**Introduction**

This article summarizes the Sivaagama Paddhathi as presented by SSVT Aasthana Acharya Sri. Shanmukha Sivachariyar during a meeting with the management and the saiva priests. So far we have been doing pujas according to one’s capability (yata Sakthi). Management and Archakas are like father and mother and the center point (Bindu) is the god. Devotees are like Children. If parents argue and fight it affects the children. Luckily the devotion given by the management and archakas in this temple is not seen everywhere. The Acharya observed that currently things are done well in our temple, but our aim is to make it even better since the congregation is increasing and we need more energy in the temple.

According to our Acharya as we approach Jeernodhara Kumbhabhishekam (JK), a very important junction, this is the right time to consolidate the saiva paddathi. Siva Agama prayoga chandrika book is the basis of education for most of the siva agama priests and our two Agama priests at the temple. This standard textbook recommends these paddhathis clearly as daily routine.

He advised our sivagama priests that what is being done to Siva needs to be followed on a daily basis for Siva Parivara pujas. Sri Sivaachariyar was appreciative of the shraddha shown by the SSVT management and the priests. By carrying on such pujas continuously he emphasized that we increase the energy at the temple.

For completeness we have given a brief introduction of Agamas with particular reference to Siva Agama as a lead into the siva paddhathi.

**Agamas**

The Agamas are a collection of Sanskrit, Tamil and Grantha scriptures that are the rules to be followed while locating a temple; method of construction, installation of the Prime Deity and other associated (Parivaram) deities, sculptures, performance of daily poojas, Naimithya poojas (Poojas on special and periodical occasions), festivals and consecration of the deities etc.,

The Agamas are non-vedic in origin and have been dated either as post-vedic texts or as pre-vedic compositions. In a narrower sense Agama can be defined as tradition or sacred traditional doctrine. There are three classes of Agamas – Saiva, Vaishnava and Saktha. Although it includes Vaishnavaite and Saktha practices the term is more or less defines only Saivaite texts. The Vaishnavaite texts (Vaikasana agama and Paancharaatra agama) have come to be referred to as Samhitas and the Saktha Agamas are referred to as “tantras”. Tantra means ‘that which protects with detail’. Sruti is said to be of two forms – Nigama (Veda) and Agama. From here on when we say Agama we refer to Siva Agama.

The Saiva Agamas led to the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy in Tamil-speaking regions of South-India and gave rise to Kashmir Saivism in the North-Indian region of Kashmir. The Agamas had existed mostly in South India, in the Tamil Nadu in palm leaf manuscript book form in the homes of Sivacharyas who had been entrusted with the duty of organizing and performing pooja in Siva temples for over two and a half millennium. All the Agama manuscript are available only in the granta script, one which had been invented by the Tamil people for writing their Sanskrit scriptures, more than 1500 years ago.

Agama (आगम) is derived from the verb root गम्य (gam) meaning “to go” and the preposition आ (aa) meaning “toward” and refers to scriptures “that which has come down (from god)”. It also means “a traditional doctrine, or system which commands faith”. Another interpretation that is put forth is that the three letters a-ga-ma respectively denote pati, pasu and pasam; and that the agamas deals with these three entities and their relationship, and hence this name.

A Sanskrit verse gives an interesting meaning for the three syllables a, ga, and ma:

Agatam Siva vaktrebyah gatam ca girija mukhe
Matam ca Siva bhaktanam agamam cheti katyate

“The Agamas originated from the faces of Lord Siva, fell on the ears of Parasakti and spread in the world as the Matha (Religion), of the Siva bhaktas”, the agamas are mostly in the form of instructions from Siva to Sakti. They take their name from the first letters, of the words agatam (originated), gatam (fell) and matam (religion) as mentioned in this sloka.

Each Agama consists of four categories or padas:

- **Kriya pada** - describes rules for construction of temples; for sculpting, carving, and consecration of idols of deities for worship in temples;
- **Charya pada** - lays down rules for daily worship (puja),

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observances of religious rites, rituals, festivals and prayaschittas.

- **Yoga pada** – doctrine & practice of concentration leading to mental discipline.
- **Jnana pada** - consists of philosophical and spiritual knowledge, knowledge of reality that leads to moksha

**Saiva Siddhantha**

Vedic texts are classified based on the subjects they deal with. For example, subjects like grammar, etymology, meter, phonetics, poetry, astronomy-astrology, ritual codes, moral codes, and social organization, are organized into different texts. Even though Agamas deal with various disciplines of knowledge, Agamic texts are primarily meant to be guides for practitioners.

As far Saivism is concerned, it is considered as originated from the South and not from the North. The Saivism of the Tamilians, was the growth of an unbroken tradition probably from the prehistoric past and this had three elements fused into it.

These are an external worship of images as the manifest abode of God, both in shrines, throughout the land and in devotees own homes, symbolism and the inward meditation and realization.

These 3 elements are: worship of images in the temples was “parartha pooja” for all mankind, for the welfare of the entire society and worship (“svartha Puja”) in homes was for individual and his family. Temple worship is done by a dedicated group of Sivachariyars for the welfare of community and worship at home is done by a person who had an initiation under a competent guru such as Vishesha Diksha for Sivapooja.

Second element is symbolism: the vigraha worshipped is not God, it is just a symbol intended to remind people of God and to direct their minds and hearts through the seen symbol to the Unseen One Beyond or Supreme, from formed to formless.

The third element is meditation. What cannot be perceived by the senses externally, may be realized in the heart, with of course His own grace. Without constant concentration and meditation, external worship alone will not result in realization.

It is only this internal worship or Atma pooja that lends meaning to external worship. These three are not separate compartments but basically one harmonious integrated whole in the ritual of worship.

The Sivalinga is symbolic of the Supreme Self, “Sadasiva” the lord of the universe. In this aspect it has three parts. The lowest (four sides) part is called the ‘Brahma-Pitha,’ the middle one (octagon), the ‘Vishnu-Pitha’ and the uppermost one, the ‘Shiva-Pitha.’ The circular part represents (Avudayar) Shakti and the linga represents the formless (Arupa) Nirguna Bramhan - Sadasiva.

Sadasiva is of five forms, called Tatpurusha (He resides in all individuals in their respective bodies - Tasya Tasya Purushu Vasati iti Tatpurusha), Aghora (He is the most benign - gorah na bhavati iti Aghorah), Sadyojata (Bestows fruits of Dharma, Artha, Kama), Vamadeva (all living beings come into existence by his sheer will) and Isana (Lord (Isa) of all beings).

To the question of how many Siva Agamas exist is difficult to answer but most accepted answer is 28 agamas and 207 upa Agamas. Again different version is presented as to how these 28 have been revealed. The one generally accepted version is that the 28 Saiva agamas are said to have been revealed from all the five faces of Siva, the first four taught five Agamas each, while the last, Isanam gave rise to eight. The first ten agamas were taught by Sadasiva to the Vidyavasanas, so they are called the Sivabheda agamas (Saiva or God-taught). The remaining 18 were taught to 36 Rudras beginning from Anadirudra, and hence these were called the Rudrabheda agamas (Raudric or man-realized).

Another group considers that from out of the five faces of Lord Siva, the Four Vedas came forth from four faces and all Agamas came from the fifth face i.e. Easamam. Kowshigar, Kasiyapar, Bharathvajar, Gowthamar and Agasthiar are the Five Rishis who heard these Agamas from Lord Shiva. It is said that the descendents of these five Rishis are the Sivachariyars who are presently performing poojas in Saivaita temples.

Though there are 28 Saiva Agamas, at present only Karana Agama, Kamiga Agama, Mahuda Agama, Vadhula Agama and Suprabedha Agama are being followed. Even out of the above five Agamas, Kamiga Agama, Karana Agama are the two Agamas that are being followed. Yet, only Kamiga Agama is followed in most of the saivaita temples. Karana Agamam, Maguda Agama etc are followed in a few select temples.

**Saiva Agama Paddhathi**

Paddathi is like a system, a process or a digest of things to follow from Agama and this gives energy to the temple when followed properly. Moola Agamas give us instructions to carry out things because we may not able to understand the
central functioning. We are currently doing the pujas nicely. Paddhatis help us to get to the energy of paramathma.

At this temple we are doing misra puja. Misra puja of the deities here is ordained at the pradhishtapana time by Swarga Sri Sambasiva Sivachariar and Swarga Sri Savyasachi Swamigal. It cannot be changed now.

Vaishnava and Vaideeka priests will do the pujas per their paddathis. It is important to note that as far as possible only Saiva Agama priests should do the Siva and Siva paivar puja.

Although there is some allowance for the Vaideeka and Vaisnava priests to do these pujas per their paddathi Saiva Agama priests should do according to Saiva agama paddathi only. He asked do you do Archana (worship) to Siva and Siva parivaras. When we say Puja, then we have to do this for all parivaras also. In fact SSVT has done Panchasana Puja for Muththukumaraswamy (Murugan) when we celebrated Skanda Shashti in 2007.

Sivachariyar was clear in differentiating mandatory aagamic rituals needed to each deity (that includes archana as well along with many other rituals) and devotee-requested archanas. The former is as far as possible the one done at the opening of the temple followed by the latter. He further elaborated that Arch means to worship; vigrahas absorb the energy from the mantras. Also Pu-ja is – “Puryanthe sarva Karmani Jayathe Gnanamaatmani.” As the priests do these puja sincerely, chaitanya or conscious powers of the vigrahas increase there by benefitting the whole world. Energy for the world is created for the universe. He continued, “One may ask do we do all these in India”. In India not all places can do this because there are a lot of political influences from government etc., But where it can be done we must do. America in general provides this opportunity.

In Saiva Agama paddhathi, Ishvara puja at the sanctum follows the route of “Aasanam – Murthy – Moolam” where the Deity is given a suitable seat or aasanam first. Once the seated, the Lord’s physical presence is embellished by nyasas and other procedures. The seated Lord is then offered various pujas and upachaaraas including pancha aavarana puja. This procedure first implemented in detail for Sri Ramanathaswamy early this year, has been now expanded to all other Saiva sanctums recently.

As mentioned earlier these are referenced in the Agama Prayoga Chandrika textbook followed by most the Agamic schools. After exchanging different viewpoints it was decided that SSVT Saiva Agama priests should follow the paddathis as described by Sri Shanmukha Sivachriyar and as summarized below. Here we have included some additional items as recommended by various religious adheenams (Saiva Agama matam) in Tamil Nadu

# 4 and 6 should be interchanged but we need to confirm this with Sivachariyar or our prists

1. SSVT has two-kaala puja every day and should continue to do the same.

2. As the temple opens in the morning Dwaara paalaka archana should be done first using mantras.

3. This should be followed by Dwaara puja (Puja to the entrance). Dwara Puja is very important. It removes all vastu dosha.

4. Then, panchasana puja are to be done. Panchasana puja controls all five elements; no naga dosha will be there and delayed marriage childbirth etc will also be avoided.

5. This has to be followed by Nyasam and it is done using mantras: Nyaasa means to place. For example nyasas like danda banki, Munda banki, Vaktra Banki, Kalabanki and vidya deha nyasas have been prescribed by Darmapura Adeenam. Nyaasa is very important in Saiva Agamas. It is a process of transfer of energy from the Acharya to the deity in the form of the vigraha in the sanctum.

6. During the daily pancha upachaara puja, there are 5 paatras (Pancha Patrams) kept below the Lord. Each patram will have different dravyams. If we do not have all dravyams (dravya alaabe – when not ABLE to procure the materials), let us use chandanam and pushpam. Keeping these Patrams in front of the deities alone will bring additional energy. If we do that in front of the Deities, it would be so beautiful. A list of dravyams needed for the puja given by Sivachariyar is presented below. Offering fragrant dravyams, during Pancha varana puja, to Deities will result in good thoughts and words in all of us.

   o saamanya argya - general argya (dhig devataas and other devataas)
   o paadya - wash the Lord’s holy feet
   o aachamana - water to drink
   o argya: to different Shira or Facts of shiva - Ishana, Tattpurusha, Agora,Vamadeva, and Sadyojatha.
   o o Aachamana and argya are given THREE times each phase. That means, for every time we need to do Argya and aachamana, it is actually 15 times. The vessels are filled up 15 times to do these steps.
Vishesa Argya: Same like argya but moola mantra is different (just like difference in procedures between Prime Minister and other ministers) Agama priests know of these procedures and are trained in rahasya mantras that are specifically used for these deities. In response to a question, “vishesha argyam, the fifth step, is done only after abhishekam. So, as there are no abhishekams to parivara deities every day, do we need to actually do the Padyam/Achamanam/Argyam”, Sivachariyar pointed out that there is a clear instruction for an alternative: “Argya udaka Bindu naa samsnapya” – as you see abhishekam can be done with argyam with a bindu or drop on the murthy due to any reason. Due to desha aachaara, aagama offers suitable alternative.

7. These steps have to be done for moolasthana Sri Ramananthaswamy daily for both Kaalas if possible but once for sure. Even if abhishekam is not done for the parivara deities on a daily basis panchaasana and pancha upacharas has to be done at least once.

8. Then upachaaraas are done. They include pujas with gandham, akshatai, doorvaygmam, bivam, pushpa archana, dhoopam, and deepam. Each of these involves anga mudras. Some intricate steps in the upachaaras have to be done behind the screen at saiva sanctums, ‘in camerae’.

9. Naivedyam is to be done without fail. Not doing proper naivedyam leads only to the destruction of the society. There should not be any reduction in the quantity of naivedyam during any day of the week. The puja ends with aradrikam (karpura arathi).

Dravyams Needed For Panchaasana Puja

Saamanargyam
- Chandanam
- Pushpam

Padhyam
- Vettiver
- Chandanam
- Arugampul
- Ven Kadugu (White Mustards)

Achamanam
- Cardamom
- Clove
- Jathikkai
- Jathipathri
- Pacchai Kalpuram

Argyam
- Venn Kadugu (white mustard)
- White Sessame seed
- Rice
- Nel
- Darbai Nuni (end portion)
- Milk
- Pushpam
- Jalam (water)

Visesha Argyam
Same as Saamanyaargyam

Sri Shivachariyar continued with the following suggestions to augment the panchaasana puja.

1. Chanting of mantras / Veda Agama Parayanam should be done regularly. This includes all Veda mantras by our Vaideeka priests and Tamil murai, puranam, pasurams etc.by our Agama priests.

2. Sahasranama archanas for all devathas should be done each week (during week days) per schedule that is in practice.

3. Evening Brahma arathi needs to be done with associated recitation of Agama mantras.

4. Only by the mantras, that the energy of a temple is enhanced and there should not be any mantra lopaa (lapses in mantra) to be offered to the deities. The deities are pleased by more mantras offered. By chanting the mantras, the vibrations are increased and deities answer all our prayers.

5. Offering of fragrant flowers are to be continued without a break. Inda or circular flower garland is kept at the Rudra bhaga or head of the sivalingam It has to be present all the time even during abhsishekams. The brahma bhaaga and vishnu bhaaga are to be covered by vastrams even during abhishekams, at all the time.

6. Different flowers are prescribed for Lord Shiva in the shaasstras. Hence, more care needs to be given to the flowers offered. By offering Flowers with Vaasanaas or
Hindu Wisdom

The great teacher Prajapati said: "The Self is pure, free from decay and death, free from hunger and thirst, and free from sorrow. The Self desires nothing that is not good, wills nothing that is not good. Seek and realize the Self! Those who seek and realize the Self fulfill all their desires and attain the goal supreme."

-Chandogya Upanishad

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good fragrances to Lord Shiva, our bad karmaas are sterilized and good vaasanas are gained by the devotees.

7. Brahmosavams for Sri Siva and Sri Balaji have to be done every year in a traditional manner. This will enhance the santhyan of the deities, removing the negative effects of omissions and commissions during yearlong puja procedures.

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WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS

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