

# SHIVA

## *and the Prímordial Tradition*

From the Tantras to the Science of Dreams



Alain Daniélou  
with Jean-Louis Gabin



*The Linga of Gudimallam, second century C.E. (Photograph copyright the French Institute of Pondicherry, used by permission.)*

*Shiva*

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with Jean-Louis Gabin

Translated from the French by Kenneth F. Hurry



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ईशा वास्यमिदँ सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य सिद्धुनम् ॥

ईशावास्योपनिषद्

*I—In a world where everything changes [where nothing is permanent] the divine is everywhere present [in flowers, birds, animals, in forests, in man].*

*II—Enjoy fully what the god concedes to you and never covet what belongs to others [neither their goods, nor their talent, nor their success].*

ISHA UPANISHAD, TRANSLATED BY ALAIN DANIELLOU



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

### *The Ferryman's Task of*

*Alain Daniélou*

An essayist, musicologist, Sanskritist, and philosopher, Alain Daniélou was also professor of the Benares Hindu University from 1949 to 1953, honorary member of the Institut Français d'Indologie from 1943 on, Director of the Library of Manuscripts at Adyar in 1954, and member of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient from 1956 to 1960, before he became the director of the Institute of Comparative Musicology in Berlin and Venice up to 1977. In 1991, the Ambassador of India in Rome handed him an edict engraved on a copper plate making him the first Westerner to belong to the famous Sangeet Natak Academy. He passed away in 1994 covered with honors: the Légion d'honneur, Professor Emeritus of the City of Berlin, Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres (at the same time as Ravi Shankar, who dedicated to him the concert he gave on that occasion in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées).

Daniélou has left behind him an exceptional work, translated and well-known in many countries both in the field of comparative musicology and the safeguarding of "World Music" (the title of the collection of records he created for UNESCO), as well as in the field of Indian philosophy and culture. His bibliography includes books that have been classics for many years—such as his encyclopedic *Hindu Polytheism* (republished with the title *The Myths and Gods of India*); *Shiva and Dionysus: Virtue, Success, Pleasure, Liberation—The Four Aims of Life*; as well as *While the Gods Play*—works that have been translated, particularly in the United States, where they have been published by Inner Traditions or in the Bollingen series of Princeton University.<sup>1</sup>

If we add to these texts his scholarly translations in French from seminal Sanskrit and Tamil works, it is strange that his memory was not more honored by the academic world at the time of his death. In this regard, the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* was fully justified in concluding the long article devoted to him in 1995 with the words, "Bewildered by such a multi-faceted approach, university circles have mostly kept Alain Daniélou aloof."

What was Alain Daniélou's approach? It can be summed up in a sentence: For more than fifteen years, he practiced only Sanskrit and Hindi, immersing himself in the traditional society of India and its scholars, which gave him access to commentaries on texts transmitted orally, parallel to official Hinduism.

From this, it is easy to understand how far Daniélou was from ordinary university research patterns and, consequently, that what he can teach us is exceptional.

If Daniélou had access to texts and commentaries that are never—in traditional society—taught in cathedra, and still less published, it is because he had no other goal than the research itself and was deemed trustworthy by those circles of traditional scholars and metaphysicians, who are similar to those who disappeared during the Middle Ages in the West and to those who may survive today in Sufi confraternities tolerated by Islam, which the history of mystic poetry tells us were often persecuted.

During his long stay in traditional India, which up to his last days he considered as his true

homeland, Daniélou gradually acquired rules of life and ways of thinking that are very different from those of the society in which he was born at the beginning of the century. A rite of initiation marked the frontier, the second birth, of this Westerner who descended from one of the oldest families of Europe, related to Shakespeare's "Dukes of Clamor." As he recounts with great humor in his memoir *The Way to the Labyrinth*, he was the son of a very Catholic mother, founder of a religious order, and an anticlerical father, several times a minister in the French Third Republic. His brother was a famous cardinal and he himself, to use his own expression, was "an apostate of some renown," who became assimilated into Hinduism, which does not proselytize and to which, in principle, one does not convert.

Such an adhesion to the object of research is almost unknown in the university approach, set on the "critical distance." His adherence can best be understood in the artistic domain, in considering Gauguin and his metaphysical Tahitian universe, which the colonization and the missions of his own time were busy destroying.

Daniélou's approach relates first and foremost to the traditional quest, which aims at identifying the seeker with the object of his search, or—if one prefers—of the initiate with knowledge. On several occasions in *The Way to the Labyrinth*, Daniélou writes that in India he sought nothing, neither career honors, nor "powers." Just so, he sought nothing, except to understand a civilization thousands of years old, a traditional society similar to the most brilliant civilizations that are no more, which had remained intact, with its social structures, cults, metaphysical and philosophical systems, its arts, the fresh air of its diversity. As the Upanishads say—and this is something that he often quoted—"In all things, leveling means death."

Daniélou, who had practiced Western dance and singing at a professional level before arriving in India in the thirties, began by learning Indian music under a traditional master, with whom he communicated in Hindi. Since in traditional India—as in Pythagorean thought—music is considered the fundamental key to knowledge, Daniélou ended up meeting the scholars and wandering monks who always gather at Benares, the "heart of the Hindu world":

After I had learned to speak and write Hindi fairly well, Vijayanand Tripathi, one of the great scholars of Benares, was kind enough to take interest in me and answer the numerous questions I had been asking myself... . Every evening, he taught from a raised platform in front of his house to a group of followers from many different castes assembled there. He had been the disciple of a famous Yogi and, besides classical philosophy, rituals, and interpretation of texts, he knew the most secret aspects of Tantric doctrines and Yoga practices. In his public lectures, he explained the episodes and the hidden meanings of the famous Ramayana in Hindi, written by the great poet Tulsi Das.

It did not take me long to discover that this austere scholar had a completely open mind with whom one could discuss not only topics such as human sacrifices, omophagia, and erotic rites, but also the origins of language, cosmology, and Indian theories on the nature of the world, the atom, time, and space... .

Little by little I entered into a mode of thinking so subtle, so complex, and so difficult that I sometimes felt myself reaching the limits of my mental faculties and capacity for understanding. I found myself immersed in a society whose conceptions of nature, of the divine, of morality, love, and wisdom were so radically different from those of the world where I was born that I had to make a clean sweep of everything I thought I knew... . This system of values could not have been more strange to me if I had been miraculously transported into Egypt during the reign of Ramses II.<sup>2</sup>

Literary people know well how difficult it has become to understand certain texts, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or the *Roman de la Rose*, now that the traditional keys are lost, because esoteric knowledge was annihilated in the West in the fourteenth century, eradicated by an ecclesiastical institution crazed for temporal power—as Marguerite Yourcenar has so admirably shown in *L'Œuvre au noir*—an institution that did not, alas, restrict its inquisition to the frontiers of Europe.

That is why it is almost a miracle that a Westerner should have been able to renew this thread that was believed to have been completely lost. In this respect I wish to emphasize how decisive Alain Daniélou's loyalty has been in sharing with us the treasures he discovered. By this I mean that, on his return to the West, he never sought a musical career, for which his abilities made him well suited, and more than he wished to play at being a “guru” or “initiate,” when it would have been quite easy for him to do so. Quite the opposite: He set himself the task of rehabilitating the traditional music of the whole world, not only of India, but of Morocco, Iran, and Africa, whose ancient traditions were threatened by ignorance—as always authoritarian and proselytizing—as well as by attempts to turn their music into folklore, or into study subjects, or to “modernize” it, as in the former USSR.

At this level, his success was outstanding. If Ravi Shankar or Ali Akbar Khan have been able to give their concerts in the same halls as Western classical musicians, if the art of traditional musicians and dancers has now been fully recognized for many years, without the slightest condescension, we owe it to Daniélou. As Ms. Noriko Aikawa, the chief of the Intangible Heritage Section at UNESCO has clearly declared: “Today, ‘music from far afield’ has become a reference for many specialists and connoisseurs. These treasures have inspired many contemporary composers. We owe all this to Alain Daniélou. Today the existence all over the world, and especially in the Orient, of a music system which is as classical as that of Bach and Mozart, is universally acknowledged: we owe that fact too to Alain Daniélou's farsightedness and unstinting efforts.”<sup>3</sup>

The results of Daniélou's approach concern not only musicology and Indian studies but also his literary creation: Two fictional works, *The Gods' Livestock* and *Tales of the Labyrinth*, provide us with a precise picture of the world of the wandering monks (saddhus) and the slightly less known world of the great traditional scholars of India. A quotation from his preface to *The Gods' Livestock* gives a glimpse of the universe behind his tales, in which, he warns us, all the characters are taken from life:

The parallel world of saddhus, the wandering monks of India, is a world apart, and their function is to transmit, from age to age, the deepest forms of an immemorial wisdom, philosophy and traditional sciences. A major part of this knowledge is kept secret. The saddhus have, however, a duty to teach—wherever they happen to find themselves, even in the humblest of villages—the precepts necessary for the maintenance of religious and moral values. This is why Indian villagers have what seems to us a surprising level of culture as well as philosophical and theological preoccupations... . The world of the saddhus remains unchanged whatever be the transformations of the society around it. The saddhus are the representatives and wardens of the “eternal religion” (*Sanatana Dharma*), which is the primordial source of all religions... . The higher the rank of a saddhu in the monastic hierarchy, the more secret is his role and the more difficult it is to approach him. Perhaps at the summit of this hierarchy exists this mysterious and impersonal being sometimes called the *King of the World*, who can never be identified or located. Whenever the earth is afflicted by the folly of men, it is the duty of this Grand Master of the saddhus to instill in their minds the knowledge and ambitions through which they destroy themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Yet another—and no less direct—contribution of Daniélou's to the humanities is his elegant and

accurate translation into French of several masterpieces of Sanskrit and Tamil literature, always carried out with the assistance of pandits: *Gitalamkara, l'ouvrage original de Bharata sur la musique*, the *Textes des Purana sur la théorie musicale*, published by the French Institute of Pondichéry, *Shiv Svarodaya*, the *Pièces de théâtre de Harsha*, *Shilappadikaram*, included in Gallimard's UNESCO collection, and *Manimekhalai*, published by New Directions in 1989.<sup>5</sup> To this significant list can be added the first unabridged and unadulterated translation of the *Kama Sutra* and its commentaries, carried out in the last four years of his life, for which—owing to the puritan heritage that the British left to modern India—he was unable to obtain the assistance of any pandit.

Throughout all of his work, Daniélou emphasizes the need to study the traditional Indian sciences, to translate them, and to ensure their preservation, starting with the ancient cosmological theories of Samkhya. He provides a considerable bibliography on these theories in his *While the Gods Play*, with the following presentation:

We do not have the original texts of the ancient Samkhya, which was not in the Sanskrit language, but we are acquainted with its Dravidian terminology thanks, in particular, to the *Manimekhalai*, which is written in the Tamil language... . The teachings of Kapila, the dark-skinned sage who was the first to teach the Samkhya in the Aryan world, were collected by his spiritual heir, the magus Asuri... .

Reconstituted and translated into Sanskrit at the time of the Shaivite revival, at the beginning of the Christian era, they were the cause of a prodigious renaissance that lasted until the Islamic invasions in the twelfth century. Only part of these texts has been published, and very few have been translated. Sumerian parallels have, moreover, confirmed their authenticity. The knowledge they reveal about the nature of the universe, the origin of matter and life, biology, astrophysics, the relations between thought and language, goes far beyond the most audacious concepts of modern science... .

According to the concepts of the Samkhyas, the universe is made up of two fundamental elements, consciousness and energy... . Matter is merely organized energy. There is no material element that exists without being inhabited by consciousness. No element of consciousness exists without an energy-giving support.<sup>6</sup>

One of Daniélou's great merits is to have made these notions accessible to inquisitive minds, especially to Western scholars who are not satisfied by positivist postulates and do not know where to turn in order to find authentic traditional knowledge and science. In connection with this interest, it is highly significant, by way of example, that a mind like Hubert Reeves has given as an illustration in one of his most famous essays on astrophysics, *Patience dans l'azur*, the image of Nataraja (Shiva dancing in his circle of flames).

Might it not be appropriate to make a careful and objective study of this notion of generalized interaction, at a time when genetic manipulation and alterations of the natural world, of which modern humanity deems it is both master and proprietor, have left the domain of theory and now invade the industrial market?

Greek cosmogony called our current era the Age of Iron, while Samkhya labels it the Kali Yuga, or "Dark Age." It appears that this era—in which totalitarian religions and military, economic, and bureaucratic dictatorships multiply and disseminate the means of destruction, poison soil, air, and water, and plant increasingly visible anguish in everyone's mind—is also to be the period in which access to knowledge is most direct and most rapid. In view of the libraries rising from the ground and revealing the forgotten civilizations of Sumer and Mohenjo Daro, perhaps the time has come to forgive certain university prejudices, and publish and translate texts like those Daniélou has brought to the

West's attention.<sup>7</sup>

This book offers the reader a glimpse into the vast world of Shiva and the primordial tradition, seen through the eyes of one who not only studied it but himself became a part of that tradition. It brings together unpublished works, papers read at conferences, or articles published in journals by Alain Daniélou between 1938 and 1991.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the texts presented here focus on the prehistoric religious tradition of Shaivism, root source of both Samkhya as well as—with Jainism—modern Hinduism.

Many of the texts collected in this book deal with the various facets of the relationship between Shaivism with the Western world, an essential question, since the desire to restore such relations and the quest for primordial tradition was at the very center of the works of the medieval alchemists and those who initiated the Renaissance movement, such as Alberti and Pico della Mirandola.<sup>9</sup>

It may be useful to ponder why the quest for harmony, wisdom, and the transcendental unity of religions—which had animated enquiring minds in the medieval and renaissance periods—led, on the one hand, to a blind technological proliferation paired with the terrifying mutation of means to destruction and, on the other, to a standardized, anthropocentric humanism, which has already destroyed almost all traditional civilizations and now threatens the planet's very existence.

“In losing purity of heart, you lose science,” wrote the alchemist Nicolas de Valois. It is the perversion of the search for knowledge—to which the semantic evolution of the terms “science” and “philosophy” bears witness—that holds the enigma of the violently profane character of the modern world, which does not appear to be a natural development from the ancient world, but rather a reaction to the traditional society whose degenerating social structures and religious dictatorships had straitjacketed thought.

Here it is important to point out—and the first text in the book affirms it—that “Shaivite philosophy knows no dogma. It does not separate theology and cosmology, science and religion. The common aim is to seek to understand the nature of the world, and the role and destiny of living beings.” Shaivism is consequently not a “religion” in the sense that we usually use this word; it only is so, literally, in its free and specific search for what binds human beings to the universe.

The structure through which Shaivism—whose very name was generally unknown to the French public before Daniélou's works were published—has been transmitted intact in India, with all its apparatus of seminal texts, preserved through long periods of apparent eclipse, is an initiatic institution: that of the sannyasis, wandering monks who are the repositories of amazing techniques of memorization and oral transmission, with whom Alain Daniélou was in contact for many long years.

Here, too, we must spell out our vocabulary. The sannyasis were—and still are—free men (and sometimes women) who have renounced earthly possessions and family life, though not necessarily sensual enjoyment, since, according to Tantrism, the “Indian cult of ecstasy,” “the union of bodies in the act of love reflects the union of the cosmic principles and is perhaps our highest experience of bliss, of that limitless joy that is the nature of the divine.”<sup>10</sup>

How can one not think of those wandering medieval alchemists, those “inhabitants of the universe,” who abandoned their place in society to give themselves over to the mysterious “Art of Love”? Does not the symbolic conjunction of fire and water, as depicted in a Tantric Indian engraving kept in the library of the Sorbonne, represent the principal operation of the “Great Work”? Mircea Eliade has already shown irrefutable convergences between tantric hatha yoga and alchemy, which both seek to deliver the mind through matter and matter through mind.<sup>11</sup> They both represent a search for a discipline aimed at transforming the mortal body into a “divine body,” enlightenment through the discovery of correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, the very vehicle of a research which “beauty is the splendor of truth.”<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, these studies are close to poetry, which is dealt with from various points of view

in the texts that follow, such as “The Nature of Beauty According to the Samkhya,” “Poetry and Metaphysics,” “Music: The Language of the Gods.” Shaivism’s approach is diametrically opposite to the hatred of the flesh practiced by the religions of the Book, the murderous dichotomy of body and spirit, human and nature, which has tormented the whole history of the West in prisons and on pyres. This is here made very clear by essays such as: “The Symbolism of the Linga” and “Shaivism and the Third Nature,” which reestablish the metaphysical importance of what Judeo-Christian tradition has relentlessly inculcated and punished, and what a bourgeois society can only tolerate in the form of fourth-rate merchandise called: “pornography.”

In the face of these trends we urgently need to hear the voice of Alain Daniélou reevoking the seers who tell us that: “In the microcosm, sex is the form in which the nature of the unformed becomes manifest;” and yet again, “because they evoke the primordial hermaphrodite, any sexually ambiguous being is of a sacred nature... . Every bisexual being can be considered as an emanation of the god’s transcendent aspect.”

The India we discover through Alain Daniélou is a country where stimulating contradictions coexist, considered as the very expression of the divine. Moralistic and puritanical Jainism prospers side by side with Dionysian Shaivism and its cults of trance and ecstasy. Vedism overlays Shaivism and was influenced by it. Official religion allowed the parallel transmission of the occult to continue, and it is still the religion of the people and the earliest populations.

Buddhism disappeared from the soil of India as a result of philosophical contests. Nothing in the subcontinent’s history remotely approaches the religious and ideological persecutions of Europe and America, or the racial and cultural genocides that are their contemporary equivalent. In these pages Alain Daniélou makes it clear that this particular fact is not the result of chance, but of absolute scientific research and wisdom:

Samkhya teaches that any method of investigation must first establish the limits beyond which its conclusions are no longer valid... . Samkhya has even been deemed atheistic, since it considers that the prime cause of the universe is non-spatial, and thus non-locatable, impersonal, and unknowable. Yet the representation of the energy principles ... in the form of more or less anthropomorphic deities is part of a system used for teaching the masses and making accessible notions that are beyond their comprehension.

It remains for this presentation to indict most of the images and analyses of India circulating in the West as false. This subject, dealt with in all Alain Daniélou’s works, is also tackled here: “Curiously of India, the home of logic and the exact sciences, the modern West only retains abstruse speculation and irrational religiosity, neglecting a whole body of knowledge it would like to think of as being exclusive to itself.”

The question of source material is essential. Alain Daniélou, who wrote and spoke Hindi and Sanskrit fluently, who had studied Tamil, was perhaps the only Westerner who was not only immersed in Indian civilization for more than twenty years but also was duly initiated and co-opted into the esoteric structures of traditional Shaivism. He was consequently a beneficiary of its prodigious oral transmission, certain texts of which he transcribed, which has inspired his whole work. Although some passages simply say in another way—which is also a way of making them clearer—what he has said in *The Myths and Gods of India* or *While the Gods Play*, other pages in this book are entirely new:

Animals and plants are in some way the visible part of subtle beings, spirits, genies and gods, which govern and inhabit them. We can often make contact with the spirits through their vegetal or animal twin. This is why certain animals and trees are considered sacred. Through the respect

and love we bear them, as well as their worship, we attract the benevolence of the subtle spirits, ~~genies, and fairies that are their invisible twins, governing the aspects of the natural world.~~

In this dualism of subtle spirits and animals, perception and knowledge functions are separated. In the human being, the divine game unites these two aspects; the human animal gradually develops an aptitude for knowledge, having in some way absorbed its subtle double, or guardian angel. This is why the human species bears a double heritage: its genetic, or physical heritage, which perceives external forms and delights in them, but is also part of the scenario; and its initiatic heritage of knowledge... .

To this he added the following note, specifically for publication with this book:

The sacred is the telephone directory of the subtle worlds: The magic and the sacred are the two faces of the same communication theory. When we consider that the subtle beings are beneficent, we talk of the sacred, if they are evil or neutral, then we speak of magic.

Nothing outside polytheism can properly be spoken of as “sacred.” Sacred symbols, sacred rites, sacred places, sacred animals, sacred trees are inevitably linked to subtle presences referring to real and permanent entities that we sometimes disguise according to our mythological conceptions. Murugan, the infant god to whom children are dedicated, will become Krishna, or the child Jesus; the sacred cave opening on to the entrails of the mountain goddess Parvati will become the place where goddesses appear, whether those of the Cretan labyrinth, of Præneste, or Lourdes.

Never has Alain Daniélou gone so far as he does in these pages in his revelations of such little known subjects as esoteric Shaivism, the personality of the great Shankara, Tantrism, the Third Nature, the Science of Dreams, or initiation<sup>13</sup>.

JEAN-LOUIS GABRIEL



## *An Introduction to Alain Daniélou and the Discovery of the Divine*

Although on the one hand we may consider Alain Daniélou's discovery of India wholly fortuitous, on the other we may deem that he was particularly destined to do so, especially in view of what he tells us about his youth.

From an early age, Alain Daniélou was very unhappy in his Western Catholic circle. He was launched into artistic activities, such as painting, singing, playing the piano, dancing, meanwhile showing deep contempt for "intellectuals" and detaching himself totally from Catholicism.

Throughout the twenties, Alain Daniélou certainly did not seem to be bothered about metaphysics, religion, mysticism, or philosophy. He sang and danced, taking rigorous and demanding dance classes at the Saulnier gymnasium in Montmartre along with the girls from the Moulin Rouge dance troupe. He gave recitals and lived a *vie de bohème* among an amusing artistic circle, with Henri Sauguet, Maurice Sachs (who had just left the seminary), and Max Jacob, for whom he had a great affection, while being totally disinterested in the poet's religious preoccupations.

At the same time, the family influences of his youth, particularly his mother's exacerbated Catholicism, were to have a decisive influence on the young rebel. Whereas his father had to be baptized so that he could get married, his mother, Madeleine Clamorgan, was very devoted to Pope Pius X. She fought firmly against the anticlerical government that had just outlawed religious congregations and set up first a substitute lay order called "Saint François Xavier," and then a school—"Sainte Marie"—where the values of Catholic ethics were very much to the fore.

Madeleine Clamorgan's brother was a canon, the curé of the church at Chaillot. Her eldest son, Jean, became a Jesuit and was made a cardinal by Paul VI, before becoming a member of the French Academy. Was the young Alain influenced by it all? He showed interest in some areas of mystery, although far from any official religion.

In the first chapter of his memoirs,<sup>1</sup> entitled "The Discovery of the Divine," he writes about a hiding place he created as a very young child in an abandoned nursery: "Here, alone, I could sense a mystery far greater than that of the ordinary human world." Yet again, reflecting on the priory of Resson, he wrote: "The old chapel held a strange fascination for me. I hated anyone else who came inside. I would stay there for hours on end, my mind completely blank. The red-shaded oil lamp threw dancing shadows on the wall. I was not afraid, though I felt an unknown presence beside me. I would perform all kinds of strange rites, which seemed guided by some mysterious force. I invented a complete ritual—was it really invented by me?—and as I lay flat on my stomach with my arms stretched out in the aisle, I would make a vow. I did not know what it was; when spirits exercise their will upon one's mind, they never express themselves through words. I vaguely sensed that I had been chosen for a special destiny and must pledge myself to it with no questions asked. That may have been my first real initiation. I was ten years old."<sup>2</sup>

His discovery of India was made accidentally during a memorable voyage crossing through it to reach Afghanistan, at the invitation of the crown prince, a friend of his youth, who was to become the

king, Mohamed Zaher Shah. During this trip, he stayed for the first time at Shantiniketan, the school founded by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in Bengal. Daniélou, who remained very close to the poet up to the latter's death, was immediately fascinated by the world he discovered. His main interest continued to be the arts: dance and—above all—music. He became rapidly aware, however, that the circle around Tagore was already greatly Westernized. Little by little, he took an interest in the Hindu system, its philosophy and religion. Settling at Benares in 1938 was decisive from this point of view.

The declaration of war in 1939 trapped him in the ancient city of Benares. It was then that he decided to start studying under the pandits of orthodox Hindu society. He studied Hindi, Sanskrit, and music.

The influence of a great sannyasi, Swami Karpatri—who was extremely revered, especially in Benares, where his name appears in bold letters across the façade of a *math*, near the temple of Kedargath on the banks of the Ganges—was to be decisive. It was Karpatri who decided that Alain Daniélou should be initiated into Hinduism. The initiation took place a few years after his arrival in the holy city, during the course of a ceremony that was, as he mentions, “quite simple, like a baptism without wishing to say much more. As part of the initiation he was given the name Shiva Sharan meaning “the protégé of Shiva.”

From this moment on, everything changed: Alain Daniélou, now Shiva Sharan, entered wholly into the traditional Hindu system, to the extent of judging any return to the Western world impossible. He discovered a religion totally opposed to the monotheistic religions he had come into contact with. He adopted all the Hindu rules. He rapidly became an ardent defender of this civilization and declared war on the later monotheistic religions, which he deemed to be pernicious and dangerous for the destiny of humankind. Their proselytizing, totalitarian, dogmatic character—unknown to Hinduism—appeared as a permanent source of conflicts, as recent history so clearly demonstrates.

Despite more than thirty years spent at his side, I always find it difficult to analyze his progress in the philosophic field (rather than use the word “spiritual,” which he would not have liked). What is clear is that the more he learned from Karpatri, the more his conceptions of Hinduism evolved. Although he acted like a good Hindu, bathing each morning in the Ganges, and a brahman used to come each day to the palace where he was living to perform a ritual puja, Daniélou remained extremely modest and reserved about whatever concerned his own religious practices.

Alain Daniélou rejected Catholicism. His visits to Algeria and Muslim countries interested him only on the musical plane, but never on a religious level, with the exception of an approach to Sufism during his visit to Iran and his contacts with René Guénon and Henri Corbin. His discovery of the Hindu world came upon him as an out-and-out revelation. This religion—as much a philosophy as a science—was in absolute harmony with his own vision of the divine.

Was his also an instinctive rejection of all kinds of prophets, spectacular rituals, masses, pilgrimages, and other gatherings of crowds under the pretext of religion? Did he not totally refuse to become a guide, a guru for confused Westerners in quest of oriental spirituality? Did he not consider the temple a place where qualified priests seek contact with mysterious powers and where the public has no function? Did he not accept the rites solely as a private relationship between himself and the gods, without witnesses?

The works he wrote, particularly his memoirs and the *Tales of the Ganges*,<sup>3</sup> denote a decisive orientation toward Shaivism—and doubtless toward Tantrism as well. Tantrism is, on principle, absolutely secret, so that we consequently know nothing. At the same time, Daniélou plunges with delight into every Shaivite text and many of his works allow us to discover concepts that differ widely from Vedism, the latter referring mainly to the four Vedas, about which he says very little.

Alain Daniélou sticks to presenting the theological and philosophical speculations of Shaivism, feeling that he has been designated for this purpose. He does not feel, however, authorized to teach

secret practices, which Westerners lacking in spirituality would treat merely as exotic approaches. Shaivism is, at the same time, both the religion of the humble and of the most esoteric and secret currents of Hinduism. Daniélou was one of the first to present this religious thought, so little known in the West.

It surprises many, including many Indians, that his view in no way reflects the most visible currents of Hinduism, nor Western concepts of it, made on the basis of texts written—as a rule—in English. One example is that he gives little importance to the theory of reincarnation. He explains the meaning of rites involving animal—and even human—sacrifice, without pronouncing any moral judgment.

What is typical of Hinduism and evident from the view taken by Alain Daniélou is its tolerance, its total lack of dogma, and the possibility for each person to choose the way of life and religious practices best suited to one's own character. This is what Daniélou always did, making it impossible to classify or label him as belonging to any precise, definite current. A careful examination of his writings often shows apparent contradictions, which bothered him very little. Indeed, unlike most Hindus, he found theories about reincarnation just as questionable as those about paradise put forward by monotheists. He insisted on his decision to be cremated, which is by no means an absolute practice among the devotees of Shiva.

A realist, he considered that we are only the links in a chain, but that, if we do not take on this role, the chain will be broken, the line will be wiped out. He used to say, “We only continue in two ways: through our genetic code, meaning by procreation, and by transmitting knowledge, that heritage of learning that we can teach the generations that follow us.” He also said, “We continue to exist only so long as someone continues to think of us.”

One personal conviction remains and seems increasingly clear to me: Alain Daniélou, either as a natural gift or through contact with some extremely strong esoteric circle, had himself acquired powers—foreknowledge, the lightning glance, abilities that in some way made him a seer—but that, as a result of the orthodox education he had received, it was important for him never to show nor use them except for wholly exceptional or serious reasons.

Did any other initiation take place, apart from the rite of his initiation into Shaivism? It is impossible to say. Some things are clear, however, such as his certainty of the extraordinary powers possessed by representatives of the esoteric currents he had met, which drew his admiration, as well as a distrust, or even fear, of the sādhus who so easily ensnare ignorant Westerners. He was also clearly opposed to the religions of the city: monotheistic religions, as also certain forms of Vaishnavism, which he found affected, sanctimonious, “plaster saint,” just the opposite of hard, violent Shaivism, which is joyful and dissolute. The god Shiva, whom he identified with Dionysus in the ancient West, is a god of both life and death, the god of bacchanals and drunkenness, as well as of great austerities. Many of his books—such as *While the Gods Play: Shaiva Oracles and Predictions on the Cycles of History and the Destiny of Mankind* and *Shiva and Dionysus*—quote from ancient texts to explain the origins of this very ancient religion.

“Religions, taken as a whole, represent the most arbitrary and stupid speculations that man ever invented,” Alain Daniélou told me, an argument he took up again during one of his interviews.

Whoever knows his work, much of which deals with religions and in whose titles the gods often appear, cannot but be astonished. Anyone who knew the man and his taste for paradox would immediately recognize him immediately.

The first book that Alain Daniélou published, in 1936, was a collection of articles entitled *Le Tour du monde en 1936*.<sup>4</sup> From that time up to 1993, in addition to about twenty seminal works, Alain Daniélou wrote several hundred articles and papers for journals, encyclopedias, conferences, radio programs, and so on, some in French, others in English, Hindi, or Italian.

These texts deal with a very wide variety of subjects concerning India, such as its religion, society, language, yoga, and music. Some have never been published, and most are unobtainable. With his consent, and under his supervision, I began cataloguing these texts according to subject matter, whence the idea of publishing collections of these texts in book form.

Jean-Louis Gabin—who early on took an interest in this project and began working on it while Daniélou was still alive—has undertaken the task of writing the preface, as well as collecting and editing these various texts, which present a previously unpublished viewpoint of Alain Daniélou's work.

This volume particularly focuses on Alain Daniélou's writings about Shaivism, dealing with its primordial origins and its revival, its philosophy and practices, and its relationship to Tantrism, Buddhism, and Western philosophical explorations.



# Shaivite Cosmology and Polytheism

Shaivite philosophy knows no dogma. It does not separate theology and cosmology, science and religion. Their common aim is to seek to understand the nature of the world, and the role and destiny of living beings. Seen from inside, the universe may be envisaged as a game, a fantasy born in the mind of a transcendent Being. But the Being that conceives the world is necessarily outside it: it is beyond the birth of space, time, and existence; it is unknowable, imperceptible, inactive, nonexistent; it is beyond number, neither one nor many. There is no way in which we can personify, imagine, or name this Being, except negatively.

This Being is that which has existed since before the creation of space, the receptacle that made possible for the universe to be formed, followed by the explosion of energy that gave rise to matter, atoms and suns, and to the measure of time.

## MANIFESTATION

The first principle that appeared is space, called *akasha*, or ether, representing the development of the potential of the universe. Then appeared the plan, the system according to which the world developed. The laws of attraction and gravitation that led to the formation of atoms and galaxies must necessarily have preceded their formation, along with the principles of consciousness and perception. This set of laws, forming a preexisting image of the world, is called *Purusha*, the universal man.

Lastly, energy appeared, *Shakti*: the substance from which all the components of the universe are formed, whatever can be designated as “something” (*tattva*). This mass of energy from which everything is fashioned is called *pradhana* (the base), or *Prakriti* (nature), but also *maya* (the power of illusion), since all the world’s appearances are, in fact, merely more or less unstable combinations of tensions, or vibrations of energy. Matter is only apparent.

### ***The Principle of Self***

The first principle to come forth from *Prakriti* is the notion of individuality, of “self.” Each atom, each cell, every living being, each solar system, takes shape around a sort of individual consciousness. Every living being is merely a conglomerate of cells, each with its own individuality, its independent behavior, grouping together as a complex system around an “ego,” something that says “I,” which is however, independent of its various component parts. It is the same for every atom, for every solar system, all of which are built around a consciousness of being, or individuality. A kind of individual consciousness is consequently present in each atom, in each planetary system. The sun has its own consciousness, just like every living being. This notion is critical, since the notion of a god, a divine personage, is a projection of the notion of individuality, of a being that says “I.” Monotheism is merely the deification of the notion of individuality.

### ***The Sixteen Tattvas***

Then appeared the different components of which the universe is formed: the sixteen tattvas, the sixteen principles, which can be defined as “something.” They are the principles of what appear to us as the five states of matter (*tanmatra*), the five forms of perception to which they correspond, and the five related forms of action, to which is added the principle of thought.

The five states of matter first manifest as magnetic potential, then in turn in gaseous, igneous, liquid, and solid forms, while at the same time the five corresponding forms of perception appear. In the human being the five forms of perception are manifested in the five senses: hearing perceives vibration, touch corresponds to the gaseous state, sight is the fiery state and light, taste corresponds to the liquid state, and smell to the solid state. These forms of perception are connected to the states of matter: gaseous particles communicate by collision, by touch; the stars—which are fusion reactors—communicate with each other by means of light; liquefied elements mix or separate by taste, and so on.

Everywhere, in each atom, in each group of particles forming an entity, a “self”—the principle of thought—is present, together with consciousness, since Purusha, the plan, the universal intellect, pervades all aspects of Prakriti, or nature.

When we seek to understand the nature of the world, its origin, its *raison d'être*, following the stage we have now reached, we come across a more or less abstract aspect of what we term the divine. At the level of the principles of the five senses—the elements—we can envisage a god of the wind, Vayu, a god of fire, Agni, a god of the waters, Varuna, and we represent the earth that nourishes us as the Mother Goddess. The sun, the center of the world we live in, giver of light and life, is for us the very image of godhead. It is equally possible to envisage spirits that have no other substance than thought, like characters in a dream. We can conceive of gods that correspond to the powers of action, personifying strength, courage, justice, love, friendship, as well as destruction and death.

## SUBSTANCE AND ARCHETYPE (PRAKRITI AND PURUSHA)

Underlying manifestation is the notion of Prakriti, the substance of the created world, considered as the female aspect, and the notion of the archetypal plan, which is Purusha, considered as a male principle. In Shaivism, this is the aspect represented by the phallus cult, the male principle from which come forth the semen containing the genetic code, the plan of the living being, which manifests itself in the substance, in the egg contained in the female organ.

Here, however, our approach comes to a halt, because beyond the couple Purusha-Prakriti, or Shiva-Shakti, lies the barrier that separates the created from the noncreated, the nonexistent from the nonbeing, the unknowable. We can only worship the world principle in its manifestation, its work. Whatever aspect of the world we envisage, we see in a veiled form an aspect of the divine plan. The divine work is, however, of an infinite variety. We can recognize the divine in whatever aspect of its work we choose as its image, in whatever we like most. Such an image may be a tree, an animal, a man, a woman, a bird, a stone, a symbol, or an idea. This is why the gods are without number.

All paths lead toward the Creator but never reach that Being. The strength of love, devotion, allows us to go a little farther each time, but our effort of concentration needs a support, and it is this support that becomes for us the image of the divine. We contemplate the face of the beloved knowing full well that that face is not the person we love. Similarly, the divine appears to us in multiple forms in the guise of innumerable gods.

## THE MONOTHEISTIC ERROR

Monotheism is therefore a metaphysical error, since the world principle, which is outside the world, ~~beyond number, impersonal, indescribable, and unknowable.~~ Above all, ~~monotheism is dangerous~~ because of its consequences, since it is a projection of the human “self” into the divine sphere, replacing love and respect for the divine work as a whole with a fictitious character, a kind of heavenly king who governs human affairs, to whom the most absurd edicts are attributed. Intolerance: the so-called “only god” is, in fact, only the god of one tribe. Monotheistic religions have served as an excuse for persecutions, massacres, and genocides; they fight each other to impose the dominion of their heavenly tyrant on others.

In actual fact, monotheism is merely a political fiction. It does not exist on the religious level. We worship the Mother Goddess, the Earth Mother who appears in caverns. We worship different symbols, prophets, heroes, saints, and holy places. In our approach to the divine, it is not a matter of the image, the face that we give it. We can very well say, “It is in Jesus that I see God. For me, he represents that visible form in which I can best conceive the face of God.” But when we say, “Baal is not god, let us destroy these idols,” or else “Apollo is not god, God does not dwell in a sacred tree, the phallus is not the symbol of the Creator,” we deny the presence of the divine in its manifested work. God is all. God is everywhere, or God is nothing.

We confuse what the Hindus call *ishta devata*, “the chosen god”—that aspect each of us chooses to worship as a representative of the divine—with the cosmogonic reality of the Universal Being. Our devotion toward our chosen god must not become a denial of other faces of the divine. We may well say, “For me, the woman I love is my chosen wife.” But we cannot say to other men, “My wife is the only woman. You must make love with her.” The error of monotheism lies in similar reasoning: opposing a chosen god to the thousand faces through which divine reality shines.

Who knows through what aspect of the world the experience of the divine will one day be manifested to us? For many, it is in the act of love that the lightning sensation of this reality suddenly appears. The union of bodies in the act of love, a reflection of the union of cosmic principles, is perhaps the highest, the most direct experience that we can have of beatitude, of the limitless joy that is the nature of the divine state.



## The Shaivite Revival from the Third to the Tenth Centuries C.E.

Since prehistoric times, India has known two great religious traditions. The first, Shaivism, is a nature religion, which seeks to perceive the divine in its works and to become part of them. The second is Jainism, a humanistic religion, dealing essentially with ethical and social values. Aryan Vedism gradually incorporated the concepts of these two ancient traditions, at many contradictory levels, resulting in what is now known as Hinduism, whereas Shaivism and Jainism, such have continued down to our own times in parallel with Hinduized Vedism.

From Shaivism comes the cosmological research known as *Samkhya*, as well as Yoga, the study of the human being's latent powers. From Jainism comes the theory of karma and transmigration, which seeks to explain human inequalities as being due to moral lapses committed in previous lives, and justifies the social hierarchy on this basis. Buddhism and later Vaishnavism are adaptations of Jainism within the general framework of Hinduism. The Jain theory of transmigration has been used to justify contempt for the untouchables, making their past lapses responsible for their present condition. Buddhism carried this notion with it as far as Japan. Shaivism has never accepted the idea of the inequality of birth, even though it recognizes hierarchies at genetic, professional, and social levels.

In India, the period stretching from the third to the tenth century C.E. was a period of crisis from the point of view of philosophic and religious thought. Buddhism had seriously shaken the foundations of Aryan Vedism, which had dominated India for centuries. Buddhism was, in its turn, contested not only by Vedism, but—more especially—by a return to the autochthonous religions. There was an extraordinary revival of a very ancient philosophic and religious heritage, coming from the prestigious pre-Aryan civilization, and in particular from Shaivism, from the cult of the goddess and the ecstatic and mystical rites of Tantrism.

During the course of history, the originally rather primitive religion of the Aryan nomads had assimilated many elements of the thought, rites, and cults of the great civilizations that had preceded it in India. However, it remained centered—at least nominally—on the texts derived from the Vedas. At the same time, these texts had gradually been reinterpreted and commented on according to the data of a much more developed philosophy, mythology, and cosmology.

The pre-Aryan civilization, which in proto-historical times had extended its influence as far as Western Europe, had not been annihilated by the invaders and had to a great extent continued to exist in parallel to Vedism. The ancient concepts of Shaivism, Tantrism, Shaktism, and Yoga, together with the ancient *Samkhya* cosmology, lay beneath the surface and continued to reappear at every level and in every period. Owing to a historical aberration, there has been a tendency to present these reappearances as new developments, except when they have been envisaged solely in relation to Vedism. Whether from the *Atharva Veda*, the *Upanishads*, or the traditional sciences, Brahmanism has constantly taken its inspiration from pre-Aryan culture, which little by little it assimilated.

The *Mahabharata* (XII, 349, 63, et seq.), referring to the leading religious and philosophic systems, mentions—on the same level—the *Samkhya*, the Yoga, the Pancharatra, the Veda, and the Pashupata, that is, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and Vedism.

Throughout history, ancient Shaivism indeed remained as the religion of most of India.

population, particularly in the south (which had preserved its original language), but also in the east in Kalinga, Bengal, in central India, and in the Himalayan regions. Although the Aryans had installed missionary brahman families in these outlying provinces, they had never been really assimilated. They played a role of political as much as religious infiltration, rather like the role of European missionaries in the countries of Africa or Asia nowadays. Shaivite and Tantric rites, needing no brahmanic priesthood, continued alongside the Vedic rites, just as they still do today.

During the early centuries of our era, ancient Brahmanism—contested by Buddhism—lost its intransigence and adopted ideas of nonviolence, vegetarianism, and transmigration from Jainism and Buddhist infiltration. Buddhism and Vedism both assimilated the practices of Yoga and Tantrism and adopted the Shaivite deities.

## SCYTHIANS AND PARTHIANS

Between the first and third centuries C.E., the north of India experienced an extremely cosmopolitan period. Invaders from the north had established empires stretching from central Asia to the Punjab, Sindh, Gujerat, and as far as the Mahratta country and central India. The dynasties of the Pahlavas (who were Parthians) and the Shakas (who were Scythians) lasted until the end of the fourth century. The Yeh Chis, or Kushanas, who drove back the Parthians, came from central Asia, which always remained their true homeland. These newcomers did not belong to the ancient Aryan clans from which the brahmans claimed their descent. Since Vedism could thus offer them only a subaltern position, they were little inclined to accept it. They adopted either Buddhism or Shaivism and were sometimes even interested in Jainism.

Highly international, the Kushanas maintained cultural and trade relations with the Roman Empire, Persia, and China. Kanishka, the Kushan emperor who reigned from 120 to 162 C.E., officially adopted Buddhism, the propagation of which served as a pretext for his conquests, although his attitude toward other religions remained very liberal. Kanishka's coins show Greek, Zoroastrian, Mithraic, Buddhist, and even Shaivite deities (the last mentioned being mainly Shiva and Durga). The Vedic deities had already been put aside. Kanishka's reign also saw—two centuries after the disappearance of the last Greek kingdom in Gandhara—the development of what is known as Greco-Buddhist art, but which is actually Indo-Scythian.

Kanishka undertook a reform of Buddhism to make it more eclectic and better suited to his political designs. He summoned a great council, during which the philosopher Ashvagosha, a Hindu who converted to Buddhism, defined the canons of what is known as the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle. This work has a high philosophical content and is a kind of synthesis, integrating into Buddhism Shaivite and Tantric elements, as well as notions borrowed from the Greeks, Christians, Zoroastrians, and from the cults of central Asia. Having become the state religion, Buddhism set about absorbing—without too many upsets—the various religious tendencies of the empire.

This enterprise—which was highly effective from the point of view of India's cultural expansion in central Asia, Tibet, and the Far East—did not, however, succeed in India itself. The third century saw the birth, in southern, central, and northern India, of a revival of pre-Aryan culture, and of Shaivism in particular. This movement started in central India among a group of confederated tribes whose chiefs were called the Barashivas. This was a reaction against foreign cults and modern religions like Buddhism but was also against Vedism. The movement was both religious and political—the revenge of a civilization oppressed for centuries by invaders who had long ridiculed it, at the same time borrowing the elements needed for their own development. The success of this revenge is a phenomenon that is almost unique in history. The Romans also took their inspiration from the thought

and art of conquered Greece, but Greece itself never rose again.

The decadence of Vedism, followed by the discomfort of Buddhism, allowed the other non-Aryan sects to lift their heads and officially claim the position that had secretly always been theirs. Besides Shaivism, Jainism—that moralistic and atheistic religion representing an ancient autochthonous tradition—also regained a popularity that was previously challenged by Buddhism. Neither should we forget the influence that Jainism played in India and elsewhere. Jain missionaries had played anything but negligible role in the development of Greek philosophy. The philosopher that Alexander wanted to take back with him from India, but who committed suicide shortly before the death of the conqueror, himself was a Jain. Buddhism had been a reform of Vedism mainly inspired by Jainism. In Hinduizing itself and integrating Tantric rites, Mahayana Buddhism lost its *raison d'être* in India although puritanical Hinayana Buddhism offered an alternative to Jainism.

The new religion that arose, sometimes known as neo-Brahmanism or Hinduism, was not—like its predecessor—Vedism influenced by Shaivism but was henceforth Shaivism vaguely suggestive of Vedism, just as Mahayana Buddhism became Shaivism disguised as Buddhism. The texts and rites of Shaivism and Tantrism became the real basis of Hinduism.

Thus, after a long eclipse, ancient Shaivism—with its cosmology, Samkhya, its conception of the human being defined by Yoga, and its rites expounded in its sacred texts, the *Agamas* (traditions) and *Tantras* (rules)—once more took a dominant position, covered by vague references to the primacy of the Vedas. The term “Veda,” however, was henceforth no longer understood as a “book constituting revelation” (like the Bible and the Koran), but as meaning *dharma*, the universal law governing the world, whose various revelations are merely fragmentary insights owed to the intuition of inspired sages, the *rishis*, or seers.

The Vedic texts were no longer considered as revelation, but as a relative expression—among others—of the perpetual human search into the secrets of the natural world and the divine.

## THE GUPTAS

In 319, a Jat, a Scythe from Rajputana, assassinated Sundara Varman, the last king of an obscure dynasty that had succeeded the Kushanas and reigned at Pataliputra—present day Patna—in the northeast of India. This Jat took power under the name of Chandragupta, founding a powerful dynasty that was to dominate northern India for three centuries. This period, which was one of the most brilliant in Indian civilization, is sometimes called the “Golden Age of the Guptas.” A period of peace and culture, it witnessed an astonishing artistic bloom, along with the production of many religious and philosophical texts that strove, with varying degrees of success, to renew the link with the most ancient traditions. This period is very much like what was later to be the Renaissance in Europe, as it was first conceived, the Renaissance of Prospero Colonna, Alberti, Pico della Mirandola, of the “Dream of Polyphilus.”

Chandragupta's successor, Samudragupta, who reigned from 330 to 380, was a pious Hindu, who actively undertook to eliminate the foreign religions introduced by the Shakas and Kushanas. The ancient Shaivite culture, denigrated both by Aryan Brahmanism and by Buddhism, once more became predominant. Southern India, Bengal, and Kashmir, considered as the outer corridors of the sacred territory of India, had largely preserved the pre-Aryan cultural tradition that could now reaffirm itself. On the other side, the arrival of the Huns, who occupied the Punjab (toward 500), then the Turks, who closed the northern frontiers, isolated the Indian world almost entirely from its international contacts, particularly its close ties with central Asia and China. Only sea trade with Egypt, Persia, and Europe remained relatively active.

Chandragupta II, known as Vikramaditya, who succeeded Samudragupta, transferred his capital westward, to Ujjain. There, he gathered the greatest artists of his time, writers such as the celebrated poet Kalidasa, scholars like the astronomer Vaharamihira and the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu and so on. Astronomy, medicine, and both sacred and secular architecture once more saw great developments.

## TEXTS

This period saw the reappearance of a great number of non-Vedic texts, which had been secretly handed down through the centuries. Along with the sacred texts of Shaivism, the *Agamas*, and the *Tantras*, these texts also included Shaivism's historical books, the *Puranas*, whose roots—~~notwithstanding innumerable interpolations and recastings~~—go back to the dawn of prehistory. To these should be added the *Mahabharata*, that vast encyclopedia of knowledge. Some *Agamas* belong to different cults, which may or may not be connected to Shaivism. The *Mahabharata* commentary tells us that the *Agamas* are the sacred books of: the Sauras, the sun-worshippers; the Shaktas, who worship the goddesses; the Ganeshas, who practice the cult of spirits; and the Shaivas and Vaishnavas. The Vaishnavas consider the sacred texts of the Vaishnavite *Pancharatra* superior to the Vedas. These comprise some 100,000 verses, which have been adapted to conform in appearance with the Vedas.

Most of these texts are of extremely ancient origin. Echoes of them can be found in the *Atharva Veda*, in the *Upanishads*, the works of grammarians, and scientific treatises. How and in what languages they were handed down through the centuries is still a mystery. The Tamil versions of some texts are more ancient than the Sanskrit versions. Indeed, during the long period of Aryan domination both texts and rites were handed down using the same method in use nowadays. Side by side with the bookish, exoteric tradition, kept alive by priests to ensure the continuation of the rites and teaching, the highest forms of knowledge are transmitted by the sannyasis, members of the monastic order whose initiation is essentially Shaivite and secret. They are outside the caste system and are hierarchically higher than the brahmins.

In such forms of teaching, the essentials of the doctrines are condensed into versified formulae called *sutras* (threads), which can be memorized and handed down from master to disciple for generations, without leaving any visible trace. Such texts are even—sometimes—transmitted by persons who do not understand their meaning, merely acting as a kind of living book. At the time of the Shaivite revival, the heirs of this most ancient culture were obliged to produce their doctrines in book form in order to oppose those of Vedism and Buddhism. The *Agamas*, *Puranas*, and *Tantras* had to be transcribed in a form that was accessible to all. This is why many of these texts were drawn up or translated into Sanskrit, which had become the universal cultural language. This at the same time discredited the Prakrit, the popular language utilized by the Buddhists.

It is impossible to understand Hinduism, or even the development of Vedism, without making any reference to that vast literature, which is—in actual fact—the basis of the philosophic conceptions, beliefs, and sciences of the Hindus. Often translated badly into Sanskrit at the time of the Shaivite revival, these texts have not received the attention they deserve. The fact that they have not survived in their original language or form has misled several modern researchers to believe that they were drawn up at the time of their new Sanskrit edition, whereas on the whole they obviously belong to remote antiquity.

By way of example, the fact that the name of Chandragupta had been added to the dynasties of the *Vayu Purana* led to the belief that this *Purana* as a whole had been written at that time. However, the *Puranas* are, by definition, historical texts, so it was quite normal to update them by presenting

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