GOD IN THE PĀÑCARĀTRA

Catur mūrtir aham śaśvallokatrāṇartham udyatah |
Ātmānam pravibhyjyeha lokānām hitam ādadhe ||
Ektā mūrtis tapścaryam kurute me bhuvi sthitā |
Aparā paśyat jagat kurvāṇam sādhvasādhum ||
Aparā kurute karma mānuṣam lokamāśritā |
Śete Caturthām tvaparā nidrām Varṣa Sahasrikī̃m ||

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…”

Ṛg Veda. IV.1. (Śrī̃ Aurobindo’s translation)

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

viśvaksena Samhitā

eṣa sarvāni bhūtāni pañcabhir vyāpya mūrtibhiḥ |
janma-vṛddhi-Ksūṇayair 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 Lĩlā 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

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

Cf Viṣṇusahgasranāma-bhāsya: Parāsarabhaṭṭa name 122.

“Paravyūha-vibhavā-tmanā trividham param brahmā” iti Bhāgavata siddhāntaḥ. Tatra parānnāma akāryam kāryād-anavacchinna-pūrṇa ṣādguṇya-mahānnāma akāryam kāryād-anavacchinna-pūrṇa ṣūdguṇya-mahārṇavot-kalikaikātapatrikṛta nissĩma nityabhoga-vibhūtikam. muktopasṛpyam, anaupādhikam avasthānam

Vyūhaśca mumukṣusiṣ kṣayā pradeya śṛṣṭi-sthiti-layāḥ, śāstra-tadartha tatphalāni dhyānārādhane lĩlācetĩdṛśakāryopayukta vibhakta paraguṇa rūpavyāpāraśikara vyūhā nirvāhita lĩlā vibhūtikam. Muktisādhakam catudhāvasthānam.

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

[1] Vedānta Sūtras: I.iii.2: Spirit and Reality: Nicholas Berdyaev p.132 “Mystica 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 the gnositcs (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 firms and at the tiem 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 enter 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 modem 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 peity 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 omni pervasiveness and personal relationship. This is the central teaching of Pāñcarātra, full, c̣hoate 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 Pāṇcarātra system, and it is stated there that Pāñcarātra is as good a method for realisng 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 Nāradīya Pāñcarātra, Mahāsanatkumāras, Ahirbudhnya, Jayākhya, Lakṣsmi, Padma and parama samhitā. The Pāñcarātra theory of creation hypothesizes two creations samṣthi and vyasthi, primary and secondary (supracosmic), and posits the fulguration of the Transcendent (Para) into the triple forms of Samkarasaṇa, Pradhyumna 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 Brtahma, 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 Paramasamhitā[1] and the introduction to *Jayākya 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 Advitĩyaj. 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.

"When the Kṛta Yuga has just appeared, by the grace of KẹAvadhani, the following five, namely Anata(serpent) Garuda, Vịvaksena, 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,

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[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

consisting of one hundered thousand ślokas. (Hence the whole of it) has an extent of five lakhs of (ślokas) it is called Pāñcarātra[1]".

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 Mah̃sanaktkumāra-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 system[2]. Linked up with this five-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, Carya, 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 corssing over; *trātā*, the deliverer the tantra, the *vidyā*. Furhter it is also seen that not only is the *tattva* five-fold in

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

[2] *Vedānta* Sūtras: II.41: Śrĩ Śankara holds that Pāñcarātra is refuted Śri Rāmānuja ho
Is that it is not refuted but approved. Śrĩ Yāmuna's Āgamaprāmāṇya seeks to show that Pāñcarātra is not contradictory to Vedānta..

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

The Upaniṣad that deals with exclusive clarity about the night is First Praśna of the *Praśṣnopaniṣad.* 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 (vyaṣtisriṣit) is Samvatsara which has tow divisions, uttarāyaṇa and dakṣināyana, devayāna and pitṛyāṇa, *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 devayāna[1]. This knowledge of creation is necessary: that Prajāpati is the creator, that the creation proceeds in two steps, smaṣṭị: as samṣṭḷ 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 Pitṛryāna, Kṛṣṇa paksa, and Rātri. The most interesting fact is that krs-Vāsudeva (Nārāyaṇa) who is considered to be p̣rna-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.*

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[1] *Manu Samhita1.65-67. cf.Mahābhāratta Santi Parva, Mokṣadharma. 224-14-17 Critical ed. There is a slight difference between* Manu *and* Prasśna Up. *for the*

latter holds Śuklapạkṣa is Prāṇa and daytime whereas the former holds Śuklapakṣa to be night –rātri. The cirtical 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-Gĩtā,* 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 Pitṛyāna (dakṣiṇāyana), Kṛṣṇāṣṭami, at mid-night. His star was Rohini, the star of exaltation of the Moon. This is the Bhaāgavata account[1]. The Harivamśa gives the star as Abhijit[2].

Thus Śri Kṛṣṇa incarnated in the five rātrs, 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 Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa of the five nights is the lord-promulgator of the Pāñcarātra method, the coccult 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 darknesses.

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[1] *Bhāgavata* X.3.1-8

[2] *Harivamśa* 60.17-18:

Abhijinnāmanakṣatram jayantĩnāma śarvarĩ
Muhūrto Vijayõnāma yatra jāto Janārdanah.

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

[3] *Praśnopaniṣad*-bhāsya: Rangarāmānuja interprets *rayi* as prakṛit.

Just as a fact of great interest let me point out the ease of the other avatār, Śrī̃ 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 prānūḥas or five daytimes.

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

In the Śrī̃mad Rāmāyaṇa śrī̃ Rāma is instructed to go to Sugrī̃va by Kabandha and make acquaintance with him and not with Vāli. The point is, as Vālmī̃ki states, Surgī̃va is the son of Sūrya whereas Vāli is Indra's son (Indu, Indra being almost identical since Soma is the favourit edrink of Indra). There are other reasons of corresponding lot of losing their wives which cwould evoke sympathy. But Sugrī̃va with whom friendship is sought, is Sūryaputa. The unity between them became proverbial: 'Rāmasugrī̃vayor 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 it[1].

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[1] Srī̃mad-Rāmāyaṇa: Araṇyakāṇḍa 72.11 ff(Kumbhakonam ed. Kish. Kāṇḍa and BālakāṇDear Avadhani, Date.

"Tato" avardhata vālī̃ tu balavī̃ryasamanvitah
Sūryaputro mahavī̃ryah Sugrī̃vah parihī̃yate   Kish.16.26
"Mahendramiva durdhars mahendramiva duhṣaham
mahendraputram patitam Vālinam Hemamālinam   Kish.17.11
Vanarendram Mahendrābham indro Vālinam ūrjitam
Sugrivam Janayāmāsa tapanas tapatām varsạ   Bālakāṇḍa17.10

In the Mahābhārata Arjuna, Indra’s Son, is the companion and bosm friend of Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa, Bh̃nuja, son of Srya, is the foe. The alliance here with the lunar byṛĩ 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 Śrĩ 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 Śrĩ Vaiṣṇava school of Śrĩ Rāmānuja holds that Rāmāyaṇa is the śaraṇāgati-veda). The contrast is that Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa always was Divine, the Transcendent, whereas Śrĩ Rāmā was always human. The two avatārs had relatively different purposes. Śrĩ Rāmā was born for the Treta-yuga, the age when light was available to all, and order, Ṛta was well-known. But Śri 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 beyond, the saccidānanda-mūrti. God’s Grace, Śrĩ Kṛṣṇa’s grace, alone can lead us beyond the darkness.

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