

GOD IN THE PĀÑCARĀTRA

*Catur mūrtir aham śaśvallokatrāṇartham udyataḥ |
Ātmānam pravibhyjyeha lokānām hitam ādadhe ||
Ektā mūrtis tapścaryam kurute me bhuvī sthitā |
Aparā paśyat jagat kurvāṇam sādhasādhum ||
Aparā kurute karma mānuṣam lokamāśritā |
Śete Caturthām tvaparā nidrām Varṣa Sahasrikīm ||*

Krishna (*Droṇaparva*. 19.32-34)

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

Rg Veda. IV.1. (Śrī Aurobindo’s translation)

*Catur-vidhasya Bhagavān mumukṣūṇām hitāya vai |
anyeṣāmapī lokānām sṛṣṭh thityanta siddhaye ||*

viśvaksena Samhitā

*eṣa sarvāni bhūtāni pañcabhir vyāpya mūrtibhiḥ |
janma-vṛddhi-Ksūyair nityam samsārayati Cakravat ||*

manu Smṛit XII. 124

*“One person: Three persons: in all Four persons:
Being thus the enjoyable Being, and the person realized
through merity, and the Person of (many), manifestational Forms
O First Lord Lying on the serpent in the Milk Ocean, and
Beyond it, Thou are the Transcendent Special Form.”¹*

Tirucchanda Viruttam.

The theory of multiple manifestations as persons of the Divine Transcendent Being in Religion is not new. It is a constantly recurring principal than the Divine continuously incarnates in His Creation for whatever Purpose of Līlā that might be held by Him. The most obvious purposes that underlie these descents are (i) that the Divine is working out a wonderful potentiality in His nature for self enjoyment or delight, and (i) that the divine does this for the sake of rescuing the souls which are wallowing in Creation and is uplifting them and make them share in the Delight of Ascent of themselves

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

Cf Viṣṇusahasranāma-bhāṣya: Parāsarabhaṭṭa name 122.

“Paravyūha-vibhavā-tmanā trividham param brahmā” iti Bhāgavata siddhāntaḥ. Tatra parānnāma akāryam kāryād-ana vacchinna-pūrṇa ṣāḍgunya-mahānnāma akāryam kāryād-ana vacchinna-pūrṇa ṣūḍgunya-mahārṇavot-kalikaikātapatrikṛta nissīma nityabhoga-vibhūtikam. muktopasrpyam, anaupādhikam avasthānam

Vyūhaśca mumukṣusisḥ kṣayā pradeya śrṣṭi-sthiti-layāḥ, śāstra-tadartha tatphalāni dhyānārādhanē līlācēṭidṛśakāryopayukta vibhakta paraḡuṇa rūpavyāpāraśikara vyūhā nirvāhita līlā vibhūtikam. Muktiśādhakam catudhāvasthānam.

Vibhāvaśca tacchāyaḥ sura-nara-tiryagādiḥ svavibhava-sajātīyaḥ aiccha prādur-bhāva-vargaḥ. Prādurbhāvaḥ kecit sākṣt, anye tu, ārsyādi viśiṣṭa puruṣādiṣṭānena. Itareca vyaktiṣu svayam evāvatīrya yathā arcāvatāra iti.

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, 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 forsooth in the subordination of these to the higher levels of conscient activity. But even then the lower ones try to resile form or reconquer the consciousness that subdued them. Temporary successes, of consciousness however, may as well be no successes, and there remains the solid threat of annihilation and absorption into this unconsciousness or Nothingness.

The view that 'All is Brahman' (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*) and the view "All this is for the habitation of the Lord"¹ (*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 *ali-is-ness*. It claims for God transcendence over all that is. Further in the pantheistic attitude there is possible the one full experience of the Divine as All, and that all is Good and complete. There is no place for Grace and Surrender and all evolution becomes meaningless whirligig and nothing more. Religious consciousness then will be one of quite resignation, and not what Spinoza may conceive of as the Quiet, which is the result of a *speculum sub specie eternitatis*.

The second view, on the other hand, reveals neither their quite resignation, nor yet the conception that the world is a static universe, just an emanate from a God, like the souls, 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 ar3 indwelt by God too, but it may not include the view that all are God, God-velled or self-velled. The second view is frankly realistic, accepting

the world as an inconscient abstracting medium frustrating the vision of the Divine or even the inflow of His Grace towards the individual, thus doubly, that is, physically and psychically, acting like an opaque room. Whatever penetrates from without it, it can never be know. Into this shell-covered existence, if the Grace of God has to penetrate, it alone could do it; no mortal power can do anything. Into this World then the Divine enters out of His Grace, spontaneously, not waiting on the wails of prisoners or 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 theist always affirmed that God out of His sublime Mercy created the Universe, so that individuals may realise their true nature as intelligent beings, who ought to worship the true Divine, and thus achieve that happiness that they have divine to themselves in the periods of darkness. How shall we conceive of this activity of the sublime Mercy or Providence? The answer is there is a descent of that 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 even like the artisan and sculptor amongst us; 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 selfing by the Divine and not as an outer mentor or dictator. It is true, even here, because of the registered unit of the outer universe and because we could be shaped to a certain extent, if not completely, as near completeness 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 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 a 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 its creatures, sinners as well as saints. It may be asked why its creatures, sinners as well as saints. It may be asked why there 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 occasion? A whole universe may be balanced on the fate and realization 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 soldiers of God or Saints of knowledge, or by a more will to save a particular individual. All these ideas have been so clearly stated by the 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 upāvatārs and then the messengers were called the Ācāryas, Prophets and Seers, tried and seer like knowers of the Divine, and lastly the miraculous occurrences in life when men are saved. Some thinkers hold that there is no personality at work. Things happen as if by destiny 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 in their common order be something that is put 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 p.1201). The question is not whether the extra-mundane God puts into the world something, but whether it is He Himself who descends into it in such a manner as to be at one with it and appear as if it is that 'pattern truly' the World-Order itself? This is what is meant by the conception of Creation as expression of the Divine Grace. This is what is called Līlā'. Organicism in Indian Philosophy was established as the sine qua non of the evolutionary ascent of souls with their self as Lord, with their Guide as

immanent as well as external, but all leading up to God, who is the Lord of both the Nature and the Souls.

¹ Cf. *Concept of Līlā in Viśiṣṭādvaitic Philosophy*

How this process of Descent is achieved and how 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 strives, battles of force and of wits, surmounting and conquests, physically and psychically, of one's nature and the rest too, is a problem of singular importance, it is only when the eye of the scientist is glued to the process alone, that he discerns no need for the Supramental force that descends into the very narrow and vitals of the individual and creation. He cries out, 'Nature does all. 'Pertinently and not infrequently the reply comes, even from the ranks of the scientists, the *Unconscious Nature can do but cannot explain*. It can do only through the stress of the Higher, if not, as a *dues ex machine*, as a goal, beckoning from the future, but as in indwelling impulsion from behind.

That in the largest and profoundest affirmations of the Indian thinkers taken as whole, we do have these two attitudes taken up together so that God may well 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 the Original inner, or rather behind, impeller, so thoroughly identifying Himself with the creature 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 is only when we perceive in the possibility which is, in reality, the Actuality of the concrete realization 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 impelling from behind, sustaining within and beckoning forward is to be understood as above. This is the theory of Vyūha in Indian philosophy, especially of the Pāñcarātra Tantra.

Vyūha means a sundering apart. Of what is this is a sundering it may be asked? Pāñcarātra says that it means the keeping apart for the purposes of creative, redemptive, dedicative, providential and destructive activities definite personalities of His Infinite Being. This entails and apparent split alone, since all the personalities of the Divine, whether cosmic or individual or embodied, are One alone. The Pāñcarātra theory postulates for 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 Deities of creation of the Universe,

¹ Vyūha means dispersal or removal also. Īśa, Up.16 vyuūha raśmin samūha tejaḥ means also Organization for defense in military science. 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 Dhamakāyua, Nirmanakāya and Sambhogakāya.

characterized by certain definite acts of creation and sustention possessing all the Will and Lordship, strength and Energy (spiritual) 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 auspicious qualities, six well-known qualities of aīśvarya, bala, vīrya, tejas, jñāna, śakti. The names of these three split personalities (so unfortunate phrase when taken in the sense of modern

psychoanalysis which will be dropped hereafter) are Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha. The manifestation of these personalities is successive and possibly from one another as it is sometimes described¹. But this does not mean

¹ Cf. *Mahāsanatkumāra Samhitā*: The Mahābhārata version of these vyūhas can be expressed thus: From the supreme, Aniruddha came into being. He, in the morning produced brahma, and after all creations being entrusted to him, in the evening out of His wrath He (Aniruddha) begot Rudra (Śānti Parva Ch. 342.17-22; 2343, 104). This creation is thus prior to the general creation. For the same view the earlier version is to be found in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa IX. 1.6.

“When Prajāpati has become disjoined the deities departed from him. Only one God did not leave him, to wit, manyu (wrath); extended he remained within. He (Prajāpati) cried and tears of him that fell down settled down on Manyu. He became the hundred-headed, thousandeyed, hundred-quivered Rudra..” This is advāraka śrṣṭi according to all thinkers since it is prior to the general creation. The Śaive view also accepts a prior manifestation of the Paramaśiva into Śakti and other transcendent categories the last of which becomes the matrix of creation or the creator.

Cf. Śat. Brāh. XI.4.3.1 for the birth of Śrī: Thus we have to conceive of Brahman-Sankarṣaṇa-Pradhymna and Aniruddha from whom Brahma and Rudra take their births. That is to say, Brahma and Rudra are not Vyūhas of the Divine. Niyāmena teṣāṃ Brahmādinām Bhāgavatāraṇaṇ svapargānāt devamanusyādivat śrṣṭipraakraṇesu sṛiyatayā parigaṇaṇāc ca. They are cosmic powers governing Mahat (cosmic intellect). Ahamkāra (cosmic egotiy) and manas (cosmic mind).

the birth or origination of the souls such as Sankarṣaṇa Pradhymna and Anirdha for they are not soul at all, but personalities of the Divine charged with creative, ustentive and destructive activities in every sphere of knowledge, Work and Devotio, of Mahān (buddhi), Ahamkāra (Selfness) and Manas (mind).

The question here is whether or not we have to take the Cosmic powers to be Vyūhas in the sense enunciated as the descents of the Divine which are to be considered to be periodic as against the view they are just powers, permanent or series (pravāha) but not descents. If we consider the Divine as tripe in the powers of the Brahmā. Rudra and Viṣṇu, as Creator, Destroyer and Sustainer or Ruler, or in ancient terminology, Agni Indra and Viṣṇu, then, these descents are different since they are not the Supreme who cosmically enters into the scheme for some act of redemption. Now the descriptions of Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha seem on the one hand to recommend the view that they could be identified with the three gods. Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Rudra, but on a deeper consideration we have to say that cannot be done, but here what seems to be the cosmo-theology is that these Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhyma and Aniruddha are the first three splits of the Divine and the creation of Brahma and Rudra are consequent on the emergence of the *tattvas* or material

Vyūhas of the Divine. Niyamena teṣām Brahmādinām Bhāgavtāragaṇanā svaparigaṇāt devamanusyādivat śrṣṭiprakraṇesu sṛiyatayā parigaṇanāc ca. they are cosmic powers governing *Mahat* (cosmic intellect), *ahamkāra* (cosmic egoity) and *manas* cosmic mind).

categories such as Water etc., as the Nārāyaṇīya section points out.¹ In which case it would be wrong to identify the three 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 unity in multiplicity and vice versa².

¹ *The Parama Samhitā* says that Vāsudeva is for Dharma, Sankarṣaṇa for Jñāna, Pradhymna for Mokṣa, whereas Aniruddha is for Īśvaratva (Ch.II.99,.102) (B.O. Series)

² It is interesting to find the *Mākaṇḍeya Purāṇa* gives an original account of the four *vyūhas* or forms of God. The inscrutable Para, Vāsdeva, the śeṣa who supports the earth (darkness, brute creation the Active Pradhyma, the fashioner of virtue (in the language of Tirumaḷīśai Āḷvār: *punṇiyattin* mūrti) who incarnates

in divine, human or brute bodies or with such bodies, and fourthly the Anataśayana form wherein He abides in water on a 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 *Bib.ind*). Cf.Bhatta: Viṣṇu Sah. *Nāma Bhāṣya*: name 521. Anantātma: Bhogindrasya Ātma.

Tertulian wrote that “the peculiar properties of each substance are preserved in tact. Salive est utriusque proprietates substantiae so that in him the spirit conducted its own affairs hat is the deedsof power and works and signs and the flesh underwent its sufferings...” (*Christiaon Theology*:Headiam p.355). It would be clear that this is not the conception of the Avatārhood in Bhāgavata and Gītā. The Avatāra as descent into the terrestrial scheme underwent sufferings 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 considered to be for the extraction of the experience of Delight that is God's even here and with the consciousness that God is with us. The

The Divine is not conceived of merely as the Lord of the supra-Cosmic entities of Mahān, Ahamkāra and Manas incarnating in them for the purpose of those redemptive activities of which the human being most obviously be unaware it may also be the permanent residence in those spheres of the supra-cosmic existence so that souls who have ascended to there planes might enjoy and serve the Divine in those spheres. These are the Mharioka, Tapoloka, Janaloka, Supramental spheres inaccessible except to the seers.

But when the Descent is conceived of as the descent into the soul as its indwelling light and self and Object of profound contemplation, the descent herein mentioned is not the same as the Upaniṣadic statement that He ever is the indwelling seer as such. But the Supreme Divine descends verily to the minute soul so that He could enjoy the soul and in turn be enjoyed by it.

For as the Upaniṣads itself has said it; it is not knowledge nor askesis nor personal effort that makes one attain the Divine. Whomsoever He chooses, he attains Him *yam envaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*. We should therefore hold that prior to indwelling as Object to Contemplation 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 to reside effulgently and

identity with the view of Vyūhas could scarcely be denied from the extract. Cf. *Mysticism and Personal Idealism* by Dean Inge.

puissantly at the very core of his being. God is the omnipervasive Being in each of the microcosmic souls which has been described as 'hundredth part of the point of the hair' (*Svet. Up. V.()*). Within that *anu* or minuteness indeed the Divine becomes minuter (*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 passed all understanding. Of unique value and inestimable significance is this Descent of Antaryāmin¹. The Lord indeed of the Transcendent 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 with all souls, higher and lower. 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 white tower of light or White – lotus of Puissance. The descent by Antaryāmin within the devotee's body is revelation like any other 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 saying of the Seer

¹ In Christian thought the Descent of the Antaryāmin may be likened to the descent of the Holy Ghost: Origen of Alexandria in his ON PRINCIPLES writes “The workings of the Father and Son takes place in saints as well as in sinners, in rational being and in dumb animals, nay even in things without life, and in all things that exist. But the operation of the Holy Spirit does not take place at all in things without life or dumb or engaged in evil courses; but only in those who abide in God”.

who asked us to remember that he who worships God as external and outward is but a creature of the ends (*Brh. Up.* I.vi.10), The inner Lord must be known, and entered into or rather He must be invoked by a total and entire surrender, to enter into oneself, 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 warranty from the fact of certain descriptions which speak of the creation as comparable to the sparks going out from the burning fire *yathāgnejavalato viṣphuyllīṅgā vipraṭiṣtheran*: (*Kāus. Up.* III.31).

On this account the Pāñcarāta has been criticized by ĀnkarĀcārya. Against this view Rāmānuja defends the souls non-origination, since Samkarṣaṇa 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 of material manifestations is possible but could it be said that Samkarṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha are of this type? Rāmānuja, as pointed out, holds that the cyūhas are not souls at all, neither nityas nor baddhas, nor as it appears the cosmic deities like Brahmā, Rudra and Indra and others.

¹ Vedānta Sūtras: I.iii.2: Spirit and Reality: Nicholas Berdyaev p.132 “Mystical affirmations such as that God is born in the souls 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, can all dispense with theological concepts.”

Any explanation according to the theory of Vyūhas is either emanational (i.e. fulgurational) or obscurational, according to the accepted conception of the soul. The first view means according to the gnostics (knowers) 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 created, though they partake of 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 or 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 but a beginning lessness 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 repercussions on the doctrines of inexpressibilities of karma and avidyā and others whose beginning less-ness 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 this doctrine, so much so, it laid stress on the law of non-destruction. Things are, every have

been, and never go out. Or as it has been expressed things are not, never have been, and never come into being.

Thus the souls are not to be considered to be of the same kind as the vyūhas, and indeed the vyūhas are laws capable of emergence as soon as the purposes of the Divine are exercised in respect of Cosmic an 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 subtle forms and at the time of creation emerge in their gross forms. The sākṣma becomes sthūla. It would be wrong therefore to take the Grace-Forms of the Divine as the individual souls, nor should we consider the origination of the souls as of the same kind as that of the Divine Emergences which are Descents, avatāras, for the purpose of evolution and upliftment of individuals and for impelling the entire Universe to the Highest strands of His Consciousness-Being.

The *Manu Smṛit*, in its last chapter (XII-124) detailing who is to be worshipped, states that neither Agni nor Indra but He of the Golden Hue, Who pervades all beings by His fivefold forms is to be worshipped. This is Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who has been described as the Source of all earlier in the first chapter of the same Smṛit. It is clear that Manu or Bhṛgu had the Pāñcarātra Vyūha theory in his mind. It is the theory taught by Nārāyaṇa Himself. It would be wrong to identify these five forms, pañcabhir mūrtibhiḥ with the five elements or the tattvas as some commentators have done.

Western theology though it is trying its level best to find everything of vital value in Hindu Religion in its own modern formulations, and is seeking precisely to do what the Indian philosopher is trying to do in respect of his philosophy, that is, trying to read the Western Wisdom in its own literature, is chary of accepting the ancient formulation of the Pāñcarātra and Āgamas generally regarding the Unity in multiplicity of the Divine nature. This principle is established we have attempted to show, conclusively in respect of the Vedic conception of the

Brahman, who is All-gods. Christianity has accepted only a trinity and it is unable to explain this trinity except through recourse to 'christian piety' even as Dr. Headlam states (Christian Theology p.466). Indian thought is not propelled by the necessity of piety but by the perception of the Divine One as revealed to the soul in a multiplanal or multi-personal nature, for this is the meaning of the apprehension of the Divine as the Infinite, qualitatively and quantitatively. Multiple relations exist in the very person of the Divine all, *Sarva*. The Divine exists in this supreme multiplicity in each individual through His unimaginable omnipervasiveness and personal relationship. This is the central teaching of Pāñcarātra, full, çhaste and clear without complications, *ādhyātmically* perfectly experientiable, ādhidaivically luminous and divine.

THE PĀÑCARĀTRA-ŚĀSTRA AND THE UPANIṢADS

It is well-known Pāñcarātra is an Āgama and a tantra śāstra. It is Vaiṣṇavadhani literature dealing with rites and worship of God Viṣṇu of the form of Vāsudeva. Its unique doctrine is stated to be the doctrine of vyūhas (fulgurations). It accepts the theory of Arcā (image or icon) as legitimate and essential manifestation of the Divine. The theory is stated to have been promulgated by Nārāyaṇa Himself. The Mahābhārata contains in the śānti-parva a good account of the Pāñcarātra system, and it is stated there that Pāñcarātra is as good a method for realising the liberation (mokṣa) as Sāmkhya, and other systems. The literature Pāñcarātra however is much wider than these references. There are samhitās, the most well-known being the Nārādīya Pāñcarātra, Mahāsanatkumāras, Ahirbudhnya, Jayākhyā, Lakṣmi, Padma and parama samhitā. The Pāñcarātra theory of creation hypothesizes two creations samṣṭhi and vyasthi, primary and secondary (supracosmic), and posits the fulguration of the Transcendent (Para) into the triple forms of Samkaraṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha whilst Himself remaining the fourth as Vāsudeva. These are the cosmic creator, sustainer, and destroyer. It is also stated that it is from Aniruddha that Br̥hama, the creator of the cosmic worlds and creatures was born. These forms are supra-temporal, whereas all the cosmic forms are historical or temporal. There are three forms which fall within the temporal, the Antaryāmin, Arcā, and Vibhava (avatārs). All these forms are one unity, a unitas *quintuples*. All these facts are most clearly presented in that most excellent monograph "Introduction to Pāñcarātra" by Dr. SCHRADER. The other works that may be usefully consulted are Dr. S. KRISHNASWAMI AIYANGAR'S introduction to his Paramasamhitā¹ and the introduction to *Jayākhyā samhitā* by the learned editor of the Baroda Gaekwad Oriental Series.

Efforts have been made to find out whether the Pāñcarātra theory has any affiliations with the Upaniṣads. The most that several writers on the subject, both orthodox and otherwise, have found out is that they consider the reference to *Ekāyana* in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII, 2) means the Pāñcarātra system. The precise meaning of the word *ekāyana* is not clear. It may mean the doctrine that holds that all have their basis or support in the One Supreme, *Tad Ekam*, the *Advitīyaj*. But the context there is unfortunately not quite complementary to the theory, for Nārada complains that it had not helped him much in the solution of his fundamental problems. Indeed Nārada was the first to write down a Pāñcarātra *samhitā*!!!

Before I attempt to put forward my suggestion in this respect, it is best to consider what exactly the term *rātra* in Pāñcarātra means. Rātras are said to be nights (*rātris*). The teaching of this system was propounded to five immortals by the Divine Lord. Dr Schrader quotes an interesting passage.

¹ The late Dr.S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar tried to link up the Pāñcarātra sacrifices (Ahina-sacrifices Tait. Sam VII.1.10) with the Pāñcarātra but it was unsuccessful. Cf. Sata Brāh. XIII. 6.11 XIII 5.4.20. Ait. Brāh., 25-6: VIII.14

“When the Kṛta Yuga has just appeared, by the grace of Keṭavadhani, the following five, namely Anata(serpent) Garuda, Vīvaksena, the Skull-bearer (Śiva), and Brahman, hear it (śāstra) in parts as follows; in the first night Anata (has his questions answered), in the second night Garuda, in the third questions answered), in the second night Garuda, in the third night Seneśa, in the fourth (is answered) what has. been chosen by the Vedas (Brahman), and in the fifth Rudra (is the questioner). Thus each of these hears for himself the Religion of Faith(Śraddhaśāstra) in the form of knowledge, Yoga, construction, and conduct,

consisting of one hundred thousand śloka. (Hence the whole of it) has an extent of five lakhs of (śloka) it is called Pāñcarātra¹”.

Rātra here means a lakh, a night, and from what Dr. Schrader himself suggests it may mean just a part of section. But the last meaning is based on the fact that the Mañsanaktumāra-samhitā is divided into five chapters each belonging to a divinity or Ṛṣi (seer); accordingly, in the above work the first belongs to Brahman, the second to Śiva, the third to Indra, the fourth to Ṛṣi Rātra, and the Fifth is stated to be not available to the learned savant. But it seems much more likely that rātra means a teaching about the night, for sometimes it is equated with knowledge (vidyā). The Pāñcarātra doctrine seeks to dispel the darkness and doubts and ignorance about the five levels of consciousness. As we have pointed out, the doctrine of the vyūhas (including the highest) is peculiar to the system². Linked up with this five-

¹ *Lbid.pp.22.-26*. The above quotation is from Vihagenda Samhita I. 33-34.

² *Vedānta Sūtras: II.41*: Śrī Śankara holds that Pāñcarātra is refuted Śrī Rāmānuja ho

Is that it is not refuted but approved. Śrī Yāmuna’s Āgamaprāmānya seeks to show that Pāñcarātra is not contradictory to Vedānta..

foldness of the Divine it becomes clear that the doctrine leads to emancipation through the understanding of the five-fold nature of creative manifestations or darkness. The five sacraments of the Pāñcarātra also have an intimate connection with the five-foldness of divine contract or contact with the Divine All-dweller Vāsudeva. The Viṣṇu Purāna indeed seems to echo much of the Pāñcarātra doctrine. Jñāna, Yoga, Kriya, Caryā, and Prapatti are the five – fold approaches to Divine Realisation. Thus *rātra* means knowledge that abolishes the night of ignorance. It is that which helps the crossing over; *trātā*, the deliverer the tantra, the *vidyā*. Further it is also seen that not only is the *tattva* five-fold in

hita (means), and five-fold in puruṣārtha, that is dharma, artha, Kāma, mokṣa and kinkarya.

The Upaniṣad that deals with exclusive clarity about the night is First Praśna of the *Praśnopaniṣad*. In reply to the question as to who was the creator of the creatures or rather the origin of the creatures, the seer Pippalāda says that Prajāpati was the creator of both the sentient and insentient, *prāṇa* and *rayi*, the twins who are also to be represented by the figures of Āditya and Candramas. These twins by their union bring about creatures. But no sooner tha he states this, he proceeds to state that Prajāpati in respect of the temporal (vyāṣṭisriṣit) is Samvatsara which has tow divisions, uttarāyaṇa and dakṣiṇāyana, devayāna and pitryāṇa, *prāṇa* and *rayi*, so to speak; and Prajāpati is also Māsa, or month of tow pakṣas, śukla and Kṛṣṇa which agan are *prāṇa and rayi*. Prajāpati is also the Day-Night, and *prāṇa* is day and *rayi* is the night. The preservation of *prāṇa* is counseled by the practice of brahmacarya; and sacrifices are asked to be performed in śukla pakṣa, and the Release is stated to happen in the devayāna¹. This knowledge of creation is necessary: that Prajāpati is the creator, that the creation proceeds in two steps, smaṣṭi: as samṣṭi he is the creator of source of both *rayi* and *prāṇa*, and it is *prāṇa* that liberates, *rayi* that confines. It is, as shewn, the night, *tamas*, We can see here that there are five *rayis*.

The word '*rātri*' used in connection with '*rayi*' when substituted in the place of *rayi* in the above passages yields a very interesting result. There are indeed two superior *rayis*, There are three inferior or temporal *rayis* namely Pitryāṇa, Kṛṣṇa pakṣa, and Rātri. The most interesting fact is that krs-Vāsudeva (Nārāyaṇa) who is considered to be pṛna-avatār, who is stated to be the God of the Sāttvatas, the propunder of the Pāñcarātra doctrine and its Goal, has been stated to have been born under the five *rays or rātris*.

¹ *Manu Samhita* 1.65-67. cf. *Mahābhāratta Santi Parva, Mokṣadharmā. 224-14-17 Critical ed. There is a slight difference between Manu and Prasna Up. for the*

latter holds Śuklapakṣa is Prāṇa and daytime whereas the former holds Śuklapakṣa to be night –rātri. The critical ed. Gives variants in accord with the Upaniṣads and infact puts the words Kṛṣṇa hah and Śuklah in doubt by marking them with ragged lines.

Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, VIII.24 agrees with the Upaniṣads version rather than with Manu: “Agni, luster a day in the śuklapakṣa, uttrāyaṇa, those departed then attain Brahman. Brahman-knowers are those men”.

Sri Kṛṣṇa has been stated to have taken birth in the Candravamśa (Yadus of the Aila clan). His own birth took place at the beginning of the Pitryāna (dakṣiṇāyana), Kṛṣṇāṣṭami, at mid-night. His star was Rohini, the star of exaltation of the Moon. This is the Bhaāgavata account¹. The Harivamśa gives the star as Abhijit².

Thus Śri Kṛṣṇa incarnated in the five rātris, and by this the five rātris got illuminated, transformed, emancipated from their darkness. The fullest emancipation of Prakṛit (Matter)³ which is the meaning of rāyi or rātri was achieved by the Divine in his fullest descent, through his fivefold forms. No wonder, as if to emphasise this fact his own brother, son and grandson were named after the vyūhas. It is also no wonder then that Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the five nights is the lord-promulgator of the Pāñcarātra method, the occult infallible path of light in darkness, conquest through absolute surrender to the Ultimate One Being who is manifest in all hearts and in all darkensses, even as the supernal light and sole rege for the devotee. Thus Divine Kṛṣṇa of the form of dispelling darkness is the *Prāṇa* in the *Rayi* as its master and illuminer and the emancipator of all those who are struggling in its darkensses.

¹ *Bhāgavata* X.3.1-8

² *Harivamśa* 60.17-18:

Abhijinnāmanakṣatram jayantīnāma śarvarī
Muhūrto Vijayōnāma yatra jāto Janārdanah.

Cf. *Matsya Purāṇa* 4-14 states *Kṛṣṇa* was born on the *Amavāsya tithi*.

³ *Praśnopaniṣad*-bhāṣya: Rangarāmānuja interprets *rayi* as prakṛit.

Just as a fact of great interest let me point out the ease of the other avatār, Śrī Rāma. We find that he is stated to have been born in the Uttarāyaṇa, śukla-navami, mid-day, of the Solar line; indeed his is the birth in the five prānūas or five daytimes.

I am further fortified in my reasoning by the internal evidence in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the works devoted to the Solar and the Lunar lines, so to speak.

In the Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa śrī Rāma is instructed to go to Sugrīva by Kabandha and make acquaintance with him and not with Vāli. The point is, as Vālmīki states, Sugrīva is the son of Sūrya whereas Vāli is Indra's son (Indu, Indra being almost identical since Soma is the favourite drink of Indra). There are other reasons of corresponding lot of losing their wives which would evoke sympathy. But Sugrīva with whom friendship is sought, is Sūryaputa. The unity between them became proverbial: 'Rāmasugrīvayor aikyam' is stated to be the most perfect unit that all souls can seek if devoted. The lunar power was slain, both Vāli and Rāvaṇa belonged to it¹.

¹ Śrīmad-Rāmāyaṇa: Araṇyakāṇḍa 72.11 ff (Kumbhakonam ed. Kish. Kāṇḍa and Bālakāṇḍa Dear Avadhani, Date.

“Tato” avardhata vālī tu balavīryasamanvitah

Sūryaputro mahavīryah Sugrīvah parihīyate Kish.16.26

“Mahendramiva durdhars mahendramiva duṣṣaham

mahendraputram patitam Vālinam Hemamālinam Kish.17.11

Vanarendram Mahendrābham indro Vālinam ūrjitam

Sugrivam Janayāmāsa tapanas tapatām varṣa Bālakāṇḍa17.10

In the Mahābhārata Arjuna, Indra's Son, is the companion and bosm friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa, Bḥnuja, son of Srya, is the foe. The alliance here with the lunar byṛī Kṛṣṇa of the five nights is obviously a mystery to many, but those who see the pattern of dharma, in both cases, will observe that both the night and the day have to be governed by a higher and supreme consciousness, the Divine, in the double forms suitable to the dharma which is to be established and adhrama which is to be dethroned and annihilated.

Thus the path that Śrī Rāmā taught by example was the path of light and duty, open and easy for all, where everything is crystal clear to ghought. (Esterically the Śrī Vaiṣṇava school of Śrī Rāmānuja holds that Rāmāyana is the śaraṅgati-veda). The contrast is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa always was Divine, the Transcendent, whereas Śrī Rāmā was always human. The two avatārs had relatively different purposes. Śrī Rāmā was born for the Treta-yuga, the age when light was available to all, and order, R̥ta was well-known. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa was born for the Kali Yuga, the age of darkness, materialism, separations and conflicts: and Kṛṣṇa the Maste Adept, Avatār, Godhead, Redeemer who is the knower of all darknesses, the Āditya (the brother of Indra?) is the *Rātri*, the Supernal Sun, bṛhand bhānu, the person of Viśvarūua who revealed to Arjuna His other impenetrable form of Absolute effulgent Transcendence (Para) beyond the Tamas (Rayi)¹. He is the knower of all darkness, the sanātana Puruṣa who is the source of all things conscient, being the supra-conscient and

¹ Harivamśa story of the fetching of dead children of a Brāhmaṇa.

beyond, the saccidānanda-mūrti. God's Grace, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's grace, alone can lead us beyond the darkness.

*Praśnopaniṣad*¹ really and definitely intimates the doctrine of the five *rātris* or *rayis*, and the emancipation of man from these *rayis* is, by way of *prāṇa* and *Prāṇava* which are taught in the following *praśnas*.

There is another correlation suggested by Manu in the *Manusamhitā* which intimates that the Supreme known as *Prāṇa* or eternal Brahman is established or pervades all beings in his five-fold forms (*pañcabhir mūrtibhiḥ*). It also intimates that the day-night division applies in the case of our day to men, *Kṛṣṇa-śukla pakṣas* are night and day for the *devas*. This is indeed important as validating our procedure of interchanging the terms *rayi* and *rātri*.²

¹ *Manusamhitā*: XII. 123-4

Etamake vadantyaḥnim manum anve prajāpatim
Indrameka pare prāṇam apare brahma śāśvatam
Eṣa sarvāṅḥ bhūtāṅi pāṇam apare brahma śāśvatam
Janmavṛddhikṣayair nityam samsārayati cakravat.

Cf. *Gītā* XVIII.61. of *Mahābhārata Droṇaparva* 29.32 to 34 (Bhagadatta-vadha):

Caturmūrtis tapaścaryam kurute me bhuvī sthitā
Ātmānam pravidhaiyeha lokānām hitamādadhe.
Ekamūrtis tapaścaryam kurute me bhuvī sthitā
Apara paśyati jagatkurvāṇam sādhyasādhuni
Apara kurute karma mānuṣam lokamāśritā
Set e caturthī tvaparā nidrām varṣasahasrikīm

The *Praśnopaniṣad* states: *Māso vai prajāpatīs tasya Kṛṣṇapakṣa eva ryaiḥ śuklaḥ prāṇas tasmād ete ṛṣayaḥ śukla iṣṭim kurvantītara itarasmin.*

(12) *First Praśna*

² *Manusamhitā* I.65-67

Dr. Mohan Singh in his original work, '*New Light on Sri Kṛṣṇa*' has written a good lot about Śrī Kṛṣṇa' the Luminous, transcendent, the occult and rich Being

who has indeed become all things remaining as their eternal breath and being and self(ātman). But this is an additional fact of the Pāñcarātra Nārāyaṇa-Kṛṣṇa doctrine. The Divine is the five fold self (breath, prāṇa, āditya), emancipator of creatures. He is the trans-cosmic Being who even the gods know not; He is the threefold vyūha, creator, ordained, controller or regulator, preserver and destroyer who indeed is beyond all categories of space and time; He is the indwelling all-lord, the inner self of all creatures without any distinction of caste or creed or race or religion, kind or nature, in animals, birds and worms too; He is the glorious teacher-saviour, warrior and the redeemer of all good souls and uplifter of all to higher rungs of His own celestial mansions of light and greater life; He is the Arcā, the adorable mūrti residing eternally in the abodes of worship, as the releaser and receiver of our surrender. All these are Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, He is the teacher of the Gītā, the warrior of

Ahorātra vibhajate sūrya mānuṣa diavikē

Rātriḥ svapnāya bhūtānām ceṣṭāyai karmanām ahaḥ

Pitrye rātryahanī māsaḥ pravibhāgastu pakṣayoḥ
Karmaceṣṭāsvahaḥ Kṛṣṇa śuklaḥ svapnāya āvārī

Daive Rātryahanī varṣam pravibhāgastayoḥ punaḥ

Ahas tatrodagayanam rātriḥ syād dakṣiṇāyanam.

Manu differs from Pippalada regarding śuklapakṣa. He considers śuklapakṣa to be prāṇa or day. Manu things it to be night Rātri.

Cf. Daivikānām yugānām or day. Manu thinks it to be night *Rātri*.

Brahmam ekam ahar jñeyam tāvatīm Rātrīm eva ca. *ibid.* 1.72

the Mahābhārata, the adored beloved of Brindāvan, the father of mankind and its great leader, and the Adorable Object of worship by all gods, seers men, cows, and creatures alike: He is the One of whom the Veda speaks in superb ecstasy of multiplanal and multi-personal existence. As the Harivamśa describes the birth of Kṛṣṇa.

Avyaktaḥ śāsvataḥ Kṛṣṇa Hariḥ Nārāyaṇaḥ prabhuh |

The prayer of the Veda praying to Agni true wealth (*rāi*): *Agne naya supathā rāye...* intimates a truth of great value. It is true that there is difference between rayi and rāi: but the fact is that the Supreme is the true wealth, the real prakṛit, the source—the transcendent, which has indeed to be achieved with the help of the Divine in all these rayis or rātris. This is the occult through, knowledge only got through the Grace of the Dayāmūrti śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of Māyā, (M, (Myuon as the Tamil name of Viṣṇu indicates).