

# THE THEORY OF FULGURATION AND EMANATION

## A study in the Pāñcarātra Concept of the Deity

Before we enter into the details of the schools of Pāñcarātra, certain general statements about the whole Tantra literature may be made. It is surely an extensive literature pertaining to the practices of certain rituals simplified no doubt from those of the Brāhmaṇas and Vedas but without conservative regulations as to caste, age or sex. Though liberal in this respect it is undoubtedly, on the other hand, strict in its exacting principles without following which there can be no progress but certainly all danger. For if the path be quickest, it is also the steepest; and to take a false step without understanding and without the full instructing of a Guru, the path may open into a chasm from which to recede would perhaps be impossible.

The theism of the Tantra centers round the importance of the Goddess or the mother – aspect or Śakti – aspect of the Divine, which it holds to be more important than the Divine Himself. The Kubjaka Tantra says “Not Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra create, maintain or destroy; but Brāhmī, Vaiṣṇavi and Rudrāṇī. Their husbands are but as dead bodies.” The Tantra-Śāstras, however, is insistent about the absolute unity between Śakti and Śiva and all other Devas and Devīs are but one and he who thinks them different from one another goes to hell<sup>1</sup>. This intimate unity which obtains in the external world.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mahanivarana Tantra*, Introducing by A.Avalon.

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tantra shows to consist in the world of man's body also. The correspondence which Tantra enunciates is also the foundation of the Statement that Śakti-Kuṇḍalīnī in the Mūlādhāra of the individual is the Devī, and that she sekes in

Yoga to unite herself with her lord who is always at the Sahasrāra, the crown of the head is the real achievement of freedom of the individual. The individual is merely Śiva seeking union with Śakti.

The monism is enunciated characteristically at all stages, but the duality of the Śakti-Śiva is almost kept inviolate. The unity is referred to as the organic unity of Ardhanārīśvara, and yet in Tantra the theory of Māyā though converted is not suspended; it śesi merely transcended by this relation of intrinsic mutual determination. The *prakāṣa* and *vimarṣa* are inseparable<sup>1</sup>. Even in *praṭaya*, final withdrawal, this relation is no means annulled; for then only the Devī is passively siled keeping within her womb all the worlds at the command and will of Īsvara. The worship of the Mother or the Devī is all through inculcated by Tantras; and the Pāñcarātra, which form the Vaiṣṇavite section of the Tantraśāstra, have fully shown that they sought the ideal balance in the eternal union of Śiva with Śakti or Śrī with Viṣṇu, and in that union and by that union the world evolution proceeds and fructifies. The theory of grace which is one of the most important contributions of the Tantra – āstra is due to the recognition of the mother – aspect or Śakti aspect of the divine.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kamalkalavilasini*

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Whilst the monistic tendency of Śankara did influence Tantra, never annihilated the individuals at all, since it was truly theistic and aimed at union with the highest through the intercession on behalf of the individual of Durgā or Lakṣmī.

The theistic thought at this point not only leaves as much room for multiplicity, as there are functions, but also it makes for a complete Unity, and severely warns that all forms of worship ultimately refer and apply to the one Divine and not to separate Kalās or expressions. Though the theory of Tantra is certainly Unity, it is not bare identity; and it is mostly an attempt at giving a more comprehensive and real statement of the Advaitic position. After all even monism cannot ask for more than what Tantra asks for . Tantraśāstra is pre-eminently

realistic, though it equally idealistic statement consists in affirming the organic monism obtaining between Śiva and Śakīt. The individual being the microcosmic representation of Śiva and Śakīt. As the inner power who is always resident in him. she leads him to higher perfections and finally to Khecharī state. The individuals thus finally through devotion and worship must awaken the Goddess within him so that she, and through her he himself might be united with the Divine. Before passing to a detailed study of Pāñcarātra, it may be said that the philosophy of Śivdwaita is almost similarly influenced by the Tantric and uses the Śaivite texts. The Śivādwaita is similar thus to the school of Rāmānuja philosophically. But whilst Nīlakanṭha affirms and seeks to maintain that Śiva is the ultimate deity, nowhere does Rāmānuja seek to establish Viṣṇu as the Highest but only Nārāyaṇa, terminology that is purely philosophic in its usage.

The Viśiṣṭādvaita school is an effort to restate the Tantric position in a new manner which is synthetic. The vision of the Seers of the Vedas and Pāñcarātra school as also the mystic utterances of ālvār are sought to be reconciled (*samanvayāt*). Rāmānuja's acceptance of the Pāñcarātra literature is more definitely known through his rhapsodies in prose (*gadya*), which are only three in number – viz., (1) on Śaraṇāgati (self-surrender), (2) on Vaikunṭha (the celestial abode of Brahma), and lastly on Śrī Ranganātha (the celestial abode of Brahma), and lastly on Śrī Ranganātha (the God at Śrīranam or the Divine Theatre), than in his Śrī Bhāṣya. Four among the sūtras are devoted to the system of Pāñcarātra. Śankara holds the view that Pāñcarātra is also discarded since it speaks of the soul as born while in the chapter of Discarding, Rāmānuja holds the contrary view that all the rest except Pāñcarātra are refuted.

Whatever be the definite view of the author of the Sūtras, Rāmānuja accepts the view he does because he believes, even as Śankara must along with tradition, in the identity of the author of *Mahābhārata* and the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. It is but legitimate that the same author cannot be said to have held two contrary views on the same subject. Rāmānuja therefore quotes from the *Mahābhārata* in support of his position. There is Sāṅkhya, Yoga, the Pāñcarātra, the Vedas and

he Pāśupata doctrine; do all these rest on one and the same basis or on different ones? “Know, O Royal Sage, all these different views. The promulgator of Sāṅkhyā is Kapila, Hiranyagarbha of Yoga, and Paśupati of Paśupata doctrine. All these have human origin. Apāntaratamas is said to be the teacher of the Vedas, who intimates the non-human origin of the Vedas and finally of the Whole of Pāñcarātra, Nārāyaṇa himself is the promulgator.<sup>1</sup>” The great Upaniṣad consistent with the four Vedas and in harmony with Sāṅkhyā and Yoga was called by him the name Pāñcarātra. This is excellent, this is Brahma, this is supremely beneficial<sup>2</sup>. for in all these doctrines it is seen, according to tradition and reasoning, that the Lord Nārāyaṇa is the only basis<sup>4</sup>.”

Thus according to the view of the author of *Mahābhārata* and the Sūtras, the concept of a personal God is what is sought to be developed and unless modern writers create a duality in the personality of Vyāsa - Bādarāyaṇa there is no way of rejecting this information.

The theory of Pāñcarātra discusses the view of fulguration (Viṣṇu-linga-nyāya) not in the evolution of the Jīvas, as Bhāskara and Yādava Prakāśa hold, but with respect to the Deity Himself who manifests the world. Possessing as he does six primary qualities of perfection which are absolutely His constituting His essential nature, jñāna (knowledge), Bala (strength), Aiśvarya (lordship), Viṁśatī (virility), Śakti (power) and Tejas (light), each pair among them is manifested in the world as a person for the governance of the world; not that the Deity in each of those forms is without the other qualities, but that

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<sup>1</sup> *Sri-Bhasya* II.ii.43.p.529(Thibaut's Translation)

<sup>2</sup> *Lbid.* P.528

<sup>3</sup> *Lbid.* P.530

<sup>4</sup> *Lbid.* P.531

The divides his function into so many exclusive expressions. This theory of fulguration is known as the theory of vyūha. A very illuminative study of this theory is from the pen of Dr.O.Schroder in hs introduction to Pāñcarātra and Ahirbhudhnya-Samhitā.<sup>1</sup>

The Manifestation of God is recognized to be in fivefold forms for the sake of the devotees, viz. *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmi* and *Arcā*.

1. The Para is the Supreme Being, full and whole within Himself, beyond the realms of manifestation or revolution.
2. The vyūhas are the creative functions of the Para so divided to guide the world. Sankarsaṇa has jñāna and Bala, Pradyumna has Aiśvarya ad Vīrya, and Aniruddha has Śakti and Tejas<sup>2</sup>." The creative activities of the vyūhas come into play one after another marking out there successive stages in the creation of the non-pure universe."
3. the Vibhava or God as Avatāra is the representative Deity leading the world by his physical presence in the world to higher perfections, suppressing the wrong and exalting the right. Such a God appears somewhat like a finite God fighting against a

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Pancharatra, p.37, 34-41.

<sup>2</sup> *Yatindramata – Dipika*,pp.84-85 and *Rahasyatrayasara*, Ch.VI.

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host of enemies, failing sometimes but triumphing in the end against the forces of Truth. Such Avatāras are considered to occur in every age, a descent of the Deity which is guided by the free will of the Deity and not by the laws of karma. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa and the rest of the ten Avatāras are considered to the major descents of his type. As the *Gaudapāda – Kṛṣṇikā* says, "The God born is born in many ways".

4. The Antaryāmi or the God that is the centre of every being, indwelling in everything and holding all of them in His unique unit is the next fulguration. The importance of the Antaryāmi has been well recognized by the Upaniṣads and the conception of entering into the world by the Īśa is the expression of the indwelling nature of the Antaryāmi at the core of all things, Pāñcarātra in recognizing this as important has accepted the Upaniṣads intuition.
5. The Arcā or the image or idol is also considered to be a manifestation of the Deity. This last is the sanction for the worship of the idols in Hinduism. It is considered that God is present at certain places more than others for the benefit of the devotees who sign to have a physical presence of the Deity at all times of worship. “The Arcā from consists in the images of the Bhagavān (God) which accommodate themselves to the various tastes of His creatures for their worship, having no fixed form but that which the worshipper may choose to call him by, all knowing but seeming to be helpless and powerless, all sufficient but seeming as though needy, thus seeming to exchange places (which the worshipper gives and the Lord accepts) and choosing to be ocularly manifest to him at all temples and horns, in short at all times and places”<sup>1</sup>.

It may be the Vedic conception of Henotheism has led to this Pāñcarātra conception and worship. Here, however, the concept is clarified and presented clearly. It is vague and poetic in the Vedas. Idol – worship is presented in a manner that may allow for acceptance. Idol – worship and animism have always the appeal to all the minds of all races of mankind an anthropology and philosophies of religion clearly show. Idollworship in Pāñcarātra is made significant. Having thus presented God in four perceptible levels in His activity, the aim of Pāñcarātra is to make man a conscious channel of the Antaryāmi on the one hand within himself, and on the other, act for the glory and greatness of the Avatāra outside, and follow the footsteps of the Vibhūti. The starting point is Arcā, the visible tangible ideal figure, the physical – spiritual from that

accelerates contemplation and lifts one to the level of freedom from the lower activates of passion, greed and egoism.

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<sup>1</sup> Artha-Panchaka: Pillai Lokacharya (Trans. A.Govindacharya, p.15)

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It may be asked how Rāmānuja, the initiator of realistic thought, could legitimately argue for the theory of manifestation in these five ways of God, who remains always the first or the Para, pure and self-refulgent. It is one of the most important contributions that Viśiṣṭādvaita makes towards the solution of this problem of God. He approaches the problem from the point of mind-body relation. The body is that which is completely being utilized, directed, preserved and enjoyed by a self, for its own ends. This would mean that thought here be deity beyond the realms of creation, yet this presence in world is possible through governance and power. This external governor is the Naiyāyika God, the vyūhas of Pāñcarātra. As the immanent sustainer of the world, God is the causating and purposive principle of the world; the vyūhas performs the world duties and evolves the world for its own enjoyment. The Para is the eternal unchanging ideal of perfection of the world and it's the goal of the individual who through all the vicissitudes and crises of evolution has striven up to the level of egoistic self-consciousness. This evolution upto the limits of egoist is necessary for the further step and in the words of Sri Aurobindo Ghose "ego was the helper: ego is the bar,"<sup>1</sup> when ego becomes an impediment to self-surrender to the śvara (Prāṇidhāna). The Para is no causation principle except for its initial Īksūna, desire, thought it is the final inalienable eternal governor of the world; \

The next stage in the development of the concept of God is the actual descent of the Highest, who guides the world by His actual presence, moral and spiritual, assuming the best

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<sup>1</sup> Thoughts and Glimpses: Aurobindo Ghose

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forms suitable for the achievement of the ideal enjoyment and fulfillment of the Divine Līlā. This is the Avatāra. The Avatāras significantly in India represent ten types of evolution of the world. The conception is based on the belief that God Himself actually descends amidst various species of begins, as He does as a human being in human society, without being subject to the limitations imposed by birth, for the fulfillment of some divine purpose, which can be achieved only by His direct presence and intervention. It is this conception of the Avatāra that makes Pāñcarātra a valuable system of thought. Pāñcarātra attempts to give the ordinary human being a satisfactory explanation of the wonderful Being, who is so far yet so near, who is transcendent to humanity, but to whom humanity is not an silent sphere to incarnate. It gives as its fundamental explanation the great joy of love that makes the deity such a lovable huane being that He enjoys playing with humanity in its own manner and according to its own likes so that the true fragrance of Divine Love might grow to its full blossom and live.

The next concept embraces the mystic realisation of the seers of their oneness, of which, we spoke in the previous paragraph, and shows the nearness of the law or the eternal principle. The foundation of law for the core of reality is in the centre of our being. This fact is cosmologically spoken of as the entering (*anupravēśa*) of the Īśvara into his creation after he had created the world of names and forms. He becomes the centre of every individual, as he is the centre of the role. Because it should be imagined that Prakṛit alone is at the implicit command of the Divine and the individual souls are independent of such a control and sustenance. The Antaryāmi is said to be at the heart of each individual governing and witnessing the actions of the individual and enjoying completely the actions of the individual with a seer-like eye, and leading the individual to higher levels of divine life as he as *Para* destines. In this aspect, How is the *Akṣara*, the pervade of all, as Rāmānuja says. The Antaryāmi whom we have considered as Law is not to be considered as merely in terms of external mechanical law but as concrete law which is the embodiment of all moral and spiritual wealth.

The Antaryāmī thus is an actual concrete Being resident at the heart of all creatures, opening the communication with the Highest Being, which is higher status of himself but here present in a different aspect of himself, the moment the individual shows the requisite intensity of purpose to act according to the Highest within himself. This is the call of Sarasvatī in ourselves<sup>1</sup>. This is the call of the more conscience, which modern philosophers identify with the ethical purpose or social voice and that most unsatisfactorily. The finding of the Antaryāmī, the highest within us, is the fundamental aim of Yoga and Tantra – śāstra. The *Antrayāmī-Brāhmaṇa* breathes the personalistic note that unless this truth is first known, the unity with the world and world-life is impossible and is full of perils. Even a little of this knowledge saves us from great fear – *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayatē mahato bhaāt*. In fact, the first aim for the individual is the realisation of his true self within himself, the Self true and beyond the superficial self of modern psychology, which finds

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<sup>1</sup> Brih.Up.III.vii.3.

the self in the compound of tendencies and purposes social, instinctive, hereditary and reflexive.

The true kind of personalization is the finding of the intimate individuality within ourselves. It consists in the realisation of our self first. The Antaryāmī is the highest and is the same as the Para, and is the self of our self as the mystics will say. Our real freedom is the co-operative activity consciously realised by us, which becomes in common practice the unity of purpose which we attain with the Highest. At this stage of functioning it does not much matter for the worker or Sādhaka whether distinctness is realised or annihilated, or unity affirmed or assumed; but metaphysically speaking, the highest is distinct from the individual, which active only with the power of the highest. “The conception of God residing in the soul but identical with it will be responsible for the apparent Advaitism of a good many passages in the Pāñcarātra literature”, says Dr. Schroeder and not without justice. The true way of mystically dissolving the several enjoyers into the

ocean of co-operative freedom and bliss is found in the unity of purposes, however differently the approach towards such an attainment of common purpose with the highest is made, through knowledge or action or love or surrender or placing oneself at the feet of the Lord (*Nyāsa*). Such indeed is the relation between the individual and the highest, namely, that the freedom is assured at the moment he acts in consonance with his own inner law, the *Antaryāmī*. He is a body as much as the body which we assume to be our own is the body which we sustain and govern. But in another sense ‘our minds and the bodies’ are all the body of the *Antaryāmī* in consecrated activity. The Ādhyātmic realisation of Brahma is the pivot on which rest the experience of a synoptic vision of the universe. In such a coalescence with the highest we do not feel the separateness or absolute otherness either with the world or with ourselves. We may say that we do not find the otherness of time or space when we are entirely concentrated within ourselves or lost in the ecstasy of love or as in dreams and trance. The otherness likewise vanishes in common purposiveness for fusion of self with self in love. The losing of the sense of all otherness or myness is a state of splendid *samādhi*, equality of beings, that homogeneous experience of eternal bliss. It is this fact that is to be borne in mind in interpreting the Pāñcarātra and Viṣṇu - Purāṇa literature; in fact, every mystic work has to be approached from this point of view. It is because this psychological or mystical union is misinterpreted not only by the mystics but also by philosophers so as to avoid a logical distinction, that the experience of reality is said to be relative as to the highest state of the realisation of Kevala. Absolute identity is affirmed in ontological solutions. But one ought to affirm a monism with distinctions and not an ontological absolute monism since it is indefensible. Coalescence of content, if content means experience, does not exist, but may exist at certain moments of highest intuition with the divine. But certainly there can be no coalescence or content. If content means substance, with another substance or into another substance.

The system of Rāmānuja accepts the system of Pāñcarātra since it leads the way to the acceptance of human aspiration after the divine and the several

fulgurations satisfy the several relatively perfect souls as also the most unreflective but who yet wants a living image, a representation upon which he may lavish all his love. The danger of idolatry consists not in having an idol but that it may lead to pure mechanical worship and also because in trying to concentrate upon the physical aspect one may forget the vast supremacy of the Divine at other levels, and that one may sink into lower worship. Rāmānuja in his works displays his tendencies to appreciate the Antaryāmī more than any other, but he is not so poor as not to appreciate the necessity for the Arcā. His Gadyas, on the other hand, show that he appreciated it fully.