



guidance of Prof. Jean Filliozat is engaged in the stupendous task of collecting and publishing the available Agamas one by one, but the editing is in French. As important and valuable as all these are, the efforts of the South Indian Archakar Sangam, to reprint and publish some of the Agamas for the benefit of the Archakars and the public are praiseworthy. The Sangam has already made some progress inspite of heavy odds. It is a pity that although the secular control of temples have been under Government for over 50 years now, the reprinting of the Agamas, even with temple funds, has not been given serious attention to upto this date. The Agamas are encyclopaedic in their contents, covering rituals and philosophy, and are the storehouse of temple arts, architecture, music and dance which are of fascinating interest to many.

Many have only vague notions about the Agamas as even books on Indian Philosophy and Religions pay very scant attention to them (except perhaps Dr. S. N. Dasgupta's book *History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. V*). For the information of the ignorant and the biased it has to be explained here that in point of chronology the Agamas are as ancient as the Vedas and they are both acknowledged as Divine Revelation from from the mouth of God. They are both *sabda pramāna* and lead to *avabodha jnana* (self-luminous knowledge). All theistic religious like Saivism and Vaisnavism (including the Madhva Vaisnavism) respect the Agamas and base their theological doctrines on them. The monistic Advaita relied only on the Upanishads with monistic trends for its metaphysics. The jnanapada of Agamas, are more explicit and indeed *Svetārsvatara* upanishad is sometimes called Agamic upanishad. The difference and distinction between the Vedas and the Agamas are that while the Vedas spoke of many Gods and of one Brahman, the Agamas are out and out monotheistic and their ontology is no less profound. *Sankara Samhita* of Skanda Purana speaks of the relation of the Vedas and Agamas thus: Vedas are in the middle of the mouth, the Aksharas are

the teeth and the Agamas are from the very tongue of Siva (" *Aasya madhyē sthitha veda devadevasya bhāsura, aksharām tu dautam jihvayam tu Sivjñāna* "). Later Saints like Tirumular in his *Tirumandram* which is considered to be the essence of the Agamas and Manikavachagar and Nammalvar (both Saiva and Vaisnava) and scholiasts like Haradatta, Srikantha, Sivāgrayogin Sivajnānaswami and Appaya Dikshita have looked upon Vedas as common and the Agamas as specific as the latter are for all irrespective of caste and sex that yearn for the descent of the Grace of Siva (*saktinipāda*). The Agamas are synthetic—*mantra, tantrā* and *siddhanta*, and embrace *charya, kriya, yoga* and *jnana pādas*. What is more, they provide for the sacrament of *diksa*, ordinary and special, besides the *gāyatri* for *svārtha* and *parārtha* puja. No one without Agamic *diksa* can perform any puja at home or in the temple. Hence a knowledge of the Agamas is necessary to all alike if they wish to take the sacrament of *diksa* for a divine office or for self - salvation..

The present publication of *Kāmikāgama*, Pūrvabhagā, Part I, by the South Indian Archakar Sangam, Madras (which has within its fold both Saiva and Vaisnava archakas) is to be welcomed and encouraged. This volume gives the Agama text in grantha script together with tātparya (gist) in Tamil for the benefit of all. One patala alone has been transliterated in Tamil but not others. (The Sangam has already published the entire Pūrvabhaga in Devanagari script). The contents of the present volume are briefly given in its preface. The *Tantrāvātara* patala gives the origin of the Agamas. The *Mantrāvātāra* patala gives an account of the mantras. The rest of the patalas give a detailed account of the various rituals and their significance.

Kāmikāgama is one of the longest Agamas and most of the temples in South India follow it only. It is looked up on as the feet of Siva. It deals with all the rituals from *karṣhaṇa*

(turning the sod) to *pratiṣṭa* (installation) of deities. The *uttarabhāga* deals with *dikṣā*, festivals etc. So this is a complete Manual for priests and laymen and for the inquisitive scholar who wants to know the details and symbolism of Agamic worship, private and public. Indeed there is currently a great interest in the information from other religionists and Western scholar. This publication would therefore serve a felt need by the Hindus and non-Hindus and place the Agamas before a world view.

The South Indian Archakar Association is to be congratulated on this programme of reprinting the Agamas. It deserves State support as well as the support of the professors of the faith, The Secretary of the Sangam, Sivasri C. Swaminatha Gurukkal deserves the thanks of the public for his labours even at his old age, particularly when the present cost of production of books has increased enormously. The only recompense that the Sangam would most need is the quick purchase of this Part so that the remaining Parts could be taken quickly.

I commenced this volume to the attention of all who wish to get an insight into the contents of the Agamas without which Hinduism would not be a living religion and no research on Indian philosophy would be completed.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Saiva Agamas are some of the earliest books in the Sanskrit language on the Saiva religion and philosophy, written over a period of several centuries before the Christian era. The Agamas represent an independent class of writing by very early seers, who had an inward experience and enlightenment from the Supreme Being, and who were also perhaps influenced by the Vedas in their original form. They had realised in their lives and thoughts the general truths taught by the early Upanisads. So far as Saivism is concerned, these seers were not men from the North. They were essentially representatives of All India and they reflected in their thoughts, modes of meditation and worship, and in their writing, the inherent Theism of the South. The Theism of the south or rather, the Saivism of the Tamilians, was the growth of an unbroken tradition probably from the pre-historic past and this had three elements fused into it. These are worship of idols and images, both in the shrines throughout the land and in the devotees' own houses, symbolism, and the inward meditation and realisation. These three were not separate compartments, but basically one harmonious integrated whole. When the Upanisads were added on to the Vedas in the course of the later centuries, they could not but be influenced by the religion and philosophy flourishing around them. These naturally embody a considerable volume of the thought of the agamic scholars, because some of the early Agamas were

earlier than these later Upanisads in point of time, and the Agamas were much more alive and vibrating with life and activity than the Upanisads, because they dealt with definite and concrete objects, while the others dealt only with abstract concepts. The very fact that some later Upanisads came to be written shows that the followers of the original Upanisads had to take note of agamic thoughts and, to bring them also into a single common fold, adopted the device of writing further Upanisads, to embrace fresh thought on the same subject. The Saiva Upanisads such as *Brhadjabala* did certainly come into existence a long time after the Agamas.

The Agamas claim Vedic authority for their doctrines. The agama doctrines are indeed theistic and such theism is not foreign to the Upanisads. The following agamic passages may be seen to affirm the derivation of the Agamas from the Vedas 'The siddhanta consists of the essence of the Veda' (Suprabhedagama); 'This tantra is of the essence of the vedas'; 'This siddhanta knowledge which is the significance of Vedanta is supremely good' (*Makuta*). It has been suggested that the agamic systems were developed out of the Brahmanas in the same way as the Upanisads, though at a much later stage, and that some of the later Upanisads like the *Svetasvatara*, which address the Supreme Being by a sectarian title and not as Param Brahman, as of yore, probably grew up under the shadow of the Agamas. The agamic cult which was that of the generality of the people, and the Vedic cult which was that of the priestly

classes, officiating for themselves or for others, were both indigenous; they existed and grew up side by side from the earliest times without any extraneous influence; the distinction between the two was in no sense racial. The Agamas are deemed to have scriptural authority and are often called the Veda and the Fifth Veda. As a matter of fact, although the Sanskrit *Nighantu* names the Veda as the *Nigama* and the Tantra as the *Agama*, the Veda and the Agama both seem to have been denoted by the common term *sruti* up to the XI century, after which period the above distinction of Nigama and Agama seems to have been adopted. The agamic (tantric) texts, as we know them today, had for the most part preceded Buddhism, and only the agamic cult had been able gradually to swallow up Buddhism on the Indian sub-continent, and ultimately to banish it altogether from the Indian soil; it was not the Upanisadic philosophy but the agamic cult that was responsible for the supplanting of Buddhism and for the fusion of the salient features into the core of the Hindu religion.

Several explanations have been offered for the term *agama*. One is that because it emanated from God, it is called the Agama, that which came (from God). Another is that the three letters *a-ga-ma* respectively denote *pati*, *pasu* and *pasa* (the self, the soul and the bonds) and that the agama deals with all these three entities and their relationship, and hence this name.

A Sanskrit verse gives an interesting meaning for the three syllables *a*, *ga* and *ma*:

*Agatam siva vaktrebhyah, gatam ca girija mukhe,  
Matam ca siva bhaktanam, agamam cheti katyate.*

'The agamas originated from the faces of Siva, fell on the ears of Parasakti and spread in the world as the *mata* of the Siva bhaktas'. The agamas take their name from the first letters of the words *agatam* (originated), *gatam* (fell) and *matam* (religion).

The common noun *agama* simply means coming or acquisition.

But in the Saiva school, a special root meaning is indicated for the term.

It is given as *a*-knowledge, *ga*-liberation and *ma*-removal of the bonds. The agama came to be called as such, since a study and adherence to its codes liberates the soul from bondage, causes realisation of the Supreme, and ultimately confers Eternal Bliss.

Agamas are common to the three prominent schools and they are called Agama in Saivism, Samhita in Vaishnavism and Tantra in Saktivism.

The agamas had not been quite popular in North India for the simple reason that they were all written in palm leaf manuscript in the *grantha* characters which were unknown in the north. Their script was the *nagari*. However, the Sivagama Paripalana Sangham of Devakottai published some Upagamas in the *nagari* script. The French Institute of Indology in Pondicherry are now publishing a series of agamas in the *nagari* script. They have so

far published parts of the *Ajtha*, *Raurvava* and *Mrgendra*. Their *Matanga* is to be released soon. They have been able to secure 23 out of the 28 principal agamas.

The agamas have the greatest currency in the Tamil country. The great Prof. S. N. Dassgupta has stated that not a single manuscript of importance is available in Banaras, considered the greatest seat of Sanskrit culture. It therefore goes without saying that the Saivagamas have been a rare and special preserve of the Sivacharyas in Tamilnad. All temple worship, festivals, installation, consecration etc., are here done according to the agamas. The thousands of temples in this country are standing monuments to the prevalence of the agamic cult from the ages past down to the present day.

Each Agama has a number of subsidiary agamas called Upagamas and their number is 207. Among the Upagamas the *Paushkara* and the *Mrgendra* are well known. The principal agamas being with *Kamika* and end with *Vatula*. Each agamas has the four parts or *padas* called *Vidya*, *Kriya*, *Yoga* and *Charya*. The *Vidyapada* is the philosophical part while the *Kriya pada* is the ritualistic part. The other two parts are generally very short. The *Kriyapada* of the *Kamika agama* has been the most wellknown part in Tamilnad. This is one of the largest of the known agamas. It is said to represent the Feet of Siva. Its *Kriyapada* alone has been printed, in two parts, by the Sivajnanabodha press, in 1901. The total number of verses in it are 12,000, made up as follows : *Purva-*

5166, Uttara-6477; verses lost 357. The term *Kamika* means 'the object desired'; the term *Kamikagama* is said to signify 'the Book which grants the desired object to the souls and helps them to final release through severance of bonds'. The *Kamika* is the agama which is widely in use today. Sivacharyas say that its authority derives from the fact that it always prescribes the rules very definitely, saying "this and not that".

The *Purva Kamika* the first part was published with a Tamil translation done by Visveswara Sastri of Tiruvottiyur. It has four sections dealing with the revelation of the agamas, rules for daily observance and worship, rules for the construction of temples and houses and for performance of rituals and rules for the installation of the deities.

The *Kamika* published by Shanmugasundara Mudaliar had long been out of print and most of the present generation could never have set its eyes on it. The non-availability of this Kriyapada text was naturally a great handicap to the earnest *archaka* who wanted really to study the scripture and follow it in the temple's rituals. The South Indian Archakar Association, through its Secretary Shri C. Swaminatha Sivacharya published in February 1976 the Kriyapada text alone in the nagari script. This no doubt made the text available to Sanskrit scholars but the entire bulk of the Sivacharyas could not use it because they knew only the grantha script. Realising this, the association has now brought out a handsome volume of the Kriyapada, part I, in the

grantha script with a complete paraphrase in the Tamil language, chapter by chapter, in about 480 pages. The wealth of the information and guidance contained in this part cannot be brought out in a short introduction. Suffice it to say that an *archaka* who has not made every line in this book his own does not know his job. Archakas hereafter do not have any excuse to say that they do not know any ritual connected with Siva worship. The volume is an encyclopaedia which will reward even any Saiva for a careful scrutiny.

In these days of high paper prices and high labour charges Shri Swaminatha Gurukkal has done a great service to the cult of temple worship, and the *archaka* community by publishing this volume. It is the duty of the Hindu Religious Endowments Board to see that some copies are in the library of temples and to supply copies also to the Archakas immediate distribution of the book will give the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement to the aged Gurukkal to publish further volumes of agamas.

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