

PEYĀḶVĀR¹

1. The greatness of PēyāḶvār lay in his knowledge-vision (intuition) of the Divine as with His Consort, Lakṣmi or Śrī. This was the vision that was uniquely granted to PēyāḶvār, a vision that was not granted to the earlier two ĀḶvārs, even in the same room. The vague or conceptual experience of the Divine as Cause was made richer by the vision of the Supreme as worthy of personal devotion. But it was made richest by the supreme devotion not merely to the Absolute as Cause, or Absolute as Divine, but Absolute as Divine dual personalities of both the Father and the Mother.²

In one sense we can say that PeyāḶvār saw God as with His Sakti as the tantras have stated. *Ṛg Khila Śrī Sūkta* has invoked the Supreme Divine-*Jātavēda* to bring *Śrī-Lakṣmi anapagāmini*, the compassionate (*Ādrām*) who resides in the lotus-pond (*Puṣkariṇim*)³ who is prosperity it self (*Puṣṭim*) who is of beautiful hue, who is decked with golden garlands, who is the impellor (*Sūryā*), and who is Wealth itself (14). The ĀḶvār's first of opening verse almost breathes the same idea. The Mother has been brought to the vision of the seer by the Lord already seen by the Bhutattār in his company.

" The Mother have I seen in the Lord oceanhued!
That Form of Golden Splendour have I seen!
That radiant Sun-Like Form Have I beheld!
The beautiful discus that glows fiery in battle
And the lovely Conch in beauteous hands have I beheld!"

The third ĀḶvār thus focusses the attention of the seekers after the very ultimate Truth on the Mother as well as the Fatherhood of the Divine. The *Parama-Bhakti* it is that is stated to be the way and the light towards this supreme vision. If the supreme Vision of the Lord were merely the perception of that high estate of the Divine Transcendence, and immanence which makes the Lord the indwelling and the

¹ The ĀḶvār was born in Mylapore (Madras) of a Red lotus (raktotpala).

² We can see here suggested as it were very luminously the confluence of the Tāntrik experience which is most clearly the Philosophy and Sādhana of the Mother. Tantras have laid stress on the two-foldness of the Divine Personality, in embrace: One in Action, two in personality, eternal both, both equal, being Pati and Patni. Their relationship is not of Lord and Slave as in the case of the individual souls and God, but one of Consort, equal in every way, each capable of creative sustentive and destructive world-activities, but sharing in the work. The Mother is the most supreme aspect, for it is here that Philosophy hearkening to the darkness of its light does not see in the Heart of the Absolute Divine, the Love, the Grace, the power greater than all Māyās or powers, infinite indeed though these māyās may be. It is this ĀḶvār who has clearly seen the Heart of the Divine. Hence the supreme importance of this ĀḶvār to later ĀḶvār-mysticism.

³ ŚRĪ SŪKTA 14: cf. Hriśca te Lakṣmīśca patnyau, VIṢṆU PURĀṆA, I. viii, 19: PURUṢA SŪKTA 9: BRAHMA PURĀṆA: Taccaktirdurjayā Bhīma Viṣṇu- Saktiriti Smṛtā

overloading Being, there is with all that may be said not the achievement of the highest *Puruṣārtha*, that bliss that is the essence and secret of existence, the hope and beacon-light of our Way. If the Final Deity is but the perception of the Space-Time-Emergent Deity, we can well close our lives with the great passage of Bertrand Russell describing the enlightened materialistic outlook on our lips:

" That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the Solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand."⁴

It is because the highest knowledge despite the measure of freedom that it grants will always invoke the fundamental impending gloom, that it is necessarily overstepped or 'bypassed' by many religiously inclined souls. The *parabhakti* or devotion that is for the Highest Object of philosophy is indeed the first ray of light in the knowledge-darkness spoken of by the *Īśvāsyopaniṣad* (V.9). This is but the awakening of the true religious impulse meeting the soul on its own terms, but *Parabhakti* gradually leads up to the *Paramabhakti* the true and full devotion for the very form of the Divine, the personality of the Divine and not merely the Impersonal or Transcendental, for that is the meaning of the word impersonal. It is this that saves the souls from the impending consciousness of the Doom which it would fain avoid. Mother is the concept of the Redeeming and saving Power of the Super-personality known as the *Para*. To the souls in the *Samsāra* or creative fire of life heralding death, She is the mother of succour and immortality: to the Divine She is the Co-Being in All, adorning His Heart, or rather 'informing His Manifold Being with Love and Grace.'

4. The manner of his vision is revealed almost in the very last verses:

Thinking, keeping the lamp of knowledge, searching
for the Lord, have I possessed Him now.
The wonderful Lord of all, having entered
into me inseparably, has stood, sat and lain Himself down⁵ (in me).⁶

⁴ MYSTICISM AND LOGIC: p.47

⁵ It is to reveal the completeness of indwelling that one ĀḶvār makes this unique postures of God as having come, got seated and has made him his abode of Rest cf. MUDAL, Tiruvandādi: v.77.

(V. 94)

5. That vision is the fruit of thinking with the help of knowledge that is purposive, seeking the object of the adoration-impulse or religious impulse; this alone is the way to vision, not merely thinking that is not purposive. The purpose of all knowledge is not merely omniscience. Knowledge itself is a way to an end or goal. It is frequently forgotten that knowledge is a means to an end, the end being a life of perfect bliss and happiness, freedom from all bonds that hamper self-expression and realisation of individual worth and value, the realisation of the vastness and greatness of Reality of which the individual is a member, an integral portion.

" By seeing God I have destroyed my increasing sins" (v.2)

"God is the medicine to our hell-existence" (V.3) an idea that is later on developed fully by Kulaśēkhara ĀḶvār in his *Mukundamāla*. "God is medicine, wealth and immortality" (V.4). The names of God are recited in order to remind the lord of His great deeds.⁷ One feels almost that it is flattery, but it is not. It is just to remember the power and glory of the Lord and His unquestionable power to allay the distress of the devotee.

" If thou recitest the names of the Lord who has the white couch having *dakṣināvarta*, then good things such as splendour, vitality, wealth, beauty and birth in a faultless family and other will all happen. (v.10) "

The lord then is the treasure-house of perfections as well as the treasure-house of graces.

6. The love for God of Veṅkaṭa (*Vengada*) facilitates the renunciation of desire for lesser pleasures such as Woman's hair and hands, and leads to perfect concentration (v.14)

7. This *Tiruvandādi* also recounts the exploits of the Lord as Trivikrama as one who sought three-feet of ground of Mahābali,⁸ of Kṛṣṇa who destroyed Danta-vakra, Pūtana, Hiraṇyakaśipu, and the Gajendra-Mōkṣa. The Trivikrama Avatār however is most often recounted (v. 4,5,9,18,47)

8. The famous doctrine of *Śariratva* of the whole universe, which is but the Antaryāmin-doctrine expressed in another form, is excellently expounded in the 38

⁶ Jai Up. Brāh .I. 15-1: Dēvā Vai Svargaṃ Lokaṃ aipsantam na sayānā na sīnā na Tiṣṭhants na Dhāvanto

⁷ Íśa. 17 Krātō, Smara

⁸ BHĀGAVATA X: Pūtana X.6. Śakaṭhāsura X.7 Vātsāsura X.11, Bakāsura X.11, Aghāsura X.12, Kāliya X 15, Dhenuka x.15, Vriṣabha x.36, Kuvalayāpida x.43.

verse,

"All things are His body. Brahma and others and stars who have tapas as their body, are Himself. The blazing fire, the huge mountains, the two heavenly lights, are He. The Lord who is all these is Incomparable. (*tāne Uvaman*).

The Lord of Cowherds has His residence in the minds of those who have in their hearts concentrated their minds according to the secret occult ways: The Lord resides in the milk ocean, Veṅkaṭācala, the primeval serpent, the cool heaven, and the ocean of scriptures, which contains occult truths, and the minds of yogis who have according to occult practices have their minds rest in the heart. (32)

"To Him who is both inside and outside I have become the slave "(37)

The experience of the ĀḶvār also is unique in so far as he finds that everything about God is beautiful and tender even like the lotus.(v.9). The feet of the Lord are to be worshipped.

Questioning not whether it is good or bad,
Seek thou the beautiful feet of the Lord,
on whose chest is worn the fragrant honey-laden tulasi
All thy sins will immediately vanish. (88v.)

The importance about this ĀḶvār's experience thus is seen to lie in the clear manner by which he points out the truth behind the vision of the Divine as inseparably with His consort Śrī, and the redeemability of man through prayer and devotion. For the first time also the mention of the tenderness and beauty of the Lord is stressed. His nearness to Mankind is demonstrated in the vision of the Lord as the Healer of sorrow, and the abolisher of sin and death.

We find on the consideration of the visions and experiences of the first three ĀḶvārs, who are traditionally said to belong to one group, (though we may include the fourth ĀḶvār, Tirumaliśai or Bhakti-Sāra, in this group, as the disciple of Pey ĀḶvār and had honour of a visit from all the three early ĀḶvārs) that they have stated what may be called the fundamentals of the three ancient streams, namely, the Vedic Knowledge, the Āgamaic and Brāhmaṇaic praxis, and the Tāntrik consciousness of the dynamic Motherhood of God. These three when they met in the canopy of the little room, got the Vision that was the culmination of Knowledge, the Vision that was the culmination of the divinised knowledge through devotion, and the Vision that was the Revelation of the Most Auspicious (*Śubhāśraya* as the Viśiṣṭādvaita says) Form of the Divine Lord and Mother.⁹

⁹ cf. Doctrine of the Mother as expounded by Śrī Aurobindo in his MOTHER is so similar to the views expounded by the Tantras and by Vaiṣṇava thinkers like Yāmunācārya, Śrīvatsanka

It would be necessary to enlarge on the last aspect at more length. But these three have laid firmly the foundations of the later theories and shown the way and path towards an integral experience of God. The outlines are firmly drawn as has been shown in the foregoing pages; the details and the manifold subtle approaches alone remain to be filled. These the later seers fully depict and, the fifth ĀḶvār according to tradition, namely Śaṭhakōpa, amplified these, and experimented upon almost all the bhāvas known to aesthetic experience. That is why Śaṭhakōpa is claimed to be the ĀḶvār par excellence, and as the one who has shown and well-laid the path to be trodden by disciples of the Light and Mother.

Misra, Parāśara Bhatta and Vedānta Dēśika that we may well say that the confirmation of the vision of PeyāḶvār is to be found in modern times in Śrī Aurobindo's experience. Śrī Aurobindo points out that the Mother's vyūhas or manifestations are fourfold as far as we can know with our mentality and it must be presumed that the Mother is co-existent with the Divine as the inseparable co-equal in all His Descents too. Yāmunācārya beautifully wrote:

yānyanyānī yathāsukham viharato rūpāṇi sarvāṇi ta-
nyāhuḥ svair anurūpavibhavaiḥ gāḍhōpagūḍhāni tē!!

CATHUŚŚLOKA. 4b.