

Indian alchemy

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AN INTERVIEW WITH A BOHEMIAN HERMETICIST

by Joseph Caezza

Lubos Antonin studied philosophy at Prague's prestigious Charles University and worked as a dissident in the Czech cultural underground during the '70's and 80's. He served for 5 years as vice president of the prominent Czech Hermetic organization, UNIVERSALIA. This organization co-sponsored the Rosicrucian Enlightenment conference in Southern Bohemia's Cesky Krumlov in 1995. (See THE STONE No. 14) He more recently played a major role in the conference on "PRAGUE, ALCHEMY and the HERMETIC TRADITION" during 1997. A stellar cast of scholars including Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, Adam McLean, Joscelyn Godwin, Cherry Gilchrist, Chris McIntosh, Chris Bamford, Rafal Prinke, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke and a host of Czech Hermeticists indulged in four days of discourse and dialogue. Following this event Lubos co-led an excursion to some of the more obscure regions of Bohemia to trace the footsteps of John Dee and Edward Kelley. Lubos played a key role in organizing the "OPUS MAGNUM" exhibit which accompanied this conference. This exhibit, located in the gothic "House of the Stone Bell" in OLD TOWN SQUARE provided a multimedia alchemical initiation experience wherein participants proceeded from the basement through four floors using a spiral staircase to encounter phases of the GREAT WORK. The exhibit displayed obscure historic books and artifacts. It was monumentalized in a large format quality bilingual volume entitled: *OPUS MAGNUM: The Book of Sacred Geometry, Alchemy, Magic, Astrology, The Kabbala and Secret Societies of Bohemia*. Lubos contributed an outstanding article to this book on the subject of natural magic. Presently he works in Prague's National Museum as custodian of 300 castle libraries.

This past summer Lubos gave me a personal tour of the National Museum's renowned mineral collection. He then escorted me to Vysehrad, Prague's hilltop sanctuary for a moment of profound contemplative silence.

Jan Vanis's contemporary book, *A GUIDE TO MYSTERIOUS PRAGUE*, describes Vysehrad as the ancient fortress of Prague's patroness, Libuse, the pagan prophetess princess. Jan Vanis cites contemporary folklore which tells how Libuse sleeps with her army of knights in catacombs beneath Vysehrad. Fables assert that in times of trouble they will awaken to aid the Czech nation. This belief is only a modern metamorphosis of older Bohemian legends connected to St. Wenceslas, Mt. Blanik and Melnik. One meets here the myth of the hallowed hollow hill inhabited by helpful higher beings. Other examples may be found at Mt. Girnar or Mt. Arunachala in India, the Glastonbury Tor in England or Mt. Shasta in Northern California. These helpful higher beings serve as "watchers" standing guard over a collective consciousness. They fulfill the duty of an "egregore", a term derived from the Greek word for "watcher". This term usually refers to the autonomous psychic residue of a group mind. Such an egregore bespeaks a yet to be heard wisdom. It shines a yet to be seen illumination dormant in stone. Recovery of this wisdom and light remains the labor of the alchemist...and men such as Lubos Antonin.

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J.C. Lubos, how do you integrate your professional work with active practice of Hermetic Wisdom?

L.A. I began my academic training in Philosophy late in life at the age of 27. While engaged in the study of philosophy from Heidegger to Post-Modernism I discovered Alchemy and Mysticism. I realized something was missing from our understanding of Renaissance philosophy. Bruno for example could not be understood as only a philosopher but as a practicing Hermeticist. My interests followed his interests in Marsiglio Ficino. So I began related studies of the Enlightenment. I discovered that scholars of the Enlightenment not just scholars of the Renaissance studied alchemy. I did not expect this! I prepared an exhibit for the National Museum in 1994 documenting this. It was called "The Kingdom of Alchemy". Thus I integrate my job and personal work. My long

term professional work involves compiling an alchemical bibliography of Czech Hermetic Literature from 300 castle libraries. I hope to show with concrete examples the history of Czech alchemy. The people here involved with natural science were very interested in alchemy. Industrial science, for example processing coal and steel, is very important in this country. There is an awesome relationship of alchemy to industrial science and anti-dogmatic post-modernist philosophy.

J.C. What kind of activities preoccupy Czech Hermetic Philosophers? What is the role of organizations like UNIVERSALIA?

L.A. For me now it is simply a matter of collecting and studying alchemical texts. Thanks to this I have seen what Czech alchemists actually do. I assist them in locating and interpreting classical texts. In the 20th century there is a long tradition of practical alchemy here. It emerged as a belief system derived from Templar, Masonic and Rosicrucian traditions in which actual practice is unconditionally necessary. Although it has presently ceased to exist, the pre-world war organization, UNIVERSALIA, was revived in 1990. Its former president, Vladislav Zadrobilek, with his publishing company, Trigon, functioned to republish many classic alchemical texts. They made possible the recent OPUS MAGNUM exhibit and the catalogue that so well documents Czech alchemical history.

J.C. Could you please tell us briefly the great alchemical myth of the founding of Prague by the pagan princess prophetess, Libuse and her ploughman husband, Premysl?

L.A. This is very significant. Libuse is the Czech version of the Delphic Sibyl. She was a virgin ruler of the people here perhaps more than twelve hundred years ago. They were not satisfied with a woman ruler and demanded a king. From her fortress presumed now to be at Vysehrad she went into a trance. She ordered her soldiers to follow her white horse through the forest to the future king. The horse led the soldiers to the ploughman, Premysl. They presented him with fine clothes and an invitation to become king. He set free his oxen who disappeared into the earth or according to other versions ascended into the sky. Then he placed his ploughman's staff into the ground and it immediately took root, blossomed and flowered. According to some versions at the time he was approached he was using his iron plough blade as a table for his lunch. All of these items have Hermetic import. He went on to become a great ruler. The country blossomed and flowered.

I personally went to the place where this happened. During a rain storm I used my screw driver to dig up some sacred mud. As I dug, my screw driver became mysteriously deformed. I got some mud and made a cup which for me embodies the sacredness of the Holy Grail.

It is believed that Libuse still sleeps under the hilltop fortress of Vysehrad and will awaken when Bohemia is in greatest danger. During the Velvet Revolution, on the 17th of November, 1989, thousands of students spontaneously assembled at Prague's south end, upon Vysehrad's temenos, the sacred precinct of Libuse. They lit candles and held an all night vigil as if to invoke her help. Then followed the miraculous bloodless revolution. The communists quit. The Russians went home. Democracy was restored.

J.C. Is this myth alive for the Czech youth today?

L.A. Consciously no it is not. But unconsciously this myth is a vital part of contemporary Czech culture. Its origins might only have emerged from the romanticism of the 19th century Czech National Revival. There are older versions of this myth. According to some the knights of St. Wenceslas sleep inside the sacred hollow mountain of Blanik or beneath the castle fortress of Melnik waiting to come to the aid of Bohemia in its hour of greatest need. Other versions have nothing to do with St. Wenceslas. This collective memory although not clear is yet alive and sleeps in the Czech landscape. The recent Czech Olympic Hockey victory is an aspect of this egregore of Wenceslas and his knights coming to the aid of Bohemia. For a moment his sleeping soldiers awoke to become the victorious Hockey players.

J.C. Is Vysehrad a sacred location even in spite of its doubtful historic authenticity as Libuse's fortress?

L.A. Yes it is. I believe the actual site of her central fortress was Sarka, where we visited earlier today, just west of Prague. It is close to White Mountain and the Star Palace. Although barren the land here still resonates with a potent mystic charge.

J.C. Bohemians are often pictured as people who glory in cheap beer, free love and bad poetry. What does it mean to be a Bohemian Hermeticist?

L.A. There is a popular misconception of Bohemians as Gypsies. One frequently meets the image of the gypsy fortune tellers or occult magicians. Their life style is strange and very different from Czech Hermetic vision. The roots of Czech Bohemian Hermeticism emerge from Jan Hus and Komenski. It finds expression as Rosicrucian philosophy and general esoteric tradition for example the work of Jacob Boehme.

J.C. What is the significance of the Black Virgin of Prague and what is her role in Hermetic practice?

L.A. She may possibly be linked to the mining tradition and its guilds as its patron. She represents an intriguing subculture with specific values expressed in the mythic language of minerals and metals. Just as the cathedrals represent textbooks of alchemy written in stone there has been speculation that the city of Prague is a book of

alchemy written in the streets and houses. The royal coronation procession path, the Royal Road, might refer to a process. Some see the Black Virgin as playing a role in this. But she is a relatively recent phenomenon compared to Libuse.

J.C. Do young Czechs still appreciate the religious heritage of the Roman Catholic Church?

L.A. This is possibly the most atheistic nation in the world. It is an issue of social conformity. Atheism is the most popular fashion. The few that still attend mass often do so without full understanding. No, young people here do not see the Catholic tradition for what it is, the most perfect system in the world. The Roman Catholic Mass is a magic ritual *par excellence*. It can not be improved. Outside the esotericism of the Catholic Church there is nothing greater. Yet people feel a need to develop themselves as individuals. Thus they turn to spiritualist, occult and hermetic practices. We have some Protestants here but their path is just faith, service and psychic hygiene. The ritual of the Catholic Mass captures the magical experience like no other tradition. "The Unspoken Word" is expressed in its highest purest essence in the Catholic Church, The alchemical ideal is expressed in the sacrament of transubstantiation. The mystery of the Trinity is expressed most wonderfully in Catholic Theology. I laugh when I see people involved with ceremonial magic because they can never compare to the greatness of the Catholic Mass. What more could you want? What more is there?

J.C. Are you familiar with the growing movement in the Catholic Church to revive the Latin Mass?

L.A. Yes. Latin is a sacred language, as is Hebrew or Sanskrit. The mass has its fullest magic power in Latin. When the Mass is celebrated in a national language it is only a lecture not a magic ritual.

J.C. The National Museum displays a fabulous collection of artifacts from mineral, vegetable and animal evolution. It constitutes a superb place for meditation. Is alchemy correctly understood as accelerated metallic evolution or is it the science of Genesis or is it natural magic?

L.A. The National Museum was established by Masons. It is a synthesis of society and Nature. This was intentional. Alchemy emerges from the study of Nature. We easily see this at the National Museum. Yes, alchemy is mineral evolution. It is also the great science of Genesis. It is also natural science and natural magic. On the second floor front lobby of the National Museum in the floor tiles there is a yantra-like mandala. This diagram is outstanding for meditation. During his wake the coffin of Tomas G Masaryk, the first president of this country after WWI and the first true democrat here, was placed overnight upon this mandala. An upcoming Internet site on the National Museum will feature this mandala as its logo.

J.C. Do you have any favorite alchemical authors? Are the books ends in themselves to the process of expanding consciousness?

L.A. Athanasius Kircher had a powerful imagination derived from Ignatius Loyola's Jesuit contemplative exercises. This was actual visualization practice. He was wrong about many things but his emphasis on the power of the imagination is invaluable. Johann Glauber and Johann Becher are authors which have long fascinated me but their works unfortunately are not illustrated. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Faulkner were alchemists like Glauber and Becher. Hemingway spent his life searching for the Stone. But I believe it is not sufficient to just read the books.

J.C. What are your plans for future work?

L.A. Michal Pober and I are working on an upcoming tour: "Magical Journeys in Bohemia": "THE GOLDEN SALAMANDER" to be led by Stanislas Klossowski de Rola. More information is available on Michal Pober's web site:

<http://www.terminal.cz/~michal/bohemia/index2.html>

J.C. Lubos, I'd like to thank you not only for making time for me here today but also for your life's work of keeping the dream alive. Thank you Lubos Antonin.

This interview was conducted on April 18th, 1998 at ROMAN SKAMEN's PUB, a stone's throw from the National Museum in Prague and later at the TERMINAL BAR, Prague's premiere Internet café. Special Acknowledgment to Michal Pober for arranging this interview and providing editorial assistance and to William Hollister for acting as interpreter-translator. Lubos Antonin can be reached at Narodniho Muzea, Vaclavske Nam 68, 11579 Praha 1, Czech Republic. Telephone 011 420 2 24497308

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SHAKING THE TREE:

Kundalini Yoga, Spiritual Alchemy, & the Mysteries of the Breath in Bhogar's 7000

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Preface

"Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different."

-William James

This work is a translation of the first eighty verses of the writings of the seventeenth century alchemist-poet Bhogar. Written in Tamil, an ancient language still spoken in the south of India, these eighty verses deal specifically with the Yogic science of re-attuning the flow and distribution of subtle energy in the body.

The flow and distribution of this energy is thought to directly affect consciousness in the most crucial of ways. It is the balance and flow of breath in the two nostrils which guides the energy through the body. Breath and the movement of subtle energy is said to directly affect how we think and feel.

Any objective observation of the breath as we go about our day reveals that the mind and it's functioning is mirrored in the quality of our breathing process. When we are relaxed and in a calm state of mind, our breathing is slow and even. Breath flows gently into our body and, on a purely physiological level, muscular tension is released with each exhalation. If we are nervous or experiencing stress, our breath is shallow and rapid, often disjointed, flowing in and out in a rather haphazard fashion.

If our mental and emotional state so profoundly affects how we breath, one can in turn wonder if how we breathe also affects our state of mind and how we feel. Perhaps, it affects not only how we feel but also how we perceive the world, both our outer and our inner life.

The Yogic science, it's practices and philosophy, is centered largely upon altering consciousness and psychological fine-tuning through the conscious control of our breathing process. This was also Bhogar's intention when he composed the eighty-two verses presented in this work. He has distilled the essence of Kundalini Yoga into a kind

of guided meditation that presents the tradition's set of symbols, sequentially structured for visualization, interwoven with technical advice on regulating the breath.

The key to applying the Siddhar teachings presented in this work begins with a process of objective and unwavering observation of the breath and its direct relationship to the whole human organism. This practice of objective observation is essential in cultivating the meditative awareness needed to discern the subtle movement of the breath. In order for meditation to truly take place, the subject must identify with the breathing process rather than the mind's erratic wanderings. This allows the practitioner to observe the mind and its movements without being drawn back into the compulsive identification with thought.

At the initial outset of this practice one inevitably forgets the objective observation of thought, breath, and body again and again, but tradition encourages the practitioner to simply take note of the momentary loss of mindfulness and with persistence and patience return to being conscious of breath. Breath then becomes the anchor of mindful awareness.

Once mindful awareness is established, the meditator widens that sphere of awareness to include thought, emotion, bodily sensation and sound. Here again, the goal is to simply observe phenomena, our mind and bodies response to that stimuli without identifying with that response.

Although Bhogar's work deals specifically with using the breath and various meditation practices to initiate a transformation in consciousness, he seems to have made the assumption that his readers have achieved a certain level of proficiency in the more fundamental of yogic disciplines. This is perhaps a bit of an understatement, in that he does have a tendency to present his system concealed within the language of an adept and, at times, he makes no accommodations for even the practitioners from other schools of Yoga.

Works such as this were encoded in the secret languages of the varying schools to preserve the tradition without revealing the inner mysteries to the uninitiated. After researching other works from Bhogar's school of Siddha Siddhanta as well as works from various Tantric Yoga schools, I have presented in the commentary some of the more common and recurring usages of Bhogar's obscure language and what is inferred by the same in the Kundalini Yoga and meditation practices of the Siddha Siddhanta & Saiva Siddhanta schools.

Bhogar, like other Yogis of the various Yoga schools that have grown from tantric roots, employed a language of symbol, myth, and allegory to speak of the transmutation of subtle energy which leads to the transformation of consciousness.

The complex network of pathways (*nadis*) through which the subtle energy moves, is clearly defined. These pathways, 72,000 in number, are distributed throughout the *etheric body double*, running parallel to the Central Nervous System. Their location and function are usually presented in a fairly straight-forward way. Being closely aligned to the physical body makes them not as abstract as the six nerve plexus' known as *chakras*.

The term *chakra* (literally "wheel") refers to six centers of consciousness that run upwards along the spine at specific points where the *nadis* cluster together. These *nadi*-clusters form jump-points where the frequency of this energy (called "*Shakti*") vibrates on new and higher levels.

As the spine's vibratory frequency is quickened, neuron transmissions reach peak output and brain activity is heightened. The senses are also heightened, pushing thought through new neural pathways, opening up unexplored avenues of perception.

It is in describing these *chakras*, situated at the axis of the etheric body, that Yogis and Mystics have had difficulty in describing their subtle and enigmatic nature. Long ago they discovered symbolism as the most effective tool for conveying their insights and experiences as to how the *Kundalini Shakti* is awakened and caused to propel the human awareness up the spine and through the six *chakra* houses. This journey of consciousness culminates in the *Sahasrara*, the thousand petalled lotus that crowns the top of the head. *Sahasrara* is the seventh and final step of the journey, the fabled "un-*chakra*", where every possible level of consciousness is simultaneously perceived and one is said to perceive the universe from all vantage points at once, fully identified with every aspect of creation.

Contemplation of the symbol, applying the symbolic language to every aspect of life, opens up roads that penetrate into the subtle inner realms. Breath then becomes the vehicle of the undefiled and crystalline awareness that transverses the secret inner terrain, mounting upwards to the blossoming lotus of super-consciousness: *Sahasrara*.

Introduction

In all languages there have been poets and mystics who have practiced an alchemy of words. Poets who have transformed the baseness of a functional system of communication into an expression infinitely more vast; one that strives to enrich humanity in some essential way, breathing new life into human existence.

The Tamil poets have had the added advantage of using a language medium that is perhaps not as heavily encumbered as the rest; where the quality of sound and the impact of meaning seem to share a common ground as far as function is concerned.

Aesthetics and application need not be relegated to opposing ends of the spectrum of necessity. Words are meant to

convey both feeling and meaning. Need we set the human heart and mind in opposition of one another when language is adopted as the vehicle of our expression? Poets in all ages, throughout the world, have defied man's tendency to cut asunder the union of heart and mind, and have instead celebrated this marriage as an invaluable asset in reconciling the incongruities of life.

The whole of the Tamil language is the poet's ally. It was born vibrant and malleable, ever ready to be shaped into rhyme or reason. It simply waits for the expelled breath. A breath that is filled with a great passion for life: be it the sighing of heart or the winds of thought.

Even the most dry and linear idea, when voiced with the Tamil tongue, is enlivened by this expelled breath. The sound produced has shape: fine curves & subtle contours, texture & color.

The beauty of Tamil does not rely on any trivial meaning which the mind might attach to it. The richness of the sound imbues the words with a life of their own, independent of any meaning that our concepts strive to convey.

There is an inherent sweetness to the Tamil tongue; and to the Tamil people themselves, "Life" (birth, growth, love, work, death; the struggle of it all) has a sweetness all its own.

*"Like moonlight and the sky,
like the warrior and his sharp sword,
like the beautiful blossom and its fragrance,
like the crocodile-shaped lute and its music,
like the eye and its lustre,
so is my sweet Tamil and I."*

*"If a stranger asked me, what was the name of my tribe,
an inexpressible joy would arise in my heart.*

*'I am a Dravidian,' I'd say, and my tongue would be all honey,
and my pride and glory would reach the skies."*

-Bharatidasan

Origins

The origins of these people and their language have been lost in some distant past; only legends remain... a handful of obscure memories. One of which speaks of how the Tamil language came to be...

There were seven great Seers, and one would suppose that they are still around, beyond the realm of form, watching the cogs of time spin round and round. One of them was named Agastya. He knew the secret of language: that all things are vibrating; that the name and its corresponding form are closer than we think.

Agastya paid a visit, long long ago, to the Sanskrit College at Benares, but he being a wandering hermit, clad in rags, humble-hearted, and having the pompous airs and assumptions of the scholar conspicuously absent, he was, needless to say, rejected outright. Distraught and forsaken, he returned to his little hut feeling very sad and terribly alone in the world. There he sought solace by praying to Chandraswami to teach him a language that was even sweeter than the sacred Sanskrit.

All of a sudden his house became fragrant. The God spoke softly, "Look in the corner". Agastya rushed to the corner of his house, and in a nook in the wall he found a small package. He unwrapped it and therein found a stack of Cadjan volumes.

His eyes darted over the inscribed words and he dropped to his knees shouting, "Tamil! Tamil!" ("Sweetness! Sweetness!"). The God taught Agastya the language of sweetness which he brought to the south and taught to the Dravidian people.

Thousands of years later the Siddhar alchemist Bhogar sat at a small shrine on the top of Palani Hill in the colonial days of 17th century Tamil Nadu. They say he had come to Tamil Country from China and crafted the icon of the Murugan of Palani Hill out of nine arsenics. Water poured in worship over that Murugan is credited with mysterious healing properties. He is said to have attained perfection through yoga, discovering all the universe hidden in the depths of consciousness. With a mind immersed in silent meditation, he related, in flowing verse, how the ensuing serenity he enjoyed became the gate to life's mysteries.

"Having become calm...

I perceived the accompanying experience.

Having experienced...

I have composed 7000."

Seven-thousand verses poured forth gracefully from a foreigner's hand. A foreigner who rejected much of grammar's laws; letting sound run wild in places, letting Tamil's sweetness speak for itself of Life's secrets.

These seven-thousand verses flow in graceful rhyme, a complex echoing of sounds whose meanings convey a flux of images: some humorous or straight forward, brimming with a simple wisdom; others enigmatic, encoded in the secret language of the mystic, haunting if not bizarre.

*"My fine fellow,
If you see Nandi,
then you will know alchemy.
"To say even one word
is just noisy useless talk.
"It's like having a chat
with a corpse in the burning ground.
"Only by seeing the light
of the jewelled root
will the golden chain
of the Circle's End
come open."*

As this preceding verse infers, Bhogar makes little attempt to explain the Siddhar mysteries. His work reads like a narration of his own free-flowing chain of consciousness, as if he embarked upon some journey through the tangled forest of his own subconscious, mapping out the landmarks along the way, as he propelled himself deeper and deeper into the soil of human existence trying to ferret out the very root of consciousness. With each line he digs up another shovelful of the mind's soil, peeling back layer after layer of thought, of ways of perceiving "reality", until he could reveal the essential living root of being.

Bhogar's work is completely spontaneous. Not a slave to order, wonder explodes as verse in the deceptive guise of a child's conspiratorial mid-night whisperings upon waking from a dream. He tells his secrets with gravity, a touch of humor, and a wealth of unrelenting paternal warmth. Bending the laws of grammar, he even rejects being encumbered by the weight that our rigid meanings attribute to words. Discarding reason, he paints in sound and image an ancient uphill path to freedom.

He cast aside logic, dismissing it as empty noise, he sought essence. He makes no pretence that the mind's ceaseless ramblings bear any real fruit. As he so pointedly puts it:

*"With words and logic
you get nothing."*

Bhogar has made no attempt whatsoever to make his experience of these altered states of consciousness at all intelligible to the common man. Over vast centuries of experimentation with Yogic disciplines and meditation, people like Bhogar have reported their experiences in their own unique way. Oddly enough, there is a staggering consistency to these reports, that, particularly over the last hundred and fifty years, has attracted the attention of western scholars and scientists. Unfortunately though, they have always encountered some inherent difficulty in finding a way to apply the findings of these mystics to the existing models of the objective scientific world.

Tirumoolar

Bhogar's approach to meditation and Kundalini yoga, as well as his application of mythic images and Hindu ritual are by no means revolutionary. He followed so closely in the footsteps of Saiva Siddhanta's 8th century founder Tirumoolar that one is often amazed at the continuity of teaching and principle preserved and sustained over a period of one thousand years.

Between the 7th-11th century A.D. a strange synthesis of Indian esoteric schools was taking place. Saivite Tantrism, alchemy, magic, Vajrayana Buddhism, and Hatha Yoga began to merge. The Tantric mysteries, drawing together all of the mystic's tools under one roof, made such distinctions obsolete. Function over form became the rule. Mystics were no longer concerned with postulating the nature of the universe, nor with philosophical concepts and the like; they sought only that which produces a tangible effect, only that which transforms consciousness in an unshakable way. Intellectual theories proposing some "empirical truth", and the debates that ensued, lost their predominance and credibility as an emphasis on the purely experiential became the rule.

It is impossible to paint an accurate historical picture of this era of cataclysmic transition in India's philosophical arena. The writings of this period pay no mind and render no aid to chronological accuracy, and scholars, both east and west, endlessly propose a vast and conflicting array of dates for these works.

Not wanting to flog a dead horse, I make no attempt at proposing a way out of this historical maze, but one thing can be said for certain: after centuries that stretch back into pre-history, living secluded on the furthest outskirts of society, yoga came down out of its Himalayan sanctuary and entered the mainstream of Indian thought.

Yoga Comes Down

Sometime in the 8th century (and even this vague date is subject to much dispute) there was a high yogi, said to have reached the very precipice of perfection, who came wandering southward from his home on the holy mountain Kailash in Tibet. Legend has it that his name was Sundarar and that he came to Tamil country in search of his friend and fellow-yogi Agastyar who had taken up residence in the Pothiya Hills. After joining his friend for a time,

Sundarar wandered deeper into the south.

One evening just after dusk, on the outskirts of a little village called Tiruvavaduthurai, he came upon a small herd of cows lowing and bellowing mournfully.

As he came nearer he saw that the cows, obviously very upset, were standing round the dead body of a cow-herd. A few hours earlier, Moolan the cow-herd, was stung on the heel by a serpent. His soul had gone to pasture, and his body lay crumpled in the grassy field.

It was getting quite dark and Sundarar, taking pity on the poor cows, shifted his awareness into the body of Moolan. Leaving his original body hidden in the hollow of a log Sundarar brought the much relieved cows home wearing the guise of the cow-herd Moolan.

The new 'Moolan' was no longer your average cow-herd, but a great yogi. You can imagine the consternation of his wife when Moolan refused to return home. In frustration, she called together the village elders who examined Moolan. They found that the little cow-herd had become a saint. They had no recourse but to advise Moolan's wife to let the sage wander as he like.

When the yogi went back to the grassy field in search of his body... it had disappeared. The saint disregarded this minor inconvenience as Siva's grace. He went to Chidambaram, Dancing Siva's holy city, and seated himself at the base of a pipal tree. People began to flock there to see the holy man.

Most often he was lost in the trance-like ecstasy of samadhi, but every now and again he would look out at the world and utter a few words about the wonders to be found inside. His words always came out in verse.

"The brinjal seeds were sown

and the bitter gourds grew;

when I dug out the dust,

I found the pumpkin blossoming."

-Tirumantiram: 2869

One legend says that only once a year the saint would leave his meditation and speak that one precious verse that the faithful would note down. Tirumantiram, the book that has compiled these utterances, is three-thousand verses long. So the people say that the sage sat under that pipal tree for three-thousand years.

Perhaps this seems a little far-fetched, but it may very well be true from Moolan's (Tirumoolar's) point of view. You see, what the people don't take into account, is the Tirumantiram's description of the Tantric Buddhist concept of Kaalachakra. "Kaalachakra is a system of yoga which stresses that (a) the universe, with all its objects and localities, is situated in the body and (b) time with all its varieties (viz., day, night, month and year) exists in the body in its process of the prana vayu (the vital wind). It believes that by pranayama (the controlling of the prana vayu) time could be controlled."

As in this case, problems of interpretation are always evident when one tries to apply one's own sociological conventions and cultural predisposition to the obscure musings of the mystic. Naturally a pursuit of a more scholarly interpretation of mystical poetry is no different.

Understanding Tamil Poetry

In Songs of Experience Norman Cutler discusses the problems that western critics have in applying their western set of literary values to the Tamil Bhakti poetry (from which Bhogar's style ultimately develops): "Because bhakti poetry disrespects and even undermines distinctions, it is subversive to certain hallowed principles favored by many literary critics in the West."

In the West poetry generally takes an array of words and phrases, and through extensive ornamentation weaves them together by relying on their decoration to create a sense of order and unity in the work. The ideas and images find integration by dilution, by dulling the sharp-edge of the words with rhetoric. The stark impact of the idea or image is sacrificed when the author employs his lavish display to convey a sense of cohesiveness to his audience.

The western critic lets some Classical sense of order be the judge of beauty. He can rarely penetrate the gaudy mask of ornamentation and discern what substance is there, the many stark and coarser parts of the skeleton that support a shroud of order.

"The bhakti poet and, even more so, the sectarian interpreters of the saints poems offer a challenge to this way of looking at literature. Unlike many Western critics who find multiplicity underlying the superficial appearance of unity, the commentators find unity underlying a seemingly multiple surface."

Just look at our Bhogar: shooting out in rapid fire, a jumble of images that makes the mind's train jump its tracks and go speeding off into the wilderness of the human psyche. His poetry seems but a barrage of images, terse and sharp, that gather momentum in the stillness and silence that frames them on the page. It is the economy of language that empowers the idea and makes the words resonant. Better still are those chasm-like spaces between words that make an image tower over the clutter of our mind's empty noise. The space between words provides us with an opening through which we can escape the tyranny of the mind.

The Gateway of Earth & Stone

At the top of Palani Hill, near the holy Murugan which Bhogar had crafted from nine arsenics, there is an opening in the Earth; it is a hole in the ground; the mouth of a cave which lies below. Bhogar often lowered himself into the Earth, sat in the cave, accessing Life's hidden secrets. He performed great austerities there, the magnitude of which very few in this modern age can fathom.

There at the opening Bhogar erected a humble shrine to the Great Mother: a few yantras, a couple of five-metal icons baring the form of the Mother and her son Murugan. He worshipped a small emerald lingam there, about ten inches in height. His one and only disciple, Pulipani (perhaps the only one who truly understood the sage), kept him company at the entrance to the underground cavern on the top of Palani Hill.

When Bhogar felt that his outer work was done, he entered the gateway of earth and stone and sat down in the darkness of the cave. Faithful Pulipani heaved a stone slab over the entrance, sealing Bhogar forever in the blackness of his earthen womb.

For thirteen generations Pulipani's descendants have watched over that stone slab that marks the gateway to the underground chamber. Long ago, Bhogar's little shrine was set atop that hallowed spot, and even today, is still worshipped by the vigilant sons of the faithful Pulipani.

They say that Bhogar is seated quietly in meditation even now; alone in the darkness; watching the slow passage of time.

His breath is still. His mind is quiet, his heart unwavering; but through the dense dark matter of his earthly form stabs the vibrant & relentless flame of the Kundalini Shakti. There he waits...

BHOGAR'S 7000

Kaapu

He has five hands
and an elephants face.

He has that tusk
like the sweet crescent moon.

He is Siva's son,
the tender leaf of wisdom.

Set within my consciousness
I praise his feet.

1

I praise the feet
of the Elephant-Faced One.

I praise the feet
of God.

I praise the feet
of the mother who gave me birth;
proffering grace
with but a glance.

I praise the feet
of Hari and Brahma.

I praise the feet
of Saraswati.

I praise the Grace-Bestowing Lakshmi's
feet like flowers.

I praise Moolar's feet,
my grandfather
who dwells in
the Sleepless Sleep.

I praise the noble feet
of the kindly Kalangi.

I praise the feet
of the Seers, who have attained
the State of "Without Distinction".

Oh! The fullness of the plentitude of their genuine guard.

2 The History of the Book

It was Siva
who told the 7000.
I just noted down
all of his shastra's secrets.
With seven chapters,
that book
is the King of Gurus;
pouring forth
it's alchemical methods.
I asked for Grandfather's secrets;
and learned
from listening
to the quality
of his direct teaching.
I listened to sweet Kalangi...
and see!

I have put forth
these 7000.

3 Muladhara

By looking
the root seems egg-like in form.
The reason being
is that it is here
that the tri-konam stands.
A ring adorns it's three angles
and outside...
there are four petals.
By approaching
one perceives
the four lotus letters:
the goodly *Va, Cha, Sa, Sha*.
By diving deep
one discovers
the inner light of the triad...
Om-kaara!
Make an effort,
and within it
you'll find *A-kaaram*.

4

Upon the *A-kaaram*
Ganesha stands,
in another angle
the *U-kaaram* stands,
it is in the *U-kaaram*
that Vallabai Shakti stands.
And in one tapering corner
there is the plantain flower.
Below the face
of the *Bhu-kaaram*
is the Kundalini Shakti.
She is like a serpent maiden,
coiled...
And ready to strike.
Having pierced
the Circle's End,
she stands

rejoicing.
This plane
is beyond even
the Sleepless Sleep.

5

This place
is the root level
of existence.
Here stands
a beautiful plantain flower
of eight petals.
To enter
Siva is standing
within her mouth.
The goodly Siva
is just *Si-kaaram*, isn't he?
Like ten thousand suns.
If your action is base
she simply won't open her mouth
and the flower
will be shut.
Oh Son!
In eight petals
there are eight shaktis.
The shaktis are there
to steal your power.
If you ask what their eight names are,
fittingly so,
they'll be...
"Size of an Atom"
"Float on the Air"

6

They'll be...
"Become Great"
"Be Heavy"
With...
"Eternal Sovereignty"
"Mesmerize"
"Attainment"
And...
"Transmigration"
These eight renowned goddesses
stand in the field,
keeping the petals closed.
Who knows why?
They won't let you see Nandi
and rise up.
But you will drink nectar,
the very substance of sky.
As you breath in
say, "*Va*",
and immediately hold the breath.
Then puff away.

7

If you puff
and make the eight shaktis swoon

they'll open all the petals
and go staggering off.
By using the heart of the flower
you'll make them obey
the Mother's commands.
Try to enter it,
and if you see Nandi
your yoga is sure to happen.
But if you argue,
she won't open the door.
She'll keep it shut
for ten years.
Fix the breath within
anyway you can.
If it runs to the left,
say "Va".
You'll get it.

8

In obtaining Nandi
one retains the breath
with "A".
If it runs to the right,
say "Si"
and draw it in.
Keep holding
and retaining
with "A".
The six streets
become level
and are clearly perceived.
Raise it up
and it will appear
like the light of a ruby.
My fine fellow,
at the root
you will see the truth.
Stay put.
Vallabai Shakti will come.
She is glorious
and green in color.

9

The green-hued Vallabai
will become sub-servient
and bow down.
She'll tell you
the appropriate time
for the appropriate chakra.
If the basis of Muladhara
is perfected...
You can go anywhere,
wandering freely
throughout the three worlds.
The dull-hued body
will mellow
and shine.
All impurities

will be removed
and the six chakras
will become visible
to the eye.
In the Sleepless Sleep
all subtlety
can be perceived.
Look and see.

10

What is seen
is the eight elements
merging into four.
In a flash
the flame of the root
can be seen.
The light
of the dark flame
will blind the eyes.
This is when
Ganapati
dances before you.
He will give your yoga
the assurance it needs
by saying,
"Take your time."
He'll relate
the True Polymorph Alchemy
and he'll tell you
the very nature of Sadasiva
by saying,...
"Straightness".
If you stop now,
there goes
your yoga.

11

Don't leave thinking it's over.
Remain at the root.
While going
or while staying...
Concentrate the mind.
Be in a place
where you don't have to listen
to the noise
of other's talk.
Procure
fixing the target
by working
from the outside in.
Don't leave out the breath
thinking it's impossible.
Join your mind
to the root,
establishing it there.
Initially
it seems so difficult,
you'll think it's a waste.

But don't just leave.
With ceaseless effort,
merge the mind.
Concentrate.

12

It is difficult
To get accustomed
to thinking in these terms.
But if you enter within and look,
you are sure to see the fire shining...
(That is, until the mind gets scattered.)
If you see the pure light
you will be happy.
The intertwined
Ida & Pingala
will be joined,
and Shushumna
will rise up
in the center.
The ever approaching
Lord of Death
will become frightened
and run far away.
Every day
will seem like a second.
You'll see.

13

Just by being so inclined,
you can easily
perceive the root.
Retain
the good breath.
Then blow and blow.
In the life-sustaining chakra
stand on and on.
My fine fellow,
If you see Nandi,
then you will know alchemy.
To say even one word
is just noisy useless talk.
It's like having a chat
with a corpse in the burning ground.
Only by seeing the light
of the jeweled root
will the golden chain
of the Circle's End
come open.

14

The time
when the Circle's End
is opened,
the mind
will be subdued.
It will be like
a piece of straw
caught

in a whirlpool.
That becomes
the end of all paths
for climbing the chakras.
The eight great siddhis
will manifest.
Without being spoiled
by the sleep
of the Circle's End,
mount the horse
of measured breath.
But if you die
in the Corner of Degradation,
there will be nothing.
The mounting is difficult
so climb on gently.

15

Mount
by making the five senses
into a pestle.
Escape
by transforming A-kaaram
into the mortar.
Cool off
by letting desire
be the form you grind.
Trap the slippery mind.
Gain strength
by remaining still
and then pulverize the mind completely.
Isn't it tumultuous
when you try to spoil it's work?
Heal
by having both yoga
and wisdom.
Without knowing this,
krores have died.

16

Even having worldly wants,
longing for 10,000 human births.
Even with the desire
for fine dining.
Even with being baffled
by the compelling lust for women.
Even with that hunger for gold
that locks men in delusion.
Even with the intoxication
of seeking security in bondage.
The world beckons...
and all
are bewildered.
Yet
people's mouths
go on speaking
of "wisdom".

17

If you say it's over
then nothing's possible.
Just take a close look
at the precious scriptures.
You'll see
that everyone
who suppressed
the breath
died.
Without
killing yourself
by suppressing the breath,
try asking...
At the steadfast center
in the base of the neck
there is a "bag".
Tirelessly
bind breath
within Vayu's house.
Friend,
the donkey
that is bound and tethered
won't run anywhere.
It is within the sixteen
that the soul's beauty
manifests.
18
At the root
is Ganesha's feet.
Firmly placed,
let the breath
be ignited there.
Inevitably,
if the Pranayama
goes wrong,...
just stop.
Then inhale,
bringing the breath
down
to the floor.
The embryonic
unit of time
goes up and up
and the knowledge
of all the specific symptoms
appears.
But
the one
who allows
the backtracking breath
to escape...
He is not a man.
The word for him...
Is "cow".
19

With words
and logic...
you get nothing!
With great strength
hold back the senses
and bind them up.
With great effort
fix the letter
in the two eyes,
establishing the mind
therein.
With a little skill
Breath, the horse,
can be saddled
with *Si*,
Saddle of the Firm Grip.
With silence,
you can hitch
the horse
to the root.
You need only set
the Circle's End alight
and see!

20

Once ignited...
Dine on honey.
Dine on karpam.
Perfect this body
which is the ancient universe.
Once revealed...
Dine on the heavy Moolikai herb.
Purge yourself of filth,
and in one's face
the light of the eye
goes beyond all limits.
Tilt the head
and cough up the phlegm
from the back of the throat.
Remove that which is unripened
from within the layers
of the six realms.
Once starved...
Cleave the five senses
with the sword.
Don't forget...
Both night and day,
you must fix the breath.

21

Fix the path.
Stand at the root.
Don't forget
to stand in the One.
When your clear...
Shake the base of the tree.
Hopping along...
You can climb upwards.

What a wonder!
You can even climb to the peak!
When you have become accustomed
to igniting the root...
You can cross the river,
leaping beyond the Last Outpost.
Raise the Twelve Inch Flame
and enter it.
Knowing Sound's End
you will reach the goal.

22

By joining the Sahasrara lotus flower
you reach and mount the Moon's sphere.
Entering there...
The sumptuous mind
is plucked
by the one with an elephant's face.
To Vallabai,
she who manifests herself as Kundalini,
to that mother...
Even from far away...
worship those feet
with incense
and many twinkling lamps.
Do service;
and by employing discrimination...
Even from far away...
you can give freely
the Milk of Soma
and can fix Victory's banner.
There at the base
hitch your horse.

23

Once bound,
offer your folded hands
to Mother Kundalini.
Place Ganapati and Vallabai
in your mind
and say...

*"Give me the path
to come crashing
against the bud
making it open."*

By embracing
the eight sharp-edged shaktis
it's all over.
Gather nectar
and drink.
Friend,
It's by abandoning "doing"
that they open the door.
Take the leap...
Bow down
and praise Nandi's feet.
All the means for rising
will easily manifest.

24

Nandi can come here easily.

Being friendly,

he will give

the eight into eight;

the sixty-four.

The malleable alchemy

will stand before you

with folded arms.

The hidden essence

will appear explicit

and complete.

Happily,

the body reaches the state

where it ceases

to decay.

Fixing thought

you become merged

in Him.

You see

the dance of He,

whom they say

drank poison.

The wonder!

Being merged

in the sound

of his anklets!

25

Being free...

Don't fall

into Longing's fire.

Every day

see Vedanta

to the very end.

Don't engage others

in unnecessary

idle chatter.

Play dumb,

but watch

very very carefully.

Don't kill,

lie,

or spread confusion.

Merge

and thereby mount

the horse

of measured breath.

Don't let the delirious libation

of the ego

destroy you.

Remove illusion.

26

Once removed...

The senses are severed

and completely rejected.

In the morning

push the sleepiness out
and eat...

Lifting in-breath
and out-breath.

Adorn then
the Self
with measures
of breathlessness,
awareness
born of itself.

This is the attack...
and a flood of nectar
comes in response,
so eat...

Strip off your mantle
of attachment
and aversion.

Proffer an even row
of Pranayamas.

Don't forget
to stay firmly set
upon the path.

27

Having done so...
Study the mind carefully
by fixing thought.
Don't let the senses
confuse you.

You'll see Ganesha.
Gather flowers,
do puja,
and knock.

Cultivate mindfulness
and retain the breath.

How suitable...

"Om Shreem Hreem Kleem!"

Higher still, to spell out...

"Gum Gum Ganapati!"

How quickly Nandi shines
like ten thousand suns.

If you see
the light
in the Good Circle...
Death won't dance.

28

In asking
what acts
without desire...

Fine sound
and touch,
form
and smell,
taste unhindered...

All the senses five.

The mind
should go along

the proper path:
Incessantly clinging
to discrimination,
without ever letting go.
You liberate the senses
by chopping them off
and throwing them away.
Touch nothing!
Get rid of your ears!
Don't ask
even a single word!...
Then look all around you.

29

Look around...
And hear yet the test.
Without eyes sparkling
one cannot see the form.
Fire it up and see...
If you keep
the nostrils shut,
the fertile scent
won't be discerned.
Feed it and see...
If you drop salt
into your mouth,
it is completely salty.
One perceives there
only that salty taste.
Cause an ant to climb
and see...
If it climbs slowly
upon your body,
it is knowledge too
that has climbed
to a point
where sensation
is perceived.

30

If you get the mind
to stand separate
from the Self,
then you will have the discrimination
of the Divine Minister of Knowledge.
At your leisure,
engage the mind
in your daily Pranayama.
Rise
and climb upwards.
Inhale in the left nostril,
then let the breath ripen
as you retain it at the root.
Don't fail
to inhale sharply
through the right.
Then keep the breath
standing at the root.

Clearly perceiving the other shore,
climb up and up.

31

It was my Grandfather
who said,

"Climb and see."

But it was

Kalangi Nathar
who gave me birth.

Patanjali,

Viyagiramar,
and Sivayogi Muni
all so rightly said,

"Look!

This is the path!"

They explained
how to mount
and go beyond.

And it was

the Great Mother supreme
who said,

"This is it!"

Having become calm...

I perceived the accompanying experience.

Having experienced...

I have composed 7000.

32

Fixing

the *Si*-kaaram letter,

Yogis

contemplate it
outside.

But True Knowledge

is not something
to be amassed
and held.

There are those who talk;

bantering,

"Blah, Blah, Blah",

in empty space.

Lingering on...

With just one word,
70,000

have gone to hell.

Entering birth

is being washed out to sea.

But becoming ripened,

the Siddhars all,

speak the *Si*
within the root.

There,

in contemplation
and meditation

they can see.

33

By meditation and inner restrain
they perform worship.
The sound
of the drum
and the conch
is heard
in the ears.
Those who meditate
hear the sound
of the anklet's
movement.
They see
the performance
of Chidambaara's
great dance.
Those who meditate
drink endlessly
from the torrent
of Satchitananda
that Devi pours forth.
Those who meditate daily
fix the chain
of the firm mind
to Siva & Devi's feet.

34

Once you fix the mind's chain
You need only lock it up
and you will become
joyous bliss complete.
Once locked...
retaining the breath,
they stand
as the Immovable Pillar.
Aiyaa!
In that single instant
when the mind is fixed,
they seek out the Sound's End
in the vastness of space.
Having raised
the Twelve-inch Flame,
it is entered.
There they offer worship
residing at the Sound's End.

35 Svadishtana

Having worshiped the root
and leapt beyond,
one learns that there
is a trepidatious four inches
scaled in the leaping.
The Lord
has made this
Brahma's house.
What is spoken of
as Svadishtana
is it's name.
Superscribed

about it's four circles
there are six petals.
In those petals
there are letters fixed...
Ba, Bha, Ma, Ya, Ra, La.
And appropriately,
the seed in the center
is *Na-La*.

36

The letter *Na*
also belongs to Brahma.
But the letter *La*
is the Earth's seed.
While the letter *Bhu*
is the dwelling place
of Turiya and the like.
It manifests itself
as the celebrated Veda.
The letter *A*
is the swan vehicle.
It's color is golden.
One aspect
of Brahma's action
operates upon
hair and bone,
flesh and skin,
and the nerves.
These five.

37

At the side
of Golden-colored Brahma
who rules the five,
stands the deathless Vaani.
Know this!
The protective
Four-faced Lord
who gives
Abaaya & Vatham
is beautiful.
With a yogi's armrest,
waterpot,
and rosary.
With the soft petals
of the lotus
strung onto
a garland of jewels.
With nine telling gems
that adorn his crown.
Perfect your meditation
and stop the breath.
Let the Noble Silence
be the mantra you recite.
There contemplate...

38

Having contemplated...
Meditate upon Saraswati.

Praise her.
To empower your ascent
ask for truth.
She alone
is the mother
who confers all knowledge.
The Treasure of Compassion
the mother who wears the tongue.
Having come before you,
one would be a fool
ever to leave.
Zealously
standing in her presence
one becomes free.
The Virgin Goddess
reveals the perfection
of yoga and alchemy,
immortality and wisdom,
just by batting her eyelids.

39

Having spoken thus...
Meditate,
placing the breath there.
As you pull it in,
say, "*Na*",
place it,
and then retain it.
The fine letter *Na*
has given birth
to thousands.
They say it is
the Forest
of Good and Wicked Acts.
They say that
to leave birth behind
one should gather
the appropriate flowers,
perform aarchana,
and sing praises.
Then leave
the holy realm
of the Four-faced One
and enter
the sacred realm
of holy Maal,
who measured
the Earth.
40 Manipura
Holy Maal's house
is six inches
upward.
A fortress
shaped
like the flawless crescent,
surrounded
by ten petals,

white as milk.
The petals I speak of
have ten letters...
Da, Dha, Nna, Ta, Tha, Dda, Ddha
of the tongue;
and the unwavering
Na, Pa, Fa.
In the center
of the element water
stands a Banyan Tree
called *Ma*.
It's seed: *Va*
can be realized.

41

In the realized House of Manipura
is where the Sleepless Sleep abides.
The inseparable left-hand side
of the Yajur Veda
is of an undiminishing
crystalline color.
The six ripened tastes
will be perceived.
The five will manifest:
water-like secretions,
marrow & blood,
brain & the excited seed.
There is the great conch,
the chakra,
and the vehicle
Garuda.

42

The vehicle manifests.
As does He,
the one
by Lakshmi's side.
With breath
hold and retain *Ma*.
With great weight
say, "*Om Namo Narayana*".
Adjust yourself.
Repeat the name.
Offer your prayerful hands.
This body,
that is all the universe,
the Mother protects.
In the Concealment's Confusion,
the Mother
is spinning round.
Beauty,
all that which compels us,
became the house.
It is the ancient
that resides
within the ripened house.

43

This house
became
the Shakti of Concealment's house.
So many enjoyments
and desire
abandoned
this house.

The withered mind
fretted away in
this house.
All manner of illusion
dwells in
this great house.
Neutral thought destroyed,
lost in a ghost's dance,
the girl is sought,
while wandering about,
throughout
this vast house.

Caste
is completely decimated
in this house.
Become assimilated.
Retain the breath...
And attack!

44

By attacking...
The Flower of the Moon's Orb,
Sahasrara's lotus petals,
are worn.

With all
the remaining incense
and twinkling lamps,
use the mind properly,
do the mental worship.
You can make it happen;
just by saying,
*"Grant me the grace
to climb."*

Say,
*"Grant me the eight siddhis.
Send them to me."*
Get rid of the five senses
and the organs along with them.

Say,
*"Stop me
from siding with them."*
Worship this way.

45

By doing this...
Maal & Lakshmi's
minds will be pleased.
They'll give you the siddhis.
They'll tell you
why it's important
to climb slowly.

They'll tell you
how action
is timely done,
so that you
may gain
the joyous body
beyond death.
They'll tell you the truth
about making your yoga
steadfast.
For subtlety...
They'll announce
from limb to limb
all the aspects
of Ashtanga Yoga,
and how one goes about
employing it
to stir up
the Self.

46 Anahata

Just climb up
eight inches
beyond Knowledge
and listen
for the House of Anahata.
To break in
a triangle stands,
a ripened circle,
and twelve petals.
Consider...

Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha, Nga, Cha, Chha

And that which is named...

Ja, Jha, Nya, Ta, Tha.

For completion
the letters
stand
within the ripened petals.
There is found
the Upwards Sleep.

47

The Shikaara letter
is in the middle.
It is the Aanmai.
It is the element fire,
coppery-red in color.
The fire's seed
is *Ram*.

The light of Om
is like 10,000 suns.
Rudra and Rudri
stand in the middle.

In asking
what their qualities are...
Veracious eating,
sloth,

fear,
and sleep.
48
As for sleep...
Wake up!
And softly join
the girl.
My friend,
It is Siva & Uma's duty
to give the Five Delights.
Growing upwards
there is
the jeweled throne.
Together with Uma,
He of the Matted Locks,
with deer and club,
and the striped tiger skin.
Effulgent
like 10,000 suns.
He who supports.
Smearred with sacred ash.
God of Gods!
The Compassionate One
wearing a snake
for an ornament.
49

Meditate on him.
Place the breath
at the pillar
and say,
"Om Aam Aum Sivaya Namaha".
Say, *"Om"*
and there contemplate
the feet
of Mother Rudri.
Make the rigid mind
compatible.
Say, *"Aam"*
and employ knowledge
to push aside
the five senses.
Say, *"The Mother
without beginning or end."*
Say, *"Give me
the grace
of your glance."*
And keep
the cautious mind
in the light.
50

That light is Nandi.
It becomes the vehicle.
It becomes one limb
of the Sam Veda.
Leap over
the Merry Milk of Lust.

Grey hair and wrinkles,
the clouded eye and inert space
are to be destroyed
and wonder
is to be
poured forth.

One who holds to it,
watching His dance,
sees the meager dance
of all wisdom
as a waste.

Retain
with an aim
and watch carefully.

51

Observe carefully...

At the prop
in the middle,
an effulgence
will be seen.

It is just like how,
to the eagle,
the target is visible
even at night.

Concentrate...

Fetter your mind
to His feet.

With knowledge
stay in the stillness.

Systematically...

Ask which path
to climb,
and receive
the 8x8 siddhis.

Being molded...

Listen to all
of the alchemical secrets.

Ask specifically
for the path
to the Perfection of Deathlessness.

52

But without having to ask...
the Moon's Sphere
will be entered.

Without delay...

Pluck a flower
from the vine
and place it
at the feet
of Shiva and Shakti.

The undistorted mind
shall merge
into the soles
of the sacred feet.

Don't just sit there!
Think the mantra!

Think the mantra!
Don't forget the breath!
Fix it
and lock it.
Residue still remains...
Get rid of it!
With incense and lamps
praise God,
and then bid him
"Adieu".
You can climb
easily now.
53 Vishuddha
Having Climbed...
One finds
that there is a twelve inch jump,
a rising,
to the Shrine of Vishuddha.
It transforms itself
into a six-pointed star
and a circle.
The Great One
has sixteen petals
for it's six points.
In the petals
there are letters:
A & Aa
I & Ee
U & Oo
The ever present...
Ru & Roo
Lu with Loo
Becoming the support...
Ae-Ai
Oh-Au
Am-Aha!

54

In the beginning was A,
placed as the first
of the sixteen letters.
In the center
of the six points
the letter *Va* stands.
In the beginning *Va* stood
as Maheshwar and Maheshwari.
It is the realm
of the Great Dream.
In the beginning *Bhum*
became the element wind.
In the beginning
the renowned
seed-syllable *Ya*
became the Atharva Veda.
With a good mind
one can establish
the vehicle.

55

It is His duty
to establish friendship.
Walking and running,
lying inert
in a drunken stupor,
remaining in stillness,
and being in a state
of equanimity.
Ask the details
for sustaining
these states.
Adorning ourselves,
eating,
listening to our desires,
bubbling with anger,
and fighting...
The baring of these burdens
becomes like a running race.
But if you see
the very flesh
of *Om-kaara*.
The mouth of the spirit
will open.
Of this I'm sure.
You'll see.

56

Surely,
the Six Tastes
are in the mouth.
These tastes
are only present
in the mouth
and not beyond.
Friend,
the Circle Supreme
is in the base.
The Supreme Base
is ever of fine quality.
The Grand Finale
is pulling out
the eight weeds.
Equally join
the flawless four
into itself.
Undoubtedly,
you'll see
all the chakras.
Friend,
you are invited
to enter into the four.

57

You bring *Va*
within the four
as food.
The primordial

Om Nama Sivaya

sends breath upwards
into the House of the Wind.

Adding drop by drop,
bound up within
it shan't escape.

With the 16 surfaces
spread wide,
the natural beauty
of the soul
will manifest.

Because of the abundance
of the soul's beauty
one will evoke superbly
and become skilled.

58

Becoming skillful
one relishes the taste.
The soul's beauty remains,
and eight merges into four.
Being in the outer world,
four becomes space.
The beautiful soul
and the intellect
waned like the moon.

Becoming empty,
grey haired,
and wrinkled;
it dies.

But they will not see
the good soul's departure.

For an instant
the sound
will be discerned
in the neck.

Along with the specifics
of Obscuration's Dance.

59

Standing
in the House of the Wind,
remain still;
and lock the chain
to the Holy Mother's feet.
In the Golden Moon Mandala,
with flowers
salute her.

Worship her feet
and lock the breath.

Say, "*Give me the means
to climb up
the steps of the ladder.*"

Praise the pure
Principle of Intelligence.

Ask the way
to the Perfection of Alchemy,
to the Perfection of Yoga,

to the Perfection of the Great Deathlessness,
vast as space.

60

The path will manifest.
Think the mantra
again and again.
Don't forget
to embrace the breath
and lock it within.
It is attainable by all...
Just say *A*,
and if you remain
retaining the breath...
Mother and Father
will be pleased at heart.
The path will manifest
and they'll tell you
the alchemical process.
They'll tell you
the process
of climbing with the breath.
Then leave the abode
of the vibrant Maheshwar.
Just rise upwards
going eleven inches above.
Climb.

61 Ajna

Having climbed up
to the center of the eyebrows,
something will stand there
exceeding the vastness
of the universe.
Climb up it's tail.
It is like
a circular house.
There will be a ring
with *Ha* and *La*
for it's petals.
Use them
to climb to the center
where you will find
the letter *Ya*.
Climb upwards with *Va*,
the elemental seed of the ethers,
and you will find
Manomani and Sadasiva
standing before you.
This state
is the House of Awakening.

62

This house has
the color of the cloud.
It's role
is to cultivate the five:
lust and anger,
withering miserliness,

delusion,
and imposing jealousy.
Come closer
and you'll see
the Four-faced One,
Maal,
Siva,
and Maheshwar
guarding well
the four directions.
But it is Sadasiva that rules,
he is the captain...
And if you've seen the captain,
you've seen everything.

63

If you see the captain,
all of your doubts
will be resolved.
The tunic of desire and differentiation
will be abandoned.
Those who see the captain,
merge with the Mother.
They see the nature
of Satchitananda.
Those who see the captain,
attain the perfections all.
A bandit at the captain's side
can even steal the five colors.
My friend,
the captain cannot be seen
by any other means.
Naturally,...
He'll tell you
how to fix the breath.

64

Having said this,
Ajna will manifest.
In this chakra
relish Manomani
as she is spelled out
before you.
Listen to the mantra
I tell you secretly...
The uniting...
Ka Ea Ee La Hreem
and in the middle...
Ha Sa Ka La Hreem
and then...
Sa Ka La Hreem
These are the three parts
of the Panchadaasakshaari,
the fifteen letters.
Spell them out carefully...
And set yourself
on fire!

65

Being set aflame...

If you see the Mother's feet,
all of your devilish delusions
will be destroyed.

Being fixed...

Eight will be added to four,
and all the siddhi's
of Sound's End
will manifest
in an instant.

Being locked...

You can enter the body
of your loved one.

You can cross the Hair Bridge
over the River of Fire.

Being lengthened...

You come to know that
which needs no support,
and the symbol
becomes clearly defined in thought.

66

To think of it..

-is to absorb the five senses.

-is to have disease,

old age and death,

grey hair and wrinkles

depart.

"Neighing" like a horse...

-one can,

in the blink of an eye,

quickly recapture

the departing soul.

By embracing it...

-one maintains it,

even in the waking state.

-one sees the Mother

dancing with the Father.

Being prosperous...

-those who have perfected

service, action, and yoga

become wisdom itself.

67 The Guru's Feet

You leap behind

even that part of the self

that is the Mother.

Listen

as I tell you

of the Lonely Place

eight inches above.

There

strive to unite

with the Guru's feet...

In the 1008 petals

is the pentacle "Invincible".

All the five...

the A-kaaram,

the *U*-kaaram,
the *M*-kaaram,
the full spectrum of vibration,
and the bindu
stand within these five angles.
You will see.

68

Look at the *Om*-kaara.
It becomes pure light
and rises upwards.
It assumes a form
that is bodiless and undefiled.
Place within it
the spreading breath,
expanding outwards.
If you want the union
to take place,
don't let it run
out of control.
Stop it and see into it.
Let it be said outright...
The thing in the beginning,
the Self
that is the very basis of Vedanta,
one need not even try
to comprehend.

69 Gayatri

It is called
"the Incomprehensible Brahmarantiram".
It is clear as crystal.
The path
cannot be had
by striving.
Eternal,
yet fleeting,
it is without form.
It is Truth...
eternal,
unstained,
and ever full.
This fullness
of Satchitananda
cannot be simply plucked
like a flower.
Rarely spoken of...
It is the Pathless Path:
Niranjanaaya Vidmahe
Niraabaasaaya Dhimahi
Soonukshma Prachodaayat.

70

They being light,
repeat the twenty-four syllables
which stand
as the crystalline gayatri.
Without letting the mind
run along the sense organs path,

call the breath to you,
stop it's movement,
and place it there.
That region
becomes light,
as one in stillness
retains the breath.
Repeat the Chitsarupa Gayatri,
sever earthly birth,
and you will become
absorbed in fullness.
No more going.
No more coming.
Only That
which is manifest.

71 Dwadashanta (the Twelve-inch Flame)

In climbing above
there is the Twelve-inch Flame.
Running along that path,
one divides the eleven and sees...
The gracious Mother Unmai,
with the eight siddhis,...
Parai, full of grace,
and He who is the supreme.
I've clearly revealed these eleven,
and that is not easy...
considering "I", my lowly self,
have not seen it.
But the gracious Nandi
has so nicely established it
in these 7000.
That which "I"
have not seen.

72

You will see
all of the hidden pathways.
It is difficult,
but if you bite
onto the tip of the nose
there will be union.
If you eat without eating
and firmly focus your gaze
within the nape of the neck
you will see what is there.
One sees
that Kundalini Yoga
is not crooked.
Fix your gaze.
You will see
the eleven
and the One.
When you look
into the center,
it is not a coy thing.
There the good Siva
with Rudra

are shining
like 10,000 suns.

73

It all happens
in accordance
with what is written
in the book
that is likened unto the Sun.
When you get acquainted
with how the breath
spreads and flows,
and when you have seen
the Word
that is likened unto the Sky...
All will become fertile,
baring the tender coconut
in vast abundance.
Then one wonders...
"What's the use
of a coconut
to a dog
like me?"
This is the time
to look
upon the goodness
of one's yogic attainments.
Look to the very end
of that
which is Kingly Divinity,
and listen to the method
of the residing breath.

74

Listen.
At the root
you are spewing forth
Va-kaaram.
Down deep
do worship.
Si-kaaram won't leave you.
Breath in.
Breath in for a long time,
then exhale and see...
In the stainless Kundalini
Nandi will be perceived.
My useful friend,
There
see the Word
which comes
from Nandi.
For the great siddhis eight
and jnana...
daily you must place the breath
with the *Ma-kaaram* mantra.
You have seen
the finer path,
now see

that you
establish it.

75

Being established...
after leaping the root,
one reaches
the Abode of Kanchan.
Being merged,
fix your gaze
upon *Va-kaaram*.
When *Si-kaaram*
shines within,
exhale.

Then your past births
will leave you.
Because the proprietous
Four-faced One is seen,
one can take the leap
from Kanchan's abode.
Then embrace
the Realm of Maal.

76

Having embraced Him,
one becomes filled up
with *Va-kaaram*.
This becomes
the Great Tapas:
exhaling from within
the *Si-kaaram*.
Being expansive...
The five grey hairs
are removed.
Then you will become
a boy again.
Sixteen years of age
you'll be.
Slithering on,
you can cross over Maal
into Rudra's abode.
Fix awareness
on the sensation of breath
and attack.
Once brought in,
then exhale the *Si-kaaram*.
The body
will run red
and the siddhi
will manifest.

77

The siddhi being manifest,
leap from Rudra's abode
entering the clear realm
of Maheshwar.
Remain still
and inhale
the elephantine *Va-kaaram*.

Then from within that
exhale *Si-kaaram*.
You will become
a ten year old boy.
It is said
that this
is like
becoming
the myrobalam fruit.
Become like a bellows.
Practice Siva Yoga.
You'll have
all the Medicines of Energy
in no time.

78

In no time
you will leap past
Maheshwar's abode.
Stand
in the encircling
Sadasiva.
Position
the irrefutable *Si-kaaram*
and gaze into it.
The departure
of the Great Awareness
will come to pass.
At the feet of Mother Manomani,
she who will not punish her children,
one should be watchful
with the same care
as when one places the breath.
The True Knowledge,
beyond disdain,
is actually
formless.
The True Fragrance
you are sure
to manifest.

79

If you stand
at the Guru's feet,
Breath,
called, "the Long Siva Yoga",
will be offered as food.
One comes to witness
the Mother's vast plentitude
that is all existence.
The eternal path
of applying
the *Va & Sa* letters,
being what is on hand,
is applied both here and there.
Intelligently
observe the mind,
and the attainment

will be great.
The fiery poison
that has been removed,
will be severed completely,
and a unique abundance
will manifest
as the Principle of Intelligence.
80 Bhogar's Leap Into the Universe
As the Principle of Intelligence itself
I leapt into the universe.
Nandi clearly elucidated
the nature of the universe.
For the sake of all beings
there is a path
that becomes a vehicle
for the five senses.
The universe that appeared before me
was arranged in layers.
Grandfather said,
"Enter the tenth one."
I took what was given me
and put it in my mouth.
Another bunch
of mercurial amalgams
I tied onto my wrist.
Off I went.
Entering the universe
of fire and light.
94 (In Conclusion)
Invite the breath,
the outer space,
to come within your house.
If you are unwavering,
placing it there
as though you were
putting oil in a lamp,...
They shall meet.
Breath and God
becoming one.
Like wind becoming breath
there is no individual intelligence.
The Great Awareness becomes Siva.
He and breath
merge into one.
It is this light becoming breath
that redeems the soul.
Surely this is the truth
of Siva Yoga!
95
In fact...
There is no perfection
as easy as this...
My dear lad,
there is nothing else!
There have been so very many souls
throughout time, that even if

you searched this whole Earth,
you shan't find them all.
Subtle
and yet of high regard
this breath.
The Sound's End
manifests easily...
The Subtle manifests...
The generous Alchemists,
the Siddhars,
the Rishis,
the Yogis...
They are like the breath.
There is nothing to be accomplished.
Turn back
and look.

WHAT
IT
ALL
MEANS...

Kaapu ("protection")

Tamil works, like most Hindu works, often begin with an opening invocation to Ganesha, the Lord of Obstacles. This same verse appears as the Kaapu of Tirumoolar's Tirumantiram, but some believe that it is a latter addition. As to whether Bhogar selected this verse as his opening is also in question.

The fifth hand of the elephant-headed god is the Tutikai, his trunk. I mention this only to point out some of the associations of Ganesha's trunk in the Saiva Siddhanta tradition...

A lovely verse of Moolar's dealing with the Kundalini's mysteries makes reference to the Tutikai...

"Left hand.

Right hand.

Both hands...

Change!

If you eat

With the Hand of Worship

you need not be depleted.

If you abandon sleep

and become a realized adept

you need not die.

You can live forever."

Tutikai means "the elephant's trunk" but its literal meaning is a combination of the verb tuti "to worship" and kai "hand", "the Hand of Worship".

Tirumoolar here speaks of eating amrita, the nectar of immortality, "the very substance of sky". When you eat with the left or right hand, with ida and pingala nadi, you dine upon the dual thron. Pleasure and pain is served in endless helpings, and your menu is limited.

When one allows the prana to stretch forth the Tutikai one can reach nectar. Ganesha seated in Muladhara, can, with his trunk, that is Shushumna Nadi scoop up helpings of nectar on one's behalf.

1

Bhogar refers to Moolar (Tirumoolar) when speaking of his grandfather "dwelling in the Sleepless Sleep".

Throughout the tradition the Siddhars speak with supreme reverence for the fourth state: Turiya, "the Sleepless Sleep".

There are four primary states of consciousness:

1. Nanavu: IA Jaagrat "the waking state; consciousness"
2. Kanavu: IA Swapna "the dream state; sub-consciousness"
3. Tookam: IA Sushubdi "the deep sleep state; unconsciousness"
4. Turiya: IA Turiya "the conscious sleep state; the sleepless sleep"

The first three states are within the sphere of our daily experience, while the fourth state is accessed only when the mind, ever imposing definitions, ever striving to organize phenomena, becomes quiet, entranced, at rest, "asleep". While consciousness, pure and unsullied by assumption, becomes awake to objective reality, and stands as a witness to life, essentially as it is.

"And Mind too is unconscious according to Vedanta. For all that is not the conscious self is the unconscious object. This does not mean that it is unconscious in itself. On the contrary all is essentially conscious, but that it is unconscious because it is the object of the conscious self. For mind limits Consciousness so as to enable man to have finite experience. There is no Mind without consciousness as it's background, though supreme Consciousness is Mindless (Amanah). Where there is no mind (Amanah), there is no limitation. Consciousness remaining in one aspect unchanged changes in its other aspect as an active Power which manifests as Mind and Body. Man then is Pure Consciousness (Cit) vehicled by its Power as Mind and Body."

This enigmatic fourth state is this limitless consciousness Sir John Woodroffe speaks of in his The Serpent Power, but there is a fifth state even more of an enigma than The Sleepless Sleep. Rarely spoken of, they call it Turiyaatitam "Beyond the Sleepless Sleep". It is the super-conscious state, the universal mind, where there is no object, only one vast and luminous self-awareness that contains within it all things.

2

The poet begins by informing his readers that those secrets contained within his verse are what he apprehended while seated in the presence of the Divine, as though Siva himself gave Bhogar a glimpse of some sacred work, written by the very hand of God, and containing all of the secrets of the universe.

As mentioned earlier, these eighty-two verses are taken from Bhogar's collection of 7000 which, he tells us here, he has drawn from "the divine book" that maps out the movement of the individual awareness through all of the thousand-fold manifestations of spirit on each of the seven planes. Hence his reference is presented in seven chapters, a thousand verses each.

In The Poets of the Powers, Kamil Zvelbil gives us a list of the names of twenty-five Tamil Siddhas and their caste-origin which he acquired through some unspecified source. Popular legend speaks of Bhogar as being of Chinese origin. Most scholars dismiss this claim as hear-say, yet Zvelbil presents this one obscure and vital thread which substantiates this legend.

Bhogar's caste is listed as *Cinatecakkuyavar*, 'a Chinese potter'. His guru Kalangi also appears on the list as *Cinattuacari*, 'a Chinese preceptor'.

Perhaps Bhogar's relationship with Kalangi began in the old country in some Chinese Tantric school. Certainly many of Bhogar's verses convey a faint whispering of Taoist thought, not to mention the outstanding correspondences found between the Siddhar tradition & the Taoist alchemical schools of the period.

Kalangi was a poet in his own right, composing the Kalangi Nanavinda Rahasiyam-30, and using his other name Kamalamuni, he composed the Kamalamuni Nanasuttiram-76.

3

"By looking

the root seems egg-like in form."

The word *Moolam* can mean either "root" or "source". It refers to the Muladhara, the chakra or nerve plexus found at the base of the spine. The Muladhara is the starting point of the journey of consciousness, as awareness is propelled up the Shashumna Nadi by the force of the awakened Kundalini energy which lies in its dormant state in Muladhara. In speaking of Muladhara and this journey of consciousness the great tantric dictum

"What is here is everywhere.

What is not here is nowhere."

becomes essential to understand the process of the transmutation of consciousness, where the beginning is the perfect reflection of the end.

When Bhogar begins his description of this journey of consciousness he begins at its root, Muladhara. He describes the root as being egg-like. The expression he uses is another Tamil word adopted from the Sanskrit. The word *Anndam* carries a double meaning. One being "egg", which implies unmanifest potential; while the other, "universe", represents the completeness of that potential made manifest. So this opening verse could also be translated...

"By looking

the root is like the universe."

The movement of consciousness is like the movement of sound. Like a single note alighting on the air. It's essential quality does not change, it expands. How does consciousness, a solitary point of awareness, this primordial egg, become the universe?

"Nada is the first produced movement in the ideating cosmic consciousness leading up to the Sound-Brahman

(Sabda-Brahman), whence all ideas, the language in which they are expressed (Sabda), and the objects (Artha) which they denote, are derived.

"Bindu literally means a point and the dot (Anusvara), which denotes in Sanskrit the nasal breathing. It is placed in the Chandra-bindu nasal breathing above Nada. In its technical Mantra sense it denotes the state of active Consciousness or Shakti in which the "I" or illuminating aspect of Consciousness identifies itself with the total "This". It subjectifies the "This", thereby becoming a point (Bindu) of consciousness with it."

4

There is a universe within a speck of dust or a single grain of sand; universes within universes. Likewise the whole universe flows within the sap of the root Muladhara.

By diving deep one discovers the light of *Om-kaara*; a triad of sound that creates, sustains, and dissolves the universe. It is a triad of the three sacred letters that unite to form the cry of the living universe, "A-U-M". All things born, all things living, all things dying are contained within the sounds that form this triangle at Muladhara.

Shashumna, like the sacred thread, the holy vestment of the Brahmin, is said to be a three-fold, one within the other: Shashumna (the subtle), Vajra (the jewel or thunderbolt), and the innermost Chitrini. In the tantric work Sat-Chakra-Nirupa it says that near the mouth of Shashumna's inner nadi, Vajra, and at the pericarp of the Muladhara "there shines the beautifully luminous and soft, lightning-like triangle which is Kama-rupa" (i.e. that which causes Kama, "desire/love" to be felt). The triangle is said to contain a wind (Vayu) named Kandarpa which holds within the three points of the triangle every point in the universe. Kandarpa is a name of Kama, the God of Love.

"The ignorant prate that Love and Siva are two,

But none do know that Love alone is Siva.

When men but know that Love and Siva are the same,

Love as Siva, they e'er remain."

The three points of the triangle are formed by the movement of sound from A to U to M. The pure awareness of Siva encompassing all pours forth and is expressed in the dynamic power of Shakti which manifests as matter, the field in which consciousness plays.

"By One letter all worlds became;

By Two letters (A&U), He the Two became Siva and Shakti;

By Three letters (A,U,&M), He the light became;

By letter M was Maya ushered in."

When beginning the journey at the root of consciousness, Bhogar tells us that one meets the masculine principle standing upon the syllable A in the form of Ganesha, the Lord of Gateways. His consort Vallabhai Shakti stands upon U and a line unites them. Their union bares an issue. Bhogar tells us that this issue is each one of us, we who stand upon the syllable *Bhu*, we who stand upon the Earth.

Instead of using the *Ma* that is Maya the Mother, he uses *Bhu* that is the Sanskrit word for the Mother Earth, or perhaps he intended to employ a purer Tamil reading of the character. Then it would read as "*Pu*", perhaps inferring the Tamil word for flower "*Poo*". Whatever was his intent (that clever fellow stacked the deck with endless layers of hidden meaning) he chose to draw attention to the lower point of the triangle, draw attention to the birth of all manifestation as the plantain flower.

"And in one tapering corner

there is the plantain flower."

Leaving out the *Ma*, he says that here beneath the face of *Bhu*, at the very root of earthly existence, one finds the Kundalini Shakti, dangerous and serpentine. Just to bring awareness here is enough to make her enter Shashumna. Just to bring awareness here is to reach the root of consciousness; that place beyond even the sleepless sleep. Shashumna in Sanskrit means literally "the Subtle"; while Sulimulai, the Tamil word for Shashumna Nadi, means "the Circle's End". This term perhaps refers to the circle around this triangle from which Shashumna rises upwards, or perhaps the term infers that Shashumna is the path through which one escapes the endless cycle of death and rebirth.

5-6

Numerologically, the number eight refers to the initial interaction of the four basic elements that leads to their diffusion into the multitude of manifest forms that constitute this universe. As long as the basic elements are perceived in their essential state consciousness is unified, but once this interaction takes place (at least at far as perception & interpretation in concerned) consciousness is diffused into the permutations of manifest matter and thus subject to the limitations of nature's laws.

Manifestation is presided over by 8 Shaktis, who are personifications of the 8 siddhis (siddhi meaning "power" or "perfection"). These Shaktis stand outside of, yet dictate, nature's laws and the laws of human limitation. To perceive the root level of existence (to perceive manifest matter, this Earth, reduced to its 4 essential elements and

their initial eight-fold interaction) is to look over creation from the outside in. It is to see the clockworks of the universe and sidestep the barrier that superscribes manifestation.

This state is one of vast perspective; it just precedes the dawning of true wisdom, and it is this lack of wisdom which puts the Yogi in a dangerous position... where the shaktis may try to steal one's power.

This danger, *this temptation of the 8 siddhis*, may be explained thus: Imagine having the insight born of closely observing the constituents of all the circumstances that cause the varieties of human response. We are the products of our environment. Our environment defines who we are. Our sense of self, our sense of who and what we are, arises in response to a set of ever changing circumstances. What if one were to perceive that pattern, manipulate those circumstances and, by extension, the outlook of others for personal gain? What drastic repercussions would ensue?

When gaining this initial perspective over the fundamental laws that govern the universe's operation one is tempted by these Shaktis to disregard such laws and to misuse one's insight, abandoning the path of integrating the individual self into the Absolute.

These siddhis are mentioned again and again in India's vast & varied array of literatures. An examination of these 8 siddhis complemented by a study of the writings of Mystics and Yogis reveals that, though these powers are predominantly taken at face value to infer an ability to manipulate matter and influence external phenomena through an act of will, these siddhis conform perfectly to the various narratives of the inner experiences of the Mystic. To the Mystic, the descriptions of these siddhis speak of the way in which consciousness, unfettered by linear thinking, becomes malleable, flows out and returns, expands and contracts, how it, by its own nature, adjusts and harmonizes itself to the oscillations of circumstance. It (consciousness) savours any object placed within its scope by pouring itself into that object, becoming all that the senses perceive, all that the mind creates, and still its essential nature remains constant and its purity undefiled.

The siddhis are always spoken of as a great stumbling block, something extremely dangerous, and yet a precious commodity; not as "the goal" in and of themselves, but as a tool for perceiving the vastness of existence both subjectively and in its entirety.

Tirumoolar describes the siddhis in verse 668 of the Tirumantiram...

"To become tiny as the atom within atom (Anima)

To become big in unshakable proportions (Mahima)

To become light as vapour in levitation (Laghima)

To enter into other bodies in transmigration (Prapti)

To be in all things, omni-pervasive (Prakamyā)

To be lord of all creation in omnipotence (Isatvam)

To be everywhere in omnipresence (Vasitvam)

---These eight are the Siddhis Great."

Bhogar introduces them much more dramatically, personified as eight formidable ladies occupying the eight petals of the plantain flower; hidden at the root of consciousness. They govern over nature's law, limiting the self, defining the multiplicity of form, restricting the flow of consciousness. They are, on the gross level, the latent tendencies of the mind, its movement & processes.

Bhogar recommends the Yogic discipline of pranayama, breathing with intent, to win them over, to soften their rigid grasp, and to set their liberating aspects in motion.

At the root one finds Siva by entering the mouth of the serpent. A foreboding image which foreshadows the coming confrontation with the infinitude of one's own being.

He is hidden in the heart of the flower. If, through the breath, awareness can be turned upon itself, Nandi (Siva) is seen. One then finds the center of all phenomena. Then the flow and expansion of consciousness can be directed by one's own will, irrevocably united to the will of the Great Mother... "You'll make them [the eight shaktis] obey the Mother's commands."

To enter within the plantain flower, one cannot reach there by striving. Awareness must simply settle into its natural state. No amount of "effort" can make this depth of meditation be achieved. The mind cannot be convinced to become silent and receptive. Internal argument only compounds the problem. This is why Yoga has developed a vast system of means to rectify and pacify the mind's internal struggle.

Bhogar in verse number six gives the first piece of the puzzle in relating his system of pranayama. This system, which applies the sacred Panchakshara mantra to well established Yogic breath manipulations, reinforces the traditional breathing practices by engaging the mind in mental repetition of the Panchakshara syllables. This becomes just difficult enough to demand the mind's full engagement and complete concentration on repeating the mantra in proper sequence with the movement of the breath.

One begins this practice by drawing in the breath with the syllable *Va*. The breath is to be then immediately retained

by the mental utterance of *Ya*. As the mantra is spoken in the mind, one shifts the breath into the lower diaphragm and fixes awareness at the base of the spine. The mind is held steadfast at the root and, before one feels light-headed (the breath is controlled, but never repressed), one exhales with the mantra *Si*.

Si-Va's name becomes the out and in flowing breath. The syllable *A* (transformed into *Ya* through Tamil's grammatical law of sandhi), the first sound to issue from primordial stillness, is the mantra of retention. Release with *Si*. Invite the breath to come within by mentally repeating the mantra *Va* (the Tamil word meaning "come"). Using *Si-Va's* name to concentrate the mind, breath begins to deepen in equal measure. After some time, as one becomes calm and listens to the sound of the breath flowing in and out, one begins to hear the syllables *Va* & *Si* being made spontaneously by the movement of breath. *Va-Si* in Tamil means "breath". Siva is hidden within vasi.

Bhogar's "puffing" practice helps to take firm hold of the mind's reigns, giving focus and direction to thought by flooding the brain with oxygen, opening the neural network, and energizing cellular activity in a sudden and dynamic way. The technical term of this practice is *Kapala Bhati* ("Skull Shining") and as one of the Four Purifications is an ideal way of beginning one's daily Yoga practice.

"*Kapala Bhati* is a series of forced exhalations: Exhale and inhale quickly and lightly through both nostrils. Emphasize the exhale, letting the inhalation come as a natural reflex.. After one series of exhalations, which should last no longer than one minute, rest and breath naturally. Then repeat."

Kapala Bhati produces a rather intoxication effect in the practitioner, making the mind (and the eight shaktis) swoon. The flood of oxygen to the cells of the body and the brain is exhilarating. This practice wakes one up, centers awareness, focuses concentration, and is an excellent preliminary to meditation.

Another "puffing" practice similar to *Kapala Bhati* is *Bhastrika* or "Bellows" which also offers the same "mental cleansing" effect. To practice *Bhastrika* one must be vigorous, not pausing between in-breath and out-breath. Throughout, both in-breath and out-breath should be of equal duration, so begin by breathing slowly, balancing in-breath and out-breath while fixing awareness at the point where the air first passes into the nostrils, focusing on that sensation. As the in-breath/out-breath duration becomes balanced, one speeds up the breathing process to a point where the intensity of air flow is short and quick with a distinct feeling of impact as breath is drawn in and then pushed out with the contraction of the diaphragm. When this practice reaches a crescendo of speed and intensity (after about 20-25 exhalations), inhale slowly and completely and retain the breath as long as it is comfortable. This practice is the bellows that fans the alchemical fire of the *Kundalini*.

7

Here Bhogar introduces perhaps the most important pranayama practice of all: *Nadi Shodanam* or "Alternate Nostril Breathing". This practice is centered directly upon balancing the flow in the *Ida* & *Pingala* Nadis. This practice has had such a profound effect on its practitioners that its use has spread into Brahminical tradition and is employed by the priest at the beginning of each Hindu rite to focus the mind, unify & direct the flow of prana through the body, and aid in balancing and maximizing air intake for correct recitation of the mantra hymnals.

The practitioner uses the thumb and fingers of the right hand to alternate the flow of air through the right & left nostrils. Placing the hand in the form of the *Vishnu* mudra the left nostril is closed as one breathes in through the right. Through contraction of chest and abdomen, the air is shifted downwards towards *Muladhara* and retained, as the right nostril is then closed.

Then, through intention or visualization, breath is shifted to the left side of the body, allowed to rise, and be expelled through the left nostril. One then breathes in through the left, shifts and retains the breath, and exhales through the right. The practice continues repeating itself in this manner. Before beginning this practice it is good to ascertain in which nostril is the air flow predominant. Bhogar offers a mantra prescription for the imbalanced flow of air in the nostrils.

8

*"The six streets
become level
and are clearly perceived."*

As awareness is refined through the pranayama practice, the spectrum of the various states of consciousness becomes apparent. The work at *Muladhara* is perfected through perceiving the manner in which the mind moves and expands. It is like a gymnasium where the fluidity of awareness is exercised.

Before the Yogi can move on from *Muladhara* he must integrate the expansiveness of his awareness with the physical constraints of the body, the inconsistency of the emotions, and the restlessness of the mind. All of the realms must be brought together, reduced to their essence, and traced back to the root. No aspect of life can be overlooked. The aspirant must simplify the manner in which he perceives *existence* until all facets can be addressed with the same complete attentiveness. Bhogar presents a set of equations in this work that define these facets or movements of the mind.

9

Vallabai here embodies the Kundalini Shakti itself. Because when a personalized relationship is established with the energy personified than one "listens" with more care and understanding to its natural movement and need not fear the premature expansion of consciousness.

By becoming a balanced and integrated individual on the earth plane, the root (Muladhara) of the whole person is properly nurtured and set in balance with nature. The body gains added lustre as the mind becomes calm, clear and receptive, entering the Turiya state where all the various levels of phenomenal existence becomes easily apprehended.

10

The eight constituents sub-divide back into the fundamental state of the four elements (earth, wind, fire, & air). These are the prime building blocks of manifest existence. Awareness withdraws deeper within as the mind's functions are quieted by the simplicity of a universe composed, in its entirety, of only four basic elements. Without the interference of restless and undirected thought, awareness is contracted and refined, like the sun's light focused and intensified through the magnifying glass of the concentrated mind. Focused on the root (metaphorically) it ignites.

The four petals of the Muladhara plexus are clusters of nadis each bearing (at least in a symbolic sense) an elemental characteristic. These four elements become the kindling that fuel the fire (the aroused Kundalini) in which Ganesha dances out this divine play that is existence.

In Tantric Yoga and the Siddhar Yoga system the aspirant begins at Muladhara to set about recreating the universe inside himself in all its panoramic glory: from the first spark of creation, dividing and expanding into this web of "becoming" and culminating into the ultimate dissolution in the "un-chakra" Sahasrara, where all the possible permutations of manifestation are represented as the thousand petals united in a single blossoming flower. Although a great portion of Bhogar's work is devoted to the alchemical science, his reference here to "the True Polymorph Alchemy" has little to do with the act of changing base metals into gold. It is common for the Siddhars to speak of the awakening of the Kundalini with alchemical terms.

"Honey-like semen is the mercury

The controlled breath is the herb

The fire at Muladhara is the oven

The product is the Philosopher's Stone

Oh man! Find this stone in the body

And fly in the sky at will."

The True Polymorph Alchemy is the attainment of the ability to let the awareness, having become malleable and unfettered by the mind's distinctions, flow into and become all that comes to perception's doorstep. When an object is perceived the aspirant does not employ the mind to judge its intrinsic qualities and functions. Nor is the mind used to reinforce a sense of "self" by defining the relationship of subject to object. This kind of inference is an intrinsic quality of the mind's functioning. It makes us all products of our environment. All victims of the pathways of interpretation that thought takes in organizing and structuring the information gathered by the senses. The sum total of this information and the way in which it is organized in the deeper recesses of the mind not only forms our conception of "reality" and molds the ego, it also dynamically affects our perception and interpretation of all new input that flows in through the senses. This information is filtered by the intellect, and immediately becomes subject to our habitual and reactionary system of interpretation. We are creatures of habit. Our patterns of thought have a tendency to get caught in a rut, which the movement of the same recurring set of thought patterns digs deeper and deeper. As we grow older, it becomes more and more difficult to open up new pathways of intellectualization. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" or assimilate new ways of thinking, and so we suffer and stagnate in a dreary world which the mind has dug out for us.

Often by adulthood, the mind, grown sluggish and morose, hounds us with its fears of change, lack of breadth, inflexibility, and its stubborn complacency to remain stuck within the confines it has imposed upon us. Life loses its vitality and spontaneity, and best we can hope for is a little distraction from our monotonous life struggling and stumbling through our pathetic little world.

11

"While going

or while staying...

concentrate the mind."

In action or in inaction, while seated in meditation or surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the marketplace, mindfulness of breath and concentration of mind should be applied. Yoga, and particularly the Tantric teachings, are of use only if applied to every aspect of life. Meditation is not meant for giving sanctuary or escape. It is to be

practiced continuously, bringing a receptive quality to awareness, and bringing the care, sensitivity, and attention to detail that our precious human existence deserves. Meditation is not a particular way of sitting or thinking. Nor should it be some vain struggle to subdue the mind. It is a quality of seeing, embracing what *is* with eyes wide open. Not judging, not daydreaming, not resisting, just a simple and effortless acceptance of things wherever and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

"Be in a place where you don't have to listen to the noise of others talk." Bhogar seems to be advising his readers to disregard what others say, and let one's own insights and understanding be the guide. Let one trust in one's self. Let one make an assessment of reality that is not compounded by the judgements of others, or even the mind, as in the Meyjnanapulampal ("the Wailing of True Wisdom"), where Battiragiriyaar cries out the great Siddhar adage: "Arivai Arival Arinthu" ("to know knowledge by knowledge") in verse twenty-four.

*"Forgetting trivial happiness,
Knowing knowledge by knowledge itself,
when shall I cut off this cycle
of falling into wombs."*

The knowledge he speaks of is apprehended only by personal experience. This is the difference between "believing" and "knowing", between that which is "learned" and that which is truly "understood".

12

Just by balancing the flow of breath in the right and left nostrils, directing (through visualization) the breath's movement to the spine's base, and fixing the mind in Muladhara, the fire of Kundalini is kindled and the streams of Prana in the Ida and Pingala Nadis unite pouring into the Shashumna Nadi. The passage of time becomes meaningless as the mind merged with the root remains perfectly balanced in the immediate present.

13

Another interpretation of the Tamil word "Sulimunai" would have "the circle's end" be more ideally rendered as "the spiral's end". Shushumna is the nadi that rises up from the serpent coiled 3 ? times around the lingam at the base of the spine. The lingam is the root of the divine in man. It is the cosmic pillar, the axis upon which the world turns. It is the hub of the wheel of Samskara. It is the cosmic axis of the spine upon which our senses and organs of action turn round. It is the center of our universe, intimate and accessible to all. The great Siddhar saint of the nineteenth century, Ramalingar, described his journey up the spine in a thirty-two verse poem which begins by describing the spine as a mountain of light, the mythical mount Meru, abode of the gods, Olympus of the East...

*"A mountain of light appeared.
Mother, in it there was a street.
There was a street!"*

Shushumna is the street that climbs the mountain of the spine, but until the Kundalini awakens, the spine keeps us firmly chained to the earth, to the realm of matter, with the golden chain of attachment and aversion, the sweet and bitter fruits of the Tree of Life.

14

The word *munai* in *Sulimunai* is the same word translated here as "corner" in *Ilimunai*- "the Corner of Degradation". "The Sleep of the Circle's End" and "dying in the Corner of Degradation" are in both cases referring to the same danger. When one, through consciousness expansion and through a greater understanding of the mechanism that is this universe, pushes past the limitations of the individual self and gains the eight siddhis, one will inevitably face the danger of identifying the ego as the actor, as the worker of miracles, as superior to the rest of this universe indivisible. So "the Sleep of the Circle's End" is when awareness, having recognized itself as "the One Consciousness", falls once again into dispersion and separation as the ego asserts itself and the individual will is reinforced.

15

The awareness anchored in the quietude (of A-kaaram) observes the mind's endless array of responses to sense objects, watches patiently and without concern the pushing and pulling of the mind. When one's very center is detached and still, the mind cannot help but to follow suit and become calm, but at the outset it is one restless and "slippery" fish-- try to take hold of it and it will slip through your fingers. Hold it gently, however, giving it room to roam, and it can be contained in the vastness of a more spacious awareness.

16

Here Bhogar makes a striking observation:

*"Even with the intoxication
of seeking security in bondage
The world beckons..."*

*and all
are bewildered."*

We live in fear, struggling day by day to hoard up wealth and resources so that we can endure. But wealth and resources must be protected, property and livestock require upkeep and maintenance, and business needs careful strategy and hard work.

Our fear and our struggle then extends beyond the maintenance of our bodies. Life's demands grow and expand beyond our daily needs. Simple necessities quickly become very complicated. We forget the freedom of simplicity and embrace instead "security in bondage".

The problem isn't in working hard or having too much. The problem is living in fear and forgetting to savour our precious and fleeting existence. Insecurity and fear wield the whip that drives us to struggle on and on, rather than letting love of life transform all we do into the simple joy of existence, of participating in life instead of fighting against the inevitability of death.

17

The practice of Pranayama should always be comfortable if not euphoric. One need never suppress the breath. Pranayama should not be an act of effort or a struggle. The body knows instinctively what it requires and so the Pranayama practitioner should always remain attentive & listen to the body's needs.

A mastery of the Ujjayi Pranayama (the "Victorious Breath") is a crucial aid in controlling the breath. The practice helps to reveal the terrain of the respiratory system. Ujjayi is the principle practice used to control the flow of prana. "Ujjayi means 'victorious'; by this pranayama one can gain control over prana. This pranayama has a heating effect. Before doing ujjayi it is helpful

to wash the tongue and rinse the throat to loosen phlegm."

This instruction in the practice of the Ujjayi Pranayama comes from Baba Hari Dass' Ashtanga Yoga Primer. Like Baba Hari Dass, Bhogar also recommends cleansing the throat as one aspect of purification in preparation for daily practice.

"Close the mouth and inhale through both nostrils, slightly tightening the glottis by bending the head forward to produce a choking sob, accompanied by a slight sniff. It should sound like a child sobbing. In the beginning one can inhale in five sobs; when it is perfected the sobs can run into each other. Hold the breath in the upper part of the chest for two to three seconds, then close the right nostril, and exhale through the left. Immediately after exhalation, inhale again through both nostrils and repeat. Begin with ten rounds and increase to forty over a period of three months.

Note: One may also exhale through both nostrils." (Which is the more common practice.)

This practice is extremely useful in defining where the breath moves and shifts in the body. The sensation of the breath's movement during practice is intense and will help to quite effortlessly draw the mind along the breath's passage through the respiratory system. Sensation in the region of the throat is especially pronounced. Here is where one gains a sense of "the bag" that Bhogar mentions.

His reference here to Vayu's House (the house that rules the air element) is allocated to the throat chakra (Vishuddha). Unlike the attributions given in other schools, Bhogar has designated Vishuddha to govern air rather than Anahata. The reader will note that Bhogar's elemental attributions for the chakras transpose the more common allocations of the Sat-Cakra-Nirupu up one level, leaving Muladhara without clear definition, an ambiguous root from whence the muddled mixture of elements rise up to levels of purer expression as blossoms on the vine. Jalandhara Bandha (Throat Lock) binds the breath after inhalation, "tethers the donkey," by simply tilting the head forward and pressing the chin tightly into the hollow of the neck. Baba Hari Dass points out that, "According to Yoga physiology a subtle nectar flows from *sahasrara chakra*, falls to *manipura chakra*, and is consumed by gastric fire. *Jalandhara bandha* prevents the nectar from falling, which brings calmness, long life, and good health. Thus the name *jalandhara*, which means 'cloud-holding, receptacle of vital fluid'."

18

As breath and mind becomes firmly fixed at the root, one becomes balanced, standing at the hub of the wheel of change. Here time loses all meaning. A single moment seems to stretch on into eternity as the mind teeters precariously towards its old tendencies of habitual response and other conditioned modes of thinking. The mind struggles to thrust up images before the immovable awareness. These images reveal "the specific symptoms" of latent pathways along which the mind moves and in which the mind is stuck, unable to divert its course of movement to new and broader avenues of perception.

19

The mantra of Ajna, the third eye chakra, is "Om". Yogis, when seated in meditation, will roll up the eyes and fix the awareness at the point between the brows. The Tamil character for Om resembles a peacock standing on one leg

with its tail fanned out. The Siddhar Ramalingar makes use of this image in one of his verses describing his experiences in meditation:

"Up in the sky

I saw the peacock's dance

The peacock became a cuckoo, sister.

The peacock became a cuckoo."

In the thoughtless space between the brows he saw the Om-kaara vibrating. It manifests as sound resounding (the cuckoo). Often in the quietude of meditation, one will discern the sound in the ears. Mystics around the world describe it variously as the voice of angels, running water, the chirping of crickets, the tinkling of bells, or the humming of bees. Bhogar mentions the phenomenon of hearing the sound, as he begins the movement from Muladhara to Svadishtana, in verse 24 as the sweet chime of God's anklets as He dances out this play of existence:

"The wonder!

Being merged

in the sound

of His anklets."

Ajit Mookerjee, in Kundalini: the Arousal of the Inner Energy, describes the specific sounds heard in each of the five lower chakras, "When Kundalini awakens, the aspirant listens to cosmic sound. When the Kundalini leaves Muladhara, he hears the chirping of a cricket; when he crosses to Svadishtana, the tinkling of an anklet; in the Manipura, the sound of a bell; at the Anahata, the music of a flute, and finally, when Kundalini crosses to Vishuddha, the cosmic sound Om, the first manifestation of Shiva-Shakti as Sonic Consciousness. The proper knowledge and understanding of Sonic Consciousness leads to the attainment of Supreme Consciousness."

20

"Time was when I despised the body;

but then I saw the God within.

The body, I realized, is the Lord's temple;

And so I began preserving it with care infinite."

The Siddhar Yoga system, as with other schools of Yoga that grew out of the Tantric traditions, is a holistic system intended to transform the person on all levels: spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. Purification of the body has often been a prerequisite before the more advanced Yoga practices can be perfected. Emphasis on the necessity of the well-being of the physical instrument has led the Siddhars to develop a vast system of herbal medicines and other prescriptions for preventative maintenance geared towards giving the practitioner good health and longevity. Karpams are predominantly used for longevity, but these mysterious medical preparations, composed of herbs, metal oxides, and arsenics, are also said to confer siddhis to the user. "Application of herbs for the attainment of siddhis is mentioned even in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. In the Tamil Siddha works, these Karpams are recommended as an adjunct to the Kundalini Yoga practice."

I must confess that I have been unable to find any reference to what "the heavy Moolikai herb" actually is, but it is common for the earlier Siddhar medical terms and their names for herbs to be forgotten. Nonetheless, Siddhar medicine is becoming more and more in vogue in present day Tamil Nadu as scores of clinics open and practitioners gain wider recognition.

21

"To shake the base of the tree" means to "vibrate the spine", while climbing upwards by "hopping" refers to the jumps in states of consciousness that one takes as he moves from chakra to chakra. It is the Kundalini that is the river of consciousness through which the individual awareness crosses over into the Universal Mind.

Bhogar has devoted a section of this work (verses 71 - 79) entirely to the Dvadashantam, the "12-inch flame". Alternately, it is described as rising either from Ajna chakra, the point between the brows, or from Sahasrara at the crown of the head, and tapers into space 12 inches above its point of origin. It is the divine flame in which the individual spirit is consumed: dissolved into eternity.

22

"Neither mantra, nor song, nor arts four and sixty

Ever sundereth birth and its accursed bonds.

Then did I take Yoga's way, and lo!

I met the Sun, Moon and Fire on the way to Cranium,

And they showed the Supreme Way!"

The tradition divides the body into three parts. The stomach and abdomen is ruled by Agni, the God of Fire. The breast houses the Sun, and the head is the rounded sphere of the Moon, crowned by the Sahasrara lotus flower. Bhogar portrays Ganesha holding aloft the mind's flower, grasped in his tutikai (Shashumna), lifted upwards into the

sky (Akasha).

The great mother Vallabai Shakti gives birth to the shakti in us all, and in turn, Bhogar advises us to redirect that force of life in us back to its source: the Great Mother.

Even from far away, through Manasa Puja (mental worship) one can reach beyond the web-like matrix of matter, transmuting thought itself into the image, the very being, of the Divine Mother.

The Milk of Soma, the sublimated seed, the Nectar of Immortality, hidden within the body, pours outward giving life to all things. Sustaining all things, the banner of awareness is raised to the zenith of the flagpole Shashumna.

23

The secret of action, as taught in the Bhagavad Gita, lies in the quality of awareness brought to activity. If the mind is clear and receptive, unattached to the fruits of action (be they "good" or "bad"), then one's inner nature takes over and one begins to act in accord with the Universal Will. Then the universe enacts its will through the individual.

Abandoning selfish desire, abandoning attachment and aversion, one does without "doing".

24

As testified by the ancient Chinese text, the I Ching, the essential characteristics of the universe can be reduced to the same equation which denotes the Vastu Purusha Mandala: $8 \times 8 = 64$. In this equation, 8×8 reflects the universes alchemical transmutation of the 8 components interacting with one another to produce the 64 primary characteristics or essences that compose the manifest universe. The four elements become eight. The eight becomes sixty-four. The sixty-four manifest as all possibility, the same 64 qualities that compose the things outside us are also found within. When the malleable alchemy is revealed all these primary qualities are effortlessly perceived. The mind becomes fluid, mirroring the 64 facets of nature as they arise and fall from view, and the essence hidden behind phenomena, the One hidden behind the many, appears "explicit and complete".

25

"The universes seven,

The cosmic space beyond,

The life---animate and inanimate---

The gunas three, the Vedas ancient,

The Gods that create and preserve

And their Primal Lord that is Siva---

All they are but in me."

Vedanta (lit. "the end of the Vedas"), whose name infers "the end of all knowledge", is the all-encompassing vision of the intricate mechanism that is this universe. It allows the viewer to ferret out the cause behind the bewildering array of effects. One sees Vedanta to its very end by once and for all reconciling the dichotomy within.

This reconciliation begins by merging the solar & lunar nadis (Ida & Pingala) into Shashumna, by balancing and integrating the flow of breath through the two nostrils, by mounting the horse of measured breath.

26

Breath sustains us. Its gift of life deserves our attentive recognition of this simple fact. Bhogar acknowledges the importance of daily practice, a daily need to set aside a time of quiet reflection; savouring breath's gift; dining on the breath of life.

27

There is a practice in South India of supplicating Ganesha by knocking three times on the temples. This is said to momentarily unite the Ida & Pingala currents and send a flood of nectar down to Muladhara, a flood of nectar which pours over Ganesha, awakens the God within, filling him with joy, bathing him with ecstasy. It transforms the body into the sanctum of pure spirit.

Another means of supplicating Ganesha is the repetition of the mantra:

Om Shreem Hreem Kleem

Gum Gum Ganapati

The word *puja* means "worship", while "the Good Circle" refers to the circle at Muladhara in which the trikonam stands.

29

All that is discerned by the sense faculties is a reflection of the level of consciousness at which we function. All is an extension of the state in which awareness is situated. As conscious expands so does the periphery of perception.

32

All the various permutations of sound are contained within the body. Each sound hangs on the Tree of Shashumna like ripened fruit, vibrating as the pranic winds move & flow through the nadis. We see all fifty characters of the Sanskrit alphabet inscribed upon the petals of the flowering vine of the spine. To outwardly vibrate the mantra cannot compare to the impact of the mantra that resonates within. As testified by the power of the Sanskrit vowels in

Schrader's Introduction to the Pancharatna, "the fourteen vowels gradually emerge from their latent condition [in A-Kaaram] by proceeding, with the Kundalini Shakti, from the Muladhara to the navel, the heart, and finally the throat where the first uttered sound arising is the aspirate, for which reason the Visarga [the aspiration] is interpreted literally as 'creation', its counterpart, the Anusvara or Bindu is an analogous way declared to represent the 'withdrawal' of speech. The Anusvara is also called 'sun', and the Visarga 'moon', and the sounds *a, i, u, r, l, e, o*, and *aa, ee, oo, rr, ll, ai, au* are respectively 'sunbeams' and 'moonbeams' and as such connected with day and night and with the nadis called Pingala and Ida."

34

The Immovable Pillar is the hub of the Wheel of Time. It is the still, silent, and changeless space at the center of all things.

When awareness is positioned where "the mind stands separate from the self" all of space, all of time, seems to simultaneously come into view. The mind, held in the silence, "having fallen into the silence that lies between words", the silence which holds the Om-kaara, the space which frames the character(s) on the page, all lie at the End of Sound, at the Aantam.

The Sanskrit root *anta* (tamil: *aantam*) can be found suffixed to words like Naath-Aantam "Sound's End" or prefixed to words like *antaati*. *Antaati* refers to a prosodic device, which Bhogar happens to employ through the bulk of his 7000 verses. This device brings continuity to the work, gives a cohesiveness to all that is expressed, and guides the train of thought from one verse to the next without leaving room for the mind's ramblings to reassert themselves.

The *antaati* is where the verse **begins with the end** of the previous verse, begins with the final word or phrase of the verse that came before.

Strangely enough, this is in no way confining for Bhogar. Quite the contrary: He goes into each new verse carrying with him the momentum of the last. One is amazed at the richness of meaning that he draws from the closing phrase as he dramatically turns the movement of each new verse on a single word towards a new and surprising destination. Now and again, this device can produce in the reader the sudden satori-like flash of insight, turning awareness, much like a zen koan, towards the place where "the mind stands separate from itself". It is where the mind, held in the silence that holds the Om-kaara, becomes pacified by the ensuing ecstasy of viewing all things from the inside out. It is the point of view of the Immovable Point that is both everywhere and nowhere. Where one looks upon all of creation, simultaneously from each and every perspective.

35-36

Four inches above the root is Svadishtana. In this system Svadishtana incorporates some of the earth element associations and symbolism that is attributed in other traditions to Muladhara. The Siddhar system, placing Ganesh at the root rather than Brahma, transposes the attributions of the Gods one station. So Svadishtana becomes Brahma's House.

Although the placement of all the elements & presiding Deities is shifted a station in the Siddhar allocations, still the number of petals and the distribution of the letters remains for the most part consistent with the other systems. Bhogar gives this chakra two biju ("seed") mantras: the biju of Brahma "*Nam*" & the earth biju "*Lam*". The biju "*Bhu*", here also mentioned is the name of earth.

The letter *A* being the beginning of creation takes the form of the Creator's swan vehicle. Likewise this chakra is associated with the creative powers of procreation.

Each chakra governs a specific portions of our physical body and it's functions; in this case they being hair, bone, flesh, skin, and nerve.

37

Vaani, Brahma's "deathless" consort, is another name of Saraswati, Goddess of Knowledge. She together with Brahma sets about creating matter from energy.

The four-faced Brahma appears here with the "nine telling gems" that adorn his crown. They are called the Navaratna, the nine planetary bodies believed to radiate potent influences that mold fate and guide the soul along life's path.

38

Saraswati governs speech & the imparting of knowledge, this is why she is said to be "the Mother who wears the tongue".

39

Brahma's letter *Na* is the essence of creation, the giver of life, the progenitor of the field of action: "the forest of good and wicked acts".

The term *aarchana* refers to a form of ritual worship.

40

Maal's realm is the chakra Manipura, the "City of Gems". This is the seat of the intellect. It is the mind's fortress formed in the shape of the watery crescent. Rising from the waters is a Banyon Tree that grows from it's mantra seed *Mam*. This is the Kalpataru, the Wish-fulfilling Tree of Indra's heaven. Found at the heart of the mind lotus, it's roots penetrate into the deep dark waters of the subconscious. It is yet another of the many recurring Cosmic Axis motifs littered throughout the text, where awareness, poised at the silent center of thought, shades the body of the God (Vishnu) who is seated beneath the ancient tree, found at the center of the City of Gems.

42

*"In the Concealment's Confusion
the Mother
is spinning round."*

Caught in the web of her own illusion (Maya). The Mother spins round within us as our own mind, ego, and feelings:

The mind's latent tendencies define phenomena and, in turn, build the House of Manipura. The mind makes distinctions, naming some objects as "beautiful/desirable/good", while others "ugly/undesirable/bad", and thus sets the bait that motivates us to pursue some external ideal; but in the perfected Manipura, within the ripened intellect one discovers the ancient mystery of the mind turned upon itself.

43

Here again Bhogar speaks of the Manipura, the lotus of the intellect as the house that conceals objective reality, that vainly seeks joy in transient objects.

When the mind's latent unity is dichotomized by attachment and aversion one wanders aimlessly in thought trying to uncover the girl (Shakti) who sets these winds of thought (Creation's play) in motion.

44

The Moon's Orb is the head and it's flower Sahasrara.

Manasa Puja (mental worship) is the practice of visualizing every ritual component and the act of offering. It completely internalizes not only the act of worship, but the object of worship as well bridging the rift between the Divine and man.

45

Ashtanga Yoga is "the Eight-limbed Yoga" first systematized by Patanjali between the 8th-9th centuries B.C. His work, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, defines these eight limbs as..

- 1) Yama (restraints)
- 2) Niyama (observances)
- 3) Asana (a physical posture or pose; a way of sitting)
- 4) Pranayama (control of prana, breath)
- 5) Pratyahara (withdrawing the mind from sense perception)
- 6) Dharana (concentration)
- 7) Dhyana (meditation)
- 8) Samadhi (super-consciousness)

46

"Knowledge" refers to the House of Manipura.

Here we see the ascending triangle in the heart lotus, Anahata, which mirrors the descending triangle in Muladhara. The triangle in Anahata is the gate through which one passes into the realms beyond the physical.

The Upwards Sleep proports the coming of the fifth state.

47

In this verse Bhogar employs a clever pun: The word *Shikaara* refers to the central tower of a Hindu temple, which indicates where the deity has been installed, in the chamber below; but he simultaneously is referring to the *Si*-kaaram, the fiery letter *Si*, poised at the center of the Panchakshatra Mantra Na-Ma-**Si**-Va-Ya.

48

Again, "the girl" is the Shakti.

49

Rudra is the presiding deity of this chakra, and Rudri, his consort.

51

As the spine was once the chain that binds us to matter, when the Kundalini is awakened, the spine becomes a prop that supports the universe.

Even the siddhis, acting upon themselves (8x8), numerically mimic the sixty-four essences that create the various evolutes of matter.

52

As each chakra is reached, it should be offered. The lotus should be mentally plucked from the vine (of the spine) and offered to Siva & Shakti.

53

The six-pointed star, ascending and descending triangles intertwined, is the meeting of heaven and earth, the union of Siva and Shakti, whose final merging takes place in Ajna.

54

Va is the biju of the water element, which in the beginning stood as the Causal Sea: an infinite ocean of all-possibility from which all things arise. It holds within its depths the Great Dream of the multiplicity of existence. *Ya* is the biju of the air, also allocated to this chakra as in Woodroffe's works.

56

"These tastes are only in the mouth and not beyond." What we perceive through the sense organs does not necessarily ensure that we are getting an accurate interpretation of "reality".

57

Va is the raechaka mantra which Bhogar applies to the in-breath. The in-breath enters and sustains the four elements that comprise the body.

The House of the Wind is Vishuddha and the "16 surfaces" its petals. Here the individual soul begins its process of dissolution into the absolute.

61

The biju of the Ajna chakra is *Om*. The Tamil character appears to have a tail. It is surrounded by a circle that has two petals.

The *Ya* referred to here is not the biju of the air element, but rather it is the final syllable of the Panchakshara. The mantra begins in Muladhara with *Om*--- then moves up the spine applying one syllable to each chakra *Na-Ma-Si-Va-Ya*, which then culminates in the pristine silence of Sahasrara.

I can offer little explanation for his attribution of the biju *Va* to the element ether. *Va* in other systems is attributed to the element water and placed in Svadishtana. I can only suspect that this is another reference to the Panchakshara *Va* used to accompany the inward flowing breath.

64

In the sixty-fourth verse, a numerically significant point in Bhogar's work, the 8 constituents & the 8 shaktis intermingle to produce the 64 components that make up the universe, (all that can be "known").

Here Bhogar reveals the Panchadaasakshaari Mantra (lit. "the 15 syllable mantra). This is the Mother's secret mantra, a closely guarded secret of amongst Brahmins even today. This mantra is so highly esteemed among them that they will even interweave its syllables with the ancient Gayatri of the Rig Veda.

Bhogar gives this fifteen syllable mantra garland of Manomani to his readers not without some reservation. If you count the number of syllables he relates, the number comes up fourteen. He has intentionally left one crucial syllable out of the verse. The equation is incomplete. Rendered useless by the omission of a single character.

Were it complete, it would put one in direct contact with the goddess Manomani, the Kundalini personified. It forms the very heart of this body of verse addressing the mysteries of Kundalini.

65

"Eight will be added unto four..." i.e. the eight siddhis will be applied to the four elements that compose earthly matter.

"You can enter the body of your loved one." means that you can project awareness into organic matter, see the world through others eyes, savour union with all beings, and leap the boundaries of flesh and form.

*"You can cross the hair bridge
over the River of Fire."*

This line gives us one of Bhogar's more vivid allegorical images: of the trepidatious crossing over from the realm of matter into the realm of spirit. The hair bridge is the Chitrini Nadi, the innermost thread of Shashumna. The River of Fire is the Kundalini Shakti.

*"...and the symbol
becomes clearly defined in thought."*

Having a concentrated mind, fixed on the symbol, is a crucial part of Bhogar's system. The symbolism is indispensable. One must have a reference point in order to direct the movement of awareness and an object with which to engage the mind.

Bhogar's system gives three primary tools to awaken and direct the Kundalini Shakti:

- 1) Pranayama
- 2) Mantra
- 3) Symbols for visualization

Throughout this work he has given a rough draft of the sequence of their application, trouble shoots some of the dangers to be encountered, and offers his own unique kind of fatherly advice on how one lives with Yogic insight.
67

"That part of the self that is the Mother" encompasses all of us except that one primordial spark of changeless awareness. She is all thought, all experience, flesh & fluid, the senses & their objects, the mind & the subconscious, both ego & id.

Leaping beyond Her, all manifestation is dissolved back into the Great Self that is He: Sada Siva.
69

Gayatri is a particular form of mantra introduced in the Rig Veda. This particular Gayatri translates:

"I understand the flawless.

I meditate upon that which casts no reflection.

May that subtle principle

bestow grace upon us."

71

One's individual self burns away passing through the first eleven inches of the Twelve Inch Flame. Then, at its peak, within the final unit beyond, the aspirant discovers the supreme. Of what exists there, cannot be claimed to have been seen by anyone, for the "I" has been burnt away and the mystery of that twelfth inch stands as witness to itself. There is no room here for the subject-object dichotomy. Only being It can bare testament to It's validity.

72

In verse 72 the poet tells us, "You will see all of the hidden pathways". These, of course, being the 72,000 nadis through which the vital force (prana) is propelled. One need only center awareness on the point where air first passes into the nostrils ("...if you bite on the tip of the nose there will be union."), there the air flow can be balanced and the streams of breath united.

"Eat without eating", dine on the Ujjayi breath shifting awareness to the distinctive sensation in the throat and "you will see what is there".

Since the Kundalini Shakti is coiled around the lingam at Muladhara she is called 'Kubjika' ("the Hunchback"), but from the point of view of the Twelve Inch Flame she is a straight line which stretches on into infinity.

73

There is an old Tamil proverb which says:

"What's the use of a coconut

to a dog?"

A dog cannot penetrate its hard outer shell and savour its sweet milk & tender fruit. The mind continually spews forth its doubts and insecurities (and the Yogi's mind is no different), But thoughts such as these should be combated with reflection, reason, and the renewed vigor to practice "the method of the residing breath" with unwavering diligence.

74

Here the path repeats itself as Bhogar guides us once again through the whole elaborate process (of scaling the chakras) in only six verses:

Ma sends breath down to the Banyon Tree that rises up from Svadishdana. Its left & right roots are joined in Muladhara and rise upwards as the celestial tree, Kalpataru.

76

"The five grey hairs" refers to the hair found at the top of the head, the moustache, the beard, on the chest, and in the pubic region.

The body turns a reddish hue as the Kundalini is aroused. There will also be a concentration of heat in the region of the awakened chakra, as Woodroffe also attests to in The Serpent Power, "There is one simple test whether the Shakti is actually aroused. When she is aroused intense heat is felt at that spot but when she leaves a particular centre that part so left becomes as cold and apparently lifeless as a corpse. The progress upwards may thus be externally verified by others. When the Shakti (Power) has reached the upper-brain (Sahasrara) the whole body is cold and corpse-like; except the top of the skull, where some warmth is felt, this being the place where the static and kinetic aspects of Consciousness unite." At this point the body appears pale, cool, and glows with a soft lustre.

77

The myrobalam fruit is clear in color. It allegorically refers to adopting the fluid character of the changing environment. Placed in the hand, it takes on the color of the skin, inferring the malleability of pure consciousness.

78

It has been said that the enlightened sage exudes a particular fragrance, what Bhogar calls, "the True Fragrance", the scent of the Divine.

Mercurial amalgams were employed by the Siddhars for various works. One of which being to gain the power of flight; but it is difficult to say whether this infers a physical phenomenon or a kind of astral projection. Whichever it may be, Bhogar used the mercurial amalgam to take him to the furthest frontiers of creation, beyond space and time, to the periphery of the universe, the farthest shores of his own being.

94-95

I have added these two closing verses to convey Bhogar's most intimate insights on the true character of the breath: The mind/body is a vessel into which Siva pours as the breath of life. Breath and Siva are one.

We all share a common soul, a common breath, a common life. Siva flows through creation, entering the body as breath; but then Mind rises up, surveying the apparent multiplicity of existence, asserting its individuality, stating, "I am the doer". This marks the birth of the ego and the beginning of a life in isolation, cut off from a universe which all are irrevocably connected to.

But there is no need to struggle in our alienation and aloneness. We are alone because there is only One: the Great Awareness (which becomes Siva, who, in turn, becomes breath).

If we are unwavering, always mindful of breath (the giver of life); receiving it with reverence, gratitude, & humility; receiving it as Holy Communion; there is no longer any need for struggling & striving.

Breathing in: God becomes many; and each and every being may savour the Divine within. **Breathing out:** One need not have any reservation, but let the vessel become emptied into the Divine Ocean of space... vibrant with the pranic essence, infinite & indivisible.

"There is nothing to be accomplished.

Turn back [the Holy Breath]

and look."

Disclaimer

"He alone who has been acquainted with the wealth of the six lotuses by Maha-Yoga is able to explain the inner principles thereof. Not even the most excellent among the wise, nor the oldest in experience, is able, without the mercy of the Guru, to explain the inner principles relating to the six Lotuses..."

In most cases, I have resisted the temptation to rearrange the order of Bhogar's words. This refusal on my part may make the translated portion of this work seem more choppy and disjointed in places, but I feel that the sequence in which Bhogar presents these words and images is important, and that any attempt on my part to make Bhogar's 7000 "more readable" would subvert the effect that his work was intended to instill in the reader.

This is more than just a map of consciousness or a technical manual on Kundalini Yoga. What may at first appear as Bhogar's inability to be clear and concise, I assure you, is neither empty embellishment, nor the rantings of a madman. The images which he uses are not digressions in the narrative, but a carefully structured stream of ideas and symbols.

This is not just a poem, but a guided meditation, where Bhogar presents more than just a map of the inner terrain: He specifies what the tools are, when & where they are to be employed. All is given freely... encoded within the context of these haunting visions with which the mind must busy itself by conjuring up, lest the journey's momentum be lost in clinging to paltry matters of technique.

An Introduction to the Tamil Siddhas: Their Tantric Roots, Alchemy, Poetry, and the True Nature of their Heresy Within the Context of South Indian Shaivite Society

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(Please Note: This paper was originally presented at a symposium on world religions at the University of Utah in the spring of '97. It was haphazardly strung together almost overnight. Unfortunately, I failed to carefully list my sources and footnote their contributions. I have tried to list the most significant references at the tail of this article, but it is by no means complete. Nor do I give them proper credit in the body of the work. I apologize profusely for this oversight, and welcome comments and criticism on this or any other issues. I must especially acknowledge how

much Dr. David Gordon White and Dr. Kamil Zvelebil have contributed to this raggle-taggle introduction to Siddha tradition. Thanks!)

[Back to Indian alchemy.](#)

The Tamil Siddhas are a religious order of mystics found in the southern part of India, whose origins can be traced back to the eighth century. They form a distinctive part of a larger movement which spread throughout South Asia, from Sri Lanka in the South to Tibet in the north, between the seventh and eleventh centuries. Siddhas everywhere share common practices, cosmology, and symbols derived from Tantrism whether the practitioner is Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain. All are part of a "pan-Indian tantric yoga movement" which Eliade described as formulating over a five hundred year period, between the 7th and the 11th centuries, but fully flowering only after the 12th century. Excluding perhaps the Buddhist Siddhas, all such groups are considered radical, if not dangerous, by the orthodoxy. An intriguing aspect of the Tamil Siddha cult is that it shares with the orthodox Saiva Siddhanta sect a common text which defines the philosophy of both groups. Since each sect emphasized different aspects of the teaching they quickly became widely divergent, with the two orders often at odds. The Siddhas would be scoffing at temple worship, reliance upon Brahminical authority, and proclaiming the injustice of caste; while the Saiva Siddhantins would berate the Siddhas much as M. Srinivasa Iyengar did in 1914 when he wrote that the Siddhas are "mostly plagiarists and impostors" and in addition, "Being eaters of opium & dwellers in the land of dreams, their conceit knew no bounds".

At times the Siddhantins have even engaged in an organized effort to eliminate the Siddhar faction. For example, one movement, observed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, systematically sought out any copy of the writings of the heretical Siddha-poet Sivavakkiyar, and promptly destroyed them.

The rift between the two orders has been sharply polarized by the fact that some Saiva Siddhantins, who mostly worship their God Shiva as the Lingam or sacred Phallus, have had a difficult time accepting the Siddhas tendency to emphasize the Goddess. To the Tamil Siddhas, Shiva is the unqualified and ultimate reality beyond form or comprehension, but Shakti, the Goddess, is immanent and accessible as the divine force abiding within the body itself. There she can be coaxed & subdued, manipulated & directed. As the serpent power Kundalini, flowing through the subtle body, she can propel the consciousness of the Siddhar into union with the Absolute. Though the orthodox Saiva Siddhantin may content himself with the worship of Shiva in the temple through the rituals of the priest, the Siddha placates the goddess to intercede on his behalf and expand the consciousness of the Siddha beyond all limitation, where he may become Shiva himself. Notions, such as this, being fundamental to the Tamil Siddha, has struck the Shaivite orthodoxy as heretical.

Within the context of Hindu myth the name *Siddha* originally denoted one of the eighteen categories of celestial beings. These beings of semi-divine status were said to be of great purity and their dwelling was thought to be in the sky between the earth and the sun. Later they became associated with a class of more adept human being, often an accomplished yogi. The term had been derived from the Sanskrit root *sidh* meaning "fulfillment" or "achievement," so the noun came to refer to one who had attained perfection. Because the Tamil language lacks the aspirated consonants of Sanskrit the word has been written and pronounced by the Tamils as *cittar*. This has led the Tamils to associate the word more with the Sanskrit term *chit*, meaning "consciousness."

This appellation is evident even in the Shaivite devotionals known as the Tevaram hymns of the 6th & 7th centuries that would later become part of the Saiva Siddhanta canon. There the term is applied not only to one of the 18 categories of divine beings but also to God Shiva himself, who is a *cittar* because the very nature of God is consciousness. Likewise, it describes the devotee as also being a *cittar* since his consciousness is always immersed in the Divine presence. By the 12th-13th century the term has taken on new meaning as we learn from the writings of Perumparrapuliur Nambi who describes the God Shiva as the *cittar* alchemist who is working strange miracles in the city of Madurai.

Essentially though, the term Siddha or Cittar has the same connotations as it does when referring to the 84 Siddhas of Vajrayana Buddhism, the Natha Siddhas of North India, or the medieval alchemists known as the Rasa Siddhas. It is a movement born of a synthesis of Vajrayana Buddhism, Shaivite Tantrism, Indian Alchemy, magic, and the hatha yoga and pranayama disciplines as expounded by the ascetic saint Goraknath. Although, in the present era, the term is often applied to any form of unorthodox mystic or saint.

All of the writings of the Tamil Siddhas, whether defining philosophical viewpoints, yogic practices, or presenting alchemical recipes for herbal tinctures and base metal amalgams were presented in poetic form, often employing the more difficult meters that harkened back to the ancient Tamil Sangam Age. These works are also riddled with tantric imagery, references to Kundalini, and clues to control the dangerous feminine power through breathing practices or the recitation of the Goddess's secret names. Because of the enigmatic nature of the Siddha imagery, and their

philosophy structured in direct defiance of human logic, few scholars have ventured to address the Tamil Siddhas and then often only as mere curiosities. Needless to say, the vast majority of the Tamil Siddha works have never been translated, as has been the case with some of the verses presented here.

One of the most basic characteristics of Tamil composition, and one that is particularly relevant to Siddha poetry, is the tendency to layer the work so that each word or image builds upon the last. Because each component image is presented so as to be viewed autonomously and in relationship both sequentially and to the totality of the verse, the images of the poem may seem slightly disjointed and contradictory. Though this may at first seem to undermine the aesthetic quality and over-complicate the simple act of enjoying poetry, the Tamil Siddha compositions pattern the imagery to expound the subtle complexity of their philosophical concepts or to map out the terrain of the inner landscape which is dominated by the dormant serpent energy.

Though most of the Indian Siddha schools did not come into their own until the 12th century, we find that the southern variant, the Tamil Siddha school, had a fully defined system in the eighth century itself. It was at this time that Tirumular, himself one of the 64 canonized Shaivite saints or *Nayanars* of the Saiva Siddhanta sect, authored the Tirumantiram which fully defined the nature of the Tamil Siddha cult up until the present era. The text also became the 10th book of the Saiva Siddhanta canon, which is referred to as the Tirumurai. Though it was the one work outlining the philosophy of the Saiva Siddhanta cult, the orthodox followers within the Saiva Siddhanta sect have always had a difficult time fully accepting the many passages which discuss the worship of the Goddess and the Kundalini Yoga practices so characteristic of Tantrism. On the other hand, the Siddhas have viewed these same passages as the most critical in formulating their esoteric doctrines on the arousal of the serpent energy.

As we can see in verse 730, the Siddhantins were confronted with the tantric orientation of their philosopher Tirumular, when he relates that it is the human body itself that is the temple of the Goddess Shakti...

In Shakti's temple
if you control
the left & the right
you can hear a lute
in the center of your face.
And Shiva will come out
dancing sweetly.
I swear upon Sada Nandi
we have spoken the truth.

Here Tirumular discusses the basis of Kundalini Yoga whereby the breath, carrying one of the vital airs known as *prana*, flows into the solar and lunar currents which run from the right and left nostrils down to the base of the spine and are there brought into union. The point of this union is at the root chakra Muladhara, the first of six chakras or nerve plexuses through which the Kundalini energy will flow. This energy is moved by the solar and lunar streams of vital breath that have entered the central current at Muladhara and will ascend upwards through the six chakras, each corresponding to a higher and more expansive state of consciousness. The individual awareness is sublimated into divine union at the crown of the head. It is a kind of inner journey towards the infinitude of the Divine, but begins only after the two streams flow into the central current as we learn from verse 801 of the Tirumantiram...

801

Left hand
Right hand
Both hands...
Change!!!
He who eats
with the hand of worship
need not be depleted.
The conscious ones
capable of abandoning sleep
need not die...
they can live forever.

The term used to denote the 'hand of worship' is *Tutikai*. *Tuti* is a verb meaning "to worship," *kai* is the noun meaning "hand". Together, as *Tutikai*, the expression also means the "elephant's trunk." This interpretation is equally viable in that Ganesha, the elephant-headed god of gateways and new beginnings is said to reside in the body at the base of the spine, at the root chakra Muladhara where the two currents flow together and enter central current Shashumna. Shashumna is sometimes envisioned as the trunk of Ganesha raised aloft and holding the full blown lotus of enlightenment, Sahasrara, at the crown of the head. What is eaten is amrita, conceived of as both the nectar

of spiritual ecstasy and the elixir of immortality.

Tantra appears in its definitive form around the 4th century, but its beginnings seem to reach back much earlier. Elements of tantric thought had already pervaded the south by the time of Tirumular, as they had seeped into yogic theory and practice at some antecedent time and even impacted temple ritual and the budding bhakti cults. Tantra was more deeply rooted in a fluid set of symbolic constructs than a static enunciation of doctrine. It represents a profound refinement of the symbol system of Hindu-Buddhist South Asia. Its emphasis on the experiential aspects of the individual's religious experience collided with the Shaivite orthodoxy like the Gnostic heresy did with the early Christian Church.

In an effort to demonstrate that the macrocosm is reflected within the microcosm, Tantra began to emphasize that the universe, in all its totality, is contained within the body of the individual. It superimposed universal symbols over the human body to help demonstrate this relationship. The spine, along which the Shashumna or central channel ran, became the cosmic axis. All the Gods that oversaw the mechanism that is this universe were hidden in the lotus centers of the body's chakras, like blossoms flowering on the vine of the spine. But it was the portly god Ganesha, who guarded the gate to the inner world. He became a patron of Kundalini yoga in the South and was invoked by the female Siddha mendicant Avaiyar, in this excerpt from her 14th century work Vinayagar Agaval. Here she relates how the elephant-headed god has reconciled the dualistic nature of the universe as the various manifestations of Shiva were taught to be part of her inner savoring.

He has concentrated my mind,
clarified my intellect,
and said,

*"Light & Darkness
share a common place."*

He presses me down
into the grace giving ecstasy.

In my ear
he renders limitless bliss.

He has revealed Sada Shiva
within the sound.

He has revealed the Shiva Lingam
within the mind.

And he has revealed that...

The smaller than the smallest,

The larger than the largest,

stands within...

like ripe sugarcane.

In about 1661, as Aurangzeb set about to expand his kingdom throughout the subcontinent and free the land of heretics, he was at the same time extending his protection to an obscure Hindu monastery in the Punjab. At the time in question Anand Nath, the abbot of the monastery and a Natha Siddha alchemist, was providing history's great persecutor of Hinduism a regular supply of treated mercury which promised to confer longevity. At the same time in the deep south, the Tamil Siddha alchemist Bhogar, who had supposedly migrated from China along with his guru Kalangi Nathar, was establishing a shrine to the God Murugan on the top of Palani Hill. It was there that he composed his 7000 verses on Kundalini Yoga, alchemy, and Siddha medicine. By medieval times Indian alchemy had come into vogue much like tantra had done almost a millennium earlier. And though the Indian alchemists also sought to develop the chemical processes of transforming base metals into gold as in Europe & the Middle East, they often emphasized the pursuit of bodily perfection and the preparation of the elixir of immortality as the Chinese alchemists had sought. They often viewed their experience of the inner processes of Kundalini Yoga as mirroring the chemical process of the alchemical work.

Though nine hundred years after Tirumular, Bhogar is still wrestling with the serpent energy, even in the midst of his alchemical operations. Though now, the Kundalini is personified as the consort of Ganesha, the Goddess Vallabai...

9 The green-hued Vallabai
will become subservient
and bow down.

She'll tell you
the appropriate time
for the appropriate chakra.

If the basis of Muladhara
is perfected...
You can go anywhere,
wandering freely
throughout the three worlds.

The dull-hued body
will mellow
and shine.
All impurities
will be removed
and the six chakras
will become visible
to the eye.
The gold-colored alchemy
will heed your every word.
In the Sleepless Sleep
all subtlety
can be perceived.
Look and see.

In a particularly odd verse of Bhogar, we find him describing a visionary experience involving the ingestion of an unidentified substance and the wearing of mercurial amalgams.

80 Bhogar's Leap Into the Universe
As the Principle of Intelligence itself
I leapt into the cosmos.

Shiva clearly elucidated
the nature of this universe.
For the sake of all beings
there is a path
that becomes a vehicle
for the five senses.
The universe that appeared before me
was arranged in layers.

Grandfather (Tirumular) said,
"Enter the tenth one."
I took what was given me
and put it in my mouth.

And a bunch
of mercurial amalgams
I tied onto my wrist.
Off I went.
Entering the universe
of fire and light.

In 1293, on his way back from China, Marco Polo got a taste of South India when he stopped along the Malabar Coast. He records a meeting he had with a group of yogi alchemists who, by preparing a tincture of mercury and sulfur, were afforded a lifespan of 150-200 years. Mercury was viewed as the seminal seed of Shiva. It formed a part of the alchemical triad of mercury sulfur and air, corresponding to the trinity of moon sun, and wind. Breath controlled through the practices of Pranayama, transformed the body's winds into a spiritual mediator that could unify the solar and lunar currents within the body. Much like the alchemical process applied air to mercury and sulfur to form the amalgam that brought the work to completion.

Consciousness was seen to ride the vehicle of breath into union with the absolute in the Sahasrara chakra at the top of the head. The Siddha could, through the intercession of the Goddess, placated by manipulation of the breath,

expand consciousness to the point where it becomes what is called the Maha Chitta or "Great Awareness" which is the God Shiva himself. Here is one of the closing verses of Bhogar's discussion of Kundalini Yoga..

94

Invite the breath,
the outer space,
to come within your house.

If you are unwavering,
placing it there
as though you were
putting oil in a lamp,...
They shall meet.
Breath and God
becoming one.
Like wind becoming breath
there is no individual intelligence.

The Great Awareness becomes Siva.
He and breath
merge into one.

It is this light becoming breath
that redeems the soul.
Surely this is the truth
of Siva Yoga!

In the modern era, the Siddhas have had a profound influence on contemporary Tamil society because of the impact of a single poet who lived in the last century. Ramalingar was born in 1823 near Chidambaram, the greatest of all Shaivite temples. Naturally, the heretical nature of his teaching and the growing number of his disciples caused the protest of temple officials and a variety of Saiva Siddhanta institutions throughout the region. Eventually they were forced to call in Arumuga Naalavar from Jaffna to put an end to Ramalingar. As a Tamil scholar and Shaivite authority, the orthodox religious leaders throughout the area, were confident that he could expose the fallacy of Ramalingar's teaching and defrock the heretical saint. Arumuga quickly set about organizing public meetings to provide a platform on which to abuse Ramalingar and a horde of pamphlets were circulated issuing public warning about this dangerous little man. Eventually though, Arumuga was forced to take legal action and filed a suit against the saint. The gentle Ramalingar was dragged into court, but eloquently speaking in his own defense, easily won the case.

The nature of Ramalingar's heresy is found to be all the more insidious when we learn that he also cherished and called his own the devotional hymns of Saiva Siddhanta saints other than Tirumular. One of these, the last of the canonized 64, was Manikkavasagar, who had a profound influence on Ramalingar and Siddha devotionalism in general. Manikkavasagar's name means "He who's utterances are rubies" and in the 9th century he beautifully wrote this mini creation myth in flowing verse...

*Becoming sky & earth
Wind & light
Becoming flesh & spirit
All that truly is
& all that which is not
Becoming the Lord,
He makes those who say,
"I" & "mine"
Dance in the show
Becoming sky
& standing there...
How can my words
praise Him?*

In this final work of Ramalingar, we see a different side of the heretical Siddhas. Not the enigmatic ramblings or harsh riddles of the ascetic, but a tender ode, that views the Siddha's experience of union as the distilled essence of

life's sweetness. In this poem Ramalingar praises Saint Manikkavasagar, and weaves his verse with a complex echoing of sound as he speaks again and again of the sweetness of his mystic absorption experienced when hearing the poetry of the saint. This fervent merging, savored by the ecstatic Ramalingar is described with the Tamil word *Kalantha*, from the verb root *Kala* meaning "to flow together", "to make as one", as it also denotes a sexual union.

One with sky Manikkavasagar,

your words...

One with me when I sing

Nectar of sugarcane

One with honey

One with milk

and one with the sweetness

of the fertile fruit

One with my flesh

One with my soul

Insatiable

is that sweetness!

Although Ramalingar's hymns were penned in praise of the God Shiva, they were often addressed to a feminine audience with unqualified personal designations such as 'Amma' or 'Akka', 'Mother' or 'Sister'. Perhaps indicating that the hymn was meant for an internal and distinctly feminine force that could propel the invocation along the proper channels of the inner cosmos, towards Shiva's divine abode.

The fact that his songs began to be sung in the schools, villages and even the temples of 19th century Cennai, began to outrage the orthodox Shaivites in the area. He, as all other Tamil Siddhas, was somewhat iconoclastic, not adequately deferential to temple or Brahminical tradition. He did not worship the linga. Forgoing all such images, he perpetrated the greatest of heresies by blatantly revealing the true face of God veiled within volumes of tantric lore. At the shrine he established at Vadalur, behind the curtain that housed the holy of holy's, he established a single flame's light to illuminate a mirror that would reflect the image of the worshipper as the secret face of god and final mystery of the Tamil Siddha cult.

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A Single Flame's Light: Reflections on the Poetry of Ramalingar

An Introduction to the poet-saint's works.
by Layne Little

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It was his brother who found him.....

the little boy, eight years of age, standing alone in the darkness of his room. A single flame's light danced across his face. His eyes, glossed over with ecstasy, held the image of his face (gone slack with wonder) reflected in the mirror in front of him.

Before recorded history, an era so ancient that their poet's voices have long since faded into silence, the Tamil people of Southern India worshipped their god Murugan in blackened caves or atop windswept hills with ecstatic dance and the beating of drums; but in 1831, in the silence of that lamp lit room, the boy Ramalingar worshipped the ancient god standing before him; hewn from the play of light and shadow in the mirror that reflected his own face. Somehow that moment changed the boy forever. He became a mystic. His eyes, that had held for a moment the flame's light, looked upon all things with a newfound wonder; saw the teeming multiplicity of life as writhing in the ecstasy of a single essence, a single presence, the Light of Grace (Arut Perum Jyoti). He was to become "unquestionably the greatest Tamil poet of the 19th century." (-Kamil Zvelbil, Tamil Literature, p113) He began composing poetry when he was nine and never stopped until one day in 1874 when he mysteriously disappeared. This essay strives to address the common source of both the mystic and the poet. It strives to ferret out the fount of inspiration in every man, (but its not "what you think").

"The words of our language are not clearly defined. They have several meanings which pass only vaguely through our mind and remain largely in our subconsciousness when we hear a word.

"The inaccuracy and ambiguity of our language is essential for poets who work largely with its subconscious layers and associations." (-Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics, p39)

While the ambiguities of language confine the conscious mind to a vague interpretation of reality, those same ambiguities of language are employed by poets and mystics to speak to the subconscious of the listener. Likewise, Ramalingar used even the space between words and images to cleave the rational mind and reach into the deeper recesses of his readers consciousness. His language of mythical and symbolic imagery expands language from word units, with their small arena of conflicting associations, to symbolic units comprising a vaster area of conceptual and emotional meaning.

"Mythical language is much less restricted by logic and common sense. It is full of magic and paradoxical situations rich in suggestive images and never precise, and can convey the way in which mystics experience reality much better than factual language." (-ibid)

Ramalingar's brilliant flashes of mythic imagery leave little room for the rational mind to drive in it's wedge of differentiation. His work abides as an anthem to his own journey beyond the rational; his leap beyond the confines of language to an experience of a profound mindfulness that his images seeks to induce in his readers.

One of Ramalingar's images in particular recurs throughout his works. He repeats it as a kind of invocation at the beginning and end of each poem, moreover he refers to it continuously within the body of his compositions. Strange that a single word was enough to awaken the visionary within. His enigmatic reference to what he might simply define as an "inner place", functioned for him as a device to center his awareness at a point within his psyche where the tumultuous mind was quieted. From that silence he found he could express his experience of that place.

The content of his invocation does nothing more than define that place, giving a symbolic reference to a level of perception...

"Tiruchittrambalam"

1) Sacred Hall of the Mind

2) Holy Heart Hall

3) The Common Place within the Sacred Heart/Mind

This invocation is the point of departure for the reader who embarks upon an uphill path through the tangled forests of the subconscious, discovering many wonders along the ascent. The recurrent image of the sacred hall seems hidden at every step, as if the hall was both the beginning and the end of the journey, and every point in between. It is like that silence between words, where understanding reigns and nothing need be said.

"This is a world painted as if it were composed of objects like apples and tables, qualities like red and green, and actions like walking, sitting, and slurping. This is a world, in other words, of nouns, adjectives, and verbs, with a few minor parts of speech stuck in to glue these basic building blocks together.

*"Nature is a continuity, which we might represent as a line:_____ But our language tells us that the world is made up of "things" that we have named. Those aspects of the world that we do not name have little of no existence for us. Our named world, in contrast to the continuity of nature, looks like a broken line: _
----- This line represents the named "things" and the spaces are those aspects of reality that remain without names and that do not exist for us." (-James Powell, Tao of Symbols, p36-37)*

Images like the Sacred Hall of the Mind represent the quietude of thought beyond names, where all of nature is reflected in its unfathomable totality. The Sacred Hall is the line, the continuous, the hall of the awareness seated in the profound solitude of meditation, it is the spacious silence that frames the letters on the page.

Ramalingar guides the adventurous into far off, unexplored realms of consciousness, pulling up in hoards the deeply rooted imagery of the psyche; but he keeps reminding us about the uncluttered spaciousness of the Common Hall of the Heart. He asks us to relinquish our disjointed perception of reality, our "named" reality that is broken up into the few bits of phenomena that can be defined, stamped with a label, and thereby be "known".

"What we are looking for is who's looking."

-Saint Francis

Ramalingar's

Aani Pon Ambalattae

or

"At the Hall of Solid Gold"

English rendering by Layne Little

Pallavi (refrain):

In the Hall of Solid Gold

What visions I saw.

What wondrous visions!---Oh Mother

What wondrous visions!

Kannihal (stanzas):

1) A mountain of light appeared.

There was a street in it.---Oh Mother

There was a street.

2) I went along that street

and in the middle of it

there was a platform.---Oh Mother

There was a platform.

3) I mounted the platform

There I discovered a hall---Oh Mother

There was a hall.

4) I searched the hall

and found a mansion

rising above it.---Oh Mother

There was a mansion.

5) All of its seven levels

were filled with wonders.

How can I describe it?---Oh Mother
How can I describe it?
6) In one story
there was a glittering pearl-white stone.
It turned into a blue sapphire.---Oh Mother
It turned into a blue sapphire.
7) On another world plane
that blue-black stone
transformed itself into red coral.---Oh Mother
All became fruitful.
8) On another plane
the green emerald
became a red ruby.---Oh Mother
It became a red ruby.
9) After that level
I saw a giant pearl
Become a diamond jewel---Oh Mother
It became the great jewel.
10) In a different plane
I was confronted with
a vast mass of coral
changing into moonstone.---Oh Mother
Changing into moonstone.
11) The next level I speak of
is decorated
with a multifarious array of jewels.
These turned to gold.---Oh Mother
These turned to gold.
12) In another place
All the gems I've spoken of
Became crystal.---Oh Mother
Became crystal.
13) Above the seven levels! 1
There was a pillar
A most agreeable golden pillar.---Oh Mother
A creative golden pillar.
14) The time when I saw
the golden pillar and climbed,
I saw a freshness...;
How can I describe it?---Oh Mother
A freshness...; How can I describe it?
15) While climbing there
I viewed a sort
that can't be spoken of.
Of boundless measure!---Oh Mother
Of boundless measure!
16) There and there...;
were Shaktis
in the thousands and thousands
They were coming!---Oh Mother.
They were coming!
17) I was not deceived
by the delusions that assailed me
But attained a special state of grace.---Oh Mother
I attained the special grace.

18) By the ways of the adept
I climbed that great pillar
And saw its jeweled peak.---Oh Mother
And saw its jeweled peak.
19) Above the jeweled peak
There stood the mountain's summit.
It was then that I saw it.---Oh Mother
It was then that I saw it.
20) Above the mountain's peak
In 1008 carat gold
Was the temple!---Oh Mother
Was the temple.
21) I saw the temple,
and there was its towering gate.
Without hesitating, I went inside.---Oh Mother
Without hesitating, I went inside.
22) Inside the towering gate
were Shaktis and Shaktas
in the tens of thousands, many tens of thousands.---Oh Mother
Tens of thousands, many tens of thousands.
23) There they were colored...;
colored white and colored red
of the colors five they were.---Oh Mother
of the colors five.
24) There they all asked
"Who is this here?";
I went beyond.---Oh Mother
I went beyond.
25) Having gone beyond
I came to the sacred doorway.
Where there were five Shaktis.---Oh Mother
Where there were five Shaktis.
26) These other Shaktis stood
to show the path above.
I reached the jeweled doorway.---Oh Mother
I reached the jeweled doorway.
27) Contemplating in that doorway,
there was a woman and a man...;
Two of them were there.---Oh Mother
There were two of them.
28) I drew near that holy entrance
and there they revealed...?
I looked out with love.---Oh Mother
I looked out with love.
29) The Mother of Bliss
was at Heaven's Gate!
My Mother!---Oh Mother
My Mother!
30) I looked upon her,
received her grace,
and dined on nectar.---Oh Mother
I dined on nectar.
31) With her support and grace,
I saw the sanctum
of the Dancing King!---Oh Mother
I saw the sanctum!

32) I entered the sanctum
and attained all that can be attained!
Only God knows!---Oh Mother
Only God knows!

I Note *nilai* usually refers to a state or condition, implying permanenece, while the verb may mean to fix the eyes on one point or object

Avaiyar's Vinayagar Agaval

English rendering by Layne Little

In the 14th century, a female ascetic, often envisioned as a wise wandering crone, took the name of Avaiyar. Her namesake of the ancient Sangam age was the prototypical Mother Goose of South India who authored the canon of moral guidelines that still form a mainstay to children's education in contemporary Tamil Nadu. The character of the Sangam Avaiyar sharply contrasts the Avaiyar of the 14th century whose occult leanings parody the benign, granny-like persona of her ancient predecessor. The 14th century Avaiyar was perhaps the third female poet to assume this name, but the distinctive character of her work, the Vinayagar Agaval, has forever immortalized this obscure figure as a poetical giant in Tamil literary history. Though the Vinayagar Agaval is recited in temples and homes at the shrines of the jovial elephant-headed god Ganesha (the mystical Janus of the Hindu pantheon), the text is at the same time ridden with the occult imagery of the Tamil Siddhas. How this incomprehensible text became a mainstay of contemporary Hinduism in Tamil Nadu is a mystery; for its obscure references to kundalini yoga and tantrism is sure to mean very little to the average devotee of the portly god. At first glance the work seems conservative enough; as it begins with the traditional contemplation of the god from foot to crown. But it promptly veers off into the domain of the mystic as she invokes Ganesha as the embodiment of Turiya. Turiya, or "the Sleepless Sleep" is a state of deep yogic trance, where the aspirant sleeps to the illusionary and transient realm of gross sense phenomena and wakes to the infinitude of the inner realm. By first invoking her patron as this adept state of consciousness, her perception and expression shifts from the outer image of the god and the external realm of perception to the inner mystery she perceives as both her own and the god's internal landscape. Though not officially recognized as such by the often hostile orthodoxy, Avaiyar's work follows the familiar pattern of other Tamil Siddha literature. Of course the most obvious distinction between the orthodox Saiva Siddhanta literature and that of the Siddha heterodoxy, is the latter's emphasis on tantric imagery and practice. Though the Tamil Siddha tradition retains a propensity for employing the same bhakti rhetoric of the orthodoxy, the pervasive presence of the goddess further betrays its divergence from the conservative Shaivite patriarchy which insists that the unruly goddess image be subordinate to that of a male god. Avaiyar's experience of Ganesha manifesting as "a mother" is a sure sign on her crossing the line of Brahminically sanctioned tradition. Her intricate weaving of devotion, world-denying asceticism, and occult symbolism enriches the Vinayagar Agaval with the versatility of the Tamil Siddha tradition. Because of the obscure nature of this symbolism, I recommend that you refer to 'Shaking the Tree', also found here in the Alchemy Virtual Library. A more thorough explanation of these verses is presently under preparation and should be online shortly. Questions are welcome, address them to Layne Little at: anjaneya@ix.netcom.com
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Avaiyar's Vinayagar Agaval

The anklets
on the red lotus feet
of the cool baby elephant
sing many songs.
The golden waist chain
and fine skirts
resting upon his rainbow waist
beautifully shining.
His weighty tusk!
His elephant face
& the auspicious orange mark
is easy to perceive.

Five hands,
goad & noose,
his body of deep blue
has made my breast its home.

His hanging mouth,
four sets of shoulders,
three eyes,
and three musk trails...

His two ears,
with golden hair shining,
and three threads intertwined
upon his glowing breast...

He is the true knowledge:
Turiya, the Sleepless Sleep,
goes beyond
the word's meaning.

Wonder
has stood personified
as the Wish-fulfilling Tree!

As the Bull Elephant!

He who rides the mouse
sniffs out the three fruits.
I begged him,
*"Take me now...
as your servant!"*

He appeared as a mother
and showered his grace upon me.
Cleaved from me
the confusion that...
"Once born, I shant die."

Thus the pristine
and primal letters five
shall unite with me.
Shall came and enter my heart.

Assuming the Guru's guise
and keeping a sacred foot
upon this Earth,
he establishes life's meaning.

He joyously bestowed the grace
of the Path of No-Suffering.

Wielding his tusk as a weapon,
he weeds out
the cruel fruits of action.

My ears devour his teaching
without ever being filled.

He reveals the insatiable
Clarity of Wisdom.
The means to master the five senses.

He has sweetly graced me
with joyous compassion.

He proclaimed
that single thought
which shrinks
the delusionary power of the senses.

Putting an end
to this birth
and the next,
he has removed darkness,
and graced me with all
the four stages of mukti (enlightenment).

He cuts off the delusion
of the three impurities.

With one mantra
he showed how
the Nine Openings
and the Five Sense Doors
can be shut...

This is the *Ankusha* (elephant-goad)
of the six chakras:

Without stopping...

Standing firmly...

Let idle chatter be discarded.

He announced the letter
of the Idylla & Pingala
and showed that the end
of the Circle's Edge
is in the skull.

The snake hangs
on the pillar
that is the junction
of the three realms.

He helped me realize
it's tongue.

In the *Kundalini*
one joins the silence...

It breaks open...
and the mantra that rises up
comes out
because of his teaching.

The rising flame,
breaking out
of Muladhara,
is caused to rise
by the wind.

Born of the single thought
which he has taught.

He related...

The state of drinking Amrita,

The movements of the Sun,

& the character of

The One Who Favors the Lily (the Moon).

He revealed
the 8+8 facets
of Vishudha Chakra
along with all the qualities
of my bodies wheels.

He sweetly graced me
with the ability to contemplate
the six faces gross
and the four faces subtle.

He enabled me to perceive
the subtle body,
and gain the darshan
of the Eight States.

He has revealed
within my mind
the Skull's Gate,
and given the sweet grace
of being established in mukti.

He made me know myself.
He showered me with grace.
He pulled out past karma...
by its root.

Without a single word or thought
my mind is one with him.

He has concentrated my mind,
clarified my intellect,
and said,

"Light & Darkness

share a common place."

He presses me down
into the grace giving ecstasy.

In my ear
he renders limitless bliss.

He has weeded out all difficulty
and shown the path of grace.

He has revealed Sada Shiva
within the sound.
He has revealed the Shiva Lingam
within the mind.

And he has revealed that...

The smaller than the smallest,

The larger than the largest,

stands within...

like ripe sugarcane.

He made me understand
the role of the ash
smeared on the brows
of the devotees merged in truth,

with whom

he made me

one.

He made both heart & mind
achieve the state of knowing
the precious meaning
of the Five Letters.

*Having given to me
the True Nature of All Existence...*

*I am ruled
by the wise Vinayagar...*

at whose feet

I take refuge.

Notes on Tantric Alchemy and the Purification of Mercury

Steven A. Feite

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Mercury, or parada in Sanskrit, has a long and detailed history of use. To the practitioner of the Tantras (and the medieval alchemists), it was the key to the ultimate sacrament. The purpose of this article is to share some of my own discoveries on this fascinating and forgotten subject.

Parada traditionally has many different names, most of which are obscure synonyms in the *Sandhya Bhasya* (Skt.), or Twilight Language. The Twilight Language is an intentional language, intentionally designed to thwart the misuse of certain formulae. The use of these formulae were only intended for those who had experiential access to twilight states of consciousness, and were familiar with the unique symbolism of such dimensions. In the Natha lineage where the Alchemical teachings are preserved, these states were obtained through a thorough training in yoga or union, and its main method, *samadhi*, or mystical union.

Some of the common words used to symbolize parada are: rasa (essence), rasendra (because it is the most important of metals), suta (because of its ability to transmute gold), capala (on account of its volatility), rasa raja (ruler of metals)--and many others. Most of these words are synonymous with Shiva, indeed one of the most common synonyms refers to parada as the "semen of Shiva". This is in and of itself, very revealing. Shiva, in the Tantric literature, symbolizes **infinite time** (Skt.: Mahakala). This explains the esoteric symbolism embedded in Shiva's traditional iconography: a yogin crowned by the eclipsing moon: the sun and the moon conjoined. Karmic prana is withdrawn from the solar and lunar channels to become jnanic (transcendental) lifeforce. There, Shiva and Shakti lie, beyond time, in the central channel (sushumna). In order for creation to come into being Shiva enters into "play" with his opposite, Shakti. Thus the concept of time, and limited experience becomes possible. In the process of making parada consumable, parada is mixed with this opposite; the only substance which can control Shiva's incredible potential, purified sulfur: the 'menses' or blood of Parvati (Shakti).

Technically speaking, Shakti is *Ahamkara* (Skt.) or literally 'the I-maker', the power behind 'I-ness', the kundalini shakti herself. A human only exists based on the fact that Ahamkara deceives herself into believing that she is mated to the limited physical body and its resident personality. When the kundalini shakti is completely 'uncoiled', she recognizes that she is Shiva's 'power'. Unfortunately, for the uninitiated or inexperienced person, once this shakti is 'awake to itself,' it forgets the limited body-mind, and remembers Shiva. She sacrifices her limited individuality to him and obtains instant enlightenment. The problem for the uninitiated is quite simple; those who have not trained in meditation and the total transcendence of limitations, both of time and of body-mind, will at worse lose the ability to identify with the body, i.e. physical death. At best, the huge influx of kundalini will overwhelm the limited energy/immune functions of the body like millions of volts of electricity running through low voltage wire. There is a misguided conception among new age-magical circles that the "fastest" way to enlightenment is to simply awaken the kundalini shakti. What they won't tell you is what to do with the incredible amounts of energy released. Most of the people I have talked to have no idea what to do with it! Remember always, that Shiva is also the Lord of death. Ahamkara, as the energy behind our essential egos, is the basis of all addiction. It is Ahamkara that addicts us even to the food we need to sustain life. The only real way to relieve this problem is to transmute Ahamkara's binding limitation by wedding her to her opposite: Shiva. The limitations of the 'I-maker' are then transformed by expansion into a balanced cosmic personality. Addiction to the God/Goddess, to a higher power, is the only permanent cure. It is interesting that even the twelve step groups seem to understand this important idea.

Mercury, as the semen of Lord Shiva, is the physical embodiment of the fire of transformation (tejas). It can provide incredible amounts of tejas to an organism, and can make them capable of digesting almost anything. This means digestion of physical substances as well as 'digestion' of the sense objects of the five senses, the digestion of experience itself. Parada can also provide unlimited amounts of prana. Thus with prana and tejas, fire and water, parada can provide unlimited ojas, the Quintessence. Because it controls these three, it can also control the three doshas, or bodily humors. Yet, by itself, mercury forms an insoluble salt which lodges in the brain and causes insanity or death. Ingesting mercury by itself is like raising kundalini through an imbalanced path. What mercury needs is something to balance it, to control its energy. That something is the element sulfur.

Sulfur is the elemental embodiment of blood, that which the body uses to create everything else (from an Ayurvedic perspective), and the only thing capable of controlling mercury. Sulfur is the womb which creates the child *Kajjali*, the black sulfide of mercury.

Kajjali is the alchemical child from which most of the other alchemical substances are created. The most famous of the mercury-based compounds is the rasayana (rejuvenative) Makaradwaja. Makaradwaja consists (primarily) of mercury, sulfur, and gold. This compound is capable of providing endurance, energy, increased immune function and longevity to its taker. Makaradwaja seems to work by allowing prana, tejas and ojas to flow into parts of the subtle physiology where it would not normally be able to flow, clearing many of the blockages which may be present. If taken prior to meditation or even sleep, it can even be seen to permeate the nadis (subtle energy-channels). Mercury allows the body to digest the otherwise only partly digestible element of gold. This allows the concentrated "solidified sunlight," gold, to gild the bodies immune system and aura. On a subtle level it actually has the appearance of a volatile mercury, streaming through the bodies channels. It is excellent for diseases such as A.I.D.S. and different forms of cancer. The average treatment routine, repeated on a yearly basis, should last for about a month, depending on the individual, usually in the coldest months of the year.

Members of the Bhairavi cult, worshippers of a particularly wrathful form of Lord Shiva, have been known to live hundreds of years through the alchemical use of such mercury-based compounds. Indeed some are said to have obtained immortality (by overcoming their innate addiction to time). Statues of the Bhairavi cult display some of the characteristics of this incredible life extension; beings so mutated from alchemical sadhana as to resemble other dimensional Bhairavis more than humans. This is their actual appearance, yet they may appear as any age to the observer, and do not usually display their true appearance to the uninitiated.

In Rasa Shastra, the Art of Tantric alchemy, Mercury is considered as a living substance--a living being. In the process of preparation it goes through all of the same processes as the sadhaka who seeks liberation, and the child or soul who seeks incarnation. First the mercury is `awakened', made `hungry', it is `fed', made to `swoon', and lastly `killed'. `Killing' refers to incineration in the symbolism of the Twilight Language. More than mere symbolism, the preparation of Mercury is the preparation for enlightenment itself, the true Gold of the Wise.

Nothing summarizes the goal of Tantric alchemy better than the following quote from the Rasahridaya Tantra (9th cent. A.D.) by the great sage Govinda Bhagavatpada, the Guru of Shankaracharya:

"It is only in the virtuous ones, the flame full of consciousness appears between the two eye brows which has the appearance of fire, lightening, or a sun. It is difficult to describe the nature of this excellent flame. It endows the person with eternal bliss and makes him free of all miseries. It is observable. It is peaceful and its attributes can be appreciated by the individual. The individual should concentrate his mind on this flame and the entire universe will appear before them like eternally vibrating consciousness...Those individuals who have attained this state of unity which is like amrita are the truly blessed ones." (Rasahridaya Tantra I:21-26)

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Indian alchemical apparatus

Late mediaeval Indian alchemical apparatus.

[Back to Indian alchemy.](#)



Distillation apparatus using simple hand cooling for the receiver.



Sublimation apparatus. The upper dish is filled with cold water.



Sublimation apparatus. The larger upper vessel is cooled by air.



Extraction apparatus.



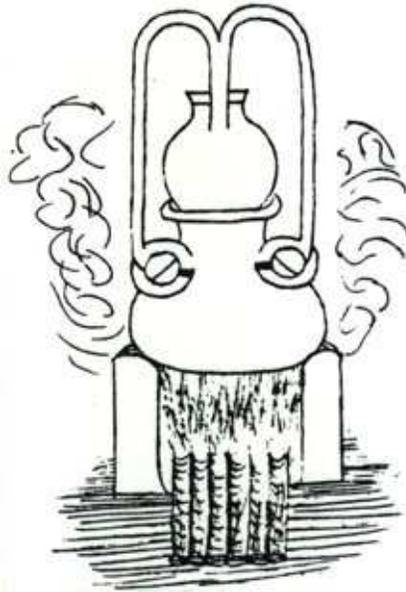
Apparatus similar to the greek kerotakis.



Descension apparatus.

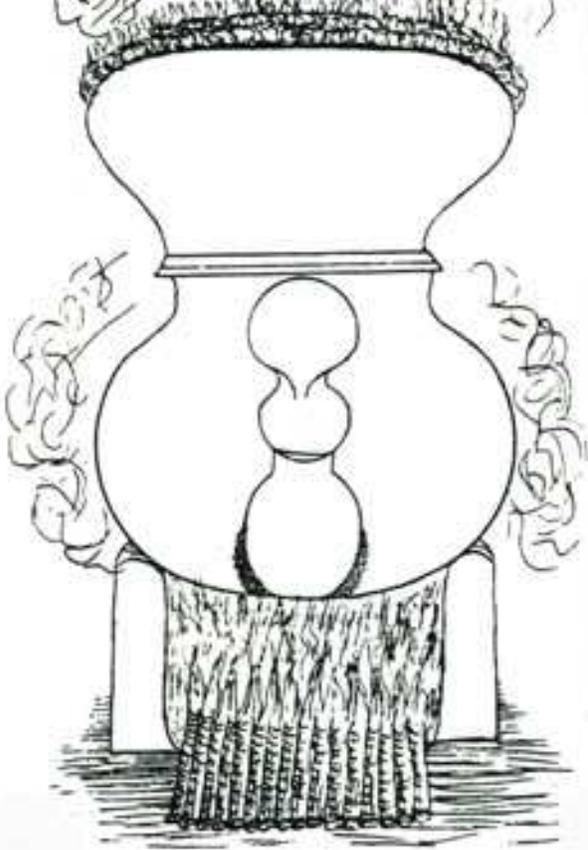
Indian alchemical apparatus

वलभी यन्त्रम्



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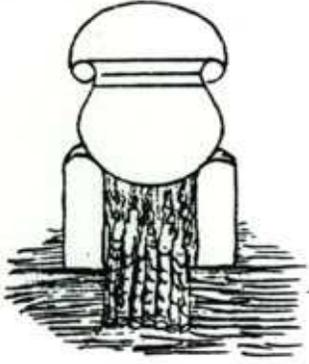
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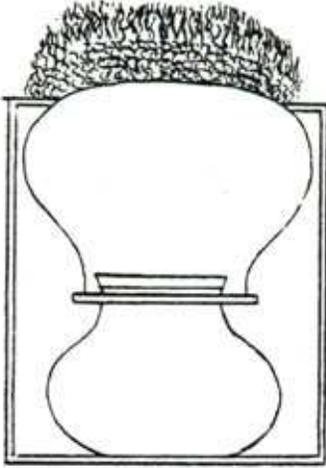
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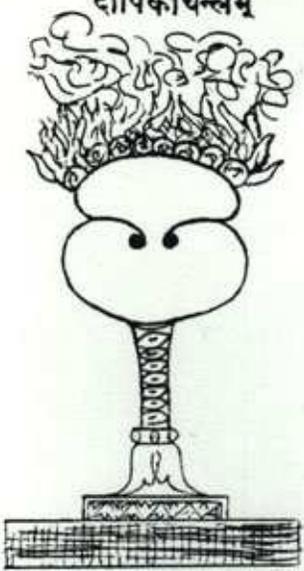
पुस्त्यन्त्रम्



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