

THE *VYŪHA* AS THE “STATE OF THE LORD”  
(*BHAGAVADAVASTHĀ*):  
VEDĀNTIC INTERPRETATION OF PĀÑCARĀTRA  
DOCTRINES ACCORDING TO VEÑKAṬANĀTHA

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The Sanskrit tradition of the Rāmānuja School finds its final development in the works of Veñkaṭanātha. It must be said that there is no evidence of the early mutual influences between the Vedānta and the Pāñcarātra in his work, but rather that with Veñkaṭanātha’s works, the influence, acceptance, integration and acknowledgement of the Pāñcarātra tradition into the Rāmānuja School has reached its culmination. No other representative of the Rāmānuja School used, as far as we can see, texts and topics of the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās in so many ways. In addition to the works devoted entirely to the exegesis of Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, evidence of the Pāñcarātra tradition can also be found in every other work of Veñkaṭanātha: in his works dealing with epistemological and theological topics, in his Kāvya works, and even in his works written in Mañipravāḷam.

Although Veñkaṭanātha holds the Pāñcarātra tradition to be self-evident and to be a completely integrated part of what we refer to as the Rāmānuja School, it is a legitimate question to ask what place Veñkaṭanātha gives to the teachings of the Pāñcarātra in his works in which the monistic concept of the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa plays a central role.

For the question of how Veñkaṭanātha reflects on or is aware of the difference between the Pāñcarātra tradition on the one hand and the Vedānta tradition on the other hand, it is instructive to look at the Tattvamuktākālāpa with Veñkaṭanātha’s auto-commentary Sarvārthasiddhi and his Nyāyasiddhāñjana – both important late works of theological and philosophical character. Here Veñkaṭanātha’s obvious integration of Pāñcarātra doctrines can be exemplified in the context of his central monistic concept of the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, whose relation to the universe is taught in the Rāmānuja School as the relation of the supporter (*ādhāra*) to the supported (*ādheya*), of the ruler (*niyantr*) to the ruled (*niyamyā*), of the principal (*śeṣin*) to the subordinate (*śeṣa*), of that which is characterized by a body (*śarīrin*) to the body itself, and as the relation of cause (*kāraṇa*) and effect (*kārya*).

According to Veṅkaṭanātha and his predecessors, the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is exclusively identified with the *one* (*eka*) true *brahman* that is taught in the Vedāntic tradition.<sup>1</sup> Such an identification implies the meaning of *one* Absolute as the highest Being, beyond which – according to the central Advaitic doctrine of this tradition – no comparable second exists. Although one of the most important doctrines of the Pāñcarātra tradition is the concept of *vyūha*, by which various divine manifestations of the highest God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa are meant, it is also a tradition with exclusively Him at the top, and one must ask how this *vyūha* concept was interpreted in the well-developed theological system of the theistic Vedāntic tradition.

In the context of Veṅkaṭanātha's work, in which theological and philosophical argumentation finds its peak, one then may ask, what enables him to synthesize the basic Advaitic concept of *one* God with the Pāñcarātra teachings of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's divine manifestations such as the *vyūhas*, the *vyūhāntaras* or the *vibhavas*? How is it possible for Veṅkaṭanātha to argue that Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as the *one* highest Being can be accommodated with His numerous manifestations?

## I.

When Veṅkaṭanātha refers to tenets of the Pāñcarātra tradition in his Nyāyasiddhāñjana he mentions either the tradition of the Pāñcarātra<sup>2</sup> in general or refers specifically to later Saṃhitās such as the

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<sup>1</sup> Rāmānuja was the first to explicitly identify the neuter *brahman* with the personal God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. He states in Śrībh I, 17,1: *brahmaśabdena ca svabhāvato nirastanikhiladoṣo 'navadhikātiśayāsankhyeyakalyāṇaguṇagaṇaḥ puruṣottamo 'bhidhīyate*. “With the word *brahman* the highest Puruṣa is designated, who by his own nature is free from faults and who has innumerable auspicious qualities, which are unlimited and of excellence.” Cf. also the beginning passage of the section about God (*iśvara-pariccheda*) in Veṅkaṭanātha's Nyāyasiddhāñjana (NyS 225,6): *advītiya-samābhyaḍikadaridratvaśravaṇād asāv ekaḥ. sa eva brahma*. “He is the single one, because the Śruti state that He has no second [and] He is devoid of an equal and of a better. Only He is *brahman*.”

<sup>2</sup> See for example NyS 223,5, where Veṅkaṭanātha refers to the enumeration of the *nītyasūris* in the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās: *eteṣāṃ nītyasūriṇām ānanyāvāntarabhedādikaṃ śrīpāñcarātrasaṃhitāsu viśadam anusandheyam*.

Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā or the Lakṣmītantra<sup>3</sup>. It is in fact striking that despite his rich knowledge of Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās as is evident in his other works, in his Nyāyasiddhāñjana he quotes only these two Saṃhitās by name. In the fourth chapter of this work (NyS 394,4ff.), Veṅkaṭanātha gives a simple short outline of how he understands the different divine manifestations as taught in the Pāñcarātra tradition. In this short summarizing passage he discusses the four *vyūhas*: Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. He explains their origin as a process of emanation that begins with Vāsudeva, with each preceding *vyūha* being the cause of the next and with the later three appearing (*unmeṣa*) with only two of the six original qualities. Veṅkaṭanātha says that the body of the highest *vyūha*, Vāsudeva, consists of six qualities that include knowledge (*jñāna*), potency (*śakti*), strength (*bala*), lordship (*aiśvarya*), energy (*vīrya*) and splendor (*tejas*). Saṃkarṣaṇa possesses strength (*bala*) in order to destroy the universe and knowledge (*jñāna*) in order to spread the *śāstras*. Pradyumna contains lordship (*aiśvarya*) in order to create the universe and energy (*vīrya*) in order to spread the *dharma*, and finally Aniruddha possesses potency (*śakti*) in order to maintain the universe and splendor (*tejas*) in order to spread the truth. Veṅkaṭanātha renders the description of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa’s divine manifestations as follows: “The *vyūha* has the form of Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Each preceding one is the cause of the following one. Among these, in Vāsudeva all six qualities like knowledge, etc. are revealed. In reference to the other three [deities] beginning with Saṃkarṣaṇa, four [qualities] are not manifested because three pairs of qualities proper for spreading the *śāstras* and for the periodical destruction of the universe, etc. become visible. All six qualities exist sure enough in every [*vyūha*].”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Veṅkaṭanātha’s quotations of the Lakṣmītantra (LT) in his NyS can be found in NyS 236; NyS 238 (quotation of LT 17.58); NyS 382; NyS 387; NyS 389 (quotation of LT 17.16); NyS 462. Quotations from the Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā can be found in NyS 368 (quotation of AS 3.26); NyS 382; NyS 387 (quotation of AS 6.23); and NyS 488 (quotation of AS 3.2).

<sup>4</sup> NyS 394,4-395,3: *vāsudevasaṃkarṣaṇapradyumnanīruddharūpo vyūhaḥ. uttarottaraḥ pūrvapūrvakāraṇakaḥ. tatra vāsudeve jñānādiguṇāḥ śaḍ apy āvirbhūtāḥ. saṃkarṣaṇādiṣu triṣu śāstrapravartanasaṃhārādy-  
aupayikaguṇadvandvatrayonmeṣeṇa catuṣkam anāvīrbhūtam. sarve te sar-  
vatra santy eva.*

According to the view of the Pāñcarātra tradition, the origin of the *vyūhas*, to which Veṅkaṭanātha refers in this passage, means the emanation<sup>5</sup> by which the highest God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa becomes one *vyūha* deity after another.<sup>6</sup> The possibility that Veṅkaṭanātha refers here to the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā's description could be evidenced by his enumeration of both *vibhavas* and *avatāras*,<sup>7</sup> who are further emanations of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's progression of manifestations and are mentioned in the next sentence (NyS 395,1-2): "Each individual [*vyūha*] has infinite subordinate *avatāras*. The various *vibhavas* [are thirty-nine] beginning with Padmanābha and the ten [*avatāras*] beginning with Matsya, etc."<sup>8</sup>

In the first sentence of this passage, Veṅkaṭanātha uses the term *avāntarāvatāra* not only to refer to the common list of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*, but also to further emanations of the *vyūhas* such as the *vyūhāntaras*, which arise from each of the four *vyūhas*: Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava arise from Vāsudeva; Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdhana from Saṃkarṣaṇa; Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara from Pradyumna; and Hṛṣīkeṣa, Padmanābha and Dāmodara from Aniruddha.

From this brief description of Veṅkaṭanātha's summary of the origin of the *vyūhas*, *vyūhāntaras* and *vibhavas*, it is clear, based on his understanding of the Vedāntic concept of the *oneness* (*ekatva*) of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, that He must in fact be interpreted in relation to many deities. For, according the Pāñcarātra view, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa has different manifestations from which He is not defined as separated, but which He *becomes* one after another. Whereas according to

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<sup>5</sup> For a thorough analysis of the *vyūha* cosmogony of the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā see BOCK-RAMING 2002: 18-56. For a discussion of the original meaning of *vyūha* as derived from the root *vi-ūh*, given by GONDA as: "ein wirkungsvolles Auseinanderschieben von Teilen eines zusammenhängenden Ganzen," see *ibid.* 302.

<sup>6</sup> Such a concept is for example expressed in AS 5.32c-44, where the highest God Viṣṇu is said to be successively becoming the four *vyūhas*.

<sup>7</sup> Their enumeration and functions can for example be found in AS 5.50-57b. Thirty-nine *vibhavas* are mentioned here, the twelve *avatāras* included. According to BOCK-RAMING 2002: 168 the enumeration of *vibhavas* or *vyūhāntaras* can be traced from the Sātvatasamhitā.

<sup>8</sup> NyS 395,1-2: *eṣāñ ca pratyekam avāntarāvatārā anantāḥ. padmanābhamatsyādidaśakādayo vibhavabhedāḥ.*

the Vedāntic doctrine, God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is the *One* without a comparable second, the teaching of His becoming something else implies a contradiction to His absoluteness and makes further conceptual reflection necessary.

In his Nyāyasiddhāñjana, Veṅkaṭanātha presents important information about these *vyūha*, *vyūhāntara* and *vibhava* deities as well as the so-called “subtle” (*sūkṣma*) deity referred to as Vāsudeva. He tries to explain the relation between the highest God and His various divine manifestations by saying that all these divine beings are to be accepted as God’s own body (*īśvaraśarīra*).<sup>9</sup> But even then the question arises in which way His own body is related to Himself. The following remarks will therefore try to outline the theoretical context in which Veṅkaṭanātha explains God’s relationship to His own body and they will attempt to clarify which role the “ontological difference,”<sup>10</sup> as emphasized by OBERHAMMER, between God and what can be known as different from Him plays in this context. This difference is in fact denoted in Veṅkaṭanātha’s system as *atyantabhedā*, “complete difference.” This is insofar a key-term for the theology of the Rāmānuja School as on one hand it affirms the absoluteness of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, but on the other hand makes His relation to the world thinkable without any contradiction. We will see that this key-term is complemented by another central term which describes the relation between God and that which is different from Him, namely *apṛthaksiddha*, “not separately established.” Both key-terms, essential in Veṅkaṭanātha’s theological reflection, form the basis of the interpretation of *vyūha* manifestations as so-called “states of the Lord” (*bhagavadavasthā*). But to clarify which role these important terms play in Veṅkaṭanātha’s system and what his interpretation of the Pāñcarātric emanation doctrine implies, I have to refer to his fundamental concept of underlying substance (*dravya*) and qualifying property (*dharma*) or state (*avasthā*).

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<sup>9</sup> NyS 236,28: *īśvaraśarīre ca sūkṣmavyūhavibhavādibhedāḥ śrīmat-pāñcarātrādibhiḥ prapañcitā avagantavyāḥ*. “And in reference to God’s [eternal] body, the different [bodies] such as the subtle [body], the *vyūhas*, the *vibhavas*, which are taught by the scriptures of the Pāñcarātra, etc., should be accepted.”

<sup>10</sup> For a further explanation of this term see OBERHAMMER’s contribution in this volume, pp. 39f. For more details cf. OBERHAMMER 1999: 205f.

## II.

In Veṅkaṭanātha's theoretical concept, the words "substance" (*dravya*) and "non-substance" (*adravya*) are key-terms. All entities can be identified either as a substance (*dravya*) or as a non-substance (*adravya*).<sup>11</sup> Generally Veṅkaṭanātha mentions six fundamental substances. The first two are the highest self (*paramātman*), which is identified with the neuter *brahman*, i.e., the highest God (*īśvara*) Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, and the individual soul (*jīvātman*). Both substances are denoted as conscious (*cit*). The other four substances, called non-conscious (*acit*), are primary matter (*prakṛti*), God's eternal divine manifestation<sup>12</sup> (*nityavibhūti*), time (*kāla*) and God's and the individual soul's attributive knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*).

These six substances can never appear as being without any characteristics (*nirviśeṣa*). According to Veṅkaṭanātha, we can therefore neither speak about the soul (*jīvātman/paramātman*) that has no attributes nor of material matter (*prakṛti*) that has no effects nor of time itself without qualifying it by special time units nor of attributive knowledge without characterizing it as a particular knowledge like perception (*pratyakṣa*), a wish (*icchā*) or inference (*anumāna*).

According to Veṅkaṭanātha, to be qualified by an attribute that cannot exist separately (*aprthaksiddha*) from its basic substance means that a substance always has different "states" (*avasthā*).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> After stating at the beginning of the Nyāyasiddhāñjana (NyS 7,1-8,1) that he will deal with objects of knowledge (*prameya*) in this work, Veṅkaṭanātha divides them into substances (*dravya*) and non-substances (*adravya*) with the following words: *tadantargataṃ ca sarvaṃ dravyādravyātmanā vibhaktam. upādānaṃ dravyam. avasthāśraya upādānam. atathābhūtam adravyam.* "And everything included in it (i.e., the *prameyas*) is divided into substance and non-substance. Substance is the base. The base is that which is the substratum for the states. Non-substance is not [defined] like [a substance]."

<sup>12</sup> In context of Rāmānuja's usage the substance *nityavibhūti* is translated by CARMAN as the Lord's "eternal realm" (CARMAN 1974: 142).

<sup>13</sup> Veṅkaṭanātha explains the term *avasthā* for instance in his autocommentary, the Sarvārthasiddhi (SAS), on Tattvamuktākālaṅkā (TMK) 5.2 (683,8): *āgantuko 'prthaksiddho dharmo 'vasthā.* "The state is a qualification that is added and that cannot be separately established." See also the same sentence in NyS 357,5-6.

These states of a substance are also called “non-substance” (*adravya*).<sup>14</sup> If, for example, an object has the colour (*rūpa*) white (*sita*),<sup>15</sup> its being white is its state. If water, silver or the moon is called “white,” the colour white is their state (*avasthā*). The colour itself, independent of which colour is meant, is denoted by Veṅkaṭanātha as non-substance (*adravya*). Even though the colour white of water, silver or the moon is in each case completely different (*atyantabhinna*) from the object itself, because the colour is a property and the water, etc. are its underlying substrate, we cannot say that these three substances are known without also knowing their whiteness. Thus, the colour white is inseparately connected to water, etc.<sup>16</sup> In this analogy, every substance (*dravya*) that has been mentioned above cannot exist without having a specific state, i.e., its qualifying attribute with which the substance is necessarily connected. Otherwise no qualification could be accomplished. Nevertheless, it is never argued that the attributes/properties (*dharma*), i.e., the states (*avasthā*) of a substance (*dravya*) are identical with their underlying substrate. They remain completely different (*atyantabhinna*). Thus the states of the substances can change, whereas the substances themselves endure eternally and stay unaffected by the modification of their states. Otherwise the substance would be changing just as its states (*avasthā*) are.

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<sup>14</sup> The substances are also taught as qualifying one another. For this, the commentator of Veṅkaṭanātha’s Nyāyasiddhāntajana, Raṅgarāmānuja, gives the clearest explanation of Veṅkaṭanātha’s reference to the criterias for the classification of substances, when he says: *dharmabhūtajñānasya jñātriviśeṣaṇatvaṃ spaṣṭam. nityavibhūter vighrahādirūpeṇeśvaraviśeṣaṇatvañ ca spaṣṭam. kālasya bhogyabhūtamahadādiripariṇāmahetutayā bhogyaprakṛtivyāpāraṇatvañ ca spaṣṭam* (NySV 38,7-8). “Attributive knowledge is evidently a qualifier of the knower. Eternal divine manifestation is evidently a qualifier of God, because it has the form of his body, etc. And time is a qualifier of material matter, which is to be enjoyed, because it is the cause of the modification that should be enjoyed, which starts with ‘the Great One’.”

<sup>15</sup> For the definition of colour see NyS 469,7.

<sup>16</sup> Veṅkaṭanātha differentiates between an essential property, i.e., properties that define the substance or the thing to qualify in its essence (*svarūpanirūpakadharmā*) – in this case, it is the colour white – and a secondary property that qualifies something that is already qualified by an essential property (*nirūpitasvarūpadharmā*).

For these substances the characteristic of this relationship that is implied – inseparability, but nevertheless difference – does not allow for the possibility of their being conjoined with their proper attributes by a connecting link. This means: they can only be inseparately related to each other because of the qualifying nature (*svabhāva*) of their appropriate attributes which Veṅkaṭanātha refers to as being “without any additional condition” (*anupadhika*).<sup>17</sup> If the relationship (*sambandha*) between substance and attribute has its origin only in their essential nature (*svabhāva*), which is a qualifying nature, other means to explain their relation, as for example by the category of “inherence” (*samavāya*) as held in the view of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, are not required and are elaborately criticized by Veṅkaṭanātha.<sup>18</sup> Founding their relationship on inherence after the relation has already been established by a qualifier is unnecessary and contradictory. This means that a substance does not become qualified by something binding a quality to it.<sup>19</sup> One cannot establish a relation-

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<sup>17</sup> See TMK 5.2 where Veṅkaṭanātha explains in the second verse: *dravyād atyantabhinnaṃ tv idam anupadhikaṃ tad viśiṃsyāt svabhāvāt* (...). “This [non-substance] that is completely different from the substance is without any additional condition and specifies that (i.e., the substance) by its own nature (...).”

<sup>18</sup> See TMK 5.26; 127 (792-793).

<sup>19</sup> Veṅkaṭanātha makes this evident in a section of the Sarvārthasiddhi (681,13-16) when he responds to his opponent, who holds inherence (*samavāya*) as a connecting link between two inseparable entities: *aprthak-siddhaviśeṣaṇatvenopalabhyante dravyaṃ praty adravyāṇi. anyathā bhavātāpi katham avaśyam ekam aparāśritam evāvatiṣṭhata ityādikaṃ udghuṣyate. ayam arthaḥ – bhavatā yayor ayutasiddhyā samavāyaḥ kalpyate tayor ayutasiddhir eva sambandhaḥ, na punas tatkalpanīyaḥ samavāyaḥ, kalpanāgauravāt; svābhāvīkāprthaksiddhivyatirekeṇa samavāyasyānupalambhāt. ataḥ svabhāvād eva dravyādravyayor upaśleṣaḥ*. “In reference to a substance non-substances are known as qualifiers which are established separately from the substance. Otherwise, how is it possible that also you are proclaiming [a sentence] starting with the words: one [entity] resides as grounded on the other. The meaning is: Between which (i.e., substance and non-substance) you are accepting the inherence because of their being inseparately established, between these the relation exists only in their being inseparately established, [and] inherence in turn is not acceptable for them, because it is the more difficult assumption, and because one cannot perceive



ship called “inherence” that surpasses the nature of the substance and that of its attribute and that is the sole cause of their connection.<sup>20</sup> We can now understand more precisely how Veṅkaṭanātha applies his concept of substance and state to the four other substances: the effects of primary matter (*prakṛti*) such as “the Great One” (*mahat*), the “I-principle” (*ahaṃkāra*), etc., are its states (*avasthā*) and cannot exist separately from it; the substance “time” (*kāla*) is the substrate of special time units, which include *kṣaṇa*, *lava*, *nimeṣa*, and *parārdha*.<sup>21</sup> Valid means of knowledge such as perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) are states of the substance “attributive knowledge” (*dharmabhūtajñāna*) of the individual self; in the same way the individual soul cannot be disconnected from its attributive knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*). Veṅkaṭanātha even accepts a series of states for God’s “eternal divine manifestation” (*nityavibhūti*).

For his concept of the relationship between a substance and its states, it is important that the state of a substance itself, i.e., defined as non-substance, cannot in turn be qualified by another attribute.<sup>22</sup> Thus, before Veṅkaṭanātha starts to list what he defines as non-substance (*adravya*) in the sixth chapter of his *Nyāyasiddhāntajana*, he states (NyS 442,1): “Non-substance is devoid of conjunction” (*saṃyogarahitam adravyam*) and he continues by explaining how substances are characterized by their states, i.e., the non-substances:

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inherence as different from being established as naturally inseparable. Therefore substance and non-substance are connected only by their essential nature.”

<sup>20</sup> See also SAS 792,8-9 on TMK 5.126: *aprthaksiddhayos samavāyākhyam svarūpād adhikaṃ kalpyamānaṃ sambandham na pratyakṣayāmah*. “We do not perceive a relation called ‘inherence’ which is accepted as being beyond the essential nature of two [things] that are [already] inseparately related.”

<sup>21</sup> According to MONIER-WILLIAMS 1964, *kṣaṇa* means 30 *kalās* or 4 minutes; *lava* means a minute division of time, equal to a sixtieth of a twinkling, half a second, or a moment; *nimeṣa* means a moment; *parārdha* means the number of mortal days corresponding to fifty years of a Brahmā’s life.

<sup>22</sup> If the quality is again qualified by *saṃyoga* it cannot be defined as non-substance, because “having contact/conjunction” is the definition for a substance. See for example NyS 422,9f.

“And in regard [to the non-substance], there is a series of states characterized by similarity and dissimilarity [of the three *guṇas*] with respect to the *triḡuṇa* (i.e., the *prakṛti*); also with respect to time, [there is a series of states] beginning with *kṣaṇa*, *lava*, *nimeṣa* and ending with *parārdha*; [and] with respect to knowledge, [there is a series of states] such as of being perception, of being inference, of being verbal knowledge; even with respect to pure *sattva*, there is a certain [series of states] similar to that of *triḡuṇa* – thus innumerable modes are to be considered according to the means of valid knowledge.”<sup>23</sup>

It is evident from this passage that according to Veṅkaṭaṇātha each substance that is mentioned is not only characterised by one but by several states. This is also expressed in other contexts by the term *avasthāsantāna*, i.e., “a series of states,” by which Veṅkaṭaṇātha means not only the states of *prakṛti*, *kāla*, *dharmabhūtajñāna* and the *nityavibhūti* that he mentions, but also other states that can qualify these substances.<sup>24</sup>

### III.

How Veṅkaṭaṇātha applies his fundamental concept of substance and state to the other substances that he mentions can be clarified by the substance “primary matter” (*prakṛti*) and his description

<sup>23</sup> NyS 443,1-3: *tatra ca triḡuṇe sadrśavisadrśarūpo ’vasthāsantānaḥ, kāle ’pi kṣaṇalavanimeṣatvādīparārdhaparyantaḥ, buddhau pratyakṣatvānumititvaśrautatvādirūpaḥ, śuddhasattve ’pi kecit triḡuṇasamā ity anantaprakāro yathāpramāṇam anusandheyah.*

<sup>24</sup> For the other states that Veṅkaṭaṇātha mentions cf. the following long enumeration in NyS 443,3-444,1: *tāni sattvarajastamāṃsi, śabdāyaḥ pañca, saṃyogaḥ, śaktiḥ iti daśaiva. evaṃvidheṣv evādravyeṣu gurutvadratvasnehasamskārasaṅkhyāparimāṇaprthaktvavibhāgaparatvāparatvakar-masāmānyasādrśyaviśeṣasamavāyābhāvavaiśiṣṭyādīnāṃ yathāsaṃbhavam antarbhāvaḥ.* “They are only ten: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, the five [qualities] beginning with sound (*śabda*), contact (*saṃyoga*) and potency (*śakti*). These [ten] non-substances contain [all the other non-substances] such as weight (*gurutva*), fluidity (*dravatva*), viscosity (*snehatva*), latent impression (*samskāra*), number (*saṅkhyā*), size (*parimāṇa*), separateness (*prthaktva*), disjunction (*vibhāga*), remoteness (*paratva*), nearness (*aparatva*), action (*karman*), generality (*sāmānya*), similarity (*sādrśya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), non-existence of inherence (*samavāyābhāva*), qualifiedness (*vaiśiṣṭya*), etc.”

of its relationship to its various characteristic states: According to Veṅkaṭanātha, the substance “primary matter” (*prakṛti*) “is described as having a quality<sup>25</sup> (*guṇa*) [called] *rajas* or having a quality (*guṇa*) [called] *tamas* or being able to become states such as ‘the Great One’ (*mahat*) and so on.”<sup>26</sup> This means, that primary matter is the substrate for its effects such as “the Great One” (*mahat*) or the subsequent effects which become manifest through the inequality of the three *guṇas*. The entire *prakṛti* is pervaded by these three *guṇas*, which are well balanced at the time of their dissolution but which finally become uneven at the beginning of each new creation. Every effect arises through the inequality (*viśama*) of the three *guṇas*, and each is said to be a state (*avasthā*) of primary matter. Thus primary matter can be described as transforming itself into many entities, and even if their effects are able to spread, etc. (*parispandādi*), it itself does not become separate or – as Veṅkaṭanātha states – is “without holes” (*niścchidra*); on the contrary, it pervades each of its own effects (*svakāryavyāpaka*), i.e., its own states. However, *prakṛti* itself and its states, though inseparable, remain different.<sup>27</sup> Like every other substance it is characterized not only by one state, but rather can have several states that co-exist. If the creation starts with the inequality of the three *guṇas*, it is in fact said to be becoming another<sup>28</sup> state by suppressing (*upamardaka*) an earlier one.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For Veṅkaṭanātha’s differentiation between different types of *guṇas* see NyS 417,2: *evam ca guṇeṣu kaś cid viśeṣaḥ, dravyātmakaguṇāḥ, kevalaguṇāś ceti. pūrve jñānādayaḥ, uttare sattvarajastamasahprabhṛtayāḥ vakṣyate*. “And in this way there are some divisions among qualities: substantive qualities and pure qualities. The former are knowledge, etc.; the later are taught as *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* and so forth.”

<sup>26</sup> NyS 40,3-4: *tatra rajoguṇakatvatamogūṇakatvamahadādyavasthārhatvāni triguṇalakṣaṇāni (...)*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. NyS 42,2: *idaṃ ca parispanḍādiyogyabhūtenḍriyapariṇāma-dāśāyām api niścchidram eva. tata eva hi svakāryavyāpakatvam*. “And it [i.e., the *triguṇa*] is not torn asunder, even in the state of its modification into [four] gross elements (*bhūta*) or senses (*indriya*), which are able to spread, etc. Therefore it pervades all its effects.”

<sup>28</sup> Any modification is described by Veṅkaṭanātha as a series of states. For example, if something comes into being it is in this sense only a succession of different states. This can be understood from NyS 357,6:

## IV.

Perhaps from these few remarks it becomes clear that Venkaṭanātha's explanation of the highest substance is analogue to the concept just described: the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as the highest substance is the underlying substrate in relation to His body, which consists of the substances characterized above together with their states/attributes.<sup>30</sup> Hence Venkaṭanātha depicts not only the five substances that are mentioned according to his substance-state model, but he interprets the highest substance, i.e., the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in the same way: Just as a single substance is specified by its inseparable (*aprthaksiddha*) states, all the other substances together are defined as specifying Him. All the enumerated substances with their specific attributes shape His body (*īśvaraśarīra*) and exist thus inseparably from their highest substance.

On the basis of Venkaṭanātha's concept of the relationship between a substance (*dravya*) and its states, it also becomes understandable how God can, despite His *oneness* (*ekatva*), be related to every entity: He is connected eternally to everything that shapes His

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*viśeṣatas tūttarāvasthāviśiṣṭasvarūpāpekṣayā tadanugūṇanīyatapūrvabhāvyavasthāviśiṣṭam tad eva vastūpādānam, yathā ghaṭatvāvasthāviśiṣṭamṛd-dravyāpekṣayā piṇḍatvāvasthāviśiṣṭam tad eva dravyam.* “Specifically the material cause refers to [an entity], itself qualified by each succeeding entity, [i.e.,] each entity is qualified by a state which corresponds to it and is always prior to it. For example, in relation to the substance clay which is qualified by the state of being a pot the very substance [clay] that is qualified by the state of being a lump [is the material cause].”

<sup>29</sup> NyS 42,3-4: *idam eva triguṇam pūrvāvasthopamardakāvasthābhēdāc caturviṃśatis tattvāni, mūlaprakṛtir mahān ahaṃkāra indriyāṇy ekādaśa pañca bhūtāni ceti.* “And this *triguṇa* [i.e., the *prakṛti*] itself, because of the difference in its states (*avasthā*) that suppress (*upamardaka*) their preceding states, [modifies in] twenty-four principles, namely, the primordial cause (*prakṛti*), the Great One (*mahat*), the I-principle (*ahaṃkāra*), eleven senses (*indriya*), five subtle elements (*tanmātra*), and five gross elements (*bhūta*).”

<sup>30</sup> For Venkaṭanātha's discussion if the attributive knowledge (*dhar-mabhūtajñāna*) belongs to God's body or not see NyS 166,5: *īśvaratajjñānavyatiriktaṃ dravyam śarīram.*

body,<sup>31</sup> although He Himself does not change nor is affected by the modification of other substances’ states. In the same way as the other substances, the relationship that is thus founded is not a relationship of inherence (*samavāya*), but is rather defined as a qualifying relationship of contact (*saṃyoga*) between Him as the underlying substance (*dravya*) and His states (*avasthā*).

In the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Tattvamuktākālāpa* quoted above, which discusses non-substances (*adravyapariccheda*), Veṅkaṭanātha interprets the relationship between the Highest (*para*) and everything else (*viśva*) in the same manner in which he has characterized the relationship between the other substances and their states. Using the terminology of substance and non-substance (TMK 5.1), he states in the first part of the verse: “[Just as] all non-substances are seen in reference to their respective substances as being assigned to it and not established separately, in the same way [it is the case] for everything for the highest Being. There is no fault for His own nature, because of the restriction of the separation [of the non-substances from Him/His own nature].”<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the other substances mentioned, which are not characterized by their own body, that which Veṅkaṭanātha calls “everything” (*viśva*) in fact shapes God’s body. For the definition of the body, Veṅkaṭanātha follows the teaching of Rāmānuja.<sup>33</sup> As a fourth definition, which results from the three definitions that he analyzed and discussed in earlier passages and which reflects Rāmānuja’s

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<sup>31</sup> Also in this case the possibility of calling God all-pervasive is based on the concept of the non-substance “connection” (*saṃyoga*). A highest Being can only be established as being all-pervasive (*vibhu*) if it is in fact connected to every entity. In NyS 132,4, Veṅkaṭanātha writes: *sarvamūrttasamyoḡitvaṃ hi vibhutvam. tasmād antataḥ saṃyogalakṣaṇam aṅgikāryam.* [...] “For all-pervasiveness is [defined as] being in contact with all embodied things; accordingly, in the end you have to accept at last [modification in the form] of contact.”

<sup>32</sup> TMK 5.1 (680,2-3): *tattadravyeṣu drṣṭaṃ niyatimad aprthaksiddham adravyajātaṃ, tadvad viśvaṃ parasya. vyavadhinyamanān na svarūpe ’sya doṣaḥ.* Cf. also SAS 680,6 on this statement (TMK 5.1): *tadvad eva viśvaṃ api parasyāpṛthaksiddham.*

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of Rāmānuja’s and his followers’ definitions of God’s/*brahman*’s body see OBERHAMMER 1996: 92ff.

intention,<sup>34</sup> he states that the qualifier of an intellectual being such as the highest self (*paramātmān*), i.e., the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, forms His body.<sup>35</sup>

The manner in which Veṅkaṭanātha classifies the different substances with their states/attributes is different from Rāmānuja's concept of the body and is developed further in this context. Corresponding to the different kinds of substances that are related to God and their states, Veṅkaṭanātha divides God's body into two types: one body is eternal (*nityaśarīra*), the other is not (*anityaśarīra*). The eternal body of God consists of four eternal substances which Veṅkaṭanātha characterizes as "having the nature of the substance which is characterized by the three *guṇas* (i.e., *prakṛti*), [and having the nature] of time, of the individual soul and of the eternal divine manifestation, etc." (NyS 174,6-7: *triguṇadravyakālaḥivaśubhāśrayādīdyātmakam*).

Further he subdivides the non-eternal body into two types: one is formed by *karman* (*karmakṛta*), one is not (*akarmakṛta*). The non-eternal body that is not formed by *karman* is characterized as "having the form of 'the Great One' and so on" (NyS 175,1: *mahadādirūpam*). The body formed by *karman* is again twofold. The passage (NyS 174,6-175,3) in which Veṅkaṭanātha lays out and exemplifies his systematic partition runs as follows: "[God's] body is twofold: eternal and non-eternal. In reference to this [twofoldness of the body], God's body consisting of the substance characterized by the three *guṇas* (i.e., the *prakṛti*), time, the individual soul, the eternal divine manifestation (*śubhāśraya*) and so on is the eternal one. (...) The non-eternal [body] is of two kinds: that which is not made by *karman* and that which is made by *karman*. The former [body] of God has the form of 'the Great One', etc. (...) The [body] that is made by *karman* is also of two kinds: that which is made by *karman*

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. NyS 158,5-165.

<sup>35</sup> NyS 165,5: *yasya cetanasya yadavastham aprthaksiddhaviśeṣaṇam dravyam, tat tasya śarīram iti. yāvatsattam asambandhānarhatvam aprthaksiddhatvam*. "For that spiritual being (i.e., God, the highest self) for which a substance exists, which is in a certain state and which is inseparably established as a qualifier, that [substance] is the body of that [spiritual] being. [Their] being established inseparably means the inability to be without relationship as long as one exists [together with the other]."

with the help of ones own will and that which is made purely by *karman*. The former is [that] of such great sages such as Saubhari; the latter is [that] of lower beings.”<sup>36</sup>

It can be seen that the relationship between a substance (*dravya*) and its state (*avasthā*) is represented here as being the relationship between God’s eternal body and His non-eternal body. Although the enumeration of that which belongs to the non-eternal body is abbreviated and unconduted, it is clear that according to Venkaṭanātha the states mentioned that are free of *karman* but non-eternal build up the non-eternal body of God. Moreover the eternal and non-eternal body are directed by God’s eternal and non-eternal will.

In regard to Venkaṭanātha’s listing of different states, we can assume that he refers not only to the twenty-three entities (*tattva*) taught as being states of primary matter, starting with the first effect “the Great One” (*mahat*) and ending with “earth” (*prthivī*), but also (with the word *ādi*) to, according to both commentators,<sup>37</sup> to three of the *vyūhas*, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha – the exception is the divine manifestation Para-Vāsudeva<sup>38</sup> – as well as to their *vyūhāntaras* Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, etc., and to the large number of *avatāras*. They all are understood as being impermanent divine manifestations and primarily different states of a substance, namely, God’s eternal divine manifestation (*nityavibhūti*), but together they belong to God’s non-eternal body (*anityaśarīra*) which is not formed by *karman* and cannot exist separately (*apṛthaksiddha*) from Him. The states of the *nityavibhūti* that belong to God’s non-eternal body are also evident from another passage of the Nyāyasiddhāñjana in

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<sup>36</sup> NyS 174,6-175,3: *tad etat śarīraṃ dvividham – nityam anityaṅ ceti. tatra nityaṃ triguṇadravyakālaḥivaśubhāśrayādyātmakam īśvaraśarīram. (...) anityaṅ ca dvividham – akarmakṛtaṃ karmakṛtaṅ ceti. prathamam īśvarasya mahadādirūpam. (...) karmakṛtam api dvividham. svasaṅkalpasa-hakṛtakarmakṛtaṃ kevalakarmakṛtaṅ ceti. pūrvaṃ mahatāṃ saubhariprabhṛtinām. uttaraṅ ca anyeṣāṃ kṣudrāṇām.*

<sup>37</sup> The passage that both commentators point out is NyS 389,18: *vigrahe ca vyūhavibhavādayaḥ.*

<sup>38</sup> Because Para-Vāsudeva belongs to the “eternal body” (*nityaśarīra*) of God; cf. Raṅgarāmānuja’s explanation of *śubhāśraya*, NyS 174,10: *śubhāśrayaḥ paravāsudevavigrahaḥ.*

which Veṅkaṭanātha describes the eternal divine manifestation (*ni-tyavibhūti*) as a place where things can change like flowers on trees or waves in rivers. They are produced (*kṛtaka*) and non-eternal (*anītya*). Having mentioned these products, he says that the *vyūhas*, etc., belong to the same category: “And in reference to [His non-eternal] body, there are [modifications] starting with [His divine manifestations like] the *vyūhas* and the *vibhavas* because only modifications that are caused by time and depend upon *karman* are denied regarding these [manifestations], but not also [those that depend] only on the will of God.”<sup>39</sup>

Another example, in which Veṅkaṭanātha combines God’s oneness with different manifestations by interpreting them as His manifestations only, shows how he applies his concept of God’s states: Veṅkaṭanātha has formed his fundamental concept of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as the highest God not only to accommodate the status and the variety of the *vyūha* and *vibhava* deities, but also to accommodate the Goddess Lakṣmī, who represents a complete and equal counterpart of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa Himself. She is also taught as being embodied in diverse *avatāras* that represent Her divinity. The manifoldness of the *vyūha* and *vibhava* deities, with their different functions, becomes multiplied once more by Veṅkaṭanātha’s acceptance of the *avatāras* of the Goddess Lakṣmī. Each of Her *avatāra* represents a female divine manifestation that corresponds to each male manifestation.

In the context of Veṅkaṭanātha’s characterization of the Goddess Śrī, whose complex relationship to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is described as a permanent partnership (*dāmpatyam śāśvatam*),<sup>40</sup> said to be equal to Him in all relevant relations, he also discusses the *avatāras* and

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<sup>39</sup> NyS 389,18-19: *vigrahe ca vyūhavibhavādayaḥ. kālakṛtakarmādhi-napariṇāmamātram hi teṣu niṣedhyam, na tu bhagavatsaṅkalpamātram api.*

<sup>40</sup> She is said to be all-pervasive (*vibhu*) as He and is to be honoured by the same subordinated beings, the *śeṣas* who are serving Him. Avoiding that in the context of his theology the highest God becomes relativized by a feminine counterpart, Veṅkaṭanātha defines their exclusive relationship as *śeṣaśeṣibhāva*, as principal and subordinated. Thus Śrī is in the final sense not a completely equal Goddess, she relies on Him. Cf. for instance Raṅgārāmānuja’s explanation of the term *bhagavadavasthābheda* quoted in NyS 363,5: *lakṣmyā api bhagavadātmakatayā tadavasthātvād iti bhāvaḥ.*



refers to them, as in the case for God’s *vyūhas*, as states (*avasthā*) of the Lord: “The teachings of the different states [of the Lord] such as the *vyūhas* [also] refer to the embodiments, etc., [of Lakṣmī], because these [*avatāras* of Lakṣmī], although they reach the state of an effect on their own will or through the will of the Highest (i.e., the Lord), are different states of the Lord, because everything contains the Lord as its self.”<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that Venkaṭanātha uses the term *avasthā* not only to describe the state of a single substance, but he assigns it also to the Lord (*bhagavat*) Himself, to explain that everything different from Him can specify Him. By declaring the divine manifestations such as the *vyūhas* as belonging to His non-eternal body and by characterizing them as His states (*avasthā*), they can be synthesized with the central concept of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa’s unchallenged absoluteness founded in His oneness.

Therefore, on the base of Venkaṭanātha’s fundamental concept of substance and states as well as his characterization of their relationship to the key-terms difference (*atyantabhedā*) and inseparability (*apṛthaksiddhi*), it becomes clear how the Vedāntic tradition and the Pāñcarātric concept of different manifestations of the God Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa can accommodate one another.

Further we can say that in Venkaṭanātha’s theological system, the *vyūhas* and their *vyūhāntaras* are above all states (*avasthā*) of the *nityavibhūti*, i.e., the eternal divine manifestation, which is categorized as being an eternal substance belonging to God’s eternal body (*nityaśarīra*) that is directed by His eternal will (*icchā*). His will can also be seen against the background of the state-substance concept: it represents a state of God’s attributive knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*), whose all-pervasiveness (*vibhu*) is related to each state (*avasthā*) of the divine manifestation (*nityavibhūti*). The non-eternal states of His divine manifestation such as the *vyūhas*, which belong to His non-eternal body (*anityaśarīra*), are directed by God’s non-eternal will. But even with his categorization into different substances and non-substances, in his monistic view Venkaṭanātha maintains that Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa is an absolute being without any comparable sec-

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<sup>41</sup> NyS 363,3-6: *vyūhavadavasthābhedaḥ tu avatārādiviṣayāḥ, sarvasya bhagavadātmakatvena tasya svecchayā parecchayā vā kāryadaśāpannasyāpi bhagavadavasthābhedaḥ*.

ond. Insofar as he subsumes all the substances with their states under God's body, being eternal and being non-eternal, he can apply the concept of substance and state. Taking into consideration His absoluteness, the *vyūhas* and his other divine manifestations can be described as His inseparable state (*avasthā*), which exists nevertheless in an "ontological difference" from Him.