

Group 4 The Glory of Saivism in Tamil Music

Saivites are those who are blessed to have Lord Shiva as their Supreme God. As there are Saivites, not only in India and Sri Lanka, but also in the many countries to which our people have migrated, Saivism now prospers all over the world.

Love (அன்பு), Morality(அறம்), Discipline(ஒழுக்கம்) and Rituals(கிரியை) are the four distinct values highlighted within Saivism. Those who pray and follow one or more of these doctrines are included within Saivism. Of these, Love and Rituals are both closely linked to our devotional songs. The Love you have for God, is known as Devotion(பக்தி). Therefore, when praying to Lord Shiva with devotion, we recite beautiful words describing His various names, the miracles He performed, the features of His treasured abodes, and put them to melody to form devotional songs. As Tamils, when we sing such hymns, in our mother tongue, it becomes Tamil Music.

There is much evidence that our Lord Shiva favours Tamil Music. When Lord Shiva intervened in the life of one of our Saiva Saints, Sundaramoorthy Nayanar, (அர்ச்சனை பாட்டேயாரும்) He declared, "Sundara! There are many songs recited in praise of me throughout this land. Hence, sing for me in purest Tamil!". Similarly, Lord Shiva asked Manikkavasagar to "use the voice that sang of Paavai to sing of Kovai". And thus, the Thirukovaiyar was composed.

Alongside Lord Shiva, His son Lord Murugan also requested Arunagirinathar to sing of Him in Tamil, leading to the creation of the Thiruppugazh, 'Muththai Tharu'. Nowadays, the worship of Lord Murugan, Lord Ganesha, Ambaal and Soorayan (the Sun) are all welcomed within the fold of Saivism. This inclusion is a distinct feature of Sri Lankan Saivites. As such, it has spread across all of the countries to which Sri Lankan Tamils have migrated over the years and can also be seen in their temples.

In this way, it is appropriate to approach Tamil Music as an important form of worship for Saiva devotees. From the founding of the Tamil language, Tamil Music has been intertwined with man from his birth to his death. Lullabies, marriage songs, pre-wedding ritual songs and funeral songs are all forms of Tamil Music that are part of our life stages. However, Tamil Music, created in devotion to Lord Shiva, raises it above all such examples.

Even though Tamil music has been present ever since Sangam times, it is believed that Karaikaal Ammaiyar was one of the earliest Saints who praised the Lord through Tamil music. Following her were the 4 Nayanmar (Saiva Saints), who composed Tamil songs with full devotion. Following that there was Katchiappar, Sekhilar, Thayumanavar, Kuruparrar and Vallalaar. More recently, there were keerthanais composed by Muthuthandavar, Papanasam Sivan and many more.

There is no doubt that if we sang Tamil hymns as intended, overwhelmed with devotion, with understanding of the lyrics and proper pronunciation, the same miracles of the Age of the Nayanmar would occur even today. Therefore, we should all sing Tamil devotional songs to pray to Lord Shiva and other deities, and strive to live lives that bring good to all!