THIRUMOOLAR NAAYANAAR - Group 5

(Based on extracts from “The History of the Holy Servants of Lord Siva – A translation of the Periya Puranam of Cekkilar” by Alastair McGlashan)

“Ennai Nandraaga Yiraivan padaiththanan
Thannai Nandraaga Thamizh Seyyu maarae”

Thirumoolar, in his Thirumanthiram, states that the purpose of his birth was to explain the soul's experience with God, in Tamil. This is his story…………………

A great yogi, from Mount Kailash, wanted to visit and stay with his old friend sage Agasthyar on Mount Potiyam - home of the Tamil Language. He started on his journey southwards - praying at holy temples in places such as Ketharam Pasupathi Nepalam, bathed in the sacred river Ganga and continued his journey south - visiting places such as Kanchi, and the city of Thillai. Finally, he reached the river Cavery. After taking a bath in the holy river and praying at the temple in Avaduthurai, he continued his journey southwards to his destination in the Podhikai Hills.

Nearing the outskirts of the village of Chaththanur, he saw a herd of cows in great distress. Their herdsman, Moolan by name, had died suddenly on the banks of the river and the cows were inconsolable – gathering around the body, sniffing it and lowing in distress.

The Yogi, realizing that the cows would be consoled only if the herdsman was alive, left his own body in a safe place and used his yogic powers to transmigrate his Atman into the body of Moolan. The yogi then arose in the form of the cowherd, now known as Thirumoolar. The joyful cows grazed happily on the riverbanks and went back to the village in the evening, cared for by Thirumoolar, who patiently waited until all the cows went back to the houses of their owners.

The dutiful wife, of the herdsman Moolan, was concerned that her husband was so late and, in her anxiety, went to look for him. When she found him, he looked so strange, so different, that she thought some accident had befallen him. And when she tried to touch him, he drew away from her. Greatly upset, she asked, “What is the matter with you?”

“You and I no longer have anything in common” Thirumoolar replied and went off to a nearby Monastery.

Seeing the radical change in her husband, she could not sleep all night. In the morning she told her neighbours what had happened to him and some of these good souls went to see him and reported to her what they had discovered.

“He is not mad nor mentally deranged, nor suffering from any other malady,” they said. “He has attained freedom from all mental instability, and his attention has become clearly focused on Siva Yoga. This is a towering achievement, which no mere human can properly assess. Like those who have severed all attachment and attained the feet of the Supreme Being, he has attained understanding in all its fullness. He will no longer relate to you in the same way he did before.”

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When Moolan’s wife heard this, she was beside herself with grief, and had to be led away by her neighbours.

Thirumoolar Naayanar then returned the same way he had come with the cows, to the place where he had safely left his physical body, in order to transmigrate back into his original form. The body, however, was nowhere to be seen! He realized, through his spiritual wisdom and reflection, that it was God’s will that had caused the disappearance of the body. The Lord, who had revealed the sacred scriptures to humankind, planned that Thirumoolar should render in Tamil, through his words, the supreme Agamas. He explained to the relatives of the herdsman who followed him, that he would have no more to do with them and sent them on their way.

Then, laying aside all anger and attachment, and with his mind focused on the feet of the Lord, Thirumoolar went to Thiruvavaduthurai. He took up residence under the shade of a tall Arasa Maram or Peepul tree and attained union with the Lord who dwells in the lotus of the heart. Here he composed the Thirumanthiram, so that the people of the world might be released from the vicious cycle of repeated births, and thereby win salvation. Starting from 'Onravan thane', the affirmation that the Supreme Being is one, he wrote a single stanza each year. It is said that he lived happily in this world for three thousand years and, in that time, he wove a complete garland of 3,047 stanzas in Tamil!

The teachings of Thirumoolar, known as Thirumanthiram, are the tenth of the 12 Thirumurais of Saivism. The Thirumanthiram contains three thousand verses, divided into nine chapters called Thanthirams.

This is the earliest exposition of Saiva Agamas in Tamil and sets out the four-fold path of Gnanam, Yoga, Kiriyai and Sariyai and also the concept of Pathi, Pasu and Pasam.

Sekizhlar, the author of the Periyapuranam, referred to this Tamil classic as "Tamil Moovaaayiram", since it possesses 3000 poems. These poems have a unique metrical structure, with each line consisting of 11 or 12 syllables, depending upon the initial syllable.

Among this rich bounty, Thirumoolar Naayanaar says: “Ondray Kulamum Oruvanay Devanum, Nandray Ninaimin”. Meaning “Humanity belongs to one and only one caste and there is one and only one God; cherish this rightly.”

Let us pay homage at the lotus feet of Thirumoolar Naayanaar, who expounded the noble path of Sariyai, Kiriyai, Yogam and Gnanam and taught us “Anbe Sivam - Love is God”.