

Translation of Thirivacegam (Athichudi) of Avaiyar as Viewed by Pundit Iyothee Thoss (1845 – 1914)

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ABSTRACT

Pundit C. Iyothi Thoss was born at Theynampet, Chennai (Madras) in 1845. He was profound literary scholar of the Tamil language. He was a polyglot. He thoroughly analysed the ancient Tamil texts and compared them with the principles of Buddhism. He realized that the most of the ancient Tamil texts had great affinity with Buddhism. He disclosed the original analytical and critical meaning of the texts in his 'Tamilan' weekly which was founded by him in 1907. It was published in the name of south Indian Sakkaya Buddhist Society. In the Tamil weekly he reinterpreted and reconstructed the older versions. He also eliminated the interpolation and biased commentaries of them. Accordingly he states 'Athichudi' as Thirivacegam' and presents new meaning to each line of the text which varies from the earlier. He is also viewed as pioneer of Babasaheb Ambedkar, B.R.

Keywords: Pundit C. Iyothi Thoss, Pandit C. Ayothi Dhas, Ayothi Das, Athichudi Translation, Thirivacegam of Avaiyar.

INTRODUCTION

Before going into the part of translation of Thirivacegam (Athichudi), the readers must understand the background of Athichudi and pundit C. Iyothee Thoss. He born at Theynampet, Chennai (Madras) in 1845. He was a profound literary scholar of the Tamil language and literature, philosopher, social reformer, literary critique and commentator, writer, editor, medical practitioner of siddha medicine and a Buddhist revivalist. From Nandhagopal, N. (2009) it is revealed that he was a polyglot. His scholarship in Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil and English is known from his scholarly literary master pieces published in his weekly, theTamilan.

In 1907, he founded a weekly in the title of *Oru Paisa Tamilan*, meaning of Tamilan of value of one rupee. Later he rechristened it as Tamilan. The weekly was published in th name of the South Indian Sakkya Buddhist Society. It is noteworthy to mention that before establishing Buddhist Society of India (1955) by Babasaheb Ambedkar B.R, Iyothee Thoss had organized Indian Buddhist Association (1898). The weekly Tamilan carried the articles about literature, society, religion and politics. The copies were circulated to the far off countries like South Africa, Australia, Rangoon and Malasiya. With the help of multi – linguistic competency, he reinterpreted the ancient texts and dismissed the old commentaries developed and preached by the Vedic, Brahminic or Hindu scholars. The *later never gave* counter to his arguments. He condemned the earlier commentaries on Tamil literature as baseless explanations.

He inferred that most of the ancient Tamil literary texts had been interpolated. He considered that ancient Tamil texts were of Buddhism. Unfortunately, after his death readers could not get copies of his writings. It was only in 1999, Alosius, G collected and compailed the copies of the the Tamilan weekly with great effort.

He published the weekly for seven long years until his death. The compilation runs for nearly 1600 pages in two volumes. Every page unveils, decodes or discloses a fact about social, cultural and religious history of Indian peninsula. However, his writings could not receive the global reputation, because his writings were in Tamil except a unique petition addressed to Colonel Olcott, H.S. (1898) and the Inspector General of Registration, Iyengar, Srinivasa Ragava (1894). In many respects his findings coincides with the scholarly works of Babasaheb Ambedkar, B. R. Therefore, he can be rightly called as the pioneer of the later; but they never met each other. From the biographical sources of Babasaheb that he had known a little about **Iyothee Thoss** and he has been mentioned as **Abathidoss**. Perhaps, if they had met, the modern history of India had been different. Thus he shines as the morning star of Buddhist revivalism.

The readers of this article will wonder, especially to know that it was from the house of the grandfather of Iyothee Thoss, the palm leaf manuscript of world famous 'Thirukkural', was brought and handed over to

Harrington, the British officer. His grandfather Kandappan was the butler of Harrington. Knowing the literary interest of then the collector of Madras, Francis Whyte Ellis, ICS, Harrington sent the palm leaf manuscript of 'Thirukkural' to him for printing. It got printed first in the year 1812. From this, the readers could understand the educational tradition of the family of Pundit. C, Iyothee Thoss.

METHODOLOGY

In this translation work, Athichudi written by Avaiyar is undertaken. As it is piece of eighth century text, it had been preserved for long time duration. It has been copied down from one copy of manuscript to the next. During the process of duplication works errors in spelling, insertion, and interpolation might have occurred. Therefore, most of the ancient texts have more than one versions. Every version gives different meaning. It may be due to previous religious learning background beside the above said reason. Secondly, while interpreting a literary text, the readers or commentators ought to use all levels of reading skill, namely direct reading, knowing the implied meaning and critical reading. The erstwhile commentators have applied only the first level of reading and tried to paraphrase the text. Pundit C. Iyothee Thoss has applied all the three levels of reading and squeezed out the real meanings. Hence, the translator has to adopt direct translation and indirect translation. All the 108 individual lines of Athichudi (Thrivacagam) have been translated as viewed by Pundit C. Iyothi Thoss. It is treated as the primary source of this work. Translation is made from this source language of Tamil to the Target language English.

AVAIYAR

There are more than one opinions prevail regarding the history of Avaiyar. The literary convention and tradition of Tamil literature say that there were more than two poetes in the name of Avaiyar. One of them lived the second during *cengam period* and the second Avaiyar lived during later century and she was the contemporary of the great epic poet *Kamban*, the author of *Athichudi* was written by the later Avaiyar. The former has authored *Kondraivendhan* and *Nanneri*.

ATHICHUDI

The phrase Athichudi has two words. Athi is a kind of tree. Chudi means 'wearing'. It is supposed that lord Siva wears the flower of 'Athi' as garland which blossoms rarely. The poem begins with

(காப்பு – Kappu) immunity protection as follows

ஆத்திசுவட்டில் அமர்ந்த தேவனை

ஏத்தி ஏத்தி தொழு வோமியாமே. - Avaiyar (ஒளவையார்)

The translation of the above lines by Raman, S. (2004) is given below.

Athi Blossoms rare adorn His locks of hair,

The child – god rapt sitting on his lap,

Praising Him now, and praising again,

Prostrating ever, our devotion we aver.

Pundit C. Iyothee Thoss says that Athi means *Kallalam* or *Kallathi* in Dravidian language. *Kall-al*, *-al* means peepal or Bothi tree. It has few other names. One such name is *Arasa maram* – *Arasa* (King's) *Maram* (tree). Iyothee Thoss says that *Arasamaram* is the causative noun of *Kallal* or *Kallathi*. The meaning for *Arasamaram* is that Buddha who came up from a royal family (king) and sat (meditated and enlightenment), hence, the *Kallal* tree came to be called as *Arasamaram*. Iyothee Thoss rectifies the error (insertion) and rewrites follows.

ஆத்திச்சுவட்டில் அமர்ந்த தேவனை

ஏத்தி யேத்தித்தொழு வோமியாமே.

The translation for the above lines are given below.

The Deva who seated under the Athi shadow

Praise him, again praise him and devote him.

The meaning of the lines are ஆத்தி (athi tree) சுவட்டில் (under the shadow) அமர்ந்த (seated) Deva (one of the stages of detachers (monk life). In this way Pundit C. Iyothee Thoss infers and reinterpretes that the poem is about the lord Buddha and the title of the poem is not *Athichudi*. The real title of the poem is Thiruvcegam which is the secondary text of the primary text the *Thiripeetaka or Tripitaka*. *Athichudi* consists of 109 single individual verses in a single line. In some texts the number of lines varies. According to Iyothee Thoss, it is only 108 lines. They have been written in alphabetical order of vowel, consonants and vowel consonants. In Tamil language all the letters can not be used at the beginning of the words and sentences as per it is grammatical rule.

Iyothee Thoss quotes from Manimekalai the epic of Buddhist Tamil epic, in support, of his conclusion that 'athi' means peepal tree or Arasamaram (king's tree). In Manimekalai, there are several words to refer the Buddha and his philosophy. One such phrase is (ஆலமர்ச்செல்வன்) 'Alamarchelvan'.

'ஆலமர்ச்செல்வன்' 'Alamarchelvan' means the person who seated under the peepal tree. He interpretes Athichudi in the background of Buddhist philosophy. He has well known that the Buddhist philosophy acts as the operational mechanism in almost all the literary text of ancient Tamil literature. He has approached and analysed them according to the various types of reading skills. While analyzing the verses of Athichudi. He reproduces the direct meaning for some verses, for others he extracts the implied meaning; in some other verses he critically examines them. These types of using reading skills are absent in the commentary of the predecessors. Let us understand 'Thirivacegam' in the light of Buddhism.

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- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1. | அறன் செயல்விரும்பு | அறன் | - புத்தன் |
| | Like the deeds of Aran (Buddha). | Aram | - Eight fold path |
| 2. | ஆறுவதுசினம் | ஆறுவது | - தணியத்தகுவது |
| | wrath should be cooled down. | | |
| 3. | இயல்வது கரவேல் | இயல்வது | - Able to do |
| | Don't hide your skill. | | |
| 4. | ஈவதைவிலக்கேல் | | |

Prevent not, when it is offered.

5. உடையதை விளம்பேல்

Boost not your property.

6. ஊக்கமதுகைவிடேல்

Don't give up zeal.

7. எண்ணமுத்திகழேல்

Don't contempt the number and letters.

8. ஏற்பதிகழ்ச்சி

Credulity is contemptuous.

9. ஐயமிட்டுண்

Dine after providing the detachers (Bikhus).

10. ஒப்புரவொழுது

Lead the life by having peace and happiness in the mind.

11. ஒதுவதொழியேல்

Stop not read and teach.

12. ஒளயம் பேசேல்

Exchange not the words which create envy.

13. அஃகஞ் சுருக்கேல்

Don't reduce your body by yourself.

14. கண்டொன்றுசொல்லேல்

Don't say what was not seen.

15. ஙப்போல்வளை

ஙப்போல்

- தன்னைப்போல்

Provide happiness to others as you enjoy.

16. சனிநீராடு

சனிநீர்

- Metal pool (pali language)

Bathe in the metal pool.

17. ஞாயம்படவுரை ஞாயம் - நியாயம்

Say justice as if it is felt by the respondent.

18. இடம்படுவிடிடேல்

While constructing home, don't leave waste space.

19. இணக்கமறிந் திணங்கு

Be friend him after judging his character.

20. தந்தைதாய்ப்பேண்

Fend the father and mother.

21. நன்றிமறவேல்

Don't be ingratitude.

22. பருவத்தே பயிர்செய்

Sow the grains in right season.

23. மன்றுபறித் துண்ணேல்

Don't grab the land of others for your livelihood.

24. இயல்பலாதன செயேல்

Don't do that you could not do.

25. அரவமாட்டேல்

Don't play with poisoness snakes to amuse (entertain) others.

26. இலவம் பஞ்சிற்றுயில்

Sleep on a mattress of kapok cotton.

27. வஞ்சகம்பேசேல்

Stop speaking cunningly.

28. அழகலாதனசெயேல்

Don't do anything which is unpleasant to others.

29. இளமெயிற்கல்

- பச்சைப் பருவத்தில்
படி

Learn at tender age.

30. அறனைமறவேல்

அறன்

- புத்தன்

Forget not the Aran.

31. அனந்தலாடேல்

Sport not in spate.

32. கடிவதுமற

Forget scolding others.

33. காப்பது விரதம்

Protecting the virtue is protecting the body.

34. கிழமைப்பட வாழ்

Live up as a wiseman.

35. கீழ்மெயகற்று

Remove baseness from you.

36. குணமது கைவிடேல்

Don't abandon virtues traits.

37. கூடிப்பிரியேல்

Don't depart from the loved one.

38. கெடுப்பதொழி

Refrain from ruining others.

39. கேள்விமுயல்

Endeavor to listen virtues.

40. கைவினைகரவேல்

Don't hide your handicraft.

41. கொள்ளைவிரும்பேல்

Don't desire to have which were illegitimate property.

42. கோதாட்டொழி

Don't take part in the games which seduce you in crime.

43. சக்கரநெறிநில்

Stand by the wheel of virtue (Dhamma Chakkara Wheel – wheel of virtue)

44. சான்றோரினத்திரு

Live admist the crew of eminent scholars.

45. சித்திரம் பேசேல்

Don't speak words of lie ornamentally like the words of true.

46. சிர்மெய் மறவேல்

சீர்

- தூய்மை

மெய்

- உடல்

Don't forget to clean the body.

47. சுளிக்கச்சொல்லேல்

Say not unintelligibly.

48. சூதுவிரும்பேல்

Dislike gambling.

49. செய்வன திருந்தச்செய்

Whatever may be the deeds, do them perfectly.

50. சேரிடமறிந்துசேர்

Before accompany him, know him thouroughly.

51. சையெனத் திரயேல்

Don't hang about as if you were a saint.

52. சொற் சோற்வுபடேல்

Abide by promised words.

53. சோம்பித் திரியேல்

Don't be lazy wanderer.

54. தக்கோனெனத்திரு

Be a competent person to do the assigned job.

55. தானமது விரும்பு

Like to be generous.

56. திருமாலுக் கடிமைசெய்

திரு

- சிறந்த

மால்

- புத்தர்

Render service to lord Buddha.

57. தீவினையகற்று

Annihilate evil deeds.

58. துன்பத்திற் கிடங்கொடேல்

Don't give chance for to be suffered.

59. தூக்கிவினை செய்

Consider well before doing a profession.

60. தெய்வமிகழேல்

Contempt not the enlightened.

61. தேசத்தோடொத்துவாழ்

Live with fellow men attending to *Pancha sila*.

62. தையல் சொற்கேளேல்

Don't lend your ears to pricking words.

63. தொன்மெய்மறவேல்

Don't forget ancestral lineage.

64. தோற்பனை தொடரேல்
Don't follow him who was defeated by you.

65. நன்மெய்க் கடைபிடி
Follow him who is considered as good by the world.

66. நாடொப்பன செய்
Do the acceptable norms of the country men.

67. நிலையிற் பிரியேல்
Don't slip from the enlightened awakening.

68. நீர்விளை யாடேல்
Don't celebrate water festive accompanying women.

69. நுண்மெய் நழுவேல்
Don't slip from the state of mental acuteness.

70. நூற்கலை கல்
Study books on various arts.

71. நெற்பயிர் விளை
Cultivate paddy crops.

72. நேர்பட வொழுகு
Be straightforward.

73. நைவன நணுகேல்
Don't live beside thrashers.

74. நொய்ய வுரையேல்
Don't speak heart hurting words to the loving persons.

75. நோய்க் கிடங்கொடேல்
Don't give room to the diseases.

76. பழிப்பனபகரேல்

Don't say debasing words.

77. பாம்பொடு பழகேல்

பாம்பை

- நஞ்சு பையுடைய

ஓடு

- உயிரினம்

Don't move with venomous creatures.

78. பிழை படச் சொல்லேல்

Don't exchange erroneous words.

79. பீடு பெற நில்

Stand firm in strengthening.

80. புகழ்ந்தாரைப் போற்றிவாழ்

Partronise them those who were appreciated by others.

81. பூமி திருத்தியுண்

Get your food by tilling the soil.

82. பெரியரைத் துணைக்கொள்

Get the assistance of versatile persons.

83. பேதமெ யகற்று

Remove various unsteady behaviours.

84. பையலோடிணங்கேல்

Don't move with teaser.

85. பொருடனை போற்றி வாழ்

Admire 'the real thing'

86. போர்த்தொழில் புரியேல்

Don't begin a vocation that would lead to unending dispute.

87. மனந்துமாறேல்

Let not your mind be unsteady.

88. மாற்றானுக் கிடங்கொடேல்

Don't lend your home to the deceiver.

89. மிகைபடச்சொல்லேல்

Don't tell the words which would cause suffering.

90. மீதூண் விரும்பேல்

Don't like to eat unnormally.

91. முனைமுகத்துநில்லேல்

Don't stand in front of shooting of archers.

92. மூர்க்கரோ டிணங்கேல்

Don't move with the person who is always furious.

93. மெல்லியாடொள்சேர்

Marry the woman speaking softly.

94. மேம்மக்கள் சொற்கேள்

Obeys to the words of great people. (of good effort, practice, feeling, and truth).

95. மைவிழியார் மனையகல்

Leave from the home of the harlot.

96. மொழிவ தறமொழி

Say unambiguously.

97. மோகத்தைமுநி

Pack up your lust.

98. வல்லமெய் பேசேல்

Don't speak tackfully.

99. வாதுமுதற்கூறேல்

Don't initiate argument from your side.

100. வித்தை விரும்பு

Aspire to learn craft.

101. வீடுபெற நில்

Stand firmly to attain Nirvana.

102. உத்தமனாயிரு

Be a perfect man.

103. ஊருடன் கூடிவாழ்

Live united with the villagers.

104. வெட்டெனப்பேசேல்

Don't speak heart hurting words.

105. வேண்டி வினைசெயேல்

When neighbours doing a profession, knowing
that, don't do the same.

106. வைகரைத் துயிலெழு

Wake up from sleep at early hours.

107. ஒன்னாரைச் சேரேல்

Don't move with foes.

108. ஓரஞ் சொல்லேல்

Don't speak biased words in favour of a party.

CONCLUSION

The interpretation of Iyothee Thoss entirely varies from the existing interpretations and critical analyses. Consequently the translation deviates very much from the exact content of the actual text. His version of interpretation and explanation clears the ambiguity and answers the doubts within the ambit of reasoning. Though his commentaries consist of so many literary texts, only five or six pages have been selected for translation work. The translation may give new direction and scope to the original text. Every page of his work leaves new meaning or peculiar definitions which are different from the existing one. His works provide a very big ground for the researchers to decode the unrevealed past religious, social, political and literary history of Indian sub-continent.

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