

GODHEAD IN THE ĀGAMAS AND IN RITUAL WORSHIP

A perusal of the contents of the *Vedas*, *Itihās* and *Purānas* would show that penances and sacrifices were the means of getting freedom from worldly bondage. The path of devotion as the means of salvation is emphasised in the *Purānas* and is given greater significance than in the other source books. The *Sāttvata* mode of worshipping God is dealt with for the first time in the *Mahābhārata*, *Viṣṇupurāna* and other works. References to the worship of the concrete form of God are scanty in these works. The gradually diminishing powers of mental concentration of men with the passage of time must have been responsible for the creation of the cult of *arcā* form. At first, the *Tāntrika* mode which is based on the mystic diagram and magic formulas should have been adopted but this too having been felt as unsuited for man in controlling himself had been replaced by the concrete image of God. God's possession of a body analogous to that of human beings, this body being admitted to be made up of matter which is not of the material kind and God's descent for rescuing the suffering humanity are all the resultant features of theism which came to characterize the *Āgamic* literature. This is not to declare that the *Āgamas* prohibit the earlier mode of worship which is called mental or internal sacrifice (*mānasa yāga* or *āntara yāga*).¹ The *Āgamas* lay stress on the external mode of worship (*bāhya yāga*).²

The *Āgamas* declare that *mokṣa* shall be the aim to be reached, after death, by those who are in bondage. A correct knowledge will have to be acquired for this and this is dealt

1. L.T. Ch. 36; *Pārameś. S.* Ch. 5; *Jay. S.* 12.

2. *ibid.*, Ch. 37 to 39; *Pārameś. S.* Ch. 6; *Jay.* 13.

with in the section called *jñāna-pāda* (knowledge part) of the *Āgamas*. Concentration, though not very difficult as in the other courses of *mokṣa*, must be practised. This is dealt with in the *yoga-pāda* (devotion part). Construction of temples for locating the idols and the rules governing such constructions are found treated in the *kriyā-pāda* (service part). The *caryā-pāda* (conduct part) is devoted to the observance of the rituals connected with worship. The *Pādma*, *Bṛhadbrahma* and *Viṣṇutattva* have all the four *pādas* while others have some of them.

The *Āgamas* prescribe the methods of worshipping the deity. There are many deities and so the *Āgamas* too have become grouped into heads such as *Śaiva*, *Sākta* and *Vaiṣṇava* according as the deities to be held as supreme are *Śiva*, *Śakti* and *Viṣṇu* respectively. Even among the *Vaiṣṇvite Āgamas*, there are two prominent divisions, namely *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa*. The name *Pāñcarātra* is accounted for as being due to the fact that it had been explained by the original expounder in five successive *rātris* or nights.³ This is so stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as having been narrated in five nights of a *Satra*.⁴ The word '*rātri*' may be taken to stand for ignorance and the system of *Pāñcarātra* can be taken to destroy the five-fold ignorance. The name is also said to be due to the five qualities of *mahābhūta*, namely, the five gross elements (*bhūtas*), the five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), egoistry or individuation (*ahaṅkāra*); and thought (*buddhi*) and the formless original matter (*avyakta*). These five constitute the *rātris* or gifts of *Puruṣa*.⁵ Hence the *Tantra* or the *Śāstra* which treats of these gifts gets called *Pāñcarātra*.⁶ Dr. Schrader throws out a suggestion that the name *Pāñcarātra* points to five principal subjects treated in the system, namely, (i) *tattva* (ontology-cosmology), (ii) *mukti-prada* (liberation), (iii) *bhakti-prada* (devotion), (iv) *Yaugika* (*yoga*),

3. Pār. S. 31: 19.

4. Sat. Br. 6: 1. This appears in one of the early *Samhitās* namely, Ahir. S. ch. 12.

5. Pār. S. 1: 30 to 40.

6. *ibid.*, 1: 33.

and (v) *vaiśeṣika* (the objects of the sense). In this case, *rātra*, which meant originally "night", must be taken to mean both a cardinal doctrine of a system as well as the chapter or work dealing with that doctrine, that is: it became synonymous with *tantra* or *samhitā* so that *Pāñcarātra* would be a designation of the ancient Vaiṣṇavite system.⁷ There is also another derivation according to which the name has been derived from the five-fold duties of routine life, namely, (i) *abhigamana* (going to the temple of God in the morning with the mind, the speech and the body centred on Him), (ii) *upādāna* (collecting the materials for worship), (iii) *ijyā* (worship) (iv) *svādhyāya* (study of the sacred texts and muttering of the usual *mantras*) and (v) *yoga* (meditation). These are to be undertaken in the course of the day which is to be divided into five parts for this purpose. The word '*rātra*' must be taken to stand for both day and night. According to another interpretation, the principles of this system were taught to Sanatkumāra by Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Nāga and Ṛṣi and what were taught by them came to be called *Brahma-rātra*, *Śiva-rātra*, *Indra-rātra*, *Nāga-rātra*, and *Ṛṣi-rātra* respectively.⁸

It cannot be asserted very definitely from the materials so far available as to when this school of thought originated, but to a certain extent it may be said to have had a very ancient history. The *Pāñcarātra* is traditionally believed to have been first taught by *Nārāyaṇa* – the supreme deity – to Nara, who in his turn, handed it over to Nārada, Sanaka, Śāṅḍilya, Prahlāda, Sugrīva and other Ṛṣis. Since its source is of a divine origin it is called *Bhagavacchāstra*. It has been stated in the *Mahābhārata* that Viṣṇu who is also the creator of the *Vedas* took the essence from the *Vedas* and *Vedāntas* and gave it in a condensed form for His devotees calling it as *Pāñcarātra*. Some of the traditional works of the *Pāñcarātra* school further assert that the literature originated with the *Vedas* and

7. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, p. 24.

8. Bhār. S. 2: 12, 13.

that its source is the *Ekāyanasākhā*⁹ affiliated to the *Kāṇvasākhā* of the *Suklayajurveda*. It is quite probable that the *Pāñcarātra Śruti* and *Pāñcarātra Upaniṣad* mentioned by Utpala in his *sandapradīpikā*¹⁰ refer to the literature of the *Ekāyanasākhā*. Further, passages quoted by the same author under the general name *Pāñcarātra* may probably refer to such ancient works as of the *Ekāyana-sākhā* because of their Vedic style and the nature of their contents. Utpala also quotes from a number of *Samhitās* of the *Pāñcarātra* school. Utpala's quotations are found to be divided in three distinct groups namely, *Pāñcarātra Śruti*, *Pāñcarātra Upaniṣad*, and *Pāñcarātra Samhitā*. It is thus quite conceivable that even as late as the tenth century when Utpala flourished, the *Śruti* literature of the *Pāñcarātras* existed, and probably, it is this branch of literature that the *Pāñcarātra Samhitās* refer to as the *Ekāyana Veda* or the *Ekāyana-sākhā*. The validity of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* is thus taken for granted by Utpala. Yāmuna vindicates the validity of these texts¹¹ as also Jayantabhatta of Kaṣmir¹² who lived about 850 A.D. There is a specific mention of this in the *Śri Raṅgarājastavam*¹³. The whole subject is discussed in detail in the *Pāñcarātrarakṣa* by Vedanta Deśika.

The *Pāñcarātra* texts are of three kinds, viz., (a) *Divya* (divine) those spoken of by the Lord Himself the examples of which are *Sāttvata*, *Pauṣkara* and *Jyākhyā Samhitās*; (b) *Munibhāṣita* (uttered by Brahmā and the sages) for which *Īśvara*, *Pārameśvara*, *Bhāradvāja* and other *Samhitās* may be as examples; (c) *Mānuṣya* (composed by men) and for this

9. The word 'ekāyana' occurs in the Ch. Up. as the name of a branch of study. Vide: 7.1: 2; 7.1: 4; 7.2: 1; 7.5: 2; 7.7: 1. It means one path (eka-one, ayana-path) for salvation (Is. S. 1: 19).

10. Page 2.

11. The *Āgamaprāmānya* (p 88) which is his independent work on this subject refers to *Kāsmira Āgamaprāmānya* without mentioning its author as a work on this subject.

12. *Nyāyamañjari* I, p. 242.

13. *Śri Raṅgarājastava* 2: 14.

kind *Āgamaprāmāṇya* of Yāmunaçārya may be given as an example. The texts belonging to this group are called by the names *Divyaśāstra*, *Bhagavacchāstra* and *Siddhānta*. There are 225 texts which belong to the *Pāñcarātra* system.¹⁴ The names of these end generally as *Samhitā* and *Tantra*, such as *Pādmasamhitā* and *Lakṣmitantra*. Among these, the *Pauṣkara*, *Sāttavata* and *Jayākhyā Samhitās* are known at *Ratnatraya* due to their importance and perhaps for having served as the nucleus, as it were, for *Parameśvara*, *Īśvara* and *Pādma Samhitās* which are followed now for temple worship.

In determining the antiquity of the *Pāñcarātra* the materials that are available are very scanty. The *Pāñcarātra* doctrines are associated with the *Puruṣa-sūkta*¹⁵ of the *Rg-Veda*, which is, as it were, the foundation stone for all future Vaiṣṇavite philosophy. It is said in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that Nārāyaṇa, the great being, wishing to transcend all other beings and becoming one with them all, saw the form of sacrifice known as *Pāñcarātra* and by performing the sacrifice attained his purpose.¹⁶ The *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Sāntiparvan* refers to the *Pāñcarātra* doctrines which prevailed in the *Śvetadvīpa* which was visited by Nārada. The reference in the *Mahābhārata* cannot be completely relied upon because it is extremely difficult to fix the date of composition of the different portions of that work.¹⁷ An interesting evidence is furnished by two ancient Tamil works, namely, *Cilapatikāram*¹⁸ and *Paripāṭal*¹⁹ (Second Century A.D.) which refer to the Garuḍadhvaja and the images of Saṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and Aniruddha. The description of Viṣṇu as given in the poems of *Paripāṭal* referred to here follows closely the description of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being in the *Pāñcarātra* texts which have come down to us and it definitely refers to

14. Introduction to *Lakṣmitantra*, pp. 10 to 13.

15. Abir. S. ch. 59.

16. Sat. Br. 13.6: 1.

17. cf. *History of Indian Literature Vol. I* (Calcutta University) pp. 465 and 475; and Dr. S.K. Ayyengar's *Proceedings and Transactions of the Second Oriental Conference, Calcutta, 1923*.

18. CLP. 5, II. 169-73; *ibid.*, 19, II. 7-10.

19. PRPL. 3, 4.

the four *vyūhas* and the *vibhavas*. There is the further statement of the character of immanence (*antaryāmitva*) clearly made in the poem. Another poem in the same collection²⁰ makes a special reference that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are the deities installed in Tirumāliruñcōlai, a sacred place near Madurai. This poem gives in circumstantial detail the features of Vāsudeva-Saṅkarṣaṇa, so fully that it leaves in little doubt that this worship had established itself in the remote south much earlier than the period to which the poem actually refers. There are references also to the *Trivikrama avatāra* and to the lotus-eyed Viṣṇu in the *Tirukkuraḷ*²¹ (First Century B.C.). Again, the Besnagar inscription (last quarter of the Second Century B.C.) refers to the setting up of a *Garuḍadhvaja* (column surmounted by the figure Garuḍa) at Vidiśā in honour of Vāsudeva by his *Yavana* devotee Heliodoros of Takṣaśilā.²² Another inscription from Besnagar refers to the erection of a Garuḍa Column for a temple of Viṣṇu. The Ghosundi inscription (Rajasthan) of the first century B.C. records the construction of a *pūjā-silā-prakāra* (stone-enclosure for a place of worship), styled as *Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka* by a devotee of Viṣṇu who had performed the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice in honour of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva.²³ The Nanaghat inscription (Bombay State) of about the same age, belonging to the queen of a *Sātavāhana* performer of Vedic sacrifices including the *Aśvamedha*, begins with an adoration of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, among others.²⁴ These epigraphs support the fact known from literary sources regarding Vāsudeva's association with Garuḍa and therefore with Viṣṇu, and with Nārāyaṇa, considerably before the birth of Christ. Dr. S.K. Ayyengar has however traced the mention of the word 'sāttvata' in the *Aitareya*²⁵ and *Satapatha*²⁶ *Brāhmaṇas* and in determining the date of *Pāñcarātra* these references

20. *ibid.*, 15. However, the mode of worship in this shrine is not of the *Pāñcerātra* kind.

21. *Kuraḷ*, 1103.

22. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, No. 669.

23. *Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 91 f.

24. *ibid.*, pp. 186 ff.

25. *Ait. Br.* 2.25; 26; *ibid.*, 8.14: 3.

26. *Sat. Br.* 13.5: 4, 21.

seem to be of the highest value. It seems very probable that within a few centuries after the Mahābhārata war (3100 B.C) the human character of Kṛṣṇa was forgotten and he was deified along with his relatives, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and their worship was made a special feature of a particular tribe, or a section of a people who came to be recognized as belonging to the *Pāñcarātra* or the *Bhāgavata* or the *Sāttvata* or the *Vāsudeva* school.

In his *Mahābhāṣya*, Patañjali explains²⁷ the word 'vāsudeva' as the name of Bhagavān, thereby meaning the divinity of Vāsudeva, who is proclaimed as the Supreme deity in the *Pāñcarātra* texts, *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and other ancient books. This would suggest clearly a date for the prevalence of *Pāñcarātra* principles at least before 800 B.C. which is the date of Pāṇini on whose *sūtra* Patañjali commented. This makes clear the popularity of these doctrines during several centuries before 600 A.D. which could be fixed as the beginning of the Ālvār period.²⁸

The *Pāñcarātra* literature is, indeed, vast, but it has been shown that most of the literature is full of ritualistic details and that there is very little philosophy in it. But there are some *Samhitās* like *Jayākhyā-samhitā*, *Ahirbudhnyā-samhitā*, *Viṣṇu-samhitā*, *Parama-samhitā*, *Paṅskara-samhitā*, *Lakṣmī-tantra* and others which have philosophical elements in them. The theoretical philosophy in all of them is mostly inseparably bound up with the story of creation. There is, however, great difficulty in fixing the age of these texts. Some of these texts refer to the Ālvārs and their worship.²⁹ Further, there is mention of the need to sing the compositions of the Ālvārs.³⁰ This would decidedly point out that either the *Samhitā* texts which contain such accounts

27. *Mahābhāṣya* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.3: 98.

28. Bāṇa (600 A.D.) enumerates the *Pāñcarātrikas* as the name of a religious sect. Vide *Harṣa-carita*, p. 237.

29. Bhr. S. *Kṛtyādhitkāra*. ch. 34; Īś. S. ch. 8; Upan. S. ch. 4, 5, 7 and 8.

30. Īś. S. 8: 175, 176; 11: 236, 252, 256; 13: 246.

were composed after 900 A.D., or such portions containing those abbreviations must have been interpolated after 900 A.D. into the body of these texts. Again, some of these texts contain episodes³¹ which are not generally found in the Agamic texts but this need not be taken serious note of for fixing the age of these texts. And again identical passages³² occur in more than one Samhita suggesting the possibility of subsequent additions and alterations into the body of the texts which were already composed.

According to the *Lakṣanīyoga* the Supreme Brahman is Vāsudeva,³³ Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.³⁴ He is also known as Paramātmā,³⁵ and Para-Brahman.³⁶ Some other Agamas describe him as Viṣṇu. The Brahman is limitless.³⁷ He is without a second and is the cause for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of all the worlds. All the worlds arise from Viṣṇu, the Supreme Brahman, who is always with Lakṣmī³⁸ who is described as Viśvātmā and who acts as the basis for the world of Viṣṇu.³⁹ Lakṣmī is the nature of knowledge⁴⁰ and represents the path.⁴¹ Lakṣmī rests on Him, is the resting place for others, destroys the defects of others and spreads their qualities.⁴² She descends down along with Viṣṇu⁴³. The word 'viṣṇu' is derived from the root 'viś' to pervade and therefore means one who pervades every thing in point of place and time.⁴³ In fact, three roots, namely,

31. Ahir. S. ch. 43, 45; Brhad. S. ch. 6 to 12.

32. cf. *Pāramet.* S. 27: 234 to 335; Pan. S. 27: 28 to 123.

33. L.T. 2: 5.

34. *ibid.*, 2: 6.

35. *ibid.*, 2: 1.

36. *ibid.*, 2: 9.

37. Ahir. S. Vol. I, p. 17; L.T. 2: 8.

38. L.T. 2: 11, 12.

39. *ibid.*, 2: 27.

40. Ahir. S. 4: 78.

41. *ibid.*, 2: 8, 9.

42. L.T. 6b. 3.

43. Ahir. S. 32: 59.

(i) *vi*-meaning going, pervading, producing, attracting through splendour etc., (ii) *ṣac*-to become united inseparably, and (iii) *ṣṇu*-to flow, have together, given rise to the word '*viṣṇu*'.⁴⁴ Though He pervades all things, yet He is called non-existent because He cannot be perceived by the senses. But, just as the fragrance of the flowers can be intuited directly, so God also can be intuited directly.⁴⁵ All things are included in His existence and He is not limited either in time or in space. All the animate and inanimate things are governed for sustenance and nourishment by Him. He pervades all these and hence He is called Nārāyaṇa.⁴⁶ The word '*bhagavān*' which means respectable is applicable to Vāsudeva.⁴⁷ He had taken the world as the property and hence He is called Bhagavān.⁴⁸ He envelops the whole thing by His own knowledge and bliss and the whole universe therefore becomes saturated with Him (*tanmaya*). The universe dwells in Him and He dwells in it. This is the sense of '*Vāsu*'.⁴⁹ Or it can mean that He passes through every thing like a thread.⁵⁰ He shines Himself by creation etc., sports Himself and is praised always by Gods.⁵¹ He is called Narasimha as he destroys the bonds of men⁵² and this word means Puruṣottama.⁵³ By placing men within and remaining all round them, He gets the name Puruṣottama and it is this sense that is conveyed by the word '*narasimha*'.⁵⁴ Since he is free from all worldly limitations, He is known as Paramātman and He is the self of all other selves.⁵⁵

44. *ibid.*, 52: 45.

45. Jay. S. 4: 76.

46. Ahir. S. 52: 51 to 53.

47. *ibid.*, 52: 58, 59.

48. Ahir. S. 52: 60 to 63.

49. *ibid.*, 52: 64 and 65.

50. *ibid.*, 52: 66.

51. *ibid.*, 52: 68.

52. *ibid.*, 54: 32.

53. *ibid.*, 54: 50.

54. *ibid.*, 55: 27, 28.

55. L.T. 2: 1, 2; Ahir. S. 2: 26.

The *Pāñcarātra Āgamās* speak of five forms of God : (i) *Para* (the transcendant), (ii) *Vyūha* (the grouped), (iii) *Vibhava* (the incarnated), (iv) *Antāryāmin* (the immanent) and (v) *Arcā* (the idol). According to these *Āgamās* Para Brahman is called *Vāsudeva*.⁵⁶ He lives in a city called *Vaikuṅṭha* which is guarded by particular persons and which has door-keepers; He is seated in a pavilion of gems on a couch in the form of the serpent *Ādiśeṣa*, placed on a throne having the eight legs *Dharma* and others; attended by *Śrī*, *Bhū* and *NIlā*; holding celestial weapons, conch-shell, discus and others; adorned with celestial ornaments such as a tiara and others. He is limitless in point of possession of attractive qualities though it is not easy to conceive the supreme deity as having innumerable qualities but what the soul would derive as benefit from these cannot be stated with any degree of certainty and so the *Pāñcarātra* has specified the qualities as six in number viz. *jñāna* (knowledge), *bala* (strength), *atśvarya* (lordship), *virya* (virility), *śakti* (potency) and *tejas* (splendour) which are passive qualities. Lordship consists in the Lord's being the agent which is strengthened by His independent will.⁵⁷ Strength in His case is marked by the absence of exertion, though He is ever engaged in the creation of the world.⁵⁸ His virility, though productive of results, does not undergo any change and is also called *acyu-
tatva*, that is never falling down.⁵⁹ Splendour in His case consists in not looking for any assistance.⁶⁰ All these are aspects of knowledge.⁶¹ His qualities are opposed to what is fit to be abandoned (*heyapratyanika*) and are auspicious (*kalyāṇa*).⁶² The Lord's presence is enjoyed by the eternal spirits such as *Ananta*, *Garuda*, *Viśvaksena* and others and by the delivered souls. He is free from the three limitations of space, time and object.⁶³

56. *ibid.*, 2: 9.

57. *Ahir. S.* 2: 58.

58. *ibid.*, 2: 59.

59. *ibid.*, 2: 60.

60. *ibid.*, 2: 61.

61. *ibid.*, 2: 61, 62.

62. *ibid.*, 2: 24, 25.

63. *ibid.*, 2: 46 to 53.

In *Vyūha* form Para-Vāsudeva Himself assumes four forms viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha for convenience of worship, and for purposes such as creation etc. While Vāsudeva alone possesses the six ideal qualities in the *Vyūha* form, each one of His three emanations possesses only two of the said qualities in turn.⁶⁴ Saṅkarṣaṇa, the destroyer of the universe, in charge of the propagation of the *Pāñcarātra* system has *jñāna* and *bala* as the prominent qualities,⁶⁵ and he is the deity for the individual self. Pradyumna is the creator of the world and he is in charge of the propagation of *dharma*, has *aiśvarya* and *vīrya* as the qualities;⁶⁶ he is-in charge of the mind. Aniruddha who takes charge of maintenance and awards the fruits of *dharma* has *śakti* and *tejas* as the qualities⁶⁷ and is in charge of *ahaṅkāra*.⁶⁸ The four *Vyūhas* are described as possessing certain weapons. Besides the *Vyūhas*, there are twelve sub-*Vyūhas* derived therefrom three from each with the names Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara.⁶⁹ The images of Viṣṇu are distinguished to represent these twelve forms by varying the order of arrangement of the four appurtenances conch (*śankha*), discus (*cakra*), club (*gadā*) and lotus (*padma*) held in four hands of each image. The names of these twelve sub-*Vyūhas* are recited by pious Vaiṣṇavites every day; they are said to protect the devotee's body if represented on the same (fore-head etc.) by painted vertical lines. These twelve subsidiary *Vyūhas* are regarded as the deities superintending each month, representing the twelve suns in each of the *rāsis*.

64. *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra*, pp. 32 to 35.

65. L.T. 10: 27-33; Ahir. S. 5-21 22.

66. *ibid.*, 10: 34 to 36; Ahir. S. 5: 22-23.

67. *ibid.*, 10: 37 to 38; Ahir. S. 5:23, 24.

68. Dr. Schrader points out that the statements regarding the cosmic activities of the *Vyūhas* are somewhat contradictory in nature and quotes instances from L.T., Viṣ. S. and Ahir. S. *ibid.*, p. 38. Vide also *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 56 to 57.

69. L.T. 4: 27.

The *Vibhava* mode consists of the *avatāras* (divine descents) of Viṣṇu. There are several of them mentioned in the *Āgamas*. The principal *Vibhavas* are thirty-eight,⁷⁰ but the chief of them are ten: Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise); Varāha (Boar), Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma, Rāma, Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and Kalki. The principle of Divine Descent is set forth in the *Gītā*.⁷¹ The *Ahīr-budhnya-saṃhitā*, however, enumerates thirty-nine *avatāras*.⁷² This includes the additional one called *viśākhayūpa*, also called *Viṣṇuyūpa* which is a divine pillar in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha. The four faces of this are prominently occupied by Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarsaṇa and Vāsudeva respectively duly representing the waking, dream, deep sleep and the transcendent stages of meditation which a devotee is required to adopt.⁷³ It is said that from this arise the descents and *arcās* of God.

In the form as *Antaryāmin* the Lord resides in the heart of the selves as the inner controller of the self. In another of His forms He stays within our heart as the object of our meditation. This form can be seen only by yogins and it accompanies the individual souls even when they go to heaven or hell.

The fifth form of God is *Arcāvatāra* (descent in the form of image). The idol is the most concrete of God's forms. When certain images are made of earth, stone, or metals, and are properly installed with proper ceremonials and invoked by *mantras*, they are inspired with the presence of God and with His special powers.⁷⁴ The belief is that God descends into those idols and makes them divinely alive,⁷⁵ so

70. L.T. 11: 19 to 25 and *Introduction to Pāñcarātra*, p. 42.

71. Bb. G. 4: 7, 8.

72. Ahir. S. 5: 50 to 56..

73. For details vide L.T. 10: 27 to 30; 11: 9 to 18; Sat. S. 4: 7 to 20; 11: 21 to 25; *Introduction to Lakṣmītantra* pp. 22 to 25.

74. Par. S. 36: 391; 38: 3 to 13; *Viṣṇudharma* 103: 16, 30; Pau. S. 36: 391.

75. Sātt. S. 6: 22.

that He may be easily accessible to His devotees and also to give facilities for concentration. The Lord comes in there due to the power of a particular *mantra* uttered.⁷⁶ Because of the Lord's presence, these idols become *aprākṛta* having all the six ideal qualities. *Bimba*, *bera* and *pratimā* are also the terms used to refer to *arcā*. Among the modes of worship that of the idol is said to be laudable, the others being mental, or sacrificial. This is because the mind and the eyes are pleased when the idol is worshipped with flowers.⁷⁷ The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* contain the procedures for installing the images of the devotees of God and for worshipping them.⁷⁸ One of the *saṃhitās* refers to the use of *Saṭhāri*.⁷⁹ The *Ālvārs* are described as having shrines.⁸⁰ Their birth is predicted in one of the *Āgamas*.⁸¹

The act of worshipping God is called *yāga*⁸² or *ijyā*. Special importance is attached to the performance of *bhūtasuddhi* which takes the shape of the utterance of *mantras* in order to cleanse one's physical frame of impurities in order to make it fit for offering worship to the deity.⁸³ Significance of the ringing of the bell while offering worship is explained.⁸⁴ Worship of the deity could be carried out in one's own residence as part of the daily routine.⁸⁵ It could also be done in villages and towns for the welfare of others. For this purpose, temples are built so that persons who get initiated into doing the act of worship could work for the participation in it of others who are not and also could not get initiated.⁸⁶ The holy

76. cf. Pau. S. 38 : 3 to 13; 15 to 30.

77. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra* 1 : 13, 14.

78. *Viṣṇutattva* ch. 13, 14; V.T. ch. 19; V.R.S. ch. 25; H.G.S. ch. 27; *Pārameś.* S. 8 : 194 to 209; Bhār. S. 3 : 54; Mari. S. Vim. Kal. ch. 19.

79. P.P.S. ch. 8.

80. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra*, ch. 34.

81. Īś. S. 8 : 175, 176.

82. cf. *Pārameś.* S. 9 : 180 to 187 for details on this.

83. *Pārameś.* S. 3 : 140 to 222; L.T. ch. 35.

84. *ibid.*, 6 : 64 to 104; Mari. S. Vim. kal. ch. 9.

85. Sau. S. ch. 50; Pau. S. ch. 22; Śrīdh. S. ch. 38 *Pārameś.* S. 6 : 243 to 245; Bhr. S. 1 : 13, 14.

86. *Ānan.* S. 3 : 25; *Pād. S. caryā-pāda* 1 : 9, 10.

places, where temples are erected, are held to be of four kinds.⁸⁷ *Svayam Vyakta* (self-manifested) is of the first kind. The Lord has revealed Himself in these places. The shrines at Śrī Raṅgam, Tirumalai, Śrīmuṣṣam and others belong to this type. To the second kind which is called *Daiva* belong temples at Kāñci and other places where God's presence was brought through the efforts of deities like Brahmā. *Saidha* represents the third kind according to which God has come to occupy the shrines for the sake of eminent persons like sages. The shrines at Tiruvallikkēni, Tirukkōvalūr and Kumbakonam belong to this kind. The last category is styled as *Mānuṣa* according to which men of piety are able to install images as in the case of modern temples. It has been stated in the *Āgamas* that among the centres of worship those that have manifested themselves are the best.⁸⁸ Śrī Raṅgam, Vēṅkatādrī (Tirumalai), Haṣṭigiri (Kāñci) and Nārāyaṇādrī (Melkote) are mentioned as four places of the Lord.⁸⁹

The *Pāñcarātra* texts adopt the *Saṃkhya* principles of evolution of matter.⁹⁰ What exists becomes transformed into another and does not get destroyed on any account.⁹¹ In this respect, these *Āgamas* represent a distinct line of treatment which is not followed by the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school of *Vedānta*, though it is much indebted to these *Āgamas* for the religious doctrines. Śrī is emphatically declared to be Viṣṇu's potency which is never separate from Him and which represents the Lord's desire to create the world.⁹² She takes the forms of sound (letters), six qualities, *vyūha*, *mantra*, deities to be meditated by the devotees and the world of animate and inanimate beings.⁹³ She creates, maintains and withdraws the

87. Īś. S. 20: 112.

88. *ibid* 3: 178, 179.

89. *ibid.*, 20: 112.

90. L.T. 12: 39, 40; Ahir. S. 3: 2.

91. cf. Bh. G. 2: 16. For a detailed treatment of this, vide Introduction to *Lakṣmītantra*, pp. 29 to 32.

92. L.T. 2: 11, 12, 22 and 23; Ahir. S. 3: 11.

93. *ibid.*, 22: 10 to 28; cf. *ibid.*, 6: 3 to 25.

world and vanishes from the sight of people who could not understand Her real nature and bestows favours on the suffering humanity.⁹⁴

Bhakti and *Prapatti* are the means to attain salvation according to these *Āgamas*. *Bhakti* is the direct path to perfection as it leads to the very heart of religious consciousness. The knowledge of Brahman when it takes the form of worship becomes the means for *mokṣa*. *Yoga* with its limbs is declared to be the means. A devotee is one who knows the real nature of the *vyūha*, who is devoted to the practice of the duties enjoined in these texts for performance at definite times during the day and constantly meditates on the *mantra* of twelve syllables (which glorifies Vāsudeva). A devotee who worships Viṣṇu after understanding His nature, will have material and spiritual goals in his hand.⁹⁵ Hence *cakras*, *maṇḍalas* and *mudrās* are recommended.⁹⁶ The various *mantras* have to be practised and the results obtained.⁹⁷ This method could be described as *yoga* materials for worship.⁹⁸ Vāsudeva is the object of this meditation. The devotion of the Lord assumes two forms viz., absence of allegiance to no other Lord and having no aim except service to the Lord. This is *Sāttvata dharma*. There is nothing which the Lord cannot give to His devotee. Hence he shall not make Him any request. A devotee of Viṣṇu shall not beg Him of food, wealth, children, age and others even when he is in danger, for the Lord gives all of them even though He is not requested.⁹⁹ If the devotee forgets Him because of his happy condition, then he gets into dangers.¹⁰⁰ Devotion to the Lord is the cause of all prosperity and its absence leads to dangers.¹⁰¹ Through meditation on

94. *ibid.*, 12: 13, 14.

95. *Pau.* S. 33: 77; cf. *Sāṅd.* S. ch. 7.

96. *ibid.*, 33: 80 to 83.

97. *ibid.*, 33: 91 to 127; *L.T.* ch. 18; ch. 34.

98. *ibid.*, ch. 34.

99. *Par.* S. 30: 7, 8.

100. *ibid.*, 30: 23, 24.

101. *ibid.*, 30: 27.

Lakṣmi, people would obtain salvation.¹⁰² A devotee shall ask the Lord this much: "Please give me devotedness at your will. What have I not acquired in the world as I have surrendered myself into You?"¹⁰³ The results obtained through devotion are the same whether the devotees who are poverty-stricken and therefore offer worship even without flowers and fruits or they being rich worship Him through offerings in the fire etc.¹⁰⁴ Details regarding the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* are mentioned.¹⁰⁵ Offering oneself to the Lord is called *hṛdyāga* (sacrifice of the heart). This is called mental worship in some of the *Pāñcarātra Samhitās*.¹⁰⁶ Various postures of the *yoga* have been described.¹⁰⁷ Methods of meditating on God are also given.¹⁰⁸ The five *aṅgas prāṇāyāma* and others are said to be essential for purifying the arteries (*nāḍī*) and bringing the vital airs under control.¹⁰⁹ The arteries are also described.¹¹⁰ *Mantras* acquired from a good preceptor are capable of giving enjoyment and salvation.¹¹¹ One whose mind is cleansed through *karma* can undertake this mode of worship. For those who are incapable of adopting this means and are unable to tolerate any delay in getting salvation, *prapatti* or self-surrender takes the place of worship.

The doctrine of *prapatti*, or *nyāsa*, or *śaraṇāgati* as the means of winning the Lord's grace has been described in *Ahirbudhnya-samhitā*.¹¹² It is a sort of prayer or adoration which carries with it the conviction that the sense of egoism and the possession that we have in all things due to beginningless, instinctive passions and desires, is all false and the

102. Sātt. S. 12: 84.

103. Pau. S. 31: 151, 152.

104. *ibid.* 32: 122, 123.

105. Ahir. S. 31.

106. *ibid.*, 31: 3, 4; Īś. S. ch. 2.

107. *ibid.*, 31: 31 to 46.

108. Īś. S. ch. 24.

109. *ibid.*, 32.

110. *ibid.*, 32.

111. Īś. S. 3: 68.

112. Ahir. S. ch. 37; Sāṅḍ. S. ch. 13; LT. ch. 17.

adorer should feel that he has neither independence nor anything that he may call his own.¹¹³ "My body, my riches, my relations do not belong to me, they all belong to God"; such is the conviction that should generate the spirit with which the adoration should be offered. The adorer should feel that the process of adoration is the only way through which he can obtain his highest realization, by offering himself to God and by drawing God to himself at the same time. The purpose of adoration is, so to say, the supreme self-abnegation and self-offering to God, leaving nothing to oneself. The adorer must always be fully conscious of the greatness of God in all its aspects.¹¹⁴ Hence *prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati* can be defined as a prayer for God's help in association with the conviction of one's being merged in sin and guilt, together with a belief in one's absolute helplessness and a sense of being totally lost without the protecting grace of God.¹¹⁵ The person who takes to the path of this *prapatti* achieves the fruits of all *tapas*, sacrifices, pilgrimages and gifts, and attains salvation easily without resorting to any other method.¹¹⁶ He is superior several times to those of good conduct, good learning and given to meditation.¹¹⁷ *Prapatti* or *nyāsa* is thus an *upāya-jñāna* and not an *upāyu*; for it is a mental attitude and does not presuppose any action. It is like a boat on which the passenger merely sits, while it is the business of the boatman to do the rest.¹¹⁸ One who becomes an *Ekāntin* shall refer to himself as a servant of Viṣṇu and not by his family name or by a reference to his village. The person who surrenders himself to the Lord shall be considered to be flawless, even if he had been an atheist and of bad conduct.¹¹⁹ It is the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* that have, for the first time, laid the foundation for the doctrine of *prapatti*. Even here, the *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā* and *Lakṣmītantra* have

113. Sātt. S. 12: 84

114. Ahir. S. 37: 27, 28.

115. *ibid.*, 37: 30, 31; L.T. 17: 60 to 83.

116. *ibid.*, 37: 34, 35.

117. *ibid.*, 37: 25, 36.

118. *ibid.*, 57: 46 to 49.

119. Sātt. S. 16: 23.

played a dominant role in giving an elaborate account of *nyāsa* together with its subsidiaries (*aṅgas*).¹²⁰ These *Āgamas* exerted a profound influence on the *Ālvārs*, who, in their turn, created a deep impression on the *Ācāryas* like Nāthamuni, Ālavantār, Rāmānuja and others.

The next point for consideration is the position that the *Gītā* occupies in the development of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. Even a very cursory reading of the *Paramasaṃhitā* and the *Gītā* would show similarity of teaching between the two too close to be neglected and regarded as accidental. The nature of the teaching as well as the details point to the affiliation of the one with the other. The teaching of *Pāñcarātra* is ascribed to the Supreme Deity of the *Bhāgavatas*, Vāsudeva, later on identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa leading to very important conclusions in regard to the nature of *Pāñcarātra* itself. The reference to the name *Vāsudeva* in the metrical *sūtras* of Pāṇini¹²¹ and the Patañjali's interpretation likewise, make it clear that these had some conception of a divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva worship apart from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. Therefore the acceptance of Para-Vāsudeva as the originator of the *Pāñcarātra* teaching seems to be fairly correct position. This is borne out by a statement made by Kṛṣṇa himself in the *Bhagavadgītā* where he makes the reference that He taught this "yoga of *Pāñcarātra*" to Vivaśvān, the Sun, and then the Sun taught it to Manu and Manu to Ikṣvāku; and then the statement follows that this in course of time had been forgotten.¹²² Para-Vāsudeva is distinct from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva often spoken of as Vāsudeva as he was an *avatāra* of the original Para-Vāsudeva. All the literature of the *Pāñcarātra*, direct and indirect, speak of the supreme in the one form or the other, particularly the more general class of writings than the set of *Pāñcarātra* texts. This position of the *Gītā* therefore seems confirmatory of what is said in the *Nārāyaṇya* section of the *Mahābhārata* in

120. Ahir. S. 37: 2, 27, 28; 52: 14; L.T. 17: 74; 66: 81.

121. Pāṇini 4.3: 95 to 98.

122. Bh. G. 4: 1, 2.

regard to *Pāñcarātra* itself, its origin and the general tenor of its teaching.

The word '*sāttvata*' signifies a class of Vaiṣṇavites. The devotees of Viṣṇu are called *Bhāgavatas*, or *Ekāntins* or *Sāttvatas* who are associated with the *Pāñcarātra* system. The word '*sat*' means reality and goodness.¹²³ Kṛṣṇa belonged to the *Sāttvata* clan and so the teaching of the *Gītā* may be taken to represent a gist of traditional religion which Kṛṣṇa inherited as the son of Vāsudeva in the family of the *Sāttvatas*. Viṣṇu was worshipped as the Supreme Deity in this family.¹²⁴

The *Gītā* is a manual of teaching *bhakti* as the most efficacious method of attaining to salvation, and as such, and as inculcating Viṣṇu *bhakti* specifically, it could be regarded as a manual of the *Pāñcarātra* school. The similarity between the *Pāñcarātra* teaching, and the teaching of the *Gītā* from the doctrinal point of view, is so close that one cannot resist the conclusion that it was intended to be a manual of *Pāñcarātra*. Even though it has been regarded that *Pāñcarātra* is in conflict with Vedic ritualistic teaching,¹²⁵ it does make provision for the religious needs of the four *varṇas*, at any rate specifically and distinctly.¹²⁶ It also makes provision for the four-fold aims in life. It is therefore a code of ethics, a *dharma sāstra*. The principles of *jñāna-yoga* (the path of knowledge) and *karma-yoga* (the path of works) as embodied in the *Gītā* are in tune with those mentioned in *Paramasaṃhitā*.¹²⁷ In dealing with the fate of those who have faith in God but cannot control their senses, the *Gītā* says, they, in course of time, come down to this world to a holy place and are born in the family of people who are pure and prosperous and this idea is comparable with the idea mentioned in *Pauṣkara-saṃhitā*.¹²⁸ The eight-fold nature

123. *ibid.*, 17: 26.

124. *Gītārahasya*, p. 518.

125. cf. Bh. G. 2: 42, 44, 45, 49, 52, 53.

126. Sātt. S. 2: 11; M.Bh. *Bhīṣma*. 66: 39, 40.

127. Bh.G. 3: 3; Par. S. 10: 3, 4.

128. *ibid.*, 6: 41; Pau. S. 41: 15.

of the Lord as mentioned in the *Gītā* is exactly the same as in *Lakṣmī-tantra*¹²⁹ The message of the *Gītā* is open to all without distinction of race, sex or caste and it declares that people who are lowly born, women, *Vatsyas* as well as *Sūdras* attain to the highest goal when they take refuge in the Lord and the same idea is found in the *Paramasamhitā*.¹³⁰ The principles of knowledge and devotion and the fate of those who give up their bodies thinking of the Lord alone as found in the *Gītā* are identical with those embodied in the *Paramasamhitā*.¹³¹ The account regarding the Cosmic Tree as found in the *Gītā* and in the *Paramasamhitā* is one and the same.¹³²

There are specific details with regard to the erection of temple¹³³ and the methods of installation of idols¹³⁴ in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. Such specific details as to the particular spots or regions in the temple where the idols of Narasimha, Vāmana and others are to be installed¹³⁵ have been mentioned in these *Samhitās*. Twenty-six forms of Viṣṇu are enumerated and described.¹³⁶ Images of various deities are to be installed in the *vimāna* and to be worshipped.¹³⁷ Details regarding the features of deities at the entrance of the temple have found a place.¹³⁸ Mention has been made of the features of idols.¹³⁹ Such details as the characteristic marks of the idols are found in the *Āgamas*.¹⁴⁰ It has been specially

129. *ibid* 7: 4; L.T. 15: 26.

130. *ibid.*, 9: 32; Par; S. 7: 24.

131. *ibid.*, 10: 9; 7: 5; Par; S: 30: 81.

132. *ibid.*, 15: 1; Par. S. 26: 3.

133. *Īs.* S. ch. 16; Pau. S. ch. 42; *Śrīpras.* S. 5, 6 to 8.

134. Pau. S. 43: 1 to 19; Jay. S. ch. 20.

135. *ibid.*, 43; 56 to 59.

136. *ibid.* S. 36: 126 to 254.

137. *Īs.* S. ch. 3.

138. *ibid.* ch. 9.

139. *ibid.*, ch. 17.

140. *ibid.*, ch. 23

mentioned that the *Vaikhānasas* should not touch the idol.¹⁴¹ If they offer worship, then installation is again to be done.¹⁴²

Every temple of Viṣṇu has the flagstaff (*dhvajastambha*). Devout worshippers bend before it and then enter the shrines. This act of bending is to be explained by treating the flagstaff as representing the *Viśākhayūpa* which is required to be meditated upon. This staff must have the figures of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva on each one of the four sides as its base.

There are several idols in one and the same shrine. There is the idol which is fixed in the *sanctum sanctorum* (*garbhagrha*) and it shall not be removed from the place at any cost. It is called *Mūlabera* or *Dhṛuvabera*. There is the idol which is taken out in procession both inside and outside the temple and it is known as *Utsavabera*. During festivals there is the sacred bath (*avabhṛtha*) at the conclusion when a separate idol called *Tīrthabera* is taken to a tank or river and is given a plunge there.¹⁴³ Some idols may be in a sleeping posture as in Śrī Raṅgam, or reclining posture as in Kumbakonam, or seated at Kāñci or standing posture as in Tirumalai and Kāñci. The very basis for having more than one idol of the same deity is to enable the devotees participate in the festivals in many ways.

These *Āgamas* contain various details regarding the worship of the idols.¹⁴⁴ Almost all the *Āgamas* state the importance of the idol which is a concrete form of God required for worship. Neither worship, nor meditation nor singing in praise is possible in a formless object.¹⁴⁵ Three kinds of worship are stated to be possible viz., worship

141. *ibid.*, 19: 135.

142. *ibid.*, 19: 458.

143. The purposes of having these is well explained (vide: Bhr. S: *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 8).

144. Pau. S. ch. 37.

145. Par. S. 3: 5, 7.

through action, worship through word and worship through the intellect.¹⁴⁶ Making use of sandal paste, flowers and other accessories for worship to the accompaniment of *mantra* is *karmayajña*.¹⁴⁷ Muttering the name of God, reciting hymns remaining pure and attentive is *vākyaajña*.¹⁴⁸ Leaving aside every thing external and worshipping the Lord mentally is *manoyajña*.¹⁴⁹ Methods of meditation on the Lord has been stated.¹⁵⁰ All can worship irrespective of caste and sex,¹⁵¹ old age, or scholarship. Among the three modes of worship, the mental one is said to be the best.¹⁵² Thinking of God with love and affection is said to be true devotion¹⁵³ and worship done without devotion is not at all as it should be.¹⁵⁴ Eight-fold devotion has been stated viz., (i) worshipping God for ever, (ii) abiding by standards of conduct and ethics, (iii) faith in the Vaiṣṇavites, (iv) great regard for understanding worship, (v) effort to do worship by himself, (vi) deep interest in listening to talk about or stories of God, (vii) unwillingness to do harm to others, and (viii) non-dependence on doing worship of Him.¹⁵⁵ Specific details regarding the worship of central deity (*mūlabimba*),¹⁵⁶ worship of Lakṣmī and Sudarśana,¹⁵⁷ and worship of Garuḍa and other retinue¹⁵⁸ are found. Methods of initiation have been stated in these texts.¹⁵⁹

Mention has also been made about the annual festivals of the temples and how they are to be conducted; the purpo-

-
146. *ibid.*, 3: 28.
 147. *ibid.*, 3: 24, 25.
 148. *ibid.*, 3: 25, 26.
 149. *ibid.*, 3: 26, 27.
 150. *Īś. S.* ch. 34.
 151. *Pau. S.* 3: 29, 30.
 152. *ibid.*, 4: 70.
 153. *ibid.*, 4: 71.
 154. *ibid.*, 4: 72.
 155. *ibid.*, 4: 72 to 75.
 156. *Īś. S.* 6: 3.
 157. *ibid.*, ch. 7.
 158. *ibid.*, ch. 7.
 159. *Īś. S.* ch. 21; *Par. S.* ch. 7.

ses of conducting those festivals have also been stated.¹⁶⁰ On such occasions the instruments of music are to be sounded; Sanskrit, Prākṛt or Tamil songs are to be sung.¹⁶¹ The Four Thousand Tamil Verses are also to be sung by the Vaiṣṇavites.¹⁶²

The *Vaikhānasa* is another type of *Āgama* followed by the Vaiṣṇavites. Though the followers of this *Āgama* are now a small minority they constitute an important sect among the Vaiṣṇavites of South India. There are different legends concerning the sage Vikhānas, the founder of this *Āgama* who is the follower of *Kṛṣṇayajur Veda*. One is that Brahmā descended himself as Vikhānas down to earth to organize the worship of the Lord in His *arcā* form. He wrote also the *Vaikhānasasūtra* to guide the people for leading a virtuous life consistent with the doctrines which he preached. The present text *Vaikhānasasūtra*, into which the precepts of Vikhānas expanded in the course of centuries is the latest of the *sūtras* of the *Taittirīya śākhā*. According to W. Caland, the *Smārta sūtra* section, comprising both *gṛhya* and *dharma* precepts, preceded the compilation of other section, the *Srauta-sūtra*, which includes an elaborate *mantra saṃhitā*, and is also called *Aukheya sūtra* because the *Vaikhānasas* (*Aukheyas*) constituted a *śākhā* (branch) with the full complement of *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Sūtras*. Vikhānas taught the doctrines of this kind of worship to Atri, Marīci, Kāśyapa and Bhṛgu each of whom brought out his version in detail of the doctrines viz., *Atri saṃhitā*, *Marīci-pāṭala*, *Jñānakāṇḍa*, *Bhṛgu-saṃhitā* and other works. More Vedic hymns are used in the *Vaikhānasa* school. This system of worship was also known as *Srauta śāstra*.

The *Vaikhānasa-saṃhitās*, like those of *Pāñcarātra*, have four divisions viz., *caryā*, *kriya*, *jñāna* and *yōga*. Worship of the deities is of three kinds; mental, oblation and idol. But the *Vimānārcana kalpa* mentions Viṣṇu worship as two-

160. *ibid.*, ch. 10.

161. *ibid.*, 11: 36, 37.

162. *ibid.*, 13: 246.

fold namely *amūrta* (formless) that is *hōma* and *mūrta* (in form) that is *arcā*.¹⁶³ But in the *Vimānārcanakalpa* four methods have been mentioned for taking to God's worship namely *japa*, *hōma*, *arcana* and *dhyāna*. *Arcana* is worship in the temple of the Lord in the form of image. Meditation is the yogic practice. Among these, *arcana* is said to be the best method.¹⁶⁴ In this type of *Āgama* God is in His five-fold states as in *Pāñcarātra* and the Supreme Principle is Nārāyaṇa with Śrī (*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in one) Śrī being ever associated with Viṣṇu in all his five-fold states. But there is a different *Vyūha*, namely, Viṣṇu, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha.¹⁶⁵ The primary form is Viṣṇu. He is said to be the sage the indweller of the self.¹⁶⁶ Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta and Aniruddha are the four-fold forms of Viṣṇu. The four *Vyūhas* are representatives to afford prosperity to the four castes.¹⁶⁷ Among these, Puruṣa, is full of *dharma*. Satya is knowledge and of the nature of lustre. Acyuta is of unlimited wealth and is the Lord of Śrī. Aniruddha is detachment and destroyer of everybody.¹⁶⁸ The ten incarnations of Viṣṇu have been mentioned.¹⁶⁹ There is a reference to the five kinds of Narasiṃha, viz., (i) born from mountain, (ii) born from the pillar, (iii) Sudarśana Narasiṃha, (iv) Lakṣmī Narasiṃha and (v) Pātāla Narasiṃha.¹⁷⁰

There are more temples in South-India today under the *Vaiṅhānasa Āgama* than under the *Pāñcarātra*. Different kinds of idols have been mentioned.¹⁷¹ The idol for festival may be standing with the goddesses seated on both sides.¹⁷² In some places like Tirukkuruṅkuṭi there are two idols for

163. Mari: S. Vim. Kal. 1.1: 1.

164. *ibid.*, ch. 95.

165. M.Bh. *Anugītā*. 109.

166. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. 24: 99.

167. Atri. S. ch. 37.

168. Mari. S. Vim. Kal. 95.

169. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 11.

170. *ibid.*, 11: 27 to 59; Vim. Kal. 57.

171. Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. 5.

172. *ibid.*, 6: 24.

festival.¹⁷³ Offering of cooked food is in vogue. This is in practice in the temple Nācciyārkōyil.¹⁷⁴ Five idols are to be installed along with that of Viṣṇu namely Vāsudeva, Saṅkar-
ṣaṇa, Praduymna, Sāmba and Aniruddha which are known as Pañcavīras.¹⁷⁵ There are measurements mentioned for the formation of villages, construction of temples and installation of idols.¹⁷⁶ Principles regarding the construction of *prakāra*, *maṅṭapa*, *gōpura* etc., have been laid.¹⁷⁷ Though Viṣṇu alone is the Supreme Deity according to this *Āgama*, worship of Vināyaka, Durgā and Sarasvatī are included when the Lord and Lakṣmī are to be worshipped.¹⁷⁸ Worship of Viṣṇu only is the means of salvation.¹⁷⁹ Initiation is necessary for the practice of temple-worship. Traits of a spiritual preceptor have been mentioned.¹⁸⁰ The *Ācārya* shall be one who follows the *Vaikhānasa-sūtra*.¹⁸¹ Devotion to the Lord is eight-fold namely, (i) affection to His devotees, (ii) applauding His worship, (iii) devotedness to hear His exploits and stories, (iv) getting overpowered in tone, eyes and limbs (while worshipping Him), (v) recalling Him to mind, (vi) absence of show in regard to Him, (vii) to be ever subordinated to Him and (viii) inability to live without Him.¹⁸² The Vaikhānasas do not worship the *Ālvārs*, *Ācāryas* and *Maṭhādhipatis* (pointiffs or monastic heads), though owing to the strong influence of Rāmānuja school, images of *Ālvārs* and *Ācāryas* were set up in some temples under Vaikhānasa *Āgamic* worship; nor do they recognise *Āṅṭāl* as the Lord's consort on a par with Lakṣmī; nor do they brand their bodies with

173. *ibid.*, ch. 17.

174. This is a place which acquires the name of the temple. It is a place near Kumbakonam. The place is referred to as Tirunarayūr in the hymns of *Ālvārs*.

175. *Bhr. S. Kriyādhikāra*. 29, 30, 131, 132.

176. *Mari. S. Vim. Kal.* 3.

177. *Bhr. S. Kriyādhikāra* 5; *Mari, S. Vim. Kal.* 11.

178. *ibid.*, *ibid.*, 15.

179. *Mari. S. Vim. Kal.* 94.

180. *Bhr. S. 6. Kriyādhikāra* 1: 22 to 25.

181. *Mari. S. Vim. Kal.* 1. 2: 1.

182. *Bhr. S. Kriyādhikāra* 24: 100 to 102.

the Vaiṣṇavite emblems of cakra, saṅkha etc., nor, again do they recite the the *Tamil Prabandham* during worship. The mention of Ālvārs in some texts must have been due to interpolation after the period of the Ālvārs¹⁸³. Details regarding the principle of expiations for lapses have been mentioned.¹⁸⁴

Information regarding the ethical life and code of conduct of the Vaiṣṇavites is found in the *Āgamas*.¹⁸⁵ According to these *Samhitas*, people who live in sacred places (*divya deśas*) are rid of their sins and get the favour of the Lord.¹⁸⁶ Though the deeds themselves would not get destroyed by becoming a mortal in a sacred place, the results of these deeds get lost.¹⁸⁷ Mention has also been made of the places of pilgrimage in these *Āgamas*.¹⁸⁸ It has been clearly stated in these *Āgamas* that the Lord is present for those who perform *niṣkāma karma* in all figures and idols.¹⁸⁹ The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, as it has been already stated, prescribe a way of life and rules for worshipping the God both in the houses and temples. These who have descended in the line of priests maintain the traditional worship, and have the right to perform the worship in temples. Others shall get initiated¹⁹⁰ and then do it. The *Āgamas* prescribe a five-fold division of the day and a routine of life to the Vaiṣṇavites.¹⁹¹ Every day, after offering food to the Lord, the Vaiṣṇavites shall be made to sing the Four Thousand Tamil Verses.¹⁹² Methods of worship are also found.¹⁹³

183. *ibid.*, *ibid.*, 34: 2 to 4.

184. *ibid.*, *ibid.*; 26 and 27.

185. Jay. S. ch. 22.

186. Pau. S. 1: 31, 32; 36: 55, 56.

187. *ibid.*, 36: 65, 66; Sātt. S. 7: 120.

188. Par. S. ch. 25.

189. *ibid.*, 36: 80.

190. Īś. S. ch. 21; L.T. ch. 20.

191. L.T. ch. 28; Par. S. ch. 27.

192. Īś. S. 13: 246.

193. L.T. 36: 55.

Specific details regarding the marks of a preceptor (*Ācāryalakṣṇa*) are found in these *Āgamas*.¹⁹⁴ Again the characteristic features of *Ācārya* and *Śiṣya* have been mentioned. The procedure with regard to initiation has also been stated.¹⁹⁵ Principles regarding the performance of annual ceremonies,¹⁹⁶ detailed procedures in matters of expiations for lapses of all kinds have been stated.¹⁹⁷ One should follow the established codes of good conduct¹⁹⁸ and shall not even think of violating them.¹⁹⁹ Emphasis is laid on the need to worship the devotees of the Lord.²⁰⁰

The word 'yāga' is used to refer to the act of worship, 'yāgaśāla' for the place where the holy fire is worshipped on the occasion of festivals, 'yabr̥tha' for the sacred bath taken at the conclusion of the festival, 'dikṣā' for the strictly religious life which the temple priest takes up during the occasions of the festivals and 'dikṣita' to refer to the temple priest. All these show that the rituals in the temples represent the Vedic ritualism.

The *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* have been responsible for the marking of the arms at the top of men and women with the heated conch and discus.²⁰¹ Besides, the vertical mark on the forehead with white mud and red pigment is also enforced by them and it is held that without this mark which is called *ūrdhvapuṇḍra*, no rite, however faithfully rendered, would bear the result.²⁰² Tirumalai, Tirunārāyaṇapuram, Śri-muṣṇam and others are said to be the places from which this

194. Jay. S. 17: 46 to 62.

195. L.T. ch. 41.

196. *ibid.*, ch. 23.

197. *ibid.*, ch. 25; also Īś. S. ch. 19.

198. Sātt. S. 16: 23.

199. L.T. 17: 94 to 96.

200. Bhār. S. ch. 5.

201. Par. S. 15: 959 to 973, 979 to 983; 17: 585 to 590 Vedānta Deśika cites Vedic authority for this practice (*Saccaritrarakṣā*, p. 43). Pau. S. 8: 40, 41; Bhār S. 3: 67.

202. *Pārameś. S.* 3: 1 to 22; Bhār. S. 3: 65; Bhṛ. S. *Kriyādhikāra*. ch. 37.

mud is to be acquired.²⁰³ The *Āgamas* emphasize the need to offer whatever eatable or objects like sandal and flowers to the deity and partake of it. The remaining portion is called *śeṣa* and is said to confer on him who takes it much good.

The peculiar feature of the *Vaikhānasa* school is that only those who are born in the families which adopt the way of life laid down in the *Vaikhānasa-sūtra* are eligible for worshipping the deity in the temples where the *Vaikhānasa* mode is adopted. Those who belong to the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya castes, are alone qualified for this worship.²⁰⁴ The *Pāñcarātra* has been more liberal in extending the scope for worship to others as well. This method of adoration could be adopted by all for worship in the house (*gṛhārcā*)²⁰⁵. Even in temples, those who belong to the family of traditional line of priests, have the primary qualification to offer worship while others could do so only by getting initiated.²⁰⁶ The catholicity of the *Pāñcarātra* mode has resulted in the adoption of this mode of worship even for house worship among all people except those who follow the *Vaikhānasa* principles.

The statements²⁰⁷ which the texts of the *Pāñcarātra* and *Vaikhānasa* contain condemning each other's practices have to be explained as implying the eagerness of the exponents of each school to assert the individual sanctity and authority at the expense of those of the other school. Really speaking, there is more agreement than divergence between the teachings of these schools. Both maintain the supremacy of Viṣṇu. There is also the concept for *vyūhas* in both. From the very ancient times, the methods of worship in important shrines like Śrī Raṅgam, Kāñci, Tirumalai and Tirunārāyaṇapuram have been in vogue according to both. While

203. Nārad. S. ch. 76.

204. Śrī Praṣ. S. 50: 160 to 165.

205. MBh, Bhīṣma 65: 39, 40; Sātt. S. 2: 11.

206. Pād. S. Caryā 1: 8.

207. Ānan. S. 13: 1 to 4. For details vide: Introduction to *Lakṣmī-tantra* pp, 7, 8.

the *Vaikhānasa* mode is followed in Tirumalai, the *Pāñcarātra* method is adopted in other places. More than all this, the method of worship is according to the *Vaikhānasa* principles in the shrines of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika at Śrīperumpūtūr and Kāñci. Both the schools adopt the concepts of *vibhava*,²⁰⁸ *arcā* and *antaryāmin*.²⁰⁹

The *Āgamas*, which are primarily concerned with the worship of the *arcā* form of God, are found thus to utilize for this purpose, the principles and doctrines of other branches of study. The philosophical doctrines and inquiries about creation and destruction, nature of God, self and world and others are dealt with in some of these *Āgamic* texts. Linguistic occultism in the form of *bijākṣaras*, and *mantras* and mystical diagrams²¹⁰ play a dominant role. Icons, installation of them and temple building play an important role and here as well as in the previous one, the principles of architecture have been put to the superior purpose of preparing the means of worshipping the deity. Yogic practices and domestic observances have been of immense help in shaping the conduct of the priest and devotee for perfecting his life. The public festivals (*utsava*) are the external display of the zeal of the architects of temple worship to attract even those who are indifferent to the path of *dharma* and make them share the benefits of the religious communion. The temple processions with all the display of attractions such as music have been drawing people from far and near so that they mingle together without the feeling of any kind of disparity. The dragging of the huge temple cars, floating festivals and others could be mentioned specifically here for such an attraction. In a way, the Indian tradition has much to its benefit by the harmonizing features of the *Āgama* literature which has brought together the brighter achievements

208. Mari. S. Vim. Kal. ch. 21; Atri. S. *Samūrtārcanādhikāra* ch. 58 to 61; L.T. 11: 19 to 25.

209. Bhr. S. *Kriyādhikāra*: 24:99; Ahi. S. 59: 36; L.T. 2: 1, 2; Satt. S. 6:22.

210. Pau. S. 5: 10.

of the various branches to study to fulfil the one task of showing the greatness of the Lord with whom the ordinary people also could have communion.

Jitāntā Śotra is said to form part of the *khilla*²¹¹ which are additional hymns to the *R̥g-Veda*. Since it is in praise of Viṣṇu, it is called *Śotra*. Though it is not accented, it is referred as *mantra* in the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and Vaiṣṇavite *Āgamas*. Ēkata, Dvita and Trita, the three sons of Brahmā are said to have taught this to sage Nārada and asked him to recite this while propitiating Viṣṇu.²¹² The *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā*²¹³ contains an exposition of the first *śloka* of this *Śotra*. The *Parama-samhitā*²¹⁴ and other *Pāñcarātra* texts²¹⁵ contain references to this *Śotra*. This *Śotra* has 128 *ślokas* grouped within six divisions, each one being called *Jitāntā*. The first division refers to Viṣṇu²¹⁶ as creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. The Lord is requested to pardon the sins committed by His devotees.²¹⁷ The devotee finds it difficult to worship Him²¹⁸ and requests to be His servant for ever.²¹⁹ This is to be recited at the conclusion of *Abhigamana*. The second *Jitāntā* refers to God's charming personality,²²⁰ qualities and *vyūhas*. The self shall beg the Lord for pardoning him for the lapses²²¹ while worshipping Him and so is intended to be recited after *Ijyā*. With all the limitations²²² imposed by the mortal body, the self expresses its incapacity for properly worshipping²²³ Him in the third

211. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 51.

212. Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai's *Vyākhyāna* on *Jitāntā* 1: 1, p. 3.

213. *Ahir. S.* ch. 53.

214. *Par. S.* 23: 46 to 63; 21: 40; ch. 13; L.T. 17: 20.

215. L.T. 17: 20.

216. *Jitāntā* 1: 3.

217. *ibid.*, 1: 16.

218. *ibid.*, 1: 19.

219. *ibid.*, 1: 15.

220. *ibid.*, 2: 254.

221. *ibid.*, 2: 38.

222. *ibid.*, 3: 4, 5.

223. *ibid.*, 3: 7 to 10.

Jitāntā. Uninterrupted service²²⁴ is requested for here. During *Upādāna*, this shall be recited. The fourth *Jitāntā* contains a graphic description²²⁵ of the body of the Lord limb by limb and is to be recited during *Svādhyāya*. The Lord is requested to lead the self in whichever way He finds suited for the self's approach to Him²²⁶ and this is to be recited as the fifth *Jitāntā* during *Yōga*. The last *Jitāntā* describes Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa²²⁷ in *Dvārakā* which is presented in the minutest detail with reference to the temple,²²⁸ festivals²²⁹ and devotees worshipping Him. All these six divisions begin with the words '*jitam te*' which mean 'victory to you'. The purport of this *Śotra* is stated to lie to prove that Viṣṇu is the goal and the means.²³⁰ Viṣṇu is the Lord for both the gods and demons.²³¹ The divine form is taken up by Him only to enable His devotees approach him for refuge.²³² The Lord shall help the self for retaining the knowledge of Him even in later births.²³³ He is everything for the self and there is nothing which the self need aspire to obtain without Him.²³⁴ The enlightened self yearns to get at the Lord at Whose feet it could render service.²³⁵ The Lord is the only refuge for the selves which suffer in bondage.²³⁶ The prayer which is offered to the deity is Upaniṣadic in expression and tone.²³⁷ The *Śotra* ends with a prayer that good men shall offer their benedictions to the Lord.²³⁸

224. *ibid.*, 3: 16.

225. *ibid.*, 4: 3.

226. *ibid.*, 5: 19, 20.

227. *ibid.*, 6: 1.

228. *ibid.* 6: 2 to 9.

229. *ibid.*, 6: 10 to 14.

230. Parāsarabhaṭṭa: (*Śrī Raṅgarājastava*) - *Śotramālā* p. 109.

231. *Jitāntā* 1: 2.

232. *ibid.*, 1: 5.

233. *ibid.*, 1: 11.

234. *ibid.*, 2: 7.

235. *ibid.*, 2: 18 to 37.

236. *ibid.*, 4: 13.

237. *ibid.*, 5: 1 to 16.

238. *ibid.*, 6: 15.

In the development of Rāmānuja School of Vaiṣṇavism, this *Śotra* played a dominant role in more than one respect. It emphasized the importance of the path of self-surrender.²³⁹ The devotee shall wish to continue to be devoted to Viṣṇu in all the births which he would be taking in the future.²⁴⁰ The desire of the devotee to render service to the Lord in whatever situation he is placed in life is referred to here.²⁴¹ The Supreme abode (*Paramapada*) is characterized by the *śāḍḡunya* and is free from the three qualities of matter.²⁴² It is this *Śotra* that may perhaps have influenced Periyālvār in uttering the words of benediction (*Pallāṅṭu*) for the Lord which gave rise to the act of *maṅgalāśāsanam*. The *Śotraratna*²⁴³ of Yāmuna and the *Gadyatrava*²⁴⁴ were written under the influence of this *Śotra* and that of the compositions of the Ālvārs. The soul-stirring devotional element in the *Nālāyiram* is not a little due to this *Śotra*. It may be stated in this connection that this piece does not form part of any known work of antiquity. As it is cited in the *Pāñcarātra* texts and as it refers to the *vyūhas*, it could be treated on a par with the Āgamic texts. The *Mahābhārata* too contains a passage of similar import.²⁴⁵ Its antiquity cannot therefore be questioned but for want of evidences, it deserves treatment along with the *Āgamas*.

239. cf. *Jitāntā* 1: 2, 8.

240. cf. *ibid.*, 1: 13.

241. *ibid.*, 2: 8.

242. *ibid.*, 2: 18.

243. *Śotraratna*, 5, 60; cf. *Jitāntā* 2.7; *ibid.*, 62; cf. *Jitāntā* 2. 11.

244. *Śaraṅāgatigadya*. cf. *Jitāntā* 1: 16; *Śrī Vaikuṅṭhagadya*; cf. *Jitāntā*, 5.

245. MBh. Sānti. 339: 134.