

THE PHILOSOPHY OF VYŪHAS

“Threefold are the those supreme births of this divine
Force that is in this world; they are true;
They are desirable; He moves there wide – overt
Within the infinite and shines pure, luminous and fulfilling..”

Rg. Veda.IV.1.(Sri Aurobindo’s Translation)

Catur – vidhyasya Bhagavān mumukṣūṅām hitāya val |
Anyeṣāmapl lokānām śrṣṭhiṣṭhityanta siddhaye ||

Viśvaksena Samhitā

“One person: Three persons: In all Four persons:
Being thus the enjoyable Being, and the person realized
Through Merit, and the Person of *many) manifestation Forms
O First Lord! Lying on the serpent in the Milk Ocean and
Beyond it, Thou art the Transcendent Special Form.”

Tirucchanda Viruttam. 17.

Una Substantia tres personae¹; *Tertullian*

¹ Cr. *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*: O.Schrader, pp.35-41

Cf. *Viṣṇusahasranāma-bhāṣya*. Name 122: *Parāśarabhaṭṭa*.

“Paravyūha-vibhavā-tmanā trividham param brahmā” iti Bhāgavata siddhāntaḥ.
Tatra *parannāma akāryam, kāryad* – annvacchinna -pūrṇa-ṣādguṇya-
mahārṇavot-kalikaikātapatrikr̥ta nissīma nityabhoga – vibhūtikam.
muktopasṛpyam, anaupādhikam avasthānām.

Vyūhas mumksusisṛkṣayā pradeya sṛṣṭi-sthti-layāḥ, śāstra-tadartha-talpalāni
dhyānārādhanē līlāceṭīdr̥śakāryopayukta vibhakta paraguṇa-rūpavāpārśikāra-
vyūha nirvāhita līlā vibhūtikam. Muktisṣdhankam, caturdhāvasthānam.

Vibhāvaśca tacchāyaḥ sura nara – tiryagādi svavibhava - sajātiyaḥ aicchaḥ
prādurbhāva-vargaḥ. Prādurbhāvaḥ kecit sāktāt, anye tu anśyādi-viśiṣṭa
puruṣādiṣṭānena. Ītaresu vyaktiṣu svyam evāvātīrya yāthā arcāvatāra iti.

The theory of multiple manifestations of the Divine Transcendent Being in Religion as persons is not new. It is a constantly recurring principle that the Divine continuously incarnates in His Creation for whatever purpose of Līlā that might be experienced by Him. the most obvious purposes the underlie these descents can only be (i) that the Divine is working out a wonderful potentiality in His Nature or self enjoyment or delight, and (ii) that the Divine does this for the sake of rescuing the souls which are wallowing in Creational darkness and is uplifting them and make them 'share' in the Delight of Ascent of themselves and Enjoy the Descent of the Divine. In the first view, we may accept God's complete 'Selfness' of all creation too, and that there is nothing other than the Supreme Divine, such as souls and matter and other entities and, even if they are but self projections from a wide multiplanal activity that appears diverse. So much so, some of these entities do not betray even in the slightest the qualities unique to the Supreme Spirit, except for sooth in the subordination of these to the higher levels of conscious activity. But even then the lower ones try to resist from or reconquer the consciousness that subdued them. Temporary successes of consciousness however, may as well be no successes, and there remains the solid treat of annihilation and absorption into this Unconsciousness.

The view that 'All is Brahman' (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*) and the view 'All this is for the habitation of the Lord' (*Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*) are identical in one sense, for the chief common factor is that 'all this is of the Lord', 'belongs to the Lord' and is possessed completely by the lord. If the whole universe be the Lord, then the pantheistic situation arises. The theistic attitude demands of the Deity something more than the all – is – ness. It claims for God transcendence may all that is, may be and has been too. Further in the pantheistic attitude there is possible the one full experience of the Divine as All, and that all that is Good

and complete. There is no place for Grace and Surrender, and an evolution becomes meaningless whirligig and nothing more, Religious consciousness is one of quiet resignation and not what Spinoza may conceive as the Quit, that is the result of a speculu, *sub specie eternitatis*.

The second view, on the other hand, reveals neither their quiet resignation, nor yet the conception that the world is a static universe, just an emanate, like the souls from a God and an inferior form of the Divine. The metaphysical view is not clearly visualized. It may entail the view that all are created by God, and perhaps that all are indwelt by God too, but it may not include the view that all are God, God-veiled or self-veiled. The second view is frankly realistic, accepting the world the Divine or even the inflow of the Grace towards the individual, thus doubly, that is, physically and psychically, acting like an opaque room. Into this shell -= covered existence, cabined and confined and firmly imprisoned, if the Grace of God has to penetrate, it alone could do it; no mortal power do anything. Into thus world then the Divine enters out of His Grace spontaneous and tender, not waiting on the wails of prisoners, or exactly on the prayers of the penitents. This is something that comes out of the Common Grace, that Universal Nature of the Divine as Providence.

Thus it is that theists always affirmed that God out of His sublime Mercy created the Universe, so that individuals may realise their true nature as intelligent being who ought to Worship the true Divine, and thus achieve that happiness that has been denied to them in the periods of darkness. This is the Nyāya-view and it śeṣi accept table to the other schools of Indian Philosophy too. How shall we conceive of this activity of the sublime Mercy or Providence? The answer is, there is a descent of the Providence into the Scheme of the Universe, wherein the Divine Himself becomes the co-worker, the leader and the Ruler and the Teacher of the Way. This activity of Providence or providential design of the universal order may be likened to an inner propulsion in the inanimate and animate creation or as a shaper of things as even the artisan and sculptor does; but in higher creation, as in the human or mental being endowed with

conscience, and a reason which is capable of itself following up any instruction, it happens by an inner and deeper seeing by the Divine and not as an outer mentor or dictator. It is true, even here, because of the registered unity of the outer universe and because we could be shaped to a certain extent, if not completely, as near competence as our materiality can permit, that men could be shaped into a set and uniform pattern by coercion and conditioning through constant habituation to a particular routine of existence till it becomes second nature. But beyond or over and above, this inner lighting of the self in the mental, there happens special need for the special providence to relieve the sin and evil and 'unjust' suffering of mankind. This implies still more special descents of the Divine Being for the sake of the Universe and as creatures both sinners as well as saints. It may be asked why should be so much purposeless suffering and then a need for speculating or postulating the actual occurrence of special descents which may be more or less universally helpful according to the particular historical occasions. A whole universe may be balanced on the fate and realisation of a saint, whereas in another case, not a gnat may be affected by it except the evil.

In these cases the occurrence of the special providence would be as far distinguished from the general or Universal Providence by a wide range which might flow from the Actual Personal Descent of the Divine to partial manifestations of the Divine personality, or even by sending His messengers, that is to say, well tried soldiers of God or Saints of Knowledge or by a mere will to save a particular individual. All these ideas have been so clearly stated by ancient theologians of India, and they called the Actual Descents of the Divine as Avatārs, the partial descents as amśa-avatārs (as in the case of the āḷvārs) or upāvatāras and then the messengers were called Ācāryas, Prophets and Seers, tried and seer-like knower of the Divine, and lastly the miraculous occurrence in life when are saved. Some thinkers hold that there is no personality at work. Things happen as if by dusting needing no extra-mundane God. Asks prof. John Laird in his Gifford Lecture, "Must the graciousness of things, in special critical conjunctions as well as their common order be something that is sput into the

world by an extra – mundane God, or may it be a feature of the world's pattern truly and faithfully interpreted? It seems to be that the latter conception might well be true.” (Mind and Deity, Pg 201). The question is not whether the extra-mundane God puts into the world something, but whether it is Himself who descends into it in such a manner as to be at one with it and appear as if it *śeṣi* that ‘pattern trjyl’ of the World – order itself? This *śeṣi* what is meant by the conception of Creation as an expression of the Divine Grace. This is what is called *Līlā*. Origanism in Indian Philosophy was established as the *sine qua non* of the evolutionary ascent of the souls with their self as Lord, with the Guide as immanent as well as extranal, but all leading up to God, who is the Lord of both the Universe and the Souls.

How this process of Descent is achieved and ho this Purpose of the Divine is carried out as if it were the inner and self – force within each individual creature impelling it to move upward through struggles and strafes, battles of force and of wits, surmounting and conquest's, physically and psychically, of one's nature and the rest too, is a problem of vast importance. It *śeṣi* only when the eye of the scientist is glued to the prcess alone, that he discerns no need for the Supramental force that descends into the very marrow and vitals of the individual and creation. He crei out, ‘Nature does all’. Pertinently and most frequently the reply comes, even from the ranks of scientist, the *Unconscious Nature can do but cannot explain*. It can contain the higher and project the higher, but this it can do only through the stress of the Higher, if not a s a *dues ex machine*, as a goal, beckoning from the future, but as an in-dwellignimpulsion from behind.

That in the larges and profoundest affirmations of the Indian thinkers ataken as whole, we do have these two attitudes taken up togheter so that God may ell be, because of His Infinite Nature and Perfection, a Goal to be achieved (*puruṣārtha*), ever present, beckoning the individual creatures to struggle onwards with Him as the One sempiternal Light shedding His resplendent rays on all alike, and also as the Original inner, or the rather behind, Impellor, so

thoroughly identifying Himself with the creatures He had brought into existence as to appear as their own inner vitality, inner conscience and inner reason, which are thirsting for the higher reaches. They cannot discern, except by a negation of themselves in the lower planes and prior history. It *śeṣi* only when we perceive in the possibility which is, in reality, the Actuality of the concrete realisation of this Dual Activity of God as the Light above and Mother below what we can fully undertake to solve the Riddle of our Struggle and Progress. The rationale of the Divine ‘splitting into the many’¹ for the sake of impelling from behind, sustaining within and beckoning forward is to be understood as above. This *śeṣi* the theory of *vyūhas* in Indian Philosophy, especially of the *Pāñcarātra*, *Tantra* and *Śrīvaiṣṇava Śāstra*.

¹ *vyūhas* means dispersal or removal also. *Īśa. Up.16. vyūhas raśmin samūtha tejaḥ*. *Vyūha* means also organization for defense in military scienc. Separating or individuating defensive organization which is a unitary organization capable of being used for offensive as well as defensive action. *Mahāyana Buddhism* accepts split-personalities of the Buddha such as *Ādi Buddha Dharmakāya*, *Nirmanakāya* and *Sambhogakāya*.

Vyūha means a sundering apart. (*vi vḥ*)¹. Of what is this a sundering it may be asked? *Pāñcarātra* says that it means the keeping apart for the purposes of creative redemptive, dedicative, providential and destructive activates definite personalities of His infinite Bing. This entails an apparent split alone, since all the personalities of the Divine whether cosmic or individual or embodied, are one alone. The *Pāñcarātra* theory postulates five such ‘splits’, which are the minimum demanded by the cosmic construction or Order. The Redemptive Transcendent who is ever above the Creative order is the *Para*; the second consisting of triple forms is that which is of the Cosmic Details of creation of the Universe, characterized by certain definite acts of creation and sustention and destruction possessing all the Will and Lordship, strength and Energy (spiritually), light, and Knowledge and Power. The *Pāñcarātra* doctrine describes the three

Personalities of the Divine in the Cosmic as manifesting two qualities each of the Supreme Lord possessing amongst an infinity of excellent suspicious qualities, six well – known qualite sof *aiśvarya, bala, vīrya, tejas, jñāna and śakti*. Ghr names of these three split – personalities (an unfortunate pharas when taken in the sense of modem psychoanalysis which will be dropped hereafter) are Sankarṣaṇ, Pradhyumna and Aniruddha. The manifestation of these personalities is successive and possibly from one another as it is sometimes descriebd². btu this does not mean the birth of or origination of

¹ *Ibid.*

² Cf: *Mahāsanatkumāra Samhitā*:

The Mahābhārata version of these vyūhas is thus expressed: From the Supreme, Anirddha came into being. he, in the morning produced Brahmā and after all creations being entrusted to him, in the evening out of His wrath He (Aniruddha) begot Rudra (*Śānti Par. Ch.342. 17-22; 343.140*). This creation thus prior to the general creation. For the same view the earlier version is to be found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. IX.1.6 (Julius Eggeling's Trans) Cf.VI.1.3.9.

“When Prajāpati had become disjoined the deities departed from him. only one God id not leave him, to wit, manyu(warth); extended he remained within. He (Prajāpati) cried and tears of him that fell down settele down on Manyu. He is advāraka śrṣit according to all thinkers since it is priot to the genral creation. The Śaiva view also accepts a prior manifestation of the Paramśiva into Śakit and other transcendent categories the last of which becomes the matric of creation or he creator.

Cf. Śata. Rāh.XI.4.3.1 for the birth of Śrī

Thus we have to conceive of Brahman, Sankarṣaṇa-Pradhyumna and Aniruddha from whom Brahmā and Rudra take their rise. That is to say, Brahmā and Rdura are not vyūhas of the Divine.

Niyamena teṣām Btāhmāḍinām Bhāgavatāragṇanā svapariganānāt devamunṣyādivat śrṣtiprakaraṇeṣu srjyatayā parignanūanāc ca.

Viṣṇusahasranāma Bhāṣya, Parā śara Bhaṭṭa:

They are cosmic powers.

Agni, Indra and Rudra or Viṣṇu, then, these-descents are different since they are not Supreme cosmically entering into the scheme for some act of redemption. Now the description of Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhymana and Aniruddha seems on the hand to recommend the view that they could be identified with the three gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra, and but an deeper consideration we have to say that cannot be done. But what seems to be cosmo-theology is that these Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha are the first three splits of the Divine and the creation of brahmā and Rudra are consequent on the emergence of the *tattvas* or material categories such as Water etc., as the Nārāyanūīya section points out¹. In which case it would be wrong to identify the tree vyūhas of Nārāyaṇa with the three gods of the Pantheon. The split or Incarnation does not entail the utter ceasing of the causal Being, God. It is simultaneous Unit in multiplicity and vice versa².

¹ The *Param Samhitā* says Vāsudeva is for Dharma, Sankarṣaṇa for jñāna , Pradhymna for Mokṣa whereas Aniruddha is for allśvaratva (Ch.II.99.102) (B.o.Series).

It is interesting to find that *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna* gives an original account of the four vyūhas or forms of God. The inscrutable Parta, Vāsudeva the Śeṣa who supports the earth (darkness, brute creation), The Active Pradhymna, the fashioner of virtue (in the language of Tirmaḷīśai āḷvār : puṇṇiyattin mūrti) who incarnates in divine, human or brute bode or with such bodies, and fourthly the Anataśayana form wherein He abides in water with serpent – bed with passion as His attribute and who is active (possibly in Yoga – nidrā as they say). (Canto. IV.43-59. Pargiter's trans.p.21.*Bid.Indi.*)

Cf. Bhatta: Viṣṇu Sah. Nāma Bhāṣya: 521 Anatātma: Bhogindrasya ātmā: cf. Śrī Jayākhya Samhitā.

² Tertullian wrote that “the peculiar properties of each substance are preserved intact. *Saliva est utriusque proprietas substantia* so that in him the spirit conducted its own affairs that is the deeds of power and works and signs and the flesh underwent its sufferings..” (Headlam: Christian Theology, p.355). It would be clear that this is not the conception of Avatārhood in Bhāgavata and Gītā. The avatāra as descent into the terrestrial scheme underwent suffering and privations even as postulated by Tertullian but they must be considered to be for the love He bears and as an example of how God’s will has to be borne for the extraction of the experience of Delight that is God’s even here and with the consciousness that God is with us. The identity with the view of vyūhas could scarcely be denied from the extract.

Cf. Mysticism and Personal Idealism by Dean Inge.

prior – to – indwelling as Object of Contemplation and adoration, the Divine is pervasively present in every individual, but once the individual has been chosen for his intense devotion to Him alone, He out of His supreme Grace indeed comes in to reside effulgently and pussantly at the very core of his Being. God is the omni-pervasive Being in each of the microcosmic souls which have been described as ‘hundredth part of the point of the air’ (Śvet. Up.V.9). Within that anu or minuteness indeed the Divine becomes minute (*aṅoraṅīyān*) just as He had become greater than the greatest or vaster than the vastest. This objective presence that the Divine grants to the soul devoted exclusively to Him alone, is a Wonder of Grace that passé the all understanding. Of unique value and inestimable significance is this Descent as Antaryāmin. The Lord indeed of the hut has come back to His cave and thrown resplendent light and has made it into a Place of self-luminosity and self-effulgence and supreme māyā. So is this in the case of all souls, higher and lower and all. The importance to religion of this descent into the inter-cosmic is a descent of which the religious consciousness is aware as Revelation, Realization and Resurrection, the three stages of that growing intimacy matured within the cave of the Heart, the ivory tower of Light or White – lotus of Puissance. The descent as Antaryāmin is a revelation like any

theory in space and time and the history of man. The descents are all of the Love – order, descents which are full and complete and transcendently beautiful. This is the meaning of the seer who asked us to remember that he who worships God as external and outward is but a creature of the gods (Brh. UP.I.iv. 10). There inner Lord must be known, and entered into and rather, He must be invoked through surrender, total and entire, to enter into one-self, completely as Antaryāmin.

This exposition leads to the most important question whether souls also can be of the same kind as these divine fulgurations. This appears to have warrant from the fact of certain descriptions which speak of the creation as comparable to the sparks going out from the burning fire (*yadā pratibuddhate yathāgnejvalato visphuyllīṅgā vipratīṣṭheran* Kāus. Up. III.3).

So has the Pāñcarātra been criticized by Śankarācārya and against this view Rāmānuja defends the souls non-origination since Sankarṣaṇa and Pradhymna and Aniruddha are not souls but emanates¹. The doctrine of fulguration or self-division through qualities is said to be impossible for qualities without substance cannot exist; the continuum of triple dualities of qualities appearing at different levels for material manifestations is possible, but could it be said that Sankarṣaṇa Pradhymna and Aniruddha are of this type? Rāmānuja, as pointed out, holds that the vyūhas are not souls at all, neither nityas or muktas nor baddhas nor as it appears the cosmic deities like Brahmā, Rudra and Indra and others.

Any explanation according to the theory of vyūhas is

¹ *Vedānta Sūtras*: I.iii.2: Cf. *Spirit and Reality*: Nicolas Berdyaev.p.134.

“Mystical affirmation such as that God is born in the soul and the soul is born in God, eternal genesis, is peculiar to the depths of the Soul, God is more human than man himself, God is within us but we are without and can all dispense with theological concepts.”

either emanational (i.e. fulgurational) or obscuration, according to the accepted conception of the soul. The first view means according to gnostics (knower) that all souls emanated from One Central or Fundamental Essence and that their degradation or imperfection depends directly on their distance from their essence for the fact of ejection is the important fact about this fulgurated or fulgurating force or momentum. This means that the souls that have been created, though they partake the Divine Nature or substance or essence, really represent imperfectly that essence, because of the distance. In other words, the emanation theory does not speak of any real creation according to some philosophers but only of a false ejection, or an illusory projection comparable to illusory sense representation of essences of ideas on the space time canvas (which is also another illusory canvas or mirror). But this theory, whilst explaining the fall or degeneracy of the soul and may therefore conform to the 'law of entropy' enunciated in modern physics, does not explain the immortality of souls. It is however open to us to accept prof. Laird's view that immortality means future immortality not a beginning – less one. This explanation is not accepted by prior thinkers though it is quite plausible. That by itself cannot refute the idea of logical non – relation between beginning and mortality. This fiction of beginning – and – end necessity relationship has been at the bottom of most philosophical theories of inexpressibility, and entailed constant appeal to scripture. This inexpressibility doctrine had its resemblances on, or parities with, the doctrine of inexpressibilities of karma and avidyā and others whose beginninglessness was considered to be compatible with their end or destruction. The ajāti-vāda or non-creationistic view of Gaudapāda has displayed more loyalty, logically speaking, to his doctrine, so much so it stressed on the law of non – destruction as well as non – origination. Things are, ever have been and never go out.

Thus the souls are not to be considered to be of the same kind as the vyūhas, and indeed the vyūhas are always capable of emergence and disappearance as soon as the purpose of the Divine are exercised in respect of Cosmic and individual functions of His supreme Grace, whereas the individual souls are immortal as well as beginning less. They are only withdrawn into the Divine

womb where they subsist in a subtle form and at the time of creation emerge in their gross form. The sūkṣma becomes sthūla. It would be wrong therefore to take the Grace-Forms of the Divine as the individual souls, nor should we considered theorization of the souls as of the same kind as that of the Divine Emergences which are Descents, avatāras for the purpose of evolution of, upliftment of, and for impelling the entire Universe to the Highest stands of His Consciousness – Being.

Pūrṇāmadahū pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate |

Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādaya pūrṇamevāvaśisyate ||