Ciṟṟampalam – ‘The Cosmic Eye’ of the Divine: The Āgamic Traditions of Tamil and Sanskrit
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...‘As far verily, as this world-space (ākāśa) extends, so far extends the space within the heart.
Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and wind, both sun and moon,
lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here
is contained within it.’
(Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.1.1 and 5).

Between the eyebrows on the forehead
Observe the Mantra that radiates
Dedicated feel the Graceful Lord
That is Ciṟṟampalam, where I reached by his grace.
(Tirumantiram, 2770).

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad and the Tirumantiram (lit. mantras of the sacred) state
a relatively similar idea that the primeval divine power is contained within human self.
While the Chāndogya Upaniṣad assumes that the magnificent power of the divine forms
part of the heart, the Tirumantiram assumes that this is within the forehead. According
to Tirumūlar, the author of the Tamil religious text Tirumantiram – c.a. 5th to 7th
century - ciṟṟampalam ‘the locus of consciousness’ is the basis of all creation, and it
encompasses everything within it - a metaphysical concept that is very similar to what is
denoted in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad as the exhaustive and spiritual space within one’s
heart.  

The term ciṟṟampalam signifies symbolically the form of Śiva in his
manifestation as a “Blissful dancer” in the Cit Sabha ‘the Hall of consciousness’ in

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1 neṟṟikkku nēṟē purvat titaiveli
uṟṟup pārkka volivitu mantiram
pañṟukkap pāṟṟāyp parama nirunittiṉ
ciṟṟam palamenṟu cēṟntuko tēnē.
2 Smith, David. The Dance of Śiva: Religion, art and poetry in South India, Cambridge University
Chidambaram. Understanding the relationship between what is presumed to be a driving force within one’s heart/mind and what is manifested in the Cit Sabha in Chidambaram in a material form as Naṭarāja in his dancing posture constitutes the main line of argument in this paper. In an earlier paper[^1], I discussed in some detail the historicity and the myths surrounding the halls, with a special reference to the Cit Sabha in the Naṭarāja temple in Chidambaram. The present paper is mainly a comparative study of the yogic approach to the worship of Śiva as advocated by Tirumūlar and the idol worship as understood in the Sanskrit Āgamas.

The Tirumantiram attempts to link symbolically the two widely studied Śaivite topics namely the consciousness in one’s heart (Cit) and the material representation of Naṭarāja’s blissful dance in Chidambaram. Crucial to this linkage is the understanding of the ‘blissful state’ in one’s heart as a result of internalizing the glory of the divine (Śiva) - what is otherwise termed mukti or ‘salvation’ in Śaiva Siddhānta. In order to attain this ‘enlightened state’ (Tirumūlar uses the Tamil word ‘Telintār’ to refer to this state of mind), one has to follow closely the yogic practices that Tirumūlar suggests concerning how the divine elements of Jīvan ‘life’ and Vindu ‘source of human creation’ ought to be controlled.

Tirumūlar’s approach to worshiping Śiva from a jñāna standpoint parallels the treatment of idol worship in the Sanskrit Āgamas, where external objects and structural temples play a significant role. Specifically, what Tirumūlar attempts in his work is to set the premise for rituals and rites within one’s heart, as opposed to the

externalized forms of temples and idols, as the Sanskrit Āgamas propose. Demonstrating the metaphor of “human body as temple and Jīvan (the soul) in its enlightened form as Śivan”, Tirumūlar constructs a system where the human body acts as a location for the divine. On the other hand, the Sankrit Āgamas propose a system of worshipping Śiva in temples following closely the rules stated in the Kriyāgramadyotikā by Agoraśiva, Kāmikāgama, Rauravāgama and so on. Temple and the image of Śiva on the one hand and the human body and jīvan on the other hand parallel the objects of worship.

The concept of ‘Cit’ and the notion of ‘Consciousness’

As already stated, the term ‘Cit’ and the way it is understood under the realm of realizing the divine in one’s heart require an in-depth study of Śiva worship from a Jñāna point of view. The literal meaning of the Tamil word cīṟampalam is ‘locus of consciousness’, but it is used in an extended meaning as ‘cosmic eye’, which is understood to be a micro space where the power of the divine is manifested. This sacred space is considered to be the driving force of all conceivable actions constituting the all-encompassing power. The term cīṟampalam is misunderstood by some as ‘hall of consciousnesses’ and ‘little hall’ in conjunction with the ‘sacred hall’ that exists in Chidambaram namely Cit Sabha, where the Lord Nataraja’s image is kept.

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4 In one verse Tirumūlar states that his realization of temple within his heart (neñcam) occurred to him after his subsequent visits to various temples in the Tamil country. This obviously illustrates why Tirumūlar takes the position of assuming ‘mind’ as the locus for source of divine power.
5 The term Tirumūlar uses for “enlightenment” is the Tamil term telintōr, which means that ‘those who are keep themselves clean from sins and worldly desires’
7 Cf. Smith(1966)
In order to understand correctly the meaning of the word *Cit* and its relationship to the word *Chidambaram* one needs to understand how the latter is derived from the former. The word *Chidambaram* is derived from *Ciṟṟambalam* by the application of the phonological rule of *rr* becoming *tt* on the root *Ciṟṟ-.* The words *ambalam* and *ambaram* are simply the synonymous forms meaning a ‘space’. Misunderstanding the word *Ciṟṟampalam* as ‘small hall’ by the analogy that the word *Ciṟu* means ‘small’ fails to capture the conceptual basis of the word *Cit*, which means ‘consciousness’ or ‘Cosmic eye’. Tirumūlar’s employment of the term *Cit* along these lines of thought constitutes the core of his entire work.

**Rūpa and Arūpa form of Worship in the Naṭārāja’s temple of Chidambaram**

The dancing image of Śiva, a perceivable form called *rūpa* in Sanskrit, is housed *Cit-Sabhā*, and it is referred to by Smith⁹ as the heart of the world and the heart of individual self (*Cit* means ‘consciousness’ and *Sabhā* means ‘hall’). To the right of Naṭārāja is an empty space, which is popularly called *Rahaśya* - a Sanskrit word meaning ‘secret’. This space designates the formless manifestation of Śiva, and is called *arūpa*, an opposite of *rūpa*. The *arūpa* form of Śiva is also called *Ākāśa Liṅga*, assuming that the space or the ether is the other manifestation of Śiva in Chidambaram (see Smith 1993: 62 and Smith 1996: 83). Thus, the custom of worshiping the space in Chidambaram developed a new architectural vocabulary namely *Chidambara Rahasyam* (Secret of *Chidambaram*) in Tamil.

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The other manifestation of Śiva is the *Liṅga*, which does not conform to any conceivable object\(^\text{10}\). The *Liṅga*, then, is both a form and without a conceivable form, so it can be understood as *rūpa-arūpa* “form and formlessness”. Evidence for this tripartite representation of Śiva in Chidambaram can be drawn from one of the verses in *Tirumantiram*, where Tirumūlar distinguishes the three terms namely uru ‘form’, aru ‘formless’ and *Para Rūpam* ‘all-pervading divine’\(^\text{11}\). As we will see below, textual evidence to substantiate the manifestation of the Lord Śiva in these three forms in *Chidambaram* is also found in the works of the Śaiva hymnists Appar, *Māṇikkavācakar* and Sundarar, whose dates are generally assumed to fall between 7\(^{\text{th}}\) and 8\(^{\text{th}}\) century C.E.\(^\text{12}\)

One of the significant references to the vocabulary of formlessness (*Arūpa*) occurs in one of the verses of the Tirumular’s *Tirumantiram* as follows.\(^\text{13}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{uruviniṇi yēninru uruvam punarkkum} & \quad \text{He has no form, but he forms the basis of all forms.} \\
\text{karuviṇṛ yēninru tāṇkaru vākum} & \quad \text{He is the Cosmic eye, the pervading power of all creations} \\
\text{aruviniṇi yēninra māyap pirānaik} & \quad \text{It is impossible for anyone to reach him without his attaining his grace.} \\
\text{karuvinī yāvarkkum kūṭaọṇṇātē.} & \text{without his attaining his grace.}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{10}\) Although there are many interpretations of the form of Liṅga, we confine ourselves to its concrete form, which is incomparable to any perceivable object.

\(^{11}\) *Tirumantiram*, (2790:69 Ninth tantra):

“For Rishis Patanjali and Vyagrapada

In the splendid Temple of Chidambaram

He danced as a Form, a Formless and a Cosmic Form,

With the Divine Grace of Sakti He danced,

He, the Citta, the Ananda; Gracefully stood and danced.” (Unless otherwise noted the translations of the Tamil hymns in this paper are rendered by the author, with necessary consultations of Smith 1996, Peterson 1989 and Shulman 1980.)

\(^{12}\) See Zvelebil (1998) for an account of the dates and the works of the Śaiva hymnists.

\(^{13}\) See Zvelebil (1998: 40–43) for an account of the dates between 7\(^{\text{th}}\) and 11\(^{\text{th}}\) century A.D. during which the poet saints including Māṇikkavācakar, tirumūlar, Nambi Anṭār nimbi, Cēkkilār, appar and campantar, who have made important mentions about both the dancing image as well as the Citambaram site. For the text, see *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar, trans and notes B. Naṭarājan, gen. Ed. N. Mahalingam (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1991).
Because this verse is included under the chapter on Corūpa utayam “Genesis of the magnificent form” (verses 2835 to 2846) in the Tirumantiram, it may be understood that the project that Tirumūlar develops concerns not the material form for the Lord, but an invisible, yet metaphysically perceivable form.

The Tamil version of Šaiva Siddhānta philosophy took its form largely from the works of the four Šaiva saints namely Tirumūlar (5th to 6th A.D), Appar (7th A.D.), Sundarar (7th A.D.) and Māṇikkavācakar (9th A.D). Essential to the teachings of the Tamil tradition of Šaiva Siddhānta is the study of the three metaphysical concepts namely pasu (soul), pati (god) and pāsa (bond), and these concepts have been discussed widely in the works of the Šaiva saints. Controlling one’s mind and senses so as to experience the supreme within is the principal goal of this tradition. All these saints claim that the Agamas come directly from Śiva himself. Māṇikkavācakar, who wrote one of the Tēvāram texts called the Tiruvācakam, claims that he was an ardent follower of the Agamas, which he regarded as the sacred revelation (Tiruvācakam 2: 20). Māṇikkavācakar claims that Śiva disclosed the Agamas from the Mahendra Hill through his five faces (Tiruvācakam 2: 20), and he recovered them from the great fish that swallowed the text (Tiruvācakam 2: 18).

The Tirumantiram is believed to have been offered to the world by the Lord Śiva himself through Tirumūlar. This text is well known for its treatment of Šaiva philosophy from the point of view of the yogic tradition, which is commonly attributed to
the Siddhars of the North India\textsuperscript{14}. According to the traditional accounts, he composed three thousand verses constituting the \textit{Tirumantiram} while in the state of meditation\textsuperscript{15}.

**Traditions of Āgamas and Tirumantiram**

Like the Veda, the Āgamas, according to Tirumūlar, are composed by Śiva himself.

\begin{verse}
anānāl arulāl aruluñ civākamām
Through His grace, the Śaiva āgamas are revealed by the Lord (58 and 64)
\end{verse}

Passing the text through Sakti, Sadasiva, Maheswara, Rudra deva, Vishnu and Brahmisa, the Lord presented the Āgamas, at the end, to Tirumūlar, who in turn offered them to the world in the form of three thousand verses composed in Tamil.

In a number of places in the \textit{Tirumantiram} we find references to Āgamas and their divisions in general terms as \textit{kāraṇam}, \textit{kāmikam}, \textit{cintiyam}, \textit{vātulam} and \textit{yāmaḷam}\textsuperscript{16}, but without any explanatory notes for these terms. Tirumūlar's references to these Sanskrit terms without much discussion suggest the popularity of the Āgamas during his time. Ishimatsu\textsuperscript{17} notes that the Āgamas and the ritual manuals in Sanskrit, on the other hand, virtually ignore the Tamil Śaiva works. One possible exception, however, is \textit{Pūrva Kāmikāgama} of the \textit{arcanam vidhi paṭala}, which according to her,

\textsuperscript{14} Legend has it that Tirumūlar was a North Indian yogi - also called \textit{Siddha} - came to the South and entered into the body of a dead shepherd boy, named mūlar, in order to soothe the crying cows, which were grief-stricken due to the death of their master. Unable to find his own body afterward, he remained in the body of the shepherd boy and went into the state of meditation.

\textsuperscript{15} It must be pointed out that there is no evidence whatsoever either in his own work or in any other texts substantiating this legendary background of Tirumūlar. Further, there is no textual evidence whatsoever to prove the fact that Tirumūlar is from North India and is not a South Indian. His north Indian origin must have been assumed by his “yogic” approach to worship of Śiva.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Tirumantiram}, verses 57 to 66.

\textsuperscript{17} Ishimatsu (1994).
makes a generic reference to Tamil Āgamas as *Drāvidabhāṣāṅgam*\(^{18}\), which needs to be chanted at the end of rituals.

The nine agamas that Tirumūlar claims to have obtained from the Lord himself include *Karanam*, *Kāmigam*, the *Vīram* ‘good’, the *Sindam* ‘high’, *Vadulam*, *Vyāmalam* ‘the other’, Kalottaram, the *Subram* ‘pure’ and *Makutam*\(^{19}\). *Tirumantiram* is divided into nine chapters and each one of them is understood to contain references from all of the nine Āgamas namely *Kāraṇāgāmam*, *Kāmigāmam*, *Vīrāgāmam*, *Cittāgāmam*, *Vāṭulāgāmam*, *Viyyālāgāmam*, *Kalottarāgāmam*, *Cuppirāgāmam* and makuṭāgāmam\(^{20}\). According to Tirumūlar, God (Śiva) composed the Āgamas in Sanskrit and Tamil simultaneously, and the Tamil version is known to us as *Tirumantiram*\(^{21}\).

By no means, can this be taken to mean that the *Tirumantiram* is a translation of the Sanskrit Āgamas. However, in all nine chapters, Tirumūlar discusses parallel ideas from the *padas* (divisions) of the Sanskrit Āgamas namely *cariya* (exoteric worship), *kriya* (esoteric ritual), *yoga* (exercising mental postures to realize the divine in *Jīvan*) and *Jñāna* (knowledge)\(^{22}\). We will see below that Tirumūlar's approach to Śiva worship concentrates on the last two *padas* namely *yoga* and *Jñāna paddas* in stating that

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\(^{19}\) *Tirumantiram*, Verse 63.


\(^{21}\) Tirumantiram, verse 66. It should also be noted that Tirumūlar does not make any explicit reference to any Āgamic text, either in Sanskrit or in Tamil, that would be considered as the authoritative source for Āgama. In the verses 57 to 66, however, he makes clear references to the presence of nine Āgamas, and their divisions, but what is not clear by this is whether he refers to the Sanskrit Āgamas, that he is adopting his work from, or they belong to any Tamil sources, which might have been destroyed.

\(^{22}\) The Cariya part deals with the service and teaches the basic moral values. The Kriya discusses rituals, Yoga for *asanas* and *pranayamas*, and *Jñāna Nyana* to deal with knowledge.
neñcam ‘heart’ is the temple and the Ciṟu ‘Cosmic eye’ is the divine element that dwells in it. In the other two padas namely cariya and kriya he discusses the ways by which one can realize the Ciṟu. What is basic to Tirumūlar’s treatment of divine worship is that god is formless, and in order to realize him one has to perform a series of ātmārta pūjas in the form of yogic postures, which help control one’s senses. This is in parallel to the Sanskrit Āgamas, which mainly endorse nitya pūja or parārta pūja to be conducted with idols and images at home and temple.

If Tirumūlar’s Tirumantiram is understood to be the Tamil version of the Āgamas, which stands in parallel to the corresponding Sanskrit version, the pūjas that Tirumūlar formulates neither contain any information about the consecration of temples, nor does it prescribe the details of daily rituals in a concise manner. Since neither the Tirumantiram, Tēvāram, nor Tiruvācakam postulate any ritual practices to be conducted in the temples, the Sanskrit Āgamas still stand as a religious manual to build temples and conduct rituals.

Zvelebil23, for example, comments that Tirumūlar makes almost no reference to the worship of God through arccanai (Tamil equivalent for Sanskrit word ‘arcanam’) in temples. The reason for this is that Tirumūlar’s account of Śiva worship, as already stated, focuses upon the principles of Yōga and Jñāna, according to which the human body is assumed to be the center of study both for the realization of god as well as for demonstrating one’s devotion to god through soul. Thus, Tirumūlar’s verses operate exclusively upon the central metaphor of “human body as temple” - omnipresence of the

god as not confined within the four walls of the temple, but existing within the human body itself. This is expressed precisely in the following verse from the *Tirumantiram*\(^{24}\):

> Mind is the magnificent temple, the fleshy body is the temple  
> For the generous Lord mouth is the gateway  
> For the enlightened ones the soul(čīvan) is the Śiva Linga  
> All the five senses are the ceaseless sacred lamps\(^{25}\).

Basic to the understanding of the human body as temple is the illustration of the notion of *enlightenment* (*Telintār*) of soul and the attainment of knowledge – i.e., *Jñāna*, by controlling all the five senses that are vulnerable to the worldly desires – i.e., *pāsa*. According to Tirumūlar, the soul - āvān – and Śivan are not to be understood as two different entities; often āvān fails to understand Śivan or is incapable of realizing it due to its preoccupations with *pāsa* – the worldly desires.

At the moment when āvān is capable of realizing Śivan, both āvān and Śivan unite to form a single entity.\(^{26}\) Tirumūlar illustrates this well using the figurative expression of a sculpture of an elephant made of wood and the mind. When the charm of the sculpture is stressed, the wood is out of focus, and when the wood is looked at attentively, the beauty of the sculpture goes unnoticed. Similarly, the āvān and Śivan are like the wood and sculpture. The charm of Śiva can be experienced only when the soul is free from all worldly desires. This requires an attentive meditation within one’s mind.

\(^{24}\) *Tirumantiram*, verse 1823.  
\(^{25}\) *Ullam perünkōyil ēnuṭampālayam*  
Vallār pirānārkkum vāy kōpura vāsal  
tellāt telintārkkuc čīvan cīvalingam  
Kaḷḷap pulanaintum kālā mani vilakkē

\(^{26}\) Ibid, verse 2017 and verse 2290.
The ultimate endeavor of realizing Śīvan within one’s ātman becomes the central focus of study in Tirumūlar’s work. His allegorical reference to the wandering soul as a cow that roams without any aim distinguishes two types of men: one belongs to the category of men who have not yet attained the wisdom of Śīvan in their ātman, and the other called Śiva yogis by Tirumūlar. The Śiva yogis, unlike the first type of men, enjoy the supreme bliss of Śiva within their ātman. Śiva yogis, who are like cows that yield precious milk, are the ones who attained knowledge - Jñāna – because of their enlightenment. The other type of men, by contrast, fail to become conscious of Śīvan in their soul (ātman) and thus remain barren.

Throughout his work Tirumūlar distinguishes between the two terms Siddhānta and Vedānta, which according to him, refer to the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta tradition of the South and the Sanskrit Vedic tradition of the North respectively. Both the Veda and the Āgama, according to Tirumūlar, are the creations of God and lead one to mutti (salvation) and the enlightenment of the Ātman.

The Supreme Bliss and the Dancing form of Śiva

Tirumūlar devotes an entire chapter in the ninth tantra to the dancing form of Śiva and the importance of the locus of Cittam on one’s forehead. The word Cittam is normally translated as ‘Consciousness’ by scholars mainly based on the Sanskrit word ‘Cittah’. But, what is stressed by Tirumūlar through the word “Cittam” in
nothing other than the notion of *Cittam* – the essence of all knowledge and power. This is the ‘supreme bliss’ that one experiences upon enlightenment by realizing Śivan in *Jīvan*. According to Tirumūlar, the spot between the two eyebrows is where one feels Śiva and that is where Jīvan is felt as well\(^31\).

> Between the eyebrows on the forehead  
> Experience the transcending Mantra upon careful observation  
> There remains the Graceful Lord to those dedicated  
> That is the Ciṟṟampalam where I have reached\(^32\).

Even though Younger\(^33\) observes the fact that that this chapter in the *Tirumantiram* is an elaborate theological interpretation of the Dancing Image of Chidambaram, but fails to capture the significance of the metaphysical representation of bliss in one’s *Jīvan*, which forms the core of this chapter. What Tirumūlar attempts to illustrate in this chapter is the ways in which one can realize the Śivan in Jīvan, and consequently enjoy the “supreme bliss”. The blissful state is symbolically represented in Chidambaram in the form of dancing Śiva.

**Pūja – Worship of Śiva, Guru and Mahēśvara**

The three chapters namely Śiva Pūja, Guru Pūja and *Mahēśvara Pūja* (worship of devotees) that Tirumūlar presents in the seventh *Tantra* deal with the ātmārtha, *Ajitāgama* and parārtha *pūjas*. These *pūjas* parallel the worship methods as defined

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\(^{31}\) Tirumantiram, verse 2770 repeated here.  
\(^{32}\) neṟṟikku nēṟē purvat tiḻaivelī  
urṟup pārkka voliviṆu mantiram  
pāṟukkuṟ pāṟāy parama niruntituṆ  
ciṟṟam palamenṟu cēntuko tēnē.  

in the Sanskrit *Kāranāgama*\textsuperscript{34}, but differ from them in stating the worshiping of Śiva in one’s own *Jīvan* in contrast to idol worship.

According to the *Kāranāgama*, *ātmārtha* worship is performed at home with one’s personal *liṅga* for the purpose of protecting the soul from everything\textsuperscript{35}. In the opening verse (1823) of the chapter on *Śiva Pūja*, Tirumūlar describes the objects of worship to be nothing other than one’s own body parts. As cited above, verse 2770 relates the body parts to the components of a temple as follows: the heart is the *garbhagrha*; the body is the temple tower; the mouth is the gateway; for the enlightened one the *Jīva* is the *liṅga*; and the ever-burning lamp is all the pervasive five senses.

In the subsequent verses of the same chapter, Tirumūlar illustrates how one would perform the *pūja* to the Lord who dwells in one’s own soul. According to him, chanting with the songs of praise to the Lord must be performed both in the morning and in the evening so that the god with matted hair (Śiva) would be pleased by it\textsuperscript{36}. The Tamil phrase *pāṭṭavi kāṭtatum* pālavi yācumē “songs are like milk” in this verse can be taken to mean that Tirumūlar is comparing his methods of worship of Śiva in one’s own heart with that of performing the ritual bath (Skt. *Abhiṣēka*) to the object of *liṅga* with milk.

A similar idea is expressed by him in another verse in the same chapter, but this time with a specific reference to the prayers with the folded hands. He states that those


\textsuperscript{36} *Tirumantiram*, verse 1824.
who are unable to express their devotion to Śiva within one’s heart are bound to experience the anguish in the ocean of sorrow\(^\text{37}\). Thus, praying to the deities with folded hands and meditating the Lord inside one’s heart are the two different types of ritual practice. He further asserts that those who can not praise the Lord who stays within the lotus of Jīvan (Āvik kamalam) are ignorant of the science of mantrā to be recited to him.\(^\text{38}\)

**Mahēśvara Pūja (Entertaining the Śiva bhaktas)**

One of the much discussed practices in Śiva bhakti is fulfilling the devotion to Śiva by duly respecting the Śaiva saints. Many legends reveal how Śiva bhakti is shown by the kings by treating the Śaiva saints respectfully. Tirumūlar devotes a separate section under the chapter *Mahēśvara Pūja* - ‘Puja to the great Lord’ - explaining how this is to be understood as Śiva bhakti. According to Tirumūlar, what is offered to god in temples is of no use to the Śiva bhaktas, but instead, what is offered to Śiva bhaktas is equivalent to offering to gods in temples (verse 1857). When a Śiva bhakta consumes the food offered to him by a respectful devotee, the pleasure that he gets is similar to the pleasure of all the lives in the three worlds (verse 1858). Tirumūlar suggests that offerings made to one Śiva bhakta finds no other match, neither offering to one thousand Brahmans nor building one thousand temples would be equivalent to this (verse 1860).

The entire chapter on *Mahēśvara Pūja* expresses the supreme nature of the Śiva bhaktas in comparison to the Brahmans and their ritual practice. This is another indication of the fact that there was indeed a contest over the hegemony of ritual beliefs and practices between the Brahminic and non-Brahminic traditions at the time of Tirumūlar.

\(^{37}\) Ibid. Verse 1834.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid. Verse. 1842.
Becoming a Śaivaite and uniting with Śiva

Goal of any Śaivaite is to attain mokṣa\(^{39}\)– the highest state of being that can be achieved by a soul - and it can only be attained by conducting a series of rituals that are capable of enabling the soul to obtain liberation from worldly bonds. Liberation of a soul is nothing other than uniting with Śiva, and thus, can be free from being born again. This spiritual state of the ‘divine body’, which is called ātmasuddhi, is the crucial part of daily worship. Smith’s discussion on liberation of the soul surrounding the three fetters namely mala, karman and māyā are based on Mṛgendrāgama and Kāmikāgama provide definitions of ritual practices to be conducted by humans with a liṅga. On a similar note, the Saiva Siddhānta discusses the process of freeing oneself from all the human qualities by transcending to the state of “Śiva yogis”, Siddhas and Šānis, who not only can liberate themselves from the worldly bonds, but also enjoy Śiva in their Jīvan.

One of the common problems of the Jīvan is to get trapped frequently in the bondages of life. Tirumūlar suggests that this is because of the Jīvan’s inability to control Vindu, ‘the source of creation’. In a separate section on the power of Vindu (the Tirumantiram, verses 1923 to 1974), Tirumūlar states how taking control of the power of Vindu, and not wasting it can lead one to attain the status of Śiva yogi\(^{40}\) and realize Śiva in the heart. “The power of Vindu is limitless and its commencement inside human body invokes all the powers of the five supreme gods Sadāśiva, Viṣṇu, Rudra, and

\(^{39}\)See Smith (1996: 83-111)

\(^{40}\)Tirumantiram, verse 1950.
Mahēśvara; and finally emerges as the power of Kuṇḍalini – the supreme strength” (Verse 1923).

Thus, Tirumūlar captures the two divine essentials central to the human body namely Jīvan and Vindu, and he attempts to relate them to the wisdom of Śiva from the point of view of Yōgic and Jñāna standpoints. His attempts to make the human body and heart sacred, and realizing the divine within the heart form the central point in his discussion. The Śiva Yōgis, who are not constrained by any fetters and worldly desires, according to Tirumūlar, are capable of achieving this state. Śiva Yōgis are the ones who always keep themselves away from the lustful eyes of women, and destroy the powers of evil elements in their mind. By doing so, they prevent the supreme energy of Vindu from being wasted (Verse1937). What Tirumūlar offers in the subsequent verses (1932 to 1947) in the same section is an illustration of how the accumulation of Vindu by controlling all they five senses leads to the union inside womb, and subsequently procreate the īcan “god” with a life and great power

...īcan uyirōṭum karuttatu vittaayk kaaraṇa kāriyam

‘that the god emanates in the form of ‘life’ becomes the cause of all the worldly deeds’ (verse 1947).

This metaphysical interpretation of sexual union and the cause for the materialization of īcan (karu) present an answer to the question of why Tirumūlar is formulating a Yōgic project focusing primarily upon the human body, both as a locus of worship as well as the object of worship.
Concluding Remarks

The two metaphysically significant terms Čīvan (Skt. Jīvan) and Žindu that Tirumūlar discusses in detail in his text play a crucial role in his defining the epistemological system of Šaiva philosophy. The ultimate goal of any human, according to Tirumūlar, is to become Težintār ‘enlightened’. Attaining this state requires controlling of Jīvan and Žindu in a proper manner. Contrastively, the Āgamas state that the worshipper transforms Šiva into liṅga and commences his services of worship on this embodied form⁴¹. Further, one finds in the Āgamic tradition a variety of this kind of ritual practices performed by the priests belonging to various categories of class and caste. To quote one example, the Sanskrit Āgamic texts, such as Suprabhedāgama and Rāmakaṇṭha’s Jātinirnaya pūrvakālayapraveśavidhi, as discussed in Smith (1991, p.70), groups worshippers into various categories and also assign restricted spaces only within which they can perform their rituals. This includes such relationships as the Šaiva-brāhmaṇa priests, non-ādiśaiva brahmans, common brahmans, Kings (ksatriyas), vaiśyas and Šudras.

But, Tirumūlar’s approach to Šiva worship, among many other distinguishing characteristics, does not propose any such hierarchical divisions of worshippers on the basis of their status or power. He knows only two types of worshippers namely those who are Šiva Yōgis and the others who are not, based strictly on how they perform the Yōgic practices, which he considers to be the path to attain the Wisdom of Šiva. In this sense, Tirumūlar’s Tirumantiram can be treated as an indigenous system of Āgamic

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practices concentrating on the human body itself. The Śaiva Siddhānta tradition that advocates a non-idol and monotheistic approach to Śiva worship are demonstrated in the texts of Śaiva Nāyanmars, including Tirumūlar. Tirumūlar’s *Tirumantiram*, which was composed much earlier than the other Śaiva texts, superimposes the idea of ‘man’ as a divine creation and he is the absolute potential for the divine power. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* states that the Soul and the supreme God are united together – *Atmāstham*:

> ‘Atmāstham ye anupasyanti tedhirah tesam sugham sasvatama na iteresam

--- *Svetasvatara Upanishad*

The same idea is revealed in *Tirumantiram* in the following verse, which states that realizing Śivan in one’s heart is the ultimate step toward the unity with Him, and to prepare oneself to achieve this spiritual experience is the goal of any soul.

Soul and Śivan are two different entities,
when the soul the soul is incapable of experiencing the Śivan.
When the soul realizes the Śivan within,
The soul and the Śivan appear as one.\(^{42}\)

References


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\(^{42}\) Cīvan enac cīvan enna veeṟillai
Gīvanār cīvanārai arikilar
Cīvanār cīvanārai arintapin


