CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF THE WORLD
Prolegomena

The history of philosophic thought reveals a constant recurrence of some fundamental problems and one of such perennial problems is, 'How the world has come to exist?' The earliest philosophic view with regard to the Supreme Being appears to have arisen out of an attempt to answer the question, 'hence this universe?'. This problem attracted the attention of Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra thinkers. In the Ālvārs, however, we do not find any specific cosmogonical speculation. Cosmology did not interest them, perhaps, because of their all-absorbing possession of the Deity. Both Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra thinkers maintain a realistic attitude towards the universe, but their realism differs fundamentally. In the account of the creative order both betray the impact of Sāmkhya thought, but they deny the dualism of Sāmkhya and institute in its place monism by accepting the subordination of the creative potency and characterising it as inherent in Brahman. But this monism of the Pāñcarātra, unlike the thoroughgoing monism of Rāmānuja, is a half-hearted assertion only, because it, like the Puruṣa of the Sāmkhya, regards Brahman as pure transcendent, and leaves the cosmic evolution severely alone to the Śakti, which answers to the Prakṛti of the Sāmkhya. But Rāmānuja gives place to the creative aspect in the very being of Brahman. In the Pāñcarātra, the cosmic evolution, issuing out of Śakti, lacks the character of a Līlā. Anything unconscious has existence, a law of growth, but no character. Rāmānuja, on the other hand, characterises the evolution as
a Līlā of Brahman, and this characterisation brings into the
creative evolution a meaning and a purpose which it acquires
in close touch with Brahman.

Rāmānuja's view of the world in contrast with that of the Advaita

The system of Rāmānuja has come into existence with a
conscious motive to oppose the mayāvāda of the Advaita. Both
these systems of Vedāntic thought draw their source from the
Prasthāna-trāyī. Both of them have always put implicit faith on
the supremacy and infallibility of the revelations of the above
Scriptures. In the cosmogony also, therefore, they depend almost
wholly upon the account given in the Scriptures. Neither of the
two has advanced any theory of his own, but both have mainly
followed the traditional account. Both were driven to this same
problem, their texts were the same, their methods were based on
the same assumptions, and yet their results show striking diffe-
rences. Their conclusions reveal their vision, their respective
apprehensions of the truth. They have divergent explanations of
the Śruti texts, to conform their ideas of creation to their
epistemological and metaphysical settings. This divergence is
mainly due to the basic difference of the static and dynamic
conception that prevails between the two. Both agree that the
cosmic evolutions should be traced to some sort of creative
effort, and that this creative effort must have a place in our
conception of the Absolute. Both regard the becoming as the
expression of the Divine, and the creative order as issuing out
of Brahman. But the basic distinction of static and dynamic
conception of Being immediately introduces a difference in the
cosmic conception. The advaitin maintains the creative effort
of Brahman as an apparent expression of the Absolute under the
conditions of space, time and causality. Rāmānuja, on the other
hand, accepts it as a self-transformation of Brahman. For the advaitin the world is a Vivarta (illusory transformation) but for Rāmānuja it is a Vikāra (real transformation). The difference between these two positions is very well explained by Sadānanda. He observes that when a thing actually appears as another, it is called Vikāra, when it falsely appears as another it is called Vivarta.²

The static concept of Being leads the advaitin to deny Ultimate Reality to the Cosmic process, for the dynamic concept of life and experience has been over-shadowed by the extreme transcendentalism of the static Absolute. The static and eternally complete Absolute admits of no change or transformation. Therefore, according to him the universe is empirical (Vyāvahārika) or phenomenal (prātibhāsika) or intrinsically unreal (Mithyā, avastu) from the point of view of the Absolute, which is the only reality and which is identity par excellence.

The doctrine of māyā as the inevitable correlate of the monism of the Advaita

The theory of reality advocated by the Advaita school presents a crucial problem. If Brahman alone be real, how the plurality of the universe, which we experience, is to be accounted for? How can the world of manifold multiplicity arise from one unitary self-same Being? This is the vexed problem of 'one and many'. The solution of this problem offered by the advaitin is that Brahman alone is real and the varying world is an illusory manifestation of Brahman caused by māyā, which is positive and beginningless but indescribable entity. It is a riddle, a sphinx, which is impervious to all attempts at probing into its nature. Wonder is its garment, inscrutable is its nature, something akin to 'I-know-not-what'. But this principle of māyā is more a dia-
lectical mystification than a genuine solution. It is a 'third position' or 'middle position' between being and non-being, sat and asat, which aims at doing away with the contradiction with which sat and asat are supposed to be riddled. But instead it looks like an evasive device which itself harbours the very contradiction it aims at vanishing. Further the existence and reality of the world is a perceived fact and in denying it complete reality the advaita seems to be giving the go-by to the verdict of the normal experience.

Rāmānuja's rejection of māyāvāda

The dynamic view of Rāmānuja enables him to reconcile this contradiction. Instead of bifurcating the entire course of reality into two compartments, he treats being and non-being, sat and asat, one and many, identity and difference etc. as two complementary aspects of the same concrete reality. His dynamic vision introduces concreteness in the static Absolute of the Ādvaita. This concreteness demands a unity which does not annihilate the differences, but admits them in its being. Logically this is a necessity in the dynamic conception. Psychologically these differences are natural expressions of being and without them being cannot exist, for knowledge and love—the essence of being—demand an expression, which would be meaningless if it is not an expression to a recipient subject. The dynamic vision, therefore, at once demands a triple existence—the locus, the expression and the recipient—in the integrity of being.

Rāmānuja's refutation of the doctrine of māyā or avidyā

The advaitin draws a distinction between Reality transcendental and Reality empirical. He lays supreme stress upon the transcendent Reality and throws away the immanent or empirical
Reality as something philosophically unsubstantial, though it has supreme value for esoteric purposes. The empirical Reality is supported in avidyā, which has the double capacity of concealing the truth of identity and projecting a scene of multiple existences. The word avidyā is used in the epistemological sense and the word māyā is used in the cosmological or ontological sense. For Śāṅkara the epistemological functioning of avidyā is more significant than its creative functioning for no sooner does the epistemological functioning cease, then the truth of identity is revealed and the cosmic appearance fades away in no time.

This avidyā hides the identity-consciousness, though it has its locus in it. It has no definite origin, still it is not eternal. It vanishes at the dawn of identity-consciousness. It has a mysterious existence, for it is neither sat nor asat. Of its existence we are directly conscious through witness intelligence.

This doctrine of māyā raised a great protest from all other schools of Vedānta founded by Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabhā, and from other thinkers like Jñānadeva and Aurobindo. All these thinkers almost followed the same line of criticism which was adopted by Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja outrightly rejects the advaitic bifurcation of Reality into transcendental and empirical, and the consequent phenomenality of the world of experience. For him the unity of Brahman is in no way incompatible with the reality of the world. Since the Advaita school tries to explain the phenomenality of the world by means of the theory of avidyā, Rāmānuja advances a vigorous and severe polemic against this theory and tries to refute it by raising certain subtle ontological, epistemological
and logical objections, which may be summarised as follows. 3

\textit{Āśrayānupapatti}

One cannot determine the locus of avidyā, which is nothing but a mere baseless fabrication of imagination. Its substrate can be either the individual soul (the position of Vācaspati) or Brahman (the position of sāryaśāṁtakamuni) but neither of the two can be so conceived. It cannot be the individual soul, 'for the individual soul itself exists in so far only as it is fictitiously imagined through avidyā,' nor can it be Brahman, 'for Brahman is nothing but self-luminous intelligence, and hence contradictory in nature to avidyā, which is avowedly sublated by knowledge.'

Nor can avidyā be admitted as a second principle, having itself as its substrate, because this would be contradictory to the advaita hypothesis of 'non-duality'. 4

\textit{Tirodhanānupapatti}

The advaitin maintains that avidyā conceals the essential nature of Brahman and thereafter projects cosmic appearance. But Rāmānuja points out that there can be no obscuration of the essential nature of Brahman by avidyā because Brahman is by nature intelligence. If it is said that such a Brahman can be 'invested and hidden by avidyā', this would mean 'the destruction of Brahman's essential nature.'

\textit{Svarūpānupapatti}

Rāmānuja further points out that even if we admit the existence of avidyā as an existence which escapes logical and categorical determination. Because the problem, then, would be, 'is it something real or something unreal?' The former alternative is excluded as not being admitted by the advaitin himself.
The latter one is not acceptable to Rāmānuja, because 'if the imperfection inhering in consciousness is itself of the nature of consciousness, and at the same time unreal, we should have to distinguish two kinds of consciousness—which is contrary to the fundamental doctrine of the oneness of consciousness. And if, on the other hand, we should say that the consciousness in which the imperfection inheres is of the same nature as the latter, i.e., unreal, we are landed in the view of universal unreality.'

Further the theory leads to an infinite regress because according to the advaitin avidyā is the cause of the unreal world and this avidyā in itself is also unreal. If so, another avidyā would have to be postulated in order to account for this avidyā and so on ad infinitum. 'To avoid this difficulty it might now be said that real consciousness itself, which constitutes Brahman's nature, is that avidyā. But if Brahman itself constitutes the avidyā, then Brahman is the basis of the appearance of a world, and it is gratuitous to assume an additional avidyā to account for the world. Moreover, as Brahman is eternal, it would follow from this hypothesis that no release could ever take place. Unless, therefore, you admit a real avidyā apart from Brahman, you are unable to account for the great world error'.

Anirvacanīyānupapatti

Rāmānuja further argues that the concept of avidyā or ajñāna is itself unintelligible and hence incapable of being used as a principle of explanation. The advaitin himself describes it as inexplicable, (anirvacanīya), but he holds that though inexplicable, it must be admitted as a fact, a positive entity 'which affects the obscuration of the real, which is the material cause of the erroneous super-imposition on the real, of manifold eternal things.' This avidyā is attested in experience and is apprehen-
nded through perception as well as inference.

To this Ramanuja replies that neither perception alone, nor perception aided by reasoning reveals to us this avidya. Even in erroneous perception, when a man mistakes shell for silver, there is an apprehension of the qualities which shell has in common with silver. The apprehension is regarded as erroneous, not because it is a case of non-apprehension or nescience, but because though it apprehends some qualities of the shell, it does not apprehend all; and the mistake is terminated, not by substituting knowledge in the place of nescience but by perfecting the former knowledge. Avidya, therefore, is not only inexplicable in theory, but is also not vouched for as a fact of experience.

Pramanamupapatti

Ramanuja contends that the theory of avidya is not supported by scripture, Smriti or Purana. It is true that Prakrti is in some texts declared to be maya, and maya may be synonymous with mithya or falsehood. But maya does not in all places refer to what is false. We see it applied, e.g., to such things as the weapons of asuras which are not false but real. Maya in such passages denotes that which produces various wonderful effects, and it is in this sense that Prakrti is called maya. This is clear from Svetasvatara Upanishad IV.9.

Again, when in certain texts it is said that 'Then there was neither non-Being nor Being.' (R. Samhitā X.129.1) the terms 'being' and 'non-being' denote intelligent and non-intelligent beings in their distributive state, and 'there is no reference whatever to something 'not definable either as being or non-being.'
Mīvartakāṇḍapatti

There is no remover of Avidyā. The Advaitin believes that knowledge of the unqualified attributeless Brahman removes Avidyā. But such knowledge is impossible. Discrimination and determination are absolutely essential to knowledge. Pure identity is a mere abstraction. Identity is always qualified by difference and distinction. Hence there can be no knowledge of an undifferentiated attributeless thing. And in the absence of such knowledge nothing can remove Avidyā.

Mīvṛtyāṇḍapatti

In the preceding point it was argued that there is no remover of Avidyā. Here it is said that there is no removal of Avidyā. Avidyā is said to be positive (bhāvanā) by the Advaitin. How, then, can a positive thing be removed? A thing which positively exists cannot be removed from existence by knowledge. The bondage of the soul is due to karma which is a concrete reality, and cannot be removed by abstract knowledge.

These arguments of Rāmānuja have been further elaborated in great detail and subtlety by Vedānta-Desika in his 'Sādhu-dūsani'. But as it has been pointed out, these criticisms are more or less beside the point and in a way commit the fallacy of ignoratio elenchi, if we take Śankara's system only into consideration; but if we take into consideration the Advaita system in general, these arguments hold good.

These days appreciable attempts have been made to interpret the māyā doctrine in a scientific manner as a doctrine teaching relativity and such an interpretation seems satisfying, but the māyā doctrine in its traditional garb does not seem to be so.
Rāmānuja's concept of avidyā contrasted with the Advaitic concept

In order to account for the phenomena of bondage Rāmānuja also takes the help of the concept of avidyā, but avidyā has different meaning in the Advaita and in Rāmānuja. Avidyā in the Advaita lies at the root of the cosmic experience, including self-consciousness. In the system of Rāmānuja avidyā can produce ignorance but cannot create experience. Cosmic experience here is never a subject to avidyā. In the Advaita māyā or avidyā spins out a universe under the control of Īśvara, in Rāmānuja system, māyā, in the sense of ignorance, cannot do so, since the universe is ever-existent.

Do Upaniṣads teach māyāvāda?

There has been a great controversy as to whether the doctrine of māyā in relation to the Upaniṣads is a graft or a growth, but this much is quite certain that the Advaitic theory of adhyāśa is an utter stranger to the Upaniṣadic thinkers. As a matter of fact the 'how' of creation, the question of the relation of the timeless perfection of pure Being to the perpetual becoming of the world, is exactly what the Upaniṣads leave unexplained. The candid admission of the author of Vivāṇaprameya Śrāvaṇa that 'Śruti is indifferent with regard to the reality or unreality of Bondage' shows that the advaitins were themselves sceptical as to the presence of māyāvāda in the Upaniṣads.

The word 'māyā' occurs but rarely in the Upaniṣads, and whenever it occurs, it admits of being construed either as mysterious power or as a 'moral defect.' The word which occurs more frequently in the Upaniṣads is avidyā (Īmūnd.II.1.10) but it has no metaphysical implication. To argue from the presence of the word māyā its existence in the Upaniṣads is quite unwarranted, for it amounts to finding that doctrine in words rather than in
ideas. In fact the mayā doctrine is suggested more by those passages which do not contain the word mayā or avidyā, e.g., ‘Mṛtyo-
ssamṛtyumāṇoti yah nānevātra paśyati’. These passages at the most contain the seed of the mayā doctrine, but not its metaphysical fruits.

Though there are some passages which contain the germ of the latter developed mayā doctrine, this does not afford any valid reason for interpreting mayā into other texts which clearly yield a realistic sense. For example, there is no reason to assume that the teachings of Uddālaka (Chāndālī) were meant to represent Vivarta rather than Pariṇāma, or that the ‘sending forth’ of the elements from the primitive ‘sat’ is to be conceived as anything else but a real manifestation of real powers hidden in the primeval Self. When it is said that the whole world has Brahman for its causal substance just as clay is the causal matter of every earthen pot, it is not the least implied that the process through which the causal substance becomes an effect is an unreal one. We may very well hold that all earthen pots are in reality nothing but earth—the earthen pot being merely a special modification (vikāra) of clay which has a name of its own—without thereby committing ourselves to the view that this change of form is not real. It is true that this material world is unsubstantial in the Spinozistic sense of the word ‘substance’ for it has no independent existence apart from Brahman, but this unsubstantiality does not constitute its unreality.

Does Bādarāyana favour māyāvāda?

Bādarāyana also in his Brahma-sūtras does not uphold the doctrine of mayā. Śāṅkara has tried to maintain that the Sūtrakāra in the Sūtra II.1.14 has declared the phenomenality
The world. But this does not seem to be plausible. This sūtra is based on the Chāndogya, passage where Uddālaka wants to teach his son 'the knowledge of all by the knowledge of One'. Now the knowledge of 'all' is possible only when 'all' has existence and is ananya (not-different) from 'one'. To explain this Uddalaka gives three instances, through all of which it is suggested that Brahman and the world stand in causal relation. From these instances it is wrong to conclude that Brahman as cause alone is existent and the world as an effect is not so. Instead of using these instances only to explain the nature of the world, Śankara uses more often the instances of make and rope, conch-shell and silver, mirage etc. This suggests a strong inference against Śankara that neither the Upaniṣads nor Bādarāyaṇa have in mind the doctrine of Vivarta. It is true that the Sutrakāra regards the dream-creation as illusory (III.2.3) but he also clearly distinguishes it from the real creation (II.2.29). The Sutrakāra is quite clear in maintaining Brahman's material causality and reality of the creation.

Rāmānuja's repudiation of the phenomenality of the world

Rāmānuja further repudiates the advaitic contention that the world is phenomenal. He argues that to hold that the objects do not exist simply because they do not persist, is rather strange. The material world is changeable and perishable and may be called 'non-being' in so far as it is observed at a certain moment in a certain form and at some other moment in a different form. But there is no contradiction between the two different conditions of a thing which are perceived at different times, and hence there is no reason to call it something futile (tuccha) or false (mithyā).
Rāmānuja makes a distinction between 'sublation' and 'non-persistence' and contends that it is the failure on the part of the advaitin to make this distinction that is responsible for his view that the world of plurality is entirely unreal. By sublation we mean one experience being contradicted by another and thus proved to be false. An object may be non-persistent, i.e., may exist for only a brief period of time, nevertheless it is real, so long as it is not sublated by another experience. That an object exists only for a short time does not condemn it as false.

He further remarks that it would be ridiculous for the scriptures to teach that Brahman became many if they believed at the same time that the many did not exist. Accordingly even those scriptural texts which appear to deny the existence of plurality do not really mean to do so. 'What all these texts deny is only plurality in so far as contradicting that unity of the world which depends on its being in its entirety an effect of Brahman, and having Brahman for its inward ruling principle and its true self'.

Thus Rāmānuja concludes that the advaitin's device of relating his pure non-differenced Brahman to a world of plurality by declaring the world to be unreal product of beginningless avidyā is void of reason and scriptural authority.

World as real manifestation of God

As against the advaitin Rāmānuja holds that the world with all its change and multiplicity is real. In the world there is a real development presided over by God. The cosmic evolution is an effect of self-transformation of Brahman. The creative impulse is inherent in nature which is a result of inherent
necessity. Brahman creates and contains this whole world from its own Being without losing its purity and perfection. Ramanuja does not accept the transcendence of consciousness and immanence of will in the creative effort of Brahman. The Reality cannot be so bifurcated. It is one and the same Brahman who is immanent in the world as its inner controller and who is transcendent to it as its Ground and Support. Ramanuja is quite clear in saying that Brahman itself is not the world, but it is the soul of the world. The Ultimate Reality is a triad consisting of Brahman, the material, and the individual souls, where the distinction of each is maintained and at the same time Brahman is regarded as containing matter and souls within itself. In this view, the plurality of the world is recognised, the supremacy of the Brahman is taught, and both are brought together into a unity where distinctive nature of Brahman is preserved and the reality of the world is recognised.

Upanisadic basis for Ramanuja's view

The general framework of the above view has been derived by Ramanuja from the Upanisads and the Gita. The Upanisads—both earlier and later—abundantly testify realistic attitude towards the universe. They do not recognise a second principle side by side with Brahman to provide it with the materials necessary for creation. Accordingly, they picture creation predominantly as an emanation rather than as a construction. 'As a spider might come out with its thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this soul come forth all vital energies, all worlds, all gods, all being' (Br.II.120) The creator declares, 'I, indeed, am this creation for I emitted it all from myself.' (Br.I.4.5) and the created world is said to be the result of what originally was undifferentiated becoming differentiated by
name and form. (Br. I (iv) Ch. VI. 2). Creation therefore is the sending forth by Brahman of the world out of itself. The universe with all its diversity depends on it for its matter as well as form.

Though the world emanates out of Brahman, it does not fall apart from it. Brahman is said to be immanent in it through and through. The Upanisads repeatedly declare that after creating the universe Brahman entered into it 'even to the finger-nail tips' (Br. I. (iv). 7). There are innumerable passages in the Upanisads where the thoroughness of Divine immanence is emphatically declared.

It is true that there are many passages in the Upanisads which seem to identify Brahman with the world, but they are not to be understood literally in a pantheistic way. One must always seek to understand them in the light of their context. For example, when the Mundaka exclaims, 'The person Himself is everything here' (II. 1. 10), it means only to say in a forceful way that everything is completely dependent on Brahman, not that Brahman is itself everything, for the passage occurs at the end of nine stanzas which portray dramatically how everything in the universe comes from Brahman as its Supreme Source. The general trend of the Śvetāsvatāra and the Katha is to distinguish clearly between the Brahman and the world. In the Śvetāsvatāra so completely the world is regarded as dependent on Brahman that it speaks of Brahman poetically as Itself the various objects of the world. (iv. 2 & 3) but this does not mean that the Brahman is immanent identical with them, for in the next stanza it declares that Brahman is 'immanent' in these all.

Thus it appears that by means of such exaggerated statements the Upanisads merely teach in a striking manner the great
truth that they had discovered, that Brahman is in all things as that which makes them what they are.

Lest these utterances declaring Brahman as completely pervading the universe should be mistaken as pantheistic, the Upaniṣads clearly maintain that the Ultimate Reality is a triad (Śve. I.7 & 12). Symbolically the wheel which holds together the diverse parts within its unity, or a river composed of several tributaries, best represents the nature of Brahman in relation to the universe. (Śve. I.4 & 5; VI.I.)

This idea that Brahman in relation to the diversity of the world must be conceived as a unity-in-diversity, or the One which holds together the many is not by any means peculiar to the Śvetāśvatara. On the other hand, the conception which we have indicated as predominant in the Upaniṣads, that Brahman is the all-pervading soul of the universe, is only another way of stating the truth that multiplicity of this universe is held together in, and energised by, the Supreme Brahman. Even the thought that Brahman as pervading principle, remains hidden in all things, and that It is ultimately to be conceived as a triad, is not unknown in early Upaniṣadic philosophy. Thus in Brhadāraṇyaka (II.6) it is declared that the world is a triad of name, form and work, and it is said, 'Although it is that triad, this soul (ātman) is one. Although it is one it is that triad. That is the Immortal, veiled by the real (satya). Life (prāna) verily is the Immortal. Name and form are the real. By this them-life is veiled.' The 'real' by which the 'Immortal' is veiled is obviously the world of multiplicity (or 'name and form' as the passage explains).

Thus the instinctive realism of the early Upaniṣadic thinkers and possibly the 'Sāmkhya' tendencies of later philo-
sophers prevented them in the main from reducing the diversity of the world to the characterless unity of distinctionless Brahman. But it would be too much to claim that always this was done. The thought that Brahman is the Supreme Real could easily lead to the thought that It is the only Real. Nevertheless we may conclude that the predominate thought of the Upaniṣads regarding the relation of Brahman to the material universe is that the latter in all its diversity is real and exists in Brahman. Brahman is its soul, it is Brahman's body.

The Gītā also like most of the Upaniṣads teaches that the world forms a part of the Supreme, being created, supported and dissolved by Him. While accepting this general position of the Upaniṣads Gītā goes a step further in describing the process of creation and dissolution, and enumerating the various elements involved in it.

In these two authorities Rāmānuja could get not only the basis of his system, but also sufficient material to fill in the required details. From the Gītā he derived the doctrine of repeated creation, which is taught also in the Śvetāsvatāra Upaniṣad, and the view that the creation proceeds in the main according to the stages enumerated in Sāmkhya philosophy. From the Gītā he also derived the idea that in creating the world Brahman is not prompted by a desire to overcome any lack or imperfection in its nature. It itself is 'Higher' than the world and transcends it, for although the latter is a part of it and is pervaded by it, its characteristics derived from matter, are not to be found in it.
Brahman as cause, and world as effect

The entire universe regulated throughout by marvellous order and method has sprung into being from Brahman, is sustained by It and will ultimately return to It. It stands combining in itself all the three kinds of causes, the material, efficient and accessory. Rudiments of creation which are real and which differentiate Its character, reside in It in the shape of Its power. Brahman is not static but essentially dynamic, and here alone lie the roots of creation. It is the immanent ground of all existence, the source of life and the home of all eternal values. It is the first and the final cause, the root and the fruit, the whole and sole explanation of the world. It is above all, in all and through all. All things are out of It, in It and unto It.

The fact that Brahman creates the world establishes that Brahman stands in causal relation to the world. Unlike Sāṃkhya, Rāmānuja maintains that Brahman is both the operative as well as the material cause. This is the basic view of the Upaniṣads also which often describe the emanation of the universe from Brahman on the analogy of the sparks which proceed from fire, or the threads which are emitted by the spider. Rāmānuja writes that this view is in harmony with the promissory declaration and the illustrative instances. The promissory declaration is the one referring to the knowledge of all things through the knowledge of one (ch. VI.1.3). And the illustrative instances are those which set forth the knowledge of the effect as resulting from the knowledge of the effect as resulting from the knowledge of the cause (ch. VI.14).¹⁵ There are some passages which declare prakṛti to be eternal and the material cause of the world, but prakṛti, writes Rāmānuja, in such passages denotes Brahman in
Its causal phase when names and forms are not yet distinguished, for a principle independent of Brahman does not exist. In addition, scripture directly states that Brahman alone is the material as well as the operative cause of the world. For example, 'Brahman was the wood, Brahman the tree, from which they shaped heaven and earth.'

If Brahman were the cause both of the form and matter of the world, the problem that arises is that how the perfect Brahman can be the cause of an imperfect world? How the perfect One differentiates itself into finite things and beings, may be a riddle or mystery, but it does so is a fact. It may be argued that the general rule is that an effect is non-different in character from its cause, and therefore the world cannot be an effect of Brahman from which it differs in character. To this Ramanuja replies that Brahman and the world cannot have complete sameness of all attributes, because in that case the causal relation—which requires some difference—cannot be established. There should be some similarity in cause and effect and Ramanuja points out that such is actually the case with regard to Brahman and the world, both of which have the attribute of 'existence' and others in common. It may be objected that the essential distinguishing characteristics of a causal substance persist in its effect also, but the world has the opposite of Brahman's essential nature of being antagonistic to all evil etc. To this Ramanuja replies that even things of different nature stand to each other in causal relation. For example, sentient worms etc. are produced from the non-sentient honey; and hence it is not unreasonable to assume that the world also, although differing in character from Brahman may originate from the latter.
Ramanuja further writes that though the world differs in nature from Brahman, this does not mean that the two are altogether different and separate. They possess some elements of similarity as well. But the point here is, in what sense we may say that the world is one with Brahman. Ramanuja is aware of this difficulty and therefore analyses the causal relationship. Accordingly he examines the causal theories propounded by various schools of thought and concludes with a statement of his own view, which is that the effect is nothing but the causal substance which has passed from one state of existence to another. Thus, for example, the jar, which is an effect, is the causal substance, clay, which has assumed another configuration and name. It is one in substance with clay, and yet it has attributes which are different from those of clay in its causal state. The effect is one with the cause in the sense that it is potentially contained in the causal substance as a state which this substance is capable of assuming.

Ramanuja here introduces into the idea of cause the concept of growth borrowed from the organic world. This is mainly to avoid the idea of external agency which we find, for example, in the case of a jar being produced out of clay by the potter. He accordingly writes, 'The case of the cause and the effect is thus analogous to that of the child and youth. The word 'effect' denotes nothing else but the causal substance which has passed over into a different condition.' In this way Brahman as the cause must be thought to be one in substance with the world in the sense that It holds the world within Itself in potential form, and that creation is only the passing over of Brahman from one state of existence, where the world exists potentially, into another state of existence, where the world exists actually.
Brahman is regarded as existing in two periodically alternating states which are referred to as Kāraṇavasthā (causal state) and Kāryavasthā (effect state). Brahman in the first state is the causal substance of the world. The second state of Brahman is the actual manifestation of the world. So the creation of the world means only the actualisation of that which is potential. What exists as a real possibility in the causal state turns out to be an actuality in the effect state.

The individual souls and matter, which are the modes of Brahman, are also regarded as existing in two different conditions. One is a state of absolute quiescence when the intelligence of the individual souls gets contracted, the matter becomes unevolved, and the two exist in Brahman as its potentiality in a dormant state. It is this state which is referred to in the Upaniṣads when they describe, 'Being alone was there in the beginning, one without a second'. The other is the evolved state when creation takes place, matter becomes evolved, souls get associated with bodies and their intelligence becomes expanded according to their deeds.

The evolution and the involution thus signify two states of the same substance, viz., God qualified by matter and souls. The Ultimate Reality is a triune unity which in one state is differentiated into names and forms, and in another state is not so differentiated. So all the time unity is there, but sometimes in a homogeneous state and sometimes in a heterogeneous state. Both these states are equally real and none is false or unreal. Then the Upaniṣads (tait. II.7) declare that 'Non-being
was there in the beginning, from it being came into existence* what they mean by 'non-being' is not 'non-existence' but only the latent or causal state, as the Brhadâranyka (1.4,7) makes it clear, 'verily, at that time the world was undifferentiated. It became differentiated just by name and form'.

Before concluding this section it will not be out of place here to undertake a review of the doctrine of causality propounded by Sâkara and Râmânuja, for it is this doctrine which is the basis of Râmânuja's view enunciated in this section.

Râmânuja, on the basis of the Saevixdya section of the Chândogya Upaniśad, advocates the Satkâryavâda doctrine of causation, according to which effectuation is simply a differentiation of the undifferentiated. Transcendently speaking, causation has no value in Sâkara's philosophy, because for him identity is the only truth. Yet for phenomenal purposes he accepts its value and makes a synthesis of causation with identity, the result of which is the doctrine of vivartavâda, which simultaneously accepts and denies causation. In fact, it is a denial rather than an acceptance of causation. In it first we posit a world through the law of causation, and then deny it to indicate the illusoriness of position and the reality of identity. The doctrine of Vivartavâda is fully in conformity with the logic of identity and transcendent oneness. Sâkara finds it difficult to reconcile causation with identity, for causation is a relational concept but identity denies relation, as Brahman does not stand in causal relation with any one, because it is the only Reality; the one is the necessity of thought, the other transcends thought. Being unable to reconcile the claims of identity and causation at the transcendental level, Sâkara retains the former and sacrifices the latter and with it the reality of the immanent existence as well.
Rāmānuja, on the other hand, does not surrender the law of causation to the logic of identity. Like Śāṅkara, he accepts the dynamic view of causation, though this dynamism is spirituo-material and not mere material as it is in Śāṅkha. In the place of static identity of Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja establishes a dynamic unity in which identity and difference (causation) are reconciled. Causation makes explicit what is implicit in identity. The cause persists in the effect and the effect is latent in the cause. The causation is nothing but a manifestation, a manifestation from latent to patent and again from patent to latent. It is not that sort of transformation which obtains between milk and curd, wherein there is no possibility of retransformation. But it is that transformation in which the effect appears out of, and again disappears into, the cause. It is nothing but a change of state in one substance. Cause and effect are only different successive stages that a substance undergoes. Being alone becomes and is the cause of becoming; one alone becomes many and is the cause of manifold. Therefore, none of the entities of the world have popped up at one particular point of time. All things are eternal and form a part of Brahma, who is the abode of all and abides in muktātman all. All things are really eternal and real, even though they are subject to change from subtle to gross and gross to subtle state.

Brahman as soul, world as body

In the previous section we have spoken of Brahma as undergoing a change in effecting the world. In order to know what exactly this change implies, we shall have to make a distinction in the nature of Brahma—the two essential aspects, viz., body and soul, the soul representing Its own perfect nature.
and the body that part of It which is the world. Rāmānuja explains the relation of the world to Brahma as that which obtains between body and soul. The idea of Brahma as the Sārīrin or Embodied Soul may be regarded as the raison-de-tre of his philosophy.

This designation of Brahma is quite in agreement with the emphasis the Upaniṣads place upon the immanence of Brahma in the world. There is abundant evidence in the Upaniṣads for the view that Brahma pervades the world as soul pervades the body. The classical formulation of this view is to be found in the Antaryāmin Brahmaṇa of the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. This is the view taught in the Mandaka (II.1.4,9) and Śvetāsvatara (VI.11.)

This modification of Brahma in the world does not introduce any imperfection in Its nature. Because this change occurs only in the body of Brahma and not in the soul of Brahma, Rāmānuja writes, "while the Highest Self thus undergoes a change-in the form of world comprising the whole aggregate of sentient and non-sentient beings—all imperfections and suffering are limited to the sentient beings constituting part of His body, and all change is restricted to the non-sentient things which constitute another part. The Highest Self is effected in that sense only that He is the ruling principle, and hence the Self, of matter and souls in their gross or evolved state; but just on account of being this, viz., their Inner Ruler and Self, He is in no way touched by their imperfections and changes."

In the Upaniṣads specially the later ones there is a clear tendency to distinguish Brahma very sharply from the material universe. The same we find in the Gītā as well, and there is sufficient basis in these works for the view of Rāmānuja.

When the world is regarded as a body of God the problem
is in what sense can it be so? Rāmānuja first of all rejects the common sense definitions of body, which have physical reference, and then defines it as "Any substance which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purposes, and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation, is the body of that soul." In this sense, all sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by Him for His own ends, and are absolutely subordinate to Him.

Thus God is in the world but not as the world. All sentient beings and non-sentient things live, move and have their beings in Him, and depend on Him for their forms and function. He is the first and the final cause of all things, the root of life as well as its fruit. He is the ground of existence and the goal of experience, the summum genus and the summum bonum. He is the immanent ground and inner sustaining life. This concept of God as the Inner Soul shows that the finite is not only rooted in but is also controlled by the Infinite. Though the finite has its source and sustenance in the Infinite, the Infinite is not wholly in the finite. The chief value of this concept lies in the fact that it emphasizes the Divine sovereignty without in any way endangering the reality and existence of the finite world.

Brahman as Substance, World as Attribute

The relation of Brahman to the world is further explained by Rāmānuja in terms of substance-attribute relationship. This conception is a logical conclusion of his epistemological position. As we have seen, by empirical reasoning as well as by an appeal to Scripture, Rāmānuja established that Brahman
cannot be regarded as Pure Being, but must be thought of as a unity which includes differences within itself. This concept of Brahman is an important foundational tenet of his philosophy. While criticising the Sankarite view of Reality Râmânuja had prepared the ground for his view that the substance-attribute relationship holds good not only in case of objects and their generic qualities, but also in case of two distinct objects, one of which may be an attribute of the other. For example, in the judgement, 'He is a staff-bearer', the predicate 'staff-bearer' is what is called separable accident, as the staff can exist by itself apart from the staff-bearer. But in the judgement 'Man is rational' the predicate 'rational' is a differentia of the subject. Both these sorts of attributes hold the same relationship with a substance, irrespective of the above difference.

If one grants that Brahman is a substance qualified by attributes, and that attributes need not necessarily, be only generic such as satyam, jñanam etc, then there can be no objection to saying that the world is an attribute or a mode of Brahman, though it, even like a staff, is in a sense substantive, and not merely attributive. In this way the world with all its plurality may be accepted as real, and yet at the same time it may be regarded as not endangering the unity of Ultimate Reality, for it stands to the latter in the relation of attribute to substance. The difference of the world from Brahman, and at the same time His complete dependence on Him, will thus be explicable.

Râmânuja explains the causal relation in terms of substance-attribute relationship. According to him an effect is nothing other than a mode of the causal substance. A cause producing an effect means only that a substance now characteri-
sed by a certain attribute, state or mode of existence, assumes another attribute, state or mode of existence, which it always had potentially within itself. 26

Rāmānuja similarly reduces the soul-body relationship to substance-attribute relationship. The body is so completely dependent on the soul that it ceases to exist when separated from the soul, even as an attribute or mode ceases to exist except when supported by the substance to which it belongs. It thus is nothing but a mode or attribute of the soul. 27 He writes that whenever we see body the soul is also apprehended but we cannot perceive it as it is formless. 28

But, it may now be asked, if the world is a mode of Brahman, how can imperfection exist in the world without affecting the nature of Brahman? Rāmānuja provides its answer in his definition of an attribute: 'Whenever we cognise the relation of distinguishing attribute and thing distinguished thereby, the two clearly present themselves to our mind as absolutely different. 29 The difference in characteristic of the mode from the substance therefore need not alarm us, for that, Rāmānuja assures us, is quite the usual characteristic of the modes. What makes a thing a mode is not sameness of character with the substance to which it belongs, but complete dependence.

From the foregoing consideration Rāmānuja concludes that the whole world is, 'predicative to, or modes of, Parama Puruṣa; hence Parama Puruṣa alone exists (the substance), adjectivated by everything else. All terms are thus connotations of Him by the rule of samānādhikaranya, or the rule which expresses the inseparable relation existing between substance and attribute, or the invariable coexistence of subject and predicate.' 30 Further the whole world, though different from
Brahman, derives its substantial being and living from Brahman only, as it constitutes Brahman's body.\(^{31}\)

**Process of creation**

As regards the process of creation Rāmānuja is little interested in cosmological speculations and in the main accepts the Sāṃkhya account of the evolution of the world with this important proviso that Brahman is the author, sustainer and controller of the whole process.

Prior to creation the world, with its distinction of matter and souls, remains latent within Brahman in a 'form so extremely subtle that it hardly deserves to be called something separate from Brahman'. Then the time for creation draws near Brahman 'broods', i.e. forms the resolve 'May I again possess a world-body constituted by all sentient and non-sentient beings, distinguished by names and forms as the previous aeon.'\(^{32}\)

'Brahman swells through brooding'; through brooding, i.e. thought-in agreement with a later text, 'brooding consists of thought'- Brahman swells, i.e. through thought in the form of an intention, viz., 'May I become many' Brahman becomes ready for creation.\(^{33}\) This brooding, which consists of thought and intention, signifies that Brahman creates out of free choice, there being no external force constraining It to create. It also signifies that the creation is not arbitrary and irrational but intelligent and rational. This brooding 'denotes knowing, viz., reflection on the shape and character of the previous world which Brahman is about to reproduce.'\(^{34}\)

Brahman creates the new world in accordance with what existed in a previous creation, because it is necessary that souls should in the new creation have a nature in accordance with their deeds in a previous creation.\(^{35}\)
The creative process starts from Prakṛti which remains dormant in Brahman prior to evolution. The creation from Prakṛti onwards proceeds much as in Sāmkhya system, by the mutual influence of matter and soul, but animated and controlled at every stage by Brahman. Regarding his acceptance of the evolutionary scheme of the Sāmkhya Rāmānuja writes, 'The Śāṅkara Śāstra (i.e. the Vedānta) does not disprove the principles assumed by the Sāmkhyas, but merely the view of their not having Brahman for their Self.' He elsewhere writes, 'We by no means wish to deny unevolved matter and all its effects in themselves but in so far only as they are maintained not to have their self in the Supreme Person. It is just on the ground of this dependence on the Lord not being acknowledged by the Sāmkhyas that their system is disproved by us.'

This opinion of Rāmānuja has ample support from the Upaniṣads and the Gītā. The later Upaniṣads, notably the Śvetāsvatara and the Maitrī, envisage the material universe in Sāmkhya fashion as composed of matter and its qualities. There is no explicit reference in the earlier Upaniṣads to any such material principle. The Chāndogya IV.4 explains all objects as composed of three elements—a procedure suggestive of the Sāmkhya account of all material objects as composed of the three gunas. In the Katha III.10-13; VI.7-8 and Praśna IV.8 we meet with an enumeration of principles similar to those found in the Sāmkhya. The Śvetāsvatara makes use of the doctrine of three gunas and the Maitrī refers to the three gunas by name, and enumerates their effects, as in the Sāmkhya philosophy. But this Sāmkhya which finds expression in the Upaniṣads is theistic, and not atheistic and dualistic which appears in Īśvara Kṛṣṇa.
In the Gītā (VII.4, XIII.5) creation proceeds much as in the Sāṃkhya philosophy. But unlike the classical Sāṃkhya Prakṛti here is not an independent principle which exists outside of, or side by side with, the Deity. It is regarded as the part of the Deity and as controlled by Him in all its developments. From Prakṛti come forth numerous elements. The Gītā, being uninterested in cosmological details, does not trouble to mention each of these elements individually, nor does it observe any consistent order in enumerating them. Much less does it seek to trace them step by step through the evolutionary process.

Along with this Sāṃkhya process of evolution of the world, Rāmacanu also brings in the idea of cosmic Egg in which all the elements of matter and souls after they have been evolved are combined together, and in which is born the creator Brahmā, who brings about the world. Rāmacanu bases this idea on Śvetāsvatara (VI.18) and quotes several passages from the Manu Sūrti and the Purāṇas. The reason why the various elements when once evolved need to combine into an egg, he borrows from a Sūrti text which says, 'Possessing various powers these (elements), being separate from one another, were unable to produce creatures without combining. But having entered into mutual conjunction they from the Mahat down to the individual beings, produce the Brahmā egg.'

With regard to the relation of the Supreme Brahman to the creator Brahmā, Rāmacanu makes it quite plain that Hiranya-garbha, the creator Brahmā, is only as it were the instrument of the Supreme Being, who dwells within him and uses him even as the soul uses the body. So, ultimately it is the Supreme Brahman who creates and not Brahmā.
Brahman's relation to Prakṛti

Prakṛti is the principle which Brahman employs in creation. It is that which produces manifold and wonderful effects under the supervision of Brahman. It possesses two chief characteristics. Firstly, it is essentially a principle of change and differentiation. Secondly, it is a principle of pleasure and pain meted out to a soul bound to worldly existence as a result of its acts. It is hence spoken of as the object of fruition. Rāmānuja bases this view on the Śvetāsvatara (I.9), Mundaka (III.1,1.) and the Gītā(XIII.20-21).

Though Prakṛti is associated with these two characteristics and also forms a part of Brahman, Rāmānuja is quite emphatic in maintaining that Brahman does not share these characteristics. Prakṛti forms only the body of Brahman and these changes etc. in the body of Brahman do not affect its soul or essence. The three qualities of Prakṛti are not manifested in the causal state when Prakṛti is absorbed in Brahman. Though the ultimate Reality comprises of non-sentient matter, sentient beings and the Loka, this does not in the least imply any confusion of their respective essential characteristics.

Motive for creation

The last and the most curious cosmological problem that faces Rāmānuja is that, if Brahman is quite distinct from Prakṛti and shares none of its characteristics, and yet maintains it as its mode, for what purpose, if any, does it keep it in existence? Prakṛti, being a principle of change, seems to exist to effect the manifoldness of the world. But it may be asked, why is the manifoldness of the world necessary? If Brahman is a perfect Being, eternally complete, who has no objects to
achieve, no desires to fulfil, then why does He divide Himself into multiplicity? The very idea of a perfect Being indulging in creation to fulfil some purpose appears as self-contradictory, for it argues a lack or imperfection in Him which He is seeking to overcome. This also cannot be said that in creation Brahman has no personal motive, but is motivated entirely by desire for the welfare of finite souls, because pain and suffering of souls in the world disproves this. Rāmānuja is aware of these difficulties and therefore following the Sutrakāra he holds lilā (sport) as the main purpose of creation. Thus that which is called the creation etc. of the world is really a re-creation, a joyous and free activity entered into by the Supreme Being as a spontaneous expression of His manifold powers. It is a purposeless purpose, which implies disinterestedness, joyousness, free will and superabundance of energy on the part of Brahman, and it must be distinguished from conscious volitional effort. The creation follows the mere will, or free choice, of Brahman. It is to preserve the supreme perfection of Brahman that the Sutrakāra has given lilā as the motive for creation.

Though the creative act gives an expression to the Divine sport, this sport is not meaningless like a child's play, as it involves 'brooding' or thinking on the part of Brahman. This brooding, as we have seen, is for meting out to souls the fruits of their acts. This not only explains the pains and suffering of souls as due to their own previous deeds, but also suggests that the purpose of creation is concerned with the deeds of the souls as well. It may be argued that before the first creation there was no accumulated karma, then how can there be any consideration and consequent discrimination? To this Rāmānuja replies that the flow of karma is beginningless. At the time of dissolution the past deeds of the individual
are not annihilated since there is no unmerited suffering (akṛtibhyāgama) or annihilation of karma (kṛtavipraṇaśa).\(^{52}\) Brahman, therefore, maintains Prakṛti, for the sake of individual souls.

We may conclude, then, that according to Pāṇārūja the world is a mode or an attribute of the Divine Being. He is both its material and the operative cause. For Prakṛti and souls, form one part or body of Him and He pervades them as their inner soul. The world, as is quite distinct from Brahman, and their distinctness is never lost. Brahman is the one only true substance of which the world is eternally distinct mode. Though Brahman is perfect and the world is imperfect and though the world completely depends on it, nevertheless, perfect nature is not sullied to the slightest extent, and the distinct reality of the world is not in any way destroyed.

**Introduction to the Pāṇcarātra Account of Cosmology**

Of all the philosophical problems that attracted the attention of the Pāṇcarātra thinkers, it is the cosmology that interested them the most. To indulge in cosmological speculations and to promulgate elaborate cosmological doctrines seem to be a favourite topic with them. Dr. Schrader has rightly remarked that their theoretical philosophy is inseparably bound up with the story of creation.\(^{53}\) All the Pāṇcarātra doctrines, theological as well as eschatological, are stated only in their cosmogonical contexts. They were much concerned with pointing out the various stages through which the world passed before it arrived at its present state. In formulating the details regarding the process of creation they are much influenced by the Sāmkhya philosophy, but in facing the problems which arise in
connection with the relation of the transcendent and perfect Deity to the imperfect and changing universe, they show great skill, depth and originality of thought. That is why it has got acceptance with many of the Vaishnava teachers of Vedānta. As the Pāñcarātra system has got its expression through two different sources, viz., the Mahābhārata and the Pāñcarātra Samhitās, we shall consider their account separately.

The cosmological account of the Nārāyanīya.

There is no evolved cosmological speculation in the Nārāyanīya, and unlike the Pāñcarātra Samhitās, the cosmological account is not much complicated. Assuming that the world is real the Nārāyanīya teaches like many of the Upaniṣads that it forms a part of the Supreme Being, who is its author, sustainer and dissolver. He is the primeval cause, the real essence, the very warp and woof of the universe. The whole universe proceeds from Him. He is the creator of the world, and the soul of every being. The creation of the universe proceeds much as in the Sāmkhya philosophy, except this difference that Prakṛti is regarded as contained in the Supreme Being and controlled by Him. It is to be noted here that the Pāñcarātra Samhitā doctrine of Śrī as the creative principle is not present in the Nārāyanīya.

Though the Supreme Being is said to be the creator of the universe, the Nārāyanīya introduces a mythological account that the Supreme Being Himself does not do this work, but commissions Brahmā who spontaneously rises out of Him to create and superintend the universe. Brahmā is said to have obtained from the Divine Being the intelligence necessary for this task. Having unveiled to the creator of the cosmos the objects that had to be evolved, the Supreme Being is reported to have
vanished in His native form, and to have adopted the course of nivṛtti or yogic sleep. The reason why the Supreme Being commissions Brahmā and Himself does not do this work, perhaps may be to preserve the Divine transcendence and perfection which seem incompatible with His being an active agent in relation to the universe.

The Nārāyaṇīya holds that the process of creation starts in two parallel orders from two real categories of matter and spirit which are identical in their origin in the Supreme Spirit. The first is a physical order of material causation and the second is a physical order of conditioned existences named as Vyūhas. The two orders are as follows:

(i) Kṣetrajña-prekti-manas-aḥamkāra-guṇas and mahābhūtas.
(ii) Vāsudeva-Saṃkarṣaṇa-Pradyumna-Aniruddha-Brahmā.

In the process of creation first there exists the Supreme Being who is identified with Vāsudeva. He is unconditioned Supreme. In creating the universe He enters into union with earth, wind, space, water and light, and in combination with these, appears as jīva(embodied soul), and is called Śeṣa or Saṃkarṣaṇa. By Saṃkarṣaṇa's spontaneous act there evolves from him Pradyumna, the cosmic manas, who is the mind of all creatures and into whom all creatures merge at a dissolution. From him again springs Aniruddha who is consciousness. He is the creator who creates all things in the universe.

Thus the Supreme Being Himself does not create the world, but undergoes a series of emanations till Aniruddha, the creator, appears. This theory of Vyūhas, found only in a germ-form in the Nārāyaṇīya, comes to be very fully elaborated in the Pāñcarātra Samhitās.
The main features of the Samhitā cosmology

The Pāñcarātra Samhitās assume a pseudo-realistic attitude towards the universe. In some of the Samhitās the advaitic doctrine of māyā finds a distinct expression. But most of the Samhitās are apparently indifferent to this doctrine. The only Ultimate Reality the Pāñcarātra thinkers recognise is the transcendent, perfect Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is so far removed in character from this changing imperfect world that not only He is regarded as incapable of being described as the cause of the world but He is also regarded as incapable of being actively or directly related to the world. Consequently great care is taken in showing how the changing universe springs from, and is related to, the unchanging Supreme. In order to account for this the Pāñcarātra thinkers postulate various intermediaries between the Supreme and the world. The universe is regarded as sprung not from Brahman but from Its Sakti, the Laksāmi, which, described as an aspect of Brahman, is so eternally distinct from Its supreme nature that though engaged in creation etc., it leaves Brahman's essential nature unaffected. The unique contribution of the Pāñcarātra thought is the theory of emanation (Vyūhavāda) which while bringing the varying world into existence from the Supreme, leaves the latter unaffected. The five-fold manifestation of God, which is a central dogma of the Pāñcarātra school, is an outcome of this doctrine.

The Samhitā account compared with the Advaitic account

The Pāñcarātra account of the world is very much similar to the Advaitic account. Firstly in both the schools the Ultimate Reality which is perfect, unchanging and static is not directly related to the world. The Īśvara in the Advaita and the Vāsudeva in the Pāñcarātra, who is as phenomenal as the Īśvara of the
Advaita, are the cause of the world. The only difference between
the two is that the Īśvara of the Advaita is associated with māyā
whereas the Vāsudeva of the Pāṇcarātra is associated with Lakṣmi.
The Lakṣmi of the Pāṇcarātra is conceived in a more positive
and determinate way than the māyā of the Advaita.

Secondly, in both the schools intermediaries (like
Hiranyagarbha, Virāt etc. in the Advaita and Vyūhas, Brahmā etc.
in the Pāṇcarātra) between the Transcendent Supreme and the
immanent world are postulated so that the perfect nature of the
Supreme Being may remain unpolluted.

Lastly, the advaitic doctrine of Vivartavāda and the
Pāṇcarātra doctrine of Vyūhavāda has this element in common that
in both the Supreme Being though regarded as the basis of the
world, is not affected by the mutations of the world. It is not
clear as to whether all the Pāṇcarātra thinkers believe in
the Satkāraṇavāda or not, and the consequent view of the illusory
manifestation of the phenomenal world, but from the premises of
the school one must legitimately expect them to believe in it.
And as we have said above, some of the Samhitās do uphold this
view.

The process of evolution

The evolution of the universe in the Samhitās is descri-
bbed as consisting of three stages which are named as Āuddha Šarga,
Prādhānic Šarga and Brahma or Sthūla Šarga. The first stage of
evolution is named as Āuddha because the other two stages are
not considered as similarly pure as the three guṇas inherent in
them give rise to impurities. The second stage is partly pure
and partly impure, and that is why it is referred to as Āuddha–
śuddha or śuddhetara. The third one is fully impure.
Pure Creation (First stage of evolution)

The Supreme Being, who dwells for timeless ages in His transcendent form in a state of quietness of cosmic absorption which is compared to 'windless atmosphere' or 'motionless sea', suddenly gets stirred up and an independent resolve flashes up in Him to start the process of unfolding. This resolve is attributed to His sakti-creative aspect of the Lord-spoken of figuratively as His consort Lakṣmī. The great sakti of Viṣṇu, which was so far indistinguishable from Him existing only as it were in a form of 'darkness' or 'emptiness', awakens as it were by His command and 'opens her eyes'. By some independent resolve, she flashes up with an infinitely small part of herself, in her dual aspect of Kriya (acting) and Bhūti (becoming), that is, force and matter, or efficient and material cause of the world.

Though the Supreme Being is regarded as the creator and sustainer of the universe, His transcendental aspect remains so completely in the background that we are practically concerned only with Lakṣmī which, as Bhūti, appears as the universe, and, as kriyā, vitalises and governs it.

Manifestations of guṇas

With the evolution of these saktis, the transcendental and undifferentiated Lord comes to be characterised by six guṇas which are necessary for creation. This first phase of the manifestation of Lakṣmī is called 'guṇam谤adaśā', that is the stage in which the six attributes of the Lord make their appearance. These guṇas-aprakṛta in nature and hence different from the three well-known prakṛtic guṇas-indicate the start of the Suddha Srṣṭi, the creative expression which is to be distinguished
from the creative evolution at the material plane. These six gunas are jñāna, aisvarya, śakti, bala, virya and tejasa. These gunas in their totality, and by pairs, are the material of pure creation. In their totality they make up the body of Vāsudeva, the highest personal God, as well as that of His consort Laksñi. As possessed of these gunas and as distinct from His Śakti, the Supreme Being is called Vāsudeva.

Emanation of the Vyūhas

From Vāsudeva three Vyūhas come into existence, each one of which possesses two of the six gunas. Each Vyūhas has two activities, a creative and a moral one, i.e., one connected with the origin of beings and the other with their ethical progress. Each of these activities said to be mediated by one of his two gunas. Since the creative activities necessarily precede the moral one, it is assumed that during the period of pure creation, the first three gunas, viz., jñāna, aisvarya and śakti, which pertain to Bhūti aspect and which are called Viśrama bhūmayah (stages of rest), only are actually manifest. The last three gunas, viz., bala, virya and tejasa, known as Śrama bhūmayah (stages of effort) and which belong to Kriyā aspect, come forth only when all the elements are created.

The creative activities of the Vyūhas come into play one after the other, thus marking out three successive stages in the creation of the non-pure universe. With Śaṅkaraśana non-pure creation becomes dimly manifest in an embryonic or germinal condition, as a chaotic mass without internal distinction. Through Pradyumna the duality of Puruṣa and Prakṛti makes its first appearance. He creates the Group Soul and the Primordial Matter with Subtle Time. The creative process from onwards we shall
consider under the second stage.

There are divergences in different Samhitās regarding the cosmic activities of the Vyūhas. Lākṣmī Tantra, for instance, teaches that the cosmic function of Aniruddha is creating, that of Pradyumna preservation, and that of Śamkarsāna annihilation, while according to the Viśvaksena Samhitā Śamkarsāna destroys, Pradyumna creates and Aniruddha protects this whole world.

It should be noted here that the above account of the Vyūhas is entirely different from the account given in the Narāyaṇiya section of the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata. There it is stated that Śamkarsāna represents the individual soul, Pradyumna the manas, and Aniruddha the ahamkāra. This type of view is found only at one place in the Lākṣmī Tantra. The Viśvaksena Samhitā, on the other hand, regards these three as the tutelar deities of the said principles.

The Highest Heaven and its inhabitants

To pure creation further belongs the Param-vyūman with all the beings and objects contained in it. It is sometimes named as Vaikunṭha, a lower heaven, but more often the latter is regarded as a reflection-en-miniature of the Highest Heaven. This Highest Heaven is in no way associated with the Transcendent Supreme Lord. This is clear from the fact that it comes into existence at the stage of pure creation. It is the manifestation of the three-fourth of the Śakti of Lord in opposition to the one-fourth with which Aniruddha creates the cosmic egg.

The Highest Heaven is made of a special supra-mundane matter named as śuddhasattva, which, as it is called, is not a mixture of the three earthly gunas. Nor is it the same as pure sattva guna without the admixture of rajas and tamas, because
sattva guṇā originates much later than the Highest Heaven. All these are made of pure matter which is of the nature of knowledge and bliss, in so far as it is nowhere an obstacle to mind, but consists, on the contrary, of nothing but wishes materialised. It is, as it were, the 'solidified splendour' of pure creation.

Prāchāṇic or Intermediate creation

The creation at the second stage is another manifestation of the Bhūti Śakti which is based on pure creation. It is partly pure and partly impure. To this belong Kūṭastha Puruṣa and the Māyā Śakti with their respective developments.

Kūṭastha Puruṣa

The Kūṭastha Puruṣa, called also simply Kūṭastha or Puruṣa, is explained as 'An aggregate of souls, similar to a bee-hive, the pure-impure condition of Bhūti—such is the Puruṣa piled up by souls, blunted by beginningless germ-impressions.' According to the Lakṣmī Tantra Puruṣa means 'the all-knowing, all-faced bhokṛ kūṭastha; as his parts go forth from him all the eternal souls, and likewise at (the time of) Dissolution the work (bound) souls, go back to him, the Highest soul.' The Kūṭastha Puruṣa, then, is the soul of souls, the totality of all disembodied but karma-bound souls. (The liberated souls do not return to the Kūṭastha). He is pure in himself but impure on account of being the abode of karma-bound souls. He takes his rise from Pradyumna, and consists of four couples, namely, the male and female ancestors of the four castes, springing respectively from the mouth, arms, legs, and feet of Pradyumna. Accordingly the Kūṭastha is called 'the Puruṣa of four pairs', 'the Puruṣa consisting of twice four', 'the aggregate of manus',...
Maya Sakti

The Maya Sakti also springs from Pradyumna. It is the root matter which comes into existence along with the Purusa and into which the Manus are destined to gradually descend. It stands into the same relation to the material universe, in which the Kutashta stands to the world soul. It has two different manifestations, viz., guna body and time body. The latter consists of Kala (time) and its subtle cause, Niyati, 'Restriction'. The Niyati, Kala and guna, are declared to originate from the fore-head, eye-brows and ears respectively of Pradyumna.

The three-fold Maya Sakti viz., Niyati, Kala and guna occupy a very important place in the Pancharatra philosophy.

Niyati, 'the sakti consisting of great knowledge' is the 'subtle regulator of everything such as the form which (a being) may have, its work, and its nature. It not only regulates the position in space (as is done by the Vaisesika category (Dis)) but it also regulates as Karmic necessity, the intellectual capacity, inclinations and practical ability of everything.

The second aspect of the Maya Sakti, viz., Kala is defined as 'the mysterious power existing in time which urges on everything' or as 'the principle which pursues (measures) everything to be matured' or as 'the cooking form of time'. The Kala originates from the Niyati and gives rise to the Guna-body.

The concept of Time has been treated in detail in the Pancharatra Samhitas. Three kinds of Time have been distinguished, viz., Gross (Effectuated) which operates in the empirical world; Subtle (Causal) which though relatively eternal is created...
The third aspect of Maya Sakti is Guna body. It consists of the three guṇas. Each guṇa, while evolving, is supervised by Aniruddha in the form of Trimūrti; that is to say, Aniruddha as Viṣṇu becomes the Superintendent of Sattva, as Brahmā that of rajas and as Rudra that of tamas. These three gods, together with their Saktis (‘ēkṣmi, Sarasvatī, Gaurī) are called in Lakṣmi Tantra the 'Sheath of generation' (Prasūtikoṣa).

After the guṇas have evolved separately they become, for the purpose of creation, a uniform mass called Āvyekta or Mūlaprakṛti. The process of evolution described onwards is more or less of Sāṃkhya pattern with certain modifications.

Gross Creation—Lower Primary.

The evolution at the third stage may be called Lower Creation which is divided into Primary and Secondary. The evolution at this stage is similar to the classical Sāṃkhya account with some important differences. The most striking difference is that whereas the classical Sāṃkhya has only two principles to start with, the Sāṃhitās hold that the evolution at this level results from the combined activity of three principle agents, viz., Prakṛti, Puruṣa and Kāla. The first two exist in the same relation as in the classical Sāṃkhya, but both are being 'cooked' by Time. Secondly, in the Sāṃkhya Prakṛti is independent, but here it is subordinate to Brahman, strictly speaking to His Sakti. Thirdly, at this stage there are not many Puruṣas as in the Sāṃkhya, but only the one Kūṭastha or SamaṣṭiPuruṣa.

Prakṛti, Puruṣa and Kāla combined together produce the Mahat. Mahat sometimes is described as three-fold in conformity with its three guṇas, its tamas element appearing as Kāla,
its sattva element as Buddhi, and its rajas element as Prāṇa.
But further we are also told that Mahat manifests itself into
four sāttvic and four tāmasic forms, while the taįjasa cooperates
with the tvo. Buddhi here is not a synonym of Mahat as in classi-
cal Sāmkhya, but one of its three forms, viz. Sāttvic. Time as
a form of Mahat means Gross Time. Buddhi, the natural organ of
knowledge, is acquired by the Manus while dwelling in the womb
of vidyā, by means of which they can ascertain the nature of
things, discriminating between the real and the unreal. The
five Prānas are in the classical Sāmkhya a common function of
Buddhi, Āhamkāra and Manas, which three together form the antaḥ-
karaṇa; whereas in the Śaṅhitas they come from Mahat only.

In the Laksṇi Tantra there is a different explanation
of the word Mahat. The Mahat, according to this, is called so
on account of its comprehending the Lotus, the Male and the
woman, the Lotus being subsequently identified with Prāṇa, the
woman with Buddhi and the Male with the Puruṣa.

From Mahat, again, originates the cosmic Tattva called
Āhamkāra. It has a sāttvic, rājasic and tāmasic form called
respectively Vaikārika, taįjasa and bhūtādi. The Vaikārika produces individual manas and the bhūtādi
gives rise to individual Āhamkāra, while the taįjasa seems to
participate equally in the production of both these organs.

From the cosmic Āhamkāra come the subtle and gross ele-
ments and then the Manus receive ten indriyas. The Manus being
perfected now come under the protection of Aniruddha. By the
command of Aniruddha they begin to multiply and generate a hun-
dred descendants, male and female, called Mānavas, and these,
continuing the work of generation, become the ancestors of number-
less Mānavamāṇvas.
Then follows the 'fall from knowledge' (jñāna bhṛṣmā) of the Manava māṇevas. A mythological account is given for this occurrence.

**Lower Secondary Creation**

The process of creation had started in the eighth and the last part of the Cosmic Night (Pauruṣī rātri) when the great Śakti of Viṣṇu opened her eyes by His Command. The creation until now was taking place during the eighth part of the night. But the appearance of the last tattva, viz., Prthivi, marks the end of the cosmic night and the beginning of the Day. All the tattvas grouped together result into a compound called Cosmic Egg (Brahmāṇḍa) in which god Brahmā comes into existence to create the gross world. Pādma Tantra gives the following short account of the secondary or gross creation. The principles thus created, existing separately with their respective faculties, could not without coalescing into a mass (samhātimvīnā) create beings. They, then, from Mahat down to the Gross Elements, became massed together, under the influence of the foremost Puruṣa. Then (out of them) an egg was produced from the Navel of Padmanābha, who is a portion of Myself, and (in the egg) thou, O Lotus-born one, becomest the womb of the world. It is thus that at the beginning of creation this whole world came to arise from Praṅṭī.

In the above account an attempt is made to combine the ancient story about the Golden Egg giving birth to Brahmā, with the later story of the Lotus springing from the Navel of Padmanābha. In some Saṃhitās the creation is derived from the Egg and in others from the Lotus. In some Saṃhitās plurality of cosmic Egg is emphasised.
dual life in the Egg there are conflicting statements in the Samhitās.\textsuperscript{117}

The above is the account of the process of evolution and creation in the Samhitās. Though there are many divergences in details in different Samhitās, the main stages in the evolution of the Universe from the Supreme Being are fairly represented by the above account.

The Pāñcarātra Samhitās are quite emphatic in maintaining that the Supreme Being alone is the cause of the universe but they are equally emphatic in saying that the Deity is quite unaffected by the changes which are necessary to bring about the universe. He is the unchanging One, who though unchanging is the explanation of all change. The five-fold manifestation of the Deity, and the concept of Leksma as the creative principle are the attempts made by the Pāñcarātra thinkers to relate the transcendental Supreme Being to a universe which appears far removed from Him in nature. The same desire to preserve the purity and unchanged nature of the Supreme Being in relation to the changing universe made the Pāñcarātra thinkers to postulate many stages through which the evolution of the universe takes place. However, this way of overcoming the difficulty, though seemingly satisfactory, is really no solution to the problem at all. In so far as these mediating principles were regarded as distinct from the Supreme Being, they served to bridge the gulf between God and the world; but when it was realised that they could not be regarded as really distinct, for then the problem arose of explaining the relation of the Deity to them, they were immediately declared to be none-other than the Deity Himself in one or the other of His aspects.
Rāmānuja and the Pāṇcarātra school—A Study in Contrast

A comparative study of the cosmology of Rāmānuja and of the Pāṇcarātra school would bring out the fact that there are striking and far-reaching differences between them, and that there is nothing significant that can be said to be common. The contrast is so strong and vivid that it leaves no ground for, and roots out the very possibility of, the Pāṇcarātra impact on Rāmānuja. As a matter of fact, Rāmānuja shows little interest in cosmological speculation, and is contented to borrow cosmological ideas ready-made from the Sāṃkhya school. He has given no new thoughts of his own, nor did he worry himself with the 'how' and 'why' of the universe. This is, perhaps, because of the fact that his interest is too definitely centred round the Deity for him to trouble much about the problems of why the Infinite and Perfect changes into finite and imperfect, and of the various stages through which the world passed before it arrived at its present state. He is merely concerned with pointing out that whatever order evolution follows it is Brahman who underlies it, and it is He who creates it from Himself as His līlā. In this respect Rāmānuja contrasts very strikingly with the Pāṇcarātra philosophers—those who were deeply interested in, and concerned with, cosmological problems, who propounded elaborate cosmological theories and doctrines, and in whom all metaphysical problems are set in cosmogonical context. It will not be too much to say that in the Pāṇcarātra thinkers philosophy begins with the story of creation. The problem that worried them the most was how the changing world is to be related to the unchanging Brahman, who is its source.

Though both Rāmānuja and the Pāṇcarātra thinkers seem to assume a realistic attitude to the universe the realism of
Rāmānuja is thorough-going, but the realism of the Pañcarātra, if interpreted logically, can be said to be apparent only. According to Rāmānuja the world constitutes the body, mode or attribute of God, Brahman is a triad or an organic whole containing matter and soul within Himself. He is immanent in the world as its Inner Controller or Soul. The God of Rāmānuja need not completely transcend the universe, because for him even if God is regarded as the author of the universe and as immanent in it, His supreme perfection and transcendence can be preserved. By creating and containing the universe His perfect nature does not get polluted. Therefore, Rāmānuja regards the universe as a part and parcel of God, and as real as God Himself.

For the Pañcarātra thinkers, on the other hand, the purity and perfection, transcendence and unchanged nature of Brahman is incompatible with the changing and imperfect universe, and this gives rise to the Saṁhitā view that the Supreme Being Himself is not responsible for creation etc. of the universe, but only His Śakti. They feel shy of the idea of Brahman being an active agent in relation to the world. Śakti, therefore, in the Saṁhitās practically usurps the place of the Supreme Being in relation to the universe. If Brahman were the only reality, and if Brahman does not stand related to the changing universe, the only conclusion logically follows is that Brahman alone is real and the universe is not real but phenomenal. But this is quite a precarious and unsatisfying position for them and in order to avoid from falling into it, they tried to maintain that the Śakti is an aspect of the Supreme and is subordinate to Him. But this position would have again affected the transcendent and unchanged character of Brahman, for the universe being an expression of Śakti and Śakti being an aspect of Brahman, the
world with all its imperfections would have been also an aspect of Brahman. So in order to preserve the transcendent and perfect nature of the Supreme—which is their main concern—they again had to shift their position and regard Śakti as a principle eternally distinct from the Supreme. Thus with regard to the relation of the Śakti to the Supreme they oscillate between the two positions. The two cannot be regarded as identical, nor can they be regarded as distinct.

In this respect the position of the Pāñcarātra thinkers does not differ much from that of Śankara, who also from his static standpoint maintains that the unity and multiplicity cannot be organically related and be equally real. Śankara ushers in the concept of māyā with the only purpose of relating the static Brahman with the changing world, and the principle of Śakti is also introduced by the Pāñcarātra thinkers manifestly with the same purpose. Both these principles are taken resort to in order to supply the missing link between the transcendent Brahman and the immanent world. Śankara and the Pāñcarātra thinkers are so much eager to maintain the purity, perfection and unchanged nature of Brahman that they emphasised His transcendence at the cost of the reality of the world. It is this eagerness which refrained them from regarding Brahman as immanent in the world. Therefore, they took resort to the view that it is only His manifestations which are related to the universe.

Though the logical position of the Pāñcarātra thinkers is thus non-dualistic, they did not rest content with it—rather they had a dislike for it—and, therefore, tried to maintain the reality of the world as well, in spite of the fact that their premises, as we have seen, did not warrant them to do so. Consequently, we find in them a juxtaposition of non-dualism and rea-
lisfflj and they oscillate in between advaitic and non-advaitic tendencies. The failure of their part to be consistent in their views resulted in serious ambiguities, and instance of which can be seen from how the same passages which were used by Schrader to prove that 'illusionism is altogether absent from them' were utilised by P.T.S. Aiyangar to establish advaitism as the view towards which the Sūdhitas incline. Consistent thinking requires that either we must deny creation and the creative manifold as Śankara did or we must accept the creative manifold to be the expression of the Absolute; but it is difficult to accept the creative manifold along with a static Absolute, which can admit of no expression, though the Pāṇcarātra thinkers have not refrained from doing so. With the help of the principle of Śakti they unsuccessfully tried to reconcile the two position, but at no moment could they find escape either in realism or in transcendentalism. They could easily bring in Śakti to bridge the gulf between Brahman and the world, but when it was realised that Brahman and Śakti could not be regarded as really distinct for that would affect Divine Supremacy—they immediately tried to identify them. But thereby they placed themselves in an unhappy dilemma. Either they should regard Śakti as identical with Brahman and thus sacrifice His unchanged and transcendent nature, or else, they should declare that the two are distinct and thereby barter His supremacy. In neither of the positions they could have been comfortable. Consequently they left the matter unsolved and tried to escape in a 'half-way house'.

Apart from the problem of the ontological status of the world, another basic problem before Rāmānuja and the Pāṇcarātra thinkers is, how can the world of imperfections arise out of a Perfect Being. This much is quite indisputable that the
world is full of imperfections, that the Supreme Being is Perfect, and that the world issues out of the Supreme Being. But the point in dispute is, can the Supreme Being be regarded as an active agent in relation to the universe, and yet be conceived as unaffected by the changes which are necessary to bring about the universe? Can He, the unchanging One, who though unchanging be the explanation of the changing world? Will His Perfect nature be not polluted if He is conceived to be directly related to the universe?

The answer to this problem was given differently by Rāmānuja and the Pāncarātra thinkers. Śankara also faced the same problem. Bādarāyaṇa in the Vedānta Sūtras had maintained that Brahman and the world are 'ananya' (non-different) but this non-difference does not mean absence of difference or change. Both Śankara and Rāmānuja agree that some change in Brahman is necessary in order to have the world, but the ontological position of this change is explained differently by them. For Śankara the change is 'vivarta', i.e. apparent only. In other words, the change undergone by Brahman to create the appearance of the world is not real. For the explanation of this apparent change Śankara postulates the principle of Avidyā or Māyā. As a matter of fact Brahman does not undergo any change but it falsely appears as if He has undergone the change. Similarly the world also is not real. It exists only for those who are under the influence of Avidyā, even as the imagined serpent exists only for those who have the wrong view of the rope.

Rāmānuja, on the other hand, believes this change to be real. The world is real as mode or determination of Brahman. The statement that Brahman is the material cause of the world suggests that the world is a modification of the substance of
Brahman. The world is not an illusion or a dream-like structure, but a real, positive, something which has its origination, existence and absorption in Brahman. He believes that the power of creation etc. belongs to Brahman Himself. He does not need the help of any tertium quid, a third entity like Mayā or Śakti in between Brahman and the world. Brahman out of His own līlā develops Himself into the world without undergoing the least change and without ceasing to be Himself. By the help of the relationship of cause and effect, body and soul, substance and attribute Rāmānuja explains how this can happen. He further says that Brahman has wonderful powers by which even the inconceivable can be achieved. The impossible is possible for God. Śaṅkara's difficulty that from Brahman who is absolute perfection the world of imperfection cannot be said to take its rise in a real manner, does not trouble Rāmānuja, since he is willing to accept on the authority of the Śruti that the finite springs from the Infinite. what the Śruti says must be capable of being logically determined. From a philosophical point of view this position is unsatisfactory. He further maintains that the elements on which the Divine will is dependent in creation, are not given from outside but exist in Him as His modes. This would mean that at any rate the will of God is dependent on their preexistence. It is also theoretically possible, like Leibnitz, to imagine that with a different kind of material the world could have been shaped better. God could not choose the best of all possible world, but was obliged to make the best of the given one. Further, it is difficult to conceive how Brahman could be supposed to be unchangeable in view of the changing conditions of His attributes, matter and souls. Rāmānuja was aware of this difficulty and was obliged to concede that this does not affect the soul or essence.
of Brahman, but is limited to His body, i.e., the world, only.

The Pāṇcarātra thinkers, like Śaṅkara, denied the possibility of Brahman being an active agent in relation to the world, but, unlike Śaṅkara, hesitated to brand the manifold world illusory in an explicit language. Here it must be remembered that no effort is made in the Pāṇcarātra school to refute the doctrine of māyā, but Rāmānuja, as we have seen, fights tooth and nail with this doctrine and regards it as the main main target of his polemic. In some of the Śamhitās, on the contrary, the world is regarded as unreal and illusory which is quite in consonance with their Advaitic tendency. Unlike Rāmānuja, they maintain that Brahman does not change Himself in the Universe. The world is not a modification of the Supreme but an emanation from His Śakti, which is considered to be His aspect. He is in no way concerned with the universe, save with the Śakti whom He is said to subordinate. The Pāṇcarātra thinkers were of the view that the imperfect world cannot arise directly from the perfect Brahman. Consequently they had to postulate various intermediaries and mediating principles like Śakti, Vyūhas, Creator Brahmā, and the various stages like śuddha sarga, miśra sarga and aśuddha sarga, to bridge the gulf between God and the world and to make less difficult the transition from God to a universe so different from Him in character. They made a constant effort to preserve the reality of the universe without thereby detracting from the transcendence and perfection of the Supreme Being, but logically it resulted into a fiasco; because if the world is real it must have a place in the Ultimate Reality, but the very transcendent nature of the Ultimate Reality, denies any such place to it. A God who is creator ceases to be merely transcendent.

The various intermediaries that the Pāṇcarātra thinkers
postulate between Brahman and the world to account for the transition from one to the other, do not find acceptance in the philosophy of Ramanuja. The main feature of the Pahcaratra cosmology may be said to be the concept of Sri or Laksmi (which is the first intermediary) as the creative principle. This concept is altogether absent in Ramanuja and in the Vedantic scriptures. Ramanuja refers to her as the beloved consort of Vishnu but never as a creative or philosophical principle. This doctrine of Sri as the creative aspect of the Divine Being is peculiar to the Pahcaratra school. In the Vishnu Purana she is invoked as 'the mother of all things' and as 'the bestower of the fruit of emancipation' (I,9) but not as creative principle.

It is true that the ideas of the Cosmic Egg and creator Brahman are present in Ramanuja's cosmology, but they do not function there as intermediaries. These ideas are not at all peculiar to the Pahcaratra, and are given prominent place in the Rigveda, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas. These ideas have little philosophical significance in Ramanuja but in the Pahcaratra cosmology they play an important role. In the Pahcaratra the gross creation proceeds from the cosmic Egg, but in Ramanuja the Cosmic Egg, Brahman and Hiranyagarbha do not function independently. It is the Supreme Being who creates through them and therefore they can easily be dispensed with. Further the various details and elaborate complications associated with these ideas in the Pahcaratra are altogether absent in Ramanuja.

Similarly the process of creation in Ramanuja and the Pahcaratra is altogether different. In the Pahcaratra there are two processes of creation intermingled. The one is the Vyūha process which is a tenet distinctive of this school. The other is according to the Sāṁkhya enumeration of principles. Ramanuja
accepts only the Śāmkhya account of the evolution of the universe. He did not incorporate the Pāṇḍarātra doctrine of three or four Vyūhas. Though in his treatment of the Pāṇḍarātra school he maintains the four Vyūhas as forms assumed by the Deity out of tenderness to His devotees for the purposes of worship, he makes no use of this doctrine as principles through which evolution of the universe proceeds. On the contrary, it seems as if he is aware of the theological aspect of this doctrine only and is unaware of its cosmological application. It is, therefore, purely a misgiving of the scholars to say that Rāmanuja has utilised this doctrine in his cosmology.

The elaborate and complicated process of creation of the Pāṇḍarātra school with its characteristic doctrine of three stages and six Kośas of creation is altogether unknown to Rāmanuja. Rāmanuja gives a very simple and straightforward account of the process of evolution borrowed read-made from the Śāmkhya. But in the Pāṇḍarātra the creation must pass through three stages and six Kośas before it can acquire the present gross form. The six Kośas, as we have seen, are Śakti Kośa, Māyā Kośa, Prasūti Kośa, Prakṛti Kośa, Brahmāṇḍa Kośa and Jīvadeha Kośa, which appear distributively in three stages. The three stages are Śūdha, Mītra (or Śuddhāśuddha) and Sthūla (or Aśuddha).

In the first stage Lekṣmi, six guṇas, Vāsudeva and other three Vyūhas along with their saktis, Vibhavas, Divine abode, with all its inhabitants and paraphernalia, appear. Under the second stage Kūṭastha Puruṣa and Māyā Śakti, consisting of Niyati, Kāla and guṇa body, evolve. The last stage is divided into two levels—primary and secondary. The primary level is described on the pattern of Śāmkhya with some elaboration and modification. At the end of this level there appears a peculiar dogma of 'Fall
from Knowledge (jnana bhramsa) which is similar to the Christian dogma of the original sin. The secondary level consists of the cosmic Egg and Brahma who creates the world that we perceive.

All these cosmological details which are original to and distinctive of the Pāñcarātra school are not available in Rāmānuja. Here we must remove some other misapprehensions of the scholars. The Pāñcarātra concept of Suddha Sattva—a supra-physical substance out of which the forms and abode of the Deity are made, is not found in the works of Rāmānuja, though many scholars under wrong impression hold that Rāmānuja has accepted and incorporated this idea in his ontology. Similarly the concept of time is treated in the Pāñcarātra school in great details and it occupies a prominent place in Pāñcarātra cosmology but it is not present in the philosophy of Rāmānuja, though it is also wrongly ascribed to him.

Another point with regard to the process of creation in the Pāñcarātra is the prevalence of tāntrism. Almost all the Samhītās are replete with the tāntric elements, occultism and ritualistic details. A notable feature of these Samhītās is the account of the process of creation through mantras. But no such accounts or tāntric elements are found in Rāmānuja.

With regard to the purpose of creation, i.e., why should the Infinite appear as the finite, Rāmānuja holds that the world is a lilā of Brahman and is an instrument for meting out the deeds of the individual souls. The creation of the universe requires thought as well as intention on the part of Brahman. In the Pāñcarātra no specific purpose for the creation is mentioned. There a distinction is drawn between the transcendence of Divine consciousness and immanence of will. The Ultimate Reality—The Supreme Consciousness—Himself does not descend in
the universe. He simply expresses a will and Sakti—His creative aspect—starts the process of creation. He is said to have suddenly stirred up with an independent resolve to create the universe and orders Sakti accordingly. But why He gets stirred up and so resolves is not answered.

Lastly, the theory of causation in Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra is widely different. Rāmānuja accepts parināmavāda under which the cause undergoes a real change in order to bring out the effect. Pāñcarātra, on the contrary, propounds Vyūhavāda according to which the effect though emanates out of cause, leaves the cause entirely untouched and unaffected.

In Rāmānuja Brahman Himself gets transformed into the universe. The God of Rāmānuja is Himself both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He is not only a creator but also the sustainer of it. He takes active interest in the affairs of the world. But the God of Pāñcarātra is not at all the cause of the world. It is His Sakti which is entrusted with this task. She alone is the creative principle and not the Deity, who in His transcendental aloofness remains unconcerned with the world. Thus the God of the Pāñcarātra school is as if not only an absentee Deity but also a slumbering Deity, who once motivating Sakti to create the world, is no longer interested in it.

From the foregoing considerations it appears conclusive that Rāmānuja and the Pāñcarātra have nothing significant cosmological idea in common. The cosmological accounts are so divergent in them that there can be no basis for any meeting point. They bear only two elements in common which are quite significant. The first one is the incorporation of the Sāmkhya account of evolution and the second is acceptance of the ideas of Cosmic Egg and Brahma. But from the account given by Rāmānuja it is
quite evident that his basis for these elements is not Pāñcaratric but purely Vedāntic. Therefore, these do not in any way suggest the impact of the Pāñcarātra.
References and foot-notes:-

1. The same problem found expression in the Viśvakarṇa hymns (Ṛgveda X.81.4). The intricacy and insolubility of the problem led the author of the Māṣedīya sukta to admit his defeat when he said, 'who can know the origin of this world. It is also doubtful whether the very supervisor of this world in the highest heaven knows it or not!' (X.129.6-7)

2. 'Vedānta Sāra' edited by M. Hiriyanna p. 8 (text) p.54 (tra) On p. 36 Hiriyanna quotes the following verse

'पृथक्कर विकार श्रीयो विनयीत।
अनंतमने न्याय एव चिन्तते इसुपरित।'

ie. when the effect is a real transformation of its material cause (which is its essence) it is called Vikāra or Parināma, but when it is an apparent transformation it is called vivarta.


5. See Thibaut's translation of Śrī Bhaṣya p.106. N.

6. मुते बेन्न नस्तरवारस्यं कटकविष्कृतां परंत्रारात।

7. cf. Brh. II.5.19; Śve.IV.9; IV.10, Praśna I.16 etc.

8. 'तदन-मलब्ध भार मणि ज्ञाति दिशा-

9. Brh. I.4.16; II.1, II.5, III.7, Ṛg.9, IV.4.13, Chād. V.15,1.2, Teit.II.6; Kaṇ.4; Iṣa 1.6; Katha V.9.13; Mund II.1.4.9, Śve.I.16, VI.11; VI.34 etc.

10. Śve.I.7-12, III.1-2, 10,14,17,18; IV.1. etc; Katha II.22; IV.9,12,13; V.9.11,13; VI.2,3.

11. Brh. I.5,15; II.5.15; Kaṇs.III.8; Praśna II.6; VI.6.

12. VII.6; IX.7,8,10,17; X.39; XIV.3 etc.

13. IX.7,9

14. III.2, IV.1, V.3.

15. Śrī Bhaṣya I.4.23

16. Ibid I.2.23

17. Ibid I.4.25

18. Ibid II.1.4-7

19. Ibid II.1.15

20. Ibid II.1.16
21. As Sarvajñātma muni has put it:-

vitartvādādhyā yāṁ pūrṇaśrūṇī: | aekanātnakam-paśiṣṭamām.

22. "svastirśāntekādhiśmān-paśiṣṭamām hāvacyaśrūṇī vitartvādādhyā: /

see Ramana’s criticism - Śrī Bhāṣya.-Thibaut’s translation p. 459.

23. Śrī Bhāṣya I.4,27

24. Ibid I.4,27

25. Ibid II.1.9.

26. Ibid II.1.15.

27. Ibid I.1.1.


29. Gitā Bhāṣya VII.7

30. Śrī Bhāṣya I.1.1.


32. Ibid I.4,27

33. Ibid I.2,23.

34. Ibid I.4,27

35. Ibid I.1.1.

36. Ibid I.4,10.

37. Ibid II.243.

38. Ibid I.4,3.

39. IX.7-8; XIV.3; VII.4;

40. Śrī Bhāṣya I.3,29

41. Ibid IV.2.6

42. Ibid I.1.1

43. Ibid II.4,17.

44. Ibid I.1.1.

45. Ibid I.3.6.

46. Ibid I.4,8.

47. Ibid I.1.1.

48. Ibid I.4,10.
49. Ibid I.1.1
50. Ibid II.1.32
51. Ibid II.1.33
52. Ibid II.1.35.
53. Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā p.27
54. 340.42
55. 348.12
56. 340.22; 348.13
57. 340.24, 32
58. 350.16-27
59. 341.89.
60. 340.64-65
61. 343.45-46.
62. 340.33-41
63. Nārāda Pāñcarātra. II.2.100; Jayākhya IV.35; Parama I-30
64. Parama Prakāśa Samhitā I.1.53; Ahirbudhnya V.4ff.
65. Ahirbudhnya XIV.7-8.
66. See Schrader loc. cit pp 30-31 for the mutual relation between these saktis.
67. Laksml Tantra II. 25 ff, II.35 ff etc. See Schrader pp.32 ff. for details.
68. Ibid IV.9.
69. Ibid VI.25
70. Ibid V.29
71. See supra pp.88,83 for details regarding these Vyuhas.
72. Laksml Tantra IV.8-20; IV.24 and II.47.
73. Ibid II.46-47; III.4; IV.24.
74. Ibid VI.7.23
75. Ibid VI.10.
76. Ahirbudhnya IV.17; IX.31
77. Ibid LII.51-52.
80. see Schrader loc. cit. pp.41-42 for sub-Vyūhas and Vidyāśaras.
81. VI.9-14.
82. p.125 ff.
83. Ahirbudhnya VI.21 ff; Laksī tantra VI.43.
86. Ibid VI.7.
87. Ibid VI.34.
88. Ibid VI.33.
89. VII.11-12.
90. Ahirbudhnya VI.34.
92. See Schrader loc. cit. p.62 for its various names.
93. Ahirbudhnya VI.12.
94. Ibid. VI.46-51. Compare it with the concept of Niyati of the Ājīvīkās. See Basham—History and Doctrine of the Ājīvīkās pp.280 ff.
95. Ahirbudhnya IV.49.
96. Ibid VI.51.
97. Ibid VI.49.
98. Ibid LI.10-12.
99. Ibid VI.51-52.
100. VI.3,20-21. In the Pāñcarātra cosmology there is an interesting doctrine of six Kośas of Laksī. The first kośa, named mātrix as Śakti Kośa, comprises of the Vyūhas and their šaktis. The second is the Māyā kośa consisting of Māyā Śakti. The third kośa is Prasūti Kośa. The fourth kośa is Prakṛti Kośa from which the Lotus producing the cosmic Egg originates. The manifest and the non-manifest stages of the cosmig Egg named as Brahmānda Kośa and Jivadeha Kośa are the fifth and the six kośas. (Laksī Tantra VI.23-8)
101. Ahirbudhnya VI.63.
103. Ibid VII.9-11; Laksī Tantra XVI.2.4.
104. Ahirobudhnya VII.13-14.
105. Ibid VII.42-43.
106. VI.37-43.
108. Ibid VII.61.
110. P. Prakāśa Samhitā 1.1.51.
111. Ibid. 1.2.
112. Ahirobudhnya XXX.8 ff; XLI.5-6; Lekṣmi Tantra V.74 ff.
113. I.5.19-21
114. see Pādma Tantra I.3; Viṣṇu Tilaka II.40 ff; P. Prakāśa III. 37-38; Lekṣmi Tantra V.15; Prasna VI.21 ff etc. for further details and divergent accounts.
115. Ahirobudhnya VIII.2 ff.
117. See Schrader Loc. cit. pp. 82-85.
118. Ibid pp. 92-3.
119. Outlines of Indian philosophy pp. 184-5.
120. Śrī Bhāṣya II.1.27.
121. Ibid II.2.42.