

DIVINE AWARENESS AMONG YOUTH BASED ON THIRUMANTHIRAM TEXT

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and explain divine awareness among Hindu youth based on the Thirumanthiram Text in Segamat district, Johor. This study is qualitative and quantitative in nature, focusing on library methods in the nature of literature interpretation and questionnaires. Since the Thirumanthiram text is the main source of reference for this study, the understanding and interpretation of classical poems is carried out through a hermeneutic approach. This approach also helps identify the god consciousness expressed in the Thirumanthiram Text. Apart from that, a research instrument in the form of a questionnaire was also used to study the awareness of God among Hindu youth. The discussion also analysed the understanding of religion that shaped the thinking of this young generation towards religion and spiritual life. A total of 470 youth respondents were involved in this survey which was randomly distributed around the Segamat district which covers five areas namely Cha'ah, Labis, Tenang, Bandar Segamat and Batu Anam. Hindu youth are categorized according to 15-30 based on the Malaysian Youth Policy. Findings show the level of knowledge and understanding and practise of the youth in the awareness of God in these five areas are at a moderate level in some dimensions that symbolize the manifestation of aspects of religious thought and belief in their Hindu religion. Studies also show that there is a positive relationship in Hindu religious thinking. This shows that the level of practice and exposure to religious activities has an impact on religious thinking

Keywords: Thirumanthiram, nobility service, voluntarily,

INTRODUCTION

Religion is an important aspect of human life. The absence of religion can cause the collapse of a person's personality, nation and country. The belief in god can guide the youth to do good and avoid bad deeds and recognize the rewards and sins. This will discipline the youth to be more responsible because it associated with the afterlife or the day of retribution. According to the Malaysian Youth Development Research Institute (2013), 42% of Malaysia's population consists of youth. Youth at this age are always trying to build a self-identity (Erikson, 1964). Therefore, religious beliefs that lead to divine consciousness need to be nurtured so that they can build self-confidence in the development and formation of a perfect human being and make a decision correctly in their lives.

Divine awareness is an important element in matters of religion because religion is categorized as a belief and a strong force in human beings (Khadijah et al. , 2013). Sabiq (1993) states that religion has a high power in the soul and has a profound effect on feelings. Religion becomes a guide for youth who do not understand and experience changes in themselves (Garbarino, 2000). Divine awareness becomes the basis for youth in thinking rationally before doing an activity. According to Fauziah et al.'s study, the majority of respondents in their study, which is 89.5%, have a low level of religious knowledge and the youth who are involved with social symptoms and undergo moral rehabilitation have a modest divine awareness.

Robiah (2001) explained that religious belief is the most superior force to prevent and oppose all negative elements that attack the emotions and mentality of the youth. According to Uthaya Sankar SB & Raman Vialingom (2009), social problems among Indian youth are increasing and worrying because of the lack of awareness of God. The higher the divine consciousness, the lower the involvement of youth in social phenomena. Therefore, the researcher has chosen the title of divine awareness among the youth based on the Thirumanthiram Text to compare the divine awareness possessed by today's youth based on the Thirumanthiram text. The Thirumanthiram text is used as the main source in this study because it is the only text of classical literature that discusses divine consciousness clearly and in detail.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Medieval Tamil literature that describes the way of life and traditions inherited by the Hindu community that has a long history (Kumaran Ramaiyah, 2015). The works of Medieval Tamil literature are of various values important that can bring a person closer to the Almighty God. Beside that, Literature can also describe the culture of the community as well helps one enjoy happiness in this world and the hereafter (Vellaivaranar,2002). There are various works of Medieval Tamil Literature in the circle Indian society. Among them are 'Periya Puranam', 'Thevaram', 'Thiruvagasam', 'Thirumanthiram' and so on. Among these works, Thirumanthiram is said to have profound divine concepts as well most of 'Thirumanthiram' describes the sect of 'Saivism' in detail. By which thus the researcher has chosen Thirumanthiram as the main reference in this research. The chosen research topic is Divine Awareness among Youth Based on Thirumanthiram Text. The Hindu community believes that, a person born on this earth is necessary trying to bring themselves closer to the Almighty God until they managed to achieve 'Mukti' (Darmalingga, 2012).

Thirumanthiram text is one of the works of literature which contained in 'Thirumurai'. Thirumanthiram means 'Holy Mantra'. Text Thirumanthiram is produced by Thirumoolar. The school of 'Saivism' prescribes four main approaches that can be followed by someone in an effort to approach God as well as in an effort to achieve 'Mukti'. The four approaches are 'Sariyai', 'Kiriya', 'Yogam' and also 'Nyanam' (Narayanaswamy, 2010). 'Sariyai' is the practice of doing good

deeds prioritizing physical service related to religion (Thirumanthiram, 1443). 'Kiriya' is the involvement of a person in religious ceremonies without expecting any return (Thirumanthiram, 1454). 'Yogam' brings the meaning of deep meditative behavior contemplating the god that exists within every human being (Thirumanthiram, 1457). The last approach is 'Nyanam' is spiritualization and deep divine consciousness. (Thirumanthiram, 1523).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Awareness of religious understanding that is not given attention can have bad consequences. Therefore, religious beliefs that lead to divine consciousness needs to be nurtured so that they can build confidence self in the development and formation of a perfect person and make a decision correctly in their lives. Some studies also show that the youth who hold fast to religious teachings less involved in immoral social activities. Divine awareness becomes the basis for youth in thinking rationally before doing an activity. Indeed, the awareness of God is very important to the youth because they are at the stage of growing up and searching for identity themselves (Corcoran & Nichols, 2004). The higher the divine consciousness the lower youth involvement in negative activities.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Based on the problem statement, this study aims to make a comparison Divine awareness of Hindu youth Based on Thirumanthiram text. Research objective This is formulated based on the problem statement.

1. Identify the divine consciousness contained in the text Thirumanthiram.
2. Identifying the awareness of God possessed by today's youth.
3. Comparing the divine consciousness contained in Thirumanthiram and the consciousness of God possessed by the youth of the time now

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on efforts to study the divine awareness of youth based on the Thirumanthiram Text. From this statement, the focus is only on the comparative aspect between the consciousness of God among the youth with the God consciousness expressed in the Thirumanthiram text. According to a newspaper article, poor religious values in youth cause them to be easily influenced by immoral social norms (Mustapa Othman, 2015). The newspaper article also added that the youth are active groups involved in drugs, gangsterism, sexual crimes and so on (Utusan Melayu). Nowadays, more youth are influenced by external negative factors and waste their energy and time in undesirable things as mentioned above.

Divine awareness will eliminate all negative behaviors such as excessive alcohol consumption, risky sexual practices, taking drugs, etc. (Ellison & Levin, 1998). Ellison & Levin's study also shows that the lack of awareness of God among youth aged 18-29 years causes them to engage in negative or immoral social norms that endanger their lives. According to Mohd. Ismail (2005), society views youth as a group that symbolizes speed, perfection, fun, joy, youth, firmness and beauty. According to the Malaysian Youth Policy (2008), youth is defined as those who are 15 years old and before reaching the age of 30. Therefore for this study the focus of the researcher is those aged 15 to 30 years according to the Malaysian Youth Policy (2008).

Table 1.1

Youth’s knowledge of Thirumanthiram Text

Thirumanthiram Text	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
The scriptures of Thirumanthiram became my lifeline.	10 2%	14 3%	112 24%	154 33%	180 38%	2.0
Thirumanthiram showed me a meaningful path.	10 2%	14 3%	112 24%	180 38%	154 33%	2.0
The virtues found in the Thirumanthiram Text can create divine consciousness.	14 3%	23 5%	134 28%	178 38%	121 26%	2.2
All the karma (sins and rewards) done by humans in the world are recorded and will follow to the rebirth of the human spirit.	126 27%	144 31%	63 13%	57 12%	80 17%	3.4
All sins and rewards will be judged by god	184 39%	165 35%	33 7%	48 10.2%	40 9%	3.9
Average Mean	14.6%	15.4%	19.2%	27.2%	23.6%	2.7

Findings show that there is a difference in the level of youth knowledge about Thirumanthiram Text in Segamat district. In the aspect of youth knowledge about Thirumanthiram Text, especially knowledge about scriptures, respondents showed a significantly high level of knowledge in the statement regarding belief in sin and reward (Karma). If examine the Mean average is between 3.4 and 3.9 respectively. The percentage of those who strongly agree is also high, ranging from 35 to 39 percent.

However, as many as 38%, which is 154 respondents strongly disagreed with the statement “The scriptures of Thirumanthiram become my life support” which touches on belief in God in relation to God’s power and oneness. Apart from that, the second and third questions which are “Thirumanthiram shows a meaningful path to me” and “The noble values found in the Thirumanthiram Text can create divine consciousness” show that their understanding of the Thirumanthiram Text is at a low level. Respondents who disagree for these two statements are 180 (38%) and 178 (38%) respectively. The respondents for strongly disagree and disagree are 154 people (33%) and 121 people (26%). The mean for this statement is also approaching the low range. Although the average for karma is high but the achievement of their level of knowledge in aspects of the scriptures of Thirumanthiram is only at a moderate level.

Table :1.2
Faith and confidence of youth in God

Faith and confidence in God.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
God is my refuge in all good and bad situation.	108 23%	134 29%	62 13%	94 20%	72 15%	3.2
I realized that God is the most merciful.	140 30%	156 33%	64 14%	62 13%	48 10%	3.5
Everything that happens in the world is not directly related to god.	40 8.5%	56 12%	32 6.8%	168 35.7%	174 37%	2.1
I belief that everything happens to people is tested by God.	120 26%	153 33%	80 17%	69 14%	48 10%	3.4
God is the creator, owner and administrator of the entire universe.	142 30%	158 34%	60 13%	56 12%	54 11%	3.6
Belief wholeheartedly that	156	158	80	34	42	3.7

God governs all beings.	33%	33.6%	17%	7.2%	8.9%	
God's power covers everything in heaven and earth.	165 35%	174 37%	43 9%	46 9.7%	42 8.9%	3.8
Average Mean	26.5%	30.2%	12.8%	15.9%	14.4%	3.3

Based on table 1.2, most respondents showed a high level of understanding in terms of trust and confidence in God. A total of 37% (174) youth strongly agree that God's power covers everything in heaven and earth. The mean reached 3.8. This statement is supported by the high level of understanding of the respondents in the statement of believing wholeheartedly that God governs all creatures.

33.6 percent of respondents agree and 33 percent of respondents strongly agree with a mean score of 3.7. The Hindu youth in Segamat district also showed a high level of understanding in the context of the application of faith and belief in God. In the statement 'Everything that happens in the world is not directly related to God', all 37% respondents strongly disagreed. This statements proves that Hindu youth have faith and confidence and trust in God.

Table : 1.3

The understanding of youth in divine consciousness

The understanding of youth in divine consciousness	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Religion is closely related to the moral decay of youth.	180 38%	188 40%	64 13.6 %	23 4.8%	15 3.1%	1.9
Divine awareness is important to me when facing challenges in life.	174 37%	212 45%	28 6%	32 7%	24 5%	4.0
As a person who follows the Hindu religion, I have to follow the teachings of the religion as a whole.	190 40.4%	208 44.2%	35 7.4%	15 3%	23 5%	1.8
I always pray and meditate.	173 37%	210 45%	24 5%	42 9%	21 4%	4.0
I always read religious scriptures.	56 12%	84 18%	35 7%	156 33%	139 30%	2.4
I always take actions or decisions based on divine consciousness.	124 26%	211 45%	26 6%	67 14%	42 9%	3.6
I always discuss matters related to religion with other Hindus.	105 22%	104 22%	78 17%	96 20%	87 19%	3.0
I attended a religion class.	28 6%	46 10%	0 0%	176 37%	220 47%	1.9
As a Hindu, I spend 5 to 10 minutes praying every day.	254 54%	216 45.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4.5
Average Min	21.9%	26.7%	7.4%	22.6%	21.1%	3.0

Findings from table above, 7 out of 9 items show a high score. Item the first which is "Religion is closely related to the moral decay of youth" shows respondents admitted that religion is an important thing in life and it can overcome the problem of moral decay. A total of 180 respondents (38%) stated totally agree with the first item. Respondents also showed positive thinking where 174 respondents (37%) strongly agree with item number two, which is the item 'divine awareness is important to me when facing challenges in life'. Item number three which is "As a religious person Hindu, I have to follow the teachings of the religion as a whole" shows 190 respondents strongly agree with this item.

The fourth item is "I always pray and meditate". This item too shows a very high significance that

is 210 respondents agree with this statement while 173 respondents strongly agree with this item. The fifth item which is "I always read religious scriptures" shows respondents who read religious scriptures are at a low level. The next item shows 67 respondents (14%) disagree and 42 respondents (9%) strongly disagree with this item. 96 respondents which is 20% stated that they disagree with the seventh item which is "I always discuss matters related to religion together other Hindus. "I attend religion classes" is the eighth item that shows a significant drop in scores compared to other items. Findings from this item shows that many respondents do not attend religious classes. "As a Hindu, I spent 5 to 10 minutes to pray every day. This last item is the highest score and percent.

Awareness of God among Hindu youth in Segamat district in this study shows that some religious practices are still at a low level. Research shows that the youth pay less attention to the reading of the scriptures of Thirumanthiram. The majority of Hindu youth were found to disagree with the statement "Thirumanthiram showing a meaningful path" and "The values found in Thirumanthiram can create divine consciousness". Many of the Hindu youth have never see the scriptures of Thirumanthiram and the contents of the text. Findings shows that more than 68% of the youth do not know the text of Thirumanthiram.

Table 1.4

The experience of divine awareness among the youth.	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean
I donate food to people who need it.	207 44%	263 56%	- 0%	- 0%	- 0%	
I donate necessities to the poor.	154 33%	316 67%	- 0%	- 0%	- 0%	
I always give physical service to people who need it.	173 37%	290 62%	7 1%	- 0%	- 0%	
I am steadfast in my principles of life.	354 75%	116 25%	- 0%	- 0%	- 0%	
I always do good deeds in the temple.	198 42%	272 58%	- 0%	- 0%	- 0%	
I involved myself in the poojai held in the temple	248 53%	184 39%	8 2%	30 6%	- 0%	
I always recite Thiruvaintheluththu manthiram during Lord worship in temple and at home.	252 54%	218 46%	- 0%	- 0%	- 0%	
I always involve myself in the velvi held in the temple.	177 38%	220 47%	20 4%	53 11%	- 0%	
Average Mean	47%	50%	0.9%	2%	0%	1.6

Table above shows the score for the practice of Divine awareness among youth through several activities such as donating food, donating essential goods, providing service in physical form, being firm in the principles of holding life, doing good deeds in the temple, saying the Thiruvaintheluththu manthiram (Om Namasivaya) and engage in the Sivavelvi ceremony. A high score from the first two items indicates that youth are concerned about the poor and disadvantaged. Indirectly, the youth express a feeling of love for the people who are in poverty and hardship and are willing to help them. Next, the third item which is 'I always provide service in physical form shows that 173 respondents strongly agree and 290 respondents agree with this statement.

The fourth item is 'I am firm in the principles of my life' also shows a high score which means that all respondents strongly agree and agree with this item. Findings from the questionnaire for the fifth item show that 42% of respondents (198 people) strongly agree and 272 (58%) respondents agree with the statement 'I always do good deeds in the temple'. This proves that the youth are

very sensitive to good practices in the temple. Apart from that, the sixth, seventh and eighth items also show a score that height. The youth's involvement in activities like this is a result of their awareness of God. All items six through eight are related to youth attendance at the temple. Youths are found to always come to the temple to worship God. They also participate in the Sivavelvi ceremony as well as recite the 'Thiruvaintheluththu' mantiram in the temple.

Table : 1.5

Comparison of the practice of youth divine awareness with Thirumanthiram

Num	The practice of divine consciousness	Thirumanthiram	Youth
1.	Giving food to God's followers	✓	✓
2.	Donating necessities to God's followers	✓	✓
3.	Doing good deeds to God's followers	✓	✓
4.	Giving service is contributing physical energy to God's followers	✓	✓
5.	Strong in principles and principles of life	✓	✓
6.	Perform sivapoojai	✓	✓
7.	Doing good deeds in the temple	✓	✓
8.	Chanting the Thiruvaintheluththu manthiram	✓	✓
9.	sivavelvi	✓	✓

Table 1.5 shows a comparison of the practice of God consciousness between Thirumanthiram and the youth. Findings from the above comparison give a clear picture of the awareness of God that exists in the youth. Thirumanthiram states that giving food to someone will bring reward. giving food to a creature that is hungry will achieve spiritual perfection. (Thirumanthiram, 1861). Giving food to the hungry is a praiseworthy act. According to the Periyapuram text in ancient times, paddy was donated to the temple to provide food for God when poojai was performed (Mageswari, 2019). According to Thirumanthiram's poem,

'Vaaraa vazhi thantha maananthi per nanthi
'Aaraa amuthu aliththaan nanthi per nanthi

(Thirumanthiram, 1784)

Thirumoolar states that when food is given to God one will feel as if one has given food to all the creatures in the world. Food is needed by humans to continue life and worship God Almighty (Vallalar, 2013). People who are in starvation will get diseases related to intestines. This will cause a person to not be able to worship God with all his heart. So food becomes the basis in helping people worship God. Therefore, food is important for life and keeping the body healthy. The person who gives food to someone who is starving is considered to be the person who gives him life. Therefore the youth who have the consciousness of God always do this practice by preparing 'Annathanam' (food) in the temple for devotees and also followers of God. 'Annathanam' is given by the youth during religious festivals such as 'Sivaraththiri', 'Navaraththiri', 'Vinayagar sathurthi', etc.

In addition, the youth also provide essential items for cooking such as rice, cooking oil, bread, biscuits, wheat flour, sugar, and so on. Donating essential items like this is done during religious festivals like 'Deepavali', 'Ponggal', 'Tahun new Tamil and so on. The main goal of the youth in giving these necessities is to help the underprivileged community celebrate a festival together with others. Indirectly this act will bring a person to the level of achieving divine consciousness. Youth also provide physical services to the local community who are not able. They often donate clothes,

wheelchairs, prosthetic legs and so on to people who need them. Donations of school uniforms are also given to poor students at the beginning of the year to cover parents' expenses.

In addition, doing good deeds at the temple is one of the activities that are often done by the youth in the Segamat area. Youth who come to the temple will usually bring flower necklaces or flowers for the statue of God in the temple. Apart from that they also pick flowers themselves to take to the temple for prayer. Youth are also willing to do charity work such as cleaning the temple area and lighting the lamp. Singing sacred songs is also a youth practice after worshipping God. Youth are willing to sacrifice time to run religious classes, and hold 'Thevaram' competitions, during school holidays. Donations in the form of money are often given by youth to parties. This donation is to cover the expenses of the prayer ceremony at the temple.

Firm practices in principles and life principles are also still practiced by youth today. For example, a Hindu will wear 'Thiruneeru' which is holy dust on the forehead. Wearing this holy dust is a principle that has been followed for generations by Hindus. Apart from that, the youth also come to the temple to pray every day. The presence of the youth to the temple during this prayer ceremony symbolizes that they hold fast to their principles. The practice of eating vegetables is still practiced by the youth on certain days. Practicing these activities in the daily life of the youth shows that they have an awareness of God that will lead them towards the achievement of spiritual perfection.

'Siva poojai is a prayer ceremony performed for Lord 'Shiva'. The Thirumanthiram text elaborates on 'Siva poojai'. The steps to be followed during this poojai are explained one by one. Thirumanthiram states that all 'Sivapoojai' ceremonies will be accepted and will be blessed by God if they are performed with love and a noble heart. Usually this 'Siva poojai is done in a temple. The 'Gurkkal' will conduct this poojai with full ritual.

All the expenses required for this 'Poojai' are borne by the youth in that area. This poojai is usually done during festivals; Sivaraththiri, 'Prathosham' and also 'Prathosha Sani'. According to Thirumanthiram this ritual of worship indirectly helps a person in his efforts to approach God.

Apart from that, the Temple is a most sacred place. The temple became the main place to carry out rituals. There are several steps that one has to follow before and after entering the temple. These steps are always followed by the youth when attending the temple. For example, washing feet, hands and face, worshipping 'Kopuram' (tower) and 'Kodimaram', etc. Next one should worship Lord 'Ganapathi' and circumambulate the temple a minimum of three times. Finally the devotees have to worship the Lord's archa which is in the main part of the temple (Karuvarai). These steps are basic when attending the temple. These steps are still practiced by the youth until now.

Next is saying 'Manthiram Thiruvaintheluththu' which is 'Namasivaya' which is defined as 'Vanakam' to God. According to Thirumanthiram a soul can escape rebirth on earth by saying 'Manthiram Thiruvaintheluththu'. Thirumoolar emphasized that 'Manthiram Thiruvaintheluththu must be recited if one wants to approach God. The researcher found that the youth who came to the temple said this manthiram in the temple and also at home. The youth is aware that reciting this 'Manthiram' will bring many rewards. Therefore they always do this activity. Youth believe that the practice of this activity can lead them to the right path in an effort to achieve divine awareness.

The 'Siva velvi' ceremony has been carried out since ages. It is said to bring many rewards. This velvi ceremony is often performed in temples. This ceremony consumes a lot of money. Therefore, the youth are willing to bear all the expenses for this ceremony willingly. They are willing to cover all expenses for this ceremony. conducting this ceremony, this activity also becomes a religious practice that is always followed by the youth.

In conclusion, the study conducted on youth shows that youth pay less attention in attending religious classes and also reading religious scriptures. Only 30% of the youth are found to read religious scriptures. These things should not be taken lightly because the followers of the religion themselves wrote and delivered this book to bring forth faith in people.

In addition, the actions and decisions taken by the youth in their lives also show a slight decrease

in that 135 respondents (29%) were found to slightly ignore the awareness of God in the actions taken by them. Ignoring the awareness of God in making decisions and not doing this can result in the youth falling into a variety of immoral behaviors in their lives. The cases that are often reported in the media about criminal acts and so on are among the evidences that can be seen clearly that they are the result of taking actions and decisions without awareness of God.

Findings from a study conducted by Haris in 2004 in Malaysia on social problems showed that 22.8 percent of urban communities suggested using a religious approach in dealing with social problems. This proves that God's awareness is very important and it needs to be practiced among the youth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion in this chapter, the researcher can conclude that Thirumanthiram's work is a treasure that is very valuable to the sect of Saivism. The poems found in the Thirumanthiram text describe God consciousness in detail. Thirumanthiram includes poems related to truth, purity of thought and action, Addhama Siddhi i.e. eight supernatural powers and Addangga Yogam. Thirumanthiram is considered to be the most valuable work because it teaches us about devotional aspects in depth. Thirumanthiram's poems also tell about the importance of respecting someone, ways of worshiping God, how to maintain the physical body, good behavior, karma done as well as ways to dissolve karma, pray, meditate and so on.

Findings from the study regarding the Thirumanthiram text show that Thirumanthiram has characteristics that encourage the youth to follow the right path. Youths who are in a hurry to do something to get something they want make them unable to make good decisions. Understanding of religion and awareness of God is very important for a young person. Youth who are said to be an asset for a country are important people in the development of the country in the future. Therefore the values found in Thirumanthiram need to be inculcated in the youth from an early age. Divine awareness is very important to the youth and they need to improve their abilities in finding solutions to the problems faced in their daily lives through the divine awareness they have.

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