CONCEPTION OF GOD
CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPTION OF GOD

The highest goal of spiritual life, according to Vīrāśaivism, is the ążga's (the soul's) attainment or regain of the union with Liṅga (God). This is possible only for a perfected mystic. It is claimed that one who has had mystic experience feels that he has lost his earlier original personality and its place has been entirely occupied by Paraśiva or that the mystic becomes a vehicle of Paraśiva. Often the mystic also claims that he becomes Paraśiva or the Absolute.

Now, these claims give rise to many philosophical problems, of which, in the present context, two are very important: (1) What is the nature of Paraśiva, with whom the mystic claims to identify himself or who is said to occupy mystic's personality fully? (2) What is precisely meant by saying that a mystic becomes Paraśiva or that the mystic's limited personality becomes vehicle of, or is fully occupied by, Paraśiva?

Postponing our attempt to answer the second question to a later, appropriate occasion, we can for the time being concentrate our attention on the answer to the first question.

Vīrāśaivism, as the word itself indicates, advocates a belief in and worship of Śiva. Therefore, Vīrāśaiva mysticism must be a theistic (opposite of "atheistic") mysticism, unlike the Buddhist or Jaina mysticism which is atheistic. The Vīrāśaiva literature, for the most part, consists in Kannada vacanas (sayings) all of which end
in the name of Śiva. Though it is a theoretical truism that the Vīraśaivas believe in Paraśiva as the highest reality, which has no name and form, the vacanakāras (vacana-writers) unanimously forget it and call the highest reality by various names, each by one of his choice. These names can be broadly classified into names which can be regarded as technical terms for God and names of family or village deities. Thus, “Śiva”, Paraśiva”, “Liṅga”, “Mahāliṅga”, “Śūn ya”, “Bayalu”, “Paravastu”, “Ghana”, “Ciḍghana” “Cīt” (or “Cittu”), “Sthalā”, “Ghanaliṅga”, etc are the commonly used technical synonyms, and names like “Kūḍalasaṅgama Deva”, “Guhēśvara”, “Kapilasiddha Mallikārjuna”, “Cenna Mallikārjuna”, “Kūḍala Cenna Saṅgayya”, etc are names of the village or family deities. However, since all vacanakāras use both these technical and non-technical names, it means that according to them there is no difference between these two kinds of names. But like the vacanakāras themselves, let us prefer the use of one or more of the technical terms, like “Śiva”, “Paraśiva”, “Liṅga”, etc.

A survey of the vacana literature reveals that it is not easy to formulate the concept of God enshrined in it. The vacanakāras say that Paraśiva is indescribable and imperceptible and yet it is a fact that the mystics claim to perceive him and that they have described him in various ways. Sometimes they argue that there is no pramāṇa which leads to a clear knowledge of Paraśiva and yet they have unhesitatingly given many detailed accounts of the states or
modes of Paraśiva, their distinguishing features, etc. What actually complicates the matter is the self-contradictory accounts of Paraśiva given by the vacanakāras.

The various accounts of Paraśiva given by the vacanakāras can be broadly classified into (a) the accounts which describe Paraśiva in impersonalistic terms and (b) the accounts which describe him in personalistic terms. Strangely enough, one finds also (c) vacanas which refuse to categorize Paraśiva either as personal or as impersonal. The latter on many occasions advocate that Paraśiva is neither with form nor without form, neither having a beginning nor having no beginning. This creates a problem of logic: if God is neither with form nor without form, what is he? In the first place, can there be a thing of that sort?

Since all the vacanakāras speak of Paraśiva both in personalistic and impersonalistic terms and also deny both of kinds of description one is puzzled. At the outset, this looks an insoluble paradox for two reasons: (1) If the Vīraśaiva mystics and saints believe in God at all, their conception must be one or the other, and it can neither be both nor neither. (2) If the Vīraśaiva stand is one or the other, how can anybody argue that Paraśiva is neither personal nor impersonal? These questions are meaningful, especially in view of the fact that the Vīraśaiva mystics and saints held some kind of belief in God, lived accordingly and achieved the spiritual goal in accordance with their belief. Hence the question,
What precisely is the Viśaśaiva concept of God, needs to be answered.

Since the vacanakāras are pre-eminently saints or mystics and not philosophers in the usual sense of the term, their descriptions may contain unconscious contradictions and unintended inaccuracies. It is, therefore, the duty of philosophers to decide whether there is or there is no contradiction between these accounts by determining the meaning of the phraseology used by them.

For Śaṅmukha Svāmi God is Cit-sūrya (consciousness-sun) meaning that the light that God is not physical light perceivable by the eyes but the light that is consciousness. The mystics in their mystic intuition perceive God as infinite light. For Ādayya, another vacanakāra, God is cid-brahmāṇḍa (universe of consciousness).

The Viśaśaivas, like the Kashmir Saivas, think that Paraśiva is Cit or Arivu (consciousness) or light (Prakāśa). Arivu or Jñāna is Consciousness or Knowledge. Normally, the word ‘consciousness’ denotes a subject which perceives an object. But, though the supreme consciousness perceives objects, its way of perceiving them is not like the human way of perceiving. We perceive objects sensuously and as being outside us and as being in space. But for Paraśiva things are not outside, for all that exists is in him only and therefore, he can perceive them as being side by side, one upon another, etc., but not as being outside him. Perhaps, he perceives
them much as we perceive our mental entities which are not 
external to us. Though there no vacanas to this effect, it becomes 
sufficiently clear when Paraśiva is defined as 'cidākāśa'. If the 
physical space could be imagined as possessing the ability to 
perceive things which it encompasses, then the only alternative for 
it to do so is to perceive them internally and without the help of 
sense organs and other mediating organs.

It is significant that Paraśiva is called Cidākāśa or Cidambara 
(consciousness-space). There are reasons why he should be called 
so. The first reason is that Paraśiva, like space, is infinite (ananta). 
The second reason is that all things, whatever their nature, are in 
space. We can find or imagine space without objects, but we cannot 
find or imagine objects which are not in space. Similarly, in 
Paraśiva, who is infinite consciousness or conscious-space all 
things are included, including the physical space. We can imagine 
Paraśiva without this or that object, but we can imagine nothing 
that is not in Paraśiva. In other words, he is ādīhāra (substratum) 
for all existence. The third reason is that Paraśiva, like space is 
pure. Often space appears to be dirty and hazy because of natural 
conditions like dust, fog, clouds, etc. But the existence of these 
things is neither permanent nor pollutes the real nature of space. 
Similarly, limited things, limited human beings, their 
imperfections, etc. cannot make Paraśiva really imperfect or 
limited, although they are in him.
It must, however, be noted that consciousness of Vīraśaivism is easily distinguished from consciousness of Advaita. According to Śaṅkara and the Śaṅkarites, Brahman is one without a second. Since Brahman is consciousness, it follows that there is nothing apart from consciousness - there is no material world and there are no individual souls. In other words, he is not related to anything in any way whatsoever. Most notably, he cannot create or maintain or destroy the world. He does not even think of the possible material world and the possible individual souls which are different from him. Nor does he have any will to create the world or be related to anything at any time. He is not even conscious of himself. He cannot respond in any manner to the devotional call of the devotees, nor does he punish or reward them in accordance with their deeds. He is, in short, niṣkriya (inactive), niṣkāraṇa (not a cause), nirguṇa (featureless) and nirākāra (formless).

So, for Śaṅkara and Śaṅkarites, Brahman is not the ultimate reality, but the only reality. We do see the world, think of it as having been created and maintained by Īśvara, deal with many jīvas (individual souls), etc. But, according to them, all these are only empirically real and in the final analysis illusory, like the snake in a rope. So our relation with Īśvara, our efforts to attain mokṣa, are all unreal. All are shown ultimately to be illusory.
For the Vīraśaivas, on the contrary, Brahman, referred to by the vacanakāras as Paraśiva, is not nirguṇa (featureless). There are in fact vacanas which seem to advocate Advaita of Śaṅkara and Śāṅkarites. For example,

If you ask, What is the nature of the Impartite Void, (We can describe it as):
He is neither with form nor formless;
The Impartite Void is neither begun nor unbegun;
He belongs neither here nor hereafter;
He is neither happy nor unhappy;
The Impartite Void has neither merit nor demerit;
He is neither master nor servant;
Neither cause or effect;
He is neither good nor wicked;
Neither the worshipped nor the worshipper;
Thus being above the duality, he illuminates ...

Another saint speaks of Paraśiva as

Unborn, unsupported, unencompassed
Unrelated, pure, unbound by Māyā,
Acosmic, impartite, ...

But these vacanas and the ones like these need not delude us to thinking that Paraśiva of Vīraśaivism is the same as Nirguṇa Brahman of Advaita. In fact, these invariably refer to the state or mood of Paraśiva when he was existing alone. If we read also the vacanas that follow them, we realize that Paraśiva of Vīraśaivism is
far from the Nirguna Brahman of Advaita. He is the creator, destroyer and maintainer of the universe, etc.

Paraśiva is not only pure and infinite consciousness, but 'sat' ('reality'). The word 'sat' implies that while everything undergoes change, the substratum of the changes, namely, Paraśiva or the supreme consciousness, does not. Paraśiva thinks of creation, maintenance, etc of the world; he decides to punish the wicked and confer grace on the deserving ones. But though all these conscious activities are definitely changes in him, yet they do not affect his original nature as creator, maintainer, etc. In contrast, the world which he creates or the human body which comes into existence, grows, decays and is finally destroyed, is not sat. By this the Vīraśaiva saints and mystics do not mean that the world or the human body does not exist or is an illusion. They only mean that the world is not permanent while Paraśiva is permanent. Even the superintending deities, like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, etc. who are appointed by Paraśiva to perform cosmic activities like creation, etc. at the appointed times are not sat in this sense.

Another essential feature of Paraśiva is his eternal blissful state (ānanda). Though he does such cosmic actions as creation, destruction, etc. he has no selfishness; and though he punishes and rewards the devotees, he does not have infatuation or hatred towards them. His attitude to them is one of impartiality. Since he has no selfishness or infatuation or hatred towards anybody, his
actions cannot mitigate his ānanda as similar actions would have
done to a human being. Moreover, in spite of his best efforts to be
happy, man cannot be happy because of both his external
conditions and his own past karmas. But Paraśiva has nothing
apart from him (nothing external to him) nor does he have selfish
or evil karmas to his credit. Therefore, his original bliss is mitigated
neither by his psychical states nor by his external conditions.

The fourth metaphysical characteristic of Paraśiva is his
eternity (nityatva). Paraśiva has no birth⁴. He has neither
beginning, nor middle nor end⁵. He is eternal (nitya)⁶. is no great
religion which does not claim eternity for God. He exists not only
when the world and the various gods and goddesses exist, but even
after they are withdrawn as in the state of pralaya or before they
are not yet created. Much before things became distinguished as
having form and having no form, as subtle and gross, Śiva existed;
much before the five material elements, the nine planets, seven
oceans were still non-existing, much before Hari, Brahmā, Kāla
(time), karma, Rudras, Sadasiva and other sādākhyas began their
respective functions Śiva was there. It was a time when Paraśiva
neither thought of creating nor was even aware of himself. Such a
state of Paraśiva is called Śunya, meaning that in that state he is
indeterminate and indeterminable⁷. The reason for regarding him
as indeterminable is that we can determine a thing only by
comparing and contrasting it with another thing, and since it is a
time when there was nothing else than Šūnya, we cannot determine it. But once creation is completed we are in a position to compare it either with its own other states or with the things which it has created.

Another equally important metaphysical characteristic of Paraśiva is his all-pervasiveness (paripūrnatva). Just as Paraśiva cannot be limited to any particular point of time, so he cannot be restricted to any particular part of space. He is nitya (eternal) or anādi (beginningless) and paripūrṇa (all-pervasive). We speak of ourselves and things in terms of spatial relations. But we cannot speak of Paraśiva in similar terms. There is no part of space in which Paraśiva does not exist. “He is in fields and valleys and caves and mountains. Wherever we cast our eyes there he is”8. Sometimes he is panthesitically identified with all things. For example, Akka Mahādevi says,

All groves you are;
All trees in all groves you are;
All animals that play in the trees you are;
O, Cenna Mallikārjuna, all you are!9

Though he is everywhere, he cannot be said to have size and shape. Of him we cannot say that he is short or long, left or right, front or back, in or out, or here or there10. The parts of a sugar cane may contain different degrees of sweetness, but the grain of sugar is sweet everywhere; similarly, Paraśiva who is omnipresent cannot be described as being here or there, in or out, etc. In any
case, *paripūṇatva* must be translated, not as 'perfect', as is normally done, but as 'full' or 'permeating'. Uriliṅga Peddi says,

> Just because countless billions of worlds
> Are hidden in the womb of God,
> Can we say that he is outside them?
> Can there be a place where he can fit?\(^{11}\)

He also asks, Does the creator remain outside the world? No. He has pervaded it fully\(^ {12}\). The vacanakāras have no fear that the existence of matter delimits Paraśiva's all-pervasiveness, for they believe that every bit of matter is pervaded by Paraśiva and he includes in his womb all material and spiritual entities.

These five characteristics (*sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*, *nitya* and *paripūṇa*) appear to be the same as those of Nirguṇa Brahman of Śaṅkara. But Nirguṇa Brahman of Śaṅkara is nothing apart from *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*, whereas Paraśiva of Vīraśaivism is qualified by these as well as by others, and therefore, something more than *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*. He is not featureless and inactive Brahman but one qualified by *śakti*. This is evidenced by the fact that he is said to perform such cosmic activities as creation, maintenance, destruction, etc. Svatantra Siddhaliṅgeśvara a post-Basava saint says

> The great maker for the pleasure of *śakti*
> Created the world;
> He did so for his sportive pleasure;
> He generated endless number of the worlds,
> The moon, the sun, the stars, thunder,
Lightning, time, action, delusion,
Males and females ... ¹³

Urilinga Peddi, another saint says,

Śiva can transform himself into the world;
Śiva can also remain without transforming
Himself into the world;
Śiva can prefer to have form and
Can prefer to be formless; . . .
Śiva can destroy and can remain
Without destroying the world ... ¹⁴

Allama Prabhu, the well known Vīraśaiva mystic, says

Just as leaves and fruits (unmanifest) in
The tree appear at the appropriate time,
So also the matter and essence of Hara
Appear in accordance with his decision ... ¹⁵

From this we can infer that God of Vīraśaivism is engaged in
cosmic activities; that he cannot be active unless he has śakti or
energy; and that he may not be active always. There are times
when he neither creates nor maintains the world; when he neither
punishes nor rewards men. But even at such times he is associated
with śakti: they are the times when he has decided to make it
inactive and unproductive. Tōṇṭada Siddhaliṅga Śivayogi who
prefers the word 'māyā' to 'śakti' says,

If you contend these three (body, soul and māyā)
Are timeless, then māyā and soul too
Are liable to birth,
Existence and death.
Śiva alone is timeless, being free
From birth, existence and death...

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARAŚIVA TO THE WORLD (ŚAKTI):

That God according to the Viśrāśaivas is qualified by śakti is
proved by many vacanas. Since the vacanakāras are not
philosophers, like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja or Madhva, they do not offer
any argument either for rejecting the Advaitic theory of God or for
advocating their own theory. In any case, they do not accept the
philosophical position of Advaita. However, there are some attempts
made by vacanakāras to show that God is not featureless but
possesses the capacity for performing cosmic functions, like
creation, destruction, etc. In one of his vacanas Tōṇḍa Śivayogi
Siddhāliṅga Śivayogi says:

From Paraśiva is
The Consciousness-Force; from it
Arose the five forces called
Parā, Ādi, Icchā, Jñāna and Kriyā;
From kriyāśakti came niṣṛtī-kalā;
From that, the great māyā was born;
From that Force the entire world
Derived its birth, look you
O Mahāliṅgaguru Śivasiddheśvara Lord!

You say, you silly man,
There’s Śiva, there is the soul,
There’s Māyā too; but then,
Is the soul timeless, or Māyā, or Śiva?
If these three were from before time,
What means one saying that
The body has a beginning, the soul has not ?
It is correct to say,
Before the body was, and soul and Maya –
These three - the Paraśiva-principle,
Eternal and unsullied, was:
All else is false, look you,
Mahāliṅgaguru Śivasiddheśvara Lord !

Combining these two vacanas as elements of an argument Tōṇṭada
Siddhaliṅga Śivayogi says:

If the creature, the bondage and impurity,
Mayā and karma, were to be
From before time, then say none was
To be the maker of the world,
That it existed ever, eternally.
If you say that the world
For ever was, then say
That the five acts -
Creation, preservation and destruction,
Control and benediction, are a lie.
If creation, preservation and destruction
Belong to Śiva, then this entire world
Was born out of his mere thought.
However, to say it was eternally,
Is a Pāśupata Śāiva view, and not
A Viṣṇuśaiva; the latter's view is :
Though the profound sea manifests itself
In foam and ripples, waves and spray,
Can they appear outside the sea?
Embodied creatures, from a blade of grass
To Brahmā, have sprung from Paraśiva's sea,
And there they disappear. Therefore,
I Say the world exists
By the mere act of Liṅga, look you,
Mahāliṅgaguru Śivasiddheśvara Lord !

Now we have to ask two questions: (1) What is the meaning of ṣakti? (2) What is the relationship of ṣakti to Paraśiva?

Meaning of “Ṣakti”

The word “Ṣakti” seems to have two meanings. Ordinarily it is used in the sense of power (bala) by virtue of which the possessor of ṣakti is able to perform certain functions. The word, however, is used also, though occasionally, in the sense of potency by virtue of which the possessor of potency produces actually or becomes capable of producing (when other conducive conditions are granted) certain results out of itself (or himself or herself). Thus a potter is said to possess ṣakti (power) of operating on a lump of clay and transforming it into a pot, jug, etc., whereas a seed is said to possess the ṣakti (potency) of becoming a plant. In other words, ṣakti as a power is an attribute by virtue of which the possessor of power is entitled to be called an efficient cause; and ṣakti as potency is an entity by virtue of which the possessor of potency is entitled to be called a material or substantial cause.
Though a potter is said to possess power he cannot be said to possess the potency of producing a pot - such a potency belongs to clay. If one could produce results just out of his power, the God of the Mādhyā school or Śaiva Siddhānta, who also is described as omnipotent (sarva-śakta) should have created the world without depending upon the prakṛti for his raw-material. But he does not. He is omnipotent and yet creates the world out of the available raw materials. Similarly, just because the clay is said to have potency, it does not become pot without the exertion of an external agent. However, there are exceptions. The seed, for example, can become a tree without the help of a conscious agent at any stage of its growth. In fact, the theory of evolution and involution of prakṛti favoured by the Sāṁkhyaas, and the theory of combination and separation of elements as causing creation, destruction, and other kinds of changes, favoured by Buddhists, the Cārvākas and the Jainas, do not pre-suppose the power of any conscious agent. However, the word śakti can be sometimes used with reference to one. When, for example, we describe God as both efficient and material (or substantial) cause, we have ascribed śakti to him in both the senses simultaneously and collectively.

The prakṛti is construed in the Sāṁkhya school as a śakti in the sense of potency or causal substance, for it, like a seed, evolves into buddhi, ahaṁkāra, material elements, etc., And involves in the reverse order, whereas śakti of Viṣṇu in the Mādhva school or śakti
of Śiva in the Śaiva Siddhānta school is construed as only a power of an omnipotent being. Even when the Śaiva Siddhāntins define śakti as an instrument of Śiva, they do not give it the position of prakṛti, the material cause of the world. The omnipotence (sarva-śaktitva) of Viśnu of the Mādhvas or of Śiva of the Śaiva Siddhāntins is restricted only to the principle that transforms the chaotic or subtle form of prakṛti with all its hidden potencies into an orderly world.

But in Kashmir Saivism, Viśiṣṭādvaita and ViṣṇaSaivism the term 'śakti of Brahman' is used in both the senses. In Viśiṣṭādvaita the world of 'cit' and 'acit' which forms the body of Brahman is called śakti, for it is the causal state which develops into a result and the result, in turn, is capable of producing physical, chemical and biological changes. Such a śakti, however, is subservient to the will of god. Its operative and quiescent forms are controlled by a more powerful being, God, just as our powerful limbs are controlled by our minds. Similarly, in ViṣṇaSaivism, as also in Kashmir Saivism, śakti means not merely a power of Śiva but his potency, and this is evidenced from many vacanas and other forms of writing on ViṣṇaSaivism. For example, śakti is said to be in its essence three guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas) which are reals and to induce ParaŚiva to become bhojaka (enjoyer), bhoga (object of enjoyment) and preraka (one who induces to enjoy) 21. The seed called cit developed into kalā...and your śakti became icchā-śakti,
jnāna-śakti, kriyā-śakti and other śaktis and as a result there were many creations...". Sometimes though the word 'cit' or 'nenahu' (literally 'memory') is substituted for the word 'śakti', the description wherein that word occurs unmistakably suggests that it is the seed of the phenomenal world. If śakti or citti (Sanskrit cit) were an abstract quality, like justice, for example, it would not possibly contain in itself the future world; nor could it be said to be the substratum in which the world resides, nor could it induce Paramātma or jīvātma to become enjoyer.

(2) The prakṛti of the Sāmkhya school and the material atoms of the Cārvāka school are said to manifest their respective śakti (potencies) which are the principles of activity and production, without depending upon any efficient cause. Even the adṛśta of the Sāmkhya and the Vaiśeṣika schools which is believed to be the law behind the phenomena, like origination and destruction of the physical world, physical and chemical changes and our feelings of happiness and unhappiness, cannot be strictly regarded as efficient cause, for it is not a conscious agent. Therefore, for them the problem, if any, of relating śakti to any efficient cause beyond the boundary of prakṛti does not arise. And for others theory of adṛśta is nor acceptable, because it looks implausible. Others ask, what is the evidence for the belief that adṛśta or apūrva, though neither a physical nor conscious substance, operates like divine law? Similarly, Śaṅkara can ignore the problem, for his Brahman is not
a creator but only a basis of the illusory world in the sense in which a rope can be a basis of an illusory snake. Even if he recognisesĪśvara (personal God) and His māyā-śakti, the relation between the two (Īśvara and māyā-śakti) is ultimately declared as illusory, like Īśvara and His Māyā-śakti themselves.

The Mādhavas and the Śaiva Siddhāntins, unlike the Vedāntins and Sāṁkhyaśas, recognise two ṣaktis - the ṣakti (bala) of an omnipotent efficient cause and ṣakti (potency) of prakṛti but regard their relation as external. The omnipotent God uses his infinite power or a part thereof for the purpose of transforming the chaos into cosmos. But the prakṛti, whether in the state of subtle mūlaprakṛti, or in the state of fully evolved world, is not regarded as a part of Brahman. Even when it is said to depend always for its existence and functions on God, it so exists that God remains untainted by its limitation. In other words, He is a transcendent God. Vīraśaivism, like Kashmir Saivism recognizes ṣakti as intrinsically related to God. In fact, it regards the ṣakti as an attribute (vi śeṣaṇa) of Śiva, though such an attribute is not merely a power.

Some of the analogies used by the vacana writers in order to explain the relation between then omnipotent Śiva and his potency (ṣakti) are misleading, either because the vacana writers were unaware of the sharp distinction between the two senses in which the term 'ṣakti' could be used or because they did not have the full
grasp of the term “śakti as a viśeṣaṇa (attribute) of Śiva”. Some of them mistook śakti as an abstract attribute like redness, etc. It is on such misapprehension that the analogies are based. For example, the analogy employed by Nījagaṇa Śivayogi, of the relation between moonlight and its coolness, or that of the relation between flower and its fragrance 24, hardly suggests that śakti is more than an abstract quality. So far as these and similar analogies are intended to show that śakti of Śiva is an operative quality (bala) and its relation to Śiva inextricably intimate, they are unobjectionable. But śakti of Śiva, as already shown, is not merely an abstract attribute but a substantial source of all things, their attributes and functions. Śakti in the sense of power cannot, inspite of its being infinite, be a material cause of the world, any more than the power of potter can be the material cause of the pot.

There are also vacana writers 25 who (perhaps, in order to instruct the ignorant) consider śakti as the wife of Śiva. Thus śakti is conceived in various personal forms such as Durgā (the terrific), Pārvatī or Umā (the mother of Gaṇeśa), etc. This is, however, a matter of consolation, for we can console ourselves saying that those who could not think of śakti as a potency of Śiva thought of it in the personal forms. But those who have conceived śakti like this, have missed the point that the relation of Śiva and śakti as husband and wife, in spite of its being conceived as very intimate, cannot suggest the full significance of the relation. It is better to
say that, just as milk constitutionally contains in itself water, so Śiva is always related to śakti. The analogical and the mythological description of Śiva and śakti as husband and wife can at best show that the two are inseparable, and not that they are one, like milk, containing water.

If śakti means not only a quality, but also a causal substance, one may object, then there will be two entities, the all-powerful Śiva and the all-producing śakti, and in such case, not only we cannot describe Vīraśaivism as a kind of Advaita (i.e., Śakti-Viśiṣṭādvaita), but also we cannot regard the term ‘śakti’ (causal substance) as predicate (viśeṣaṇa) of another substance (Śiva).

The Viśiṣṭādvaitins are faced with the same problem. Their own answer is that an object as related to another object can be regarded as an attribute, though their relation is not eternal or natural, like that between a triangle and its triangularity. For example, the relation between a staff and the holder of that staff is not eternal; nevertheless, the staff-holder can be said to be qualified by the staff. Similarly the Brahman is said to be qualified by the world of sentient and insentient beings. The only difference between the two cases is that the relation of the staff to the staff-holder is not eternal or natural, while that between Brahman and the world is eternal, natural and inseparable (aprthak-siddhi). In order to stress this point, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins have regarded the
world as the body of Brahman and Brahman as the embodied, meaning that the world cannot exist except as depending on Brahman, whereas the Brahman can exist, if He so chooses, independently of the world, just as a body cannot exist independently of the soul, whereas the soul can exist independently of the body, as for example, in the state of mukti.

It is unfortunate that no philosophically defensible explanation concerning the relation between šakti and Śiva is available in the extant Vīraśaiva literature. Perhaps, the writers were unaware of the problem or they were always under the impression that the relation between Śiva and šakti is like the relation between moonlight and its coolness, sugar and its sweetness, etc. However, there are accounts from which we can cull out an answer to the above question.

The conception that šakti is the wife of Śiva (Umāpati 20) is almost the answer, i.e., just as the traditional wife always cooperates with her husband, so šakti (or Umā) the wife of Śiva cooperates with her husband, carries out his orders faithfully and cannot exist independently of Śiva. But this analogy, if carried too long, reveals certain inherent limitations. For example, one can argue that a wife’s relation to her husband however intimate, has a beginning in time, whereas šakti’s relation to Śiva is beginningless, and that a wife is a self-conscious being and her mental activities can occur independently of her husband, while šakti is not a
conscious entity and therefore cannot have any mental activity whatsoever.

Thus while the conception of sakti as an attribute fails to suggest the sense of productivity, the conception of sakti as a wife of Śiva fails to suggest the notion of its eternal and inseparable relation with Śiva.

But we can combine these two imperfect conceptions and arrive at this answer: sakti is inseparably related to Śiva, just like a quality to its substance, and sakti is a productive entity like a woman.

Some who must have felt the need for such a combination have evolved the concept of Ardhanārīśvara as a solution. This conception of Śiva as half-man and half-woman is not peculiar to Viśaṣaivism, and it implies nearly, if not precisely, that the ultimate reality is not one, but a combination of two aspects, that the association is inextricably intimate, and that both of them are necessary for the explanation of the world and the activities therein.

There is a specific reason for the necessity of the two and their intimate relation. Śiva without sakti is not any different from the Nirguṇa Brahman of Śaṅkara and for the Viśaṣaivas who consider the world as real, the conception of Nirguṇa Brahman is philosophically untenable. Similarly, the prakṛti of the Sāṃkhya is nothing but sakti without Śiva. But the Viśaṣaivas have regarded as
equally untenable to conceive *šakti* as operating without a self-conscious agent. If we have to explain *šakti* and its operations we must necessarily conceive it as guided and controlled by conscious Śiva. All creation accounts invariably support the idea that *šakti* operates but as guided by Śiva 27.

Vīraśaivism holds that not only the two are necessary but also they must be related intimately, not like husband and wife, as some writers say, but like the two halves of *Ardhanārīśvara*, or like the soul and the body in which it exists. In fact, there are many vacanas which suggest that the world made of the five kinds of material elements, the soul, the sun and moon make the body of Śiva.28. (This is a very ancient Śaiva conception and is used by the celebrated poet Kālidāsa in his victory verse in the *Abhijñāna Śākuntala*.) But such a body is quite different from ours: while ours is accidental and separable from the ātman, His is natural and inseparable. That is, the world which is but his *šakti* in manifest form, is natural to Him. The world may appear as independent of us, but really it cannot be independent of Him, just as the foams and waves are not independent of the sea29. There may be occasions, like laya, when his *šakti* is not manifest and operative, but even during such a state *šakti* is associated with him. In fact, the relation of *šakti* to Śiva during laya can be said to be more intimate then otherwise, for it is then it is said to be indistinguishably one with Him.
The Vīraśaivas have derived their conception of śakti as Śiva's body from the Śaiva Āgamas, the Viśiṣṭādvaitins (theirs) from the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas. Since both of these schools bear similar names, entertain similar concepts and employ similar analogies, there is a possibility of our being misled to think that they differ only terminologically. Though both of them are set against Advaita of Śaṅkara in advancing the theory of *cidacidviśiṣṭa* Brahman (Brahman qualified by the world of sentient and non-sentient beings), they differ from each other sharply so far as their idea of śakti's relation to Śiva is concerned. According to Rāmānuja, the chief exponent of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school, God has three kinds of śakti. One of them is called bala (power) by virtue of which he becomes an efficient cause. The other two are potencies, called cit-śakti and acit-śakti. From the former emerge the individual souls and from the latter the material entities. Both of them are said to constitute together the body of Brahman who remains logically distinguished from it, in all the three states. When Brahman is said to enter everything during creation, it is obvious that He is different from what He enters. Even during the *laya* the two śaktis which form his body remain distinguishable from Him; the individual self when it attains mokṣa can come near God, but cannot merge in Him. In Vīraśaivism, on the contrary, śakti or the world of cit and acit, which is occasionally described to constitute Śiva's body, is one with Him during *laya*. Similarly, the individual self which is
believed to have emanated from Śiva, like a spark from a great fire, becomes one with Śiva during mokṣa. Insofar as Vīraśaivism upholds the distinction between Śiva and manifest world of cit and acit, it agrees with Viśiṣṭādvaita; but while it upholds the intimate relation between Śiva and śakti during laya, or Śiva and atman in mokṣa, it differs.

From this it follows that Śiva and śakti, strictly speaking, are not two entities, but one only having two aspects, namely, Śiva, the conscious guide or the efficient cause, and śakti the substantial cause. In Kashmir Saivism the relation between the two is compared to the relation between mind and its states. Just as a man recognizes one out of many impressions which are all a part of his mind, so Śiva sees the things (which are different forms of śakti) in his own consciousness. But the world which is ideal to Him appears as real to us, because He, like space contains everything in Himself and cannot see them except as idea, just as I see my mental states as within me, whereas things which are not within us but without us, must appear as external to us. Sometimes Vīraśaivism comes very close to this kind of comparison also. When, for example, the world is described as being created by the sheer idea or memory (nenahu) of Śiva, what is meant is that śakti is creative urge of Śiva. This urge is a spur in the divine artist. It becomes a decision (cittu) from which emerge the seeds of creation, etc. The use of these words (like cittu, nenahu), which
denote psychical states, compel us to think that for Śiva creation of
the world is only awareness of His own mental states; and pralaya
is divine slumber.

Here one may object that since śakti means potency or causal
substance which evolves into the world of diversity and Śiva means
consciousness qualified by such a śakti, it is redundant to take
śakti also in the sense of bala or capacity. The objection ignores the
point that there is a relation between (potency) and the controller,
Śiva. Unless Śiva exerts His influence on the potency, the latter will
not evolve or involve. “The exertion of influence” here means just
taking a decision and even taking a decision requires the prior
existence of capacity or power. The prakṛti of the Sāṅkhyaś which
is ever active and productive, and even the Nirguṇa Brahman of
Śaṅkara which is inactive consciousness, cannot take decision (of
creating or retracting the universe) or act otherwise. If the śakti
(potency) could evolve or involve without a conscious, deliberate and
purposive decision of the creator, it would not be different from the
prakṛti of the Sāṅkhyaś.

The power of taking decision and the power of creating the
world according to the decision are called icchā-śakti and Kriyā-
śakti, respectively. It is these two śaktis which constitute the
creatorship.

Even when Śiva is said to create the world out of His śakti,
He is not said to do it in the manner of a potter. The potter in order
to make a pot out of clay, must make use of his hands, stick, 
wheel, etc. But according to Vīraśaivism, Śiva, the creator, just 
decides to create the world and immediately the śakti (potency) 
begins to evolve. If the formless wind without limbs can shake the 
branches of a tree, and the limited soul without limbs, etc., can 
construct its own imaginary or dream world, Brahman (Śiva) who is 
qualified by infinite energy can do wonders without the means, like 
body, etc. That is, Śiva's decision and power are so great that 
śakti (potency) must obey them. Thus when śakti is said to be 
related with Śiva it means not only that śakti (potency) is 
dependent on Śiva for its existence but also that it depends on 
Śiva's Icchā-śakti, Jñāna-śakti and Kriyā -śakti for guidance. It is 
this dependence of the śakti that makes its relation with Śiva very 
intimate.

It must, however, be noted that when śakti of Vīraśaivism is 
said to be a part of the ultimate reality or to become one with it 
during laya, we must not be led to think that Śiva and śakti are 
identical. To speak of their inseparable unity is one thing and to 
regard them as identical is yet another. If śakti were identical to 
Śiva there would be no reason for speaking of their difference, still 
less for speaking of their relation. In short, unity is not identity.

The relation of śakti to Śiva is traditionally described as 
bhedābheda (unity-cum-difference). The śakti which evolves at the 
behest of Śiva into the world of cit and acit is only logically different
from Śiva: While it is subject to changes like origination, existence and retraction, Śiva, who is the efficient cause of all these changes remains changeless. But ontologically sakti is inseparable from Śiva in all the three states. When it is subject to withdrawal (śakti-saṅkoca), it indistinguishably merges in Śiva; when it is subject to evolution (śakti-vikāsa) it exists as a manifest part of Śiva. Similarly, the individual souls, though essentially of the nature of Śiva (i.e., cidrūpa) are distinguished from Him on the ground of the limiting adjuncts like body, sense, ignorance, etc. But during mokṣa or sāmarasya, the souls merge indistinguishably in Śiva once and for all.

The Viraśaiva authors, like any theologian, stress these two points of unity and difference, both in order to explain changes and to guard Śiva from transformation. Thus when they say that Śiva becomes the world and yet does not undergo changes, they mean sakti, not Śiva, undergoes changes. All that Śiva does is to think of a time when sakti should expand or contract.

In addition to these we come across account regarding various starts of Parasiva. For example, Tōṇṭada Siddhaliṅga Śivayogi says that there was a time when nothing existed except Parasiva. There was no worlds nor Gods along with their Śuktis, who could create the different department of the world. There were neither the field gross elements nor the indivisible souls for when the world could be created. But the eternal Parasiva existed in this
state but he was neither aware of what he should do nor aware of himself. This state of paraśiva is called ‘sarva-śūnya-nirālamba
sthala’. This lasted for a long time.

When the ‘sarva-śūnya-nirālamba-sthala’ ends paraśiva wakes up, as it is from this long silence, he becomes aware of himself, but it is a self-awareness, which is not accompanied by the awareness of object. This state of paraśiva is called ‘śūnya-liṅga-
sthala’. Which that every thing except paraśiva (śūnya-liṅga) nor exists. When he becomes awareness himself he realizes that he should create. And thus the third state begins. In the third state which is call ‘Niśkala-liṅga sthala’. There is a vibration in his śakti and as a result ‘Niśkala-liṅga’ divides it into ‘Aṅga-sthala’ and ‘liṅga-sthala’ etc.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARAŚIVA TO THE SOUL (AṄGA):

When man realizes that human existence is perennially bound to pain and suffering he begins to ask metaphysical questions, like Who am I? Whence have I come? What should be my goal? And so on. The Vīraśaiva mystics who have reached the goal have come out with the answer that he (human soul) is something different from body, senses, mind, etc. and is essentially consciousness. The Vīraśaiva technical term for individual soul is aṅga or jīva or jīvātma.

Aṅga means either ‘body’ or ‘part’ and in Vīraśaiva philosophy both of these senses are relative. That is, they have meaning only in
relation to Paraśiva. In other words, āṅga is both body of Paraśiva and part of Paraśiva. These two senses are helpful in understanding the relationship of āṅga and Līṅga.

The relationship between āṅga and Līṅga is not just old, but eternal. The āṅga was once upon a time part of Paraśiva and after creation is believed to be separate from Paraśiva. Thus when Tōṇṭada Siddhaliṅga Śivayogi says

... This vast unconscious Thing,
Becoming conscious of Itself, became
The Consciousness; and this
Assuming five attributes:
Existence, Consciousness, Bliss,
Perfection and Eternity,
Became the formless Śiva-principle.
This single formless Śiva-principle,
By mere vibration of its energy,
Divided into two; wherein
Līṅga-sthala is one; the other, āṅga-sthala.
And thus it operates as āṅga and Līṅga,
Worshipped and worshipper ...

it means that Paraśiva himself divided into pūjya (worshipped) and pūjaka (worshipper). This further means (1) that the worshipper, the soul, is a part of Paraśiva and therefore, the essential qualities of the soul and the worshipped Līṅga are the same, (2) that the worshipped is the creator of all things except pūjaka (soul) and (3) that the soul should worship Līṅga in order to transcend the
pujya-pujaka relationship and to merge in, or return to, Paraśiva (the state of God bifurcation).

Now, the question of the relationship between āṅga and Liṅga can be approached from two angles. (1) What is the relationship of āṅga and Liṅga in the sāṁsārika (bound) state? (2) What is the relationship of āṅga and Liṅga in the sāmarasya and the post-sāmarasya state?

During his bondage to saṁsāra man suffers from ignorance (marevu), owing to which he thinks that he, as an individual, is separate from, and independent of, Paraśiva. This wrong notion of himself makes him a highly self-centered person and induces him to do all kinds of actions (karmas) which only strengthen his bond to saṁsāra. Since the ignorance and the resultant actions repeat in the next births also, he has to suffer more re-births and re-deaths. But if one day he realizes the gravity of the problem he approaches the guru who initiates him to Vīraśaiva spiritual discipline (Śivayoga).

Even the initiation itself involves a ritual act called hasta-mastaka-saṁyoga (hand-head contact), which presupposes that there is consciousness (which is of the nature of Liṅga) in the head of the aspirant. The guru extracts, as it were, this consciousness from the aspirant’s head and ‘establishes’ it (as it were) in the istsalīṅga. Thus the guru is implicitly teaching the aspirant that Liṅga is not something outside the aspirant, but inside himself,
and that the aspirant’s goal should be to realize his own consciousness as Liṅga. In any case, the aspirant who receives the īṣṭalīṅga from the guru is expected to worship it thrice (or at least once) a day and learn to attain concentration leading to a mystic state in which his soul merges in the universal soul.

In the beginning, the worship of the īṣṭalīṅga by the āṅga presupposes a dualism of worshipper and the worshipped. Only in the final stages of his spiritual discipline (that is, in Sarana-sthala and aikya-sthala) does he realize that he is essentially Paraśiva, but not Liṅga-sthala (that is, the soul merges in the universal consciousness which is undivided and indeterminate, and not in Liṅga-sthala who is the creator, preserver, etc).

Once the aspirant attains harmony with Paraśiva (indeterminate and undivided consciousness), he begins to feel that he is not separate from Paraśiva. He feels that he is a part (aṅga) of Liṅga, the whole (pūrṇa). In other words, he has no sense of individuality, because his ego is naughted. He cannot refer to himself except as a part of Liṅga. This is rightly compared to a river merging in an ocean and losing its individuality.

However, for all practical purposes, the individual is still an individual; but he is a jīvanmukta, a liberated person while alive. He eats and drinks like us; but his philosophical set up is quite different from ours. Since he has lost his ego and united with Paraśiva, he thinks that Paraśiva eats, whenever he eats; thinks
Parasiva drinks whenever he drinks, thinks Parasiva is happy whenever he is happy. He considers his body, sense, mind, intellect, etc as those of Parasiva. In other words, he becomes the body (aṅga) of Parasiva or becomes a vehicle of Parasiva; or he is body and Parasiva is the soul of that body. Thus in the mystic (or jīvanmukta) state the relationship between the soul and Parasiva is exactly like that between body and soul. This is so, not only for the reason that just as a living body has no existence apart from the soul, so also the (mystic's) soul has no existence apart from Parasiva, but also for the reason that just as the guiding principle in a living body is the soul, so also Parasiva is the 'driver' of the mystic's personality which is his 'vehicle'.

The Vīraśaiva concept of soul is completely different from that of Christianity. While the soul, according to Vīraśaivism, is a part of, and essentially one with, Parasiva, the soul, according to Christianity, is a distinct entity. The human soul is regarded as a nameless something which is "great enough to be God and small enough to be me"... "It is here that the mystic encounters Absolute Being. Here is his guarantee of God's immediate presence in the human heart; and, if in the human heart, then in that universe of which man's soul resumes in miniature the essential characteristics" 36. Other words, the soul is a place where God can dwell, and is not a part or body (aṅga) of Parasiva, as conceived in Vīraśaivism.
REFERENCES:
[p stands for page and v for vacana]


12. Ibid., v 1557.


17. *Ibid.*, v 65


32. Menezes, M. and Angadi, S. M.[trs]: *Essence of Śatsthala* v 44.