THE PATH OF THE NAYANARS
Category : April 1983
Published by Anonymous on Apr. 01, 1983

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Vanakkam! Being here at Annamalai University is like the completion of a cycle. The great founder of this institution had a relative in Sri Lanka who took me to see my Guru, Siva Yogasami, for the first time. His name was Kandiah Chettiar. So the name of this University has always been in my mind since twenty-two years of age, from that early time. So I have always looked forward to being here one day. But I never expected to have the honor and privilege of opening and blessing this philosophy association. All of you young people have a rare opportunity. Do you know what kind of a rare opportunity you have? The opportunity to be the leaders of tomorrow. You are the most important people on the earth today, because everything on the earth will be yours one day. You will be in charge, and you are preparing yourselves with one of the greatest forms of knowledge: philosophy.

Our great religion, the Saivite Hindu religion, has never been created by God Siva Himself, through God Siva's relationship with His devotees. Since it was never created, it can never be destroyed. The Saiva Samayam is the natural religion of the Tamil people. This religion of ours is divided into three sections, and this is how it survives. One section is the temple and the worship of God within the temple. The other section of the religion is the philosophy, not only the philosophy of our religion, but all philosophies related to our philosophy, which help to clarify that philosophy for each and every one of us. And the third section, what is that? That is the Guru, the Guru, who teaches who teaches you to internalize your worship, internalize your worship and realize light, Siva, within yourself. Each and every one of you in this room today will have the opportunity for self-inquiry if you face philosophy in that way.

In my early years, I had the opportunity to study a little bit about each of the religions of the world. First, at ten years of age I was introduced to the Saiva Samayam, to Lord Siva Nataraja. A very dear friend of our family spent five years as the guest of the Maharaja of Mysore, studying the culture, the art, the dance, the music, the philosophy and gaining knowledge about Siva. At that early time in my life I learned that God Siva is the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer - Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra - all in One, the three functions of our Great God Siva.

Ten years of age. That started my quest for Self, for the light within, and each of the religions approached me before I got to my guru. I studied Buddhism and found that Buddha and his teachings, what did it come to? It did not bring that light within. I studied Christianity according to its teachings and its promises, but what did it come to? It did not bring that light within. I studied Islam according to its teachings and what it had come to. It did not bring that light within. It did not stimulate that fire within. Then I was taken to the temples, the Saivite temples, and felt the stir of my own inner being during the puja within the temple. I could see the God enter the sanctum sanctorum and bless the people, coming from the Sivaloka into the Devaloka and into this First World and blessing the people who came to the temple. Then I was taken to my Guru, Siva Yogaswami, and saw the fire of Siva. I found that in the Saiva Samayam, your own Saiva Samayam, the religion that the Tamil people have been carrying forward for the last ten thousands years or more, there was the path to the light within. In the Saiva Samayam I found not only the awakening of, but the control of the kundalini force, the force which gives brilliancy of mind and astute knowledge from within when needed. So, my Guru told me to study the book, Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms, saying "Study this book and go into yoga," and it was the only book that I studied. Then in the years to follow, great efforts were made to bring the Saiva Samayam, in its simplicity not its complexity, but its simplicity, to the people in America, to the Eastern souls in Western bodies.

I was told that the Saiva Samayam is like ghee. The grass goes into the cow, the milk comes out of the cow. The cream is taken from the milk, and then finally we have ghee. And ghee will light a lamp. Our religion is so simple and so deep. Unless a religion lights up a light within you, what good is it in this age of technology? Unless your religion lights a lamp within you and gives you peace of mind while working a factory, sitting at a computer, running some kind of an automobile or tractor or machinery, or discussing business, in this high-powered age, what good is it? Well, that is what people are asking, but discovering. No good. And religious are falling by the wayside because they are not serving the need of the people at this time on this planet. Because the ghee is not there, the light is not there. The philosophy, the guru, the temple, all working in concert, one with another, is the fullness of our religion. You can enter a Siva temple with your mind absolutely confused and bewildered, place your problems at the Feet of Lord Siva and walk away from the temple in a peaceful state, even wondering what you were worried about. Such is the magic of the great psychiatrists, the Gods that inhabit these great temples. This is the essence of the Saiva Samayam that I was taken into and asked to teach as a sannyasin.

As the years went by, we developed in the West a Catechism for the Saiva Samayam and a Creed for the Saiva Samayam. A religion is not considered a

religion in our country unless it has a catechism, a creed, a school for a ministry, and regular lectures and services for the people. Also, when a religion moves to a new country, it must be codified, it must be brought down to the very essence of itself in order for the people in the new country to understand it and compare it against the other religions that are existing there.

To find the ghee, to codify the religion in our Catechism and Creed, we looked at the Saiva Samayam as it was a thousand years ago, when all India worshipped Siva, when India was the most productive and richest, most powerful country in the world, and when people worked together, created together, lifted one another up, became wealthy together, built great temples together, had great systems of government and fulfilled their dharma together.

This Catechism and Creed is based on the Tirumular Saiva Siddhanta; as Dr. Pillai, head of the Philosophy Department here, has said, the original Saiva Siddhanta. We've been asked to present these two books to be made a part of your philosophy department. We are very happy to present them.

Now is the time when we need factual knowledge, not knowledge that keeps changing from day to day, but factual knowledges as to how religion can help us to live our day to day life. We have found that all religions are not one and the same, and they do not lead us to the same goal, nor do they even make the same promises that they will. Our Aadheenam did four years of research. Not only talking to religious leaders informed us of this fact, but reading their books, studying pamphlets, and so forth. The Jewish religion, for instance, does not even pretend to lead a person within himself. Their God is a wrathful God. They do not accept Hinduism at all. They do not even acknowledge the existence of Christianity. The Christian religion does not believe in karma. And holding the belief that God is everywhere and in all things could cause you to be thrown out of the Catholic Church as an enemy to the Church. We were amazed to find out all of these things.

We are doing research into samskaras, into the sacraments of the Saiva Samayam. An ancient part of the religion is the sacraments, and the knowledge that came within the priesthood, a very important part of life, very necessary for our journey from birth to death, into the hereafter and into the next life. These great sacraments are not to be discarded, but to be perpetuated in our lives, in whatever country in the world Saivites live, practiced in a knowledgeable way. But

we find that the sacraments of our religion, all of that great knowledge, has been lost in many countries of the world. In Trinidad, South Africa, even Saivite Hindus living in the United States have been raised in Western ways of thinking and have neglected to carry that knowledge of the samskaras over to our country with them for the sake of their children. This is some of the kinds of research that Kauai Aadheenam has been doing to bring to the knowledge of the general Saivite public the importance of the fullness of our religion.

Of course, I know that you will be studying all of the philosophies of Hinduism, of which there are many, but it is important to remember that only one will benefit you. Only one will fit you. It is for you to make your personal choice and settle on one theology that will carry you to your inner goal and lead you to the feet of some guru, lead you to the feet of some god, to fulfill, completely fulfill, your life on this planet in this technological age.

For us, we follow the path of the Nayanars, the 63 saints who lived Siva, spoke of Siva and were burning with the fire of Siva, the same fire that digests your food. When that fire is lifted, bhakti warms the heart and gives us compassion. When that fire is lifted to the neck chakra, it causes us to have inner knowledge of the inner workings of this universe, of which we are all a part. And it is the duty of each of the philosophies and each of the religions of the world to lead us to one ultimate goal. But they do not all make the same promises; they do not all promise to lead us to the same ultimate goal. We have studied it very carefully, very very carefully.

But we are satisfied with the Saiva Samayam, and we are making a concerted effort to keep the ghee from being spoiled by putting water in it. When we put water in ghee, when we start to do that, it begins to spoil, and finally it is greasy water. I call liberal Hinduism, this movement which is so prevalent in the world today, "greasy water." It is only worth throwing out to help make more grass for the cow to eat to make a fresh pot of ghee.

What is liberal Hinduism? It is adding to the ghee the idea that Vishnu is separate God from Siva. It is saying, "Let all of us Saivites bring in the Vaishnavites and go along with their idea that Vishnu is a separate God from Siva. Is that our final conclusion of Saiva Siddhanta? God Siva is the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer - Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. How did it get separated? Rather than converting the Vaishnava people into the Saiva Samayam like they used to do, now

we want to dilute the Saiva Samayam and include the Vaishnava people without converting them. While the Vaishnava people are diluting their religion, including everybody, and we get some water in both pots of ghee. The next thing, we don't like Christian conversions, so we bring in Christianity and put Jesus on our altar, and Mohammed on our altar, and Buddha on our altar. More water in the ghee. Recently, one educated Saivite gentleman in Madurai said, "Yes, you are right, Gurudeva, we have become so liberal that now we have become disinterested and fail to pass this great religion on to our children." Why? Greasy water, fermented ghee that won't even light a lamp any more. It's not even worth passing on to anybody is it? It's just rotten. Wash your hands and go on with life.

We, as Saiva Swamis, are trying to firm up the boundaries of the Saiva Samayam. In America, if a Christian is interested in the Saiva Samayam, we say "We are very pleased to hear of your interest in Saiva Samayam. But you have a good religion already." Hundreds of Christians have said, "Yes, I have a good religion but it doesn't lead me within myself. I do not believe that my soul was born impure. The ancients never taught that the soul is born impure. I don't believe that." We say, "Fine, study your religion, study our religion, and then if you are still interested, make a complete severance." And they do so by going to the archbishop, getting a letter from the archbishop stating that they are now leaving the Catholic Church and entering the Saivite Hindu religion, and are no longer a part of Catholicism. Thus, they make clean cut conversions from the boundaries of one religion. That gives them strength of purpose and strength of character, rather than us broadening the boundaries of the Saiva Samayam, until we have no more ghee, no more light, only confusion.

All of this you philosophy students can study - what is happening in the world today as far as philosophy goes, as far as religion goes. A university is a platform for open inquiry, open inquiry. And the best that can be taught to you at any university, in philosophy, in science, is to think for yourself. Think for yourself. I once listened to a lecture given by a multi-millionaire in America, a great philanthropist and this will interest all of who want to get rich. If you want to get rich, either spiritually or materially, and want to get the best out of life, this millionaire said, this is the way to do it. He said, "Think. Think. Think. Think. Think. Think. Think. Think..." And that was his lecture. For one hour he stood there and told a group of two thousand young people to think. Take knowledge and develop it within yourself through thinking. We are sure that this great university will stimulate you to think like you have never thought before, as you study the great philosophies of the dharma that keeps reappearing on the earth, the Sanatana Dharma. It ever appears on the earth wherever man is, the religion that has no beginning and hence will have no end. AUM NAMASIVAYA AUM NAMASIVAYA AUM NAMASIVAYA AUM.

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