

JÑĀNA VETTIYĀN – THIRUVALLUVAR'S VISION OF THE SACRED

DANCE

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Abstract: The *Tirukkural*, composed nearly two thousand years ago, is universally regarded as a timeless text relevant across all ages. In addition to authoring the *Tirukkural*, the sage **Thiruvalluvar** is also believed to have composed **Jñāna Vettiyan**, a work that stands as a spiritual scripture in the Siddha tradition and reflects deep yogic science. The word *Vettiyan* signifies a “guardian” or “protector,” symbolizing the safeguarding of divine knowledge that prevents spiritual truths from being lost or misused. This idea of preserving sacred wisdom lies at the core of *Jñāna Vettiyan*.

Comprising approximately **1500 verses**, *Jñāna Vettiyan* does not follow the couplet style of the *Tirukkural*, but is composed in four-line stanzas. It belongs to the genre of Siddhar literature and aims to illuminate the path of **spiritual knowledge (Jñāna)**. The name itself implies “one who shows the way to higher understanding.”

This work covers diverse themes such as **conception within the womb**, fetal development, **causes of physical disabilities**, **methods to ensure healthy childbirth**, child growth, **bodily health and immune strength**, yogic paths for wellness, **disease prevention through traditional rejuvenation methods**, and philosophical doctrines of breath and body regulation. All of these are deeply rooted in the Siddha system.

Above all, the work asserts the **oneness of humanity**, disregarding divisions. The verses of *Jñāna Vettiyan* revolve around topics such as **birth, death, philosophical insights into life, and cosmic mysteries**, and are articulated in simple, profound Tamil to make spiritual wisdom accessible.

One notable verse states:

“Even Brahma, who sits on the lotus, Indra who rules the celestials, and Vishnu who once measured the worlds—none can comprehend the cosmic dance performed by the Lord who wears a snake and licks his earring.”

“பூவிலயனும் புரந்தரனும் பூவுலகைத்
தாவியளந்தோனும் தாமிருக்க - நாவில்

சிவ நக்கி நூல் நெடுகும் ஏழை அறிவனோ
சுவ நக்கும் பிஞ்சுகள் தன் கூத்து”

This verse appears in *Jñāna Vettiyan* and refers to Lord Shiva's Urdhva Tandava, a sacred dance performed in divine ecstasy. It is said that even deities like Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra, despite witnessing the dance, could not understand its essence. When these celestial beings approached Thiruvalluvar to learn more about the significance of this divine performance, he humbly replied that if even the highest gods could not grasp its meaning, how could a humble weaver like himself claim to know? His answer reveals not only his humility but also the depth of his realization.

This verse affirms that Thiruvalluvar possessed divine insight deep enough to provoke questions even from the gods. According to traditional belief, Lord Shiva performed 108 dances, of which:

- 18 were solo
- 36 with Goddess Uma
- 9 with Vishnu
- 3 for Lord Murugan
- 42 for the Devas

Notably, four of these sacred dances were performed at Uttarakosamangai (Adi Chidambaram)—Ananda Tandava, Sandhya Tandava, Samvihara Tandava, and Urdhva Tandava.

These dances are believed to strip away worldly illusions and prepare the mind for transcendental states. Passed down through generations, they continue to inspire spiritual seekers.

Shiva's dance is not just a performance, but a cosmic lesson—a way to break our false sense of knowing, to teach acceptance of life's flow, to embrace change, and to grow spiritually. This sacred dance, as perceived by Thiruvalluvar, is the essence of the article and is explored in greater detail within the full research paper.