

THE INFLUENCE OF ORTHODOX VAIṢṆAVISM ON VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA VEDĀNTA AND PĀÑCARĀTRA

Gerhard Oberhammer

The aim of my paper is not to provide new insight into the development of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta or the Pāñcarātra but rather to point out a gap in our research, which is to blame for our almost complete absence of an adequate and historically documented grasp of the rise of the Rāmānuja School, the intellectual milieu of its emergence and the role that the Pāñcarātra played therein.¹ To begin let me point out that when I speak of orthodox Vaiṣṇavism in the title of this paper, this term does not mean the amorphous religious and cultural phenomenon that can be perceived, for instance, in the anonymous literature of the Purāṇas. Of course, the Brahmanic orthodoxy produced also this genre of literature. However, it is not this literature that gave the Brahmanic orthodoxy its particular outline that can explain its being an effective force in the history of ideas. Both Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra moved in the charged atmosphere of theological and philosophical discussions which must have been characteristic of this orthodoxy and which have been transmitted in the epic and religious anonymous literature only inexplicitly and often in a secondarily derived epic form.

To put the Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy into concrete terms: It belonged to a religious and philosophical tradition that was bound to its Vedic origin, that was moulded by a Brahmanic style of thinking and living, and that manifested itself by the Brahmanic ritual, especially the domestic ritual as well as by the Dharma literature and the early philosophical systems. At the time of the Rāmānuja School's rise, this orthodoxy had to a great extent already become monotheistic and was strongly moulded by the philosophical and theological thinking of the Vedānta tradition.

Above all probably only scholars of this orthodoxy had the necessary depth reflection to enable Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Ve-

¹ Credit must go to JOHN CARMAN for giving us at least an idea of the milieu in which the Rāmānuja School emerged in his book on the theology of Rāmānuja (CARMAN 1974). In that context it was undoubtedly not possible to elaborate further than he did.

dānta to arise. Ultimately, this orthodoxy was probably also the seed of the religious movement of the Ālvārs. The Ālvārs, who are often considered in historical descriptions to have been the formative precursors of the Rāmānuja School, did not actually contribute to the formation of the ideas of the Viṣṇu faith as characteristic of the Rāmānuja School, but introduced a certain spirituality, a style of piety, to the scholasticism of their time, similar to the mediaeval mysticism of the Occident. They did not lay the foundation of the philosophical and theological reflection by which the Rāmānuja School initially gained its typical identity. In the formative period of the school one could count perhaps Bhāskara and his Bhedābhedavāda to the scholastic tradition of this Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy and also Yādavaprakāśa, Rāmānuja's forgotten Vedānta teacher. He was not an isolated phenomenon but must have had a group of adherents, however small it may have been, and he founded his own tradition of interpreting the Brahmasūtras. Likewise, Nāthamuni belonged to this orthodoxy. As far as can be seen from the fragments of his Nyāyatattva, Nāthamuni was a true scholastic with a lively interest in philosophy and even natural philosophy, but we do not actually know why he was referred to as being the first Ācārya of the Rāmānuja School. Because he was the grandfather of Yāmunamuni? Perhaps, but as far as the extant fragments of his Nyāyatattva testify probably also because his thinking was already directed towards the teachings of the school in many aspects of his philosophical endeavour, even if he did not actually reach the central ideas of Viśiṣṭādvaita theology.

However, Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta cannot be traced back to only the scholasticism of the Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy. The question would still stand as to where did the religious and theological aspects of the school derive from. These are usually not treated in descriptions of its history of philosophy. These religious and theological aspects can also not be traced back to the Pāñcarātra, but rather point to an independent branch of the tradition.

In the Brahmasūtra tradition, for example, neither a theology of the Goddess, the teaching of the eternal *vibhūti* of God nor the spirituality of the *śaraṇāgati* is necessary. The Pāñcarātra, to which the school's ritual practice might be traced, lacks however the theological model that is characteristic of Rāmānuja and his Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, which is essentially determined by the concept of the rela-

tional being of the *brahman*.² This concept is fundamentally moulded by the “ontological difference” between the *paramātmān* and the sentient (*cit*) and insentient (*acit*) entities of the world, this being a difference that is neither bridged by an idealistic monism nor by an evolutionary scheme.

In connection with this symposium, it is perhaps of particular importance to point out this ontological difference. It was just this ontological difference, together with the concept of the relational being of the *brahman*, that offered the school the possibility to adopt the religious concepts of the Pāñcarātra, but Rāmānuja himself barely mentions how these concepts are to be unified. An incidental remark of Rāmānuja in his commentary on the Utpattayasambhavādhikaraṇa of the Vedāntasūtras³ shows that the reception of concrete concepts of Pāñcarātra theology, as for example, of God, was indeed made possible by this ontological difference. Rāmānuja makes this remark in order to justify the Pāñcarātra by interpreting it through concepts of his own teaching. He interprets here the Pāñcarātra doctrine that the four *vyūhas* and other divine beings arise from the Supreme God from the point of view of his own theology, i.e., that the God Vāsudeva, who is identified with the Supreme *brahman* (*paraṃ brahma*), appears in four forms⁴ by assuming the physical shapes (*vigraha*) of the *vyūhas* and the other divine beings according to His own wish.⁵

² For this concept see OBERHAMMER 1999.

³ BSū 2.2.39-42.

⁴ “The Supreme *brahman* itself, which is called Vāsudeva, being affectionate to those who seek refuge [with it], exists in four forms according to its own wish in order to give refuge to those who seek refuge with it.” (ŚrīBh II, 324,12: *vāsudevākhyam paraṃ brahmaivāśritavatsalam svāśrita-samāśrayaṇīyatavāya svecchayā caturdhāvatiṣṭhate*.) “For the devotees attain this Supreme *brahman*, which is called Vāsudeva, whose body consists of the complete six [divine] qualities, [and] which is divided into the Transcendent One (strictly speaking: the “Fine One”), the *vyūhas* and the *vibhavas*, if [they] worship it in the right manner according to [their] authority ...” (ibid. 325,1f.: *tad dhi vāsudevākhyam paraṃ brahma saṃpūrṇaśāḍguṇyavapuḥ sūkṣmavyūhavibhavabhedabhinnam yathādhikāram bhaktaiḥ ... abhyarcitam samyak prāpyate*.)

⁵ Cf. ŚrīBh II, 325,7-9: “Hence, as Saṃkarṣaṇa and the other [*vyūhas*] also have the form of the body of the Supreme *brahman* according to its

By this, in the end he places the *vyūhas* and the other divine beings – considered, as the later tradition would call it, to be manifestations of God’s eternal *vibhūti* – into the *brahman* theology while maintaining the transcendence of the Supreme *brahman*. In this sense, the decisive impetus to Rāmānuja’s theology may have come, e.g., from the Nārāyaṇa theology of the Subālopaniṣad,⁶ which stemmed from the orthodox tradition. In all these aspects of the religious faith of the Rāmānuja School, the Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy mentioned above seems to be tangible, although its identity is scarcely discernible by merely denominating it as the Bhāgavatas.

The denotation of the term *bhāgavata* is unclear. In the formative period of Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, if we are to believe Yāmuna’s Āgamaprāmāṇya, it seems for example to have designated a certain social group and not a particular doctrinal tradition. In the Āgamaprāmāṇya, the Bhāgavatas are Vaiṣṇavas who claim to be Brahmins and who in their religious faith are Pāñcarātrins. This last feature is confirmed by Rāmānuja’s commentary on the Utpattyasambhavādhikaraṇa of the Vedāntasūtras. Here, probably under the influence of Śaṅkara’s commentary on these Sūtras, Rāmānuja refers to the tradition under discussion as Bhāgavatas, but clearly understands their doctrine as one of the Pāñcarātra. Śaṅkara’s commentary on this passage is unclear on its part, because Śaṅkara mentions both Bhāgavatas and Pāñcarātrasiddhāntins, but it is not clear if he really equates their doctrines.⁷ As Śaṅkara reports, these doctrines are dif-

own wish, there is no contradiction with the authority of the Śāstra that teaches this, because [this Śāstra] teaches the ‘coming into existence’ in the form of assuming bodies according to His own wish on account of the affection for those who seek refuge with [Him], as it is proven even by the *śruti*: ‘Being unborn, he arises in many forms’ (TĀ 3.13.1).” (*ataḥ saṅkar-ṣaṇādīnām api parasyaiva brahmaṇaḥ svecchāvighararūpatvāt, “ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate” iti śrutisiddhasyaivāśritavātsalyanimittasvecchāvigharasaṅgraharūpajanmano ’bhidhānāt tadabhidhāyīśāstraprāmāṇyasvāpratiṣedhaḥ.*)

⁶ Cf. OBERHAMMER 1998b: 26ff.

⁷ Cf.: “With respect to this, the Bhāgavatas teach: The Venerable One, the only Vāsudeva, whose nature is pure knowledge, is the [divine] principle in the true sense. Having divided Himself, He appears in four parts: in form of the Vāsudevavyūha, the Saṅkarṣaṇavyūha, the Pradyumnavyūha and the Aniruddhavyūha. Vāsudeva is called the Supreme Self (*pa-*

ferent, even if they possibly represent Pāñcarātra concepts merely of different periods. In any case, we cannot consider the Pāñcarātra as the scholastic milieu in which the specific *brahman* doctrine of Rāmānuja arose.

Hence, does the Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy, as we tried to define it above, offer scholastically the fertile soil that enabled the Rāmānuja School to arise? Let me present a few observations that may not answer our question, but will make it more concrete through the philological analysis of small units of text.

In the Paramasaṃhitā, we find two rather long sections that are apparently quotations⁸ and that give the Saṃhitā the character of *bhakti* spirituality that is typical of this Pāñcarātra text in its extant form.⁹ Both are texts with a remarkable level of religious reflection

ramātman), Saṃkarṣaṇa, the *jīva*, Pradyumna, the *manas*, Aniruddha, the *ahaṃkāra*. Among these, Vāsudeva is the supreme primal principle, the others, [i.e.,] Saṃkarṣaṇa, etc., are His product. If one worships this Venerable One, the Supreme Lord, who is of such a kind, by approaching, appropriating, worship, studying and *yoga* during one's entire life (literally, for one hundred years), one, being [thereby] free from afflictions, reaches the Venerable One." (BSūBh 259,20-260,1: *tatra bhāgavatā manyante – bhagavān evaiko vāsudevo nirañjanajñānasvarūpaḥ paramārthatattvaṃ, sa caturdhātmānaṃ pravibhajya pratiṣṭhitaḥ – vāsudevavyūharūpeṇa, saṃkarṣaṇavyūharūpeṇa, pradyumnavyūharūpeṇāniruddhavyūharūpeṇa ca. vāsudevo nāma paramātmocyate. saṃkarṣaṇo nāma jīvaḥ. pradyumno nāma manaḥ. aniruddho nāmāhaṃkāraḥ. teṣāṃ vāsudevaḥ parā prakṛtir itare saṃkarṣaṇādayaḥ kāryam. tam itthaṃbhūtaṃ parameśvaraṃ bhagavantam abhigamanopādāne jyāsvādhyāyogair varṣāsatam iṣtvā kṣiṇakleśo bhagavantam eva pratipadyate iti.*) In contrast, in a later passage Śāṅkara speaks about this teaching as follows: "And these [beings, namely,] Saṃkarṣaṇa and the others are not considered as the individual self (*jīva*), etc. How then? They all are agreed to possess the lordly qualities *jñāna*, *aiśvarya*, *śakti*, *bala*, *vīrya*, and *tejas*. They all are Vāsudeva (lit. Vāsudevas), faultless, sovereign, and perfect." (BSūBh 260,22-24: *na caite saṃkarṣaṇādayo jīvādibhāvenābhipreyante; kiṃ tarhi? īśvarā evaite sarve jñānaiśvaryaśaktibalavīryatejobhir aiśvryadharmair anvitā abhyupagamyante – vāsudevā evaite sarve nirdoṣā niradhiṣṭhānā niravadyāś ceti*). Śāṅkara ascribes this teaching to the Pāñcarātrasiddhāntins (cf. BSūBh 261,10).

⁸ Cf. OBERHAMMER 1998a: 33ff. and OBERHAMMER 2004: 165ff.

⁹ For the composition of the Paramasaṃhitā cf. CZERNIAK-DROŹDŹOWICZ 2003: 34ff.

and style, although they are not poetic texts in the narrowest sense. One of the texts is a sort of meditative analysis of existence in *saṃsāra*, ending with an invocation of Viṣṇu and taking refuge in Him (ParS 30.37-67). The other text, ParS 29.21-33, is a hymnal invocation (*stuti*) of Viṣṇu, which, similar to the first text, passes into a reflection of existence in *saṃsāra* in its second part. It also deals with taking refuge in Viṣṇu. Both texts represent a type of literature that seems to be, with regard to its content, more closely related to the thinking of the classical systems of salvation, which strive for emancipation from *saṃsāra*, than to the religious hymns (*stotra*, *stuti*) of the later Rāmānuja School.

(a) The first text reflects on individual existence in *saṃsāra* with a rather unusual forcefulness and personal grief. I would like to present the text in an abridged form to impart an idea of its diction and contents: “I was born alone ... at that time and as I am ... (37) I was also born in some land at an earlier time ... (38) And more, there will be another future birth of mine ... (39) And nobody follows me when I am born from the mother’s womb or when I die alone. (40) ... The place [where I live] is not mine, nor this property, nor [this] powerful position, nor these servants, nor these wives, nor these sons, nor these dear ones. (45) ... This disease troubles me, this old age troubles me, (46) and I have other grief. This is my feeling. What [I] saw last year, I see [again] this year. (47) The duty that was done then must be done [again] now; the meal that was eaten on a bygone day will be eaten [again] today. (48) ... Where did I come from before? Where will I possibly go again? How much [time] will I possibly spend here? I do not know all this. ... (56) Therefore I seek any refuge that is granted to those who are devoted exclusively [to Viṣṇu]. (57) Otherwise, my fear does not disappear in transmigration. (58) ... And in the epics, the Purāṇas, in the world, in the Vedas, or in the Āgamas I do not see any being that is higher than Viṣṇu. Therefore I take refuge only in you who is a friend of those devoted [to you]. (63-64) Being desireless [and] firm in resolution, I will never think of wishes mentally, in deed [or] verbally. (65) What is the use of [the fulfilment] of one or two wishes? [What I] desire is

perfection. Therefore I take refuge in Hari without expecting fruits, with firm devotion committed only [to Him] ... (67)¹⁰

In connection to our question, this text is important because it is earlier than the Paramasamhitā's extant text, which was already quoted by Yāmunamuni, and because it testifies to a conception of the *śaraṇāgati* whose basic idea hardly deviates from the conception of the Rāmānuja School and yet whose spirituality and practice clearly differ from the latter. Our author attains the motive for the *śaraṇāgati* from a quite rational analysis of the individual's existence in *samsāra*'s clutches and being lost in it without a resort, and not from a feeling of personal sinfulness and wretchedness as is found in later periods. Furthermore, any reference to a ritual dimension of the *śaraṇāgati*, such as a *mantra* to be used, is lacking, as well as any reference to the Goddess as a mediatrix (*puruṣakāra*), which is not less characteristic. Here the *śaraṇāgati* is an expression of a spirituality, not a ritual act.

(b) The second text that I mentioned¹¹ is first of all important because it later became part of the text that is transmitted under the name Jitamtestotra (JSt), although earlier than Periyavāccāṅ Piḷḷai's

¹⁰ ParS 30.37-67: *aham ekaḥ prasūto 'smi ... | asmin kāle yathā cāsmi ... || 37 pūrvam apy abhavaj janma viṣaye mama kutracit | ... janmāntaraṃ ca me bhāvi kim apy asti ... | na ca mām jāyamānaṃ vā kutaścīn mātur āśrayāt | ekāki (em. ekāki) mriyamānaṃ vā kaścīd apy anudhāvati || 40 ... naivāspadaṃ mamaivedaṃ dhanam aiśvaryaṃ eva vā | ete bhṛtyā ime dārā ete putrā ime priyāḥ || 45 ... bādhathe mām iyaṃ vyādhir bādhathe mām iyaṃ jarā || 46 santāpo me paraś ceti mamaiveyaṃ ca vedanā | pūrve samvatsare drṣṭam asmin paśyāmi vatsare || 47 tatra pūrvam kṛtaṃ kāryam atra kartavyatām gatam | atīte divase bhuktam annam adyāpi bhujyate || 48 ... kuto 'ham āgataḥ pūrvam kva gamiṣyāmi vā punaḥ || 55 kiyad vā viharāmy atra na jāne sarvam idrṣam | ... tasmāc charaṇam icchāmi kiṃcid ekāntisamhitam || 57 anyathā mama samhare (em. samṣāre) bhayaṃ vā na nivartate | ... na ca viṣṇoḥ paraṃ kiṃcit paśyāmi puruṣaṃ sthitam || 63 itihāsapurāṇeṣu lokavedāgameṣu ca | tasmāt tvām eva śaraṇaṃ prapadye bhaktavatsala || 64 manasā karmaṇā vācā nirapekṣo dṛḍhavrataḥ | na karomi ca kāmēṣu kadācid api mānasam || 65 kiṃ mamaikena kāmēna dvābhyāṃ vā siddhim (em. siddhir) īpsitam | tasmāt phalam anākāṃkṣat (em. anākāṃkṣan) prapadye śaraṇaṃ harim || 66 ekāntadrḍhayā bhaktyā ...*

¹¹ ParS 29.21-33.

commentary on this text.¹² We can determine that the text of ParS 29.21-33 was actually inserted into the Jitamṣtestotra by the fact that also its introductory *śloka* from the ParS was inserted into the Stotra.¹³ In the Paramasamhitā, this text is also a quotation. It is identical to Rgvidhāna III.33ff. and was adopted into the Paramasamhitā from there, unless both were adopted from an earlier text. Obviously, this text belongs to the orthodox Vaiṣṇava tradition. The Stotra quoted in the Samhitā is neither a Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta work nor a Pāñcarātra work. In addition to this, the Stotra is important, because, just like the text discussed above, it is also bound to a *śaraṇāgati* spirituality that represents an initial stage of the *śaraṇāgati* practice in the later Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of the Rāmānuja School. The text itself has two parts. The first part, beginning with the verse 29.21, is devoted to a hymnal praise of God, whereas the second part expresses the speaker's need for salvation.

When the speaker who takes refuge has invoked God as “the common deity of deities and demons,” as the creator and the destroyer of the world, and as the only resort and the rescuer from *samsāra* (29.21-24), he praises God as the transcendent supreme being that is still accessible to His *bhaktas* and who disposes of everything with antithetic invocations: “You have neither a form nor a shape, nor weapons, nor a place. Nevertheless you appear in a human form (*pu-ruṣākāra*) to the [people] devoted to you. (25) There is nothing that is beyond the range of your sight. [However,] you are visible to no one. There is nothing that is not known by you, but you, [being transcendent,] are not apprehended by anyone. (26)”¹⁴ Following these antithetic invocations, the author proceeds to more intensive direct praise: “[You are] the first cause of [all] effects, the highest [object] that can be designated by words, the supreme perfection of the *yo-*

¹² This text is a late collation of *stotra*-like invocations of Viṣṇu, which, with minor variations, all begin with the verse MBh 12.336.44 from the Nārāyaṇīya.

¹³ For the composition of the Jitamṣtestotra cf. OBERHAMMER 2004: 165, n. 442.

¹⁴ ParS 29.25f.: *na te rūpaṃ na cākāro nāyudhāni na cāspadam | tathāpi puruṣākāro bhaktānāṃ ca prakāśase || 25 naiva kiṃcid parokṣaṃ te pratyakṣo 'si na kasyacit | naiva kiṃcid asidhyante (em. asiddhaṃ te) na ca siddho 'si kasyacit || 26.*

gins. They know that [only you are] the absolute Supreme [Being]. (27)”¹⁵

In the second part of the Stotra, our author introduces the motive of fear in *saṃsāra*, which becomes the inducement to take refuge in God. Thereby, the taking of refuge that is expressed in the beginning of the Stotra¹⁶ is proven to be a formula of confident worship: “O Lord of the deities, I am afraid in this transmigration that contains great danger. Protect me, o Lotus-eyed One! I do not know a better refuge. (28) At all times and in all places, o Acyuta, [be it] in [this] body, [be it] in death, great fear is growing within me. (29) Also in other lives, there is not any cause for salvation other than Your lotus feet, by which I attain the good state [of emancipation]. (30)”¹⁷

The correspondence of the Stotra’s structure and the contents of this second part to the text from the Paramasaṃhitā mentioned earlier is certainly not coincidental. It rather shows that we are dealing here with a *literary type* of religious poetry, unless one of the two texts was influenced by the other. In addition, both texts, including the text that was incorporated into the Jitamṣtestotra, lack any hint of a ritual *śaraṇāgati* practice. In both, the idea of taking refuge fits well into an orthodox Vaiṣṇava tradition moulded by *bhakti* spirituality, in which taking refuge is an expression of confident *bhakti* and in which reflection on the hopelessness of *saṃsāra* is the actual motive for taking refuge.¹⁸ In addition, both texts are not chance quotations from the broad stream of traditional orthodoxy but, at least in the case of the Paramasaṃhitā, are conscious adoptions of orthodox

¹⁵ ParS 29-28: *kāryānām kāraṇam pūrvaṃ vacasām vācyam uttamam | yogānām (em. yoginām) paramā siddhiḥ paramam te param viduḥ ||*.

¹⁶ ParS 29.22cd: *sarvadācaraṇadvandvaṃ vrajāmi śaraṇam tava ||*.

¹⁷ ParS 29.28-30: *ahaṃ bhīto ’smi deveśa saṃsāre ’smin mahābhaye | pāhi mām puṇḍarikākṣa na jāne śaraṇam param || 28 kāleṣv api ca sarveṣu dikṣu sarvāsu cācyuta | śarīre ca gatau cāpi vardhate me mahadbhayaṃ || 29 tvatpādakamalād anyan na me janmāntareṣv api | nimittaṃ kuśalasyāsti yena gacchāmi sadgatim || 30.*

¹⁸ For the *śaraṇāgati* in the earliest Vaiṣṇava orthodox tradition cf. OBERHAMMER 2004: 98ff.

bhakti piety undertaken during the reworking¹⁹ of an earlier Pāñcarātra text.

(c) In the thirty-seventh chapter of the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*,²⁰ we also find a conscious adoption of traditional orthodox thoughts. Here, however, these thoughts have been reinterpreted and have become an occasion to form a new Tantric ritual. Following the description of an older ritual for the rescue of a sovereign who is hard-pressed by his enemies, a second ritual is taught, which is described as the “sacrifice of oneself” to the God *Sudarśana* who is to be worshipped here, and which is designated by the old term *nyāsa*. In this sacrifice, the sovereign’s enemies are considered to be magical substitutes for sacrificial animals. The description of this ritual opens with remarkably traditional orthodox thoughts that are not actually related to the sovereign’s hardships, but are a quite traditional exposition of the *śaraṇāgati*: “That which he who has various desires cannot attain by other means, that which he who strives for emancipation [can] neither [attain] by Sāṃkhya, nor by Yoga, nor by *bhakti*, (25) ... that [person] can attain this only by *nyāsa* ... (26). The Supreme Being, the *paramātmā* is attained only through this. They who know the Veda (*vedaviduṣaḥ*) say that the [*nyāsa*] is sixfold ... (27) The desire for adequateness (*ānukūlya*), the avoidance of inadequateness (*prātikūlya*), the confidence: ‘He will protect [me]’, the choice of [Him] as protector, (28) presenting of oneself (*ātmanikṣepa*), [and] poverty, [these are] the sixfold [means of] taking refuge (*śaraṇāgati*) ... (29) Thereby all the austerities of the ascetics are accomplished, all places of pilgrimage, all sacrifices and all donations are accomplished at once, and thereby he partakes of the emancipation ... (35)”²¹

¹⁹ For this reworking cf. OBERHAMMER 1998a and CZERNIAK-DROŹDŹOWICZ 2003: 34ff.

²⁰ Cf. OBERHAMMER forthcoming.

²¹ AS 37.25-25: *yad yena kāmakāmena nāsādyaṃ sādhanāntaraiḥ | mumukṣuṇā yat sām̐khyena yogena na ca bhaktiṭaḥ || 25 ... tena tenāpyate tat tan nyāsenaiḥ ... || 26 paramātmā ca tenaiḥ sādhyate puruṣottamaḥ | ṣoḍhā hi vedaviduṣo vadanty enaṃ ... || 27 ānukūlyasya saṃkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam | rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso goptṛtvavaraṇam tathā || 28 ātmanikṣepakārpaṇye ṣadvidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ | ... kṛtāny anena sarvāṇi tapāṃsi ta-*

The meditative realisation of this *nyāsa* in the form of a “sacrifice of oneself,” thus introduced, is metaphorically equated with a Vedic sacrifice in the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā (AS 37.39cd-49): “The body of [God], which has the form of the sacrifice, is regarded as the *vedi*. (40) The *śruti* settles [that His] mouth is the *āhavanīya* fire, [His] heart is the southern fire, and [His] belly is the *gārhapatyā* fire. (41) The principle [of His] *manas* is declared to be the institutor of the sacrifice, [and His] *buddhi* [is declared] to be [his] wife. The enemies of him who took refuge in Him are declared to be the sacrificial animals. (42) The *jīva* of he [who is offering the sacrifice] is called the sacrificial food (*havya*).”²² The description proceeds with this equation down to the last detail. However in our context, this is sufficient.

The contrast of the description of this *nyāsa* to that which is described in the introductory verses is striking. The first is understood to be the “sacrifice of oneself,” whereas the latter is nothing other than the spiritual act of “taking refuge” (*śaraṇāgati*) as it is taught by the traditional orthodoxy. Among other things, this can be seen by the six elements of the *śaraṇāgati*. The verses under consideration are also found verbatim in the Viṣvaksenasamhitā²³ as well as in the Lakṣmītantra²⁴, and are ascribed to “people knowing the Veda” (*vedaviduṣaḥ*) in the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā. They cannot derive from the Pāñcarātra but, just as the entire *śaraṇāgati* spirituality, from an orthodoxy bound to the Veda.²⁵

However, where does the notion of the *nyāsa* as a “sacrifice of oneself” derive from? Vātsya Varadaguru, who describes the same

patām ... | sarve tīrthāḥ sarvayajñāḥ sarvadānāni ca kṣaṇāt || 34 kṛtāny anena mokṣas ca tasya haste.

²² AS 37.40cd-43ab: *yajñarūpadharasyāsyā śarīraṃ vedir iṣyate || 40 āśyam āhavanīyāgnir hṛdayaṃ dakṣiṇānalaḥ | athāśya gārhapatyāgnir udaraṃ śruticoditam || 41 yajamāno manastattvaṃ buddhiḥ patnī prakīrtitā | svāśritapratyanikā ye paśavas te prakīrtitāḥ || 42 ... asya jīvaṃ havyaṃ pracakṣate |.*

²³ Quoted in PraP 1.17-26b. For the Viṣvaksenasamhitā see below, p. 49.

²⁴ LT 17.60f.

²⁵ Cf. OBERHAMMER 2004: 113-121.

notion in his Prapannapārijāta,²⁶ ascribes it to the Veda of the Taittirīyas. In fact, a corresponding passage that equates the *nyāsa*, the forest ascetic's austere way of life, with the Vedic sacrifice is found in TĀ 10.63.19ff. (= MNārU 24-25):²⁷ "He should harness the *ātman* [in concentration] in this manner. This is the great correspondence (*mahopaniṣada*) indeed, the secret of the deities ... For he who knows thusly, the *ātman* is the institutor of the sacrifice (*yajñasyātmā yajamānaḥ*); confidence (*śraddhā*) is [his] wife; [his] body is the fuel; [his] breast is the *vedi*; ... [his] heart is the sacrificial post; [his] desire is the melted butter (*ājya*); [his] anger is the sacrificial animal; [his] ascetic heat is the fire."²⁸

It is this doctrine of asceticism as a Vedic sacrifice from the Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad that is found in Varadaguru's text. However, in this text this ascetic practice is reinterpreted to be a "sacrifice of oneself" in terms of the *śaraṇāgati* spirituality: "He should sacrifice the living *ātman* (*jīvātman*) as an oblation (*haviḥ kṛtvā*) in the mighty fire of the *brahman*, whose body the [living *ātman*] is, with the [syllable] *om*, which has the form of the *dvaya*[*mantra*]. (4) In this manner, the practice of the *prapatti* [using this *mantra*], whose nature is the *praṇava*, is handed down. There, [in the Veda of the Taittirīyas], the sacrifice in the body is prescribed for he who knows this. They say that the *prapatti*, which is called *nyāsa*, is the highest of the ascetic practices."²⁹ These verses show that a Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy, of which I spoke at the beginning, also influenced the tradition of the Rāmānuja School in one of the school's characteristic aspects of spirituality. This can be seen by the fact that the Upaniṣad doctrine re-

²⁶ Cf. PraP 2.1-6ab.

²⁷ The verse AS 37.37ab is also found almost verbatim in MNārU 24.1. Cf. *teṣāṃ tu tapasāṃ nyāsam atiriktaṃ tapaḥ śrutam* | (AS 37.37ab) with: *tasmān nyāsam eṣāṃ tapasāṃ atiriktaṃ āhuḥ* (MNārU 24.1).

²⁸ MNārU 24-25: *ity ātmānaṃ yuñjīta. etad vai mahopaniṣadam devānāṃ guhyam. ... tasyaivaṃ viduṣo yajñasyātmā yajamānaḥ śraddhā patnī śarīram idhma uro vedir ... hrdayaṃ yūpaḥ kāma ājyaṃ manyuḥ paśus tapo 'gniḥ.*

²⁹ PraP 2.4-6ab: *jīvātmānaṃ haviḥ kṛtvā taccharīre mahīyasi | brahmāgnau juhuyād om ity anena dvayarūpiṇā || 4 iti prapatter āmnātaḥ prayogaḥ praṇavātmānā | tasyaivaṃ viduṣo yajñāḥ śarīre tatra kalpitaḥ || 5 prapattiṃ tapasāṃ eṣāṃ nyāsākyām āhur uttamām |.*

lated here by Varadaguru to the *prapatti*, cannot be immediately derived from the Rāmānuja School in the manner he reports. In the course of the exegesis of this passage, this doctrine rather presupposes a reinterpretation of the asceticism that is understood to be an internalized sacrifice, a “sacrifice of oneself,” without already understanding it to be an act of *prapatti*.

The same reinterpretation must also be assumed for the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā passage. Here the interpretation of the *nyāsa* of the Upaniṣad as “the sacrifice of one’s own self”³⁰ is also presupposed. It is striking that the influence of the Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy led here to the emergence, typical for the general Tantric way of thinking, of a new ritual for the rescue of a sovereign in distress in the tradition of Sudarśana worship.³¹

(d) Apart from this Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy, the period following Rāmānuja, the thoughts of his school, as one could expect, also influenced the theological concepts and the spirituality of the Pāñcarātra. This is testified not only by the late Bhāradvājasamhitā, whose description of the *prapatti* is inconceivable without the influence of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas,³² but also by a text that is quoted repeatedly as an authority in Varadaguru’s Prapannapārijāta³³ and that is identified as a Viṣvaksenasamhitā by the editor of the text. The reason for this identification is probably Varadaguru’s introduction of the respective quotations with the words *yathāha bhagavān śāstre viṣvaksenāya śrīṅvate* and the appearance of Seneśa or Gaṇādhipa³⁴ as the person being addressed. However, the fragments transmitted by Varadaguru cannot derive from the extant Viṣvaksenasamhitā³⁵, because in this

³⁰ In AS 37.43, the *jīva* of the meditating person becomes the offering, whereas in MNārU 25 the *ātman* is the institutor of the sacrifice, desire is the oblation, and anger is the sacrificial animal.

³¹ Cf. OBERHAMMER forthcoming.

³² Cf., for example, the distinction between the *drptaprapanna* and the *ārtaprapanna* in BhārS 1.20, which was probably made by Varadaguru. Cf. OBERHAMMER 2004: 81ff.

³³ PraP 1.16-26ab; 2.3cd-4ab; 3.15-19; 6.3; 6.6-12ab; 6.34-44ab.

³⁴ However, in PraP 3.19 *divradānana* is found. For this cf. GUPTA 1976.

³⁵ See the bibliography s.v. ViṣS.

text Viṣvaksena is the teaching person and Nārada is the listener.³⁶ Nevertheless, it seems that Varadaguru quotes from a text that after all was a Viṣvaksenasamhitā, since Raṅgarāmānuja also quotes a sentence from a Viṣvaksenasamhitā that does not occur in the extant text that bears this name but that is within the immediate context of the fragment delivered in Varadaguru's Prapannapārijāta (6.6ff.)³⁷: *mama prakārāḥ pañceti prāhur vedāntapāragāḥ. paro vyūhas ca vibhavo niyantā sarvadehinām || arcāvatāraś ca tathā ityādiviṣvakse- nasamhitāvacanāny anusandheyāni*³⁸.

According to Varadaguru, following the description of the five modes of God in the Viṣvaksenasamhitā, it also taught a theology of the Goddess.³⁹ Varadaguru quotes this passage (or perhaps sections of it). I would like to discuss this text briefly as an example of the influence of the Rāmānuja School. Raṅgarāmānuja's quotation mentioned above already documents this influence – not only because it ascribes the doctrine of the five modes of God's existence to people “who know the Vedānta” (*vedāntapāragāḥ*), but also because this doctrine seems to have been developed in the Rāmānuja School.⁴⁰ But the fragment on the theology of the Goddess, which was quoted from the same context by Varadaguru, is also not conceivable without the thinking of Rāmānuja. The text of this fragment, which I would like to discuss only with regard to its formal terminology and the concepts connected with it without going into the theology of the Goddess itself⁴¹, reads as follows: “I will likewise explain the essence (*svarūpa*) of Lakṣmī. Listen attentively! The pervasion [of the world] through essence (*svarūpeṇa*) according to the qualities (*gu-*

³⁶ Of the fragments transmitted by Varadaguru, the introductory phrase of only one seems to indicate that Viṣvaksena is the speaker. This introduction of the fragment PraP 10.9ff. reads as follows: *ātmīyasamhitāyām tu yathā seneśa uktavān*. However, this fragment is also not found in the extant text of the Viṣvaksenasamhitā.

³⁷ Cf. OBERHAMMER 2002: 30f.

³⁸ NySV 394,8f.

³⁹ Cf. PraP 6.5: *asyā vaibhavam ākhyāti tattvato hi (ratne) yathā hariḥ | paravyūhādikān pañca prakārān ātmano vadan ||*.

⁴⁰ Cf. OBERHAMMER 2000: 97ff., especially n. 280.

⁴¹ For the theology of the Goddess see OBERHAMMER 2002: 31-36.

ṇataḥ) is taught as being common [to Us both (i.e., to Her and Me)]. (6) [And] just as I pervade the world through essence (*svarūpeṇa*) according to the nature (*svabhāvataḥ*), in the same manner all this is pervaded by Her. She is the Governess (*niyantrī*) and Mistress [of all]. (7) In this manner She is also pervaded by Me, [and] I, the Lord, am pervaded by Her. Hear the following difference between Me and Her, Seneśa! (8) She, the Mistress of all, my beloved [wife], is the ‘remnant’ with regard to Me. In the Veda, I am known as Her and as the world’s Lord. (9) The twofold *vibhūti* is the ‘remnants’ with regard to Her and Me. So it is well-known in the Upaniṣads and in My Śāstras, o Honour-giver! (10) – In the same manner, Bhūmi and Nīlā are taught as being ‘remnant’ with regard to Me. In the same manner, the pervasion of all souls through knowledge is acknowledged. (11) However, there is no pervasion through essence for these two, o You who knows the Upaniṣads!”⁴²

In its basic ideas, i.e., the identity of God and Goddess, the theology of the Goddess that is portrayed in this fragment could derive from the Pāñcarātra tradition, for example, from the Lakṣmītantra. Unfortunately, this cannot be substantiated at our current state of Pāñcarātra research. At any rate, there is no reason for the thinking of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja to adopt the doctrine of the equality of the divine nature (*svabhāva*) of God and Goddess, though it is the concept that is usually chosen by the Sanskrit tradition in order to adhere to the school’s monotheism, which is strived for notwithstanding the belief in the Goddess. However, this doctrine owes its conceptual elaboration and terminology as well as its final form as given in the fragment to the terminology of the scholastic thinking of the school.

⁴² PraP 6.6-12ab: *tathā lakṣmyāḥ svarūpaṃ ca vakṣye śrṇu samāhitaḥ | guṇataś ca svarūpeṇa vyāptis sādharmaṇī matā || 6 mayā yathā jagat vyāptaṃ svarūpeṇa svabhāvataḥ | tayā vyāptam idaṃ sarvaṃ niyantrī ca tathēśvarī || 7 mayā vyāptā tathā sāpi tayā vyāpto ’ham īśvaraḥ | mama tasyāś ca seneśa vailakṣaṇyam idaṃ śrṇu || 8 maccheṣabhūtā sarveṣāṃ īśvarī val-labhā mama | tasyāś ca jatataś cāham īśvaro vedaviśrutaḥ || 9 asyā mama ca śeṣaṃ hi vibhūtir ubhayātmikā | iti śrutiśirassiddhaṃ macchāstreṣv api mānada || 10 tathā bhūmiś ca nīlā ca śeṣabhūte mate mama | tathātmanāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ jñānato vyāptir iṣyate || 11 svarūpatas tu na tayoh vyāptir vedāntapāraga ||.*

In all probability, this applies to the doctrine of the Goddess' being the *śeṣa* of God, which mitigates the fundamental conception of monotheism. This doctrine introduces a hierarchic ontological relationality of God and Goddess into the concept of the divine reality, which ensures the ontological primacy of God in the sense of monotheism and which in the end makes a true Śrīvaiṣṇava theology out of the theistic *brahman* doctrine of Rāmānuja.⁴³ The concept of the “dual *vibhūti*” is probably also to be attributed to the Rāmānuja School. In the same way, the determination of the mutual pervasion (*vyāpti*) of God and Goddess by means of the conceptual differentiation of *svarūpeṇa guṇataḥ*⁴⁴ and *svarūpeṇa svabhāvataḥ*⁴⁵, which entails a clear distinction from pervasion through knowledge (*jñānato vyāptiḥ*)⁴⁶, as applied to Bhūmi and Nīlā, reveals a scholastic terminology and approach that I have not seen in Pāñcarātra texts. The reference of the pervasion of both according to the nature (*svabhāvataḥ*) and according to the qualities (*guṇataḥ*) to the essence (*svarūpa*) of Goddess and God is especially striking. By this reference, the Goddess is clearly distinguished from Bhūmi and Nīlā, to whom, as to all other selfs, only a pervasion according to knowledge (*jñānataḥ*) is attributed. This reveals a level of conceptual reflection that I do not know from the Samhitā literature, but that definitely corresponds to the Viśiṣṭādvaitic mode of thinking. Apart from the distinction between God's *svarūpa* and *svabhāva*, which is an inherent part of Rāmānuja's theology, a similar scholastic terminology is found, for example, in Rāmānuja's commentary on BhG 18.55⁴⁷: “He who with this kind of devotion truly recognizes Me as I am in [My] essence (*svarūpataḥ*) and in [My] nature (*svabhāvataḥ*) as well as in [My] qualities (*guṇataḥ*) and in [My] *vibhūti*, he, having truly known Me,

⁴³ For the concept of the being *śeṣa* cf. OBERHAMMER 1996: 37ff. and for its application to the Goddess, OBERHAMMER 2002: 36ff. and 126ff.

⁴⁴ PraP 6.6.

⁴⁵ PraP 6.7.

⁴⁶ PraP 6.11.

⁴⁷ *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ | tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram ||.*

immediately ... attains Me through [his] devotion.”⁴⁸ The same conceptual distinctions as in the quotation from the Viṣvaksenasamhitā⁴⁹ are used here, without having been required by the commented verse from the Gītā and not having been interwoven in a speculative application as in the Viṣvaksenasamhitā fragment.

To conclude, I would like to point to a further conceptual discussion in the text, which can probably only be explained by a familiarity with teachings of the Rāmānuja School. It is the idea that I already mentioned, namely, that Bhūmi and Nīlā, who are “remnants” of God in the same manner as Lakṣmī, do not pervade everything through their essence (*svarūpeṇa*) but only through their knowledge (*jñānataḥ*) like all souls. This can only be understood if one knows that, according to the teachings of the Rāmānuja School, knowledge (*dharmabhūtajñāna*) moves to the objects and thus, knowledge really can pervade everything.

Considering the fragment from the Viṣvaksenasamhitā as a whole, it gives the impression of being a text of the Rāmānuja School. This impression is also gained by the fragments of the Samhitā that Varadaguru quotes in connection with the *śaraṇāgati*,⁵⁰ with which I cannot deal here.⁵¹

Looking back at the few examples that have been discussed, which, having been chosen by chance, do not yet convey a picture in its entirety, we see something that is too easily overlooked in historical reflections on the Pāñcarātra and the Rāmānuja School: There must have been a learned Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy, which is not only perceivable in the Purāṇas, that was bound quite concretely to philosophical and theological thinking. Ultimately this orthodoxy seems to have been the root of Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. This orthodoxy also had an important influence on the Pāñcarātra and its religiosity, though essentially limited to the Pāñcarātra of South Indian

⁴⁸ GBh 483,29f.: *svarūpataḥ svabhāvataś ca yo ’haṃ guṇato vibhūti-to ’pi yāvāṃś cāhaṃ taṃ mām evaṃrūpayā bhaktyā tattvato ’bhijānāti mām tattvato jñātvā tadanantaram ... bhaktito mām viśate.*

⁴⁹ For its interpretation, see Venkaṭanātha’s Tātparyacandrikā (TC) on this passage and OBERHAMMER 2002: 31ff.

⁵⁰ E.g. PraP 1.17-26ab and also PraP 3.15cd-19.

⁵¹ For some thoughts on these fragments, see OBERHAMMER 2004: 121ff.

traditions. As already mentioned, of the Vedānta authors earlier than Rāmānuja whose texts are extant, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa probably belonged to this orthodoxy, though the latter must be considered to have been more complex than the few works of the Brahmasūtra tradition seem to indicate. This is also evident, for example, in the theology of the Goddess, if one regards the many doctrines that were rejected by Veṅkaṭanātha in his commentary on Yāmuna's *Catuḥślokī*. In this commentary, Veṅkaṭanātha mentions seven different approaches to a theology of the Goddess, all of which he refutes and of which only two may have originated in the Pāñcarātra milieu.⁵² Drawing sharper outlines than I have been able to do here requires further intensive examination of the concrete texts, particularly those of the Pāñcarātra.

⁵² Cf. OBERHAMMER 2002: 82ff.