

Saiva Agamas

They are in two main divisions: the 64 Kashmir Saiva Agamas and the 28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas.

The Saiva Siddhanta agamas are the fundamental sectarian scriptures of Saiva Siddhanta. There are two classifications of the Saiva Siddhanta Agamas. They are Shiva Agamas and Rudra Agamas. There are 10 Shiva Agamas and 18 Rudra Agamas.

The 28 Saiva Agamas are said to have been revealed from all the five faces of Siva. The first four taught five Agamas each, while the last, Isana, gave rise to eight.

- The Sadyojata face revealed the Kamika, Yogaja, Cintya, Karana and Ajita. These were taught to Kausika Rishi.
- The Vamadeva face gave rise to Dipta, Sukshuma, Sahasra, Amsumat and Suprabheda, and taught them to Kasyapa Rishi.
- The Aghora face revealed Vijaya, Nisvasa, Svayambhuva, Agneya (or Anala) and Vira, and gave them to sage Bharadvaja.
- The Tatpurusha gave rise to Raurava, Mukata, Vimala, Chandrajnana and Mukhabimba (or Bimba), and taught them to Sage Gautama.
- The Isana face revealed Prodgita, Lalita, Siddha, Santana, Sarvokta, Parameswara, Kirana and Vatula to Sage Agastya.

These Agamas also have upa-Agamas - the supporting Agama tantra texts. These are 204 in count for the 28 Agamas. Some of the Agamas are said to be having millions of verses. A lot of these texts have been lost in the history.

The Kamika is the Agama most widely followed in Tamil Saiva temples, because of the availability of Aghorasiva's manual-commentary (paddhati) on it.

Most Agamas are of four parts, called padas, and possess thousands of metered Sanskrit verses, usually of two lines.

- The charya pada details daily religious observance, right conduct, the guru-shishya relationship, community life, house design and town planning.
- The kriya pada, commonly the longest, extols worship and temples in meticulous detail-- from site selection, architectural design and iconography, to rules for priests and the intricacies of daily puja, annual festivals and home-shrine devotionals.
- The yoga pada discloses the interior way of meditation, of raja yoga, mantra and tantra which stimulates the awakening of the slumbering serpent, kundalini.
- The jnana pada narrates the nature of God, soul and world, and the means for liberation.

28 Saiva Siddhanta Agamas

Sivabheda division Agamas:

- 1) Kamika,
- 2) Yogaja,
- 3) Chintya,
- 4) Karana,
- 5) Ajita,
- 6) Dipta,
- 7) Sukshma,
- 8) Sahasraka,
- 9) Amshumat and
- 10) Suprabheda.

Rudrabheda division Agamas:

- 11) Vijaya,
- 12) Nihshvasa,
- 13) Svayambhuva,
- 14) Anala,
- 15) Vira (Bhadra),
- 16) Raurava,
- 17) Makuta,
- 18) Vimala,
- 19) Chandrajnana (or Chandrahasa),
- 20) Mukhabimba (or Bimba),
- 21) Prodgita (or Udgita),
- 22) Lalita,
- 23) Siddha,
- 24) Santana,
- 25) Sarvokta (Narasimha),
- 26) Parameshvara,
- 27) Kirana and
- 28) Vatula (or Parahita).

Interesting features of Agamas

- Majority of the Agamas are in grantha script and not in devanagari script.
- The study of Agamas is not restricted to any caste or gender.
- The Agamas do not extol the supremacy of one caste over another. The Agamas are essentially free of varna restrictions although they may recognise the varna system. The many types of dikshas or initiations mentioned in the Agamas are open to everyone in society.
- From temples to home altars, pujas, first feeding, ear piercing to death and ancestor worship, festivals and holy days and temple chariot pulling, initiations, fasts and other observances are all governed by the Agamas.
- Bija mantras are used in most Agamic rituals. Certain Agamas like the Ajita Agama consist of purely Agamic mantras and no vedic mantras. There is no svaras (accents or tones) for Agamic mantras and hence there is flexibility in rhythmic chanting.
- As Swami Vivekananda said – Hindu religion as practiced in India today is almost entirely based on the Agamas.