Saiva Prakasa Sabha- organisation of Tamil Speaking people in Thiruvananthapuram-in the name of Lord Siva-Thiruvananthapuram-Kerala.

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Saiva Prakasa Sabha was started at Thiruvananthapuram in 1880s.Sundarampillai was one of the earliest proponents of Neo-Saivism in the late nineteenth Century. He extolled in his works a Tamil identity devoid of any foreign influence when he was the Principal of the MDT Hindu School at Tirunelveli, learnt Saiva Siddhanta from Kodakkanalur Sundara Swamigal and held a long discussion with Swami Vivekananda during his visit to Kerala. Moreover, he was supported by Thychaud Ayyaru Swamikal (1814-1909), who delivered several lectures and discourses on Bhakti,Yoga and Vedanta to the leading personalities in and around Thiruvananthapuram. The first organizing committee consisted of Valiya Melezhuthu Thiriviayimpillai as the President, Manonmaniam Sundarampillai as Vice-president and Advocate Swaminathapillai as its Secretary. Sri MoolamThirunal (1885-1924) the then Maharaja of Travancore also extended his support to the progress of the Sabha. In 1929 it was registered under the Travancore Registration Act. T.Lakshmanapillai, V. Subramaniyapillai and A. ViswalingamPillai were president, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

The aims of the Sabha were(i)Arranging lectures in front the image of Siva,(ii)Arranging Purana discourses (iii) Promoting Tamil Language, art and culture,(iv)Removal of existing evils from the Tamil society,(v) Improving the economic condition of the Tamils,(vi)Protecting the rights of Tamil minority,(vii)Providing vocational and higher education and (viii) Promoting research to the Tamils. The Sabha has succeeded to a very great extent, in realizing these goals.

Saiva Siddhanta was highlighted as a ‘Dravidian religion’ by Prof. Sundarampillai for the next two years. The most scholarly practitioners of Saiva Siddhanta were two of his disciples viz J.M NallaswamiPillai and Swami Vedachalam(Marai Malai Adigal) both of them had propagated the religion at Madras. In 1986 Prof.Sundarampillai wrote as follows,”With all difference to the Vedas, which have subsequently become the Dravidian as well as Aryan Bible, I believe that Saiva system of thought and worship(is) particularly our own”. (Letter of Prof Sundarampillai to J.M Nalla swami Pillai, dated 31st March 1886, published in Saivathathapillai,vol.II.no.B). However within two years after the establishment of the Sabha, one of its founders, Prof. Pilli died on 26th April 1897 at the young age of 42. But his followers worked hard for the growth of the Sabha further.

The Sabha had its own building within a year. For the construction of its building its members purchased seven cents of land with an old building at on the main road (near the present Ayurveda College at Trivandrum Road) in 1886. In 1888 five more cents were purchased for the Sabha. In 1971, a new three storied building was constructed there at a cost of three lakhs rupees and it was opened by V.Viswanatham, the then Governor of Kerala. Realising the first goal, the Sabha had produced a lot of Tamil reputed Scholars like Isaiuchelvar T. Lakshmanapillai, Researcher K.N. Sivarajapillai,
R. Vaithiyalingam Pillai, P. Nataraja Pillai etc. They worked as administrators and members of the Sabha and also convened series of meetings for discussing prospect of their researches. These scholars themselves later mentioned about the benefit they received from this Sabha during their research career. There is an auditorium in the top floor of the Sabha’s building. A Siva idol is installed there and regular pujas are conducted. Special religious functions are also celebrated here.

In 1954, P.S. Nataraja Pillai, son of Prof. Sundaram pillai was a minister in the Travancore government and like his father, he too worked as Vice-president of Sabha from 1955 to 1962. The Thiruvaduthurai Adinam, a Tamil scholar delivered lectures on Saiva Siddhanta at Thiruvananthapuram. Since 1982 the Kantha Sasti Vizha was celebrated. Since 1957 two more functions were introduced viz. Thiruppavai and Thiruvenpavai and these are conducting in the Tamil month of Margazhi every year. In addition to this, since, 1978, free Tamil Language coaching was given to those who like to learn Tamil. This benefited the Malayalam speaking population of Thiruvananthapuram to learn Tamil. In memory of its centenary the Sabha published a Souvenir and an endowment was opened in the name of its founder Prof. Sundaram Pillai with a view to conduct Tamil Lectures in the Tamil Department of the University of Kerala. An amount of Rs.10,000/- was given for conducting seminars in the Department.

The Sabha brought out Guga Avadara Ragasiam and Baktar Paadia Pamalai in 1960. The discourses on Sivapuramam, Tirumurugattuppadai, Tiruvacakam, Tevaram, Peria Puranam, Tirukkural were conducted and the selected discourses were published and circulated among the Tamil Scholars for free of cost. The research papers presented were collected and edited and published with the caption Karutharangu Malar. To cater the need of the reader a library was opened in the Saivaparkasa Sabha in 1971. Tamil dailies, journal and periodicals are subscribed here for promoting learning in Tamil. Protecting the rights of Tamil Minority was one of its goals of the Sabha. It offers prizes to the Tamil students who are getting highest mark in SSLC, +2, B.A and M.A, in the State of Kerala. In addition, the Sabha petitions to the Kerala government to protect their rights and alleviate their legitimate grievances.

Since its establishment several scholars and politicians visited the Sabha. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, former President of India, Thiru. V. Giri and P. Ramachandran, former Governors of Kerala, K. Kamaraj, President of the Indian National Congress and Former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu. Ma. Po Sivaganesan, T. P. Meenakshi Sundaranar, Tavathiru Kunnakudi Adikalar, Thirumuruga Kirubanatha Warrier etc. are in the long list of eminent personalities who graced the Sabha by their visits.

Up to 2003 Kavimamani P. Kumaesan was the President of this Sabha. As a scholar he is with the Sabha for the past fifty years and he published the Biography of Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai in 1994. Enjoying the support and encouragement given to this Sabha by leaders and scholars, it continues its services under the lable Saivamum Tamizhum, which means by the name of Siva working for the progress of Tamils and their language and culture.

REFERENCES

1. Interview with E. Ganesan Chettiar (Librarian) Saiva Prakasa Sabha Thiruvananthapuram on 18th December 2002.