



**On site Investigation**

**Energetical Roots of Fundamental Experience  
South India**

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**April, 2002**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Synthesis and Summary</b> _____	3 – 4
<b>Note</b> _____	5
<b>Preparation</b> _____	6 – 8
<b>Investigation</b> _____	9
<b>First Stage</b> _____	9 – 13
<b>Second Stage</b> _____	14 – 18
<b>General Observations</b> _____	20 - 21
<b>Final Conclusions</b> _____	22

## **Annexes**

<b>Thai Pongal Festival</b> _____	23
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## **Interviews**

<b>Dr. Krishnam</b> _____	24 – 27
(Faculty Head of the Saiva Siddhanta Studies at the University of Madras)	
<b>R. Muthakumara Swami</b> _____	28 - 29
(Director, The South India Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society)	
<b>Guru Sri-La-Sri KaSaivasi Dharumai Aadeenam</b> _____	30 - 33
(Dharumai Aadeenam Mutt)	

## **Annex Files**

<b>Bibliography</b> _____	34
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## Synthesis and Summary

### Synthesis:

This investigation was dedicated to finding traces of original roots of the Energetic Discipline and the existence, or not, of actual energetic practices among the Shaivites and Hindu Trancers in Tamil Nadu, southern India. It was focused on personal experience gained by participation in their ceremonies and devotional practices; observation of the organization of sacred spaces and affective atmospheres in human relations. And for this we visited temples, shrines; participated in ceremonies; interviews with gurus, investigators and devotees. This report is descriptive of the places visited, transcriptions of interviews and conclusions based on impressions and personal experience.

### Summary

#### Preparation

The preparation for the on site investigation was in finding texts that were produced in Southern India, by Indians, about the Saiva Siddhanta Shaivas and conversations with el Maestro<sup>1</sup>. Contact was made with our friends in Chennai for logistic help.

#### Plan

The two week investigation began following one week of meeting with friends and carry out ceremonies with different groups of people. The investigation was formed around a basic plan of temple visits outlined in conversations with the Maestro, and participation in all levels of Shaivite religious life, interviews and conversations with all people possible. The central proposal was find evidence of profound experience in ceremonies and devotional places. The personal presentation was one looking for personal experience and friends in Chennai would accompany the investigator on trips and visits. The daily practice of Asceticism was the central source for guiding the decisions, hunches and intuitions which were the basis of the movements throughout the investigation.

#### On-site investigation

The first week was spent between interviews, reading, visits to Chennai temples and a short trip to Madurai, city dedicated to the Shakti. Visits were made to temples of different religions; interviews with specialists and conversations with devotees. This was experienced as the entrance, a “passage” into a whole religious culture dedicated to Shiva and agrarian mother religiosity. The participation in their temple practices and rituals, connecting internally with the gestures and prayers together with devotees, easily brought forth the first experiences of inspiration and recognition of the energetic substratum in Shaivism.

The second week was based on trips outside of Chennai, into the smaller villages and important temples. This week was guided by hunches, personal registers and we were able to enter into contact with the important gurus, contact with the keepers of the temples, participate in intense ceremonies in the Mother temples and community life surrounding the temple. We were able to further “enter” into the atmospheres and an internal frequency that produced significant energetical experiences and comprehensions about this sacred landscape.

#### Conclusions:

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<sup>1</sup> El Maestro, or Maestro; always refers to Silo.

While the objective of the investigation was to see if there still existed fundamental experience and what had happened with all of this, it gradually became apparent that if there is fundamental internal experience practiced today in form of an organized asceticism as we know of, for us it was kept well hidden, unknown of or unspoken of. What did become clear was that we were in a complete culture based upon the internal energetical experience and this experience is still vital today in these peoples. What became of utmost interest was to see how a culture could continue transmitting the codes of a profound original experience through thousands of years since its origins.

Punta de Vacas  
March 2009<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This document is a final revision made in Parque Punta de Vacas in December 2011.

## Note

This particular investigation, which was proposed at the end of October, 2001 can be considered finished with this final report. It should be considered that this report is in no means a complete or exhaustive analysis of the complex and fascinating theme in question, but rather a compilation of diverse “samplings” taken from the Shaivite inspired culture in the state of Tamil Nadu in southern India.

The report is basically descriptive, organized in three parts: preparation, on-site investigation and brief observations and conclusions. It includes reconstruction's (not transcriptions) of the most illustrative interviews and also some photos have been included. There are no photos of the most internal parts of the temples because cameras are prohibited. A listing of the collected bibliography has been included that is available for future studies.

Some of the names and words in the Tamil language may be misspelled as they were heard in conversations, without textual reference, and have been reproduced phonetically.

April, 2002

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### Additional comments:

There are almost 10 years between carrying out this investigation and making this revision. Perhaps if written today several points would be different but I have chosen to leave it basically in it's original form because, on one hand, I still find valid the majority of the text and what I disagree with I have also left as this study is an historical document of what was understood in that moment.

In revising my notes I found a description of the Pongal Festival which was left out of the original document and now included in this revised version. This very popular harvest festival, that marks the winter solstice in southern India, has its roots in the beliefs and customs of the area of Tamil Nadu. Some say this festival is at least one thousand years old, others say much older and I tend to agree with this second opinion. In these descriptions one can intuit the vitality of an ancient spirituality with an energetical substratum in the ceremonies, codes, rituals and images of this event.

K. Rohn

Revised December, 2011

## Preparation

Objective: On site study to find the roots of the Energetic Discipline in its primitive state and verifying the actual state of what has become of this phenomenon. This phenomenon is undoubtedly the ancestral roots of our Discipline.

Criteria: Carry out the investigation in the south of India, in Madras and cities and places more to the south of Madras, concentrating in the practices of the Shaivites and Hindu Tantrists. The interest is in the experience and not theoretical.

### Steps of Preparation:

(November – December 2001)

- 1) Read books and materials in order to become familiar with the vocabulary and also to understand how the theme is being structured and presented to the West. This is the same scheme that we will find in India.
- 2) Clarify the indicators we will use to interpret what we will find.
- 3) Construct the “presentation” we will use in order to enter into different contacts and ambits.

### Conclusions

The majority of the Tantric literature circulating in the West has a Tibetan-Buddhist origin. We looked through bookstores and websites in both Spanish and English and there are hundreds of books and references to Tantric Yoga. In any case, with a small sampling and notes from talks given by el Maestro we have come up with the following:

### History:

Brief comments from non-official notes:

Concerning the experience of the profound spaces:

.....these ambits are covered over and cannot express themselves. They have always been seen in different cultures. Certain registers, almost sensorial, can be found there. Through the systems of asceticism they will appear to the practitioner. They are spaces that exist in all human beings and it is the place of profound inspiration. Those that have taken contact with these places and times and sacred spaces later externalized them and appeared, for example, “..if go into that woods God will appear, etc...”. This is the base of religiousness because these are other times and other spaces that effectively have nothing in common with what is habitual. This is the point that all the different asceticisms have aimed towards, with their different organizational and procedure systems that have tried to arrive there.

NY<sup>3</sup> is one of these paths. It has been seen in India and in China. In the pre-Vedic India

<sup>3</sup> NY is an abbreviation of “Nuestro Yoga”, original Spanish name for the Energetic Discipline.

it is possible to find the origins of some sexual rituals in the south of India. These rites have to do with the sacramental that later was channeled in to the Shaivas (you can make a parallel between Shiva and Dionysus of the Hellenic Civilization) and from there to the tantras. Different from the local definition that the Hindu's have, the Buddhists were expansionists and took tantra with them in their displacements to Tibet. There it merged with the Buddhist Tantric Bon which had a shamanistic root. In this way, we have said that the different forms and systems of asceticism will take one into these ambits and all of this is very linked to religiousness.....also we could say that the ceremonial puts into march these registers and the Shaivas put this into march.

For their part, the Indians have made distinctions in the different yoga's which are forms of asceticism (a) Bhakti yoga or yoga devotional and contemplative, (b) Jnana yoga or that of knowledge and (c) Raja yoga of asanas or postures and breathing. The tantric we locate in the Bhakti yoga. The tantric discipline is one of contemplation.

#### Literature:

1. The popular books written in the last 20 years in general have to do with the "occidental presentation" of Shiva. This is a combination of sexual practices, postures, magic rituals, (mantras – yantras), intoxicating substances, religious figures and gods (Shiva, Shakti) and current gurus or "how-to" manuals. In general, the authors of the books have been "invested" (by their own personal guru) with the right to disclose the secrets of the ages to the wider Western audience who will not have the opportunity, or need, to go to India and find a guru. In general the presentation includes an extensive context about Tibetan tantric yoga combined with references to alchemy, the Goddess, physics and a wide range of unrelated and confusing information. This is followed with recommendations of postures and explanations and illustrations of sexual rituals. There is no mention of process, little mentioned of internal registers and lots of reference to "imaginings".

In general, tantrism is treated as a "pleasurable, easy and mystical" way of quickly provoking a cosmic experience.

2. More serious studies (M. Eliade, different pre-70's Swamis) that treat the subject as a difficult and committed Path. Here the theme is how yoga, in its different forms (Bhakti, Hatha, Raja, Tantric, etc), has developed as the way to; understand the working of the senses and memory and levels of consciousness; to reach profound internal experience of the self; to liberate oneself from the suffering caused by the dependency on the body and the consciousness. The different difficulties and their particular manifestations that one will encounter in this path of spiritual liberation are explained or mentioned. The discussion is vigilant and registers are explained with more precision.

These books give historical, philosophical and psycho-physical context and treat yoga as a lifelong process of dedication.

3. Manuals of different Swami's on Kundalini energy and Hatha Yoga. Not tantric but specifically dedicated to the concentration and direction of the sexual energy through technically precise postures and registers.
4. The "Aphorisms of the Yoga-Sutra" of Patanjali was located as the one interesting book to use as a reference in Yoga. It is the first recompilation of various people done

in the 2-3 century before this era. Its lucid and clear ideas and statements can be considered as a reference of reflection to internal process.

Madrid (January)

Conversations with el Maestro

1. The “presentation” we will use is that of personally looking for internal experience. We are not doing a “study” or journalistic investigation.
2. The intention is to go to the places where the energetic expression has been the most intense, i.e. south of India.
3. It would be good to participate in the Shaivism ceremonies. Someone should be with me in order to translate what they are saying.
4. Go to meeting places, (clubs, ashrams, meditation centers, etc) where they read from their books and speak to the people. See what they are saying.
5. Visit the Gurus. There are different levels of Gurus, from the neighborhood Guru who attends to the needs of the family and the locality, fakirs and other levels of important Gurus.
6. Surely we will find the religion fragmented as this is what happens in all of the old cultures. We will find a “salad” of things, and that is the actual state of the religion.
7. We are interested in seeing what they recommend to someone who is trying to perfect themselves.
8. It is difficult to define what kind of “indicators” could be used to interpret the actual experience today. The necessary knowledge to accurately interpret the codes is not in my cultural experience, considering that all internal experience is translated through cultural images. To not worry about this.

India

1. Having had the previous opportunity of accompanying A. in her conversations with the Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka was a great help in being able to begin to locate myself in the Orient from the point of view of investigation. In any case, Sri Lanka has little to do with India, nor the Buddhists with the Shivites, but in some way it gave me more confidence to carry out the investigation alone in India.
2. The two occasions of celebrating the Ceremonies in Madras put me in the situation to work closely with the Indians in Madras and become a bit more familiar with their codes of relation. This helped me “locate” myself in terms of cultural codes and how to go forward.

## Investigation, February 4 –18, 2002

The on-site investigation in India can be divided into two stages.

Team: The team was formed with H., (Islandic who has been living in Chennai for 8 months and has a great respect and affection for the Indian people), and Raghavan (devote Shaiva who has ample knowledge of the religion and history of Tamil Nadu) acting as guide and translator.

The investigation can be divided into 2 stages.

### First Stage

#### Activities:

Chennai: Visit to the Shiva Temple, Rama Krishna Temple  
Interview with Dr. Krishnam, Director of Saiva Studies, University of Madras  
Interview with R. Muthukumara Swamy Director of Saiva Siddhanta Editorial  
Conversations with many individuals in the temples  
Conversations with different Shivita friends in Chennai

Madurai: Two visits to the Meenakshi Temple (Shakti Temple)  
Two visits to the Shakti Temple  
Visits to smaller, roadside temples  
Visit to Royal Palace

#### Interviews<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>4</sup> Clockwise, starting on upper left: (1) Dr. Krishnam; (2) Personal guru of R. Muthukumara Swamy; (3) R. Muthukumara Swamy and family; (4) Dr. Krishnam, Karen, Hannar and Ragavan; (5) Guru Sri-La-Sri KaSaivasi Dharumai Aadeenam



The conversations with both Dr. Krishnam and R. Muthukumara Swamy (see annex) left us with the following information:

- Saivism is a personal religious path without intermediaries.
- Saivism has four Schools of Shiva worship, the Tamil Nadu School being called the Saiva Siddhanta
- Saivism has a type of devotional asceticism divided into different steps that correspond to increasing internal experience and changes in conduct.
- The maximum aspiration is realization of which there is the intentional path that is built following the indicated steps but ultimately realization is decided upon by Shiva. A mixture of conscious work and religious rapture.
- Saivism considers the world of the senses as the base of the first steps of their asceticism and so nothing should be renounced, everything should be included. Internal progress and attentional capacity of the consciousness is considered "natural". In this way one can go "beyond" the senses into the non-representational experience of god or the mind.
- The Gurus are those who "know" the mysteries of this path, and they don't talk with anyone and are retired to the forest or the Himalayas. This is how things should be - no one expects them to talk to anyone. The world is in order with the Gurus in the mountains.
- Only the Gurus know about the chakras and the disciplined mobilization of energy.
- Doctrinarian knowledge is scarce at best as their holy books are not entirely translated into Tamil. There was a repetition of two names of those who are Tamil scholars,

(outside of themselves which were references also repeated by others) of which the two were not actually living in Tamil Nadu.

Interviews with devotees in the Temples and other sites



- The divinities, Shiva and Shakti, are not considered to be “inside” of the icon, but the temples are divine places of great power. In these places the gods have appeared or carried out important actions and so they are held in great respect.
- It is part of the “duty” of a person to honor the gods.
- Shiva will respond to sincere petitions through the actions of others, persons known or strangers or through situations. One also can used by Shiva to help others. One needs to be very attentive to everything that happens in one’s world because it is there that Shiva is acting in an indirect or direct manner.
- Shakti is the great mother, greater than Shiva because she is origin of everything. The Shakti has the greatest power and protects her people. She is energy and has multiple presentations and different manifestation in each village.

Temple Visits:



It was decided to visit the temples as the places of major congregation of Shaivas. We entered the temples with a double interest - to learn through simple observation of the people and the physical construction of the holy site and also trying to focus ourselves internally as that of a devotee, trying to register something of what the devotees were experiencing.

- The temples are the places for social gathering, religious offerings, ceremonies and festivals.
- The periphery of the temples are covered with statues of the pantheon, shaktis, gods, serpents, nature motifs of flora and fauna.
- The Shiva/Shakti temples have an internal "sactum sagrado" where the principal icon is housed. From there an unlimited amount of passages, rooms, courts, ponds, etc have been built, depending on the size of the temple.
- Large or small, the temples have an array of niches with icons of the Shivalingam or the Shakti where the devotee can make offerings or prayers to their god. In the open

- spaces they are full of people talking, sitting, sleeping, cooking, carrying out a multiplicity of activities with a relaxed atmosphere.
- The inner sanctums have icons of the Shivaligam or the Shakti, neither of which represented in their human form. The sanctums are dark, cave-like, always with fire, and offerings (sacrifices) of flowers, fruit, etc..
  - With the attitude of a devotee and performing the actions and rituals of the others one could register “the presence” of the deity in the inner sanctums. This was registered as either Peace or Force.

### Conclusions:

The first week was spent between interviews, reading, visits to Chennai temples and a short trip to Madurai, city dedicated to the Shakti. Our activity was basically trying to “find our feet” in the great “salad” of the southern Indian religious panorama. We quickly understood the meaning of “multiplicity” of the Indian culture – everything has many meanings, many names or, in other words, many different presentations and volume. In this act of trying to find an order and “a thread” in order to advance in the investigation made apparent the weight and complexity of an ancient culture. Hundreds of generations of human development in the same physical space has guaranteed that nothing is simple or flat.

There are literally thousands of temples in Tamil Nadu. Each village has at least one Shakti, Shiva and Vishnu temple. The temples are covered with an iconography that has nature images as their base, intertwined with multiple images of Shiva and the Shakti (Meenakshi, Parvati, Lakshmi, Kali, etc) , the complete pantheon plus the allegorical images of the royal families who financed their construction (later epochs, starting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century). The icons are representations of the exploits, fables and myths of the gods, of which everyone seems to know. The temples have a doctrinary base in their construction with different chambers and rooms, labyrinth like corridors and water ponds for cleansing. The great majority of icons are placed within a wall niche or small dark enclosure. The imagery goes externally from the most human, dynamic and sensuous, to the most internal which is immobile, primitive, potent and absorbing.

There are no obvious “authorities” controlling what happens in the temple, the people come and go and each one seems to know what they are doing. The most internal icons have “grukals”, members of the icon server caste, taking the offerings of the people to the icon and returning sacred ashes and flowers to the people and carrying out the icons ceremonies. The grukals carry out their temple function and apparently have no important spiritual significance for the people.

The Shivitas of Tamil Nadu are concentrated in the Saiva Siddhanta religious expression. The word Tantra for them is the name given to their Agamas, or holy books. Their principle form of Shiva worship is Bhakti Yoga - devotional dedication to a personal god. According to their religious process, when someone becomes dedicated to internal development they no longer need to visit the temples as they have discovered the god within and outside of themselves. While this comprehension seemed highly evolved for a religion, for the purpose of our investigation this created a complication because there didn't appear to be any “place” where we would be able to find those individuals who where seriously dedicated to a process of ascesis and could be having interesting internal experience. The general sensation was the more we learned about Saiva Siddhanta, the more

complex the landscape became in light of our interest of finding important internal experience.

## Second Stage

The second and last week was where we decided to advance with the information and intuitions that we had. Our information was that (1) the Gurus who knew the “mysteries” of internal process where in retreat and wouldn’t talk with us, (2) the Gurus who made propaganda were not real Gurus (3) those individual dedicated to sincere asceticism were not in the temples (4) the only outward sign of a wise or holy person was the congregation that formed around them, a “satsang” and the only satsang known was the Mutt. El Maestro had mentioned to visit Tiruchchirappalli so we decided to visit the Mutt and the city of Tiruchchirappalli and to follow our guide’s advise to visit Chidambaram and the Cauvery Valley.

At this point we had more or less concluded that if there was fundamental internal experience in the South of India it was not recognizable to us. But, what was recognizable was how a whole culture had developed upon an ancient fundamental energetical experience. This was obvious for the external images, values and a certain logic in their form of asceticism. We decided that it was very interesting to continue trying to understand different facets of the actual expression of this fundamental experience as we directed ourselves to the only “clues” of possible interesting people that we had.

### Activities

Chennai	Participation in an important festival in the Shiva Temple Visit to the National Art Museum – Iconography Rooms Visit to private home temple/altar Interview with local neighborhood Guru Interview with Guru and ashram Further conversations with R. Muthukumara Swamy Conversations with different followers of Gurus “top”
Chidambaram	Visit to the “Ether” Shiva Temple Visit to the Shakti Temple Visit to private home temple/alter
Valley of River Cauvery	Visit to the Aadeenam Mutt and Shakti Temple Interview with Guru Sri-La-Sri KASAIVASI DHARUMAI AADEENAM Visit to village Shakti Temple Visit to bronze foundery
Tiruchchirappalli	Visit to “Water” Shiva Temple Visit to important Mariama/Shakti Temple Visit to major Vishu Temple Conversation with follower of neighborhood Guru

Interviews:



The first interview was with a neighborhood Guru who was completely dedicated to gain immortality for himself and his family through the efforts to become invisible. This was carried out through a special diet and devotion to a Shaiva who had “disappeared”, hence transforming himself into an invisible nature.

The second interview was with His Holiness Sri La Sri KaSaivasi Dharumai Aadeenam head Guru of one of the three organizational bodies of Saiva Siddhanta. (see annex). His interest in our visit was seen in the length of the interview granted and his offering of lodging and further conversations. He is one of their three principle religious and political leaders.

The last interview was with the personal Guru of R. Muthukumara Swamy. This was prearranged in the ashram of the Guru. The whole ashram was lined up and waiting for us on the road in front of the Ashram. The interview, carried out in English, was arranged with a professional photographer and tape recorders (organized by them). We asked one question and the Guru spoke without stopping for over an hour – a mixture of religious fervor, genetics and physics. He later did several personal exhibitions of his profound internal states which were unintelligible for us. Later he did the laying on hands (while we were standing and drinking soft drinks) while the photographer took pictures. There was a large painting of him on the wall and the paintings of different Shakti, all had their breasts covered with bikini-like clothing.

Interviews with devotees

This was a repetition of the first week with the exception of the followers of the Guru's "top", those who make a lot of propaganda and are directed to the West. These followers had the fervor of those who try to convince others, in contrast to the "normal" Shaivas who portrayed a certain serenity, joy and intelligence in relation to their devotional life.

Town temple and foundry visits

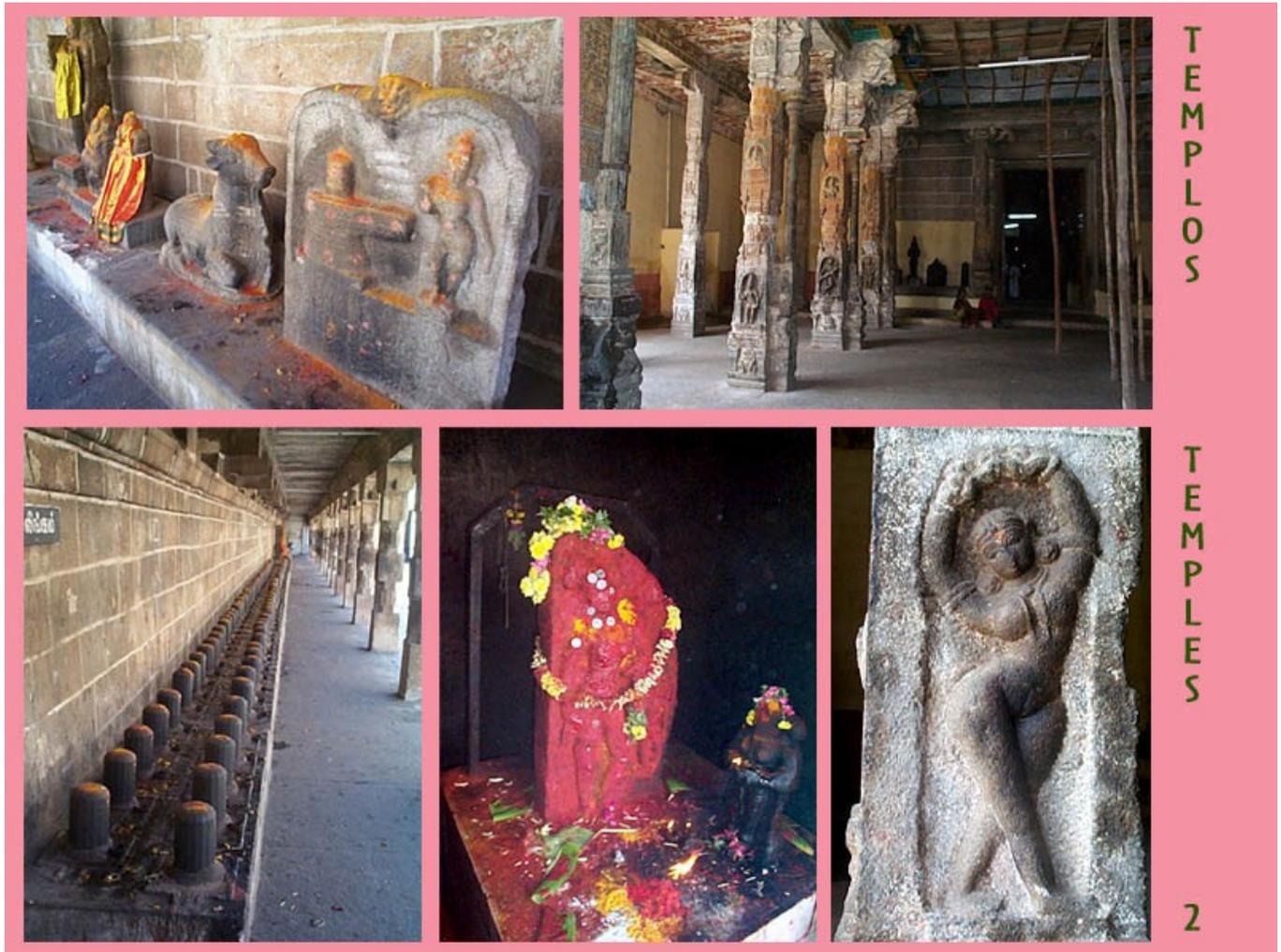


We had the opportunity to be invited into two different homes of devotee Shivitas and allowed to enter into their home temple/altars. These were complete rooms, located in the center of the house plan. These individuals did their devotions for one hour every morning, the male head of the house beginning and later following the other family members. They were filled with diverse icons, flowers, fire, etc., miniature reproductions of the temples. Considering their explanations, their daily devotion is carried out in a scientific, organized way, each gesture and object charged with meaning.

We also had the opportunity to visit different working sites of the Sabhti, the caste of temple builders and icon makers. This was very interesting to see the process used,

seeing the organization with has its own form of Masters, Appendices and is passed through the family from generation to generation. They are located immediately outside of the major temples and in one village they occupied a whole sector of the town. We were able to watch them working icons in metal (bronze and other metals) and in cement.

### Temple Visits



Chibambaram is a major center of Shiva worship, housing one the five important “element” Shiva temples, in this case the element of “Ether”. This temple is also a major Shakti temple and the *grukals* are presented with both feminine and masculine attributes, following the presentation of Shiva in his androgynous form. In this temple we participated in the ceremony of experiencing the “form-without-form” of Shiva. This consisted of gathering the people in an enclosure in front of the inner sanctum, with the ringing of huge bronze bells and chanting. There is a tremendous noise and great anticipation of the people. In one moment the *grukals* take away a wooden wall covering where there is a space beside the Shivalingam that is full of icons and in the back a wall covered with leaves of gold. It is in this space that one should experience the form-without-form. This lasts one minute and then they replace the wall.

Before leaving Chidambaram we went to visit the local Shakti temple, as according to our guide one cannot leave without giving honor to Shakti. This was a small temple, with the Shakti in different forms and Naga, the serpent as a main icon. Here is represented Naga creating the Shakti and the energy of the Shakti creating the gods Shiva and Brahma with his many forms. Here a strong internal commotion was provoked, connecting with profound internal contents was activated and experienced by the investigator and the register of being in a sacred space was experienced by all of the team.

We later passed through the valley of the River Cauvery, going through innumerable villages, where the community was in full rice harvest. This activity, with all of the people doing their work went connecting us with a sensation of being in another time, closer to the Neolithic than the virtual. Our first visit was to the birthplace village of our guide who wanted to visit the temple of his Mother. This was very interesting to see the importance of this acting in our guide who explained that in this Shakti temple was the place of worship of his mother, grandmother, etc for many generations. He explained that the Shakti in this temple was his real mother, this was going to pay homage to The Mother that transcends the biological ties. In this temple the grukul was an old woman and our guide explain that normally in the villages the Shakti temples are taken care of by woman who serve the needs of the community, the local "psychologist".

Visit to the Shakti Temple of the Mutt Dharumai Aadeenam (see annex).

Tiruchchirappalli was the last stop on this travel, a city which houses the great Shiva Water Temple. This is an immense temple with multiple internal altars. Here what was new was to see women stand in front of certain Shakti images and sing to them. We also observed what the people did with the milk that was used to wash the Shakti and later comes out of the side of the altar. We spoke with the people involved in a marriage ceremony and followed the ceremonial procession of carrying milk to a certain deity.

We visited the Mariama Temple, an important temple as one should honor the Mother before leaving a city or town. The temple was filled to capacity with hundreds of people making their offerings. There were mounds of coconuts, bananas, flowers, fires everywhere, people curing themselves on the floor, people completely covered with ashes, in short, everything. This was the most intense congregation of people we had encountered. There wall-to-wall people with a strange general feeling of internal concentration and calm.

### **Conclusions of the second stage**

The Head Guru Sri-La-Sri of the Mutt provoked reverential respect in our Shaiva friends but through his questions and the general tone of the men waiting for an audience we would say that he is both a political and spiritual leader.

The Saiva Siddhanta, being a religion based on a personal relationship with the god, gives rise to free interpretation which translates in all kinds of original theories and forms of devotion. None of which seems to surprise anyone.

The smaller Shakti temples were much more populated, proportionally, than the major Shiva temples.

## General Observations

The initial religious activity was in the caves where the Buddhist culture was developed (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century). Much later the Brahmans brought the temples out into the valleys to become visible centers of political power and influence and around which grew up the major cities. These different phases in their trajectory can be seen in the preservation of the cave-like (dark, rock niches, illuminated by fire, symbolic forms) surroundings of the most important images to the most external images of gods and heroes “in the world” (human forms, flora and fauna, political allegories, etc).

The “doctrine” of the Saiva Siddhantas is a mixture of original Mother worship, traces of Buddhist orientation, dominance of Brahmanic influence and organization, and the originality of Bhakti Yoga which could have its roots as the original spirituality of the agrarian mother worship. In the iconography traces of all of their history can be seen.

Bhakti Yoga is a devotional, contemplative form of worship. The deity can vary, but the experience of contemplation can be seen in the temples in the quiet relation of the people with their God-icons; in the peaceful and joyful atmosphere within the temples; in a basic esteem for life in general (75% vegetarians) and in the high value placed upon service to others.

The Saiva Siddhanta is a local form of Shiva worship basically contained within the Tamil people (70 million). There has not been any effort to export this religion as there are very few books published in other languages.

Speaking with a few people in the Shiva temples, the prayers are repeated in Sanskrit, a language which the people do not speak.

In the Shakti temples there were prayers written in Tamil on the walls of which the people repeat. (for example: “Meenakshi! Come live inside of my body, inside of my heart and inside of my mind and accompany me)

The Saiva Siddhanta places hymns and mantras as a principle source of the devotional activity, of which we saw very little evidence.

The original energetical experience strongly comes through in the cultural representations from the icons, temples, clothing and a certain feminine value that still reigns in this people (every female is a potential Mother, representation of Shakti).

## General Considerations

The major world religions have a founder, a message, sacred books, priestly castes, and a basic form of organization where everyone is accounted for. There are right ways and wrong ways of thinking and doing and all of this is closely debated and watched over. This is not the case in Shiva worship.

In the case of Shiva/Shakti worship, there is a fundamental energetical experience but there is no record of particular individuals in its roots. It speaks of sacred experience as a widespread cultural experience, which over time has gone organizing itself, creating doctrine as it was incorporated into other religious forms or Schools (Brahmanic, Buddhist,

Jainist). It is prevedic, pre Buddhist, a strong religiousness that could not be denied as other forms entered into the local culture. Shiva and Shakti worship have developed different lines, or Schools, of devotion in India, the Saiva Siddhanta being particular to the South. The Buddhists in the South took this original Tantric experience and exported it with their missions into the North of India and Tibet (3-4<sup>th</sup> century), creating a vast tantric movement that influenced other forms of religiousness in the North. As the Buddhists were eliminated as a social force in the South, it appears that this experience was also eliminated. The Brahmanic caste tried to manipulate the religiousness of these peoples, placing the Shakti as the consorts or wives of the main gods of Shiva and Vishnu, but in the actual devotional practices of the people it is the Shakti who is still at the head of their pantheon.

What has come out in the South as their form of Shiva/Shakti worship is a devotional and contemplative line of worship. While not an energetical asceticism as we understand it, there is certainly a rich and fulfilling internal experience if the steps and practices explained to us are followed.

**Possible Hypothesis:**

In the first stages of devotion, the devotee concentrates his devotional forces towards his deity and its representations. These are external manifestations of his internal representations. This contemplation is able to quiet his internal state and increased contemplation and concentration can begin to produce an altered state of consciousness, experienced as religious experience. If this is combined with the internal repetition of Mantras or the singing of hymns, this combination between increased presence of his cardiac plexus, plus internal phonetic vibrations, plus an increasing altered state of consciousness will definitely produce an important internal commotion. If this internal commotion, (probable trance) is directed through the copresence of finding the experience of god within himself, then it is highly possible to reach into sacred internal spaces. If these experiences are increased in the more advanced stages of devotion and the person looks for environments of minimal distraction (community of satsang and eventually alone) then surely important internal experience would be reached.

In the Water Temple this process was manifest by observing the multiple environments and peoples behavior inside the temple. On one hand in the passage ways and gardens there was relaxed and multitudinous social activity with a lot of people joyfully and noisily visiting the different icons and making their vows and rituals. But there also could be seen in the darker, "less traveled paths" with the labyrinth of the temple devotees totally concentrated in their spiritual practices oblivious to everything else.

This process is structured here as a hypothesis and it would be very interesting to go deeper into their religious experience.

## **Final Conclusions**

The objective of the investigation was to see if there still existed fundamental experience today in the south of India understanding this as an organized ascesis. Throughout the time of the investigation it became apparent that if there was fundamental internal experience today it was well hidden from us, unknown or unspoken of. In other words, we cannot verify it's existence.

At the same time what unfolded to us was that we were in a complete culture based upon the internal energetical experience. What became of utmost interest was to see how a culture could continue transmitting the codes of a profound original experience, separate in time by thousands of years. The investigation began to observe how the art and religious representations, the peoples form of devotional experience, customs, aspirations, internal complexity and personal treatment all spoke of a certain internal sensibility that could be summarized as peaceful, respectful with a profound, living religious sentiment.

## Annex File Pongal

Pongal Festival (Rice Harvest)

January 14 - 16 – Tamil Nadu

These are notes taken in a conversation with 2 friends in Madras, one Christian and the other Hindu.

This festival is one of the most important festivals in the South. The word pongal means to “spill over or run over” such as what happens in the pot when boiling rice and how one’s life should be, something that “overflows” the container. The festival lasts three days:

The first day is called “Kani Pongal” which means “to see”. This day everyone cleans out their home and whitewash the walls. Everything that is old and not useful anymore is thrown out and make a huge fire. The cleansing and the fire are to “clean the heart and see reality more clearly”. On this day the girls can go around freely and do whatever they want.

In Madras they make a huge fire with 2000 litres of ghee and a wick that is 30 meters across. The fire is built on the highest hill and it burns continually for 3 days. More than a million people participate in the lighting of the wick.

The second day is to give thanks for the harvest and for all the micro organisms and all of the things (soil, bugs, etc) that have given their life in order to produce rice. Rice is cooked and while cooking it overflows the pot. There are special pots or people dedicate their pots to Shiva, so this overflow comes from Shiva. This “overflow or rice milk” is the symbol of the abundance of life.



People cooking “pongal rice” in a temple with the pots decorated as Shiva.

The third day is for honoring the bulls. To honor the bulls they are bathed, painted and decorated with flowers, etc. Then they paraded through the streets of the town. The biggest and most vital bull is chosen and let loose to run through the streets freely. All the men that feel “strong as bulls and whom are very courageous” try to jump on the bull’s back and ride him, controlling him with his horns.

Reflection: Between the fire/bulls/riding the bulls/ freedom for the girls/ceremonies and celebrations...this description sounds like it could also be a festival in Crete.

## Annex Interviews

### Dr. Krishnam, Chennai

Interview: Dr. Krishnam, Faculty Head of the Saiva Siddhanta Studies at the University of Madras. Present: H., Raghavan, Dr. Krishnam, y Karen.

This conversation was organized by Raghavan. He explained to Dr. Krishnam that we were doing research about important religions and personal religious experience in India. Dr. Krishnam granted us all the time we wanted and requested that we return before leaving India. The interview lasted 2 hours.

To start with we explained that we were very interested in the Shivaism religion, that we had been reading various and diverse documents, visiting temples and speaking with people. As westerners, there were some things hard for us to understand. So, we were not experts, but people interested in this theme, primarily from the point of view of personal experience.

This is a summary of the answers given. The conversation was very active with many questions and answers coming and going. The answers given by Dr. Krishnam have been reconstructed based on the notes of K and H.

**K:** Could you explain the basic ideas of Saivism and what important differences have been developed by the Saiva Siddhanta?

**Dr.K:** There are 4 Schools of Saivism, the Kashmir, Saiva Advaita, Vira Saivisha and Saiva Siddhanta. The Kashmir school is located in the North, the Vira in Karnataka and Bangalore (South), the Advaita is a philosophical school dedicated to knowing the Truth through wisdom and knowledge.

The Saiva Siddhanta is based on the Agamas or the Tantras. They are 28 in number and are Dravidian. The Saiva Siddhanta uses the 28 Agamas plus the experience of the Tamil saints, which are 63 in number and 4 being the most prominent. The first 2 of these appeared in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, another in the 8<sup>th</sup> and another in the 9<sup>th</sup>. This school initiated Bhakti, a devotional line of Shiva. It works with the emotional aspect to become god, to find the Truth. It takes ideas from the Gita and the Vedas but uses the Agamas as scriptures.

Each Agamas or Tantras is divided into 4 parts.

The first concerns icon worship. This considers that it is very difficult for the mind to grasp the abstract image of god. So it is necessary to place an image into to make a bridge to god, the icon works as a bridge between the person and god. The God is worshipped in the temple, the image is the god.

The second stage is when one is able to perceive the formless god through the form. In this stage one goes beyond the idol, or form, and finds god. If the devotee goes daily to the temple, slowly and over time the concentration on the image will naturally go past the icon. If the devotee has a real and sincere need to find god, he will go past the form and encounter the formless god which is everywhere.

The third stage is that of yoga. Here there is no need to continue to go to the temple.

There is the realization, based on experience, that god is within, one is able to see god within. This is a natural development of more devotion and more concentration.

The fourth stage is the Jnana., that of knowledge. Here the devotee sees god within and outside. God is everywhere. This stage can only be attained through god's grace.

**Q:** Why do you use the word “see” when referring to the experience?

**A:** This means to see internally, to use intuition, to perceive God.

**Q:** How does one know in which stage they are in?

**A:** The development depends on the maturity of the person. If one is intelligent they will go to the temple, and if they are more intelligent they will go past the icon. If they are really intelligent they will leave the temple as they experience god within. And in stage four they have maximum intelligence.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage the person demonstrates love and compassion. This is felt by others, is recognizable. This happens automatically with the experience of god. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage god still has form, you see god in the world. One of our saints says: God is basically formless and nameless but lets give him a 1,000 names and celebrate!

**Q:** Who helps a person in their advancing? The priests?

**A:** No, the priests do nothing. This is a personal relationship, each one with their god. One is guided by their own questions. The questions need to be asked in an experiential way. Devotional questions...are am I happy with my life, what I am doing with my life, if I am not happy with this world and want to search for something else, etc. One has to prepare oneself and this is done by the questions one asks themselves, through devotion you prepares yourself. An ordinary man will think that he does everything while the intelligent man will know that god does everything.

**Q:** Is the internal progress something that each one constructs or is each persons' goal an ecstatic experience?

**A:** This is a natural progress and also about ecstatic experience. When one encounters god, if god happens, then one needs to celebrate, to dance and sing. The experience of god gives infinite energy and we need to celebrate!

**Q:** Could you explain what you mean when you speak of Tantra?

**A:** Tantra means “path”. This was a way not accepted by the Vedas. Here we have 2 attitudes. In Saiva Siddhanta we experience the worldly things, enjoying pleasure and through this one attains the Godhead. The Saiva way is not about renunciation of the world. You go through the experience and come out of it knowing god. We don't renounce anything...you can drink or whatever you want. You attend to the experience, go through it and come out. One should keep one's mind focused on god, nothing is to be denied.

*We keep awareness alive.* You don't have to fight or struggle with the world, you are aware and don't become lured. Awareness is natural....I am talking with you and also hearing the birds outside of the window. I attend to the experience.

The other attitude is that of the Buddhists and Jainist. The attitude of the Buddhists is to negate the world. They don't become lured through the strength of the mind, through knowledge. It is another way.

Our attention is not concentrated like the Buddhists. Our awareness is simultaneous attention. When you are simultaneously attending to the world then your mind becomes quiet. When you feel god is everywhere, you naturally lose interest in some things.

**Q:** Do the Saiva Siddhanta saints go to the forest?

**A:** No they all, except for one, were married, they enjoyed their life. We do not renounce anything...just lose interest in some pleasures. It is natural. A saint does not renounce the world, they form a Satsang, a community of Truth. This means that people begin to gather around this person because they feel their enlightenment.

**Q:** Are their saints today?

**A:** Maybe they exist, I don't know. The gurus know about the Saiva Tantras but they are difficult to find....I don't know if they exist or not.

The point is not about the guru but about what do I want to do with my life. The guru will come, internally or externally. It is not important if the guru is internal or external, with or without form. Sincere questions and search will always find answers. There is a saying that the guru will find the seeker....you never know who he will be.

**Q:** In my readings, they mention yantras, mudras and mantras as in relation to Tantra. Could you explain these?

**A:** Yes, in Tantra all of these can be used.

Mantras are special words or sounds. They are divine worlds that create vibrations and change the body chemistry. The way a person thinks and feels has to do with their body chemistry. The mantras can change bad into good. They have to be pronounced correctly and here a guru is needed to teach one.

Yantras are geometrical forms that have the capacity to grasp divine energy. They are used to energize yourself. In the temples, under every icon there is a yantra. (Do the people see this?) No, only the temple builders know about this. The temple builders are a caste, they pass their knowledge on from generation to generation. The temple builders are those who have mastered the Agamas.

**Q:** What is the most important thing for a devotee Saivita in order to perfect themselves?

**A:** Love is the most important. Love of god. The person loving god will have love for everybody. As love develops, wisdom develops. Only people of love can be very wise. Wisdom is knowing how to remove the obstacles that prevent me from loving others. Also love is easy, everyone is capable of it.

**Q:** How does Saivism relate to the world we are living in today?

**A:** Today many people don't understand the spirit. They think going to the temple is about resolving their personal problems. They are motivated by achievement. They compete with others and this makes violence.

**Q:** What is the root of violence?

**A:** The "I", myself, my family, my religion. This is selfishness. I think I am important, the world becomes reduced to my things. The sign that someone has love for others is that they are generous. Love is sharing. Generosity is the sign.

**Q:** Why do you think a new school of Saivism was born in Tamil Nadu?

**A:** The Dravidian culture has always had two themes, love and war. In the 1st century the Buddhists and Jainists came to Tamil Nadu. Before them there existed some kind of god like Shiva, but without a name. (And the Goddess?) Yes, there have also been found certain idols of the goddess. When the Buddhists and Jainists came they were organized religions, they had leaders, scriptures and here there was nothing, so the people adopted these forms. But they were alien to the people. They had no god. These two religions preached Knowledge, but without god and without Love. The Tamil people valued love. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when the Shiva saints arrived they had a god, Shiva, who was similar to their original god. It was similar with the Shakti, Shiva became the name of their original god. They spoke about love so this was easily adopted. The people recognized this and a mass movement was formed. Buddhism and Jainism were eliminated as it had been a contradictory religion for the people. So the Saiva Siddhanta arose because of the

pressure felt by Jainism and Buddhism. They took it from the Vedic tradition and joined hands with the Brahmanic tradition to fight the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. A factor was also that the saints spoke the local dialect whereas the scriptures of buddism and Jainism were in Sanskrit. Some people claim the Saiva worship has it's origin in south India.

**Q:** Is the devotion to the Sakti through Paravti or Meenatchi, the family, have to do with this value of love in the Tamil people?

**A:** Yes, Shiva and Parvati have to do with the Vedic tradition, the Brahams traditionally include god. Vishnuism also celebrates love.

Our last questions were about people, places and books that would be interesting. We emphasized that he had given us all the information we needed and we were only interested in continuing talking about the experience of people. He referred us to a Tamil language scholar who is a orthodox and devote Saivita, who would also know others. He directed us to the Saiva Siddhanta press. We went immediately and found the few books existing in English and also speaking with the owners of the bookstore they offered to put us in contact with devotees. Furthermore the owners offered to get us photocopies of the all important Tantras in English, as they don't exist in print today..

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**R. Muthakumara Swarmi, Chennai**

Synthetic notes taken in the first conversation with R. Muthakumara Swarmi, Managing Director, The South India Saiva Siddhantha Works Publishing Society. Present were H. and K. We were treated very well, invited for coffee.

**K:** Could you explain to us about Saiva Siddhanta and internal experience?

**M:** When you look at Saivism you see three aspects – the rituals, the sacrifices (puja) and the development of the mind (yoga). Yoga is taking the internal experience up to the mind. The jnana (knowledge) can only be had through yoga. The Saivan is a personal relationship with the Buddha, with the Lingham within ourselves. The mantra is the form of Saivam worship, inner worship. You chant the mantra for 15 minutes everyday. The highest level of development involves 2-3 hours of chanting and prayer hymns daily.

**K:** Who and where are the Yogis who dedicate to yoga?

**M:** Those on the Shidda path in a higher stage are the Yogi's. They are able to convert air into food. They never spend energy. They don't talk. You can only find them in the mountains or in the forest. They prefer to go there because there are no distractions. They have a very high philosophy and a perfume will come out of their body from their high work.

A person who wants to dedicate to Yoga will need to concentrate only in that. He will have an initial initiation with his guru and then will have repeated initiations over many years for the different stages. It is very rare that a Yogi will explain about his personal experience. They very rarely talk. There is a book. The Autobiography of a Yogi, do you know it? In this book he explains in great detail his experience and this is very rare.

The path of Yoga is the non-attachment. You leave the senses one by one. You leave all of your attachments. You even leave your attachment to god. Only then, through the non-attachment can you reach realization. In one moment you are not interested in practices and cut off all contact with others. Even from God you should cut off your affection. You need to stand on your own feet, without dependence on anything.

**Q:** If each one is to look for solitude and no-dependence why the Satsang?

**A:** The Satsang helps as an environment. As an individual you are disturbed by many things. The interest to go to the Satsang is to pray. You stay there and concentrate. The Satsang is a ring, only together with others inside the ring, same action, same vision. You can't stop with the Satsang. The Satsang is useful in the first step. Here there are others. The second step is Solitude. Only having occasional interchange with others who are in solitude. Here are the Masters and many questions should only be answered by the Masters. There are many false Masters. In Tiromool there is a big prayer hall, big temple, it is famous for its Masters. It is in the Kerala State and there they worship the Mother Ooma.

**Q:** How can you find a guru?

**A:** It is very difficult. There are the religious Mutts, the Satsang, but there you can't find a Guru. It is more dedicated to organization. I have a Guru. He is retired from the Air Force. We are a small group of people and he teaches us how to advance. We meet, it is relaxed, 30 minutes of songs then he gives the lessons. He gives practices, initiation and has written 5-6 books. He is around 60 years

old, has been meditating for 15-20 years and proves his advances by floating on water (shows pictures of floating on water).

**Q:** What about the possibility of us having photocopies of the Agamas/Tantras?

**A:** It is not possible because of the 18 Tantras only 3 have been translated into Tamil and of these there is a brief translation into French and it is in the library of Ponchicherry. There are some sutras from one of the Tantras in English and I will be sure a copy gets to you. The Saivan Siddhanta Tantras were written in Granta script, later translated into Nagru script. A few have been fully translated into Tamil The french published the Nagra script.

I will arrange for you to meet my Guru on Saturday morning.

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### **Guru Sri-La-Sri KaSaivasi Dharumai Aadeenam, Dharumai Aadeenam Mutt**

Visit to the Dharumai Aadeenam Mutt in the town of MAILADUTHURAVIA in Tamil Nadu. Raghavan, H., brother –in-law of Raghavan, car driver and K. This is one of the three Mutts through which the Saiva Shiddhanta religion is organized. The Mutt is an extensive compound that includes temples, the “satsang”, archives, schools, a university, hospital, agricultural activities and, above all, is the residence of the Guru. It was founded around 800 years and has been the residence of the Guru since that time.

We arrived unannounced around 4:00pm to the Mutt and for some unexplained reason a monk indicates for us to go immediately to another part of the Mutt where His Holiness Sri-La-Sri KaSaivasi Dharumai Aadeenam has begun his daily prayer rituals. We hurry and arrive to a temple where the first chamber houses two alters, one with the Shivalingam and another at an 90 degree angle of the Shakti-Parvati. His Holiness is conducting his daily worship, with 3-4 other monks, 3 musicians and we incorporated ourselves behind the monks. We are accepted, follow through the rituals, receive the holy ashes. Then H. H. Goes into another very large room where in the middle there is a large statue of a Shakti, on a raised platform, colorful ribbons and cloths around the base and off to the side there are two cows. HH goes through the rituals with the Shakti, passes us holy ashes and leaves and then offers bananas to the cows. Then we leave the building, go down a small paved street and HH stops before two huge doors. The doors open and there is a fully painted and ceremonially clothed elephant, who begins to “trumpet”. HH does another round of rituals, us included and then offers bananas to the elephant. Then we return to the initial room where the Shivaligam is bathed in milk, then the Shakti bathed in milk and redressed and more sacred ashes. We finish and we follow HH and entourage to this chambers, behind the central library. While we are walking the word is passed to HH that we would like an audience and he returns the word saying that he will receive us.

We are taken into an assembly room, the three walls with small writing desks, men sitting and talking and writing and others waiting for an audience. Before this room was the antechamber, with paintings of previous gurus, and sacred objects. HH chambers are entered through this room and there are more men waiting for their audience.

Immediately upon entering the assembly room a small rug for us to sit on, then later HH sent an orange to me on a plate and we were invited to visit the library. In the library we were shown all the books in English and I asked to buy all of them (80 cents). The 2 library workers were very excited we were there. They should me the list of all the books in English, which covered a large variety of themes, especially science and comparative religions. We returned and waited. We asked to use the bathroom which was a problem because they didn't have facilities for women. They sent me to the university where both boys and girls were in class. The teachers were monks. After waiting around 1.5 hours we were granted the interview.

#### Interview

We had prepared 2 questions as not knowing the amount of time we would have and it appeared that 10 minutes would be about it. HH received us in his receiving chambers/office. He was sitting at his desk and invited us to sit on a rug on the floor where his translator also sat with us. Upon entering Raghavan told us just to do what he would

do, as he kissed the floor we followed suit. There were also various people in the corners, half hiding behind the book cases, watching and enjoying all of this. As the time went by more people entered and when we finished all the people who were waiting outside where crowded into the doorway to watch.

The audience lasted about 1 hour 20 minutes. We all were sitting on the rug and HH had his own translator sitting behind Raghavan which was our translator. Raghavan gave a long preamble in Tamil as to who K. Was and why we were there. The only words understandable were "Ghandi" "Krishnam" (Univ. De Madras).

**HH:** Why haven't you come with philosophers and scholars as your translators?

**K:** We have come here with questions about personal experience and I have come with my friends.

(This was followed by a long conversation between HH, R., and the translator.)

**K:** The Shiva worship is very old and the Saivan Siddhanta is a very old and powerful religion. We have been speaking with many people and feel there is much to be learned about internal experience here in Tamil Nadu. We have learned that a devotee applies the devotion in himself and dedicates to his own advancement towards liberation. Also, through the Grace of God, one can have another kind of experience. What is the internal experience that a devotee aspires to have?

**HH:** This experience is Indescribable. Without having this experience you cannot talk about it.

**K:** What is the most important thing a devotee can do to perfect themselves?

**HH:** There are seven steps to perfection: 1. Give away all worldly goods; 2. eat only vegetables and fruit; 3. Clean Body; 4. Clean mind 5. Dedicate to keep Bhakti in Yoga; 6. Concentrate your mind on God through devotion. 7. Reach God

**K:** How should one understand Yoga?

**HH:** Yoga is to concentrate your mind on God. You should only think about God.

**K:** How can you keep your concentration on God?

(Translator answered, he did not translate the question): It is automatic. If you dedicate your prayer and devotion to God then it is automatic that your attention is always there.

**K:** I would like to concentrate but my mind wanders. How do you practice the simple and simultaneous attention that we have been told about?

**HH:** (he understood the question, which was translated, but did not answer)

At this point HH began a string of questions about my personal situation: Do you have children? How old? Where you born? What state? What city? How many people live there? How many people lived there when you were born?

**K:** answers

**HH:** In India the majority of the people live in villages. The scholars, doctors, everyone lives in a village. India is a village. Many go to work in the cities but live in the villages. In your country they live in the city and go to work in the village. It is the opposite.

**HH:** more questions. Are your earrings silver? What are they called? Do the women in your country always wear earrings like that? Do you wear bracelets? Necklaces? Ankle bracelets? Nose rings? He then asked to see my profile.

K. Answers

**HH:** A women should always wear gold on the upper half of her body and silver on the lower half. With holes in the ears and nose the gold enters the body when you bathe and purifies you. The ear holes help the vision and the nose holes help to have good breathing. This influences the good qualities of the person. They are like the acupuncture holes. The gestures in worship of Ganesh (hitting the forehead and cheeks) activate nerves. There are 72,000 nerves in the body. All of this is good for your health.

**HH:** You should wear gold and diamonds. You are like an Indian woman...your gestures, your way of speaking, your tone of voice and your face, your knowledge and questions. What does your husband do? What does your son do?

This conversations was very relaxed and K. Made a joke that he liked a lot. More and more people began to gather in the corners. HH was having a good time. His translator told me that Shiva had brought me to them and they were trying to find out why.

**HH:** Do you have a political party? Do you have political influence?

**K:** I am a member of a very small political party that has no influence but allows people to express their opinion.

**HH:** What do you think of India? What do you think of the Indians as compared to your people?

**K:** I like India very much. In India you can feel the thousands of years of culture acting in the people and pushing the country forward. My country has a very short history. The people have a great internal need for meaning.

**HH:** What do you think about the Indians that live in poor conditions as compared to your people?

**K:** I think that even though there are very poor conditions in India I feel the people have more dignity individually and as a people than in my country.

**HH:** What do you think about the 11 of September, the Twin Towers.

**K:** It was not surprising but it was shocking anyway.

**HH:** What do you think about terrorism? How can it be stopped?

**K:** Terrorism is a form of violence that will continue to grow. It is found everywhere. I don't know how to stop terrorism but at least there are things that need to be done that could help. The USA needs to remove its troops and bases from foreign territories. This would lower certain tensions. The UN is now without prestige but it is the only organized body that we have to begin to talk and communicate amongst the countries. This could be revitalized.

**HH:** Politicians are dirty and greedy and they won't allow the people to live in peace of mind. They are morally destroying the people. Since 1947 India has gained independence but the people don't have self control, they don't have discipline so it doesn't work. What do you think about Bush?

**K:** He is not an intelligent man and is not interested in dialog with other cultures.

**HH:** What do you think about Clinton?

**K:** More or less the same as Bush, but he was more “hollywood” and also tried to increase dialog.

**K:** Please, your HH, I have come very far to ask YOU questions (risas)!

**K:** How is it possible that after 3000 years of religious development only 50 years of political independence can destroy everything?

**HH:** A little poison can destroy everything. We are building up good qualities little by little and all can be destroyed in one day. It takes along time to climb a mountain, step by step, and you can fall into an abyss in one second. People today are bad. It will take time for the people to change.

**K:** But with thousands of years of development...

**HH:** There was a time in the 1950's where the political parties began to say that there was no God. These people wore black and went around the villages saying there was no God and now it was politics that was important. At this same time, in one village, a man, P.T. Rajan began to take the icon of Iyappa around from village to village singing about Vishnu. These followers of Vishnu also wore a black dhoti. Many people did not know about God, many began to worship again, even drunkards. In this way, in the confusion of the color black, the balance came back to the community.

**K:** Given the context of all the situation we have spoke of, do you think people should dedicate themselves to good actions or meditation?

**HH:** We cannot ourselves struggle with these big processes. God himself will select some people to get rid of the evil things and the good qualities will grow again in the community. I think someone will be selected by God to help grow the good qualities.

After this HH gave us presents, fruit, books, flowers, etc. I asked to take his picture. He had a long conversation with Raghavan and his translator which was not translated. We thanked him for his kindness and we left. Upon leaving we realized that the back of the room had filled up with all the people that were initially outside.

As we left in the car Raghavan told me that we had been invited to spend the night there and accompany HH the next day to another temple. R said we could not do that so he arranged for us to visit his Shakti temple close by (30 min.) where the monks were waiting for us. When we arrived they gave us a special tour, did special ceremonies for us in the inner sanctum with music, drums, presented K with the ceremonial cloth and other gifts and tied a ceremonial cloth around the head of H symbolizing that we had become accepted as devotees of Shakti. Upon leaving we were taken to kiss the ground before the Shakti and then served a dinner by the monks. All this finished at 10:00pm.

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