

## Chapter One

### Jñāna and Kriyā:

### Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas

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#### Introduction

#### The Pair *Jñāna-Kriyā* at Different Levels

There is perhaps no Indian school where the pair of concepts “knowledge” and “action” (*jñāna* and *kriyā*) is given such prominence as with the Śaivas, especially in these branches of Śaivism that are more or less directly based on the Āgamas and go by the name of *Southern* and *Northern Śaivism*.<sup>1</sup> Here, we will deal exclusively with the first, technically called *Śaiva-Siddhānta*,<sup>2</sup> but much of what will be said applies to the Northern school as well.

It is but natural to start with Śiva, whose inherent Power (*Śakti*) usually is described as having two sides: one called *Power of Knowledge*, *Jñāna-Śakti* or *Dṛk-Śakti*; the other *Power of Action*, *Kriyā-Śakti*.<sup>3</sup> These Powers are not separate, being only the two complementary aspects of the unique infinite Power of the God, called simply *spiritual power* (*Cicchakti*)<sup>4</sup> when considered as a whole. This *Śakti* is sometimes likened to the effulgence of the Sun-Śiva,<sup>5</sup> and in this perspective the God is the *dharmin* and His Power, the *dharma*. But their inseparability is always insisted upon: Śiva would be nothing without His *Śakti*, is different from Her<sup>6</sup> only in appearance, so that perhaps we should better say that the two Powers we are speaking of “constitute” Śiva. Whatever the case, the fact that we wish to stress is the polarization of Śiva’s Power in two directions and only two. This bipolarization may well be lost sight of when one considers the numerous lists of three, five, eight, nine, sixteen, and more *Śaktis*,<sup>7</sup> each with a particular function, that we find

in the Āgamic literature. In fact, these extensive lists most certainly represent a later development of the doctrine, which introduced subtle distinctions within the Śakti concept and tried to connect them with all kinds of triads, pentads, and so on, met with in the cosmology or ontology of the school. Even the very common list of three, which begins with a Will or Wish (Icchā) logically anterior to Jñāna and Kriyā, is decidedly less satisfactory than the simple division into two; for the "power to know" is not the knowledge, nor is the "Power to act" an action, so that one fails to see any necessity for imagining a "Power to will" (even less a Will, as usually understood). On the contrary, the division into Jñāna and Kriyā is natural. It is almost always the one given at the outset of the considerations on Śakti, and sometimes the only one ever mentioned. Besides, it is reflected in the definition of the soul itself. As is well known, the Āgamas maintain that the essential nature of the soul (*ātman*, *aṇu*), which manifests itself when the soul is freed from the bonds that prevent it to shine, is exactly the same as that of Śiva, with the sole difference that the soul has been liberated from its bonds at a given moment and by the grace of Śiva, whereas Śiva is eternally free.<sup>8</sup> Now, the most usual and much repeated description of the soul is given in a few words in the Mṛgendra (vp, 2, 5): *caitanyaṃ dyk-kriyārūpaṃ tad asty ātmani sarvadā* ("in the *ātman* exists at all times a spiritual [power] (*caitanyaṃ* is here synonym of *cit* generally used) consisting in Vision and Action").<sup>9</sup> No other Power is ever mentioned. We feel therefore justified to ignore the complications of the later doctrine and consider both Śiva and the liberated souls as unlimited masses of Power, or Energy, susceptible to manifest themselves in two directions, knowledge on the one hand, action on the other hand.

At this level, the terms *jñāna* and *kriyā* refer to powers.<sup>10</sup> Their expression, or actualization, is the unlimited knowledge that God has of the universe and the unbounded action He may exert on this universe; that is, His omniscience (*sarvajñatva*) and His omnipotence (*sarvakartṛtva*). This one may accept as a general view; but a serious difficulty presents itself when one tries to understand this actualization more precisely. As far as *Kriyā* is concerned, we are told that it is by Her mere presence that She acts on the *bindu*, the subtle matter which, when so "excited," gives birth to the realities that constitute the world.<sup>11</sup> And we know the form that the resulting activity is taking: they are the well-known "five actions" of Śiva, which we shall talk about presently. But what about *Jñāna*? Even if we admit that the action of presence, as a rule attributed to *Kriyā*, in fact concerns the Śakti as a whole, it remains to understand

what sort of knowledge Śiva is supposed to have through the play of this Power. We would spontaneously think of some transcendent knowledge, without any relation to ordinary human knowledge, and it might be that some masters of the Siddhānta have upheld views of this kind. But this is not what we actually read. The rare explanations we find in our texts are quite naive and matter of fact: in the same way as a weaver cannot carry on his trade without knowing all about the threads, and so forth, God has to know the objects on which He exerts an action. Because His action is unbounded (he is *sarvakṛt*), His knowledge must be unlimited too,<sup>12</sup> but it is not essentially different from human knowledge.

Another problem concerns the timing, if we may say so, of the manifestation of these divine faculties. According to Kashmirian philosophers, this manifestation is progressive, from the supreme Śiva, where Jñāna and Kriyā are not differentiated, to lesser aspects of the God, where one or the other shines particularly. This vision implies a certain anteriority, and hence superiority, of Jñāna with respect to Kriyā (and even a different conception of Kriyā),<sup>13</sup> which is not belied by the other teachings concerning the Śakti. Now, the Siddhānta, which in many respects seems to have preserved an older form of the Śaiva thought, teaches nothing of the sort concerning Śiva.<sup>14</sup> Sure enough, some texts do explain the three states that the God seems to assume (*laya*, *bhoga*, *adhikāra*; or *śakta*, *udyukta*, *pravṛtta*; or *niṣkala*, *sakala-niṣkala*, *sakala*) by differences in the condition of the Śakti, which is at rest, so to speak (or closed like a bud), in the first case; ready to act in the second; and fully active in the third.<sup>15</sup> But this conception does not entail any dissymmetry in the manifestation of Jñāna and Kriyā, still less any hierarchy between them. Neither does the description, given in several texts, of a progressive unveiling of these Powers in the soul on its journey toward liberation, which moreover is quite another story. So far as Śiva is concerned, there can be, according to the Siddhānta, no superiority, or anteriority, of one of His two Śaktis on the other; at least, theoretically. In fact, a certain partiality for one or the other may be observed in some passages where the texts are not busy with formal definitions. Sometimes, Jñāna-Śakti is spoken of as if She could be identified with Cit, the undifferentiated Śakti, or even directly with Śiva, and therefore appears to hold a superior position.<sup>16</sup> But in the majority of cases, the partiality for Kriyā is striking. For instance, the three above-mentioned conditions of the Śakti are attributed to Kriyā alone by the Ratnatraya,<sup>17</sup> and it is the commentator, Aghoraśiva who explains that by implication Jñāna also is meant, as both are inseparable. More often, it is indirectly

that we perceive the greater interest for Kriyā, by the use of the single word *Śakti* when Kriyā-Śakti is clearly meant, as if this Power of Action were the essential aspect of Śiva's Power.<sup>18</sup> We certainly are not far from the mark if we suggest that Śiva was conceived as a Power, without specification, but with the idea of action in the foreground, long before this Power was described as having two sides, Jñāna and Kriyā. And this is quite natural, for the creatures—say, men—experience (or believe they do) the Power of God through some effects, the causes of which they attribute to definite actions of this God, whereas they are not directly aware of His knowledge. The latter is only inferred from His actions. Typically, when a Śaiva master wishes to establish the existence of two infinite Powers in Śiva, he always starts with the evidence of the Power to act and deduces from it, as its necessary condition, the Power to know.<sup>19</sup> We have seen earlier the special conception of Jñāna implied by this way of reasoning.

A last observation may be useful: the word *Jñāna* in this context is often replaced by *Dṛk* (one can then speak of "the Power of Vision"), never by *Vidyā*.

But let us come back to Śiva and his activity concerning the universe. The Siddhāntins maintain that this activity has no motive other than the ultimate liberation of the souls (the *aṅus*); to wit, the removal of the impurity (*mala*, or *āṇavamala*, "impurity of the soul"), which, from no conceivable beginning, "covers" their natural infinite Power, making them ignorant as well as impotent. For this removal, they say, cannot take place without the souls being given both a body (gross and subtle), and a world to live in, consuming their past *karman* and generating a new one. Through the experiences that the souls will undergo in their successive births, their *mala* will "ripen" and be finally ready to be removed.<sup>20</sup> This is why, and only why, Śiva creates the worlds: a series of "pure" worlds manifested out of a very subtle matter called *bindu*; and a series of "impure" worlds, permeated by the same *bindu* but manifested out of a less subtle matter called *māyā*.<sup>21</sup> Both *māyā* and *bindu* are eternal, both are external to Śiva, and both—but especially *bindu*—are sometimes considered as Śaktis of the God. We shall come back later to this peculiar Śakti of a nonspiritual nature. Having created the worlds, Śiva maintains them in existence for a while, then destroys them at a given moment, only to create them anew—one cycle in this process widely encompassing any known puranic period. The three acts just referred to (*śṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, and *saṃhāra*) are attributed to the supreme God by all the theistic schools in India, but the Śaivas add two more, concerning, not the whole universe

like the first three, but only the souls: Grace (*anugraha*) by which Śiva gives them liberation by loosing them from the *mala*, and Obstruction (*rodha*, *nirodha*, *tirobhāva*, *saṃrakṣaṇa*), by which He maintains them in the worlds—or, to use the technical language of the school, sees that they consume the fruits of their *karman*<sup>22</sup>—and hence ensures their continued association with the products of *māyā* (or *bindu*, if they have already exhausted their *karman*). Grace is said to be the operation of Anugraha-Śakti (Salvific Power), and it takes the form of a *dikṣā*, which is an act of Śiva, even when it is performed through the agency of a human guru. Obstruction is the operation of Rodha-Śakti (or Nirodha-Śakti—also called Tirodhāna-Śakti, Tirobhāva-Śakti and Vāmā), and it takes the form of various hindrances, which at first sight appear to be added by a malign power to the natural obstacle represented by the *mala*. These two Śaktis, however, are not different: they are but two aspects that the unique Śakti of Śiva—naturally Kriyā-Śakti, but the texts speak only of “Śakti”—assumes in succession with regard to each soul. Rodha-Śakti acts as explained before so long as the *mala* of this soul is not ripe, performing an act that seems to be a punishment but is already a grace in disguise; and She automatically turns into Anugraha-Śakti as soon as the *mala* is ripe, ready to be removed through *dikṣā*.<sup>23</sup> We come then to the number five for the operations (*kriyās*) of Śiva, each of them associated with one of the Faces of Sadāśiva.<sup>24</sup>

Now, within the activity called *creation* (*śrṣṭi*), there is a definite operation of Śiva that is of special interest to us: the handing down by God to the men (we shall thereafter forget all the other sentient beings, on earth or elsewhere, and especially those who, living in the “pure” world, beyond *māyā*, know nothing of human predicaments and cares) of his Science, called the *Science of Śiva* (*śivajñāna*), or simply but with the utmost veneration *The Science* (*jñāna*).<sup>25</sup> It takes the form of a body of specific instructions, which the God first revealed to some chosen divine Beings, who handed them down to the men, via a series of intermediaries forming a kind of descending ladder. At the bottom of this ladder, the men receive this teaching in the form of texts, called *Tantras* or *Āgamas*.<sup>26</sup> These texts therefore have Śiva as their author; and though their content has suffered a progressive simplification during the handing down process, to allow for the decreasing faculties of the recipients, it is assumed that they are composed of the very words of Śiva and nothing else.<sup>27</sup> The *Āgamas* on that account are fully authoritative, as no other scripture (including the Vedas) could be.<sup>28</sup> They are the present God makes to men to lead them toward salvation. For all the other

ways, taught in various schools and supposedly salvific, are only blind alleys in the eyes of the Śaivas, or at best roads to some paradises from where the soul necessarily will have to descend.

Returning now to our enquiry, it is clear that, in the present context, the word *jñāna* refers not to the operation of knowing, but to the totality of the information that the devotees of Śiva have to know if they want to attain liberation; that is to say, identity with Śiva. This body of knowledge comprises ritual techniques (mainly), philosophical doctrines, rules of right conduct, details on the composition of the subtle body, and so on.<sup>29</sup> The word *jñāna* therefore is better rendered by "science," rather than "knowledge." Not surprisingly, we find it often replaced by *vidyā*. Now, if we look for a corresponding *kriyā* to this all-comprehensive *jñāna*, it seems that the best candidate would be this "action" of men that consists in the use made by them of this divine gift; that is to say, the practice of the *śāstra* in the broadest sense, beginning with the study of all the teachings without distinction. But we usually do not find such a couple in evidence.

Leaving Śiva and the Āgamas for a moment, we must now consider the human soul, where we find the pair *jñāna-kriyā* as a pale reflection of the one which exists at the highest level. As we already saw, the soul, whose nature is the same as Śiva's, has been reduced to a state of total infirmity by the stain (*mala*) that "covers" its natural powers. To undergo the experiences we have spoken of, and that alone will permit the ripening (and future removal) of this *mala*, the soul of necessity must acquire a minimum of capacity. This is the role of two of the "realities" (*tattvas*) which, engendered by the *māyā*, are parts of the subtle body that the soul is given at the beginning of a new creation: the first one, called *kalā-tattva*, tears up, as it were, a bit of the *mala*, unveiling in part the Power of Action of the soul; whereas the second, called *vidyā-tattva*, slightly reveals the Power of Knowledge, thus enabling the soul to receive (later, and through the working of other *tattvas* like *buddhi*) the necessary information from what will be its environment. Such is the gist of the process—as described for instance in the Mṛgendra<sup>30</sup> and generally accepted by the school—that transforms a wholly impotent being into an agent and a knower. The soul is now endowed with a minute part of its own natural *śakti*, which presents the same dichotomy of knowledge and action as the one we find in the unlimited Power of Śiva or the liberated soul. Only, the dichotomy seems to have here a greater reality; and, what is more disconcerting, the (theoretically) perfect symmetry between knowledge and action recognized in the infinite Śakti seems to have been lost.

The acquisition of the two limited faculties is in effect accomplished in two successive stages—for the *vidyātattva* is begotten by the *kalātattva*, and only after the Kriyā-Śakti has been partly uncovered—whereas it was understood and will always be affirmed that Kriyā-Śakti cannot go without Jñāna-Śakti, so that any unveiling of the one should entail a simultaneous and similar unveiling of the other.<sup>31</sup> This violation of the general law is difficult to account for. Let us for the moment only note that, here too, *kriyā* is given prominence over *jñāna*: the soul, it seems, must acquire the capacity to act before the “wish to know” arises in it.

Whatever explanation we may accept on this point, it remains that the couple formed by the limited knowledge and the limited action of an ordinary man is the reproduction, at a lower level, of the perfect pair constituted by the infinite knowledge and the unbounded action of Śiva and the liberated souls. And this is true whether we consider the two faculties in themselves or in their actual expression.

### Statement of Our Problem: Doctrine versus Action According to the Āgamas

The preceding considerations have provided us with a general frame in which to inscribe the limited problem we especially intend to deal with and that concerns the interplay of knowledge and action within the Śaiva Scriptures. This problem can be approached from two different directions: pursuing the soul’s epos, we could ask ourselves what are—or what should be, according to the texts—the respective parts that man’s two faculties, knowledge and action, must play in his journey toward the goal; or we can consider the texts in themselves and, deviating from the line we have followed up to now, attempt to examine the connection between their theoretical and their practical teachings. We shall adopt the second viewpoint, for the enquiry it will lead to is of greater interest for the study of Śaivism. We shall keep the first question in mind, however, and try to give it an indirect answer while busying myself with the second. Let us then turn to this problem; to wit, the relation between the doctrine (*jñāna*, *vidyā*) taught in the Āgamas, and the rituals (*kriyā*) described in the same works.

First of all, attention should be called to the shift in meaning we impose on the word *jñāna*: from the all-comprehensive Science represented by the Āgamas themselves, we pass to only a fraction of it, the doctrine, that is to say, the intellectual conceptions about God, the souls, the world, and so on, formulated by our texts.

Whereas in its larger sense, the knowledge given by Śiva to mankind can in no way be divorced from action, as it comprises the ritual procedures, the right conduct, and so on, in its limited sense of "doctrine," its links with action are no longer evident and can rightly be questioned. It is to this task we shall now address ourselves, forgetting for a while all the other meanings of the word *jñāna*.

Some further precisions on the two terms under investigation are needed, taking into account the formal organization of the Āgamas.<sup>32</sup> As is well known, some of them distribute their teachings into four "quarters" (*pādas*): *jñāna-* or *vidyā-*, *kriyā-*, *caryā-*, and *yoga-pāda* (in any order), which respectively deal with doctrine, rituals, right conduct, and yoga. It is often suggested that such is the normal situation, and that all the Āgamas which do not answer this description have lost such or such *pādas*. Without attempting to criticize this hypothesis for the moment, we shall simply ask ourselves whether we can rely on this subdivision for the definition of the two terms of our enquiry: do *jñāna* and *kriyā* correspond respectively to the contents of *jñānapāda* and *kriyāpāda*?

Let us begin with the term *kriyā*. If we look into the contents of those (rare) Āgamas that do possess the four *pādas*,<sup>33</sup> we are struck by the fact that the content of the section called *kriyāpāda* is highly variable. Some Āgamas, like the Suprabhedā, list in their *kriyāpāda* all the rituals connected with the temple, but exclude from it those (*dikṣā*, etc.) that concern the disciples and that they include in their *caryāpāda*. Conversely, an Āgama like the Kiraṇa<sup>34</sup> describes the *dikṣā* and related rituals in its *kriyāpāda*, but deals with the establishment of images (*pratiṣṭhā*) and similar rituals in its *caryāpāda*. And it is in the *yogapāda* of the same Kiraṇa that we find all the rites connected with death, which, quite naturally, in the other texts are described in the *caryāpāda*. In the same *yogapāda* we also find with some surprise the very typical ritual called *lifting of the marks* (*liṅgod-dhāra*); that is, the rite that someone coming from another sect must go through to join the Śaiva sect, and which is usually dealt with in connection with *dikṣā*. These few examples will be enough to show that it would be a serious mistake to circumscribe the concept of *kriyā* by relying on the classification offered by some chosen texts. One must simply take the word in the general sense of "ritual act," whatever the object and beneficiary of this act and whatever the section where it may be described in such or such Āgama.

This state of affairs should in no way disturb us. It shows only that the subdivision of the teachings of Āgamas (so rarely met with in the extant works) is quite artificial and probably rather late;



and that we should refrain from explaining automatically, on the strength on some formal declarations found in the Āgamas,<sup>35</sup> the absence of *yogapāda* and *caryāpāda* (we will leave the *jñānapāda* aside for the moment) in the texts we have by loss of material in the course of time. It is more realistic to admit that, in most cases, the different rituals were first given one after the other, in a logical order perhaps, but without any attempt of classification, and that they only later were forced into pre-labeled drawers.

Now about the term *jñāna*, in the sense of “doctrine,” or “philosophy.” When the text is divided into four *pādas*, we naturally have to look for this doctrine in the *jñānapāda* (frequently called *vidyāpāda*); and we actually find it explained there, more or less clearly, more or less precisely. In the present condition of the majority of the texts, however, no such subdivision exists, or only a (questionable) splitting into a modest *vidyāpāda* and a huge *kriyāpāda*. Shall we then have to limit our study to the rare Āgamas that possess a *vidyāpāda*? If such were the case, the results of our investigation would carry little weight. Fortunately, the situation is not so hopeless, for the texts deprived of a doctrinal section are not on that account without any doctrinal teaching. Much such information is given in the course of ritual descriptions, either in the form of whole chapters,<sup>36</sup> or of groups of verses, or again of stray allusions, all the more precious as they are unsystematic. And this happens even in the texts provided with four *pādas*. Besides, some rituals are transparent as to the ideas that lie behind them and open for us, in this way, interesting and often unexpected vistas on the doctrine. This however happens rarely, and most of the rituals we come across are on the contrary completely opaque—a disturbing fact on which we will have to come back.

We are now in a position to start our enquiry. We shall proceed by asking ourselves two questions: first, is there any tight and regular correspondence between the set of beliefs overtly or covertly accepted by the Āgamas and the ritual edifice they describe? second, which of the two, knowledge or ritual, has priority over the other, inspiring it as it were?

Such an enquiry is set with all kinds of difficulties. Some of them are purely psychological, coming from our own cultural conditioning. We would spontaneously maintain that one thinks before acting—and derive from this fact, insufficiently analyzed, much too easy an answer to the second question—and certainly opine that the ritual therefore must be a faithful expression of the theoretical convictions, a positive answer to the first question, which also betrays a naive confidence in the internal unity of our

texts. This first obstacle to an impartial appreciation of the Āgamas is not insuperable, but should not be overlooked.

The most serious difficulties, however, are objective and come from the Āgamas themselves. We do not think here of the absence, in such or such text, of this or that type of information, but of the lack of consensus among our sources. Even if we know well that each Āgama constitutes a whole in itself,<sup>37</sup> the fact that they are put together in a corpus connected with a definite school makes us expect a measure of mutual agreement. What we find is rather disappointing. So far as the ritual is concerned, the diversity is somewhat masked by the enormous mass of the material we have to investigate; and after all, diversity in this domain is but natural, for each group of devotees, starting from a common heritage, may well have invented its own techniques, and it is rather the too great similarity that gives cause for reflection and betrays contacts, imitations, rewritings. But in the field of doctrine, one would anticipate a certain homogeneity, because the school is known to be marked off from the Northern school by a peculiar philosophy. It is therefore a matter of astonishment to find differences among the texts important enough to forbid speaking of *the* Āgamic doctrine.<sup>38</sup> And there are signs that show that the diversity was even greater in the past and has been obliterated by the loss of some texts (probably those furthest from what has become the "orthodox" philosophy) and by the repeated alterations to which the works that have come down to us have been subject.

In the light of what has just been said, it seems that the only safe method for solving our problem is to examine the texts separately, especially (but not solely) those which have their four *pādas*, and give the result for each of them. It is possible however both to simplify and to extend the enquiry, by choosing to take into consideration, in the *vidyā* section, only the teachings shared by the majority of the extant Āgamas or the tenets that, having been expounded with the utmost clarity by the great masters of the ninth to twelfth centuries,<sup>39</sup> have finally been accepted by the school and constitute what we call the *orthodox* philosophy. This means that we shall leave aside almost all the isolated teachings. Such a limitation is to be regretted, but actually is a necessity; besides, it will not impair our work too much, for the consensus is large enough to allow a fruitful investigation. One should only keep in mind that this investigation does not cover the whole range of the extant texts. In any case, these texts are much too numerous and most of them too voluminous to be examined in toto, and a choice therefore is unavoidable. Our selection results simply

from our past research. Without attempting to start a fresh enquiry, we shall bring together the various observations made in the course of our Āgamic studies regarding the problem we wish to tackle and that actually have made us sensitive to this problem.

Summing up, we shall compare, on the one hand, the set of theoretical views that have gained authority in the school from a certain time onward and represent, not *the* doctrine of Āgamas, but the last stage of Āgamic philosophy; and, on the other hand, the body of rituals preserved in a broad selection of the texts available to us. It goes without saying that the details of our enquiry cannot find place in a limited paper; only the results will be given, with a few examples to illustrate them. In spite of all these limitations, we hope to be able to provide a convincing account of the situation.

## On the Agreement between Doctrine and Ritual

### The Declarations of the Texts

To begin with, one must note that the texts themselves affirm that the ritual and the doctrine they teach agree with each other. The contrary indeed would be astonishing, if we remember that each Āgama is supposed to represent a complete (though contracted) version of the Science of Śiva, formulated by the God Himself, and as such is exempt of imperfection, hence of contradiction. And even if we do not share this conviction of the faithful regarding the unblemishedness of the Āgamas, we can be sure that the authors of our texts tried their best to approximate as well as possible the ideal of perfect homogeneity between the different teachings of a given work. It then is quite normal that they should insist on this agreement. Such general declarations may be found anywhere, but they are met most frequently in the introductory chapters. Let us for instance quote the *Mrgendra*, where it is announced in the *vidyāpāda* that the utilization (*vinīyoga*) of the three fundamental categories there defined (*pati*, *paśu*, *pāśa*) will be explained in the *caryā*-, *yoga*-, and *kriyāpāda*.<sup>40</sup> And of course the commentators are always keen, especially when it is not obvious, to show that the agreement is perfect.

### Evidence of Agreement

That the preceding claim is not vain is copiously evidenced. We however shall deal only briefly with this part of our demonstration,

for most of the readers are convinced in advance of the reality of the agreement between the doctrine and the ritual, and it is not necessary to insist. A few indications therefore will suffice.

Let us first consider the most fundamental tenets of Śaiva-Siddhānta: the conception of Śiva (*pati*), of the soul (*paśu*), and of the bonds of the soul (*pāśa*)—these latter being the congenital stain (*āṅṅavamala*), the *karman*, and the productions of the *māyā*. No ritual, at least as understood by the commentators, seems at first sight to contradict the philosophical view regarding these categories. For instance, it is said that God is infinite and all-pervasive. Consequently, when He is to be “invited” (ritual of *āvāhana*) in a certain image in order to be worshipped, He is first given a “body” of *mantra*, supposed to be able to “condense” the Energy that is God Himself and allow Him to be shifted, as it were, and brought into the place where one wishes Him to be.<sup>41</sup> A similar process is used for any spatial displacement of the soul—which, in spite of the term *aṅṅu* by which it is designated, is also all-pervasive and infinite. Another instance of conformity is offered by the ritual of *dikṣā*, which takes into account quite satisfactorily the different bonds of the soul to be purified, with their specific characteristics, and shows very clearly that, at the end of the rite, the liberated soul is equal to Śiva.<sup>42</sup> And so on.

If we now think of the details of the doctrine, we find them in many cases accurately illustrated by the rites. For instance, the throne of Śiva, on which the God is made to sit during the cult, is often built systematically and in good order with the thirty-six “realities” (*tattva*) which are the bricks of the material world, so that one may clearly understand that it represents this universe.<sup>43</sup> At the top, just below Śiva, we find sitting a number of eminent Beings, like the *Vidyēśvaras*, whom we know to be exalted souls, living in the purest worlds, together with some Śaktis, whose nature it is more difficult to ascertain.<sup>44</sup> In a still more precise way, the ritual of *dikṣā*, already alluded to, makes use of all the constituents of the universe, considered as included in the particular “road” (*adhvan*) that the guru has chosen, among the six possible ones, for this purificatory journey of the soul that is called *dikṣā*. It is even only with reference to the *dikṣā* that one can rightly understand the meaning of “the six roads” (*ṣaḍadhvan*), so often mentioned among the specific tenets of Śaivism. These instances could be multiplied easily.

We are thus inclined to admire the solidity of the whole construction and conclude in favor of a satisfying homogeneity between the doctrinal teachings of the Āgamas and the structure

and content of the rituals they propound. With a precision, however: the agreement concerns the doctrine actually taught by the Āgamas, not the one accepted by the Tamil school of Śaiva-Siddhānta.<sup>45</sup>

## Evidence of Disagreement

The optimistic picture derived from the preceding considerations unfortunately cannot stand a more detailed and critical examination of our texts. We are now going to show up the main defects and cracks of the seemingly solid Āgamic building, arranging these anomalies according to their nature and origin. This negative part of our criticism will be given more weight than the positive part, for the need to convince is greater, and also on account of the greater diversity of the remarks we shall be led to make.

### Cases of Open Disagreement

We shall first of all deal with the most easily perceived of these anomalies: a discrepancy between the doctrine held by a given Āgama and the ritual instructions given in the same text.

There are some cases of patent contradictions. For instance, one may cite the Raurava which, in its chapter on *dikṣā* (belonging to *kriyāpāda*), describes the “path of *tattvas*” (*tattvādhvan*) as made of thirty-six *tattvas*,<sup>46</sup> whereas in several passages of the *vidyāpāda*, only thirty are recognized.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the contradiction is not so much between doctrine and practice as between two theoretical teachings, for the chapter on *dikṣā* we are alluding to is devoted to theoretical considerations only, the description of the ritual itself is altogether absent. We shall point to other similar cases later. Another inconsistency of the same text is less obvious but nonetheless characteristic, bearing as it does on an important triad of *tattvas*, not belonging to the list of thirty (or thirty-six), but offering a new scale into which the latter find place: *ātmatattva*, *vidyātattva*, and *śivatattva*—as per the usual sequence, the one retained by the “orthodox” school. Now, the *vidyāpāda* of the Raurava, which mentions them in a descending order, gives the list: *śiva-*, *ātma-*, *vidyā-*, which is original in placing the *ātmatattva* in the intermediate place;<sup>48</sup> and it also defines them in a peculiar way, which agrees with this sequence. But when these very same *tattvas* appear in the ritual of *pavitṛārohaṇa*,<sup>49</sup> the formula is “from *ātmatattva* to *śivatattva*” (in a certain case), or “from *śivatattva* to *ātmatattva*” (in another case), that shows that it is the usual sequence, implying a quite different conception of these *tattvas*, which is accepted in this ritual. We hold this disagreement between the two sections of Raurava as much

more revealing than what at first sight may appear to be the case; for this triad of *tattvas* finds in the ritual (especially that of *pratiṣṭhā*) a regular use, which testifies of the importance it once must have had in the ontology of the school and no longer corresponds to the feeble attention it is given in the "orthodox" texts. It might be that the *vidyāpāda* of Raurava has preserved an old vision that it would be interesting to try and trace in other works too.<sup>50</sup>

Further instances of the same inconsistency could be cited, most of them of less weight: variations, in the same Āgama, in the distribution of the *tattvas* among the five *kalās* (these are "parts" of *bindu*, the subtle matter of the universe) as explained in the *vidyāpāda* and as evidenced in the ritual; ascription, by the *vidyāpāda*, of a definite function to a certain Face of Sadāśiva, when the ritual has another version, and so forth.

In most cases, the opposition between doctrine and ritual does not take the form of a patent contradiction, but rather of dissymmetry: either the ritual makes use of notions totally absent from the doctrinal part; or (less frequently), some teachings of doctrinal nature are given that do not find place in the ritual, though they could and are actually used in rituals described in other texts.

Instances of the first type are many. Let us cite the Mṛgendra where the most important *dikṣā* makes use of the path of the five *kalās*<sup>51</sup> (see earlier), whereas the *vidyāpāda* totally ignores these realities.<sup>52</sup> Something similar happens with the Raurava, with this difference that the author to whom we owe the last chapters of the work (evidently added at a later stage) was conscious of the absence in the *vidyāpāda* of any teaching concerning the *kalās* and tried to compensate for this omission by introducing in the chapter on *dikṣā*<sup>53</sup> some (incomplete) information about them. Unfortunately these details are of no use there, since the ritual of *dikṣā*, as already noted, is not even sketched; but they are useful for the understanding of the ritual of *antyeṣṭi* given in the preceding chapter. It is clear that the Raurava in its ancient (we dare not say "original") form knew nothing of the *kalās*. Nor did it know anything in general of what is called the "sextuple path" (*kalās, tattvas, bhuvanas, varṇas, padas* and *mantras*), described in the same chapter on *dikṣā*.<sup>54</sup>

The opposite situation prevails in another series of texts, which have a very simple procedure for *dikṣā* without the "purification of the six *adhvas*" that characterizes others, although they somewhere else include a development on this sextuple path. This is the case with the Suprabhedā, which gives an account of the six *adhvas* in its *vidyāpāda*, even though four of them do not correspond

to any ritual, and which awkwardly inserts (obviously in an interpolated fragment) some precisions concerning the five *kalās* in the very chapter on *dikṣā* that has no use for them, no more than any other chapter on ritual.<sup>55</sup> The case in some ways resembles that of the Raurava, but actually is worse, as here a certain ritual of *dikṣā* is effectively described, which comes in sharp contrast with the useless teaching placed in its midst, and as this teaching about the five *kalās* is in contradiction with the *vidyāpāda*, where the *kalādhvan* is made, not of the five *kalās* of the *bindu*, but of the thirty-eight *kalās* of Sadāśiva.

Another theoretical teaching that sometimes is given and never systematically used is the conception of five *ātman*s,<sup>56</sup> which still could have influenced the *dikṣā*, had it been accepted when this ritual was built.

### Masked Opposition

All the preceding cases consist of formal clashes, expressed in the wording of the texts and therefore susceptible to be found out by a mere compilation of words or formulas. They are not very numerous, for the evident reason that the Śaiva masters who wrote, rewrote, or altered the Āgamas at different stages did their best, as suggested earlier, to make them appear convincingly homogeneous, adding the missing (or what they considered missing) information, and alas most probably suppressing this or that teaching that they deemed out of line. We shall consider with greater attention the unavowed or unrecognized contradictions that we readers have to trace by a detectivelike investigation, helped not a little by the persistence, in the ritual, of fossilized formulas that appear to have come unchanged from a hoary past.

In a first category, we shall place oppositions masked by superficial agreement. These could have been dealt with in the preceding section, were not the agreement so heavily insisted on that the reader is at first carried away by the proffered explanations and only on second thought sees the difficulty. Let us take as an example the rite of *āvāhana*, that is, the invitation of the Supreme Śiva (or any God or Goddess) in a given receptacle, usually a material image. We have already noted as a positive indication that the way this action is performed suits the conception that the school has of Śiva, taking into account in particular His pervasiveness and infinity. This is the impression derived from the most elaborated texts, especially the *paddhatis*. Now, we come across less-sophisticated descriptions that seem to reflect a state of affairs when the divinity so "invited" in the image apparently was not conceived in this way,

but as a mass of Energy that the practitioner could lay his hands on and move according to his wish. The rites that follow the *āvāhana* confirm this frame of mind. In effect, once brought into the image, this God or Goddess has to be "fixed" (rite of *sthāpana*), made "present" (*sannidhāna*), "detained" (*nirodhana*) so that He cannot escape, and finally "enveloped" (*avakunṭhana*) to become hidden to others. It is almost certain that this series of actions was first conceived in the context of the cult of the *sādhaka* (a person we shall meet again and whose unique aim is to win the power of a chosen deity), and in old times concerned any divinity, not especially Śiva. Besides, the material image most probably was an impermanent one, like a *sthaṇḍila* (elevated platform made of sand or grains), a *liṅga* made of dough, a pot of water, and so on. Hence the necessity of *āvāhana* (in the literal sense) and the rites immediately following. When this very same sequence of actions, with the same denominations, became a normal part of the cult of Śiva, whoever the practitioner, whatever the context or the aim, it had of course to be reinterpreted to suit the new situation. And it was; but with some uneasiness in the explanations, which indirectly substantiate our hypothesis that these rites are not coeval with the conception of Śiva upheld by the Āgamas. We are not contending that they are out of place in the cult of the supreme God, only that they certainly have not been invented by persons having in mind the greatness, the all-powerfulness, the uniqueness of Śiva; it is in this respect that they are opposed to, or at least in bad harmony with, the philosophy of the school. And they are still less-adapted to the worship on a permanent image, which the God, after He has been introduced by the ritual of "establishment" (*pratiṣṭhā*), is never supposed to leave and therefore cannot be "invited" into, in the normal sense of the word, no more than He can be "dismissed" from it (rite of *visarjana*). Here, too, the Śaiva masters are not at a loss for explanations, which they too often mix with the ones that they offer to get out of the first difficulty and that anyhow do not solve all the problems.<sup>57</sup>

In still more glaring contradiction with the general conception of Śiva are the numberless protective and purificatory rites that precede or follow the cult of Śiva proper and that inevitably arouse perplexity in those who imagine the cult as a pure manifestation of devotion. Why are there so many precautions to defend the place of worship against malevolent beings? Why are there so many offerings to placate them? Why perform these apotropaic rites to efface the evil eye from the image of God after the temple *pūjā*? Why all that, and so many other similar procedures, since Śiva,



ever-present in the permanent images, and all-powerful, surely could see to His own and the place's protection? But we shall speak later of this category of rites.

Other cases may be cited with respect to the conception of *karman*. The Śaivas share the general view of *karman* as the result of past actions, adding as a precision that these actions were accomplished by the individual in the "impure worlds"; that is to say, the part of the universe that has taken its origin in *māyā* and is therefore situated below the *māyā-tattva*. They often insist that the only way for an individual to get rid of this bond is to "consume" it totally, in the form of various "fruits," a seemingly impossible task, which nevertheless is accomplished during the ritual of *dikṣā*, through the power of mantras. In the case of "liberating *dikṣā*" (*nirvāṇadikṣā*, which is the *dikṣā* when no other precision is given), this consumption is total, with the exception of the *karman* whose effects are manifested in this life (*prārabdha-karman*).<sup>58</sup> As we have said earlier, the rite broadly tallies with the theory. Still we may mention some discrepancies: (1) In its most elaborated form, which also is the commonest (the one we find in *Pūrva-Kāṁika*, *Mṛgendra*, the *paddhati* of Somaśambhu, etc.), the ritual takes the soul along one of the "six paths" (*adhvans*) we have spoken of, from the bottom of the universe up to the level of Śiva, ensuring at each level the simultaneous consumption of *karman* by all the bodies that the soul, in the absence of *dikṣā*, would have taken on in succession for this purpose. Now, the rites are repeated exactly in the same way at each level, though the uppermost among them (two among five, if the path of *kalās* is chosen) belong to the pure worlds, beyond *māyā*, where no *karman* is supposed to exist. The commentators perceive the incongruity and, in accordance with some texts, speak of "pure *karman*" in these domains<sup>59</sup>—a notion not easy to admit. (2) In the same context of *dikṣā*, one meets rather often with the affirmation that the past *karman* has been "burned up" by the rite;<sup>60</sup> and though such a contention may be supported by a passage of the *Kiraṇa*, everywhere quoted,<sup>61</sup> it clashes with the fact that the ritual, as usually described, shows the consumption of the past *karman*, not its burning up. Only the seeds of future *karman* are burned. (3) Some texts describe a ritual called *reanimation of karman* (*karma-sañjivana*), that the guru must perform when he has given a *dikṣā* to a wrong recipient. The obvious meaning, openly accepted by some unsophisticated texts, is that the *karman* which had been annihilated by the *dikṣā* (either consumed or burned up, but in this context the second vision prevails) is restored, and hence, the effect of the rite cancelled. This of course creates some

difficulty, since it goes against the affirmation that the *dikṣā* brings a real change and therefore is irreversible; so much so that the Mṛgendra for instance prefers to reject the direct meaning, interpreting the rite as a *prāyaścitta* intended to avert the bad consequences of the fault made by the guru.<sup>62</sup> This solution of the difficulty, all but convincing, betrays the uneasiness of some Śaiva masters faced with what we consider to be residual rites introduced long ago within the Āgamic body of rituals without much thought, and too firmly rooted to simply be eliminated when the philosophical reflexion developed. In any case, it seems clear that, in the last two examples, we are faced with a conception of *karman* that is different from that which the school advocates.

A similar difficulty is aroused by another rite which is part of the elaborated *dikṣā*: the offering by the guru, to different divinities, of the subtle body of the pupil who is being initiated (the rite is called *puryaṣṭaka-samarpaṇa*). We have explained elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> first, that this rite supposes a simpler conception of the subtle body than the one commonly accepted by the school, and second, that it was first devised as a *dikṣā* by itself and only later has been incorporated into a complex ritual where its necessity is anything but evident.

We may adduce a last case in the same category. It concerns a rite that comes at the end of this long purification, called *nirvāṇa-dikṣā*, and consists in the solemn enumeration, by the guru, of the six Perfections now possessed by the soul.<sup>64</sup> These are no other than the Perfections of the Supreme Śiva: Omniscience, Contentment, and so on. Now, the rite is called *guṇāpādāna*, the direct meaning of which is "production of the *guṇas*." One understands naturally that they are given as a kind of gift; and this interpretation is confirmed unambiguously by the mantras recited at that time, each one accompanied by an oblation in the fire: "Oh *ātman*, be omniscient!" The name of the rite (or the verbs by which it is introduced), the mantras, and the fact that, as a rule, an oblation accomplishes something, all that seems to prove that, at this stage of the *dikṣā*, the soul gets perfections it did not possess before. But this openly contradicts an important tenet of Śaiva-Siddhānta; to wit, that the soul essentially is equal to Śiva and appears as such once its bonds have been removed. Since the *dikṣā* has effected this purification (the soul later will be joined with some impurities connected with its body to eat up its *prārabdha*, but at this stage it is perfectly free from any stain), the "being-Śiva" (*śivatva*) must reveal itself spontaneously and at the same time the Perfections that characterize this condition—and this, without any ritual to "produce" them.

Such is the theory of *guṇābhivyakti*, specific to our Śaivas. This is why the commentators refuse the normal interpretation of the preceding ritual and explain that it is intended only to make known to the world the new greatness of the soul. In fact, the ritual comes probably from a sect which, though accepting the equality of the liberated soul with Śiva (*śivasamatā*), did not advocate the theory of *abhivyakti*: either the Pāśupatas, or the Mahāvratas, or (less likely) the Kāpālikas, for all of them satisfy this condition.<sup>65</sup>

We may group in a second category the cases where a ritual injunction is ambiguous enough to admit of contradictory interpretations. Many of them are concerned with Śakti, and the ambiguity comes from the fact that the Āgamas are not quite clear about the ontological status of what they speak of as Śakti. As already hinted at, the most influential among them—those we have called *orthodox*—know two quite different supreme Śaktis (both occasionally termed *Parā*): the own Śakti of Śiva, inseparable from Him, and the “external” Śakti, of unconscious (*jaḍa*) nature, whom Śiva acts upon (“excites,” as the texts say) to create the world. The latter, which is no other than the *bindu*, several times mentioned<sup>66</sup> (we may write Bindu, as it is often likened to a Goddess), is the *materia prima* of the pure worlds and pervades the rest of the universe as well. She is called Parigrahaśakti (the Śakti “chosen,” or “seized,” or “espoused”),<sup>67</sup> but she has other names too: Mahāmāyā, Kuṭilā, and Kuṇḍalinī being the most frequent. Such is the vision generally shared by the great masters of the past and that one may expect to be reflected in the ritual.

Let us take as our first example the “construction” and worship of the throne (*āsana*) of Śiva, which comes as a necessary preamble to the cult of Śiva Himself. This throne is made of mantras, each of them, once recited, assuring the presence of a certain reality. Now, the first Power to be invoked, at the bottom of the throne, generally is the “Sustaining Power” (*ādhāraśakti*), upon which all the rest is piled up.<sup>68</sup> This Śakti is sometimes identified with the gigantic Tortoise that the Purāṇas (and the Āgamas as well) describe as the support of the world, but this poetic vision presents no difficulty. The difficulty lies in the nature of this particular Power: which of the two Śaktis recognized by our school is the Ādhāraśakti? Logically, we would say Kuṭilā, because the throne itself is made up with the very *tattvas* issued of, or pervaded by, this subtle matter, and actually it is what we read sometimes.<sup>69</sup> But many commentators understand Her to be the Kriyāśakti, whom we know to be a form of the own Śakti of Śiva.<sup>70</sup> There seems to be a way of reconciling the two points of view: decide that Kriyāśakti, in this context,

simply is a synonym for *Bindu*. Though this solution would have the support of some texts,<sup>71</sup> it does not remove every difficulty; for the mere fact that the name *Kriyāśakti* was introduced in the list of synonyms of *Bindu* testifies of conflicting doctrines about this reality, that the ritual descriptions seem to ignore.

An ambiguity of the same kind, though much more annoying, concerns the very consort of *Sadāśiva*. This Goddess plays a role in several rituals, among which we shall retain, as most characteristic, the worship of the throne, just spoken of, and the establishment of the *liṅga* (*liṅga-pratiṣṭhā*). At the end of the *āsanapūjā*, before the God is invited and made to sit by Her side, She is invoked, under the name of *Manonmanī*, on the receptacle of the lotus that constitutes the uppermost part of the throne and surrounded by eight *Śaktis* installed on the petals. Opinions already vary about these eight, some authors connecting them with the eight *Vidyēśvaras* (who are always considered as exalted souls, not as aspects of *Śiva*), whereas others consider them as different forms of the Supreme *Śakti*.<sup>72</sup> But here we are interested only in *Manonmanī*, the "wife" of *Sadāśiva*. Is She the personification of *Śiva*'s own inherent *Śakti*? Or something else? The texts are silent on this point. The case of *pratiṣṭhā* is slightly more complex. Outwardly, this ritual consists in the junction of the *liṅga* with its "pedestal" (*piṭha*), by way of a series of rites deliberately suggesting a coitus. In truth, it is the union of the two divinities represented by the material objects. And since we read in quite a number of texts, as an introduction to this ritual, that "the *liṅga* is *Śiva*, the *piṭha* is *Śakti*"—or some equivalent formula, usually given without any further precision—it may be said that the essence of *pratiṣṭhā* is the union of *Śiva* with *Śakti*. All *Āgamas* agree with this general definition.<sup>73</sup> The difficulty begins when we try to determine the nature of this *Śakti*. The ritual, as generally described, gives no clue. The mantras recited respectively on the *liṅga* and the *piṭha*, or on the two vases containing the water that will be poured over these two objects, are respectively that of *Śiva* and that of a goddess called *Manonmanī*, or *Gaurī*, or *Umā*,<sup>74</sup> without any reference to one or the other of the two *Śaktis* (*Śiva*'s own, and the *Bindu*) recognized by the theologians of the school. So that we have the same representation as the one met with in the *āsanapūjā*—not surprising, as the material *piṭha* is nothing but the concretisation of the mantric *āsana*. And both rituals pose the same problem: who is the Goddess who plays the part of the consort of *Śiva*? Here, too, as with *Ādhāraśakti* but for different reasons, it seems that the logic would rule out the inherent *Śakti* of *Śiva*. How could She be represented by a Goddess seated on the lotus