

## [What Is the Nature of the Soul?](#)

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FROM THE AGAMAS

## What Is the Nature of the Soul?

In the Kirana Agama Lord Siva explains bondage, grace and release

Kirana Agama is the 27th of the 28 Saiva Agamas. This excerpt is from the Vidyapada or knowledge section. Typically, Agamas are divided into sections dealing with philosophy, yoga, personal and temple worship and construction of temples, including design of Deity images. The Saiva Agamas are set in Sanskrit as a conversation between Lord Siva and a devotee, in this case, Garuda. Here in verses 10 to 23 of chapter one, Garuda poses a question about the nature of the soul and how it might be released from the cycle of reincarnation. The 36 tattvas, frequently referenced in these verses, are "reality essences " or categories of existence. There are five suddha or pure tattvas beginning with Siva tattva or the pure consciousness of God. Then there are seven tattvas of mixed nature including maya, time, karma, creativity, knowledge, attachment and the purusha tattva, or soul, equipped with the preceding five. The 24 impure tattvas include prakriti or primal nature, intellect, ahankara tattva, instinctive mind, the various senses, organs and the five elements.

Garuda: "O Lord! I am your devotee and yet I am frightened with the hazards of continuous transmigration. In order to annihilate this fear, kindly impart to me the Sivajnana, the divine knowledge, by obtaining which alone all the embodied souls are relieved from the bondage and attain the final and supreme blessedness."

Thereupon the Lord, having been implored by Garuda, shook his head, resplendent with the crescent, and spoke.

Lord Siva:"What is requested by you is auspicious. Now I impart to you an important and great Saiva scripture. It is capable of bestowing on the disciple siddhis, the

greatest and perfect accomplishments. The name of this great scripture is the Kirana Agama. It procures for the aspirants the highest kind of the nectar of bliss. For all people, irrespective of castes, it grants liberation. It is devoid of discrepancies. Each and every word of it is full of clarity and sense. It imparts the knowledge of the soul, its three bondages, God, the grace of Sivasakti and the manner of spiritual investigation. It also explains with equal stress about worship and personal conduct. The greatness of yoga is set forth in many of its chapters."

Garuda: "What is the nature of the soul which is thus told? How does the soul get entangled in bondage? How is it released? Kindly impart to me in order to dissipate the doubts concerning the soul."

Lord Siva: "The soul is eternal. It is without form. It is with limited knowledge and action. It is without attributes. It is neither omnipotence nor omniscient. It is pervasive. It has its existence in the middle and upper regions of maya, the created worlds. It is of the nature of attaching itself to the means of enjoyments.

"To the soul associated with impurity, the bondage of kala tattva, the impulse toward creativity, is brought about by me. Because of the bondage of kala tattva, the power of the soul to acquire knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the senses is partially manifested. The kala tattva partially removes the obscuring impact of maya, so the soul can come under this influence of vidya tattva, knowledge. Then the soul is chained with raga tattva, desire, which induces it to feel intense attachment. Again the soul is bound by avyakta which is in the form of the gross worlds, and in which the three qualities of nature, sattva or quiescence, rajas, passion, and tamas, darkness or inertia, are latent. After the bondage of avyakta, the intellect, the external ego, instinctive mind and senses such as hearing, etc., bind the soul. Then the soul which is equipped in this way for empirical experience becomes restricted by its karma. Because of this restriction, the soul is confined to the fruits of its own karmas procured by it in its previous births.

"In this way the soul, which is bound by the chains of kala and other tattvas, gets associated with the gross body. It is possessed of limited knowledge and action obscured by the innate impurities. The soul becomes deluded under the bondage of maya and its evolutes. The act of misconceiving the not-self as the self becomes its own nature. After its embodiment, the soul experiences all pleasures and pains which are the consequences of its previous good and evil deeds.

"Due to the passage of time, when equality occurs in the karmic influences of the soul, the rapid and forceful descent of grace, Saktipata, occurs. On the ground of the descent of Sakti, when the soul is initiated according to the grade of Saktipata by a guru, the soul gets over its limitedness and becomes omniscient like Siva. Thereafter it is not fettered by the bonds. It regains its own essential nature of Siva tattva. It does not get again plunged in transmigration. The soul whose essential nature is intelligence itself and whose bondage is due to mala gets released on account of the grace of the Lord who is essentially and eternally free from mala. Thus the nature of the soul is expounded to you. What else do you want to be imparted?"

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The Agamas, like the Vedas, are divinely revealed and revered scriptures, sruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1,200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). There are many Agamas and subsidiary texts for each of Hinduism's principle denominations--Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava. Dr. Sabharathnam dates the Agamas at 12,000 bce.