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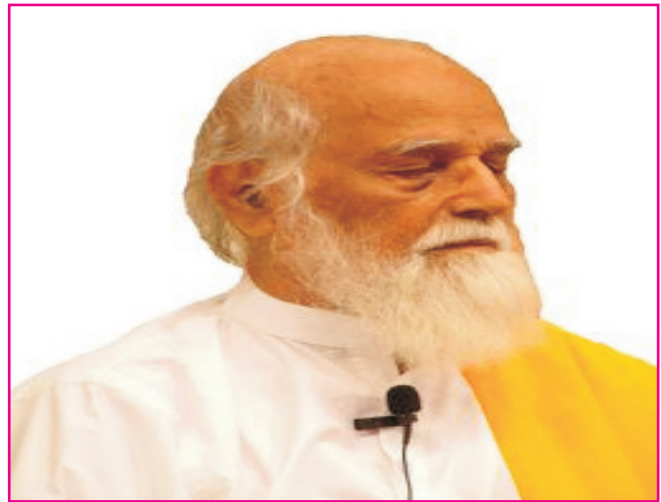
INFLUENCE OF SIDDHA PHILOSOPHY ON VETHATHIRI MAHARISHI THE FOUNDER OF SKY YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Vethathiri Maharishi was very much traditionally influenced by the Siddha tradition, which was very much prevalent in Tamilnadu. Vethathiri used their notations as hand maids for his philosophical quest. The Kundalini yoga system, which is modified by Vethathiri was fundamentally belonging to the Siddha tradition. He had also found their medical system and also the secret Yoga techniques like Kayakalpa Yoga. He had understood the need of having longevity for the physical body and he clearly understood that the wisdom and Divine spirit is present only through the body. The Thirumandira yoga of Thirumoolar made him to think. He had compared Shiva yoga, Kundalini Yoga and Thirumandira yoga of the Siddha tradition. He concluded that the life with austerities as led by the siddhas cannot be led in this contemporary world. Maharishi always insisted to get married and live a happy and prosperous yogic life. Since the siddhas achieved the ultimate even by leading a family life, it made Maharishi also to follow the same path. Any how he had made the siddha tradition as his foundation to realize the never changeable cosmic values for a Spiritual achievement. "Tamil Nadu was the main region of activity of the siddhas and their culture has been inherited by us. The time has come to spread the philosophy of the Siddhas to the rest of the world and this duty has been cast upon the World Community Service Centre. This study is an effort to find out how Vethathiri Maharishi was influenced by the Siddha philosophy.



KEYWORDS: Prevalent, Notation, Longevity, Maid and Quest.

This paper deals with the following in detail:

1. Brief introduction of the siddhas
2. Siddha tradition
3. Siddha Philosophy-Tenets of the Siddhas
4. Influence of Siddhas on Vethathiri
5. Way of life of Siddhas
6. Solutions found by Vethathiri to his problems in siddhas
7. Modifications made by Vethathiri suitable to the modern world.
8. Conclusion

1. Brief introduction of the Siddhas:

The Siddhas are saints in India, mostly Shaiva, in Tamil Nadu, who professed and practiced an unorthodox type of sadhana (spiritual practices) to attain liberation. A Siddha obtains yogic powers called siddhi by constant practice of certain yogic disciplines and tapas. Siddhas are people who are believed to control and transcend the barriers of time and space by meditation (Yoga), the use of substances called Rasayanas that transform the body to make it potentially deathless, and a particular type of Pranayama (breathing-practice). Through their practices they are believed to have reached stages of insight which enabled them to tune into the powers hidden in various material substances and practices. Siddhas were knowledgeable in science, technology, astronomy, literature, fine arts, music, drama, dance, and provided solutions to common people in their illness and advice for their future. Typically Siddhas were saints, doctors, alchemists and mystics all at once. They wrote their findings in the form of poems in the Tamil language, called as siddhar padalgal. In this way Siddhas developed, among other branches of a vast knowledge-system, what is now known as Siddha medicine, practiced mainly in Tamil Nadu as a type of traditional native medicine. A rustic form of healing that is similar to Siddha medicine has since been practiced by experienced elders in the villages of Tamil Nadu. Siddhar who found new methods of medication; were unique in worshipping God and way of living. Siddha philosophy is deeply rooted and it cannot be uprooted, it is always accepted by many and is suitable even for the future generation.

2. Siddha tradition:

There are 18 siddhars in the Tamil Siddha tradition. They are: Patanjali, Agastya, Kamalamuni, Tirumoolar, Kuthambai, Korakkar, Thanvandri, Konganar, Sattamuni, Vanmeegar, Ramadevar, Nandeeswarar (Nandidevar), Edaikkadar, Machamuni, Karuvoorar, Bogar, Pambatti, Sundarandandar.

3. Siddha Philosophy- Core principles in the tenets of life of Siddhas:

1. Delightful enjoyment 2. Charity and 3. Immortality.

1. Delightful enjoyment: Enjoyment in the language of Siddhas – a practical, sensible method to derive unalloyed pleasure, causing no harm to self or other beings, either at the present or in future. Enjoyment is achieved by the usage of the senses with awareness of the results under limit and method. Then only life would be without pain. A pleasurable life would get set. Delightful enjoyment points to such a responsible style of life.

2. Charity: “Charity” according to siddhas, means a state of surplus in one’s resources. Begging and beseeching were wholly foreign to their nature. Constantly adding to one’s knowledge and putting that knowledge to use for the benefit of others; expanding ones material resources and being active in applying those resources for the welfare of others; and always assessing “Where I am, What I am and How I am ‘so as to be of maximum service to self, family, relatives, countrymen and world community- these are the ingredients of charity. Charity emphasizes developing the fitness and readiness to help others all the time with use of the body, material and potential. Charity is a very important principle. One should not expect anything from anybody. Never stretch your hands for alms. The feelings of need and desire to help others may arise in the minds of some people in the society. Only to help them fulfill their desire one can receive from them. Charity comprises contentment, self-confidence, and taking care of the welfare of others.

3. Deathlessness: The crowning feature of the siddhas way of living was “Deathlessness”. Instead of falling a helpless victim to death, these brave, bold men could remain immortal if they chose to do so. When does the body disintegrate into the elements? When the life-energy, takes leave of it. Suppose one could retain the life energy, then evidently the body would not fall apart. The Siddhas mastered this science too; and 18 of them are still in Jiva Samadhi at shrines which are well known pilgrimcenters in southern India.

4. SIDDHARS INFLUENCE ON VETHATHIRI MAHARISHI:

i. Family life:

Siddhas were great people who had achieved the highest knowledge but lived a very simple family life. This principle of Siddhas influenced Maharishi. “Quite a few of the siddhas were family men in the thick or worldly life but that was no impediment to their self-realization. If only this fact is highlighted, it would help many persons to shed their irrational fear of yoga. Maharishi advocated that the home is the best place for Spiritual progress and if yoga benefits you, then it would benefit your wife and husband and children too in equal

measure”.

ii. Immortality:

One can extend the relationship between the body and life force to any length of time when one had realized all the facts about the body, the life force, the consciousness, and the cause and effect principle. One can acquire the capacity to protect and retain the life force from draining out without his knowledge, and to make his own demise happen only upon his wish by making the life force to be interred in his body itself. The suitable practice towards it lies in art of Kayakalpa

Value of Kayakalpa Yoga:

By sublimating and recycling the sexual vital fluid
 Kayakalpa frees you from a variety of earth-bound ills.
 Your mind develops strength and Contentment comes to stay;
 Charity, compassion, and Chastity-consciousness,
 Patience, forgiveness, and Acuity of intellect-
 All these become part of your nature and being.
 Your thought gets oriented to the absolute direct
 And fear of death withers in the effulgence of Wisdom.

Only through the practice of this art one can extend his life time until he could realize the Divinity which happens to be the prime aim of his birth. One can bring an end to his life merging his self with Divinity which is the Absolute Expansiveness by taking his consciousness also to a highly expanded state. Since the life force is made to be interred in the body itself the particular life force would not have the chance to go and join any other body and so would rest in the body itself. The life of those who attained such an end is praised to be ‘Immortal &Prideful life’ (Maranamilla Peruvalu). Siddhars had been practicing the exercise of folding the tongue and pressing it against the palate to prolong their life span to a greatest extent. That exercise was called as Lambika yoga. Kayakalpa Yoga system was synthesized by the benevolent sages of Tamilnadu revered as Siddhas, some thousands of years ago. They had given out the formula in abstruse code so that it may not be used without responsibility; and only the yogis and a very limited number of family men fortunate to derive its benefits. The Siddhars of South India, who did researches for the welfare of humankind, realized these facts and altruistically contributed certain exercises to humanity designed to purify and strengthen the sexual vital fluid. These regenerative exercises are called ‘Kayakalpa’ yoga. It is simple to learn and easy to practice.

iii. Limit and method:

The world is a stage displaying a variety of objects and scenes;
 And drawn by the spectacle, the senses seek enjoyment.
 Imprints were already there and these being activated,
 The mind has now become a hall of exhibits.
 Hence the reluctance of the world-soaked mind to accept
 The vision of Excellence. But despair not, my friends,
 The distracting exhibition would not cause you harm,
 If only you develop awareness constant and
 Apply the principle of “Limit and Method”
 Whenever you go in for worldly enjoyment....

Maharishi said that there will not be any suffering when man enjoys (1) food, (2) work, (3) sleep, (4) sexual gratification and (5) thought with limit and method as he lives in this world. Enjoying these five in excess or less is not a measure. Method is enjoying in coordination with nature, not against it.

5. SIDDHAS WAY OF LIFE:

Siddhas lived a very simple family life. In ancient days Siddhas did many mystics only for the prosperity of the Human race. They saw the people suffering from diseases and poverty, to help them out of these sufferings

they used the mystic powers. They did it as a duty. Siddhas always lived with a purpose. Rather than establishing there fame they tried to establish a strong medical system. Immense effort has been put by the siddhas in improving the level of consciousness in humans. Sivavakkiyar was resolutely opposed to the caste system and was opposed to idol worship and temple ceremonies. His rebellion against any kind of orthodoxy meant his work was left out of the Saiva canonical literature however some of his poetry is well read in Tamil literary compendiums. Siddhas are those who had faith on God. They accept that there is bigger force existing both in the sky and earth. Since they questioned the rituals followed by the people they were called as rational thinkers. We can assume that without showing any differences in men they have showed the right path of living.

Vethathiri Maharishi is in parallel with the Siddhas in using his labor and knowledge for the sake of uplifting the society which is unveiled in one of his poems mentioned below:

“Eschewing expectation and disappointment too
And placing as capital my labor and knowledge,
I was determined to do my duties
In a manner that would bring in results good
Spreading lights and warmth like sunbeams over the globe.
Problems that were puzzles could then be unraveled
Through the surge of Grace welling-up from forth only
Excellence and having seen the shape,
I greet you in ecstasy “Be blessed with all that is best.”

Vethathiri Maharishi in one song expresses that god is within you and you are within him. Maharishis idea of God is that the God dwells inside the objects and appearances. That can be traced and enjoyed when the mind retracts and merges in the life force which is its source.

The conjoined functioning of life-energy particles
Manifests as the world and all objects and appearances.
Truth is that which is in-dwelling in all these
And functioning as Consciousness is called the Absolute also.
The projecting mind is the world and when it reacts and merges in
The life-force which is its source- That process is mediation.

6. SOLUTIONS FOUND BY VETHATHIRI TO HIS PROBLEMS IN SIDDHAS:

Though Maharishi had worked hard in the textile mill, his mind always craved to see god; the questions that arose in the young mind of Vethathiri never took rest. With this craving he habituated to go to the Ganesha temple where he heard the song “Angingyennadapadi.....” This song became the foundation for Maharishis Advaita philosophy. Just as the story of Satya Harish Chandra changed the life of Gandhi, this song had created a strong impact on Vethathiri. Through this song Maharishi could come to the conclusion that God is formless and it is unperceivable and that is the Absolute Space with four characters and three potentials.

7. MODIFICATIONS MADE SUITABLE TO THE MODERN WORLD:

Maharishi simplified the Kundalini yoga technique, gave some steps to be followed to practice. He gave preference for women to undergo this training irrespective of caste, creed, color and religion. After understanding the way of life Siddhas have lived Maharishi took unshakable steps to teach Kundalini yoga and Kayakalpa for family men, since family life was not an impediment for these practices. In fact Maharishi had given concession for couples who willingly came to learn these practices. Hence this philosophy could reach many families.

8. CONCLUSION:

There are some features which are typical for all or almost all Siddhas as a body of thinkers. First, in sharp opposition to the bhakti tradition, they refuse to allow themselves be carried away by idol worship in particular temples. Second, in contrast to bhakti which emphasizes passionate devotion to God, the siddhar emphasize

knowledge, yoga practice, and character, moral behavior, right conduct. They believed that Anger, lust and egotism are the worst sins. Third, almost all siddhars raise a protests against caste and casteism.

Vethathiri Maharishi stands as a solution for all the problems faced by the Siddhas. Though siddhars could find solution for many problems, they could not explain them in the way such that even lay man can understand. But Maharishi has given a practical method to understand and feel the real God. He has coined practical ways to come out of six temperaments and develop moral behavior and live in accordance with the Nature. With all these observations we can assume that Maharishi has observed the Siddha philosophy and stood as a solution for it in the modern world.

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