

SAIVAGAMA -S- INTRODUCTION

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1.1. ŚAIVA ĀGAMA-S:

A science which comes from teacher to disciple is called āgama [ā-gam]. In this science, creation, destruction, worship of deities, repetition of mantras and accomplishment obtained through the description of tattvas, means for attaining siddhis and also the personal desires, form of meditation and yoga practice, civil codes, yantras, details of initiation and release from bondage and the way of enjoyment in higher worlds (bhoga) and liberation (mokṣa) are all explained in detail. The ¹ āgama that which gives desired knowledge and describes the means for the welfare here in this world as well as in the other world is called Tantra. Any methodical arrangement, collection of texts or verse is called Saṃhitā. So āgama or Tantra, or Saṃhitā ² speak about the same variety of texts.

The Vedas are also coming down from teacher to disciple and as such they also could be called āgamas. The āgamas are called śruti literature as they come down by tradition from teacher to disciple, they are also

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considered as revealed literature. In order to distinguish Vedas from the well known āgamas, Vedas were called Nigamas.³ These aforesaid Nigamāgamas are the main sources of the religious philosophy of the 'Sanātana dharma! The ardent followers of this eternal religion attain the summum-bonum of life, by adhering the paths directed by the āgamas and Nigamas. Since Nigama, and Āgama are emanated from Lord Śiva, it can never be contradictory. Śrī Nīlakaṇṭha Śivācārya in the first verse of his book Kriyāsāra support the view:

परस्पराविरुद्धार्थाः शिवोक्ता निगमागमाः ।
अल्पबुद्धिभिरन्योन्यं विरोधः परिकल्प्यते ॥⁴

Āgama or Tantra, as it is commonly known and accepted as synonyms, are the vast treasure believed to be revealed by the lord of the Lord's Śiva. It is generally a discourse between Lord Śiva and Goddess Pārvatī and with the manifestation of the divinities such as Rudras, Ṛṣis etc. The contents of Āgamas are much more extensive and vibrating than Upaniṣad-s as it is related to and observed in almost all the aspects

of the life by all the people of society. Some āgamas are also much more older than the later Upaniṣad-s and hence are influenced and embody the thoughts therein such as Śaiva Upaniṣad, Bṛhad Jābāla which certainly came into existence long time after the old āgamas. Āgamas are deemed to have scriptural authority as that of Veda.⁵

1.2. The Explanation of the Word of Āgama:

The āgamas are spoken of as the utterance from the mouth of Śiva in response to the queries of his consort Pārvatī. Padma Saṃhitā attempts to define āgama as follows giving the etymology of the word and detailing the generic nature of the class of text.

आगतं पञ्चवक्त्रात्तु गतं च गिरिजानने ।⁶
मतं च वासुदेवस्य तस्मादागममुच्यते ॥

Śaṅkara Saṃhitā says that Vedas are in the middle of the mouth, the Akṣaraṇi in the teeth and the āgamas in the tongue of Śiva.

आस्यमध्ये स्थितो वेदा देवदेवस्य भूसुराः ।
अक्षराणि तु दन्तेषु जिह्वायां तु शिवागमाः ॥⁷

It is believed to be emanated from God and hence termed as 'Āgama'. The syllable 'ā' denotes that which is originated 'ga' signifies 'falling' i.e., falling to the Goddess Pārvatī and 'ma' means the religion or the doctrine for the devotees. According to some Śaiva sects 'Āgama' illustrates the knowledge [ā], the liberation [ga] and the means to destroy the bonds [ma].

1.3. Veda-s and Āgama-s:

The works which take the Veda-s as authority present a religious system which is that of the four castes [Varna-śrama dharma]. Thus the Śrauta-sūtra-s deal with the details of sacrifices, the Gṛhyasūtra-s with the domestic rites and the Dharmasūtra-s and Smṛti-s with the social rules and duties of the members of the four castes. Hundreds of individual text and commentaries, followed these works. However, if one goes through this branch of literature, one does not find the type of religion that is now existing in India. These works do not give rules or regulation for worship in the form of pūjā nor for the temple worship as they are practised now. It is only

āgama-s which are the basic texts dealing with those regular personal or temple worship and with all that pertain to the temple complex.

Padma-Saṃhitā attempts to define āgama as follows: giving the etymology of the word and detailing the generic nature of the class of text.

सृष्टिश्च प्रलयश्चैव देवतानां तथार्चनम् ।
साधनं चैव सर्वेषां पुरश्चरणमेव च ॥
षट्कर्मसाधनं चैव ध्यानयोगश्चतुर्विधः ।
सप्तभिर्लक्षणैयुक्तं त्वागमं तद्विदुर्बुधाः ॥⁸

However that Veda-s and related literature do not mention about temples or temple worship as it is not an absolute proof that temple worship did not exist during Vedic period. On the contrary one may think that in an early stage the Vedic and Āgamic religions existed side by side through out India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Hundreds of Āgama texts and commentaries are available in Kashmir and Nepal as well as in Rajasthan libraries which have not yet been

completely explored. The Vedic and Āgamic contradictory statement are historically important, even if the work in which they are found are not easily dated, for they seem to be from the time of assimilation when the āgamic rituals were being introduced into the Vedic school.⁹

1.4. Groups of Āgama-s:

The āgama-s or Tantras are grouped into three varieties. Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta. Those which accept Śiva as Supreme and deal mainly with the worship of Śiva and his retinue are called Śaiva-āgamas. Those which state Viṣṇu as Supreme are Vaiṣṇava āgamas and those which describe the Śakti or the Goddess as Supreme are called Śākta āgamas.¹⁰

1.4.1. Śaiva Āgamas:

The Śaiva āgamas are four fold, Śaivism, Pāsupatam, Somam and lāguḷam.

शैवश्चतुर्विधं ज्ञेयं शैवं पाशुपतन्तथा ।
सौमंलागुलमित्येते चतुर्भेदाः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥¹¹

The first one is of two kinds, Kāśmīr Śaiva and Siddhānta Śaiva, Kāśmīr Śaivism is mainly followed in

North India. Siddhānta Śaivism is in vogue in South India. There are twenty-eight basic texts (mūlāgama-s), each of them having some supplements (upāgama-s), the total number of which is two hundred and seven. ~~For complete list of basic and supplementary texts, See Appendix. p 97.~~

1.4.2. Vaiṣṇava Āgama-s:

The Vaiṣṇava āgamas are subdivided as Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa. The āgamas revealed by sage Vaikhānasa to his disciples Bhṛgu, Marīci, Atri and Kāśyapa and handed over by them to the world are Vaikhānasa āgama¹².

The Pāñcarātra āgamas are three fold namely,

- a) divya, revealed directly by Lord Nārāyaṇa, such as Sāttvata Saṃhitā, Paṣkara Saṃhitā and Jayākhyā Saṃhitā;
- b) Munibhaṣita - spoken by the sages such as Bharadyāja Saṃhitā, Pārameśvara Saṃhitā and Padma Saṃhitā and
- c) Āptamanuja prokta, written by men whose words are trust-worthy.¹³ The total number of Pāñcarātra text so far known are enumerated as two hundred and nineteen or two hundred and twenty five but only a few are available.

1.4.3. Śākta Tantras:

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The Śākta tantras are theoretically enumerated as Sixty-four. They are grouped into two kinds Dakṣiṇa and Vāma, right hand school and left hand school. ¹⁴

1.5. Name of the Āgama-s:

The Sadāśiva, the Sakala form of the Supreme Śiva revealed in the first ten of the mūlāgama-s to ten Śiva-s [Praṇavaśiva, etc] and as such they are called Śivabheda. The later eighteen were revealed to eighteen Rudra-s [Anādirudra etc] and as such they are called Rudrabheda.

कामिकं योगजं चिन्त्यं कारणं त्वजितन्तथा ॥
दीप्तं सूक्ष्मं सहस्रञ्च अंशुमान्सुप्रभेदकम् ।
विजयश्चैव विश्वासं स्वायंभुवमथानिलम् ॥
वीरश्च रौरवश्चैव मकुटं विमलन्तथा ।
चन्द्रज्ञानश्च विम्बश्च प्रौढगीतं ललितं तथा ॥
सिद्धं सन्तान सर्वोक्तं पारमेश्वरमेव च ।
किरणं वातुलश्चैव अष्टाविंशति संख्यया ॥
तेषु पूर्वे दशप्रोक्ता शिश्वभेदेति संज्ञिकम् ।
तथा पराष्टदशकं रुद्रभेदमिति स्मृतम् ॥¹⁵

All these āgama-s are believed to have been sprung forth from the five faces of the lord of Śiva, namely, Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īṣana.¹⁶

Then the āgama-s were taught by Śiva-s or Rudra-s to gods by gods to sages and by sages to men and then the line continues by tradition. The Tantraāvataṛapaṭala [in Chapter relating to revelation of tantra-s] each āgama gives details of the āgama-s and upāgama-s, their extent, teacher, disciples, tradition etc. ~~See Appendix.~~

As this was oral tradition they were called Śruti, Hārīta in his Dharmaśāstra explains in his first two sūtra-s that Śruti literature is of two kinds, Vedic and Tantric. Kullūkabhaṭṭa in his commentary on Manusmṛti [11, 1] explains the same thing.¹⁷ So it seems even during the Dharmasūtra period, the school and tradition of āgama literature was known to Vedic school and they considered this also as oral tradition.

1.6. General belief about the Āgama-s having

Four Parts:

The canonical texts, mūlāgama-s and upāgama-s are considered as having four pāda-s (sections, Vidyā, Kriyā,

Yoga and Cāryā. The four sections involved are, vidyā or jñāna (doctrine, philosophy), yoga, kriyā (ritual) and caryā (discipline or rules of behaviour) - this according to the so-called 'descending' order, clear to the Tamil school of Śaiva Siddhānta.¹⁸ The representatives of this school are indeed among the writers who most heavily insist on the above sub-division of the āgamas. For they consider the four types of corresponding teachings (starting from caryā) to be successive steps towards the ultimate goal, which is liberation (mokṣa) supposedly given by jñāna. Such is the opinion voiced for instance by Devasenapathi, following Tamil masters of the sixteen century,¹⁹ and many other authors of the same school could be cited who have expressed the same view.

We must mention separately a passage of the suprabhedā which occurs in its chapter on the 'decent of scriptures' (Tantrāvatārapaṭala). The account closely follows the common pattern, with this interesting detail, when we reach suprabhedā itself (it is the last of the first ten āgamas, which constitute

the group called Śivabheda), we read that this text is called suprabheda (of a good variety or having good division) on account of it being alone in showing clearly the four sections from kriyā to jñāna.

क्रियादिज्ञानपर्यन्तं अत्रैवेह प्रदृश्यते ।
इदं शास्त्रं अनेनैव सुप्रभेदं इति स्मृतम् ॥²⁰

Relating to the four pāda-s in Kamikāgamam, the text says:

सापेक्षनिरपेक्षाणि शिववाक्यान्यनेकधा ।
चतुष्पाद्युतान्येव भुक्तिमुक्त्यर्थसाधनम् ॥²¹

1.6.1. Vidyāpāda-[Jñānapāda]:

The Vidyāpāda or Jñānapāda deals with philosophy and defines the main three entities, pati, paśu and pāśa that is the supreme soul, the bondage and their relation the cosmic world.

शैवागमेषु मुख्यं पतिपशुपाशा इति क्रमात्त्रितयश्च ।
जीवज्ञानी पशुज्ञानी शिवज्ञानी पतिः स्मृतः ॥²²

The number of worlds (bhuvana) differ in different āgama-s, the creation the lords of the worlds, the seven crores of mantras which are liberated āṇu-s (souls) half

of them remaining still without any action, just enjoying the Supreme bliss and the other half helping the souls in bondage to obtain liberation, the five kalā-s, the pure and impure tattva-s, the six-fold path (adhvan) and the five-fold action of Śiva for the benefit of soul in bondage. Being tied up by these strings the jīva-s called pasu-s do not know the nature of the lord and hence not in Samsāra. The knowledge of the Lord is only through his blessings . It is forattaining his blessings that we must follow the Śaivāgama-s and act according to them.

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1.6.2. Kriyāpāda:

The Kriyāpāda deals with rituals starting from the selection of site upto the construction of the temple. The materials to be collected for the construction of the building as well as idols, the rituals dealing with consecration of temples and idols, the rituals to be conducted daily, occasionally and yearly, Special and expiation ceremonies. The detailed construction of temples and images are described in Śilpaśāstra-s.

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Some details are given in āgama-s whenever some ritual is necessary. Personal rituals of the devotees are also explained in this section.

1.6.3. Yogapāda:

The Yogapāda deals with purification of the nāḍi-s, the eight, seven or six accessories of yogic path (yogāṅga) and movement of soul in the paths called arcirādi or dbūmādi etc., and also the details of six cakra-s. The yoga system prescribed in āgama-s has much difference with the Yogaśāstra or Patañjali and as such is called Śaivayoga.

1.6.4. Caryāpāda:

The Caryāpāda deals with convention, rules and regulations to be followed by the followers of the Śaiva school, the different higher stages that could be attained by regular practice and initiation, the duties of the teacher (ācārya), the high priest (sādhaka), the putraka (who has a higher initiation) and the samayin, the follower of convention of the school, who obtains the first initiation.

Relating to the four pāda-s in each āgama in the texts available, we find mainly the kriyāpāda, mostly because this was the most important portion needed by priests for their practices, and manuscripts of this portion seem to have been specially guarded. ²⁶

Amongst the rare works which are available with their four pāda-s, we may note two mūlāgama-s, suprabheda and kirāṇa and two upāgama-s, mṛgendra and matāṅga-pārameśvara, the last two being available with commentaries and being profusely quoted by authors of Paddhatis as great authority.

In some āgama-s it seems that portions of other pāda-s, have been mixed with the kriyāpāda which is generally the best preserved as we have seen. It must be told however that even in the kriyāpāda-s some portion seems to have been lost due to the decay of a manuscript and due to the carelessness of the priests who were guarding them more or less secretly without knowing how to preserve them. Thus after so many decades, we are not in a position to state in which form the original

āgama-s with four pāda-s came down from teacher to disciple in tradition. There are even different versions of the same text like - Kamikāgama or Kāraṇ-āgama.

1.7. The Eighteen main Paddhatis:

Apart from those significant texts which had been revealed by Śiva himself, the Śaivāgama literature comprises the eighteen main paddhatis attributed to main teacher in this line, such as Dūrvāsa, Sadyojyoti, Ugrajyoti, Rāmakaṇḍar, Vidyakaṇḍar, Nīlakaṇḍar, Somaśambu, Īśānaśambhu, Brahmaśambhu, Jñānaśambhu, Hṛdayaśivan, Vairāgyaśivan, Trilocanaśivan, Varunaśivan, Īśvaraśivan, Aghoraśivan, Vamadeva and Īśānaśiva. The Somaśambhu paddhati is called Kriyakāṇḍakramāvali. Aghoraśiva paddhati, is named Kriyākramadyotikā. In addition to these there exist many more paddhati's commentaries, works on ritual or philosophy and numerous hand books and notes by learned priests.

1.8. The Temples and Śaivāgamas:

It seems that in ancient times each āgama was

connected with a special temple. For example, as per tradition the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram followed Makuṭāgama and Vaidyeśvara temple Vātulāgama and so on.²⁷ But all these temples have been renovated periodically and it is not sure as to whether they followed the same āgama during reconstruction and renovation.²⁸

Texts of Śaivāgama-s have been abridged and revised so many times and as a result at present we find atleast three versions of Kamikāgama, the main āgama which is traditionally handed over to us mostly followed in practice. Further the authors of paddhatis who were great masters, after consulting all the āgamas prepared some standard texts which became the basic texts in relation to all the rituals and other things pertaining to temples and to its followers. The last of these masters are Aghoraśiva and Īśānaśivacārya whose paddhati's are being followed practically now for all Śaivite rituals.²⁹

1.9. The Śaivite rituals and an Ācārya (Priest):

An ācārya (priest) must move physically within the temple during the course of worship and he is centred

more around the main deity. Their movements are in
formed by the same logic of emission and reabsorption
which governs the more static dispositions of divine
principles stationed within the temple complex. ³⁰

The temple, as we have seen is an emanated
structure unfolding from its centre and space within
the temple is organised as a concentric hierarchy with
the most exalted area located at or nearest to the
centre. ³¹ To approach the presiding deity Śiva, the
worship necessarily begins outside the temple walls
and gradually approaches the inner sanctum moving from
the periphery to the centre of the ritual space.

Not everyone can accomplish this approach. Only
those person who are qualified, within the Śaiva
hierarchy of spiritual attainment may enter the most
sacred sanctum of temple. ³²

The āgamas make specific provisions concerning
who may and may not perform temple worship on behalf
of others. Worship on behalf of others must always be
done by a Śaiva brāhmaṇa. A pious ādīśaiva best among

the brahmanas does worship regularly, but if others perform worship other than for their own behalf the worshipper will be destroyed.

परार्थयजनं कार्यं शिवविप्रैस्तु नित्यशः ।
धार्मिकः कुरुते नित्यमादिशैवो द्विजोत्तमः ॥
अन्ये तु स्वार्थकादन्यं कुर्युश्चेत्कर्तृनाशनम् ।
शिवसृष्टिं विना ये तु जायन्ते ब्रह्मणो मुखात् ॥³³

One criterion is that of birth a priest must be born as a brahmin and moreover in one of the five ādisaiva (primary Śaiva) or Śaiva-brahmana clans. Other brahmins are disqualified. ~~I will explain the ācāryalakṣaṇa in this study coming in the third and fourth chapters respectively.~~

1.10. The Initiation Ritual necessary for priestly competence:

Not only must a priest [an ācārya] be born in the proper brahmanic clan, but he must also be qualified ritually.

Only a member of the Śaiva community who has undergone both liberating initiation (nirvāṇadīkṣā)

and a priestly anointment [ācāryābhiṣeka] may act suitably as temple priest, worshiping on behalf of the community.

No strain attaches to worship undertaken for other's benefit that is offered by an intelligent Śaiva-brāhmaṇa who has received initiation and anointment, since he will be obedient to the order of Śiva.

शिवदीक्षाभिषिक्तस्य शिवविप्रस्य धीमतः ।
शिवाज्ञावशतस्तस्य परार्थेज्या न दोषभाक् ॥³⁴

An ācārya initiated member of Śaiva community, whether house-holder, ascetic or priest should perform nityapūjā [the basic qualification]. Samayadīkṣā, the 'general initiation' that confers according to most accounts, the competence to perform worship on one's own behalf [ātmarthapūjā] which stands in addition. For many Śaiva house holders that is sufficient. A temple priest who is responsible for offering worship on behalf of others [pararthapūjā], however, must undergo additional ritual preparation, a 'liberating

initiation' [nirvāṇadīkṣā] and then a priestly anointment [ācāryabhiṣeka].

Secondly, an ācārya has to be a male. The performance of nityapūjā, both public and private, restricts and makes only males eligible to receive the general initiation 'with seed (sabīja) that enables one to offer worship oneself and perform initiation with seed. This binds one to the common code of conduct. The samayācārya for those not capable of receiving this initiation perform initiation without seed (nirbīja)^{and} do not offer the common code of conduct.

समयाचारसंयुक्ता सबीजा जायते नृणाम् ।
निर्बीजा त्वसमर्थानां समयाचारवर्जिता ॥³⁵

The initiation ritual necessary for priestly competence will be described in the ^{mūlāgama-s} ~~next chapter~~ of Śaivāgamadīkṣāvidhi with brief notes.

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