

## LITERARY HISTORY OF TAMIL SAIVISAM

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The origin saivism is in obscurity. It is clear that saivism is a blend of two lines of development, Aryan and the Pre Aryans. It is not a single cult, but a federation of allied cults. The hold of saivism extends not only over the whole of India, but also stretches out across the sea to greater India and the Archipelago.

An attempt is made in this paper to trace the genesis of this powerful creed (Saivism) and survey the evidence from Tamil Literature in a detailed way.

Tamil Literature's for Saivism is extensive and its philosophy is complex. Our endeavor will be just to review the Literary history of Tamil Saivism. This has necessarily to start with discussion of Thirumular and his work. The place of Thirumular in the history of Tamil Saivism is indeterminate. He is the earliest exponent of saivism in the Tamil land. His most important work is Thirumandiram. For this various dates have been assigned, ranging from the first to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. As Thirumular is mentioned by Sundaramurthyayanar, we may be sure that he must have lived earlier than the 9<sup>th</sup> century, A.D., some statements in the preface of the work, imply that Thirumular was the first to interpret Saivism to the Tamil world. But the highly intricate theology and dogmatics expounded in the work, and its sectarian character may raise a doubt whether this work is really very early.

The other literature of Tamil Saivism is assigned to Nambiandar Nambi, who may be assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Umāpathisivachariyar who was the last of the Santhanachariyas belongs to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. describes in a short work, Thirumuraikandapurānam, the redaction of the Saiva canon by Nambiandarnambi, He states that Nambi, in the first instance, arranged the canon in the form of 10 books. The first three comprising 384 Padigam' of Thirugana Sambandar, books Four to six made up of 307

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Padigam's of Thirunavukarasu, 100 Padigams of Sundaramorthy forming the 7<sup>th</sup> book, the Thiruvagasam of Manikavasagar being the 8<sup>th</sup> and a number of Thiruvisaipa by nine different authors and the Thirumandiram of Thirumular forming the last two books. The Periyapuram by Sekkizhar is the twelfth book. The arrangement of the books is not chronological.

The Siva-gnan-botham of Meykandar written in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century,<sup>1</sup> is the first attempt of the tenets in Tamil Saivism. The name Sivaganapotham is explained thus: Sivam is one., Ganam is the Knowledge., Potham is the realisation of such knowledge. The scheme of the 12 sudras is simple, the first three assert the existence of the three entities – God (Padi), Bondage (Pasa), and soul (Pasu), the next three define the nature and their inter-relation and the next three deal with the means of realisation, and last is devoted to the nature of release.

The systematic treatment of the doctrine by Meykandar was preceded by two works namely Tiruvntiyar and Thirukkalirrupadiyar by two authors. Both these are works meant to present in an easy style i.e., main aspects of Saiva doctrine and Practice.

After the Siva-gana-botham, the next work of importance is the SivaGanaSidhiyar of Arunandi, who has been the first Guru of Meykandar's father and then the disciple of Meykandar himself. This great work, is classic literature on Tamil Saivism.

Another work on Saivism is the UnmaiVilakkam by Manavasagandan of Thiruvathikai. Umapathi Sivachariyar, who lived at the close of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century was the author of 8 works on the doctrine which complete the tale of Saiva Siddhanta Sastras in Tamil. Of these Sivaprasnam, is an important work and the Sivagana Sidhiyar UnmaiNariVilakkam is also ascribed to him and deals with the 10 karyas.<sup>2</sup>

The later religious experience of the Tamil Saivas apart from its dialectic and philosophy, is interpreted in the songs of this Siddhas, in with the spirit of the old Bhakti literature of the Devaram and the Thiruvagasam is captured again and reinterpreted. These songs are theistic and some times antibrachmanical in tone. From these works we come to know the importance of Tamil Literary works for the promotion of Saivism in Tamil Nadu.

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**Foot notes**

1. Senthamizh III, pp. 189-190.
2. These are ThattuvaRupa, Thattuva Dharsana and Thattuvasurthi, Atmarupa , Atmadharsana and Atmasurthi, Sivarupa, Siva Dharsana, Sivayoga, and Siva Poga.