

Publisher's Address
January 17, 2010

Vannekom and welcome to you, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, scholars and everyone present today on this auspicious occasion. Many of you are probably wondering "Why has a Canadian based publisher and charity, "Babaji's Kriya Yoga," invested so much effort and resources into a new translation of the *Tirumandiram*? There is both a short answer and a long answer. The short answer is that it needed to be done. The long answer requires that I relate to you some of my personal history.

That history goes back over 40 years, when as a student in my senior year at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington, D.C. in 1969, I began attending classes with Yogi S.A.A. Ramaiah, and who spoke of "Tamil Kriya Yoga Siddhantam," and the teachings of Tirumular, Boganathar and his own Tamil Siddha guru Babaji Nagaraj. In every class he would have us sing a verse from one of their poems, and taught us how to meditate on them to discover their esoteric meaning. He would share his insights about these verses with us.

The following year I made a formal dedication of my life to the mission of our guru, Kriya Babaji Nagaraj, joined Yogi Ramaiah's new ashram in California, and began an 18 year long period of intensive yogic sadhana. Beginning in 1972 I made several year long visits to Yogi Ramaiah's ashrams in Tamil Nadu, where I became more familiar with the writings of the Siddhas including those of Tirumular. In 1979 I met with Dr. B. Natarajan, at his residence here on Harrington Road, who gave to me a copy of the first tandiram of the *Tirumandiram*, which he had translated into English. I eagerly looked forward to reading the other eight tandirams, but when I returned in 1986, and again visited his home, I was dismayed to learn that Dr. Natarajan had died a few years earlier, and that the remaining tandirams had not been published. In 1990, when I returned to Chennai again, I made an offer to Dr. Natarajan's heirs to publish the remaining tandirams, but as they requested a huge amount of money far beyond my means, I could only send them periodic reminders that this work needed to be published for the benefit of English speaking readers. Finally in 1992, I learned that Dr. N. Mahalingam had obtained permission to publish the manuscript and had given the same to the Ramakrishna Mission in Mylapore with the funds required to print a first edition. After obtaining a copy, I realized that in it was not going to meet the needs of most English readers particularly in the West. So I obtained permission to publish it from the Ramakrishna Mission and printed a new international edition in 1993 in Canada, with special introductory chapters for the non-Indian reader, an index, and an attractive 3 volume boxed format, totaling over 800 pages. Since that time, we have reprinted it five times, both in Canada and India.

Since that time, I have also received some critical comments about the translation. These included:

- it had too many of the words which were not translated, as if the translator became fatigued, or could not find adequate English expressions;

- secondly, that in many places the translation was not accurate.
- Thirdly, lacking a verse by verse commentary, much of the work was not comprehensible to most Western readers, particularly when references were made to unfamiliar Indian philosophical or theological concepts.

In the year 2000, I started a project which became known as the Yoga Siddha Research Project with my friend and colleague, Dr. Georg Feuerstein. The objectives of this project included the following: to collect, preserve in electronic format, transcribe into modern Tamil, translate and publish the manuscripts attributed to the 18 Siddhas which are related to the subject of Yoga. Since that time, under the directorship of Dr. T.N. Ganapathy we have largely achieved our original objectives. Several hundred manuscripts were found, copied onto CD Roms, and transcribed into modern Tamil. We have published six books containing translation and commentary on some of the best works we have found, including an Anthology of the poems of all 18 Siddhas, as well as separate volumes on Boganathar, Avvai and Tirumular, all with extensive commentary.

Today, we are gathered to celebrate the release of the latest and greatest of the Yoga Siddha's works: a new English translation, with verse by verse commentary of the Yoga Siddha Tirumular's *Tirumandiram*. I am grateful to all of the scholars who have contributed to this new edition, including Sri T.V. Venatkaraman, Dr. T.N. Ramachandran, Dr. KR Arumugam, Dr. P.S. Somasunderam, Dr. S.N. Kandaswamy, Dr. B. Ramesh Babu, Dr. T.B. Siddhalingaiah, and the general editor, Dr. T. N. Ganapathy who oversaw the entire project. I am especially grateful to Dr. N. Mahalingam who not only rescued the first English edition by Dr. B. Natarajan, nearly 20 years ago, but who also came to our rescue, with a very generous offer to print 2,500 copies, when we were planning to publish this new massive ten volume edition in the form of an electronic book, and to print only 50 copies. I also want to express my great appreciation to the editor, Durga Ahlund, who was able to enrich the commentary with her experience of Yoga; to the copyeditor Krishna Brod who polished the English and made it easier to read, and to the graphics specialists Vinod and Lata Kumar, who transformed this massive work into ten volumes.

As we are also celebrating the release of two other publications, also written by the Tamil Yoga Siddhas, I would also like to express publicly my gratitude to Dr. T.N. Pranatharthiharan, who translated the *Voice of Babaji: Trilogy on Kriya Yoga* from English to Tamil, and to Dr. Prema Nandakumar, who translated the *Kriya Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Siddhas* from English to Tamil. I am also grateful to the heirs of V.T. Neelakatan, especially N. Suryanarayanan, for giving us permission to publish the *Trilogy*. When Kriya Babaji dictated this book to his father in 1952, he asked that it be published in Tamil. That request by our guru is finally being fulfilled today. We believe that these new Tamil language editions will inspire many to apply the wisdom and technology of Yoga Siddhantham.

We believe that this new edition of the *Tirumandiram* will serve a long standing need, which I first saw, forty years ago, to make the teachings of the Yoga Siddha's accessible to the English speaking readers all over the world. I would like to thank all of the donors who have contributed to the Yoga Siddha Research Project during the past 10 years. In particular, the Yoga Research and Education Center, and its founder, Dr. Feuerstein, and successor-President, Dr. Scott Anderson, M.D. who have donated substantially to it every year since 2000. It has truly been a labor of love by all concerned.

What is it that inspires us to publish the *Tirumandiram*? Put simply, this great work inspires us to realize our greatest potential as human beings. As humans we have the unique ability, unlike any other species, to not only conceive of perfection, but to notice our own imperfections. Furthermore we have the imagination and the power to devise means and apply these means to transforming ourselves perfectly. The word Siddha refers to one who has become perfected through the scientific art of Yoga. The author of the *Tirumandiram*, Tirumular, is a Siddha, who laughs at the limitations of ordinary human nature: the malas or stains: ignorance of our true identity, egoism, delusion and our collected habits, our past karma. And he speaks to us not in some dry, philosophical tone, but in the first person, with the joy and inspiration of one whose deepest aspirations for the Divine have been fulfilled by the Beloved. He also instructs us in the myriad ways in which humanity loses itself, how through the practice of yogic sadhana, one can not only find the Truth, but surrendering to it, become transformed, physically, vitally, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. His words are as relevant to us today as they were two thousand years ago, because our human nature has not changed. The *Tirumandiram* is therefore a pathway to God realization and to perfecting the potential of human nature.

The *Tirumandiram* is not an easy work to read. It is very dense, filled with expressions which have layers of meaning, often purposefully obscure. Because of the depth and breadth of its subject matter, which is often esoteric in nature, one must approach it informed by the rich tapestry of Indian philosophy, theology and culture. Yogi Ramaiah often said that only interdisciplinary team of scholars, yogis and linguists could begin to translate and comment on the literary works of the Siddhas. Those who have contributed to this edition are such a team, but we all bow our heads in admission that we have only made a beginning.

Today, for the first time in human history, anyone in the world can gain access to the literature of any religion or spiritual tradition through the internet. This power to explore is however only fruitful when what is found is applied to one's life. The culture which gave birth to the *Tirumandiram* is a unique, living culture. But it is also threatened by indifference and the distractions of modernity. The wisdom teachings of the *Tirumandiram* are our greatest inheritance, born of hundreds of generations of yogis who since ancient times have sought perfection. If the purpose of human knowledge is to alleviate human suffering, that knowledge which eliminates human suffering completely is the greatest of knowledge. Therefore, as the present stewards of this great knowledge, in this period of human history, it is our duty not only to preserve and to make accessible such wisdom, but to apply it individually and collectively. I would like to encourage everyone to study the *Tirumandiram* and to apply its teachings to the problems of human

nature, in psychology, politics, economics, ethics, health, theology, and indeed all areas of human purpose.

We live during a period of history where our very existence is threatened by environmental degradation, born of a culture that puts material comfort and individual possession of property above every other concern. The clock is ticking. It may already be too late to reverse the slide of global warming. Each of us must decide how can we stop being a source of the problem, and contribute to its solution. I believe that individually and collectively we must simplify our material lives, and replace material values and pursuit with spiritual ones. The *Tirumandiram* provides excellent guidance for this. May we all find the will and the intelligence to do so.

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