

THE CONCEPT OF NADA AND BINDU IN *TIRUMANTIRAM*

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Abstract- Indian philosophy gives a significant position to the sound. Saivism, one of the prominent branches of Indian religious philosophy, put forward the key phonematic representations as Nada and Bindu. Saivite doctrines of monism and dualism differs each other with regard to the nature and function of sound. Here is an attempt to analyze the earliest dualistic Saiva text- *Tirumantiram* in connection with the discussion of the aforementioned vital sound principles.

Index Terms- Sound- Nada- Bindu- Saivite dualism- Tirumantiram

I. INTRODUCTION

Sound plays an important role in the world of every sentient being. Indian knowledge system, comprised of religion, philosophy, metaphysics, theology etc., considers this as a significant matter of discussion. There are many speculations about the cosmogonist and magic power of word (sound) in the texts deal with phonetics, grammar and philosophy. Philosophico-linguistic approach of sound could found in the earliest written elements as well as in the various thought systems of India, where a linguistic theology has been evolved throughout the ages. Saivism, one of the prominent branches of philosophy, propounds the concepts of Bindu and Nada – the basic phonemic representations. This paper is a search, for roots of Saiva theory of meaning in the work *Tirumantiram*.¹

The study of sacred sound must be able to incorporate material various sources such as Vedic and Tantric texts. The Sakta tantras talks about the sound as goddess srividya and goddess Kali. Vaisnava and Pancaratra texts consider as the energy of Visnu while in Saivism, it is the energy of Siva². The status of sacred sound in Saivism is one of the subordination to the supreme deity, Siva. The important thing to be mentioned here is the dualistic and nondualistic doctrines of saivism differs each other with regard to the nature and function of sound³. So the discussion about the monistic doctrine seems to be better before entering into the nondual Saivite thought.

II. NADA AND BINDU IN MONISTIC SAIIVISM

Nada usually signifies a subtle sound form which is the first resonance of the supreme word (para vak), of the vibration (spanda) which gives like to the primary principle. Jayaratha, in the commentary on *Tantraloka*, describes the level of Nada as consciousness transcending the universe and self-awareness.

According to him Nada is an unstruck (anahata), almost unmanifest, sound (dhvani) for there the phonemes are not differentiated⁴. Sometimes it is referred to by the term phoneme (varna), as Abhinavagupta says:

*eko nadatmako varnah sarvavarnavibhagavan
so 'nastamitarupatvadanahata ihoditah*⁵

Nada is also considered to be as cit, the level of Sadasiva: the ontic level, where the phonematic emanation is projected into the energy and where consonants begin to arise. "From Sakti, in effect, the sound energy becomes first Nadanta⁶, then Nada, then Nirodhini⁷, next comes Bindu, itself preceding ardhacandra⁸. Bindu is one of the most significant terms in the speculations about the word and energy. *Saradatilaka* defines thus:

*saccidanadavibhavatsakalatparamesvarat
asicchaktistato nadah nadadbindusamagamah
parasaktimayah sat u tridha 'sau bhidyate punah
bindurnado bijamiti tasya bhedah samiritah*⁹

Bindu is the drop or point in which the energy is collected, and is known as the 'mass formed by the union of Siva and Sakti' (Sivasaktimithunapinda)¹⁰. Bindu, plays a role in awakening kundalini, and at the time of cosmic resorption, it is the point within which the universe is reabsorbed as it merges into the energy gathered upon itself.

Word is the origin of all things inclusive not only of the world of speech but also that of sense or meaning, and the language is the basic tool for the experience of itself, and of all the other categories. Language is based; of course, on the sound (Nada). This is perhaps Saivasiddhanta insight in postulating the category of Nada, the essence of language and speech as the first evolute of pure, unmixed (suddha) maya¹¹.

It is familiar that nondual saivism of Tamilnadu is based upon the traditional treatises like *Tirumurais* and *Saivagamas*. Many of the Saivagama literature contain metaphysical and cosmological discussions about Nada, Bindu, the thirty six principles, Bija, matrkā and the origin of alphabet. But Saivasiddhanta accepts the basic Agama categories of Nada, Bindu etc., differing from it¹². In its cosmogony, there is a nine fold progression from unmanifest to manifest in descending order-Siva, Sakti, Nada, Bindu¹³. *Tirumantiram* refer to in different parts, about Nada and Bindu. As an authoritative Saivasiddhanta text, *Tirumantiram* only mentions the basic theories from which later thinkers developed meaning theory.

III. PRINCIPLES OF NADA AND BINDU IN TIRUMANTIRAM

Most of the descriptions in this text are said to be related with the Yoga practice of various kinds. The philosophical principle of Nada Bindu principle hence is having limitations in the conveyance of the sound theory. Also the compendium of conceptions under dualist and nondualist beliefs make an obscurity in the area. Tirumular defines thus: "Paraparam has neither beginning, nor end. Nada was born from the union of Param with Parai. Pure Para arose in the light of pure consciousness consorted with Parapara."¹⁴

The ultimate primal one, who created the vast universe by pure consciousness, is Sadasiva who is not distinct from Sakti. The process of creation depends on Nada and Bindu from the union of which Siva and sakti appear. Maya and maan (mahat) Sakti are the other important things in creation. Jnana originated from Siva aforementioned, Kriya from Sakti and Iccha arises from Bindu. Maya is the product of Sakti. The Anavasakti acts on the material sphere known as maan or mahat from which five elements evolves, five gods born and perform five acts.¹⁵

Maya with the union of Bindu produces all the celestials, space, air, fire, water, sound, mind, etc. It also says that Bindu as well as Mayasakti born of Nada. Such confusing nature disappears only after the discussion of the Paranada and Parabindu.¹⁶ Tirumular describes the four states in creation process. Paranada and Parabindu evolve from the transcendental sphere and in turn, evolve Parasivam and Parai. Along with these four (Paranada, Parabindu, Parasivam and Parai), the paraparam and Parai is conjoining to make the six transcendental categories. From Parabindu and Paranada, Siva, Sakti, Aparabindu and Aparanada evolve and then lead to the chain of creation process.¹⁷

Nada and Bindu have role in the attainment of supreme reality. The ultimate reality according to Tirumular is Siva the lord. The end of Nada is grand Yoga, divine sakti, and the final goal where the god seated.¹⁸ The primal sound Nada and god are one in consciousness which should be reached with the help of raising the kundalini. The practises of candrayoga, erolicakra, tarakacakra, ajnacakra etc., are also based the sound principles Nada and Bindu.

Tirumular's theology gives emphasis to the recital of pancaksara and omkara as all Saivasiddhanta treatises do.¹⁹ When the manifestation of the self as an object is considered as a movement of sakti, Nada and Bindu are to be said as the stages of that. Bindu and Nada produce Bija:

*Vinduvum nadamum okka vizhuntitil
Vinduvum nadamum okka viraiyatam
Vindirkuraintitil nadam ezhuntitil
Vinduvai enmati kondatu visame.*²⁰

From Bindu and nada, the fifty letters evolved, and from these letters, cakra²¹ was formed. The letters are mantras²² and the supreme mantra pranava, seated in the eyebrow centre is to be expanded into namahsivaya-the pancaksari.

Even though the Tirumurais in Tamil are the fundamental treatises of siddhantasaivism, there happened many changes in the literary sources of latter origin. Pauskaragama (its commentary by Umapati Sivam) and Nadakarika are the works deal with developed theories of sound with the help of Agamic

and external influences.²³ Metaphysical representations of Nada and Bindu have not a gulf of distance from the early Siddhanta treatises. Pauskara proposes that the power or capacity (nada,sakti) of phonemes (varna or arna) denotes meaning. The Sabda arising from Bindu produce varna. Varnas are fifty in number, and Bindu is their material cause, Isvara is effective cause and human effort is the auxiliary cause. The meaning is known through the power (samskara) of varna and the verbal transaction occurs:

*yatha varnah pura jnatah kramenaiva tatha punah
samvahanti ca samskaramste tatha smrtibodhatah*²⁴

Only Nada, manifested by the gross (and inaudible) varnas is the denote of meaning. Kiranatantra postulates the theory as : "Paramasiva is in primal unvoiced sound (Nada), in almost gross sound (Bindu), in (sound of) either, in (gross sound of) mantras (that express Siva himself), in anus, in the power (which controls those), in the seed (syllables such as om), in the sound units (of the seeds) and in the end (sound such as the final nasalization of the seed syllable om)."²⁵

The idea of sound (sacred) becomes a serious philosophical thesis only after the discussion of the connection between word and meaning. The discussion (in Saivasiddhanta) is to be believed that originated after the influence of grammarian philosophy of language. That is why the earlier texts like Tirumantiram don't deal with the same. Also this analysis strikes on the subject of the dualistic nature of Saivasiddhanta. An assumption should be postulate as the dualism comes under the treatises which created after the merging of Saivagamic pluralism and not in the earlier Tamil works. The dualistic nature makes the Sakti distinct from supreme Siva and hence the Nada becomes the power of Sakti. Tirumantiram impartially explains sound both as Siva and Sakti.

In sum, there is reversal and contradictory status of nada and Bindu in the Siddhanta school of Saivism according to the different approaches of the texts of different time periods. Salvation has a central role in this system of philosophy and hence the theories and practises of all kinds in Tirumantiram are related with the attainment of supreme goal. So the primal phonemic principles are discussed here only in the dimension of their salvific roles. The later theoreticians incidentally teach the theory of word and meaning in the occasions like the transmission of sacred texts (tantravatara). The findings should be postulated as:

- According to the variance in originating time of different treatises, status of the concepts- Nada and Bindu is contradictory in Saivasiddanta.
- The discussion about the connection between word and meaning is originated only after the influence of grammarian philosophy of language.

Dualism comes under the literature created after the pluralistic amalgamation of Saivagamas is not in the earlier Tamil works.

NOTES

- [1] *Tirumantiram* written by Sage Tirumular (5th century AD) is believed as the primary text of the Saivasiddhanta, eventhough there an earliest text named *Nandinathakarika* exists.
- [2] Buck. L. Guy, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sound*, University of South Carolina, USA, 1993, p.14.
- [3] Chauhan, Usha Colas, *A Saiva Theory of Meaning*, Journal of Indian Philosophy, vol.36, Aug.2008.
- [4] Sagar Krishnanand (Ed.), *Sri Tantraloka*, vol.2, Sri Sivoham Sagar publications, Varanasi, 1984, p.76.
- [5] *Ibid.*, vol.4, p. 178.
- [6] Nadanta is the very point where the resonance ultimately merges into energy, the end of Nada.
- [7] The obstructress-subtle level of sound; also known as Nirodhika.
- [8] Padoux Andre, *Vac: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*, Sri Sadguru Publications, Delhi, 1992, p.101.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 86, n.2.
- [10] This is somewhat related to the concept of Yamala or Sanghatta.
- [11] Soni Jayendra, *Philosophical Anthropology in Saivasiddhanta*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989, p.137.
- [12] *Infra*, p. 6.
- [13] Natarajan .B (Ed and Tr.), *Tirumantiram by Tirumular*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1991, p. 61.
- [14] “Adiyodantamilata paraparam Bodhamatakappularum paraparai Jyotiyatanir parantonttrattonttrumarumantitil paraiyatan paltikal nadame” *Tirumantiram*,410.
- [15] *Ibid*, p.16.
- [16] This first stage is not referred to in some of the later works on Saivasiddhanta. They present the creative process as starting with the nine evolutes of pure spirit.
- [17] Natarajan . B, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.
- [18] *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- [19] Buck Guy L, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

- [20] *Op. cit.*, p. 349.
- [21] Here cakra represents the Nadacakra
- [22] The reference of letter is added only because of description of Mantra- a means to liberation.
- [23] *Infra*, p. 6.
- [24] *Tantraloka*
- [25] Goodall Dominic, Bhattaramakantha’s commentary on Kiranatantra, IFP, 1998, p.179.

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- [4] Goodall Dominic (Ed. and Tr.), *The Parakhyatantra: A Scripture of Saivasiddhanta*, Collection Indologie 98, IFP, 2004.
- [5], Bhattaramakantha’s Commentary on Kiranatantra, IFP, 1998.
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- [7] Natarajan. B (Ed. and Tr.), *Tirumantiram by Tirumular*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1991.
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