the experience, plane for the soul and its purification".⁸

So the cyclic change does not seem to be for the sake of the phenomenal world not for the same of God, but it occurs for the sake of the soul. As the Siva –Jnana-bodha says that "the world evolves in order that the anava of soul may be worn away".⁹ However the other primary reasons why God causes the phenomenal world to pass through cyclic change, it is merely the sport of the Siva His Lila or play.

That is why Manikka Vasakar sings, ----Dancer in Tillai's sacred court, Midst waving fire! This heaven, the flowery earth, us all in sport Thou Gurardest, formest, dost enshroud----".¹⁰ The postulate of maya emerges from that of the reality of the world. God arises from the inference of maya; while anava and soul arise from the relation of God to maya and the cyclical process which follows. Pati or God, Pasu or the soul, and Pasam or the bond, are thus established as the three uncreated realities which make up the world –view of the Siva Siddhanta".¹¹

Conclusion:

Pati and Pasu and Pasam are the three realities on which the philosophy of Saivism is being built upon and without which Siddhanta philosophy loses its moral and spiritual ground. Siddhanta philosophy is not only logical but also scientific. Saiva Siddhantam does not consider God as the only eternal entity which is referred to as Pati. Like God, souls or Pasu is also eternal that has neither beginning nor end. Souls are many and have their own limitations. Its capabilities are limited due to the bondage or Pasam. This is also eternal like God and souls. The soul is known as Pasu due to its nature of being under Pasam. It is the source of cosmos which includes world and all living entities Anavam, Karmam and Mayai are in-animated. These elements are not capable of knowing anything even if it is taught. God and souls are animated. God as all knowing and souls capable of knowing when taught. From the beginning less period, souls were depending on Anavam and concealed the knowledge of the soul. God took pity (KARUNAI) on souls and created bodies (Thanu, Karanam, Buvanam, Bhogam) from Maya to enlighten the souls. All five elements or categories are inter-connected. In a logical way of approach, a perfect philosophy which deals with ultimate reality, must accept the existence of the above five categories.

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⁷ Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, P. 163

⁸ John Piet H., *A Logical Presentation of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy*, Chennai Diocesan press, 1952, P. 18

⁹ Siva –Jnana-Bhodham, *Sutra. I*,

¹⁰ G.U.Pope, *The Tiruvvasagam*, P.110 (Poem.12)

¹¹ John Piet H., *A Logical Presentation of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy*, Chennai Diocesan press, 1952, P. 18