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 Pāṭṭŭ (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 (suṣumnā). 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 Śiddha 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 Pāṭṭŭ (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: ŠŚ) – 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 Gītāsurāj.

**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 (susumnā) 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 Taikkāṭṭŭ 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 pāmbŭ), mentioned by Guru in another poem, Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭŭ (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 Śiddha 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 Pāṭṭŭ (T.B. Nair, Jīhanakkatal (Malayalam Metrical Version of Jnanakkovai, in Tamil), Trivandrum 1974, pp. 48–65). Cf. T.B. Siddhalingaiah, 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. Urbanska, The Twilight Language of Svāmabhava Gīti by Nārāyaṇa Guru – Analysis of Selected Stanzas in the Light of Tirumantiram and Other Tamil Literary Sources, “Studia Religiologica” 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):

> paṟavakal pattumarguttu párrinilkêum kuṟikalojiccu karuttaṭakkiyāṭum
> ceṟumaṇi cênu ceguttu kāḷanāgam neṟukayिलăkkiojicçuṭum nîtyam // 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 Gītāsurāj) 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 (ceṟumaṇi) as the edge or extremity (aṟṟam) 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 Kuṇḍalini’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 Kuṇḍalini reaches the lotus sahasrāram located on the top of the head. With that, as the realization of

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⁶ pattindriyaṅṅaléyum kīḻaṭakki – “having controlled ten senses” (B. Nāyar, Śrīnārāyaṇa Gurudēva-kritkal. Sampūrṇa Vyākhyānam, Thiruvananthapuram 2010, p. 234). Cf. TM 7 2025: pulamańcu puḷḷańcu puḷḷŭ cennu mēyum nilamańcu nīrańcu nīrmañcu atići / kulamonnu kölkonju meỳppōnoruvan ulaminnu pōmvali 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 Avayute visayanāle puramtaḷli – “having rejected their objects [of senses]” (B. Nāyar, op. cit., p. 234).

⁸ In T. Bhāskaran’s edition: instead of nītyam – lōkam. olícicǐṭum lōkam – janam olícicarumnu ennō lōkam marayumnu ennō artham paṟayām – “one can say that man (inhabitant of this world) sheds light or the phenomenal world disappears” (T. Bhāskaran, Śrīnārāyaṇaguruvinge Sampūrṇakritkal, Kozhikode 2015, p. 207).

⁹ Kāḷasarpatteppōḷḷa kuṇḍalini – “Kuṇḍalini 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., kuṇḍalini = 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, Gitāsurāj interprets the black snake as Kuṇḍalinī Śakti; the small jewel denotes in this case the jīvātmā consciousness. What is important here is that the epithet āṭum (dancing) has been associated with the term ceṟumāni (i.e. jīvan’s unstable consciousness). The expression karuttaṭakki (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 jīvātmāvū 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 jīvātmāvū 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 prāṇāyāmam 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 Gitāsurāj 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, Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭŭ, depicting the Kuṇḍalinī as the dancing cobra that unites with the highest reality (Śiva).

According to Nāyar’s commentary, the black snake means Kuṇḍalinī 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 ceṟuttu in the context of the relationship between Kuṇḍalinī and ātmāvū and seems to interpret the term kāḷanāgam as the lower stage of Kuṇḍalinī 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, Kuṇḍalinī 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 Gitāsurāj, Śrīnārāyanagurudēvan. 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).” These two verb forms: cennu ceruttu could in such a case pertain to the black snake, not cakras (cennu – from celluka – “to approach, reach,” cennu means “having reached; approached;” ceruttu – from cerukkuka – “to oppose, confront, encounter,” ceruttu 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 or Agni (and Śūrya-) Kuṇḍalinī, preceded by stages of control constituting Āṣṭāṅga 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 Śivaṉ, 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). 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 (veli) as well as darkness (iruḷ), identical with Tirodhāna Śakti, the power of concealment (or basic defilement called āṇava mala). Tirumandiram refers to the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti in terms of the Power representing Darkness as well as Brightness; the latter brings union with Śivaṉ or Śivam

15 Pāmbinṟe nerukayile maṇi kāṇān kaḻiññālum kaikkalākkān pāmbutanne taṭassamāyittīrunnu (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 Kasmir 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 Saiva 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.), Québec 2006, p. 204. Agni-mandala is connected with tamas and comprises mūlādhāra and svādhiṣṭāna cakras. See: A. Avalon, The Serpent Power being the Shat-Chakra-Nirūpana and Pādukā-Panchakā, Madras 1950, p. 248.
18 “When the sex-energy (ṣukla) is directed below in this body-space it is dark. When the ṣukla-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 aruḷāṇŭ sakalatum ākunna bhūtam aruḷāṇŭ carācaramākunna ammalavum / iruḷāyŭ veḷiyāyŭ eṅṅum niṟaňňa īśan aruḷāya jagaḷan 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 raṇṭatum māṟṟipporuḷil poruḷāyŭ pporunni aruḷil aḻiññattan aṭiyinkal uruḷāta, kalmanam uṟṟirunnallō ("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.\textsuperscript{20} The Purānic 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Śivaṉ Himself, called a brilliant gem or a dancing ruby (TM 7 1843).\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, Tirumūlar describes in TM 1 272 the attainment of such a priceless or golden gem (poṉmaṇi) 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.\textsuperscript{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

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\item[20] TM 8 2455: cemmū atām paśu tan svētam tiriyunna pōl amneyū pparattōṭu aṇu uḷḷilāyū / poymmayām jagam unṭabōdha veṟumāḷači cemmūvāmēru cērkoṭyākumē (“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).
\item[21] P. Kumar, Śaktism in India (With Special Reference to the Purānic Literature), New Delhi 2012, p. 52. The story has been included in Devī Māhātmya 5.83–88. Cf. H. Urbańska, op. cit., p. 121.
\item[22] V.S. Agrawal, Matsya Purāṇa. A Study, Varanasi 1963, p. 245.
\item[23] Cāṇakantannil aḻuntiya māṇikyam kāṇumāṟuḷḷoru karuttaṟiyillārumē / pēṇipperukki pperukki ninacciṭuvōrkkavan māṇikyamāyŭ manassīṅkal 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).
\item[24] Elline viṟakākki iṟacci aṟattīṭṭū ponnennapōl kanalinkaliṭṭu kācci urukkiyālum / anpatāl urukkiyē ankaṃ aḷiyuvōrkallā empōl en maniyanekkāna kan 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).
\end{footnotes}
jīva) while holding the poison at His throat and transforming it into nectar (amṛta),
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 ceruttu) to the small gem (cerumanī)
symbolizing Sivan 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 Śivaṉ-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 Veḷi) 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 īśan oḷi, tuyaṅṅoḷi tuyilārnna pōlatŭ aruḷoḷi, śakti, viḷaṅṅoḷi mūnnāyŭ
viricuṭar jyōtiyāyŭ uḷaṅṅoḷiyuḷḷil oruṅṅi ninnōn (“The light which shines is the light of
Īśaṉ, 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 Īśan, 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 jīva).
27 Oḷi paviḷatturumēni venuṟan ali paviḷaccembom ṣadipurān / kali paviḷamatām kāriruḷ nikki oḷi
paviḷamāyū en iṣānāyū 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 matiyettinnumēru eḻum pāmbatū tinaktip tanneyum cyōticcu anal uṟum / pāmbum matiyum
paka pōkki uṭanpeṭum nēram tēmbal pōkkiyē taininilikku majaṉēra (“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 liberation of these five – for the union of Śiva-Śakti 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: amaravāhinipoṅṅivarum tiraykkamamennakaṇku paṭaṅṅaḷum samarasattit viriccāватāḥ toṣamaraṃ accitayatiyaṭkaṇṇam // 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 onnŭ phaṇam ańcŭ, nālatil bhōgam, puṟṟiṅkal patuṅṅi irikkum / āmgam raṇṭil phaṇam viriccāṭṭam oḻińňŭ ēka phaṇam koṇṭōrāmgamāyŭ ccamańńiṭum (“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 Brahmānandaniḥ mahābalavatā ‘haṃkāraghorāhinā samvestyātmanī raksyate guṇamaya-śaṅcālaiḥ triḥhiramastakaiḥ vijñānākhyamahāsānā śrutimatā vicchidrayam ‘nīnāyātim imām nidhiṁ sukharakam dhīro ‘nubhoktum kṣamah //302// (“The jewel of bliss being Brahmā 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 (ahaṁkāra), 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 ceṟuttu “having approached and opposed.” The correlation between the jewel of bliss and the snake in defined with verb saṁ-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 Śatakan
d
The last stanza of Śiva Śatakan, 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 – Śurya 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.

Stanzas 82 and 83 of ŚŚ depict Sōman (i.e. the Moon) identical to the mind:

kumudini tannilikku kāluvīśissumaśarasārathiyāya sōmaninnum // 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.
kalamuḻuvan tikayum poḻutāyŭ varum vilayamitennakatāril ninaykkayō?/
alarkumalā virādhayāva nintalayililirunu tapikkarutinniyum // 83 //
Do You remember in Your tender mind,
That final dissolution comes at the time,

32 kuḷirmatikoṇṭu kuḷirttu lōkamellām oḷitiraḷunnoruveṇṇil āmbalviriṅṅukāṇaṇam 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 oḷiyāvōn ākunna candra taṭpamatāvōn ākunna candrakkalayatum cērukil ākunna candrannum 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 mēlēṟṟi ppāl koṇṭu sōman mukham paṟṟi uṇṇāte / māl koṇṭu madhu uṇṭu maruḷunnōre kōl koṇṭu daṇḍam ceyyuka daṇḍantīyē (“Having become firmed with the breath, having ascended above with the Heat, having grasped the top of the milk-filled Cōmaṉ (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 svādhiṣṭāna. 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 kāmam, 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 (tamassŭ) 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 Gitūśurāj, Sōman symbolizes the mind (manassŭ), 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 (tapassŭ) in order to raise Kuṇḍalinī.

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 kalamuḻuvan tikayum polutayŭ 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 kāmam, 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.

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, 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.

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37 Gitūśurāj, 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 vīṇaḻumāṃ-pāpamiyarut-rāpāyipōle manumē (“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 vijaṉīṭunna puttaṇ pavīḷamalaykku muṇacakēṭumilūvū.
toward the heat of ājñā, sahasrāra cakra and beyond.\textsuperscript{40} In Subrahmanya Stōtram or Kīrttanaṁ ("Hymn in Praise of Subrahmanya") by Guru the same idea of the crescent evokes the concept of the Moon-Kūndalinī which is to be absorbed at the end of the day with its last digit within Bright Space [above sahasrāra]:

\begin{align*}
\text{anti}^\text{ippān}^\text{tīṅkaḷ} & \text{un}^\text{ti} \text{tiru}^\text{rūṁti} \text{ti} \text{rū}^\text{rū}^\text{kāc}^\text{cā}^\text{kī}^\text{ṭ}^\text{a}^\text{lītum} \ \text{pha}^\text{ṭ}^\text{a}^\text{ṭ}^\text{ṭ}^\text{i}^\text{ṇ}^\text{ṭ}\text{ṭ}^\text{ṭ}^\text{ṭ} \\
cantam & \text{cintum} \ \text{nilā}^\text{vīn}^\text{no}^\text{līv}^\text{el}^\text{y}^\text{il} \ \text{vi}^\text{y}^\text{a}^\text{d}^\text{g}^\text{a}^\text{m}^\text{a}^\text{g}^\text{a} \ \text{po}^\text{nī}^\text{kkāvī}^\text{nī}^\text{ṇī}^\text{ṇī} \\
cantacentum & \text{milīc}^\text{c}^\text{cē}^\text{ṅ}^\text{kūt}^\text{ā}^\text{kā}^\text{t}^\text{i}^\text{r}^\text{ā} \ \text{ni}^\text{ra} \ \text{c}^\text{ō}^\text{r}^\text{i}^\text{y}^\text{e}^\text{c}^\text{d}^\text{h}^\text{a}^\text{k}^\text{ā}^\text{r}^\text{ā}^\text{r}^\text{ā}^\text{nā}^\text{kār}^\text{rī}^\text{c}^\text{c}^\text{nīr}^\text{s}^\text{a}^\text{ṃ}^\text{t}\text{ā}^\text{nā}^\text{m}^\text{ē} \ \text{nī}^\text{ntīr}^\text{u}^\text{v}^\text{a}^\text{ṭ}^\text{a}^\text{ṭ}^\text{i}^\text{ṭ}^\text{y}^\text{ā}^\text{i}^\text{ṇ}^\text{ī}^\text{yan}^\text{s}^\text{ā}^\text{k}^\text{ṇ}^\text{a}^\text{t}^\text{ā}^\text{m}^\text{ā} \ \text{sā}^\text{k}^\text{ṇ}^\text{a}^\text{ţ}^\text{a}^\text{m} \ \text{pō}^\text{k}^\text{kī}^\text{ṭ}^\text{ē}^\text{ṭ}^\text{a}^\text{m} \ //1//
\end{align*}

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 Tree\textsuperscript{41} / 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 (koḻuntŭ or koḻunnŭ) of the mind squeezed into nectar.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{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 nirvāṇa-kalā, more subtle and also turned downward, bestowing divine knowledge. See: A. Avalon, \textit{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 amṛtŭ s oftening 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 [koḻuntŭ] [rising] within [Primeval Mould]! The Tamil term koḻundu appears among others in TM 7 1769 and 3 815 in the context of transcendent Space, substantial firmness and silver – silvery spring (vel[f]), according to Venkataraman associated with ājñā cakram.

\textsuperscript{41} Kalpavrksam (T. Bhāskaran, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 92).

\textsuperscript{42} Šaṁmukha Daśakam 1: jhānacentyeluppettelutele vilasum cillivallikkoṭikkul maunappānṭînkal ullāṭurakum amṛṭalukkuṭirunu uḷḷaliṅṭum nānun nīyum īnurakkakkalarivatin aru tamanayām nin nastittārṭēnītākkuna muttakkata atīyanatakktūm accīl koḷḷunṭē //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 amṛṭū 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 [koḷḷuntī] [rising] within [Primeval Mould]!"). The Tamil term koḷḷundy appears among others in TM 7 1769 and 3 815 in the context of transcendent Space, substantial firmness and silver – silvery spring (vel[f]), according to Venkataraman associated with ājñā cakra.

\textsuperscript{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 *Śvānubhava 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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