CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA
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Antiquity of Sáivism:

Sáivism dates back to the Chalcolithic age, and even further still. The archaeological excavations at Mohenjodaro show the evidence that the religion of the people was Sáivism. In South India, and Ceylon, Sáivism, as a religious system is referred as Tamil Sáivism (தமிழ் சிவவம்), and as a philosophical system it is referred as 'Sáiva Siddhánta'. Sáivism as the native religion of the Tamil people had to stand up to the challenges of other religions like Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islám. It is not easy to determine when and what extent it has been influenced by them. Even the early Tamil works like Tolkappiam, and Tirukkural show the influence of other cultures upon Tamil culture. Sáivism the popular religion of South India, is seen in many forms like, Vira-Sáivism of Karnataka, Káshmir Sáivism of Káshmir, and Sírkañçha's Siva Divya. It ranges from the Idealistic philosophy of Káshmir Sáivism to pluralistic realism of Tamil Sáivism of South India.

Sáiva Siddhánta:

The word Sáiva derived from the word 'Śíva' denotes God, who is the Creator, Maintainer and Destroyer of the world. The word Śíva is used in Upanisads to denote God. (In 'Śveta-
Śvātāra Upaniṣad\(^{1}\) (Śiva is used in the sense of Supreme God, and in very many places prayers are offered to Him). Śiva is also used in Tamil works in the sense of 'perfection', 'redness', etc.

Śiddhānta\(^{2}\), is a combination of the words, Siddha and anta. This means accomplished end. Tirumantiram used the word 'Śaiva Siddhānta' for the first time, saying that a Śaiva Siddhānta must have the knowledge of all the systems. It is the first work to explain the various paths of Śaivism and different branches of Śaivism.

The Basic Texts of Śaiva Siddhānta:

The basic texts in Sanskrit the Śaivites are the Vedas, and Āgama\(^{3}\). The Śaivagamās are twentyeight, and important among these is Kāmika Āgama. Tirumūlar in Tirumantiram gives equal status to these two kinds of texts (which are prescribed for the common people, and the selected people respectively). Tirumantiram, in 9 parts or ūttras explains the facts and principles of all the Āgama, in Tamil. Hence it is known as Tamil Vedas. (சோழ வேதை).

The devotional works of Śaiva-saints (panniruṭirumurai) and the doctrinal expositions (Meikanta-Śāstras) form the authentic texts on Tamil side. The preceptor of Śaivism are classified into Samava Kuravas and Santhāna Kuravas. (the
spiritual preceptors, and the religious leaders).

**Meta-Physics of Śaiva Siddhānta:**

Śaivism accepts three eternal realities. They are God, souls, and the world. These three are referred to as Tripa-dārthās (त्रिपदार्थाः). In Sanskrit they are spoken of as pasu, pati and pāsam. In Tamil they are referred to as Irai, Uvir, and Kutu (யை, புரை, பாசம்). Tirumantiram explains these three realities, and discusses the spiritual life of the soul.

The word Śiva denotes the Supreme God, the nameless, and the formless one. The various gods are but His forms and all other names are His. He is the Father and Mother of the world. In whatever manner we worship the Supreme Lord He bears our prayers and accepts our true love.

In Śaiva Siddhānta, the souls are eternal and different from God and bonds. God is known as Sat. The bonds are known as asat. The souls are referred to as sadasat. Souls are many in number. Their nature is such that they reflect their environment (वनस्पतिः निर्भयः). St. Tāvumānavar in one of his songs clearly explains the nature of the souls. 'Oh' for the day when I shall be in inseparable union with wise, even stable One, even as now I am in inseparable union with the primal impurity.'
The souls are classified into three groups as vīttēnum kalar (souls with one impurity - ānayamalam), pralavē-kalar (souls with two impurities, ānava and karma), and sākalar having the three impurities. In Śaiva Siddhānta, the bondage is real, māyā is not a mere negative entity but a positive. In Śaiva Siddhānta, the place of guru and initiation into the spiritual life (dikṣā) by him are important. Above all the grace of God is necessary even to worship Him and enter into spiritual life. That is why Śaivism is known as the religion of grace (śiva). The social philosophy of Śaivism stems from the concepts love and grace.

Metaphysical developments, and epistemological theories are all later developments in Śaivism. The systematisation of the principles arose as an answer to the challenges of other systems. Before Tirumūlar this system was known as 'Aṟul neri' (Path of grace), 'Peru neri' (The great path). Thus Śaivism is mainly the religion of grace and a way of life.

Ethics of Śaiva Siddhānta:

The ethics of Śaiva Siddhānta is theistic, and it is centred in God Śivam. The word Śivam (as we said earlier) means 'auspicious', or 'blissful' which is the source of all goodness. The revealed texts Vedās, Purāṇas, and Agamas prescribe the way of good life. The first two parts (Tattra) of
Tirumantiram explains the way of moral life according to Saivism. In the social philosophy of Saivism, ethics forms the major part. The virtues of love, and service to the fellow-beings are emphasized. The Sākvanēvar of Periyapuram, was a Buddhist, attained spiritual liberation through love. The importance of love can be known from the fact that Tirumantiram equates love with God.

Good life in Saiva Siddhānta is based on love towards God and love towards souls. Service to the poor is considered as service to God. This is so because, love for the people is the love for God. Both are like the two sides of the same coin. Ethical life of Saivites consists of cārva, kṛiva, yoka, and jñāna. All these are steps in one single life which is based on love towards God, and service to all the living beings. The ethical philosophy of Saivism aims at the consummation of morality in God realisation. God is the embodiment of love and perfection. After the realisation, the souls live with God in the form of light and with the nature of love. The individuality of the souls never disappears after release. There is nothing to be gained or desired at the state of release. But there is the social bound spiritual responsibility of helping the bound souls towards their goal. Social service of the liberated persons (jīvan-mukta) is emphasized in Saiva Siddhānta. It is a must. The 'realised' must observe the rules and regulations strictly, otherwise the fall will be great. The jīvan-mukta
is a person who is very active in the world, not at all one who is totally inactive and passive and simple marking time. His ichha, jñana and kriya are fully engaged. His ichha is fully engaged in Sadhusatsanga, his jñana is fully engaged in keeping a close watch against the relapse of the malaś, and his kriya is fully engaged in the service of all living beings, the service of fellow sadhūs and the service of temple worship.

We see the ideal of Śiva Siddhānta for a jīvan-mukta life in social service of various kinds. Tolkāppiyam speaks two kinds of souls. They are (1) Those who works for their own welfare and attain the ultimate purpose of life (ahā-mārkam). (2) Those who are capable of attaining that state, but remains in the world and works for the welfare of the humanity (Saka-mārkam).

The second group of people are the jīvan-muktas – the Nāyanaśīya of Periapurāṇam.

Social Philosophy of Śiva Siddhānta as Periapurāṇam

The original title of Periapurāṇam is Tiruttandar-purāṇam (திருத்தந்தார் பூரணம்), which can be understood to mean the history of socio-religious workers. Seikkizhār is not a mere composer. His lines are not mere array of words set to metrical beat. It is not a Jhonsonian Jingle. It is a singer's harp, not a juggler's drum. Seikkizhār is a seer-poet, a messenger of Truth-Light, a meditator between Soul and Śiva. His songs falls from Soul's communion with Śiva, the Supreme.
His poetic ecstasy opens human eye to the wonderful vision of Divine in Man.

Periapurāṇam explains the life history of 63 Śaiva Saints. Seikkhisheer wrote this in order to stress the purpose of life. Through Periapurāṇam he explains the truth that the purpose of life is to love God and serve humanity in the name of God. This is the 12th Tirumurai of Śaivism, in which we see the social work of religious persons. Seikthisher describes the social life of Tamil Nādu incidentally in his narrative.

"Periapurāṇam does not strive to explain about God or Man, but about the God who serves man, and man who served God. Periapurāṇam shows how even God will come down to earth in the form of human being and serve the needs of these social workers who dedicate their lives to work the upliftment of all living beings. This classic emphasises the social service as a means to attain the ultimate goal of life namely - liberation (vidyā). The saints call attention to social work can known from the following verse:

"The heart has to melt in love.

This is possible only when the soul engages itself in activities of social utility, thus overcoming selfishness. There is no finality to such work. The soul that overcomes the
assertive and possessive tendencies is ready even to sacrifice itself in the service of others.

Periapurāṇam is a revolutionary classic in Śaivism which emphasises the necessity of social work, and brings together devotees of various castes into one joint family. While the other works on Śaivism are treatises which deal with philosophical problems of Śaivism, Periapurāṇam completely deals with the socio-religious problems and their religious solutions. The 63 Nāyanmāras of Periapurāṇam were not false prophets who thrived by show and sycophancy. They did not deceitful asceticism. They did not deter their opponents with awful and abstruse mysticism. They did not perform miracles to gather a rabble around them. They did not turn their backs on the world and court solitude. They lived in the midst of society and toiled for the public weal. They scorned delight and lived laborious days. They indulged not in pumy carping and petty cavilling. They did not intrigue with the ignorance of the people or play upon their fancies. They talked not of party-politics and they did not fly after fleeting jobs. They resisted the temptation of crowd psychology and social gains. They had neither affections nor aversions. They were not dismayed by opposition and violence and they spiked all sectarian dogmatism. They worked for the State of Śiva and Universal Religion. Their mission was Happiness, their message was Love, and their weapon was Service. What they taught to the people, they proved by their living.
mental faculties were ever virile and watchful. Never for a movement they lost sight of Śiva. Every minute of their lives was spent in His Living Presence. God Śiva was ever attending on them for He is famous as a servant of His devotees who are His slaves.

The sixty four saints of Periapurāṇam belong to different castes, different professions, to different places of Tamil Nādu. The galaxy of Nāyanmāras consists of 4 Ādi Śivas, 13 Maravore, 6 Kings, 5 Chieftains, 5 Merchants, 13 Vellālas, 2 Shepherds, 1 Potter, 1 Fisherman, 1 Hunter, 1 Natar, 1 Weaver, 20 Gilman, 1 Washerman, 1 Harijan and 6 Saints of unknown rank. They are linked together with the thread of love for God and love for mankind. The one truth that Periapurāṇam explains throughout is that social differences have nothing to do with a religious man. The saints of Periapurāṇam lived in society, through and faced the socio-religious problems. They went/all the sufferings of the common men. For example, the life of Elavāṅkunai Māranār, Nandanār, and Kannappa Nāyanār.

Conclusion :

Śaivism is the religion of love and grace. Social philosophy of Śiva Siddhānta stems from these concepts.

This social philosophy is spiritualistic, realistic and plura-
listic. The metaphysical principles and ethical practices of Śaiva Siddhānta, give proper place to social life.

Periapurāṇam - the 12th tirumurai of Śaiva Siddhānta explains the social responsibilities of religious leaders. This classic explains the fact that in spiritual life, social differences have no place. But one must not escape from his social responsibilities in the name of spirituality. This classic's main aim is to explain the spiritualistic social philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta.

Two great saints of recent South India, influenced and greatly attracted by this classic. St. Rāmalingam's first public lecture began with the lecture on Periapurāṇam. Another great saint Ramana Maharshi used to hear the stories of Periapurāṇam and the biographers record that Maharshi used to shed tears when he listens the stories of Nāvanmāra.