



The Concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* in *Śiva Śatakam*: A Malayalam Work by Nārāyaṇa Guru

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Abstract

In the present paper an attempt will be made toward interpreting selected stanzas from the work of Nārāyaṇa Guru (1854–1928), a mystic and social reformer from Kerala. In his Malayalam work the *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭū* (*The Song of the Kundalini Snake*), Guru depicted an ancient yogic concept of *Kuṇḍalinī*, a coiled power residing in the state of sleep within the subtle energy centre (*mūlādhāra*) situated at the base of the central body channel (*sūṣumnā*). The very same concept appears in many other works by Nārāyaṇa Guru, including *Śiva Śatakam* (*One Hundred Stanzas on Śiva*). An analysis of these stanzas in the light of the Siddha tradition (*Tirumandiram* by Tirumūlar) reveals that not only has the *Kuṇḍalinī* concept been borrowed from the Dravidian literature, Nārāyaṇan introduces the Tamil Siddhas' style of description of mystic experiences to his philosophical works, using metaphorical-twilight language which excludes the possibility of univocal interpretation.

Keywords: Nārāyaṇa Guru, *Tirumandiram*, *Kuṇḍalinī*, *Śiva Śatakam*, Śaivism

Słowa kluczowe: Nārāyaṇa Guru, *Tirumandiram*, *Kuṇḍalinī*, *Śiva Śatakam*, Śiwaizm

In this paper an attempt will be made toward interpreting several stanzas from a Malayalam work by Nārāyaṇa Guru (1854–1928), a philosopher and social reformer from Kerala. In his poem *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭū* (*The Song of the Kundalini Snake*), Guru introduced the ancient yogic concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* (a serpent power awakened in *mūlādhāra* cakra and lured to dance), which appears in another Malayalam poem, *Śiva Śatakam* (henceforth: ŚŚ) – *One Hundred Stanzas on Śiva*. This composition, based on different philosophical systems (Śaiva Siddhānta, Yoga, Tantra, etc.), contains several stanzas (11, 28, 31, 32, 35, 82, 83, 99, 100) which can be interpreted in

accordance with the Kuṇḍalinī Yoga system, as stated by the following three commentators: T. Bhāskaran, Bālakṛṣṇan Nāyar, and Gītāsūrāj.

Literary sources of Kuṇḍalinī Yoga in Śiva Śatakam

The Tantric Yoga of South India supplemented the methods of Patañjali's Aṣṭāṅga Yoga with the practice of awakening the *Kuṇḍalinī* power directed upwards through the central body channel (*suṣumnā*) to the top of the head.¹ The Tamil philosopher and saint Tirumūlar, the author of *Tirumandiram* (henceforth: TM), is considered to be the first to bring the Tantra aspect of Śaivism from Kashmir to the Tamil world.² The Śaivism of Tirumūlar comprises among others Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, although Tirumūlar calls it Śiva Yoga; this Tamil work could have become one of the literary sources for Nārāyaṇa Guru who – just like the author of TM – avoids the term *Kuṇḍalinī* or *cakra* (energy centre) and introduces so-called twilight language (*sandhyā bhāṣā*)³ in ŚŚ, which was composed around 1884 during Guru's penance at Marutvāmala in Tamil Nadu, after he had broken the ties of domestic life and rejected marital relations. The stay at Marutvāmala became the next step in Nārāyaṇan's yoga practice; before that time he had studied yoga with notable ascetics such as Caṭṭambi Svāmikaḷ or Taikkāṭṭū Ayyāsvāmikaḷ, an adept of Śiva Rāja Yoga based on *Tirumandiram*.⁴ It is worth emphasizing here that the concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* imagined as a dancing snake (*āṭunna pāmbū*), mentioned by Guru in another poem, *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭū* (*The Song of Kundalini Snake*), was borrowed from the Tamil songs of Pāmbāṭṭi Siddhar.⁵

¹ “Teachers in the south did not develop a separate system based on Śaiva doctrines contained in the *Āgamas*, but revised the already prevalent system of Patañjali” (B.N. Pandit, *Specific Principles of Kashmir Śaivism*, New Delhi 1997, p. 93).

² *Tirumandiram* is considered to be the first literary explanation of Śaiva Siddhānta system in Tamil Nadu (G.V. Tagare, *Śaivism. Some Glimpses*, New Delhi 2001, p. 60) and “the earliest representation of Tantric thought and practice among the Tamil Siddhas” (D.R. Brooks, *Auspicious Fragments and Uncertain Wisdom: The Roots of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India*, [in:] *The Roots of Tantra*, K.A. Harper, R.L. Brown (eds.), Albany 2002, pp. 57–76).

³ According to Ganapathy, twilight language means that “the ideas may be explained either by the light of the day or by the darkness of the night” (T.N. Ganapathy, *A Curtain Raiser*, [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas. An Anthology*, T.N. Ganapathy (ed.), Quebec 2004, p. 3). In order to depict their mystical experiences the Siddhas used “a clothed language in which the highest truths are hidden in the form of the lowest, the most sacred in the form of the most ordinary. The meaning of the poems operates at two levels – one, the exoteric and the linguistic, the other, the esoteric and the symbolical” (T.N. Ganapathy, *The Twilight Language of the Tirumandiram*, [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular. Essays on the Tirumandiram*, T.N. Ganapathy, K.R. Arumugam, G. Anand (eds.), Quebec 2006, pp. 295–297).

⁴ M. Kumaran, *The Biography of Sree Narayana Guru*, Varkala 2014, pp. 64–69. It is significant that the biography of Nārāyaṇa Guru, the great *yogi* and Siddha, written by Moorkoth Kumaran, was preceded by a description of yoga systems including *cakras* and the *Kuṇḍalinī* system (*ibidem*, pp. 15–47).

⁵ Pāmbāṭṭi Siddhar wrote many poems, among others *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭū* (T.B. Nair, *Jīnakkāṭal (Malayalam Metrical Version of Jnanakkovai, in Tamil)*, Trivandrum 1974, pp. 48–65). Cf. T.B. Siddhalin-gaiah, *Pāmbāṭṭiccittar. Selections from 'Dance, oh! Snake! Dance'*, [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas. An Anthology*, T.N. Ganapathy (ed.), Quebec 2004, pp. 485–513. Cf. H. Urbańska, *The Twilight Language of Svānubhava Gīti by Nārāyaṇa Guru – Analysis of Selected Stanzas in the Light of Tirumandiram and Other Tamil Literary Sources*, “Studia Religiosa” 2017, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 118–119.

Kuṇḍalinī as the dancing [black] snake

The concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* depicted as a dancing snake may have been introduced by Guru in ŚŚ 31, which seems to be an allusion to the serpent power rising up while it pierces energy centres (*cakras*):

paravakaḥ pattumaruttu parrinilkkuṁ kuṛikaḷoḷiccu karuṭṭaṭṭakkiyāṭum
cerumaṇi cennu ceruttu kāḷaṅāgam nerukayilākkiyoḷicciṭunnu nityam // 31 //
 Having cut down ten birds⁶ withdrawn from attendant goals,⁷
 Having restrained power (virility),
 As soon as the dancing black snake – after the small jewel
 Has been obstructed while passing [through *cakras*] –
 Places [that jewel] within the crown at the top of the head,
 [The phenomenal world]⁸ disappears forever.

Three commentators (Bhāskaran, Nāyar and Gītāsūrāj) interpret the above stanza in accordance with *Kuṇḍalinī* Yoga; however, they seem to differentiate between several stages of *Kuṇḍalinī*, passing from *mūlādhāra* – the lowest *cakra* – to *sahasrāra* – the highest one. Bhāskaran interprets the black snake as *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*, similar to the black snake⁹ and the small jewel (*cerumaṇi*) as the edge or extremity (*aṛram*) of *Kuṇḍalinī*. The term *āṭum* (dancing) seems to pertain to both, according to the commentary. *Kuṇḍalinī*, which in the shape of a snake moves upwards to reach the highest point situated on the top of the head (*sahasrāra*), has to pass through the obstructions:

As soon as the mind becomes restrained, the *Kuṇḍalinī*'s edge, which is like a jewel, begins to tremble in the *mūlādhāra cakram*. As soon as it knocks many times against the closed entrance of the *suṣumna* channel, it is opened. In such a way the ascending in the form of snake *Kuṇḍalinī* reaches the lotus *sahasrāram* located on the top of the head. With that, as the realization of

⁶ *pattindriyaṅṅaḷeyum kīḷaṭṭakki* – “having controlled ten senses” (B. Nāyar, *Śrīnārāyaṇa Gurudēva-kṛtīkaḷ. Sampūrṇa Vyākhyānam*, Thiruvananthapuram 2010, p. 234). Cf. TM 7 2025: *pulamaṅcu puḷḷaṅcu puḷḷū cennu mēyumu nilamaṅcu nūraṅcu nīrmamayum aṅcū / kulamonnu kōḷkoṅṭu mēyppōnoruvan ulamninnu pōmvaḷi onpatumē* (“There are five rice fields / sense organs, five birds; the regions the birds graze on are five; there are five waters, five properties of water; there is one group and one herdsman with staff, the swerving exit ways are nine” – C.K.G. Nāyar, *Tirumūlanāyanār Tirumantram*, Kottayam 2007, pp. 613–614). All translations of *Tirumandiram* are based on the Tamil original text (10-volumed edition with English translation and commentary; general editor: T.N. Ganapathy) and Malayalam translation by C.K.G. Nāyar quoted above.

⁷ *Avayūṭe viṣayaṅṅaḷe puṛamtaḷḷi* – “having rejected their objects [of senses]” (B. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 234).

⁸ In T. Bhāskaran's edition: instead of *nityam* – *lōkam. oḷicciṭunnu lōkam* – *janam oḷicitaṛunnu ennō lōkam maṛayunnu ennō artham paṛayām* – “one can say that man (inhabitant of this world) sheds light or the phenomenal world disappears” (T. Bhāskaran, *Śrīnārāyaṇaguruvinṇe Sampūrṇakṛtīkaḷ*, Kozhikode 2015, p. 207).

⁹ *Kāḷasarpatteppōḷuḷḷa kuṇḍalinī* – “*Kuṇḍalinī* being like the black snake” (T. Bhāskaran, *op. cit.*, p. 207). Malayalam terms borrowed from Sanskrit can be given in their Sanskrit versions (e.g., *kuṇḍalinī* = *kuṇḍalinī*; *ātmāvū* = *ātman*; *iḍa* = *iḍā*).

ātmāvū happens, those who attain it shed splendour – or as soon as the self-realization comes, the phenomenal world disappears.¹⁰

Similarly, Gītāsūrāj interprets the black snake as *Kuṇḍalini Śakti*; the small jewel denotes in this case the *jīvātman* consciousness. What is important here is that the epithet *ātum* (dancing) has been associated with the term *ceṛumaṇi* (i.e. *jīvan*'s unstable consciousness). The expression *karuttatakki* (having restrained the power) may be referring to earlier stages of yoga practice – breath-restraint (*prāṇāyāma*) and sense-control (*pratyāhāra*):

As soon as the senses become restrained, the world of objects becomes destroyed. As soon as *Kuṇḍalini Śakti* – the black snake, having restrained the power, places the gem which is the dancing *jīvātman* consciousness in the crown on the top of the head – like a snake placing a ruby on its head – the phenomenal world disappears. The small jewel means *jīvātman* here. *Maṇi* means *ratnam* (jewel; gem). One can find here a concept of a snake bearing a ruby-jewel on the top of its head (within its hood). After subduing the senses, having restrained the power – having controlled *prāṇam* – one should awake *Kuṇḍalini Śakti*. The black snake denotes *Kuṇḍalini Śakti*. It is imagined in the form of a snake resting in the *mūlādhāra cakram*. During the *prāṇāyāma* which is performed in the *iḍa* and *piṅgaḷa* channels, *Kuṇḍalini* – having moved up through six *cakras* – reaches the *sahasrāram* at the top of the head – it is *Kuṇḍalini Yoga*. The concept is that if she delivers life-power there, self-realization is attained. At the same time the phenomenal world disappears.¹¹

Both Bhāskaran and Gītāsūrāj call our attention to the idea which has become the basis for the concept evoked in this stanza: there is an ancient belief in snakes holding precious jewels within their hoods. Guru also adopted this belief in another work, *Kuṇḍalini Pāṭṭū*, depicting the *Kuṇḍalini* as the dancing cobra that unites with the highest reality (Śiva).

According to Nāyar's commentary, the black snake means *Kuṇḍalini Prāṇan*, which flows after entering the *suṣumna* channel, whereas the small jewel symbolizes self-effulgent *ātmāvū*.¹² *Kuṇḍalini*, having approached and having grasped *ātman*, places it within (inside) her hood¹³ and disappears (hides).¹⁴ Nāyar explains the expression *cennu ceṛuttu* in the context of the relationship between *Kuṇḍalini* and *ātmāvū* and seems to interpret the term *kālanāgam* as the lower stage of *Kuṇḍalini* at the same time: Śakti herself becomes an obstacle while descending into the lower level of creation, the realm of *Māyā*, in order to reveal the real nature of ultimate reality – as for Śiva to reveal as *Para Śiva*, the Wholeness beyond immanence, *Kuṇḍalini* must emerge from Him and return to Him. In such a sense – transforming herself into the lower *tattvas* (principles of reality) – she herself becomes an obstacle: “In order to see the jewel on the top of the head of a snake and – if it is done – in order to grasp

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Gītāsūrāj, *Śrīnārāyaṇagurudēvan. Śivaśatakam*, Varkala 2013, p. 46.

¹² B. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ The term *lōkam* has been replaced with the term *nityam* in the case of the text and interpretation given above.

it, the snake itself becomes an obstacle (*taṭassam*).¹⁵ These two verb forms: *cennu ceṛuttu* could in such a case pertain to the black snake, not *cakras* (*cennu* – from *celluka* – “to approach, reach,” *cennu* means “having reached; approached;” *ceṛuttu* – from *ceṛukkuka* – “to oppose, confront, encounter,” *ceṛuttu* means “having opposed; confronted”). Thus the interpreted stanza of ŚŚ 31 can be translated as follows: *Having controlled ten senses and having rejected their objects, having restrained the power, the dancing black snake – having approached and having opposed the small jewel, having placed it within her hood – disappears (forever).*

It is worth emphasizing here that the stanza quoted above refers to the concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* imagined as a *black* snake. Taking into consideration the commentary given by Nāyar, who interprets the snake as an obstacle (*taṭassam*) opposed to the *ātman*, the black colour of *Kuṇḍalinī* could suggest the lower stage of Śakti termed *Kuṇḍalinī Prāṇa*¹⁶ or *Agni* (and *Sūrya*-) *Kuṇḍalinī*,¹⁷ preceded by stages of control constituting Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, like *pratyāhāra* (sense control) and *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) or *yama* (self-control). It is extremely interesting that in the section of *Tirumandiram* devoted to the concept of *Adhomukha* – “the manifestation of downward face [for the sake of grace]” (2 521) *Tirumūlar* mentions the blackened neck of Śivaṅ, who swallowed poison, suffusing darkness. According to Ganapathy’s commentary, this phrase means that the body-space below the throat stands for darkness or ignorance (the dark sphere also comprises *anāhata cakra* in that case).¹⁸ However, the grace of Lord (*aruḷ*) paired up with ultimate Substance (*poruḷ*) and identical with the most sublime form of Śakti, comprises – as stated in TM 7 1806 – light (*veḷi*) as well as darkness (*iruḷ*), identical with *Tirodhāna Śakti*, the power of concealment (or basic defilement called *āṇava mala*).¹⁹ *Tirumandiram* refers to the *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* in terms of the Power representing Darkness as well as Brightness; the latter brings union with Śivaṅ or Śivam

¹⁵ *Pāmbinre nerukayile maṇi kāṇān kaḷiññālum kaikkalākkān pāmbutanne taṭassamāyittirunnu (ibidem).*

¹⁶ The lower stage of *Kuṇḍalinī* in Kashmiri Śaivism is termed *Prāṇa Kuṇḍalinī* (L. Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī. The Energy of the Depths. A Comprehensive Study Based on the Scriptures of Nondualistic Kashmir Saivism*, Albany 1988, p. 23). The *Prāṇa Kuṇḍalinī*, experienced by those *yogis* who are attached to both their spiritual and worldly lives, can be risen up to the *maṇipūra cakra*. See: D. SenSharma, *An Introduction to the Advaita Śaiva Philosophy of Kashmir*, Varanasi 2009, p. 141.

¹⁷ T.N. Ganapathy, *The Yoga of Tirumandiram*, [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular. Essays on the Tirumandiram*, T.N. Ganapathy, K.R. Arumugam, G. Anand (eds.), Quebec 2006, p. 204. *Agni-maṇḍala* is connected with *tamas* and comprises *mūlādhāra* and *svādhiṣṭhāna cakras*. See: A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power being the Shat-Chakra-Nirūpana and Pādūkā-Panchakā*, Madras 1950, p. 248.

¹⁸ “When the sex-energy (*śukla*) is directed below in this body-space it is dark. When the *śukla*-energy is sublimated above the throat, it stands for *amṛta* and it illuminates the body-space above the throat” (T.N. Ganapathy, *The Yoga of Tirumandiram...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–215).

¹⁹ *aruḷāṇū sakalatum ākunna bhūtam aruḷāṇū carācaramākunna ammalavum / iruḷāyū veḷiyāyū eṇṇum niṇāṇa iṣan aruḷāya jagalaṅ allātārumalla* (“[His] Grace is the all of forms of *Māya*; Grace is what is movable and immovable – the impurity [of *Māya*]; as both Darkness and Brightness – Lord exists everywhere – it is nothing but His own deceptive delusion (or: intoxicating drink) being Grace” – C.K.G. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 549). Comp. also TM 9 2952: *iruḷum veḷiyumām raṅṅatam māṛripporuḷil poruḷāyū pporunni aruḷil aḷiññattan aṭiyinkal uruḷāta, kalmanam urṛirunnallō* (“Having transformed both darkness and brightness, having harmonized oneself as substance within the Substance, after becoming loosened thanks to the Grace, I remained with the unrolling stone-fixed mind settled with affection thanks to the Lord’s feet” – *ibidem*, p. 911).

identical with the Void devouring the dark falseness, whereas the former can be identified with impure *Māya* connecting the individual being with the world of matter.²⁰

The *Purāṇic* version of the concept of one Śakti operating on the lower and the higher levels (*Parā-Aparā Śakti*) presents Pārvatī addressed by Śiva as Kālī, the “black goddess.” When Pārvatī came to take her bath in the Gaṅgā, a new goddess was born from the five sheaths of her body, called Kauśikī, while Pārvatī remained herself as Kālī.²¹ The Goddess performed *tapas* in order to change her colour and was blessed by Brahmā so that she would become golden in colour and obtain the love of Śiva in the form of Ardhanārīśvara.²² Two aspects of the Goddess are mentioned here: the dark form (*Māyā Śakti*), which becomes an obstacle to associating with Śiva, and the golden, bright form (*Cit Śakti*), obtained by means of *tapas*, which leads to the inseparable union of Śiva and Śakti.

The metaphor of the jewel placed or hidden within the crown at the top of the head can be also found in *Tirumandiram*: it is Śivaṅ Himself, called a brilliant gem or a dancing ruby (TM 7 1843).²³ Moreover, Tirumūlar describes in TM 1 272 the attainment of such a priceless or golden gem (*ponmaṇi*) in the process of self-sacrifice, which is Kuṇḍalinī Yoga practice; the kindling of golden fire in *mūlādhāra* results in reaching the Lord’s feet.²⁴ Thus the expression *aṭum ceṟumaṇi* (a small dancing gem) may be referring to Śivan Himself, who is transcendent as well as immanent, as stated in TM 9 2689, mentioning the triple light of *jīva*, Śakti and Śiva and differentiating between the supreme light of the Lord which removes the darkness (of

²⁰ TM 8 2455: *cemmū atām paśu tan svētam tiriyunna pōl ammeyū pparattōṭu aṇu uḷḷilāyū / poymmayām jagam uṇṭabōdha veṟumpālāyū cemmśivamēru cērkoṭiyākumē* (“Just like whiteness [of *Paśu*] which stands in the front of redness [of its essential nature] turns [to be red], also the Heart of limited [with *āṇava malam*] being in contact with *Param* – that is the Truth [turns to be that Truth]; within the empty Void of consciousness which consumed the world which is dark falseness, united (or impure) creeper makes yokes with the Reddish Śiva Mēru [or: Blazing Flame of Śivam]” (*ibidem*, pp. 751–752). The whiteness of *Paśu* symbolizes the shining or manifestation process (*śveta; śvit*), whereas the redness or blazing colour of *Param* / Śiva Mēru / Śivam Flame – the opposite process of being burnt in the flame of consciousness. Two spheres can be referred to here: the sphere of Mēru and the sphere of *Śivam* – *pōdam* – pure consciousness (*Parāparam*). (*Parāparam* – the stage of empty space beyond *sahasrāra*). [*Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*] has been imagined as creeper that can be both impure – as connected with darkness of the world – or united with *Śiva[m]* – as the Higher Śakti (*cērkoṭi*).

²¹ P. Kumar, *Śaktism in India (With Special Reference to the Purāṇic Literature)*, New Delhi 2012, p. 52. The story has been included in *Devī Māhātmya* 5.83–88. Cf. H. Urbańska, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

²² V.S. Agrawal, *Matsya Purāṇa. A Study*, Varanasi 1963, p. 245.

²³ *Cānakantannil aḷuntiya māṇikyam kāṇumāruḷḷoru karuttariyillārumē / pēṇipperukki pperukki ninacciṭuvōrkkavan māṇikyamāyū manassiṅkal miḷirvōn* (“The ruby that remains immersed within [the body of] span-measure; nobody knows its power until it becomes discovered; to those who comprehend it with worship and constant making perfect, He enters the heart as the garland of ruby jewels” – C.K.G. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 560).

²⁴ *Elline viṟakākki iracci aṟattittū ponnennapōl kanalinkaliṭṭu kācci urukkiyālum / anpatāl urukkiyē ankam aḷiyuvōrkkallā empōl en maṇiyanekkāṇa kaṇ kaniyillahō* (“Having turned bones into firewood, having chopped the flesh, melt and boil it putting into the blazing golden heat; but unless your sin becomes melted and dissolved through Lord’s love, you will not unite with Precious Lord – Golden Gem” – *ibidem*, p. 108).

jīva) while holding the poison at His throat and transforming it into nectar (*amṛta*),²⁵ the light of Śakti being His grace and the inner light (of *jīva*) itself – all being one at the end of the day.²⁶ The Lord is a delightful, precious coral-gem, and He remains with the *yogi* as a brilliant gem, *oḷi pavaḷa* (brilliant coral), after dispelling the thick darkness, *kār-iruḷ* (TM 9 2695).²⁷

In stanza 3 871 Tirumūlar introduces the concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* on the basis of the ancient myth of the Snake (*pāmbu*) devouring the Moon, which can be referred to the *Candra Yoga* system (see below). One may have the impression the Serpent is in eternal enmity with the Moon; however the Lord is the one who unites everything into one.²⁸

With the help of the Tamil stanzas mentioned above we can reinterpret stanza 31 of *Śiva Śatakam*. Now, the black snake (*kāḷanāgam*) represents *Kuṇḍalinī* at Her lower level which seems to be opposed (*cennu ceṟuttu*) to the small gem (*ceṟumaṇi*) symbolizing Śivan Himself. Nārāyaṇan, just like Tirumūlar, introduces the concept of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* with the help of ancient belief; however, he selects the myth which perfectly presents the seeming duality of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* and Śivan Himself: as soon as *Kuṇḍalinī* makes the gem to be placed in the crown of the head (within her own spread hood), she disappears forever. The last phrase means the *Kuṇḍalinī* ascends to the top of the head, where She unites with Śivan – the gem, so as [She] is concealed forever. As a result of reaching *sahasrāra*, *Śakti Tattva* becomes absorbed in *Śiva Tattva*. As soon as the latter becomes rejected, the *yogi* attains liberation of *nirvikalpa* state. Such a situation has been described by Guru in the subsequent stanza: the self-sacrifice results in rejecting in turn *Nāda*, *Śakti* and *Śiva Tattvas*. According to Tamil tradition, this process (beyond *sahasrāra*) comprises the sphere of *turīyātīta*: *Para Śivaṅ-Parai* (*Parā Śakti*) and above, within which one finally attains the state of

²⁵ “The region of space, represented by *ājñā* and *sahasrāra* (which symbolizes the transcendental space – *Para Vēḷi*) alone is conductive for Yoga. To mark the boundary line, the throat of the Lord was blackened” (K.R. Arumugam, *Śaivism as Conceived in the Tirumandiram*, [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular. Essays on the Tirumandiram*, T.N. Ganapathy, K.R. Arumugam, G. Anand (eds.), Quebec 2006, pp. 130–132).

²⁶ *Ilaṅkuka evvoḷi avvoḷi īsan oḷi, tuyaṅṅoḷi tuyilārnna pōlatū aruḷoḷi, śakti, viḷaṅṅoḷi mūnnāyū viriḷuṭar jyōtiyāyū uḷaṅṅoḷiyuḷḷil oruṅṅi ninnōn* (“The light which shines is the light of *Īsan*, the light which glitters is the swaying *Aruḷ Śakti*; the light which shines forth – these three appear to be the expanded Effulgence – He remains within, having united them as the innermost light” – C.K.G. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 828). The Effulgence can comprise three lights: the shining light of *Īsan*, the dazzling light of His Grace (as it appears and disappears) as well as the light of Manifestation (*Tirōdhāna*), which conceals the essential nature (those three are united within each *jīvaṅ*).

²⁷ *Oḷi pavilattirumēni veṅṅiṅṅan aḷi pavilaccembon āḍipurān / kaḷi pavilamatām kāriruḷ nīkki oḷi pavilamāyū en īsanāyū ninnavan* (“The divine form is bright and coral-red, He is covered with silvery ashes; the Primordial Lord is gracious cool honey-love, coral-red and golden of hue; having separated the pitch darkness, while being intoxicating, delightful red-coral, He remained united within me as the Lord that is the bright coral” – *ibidem*, p. 831).

²⁸ *Pāmbu matiyettinumāru eḷum pāmbatū tīṅkatir tanneyum cyōticcu anal uṟum / pāmbum matiyum paka pōkki uṭanpeṭum nēram tēmbal pōkkiyē taṅṅinilkkum jaṭāḍharan* (“The Serpent devours the Moon / Mind; the Fire, having heated the Snake, devours with its heat the Sun-rays also; the revengeful attitude of the Snake and the Moon becomes annihilated by Master, the one who is the tip and the end of separation, the tall and excellent One” – *ibidem*, p. 281).

Parāparam – Pure Consciousness, deprived of any aspect of *Param*, where *Kuṇḍalinī* becomes totally absorbed in the ultimate reality in order to disappear forever.

The dancing snake spreading its hood [over a yogi's head] can represent unstable senses, *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* rising in order to be united with the [dancing] Lord as well as the ultimate result: the union of Śiva-Śakti crowned with self-realization.²⁹ In TM 6 1621 one can find an image of the snake which can symbolize *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*: its abode (an anthill or a hole) is the body (or *mūlādhāra cakra*); its five hoods stand for the senses bringing enjoyment of phenomena, and the union of these five – for the liberation crowned with entry into Space (*iḍam*). Such a snake is depicted as twain-bodied, which can be interpreted as the entity comprising two aspects: the lower or dark one and the bright or higher one.³⁰ Thus Śakti, being grace (*aruḷ*) inseparable from Śiva (as there is no Śiva without grace and no grace without Śiva), operates at two levels: the lower one (*Aparā Śakti*) becomes an obstacle in the process of liberation, whereas the higher one (*Parā Śakti*) brings liberation. Such symbolism of the snake which is to be restrained and controlled in order to obtain the gem hidden within [its body], can be traced in Sanskrit texts as well, namely in *Vivekacūḍamaṇi* 302 by *Śaṅkarācārya*.³¹

²⁹ The *sahasrāra* lotus is described as standing with its face downwards; it lies in the Void region where there are no *nāḍīs*, resembling an umbrella spreading over a *yogi*'s head. See: Sh.S. Goswami, *Layayoga: The Definite Guide to the Chakras and Kundalini*, Vermont 1999, pp. 266–267. The same idea is expressed in ŚŚ 99: *amaravāhinipoñṇivarum tiraykkamaramennakaṇakku paṭaṇṇaḷum samarasattil viriccaravañṇaḷōṭamarum acciṭayāṭiṭiyakkaṇam // 99 //* (“Please approach me while dancing, You – adorned with matted hair, surrounded by snakes, spreading up their hoods harmoniously like a stern of a ship [moving towards/against] waves lifted up by the river bringing immortality”).

³⁰ *Nāgam onnū phaṇam aṅcū, nālatil bhōgam, purriṅkal patuñṇi irikkum / āmgam rañṭil phaṇam viriccāṭṭam oḷiñṇū ēka phaṇam koṇṭōrāmgamāyū ccamañṇiṭum* (“One snake, five hoods, the four enjoyments; having adapted within the white anthill (or: snake's hole), remains [there]; the twain (coupled) body (heart); having brought to an end the dance of its spread hoods, [the snake] made them [united into] one – as the space [beyond] the [such] body it remains now” – C.K.G. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, p. 493). According to T.N. Ganapathy, the snake refers to the soul with its body – *jīva*. See: T.N. Ganapathy, *The Twilight Language...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311–312.

³¹ *Brahmānandanidhir mahābalavatā 'haṃkāraghorāhinā saṃveṣṭyātmani rakṣyate guṇamaya-iścaṇḍais tribhirmastakaiḥ vijñānākhyamahāsinā śrutimatā vicchidya śīrṣatrayaṃ nirmūlyāhim imaṃ nidhiṃ sukhakaram dhīro 'mubhoktuṃ kṣamaḥ //302//* (“The jewel of bliss being *Brahman* is slept around by the terrible and mighty serpent of egoism and protected for its own sake with his three fierce heads [made] of *guṇas*. Having cut off these three heads by the great sword of discrimination, that is prescribed in the scriptures, having rooted the serpent out one can get possession of the gem which confers bliss. Only the steady person is able to take possession of it”). The snake symbolizes egoism (*ahaṃkāra*), while its three heads denote *guṇas*. Moreover, Śaṅkara emphasizes the obstacles and difficulties one must face while uprooting it. It can correspond with the phrase *cennu ceṛuttu* “having approached and opposed.” The correlation between the jewel of bliss and the snake is defined with verb *saṃ-viś* – “to sleep, lie down to rest,” which brings to mind the concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* sleeping in *mūlādhāra cakra*.

Elements of Candra Yoga in Śiva Śatakam

The last stanza of *Śiva Śatakam*, mentioning *kuḷir-mati* – “the cool moon or the cool mind”³² reflects the concept of Candra Yoga which describes experiences occurring in the higher region of the body. *Kuṇḍalinī* acquires different names in its passage from *mūlādhāra* to *sahasrāra*. *Kuṇḍalinī* extending from *mūlādhāra* to *anāhata* is called Agni or Fire *Kuṇḍalinī*; from *anāhata* to *ājñā* – *Sūrya* or Sun *Kuṇḍalinī*. Moon *Kuṇḍalinī* (*candra-maṇḍala*) represents the higher stage of Śakti extending from *ājñā cakra* to the top of the head.³³ The head and the space around the head are known as the moon region.³⁴ Candra Yoga has been depicted in Tirumandiram as follows: when Prāṇa with *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti* reach the moon region at the *ājñā cakra*, one assimilates the moon’s lustre and its coolness. A bright light shines in the eyebrow centre and the whole front of the forehead becomes illuminated. Blending with the sixteen *kalās* or the digits of the moon, the seeker is said to become the Moon itself (TM 3 685)³⁵. Tirumūlar also mentions the Milk – the immortality nectar of the Moon (*Cōman*) that is to be obtained after breath control and ascent of the heat (of *Kuṇḍalinī* awakened in *mūlādhāra*); however, people prefer to become intoxicated with the liquor of delusion, which requires punishment of the King (or the Moon – *vēndaṇ*) (TM 1 246).³⁶ Stanzas 82 and 83 of ŚŚ depict *Sōman* (i.e. the Moon) identical to the mind:

kumudini tanniludiccu kālūvīśissumaśarasārathiyāya sōmaninum /
kimapikarañṇaḷ kuṛaṅṇu kālūmūnittamasi layiccu tapassu ceytiṭunnu // 82 //
Sōman, the charioteer of the One who has flowers for his arrows,
 Having risen in the water-lily pond, its feet / digits waved with motion,
 Having remained with its hands / rays somehow weakened,
 Having fixed firmly its foot / digit within darkness,
 Having dissolved in there – it keeps practicing the heat of penance.
kalamuḷuvan tikayum poḷutāyū varum vilayamitenakatāril ninaykkayō? /
alarśaramūla virōdhiyatāya nintalayilirunnu tapikkarutinniyum // 83 //
 Do You remember in Your tender mind,
 That final dissolution comes at the time,

³² *kuḷirmatikoṇṭu kuḷirttu lōkamellām oḷitiraḷunnoruveṇṇilāvupoṇṇi teḷeteḷe vīśivīḷaṇṇi dēvalōkak-kuḷamatil āmbalvirīṇṇukāṇaṇam mē // 100 //* (“Through the cool mind / moon the whole world became [the reservoir of] bliss (or coolness); as soon as the silvery moon-light which sheds its brightness fully ascended to wave with its sparkling luminosity – in that pool being the heavenly world – let me see the water-lily in bloom”).

³³ T.N. Ganapathy, *The Yoga of Tirumandiram...*, op. cit., pp. 204–205.

³⁴ Comp. the whole section of TM 3 (851–883) devoted to Candra Yoga.

³⁵ *Ākunna candra oḷiyāvōṇ ākunna candra taṭpamatāvōṇ ākunna candrakkalayatum cērūkil ākunna candranum avantanneyām* (“The one who is like the lustre of the rising Moon, the one who is the coolness of the rising Moon – if he conjoins the [all] digits of the rising Moon, he becomes the rising Moon itself” – C.K.G. Nāyar, op. cit., p. 229). The dissolution of the sixteen digits of the moon (*kalās*) means the final absorption of sixteen aspects of the Moon into one in the moon-sphere of *sahasrāra* and beyond.

³⁶ *Kālkoṇṭu keṭṭi kanal koṇṭu mēlēṛri ppāl koṇṭu sōman mukham parrī unṇāte / māḷ koṇṭu madhu unṇu maruḷunnōre kōḷ koṇṭu daṇḍam ceyyuka daṇḍanūṭiyē* (“Having become firmed with the breath, having ascended above with the Heat, having grasped the top of the milk-filled *Cōman* (the Moon) – they do not eat it, [instead], they become intoxicated with the liquor of delusion; the duty of the King (or: the Moon) is to make punishment with that which is above and superior (Mal. with the staff)” – *ibidem*, p. 101).

When perfection of digits is completed?

O, may the one fixed on Your head not get heated up / burnt again

O You, being the inborn enemy of the one, who uses flowers as his arrows!

Taking into consideration the philosophical context of these stanzas, we can conclude that the similarity between these two objects, the moon and the mind, has been suggested not only through the qualifications of both, but also by means of *śleṣa*: the ascension above the water lily pond symbolizes the activation of *Kuṇḍalini* fire in *mūlādhāra cakra*, in accordance with twilight language of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta, *Tirumandiram*, whereas the dark pond means *mūlādhāra cakra* or *svādhiṣṭhāna*. The compound *sumaśara-sārathi* can define both *Sōman*, who is the charioteer of *Kāman*, or the mind, which is the charioteer of the body adhering to *kāman*, i.e. desire. The term *kara* means either ray or palm (hand), so it can symbolize the weakening of the control of the mind, which holds the reins of the chariot of the senses. The darkness (*tamassū*) denotes ignorance (delusion), so fixing the foot and immersing in the darkness may symbolize the state of being rooted in ignorance or basic defilement (*āṇava mala*). According to Nāyar and Gītāsūrāj,³⁷ *Sōman* symbolizes the mind (*manassū*), which being bound up with attachment has lost its power and remains immersed in primeval ignorance; still it makes the effort to kindle the heat of penance (*tapassū*) in order to raise *Kuṇḍalini*.

The latter stanza mentions the ultimate dissolution (*vilayam*) that comes as the moment of completion of all moon-digits into the perfect fullness. This absorption results in attainment of oneness; in such a way – as a result of annihilation of all the portions – the mind attains perfection or liberation. The phrase *kalamuḷuvan tikayum polutāyū varum vilayam* – “final dissolution comes at the time, when perfection of digits is completed” can refer to the Moon as well as to the mind which thanks to the yogic practice and penance becomes dissolved and united with the ultimate reality (in Candra Yoga the absorption of the sixteen portions, the digits of the moon, results in attaining of the fullness or perfection). The conclusion of both stanzas may be understood as a request to Śivan neither to reduce *Sōman* – a charioteer of *Kāman* – to the ashes, nor to heat up the mind as dependent on *kāman*, that is, desire. It becomes the equivalent of the Tamil statement that the Lord or King (the Moon) punishes those who continue to adhere to the liquor of darkness.³⁸

The *Sōman* (the mind) stuck with one foot in the darkness can also represent the crescent in Śivan’s matted dark hair. In ŚŚ 11 Guru mentions the moonlight sprouting toward the fresh coral mountain that illuminates the water-lily,³⁹ which could symbolise the *amṛta*-flow, identical with *amā-kalā* or *nirvāṇa-kalā* (the last sixteenth digit or additional seventeenth digit) in Laya Yoga – released within the moon region

³⁷ Gītāsūrāj, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84; B. Nāyar, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–270.

³⁸ Comp. *Navamañjarī* (“A Bouquet of Nine Verses”) by Guru, stanza 2: *rāpāyil viṇuḷarumā-pāpamīyaruti-rāpāyipōle manamē* (“May this sin – the trouble of falling down into drinking at night-time – not happen [to you], of mind similar to the drunkard in the darkness [of ignorance]”).

³⁹ *Kuvalayamokke viḷaṇṇiṭṭunna puttān paviḷamalaykku muḷacceḷumnilāvū*.

toward the heat of *ājñā*, *sahasrāra cakra* and beyond.⁴⁰ In *Subrahmaṇya Stōtram* or *Kīrttanam* (“Hymn in Praise of Subrahmaṇyan”) by Guru the same idea of the crescent evokes the concept of the Moon-*Kuṇḍalinī* which is to be absorbed at the end of the day with its last digit within Bright Space [above *sahasrāra*]:

*antippūntiṅkaḷ unti tīrumuṭi tirukiccūtiyāṭum phaṇattin
cantam cintum nilāvinnolivelīyil viyadgamga poṇṇikkaviñṇum
cantacentimilicceṅkatir nira coriyiccandhakārānakarri-
ccintāsantānamē nintiruvaṭiyaṭiyan saṅkaṭam pōkkiṭēṇam //1//*
Heavenly Gaṅga rises and overflows
In the open space filled with the brightness of the moon-light
That spreads the elegance of the hood of a dancing snake
Which – having crowned [Your head] – screws while pushed into [Your] matted hair
[With its tail] – the twilight tender crescent;
[That] Charming Eye of Blazing Fire – having removed all darkness
After scattering sheets of red rays – [is You],
O Wish-Yielding Tree⁴¹ / Offspring of Thought;
Your holy feet should reduce the grief of Your humble servant.

In accordance with Tamil tradition, the sphere of absorption comprises the region of *ājñā* and beyond; the crescent becomes identified with the Tender Sprout (*koḷuntū* or *koḷunnū*) of the mind squeezed into nectar.⁴² Just like Tirumūlar, Guru depicts the whole picture with a trinity of colors: blackness (*āṇava malam*), whiteness (the pure aspect of *jīvan*; the brightness of Space) and redness (the top of *suṣumnā* represented by Mēru Mountain associated with *ājñā cakram*; the heat of penance and the liberation process; Śivan Himself / Śivam Itself).⁴³

⁴⁰ *Amā-kalā* is said to be placed in the moon sphere within the triangle symbolizing Kailāsa placed within *sahasrāra* (or beyond), and described as “as thin as the hundredth part of the lotus-fibre,” lustrous, in a shape like the crescent moon turned downward discharging a stream of nectar. In the lap of this *kalā* is the *nīrvāṇa-kalā*, more subtle and also turned downward, bestowing divine knowledge. See: A. Avalon, *op. cit.*, pp. 446–449; 457–458. Cf. TM 3 589 which depicts the heavenly waters crowning the top of the mountain; the joint of the bows (eye-brows) is mentioned at the same time. With the end of *suṣumnā nāḍī*, as soon as the *ājñā cakra* becomes opened, one experiences the bliss flowing in streams of heavenly *amṛta*. Meru stands for the central *nāḍī* in TM 3 672. In the *ājñā cakra* are the ends of *idā* and *pingalā* which form a junction with the *suṣumnā* channel – the red region in the centre of that *cakra* (Sh.S. Goswami, *op. cit.*, p. 239). The *amṛta*-flow can be also associated with Kailāsa Mountain, symbolizing *sahasrāra* and the Space beyond (TM 3 815).

⁴¹ *Kalpavṛkṣam* (T. Bhāskaran, *op. cit.*, p. 92).

⁴² *Ṣaṇmukha Daśakam 1: jñānacentīyeḷuppitteḷuteḷe vilasum cillivallikkoṭtikkuḷ maunappūntiṅkaḷ uḷḷūṭurukum amṛtoḷukkuṭtirunnū uḷḷaliñṇum ṇānum nīyum ṇerukkakkalaruvatin aruḷ tṇamayām ninnaṭittārttēnūḷttikunna muttukkuṭa aṭiyanaṭakkīṭum accil kkoḷuntē //1//* (“The heart of the creeper of the eyebrow bows shining brilliantly with the blazing fire of wisdom awakened, having melted what remains within into the flow of the *amṛtū* softening as the inner essence of tender crescent that is silence itself – for squeezing and uniting me and You [like that], do bring under control to / of [Your] humble servant the pearly pot showering inside the honey of the flower of Your feet that is grace and truth or sameness (or: the best quality of grace), o Tender Sprout [*koḷuntū*] [rising] within [Primeval] Mould!”). The Tamil term *koḷundu* appears among others in TM 7 1769 and 3 815 in the context of transcendent Space, substantial firmness and silver – silvery spring (*veḷḷi*), according to Venkataraman associated with *ājñā cakra*.

⁴³ Cf. footnote 20; 41.

Conclusion

The concept of *Kuṇḍalinī* appears in other works by Nārāyaṇa Guru as well, such as *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam (One Hundred Stanzas of Self-Instruction)* or *Svānubhava Gīti (Lyric of Ecstatic Self-Experience)*. Not only has the *Kuṇḍalinī* idea been adopted from Tamil tradition, Nārāyaṇan seems to apply the very same style of presentation of yogic experiences to his works, using the metaphorical-twilight language which excludes the possibility of univocal interpretation. Such presentation has been presented by both Nārāyaṇa Guru and Tirumūlar as an inseparable part of a syncretic formation which comprises different aspects of yoga.

The wide diversity of opinions given by commentators as well as the comparative analysis presented above of selected concepts included in the Śaiva texts shows clearly that the construction of the stanzas being interpreted, which are written in the extremely elusive style characteristic of a mystic composition, remains a formation that is polysemantic in nature, multivalence and capacity in order to express at the same time a number of meanings both at the level of ordinary experience and at the level of transcendence.

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