
V. S. George Joseph, *Centrality of Self in Saiva Siddhanta*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006, pages: 263, ISBN: 81-70863-68-6.

Centrality of Self in Saiva Siddhanta is an important book which offers a different mode of understanding of self in Saiva Siddhanta. He clarifies the concept of human self in Saiva Siddhanta by looking at the text from a philosophical point of view. He gives a graphic picture of both the philosophical content and the sophisticated methodology of Saiva Siddhanta. Thus, this book explores the significant reflections of our ancestors on the existential and essential state of human in order to make a meaningful appraisal of their philosophical reflections and responses to the modern Indian context.

The author highlights the peculiarities of Saiva Siddhanta by referring to various sources in the introduction. There is an effort to see through the existential state of the human with special reference to Sivajnana Mapadiyam of Matava Sivajnanamunivar, an 18th century Tamil commentary on Sivajnanabodham by Meykanda Devar.

The author clarifies the cognitive significance of *podu* and *cirappu* in the first part. According to Siddhantins, *podu* (general) and *cirappu* (special) are two major and qualitatively differing cognitive levels or methods by way of perceiving and realizing the essential nature of the

triple realities of *pati-pasu-pasa*. Sivajnanamunivar is of the opinion that self's spiritual progress starts from reasoning (*podu*) and culminates in the realization of reality (*cirappu*) which is trans-rational.

Second chapter provides a detailed analysis of the self. As God is the permanent revealer of the self, *pati* (I iva) is knowable partly by the self in *podu* and fully in *cirappu*. It is the self that has the ability to experience both I iva and the world, for it is the one reality that has the ability to know both *sat* (*pati*) and *asat* (*pasu*). Hence, in Saiva Siddhanta, the self can have in its cognition itself and the other realities too.

Later, the study focuses on the self as an existential being. There are three types of selves in Saiva Siddhanta, and the *sakalas* refer to human beings. Since the *sakala* (self) in the human condition can be considered the highest form of existence by reference to the other beings apart from man or woman. *Sakalas* are selves which are under the great influence of all the three *malas* (*pasa*) that is *anava*, *karma*, and *maya*. It also explains the self which goes through three states (*kevala*, *sakala*, and *suddha*).

Liberation of the self is nothing but realizing the right and lasting relationship of its advaitic union with *pati* and not with *pasa*. The Saiva Siddhantins believe in the spiritual progress which leads to salvation or liberation. The concept of *guru* who imparts divine wisdom to the self is very relevant in Saiva Siddhanta. They also stress the importance of *Mukti Pancaksara*, that is, *si-va-ya-na-ma*. Finally, the liberated self attains a state where it becomes Siva-like.

The book deserves appreciation for its excellent quality of research acumen and easily accessible presentation. Indeed, the author provides enough information regarding Saiva Siddhanta that lets even a beginner understand its philosophical as well as theological implications. The presentation is very captivating and is capable of generating further interest in the Saiva Siddhanta. Of course, this book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on the subject.

Vipin Varghese Vanchipura
