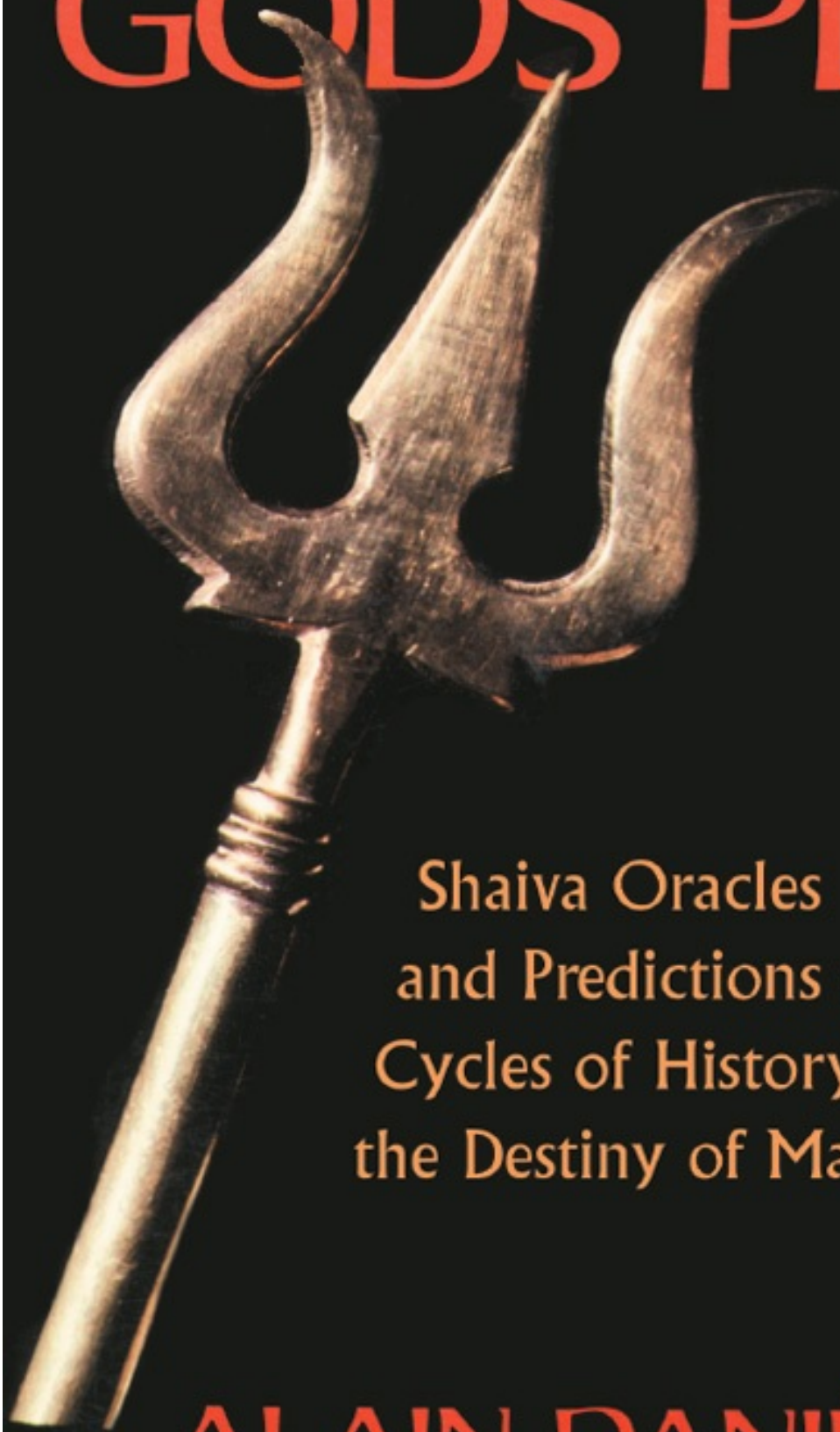


# WHILE THE GODS PLAY



Shaiva Oracles  
and Predictions on the  
Cycles of History and  
the Destiny of Mankind

ALAIN DANIELÉLOU

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*Shaiva Oracles and Predictions  
on the Cycles of History and  
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ALAIN DANIÉLOU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY  
*Barbara Bailey and Michael Baker*



Inner Traditions International  
Rochester, Vermont

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## Note on the Transliteration of Sanskrit Terms

AS EXACT A PRONUNCIATION AS POSSIBLE IS AS MUCH essential for the ritual formulae and the magic sense of words as for establishing the parallels between different languages. The Sanskrit alphabet is a syllabic alphabet consisting of fifty-two phonetic signs. The syllables can be long (*â*) or short (*a*). The consonants are voiceless or aspirated (*t* or *th*). Certain vowels of the old phonetic system have disappeared from the pronunciation of modern Sanskrit. Such is the case with *ë* (as in the English word *above*), these days pronounced "ri," which is transcribed either as *e* or *ri*, and with *ü* (which does not occur in English, but is closest to the French *u* as in *vu*), pronounced "lri" and transcribed either as *ü* or *lri*. An *a* occurring at the end of a word is not pronounced in Sanskrit. It corresponds to the final silent *e* in English. It is denoted by *ä*. *Yogä* should be pronounced "Yog", *Shivä* as "Shiv." *Shivâ* is feminine, a name of the goddess.

The retroflex consonants are shown underscored: *ṭ*, *tḥ*, *ḍ*, *dḥ*, *sḥ*, *ṇ*. The palatal nasal is written *ñ*, the guttural nasal *ṅ*.

The English sound *oo* (as in *book*) is represented by the letter *u*. The modern Tamil alphabet is based on the same phonetic system. Sanskrit words are written with a capital letter in the text, and the plural is neither shown by an *s* nor otherwise indicated. I have added an *(s)* for clarity.

In the translation of Sanskrit and Tamil texts I sometimes incorporated some explanatory words added by the scholars who quote them or taken from commentaries. Later I added some quotes from modern works that I noted in the course of my research.

In the exposition of the doctrines of Shaivism, I have followed the terminology of the Sanskrit versions of the Sâmkhyä(s) and the Ägamä(s). At times I have added Dravidian terms to the Sanskrit words or to their translation.



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## Introduction

WE ARE SO ACCUSTOMED TO REGARDING THE EVOLUTION of humanity as a constant progression, and the development of knowledge over the course of several centuries or even several decades as continuous forward movement, that we sometimes have difficulty in realizing that contrary forces also exist which periodically return peoples to states of incredible barbarism.

Important civilizations pass away, their highly developed scientific knowledge suddenly annihilated. In such cases, the only lingering echo is the vague remembrance of a Golden Age, and sometimes a few monuments remain which reveal a knowledge so evolved that our ancestors of only a few generations ago were not only incapable of deciphering it but even of having any idea of what sort of knowledge they were witnessing.

We use the rather vague term *tradition* to evoke the fragments, which have come down to us through secret and esoteric channels, of this ancient and prestigious knowledge, whose substance we have lost even though we have preserved its memory. There are periods in the course of history in which we encounter attempts to recover something of this ancient knowledge. The emperor Hadrian gathered together a great number of scholars to try to recapture the science of the ancient Egyptians. Later on, in Italy, a group of artists, scholars, and philosophers formed the Accademia Vitruviana, then the Accademia Romana, providing the beginning impulse of what is called the Renaissance in Europe. This group had also sought to recover elements of the knowledge of the Egyptians, the Etruscans, and the Pelasgians. Its members were tortured and massacred by the Borgia popes, and the survivors dispersed, leaving only a few enigmatic writings.

In India, around the time of Christ, there was an astonishing personality called Lakulishä who dared to stand in opposition to official Vedism and Buddhism, and enabled the ancient Shaiva religion to be reborn. With it the sciences and religious and philosophic concepts that had been "underground" for nearly two millennia came to the fore and provoked a prodigious effervescence in the domain of culture and the arts. Its representatives were likewise gradually eliminated, and modern Hinduism retains only a degraded remnant of it. The true knowledge is once again enclosed in esotericism.

Some texts dating from the pre-Aryan civilization of India were partially recuperated during the period of the Shaiva revival. I have attempted, often with difficulty, to study and understand the conceptions they present of ancient Shaivism concerning the nature of the world and the destiny of man, and to present certain aspects of these conceptions in this book. Obviously I can give here only a brief summary. The upholders of the tradition, always under threat, are reticent and secretive. The knowledge is often fragmentary, and the level of the concepts sometimes goes quite beyond the scientific and philosophic notions with which I am familiar, posing arduous problems of comprehension and terminology. There remains, however, a vast corpus of texts, for the most part unpublished, which represent a body of knowledge coming from the depths of the ages. These texts deserve to be studied by people more qualified than I. I have limited myself to the texts that I thought understandable concerning cosmology, the nature of language, and musical semantics. I was not competent to approach the texts on mathematics, astronomy, or medicine, and hope that others will be able to explore them. What is important in such research is, first of all, to be conscious of the limits

our own knowledge and neither to reject nor to seek to bring to our level notions that seem bizarre and incomprehensible at first approach. The situation is analogous to that of a man of the eighteenth century being able, by a phenomenon of vision, to read certain texts of modern physics.

Vanity on the part of ethnologists and Orientalists often leads them to aberrant interpretations and absurd judgments.

My work will be useful if it succeeds in awakening the curiosity of even a few scientists at the forefront of research, several of whom have indicated to me their astonishment at the discoveries clearly expressed in this ancient knowledge, of concepts that they themselves hardly dare to envisage, such as the structural identity of the cells which form the galaxies and the cells which form our bodies, or the necessity of the omnipresence of consciousness as one of the essential components of interstellar and atomic matter, the relativity of time, and the purely energetic nature of matter, all of which are concepts familiar to the Sâmkhyä.



## **PART ONE**

# **THE HUMAN ADVENTURE**



# 1

## *Origins*

ACCORDING TO THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PURĀNĀ, THE present humanity would have appeared about 58,000 years ago, a figure that corresponds to twelve and a half times what Shaiva cosmology calls the Age of the Ancestors (Pitri), that is, the duration of a lineage, a particular species of men. But men and similar beings existed before the present humanity. The human species that have succeeded each other on earth have each achieved a very high level of development and knowledge, then disappeared at the time of planetary catastrophes, leaving, however, traces that served as the bases for the development and knowledge of subsequent humanities, which, when they reach the limits of the knowledge permitted man in the plan of creation, are, in their turn, destined to disappear.

Creation is a continuous phenomenon. Species evolve. New species appear; others cease to exist. No species is born of a single couple. Even if a mutation can be the act of an individual, the appearance of a new species is always a global phenomenon. Man is no exception. Since the birth of the present humanity, four species of men have appeared at precise moments in the cycle. Thus they are in different ages of their development.

The history of humanity is not, therefore, a single phenomenon. It is marked by conflicts between peoples in different ages of their development. The principal problem for all civilizations is to know how to organize their coexistence.

To try to understand the history of man, anthropologists and archaeologists excavate, layer by layer, the places he has lived. They discover primitive forms of habitations, but also vestiges of civilizations prestigious for their arts and technology which are sometimes contemporaneous with them, belonging to lineages of men who are in different ages of their destiny. In any case, archaeology gives us information only about eras when humans used stone and metal, which are not indispensable ingredients for a sophisticated civilization. The spiritual decadence of man, according to Hindu tradition, goes hand in hand with progress in metallurgy from the Golden Age (Satyā Yugā) to the Iron Age (Kali Yugā). The scientific cautiousness that only recognizes the existence of man according to the material objects left surviving is a very unreliable method, since it depends on chance discoveries and only has value in respect to civilizations using stone or metal. It is very dangerous to draw conclusions from such a method. After the destruction of the magnificent cities of the Indus by the Aryans, stone was not used in the construction of cities for a millennium. The eras that we call Stone Age are, in reality, ages of timber, of adobe, and of clay bricks.

Today in India, not far from Pondicherry, there are populations who construct the hulls of ships from curved wood, pierced in a fire and bound together with oakum, without any use of metal, and which they are able to cross the seas. There are also artists there capable of constructing wonderful timber palaces covered with frescoes like those at Trichur in Kerala or in some Himalayan cities. The oldest temples dug into rock (at Ajanta), duplicate very elaborate timber architecture of which no trace remains.

In Africa, the sites of cities once famous for their splendor can no longer be found.

In Japan, it has been possible to save some timber temples thanks to the periodic replacement of damaged parts.

The men who decorated the cave sanctuaries of what we call prehistory did not live underground. They also painted frescoes on their earthen or timber houses, as is still done today in the villages of India.

When we see important vestiges of lost civilizations appear, it is often at a very high level of urbanism, art, literature, knowledge of astronomy, and philosophical myths, which represent a long past. Some megalithic monuments of India and Europe, as well as structures in certain forgotten cities of ancient America, necessitated the transport and polishing of blocks of stone so enormous that the required technical means that seem unachievable today. Their orientation implies a very advanced understanding of astronomy.

There exists no primitive language, a language that does not allow the expression of the most abstract notions. One cannot judge the level of culture of peoples or civilizations by the "permanent" vestiges that have survived or by the customs of new peoples wrongly called primitive. The astronomical, medical, mathematical, and physical knowledge of the Indians, but also of other peoples on various continents several millennia B.C., was, in some cases, more advanced than that of Europeans only two centuries ago. The modern world is much closer to Kapila, Pythagoras, Euclid, and Aristotle than to the theologians of the Middle Ages. Astrophysicists who study the birth, formation, and evolution of the world are coming closer and closer to the ancient theories of Shairi cosmology whose elements India has retained.

The idea that modern civilization started practically from scratch, from a single source of ape-men several millennia ago, has distorted, or caused to be ignored, information that has reached us just as much by tradition as through archaeological finds. We are so fascinated by the technological advances of the last centuries of modern civilization that we simply forget the periods of obscurantism that preceded them and the differences in the level of development of the various peoples of the world. We tend to consider "progress" a continuous and general phenomenon stretching from the apes to Einstein. Yet the history of man is not one of regular development. It is characterized by a succession of developments and regressions related to astrological and climatic cycles. Barbaric races, still in the infancy, destroy civilizations that had been developed by older, more evolved populations, doing away with the sciences and arts, yet allowing some scraps of knowledge to survive which serve as the basis of the development of new cultures. On all continents we can find traces of outstanding cultures and advanced technologies belonging to bygone ages, followed by periods of barbarism and ignorance.

## ***The Dravidians***

THE first of the great civilizing peoples of the historic period seem to have been the Dravidians. According to the *Lugal-ud*, a Sumerian text inscribed on clay tablets six thousand years ago: "There were thick ice sheets everywhere . . . then a terrible fire ... melting ice sheets, interminable rain, water covering the Earth, then, little by little, being absorbed." And the Book of Genesis (11:1) says: "Leaving the Orient, these men found a plain in the country of Shinar (Sumeria) and settled there." The present populations, called Dravidian, who, like the Sumerians, spoke agglutinative languages, appeared in India after the last Ice Age toward 9,000 B.C. According to tradition, they came from a continent that had been engulfed by the sea.

As M. R. Sakhare points out in his *History and Philosophy of Lingayat Religion*, the Dravidians, the Termitoi of Herodotus, belong to a race of the type called Mediterranean. They may have emigrated to India from Lemuria, a continent which extended from Madagascar to Indonesia and which was flooded by the sea. Their civilization spread in India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas.

Starting from the sixth millennium B.C., during what the Hindu cosmology calls the Age of Doubt, the Dvâparâ Yugâ, which is the third age of the cycle that regulates the existence of the present humanity from its beginning to its end, the Dravidian civilization developed, reaching its peak in India between the sixth and second millennia B.C.<sup>1</sup>

It was the Dravidians who built, among others in the Indus Valley, the cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, considerable traces of which have recently been discovered. The influence of the Dravidian civilization was very extensive. It affected the whole Indian continent, but also extended to the "Sumerian cities with which the people of the Indus were definitely in contact."<sup>2</sup>

The Dravidians were a seafaring nation. Large ports have been discovered on the Peninsula Kathiawar and in the Gulf of Cambay, north of the present Bombay. Sizable necropolises belonging to a population called the Tortoise People, who were related to the people of the Indus, have been discovered in Oman and Arabia. The Indo-Sumerian influence on the first dynasty in Egypt is evident. The Cretan civilization is closely linked to that of the Indus.

The Sumerian deity called the Lord of the Animals corresponds to the Indian Pashupati (Lord of the Animals). The Sumerian goddess, the Lady of the Mountains, is called Parvati (Lady of the Mountains) in India. Nergal, the Sumerian god of the underworld, and his sister, Ereshkigal, call to mind Yama, the Indian god of the dead and his sister, Yami. The cult of the Bull, the symbol of the horns, and the story of the flood are found in the two cultures, as is the symbolism of numbers. The mountain of cedars in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the Dâruvanâ (the forest of cedars) of Indian myth. The Sumerians were called "Black Faces." The followers of the old religion are, throughout the course of history and still today, called the Kâlâmukhâ (Black Faces) in India.

Isidore of Seville (sixth century), looking to very old traditions, mentions in his encyclopedia the migration of Indian populations, which he calls Garamantes and which, via Egypt, may have come to Spain and from there moved as far as to Great Britain.<sup>3</sup> According to a theory today supported by Soviet historians, this migration took place in the opposite direction, that is, from the Mediterranean toward India, thus linking it with the myth of Atlantis.

The Dravidian languages, which are agglutinative like Sumerian, formerly spoken in the whole of India, today survive essentially in the south. The main languages are Tamil, Kanara, Telugu, and Malayalam. However, in central and northeastern India as far as Baluchistan on the Iranian border, there remain pockets where Brahui is still spoken. Agglutinative languages similar to the Dravidian languages which have survived in the West are Georgian, Basque, and Peuhl, peripheral traces of an ancient culture surviving on the edge of the Aryan world. The Pelasgi of pre-Hellenic Greece were, all likelihood, Dravidian.<sup>4</sup> Ligurian was a Euskaroid language related to Basque, as probably the Etruscan language was.

Recent studies on blood types have related the pre-Aryan origin of Caucasians, Basques, Sardinians, and Berbers.

Descending neither from Cro-Magnon man nor from the Celts, the populations living on the edge of western Europe and in some Mediterranean centers are therefore of Neolithic origin, their arrival taking place between the departure of the Cro-Magnon men, who set out for the North with

their reindeer, and the Celtic invasions of the Bronze Age. . . . These populations . . . live in countries "at the end of the earth," the western extremity of Britain, a fringe of Normandy, Wales, North Scotland, Ireland, Iceland ... [and also] certain Mediterranean regions, isolated or in refuge like the inhabitants of the mountainous Massif of Sardinia, Corsica, several alpine valleys, the inhabitants of Liguria, some of the Berbers of the Saharan Atlas Mountains, some groups of Tuaregs. . . . the blood of these insular or isolated fringe populations is close to that of the Basques with a high occurrence of type O.<sup>5</sup>

Strangely, the blood of the American Indians is also type O. Their languages are agglutinative, and their religious symbols and the graphic principles behind their architecture are very similar to those of the Dravidians. They apparently belong to the same human species.

## *The Aryans*

THE invasion of the Aryans, who came from the plains of the Ukraine at the dawn of the second millennium following climatic changes, was an unprecedented material and cultural catastrophe.

At first, the Aryan tribes only settled in the northwest of India. Their penetration into the Ganges Valley took place slowly. The south and the east of the continent remained independent for a long time, and they were able to save their languages, religions, and customs. The Aryans destroyed the cities of the Indus (about 1800), and also Sumeria, Crete, and Mycenae. They spread throughout the west. The Aryan Kassites settled in Babylon toward 1750. The Hyksos entered Egypt at the same time. The Persians, Achaeans, Dorians, Romans, Celts, and Germans were Aryan tribes.

### ARYAN LINGUISTIC EXPANSION

Nothing has survived of the original Cretan language. We also know nothing about the Etruscan language, although many Roman nobles were sent to study in the universities of Etruria. The phenomenon of Aryan linguistic expansion continues on implacably today. Texts about the cultures of the peoples colonized by the Europeans survive only in Aryan languages (English, French, German, etc.). Even in India, whose ruling classes send their children to study at Cambridge, some aspects of Hindu thought are known today only through translations into Western languages, which are those of the new conquering Aryans.

By a curious falsification of history, the legend that the origins of civilization are Aryan, or Indo-European, was generally accepted until the discoveries of Egyptian and Cretan worlds, then Sumeria, Hittite, and Babylonian texts, combined to confirm the primacy of the ancient cultures whose languages and traditions India has safeguarded.

### THE OCCULT TRADITION

The religion of the Aryans, which was introduced into India and also into Persia and Achaean and Dorian Greece, comes from a patriarchal society of nomads. The worship of the horse replaces that of the bull. The new religion, imposed by the conquerors, disturbed the order of Indian society, making men of Aryan origin a "master race" who considered themselves superior to other humans. Non-Aryans were treated as an inferior race, good for slavery (*dâsyu*) and deprived of civil rights. Many were driven into the mountainous or outlying regions and to the south of the country.

The Aryan conquerors destroyed cities, massacred populations, and reduced the survivors to slavery without regard for rank or learning. It was not only in Greek antiquity that scholars and philosophers were sold as slaves. The attitude of modern colonialists toward "native" scholars has scarcely evolved.

in this regard.

Therefore, it was in the classes considered inferior and used for the most lowly tasks that we found, mixed with artisans and farm laborers, the descendants of princes and priests, the holders of knowledge. Little by little, these latter organized themselves in the form of occult societies representing a parallel civilization, kept secret, in which the task of groups of ascetics was to pass on the various aspects of the ancient knowledge. This is not unique to India. Occult societies represent a force all over the world in maintaining the forms of knowledge that originated in the pre-Aryan world. In India, in order to escape persecution, these groups of initiates were often forced to feign madness. This explains some of the strange rules of conduct adopted by the majority of monastic orders, heirs of the ancient knowledge.

The Aryans, while maintaining their racial privileges, gradually absorbed some aspects of the technology and arts of the conquered people, as well as many of the philosophical and theological concepts of the ancient civilization of India. Vedism became imbued with the culture of a world that was striving to subjugate. Non-Aryan princes and philosophers were raised to the rank of "honorary Aryans" and profoundly influenced the Aryan culture.

The first hymns of the *Rig Vedä*, which represent the original religion of the Aryans, were in all likelihood composed before their arrival in India. The latest of their sacred books, the *Atharvâ Vedä*, already reflects rites, beliefs, and religious and magical practices that no longer bore any relation to those of the first hymns of the *Rig Vedä*. The Dravidian influence is also perceptible in the texts describing the great rituals, the *Brâhmanä(s)*; in the philosophy of the *Upanishad(s)*; and in "the tradition of Yogä, which begins with the Indus Valley and continues through the [non-Aryan ascetics called] Yatis of the *Rig Vedä* and Vrâtyäs of the *Atharvâ Vedä*."<sup>6</sup>

The teachings of the non-Aryan sage Kapilä (with brown skin), whose influence we see appearing toward the seventh century B.C., had already introduced some of the cosmological theories of the Sâmkhyä into the Aryan world. However, it was always an oral tradition whose extent and complexity we have difficulty in realizing.

Groups of the initiated, forming secret societies, were created everywhere that Aryan religions had been imposed, with the aim of safeguarding the threatened rites and forms of learning. Alchemy, astrology, and the powers of vision and prediction of Yogä were often considered to be diabolical and were persecuted by the official religions. It is thanks to the occult tradition that efforts could be made in various eras, to salvage the ancient knowledge and cults. Thus, in the period when Lakulish restored Shaivism we will see Gnosticism and Mithraism appear in the West.

Later, the emperor Hadrian tried to bring together a college of scholars to rediscover the ancient learning. A similar endeavor by Prospero Colonna was at the origin of the Renaissance in the West whose philosophical and religious bases were destroyed by the savage persecution of the Church, allowing only the most external aspects to survive.<sup>7</sup> Despite Christianity, Dionysian practices and rituals lasted for a long time in Europe in secret initiatory organizations. Sufi sects in the Middle East have protected an esoteric teaching and still practice ecstatic dances of Dionysian character despite opposition from orthodox Islam.

#### WRITING

Writing, a phenomenon linked to the Kali Yugä, appeared nearly simultaneously in India, Sumeria, and Egypt around 3300 B.C. The ancient writing of Mohenjo Daro, which has not yet been deciphered, seems to have disappeared after the invasion of the Aryans, who knew nothing of writing and probably



considered it to be wizard's spells. Written texts probably survived for a long time in esoteric Dravidian centers, but subsist only in later versions. On the other hand, the tombs of the kings of Egypt have safeguarded precious documents, and it is thanks to a climatic miracle that original Sumerian texts, inscribed on clay tablets, have recently come down to us.

The Aryans, it is said, "loathed writing." (That is why we have no knowledge at all of the Druidic tradition.) Their religious texts and rituals, the Vedā(s), Upaniśhad(s), and the Brâhmanā(s), were, and still are, handed down with the help of very elaborate mnemonic techniques that assure the continuity of the oral tradition, even through individuals who do not understand their meaning. A text learned from a book is not, even these days, considered fit for ritual. Ancient writings survived in India only in a secret form, in places where dynasties of priests or scholars carried on the tradition of the ancient learning.

A new concept of writing with a commercial purpose appeared among the Phoenicians at the beginning of the first millennium B.C. It was introduced to Cyprus and Carthage in the eighth century, to Malta and Sardinia in the seventh. The Greek alphabet, derived from the Phoenician, was formed in the eighth century and spread among the Etruscan and Latin tribes from the seventh century onward. It was not standardized until the fourth century. Aramaic writing, which was to become Arabic writing, spread in Iran during the sixth century.

It was only in the sixth century B.C., the critical period in the middle of the Kali Yuga, that is, the period of the Buddha, more than a thousand years after the Aryans arrived in India, that Darius, who had annexed the Indus Valley and established a satrapy there, introduced into India a new form of writing, Aramaic, used by merchants, as was money. The ancient Sanskrit alphabets, the Brahmi and the Karoshti, are therefore of Semitic origin. The first inscriptions date from the third century B.C. The Vedic language had evolved, giving birth to various vernacular languages, the Prakrit(s).

Writing allowed the Aryans to fix the religious and philosophical texts until then passed on orally. It was on this basis that great scholars forged an artificial language called Sanskrit, the "refined language," devised to last forever, which, little by little, became the universal language of the culture.

In the fourth century B.C., the grammarian Pânini, summarizing earlier works, established in his famous grammar, the definitive form of Sanskrit, which has not changed since.

Apart from inscriptions and engravings on coins, writing was done on papyrus, palm leaves, parchment, and silk. Paper, which appeared in China at the beginning of our era, only spread to the West in the fourteenth century and in India a little later. The majority of Indian manuscripts are on palm leaves and must be periodically recopied.



## *The Religions of the Kali Yugä*

### *Shaivism*

SHAIVISM, THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT DRAVIDIANS, was always the religion of the people. Its metaphysical, cosmological, and ritual conceptions were preserved by communities of wandering ascetics living on the fringe of the official society, whom the Aryans scornfully called Yati(s) (wanderers), Vrätÿä(s) (untouchables), or Âjîvikä(s) (beggars).

The *Vâyu Purânä* mentions the fact that these wandering Shaiva ascetics "seem to have possessed the humble status of Shudras (people of the seryile caste or even of outcastes who were forbidden to enter towns)."

In practice, the term *Âjîvikä* applied to the whole of the non-Aryan population. Communities of *Âjîvikä* laymen were to be found in all the great cities of the Ganges basin (and formed a parallel society). They included members of all classes.<sup>1</sup>

In the fourth century A.D., Amarsimhä, the author of a famous Sanskrit dictionary, still classes among the Shudrâ(s) (the low castes) the Devalä or Shaivas, who worship idols, and notes among them the Pâshupatä(s), the Pâncharâträ(s), and the Tantrikä(s), that is, the population groups who had been able to maintain the old religion, its rites, cosmology, myths, and practices. It is the members of these monastic orders who today still teach the disciplines and eroticomagical rites of Tantrism.

Aryan society practiced a punitive discrimination against them. In South India, even in the fourteenth century, the *Âjîvikä(s)*, that is, the indigenous people, paid much heavier taxes than the rest of the population (as later on the Muslims imposed upon the Hindus).

### *The Return of Arihat*

THE date 3102 B.C., which marks the beginning of the Kali Yuga, represents a cosmological reality linked with an alteration in influx from the planetary spheres; it is not an arbitrary date. Its influence is felt everywhere in the world. Differences in the estimation of this date derive from varying methods of calculation. In Sumer, it is the time of the flood. The Hebrew calendar preserved by certain sects begins in 3760 B.C., while the American Mayan calendar begins in 3313 B.C. After the events that mark the beginning of each period, a sort of characteristic climate is established, which, for the Kali Yuga is an atmosphere of tensions, rivalries, conflicts, invasions, wars, and the like. Perverse conceptions hostile to the tradition of wisdom and the harmony between the species which appeared during the Dvâparä Yugä, began, from the start of the Kali Yugä, to impose themselves with violence. It was at this time that the invasions of the Aryan barbarians, described in the Great War of the *Mahâbhârata*, and the imposition of Vedism took place. At the same time, we can see the development of the moralistic and atheistic religion of Jainism.

It is at the midpoint of the Kali Yuga that the conditions are brought about which will lead to the final decline. The fifth century B.C. was then to see the forceful manifestation of the ideologies that would be the cause of humanity's decadence. And, indeed, we are seeing the reappearance, in conformity with the predictions, of the teachings of Arihat, which had caused the fall of the Assurs.

## *Gosâlâ*

THREE figures in India were to play a key role in the religious reforms that conditioned all subsequent religions. They are Makkhali Gosâlâ (560–484 B.C.), Mahâvîrâ (547–467 B.C.), and Gautamâ (550–484 B.C.), whom his disciples called the Buddha, the Illumined.<sup>2</sup> The characteristic sign of this reversal of values was the Makkhali Gosâlâ's attempt to reform the Shaiva tradition.

Gosâlâ was one of those non-Aryan wandering ascetics of humble origin whom bourgeois society called Âjîvikâ(s) (beggars). He was very early preoccupied by the activities of extremist sects such as the Kâpâlikâ (Skull-Bearers) and the Kâlâmukhâ (Black Faces), whose magical practices and antisocial attitudes shocked the urban society of their time. He sought to reinstate the philosophic and rationalist aspects of the ancient pre-Aryan culture, which were in opposition to popular ecstatic and mystical Shaivism. We find similar attempts to adapt Shaivism to the prejudices of bourgeois society with the Virâ Shaivâ or Lingayat of the Middle Ages and later with the reformers of the British era. The Shaiva ascetics went about naked, their bodies smeared with ashes, practicing orgiastic dances. They refused to be participants in a society oriented toward productivity and puritanism. With matted hair and haggard eyes, they lived away from villages and towns and refused to take an interest in material wellbeing. In the same epoch, the sect of Cynics, of which Diogenes is a typical example, flourished in Greece and is clearly related to the Kâlâmukâ(s) of India.

The *Bhagavatî Sûtrâ*, a Jainâ work, has preserved for us the most important description of the life and work of Gosâlâ, his relationship to and his break with Mahâvîrâ, and the circumstances of his death.

The father of Gosâlâ was a Mankhâ, a sort of roving bard, exhibitor of pious images. Of non-Aryan origin, he was considered to be a Dâsyu, an appellation corresponding to the term "native" in the period of European colonialism. This, in fact, meant that any position other than a servile one was prohibited to him in Aryan society. Nevertheless, he was a man learned in the philosophic tradition of the ancient culture, particularly in the materialist theories of the Vaïsheshikâ and the cosmology of the Sâmkhyâ, infinitely more evolved than the nebulous concepts of the followers of the Vedâ. (In a similar context many centuries later, I myself knew a humble janitor at the French Consulate in Calcutta who was a poor Brahman who read the Upanishad(s) while operating the elevator for the sahibs, the Europeans, the new Aryan lords of India, as arrogant as they were ignorant.)

It was during the course of his father's peregrinations that Gosâlâ was born, like Jesus, in a stable not far from the famous university of Nalanda. After having practiced for several years the familiar business of dealing in images, Gosâlâ joined a group of Shaiva ascetic-beggars. He soon acquired great renown for his asceticism and his learning. According to the *Bhagavatî Sûtrâ*, his disciples considered him the twenty-fourth prophet (Tîrthamkarâ) of the Âjîvikâ, in the Avasarpini Yuga (the age of secret messengers), and as the reformer of the old Shaivism, about which little was known at the time for the texts were only reconstituted later. "A great wave of spiritual unrest swept through the Ganges Valley in the sixth century B.C. The thirty-three great gods of the Aryans and the lesser earthen spirits of the Aborigines were too motley a company to correspond to the orderly civilization which

had already emerged . . . and were inadequate to meet the spiritual needs of the rising class merchants to the existence of which both Buddhist and Jaina texts testify."<sup>3</sup>

The wandering Shaiva sages, asocial and marginal, both ascetic and lascivious, free from the tyrannies of society, held a great fascination for the bourgeois and aristocratic young people of the cities (a little like the hippies of modern times). Hence, the great bourgeois Mahāvîrā and the prince Gautamā became disciples of Gosālā. (Plutarch reports that Alexander said of himself: "If I were not Alexander, I would wish to be Diogenes.")

The figure of Gosālā is very important, for in presenting a different version of the old culture, until then ignored and rejected by Aryan society as the superstitions of despicable slaves, he attracted those such as Mahāvîrā and Gautamā, who were dissatisfied with Vedic rigidity, and he aroused a sudden interest in the antique pre-Aryan philosophy within the good society of the period. The role of Gosālā can be compared to someone such as Aurobindo, who, in the modern era, however contested by orthodox Hinduism, provoked considerable interest in the philosophic and religious conceptions that Europeans until then had regarded as the superstitions of backward populations.

Mahāvîrā traveled with Gosālā for six years, and Gautamā joined them for three or four years. The commentary on the *Avashyākā Sūtrā* by Jīna Dāsā, which gives a rather complete picture of the life of Mahāvîrā, contains the story of his travels in the company of Gosālā. Gosālā finally argued with his two disciples over points of doctrine, and they separated. "After their separation, Gosālā made his headquarters at Savatthi in the workshop of a potter-woman, Hālāhalā, and was surrounded by many disciples. At this time he was visited by six *dishācharā* (missionaries of the six directions) with whom he codified the *Ājīvikā* scriptures."<sup>4</sup> Gosālā died in 484 B.C., a year before the birth of Buddha. Mahāvîrā lived on until 467.

During his last years, Gosālā observed a vow of silence (*vācam pahāyā*) and lived in a state of trance. He practiced dance and drunkenness. A few moments before his death, one of his disciples asked him, "What is the nature of Hallā [the principle of the world]?", to which he answered with the mysterious phrase, "The form of Hallā is as the root of the bamboo. Play the *vînā*, Friend." The *vînā* is a stringed instrument made from a long bamboo. Music, the ephemeral harmony of sounds that evokes the harmony of the universe, comes forth from the bamboo. Its form and sonorous qualities are implied in its root, in its genetic formula, which like that of all other species is part of the plan devised by the Creator. Gosālā suggests here a subject for meditation on the tortuous route (*vakṛā*) which links the world of appearance to the unfathomable origin of creation and thus evokes the fundamental problem of knowledge.

*Hallā* is a mysterious term used by certain Shaiva sects to invoke the Supreme Being during ecstatic dances. It is difficult to avoid a comparison with *Allah*, the divine name adopted by the Muslims together with the black stone of Mecca, which, according to the geography of the Purāṇā(s), is a Shiva Lingā situated in the ancient sacred site called Makhevshvarā (Lord of the Crocodile). Vestiges of an important colony of people from the Indus Valley have been discovered at Oman, on the Arabian Peninsula.

The teachings of Gosālā, which constitute the reformed doctrine of the *Ājīvikā*(s), were gathered together in a work in ancient Dravidian called *Navakadir*. According to Nīlākēshi Tirattu, this work was translated into the Tamil language (modern Dravidian) under the name *Onbadukadir*, today lost, but of which the *Maṇimekhalai*, a Tamil novel from the second century, preserves important extracts

We primarily know about the doctrine of Gosâlâ through the writings of his Jainâ and Buddhist opponents. These texts must therefore be read with some caution. The essential element of the teaching of Gosâlâ is the doctrine of Niyati (determinism), which envisages a preestablished universal order by which the world evolves, at all levels, as do living beings, according to a plan contained in its seed. Progress and change are strictly determined by the "law of the process of development" (*parinâmâ-kramâ-niyamâ*), which forms ruts or molds inside which individuals develop.

Gunaratnâ, the commentator of the *Shaddarshana-Samucchayâ* (condensed from the six systems) Haribhadra, cites Gosâlâ: "What makes thorns pointed and determines the innumerable forms of the animals and birds? All this originates from their nature (*svabhâvâ*). Nothing is born of its own will or its actions. All beings develop according to the plan (*niyati*), to their nature (*svabhâvâ*) and chance (*sangati*)."

Evil and suffering, attributed by others to the actions (*karmâ*) of living beings, are, according to Gosâlâ, determined by fate. "Just as a dropped spool of thread unwinds to its end, so will the madman like the sage, follow his destiny and reach the end of suffering (*dukhântâ*)."<sup>5</sup> "Human efforts are ineffective" (*N'atthi purisakare*) was the slogan of the Âjîvikâ(s).

The doctrine of Gosâlâ was divided into six parts: gains (*lâbham*), losses (*alâbham*), joy (*suham*), sorrow (*duham*), life (*jîviyam*), and death (*maranam*). It included the atomic theory of the Vaïsheshikâ and the cosmology of the Samkhya. We will see later with regard to the Vaïsheshikâ, a summary of Gosâlâ's materialist doctrine according to the *Mañimekhalai*. According to this doctrine, the number of souls, of "individual consciousnesses" in the world, is infinite.

A theory of cyclical liberation (*mandalâ mokshâ*) refers to the destruction of individual beings at the end of each cycle. The process of the development of life over 8,400,000 Mahâ Kalpâ, the stages of evolution that represent the different species in creation, was later on interpreted as a series of reincarnations of the individual being.

All the Âjîvikâ(s) used music and dance as ecstatic media and knew the secret of the technique of resuscitating the dead by the transfer of their own vital energy, one of the Siddhi(s) (powers) obtained through Yogâ. This power was called *paütta parihâra* by the disciples of Gosâlâ.

## ***Mahâvîrâ***

IT was in the Age of Doubt (*dvâparâ*), with the development of agricultural, sedentary, and urban civilizations, that Jainism appeared, whose first prophet, Rishabhâ, belongs to what we call prehistory. With him arose the notion of a moral, materialistic society with atheistic tendencies, which restrained individual liberty in the name of the common good and of the orderliness of the city, in opposition to Shaiva mysticism, which promotes the joy of living in communion with the divine work that the natural world represents.

It was Jainism that introduced vegetarianism and nonviolence, as well as the theories of transmigration and Karmâ, into the Indian world. Jainism also advocated suicide by fasting.

The doctrine of Karmâ, linked to that of transmigration, attributes differences between beings to their behavior in previous lives. Inequalities between living beings, and, in particular, between men are due to an automatic retribution after death for actions committed in life. This theory tends to replace the responsibility of an impermanent "I," the transmitter of a genetic code that affects the species, with the evolution of a supposedly permanent "I." This has significant consequences, moral and speaking, and also eliminates the notions of grace, of the whim of the gods, and of their freedom.



action. It is basically an atheistic theory, contrary to the conceptions of the mystical Shaivism and ritualistic Vedism.

Mahāvîrā is considered to be the twenty-fourth and last prophet of Jainism. Pârshvā, the twenty-third prophet, lived three centuries earlier and had apparently liberalized the ascetic customs of the sect.

Mahāvîrā was, at a young age, outraged by the environment he lived in, which was essentially commercial. He became the disciple of the wandering monk Gosâlā, with whom he traveled, begging for his food, for over six years. Gosâlā did not practice or recommend the observance of chastity, as was contrary to the principles of Shaivai Yogā. Antisexual moralism was introduced later in certain sects, such as the Vîrā-ShaÑ—vā. It was on these grounds and on that of Karmā that Mahāvîrā parted company with Gosâlā. "Mahāvîrā was almost certainly a twice-born Aryan who had been converted from the religious goal of sexual power to that of ethical celibacy. His reform of the religion of Pârshvā was precisely to impose the law of celibacy where earlier it had not been in effect. He was overall the most antisexual of the religious teachers of his time."<sup>6</sup> Mahāvîrā undertook to reform Jainism, which, since that time, has been divided into two sects: the Jâinä Hdressed in space (*digambarā*), who are always naked, and the Jâinä "dressed in white" (*shvetâambarā*), which allows them to participate more easily in the social life of urban society.

## ***Gautamā Buddhā***

GAUTAMĀ belonged to a princely family of the Shâkyā clan of Nepal, who reigned over the rich city of Kapilavastu in the northeast of India. At the time, the families of the warlike aristocracy were in revolt against the authority of the Brahmans and the rigid ritualism of the Vedic religion. Immense sacrificial ceremonies, such as the sacrifice of the horse (*ashvāmedhā*), through which the Brahmans imposed their power, ruined the states financially. Gautamā was at first attracted by the antisocial mysticism of Shaivism. For a time, he was also a disciple of Gosâlā and very close to Mahāvîrā, who was three years younger. For several years he practiced with them the austere and free life of a wandering monk. He eventually left them, however, and soon became their rival. He then undertook to reform Brahmanism on the basis of the fundamental atheistic concepts of the Jâinä, in particular the prohibition of rites, nonviolence, reincarnation, the doctrine of Karmā, the negation of castes, the emphasis on moral values, and so forth.

His disciples called Gautamā the Buddha the Enlightened One. His doctrine, under the name of Buddhism, was to have a great influence, first in India, then in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Adopted by the aristocratic and warlike class to which Gautamā belonged, Buddhism became a powerful instrument of colonialism and cultural expansion, justifying, under the pretext of religious propaganda, the most savage conquests, such as that of Kalingā, by the emperor Ashoka. Later, Christianity and Islam, other moralistic religions stemming from Arihat, were to serve in the same way as a pretext for a conquering imperialism. Buddhism was to play a major role on the Indian scene for more than six centuries.

## ***The Religion of Nature and the Religion of the City***

DURING the Dvâparā Yugā, the age of doubt and economic development, together with sedentary life and urban growth, new forms of religion emerged which sought to protect a conservative and puritanical social order. But it was not until the middle of the Kali Yugā that we witness the

realization of the prediction of the Purânâ(s). The teaching of Arihat, in the form of Buddhism and Jainism, as well as reformed Âjîvikism, attacks the old ecstatic, orgiastic, and mystical Shaiv tradition and, at the same time, the ritualistic and hierarchical structures of Vedic society.

The three heterodox sects that arose in this cultural climate, Buddhism, Jainism, and Âjîvikism had much in common. All three alike rejected the sacrificial polytheism of the Aryans and the monistic theories of the Upanishadic mystics. The supernatural powers were relegated to an inferior or even negligible position. The three new religions represent a recognition of the rule of natural law in the universe, and the work of their founders may be compared with that of their approximate contemporaries, the natural philosophers of Ionia.<sup>7</sup>

The religious reforms in the middle of the Kali Yugä were to bring to the fore the conflict of mysticism and moralism, and of the religion of nature and love in contrast to that of the city and civic virtues.

In India, as elsewhere, we can, in the course of the Kali Yugä, follow the alternation, conflict, and sometimes even the complementary nature of the two tendencies. Beginning in the Dvâparä Yugä, in the limited spheres of what is called the intelligentsia of the cities, materialistic tendencies developed which were in conflict with Dionysian Shaivism, the religion of nature, hostile to the religion of towns, focused on man.

Jainism, an essentially moralistic religion, along with the forms of Hinduism derived from it, such as Buddhism and Vaishnavism, are still the religions of the city dwellers and commercial classes in India today.

## *The Kali Yugä in the World*

A development similar to that in India took place in all the territories occupied by the Aryans. The legacy of vanquished Pelasgi and Cretans is at the root of the development of the Hellenic civilizations. The Indo-Sumerian sources of Hesiod and Homer have been proven.<sup>8</sup> Dionysian cults similar to Shaivism combine with the Aryan religion in Greek and Roman antiquity as they do in India.

The middle of the Kali Yugä is everywhere marked by great upheavals. Europe witnessed the spread of Celtic barbarians. It was the time of the destruction of Athens, Urarthu, and Babylon, and the Persian invasion of Egypt. In Italy, Rome developed at the expense of the Etruscans. We can observe in different parts of the world, the simultaneous appearance of doctrines so similar to each other that they seem all to have the same source, which, according to the Indians, would be the Jainism of Pârshvâ (817–778), the predecessor of Mahâvîrâ. All these religions and philosophical movements are moralistic and puritanical in character, demonstrate a belief in transmigration, and also oppose polytheism and ecstatic practices.

Zoroaster (died 553 B.C.), a little before the occupation of the Indus by Cyrus (533 B.C.), had reformed the Persian religion (close to Vedic polytheism) and adopted the Jainâ theory of transmigration and retribution for actions after death. Xenophanes, a Greek from Asia Minor, (c. 540 B.C.), opposed polytheism and anthropomorphism. In Greece, the naked Gymnopedists, who were Jain missionaries, had a considerable influence. Pythagoras taught transmigration and set up a brotherhood in the same year that Gautamä became a monk (530 B.C.). He drew inspiration from the theories of the Sâmkhyä, while the School of Cynics is, in all likelihood, an echo of the teachings of the Âjîvikä(s).

In China, the fifth century is the age of the birth of Taoism (Lao-tse, 604–531 B.C.) and Confucianism (Confucius, 551–479 B.C.), whose ideas are very close to some of the Indian concepts. The great system of Tao, which tries to follow the natural movement of the universe, originally appears to be based on a poetic version of the concepts of the Sâmkhyä and of Yogä. The words *Yin* and *Yang* correspond to *Yoni* and *Lingä*. Breathing practices and the search for the sun and moon in the body recall *Idâ* and *Pingalâ*, the lunar and solar paths of breath in Yogä. The sexual practices (withholding the spermatic essence and trying to absorb the feminine essence) are identical to those of Yogä. The notion of immortality conceived as transmutation, in which "astride a white cloud the Sage or Yellow Emperor arrives at the region of the gods," is analogous to that of Shaivism. We again find the seven sages, the refusal of asceticism, the practices aiming at a long life (Ayurvedä, the Indian science of longevity).

Confucius, who was born ten years after Gosâlâ, in 551 B.C., and died five years after him, in 479 B.C., was an agnostic who was against Taoism and sought to resolve all difficulties in the world through morality. He was, according to Max Weber, "a rationalist absolutely free of the metaphysical and of any religious tradition who ... built up a morality based on the nature of man and the needs of society." His meeting with Lao-tse would have been in 517 B.C. It is apparently a Jainä influence that caused the appearance of the notion of transmigration in later Taoism.

With the development of urban, industrial, and capitalist societies, the doctrines of the kind attributed to Arihat—moralistic, materialistic, and atheistic—filtered through into all subsequent religions, including modernized forms of Hinduism and Shaivism. We find their influence in Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and even Marxism, the last of the religions of the Kali Yugä.

## ***The Shaiva Revival***

THE period that corresponds to the beginning of the Christian era was everywhere a time when the official religions were being challenged. In India, Buddhism, which had considerably weakened the Vedic tradition, was on the decline, yet the authority of the Brahmans was not restored. Mendicant ascetics, despised and ignored by the ruling classes, had also undergone attacks from Buddhism, and it is only in the age of the decline of Buddhism, that is, at the beginning of our era, that we see the ancient pre-Aryan culture and its religion, Shaivism, reappear gloriously, scarcely affected by centuries of clandestine existence. The moment seemed favorable to the representatives of the ancient tradition to openly reestablish its precepts and react against all the foreign cults, including Vedism and the new religions, Buddhism and Jainism.

## ***Lakulishä***

IT was an Âjîvikä called Lakulishä, one of those wandering monks who maintained the heritage of the ancient knowledge in an occult tradition, who judged the moment opportune to reveal it, causing a great revolution in society. This corresponds to the greatest period in Indian civilization, which was to last for more than a millennium. Lakulishä (the name means the "Club-bearing Lord") restored an extraordinary impetus to Shaivism, reestablished the pre-Aryan culture, and united, under the name of the Pâshupatä(s) (followers of Pâshupati, Lord of the Animals), the different sects that had survived in semisecrecy for centuries.

According to tradition, Lakulishä probably lived a little before and at the beginning of our era. He



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