

'ENTERING THE UNIVERSE OF FIRE AND  
LIGHT' THE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF  
POKAR FROM *POKAR ELAYIRAM*<sup>1</sup>

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As the Principle of Intelligence itself  
I leapt into the universe.  
Nandi clearly elucidated  
the nature of the universe.  
For the sake of all beings  
there is a path  
that becomes a vehicle  
for the five senses.  
The universe that appeared before me  
was arranged in layers.  
The grandfather said,  
"Enter the tenth one."  
I took what was given to me  
and put it in my mouth.  
Another bunch  
of mercurial amalgams  
I tied onto my wrist.  
Off I went,  
Entering the universe  
of fire and light.<sup>2</sup>

My original intent in undertaking this analysis was to try to reconstruct a biography of the alchemist Pokar, a mysterious and compelling figure in the Tamil siddha tradition, based on a particular Tamil text, *Pokar Elayiram*, also known as *Pokar*

*Saptakandam* (henceforth in this essay PS7000).<sup>3</sup> I had earlier, with similar intent, researched the figure of Iramtevar/Yakoob, a Tamil siddha who converted to Islam.<sup>4</sup> Yakoob is also an elusive figure, as are most of the renowned Tamil siddhas; but I was able to at least partially develop the known facts of Yakoob's life into some kind of biography, albeit sparse and quite heavily symbolic.

Pokar, however, presented me with a different set of problems, in that I found the text itself to be completely recalcitrant and frustratingly equivocal. Interpreting the text – or, if I may take the liberty of putting this in meta-textual terms, “entering the universe of fire and light” – was very difficult, for reasons that I will elucidate when I take up the text itself in detail. Perhaps – once again, phrasing my problems meta-textually – some form of the fabled “mercury amalgams” would have been helpful; but I had recourse to nothing save my academic training. And this in fact was counter-productive, for academics are conditioned to analyze and theorize according to established categories, and offer in the end something conclusive, some ‘true’ findings, that can be corroborated by other scholars and upon which further research can be built. In the case of the Pokar text, the first imperative is that one suspends one's standard habits of academic analysis, for the ‘truth’ is embedded in a surreal matrix of what can only be described as accumulated impossibilities; if this pearl is to be retrieved from such an ocean, the diver must first of all accept a textual framework of unrelenting ambiguity, bear in mind that the ‘findings’ too may be characterized by ambivalence, and then proceed to work out a different course through 7000 verses.

During my repeated readings of the text, I persistently asked myself where, amidst this apparent and deeply symbolic chaos, some formal and intellectual order was to be found. As it happened, while mapping the elusive trajectories of intermeshed narratives in my efforts to extricate enough facts to begin constructing a historical

biography of Pokar, I was indeed able to chart evidence of some philosophical order. This took the shape of concise commentary on Vedanta and this is all the more impressive in contrast to the surrounding textual upheaval and rupture of logic.<sup>5</sup> These verses are the gemstone in the ring of the text, so to speak; they are surely not an accident; they infuse it with profound philosophical meaning – but what are we to make of the rest of the material?

The text has seven *kandas* (chapters), each with over 1000 verses. As the language of the text advances from the first *kanda* through the later ones, the diction moves from being refined and evocative to increasingly pedestrian modes of utterance. The Tamil of the first *kanda* seems more archaic than that of the other sections.

Barring in the first *kanda*, the text abandons all pretence of abiding by narrative logic. The symbolic realm that the reader confronts is continually fecund, invented and reinvented anarchically, breathlessly, relentlessly. Is this the imagination of a single author or of different self-styled Pokars?

The typical unities of time, space and action are disregarded most audaciously and without any apology. Linearity and teleology are abandoned. There is no difference between the real and the surreal – perhaps this is true for accomplished siddhas,<sup>6</sup> but it severely disorients the reader who struggles to follow Pokar on his travels – to mythical lands and across mythical seas, on steam ships and sky horses; the protagonist finds himself in different regions and different mythical *yugas*. His activity is dispersed across different ages and cartographies – he enthusiastically meets up with both deities and heroic figures: Ganesha, Draupadi, Tataka, Ravana, etc.; flies kites for serious Chinese spectators, chides his fellow siddha Yakoppu/Yakoob, now a convert to Islam, who he meets in Mecca, and so on. The text demands a suspension, willing and unwilling, of disbelief, as well as of epistemology and hermeneutics. The sheer scale of Pokar's

adventures stuns the reader. In this context, is it reasonable for the researcher to expect conceptual clarity at all? Or is this elusiveness itself a primary index of the unfettered lifestyle of the siddhas?

Expectedly, the lives of Tamil alchemist siddhas are shrouded in deep mystery, partially because of their deliberate deployment of opaque language and highly coded references. Nevertheless, we occasionally come across sparse autobiographical notes in their major writings, mentioning their profession or significant events of their lives. Those particular events/their notations would be found in all of that siddha's works, and also appear in the works of other siddhas. However, these cannot be taken at face value because many dubious details are also to be found in these texts, inserted by those collating and publishing the writings in later eras.<sup>7</sup>

Online, one finds tall and fantastic attributions about Pokar, material contributed to the public domain without any serious referencing, Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, confidently places Pokar in the 5th century BC, and also identifies him with "Lao Tse, the founder of Taoism". In fact, the two figures have nothing in common save that both posited the doctrine of primal male and female energies. According to Wikipedia, Yang and Yin, propounded by Lao Tse, is the same as the Tamil tantric Shiva-Shakti tradition, presumably theorised by Pokar. Several sites offer ingenious life sketches and depictions of Pokar, and claim that he was the sculptor of the fabled *Navapashana* (nine arsenics) idol of Murukan in Palani, Tamil Nadu.

More established scholarly work on Pokar the alchemist/tantric illusionist/physician considers him an important siddha, as his name occurs in many medieval and pre-modern siddha listings.<sup>8</sup> But the task of constructing a biography is fraught with great difficulty, because historically there were at least three identifiable figures with this name. Very often

the three lives were fused by interpreters, compounding the problem. In *A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult*, R. Venkatraman typically brings to our notice that there were at least three Pokars. He declares that "Pokadevar", mentioned in Tirumular's *Tirumantiram* as belonging to the sanmarga tradition, was perhaps the first one. There was another Pokar residing in Caturagiri, who was interested in *Kayasiddhi*; and the third Pokar, who lived as recently as the 17th -18th century, was associated with the Palani shrine devoted to the Tamil god Muruka.<sup>9</sup>

Early reference to Pokadevar is found in *Tirumantiram*,<sup>10</sup> where the author Mular makes reference to the spiritual lineage beginning with Kalangi, reportedly the teacher of Pokar. Here he states the "Aghora" was the chief disciple of Kalangi; this contradicts the repeated claim made in PS7000, that Pokar was the student of Kalangi. Moreover, there is no mention of this Pokadevar having had any connection with Palani, or visiting China; and there are no extant texts attributed to him.

In his well-researched work *History of Tamil Literature*: 16th century, M. Arunachalam asserts that the second figure known as Pokar lived during the reign of Rajarajacholan, when the king was engaged in building the great Tanjore temple. Arunachalam also mentions another Pokar of the 16th century, who went by the name "Pokanathar" and lived in a place called Thirupukalur. One Thiruvottriyur Tattuva Prakasar who wrote a commentary on the text *Shivajnanasiddhiyar* refers to this Pokanathar by the name "Thirupukalurswami".<sup>11</sup>

The source of the legend that one siddha named Pokar lived in Palani, entered samadhi there, and was responsible for sculpting the image of Dandapani with nine poisonous arsenics (*navapasana*) is unclear. The 15th century saint-poet Arunagirinathar, who has sung 96 or more songs in worship of Palani Murukan,<sup>12</sup> nowhere refers to Pokar or to the nine arsenics reportedly used to make the idol. Nor does

the text PS7000 refers to Pokar in relation to the idol or the arsenics. Therefore we may suppose the legend of Pokar sculpting the idol to be recent origin; Venkatraman even goes so far as to suggest, since the text is full of references to contemporary inventions and scientific principles, that it was composed in the mid-20th century.<sup>13</sup>

However, one of these three Pokars was definitely a virtuoso alchemist and had either traveled to China from South India or from China to South India. That there was an intimate Indo-Sino connection in the ancient and medieval alchemical worlds cannot be overlooked, because according to siddha texts, cinnabar or *chinapishhta* that was required to create the elixir/distilled essence came largely from "Mahachina" (the China-Tibet plateau); the same route was taken by the influential Buddhist Tantric cult of the goddess Tara.<sup>14</sup> According to B.V. Subbarayappa<sup>15</sup> and the renowned Chinese scholar Joseph Needham, Pokar was a Chinese Taoist philosopher who came to South India to study medicine.<sup>16</sup> Other scholars also hold the view that Pokar was a South Indian who went to China to teach and learn alchemy.<sup>17</sup>

This presentation focuses on the text PS7000, attributed to the third of the above mentioned Pokars, who had a unique mode of travel: the work has multiple references to fantastic flights and other journeys to various places around the globe. Seemingly he was also a parachutist; as well as an inventor who modeled a steam engine in order to visit European countries.<sup>18</sup> The text also refers to the *rasakinaru*, the well of mercury<sup>19</sup> that I have analysed as an alchemical symbol in my earlier research on the Tamil siddha Yakoppu.

As mentioned earlier, *Pokar Saptakandam*, or Pokar7000 is a voluminous text with 7 chapters, each of 1000 verses; it runs to 1120 printed pages.<sup>20</sup> For my research I have used the 1934 edition. The verses are in a simple *antati* style. *Antati* is a traditional genre in which the last letter, syllable or foot, of the last line of one stanza is identical with the first letter,

syllable or foot, of the succeeding stanza, the sequence is kept between the last and the first stanza of the poem as well. This form of poetry could be easily committed to memory. PS 7000 is thought to have been composed in the city of Chidambaram in the early 17th century. This may be contested, however, for the text among other chronological anomalies refers to the 19th-century Muslim siddha poet, Gunangudi Mastan Sahib.<sup>21</sup>

Before we proceed to the text itself, we might do well to keep in mind the warning issued by M. Arunachalam in relation to the professed authenticity of siddha texts. This scholar insists there is a specific reason for the proliferation of siddha works in the early 19th century: at this time the Maratha king Serfoji commissioned the renowned Tamil poet Sivakozhuntu Desikar to collate and edit all available siddha texts. Seeing the potential for royal patronage, monetary benefits and recognition, various fraudulent 'siddhas' composed fantasy-based texts, titling them *Thirumular Jnanam*, *Pokar Jnanam*, *Karuvurar Poocai*, etc.<sup>22</sup>

The Pokar text I focus on here is supposedly addressed to the siddha's chief disciple Pulipani.<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that the main body of the first *kanda* of the text does not refer to him at all. He abruptly manifests in verse 1015, towards the end of the first *kanda*: "My son Pulipani, hear this."<sup>24</sup> In the earlier portions of the text, Pokar affectionately refers to a certain "Konganar" as his student and beloved child.<sup>25</sup> Pokar's alleged flights to China that proliferate in later parts of the text are also largely missing in the main body of the first *kanda*. Of the 1022 verses of the first *kanda*, only two verses refer to these flights: an introductory verse (6), and one single verse at the end of the chapter.

They say:

"I went all over the world,

I also went to China and met Kalangi..."<sup>26</sup>

These verses could be later interpolations. The author of the first *kanda* clearly seems to be different from the author/authors of the later chapters, in the mode of enunciation and, to some degree, symbolic content.

According to the author, the authenticity of PS7000 is drawn from Shiva himself; the god revealed the text to Pokar, who was merely the faithful scribe:

It was Shiva  
 who imparted the 7000.  
 I just noted down  
 all of his shastra's secrets.  
 With seven chapters,  
 that book  
 is the King of Gurus;  
 pouring forth  
 its alchemical methods.  
 I asked for Grandfather's secrets;  
 and learned  
 from listening  
 to the quality  
 of his direct teaching.  
 I listened to sweet Kalangi...  
 and see!  
 I have put forth  
 these 7000.<sup>27</sup>

In the later *kandas* there are several references to Pokar visiting China many times, meeting his master Kalangi who sporadically wakes up from his grave to impart instructions every now and then. The later portions of the text, beginning from the third *kanda*, are more akin to science fiction, at once fantastic and entertaining. There are myriad accounts of magical flights, including flying on a "sky horse"; and as mentioned earlier, the author also constructs a steam carriage, steam engine, steamship, and travels to Mecca,

Jerusalem, Paris, and Rome. He not only circumnavigates the globe but also crosses seven mythical oceans of milk, yogurt, clarified butter, etc. The text abounds in such hallucinatory articulations.

PS7000 contains no direct references to Pokar's birth or childhood, save a verse confidently asserting: "I was born a siddha and in childhood I went to many places by the grace of Kalanginatha<sup>28</sup>, consuming the *kulikai* (elixir)."<sup>29</sup> According to one tradition he was born into the family of a goldsmith. In *The Poets of the Powers* (1973), Kamil Zvelbil lists 25 prominent Tamil Siddhas and their caste-origins, which he acquired through some unspecified source; Pokar's caste is specified here as Cinatecakkuyavar, "a Chinese potter". His guru Kalangi also appears on the list as Cinattucari, "a Chinese preceptor."<sup>30</sup> "Pokar" is etymologically linked to the Sanskrit word *bhoga* (enjoyment), for he allegedly "enjoyed" the beautiful and fair Chinese women he encountered on his travels to that territory. Interestingly, in the first chapter of PS 7000, the author warns his disciples to keep away from women, give up lust and stay focused on "the Vedantic ideal". He also cites Kalanginathar's view to authenticate his position.<sup>31</sup> In the second chapter, however, he announces, almost with relish, various sexual escapades. This gives us a clear glimpse of Pokar's Tantric leanings:

"I enjoyed the fair Chinese women through the grace of the Vedanta mother...

Remembering the wise Kalangi, my master, with great lust I enjoyed sensual pleasures with the fair Chinese women."<sup>32</sup>

Many Siddha Tantrics commonly express a "loathing and abhorrence of women" which, however, quite often paradoxically combines with Tantric-like use of sexual congress: a very important social component expressed as social radicalism...<sup>33</sup>

The first chapter of PS7000 describes swallowing a pill a

kulikai and levitating/flying everywhere.<sup>34</sup> Mercurial amalgams were employed by the siddhars for various activities/acquisition of supra-natural powers; one such is the power of flight, but it is difficult to say whether this is literal, or a sort of tantric/yogic astral projection. One of the most fascinating components of Iramatevar alias Yakoppu's narrative is his claim to have consumed *Kulikai* which bestowed upon him the power of flight. He flew in Arabia and landed in the pilgrim city of Mecca.<sup>35</sup> Whichever it may be, Pokar perhaps used the mercurial amalgam to take him to the furthest frontiers of creation, beyond space and time, to the periphery of the universe, the farthest shores of his imagination/own being. To use contemporary terminology, this is perhaps a "trip" enabled by consuming intoxicants, for none of the references to the sites and cities that he claims to have visited match with the actual geography of those places. His very frequent visits to China narrated in the later chapters cannot be topographically authenticated. He refers to China being on the shores of the ocean, but there is no mention of any Chinese city or the name of historical Chinese kings or any Chinese masters of alchemy, excepting his own teacher Kalangi and his disciple Konganar.<sup>36</sup> He makes a general remark that Chinese men and women are fair complexioned and non-vegetarian. He also mentions that Chinese women do not observe menstruation taboos, nor are they conscious of caste distinctions.<sup>37</sup> He claims to have entertained the Chinese with feats such as kite-flying<sup>38</sup> and parachute-jumping.<sup>39</sup> There is a mention of Chinese paper mills<sup>40</sup> and the population's use of opium.<sup>41</sup>

The siddha's love for China is evidenced in this declaration that has an unexpectedly philosophical twist:

A country that deserves to be called a country is China, just as a desire that can be legitimately called a desire is the desire for knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

Pokar mentions a vast air balloon/zeppelin, and a steamship

800 yards in length, 500 yards in breadth and 100 yards in height. It moved when power generated in the boiler rotated the two wheels on either side of the rudder. He recounts his travels in a locomotive 100 yards long and 30 yards wide, with a big boiler that produced steam. In this vehicle he goes with other siddhas to Rome, where he sees the tombs of many Roman kings.<sup>43</sup> He even manages to discover the graves of Christ and his 12 disciples. He meets aggressive evangelists who preach Christianity everywhere. He observes large forts and people inhabiting these. He returns to China, first courteously dropping off his fellow siddhas in their respective countries.

He also travels to Mecca, where he encounters many Muslims praying on a mound. They see Pokar and proceed to intimidate him by demanding to know his identity. When he says he is a disciple of Kalangi from China, and that he wants to meet Prophet Muhammad, he is allowed to enter the city. He lives there and observes the precepts of Islam till he is allowed to see the grave of the Prophet. He is given *roti* to eat.<sup>44</sup> There he meets Yakoppu, and both set off to China. Incidentally, the fact of eating *roti* as a part of his acculturation in Mecca is also to be found in the works of siddha Yakoppu.<sup>45</sup>

PS 7000 is also densely packed with the narrations of various mythical flights and lives of other siddhas, their birth stars, zodiac signs, horoscopes, lineages, etc. I have refrained from commenting on this theme here, for lack of time and also because this aspect requires an elaborate exposition.

#### *Pokar's Philosophy, Alchemy and Tantra:*

As stated earlier, the first kanda of PS7000 contains some philosophical commentary. According to Pokar, there are three attainments: the art of immortalizing the body (*kayasiddhi*) through the *ashtanga yoga* and *pranayama* techniques of Patanjali; the attainment of material alchemy

for medicines, etc. (*vada siddhi*); and finally the attainment of union with Brahman the Vedantic ideal (*yoga siddhi*). The three play a supportive and enabling role in relation to each other. Prioritizing consciousness over the material body and material well-being is a cardinal tenet of Advaita Vedanta, but Pokar seems to make all three practices complimentary to one another, and this is offered as a unitary worldview.

The first chapter of PS 7000 deals with *vasiyogam* or breath control techniques. This technique is seen to be a means for achieving the end of realizing the Advaitic truth. The text blends Vedanta with Patanjali's and Thirumular's yoga methodologies, mentioning these sages by name.

It was my Grandfather  
 who said,  
 "Climb and see."  
 But it was  
 Kalangi Nathar  
 who gave me birth.  
 Patanjali,  
 Viyagiramar,  
 and Shivayogi Muni  
 all so rightly said,  
 "Look!  
 This is the path!"  
 They explained  
 how to mount  
 and go beyond.  
 And it was  
 the Great Mother supreme  
 who said,  
 "This is it!"  
 Having become calm...  
 I perceived the accompanying experience.  
 Having experienced...  
 I have composed 7000.<sup>46</sup>

The first *kanda* specifically uses Advaita phraseology to express Oneness of spirit:

Do not be burnt by the fire of passion,  
But every day look with conviction  
At the truth established in Vedanta.<sup>47</sup>

Pokar recommends that after one has achieved success in the technique of controlling the breath,

See everything as *sariri* (the soul)  
And remove all sorrows concerning the body...

Look at everything as dream objects and stop worrying...  
Deliverance is only through Vedanta and not by any other means...

Do not forget that you are the ultimate Blissful self.<sup>48</sup>

The means of reaching the state of sublimity termed "*Naan-Brahman*" or *ahambrahmasmi* is not through the usual process of "hearing, reflecting and establishing in the truth" as recommended by the conventional texts of Vedanta, but through the yogic practice of *asana* and *pranayama*. These are essential for controlling the mind, which is the first step towards understanding the truth. This practice of *pranayama* as an effective means of controlling the mind is also endorsed by Sri Ramana Maharishi in more recent times.<sup>49</sup> The text mentions the three fundamental conditions of being, namely the wakeful, dream and deep sleep (*jagrit*, *swapna* and *sushupti*) states, and *samadhi* in *turiya* (fourth state). In addition, though the author does not fully develop the philosophy of Samkhya, he seems to be aware of the Samkhyan modes of Prakrti and Purusa: he invokes theistic versions of these.<sup>50</sup>

To narrate the complex parameters of alchemy requires

great expertise in pre-modern science. Such a description is beyond the scope of this presentation. However, a few key observations in relation to alchemy in PS7000 may be pertinent here. The text has references to minerals, metals, salts, certain toxic substances and numerous herbs. Specific minerals are used for medicinal purposes and also for attaining *kayakalpa*, elixir for longevity. The basic salt for making *muppu* the primordial salt<sup>51</sup>, is *punir*, a natural exudate from the soil, similar to Fuller's Earth. A detailed account of the geographical location and method of extracting/collecting *punir* and its processing is found in the second kanda.<sup>52</sup>

Several passages describe how to stabilize and bind mercury,<sup>53</sup> a crucial ingredient in the preparation of various medicines that are essential for general well-being, as also *kayakalpa* or "immortalizing" the *kaya/body*. Mercury is called *suta* in many Tamil alchemical texts. It is also called *rasa* and *paarada*. As mentioned elsewhere in this essay, Pokar makes a passing reference to the legend of the well of mercury, *rasakinaru*. It is highly probable that the original Pokar went to China to learn about mercury processing, and brought the metal back to India. Pokar talks of preparing mercury through "swooning", "killing" and "binding", an activity he calls *sutakattu*. Konganar, who is lovingly addressed as "my son" by the siddha in the first kanda of PS7000, has identified mercury with Shiva's *bija*, *bindu*, *semen*, and sulphur with *Shakti*; he explains that when the two are in some proportion successfully blended, the elixir distilled can be consumed for the purposes of immortalizing the *kaya/body*.

For want of time, I shall here just make a passing reference to Pokar's *sutakattu*. Binding (the practice is known as *bandha*) where mercury is rendered immobile. *Bandha* in Sanskrit literally means to "lock". The non-stable element of the compound is made stable ("*suta niruttam*") through a series of *bandhas* (*kattutal*) or alchemical

processes/techniques. This processing changes the physical and chemical composition, and thus the behaviour of mercury.<sup>54</sup> In the long section on *sutakattu* processing, we are told that it takes the form of gel or paste, and may be rendered as soft as butter.<sup>55</sup> Pokar also informs the reader about the powdering of mercury *podu* (powder). The bound mercury in the form of a mani, jewel, (ingestible tablet) can be made into an elixir, a consumable tablet; and this, according to Pokar, enabled him to fly to China and elsewhere. We have no way of assessing whether the details have any experimental scientific value or whether they are as fabulous as the other material in the book.

Finally, a word about tantra in as articulated in PS7000. There are several verses dealing with tantra, which is inseparable from alchemy in the siddha tradition. There seems to be a natural symbiosis between the two. The first *kanda* abounds with references to tantric formulae and diagrams as well as description of yogic and meditative techniques, ritual practices, and Shiva-Sakti and Ganesha devotionalism. The text focuses on the channeling of prana (breath) and other vital elements through the six chakras (plexuses) strung along the length of the spinal column,<sup>56</sup> in the order of (lowest to uppermost) *muladhara*, *svadhistana*, *manipura*, *anahata*, *visuddi* and *ajna*. In particular, the text describes in detail the *manipura*, *anahata* and *visuddi* chakras, their different colours and the manifestaion of cosmic energy in these "houses" (*veedu*).

### *Conclusion*

Returning to my initial question about PS 7000 being a "problematic" text, I continue to ask myself, as well as place before you, this urgent question: What keeps us engaged with this text even while it seems to elude us? Is it the almost hallucinatory energy of the work? Is it because we cannot pin down the certainties of its authorship? Are we obstructed by our academic training, dependent on almost immutable

hermeneutic structures? Do these structures lock us into particular modes of reading so that we overlook subtexts of crucial significance? In other words, how should such “problematic” texts be read? What does it mean to impose “meaning”? Finally, do we find ourselves valorising, and thereby investing with value, mostly those texts that are a confirmation of what already has meaning for us? Are we thus, as readers/interpreters, invariably complicit in the processes by which textual/intellectual canons come into being and are perpetuated? And are we thereby complicit in the processes of textual exclusions, as much as in textual inclusions?

#### NOTES

1. I am indebted to Smrti Vohra for the editorial help.
2. The above translation is by Layne Little. A good translation of the first 80 verses of the first *kanda* has been undertaken by Layne Little, and is available online at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/bhogar2.html>. I have in some places used Layne’s translations and at others my own.
3. *Sri Patinensittarkalil Maha Makuttuvam Poruntiya Poka Munivar Tiruvaimalarntaruliya Sattakandam*, (henceforth *PS7000*) according to the edition of Kantasami Mutaliyar, Published by Parthasarathy Naidu Sons, Chakravarti Press, Chennai, 1934, (Priced Rs 4)
4. See “Divine Semen: The Alchemical Conversion of Iramatevar”, in *Medieval History Journal*, 7, 2 (2004), Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 255-78
5. An exposition and approval of Advaita Vedanta can be seen in the verses 290- 308 (pp46-49) of first *kanda* of Pokar 7000. This is interesting because the text sees no contradiction in recommending Advaita Vedanta to the alchemists. Advaita privileges spirit over matter and definitely does not preoccupy with immortalizing body as Tamil *rasasiddhas* aim to do.
6. Many Tamil scholars and siddha practitioners who participated in the conference on siddha medicine held at the French Institute Pondicherry, August 2007 objected to my ‘non-reverential’ reading of the text. They believe that siddhas have incredible power that enables them to move anywhere and perform any feat.
7. According to R. Venkatraman, “this is an area where forgeries could be produced in abundance as it is very easy to imitate their versification. However, as forgery into the technical aspects of this school is not easy

far the uninitiated, the forgers have confined themselves to mythmaking, but to an enormous extent”

8. See Kandaswamy Pillai, *History of Siddha Medicine*, (Government of Tamil Nadu, 1979), pp342-345
9. Venkatraman R, *A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult*, Ennes Publications Madurai, (1990), p 49
10. Verse 102, *Tirumular, Tirumantiram, A Tamil Scriptural Classic*, ed. N. Mahalingam (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1991), p. 16
11. M. Arunachalam *Tamizh Ilakkiya Varalaru*, 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Part 3, The Parker, Chennai, 1976, (reprint 2005), pp215-16
12. *Tiruppkazh Madani*, of Sri Arunakirinatar, Tiruppkazh Anparkal, Vasant Enclave, New Delhi, pp91-206
13. R. Venkatraman *A History of Tamil Siddha Cult*, Pp163,185,
14. Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body, Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (University of Chicago, 1996), p. 64
15. *The Lancet*, Supplement to, Index Volume 350, ed Richard Horton, p.1841 (July-December 1997). This author also believes that “Bhogar might have lived in the fifth to sixth century and the other siddhas were of a later date.”
16. *Science and Civilization in Ancient China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Vol.5. pt.5 (1983), p 285  
13 See White Gordon, *The Alchemical Body*, pp 376-377, ft n 60.  
The text PS 7000 also holds the view that Pokar was a South Indian who traveled to China to teach alchemy to Konganar.
17. *PS7000, Kanda 2*, Verses-281-84, p. 206
18. *Ibid.*, verse 323, p 213. *Rasakupa* in Sanskrit. For an interesting myth on the origin of mercury and the well containing it, see S.R Sharma and Y.Sahai, “Gushing Mercury, Fleeing Maiden:A *Rasasastra* Motif in Mughal Painting”, in *Journal of European Ayurvedic Society* 4 (1995), pp. 149-62
19. A fairly good translation of the first 80 verses of the first *kanda* has been undertaken by Layne Little, and is available online at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/bhogar2.html>  
*Shaking The Tree, Kundalini Yoga, Spiritual Alchemy, & the Mysteries of the Breath in Bhogar's 7000* English Rendering by Layne Little
20. *PS7000, Kanda iv*, Verse 702 p594
21. M. Arunachalam, *Tamizh Illakiya Varalaru*, 14<sup>th</sup> Century, p282.
22. “Pulipani” derives from two languages, *puli* (Tamil meaning tiger) and *pani*, (Hindustani meaning water). It is believed that the disciple brought water for his master sitting on the back of a tiger.
23. *PS7000, Kanda, 1* verse 1015, p. 158
24. *PS7000 Kandal* verse 510, p. 81
25. Translation is mine. *PS7000, Kanda, 1* verse 1017, p.158
26. *Shaking the Tree: Kundalini Yoga, Spiritual Alchemy and the Mysteries of the*

- Breath in Bhogar's 7000*. English Rendering by Layne Little
27. Though Pokar says he is Chinese, his name is found in the list of Tamil siddhas.
  28. *PS7000*, Kanda iv Verses 996-999, p. 640
  29. Zvelebel Kamil V, *The Poets of the Power* (Rider and Company, London, 1973), p.132
  30. Translation is mine. *PS7000*, Kanda 1, Verse 173 p. 28.
  31. *PS7000*, Kanda 2, Verse 654 p. 266
  32. Zvelebil, Kamil.V, *The Siddha Quest for Immortality* (Oxford, 1996), p. v
  33. *PS7000*, Kanda 1, Verse 6, p. 2
  34. See 'Divine Semen' and Alchemical Conversion of Iramatevar, p 262
  35. According to Gordon White, Pokar taught alchemy to a ruler in China by name Kong. *The Alchemical Body*, p 61
  36. *PS7000*, Kanda 7, Verse 282 p. 845
  37. *Ibid.*, kanda 2 Verse 800p. 288-89
  38. *Ibid.*, kanda 2 Verses 281-84, p. 206
  39. *PS7000*, kanda 3 verse 486, p.398
  40. *Ibid.*, kanda 3 Verses 507- 11, p. 401
  41. Translation is mine. *PS7000*, kanda 2 Verse 524, p. 245,
  42. *Ibid.*, kanda 3, Verses 203-227, pp.353-57
  43. *PS7000*, kanda 3, Verse 230 p. 357
  44. See 'Divine Semen' *The Alchemical Conversion of Iramatevar* p266
  45. *PS 7000*, Kanda 1, Verse, 39, p 7, Translation Layne Little.
  46. *Ibid.*, Verse 33
  47. *Ibid.*, Verses 307-321, p. 50-52
  48. See Zvelebil Kamil.V., *The Poets of The Powers*, (Rider and Company, London, 1973), pp. 50-51
  49. *PS7000*, Kanda 1, Verse 322, p. 51
  50. In some texts like *Sattaimuni suttiram*, the human body is regarded as the earth and the sublimated semen is *muppu* the primordial salt. See R.Venkataraman, *A History of The Tamil Siddha Cult*, pp 131-132
  51. *PS7000*, kanda 2, Verses 682-707p. 270-73
  52. *Ibid.*, kanda 2, Verses 160-188 pp. 186-91; & kanda 1, Verses 817-20 p. 187, etc.
  53. See Gordon White, op. cit., p. 277
  54. *PS7000*, kanda 1, verses 817-820, p.13
  55. See Gordon White, op. cit., p 40