

THE DIVINE AND MOTHER AND MĀYĀ

In this chapter I shall consider more fully the nature of the relationship between the Mother (Śakti) and the Divine Person which is one of the most inexplicable and inexpressible in theological Philosophy. Intellectual understanding of the relationship could only lead up to analogical description. It can only apply within limits. The relationship between the finite and the infinite is difficult to describe; much more so in the case of infinites, and it appears that both the Divine Person and the Mother are infinites.

Pancaratra holds that the relationship between the Divine and Mother is one of connection or inherence like that of an attribute and its bearer (*dharma dharmi sambandha*), *I-ness* and *I* (*ahamta and aham*), moon and moonshine, sunshine and sun. The Visistadvaita of Sri Ramanuja claims that the Mother is also a Person like the Divine, though she is like the moonshine to the Moon and the sunshine to the Sun. The difficulty of this position would become apparent as we proceed to find out what other categories are of the sort. Whilst it is conceivable that Śakti and Saktimān can be inseparable it becomes difficult to believe that Śakti could develop a unique activity of her own though under the sovereign permission of the Supreme. Thus all the systems of thought that uphold the theory of Śakti or Mother and her inseparable relationship with the Absolute will have to explain at length the relationship more clearly than they have been able to do. Disunity is the truth. But How?

- (1) The Supreme Lord (Nārāyaṇa) is Consciousness, Perfect and whole, saccidānanda. He has consciousness that is also perfect and whole. The former is known as *svarūpanirśita-guṇa*, whilst the second is known as *nirūpita-svarūpa-višeṣana* or *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*. The former is also known as *dharma-bhūta-jñāna* or substantive consciousness. In the case of Supreme Lord, these two are Infinite, Integral, Perfect and Eternal, that is

undergoing no changes such as limitation or restriction or conditioning, either by His own will or by means of others, since there are none such.

- (2) Any other Infinite Being will therefore be the former. Co-existing and co-expansive and co-conscious. It may therefore be considered to be non-different from the former, being indistinguishable. In this explanation, the difference between the Śakti and & Śaktiman or Consciousness-Force and Consciousness consists in the fact that the one is the source and foundation of the other.
- (3) As against the former view, it may be said that if we accept that they are related to each other as Moon is to his rays, then we may be able to explain the relationship perhaps more satisfactorily, provided we consider that the rays can each have a personality of its own, independent of or subordinate to co-existent with the Moon, their source. It is however held by almost all tāntriks that the real doer and active agent of all activities is the Śakti of Lakṣhmī, the executer of all activities, who is present nascently in the Divine Infinite.
- (4) To understand this position it would be necessary to enter into the general nature of the attributive or functional consciousness (*dharma-bhūta-jñāna*) which partakes to a certain extent of the nature of the rays. *Dharma-bhūta-jñāna* essentially a cognitive function of the Divine as also of the individual souls and this cognitive function of the latter could in liberation become co-extensive with that of the Divine. *jñāna-sāmya* or equality with Divine cogniscience is affirmed in the scriptures that deal with the nature of the freed soul.
- (5) The nature of the Divine is more than the cognitive, give as is the case with the individual souls. It is not only omniscient but also omnipotent and omnopervasive and, above all, omni beneficent. The functions of these

orders are therefore of the same kind as the first mentioned. They may be called *Dharma-bhūta-āaktis*. It may, however, be remarked that there is recognized a great difference between the souls and the cognitive consciousness in that the cognitive consciousness is luminous but not self-luminous, whereas the souls are self-luminous centers even when they are also modes of the Divine. These souls can become and are the bodies of God in so far as they could be utilized, controlled, sustained and enjoyed by the Divine for His own occult purposes. The consciousness belonging to the functional order is not an object of enjoyment, though it is an instrument of enjoyment. This preliminary statement seems to be necessitated by the fact that Maya is declared to be a power of the Divine, though a lower one, than the other power known as the Mother, the beneficent power and personality of the Divine Himself. As Sri Aurobindo has written "Divine Māya is the knowledge of the through of things, its essence, law, operation which the gods possess and on which they found their own eternal action and creation and their building of their powers in the human beings, "In one sense, it appears to be the *Rta* of the Veda, the Divine Law, the *satyadharma*, the sovereign function of Divine Existence. Different from this is the *adaivī Māyā* which is said to be that which causes false mental forms and appearances. It appears as mysterious tremendous which deludes the many whilst it remains or is almost nonexistent in respect of the One. According to Śankara, he who believes that the many are real is misled by it. Whereas he who believes the many to be non-existent or does not perceive anywhere difference or manyness, is superior to relationship is to be state to exist between these two māyās, it might be said to be one of opposition. They are dialectical opposites. Māyā, therefore is inexpressible *anirvacanīya*. But other systems of thought whilst perhaps conceding that Māyā, whether Divine or lower, is inexpressible, do not consider it to be a drearier. It is creativity, the Knowledge-Will aspect of Divine Nature that exceed the bounds of all types of possibility conjectured by the intellect of man or even

by Gods. It is also true that it is fundamental inseparable attribute of Divine Nature and Existence¹.

Māyā is inevitably linked up with the notion of Creative Existence or Līlā. Speaking about Creativity, Dr. A.n, Whitehead says “Creativity is the pure notion of activity conditioned by the Objective immortality of the world. It is the ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality. It cannot be characterized because all characters are more special than itself.” He proceeds to state that “Neither God nor the world reach static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty.” But this makes the category of process more ultimate than Perfection. But this, as the Viśiṣṭādvaitic teachers and other tāntriaka writers and Sri Aurobindo point out, is one portion of the Divine, and an inferior portion, though the most important for creation and exhibition of the eternal possibility of the Absolute which alone can be the true metaphysical ground of all process and creative advance into Novelty. There are other manifestations of the ‘līlāic’ activity, such as the redemptive aspect, the Mother aspect and agvatār-aspect. The descending Grace of the informing eternal Omniscience enters into the scheme of His own Māyā may be rescued from its enchanting grip and limitations and exceed it. The question is whether, as Dr. Whitehead points out, we should grant to His Creativity as the most abstract notion for Māyā, a status higher than Deity or God. As we have pointed out, the view taken by Viśiṣṭādvaita is that Māyā as mere creative power is subordinate to the will of the Divine, and as such is not to be placed above the Divine. A second point that might be mentioned here is that Maya is a real causal category and, even as the dreams are real, the creations of the Divine for the sake of subjective experience are to be considered to be real activity of the Divine alone. If indeed we have to place or arrange these powers or *dharma*s or functions of the Divine in some hierarchical manner, it would be necessary to place supreme goodness or redemptive power, Dayā or Śrī, higher than Māyā. It is however clear that without Māyā. It is however clear that without Māyā, the world process would not be, nor the manifest wonder of it.

It is also clear that the lower power of creativity, that is , creativity within the limits of space-time-causality, may ultimately derive its luminous but veiled ability and intelligence form something that is transcendent to the space-time-causal schemes and delimitations of Ignorance, form something that is supernatural. But to that supernal power and being these space-time-causal schemes would not be limitations or plunges into ignorance's, but free and unrestricted fields of freedom, and as such play. Māyā would then reveal the greatness (*mahatva* and *bṛhatva*) of God and subtly inform the transcending infinities of His abundant Naturek, described by Whitehead as 'creative advance into novelty.'

The third aspect, similar to the *dharma-bhūta-jñāna* and *dharama-bhūta-śakti*, is the Ānanda or delight-aspect of God's enjoyment of the universe is as dynamic an experience as the other tow. This is the affective knowing or affective aspect.

But there is a fundamental point that has to be considered ere we proceed further,. It is the question whether we can ever consider these dharamas or functions as conscious or self-conscious. Viśiṣṭādvaita is definitely against imputing any consciousness or self-consciousness to the *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*. Nor can it therefore be śarira or body, because it is the instrument of a self in enjoying or knowing or controlling a body rather than itself a body. To affirm any such nature would only lead to infinite regress. Dharma-bhūta-jñāna and therefore *dharma-bhūta-jñāna* and ānanda are acit (insentient). "It gets the name of conscient (*cit-śabda*) because of having the form of knowledge: it gets the name of inconscient since it is not the substrate of any other consciousness" says Venkaṭanātha.

This defect may seriously infect theories which postulate the triple śaktis, such as *cit-śakti*, *kriyā-śakti*, and *jñāna-śakti* of the Divine. These would suffer from the serious fault of being considered to be acit, inconscient, and *Iklem prakṛit*, which is stated to be something belonging to the category of bondage

(pāśe). Equally any attempt to make Mother a śakti of the Divine involves this essential logical difficulty. That is why Śrī Rāmānuja and Venkaṭanātha have definitely ruled out the attributive or functional view of the Mother¹. thus while *dharma-bhūta-jñāna* and even Māyā may be classed as inconscient (acit), it would be difficult to place the Mother in this category. It is however clear that we are yet

¹ For the view in Buddhistic Iconography see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's *Elements of Buddhis* Ip.22. "Śrī Lakṣmi is essentially Aditi, Prakṛti, Māyā, Apsarasa, Ūrvāśi, he Waters, all the possibilities of existences, substantially personified. This lotus is per-eminently hers, because she is the Lotus of the Earth, at once the source and support of all existences, Vasudhā or Vadudharā; that is, with respect to their substance as the Supernal Sun in respect of their form." As will be seen in the same work, Śrī typifies the highest concept of value along with Agni Vṛkṣa, Skamba, Sun and Aśvattha. Vaiṣṇava theology does not accept the identification of Lakṣmi with Māyā. Śrī is Aditi, Bhū is the soul of Prakṛti.

trying to find out the further possibilities of the functional activates of the Divine. Despite the inseparability of these dharmas from the Divine, and there are undoubtedly the three infinities which make the universe what it is and make God in relation to it its Omniscient, Omnipotent and Sole Enjoyer, these cannot be the Mother. These may however be the attributes of the Mother. The Mother like God is a person, and if She were that there arises to problem the dual personality of the One Divine. It is a transcendental Disunity unlike Māyā. Further the concept of Mother-personality means the possession of Grace. It is Grace or Providence or Beneficence that distinguishes the divine from the un-divine. And that is why the relationship between the Motherhood and the Divine Godhead is one of inseparable co-existence and perhaps even ideality, for in them there are not as St. Augustine said of the Holy Trinity of Christian Theology "not three lives but

one life, not three minds but one mind, not three substances but one substance”, Mother has all the qualities in almost an identical manner as the Divine, namely, of pervading everywhere, of descending into correlated forms into the terrestrial scheme of things and She has her vyūhas or manifestations corresponding to those of the Divine Himself.

The vyūhas or personalities of the Divine are usually stated to be four: Vāsudeva, Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and fullness has six qualities (*śadguṇa*) of aiśvarya, (Lordship), bala (strength), vīrya (courage), tejas (light), śakti (power of māyā) and jñāna (Supramental knowledge). The three personalities of Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha have each a pair of qualities, whilst Vāsudeva has all the six qualities. These qualities are all beneficent. Even as the Divine has these six qualities, the Tīvari Śrī or Mother has these and she too has three personalities known as Mahālakṣmi, Mahāvidya and Mahākālī according to the Lakṣmi Tantra¹. The Śandilya Upaniṣads speaks of Gāyatri, Sāvitri and Sarasvati as the three personalities (vyūhas) of the Mother; the first is Swan-mounted. The VAikhānasa Āgama thinks that these three are the Yoga-lakṣmi, Bhoga-lakṣmi, and the Vīra-lakṣmi. all these forms thus correspond to the Divine nature of Saccidānanda.

One more point that might be noted is that the other is not a finite soul but he inner dweller immortal. Whilst she is Pūrṇa and Person like the Divine, she is yet His subordinate, dampati, or patni, co-sharer. As such she is not like the finite soul just a thing existing of the pure enjoyment of the Divine, being supported and controlled by Him, though all these are true of her as of the souls. Nor is She just an eternally free soul (*nityamukta* soul). She is capable of indwelling in all creatures as their – self even like the Divine.

¹ *Lakṣmī Tantra*: II.17;II.1.ff,VII.13; IV.67; VI 18-19.

She is the mediatrix, the puruṣakāra and thus is most to the Divine Nature. She is the Teacher and Leader of Men to Him, the immortal and transcendent Father¹.

¹ There are some Śākta writers who figure the Divine as Ardhānāri that is half-mother and half-father perhaps basing their idea on the passage *ekameva tvam mātaram ca pitraamca*, or following Kālidāsa's opening śloka of his *Raghuvamśa*. This same relationship is again stated to be identical with the relationship between the body and the soul, Viṣṇu and Laksmī and Brahmā-sarasvati (*avinābhāva*).
