

SECTION II

PRE-ĀḶVAR PERIOD

SUMMARY

In this section it is shown that Vaiṣṇavite philosophy and religion which the Āḷvārs have propounded in their works is as old as Hinduism. While philosophy defines Brahman as the Godhead that takes its role in creation, sustenance and destruction, religion identifies the same Godhead as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all the souls.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in the *Ṛg Veda*. He rose to eminence during the period of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. His three strides made Him identified with the sun. He is at first a friend and well-wisher of Indra. His eminence is evident from the appellation *Puruṣa* which He assumed. On the plane of ritualism, He came to be identified with the sacrifice and on the philosophical side, He became the inner controller of all beings. The concept of His divine descent emerges in the later periods when He became fit for adoration and came to be called *Nārāyaṇa*.

In the epics and *Purāṇas*, Viṣṇu came to be treated as the supreme deity with the names *Bhagavān*, *Vāsudeva* and others. With His countless qualities endearing Him to humanity, both gods and

men approached Him in times of distress. The *Pāñcarātra* doctrines get treated in these works, especially in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*. His various descents for the sake of humanity receive special attention in these works. Devotion, worship of the deity and devotees and congregational prayers form part of the practical religion preached here.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* identifies Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu. The concept of Viṣṇu as Puruṣa paves the way for the declaration of Srī Kṛṣṇa as Puruṣottama, Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity is reiterated here. Such concepts as that the world is real forming part of the Supreme, the concept of *Prakṛti* as not being an independent principle, the dependence of self on the Universal Self being only His instrument, that the self should do his duty, the doctrine of *karma*, the path of emancipation, and the relationship of God and the soul have received significant treatment in the *Gītā*. Stress is laid here on discipline and duty. Both the deed and its results are to be dedicated to Viṣṇu.

The *Āgamas* lay stress on the external mode of worship without barring the mental worship emphasized in the *Gītā*. The various modes of worship, their ritualistic details, the concept of five-fold forms of God, the emphasis on *bhakti* and *prapatti*, specific details with regard to the erection of the temples, information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites, specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor have all found their place in the Āgamic texts. The antiquity

of the *Pañcaratra* mode of worship is known from epigraphical and literary sources. The *arcā* form of worship and the elevation of the act of worship to the state of sacred rite (*yāga*) are some of the striking features of the *Āgamas*. The *Vaikhānasa* mode, which is equally ancient, has some marked features. The *Jitante Stotra* which is perhaps pre-Āgamic in date, deals with the doctrine of *prapatti* and *ṣāḍ-guṇya* of Viṣṇu.

The path of devotion is reiterated in the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada and Sāṅḍilya with greater emphasis on the unique nature of devotion. Love of God is insisted as an essential pre-requisite for the operation of the divine Grace and therefore posited as a precondition for salvation. Classification of devotion, its manifestation in many forms, the means for the attainment of devotion, the positive means for the cultivation of devotion get full treatment in these texts. The *Dharma-śāstras* deal with the code of good conduct, modes of expiation for sinful deeds, the religious rites which are to be performed in the sacred fire and the greatness of the deities. The rules to be followed by the devotees of Viṣṇu are endorsed in these works.

These ideas and concepts spread to the far south and found entry in the ancient classics of Tamil literature some of which could be assigned to the period before the birth of Christ. The *Pattu-p-pāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭu-t-tokai* collections which are the production of these periods reveal the extent to which the fundamental doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism as recorded in the Sanskrit works came to be admitted into the Viṣṇu

cult in the Tamil regions. The *Pāñcarātra* concept of *vyūha* was a familiar tenet in these parts. Temple worship was a well-known trait of the cult of Viṣṇu. Certain anecdotes in the life accounts of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and others not to be found in the Sanskrit sources, have been in vogue and seem to have had their rise only in these regions.

There were several streams of philosophical and religious tradition connected with the cult of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa and Bhagavan are the names of the deity treated at different periods as fit for adoration. The identity of the deity as having some of these names was dealt in some of the source books and finally before the birth of Christ, all these names came to refer to only one deity, Nārāyaṇa. Devotion, mystic experiences, worship in the temple, features marking the life of a devotee have all come to form the foundations of the Viṣṇu cult in the period preceding that of the Ālvārs and could be treated as the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism which created a deep impression on these Tamil Vaiṣṇavite saints.

CHAPTER II

VIṢṆU IN VEDIC LITERATURE

The *Vedas* are the earliest literary records of the ancient Indians. They are four under the names *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Of these, the *Ṛgveda* is the earliest and is the foundation for the composition of the other three *Vedas*. The name 'Ṛgveda' means the *Veda* of adorations. Such adorations are directly addressed to gods whose forms shone forth in the hearts of the poets who were the seers of *Mantras*. Among the various gods who were adored in this *Veda*, Agni and Indra have about two-thirds of 1017 hymns addressed to them. Maruts, Rudra, Aśvins, Savitr, Varuṇa, Viṣṇu and Mitra are among the well-known gods who are adored in the remaining portion. Offerings were made in the sacred fire invoking the gods even at the very ancient time when the hymns were composed and for this reason, Agni who represented the sacred fire, was given special treatment in the *Ṛgveda*. Similarly, Indra, as the Lord of gods, received frequent invocations. Agni or Indra do not get any preferential treatment over the other gods nor is any special significance attached to the latter.

In the other *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* portions of them including those of the *Ṛgveda*, Rudra and Viṣṇu gained prominence without any detriment to the positions of Agni and Indra. The exclusive importance which Rudra and Viṣṇu acquired is to be found for the first time in some of the *Upaniṣads* like *Śvetāśvatara*, *Atharvaśtras*, *Jābāla* and others in the case of the former and *Mahānārāyaṇiya*, *Subāla*, *Nṛsiṃhatāpaniya* and others in the case of the latter. Later, their greatness shot forth in the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* to dizzy heights overshadowing the original great positions of other gods.

Among these two gods, Rudra is celebrated in the *Rgveda*¹ as fierce, exalted and unassailable.² The hymns addressed to Him refer to the fear of his terrible missiles³. He is implored not to injure people, cattle and to save them from distress⁴. He is referred to as the physician among the physicians⁵. To avoid His wrath, oblations are to be offered to Him⁶ and obeisance to be shown to Him⁷. Prayers are offered to Him in order that His worshippers could be happy with sons, grandsons and all their relatives⁸. *Isāna*⁹ and *Kapardin*¹⁰ appear as His epithets. In the other *Saṃhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*, *Mahādeva*¹¹ and *Śiva* occur as His names. He holds the *Pināka* bow in the hand¹². The *Yajurveda* glorifies Him in a section which became known, as *Satarudriya*¹³. This paved the way for His glorification in the *Svetāsvātaraspaniṣad*.

The benevolent aspect of Rudra in offering protection to His worshippers in times of distress must have given rise to the appellation *Śiva* to Rudra. This word '*śiva*' which means auspicious, came to be used for Rudra in the post-vedic period and the creed of Śaivism arose out of this word. The word, '*bhāgavata*', which is normally taken to mean a devotee of Viṣṇu, seems to have been used with the word '*śiva*' as *Śiva bhāgavata*, in the sense of devotee of *Śiva*¹⁴. The *Śiva-*

1. R.V. 1.43; 1.114; 2.33; 5.42; 7.46

2. *ibid.* 1.114:9, 2.33:9.

3. *ibid.* 2.33:10, 14.

4. *ibid.* 1.114:7, 8; 2.33:14

5. *ibid.* 2.33:4

6. *ibid.* 2.33:5

7. *ibid.* 1.114:11; 5.42:11

8. *ibid.* 2.33:14

9. *ibid.* 2.33:9

10. *ibid.* 1.114:1

11. *Maṭrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 2.9.1; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.33; *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 10.11:2. Burning of the three cities is referred to in the *Taittirīyasamhitā* 6.2:3.

12. *Taittirīyasamhitā* 1.8.6.2; *Vājasaneyasamhitā* 3:61; 16:51.

13. *Śuklayajurveda* 16.18.

14. *Vārttika on Aṣṭādhyāyī*. 2.1.60.

bhāgavatas are described¹⁵ to have "carried in their hands iron lances as an emblem of the deity they worshipped"¹⁶.

It is held that Śaivism was a flourishing creed in North-Western India and that the worship of Śiva extended in the hill regions in the West "as far as Bactria, the present Balkh in Afghanistan, and in the north as far Meros or Meru, which may be identified with Pamir"¹⁷. It combined in it the elements of the Vedic and Indus Valley cultures¹⁸. In the course of its development, it absorbed many of the peculiarities of the Dravidian and Indus Valley civilization¹⁹. The Dravidian origin of Śaivism and the absorption of this creed into the Āryan fold is also advocated by some scholars. Kashmir and South India have been all along the greatest strongholds of Śaivism.

The Rudra-Śiva cult has more of the ascetic element and yogic practices which characterise the life of its votaries. It is only in the later stages of its development, particularly in Southern India, that devotion marked the dominant feature of this cult. Yet, the cult owes not a little to the Vedic texts for inspiration and development.

Vaiṣṇavism is as old as Śaivism, or for that matter Hinduism and it has been extolled through the ages as the religion of redemption. It connotes the religion in which Viṣṇu, the eternally pure and perfect, enters into the history of humanity with a view to redeeming the bound self from sinfulness and selfishness and vaiṣṇavise its nature. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism makes the meaning more explicit by defining the dual function of Viṣṇu as *Śrīyaḥpati* which consists in universal redemption. While Viśiṣṭādvaita as a philosophy defines Brahman as the Godhead that creates, sustains and destroys the universe with a view to brahmanising the finite self. Vaiṣṇavism in its religious aspect identifies the same Godhead

15. *Mahābhāṣya* 5.2:76

16. *Evolution of Hindu Sects* p. 94

17. *ibid.*, p. 95

18. *ibid.* p. 102

19. *ibid.* p. 104

as unity in trinity with Viṣṇu who pervades all souls and vaiṣṇavises their nature.

The *Vedas* comprise of four Books, *R̥k*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*. Each has four divisions called *Saṃhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. In the view of the scholars of the West, these *Vedas*, together with these divisions, were composed at different periods by several authors²⁰. The *R̥g Veda* is the earliest among them, some of whose hymns are found incorporated in the *Saṃhitās* of other *Vedas*. These scholars maintain that in the earliest periods, the *R̥g Vedic* seers were worshipping Nature²¹ and that anthropomorphism was a feature of Vedic religion. It must, however, be said in this connection that the deities are considered to have both visible and invisible forms and that the forms which are considered to be visible have marked features which could belong to a corporeal form. This proves the inadmissibility of the theory of anthropomorphism.²² The very idea of worship presupposes that the worshipper is cognisant of the superior and beneficial features in the character of the deity concerned. Without having a concept of what a deity would be like, there cannot rise the concept of worship. Nature too is divine, according to the Hindu ideals, and so if it is said to have been propitiated, it must have been only as representing an aspect of the divine that worship could have proceeded.

Viṣṇu is a Vedic deity occupying a subordinate position in *R̥g-Veda*. He is being celebrated in only five or six whole hymns, but his name occurs not more than a hundred times in all. He is said to be young, but vast in body, not a child, and his one great action is taking of three strides; hence he is called the wide strider. The word 'vṛgāya' which is used in *R̥g-Veda* 1.154:1 is taken by A.A. Macdonell in the sense of 'wide-going'. Sāyana, however, takes it in the sense of 'praised by the great'. The long strides which he takes and the three steps by which he measures the universe, are always

20. *History of Sanskrit Literature*. pp. 202-203

21. *A Vedic Reader* (Introduction). p. XVIII

22. *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* p. 15

described with an enthusiastic spirit. Of the three strides two are visible to men and can be approached by them, but the third no one can transgress, and is beyond the ken even of birds.²³ But again it is said the wise see the highest place of Viṣṇu—called *Paramapada*—as it were an eye fixed in the heaven.²⁴ That highest place where there is well of honey²⁵ is said to be the dear abode of Viṣṇu, beyond the ordinary mortal ken, which 'man apprehends not, nor can the soaring winged birds pursue'²⁶ and in which 'Gods rejoice'²⁷ and 'god-seeking men delight'.²⁸ The Rg-Vedic poets pray²⁹ that people may go to this blessed abode of Viṣṇu, 'where he himself dwells inscrutable' to enjoy felicity. Hopkins opines³⁰ that the later popularity of the god lies in the importance of his *Paramapada* which is said to have been the home of departed spirits.³¹ In later times, *Viṣṇu-pada* became a synonym of the sky and the abode of Viṣṇu became the goal of spiritual aspirations of the devotees of that God and several places situated usually on the top of the hills came to be styled as *Viṣṇu-pada*.

It is understood from Durgācārya's commentary on Yāska's *Nirukta*³² that the three steps of Viṣṇu are the three periods of the sun's course viz., his rise, culmination and setting. But Keith points out that this interpretation is not in keeping with the highest place of Viṣṇu.³³ According to another ancient commentator, Śākapūṇi, by name, the three *padas* are believed to refer to the three-fold manifestation of light in the three divisions of the universe. viz., fire on earth, lightning in the atmosphere, and the sun in the sky.³⁴ The

23. RV. 1.155: 5.

24. *ibid.*, I.22: 20.

25. *ibid.*, I.154: 5.

26. *ibid.*, I.155: 5.

27. *ibid.*, VIII.29: 7.

28. *ibid.*, I.154: 5.

29. *ibid.*, I.154: 6.

30. *Religions of India*, p 56.

31. RV. 1.154: 5,6.

32. *Nirukta* 12: 19.

33. *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*. I., p.108.

34. *cf. Vedic Mythology*, p.38.

Taittiriya Saṃhitā and the *Śatapātha Brāhmaṇa*³⁵ also refer to the three places of Viṣṇu as earth, air and sky. The three imperishable steps mentioned in the *R̥g-Veda* were endowed in later times with a spiritual meaning. The Besnagar inscriptions interpret the 'immortal' *padas* as denoting 'Self-control, renunciation, and vigilance which lead one to haven' apparently pointing to the abode of Viṣṇu as the God of gods.³⁶

The *R̥g-Veda* regards Viṣṇu as a youth and as a leader who is said to have defeated Śambara.³⁷ In the capacity of a warrior Viṣṇu is often closely associated with Indra and the two gods are supposed to be masters of the world.³⁸ He is the helper of Indra with whom he is often allied in the fight with Vṛtra.³⁹ In the hymns addressed to Viṣṇu alone Indra is the only other deity incidentally associated with him. One hymn is dedicated to the two gods conjointly.⁴⁰ Through the Vṛtra myth, the Māruts, Indra's companions, are drawn into alliance with Viṣṇu, who throughout one hymn is praised in combination with them.⁴¹ According to a legend in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,⁴² Varuṇa, Bṛhaspati, and Viṣṇu successively helped Indra in turning out the *asuras*. In the *R̥g-veda* Viṣṇuis certainly inferior to Indra as is evident from such names as Indra-Viṣṇu.⁴³ But there is no doubting the fact that the Vedic legends served as the basis on which the superstructure of the Viṣṇu mythology of later times was built. Barnett suggests that, according to the lay imagination, a transfusion took place of some of the life blood of Indra, the most truly popular god of action among the *R̥g-Vedic* deities, into the veins of Viṣṇu, as a result of the close relation between the two gods in early Vedic conception.⁴⁴ According to later tradition, Viṣṇu is considered as one of the manifestations of the sun.⁴⁵ The later conception

35. Sat. Br. 1.9: 3, 9.

36. *Select Inscriptions* I, pp.90 f.

37. R.V. 7.99: 5.

38. *ibid.*, 6.69; 7.99.

39. *ibid.*, 4.18: 11.

40. *ibid.*, 1.155.

41. *ibid.*, 1.85: 7.

42. Ait Br. 3: 50.

43. *ibid.*, 4.54: 4; 7.99: 5; 8.10: 2. etc.

44. *Hindu Gods and Heroes.*, p.41.

45. R.V. 1.155: 6.

of Viṣṇu as 'udyatkōṭi-divākarābha' and 'savitrīmaṇḍala-madhyavarīn' as well as his association with the conch or discus resembling the disc of the sun god with the bird Garuḍa, adapted from the Ṛg-Vedic conception of the sun as a winged celestial bird, also points to His solar character. In many passages of the Ṛg-Veda, Viṣṇu is mentioned along with the Ādityas, while later works represent Him as one of them. All this shows that Viṣṇu was regarded as the sun or endowed with the qualities of the sun.

Viṣṇu, in spite of his comparatively subordinate position in the Ṛg-Veda, began to rise in importance in the time of the Brāhmaṇas.⁴⁶ In the Brāhmaṇic period there is the mention of Agni as the lowest (*avama*) of the gods and Viṣṇu as the highest (*parama*).⁴⁷ These two terms may be taken to mean 'earthly' and 'heavenly' gods respectively. But the same work also regards Viṣṇu as the door-keeper (*dvārapa*) of the gods.⁴⁸ This is no doubt an uncomplementary epithet, unless it is taken to mean that Viṣṇu probably regulated entrance into the heavenly world. A Ṛg-Vedic passage calls Viṣṇu the germ (*garbha*) of *ṛta* which may mean sacrifice or moral order.⁴⁹ According to the Śathapatha Brāhmaṇa, 'Viṣṇu is the sacrifice; by striding, he obtained for the gods that all-pervading power which now belongs to them'.⁵⁰ The equation of Viṣṇu with the spirit of sacrifice was possibly suggested by the fact that both were considered to be helping or strengthening Indra and other gods⁵¹. In later literature, Viṣṇu is essentially connected with such names as *yajña*, *yajñeśvara*, *yajñapuruṣa* etc. According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa He averts the evil consequences of the defects in sacrifice, while Varuṇa protects the fruits of its successful performance.⁵² The same work regards Agni and Viṣṇu as the two *dikṣāpālas* or guardians of initiation.⁵³

46. For the incidents in support of Viṣṇu's importance, vide Sat. Br. 14.1: 1; Taiti. Ar. 5: 1; Pan. Br. 7.5: 6.

47. Ait. Br. 1: 1.

48. *ibid.*, 1: 30.

49. R.V. 1.156: 3.

50. Sat. Br. 1.9: 3,9.

51. *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, p.39 f.

52. Ait. Br. 3: 38.

53. *ibid.*, 1: 4.

There is in the *Śathapatha Brāhmanā* the story of Viṣṇu the dwarf⁵⁴ which forms the germ of the post-Vedic story of the Vāmana-Trivikrama *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The same *Brāhmanā* also says how 'having assumed the form of a tortoise, Prajāpati created offspring' and in the form of a boar, he (Prajāpati) raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean'.⁵⁵ Again according to *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the earth was raised from the waters by a black boar with a hundred arms and the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* identifies the cosmogonic boar which raises up the earth with a form of Prajāpati.⁵⁶ The former work also alludes to Narasimha or Man-lion. The story of the Great Deluge in the *Śatapatha Brāhmanā* represents the fish that towed Manu's vessel into safety as a form of Prajāpati Brahmā and this is sometimes supported by epic and Purānic tradition. In later mythology, however, the function of the Boar, Fish and Tortoise forms of Prajāpati Brahmā is attributed to Viṣṇu, the most benevolent of the gods.

In the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*⁵⁷ food that sustains the universe is called the form of Bhagavad-Viṣṇu. In the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*,⁵⁸ the progress of the human soul is compared to a journey, the goal of which is said to be Viṣṇu's *Paramapada*, the abode of eternal bliss.⁵⁹ The use of the word '*paramapada*' in this sense lends support to the view that the elevation of Viṣṇu to the dignity of the Supreme Being was due to the fact that the expression was capable of being used to denote this sense. This shows that Viṣṇu was often regarded as the greatest god in later Vedic times. Sometime later, Viṣṇu became even a household god. According to the *Āpastamba*,⁶⁰ *Hiraṇyakeśin*,⁶¹ and *Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtras*,⁶² the bridegroom

54. Śānt. Br. 1.2: 4.

55. Ibid., 14. 1: 2.

56. Taitt. S. 7.1: 5.

57. Mal Up 6: 13.

58. Kath. Up 3: 9.

59. X. cf R.V. 1.22: 20.

60. Haradatta's com. on *Āpastamba Gṛhyasūtra* 2. 4:15.

61. *Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhyasūtra* 1.21:1.

62. *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* 1. 8:2.

is required to say to the bride in the ceremony of taking seven steps contained in the marriage ritual, 'May Viṣṇu be with you' This is perhaps a development of the *Ṛg-Vedic* idea that Viṣṇu is a protector of embryos and promoter of conception.⁶³

There are references in the *Ṛg-Veda*⁶⁴ to Viṣṇu's association with cows which is probably indicated by the epithet 'gopā' meaning 'protector of the cows' or 'herdsman' The same work describes the highest abode of Viṣṇu as the dwelling of 'many horned swiftly moving cows'.⁶⁵ The *Baudhāyana Dharma-Sūtra* calls him 'Govinda' (cow-keeper or herdsman) and 'Dāmodara' (one with the cord round his belly).⁶⁶ In later times, spiritual interpretations of both the names were offered.⁶⁷

The idea which is prominent in the *Upaniṣads* is that Brahman is the ground of all things. He is a conscious principle.⁶⁸ The word 'ātma' is used in these texts⁶⁹ with free identification with Brahman and Puruṣa. The central theme of Upaniṣadic teaching is that Brahman is one without a second.⁷⁰ All the gods are subordinated to him.⁷¹ Brahman has transcendent nature which baffles all human thought.⁷² He has marvellous qualities which lie beyond human imagination.⁷³ He is depicted as having human perfections⁷⁴ which endear the suffering humanity to Him. He creates the world⁷⁵ and remains as its Inner Controller⁷⁶ and the self also.⁷⁷

63. *ibid.*, 7.36: 9; 10. 184: 1.

64. *R.V.* 1.22; 18; 10.19: 4.

65. *ibid.*, 1.154: 6.

66. *B.D.S.* 2.5: 24.

67. *M.Bh.* 5.70: 8.

68. *Ch. Up.* 6.9: 3,4.

69. *Br. Up.* 2.5; 1. cf. *Sv. Up.* 3: 7 to 12.

70. *ibid.*, 1.4: 11.

71. *Ken. Up.* 3.

72. *Kath. Up.* 3: 12.

73. *ibid.*, 2:21, 22. *Mun. Up.* 3.1: 7; *Sv. Up.* 3: 19.

74. *Sv. Up.* 1:7, 3:11, 17; 6: 8; *Kath. Up.* 5:13.

75. *Br. Up.* 4.4:13.

76. *Kath. Up.* 5: 9, *Mun. Up.* 2.1: 4.

77. *Br. Up.* 3.4: 1; 4.4: 22.

Knowledge which should rise about the correct nature of Brahman is declared as the means of getting final release.⁷⁸ Good conduct is required to be practised to get at Brahman.⁷⁹ The goal of human endeavour is stated to be the highest place of Viṣṇu.⁸⁰

The leading exponents of Vaiṣṇavism derived from the passages of the Vedic texts, inspiration and support of equating Viṣṇu with Brahman. In arriving at such a conclusion what is to be noted is the method of interpreting such passages. While it is quite possible to arrive at conclusions which would be at variance with the principles of Vaiṣṇavism it must be conceded that the Vedic passages admit also of different interpretations which favour the identification of Viṣṇu with Brahman. It is in the light of this interpretation, that the Vedic passages should be looked upon as having served as the basis for the formulation of the doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism.

The Supreme Being according to Vaiṣṇavism is Viṣṇu with Lakṣmi.⁸¹ The whole universe is pervaded by that Being both within and without.⁸² The universe cannot actually contain Him and this justifies that Viṣṇu is growing and growing beyond the limitations of time and place.⁸³ The selves, the inanimate world and He form together and constitute *Tattvatraya*⁸⁴ out of which arose the later concept of God as having the animate and the inanimate as His attributes, thus lending support to the name *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. All the *Vedas* show Him to be the greatest. The word 'viṣṇu'

78. *ibid.*, 4.4: 14.

79. Kath. Up. 2: 24. of. Mun. Up. 3.1: 5.

80. *ibid.*, 3: 9.

81. Taitt. S. 4.4: 12; Taitt. Br- 3.1: 2, 5;
Taitt. Ar. 3.13: 1; Nar. Up. 93.

82. Nar. Up. 94.

83. *Puruṣasūkta*. 1.

84. Sv. Up. 1:8, 12 cf. 1.9 where the three are said to constitute Brahman.

suggests that the Supreme Being has unbounded powers to pervade anything and that nothing could prevent Him from using His own purposes.⁸⁵ One can count the dust particles on the earth but cannot exhaust His powers.⁸⁶ That the word 'viṣṇu' is derived from the root 'viṣ', 'to enter into' receive justification here. To render the root 'viṣ' as active as it is done by A. A. Macdonell does not appear to be warranted.⁸⁷ He is Himself the creator, protector and destroyer of the universe which represents only Himself,⁸⁸ and this reveals that He is the material and instrumental cause of the universe. He created the universe and entered into it⁸⁹ and this suggests that He became the Indweller and then Inner Controller. He controls the world of animate and inanimate beings as the self does the body inside where it dwells. This presupposes the fundamental tenet of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school that He is the inner soul of all.⁹⁰ He is superior to all other deities who obey Him. The wind, the sun, the fire, Indra and Yama are afraid of Him and do their duties conscientiously.⁹¹ He is stated to have measured the regions in order that people could have comfortable accommodation.⁹² He maintains those regions⁹³ and supports the good deeds of people.⁹⁴ People could perform such deeds only through His favour.⁹⁵ He is available to His devotees in the form of *mantras*,⁹⁶ which are uttered when He is worshipped. He

85. *ibid.*, 1.6, 10, 11.

86. R.V. 1.1.154: 1.

87. *vide: Vedic Reader*, p. 31

88. Taitt. Up. 3.1: 1.

89. Ch. Up. 6.3:31:1 Ait. Up. 1:1; Taitt. Ar. 3:11; Taitt. Up. 2.6:1.

90. Mun. Up. 2.1:4.

91. Taitt. Up. 2.8: 1. He could not be injured by anyone.

92. R. V. 1.154: 2.

93. *ibid.*, 1.154: 4. cf. Br. Up. 3.8:9.

94. *ibid.* 1.22: 18.

95. *ibid.*, 1.22: 19.

96. *ibid.*, 1.154: 2. The word 'giriṣṭhāḥ' is taken by Śāyana in this sense, while Macdonell takes it in the sense of remaining in the mountain. *Vide: Vedic Reader*, pp. 32, 33

awards to the people the fruits of their deeds.⁹⁷ He is related to all these who do good deeds.⁹⁸ Thus it comes to admitting the need for being devoted to Him in order to avoid distresses.⁹⁹ He grants the desires to His devotees, and the regions over which He strode are always prosperous.¹⁰⁰ The husband and wife are asked to worship through sacrifice and get the results of their undertaking.¹⁰¹ His favour is thus needed¹⁰² and one will be forewarned of these consequences before one intends to commit misdeeds.¹⁰³ Good deeds, when undertaken remove the sins.¹⁰⁴ His control over everything by being within is not realized by people and in order to make this realizable, the things are said to be controlled by His will. Earth, water, fire, atmosphere, wind, sky, sun, quarters of heaven, moon, stars, space, darkness (matter), luminaries, all elements, vital airs, speech, eye, ear, mind, skin, understanding and vital fluid are mentioned in this order with the change that 'atman' implies knowledge in the *Mādhyandina* recension of the *Śuklavajurveda*.¹⁰⁵ He has two forms,¹⁰⁶ one which is visible and the other as lying beyond human apprehension. His body is divine as it is clear from His charming limbs¹⁰⁷ shining like gold¹⁰⁸ and resembling lotuses.¹⁰⁹ His

97. *ibid.*, 1.154: 3. The word 'vṛṣṇe' is taken in the sense of pouring forth desires by Śāyana' but Macdonell takes it to mean the bull. vide: *Vedic Reader*, p.33. The word 'ekat' used here is suggestive of Viṣṇu's greatness in standing above and achieving any task without anybody's help.

98. Śāyana on R.V. 1.154: 5.

99. R.V. 1.154: 4.

100. *ibid.*, 1.154: 4! Sv. Up. 6:13

101. *ibid.* 1.154.6. The word 'vām' is addressed to husband and wife. Macdonell takes it in the sense of Agni and Viṣṇu.

102. Kath. Up. 2:22.

103. Kau. Up. 3.9.

104. *Mahānārāyaṇīva* 17:6.

105. Br. Up. 3.7: 3.

106. *ibid.*, 3.7.3.

107. Ch. Up. 1.6:6.

108. *ibid.*, 1.6:6; Mun. Up. 3.1:3; *Puruṣasūkta*. 20.

109. *ibid.*, 1.6: 7.

yellow raiment¹¹⁰ lends charm to His frame. His holy smell¹¹¹ renders fragrant everything with which it comes into contact. He is ever youthful.¹¹² On account of these features He is absolutely free from defects.¹¹³ The self and He occupy the same place,¹¹⁴ namely, the body which shows that He sustains them without in the least affected by the impurities of the material body.¹¹⁵ The soul however has to taste the fruits of the deeds done by it in the past.

When Viṣṇu was the Supreme Being, a distinction was drawn to distinguish Him from other deities. This was done by calling Him *Puruṣa*. Other deities remained as deities. This is evident from the name *Puruṣasūkta*¹¹⁶ which was given to the hymn which is in praise of Him depicting Him as the source for the rise of every thing. This again suggests that He is both the material and instrumental cause of the animate and inanimate being. It is emphatically stated that there is no means but knowledge of the correct nature of God¹¹⁷ that could help the self for obtaining *mokṣa*. Deeds are ephemeral and do not endure till the time when their fruits are to be realized and so have no meaning for adoption as the means of release.¹¹⁸ The Supreme Being must be meditated upon; when at an advanced stage in this process, the Lord would be realized through intuition. Then all the knots that bind the self to this world are torn asunder freeing the self to leave the mortal world.¹¹⁹ The *Upaniṣads*

110. Br. Up. 2.3: 6.

111. Ch. Up: 3. 14: 4.

112. R.V. 1.156: 2.

113. Sv. Up. 6: 15.

114. *ibid.*, 1.9; Mun. Up. 3.1: 1. cf. R.V: 1,164: 20.

115. Kath. Up. 5:11.

116. *Rg-veda*, 10:90.

117. Taitt. Up, 2.1: 1; Taitt. Ar. 3,13: 1; Sv: Up. 3: 8. *Narasimhapūrva tāpinē* 1:6.

118. Ch. Up. 8.1: 6; Br. Up. 3.8: 10; Kath. Up. 2:10; Mān. Up. 1.2:7; 1.1: 5, 6.

119. Br. Up. 2.4:5; Mun. Up. 2.2: 8

use also the expression 'upāsita'¹²⁰ which literally means to attend upon by being near and this is highly suggestive of the path of devotion which became later well developed. In spite of all the efforts which an individual takes to visualize Him, it is His will that prevails in the matter of His presenting Himself before the devotee. Those who are deeply learned do not visualize Him while He presents Himself to those who are not learned. The case of the gopīs in the Gokula illustrate this truth. He is the cause of both bondage and release.

The word 'nārāyaṇa' occurs as His epithet only in later *Upaniṣads* such as *Maitri*¹²¹ *Mahānārāyaṇiya*¹²² and *Narayaṇa-pūrvatāpint.*¹²³ The *Nārāyaṇya Upaniṣad*¹²⁴ establishes the identity of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa and *Puruṣa* and that all the four *Vedas* extol Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Being.

The course which would be taken by the soul to reach the place of emancipation, which is elaborated later by the Ālvārs is found described graphically in the *Chāṇḍogya*. It is known as *arcirādi mārga* as the self passes over into a flame, then into the day, half month, period of six months and so on.¹²⁵ The place which is reached by the self is gloriously described in the *Kauṣṭhiki Upaniṣad*.¹²⁶ In the released state, the self goes about as it likes with complete freedom eating whatever it desires and assuming the form it desires.¹²⁷ Release is thus the enjoyment by the soul of perfect power, freedom and bliss in the world of Brahman. The self thus attains immortality.¹²⁸ There is also a reference in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* to the

120. Kau. Up. 2:6; Ch. Up. 1.4:1; Br. Up. 4.1:2.

121. Mai. Up. 6:8.

122. Mahan. Up. 9.4

123. Nar. Up. 5.4

124. Narn. Up. 4.6.

125. Ch. Up. 4. 15: 5,6. Br. Ar. 6.2: 15, 16.

126. Kau. Up. 1: 3 to 7; cf. Ch. Up. 8.1: 5.

127. Taitt. Up. 3.10: 5; cf. Ken. Up. 3: 4.

128. Kath. Up. 5: 13.

mystic union of the self with Brahman in the state of release.¹²⁹ According to *Śvetāśvatara* the self becomes merged in Brahman¹³⁰ and is in the state of peace for ever.¹³¹ The *Maitrī* declares that the self obtains a happiness which is undecaying and free from sickness.¹³²

In conclusion, it may be said that the predominant thought of the *Upaniṣads* regarding the relation of the Supreme Being to the individual soul is this: God exists in the embodied individual as its principal consciousness. So some of the Upaniṣadic thinkers are impressed by this fact which led them to identify Brahman completely with the individual. But even then many of them have assumed that the migrating soul is not in all respects with Brahman. In some of the later *Upaniṣads* the thought appears that Brahman and the individual soul are two, the Supreme Self pervades the finite soul as something different from it, that He does not share in its imperfections and that He seeks by His grace to grant to the finite self that knowledge which it requires for obtaining release. Thus it is seen that even during the Vedic period, the Vedic deity Viṣṇu who was identified with the sun and another deity Puruṣa became one and the same. Later, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa and Nārāyaṇa came to be identified with each other. Viṣṇu came to be recognized as the Indweller of all, thus controlling every one for their well-being. He must therefore be worshipped for the sake of avoiding the sufferings of the world and to acquire complete freedom from worldly life. These texts contain references to the incidents connected with the fish, the boar and the tortoise saving the world from distresses and the three strides of Viṣṇu. These incidents were later developed into the theories of divine descent (*avatāra*), though there is no indication of this theory being suggested in the Vedic texts as such.

129. Mun. Up. 3.2 : 8,9.

130. Sv. Up. 1 : 7.

131. *ibid.*, 2 : 14; 3 : 20; 4 : 7.

132. Mai. Up. 4 : 4.