

KRAMAMUKTI. A FEW NOTES

1. - Kramamukti in Śaṅkara: the anāvṛtti problem.

a) - The treatment of anāvṛtti in Śaṅkara.

While perusing the *Kāryādhikaraṇa* in the fourth *adhyāya*, third *pāda* of Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, one cannot but feel impressed by the concession of final liberation to Brahmā-Hiraṇyagarbha together with the *jīva*-s who have attained his world. This eschatological breach in the compact texture of the Ācārya's thought seems to collide with the general views entertained by him.

Let us consider what the most illustrious representative of *Kevalādvaitavāda* writes commenting upon *sūtra* 10:

« *Kāryabrahmalokapralayapratyupasthāne sati tatraivotpannasamyagdarśanāḥ santas tadadhyakṣeṇa hiraṇyagarbheṇa sahātaḥ param pariśuddhaṁ viṣṇoḥ param padam pratipadyanta iti / itthaṁ kramamuktir anāvṛttyādiśrutyabhidhānebhyo 'bhyupagantavyā / na hy añjasaiva gatipūrvikā paraprāptiḥ sambhavati ity upapāditam* //¹ ».

The last remark refers to the commentary upon *sūtra* 7, where, following Bādari, whose opinion he apparently is committed to, Śaṅkara has already rejected the possibility of *ganṛtva*, *gantavyatva* and *gati* concerning *Parabrahman*².

That *devapatha* alias *uttaramārga* leads but to the upper section of *Brahmaloka*, namely *Satyaloka* (which he identifies with the entire *Brahmaloka* sub *Br. Sū.* 1, 3, 15), Śaṅkara affirms while commenting

1. *Brahmasūtraśaṅkarabhāṣyam* « *Brahmatattvavimarśinī* » *hindīvyākhyopetam*, *dviṭīyo bhagaḥ*, *Vidyābhavana saṁskṛta grānthamālā* 124, Vārāṇasī, 1967, p. 1039.

2. He is going to enlarge upon the argument under *sūtra* 14. Cfr. also *Kaṭhapaniṣadbhāṣya* 1, 3, 11 (*Śrīśaṅkaragrānthāvalīḥ, samputaḥ* 3, Śrīraṅgam, 1910 ff., p. 143).

upon the fifteenth *khaṇḍa* of the fourth *adhyāya* of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, section 5: here he brings in evidence the very same reason, denying *gāṅtrgantavyagamayitṛtva* in respect of *Brahman*³.

Such a construction is in full harmony with the all-important principle to be found everywhere in the meshes of Śaṅkara's mighty intellectual opus: the utter contrast between action and knowledge, the first being based on *avidyā*⁴ and able to bring forth only *anitya* fruits⁵. In effect, the ancient *uttaramārga* too is invested by the radical devaluation which affects all products of *karman*, since it is followed by the dead through pious meditation, which Śaṅkara brands as action, albeit not ritual⁶. So he associates *uttara* to *dakṣiṇamārga*, which certainly leads to rebirth, in the global presentation of *saṃsāra* proposed to man in order to urge his *vairāgya* while commenting upon the first *muṇḍaka*, second *khaṇḍa*, strophe 12, of the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*⁷.

But the most relevant passage outside the *Br. Sū. Bh.* concerning this point seems to be the commentary upon the fifth *adhyāya*, tenth *khaṇḍa*, section 2, of the *Ch. Up.*: here Śaṅkara begins by sketching a distinction between two kinds of exemption from death: the first one which lasts but till the end of the world, and is characteristic of the state reached following the *uttaramārga*, and the second one — *ātyantikāmṛtatva* — which can be identified *tout court* with *mokṣa* understood as *ātmānubhava*. As in countless other instances, the *Ācārya* in this context makes use of a debate on a scriptural problem, namely the logical equivalence of the housefather and the anchorite which would be implied by the admission that *uttaramārga* actually leads to *mokṣa*, to draw out boldly his own view, which in such way results riding at the anchor of exegetical necessity.

The crux is, what happens when the freedom from death attained *pro tempore* through *uttaramārga* subsides?

In facing Śaṅkara's treatment of this issue, we apparently are confronted with two different positions. In the commentary upon *Br. Sū.* 4, 3; 10 just quoted, *kramamukti*, already hinted at by Śaṅkara sub *Br. Sū.* 1, 1, 11; 1, 3, 33; 3, 2, 21; 3, 3, 1, is introduced in full to explain

3. « *Gamayitṛtva* » is the role of the mysterious *amānavapurūṣa* who resides in thunderbolt: cfr. *Ch. Up.* 4, 15, 5; 5, 10, 2; *Br. Up.* 6, 2, 15; *Kau. Up.* 4, 6.

4. Cfr. for instance *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* 4, 18 (Śrīśaṅkarādi cit., *samputaḥ* 8, p. 105).

5. Cfr. for instance *Muṇḍakopaniṣadbhāṣya* 1, 2, 12 (Śrīśaṅkarādi cit., *samputaḥ* 3, p. 322).

6. See *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1, 1, 4 (ed. cit., *prathamō bhagaḥ*, 1964, p. 55): « *Dhyānaṁ cintanam* » etc. ... For the classic theory on heaven as a product of action, cfr. *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 4, 3, 13 ff. The remark of GEORGE THIBAUT, *Vedānta-sūtras with the commentary by Śaṅkarācārya*, Delhi-Patna-Vārāṇasī, 1973, p. CIX, « Only because the system so demands it », does not allow for the fact the reasons of « system » are quite sound.

7. Cfr. n. 5 *supra*. (p. 321).

away the *anāvṛtti* argument, urged by *pūrvapakṣa* under *sūtra* 9, deducing from the mention of non-return in the *śruti*-s the actual reaching of *Parabrahman* through *uttaramārga* eventually; on the contrary, Śaṅkara answers, there is a passage to the transcendent abode of Viṣṇu both for *Brahmā-Hiraṇyagarbha* and for those who have succeeded in establishing themselves in his *loka* following *uttaramārga*: such is the proper way of reading the *anāvṛtti* passages.

If we now turn to the commentary upon *Ch. Up.* 5, 10, 2, we find, immediately after the development of the dichotomy between the two kinds of *amṛtatva*, the selfsame *pūrvapakṣa* introducing the *anāvṛtti* texts, put against the denial of *ātyantikāmṛtatva* as goal of *uttaramārga*⁸. But here Śaṅkara's *uttarapakṣa*, instead of introducing *kramamukti*, endeavours to construe the *śruti*-s as denying but the rebirth in present *manvantara*:

«*Imam mānavam iti viśeṣaṇāt teṣām iha na punarāvṛttir asti iti*⁹
ca / yadi hi ekānte vaiva na āvarterann imam mānavam iha iti ca
viśeṣaṇam anarthakaṃ syāt / (pūrvapakṣa) — imam iha ity ākṛtimā-
tram ucyata iti cen (uttarapakṣa) — na anāvṛttisabdenaiva nityā-
nāvṛttiyarthasya pratītatvāt ākṛtikalpanā anarthikā / atah imam iha
*iti ca viśeṣaṇārthavattvāya anyatra āvṛttiḥ kalpanīyā /*¹⁰».

Taking into consideration Śaṅkara's commentaries upon the other two relevant *śruti*-s about *anāvṛtti*, we can see that, while interpreting the first *praśna*, section 10, of the *Praśnopaniṣad*, he does not introduce any discussion of our topic, he assumes a position which is very similar to that in *Ch. Up. Bh.* in his commentary upon the sixth *adhyāya*, second *brāhmaṇa*, section 15, of the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. Here he is firstly concerned with justifying the plural form «*brahmalokeṣu*» in the *Upaniṣadic* text by observing that there are in *Brahmaloka* various sections, reached dependently on the various kinds of pious meditation cultivated by people, then proceeds to read «*paraḥ parāvato vasanti*» in the sense that those who have attained *Brahmaloka* abide there for a great many *Brahmakalpa*-s. After this, Śaṅkara enters the *anāvṛtti* topic once more in the light of his devaluation of *uttaramārga*: basing his construction on the word «*iha*»¹¹, as in *Ch. Up. Bh.* 5, 10, 2, he infers that there shall be a return at the end of the present *kalpa*; the *pūrvapakṣa* introducing the *ākṛti* objection is to be found also here; the *Ācārya* in this

8. The *pūrvapakṣa* under *sūtra* 9 quotes *Ch. Up.* 4, 15, 6; *Br. Up.* 6, 2, 15 and *Ch. Up.* 8, 6, 5; that in *Chāndogyaopaniṣadbhāṣya* (Śrīśaṅkarādi cit., *samputaḥ* 5, p. 248), *Pr. Up.* 1, 10 and *Ch. Up.* 4, 15, 6.

9. *Br. Up.* 6, 2, 15.

10. Cfr. n. 8 *supra*. That «*Mānavam āvartam*» should be intended as a *Manvantara*, Śaṅkara shows while commenting upon the original passage: «*Manusambandhinam*» etc. ... (p. 208 f.).

11. Present in the *Mādhyandinaśākhā* recension of the *Upaniṣad*: remark that Śaṅkara usually sticks to the *Kāṇvaśākhā* one! (ed. *Anandāśrama*, vol. 15th, p. 815).

passage enlarges upon its refutation, strenghtening his point by the exegetical example of the relevance of the temporal determination « śva » in order to exactly determinate the day for the execution of the *cātur-māsa* rite.

b) - Was Śaṅkara under the influence of an earlier commentator in his construction of *kramamukti*?

Such coincidence on the part of the two more import *upaniṣadbhāṣya*-s about the way of setting up the *anāvṛtti* topic is significant enough. We may be induced to see in the thesis of final return Śaṅkara's actual position. But in this case what are we to say about *kramamukti*? Does Śaṅkara fall somewhat short in respect of his own ideas in the *Br. Sū. Bh.*, admittedly his masterpiece?

One possible solution can be found in recognising that in this latter work he is *not* actually exposing such ideas. As Mōše ben Maymūn shrewdly remarks in the beginning of his *Dalālat al- Ha' irīn*,

« when the author has put together the words of people whose views differ without quoting their respective sources, one finds in such author's work either contradictions or opposite statements, because between two propositions the first expresses the opinion of one person, and the second that of another one ».

Sometimes this is just the case with Śaṅkara: for instance, sub *Br. Sū.* 1, 1, 19 he, as it is well-known, expounds a completely different reading of the *ānandamaya* topic than in his previous construction of it, evidently mutuited by some precedent commentator; sub *Br. Sū.* 3, 2, 22, he gives as two alternative interpretations of « *neti neti* » his own view, which follows *Āgamaśāstra* 3, 26, and another one, which he explicitly treats as a *pūrvapakṣa* to be contrasted by an *uttarapakṣa* exposing his own view in *Br. Up. Bh.* 2, 3, 6.

It is true that usually Śaṅkara gives his own opinion too, marking it with some expression apt to distinguish it from the other ones¹², but the *kramamukti* topic may have been judged by him of too little moment to have it followed by another reading of the *anāvṛtti śruti*-s so contradistinguished, especially since the *kramamukti* construction fills well in the pattern of the *sūtra*-s and is apt enough to the confutation of the theory of *uttaramārga* as a way to reach *Parabrahman*, wick Śaṅkara seems interested in rejecting without any further consideration while discussing the *Kāryādhikaraṇa*.

If we turn, as a test of the above hypothesis, to the consideration of Rāmānuja, who adfirms to follow the *ṛtti* of Bodhāyana, anterior to *Śaṅkarabhāṣya*, we shall see that he, both in *Śrībhāṣya* and in *Vedān-*

12. E.g. in *Br.Su.Bh.* 1, 1, 19 « *Idaṃ tv iha vaktavyam* »; in 3, 2, 22: « *Itaś caiṣa nirṇayaḥ* ».

tasāra, reads the *sūtra*-s from 7 to 11 exactly in the same way as Śaṅkara, even if he eventually considers Bādari's opinion as a *pūrvapakṣa*. Nay, Rāmānuja quotes as *smṛti* authority on *kramamukti* in both his commentaries upon *sūtra* 11 the very same *śloka* from *Kūrmapurāṇa*¹³ which is introduced to the same end by Śaṅkara:

« *Brahmaṇā saha te sarve samprāpte pratisaṅcare /
parasyānte kṛtātmānaḥ praviśanti param padam* » //

Such uniformity could well point to a common dependence of both the commentators from a previous Vaiṣṇavite *ṛttikāra*, in whom Boddhāyana himself might perhaps be seen. Even if we should not take into consideration the mention on the part of Śaṅkara of the name of Viṣṇu in his commentary upon *sūtra* 10, when we would expect to find *Parabrahman* as usually, the expression « *param padam* », which he uses there, evidently borrowed from the said *śloka*, is of clear Vaiṣṇavite provenance as contrasted with « *loka* »¹⁴. Śaṅkara, if the aforesaid picture is to be accepted, being confronted with a complete presentation of Bādari's thesis including the *kramamukti* solution of the *anāvṛtti* topic, would have endorsed it, making an original contribution of his by treating such thesis as an *uttarapakṣa* instead of a *pūrvapakṣa* as the previous *ṛttikāra* — followed by Rāmānuja — had done, respecting the order of the *sūtra*-s; in fact Śaṅkara feels compelled to justify himself somehow for not respecting such order. The alternative is to admit that Rāmānuja is borrowing directly from Śaṅkara, but such being the case we would be left with the problem of the Vaiṣṇavite character of the *kramamukti* topic as found in Śaṅkara himself.

2. - *Brahma's role in the kramamukti pattern and the general Vaiṣṇavite view of his position.*

In point of fact, it is quite clear that we must take into account first of all the Vaiṣṇavite outlook about Brahmā and his standing, to fully understand *kramamukti* as we find it in Śaṅkara. The peculiar kind of inferiority which is allotted unto the figure of Brahmā in Indian eco-

13. 1, 12, 269 (ed. Vārāṇasī, 1967, p. 31). Under *sūtra* 9 (8, for him), Rāmānuja quotes *Bh.Gi.* 8, 16. Śaṅkara (always provided that *Gitābhāṣya* be his work: cfr. our *Śaṅkara e la rinascita del Brāhmanesimo*, Fossano, 1974, p. 193 f.) commenting on the precedent *śloka* barely reformulates the text, then passes immediately to the *śloka* 17.

14. To quote the beautiful volume of GONDA, *Loka, World and Heaven in the Veda*, Amsterdam, 1966, p. 155: « It is interesting to remark that Viṣṇuism in the course of time rejected the term *loka* as a suitable term for indicating Viṣṇu's supermundane Vaikuṇṭha heaven — the highest *loka* also called by the Vedic name of Viṣṇupada — which is imperishable, eternal and unperceivable even by the gods ». (Regarding « *Pada* », cfr. *ibidem*, p. 15, n. 2).

nomy of divine personalities, an inferiority which can be regarded as more or less intimately connected with the ancient motive of the ignorance in regard of his own origin on the part of the somehow anthropomorphic first-born divinity¹⁵, be it an impersonal and ineffable Reality such as *Parabrahman* or the equally impersonal play of causes and effects which -to Buddhist mind- rules the cyclic manifestation of the universe¹⁶, is well developed in the Vaiṣṇavite reading of such figure.

This reading takes advantage of the uneasy station of Brahmā to enhance Viṣṇu's one at his expenses, presenting the latter as the unknown original reality about which the same Brahmā is unaware. We have in this way subordination of Brahmā to Viṣṇu in the order of both knowledge and mightiness which not only finds a plastical expression in the well-known cosmogonical iconography of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's *ādi-mūrti*, where Brahmā is transfigured from the *hiranyāṇḍasambhava* version of the Vedic Hiranyagarbha¹⁷ into a less dignified *hiranyapadma-sambhava* form blowing from sleeping Viṣṇu's navel¹⁸, but is relevant enough in eschatological perspective too.

15. This motive is to be found, albeit in a veiled allusion, already in the well-known *Nāsadiyasūkta*, *Rg Vē.* 10, 129, 11 (RENOU, *Hymnes spéculatifs du Vēda*, Paris⁶, 1956, p. 254, n. II, aptly recalls *Ka. Up.* 2, 25), and we are able to trace it in the primordial awe of *ātman* at his first experience of utter loneliness, expressed with sober pathos in *Br. Up.* 1, 4, 1 ff. The figure of Brahmā seems to assemble in himself such motive at the same time that his identification with Hiranyagarbha emergent from the watery abyss takes place.

16. In the *Theravāda* version, which reflects an early state of theorization, Brahmā is already enthroned in the topmost of the nine sections that constitute *Brahmaloka*, where he is born after the cessation of his former and higher *ābhāsvara* condition (corresponding in *āstika* cosmology to the *Tapoloka*, second and intermediate section of *Brahmaloka*: cfr. Vyāsa, *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, 3, 26), about which he conserves no memory at all. Such decadence is not to be found in any *āstika* school to our knowledge and this is the case also with the fact that the « creative » role of Brahmā appears here only as illusory (cfr. for instance *Brahmajālasutta* 1, 2, 3 ff.); the vanity of Brahmā about his condition, accompanying his ignorance, is a tract of his character that we find, on the contrary, elsewhere.

17. Which is to be found already in the *Mahābhārata* (cfr. for instance Bombay ed., 12, 312, 3). This *caturmukha* divine form emerging from the golden egg reminds one of the golden-winged *τετραχέροτος* aspect of *Ἐρως πρωτόγονος* emerging from the silver egg in Orfic cosmogony (cfr. for instance hymn 6 and DAMASCIUS, *De principiis*, 55 and 123).

18. It is so usual to find such a picture in Indian cosmogony, that even the Śaivite formulation of it, which obviously tends to put Viṣṇu on a station more or less equivalent to Brahmā's one in respect of Śiva's all-transcendence (even if Viṣṇu, as foremost in cultivating *Sivabhakti*, enjoys much greater consideration!), elaborates its construction starting from a Brahmā ignorant of his own cause and trying to ascertain it descending for many ages along the stalk of his lotus: cfr. for instance the *Liṅgodbhava* narration in *Sivapurāṇa* 2, 1, 7, 1-16.

Firstly, in contrast with Viṣṇu's unborn and immortal identity, Brahmā is considered, as in the *Bauddha* view¹⁹, to be but a *saṃsārīn*, who somehow has succeeded into obtaining his role, only to leave it at the expiry of his time to the next qualified aspirant²⁰. His divine identity is in such way made to dissolve into a mere appointment, a mask worn *pro tempore* and destined to be ultimately thrown off. This view is held almost universally in more recent Indian Weltanschauung²¹ and is not fit to encourage wholehearted devotion to Brahmā, as any examination of his almost triflelike standing in actual Indian piety will show.

Secondly, the relation between Brahmā and the duration of universe is understood in such a way, as to allow him but a modest role of renewer of the inferior sections of the world-fabric after his daily activity of destroyer of them (in his Rudra-aspect²²) in the course of *Nitya* and *Naimittikapratīti*sarga-s, in contrast with the perpetuity of the correspon-

19. In *Theravāda* texts, the individual names of some *Brahmā*-s are given, but it is not always clear whether they be actually different rulers of *Brahmaloka*, or simply different inhabitants of it. Anyway, the fact that Brahmā is but a *saṃsārīn* is plainly advocated (Cfr. for all G. P. MALALASEKERA, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, London, vol. 2^o, 1960, s.v. *Brahmaloka*). It would take some boldness to affirm that the *Bauddha* view is the first one and the Vaiṣṇavite conception is being developed under its influence: the state of our sources is chronologically uncertain and we could as well postulate a parallele evolution of our picture in *āstika* and *nāstika* respective tracks, with criss-cross influence to be sure.

20. Śaṅkara reflects this view while commenting upon *Br. Up.* 1, 4, 1 (*Srīśāṅkarādi cit., samputaḥ* 6, p. 62), as always, he insists in condemning the fruit of *karma*n as perishable, and the condition of *saṃsārīn* of the first-born divine figure is in perfect harmony with such condemnation.

21. Nevertheless, it has not always been so: cfr. for instance the equivalence between Brahmā and the two more prestigious divine forms Viṣṇu and Hara as expressed in KĀLIDĀSA's *Kumarāśambhava*, 7, 44. Taking as third one an inferior aspect of their respective divinity of election, the same picture is held by both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite outlook, keeping in a dominant position over the three the superior aspect of such divinity. The *Śākta*-s give unto the *Devī* the latter eminent standing. The triad is always considered, as in Kālidāsa, in relation with *guṇatraya* and the manifestation-permanence-dissolution series of functions. One cannot fully agree with an evaluation like that of SUKUMARI BHATTACARIJ, *The Indian Theogoty*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 15 and 345, who sees in Brahmā's character, void of « a vivid or tangible personality », having been spoiled to the advantage of *Parabrahman* of his more positive features, the main reason of his unsuccessful « hold on the popular imagination ». Such character seems to be a *consequence* more than a *cause* of Brahmā's position, which should be seen in the light of the deficiency of knowledge of Vedic first-born divinity, as we have pointed out. In fact, the dialectic *Brahmā-Parabrahman* is far from being developed as the one between Viṣṇu or Śiva and the impersonal Reality, which nevertheless does not at all imply any failure to conserve a rich and charming character on the part of both the latter divine figures.

22. In some instances such aspect is assumed by Viṣṇu too, on a pair with the Brahmā one, which seems, in such case, to become devoid of even the simple *saṃsārīn* personal identity left unto him in the normal state of things. Cfr. for instance *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 1, 4, 1 and *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 1, 9 f.

ding role played by Viṣṇu after every *Prākṛtapratisarga*. Such underling position of Brahmā is left untouched even out of the pale of strict Vaiṣṇavite eschatology: if we turn to consider the Śaivite one, so much richer of cosmic ages of progressively longer duration²³, we shall constate that there too Brahmā conserves his low standing, of the same ratio in respect of Viṣṇu's one, while the latter is in its turn made of only relative relevance, being overwhelmed with an impressive series of upper manifestations and destructions of increasingly larger sections of a fantastically complexe universe²⁴. Of course, Viṣṇu himself gets in this picture the state of a *saṃsārin* and follows the path of *kramamukti*.

Thirdly, and this is perhaps the most important implication of Brahmā's unfavorable situation, he is not, as Viṣṇu, bedecked with *mukṭatva*, and much less seems to be able to confer it on others. In the countless instances that Indian epics and narratives give us of men, *Asura*-s, etc... recurring to Pitāmaha for boons of many sorts, we find many times that he grants some kind of invulnerability *sub condicione*, but it never happens that anybody ask him *mokṣa*. As, in western late-ancient and medioeval cosmology, the sphere of the moon marks the border of the world of mutability comprised into it, Brahmā and his dominion delimitate in Vaiṣṇavite outlook the spere of — shall we say «creaturality»? — under the sway of death and suffering, which can be posponed by individual effort, or merit, but eventually take over²⁵. The *Brahmāṇḍa* is the place of *āvṛtti*; as *Bhagavadgītā* 8, 16, expresses it,

«*Ābrahmabhuvanāl lokaḥ punarāvartino 'rjuna* / »

Brahmā himself cannot by his own strenght evade from such necessity: he need receive *mokṣa* as a graceful present *octroyé* by his overlord at the end of his long life. The conception of *kramamukti*, if it is understood not as an automatic outgrowing the previous intermediate standing, *Ājīvika*-like, but as a fulfillment of *bhakti* on the part of Brahmā, concurs with the other elements of Vaiṣṇavite reading of his figure to delineate it in such way, as to emphasize both his submission and Viṣṇu's magnanimity.

23. Cfr. on this argument the synthetic exposition of ABHINAVAGUPTA, *Tantrāloka*, 6, 130-169.

24. Cfr. n. 23 *supra* and 8, 149-405. The picture is even more detailed than the temporal one: extent in range and in duration grow at the same rate. To have an idea of the figures that are to be found in this cosmology, the extent of the sphere of *Prākṛti*, incredibly small when confronted with that of superior spheres, is calculated by J. L. K. JALALI, *The triad of Time, Space and Matter*, Śrīnagar, 1971, p. 84, «roughly as $4 \times 2^{288} \times 10^{96}$ cubic kilometres» following Śaivite Āgama-s.

25. Brahmā appears sometimes in respect of his dominion as a tyrannical Prince of the «Sublunar» World in Marcionite style: cfr. for instance *Sivānandalaharī* 15: «*Bhavaddhyānavimukhāṃ durāsābhūyiṣṭhāṃ vidhiliṣim*» (*Śrīśāṅkarādi cit., samputaḥ* 11, p. 16).

3. - *Other features of the kramamukti pattern: the motives of « collective apotheosis » and « moving staircase ».*

But Brahmā's inferiority is not the only feature of *kramamukti* to stand out, when we consider the process in its wholeness; two other ones, not strictly connected with his hierarchical relation to Viṣṇu, strike our attention: namely, the attainment of liberation simultaneously with Brahmā by a multitude of lesser beings in what we could call a *collective apotheosis*, and the *moving staircase* structure unfolded by the history of the universe, depending on which the individual « promoted » to some higher divine station is replaced in his former one by another, and sometimes displaces in his turn the former occupant of his new position, producing a sort of chain-reaction. We have so two series: the first one, immovable, of the divine personalities with their respective roles, and the second one, movable, of the *jīva*-s who are identified with them one after another. These features of *kramamukti* are to be found not only in India, but also elsewhere, as we shall see, and form a very characteristic pattern, the study of which is an interesting field in its own right.

a) - In Vaiṣṇavite outlook: the instances of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mādhva* system.

The collective apotheosis motive, as we have noticed, is the way to introduce the *Uttaramārga* in the general picture offered by *Brahmasūtra*-s about man's ultimate destiny. This motive seems not to have been developed in the main part of Paurāṇic literature, which contents itself with a more or less detailed description of *Prākṛtapratīśarga* and of Viṣṇu's role in it. This explains why Śaṅkara — or his Vaiṣṇavite predecessor, as Rāmānuja allows us to suppose, if we do not wish to bring back the *Kūrmapurāṇa* reference to Bādarāyaṇa himself! — is forced to search for a relatively unimportant source, as the *Kūrmapurāṇa* can be considered (especially from the Vaiṣṇavite point of view, since it is under strong *Saiva* influence in many parts), to find there, in a casual allusion on the part of *Devī* extolling Vedic *dharma*, a *Smṛti* authority to support the adoption of such a motive. Yet we can trace a variant of the motive in discourse in the grandiose end of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where the hero of the poem, recovering his identity of Viṣṇu, brings with him, after an impressive general suicide by drowning, a great throng of many kinds of beings. The scene is not bereft of splendour, and constitutes one of the few occasions in which we can look at the collective apotheosis directly, instead of hearing about it without any description. Even if the last book of the poem is the work of somebody posterior to Vālmīki²⁶, its antiquity — in the part which we are taking into consi-

26. Cfr. OSCAR BOTTO, *Storia delle Letterature d'Oriente*, vol. 3°, Milano, 1969, p. 64.

deration — is quite evident in the terms promiscuously used by the poet to designate the high condition attained in the course of the collective apotheosis: we find side by side the mysterious *Santānakaloka*-s, that are said to give the same advantages than *Brahmaloka* and to be very near to it,

« *sarvair brahmaguṇair yukte brahmalokād anantare* //²⁷ ».

the *Uttaramārga*, said to lead unto *Pitṛloka* instead of *Devaloka*, as one would expect to find, the upper sky *Tridiva*, where both Viṣṇu and Brahmā are said in many passages to live, and the *Devaloka*. Perhaps, this condition is not to be considered as a mere first step in the path of *kramamukti*, but as pure and simple *mokṣa*. Rāma himself seems to reach, along with his brothers, a more elevated standing, entering *Vaiṣṇavatejas*, in a true ἀποκατάστασις. This double level of liberation has a distinctive Vaiṣṇavite *dvaita* flavour, as it conveys the preoccupation to save in some way Viṣṇu's superiority even in a moment of universal ascension to heaven. We must remark that the role of Brahmā is here higher than in successive texts, since apparently Viṣṇu impels him to grant to his *bhakta*-s heavenly residence, in a context where there seems not to be any question of *āvṛtti* concerning such residence.

Speaking of *dvaita* approach to our theme, it is interesting to find in Madhva's treatment of *kramamukti*, which in other respects follows Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's ones, the moving staircase motive with a more articulate presentation than in normal Vaiṣṇavite conception. In Madhva, we have a divine figure, namely Vāyu, that acts somewhat as *yuvarāja* in respect of Brahmā: he actively helps him in the task of administrating the world-fabric, assuming the role of Dharma, and will succeed him after his liberation, as Brahmā of a new universe²⁸. Such view, which can be considered as a rediscovery of the ancient importance of the figure of Vāyu²⁹, is in full harmony with the fact that Madhva himself is regarded as an *avatāra* of Vāyu by his followers. At the moment of collective apotheosis, Brahmā conserves the central position that he used to held in the course of his life: the liberated ones

27. *Uttarakāṇḍa*, 110, 20.

28. Cfr. SUZANNE SIAUVE, *Les Hiérarchies Spirituelles selon l'Anuvyākhyāna de Madhva*, Pondichéry, 1971, p. 63, vv. 77 f. and n. 1 and *La doctrine de Madhva. Dvaita-Vedānta*, Pondichéry 1968, p. 342, nn. 1 and 2. The similitude of the *yuvarāja* is of Madhva, who introduces it while commenting upon *Br. Up.* 3, 5, 9, treating of his role of leader to Viṣṇu of the *bhakta*-s: The figure corresponding to the *Mahārāja* is here Viṣṇu himself. We find an intimate relation between Brahmā and Vāyu also in a Śaivite text like *Sivapurāṇa*, where the second is said to be disciple of the first (6, 1, 4, 4). Cfr. for Vāyu's standing also *Br. Sū.* 3, 3, 43.

29. An importance that concerns the entire Indo-Iranic world: cfr. GEO WIDEN-GREN, *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart, 1965, s.v. « *Vayu (Vāta, Vād)* ». The function mentioned in n. 28 *supra* has an exact parallel in Vayu's role of ψυχοπομπός in *Vidēvdāt* 5, 8 f. and *Aogemadaēcā* öö 77-81.

maintain their hierarchical order, in which he occupies the foremost place (*adhika*)³⁰. Unlike the picture of *mokṣa* which is to be found elsewhere, Madhva is prepared to let his *mukta*-s undergo periodical *pratisarga* as the rest of universe, conserving nonetheless their consciousness of beatitude³¹. If Śaṅkara had understood the goal of *kramamukti* in this way, he would have considered it as inside the pale of *āvṛtti*, and consequently of *saṁsāra*! Such is actually the case in both Northern and Southern Śaivite view about the condition of all beings, when they become *Pralayakevala*-s or *Pralayākala*-s: as Madhva's *mukta*-s, they are involved in the dissolution of the world, being freed, for the long time of its duration, of a part of their *paśa*-s³², and enjoy the vision of Śiva in a supermundane aspect³³; at the moment of the manifestation of a new universe, if their remaining *paśa*-s are mature enough, they enter the path of *kramamukti*, assuming in the divine hierarchy the role of *Bhuvanapati*-s or *Mantreśa*-s³⁴; otherwise, they are subject once again to *saṁsāra* and recover the *paśa*-s from which they were already free.

In *Pralayakevalāvasthā* we have a turning point in Śaivite pyramidal world-structure: from this condition are open to the individual either *āvṛtti* or a path of ascent, depending not, as in other instances, on the intrinsic characteristics of his standing as such, but only on his personal qualifications, which are by no means implicit in such standing. In Northern Śaivite perspective, a second turning point is furnished by the dissolution daily operated by Śrīkaṇṭha, lord of *Prakṛti*, of his dominion: all who follow a different path than *Saivādvaitavāda* are said to undergo *āvṛtti* in the subsequent manifestation³⁵. Once passed such barrage, *kramamukti* is sure to go on smoothly and undisturbed.

b) - In Śaivite outlook: the instance of the *Vidyēśvara*-s.

The Śaivite hierarchical iter is far too full of details to be treated here³⁶; there is, however, a section of it which is of special interest in

30. *Br. Up. Bh.* 5, 4; cfr. SUZANNE SIAUVE, *La doctrine cit.*, p. 345, n. 3.

31. Cfr. SIAUVE, *ibidem*, p. 355 ff.

32. I.e. the *Māyāmala*; they conserve the *Āṇavamala* (aptly defined by RANIERO GNOLI, *Essenza dei Tantra*, Torino, 1960, p. 84 as « ignoranza innata, consistente ad un tempo nell'aver l'io perduto la sua libertà e nella nescienza di questa perdita ») and, unlike the *Vijñānākala*-s, also the *Karmamala*. On the *Pralayakevala*, cfr. K. C. PANDEY, *Abhinavagupta, an historical and philosophical study*, Vārāṇasī², 1963, pp. 310 and 353 ff., where the important distinction between *Karmasaṁskāra* and *Karmamala*, which allows us to construe an *āvṛtti* even after *Mahāpralaya*, is delineated.

33. Cfr. T. P. M. MAHADEVAN, *Saivasiddhānta*, in « History of philosophy eastern and western », vol. 1^o, London, 1952, ch. 15 A), § 4; ABHINAVAGUPTA, *op. cit.*, 6, 142 ff.

34. Following the restitution performed with intelligence and philological accuracy by PIERRE-SYLVAIN FILLIOZAT of the stanzas 11-13 of Bhoja's *Tattvapraṇāśa*: cfr. *Le Tattvapraṇāśa du roi Bhoja et les commentaires d'Aghoraśivācārya et de Śrīkumāra*, in « Journal Asiatique », 1971, p. 267.

35. ABHINAVAGUPTA, *op. cit.*, 6, 152.

36. Cfr. nn. 23 and 24 *supra*.

the present context, as it shows with remarkable accuracy and clearness our moving staircase motive: namely, the group of the *Vidyēśvara*-s. These are eight divine figures whose names and aspects are described quite minutely in Āgamic literature³⁷, and whose cultural and cosmic functions are of somewhat greater relevance in respect of those of other ogoads. The *Vidyēśvara*-s are the topmost *Vijñānākala*-s, to whom, before every *Sarga*, is allotted the task of controlling the five divine actions³⁸. They live in progressively higher *Suddhabhuvana*-s in the sphere of *Īśvaratattva*. Ananta is the overlord of the other seven, who in their turn rule the legions of *Mantra*-s³⁹. Their body is made of pure *bindu*, and they are in intimate relation with the nine yellow forms of *Śakti* who held the dominion of the corresponding *Suddhabhuvana*-s in *Sud-*

37. Cfr. T. A. GOPINATHA RAO, *Elements of Hindu iconography*, vol. 2nd, part 1st, Delhi², 1968, pp. 392 ff. and part 2nd, p. 197 ff. They are, in order of growing dignity: Sikhaṇḍin (NW); Śrikanṭha (SW); Trimurti, Trinetra or Ekapāda (SE); Ekaneṭra (N); Ekarudra (NE); Śivottama or Siddheśvara (W); Śūkṣma or Śūkṣmarudra (S) and Ananta or Ananteśa or Aghoreśa (E). Only Trimūrti seems to have actually been represented in Indian templar art, and not as a *Vidyēśvara*, but as a syntetic presentation of the functional triad; to his description given by Rao, we can add that given by the *Ājitāgama*, *Kriyāpāda*, 36, 238b-243 a (critical ed. by N. R. BHATT, vol. 2nd, Pondichéry, 1967, p. 37 ff.). It is possible that the divine *yogin* Dattātreyā be in some respects assimilable unto this figure. A collective cultural presentation of the *Vidyēśvara*-s in *Rauravāgama*, *Kriyāpāda*, 27, 55-57 (critical ed. by BHATT, vol. 2nd, Pondichéry, 1972, p. 22 f.) may as well be added to the two passages given by Rao. The doubt expressed in n. 296, p. 770 of the recent version of *Liṅgapurāṇa*, Delhi, 1973, part 2nd, whether the reading «*Viśveśvarāṇ*» should perhaps be preferred to that «*Vidyēśvarāṇ*» in 2, 47, 39, and the decision to read «*Viśveśvarāṇām*» or «*Vighneśvarāṇām*» in *śloka* 41, are evidently unjustified in the light of the latter passage; cfr. also HÉLÈNE BRUNNER-LACHAUX, *Somaśambhupaddhati, Le rituel quotidien dans la tradition śivaite de l'Inde du Sud selon Somaśambhu*, part 2nd, Pondichéry, 1968, p. 58 ff. and 335, where the relation of the *Vidyēśvara*-s with the *Vardhanī* vessels is made clear. The orientation followed in this note is that given by MARIE-THÉRÈSE DE MALLMAN, *Les Enseignements iconographiques de l'Agni-Purāṇa*, Paris, 1963, p. 56; a different one is to be found in BRUNNER-LACHAUX, op. cit., part 1st, Pondichéry, 1963, p. 166: the *Vidyēśvara*-s of our list are related there respectively to NE; N; NW; SW; W; S; SE and E.

38. For such delegation of Śiva's functions, cfr. *Sivapurāṇa* 2, 1, 6, 33 f., where Śiva confers the task of performing them on Viṣṇu, keeping to himself but liberating grace.

39. The *Mantra*-s are *Vijñānākala*-s who have attained a lower degree of *paripakva* in regard of their *Ānavamala*; BHOJA, *Tattvaparakāśa* 10, fixes their number in a figure of *koṭyaḥ sapta*, and puts their residence in *Suddhavidyātattva* (*ibidem*, 31). PIERRE-SYLVAIN FILLIOZAT, op. cit., p. 266, remembers, apparently following Aghoraśiva, a division between 35 millions of *Mantra*-s, who take residence in a spiritual preceptor to enable him to initiate his disciples, and the other 35, who are employed directly by Śiva to bestow liberating grace on the inhabitants of pure worlds. It seems that in Southern Śaivism the *Vidyēśvara*-s are reputed to rule directly over the *Mantra*-s in *Suddhavidyātattva* (cfr. BRUNNER-LACHAUX, op. cit., part 1st, p. 328 and n. 1), while in Northern Śaivism there is a distinction between the 70 millions in *Suddhavidyātattva*, ruled by the nine yellow *Śakti*-s, and others 35 millions in *Īśvaratattva*, ruled by the *Vidyēśvara*-s (ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 339 ff.).

*dhavidyātattva*⁴⁰: each Vidyeśvara is the *adhiṣṭhatṛ* of one of them⁴¹ and Ananta, residing in the top of universal cave⁴² in the middle of their *maṇḍala*, provides through them to the proper functioning of manifestation from *Māyā* downwards, while he takes out from the inferior worlds the *jīva*-s through the upmost of them, who likewise occupies the centre of their *maṇḍala*: Manonmanī⁴³. Ananta is the keystone of all the pattern: we find him ubiquitously as chief of the eleven *Rudra*-s ruling the *Satarudra* group immediately out of the *Brahmāṇḍa*⁴⁴; as such, he is situated under the whole world-structure, in the primordial waters, surrounded by *Nāga*-s and in state of perennial ebriety⁴⁵; in the evocation of Śiva's universal throne, he presides over the first section of it, which is called after him *Anantāsana*, with his *Nāga* court and sometimes assuming himself a serpentine aspect⁴⁶.

His role may be assimilated to that of a sort of super-Brahmā⁴⁷, and we should expect to find, as in the case of Brahmā, a collective apotheosis at the end of his career. Now, this is just the case with him: in *Sivatanuśāstra*, Bṛhaspati, one of the more ancient Śaivite teachers, tells us that Ananta, his appointment being exhausted, is resolved in Śiva's consciousness, and along with him scores of millions of *Mantra*-s. The moving staircase is found now running: the *jīva* previously occupying the immediately inferior position becomes the new Ananta, his place is in its turn occupied by the following one, and so on. The place of the eight one, Śikhaṇḍin, being free, Śiva grants it to a new *jīva* not

40. Namely Vamā, Jyeṣṭhā, Raudrī, corresponding to the functional triad; Kālī, Kālavikaraṇī, Balavikaraṇī, Balapramathanī, Sarvabhūṭadamanī or Damanī and Manonmanī.

41. Cfr. BRUNNER-LACHAUX, op. cit., part 1st, p. 167. «*Vidyeśvarādhiṣṭhātriḥ*» should be considered a *Bahuvrīhi*.

42. ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 345 f. (Quoting BṚHASPATI'S, *Sivatanuśāstra*; on the theme of the universal cave, cfr. the eloquent presentation of LILIAN SILBURN, *La Bhakti*, Paris, 1964, p. 28.

43. Who seems to be a superior aspect of Damanī, Ananta's corresponding Sakti.

44. ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 179 ff.

45. ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 20 ff. Cfr. also *Īśvaragītā* 6, 35: *yo 'nantamahimā nantaḥ śeṣo 'śeṣāmaraprabhuḥ' / dadhāti śirasā lokaṃ...*

46. Cfr. BRUNNER-LACHAUX, op. cit., part 1st, pp. 158 ff.; for a parallel from Greater India, cfr. C. HOYKAAS, *Surya-Sevana. The way to God of a Balinese Śiva priest*, Amsterdam, 1966, pp. 37 f., 68 and 144. A considerable role is allotted to Ananta in such serpentine form in the history of his *avatāra* as Patañjali (cfr. our *Śaṅkara* cit., pp. 25 ff.).

47. Cfr. *Īśvaragītā* 1, 34: *Jayānanta jagajjanmatrāṇasaṃhārakāraṇa*. (In such capacity, Ananta is identified with Kālā, *ibidem*, 3, 23). Actually another instance of such a super-Brahmā is to be found in Śaivite cosmology as the Brahmā ruling over the *Manastattva*, much higher in his standing than the one ruling *Brahmāṇḍa*, but lower than Ananta. Brahmā is said to pervade the worlds from Ananta to *Prakṛti* (ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 9).

previously seen in the ogdoad⁴⁸. Our motive is here delineated with a limpider and richer structure than in any other Indian instance: to find out something at the same level of fullness, it is necessary to extend the range of our research to a different world: namely, the Islāmic *Sī'ah*.

4. - *The motives of « collective apotheosis » and « moving staircase » outside India.*

a) - The instance of the spiritual Adam in Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism.

The more interesting case in this field, presenting not only the collective apotheosis and moving staircase motives, but also the first-born « creator »'s ignorance about his own origin, is to be traced in the views entertained by Fāṭimid Ismā'īlian speculation about the beginning and the end of the material world.

The ignorant « first-born » divine figure is here the *Ādam rūhānī*, proceeding from the diad formed by the first and the second Intellects, namely the *'Aql al-Kull* and the *Nafs al-Kull*, emanated from the Divinity, apophatically designated as *Gayb al-guyūb*. Refusing to know the Divinity through the medium of the second Intellect, who, on the contrary, has agreed to do the very same thing through the first Intellect, the spiritual Adam overjumps his immediate hierarchical superior as illuminative limit (*ḥadd*), trying to discover by himself and in himself the mystery of the Origin. In the process of such Luciferous practice, he engenders, in a condition of swoon about which he later seems not to conserve any memory, seven new Intellects pacing the interval taken by him from the *Nafs al-Kull*.

Unlike Ananta, he is not in a top position in regard of his seven companions, but only in the lower one: under him there is only Iblīs, downcast hypostatization of his guilt's shadow.

Afterwards, to save the luminous entities — in Śaivite perspective one would be tempted to assimilate them to the *Mantra*-s! —, who inhere in his pleromatic structure, from such shadow, he proceeds to create the material world and to give them bodies to wear⁴⁹. His position is

48. To quote the elegant version of RANIERO GNOLI, *Luce delle sacre scritture*, Torino, 1972, pp. 284 f.: « Ananta, poi, incaricato ... da Śiva d'occuparsi soltanto delle anime limitate, che si muovono nei sentieri inferiori dell'essere, una volta che ha adempiuto all'ufficio commessogli dal Signore, si dissolve (nella coscienza) insieme con decine e decine di milioni di mantra, e, al suo posto, subentra Śūkṣmarudra. Il Signore, infine, facendo segno del suo favore un'anima limitata, mai vista prima ..., la mette al posto di Sikhaṇḍin. Gli otto Vidyēśvara si succedono così via via ed ogni volta che uno di essi subentra al posto del più anziano, questi si dissolve (nella coscienza portando con sé) innumerevoli creature ».

49. On this cosmogony cfr. HENRY CORBIN, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, part 1st, Paris, 1964, pp. 118 ff.; *Trilogie Ismaélienne*, Paris-Tehrān, 1961, s.v. « Sept » and « Dixième Intelligence »; PIO FILIPPANI - RONCONI, *Ismaeliti ed « Assassini »*, Milano, 1973, pp. 76 ff.

now exactly like that of Brahmā: a somewhat subordinated role of master of an inferior sphere of manifestation. We are not concerned here with the ulterior development of the cosmic process of salvation. Sufficient is to say that, at the proper moment, the second Adam (physical hypostatization of the plerome, born with a hierarchy of twenty-seven companions on the Peak of Adam in the island of Ceylon), after having appointed to his succession a third Adam, ascends to the sky, to occupy the position of the first one. We can see here our moving staircase motive introduced to bring the spiritual Adam to salvation in the classical *kramamukti* pattern⁵⁰. The gradual ascension of the *Ādam rūḥānī* to his former position takes place simultaneously with a collective apotheosis, which follows in its own turn the moving staircase mechanism: every successor to the third Adam, who is the *Imām* of his epoch, acts as support to a *Lāhūt*⁵¹, which consists of a *Haykal nūrānī*, living pleromatic structure into which his followers enter as forms of light after their death, following a miniature moving staircase procedure⁵². During every age of the world, the *A'immaḥ* at their death are taken up, with their respective *Lāhūt*-s, in the « enclosure » occupied by the spiritual Adam after his fall — which takes here the place of *Brahmaloka* —, and their *Lāhūt*-s form a greater pleromatic structure called *Haykal nūrānī a'zam*. When the end of the age, be it of occultation as the present one or of manifestation, is coming, the last *Imām* of it, acting as *Qā'im* of the collective apotheosis, which is called in this context Resurrection of Resurrections (*Qiyāmat al-Qiyāmāt*), ascends, bringing with him both his predecessors and their collective *Lāhūt*. The continual supply of such cyclic Resurrections, each one occurring when the accumulated momentum of an entire age, in the form of the pleromatic structure progressively enriched by the forms of light freshly brought by every *Imām*, has reached the turning point, keeps the moving staircase running. The total duration of the time necessary to the reintegration of the *Ādam rūḥānī* and his plerome, in such way reconstituted, in their original third hierarchical degree, amounts to 129.600.000.000 years, a comparatively small figure by Indian standards⁵³.

50. CORBIN, *Histoire* cit., p. 128, exposes the process very clearly: « Lorsqu'il eut investi son successeur, le premier Adam fut transféré au Plerome où il succéda au X^e Ange (l'Adam céleste), qui lui-même, et avec lui toute la hiérarchie des Intel ligences, s'éleva à un rang supérieur à son rang précédent. Ce mouvement ascensional ne cessera pas, jusqu'à ce que le III^e Ange-Intelligence ... ait regagné le cercle du Second Emané ou Seconde Intelligence ».

51. Cfr. HENRY CORBIN, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4th, Paris, 1972, s.v. « *Lāhūt* ».

52. To quote once again CORBIN, *Histoire* cit., pp. 133 f.: « lors de son *exitus*, la Forme de lumière de l'adepte fidèle est entraînée par le « magnetisme de la Colonne de lumière » vers la Forme de lumière du Compagnon qui le précède en grade mystique ... Ensemble ils s'élèvent vers le *ḥadd* qui leur est supérieur à tous deux. Ainsi de suite, tous ensemble prennent rang pour constituer avec l'ensemble des *ḥudūd* le « Temple de Lumière » ... ».

53. Cfr. for instance the span of life of Viṣṇu in *Saiva* computation: 22.569.643.880.000.000.000 years.

b) - The instance of the *Abdāl* group.

Out of the pale of Ismā'īlian Weltanschauung, we can find another instance of our moving staircase motive, albeit less fully in relief and without any apparent relation to the collective apotheosis: it is the case of the *Abdāl*, a group which forms a particular section of the hierarchy of saints acknowledged both by the exponents of the *Sī'ah* and by those of *Taṣawwuf* spirituality. As his very name, meaning « substitute », hints at, the *Badal* is somebody who has taken the place of another, and who is going to be in his turn relieved of his position when promoted to an higher one. The hierarchy is articulated in a series of sections the number and name of which vary in some measure in the different traditions⁵⁴. Near the top of it are our *Abdāl*, seven in number as the intermediate Intellects separating the spiritual Adam from his original standing and the *Vidyēśvara-s* under the rule of Ananta. They correspond in the prophetological classification to the spiritual level of Abraham; in the *Sī'ah's* view they are the seven orifices in the throne of God, the seven poles that surround the *Gawṭ*, who is the *Qā'im* himself, Pole for antonomasia⁵⁵. Without them there could not be life on earth. The *Qā'im* is so found to occupy here a central position like that of Ananta: while in Ismā'īlian eschatological perspective we find him, as an *alter ego* of the spiritual Adam, helping him in his fight to rise along the path of *kramāmukti*, here he is once again in his normal station, and the rising is spoken of solely in regard of his lesser companions⁵⁶. Never-

54. Cfr. I. GOLDZIHNER, s.v. « *Abdāl* » in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*²; CORBIN, *Terre Céleste et corps de Résurrection de l'Iran Mazdéen à l'Iran Shi'ite*, Paris, 1960, p. 249, n. 28; *En Islam* cit., vol. 3rd, pp. 35 ff. The *Abdāl* are sometimes confused with a group of forty; the seven over such group are called in that case « *Aḥyār* »; in other instances, the members of the group of forty are called « *Afrād* » (which is a synonym of « *Abdāl* » elsewhere) as different from the seven *Abdāl*.

55. Cfr. CORBIN, *En Islam* cit., vol. 3rd, p. 27. The seven *Abdāl* were seen by Rūzbehān of Sīrāz in the seven stars of the Great Bear (cfr. the seven *Rṣi-s* identified with such stars in India). The poles are sometimes considered as different from the *Abdāl* (for instance, cfr. CORBIN, *En Islam* cit., vol. 3rd, pp. 174, 177 and 205).

56. It is significant that in India the Pole is in some cases considered an aspect of Brahmā (See for instance ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 146, where he is said to abide in the place of Brahmā; cfr. GNOLI, *Luce* cit., pp. 260 and 732 ff). There is no apparent connection of the seven *Vidyēśvara-s* and their chief Ananta with the seven *Rṣi-s* and Dhruva, with the seven *Cirajivin-s*, planets and Sūrya, who have a different cultural and cosmological role, while the seven figures in *Islām* may, on the contrary, be in relation with the seven skies and their ἀρχοντες in Gnostic perspective. In *Islām*, around the Pole are to be found in many texts the four pillars of Earth (*Awtād al-Ard*), namely Enoch or Idris or Hermes Trismegistos; Elijah; *Ḥaḍir*; and Jesus (cfr. CORBIN, *Terre Céleste* cit., p. 249, n. 31; *En Islam* cit., vol. 1st, p. 122), who are not subject to be replaced as the other members of the hierarchy. Leaving aside the obvious parallel with the holy *Hayyūt* under the throne of God in *Ezekiel* 1, 5 ff., and the four angels with their respective armies and camps around such throne in *Masseket Hekālôt* 6, we find the four pillars (*pādukāḥ*) also in Siva's throne: they have the aspect of lions (cfr. the four lions guarding the

theless, both the Islāmic patterns here considered give us so many details in common with the Indian ones, to induce us to suspect that there can be here something more than mere casual analogies.

c) - The instance of Valentinian construction of liberation.

Certainly there is some contact between Ismāʿīlian picture and the views of ancient Gnosis⁵⁷; to confine ourselves to the Ptolemaic branch of the Valentinian school, the only one of the speculatively more important current in this field about which we have informations of some extent⁵⁸, we find here too, and in a much likewise structure, our collective apotheosis and moving staircase. In this speculation the ignorant «first-born» divine figure is triplicated: firstly we have the fermal αἰών called Σοφία, last to be born in the series of the thirty ones forming the Παῦρωμα. She, as the *Ādam rūhānī*, refuses her comparati-

water of life in so many Islāmic tales), respectively white (Dharma, SE), red (Jñāna, SW), golden (Vairāgya, NW) and black (Aśvarya, NE). They are said to be the four powers of Ananta through which he respectively places, knows, is detached from, and rules the universe (cfr. BRUNNER - LACHAUX, op. cit., part 1st, pp. 160 ff.). ABHINAVAGUPTA, op. cit., 8, 355 ff., considers them as worlds in the *Īśvaratattva*, where Ananta is enthroned. The four lions of the well-known Aśokan pillar, now symbol of India, are perhaps somewhat in relation with these figures. The iconography of this pillar is in relation to Saivism in other aspects too: the four animals under the lions, namely elephant, lion, horse and bull, which are to be found elsewhere in Buddhist architectural relieves (e.g. in the half-moon shaped stones that pave the main entrance to some of the most important Sinhalese sanctuaries; cfr. S. PARANAVITANA, *The significance of Sinhalese moonstones*, in «Artibus Asiae», vol. 18th, 3-4 (1954), pp. 197 ff.), are said by local people to surround the lake Mānasa, near the mount Kailāsa, sacred abode of Śiva, living in caves where nobody can enter, emitting from their mouths four great streams in the four cardinal direction (cfr. TUCCI, *Santi e briganti nel Tibet Ignoto. Diario della spedizione nel Tibet Occidentale - 1935*, Milano, 1937, pp. 115 f., where the four animals are exactly the same). Cfr. also the comparison with the four animals around the horned «proto-Siva» in the well-known seal of the Harappan culture in STUART PIGGOT, *Prehistoric India to 1000 b. C.*, Harmondsworth, 1950, ch. V, p. 202.

57. Cfr. CORBIN, *De la Gnose Antique à la Gnose Ismaélienne*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma, 1964.

58. The Valentinian school is generally presented in its Ptolemaic version; the oriental branch of it is very difficult to be individuated in its tenets; for an attempt to find them, cfr. MANLIO SIMONETTI, *ψυχη e ψυχικός nella gnosi valentiniana*, in «Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa», vol. 2nd, (1966), pp. 22 ff. For the Valentinian school, see F.-M. SAGNARD, *La Gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de St. Irénée*, Paris, 1947; W. FÖRSTER, *Von Valentin zu Herakleon*, Giessen, 1928; H. JONAS, *Gnosis und Spätantiker Geist*, Göttingen, 1954; A. ORBE, *Estudios Valentinianos*, Roma, 1955-1966; G. QUISPÉL, *La conception de l'homme dans la gnose valentinienne*, in «Eranos Jahrbuch», vol. 15th, Zürich, 1947; R. A. MARKUS, *Pleroma and Fullfillment*, in «Vigiliae Christianae», vol. 8th, (1954); G. C. STEAD, *The Valentinian myth of Sophia*, in «Journal of theological Studies», 1969; DOMENICO DEVOTTI, *L'antropologia di Eracleone attraverso la figura del Battista*, in «Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino», vol. 107th, (1972-1973).

vely low standing in the hierarchy and, overjumping the intermediary degrees, here more numerous, directly searches to know the original Reality, apophatically designed as Βυθός. Once again such Luciferous attempt is doomed: instead of finding a limit in her hierarchical superiors, as the spiritual Adam, Σοφία is blocked by a Limit produced, as it seems, *ad hoc*: "Ὁρος, who, unlike the *hadd* of Ismā'īlian conception, seemingly has no transparence of his own, but merely a rejecting function⁵⁹. Σοφία is not subject to any swoon, but, as her Ismā'īlian counterpart, liberates herself from a downcast hypostatization of her guilt, in the form of an *alter ego* made of passions, 'Αχαμώθ. Now she is reintegrated in her former state, and the ignorant « creator »'s role passes unto this second Σοφία, who, « crucified » by the Limit⁶⁰ immediately after having been downcast, is excluded from the hierarchy, as the *Ādam rūhānī*, and gives birth to a third, male, figure: the Δημιουργός. He too does not know about his own origin, and consequently believes to be the supreme God⁶¹; he creates the material world, putting in it, unknowingly, the spiritual seeds of his mother 'Αχαμώθ⁶². The role of the spiritual Adam is so doubled: the incorporation of the luminous entities in the world for the purpose of their liberation has its parallel in the insemination on the part of the female divine figure, while the creation of the world, Brahmā-like, is allotted to the male one. It is unnecessary to follow here in details what happens next. To confine us to our two motives, the second Σοφία waits for her salvation in a special condition said ὁ τῆς μεσότητος τόπος⁶³, that reminds us of the « enclosure » and of *Brahmaloka* in the

59. It is true that he has also the name of Μεταγωγός, but what is known of his role, even if we do consider the exceptional function of celestial place in which the final marriage between 'Αχαμώθ and Jesus takes place in CLEMENS, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 64 (ed. by F. M. SAGNARD, Paris, 1948, p. 186), seems to disprove the implication of such an appellation. He has a purifying function in IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, 1, 3, 5.

60. Who is also called « Cross ».

61. Cfr. the haughtiness of the Δημιουργός as seen in *Isaiah* 45, 5 (HIPPLYTUS, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, 6, 33). Such haughtiness, which is a characteristic mark of the ignorant « creator » also outside Valentinianism (cfr. A. ORBE, *El pecado de los Arcontes*, in « Estudios Eclesiasticos », 1968, pp. 355 ff.), is a common tract with Brahmā (cfr. for instance the passages quoted in nn. 16 and 18). The beheading of Brahmā's fifth head on the part of Bhairava, who acts somewhat like "Ὁρος in respect of Sophia, is a direct consequence of this peculiar attitude of his (cfr. *Sivapurāṇa* 3, 8, 42 ff.; in 1, 7, 22 ff. Brahmā deserves such fate for pretending to have attained Siva as apophatic transcendence, while he actually has failed in this task, like the spiritual Adam and Sophia in their corresponding attempts).

62. IRENAEUS, op. cit., 1, 5, 6; cfr. also 1, 5, 3.

63. *Ibidem*, 1, 5, 3 and 1, 7, 1; such place is called also Κυριαχέ, and 'Αχαμώθ standing in it is said « the Ogdoad ».

contexts already taken into consideration. When the fullness of times will come, she shall reenter the Πλήρωμα, uniting herself to a new αἰών: Jesus. We see here the collective apotheosis: the spiritual living seeds, collected by Ἀχαμῶθ, follow her in her ascension, to be united as female partners to the angels of Jesus in the condition of πνεύματα νοερά⁶⁴. The Δημιουργός too reaches an inferior kind of salvation, since he is promoted (remark the moving staircase motive!) in the condition previously occupied by his mother, becoming himself ὁ Τόπος. A minor collective apotheosis takes place at this moment: as Ἀχαμῶθ is followed by the spiritual individuals, he is followed in his « *kramamukti* » by the ψυχικοί, ontologically different in their constituent matter in respect of the former ones⁶⁵. This is the instance nearer to our model of gradual liberation to be found in Western religious and philosophical history. Some contact of Gnosis with India can possibly have existed, especially in Egypt, where Valentinians were well represented⁶⁶.

5. - One possible solution of the anāvṛtti problem in Śaṅkara.

Coming back from our brief examination of the *kramamukti* pattern in its various presentations to Śaṅkara's views about it, it is necessary to take into account an additional element, which can help us to understand why he takes on the *kramamukti* reading in *Kāryādhikaraṇa*.

While Śaṅkara, as we have pointed out, denies everywhere that *karman* may produce liberation, and is prepared to affirm that *Uttara-mārga* leads ultimately to *āvṛtti* as depending on it, he admits that

64. *Ibidem*, 1, 7, 1: "Ὅταν δὲ πᾶν τὸ σπέρμα τελειωθεί, τὴν μὲν Ἀχαμῶθ... μεταθῆναι τοῦ τῆς μεσότητος τόπου λέγουσι, καὶ ἐντὸς πληρώματος εἰσελθεῖν, καὶ ἀπολαβεῖν τὸν νυμφῖον αὐτῆς τὸν σωτῆρα... τοὺς δὲ πνευματικούς, ἀποδυσσάμενους τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ πνεύματα νοερά γενομένους, ἀκρατῶς καὶ ἀοράτως ἐντὸς πληρώματος εἰσελθόντας, νύμφας ἀποδοθήσεσθαι τοῖς περὶ τὸν σωτῆρα ἀγγέλοις."

65. *Ibidem*. Cfr. also CLEMENS, *Excerpta cit.*, 63, 1 (p. 184 ff.), where the Ogdoad is not Ἀχαμῶθ, but the place of the μεσότης. Remark the connection with the figure eight, which brings us to the eight *Vidyēśvara*-s in their *Īśvaratattva* μεσότης - like abonde and the series of seven Intellects plus the *Ādam rūhāni* and of seven *Abdāl* plus the Pole. The original Ogdoad is inside the Πλήρωμα, and is formed by the divine couples from Βυθός to Ἐκκλησία; in the place of the μεσότης, we have a sort of reverberation of it.

66. Cfr. JEAN FILLIOZAT, *Les relations extérieures de l'Inde* (I), Pondichéry, 1956. The only instances of contacts with India in the field of Gnosis about which we are fairly certain, are those of Bardesanes and of Mani. Nevertheless, the Indian image of Brahṁā, as *Theravāda* texts give it for that age and that of Mara, more sinister, but in its own right an example of ignorant Κοσμοφύλαξ much gnostic-like, can have directly or indirectly affected the picture of God in the first centuries after Christ in Mediterranean speculation.

Prajāpati, not as a result of actions, but of knowledge spontaneously arising in his mind thanks to the excellency of his qualities — which, in its turn, is the outcome of a birth depending on *karman* — can actually attain *mokṣa*. Such very important admission is to be found in *Br. Up. Bh.* 1, 4, 2:

« ... utkr̥ṣṭa hetūdbhavatvāl lokavat / yathā puṇyakarmodbhavair
viviktaiḥ kāryakaraṇaiḥ saṃyukte janmaṇi sati prajñāmedhāsmṛti-
vaisāradyaṃ dṛṣṭaṃ tathā prajāpater dharmajñānavairāgyaiśvarya-
parīta hetusarvāpāpmadāhād⁶⁷ viśuddhaiḥ kāryakaraṇaiḥ saṃyuktam
utkr̥ṣṭaṃ janma tad udbhavaṃ ca anupadiṣṭam eva yuktam ekatva-
darśanaṃ prajāpateḥ / »

Even if Śaṅkara here dwells with the figure of the first-born ignorant divinity, and not with those of the inhabitants of *Brahmaloka*, it is quite apparent that, to his mind, the reaching of salvific knowledge of the unity of *Brahman-Ātman* could be open to some of them too, as we can argue from his hint concluding *Br. Sū. Bh.* 1, 3, 33 and from his whole treatment of the topic of the possibility of *mukti* on the part of the *Deva*-s. Such being the case, the expression « *Utpannasaṃyagdarśanāḥ* » in the commentary upon *sūtra* 10 should be read as a somewhat limitative clause adapting the perhaps previously existing *kramamukti* reading of *Kāryādhikaraṇa*'s discussion of the *anāvṛtti* passages to Śaṅkara's general position about such theme, by confining the attainment of liberation to those only who in *Brahmaloka* have reached the perfect comprehension, excluding the other ones⁶⁸. We have seen in the Śaivite example of *Pralayakevala*-s that such a construction is to be found in Indian theological perspective. To read otherwise Śaṅkara's introduction of *kramamukti* in the *anāvṛtti* picture, would leave us with the unsolved riddle of the seemingly patent contradiction in the *Ācārya*'s treatment of it therein implied.

Our conclusions are confirmed by the syntetical rendering of the *kramamukti* pattern by Sarvajñātman in his *Samkṣepasārīra* 3, 50 f.

67. (p. 100). We find here Śaṅkara quoting the four *pāduka*-s well-known in Śaivism (cfr. n. 56 *supra*) in the classical order. The *Smṛti* passage given by him in the following quotation,

Jñānam, apratighaṃ yasya vairāgyaṃ ca jagatpateḥ /
aiśvaryaṃ caiva dharmaś ca sahasiddhaṃ catuṣṭayaṃ //

[which is to be found with small variants — *apratighaṃ*; *sahasiddhi catuṣṭayaḥ* — in *Vāyupurāṇa*, 1, 1, 3 (Bombay ed., 1933, p. 1a)] employs a different one: we have consequently an hint at Śaṅkara's familiarity with Śaivite tenets. The observations of PAUL HACKER, *Relations of early Advaitins to Vaiṣṇavism*, in « Wiener Zeitschrift », Band IX, Wien, 1965, have their strength somehow weakened by such indications as this one.

68. That we cannot formulate the hypothesis that all those in the superior section of *Brahmaloka* undergo *mokṣa*, is clear from Śaṅkara's treatment of *Satyalo*ka in *Ch. Up. Bh.* 4, 15, 5 (cfr. *supra*). The interpretation of later *Kevalādvaitavādin*-s as e.g. VIDYARĀṆYA, *Pañcadaśī*, 9, 51 f., is not in conflict with such restrictive reading.