Introduction

1.1 Text and Context

‘Existential-state-of-the-human’ is the present condition of the human being as he/she is-in-the-world of ‘here and now’.

‘Essential-state-of-the-human’ is the ontological condition of the human being as he/she is in his/her true, real, typical and original nature of one’s being. As a topic (Sivajñānamāpādīyam: A Study in Philosophical Anthropology- A Hermeneutic on the Cognitive, Ontological, Existential and Soteriological Dimensions of the Human Being) of enquiry it has a universal significance and application. But, for a genuine research and concrete understanding of the existential/essential nature of the human, it is not enough that we provide “something” (Content) but a “somewhere” (Con-text) to think about. For, every human existence is a situated and contextualised presence in-the-world. Anywhere and at any time, it is rooted in a particular historicico-socio-linguistic milieu. So also is a text. Every text is situated, interpreted, preserved and passed on through a context. "However much one might claim to be ‘objective’ bracketing one’s context, a human being is not perceived in isolation but isolated in the concrete world which is part of a whole". Sivajñāna Māpādīyam, approximately an eighteenth century Tamil Commentary on one of the most fundamental philosophical texts of the fourteenth century, Sivajñānabūdham which belongs to South India on the Asian Continent is, then, an effort to see through the existential state of the human being.
1.1.1 Sources

Very few Studies have been undertaken with a philosophico-anthropological thrust and perspective about an ancient, yet modern culture like Tamil and one of its philosophy Śaiva Siddhānta. It is our earnest desire to probe the classical, relevant, philosophical (Sāitraṇka) and devotional (Tirumuṇaṅkaḷ) texts of Śaiva Siddhānta, with special reference to the primary source of Mātava Śivajēna Munivar’s Śivajēnaṇabōdha Māpādiyam, an eighteenth century Tamil commentary on Meykanḍar’s Śivajēnaṇabōdham. It is shortly called Śivajēna Māpādiyam. For the secondary sources, we have relied upon the scholarly works and translations done by authors like K.Vajravelumudaliar, S.Arunaivadivelumudaliar, V.A.Devasenapathy, K.Sivaraman S.S.Mani and P.Krishnan.

If we examine our understanding phenomenologically (as it is understood in the Heideggerian traditon) we discover that there is always a world in which the text is located. A text, whether in the waking state or in a dream, is never a text by itself alone, independently and outside of a world; a text is only within some definite world. Though we can speak of a text without any qualification the world in which the text has its place is its penumbra as it were which is not explicit in the linguistic expression. Hence a text as such is an abstraction; and an abstraction is an abstract, lexical meaning. The subject-matter of the Human’s discourse is normally not about such abstract meanings; it refers to the real, concrete world in which the text and the reader find themselves. Moreover there are two important aspects to the understanding of the texts. The first major aspect of understanding any text is familiarity with its origins, the soil from which it has blossomed. Śivan, the God, for example, has to be understood on the background of Indian Religion because it is there that the Bhagavān’s revelation has taken place. Hence an interpretation may not ignore the origins of its text. Second
one is positive and equally important aspect of understanding a text is understanding its nature. The nature of any text (for that matter, even literary style and rhetoric etc..) is its dynamic open-endedness. For, “A text by its very nature is semantically autonomous. This means that its meaning cannot be restricted. Any one who is able to read the text can interpret it from his perspective. This polysemous character of a text allows for a multiplicity of interpretations ... It is the polysemous character of the text, then, that allows a pluralism of interpretation and is in effect the basis of new traditions. An interpretation becomes a tradition when it is taken up by a community and integrated into its self-understanding.” That is why any person who can read the text must also interpret it. “If a text is not to remain obsolete and become obscurantist, if the dynamism of a text qua text is to be preserved, then it needs to be interpreted and re-interpreted from every possible angle. In other words the meaning of the text has to be kept open and constantly broadened. The centripetal force of the text’s origin has to be maintained by the centrifugal force of its universalizing aspect.” The richness of a tradition increases in depth in proportion to its universal appeal.

1.1.2 Situating the Topic

1.1.2.1 South Asia

Kathy Gannon, a journalist, culling out a short statistics from the United Nations-funded report, authored by Mahbub-ul Haq, founder of the Pakistan based Human Development Centre, under the title “South Asia has penny for poor, pound for arms.” to The Times of India, New Delhi, April 10, 1997 has the following things to say:

South Asia (defined as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives) is the poorest and most illiterate region in the world, yet its governments buy more weapons than anyone else. This region has been sinking fast into a quagmire of human deprivation and despair, emerging
as the most deprived region in the world. More children go to bed hungry
every night in South Asia than anywhere else in the world, including
Many of these children work over 15 hours a day and are often physically
abused. Of every 100000 children born, nearly 600 mothers die. In
Bangladesh it is even higher at 850 maternal deaths and in Bhutan, still
higher, with 1,600 mothers dying. The World Bank estimates that the region
contains about 40 percent of the world's absolute poor surviving on just $1
a day. India spends $10 per capita on defence and Pakistan $26. On health
and education India spends $14 per person and Pakistan $10. According
to this report, the reasons for SA's slide are many: political instability, bad
governments, corruption and lawlessness

1.1.2.2 Indian Context

Let us now narrow it down to India, an important country in the South Asian
region. The situation isn't much different from the other countries. India is, however, a
land of paradoxes to live in and experience; a land which at the end of its third
millennium will have a population beyond hundred crores; a land where in spite of the
tremendous influence of the modernization and secularization, variety of religions and
religious sects (which have their origin in antiquity) continue to have a hold over millions
of people. Being the cradle of great religions and having the unique privilege of producing
world renowned philosophers and philosophies, India contains within it certain puzzling
realities and challenges. Although India is one of the top ten countries of the world in
its scientific and technological advancement, thousands of its people are wiped out
over night every year due to natural calamities like floods, famines, droughts, epidemics
and earthquakes. We hear number of cases reported in the media daily of people being
killed due to negligence in some industries, dying in railway mishaps or road accidents
or planned murders, of looting of people during communal riots and caste clashes in
the country. India, inspite of being one of the biggest democratic countries of the world,
has more than thirty percent of its population living under the poverty line. We can
keep piling up instances such as these to show that the Indian scenario is one of perplexing contradictions. It is in this context that we explore the ancient, yet significant reflections of our ancestors on the existential and essential state of the human in order to make a meaningful appraisal of their philosophical reflection and response to our modern Indian context.

1.1.2.3 Ultimate Questions

Presence of many religions on the one hand (which claim to propagate love, peace, justice, brotherhood, renunciation etc..) and on the other silent acceptance by the vast majority of the poverty and suffering of the masses pose certain basic questions, like

Who am I?
Why was I born? Why do I die?
Who and where was I before birth and what happens after death?
Why some among the people always remain poor and some rich?
Why such suffering and pain in this life and who causes this?
Is there a way out? If there is, then,
What is the way out from all these miseries of life?

Questions such as these may sound superficial at the beginning but in course of time should provoke us to think seriously and respond to the puzzles and challenges of life. These are, truly speaking, some of the ultimate questions which arise spontaneously in the mind of any rational being on this earth. For, these questions once reflected on seriously will take us from proximate to ultimate horizons of the human, will beckon us to enter from temporal aspects to the transcendental realm of life and will lead us from accidental happenings to a discovery of the essential nature of the 'cosmo-theo-andric' realities.
These are not mere personal and whimsical questions. Even Śivajñāna Munivar seriously gives a thought to them while trying to defend the Siddhāntin’s understanding of the supremacy of the Prime Being as an agent of the five cosmic functions and His inseparable relation with the selves for the sake of the individual selves. Munivar in his Māpādiyam does face the questions raised by those who object to the supremacy and impartial nature of the Primal Being and finds a philosophical way of explaining the rationale behind the disparity between individual selves. He says that the disparity is due to past karma of the individuals.

But even then the question of the Prime Being’s agency is not established without doubt. For when individual selves are given incarnation, some selves are enjoying pleasure and some are suffering from pain, some are made to enjoy the pleasures of the heavenly world whereas others are sent to hells; some are made to be born in high caste, and others are made to be born in the low caste. Some enjoy long life and others have only short life. So the Lord who makes the individual selves have different experiences thus cannot be considered to be impartial and gifted with grace. So He cannot be the prime Being. Thus there is objection with regard to the characteristics of the prime Being...⁸

If we carefully notice, we will understand that these questions are not merely anthropological but philosophical as well. In so far as they question the nature of human being and their sufferings, they are truly anthropological and in so far as they enquire into the ultimate causes for such human miseries, they are genuinely philosophical.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The primary purpose of our study is to explicate the implicit philosophical and anthropological insights and convictions of the Śaiva Siddhānta school of Indian philosophy which are handed down to us in the fundamental Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta philosophical text of ‘Śivajñānabōdham’ of ‘Meykandar’ and interpreted through the commentarial text of ‘Śivajñāna Māpādiyam’ of Śivajñāna Munivar. It is undisputable fact that Śivajñāna Munivar has contributed profoundly to the growth and understand-
ing of Śaiva Siddhānta in South India through many of his works. But the best and unique among them is Śivajñāna Māpādiyam. It is rightly called “Dravīḍa Māpādiyam”. And yet very few have dared to enter into the evidently difficult eighteenth century Tamil prose of Māpādiyam and contribute to the growth and understanding of Siddhānta in this modern and contemporary context like ours. The present effort is to fulfill this modern need and grapple with this authoritative philosophical text and draw hermeneutical inspiration from it.

1.2.1 A Hermeneutical Study in Philosophical Anthropology according to Śaiva Siddhānta

The thesis is basically a study in philosophical hermeneutics of Śaiva Siddhānta with particular reference to the cognitive, ontological and existential state of the human. We enter into the great Siddhānta Sāgara (ocean), by concretely studying a classical, philosophico-religious text, and thus acquiring an ability and competence to interpret a living religious tradition. It is a short and careful reading into the explicit and implicit meaning, structure and communication of the text of Śivajñāna Māpādiyam. In doing so, we shall keep the notion of self (ātma/āyam/pāśu/uyir all are equivalent to self or soul) as the main focus of study, in so far as it is directly related to what constitutes a definition of man in the world. Moreover, by using a hermeneutical device of tracing out the whole through parts, we enter into the complex system of thought through specific concepts and sentences which have epistemological, ontological and existential significance. For, “Any philosophical or theological concept must be studied in the context of the method, presuppositions, objectives and the structure” of the complex whole to which the conceptual scheme belongs.9 Unravelling the potent meaning of one or many of its concepts and sentences in their textual context will reveal to us, gradually and systematically, the holistic structure of the system as a whole.
While doing this a general outline and the basic structure of the text will be explained. While interpreting the text, specific concepts which represent the anthropo-philosophical aspects will be explored. This is done in order to show that insights (philosophical or anthropological), in turn, leading to concepts and categories expressed through a statement, do not occur at random but exhibit their own "coherence" and "logic" within a "systematic structure" of "thought or experience" wherein "initial parts" are as important as the "whole" itself. For in a system of thought "their interconnections are more like the vital ties of an organism where each part exists by the existence of the whole". For, any insight, whether religious or secular, springs from basic life experiences, needs, and aspirations of the human being in their socio-cultural milieu. Bertrand Russell says, "Philosophers are both effects and causes... of their time". And according to him, "each philosopher is an outcome of his milieu, in whom are crystallized and concentrated thoughts and feelings which in a vague and diffused form, are common to the community of which he is a part". For, "Philosophy from the earliest times, has been not merely an affair of the schools, or of disputation between a handful of learned men. It has been an integral part of the community," to which he belongs and has always been a reflection of the world view that a particular community cherished as its own.

The term 'Uyir' is applied to all the living and embodied beings (selves/souls-Uyirka) starting with amoebae which go through an evolutionary, transmigratory and cyclic process of several births and deaths. The subject of our study being specifically humankind, this term is also used for the human being. Siddhānta recognizes three types of selves, viṇāṇakālas, pratāyākālas and sakalas. Human beings in their present existential condition are called sakalas. For, 'uyir' in human condition as sakala enjoys the possibility of exercising its freedom and of attaining the final liberation here on earth.
1.2.2 An Exploration into the Methodology of Śaiva Siddhānta

Secondarily, our enquiry is oriented towards acquainting oneself into the gamut of Śaiva Siddhāntic world view and its unique methodology of (1) podu (general) and (2) cirappu (special) and the unique transition from podu to cirappu through an evolutionary process.

It is Unāpati (who is the author of Śivaprakāśam one of the fourteen Maykanda śāstras) who introduced in explicit terms the methods of ‘podu’ (general) and ‘unmai’ (i.e., that which can not be contradicted; this is also said as ‘cirappu’ meaning ‘special’) for the first time in his first work of Śivaprakāśam (SVP.II). What are ‘podu’ and ‘unmai’ (or ‘cirappu’ as introduced in Śivajñāna Munivar in Śivajñāna Māpādyam which is an equivalent term for unmai)? ‘Podu’(general) is “knowing the general nature of both God and self...In short, the purpose of general understanding is to arrive at an intellectual conviction about the three realities (Pati-Pāśu-Pāśa) as envisaged in the scriptures by going through progressively the other three pādas, namely the caryā, kriyā and yōga. The necessity of going through these three pādas depends on one’s previous birth and the level of spiritual maturity one has attained at the present birth that he or she is going through. This understanding is mediate (vajjalava) in which there is no direct apprehension of the object of understanding”. Where as ‘special’ is “an understanding where there is a kind of participation of the subject in the object of understanding”. It is an immediate apprehension of the reality,” which is obtained only by the grace (arul) of God. “The important point to be noted is that in both ‘general’ and ‘special’ understanding, it is the same three-fold reality - Pati-Pāśu-Pāśa - which is being understood in increasing degree and intensity. The reality which is mediately comprehended in ‘general’ is immediately apprehended in the ‘special’.”
Distinction of Podu/Cirappu between the Advaitic Vyavakārika and Pāramārtika

According to advaīta, reality is not plurality but ‘One’ (Pure Monism). Whereas Siddhānta not only accepts but advocates plurality (Pati-Paṣu-Paśa) in reality. So there is definitely a metaphysical difference in perceiving the reality itself. But in perceiving the reality (as understood by them according to their own understanding of reality), both accept two levels of perception, one advocating the vyavakārika/pāramārtika levels and the other advocating the podu and cirappu. In other words, both accept two modes of cognition of reality but the reality understood through these modes of cognition is different. Moreover, in the advaitic sense, when the reality is perceived at the pāramārtika level, what was perceived at the vyavakārika level is totally negated and the other mode of cognition alone accepted as real. But in Siddhānta, the reality revealed through the method of ‘podu’, is never negated but accepted as important step in the progressive manifestation of reality which culminates at the level of ‘uḍmai’. At this stage the mode of cognition at the level of podu, though continues to exist, its usefulness is practically nil. Terminologically, not compromising the stand of each of these two schools towards its understanding of reality, podu and uḍmai could be understood to mean, what the Advaitins mean by the terms, aparajñāna and parajñāna respectively. Thus, the ‘podu’ mode of cognition of reality, is really important in understanding the implication of evolution (sōpāna), a unique methodological principle advocated by Siddhāntins. This evolutionary understanding of reality will be further explained in the chapter that follows and will be compared and contrasted with that of Darwin’s understanding of evolution in the fourth chapter on the ‘Ontological and Existential Status of Man’.

In a succinct way Dr.Rathnasabapathy says, “It is well known that the Ācāryās of Śaiva Siddhānta including Urmāpati Śivācāryār have presented the Siddhānta system,
following the lead of Maykandār, under two sections or methods which are known as 
*podu* and *unmai*. *Podu* is the 'general' method which employs reflective reason for the 
investigation and ascertainment of reality. *Unmai* is the 'specific' method by means of 
which an analysis of the five states of consciousness is done; and by an eliminatory 
process,... the fifth state of consciousness, known as 'turīyāṭīta' is reached in which 
the *Unmai* (Truth) is known.”¹⁵

### 1.2.3 A Comparative Study of the Empirical and Transcendental Sciences

Though there is a great deal of disagreement among the scientists as to when 
extactly a human embryo in the mother's womb is considered fully human, there is 
practically no disagreement among the scientists and others to recognize a full-fledged 
new born babe to be human. Let us presuppose then that the birth is the starting point 
of the human-in-the-world. The cycle that sets forth with the birth of a child continues 
through childhood, adolescence to adulthood until the old age and completes apparently 
with the death of a person. During the interval between birth and death, the human 
beings go through innumerable experiences of joys and sorrows.

Much of the ethnographic or ethnomethodological materials which are available for us. 
are materials which deal with human being between this interval. For it is the nature of 
both the physical and social sciences to assume at least the relevant reality is confined 
to what is given to the common and perceptual knowledge and experience (Reality is 
what is perceivable and observable). General anthropology with its field-based, 
participatory and observation methodology would yield results about the observable, 
testable and predictable characteristics of the human being which are purely positivistic 
or empirical in nature. What happens to the realm of being, which can not be exhausted 
by positive or natural sciences? What happens to those basic questions to which we
earlier referred, which are basically anthropological as far as they deal with human
being but are philosophical in as much as they deal with the ultimate realities? “For the
repeatable truth, scientific method is an adequate method of verification. Life experience
or religious experience is a process which falls outside the scope of the scientific method.
Religious experience gets verified in the life process itself.”16 Yes, there are certain
realities in human life which take us from proximate experiences to ultimate quests of
human being. We, as human beings, at times, grapple with truths which beckon us to
enter through the temporal (the given, the known) to the transcendental (the beyond,
the unknown). Besides these, we face with events in life which gradually lead us from
the mundane (common sensical) to an enquiry into the essential nature of the human
being.

Truly speaking, there is no single philosophy in India but many ‘schools of
philosophy’ which are ‘divided on the issue of what constitutes the essential nature of
man’. So, “an investigation from the perspective of philosophical anthropology of any
system of thought that attempts a description and definition of man in the world, ...would
be meaningful even if-as is the case with several Indian schools of thought-the essential
nature of man is ultimately contrasted with that of the physical, empirical world, through
which, in fact, the former may be realized.”17 Though at the surface level the “theme of
philosophical anthropology is a moot one,” at the deeper level, “if, however, the enquiry
about the nature of man is the basic question of starting point of anthropology, then
access is provided into practically all the systems of thought in India for an investiga-
tion from the standpoint of philosophical anthropology.”18 Thus, a study of man, must
necessarily include a study of man in the world, of man in relation to the inalienable
environment to which he and his bygone generations traditionally belonged.
1.3 Śaiva Siddhānta - its Origin, World-view & Relevance:

Śaiva Siddhānta is one of the philosophical systems of “Śaivism, which considers Lord Śiva as the Supreme God.”19 Śaivism is an ancient, yet living religio-philosophical phenomenon of India today. “Śaiva Siddhānta, the most highly developed form of Śaivism, claims to be the ‘end of ends’ with reference to other systems of Indian philosophy”.20 It is “an elaborate system”. “As to when it took to such complex form, it is hard to say. The dates of the śāstras, in which it is portrayed, are no help in determining this question as it appears that the system depicted in these writings was in existence before it came to be recorded.”21 In spite of its antiquity and lack of reliable and objective historical sources, we need, as much as possible, to be informed of its possible and most probable origin, growth and of its significance for modern man.

“For, the essence of a religious fact is historically conditioned and one cannot overlook history in the manifestation of the religious fact, and the historical development of a fact does contribute to getting at new meanings or even to correct the older ones in the light of changing circumstances and contexts...”22 Hence, without running the risk of historicism,23 in this introductory chapter itself we trace out in brief a panoramic historical background of Śaivism in general and of Siddhānta in particular.

1.3.1 A Micro-view of Śaiva Siddhānta

“Siddhānta,” could be categorized as a philosophical school of “pluralistic realism.”24 It is pluralistic in the sense of being non-absolutistic. Śaiva Siddhānta conceives reality in three ultimate categories, namely, Ātman-Paśu and Pāsa.25 The same truth is spoken of in Tiruvavuppayan by Umāpati elaborating the third category into four, thus, making these categories into six.
“Ekam aneka nirj karumam mayaiyiran
dakavai aradi ili” (TVP.51)“

It means that the following six are without begining: The one God (pati), many selves (paśu), āñana, karma and the dual māyās (suddha and aśuddha).

Ekam is the Supreme being Pati. Anēkan means the innumerable selves. nirj stands for the root cause of all bondage, namely, the āñana. According to Siddhānta, the other three (karma, suddha and aśuddha māyā) which are categorized under paśa also exist eternally. But there is a difference between the āñana and the rest. These three are through the gracious act of Śivan himself, to rid the selves of the influence of āñana. For, Śivan, according to Siddhānta, in his supreme state of being (Patimutuniai), is all-knowing (arivāki, TVP.1; pūrarivan, TVP.49). He is a sentient being. So too all pervasive. Whereas, according to Siddhānta, the Paśa is insentient and a delusive principle.

Paśupati (paśu+pati) really means the Lord of the selves or the leader of the selves. Paśu means that which is bound. Naturally two important questions which arise here are: 1) who is bound or what is bound? 2) what binds or who binds?. These questions give us a clue that selves (for paśu, literally means, cows which are tied to something) are the ones which are bound. Looking at the compound word paśupati, some may be misled to think that it is the Pati who binds paśu because of his lordship over the selves. On the contrary, selves are bound by paśa. In Sanskrit, paśa means a ‘thread or a rope’ with which things are tied to or bound. In Tamil an equivalent word talai is used. This word brings out the appropriate meaning and content of the special relationship that exists between Paśu and Paśa. Tirujānaspambandar in his Tēvaram and Kacchiyappar in Kantapurāṇam use this word and explain beautifully these three categories of Śaiva Siddhānta. Pati (talai), Paśu (Uyir), and Paśa (Talai) are the three basic philosophical categories (padārthas) of Śaiva Siddhānta.
Śāiva Siddhānta is realistic, in the sense that none of the three has its origin in the other. They are, in fact, without origin or beginning (torrami = beginningless or no beginning). In Sanskrit, it is expressed succinctly by using the word anādi (a + ādi = no beginning). Its corollary is that these three are eternal everlasting substances. So, they have no end (a + anta = no end). Are these then “separately existing entities?” Sivaraman answers this aptly, “Śāiva Siddhānta admits not a factual separateness but only a cognisable difference between the things ‘separated’ as connoted by the three terms... (it) without denying an ontological basis for an otherness of existence, denies however what is supposed to imply, namely, unrelatedness. It denies otherness in any sense but as existential, and affirms essential relatedness.”

1.3.2 A Brief Historical-view on Śāiva Siddhānta

The study on Philosophical Anthropology in Śāiva Siddhānta requires some knowledge of the historical background of Śāiva Siddhānta and the basic evolution of its philosophy of God-World-Man. Siddhānta, just like the other Indian religio- or non-religio-philosophical schools, is more an offshoot of Hindu culture that dominated for ages and continues to have its sway over the majority of the present day Indians too. It is appropriate, then, that in order to have a panoramic view, we carefully search for its hidden roots and the seed from where the tree has sprouted and is nurtured, before even, launching out to explore the obvious stem and largely extended branches. We shall begin with the study of Śāiva Siddhānta and its place in Hinduism. Hence we commence our exploration with a ‘Preliminary Understanding of Hinduism’. Śaivism is one of the major sects of Hinduism. It would be fitting then to know the meaning and significance of Śaivism in general, about its subsects briefly and in particular about the Āgamic Śaivism of the Tamil land in South India-the Śāiva Siddhānta.
Contrary to the theory that the Aryans came to India from outside and had confrontations with the Dravidians, the RSS put forward another theory according to which the Aryans were the natives of India; they spoke the language Sanskrit and they had no confrontation with Dravidians. This theory of the RSS received a jolt after the findings in the Indus Valley. In order to overcome this difficulty, the RSS pushed the period of the Vedas to 4500 BC, since Indus Valley Civilization dates back only upto 2500 BC. Romila Thapar in her article (p.9) points out with evidences that the theory put forward by the RSS cannot be maintained.
1.3.2.1 Preliminary Understanding of Hinduism

Hinduism is an over-arching religion of many religious traditions of the majority of the people in India. ‘Hindu’, is a Persian word, derived from ‘Sindhu’, the name of a river which is found in the North West of India and originates from the Himalayan mountains. This Persian word is given to the land watered by the river. Thus the word ‘Hindu’ was almost inadequate to express the complex reality. The reality became so extensive that the simple word ‘Hindu’ was almost inadequate to express the complex reality which is an organised socio-cultural and religious system of almost five millennia of history.

The archaeological discoveries of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in Sind and Punjab reveal the fact of an advanced civilization between 2500-1500 years before Christ.

At its peak, the Indus Valley Civilization extended over most of present day Pakistan, into India as far eastward as Delhi and southward as far as the estuaries of the Narmada River. It was apparently dominated by the two cities of Mohenjo-Daro, on the Indus River in Sind and Harappa, about 350 miles to the northwest on a former course of the Ravi River, one of the tributaries to the Indus.

This civilisation had been characterised by the worship of a god who resembles the later Śiva. However, it is timely to bring to the reader’s notice Romila Thapar’s recent paper on the “Theory of the Aryan Race and India” which not only marshals evidence to criticize this theory, but also gives an outline of the plausible nature of the interaction.

These examples from Mohenjo-daro have a special interest in that they appear to represent a prototype of the great god Śiva of the later Hindu Religion.
Towards the middle of the second millennium before Christ, this civilisation was overwhelmed by the invasion of the \textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}} who came to India from the North West.

After the entry of the \textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}} tribes into northern India around 1500 b.c., the continuity of Indus Valley religion is found mainly in the \textit{Dravidian} cultures of South India, although various elements were preserved in the village cultures of North India and in the synthesis of \textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}} and non-\textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}} cultures that marked late \textit{Vedic} and Post-\textit{Vedic} developments in the Ganges Yamuna Valley.\textsuperscript{33}

In the course of time the religion of the \textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}}, the newcomers, blending with the cult of the Pre-\textit{\textit{\textsc{a}ryans}} population spread all over India and developed into what is known as \textit{Hinduism}. During the course of the history of two millennia, it evolved into several systems of Philosophy besides giving rise to Buddhism and Jainism which through the centuries evolved into religious philosophies.\textsuperscript{34}

Because of the diverse elements absorbed into \textit{Hinduism} during the long evolution and also because of the broad mindedness allowed in the interpretation of the scriptures there is no single system of belief which can be said to represent \textit{Hindu} cultural tradition. The exact idea of Indian religo-cultural tradition is hard to define since beliefs and practices of Indian society greatly differ from one period of history to another. Indian Theology and Metaphysics range from belief in a Divine Absolute to Atheism. Likewise there is a great range of religious practices and of alternative and overlapping mythologies. What R.C. Zaeherer says of \textit{Hinduism}, is relevant here.

\textit{Hinduism} is quite free from any dogmatic affirmation concerning the nature of God and the core of religion is never felt to depend on the existence or nonexistence of God, or on whether there is one God or many for it is perfectly possible to be a good \textit{Hindu} whether one’s personal views incline towards monism, monotheism, polytheism or even atheism.\textsuperscript{35}

Another modern author of a work on \textit{Hinduism} is also of the view that \textit{Hinduism} is not essentially a collection of dogmatic affirmation but on the contrary, it is a
way of life. This modern author Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in his work the ‘Hindu Way of Life’ says, "Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought".36

Ideological differences do not bar one from being a Hindu provided his ethical life corresponds to the demands of Hinduism. It is not only the intellectual belief but also the practices which differentiate one religion from another. Each sect is not only intellectual but has differences in their ethical implications too.

Though Hinduism is exceedingly complex and sectarian, yet there are certain things which are common to all Hindus. It is in this that the longevity of Hinduism is explained. Hinduism would have disintegrated and been swallowed by the tidal wave of history if not for certain fundamental unifying factors. The fundamental factor in the Hindu ethical philosophy is the right and just way of living a strict code of practice.

While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought, it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and atheist, the sceptic and agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu systems of culture and life. Hinduism insists not on religious conflicts but on a spiritual ethical outlook in life.37

What is notable in Hinduism is its incredible variety of expression both in theory and in practice. Due to its infinite variety, a definition seems impossible.

What is Hinduism? The religion has an incredible variety of expression, to the extent that it has reasonably been suggested that it is not possible to characterise it as a religion in the normal sense; since it is not a unitary concept nor a monolithic structure; but that it is rather the totality of the Indian way of life.38

The common belief on a few fundamentals is considered necessary inspite of the liberal view that is in vogue in Hinduism. All the Hindus, except a few, believe in the authority of the Vedas. They all accept and believe in rebirth and the law of karma (the law of moral retribution). It is the accepted belief of the Hindus that the scriptures
are the basis of their religion. They accept and observe the rituals as prescribed in the books of Law and other treatises. These are the few fundamental beliefs which reveal the identity of a Hindu. In the religious evolution of Hinduism among the various religious sects that have sprung up, Śaivism is one. The culmination of Śaivism according to the Śaivites of Tamilnadu, India, is Śaiva Śiddhānta and hence a brief exploration of Śaivism is pertinent here.

1.3.2.2 Śaivism

In the great waters of Hinduism, Śaivism is a river, indeed an important one. Śaivism is one of the principal sects of Hinduism. In this sect, God Śiva is considered to be the Supreme God, as the Absolute. The origin of Śaivism is not very clearly defined. It is hidden in the antiquity of time. Many authors think that this sect is so complex that various elements must have contributed to its formation. Certain trends of the Dravidian (or Pre-Āryan) ancient religion are found in Śaivism. In the process of the history of the development of Śaivism, both the Pre-Āryan and Āryan elements are blended together.

There is a broad scholarly consensus, however, that a form of Proto-Dravidian was the dominant language of the Indus urban culture; and this is substantiated by parallels between cultural and religious features of Indus Civilisation and later Dravidian village cultures.39

Scholarly opinion is that the proto-Dravidian has led to the modern Śaivism.

1.3.2.3 Pre-Āryan Elements

What are the Pre-Āryan elements that are said to be blending together in Śaivism? The excavations of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa as mentioned in the work of Mortimer Wheeler bring to light certain historical facts connected with the cult of Śiva. The various seals and figurines unearthed in these excavations represent a prototype of
god Śiva as the Lord of animals and Prince of Ṛgins-ascetics.

Carved on the Indus Seals with a small chisel and a drill are in taglio designs (i.e. engraved with a sunk pattern so that impression appears in relief) which must often be claimed as small masterpieces.

They include a wide range of animals which must be clearly have been at that time familiar denizens of the Indus Valley.

These examples from Mohenjo-Daro have a special interest in that they appear to represent a prototype of the great god Śiva of the later Hindu religion.\textsuperscript{40}

There are many clay figurines of women among the excavations. These suggest a type of worship of a Mother-Goddess. Another seal bears the image of a woman from whose womb a plant sprouts. This seal can be taken to indicate an earth-goddess for vegetation as found in many works related to the excavations of Indus Valley Civilization.

These figures are almost invariably in a damaged condition, but there is a strong reason to believe that they represent the great Mother Goddess, who was worshipped so widely in the Near and Middle East in ancient times and whose cult is almost universal amongst the lower class people of modern India. It seems certain that these pottery images of the goddess, whose name is unknown, were kept in almost every house in the Indus Valley cities. probably in a recess or on a bracket on the wall, which would account for the fact that the figures are nearly all roughly finished at the back. \textsuperscript{41}

Phallic worship however, is not solely unique to Śaivism, but the type of worship only shows its ancientness. It also shows that there is a continuity from the ancient to the modern.

The designs of various animals surrounding a Ṛgīn in the seal suggest the representation of the worship of the prototype of the God who is the Lord of Animals.
The excavations bear witness also to the fact of phallic cult in Śaivism from the seals that represent male and female generative organs.

Another feature of the religion of that Indus Valley which is still practised in India is the veneration paid to phallic symbols, typified by the linga or conical stone which is now associated with the worship of Śiva.42

It is known from the Rgveda that the phallic worship is not of Āryan religion. 43

A possible allusion to the worship of phallus may be found in one of the earliest Tamil literary works, Pattinapālai. The expression Kantutāippotiyil may be taken to mean the worship of phallus.44

Even before the time of the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization, many Non-Āryan elements were discovered in the Rudra-Śiva cult. The title of Rudra as the Lord of the bhūtas (spirits), phallic worship and his association with serpents are typically un-Āryan.45

1.3.2.4 Tamil Sources

Many Tamil sources reinforce the theory of the non-Āryan elements being blended in the formation of Śaivism. The Tolkāppiyam,46 the earliest Tamil literary work divides the land into five regions. Each region has its own titular gods. Māyōn, Cēyōn, Vēntan, Vannan, and Koppāvai who are given forest (mullai), hills (kurinji) cultivated lands (marutam) coastal land (neytal) and dry land (pālai) to govern respectively. These gods became Vishnu, Śiva, (or his son Skanda), Indra, Varuṇa and Kāli under the influence of the Vedic religion of the North.

In the case of god Śiva, his origin is traced to in Cēyōn, the hill god. The etymological meaning of Cēyōn is 'person of red or brown complexion'.47 Again, it means tender one, denoting youth and beauty. Perennial Beauty and youth are attributed to the God-head by the Tamils.
The word Śivam expresses the very characteristics of the ancient god Rudra. Goodness, prosperity and auspiciousness, final deliverance (mukti) the highest state of God, in which he exists as Pure intelligence, are some of the meanings of the word Śivam.48

It is to be noted that the idea of goodness of god Śiva became so prominent in the thinking of the Tamil Śaivites that Ķrumūntar would identify Śivam with Love—Anbē Śivam.49 The Ėttuṭokai and Pattupāṭtu of the 2nd century A.D., though not mentioning the name Śiva yet indicate the characters of god Śiva such as three-eyed Lord (mukkaṭselvar), the ancient first Being (Muḷu Mutaivan), the god under the banyan tree (Ājamara Selvan), and one who rides on the bull (Pankam urvon). From these it leads to the evidence that Pre-Āryan elements played a great role in the concept of the formation Śaivism in so far as the benign character of the Supreme God is concerned.

Besides these there are other Tamil literary works which bring out the idea of the Dravidian god. Paripāṭal, Kalittokai, Manimēkālai, Silappatikāram and Mathurikāci, are some of them deserving to be mentioned.50

1.3.2.5 The Vēdic origin

The Āryan influence of Śaivism is to be found in the Hindu literature which dates back to 1200-1000 before Christ. Śiva as the proper name of god is hardly found in the Ṛgveda, the earliest literature of Hinduism. The analysis of this literature reveals that god Rudra, a minor deity of Ṛgveda prefigures later, Śiva, the Supreme God of Śaiva Siddhānta.

Though the etymology of the word ‘Rudra’ is not clear yet it is commonly understood to signify ‘howling’, ‘crying’, and ‘roaring’. Besides these ‘to be red and to be bright’ are also suggested for the term ‘Rudra’ by the authors. The name ‘howler’
is imputed to *Rudra* as he is considered the God of the natural forces such as stormy winds, lightning and thunder.

May you lightning which, hurled down from the sky passes, along the earth, avoid us.\(^5\)

The *Rgveda* literature describes *Rudra* as terrible and formidable but easily invoked, auspicious (*Śiva*) and bountiful (*mishvams*). He is also called a bull.\(^5\) Though the people feared the terrible and fierce character of *Rudra*, yet they implored him to be gracious towards their cattle and spare them from destruction. The terrible and destructive god *Rudra* showed himself gracious when propitiated by men in their need. The protection of the animals was considered to posses healing powers and portrayed as merciful healer as physician of physicians. He was said to have two qualities - *jalasa* and *jalasa-bhesaja*, cooling and possessing cooling remedies.\(^5\)

The merciful and auspicious character of *Rudra* (*Śiva*) became very prominent in the course of history and thus overshadowed the fierceful character of *Rudra*. The conclusion of Dhavamony seems pertinent here.

The deprecations of his wrath - this explanation seems to me to be a more plausible one - give rise to euphemistic title ‘auspicious’ (*Śiva*).\(^5\)

Another *Āryan* element that we identify already in *Rgveda* is that *Rudra* is considered as *Paśupati* or Protector of the Cattle.

I have brought hymns of praise to you as a guardian of animals, grant us favour, O Father of *Māruts*, for blessed is your most sympathetic benevolence; so truly do we desire your help as a favour.\(^5\)

That it be well with all our two footed and four-footed beings that in this village all (be) prosperous and exempt from sickness.\(^5\)

Again in *Atharvaveda* *Rudra* is named *Paśupati*, the Lord of animals for the first time. *Rudra* is invoked to look after the unhoused cattle exposed to dangers.
O Bhāva- and Sarva, be gracious; do not go against (us); ye Lords of spirits, Lords of cattle, homage to you! The arrow that fitted, that is drawn, do not let fly, do not harm our bipeds and quadrupeds.  

Another reference to Rudra is found in one of the rules of grammar of Pāṇini; Śiva would mean 'a descendant of Śiva'. Further it also stands for the object of cult a person or thing, one who reveres Śiva. Here it is good to note what Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, one of the fourteen major Upaniṣads, says of the Rudra-Śiva. In this Upaniṣad, Rudra Śiva is considered as one Supreme God (Śka-dēva) and this Being is said to possess auspicious qualities. This Upaniṣad is very important for Hinduism and especially of all philosophical Śaivism, that his personified ātman or puruṣa is identified with the Supreme God Rudra Dēva. This Upaniṣad attempts a new synthesis of Vedic and Upaniṣadic doctrines under the aegis of the personal God (the Dēva), Rudra-Śiva.  

The ideas enshrined in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad about the Supreme Being are close to the characteristics of Śiva of Śaivism. Identification of God with other beings is totally rejected and the doctrine of non duality is clearly established. Thus the God of Svetāsvatāra emerges as Being. The God of Svetāsvatāra Upaniṣad is considered as the cause of causes.  

The Vedic Rudra gets merged into the richer and more complex personality of Śiva. And this Śiva becomes one among the Triad of Hinduism (Tirumūrți) Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva by retaining their own independent status in the Vedic pantheon. They are usually described as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer respectively. As Śiva is considered the god of destruction or death, he is called by various names such as Hara (killer), Ugra (fierce) and Bhairava (dreadful). He is figured as having five faces and sometimes one face with three eyes, signifying his knowledge of all times.  

As Śiva is constantly engaged in battles with mighty demons, he is armed with special weapons namely trident (trāṣṭra), bow, thunderbolt and an axe. He is also figured as holding in his hands a noose to bind his enemies.
There are two aspects in Śiva, one is active and the other is quiescent. The active aspect is called Śakti and is personified as his wife or the female half of his essence. In every attribute of Śiva the consort of Śiva is also represented. Śiva is also considered the god of generation and a conqueror over death. This aspect is clearly brought out in the phallic (śaṅga) worship by the Śaivites. As destructress, the consort of Śiva is called Kāli, as an agent of reproduction she is figured as Yoni and as Umā for beauty. With regards to the activities, Śiva is conceived as a fierce universal destroyer who annihilates at the end of every age not only the material things, but men and even other deities. He is also the personification of the eternal reproductive power of nature perpetually integrating after destruction. He is eternally the blessed one or the bestower of blessings.

He is portrayed as the ideal ascetic (yōgin) who has attained the highest perfection in abstract meditation and austerity. Śiva is a contemplative philosopher and a learned sage, the revealer of grammar to Pāṇini, the greatest of Indian grammarians. Śiva is also represented as a Brahmin with the sacred thread and he is well versed in ‘vādas’.

He is also considered a ‘sportive’ figure. The idea of the sport in Śiva is explained by the Śaiva school as his omnipotent power. All the work is so easy for him and he does not require any effort. He is said to act without acting. At times Śiva is called Nāṭēśa and Nāṭarāja, meaning the king of the dance. As Śiva rose to eminence as supreme god he became the object of speculation and meditation and this led to the formation of various sects within Śaivism itself.

1.3.3 Various Sects of Śaivism

The long history of Indian religious thought has produced not only various religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, but also various religious sects within Hinduism itself.
Śiva, as the supreme God, is worshipped by the devotees of various sects. For one reason or another, doctrinal or practical, various groups of devotees among the worshippers of Śiva have emerged. Notable among the sects are Pāsupatas, Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Kāśmir Śaivism, Vīra Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta.

The sub-sect of Pāsupatas was founded by one Lakuṭī. He is considered to be an “incarnation” of Śiva. The followers of this group attain ecstasy by violent means. This is considered the earliest sect known within Śaivism. According to this system, Śiva is absolutely independent; matter (prakṛti) and selves (ātma) are dependent on Śiva as effects. The selves become eternally associated with Śiva in liberation.⁶¹

The Kāpālikas (skull bearers) and Kālāmukhas (black faces) form a group of worshippers of Śiva whose tenets and practices are gruesome and repulsive. They are also called Mahāvratins which means ‘observers of the great vows’. Their vows consist in eating food placed in the skull and applying ashes of human carcasses to their bodies. The basic position of Kāpālikas was devotion to Śiva in his terrific aspect and worship of him both through imitation and by propitiation. The followers are constantly associated with the particular vow or penance.⁶² It is said that they were addicted to the worship of the female principle.

1.3.3.1 Kāśmir Śaivism (Śakti-Vīśeṣādvaita Śaivism)

This is more of a philosophical system than one given to mere practices. It dates from the beginning of the 9th century. This school of thought elaborates a monistic viewpoint with some similarities to Śāmkhya and Advaita Vēdānta. Śiva is the Ātma indwelling all beings and objects individually as well as the universe as a whole. The supreme reality is Śiva. The immanent aspect of Śiva is Śakti which is not an independent aspect but his creative energy.
There are two branches of Kāśmir Śavism: Spanda and Pratyabhijñāna. The authorship of the first is attributed to Vāsugupta and his pupil Kallata. But the second school, Pratyabhijñāna school is said to have been founded by Somānanda. The principal works of the system are Śivasūtram or Śivasūrāṇi and Spandakāṇkās.

All consider that these works are of divine revelation. Besides these two, there is still another work called Śivadṛṣṭi which is said to have been composed by Somānanda, the founder of Pratyabhijñāna school of Kāśmir Śavism. This contains the philosophical treatise as the base for the system. These works are called ‘Triple-Instruction’- trika śāsana. The time of Spandaśāstra and Pratyabhijñāsatra is around 9th century A.D. The metaphysical content of the notion of God and his creativity is praise worthy. In the act of creation, God does not need any prompting cause or material cause. He brings into existence by the mere power of his will (sahkālaṃ śakti).

It is God who makes the world appear in himself as if it were distinct from himself though not so really. The expressed world, in Kāśmir Śavism, is not seen false ontologically. It is not the product of avidya. The world is the material expression of Śiva in the sense that it is Śiva himself who expresses himself, through his absolute power of sovereignty in the form of an objective world.

According to this system, though God is not distinct from the individual souls, yet he makes them appear on himself as images are reflected on mirrors. Men, due to illusion caused by three kinds of impurities do not perceive the identity.

Thus according to this system the individual soul is identical with the supreme soul. But the former does not perceive this identity on account of his impurity. This impurity or Māla is of three kinds.

Though this school holds that the soul is identified with Śiva himself, yet it is deprived of its absoluteness and is involved in the bonds of defilements and hence is
considered finite and imperfect. The attainment of perfect bliss consists in the recognition of its true self.

1.3.3.2 Vīraśaiva Or Lingāyat Sect

Basava, the son of Madirāja is generally said to have founded this sect despite the conflicting views. It was in the time of King Vijana (1157-1167 A.D.) that Basava was in charge of the treasury and he was supporting this group. This group came into existence in militant situations caused by the Jains, Buddhists and Vishnuvites. It is said to have been initiated at the personal request of Śiva himself to Nandin to become incarnate to work for the cause of this sect.⁶⁷

According to this, the One Highest, Brahman, characterised by existence (sat), intelligence (cit) and joy (ānanda) is the essence of Śiva (Śvātattva). This Highest Being is also called Sthala. By the agitation of the power (Śakti) of God, Sthala becomes divided into: Lingasthala and Angasthala. The Lingasthala is Śiva or Rudra to be worshipped or adored while the Angasthala is the individual soul as worshipper.

This school would be advocating the same doctrine of non-duality of Śamkara if not for the view of Śakti (power) which plays a great role in giving identity to the supreme soul. Hence this school holds the theory of Qualified Spiritual Monism.

The belief of the Vīraśaiva school is that the original essence of Śiva divided itself by its own innate power into linga, or God and the Anga, or the individual soul, and under the influence of other powers the essence became the creator of the world, shows that the doctrine, therefore resembles that of Rāmānuja but with the latter there is a real rudiment of the soul and of the external world characterising God which afterwards develops, but with the Vīraśaivas there exists a power only in God which leads to creation so that it is the power that characterises God according to the latter, while the rudiment is his characteristic according to the former. The Lingāyat school, is a school of Qualified Spiritual Monism. (Viśiṣṭādvaita).⁶⁸
It is the innate power (Śakti) that makes God and the individual soul really distinct. This individual self, though distinct, is characterised by devotion which is but a tendency towards the Lingasthala (bhakti).

### 1.3.3.3 The Śaivism of the Āgamas

Āgamas is a name given to the theological and ritual treatises which form part of the scriptures of the principal sects of the Hindu religion such as Śaivism, Vishnuism, and Śaktism. Literally, 'āgama' means 'that which has come from'. It means 'tradition' in relation to the revealed doctrines found in the Vēdas 'which has been handed down'. The Āgamas contain a lot of mythological, ritual and metaphysical elements. Among the more benign and sober developments within the fold of Śaivism is the Śaivism of the Āgamas which dates from the 7th century A.D. There are 28 Āgamic texts of Śaivism besides 108 Upāgamas.

There is a view that Āgamas belonged to Tamil literature and they had been translated into Sanskrit by the Āryanś on conquering the Tamils. Further the original texts in Tamil had been destroyed by the deluge which swept away the major part of the Tamil land. As a staunch advocate of this view, V. Ponniah has said:

> Therefore the presumption that the Tamils are responsible for the production of Śaiva Āgamas is not without force and this presumption leads us to the logical conclusion that Śaiva Siddhānta belongs to the Tamils. 69

Both are there. But one is not due to another. According to the Āgamas, the supreme God is Śiva, He is named Pati which means the Lord. He is the Lord who is beginningless and omniscient. He is considered a Pure Energy. He acts upon the unconscious matter. Selves are conceived as eternal and they possess spiritual energy which enables them to act and to have knowledge. Selves are limited by threefold
impurities which are called Mala. They are as follows: Ānava, Karma and Māyā. Self is impeded by ignorance (Ānava) of the true reality and consequently selves are unable to recognise it. Acts and their effects cling on to the selves.

The souls are bound to enjoy the fruits of their actions. This idea is expressed by the word ‘karma’. Due to Māyā one has a false knowledge of oneself and thus the true vision of man is hidden from himself. The self is in need of liberation from the three bonds. Grace or assistance of God is necessary to deliver the souls from the fetters and to lead them to final salvation which is but the union of the selves with Śiva and the realisation of their true nature.

1.3.3.4 The Śaivism of the Tamils

Śaivism is prevalent in the Dravida or Tamil country with its own extensive literature. The cream of Śaivism is found in the devotional hymns of the 63 accepted religious devotees (Nāyanmārkai) who lived from the 7th century onwards in Tamil Nadu. These devotees sang the divine songs in praise of Śiva. Among them stand the Samayāchāryars Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar, and Māṇikkavāsakar. The hymns of these four saints constitute eight of the twelve books of the Śaiva devotional canon. Their hymns of praise are found in the book of ‘thāvaram’. This is the first of the twelve ‘canonical books’ called ‘tirumūṟai’ of the Dravidian revealed literature according to the Śaivite. In these hymns we do not find systematic theological and philosophical thoughts of Śaivism, but we find a systematic and vivid manifestation of the personal experience of God, lived by the mystics. They have given expression to their personal experience in the form of devotional hymns. The love of God and love of mankind are the basic thoughts found in the devotional hymns of these saints.
For Appar, an outstanding Śaiva devotee, Śaivism is an optimistic religion. He believes in God's mercy and love. Appar considers Śaivism as a universal religion meant for everyone. He says that nothing avail except one's recognition of the Almighty as Śiva and a continuous love (Śivabhakti) to him. Māṇikkavācakar, the author of Tiruvasagam, is one of the Samayāchārīyas, teachers of religion par excellence. He is said to be of the 9th century A.D. He pours out personal feelings pregnant with love and devotion to Śiva. He narrates in his devotional literature his personal spiritual experience with Śiva. Śiva is described as nectar, river of mercy and the inner light of brilliance, to quote a few of them. He praises Śiva as indwelling in his own heart. He claims to have been privileged with many visions of Śiva who is the 'Supreme Bliss'. Śiva, the Ānanda cannot be realised by the ordinary mind or intellect without grace and cannot be expressed in words. But when this inexpressible Ananda or Bliss was experienced by Māṇikkavācakar, he was so filled with joy and every part of his body was conscious of His presence.20

During the period of Hindu revival the saints of Śaivism and Viṣṇavism strengthened their sects respectively. They were able to put away the new elements that were creeping in the form of Buddhism and Jainism. After having driven out these elements, the Śaites and Viṣṇavite could not agree between themselves and there prevailed divergence of religious beliefs and practices.

The defenders of the Śaivism were generally from the Hindu Śaiva monasteries (1400-1500 AD) founded and richly endowed by the princes to promote the study of its literature of philosophy and religion. In order to establish their position, the men at the monasteries appropriating the ideas proposed by the Nāyanmārka systematized them in the form of aphorism (sūtras). The exploration of these men brought to light the
great depth of philosophy and the devotional character of Śaivism. The truths of Doctrines of any system are considered revealed ones, whose existence does not depend on the system itself. What a system, whether philosophical or theological, does is to interpret the revealed truth and doctrines. The process of interpretation is always historically influenced. This is true of Śaiva Siddhānta which had been sustained and enriched by many intellectual ascetics who were able to interpret the truths systematically to humanity.

...it is also equally necessary that a philosophical system like Śaiva Siddhānta be placed on the map of the subject of which the system is a systematic interpretation.\(^7\)

The philosophical thinking interprets and systematises the deep experiences of the Śaiva religious men and their spiritual aspirations. The problems discussed in this philosophical thinking remain relevant even to this day.

1.3.4 Relevance of Śaiva Siddhānta

Śiddhānta is definitely a dynamic product of a socio-religious and philosophical process and a culmination of living, experiencing, and thinking that has evolved through ages in the Indian soil and in particular, in the Tamil land of South India, where the dominant Agamic tradition, with a fine sensitivity and assimilation of the Vedic tradition, continues to flourish till today.\(^2\) It is because of this reason that our enquiry into Śaiva Siddhānta shall not be as a 'mere system of belief and faith of antiquity but rather as a 'living' philosophical system,... in the sense that the issues of great consequence for the thought and life of those who are grasped by it. It is therefore as much contemporary in its relevance as it indeed is old and traditional.”\(^3\)

1.4 Siddhānta Literature

There is a mixture of sociological, anthropological, theological and philosophical elements among the devotional and classical texts of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. Though
there may be numerous texts available over the centuries of its history. It is the believers of the community (with all their faithful members, devotees, along with the hierarchy of leaders and priests who live out their faith and profess their belief) who choose a few texts as their own and acknowledge them as genuine and authoritative in depicting the fundamentals of their religious and philosophical truths. Some texts give more importance to one element of the tradition than the other.

The philosophical concepts of Hinduism are based on the religious beliefs derived from the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. As a part of Indian Philosophy, Śaiva Siddhānta recognises the sacred scriptures of the Vēdas together with the 28 Śaiva Āgamas, the twelve Tirumurai and the Fourteen Mâyakaṇḍa Śāstras.

1.4.1 Āgamas

Āgamas are considered as special scriptures the content of which do not contradict Vēdas. Tirumular, a Śaiva mystic says about the Vēdas and Āgamas:

The Vēdas and Āgamas are the true revelations from God. One is general and the other special. The Śaiva theologians explain the relation between the Vēdas and Āgamas as one of transition from the general revelation to the special revelation. No Āgama that goes against the Vēdas will be acceptable to Śaivites. The Tamil scholars have not written much about the Śaiva Āgamas; as a result not much of them is known through them. But when there is a conflict between the Vedas and Āgama, it is only the Āgama pramāṇya which will be the final criterion.

1.4.2 Pāṇṇiru Tirumūraikaṭ (Canonical books of Siddhānta)

The Pāṇṇiru Tirumūraikaṭ (Twelve Tirumūrais) which is another set of literature of Śaiva Siddhānta, is considered ‘canonical books’ of the system in so far it lays down
rules for ethical life of a Saivite and sets forth also religious beliefs of Śaiva Siddhānta. According to the commonly accepted tradition the first eleven books were compiled by Nambiandar Nambi in the 10th century. Later the Periyapurāṇam, another book written by Čekkīḻar was added to the list of Tirumurai.

The first seven books of Tirumurai are Tēvāram, a collection of devotional songs in honour of Śiva sung by Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar. These devotional songs are considered ‘Tamil Vēdās’. What Vēdās are to classical Hinduism, Tēvāram is to Tamil Śaivism. The eighth book is Tiruvācakam and Tirukōvaiyār by Mānikkavācakar, one of the four samayācāriyārs- the religious teachers par excellence. Tiruvācakam is full of religious experiences and mysticism showing different states of mystical experience.

The ninth book is called Tiruvisaipā, a collection of hymns on Śiva, and Tirupattantu a poem by Čenar, a poet, in praise of Śiva. The tenth book is called Tirumantiram by Tirumūlar, a Śaiva saint who had contributed much to the development of Tamil Śaivism. His work, Tirumantiram is one of the last works to reflect the theology of the Āgamas. Some of the philosophical and the mystical problems relating to the Śaiva Siddhānta have been explained in his work.

The eleventh book is called ‘Patinōrām Tirumurai’ meaning ‘eleventh book’. It contains poems composed by twelve Śaiva devotees. The twelfth book is called Periyapurāṇam by Čekkīḻar. This work contains a collection of particulars on the lives of Saiva saints. Besides Tirumurai there is another set of literature. This set of literature is collectively called Meykānda Śāstirās. There are fourteen books in this collection of philosophical literature. The main treatises of the religious philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta is found in this set of literature. The authors of these texts, basing themselves on the religious
experiences of the ‘Nāyanmārka!’ formulate rational arguments for the doctrines of Śaivism. Thus the authors defend and support the religious beliefs held by the Śaiva saints.

1.4.3 Meykāṇḍa Sāstirakāṭ

In the list of Meykāṇḍa Sāstrās, we find three most important philosophical treatises namely, Śivajñānaboddham by Meykāṇḍa Dēvar, Śivajñāna Siddhiyār by Aruṇandī Śivāchāriyar and Śivaprakāśam of Umāpati Śivan. These contain the philosophical basis of the whole system. The philosophical concepts found therein are very profound and are elaborated by other works in the same collection. Thus, the two main streams of devotional (tirumuraikaṭ) and philosophical (sāstirakāṭ) literature flow into an ever dynamic and perennial river of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition.

"The Siddhāntins have accepted the Vādās in general and the Āgamas in particular as authoritative sources of Siddhānta philosophy. So far as the Tamil tradition of Siddhānta is concerned, the fourteen philosophical works, known as Meykāṇḍa Śastras, are considered as authoritative sources. Apart from these, the twelve devotional and mystical treatises known as Panuritrumurugais have been accepted as sources, because they are considered as the record of the direct spiritual experiences of holy saints, and as evidencing the truth of the Siddhānta philosophy. Of the fourteen philosophical works, Meykāṇḍar’s Śivajñānaboddham has been accepted as the basic and systematic work on Siddhānta. It is a very short treatise consisting of twelve sūtras, each running into four lines. The sūtras are so pithy and terse that it is almost impossible to understand the full philosophical import. Aruṇandi’s Śivajñāna Siddhiyār and Umāpati’s Śivaprakāśam are more elaborate than Śivajñānaboddham, but they also express the philosophical ideas in poetic language and, therefore, it is difficult to understand the Siddhānta philosophy in all its details and subtle nuances from these works.""

1.4.3.1 The Śivajñānaboddham

There is a divergence of opinion with regard to the original source of the Śivajñānaboddham. The doubt is caused by the fact that twelve sūtras of the
Śvajñānabodham are also found in the Sanskrit version of Pāpavimocana paṭalam in Raurava Āgama. This fact leads the reader to doubt whether the author is a translator of an original writer. Some scholars maintain that the original was in Tamil while the others are of the opinion that it was in Sanskrit. The debate in no way affects the greatness of the work.

Some scholars like Maraimalai Adikal maintain that Āgamas represent the oldest product of Dravidian language (Tamil) and a great part of them had been lost in the great deluge which had swept over the land of present Cape Comorin. Only a remnant of older Āgamas were translated into Sanskrit and preserved in this form.

But the scholars like Hoisington subscribe to the view that the original work had been done in Sanskrit and a part of them had been translated into Tamil. Whatever be the opinion, the author of the Śvajñānabodham in Tamil is more than a translator. His originality is manifested in the analysis and the precise and clear presentation of the sūtras.

The Śvajñānabodham whose literal meaning is ‘instruction on the special knowledge (wisdom) of Śiva,’ is the basic work for the philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta. This work not only contains the religious thinking of the system, but also clearly elucidates the deep philosophical ideas of the system. This is the first work which systematically deals with the Śaiva belief.

Meykanṭar’s Śvajñānabodham initiates a new phase of development in Śaiva thought by coordinating the ‘two’ approaches inherent in Śaiva Siddhānta. The ‘two’, the general and the ultimate, are not two different or alternate standpoints. One is the presupposition of the other. It is a difference of perspective in which there is also the demand that one be subordinated to the other so that there is really no difference. 

It has only forty lines of poetry in Tamil and it is considered as one of the most closely reasoned out religious philosophies. The forty lines of poetry are divided into
12 aphorisms which are called sūtras. The first six aphorisms form the general part which deals with the proofs for the existence of God, soul and bondage while the latter six deal with the attributes of the above mentioned entities.

Śivajñānabōdhham is a work of twelve sūtras, the first six ‘general’ and the second, special or ‘ultimate’. The general again consists of two subdivisions of three sūtras each, the first three evidencing through the aid of metaphysical reason the reality of Pati, Paśu and Paśa, and the second three ‘defining’ them. The special also consists of three sūtras on Spiritual Means (sādhana) and there on Spiritual Fruit (phala). The structure of the work thus bears resemblance to Brahma-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with its four adhyāyas or padās.  

This work had been translated into English by several authors. Some of them are: Gordon Mathews, Henry Hoisington, John H. Piet and Herbert Arthur Poley.

The content of this book is arranged according to a definite pattern. First there is the aphorism (sūtra) which is followed by the summary statement of its substance in prose which is expressed in Tamil as karutuṟai. Then, there is the exposition of articles which are called adhiṅkaraṇam.

This exposition consists of (a) theses which are said to be mērkoḷ (chūrṇika) in Tamil, (b) reason which is expressed in Tamil as etu (vārtikam or ēru) and (c) illustrative verse or example or examples- this is rendered in Tamil as udāraṇam (Udhāraṇa). This work had been commented by various authoritative authors.

There are at least four different but important commentaries on Śivajñānabōdhham. One is of Vadivelu Chettiyar, Śivajñāna Tejiporuḷ vijakkam (Tamil), another one, is that of Śivāgrayōgin Śivāgrabhāṣya (Sanskrit). Third is by Pandi Perumal (Tamil). Fourth is that of Śivajñāna Munivar, Śivajñāna Māpaḍiyam (Tamil). Vadivelu Chettiar interprets Śivajñānabōdhham in the light of Sankara’s Advaita Vēddanta and claims that it is a Vēddanta-classic. Since the world-view presented by him is radically different from that of the
Śivāgra Yōgin’s commentary on the Sanskrit version of Śivajñāna-Bodham, however, inclines to accept Śrīkantha’s view of Śiva as not only the nimitta-kāraṇa but also the upādāna-kāraṇa and gives a detailed exposition of the rival point of view, namely, that of Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya followed by detailed criticism. It is interest to note that Śivāgra Yōgin follows very closely Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya. The same objections in the same language are raised at innumerable places; one can even profitably consult Śivāgra-Bhāṣya to correct the readings of the text of Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya. And yet Śivāgra Yōgin departs from Umāpati’s point of view on important matters. Where he so departs he is in agreement with Śrīkantha.

The third commentary in our list is that of Śivāgra Yōgin (18th century), in Tamil on Śivajñāna-Bodham. Coming last it has the advantage of reinterpreting and reconciling the rival points of view. Drāvida Māpādiṃ (Skt. Mahābhāṣyam) as this work is called, bears evidence of influence from three quarters (i) Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya of Umāpati, (ii) Śivāgra-Bhāṣya, and (iii) Śivārkamani-Dīpika of Appaya. Appaya’s insightful solution to problems, his manner of reconciling the Āgama with Veda in terms of its implicit Śaiva content make an undeniable appeal. The main lead for Drāvida Māpādiṃ however comes from Umāpati, the Sanskrit commentator as well as the one of Meykandār’s line. On every vital issue Umāpati is followed and Śivāgra Yōgin criticised. Śivajñāna Yōgin brings to bear on his work the stamp of his own spiritual genius, and the manner in which he reconciles differences of viewpoints without compromising the central insight gives his commentary a distinction seldom to be matched by other works of its kind.
Siddhānta tradition, his interpretation has been less appreciated and accepted by the Siddhānta scholars. The works of Śivāgrayōgin and Śivajñāna Munivar have been accepted into the Siddhānta fold, though there are important metaphysical and epistemological differences between these works.

Śivāgra Yōgin’s commentary on the Sanskrit version of Śivajñāna-Bodham, however, inclines to accept Śrikaṭha’s view of Śiva as not only the nimitta-kāraṇa but also the upādāna-kāraṇa and gives a detailed exposition of the rival point of view, namely, that of Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya followed by detailed criticism. It is interest to note that Śivāgra Yōgin follows very closely Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya. The same objections in the same language are raised at innumerable places; one can even profitably consult Śivāgra-Bhāṣya to correct the readings of the text of Pauṣkara-Bhāṣya. And yet Śivāgra Yōgin departs from Umāpati’s point of view on important matters. Where he so departs he is in agreement with Śrikaṭha.

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1.4.3.2 The Śivajñāna Siddhiyār

The next important work is the Śivajñāna Siddhiyār. It is important and authoritative because it was written by the immediate disciple of Meykaṇḍa Dāvar, the author of the Śivajñānabōdham which forms the basis for this work. The author is Arūṇandī Śivan. His original name was Sadā Śivan. He was given the title of ‘sakalāgama panditār’ which means ‘learned in all scriptures’. This work is said to be composed at the command of Meykaṇḍa to expound the doctrine contained in the Śivajñānabōdham.
This work has two large parts: One outlines the views of the other schools of philosophy, examining and refuting them from the stand point of Śaiva Siddhānta while the second part sets forth in detail in 328 verses the fundamentals of Śaiva Siddhānta with incidental references to the views of the other schools. The first part is called parapakkam (parapakṣa) and the second is called supakkam (svapakṣa). The supakkam is the positive and detailed exposition of the doctrines contained in the Śivajñānabodhīnī. They are written in an excellent style and with the depth of thought and hence its author is ranked high among the thinkers of the Śaiva Siddhānta.

These two texts explain and interpret the Vēdās and Āgamas. They systematise the thoughts contained in them. Hence it is inevitable to meet some of the general doctrines of Hinduism in these works. Rational arguments are adduced for the religious beliefs which are found in the Hindu scriptures.

1.4.3.3 Śivapraṅkaśam

According to tradition, Maraiñāna Sambandhar was disciple of Arunāndi Śivan. But he does not seem to have written any philosophical treatise on his own. But he was the preceptor to Umāpati Śivan who wrote eight important works in Śaiva Siddhānta which are known as Siddhānta Aṣṭakās. With him, we have four spiritual preceptors in Śaiva Siddhānta. 1) Mayaṅgar, 2) Arun Nandi, 3) Maraiñāna Sambandhar, and 4) Umāpati Śivan. Umāpati, according to tradition, after being initiated by his Guru, was ostracized by the priest community of Chidambaram for his unconventional act and was sent out of the city. From then on, he lived at Kōṟavangudi, a place near Chidambaram, thus he came to be known as Kōṟavangudi Umāpati. Among his Siddhānta Aṣṭakās, Śivapraṅkaśam and Tiruvarātpayan stand out as his unique contribution to the growth of Siddhānta literature.
Śivaprakāśam consists of one hundred stanzas and is divided into two parts podu and unmai. The first fifty verses dealing with podu give an account of the embodied condition of the soul and the remaining verses explain the unmai part i.e., the released condition of the soul. Umāpati first uses the term Śaiva Siddhānta in Śivaprakāśam. Umāpati not only first used the full expression 'Śaiva Siddhānta,' but also called it 'the essence of Vādanta'. Śivaprakāśam is yet another handbook of Śaiva Siddhānta explaining the tenets of the system and meeting the criticism raised against it by the other schools, both inner and outer. We have several Tamil and English commentaries for Tiruvuṟṟoyan.

1.5 Meaning & Significance of Bhāṣya, Vṛtti, Vārttika

The Sanskrit word bhāṣya literally means 'commentary'. A commentary is always on something said, written, or an event that had happened in the past. Commentary, then, is a critical comment on a word, a sentence, a text, or an event that preceded it, beckoning the same to succeed meaningfully in the present and in the future too. Gavin Flood in his An introduction to Hinduism says:

The most notable feature of Indian theology and philosophy is that it is expressed primarily through commentaries and sub-commentaries on sacred texts. Although there are independent philosophical texts apart from the terse Śūtra literature which stands at the beginning of commentarial tradition, the traditions are primarily exegetical. Śūtras are short condensed aphorisms which summarize the teachings of a school. Indeed, the aim of writing commentaries is to bring out the meaning of these aphorisms, to reveal what is already there in the earlier text, to illuminate its truth and not to say something new or original (though, of course, the commentaries inevitably do). A commentary (bhāṣya) is an explanation—often extensive—of the Śūtras, while there are also shorter explanations or glosses (vṛtti) and further explanations of commentaries (vārttika). An author might also compose an auto-commentary on verses which he himself has composed. The commentaries reveal a vibrant and living tradition with creative reading and interpretation at its heart; commentaries are in the words of Francis Clooney,
not signs of decay or decline of the original genius of a tradition, its reduction
to words, mere scholasticism; they are the blossoming and fruition of that
original genius'.

1.5.1 The Commentatorial Tradition in Siddhānta

As we know already, the chief among the Meykāṇḍa Śāstras is the Śivajñānabodham. It is the basic text book of the Siddhānta. This work is terse. So, it is difficult for any common man to read and understand. ‘Śivajñāna Siddhiyār’ was written to over come this difficulty. But six commentaries have been already written on it.

There are six old commentaries on the Siddhiyār and two modern ones (Muthiah Piīlai and Tirvilangam). It is possible that there might have been some others also, lost through the course of centuries. The six old commentators are Nirmambavajigir, Maraijñāna Dāsikar, Śivāgra Yōgin, Jñānaprakāśar, Śivajñāna Yōgin, and Subrahamanya Dāsikar. Of these, the last does not attempt any original interpretation but merely follows Śivajñāna Yōgin closely, giving the word meaning (padavurai) of verses whose general sense (paṟṟupurai) is given by Śivajñāna Yōgin.

Though Śivaprakāśam may not strictly be categorised as a commentary to Siddhiyār, following the earlier tradition, Umāpati expounds the Siddhānta in it. Even this work happens to have been done in poetry.

After these commentaries there is a period of lull in the progress of writing worthwhile commentaries for Śivajñānabodham. Before the entrance of great Mādava Śivajñāna Munivar, a certain Pandi Perumal who lived before the 18th century seems to have written a commentary in prose. As it is, we are only gifted with two types of commentaries of the same author, one, the ‘Śiyurai’ (Smaller or Abridged Commentary) and the other being one of ‘Pērurai’ (Greater or Larger Commentary). The latter is the ‘Mahā-Bhāṣya’, in its Tamilised form called ‘MāpaćiyyyyMMddam’.

In the Brahma-sūtra, Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa strings together the leading concepts of Vēdānta in an ordered manner. The Sūtra is an exquisite garland made
out of Upanishad-blossoms. It is divided into four chapters (adhyayās); each chapter consists of four consists of four parts (padās); each part has a number of sections (adhikaraṇās); and section has one or more aphorisms (sūtras). According to Sankara, the number of sections is 192. The total number of aphorisms is 555.83

Śivajñāna Māpādiyam is, thus, modelled after the great ‘Brahma-Sūtra’ (one of the prasthāna-traya, triple canon of Vāda) of Badrayana whom Indian tradition identifies with Vyāsa, the arranger or compiler of the Veda. Moreover,

...Śivajñāna Māpādiyam which has been accepted by the Siddhāntins as the most authoritative and consistent philosophic treatise for well over a century. Just as Vedantic texts are interpreted and understood in the light of the interpretations of Saicara and his followers by the Advaitins, the philosophical and devotional works of Siddhāntins have been understood in the light of the world-view presented by Śivajñāna Munivar.84

1.5.2 ‘Śivajñāna Māpādiyam’ of Śivajñāna Munivar

Sūtra: The simplest meaning of the word sūtra is “thread”. A thread is, so to speak, the bare thread of an exposition, the absolute minimum that is necessary to hold it together, unadorned by a single ‘bead’ of elaboration. Only essential words are used. Often, there is no complete sentence structure. There was a good reason for this method. Sūtras were composed at a period when there were no books. The entire work had to be memorized, and so it had to be expressed as tersely as possible. Mēykaṇḍār’s Sūtra, like all others, were intended to be expanded and explained. The ancient teachers would repeat an aphorism by heart and then proceed to amplify it with their own comments, for the benefit of their pupils. In some instances, these comments, also, were memorized, transcribed at a later date, and thus preserved for us.

Māpādiyam (mahā-bhasya) literally means the great commentary. Its Tamil equivalent is Pērurai (Periya Urai). He has a ciirurai as well. Commentary is fundamentally a
literary and interpretative work on a classical and valuable work which has preceded it. In Tamil, the utterance of "Māpāṭhram" would immediately mean the great commentatorial work of the great Mādava Śivājīnāra Munivar on the original, philosophical and classical work called "Śivajīnābodham" done by Mēykanṭhār in the Sāva Siddhānta tradition. This commentator, in all probability lived for 32 years (just like Sankara) and died in the year 1786. A.D.45

The following are the literary angās (organs) used in Śivajīnābodham. Before giving the Sūtras, there is a cirappu-pāyiram, a special poem composed (either by the author himself or any one who is worthy enough to compose it). This is in a way the prelude to the whole work. In the case of Śivajīnābodham there is another cirappu-pāyiram at the end of the text too. Followed by a Maṅgala Vaṭu (an invocatory verse) to Lord Ganēṣa. Thirdly, it has an Avaiyadakkaḷam by way of salutation to the audience.

Only then the real work of sūtras begin. Each sūtra is further elaborated through several

The adhikaraṇa in Nyaya (Indian Logic) comprises of 5 stages of arguments which are as follows:
(1) Viśaya- the proposition,
(2) Samśaya- the doubt or objections,
(3) Pūrvapakṣa- the theory refuted,
(4) Siddhiṣṭa- the theory proved or established,
(5) Saṅgati- the sequence in argument.

But Mēykanṭhār mentions 3 steps of arguments in his text. According to Śivajīnābodham, Adhikaraṇ comprises of the following:
1) Mērēśi - the substance of the argument,
2) Ėṭu - the reason proposed,
3) Uḍīḍhatram - the analogy given,

in which the above mentioned 5 angās of arguments have been incorporated in the 3 steps of an adhikaraṇ.

Here, it is used as a method of inductive proof and should be distinguished from the various kinds of Ucchāraṇa (Polis) or false analogies and figures of rhetoric. The sole condition of a real analogy is that the sameness applies to the attribute found by induction to bear the consequence assigned.

One or more veṇbhas (a poem of four lines in Tamil) are used for this purpose.46
The commentary of Śivajñāna Munivar follows exactly the same pattern of Meykandar but elaborately dealing with matters concerning its philosophy and refuting the philosophy of others as and when needed.

Against the general, historical and evolutionary background which we have just given on ‘Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy,' we take up in the second chapter of the thesis a study on the methodology followed in the text of Śivajñāna Māṇḍārya.

Concluding Remarks

After these introductory remarks in the first chapter, we go on to the rationale behind the arrangements of other chapters. In the chapter that follows a brief survey is made on the ‘built in methodology of podu and cita pu as expounded in the basic sastras and particularly in Śivajñāna Māṇḍārya. In the latter part of the same chapter, we will justify the comparison between empirical and transcendental sciences and establish the thesis that the empirical sciences and the methods employed by them have their in-built limitations in comprehending the totality of the cognitive and ontological aspects of man and hence it is only the prerogative of transcendental sciences to do justice to this realm. First and foremost, it is a well received and accepted maxim in Indian philosophies that the establishment of the objects of knowledge depends on the means of knowledge (manadhānamaya-siddhi). Śaiva Siddhānta is in no way an exception to it. Hence utmost importance and priority is given to the Prāmaṇas (Tamil: alavar). Śivajñānabodham begins an exposition of the epistemological nuances of the Siddhānta. The third chapter, then, deals with ‘Man the Knower, with his know-how along with his know-what (Epistemology).’ In the fourth chapter, we systematically expose the three padānthās (categories) recognised in all the Śaiva schools, pointing out, of course, the unique understanding and differences shown by Siddhāntins, viz., Puris (God), Pāsā (bonds) and Paśu (soul) (Metaphysics). While dealing with Paśu, its
essential and existential nature will be expounded (*Siddhānta Metaphysics*). Fifth chapter will deal with the soteriological goal of the Śaiva Siddhānta (Ethics). Concluding the thesis, it will be shown that *Siddhānta* is not only a system *par excellence* with its accomplished end but has a noble end as its goal which is realistic and relevant to today's India. Its interest is not adding up complex theoretic doctrines but leading the souls to the practical teaching relating to the means to release and the conception of release itself. In this sense *Siddhānta* is ultimately a *sādhana*: a way towards a lasting liberation, not just ‘out there’ but ‘right here’; not ‘sometime to come’ but just at the ‘here and now’.