

Saiva Devotional Literature that Emerged after the Thirumurais – Group 5

In the history of the Saiva religion, Saiva devotional songs have been composed by many saints. Devotional literature has been composed in Tamil to a greater extent than any other language. Following the devotional tradition that had developed since ancient times, these saints enriched and firmly established Saivism. This was called the ‘Bhakti Movement’.

The twelve Thirumurais are the most important among the devotional literature of Saivism. They are a collection of Saiva religious works that appeared during and after the Sangam era. The word “Thirumurai” means ‘a book with divine qualities’. Apart from these, many more Saiva devotional compositions appeared in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka and help us to understand the religious and social history of those 2000 years. These Saiva devotional compositions have played a major role in the rise of Tamil, music and art in our culture.

In our ancient history, Tamils lived without religious differences. Over time, the principles of life, combined with the spirit of morality, became the reason for the emergence of the Bhakti movement. This movement, founded by the Nayanmars, grew to become a religious revolution after the tenth century. In every era, sages emerged and drove the chariot of the Bhakti movement forwards. As a result, God-consciousness and the path of devotion were continuously developed in various ways. Thus, countless saints, who came after the Nayanmars, have contributed greatly to Saivism - through their words, books and lives.

One of them - Thayumanavar, describes the special qualities of Saivism:

“சைவ சமயமே சமயம் சமயாதீதப் பழம்பொருளைக்

கைவந்திடவே மன்றுள் வெளி காட்டும்; இந்தக் கருத்தை விட்டுப்

பொய் வந்துழலும் சமயநெறி புகுத வேண்டாம்; முத்தி தரும்

தெய்வ சபையைக் காண்பதற்குச் சேர வாடும் ஐகத்தீரே!”

“The Saiva religion is the one religion

That exhibits the Primordial Being, that is beyond all religions.

Ignoring this concept, do not enter into a false religious system,

Oh people of the world! Come and see the assembly of the God that gives liberation!”

The devotional literature that emerged after the Thirumurais include Saiva Siddhanta books, Siddha songs, translated Saiva books, Thala Puranas, Veera Saiva books, and general books like the Kanda Puranam. Along with the Sakalalakavalli Maalai, composed by Kumaragurupara Swamigal in the sixteenth century, Pillai Tamil, Thayumanavarin Paraparakanni, the Thiruvartpa of Vallalar Swamigal in the nineteenth century the Naalvar Manimalai of Sivaprakasamunivar and the devotional songs of Mahakavi Bharathiyar are worthy of praise. The kirtanas composed by Gopala Krishna Bharathiyar, Muthuthandavar and Paapanaasa Sivan deserve special mention.

In Eelam too, Srilasree Arumuganavalar, Yogar Swamigal, Chinnathambi Pulavar, Varatha Pandithar, Swami Vipulaanandar and Navaaliyur Somasundarapulavar, who renounced worldly life and grew up steeped in Saivism, created devotional literature and guided the followers of Saivism to eternal bliss.

May we all live as Saivites and rise to greater spiritual heights by following the path to Lord Shiva, shown by them.