

VAIKHĀNASA AND THE PĀÑCARĀTRA

In Śrī Rāmānuja Philosophy of devotion and worship in the temples there is a fusion of the two above mentioned schools of thought or work. Śrī Venkaṭanātha has defended their aikyaśāstra character in his Pāñcarātra takṣa. Though their aikasāstra character in his Pāñcarātra takṣa. Though vaikhānasa is Vaidika, holding allegiance to the Veda and its rituals, the Pāñcarātra theory is said to be tantrik: thus the former is said to be mantirika and the latter tantrika, though Tantras have their own mantras in fact. The former demands adhikara for Vaidika sikṣa, such as birth as a twice born and upanayana and other samskaras prescribed in the gr̥hya and kalpa, but the tantra demands dīkṣa such as tapah (branding of conch and discus), pundra, wearing of the caste mark, getting a name and initiation in a mantra, and the performance of tyaga, which is of the nature of surrender. The vaikhānasa is said to be Sauryam – solar, whilst the Pāñcarātra is said to be Agneyam – of fire. The Vaikhānasa āgama holds the world and other – world as the aims (puruṣārtha), whereas the Pāñcarātra holds that Mokṣa alone is the goal of man and all practice. Vaikhānasa worshipped God Viṣṇu in towns and villages, though the temple at Tirumali śeṣi on the mount, whereas the Pāñcarātra had their temples on the banks of rivers and mountain tops. According to Vaikhānasa Viṣṇu is the Ādi Puruṣa, or the Ultimate deity, and his forms (beras) are Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha, whereas in Pāñcarātra Vāsudeva is the Highest Puruṣa and All, and Sankarṣana, Pradhyaumna and Aniruddha are his forms. As it was pointed out Vaikhānasa is intended for dvijās and Pāñcarātra is for all.

The founder of the Vaikhānasa school is Vaikhānasa and the system is promulgated by Marichi, Bṛgu, Atri, Kaṣyapa. The Pāñcarātra is said to have been promulgated by Vāsudeva Himself and Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been hailed as the founder of the same. The general theory and philosophy is strictly developed by

Śrī Rāmānuja. God is the Supreme Omni pervading personality who has the souls and Nature as His body. These are His bodies and he is there self. He is transcendent to all there imperfections whereas, He is also their self, and possesses infinite auspicious qualities or perfections. By realizing themselves more and mole fully as His body, they attain perfection and freedom. By worship of God through self-surrender and prayer which is real offering, one attains the Bliss state of God. Souls pass from the sate of ignorance and bondage to the state of freedom from both of them and attain finally the free state of eternal freedom from births and bondage. The souls and nature are created by God but are eternal and only pass from the sate of subtleness to grossness and also return from grossness to sublet conditions till the soul attains freedom in God. The highest state is the state of nearness and bliss – equality.

Vaikhānasa developed the theory of pañcabera or five iconic forms to stand for the Divine Puruṣa. thus theologically there are five statuses of god, such as the eternal unchanging or fixed (dhruva) transcendently poise of the infinite. This is called the Para, the transience. Corresponding to it the Vaikhānasa have an Icon – which is the Mūla – or the root. This is a however said to be Niṣkala, without parts, and its significance as in Yajñā which is also important is that of the Garhapatya (the icon of the House or the Central place – called in the temple garbhagriha – he originating or birth – place) or the womb.

The second form in the theology is the Cosmic form. In the Vedānta he may be said to be the creator – sustainer and destroyer, cause of all the worlds (janmadyasaya yatah). Corresponding icon in the temple is the Ugra – (the dynamic power aspect). Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to this obviously in his Visvarūpa which Arjuna called the Ugra – rūpa.

The third from in the Theology is the Historical form. In the Vaikhānasa this from of the icon is known as the Utsavgamūti or bear. He is the person who gets all worship and goes out of the temple and all functions, rides all vāhanās, an in fact He is the deity that officiates for the Transcendent in the world. He is

similar to the Avatāra who has descended to the earth to meet and teach and uplift the people by resorting dharma – and the going round of the idol through the streets or even to outlying villages if or the purpose of demonstrating accessibility of God to one and all. Those who cannot go into a temple for whatever reason can have the grace of God and his beneficent gaze (darśaṇa). He is dakṣiṇāgni.

The fourth form of God theologically is the Inner Ruler Immortal – the inward Ruler, antaryāmi seated in the heart is the most powerful Godhead – the constant companion of the soul who is the one of the twin suparnas seated on the same tree so to speak – companion in all things and under all conditions inseparable from oneself. The whole history of man's evolution is dependent on the awakened descent of the Divine within oneself and taking up the reins of being. one becomes just a sākṣī (seer of the doings of God). He is the bali-the strength or the power within the soul that has sought and found refuge in God. The corresponding icon is the Kautka-the corresponding fire is the ahavanīya – it is to this God-icon that the daily offering is made – nityārchana and all decorations within. He never leaves the precincts of the temple and is connected with the Dhruva or Mulabera with a thread to show their inseparability. The inward Ruler is indeed the All Ruler and the Transcendent. The link between them is absolute. All descent of the transcendent is governed by this inward connection – sūtra-manigānairiva.

The enjoyer of the Līlā of the Universe is God, He is also the object of all enjoyers – the most beautiful Golden or silver form in the Śrī Venkaṭeśvara's Vaikhānasa shrine – he is called the Bhoga – Icon or mūrti. The Lord is in this form the Lord who moves in sleep to all the devotees and makes for their ānanda.

The Vaikhānasa concept of the Five Bearas or mūrtis of the One Divine really has a significant philosophical and theological meaning and shows how the needs of all levels of beloved devotees is sought to be served – the mystic with

his para, the philosopher with the First Cause and Ground, the King who seeks the establishment of law that is love and showering equality and justice to all, the inward yogi who seeks to unit Him with himself in all planes of being and Longs for the supreme entry into God Himself, and lastly the seeker of the physic-spiritual beauty of God in Nature and matter within the temple. And all are necessary for a total enjoyment and realisation. Indeed all these are four forms of the One and to see difference between them in essence is not only a mistake but also a pathway to mortality – that is to say a cause of rebirth in order to gather up this knowledge that is integral.

From what has been shown it is clear that the Vaikhānasas though they say they are śaurya or solar are really as in the forest temples, worshippers of the Fivefold Fire of the Yajñā. In fact the Divine is represented by the theory of five fold agni - pañcāgnikalpa – not the pañcāgnividya of the Upaniṣads but the pañcāgnividya of the Brāhmaṇās of the Vaikhānasas.

I have argued in another paper taking the issue further. The Pāñcarātra is not pañcāgni but pañcasōma or Upaniṣads Prasnopaniṣad I gives the equation clearly. Śrī Pāñcarātra is significant. The solar births of Śrī Rāma of Ayodhya is again representative of the five ādityas or five has (daytimes). This too is shown by the equations of the identified. They are appropriately the Bhrigu, Cyavana, Apnuvana, Aurva, jāmadagni who are the fires of the transcendent, cosmic, hoistorical, inner antaryāmi and arcā nature, though we might identify them with the Rṣis who seem to have discovered these fires and made use of them for spiritual integration and immortality and built the fire – altar- the perishable that makes for the imperishable and the immortal. The Paraṣu Rām or Puruṣa – Rām seems to be the Puruṣa of the Vaikhānasas – the transcendent, the divine incarnation of the Fire. So the Lord of the Gītā says: Yad ādityagato tejas jagatbhāsayate akhilam yat candramāsi yaccāgnau tat tejo viddhi Mamakam. The three Rāmās are indeed from the Puruṣottama – the Vāsudeva – the Prajāpati – the braāhmaṇa of the Upaniṣads and the Puruṣottama of the Gītā.

They are descents from that high for the restoration of dharma in the Universe, the first the brāhmaṇa dharma, the second the ksatriya dharma and the third the vasya dharma mainly but in the complex integrality of all, the three dharmas are one and each leads to the restoration of real functions according to guṇa and karma of each individual. We can see the dharma sankara or mixing up or confusion of dharma owing to promiscuity in functions and etc or lack of social discipline all of which had to be resorted to society.

Every avatar is an agent of restoring the 'Open Society' and grants the sense of freedom and meaning to every individual in the Universe – a freedom that is total or integral embracing every level of life and being, every walk of life and is something that restores to each and every individual the mature movement that belongs to the self as a free individual in thought, word and deed, but a freedom that has discovered that secret by which it can never be let again or let closed up or shut up in itself considering itself to be free because shut up in its own being losing all movement and growth and vastness.

Temple Culture centers round this free living and was a model for spiritual living in self – discipline and cooperation in the City itself. However it is clear that even the most spiritual extends towards the material and being material it gathers grossness which demands sublimation and spiritualization through continuous vigilance.

The continuous vigilance is the spiritual activity of the indwelling antaryāmi and the Historical Avatār.

The Bhagavat Gītā gives us an epitome of this view.

II

THE THREE PURUṢAS OF THE GĪTĀ

HAVE THEY ANY RELATION TO THE

VYŪHAS OF THE PĀÑCARĀTRA AND THE VAIKHĀNASA

The Gītā speaks (XV) of the triple puruṣas, namely the kṣara, the Akṣara and the Puruṣottama who is different from both and the Highest.

kṣara is the Lord in the world of Nature (prakṛit) (aparaprakṛit), its presiding deity so to speak. Of course some try to read this as the transmigrating soul or jīva, but it is better to take it is referring to the Divine who is presiding over the temporal Process so very inherent in the mutable Nature. Himself immutable the directs and guides and is he inner ruler immortal in all the creatures; Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtanam hṛiddese tiṣṭhati bhramayān sarva bhūtant:

The Akṣara puruṣa is one who is transcendent and is of the immutable changeless world paraprakṛit beyond space and time were the freed souls go to and worship that aparakrit form.

Though these tow called puruṣas, the higher than these two is the Puruṣottama, the Supreme Self of both Nature (lower) and the souls (higher) and the eternal world (higher nature).

The Vedic Seer has sung about the Puruṣa in the Puruṣa sūkta. The Supreme Being who is the cause of all the worlds, from whom all sprung. The concept of the Kṣara is the implicit in this as well as the Akṣara whom the celestials have contantly sung about – the eternal Bing. Ultimately the Unborn is said to have taken the form of the changing and th born the pose of the Eternal is the temporal, and in both He is the Lord. But transcendent stat is also intimated. Thus the three puruṣas of the Bhagavat Gītā reflect the original conception of the Puruṣa of he Veda

The Pāñcarātra Āgama conceives of the Divine in the fourfold forms vyūhas, as Vāsudeva, Sankarṣaṇa, Pradhymna and Aniruddha. The Vaikhānasa describes the Divine as Fourfold including the Highest form (Viṣṇu) Purusa, Acyuta, Satya and Aniruddha. The inclusion of Puruṣa as the first form of Viṣṇu is to show the identity with the Vedic Puruṣa. therefore the three Puruṣas

of the Gītā can be brought into line with the Puruṣa, Satya Acyuta and Aniruddha. Acyuta and Satya correspond to the Akṣara puruṣa whereas Aniruddha corresponds to the Kṣara puruṣa who is the inner ruler immortal in both the sentient and insentient Nature.

In this context it becomes necessary to point out that the derivation of puruṣa from puriṣa is valid only because the real ruler of the sentient and the insentient is the Lord (not the individual soul) who is the sarva śarīrī of whom all (including jīvas) are śarīra.

It is perhaps with this idea in view that the Great Rāmānuja also speaks of the Person spplekn of in the Vedaśiras – the Puruṣa sūkta and not as usually considered Upaniṣads – as the Śrīnivāsa in the opening verse of the Śrībhāsyā. (Cf. Puruṣasūkta – bhāsyā ed and trans. By V. Krishnamacharya)

It is not possible to accept the view that the Upaniṣads which are the Vedānta are also the Vedaśiras. The Upaniṣads deal with the Vidyas leading to the knowledge and revelation of knower of the Brahman. It is of course true that the Supreme Brahman is the object of all teaching and instruction by the Rsis. But the Puruṣa sūkta has the right to be considered as the Vedśiras – the head of the Veda by which the Supreme Puruṣa Brahman – is being praised by all the gods in all the Vedas. It is therefore to this supreme Hymn the word or appellation of Śiras could be aptly applied. Therefore the Śrī Bhāsyā verse refers to this Puruṣa sūkta as the Vedāśiras which contains the fullest description of the Supreme as the person supreme being described illuminatingly as Śrīvāsa, the being who is the abode of the śreyas, Śrī.

The three vyūhas of the Divine reveal the integral oneness of the three poises of the Divine as transcendent Self as the Self who supports the eternal world and the Seldc was supports guides and rules the temporal world of change. It is because of this oneness continuing in a the poises of the Divine infinities there is this experience of Sarvam khalvidam Brahma – all is indwelt by

the Lord and the Lord is the Lord of the there and hereafter and eternity and Reality.