PANCARATTA Agamam (A brief overview)



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pA'ncarAtra Agama

A brief overview by

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Introduction:

The scriptures of the Hindu-s can be classified into Agama-s (also known as the tantra-s) and nigama-s (also known as the veda-s). Agama prescribes the day-to-day ritualistic life and a practical course of self-discipline for its followers. It also prescribes the procedures for consecrating the idols in the temples, forms of worship to be performed in temples that follow the particular Agama, etc. The Agama has three main divisions - Saiva (based on Siva as the principal Deity), SAkta (based on worship of Sakti as the principal Deity), and VaishNava (based VishNu being the principal Deity). The nigama is divided into four veda-s - Rg, yajus, sAma, and atharva.

There are further sub-divisions among each of the Agama-s. The two divisions in the vaishNava Agama are the vaikhAnasa and pA'ncarAtra. The current review deals with the pA'ncarAtra Agama. A list of references is given at the end of the write-up.

In the historical evolution of the Agama-s, there have been several views over time -

- Agama-s are derived from the veda,
- Agama and veda are both derived from a common root or mUla-veda,
- Agama-s are inferior to, and less authoritative than the veda, and







• Agama-s are superior to veda.

The development of the Agama schools gave great support to promoting the concept of bhakti by concentrating attention on one Deity, and to self-surrender. It also gave great support to art through temple architecture, devotional poetry, dance, etc.

The name "pA'ncarAtra":

There are several different explanations for the term pA'ncarAtra. Some of these relate to the principles or practices of the pA'ncarAtra, whereas others fall in the category of 'imaginative exercises' as described in Agama-koSa published by Kalpatharu Research Academy. An elaborate list of definitions from several samhitA-s is included in the above reference, but only a few selected ones are covered below.

Literally, the term "pA'ncarAtra" means "five nights". Some definitions tie back to this specific meaning, and others key in on the word "pA'nca", and give different meanings to the word 'rAtra'. Based on an analysis of the definitions found in various texts, the five rAtra-s have also been equated to:

- five cosmic elements,
- five objects of senses,
- the five types of knowledge, or
- the five types of ignorance.

And so, the pA'ncarAtra SAstra can be considered either as the means for the liberation of the soul from the five elements, or container of the five types of knowledge, or the dispeller of the five types of ignorance. Some definitions are based on the story of five nights. We will see a few of the definitions in the subsequent paragraphs.







1. "When the kRta yuga had just started, by the grace of KeSava, the following five viz. ananta (the serpent), GaruDa, vishvaksena, Brahman and Siva hear the SAstra in parts, from KeSava: in the first night (rAtra) ananta has his questions answered, in the second night GaruDa, etc. Each of them hears for himself the Religion of Faith in the form of a work on knowledge, yoga, construction, and conduct, each night consisting of a lakh of verses. Since the whole instruction thus was given over five nights, it is called 'pA'ncarAtra". Vihagendra samhitA (I.31-4) gives an interpretation along the above lines, except that the order of the devatA-s receiving the instructions is different.

The name "pA'ncarAtra" can thus be associated with the "five nights" of instruction.

- 2. Another interpretation for the term "pA'ncarAtra" comes from Satapata-brahmaNa (XIII.6.1). This has the earliest passage in which the word pA'ncarAtra occurs. Here, Purusha nArAyaNa is mentioned as having conceived the idea of a pA'nca-rAtra sattra continued sacrifice for five days as a means of attaining superiority over all beings and becoming all beings.
- 3. In ahirbudhnya samhitA, at the end of the 11th adhyAya, it is stated that the Lord Himself framed out of the original SAstra the system called pA'ncarAtra, describing His fivefold nature known as para, vyUha, vibhava, antaryAmin, and arcA forms. This SAstra is therefore called the pA'ncarAtra. This is yet another interpretation for the term.

Otto Schrader favors this interpretation. He quotes the following Sloka-s of ahirbudhnya samhitA in support:

nirmame sAramuddhRtya svayam vishNurasa'nkulam |

tat para vyUha vibhava svabhAvAdi nirUpaNam ||

pa'ncarAtrAhvayam tantram mokshaika phala lakshaNam |







sudarSanAhvayo yo'sau sa'nkalpo vaishNavaH paraH ||

sa svayam bibhide tena pa'ncadhA pa'ncavaktragaH |

Schrader summarizes the above in the following words: "The Lord Himself extracted, as the purest essence of the pure divine Sastra, the system (tantra) called pA'ncarAtra describing Him as para, vyUha, vibhava, etc., and being recognizable by having liberation as its sole result".

4. Another explanation involves the five-fold kAla-s (times) like abhigamana etc., or the pa'nca samskAra-s (puNdra, nAma, mantra, japa and pUjA). In SrI mahAbhArata (ch. 337), there is reference to Sage NArada euologising Lord NArAyaNa through 200 nAma-s, among which are the nAma-s "pa~nca yaj~na, pa~nca kAla kartRpati, pA~ncarAtrika", etc - 'Thee of Five Offerings', 'the Lord of those who perform the Pa~nca kAla ritual', 'Thee of pA~nca rAtra' etc. In the pAdma-samhitA there is a Sloka that lists different words that are synonymous with the word 'bhAgavata'. Among these are the nAma-s pa'nca-kAla-vit (the knower of the significance of the five-fold division of time), and pA'ncarAtrika (a follower of the pA'ncarAtra system),.

"sUriH suhRt bhAgavataH sAttvataH pa'nca-kAla-vit |

ekAntikaH tanmayaSca pA'ncarAtrika ityapi |

evamAdibhirAkhyAbhih Akhyeyah kamalAsana | | (2-87)"

SrI VedAnta DeSika's eloquent defense of pA'nca-rAtra in his work 'pA'ncarAtra rakshA' highlights the aspect of 'pa'nca kAla vit' as the essential aspect of the pA'nca-rAtra doctrine and practice -

pa'nca-kAla vyavasthityai ve'nkateSa vipaScitA |

SrI pA'ncarAtra siddhAnta vyavastheyam samarthitA ||

The jayAkhya samhitA gives a similar definition, and says the name is derived based on the five different actions performed during the five time periods -







pa'nca karmAnushThAna pa'nca kAla nirdeSanena pA'ncarAtra iti sam~jnaH.

The pa'nca kAla-s are described in the section underthe summary of svAmi deSikan's pA'ncarAtra rakshA.

6. In the mahA-bhArata, we have the following Sloka that states that pA'nca-rAtra refers to the collection of the four veda-s and the sA'nkhya yoga -

idam mahopanishadam caturveda samanvitam

sA'nkhya yoga kRtAntena pa'nca-rAtrAnuSabditam ||

---(mahAbhArata - 339,112).

- 7. The nAradIya pA'ncarAtra interprets the word 'rAtra' as 'path of knowledge', and explains pA'ncarAtra as referring to the five relevant paths of knowledge:
- tattva (cosmology),
- mukti-prada (liberation),
- bhakti-prada (devotion),
- yaugika (yoga), and
- vaishayika (objects of sense).

rAtram ca j~nAna vacanam j~nAnam pa'na vidham smRtam |

tenedam pA'ncarAtram hi pravadanti manIshiNaH ||

Otto Schrader comments that while the nAradIya and the ahirbudhnya samhitA do indeed have five 'books' each, they do not strictly correspond to the above division. The nAradIya pA'ncarAtra is now generally not considered an authentic pA'ncarAtra text by many vaishNava-s.

8. The SAndilya samhitA (1.4-75-76) gives a different interpretation viz. that







the pA'ncarAtra gives the collective knowledge to its adherent that is given in parts by the SAstra-s: sA'nkhya, yoga, vairAgya (dispassion), austerity (tapas), and bhakti.



sA'nkhyam yogaSca vairAgyam tapo bhaktiSca keSave |
pa'ncArtha dAna tat-trANAt vidyA sA pA'carAtrikI || (4.80)

Here the five disciplines are equated with rAtra-s.

9. Another interesting stanza from the utsava sa~ngraha says that the name derives because of the five disciplines covered in the pA'ncarAtra: Agama, bharata (nAtya SAstra), Silpa (iconography and architecture), vaidya (medicine), and jyotisha (astrology) -

Agamam bharatam Silpam vaidya jyotishameva ca |

pancA SAstrANi samyoqAt pA'ncarAtra miti smr*tam ||

(utsava san. Mss. Adyar Lib., vo. 3 p. 15).

10. Paushkara samhitA (38-307-308) interprets the word as meaning a collection of five systems of thought - purANa, veda, vedAnta, sA'nkhya, and yoga -

purANam veda-vedAntam tathAnanAkhya yogajam |
pa'nca prakAram vij~neyam yatra rAtrAyate'bjaja |
phalotkarshenaiva pa'ncarAtra iti smRtam ||

11. There are some texts (e.g., padma-purANa) that interpret the word rAtri as 'overcoming' or 'eradicating' (rAtrIyante, adRSyAni bhavanti), some texts that interpret rAtra as meaning ignorance or false knowledge (e.g., vishNu samhitA), etc. The false knowledge is that which is obtained through the five senses (form, sound, smell, taste, and touch), or the pa'nca-bhUta-s (earth, water,







fire, air, AkASa) that constitute the world.

Thus, it is to be noted that even a small subset of the definitions for the term pA'carAtra listed above has yielded a very large number of interpretations. We conclude this section by reiterating the vast amount of literature available on the pA'ncarAtra system (215 pA'carAtra samhitA-s are listed by Otto Schrader based on references in the literature, many of which are now non-existent). These are grouped into three categories, according to parameSvara samhitA, ch. 30: divya, or of divine origin; muni-prokta, or originated by sages; and paurusha or mAnusha, of human origin.

(p. 36 of pA'ncarAtra rakshA) - svAmi DeSikan groups the sAttvata, paushkara, and jayAkhya samhitA-s in the divya category (p. 40): sAttvata paushkara jayAkhyAdIni SAstrANi divyAni. He groups the muni-prokta samhitA-s into the sAttvic, rAjasic, and tAmasic groups, and the ISvara, parameSvara, and a few others in the sAttvika group. Among the more important pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s that Schrader lists are: paushkara, sAttvata, ahirbudhnya, parameSvara, pAdma, and ISvara samhitA-s.

One writer distinguishes the 'divine' vs. 'human' originated pA'ncarAtra texts by noting that the former are in the category of samhitA-s or Laws, and the latter are in the category of vidhi and prayoga. This should be taken as just as one opinion, since the number of texts accepted by the likes of DeSika in the daivika category are far too few in number compared to the enormous number of pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s that have been identified by Schrader etc.

Subjects covered in the pA'ncarAtra:

The ideal pA'ncarAtra samhitA is said to consist of four quarters teaching respectively:

- j~nAna (knowledge),
- 2. yoga (concentration),







- 3. kriyA (making i.e., construction and consecration of temples and images), and
- 4. cary A (doing i.e., the religious and social observances, daily rites, festivals, varNAS rama dharma-s, etc.).

These four quarters are not given equal importance in all the samhitA-s, and some of them even omit some of the quarters. Just to give an example, Schrader notes that the number of pages devoted to the four sections in one edition of pAdma tantra are: 45, 11, 215, and 376 pages respectively. In general, the kriyA and the caryA portions - the practical parts - get more attention.

The date and origin of pA'ncarAtra:

SrI VedAnta DeSika in his tattva-mukta-kalApa points out that the pA'ncarAtra system originated from the ekAyana SAkhA portion of the veda-s. The chAndogya upanishad refers to the ekAyana SAkhA as the veda of all veda-s, the treasure of the gods, and the sacred utterance among all utterances. ekAyana means "the only means", and is considered a reference to the pA'ncarAtra.

"....pa'ncamam vedAnAm vedam pitRyam rASim daivam nidhim vAkovAkyam ekAyanam....iti" (chAndogya 7.7.1).

The mahAbhArata states that this ekAnti dharma was promulgated by Lord NArAyaNa Himself during the first stage of the cosmic evolution, or the First Birth of BrahmA (mAnasa). The terms "bhAgavata" doctrine and "sAttvata" doctrine, are also used synonymously with the term "pA'ncarAtra". While elucidating the nature of the ekAnti dharma, the SAnti parva of the mahAbhArata (332-16-8,336-1-76, 337-61-7) refers to the sAttvata, bhAgavata, and pA'ncarAtra systems. This goes to show that all these are closely connected systems that believe in the worship of one God, VishNu. The mahAbhArata states that the sAttvata arose in the Fourth Birth of BrahmA (SravaNaja), and finally the pA'ncarAtra evolved at the end of the Seventh







Birth (padmaja - born out of the lotus). Thus, this proclaims that the pA'ncarAtra represents the latest stage of the evolution of the bhAgavata theism. Special mention is also made of the divine authorship of the pA'ncarAtra, as against the human authorship of the sA'nkhya and yoga systems.

Other references to the pA'ncarAtra SAstra are found in SiImad RamAyaNa, SrI mahAbhArata, the Satapatha brAhmaNa, etc.

sa etam purushamdham pa'ncarAtram yaj~nakratummapaSyat |

(Satapatha, 13.6.1.1)

purANaiSca vedaiSca pA'ncarAtraistathaiva ca

dhyAyanti yogino nityam kratubhiSca yajanti tam ||

(RamAyaNa, uttara. 7.16)

sA'nkhyam yogam pA'ncarAtram vedAraNyakameva ca |

j~nAnAnyetAni brahmarshe lokeshu pracaranti ha ||

(mahA. SAnti. 359, verse 1)

idam mahopanishadam caturveda samanvitam |

sA'nkhya yoga kRtAntena pa'ncarAtrAnuSabditam ||

nArAyaNa mukhodgIrNam nArado'SrAvayat purA |

(mahA. Santi. 348.62-3)

The earliest reference to the pA'ncarAtra that is currently available seems to be the nArAyaNIya section of the SAnti parva of mahAbhArata. There is a reference to sAttvata vidhi in bhIshma parva at the end of the 66^{th} adhyAya, which could be a reference to the sAttvata samhita. The existence of







pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s prior to the nArAyaNIya is possible.

According to mahAbhArata it was sa'nkarshaNa, vAsudeva's elder brother, who taught the doctrine of the sAttvata-s (sAttvata-vidhi) when the dvApara age was drawing to a close and the kali age was just dawning. From several inscriptions and literature, it can be said that the sAttvata doctrine centered around the worship of five members of the vRshNi race. Of these, vAsudeva was considered the more important, even though he was the younger brother of sa'nkarshaNa. The term bhaga, representing the concrete manifestation of six divine attributes (shAD-guNya) was the basis behind the term bhagavat being used to describe VAsudeva in the VAmana samhitA.

There were several (close to two hundred and twenty five) samhitA-s describing the pA'ncarAtra doctrine, even though many of these are extinct now. This can be inferred from cross-references in the samhitA-s that are currently available. Some of these are referred in the mahA-bhArata (e.g., the sAttvata samhitA) and the brahma-sUtra-s. Thus, some of these are very ancient. BhIshma parva (62-37-39) refers to the sAttvata precepts.

In addition to the written literature, there is reason to believe that the Agama-s have been in existence and passed on from generation to generation orally just as the veda-s have been transmitted, and thus may be as old as the veda-s. In a book on pAdma samhitA published by the PA'ncarAtra PariSodhana Parishad in the 1980's, it is pointed out that the Ghosundi and BesnAgar inscriptions show that in 2nd century B.C. the bhAgavata religion had overflowed the mathurA region and had even reached non-India people some of whom converted to this faith.

SrI YAmunacArya, the teacher of the teacher of SrI RAmAnuja, who lived in the first half of the 11th century, claimed the authority of the fifth veda for the Agama-s. In the north of India, the oldest work quoting the pA'ncarAtra is the spandapradIpikA of UtpalavaishNava, who lived in the 10th century A.D. Based on these, the age of the samhitA-s could be the 8th century A.D. Based









He conceived the pA'ncarAtra!







"nArAyaNa mukhodgItam!"







on detailed analysis, Otto Schrader concludes that the oldest of the pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s are paushkara, sAttavata, and jayAkhya.

Support for the pA'ncarAtra doctrine:

SrI yAmunAcArya's work called AgamaprAmANya, SrI RAmAnujAcArya's SrI bhAshya (II.2.42), and SrI VedAnta DeSika's pA'ncarAtra rakshA are among the well-known works expounding the greatness of the pA'ncarAtra Agama.

SrI RAmAnuja mainly gives passages from the mahAbhArata to support the authenticity of the pA'ncarAtra doctrine. In the mahAbhArata, SrI vyAsa has elaborately described the pA'ncarAtra system in the chapter titled 'mokshadharma'. He starts with the question 'If a householder, or a brahmachArin, or a hermit, or a mendicant wishes to achieve success, what deity should he worship?', and then explains at great length the pA'ncarAtra system, and then says, "From the lengthy story of the mahAbhArata, consisting of one hundred thousand sloka-s, this body of doctrine (the pA'ncarAtra) has been extracted-like amRta from the medicinal herbs and AraNyaka from the veda-s". vyAsa also says in the mahAbhArata that this great upanishad - again referring to the pA'ncarAtra - is consistent with the four veda-s, and is in harmony with sA'nkhya and yoga, the concentrated application of knowledge and works. (This Slokam had been briefly discussed earlier in the section dealing with the definition of the term 'pA'ncarAtra'.)

idam mahopanishadam caturveda samanvitam |

sA'nkhya yoga kRtAntena pa'ncarAtAnuSabditam ||

nArAyaNa mukhodgItam nArado'SrAvayat purA | --(MB, SAnti 348.62-3)

Note the words "nArAyaNa mukhodgItam" - The Promulgator of the pA'ncarAtra is none other than nArAyaNa Himself according to vedavyAsa.

The mahAbhArata says of the pA'ncarAtra - "This is excellent, this is Brahman, this is supremely beneficial. Fully agreeing with the Rg, the yajus, the







sAman, and the atharva veda-s, this doctrine will be truly authoritative".

Some of the samhitA-s elevate the pA'ncarAtra to a position above the veda-s. SrI-praSna-samhitA says:

vedam ekAyanam nAma vedAnAm Sirasi sthitham |

tadartham pA'nca-rAtram mokshadam tatkriyAvaham | 2.38.

vAmana samhitA takes the same position, based on the argument that it is only the pA'nca-rAtra which has salvation as the only objective, whereas the veda-s promote the other three values also (dharma, artha, and kAma). The other distinguishing feature attributed to the ekAyana is that unlike the veda-s that can only be studied by those who are qualified to perform the rituals prescribed therein; the ekAyana is meant for all those who are eligible to realize final emancipation.

The bhAgavata doctrine is distinguished by its insistence on bhakti that is absolute and exclusive (ekAnta), towards a concrete iconic manifestation of bhagavAn. The relation between a bhakta and the bhagavat is similar to the relation between nara and nArAyaNa of the nara-nArAyaNa incarnation. The realization of the all-importance of bhagavat (or nArAyaNa) is covered by the sA'nkhya, and the procedure by which the bhakta communicates with Bhagavat is covered by the yoga.

pA'ncarAtra and viSishTAdvaita:

It is believed by some that the pA'ncarAtra system and the viSishTAdvaita philosophy are one and the same thing, in the sense that one is derived from the other, and they both have the same philosophical background. This is an incorrect notion. The two thought-streams stemmed from independent sources, and have had different and independent courses. It is true that some of the great AcArya-s of viSishTAdvaita have attempted to integrate the two systems. However, the distinct origin of the two systems can be seen based on







the differences between the earliest of the pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s (sAttvata, jayAkhya, ahirbudhnya) and the later ones (vishvaksena, vihagendra, lakshmitantra etc.). The later ones clearly follow the lead of viSishTAdvaita.

Following are some of the points that clearly indicate the independent origin, evolution and course of the two systems:

pA'ncarAtra:

- 1. Not a philosophy but a thought system justifying a compendium of practices relating to worship.
- 2. Early texts were indifferent to claims that the veda-s are the most ancient, and in fact they claimed to be more ancient than the veda-s themselves.
- 3. Prapatti is mentioned in later pA'ncarAtra tests, but not in the early ones probably a reflection of the influence of viSishTAdvaita philosophy on pA'ncarAtra.
- 4. pA'ncarAtra existed even at the time of mahAbhArata.

viSishTAdvaita:

- 1. A philosophy by no means confined to worship.
- 2. Seeks to justify its position wholly based on vedic authority.
- 3. Prapatti is an integral part of the viSishTAdvaita philosophy.
- 4. More recent than pA'ncarAtra.

It has been pointed out by van Buitenen that SrI RAmAnuja has not used any quote from the pA'ncarAtra in any of his known works. An explanation offered has been that this might have been because in SrI RAmAnuja's days there was so much resistance to anything even remotely considered non-vedic in nature, and quoting from pA'ncarAtra or prabandham could weaken his case in the eyes







of the biased. The postulate advanced is that SrI RAmAnuja was in a position to make a good case with purely the help of the Sruti-s and well-accepted smRti-s, and there was no need for him to bias his case by using quotes from sources which could have been dubbed sectarian.

The topic of the inter-relationship between the two systems is in itself a subject that deserves dedicated analysis and understanding, and is a separate subject which we will defer. At a high level, the following are some common aspects between the pA'ncarAtra and viSishTAdvaita systems as they are accepted today, and are greatly emphasized by SrI RAmAnuja (e.g., prapatti in the gadya-traya-s).

- 1. The concept of prapatti
- 2. Insistence on an austere life,
- 3. Dedicating all actions including sleeping and eating to BhagavAn (sAttvika tyAgam)
- 4. The concept of disinterested action which in the end leads to God realization, etc.

High-level view of the postulates of the pA'ncarAtra:

At a high-level following are some of the highlights of the pA'ncarAtra system:

- 1. The pA'ncarAtra does not admit of a plurality of God, but is an uncompromising monotheism.
- 2. Prapatti is a means to moksha that is available to everyone without any constraints regarding varNa etc., and moksha is available at the end of this birth itself.
- 3. An adherent of the pA'ncarAtra system should lead a very austere way of life where everything that is done is done for BhagavAn's pleasure, not excepting eating and sleeping.







- 4. nishkAmya karma, or disinterested action, which will ultimately lead to God-realization.
- 5. pA'ncarAtra emphasizes ritual worship consisting of dIkshA, ArAdhana, pUjA, function and use of nirmAlya and naivedya, and pa'ncakAlikA (these will be covered more elaborately later).

Interpretation of the Postulates of pA'ncarAtra:

Summarized below is one interpretation and explanation of the postulates of pA'ncarAtra. Multiple interpretations are not given in the interests of brevity and simplicity.

- 1. The nature of Godhead: Bhagavat who denotes the manifested configuration of the six qualities; not only an absolute, indescribable, and transcendental Brahman of the vedAntins, but also a personal God, worthy of adoration and worship; also different forms (vyuha, vibhava, arcA etc.) assumed by the personal god.
- 2. karma panca-kAla procedures
- 3. vidyA Systematized spiritual knowledge, or the energy of the Godhead which works within the individual for producing knowledge. The samkarshaNa aspect of Godhead bestows the knowledge of scriptures (Sastra j~nAna), the pradyumna aspect the knowledge of practice (anushThAna mArga), and the aniruddha aspect the benefits of such knowledge and practice (kriyA-phala).
- 4. kAla the principle of time. Time is viewed as that which causes the disturbance in the guNa-s and which brings about everything in the universe in an orderly fashion.
- 5. kartavya what ought to be done as a duty. This includes the daily and imperative worship at home, meditation, etc.







- 6. vaiSeshika special ceremonies such as pratisThA in a temple, pavitrotsava, adhyayanotsava, etc.
- 7. samyama yogic practices the yoga of restraints. (Chapter 6 of bhagavad-gItA emphasizes the value of yoga, and Lord kRshNa tells arjuna tasmAt yogI bhavArjuna therefore you should become a yogi).
- 8. cintA dhyAna (contemplation), cintana (visualizations), etc. These are in the category of antar-yAga (internal or mental sacrifices).
- 9. mArga the path to be chosen for securing salvation. sAttvata samhitA mentions devotion (bhakti) as the mArga bhakti which is firm (acala), pure (Suddha), constant (nitya), unwavering (avyabhicAriNI). ahirbudhnya samhitA indicates that the mArga is namana (bowing) involved in the mantra-s that proclaim SaraNAgati (surrender). This refers to total and absolute surrender, with mahA viSvAsam, of oneself and all that belongs to oneself to Godhead, and is an important concept of viSishTAdvaita.
- 10. prapatti As was pointed out earlier, prapatti is not included in the earliest pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s, and this leads one to surmise that the later samhitA-s have this added as a result of the influence of the viSishTAdvaita system. Six aspects of surrender are described in many pA'ncarAtra samhitA-s such as ahirbudhnya samhitA, lakshmI-tantra etc. The order of importance is not the same for these six aspects in the two samhitA-s referred to above, but the aspects are same. Sometimes one or more of these is considered the principal one, and the others are considered aspects that are needed for achieving the primary ones.

LakshmI tantra give the following: (LakshmI-tantra 17, 59-61)

"AnukUlyasya sa'nkalpaH prAtikUlyasya varjanam |

rakshishyatIti viSvAso goptRtva varaNam tathA ||

AtmA nikshepa kArpaNye shadvidhA SaraNagatiH ||







Thus the order of the a'nga-s given in lakshmI-tantra is:

- AnukUlya sa'nkalpam,
- prAtikUlya varjanam,
- mahA viSvAsam,
- goptRtva varaNam,
- · Atma nikshepam, and
- kArpaNyam.

In ahribudhnya samhitA, the order given is:

- Atma nikshepam or nyAsam,
- kArpaNyam,
- mahA viSvAsam,
- goptRtvam,
- prAtikUlya varjanam, and
- AnukUlya sa'nkalpam.

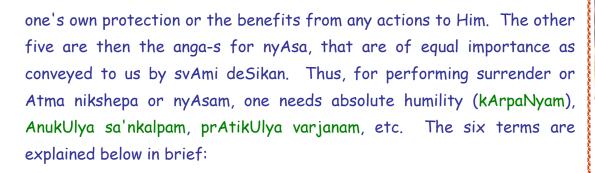
svAmi deSikan has addressed these differences in his nyAsa vimSati Slokam 12, and concludes that those who know prapatti SAstra well agree that there are five anga-s to prapatti, and the different positions taken in respect of the number and sequence of importance etc. of the aspects of prapatti really say the same thing in the end (sarva vAkya eka kaNThyam).

Atma nikshepam or nyAsam is considered the main aspect of prapatti - the conviction that one's own effort in attaining Him will not bear fruit, and placing oneself directly under His care and giving up ownership of









- i) Atma-nikshepa or nyAsa placing oneself completely and directly under BhagavAn's care. This involves giving up independent ownership in matters of actions or fruits thereof. This in fact is the real SaraNAgati. The subsequent five are to be regarding as assisting this. The obstacle to nyAsa is phalepsA or the desire for mundane benefits, which should therefore be avoided.
- ii) kArpaNya This refers to absolute humility bordering on lowliness and honest awareness of one's own natural ignorance, impurity etc., partly because of stains acquired through countless births. We all know the enormous feeling of kArpaNya that our AzhvArs have expressed through their compositions. This leads to ridding the arrogance that one may have because of parentage, learning, wealth, etc., and to get the sense that without the aid of Godhead, whatever we undertake on our own is bound to fail.

The enemy for kArpaNya is the feeling that one is free, independent, and competent to do whatever he likes (sva-svAtantryAvabodha).

- iii) mahA-viSvAsa irrepressible and great faith in Godhead. Involves the understanding that God is the benefactor of all beings, and His compassion is always and readily available. The firm conviction that He will not fail to protect us is 'viSvAsa'. This by itself is capable of eradicating all sins.
- iv) goptR The deliberate choice of bhagavAn SrIman nArAyaNa as the sole Protector. Even when it is granted that anyway He is the sole







protector, lakshmI-tantra points out that what is involved in this anga is the conscious and mindful selection of Him, the acknowledgment that we need protection, and that He and only He can protect us.

- v) prAtikUlya-vivarjana giving up whatever is antagonistic to any of His creations or to Him. A devotee must realize that all beings are like himself.
- vi) AnukUlya-niScaya The resolve to do good to all beings. The realization that all beings are in actuality the body of God, and the resolve to live in accordance with the will of God.

ahirbudhnya samhitA gives a beautiful illustration of SaraNAgati using a passenger who wants to cross a river in a boat. It is the passenger's responsibility to go and sit in the boat, and that is the end of his responsibility; the job or rowing the boat is not his, but that of the boatman (in this case God Himself).

11. moksha - The attainment of the glorious and supreme feet of vishNu (tad vishNoh paramam padam). The pA'ncarAtrin regards it as a positive state of attainment for an individual soul. Being able to perform nitya kaimkarya to bhagavAn is the gist of moksha.

The concept of the individual soul in pA'ncarAtra:

ahirbudhnya samhitA explains that the individual soul is by its nature immortal, indivisible, and blissful. Its form, potency, and knowledge become attenuated and obscured owing to the mAyA-Sakti of bhagavAn, and thus limitations are introduced that bind the soul to the material world.

But there is another power of God, the anugraha Sakti, which prompts God to look with compassion on the deserving soul and accept it. When God wills it, the soul longs for liberation, becomes dispassionate, and sets about to discern the real from the unreal. This leads to actions such as reflecting on scriptures,







serving a master (AcArya), engaging in good deeds, becoming steady in the knowledge of vedAnta, etc. After great, steady and concerted effort, he attains the foothold of vishNu (ahir. 14, 36-40).



The pA'ncarAtra theory holds that at time of dissolution (pralaya), the individual souls merge, but do not become one with, Godhead. They retain their identity, and when the new phase of creation begins, the unliberated souls occupy separate bodies. While the liberated souls are never born again, they do not become one with God, but remain distinct from each other and from God. SrI vedAnta deSika identifies the following forms of liberation for the liberated soul -

- sAlokya (residence in the same plane as Godhead),
- sAmIpya (abiding in close proximity to Godhead),
- sAdRSya (attaining the same form as Godhead), and
- sAyujya (union with Godhead). Of these, the last one is the ultimate liberation.

The modes of the Deity in pA'ncarAtra:

The number of varieties of forms assumed by the Deity is described as three, four, or five depending on the age of the pA'ncarAtra text. The earlier texts (e.g., sAttvata, ahirbudhnya) describe three forms, the para, vyUha, and vibhava. SrI ParASara BhaTTar also refers to only three forms in his vishNu sahasranAma commentary - paravyUhavibhavAtmanA trividham brahmeti bhagavad siddhAntah. The later samhitA-s (e.g., SrI praSna, vishvaksena) add the antaryAmi and arcA forms. Of these, the para (transcendental) and vyUha (emanatory) forms are known only to the nityasUri-s (the likes of GaruDa, ananta, and vishvaksena who are never born), and to mukta-s (those who were once mortals but who have subsequently attained divine bodies) who have joined the Lord in SrI vaikuNTham. The incarnations are forms on earth, seen by







those who are our contemporaries. The antaryAmi form resides in every one of us, even though only the sages visualize this form in their meditational spells.

The Transcendental Mode:

The three modes are together called the Supreme Deity, called variously as vAsudeva, nArAyaNa, bhagavAn, AtmA, paramAtmA, vishNu, kshetraj~na, etc. In this 'para' or transcendental mode, the Deity is like an ocean of nectar altogether devoid of waves, quiet, profound, limitless, unfathomable, pure consciousness, the abode of the six qualities in fullness, altogether non-material in nature, devoid of all negative attributes (nirguNa), devoid of aspects (nishkala), without discernible forms (nirAkAra, nira'nga), an embodiment of Absolute Bliss and Peace. VAsudeva is in a plane where knowledge and bliss abound unobstructed.

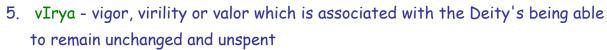
Even though we are all familiar with the six qualities, they are listed here briefly to remind ourselves of the significance of these qualities.

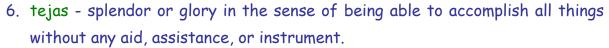
- j~nAna or knowledge comprehension of all things without the help of any external agency. This corresponds to absolute knowledge, directly and completely, of all things in all places at all times. One way to understand this concept is to look at it as the pervasion of all things by bhagavAn as the antaryAmi in everything.
- 2. Sakti energy which is spontaneous and independent and which knows no constraints. This is the energy in the Deity which wills-to-become and is all-powerful. This is the initial impetus to create.
- 3. aiSvarya omnipotency or Lordship over everything, expressing the freedom to act in such a way that there can be no obstruction whatsoever from any source.
- 4. bala strength for doing all things at all times (like the creation, preservation and destruction) without getting fatigued on that account.











These attributes constitute the body of the Deity (shAdguNya-vigraha), which is also the body of Lakshmi who is inseparable from the Deity. However, in the transcendental mode these six attributes are indistinguishable (i.e., undifferentiated), and static, still and not active in phenomenal appearances and changes.

Lakshmi is considered the Sakti or energy of Brahman, and is considered inseparable and indistinguishable from Him in this state. This Sakti is considered responsible for the origin, maintenance, and dissolution of the world. It is this energy that makes all existence possible. The second aspect of Lakshmi is called bhUti-Sakti, wherein the world is considered nothing but a transformation of the energy that is Lakshmi, and so Lakshmi is also the material cause of the world. Lakshmi is considered the consort of the transcendental form, the energy inseparable from Him, and for this reason the Deity in the transcendental form is also referred to as LakshmI-nArAyaNa.

While the earlier pA'ncarAtra texts only mention of Lakshmi as the energy associated with the transcendental form, later texts add BhU, and still later texts add NILA. Prof. Ramachandra Rao indicates that probably the three energies represent the three guNa-s of prakRti - Lakshmi representing sattva, BhU representing rajas, and NILA representing tamas. He bases this opinion on the premise that lakshmi is white in color (sattva), bhUmi is red (rajas), and NILA is dark (tamas). He does not give a reference for this opinion.

The vyUha Modes:

The vyUha mode of the Deity's being emphasizes the differentiated manifestations and functions of the six attributes for the purposes of creation









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Para VAsudevan













vyUha - kshIrAbdhinAthan







and evolution of the world, for maintenance and protection of the devotees, and for leading the devotees to salvation. In other words, in the vyUha form the attributes become dynamic and express themselves in the creation, protection and destruction.

Of the six qualities constituting the body of the Deity in the transcendental mode, three (j~nAna, aiSvarya, and Sakti) are functionally in a plane of rest, whereas the other three (bala, vIrya, and tejas) are in a plane of activity. The qualities in the two planes pair with each other resulting in the three vyUha forms (j~nAna and bala, aiSvarya and vIrya, Sakti and tejas), corresponding to samkarshaNa, pradyumna, and aniruddha respectively. Some samhitA-s talk of four vyUhas including vAsudeva who has all six attributes in fullness, whereas other samhitA-s, e.g., sAttvata samhitA, only consider three vyUha forms. In some texts, distinction is made between para-vAsudeva - referring to the transcendental mode of vAsudeva, and vyUha-vAsudeva, referring to the vyUha mode of vAsudeva.

It is noted that in the transcendental mode all six qualities are equipotent but unmanifest. In each of the vyUha modes again, all six qualities are present, but two of these qualities are manifest while the other four are dormant. The vyUha forms thus become operative in the physical and spiritual evolution of beings, and thus become significant.

Different samhitA-s differ on the actual functions assigned to the vyUha forms. In general, aniruddha (Sakti) is associated with creation, pradyumna with preservation (vIrya), and sankarshaNa (bala) with destruction or with attaining salvation (j~nAna). vAsudeva is associated with dharma, the basis for the cosmic order.

There is also a notion that the vyUha-s emanate in a sequence, sankarshaNa from vAsudeva, pradyumna from sankarshaNa, and aniruddha from pradyumna. But they do not undergo any change during such sequential appearance. The simile given to illustrate this is the sequential lighting of one lamp from







another. Para-vAsudeva is like the seed that contains the entire tree, but it manifests over a period of time.

The viSAkha-yUpa or the brahma-yUpa:

The concept of the vyUha emanations from para-vAsudeva is related to the pillar of light resplendently located in SrI vaikuNTham, and said to be assumed by the Deity for the purpose of meditation by the yogi-s. The pillar has four nodes, each facing one of the four principal directions. The topmost node is altogether bright light, representing vyUha-vAsudeva. Nothing is discernible at this level except pure Effulgence. The next three levels descending downwards respectively represent sa'nkarshaNa, pradyumna, and aniruddha. At each level going down, the node is more and more discernible, representing the para-vAsudeva assuming forms to make it easier for the devotees to realize Him. Thus, sa'nkarshaNa node is red in color like ruby, pradyumana is yellow like burnished gold, and aniruddha is black like rain-bearing cloud. Descending down the tree, more and more details are seen in the node including the weapons associated with the form, the retinue, etc. The four nodes going from bottom up are also equated to jAgrat (wakefulness), svapna (dream), deep sleep (sushupti), and turiya (the state beyond it).

LakshmI-tantra also identifies sa'nkarshaNa with the individual soul, pradyumna with individual awareness (buddhi), and aniruddha with the sense of ego (ahamkAra). The idea is that sankarshNa provides the foundation for all the individual souls, pradyumna enters into the souls, seizes hold of the faculty of awareness and distinguishes between the subjective and objective frames of reference, and aniruddha projects the world of multiplicity and differentiations.

The concept illustrates the idea that the vyUha forms are no different from the para-vAsudeva form, and also shows how the vyUha forms take shape. The concept here is that Deity descends and becomes involved in the transactional aspects of the world and is also more easily approached as we go down the tree.





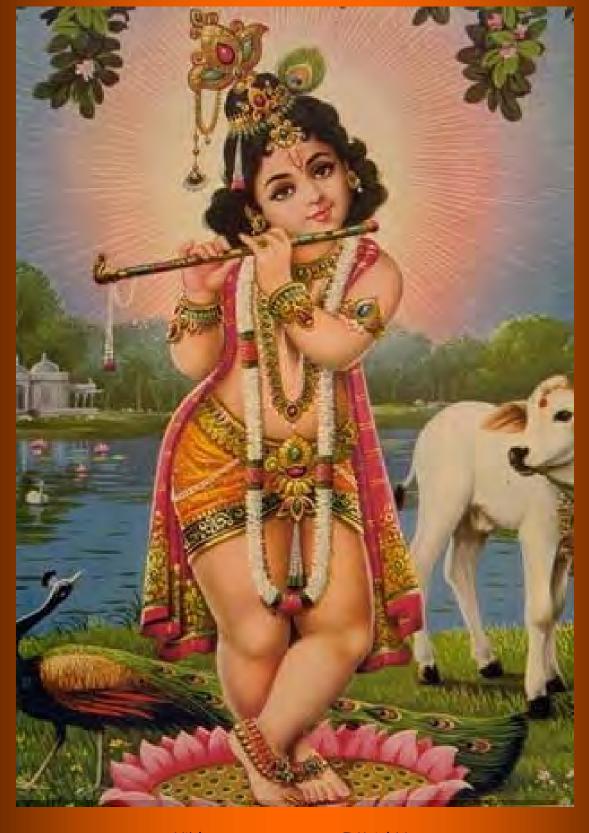


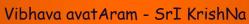


















The vibhava mode:

The vibhava forms are special manifestations of the Deity on earth, descending from aniruddha, who represents the bottom-most node of the viSAkha-yUpa. For this reason they are called "descents' (avatAra-s) or appearances on the earth. Since the viSAkha-yUpa is in SrIvaikuNTham, and the vyUha modes are part of this pillar in SrIvaikuNTham, the Deity makes a further descent to appear in this world in the vibhava mode so as to be accessible to those who are not accomplished enough to reach Him in SrI vaikuNTham, and are meant to secure the welfare of all mankind.

Three types of vibhava avatAra-s are distinguished -

- 1. sAkshAt-avatAra or svarUpa-avatAra direct manifestation of the Deity's nature,
- 2. guNa-avatAra the Deity's attributes taking possession in divine and human beings, and
- 3. amSa-avatAra-s where some aspect or weapon of the Deity incarnates itself to carry out the deity's will.

38 vibhava or incarnatory forms are identified in the sAttvata-samhitA. Among these are the common forms that we are familiar with - the daSAvatAra-s, padma-nAbha, ananta, viSva-rUpa, hamsa, etc.

The arcA mode:

sAttvata samhitA considers the arcA mode under the vibhava mode. ArcA is the form of the Deity represented by an icon that is transmuted into the very form of the Deity full of the six divine attributes through the power of the mantra-s used in the installation as well as subsequent worship. Therefore the proper installation of the arcA mUrti with the prescribed Agama procedures is very essential for the power of the arcA mUrti, and also the proper subsequent maintenance of the sanctity through proper ArAdhana-s, utsava-s and other



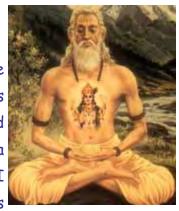




regular and proper worship.

The antaryAmi mode:

The antaryAmi mode is the extension of aniruddha in the hearts of all devotees, without assuming a shape. As indicated earlier, not all samhitA-s list the arcA and antaryAmi modes as separate modes. The sAttvata samhitA considers the para and vyUha as the ones in SrI vaikuNTham, and the vibhava as all the forms on this earth.



antary Ami!

pA'ncarAtra Practice:

The book by Prof. Ramachandra Rao published by the Kalpatharu Research Academy contains a chapter with the above title. I am not including much of the material covered there, but only a brief overview, followed by the part relating to the pa'nca samskAra which many of us are familiar with.

PA'ncarAtra, like other Agama-s, specifies worship of the Deity in concrete forms, and specifies the need for obtaining proper eligibility for worship. Worship can be performed in an icon, in fire, in water, or in one's own heart. Of these, iconic worship is the easiest. When worshipping in one's own heart, procedures like the placement (nyAsa), visualizing one's own body as the temple of God, and identifying oneself with the Deity being worshipped, are specified. The four vyUha forms, the twleve vyUhAntara forms, and the thirty eight vibhava forms, each have their own mantra. While chanting the mantra, the devotee must visualize the iconic form of the Deity that the mantra represents.

Initiation is of three kinds:

- para-dIkshA (ultimately leads to salvation),
- 2. vyUha-dIkshA (calculated to accomplish worldly welfare and salvation), and















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arcA - SrI Oppiliappan - Thiruvinnagaram









3. vibhava-dIkshA (only worldly welfare).

Initiation involves the following five consecrations (pa'nca samskAra):

- 1. Branding of heated metallic emblems of vishNu (vis. The conch and the discus) on the arms of the devotee.
- 2. The wearing of marks on the forehead signifying devotion to vishNu
- 3. the bestowal of one of the names of vishNu (whichever form out of the thirty-eight vibhava forms appeals to the devotee) not one of the "nambi pimbi" names (recall the prabandham pASuram in this context).
- 4. the formal communication of the selected mantra for the above Deity
- 5. Fire-rituals.

Of these, the ritualistic branding is considered the most important, and is a requisite for initiation. This is what marks a devotee as a vaishNava (a person belonging entirely to vishNu).

Later samhitA-s give different definitions for the different types of initiation, which we are not addressing here.

A Difficult period for pA'ncarAtra:

Even though there is ample evidence from the Sruti-s an smRti-s that the pA'ncarAtra is given to us by BhagavAn SrIman NArAyaNa Himself through His own words, the pA'ncarAtra system had its adversaries in plenty, especially at the time of YAmunAcArya, and to some extent it continued to the time of svAmi DeSikan and later. In addition to the objections to the pA'ncarAtra system that were created by the mImAmsaka-s and the advaitins, there was internal rivalry even between the two branches of the vaishNava Agama itself - between the pA'ncarAtra and the vaikhAnasa systems. There were even texts that said that the pA'ncarAtrins should not be invited to partake in SrAddha meals in the homes of the followers of the vaikhAnasa system that people







should not even talk to them, etc. There was also counter-attack from the pA'ncarAtra camp, including statements calling the veda-s as perverted texts incapable of fulfilling the human values (purushArtha aproyojaka). Unfortunately, the rivalries continue to this day in some form.

All good things seem to go through some difficult times, as a part of BhagavAn's leelA. We know that Even Lord Ra'nganAtha went through the leelA of being displaced from His own temple in SrIra'ngam for a period, and so it is no wonder that His own words in the form of the pA'ncarAtra Agama were questioned by some people, and our great AcArya-s had to come to His rescue and to the rescue of His own words in the form of the pA'ncarAtra Agama. We will briefly see the history of these difficulties that the Bhagavat SAstra (pA'ncrAtra) had to go through, and the great efforts undertaken by our

AcArya-s to establish its validity in toto.

Basically, the Agama declares that by constructing places of worship and offering worship to BhagavAn through the tantric worship - as specified in the Agama, the aspirant to moksha will attain moksha at the end of this life. This is a fundamentally different system than the purely vedic system, and involves mantra-s and procedures that are not part of the nigama (veda) with its prescribed mantra-s. The major objection to the validity of the pA'ncarAtra system came from the group called mImAmsaka-s, who had faith in the sanctity of the veda-s, but did not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being called They raised several points of objection against the Agama system, essentially stacking up points that the Agama was non-vedic, and that there was no basis to believe its claims that worshipping a fictitious Supreme Being will lead to moksha. They maintained that it was all a deception. To add to the problem, Sa'nkara interpreted four of the brahma sUtra-s of veda vyAsa (sUtra-s 2.39 to 2.42) as declaring that the pA'ncarAtra system is invalid. This was in spite of the fact the same Veda vyAsa has declared in clear words in his mahAbhArata that the pA'ncarAtra system in completely authoritative, and has the same status as the veda. In addition, there was discordance between the







two vaishNava Agama-s themselves, and so the pA'ncarAtra Agama was under attack from diverse sides.

It was under these circumstances that YAmuna rose up to defend the pA'ncarAtra system against its attackers through his monumental work "Agama prAmANya". We will briefly look into the specific points of attack from the mImAmsaka-s and the advaitins on the Agama, and the valiant defense of the sacred Agama by YAmuna. Later, svAmi DeSikan wrote the pA'ncarAtra rakshA, and we will briefly look into the subject matter of this work as well. Two other works were also written in support of AgamaprAmANta -tantraSuddha by BhaTTAraka Vedottama, and pA'ncarAtra kaNTakoddhAra by VadhUla VaradAcArya. It should be noted that SrI VedAnta DeSika has also written a work about the vaikhAnasa Agama titled sajjanavaibhava, though I have not been successful in locating a copy.

YAmuna pointed out that the pA'ncarAtra and the veda-s both originated from SrIman nArAyaNa, and were complementary to each other. Inevitably it was a very sensitive undertaking, since it touched on the sensitivities of both the opposing camps. Then there came the time when the pA'ncarAtrins claimed superiority over the veda-s saying that the pA'ncarAtra was more ancient, and the veda-s came later. Perhaps in this atmosphere, SrI vedAnta-deSika endeavored to bring a balance between the veda-s and the Agama-s, quoting passages from the pA'ncarAtra text Lakshmi-tantra, that the wise man should never transgress even in his thoughts the conduct prescribed in the veda-s. It cannot but be noticed that our great pUrvAcArya-s have done exceptional service in bringing about the reconciliation between the vedanta adherents and the Agama group, trying to make sure that people don't succumb to self-destruction through disunity.

The style as well as the contents of the YAmuna's and VedAnta DeSika's works are very different. YAmuna's work is very terse in style, and goes through elaborate dissection of the opponent's points and their rejection through extensive pramANa-s. He exclusively deals with the objections raised by the





mImAmsaka-s and the advaitins against the poA'ncarAtra system, and refutes their claims that the pA'ncarAtra is non-vedic, and hence should not be treated as authoritative. He mainly points out that the pA'ncarAtra Agama is given to us direct from BhagavAn Himself as an alternative to the involved vedic procedures, and is in every way as authoritative as the veda-s. He refutes each and every objection raised by the opponents to the pA'ncarAtra system. Only those with training in mImAmsA and nyAya will be able to follow the elaborate and involved arguments presented in this work. Dr. Narasimhachary has published a critical edition of Agama prAmANya in English with extensive footnotes etc. Prof. Van Buitenen has also published an English translation for YAmuna's work.

SvAmi DeSikan's work titled 'pA'ncarAtra rakshA' is, by contrast, a work written in very easy style, and even those with a rudimentary knowledge of samskRt will be able to understand a large part of his work. He does not have any significant overlap with YAmuna in the treatment of the subject. In the first of three chapters, he starts with a statement that the pA'ncarAtra is devoid of any flaw because it is the word of BhagavAn Himself, and then goes into the various divisions (siddhAnta-s) of the Agama, the rules regarding their intermixing, etc. In the second chapter, he establishes the validity in the smRti-s for the pa'ncakAla vidhi - the division of the pA'ncarAtrin's day's activities devoted to the worship of BhagavAn into five periods. Then in the third and final chapter, he goes into details on the procedures and rules that should be followed in observing the pa'ncakAla vidhi. Typical of a great AcAryan, he comes down to the level of the ordinary people who wish to understand and practise the system, and describes even the minutest details of the rules to be followed in observing the worship procedures. I could not find an English translation for this work in the web, and it would have been a great treasure for us to get a proper understanding of our tradition with pramANa-s. A few random examples are included in the summary of the pA'ncarAtra rakshA that is presented later.



















A Brief Summary of YAmunAcArya's "Agama prAmANya"



The following points are of interest based on the Introduction to the book by R. Ramanujachari and another introduction whose author is not clearly identified. Some of the points have been mentioned before, but they are worth repeating:

- A basic pA'ncarAtra teaching is that everyone, whatever his station in life,
 is entitled to moksha at the end of this life itself.
- PA'ncarAtra invests all our acts in our lives with sanctity. In other words, everything we do is done with the spirit of dedicating all the benefits to Him, and is undertaken in the spirit of service to Him.
- The pA'ncarAtra is an uncompromising monotheism that BhagavAn NArAyaNa is the one and only Supreme Deity to be worshipped. He takes many forms for our benefit, and He has His full power in all His forms.

In his AgamaprAmANya, Yamuna mainly deals with the objections raised by the mImAmsaka-s and the advaitin-s against the pA'ncarAtra system. YAmuna takes the main message of the pA'ncarAtra system as one of advocating that the consecration of BhagavAn VishNu in the temples and His exclusive worship will lead to moksham, the ultimate liberation of the jIva from the repeated cycle of birth and death. The mImAmsaka-s, while upholding the authority of the veda-s, deny the existence of a Supreme Being. They essentially contend that it is just a convenient postulate for purposes such as meditation, and is just a fabrication. YAmuna devotes a large part of his pA'ncarAtra rakshA to refute this position, and to establish the existence of a Supreme Being, endowed with all auspicious qualities, filled with infinite compassion for the jIva-s, intent on uplifting the beings, etc. The mImAmsaka's position is that







the pA'ncarAtra Agama is non-vedic for the various reasons that we will see below.

YAmuna also criticizes the interpretation of Sa'nkara for four of the brahma sutra-s (2.39 to 2.42) as lending support to the non-vedic character of the pA'ncarAtra system, and gives alternate interpretations that fully establish their consistency with VyAsa's position on the pA'ncarAtra Agama as found in the mahAbhArata. SrI Narasimhachari notes that MadhvAcArya also accepts the validity of the pA'ncarAtra system in toto.

At the outset, YAmuna refers to the pA'ncarAtra system as the BhAgavata matam, and points out that the great pA'ncarAtra tantra of great depth is given to us by BhagavAn Himself: Paramapurusha viracita niratiSiya niSSreyasagocara pa'ncarAtra tantra. He also treats the term 'sAttvata' as equivalent to the term 'BhAgavata' and 'pA'ncarAtrin' throughout his work.

Among the points that YAmuna raises in his pUrvapaksha are the following major questions of philosophy and ideology, to which he devotes a major part of his work. However, we will not delve into this major topic in any depth because of the extreme complexity of the arguments involved in the discussion. He addresses several other points of objection to the pA'ncarAtra system from the mImAmsaka-s and the advaitin-s that are at a level that can be more easily understood. We will deal with these at a high level following a very brief summary of the questions raised by the mImAmsaka about the very existence of God.

The types of questions raised by the mImAmsaka in this area were:

 Where is the basis for claiming that activities such as consecration of temples, worship of BhagavAn, etc., will lead to ultimate release or moksha? (The mImAsaka accepts the validity of the veda, but not the existence of God. Since the pA'ncarAtra is not part of the four veda-s directly, and







since they don't trust the claim that there exists a Supreme Being whose words are infallible, they do not accept pA'ncarAtra as valid). The pA'ncarAtra system postulates that worship of BhagavAn will lead to moksha, and this need not be true.

• There is no scriptural evidence which says that actions such as consecration of temples, worship of BhagavAn, etc., will lead to ultimate salvation, as claimed by the pA'ncarAtra doctrine.

Responses:

YAmuna goes through extensive, detailed, and incisive logical analysis, with ample support for his position from the smRti-s etc., and establishes that the pA'ncarAtra system is without any fault whatsoever, and is valid in toto in every sense, because it is the word of BhagavAn VAsudeva Himself. He points out that it does not have any possibility of flaws that can occur in systems that are given to us by sages, the other gods like BrahmA, etc.

As pointed out earlier, without going through the very detailed arguments of YAmuna that are very difficult for all except those who have mastered mImAmsA, nyAya, etc., we will give a summary of YAmuna's responses to the objections at the philosophical level that have been listed above.

- Tha parattvam of VAsudeva is declared in several smRti-s and works of famous sages including dvaipAyana, parASara, nArada, etc., and in varAha purANa, li'nga purANa, mAnava dharma SAstra, bhavishyatpurANa, etc. There are also enormous references indicating that the likes of Rudra are jIva-s subject to karma phalan and are subject to birth and rebirth. (The individual references are given in the original text, but are not included here in the interests of brevity),
- There is no need to look for support pA'ncarAtra in the veda-s. They are independently valid, because it is also direct knowledge. They are independent sources of knowledge, and are not interdependent -







parasparamapekshete tulyakakshye na hi smRtI |
pa'ncarAtra SrutI tadvannApekshete parasparam || (Yamuna. P. 10)

Just as BhagavAn gave the veda-s (mantra) for the sustenance of the beings
of the world, He gave the pA'ncarAtra Agama-s (tantra) as an independent
means of sustenance to the world in His own words, and promulgated it
through sanatkumAra, nArada, etc., for the purpose of His worship, because
of His infinite compassion,

parama kAruNatayA taptamAnasaH parama niSSrewyasa sAdhana sva ArAdhana avabodha sAdhanIbhUtAH pa'ncarAtra samhitAH sanatkumAra nAradAdibhyaH atrayI samAna svatantrAnubhava bhyavocat iti trayI samAna svatantrAnubhavamUlAni tantrANi

(samskRt p. 12, Eng. 23)

 YAmuna repeats many times the point that the pA'ncarAtra tantra is given to us by BhagavAn Himself, and therefore there is nothing to question about its validity, except by those who are ignorant:

SrutimUrdhni prasiddhena sarvaj~nevaiva hi nirmitam |

tantram mithyeti vaktum naH katham jihvA pravartate ||

(p. 18 of samskRt text)

- YAmunacArya asks: 'How can our tongue attempt to state that the tantra is false, when it is composed by the Omniscient One who is known through the Upanishads?' (Eng. P. 30)
- There are hundreds of scriptural supports proclaiming the validity and authority of the pA'ncarAtra Agama: e.g.;

In the skanda purANa, it is said that kapila is the promulgator of sA'nkhya, and keSava of pA'ncarAtra. (item 114)







sA'nkhyasya kapilovaktA pa'ncarAtrasya keSavaH | (skanda.)

pa'ncarAtrasya kRtsnasya vaktA nrAyaNaH svayam | (bhArata.)

idam mahopanishadam caturveda samanvitam |

sA'nkhyayoga kRtAntena pa'ncarAtrAnuSabditam ||

nArAyaNa mukhodgItam nArado'SrAvayan munIn |

• Great sages such as NArada, SANDilya, etc., have conclusively decided that BhagavAn created the pA'ncarAtra system that constitutes the sole means of attaining the beatitude they sought. (Eng. P. 68, item 82)

brahmaNassadane tAta! YathAdRshTam yathASrutam ||

SANDilya nAradAdi parama RshibhyaH tadabhilacita niratiSaya niSSreyasaika sAdhana svAvagagamArAdhana avabodhinIm pa'ncarAtra samhitAm niramimIteti niScIyate | (sams. P. 42)

Other Objections raised against the pA'ncarAtra system, and their Refutation by YAmunacArya:

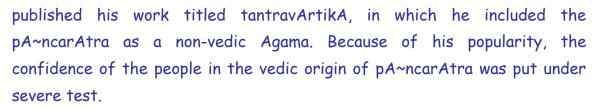
Among the other points of objection raised by the mImAmsaka-s were:

- 1. The pA~ncarAtra prescribed, or required a special initiation called dIkshA for anyone to be qualified for performing temple worship (the equivalent of priests in the temple). dIkshA is not explicitly mentioned in the veda-s, and so the argument was that pA~ncarAtra was non-vedic.
- 2. Unlike the pA'ncarAtra system whose authorship was not ascribable to any human source, the vaikhAnasa school was initiated by a vedic sage by name vikhanasa, and so it was easier to accept the vaikhAnasa system's known vedic basis.
- 3. A very well known mImAmasaka by name kumArilabhaTTa (around 800 A.D.)











- 4. The interpretation of four aphorisms of the brahma sUtra-s considered to deal with the pA~ncarAtra system by the well-known Adi Sa'nkara led him to conclude that the pA~ncarAtra was non-vedic. (We have covered the details of this earlier).
- 5. In one of the pA~ncarAtra samhitA-s (parama samhitA), SANDilya is quoted as saying that he has studied all the four veda-s but has not been able to find beyond all doubt the road to bliss, and so he undertook the study of pA~ncarAtra. This has been quoted by the advaitin-s as proof that the pA~ncarAtra undermines the veda-s by saying that they are incapable of revealing the truth.
- 6. The term sAttvata refers to a class of low-born people called vrAtya-s according to manu-smRti. The vrAtya community is decidedly non-vedic. Since the pA~ncarAtrin-s are referred to as sAttvata-s, they must be the same class of low-borns that is referred to in the smRti, and so pA~ncarAtra is non-vedic, and the bhAgavata-s (sAttvata-s) are not even brAhmaNa-s. The fact that pA'ncarAtra recognizes the authority of the bhAgavata-s who by birth and by deeds have deviated from the way of the veda-s is sufficient ground to deny authority to the pA'ncarAtra scriptures.
- 7. The sAttvata-s live by the profession of cleaning up the sanctuaries of the Deity, and sustain themselves by eating the eatables offered to the Deity. Both of these are prohibited by the Sruti-s, and so the faith followed by them in non-vedic. Those who perform worship in the temple in order to earn their living are prohibited from the study of the veda-s, participation in sacrifices, and officiating in sacrifices. tathA ca uSanA sarveshAm kRshi SAstropajIvanam AcArya sAttvatayoH devapUjanam iti, tathA brAhme







purANe vishNorAyatanAni sa pUjayedAj~nayA rAj~nAm iti tathA anyatrApi sAttvatAnAm ca devAyatana Sodhanam pratimA samrakshaNam iti | (item 15 in Agama prAmANya)

- 8. The people who do temple worship should not benefit by this activity, and some of the people who do pA~ncarAtra worship have their livelihood from this.
- 9. vAsudeva, the person from whom the pA~ncarAtra is said to have originated, is known to have deceived the asura-s in His mohini incarnation, deceived mahAbali in His trivikrama incarnation, etc., and so He is unreliable, and could have also deceived people by creating the pA~ncarAtra.
- 10. While the veda-s have got a particular sequence (krama), there is no such krama for pA'ncarAtra texts, and so pA'ncarAtra is non-vedic in character.
- 11. For the same rite, there is a vedic and a tantric rite, and this again establishes that Agama-s are opposed to, and are different from the vedas.
- 12. The pA'ncarAtra is not included in the 14 sources of knowledge (vidyAsthAna) consisting of the four veda-s, their six accessories, the mImAmsA, the nyAya, the purANa, and the dharma SAstra as given in Manu smRti, and recognized by orthodox people. (Manu)
- 13. If the pA'ncarAtra is claimed to be based on the veda, then why promulgate it once more?

Refutation of the above objections by the revered YAmuna and the latter SrI VaishNava AcArya-s:

YAmunAcArya, Bhagavad RamAnuja and VedAnta DeSika have provided convincing and sound refutations for the above objections. There is an excellent English summary of the specifics that yAmunAcArya used in defending the pA'ncarAtra in the book titled AgmamprAmANya of yAmunAcArya by SrI M. Narasimhachary and published by the University of







Baroda. The following is an extract from this reference.

1. Response to the Objection of dIkshA Being Required for Temple Worship: (p. 38 of Introduction)

yAmunAcArya replies that the requirement of dIkshA for performing temple worship is not non-vedic. He points out that special sacraments are ordained in the veda-s as and when necessary, to qualify one to perform particular duties. Thus, for instance, for performing the jyotishToma rite, special dIkshA is ordained by the injunction "AgnAvaishNavam ekAdaSa kapAlam puroDASam nirvaped dikshishyamANaH", on a person who has already been initiated by upanayana. This is a vedic passage, and so it is authoritative by the standards of the vedAntin-s.

2, and 3. Authorship, vedic vs. non-vedic character:

yAmunAcArya points out that if the mImAmsaka does not have a problem accepting the authenticity of the veda-s, then he should not have problem accepting the authenticity of the pA'ncarAtra. The mImAmsaka would say that the veda-s are apaurusheya (impersonal in character), and therefore their validity is unquestionable. So also the pA'ncarAtra Agama-s are the direct utterances of the Omniscient and Merciful vAsudeva, and are therefore unquestionable.

4. SrI Sa'nkara's interpretation of the four brahma sUtra aphorisms related to the pA'ncarAtra and the responses by Bhagavad RAmAnuja:

This has been covered in an earlier section.

5. Defense of SANDilya's words that from the veda-s he could not find the road to bliss:

yAmunAcArya points out that SANDilya's statement should not be taken to mean that he is saying that humans can't find the answer in the veda-s because







they do not contain one. It only means that he, in his particular case, could not find the answer in the veda-s because of their vastness. In fact, this only means that the purport of the Agama-s and the veda-s is one and the same and there is no contradiction between them. Both RAmAnuja and DeSika point out that what is meant here is that it is difficult for everyone to understand the veda-s, and the style of the pA'ncarAtra texts is such that it is more easily grasped. So SANDilya's statement is not meant to be anti-vedic in any sense, but is only meant to emphasize the easy style of the pA'ncarAtra texts.

SANDilya's words that he resorted to the pA'ncarAtra because he could not find a meaning of human importance in the four veda-s, is to be correctly understood through the 'na hi nindA' nyAya. YAmuna gives several examples (p. 76 Eng.) Also, the emphasis is in 'failing to find the purpose of human importance', and not there was 'no purpose of human importance in the vedas'.

SvAmi deSikan also advocates this position in his pA'carAtra rakshA, and points out that SANDilya's words are meant to praise the greatness of the pA'ncarAtra system, and are not meant to talk ill of the veda-s.

6. Refutation of the contention that the bhAgavata-s were not brAhmaNa-s:

Regarding the argument that "bhagavata-s" who practiced pA~ncarAtra during the mImAmsaka's times did not belong to any one of the three higher castes, yAmunAcArya points out that they are in every sense brAhmaNa-s. This is evident both by the fact of ocular perception (pratyaksha) of their practices and observances, and also by the fact that there is the practice of remembering the gotra from which they come. There is no reason to doubt their brAhmanical status.

Then yAmunAcArya deals with the statement by the opponents that Manu smRti (10.23) says the term sAttvata refers to people from a community called vrAtya-s who are decidedly non-vedic, and since the sAttvata-s practiced pA'ncarAtra, pA'ncarAtra is non-vedic by the fact of being practiced by a non-vedic group. yAmunAcArya points out that the term sAttvata as used in







pA'ncarAtra context need not, and does not, refer to the same group of sAttvata-s as referred to in Manu smRti. He illustrates this by pointing out that the same Manu smRti Sloka (10.23), also uses the term AcArya to refer to the low born belonging to the vrAtya community.

vaiSyAttu jAyate vrAtyAt sudhanvAcArya eva ca |

KArushaSca vijanmA ca maitraH sAttvata eva ca | (Manu. 10.23)

"From a vrAtya of the vaiSya caste are born a sudhanvan, an AcArya, a kArusha, a vijanman, a maitra and a sAttvata."

By the referenced Sloka from Manu smRti, the term AcArya refers to a person of the vrAtya community, but no one denies that the word also refers to a learned brAhmaNa teacher. yAmunAcArya points out that when the etymological meanings for the words bhAgavata and sAttvata are available, indicating that these terms refer to the devotees of the Lord, there is no need to reject these and resort to some other meaning. By profession, vrAtya-s look after the temple, but bhAgavata-s perform the five-fold activities for bhagavAn, and these are not comparable and identical.

The atharva veda also mentions a class called vrAtya-s who are naturally pure and thus need no samskAra even. In praSnopanishad, prANa is referred to as vrAtya - vrAtyatvam prANaikarshirattA...(2.11), which is interpreted as "prANa is vrAtya - One born first, and so not needing purification etc.". In the atharva veda (15-11) it is said that anyone who entertains a vrAtya will gain the road that gods travel etc.

The, the objection of the vedAntin-s stands refuted.

7. naivedya offered to Lord vishNu is sanctified and holy.

On the objection that the bhAgavata-s partake in the food offered to the Lord in violation of the smRti-s, yAmunAcArya gives evidence from many samhitA-s and smRti-s and points out that this applies only to the food offered to other







gods, and not to the sacred prasAdam offered to Lord VishNu. The naivedya offered to bhagavAn is holy, and there is nothing to dispute this.

8. BrAhminical character vs. earning livelihood:

On the contention that the bhAgavata-s are not orthodox brAhmaNa-s because they worship the Lord for their livelihood, yAmunAcArya points out that except under dire financial conditions, this is not the case, and even when this is the case, this has nothing to do with their brAhmanical character. It is only when worship is done with greed as the motive, that it is unacceptable.

9. Refutation of mImAmsaka's Position on VAsudeva Being Deceitful:

yAmunAcArya points out that until there is reason to believe beyond doubt that a certain utterance is not dependable, there is no reason to doubt its validity. Since the upanishad-s glorify the author of the pA'ncarAtra as Omniscient and Merciful, there is no reason to assign any evil designs in Him in composing these Agama-s.

10 and 11. Response to the Objection that A Tantric Procedure is Specified for A Karma when a Vedic Procedure already Exists, and So Agama is Anti-vedic:

Regarding the objection that for the same karma, pA'ncarAtra provides for a tantric rite when there is already a prescribed vedic rite and so pA'ncarAtra is anti-vedic, I did not find a direct refutation listed in the above reference. However, based on SrI deSikan's nyAsa vimSati and other writings, the following is a valid explanation.

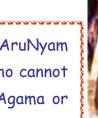
The veda-s limit the vedic rite only to those who are qualified to perform these by their varNa etc., whereas the tantric rites are open to anyone without these restrictions. An example is prapatti or bhara-nyAsa, for which svAmi deSikan clearly points out that those who cannot utter the vedic mantra-s required for the vedic procedure should follow the tantric procedure. Thus, the provision of a tantric procedure meets the needs of those who are forbidden from following







a vedic procedure. So it is purely because of His Infinite Mercy or kAruNyam that SrIman nArayaNa gave the pA'ncarAtra Agama so that people who cannot perform the vedic rites can still perform the same rites using the Agama or tantric procedure.



12. To the objection that the pA'ncarAtra is not included among the 14 valid sources of knowledge:

YAmuna responds that the likes of ValmIki's RamAyaNa and VyAsa's mahAbhArata are also not included in that list, and so this does not make them invalid souces: tadapi dvaipAyana vAlmIki praNIta bhArata rAmAyaNAdi granthairanaikAntikam | (Item 93 in book)

13. To the question of why BhagavAn promulgated a separate pA'ncarAtra SAstra if it is already based on the veda-s:

The answer is that because the devotees found it difficult to retain and transmit the widely scattered injunctions, BhagavAn in His infinite compassion condensed the meaning of the veda in an easily comprehensible way and taught it the form of the pA'ncarAtra Agama.

vedAnteshu yathA sAram sa'ngRhya bhagavAn hariH |

bhaktAnukampayA vidvAnsa'ncikshepa yathAsukham || (p, 47 sams.)

Thus, each and every objection raised against the pA'ncarAtra system has been soundly refuted as baseless by our SrI VaishNava AcArya-s, and the firm basis of the pA'ncarAtra Agama as a vedic Agama that was propounded by BhagavAn NArAyaNa Himself is well established.

SrI Sa'nkara's objections to some aspects of the pA'ncarAtra system

Four of the brahma sUtra-s (2.39 to 2.42) have been interpreted by Sa'nkara as a refutation of pA'ncarAtra by BadarAyaNa. In particular,







'utpatyasambhavAt' 'Because of the impossibility of origin' clearly refutes the origin of sa'nkarshaNa from vAsudeva, etc.

In his explanation for the nAma catur-vyUhaH that occurs in SrI vishNu sahasra nAmam, SrI Sa'nkara has given a reference to mahA-bhArata supporting the vyUha concept. The vyUha concept is an integral part of the pA'ncarAtra doctrine. It is known that SrI Sa'nkara had opposed the pA'ncarAtra Agama, and this was part of the reason that contributed to the questioning of the pA'ncaratra system in his time and the immediately following period.

Based on the bhAshya for brahma sUtra by SrI Sa'nkara, it is evident that he does not accept the pA'ncarAtra doctrine in toto. However, there are certain aspects of the pA'ncarAtra doctrine with which he agrees. VyUha, or the division of the supreme Brahman into many forms, is one aspect that he accepts. In his preface to a book on pAdma samhitA, SudarSanam SrI KRshNasvAmi AiyangAr has included a section of the original samskRt commentary by SrI Sa'nkara for the brahma sUtra II.2.42 that clarifies this.

'tatra yat-tAvaducyate yo'sau nArAyaNah paro'vyaktAt prasiddhaH paramAtmA sa AtmanAtmAnam anekadhA vyUha avasthita iti, tat na nirAkriyate. (Note the words 'na nirAkriyate'). 'sa ekadhA bhavati, tridhA bhavati' (chAndogya 7.26.2) ityAdi SrutibhyaH paramAtmanaH anekadhA bhAvasya adhigatatvAt | yadapi tasya bhagavataH abhigamanAdi lakshNam ArAdhanam ajasram ananya cittatayA abhipreyate tadapi na pratishidhyate (again, note the words 'na pratishidhyate'). Sruti-smRtyoH ISvara-praNidhAnasya prasiddhatvAt.

The translation of the above words of SrI Sa'nkara is: "We do not refute the view stated therein that nArAyaNa, who is superior to Nature and who is well-known to be the Supreme Self and the Self of all, has divided Himself by Himself into many forms; for from vedic texts such as - He assumes one form, He assumes three forms etc., it is known that the Supreme Self does become







multifarious. As for the predilection for His propitiation, consisting in visiting His temple etc., and so on, with exclusive devotion and for long, that also is not denied. For the contemplation of God is well in evidence in the veda-s and smRti-s." - translation is taken from svAmi gambhIrAnanda, advaita ASrama publication.

The major objection SrI Sa'nkara has for the pA'ncarAtra system is on how the beings called sa'nkarshaNa, Pradyumna, and aniruddha resulted from the supreme Self, vAsudeva. It is very interesting to read the vyAkhyYna-s of SrI Sa'nkara and SrI RAmAnuja for the sUtra-s utpatti asambhavAt (2.2.39), na ca kartuH karaNam (2.2.40), vij~nAnAdi bhAve vA tat apratishedhaH (2.2.41)', and vipratishedhAcca (2.2.42), wherein the objections are raised and answered. Briefly, SrI Sa'nkara's objections are -

- 1. The soul called sa'nkarshaNa could not have originated from the Self vAsudeva, since the soul cannot be born or created according to veda-s;
- 2. If vAsudeva, sa'nkarshaNa, pradyumna, and aniruddha are all of equal knowledge, powers, etc., as the bhAgavata doctrine maintains, there is no need for four forms, since one form could have carried out all the functions of God;
- 3. If they are all of equal knowledge and powers etc., then one could not have originated from another, since the cause and effect should have some difference in order to differentiate them, and yet the bhAgavata-s insist that there are not different.

Refutation of Sa'nkara's Interpretation:

SrI RAmAnuja points out that the origin of sa'nkarshaNa from vAsudeva etc., in this context should be viewed as the voluntary assumption of bodily forms by the supreme Brahman vAsudeva out of compassion for Its devotees, so that the devotees can have easy access to the supreme Brahman. This is because vAsudeva the supreme Brahman has for Its body the pure aggregate of the six







supreme qualities, and thus is difficult for all to attain easily. The devotee attains to the vyUha forms by worshipping the vibhava forms such as worship of RAma, kRshNa, etc., and from the vyUha forms he attains to the Subtle form of vAsudeva. If birth or origination of sa'nkarshaNa from vAsudeva etc. is viewed thus, there is no contradiction between the pA'ncarAtra doctrine and the veda-s. In fact, the pA'ncarAtra doctrine is considered to include in it all the other veda-s, the sA'nkhya-yoga, and AraNyaka-s.

It is to be noted that the author of the mahAbhArata is the same vyAsa who composed the brahma sUtra-s earlier. As was just noted, there is explicit and detailed support for the pA'ncarAtra system in the mahAbhArata, including statements that the system is consistent with the four veda-s, etc. However, SrI Sa'nkara has interpreted some of the sUtra-s in the brahma-sUtra as being opposed to the pA'nca-rAtra system (details are given in the next section). SrI RAmAnuja questions these interpretations based on the very strong statements made by SrI vyAsa in the mahAbhArata advocating the pA'ncarAtra doctrine as an upanishad that is consistent with all the veda-s. The mahAbhArata also says "Of the whole pA'ncarAtra, NArAyaNa Himself is the Promulgator". Since the matter to be known from the veda is nArAyaNa, and since narayaNa Himself is the promulgator of the entire pa'ncaratra, including the nature of nArAyaNa and how to worship Him, it is only logical that in the pA'ncarAtra all other doctrines are comprised. For this reason, the mahAbhArata says "The sA'nkhya, the yoga, the veda-s, and the AraNyaka, being members of one another, are called the pA'ncarAtra".

Thus, while it is true that SrI Sa'nkara did not accept the pA'ncarAtra doctrine in its entirety because he had issues with certain aspects of it, by his own words, there are certain aspects of the pA'ncarAtra doctrine that he also agreed with, e.g., vAsudeva as the supreme Brahman, Its ability to divide Itself and manifest Itself in many forms, dedicated worship to vAsudeva in temples, etc. The parts of the pA'ncarAtra system to which Sa'nkara had objections have been answered as described above by the viSishTAdvaita AcArya-s.











Namperum Al!











Bhagavan gave us pA'ncarAtra!







A Summary of SvAmi DeSikan's work

"The pA'ncarAtra rakshA"



svAmi DeSikan's work 'pA'ncarAtra rakshA' is written in simple and easily readable samskRt compared to YAmuna's AgamaprAmANya, and conveys the message in language that people with a basic knowledge of samskRt can easily understand,

SrI NarasimhAchary notes that svAmi DeSikan has also defended the pA'ncarAtra Agama-s in his nyAyaparisuddhi:

pa'ncarAtram tu kRtsnam Srutivat smRtivadvA pramANam (p.167)

mahAbhArate ca Aptama mAnava dharamSAstrasyA'pi tanmUlatvokteH

(The mahAbhArata declares that the pA'ncarAtra Agama is the basis for even the likes of Manu smRti).

The pA'ncarAtra rakshA consists of three sections, and these are respectively titled:

- 1. siddhAnta vyavasthApanAkhyaH The section dealing with the establishment of the siddhAnta
- 2. nityAnushThAna sthApanAkhyaH The section dealing with the pramANa-s for the division of a day's activities into five time periods based on pa'nca kAla vidhi.
- 3. nitya vyAkhyAyanAkhyaH The section dealing with the rules and procedures for performing the different daily obligatory activities

The first section deals with the basis for the pA'ncarAtra Agama, the samhitA-s of the pA'ncarAtra Agama, the different variants, their similarities







and differences, etc. The second section deals with the pa'nca kAla vidhi - the division of the day's activity into five divisions, the support for this division in the smRti-s, its applicability to all brAhmaNa-s and to all those who have had the pA'ncarAtra dIkshA, etc. The third section goes into elaborate detail on the procedures to be followed in the performance of the karma-s associated with the five time periods of the day.

We will give brief summaries of the three sections. It will be a great blessing if someone translates the third section in particular into English or other language that many of us can easily understand, because the work is a treasure house of knowledge on our tradition. This third section is a collection of all the Ahnika procedures - the rules to be followed in all the daily activities of a BrAhamaNa according to the pA'ncarAtra during the course of the day.

Summary of Section 1 of pA'ncarAtra rakshA:

In his opening words of the siddhAnta section, svAmi DeSikan points out that the pA'ncarAtra is given to us by BhagavAn Himself:

vedAnteshu yathAsAram sa'mgRhya bhagavAn hariH |

bhaktAnukampay vidvAn sa'ncikshepa yathAsukham ||

He also notes that since the pA'ncarAtra came from BhagavAn Himself, there is no flaw of any kind associated with it: 'bhagavanmukhodgatasya SAstrasya kAraNa doshAdi abhAvena kvacit aprAmANyam na Sa'nkanIyam iti niraNAyI'. Thus there is nothing that is not authentic about it, nothing to doubt its validity, its authority, etc. We may also recall the very first Slokam of svAmi deSikan's yatirAja saptati:

kamapyAdyam gurum vande kamala gRhamedinam |

pravaltAcchandasAm vaktA pa'ncarAtrasya yaH svayam ||

'I prostrate to emperumAn who gave us the veda-s and the pA'ncarAtra







SAstra through His own words, who is the first AcAryan, and who is the Divine Consort of SrI mahAlakshmi'.

To be noted is the established authorship or origination of the pA'ncarAtra through BhagavAn's own words, a credit that no other Agama can claim.

The four divisions of pA'ncarAtra:

After a brief introduction, svami DeSikan describes the four divisions in the pA'ncarAtra system. These four divisions are called siddhAnta-s, and are given in the pAdma samhitA as:

- 1. mantra siddhAnta,
- 2. Agama siddhAnta,
- 3. tantra siddhAnta, and
- 4. tantrAntara siddhAnta.

The paushkara, ISvara, and ParameSvara samhitA-s reverse the order of the mantra and Agama siddhAnta-s given above. There is a lack of homogeneity between the four siddhAnta-s. The differences between the four siddhAnta-s from different view points in the different samhitAs - their orgin, their time periods, the number of forms of VishNu that are worshipped, etc.

HayagrIva samhitA distinguishes between the four siddhAnta-s by the way they consecrate the iconic forms in the temples and the number of forms of deities that are worshipped (e.g., one form; four forms - vAsudeva, sa'nkarshNa, pradyumna, and aniruddha; nine forms - in addition to the above four, nArAyaNa, hayagrIva, vishNu, nRsimha, and varAha, etc.).

SrI vedAnda DeSika quotes from the hayagrIva samhitA and states that among the four samhitA-s:

the Agama siddhAnta is meant to accomplish salvation alone,









tantrAntara siddhAnta will bestow the benefit desired.

In other words, all the siddhAnta-s will lead to moksham if desired. (pA'ncarAtra rakshA p. 8)

The kAlottara samhitA distinguishes the four siddhAnta-s by their origin:

- Of divine origin (divya),
- svayam vyakta (self-manifest),
- saiddha (promulgated by the adepts), and
- Arsha (taught by the great seers). (Rao p. 60)

Another grouping of the Agama samhitA-s is:

- daivika,
- sAttvik,
- rAjasic, and
- tAmasic.

Those that originated from BhagavAn Himself, and were passed on to disciples by the likes of BrahmA - brahma rudrendra pramukhaiH pravartitam Sastram daivam - without any of their own words and thoughts and opinions added, are called daivika. Those that were postulated by the likes of BrahmA are called muni vAkya SAstra-s, and these are subdivided further into sAttvik, rAjasik, and tAmasic samhitA-s (SAstra propounded by the Sages - brahmAdibhiH nirmitam SAstram muni vAkyam). There is provision for change of worship fram tAmasic to rAjasic, rAjasic to sAttvik, and sAttvik to daivika modes. Intermixing between SAstra-s of the same category is not permitted.







One point of interest is that when the divine Consort is consecrated along with the Lord in the temple, the Consort is located outside the sanctum according to some of the siddhAnta-s (Rao p. 62). This is the case at least in the mantra siddhAnta, according to pAdma samhitA - devyaH SriyAdayaScApi sampUjyAH parivAravat.

All the divisions agree that vAsudeva is the Supreme Spirit and that salvation is to be attained by worshipping Him.

The Issue of Intermixing Between the four siddhAnta-s of the pA'ncarAtra Agama:

After introducing the four siddhAnta-s of pA'ncarAtra, SvAmi DeSikan discusses the issue of sa'nkara (intermixing) between these four divisions, and establishes that intermixing between the four divisions of the pA'ncarAtra Agamam in not permitted (siddhAntAnam as A'nkarya sthApanam). He gives an example to illustrate that sA'nkara is not permitted, by giving us a simple analogy that we can easily relate to: The followers of one veda do not follow the practices of another veda - 'RgAdivadeva SAkhA bhedaiH avAntara tantraiH bhidyante'. For instance, those of us who are descendants of the yajurvedin-s observe only the yajur upAkarma, and not the sAma veda or Rg veda SvAmi DeSikan points out that similarly, those of us who are followers of the Apastamba sUtra should follow the procedures of the Apastamba gRhya sUtra, and not some other sUtra using priests that are followers of a different sUtra. Unfortunately some of us may not recognize this aspect when we arrange for specific karma-s at our homes using the available priests from temples etc. in North America. SvAmi deSikan's words are: yathA ca vAcanikAtirikte vedAntara SakhAntara sUtrAntara sa'nkare doshaH, tatheha siddhAntara sa'nkare tantra sa'nkare pratyeka tantrAntaH pAtiniyata vaikalpita dharmAdi sa'nkare ca |



He proceeds to point out that intermixing of dIkshita-s between the four siddhAnta-s is also not permitted - ekatra siddhAnte dIkshitasya anyatra na





adhikAraH. These restrictions that apply to intermixing between the four divisions of the one and the same Agama, should be kept in mind when the issue of intermixing between the pA'ncarAtra and the vaikhAnasa Agama-s is considered later,



Having said that sa'nkara (intermixing) is not permitted between the different siddhAnta-s, the samhitA-s then qualify this by pointing out that the siddhAnta that has moksha as its only goal, or the one that of divine origin, has priority over the others; the same holds true of the other three siddhAnta-s - namely, the higher-order siddhAnta among the other three has priority over the lower ones in the scale, and worship can be performed using the higher category samhitA in a place that has its system of worship established in a lower category.

The above position regarding the intermixing between the four branches of the pA'ncarAtra Agama constitutes only one view. There are many different and opposing views on whether any intermixing is allowed, which one is the most superior, etc.

Serious adverse consequences are specified for the ruler, the country, the temple and the family of those who transgress these rules, according to the different samhitA-s.

While there are different practices within the pA'ncarAtra Agamam itself between the four siddhAnta-s, these are not differences in principle. However, it is to be noted that the accepted position is that mix-up of one siddhAnta with another is prohibited. It would appear that sA'nkaram at any level would only lead to negative effects.

Rivalry Between the two vaishNava Agama-s:



SvAmi deSikan points to the issue of 'paraspara nindA' between the pA'ncarAtra and vaikhAnasa Agama-s that is found in some samhitA-s of the two VaishNava Agama-s (vaikhAnasa pA'ncarAtrayoH paraspa nindA vacanAnAm





prakshiptatva pakshaH). He gives a couple of examples:

The vaikhAnasa SAstra declares in one place:

Agneyam pa'ncarAtram tu dIkshAyuktam ca tAntrikam |
avaidikatvAt tattantram tyaktvA vaikhAnasdena tu |
saumyena vaidikenaiva devadevam samarcayet ||

The above Sloka calls the pA'ncarAtra system non-vedic, based on the tAntrika system consisting of non-vedic mantra-s etc., requires initiation which is not sanctioned by the veda-s. It advocates giving up the pA'ncarAtra worship and switching to the 'superior' vaikhAnasa system for the worship of the Deity of all deities.

On the pA'ncarAtra side, we have:

aSrIkaram asaumyam ca vaikhAnasam asAttvikam |

...

tadvidhAnam parityajya pa'ncarAtreNa pUjayet ||

"The vaikhAnasa system does not lead to prosperity, is inauspicious, and not sAttvic in nature - not leading to the quality of purity and goodness. Give up the vaikhAnasa form of worship and perform worship using the pA'ncarAtra system".

SvAmi deSikan points out that these should be understood through the 'na hi nindA nyAya' which says that when a different system is spoken of at a lower level, it is more to glorify their own system, rather than to deprecate the opponent - 'na hi nindA nindyam ninditum pravartate; api tu nindyAt itarat praSamsitum'. He points out that we should remember that Lord SrI Ra'nganAtha, SrI Ve'nkateSvara, Ka'nci VaradarAjap perumAL, Azhagar of tirumAl irum SOlai, etc., are worshipped through tradition, and both Agama-s are valid.







He gives several references to support this position of acceptance of both systems as valid (note that this is not a vindication for intermixing the Agamas, but a position that mutual negative words should not be taken as actual nindA - derogatory words).



aviruddha yogAbhyAm ubhayorapi SAstrayoH |
madhyasthairapi kRtam dharmavidyA sthAna niveSanam ||
Also, he gives a reference from SrI VaishNava dharma SAstra:
katham tvam arcanIyo'si mUrtayaH kIdRSAstu te |
vaikhAnaSaH katham brUyuH katham vA pA'ncarAtrikAH ||

The question is addressed to BhagavAn as to how He should be worshipped - is it through the pA'ncarAtra Agama or the vaikhAnasa Agama. BhagavAn's response to this is:

ashTAkshara vidhAnenApi athavA dvAdaSAksharaiH |
vaidikairathavA mantrairmama sUktena vA punaH ||
sthApitam mAm tatastasmin arcayitvA vicakshaNaH |
purusham tu tataH satyam acyutam ca yudhishThira ||
aniruddham ca mAm prAhuH vaikhAnasavidho janAH |
anye tvevam vijAnanti mAm rAjan pA'ncarAtrikAH ||
vAsudevam ca rAjendra sa'nkarshaNamatApi vA |
pradyumnam cAniruddham ca caturmUrtim pracakshate ||
etA anyASca rAjendra samj~nA bhedena mUrtayaH |

viddhyanarthAntarA eva mAmevam cArcayedbudhaH ||







BhagavAn replies that He can be worshipped by the vedic Agama (vaikhAnasa) or through the pA'ncarAtra Agama that He Himself has given. Thus, both are to be accepted as valid Agama-s.

SvAmi DeSikan concludes the introductory section by pointing out that all the sAAtvik SAstra-s should be accepted as pramANa-s. He notes that pA'ncaratra is distinguished by the fact that it has been given to us direct from the divine words of BhagavAn Himself (He again quotes Sage VyAsa's words: 'pa'ncarAtrasya kRtsnasya vaktA nArAyaNaH svayam', and therefore there is no dosha of any kind as can occur in the works of BrhmA and others - brahmAdi purusha kRtAmSeshu kAraNadoshaH na sambhavati | He declares that pA'ncarAtra is thus the valid pramANam - 'ataH kRtsnam pA'ncarAtram pramANam'. He adds that whatever system has been used in the initial establishment of the temple should be continued, and draws a similarity to the observance of the different branches of the veda. He strongly states that intermixing between the siddhAnta-s should not be done - 'yathAdhikAram vyavasthinAnushThAnatayA siddhAntAdi sa'nkara parihAreNaiva sarvadA anuvartanIyam'.

Section 2: The SAstric basis for the pa'ncakAla vidhi, which is a very integral part of the pA'ncarAtra:

It had already been pointed earlier that svAmi DeSikan highlights the aspect of 'pa'nca kAla vit' as the essential aspect of the pA'nca-rAtra doctrine and practice in his pA'ncaratra rakshA. He devotes two of his three chapters in his work to this sole topic of pa'ncakAla vidhi.

pa'nca-kAla vyavasthityai ve'nkateSa vipaScitA |

SrI pA'ncarAtra siddhAnta vyavastheyam samarthitA ||

In section 2, svAmi DeSikan gives the basis for the pa'ncakAla vidhi from vyAsa smRti-s. He describes the five divisions of bhagavad ArAdhanam - worship of BhagavAn as spread out in the five time divisions, answers doubts





that some raise as to whether there is any conflict between prapatti and observance of the pa'ncakAla vidhi (the answer is there is no conflict - prapannaiH pa'nvakAla kramaH tyAjya iti pUrvapakshaH; prapannaiH pa'ncakAla kramo grAhya iti siddhAntaH; pa'ncakAla prakriyA SrI bhAshyakAra abhimata iti samarthanam). He also goes into some detail into the 'eight-fold division of the day's activities' given in the daksha smRti, and maps it into the pa'ncakAla vidhi of the pA'ncarAtra system - (dakshokta kAlAshTaka vibhAgo'pi pA'ncakAlika karmAnuguNaH).

Recall that the whole of p'AncarAtra are the words of BhagavAn Himself. The pUjA vidhAnam or the way of worship by dividing the duration of the day into five divisions, and the respective acts to be undertaken towards BhagavAn's worship during those five time periods, are also ordained by BhagavAn Himself. SvAmi DeSikan quotes BhagavAn's words from the jayAkhya samhitA, giving the five time divisions and the activities to be performed during those times: (He first quotes from the jayAkhya samhitA, pointing out the jayAkhya samhitA is one of the three ratna-s - precious gems - that came to us from the mouth of BhagavAn Himself:

yathoktam sAkshAt bhagavanmukhodgatatayA ratnatrayamiti prasiddheshu jayAkhya sAttvata paushkareshu jayAkhya samhitAyAm

SrI bhagavAn uvAca -

brAhmAn muhUrtAn Arabhya prAgamSam vipra vAsare |

japa sdhyAnArcana stotraiH karma vAk citta samyutaiH ||

abhigacchedjagadyonim taccAbhigamanam smRtam |

tataH pushpaphalAdInAm utthAyArjanamAcaret ||

bhagavadyAganishpattikAraNam praharam param |

tadupAdAna samj~nam vai karmakAlapadASritam ||







tato'shTA'ngena yAgena pUjayet parameSvaram |

sAdhikam praharam vipra ijyAkAlastu sa smRtaH ||

SravaNam cintanam vyAkhyA tataH pATha samanvitA |

SvAdhyAyasaj~nam tam viddhi kAlAmSam munisattama ||

DinAvasAne samprApte pUjAm kRtvA samabhyaset

yogam niSAvasAne ca viSramairantarIkRtam

pa'ncamo yogasamj~no.asau kAlAmSo brahmasiddhidaH ||

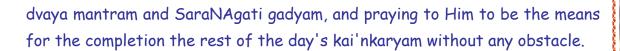
Through the above words, BhagavAn instructs nArada on the pa'nca kAla-s and the associated activities starting from waking up in the brahma muhUrta, followed by abhigamana, upAdAna (collecting the flowers, fruits, etc., for the worship), ijyA (pUjA starting at noon), svAdhyAya (consisting of hearing the praise og Bhagavan -SravaNam, meditaing on Him - cintanam, giving instructions to students - vyAkhyA, reading the scriptures, etc.), followed by yoga and dhyAna to conclude the day before retiring for rest - viSrama. These five time periods and the associated activities are summarized below:

1. abhigamana - beginning with the brahma-muhUrta (from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. assuming sun rise at 6 a.m. and sunset at 6 p.m.), devoted to the preparatory sequences in the morning (like Sauca, snAna, sandhyA, japa, and dhyAna). One dictionary dealing with the VaishNava specific words describes abhigamnam as 'the prayer performed in the early part of brAhma muhUrtam through thought, word and deed'. PrakRtam SrImad Azhagiya Si'ngar, in his book entitled Ahnika grantham, gives the meaning 'SaraNAgati' to the word 'abhigamanam', and indicates that since the main act during abhigamanam is SaraNAgati, this first pa'ncakAla vidhi itself is called abhigamanam. He summarizes the abhigamana karma as 'washing the hands and feet, performing Acamanam twice, prostrating in BhagavAn's sannidhi, performing arcanA, offering the fruits and flowers, chanting the









- 2. upAdAna (from about 9 a.m. to 12 noon) spent in collecting the articles necessary for worship (like flowers, tulasi, fruits, etc.), and making preparations for the main worship ijyA. The word upAdAna means 'taking', gathering, accumulating, obtaining'. Since this is the time allocated for gathering all the materials such as fruits, tulasi, dharba grass, the materials needed for preparing the food for offering to BhagavAn during the bhagavad ArAdhanam, etc., this time period is called upAdanam. It is pointed out that offering the tulasi and other flowers that are grown in one's own garden is the most desirable for offering (as opposed to buying them from a vendor, getting it as a gift from someone else, etc.). The tulasi and flowers should not be carried with bare hands, but should be gathered and brought in a vessel on in a leaf such as the plantain leaf.
- 3. ijyA (beginning with noon time) is the time devoted to the formal iconic worship elaborately conducted, and partaking of food as naivedya with other devotees. The word ijyA literally means worship. This is the most important part of the daily activities for a householder that is prescribed for a householder.
- 4. svAdhyAya (afternoon and evening), spent in the study of scriptures, contemplating on their message, teaching scriptures to others, etc.
- 5. yoga (night), devoted to the repetition of the formal iconic worship but briefly conducted, yoga practice (eight-fold practice, ashThA'nga yoga), and deep meditation on godhead (dhyAna) before finally resting for the day.

The five phases are intended to be one uninterrupted worship ritual, with the ijyA as the central theme, and the others as preparatory or follow-up.

Though it might sound trivial, it is worth repeating that the pa'nca kAla vidhi is nothing less than BhagavAn's command that a vaishNava is expected to follow.







Note also that there is no room in this scheme for any activity other than everything directed to the service of the Lord.

SvAmi DeSikan then continues to give the eight a'nga-s of yAga from JayAkhya samhitA. Then he gives BhagavAn's words on the pa'ncakAla vidhi from the pAdma samhitA. He also points out that the disciples of BhAshyakAra have followed the pA'cakAlika dharma, and gives examples of SrI Ra'nganArAyaNAcArya of va'ngi vamSa and SrI ParASara BhaTTakAraka.

SvAmi DeSikan also specifically addresses the question that some seem to have raised: 'Is there a conflict between performing prapatti and then continuing the extensive worship of BhagavAn as specified in the pA'ncarAtra dharma? He points out that there is no conflict of any kind, because the worship is performed for the sole pleasure of BhagavAn, and with no other benefit in mind - bhahavatprItyeka prayojanatayA anushTheyam iti anuj~nAyeta. It is also the true nature of a prapanna to do kai'nkaryam to BhagavAn - svAmini bhagavati dAsabhUtasya prapannasya svarUpa prAptAm ki'nkara vRttim anujAnanti |

He quotes the following, clearly distinguishing the prapanna-s dedicated to the kai'nkaryam of BhagavAn without interruption, from the others whose interests are eternally different:

adyaprabhRti ye lokA yUyam yUyam vayam vayam |
arthakAmaparA yUyam nArAyaNaparA vayam ||
nAsti sa'ngatirasmAkam yushmAkam ca parasparam |
vayam to kinkarA vishNoH yUyamindriya ki'nkarAH ||

(We are in the service of VishNu, and you are in the service of your sense organs! There is nothing common between us and you. You will be always be 'you', and we will be always 'we'. You are after worldly pleasures, and we seek NArAyaNa).







SvAmi DeSikan then gives support for each of the pa'nca kAla vidhi-s from vyAsa smRti. For instance, for abhigamana, he quotes:

brAhme muhUrte utthAya dharmamartham ca cintayet

kAyakleSam tadadbhutam dhyAyIta manaseSvaram ||

yathAgatya gRham vipraH samAcamya yathAvidhi |

prajvAya vahnim vidhivat.....

devAdInAm namaskuryAdupahAram nivedayet

dadyAt pushpAdikam teshAm vRddhAnScaivAbhivAdayet ||

etc.

'As soon as one gets up in the brAhma muhUrta, one should meditate on dharma, think of BhagavAn, perform Acamana, snAna, etc., as per prescribed rules, prostrate to BhagavAn, make offerings of naivedyam, flowers, etc., prostrate to AcAryan, the other elders, etc.'.

SvAmi DeSikan then gives similar support for upAdAna, ijyA, etc, also from vyAsa smRti. He then looks at the division of the day's activities into eight parts in another smRti - the daksha smRti - for the activities of a twice-born (dvija), and points out that the activities essentially map into the pa'ncakAla vidhi of the pA'ncarAtra - dakshokta kAlAshTaka vibhAgo.api pA'ncakAlika karmAnuguBaH.

He points out that:

- 1. the first and second divisions according to daksha map into the abhigamana in the pa'ncakAla vidhi
- 2. the third division of daksha maps into upAdana in the pa'ncaAla vidhi
- 3. the fourth and fifth divisions of daksha map into IjyA







- 4. the sixth and seventh divisions of daksha map into svAdhyAya
- 5. the eight division and the associated activity given in daksha smRti loka yAtrA worldly actions, is not applicable to prapanna-s, and so svAmi DeSikan does not discuss this further.

Let us also recall for a moment that when it is said that all our karma-s such as sandhyA are BhagavAn's order and that we should not violate them, the pramANam for this is amply provided by svAmi deSikan through the above supports for the pa'ncakAla vidhi that we have briefly gone through.

Note the minute aspects of dharma SAstra that are emphasized in each activity of each phase. As one example,

'The prasAda offered to BhagavAn is then offered to pitR-s, deva-s, manushya-s, and other lower forms of life (such as kITa - worms), before being partaken by the kartA':

pa'ncame tu tathA bhAge samvjbhAgo yathArhataH |

pitRdevamanushyANAm kITAnAm copadiSyate ||

samvibhAgam tataH kRtvA gRhasthaH Seshabhug bhavet |

bhuktvA tu sukhamAsthAya tadannam pariNAmayet ||

By omitting any word of the concluding two or three pages of the second chapter of svAmi deSikan's pA'ncarAtra rakshA, we miss a great deal of the seriousness with which he emphasizes the need for us to do bhagavad kai'nkaryam following the pa'nca kAla vidhi – every word is extremely forceful in emphasizing this point. For the sake of brevity, we are not reproducing all his words in full. Here is one Sloka:

mA'ngalya sUtravastrAdIn samrakshati yathA vadhUH |
tathA prapannaH SastrIyapati kai'nkarya paddhatim |







yadvanma'ngala sUtrAdestyAge samrakshaNe'pi vA |

rakshennirodhAdbhogAdvA patistadvadihApi naH ||

Just as the mA'ngalya sUtra protects the married woman, so also the prapanna is protected by the system of kai'nkaryam to BhagavAn.

A Brief Summary of the third and final section of pA'ncarAtra rakshA:

After establishing the smRti support for the pa'ncakAla vidhi in the second section, svAmi deSikan proceeds to describe in elaborate detail the steps ane rules to be observed in the actual observance of the pa'ncakla vidhi in the third and final section. He notes that he is giving these details as per the traditions of nAthamuni, yAmunamuni, mahApUrNa, etc. This section is by far the most detailed out of the three sections - section 1 consists of 45 pages, section 2 runs for 35 pages, and section 3 covers 100 pages. While I am tempted to go through these sections in detail, the time constraints at this time preclude a detailed write-up. The third section essentially describes the Ahnika kramam - the detailed description of all the activities that a prapanna is expected to observe everyday as kai'nkaryam to BhagavAn.

athopakramyate nityakartavyakram sa'nkramaH |

nAtha yAmuna pUrNAdi sampradAya saritpathe ||

He starts with outlining the very basic aspects of every karma that a vaishNava undertakes, starting with sAttvika tyAga - 'bhagavAneva' ityAdikam bhAshyakAra nityoktam ca vAkyam paThitavyam; ante ca sarvam svaniyAmyeti AdikrameNa samantrakam samarpaNIyam. He discusses the benefits of getting up in the brahma muhUrta.

YAma - consists of three hours. The last yAma of the night starts at 3 a.m. (assuming sunrise at 6 a.m. and sunset at 6 p.m.).







BrAhma muhUrta - The last yAma of the night, starting at 3 a.m. and ending at 6 a.m.]

A close study of this section will reveal a lot of essential knowledge for many of us in our day-to-day observances, but is not undertaken here because of the vastness of the subject. Random examples are: nidrAnta AcamanAdikam - performance of AcAmana etc., at the end of sleep - when getting up, the need to get up in the brahma muhUrtam and the benefits - brahma muhUrte prabodhaH tatphalam ca, the rules for sandhyA - sandhyA kartavya kramaH; the practice of chanting the hari nAma and the varAha mantra when getting up, stepping on the ground with the left leg when getting up, etc.

harirharirbruvanstalpAdutthAya bhuvi vinyaset |

namaH kshitidharAyoktvA vamam pAdam mahAmate ||

svAmi DeSikan notes that the 'hari' Sabdam should be uttered seven times, and gives the pramANa for that - in the nitya sa'ngraha by SrI gRdhrasarmuni. Then there is reference indicating the hari nAma should be chanted when getting up, keSava nAma should be uttered when going out, govinda nAma when eating, and mAdhava while retiring to bed - as declared in SrI VishNu dharma by Saunaka.

The description goes into details of even the cleaning of the teeth - Acamanam dantadhAvanam ca. Another randomly collected information from this section points out that we should not do pradakshiNam or prostration in odd numbers, should not show our pRshTa bhAgam - back side when exiting BhagavAn's sannidhi, and should worship Vishvaksenar and the dvAra pAlaka-s (the divine gatekeepers) both before entering BhagavAn's sannidhi and after exiting the sannidhi:



'tatra ca pradakshiNAni praNAmAnSca eka tri pa'nca saptAdigaNanA vishamam hi yat iti vishama pratishedAt | praveSe nirgame caiva vishvaksenanatim caret iti vidhAnAt vishvaksenam dvArapAlAnSca praNamya





anu~jnApya tatra tatra praviSet |'

cakravad bhrAmayennA,ngam pRshTabhAgam na darSayet |

paScAtbhAgena nirgacched devatAsannidhau sudhIH ||

I am not aware of a complete translation of this great work of svAmi DeSikan, which can give us tremendous knowledge of our tradition. This will be of great value. Almost every line of every page of this section gives valuable guidance on our traditions in our everyday activity.

A book published by PrakRtam SrImad Azhagiya Si'ngar with samkRt text and Tamil translation/transliteration under the title 'Ahnika granthaH' describes the daily observances based on SrI sannidhi traditions in elaborate detail. This is one of the best sources for those who wish to learn the intricacies of the dharma SAstra and the procedures to be followed according to the pa'nca kAla vidhi. This work is based on the work titled 'SrI vaishNava sadAcAra nirNayam' by the 26th SrImad Azhagiya Si'ngar, which in turn was based on the works titled 'smRtiratnAkaram' and 'saccarita sudhAnidhiH'.

There is also a work in samskRt titled 'Ahnikam' by SrImad TirukkuDandai DeSikan (SrI GopAlArya MahA deSikan), a well-known pUrvAcArya of the munitraya sampradAyam. The Ahnikam of SrI GopAlArya MahA deSikan is available in the book released by SrIra'ngam SrImad ANDavan ASramam on the occasion of the 301st tirunakshatra moahotsavam of SrI GopAlArya MahA deSikan. This work is based on svAmi DeSikan's pA'ncarAtra rakshA;:

SrI pA'ncarAtrarakshoktaH prapannAnAm mahAtmanAm |

bhagavatparicAryAH kramaH sa'ngRhye.adhunA ||

A brief summary is given below for the different activities performed in the different time periods. This summary is very incomplete, and gives only some high-level points with which many of us may be already familiar. Those interested in learning the complete details of all the rules should study the two







references given above.

- 1. Getting up in the brAhma muhUrtam, chanting the hari nAmam seven times, and thinking of BhagavAn as we get up, certain Sloka-s are chanted. The Sloka-s are listed in the original publication.
- 2. This is followed by the Srota Acamanam or the regular Acamanam as convenient. While still seated in the bed, the SaraNAgati gadyam of Bhagavad RamAnuja starting from 'akhila heya pratyanIka' is chanted up to 'Apatsakha! SrIman nArAyaNa!'.
- 3. This is followed by sattvika tyAhgam (bhagavAneva svaniyAmya....), surrendering all the activities to follow, as well as any benefits from them, to Him and Him alone.
- 4. Then abhigamanam is described, as laid down by SrIva'ngi vamSeSvara.

abhigamanam:

- 1. The prapanna asks for forgiveness from BhagavAn for the time wasted during the sleep without performing kai'nkaryam to the Lord.
- 2. This is followed by the abhigamana sa'nkalpam (abhigamanena bhagavat karmaNA bhagavantam Vasudevam arcayishyAmi). This is called balamantra.
- 3. Next, sAttivika tyAgam is offered (bhagavAneva svaniyAmya...svayameva kArAyti), and prayer is offered to BhagavAn for the completion of the rest of the day's kai'nkaryam without any obstacle.
- Prayers are offered to guruparamparA (the lineage of all AcArya-s starting from our AcAryan up to BhagavAn). One should pray to BhagavAn chanting
 the four vyUha nAma-s (vAsudeva, sa'nkarshaNa, pradyumna, aniruddha),
 then the dvAdaSa nAma-s (keSava, nArAyaNa,,,,), and 3) the ten daSAvatAra nAma-s. This prayer is given in Slokam form in the Ahnikam, and the source is given as ParameSvara samhitA. One also meditates on our







chanted.

- divine Mothers om Sriyai namaH, om bhUmyai namaH, om nIlAyai namaH. In the interests of brevity, I am not including all the Sloka-s that are to be
- 5. svAmi deSikan specifies in the pA'ncarAtra rakshA that these Sloka-s should be chanted in a loud voice so that others can hear them, and such that it creates happiness in the minds of the listeners - harshajanakena uccaiH svareNa samkIrtya. This is followed by the dvaya mantra japam, the appropriate vedAbhyAsa, etc.
- 6. Then, one should chant the hari nAma seven times, and should step on the ground with left foot while meditating on BhUdevi's Consort - om namaH kshitidharAya.

Then the rules to be observed while relieving the body of urine, etc., the rules for cleaning up afterwards, the procedures for cleaning the teeth, etc., are described. The rules include how to choose the ground for discharging urine etc., how to choose the soil for cleaning up, how many times the cleansing to be done, the mantra-s used to drive away any poisonous insects from the surrounding areas, etc., and how to choose the stick for cleansing the teeth, how many times the gargling should be done, which fingers should not be used for cleaning the inside of the mouth, etc. I am not listing the rules here because most of us will not be able to follow these in the present-day living conditions for most of us.

This is followed by the rules to be observed in taking the bath (snAna vidhi). Again the rules involved are given in great detail. This includes Acamanam, wearing the pavitra, doing the prANAyAma, praying to guru paramparA, and sa'nkalpam before taking bath. Among the mantra-s chanted at this time is varuNa sUktam. The Ganges river is invoked to be present in the waters where the bath is taken. Then the Urdhva puNDra dharma follows. There are specifications for the height and width of the UrdhvapuNDram worn on the forehead, on the arms, chest, etc. There are mantra-s associated with the







wearing of the UrdhvapuNDram. This is followed by the morning sandhyAvandanam. Then the ashTAkshara japam is performed, followed by the devaRshi tarpaNam, brahma yaj~nam etc.

The abhigaman is concluded with sAttvika tyAgam.

upAdAnam:

The upAdAna karma-s are performed in the second yAmam of the day (between 9 a.m. to 12 noon). Starting with sAttvika tyAgam, the materials needed for the worship are collected. There are guidelines in collecting the materials. For instance, the flowers should not have worms or insects in them, should be of pleasant fragrance, there should be no thorns in them (svAmi deSikan gives support from the sAttvata samhitA). They should have grown in clean ground, they should not be ones forbidden by SAstra for worship. Other materials such as sandalwood, tAmbUlam, darbha grass, etc., should be collected for the worship.

As previously mentioned, materials grown by one's own self are the most preferred; materials grown elsewhere are of lower preference; materials purchased for money are of still lower preference; those that are obtained as donations (yAcitam) are of still lower preference (adhamAdhamam).

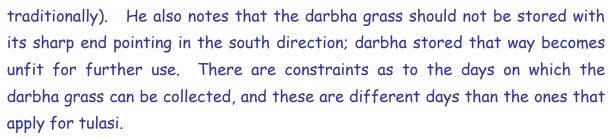
There are certain days on which tulasi leaves should not be plucked from the plant: Tuesdays, Fridays, paurNami, amAvAsya, dvAdaSI, on any day after 12 noon, on the days in which the month begins, etc.

There are mantra-s given for getting the tulasi leaves and for getting the darbha grass. As mentioned earlier, tulasi leaves should not be collected and carried in bare hands. They should be gathered in a vessel or on a plant leaf (such as plantain leaf), and then should be kept in a cool, shady place so that they don't dry out and loose their fragrance. SrImad Azhagiya Si'ngar points out in his Ahnika grantham that thread should not be used to string the flowers or tulasi. (The strands from the dried stems of plantain leaves are used









ijyA:

This is the next in sequence in the pa'nca kAla-s. At the outset, svAmi deSikan comments that he is giving the details of ijyA as described in the nitya grantha by SrI BhAshyakArar (atha mantra siddhAntopasyapararUpa vishayAm bhogArcanAmayIm ijyAm bhAshyakArokta nityagrantha vivaraNa mukhena vyAkhyAsyAmaH).

ijyA starts with:

- 1. Acamanam,
- 2. prANAyAmam,
- 3. sa'nkalpam,
- 4. sAttvika tyAgam, etc.

A bath is prescribed before mAdhyAhnikam. After mAdhyAhnikam, the bhagavad ArAdhanam is performed. One should enter BhagavAn's sannidhi with the right foot first. The ijyA is considered one form of SaraNAgati, seeking unhindered bhagavad anubhavam - enjoyment and experience of BhagavAn. One should not be in an angry mood, lazy mood, casual, etc., during the ArAdhanam. Among the mantra-s chanted during ijyA is the SaraNAgati gadyam starting from 'akhilaheya pratyanIka', up to 'tvatpAdAravinda yugalam SaraNamaham prapadye'.

The detailed description of bhagavad ArAdhana kramam is given in several available publications, and is not described here. The ArAdhanam has six





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segments:

- 1. mantrAsanam,
- 2. snAnAsanam,
- 3. ala'nkArAsanam,
- 4. bhojy Asanam,
- 5. punarmantrAsanam, and
- 6. parya'nkAsanam.

The bhagavad ArAdhana kramam is best learned from an elder or AcArya who performs ArAdhanam regularly. It is specified that if, for some reason (such as dvAdaSI tithi etc.), time becomes a constraint, the activities specified for the abhigamanam and upAdAnam should be shortened (such as gathering the materials for the pUjA the previous night itself), but ijyA should be performed properly.

svAdhyAyaH:

The next activity (the fourth out of the pa'nca kAla vidihi) is called svAdhyAya. svAdhyAya means 'study, recite, read to'. This time is devoted to studying as well as teaching, intellectual discussions with persons of sAttvic disposition, etc. - SravaNa manana pravacana japAdIn sattva samvAdAdInSca kuryAt. As with all other activities, this activity is also started with Acamanam, prANAyAmam, sa'nkalpam, sAttvika tyAgam, etc., and concluded with sAttvika tyAgam. This is also the time for attending to worldly matters related to the family etc. This is followed by the evening sandhyAvandanam. This should be performed before sunset. Then the evening meals are taken.



This is the final activity and is performed in the last of the five time periods of







activity for the day. One essentially meditates the divine tirumEni of BhagavAn in this time. This includes meditating with dvaya mantra, chanting from 'akhila heya pratyanIka' up to 'S'araNam aham prapadye', SrI vaikunTha gadyam from 'caturdaSa bhuvnAtmakam' till the end, etc. One should fall asleep even as one meditates on Madhava – tameva mAdhavam hRdaye dhyAyan tameva kIrtayan sukham SayIta, with mind meditating on emperumAn in SrI vaikunTham, under whose divine feet we rest our head. If one wakes up in the middle, then one should again meditate on MAdhava until falling asleep again.

As has been indicated earlier, the above is a high-level description of the pa'ncakAla vidhi. The Ahnika grantham by SrImad Azhagiya Si'ngar in Tamil is probably the best and most easily available source for those who do not have extensive knowledge of samskRt. SrImad TirukkuDantai DeSilkan's Ahnikam is a source available for these with knowledge of samskRt.

The main point of emphasis is that the pA'narAtra pa'nca kAla vidihi is nothing but a continuous kai'nkaryam to BhagavAn by one who has no other benefit in mind than the eternal kai'nkaryam to BhagavAn.









SOME ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON THE TWO VAISHNAVA AGAMA-S

Up to this point, we have covered a lot of general information on the pA'ncarAtra Agama, as well as brief summaries of YAmunacArya's AgamaprAmANya and svAmi DeSIkan's pA'ncarAtra rakshA. Not much was mentioned about the vaikhAnasa Agama, which is the other VaishNava Agama. A separate e-book is being published in the current e-book series on the vaikhAnasa Agama. However, I had occasion to spend considerable amount of time some five years back looking into the differences between the pA'ncarAtra and vaikhAnasa Agama-s. A wealth of information was collected through research of published resources, one-on-one discussions with subject matter experts in both Agama-s, as well as by interfacing with well-known sthapati-s who have been involved in construction of major temples both in India and abroad. I will not share all the information I gathered in the process, but will share some of the information that I collected based on published literature.

Most of the information below is from the book titled 'Agamas and South Indian VaishNavism' by V. Varadachari.

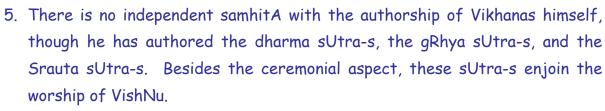
Highlights of the VaikhAnasa Agama

- 1. Describes a method of worshiping VishNu, and prescribes the way of life for the followers of the VaikhAnasa sUtra
- 2. Sage Vikhanas (also known as Vikhanasa or VaikhAnasa) is considered the originator of this system
- 3. Vikhanas is considered to have sprung from the mind of BhagavAn
- 4. He belonged to the aukheya division of the taittirIya recension of the KRshNa yajur veda.











- 6. The sages KASyapa, atri, MarIci and BhRgu, who were students of Vikhanas, have authored independent samhitA-s on the vaikhAnasa system
- 7. The system primarily deals with the worship of the arcA form of VishNu
- 8. The system is purely vedic in nature, with no use of tantra-s (mudra-s etc)
- 9. For ease of worship of the devotees, BhagavAn becomes five-fold, with the five names VishNu, Purusha, Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha. Among them, VishNu is the foremost, and is called AdimUrti.
- 10. These forms are distinct. VishNu is all-pervading, Purusha is animating, Satya has unlimited static experience, Acyuta does not change under external influence, and Aniruddha has no check from any source.
- 11. VishNu has four forms called MahAvishNu, sadAvishNu, VyApin, and NArAyaNa.
- 12. Satya arose from MahAvishNu, Acyuta from sadAvishNu, and Aniruddha from VyApin.
- 13. Dharma, j~nAna, aiSvarya, and vairAgya are the qualities of Purusha, Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha.
- 14. PrakRti is both sentient and insentient. The former is the self (soul) that is ever associated with a body. The latter is represented by products of matter such as the five elements, mind, senses, etc.
- 15. The idea of universal pervasion of everything by VishNu is accepted, as also the concept that everything constitutes His body.







- 16. The worship of the arcA form is declared to be the best form of worship.
- 17. Only those who have undergone the vaikhAnasa rituals since the time of conception are allowed to perform temple worship according to the vaikhAnasa Agama. This restricts the right to perform worship using the vaikhAnasa Agama to a limited group of families, estimated to be not more than 2,500 according to one published source.
- 18. The only temple signifying Vaikhanasa system of worship is in Uttiramerur near Kanchipuram, where a separate temple form was created by a great Sthapati by name Parameswara Perunthachan who flourished under the patronage of Pallava monarch. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and he did the inscription himself in Sanskrit on the walls of Uttiramerur Temple, which is still referred to by archaeologists. The following is the inscription:

"asya alankara manancha yathalakshana samyutam yaschainam vetti sakalam savai vastuvidam varaha evam vastvabhavat mahatpravigatam namna cha jatyadina enasmin bahubihi yathagamavidaihi grame prayoganvithaihi srimat patakavasina kruthadhiya takshna sadavagmina tenedam parameswarena mahata srivastuno bhaskaraha"

"He who understands the measures and architectural details of this (Vimana) fully, is an expert among architects versed in Vastu Vidya."

(The entire text under the above bullet is an exact reproduction from a well-known sthapati, and I have not made any editing of the Sloka or the text).







A Table comparing the two vaishNava Agama-s:

Vaikhanasa Agamam	Pancharatra Agamam
Recognized vaishnava agamam	Recognized vaishnava agamam
Worship of Vishnu is the goal	Worship of Vishnu is the goal
Conversion from vaikhanasam is forbidden	Conversion from pA'ncarAtram is forbidden
_ ·	Additional tantrika mantra-s, which are not part of the veda-s, are included for use by those who are not qualified to learn veda.
vaikhanasa family, to vaikhanasa	Anyone, male or female, can perform worship using pancharatra agamam, as long as they have undergone pancha samskara and diksha.
•	More liberal - allows for modifications to vedic procedures to make them more adaptable to social needs
	Well-known both in South and North: Supported by Madhva, Nimbarka (from Kerala), Caitanya (Hare Krishna), Ramananda, the heads of all vaishnava Mutts without exception, other than the vaikhanasa sUtra followers; Also closer to the Saiva agama, and preferred by Kanchi Sa'nkaracharya.







x7.111 A	p 1 . 4
Vaikhanasa Agamam	Pancharatra Agamam
related service activities, like	·
	Not restricted to any particular clan, but followed by a large community of Vishnu worshippers
	Preferred Agamam for all vaishNavas other than vaikhanasa followers for all new consecration. After Ramanuja's period, this was favored because of the more inclusive and liberal aspects of the pancharatra system.
Only veda mantra-s are used and allowed during ArAdhana	Prayers and chantings in other languages are prescribed as part of ArAdhana procedures - an example of more inclusivity
Tattva is nArAyaNa – tattvam nArAyaNah paraH (varadachary p. 93)	Tattva are three - cit, acit, and ISvara







The Relative Times of origination of the pA'ncarAtra vs. vaikhAnasa Agama-s

The viSishTAdvaita AcArya-s have pointed out that the pA'ncarAtra is given to us by BhagavAn Himself, and the vaikhAnasa system is authored by Sage Vikhanasa, who is considered as having originated from the mind of the Lord. Given that the pA'ncarAtra is given to us by BhagavAn in His own words, there is no question of any flaw in it in any aspect. However, this does not say whether the vaikhAnasa Agama originated earlier, or it is pA'ncarAtra that is the more ancient.

SrI NarasimhAchary poses the hypothetical question as to the need for a pA'ncarAtra system while 'there already existed a vaikhAnasa system that have treatises on temple worship'. He then gives svAmi DeSikan's response to this question: "The vaikhAnasa manuals cover only the particular vedic branch that is followed by the vaikhAnasa-s, and thus their scope is limited. It is to fill in this gap and to fulfill the needs of the followers of other vedic branches that the pA'ncarAtra texts came up. This points to the precedence of vaikhAnasa over pA'ncarAtra."

In the very next sentence, NarasimhAchary refers us to a vaikhAnasa text that states that 'under certain circumstances, the pA'ncarAtra system can be followed as an alternative'. This statement from the bhRgu samhitA - an authoritative vaikhAnasa text, indicates that the pA'ncarAtra system of worship was already in vogue when bhRgu muni wrote his vaikhAnasa text.

DeSika quotes from the bhRgu samhitA:

gurUpadeSa samsiddhaiH kalpamantrairathApi vA (gurUpadeSa here refers to the vaikhAnasa system, and kalpa mantra refers to the pA'ncarAtra system) -

We also have references to the pA'ncarAtra system in the mahAbhArata, in the chAndogya Upanishad, etc. We saw earlier that even the three veda-s had their origin in the pA'ncarAtra SAstra, which itself has its roots in the







ekAyana SakhA of the Sukla yajurveda.

It is curious that there is not a single reference to the vaikhAnasa Agama in yAmuna's AgamaprAmANya, as best as I could verify. This area needs to be researched further.

It is obvious that both the pA'ncarAtra and vaikhAnasa Agama-s are very ancient, and both have been used in temple worship from ancient times. DeSika does comment that the pA'ncarAtra Agama is flawless in toto because it reflects the words of BhagavAn nArAyaNa Himself. He points out, however, that tradition should be followed, and whichever system has been used traditionally for worship should be continued and inter-conversion is prohibited.

Some Concluding Remarks:

In the preceding sections, some of the more common aspects of the pA'ncarAtra Agama that many of us are familiar with, have been covered in some detail. The Agama itself consists of a vast ocean of knowledge and information. For instance, it covers in details the Silpa SAstra (the making of the idols prior to consecration), the consecration procedures and other practices involved in consecration, the details of the procedures and practices of worship in the temples, the art and science of the construction of the tempes - including the placement of the different deities, the size, shape, etc., of the different parts of the temple, the shape of the divine canopy, the procedures involved in the different samskAra-s such as upanayana, marriage, etc., the various temple festivals, etc., etc. What has been covered in the current write-up is a very tiny fraction of some randomly selected topics that are of the most common general interest on pA'ncarAtra. Thus, this write-up is a very brief overview of pA'ncarAtra'. All the same, it is hoped that the write-up will give enough information to whet the interest of the reader for further studies of this great divine Agama that was promulgated by SrIman NArAyaNa Himself as a means of offering worship to Him.







aDiyEn offers this humble effort at the Holy Feet of asmad AcAryan SrImad SrI Ra'ngarAmAnuja MahA deSian, so that all blemishes unknowingly committed by aDiyEn will be automatically removed, and the readers only see and benefit from the good and meritorious parts of the write-up.

-dAsan kRshNamAcAryan









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