

SALVATION IN SAIVA SIDDHANTA

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Salvation of the human self is a very favourite theme in all religions of the world. Although each religion approaches this doctrine from its own *weltanschauung*, salvation, essentially for all religious traditions, is a deliverance from bondage, evil, sin and suffering. It is a passage from the negative, bound state of being to a positive, blissful state of life. This article is an attempt to understand the concept of salvation in one of the Indian theistic traditions, namely, the Saiva Siddhanta school of the Tamil Tradition. The study is based on the philosophical and mystical hymns of Tayumanavar (*Tayumanaswamikal Patal (TP)* of 17th century A.D. and the classical Saiva Siddhanta philosophical work *Sivananapotam* (Skt. *Sivajnanaobodham*) of Meykantar (13th century A.D.).

I. Nature of Human Soul

The portrayal of the nature of human soul will show us the intense need for salvation of the humans from their predicamental and enslaving existential situation. The hymns of Tayumanavar¹ show the existence of countless number of human souls, each being without beginning and distinct from the psycho-physical organism. This distinctiveness of the soul is seen to differentiate the soul from the body, senses, mind and the like. In LIV.9 the poet-saint tells us what

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¹For a brief analysis of the hymns see Thomas Manninezhath, *Harmony of Religions: Vedanta Siddhanta Samarasam of Tayumanavar* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993).

the soul is not. The soul is not the five elements,² nor the sense organs.³ The soul is neither the organs of action⁴ nor the inner organs:⁵

You are not the five elements beginning with the earth. Reflect carefully, you are not the *indriyas* and *karanas* (organs of action, perception and intellectual organs). You are the consciousness that thus reflects, said He. (LIV. 9).⁶

The hymns also show the two important features of the soul. First, the soul never stands alone by itself. Its existence is always in association or relationship with either the world or God. Second, the soul assumes the nature of that with which it associates. That is to say, its essence lies in its identification, whether it is in identification with the world, causing delusion, or with Pure Spirit which means liberation. This is brought out in the simile of the crystal and the objects adjacent to it:

You are not those *gunas* that are associated with five elements and five organs. You are not that one who looks forward to the six-fold *adhvas*⁷ (pathways). You are not the one who controls the body, substance and soul. You are neither the knowledge nor the ignorance nor the body. You are the *Cit* that resembles the crystal which takes on the nature of the thing with which it associates. I am the one who knows at the right moment of your maturity and instruction (XIV.18).

As the object which comes into contact with the crystal determines the colour of the crystal, the self becomes one with the thing with which it dwells. Thus the soul could be associated either with the world or with God. In this respect the soul as *cit* stands distinct from God who is also *Cit*. The latter is the one who provides the appropriate instruction to redeem the soul from its bondage.

² The five elements are *akasa*, air, fire, water and earth.

³ The *jnanendriya-s* (sense organs) are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

⁴ The *karmendriya-s* (organs of action) are: mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitals.

⁵ The *antahkarana-s* (inner organs) are *citta*, *manas*, *ahankara*, and *buddhi*.

⁶ Also see., TP., XIV.18.

⁷ The six *adhvas* are the *mantra*, *pada*, *varna*, *Bhuvana*, *tattva* and *kala*. For details on *adhvas* see Umapati, *Sivappirakacam*, No.3.

Because the soul partakes of the things with which it happens to associate, the souls are said to be either *sat* or *asat*:

When it is associated with ignorance, it becomes ignorant. When it is associated with the state of knowledge it exists as knowledge. When Grace thus makes it know, it knows *sat* and *asat*. This is its true nature as knowledge (XXVIII. 22).

The soul is conceived of and presented in the hymns as a conscious self passing through different stages of consciousness (*avasthas*). In the section XXIV.25-26 Tayumanavar speaks about different stages of consciousness (*avasthas*)⁸, namely, the *jagrat* (self-consciousness), *svapna* (dreamy consciousness), *susupti* (sub-consciousness), *turiya* (pure consciousness) and *turiyatita* (cosmic consciousness). The final state is the *turiyatita* state where the soul attains the feet of God and is one with God. The poet says that mature souls understand the nature of each stage of consciousness and they conduct themselves accordingly:

The persons of penetrating knowledge will say that in my forehead is the wakeful state with 35 *tattvas*: the 10 *indriya-s*,⁹ the 10 *visaya-s*¹⁰ beginning with *sabda*, *vacana* etc., the 10 *vayu-s* (vital airs like *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* etc.) and the inseparable four *antahkarana-s*¹¹ which function with *purusa* (XXIV.25). The next verse explains the other *avasthas* of the soul:

In the heart which is the abode of *susupti* there are the *prana*, *citta* and the inseparable *purusa*. The navel is the abode of *turiyavastha* where *prana* and *purusa* shine together. *Turiyatitam* is in the *muladharam* where *purusa* alone is seated with power. The mature people on whom *jnana* has ripened will know the nature of the organs in the five *avasthas* and they will conduct themselves in terms of those *avasthas* (XXIV. 26).

⁸ One may recall here the original teaching on the *avasthas* found in the *Mandukya Upanisad* I.3-7.

⁹ The five *jnanedriya-s* and the five *karmendriya-s*. See above.

¹⁰ That which appear from the *jnanedriya-s* (hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell) and the *karmendriya-s* (speech, walking, giving, evacuation, and pleasure).

¹¹ See above.

The state beyond *turiya* (the fourth) is *turiyatita*, the state of consciousness, which is a state of pure Divine consciousness. In this state, the soul enters into conscious experience of oneness with God.

Another characteristic of the soul as found in the hymns is the soul's longing for liberation. This is interiorized in the form of the yearning of the saint's soul and is expressed throughout the hymns.¹² The whole section of XLV .vii. 1-8 is a desperate longing for the knowledge of the true self. In one of the hymns he asks, "When will we know our selves instantly through grace, giving up the foolish idea that the three *gunas* are the soul"? (XLV.vii.1). In the same section, in hymn three, the poet sings "when would we perceive that our souls are the embodiment of *cit* and that they carry the impermanent physical body which is controlled by the *tattvas*"? The nature of that union with God is described in the expression '*camattunilai*' (equalling state).¹³ The *camattunilai* is a state of union between God and the soul which is characterized as a state devoid of the difference between the one and the two (*onrirantu millatuvay*) and it is also a state which retains the difference between the one and the two (*onrirantu mullatuvay*).

The attainment of *mukti* (liberation) is seen as a passage or crossing from one state to the other. The soul, as we find in the hymns, passes through three stages, namely, *kevalavastha* (XLV.6.25; XIV.30; XXIV.15), *Sakalavastha* (XIV.30; XVI.2; XXIV.15; XLV.vi.25) and *Suddhavastha* (XLV.vi.27). In the *kevalavaStha* the soul is fully enveloped in the darkness of *anava mala* under which the inherent powers of the soul like intellect, will and emotion are kept inactive. In the *SakalavaStha*, the souls on account of God's grace take suitable bodies and are involved in different activities in various environments. In the *SuddhavaStha* all the binding bonds of the soul are shattered once and for all and the soul attains freedom which is eternal bliss.

¹² TP., XXXIII.1ff; XXXIX.1; XLV.xi.1ff.

¹³ See TP., XLV.xiv.15.

II. Originally Free Existentially Bound

It is very clear from the above analysis of the nature of the soul that in its original state it is pure. The soul; however, because of its innate tendency to associate with the *Sat* or *asat* is existentially in tension and there is always a pull towards the good or the evil. Both philosophical and mystical traditions of the Saiva Siddhanta give a real picture of the bound, predicamental state of the souls.

A. Philosophical Tradition

The philosophical texts of the Saiva Siddhanta conceive a hierarchical order among souls, namely, *vijnanakalas*, *pralayakalas* and *sakalas* (*SB.*, VIII. 2; *SS.*, VIII. 2). The difference in their place in the order is due to a function of the number of *malas* that defile them. At the top of the hierarchy is the *vijnanakalas*. These souls are believed to be impaired only by *anava mala*. Certain classes of souls either belong to or have ascended through spiritual discipline to this order, which is above the sphere of influence of *karma* and *maya*. This is the region of *suddha maya* and the souls in this order are mature and fit for the final operation of Siva's grace. With the dawning of Divine grace from within, the *anava* is cast off and the soul is released from all the binding forces. The second order is the *pralayakalas* who are tainted by both *anava* and *karma malas*, but are free from *mayamala*. These are the souls which exist in the state of cosmic dissolution. When there is fresh evolution it becomes *sakala* being alerted by *karma mala*. At the bottom of the order is the *sakalas*, the full-fledged empirical souls, who are defiled (infected) by all the three *malas* (*anava*, *karma* and *maya*). Release for *pralayakala* and *sakala* souls is effected differently in accordance with the difference in the nature of their bonds. To the *pralayakala* souls God appears in His celestial form when their two *malas* have become ripe, and in the case of the *sakala* souls God assumes the form of a human teacher (*guru*). The latter, through the mediation of the Scripture and the Tradition (*sampradaya*), inculcate saving knowledge.

B. Mystical Tradition

Tayumanavar elaborately explains in his hymns the various modes in which bondage presents itself and describes them employing the language of his religious tradition, Saiva Siddhanta, as 'impurities' which make the soul finite and ignorant. Speaking of the bonds, Tayumanavar refers to the primal impurity and asks:

When shall I have the inseparable union with the Lord who is the true Knowledge just as I am now inseparably united with *anava mala* (XLV.xiv.28).

In bondage the soul is in an *Advaita* relation with the primal impurity and liberation consists in the realization of a true Advaita relation with God.

What is spoken of here as primal impurity, is not mere absence of knowledge but a positive principle of darkness whose nature is to hide the Reality from the self. As the 'impurity of darkness' (*irul malam*), it deludes the soul. Its hiding and deluding nature is implied when the poet calls it *pasa irul* (the bond of darkness, V. 1). In IV. 6 the poet-saint says that the souls are concealed in the darkness of *anava*: In the dark womb of primal impurity, I lie fettered like an ignorant and blind babe...(IV.6).

This primordial impurity is capable of hiding everything from the soul, both itself and everything else:

The impurity of darkness that does not reveal its form, but causes the ignorant condition of perceiving Thy nature and my nature as identical, like darkness that is dispelled at seeing light, may be retracted without showing forth its nature (X.11).

As a positive principle of darkness it permeates all bodily and mental organs and generates through them the limiting evils like passion, lust, covetousness, sufferings, likes and dislikes, pride, attachment etc. (IV. 3). Its removal is made possible when the souls are led to higher stages of spiritual advancement, and in the state of *mukti* the power of darkness is completely uprooted.

Association with deceitful impurities gives one *mala*-consciousness. When will I merge with Thy Pure (*nirmala*) state, so as to be released from my impurity? (XLV.vi.17).

The other bond co-existing with the primary one in the eternal soul is *karma*. The poet-saint states that God fettered him with the bond of *karma*: *intapparil patarntavinait/tataiyal talaiyittu...* In this world binding me with the blockage of *karma* (XXVII. 55). Being aware of the evil consequences of *karma*, the saint asks why the Supreme One planted the 'I'-ness and burdened him with the body of flesh and blood and governed the soul by the immutable law of good and evil:

Why did you place the pride of self-assertion which reiterates 'I-ness'? Why did you make me in the process, and carry the burden of this flesh-filled body which circles around good and evil actions? Why did you give me within this body, as you name it, life? (XVI. 5)

There are many hymns where the poet-saint laments the evil consequence of *karma*. It consists of the evil of self-ignorance :

Is it proper that the previous *karmas* associate with me, the helpless one who does not know myself? Oh Supreme One I am ruined (XLIII. 162).

The soul under the spell of *karma* is directed towards desire, cycles of birth and death (XXXVI. 5; XLIV. 29). In XXVII. 38 and XXIV. 47 the saint laments *karma* as it causes countless births with never-ending burdens. *Karma* makes the soul a slave of this life (XI. 8) and a beast of burden (XX. 10). Consequently the soul experiences pain and pleasure and is subject to the wearying cycles of births and deaths.

Being co-existent with the eternal souls, *karma* induces the souls to act through the body, mind and speech. It acts in order to enjoy, and enjoys in order to act. Through actions the souls accumulate the merits or demerits (*punya* or *papa*) of these deeds. With reference to the fruits of deeds, the poet speaks of two kinds of *karma* (*iruvinaï*, XII. 2; XVI. 2; XLIII. 160,164). The two-fold *karmas* are *nalvinai* (good *karma*) and *tivinai* (evil *karma*) (XVI. 5). When the

soul does any act for good (*nalvinai*) or bad (*tivinai*) in any egoistic spirit, it has got to reap the fruits of such an act whether good or bad. Good deeds (*nalvinai*) as well as bad deeds (*tivinai*) are the source of re-births.

Karma, understood as the deed and fruit of manifold deeds, is classified into three according to the time of its fructification. Tayumanavar refers to them as the "three mires" (XLV. 6. 21):

When will be the day when the three mire-like accumulations of *karma*, beginning with *sancitam*, will be burnt up by Thy grace? (XLV. vi. 21).

Tayumanavar also specifies the nature of the 'three' modes in which the bond *karma* functions:

How come I have been born and made to suffer here in this world?
I do not have any action of my own. Is it, then, proper for actions done earlier and actions accruing in the future (for fruition) come to me, the poor one, Oh my Lord (XLII. 27).

Tayumanavar here refers to the accrual in the future of *karmas*, which is technically called *agamiyam*. *Sancitam* is the accumulated *karma* of the former births. It is the *karma* which is carried forward from the time when a deed is done, to the time when the fruit of that deed is experienced:

In accordance with my old *karma* I am distressed in mind (revolve through successive births). Will I be able to attain your boundless grace? Tell me Oh, Silent Teacher; Oh, Teacher of Wisdom who has realized all that is to be realized (XXVIII.30).

Prarabdham is the functioning of *sancitam* in the present birth (XLII. 27; XLIII. 162). The work of these three-fold *karmas* is cyclic in its fructification. Enjoyment or suffering which the soul experiences as a result of past actions in the form of *prarabdham* becomes the source of fresh acts, which are called *agamiyam*.

The soul which always longs for freedom and spiritual tranquillity is enslaved by the bond of *karma*. The aim of the soul, therefore, is always to get rid of the intolerable misery, birth and death,

coming in quick and never-ending succession, caused by *karma* which is as expansive as oceans and as huge as mountains:

The *karma* is as expansive as the ocean and as huge as a mountain. How many are the bodies that are taken due to this *karma*? To count them is as fruitless as counting the fine grains of sand in the ocean. Therefore, before I depart from this body, will you not remove the veil of darkness so that I can reach you. Oh Supreme Omnipresent One (XXVII.38).

The poet-saint being anxious to attain *mukti* looks forward to the day when the evil of *karma* will be overcome:

When will be the day, when the rays of grace of our Lord will be discharged upon us in order to dry up the accumulated crops of *karma*? (XLV. vi. 19).

When will be the day of the arrival of the grace to grill the seeds of stored actions caused by mind, speech and body (the agents of thinking)? (XLV. vi. 20).

In addition to the aforementioned bonds, Tayumanavar also speaks of the bond of *maya*. This non-intelligent, primordial matter serving as the material cause for the cosmic evolution is described in various ways by him in order to express its veiling power (V. 3). The all pervasive *mayic* control (*akilamayai*) which represses the mind and the world are seen in expressions such as '*manamayai*' (*maya* which deludes the mind, IX. 9; X. 3; XI. 4; XIX. 7); '*mayai catam*' (*maya* which makes the unreal body as real, XXVII. 32; XXI. 9); '*mayaip perum patai*' (*maya* the great army, XXVII. 1); '*maya cakam*' (*maya* the world); '*pal veyya mayai*' (useless and scorching *maya*, XIV.3); '*maikattu mayai*' (*maya* which shows darkness, XLIII. 330).

There are thus multiple bonds at work in enslaving the souls. They hide and veil the truth from the souls. These binding impurities (*mala-s*), however, are removable and when the souls become mature and pure those bonds disappear from the souls. The process involved in the maturing of the bonds and of the bound soul, the descent of grace etc. are themes which are elaborated in accord with the theology of Saiva Siddhanta.

III. From Bondage to Bliss

The souls bound by impurities are not left in darkness unredeemed forever. Liberation from this bound state of the soul is possible. The pathway to the ultimate goal starts with the divine act of initiation (*diksa*) by a *guru*. *Diksa*, as a spiritual discipline, is to scorch the force of the *malas* (*ksiyate pasubhavana*) and free the soul from their grip, thereby conferring on the disciple the vision and bliss of *jnana* (*dhiyate vimalam jnanam*). In the hymns V.2 and V.5 the poet discusses different *Diksas*. Through *samaya Diksa* the *guru* initiates the aspirant into the religious life, making him fit for observing the disciplines in order to purify the body, mind and soul. In V.2 the poet refers to the *visesa Diksa* by which the *guru* mentally advances the disciple to do *kriya* and *yoga*; to perform *Siva puja* (worship of Siva), to study the *Sivagamas* and to enter into *yoga marga*. Through *vnirvana Diksa* the *guru* makes the thoughts, words and deeds of the disciples spotless and pure and thus qualifies the disciple for directly receiving wisdom (*jnana*).

Once thus initiated, the four main paths of devotion, rite, yogic integration, and enlightenment are undertaken by the seeking soul. These paths are four stages in the spiritual evolution of the soul. These stages are beautifully expressed by comparing them to the bud, the flower, the unripened fruit and fully ripened fruit, respectively, on the way to spiritual realization:

Oh Most High (the Beginning and the End) the practices of *carya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana* are like the bud, flower, unripened fruit and ripened fruit (XLIII. 157).

Tayumanavar elaborately explains each *marga*. In *carya*, as it is explained in the *Saivagamas*, the devotee becomes involved in the ordinary religious duties such as cleaning the temple premises, gathering flowers and making garlands for the image of the Lord, lighting the lamps etc. Through these external services, the devotee attains *Siva-loka* (the abode of Siva). The spirit of this mode of devotion is recaptured by Tayumanavar in the form of devotion to devotees of God.

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) if you grant me the eagerness to serve the devotees, the state of bliss will come upon me of its own accord (XLIII. 155).¹⁴

In this hymn the poet-saint claims that he can have the blissful experience of God by serving others. The performing of charitable works to God's devotees (*anpar pani*) gives the saint the state of bliss (*inpanilai*). This is *jnana* in *carya* - the experience of the Lord in and through the performance of ordinary duties dedicated to God. In the mode of rite the devotee performs worship to the forms of Siva and sings Siva's praises and does the daily fire-rites. Through these acts, acts of worship performed to God, the devotee establishes a sense of intimacy with God, and experiences the joy of living in proximity to Siva. Tayumanavar's description of this mode is as follows:

My mind is the temple, my thought is the fragrance (offertory) for worship and my love is the water for ablution. Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) would Thou come and accept my offering (XLIII.151).¹⁵

The external acts done so far with the right intention and spirit prepare the devotee for meditation and internal worship. In the *yoga* state the relation of the devotee to God is closer through meditation and there are many hymns where the poet-saint extols the path of *yoga* giving details about *yoga* postures (*yogasanas*) and the eventual attaining of mastery over the body and achieving spiritual intimacy:

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End), will the body fall down (will there be death) for the *yogi* who arrests air within (*pranayama*), who arouses fire at the base (arouse *kundalini*) and makes *kundalini* reach the *sahasrara*, above the forehead (*chandramandala*)¹⁶ (XLIII: 153).

Kundalini, (that which remains coiled), the serpent power, is described as the supreme consciousness. Passing through various

¹⁴ Also see, TP IV.1; XVI.1; XXVII.31.

¹⁵ Also see, TP., VI.8; XLIII.155.

¹⁶ TP., V.8; VII.6-7; X.9; XII.1; XIV.1; XXII.7; XXVII.28,31; XXXVIII.1; XLIII.153.

steps of *yoga* one is able to cultivate mental concentration and finally the *yogi* through undisturbed concentration attain Oneness with the Supreme. Realization of Oneness by way of *yoga* makes Tayumanavar praise and glorify the *yoga* path :

If I, the poor one, am able to control the mad elephant-like mind which is enchained by the shining and circling vital breath, then the learned will praise my achievement as the result of the praiseworthy *Rajayoga* which is most desirous in all the three worlds. Thus praised, I will live for long. What, then, is the proof for this? You are the golden swan who had resolved to grant the dear devotees the gift of auspiciousness (*cakratara pakya*) which is praised by all kings; the poetic ability of composing great epics; the sharpness of mind which is capable of reciting the four *Vedas* in their entirety; the Eight Great *Siddhis*;¹⁷ You are praised by the whole world, Cosmic Goddess (*akilantanayaki*), who resides in Tiruvanikka (XXXVIII. 1).

The greatness of the *yoga* path is reiterated here. It is this path that helps one to control the wild-elephant-like mind (*manamenum periya matta yanai*) and grants one the fitness for God - realization. This is the reason why Tayumanavar praises the glorious path of *yoga*.

The culmination of these various-paths is *jnana* which is called *Sanmarga* for it takes the soul straight to *Sat* which is God. The superiority of this *marga* is clearly spelled out in many places in the hymns. In XXVI. 3 the poet-saint says that *carya*, *kriya* and *yoga* are only preparatory and are superseded by *jnana* : *patamunrun katanta varkku melana nanapata*...Here, *patamunru* refers to the above three paths and the respective stages of spiritual advancement. The path of *jnana* leads the soul to the final state of *sivasayujya* where the soul attains supreme release and is one with Siva.

¹⁷ The *siddhis* are a special kind of psychic and supernatural powers a *yogi* possesses when he purifies his mind and attains perfection. The commonly cited Eight *Siddhis* are *animan* (the power of reducing oneself to the size of an atom), *mahiman* (the power of increasing one's size), *laghiman* (lightness), *kamavasayitva* (the power of attaining things desired), *prakamya* (the power to overcome natural objects and go anywhere), *isitva* (the power of domination over animate and inanimate nature), *vasitva* (the power of assuming any form) and *gariman* (the power of heaviness).

The excellence of the *jnana marga* (path of knowledge) is emphasized when he sees *jnana* as the only path for the attainment of *mukti*:

Can one attain *moksa* without *jnana* even if one follows the path of devotion or circumambulating this vast world of nine divisions or even if one takes a holy bath in the ocean and in different rivers, or survives without eating or drinking in the centre of fire, or remains silent by feeding on dry leaves, water and air, or by withdrawing oneself into the caves of high mountains, or cleansing the ten *nadis* (10 principal nerves), or by elevating a fire with one's breath into the orb of the moon, or by drinking the nectar, or by attaining great *siddhis* in order to sustain the body for ages? (IV.11).

Liberation, according to the saint, is guaranteed by *jnana*:

Faltering from the path of *karma* leads to severe hell. The path of knowledge always grants the Good. When will I embrace this path (XLV.xv. 1).

In one place the poet calls this superior path the "*oru col markkam*" (the path of one word) (XLV.xv.3). *Jnana* annihilates all the *malas* and leads the soul to *mukti*. The power of *jnana* in exterminating the bonds (*pasas*) is effectively spelled out in metaphorical expressions such as "*nanak kanal*" (the spark of knowledge) (IV.7), and "*nanakni*" (Skt.*jnanagni*) (the fire of knowledge, XLV.xv.11). *Jnana marga* then is the direct and immediate means for attaining the Highest end (V.5).

The bondage caused by multiple bonds is now broken and the soul is matured (*malaparipakam*) (IV. 7) by passing through different paths (*Sadhanas*). The soul on the way to its God-realization adheres to the Scriptures (XIX.1-3), to the lives and teachings of the realized souls (XLV. ii and iii), to the performance of *dana*, *tapas* and *dharma* (XLIII. 157-58), to the chanting of the *pancaksra* (*na ma si va ya*) (V. 8: *manimantra*) and to the practice of *Sivohambhavana* (meditation of identity with Siva) for the total liberation from all the impurities (*malas*).

According to Tayumanavar, attainment of the Supreme goal without Grace is as unlikely as a man searching for a lost elephant inside a pot, or a man crying for the possession of the moon in the sky

(IV.2). The soul fulfills all the above conditions, and then finally blessed by the benevolent grace of God (IV. 4; VIII. 6; XI. 8; XXV. 13; XXVII. 5; XXXI. 2; XLVI. 15 etc.), it experiences the Supreme Reality (IX. 11) as *nirmala* (pure), changeless, beginningless, devoid of forms and qualities.

IV. Liberation as Inseparable Union

The Saiva Siddhaanta tradition, both philosophical (Meykantar) and mystical (Tayumanavar), speak of *mukti* as a state of inseparable union of the human soul with the Divine.

A. Advaita of Meykantar Tradition

According to the Meykantar tradition, the soul (*pasu*) released from all the binding forces enters into a new relation with the Supreme. It is a kind of relation which subsists between two distinct things which now become non-dual (*advaita*) by the power of intimate association. *Sivajnana Bodham* (*SB*) introduces the notion of Advaita in two different contexts. The first context is *sutra* II. The expression *avaiye taneyay* in *sutra* II reflects the unique relation in which God stands as He performs the cosmic functions of creation etc. The second context is *sutra* XI which describes *moksa* which consists in the soul realizing its non-dual relation with Sivam. When the soul enters the life of *moksa* or when "in ceaseless, unwavering love, the soul unites to Siva's Feet" (*syara anpin aran kalal celume*) (*SB*. XI), it is said to accomplish 'integration with Sivam' (*Sivayogam*). Just as Siva is and has been 'non-dual' with the soul in its life in the world-standing one with it although hidden from its purview - the soul in *Sivayoga* becomes in its experience of union with Siva 'non-dual', surrendering its sense of 'I do' and even its very sense of being an 'I'.

In the unique relationship expressed in "God is one, different, one and different with the world" (*ulakela maki veray, utanumay*) (*SS*. II. 1),¹⁸ we find three kinds of relationships viz., *abheda* (non-difference between soul and God), *bheda* (difference between soul and

¹⁸ *Sivajnana Siddhiyar* (*SS*) is the commentary on *SB* by Arulnanti Sivacharya.

God) and *bhedabheda* (difference and non-difference between soul and God). The kind of oneness Saiva Siddhanta speaks about is different from the above kind of relations although it admits *bheda* only in the sense of a relation between the eyes and the sun in seeing; the *abheda* relation exists to the extent to which there is identity between soul and body. Likewise the *bhedabheda* relation is true, in the sense of the relation that we find between the seeing soul and its eyesight.¹⁹ To these three kinds of relations, thus distinguished and held together at the same time, Meykantar draws our attention in his illustrative verse under the Twelfth *sutra*:

For the enlightened He is not other than the world, He is not one with the world, He is not both other than and one with the world. But because the relation is non-duality, which includes all these three, all things are His form. Nevertheless, thou who knowest the truth of non-duality, worship in love.²⁰

This non-dual relation between soul and God is '*Suddhadvaita*' according to Meykanta, and the one who 'knows the truth of non-duality' is described by him as an '*attuviti*' (Advaitin). The inseparable union that exists between God and soul as shown above is pure Advaita (*Suddhadvaita*). Advaita does not mean here 'one' (*ekam*) in the sense of being literally without a second (*SB. II.1; SS. II.2*). The very thought of 'one' implies the idea of a second thing, that which thinks of it as one. Advaita here, therefore, means 'not two' and it avows the soul's inseparable oneness with God while denying "separate existence and separability of God and soul".²¹ This Advaita relation as understood by Saiva Siddhanta in terms of 'One' and 'Second' may be well explained as follows:

Advaita, according to Saiva Siddhanta, affirms neither the absence of a Second (monism) nor implies the being of a Second (dualism), but affirms only the Secondless of the Second. What appears to be Second to *Brahman* the order of existence is, nevertheless not

¹⁹ See *SB. II. 1; SS. II. 1*.

²⁰ *SB, XII*. As translated by Gordon Matthews in *Siva-nana-Bodham: A Manual of Saiva Religious Doctrine* (Oxford: University Press, 1948), p.28.

²¹ *SP. II.1* as trans. by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

essentially second to it, because *Brahman* is Presence involving union, pervasion and relation. What is therefore denied of the two is their otherness which alone furnishes the basis for duality and what is affirmed by implication, is their inseparability, inalienability...²²

Advaita is also seen as a relation characterized as *ananya* (non-difference): *attuvita menra colle anniya nattiyai yunarttumayittu* - The word Advaita itself points to non-difference (*anniyannatti*) (*SB.*, II. 1). *Ananyam* (in-separability / non-difference) denotes the intimate and inseparable relation between God and soul. According to this unique relation, although there exists a difference in substance, no separation is possible.

The *SS* uses the term *ananya* in a few places to denote the Advaita relation between God and soul. The soul being liberated from the bonds of impurities (*malas*) and assisted by Divine grace perceives the Supreme God as *ananya*: *arulinale yananiya makak kanpan* (*SS.*, VI.6). Advaita understood as non-difference (*ananya*) between God and soul is further found in *SS* :

As God is not different from the soul, as He is in the soul, and as He is the thinker of all the soul's thoughts, as in Him there is no distinction of "I" and "mine".²³

The Advaita relation of God and soul according to the author of *SS* is thus again a case of oneness without a second, but in the sense of inseparable unity. This inseparable unity does not mean that the soul becomes God or that God becomes the soul. The ultimate Reality is One in the sense of being 'one' with the souls but at the same time is different from the soul. Arulnanti summarizes this unique relation in his other work *Irupavirupatu*²⁴ as "*onrakamal-irantakamal onrumirantu minrakamal*" - "neither one nor two, nor both, nor again is it a negation of either."

²² K.Sivaraman, *Saivism in Philosophical Perspective*, *op.cit.*, p.143.

²³ *SS.*, VI. 8 as translated by J.M.Nallaswami Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

²⁴ *Irupavirupatu* (*Irupa Irupatu*) (XX. 9 - 10). It indicates a type of poetic composition where the *venpa* metre and *akaval* metre alternate in the twenty verses. This work praises Meykanta for his exposition of the Saiva Siddhanta truths.

Advaita relation is sometimes called *tadatmya*. The Siddhantic use of *tadatmya* (identity) is different from that of the Advaita of Sankara, where *tadatmya* is used for the *appearance* of one thing as two (*mithya tadatmya*). According to Siddhanta, in *tadatmya* relation two things become one by the power of intimate association (*atu atu atal*).²⁵

Advaita whether understood as *ananya* or as *tadatmya*, represents the heart of the God-soul relation, and implies the negation of all factors that seem to intervene and stand between and alienate man from the divine ground. It is the affirmation of the inalienable indwelling of God within man.²⁶

B. Advaita of Tayumanavar

The individual self is always restless until it reaches the supreme goal. The supreme end is *Advaita* and the individual's longing for that state of oneness with the Supreme is expressed in a single word: "*attuvitavancai*" (IV:2). The yearning for that *Advaita* state is a quest for merging with the Supreme Lord. This merging is *mukti* (liberation) which is the final truth and this ultimate state of final truth is *Advaitam*.

In the section *Cinmayanantakuru* (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) (IV:2) the *Advaita* state is described as *vakkumanam anukata puranapporul* (the perfect state beyond words and thoughts). Meditation on the sublimity and subtlety of that ideal state awakens self-awareness in the saint. This self-awareness and self-consciousness make the poet say that he is a sinner who perceives the impermanent body which crumbles like the bank of a deluged river, as permanent (*akkaiyenum itikaraiyai meyyenra pavinan*). This supreme state of *Advaita* union is like a dream. The longing for realization of that dream is presented as: *ariyakompil tenai mutavan iccittapati akum* (it is like a crippled person longing for honey to be found on the top of

²⁵ See SS as translated by J.M.Nallaswami Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.164.

²⁶ See K.Sivaraman, *Saivism in Philosophical Perspective*, *op. cit.*, p.142.

the branch of a tree, IV:2). The *advaitanvancai* (longing for *Advaita*), here, is equivalent to the desire to merge with God which is the final truth of Vedanta.

Commenting on "*otariya tuvitime....nanamakum*" the commentator²⁷ says that Tayumanavar sees *dvaita jnana* as the cause of *advaita jnana*. This is the Vedantic view. Tayumanavar, however, calls *dvaitam* "*otariyatuvitam*" injecting into it a mystical element. According to the poet-saint only "*otariyatuvitam*" is the means - not just any *dvaitam* - which will lead to *Advaitam*. The "*otariyatuvitam*" which the poet speaks of has an unspeakable element in it. Only that *dvaitam* where there is a kind of merging of the human and Divine will lead one to *Advaitam*. For example, in Samkhya there is *dvaitam* - *Purusa* and *Prakrti*. One is stuck with *Purusa* and *Prakrti* and will not reach the Supreme One. The advocates of "*otariyatuvitam*" concede *Advaita* to be the crowning end of their own dualistic framework, and in that sense they too lay claim to *Advaita*, albeit interpreting it differently. To Tayumanavar this is the verdict of experience.

The integral relation between *dvaitam* and *Advaitam* and the *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline as the pathway) to attain the ultimate state is echoed in the following hymn:

As declared by the *Vedas* the soul and That Object are unmistakably *cit* by their inherent nature. By whichever way you investigate, the duality will become *Advaita* when one reaches *nistha* which the *Saivagamas* speak of (XXVIII.16).

The soul by means of prescribed *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) enters into the state of disposition and leaps into the knowledge of the Supreme. In other words, *dvaitam* leads one to *Advaitam*. Vedanta, thus, is understood as the unique God-soul relation. In order to assert that non-separation he uses the term *Advaita*. *Advaitam* as an assertion of non-separation is described in a number of hymns. In the following verses *Advaita* is used in a descriptive²⁸ sense. The *Advaita*

²⁷ Puvai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Com. *Tayumanaswamikal Tiruppatalirattu Meykanta Virrtiyurai* (Madras: Ratnaayakar & sons, 1937), pp.202-204.

²⁸ Descriptive in the sense of the portrayal of God-soul union.

state is presented in XLV.15.4 as a pre-condition for the soul's passage into a more subtle state of intimate relation, the *Suddha Sivam*:

When shall I abide by the pure *Sivam*²⁹ after being seen and known by the word *advaitam* (which is apparently separate as word is separate from its meaning) which is the assertion of non-separation (which is a state devoid of duality) (XLV:15.4).

There are two ways of understanding this verse. One is having the wordless experience of *Suddha Sivam* after hearing and learning about the expression "*attuvitam*". And the second meaning is whether there is a state beyond the one indicated by the expression *Advaitam* which itself is a non-dual condition of relation between God and soul. In whichever way it is taken, Tayumanavar is here referring to the distinction within experience of an earlier stage when one receives the word from the preceptors and the culminating stage of oneness as *Suddha Sivam*. What the poet-saint hints at is the truth that once the individual soul is awakened by *advaita*-consciousness - a state where there are no distinctions or differences - the soul dissolves into the Supreme Lord.

Advaita relation is also described as a stimulus for religious unity and the promotion of peace and tranquility between various religious creeds. This is possible, according to Tayumanavar, only through the intuitive knowledge which brings about an intimate relation with the Infinite. This intimate relation with the Infinite is *Advaitam* and it is beautifully illustrated by the simile of '*nanamattakagam*' (wild elephant like knowledge) and '*attuvitamam*' (*Advaita*-intoxication):

Placing me in the company of men who are filled with Thy grace,
Thou hast trained me like an elephant wild with wisdom, which
exterminating the pillar of egoism (to which it had been tied)
shatters into pieces the chains of desire; which being intoxicated
with the rut of *Advaitam* (the experience of oneness) casts out the
six religions like the mucus flowing down from the elephant's

²⁹ *Suddha Sivam* - what is meant by attaining or being bound by the *Suddha Sivam* is the soul's realization of the unparalleled *Advaitic* union with Siva, the One God. In a sense the term is a theological description of the *Advaitic* union.

proboscis; which roars in anger at the darkness caused by bondage (*pasa*) as if it were its own shadow; which rolling into the ball of rice consumes with much delight the mind looking up and spreading out (the wandering mind), which strips away *maya* (which makes things shine) as if it were a decorative cloth that covered its face; and then drowning in the great ocean of spiritual happiness, obeys only the beautiful hands that hold the goad (*ankusam*) which is marked with the seal of Consciousness (*cinmudra*). Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Mantras*; Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Yoga Tantra*; Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Mauna*, who art descended from Mular, Oh Thou the Preceptor of Wisdom (V.1).

The individual soul once it is controlled by the true knowledge and possessed by the true spirit is liberated from all these forces. Being intoxicated with the bliss of inseparable union (*Advaita*), the individual soul breaks all kinds of bonds such as egoism and religious narrowness, and like the wild elephant (*mattakagam*) flushes out the river of mucus from its trunk. The individual soul in this state of oneness with the Supreme is totally under the spell of the revealing wisdom of the seal of supreme consciousness (*cinmudra*).

In the following hymn Tayumanavar uses *Advaita* in order to express the state of incomprehensible (*akocara*) (Skt. *agocara*) deliverance (*nirvrti*). In VI:1 the ungraspable experience is characterized as *Advaitam* (non-dual), the true and *svarupa* experience:

Oh qualityless (*nirkuna*), painless (*niramaya*), passionless (*nirancana*), independent (*niralampa*), the embodiment of *moksa* which is objectless (*nirvisaya*) and devoid of form, the unattached (*niskala*), the immovable, the Silent One (*nirvacana*), the non-dual One, the eternal, the Free, self-abiding (*tarpara*), the ever - full - like space (*vyomaparipurana*), the one who is eternally blissful, the Lord of Wisdom (*nanapakavan*), the embodiment of bliss (*Sambu*), the auspicious one (*Siva*), one who does good (*Sankara*), Oh Lord of all, when shall I think of you thus always. Oh three-eyed Teacher who is seated under the banyan tree, Thou dost make obvious to Thy expiated devotees who have obtained the wonderful (*arputa*) and incomprehensible (*akocara*) freedom, Thy essential form apart from all fiction as perfect bliss, inseparable (non-dual), true, and *Svarupa* experience. Oh merciful Lord who

does the blissful dance in the hall of pure consciousness which is beyond the reach of thought (VI.I).

The sublimity of God-experience is well depicted in the use of *attuvita niccaya corupa caksatkara anuputi*. The experience of Siva is the 'seeing of own self' (*corupa*) (Skt.*Svarupa*). It is an intuitive perception (*Saksatkara*). This seeing of Self, which is intuitive non-dual experience, according to Tayumanavar, is *Advaitam*.

"*Attuvitananta cittam*" (blissful *advaita*-consciousness), as found described in the hymn XVII:7, again is descriptive of the *Advaita* state of consciousness. In fact the whole hymn presents the characteristic features of a person who has penetrated into the self and realized the self:

If you rise into the supreme space (*paramakasa*) which has neither beginning nor end nor middle, then you will have the consciousness of the bliss of *Advaitam* (oneness) (blissful *advaita*-consciousness). All our clan will survive. There will not be any unfulfilment. Whatever course of action you have taken will all be good and it will be possible to live and sport with the wise ones in whom the grace has risen like the sunrise which has neither excess nor deficiency (perfect). These perfect ones will be in behaviour like children, the frenzied and the possessed who do not rejoice even when the world and heaven are given (XVII.7).

According to this hymn the one who has unitive experience of the self is a perfect one. There is nothing more nor less in him. There is neither the lack of anything nor any sense of unfulfilment in him. The state of mind of detachment and contentment is described in such a way that any ordinary person can have a glimpse of the uniqueness of that perfect state. The *advaitic*-consciousness of a sage is compared to the mind of a child, a mad fellow and to one possessed. Children do not think of the fruit of their actions. For the mad ones both friend and foe are alike and they never care for anything. The possessed ones, though one administers thrashing and pain to their body, the effect is on the evil spirit that possesses them rather than on themselves, and they suffer no pain.

The person who is in the state of happiness because of being one with the Supreme (*advaitanantam*) is beyond the limiting

conditions of desiring for the fruits of work and is free from pain and pleasure. This disposition of the individual soul, according to Tayumanavar, is *advaitanantam*, which is the essence of Vedanta.

The liberated soul (*mukta*) experiences its state of realization of non-duality with God (X. 3). The poet calls this the state of God-soul relation *attuvita niccaya corupa caksatkara anuputi* (immutable bliss of the true unitive nature) (VI.1), *Sivanuputi* (Blissful experience of Siva) (V.4), *attuvita anupava* (unity experience) (XXVI. 7), *cacuvata muttinilai* (state of eternal liberation) (X. 5), *sivasayujya mutti* (unity with Siva) (XI. 3; XII. 2,7), *nirvikalpa samadhi* (indeterminate absorption) (XLIII. 51, 245, 327, 352), *Siddhanta muttimutal* (the final state of Divine Bliss) (IV. 1-11), *Sivamayam* (likeness of Siva) (XXVIII. 65-66) etc.

The poet-saint as a philosopher had an intuitive knowledge of Reality (XLIII.98,275), and as a mystic always longed for the experience of merging with God (XLV.x.1-14). As a realized soul the poet would say "I have become your own in such a way that *karma* is absolved, egoism is eliminated and Beatitude is reached" (XLIII.375). This blessed state of oneness is a gift of God's grace and Tayumanavar thinks of it very much that way: "You enlightened me and I realized the state of non-separation, within You" (XLIII. 372).

Tayumanavar's mystical understanding of salvation has its basis in the Saiva Scriptures and the philosophical and theological teachings of the tradition. Although, as it seems, he does not struggle very much after the metaphysical aspect of salvation, he realized it as freedom from the bound state of the soul. Such a freedom made him open to other traditions and everyday problems of the society of his time. The philosophical tradition of the Saiva Siddhanta represented by Meykantar, Arulnanti Sivacarya and Umapati have seen salvation as a unique kind of non-dual relationship of human soul with Siva. For them this relation was neither non-difference between God and soul (*abheda*) nor difference between God and soul (*bheda*) nor difference and non-difference between God and soul (*bhedabheda*). It was soul's integration with Siva (*sivayoga*) and the Saiva Siddhanta philosophical tradition called it 'pure advaita' (*suddhadvaita*). Salvation for them is a unique union of the soul with Siva.