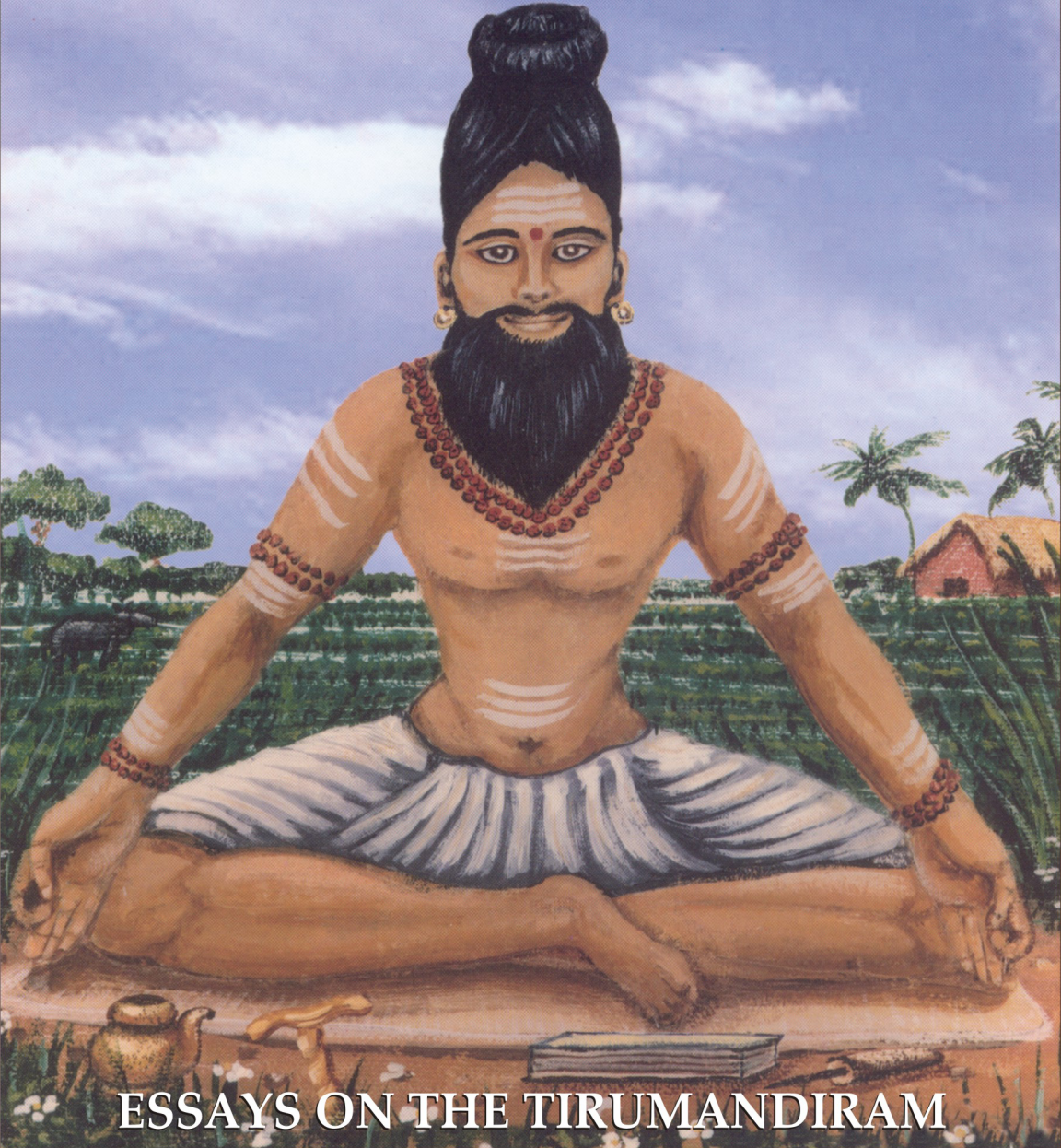


THE YOGA OF SIDDHA TIRUMULAR



ESSAYS ON THE TIRUMANDIRAM

T.N. Ganapathy & KR. Arumugam

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4. THE YOGA OF THE TIRUMANDIRAM

T.N. Ganapathy

1. Definition of Yoga

Any attempt to define Yoga in terms of *per genus et differentia* will be an unsuccessful attempt for “only by Yoga is Yoga known.” Really Yoga means many things for it is many things. To start with one can indicate the denotative aspect of the term and gradually, though not successfully, attempt to comprehend its connotative aspect. Through denotation, we can say that Yoga is the *lingua franca* that has crossed doctrinal, regional, linguistic and geographical frontiers. As Mircea Eliade says Yoga is a “living fossil,” a modality of spirituality which has existed for a long time and still “un-fossilizable.”¹ Patañjali calls Yoga as *anuśāsana*, which means “direction coming down from traditions.”²

Though etymologically the term “Yoga” means “to bind together,” it has acquired many other connotations such as “method,” “activity,” “force,” “meditation,” “renunciation,” “concentration,” “evenness,” “practice of inner isolation,” etc. Theos Bernard gives seventeen meanings of the term “Yoga.”³ It is the method of actualizing what is always potential in one’s nature. It helps one to understand the untapped silent areas of one’s consciousness. The nucleus of Yoga is practice. He who tastes knows it, not by philosophic argument. As *dhyāna-sukham*—joy of contemplation—Yoga provides man with the joy of self-discovery. The Tamil Yoga Siddhas have indicated the connotation of the term Yoga. According to Śiva-vāṅkiyar, a Tamil Siddha, the aim of Yoga is to attain “seedless consciousness,”⁴ or pure or integral consciousness, which is an emergence from time and abolition of history. It is a “perception beyond perception.”⁵ The Tamil Yoga Siddhas call Yoga figuratively as an esoteric path of taking honey without flowers as base. Yoga, in short, may be interpreted as a

method by means of which the basic aspects of the individual, namely, the vital current, mind, consciousness and energy are mobilized and harmonized. It is an esoteric technique, a method of inner development of a human being. In short, Yoga is ecstasy that is samādhi. It provides practical method for self-realisation.

1. 1. Yoga is different from religion

Yoga may be associated with religion *per se*, but it is distinctly distinguishable from religion and religious practices. While religion speaks of God-realization, Yoga speaks of self-realization. To achieve self-realization jñāna is the method adopted by Yoga. Tamil Siddhas insisted on the supreme importance of jñāna and they do not emphasize bhakti as the method of realization. In bhakti the heart weeps for what is lost whereas in jñāna the spirit delights in what it has found. Hence the Tamil Yoga Siddhas are critical about idol-worship and religious practices. They are against the fundamentalist attitude of religion. In their literature there is almost a total absence of any local cult or the deity. No genuine Siddha in Tamil Literature has sung in praise of any local God. One of the chief characteristic features, the *differentia*, to determine a genuine Siddha is to find out whether he/she has sung in praise of any local God or Deity. According to Śiva-vākkiyar, a Siddha never worships a deity in the temple.⁶ This is a feature that distinguishes Siddhas from other saints, especially Ālvārs and Nāyaṇmārs. Yet the Siddhas believed in the Supreme Abstraction and called it as “That” or “It” or “Suchness” or “*Parāparam*” in Tamil. The Siddhas are against any institutionalized religion, which produces habits, customs and ritualistic practices which prevent one from being spiritually alert and fully conscious. Formalities threaten to become more important than knowing one’s own inner nature or self and hence rituals and scriptures become only

fetters. One who is bent on enlightenment should be careful about the road-blocks such as rituals, scriptures, temples, churches, mosques, etc., which hinder the spiritual pathway and progress. According to the Siddhas the cause of the prevalence of delusion in our lives is institutional rather than personal.

2. Yoga as understood by Tirumūlar

In discussing Yoga as understood by Tirumūlar one has to take into consideration his definitions of a Siddha; that is, his views regarding Yoga *inter alia* are connected with his understanding of who a Siddha is. His views on Yoga and his definitions of a Siddha are the two sides of the same coin.

2. 1. Yoga is Śiva-Yoga

First of all Tirumūlar calls the Yoga discussed in the *Tirumandiram* as *nava-yoga* (new type of Yoga) or *tava-yoga* (Yoga of penance) or Śiva-Yoga (Yoga that bestows *Śiva-ānanda*).

The verse runs as follows:

Śiva-Yoga is to distinguish the *cit* from the *acit*;

Yoga of penance is to attain self-illumination;

Other types of Yoga are not Yoga proper; to attain Śiva-ānanda

Nandi has bestowed this new type of Yoga.⁷

Tirumūlar says that Nandi (Śiva) has bestowed this new type of Yoga (*nava-yoga*) discarding the previous types of Yoga as Yoga not proper. The term that Tirumūlar uses for the other types of Yoga is *ava-yoga*. *Ava-yoga* refers to the useless types of Yoga that were in vogue previously, which do not bestow anything good for the yogin. G. Varadarajan interprets the term *ava-yoga* as Haṭha-Yoga, which deals mainly with bodily discipline.⁸ But this

interpretation is far-fetched, for *ava-yoga* simply means Yoga which is useless.

Śiva-Yoga, also called Śiva-rāja-Yoga distinguishes by means of *viveka* (discrimination), the *cit* (intelligence, consciousness, knowledge) from the *acit* (non-conscious, that which lacks knowledge). Suba. Annamalai distinguishes between *cit* and *acit* in the following manner: Though the atman or individual soul or consciousness by nature is *cit*, it does not know due to ignorance that it is *cit* and it is treated as *acit*; but when once wisdom dawns, the ignorance that it is *acit* is removed.⁹ This interpretation powerfully reminds us of the story which Swami Vivekananda is fond of narrating. It is as follows:

There is a story about a lioness, who was big with young, going about in search of prey; and seeing a flock of sheep, she jumped upon them. She died in the effort; and a little baby lion was born, motherless. It was taken care of by the sheep, and the sheep brought it up, and it grew up with them, ate grass and bleated like the sheep. And although in time it became a big, full-grown lion, it thought it was a sheep. One day another lion came in search of prey and was astonished to find that in the midst of this flock of sheep was a lion, fleeing like the sheep at the approach of danger. He tried to get near the sheep-lion, to tell it that it was not a sheep but a lion; but the poor animal fled at his approach. However he watched his opportunity and one day found the sheep-lion sleeping. He approached it and said, "You are a lion." "I am a sheep," cried the other lion and could not believe the contrary, but bleated. The lion dragged him towards a lake and said, "Look here, here is my reflection and yours." Then came the comparison. It looked at the lion and then at its own reflection,

and in a moment came the idea that it was a lion. The lion roared, the bleating was gone.¹⁰

Śiva-Yoga is the Yoga method by which the atman identifies itself with Śiva. It is a process of attaining Śivahood at the top of the head (*sahasrāra*). It is called in Siddha literature as “Yoga which touches the top”¹¹ Here the yogin is said to “drink” the “ambrosial juice” oozing from the sahasrāra. Hence this Yoga is called by some Siddhas as a process of “begging at the top” or “quenching the thirst at the top.”

Śiva-Yoga is attained by *tava-yoga* (Yoga of penance). It is a new type of Yoga (*nava-yoga*), which has been bestowed to humanity by Nandi (Śiva) Himself. By calling as *nava-yoga*, Tirumūlar indicates that this new type of Yoga was not in vogue before him in the Tamil country. It is for the first time that this Yoga is explicitly explained and discussed in the *Tirumandiram*. (Though Tirumūlar does not use the expression Kuṇḍalini-Yoga, what is discussed by him is only that. In the sections that follow, the term Kuṇḍalini-Yoga is used as the alternate term for Śiva-Yoga). That is, the *Tirumandiram* is not only an Āgama treatise but a treatise on Yoga as well. Though the *Tirumandiram* is listed as the tenth *Tirumuṟai* (bhakti works of Tamil Śaivism), it is distinctly different from the other *Tirumuṟais* in that it discusses a new type of Yoga (*nava-yoga*) dealing with cakras, prāṇāyāma, Pariyaṅga-Yoga, twilight language, etc., The *Tirumandiram* develops Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga as Śiva-Yoga. Hence its message is wider than Patañjali’s *Yoga-Sūtras*.¹² It is the first treatise in Tamil on Śiva-Yoga known as Kuṇḍalini-Yoga. As Tamilannal says Tirumūlar, in his *Tirumandiram*, struck a new tradition in Tamil.¹³

According to Tirumūlar, yogins who practice Śiva-Yoga are called Śiva-yogins or Siddhas:

Śiva yogins are they that the seed destroy;
Who, in waking state, the pure awareness induce;
Who in harmony unbroken, achieve the tranced breath
When life, senses, body-alike simulate death.¹⁴

Siddhas are those who are alive, but “dead” so far as the external world is concerned. They are *jīvan-muktas* who live in their bodies, but yet liberated; they are yogic adepts of immortality. As they call in Tibet they are *amṛta-siddhi-yogins*. That is, *jīvan-mukti* is living liberation. A *jīvan-mukta* has a body made of enlightened awareness and equal to that of Śiva, but a physical body nevertheless. To be liberated in life is to be Śiva—the Supreme Abstraction unbounded by form or times. (Śiva is the symbol used to connote a divinized human state of liberation, and every yogin should strive to be Śiva, the Lord of yogins). Tirumūlar, therefore, calls a Siddha as *Śiva-muṇi-Siddha*¹⁵ or *nirāmayattōr* (one who does not suffer birth).¹⁶ Tirumūlar calls himself such a Siddha.¹⁷

There are several verses in the *Tirumandiram* to show that Yoga is Śiva-jñāna. Tirumūlar defines a Siddha as one who has attained Śiva-jñāna.¹⁸ He calls a Siddha as Śiva-mukta.¹⁹ According to Tirumūlar Śiva-jñānis are dead to the world, though living in body and senses.²⁰ Śiva-jñānis are *jīvan-muktas*.

Jīvan-mukti or living liberation is a state of embodied wisdom in which the yogic attainments transform all aspects of human existence. Tirumūlar calls a *jīvan-mukta* as *cōmbar*.²¹ *Sōmbar* in Tamil stands for the state of tranquility. He also calls a *jīvan-mukta* as *tūṅgi-k-kaṇḍāṇ*. It means one who has attained realization by “sleeping.” A *jīvan-mukta* is one who “sleeps” (is quiet) and sees Śiva’s world and experiences Śiva-Yoga.²²

In a work called *Amṛta-siddhi* or *The Attainment of Immortality*²³ the author Avadhuta Candra describes a jīvan-mukta as follows:

When the attainments of
Body, speech, and mind are manifest,
The great attainment, the bestowal of the fruit of living
liberation
Is to be known. (30.3)

The yogin is blissful,
Omniscient, he has vision,
He makes an offering of all elements,
Pledged to the three worlds. (30.5)

He is not burned by fire,
Nor does he sink in water,
The master of Yoga is invincible,
He has cast off the things of the world. (30.8)

Such a yogin is made of everything,
Composed of all elements,
Always dwelling in omniscience,
He has the respect of the entire world. (30.9)
Endowed with all the qualities of Siva,
With limitless all-pervading wisdom,
The yogin, following the great adepts,
Is the locus of all accomplishments. (30.7)

So do these beings live,
Beheld replete with spiritual attainments,
Those adepts who possess the body of Siva,
Are known as the Living Liberated. (30.14)

Thus the blissful yogin (achieves),
A wisdom body, magnificent,
Indestructible, unchanging, and pervasive,
All-encompassing, omnipresent, (he is) Śiva. (35.1)²⁴

A genuine yogin is equal to Śiva. It is appropriate that Tirumūlar defines Yoga as Śiva-Yoga.

2. 2. Śiva-Yoga is Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga

Tirumūlar speaks of Yoga as Śiva-Yoga and says that it shows the way.

Neither mantra, nor song, nor arts four and sixty
Ever sunder birth and its accursed bonds
Then did I take to Yoga's way,
And lo! I met the Sun, Moon and Fire on the way to Cranium,
And they showed the Supreme Way.²⁵

The Śiva-Yoga way is the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga way for he speaks of the Sun (piṅgalā), Moon (iḍā) and fire (suṣumnā) by means of which he reaches the cranium (the sahasrāra). Therefore one can safely substitute the term Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga for Śiva-Yoga. Tirumūlar has not used the term “Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga” anywhere in his work. He uses the term *kuṇḍali* in verse 2419. Here the term *kuṇḍali* is used in a different sense to mean the term tirodhāna-śakti, which provides worldly experiences for the souls, hiding spiritual truths from view. However Tirumūlar refers to *aruḷ-śakti* (a benevolent energy) as a śakti, which resides in the human body. When the yogin attains the sahasrāra by diverting the *aruḷ-śakti* residing in him, he attains the eternal bliss. The energy that guides him to pass through the six adharas and reach the sahasrāra is the *aruḷ-śakti* residing in him. This *aruḷ-śakti* (as residing in the human body) is what is commonly referred to as kuṇḍalinī-śakti.

Tirumūlar uses the term *kuṇḍali* in verse 580 in the specific sense of the kuṇḍalinī energy. Tirumūlar calls *aruḷ-śakti* as *yajña*, which cuts asunder rebirth.

(Arul-sakti)

Cuts the bonds of birth asunder;
Grants the prowess of mighty *tapas*;
Scorches the soul's forgetfulness;
And leads you to liberation path.²⁶

Tirumūlar calls Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga as *tapas*²⁷ and calls it as the Great Way.²⁸ He also refers to Yoga as sublimation of sex.²⁹

2. 3. Aspects of Yoga as discussed in the Tirumandiram

In the *Tirumandiram* apart from Śiva-Yoga, Tirumūlar speaks of the following aspects of Yoga.

1. Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga;
2. Kechari-Yoga;
3. Candra-Yoga; and
4. Pariyaṅga-Yoga.

Before we discuss them, let us pass in review, the three types of yogins and the benefits of Yoga and Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga as explained in the *Tirumandiram*.

2. 4. Three types of yogins

Tirumūlar speaks about the three types of yogins. One type is the *kāmattōr*, who indulge in sex for its pleasure; they are the *vāmācārins* or *vāmattōr*. The other type is *ōmattōr* of the *dakṣiṇācāra* school of Yoga, who find the light in their inner flame through the method of Śiva-Yoga. The third type of yogins is called *nāmattōr*, people who indulge in the *bhakti* method of singing the praise of God.³⁰

2. 5 Benefits of Yoga

Throughout the *Tirumandiram* the value of Yoga (Śiva-Yoga) is stressed. In one place he says that the hairs of the yogin will emit light.³¹ The following verses may be quoted for understanding the benefits of Yoga.

They who knock about
Reach not the Refuge of Blossom Feet;
Containing not the Kundalini fire within;
Their body a prey to fire becomes;
They who know the Way
And seek His Victorious Feet
See the heavenly Dancer
Through their spinal hollow.³²

They who sought the Dancer as their goal
Gained many things good;
And so stood in the path of the holy scriptures;
Seeking Him within and experiencing His presence
In eagerness they sit
And one with Siva become.³³

Well may they thus live for aeons and aeons,
And they tire not in their devotion;
And thus see the mind's end,
And within see Him as Entity non-separate;
And as one with Siva they live filled in divinity
And so see countless ages of Life Exalted.³⁴
They who seek
Know death none; evil none;

They who seek
Will become lords of earth;
They who seek

But know this true;
And well may it be told
To those that aspire.³⁵

Yogi attains siddhis eight
He experiences the divine Nada State;
He is of Karma rid
He is of calm mind
He pursues the Four Ends of Human Goal,
He courses the Sakti Kundalini
Through centers six within the body;
That way he reaches the one
And union in Him attains.³⁶

2. 6. Appropriate days for commencing Yoga

Even though any day is good for starting to learn Yoga, it is significant that Tirumūlar indicates the appropriate days for commencing Yoga.

The birthday, The first, second, third and the eighth day
following it,
Any one of these is day appropriate for commencing Yoga;
Find the day suitable most,
And easy shall be your entry
Into the Mystic House within.³⁷

3. Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga

Any study on the translation and commentary of the poems of the *Tirumandiram* requires a background note on Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga. The Tamil Siddha movement is a part of the pan-Indian Tāntric Yoga tradition. It insists on the value of the Tantra-Yoga as a means for the attainment of freedom and immortality. Yoga is

essentially the cultivation of awareness. It emphasizes practice rather than philosophy. Tantra-Yoga is basically Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga. The principle of polarity and the principle of identity are among the most important aspects of Tantra. The aim of Tantra is to transcend all forms of duality by the total merging of the dual principles into one within the yogin's body. The duality is symbolically put as two poles: male and female, as Śiva and Śakti. One of the main tenets of Tāntric Yoga is that whatever is in the macrocosm, *aṇḍa*, is in the microcosm, *piṇḍa*. The entire Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga is an expression of the micro-macro unity. The individual being and the Universal Being are one. Jīva is Śiva; the microcosm is the macrocosm.

Yoga has many forms and of these the main four are: Mantra-Yoga, Haṭha-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, and Rāja-Yoga. The simplest form of Yoga is Mantra-Yoga in which the aspirant is selective about the object of his contemplation, such as gods in images, emblems, pictures, markings, *maṇḍalas*, *yantras*, *mudrās*, etc. The practices, which comprise Haṭha-Yoga, are concerned primarily with the control of the physical body for conditioning the subtle body. A basic knowledge of Haṭha-Yoga is necessary for anyone who wants to understand the Siddhas. Laya-Yoga is the highest form of Haṭha-Yoga and is connected with the functioning of the kuṇḍalinī. The Tāntrics and the Siddhas lay great emphasis on this form of Yoga. The method of arousing the kuṇḍalinī and uniting her with the Supreme Spirit is the essential part of Laya-Yoga. Rāja-Yoga stands for the concentration of the mind through the control of the vital airs.

Laya-Yoga is a yogic method practiced by all the Siddhas. It is deep absorptive concentration, which takes one to the final goal of oneness with the infinite or what Siddhas call *Śiva-aikya*. Since arousing the kuṇḍalinī is the fundamental aspect of Laya-Yoga,

this Yoga has been called Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga. Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga is called by Tirumūlar as Śiva-Yoga leading to *Śiva-aikya*. *Śiva-aikya* is a reality, because the basis of it is love. Śivam is love. The basis of Yoga is love and its method is jñāna.

3. 1. References in the Tirumandiram of Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga (Śiva-Yoga)

Though in *tantra* Seven of the *Tirumandiram* one finds a reference to the six ādhāras (section 1), the *mudrās* (section 17), the importance of controlling the five senses (section 32) and how to control the senses by way of sublimation (section 33), the concept and the function of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga (Śiva-Yoga) is diffused throughout the work. In this connection it may be noted that the entire section one on *Agattiyam* and section two on the *Eight Heroic Deeds of Śiva* of the *tantra* Two may be interpreted symbolically in terms of Śiva-Yoga. A case in point is that in verse 337, the term *naḍuvuḷa aṅgi Agattiya* means “amidst the blazing sacrificial fire” which refers to the Kuṇḍalinī energy, i.e., *aruḷ-śakti*, arising at the mūlādhāra. In verse 339 the term *cūlam*, i.e., the trident refers to the iḍā, piṅgala and suṣumnā nāḍis. Verse 345 speaks of the mūlādhāra from where kuṇḍalinī-śakti is awakened and courses to the hollow on the top, i.e., the sahasrāra. The section four on *Dakṣa’s Sacrifice* may also be construed as a subtle symbolic reference to Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga. Verse 360 speaks of the *nava-kuṇḍam*, which refers to the six ādhāras, the two eyes and the sahasrāra as if they form the *agni* (fire) of the *homa-yajña*. It also refers to praṇava by using the term *vil* (in Tamil), i.e., bow. The phrase “Dakṣa’s sacrifice” itself refers symbolically to the wasting of *aruḷ* or kuṇḍalinī-śakti without properly directing it to attain the Śiva at the sahasrāra.

In section 12 of *tantra* One, called *Andaṇar Oḷukkam*, i.e., the dharma of the brahmins, Tirumūlar uses the term *andaṇar ākūti*, i.e., the *yajña* performed by the brahmins, to refer symbolically to the arousing of the kuṇḍalinī.³⁸ Similarly he compares Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga with *yāga* or *yajña*.³⁹ Further he specifically refers to Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga when he speaks of those who fail to scale the height (i.e., the sahasrāra) through the thread of the kuṇḍalinī.⁴⁰ In one verse he refers to the passage of kuṇḍalinī as the ladder of threads (in Tamil *nūl-ēṇi*).⁴¹ In a similar fashion he refers to the kuṇḍalinī-yogins, as those who stand in the middle path.⁴² Verse 523 of *tantra* Two and verses 424 and 470 of the same *tantra* specifically refer to the process of kuṇḍalinī energy. The following verse speaks of the process of Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga.

Open and drink deep the nectar that gushes from the spring;
 Unfold the petals of the Holy Master's Lotus feet;
 Lead the yoga-breath through the spring channel up
 Reach the Divine Good in holy meet.⁴³

In one verse in *tantra* Three, Tirumūlar speaks of Yoga as *ādhāra-yoga* and *nirādhāra-yoga*.⁴⁴ Experiencing the appropriate powers at the six ādhāras and ascending them one after another is *ādhāra-yoga*. *Nirādhāra* means beyond the ādhāras of the body. Beyond the sahasrāra, there is the *dvādaśānta* space (the twelfth end). *Nirādhāra-yoga* is ascension from sahasrāra to *dvādaśānta* space, which is beyond thought and speech. Tirumūlar describes kuṇḍalinī as one which cuts the bonds of birth, grants the powers of *tapas* and leads one to the path of liberation.⁴⁵ In a section called the *Grace of Guru's feet*, Tirumūlar says that the passage of kuṇḍalinī to the head is due to the real grace of the guru. In this connection one may refer to section 17 of *tantra* Eight which speaks of *Head and Foot Knowledge*. To quote Tirumūlar:

They know not
The Head and Foot (of Lord) is within body,
The Head is in Sahasrara (cranium)
The Foot in Muladhara;
Those who visioned thus in the Yogic way,
Remained in Prayer
Their heads bowed at Lord's feet.⁴⁶

3. 2. Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga as described in the Tirumandiram

Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga is called Ṣaṭ-cakra-Yoga because in it we come across the six subtle centers called cakras. The Siddha Yoga practice is primarily based on the cakra organization and the nāḍi system.

3. 2. 1. The cakra System

In *tantra* seven, section 1, Tirumūlar discusses the six ādhāras, their petals, their letters, etc.⁴⁷ The cakra system is one of the subtle power operations. The cakras are inner power phenomena and centers of psychic energy. The power that is hidden and waiting to be aroused is the kuṇḍalinī. There are seven cakras in the human system. In addition to the general power called kuṇḍalinī or *aruḷ-śakti*, each of these cakras contains specific power phenomena, that is, śaktis. The cakras are figuratively referred to as lotuses even though the term cakra literally means a wheel or a circle. The term cakra refers to the internal centers symbolized as lotus flowers through which the yoga-kuṇḍalinī-śakti flows producing various spiritual phenomena in life, body, and consciousness. In principle, each cakra has a certain number of petals, numbering four, six, ten, twelve, sixteen and two. The number of petals indicates the rate of psychic vibrations of that particular cakra.

Each petal of the cakra represents a syllable, a sound vibration. The sum of these sounds is the mantra of the cakra. In the center of each cakra a letter represents the root, the *bīja*, of the mantra. Similarly, each cakra has a color. Apart from the sounds and colors, each cakra has a shape, represents an element called *deva* and its principle, has a God and Goddess representing spiritual forces manifest and latent in the cakra, and represents a *loka*, world, and an animal. The gods and goddesses represented by the cakras are not of the religious pantheon, but just names given for the particular forms of consciousness manifested and exhibited in each cakra.

Awakening of the cakras, in general, corresponds to the predominant psychological states and the levels of spiritual consciousness attained by the *sādhaka*, or aspirant. That is, each cakra is identified with certain level of meditative achievement. (The lower three are egoistic, and concerned with sex, security and power to realize desires. The upper three are concerned with love, creativity and intuition). The seven cakras are, then, the thresholds or spiritual gates in the human body leading one to the attainment of the Absolute Reality. The seven cakras are:

- 1) Mūlādhāra—The root center. Tirumūlar calls it as *mūla-dhvāra*.⁴⁸
- 2) Svādhiṣṭhāna—The support of the life-breath center. Tirumūlar calls it as *kamalam*.⁴⁹
- 3) Maṇipūra—The center embedded with gems. Tirumūlar calls it as blacksea.⁵⁰
- 4) Anāhata—The unstruck sound center. Tirumūlar calls it as the *nāda* sphere.⁵¹
- 5) Viśuddha—The great purity center. Tirumūlar calls it as *nāḍānta* sphere.⁵²

- 6) Ājña—The command center. Tirumūlar calls it as the *mēdhā* sphere.⁵³
- 7) Sahasrāra—The thousand-petaled lotus center. Tirumūlar calls it as the *bōdhānta* sphere.⁵⁴

The first six are called the six ādhāras (props or supports). We have, in all, six ādhāras and seven cakras. The seven cakras are called the seven worlds by Tirumūlar.⁵⁵ At the top of all the six ādhāras, there is the sahasrāra, known as *brahma-randhra* or *nirvāṇa-cakra*. When prāṇa is coursed up through these cakras, the yogin is oblivious of his personal self. With the support of prāṇa the yogin should evoke AUM and proceed beyond the ādhāras to ascend further the six steps called *adhvas*, viz., *kala*, *bhuvana*, *varṇa*, *mantra*, *pada* and *tattva*. When this is practiced the yogin experiences himself as the *parāparam*, infintite bliss.⁵⁶ Tirumūlar says that over the fifty letters of the petals of the six ādhāras there is the basic letter AUM.⁵⁷

Sahasrāra is called by different names by Tirumūlar. He visions it as an eight-petaled lotus.⁵⁸ It is so called because its petals are facing the eight directions. The eight directions are: eastern, south-eastern, southern, south-western, western, north-western, northern and north-eastern. Tirumūlar speaks of the petals of the ādhāras in verse 746 of *tantra* Three and in verse 1704 of *tantra* Seven. Tirumūlar also speaks of the root syllables of the ādhāras.⁵⁹ Suba. Annamalai has explained this in the form a chart.⁶⁰ It is as follows:

Five elements	Five letters	Symbols	Energy symbolized	Place in the body
Space	ya	o	ō	middle of the eye-brows
Air	va	e	ē	neck
Fire	ci	u	ū	heart
Water	ma	i	ī	navel
Earth	na	a	ā	base of the spinal column

Sahasrāra is called the celestial lake (*cēṇ-paḍu-poigai*).⁶¹ the stony arena, i.e., the Mount Meru within (*podu*);⁶² the cave (*koy*);⁶³ the mango fruit;⁶⁴ the purest gold (*cempon*);⁶⁵ the moon-sphere (*nilā-maṇḍalam*);⁶⁶ hundred by hundred (*nūru-nūru*);⁶⁷ the golden temple (*pon-ambalam*);⁶⁸ cirrambalam (microcosm), *cidambaram*, *tiruvambalam* (the temple of god);⁶⁹ *tarātalam*;⁷⁰ *podu ambalam* (common temple);⁷¹ *kuṇḍigai* (top vessel);⁷² *candra-maṇḍala*;⁷³ *aṣṭa-taḷam*.⁷⁴ It is conceived of as a lotus of a thousand petals. This cakra is the quintessential consciousness where the integration of all polarities is experienced. Even Vedas are hesitant to speak of this experience.⁷⁵ Yet Tirumūlar attempts to give a picture of the experience of the eight petaled lotus.⁷⁶ It is called Mount Meru. The verse is as follows:

He is in this world
 Yet if He is beyond reach,
 Seek Him in Heaven,
 Where the elephants roam
 And the Celestials wander,

Where fire, rain and wind abide;
In that Space seek Him.⁷⁷

When one attains this state there is no death for him. It is the state that embraces all. To quote Tirumūlar:

Who seeks the luminous nada atop
And of its sweetness savour
Know of death—no more;
The Lord is the seed of all
Of Sun, Moon and Fire
Of the Universe Vast
The Architect that builds all as well.⁷⁸

Through self-effort based on wisdom, inquiry into Self, one can reach the Supreme Abode and burn up all desires. In this state of samādhi, there is eternal satisfaction and clear perception of the reality of the universe. Once this abode is reached one rules his own world with an enlightened mind, radiant with bliss, peace and sweet purity.

Tirumūlar suggests the sun as piṅgala-nāḍi, moon as iḍā-nāḍi and fire as the kuṇḍalinī awakened in the suṣumnā. When moon and *agni* (fire) join, the rays of the sun become active or dominant. Tirumūlar explains further that when the moon and sun and fire join, one's soul, or spark of the soul (*tāraka*) one's True Self, which is found deep in the heart center, anāhata or within the ājña reveals itself and becomes everything, all existence.⁷⁹

Once a yogin reaches the sahasrāra and experiences the Supreme Self there is a transformation of the mind, body and life to the extent to which all the bindus or kalās are intergrated. This is a state of void or no mind. In this state of no mind, consciousness is free of all limitations, free of all taints and impurities of

concepts or percepts and is in its essential nature is Supreme Intelligence.

3. 2. 2. The Kuṇḍalinī

The location of the kuṇḍalinī is given by Tirumūlar. Here he specifically uses the term *kuṇḍali*. The verse is as follows:

Two finger length above the Muladhara
Two finger length below the sex organ
Four finger length below the navel visible
There within is Kundalini
A flaming fire lambent.⁸⁰

The term *āru-mugaṇ* in verse 520 of the *Tirumandiram* may be symbolically interpreted as the kuṇḍalinī power that passes through the six ādhāras. In this connection it would be interesting to note what Tirumūlar says about two mothers.⁸¹ According to him life in the body is fastened by two powers, the kuṇḍalinī power and the cit-śakti (energy of Supreme Consciousness/the cosmic power). He also calls kuṇḍalinī as *tēci* and life śakti as *tēcaṇ*.⁸² The life in the body should attain jñāna through kuṇḍalinī-śakti. Tirumūlar in section eight of *tantra* Four, describes kuṇḍalinī-śakti and her nature in one hundred verses.⁸³

Kuṇḍalinī is the individual bodily representation of the great cosmic power. It is symbolized by the sleeping serpent with three and a half coils. This latent sleeping energy is to be awakened and sent upward to the sahasrāra where it becomes fully awakened consciousness, called samādhi. Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga is the technique for transforming normal consciousness into supreme consciousness. Tirumūlar uses a significant expression to refer to kuṇḍalinī as the spark that kindles all the lamps around (The Tamil term is *tūṇḍu viḷakku*).⁸⁴

The three coils of the kuṇḍalinī represent the three states of mind (*avasthās*), namely, waking (*jāgrat*, in Tamil *naṇavu*), dreaming (*svapna*, in Tamil *kaṇavu*), and deep sleep (*suṣupti*, in Tamil *uṛakkam*). There is a fourth state (*turiya*, in Tamil *niṭṭai* or *pēruṛakkam*), combining and transcending the other states; this is represented by the half coil. The homology between kuṇḍalinī and the serpent is significant. In India a serpent is viewed as a symbol of immortality. The serpent inserting its own tail in its mouth is a symbol of eternity, because a circle has no beginning and no end. Indian folklore credits the serpent with vitality, with the possession of the knowledge of life-giving plants. This is the reason why the Siddhas who practiced Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga are recognized as genuine medicine men. We have to view the kundalinī as a sort of dormant force in the body, but when it is roused and reaches its destination, this force is transformed into *amṛta*, the immortal nectar of liberation.

The awakening of the kuṇḍalinī is the sole aim of Yoga. When kuṇḍalinī reaches a cakra, the head or face of the cakra (or lotus) turns upward and the cakra “blooms.” The dynamization of kuṇḍalinī when it passes from one cakra to another is an unfoldment of spiritual consciousness stage by stage and also the acquirement of certain yogic powers called siddhis. Yoga-sādhana consists in raising the kuṇḍalinī-śakti, the coiled force from one pole, the mūlādhāra, to the other, the sahasrāra, the abode of Śiva. When kuṇḍalinī reaches and merges into the sahasrāra, the yogin becomes conscious of what is conscious. Here he is said to “drink” the “ambrosial juice” (*rasa* or *amṛta*) oozing from the “moon” of the sahasrāra. This *amṛta* is called by many names in the Siddha literature.

3. 2. 3 The nāḍi system

In Yoga, the nāḍi system is not the nervous system. The term nāḍi is used in a technical sense. It is the most important component of the subtle body. It is the channel of activated energy; it is an etheric channel. The energy that is carried by this channel is called the prāṇa energy. According to the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpikā* there are about 72,000 nāḍis, which spread and move the cosmic energy in the body. The chief nāḍis are ten in number. (Tamil Siddha terminology is given in brackets) They are: idā (*iḍakalai*), piṅgalā (*piṅgalai*), suṣumnā (*suḷumuṇai*), gāndhārī (*kantari*), hastijihvā (*atti*), puṣa (*puruḍaṇ*), yaśasvinī (*ciṅkuvai*), alambuṣa (*alampuṭai*), kuhu (*kuku*), and saṅkhinī (*caṅkini*). All these nāḍis start from the *kanda* above the anus. The spinal cord tapers down into a bunch of soft threads called *filium terminale*, which is the portion of the *kanda*. The idā, piṅgalā, and suṣumnā are the most important nāḍis from the Yoga point of view.

The idā and the piṅgalā stand to the left and the right of the suṣumnā respectively. Tirumūlar calls idā as *kaṇṇaṇ*, i.e., the moon and piṅgalā as the sun.⁸⁵ He also calls them as two rhythms.⁸⁶ G.Varadarajan identifies the three threads worn by the Hindus as representing the idā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā.⁸⁷ Taking its origin from the navel, the idā has its terminus at the left nostril. Taking its origin from the same area, the piṅgalā terminates at the right nostril. These two subtle psychic arteries run parallel and close to the suṣumnā until they cross and the right-left position is reversed. In Tāntric lore, these two nāḍis signify opposite poles. The confluence or commingling of the three together, idā and piṅgalā with suṣumnā at the level of the ājñā-cakra, is known as the sacred triple-stream or *triveṇi* or *prayāga*. From the ājñā-cakra, the idā and the piṅgalā, proceed to the right and the left nostrils

respectively, and the suṣumnā enters the sahasrāra. Tirumūlar calls iḍā as the left hand and piṅgalā as the right hand and the suṣumnā as the trunk (*tudikkai*). If one knows the technique of breathing through these nāḍis Tirumūlar says one achieves immortality. The verse is as follows:

Alternating breath's course from left to right and vice versa,
They who can force breath through spinal Sushumna
Shall know tiring none;
They can abolish sleep forever
And attain god-awareness;
They die not;
Immortal they shall be.⁸⁸

It is significant that Tirumūlar uses an expression in verse 1069 in *tantra* Four. The Tamil word is *nīdi*, which may be interpreted as the middle path of not swerving to any one side. This term, according to Suba. Annamalai, is to be interpreted as the act of an yogin who passes the prāṇa through the suṣumnā. Hence a yogin is also called the *naḍuvu niṇṇār*, a person who courses prāṇa through suṣumnā.⁸⁹

3. 2. 4. Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga

Laya-Yoga follows the various stages of control that are referred to as Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga or the eight-limbs of Yoga. They are *yama* (abstention), *niyama* (observance), *āsana* or *sthūla-kriyā* (posture or muscular control process), *prāṇāyāma* or *sūkṣma-kriyā* (breath-control process), *pratyāhāra* (sensory control), *dhāraṇa* (holding concentration), *dhyāna* (deep concentration), and *samādhi* (cognitive absorption). In *tantra* Three, sections 1 to 9, verses 549 to 631 Tirumūlar discusses in detail the eight-limbs of Yoga. He lists the eight limbs of Yoga in the following verse:

Yama, Niyama and Asana numberless
Pranayama wholesome and Pratyahara alike,
Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi to triumph
-These eight are the steely limbs of Yoga.⁹⁰

Yama consists of a number of do's and don'ts. It is an ethical preparation for Yoga. Tirumūlar speaks of one who follows the ten ways of *yama* as follows:

He does not kill, he does not lie, he does not steal;
Of marked virtues is he; good, meek and just;
He shares his joys, he knows no blemish
Neither drinks nor lusts
This the man who in *Iyama's* ways stands.⁹¹

A man who stands in *niyama* should have firm faith in the first cause, i.e., the Supreme Being and that He is the kuṇḍalinī-fire. Tirumūlar speaks of the way of *niyama* as follows:

The Being First,
The Meaning-Central of Vedas all,
The Light Divine,
The Fire within that Light
He who shares Himself
Half-and-Half with His Śakti
And the Divine justice thereof
-Them, he in *Niyama's* path knows.⁹²

He also speaks of the ten virtues of *niyama* and an additional ten virtues of the same in two verses. They are:

Purity, compassion, frugal food and patience
Forthrightness, truth and steadfastness
-These he ardently cherishes;
Killing, stealing and lusting, he abhors,

-Thus stands with virtues ten
The one who Niyama's ways observes.⁹³

Tapas, meditation, serenity and holiness
Charity, vows in Saiva way and Siddhanta learning
Sacrifice, Siva puja and thoughts pure
-With these ten, the one in Niyama perfects his way.⁹⁴

According to Tirumūlar there are many āsanās (eighty and hundred) of which *padmāsana* (lotus posture), *bhadrāsana* (the happy posture), *kukkuḍāsana* (the cock posture), *simhāsana* (the lion posture) are important. He speaks of the eight important āsanās:

Bhadra, Gomukha, Padma and Simha,
Sothira, Veera, and Sukha,
These seven along with eminent svastika
Constitute the eight, Eighty and hundred, however,
Are asanas in all reckoned.⁹⁵

Since there is a separate section on praṇāyāma we shall leave the discussion of it here.

Pratyāhāra is the restraint of the senses and the withdrawal of the mind from external things. It is not a mere control of the senses but a sublimation of the senses.⁹⁶ It includes maintaining an inner focus and avoidance of dispersion and distraction. The yogins, says Tirumūlar, like the turtle, withdraw their senses within and know this world and That.⁹⁷ The *vairāgya* or firmness of the yogins in withdrawing their sense is compared to that of the Varamus lizard, which tenaciously holds to the object it seizes and does not swerve, however hard you pull the reptile.⁹⁸ Tirumūlar, in his work, in *tantra* Seven, devotes two sections on the importance of subduing the five senses,⁹⁹ and how to subdue the senses by

way of sublimation.¹⁰⁰ One cannot resist the temptation of quoting the following verses, which speak of the sublimation of the senses.

“Control, control the senses Five,”

Thus say those who know not;

None, not even the Immortals;

The senses Five control;

When you the senses Five control;

Verily are you an inert mass;

(There is a way alternate open)

Sublimate them toward the Lord;

That Wisdom’s Way, I learned.¹⁰¹

If the senses Five you sublimate

Then all worlds are yours;

That is tapas rare;

That is the Lord’s Feet too;

That indeed is the way to Grace receive.¹⁰²

Daily think of the Living Nandi

Gently control your thoughts distracting,

Course your thoughts through Muladhara

Then your thoughts a temple become,

From north to south extending.¹⁰³

According to Tirumūlar sublimation is the best way. According to him,

Tie the prancing senses five

To the post of Jnana that illumineth;

Thus you attain grace that is Bliss;

This the Way of Yore, high and true.¹⁰⁴

Dhāraṇa means to retain the mind and keep it steadfast inside, which has been obtained by *pratyāhāra*. Tirumūlar says that

one should sit calm in singleness of thought like a stork at streams-head waiting for a catch.¹⁰⁵ Tirumūlar explains *dhāraṇa* in the following verse:

To contain body's harassing senses five
In elements five,
To contain elements five
In organs cognitive internal,
To contain cognitive organs internal
In their Tanmatras
To contain the Tanmatras
In the being Uncreated
That, verily, is Dharana
In stages practiced.¹⁰⁶

Dhyāna is consistent, uninterrupted meditation. According to Tirumūlar it is of two kinds. the verse is as follows:

The Ten-
The five elements and the five senses
Being contained, one by the other,
The internal organ Buddhi
In turn contains the senses,
Thus is Dhyana born;
The para Dhyana first;
That is on Sakti centered,
And Siva Dhyana next
That is by Guru blessed.
These two are the Ways of Dhyana Yoga.¹⁰⁷

If one practices *dhyāna* one gains liberation. The verses are as follows:

If your eyes twain are
On nasal point fixed,
No sorrows befall you;
Perishes not your body;
Agitation none shall you have;
Feelings none:
Seekings none;
None that is “I;”
You and Siva one become.¹⁰⁸

Fixing the gaze on nasal point
Retaining the roaming breath within
They who can thus still the nadis,
Will sure reach the Goal
No fear of birth to be for them.¹⁰⁹

A yogin who practices *dhyāna* enjoys varied sound experiences:

Bell, sea, elephant, flute, cloud
Bee, dragon-fly, conch, drum, and lute
The subtle sounds of these ten are heard
For them alone
Who have stilled their mind in God.¹¹⁰

The roar of sea, the thundering of cloud,
The trumpeting of elephant, the euphony of lute,
The music of the orbs
That glow in firmament vast,
The melody of the flute; the resonance of conch,
All these
The yogi true alone hears.¹¹¹

Dhyāna leads to the grace of being one with Śivam.
Transcending Tattvas six and thirty unreal,

Destroying Maya's layers thick,
Transformed into Jnana Pure by Grace
Themselves that Grace inseparable Becoming
They who achieved thus
Were the good souls
That the Way of Dhyana knew.¹¹²

Samādhi is the final goal of Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga. It is the attainment of tranquility.

Samadhi attained, Siva is attained;
Sakti too will be caught in its fold;
Distracting passions will be dispelled;
In equanimity perfect,
Like unto a balance
Will be the mind
All this, for those who in Samadhi sleep.¹¹³

In almost all the editions of the *Tirumandiram* there is a separate section called the *Fruits of the Eight-limbed-Yoga*.

They who seek Lord
Of the matted locks bedecked with flowers
Will sure reach the Abode of Gods;
“What this devotee of mine seeks,
That I grant,”
Thus blesses the Lord
That mounts the Bull
And dances to His Consort's delight.¹¹⁴

Transcending Jiva's caused limitations
And accepting the Causal Tattvas
Extinguishing the Causal sources themselves
Thus do tapasvins unite in the Being Uncaused
That, in truth is Samadhi supreme.¹¹⁵

According to Suba. Annamalai this section containing eight verses (verses 632-639) is an interpolation since it does not fit in with the title, differs from the original style of Tirumūlar's writing and contains words/terms, which are being used at a later period than at the time of Tirumūlar.

3. 2. 5. Prāṇāyāma

Prāṇāyāma is the practice of ordered breathing; it is not a mere physical technique but a vital step in yogic discipline. Prāṇāyāma makes the restless mind fit for concentration. The process of prāṇāyāma consists of three acts: inspiration (*pūraka*, *apāna*, *āhāra*), expiration (*recaka*, *prāṇa*,) and suspension of breath (*kumbhaka*, *vyāna*, *rucira*, *dhāraṇa*). The terms *pūraka*, *recaka*, and *kumbhaka* are used by the Tāntrics and the Siddhas and not by Patañjali. The real object of prāṇāyāma is to help one attain *ekāgrata* or one-pointedness of the mind. The cakras are unfolded by prāṇāyāma, so that the aroused kuṇḍalinī can pierce through them. The prāṇa energy causes the kuṇḍalinī to uncoil itself. Prāṇāyāma opens the passage of the suṣumnā and prāṇa joins the kuṇḍalinī when it enters the suṣumnā. When the whole current of prāṇa is infused into the suṣumnā, it generates heat that causes kuṇḍalinī to be roused. The kuṇḍalinī then “hisses,” uncoils, and straightens itself and pierces the six ādhāras. To achieve this, the sādha sits in the prescribed āsana and steadies his mind by the *kechari-mudrā*. When the kuṇḍalinī in the sādha enters the sahasrāra and becomes one with Śiva, he becomes one with the witness of the universe, a Siddha, and emergence from time and history is accomplished. When prāṇa ascends through the suṣumnā the yogin experiences

...Seven sounds he hears
Five colours he sees
Three odours he smells,
Two tasks he knows...¹¹⁶

These sounds, colors, smells can be symbolic or representative of the inner secrets of our nature. As we become clearer in our inner sensing we are able to trace thoughts and feelings and sounds and colors and odors back to their source and feel their origin and receive their messages immediately.

According to Tirumūlar the prāṇāyāma practice consists of the following:

You who enter the land of yoga practice!
Know that it consists in this
The measure of breath inhaled is twelve inches
Having measured accordingly
Exhale eight matra consciously
The four matras retained
Are in the six adharas to suffuse
And thus breathing examine to Tattvas twenty and five.¹¹⁷

As explained by B. Natarajan, this verse means: Yoga consists in the following: inhalation of twelve *mātras* (unit of time); exhalation of eight *mātras*; retention of four *mātras*. Breathing in this measure continuously, Yoga suffuses the six ādhāras with prāṇa, which ascends beyond the twenty-five tattvas.

There are said to be three points for *recaka* (exhalation), *kumbhaka* (retention) and *pūraka* (inhalation): 1. outside the nose, 2. from below the place known as *dvādaśānta* (above or in front of the forehead at a distance of twelve fingers); 3. the source at the heart.

Contact with the source of this prāṇic force, which is located downward to the length of twelve fingers in the heart lotus is known as pūraka or inhalation. When the apāna has ceased to move and when the prāṇa does not arise and move out of the heart (and until these begin to happen) it is known as kumbhaka. The natural and effortless movement of the life force at all times is the movement of the vital air up to the extent of twelve fingers from oneself and this constitutes recaka.

If one practices suspension of breath after exhaling the prāṇa to a distance farther where the apāna rises (twelve finger breath distance), he is no longer subject to pain and suffering. If he is able to see the space within himself, where the inhaled breath turns into the impulse for exhalation (infront of, or at the root of the nose), it is said he is not born again. By seeing where the prāṇa and apāna terminate their motions, and by holding oneself in that space one's mind does not arise. This is an effortless suspension of the breath and is a Supreme state.

In two sections of *tantra* Three, Tirumūlar speaks of the *measurement of life span* (by the process of breathing) (section 15) and the *breath rhythm in days of the week* (section 16). We shall summarise below the above two sections in the words of Yogacharya Shantikumar as quoted by B.Natarajan.¹¹⁸

According to B.Natarajan Indian astrology has developed a branch of techniques in measuring the life span based on observation of the breathing rhythm. This is known as *cara-v-ōṭṭam* in Tamil. In Sanskrit it is known as *pavana-sarvodaya-śāstra*.

Learned Indian yogis of yore had critically studied the movement of air through the whole respiratory passage during inhalation and exhalation. They had discovered that just as the current of a river sometimes flows on the one side, and at

another time on the other side, the air also changes sides in the nasal passages during inhalation and exhalation. They had discovered a close connection between the mental states and such sideway movement of air.

It has been observed that we sometimes breathe through the left nostril and sometimes through the right one. The nostrils thus work alternately. The left channel for the passage of the air is known as '*ida*' while the right channel is the *pingala*. The left one is known as the lunar channel (*chandra nadi*), while the right one is the solar channel (*surya nadi*). When a person has obtained mastery over pranayama, and when he is physically and mentally healthy and ready for higher spiritual practices, his breathing is from the middle channel known as '*susumna nadi*.'

In the bright half of the month and on the first, second, the seventh, eighth, ninth and fourteenth days, and on the full moon day one breathes (editor's note: initially) through the left nostril in the mornings, but every hour this alternates with the right nostril. In the remaining days of the bright half of the month, one breathes (editor's note: initially) through the right nostril in the mornings, the direction changing every hour, the right and left nostrils alternating.

In the dark half of the month and on the first day one breathes through the right nostril, but alternating every hour with the left nostril. Then there is reverse movement every third day.

When one breathes through the left nostril – lunar channel – the breath comes under the invisible influence of the moon and such lunar qualities as coolness, steadiness, sobriety, discretion, etc., are thus born or nourished.

When one breathes through the right nostril – solar channel – the breath comes under the invisible influence of the sun and solar qualities such as heat, light, bravery, dynamism, enthusiasm, strength, etc., are thereby born or nourished.

Breathing can be changed from the right nostril to the left one and vice versa. The technique is very simple. If you are breathing through the left nostril, and you want to breathe through the right one, lie down on the right side for sometime. If you are breathing through the right nostril and wish to breathe through the left, lie down on the left side for a short time.

When one breathes through the right nostril, one should undertake such work, which requires greater exertion, eg., walking, running, arguing, physical exercise, eating or cleaning the bowels. Ancient Indian medical science advises people to rest on the left side after meals so that one breathes through the right nostril and the food is thus well digested.

When one breathes through the left nostril, one should undertake such work, which requires less exertion, such as light mental work, discretionary work or work of a permanent nature. Sleeping on the right side relieves mental stress, strain, and tension and gives mental rest. In this state of breathing, holy activities may be undertaken. This is an ideal state for studies as well.

When one breathes through the middle channel, one should practice concentration, meditation and spiritual activities. A true yogi or for that matter even a perfectly healthy person constantly breathes thus and maintains mental peace and equanimity even under the most trying circumstances.

Ancient Indian astrology had developed a particular branch,

which was based on this. If one breathes through the left nostril and if a person sitting on his left asks if a certain work undertaken or to be undertaken would be successful, the answer should always be in the affirmative; but if one breathes through the right nostril and if a person sitting on his left asks if a certain work undertaken or to be undertaken would be successful, the answer should always be in the negative.

When one constantly breathes through the middle channel, one develops intuition, knows future events, can practice telepathy and transform the personality of others easily. Such breathing is compared with a mother-in-law who is difficult to be pleased but if once pleased becomes an additional blessing. (Quoted from *The Science of Yogic Breathing* by Yogacharya Shantikumar, pp. 30-32).

According to Tirumūlar if one knows the rhythm of breath, one is aware of the *nāda*. That is *nāda* and God are one in consciousness.¹¹⁹ If breath is coursed upwards, it will give steadiness of mind.¹²⁰ If one practices breathing from the left to the right nostril and from the right to the left in rhythmic alteration, it purifies the *prāṇa-nāḍis*. If one practices this carefully, it helps one to have mastery over the senses and one can live for hundred years.¹²¹ Tirumūlar speaks of the retention of breath (*kumbhaka*) and speaks of the practice of retention for certain number of days when one experiences certain visions.¹²² In one verse Tirumūlar identifies Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga with *prāṇāyāma*. The verse is as follows:

None knows kundalini that spans high
None knows the science of breath control
They who know it not perish away
I knew the truth that none know.¹²³

In section 16, *tantra* Three, Tirumūlar speaks of the differences of the breath rhythms between the left and right nāḍis on different days of the week.¹²⁴

3. 2. 6. Bandhas and mudrās

Along with āsanās, we have *bandhas* and *mudrās*, which play an important part in Haṭha-Yoga. *Bandhas* are locks or concentrations pertaining to isolated muscles or groups of muscles. They are the special bodily manipulations or devices that are designed to confine the life-force within the trunk and thereby stimulate it. The Siddhas speak of *mūla-bandha*, *uddiyāna-bandha*, and *jalan- dhara-bandha*. *Mūla-bandha* (i.e., the root-lock) is executed by contracting the perineum and vaginal muscles. *Uddiyāna-bandha* is performed by drawing back the abdominal muscles.¹²⁵ It is a preliminary exercise to the performance of *kechari-mudrā*. It is an exercise in the lower regions parallel to the *kechari-mudrā* at the higher regions. It is damming the course of downward *apāna* at the mūlādhāra. To quote the *Tirumandiram*:

The exhaling breath will inside retained be;
 The retained breath will from escape prevented be;
 In due time,
 From the Moon's region starts ambrosial flow;
 If it is not checked it will merge in the Kundalini.¹²⁶

Jalandhara-bandha is done by pressing the chin and the chest together tightly. These *bandhas* are performed to withdraw the prāṇa from the iḍā and the piṅgalā. The prāṇa withdrawn from the iḍā and the piṅgalā enters the suṣumnā and goes upwards towards the sahasrāra. When the whole current of prāṇa is infused into suṣumnā it generates heat, causes kuṇḍalinī to be roused and uncoils it. The uncoiled animated kuṇḍalinī by piercing each of

the lotuses absorbs into itself the regnant tattvas (the five elements) contained in each of them. When the ascent is made, each of the tattvas enters the state of dissolution called the *laya* state. This is the part played by *bandhas* in Laya-Yoga.

Mudrās are psycho energetic gestures involving the hands, fingers, eyes or tongue while performing meditation or breathing practices. It is also a non-verbal mode of communication and self-expression; it is a stylized form of gestural communication. Of these, the *yoni-mudrā*, the *sāmbhavi-mudrā* and the *kechhari-mudrā* are very important for rousing the kuṇḍalinī.

Tirumūlar says that *mudrās* are used to transcend the *avastas* eleven. *Mudrā* directs the eleven organs—five *jñānendriyas*, five *karmendriyas* and *manas* on the silent letter AUM.¹²⁷

3. 2. 6. 1. Yoni-mudrā

Tirumūlar refers to *yoni-mudrā* as *mauna-mudrā*.¹²⁸ *Yoni-mudrā* (womb-seal) is performed by sitting in the upright posture and closing the eyes, ears, nostrils and the mouth with fingers so as to shut out all external impressions followed by breath suspension and simultaneous contemplation of the six centres (cakras) with concentration at the same time on a light behind the eyes. The *mudrā* that is *mauna* is the *mudrā* for those who seek *mukti*.

3. 2. 6. 2. Sāmbhavi-mudrā

It consists in gazing at the spots between the eye-brows while inwardly contemplating on the transcendental self. According to Tirumūlar *sāmbhavi-mudrā* brings grace and terminates the cycle of birth.¹²⁹ He calls it as the lion among *mudrās* that leads to the eight siddhis.¹³⁰

3. 2. 6. 3. Kechari-mudrā

It is the *jñāna-mudrā*, whereas *sāmbhavi-mudrā* is the *mudrā* of grace of Śiva. In *kechari-mudrā* the tongue is lengthened; for the lengthening of the tongue certain processes are advised. They are: (1) *Chedana*—the cutting gradually at intervals of the band that holds the tongue to the base of the mouth, i.e., the *lingual frenum*; (2) *Chalan*—this tie being removed, the tongue is then moved from side to side by holding it between the fingers; and (3) *Dohana*—the tongue is stretched in the manner of milking the cow's udder. In *kechari-mudrā* when the tongue has been lengthened one has to practice turning it upward and backward so as to touch the palate until at length it reaches the holes of the nostrils opening into the mouth. Close the holes with the tongue and fix the gaze at the space between the eyebrows. This position of the tongue in the mouth is said to permit or facilitate the flow of current along the *iḍā*, the *piṅgalā*, and the *suṣumnā nāḍis* to the *sahasrāra*. This *mudrā* is said to be the king among *mudrās*, and hence some Siddhas call Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga, the “Yoga of the inner tongue.” *Kechari-mudrā* is called Kechari-Yoga by Tirumūlar. It is also called *nirādhāra-yoga*. The term *kechari* is not to be confused with the term *kesari*. *Kesari* means lion whereas *kechari* means to traverse in space. *Kesari* may stand for the lion-posture. But *kechari* has nothing to do with postures. When *kechari-mudrā* is performed, the mystic nectar will begin to ooze from the *sahasrāra*. One who drinks the nectar obtains bodily immortality. It is interesting to note that Kechari-Yoga is interpreted as the Yoga, which bestows rains from the head or *sahasrāra*.¹³¹ Through mastery of the *kechari-mudrā* the yogin can engage in sexual activity without the risk of seminal discharge. Regarding the practice of *kechari-mudrā* Tirumūlar writes:

Control the spiration
And see that breath is wasted not;
Bind it tight,
Dam the source of Kundalini at Muladhara,
Lock the chimney up in the mouth;
Bolt the cavity above with thy tongue's tip
And sit erect in yoga Samadhi
No more shall there be death for you.¹³²

Kechari-mudrā leads to youthfulness. To quote Tirumūlar:

If you can send the breath twain
Into the mouth's upper cavity
You shall then know death none;
And the gates of nectar will open be;
Greying and wrinkling will disappear
For all to see;
Young will the Yogi be;
True this, I say, in the name of Nandi Holy.¹³³

Kechari-Yoga is a pre-requisite to Pariyaṅga-Yoga.

2. The Concept of guru according to the Tirumandiram

2. 1. Who is a guru?

The following two verses from the *Tirumandiram* explain who a guru is.

As declared by the Vedas and the Āgamas a guru is
Entranced in bliss, conceiving on Śiva-Yogi,
Cutting asunder the growing attachments with concentration,
Leads to the Great Guru.¹²

The summary of the verse is: A guru is a self-realized being as declared by the Vedas and the Āgamas and conceiving oneself as a Śiva-yogin, cuts asunder the growing attachments with concentration, leading one to the Great Guru.

One who reveals the real, the unreal and the real-unreal;
Merging the real and the unreal in Śiva;
Speaks the blissful words beyond the pure and the impure;
Is called the blessed guru, the leader.¹³

The summary of the verse is: The blessed guru is the leader who reveals the real, the unreal, and the real-unreal and shows how the real and the unreal merge in Śivam and reveals of that which is beyond the pure and the impure.

The conception of guru as understood by Tirumūlar in these two verses is of the highest order. The guru, according to this conception, is not a mere *ācārya*, nor an *upādhyāya* as viewed in the ordinary sense of the term. A guru is a *bodhaka* or illuminator who imparts knowledge of sādhana and lights up in the disciple the lamp of spiritual knowledge. He is not a mere guru, but a *loka-guru*, the world-teacher, Śiva Himself.

2. 1. 1. A guru is a self-realized being

A guru is entranced in bliss, a self-realized being as understood in the Vedas and the Āgamas. Realization of one's original identity or oneness with Śivam is self-realization. Self-realization is a state of spiritual impersonality. According to Tirumūlar, once self-realization is attained, the jīva (in the guru) and Śiva become one and the same.¹⁴

2. 1. 2. A guru is a Śiva-yogin

Self-realization is a stage of the guru becoming the auspicious Śiva.¹⁵ The guru becomes a Śiva-yogin. It is a state of unitive experience where there is no distinction between the guru and Śivam. Śiva-Yogam consists in making a mystical equation between the guru and Śivam. The oneness between the guru and Śivam is of an extra-ordinary character. For want of a better expression, the oneness between the guru and Śivam is termed as super union or Yoga and this is what is termed as Śiva-Yogam. Yogam here means the progressive reduction of the 'I'-consciousness to the point of its complete break down and its merging one with Śivam, the

Absolute. Śiva-Yogam is infinite awareness. Tirumūlar says that the guru is Śivam, and he is the ineffable one.

To quote:

Guru is none but Siva – thus spoke Nandi;
Guru is Siva Himself – this they realize not;
Guru will to you Siva be;
And your guide too;
Guru in truth is Lord,
That surpasses speech and thought, all.¹⁶

2. 1. 3. A guru is a destroyer of attachments

By teaching the method of concentration the guru helps the disciple to cut asunder the ever-growing attachments. Attachments cause misery. Misery makes one wallow in *samsāra*, the world of relations, and kills one's initiative to self-realization. The real guru teaches the disciple to cut asunder the desires and passions, so that the Lord's place will be easy to reach.¹⁷ The *Tirumandiram* says that Śivam lives in the thoughts of those who have abnegated their desires.¹⁸ Tirumūlar as the great guru, advises the disciples to sunder even the desire to be one with God.¹⁹

2. 1. 4. A guru is one who reveals the distinction between the real (sat) the unreal (asat) and the real-unreal (satasat)

A guru reveals to the student what the real (*sat*) is. The real is always one. Nay to all it even as one is to set a definition to it. Therefore Tirumūlar uses the expression to refer to the Real as “the Great Aloneness.”²⁰

The Real is *kaivalya*, Aloneness; It is Beyond the Beyond. That is reality is beyond relations; it is the Absolute. Tirumūlar uses a significant expression *kaḷimbu-aruttāṇ* to refer to the irrelative

nature of the Absolute.²¹ *Kaḷimbu-aruttāṇ* is usually interpreted as one who has dispelled the impurities of the soul. (*Kaḷimbu* in Tamil means sub-acetate of copper). But its philosophical interpretation is one who is beyond all relations, one who has cut all relations. The real is an a-logical whole, as it does not fall within the bounds of logic. A true guru is one who reveals to the student what the real is without reducing the real to any particular religious concept. Only the thoughtless, the ignorant contend “That” is God and “This” is God.²² Only the true, the spotless, the impeccable guru (*tūcu piḍittavar*) knows the root (*tūr aridal*), that is the irrelative Absolute.²³ Tirumūlar uses the popular term “Śivam” to refer to the Irrelative, The Absolute; Śivam is not a religious concept, but a supreme abstraction; and it refers to a perfect, indescribable reality which is being defined differently by many religions; but it is never being fully or finally defined or grasped by those religions.

A guru reveals to the student what the unreal (*asat*) is. While the real is indestructible, and eternal, the unreal is that which is destructible, impermanent and which contradicts itself. *Asat* is delusion; it is *māyā*. A guru is one who illuminates the disciple by revealing the distinction between the *sat* – the real, and the *asat*—the unreal, the delusion.

A guru reveals to the student the real-unreal (*sat-asat*). The real-unreal stands for the ātman. Ātman is real (*sat*) because it is of the nature of the ultimate reality, i.e. Śivam. It is unreal (*asat*) because its real nature is covered or concealed by *āṇava*. The ātman is deluded into thinking that it is different from the ultimate reality (*sat*). That is, its true nature is real (*sat*); but due to delusion it thinks that it is the unreal *jīva* (*asat*). Therefore what is referred by *sat-asat* or real-unreal, is the eternal atman, deluded

into thinking that it is a non-eternal jīva. In another sense, the *sat* (real) does not have/know the *asat* (the unreal, the māyā—world); the *asat*, on its part does not have/know the *sat* (the real). That which knows the real (*sat*) and the unreal (*asat*) is the ātman or jīva. Hence it is called the *sat-asat*. Ātman partakes in *sat*, its true nature being eternal and partakes in *asat*, due to āṇava. Hence it is *sat-asat*.

A guru, in short, reveals to the disciple that which is *sat*, that which is *asat* and that which is *sat-asat*.

A guru is one who shows that the real (*cit*) and the unreal (*acit*) merge in Śivam. Here the real (*cit*) stands for the ātman and the unreal (*acit*) stands for the thirty-six principles or tattvas. A guru shows the path as to how to merge the ātman with Śivam and the technique of the assimilation of the thirty-six tattvas in Śivam.

A guru is one who initiates the disciple into the blissful state by removing the māyā (delusion), i.e., both śuddha and aśuddha-māyā. A guru empowers the disciple by freeing him from delusion and initiating him into the blissful state by the mantra (*cugamāṇa col*, blissful word).

To sum up: To empower the student with his jñāna-energy, the guru must be a realized being, a Śiva-yogin, a destroyer of attachments, capable of revealing the nature of the real, the unreal and the real-unreal, with the methodology of showing how all—the real, and the unreal—merge finally in the state of Śiva, and one who initiates the disciple with the mantra which will lead the student into the blissful state. Tirumūlar also says that unless the guru reveals himself as guru, He is beyond the reach of the disciple. The verse is:

From He has none,
Yet Form He assures;
Birth He has none;
Yet is He the seed of all birth;
Beyond formlessness, too, He is,
The elusive Lord;
Unless Himself as Holy Guru reveals
None, Him reach.²⁴

2. 2. The guru-paramparā (the lineage of the gurus)

According to Tirumūlar, Śivam is the real guru, whom he often refers to as Nandi. Nandi literally means the bull of Śiva, but Tirumūlar uses the name Nandi as a synonym for Śivam. Śivam with form is called Nandi; and the formless aspect of Nandi is called Śivam. In the Siddha and Śaiva traditions Nandi stands as the head of the guru-lineage. Speaking about the guru-lineage Tirumūlar says:

Seekest thou the Masters who Nandi's grace received
First the Nandi's four, Siva-yoga the Holy next;
Patanjali and Vyagrapada, who in Sabha's holy precincts
worshipt
And including me to complete the number eight.²⁵

Based on this verse one can say that there are eight disciples for Nandi. They are Sanaka, Sanantana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra—all these four are also called the “four nandis”—Śivayōga-mā-muṇi, Patañjali, Vyāgrapāda, and Tirumūlar himself. These eight disciples are also called nāthas. Of these, the first four nāthas, called the “four nandis,” were commanded by Nandi (Śivam) to go in four directions and spread the message of the Āgamas. At their appointed destinations they practiced Yoga and attained the

status of guru in their turn and became one with the celestials. To quote the *Tirumandiram*:

The four, each in his corner, as Master ruled,
The four, each his diverse spiritual treasure held
Each gave to the world whatever they have attained,
And thus, the four Immortals and Masters became.²⁶

The Great Guru, Śivam, gave *upadeśa*, spiritual initiation, to the three and the four Sanakāti-munis i.e., to Śivayōga-mā-muṇi, Patañjali, and Vyāgrapāda and to the four that is, to Sanaka, Sanantana, Sanātana and Sanatkumāra. He taught them the method (in Tamil *neri*) of transcending birth and death. In the words of Tirumūlar,

The Lord (Isa) imparted (the method of) ending death and birth

To the three and the four...²⁷

This is a very significant verse since more is meant in it. In this verse Tirumūlar has omitted his name as a disciple, but in another verse he says that he ventured to compose the Āgamas and calls the Āgama composed by him as Śivāgama, which is due to the grace of Nandi's holy feet. The verses are:

High on my bowed head Nandi's sacred Pair of Feet I lore,
Intoning loud his Name in my heart's deepest core,
Daily musing on Hara wearing high the crescent moon,
Thus I ventured the Agamas to compose.²⁸

Flashed in my mind the mystic name of Sivagama;
Straight I rose to Arul Nandi's Holy feet;
These eyes witnessed, enthralled,
The surprising dance in Holy Sabha;
Thus I lived and enjoyed for seven crore Yugas.²⁹

It is significant that Tirumūlar has included his name as a disciple of Nandi in separate verses, because there is a distinction between the *neri* (the methodology) followed by him and the *neri* followed by the Four and the *neri* followed by the Three. The initiation bestowed on the Four, i.e., Sanaka, etc., consisted in the ascetic path of renunciation of the world and its pleasures. It is the method of the *samnyāsa* (in Tamil *turavu-neri*). But the instruction given to the three, i.e., Śivayōga-mā-muṇi, Patañjali and Vyāgrapāda, is to be *in* the world—and take the wallowing souls out of the quagmire of *samsāra*, i.e., birth and death, by the method of devotion (in Tamil *aruḷ-neri*)—but not *of* the world. The aim of both the methods—the method of the *samnyāsa* and the method of devotion—is to be liberated from birth and death. Tirumūlar's significant contribution is to merge the two methods—*turavu-neri* and *aruḷ-neri* and calls his method, *Tiru-neri* (the Supreme path). He calls *tiru-neri* as the great path (*peru-neri*), the path of Śivam (*Śiva-mā-neri*) and the only path (*oru-neri*).³⁰ The difference among the three methods is not a difference in kind, but a difference in degree. There is a distinction among the three methods without a difference.

Tirumūlar calls himself as Sadāśiva³¹ and his work as *Tamil Śāstra*,³² *cilāṅga-vēdam*³³ (meaning the Yoga of discipline, i.e., the Mūlādhāra-Yoga), *Tamil Āgama*³⁴ (where he says that the Lord gave good birth to him so that he may bring out a good Tamil Āgama work. However Suba. Annamalai calls the *Tirumandiram* as *Sadāśiva Āgamam*).³⁵ Tirumūlar also says that in his work he has brought out the rich treasures of the Tamil and the Sanskrit Āgamas,³⁶ which were taught by Śiva to Śakti. Śiva is one whose greatness and mystery have been revealed in both the Tamil and Sanskrit Āgamas.³⁷ It is significant to note that Tirumūlar uses the

term “Āryan” to mean the guru, Śiva.³⁸ Tirumūlar says that Śiva, as guru, has given us the Tamil Śāstras to prevent the eruption of egoism in us.³⁹ He also vouchsafes the fact that he belongs to the Kailāya tradition⁴⁰ and received *dīkṣā* through Nandi (Śiva).⁴¹ Due to the *dīkṣā* he became enlightened, lived in a “space” where there is neither day nor darkness (a place which is beyond the space-time matrix), lived with a body of wisdom (in Tamil *jñāna-uḍambu*, i.e., *divya-deha*) and sat under the holy feet of his guru Nandi⁴² under the *bodhi* tree.⁴³ Thus one of the best *guru-śiṣya*, (guru-disciple) combination is that of Nandi and Tirumūlar, Nandi being the greatest guru and Tirumūlar being the greatest disciple. Yet Tirumūlar bemoans, due to his extreme modesty, that he does not know the method/the way the singers sing praising the Lord, (in Tamil *pāḍal-neri*); does not know the method/the way the dancer’s dance (in Tamil *āḍal-neri*); does not know the method/the way the seekers seek (in Tamil *nāḍal-neri*); and does not know the method/the way the searchers search in Tamil *tēḍal-neri*.⁴⁴ As a disciple, since he does not know these four methods, Tirumūlar is afraid whether there is any scope for his liberation. This is just an expression of Tirumūlar’s modesty.

A little explanation is necessary for each of the four methods/ways referred to above. Tirumūlar enumerates here the four different methods by which one may “enjoy” the presence of the Lord. The method of singing the praise of the Lord (*pāḍal-neri*), the method of dancing due to the emotion of *bhakti* (*āḍal-neri*), the method of *jñāna* (*nāḍal-neri*), and the method of Yoga (*tēḍal-neri*). The first two methods, *pāḍal-neri* and *āḍal-neri* are the methods which belong to the method of *bhakti* or devotion. The *nāḍal-neri*, is the method of *jñāna* by means of which one tries to understand the nature of reality. But the method of search, *tēḍal-neri* is one,

which makes a search for reality inside one's body. The first two methods belong to the *bhakti-mārga* and the last two belong to the *jñāna-mārga*; and especially the search for reality inside the body, *tēḍal-neri*, is the method of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga the method of the Siddhas. For an ardent student, who is in search of liberation, all these four methods are necessary.

The problems of human life, according to Tirumūlar, can be tackled with the help of education. To Tirumūlar education is not mere literacy; education is spiritual, that which transcends religious divisions but teaches how to love and realize the ultimate truth. Knowing the purpose of the union of body and soul is education.⁹⁴ Those who have mastered this are educated, even if they are illiterates; those who have not mastered it are uneducated, even if they are literates.⁹⁵ This education comes easily by listening to the words of the holy and wise.⁹⁶

The responsibility to set right the things that are in disarray in a society rests with the ruler. It is the duty of the ruler to assure that things fall in place. The ruler should punish the pretenders who don the holy garb and practice evil ways.

The senseless fools donning sacred thread and matted locks,
And with chanting phrases pretend to wisdom unpossessed,
Them, the ruler of state shall, with wise men's help, take and
test,
And, for the country's good, impart words in wisdom drest.⁹⁷

The ruler can claim one sixth of the produce of his subjects,⁹⁸ and in turn it is the duty of the ruler to defend his people. The ruler who protects his people wins the loyalty of his subjects.⁹⁹ If one does not stand in his own ordained faith and if he deviates, the ruler should not fail to punish them according to the laws laid down in the Āgamas.¹⁰⁰ To do all these the ruler should be an educated one.¹⁰¹ Education in the parlance of Tirumūlar is spiritual

education. One can say that Tirumūlar proposes a philosopher-king.

Though the ways the society conducts itself and the modes of the government have changed, Tirumūlar's advices still hold water because man is essentially the same right from the beginning, suffering from impurities.

7. Tirumandiram – A literature which shows the way: *Ārru-p-paḍai*

Ārru-p-paḍai is a kind of Tamil poetry. The term *ārru-p-paḍai* is a compound of two words, *āru* and *paḍai*. *Āru* in Tamil stands for a river, a canal, or a way. In olden days, when people migrated from one place to another in search of lands of prosperity, they went alongside the rivers. They made their habitats on the banks of the rivers. Since the rivers showed the way to wealth, people named 'way' with the word which stands for river, *āru*. *Paḍai* is a term, which means 'the act of putting.' The combination of these two terms, i.e., *ārru-p-paḍai* would mean 'the act of putting one on the way' or 'the act of showing the way' or 'the act of canalizing (guiding).' This has become an image in Tamil heroic poetry.

The definition of the *ārru-p-paḍai* kind of poetry is given in the *Tol-kāppiyam*, the oldest available Tamil grammar work. It is as follows: May he be a stage actor or a singer or a buffoon or a songstress, an artiste on his/her return after getting so much of gifts from a king for his/her performance, when met with a co-artiste on the way, guides him/her to the king, describing the philanthropic nature of the king to enable the co-artiste benefited as he/she was.¹⁰²

This definition restricts the imagery called *ārru-p-paḍai* only to the stage artistes. Later the poets were also included. In any case *ārru-p-paḍai* stood for guiding one to material wealth. It was

Tiru-Murugārru-p-paḍai which guided the wayfarer to Lord Murugaṇ for material as well as spiritual wealth.

Tirumūlar, the first known Tamil Siddha, used this imagery *ārru-p-paḍai* completely for spiritual purposes. Tirumūlar says:

Let the entire world attain the bliss I have attained
If the name of the Lord chanted by the great ones is repeated
Within the heart will arise a thrilling unstruck sound
Which, when practised, will lead to realization.¹⁰³

It is rightly observed by T.N. Ganapathy that the *ārru-p-paḍai* concept has acquired a socio-philosophical meaning at the hands of the Tamil Siddhas. According to T.N. Ganapathy, this concept has two aspects in the philosophy of the Siddhas—one positive and the other negative. The anti-scriptural and anti-theistic attitudes coupled with their criticism of caste, idol worship, religious observances, rituals and ceremonies and their warning against pseudo gurus etc., represent the negative side of the *ārru-p-paḍai* concept, while, the method of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga, their ethical precepts and their system of medicine form the positive aspect of the *ārru-p-paḍai* concept.¹⁰⁴ It is to be kept in mind that Tirumūlar is not anti-scriptural or anti-theistic for he praises the scriptures.

The *Naṇṇūl*, a Tamil work on grammar defines a book as one which accomplishes all or some or at least one of the following four: virtue (*aṛam*), wealth (*poruḷ*), pleasure (*iṇbam*), liberation (*vīḍu*).¹⁰⁵ These four are called *puruṣārthas* in Sanskrit. In Tamil they are called *ūdiyam* or *urudi-p-poruḷ*. That is, these are the final goals one is striving for. Man seeks pleasure either materially or spiritually. Wealth and pleasure are material; virtue and liberation are spiritual. Hence the *Naṇṇūl* defines that a book should help one to achieve at least one of the four.

Some books revolve around the concept of virtue; some concentrate on wealth; some on pleasure; some take all the three in their fold. The *Kauṭalīyam*, the famous work of Chāṇakya, claims that it is taking all the three—virtue, wealth and pleasure—into account.¹⁰⁶ The *Tiru-k-kuraḷ* speaks directly about the three and refers indirectly about the fourth one liberation.

The books which deal with the first three—virtue, wealth and pleasure—are called *tri-varga* and books which deal with all the four including liberation are called *catur-varga*.

The *Tirumandiram* concentrates on only one of the above—liberation. It speaks about virtue only as a supplement to liberation. In that case the *Tirumandiram* may be called as *dvi-varga*. The *Tirumandiram* speaks very less about material wealth and material pleasure. Concentrating on them is not necessary for a book, which is directing people to liberation. Further in the conception of Tirumūlar, liberation is the final axis; without that the other three will become meaningless.

The social concern of the *Tirumandiram* is to direct each and everybody to liberation. The philosophical, religious and the other conceptions of the *Tirumandiram* are stemming from this concern for the other beings. Blessed are those who study it and take its advice to heart.

“The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular: Essays on the Tirumandiram”

by Dr. T.N. Ganapathy, Ph.D and Dr. K.R. Arumugam, Ph.D

This book fulfills a longtime need for a comprehensive introduction and commentary in the English language for one of Yoga's greatest source works: the *Tirumandiram* or “Holy Garland of Mantras,” described by Dr. Georg Feuerstein Ph.D “as important as the *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Yoga-Vashistha* combined.” *Tirumandiram* is considered to be the greatest and earliest seminal work of the Siddhas, the greatest adepts of Yoga, and an encyclopedia of philosophical and spiritual wisdom rendered in verse form. It is a book of Yoga, tantra, alchemy, mysticism, mantra, yantra and philosophy. But without a commentary, it has been difficult for most English readers, unfamiliar with much of its underlying philosophical concepts, to clearly understand.

This new book explain clearly the most important themes and philosophical concepts which are woven throughout the *Tirumandiram*. These include: Saivism; the nature of Siva and the relationship which the soul or *jiva* has with the Lord; the philosophical school of *Saiva Siddhantha*; the concepts of God, the soul, the world, liberation, the paths to liberation; the bonds or impurities which keep the soul in bondage; the concept of Grace; Love; meditation; *jnana*; the Yoga of *Tirumandiram*: Astanga-Yoga, Khecari-yoga, Pariyana-Yoga (tantric yoga), Chandra-Yoga (literally “moon” yoga), Kundalini-Yoga; mysticism, the concept of the human body and its transformation into a divine body; the concept of the guru; the social concerns of the Tirumular. With an understanding of the basic ideas, the reader will then be stimulated to make a detailed study of the *Tirumandiram* itself.

It is the sixth publication in a series produced by scholars of the Yoga Siddha Research Center, in Chennai, South India, sponsored by Babaji's Kriya Yoga Order of Acharyas and the Yoga Research and Education Center. The present work benefits from the great familiarity which the authors have developed over many years of full time study of much of the massive body of palm leaf manuscripts written by the Siddhas.

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