The Impact of Rāmānuja's Teaching on Life and Conditions in Society

G. Lakshamma
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G. LAKSHAMMA

SUNDEEP PRAKASHAN
DELHI
Dedicated with affection to my beloved dynamic maternal uncle Sriman V. T. Tirunarayana Iyengar
Prof. of Sanskrit and Philosophy (Retd.)
of the Mysore University, Mysore
Acknowledgement

The title of the present work was suggested to me by Dr. Sheikali, the present Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University, Mangalore, when he was the Head of the Post-Graduate Studies and Research in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore. Subsequently Dr. A.V. Venkata Ratnam, Professor and Head of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in the Department of History was kind enough to be my guide. He has been of immense help to me in the preparation of the work. He evinced keen interest at every stage and offered valuable suggestions for which I am grateful. I have received valuable help from Sri V.T. Tirunarayana Iyengar, Professor of Sanskrit (retired) of the University of Mysore. I wish to record my indebtedness to him.

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—G. Lakshamma
Preface

This work is an attempt to study Śrī Rāmānuja’s teachings and their impact on various aspects of Social life in India not only during his life time but also afterwards and right down to the present days. Many works have been written on Śrī Rāmānuja with a view to analyse his philosophy. On the other hand this work is based on an historical approach and as such seeks to analyse the relevance of Śrī Rāmānuja’s teachings in the socio-economic, cultural and administrative fields.

Śrī Rāmānuja was not a ‘revolutionary’ in the sense in which that world is understood today. He was no doubt a revolutionary in the context of the times in which he lived; and, without rejecting tradition, he tried to accommodate suitable changes wherever necessary for the integrated growth of society. He made a sincere attempt to conserve and adopt the long established tradition and made it meaningful to our existence. The concept of interdependence rather than conflict was the central idea of his philosophy and teachings.

Śrī Rāmānuja can in one sense be termed as a ‘Socialist-philosopher’ who based his concept of the distribution of material things in socio-economic life on the firm faith in God. It is not the Godless socialism of modern days, but a God-based socialism appealing to each and every one. Integration of society was his concern rather than the disruption of the existing system and its replacement by a new one. In this sense he advocated evolutionary development of man and society. This is the thrust of the present study.

The title of the work on hand was suggested to me by Dr. B. Sheik Ali, the present Vice-Chancellor of Goa University, Goa, when he was the head of the Department of Studies in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore. He was my research guide till he took up the post of Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University, Mangalore. Subsequently Dr. A.V. Venkataratnam, former Chairman, Department of Studies in History, Manasagangotri, Mysore, was kind enough to guide me in my research work. They have been of immense help to me in the preparation of the work and evinced keen interest by offering valuable suggestions at every stage. I am highly grateful to
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Contents

Acknowledgement \hspace{5cm} VII
Preface \hspace{5cm} IX
I. Introduction \hspace{5cm} 1
II. Rāmānuja's Education and Academic Adventure \hspace{5cm} 13
III. Rāmānuja's Attitude Towards Society and Its Behaviour \hspace{5cm} 49
IV. Rāmānuja's Interest in Society and Its Well-Being \hspace{5cm} 75
V. Rāmānuja and the Economic Field \hspace{5cm} 96
VI. Rāmānuja and the Social Field \hspace{5cm} 121
VII. Rāmānuja—The Culture-Based Socialist \hspace{5cm} 145
VIII. Rāmānuja and the Administrative Field \hspace{5cm} 157
IX. Rāmānuja and the Doctrine of Service \hspace{5cm} 188
X. Rāmānuja's Legacy \hspace{5cm} 205
XI. Conclusion \hspace{5cm} 222
   Appendices \hspace{5cm} 227
   Glossary \hspace{5cm} 234
   Bibliography \hspace{5cm} 241
   Index \hspace{5cm} 248
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Nature and Scope

This work is an attempt to study Rāmānuja’s contribution to society. Rāmānuja has been regarded as a great socio-religious reformer. The philosophy of Rāmānuja has come to be known as Udbhayavedanta, the twin system of Vedāntic thought. Two aspects are recognised in this System. The first is the personal, the ‘Theistic approach to the Absolute’ in search of wisdom. The other is the behaviour in life with the possession of wisdom. That is the ‘Socialistic aspect of Absolutism.’ The two aspects are thus inseparable.

We are interested in understanding the socialistic aspect which is to regulate the mode of life and not to miss the benefits of life. In this connection, Rāmānuja has been hailed by his disciple Sudarśana, the author of the Śrutprakāśika, as Paramayogin—the greatest associate capable of controlling the maladies pertaining to society ‘Antar-Jvara’ the lurking fever. To quote Sudarśana¹.

“Tasmai Rāmānuja śaryaya
namah paramayogine
yāḥ-śrutī-smṛti-sūtraṇam
antar-jvaram, asisamat”.

I bow to the exalted Rāmānuja, the greatest healer (associate of the Lord) who brought down the fever (of discrepancy) lurking in the Vedas (the Vedic projection), the Smṛtis (the ritual delineation) and the Sūtras (aphorisms, i.e., Vedic thought in a condensed form)”.

We are impressed when we notice that the way of Rāmānuja was to control social disorder by keeping the mind above polluting influence. In his works a few concepts emerge as capable of holding society together in a harmonious way. They are Aprthak-Siddhi (inseparable existence), Samanvaya (the supreme pursuit), Sarirātmabhāva (the body-mind kinship) and Ananyatva (non co-ordinate status). These philosophic terms enabled Rāmānuja to conceive of society as
a body and an organism and develop the *Vedanta* (the final phase of wisdom) philosophy of benefit not only to the student but also to his fellow beings. These four concepts formed the four cardinal principles of social structure and well-being.

Being a *Vaidika* (believer of the *Vedas* and follower of the Vedic style of living) and a *Sanyasin* (ascetic of the *Vedic* order, Rāmānuja could not confine his study exclusively to society to the exclusion of the element which founded, organised and evolved the society having full sway over the participants covered by society.

To stress the spiritual nature is the concern of philosophy, but to exclude it totally, while dealing with Rāmānuja’s association with society, is to miss his contribution.

The present work has a two-fold view. The first is the facility offered to stave off starvation and duress and to eliminate bitterness among people. The second is to educate people to an awareness of healthy existence in community life. It involves an understanding of personal responsibility, capacity, opportunity and dignity along the humility. This awareness is the birthright of every member and the basis of living in peace in the world. This aspect of awakening social consciousness in its integrity is the burden of the leading members of society who indulge in service and who have disposition towards active behaviour with no taint of personal elevation and aggrandisement in view. In order to appreciate Rāmānuja’s contribution it is necessary to study his struggle against adversity and to discuss his contribution to society.

The philosophic references in this work may not be looked upon as a treatise on the philosophy of Rāmānuja. They would only serve as a background to have a clear view of society as it ought to be. As a leading member of society, Rāmānuja tried to provide society with the material needs with an instruction that the material need should not be the only pursuit in life to the exclusion of the other unavoidable aspects of helping the depressed to emerge healthy and happy. To the truly enlightened mind, life in this world is not the scene of grief and despair compelling an escape. It is an occasion to accept an active role with cheer and robustness, though the life-stream may be checked by the tide of time.

It is known that the treatment of the subject does not conform to the modern method of approach to socialism. Rāmānuja did not contribute to the comfort of society as it drifted from one stage to another by withdrawing the restraints placed on its members. He rather devised a curative treatment which would not damage the
health of society. It was therefore a protection against pollution. This is Rāmānuja's conception of society and of its welfare. It is for posterity to assess his contribution. Rāmānuja therefore may be regarded as the upholder of "Socio-theistic-Absolutism", a term, new as it is, which includes the Supreme Reality, the blessing on the individual and the benefit to the masses. We have confined our attention to the aspect of benefit to the masses. The work is to elucidate the nature of equipment and contribution of Rāmānuja.

Chapter Divisions
The work is spread over eleven chapters. Chapter one deals with the Nature and Scope, Chapter divisions followed by the Survey of Sources. The second chapter is devoted to the sketch of Rāmānuja's life in its progress from academic awareness to reach the climax of conviction meeting the challenges to life with grim determination. The third chapter deals with Rāmānuja's conception of society as the abode of persons with varied ambitions and interests; the need for the existence of such a variety of interests and the importance of all the individuals constituting society to function as responsible members regardless of pride and prejudice, to maintain the harmonious nature of the unit. The chapter four deals with the method applied by Rāmānuja at the different levels of social life and discusses the main role of an individual in society, his rights and privileges. Rāmānuja conceives of society as a unit of inseparable parts, an organism which controls and guides each and every part directly. According to him, the organism is not a creation of the constituent parts, as it is a self-existing entity by its own right evolving along the tide of time, assuming different forms as a result of the interaction of the participants. The ideal form of society is the one in which all the participants behave and engage themselves in performance, being aware of their direct dependence on the unit from which they desire their energy. This is the doctrine of Samanvaya discussed in the Samanvaya section of the 'Śrī Bhāṣya'. Samanvaya is unity of purpose, conflict in life emerges in the absence of a single aim. This awareness makes healthy co-operation possible and society is continued to move along the normal pattern of affection and co-operation among the participants dedicated to serve the source from which the participants draw their spirit and energy. This conception enabled Rāmānuja to maintain the doctrine of "temperamental inheritance" as well as the spirit of equality
among all the participants. Anything that would alter this would upset the social equilibrium and pave the way for strife and struggle, the inescapable social evil. The social outlook which Rāmānuja developed was a result of his study of religion and philosophy which served as the fountain of life in its fullness.

Rāmānuja put this theory into practice in all fields of life. The most basic and universal being the ‘economic aspect’, he endorsed a scheme of agricultural operation relating to production and distribution said to have been practised during the time of the Pāṇḍya king. At the industrial level the scheme kept every member of unit engaged in providing shelter, water, clothing and the like. Side by side with this, special interest was shown in the field of medicine, drawn largely from the botanical section of life. These aspects are discussed in Chapter five.

Rāmānuja formulated a two-fold theory self-restraint and enforcement of law. The two aspects together maintain social order. Self-restraint was maintained under the concept of ‘non-adjustment’, not to swerve from the stand that the individual is a direct dependent on the source and that his role in life would conform to that dependence primarily. The second one is the theory of “accommodation” which permits any one free access to every walk of life within the limit so that this access does not efface the awareness of the relation between the source and the dependent. This forms the theme of the sixth chapter.

At the highest level which is commonly described as the religious level, Rāmānuja has the following conviction. Religion and philosophy are not something alien to men, nor are they dealing with problems beyond life. Religion viewed in this light and introduced in actual life is distorted religion, because it splits itself into classes and creeds. Rāmānuja uses the word ‘Religion’ in the broadest sense of the term affecting the whole of society in this life. Religion, according to him, is an awareness and an attitude. A principle is there perfect in itself to hold society. It is the awareness of the life-spring that would keep the members of society alert, active, helpful and happy, whatever be the form that society may take along with its evolution. This sense of unity does not deny variety. It is a refining principle which prevents the emergence of licence and an element of disorder introduced by narrow outlook and interest. It is here that Rāmānuja has recognised in his fold of society the Sattādārs and the Tiru-k-Kulittārs— in particular, women not excluded. This principle covers the field of intellectual
investigation as well as the practice of ritual. It is socialism based on culture. This forms the seventh chapter.

Chapter eighth deals with the scheme of administration, the machinery which holds society together. It was introduced in the region at Mēlukōṭe in Karnataka with the temple as centre of society. The monarch Vishnuvardhana who become the disciple of Rāmānuja was in charge of administration. Selection of groups are persons to serve in the different branches of administration was mainly on the basis of dedication. The basic education which was mandatory to one and all, was that service was power and the elixir of life. Secondly, no member could be denied the right to be and to continue as a member of society. The units drawn for service were required to stick to their portion of work as long as they continued as members of the team and thus provide for the preparation of the different types of work under the control of the central spirit. It is here that we find development in advanced study. Spread of education, social spirit and co-operation—all with the one aim of putting down narrow indiscrimination.

On the cultural side Rāmānuja was keen that, as far as possible, the masses must be kept informed of the vital element of wisdom to enable them not to be misled. With this idea he instituted a band of scholars with a special function of keeping the masses aware of their light in life. Great works were produced in this field and temples were instituted, particularly in the Karnataka region, to spread his culture, (Śrīvaiṣṭava Culture). It would not be improper to assume that the Karnataka region surrounding the famous temple of Mēlukōṭe was the field of his activity crediting him as the builder of the Śrīvaiṣṭava Society. It is noteworthy that in Mēlukōṭe the figure of Rāmānuja, a metallic production, was installed by himself. The figure is worshipped even to-day with utmost zeal and reverence and scheme of administration in particular, is recognised as the scheme formulated by the Master.

The ninth chapter discusses Rāmānuja's "Doctrines of Service". Regarding the aspect of service in life, Rāmānuja developed the concept of service from the lowest level of social contact to the highest level. Service, starting as a means to living, was looked upon by him as crude, though necessary. The highest form of service was identified with the habit and behaviour of the member of society in his full wisdom, rid of the element of self-interest on the reception side. This is the greatest contribution of Rāmānuja to society. Though it was not within the easy reach of all to rise
to this height of wisdom, he insisted that the aim should not be lost sight of. Amudanār who sketched the life of his Master specifically emphasises the unique features of Rāmānuja in the work ‘Rāmānuja-Nūṟṟandādi’ where he uses the following expression—

“Īrāmanušanai-p-Porunliname”
“We rallied around Rāmānuja
“Srēṟ-kaliyāl varundiya Jñārattai......vandu edutta aruntavan”

“A sage of rare attainments appeared and liberated the world from the clothes of formenting Kali, the postulate of perversion.”

“Kasiniyār idarin-kan viñnidida-t-tānum avarpin padarum kunah iramanusan tan padi iduve”

As the inhabitants of the world were plunged in grief, Rāmānuja, by virtue of his habit, would follow them (to offer relief),

“Padi konḍa kīrti is irāmāyaṇam enrum pattiveḷḷam kudikonḍa koil trāmānuṣan”

Rāmānuja is the divine reservoir of the flood of Bhakti (devotion), the central teaching of the Rāmāyaṇa of world-wide fame.

The above description summarises the aim and outlook of Rāmānuja, his interest in society, the modal society he had in view and his attempt to introduce into social life the system which he recognised as model.

Chapter tenth is devoted to the study of Rāmānuja’s legacy. His scheme did work for centuries effectively, but the tide of life is such that the best in life is frequently missed and the bare form is retained. It is not peculiar to Rāmānuja only. It is a world phenomenon. Leaders come, they establish a healthy order of life, volunteers gather around them in worshipful devotion and grim determination to follow their lead in life and to pave the way for the future generation. Life being a complex of temperament and temptation, the majority being generally under the impules of ignorance, the leaders do suffer martyrdom under their very followers as time moves on. To remember a few world incidents in this connection: ‘The League of Nations’ came into existence only to be ignored later on. The ‘United Nations Organisation’, a living organisation
Introduction

at present, has descended to the level of a body to express opinions. Within our own country Mahatma Gandhi is reduced to an entity to be worshipped as a leader and to stop with that. We cry after the leaders in times of peril and when we are free from peril we forget our saviours. Leaders in society need not run the risk of serving society at personal risk and sacrifice. This is not to striks a note of pessimism in life. The scheme put to practice in earnestness has a healing effect. The social order of Rāmānuja, as the orders introduced by other leaders of society, suffers on account of abuse. The last and the concluding chapter is the assessment of the contribution of Rāmānuja to the study of life from the social point of view.

Survey of the Sources

The sources for the work are confined to Literary works and Epigraphs. The literary works are classified into Primary and Secondary. Modern works on Rāmānuja have also been consulted.

Primary Source: (a) Literature—Regarding the Pre-Rāmānuja literary works which have been consulted for the study, mention may be made of the Vedas, Manusmṛti (of Manu) the Rāmāyāna (of Valmiki), Bhagwad-gīta, the Divya Prabhāndam (of Ālvar), Mukanda Māla (of Kulaśekhara) and the Stoīra-Ratna of Yāmunacharya).

Rāmānuja’s own works are in order—Vedārtha-Saṅgraha, Vedānta-Sāra, Vedānta-Dipa, Śrī Bhaṣya, the Gadyatraya and the Gīta-Bhaṣya.

The Vedas—The earliest is undeniably the literature called the Vedas. It reflects life as it ought to be. The meaning of the word Veda is to enlighten. It is the book of knowledge. The main teaching of the Veda is two-fold an awareness of the link that man has with the changing world, on the one hand and the protecting principle on the other. This relationship is ‘Prthak’ and ‘Aprthak’ according to the nature of the relata.

The relationship between the source principle and the dependent world is linked to the Sarīra-Ātma link—the body—mind relationship. That is a development of Aprthak-Siddhi. This aspect was specially noticed by Rāmānuja as the basic concept to explain the nature, function and value of life.

Manusmṛti—It is a sanskrit work. It is an elucidation of the style of life in society prior to the stage of dealing with the Upaniṣada. The book prescribes the way of life to keep adversity under cheek. Emphasis is laid on ‘Division of Society into Caste’
sections and the functions assigned to each caste. It would be a provisional arrangement to preserve society on a co-operative basis. The aim is personal and individual and as we shall see Rāmānuja was inspired by this thought.

The Rāmāyaṇa—The Rāmāyaṇa describes society under different guiding principles. The model type of society is presented in the style of performance by Śrī Rāma—the epic hero. It is therefore taken to be a description of the behaviour of participants to preserve society in its ideal condition and the responsibility of the leader to maintain social harmony.

The Bhagavad-gīta—The Bhagavad-gīta is a book enjoining on man the performance of ‘duty’. He is ever to be active. Idleness is an incurable malady. In this work, the work enjoined on man is subjected to a process of refinement and the purest form of act has been maintained as ‘service’. The concept of service is developed from the crudest from to the perfect form.

The two works, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhagavad-gīta, therefore point to the type of society in which man expects to live and the work that man has to do to be worthy to belong to that society. The Rāmāyaṇa points the role of the leader. The Bhagavad-gīta outlines the role of the individual in society. Rāmānuja is indebted to these two works.

The Divya Prabhandam—Rāmānuja introduced to the world another type of literature known as the Drāvida-Vedānta or the Divya Prabhandams—a composition in Tamil language consisting of 4000 verses. This section of literature starts from the basis of the Aprthak-Siddhi—relationship between the source-principle and the dependent individual who seeks to reach the peak of perfection in life. The emphasis here is on the protective power of the source principle and the various types of incarnation it assumes to render protection on the basis of the relationship of Sarira-Ātma. The principle in this work reflects the personal attention of the guardian of society and the awareness of such attention on the part of the dependent subject. Emphasis is laid on the spontaneity of the protecting power relieving man of any activity on his part for protection. Therefore human activity gets a new direction. It is service, ‘Kainkarya’. It is not directed towards the source power which is perfect. Therefore this activity is directed towards society in the name of service to the source. This is known as ‘Niśkamakarma’—an activity unadorned by narrow motives and attractions. It pertains to the individual and it is real service. It pertains to a
social entity. This aspect contained in the ‘Khila’ section of the Veda is developed to such an extent that its value was realized by Rāmānuja.

The next source is the Stotra. This records the application of the protective power as felt by the recipient of protection. To this class belong the Mukundamāla of Kulaśekhara, the Stotra-Ratna of Yāmunācharya.

Rāmānuja’s own works are the Vedartha-Saṅgraha, the Vedānta-Sūra, the Vedānta-Dīpa, the Śrī Bhāṣya and the Gītā-Bhāṣya. They deal with the concept of Brahman, the ubiquitous and its sway over the world. Śrī Bhāṣya is a comprehensive critical exposition of the system of Vedānta as contained in the Brahmāsūtra of Vyāsa which forms the basis of philosophic thought among all the Vedāntins. The basic principles which holds society together for ever as a harmonious unit are determined in this work. The Gadyatraya (Śrī Vaikunṭa-Gādya, Śrī Rangagadaya and Śaraṇāgati-Gādya) refers to the content of the Drāviḍa-Vedanta. It is here that the importance of the Bhāgvad-Gīta is felt. According to Rāmānuja, it starts with Karma in its crude form and ends with Karma in its most refined form. It may therefore be held that the Vedic teaching in Sanskrit determines the power of the protective power and the same section in Tamil describes the impact of that power on society.

Secondary Works: This is classified into contemporary and the post Rāmānuja works.

(a) Contemporary: To the biographic group belong the Divya-Sūricarita of Garuḍavāhana Panḍita in Sanskrit, Yatirāja-Vaiṅhava of Āndhrapūrṇa in Tamil. There are other works like the Paṅcaṣṭava of Kūrese and Dhatipaṁchaka of Dāsirathī which belongs to the Stotra section. These contemporary works were written by his disciples.

(b) Post-Rāmānuja Works: The Guruparamparā-Prabhavam of Perumāl Jiyar in the Maṇi-Pravāla language is a traditional work. The peculiarity of this biographic literature is that it deals with the life of Rāmānuja and his predecessors from the point of Anṛthak-Siddhi. The work can therefore be regarded as authoritative historical account from a larger historical perspective. The other works namely, ‘Mumukṣu-Paddi’ and ‘Srivacanabhuṣaṇa’ of Lokācārya are succinct account of life and its function on the basis of Drāviḍa-Vedanta. The Ācārya-Hṛdaya of Māyanār is a refutation of the ‘Doctrine of Individualism’
in the philosophy of Rāmānuja, written in Maṇi-Prāvala language. One more work in the Maṇi-Prāvala called Varta-Mala records the observations of the savants of the Viśistha-dvaita which may be regarded in a light vein as cultural gossip. To this group belongs another work Yatindra-Pravana-Prabhāva of Piḷḷai-Lokam Jiyan which deals with the lives of post-Rāmānuja leaders of Viśistha-dvaita School.

The Koviloḻugu in Tamil prose is a record of gifts made, and repairs and additions effected to the temple of Šri Ranganatha at Śrīrangam and it records the tradition of the temple. 'The Temple Manual' of Mēlukōṭe in Kannada also records the tradition of the temple at Mēlukōṭe. Yet another work is 'Prapannamrtam' written by Anantārya. It deals with the lives of Āḻvārs (Saints) and Ācāryas (the leading agents in life).

(c) Modern Works: To this are added the following works in English for convenience of reference—Govindācārya Swami A—The Life of Śri Rāmānuja, Srinivasa Aiyengar C.R., The Life and Teachings of Śri Rāmānuja, Swami Ramakrishnananda, Life of Śri Rāmānuja Yāmunācārya M, Rāmānuja's Teachings in his Own Words, Śri Subrahmanya Ayyar lectures on the History of Śrīvaiśnavaśas delivered by the Late Gopinatha Rao T.A. Shree P, Śri Rāmānuja.

Epigraphy
Another important primary source for our study is epigraphy. Inscriptions, though scanty for our study, provide valuable material. They are found written on stone and copper plates. Many of them record the consecration of temples, the construction of canals and agrahārās (Brahmana Settlements) by monarchs, chieftains, the private individuals and the public. They also contain the gifts made and repairs and additions effected, to the temples. They also give valuable information about the land grants and gift of money made by them under cultural coverage, and as such direct references to Rāmānuja are scarce. The available contemporary and the later inscriptions serve only to indicate the vague and popularity of the socio-religious leader Rāmānuja and the impact of his teachings. For instance, Belūr 58 of A.D. 1117 records the consecration of the great temple at Belūr by Viṣṇuvardhana, the Hoysala monarch. He was devoted to the worship of Purushotama and was a devotee of Rāmānuja. He set up with faith the God Vijayanārāyaṇa and provided for the daily ceremonies, the decorations and the offerings for Lord
Vijayanarayana and Lakshminarayana and also for the livelihood of 'Srivaishnava Brahmañas'. Another inscription in the temple at Tonnūr of the 14th Century records a gift of land to the Rāmānuja Maṭha by the Mahajanās (the local citizens). Another inscription of the 14th Century found at Garuḍa temple in the Nāmada Katte garden records that Immadi Ravuttaraya Madhappadannāyaka, son of Perumajādeva, Dannāyaka of Heḍatale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumanar as Tīruman (the holy clay paste), to God Tīrumanna-Perumāḷ. It is dated the year Siddhārthī Ashada Su. I Monday. The details may be equated with A.D. 1319 June 18th Monday. A 13th Century inscription discovered on a stone paved into the floor of the Yatiraja Maṭha describes that Kotiyappa Setti described as Ālagiya Malavala dāsar of Terakanāmbi made a grant of two villages and wet land to the Rāmānuja-kūta. Another epigraph found at the temple of Mēlukoṭe and belonging to the reign of Krishnadēvaṇaṇa explains the sale deed granted to Rāmānuja Iyengar. The details are as follows:

"May it be suspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja, while the illustrious.........Krishnadēva Maharaya was ruling the kingdom.........worshippers of the divine lotus feet of God Sampath Kumāra Nārāyanadēva of Tirunārāyanapurā, establisher of Vedic religion, Rāmānuja... the sale deed granted to Rāmānuja Iyengar is as follows—For feeding daily the Srivaishnavas........We have sold from the treasury.........to you. Hence these two plates offered food........as we have received in full.......to this two Kulas succession of the disciples for as long as moon and sun endure, the Rāmānuja Kūta, To this effect is the writing of Rāmānuja the Sena-beva of the Treasury".

(The translations of the Inscription are given in the Appendix No. I)

REFERENCES

1. Śudarśana: Śrutaprakāṣika, Sarasvati Mudrakshara Shala, Madras, 1907, Opening verse.
6. Note: Prthak—Piece Meal.
7. Note: Apthak—Integral.
CHAPTER II
Rāmānuja’s Education and Academic Adventure


Preliminary Equipment

In order to appreciate Ramanuja’s contribution, it is necessary to study his struggle against adversity. Rāmānuja belongs to the line of great seers and ascetics who held aloft the torch of Indian culture as handed down from the Vedic times. The Vedic culture is recognised as the most ancient and comprehensive, covering human life from the greedy start to the goal of enduring happiness for beyond the reach of affliction. The Isavasya Upaniṣad refers to the course of life in general in the opening verse and prescribes a regulated way of life in which personal preservation is emphasised, but greed is prohibited.

"Tena tyaktena bhūṣjitāḥ
Magṛdhah kasyasvit dhanam"1

Keep with that detachment. Do not cover any one else’s wealth.
The verse requires every one to feed oneself on the world produce with contentment and not to cast greedy eyes on others possession. The verbs bhūṣjitaḥ (utilise) and Maṇḍradhan (do not grab) in the above verse are injunctive and prohibitory. They refer to what is to be adopted and what is to be avoided. This is the basic principle to be kept in mind by one and all to maintain society as a healthy organism.

**Eminence**

Rāmānuja's style of living was of a high order compelling the attention of people around him who, in all sincerity and seriousness, wished to reap for themselves the best of life. In that way he was one of the great leaders who paved the way for a truly noble and happy life in this world. His influence on mankind is summed up in the following verse attributed to one of his staunch disciples Dāśrathī by name.

\[
\text{Punyāmbhoja-vikāsaya} \\
\text{Pāpa-dhvānta kṣayayaya ca} \\
\text{Śrīman āvirabhūt bhūmau} \\
\text{Rāmānuja divākaraḥ}''''
\]

The bright Sun, Rāmānuja the splendid emerged in the world. The consequence being the disappearance of the darkness of evil and the blossoming of the lotus of merit.

**The Span of Life**

The life span of Rāmānuja extended to one hundred and twenty years. It was determined in a strange way. The year of his birth was denoted by the expression 'Dhīh-lab-dha' (knowledge is obtained). Likewise the year of his exit was marked by the expression Dharmo-ṇaṣṭaḥ (Righteousness slipped out of reach). The first expression suggests the dawn of knowledge, wisdom. The second signifies the disappearance of the enduring power. These words signify his hold on life in society. The initial consonant of a syllable represents a number. In the present instance, the conjunct consonant dh stands for nine the consonant t for three, the consonant M for five, n represents zero, t one. The counting is in the reverse order. Hence nine thirty-nine (939) would denote the year of his birth according to the Śālīvāhana Śaka which with an addition of seventy eight represents the Christian era. Similar is the case in Dharmona-

\[\text{ṣtāḥ} \] reversing the order, the year of exit would be ten fifty-nine
(1059) Śalivāhana Saka. It would appear that Dhi and Dharma were in full swing during the life-time of Rāmānuja. Such a description is unknown with regard to his predecessors.

It is natural therefore to consider the propriety of this epithet. It could be the presentation of Rāmānuja of society in glowing terms by a few of his fanatic admirers or it might mean that the tribute paid to him was in recognition of the greatness of the person who had risen to eminence denied to many stalwarts. In the latter alternative his life deserves to be studied in an objective manner on the basis of which his contribution to mankind has to be assessed.

Rāmānuja, The Man

The biographic build up of Rāmānuja’s personality is an essential preliminary to his contribution to society in the wake of refinement and reformation along the lines regarded as pure, profitable and enduring to mankind. In any walk of life this aspect forms a necessary part of historical estimate of a person’s worth and his contribution. His contribution to society is revealed in his undying zeal for social reform as gathered from his biography by Amudanār ś which contains 108 verses. He has explained the great influence of Rāmānuja on his own personality as follows.

"ʻAḍi-k-kil ennai sertta-darke" ś
Glued me to the feet of the Lord.

"ʻEnnai puviyil oru poru ākkā" ś
Made me a full fledged person.

Rāmānuja’s sole aim was to revive the abiding awareness of love and equality among men as participants in the social setup, but not to disrupt the social structure which is a phenomenon beyond the powers of any one or all of the participants in society. A person of that gift and stature is rare to be found frequently in society. Centuries after, in modern times, society was blessed with a person of the type of Mahatma Gandhi whose attempt to reintroduce peace and prosperity among men reminds of the performance of Rāmānuja some nine hundred years before.

Birth and Parentage

Rāmānuja was born in Śaka 939 corresponding to 1017 A.D. in a small village called Śrī Mahābhūtāpurī ś in South India, now designated as Tamil Nadu. He belonged to an orthodox brahmin family of the Srivaishnav order. His maternal grandfather was Śrī Śailapūraṇa
of Tirupati, a disciple of the great Vaiṣṇava teacher Yāmunācārya Śrī Śailapūrṇa had two sisters by name Kantimati and Dyutimati who were known also as Bhūdevi and Śrídevi. He selected two Vaidika Brahmanas whom he put into the Śrīvaiṣṇava order by administering to them what is technically known as Pañcasamskāra (five-fold efficacy). The husband of Kantimati, Kēśavasomayajan by name, had reputation of belonging to a family which performed Somayāga. Rāmānuja was the son of Kēśavasomayajan and Kantimati. The other sister of Śrī Śailapūrṇa was married to Kamalanayana Bhaṭṭa and a son by name Govinda Bhaṭṭa was born to them. Govinda Bhaṭṭa, the cousin of Rāmānuja on the maternal side became a staunch disciple of Rāmānuja and came to be known as the shadow of Rāmānuja (Rāmānuja-pada-cohaya). The expression suggests that Govinda Bhaṭṭa was the closest follower of Rāmānuja in all respects, just as Rāmānuja was the follower of Śaṭhakopa—

“Māran aḍi paṇindu uynḍvan”

Won emancipation by the lead given by Māran Śaṭhakopa.

“Yānē ni enudamaiyum niyē”

I am you and my belonging also is yourself.

Environment and early Education

Following the traditional practice, the Vedic way of life was closely followed by the orthodoxy in Śrī perumbūdūr. The presiding deity of the village known as Ādi Kēśavaperumāl was the only object of worship. The worship was, it is to be assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in the form of rituals and sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas. That was the profession of one and all throughout life. In the process, education was confined to serve the purpose of ritual. Accordingly Ramanuja received along with his cousin brother, the Vedic education at home.

Marriage

Rāmānuja got married soon after his education at home was completed. As a member belonging to the class of house-holders, he was called upon to discharge his duties, with the assistance of his wife, to serve society in the conventional way.

According to Manu, the stage of the Gṛhaṇa (house-holder) is held to be the best of the four asramas or (stages of life).
“Garstaha uc ye a srestah Sa trin etan bibharty hi Yathaa nadi-nadah sarve Saggare yanti samshhitim Tathaiva astra injah sarve Garasthe yanti samshhitim”.

The house-holder is said to be the best, for he serves the three other astra mins, brahmaa rin (bachelor), vanapratha (the seeker after secluded resort) and sanyaa sin (ascetic). Even as all the rivers flowing eastward and westward find their steady shelter in the ocean, so also members of all the astra mas (stages), without exception, find their shelter in the astra ma of the house-holder.

“Te sam traya mana susrasam Paramam tapa uc yate natah abhyananujaya taht dharmam anyam samacaret”

The best form of the dedicated life, Tapas (penance), said is to be service to the three groups.
Purport: These lines suggest the superiority of the house-holder to others.

“Yathaa vayum samaa striya Vartante sarvajanta vah tathaa grastham a striya Vartante sarva asramaah Yasmah tryapiti astra maah Jitanena, amena ca, avaham Garastenaiva dharyante Tasmah yae sthaastra ma grih

Even as all living beings depend upon breath, so also persons belonging to different astra mas depend upon the house-holder. Because all the three astra mins are maintained by only the grastha (house-holder) daily for food and knowledge. Therefore the house-holder’s walk of life is recognised as the most superior.

In this life there is scope for active participation in serving society. The service aspect involves the public. It is evident that the house-holder has the responsibility of ministering to the needs of other classes of society who come under the categories of the brahmaa rin, the vanapratha and the sanyaa sin (ascetic).
In accordance with the Hindu tradition as explained by Manu, Rāmānuja entered the life of a house-holder which was considered to be the most useful among the four āśramas, because it was in this āśrama that an individual engages himself in discharging multifarious duties. The spirit of sacrifice and obligation dawns and develops a sense of social awareness and responsibility.

The Venture

Rāmānuja was restless. He was eager to know the truth about life and its significance. He felt that in the absence of such knowledge his life would be imperfect. Real happiness would not be felt till after acquiring that knowledge. He seemed to have set for himself the course of true life.

Rāmānuja tried to pursue that knowledge which would emancipate him from ignorance and fill his life with perfect and enduring joy. But in the process of this pursuit he was determined not merely to acquire that knowledge, but also to assess and appreciate it in all its dimensions. This knowledge went far beyond the mere pursuit after transitory comfort and luxury, which were the reward for dedication only to the ritual.

It is interesting to note that Rāmānuja desired to achieve that precious and perfect knowledge remaining in the service of society as a house-holder.

Approach to problems in Life

Rāmānuja never tried to run away from society in order to work out his own personal salvation. On the other hand, from the beginning he had an instinct, an inward self-direction which he nourished and cultivated in the course of his life to solve the problems of life. It was his belief that true knowledge was the fountainhead of joy. His approach to it was objective and realistic. He also believed that confusion and contradiction were associates of knowledge. But these defects would disappear once the pursuer of knowledge develops an objective, synthetic and critical attitude. For this he needed a guru (teacher).

Search for a Guide

Belonging to the Srivaśnava fold of brahmins. Rāmānuja was expected to seek guidance from leaders of the Srivaśnava School. But he felt that formal convention ought not to stand in the way of seeking the help of a guide who could expound the truth and value
of life as recorded in the *Vedānta* in an objective way. Convention based on faith only does not lead to mental satisfaction. Knowledge alone has the power to govern faith. Hence to go beyond convention is not a sign of guilt in the field of enquiry. Rāmānuja urged by his inner instinct, disregarded the convention of confining only to the Śrīvaiṣṇava group. For any type of progress he had to go outside that group as he did not find a person belonging to that group who was competent to guide him. However, he did not ignore the convention set up by Vedic tradition, that a *tri-varṇika* (pertaining to three castes) competent and authorised to teach the *Vedānta* should be approached. So he went along with his cousin Govinda to the then famous *Vedāntin* (philosopher) by name Yadavaprakāśa. Who expounded the philosophy of the *Vedānta* as handed down by tradition through the frame of critical appreciation, even though the said master did not belong to the category of *Vedāntins* treading the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* path. Rāmānuja rejected the latter convention which he felt did not help him towards true enlightenment. He broke the narrow convention to establish the broad convention. The dogmatic was dropped to entertain the rational. This marks the first event in his outlook about the power of custom. It is an aspect of the doctrine of social service according to the School of Rāmānuja.

As it would become clear later, a custom which would hinder the development of personality deserves to be rejected in preference to another custom which helps the development of the personality which is at once an aid to self-preservation and the fountain of utility to society.

During this period the name of Yadavapraṅkaśa was familiar to scholars. He was looked upon as the foremost exponent of the thought contained in the *Vedas*. His name was as significant as that of his predecessors in the field, namely, Bhāsaṅkara and Śaṅkara.

Rāmānuja was not content with observing rituals prescribed in the *Vedas* with the sole purpose of attaining personal prosperity during life here and hereafter. In other words, he would not stop with blindly following the routine rituals and offerings prescribed in the scriptures. The *Vedas* themselves had recognised the shortcomings of such a course. As pointed out by Rāmānuja, they were intended to be only steps for gaining knowledge of the nature and value of life in its essence and realising it. The super-ritualistic speculation constituted the sum and substance of the teaching of the *Vedānta*—the final part of Vedic culture. Under these circumstances
Rāmānuja felt an urge in him to study the Vedānta which would regulate his life in such a way that he would no longer be a helpless victim of dogma which would generate passion and prejudice. As Yādavaprakāsa was the most outstanding exponent of Vedānta as contained in the Upaniṣadic literature in the contemporary period. Rāmānuja thought that his thirst for true knowledge could be quenched at the feet of this great acārya (leading agent in life). At that time he developed the desire to know the basic structure of life, its function and value.

Rāmānuja dissented with his Master Yādavaprakāsa over the Interpretation of vital statements in the Vedānta

The three statements viz., ‘Sarvamkhalu’21 ‘Satyam Jñanam Anantham’22 and Kapyāsam-Puṇḍarikam23 are helpful in determining the nature of Brahman. Its relation to cosmos and its function towards the cosmos. Special mention has been made regarding these three topics, where Rāmānuja would not agree with his master. If the master’s view is accepted, the human being would have no option but to cut himself away from the world which is an atmosphere of despiar and disappointment. If, on the other hand, as Rāmānuja maintained, the escapist attitude is overcome, the world would provide an opportunity for the development of human personality to its climax. If only the wrong notion which haunts the mind is removed, the cosmos would be an extension of the atmosphere of joy and venture. The world therefore affords an opportunity for self-fulfilment. Detachment is not detachment from the world. True detachment is detachment from the erroneous view of the world lurking in the human mind. Error replaced by truth, presents the world as an oasis which, otherwise, remains a desert.

The importance of this aspect cannot be belittled. For Rāmānuja’s socialistic impulse and indulgence was to correct himself and to help society to correct itself if possible. That marks him out and out an unparalleled personality.

The dispute with the master on these points which brought him victory is recorded in the biographic references, by his contemporaries. It would therefore be not irrelevant to quote the remarks of his contemporaries.

‘Sarvam khalu idam Brahma’24

All this indeed is the Supreme.
“Tataḥ Kadācit dhuri yādavena
Sarvam-khalu-sruti-avisaradena
Apārtha ukte sa yathārtham uktvā
Rāmānuja adarśayat arthasāmi”\textsuperscript{25}

Then on an occasion at the beginning when Yadāva, who
did not know the full implication of the proposition ‘sarvam
khalu’ projected a wrong interpretation and gave the
meaning which appeared to be cogent Rāmānuja revealed
the inter import.

“Satyam Jñanam Anantam”\textsuperscript{26}

Brahman is existent, knowledge and infinite.

The import of the above expression, according to Rāmānuja,
would be that ‘Brahman is ever the same, non-material and un-
limited and therefore Brahman is distinct from mind and matter.

“Kapyāsam Puṇḍarikam
Kapyasa sabdasya vadati apārtham
Taśmin tada abhyanga-kritaḥ kadacit
Rāmānujasya āsu tadāru-dāhi
dṛśṭva āśrī sopi unmukha sambharamo bhūt Kapyāsam”\textsuperscript{27}

A passage in the Upanisad describing the eyes of the Supreme
Person is briefly remembered as the Kapyāsa Śruti.

When an irrelevent explanation was made by Yadava on the
expression Kapyāsa, on an occasion of taking an oil bath,
the hot tears from the eyes of Rāmānuja were observed
falling on guru’s thighs; the guru became agitated and
looked up.

“Tasya yatha Kapyasam Puṇḍarikam evam akiṣṇi”.

His eyes are, thus as Kapyāsam—that is, the monkey’s
buttock, Puṇḍarika—the white lotus.

This was the sense conveyed by the master to Rāmānuja. But
the inner instinct of Rāmānuja would not tolerate the narrow,
artificial and distorted presentation of the truth. He would not
accept the teacher’s explanation. He demanded a synthetic and
comprehensive treatment of the subject. The aesthetic aspect of
experience and its significance could not be neglected or explained
away even if one were to be a recluse. The objective frame of
mind was for him the source of any successful venture. In his
opinion, the explanation was vulgar and without any value. The addition of a second example did not make any extra contribution to the concept. It was therefore a case of tautology and a load on the concept to no purpose. Precious words and expressions do not deserve to be treated in a light, loose and partial way. The description of the eye as suggested by the master does not impress the mind aesthetically, or intellectually or even pragmatically. When a better way can be found, the juvenile style has to be given up. The explanation that Rāmānuja gave was as follows—*Vedic* expressions are etymological in form as maintained by the great sage Yāśka in his work called *Nirukta*:*'

"Nāma, ākhyāta, upasarga, nipātāh"

A word may refer to a name, act, prefix or affix.

Accordingly, a possible interpretation would be thus—‘*Kapi*’ is derived from two words—*Ka* and *Pa*. The first word denotes the water. The second refers to an agent who drinks water. *Kapi* therefore means the planet sun who draws the water from the ocean through his rays. *Āsam* is an object which is made to blossom by *Kapi*. The compound word *Kapyāsam* refers to the flower which blossoms under the influence of the sun. Among the flowers that blossom, lotus in particular has been recognised as blossoming under sunshine. Accordingly, *Kapyāsam Pundarikam* is a phrase denoting the bright lotus which blossoms under the influence of the son who draws the water from the ocean. There is a reference to the origin, the growth and the charm of this flower and the means by which it has developed itself to perfection. This can have a reference to the growth of life under the care and influence of the Source of life—spirit, which feeds the entire world and raises it to charming perfection. This interpretation perhaps was the result of his attitude to problems that demand a solution. The attitude should be realistic and objective and the view must be synthetic and comprehensive. The master regarded the behaviour of the pupil as look of discipline. The pupil, on the other hand, felt that in the field of thought and discourse, status and sentiment could not count though the relationship between the pupil and the master was not to be weakened. Rāmānuja felt that the student-teacher relationship in its true form was an effort of co-operation to unravel the mystery about the significance of life, conflict is confined to thought only. The thinker is excluded.
Frankness fraught with Danger

Rāmānuja had to part company because he did not accept the master's approach to the problems of study. Yādavaprakāśa lost control over himself and ordered his student to quit his fold. This he did when he felt that Rāmānuja’s explanation was superior to his own, as it was realistic, comprehensive and elevating in outlook—a very strange incident in the life of Rāmānuja as a student.

Rāmānuja in Wilderness

Yādavaprakāśa’s intolerance of the behaviour of his pupil went far beyond the expulsion from the fold of his pupils. A fiendish thought possessed the master. Persons clinging to power and prestige are generally haunted by evil thoughts under the spell of passion. He wanted to do away with his pupil once far all. At the same time he did not want to be detected and condemned for the crime. He therefore planned a trip to the holy Vāraṇāsi, where Rāmānuja could be forced to be washed away the flood waters of the Ganges. With this intention Rāmānuja was sent for again and the entire party led by the master moved towards the holy city of Vāraṇāsi. As the party entered the dense Vindhyā forest, on the way it became hard for the members to keep together. Rāmānuja was unable to keep with the party and he felt was insolated in a place where he could not expect any shelter or guide. He found himself in wilderness. He was desperate.

The period of Transition

Rāmānuja’s Return to Kāṇci—As it generally happens in life on such occasions, chance brought to his presence a hunter and his wife. Their personality was pleasant and imposing. They announced themselves as southward bound and offered to escort Rāmānuja thither if he wanted their help and if he would follow them. The offer was readily accepted with all joy and soon during the dawn sometime later the three were within the reach of Kāṇci.

The quality of gratitude and its Effect

The lady exclaimed that she felt thirsty and she would like water to be brought to drink. The sense of gratitude was powerful in Rāmānuja who saw the existence of a well nearby and offered to fetch the water. As he came out to meet the companions he was surprised that the benefactors were out of sight. The early sunrise made him familiar with the region and he saw the temple at Kāṇci.
which he quickly entered with the vessel containing the water. The personality of the escorting couple seemed strikingly similar to that of the Presiding deity of Kāñcī and His divine spirit in the temple appeared to him in the forest as a hunter and that was an act of divine favour showered upon him during distress out of grace and pity. He also felt within himself that his thirst for knowledge was reflected in the lady’s demand for water to slake her thirst. He therefore undertook the service of fetching the holy water from the well every day for worship. The well even to-day is regarded as a sacred spot under the name of Śalai-k-Kiñar²⁳. The episode may appear mythical, but it has a vital bearing on Rāmānuja’s life and quest after knowledge.

Rāmānuja and Kāñcīpūrṇa

Traditional Convention Disregarded—Just in the way Rāmānuja dedicated himself to fetch the water from the well to the temple for worship everyday, there was another person engaged in the service of the Lord, fan in hand. He was known as Kāñcīpūrṇa. Not privileged to belong to the privileged caste as determined in the Vedas, he could not wear the sacred thread on his person, a pre-condition to take up Vedic studies. All the same he appeared to be peerless in point of piety, devotion and outlook. He was accordingly described as a Śattada Śrīvaiṣṇava²⁴ a devotee without the mantle of the twice-born. Kāñcīpūrṇa was reputed to have possessed a peculiar faculty permitting his direct communion with the Lord on certain chosen occasions. Rāmānuja learnt of this privilege. His personal desire to know the truth about the basic structure of life continued unabated. He could no longer go to Yādavaprakāśa. He was convinced that Yādavaprakāśa was incompetent for the task. No other name was heard of. Rāmānuja thought of approaching Kāñcīpūrṇa to furnish the answer to his doubts by pressing into service his super intellectual gift. The superiority of Kāñcīpūrṇa as the home of great wisdom made such an impression on Rāmānuja that he prevailed on Kāñcīpūrṇa to accept a dinner as a ‘guest in veneration’ Atithidāva²⁵. This he thought was also a part of service as it referred to a person steeped in devotion to the Supreme Bhāgavata. Kāñcīpūrṇa had the gift of intuition. He, however, belonged to a community not qualified to study the brahminical lore and employ the brahminical apparatus and technology to present the truth. Rāmānuja did not mind that the master was not a brahmin in the accepted sense of the term. He did not
hesitate to receive him as 'guest of honour'—Atithi and accord to him at dinner the status which an Atithi (guest) is entitled to as enjoined in the Upaniṣad. The invitation was accepted but not as Rāmānuja desired. It is again an accident that when the guest came the host was absent and the hostess served the food. Rāmānuja discovered that the behaviour of his wife wounded his sense of service and attitude to the guest. The mandate is Atithidvobhava. Guest is to be regarded as divine. The four dignitaries to be treated on a divine level are—the mother, the father, the ācārya and the guest.

This event is a clear record in the life of Rāmānuja. Mere convention cannot control the higher reaches of life. But the refusal of Kāṇciścīrṇa to oblige Rāmānuja suggests that convention can be overlooked only when it is a hurdle. As an instrument, however, of preserving the higher truths it shall not be violated. On this assumption Kaṇciścīrṇa excused himself.

"Kāṇciścīrṇa nirataḥ pursva
Kāṇciścīrṇārya Sa varda sūrīt-oktipātiram ācāryam
nījam acikirśad apyavamśyam, nōgāṇyo bhavati
Mahātmanāṁ kulādīh".

As before devoted to the worship of the Lord at Kāṇci. He (Rāmānuja) desired to treat as his ācārya Kāṇciścīrṇa who was the receiver of the utterances of the Lord directly. Though he belonged to a different caste, the worldly pedigree of the great does not come in for consideration.

Purno yadapi varadānu-kampayā aham
nōyuktam āvijavara
laukika kramasya ityuktivā pranati-param sa
tam nyarautsit
nocchṛyān prahayati sajjanaḥ svakiyam"

No doubt I am and I am under the mercy of Lord Varadha. O! noble brahmin it is improper that I should employ the technical formality. Having said so Kāṇciścīrṇa halted Rāmānuja who knelt before him. Men of wisdom do not project their eminence.

Garuḍavahanapāṇḍita, the contemporary of Rāmānuja, observes this event as the mark of humility. Kāṇciścīrṇa was completely free from which means Vidyaṃada the feeling of competence to
explain any and every aspect of experience and also intellectual conceit and arrogance. He was not familiar with the Vedāntic procedure though he had clear knowledge of the conclusion based on it. In other words, he was not familiar with the technological aspect prescribed in the Vedas. Rāmānuja felt that because Kāṇcīpūrṇa possessed the wisdom, he must also have been familiar with the methodology leading to wisdom.

The new hope and Venture

Trip to Śrīrangam to meet Yāmunācārya—The hurdle in the way of Rāmānuja's quest for truth kept him ever agitated in mind. He was taken to another great scholar at Śrīrangam by name Yāmunācārya of whom he had heard. But the moment he reached Śrīrangam he learnt that the great master had a deep desire to consult an important source of information without which he would not pronounce a final opinion on truth. This report enhanced the respect of Rāmānuja for that scholar. He appreciated the attitude that any conclusion based on insufficient material would continue to be a dogma. He readily resolved to trace the unexplored source and build his thought.

By the time Rāmānuja and the pupil went to Śrīrangam to meet the great scholar-saint Yāmuna, they were able to see him as a pious soul just departed with three fingers folded, which were suggestive of want of opportunity for the acarya to realise his three wishes during his life time. He returned again to Kāṇcī with a heavy heart, that he had no teacher to guide.37

Rāmānuja follows the suggested Course

Rāmānuja communicated his desire to have his surging doubts cleared and that, he would be grateful if Śrīkāṇcīpūrṇa would be pleased to provide the answer at least. Some time later the answer was communicated. It pertained to factual knowledge, the course to pursue the goal and the time of realisation and the guide to be approached.38

"Aham eva param tattavam
Darsanam bheda evaca
Upayastu pratipatiḥ syāt
Antime-smṛti-warjanam
Dehavasane mokṣaḥ syāt
Pūrṇaryam tu samasrayet".
God, (I) alone is the Supreme Reality. The final truth is bheda—distinction between the Supreme (I) and the subordinate (I) Upayastu Prapattih—The means to release is surrender or resignation. The functioning of memory at the time of death is avoidable and not obligatory. Release is to be realised at the end of this birth.

The doctrine of surrender takes away from human activity, the purposiveness towards emancipation and restricts it to the notion of service or Kaiṅkarya as an inherent phase of life free from shackles and fetters of Karma (action). The factor that secures the release of the self from bondage is identified with the grace or disposition of the Supreme of which the finite self is the inseparable dependent.

The strangeness of the phenomenon was that Kāṇcīpūrṇa furnished the answer without knowing himself the question. The answer therefore was taken as full and final by Rāmānuja. On the advice of Kāṇcīpūrṇa Rāmānuja sought the help of Mahapūrṇa and his four other companions who were students of Yāmuna the great.

The contemporary society was generally inclined towards orthodoxy. But Rāmānuja tried to set aside such considerations. He was prepared to recognise higher merit in any human being outside of caste and status confines. He was humble enough to recognise Kāṇcīpūrṇa as his guru (teacher). But what strikes one is the reaction of Kāṇcīpūrṇa who was not ready to accept the offer of Rāmānuja, though he was spiritually in no way inferior to other great acāryas of the period, because, the forces of distinctive disciplines connected with the study of life were such that Kāṇcīpūrṇa politely declined to accept Rāmānuja as Śiṣya (disciple) in the accepted sense of the term.

Yet Rāmānuja's doubts concerning the basis and function of life were cleared by Kāṇcīpūrṇa. Through him the Lord was supposed to have revealed the answer to his problems. What appears here is the concept presented by Kāṇcīpūrṇa to Rāmānuja, namely, the fact of man’s dependence on the ‘Supreme Being’ and without its grace and initiative, the impossibility to achieve anything in life. The organic view of life is projected in this context and its bearing on the social aspect cannot be ignored. The relation between members of society is through the source and not direct and independent. This is the doctrine of ananyatva and samanvaya, which Rāmānuja has discussed in detail in his Śrī Bhāṣya.
Guidance Obtained

Rāmānuja felt thrilled and encouraged. He went in search of his would-be master, Śrī Mahāpūrna, as he was known at that time who was returning from Śrirangam to Kaṅcī. The pupil and the would-be master met mid-way at a place known as Madhurāntaka⁴¹, a little distant from Kaṅcī. There Rāmānuja was initiated into the highest branch of study which was considered to be the Rahasya (inner-thought) of the Upaniṣad through the formal process conforming to the procedure of what was regarded as Pañcasamskara⁴² (five-fold efficacy).

Dedication to continue the spirit of Yāmuna, and never to conclude in the absence of Reliable Data

Progress with Mahāpurna: Rāmānuja resolved to follow the tradition of Yāmuna with the help of his five students who come to be known as the life instructors—The Pañcācāryas (five masters) of Rāmānuja.

The Divorce

Rāmānuja continued the studies of the Upaniṣads and their commentaries including the epics, the Purāṇas and the section on rituals which are to be necessarily performed in life. This synthetic attitude is developed from the observation of Bodhayana on the Brahmasūtras that the entire Vedic teaching, both Karmakānda and Brahmakānda, constitute a single unit, Śāstraikatva-siddhi (unity of teaching to be maintained). It implies that nothing in the world should be rejected. On the other hand, the utilization must be controlled by proper evaluation. The study could not be continued for long. This time the hurdle came from Rāmānuja’s wife. There was therefore a need for the pupil to keep himself free from indiscipline in the interest of his study⁴³.

The master Mahāpūrna and his team deserved respect and devotion at the hands of the pupil and his group. Rāmānuja’s wife entertained an irrevocable feeling of her superiority traceable to her parentage over that of Mahapūrna’s wife. That itself was an offence at the mental level. To add to that, the behaviour of Rāmānuja’s wife and the discourtesy she showed to the guru’s wife was a social offence, to say the least, which would not come under the act of pardon, unless it was associated with true repentance. In this context the acārya would not permit himself the degradation of describing the unbecoming attitude of Rāmānuja’s wife, and he could not
continue the teaching in the disturbed atmosphere. He therefore decided to get back to Srirangam with his family instead of directing Rāmānuja to discontinue the studies with him. The ācārya thought that withdrawal from the scene of conflict was the better course than letting a mood of aggression and aspersion against the offending party.

Rāmānuja was sad to find the master absent. He came to know that the disturbance was the result of his wife’s behaviour. She was not a wicked lady, but being obstinate and unyielding she could not be persuaded to mend her ways and relish the thrill and joy of life above the level of vanity. He therefore decided to part from her and pursue his studies as before. He accepted the āśrama of sanyāsa at Kāṇcl and felt himself free to be in the company of his master and to follow the type of life free from pollution.

Mahāpūrṇa introduced Rāmānuja to the other four colleagues of his, all of them worthy disciples of Śri Yāmūnācārya. The five disciples of Yāmuna were able to acquaint Rāmānuja with the views of their master on the vital problems of life.

The contribution of the Five Ācāryas

The ācāryas conveyed the significance of philosophic thought and its bearing on life in the course of studying the Vedānta and the great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, not excluding Smṛti and the Purāṇas. One of the special contributions was the study of the Drāviḍa Veda, the store-house of knowledge recorded in the Tamil language recognised as ‘Agastya’ discovered by the great sage Agastya. This section was regarded as the logical finale of the Vedas recorded in the Sanskrit language. The shift emphasised is from the view that the world is a separate block to the view that it is an inseparable part of the organic unit and, as such deserving of evaluation and appreciation in a synthetic and comprehensive attitude.

Rāmānuja’s confrontation with one of the Ācāryas

Confrontation with Malādhāra: While discussing the import of Tiruvāimōli (the divine outburst in Tamil), the ācārya interpreted a particular stanza to suit the frame of mind to despise and discard the world which exposed it to grief and gloom.

"Ariya-k-kalattulle
Adimai-k-kan anbu sevittu"
Ariya ma mayatu
Adiyani vaitaial"

During the pre-discrimination stage desire for service was produced in me, but you pushed me your dependent into the abysmal world which extinguishes discrimination.

The usual thought is that God has imbued the finite self with the spirit of service and then put him down into the world which has powerfully affected and interfered with the spirit of life in service compelling the mind towards struggle for existence and self-preservation.

This thought suggests that the Absolute could be indifferent and life in the world is a bitter struggle against extinction. The note of pessimism is inescapable. According to Ramanuja, this view does not conform to the true nature of the Absolute and is based on a narrow understanding of truth. He therefore interpreted the verse in a way in which he interpreted on a former occasion, the Upaniadic expression—Kasya in the presence of Yadavaprakaśa. According to him, the stanza conveys note of optimism and whole-hearted loyalty towards the guiding master for befriending the self incognite from the beginning and intensifying the desire to be engaged in service even in a world which is quite uncongenial to sush a course of life.

“Evam vidho arthopi ucito bhavediti
Uktam kvacit tattra yatishvarena
Srutvā guruḥ pūrṇa—yugāya cāha
Tābhyaṁ ca tenāpi abhimāntah saṁ"47.

The interpretation furnished by me also looks to be relevant, so said Ramanuja in a particular context.

Even as a student Ramanuja faced the master with a counter exposition in which the frame of mind was filled with joy, fervour and gratitude, even under circumstances which would normally turn man to a mood of gloom and grief. The master frankly admitted that the interpretation of Ramanuja had also been entertained by the great guru Yāmuna. The two masters Kaścipūrṇa and Gośṭhipūrṇa heard this. They along with the other masters congratulated the pupil a mark of admiration and appreciation for presenting the truth.

The influence of the Rāmāyaṇa on Rāmānuja’s Social Outlook
Rāmānuja on the Concepts of Personality and Society: The
tradition among the orthodox is that the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, are an elucidation of the types of thought and behaviour contained in the Vedas in actual life. Rāmānuja particularly stresses the role of compassion towards the helpless. Responsibility rests with persons in power who uphold the power of Dharma (Righteousness) or righteous living and prevent and discourage any attempt towards defiling Dharma and ultimately destroying it. Mythical as it may seem, the concept of the solar dynasty suggests that the source of life of a person or society is the spring of light and energy which neither fades nor vanishes.

Like many other great ācāryas before, Rāmānuja also derived much inspiration from the great epics of the Hindus. His social philosophy to a great extent was moulded as a result of his deep study, particularly of the Rāmāyaṇa. As every Hindu was in some way or the other influenced by the characters and the episodes of this epic, it was natural that Rāmānuja turned his attention to the study of this epic. He was particularly alive to the attitude of Daśaratha and Rāma—father and son respectively. As a result of the study of this epic eighteen times, Rāmānuja discerned two contrasting principles of life as depicted in the lives of Daśaratha and Rama. According to Rāmānuja, Daśaratha was concerned with the short-term policies and problems of life in society. Rāma on the other hand, emphasised the importance of value in dealing with social problems. The failure of Daśaratha’s administration was a product of his emphasis on the policy of exigency. Rāmānuja tried to synthesise the two concepts, namely, the useful and the enduring. But, in the ultimate analysis, Rāmānuja learnt, as a result of his study of Rāmāyaṇa, that the true goal of evolution should not be missed. It was this unique way of analysing and interpreting the great epic that helped him to put forward his own social philosophy. In this respect he was pragmatic and tried to conserve and reform society from within rather than from without.

Resistance to aggression and Arrogance

The life of Sīta, the consort of Śrī Rāmā, helped Rāmānuja to realise the power and value of resistance to evil forces. The career of Sīta which was full of unforeseen difficulties and degradations, isolation and misery, impressed Rāmānuja, Inspite of all the troubles and tribulations, Sita remained firm in her conviction and had immense faith in herself. These aspects of Sīta’s character also moulded the ideology of Rāmānuja.
Thus the two impressions that Rāmānuja got from the study of the Rāmāyaṇa gave him the strength to contribute his best to society and to resist any form of attraction which might impair his personality. It would not be unrealistic to regard Rāmānuja as an ascetic (sanyāsin) in the fullest sense of the term. Personality he adopted the behaviour of Sīta and in the field of service he went to the full extent as Visualised by Śrī Rāma. The personality of Rāmānuja is a happy blend of the characteristics of Rāma and Sīta. In the Rāmāyaṇa Sīta did not yield to the seducing power of Rāvana. Rāma put an end to that power in his attempt to rescue Sīta and wiped out Rāvana and his army. The ladies who surrounded Sīta and illtreated her under the compulsion of Rāvana were brought under protection by Sīta after the death of Rāvana though as belonging to Rāvana they merited ill-treatment for their crime. Rāmānuja's role as Sanyāsin indicated that he would not be a victim to the social system as it then obtained. For it prevented the growth of a free society in a harmonious way: that is the role of Sīta that he permitted for himself in a strange situation. Sanyāsa (asceticism) was ordinarily understood as a way of personal protection and elevation without entering the province of polluting society. But, according to Rāmanuja, Sanyāsa was a deliberate plunge into society without losing the personality.

The human organism is not a mere blend of the material and mental entities to pull on together harmoniously till the two separate. But if the mental entity could only know itself as distinct and unchanging unlike its material component, the opportunity should not be missed to realise the splendours nature of the spirit of the spiritual entity which combines with nature not merely for harmonious life-here, but also as an instrument for elevation. In consequence, life in the world of the enlightened spirit would be akin to the presence of the divine on the earth. Full personality could not be developed in the absence of attention to the spiritual side. That would naturally reduce man to a state of helplessness in the face of adverse forces of nature subjecting him to passion and prejudice the two basic defects to be guarded against. This attitude was proved in the life of king Dasaratha himself. According to Śrī Rāma, personal weakness instils the desire for outside conquest which may or may not be realised. But self-conquest makes one a part and parcel of the entire society and does not permit the individual to consider himself as different from society and superior to it. This view of refining man and pushing him up from vanity to humility.
is the normal result that will accrue to a person who is keen on the development of personality in its true sense. This conviction stood as the basic support for Rāmānuja.

Rāmānuja and Goṣṭhipūrṇa

In his life of search for truth Rāmānuja came in contact with five ācāryas, who were experts in various fields of philosophical learning. Among them Goṣṭhipūrṇa, in particular, had a great reputation in the contemporary period for his scholarly exposition of the value of life and function of man in the world as revealed in the Bhagavad-gītā. Śrī Krishna draws a distinction between the apparent and the real regarding ambition and approach.

"Īśvaraḥ sarvabhistānam hṛdeṣa Arjuna tisthāti
Bhramayan sarva bhūtām Yntra ruddham māyaya".

Oh! Arjuna, casting his veiling power, the Supreme Lord of unlimited controlling power stays in the heart of all these revolving as though they are on the rotating wheel.

The apparent aim of life is happiness in the world beyond. In both these worlds the material contact is unavoidable, its influence is irresistible and the resulting happiness is mixed and impermanent due to the fact the association is with that part of life which is ever changing. Existence of the self and its experience in contact with the material side completely cut off would be unreal and imperfect. Because the Cosmos composed of the mental and material parts are both controlled by a Super power which exists by its own right holding under control the entire Cosmos. Śrī Krishna discloses the sure way towards freedom and release. He says—

"Māmeva ye prapadyante
Māyām etām tarantite"50.

Those who resort only to me, they alone can move beyond the bewildering condition of life.

These passages reveal that human beings like the material objects are totally under the sway of the Supreme. In consequence human endeavour by itself deserves to be discounted as ineffective towards release and freedom. The problem is created on the following basis. The person who yearns for some fulfilment in life has to be active towards that personality. But being impotent, his effort proves to be futile. Hence the problem is how to convert human activity into a potent instrument to secure the coveted result.
Gīta was not a scripture for a saint or to a man who renounced the world. It was considered by the Vaiṣṇava scholars of the period as equally useful for leading the society on a path of progress and harmony. It was under these circumstances that Rāmānuja made it a point to contact the 'best mind' of the age and found in Goṣṭhipūrṇa, a scholar and a teacher who could quench the thirst for true knowledge.

Rāmānuja was confronted, like many seekers of the period, with fundamental but irreconcilable notions which had relevance in the realm of society. The notion was that human effort was a necessary instrument to secure the reward which might be material or metaphysical. Another notion was that the human being inspite of his individual effort to realise his ends, was a helpless dependent on the Supreme spirit, which controlled and guided the entire Cosmos and which could be identified with the cosmic force. As such, individual effort, according to the second notion, was as useless as inaction. Rāmānuja was puzzled as to the nature of the true notion and its utility to society, because in the social affairs of society, individuals in various capacities confronted the same contradictions. Hence it was natural for Rāmānuja to clear this doubt before he launched the programme of upliftment.

The meeting of Goṣṭhipūrṇa and Rāmānuja forms an interesting episode, (in the history of society) particularly, as it was related to the relationship between a good teacher and an anxious student. Just because Rāmānuja approached him, Goṣṭhipūrṇa did not show immediately any inclination to solve the contradictions in the mind of the student. Goṣṭhipūrṇa was a far advanced scholar. He had a strong desire to convey the central truth, but before he could impart the knowledge, he wanted to know whether Rāmānuja was fit enough to receive it. Was the urge in Rāmānuja genuine? Could he fulfill and implement the knowledge gained thus? These were some of the questions that tormented the mind of the ācārya. The forces which mould human society and the reaction of man to values in life have to be determined only on an intuitive basis. Only then systematic knowledge becomes possible. This required enormous devotion and continuous study. Goṣṭhipūrṇa feared that there was the possibility of subjecting this intuitive knowledge to abuse. The true significance of social virtue could be appreciated from the intuitive stand which is termed Divyacaksus (the divine eyes) in the Bhagavad-gītā. Like a true teacher, therefore, he wanted Rāmānuja to prove his earnestness and seriousness. He expected
from Rāmānuja that the latter would not subject the message to careless and perverse treatment. The whole episode probably left a deep imprint on the mind of the student, who when he emerged as a teacher himself, adopted some of these good principles of Goṣṭhipūrṇa. Only after a clear assurance and test Rāmānuja was able to get the message.

Goṣṭhipūrṇa put forward before Rāmānuja a few important principles, which later on guided the socio-religious movement of Rāmānuja in South India. Those principles were as religious as they were social. They were also fundamental for the harmony and the very survival of society. One such principle emphasised the importance of rituals and prayers in the life of a seeker in society. It is well known that in the history of socio-religious movement in India various reformers from Buddha to Rāmānuja had, in their zeal to reform society, attached the ritualistic forms and stressed more the ethical side of human existence in the social environment. Quite contrary to, but not wholly opposed to his view Goṣṭhipūrṇa pointed out to Rāmānuja that Yāgas (rituals), Yagūas (worship) or ceremonies, prayers and singing devotional songs were all essential and would assist the individual to make progress along the path of culture. Certainly the rituals and ceremonies were helpful to condition the behaviour and tame the animal instinct in man. Another principle that was taught by Goṣṭhipūrṇa was that the rituals and prayers would move the divine force to enlighten the devotees. The whole idea was conceived as a co-operative task in which the divine force and the devotee acted as partners. Yet another principle was that divinity was Supreme and so such, man was entirely under its control, whether knowingly or unknowingly man acts in society only with the influence of the Cosmic Force. The concept of Kainkarya was particularly emphasised by Goṣṭhipūrṇa. It was a form of service and also a form of behaviour. He told Rāmānuja that the concept of service was very subtle and it was likely to be misunderstood and abused, resulting in confusion and choose among the masses, if it was not properly applied. That was why Goṣṭhipūrṇa insisted that these principles of the Gītā were to be employed only by a few individuals who had abiding faith in them—

"Idam te nātaptapakaya nābhaktaya kādācana
na Cā śusrusave dādyāt nacamam yobhya Sūyati"

This given to you should not be given to the disciplined or
As such, the second aspect which was positive in character was more important and it was ever lasting. Rāmānuja was told that there existed a link between the All Controlling Power and the wandering individual. As a member of society every individual should strive hard to realise this link which had occupied a very important place in the life of man. In short, Māhāpūrṇa's argument was based on the fact that the caste discipline was confined to the material frame of social life. But the spiritual system was above this material frame. Between the two the spiritual system was superior and hence it was to be recognised in proper perspective. Therefore, the act of Māhāpūrṇa performing the last rites of his classmate was in tune with this outlook of life. He had given importance to spiritual stature rather than the individual's traditional rank in social set-up. It was in no way a violation of the Varnadharma (caste based obligation). In order to drive home this principle, Mahāpūrṇa reminded Rāmānuja of an incident in the Rāmāyaṇa, where Rāma without any hesitation performed the last rites of Jātāyu which was a bird. Hence, according to Mahāpūrṇa, what was important was spiritual equality with discipline as a guiding force. As applied to society, this principle accepted diversity as a factor in society which could not be levelled or equalised by any force. However, he did not mean that there was no meeting ground amidst diversity. The aim of society should be uniform, but the paths might be different. Each individual according to his own status or rank in social structure should strive hard to reach this goal. Hence, equality meant equality of opportunities, but not destroying the traditional system of organisation. Diversity did not prevent mingling, also it did not mean divorce from the various kinds of forces which were operating in society. This was the sociophilosophical principle that Rāmānuja learnt from his ācārya, which impressed him.

Rāmānuja's sojourn to Kashmir

Yāmunācārya, teacher of Rāmānuja, had expounded a new approach to the study of the Vedānta in the contemporary period. His views on the Vedāntic message on life and reality radically differed from the views of other thinkers in the field. In this connection, Yāmuna wanted to know whether the Vedāntic thought as understood by him was in conformity with the exposition of the same by Badarāyaṇa who was the author of the Brahma Sūtras. This work was considered to be an authority on the subject by every
thinker. In order to realize this objective, the only way for Yāmuna was to go to Kashmir which was the formost seat of learning at that time. Unfortunately Yāmuna's wish was never fulfilled. It became the mission of Rāmānuja to visit Kashmir for the purpose of comparing the views of Yāmuna with those of Bhadarāyaṇa's Brahmasūtras. It is under these circumstances Rāmānuja undertook the historic journey. He was accompanied by his pupil Kurēśa. While he was in Kashmir, he got access to the comprehensive work entitled 'Bodhayana Vṛitti'⁵⁸. He found that his interpretation of the Upaniṣadic term Kapyāsa was in perfect tune with the traditional view. Thus the sojourn in Kashmir was a success from the point of view of Rāmānuja's intellectual appetite which was appropriately quenched there.

The composition of the Śrī Bhāṣya

Rāmānuja and Kurēśa: The result of his visit to Kashmir was the composition of the Śrī Bhāṣya which has been considered as one of the greatest works on Indian Philosophical thought which has a far-reaching influence on Indian society. After his study of Bodhayana's Vṛitti on Brahmasūtra, he was convinced that the thoughts of Yāmuna and this work were in agreement with each other. He therefore, decided to interpret the Vedānta Sūtras as understood by him. In this task Rāmānuja adopted the synthetic and the objective way. He followed the path set out by the eminent scholars of earlier times. To Rāmānuja, pure tradition was a sanctifying force. He never reproached tradition, but he wanted to harmonise his thoughts and discoveries with the ancient living tradition. That was nor was he destroyer. His main aim in writing Śrī Bhāṣya was to conserve what was best in the Indian Vedāntic tradition. However, it did not mean that he accepted everything at face value. He put everything that was in tradition to rigorous scrutiny and never hesitated to reject what was not in conformity with the main flow of tradition. He broke the existing dogmatic convention to establish the healthy convention this was one aspect of social service rendered by Rāmānuja. In this sense his work was synthetic and objective. Synthetic because the new thought that he discovered as a result of his reflective attitude was linked up and synthesised with the pure tradition. It was objective because he gave rational explanation to the idea he said and wrote. He viewed his subject from a detached point of view.
Rāmānuja as a Synthesiser

As a great synthesiser Rāmānuja co-ordinated the thoughts contained in Vedānta and the Drāviḍa-Vedānta, and coined a new word called Ubhaya-Vedānta, vedānta put much stress on personal elevation and individual salvation. On the other hand, the Ubhaya-vedānta as interpreted by Rāmānuja emphasised the concept of Kaiṅkarya or service to society. It was not enough if an individual tried to uplift himself and attain Mokṣa (Final Release). Rāmānuja demonstrated in his writings and in his life the principle of Kaiṅkarya or elevation of society through service. Since they were not opposite ideas, both were essential. They were like two sides of the same coin. The stress on the one and the rejection of the other would lead to lop-sided development. That was why Rāmānuja presented an integrated approach in his writings and teachings. If a person merely thinks of his own elevation either in the material or the spiritual sense, he would ultimately end up in egoistic outlook. But if he strives for the upliftment of his immediate social environment, it would not only broaden his outlook but lead to an integral life. Rāmānuja’s philosophy as described in the Śrī Bhāṣya was not mere speculative metaphysical principles, but is had relevance to problems of social interests. In this sense Rāmānuja carved out a new path. He never rejected the worldly life or material existence of society, but he criticised too much indulgence in this aspect of life. For a harmonious existence there should be a link between the individual, the society and the Supreme Force. The individual should not forget that he is dependent on him and true life consists in harmonising the principles of life for all times. The emphasis on either one of the two would result in imbalance, instability and misery.

The Upaniṣads are primarily concerned with the method of disowning contact with the material world—that is the goal or mokṣa (Final Release) envisaged. The Drāviḍa Vedānta, on the other hand, emphasised the need for undisturbed wareness of the direct link of the Cetana (soul) with the Supreme Spirit and to the extent to which material link emerges as a hinderance the desire for delivarance is kept up. It is only in the latter view, that the direct relationship should not be subordinated to the assumed relationship which exists between the cetana and the a-cetana. The concept of service or Kaiṅkarya figures as a function vital to the nature of the cetana. This doctrine is emphasised and elaborated in the Drāviḍa Vedānta and is also found in the Upaniṣads. Service is projected in
its crude form as the concept of ‘Karma’ confined only to the process of personal elevation. This point has been clearly stated in the manipravāla classic of Abhiramavara:

"Karma Kainkaryangal, nitya nityā satyā
Satya varṇa dasyanugunangal"

*Karma* and *Kainkarya*, accord respectively with the eternal and the non-eternal, with the changing and the unchanging and with the physical and the spiritual temperament.

Hence *Kainkarya* which is the mark of spiritual consideration is by far superior to *Karma* which has a direct reference to the physical frame of spirit. In other words, *Karma* cleared of all its impurities emerges as *Kainkarya*, *Karma* is the crux from of *Dāsyya* (service prompted by love). *Karma* is a means, where as service is life’s normal behaviour. Śrī Bhāṣya incorporated the principles mentioned above. In the task of composing it, Rāmānuja utilised the services of Kūreśa, who acted as a scribe.

**The limitation of the Teacher**

Before proceeding to write the Śrī Bhāṣya, Rāmānuja cautioned Kūreśa not to write in blind faith on the consideration that the master was an unrivalled master of the subject. To do justice to the subject, the role of the master should not be over-emphasised. Being an individual no person can claim full validity for his personal ability and assessment of truth. Time honoured tradition has secured the status of supreme sanctity being based on the real nature of the object and appreciated and acclaimed by numerous critics and seers in all times. To miss this point of unswerving loyalty to the objective aspect of experience and its normal pomp and promise and to permit the whim of any individual, however great he may be, to paint the objective truth is an intellectual crime deserving condemnation and repudication at all hands. Kūreśa very much appreciated and admired the spirit of discipline evinced by his ādārṣṭa. The work of Śrī Bhāṣya proceeded smoothly upto a point when for reasons unknown, Rāmānuja described the concept of the cetana (soul) not quite in conformity with its nature of apraha-ksiddhi. Kūreśa stopped writing. He disobeyed the matter apparently in obedience to him. Kūreśa would not express the flaw he discovered in the master. For he sincerely felt that the master was a scholar of rare ability and the pupil was not worthily equipped to expose the flaw. He felt he was unable to appreciate the significance
of what he thought was an incorrect remark. He therefore thought that silence on his part would serve the purpose of helping the master to reframe his thought or to reiterate it upon second thought. An anecdote cited here in this connection throws light on the character of Kūrēśa as a pupil without a match. This anecdote is in connection with the framing of the definition of the concept of cetana. Cetana as an intelligent entity is other then the a-cetana (non mental) or the material entity. Cetana being dependent on and meant for the sake of the Supreme in service is looked upon as ṣeṣa or an entity meant only for service with no tinge of selfishness. Since both the cetana and the a-cetana are the common dependents, the doctrine of ‘existance for service’—ṣeṣatva’ (the nature of the ṣeṣa) is of primary significance. The sentient nature of the cetana is only to distinguish it from the a-cetana and not to claim any privilege beyond service on the ground that the mental equipment makes it resemble the Supreme Spirit.

Rāmānuja felt a doubt here. Empirically the knowledge aspect deserves prominence, but fundamentally it yields place to the service aspect. The solution suggested in the Drāviḍa Vedānta is that the cetana is primarily regarded as Ādīven an entity engaged in service only. Intelligent variety also utilised in service by the expression Unārun a mental entity.

The idea according to Rāmānuja would be that the cetana is dependent on the Supreme and therefore on a par in status with the a-cetana, but it differs from the a-cetana because it is cetana, a mental entity possessing the feature of knowledge confined to the region of service.

Śrī Yāmuna in his ‘Satotra-Ratna’—a philosophic treatise in poetic garb observes:

Yadvā Śramāvadhi Yathāmati
Vṛṣi asaktāḥ staumi, evameva
Kalu tepi sadā stuvantaḥ
Vedāḥ caturmukha mukka ca
Mahārṇavāntah ko majiataḥ
amu kulācalā yoh viśesah”

Frail as I am, I indulge in praying to the Almighty. So also do the great and mighty namely the Vedas the first child of God, Brahma and others of high calibre. The result being the same between us all. The great mountain.
and a small pebble defy any attempt to ignore inequality. But they are treated alike when they are immersed in deep ocean.

The message of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is worth recording here—Naciketas, an adventurer in the field of enquiry with a firm resolve never to let go his efforts till he succeeded in reaching the truth, was informed that all his excellence amounted to nothing. Only the grace of the Supreme power would help him in his progress. This proves that Naciketas, the celebrated Upaniṣadic hero and the negligible ignoramus crawling on the earth are both powerless, as far as the attempt to grasp Brahman by personal endeavour is concerned.

Rāmānuja deputed his pupil to approach his master Gosthipūrṇa and get the true version. Implicitly obeying the master, Kūrēśa moved from Śrīrangam to meet Gosthipūrṇa the master's master. He is said to have taken the trip eighteen times, because the master was not available. In the last trip the master is reported to have cleared the doubt in a very casual way with the direction to refer to the two stanzas and their sequence in the famous work of Tīrūvāimolī—Sāmaveda section of the Drāvida Vedānta occurring in Stanzas 2 and 3 in the 8th decade of the 8th section. On receiving the guidance from the master through Kūrēśa, Rāmānuja felt that absence of alertness even for a second would be enough to do irreparable damage to truth. He quickly corrected himself and projected the concept of the cetana emphasising its functional nature as more essential than its intellectual stature. In other words, the worth of an individual is determined by the quality of service he renders. Usefulness to society is the mark of merit. Kūrēśa continued the task of writing and sometime later the famous classic of Śrī Bhāṣya was completed.

The incident that took place during the composition of Śrī Bhāṣya, namely, Kūrēśa's doubt regarding a statement of Rāmānuja indicates the personality of Rāmānuja as a teacher. In this connection he stands out in contrast with his former guru Yādavaprakāśa, who, it may be recalled here, had snubbed him, when the former questioned the interpretation of the latter. Kūrēśa was not an ordinary scribe merely copying the words of the master. He had his own abilities as a scholar. In the most obedient manner Kūrēśa brought to the notice of Rāmānuja the flaw in his interpretation. Without hesitation Rāmānuja agreed to the silent disagreement of
the scribe. He was in a position to clear the doubt himself. But he felt that it was better to consult another authority on the subject and at the same time to show to Kūrēśa that he was not interested in the personality cult or personal domination. That was why Kūrēśa was sent to consult Gōsthipūrṇa to clear the doubt. It only reveals humility on the part of Rāmānuja and the respectful obedience and not blind obedience on the part of Kūrēśa. The event is certainly interesting and speaks of higher qualities of Rāmānuja as a teacher and Kūrēśa as a model disciple of the twelfth century. Ramanuja had shown in action what the acārya wanted others to practise.

REFERENCES

3. Ibid, P. 216.
8. Note: Mahabūtapuri—The word Mahabūtapuri indicates a city inhabited by Mahabūtas or great men steeped in the knowledge of the absolute. The Taittiriya Upaniṣad distinguishes between being and non-being. A person who has the knowledge of Brahman as his inner-self is said to be existent—Bhūta. One who does not possess this knowledge is said to be non-existent-abhūra. The exact words used in this connection in the Upaniṣad are sat and asat respectively. The word sat is synonymous with Bhūta. Mahabhūta is one who retains this knowledge throughout one's life (Taittiriya Upaniṣad—Section-Anandavalli).
11. Note: Pada-chāyā: It may be of interest to note in this connection the significance of the statement ‘Aham Brahma Asmi’ which means ‘I am Brahma’. The common man starts his life with the basic notion that he is the one to be counted as supreme and all others should subserve his interest. This is the attitude during the period of persistent ignorance. As a reward for true education leading to full enlightenment the expression ‘Aham Brahma Asmi’ is used to describe the enlightened man. Facing God the enlightened man announces ‘Aham Brahma Asmi’. The intention
is not identity of essence but non-difference (Aprthak-Siddhi). The word ‘Aham does not contain anything in substance or quality not covered by Brahman. The enlightened person feels totally subordinate like the shadow. The ambition of man is to achieve absolute independence—that is the start in life. When the goal is reached the realisation is absoluteness in dependence. This is the interpretation of Śrī Rāmānuja. The term ‘Pada-cchāya’ contains the notion of absolute dependence on the master.

17. Ibid., verses 229.
Srinivasa Iyengar : The Life and Teachings of Śrī Rāmānujacārya, Madras, 1908, Pages 46-47.
Note: This doctrine of going beyond the conventional bounds for elevation and enlightenment was utilised by an ācārya of the fourteenth century by name Śrī Śailanātha. This great brahmin scholar sought precious knowledge from a scholar by name Vilāmoṣolai-Pillai, whose work Sapta-gadha condensed the philosophy of the Srivacanabhushana of Lokācārya (13th Century).
Govindacaryaswamin : Life of Rāmānuja, P. 43.
Andhrapurna : Yatirāja Vaibhavam, Sarasvatī Mudrakshara Shala, Madras, 1877, verse 12, P. 184.
Taṭṭtirīya Upaniṣad : Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1945, Section Brahmanandavalli, Anuvaka—1.
Chandogya Upaniṣad, Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1956, Ch. I, Sec. VI, 6.7.
Govindacaryaswamin : Life of Rāmānuja, P. 32.

   Govindacharyaswamin: Life of Rāmānuja, P. 33.
   Andhrapurna: Yatirāja Vaibhavam, P. 50.


   Govindacaryaswamin A.: Life of Rāmānujacārya, P. 60.

33. Ibid., P. 60.

34. Ibid., P. 60.


36. Ibid., verse 47, P. 133.
   Perumāl Jīyar: Guruparamparā, P. 247.


   Perumāl Jīyar: Guruparamparā Prabhavam, P. 347.

39. Perumāl Jīyar: Guruparamparā Prabhavam, P. 245


   Note: Pancasamskāra: Paṇcasamskāra is different from Samskara (efficacy) prescribed to enter upon the Vedic studies. The Vedic studies lay emphasis on the mode of effecting release from the material attachment which prevents the joy arising out of the eternal association with the Supreme Being. The style is based on the assumption that joy is spiritual association and the material attachment is misery. The Pancasamskāra, on the other hand, is based on the thought that the association of the finite self with the Supreme Being is eternal and imperishable and the material interest gets transformed itself into an abiding interest and an attitude of opportunity for services to the exclusion of seeking pleasure. This thought is applicable to one and all of the finite selves. It revives. It revives the eternal spirit of optimism in life by transcending the narrow self-egotism and moving on to the highest plane of joyful subservience to the Supreme and to the world directly linked to the Supreme. At this Upanisadic level what is discarded is the material world. At the Rahasya level that is discarded is the unten-
able self-importance in the world set-up. The self engages itself in an act of self-refinement and elevation to perfection through the process of *Karma* leading to *Jīvana, Bhakti* and finally *Prapatti*. It is the protective measure employed by the finite self and in consequence there is no scope or occasion for service or *Kainkarya* as understood in the *Vadānta*. According to the inner import of the *Upanisad*, the protective part of activity is the exclusive monopoly of the Supreme Being which is the only principle for the emergence, endurance and exit of both the mental and the material part of the Cosmos. This finite self is constrained to employ its activity not for protection but to the only other purpose—namely service. In the light of this understanding the doctrine of *Prapatti* does not provide opportunity for the finite self to enter into the protective activity.

The *Pañcasamkāra* is intimately connected with the life based on the interpretation of the *Upanisads* emphasising the kinship between the finite self and the absolute. It is listed in the following verse:

"Tōpa Ṛaṇḍraḥ tathānāma
Maṇtro yāgaśca panchamah"

The initiation of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas is based upon these five Sacraments or *Panchasadakāras* viz.:

(i) *Tōpa* or branding on the two shoulders with the marks of Śāṅkha (conch) and the *Chakra* (disc), the emblems of Viṣṇu;
(ii) *Pundra* or two white lines (of a sort of white clay) on the forehead, with a red line of powder sūffron etc., in the middle. They should be marked in the eleven other places of the body, three on the stomach one on the chest, two on the shoulders, three on the neck and two on the back. These twelve marks should be borne every day and are called by the twelve names of Viṣṇu, Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Madhava, Gopīnda, Viṣṇu, Madhusudhana, Trivikrama, Vamana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha and Rāmodara;
(iii) *Nama* to bear the names of Viṣṇu and one should be called by those names only;
(iv) *Maṇtras* which are taught by the *guru* at the time of the initiation. The *Maṇtras* of Viṣṇu are various. These *maṇtras* are taught to everyone at the time of his initiation. This initiation can be obtained by any one of any caste, even a Mleecha or Chandala—and he becomes a *Vaisnava*. *Vaisnavas* should recite *maṇtras* a certain number of times every day;
(v) *Yoga* or worship of certain idols of Viṣṇu which is taught at the time of initiation by the gurus, presenting one idol to the disciple for his worship and thence the disciple should worship it and no other.

45. **Note**: *Tiruvāinoli*—The term Tiruvāimoli means the language of the sacred utterance. It is equated with the famous *Chandogya Upaniṣads* of Vedānta. In form and context there are three other works belonging to the category of Tiruvāimoli corresponding to the other three parts of the Veda namely, the Ṛg, the Yajur and the Atharvav. This is a part of the Śaṃaveda. The main subject-matter of the Drāvīḍa Veda is the nature of the Absolute as the sole Greator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Cosmos, the sportive aim of activity of the Absolute and the use to which the material world has to be put in that context which is looked upon as the Upakarana or instrument to be used in the service of the Lord. If the Sanskrit section of the Veda prescribes the way to be unaffected by the world, the Tamil section prescribes the way to utilise everything for service. On this account the system of Rāmānuja’s philosophy has come to be recognised as ‘Udbhayavedānta’.

46. Nambillai—Bhagavadviṣyaṁ—IDU (Commentary on Tiruvāimoli), Madras, 1873, Vols. II, III.

47. Āndhraprūṇa: Yātrāja Vaibhavam, verse 63, P. 187.

48. Vālmiki: Rāmāyana: Asthanvidvamsa (ed.), Mysore, 1913, VI, 107, the Section is termed Aditya Hṛdayam.


Rāmānuja: Śrī Bhāṣya, Invocatory verse.


52. **Note**: Intuition: In the central view, as opposed to the side view, of the Dravidian term ‘Mayarvara Madinalam’. Knowledge free from flaw and undetached from the source. (Tiruvāimoli; ii 1-1-1).


55. Notē: Embērumanār—Perumān is Brahman. It connotes the quality of magnifying.


Āndhraprūṇa, op.cit., P. 37.


61. Álvāra: Divyaprabhandam: Tiruvaimoli, IV-X-5.

CHAPTER III

Rāmānuja’s Attitude Towards Society and its Behaviour

The Basis for a New Outlook—Asceticism Not Anti-Social—The Enduring Distinguished From the Fleeting—Humanistic Evaluation of the Social System—The Dynamic Role of an Ascetic—Service Outlook—Society Treated as a Field of Service—Asceticism as a Potent Tool of Service to Society—Society a Blend of Savage and Saintly Traits—Dedication to Tame Savagery—Rough and Refined forms of Life—The Potency of Prayer and Compassion.

The basis for a new Outlook

It is clear from the previous chapter that Rāmānuja’s place as a social reformer was the product of his social up-bringing, training in the ancient lore and contact with the great minds of the period. Social association in determined by purpose. Contact is therefore selective. It is not indiscriminately brought about by blind, instinctive urge. The impact of the Drāviḍa Veda of Saṭṭhakopa and others is significant. Saṭṭhakopa, Parakāla, and Yogivāha are not of the top class in the caste-order. But they are regarded as unfailing leaders far ahead of the celebrated seers or rīṣīs of Vedic fame. The glory of Rāmānuja is traced to his devotion to Saṭṭhakopa and the other Āḻvārs (Saints) and their followers, the earlier ācāryas (seers), viz., Madhurakavi, Nāṭhamuni and Yāmuna.1 Kulaśekhara, one of the Āḻvāra observes thus—

"Adi śūdum arāṣai allāl
Arasāga ennenn māṟṟu arasu".2

I regard the feet of the Lord on my head as the crown proclaiming my sovereignty. No other symbol of sovereignty attracts me.

Sovereignty is the privilege of exercising the inherent power at will and without any check. In this case wearing the feet of the
Lord on the head symbolises the sovereignty of service. This is symbolic of the maxim that service is sovereignty. Here the distinction between the temporal crown and the religious crown in emphasised. The latter is preferred as it is a lasting feature. The flower taken from the feet of Pāṇperumāl adorns the head of Rāmānuja, observes Amudanār. Pāṇperumāl is Yogivāha. Saṭṭhakopa recognises in the series of the adorable devotees of the Lord, and the idea was accepted by Rāmānuja later, even those who may be considered in the world as Candālas among the Candāsa.8

Tondar-adipodi, another Āḷvār from the Brahmin fold, administers a warning to the top class of society. A person may be an authority on the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. He may be the most esteemed of the devotees by birth and behaviour. If, by any chance, he despises any sincere devotee, he will hurl himself that very moment down to the level of the wretched with no hope of recovery.4

Another Āḷvār by name Munivāhana observes that the Lord rises above Himself when He employs man to serve the devotees.5 Yāmunācārya, following Kulaśekhara, prefers sub-human life in good company to the exalted position in a damaging environment.6 The principle which governs the ambition of the great is the power of ‘character’ ājina-śīla to the exclusion of self-aggrandisement, aḍambara. Following this principle, envisaged in the Veda and emphasised by the Āḷvār the early batch of Rāmānuja’s followers followed this system of life in society. The two classical works Śrīvacanabhusanā and Ācārya Hṛdaya are the codification of philosophic behaviour in the social set-up. The two works rank in status with the classical works of Rāmānuja. From the Tamil point of view, they are what the classical works of Vedāntadēsika (Satadāṣani, for instance), in Sanskrit, to establish the theistic trend of the Advaita Vedānta.

The social upbringing is not to be understood in the modern sense of mixing with members outside the community and developing a taste and temperament as a result of the contact. The Vedas refer to different kinds of aim in life and the means to be adopted towards that end. The society to which Rāmānuja belonged was Śrīvaisnava in outlook and habit. At that time Rāmānuja was not aware of any scholar who could point to the rationale behind the Śrīvaisnava belief about life and value which then seemed to Rāmānuja a dogma. He could not get the Vedānta
support to the Śrīvaishnava convention from the scholars to whose fold he belonged. The unsatisfactory environment and the inner desire for an outlook on life which would convincingly keep him untouched by depression and disappointment forced Rāmānuja to obtain the solution from outside his fold.

The influence on him was not confined to any physical association with groups of people. The gap between the sermon and practice was enough to influence his alert and dynamic mind. As a person who believed in the conservation of ancient thought and system free from contamination, Rāmānuja tried to interpret afresh social assignments, Varnāśrama dharma and the role of ascetic life in society. He retained a lively contact with society. The present day notion of social reform or evolution appears to lay emphasis on the sanctity of man-to-man relationship overriding all considerations that may disqualify man from conningling. If, on the other hand, socialism is an active effort to elevate mankind to command esteem and affection, the process does involve an element of restraint on the part of the forward member lest he would lose his foot-hold in life and becomes unable to assist the backward to leap forward. This applies at all levels—food and bed, the casual aim in life and which expects to maintain dignity as a worthy member of society.

The opportunity to meet men of renown and ability was not missed by Rāmānuja. In this venture he moved from one scholar to another. The change in outlook was regarding the value attached to the Varna (Caste) and āśramas (stages). He never attempted to abolish them as they were integral to social life, not mere conventions introduced by mutual agreement.

Asceticism not Anti-social

Regarding Sanyāsa about which much confusion still prevails, the Bhagavat-gītā is cited with approval.

"Kāmyānām karmaṇām nyāsam
Sanyāsam kāvayo viduṭ"

Withdrawing from acts with a motive is renunciation or asceticism as the wise have held.

Rāmānuja’s commentary on the above verse—

"Varṇāśrama-vihitam-karma
madārādhana-rūpatayā kāryam
svayam-prayojanam iti matvā"
The performance associated with Ṣaṅgha and āśrama, the castes and their stages, must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship a revental function with no extra promise.

Asceticism is refraining from acts with a selfish motive. Disengaging from acts to secure personal gains is, in the opinion of Sanyāsa—ascetism. Another statement in the same work has this to say about act—

"Naḥi kascit kṣanam api
Jātutisṭhati akarma—kt t
Kāryate hi avaśah karma
Sarvaḥ prakṛtijah guṇaiḥ". ⁹

No one can exist at any time, even for a second, without any activity. Irresistably, by the forces of nature every being is completed to act.

Rāmānuja comments thus—

"Evaṃ kriyamāṇeśu
Karmasu kartrtvādi-parītyagah
Śāstra-siddah sanyāsah
Sa eva tyāgah iti ukto bhavati". ¹⁰

Thus in respect of all activity the total rejection of the feeling of agency (performer) and the like determined by the law of life (Śāstra) is Sanyāsa, ascetism. This alone is meant by the word tyāga, renunciation.

The stand of Rāmānuja is in accordance with the message of the Gītā, that is—

"Aham sanyāsasya tyāgasya ca
Ekameva svarupam". ¹¹

Of the two, Sanyāsa and tyāga, the nature is the same.

In essence, to use a paradoxical expression, the function of the ascetic in society is to indulge and to refrain at the same time.

No one can be idle even for a second. He will be compelled to act by the forces of Prakṛti—the environment. Rāmānuja recognised the true significance of functioning in society conforming to talent and temperament, an inherent accompaniment at the start of life. Society provided a great attraction to him. He was richly rewarded. He utilised every opportunity to strengthen his own
personality. He had definite ideas regarding individuals, their social involvement and behaviour.

As noted above, Rāmānuja believed in the principle of involvement in social affairs. He attached extreme importance to the value of life between the two points of birth and death. To him, mental activity and creative ability were not confined to the span of life in the existing birth alone. Applying the doctrine of values, Rāmānuja did not permit himself to be unconcerned about his fellow beings. At the same time, he did not imbibe the habits associated with the different sections of society. He firmly believed in the doctrine of ‘division of labour’ without which society could not survive.

"Varnāśrama vihitam karma
Madārādhana—rūpayatayā kāryam
Svayam—prayojanam iī maṭvā”12

The performances associated with Varna and Āśrama, the castes and their stages, must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship and therefore carry their own rewards.

He was up against inequality operating among persons. He considered inequality as foreign to human nature. Functional variations do not affect the stature of man who functions as a member of society. The contribution of Rāmānuja in this field is remarkable.

This idea was not originated by Rāmānuja. It was already there in the Bhagavad-gīta.

"Vāsāmsi jirṇāni yathāvihāya
navāni grhanāti naro
Tathā sarīrāni vihaya jirṇāni aparāṇi
anyāni samyāti navānidehi”.18

As a person removes the worn out clothes and accepts fresh garments, even so the intelligent person rejects the worn out body and accepts a fresh body.

Rāmānuja explains the above thus—

"Dehagatam tu anityatvam vaiṣamyam ca”.14

Impermanence and difference pertain only to the body.

The Gīta taught him that there was something precious and permanent lodged in the body which varies with the passage of
time and disintegrates when deserted. In other words, Rāmānuja believed in the permanency of the conscious entity.

"Sukha-duḥke same kṛtvā
lābhā-lābhaujaya-jayau
tato yuddhāya yujyasva
naiyam pāpam avāpsyasi".15

Treat alike joy and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat. And then employ yourself in battle. Thus you will not be associated with sin and evil.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse—

"Nityam ātmānām jñatva yuddhe
cā avarjañya-śāstrapātādīnimitta
sukhaduḥkhe jaya-parājaya-lābhā-
lābheṣu avikṛte-buddhiḥ
kevala-kārya-buddhyā ārabhasva".16

Know that ātman (soul) is eternal. In the battle ground, regarding the unavoidable experiences brought about by the use of weapons, such as pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, gain and loss, maintaining the same attitude get engaged only on the basis of duty to be discharged. Treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat. Thus equip yourself for strife. You will not acquire the sin of life.

This reflects the sportive temperament of a social member.

The enduring distinguished from the Fleeting

Rāmānuja believed in the permanency of the conscious entity. From the point of view of society this principle had great significance for Rāmānuja. Whether a member of the society is high or low, poor or rich, material or spiritual minded, ascetic or aristocratic, all were subjected to the process of evolution. It was only a question of difference of degree and not of kind. Rāmānuja believed that every one of zest and hope. Life opened up opportunities for every one to realise the hope. It was only a question of time depending upon the level of the individual's fitness toward that goal. But no member of society was to be denied this opportunity towards betterment.

"Jātitaḥ ca ākārataḥ svabhāvataḥ
jñānataḥ atyanta—utkṛṣṭa—
apakṛṣṭa—rūpena varīmāṇeṣu
sarveṣu bhūteṣu samāśrayanīya
tve samoham
Ayam nikṛṣṭah samāśrayaṇe na me
dvēṣy osti ude janiyataya na tyājyosti”.¹⁷

I am the same as resort for all beings belonging to
superior and inferior varities in form conditioned by the
caste, shape, habit and knowledge. This person, though
designated as low in regard to acceptability, is not to be
treated as an enemy or to be pushed aside as a source of
disgust.

“Inrāga nālaiyē, aga, ini siridum
ninraga nin arul enpalade”.¹⁸

May be today, may be on the morrow, or may be after
some delay, your grace is always towards me.

The grace of the Lord may be immediate or delayed, but it is
never denied.

The organic view of reality which left a lasting impression on
Rāmānuja’s mind provided him with cardinal principles of profit-
able life—Śarīrātmabhāva, aprthaksiddhi, ananyatva and samanvaya—
which are derived from the basic concept of structural synthesis.
The structural synthesis covers the supreme controlling power
which projects society and maintains it under its sway. Aprthak-
siddhi is non-existence in isolation. Ananyatva is non-self-assertion,
Śarīrātmabhāva—non-aggression, Samanvaya—single purpose. The
four concepts mentioned above may be put into groups—The first
—the attitude of the individual towards the source, the second—
the hold of the source on the individual. Aprthak-siddhi—the
individual shall realize that he exists not in isolation unconnected.
Samanvaya is the sole and supreme aim of life in its march
towards perfection. Śarīrātmabhāva—the source holds its sway
on the individual in its entirety. The soul holds the body entirely
functioning without resistance. Ananyatva—the source does not
permit the individual any aloofness.¹⁹

“Kāñcana dravya—viśeṣam prati
viśeṣanatayā eva yasya sadbhāvaḥ
tasya tatd—aprthak-siddheḥ
tat-prakārataya tat—samānādhikar-
yena pratipādanam yuktam”.²⁰
In respect of any substantive entity, if another object could come into being only as its attribute, and owing its existence only as inseparably related, referring to its existence as only the possession of the substantive element, co-existential equation becomes relevant.

**Humanistic evaluation of the Social System**

Religion and philosophy, poetry and myth are aids to extend the scope of vision. They present to the mind the sublime and enduring modes of life. They are of value to mankind to lead the best kind of life in this world. The world is not a haunted house. Only we must try to drive away the evil intentions which haunt our minds. Humanistic studies which are not historical in the narrow and conventional sense of the term, are still historical because they have a catalytic effect on life and society. They help not to decry life here but to remove the impairing influences in this life. The role of the true ascetic assumes importance in this sense. The emphasis is not on life limited or extended in respect of time. It is on the value of life, whether it be here and now or elsewhere and hereafter, outside the range of historical awareness.

Regarding the role of the ascetic in society, Rāmānuja had some unique ideas. He could be described as a dynamic and active member of society, keen on regulating the course of life. The Aryan concept of asceticism, namely, going to the forest, living a life of isolation and austerity, and shunning all types of social contact, did not appeal to Rāmānuja. The social bias is noticeable in many groups of people who gathered around Rāmānuja in Śrīrangam. A *sanyāsin*, in the traditionally accepted sense, shun's society in self-interest. His aloofness is based on the suspicion that social life would be seductive. The will-power towards self-preservation may not be strong and uniform. Such an outlook, in the opinion of Rāmānuja, was an indication of weakness relying on external factors for protection. Rāmānuja rejected this doctrine of escapism. The ascetic would be a true ascetic only when he lives in the midst of society, working for its refinement. It is remarkable that among the ascetics of yore, only Rāmānuja was surrounded by numberless people irrespective of caste, sex, attainments and occupation, in a co-operative effort to regulate social life as he visualised. The ascetic, in his view, was part and parcel of society. He had social obligations to
perform. His services were required by society. He owed a debt to society as society also owed a debt to him. The Vedas speak of rṇa or (debt) in respect of every being that belongs to the world and one such is the rṇa that he owes to the society to which he belongs. Unless he discharges that debt, ascetic though he may be, he remains a debt or and his emancipation remains an unrealised ambition. Therefore, to be a true ascetic, is to be engaged in social service from a higher plane. He projects himself as the leading adherent of a way of life which keeps under check the mad fury of personalism which is the very opposite of life as a member of society. Existence is interdependence demanding complimentary and not a contradictory role. A true ascetic, according to Rāmānuja, not only works for his own good, but also guides society on the path of projection and rejection of values and acts as a force of purification without which the savage instinct would continue to dominate. Hence Rāmānuja’s social outlook did not make him live apart from society. The aim of an ascetic in society is made clear in the Bhagavad-gītā.

“Nānavāptam, avāptavyam
varīte eva ca karmaṇī”.

There is noting which is not possessed nor is there anything to possess afresh. Still I keep myself actively engaged.

(This is the clue to the nature of service in life).

Rāmānuja comments on the above verse thus—

“ Svacchandato vartamānasya
kim-cid api kartavyam asti
yato anavāptam, karmaṇā avāptavyam
na kim cidapi asti—
aithāpi loka-rakṣāyat
karmaṇyeva varte”.

I am already what I like to be. I have therefore nothing to obtain through effort which could not be possessed except through effort. Nothing need be obtained by me which is not already possessed, still I am engaged in active work.

Rāmānuja worked in society and tried to uplift it to the best of his ability.
Philosophy, theology, ritual and ceremonial were not formalities of passing interest in life. To Rāmānuja they were different venues to preserve society in a given order. They were illustrative, but not exhaustive. The order had already been in existence for a long time. Before Rāmānuja over a very long period, the Hindus had accepted that social framework and found it viable. Hence Rāmānuja did not want to destroy the social structure, but tried to reform it wherever necessary. He was flexible where it was needed, His attitude during ablutions is noteworthy. Conscience would prevail over custom. Rāmānuja, the brahmin ascetic, would go to the river for ablutions taking with him his nephew Dāsarathī. While returning after the ablutions, the privilege to accompany him was exercised by a non-brahmin Bhāgayata Dhanurdāsa by name.

The dynamic role of an Ascetic

To a modern reformist Rāmānuja might appear inflexible and orthodox, not radical. But from the point of view of contemporary social environment, Rāmānuja was unquestionably a radical. The formal distinction between orthodoxy and radicalism is that 'orthodoxy' maintains a pattern of behaviour at the low level of dogma. His concept of the role of ascetic in society itself is a significant contribution. Living amidst society, the ascetic undergoes all kinds of experience both good and bad. When he is exposed to social environment which is a complex involving contradictions, he strives to endure and be patient with the forces opposed to him. His function is to synthesise, harmonise the contradictory and complex forces of society. Only by endurance the ascetic ascends to greater heights. Once he attains the greater heights, he becomes a model for others who also try to reach the level of the ascetic. In short, an ascetic should act as a force of enlightenment for man invariably belonging to society. This was the social attitude of Rāmānuja. As far as the ascetic role was concerned, he was alter to the needs of society and he worked for the unthinking masses. He was on the part of progress and ivolution. He worked for the upliftment of society.

The ascetics that went before Rāmānuja never disowned responsibility towards society. They believed that their mode of life would be enough to serve as the guiding star for the masses to move in the direction of refinement which would be their aim of life. The world as we see provides us with many instances of rare personal...
performances. They result in admiration, periodic enthusiasm and, in course of time, forgetfulness. The result is that man ultimately remains after the observation what he was before the observation. Rāmānuja considered this type not suited to provide an atmosphere in which man could be inspired to be engaged in progressive refinement. To Rāmānuja self-refinement was meaningful only through social refinement. The individual can never afford to be clam and happy in an environment where storm and trouble ceaselessly rage. This attitude compelled Rāmānuja to initiate a system of social life for the benefit of the masses and it forms the topic of the next Chapter.

Service Outlook

The doctrine of service is not the creation of Rāmānuja. The credit goes to his predecessors in the field of the Drāviḍa Vedānta who became aware of the source of tradition and who discovered the true significance of life in its fulness. Viśṇucitta refers to two types of social life—the debasing and the delighting. Under the counsel of the minister śelvanambi, the Pāṇḍyan King Vallabha Dévarāyan held the country in the swing of prosperity. Man has only one function throughout and that is Seva or service or Kainkarya as indicated in the Jitanta section of the Rgveda which is relegated to the category of Khilagrantha for want of vision and will to follow the truly normal course of life.

Society treated as the fields of Service

Rāmānuja viewed life as a blend of two types of activities in society. The first one is personal purpose and the second is the extension of this concept to society. The body is an organism consisting of several parts under its control. Bodily health is preserved by indulging in clean habits. Cleanliness keeps off contagious pollution. The necessity of personal cleanliness as a precondition in any walk of life is too well-known to be emphasised. Inspite of this, the needed attention is not paid and man is subjected to discomfiture, needing outside assistance for recovery. This habit is intended by the word-Ācāra-habit.

*Lōka-raṣārtham viśīśta-tayā prathitena śreṣṭhena sva-varṇa āśramocitam karma sakalam sarvathā annusṭheyam, anyathā loka-nāśena janitam pāpaṃ jñanayogād api enam pracyāvayet*"
For the welfare of society even by the elite, renowned for excellence, all acts, in keeping with his caste and grade, have to be performed absolutely. Otherwise the sin arising out of social disorder (Loka-nāśa) will pull down this great man even though he may be very exalted.

The word Loka in this sentence refers to society and the word nāśa to destruction of harmony.

In this capacity as a member of society man tries to separate himself mentally from the social environment and continuously works for personal elevation. Personal elevation means resistance to pollution and it is something different from indiscriminate indulgence in material pursuits. Each individual has an urge to realize the aim of liberating himself from frustration and despondency. It is therefore extremely necessary to select a climate which would be favourable to realise the ambition. The atmosphere is considered in two aspects. First is people who had already devoted themselves towards self-refinement and elevation. Secondly, people, unaware of such a course, would be found moving about confining their attention to live comfortably in slums exposed to hazards. In these circumstances, it is necessary to follow the lead of the elders who have provided the healthy atmosphere and to persuade and inspire the common man to adopt a better way of living. In this task they have to provide an atmosphere which would help the masses to lead the healthy life. If the atmosphere is created, naturally chance of helping mankind to see things in their proper perspective would be more. In other words, the duty of the true ascetic would be to advocate conservative liberalism, a system which advocates accommodation and prohibits adjustment. Towards this end Rāmānuja directed his mind after his education. The methods he employed speak for his loftiness of outlook, love for the fellow beings and deep concern over the people's lot whose vision was dim and disappointing. These adjectives are justified by the plunge he took from personal happiness to the pursuit of social happiness. His battle with the master is an indication of his outlook. The scheme that he formulated was not his creation. It existed before. But it was a revival of the ancient system which had been lost sight of over a long period of time. Therefore, Rāmānuja declared himself to be what has been described in the texts as Vidhiśodhaka kīṅkar— a servant whose function it is to keep the path cleared of the accumulated garbage of confusion and contamination.
Asceticism as a potent tool of service to Society

When the life of the ācraya is studied in the context of life in this world, the word life easily can be understood at different levels in the present life.

The term asceticism implies that one should not lose oneself in pursuing petty promises and attractions in life. It is not pessimism for, that word indicates a state of existence with all available comforts completely kept out of use. The attitude of indifference arises as a result of strong desire for a different state of existence which in quality is different and superior. But such a state in which society totally ignored is abstract and uninspiring. Periodically the power of the flesh asserts itself and pulls down the mind from the ascetic level of aloofness. Examples are abundant in support of this danger. Ascetics, seasoned in discipline, sometimes fall prey to outside influence, begin to realise later their folly and try to pursue their ascetic walk of life with greater determination. But they have one failing. They generally curse the entities against whom they could not assert their superiority. The sin of the ascetic therefore is to curse the neighbour for his own weakness. This defect can be overcome only when the ascetic does not run away from his neighbour, but tries to practise asceticism in company. This attitude has a two-fold virtue. It is strengthens the mind to resist temptation. It also prevents the mind from throwing the blame on another for one's weakness. The polluting thought of social misbehaviour will be kept under check. An ascetic is the educated specimen of the masses. Hence Rāmānuja thought that the best way of spending life was to stay with the masses and to treat the masses in a way that would not permit of any pollution in association. Hence he scrupulously approved of the habit of the grhaustha26 who would be a nivrīttaga—a person who does not succumb to passions and temptations. Most of the disciples of Rāmānuja were grhausthas. They were ascetics in the sense in which the term has been used in the Bhagavad-gīta. Accordingly, the distinction between the grhaustha (house-holder) and (sanyāsin) turned out to be formal.

Rāmānuja did not recommend sanyāsa in its formal sense to one and all. Hosts of his followers were grhausthas—Kūrēsa, Kurukeśvara, Daśarathi, Amudanār, remained grhausthas. Paraśarabhaṭṭa's wife was the selection of Rāmānuja. He permitted only a few to accept sanyāsa who were averse to married life. The idea behind the attitude was that compulsion of any kind was to be
eschewed. But going back from the advanced stages was for bidden.

Society a blend of savage and saintly traits

The struggle for existence and ceaseless strife towards emancipation are the normal habits with all men constituting society. People are not agreed on the exact import of existence and emancipation. The content appear differently, pursuits are manifold and the methods followed are also many. But sometimes there is collision leading to conflict of interest with inevitable consequence that, if one of the ways should survive, others must be kept under check. This attitude normally leads a person to interference with the ways of others. This interference is traceable to the ignorance of the fundamental principle that every man is entitled to chalk out his own way of life. Recognition of this fundamental principle instils a spirit of respect and tolerance towards the ways pursued by others, while at the same time the person concerned exercises his right to choose his own way of life. It is the principle of non-interference in other's affairs. The author of the Tiruvāimolī, the most sacred section of the Drāviḍa Vedānta according to Rāmānuja, has brought out this idea in a lucid way—Men select their leaders according to the taste provided by their intellect.²⁰

"Avar avar tamatamadu
arivari vagai vagai
avar avar itaiyavar ena
adi adivarga
Avar avar itaiyavar kuratiyil
Itaiyavar avar avar
vidivai adaiya niyranare"

Persons according to the equality of their knowledge worship at the feet of Gods whom they regard as their sole resort. The chosen Gods do not fail the devotees. For the Supreme Lord functions in them and allows them to wield power.

"Na buddhi-behedam janayet
ajnānām karma-saṃginām"²¹

Among the people engaged in performing acts, one should not create a rift in thought.

The unknowing should not be compelled to receive a foreign thought which would upset the normal way of life. The idea of introducing
fresh thought is to effect refinement and not to efface the habit which is natural to mankind. Work must not be given up. This is the process of purifying the nature of work. Accordingly the people submit themselves to the leaders as they conceive and remain satisfied with the blessings of the chief of their choice. They will not be disappointed. The basic principle on which social life depends includes even the functioning of the leaders. Their domination is undeniably limited.

Unfortunately, this principle of freedom to choose and its corollary of letting persons to exercise their freedom are forgotten in life. The instinct of dictatorship pushes one to the giddy heights of vanity and arrogance. As a result, the vain person demands submission to him under pressure in the form of benefits, or severe persecution and punishment in the refusal. Such a course in the name of religion or spiritual awakening or upliftment of mankind is a crime of infinite magnitude. This was the idea of Rāmānuja. For this attitude of his, he has cited the famous advice of Śrīkṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-gīta as the solid support.  

"Yathā icchāsi tathā kuru".

Do you like, but never under the idea of compulsion of any kind.

Rāmānuja’s commentary on the above line is—

"Eṣad aṣeṣeṇa vimśya
svādhiśāvanugunārtha yathā
ichchāsi, tathā kuru".  

Having considered this in full, according to your temperament and position, do act as you like.

Note the alternatives before you for selection, for that, have all of them, you cannot reject any in this world. Hence, regulate. If this attitude is not followed, society can never maintain stability and harmony and its welfare would remain a dream.

There is another way of considering society. It is blend of the human and savage elements. This distinction is based on the function and purpose of factors that constitute life. There is no doubt anywhere about the existence of a power which is supreme and self-propelled holding together all divergent elements. There is another entity which is intelligent in nature, entitled to happiness but affected by the environmental limitations which it cannot shake off.
at will. The material element functioning as body establishes relation with nature providing an occasion for men to gather experience. The whole purpose of life in society is under the direct control of the basic power of harmony. The mental entity subserves the purpose of the supreme, utilising the material element as the area of operation. This is the sagacious style. The aim should not be lost sight of if true happiness is the goal of life. On the other hand, another section emerges insisting on the acquisition and exercise of power for self-domination to reap the best benefits from nature. They are the persistent aspects of social evolution. They cannot be denied or discounted.

The Vedic culture depicted life in its synthetic form utilising the cardinal principles of anrthaksiddhi, ananyatva Sariramabhava and Samanvaya, which Ramanuja recognised and adopted. The stream of Vedic culture was diverted by resorting to abstract and sectional treatment. The result was the emergence of sectarianism rejecting the right to recognition of aspects of experience which emphasised regulation and restriction in life. There are variations not only in the Vedanta, but in other heretical systems also which emerged including the Caravaka, the materialists which have been rejected in the Sri Bhasya.

According to Ramanuja, education and open-mindedness have the only task of recognising and maintaining the true purposes of existence, namely the individual as a member of society and the obligatory task enjoined on him as a social arm. It does not discard the gifts of the world, but it only accepts the reward as a gift of the occasion.

"Vahndargal vacond nirpar
enbadu illai nirkuril aindar kadal
palli annal adiyavar amino".

Get spiritualised and live here in perfect happiness.

Dedication to tame Savagery
Viṣṇucitta draws a distinction between two types of men in society. He designates the first as Ādiyān-Ādyār and the second as Ādīmai inri Tirivār. Ādiyār—followers—those who have a stand. Tirivār—the straying. The distinction reflects two different temperaments. The true aim of life would be service as a prerogative by constitution. The other way is to think about in the world as ‘vagrants’ without a thought about the power and the joy that the doctrine of service
holds out. Rāmānuja observed this distinction society. He felt he was bound to adopt the cultured course like all the ascetics who went before him, with the sole motive of personal elevation through the process of progressive purification. This process is elaborately dealt with in what is known as Varnadharma and Āśramadharma, a mode of personal preservation in a disturbing atmosphere. The restrictions imposed on that in respect of the body he assume at birth and its growth to the point of exist from the world constitute varnadharma. Naturally this system introduces the idea that seclusion ought to be kept, if personal progress is to be achieved in the absence of congenial atmosphere. An abuse of this attitude is contempt for persons who do not accept this principle. In a sense the system of Varna and Āśrama is taken to emphasise the doctrine of mutual exclusion in society. If this aspect is lost sight of, discipline would be diluted and progress would be halted. This is only subjective. If, on the other hand, in the name of integration, a mix-up is encouraged and adopted, the process would only be an experiment without any fore taste of undisputed improvement—Natural integration is uniformity fulfilling itself through evolution. Whereas the experimental type, employed in the ‘try and test’ method, would carry with it horror and hazard necessitating further remedial research. Rāmānuja did not deny this. He desired that every member of society should be the embodiment of such discipline.

To effect this transformation, Rāmānuja considered that mixing with society without losing sight of personal discipline would be the best method to bring about a situation in which the charm of democratic pulse would be felt and appreciated.

“Varnāśrama vihitam karma
madārādhana-rūpatayā kāryan
svayam—prayojanam iti matvā”87

The performances associated with varṇa and āśrama, the castes and their stages must be done with the knowledge that they are in the nature of worship and therefore carry their rewards.

It is in this context that the caste classification and the āśrama stages were restricted to the personal aspect of life and the importance of the superiority of the two-fold distinction of society as the dim and the deserving in outlook was realised.
Rough and refined forms of Life

Life as universally admitted is a blend of many forces. One such force is the self-controlled which is the main-stay of life. The body represents the physical force which is attached to a mind which finds itself in an atmosphere consisting of external attractions and promises and the significance of which lasts as long as the material body attaches to the mental entity. Endeavour of all kinds not merely normal and natural but necessary and unavoidable in order to keep the body and the mind together. Common education is a necessary guide to make a proper use of the opportunities in life to derive the best benefits without surrendering to the unpleasant clutches of gloom and adversity. The maximum duration of such a covetable life would be the span of life permitted to man on the earth, he is a hundred years or even more. But there being another element associated with the body, our recognition of it becomes inevitable. Without that life principle human organism loses all meaning and value, though we are apt to forget its importance on the ground that it is invisible and intrinsically different from matter, the stuff out of which the entire world is created to serve as the arena and the instrument for the activity of the mind. If this element is recognised to be as important as the material element, if not more, our attitude to life changes considerably. It should be remembered that the blend being what it is, worldly pursuits are neither ignored nor avoided. Their utility would continue in a different shape providing for a better order of life in society. There is a world of difference between using an object indiscriminately and using the same with a set purpose. Projecting an environment in which the body secures the purpose of life is the course of education and enlightenment.

The caste discipline is a restriction enforced on the individual which is directed towards an awareness about the mode of utilising the wealth of the world. This discipline is born out of experience of misery and hardship. It serves as an inspiration towards further personal discipline. This aspect of life may be considered as service also. But it is personal service.

Men of wisdom, to whatever caste they may belong, who adopt a way of life in which their behaviouralistic supremacy is felt and realised, naturally occupy an elevated position in society. Caste discipline is not doubt a means to such refinement in outlook. But mental refinement is not confined and restricted only to a particular
type of caste as it is ordinarily understood. We hear of many great men born in different castes whose outlook on life is unquestionably of an exceedingly high order in which the life value dominates and the interests of the flesh are subordinated, if not subdued. Etymologically they are entitled to be designated as Bhāgavatas—truly devoted to realise the purpose of life. The material component of their person does not serve as a bar to their being regarded as leaders worthy of worship. The association with them is from the point of view of their outlook and those great men would never stoop to the debasing level of material comfort and interest to which man is commonly a prey to the detriment of the high ideals they live for. Hence social comingling does not affect the purity of life. It does not even retard progress. In this sense one of the Dravidian saints by name Bhaktāṅghṛireṇu has welcomed worship and mingling.

"Toḷumin nir koḷum in koṭmin".38

Resort with reverence, offer and receive.

Engage yourself in service. The term service precludes bargaining, give and take.

Thus Rāmānuja has been able to cover the gap between the disciples of devotion and caste.

The potency of prayer and compassion

Clear vision and a determined will constitute a necessary precondi-
tion for self-preservation in life. Society is the area in which life functions. In order to attain progress man has to find himself in a surrounding which would help him to pursue his walk of life and reach the coveted goal. But that is rarely to be found. Society follows its own law which may or may not be agreeable to the thinking mind in interested in self-elevation. There are many impediments to achieve this goal. The individual finds himself in a helpless situation as a result of these impediments. Such an attitude of helplessness to resist will lead to evolving the maxim that if we are to survive we must adjust to the conditions of the time. The logic behind this maxim is that man is unable to convert, the environment to suit his way of approach and assessment. The healing is temporary and life is carried along the tide of helplessness and finally it reduces the man to the condition of a destitute. Self-preservation means a determined effort to tide over the difficulties
and to establish the supremacy of the will over the environment. The environment has to be converted to suit the purpose of the self and to serve the self in its steady progress. The willpower to control the body and not to fall a prey to opportunism is the mark of character. Therefore, an alert mind has a double purpose. The first is to sympathise over the plight in which society is found and entertain a desire to free society as far as possible from the sad plight. This is an obligation which cannot be lost sight of under any circumstances. The second aspect is a constant concentration, a process of enriching and enlivening the thought to serve as a powerful instrument towards uplifting society. Normally prayer is taken in a religious sense, but primarily it is a ceaseless attempt to develop an idea to a point of of potency and perfection so that its instrumental value may not fail.

Rāmānuja followed this path of life. By pursuing this path, he developed such a power to influence society that it could rise to a higher, happier level. Though he was a strict Vaidika following scrupulously the discipline enjoined in the Vedas and the dharmaśāstras in respect of varṇā (caste) and āśrama requirements of life, he followed the mandate as as personal concern. In addition to this, he revealed another aspect of life if his dealings with society. Remembering full well the dominance of life with a vision, Rāmānuja did not hesitate to respect and recognise the value of intellect pervaded by a warm heart. About the concept of caste domination, Rāmānuja is reported to have advocated the view that caste cannot be the only criterion to assess the cultural worth of a person. His advice to his followers was to adore the worthy and evince sympathy towards the helpless. Failure to observe this conduct is a social crime outside the scope of pardon.⁶⁹

"Sam seviataḥ samyami-saptā-satyā
pīṭhaḥ catus-sapatibhiḥ sametaḥ
Anyairantaḥ api viṣṇubhaktaiḥ
Āste adhirangam yatisarvabhaumah".⁶⁰

Adored by seven hundred ascetics and by the group of seventy-four scholars and other innumerable devotees of Viṣṇu, the supreme sage resides in Śrīranga.

In recapitulation, a few instances may be cited. While he was a student keen on searching for a solution to the problems of life, he came across an individual who enjoyed unrestricted prestige, though he was unsuited to be grouped among the chosen classes of men who
could be permitted to study the Vedas. This person was Kāncīpūrṇa and Rāmānuja approached him for blessings and message. According to him, the caste conception suffers in prestige and function only when it permits the notion of ‘Self-Superiority’, with the implication of a system of hierarchy not on the plane of discipline, but in the field of demand and prestige. This attitude strikes at the root of the doctrine of service as understood by Rāmānuja and as implied in the Vedas and preserved through tradition.

In another situation Rāmānuja projects his frame of mind of ‘Self-restraint’ and ‘Subordination’ and devotion to society which appeared to him the lasting base of democratic structure. At Śrīrangam he used to go every day for his ritualistic ablutions in the river Cauvery. While moving towards the river he went in the company of his nephew Dāsarathi. While returning for the Cauvery after ablutions Rāmānuja would move in the chosen company of Dhanurdāsa, a person who did not enjoy the privilege of belonging to the brahmin fold. The purity that pertained to Dhanurdāsa in the opinion of Rāmānuja was the temperament of ‘Self-subordination’ which was strangely still found wanting in Dāsarathi who otherwise was a matchless follower of Rāmānuja. Mingling in society therefore meant neither loss of ‘Self-prestige’ nor disregard for the intrinsic dignity of the neighbour.

The section pertaining to the Drāvida Vedānta has as its contributors the human divinities who have come to be regarded as Ālvāra. The group of Ālvāra consists of Brahmīns, Kṣatriyas, Śūdras Pañchamas—(The unspecified class as distinguished from the four specified classes) including women. This group emphasised the life-power pervading mankind irrespective of caste of custom, sex or habit. Between the passing and the lasting forces the latter power eclipsed passing power of the material instinct to be a helpful factor in the atmosphere of full-fledged life. As is maintained in the School of Rāmānuja, the Ālvārs are the visible examples of life, pure and cultured, a type which Śrī Rama in the Rāmāyaṇa is reported to have visualised and the lack of which he disapproved during the regime of his father king Dāśaratha. Following in the foot-steps of the Ālvārs there was a galaxy of acāryas who could not, however, reach the heights of the Ālvārs, but who at the same time did not deviate from the path chosen by the Ālvārs. Of them the most noted fore-runners of Rāmānuja were Nāthamuni and his grandson, Yāmuna, Rāmānuja was Yāmuna’s pupil’s pupil. The life which they led revealed a marvellous and a healthy homogeneity with
the forces of ‘Caste and Creed’, both the words being understood in a sense which is now obsolete. The ācāryas like their predecessors viewed life from the point of view of purpose and function. Accordingly, they developed the view that sanctity of the highest order was inherent in every person and all that was needed in life was to realise that sanctity in a natural way.

It is in this context that significance is attached to the behaviour of Rāmānuja in which from the ordinary śāstraic point of view, his choice would be considered deviation and departure. As has been already noted, he went out of the way to invite Kāñcipurāṇa for dinner as ‘Atithi’—a guest of honour as laid down in the Veda-Atithidvobhava. Ignorance of the true implication of this maxim involved the husband and the wife in a dispute which resulted in Rāmānuja moving towards Sanyāsa. Social habits in which the self dominates over others are unworthy of approval and application as they tend to agonise persons who deserve a treatment affable and enlightening.

Rāmānuja, being alert, observed human activities at different levels. If the activity suggested to him the link with the Source and the purpose connected with it, he felt elated and regarded the workers as indeed refined and gifted. In support of this we can give an interesting episode in the life of Rāmānuja. During his sojourn to Melukoṭe in Karnāṭaka, Rāmānuja met a batch of people who were tribals having perhaps no ray of cultural outlook. All the same the human instinct inherent in one and all shows itself as a helpful guide to persons in distress. Rāmānuja had a vision of the Lord, the deity being known as Nārāyaṇa. He had a burning desire to go to the spot from where the deity revealed itself to him in his dream. The path was not clear. He did not know in which direction to move. It was a dense forest and movement was physically impossible. The tribals chanced to notice Rāmānuja in a depressing mood. By themselves they cleared the passage and aided Rāmānuja to move towards the spot where, to his ecstasy, he saw the deity which had appeared to him in his dream. Śrī, the Lord’s consort, an embodiment of compassion, has it as her function to bring together the joy-bestowing Lord and the joy-seeking self. She does it as part of Her duty and Her only reward is the satisfaction that the seeker has moved beyond suffering. This doctrine of spiritual redemption operated in the mind of Rāmānuja as he saw the tribals help him reach the image of the Lord. Accordingly, in unbounded joy, he designated them as Tiru-k-Kulattārs, the clan traceable to
Srī, the divine consort and functionally belonging to Her family. Tīru in Tamil means Srī, in Sanskrit, a term which the best brāhmaṇa would like to claim, but which has been strangely the preserve of the tribals. This episode makes clear that he had no belief in the theory of the low-caste.

From these incidents it becomes clear that Rāmānuja believed in the natural development of any tribe and the realization of the ultimate goal without having to change from one sect to another sect which seems to be the belief based on the doctrine of gradation of birth and āśrama. The thought of Rāmānuja finds its support in the utterance of Srī Krishna in the Bhagavad-gītā—

Śreyāṁ svadharma vigunah
Paradharmaḥ svanuṣṭhitah
Svaḥdharmaṁ nidhanam Śreyah
Paradharman bhayāvahah”.44

One’s normal role in life, though lacking in efficiency, is more profitable than accepting a foreign role well-conducted. Perishing by clinging to one’s role in life is better than adopting or borrowing a foreign role abounding in dangers.

The substantive stand in the scheme of life is preferrable to the attributive. Rāmānuja’s commentary on the above verse reads thus—

“Paradharma-bhūtaḥ
Pramada garbhatayā bhayāvahah”.45

Being the habit of alien, it is a source of concern because it does not provide the knowledge of function.

Dharma here is the staple force or power. Imitation or encroachment is a veritable impediment to natural progress. They may only provide variety but they will not be a support against peril. How Rāmānuja behaved in his life towards society is based on his determination to adopt a disciplined course which connects the ground and the goal of life impelled by the synthetic instinct in outlook and activity. We are accustomed in normal life to be prompted by the physical instinct. At a higher plane the physical instinct is replaced by the mental instinct which operates as the prompting of conscience. Even that is limited in the absence of the intuitive prompting which covers all three aspects, the constitutional, the mental and the material. The constitutional prompting sanctifies the mental and purifies the material instincts. Any
member of society who exhibits this tendency and adopts it in life is worthy of association and adoration. The inverse way of life would appear to be a move in the direction of decay and disappointment. Rāmānuja appears to have recognised the utility of Varnāśramadharma (the obligation based on caste and stages in life) in respect of the trend of decay in life as a checkmate. But he does not confine himself to the rigidity of Varnāśramadharma in respect of social behaviour as applicable to what he terms the elite. In the work, composed in Tamil by his disciple Amudanār⁴⁸ occurs the verse—

“Marraru pērum madiyādu
Araṅgan malar aṭṭikkku āl uttavare
Tanakku uttavarai-k-Kollum uttamanai”

Not considering any other ambition, Persors firmly devoted to serve at the feet of the Lord of Śrīranga are taken as His inseparable associates.

In this work, the Gayatri of the Prapanna, reference to Rāmānuja’s association with different persons constituting society is made in verse 57 of the work bearing the title Rāmānuja Nūṟṟandādi. He considered as his personal kinsmen those who had dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord not countencing any other goal in life. This was the super caste—the universal caste, that Rāmānuja believed which he treated as the precious gift of the truly enlightened section of society. In this light the information that we have about Rāmānuja that daily after ablutions in the morning, he would return home from the Cauvery holding the hands of Dhanurdāsa becomes significant. It points to the sacredness of such behaviour. Adherence to duty carries with it popularity as its natural reward. Rāmānuja firmly believed in the maxim that discipline is divinity and that divinity is the cure for all evils and shortcomings in life. The number of women and non-brahmins (to use an archaic expression) flocking around Rāmānuja was nearly 12,000. They were called Ekāntins—persons who did not waver in their minds, not to mention the Sanyāsins and other scholars.⁴⁹

“Sam—sevataḥ samyami—saptā—satyā
pīṭhaḥ catus—saptati bhīh sametaḥ
Anyairamataḥ api Viṣṇubhaktaiḥ
Āste ādhirāngam yatīśvaravhaumaḥ”⁴⁰

Adored by seven hundred ascetics and by the group of
seventy four scholars and other innumerable devotees of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Sage resides in Śrī Raṅga.

In the view of Rāmānuja society is one. It is a unit accommodating a variety of individuals each differing from the other in many ways. Yet that they are all contained in the unit is a basic fact. Therefore, they deserve to be regarded on a par with one another, as parts of the unit. But the variety and difference in projection and behaviour cannot be ignored. If these two aspects are viewed together the only conclusion would be that restriction pertains to the individual content lest it should decay. But the real purpose of being a part of the unit is to allow the other parts to develop through the mould of personal discipline with a single purpose in view. All the individuals are parts of the single unit and they cannot operate forgetting the basic stand and aim. That is the explanation for Rāmānuja being an ascetic in the accepted sense of the term of aloofness and being involved in maintaining and promoting social welfare allowing different categories of persons together around him to serve the purpose of developing to perfection the individual personality. This is the spirit of the mendicant's life in society.

REFERENCES

1. Amudanār: Ramanuja Murrandadi, verses 8 to 12.
2. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Perumal Tirumoli, X—7.
4. Ibid: Tirumalai, verse 43.
11. Ibid, verse 2.
17. Rāmānuja: Gita Bhaṣya, IX, verse 29ff.
18. Cf. Ālvārs: Draviḍa-Veda, IV Contax. 7.
Perumāl Jiyar: Guruparampara Prabhavam, P. 328.
26. Ibid, IV—ii.
29. Note: Grhaṭtha: The word Grhaṭtha is understood in its broad sense of the existence of an ascetic in society and not merely a person who is wedded and therefore responsible to his partner in life (Grha- society).
30. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Tiruvālmolī, Chapter III, verses 1-1-5.
34. Rāmānuja: Śri Bhāṣya, P. 203.
35. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Tiruvālmolī, IV, i—6.
36. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Tirumolī, 4-4-11.
37. Rāmānuja: Gīta Bhāṣya, XVIII, verse 9, P. 518.
38. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Tirumalaī, verse 42.
40. Perumāl Jiyar: Guruparamparā Prabhāvam, PP. 364 to 368.
42. Perumāl Jiyar: Guruparampara Prabhavam, P. 328.
43. Note: Ālvārs are the seers of the Dravida Vedanta.
44. Note: Ātithidévabhava—Regard the Guest as God. Ātithi—A guest of honour.
45. Note: Tiru-k-Kulattār—A clan belonging to the family of Śri—The consort of Lord Viṣṇu.
47. Rāmānuja: Gīta Bhāṣya, II—35.
50. Ibid. P. 368.
CHAPTER IV

Rāmānuja’s Interest in Society and its Well-being


An insight into the nature of life in society is essential for a person to discriminate between what is natural and what is adventitious. Otherwise human effort would be a move along a pointless path. Therefore, education and personal equipment in the light of that education would be the pre-condition in any active walk of life. Rāmānuja was not an exception to this rule. What marks him from others is his interest in the fellow beings. This made him work for his fellow beings with his equipment. Therefore, the personal equipment of Rāmānuja, mental and social in the form of discipline, may be regarded as an exercise to fit him to serve society along the lines of Vedic tradition which does not exclude any one from securing the best in the world.

Interest in society and its Well-being

The worth of a leader in society is measured in terms of his endeavour to keep society happy and contented. Peace and prosperity are the prime considerations for the welfare of society. Each man differs from the other. Aims and ambitions are not always similar or even the same. The fear of being caught in conflict is neither rare nor unexpected. The law that the fittest survives may be unchallenged. But the defect attached to that law is that survival involves struggle in the process. Peace and prosperity appear to be objects of desire. Though they may be realised, the realization may be uncertain or shortlived. Therefore, in society man mingles with man in order to co-operate, to effect a situation where no
person would be subjected to misery and duress. But co-operation is not such an easy thing. The basic instinct in man is self-assertion. That instinct does not permit of self-denial with the same spirit as self-assertion.

"Śarve 'sām eva svātantryāṁ eva
Iṣṭa-tamasm ārṣyate
Pāra-tantraṁ dhu-kha-karām
Śaṅkaraṁ svātantraṁ pratīyate
tasmin eva, aham iti saṁsārināṁ pratītiḥ
Ātmābhimanah yadrśah
tad-anuguṇaiva puruṣārtha-dṛṣṭīṇi".1

Dependence on others is misery, happiness is to exercise control. The body, being the unit of existence, is regarded as independent. Ordinarily men believe that the body is Ātman—the self. The aim of life is determined by the way in which the entity Ātman is regarded.

Co-operation is seeking the help of another and to promise help in return. The aim is that the co-operating partners move beyond discontentment and keep satisfied. The emphasis in this co-operation is not to be the gain to one's self only. It should be the endeavour to keep the other partner satisfied. This is understood by the Sanskrit term, Para-samṛddhi, benefit to the neighbour. Therefore attitudes, utterances, arrangements and explanations are indulged in to make a show of equality among all people in respect of status and claim in society. But at heart there is the craving in most cases for being recognised as a senior, a superior and a model for the rest in society. It would be unfair to truth to maintain that man looks upon as his equal in every way under all circumstances. Equality therefore is a doctrine adopted under special conditions in the absence of which anarchy and extinction may result as is recorded in the mythological battle of the yādava after the departure of Śrīkrṣṇa from the world. Human nature being what it is, the instinct of self-importance and elevation cannot be uprooted. Multiplicity of purpose in the world is a fact which cannot be ignored. It is not healthy as a social measure, because it violates the doctrine of Samanvaya, as understood by Rāmanuja, one of the four cardinal principles supporting the stand of Rāmānuja.

Equality, an assumption conditioning harmony

Society is a group of individuals each with the instinct for self-
assertion. Therefore, the treatment that may be accorded without inviting disapproval is to provide equal opportunities for one and all, so that the inner talent and instinct of every individual may be allowed to develop unhampered. In other words, it is providing the field suited to the growth so that there is no preferential treatment accorded to any particular individual or section of society. The difference noticeable in this context is a capacity pertaining to the individuals or group that is concerned. If the environment and the application of the capacity are of a healthy order, the result presented is impressive. But any shortcomings here and there must be traced to either the opportunity and the environment or to the instinct and incapacity. Public interest in social service is to provide the opportunity uniformly and to encourage the development of instinct and capacity as best as could be possible. Therefore, social involvement includes two vital aspects—the first is to provide an opportunity and the second is to permit the development of capacity. Both these aspects of social order are based on the strict principle of social discipline. Social discipline can be maintained only in the presence of mutual trust, affection, respect and tolerance.⁸

Rāmānuja quotes from the Bhagavad-gītā and following is his commentary on that—

"Ye tu arādhanaṁy a dattān
ātmāratatayā, upādāya
vipacya, aśnanti, te papat-mandaḥ".

Those who receive gifts for worship, for non-personal use, receive in selfish interest, utilise and consume, they are sinners by nature.

Indeed, trust property cannot be treated as personal property. The purport of the above statement is—A social being, if he is selfish, is considered a sinner.

"Annaṁ bhūta-sabda-nirdīśāṁ
Sajīvāṁ śaṁrāṁ
Parjañyat annam
Yajñat parjañyāṁ
Yajñesca, kartri-vaṛṣa-rūpāṁ karmāṇāṁ
Karma ca sañjīvat śaṁrīt
Sajīvam śaṁram punarapi annat
Chakravat pariṣvartamānāṁ".⁸

The word Anna refers to the material complex, namely, the
body with the mind lodged within. From parjañya Annæ emerges, from sacrifice parjanya emerges, sacrificial worship emerges from the act which is the performance of the agent. The act emerges from the living body. That living body again emerges from Annæ. This is the revolving nature of life.

Life is a cycle and society is also treated as a cycle in which the participant play the role of give and take without exception.

The hazard involved

Involvement in social service is a very hazardous adventure. More often the reformer comes to trouble and his end is mostly tragic. The only glory that may attach to him is that he becomes a martyr.

"Tannai eñinarkku attānam kōḍuppadu
ıan tagavu enṭum śaran kōḍutte".4

To them who approach (Him) Rāmānuja offers relief for he believes that it is his duty to offer relief.

Whoever approaches shall be served to the extent of being treated as his equal. This Rāmānuja considered as his habit in life. Religious seers in India followed a course of personal discipline and development by moving from earthly interest to spiritual inclination, from the shaky to the steady. The process involved a movement through what may be called the āśramas or the stages of life. This they did probably because they felt that personal purification and elevation were a pre-condition to cater to the needs of society in its march towards perfection. The āśramas were four in number. The first, the Brahmacārya as it is called, was confined to acquisition of knowledge with the help of a guru and a dedication to cater to the need of the guru. This is service to society at the starting stage, to an individual for whom respect is due because that is the source of enlightenment. In addition to this there is another obligation enjoined on the Brahmacārīn (bachelor) that he shall perform regularly the ritual of Śaṅdhya every day. The significance of this Śaṅdhya is that it contains in it the germ of service without any expectation. Service, if neglected, would lead to degeneration. It is stated to be a nityakarma—a daily duty which cannot be avoided. This is the initial form of engagement in service as such.

In the second stage when man gets married after education he
plunges into society, engages himself in the act of give and take which reminds him of the fact that man is an inseparable part of the social fabric and that he cannot keep aloof in life. The best way to be a happy as possible is to earn and to spend not merely for personal happiness. There are rituals prescribed which are both private and public. The grihya sūtras record how man has to conduct his life as a house-holder. He shall not think of himself only, nor can he totally forget himself. According to Rāmānuja, the statement of the Bhagavad-gīta in a different context is clear on this point⁵.

"Devān bhāvayatānena
Te devā bhāvayantu vah
Paraśparāh bhāvayantah
śreyāḥ param avāpsyatha".

This way oblige the Gods, they shall also oblige you. Thus mutually obliging, reach the highest prosperity.

Rāmānuja's commentary on the above verse is the following—

"Anena devatā ārādhana-bhūtena
Devān madātmakān
ārādhayata evam paraśparam bhāvayantah
śreyāḥ avāpsyata"⁶.

By means of this act, regarded as the worship of Gods in whom I d'well, you offer worship. Thus obliging mutually, reap the best of happiness.

The purport is treat the devas as related to God and get your rewards. Thus with mutual service be all of you happy. In an other verse, preference to the neighbour is emphasised and self interest can appear only in the end⁷.

"Yjna-śiṣṭā-śīnāh santo
mucyante sarva-kiliṣaih".

The good who consume what remains of the sacrificial food will be free from all kinds of sins and imperfections. He who eats without sharing with others is varily a thief.

"Taih dattam aprādayaiya
yo bhūṅkite stena eva sah"⁸.

Whoever utilises the gifts of nature without being made available of others is varily a thief.

From these statements it is clear that in society selfishness and
personal consideration are the surest cause of misery and disaster.

The third stage called Vānaprastha deals with a person who is no longer able to offer his service to society in an active way. He therefore retires to a quiet place or a suburb trying as best as possible not to be a burden on society. Content with what nature may offer in the Vana or forest, he does not permit himself to be a recipient of favours for he realizes that the could not be of help anymore. He would not like to be burden.

The last stage called Sanyāsa is to shun even the privilege of the Vānaprastha and to think of the only principle that sustains all forever, trying to merge into it when he discards the body which had established his link with society during life time. The two later āśramas are significant in the sense that there would be no justification for the persons to hang on to society for their existence or comfort.

The Sanyāsa or the final stage also indicated that nothing ephemeral could be permanent and therefore blind attachment to worldly life without developing the spiritual would be life wasted and abused. It may be noted that in the āśramadharma there is no note of pessimism anywhere except a warning that life in the world is not always the same nor is it an eternal experience. Here we notice an indirect way of keeping society informed of the aim and way of living in this world. But this indirect enlightenment is rarely realized because passion and prejudice, the eternal forces of worldly instinct, upset even the most alert and disciplined mind in the world. There is however no note of despair though the struggle is fierce and protracted. Rāmānuja draws this lesson from the experience of Arjuna.

"Naṣtomohah, srṁthiḥ labdhā
Sthitosmi gata-sandehah kariṣye"

Confusion is gone, memory is regained. I am steady, I have no doubt, I shall do.

"Sneha-kārurtya
pravṛddha-vipaṁśa-jñānamulāt
Sarvasmat avasādat vimuktah
gata-sandehah, savstah
sīhitosmi idādim eva tava
vacanam kariṣye"

I am free now from depression brought about by the wrong impression based on ill-directed affection and sympathy. I
have no more doubts. I am my normal self. I am steady. Without further delay I shall engage myself in duty as you have suggested.

The role of the Saste in Society

Socialism, a progressive measure is regarded as a power to put down casteism which operates in society under the instinct of dogma, belife without reference to the rationale in support of it. The functional aspect is forgotten, but the prestige aspect is emphasised. This apartheid between the prestige claim and the obligatory function of the caste is the root cause of social disharmony.

It becomes clear upon full reflection that casteism in a style of life in society which records the refinement of an individual or a group in the journey towards perfection. The aim is selfish because it keeps a section of society out of contact. It involves a split in the process and therefore it is not social by nature or outlook. On the other hand, the other view of treating society as a unit, as an indivisible unit, restricts the scope of the caste-order to retain efficiency to meet the needs of the neglected section. The caste-order is therefore a discipline in equipment to build a society in which the equipment could be fully utilized. In this sense caste obligation is a means and not an end. This point is made clear in the following passage

"Brāhmaṇyam vilai śellugiradu
Vedādhyanādi mugattālē
Bhagavai-lābha-hetuvenu
adu tāne ilavukkuur uppagil
tyājyaṁāṁ ite”.

Brahminism retains its utility as instrumental to heavenly bliss through Vedic studies and practices. If that very brahminism is put to abuse it deserves to be discarded as a degrading stigma.

The Śūtra quoted above maintains that Vedic education emphasises function and not prestige of the functionary.

Four castes are mentioned in the Vedas, they are Brahmana, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. The cosmic person or Puruṣa as He is called in the Puruṣa-sūkta is the source from which the four castes have sprung. From the mouth emerges the Brahmin, from the shoulders the Kṣatriya, from the thighs the Vaiśya and from the feet the Śudra. It may be that in course of time the disparity in social status
was accounted for on the basis of emergence from the different parts of the Cosmic Person. But from the fuller point of view it would be not in tune with fact and function to maintain such a gap in value. For, the difference is only functional as represented by the organs all of which are parts of a single unit, the containing personality. Each limb asserts its importance in a particular way and this importance can never be the basis to claim difference in status. Thus probably the evil of caste system came to be felt with the assertion of the superiority of one caste over the other, forgetting the basic truth that society cannot do without any one of the four castes mentioned above. If thus the classification is necessary and if the castes are interdependent, the claim to status is an act of inexcusable vanity.

The caste system is, no doubt, a social convention, but it is not creation by society founded on convention, in opposition to the orthodox traditional view. The Vedas came to be regarded as only a communicative phenomenon introduced by the members of the society concerned. The orthodox view is therefore, that the Vedic literature, being co-eval with the ultimate Real both in latent and patent forms, the authoritative nature of the Vedic cannot be questioned except that it should be recognised that the caste classification is confined to the society in its working condition.

But in the Vedas, while laying emphasis on the importance of training the mind to a pitch of awareness and alertness such that it may be able to feel the pulse of the most subtle aspect of experience strangely a restriction has been imposed and persons eligible to follow the Vedic course of education are the male members of the three castes to the exclusion of all women and śūdras\(^1\). This topic is discussed by Rāmānuja in his Śrī Beāśya. It is known as the apasūdra adhikarana. This apparently amounts to a selection which has on justification from the point of view of enlightenment and salvation which has never been denied to any one under the Sun even in the Vedas. That would imply that the caste frame is the only ladder to emancipation and there is no other way out for mankind.

This doctrine of restriction leads us to a situation of contamination in society, namely, women and Śūdras whose active participation and association have not been denied in society. It may be that the privileged castes had to be dependent on the other two, namely, the Śūdras and the women who were embodiments of production and service. Therefore, the women and the Śūdras were exempted from undergoing the discipline which was mandatory for the male
members of the trivarnikas. It is of utmost importance to remember in this connection that women have come to be regarded as angels and the treatment of the Śūdra should be even superior to the treatment one can offer to one's own wife. Apastamba has made this point very clear referring to the Śūdra as Karmakara one engaged in the discharge of duty.

"Kāmam atmānam
 Bhāryāṁ putram vā
 Uparundhyāt-naiveva
dāsa-karma-karam".

Rather check myself, may be or my son, but never a person employed to serve.

This is quoted by Sudarshana while explaining in the Śrī Bhāṣya the term Eka-dikṣa of the opening verse.

The Karmakara is the servant. On the basis of the castes system the term refers to Śūdra. In the event of deserting any person the maxim that should guide the educated is that the Karmakara shall not be deserted even if it means giving up one's own kith and kin including the wife and even one's own life. This is an indication of the attitude that a person should entertain towards persons engaged in honest service. This topic is, however, too complicated to be treated in this work. Therefore suffice it to say that the caste system was a reflection of the doctrine of natural distribution of duty among the sections of society to preserve the homogeneity of society.

The doctrine of beginning lessness and the theory of Karma are cited in support of maintaining the caste distinctness in society. The concepts of Anādi (Beginningless) and Karma may be roughly understood as instinct and habit and any effort in society must be to refine the same and not to replace it. With this in mind the Vedic literature through the later clarifications and commentaries has provided for enlightenment to the masses in a way which does not involve the strain of discipline to which the first three groups have to subject themselves. Already we notice what is needed for enlightenment and emancipation is knowledge and not the process by which it is obtained. According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava theory, every living being, a creature of the Absolute, can be engaged as a matter of inherent right to service or Kainkarya as it is termed, this behaviour of the created entity has no bearing of any kind on maintenance survival, improvement or attainment of the goal, all of which are
believed to be only the responsibility of the Absolute source which is unconditionally the Creator, the Maintainer and the Destroyer. It is indicated in a graphic way of referring to the three strides of the Lord *Trivikrama* who has kept under the shelter of his feet all the creatures. Hence being the protected under the feet the aim is to reach the feet with full knowledge and be engaged in unbridled service with full knowledge and be engaged in unbridled service with full zeal and enthusiasm. The final goal of the three selected castes under *Vedic* discipline is just this. The sage Vyasa is reported to have made a remark that in the *Kaliyuga*, there are only two types of *Sadhus*—*Kalih Sadhuḥ*, *Strī Sadhuḥ*.

**The limitation of Caste System**

Caste is a functional mark attached to a material body, in which is housed the precious soul, which is totally distinct from the material frame. Divine in nature, caught in the bodily frame, the soul gets its powers squeezed and crippled. The attempt in life is philosophically to effect an escape from the body and feet the freedom of normal spiritual experience. In the process it gathers experiences, pleasant and otherwise. As long as it continues in the frame, it acts in a way which leads the spirit from one frame to another. The quality may not be necessarily different from the one already possessed. As is said in the Gīta, the worn out clothes are thrown out and fresh ones are accepted by men. Rāmānuja elucidates the point thus:

"*Jīrṇāṇī vāsāṃsī vihāya, navāṇī*
*Kalyāṇāṇī vāsāṃsī grhnhatāmeva*
*harṣa-nimittameva aitra, upalabhyate*"\(^{14}\).

Leaving behind the worn out clothes, the new whole-some clothes are accepted with all joy. The same principle obtains even regarding the changing bodies.

Man leaves behind the existing body and moves into a fresh one. When the soul comes upon a stage such that it requires no further body, it is expected to have won freedom from the fetters of *Samsāra* birth and death series. At that stage he will employ himself in service. This service is unknowingly indulged in by habit by the women and the Śūdras. All that they need to know is the spiritual worth of their instinct.

The *Upaniṣads* have drawn attention to a doctrine that the Principle that creates and governs the cosmos can alone elevate any one
to enlightenment and salvation. In the same context, it is gathered that the mightiest becomes the most worthless and incapacitated except under the control and assistance of the Sustaining Principle. The two expressions may be remembered.

"Yam eva eśa vrūte
Tena labhyah
Tena vinā itīnām api na calatī.\(^{15}\)

Only he whom the Lord chooses shall reach Him, the dependent cannot claim the privilege of the supporter.

This doctrine is a sure remedy for both arrogance and depression. From this it is clear that man, however heroic, is but a helpless entity entirely dependent upon the favour and selection of the Governing Spirit. This aspect reveals the other face of philosophy that man, instead of winning salvation, receives it if he is fit to be rewarded.

Ritual transformed into Service
The principle implied in the performance of ritual is that the intelligent element of creation, namely the human being, is essentially an active member of society. Secession from activity amounts to denial of the entity according to Rāmānuja. He remarks—

"Na akincit kurtvataḥ śeṣatvam"\(^{16}\).

Śeṣatva or servitude cannot apply to one who is inactive (Śeṣatva—meant for the use of others, Śeṣatva really is offering for active service).

The Absolute, according to the tradition of the Vedānta, upheld by Rāmānuja in his Viśiṣṭādvaita (comprehensive Absolutism) philosophy, is the one Supreme Entity with a real world dependent on it. The world is not to be treated as an illusion or a mere appearance. The dependent world consists of two elements, the material and the mental, the a-cetana and the cetana. The cetana shares in a microscopic way knowledge and Ānanda and a host of other auspicious qualities pertaining to the Absolute, Brahman. The mind and its body are both established as the body of Iśvara subsuming its purpose with no claim to independence from it in any aspect. That way the jīva is a mental entity eternally dependent upon the Absolute and inseparably linked to it. The direct relationship between the material and mental entities is not eternal, though when it started is beyond knowledge, giving rise to doctrine of Anādi.
Being an occasioned relationship it can also be terminated making the concept of Mokṣa or liberation meaningful.

The Varnaḍharma or the caste discipline mentioned above refers to the phase of the link between matter and mind and the process of disconnection. But the relation between the Absolute and the mind is eternal, inseparable. It is commonly overlooked and forgotten in the context of body-mind relationship. The stress laid in the Drāvida Vedānta, also traced to the Veda, is this eternal relationship to be known, to be remembered and to be acted upon. If a person moves on the basis of this eternal relationship, he need not be subjected to the rigour of discipline under caste system. But what has to be kept in mind is that this relationship shall not be abused to promote material interests which are not sanctioned by the caste distinction. People of this inclination and temperament are always regarded as men divine and therefore deserving of treatment due to the deity itself. This is the doctrine of Bhāgavata Pāramya, the supremacy of the true devotee. Caste and other social distinctions apart, a person has a right to regard himself firmly as property of the Lord, the source of life, Bhagavan. His behaviour and activity take a shape along this line of conviction. This conviction is universal and not the monopoly of any section of creation. He is called Bhāgavata (devotee) and he is superior because of this outlook on life. In the eyes of people who entertain a variety of standards recognising personal superiority, of the Bhāgavata, caste restrictions and considerations are blunted in this context and they will not be a bar to any worshipful association with the divine.

This notion of transmaterial temperament and super-self consideration is considered the basic feature of every living entity. To kindle the spirit and keep it bright and steady is the aim of pure life. There will be nothing outside deserving banishment or disfavour as all things are regarded as emerging from the same source and moving in the right direction.

In this context, the Indian seers and ācāryas have introduced two classes—the one that move along the right path and the other that needs to be led along the right path. In the one case resistance is criminal and in the other case the lack of sympathy is crime. It is this that prompted Rāmānuja to utilise his life to the service of the Lord by serving society following the virtuous and helping the less fortunate.

According to the Vedas as frequently stated, four castes have been recognised on the basis of function. From the study of the
Ramana's Interest in Society

Dravidavedanta Ramana has recognised two classes in society based on the cardinal principles which he has closely followed. Accordingly the class of people who cling to the four cardinal principles are regarded as Tondar, Saniah, persons who feel the pulse of the 'Supreme' beating in their heart. They are the wise on the road to all-round prosperity in life. They do not relish the thought of existence, aim and activity except as for the supreme principle which is the ground, the guide and the goal. The other class of people who lack this wisdom and outlook are considered Andar or men with material interest. This class regards itself as privileged to experience happiness as distinct from the Source from which it derives its existence. Sympathy towards this class is therefore a necessity and it is the normal feature of the group of the wise. This sympathy is a helpful factor in the process of elevation to equality which is an attempt to discourage the thought of inequality among members of society.

Ramana's followers could be counted among all castes and sub-castes, sex and skin being no bar as it is said by his disciple17.

"Arangan malar adikku
al urvarë tanakku
urvaröi-k-kollum uttamanai"

Persons dedicated to the service of the 'Source-Principle' the Lord excluding other aims are regarded as his inseparable kinsmen. Therefore Ramana has emerged as the noblest.

Though a Sanyasin and isolated from the society physically, Ramana enjoyed the company of numberless kinsmen. The criterion for kinship was dedication to the feet of the Lord of SrIranga. His disciple Kuresa has given the names of his ancestors following the principle that Ramana laid down18.

"RamanaUjhangri saranosmi
Kulapradhyastu asi sa yamuna muneh
Sa ca natha-vamşyah
Vamşyah paränkuśa muneh sa ca,
Sopi devya dāsah tava".

I regard as my rescuing agent the feet of Ramana. He was the bright successor of Yamunamuni. Yamuna was the descendent of Nathamuni, he belonged to the family of Paraṇkuśa and he is the devout servant of your consort. On this basis I wish to be the target of your grace.
This lineage does not admit _Varna_ (caste) or _gōtra_ (clan). Nor does it yield to the demand of the flesh bed and bread.

**Śattadārs**

There were countless numbers of _Sanyāsins, grhaśīhas_ and ladies among brahmans and ever so many others under the general name _Śattadārs._ The expression _Śattu_ means to use or ‘to wear’. The word _Śattadār_ non-users, was exclusively used in the south perhaps to refer to the devotees who were not the privileged under the _Vedic_ decree on the ground that they were not entitled to wear the sacred thread. But having accepted that _Śrivaśnava_ view and way of life they were termed _Sattada Śrivaśnava_ devotees who would not indulge in the restricted functions exclusively mentioned for the _traiyarṇikas_ in the _Vedas._ In other words, upliftment based on caste consideration was denied to them. But upliftment on the spiritual consideration was extended. The procedure of upliftment on spiritual consideration is a necessity even for the _traiyarṇikas_ who on that account. Consider the caste discipline as a mere furrow in the onward march, without attaching to it any value which may imply scant respect and disregard to the fellow creatures of other category, says and _ācārya,_ a contemporary of Rāmānuja and his favourite philosophic heir, Kurukṣēśa in respect of _Bhakti_ or attitude towards God and his creatures.

"Madirā-bindu miśramāna
Śatakumbhamaya-kumbha-gata
Tīrtha salīlam pōla"[^19].

Self-consciousness amounting to vanity on the part of a true devotee is like the drop of alchohal in the precious sanctifying water contained in the golden cup.

There is another sense in which the word _Śattadār_ is used. The wearing of the sacred thread, learning the _Vedas_ at the feet of the master and performing the rituals prescribed in the _Vedas_ as not applicable to a group. Therefore they were looked upon as _Vedam-Śattadārs_—not directly in touch with the _Veda_ restricted to the _traiyarṇikas._ The system of Rāmānuja recognises as indispensible what is known as _Ubhaya-Vedānta,_ which alone is the distinguishing feature of _Śrivaśnava_ tradition, and could lead people along the way of life which he lived and advocated. He introduced the _Drāviḍa Vedānta_ to the _Śattadārs_ and others so that the formal would in addition to their duty towards the presiding deity in the
selected temples spread the message of Rāmānuja and enlist persons through the ritual of Pañca-Saṃskāra to learn and live in a way becoming of a Vedic follower. The said Ācāryapurushas (cultural custodians) would first introduce the disciples to the fundamentals of philosophy and engage them in services according to their fitness and temperament. The temples thus become the centre of education, worship and service and the social problems pertaining to such people were attended to in what came to be called later on Rāmānuja Kūṭa (Association).

"Naivediyargal Tojum tiruppādān
Irāmānuṉasānai-t-tojum periyōr
Elundiraittadum idam
adiyenukkku iruppādamē"\textsuperscript{10}.

Vedic experts of exalted stature kneel before Rāmānuja. Greatmen who serve Rāmānuja get together in joy. Such a place I would choose to stay in.

The spirit throughout was one of living high and dignified with affection and service to the neighbour without an eye on personal pomp or pleasure. It would be a picture of individual poverty but collective plenty. Material pulls which would create selective interests leading to conflict and confusion would find no place in the scheme of Rāmānuja. This outlook of Rāmānuja is indirectly suggested in a verse by one Madhurakavi, the direct disciple of Sāthakopa\textsuperscript{21}.

"Inru toṭṭum elumaiyum
embiān ninru tan pugal irra arūlinan
Kumra-māda-t-tiru-k-kurugūr nambi
Enru enmai igalvilan kāṁminē".

From the time I allowed myself to be in his presence, my benefactor Śrī Sāthakopan stood by me and enabled me gracefully to speak appreciably of the glory which was his fortunate benefit. This leader of mine wouldn ever let me down, this I would like to announce to the public.

According to tradition, by birth Sāthakopa does not belong to the traivarṇika or the qualified group of instructors according to Veda. But Madhurakavi was an accomplished brahmin recognised as one of the leading seers.

The earlier part of the Vedānta is the Sanskrit section leading to
the *Rahasya* through the *Upaniṣads* stressing the need to terminate the material link. The other part or the final part is known as the *Drāvīḍa Vedānta* which lays stress on the need to remember the permanent link between the supreme and the self which must be cultivated and preserved. Its importance is that it is the fundamental basis of structure to be realised and retained and the body becomes the handmaid to realise this aim though it cannot be retained for all times and though in the absence of God—knowledge, the body may drag men along the polluted current of life. The body thus acquires two distinctive functions—it may be a *Kaśyapī* (service) *Śarīra* or it may be a *Sādhana Śarīra*. The Sanskrit Veda emphasises the *Sādhana* aspect while the *Drāvīḍa Vedānta* points to its *Kaśyapī* aspect. The *Sādhana* is only the starting point in the hands of one who feels independent and entertains personal ambition. The same becomes *Kaśyapī Śarīra*.

The *Uḥhava Vedāntin* is termed as *Śrīmad Vedānārga pratihatāpanācārya*. That is a leader protecting the path of *Śrīmad Veda* that keeps in mind the thought of the eternal relationship. The expression *Sātu* in this connection means to complete or cover. He who studies both the *Vedāntas* is regarded as a true *Śrīvaiśīṣṭa* or *Sāttina Śrīvaiśīṣṭa*. But persons who are experts in the *Varnāšrama* scheme of salvation to the neglect of the doctrine of eternal bond between the self and the Supreme are regarded as *Sāttadārs*.

Thus, in the view Rāmānuja, a true *Śrīvaiśīṣṭa* is one who follows whole-heartedly the way of life chalked out by tradition as embedded in the *Veda* and elucidated by the *Drāvīḍaveda* and elaborated in the sanskrit *vedānta*. In this is included performance which is indulged in by persons whose aims are varied according to their constitutional temperament under the pressure of material association. The ambition of Rāmānuja is to rouse in man the inner divine instinct to action and to clear the hurdle in the wake of its progress in life. Hence he recognised the right of every one as a *Śrīvaiśīṣṭa* to enter into spiritual service and be entitled to the esteem and devotion of mankind irrespective of his clan restrictions. But it was necessary that people should tread this path from the *Śrīvaiśīṣṭa* point of view. He therefore thought of a society of persons of varied castes and customs moving along the path prescribed in the *Vedānta* without any coercion or temptation but out of free will and choice. If the eternal values are kept in mind and followed with all earnestness, man is mechanically elevate to the level of divinity, though otherwise he would be unfit to be
admired as a person capable of contributing some genuine good to society.

The way of reforming society according to Rāmānuja

Life is precious and social reformation is based on the consideration that that human life is entitled to uniform recognition and treatment:

"Ādipirān aḍīrku enni aḷ padutta vimalan".

God the benefactor has placed me at the service of his dependent.

"Urraḍum unāḍīrkkku adimai"

I have been ordained to be in the service of your dependent.

Barriers introduced by the concepts of race, religion, colour, sex, custom, passions and perejudice have no right to be recognised, for there is a common ambition in one and all that pursuit of life is happiness. Contentment enters as a powerful aid so that the forces of discrimination and unequal treatment may not evoke a spirit of dissatisfaction, rebellion or strife leading to despair and misery. Each person in society does certainly possess his individual likes and dislikes. But they shall not be for consideration in a society which believes in justice for all without discrimination. The greater the leader, the more effective is the emphasis on this type of social existence. Even the Upaniṣads have come out with a declaration—

"Sarvam Khaḷu Idam Brahma".

Everything indeed in this world is Brahman, (the very highest though in a potential form).

Therefore socialism or uniformity of outlook and attitude appears to be both the basic structure and aim of social organisation.

Enlightened Approach

It would be taken as a mark of culture of the highest order if one could elevate one-self to treating every one in a spirit of perfect equality. In this context scholars expect to know the contribution of Rāmānuja. It is said and admitted that Rāmānuja, of all the great saints and seers pursuing the Indian tradition, paid much attention to the social aspect and evinced keen interest in the welfare and upliftment of people belonging to different castes and communities, men and women, depressed and helpless. The expectation is all the keener in the light of what is known as elevating the so-called
untouchables in Karnāṭaka to the status of Tiru-k-Kulattārs—descendants of Lakshmi, the Lord’s consort, for some service that they rendered. It may also be noted in this connection that this broad outlook of his resulted perhaps from his association with Śrī Kāṇcīpūrṇa and Dhanurdāsa and others during his life time and the culture that he imbibed through his Paramaguru Yāmunācārya from the sacred utterances of the Drāviḍavedā.

Traditional Clue and Support

It will not be out of place to take up this topic for consideration in the light of Indian culture handed down through the sanskrit Vedānta known as the Upaniṣads and the Tamil section of the Vedānta known as the Drāviḍavedānta.

As far as society is concerned, the individual constituting an intellectual part has a two-fold aim. To keep himself fit and happy in the world which surrounds him, the individual has to be active with a purpose. He cannot however neglect his contribution to society which surrounds him. Of the two aims the selfish aim is covered by the altruistic aim. In the one case he has to deserve fair treatment in society, to deserve he has to function. The quality of function may produce the wanted result or prove abortive. On the other hand, the aim to serve society has a great promise. It springs from the feeling that being part of society the individual would not be let to perish under any circumstances. The social law is an operation to keep under protection the members of society. That operation is through social service. If man proceeds with this conviction, he will naturally incline towards the sense of obligation in preference to the sense of demand. It is an extention of the doctrine of aprthak-sidāhi in social behaviour. This idea is gathered by Rāmānuja and communicated to the masses using philosophic terms. That is as follows.

Two courses are prescribed in the Vedānta to know the truth about the world. The one is the archaeological method or the upstream drive of the mind. The other is the evolutionary method or the gliding method. The Taitiriya refers to the former and the Chandogya adopts the other course. The strain in the Taitriya is a rigorous march from the known to the other, from the effect to the source. The Chandogya Upaniṣhad, on the other hand, is an explanation of the activity of the Supreme Real in evolving itself to the finite tiny entity in creation. Here all that is needed is a faithful observation closely following the course of the process without any
need for discipline suggested in the empirical attempt. It is thus possible to admit every one having the ability to observe and follow the course. The discipline required here is impartial observation ending in conviction.

In both these cases there is a special section beyond the normal powers of the person who is in quest after the Real. The guru who has some how come to know the source gives the clue to the investigating seeker and directs him to realise it through his efforts. If the experience that he discovers conforms to the model given to him by the guru, then his effort is a success. In the Chandogya, the observer is finally told that he is 'Brahman' in the sense that he is not identical with 'Brahman', but he is in essence and function at the mercy of the Real.

The doctrine of mercy and the doctrine of absolute subsistence of the Jīva (soul) on God lead to a conclusion revealed in the Drāviḍa Vedānta and entertained in the sanskrit Vedānta that the ground of experience is the sole guardian leaving no scope for the Jīva to think in terms of self-protection. Secondly, the function of Jīva is exclusively regarded as service under the Lord without any thought of self. These are the two basic ideas which cannot be kept alive or functioning by any effort of the Jīva. He cannot be active for he is powerless; he cannot be inactive for he has to be in service.

This idea is preserved and spread among the masses by the ācārya when he applies to them the twin terms Pāngu (Lame) and Dāsa (Servant). This is native to every Jīva according to Rāmānuja's study of the Vedānta and if this spirit is allowed an opportunity to develop to its full stature freedom is realised. This power is common to every one irrespective of any discriminating physical consideration. Rāmānuja's burning desire was to draw people to their latent glory and to encourage them to develop the same, whatever the frames they might have inherited on the basis of Karma. Therefore, abstracted from this idea the body is deemed Sādhana Śarīra, an instrument to achieve as recommended in the Varnādharma scheme. But the same body is given a more congenial and dignified function of being a tool of service and from that point of view the respect due to the body engaged in the function is equal to that due to divinity itself. But the problem of social association and intermingling as conceived in the secular world to maintain a homogeneous society is an idea alien to the spirit of service which is the kernel of the Vedānta philosophy. Life in a particular body is not an end in itself, nor the body can be permitted to defeat the purpose for which
it has been intended. As far as worldly life is concerned, the law of discipline cannot be ignored, for it introduces discipline of a different order. The two disciplines should not be confused says Śaṭhakopa in his Tiruvāimoli.

From the point of view of Rāmānuja, the body is primarily Kaṭṭkarya Śarīra—a frame for service. But it is a Sādhana Śarīra when it does not indulge in Kīṭkarya. This distinction can be expressed in an other way. Rāmānuja stands for the doctrine of dignity of discipline Kaṭṭkaryaniṣṭhā and not the discipline of dignity—Yoganīṣṭhā. This distinction is clearly marked in the Drāvida Vedānta works—Adiyār verses Tirivār, Tōṇdar verses Andar Vālve, Vāl versus Kūl, Mumukṣu—Bubhukṣu.27

"Adiyārrkku āl paduttāi
Tōṇdar adippodi"

Employ me to serve your devotees.

"Yogah siddhi asiddhyth
Samatva-rūpam cītī-samādhanam".28

Yoga is the mental equanimity in the face of success and failure in life.

It is significant in this connection to note the attitude of Śrī Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa. Commenting on the benefit to mankind of his father’s rule, Rāma deplored the lack of opportunity to discover and develop the innate element of spirit in the scheme of governing the country. Following the spirit of the Vedānta Rāmānuja inherited and extended that tradition and tried his best to provide that opportunity and to bestow the benefits on people. However, being an enemy of ocercion or compulsion, he never forced any one to follow the path that he had chalked out for himself as well his followers.

REFERENCES

8. Ibid., III, 12.
12. Quoted by Sudarśana while explaining *Śrī Bhāṣya*, c.f. the term *Eka-dikṣa* of the opening verse.
17. Amudanār: Rāmānuja’s *Nṛrandādi*, verse 57.
25. Ālavās: *Divyaprabhandam*, Periya Tirumoli, 8-10-3.
27. Ālavās: *Divyaprabhandam*, Tirupaḷi elucc, verse 10.
CHAPTER V

Rāmānuja and the Economic Field

The Common Coal—The Existing Environment—United Effort—
The Basic Start of Co-operative Effort—Discipline as a Democratic
Principle of Life—Spheres of Operation—The Triple Nature of
Existence—Agriculture—Properity of Preservation and Distribution
—The Economic Castism—Discipline—Personal and Environmental
—Production and Distribution—The Twin Aspect of Economic
Functioning—Human Organism and Economic Principle—Life’s
Journey Towards Unhindered Progress—The Need to Meet the
Legitimate Demand—The Source Power of Life and Society—Con-
tribution to Preserve Economic Equilibrium—Humility—An Ethical
Instrument of Economic Stability—The Style of Economic Fuction-
ing—Agriculture Labour—Village Life—Division of Labour—
Industrial Production—Pooling of Resources (Permanent, Perioccic—
General and Specific)—Donations and Contributions in Karnāṭaka—
The Mite of the Ācāryapurushas after Rāmānuja.

Man is a social animal. He is inevitably an inseparable part of so-
ciety. Joy and misery may befall man. To avoid one and to seek the
other exclusively is impossible as long as man is a member of society.
But the craving for unalloyed happiness is ever on the increase.
The solution suggested in the Upaniṣads is an attempt to cut off
social contact of any form. That is termed Mukti (liberation). It
is an anti-social measure for self-fulfilment. The dominating
tendency in life is pessimism. Formerly much thought has not been
directed towards assessing the true function and purpose of social
life.

It is in this connection the need for the Drāviḍa-Vedānta is felt. The structure of society appears completely transformed. Society
is no longer a market for bargaining for personal gains. It is an
environment where the bliss sought after can be experienced, though
for a short time. Society appears to be a prison-house to a person
who is not aware of this sober, optimistic perspective. It is lack
of knowledge of the right type that drives persons towards gloom
and thought of escape. The *Drāvida-Vedānta*—the quintessence of the *Upaniṣadic* thought—emphasises the need to cure the observing mind of its defects. That brings about an attitude of love for society and dislike of personal importance in society. Rāmānuja included in his thought and system this aspect of experience also. His conception of socialism is, therefore, traceable to the *Drāvida-Vedānta* which is the essence of *Vedāntic* teaching.

In the *Drāvida-Vedānta* (*Vedic* thought enshrined in the Tamil language) Rāmānuja has consequently been accorded a status very next to Saṭṭhakopa. He is regarded as the foster-mother of the work *Tiruvāimooli* which was first delivered by Saṭṭhakopa.

""Ina mudal tai Sadagopan Moymbāl Vaḷarta ida-t-toi Irāmānuśan""\(^1\).

Sadagopan (Nammalvār) is the first mother who delivered the Tiruvāimoli, Rāmānuja is the foster mother who nourished the Vedānta with care and affection.

The *Rāmānuja Nūṟṟandādi* is the biographic sketch from this stand and outlook. Hence the directions in the field of socio-economic activities are traced to the statements Āḻvārs.

**The Common Goal**

According to Rāmānuja, the aim of every individual who forms part or society is to experience a state in life in which peace and comfort are always present. Such a condition is the result of a struggle against disorder and uncertainty. If all people who form society are happy and contented, that would be a heavenly world. People would be moving about revelling in joy. The close association with one another would be a reflection of the feelings of happiness without any indication involving the doctrine of give and take, usually employed to keep persons above want\(^2\). This idea is made clear in the following verse—

""Ūrum nādum ulagamum
Tamrai-P-Poll, avanudaiya
Perum tāṟgaḻume pidatta-k-kaṟpavān”.

To teach the inhabitants of the village, the town, and the country, to speak of the Lord’s name and the garlands, like himself.

**The Existing Environment**

Actually conditions in the world are different. The sense of want
is felt accurately by every individual. The only thing common to all is this sense of want and the desire to be above want. The individuals in society are not independent of one another. Interdependence is the basis of social existence. Society is, therefore, considered as an indivisible group of individuals linked to one another of necessity.

"Toṇḍir ellirum vārīr"

Come in, all of you, dedicated to serve.

This thought, being crucial, is taken up for consideration to keep society in harmony.

United Effort

The joint venture of persons is, therefore, the only remedy to keep want under control, if it cannot be completely conquered. Therefore persons constituting society co-operate, keeping themselves engaged in different functions with an understanding that, if internal conflict is avoided, the combined effort would produce the desired effect. All people are not of the same calibre. Some of them specialise in the field of production where others may find themselves actually incompetent to the required extent. It does not, however, mean that there is a section in society without any ability to contribute to the welfare of society. The fields of contribution are varied. Capacities also are not of the same degree.

"Kuḷaṅgalāṅi aḍiyiruḍan
Kāḍi ninṛu aḍumine".

Please join us, the participants in service, remain with us and be merry.

The basic start of Co-operative Effect

In consequence, there is an adjustment in society with this minimum requirement on the part of every one. The contribution, whatever that be, must be on the basis of honesty and sincerity. Likewise the demand also must be controlled by the desire that personal gain should not be at the cost of others. If this basic principle of ‘live and let live’ operates, it becomes hard for any one to indulge in activities disturbing the social order. For the principle is that the individual has right to freedom only as a member belonging to society. As such he could neither ignore society nor treat it as a means for his personal benefit. Therefore, the full freedom
that man aspires to in society as an individual is limited. In this context the doctrine we rely upon is that discipline is the ground of freedom.

"Toṇḍa-k-kulattil uḷīr vaṇḍu aḍi toḻudu
.........Paṇḍai-k-kulattai tavirṇdu pallaṇḍu enmine”.

You really belong to the class of servants. Rise above the obsolete convention pertaining to the greedy class and pray only for prosperity of the supreme unit.

**Discipline as a Democratic Principle of Life**

Rāmānuja realised the importance of this discipline and devoted his life-time towards helping society to realize freedom from want through discipline. Discipline has no barriers. It is not confined to any one section of society or any walk of life. On that point of view all approaches made by the participants in society bear the stamp of sacredness. Consequently the thought of qualitative difference in various walks of life would appear bereft of sense and propriety. Without exception the constituent groups and individuals involved in the social structure do not keep themselves idle, but act conforming to their capacity with all earnestness. The result is the production of wealth which serves the purpose of all. In this system there is no scope for any one to boast of contribution. Nor is there a chance for any one to appear depressed that he does not deserve the wealth which he might use. Activity directly or indirectly conductive to the welfare and maintenance of society is natural to every individual which he cannot shake off. This principles of contribution preserves the human mind at the democratic level, ethically and spiritually without which social order could not be unruffled. The wise have maintained thus—

"Kūḷ āḷ paṭṭu—ninirigai pungudal oṭṭom”

If you have any selfish motive, we will not admit you to our group.

**Spheres of Operation**

The fields of activity are many. Activity accordingly appears in different forms. But the fields, considered basic and unavoidable, are taken up for demonstration, to prove that methods can be devised and employed to meet the needs of society and to present a situation in which no man would be the victim of disappointment and despair.
"Kaḍal Suṅda maṇṇuḷgam vālga
Sāni loka-hitaisiṇi".

May the earth engirdled by the ocean prosper.

The mandatory direction of Rāmānuja is in the interest of the entire world.

The Triple Nature of Existence

There are three constituents or layers of existence. The physical, the mental and the spiritual. The physical and the material wants cannot be ignored. The craving is universal. Life takes its start on the physical plane. To neglect the physical interest is sacrilegious as it is eventually suicidal. 

"Sakala—sāstraṅgalālum dēhattāle pēru engiradu".

All branches of study regard the body as an indispensable tool towards progress.

The very first attention goes towards the problems of foods drink, shelter and association, the minimum needed for physical survival.

Agriculture

Physical survival is the primary pursuit of life. It is universal. The law of nature does not withhold in some form or other adequate food supply for the hungry section of creation. Therefore raising food of quality in sufficient quantity is the basic concern of every living being and naturally agriculture takes a position of importance and priority in life. It is maintained as an axiom that Ṣarīra or body is an apparatus without which there could be no existence, endeavour or happiness. This being so, raising food in various forms from the earth has been a natural and universal habit in life. There is no need for any direction or advice to raise food. The demand and supply position in nature is always equal, neither less nor more. The earth has been described as Ṣthīra and Vasundhara a steady source and the mine of wealth in its common conception as food. This is the value of the earth for man. Inequality is the result of human behaviour and interference in distribution based on the unpardonable desire of allowing to the lured to revel in luxury. As a consequence others would be compelled to have something less than needful. This inequality produces discontent, jealousy and finally moves into a force of conflict and confusion, which it would be extremely difficult to keep under check. Social reforms are
ceaseless attempts to set right this basic inequality. In the process the ideal, though it may be acceptable to all, is seldom realized because the methods employed create further complications. Social history is therefore apparently a steady move from solving one problem after another. But in reality it proves itself to be bringing into existence one complication after another more into prominence. This attitude needs a radical change. Human wisdom collectively or individually can at best offer a shor-time solution for a section, but not for all and never for all times. If the wisdom of Vedic culture is allowed to have its course, toleration and co-operation, associated with activity and self-restraint would keep the hetero-
genous elements together. It is endorsed by Rāmānuja while citing the verse of the Bhagavat-gīṭa—

"Yat cāpi
Sarva bhūtānām
Bījam, tadaham avyayam
Natadasti vinā yat syāt
Mayā, bhūtam caracāram".

Whatever is the source of all beings pertaining to nature and society, that I am permanently. There cannot be any existence static or dyamic which could dispense with me.

Diversity is a pleasant phenomenon only under the grip of unity.

Propriety of Preservation and Distribution

The doctrine is traced to the Bhagavat-gīṭa. Rāmānuja explains thus—the doctrine of adequate preservation and of proper distribution is the guiding principle arising out of the agricultural operation.

"Bhūta-jātam mayā vinā,
Yat syāt natad asti".

Whatever entity is observed that never is without me.

To protect this doctrine against its abuse, authority must be vested in a person who shoulders the responsibility with devotion. This is not a novel idea, considered by Rāmānuja as a flash. Nor did he think of the ordinary performances which the regimes prior to him might have adopted. He, however, refers to a type of regime which used the full the lofty principle that the sense of unity should not be ignored under any circumstances. It is a logical corollary to
the raising of food to feed the needy. According to Rāmānuja who takes clue from Selvanambi, this is a system which can effectively meet the challenge of economic crisis. This scheme is to avoid pilfering in production and distribution. This thought is taken up for consideration to keep society in harmony.

**Economic Casteism**

From this point of view society is arranged into two groups. Borrowing the idea from the *Vedas* the two groups are respectively known as the the *Dīva* (who co-operates) and the *Asura who interferes*). In the Drāvidian language the terms employed are *Adiyār* and *Tirivar*—the responsible and the vagrant. Through the power be vested with the king whose direction is mandatory, the directing power should carry with it the content of genuine welfare of the society. This content which makes authority ever endearing to the people is mainly the contribution of expert advisers who enter the field on being requisitioned to join the team of experts to preserve and promote social welfare and health. Rāmānuja derived the inspiration noted above from the Rāmānuja the great epic.21

"*Nandunti udite āditye
Nanaḍanti astam ite ravau
Ātmano navabyudhyante
Manusyaḥ jīvita-kṣayam*".

With the sun-rise men feel cheerful, with sun-set men do feel cheerful. But men are not aware that life is limited.

The purport, in the opinion of Śrī Rāma, is that people are satisfied with the day-to-day achievements unaware of the lasting welfare.

Rāmānuja looked back to a period in which he found such a healthy system in operation in the region of Pāṇḍya. The great person who shouldered this responsibility was one Selvanambi, whose services have been extolled by his contemporary Visṣudcitra.

"*Alvalakhu onrum illā
ani kōṭiyar-kōn abhimāna-tuṅgan
Selvanai-p-pōla Tirumale nānum
unakhu-p-pula vadiyēn*"12.

I am also thy old servant, my benevolent Lord, like Selvan, the greatest, enjoying the patronage of the Ruler of the masses, the most benevolent.
Discipline—Personal and Environmental

The condition in the land during the time of Selvanambi appears in two aspects. In the work called Peri Āḻvār-Tirūmoḻi in the IV cantox, the IV decade points to this fact. The vagrants in the eyes of the wise are a burden on earth. They are a liability to society only because inspite of all efforts they do not find anything of value beyond their personal want. They live ‘dead’. They are, however, neither to be despised nor hated, they deserve to be the victims of pity. An expression about them is that the things they use must have committed sins “Pāvam Sādanadām”. Beyond consumption and idling away their time they have no interest. Habit is, therefore, an unhindered process of keeping the bright life in perpetual slumber finally paving the way to extinction. Such life is not only aimless, but it is positively injurious to society. Like the thick grown weeds these are termed Tirivars, who have no moorings. They are to be tolerated and every effort must be made to wake them up to the dynamic value of life.

The other section constituting society entitled to the name Ādiyār is ever alert to the truth that it is under the control of the basic power and that life should accordingly be a course of discipline conforming to the direction of the indwelling impulse. The term Ādiyār is derived from the word Ādi which means the source, the sole master and Ādiyār reflects the idea of belonging to that Ādi and therefore inherently wedded to a life of discipline. This is inborn self-discipline and not mere social discipline. If such people emerge and build a society, an air freedom, joy, affection and satisfaction would fill the atmosphere. Providing such an atmosphere is equally necessary, though it is secondary as compared to self-discipline which is experienced under superior control. In an atmosphere of this nature it would be next to impossible for the vagrant section to commit pillage. The atmosphere further has an indirect effect on the vagrants who will be forced to change their outlook in due course and give up their anti-social and ultimately suicidal behaviour even though they may not actively contribute towards social well-being. The expression “Viḷainda dāniyamum Irākkādar, mindu kollāki rargale”

“The crops grown, the looters will not lay their hands upon”.

Is noteworthy as recording the influence of the disciplined over the vagrants.
Production and Distribution

Parakāla in his work Periya Tirumoli describes the crops produced in the land. The most important of them are ‘Sen nel (paddy), Palā (jack), Teŋgu (coconut), Vālai (plantain), Kāi (roots), Kari (vegetables), Karuṁbu (sugarcane), Kamugam (nuts), Mā (mango) and the like. Nature’s bounty is appreciated by Viṣṇucitta who describes the field as the unfailing granary in every way. ‘Sen nel or polilsul Tirukkanṭiyūr—fields covered by paddy’. Inspite of Nature’s bounty and of the sufficiency of food produce and supply, there may be occasions where shortage of supply and the increasing volume of demand might affect the normal economic life. Even if a handful of food material costs much and goes far beyond the expect ed purchasing power of the man as could be normally fancied in society under such conditions, men would not permit themselves a change of mind or mood. They would not withhold supply. Nor would they indulge in making a high demand for what they supply. The healthy method is as stated.

“Kāśin-vēi karam viṟkilum
Karavādu—maṟṟu—ili sortu”

Though a handful is sold at a heavy rate without hiding and without laying down a condition, the supply of food was assured.

The principle of adequate supply and price control was maintained even during times of distress. People would never allow a state of depression. These factors made lasting impression on Rāmānuja as a social arrangement healthy and desirable on all accounts and he tried it with a measure of success.

“Ākki aṭimai nilaippittana
ennai inṟu avatē pōkki-p-pura tiṭṭadu”

You put me into the frame of life for service, you made me realise that service is life. You removed the evil intention of mine and took me beyond its reach.

“Iruḷ koṇḍa en tyar maṭṟri—i— tan niṟīl perum
Puṭṭiṟ, teruḷum teruḷ tandu
Irāmānuṉai seyyum ‘semangale’

You removed the afflicting ignorance and enabled me to regain my vision and fix my attention on your matchless virtue. Such are the benefits, many acts of benefits of Rāmānuja.
The twin aspects of Economic Functioning

The system of economic arrangement laid stress on two vital points. The idea in the expression ‘Mīdu Kōḷla’\(^{18}\) is to provide a check against the tendency to accumulate as a reserve even when the need for its consumption is there. Looking up of wealth and not utilizing it in times of need is an economic crime. That should never be tolerated in society, for wealth is not the exclusive possession of an individual or a group alone to the exclusion of the rest of society.

The second crime on the economic front is in reference to the expression Karavādu—Marrili\(^{19}\). In the Tirumoli composed by Parakāla the Divyadāsas—holy regions are referred to as providing food, shelter and the like; making an offer without a thought of return and without imposing limit in quantity. In times of distress when there is a shortage of supply, advantage must not be taken to disturb the value of commodities involved in demand and supply. The situation rather calls for an attitude of helping society to have sufficient quantity at normal rates. The common tendency experienced in commerce is exploitation in abnormal situations to further enrich the possessor and to impoverish the purchaser. Such tendencies imperceptibly creep into the body politic of economics and pave the way for tampering with the healthy system in which the principle of ‘Live and Let live’ operates. The gist of this is that wealth should not be kept idle because by nature it is a liquid stuff. This scheme of economic sufficiency of the institution came to be known as ‘Rāmānuja kūta’\(^{20}\).

Human Organism and Economic Principle

The body which we maintain with great care and affection has a lesson for us in our economic life in society. An alert mind can very well learn from ‘books and brooks’. The only trouble is that the knowledge thus obtained remains momentary and the enduring benefit from that knowledge develops into a fancy. To make the point clear. Nature is regular in presenting the cycle of seasons. The body that we have is a conglomeration of the elements that constitute nature, viz., earth, water, fire, wind and ether called the Pāṇcabhūtas (the five elements). Our habit and attempt in life are to protect ourselves against the abnormal influence of nature which surrounds us. During the summer we need materials that could control the adverse effects of the summer. Similar is the habit during the other seasons. The protective measure that we employ
is an expression of our not needing anything in excess of actual requirements. So, too our habit seeks to possess what appears to be in short supply. This is the truth we learn about the economics of nature, if we may say so, and its value to life. The same law applies in the matter of food supply and other needs which we consider essential for life. They are earth, water, light, air and space to stay. These five elements constituted the minimum necessity for the preservation of life. Remembering that this is the basic key to life, Rāmānuja preferred a surrounding in which these elements were easily obtainable. It should not be assumed that the idea was a creation of Rāmānuja's mind, rather he discovered the value and preferred to provide mankind with facilities which would continue without a break so that man could continue his life with minimum exertion. This idea was responsible for the maintenance and development of water resorts, fields and gardens, manṭapas and dwellings cut out of rock. Besides the staple food grown and cereals along with the trees, such as plantains and coconuts considered Kalpavṛkṣa (Kalpavṛksa—a tree that yields for all times), Sources of perennial supply were found in plenty. Herbs and flowers were grown which served the purposes of health and charm. In all these places the most notable thing was the provision for temple. An atmosphere of piety and veneration was provided for by installing a divine icon which would function as the centre of 'Spiritual Experience'—mental mood in which mutual difference and personal preference are held under cheek, a factor essential to mankind both to the eye and the mind, in its own way explaining the source of reality functioning as the ground, the means and the goal of life on its journey towards unhindered progress.

Life's journey towards Unhindered Progress

Regular worship and festivals were arranged according to the tradition set up in the Veda, an aspect of experience. Spiritual in essence and material in form with the view that the spiritual factor in life may not be forgotten or undervalued. Rāmānuja was more a believer in self-reliance and in the function of service in a voluntary spirit out of love²¹.

"Paricaryā—Karaṇāya
Parighrniṣva iti yācamanśti"

Please accept me for rendering service—thus he prays.

The spirit behind this was his unwillingness to demand any
benefit or command service from others. He believed that maintaining an untenable attitude would result in the disappearance of the view of human equality and dignity. Even in the field of interdependence he seems to have encouraged the doctrine of 'Serve' and then be 'served' if need be. In other words, he emphasised the importance of the impulse of privilege. This doctrine is traceable to the system of social order that prevailed during the time of Selvanambi who never ignored the lofty ideal he followed most scrupulously. The economic relevance is found in the expression—

"Kōvindan kunam pādurvār ula naṭtinul"

In a land where people would recount with joy the virtue of Govinda, the looters cannot lay their hands on the crops grown there.

Lord Krishna who as the word Govinda suggests evinced His interest in the welfare of the cattle. The word 'Govindan' refers to Lord Krishna. But the relevance of the word is to the function of the Lord to extend protection to cattle as a mark of duty without which He would be unworthy of Himself.

The need to meet the Legitimate Demand

The economic provision contemplated by Rāmānuja was based on the doctrine of meeting the need of the individual to the full. The needs of the people are not the same in kind or quantity. But satisfaction is uniform experience. This point is illustrated in an event during the time of Rāmānuja at Mēlukōṭe. The event is called significantly "Aḷḷum (Draw) tāḷḷum (drive), Sirappu (function)". It is cryptically known as the festival of 'Draw and Drive'. Uniformity was not to be confined to the supply of material. But it should be with reference to meeting in full the hunger. This outlook of Rāmānuja exhibited in this event is recorded in a general way by Amudanar in his Tamil composition on Rāmānuja "The Prapanna Gāyatri" where he uses two significant expressions about the ācārya.

"Tānmai urṟār anṭi
Tānmai urṟār illai."²³

People have no disposition to serve except those who are devoted to him—Rāmānuja.

Generally people follow the word of the master not his intention
conveyed in the word. The meaning intended by the ācārya in his direction to the needy person is—‘draw as much as you actually need’ to meet your hunger. The direction to the distributor is ‘push the provision within the reach of the recipient to his real satisfaction. The speciality that attaches to the institution of Rāmānujakśa is that the economic involvement in the form of offer or acceptance does not lead to a change in social status among the participants. The offer is in all humility placed for the public through the spiritual link which alone is the binding factor among beings. The recipient does not feel personally inferior to or obliged to the contributing partner, because he receives whatever he is offered in the temple by others in the spiritual environment. The environment, therefore, keeps all people at the same level towards one another as the dependents of the spiritual force. The giving and the receiving attitude do not create a sense of superiority or inferiority, since every individual is wedded to the twin principle in life of give and take. He feels he is only the instrument or the channel of cosmic operation. This principle that man is but an instrument and not an author is contained in the Kapyaśa concept. The water from the ocean is received through the earth which produce a lotus which blossoms and through his beauty delights the world. There is no direct relationship between the ocean and the lotus. The sun is the centre of activity. He draws and delivers the water. The lotus is benefited and it has earned in sanskrit for the Sun the distinction of being Kamala bandhu (the inseparable companion of the lotus). It is the function that binds people together and no one function can be said to be different from another in point of status or contribution. Each function in its own place has its uniqueness which cannot be shared by others. The emphasis on the institution of temple in social life serves another important purpose in the absence of which all evils of like make their appearance. Economic life is based on the principle of production and distribution involving the mental and material factors of production, demand and distribution which concern only the intelligent section of creation which realises that interdependence is the basic factor of social life.

The source power of Life and Society

According to Rāmānuja, this interdependence is not direct between the individuals, as it fails to recognize the basic factor of existence. The spiritual element invisible to normal awareness holds the many together in the light of which no two individuals can be said to be
directly associated with each other to the exclusion of the sustaining spiritual basis. 

"Parama-puruṣa-vyatiriktānām
Paraspara-seṣa sesibhāvabhadāt
tad-vyatiriktam prati sesata
duhkam eva sarvaih ātma-yāthātmiya
vidbhih sevyah purusottama śka eva":

Direct relationship between individuals to the exclusion of the source-power does not exist. To act on the basis of direct link ends in misery. Only the Supreme is served by the enlightened.

Unless this idea operates in life human nature would not move along the way of undisturbed harmony. The sustaining element inspires awe and affection, devotion and dedication in life. No human being can be an exception to this unless he allows his mind to rust and rot. The system of barter here appears in the concept of the deity an object of common worship which handles the give and take of whatever is used as a commodity for consumption. The barter transaction viewed in this spiritual light projects the fine instinct and qualities which otherwise may not develop. Vanity and patronage on the part of the offering agent and depression and dependence characterising the consumer at the receiving point would be kept under check. The man who offers develops the spirit of devotion and humility realising that the offer he makes is a part of cyclic phenomenon in which as a recipient through the mercy of the deity what he is able together, he would spare as an offer. The recipient for his part receives the offer with all devotion and humility, and permits himself to develop an attitude of service in some form of which he would be capable. This mood and temperament being common to both the giver and the receiver keep them together in a pleasant atmosphere so that they shall continue to be co-workers in their own way in the service of the deity. If this attitude could be spread in any other way, it would not be unwelcome.

**Contribution to preserve Economic Equilibrium**

Experience proves that only the spiritual awareness kept alive and functioning in temples could keep man in this elevated condition. This was one of the main intentions of the great ācārya when he recommended that the old tradition may be continued in the
temple which was looked upon as the store-house of production and the centre of distribution. The following extracts serve to explain the point.

"Parama puruṣo hi svaktyena
Jivatma, svaktyaiscā karaṇa
Kalabaro-praṇaik svalila-prayojanāya
Karmāṇi arabhate. Ataḥ
Kṣut-nivrtyādikam api
Phalam tat-sādhana-bhūtamcā
Karma, parama-purṣasya eva".

The supreme person is indeed, with His dependent Jivatma (Human mind) and with His instruments (sense organs), body and breath, for the sake of sportive experience, indulges in various acts. Therefore the result such as removing hunger and such like and the act leading to that end, all these are the Supreme Person alone.

"Tannai uṟar anṟi
Tannai uṟtār illai"26.

People have no disposition to serve except those who are devoted to Him—Rāmānuja.

With this spirit operating in society rich donations were made to the temples. Occasions were arranged for assemblage and substantial supply was made to those that gathered. The devotee who receives now an unexpected supply in the temple is totally ignorant about the donor. Likewise the donor never knew who would be benefitted by his donation. This interdependence between the giver and the receiver is raised to an impersonal level which is preserved and improved upon by later generations constituting society. It is not surprising to note here that the individuals were not quite rich, but they never felt any want in life. The temples were extremely rich and the benefits were extended to every one that would not refuse. Human nature being what it is, one experiences lapses more often than not, with the consequence that here is a perpetual struggle between the two classes of people connected with the temple. One tries to keep the temple as a centre of undiminishing plenty and the other considering this type as a manoeuvre to exploit the many to protect the idle interest of the few.
Humility—An ethical Instrument of Economic Stability

It is common experience that a person who earns through personal exertion utilizes his wealth for personal use. Other persons have no right to expect from him for their comfort the benefits of his toil. Thus there comes to be in society a disparity between persons. Some people cannot earn enough, some people cannot consume the entire wealth. Thus plenty and poverty appear side by side, leading to feelings which reduce men to the degrading position of unwelcome associates. The blame for this kind of situation rests mostly on that section which earns more than enough. If only the earning section would share its wealth willingly with others who could not earn for want of knowledge and capacity, social evil would be absent, because both the possessing and the non-possessing would be converted to the possessing group. As a result, the higher qualities of sympathy, generosity, affection, gratitude and respect would emerge, qualities which would hold society united.

It is from this point of view that Rāmānuja occupied the pulpit in the temple at a place called Gōsthipurā, and shared his wealth of the secret of joy and self-protection with the public which he received from his master Gōsthipurā, with a guarded solemn promise that the wealth would be scrupulously guarded and its value not allowed to suffer by wasting it among those ignorant of its worth or use. Rāmānuja gave the promise to his master in all solemnity only to break it and be the victim of the master's curse, for he felt social prosperity was greater in significance than individual prosperity.

The style of Economic Functioning

For the first time in the line of leaders interested in the welfare of society, we come across a person who evolves a system of providing the masses with food and shelter, an institution which was later named 'Rāmānuja-kūta' referred to on a previous occasion. The periodic functions of what has come to be known as Manṭapotsava (to provide a spiritual climate) owe their origin mostly to Rāmānuja. The religious motive apart, the secular side of providing food and shelter is as significant as it is interesting. This is not an invention of Rāmānuja. He discovered that the Ālvārs in their sacred hymns had recognized and appreciated the importance of such institutions for providing the public with food and shelter and with clothing as well. This aspect is more emphasised in the Dravida Veda than in the Sanskrit section of the Veda. The receipient of the benefit in
the scheme would be induced actively to associate himself in service in conformity with his capacity without violating the enduring scheme of service ritual. The divine seer Parakāla by name has given expression in his section of contribution to Vedic culture to this idea in the VII, vii-8 of the work known as ‘Periya Tirumoli’. He addresses the Master, “My Lord, I am here dependent entirely on thee, I have resisted pulls from the cruel associates, I have taken shelter under you. Give me food and clothing and other things and admit me to your service”.

Viṣṇucitta, another contributor to this culture, in his Peri Āḻvār Tirumoḷi addresses the Master thus—“My Lord, do not hesitate to accept my service suspecting that you may have to shoulder the burden of feeding me. You need not take the trouble of providing me with food, clothing and shelter, for in the temple, a scheme of service is instituted and I find my shelter, food and clothing there.”

The problem is to find the provisions to feed. The same Viṣṇucitta in the decade beginning with the verse—‘Navakāriyam’ IV, iv refers to two categories of persons. The first category consists of idlers who are a load and liability and who do not in the least assist in programmes to protect and promote the interest of society. It is not to condemn them totally as misfits of society, but to instil into their minds that they cannot evade their contribution to society and only remain a drain on the social wealth. The other category consists of people who shoulder the responsibility of distributing economic aid and prevent the economic wealth against pilfering and destruction. Reference is made on previous occasion to one by name Selvan of exemplary behaviour and outlook in charge of socio-economic administration, who was looked upon as one with affection flowing out to people and ever alert to the needs of the public. The relevant portion is worth quoting:

“Naḷirndā stīlan, nayācalan
abhimāṇa tuṅganai nādorum
Talinda selvansi-c-cevagam
Konda sengaṇmal tiru-k-kottiyūr
Kulirndu reginra kōvindan kunam pāduvār ullanttinuḻ
Vilainda daniyamum irakkadar
Mindu koḷḷa kilārzale”.

The looters cannot lay their hands on the crope grown in the region where people sing the virtues of Govinda who dwells happily in Tirukottiyur, where the service is accepted
of the pure minded Selvanambi offered every day who is the
noblest with affection and of spotless character and comfort-
ing habits.

This great man Selvanambi set up an administration in a way
that even the wicked, looters and plunders would not venture to
disturb the economic scheme arranged under the guidance of the
master. Godowns were not under look and key, but yet people
did not suffer for want of sufficient food. Nor did they act under
the pressure of greed to grab wealth.

This was the principle that Rāmānuja kept in mind when he
thought of an arrangement to help society economically in his own
way. While he discovered this in the ancient works on Vedic
culture, he also introduced an element of fascination towards the
super secular force in life which kept humanity together in mutual
respect and affection. Though he did not name the institution
Rāmānujakāta, the institution was run by his followers in his name.
The well-to-do would make an offer and stand by. There Kutas
used to feed those who came to them.

Agriculture Labour

The principle followed by Rāmānuja may be considered to be the
system of voluntary tenancy governed by the doctrine of regulated
labour which permits the toiling agent to retain a share and treat
his toil as contribution to service (service in the form of menual
labour) to the deity to whom the produce is conveyed. It may be
considered a cruel and cynical remark to state that attempts
connected with agricultural reforms are posing insurmountable
problems now perhaps because the deity concept is divorced from
the scene of integrated life.

Village Life

Likewise, Rāmānuja had relished the maintenance of small villages
around the temple in preference to big towns and cities which
paraded as the ‘pomp house’ of mighty monarchs and emperors.
His words in this connection addressed to the gathering at Mēlukōte
which had to be converted from being a dense forest to a habitable
locality are—

"Kutim kṛtva tasmin yadugiri tate nītya vasatiḥ"31

Small dwellings may be built on the slopes of Mēlukōte.
People must live permanently.
Rāmānuja had not relished the idea of converting the small villages into crowded towns.

He preferred a system where canals could be dug to make water available for perennial water supply.

"Kādam palavum tirindu ṭalverkku ariju or nilal illai—nirum illai"\textsuperscript{32}.

To us covering a long distance neither shelter nor water is within reach. ‘Shadow’ in this context is understood as shelter.

To solve this problem of water supply, Rāmānuja preferred a system which could provide for the construction of canals to make water available always. In that hilly region of Mēlukōṭe where his impact could be really felt in all possible walks of life, a good number of wells, ponds, lakes etc., were brought into existence indicating the working of the hygienic instinct of Rāmānuja. In almost all places we have side by side with the ponds, a mini pond. The tank Kalyāṇi that he got built in Mēlukōṭe is a marvellous structure with perennial supply of water from some spot in the underground and the ground tank at Tonḍanūr, a few miles to the south of Mēlukōṭe is a marvel of Rāmānuja’s engineering skill\textsuperscript{33}. In addition, trees and plants were grown in plenty to provide shade and scent. In other words, he preferred the protection promised by nature to the protection artificially substituted by the genius of the human mind.

**Division of Labour**

Though a person is competent to discharge any work assigned to him, yet it is an undeniable fact that by inheritance he has a knack for a particular type of work in life. This is the normal instinct accompanying from the time of birth and the instinct only requires a congenial environment for natural growth.

Side by side with this we find in experience what may be termed the grafted instinct, that is, in addition to the normal instinct that is associated with birth, another talent in the form of instinct shows itself also alongside the natural instinct. It is talent in the sense that is not common to human species. It is not unnatural because it is a normal aspect as the other instinct is. Thus we find rare cases of talents where the consideration of birth does not come in the way of recognizing the value of the talent. This is known as the abnormal side of the normal phenomenon and it is given the status and respect which the possessor of the talent in the form
of instinct would receive as an individual belonging to the species
to which this talent normally belongs.

This does not mean that Rāmānuja is quite blind to the distribu-
tion of work based on the inherited instinct which according to
tradition goes by the name of caste-based on the doctrine of ‘Karma’
or ‘performance frequency. Rāmānuja therefore rules out the
doctrine of inequality among individuals in society. The functions
of persons only enable them to rise higher in the same cadre to feel
the pulse of purity, freshness, enthusiasm and perseverance to move
further in the direction towards perfection.

Industrial Production

Rāmānuja Mēlukōte in particular accepted the services to the
temple of other classes of people, namely, potters, weavers, washer-
men, the bearers of the palanquin of the deity. The reposodistis
and several other groups formed parts of the temple upkeep\textsuperscript{34}. The
arrangement has in course of time greatly changed. His idea
seemed to have been to encourage small industries, keep people
engaged, find a use for what they produced and keep society self-
sufficient in that way. Industry as we understand now is the
substitution of inanimate energy for human energy. The advantage
of the industrial system is large production conserving human energy
and saving time. Human energy is forced to seek other venues of
activity since the machine has been substituted for the hand. This
idea of the advantage or otherwise of human energy being allowed
to enjoy ‘Leisure’ might have occurred to Rāmānuja or he might
have not preferred it. It is the belief even today among the
conservative traditionalists that over-production on the one
side, lack of opportunity to work on the other contribute to
a condition of restlessness which should not be permitted. It may
be noted in this connection that the women-folk would form plates
to serve the purpose of feeding. They were assigned the task of
keeping the temple precincts clean and attractive. The spiritual
responsibility of the women-folk was to keep the home and environ-
ment clean and pleasant.

Pooling of Resources: (Permanent—Periodic—General and Specific)

Pooling of resources is a pre-requisite to effect distribution in a
fair and satisfactory manner. The distribution is for the public
and to that effect collection is also from the public. The clouds
are formed from the ocean and they feed the land with water. The
unused quantity of the rain water enters the ocean again. This is the cycle of unending demand and offer. Without the clouds there could be no rains. Without the ocean clouds will not be formed.

Regular supply from the public for their welfare through the receiving centre is perhaps the basis of the law of taxation. The pooling is of various types. It may be permanent or periodic. It may be for a public purpose or to preserve a particular aspect of social life. The offer may be made regularly or it may take the form of a permanent grant or donation. The only binding factor is, in all these cases, the pooling authority in charge of the trust shall be barred from abusing the trust or diverting it as that would seriously affect the trust reposed by the public. In this sphere of building property for social welfare, Rāmānuja endorsed the system of philanthropy in its broadest sense. Following it many persons endowed temples and public institutions in particular with a portion of their personal assets. These were collected, preserved and developed to promote the type of social life that Rāmānuja envisaged. Gifts have been made on a large scale in various forms for different purposes under the broad heading “Charity and Endowment”. They are recorded in various inscriptions of Kāṇāṭaka. For example, an inscription from Belur dated A.D.1117 records 35. The consecration of the great temple at Velāpura of Belūr, Where the king was living dedicated to Vaiyaveṇāraṇyaṇa under the name of Chennakēṣava. According to this inscriptive evidence, he was devoted to the worship of Purushottama. He was in his residence Velāpura, and set up with faith the God Vaiyaveṇāraṇyaṇa and provided for the daily ceremonies, the decorations and the offerings three times to Vaiyaveṇāraṇyaṇa and Lakshmināraṇyaṇa, and for the livelihood of the Śrīvaishnava Brāhmaṇas, of the dancing girls, the potters on the vestments, the learned men, the garland-makers, lighters of lamps and all the attendants, he made grants of villages. Whatever surplus income may accrue, to be devoted to offerings to the faithful and to temple repairs. Thus was it ordered by the eleventh coronation, Vishnuvardhana Hoysaladeva.

A 14th Century inscription on the wall of the big kitchen of the Nārāyaṇaswamy temple at Mēlukōṭe records, that, while Vīra Baḷījaḷa was ruling the kingdom, Mādappadannāyaka and Kaṭappa-
dannāyaka, sons of Mahāpradhāna Perumāḷe dannāyaka of Eḷaṭale made a grant of land to Lakṣmaṇadās, in order to provide annually 15 gulas of eleyatti to God Tirunāraṇyaṇa of Mēlukōṭe 36.

Another inscription of the 14th Century found at Garuḍa temple
in the Nāmadakaṭte garden records that Immadi Rauvttarāya Mādappa-dannāyaka, son of Perumājudeva-dannāyaka of Heḍaṭale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumānār as Tirumāṇ (holy earth) to God Tirumanna Perumāḷ, as a charity\(^{37}\).

Another Telugu inscription in the characters of 16th and 17th Centuries found on the top of the rock in Mudibetta near the town Mēlūkōte records that may be it be auspicious obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. This is the service of the flower garden rendered by the illustrious Mahāmandalēśwara Rāmārajāyyadeva and Ucabajamma to God Nārāyaṇa\(^{38}\).

A Tamil inscription of the 14th Century in the temple at Tonnūr, records a gift of land to the Rāmānuja-Matha by the Mahājanas\(^{39}\).

The scheme of participation in a social set-up as envisaged by Rāmānuja, is demonstrated in the Karnāṭaka state. The idol of Śrī Nārāyaṇa at Mēlūkōte which gave a call to Rāmānuja to move towards it is a fact of experience among the orthodox. But from the social point of view as understood by Rāmānuja, it is of immense value to an alert and dynamic member of the society. Biography records that Rāmānuja left behind his ascetic robes and entered the region of Karnāṭaka in white robes. He changed over the his Sanyāsa dress at the lake, Vedapushkarini in the presence of the divine entity Dattatreya, carved in stone Mēlūkōte (the fort in the west) was a thick forest uninhabited. Rāmānuja first discovered the deity and built a township around it with the help, of course, of his disciple Vishnuvardhana. The region reminds one of the plan that Rāmānuja had in his mind to form a society where with the co-operation of one and all that glory of harmonious relationship could be experienced.

Treating the deity as the symbol of guiding spirit Rāmānuja personally attempted to induce persons to enter the society and maintain through their efforts that lofty level.

It is in Karnāṭaka that Rāmānuja actually tried his scheme of social structure and organisation. The dense forest became during his time a model village which served as a model for other places in South India. The village is rightly named 'Tirunārāyaṇapura'. It is a village presided over by Nārāyaṇa, the ground and goal of society (the term signifies the ground of existence and the goal of evolution, involving the principles of power and mercy). It is bountiful 'Tiru' where people are not denied their need nor are they over-loaded with plenty.

Rāmānuja next started to convert this region into a pretty
paradise. It is in this context that the secular mind appreciates Rāmānuja’s contribution to social welfare in different walks of life.

**Donations and Contributions in Karnātaka**

Under the inspiration of Rāmānuja was formulated an administration perhaps initiated by Vishnuvardhana himself. With the efforts of the Sthānikas local guardians of the Mēlukōṭe temple and the ācāryapurushas custodians of culture associated with the temple at Mēlukōṭe, the chieftains, the well to do nobles as also the common man came forward with rich offerings of village, lands, jewellery and whatever could be spared by them to be pooled together for the maintenance of the temple. The management was mostly with the temple Sthānikas.

The mode of utilising the contribution was in strict conformity with tradition of the ritual in the temple. To feed the visiting devotees the resident devotees engaged in various services not on a contract basis, for no compulsion was recognised which would interfere with the freedom of the spirit of service in worship. Even in the absence of Sthānikas and the ācāryapurushas on spiritual and administrative mission, their share of right was neither questioned nor denied. Inscriptional evidence is available in plenty from various sources over a long period of time; (the text and translation are given in the Appendix No. 2).

Even during the regime of the Mahārājas of Mysore we find several inscriptions about gifts offered in addition to service, strictly in conformity with the tradition that was obtaining in the temple. Even in the present day devotees in possession of fluence are engaged in following the lead given by the ācāryas.

**The Mite of the Acāryapurushas (Cultural Custodians) after Rāmānuja**

Natives of Mēlukōṭe who belonged to the ācāryapurushas branch have also contributed their mite in this direction by gathering a large body of Siśyas (disciples) from all communities in the State of Mysore. It may be mentioned in this connection that one Kesavacaryaswamin celebrated for his connection with Tiruvāimoli—the Drāvida Vedānta, had a son by name Srinivasa. When the boy was in his teens, under the inspiration of Lord Narasimha of Ahobilam now in the Andhra State, this moved to Ahobilam and was, to his surprise, led to the āśram of Sanyāsa under the name Adivan Ṣathakona Swamin. Under his influence Śrī Krishnadевarya the King of Vijayanagara wrote a book in Telugu under the name.
Ramana and the Economic Field

‘Amuktamalayada’ in which he particularly celebrated his guru, the Melukote ascetic and offered many gifts to the deity at Melukote. Subsequently the sisyas of the various acaryapurushas united to create institutions of their acaryas for purposes of arranging temple worship and feeding the devotees on special occasions. The Sthānikas (official retinue) also moved among the enlisted people belonging to the lay group to inspire the latter to make contributions to run the temple along the lines indicated by Sri Ramana jācārya.

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CHAPTER VI

Rāmānuja and the Social Field

Social Pattern Before the Advent of Rāmānuja—The Brahmin—
The Pioneer in the Field of Social Purity and Upliftment—The
Function of Ācārya—Enhancement of the Quality of Social Life
Through Practice—Rāmānujā’s Aversion Towards Discriminatory
Treatment in Society on the Basis of Mere Caste Hierarchy—The
Episode of Dhanurdaśā—The Stigma of Social Arrogance Removed
—The Tīru-k-Kulattār—The Sin of Segregation—Non-adjustment
and Accommodation—The Ṣattadārs—Origin and Early Habitation
—Inspired Privilege—Service to Ramanuja—Ṣattadars and the
Development of Art—The Contribution of Ṣattadārs—Costume,
Custom and Habit—Family Names—Position and Status of Women
in the Śrīvaiṣṇava Society.

Social pattern before the Advent of Rāmānuja

Hindu society, in the course of its evolution, has witnessed both
radical and progressive trends. In India, Hindu religion and
society were inseparable. To a Hindu his religion was a way of
life. Hence any reformer who wanted to reform Hindu society
had to be a religious man too. This was the trend in pre-Rāmānuja
period. The same may be applicable to Rāmānuja also. But the
nature and impact depended upon the personality of the individual
also who wanted to reform the Hindu society. The period in which
Rāmānuja lived demanded the reforming trends in Hindu society.
The emergence of Rāmānuja heralded a mass awakening in society
and became an all-inclusive movement.

The Brahmin—The pioneer in the field of Social Purity and
Upliftment

Brahminism has come to be associated with the most refined
section of society. The word ‘Brahmin’ is a cognate of the basic
Real which in the Vedaś is termed ‘Brahman’—the biggest and
therefore the best. It is because of this proximity of the Brahmin
in his outlook to the nature of Brahman that he continues to be
the best evolved.

"Mēvum nallōr
Ekkutta—vālar, Edu piṟappu, ēdu
yalvāga ninrōr, akkuttam, appiṟappu
avviyalvē nammai ḍikollume"

Fortunate people deeply devoted to Rāmānuja might have been wicked in deeds, polluted of pedigree or intolerable by nature, those very defects which moved them the Rāmānuja would also help me to keep near to him.

The vice if it leads man towards the wise, it takes the place of virtue. Vice gets transformed to virtue. The victim of such acts is the agent himself. The purport of the above verse is that persons with deep devotion might have been associated with any crime, birth and habit. These factors would be a source of encouragement for us to progress in life in the right direction. The idea behind this is that birth and behaviour do not always control the mind. This is the philosophy of Rāmānuja (which he preached and practised) based on aprthak-siddhi. Legends have been numerous in the Purāṇa regarding the treatment to be accorded to the brahmin class. The power possessed by the brahmin was far Superior to all other types of power. The incident is recorded in which Vaśiṣṭha the sage wielding spiritual power and Viśvamitra, a great warrior, an embodiment of secular power chanced to meet each other. An interesting development of this meeting is recorded in the Itihāsa and Purāṇas to emphasise the worth and value of both types of power. The King Viśvamitra openly admitted the inferiority of the material to the spiritual power, exclaiming—

"Dhiṅk balam kṣatriya balam,
Brahma tejo—balam balam"².

A brief biographic sketch of Viśvāmitra’s life is recorded in the Rāmāyaṇa. The warrior was over-powered by the mendicant, the latter wielding a power which would vanquish an enemy without extinguishing him. This power Viśvāmitra was able to possess after his encounter with Vaśiṣṭha. The brahminised warrior felt satisfied after he was acknowledge as such by Vaśiṣṭha. The impact of the Rāmāyaṇa on the social aspect of life is full and complete according to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

Amudanār describes Rāmānuja as—
Rāmānuja and the Social Field

“Irāmāyanam enṟum patti-veḷam kuḍi kōnda koil”.

Rāmānuja is a reservoir in which is gathered the flood of yearning for association, namely, the Rāmāyaṇa.

The purpose here is the demonstration of the basic principle in social life. The mode, if any, in society must serve to elevate, but the model should not be to pull down. This method of elevation in life starts from envy and jealousy which, though they are not virtues, may yet be converted into virtues provided they are not utilized towards supplanting or extinguishing the higher values of life accordingly on the part of the brahmin. It is his basic responsibility to educate, elevate and in the end, if there be a need, even to emulate the person who was formerly less fortunate. This social aspect by behaviour, admonition and by contribution was an important aspect of the brahmin which could not be neglected or set aside. The function denied, the spirit disappears and the claim becomes untenable.

Rāmānuja, belonging to the brahmin group, was aware of this. Strict orthodoxy prescribed a six-fold duty for the brahmin in society—Yaṭṭha and Yājana observe the ritual and direct the performance, Adhyayana—Adhyāpana—learning and teaching, Dāna and Pratigraha—offering and receiving offers.

The function of the Ācārya—Enhancement of the quality of Social Life through Practice

The ācārya held a loftier outlook. The mandate mentioned above relates to an aspect of life here, but such a life would be crippled and imperfect as long as the basic support of the life-stream is ignored or excluded. Life here must not only be smooth and healthy. It must also be happy and energetic. Thus the basic aim would be to enable every individual to realise the significance of that basic spirit and shapes life accordingly. Mere awareness of the goal is not more important than the keen desire not to miss the goal and, equally, the determination not to swerve from the path which is the only gateway to the goal. Persons choosing this way of life, caste, and other considerations apart, deserve full regard and allegiance. This is what Rāmānuja means by the term Bhakta-Samā-gama⁴ (association with the wise).

“Samsāra-viṣa-vṛksasya
dve phale amṛtopame
"Kādācit Keśava bhakti
Tad-bhaktairvā samāgamah"

The poisonous tree of the cycle of life projects two fruits which serve as nectar, sometime in life the devotional attitude towards the Lord or preferably to His devotees. (the company of the wise opens the eyes sometime in life towards wisdom).

The inequality which comes to light under the caste system is treated as a sign of defect in the context of Bhakta-samāgama (association with the wise).

This spirit of Rāmānuja was made known in his conduct before and after the ablution ritual in the Cauveri at Śrīrangam as previously stated. Another incident makes this point still clearer. Here it is the case of the difference in attitude that the two brahmin disciples of Rāmānuja exhibited. The two persons were none other than the eminent Kurēśa and Daśarathi. It is again a story which in itself may be of no significance to the common mind. But a great principle is discovered in it which is vital to life from the lofty cultural stand. Social custom demanded that a person of unclean stuff and style shall not move about in the midst of the elite and the elegant. As Rāmānuja was passing through the streets of Śrīrangam where men had gathered to have his darshan, it is reported that a certain woman was moving the opposite direction and She could not avoid being in the midst of the crowd in the presence of the acārya, Rāmānuja. Daśarathi and Kurēśa were heading the procession and served as the vanguard. Daśarathi advised the woman to recede and keep aloof till the acārya, passed through the street. The woman who found herself in a helpless situation mechanically exclaimed, "Master tell me whither I might go. I cannot fly. I am without wings. The earth is hard. I cannot cave in. I cannot get back for the river Cauveri is holy. I cannot move forward for the great acārya is coming". This observation quickly moved Kurēśa to reaction and his response to this situation was equally significant and elevating. Kurēśa addressed his friend against the attitude which prompted the woman to reveal her plight. Śāstras might mean pollution in the event of good and evil getting mixed. True culture demands that self-purification is preferable to directing others to behave.

This principle based on the regard that is due to every one under the Sun is not an innovation started by Rāmānuja or his contem-
poraries. The Guruparamparā records that this principle has traditional sanction for it. Śrī Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa has employed the method of Brahmamedha—the privilege of the saints and seers to a bird by name Jātayu when it laid down its life on behalf of Sītā a battle with Rāvana. Rāma was a human being, a prince with great accomplishments. The bird Jātāyu had for its privilege the accident of fighting against cruel power and yet it had the privilege of post-mortem treatment reserved for the most enlightened. Secondly, in the Mahābhārata Yudhīṣṭhira, the Paṇḍava chief, offered a similar treatment of Vidura, an uncle of his who unfortunately was deemed lower in casts, because he was a dāśiputra—the son of a maid servant. In the same way Periyanambi welcomed the privilege of offering Brahmamedha treatment to a sattāda Śrīvaishṇava, his classmate Māranērinambi by name, considering him as the ‘Brahmin in mind’, though not in body. This indicates the wisdom of the course that is to be adopted towards the ‘Godly’ in preference to the general course prescribed for the various casts and creeds to maintain social order not interfering with the tastes and talents of members constituting society.

An incident in the life of Rāmānuja relates to his association with people in society. Rāmānuja returned from Yadavaprakāśa, very sad and disappointed. He found the master not above an ordinary man, for he was still the victim of passions, envy and revenge though an exalted student of the Vedānta. While staying in Kaśī he noticed that one Kaṇcīpūraṇa, not of the Brahminic group, was in the service of the Lord Varadaraja in the temple. It would appear that the said Kaṇcīpūraṇa enjoyed the privilege of conversing with the presiding deity. The language of conversation of course must be beyond the range of human understanding. Rāmānuja was not a meditator or an upasaka, as it is said in the Veda for upasana is developing an attitude of mind to grasp reality as it is. The result would depend upon the quality of the upasana. All the shortcomings of the upasana (observation) would continue to the end, as stated in the Upāniṣads. This is termed as doctrine of Yathākratu namely, the approach determines the achievement. Unless the approach is clean, the goal cannot be clean. Therefore, true philosophy is the result of spontaneous revelation and the function of the mind is receptive alertness. Discussion with Yādavaprakāśa did not result in definite understanding of the problem. Consequently meditation on the object of thought was not possible. Rāmānuja was still at the stage of discussion. He, therefore, moved
to discover a person who could provide him with definite knowledge of the object of meditation. He discovered by chance that Kaścipūrṇa had the required knowledge in the form of intuition which is either a gift or the product of long standing pursuit. In his eagerness to secure this intuitive knowledge without delay Rāmānuja approached Kaścipurṇa. The treatment accorded to Kaścipurṇa is of a higher order, despite the fact that Kaścipurṇa did not belong to the Brahmin fold.⁸

"Kaścśārcana nirataḥ pureva
Kaścśīpūrṇāryam as varada sūnti—okti pātram
ācāryam nijam acikīrṣad apyavamśyam
nānvo bhavati Mahātmanām kulādiḥ."

As before, devoted to the worship of the Lord at Kaścī, He, Rāmānuja, desired to treat as his ācārya Kaścīpūrṇaryya who was the receiver of the utterances of the Lord directly. Though he belonged to a different caste, the worldly pedigree of the great does not come in for consideration.

"Purnā yadyapi varadānu—kampayā aham
mūyuktam dvijavara Laukika kramasya
Ityuktvā praṇatī—param sa tam nyarautsit
nociohrāya prathayati sajjanaḥ svakīyaṁ"⁹

No doubt I am what I am under the mercy of Lord Varada. O; noble brahim, it is improper that I should employ the technical formality. Having said so Kaścīpūrṇa halted Rāmānuja who knelt before him. Men of wisdom do not project their eminence.

Rāmānuja’s aversion—towards discriminatory treatment in Society on the basis of mere Caste Hierarchy

Rāmānuja had aversion towards discriminatory treatment in society on the basis of mere caste hierarchy to the neglect of the law of humanity, that the needs of the neighbour require pariority of attention and treatment. This doctrine did not, however, amount to denying and discarding, the functional value of caste in the social set up. The service aspect of caste system towards society calls for greater attention than the consideration for preserving personal equipment.

All the physical frames are but the product of Prakṛti, a material source with the three constituents of Satva (stamina), Rajas (Passion) and Tamas (Lethargy) mixing up in various combinations.
Each one of the combinations is an equipment for the discharge of a particular function in life of the owner of that frame or body. The body and the function are brought together in a co-operative effort to serve a purpose. Discipline, Sāṃskāra as it is technically termed, differs from body to body. The body, therefore, may have common features but the function to which it is put also determines its value. To ignore this is to interfere with the structure of social life. Such interference would amount to Samkars, adulteration, affecting the purpose of a healthy and orderly progress in society. In other words, awareness of the difference and the purpose for which the difference is recognised indicates the normal course of progress from the coarse to the refined stage in life.

If the constitution of the body is at variance with that of the mind in the human organism there arises the problem whether primary attention should be paid to the body or to the mind. A refined mind in the coarse body is preferable to a coarse mind in a refined body.

On an occasion when Rāmānuja was carrying on his studies with his master Mahapūrṇa, the wives of the pupil and the master were drawn into a quarrel in which the pupil's wife maintained that she was of a higher breed than the masters. This was an unfortunate incident between the two women. Normally the teacher's wife is entitled to respect to match the respect due to the teacher. But that was not the case to be here, for the interest of the self interfered with the discipline of civilized life.

"Toḷumṭīr kōḍumīn koṭṭin"

Engage yourself in service. (The term service precludes bargaining).

The purport is bow, give and take. Though inferior by caste if, in outlook and attitude, people are of the progressive order, mix with them for the purposes.

"Yasmin mleche api vartate
tasmai deyam tato grāhyam
sa ca pūjyo
yatā hi aham".

If it be found even in the unruly (mleecha) make the offer to him and receive the offer. He is as worthy as myself.

The purport is, if Bhakti is found even in a mleecha, the 'rough' person, one should adopt the principle of give and take. He shall
also be worthy of respect on an equal footing the with ME (The Lord of the Universe). This idea is gathered from the Ācārya Htdaya’.

Rāmānuja came to know of the incident and he was furious with his wife. Between the physical frame and the mental power, the mental power has a greater value and the physical frame shall not be allowed to come in the way of according due recognition to the mental power. But cast in that frame, should the mental power suffer restriction and humiliation? The answer is in the negative. Because the body is only an adjunct to aid the progress of the mental factor, if it does not move agreeably with the mind along the lines of discipline that would be considered as an aspect which may be overlooked by people who choose the line of discipline. Thus it is that, a superior mind in a inferior caste is not denied its place of respect in society. According to Rāmānuja the real glow of caste lies not in its birth, but in its functional power. Thus Rāmānuja’s view with regard to the physical body was that if it were conductive to elevation, it deserved respect. By itself, it merits neither respect nor condemnation. That being his view, Rāmānuja felt that the only limitation that the bodily frame could set as in respect of discharging the duties prescribed for various sects. That is more the responsibility of the owner of the frame than the person who is engaged in according service to him. No one individual is to be overestimated or underestimated and no one is to be excluded from his claim or share in the society. No one as a member of society can escape from making his contribution. Each individual has his place in society. Functional difference is to be retained. No chance is to be given to encroach upon the work of the other. Coercion leads to compulsion, compulsion to conflict which is unhealthy. Rāmānuja had his own conviction.

The episode of Dhanurdāsa—The stigma of Social Arrogance Removed

This attitude and behaviour of Rāmānuja is illustrated in the episode of Dhanurdāsa during his lifetime. The episode serves as a stern warning against possible lapses into arrogance. Dhanurdāsa was a person in the employ of a chieftain. He did not belong to the higher caste, namely, the tripravarmikas eligible to claim Vedic privilege. He came under the influence of Rāmānuja. He adopted the course of life which was free from elements which would pollute the social mind. One such was the awareness that a person is educated and civilized, and is worthy of respect in society. This attitude
normally carries with it the instinct of self-superiority that would permit the instinct to look down in some way or other the other members of society. Such a frame of mind is a hurdle against cultural development. Rāmānuja’s nephew Daśarathi and Dhanurdasa the disciple who functioned as the constant personal attendants, would be always together. Rāmānuja in the early hours of the day used to hold the hand of Daśarathi when he proceeded to the river Cauveri, to perform the ablutions. While returning from Cauveri, after ablutions, Rāmānuja would hold the hand of Dhanurdasa and reach his āśrama. The brahmin ascetic behaviour was not in conformity with the normal social system. The explanation was that the person belonging to the higher caste was conscious of the element of such superiority, a flaw according to Rāmānuja. Dhanurdāsa was free from it. In respect of devotion and attachment both were equal. But Dhanurdāsa was free from such flaw, as he had not any factor in himself to boast of, where as Daśarathi was the victim of the flaw brought about by the status of his birth. In the realm of healthy life, a factor to be avoided deliberately under all circumstances is the superiority complex. Otherwise the estrangement in society cannot be avoided. The contradiction apparently involved in this context of caste distinction and equal regard for all would be resolved only when the element of hierarchy is kept under check. It is not open to any one to ignore the functional demands of caste. What is expected is that the functional difference shall not affect the status of different sections of society, none of which can be excluded or avoided.

According to Rāmānuja, as revealed in this episode, humility is higher in value. Social contact with the attitude of personal humility is an accomplishment in culture, while patronage, the only other possibility, is an unhealthy aspect of character destined to lead to degradation. It also indicates superiority based on caste in the seare of advanced discipline on the part of the individual to serve society with ever decreasing self-interest. Caste system, therefore, has a social significance, in that it is progressive personal abstinence and readiness to assist others to grow in life.

The Tīru-K-Kulattār—The Sin of Segregation

The intention of Rāmānuja being to discover the most sacred instinct not inconsistent with the spiritual in the behaviour of
any group or individuals belonging to society, led him to recognize and include every one to shoulder the responsibility which his instinct permitted. Vanity or self-esteem as the basis of social disereimation was a taboo. In this connection the concept of 'Tiru-k-Kulattār' is an expression which emerges with a significance many which of the other groups of persons are not privileged to claim.

It is generally believed that Rāmānuja elevated a section of society to the status of 'Tiru-k-Kulattār'. The word 'Tiru-k-Kulattār' is an expression that can emerge only from persons of the status of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja would not degrade himself to the position of an observer satisfied with the external outlook and behaviour. He had the unique instinct and ability to connect it with the spiritual side of life. To impress upon the people the need to recognize this fundamentally normal nature, he gave expression to terms which were considered and soul-stirring. In the system of Rāmānuja the term Śrī associated with Śrīvaṁśa refers to an entity—an embodiment of compassion eternally associated with Viṣṇu, the all-pervading Lord wielding absolute power as Lord. The gap is between the sinning self and the flawless source of life; God is indeed infinite, but without the application of compassion chances of redemption are practically nil. As the law works in life, man's effort is a ceaseless movement from one discontent to another. Compassion extended by the Supreme bridges this gap and thus paves the way for gratitude for the aid and continuance of humility traceable to the inherent importance of the self aspiring for relife.

This is a spontaneous benefit unexpected. During the Sojourn to Mēlukōṭe from the fertile lands of Śrīrangam, Rāmānuja was in a region of thick jungle not knowing which way to move to meet the Lord of when he got a vision. The persons who moved about in that dense forest perhaps must have been girijans—tribes belonging to the giri—the hills. They were able to show the way out of the forest. They prepared the path of their own accord on seeing Rāmānuja in distress. As a result of their effort, Rāmānuja was able to reach the outskirts of Mēlukōṭe where he was able to see the Lord, the eternal elixir of life. His spiritual journey as reflected in the Vedas completed on this earth, thanks to the unsolicited aid of the hill tribes who inspite of their rough habits and ignorance put into use the finest spirit of inborn Compassssion and extended help to a person in need of it without
any thought of any return for their service. This spirit must
flow only from the Goddess of compassion Śri—a word retained
in Tamil as Tiru. Gratefully Rāmānuja recognised the tribals as
belonging to the Goddess Lakshmi. He did not change their
caste, as we understand. He made them realise the sacredness of
their divine instinct. Thus came into being a section with a
reputation beyond the reach of many other clans. Social habits
may not change; the skin, the bone and the blood may not permit
any mixture or modification. But the value and status as a
person on the way to assured perfection are recognised and
respected. This is the contribution in the outlook of Rāmānuja
in the matter of maintaining social relationship.

It may not be quite correct that the people whom Rāmānuja
recognised as Tiru-k-Kulattār belong to the fold of the excommu-
nicated on the basis of failures and excesses in life as members of
society. Even in modern times, defections are a reality and the
inadmissible doctrine of apartheid in practised even by the
opponents of apartheid in some form or other keeping a particu-
lar ambition in view. In Sanskrit this is called the doctrine
of Bāhiśkāra, excommunication.

The spirit which Rāmānuja followed is traced to an ancient
prescription in this regard contained in the following verse in the
context of bhakti.15

"Madbhakta-jana-vatsalyam
Pūjayām ca anumodanam
svyam abhucaśraṇam caiva
mad-arthe dambha varjanam
mat-katha sravane bhaktiḥ
svaśe-netra-ange vikriya
mamaṃ-smaranam nityam
yacca mam upa-jiviti
bhaktiḥ astavidhahi e sayasmin
miecchept varītate
tasmaideyam tato grahyam
sacapujyo yathahi aham".

Affection towards my devotees
Assent to offering him worship
Outspokenness in this regard
Shedding vanity in My interest
Eagerness to hear My glory
Manifestation of the attitude through Voice, 
Sight and limbs. 
Remembering Me every day and living under My protec-
tion.
And he who lives as My ward.

This is the eight-fold mark of devotion. The birth does not 
matter in the presence of this, since the aim of birth is to lead to 
this bhakti. This is said earlier and admitted by Rāmānuja. 
This verse is culled out from the commentary on the 85th Sūtra 
of the work Ācārya Hṛdaya—a work of the 14th Century scholar 
which is an evolution of the teachings of the Drāvida-Vedānta 
from the philosophic point of view, dealing with the conduct of 
life in society. Birth and breeding apart, if we find in any 
person the features mentioned in this verse, he is recommended 
to be regarded on a par with the Lord Himself. The verse is 
both our hope and despair, for, the status of esteem is not denied 
to any one, but to work for the status is beyond normal means in 
a world of conflicting interests. The factors present in a person 
which command universal adoration, irrespective of the limita-
tions introduced by the birth factor are the following—

Men are treated as belonging to an exclusive class of Mleechas 
if birth or jati (caste) is the only basis for dignity or respect as a 
member of the society.

The spirit behind this attitude is that the privilege to move 
towards perfection is universal and the right to deny such 
privilege does not belong even to a single being, however great 
he may be. This is the doctrine of accommodation not involving 
adjustment.

Non-adjustment and Accommodation

Constitutionally in the eye of the Veda, every functionary is a 
Mleecha (renegade)—a person who fails to conform strictly to the 
code of conduct. It is in this context the doctrine of mercy on 
the part of the saviour comes to be recognised. The function of 
grace is to assist in overcoming the abnormal trend in life based 
on psychological promptings. As a substitute for punishment, 
grace operates to link the psychological course with the logical 
and it is this blend of psychological impulse that assures man 
true freedom in life. The aim of all is not to be the untouchable 
of the Lord. In this light it would be an unpardonable crime to 
be an untouchable personally in spirit and apply the doctrine of
untouchability to another member of society. Therefore, eradication of untouchability will not be a reality unless the partners in apartheid jointly realise the basic factor of untouchability. This doctrine is revealed in the Superb expression of Kuréśa—the great disciple of Rāmānuja in one of his Stotras.16

"Parasparā-nica-bhāvaiḥ
mad deśi-kaiḥ
parijanaṁ tava sangasīya".

May I be in the company of your devotee, My leaders in life who behave towards each other in humility.

Every member entertains that he is an untouchable. With this attitude of humility and the realization of the position of the self in relation to the Supreme Spirit, the great men come to lead us and they are therefore the ācāryas or guides in society and they are all without exception engaged in ceaseless service to the Lord. Kūrēśa prays that he might be admitted to the group of such persons. The doctrine does not preach the principle of exclusion. On the other hand, the true implication is to check aggression through practice. Aggression is discouraged not only for others who want to be aggressors, but also for the person who discourages aggression. It is in this sense that Rāmānuja preferred the good company that he enjoyed in life.

In the Tīru-k-Kulattār context of treatment, Rāmānuja observes another point which escapes the attention of an alert mind. An instinct insignificant in itself in a particular set-up is charged with a spirit of powerful glory which it derives from the divine influence. What happened actually was that by chance and by instinct the natives of the forest (girijanas) (the term pañchama may not be exclusively applicable to this batch cleared the path and helped Rāmānuja to use this path when he discovered his deity. This little instinct got enriched in value in the outlook of Rāmānuja. An instinct on the part of Śrī or Tīru to prepare the path for mankind is to move from grief to bliss. This is the functional status recognised and the pride of the Tīru-k-Kulattār is that they have a chance or opportunity of realising the best worth of their habits. Thanks to the association of Rāmanuja, the doctrine here again is that all that is needed for man is purification, rising above misconception and not to tarnish his own image by indulging in limitations or deserting his native habits, the phrase occurring in the Bhagavad-gītā—
“Svesve karmaṇi abhirataḥ” devoted to natural work, may be remembered to serve as the guiding star in life. The practice of this principle has been recorded in the Guruparamparāprabhavam—a treatise on the life of the Śrīvaishnava ācāryas mainly from the spiritual point of view.\textsuperscript{17}

“Vipraku gōtra, sūtra, charana kūṭasther
parāśara parāśrya, bodāyanadigal
prapanna jana kūṭastha, paraṇkuśa
parakāla yatisvarādigal.\textsuperscript{18}

As regards the twice born, the forerunners of the family, the clan and sect are respectively parāśara, pārāśarya and bodhāyana. As regards the prapanna, the, Śrīvaishnava, the forerunners are respectively—Paraṇkuśa, Parakāla and Yatiśvara Rāmānuja.

The caste-bound section, that is the brahmin, is guided by parāśara, Vyāsa and Bodhāyana. The spirit-bound section without restriction follows the lead of Paraṇkuśa, Parakāla and finally Rāmānuja. \textit{Tirukkulam} belongs to the latter group. The first section refers to the material aspect of life in the progressive direction, the second relates to the cultural aspect of life to be preserved. Material progress is a move from imperfection to perfection, progressive refinement in life. The second is retention continuum. Social activity is the result of qualitative change as is commonly understood. But, according to Rāmānuja, is an orderly life without a qualitative change in different phases. Rāmānuja’s socialism is to regulate and not to introduce new from. From his point of view Rāmānuja is a socialist While observing the rules and regulations under the caste system which have been neither ignored nor under-valued, a point to be remembered is that the polish of the system should not be allowed to fade.

The Śattādārs

In this connection it would not be out of place to mention the special status of a group of Vaiṣṇavaites who chose to be the disciples of Rāmānuja and confined themselves to functions connected with the temple and the devotees; they were called, it is maintained in tradition, Śattāda Śrīvaishnavas. The term Śattāda is interpreted in different ways from the caste point of view, to which Rāmānuja does not attach too much importance.
except as a mark of class discipline. The Šattadārs are those who do not wear the sacred thread which entitles them to study the Vedas and the Vedānta as the traivārnikas are entitled to do. On the other hand, they are not denied the fruits of Vedic study, for they are given the initiation through what is known as Pañchasamskāra and introduced to the study of the Drāvida-Vedānta which does not insist on the wearing of the sacred thread as a precondition to the study of the Veda, in the same way in which the traivārnikas are not permitted to study the Drāvida-Vedānta unless they accept initially the Pañchasamskāras. The word Šattāda may therefore be applied to both the communities who specialise separately in the two Vedāntas. The person who does not wear the sacred thread is a Šattāda, not wearing, from the point of view of Sanskrit Veda. In a similar vein, the men wearing the sacred thread not qualified to study the Drāvida Veda is also a Šattāda Brahmana. The true Śrīvaisthavas who can hold the office of an ācārya; therefore, is one who has access to both the branches of Vedānta—Sanskrit and Drāvida. Rāmānuja recognised the rank and status of a community named Šattadārs. Šattada, the term is used to distinguish from the term Šattina. Šattina means wearing the sacred thread and entitled to study and follow the Vedas. Šattada refers to a sect which is denied the above privilege;²⁹ It includes all the non-brahmins. Among them a group emerged accepting the view and way of life of the Śrīvaisthava. Even among the group of Šattinabrahmins a few come under the category of Śrīvaisthavas. The Šattada Śrīvaisthava include the non-brahmins in the Śrīvaisthava fold.

Not all the non-brahmin Śrīvaisthavas are technically Šattadārs. They must have constituted a small group. They must have been forward among the non-brahmins group from very early times. They must have preferred a status for themselves between the brahmins and the non-brahmins as commonly understood, on account of their vocational inclinations, namely, the art of healing, the art of decoration and a few manual performances of the socio-religious order.

The distinction maintained by this group as an element between the brahmin and the non-brahmin in the accepted sense has created a problem of its status at the time of origin. The Šattadārs claimed on the basis of Agnipurāṇa that they were brahmins, but they neglected the sacred thread and the study of the Vedas for a long time.²⁰ They would, therefore, accept a
status higher than a non-brahmin. Attempts are also afoot to revive the old habits of brahminism and to reestablish their brahminism. The period of brahminic lapse must have been over many centuries. During the time of Rāmānuja, they remained Sattada Śrīvaisṇavas. They were not anxious to reclaim brahminism in preference to Śrīvaisṇavism which they considered must precious and permanent.

The present age finds a very small percentage of brahmins continuing in form and spirit the Vedic practice. Reasons are not difficult to find. The strains and stresses to which the land of the Vedic seers was subjected to by the invasions and heretic protestations deny ever safety to the brahmin creed. Along the passage of time, the brahminism has been gradually losing its vigour and vitality. Yet the name and the aim have a fascination for mankind which has ceaselessly started to attack the contemporary representative as an intermediary.

Rāmānuja insisted on the permanent value of Śrīvaisṇavism—a characteristic which covers the whole universe. But brahminism and non-brahminism confined to modes of approach were held secondary in importance. He, therefore, did not insist on the Sattadars to wear the brahmin badge. The practice is running as it existed during the time of Rāmānuja.

Tolerance, dignity of status, functional distinction, non-encroachment, confidence in happy life was promised by Rāmānuja to them and finally wiping out the element of ego, the root of all social evil, they were given posts conforming to their power of functioning Rāmānuja was interested in functional ability.

Origin and Early Habitation

The Sattada Śrīvaisṇava community is a community existing from the origin of the human race. It is generally believed that they had their origin in Tamil Nadu, they also stayed in Andhra. The Sattadārs who chose to be under the influence of Rāmānuja were called the inhabitants of Venkaṭapura—the locality named after the presiding deity Śri Venkaṭeśwara. Their casts originated from those who served in vaiṣṇavaite temples. They migrated to different places inhabited by the vaiṣṇavas. They are largely inhabited in Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnata and speak the respective regional languages—Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. In the region of Mēlukōte the Sattadars built a village and identified themselves as Bethamangal Sattadārs, they also migrated to Orissa, wast Bengal
and Madhya Pradesh. Their population in all is approximately fifteen lakhs all over India. We come across different groups in this community Śrīnadam-
. tāngis, who participated in processions and decorations of the deity and the bearers of the palanquin in which the deity is seated; they are named as Tōlukku-Iniyan (the deity born on the shoulder produces a sense of thrill). In addition to these, there emerged another batch which was not interested in the land of birth or adoption, but which welcomed the functional dignity associated with the clan. They came to be designated as the Sātyika Śrīvaisṇava. The word Sātyika emphasises the power of Śatvaguna of pure knowledge.

Their mother tongue is Tamil, but they speak Telugu and Kannada also because of their migration to Āndhra and Karnāṭaka. The people living in southern most parts of Tamil Nādu speak Tamil. They are called Kovithuraiyar.

The endogamous sub-divisions of this caste are—Ekakshari, Chathurakshari, Asthakshiri and Kulāsekara; there is also a group known as Chinnavaisnavas. In the Madras Census Report of 1901, they are summed up as being a Telugu caste of temple servants supposed to have come into existence during the time of Vaisnavaite reformer Rāmānuja. Eka—one, akshari—syllable, hope to get salvation by reciting the one mystic syllable, om, while the Chaturākshari believe in the religious efficacy of the four syllables of Rāmānuja. The Asthakshari hold that the recitation of eight syllables—om—na—mo—nārā—yaṇaya—om. Salvation to Nārāyaṇa will ensure them external bliss and the Kulaśekaras claim to be descendants of the vaisnava saint Kulaśekara Ālvar. All these Sattadārs their sub-divisions closely imitate the Tengalai vatsnaya brahmans and are strictly the followers of Rāmānuja. The Sattadārs are described in the census report of 1871 as religious mendicants, who live one begging alms, priests of inferior temples, priests of Śūdra castes, and have recruited their number by the admission into their fold of individuals who have been excommunicated from higher castes.

Mysore Census Report of 1891 mentions that Sattadārs are styled as Khadrivaisnavas, Sattadaval, Chātali Kuleśekhara and Samerava, these names might have irritated them and they took pains to cast them off and enrolled themselves as Prapanna Vaisnava, Nambi, Venkaṭatpura Vatsnava and so on. They hated the idea of being tabulated as Śūdras. They also called themselves as Dāsanambis, Nātāchāramurti and so on. They are at Śrīvilliputtur in Tinnevelly district.
They are Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇavas of Tenkalai persuasion. Their gurus are known as Paravasudēva. They have Sadacharulu, who act as their agents and brand their shoulders with the Vaiṣṇavite emblems, the Saṅkha and Chakra and initiate them into the Vaiṣṇava religion by whispering into their ears the word Rāmānuja.

In Tamil Nādu, the people of this caste lived mostly in villages until recently.

**Inspired Privilege**

The religious fervour which distinguished the Śattadārs as the exclusively privileged to carry the palanquin on their shoulders on occasion of processions in which the deity is kept moving is clearly traceable to the function of Hanumān recognised as an authority on linguistics (Navavyakarṇa Paṇḍita). Hanumān enjoyed the privilege of carrying on his shoulders both Rāma and Lakshmana. It was his exclusive privilege to bring the life-saving herbs without which the army would not recover from the effects of poison. Precisely with this temperament the Śattadārs have been exercising under permission of ācārya, the exclusive privilege of being the personal archakas or worshippers of Hanumān.

The sanctity of the expression Śṛipadaṁ tāngi—the moving foot rest of the divine is traceable to Hanuman who is known among Śrīvaiṣṇavas as Śrīya tṛuvadī. Hence it would be clear here that caste and the āśrama of organic life are not regarded as an exclusive need to a life in its march to perfection. Consequently regard or aversion for any caste as such does not arise nor does it deserve special consideration.

The interest in the medical field is also traceable to the part played by Hanumān in the epics. Śattadārs are experts in testing medical worth and value of herbs, fruits and flowers alike. Sandal paste was extensively used as an external paste to ward off unhygienic effects of nature. Hence the group on that account was accorded a status next to the philosophers who devoted themselves to maintaining spiritual health.

**Service to Rāmānuja**

To commemorate the event of Rāmānuja’s arrival at Mélukōte on the two occasions of his moving away from Śrīrangam westwards for the first time and again on the occasion of his return from Delhi bringing with him the iconic figure of the deity who was endearingly addressed as Ėlvapāḷai—the child of my fortune, his followers,
particularly Šattadārs, prepared a floral crown and offered it for wearing to Rāmānuja on the sixth day of the birth-day celebration of the ācārya celebrated over a period of ten days. Since the ācārya left behind his ascetic robes and took in exchange the white robes for period, that particular day in the celebration of which the Šattadārs played a prominent role is described as ‘Delhi Uttsavam’ or ‘Veḷḷaiśāttu-p-padi’—which is wearing the white robes. This was the privilege of the Šattadārs and the function was continued without a break till very recently. Modern pulls and pressures from the secular side led to the stoppage of the peculiar privilege of the Šattadārs who migrated to different places unable to maintain the disciplined life of welcoming economic discomfort. Even today at Mēlukōte a floral crown is brought to the temple on that particular day and it is put on the head of Kuruśa, the alter ego of Rāmānuja. On that occasion the group of Šattadārs is singled out for special honour in the assembly. This is recorded in the Temple Manual.

Art Development

Šattadārs are generally known for their talents. They are well-versed in the field of astrology, medicine, music, dance and in the art of decoration. Both men and women are experts in fine arts. They are immersed in Bhagavat-bhakti and singing in praise of Almighty and in bajana and Kalakshepams (discourse). Side by side with the art of decoration, the art of dancing or Abhinaya was developed which found its source in religion. Even as the image of the deity conveyed the intent of philosophic life in the various postures, the purpose of the dance was also to show to the eye of the recipient the significance of philosophic life in the presence of the deity by employing various moves and postures. The central idea was one and the same to reveal the nature and purpose of life in all possible ways for the benefit of people of varying capacities to grasp the value of life. This was taken as a privilege by the ladies. Even long before Rāmānuja, the ācāryas who preceded him specialised in the art of religious abhinaya before the deity. They selected men of outstanding ability in the field of music and dancing and they developed the art of conveying the philosophy of life expounded in the Drāviḍa-vedānta in the presence of the deity. They introduced what may be known as audio-visual system of communication. This was confined to the experts in the Udbhaya-vedānta and that system has been continued to this day by the specialists who have been known as Ariyars (the Chief).
This talent of Śattadārs was recognised and utilised by Rāmānuja. They were allotted duties big and small. Those who dwell in villages were mostly archakas and in divyadāsas (Holy Places) like Śrīrangam and other eminent Śrīvaisnavā temples they had been allotted duties and were given due temple honours. They led a simple and scholarly life and were respected and rewarded by the public. Their daily routine was to seek alms. They lived on Unchavṛthi (alms)²⁹.

The contribution of the Śattadārs

Profession and Occupation—Coming to the part played by the Śattadārs in society, they contributed their talents by taking up different kinds of professions and occupations which served the society and as their livelihood. They were well-versed in the field of medicine. The genius of testing the medical worth and value of herbs, fruits, flowers, alike, made them take up the profession of Ayurvedic doctors³⁰. Some of them took up cottage industries like making cot tapes false plaits, Kumkum, Nānam fan and alike. They were well-versed in the science of astrology. They engaged themselves in making Vāhanas (vehicle), drawing divine pictures, decorated wedding pandals. During the time of Rāmānuja they held many posts in temples at Śrīrangam, Tirupati, Thirukkōtti-yur, Mēlukōte, Kāncipuram and alike and were priests in the Hanumān temple and were reliable confidants of Rāmānuja and served him and implemented his reforms faithfully. The earned name in society by helping society in all manners. They had even sacrificed their lives in propagating Vaiṣṇavism and protecting temples and their properties from enemies from within and without. They prepared sandal paste which was used as an external paste to ward off unhygienic effects of nature. Flowers were used to develop the sense of art in the preparation of garlands, they toiled in the garden and made garlands to offer it for their Lord. They worked in Nandavanams, participated in temple processions and decorated the deity. They were the Palanquin, bearers. The women-folk also engaged themselves in the task of keeping the entire area of the temple clean and attractive. They wrote pictures on the floor representing the art scenes. The principal occupations of the Śattadārs are making garlands, carrying torches during the God’s procession and participating in the procession of the deity. They also make umbrellas, flower baskets and boxes of palmgra leaves and prepare the sacred bolls of white clay for making the Vaiṣṇavite Sectarian
mark and saffron powder. They sell turmeric, colour powders, some acted as priests to Balijas and Komatike at whose death ceremonies, the presence of the Sattadars is essential. They supply flowers and tulasi (basil) leaves for worship and watch the gate of the temple during the night and they also develop the art of abhinaya (pose) in the presence of the deity. They also engage in business and agriculture.

**Dress, Custom and Habit**

The Sattadars have their heads completely and tie their lower cloth, put nāmam on their forehead, wear tulasi—(basil) māla (garland). The Sattadār mendicants can be recognised by the flat gourd-shaped brass pot and palm leaf which they carry. The Sattadār women dress just like Vaiṣṇava brahmin women.

In the former days, they observed a festival called Ravikāla Uttavam which now goes by the name of Gandapadi Utsavam (Sandal powder). The custom of Menarikem, according to which a man marries his maternal uncle’s daughter is observed.51 The marriage of the widows is not allowed. They are Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇavas of Tenkalai persuasion. They undergo the branding ceremony (Samśrayaṇa) of the Vaiṣṇavite symbols by their ācāryas. They perform the last rites of the Śūdras and the Komistis. They live near the temple and recite Tamil devotional hymns on equal basis with the brahman functionaries.32

Regarding their habits, the consumption of alcoholic liquor and animal food is strictly prohibited. Some of them bury dead and others burn.

Their usual agnomen is Aiyar, Dāsa-Nambis, Muthalis—a term denoting respect in Vaiṣṇava terminology. There is mention about Sattada Mudalis, such as Śrīkulašekaraperumal, Pattrapiran, Dāsar, Pillainranga Villidāsar, Rāmānuja Velaikkarar, Rāmānuja’s army called Velaikkarapadi consisted entirely of Sattadars.33

Sattadārs family names have been coined in such a way as to indicate the places where they lived or from where they migrated. They are—Tirupathi Valiū, Sonijar, Redlapillar, Nellorer, Tiru-K Kovillar, Śrīvilliputhoorar, Kumbakonathar and alike.34 Some of the names arising out of the avocations they pursued are—Kovilar, Poovular, Sannanthur and alike.

Some were called after the titles they received due to their special traits or performances—Aravamtheever, Pillalu, Kanthadaikulam, Prapanna Vaiṣṇava, Sarvika Vaiṣṇava, Kulašekara Vaiṣṇava, Rāmānuja.
Rāmānuja elevated this section of a community to a place of honour in the society by imposing on them the Śrīvaishnava culture. His injunctions to his disciples and society was that they should guard themselves against pride of caste, wealth and knowledge. He struggled hard to emphasise the need for social cohesion humanitarian solidarity. He preached and practised humanism and practised humanism and love among the fellow beings. The Sattadārs served him and implemented his reforms faithfully. Immensely pleased with the sincere and devoted work of these people, Rāmānuja blessed them and admitted them to Śrīvaishnava fold. He visualised the volition of a society without hierarchy.\(^{36}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{"Tonḍa-k-Kulattil uḷḷir vanḍu} \\
\text{adi taḷḍuḥu..... paṇḍai-k-kulattai} \\
\text{tavirṇdu pallāṇdu enmine".}^{37}
\end{align*}
\]

You people belonging to the group of the devotees do come and worship at the source, give up the habit of the former or the previous environment and pray for the preservation of that.

He gave importance to functional recognition and service. During his time they were held in high esteem. Rāmānuja established a code to organise the temple affairs which covered the aspects of ritual and management. The non-brahmins were permitted to take up service in temple which not only provided employment, but also induced service motto of which Rāmānuja was very particular. Many of the key posts such as temple accountant, manager, was given to the member of the Śūdra agricultural community—the Vellalas. The task of offering coconut to the deity was given to a member of the weaver community. The Sattadārs were permitted to take up service in the Śrīvaishnava temples. There was a group of Śūdra house holders permanently attached to the temple service. The ritual roles of them were maintained according to the rules prescribed in the code of Rāmānuja. This reflects the apparent liberalism of Rāmānuja in his capacity as sect organiser and leader. In the context of the ritual, various classes of persons were permitted to participate provided they had faith in the ritual. Sattadārs were given a legitimate place and honour in the temple and society\(^{38}\). As a part of the scheme of the socio-economic and religious service, Rāmānuja admitted Sattadārs into his fold and they were given a recognition in the society.
Tirupathi temple reached its pinnacle of glory under the vijayanagara emperors. The rise of the temple was based on its ancient sacred character in part, on a traditional relationship with Rāmānuja Krishnadévarāya, Sālva Narashima and others supported it by extending royal patronage. Numerous references are found in inscriptions of granting substantial wealth to the temple, and also for the appointment of the Śattadārs in the temple service.

**Position and status of women in the Śrīvaiśṇava Society**

Improvement in the status of women in the social and religious walks of life, was another notable contribution of the Śrīvaiśṇava society. In the society of orthodox traditions women were not generally endowed with social status of rights and privileges in the modern sense. They enjoyed enough freedom in the family and were respected in the society. However, there did not exist public or private institutions to impart general education to and women were not allowed to participate in religious discussions on par with men in public. But it has been rectified by Śrīvaiśṇava tradition; there are women saints such as Andal and the existence of a large group of saintly women devotees of Rāmānuja we find stray references to women’s participation. Andal—wife of Kurésa—disciple of Rāmānuja participated in the open discussion along with men on the role of sanctity in life. This reveals that Rāmānuja recognised merit in women.

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7. *Note* : *Upāsana : Upāsana* or meditation is a mental act with a purpose. The object contemplated should not be missed and the unwanted object should not be allowed to stay. This twin purpose determines the nature of *Upāsana*. The mental act is the follow-up of threadbare discussion on the nature of the object contemplated.
10. Ālvārs : *Divyaprabhandam*, Tirumālai, verse 42.
11. Nāyānār: Ācārya Hṛdaya, Prakārṇa—1, Sūtra 86.
15. Commentary on the 85th Sūtra of the work Ācārya Hṛdaya.
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34. Ibid., 30.
35. Ibid., 31.
36. Stein Burton: 'Medieval India and Social Mobility' (Comparative
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   1968, P. 36.
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CHAPTER VII

Rāmānuja—The Culture-Based Socialist

Religion Basic to a Synthetic Perception—The Social Status of Different Functions Vital to Hold Society Together—Compassion as the Basis to Hold Society Together—The Procedure Adopted to Spread the Above Culture Among the Masses—Intellectuals and their Contributions.

Religion and Ritual are respectively knowledge and behaviour on the part of an individual who is after maintaining the very best in life. They constitute the cultural backbone of individual life in all its aspects. It is the acquisition of the individual. It is to spread this individual acquisition among the masses that intellectuals are introduced into society. This is cultural socialism. It is in this context the institution of temples and worship in the temples become significant. The role of Rāmānuja in propagating cultural socialism is discussed.

Religion basic to Synthetic Perception

Religion as a part of experience has provided for temple worship. Our activity is conditioned by circumstances, helpful and hostile. The persistent ambition is to neutralise hostile forces, if they could not be converted into helpful forces. By instinct a Super-power is approached to achieve the ambition with firm faith that it is both potent and compassionate, Kāruṇīka and Sarasvāra. Steady attachment to this source—power, commonly remembered as God, is religion. In other words, firm faith in this entity of Mercy-Power and allegiance to it in all walks of life is the distinguishing mark of religion which otherwise is a secular life with or without purpose. Any activity which is linked to Religion is a ritual. The temple is the best suited centre to experience religious life and to perform ritual acts. Ritual is also religious because it closely follows the spirit of religion. The significance of religion and ritual is the awareness that without a Super Power to assist, human progress is
not possible. Human activity which is secular in character by itself may not be a potent instrument to realise the ambition of life. Hence associating the Super-human power in some form or the other in the performance of the act comes to be known as ritual. When the human and Super-human forces are associated, the relative contribution of the two forces in combination varies depending upon the mental power of the agent who embarks on a procedure to gain his point in life.

The Social Status of different functions Vital to Hold Society Together
Being convinced that without the Super Power, life becomes meaningless and realising also the strong inclination towards secular attractions in life and following the time honoured tradition, Rāmānuja emphasised the importance of developing a temperament which would not eschew the spiritual side of life.¹ This idea is emphasised in the *Vedānta Sūtra* which discusses the source of wish-fulfilment.

"Phalam atah upa-pattaḥ
Paramāt Brahmaṇa eva
Karamabhiḥ upāsanenu ca ārādhitaḥ
bhūgāpavarga—rūpam phalam siddhayati".

Benefits, earthly or heavenly, can be reaped only by winning the grace of God through prayar or ritual performance.

Even in religious life where the spiritual aspect of life prevails over other aspects touching the body and the mind, men are not called upon to give up their functional style.

"Sarvāni Kāmyāni api Karmāṇi
.........mayi Sanyāsta-kartṛtvādikāḥ
Kurvāṇaḥ mat—prasādat.........
avikalam praproti"."²

Performing every kind of activity even though that be Kāmya, with a narrow end, in view, disassociating from the feelings of personal agency, performance and result, the person only by my grace obtains, the true reward in full.

What is of special significance in the temple is that every one is regarded as entitled to equal status of treatment. The contributions that different types of people make to the temple are all treated as of equal value. With this equality recognized and admitted and
preserved, the need never arises for one to adopt an alien role in service.

"Yathodite Karmani abhirato narah Siddhim vindati"³.

Devotion to the duty assigned to a person leads him to perfection.

Thus the archak or the actual worshipper of the image will not be involved in any other form of service; even the Paricharaka (servant) and the Board or the Pathaka (Reader). There are other categories—the lamp bearers, the flutist, the florist and a host of others. The duty and the atmosphere of the temple would serve to preserve the spirit of divine presence and devotion revealed in service. It would serve as a background for healthy conduct in society. This spirit becomes a habit. The habit becomes precious and pleasant with the knowledge of life in its essence derived through learning from books and observing the habits of the wise.

*Kūḍi iṟundu kuḷiṇdu"⁴

Please get together, keep together and feel comfortable.

This is the basis for the doctrine of co-operation. To keep together happily. This attitude and walk of life could not be missed by any one. This is basic to life. Variations there may be in the application of this principle. Those variations regarded as cult. Rāmānuja recognizes the claim of life also in religion and he does not plead for the substitution of one cult for another by indefensible means, lest such a trend be regarded as a form of external force.

"Mėlainṭār Seyvanagal veṇḍavane"⁵.

We prefer the performances of the ancients.

The temple, therefore, is an institution serving the cause of an important aspect of life in which appear as prominent the following—a respectful outlook, while-hearted contribution, personal humility, co-operation and a sense of contentment and satisfaction, besides the keen desire to keep these tendencies alive and active. The temple serves as the symbol of a society where vice does not rule and want is not aggravated, duty is not neglected and encroachment allowed. This is the social significance of life in the temple. No distinction is made between the saint and the savage, the Sanyāsin and the serf. The rich and the poor, the familiar and the unfamiliar, man and woman, the worker and the visitor in the temple. If this act is practiced in society, it will also be a temple. The spirit of
the temple re-lived in society, makes for heavenly life, but the converse is not a guarantee. If in the temple, the non-temple way of life is introduced, it becomes the centre of strife and pollution and loses its claim to be a temple. Festivals serve as occasions for the gathering of people in large number to experience the joy in a society that is well organised. This refines human mind. Commenting on the verse—

"Yetuanya—devatā—bhaktāḥ".

Those who are the devotees of outsiders.
Rāmānuja observes—

"Sarvasya mat—śārīratyā madāt makatvena Vastuto mam eva yajnate".

Actually every thing is inhabited by me. Hence any worship—if it be genuine—is worship of Me.

Cf. "Avar avar Iṭaiya var kuraivilar".

The deities recognised are not in any way defective.

Compassion as the basis to Hold Society Together

The old rituals of Hinduism confined to the higher castes are replaced by the Vaiṣṇava rituals, such as the Pañcasanskara of the Bhāgavata tradition, prescribed for all irrespective of castes and sects. The sacrificial worship of the twice-born comes to be replaced by image worship opened to all castes. The deity incarnate in the image is held to be the highest form of God-head.

Temple worship comes to the forefront. The entire community sustains the temple and participates in its ceremonial functions. Vedanta Deśika quotes from an ancient text Varahapurāṇa—that the observance of untouchability in the temple is an henous sin. This work epitomises the life of a Śrīvaiṣṇava as practised by Rāmānuja and the value of this life is the wiping out of hierarchy in society on baseless convention.

The conventional caste distinctions are said to be obliterated among the devotees of Viṣṇu. The Śrīvacanasabhushana regards the enquiry about the caste of a devotee as equivalent to suspicion about one's mother's chastity. To look upon the image of Viṣṇu as merely a physical object is equally a mark of debasing outlook. In an attempt to elucidate the stand adopted by Rāmānuja, following the clue available in the Śrīvacaṇabhuṣaṇa. Vedanta Deśika the follower of Rāmānuja, has discussed this whole question in his Rahasyatrāpa in the chapter called 'Prabhava Vyavasthādhikara.'
While this doctrine conduces to social integration among the devotees, what should be a Vaisnava's attitude towards those who fall outside the bounds of the Vaiṣṇavas. The criterion of true Vaiṣṇavism is enunciated by Hanjiyar as quoted to Idu—a compassion to all beings that suffer without any enquiry regarding their merits. Compassion, truly universal, is regarded as the fundamental mark of a Vaiṣṇava. The pathways to God formulated in the older Hinduism as Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti are discarded in favour of prapatti which later is held to be capable of universal adoption unlike the superseded pathways. Though the Vedānta Sūtras considered the Śūdras as unfit for Upaniṣadic meditations, in the entire history of Sṛtvaiṣṇavism there is a progressive attempt to nullify this restriction. A new system of initiation comes into vogue named Pañcasamskāra which practically eclipses and even sets aside the Vedic initiation into the Gāyatri of the three upper castes. A trinity of devotional formulas or maṇtras is introduced and it is set above the Vedic maṇtras. It is called Rahasyatrāya. It is open to all irrespective of castes and sects.

The Procedure adopted to spread the above Culture among the Masses

Rāmānuja Visualised the need to provide an opportunity to the fellow beings to cling to the life of supreme culture. He would not employ the culture of force as that would always result in rebellion. External force is no solution to salvation. He, therefore, preferred the course of creating a proper background which would help the fellow beings to see life for themselves. With this in mind he selected the competent among his followers to engage themselves in providing such an opportunity. They were intellectuals, the ācārya purushas, and other persons. Some of them wrote works pertaining to the true nature of life in their terse works. Others wrote popular treatises in the form of handbooks. Some others met the people in society, mixed with them and expounded the scheme of life to them. To this category, devoted to the spread of culture as visualised by Rāmānuja, belong the great intellectuals. The works of some of them which are regarded as classical and easy to grasp are referred to in the following section.

Intellectuals and their Contribution

Yādavaprakāśa, formerly the guru of Rāmānuja, entered his fold under the name of Govinda Muni. He wrote a work on the discipline which governs the life of a Sanyāsin—Yatidharma Samuccaya.
The Impact of Rāmānuja’s Teaching on Life

A material cousin of Rāmānuja by name Govinda became a Sanyāsin and spent his life time as Rāmānuja’s disciple. He was a pastmaster in the art of abhinaya (dance), the purpose of which was communication of religious thought and feelings though pose and posture. There was another great scholar by name Dēvarāja Muni also called as Varada Muni. For the first time during the time of Rāmānuja, this new incumbent wrote two books of classical value in Tamil dealing with the nature of the Supreme Being and its protective power. The works bear the names—Jñanasāra and Prameyasāra.10

“Rāmānujārya as śiṣyam
Veda-śāstra-artha-sampadam
Caturtha-āṣrama-sampannam
Dēvarāja munim bhaje”.

The devoted disciple of Rāmānuja whose wealth is his command over Vedic thought and who has entered upon the fourth stage of life (Sanyāsa) that sage Dēvaraja Muni by name, I adore.

Another notable figure by name, Kurukēśa, the son of Śrī Śailapūrṇa of Tirupati wrote in Sanskrit-cum-Tamil language (in Maṇipravāla) the first commentary on the Tiruvāimōḷi—the Tamil counter-part of the Chandogya Upaniṣad. It bears the name in Tamil Aravirā-paṭi. Kūrēśa, the alter-ego as already noted, presented the system of Rāmānuja’s thought in recitational form in Sanskrit. His works are five in number and the entire work is named Paṇcastava. This form of presenting philosophy is in imitation of Yāmunācārya’s style as revealed in his work Stotra Ratna. This form of presentation is to make the philosophy familiar to the masses. It differs in style from the Bhāṣyas or treatises by omitting the terse technology employed in the application of thought principles. His son Parasarabhāṭṭa like his father expounded the system in two great works—Srīraṅgarāja Stava and Srīguṇarājana Koṣa. The latter describing the nature and function of Śrī. Besides he wrote a commentary on the Viṣṇusahasranāma stated to be the final message of Bhism to Yudhiṣṭhira who was in quest for lasting peace of mind—mokṣa. This Sahasranāma is a summary of the course to be followed in life as mentioned in the Bhagavad-gīta by the Supreme Incarnate. Both the works—the Sahasāranāma and Bhagavad-gīta constitute the central teaching of the Mahābhārata, a book discussing comprehensively methods leading to happiness. Following the methods adopted by Dēvarājamuni, Pārāśarabhāṭṭa
wrote a work called *Aṣṭaśloki*. It contains the essence of the philosophy of Rāmānuja. Another scholar by name Viṣṇuchitta joined the fold of Rāmānuja serving as the disciple of Kurukēśa and wrote a commentary on the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* of Parāśara which was looked upon as the best of the eighteen *Purāṇas* for its clarity and objectivity. The said scholar could not be the direct disciple of Rāmānuju, for he was very much younger in age. The three scholars namely—Kurukēśa, Viṣṇuchitta and Parāśarabhatta directed their energies to recording the tradition presented in the three works of *Drāvīḍa Veda*, *Viṣṇupurana* and the *Sahasranāma*, the quintessence of the teaching of *Mahābārata*. To this group a great Paṇḍit by name Garuḍavāhna found admission. Besides being an expert in medicine, he chose to present in order the list of the celebrated ācāryas who preceded Rāmānuja. This book in Sanskrit is the first *Guruparampara* dealing with the great torch-bearers of the *Visistha-dvaita* culture ending with Rāmānuja. The work is known as *Divyasāricaritam*. Another scholar of importance who dedicated his life solely to the service of the ācārya was one Āndhrapūrma, probably a person from Āndhra region. He was also known as Vaḍuganambi, perhaps on the score of his remaining throughout life a bachelor. *Vaḍuga* is *Vatu* which in Sanskrit means a bachelor. His outlook on life was that of a disciplined life under the intrinsic influence of existence and its purpose. Behaviour would lead to the beaming knowledge perhaps with greater ease. It is comparable to the practical approach to knowledge. He too wrote the biography of Ramanuja in Sanskrit under the caption *Yatiraja Vaibhavam*. The chief merit of the work is the power of the Supreme personality of Rāmānuja against which, as the author records, the discipline of indiscipline (i.e., *Kali Prabhāva*) proved ineffective. This reference must be confined to the study of character and outlook of Rāmānuja and not to the circumstances in which the ācārya found himself. Man is not the meek victim of environment, but he continues unperturbed irrespective of the environment.

"*Sarvatra utsārya loke vyapagata-vasatim*  
*Mām akār Śir yatas īvam*  
*Tasmāt samprāpta-kāle matam api*  
*bhavataḥ kṣobhayise, sapeyam""11

Having expelled me from the world in every way denying to me homestead to dwell, you have rendered me homeless. Therefore, on a suitable occasion later I vow to disturb the
quality of the thought system you have evolved.

*Kali* appeared before the ācārya and vowed to disturb the stability of the system at a suitable period in the post-Rāmānuja period of thought. The lines suggest that great grit is a necessity to resist the swirling attractions of the world which may not be maintained. Another scholar of repute was Amudanār, who wrote the classical work *Rāmānuja Nṛṇandādi* in Tamil consisting of 106 verses. In this work he gives a clear picture of the source of strength of Śrī Rāmānuja, his power to overcome obstacles in life successfully and his skill and desire to rescue the less fortunate from the clutches of degrading forces of life. It is called *Prapanna Gāyatri*, because it is the beacon light to the *Prapanna* in the same way in which the *Viṣṇu Gāyatri* is to the *Vedānt in* and the *Vedic-Gāyatri* is to the twice-born. This is the contribution of Amudanār to an appreciation of the full-fledged personality of Rāmānuja. Another great scholar and a distant relative of Rāmānuja was Kīḍāmbi āccan. He was looked upon as a scholar of eminence comparable to the great *Nyaya* philosopher Udayana—the author of a very terse work *Nyaya Kusumānjali*.

When Rāmānuja was at Mēlukōṭe, he taught his classical work of Śrī *Bhāṣya* to one by name Somayaji Āndān. He is said to have written a few works, the chief among them being *Sadhartha Samksēna*. The work has been missing from a very long time. But a sentence reported to be his composition is quoted in works of later times to indicate that the scholar from Mēlukōṭe also commanded great respect in the eastern region inhabited by Śrī-vaishnava scholars. The sentence is a definition of Prapatti. “Bhagavat pravṛtti virodhi svapraśvṛtti nivṛthīḥ prapattih”.

The doctrine of *Prapatti* is that it is a check on the activity of the supplicant which may be counter to the activity of the Supreme. The definition emphasises the virtue of *Prapatti* in a negative attitude of the behaviour of the supplicant. Scholars who were distributed in various places are also reported to have produced works summerising the philosophy of Rāmānuja. But the main classic that was the subject of study was the *Śrī Bhāṣya*—a comprehensive critical exposition of the system of the *Vedanta* as contained in the *Brahma-Sūtra* of Vyāsa which forms the basis of philosophic thought among all the Vedantins. In addition to this, on the *Vedānta* Rāmānuja wrote two smaller works—*Vedānta-Sāra* and *Vedānta-Dīpa*, one giving the purport of the *Vedānta* and the other
a digest of the Śrī Bhāṣya. Vedārtha Samgraha is the exposition of the Upaniṣadic thought. The Bhāṣya on the Bhagavad-gīta elucidates the nature and relevance of the different steps adopted on the pragmatic side of life. Separately Rāmānuja has written three works in prose called Gadyatraya where stress is laid on the nature and outlook of life of a person who is aware of his enduring link with the source of cosmos. The Bhāṣya and the Gadya (prose) are regarded as supplementary to each other, one on the negative side to escape from trials and tribulations and the other on the positive side, retention and realization of the blissful life. On the basis of Pañcaratra, the scheme of worship is contained in the Nityagrāntha—a guide to daily worship by the devotees. It could be seen that during the time of Rāmānuja the necessary framework of thought and action was furnished leaving to the latter generation the task of explanation and elucidation meeting the needs of the times. Following this two leading figures emerged towards the end of the 13th Century Piḷḷai lokācārya and his brother Nāyanār (Aḷahiya Maṇavai—Perumāl Nāyanār) devoted themselves to the development of the positive line of life-spirit. Their chief works being ‘Śrīv cana Bhūṣṇa’ and ‘Ācārya Hṛdayam’. Venkata-nātha an equally stalward figure established his leadership dealing with the negative side in which he had to face other Vedantins, and non-Vedanta philosophers. He was a versatile scholar. He wrote numerous works, but his aim was the presentation of Rāmānuja’s thought. In his writings he employed poetic, dramatic, polemic forms. The most significant works were the Satadushani and Tatvā Mukta Kalāpa. An interesting branch is the literature called Vārtamāla—this is a collection of the views of various scholars on the subject of philosophy and life communicated to the lay public on relevent occasions. Perhaps this work is similar to the branch of literature known as folklore.

Barring the technical philosophic treatises which are devoted to determining the nature of Reality, all the rest point to the practical benefits flowing from the philosophic source. The last work Vārtamāla is an instance of the lay man being benefitted without knowing much of the teahnique of thought. All these works throw light on the way of life. It is interesting to note here that the split into two schools as in the system of Rāmānuja is found also in the School of Śaṅkara where the earlier known as the Vivaraṇa School was followed by another which has come to be known as the Bhamati School of Advaita.
Maths as distinguished from the institution of acarya purushas developed into institutions to continue the tradition of propagating the thought, enlisting disciples and enriching the field of service in different regions.

As has been already mentioned, the positive side of life was taken up for intensive study and the benefits of that study were made available to every one in the fold of Śrīvaiṣṇava group irrespective of caste, sex, age or efficiency. The negative study mostly being polemical pointing out the untenability of other systems of thought was confined to the few and that was regarded as optional. But the benefit of that debate was available to the rest in the form of summaries. Thus two classical commentaries came into existence—one in Sanskrit named Sruta-Prakāśika and the other in Manipravāla by name Idu Muppattu-Arāyiram under the leadership of Nambīḷai, both works belonging to the thirteenth century.

Though the fundamental scripture of Hinduism is Vedic what the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition adds to it is Divyaprābhandam. The Vedic scripture was opened to only three upper castes. But the Divyaprābhandam is open to all. The former is clothed in the learned language of Sanskrit and the latter is in the spoken language of the masses. Hence, the tradition is called Udbhaya-Vedanta. The Divyaprābhandam is exalted above the Vedic scriptures. as it refers to the basic link which is ignored, denies the very existence of the world. Vedanta Dēśika says in his Rahasyatraya Sāram—that many a problem not solved in the Vedic scripture is solved in the Prabandhas. Acārya Hṛdaya definitely argues for the superiority of the Divyaprābhandham particularly Tiruvaimoḻi over the Sanskrit scripture.

The axiom on which Rāmānuja based his system of thought is the Body-Mind-Relationship—Śarirāṭma bhāya. This relationship synthesises experience and presents a picture of unity with extensive variety under control. The mind or jīva is described as cetana—the knowing element in experience. It is associated with the a-cetana—the mechanical element. The cetana finds himself in the world with the a-cetana which assists him in the form of body and serves as the medium of experience and the environment, the field of experience. As far as the body is concerned, it is expected to be ever equipped and ready to meet the intentions of the mind. The association between the body and the mind is contingent and occasioned by the exigencies of life, under the law of Karma. Therefore, the link is not relished, because it is not permanent and, as is commonly admitted, not an aid to lasting happiness. Emphasis—
ing this aspect, the Upaniṣada project the method of controlling the menacing body contact which involves strenuous work in the form of penance and renunciation. The aim is to free the mind once and for all from the clutches of matter. The Upaniṣada have enunciated that the Supreme power Brahman in the only atman, the mind with out a second. The other atmans or the individual minds comprising the many under the control of the One are also the body—Śartra of the one and only Ātman. Therefore, the knowing factor in the human organism is also the body of the Supreme. This relationship between the one Ātman and the Several atmans is also the body-mind relationship. It is permanent and natural. True freedom arises with true knowledge and true knowledge is based on that permanent relationship. The cetana is also the body of Iśvara, the Supreme and therefore on a par with the material component which is also the body of Iśvara. It is this awareness that compels the human mind to engage in service, an activity peculiar to the body in reference to its atman. This aspect, the innermost content of thought in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads is known as Rahasya and this aspect is dealt with in detail in the Dravida-Vedānta.

What is known as the Upaniṣadic message is a direction in the form of renunciation of interests, private and personal. The mandate of the Rahasya is the awareness that renunciation is not the aim and end of life. It is something beyond self-abnegation. It is continuous activity with the awareness that the activity pertains to the body of the atman, in this case the cetana who is the Śartra of Iśvara. Therefore, socialism is the doctrine according to Rāmānuja which entails upon members of society to serve with a purpose untainted by personal motives, like the parts of an indivisible human organism.

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CHAPTER VIII

Rāmānuja and the Administrative Field


The Administrator acceptable to Rāmānuja

Adherence to Truth and Realism: Rāmānuja adopted a course of discipline in life for securing enlightenment. He mixed with many types of leaders in the field. He was not the type to believe that any utterance from a superior is an oracle. Equally he did not believe in the dogma that enlightenment is the result of personal endeavour and pursuit, to the neglect of the thought held by others. The modern trend in the scientific world is to treat every achievement of the past as acquisition for further investigation, but Rāmānuja held the view, following the tradition, that the views held by others in the past could not replace the material which alone has a claim for consideration on the part of man. The views of others may be acceptable or otherwise, but the testing factor of veracity is the extent to which the view reflects the nature of the material. It is only on this basis of strict objectivity and observation under proper perspective that truth can be obtained which would safely guide man throughout life without clouding his thought or restricting his activity.

This achievement is purely subjective and personal. Only when this aim is reached, a direction can be given to promote the welfare of people in society. But the problem is, whether such a discipline and achievement could ever be possible. Society is so varied and
complicated that a steady and unhindered progress is seldom possible in life for any one. But, all the same, on that consideration alone human pursuit after a better status in life cannot be stopped. Pessimism is ruled out of consideration. The empirical approach of employing the doctrine of profiting through error will remain cyclic in character.

The Rational Start

The rationalistic approach of adopting the axiomatic formula of life would be the only effective solution to the preservation of stability in the progress of life. That axiomatic principle is the basic unity of all variety and the consequent discipline and that variety would not appear as pleasant and meaningful unless it is viewed as related to and dependent upon the Source.

Service as Function of Discipline

Rāmānuja found the fulfilment of discipline in the service of society. He did not entertain the earlier notion of leaders of thought that individual salvation was the Supreme aim of existence. He believed in entering society and realising it to be the offshoot of the Source like himself. He tried his best to mix with people of different views and habits and induce them to elevate themselves to a disciplined style of life so that confusion and competition, chaos and conflict, destruction and disintegration might not continue to make man wail and weep. The subjective aspect of the Vedānta is personal discipline. The realisation of the value of the Vedānta is in the effort to work for the salvation of society even at the risk of self-sustenance. This attitude Rāmānuja imbided from the study of the Drāvida-Vedānta which claims to base its philosophy on the most vital aspect of philosophy enshrined in the Sanskrit section, namely, the functional aspect of the Fundamental Principle which employs creation and destruction of the cosmos only to put it into shape and to preserve it in that shape. In this sense administrative activity assumes importance. The doctrine of Avatāra of the Lord is a point in illustration.

Administration

Administration is an aspect of social function in the interest of peace and prosperity. It is a known fact in life that what is relevant is a rule or a principle that governs several individuals and instances, conformity to a set-order of what is valued. The projection of
that order and operating it successfully is the function of a wing in charge of the administration.

The twin Aspect of Service

Rāmānuja introduced the right type of administration in two ways on two different occasions. On one occasion he had to interfere with the administration of a temple, which, according to him, needed a correction. In the other case it related to a monarch already in charge of governing the country who sought the advice about administration of the right type. The first refers to the events in Śrīrangam and the second to King Viṣṇuvardhana, the Hoysala monarch.

It must be remembered that Rāmānuja was out and out a philosopher and a saint. He could not afford to ignore the importance of the super secular element operating in life. But he was not narrow-minded to be condemned as a sectarian. Never did he project any sign of dictatorship to force his thought on the unwilling section of society. Personalism as a creed and persecution as a doctrine are constituents of crime that can never be allowed to go unpunished.

The impact of Rāmāyaṇa on Rāmānuja was so intense that he derived his inspiration to evolve a healthy social life mainly from the behaviour and attitude of the great characters who figured in the epic. The work is studied in two phases, the first phase beginning with the marriage of Rāma and ending with the separation from his wife brought about by Rāvana, a dreadsed Rakṣasa king of Lanka. The second phase starts from the separation of Śīta and Rāma and ends with the death of Rāvana and the reunion of the separated couple. The Rāmāyana is thus a study of 'life in the company of the partner' and yearning for the missing partner. Life's interest in society involves the two phases stated above.

As far as we could gather from the epic, there are four types of people entrusted with the duty of administration. They are the typical representatives of King Daśaratha and Śrī Rāma, the monkey King Sugrīva and the Rakṣasa King Rāvana. Of these Rāmānuja considers Daśaratha and Śrī Rāma as administrators worthy of recognition and approval. Between the two Daśaratha suffers from lapses. The behaviour of Śrī Rāma need not be considered on a Super humans plane as Śrī Rāma himself has said "Ātmanāṁ Manuṣam Manye Rāmam Daśarathātmaṁ."

I consider myself a human being by name Rāma, Son of Daśaratha.

**Style of Administration Provided**

Let us consider the way in which administration was carried out by Daśaratha, an emperor known to be the embodiment of Satya (truth) and justice. Daśaratha himself spent the whole of his lifetime under the royal umbrella mainly to keep the subjects free from want of any king in the world. He took personal interest.

"Pāṇḍarasya āta patrasya
Chāyayām jāritam mayā"².

I have grown old under the umbrella of peace, now too old to hold the administrative responsibility any longer.

But his administration was found to have lost sight of an important factor in life, whose significance perhaps the king could not appreciate. Śrī Rāma, his son, brings out this factor in the following observation³.

`Nandanti udite āditye
Nandanti astam ite ravau
Ātmano nava-budhyante
Manuṣyāḥ jīvita-kṣayam`

With Sunrise men feel cheerful, with Sun set men do feel cheerful, but men are not aware that life is limited.

People are happy during the day from Sun-rise. They are genuinely happy because they have regular work to attend to during the day and the joyful rest during the night. If people could only keep happy throughout life both during day and night minding their business there is no occasion for any one to feel any want and be disappointed in life. That was the state of society under the regime of Daśaratha and the King's duty was not to disturb that peace which was the prerogative of every subject of his. What more could be expected of an administrators under the Sun to keep society in a state of undisturbed comfort?

But that was not all, according to Rāma. The administrator was expected to shoulder yet another responsibility. To keep people contented materially was no doubt the responsibility of the administrator. But that was limited to providing conditions for the preservation of a healthy body in a congenial atmosphere in a
working condition. There is yet another element which forms an important part of the human organism and that is the welfare of the mind or the spirit which as recognised in the Indian system of life cannot be neglected and for whose welfare also an effort has to be made. Society, therefore in the opinion of Śrī Rāma, is not merely concerned with the present but it has to think of a future. It has an educative aspect as the body grows. As the society evolves from prosperity to prosperity, so the mind must rise from the narrow outlook to the broader outlook. The growth of mind is not aimed at subserving the demands of the body and the world, but it has the duty of developing itself so that the material aspect may not enslave any longer, through terror or temptation, the ambition and aspiration of the mind. A healthy body is not enough and it would not be considered a healthy body unless it is instrumental to the development of a healthy mind which does not helplessly depend upon the body to realise its stature and joy. This is the purpose of education as understood by Rāmānuja. To ignore the mind and its welfare is to preserve the corpse to the neglect of the spirit which kept the body active and attractive. Hence it could be safely concluded from the secular point of view that education, according to Rāmānuja, is freedom from slavery towards the body. Rāmānuja explains the position thus—

“Śrotradi-jñanendriyādyarthē śabdadau
Vāgādi karmendrya yarthē vacānadau.
Prācinā-viśanā-janita-tadanu
bubhūśarupa-rāge avarjaniyaḥ
Vyavasthitah Tadanubhave pratihatate ca
avarjaniyo dveṣo vyavasthitaḥ tau
evam jñāna-yogāya yatamānām
niyamita-sarvendriyam svavase kṛtva
prasahya sva-kāreyuḥ niyojayataḥ
Tapas-cāyam ātma-svarupanabhava-vimukho
Vinaśto bhavati jñāna-yogārmbhena
Rāga-dveṣa-vasam agamya-navina’s yet”

With regard to sound and the like which constitute the object of the sensory organs, such as the ear, and with regard to speech and the lake, which are the objects of the motor organs, such as the mouth, arising out of the instinct resulting from previous experience, it is hard to avoid desire to experience (the feeling of want) and that is definitely
established. If such a want is thwarted, enmity emerges. In pure meditation, they compel the mind to yield to their pressure. Thereby the ātman turns back from discovering himself through meditation and finally gets lost. Hence by embarking on Jnanayoga (pure meditation) don’t get lost under the unavoidable pressure of raga and dveṣa—attachment and aversion.

This emphasises that inaction contemplated in the context of pure meditation in impossible and dangerous. In other words, living in the world to be entirely unassociated with the worldly interest is even beyond dream. Duty for a social member is unavoidable and hence it should be continued in a new frame of mind. It is work without attachment—Nīkāmakārma. The body is necessary, but it shall not control the spirit, lest society should lapse from the human level to that of the beast.

The primary duty of the administrator is to clear the hurdles in the way of the normal growth of life in society. Daśaratha failed to do it, according to Śrī Rāma, and the consequences were the epic.

Rāmānuja lays special emphasis on the outlook and attitude of a person, to hold administrative power. He particularly appreciates the basis on which the choice fell on Śrī Rāma as successor to his father Daśaratha.\(^5\).

\textit{Vyasaṇeṣu manuṣyaṇam}
\textit{Bhṛsam bhavati duhkhitah}
\textit{Utsaveṣu ca sarveṣu}
\textit{Piteva paritusyati’’}

He feels greatly grieved when peoples are sad. He experiences unbounded parental pleasure when people are jubilant.

Public opinion has been able to be impressed by the two outstanding attributes of Śrī Rāma, namely, unbounded sympathy towards the grief-stricken and suffering and supreme pleasure that people are prosperous and in possession of plenty. Another trait that Rāmānuja has discovered in his model administrator Śrī Rāma is that promise and proclamation are too sacred to be ignored or broken and personal interest should not count for anything and come in the way of the duty of serving the public, protecting them against outside interference, rampage and destruction. Rāma is
reported to have made this position clear to his consort Sīta:

"Āpyaham jīvitam jahyām
Tvām vā Sīte sa-Lākṣmaṇām
Notu pratijnam samśrutya
Brāhamanabhīyo viśesataḥ"

My dear Śīta I am ready to lay down my life, to desert even you along with my trusted brother and word Laksmana, but never will I be a promise breaker especially to the brahmins engaged in higher and nobler pursuits in life.

"Tayaradarkku, magan tannai
anri marībān tanjamāgave"?

Excepting the son of Daśaratha, I would not regard any one as my saviour.

Rāmānuja came across yet another incident in Śrī Rāma which he would never forget. During the reign of Śrī Rāma life was quite normal without any factor leading to disturbance of peace and agitation. But unless some event occurs, the administrator will not have had any opportunity to prove his mettle by reacting to the situation. One such was discovered even during the time of Śrī Rāma. Society being a synthetic unit, disturbance somewhere affects the entire system and unless the defect is removed the system cannot be put on the plane of harmony, contentment and prosperity. A certain aged brahmin much against normal expectation found that his young child could not live and survive him, for it died early before his very eyes.

"Rāja dosaiḥ vipadyante
Prajā hi avidhi-pāliṭāḥ
Asadvrittau-tu nr̥patau
Akaḷe mriyate janah?"

Subject under improper protection perish because of the shortcomings of the protector. If the protector, the king behaves improperly, man is subjected to untimely death.

Chaos and uncertainty emerge in the absence of law and order. The brahmin ran to the King with the dead child and presented this truth. Social disorder is the result of neglect and inefficiency on the part of administration. Śrī Rāma, as the epic records in the Uttarākāṇḍa, immediately took a personal interest and moved out to find the cause of this strange event. He found one by name
Sambuka engaged in a walk of life quite alien to him for which he was not at that time competent. This inroad on the part of an incompetent individual into a foreign field is a phenomenon which is unnatural and unless such a situation is halted, abnormal events could not be prevent. Śrī Rāma acted in a way to foster the natural development and prevent intrusion and he found that the child get back its life and its father went back extolling the administrative quality of Śrī Rāma. This principle, which was very much to the linking of Śrī Rāmānuja, made him be on the look out for the right type of men for the right type of work and by implication to avoid misfits.

"Saṅitava-c-chambukan-tannai-c-cenru
Konru, ṣelu-maraiyun uyir mitṭu".

He brought back to life the son of the great sage after having sighted and slain Sambukan engaged in wicked penance.

When something happens bad to a citizen, the ruler personally attends to afford him relief. That is the nature of the alertness of the administrator. Administrative power carries with it, according to Rāmānuja, alertness and dedication to put down disorder in society. It is not merely a seat of power and prestige.

**Fight Against Corruption**

Rāmānuja had a dislike for no one. He encouraged the person to continue his job, but to shed the defect that might taint his outlook and attitude. The individual deserves not to be sacrificed for the sake of his perversity.

"Paḷiyai-k-kadattm Irāmānuśaṁ" He removes the stigma.
"Munnaḻ-p-pāḻavinai vēraṟuttu".

Having uprooted the time old sins of the past.

"Nigar inri ninra en niśadaikku
Nin arulinkan anri-p-pugal onṟumillai".

My meanness which baffles any comparison has no resort (to improve, to change into) except your compassion.

Sympathy is the moving element on the part of the Superior to help the less fortunate. That is social interest. Perversity is only the result of ignorance and passion. With enlightenment the man who was bad prior to enlightenment become the most precious.
after enlightenment. Rāmānuja’s temperament was towards converting the man by influencing the mind and making it capable of maintaining an objective view. He was not for dispensing with the man himself, for that would lead to exclusion, disappointment and ultimately revenge. The right to happiness should not be denied, but the impediments in the way of natural and healthy progress in life to be removed. It is very significant in this context to appreciate the mission of Rāmānuja in life. His mission was not to prepare a clean, new way but to clear the path of the rubble.

"Vidhi shodhaka kinkara"

With this outlook in life, for the administration of the temple of ŚrIrangam he selected one Amudanār by name and it was not a new selection.

"Allā valiyai-h-kadattal enamkini yadum varutiam anre"18.

I have no difficulty henceforward to keep off unhealthy paths.

Principle governing life appear both as conditioning and corresponding to events in the evolution of society or an individual. In the attempts to fix the mind on the value of life, events out of the reach of ‘historic perview’ do not lose historical value. Myth accordingly is history of the pre-historic past.

Selection for Service

The creed of Rāmānuja was that man has an inherent claim to the best treatment that may be accorded to any one in life. But he makes a distinction between man who are good and those who are not. It is the equipment and attitude of man towards others that makes one great or small. Particularly when a person wields administrative power he has to make a difference between persons who are useful to society and those whose function is more a hurdle and an impediment to the welfare of the people. The defect is not in the Person concerned, but in his behaviour and outlook which is after all a passing feature and which is subject to transformation into all enlightenment. Otherwise progress will not be possible and education will be meaningless. To scorn a person and disown him or even to do away with him would be an act of petty-mindedness and prejudice. The larger interest of the love of man would try to retain the individual and try to help him be relieved of his pride
and prejudice. Otherwise the administrator would become a partisan and not the devotee of wisdom which calls for the practice of universal love and respect. Rejecting the individual for the sake of folly forever is want of wisdom and it amounts to denial of the right to existence even of the person who rejects. For, the doctrine of rejecting the individual leads to social disintegration and annihilation in the end. To guard against this possible evil of anarchy, man has to try to mend man and end the rebellious trend. This is the paramount responsibility of the administrator whose main charge is to hold society together.

This doctrine was put into practice by Rāmānuja in two different spheres of administration. The first was in reference to the temple at Śrīrangam, the maintenance of which was in elucidation of the principle of harmonious unity. One Amudanār, a person of great scholarship and power, was responsible for the administration of the temple. The administration was run at variance with the principle upon which the institution was started. Rāmānuja seems to have given expression to the feeling that the administration was ill-based. Reports seem to have reached Amudanār. A direction was issued that Rāmānuja and his followers should not be allowed access to the temple. Not aware of this direction, once Kūrēśa went to the temple. Within his hearing there was a direction that, though a follower of Rāmānuja and thus not entitled to enter the temple, still being essentially a well-meaning and pious person he might be allowed into the temple as a special case. Kūrēśa appeared to have been hurt that his association with Rāmānuja was a disqualification in the opinion of the administrator. He returned home without entering the temple. Amudanār, the administrator was a very pious person and he was also aware of the greatness of Śrī Rāmānuja and Kūrēśa, though he differed from their outlook on life. On an occasion he had to perform an ancestral ceremony. He had to search for the right type of participants in the function. Not finding any one else Amudanār went to Rāmānuja, the ascetic and prevailed upon him, to extend his co-operation. Rāmānuja directed Kūrēśa to participate in the ritual with a direction that Amudanār would not withhold any offering within his power at the ritual. Kūrēśa participated accordingly and when Amudanār, towards the end of the ritual, reminded him of the direction of the master, Kūrēśa demanded that the keys of the temple at Śrīrangam be handed over to Rāmānuja. The direction was obeyed. The next day Amudanār was sent for and Rāmānuja reinstated him as the admini-
strator with a direction that Amudanār would not fail to follow the true tradition of the temple. That tradition has been recorded in what has come to be known as Koilojugu or the tradition of the temple at Śrīrangam. The act of Rāmānuja may be considered as an unfair deal with Amudanār. But what Amudanār himself said makes the point very clear. The first person who sang in praise of Rāmānuja in his work bearing the title ‘Rāmānuja Nūṟṟandādi’ in Tamil, repeats in each verse the name Rāmānuja and draws pointed attention to his inherent greatness. In the fourth verse, he expresses his deep gratitude towards the master for his compassion and for enlightening him.

“Ennaipuviyil oru porul ākki
marul śuranda munnai-p-puḷavainai
Vērur urtu-ūli-mudal vanaiyē
panne-p panitta irāmānuṣan
paran pādamum en senni-i-tarikka vaitōn
enakkō idum śīdaiyu illaiyē”.

Rāmānuja shaped me to be a countable person in the world. He removed all the trends of life encompassed by ignorance, made me praise the deity presiding over time and the world. He also made me wear on the head the feet of the Supreme deity, a symbol of lasting dependence on power. I have no more any trouble. He also made me realise that I am only for service. I have missed nothing, having understood the significance of a member in society, the social consciousness as understood by Rāmānuja, that I am one among the many and that there is a Lord to control.

His words are—

“Kūrattālvōn śaraṇ
Kūḍiya pin
paḷiyai-k-kadattum
Irāmānuṣan pugal pādi
Allā vaḷiyai-k-kadattal
Enakkōṇi yadum varuttam anrē”.

After securing the guidance of Kurēśa, I went into raptures over the qualities of Rāmānuja who is above questionable qualities. I have no difficulty henceforth in keeping off the polluting path.
"Śurakkum terivum unnrum
Solap-putil vai amudam parakkum
Irvinai parraś—ōdum
Pediyl uḷḷir uraikkinranam"\textsuperscript{17}

If you employ the term (with its implication) Rāmānuja, knowledge and awareness will ooze. If you mention the term necktar will fill the mouth. The stain of the to-fold deeds (puṇya and pāpa) would disappear. O! men if you want to live in the world, I will tell you of the glory which could overpower Kali—perversion which works against the current of dharma—social harmony:

The above incident must not be construed as a doctrine of conversion, for such a doctrine was not acceptable to Rāmānuja in principle. Conversion implies some element of force which interferes with the smooth-sailing of the mind and turns it away from one angle to another from which it may find it hard to retrace. Conversion, according to Rāmānuja is the opening of the mind and providing it with an opportunity to see for itself what is true or otherwise. It is in this sense that Amudanār was converted to the view of life held by Rāmānuja. Thu Amudanār found it easy with no strain whatever to avoid the uncivilized walk of life. Compelled by sympathy for his fellow-beings Amudanār suggests that the influence of Kali can be resisted by repeating the name of Rāmānuja which instils a spirit of longing for leading a noble life. The noble way as Amudanār understands is the normal life that a man is expected to lead and by Kali he refers to perverted thought and outlook.\textsuperscript{18} Perversity would be removed and everything one deserves in the world including wisdom would be within reach through the effort of Rāmānuja.

\textbf{Initiation}

The principle, which Rāmānuja expected of an administrator, was also found to be applied by the great Hoysala King Visnuvardhana. As a result of persecution by the intolerant chola King. Rāmānuja in obedience to the intention of his conscience—keeper Kūrēşa repaired towards the uplands called Mēḻnādu and reached a place which later on came to be called Toṇḍanūr—the city of the devotee (Bakta). Here he discovered different systems of religion flourishing, the most major of them being at that time Jainism. He was accosted by the local Jains and he had to establish his stand in
philosophy from which a social system emerged and to maintain which, Rāmānuja toiled all through his life. It is reported that he met the objections of two thousand antagonists with wonderful capacity and put their debating power to a pulvarised condition. This has been graphically described as Rāmānuja being responsible for crushing the two thousand opponents of his in a grinding mill.

When the King became his disciple he gave him be name Visnudevadhana, which literally means one who nourishes the Universal Spirit. The King took special interest in developing the temple at Mēlukōte and building a fort around it to signify that foreign influence may not move into the region. The fort is a symbol of the spirit to resist any force which would be an inducement towards adjustment under expediency, thus losing the native character of steadiness. At the same time he prevailed upon the King to desist from any thought of forcible conversion of people, because he knew full-well that such an attempt was not only unnatural and improper but would ultimately lead to the petty feelings of discontent, vengeance and ultimately revolt and disintegration leading to total annihilation of the contending communities. Hence it is that the region of Karnātaka is regarded as the seat of paradise in the Indian continent where all systems of religion are free to develop, protection and non-interference being assured. It is very significant to note here that the great Vedāntacharyas, namely Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Purṇaprajña were able to give their best to mankind from their respective seats at Śrīnēri, Yadugiri (as Mēlukōte is called) and Udupi. The installation of Gomatiśvara is proof of the spirit of tolerance among different thinkers, orthodox and heterodox. It is here that we find unity with its variety in happy combination.

"Ilingattu iṣṭa purāṇattīrum
Śamanarum sākkiyarum
Valindu vādu śeyvīrāgalum marrum
Nam teyvamum agi ninran
........................................
Onrum poyyillai porrumind"

Scholars relying upon the purana devoted to the divine symbol Linga, the Śramaṇās (Jains) the Śakhiyas (Buddhist) the powerful debaters in Logic. He projected and he remained also my Supreme Lord.

In this connection one should remember that difference does not
imply contradiction, but steps to remove the mist on vision. This is not the invention of Rāmānuja out of necessity. This is the Vedic culture, the power of which he was able to feel and realize as expressed by Śrīparankuṣa in the Tamil section of the Veda called Tiruvāimoli, in verse 5 of the opening section. People according to the mode of their understanding describe their own destiny shaping Gods and kneel before them. Those Gods do meet and fulfil the demands of the supplicants. All that is true, because the one Real Supreme maintains and sustains them in the world. The thought lying behind this verse is that all walks of life do lead to the same goal, but the goal is viewed in different colours. The principle underlying the direction of Rāmānuja, that—though uniformity may not be possible or realisable, homogeneity should not be destroyed. Society is an organism with its limbs with different shapes and functions, all together preserving the system, the organism to which they belong. Variety should not indulge in clash but must be cooperative; that is the social view as Rāmānuja felt. That is the outlook on life for the common people though they may not be aware of the basic element called the philosophic ground of existence and value. The figures of Rāmānuja and Viṣṇuvardhana in the temple at Belūr are a reminder of the attitude of the preacher and the behaviour of the administrator.22

The spirit of toleration could be noticed even in the family life of the king. He did not compel his wife against her will to become a vaishnavite.

Seasoned Counsellors

It would not be inappropriate to observe that Rāmānuja's social philosophy based on the Vedāntic structure of reality is drawn through the perennial fountain of the epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. The historic approach to problems is confined to events in life. The purpose behind their occurrence belongs to the sphere of speculative study. It does not come within the purview of observation. Rāmānuja and leaders of his frame of mind offer primarily the principles which should guide social evolution. With this 'know-how' it would be easy to maintain normality in social equilibrium. In this view the social system in the Rāmāyaṇa comes to be regarded as an earlier type, though it is taken as myth on the ground that it is beyond the reach of the time-scale of modern historians. The view about the qualification of a person in administration has been stated in the previous section. It should never be the motto of substituting
man for man, but to retain the man by removing the disqualification in him. The spirit underlying this attitude is to maintain the synthesis at the peak level of enlighntened purity in which public and private interests are not set against each other and in which the private or the personal interest is regarded as a part and parcel of public interest with no claim to special treatment.

The administrator, eminent though he may be, cannot discharge his duty without the aid of the counsellors whose task is to keep the administrator ever alert towards his status as a responsible person devoted entirely and whole-heartedly to the instinctive demands of the subjects or their aspirations which do not have real bearing on the progress of society as a whole. If it is catering to the needs of the society which has no inclination towards elevated, disciplined and effeccionate existence in company, that would be a mere change from one state of experience to a different stage without the emergence of quality. Therefore, the paramount demand is to march in the direction of unity and fraternity leading to a stage of universal love and respect.

With this view, Rāmānuja appreciated the presence of the counsellors and their constant advice to the administrator in the interest of the person in power and the people who tasted the benefits of that power. In his own instance he had the unique privilege and advantage of having such a companion whom we considered his conscience—keeper and that was the great Kūrēśa, the very embodiment of discipline and devotion.23

"Soyam Rāmānuja muniḥ api
svīya-muktim karasthām
yat-sambHQat amanuta
katham varnyate kūranāthaḥ."

That great ascetic Rāmānuja felt assured of his emancipation on the basis of his relationship with Kūrēśa. If it be so how can we comprehend the eminence of Kūrēśa.

Also noteworthy is the role of Śelvanambi in the Pāṇḍyan Kingdom.24 His devotion made his ācārya a person of great attainments. His discipline, though it may sound strange, did bring to light the greatness of ācārya who was able to find a devotee of the highest order.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāmānuja found a few instances in which the administrator and his counsellors failed to conform to the demands of their office.25 So too did Rāmānuja experience a situation which,
however, he was able to overcome, thanks to his disciple Kureśa.

Preceptor as the Practising Leader

In another context Rāmānuja recognised that personal authority ought not to be allowed to cloud and set aside the value of Law and tradition. That was in connection with his attempt in writing out his famous treatise called Śrī Bhāṣya on the Vedānta Sūtras. At some point, discussing the nature of the Jīva Rāmānuja committed a deviation. His disciple Kureśa who was his scribe refused his cooperation. This led to the situation when Rāmānuja tries to exercise his authority as a master over the servant scribe. The silent persistence of the devoted scribe opened the eyes of his master to folly and then the proper definition on the nature of Jīva was formulated and the master extolled his pupil as a servant having the power of the saviour in times of distress and confusion. This incident is narrated in the Guruparamparā Prabhāvam in the Madhvācaya language. The counsellor had the only aim of keeping the administrator in safety under all circumstances without allowing him to swerve from the proper course of administration. Fearing that the master’s life was in danger and deeply interested in keeping the master safe to spread his message of social welfare, Kureśa embarked on a venture. He impersonated his master and arranged for his exist from Śrīrangam towards the west outside the region of King Chola, last something might happen to his master affecting his life, and thus the benefit to the world be denied. This is the so-called Chola persecution and the attempt of Kureśa to resist the temptation to adjust to the occasion at the cost of the well-being of society.

In the life of Rāmānuja, the incident of divorce leading to his Sanyāsa illustrates the point that the duty in life is more vital and sacred than the duty which concerns only as personal. Rāmānuja married a lady and was a willing partner in life till he discovered that she would not allow him to employ the principles of life which were sublime and beneficial in a universal measure. The wife was unable to appreciate the difference between the doctrine of distinction and division as applied to life. Seclusion in society on the basis of achievement leads to division. But an indiscriminate adherence to unity as against division destroys the doctrine of distinction. Rāmānuja’s wife could not appreciate the significance of the two doctrines. She identified the two which led to the welcome doctrine of the scale-complex of social awareness. In consequence, society suffered from improper treatment at the hands of different sections
who were bound together as one unit. If Rāmānuja had continued his partnership, it might not have been possible for him to play his role in life and to practise the real demand of society of preserving the doctrine of distinction without allowing it to be merged in division. In modern language it may be said to be an attitude of life, of conservative discipline personally, and liberal accommodation towards society. This is a doctrine which not only preserves the self, but urges it to function as an active member of society in the interest of Universal welfare. This is in a way a reflection of the incident noticed in the life of Daśaratha. Rāmānuja tried on three occasions to persuade his companion in life to his outlook so that the couple could smoothly perform their duty towards society. Persuasion not having succeeded, he gave her up and took to Sanyāsa.

It is the belief among the Śrīvaiśnavas that Sanyāsa in the formal sense is vital for developing personality to perfection.

Disciplined Loyalty

The loyalty towards the master on the part of his disciple was too deep to be diluted. The disciple was more particular about the prestige of the master who exercised his personal authority. Obedience to the authority of the master's whim would have led the master to ridicule and disaffection on the consideration that he yielded to a deviation from the proper course of observation and assessment. The devotion of Kureśa compelled him, therefore, not to obey the master's command. At the same time his devotion to the person of the master was equally deep and great. He would, therefore, not insult him by offering his opinion in the matter. Though it would not amount to insult, Kureśa feared the possibility of arrogance in the presence of the master. That was the way of his subtle thinking.

This situation led the master to seek clarification from his guru Cośthipurna. He employed his non-co-operating pupil Kureśa to seek on his behalf clarification on the point which the disciple very promptly undertook. The master's solution to the problem was not in accordance with the view that Rāmānuja had held. He immediately corrected himself and with all smile and readiness Kureśa continued his participation as the acārya's scribe. This incident reveals the exalted maxim entertained and put into practice only by the very great, that the master is defied only because he is to be deified.

This equipment of cultural loyalty is a very essential factor among persons wielding power and his vassals engaged as advisers to keep society away from grief and turmoil. This is drawn from the epi-
sode of Vaśīṣṭha in the Rāmāyaṇa.

**Confrontation and Persecution**

The temperament of Rāmānuja would not permit him to take up a fight against any opponent only to shoot himself into prominence in life. But he would not be idle and hesitant to offer his view against any opposition on the basis of his conviction which derived its strength and life from the fountain of reality through unbroken tradition. His great work the Śrī Bhaṣya is the finest example of such an approach. The main opponent he had to confront was the great leader Śaṅkaracārya who evolved a philosophy according to which when all the difference were removed, the finite self and the infinite were identical in essence. This view, according to Rāmānuja, was fundamentally fallacious, because, it involved the rejection of aspects of experience outside the control of human interference. In an integrated view the structure of Real would be a complex unity which provides for a rational appreciation of life in its process towards emancipation and participation in the scheme of an evolving system. Greatmen are interested only in the logical power of their thought and the structural nature of the object.²⁷

"Param Brahma eva ajnam
bhrama-parigatam samsarati Hi
śruti-nyāyāpetam".

The Supreme Brahman becomes non-sentient, being enveloped by ignorance and consequently gets helplessly involved in the cyclic course of life. This attitude is opposed to Śruti and logic.

The purport is that, it is opposed to the *Vedic* thought and to the law of consistency to hold that Brahman the Supreme is subjected to *Stupor* and change. When we deal with society, we should include every aspect of life. That is the synthetic view. The opponents are treated as rivals in the intellectual fray. But they are all members in a symposium on the problem of life in its comprehension. Lesser minds enter the field of discussion and dispute under the constraint of scoring personal victory for themseleve and their cause. It is these illtrained experts who introduced elements alien to the intellectual mettle affecting the sanctity of truth and reality. Differences of opinion did not prevent Rāmānuja from extending his regard to others. But he would not yield under any circumstances to any power or pressure not intrinsic to the subject under debate. There
was a great scholar, contemporary of Rāmānuja by name Uyya-k-Koṇḍār.28

"Uyya-k-kōṇḍār visayamaga
Uḍāiyavar aruliceyda vārtaiyai
nināip-padau".

Remember in this context the statement that Rāmānuja made about Uyya-k-Koṇḍar.

Who advocated the doctrine of Bhakti, the principle of appearing the deity, as the relevant and petent instrument of salvation. Rāmānuja was the advocate of the doctrine of Prapatti, submission to the will of the deity, as a corollary in keeping with the nature of the Real. Uyya-k-Koṇḍār listened to the exposition of Rāmānuja’s doctrine of Prapatti. He seemed to have appreciated the exclusive merit of the doctrine, but he said that he was disinclined to give up his faith in the doctrine of bhakti. The observation of Rāmānuja was that thought was not followed by action generally owing to the lack of divine grace, even though the intellect is strong enough to recognise the worth of the doctrine. There was no persecution of any kind nor any contempt involved in the debate. This attitude of respect and tolerance for others views is traced to the spirit recognised in the Drāvida Vedānta.29

"Avar avar, tām tām
Aṛinda-vārettri
Iyārivar emberumāṇ enru
Śuvar miśai-c-cattiyu,
Vaṭṭum toḷuvar".

Different people, according to their mental might, sing in praise of deities treating them as their Supreme Lord and putting their figures on the walls and installing them for perpetual observance and worship. Importance is to the attitude not to the figure.

"Avar avar-tama tamadu
ari-v-ari-vagai-vagai
Avar-avar īrāiyavar ena
adi-y-adāivargai"30.

Different approach the same deity as their understanding permits them.

By this we know that Rāmānuja is not a man of times, but a man
of principles. That Jains were pulverised into powder is not true when we see his attitude in this statement. He was not a man to force or compel any one.

The deities of their choice would never fail their devotees, for the Supreme deity permits them to continue the path of their choice. This idea is reflected in the Bhagaved-gīta.81

"Ye pi anya-devatā-bhaktāḥ
Yajante sradhāyanvītaḥ
tepi māmeva kaunteya
yajanti-avidhi-purvakam".

Even the devotees of other Gods offering worship with zeal, all of them do worship Me alone but only indirectly.

"Vedānta-vākyā-jātam hi paramapuruṣa
Śārīrakāya avasthitam indrādiṇām
aradhyatam vidadhāt, atma bhutasya
parama-purasayaiva saksat aradhya-
tvam vidadhāti"82.

The Vedāntic statements collectively reveal that, since all the Gods are the Sarira of the Supreme God, their worship of the Supreme Lord who is their innerself. It means that service to man is service to God.

It is the firm brief of Rāmānuja that between Prapatti and Bhakti, the latter is the indirect means because it implies that the seeking self is apart from the saving self.

At Toṇḍanur Rāmānuja had to encounter formidable opposition to his view of life from the local scholars numbering about two thousand who upheld the theory of Jainism which rejects monism. The basic stand of Jainism is the negation of a deity distinct from the Jīvas and Superior to them in status, entitled to be termed 'Īśvara' or Lord. The second feature is that the Jīva an immaterial stuff is flexible in nature and subject to expansion and contraction. These two tendencies are at variance with the philosophy of the Vedas. For it disown the concepts of basic perfection and the inherent changelessness of the mental entity. When he was accosted, Rāmānuja exposed the untenability of the opponents stand with such vigour and variety that the opponents intellectual power was described to have been crushed in the mill of logic. It is strange and foreign to the nature of Rāmānuja that the graphic description
of this intellectual warfare should have been circulated in the literal sense that opponents were got crushed\textsuperscript{33}.

**Facing Peril**

There was another incident in which Kūrēśa, the pupil of Rāmānuja, joined in the battle with the Śaivite King Chola\textsuperscript{34}. On behalf of his master. It revealed the king's behaviour which was at once vulgar and loathsome. King Chola wanted the assent of the Rāmānuja School of thinkers for his view that “Śiva was the topmost deity”. The proposition enunciated by the Chola King was “Śivāt Parataram nāsti”—There is nothing Superior to the concept of Śiva. Quick came the answer from Kūrēśa—“Droṇa masti tataḥ param”—Beyond that there is a concept answering to the term Droṇa. The words Śiva and Droṇa represent the different measures the food grains. Droṇa is a measure considerably bigger than Śiva. He made a pun of it which is also philosophically true. The truth of this difference also pertains to the difference between Viṣṇu and Śiva, the two concepts taken up for controversial consideration. This event is recorded in the famous booklet called Kūrēśa-Vijayam, in which Kurēśa has furnished the refutation to the claim made in favour of Śiva. A verse in commemoration of this event is even now current among the Śrivaśṇavas and their admirers—“Jayati Hariparatva—Sathāpanodveva—modat”.

Kurēśa was sent for to participate. He smelt danger for the life of Rāmānuja and as his alter ego went to the King’s court to participate, what Kūrēśa feared actually happened. In the debate that ensued unflinchingly maintained the doctrine against the interest of the Chola king, with unbounded joy at getting an opportunity to maintain the Supremacy of Hari in debate explaining along the lines of logic the ideas inset in the Upaniṣads and putting down the Chola King who was anxious to establish the Supremacy of Śiva.

\begin{verbatim}
Upanişhad-upa-gūḍhān
nyāyatorthan vīvrn van
Adharita—śiva-paramyarthi
Colādhi-rādah
Śamita-vimata-vadah
Śantimām-kuranathah.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{verbatim}

Kūrēśa, the embodiment of patience, put down the doctrines of opponents, put down the Chola King who was keen on establishing the Supreme eminence of Śiva, by making
clear, with the help of the principles of knowledge, the
thought lying deep in the Upanisads. This is loyalty to
culture, not yielding to confusion.

Kūreśa the great comes out victorious in the fray with peace in
mind. Emotion was roused and the Chola King ordered pulling out
the eyes of the opponents and prevented them further from their
normal activity36. As a disciple of Rāmānuja he is reported to have
voluntarily made himself blind. He did not resist the physical
illtreatment meted out by the king, with this exclamation that even
in the field of punishment the opponent should not be the direct
offender. This the the doctrine of voluntary suffering. This is an
instance of conscience not being cowed down by emotional power.37

Temple Administration

Rāmānuja was interested in the continuity and spread of the
culture that he imbibed. The main wing that he chose for this
purpose was administration. Education had to meet the mental and
spiritual needs of society even as industry and agriculture met the
physical and material needs of mankind. It is said that he enjoyed
the company of seven hundred ascetics, (sanyāsins), seventy-four
scholars and intellectuals continuing his mission as his executives
and twelve thousand disciplined persons, both men and women of
different groups and castes.38

"Sam seviatah sanyami sapta satyā
pīthaḥ catus-saptatibhiḥ semetaiḥ
Anyairanantaḥ api viṣṇubhataḥ
Āste ādhirangam yatisārvabhaumāḥ".

Waited upon by seven hundred ascetics, by the group of
seventy-four “title holders” and numerous other devotees of
Viṣṇu, Rāmānuja Yatiērvabhauma, the Supreme ascetic,
stays in Śrīrangam. The title holders are those entitled to
function as ācāryapurushas.

This involves the doctrine of functional diversity in unity, dignity
associated with it.

The Institution of Ācāryapurushas

Upto the time of Rāmānuja, the privilege of passing culture from
master to pupil was limited to one person who was considered the
best in the opinion of the ācārya. The person who was chosen was
expected to be the custodian of culture and others, if they were
qualified and competent, were looked upon as his aids. Thus the Guruparamapara or the line of teachers was maintained. Its aim was not merely to communicate, knowledge, but also to exercise under obligation the privilege of performing what is known as the pañchasamskāra.39

"Vāsudevākhyan param Brahmaiva
aśrita-vātisalām, svaśrita samāśraya-
niyatvaya sevecchaya catur-dhā ava-tiṣṭhake
tatca vāsudevākhyā-para-brahmopanam
Vedāntesu yathāśāram
Sangrahya bhagavan Hariḥ
Bhaktānukampaya vidvān
Sam-cikṣepa yathāsukham".

The Supreme Brahman designated as Vasudeva, with a motherly attitude towards the seekers, for the sake of being approached by devotees, out of free will exists in four forms. And that is the meditation upon the Supreme Brahman, namely, Vasudeva.

It is a life discipline according, to Rāmānuja, to maintain the association with the Lord. The Sāmakara (efficacy) is five-fold and is the basic requirement for a person choosing the path of life which Rāmānuja opened to the public as the true and traditional path. It is an invitation to the Brahmacārya of the Śrīvaiṣṇava order like the initiation to the brahma cārya of the brahmin order. Rāmānuja felt that restricting this privilege to a single individual would stand in the way of the vast majority who were eager to derive the benefit, but who might not be able to meet the person privileged to perform the Saṁskara. He, therefore, chose seventy-four among his followers. He empowered them with this privilege of contacting people and assisting them in the shaping of their lives. He distributed them among the many temple-centres to continue his mission in life on his behalf. The chosen persons were accordingly designated ācāryapurushas40, the term ācārya being reserved to designate Rāmānuja exclusively. The persons chosen were great scholars themselves and they were considered the disciplined soldiers of culture under the leadership of Rāmānuja. The ācāryapurushas were, with very few exceptions, gṛha-
sthas who continued that privilege and passed on the tradition to their descendants. Thus in the cultural society constituted by Rāmānuja, the seventy-four families even to day continue, to spread the culture of Rāmānuja. As a mark of protection to them against
lapse, they are privileged to receive in a special measure a few offerings in the temples to which they are attached as an indication of divine appreciation and blessings. Later on, a few Sanyāsins engaged in the temple at the behest of the master institutionalised their service, bringing into existence a custom of Sanyāsins being selected for service. These families and institutions were the centres of cultural and religious expansion and they are practically regarded as University centres to use the modern expression. This was a movement of mass education to keep society efficient and enlightened.

Rāmānuja insisted on the maintenance and promotion of Udbhaya-vedānta in life. The twin problems were not to miss at any time the thought of the eternal aspect in life and to refrain from being led away by the passing attractions around. This intention of Rāmānuja is recorded by his disciple in the following verse41.

"Punyāṁbhoga-vikāsāya
Paṇa-dhvānta kṣayāya ca
Śrīmān āvirabhāt bhuma u
Rāmānuja divākaraḥ."

For the blossoming of the lotus of merit and for the removal of the darkness of sin, the glorious Sun, Rāmānuja appeared on the earth.

That is the period of clear vision and energetic life.

Culture of the Temples

The Source of Social Energie —Temple Administration: To enable the common people not to forget in life the divine element without which life would be dry and dusty, Rāmānuja emphasised the importance of the institution of temple worship. He followed the system of the Pañcarātha sponsored by Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord directly. The regard that the Pañcarātra commends is the same as the massage from the mouth of the Lord. There is another system of temple worship known as the Vaikhānsa which owes its origin to the Vedas. The preference to the Pañcarātra was based on the consideration that this āgama is concerned with the essentials of worship. The distinction between Vaikhānsa and the Pañcarātra in value may be likened to the difference between the Bhagavad-gītā as a mode of approach towards refinement of life and the other modes enumerated in the bulky epic, the Mahābhārata of which the Bhagavad-gītā forms the final part. It may be remembered in this connection that Rāmānuja did not introduce the system of Pañcarātra in any temple on.
his own initiative. The agamas themselves indicate that in the many temples they were to be followed. But that system must have suffered a set-back sometime prior to the advent of Rāmānuja. The Vai-khanasa system also prevalent in some of the temples. But the temples were under the influence of the Vedāntins who differed from Rāmānuja. In a few temples where Rāmānuja started to reintroduce the system of Pañcharātra the local priests would not accept the change mainly for the reason that as followers of Vaikhānasa they would be deprived of their privilege and that though they were willing to follow the Pañcharātra style of worship, the doctrine of keeping the two systems separate stood in the way of the Vaikhānasa adopting the Pañcharātra system by abandoning their own, as in the case of Varṇasāṅkara, indiscriminate admixture in society was proscribed in the Bhagavat-gītā.

"Na buddhībhedam janayet"

Do not detract the mind. Do not leave the mind at the mind at the cross-roads.

"Karmani asakto jñana yogādhikāra yogyopi vyapadesyah śīṣṭah
loka-rakṣārtham svācārenā
śīṣṭa-lokāṇām dharma-niścayam
cikitsāḥ karma-yogam eva kurya"

Unattached in Karma, a person fit to be engaged in Jñana Yoga, a man though renowned and remarkable, for the sake of preserving social order, by indulging in doing the duty assigned to him with the purpose of providing faith in Dharma for the other members of society, shall continue to observe only the Karmayoga.

The āgama Saṅskāra also comes under proscription. Not applying the principle of coercion, Rāmānuja allowed the Vaikhānas to continue, not because the priests would never permit themselves to be thrown out of their duty in the temple. This is not an indication of failure on the part of Rāmānuja to effect a change in the temple worship, but is an expression of his firm will not to employ force and compel people against their inclination and ability. The Vaikhānas system relates to an aspirant after mokṣa where as the Pañcharātra lays stress on the service aspect of life which is the native virtue of all aspirants to salvation.
In the 'Srîrangam temple, with Amudanâr as the administrative head, the procedure to be followed in the worship is briefly recorded in a work named Kovil\(^{44}\) olûgu or the procedure that obtains in Srîrangam.

While Râmânuja was staying at Tondanûr in the region of Yadavagiri (Mêlukôte) as it was than known, Vishnuvardhana was attracted towards him and he offered himself to be his disciple, with the help of that monarch administrative responsibility was distributed among the local people there. Thought appears in various forms. The forms may be similar, complementary or contradictory. The aim of thought is only to remove the contradiction. Different forms of thought depend upon the different stands the people entertain, Râmânuja wanted the disputation to be conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation and made the opponents realise the untenability of narrow points of view. This is stated by his immediate disciple in the Dhâthipañcaka\(^{45}\).

"Pâśanda-druma śaṁḍa dâvadahanaḥ
câravâka-sailâ śanîh
Bauddha-dhvânta-nirâsa-vâsaropatiḥ
Jainebha kântîravah
Mâyâvâda-Bhujânga-bhânga garudâh
Traividha-cûdâmanîh
Srîraṅgâsa-jayadhvajo
Vijayate Râmânujoyam muniḥ".
Râmanuja is a powerful silencer of the schools of Carvaka, Baudha, Jaina, Mâyâvâda and Śaivism. He is the upholder of the thought of 'Supreme Synthesis' the Lord of Srîrangam.

The tone of administration by the King was in conformity with the instructions of Râmânuja, that in wielding power the administrator must invariably avoid pressure against the will of the people, as pressure would lead to discontent and destroy the social frame. This principle was employed in all walks of life. It must have appealed to the king who must have experienced during the pre-Râmânuja period the aggressive instinct of the Jains and Buddhists who settled there. The king suffered neglect bordering on humiliation at the hands of his co-religionists for a personal deformity which was not his making. His reaction towards them could have been retaliatory after he obtained acceptance by Râmânuja.\(^{46}\) Strange and significant was the attitude of the king under influence of
Rāmānuja who never felt worried that one of his queens would not of her own accord shift from Jainism to the view of her Lord, while other ladies accepted the system of Rāmānuja in their life. In this context Rāmānuja’s attitude towards his wife prior to his Sanyāsa becomes significant. Having consented according to custom to follow in the footsteps of her husband, Rāmānuja’s wife did not approve of the conduct of her husband, in his dealings with members of other castes. Rāmānuja was least worried about these differences between himself and his wife. His dissatisfaction was due to her personal pride on some consideration or another and disdain to members of other communities. This type of social behaviour affected Rāmānuja so much that he felt that separation was the only remedy. He would not accept her again after Sanyāsa as wife, because his āśrama would not permit such an association.

Rāmānuja’s concern for the welfare of mankind compelled him to overlook formal restrictions which would not permit the extension of benefit to the unqualified. This is in the field of education. To use the modern word broadcasting would not be out of tune. When Rāmānuja approached his master Gōṣṭhipūrṇa to know about the doctrine of ‘Surrender’, he was directed not to reveal the doctrine to the unworthy lest they should abuse it. The master’s interest lay in preventing the reckless application of this doctrine, but Rāmānuja ignored the direction and spread the message from the top of the temple to persons who had gathered there. He seemed to have remembered the situation when Lord Krishna himself announced this doctrine to Arjuna in the battle field of Kurukṣetra where the gathering was undeniably a mixed one. Śrī Krishna announced the doctrine of surrender. The main listener was Arjuna, no doubt. But the Mahābhārata records that in the large gathering there were a few fortunate people who heard the message. The doctrine does not suffer even if the person who employs it does not remain true and faithful to the tradition. Rāmānuja gave out in broad outlines the value of the doctrine with the expectation that if the listeners were really interested, they would come forward in a formal way to grasp the doctrine in full. This was the liberal attitude of Rāmānuja. This approach of Rāmānuja to the doctrine of surrender may be said to correspond to the preface section in the works of the author. It is on this account that Gōṣṭhipūrṇa admired his apparently unfaithful pupil and discovered in him the ācārya with the special characteristic of compassion.
During the time of Vishnuvardhana a fort was constructed around the temple Mēlukoṭe. With the discovery of the image of Tirunarārayana at Mēlukoṭe, Rāmānuja is reported to have called that region ‘Tirunarārayanapuram’. The term ‘Mēlukoṭe’ is from the original Tamil ‘Mēlukoṭṭai’, which means the fort in the west, to distinguish it from Śrīraṅgam with its kottai or fort, which belongs to the eastern side of the land. The word Mēlukoṭe with its link to the Śrīraṅgam fort carried with it a religious sentiment revolving about the link between Jñana and Ānanda. The Mēlukoṭe temple is regarded as Jñanamantapā and the Śrīraṅgam temple as Bhōgamantapā of the four significant temples for Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati, Kānci and Tirunarārayanapuram. The four religions centres are remembered in order during the religious rituals observed every day at the Sandhya, the obligatory daily duty enjoined on the brahmin.47

Śrīraṅga maṅgaḷamanim karupāṇivāsam
Śrī Veṅkatādri śikharālaya kālamēgham
Śrī Hasti Śaila Śikharoṭivala pārijātam
Śrī śam namāmi śirasa-yadu-śailadipam”.

I prostrate before the auspicious gem in Śrīraṅgam, the home of compassion, the dark cloud at the crest of Veṅkatādri (Tirupati), the intensely bright celestial flower of the Hasti Śaila (Kānci) and the light on the Yadu mountain (Mēlukoṭe)

This idea and order are also recorded in the first verse of Tiruvāimolī48. The same idea is contained in the opening verse of Tiruvāimolī as stated below—

“Nalam udālayvan, arulinān,
adhipati śuḍar-ādi”.

The possessor of auspicious qualities the spring of compassion, the Supreme Lord, the bright person.

It is at Mēlukoṭe that Śrī Rāmānuja took up again the robes of the Sanyāsin at the shrine of Dattātreya (The Lord teaching the four Vedas). Rāmānuja lived in Mēlukoṭe for twelve years evolving the form of social life he had in his mind. During this time, he is reported to have gone to Delhi and brought back the idol of Sampatkumara. He taught his classical work of Śrī Bhāṣya to one by name Somayaji Āndān, who has paid his mead of praise to Amudanār of Śrīraṅgam for having described the personality of
Rāmānuja and for having gifted to mankind the Prapanna Gāyatrī. Even during the days of Rāmānuja, it is rumoured, people from various parts made their rich offerings to maintain the institution of the Rāmānujakūta. Later, however, a few inscriptions indicate that gifts were made for the same purpose. It may be concluded from this that institution of ‘Rāmānuja-kūṭa’ led to the development of temple wealth with vast lands and ornaments. The administration during the later periods not being quite uniform as a result of change, the ‘Rāmānuja-Kūṭa’ has changed beyond recognition. This is yet an example of Rāmānuja’s desire that power should be distributed, but the policy shall be held sacred and unalterable. The former rulers of Mysore right from Rajawodeyar to Chikkadēvarāja Wodeyar evinced keen interest in the temple and contributed their bountious mite in various forms. Śrī Krishnarāja Wodeyar III in particular appears to have been involved in maintaining the temple institution in proper form, like his predecessor Rāja Wodeyar. His figure in stone is installed within the temple at Mēlukōṭe. The images of the Mysore kings in the temple as devout rulers may appear to be a reminder of the purpose for which Rāmānuja himself left behind a metallic form of himself which is since being worshipped with name,

“Tān uganda Tirumēni”,

to oblige the local population who would not have stayed there without him. This is the first frame of Rāmānuja made during his life time at his direction. The metallic figure at Mēlukōṭe therefore, has a special significance for the followers of Rāmānuja. His Dāśarathī who moved about in the region of Karnāṭaka when Rāmānuja returned to Śrīrangam appeared to have got a few temples built with the help of Visnuvardhana, Pancha-Narayana temples. At the desire of Āndhapūrṇa the foot print of Rāmānuja was carved on a stone at Sāligrama, a few miles away from Mēlukōṭe. That region was also held in great reverence and daily worship is offered. The names of Āndān and Āccān, the cook and the companion of Rāmānuja in the absence of Kūreśa are mentioned. Āndān is reportedly a relative of Rāmānuja, Āccān was looked pon as a scholar of eminence comparable to the great Nyaya philosopher—Udayana—the author of a very terse Nyaya-Kusumāṅgali.
REFERENCES

2. Ibid., II, ii.
4. Rāmānuja: Gīta Bhāṣya, III 34.
6. Ibid., III, x, 18.
7. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhāndam, Tiruvāimoli, III, vi, 8.
8. Vālmiki: Rāmāyaṇa, Uttarakāṇḍa, 73, 16.
11. Ibid., verse 4.
12. Ibid., verse 48 and Cf. verse 32.
17. Ibid., verse 43.
18. Amudanār, verse 32.
20. Note: Vishnuvardhana, Visnu, means all comprising Vardhana develop-
24. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhāndam, Peri Ālvār Tirumoli, IV, 11.
28. Mumukṣupadi, Section on Carmaślokā.
29. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhāndam, Iyarp-mudal Tiruvandādi, verse 14.
34. The Proposition Enunciated by the Chola King was, Śīvat Parataram
   nāsti.
   Perumāl Jiyar: Guruparamparā Prabhāvam, P. 331.
   The answer furnished to the above proposition, Droṇa mastitatahe paran.
   Ibid, P. 331.
36. Gopinath Rao, T.A.: Sri Subramanya Ayyar Lectures on The History of
   Śrīvaṅgava, P. 39.
44. Note: Koil: The term Koil denotes a temple in general. But to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas Koil is primarily the temple at Srirangam.
47. Daily Prayer.
48. Ālvārs: Divyaprabhandam, Tiruvāimoli, I-i-i.
50. Perumāl Jiyar: Guruparampurā Prabhāvam, P. 357.
CHAPTER IX

Rāmapūtra and the Doctrine of Service

The concept of Service—Service Involving the Barter System—
Conventional Level—Service from the Constitutional Position—The
Area of Service—Rāmapūtra’s Doctrine of Service—Alertness in the
Field of Social Service—The Ritual of Service—The Sanctity of the
Social Servant—The Impact of Rāmapūtra’s Doctrine of Social
Service.

The concept of service as it appears at various stages is dealt with
here and the concept as Rāmapūtra considered is dealt with in a later
section to indicate that his conception of service marks the final
stage. Introducing a discussion on the concept of service. Rāmapūtra
starts from the crudest form to the most natural and refined form
of service. The doctrine of service has been borrowed from the
‘Bhagavad-gītā’ which describes performance or Karma at various
stages of performance, from the familiar to the unfamiliar. The
doctrine of true service is untenable from the lay man’s point of
view. But it is normally and unavoidable from the enlightened
stand.

Service is an inherent behaviour of a social existent. The specimen
in an embodiment of service. Society, likened to human organism.
recognises service as the Universal principle of life. The Indian
tradition is built on this basis.

The Rgveda in the Khila section neglected by the “devotee of the
skin and its potency” to the exclusion of the vital element which
holds and function. This tradition is continued in the Drāvīḍa
Section. It was followed by Rāmapūtra.

“Tondanen tiruvadiyetunai aillai tuñai-itēn”\(^1\).

I am engaged in thy service. Thy fact alone are my
protection. Nothing else do I regard as my shield. I do
thus exclaim.

“Kinkarōsmi Hrstk̲aśa, bhuyo bhuyo asmikinkarāḥ”\(^2\).

My Lord I am yours event for over and in every won.
Uttradum un aḍiyārkkuk aḍimai”\(^3\).
I have taken upon me to serve your followers my Lord.

"Nitya kimkarō-bhavāni"4

We can see from this that Rāmānuja's emphasis on service is an exercise of his inherent right as admitted by tradition.

The Concept of Service

To appreciate the significance of the 'Doctrine of Service' as expounded by Rāmānuja, it is necessary to be aware of the factors which go to form the concept of service as implied in the doctrine of Śeṣatva associated with the doctrine of Samānādhikāraṇya, the concept of dynamic dependents. Ordinarily service refers to an activity or a behaviour. It involves two persons, one of them the agent of activity and the other the beneficiary. We come across the expression 'serving one's own self' in which we do not find two people separated from each other. All the same the distinction between the working part and the enjoying part is not denied. What actually is involved in this aspect of service is a condition which is not present but felt very desirable to be realized. This is the aim. The other aspect is the work or the attitude which would pave the way to realize the end. This is considered as the servicing aspect of life. In other words, service is an instrument of satisfaction. As recorded in the Rgveda "Service is the Śādha (means) for the phala (result), particularly applicable to human society. Service naturally would come to a halt with the realization of purpose.

Service involving the Barter System

The concept of service is not limited to a section of society alone. By nature every member of society is entitled to receive some benefits to keep himself happy. But he cannot continue only to receive without making any contribution to the members from whom he expects the benefits. This mutual inter-dependence involves the notion that man is both the agent of service and the person to be benefited from service. This is a necessity whether it is to be one's liking or not. The choice is restricted to the need of the receiver. The element of regard for the neighbour and his well-being manifests itself in this arrangement. We, therefore, evolve the principle of existence by meeting the needs of one another interest of the well-being of the group as a whole.

Another point deserves to be noticed in this connection, the doctrine of master and servant finds a place in this scheme. At the servicing level, constrained by the necessity of self-preservation as
is normally understood, the servant permits himself to be an employee in services and undertakes to follow the wishes of the employing master to the extent to which he could preserve himself. Though the master also depends upon his employee for self-maintenance, he has the privilege of deciding the mode of service of the employee. As members of a contract, both the partners forget the underlying principle of interdependence which does not make a distinction between the employer and the employee as far as the preservation aspect of life is concerned.

Conventional level

The type of relationship noticed in the previous section emerges in a slightly refined way. The element of humanity is introduced. The employer entertain a consideration towards the employees with sympathy. It is so longer relationship limited to the economic aspect in which the rule that works is minimum effort and maximum benefit. A few concessions are permitted to the receiving partner at the cost of comfort on the part of the giver. This may be treated as a gift or on offer with a pious intention.

Though it is not termed service. It could be noticed that in this attitude the underlying spirit is commission towards the recipient and a voluntary offer to provide him with some comforts not directly connected with the work assigned to him. This may be regarded as the privilege of the worker or the generosity the employer in the direction of exertion to relieve the labourer of his strain to some extent at least. It is this attitude which introduces the sense of gratitude in human relationship on the part of the receiving partner. It is an indirection that the value of co-existence is raised to a point higher than the mere economic relationship. Failure here and there to preserve this tie intact may not be of much significance if it is occasioned by conditions unrelated to the human mind.

But the application of this type of service may lead to certain extremes in the long run. It may create a group which would like to get benefits without deserving them. It may also lead the generous partner to develop an attitude that his generosity is likely to be a waste. It is in such circumstances that society splits the groups of helpless beggars and merciless masters. Perhaps the disparity between the 'Haves and the Havenots' is the logical conclusion of this step adopted and practised mechanically over a long span of time. This may be the abuse of the doctrine of service to society.
To guard against this unpleasant possibility, a regulation is introduced in life that the recipient shall have the obligation of serving also, an idea which keeps him away from idleness. Service therefore, takes the form of work with discipline on the part of the recipient, that he will try as far as possible not to receive benefits lying idle without any aim. If this spirit is maintained, service would appear in its noble form.

Service from the Constitutional Position

In the preceding paragraph the consideration was towards the weak and the needy. The competent factor of society volunteers to render assistance. The rendering involves a measure of self-imposed restriction to provide better conditions of living for the weaker sections of society. Normally there is no insistence that the section which receives the benefit should work for its welfare apart from merely receiving the benefit.

This group which indulges in service to society being urged by humanitarian considerations may set differently, if its offer is not put to right use. Generosity towards the undeserving could be anything but virtue. There is a possibility of this generosity being halted from the consideration of purpose or use to which it is put by the group which gets the benefit.

The constitutional structure of society is a compulsive force on all the members to engage themselves in some form of activity. This activity will not be service in the strict sense of the term, if it is directed towards promoting individual ends. Service is service only when it is for society and on behalf of society. It is not a projection of imaginative thought. It is an engagement in fulfilment of the purpose for which man is accepted as a member of society is a purposive unit which realizes its purpose through the members it accommodates. In this view man realizes that he is a member primarily of society and that he has an obligation to discharged as long as he continues as its member. The thought of any gain far himself as member is only secondary. The true gain is how for he is able to discharge his duty from the position in which he is placed. In consequence the thought of any return from society as reward for his service does not find a place. Indian tradition is best explained in the maxim expressed through the Bhagavad-gita 'Duty for duty's sake with no thought directed towards personal benefit from the performance of duty'.
"Śēsatvam ātmāvikkusvarūpam\(^5\) Śēsatvam ilādapodusvarūpam illai". 

Sesatva is the characteristic of atman. If Śesatva is denied, atman cannot have any claim to existence.

Service therefore becomes a habit of the individual. It no longer needs a mandate from outside. Accordingly to be serve in life is to cease to be alive.

The Area of Service

Any disorder anywhere in the human organism is a source of pain and concern. The relief lies in setting right the disorder. This aspect is observed and referred to by Sudarśana, the great commentator on Śrī Bhāsyā of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja refers to the 'Concept of body, Vigraha as he terms it as follows—

"Brāhmaṇyādikāmdevadīnāmapiasti
tat khalu adṛṣṭa-viśeṣa
Sambadha rūpam natu
Jāti rūpam, Brāhmaṇaṇādibhiḥ
Brāhmaṇyādiṣu utpatti-mātram"\(^6\)

The forms such as Brahmana belong even to the divinities. The nature of those forms is a mark of specific gift or power, but not in the form of Jāti or caste such as birth by the Brahmin man and brahmin woman as couple.

The main idea is that this division between brahmin and others is based on the function and not the parentage. Caste system is personal and is indirectly helpful to maintain social harmony.

The human organism may be conceived as a microscopic presentation of social organism. The human organism is perhaps the best developed form. We notice in it a variety of parts similar and dissimilar to one other. The parts function in their own way. They keep themselves interlinked. The interlinking is not direct, though it may appear so. All the factors derive their energy from the organism which is not a bundle of factors or a mere assemblage of parts. They are brought together a plan and purpose by which the functioning continues in the organism.

Though the function assigned to every member is the same which is to serve the purpose of the unit, yet the field in which the members function and the way in which they function differ. It is the func-
tional difference of this type which makes variety possible and intelligible. In one sense all the factors enjoy the same status. In another sense they greatly differ from one another determined by the field of their operation. In other worlds, if the members for obolition of ‘distinction and inequality’ what would be the condition of the organism could well be imagined. This ‘concept of body’ referred to by Rāmānuja one best be applied to the members functioning in society. Rāmānuja clearly lays down the principle that function fills the caste with life and glow and not mere birth. This applies to all section of society which may claim recognition as social constituents. Here is an indication that the social outlook of Rāmānuja influenced by this view of life.

Service is service to the Lord, the Source. This is the main aspect. There is another aspect which Rāmānuja has not failed to notice in connection with his idea of social service. That aspect is service to the dependents on the Lord. It is an extension of service from the Sovereign to His Vessals in devotion who constitute the visible section to be served.

A person born in a particular caste and not doing the job required by the caste is a person who misses the opportunity. The other person who rebels against caste is one who has no opportunity. This is the tragedy of keeping ‘birth and function’ each apart from the other. Following his predecessors in the field, Rāmānuja takes pride in directing his service to those who are devoted to the devotees of the Lord. As Kulaśekhara has mentioned in his Mukuṇḍamāla?

“Tvad—Bṛtya—Bṛtya—
Paricāraka—Bṛtya—Bṛtya—
Bṛtyasya—Bṛtya iti mam smara”.

Remember me as in the service of the servant, of the servant.
of your servant”.

This principle suggests that the source is served by serving the connected members of the source. A few elements in the body are linked to the other elements and the expectation is that the service is mutual. But in the light of the above principle this, the so called inter-service is, in reality, the service to the source through the medium. This is what Rāmānuja considers as the privilege of being in the service of the Bhāgavata, the devotee of Bhagavan.

Rāmānuja’s Doctrine of Service

The concept of service emerges with full vigour and glow only
when man feels sincerely that he is a member of the system and that he has it as an obligation to conduct himself as a true member. This idea is generally beyond the ken of the common people whose mind is clouded by interests which have no direct bearing on the unit to which they belong. Paradoxical as it may seem, the true interest of life cannot be served unless the petty interests are kept out. Restraint is a necessary pre-condition to feel the pulse of freedom. As a social member, if this maxim is not kept in view, life becomes a menacing factor to one engaged in service. Rāmānuja was very much alive to this aspect of social structure which by any stretch of imagination could not be maintained as a model evolved by the members belonging to it. Human organism clearly reveals this aspect. We know that in experience the various parts of human organism, if they are damaged may be substituted by their similars employing skill and technology. Till now, and perhaps for all times, life has not been introduced into a lifeless assemblage of parts and projected as a living human entity. Our effort can be confined to regrouping the elements. This would be an artificial grouping. But it can never be the effective substitute. Accordingly the social organism, like the human organism, is a natural presentation with a few fundamental laws set forth to preserve the organism throughout the process of its functioning. Subject to that, the talent of man has vast scope either to preserve the unit in the best form or to spoil it perhaps beyond the stage of recovery. This principle is recognized throughout the most ancient times and that is the constitutional order running through the several constituent factors Rāmānuja, commenting on verse 2, chapter XIII of the Bhagaved-gita observes thus—

"Yathā kṣetram kṣetrajñya—
viṣeṣaṇa-taika
svabhāvatayah, tad-apṛthak-siddah,
tat-samāṇādi-kāraṇyaṇaiva nirdeśyam,
tatha-kṣetram
kṣatyanam ca madviṣeṣaṇa-taika...
svabhāvātayā
madapṛthak-sidhēh, mat-samāṇādhikāraṇyaṇaiva
nirdeṣya vziddhi prthivyadi sanghata
rūpasya hṣetrasya kṣetrajñyasya ca
bhagavat śaṣṭiṣṭaika svabhāvā-svarūpatayā
bhagavad-ātmākatvam
The body by nature is only the possession of the mind the possessor of the body, considered only on the principle of homogeneity based on inseparability. In the same way the body and the mind, being only my attributes, they are inseparable from me and must be treated as linked to me by Samāñadhikāranya. The complex of earth and other elements and of the mind also, being by function the body of the Lord, their Soul, their ātman is the Lord. Both the sentient, and the non-sentient, in all their conditions, are the Śarīra of the Supreme Lord, only as such they are counted as existents.

"Servasmin Karmāṇi
Vyavasāyātmika budhistaka
Mumukṣuṇa annuṣṭeye karmāṇībuddhiḥ
Vyavasāyātmika Vyavāsāyaḥ niṣcāyah
Śāhi buddhiḥ ātmā yātamma-nisecaya
pūrvikaḥ"

In every form of act the unwavering mental state is one and the same. The seeker after release engages himself in an act. His mind develops the stage of Vyavāsāya. Vyavasāya means firmness. That mind reveals the true nature of the ātman and is therefore, unwavering.

Alertness in the field of Social Service

One of the requirements of a member devoted to social service is that he should be alert and watchful. More often than not the current of mechanical life introduces changes and innovations which appear attractive and adoptable. They may in the long run weaken the social structure and present or picture of confusion by blocking the main constituents which must continue along with social evolution. This upheaval is likened to the periodic occurrence in nature of a quake, a volcano, a cyclone or a flood which would sweep out of existence much of the social content. The nature of self-preservation by itself would not be enough. The gift of talent is pressed into service toward off the disaster. It may be a reaction subsequent to the occurrence. It may be a preventive remedy. This alertness is a mark of statesmanship.
Likewise, the talent of the social servant is trained to effect a remedy when disorder sets in through prescribed methods which would not permit men to be a prey of fleeting fortunes. Caution against danger is essential. It is this approach towards social problems that is rated as most essential, though least thought of in life. It is this attitude to detect the abnormal trend in life which, if not controlled, would lead to the formation of Cancer in social life. Actual prevention may be difficult and out of control for sometime. but caution and preparedness would keep under check the evil from spreading. The human organism is looked after with great care to preserve and promote the normal health and to be free from defects brought about by negligence and exposure. This principle is termed "Asthāne Bhayasaṅkitva."

"Pattāṇḍu, pattāṇḍu" for many years to be free from mishaps. Intense love for a person suspects danger to his safety in time to come, though there may be no possibility. It is keeping prepared to meet any untoward challenge in the future. This is foresight, a sign of statesmanship a common phrase among the ‘Śrīvaigavas’. It implies the operation of caution against any possible mishap. This principle is the consequence of faith in the theory that society is a unit in its own right and not a creation by members who get together to uphold an idea and adopt it in life.

The Ritual of Service

The status of Rāmānuja as an individual engaged in Social Service reveals itself as occupying an attitude beyond the reach of many stalwarts who preceded him. Right from the earliest times cultural tradition recognises supreme happiness and unchecked prosperity as the committed goal of one and all in society. How to achieve the goal has also been dwelt upon members constituting might pursue goal individually by withdrawing their interest from perishing pursuits in the world. This was considered asceticism in the technical sense. The result would be visible only after total severance is effected. That would be an exit the world. It implies aloofness from the surrounding and pessimism in life in this world. In ordinary language it is a steady pursuit after escapism, probably under the belief that the unknown future would be more relishable than the actual present. This attitude reduces society to bide the time and evince no interest or seat.

But life is the embodiment of joy and satisfaction. Were it not so the idea of pursuit after joy would never occur to any in society.
Life being a reality its nature too must be of the same mettle. Irresistible optimism is manifest everywhere in society that is characterised by the element of hope and confidence which prevails in every human mind. That being so, the present life cannot be completely devoid of that aspect of life. The logic of struggle for existence is based on the unrealised fact that life in any from of society could realise its real worth and wealth.

Rāmānuja appreciated this aspect of life flowing from the doctrine of ‘‘aprtihak-siddhi’’ the theory of nonseparateness based on the other fundamental truth that the true goal of life must also be the ground of life. The process of life is an attempt to realise the basic nature of existence, its work and function. It is not a process to gain something afresh. It is in this sense the concept of Mokṣa Releases, becomes significant. The process, therefore, is the elimination of alien elements. Thus the goal of life is to discover that the ground is identical with the goal. The process of evolution from the ground to the goal involves infinity as the time factor. In this process of evolution disturbances occur here and there due to the waves of change in society causing confusion and despair to the members involved. If the mind could be cleared of its confusion and if it continues to be steady and dedicated to the call of unity of purpose, disaster could be kept at bay, though it cannot be totally annihilated.

This outlook and attitude takes the form of social ritualism which cannot be avoided or explained away as a concept of no consequence. Rāmānuja was keen on introducing the type of life in society which would keep all the members functioning in their own way affection and dedication, meeting the needs including bread comfort.

It is as a result of this spirit and outlook that Rāmānuja ushered in a society which come to be known as the Śrīvaiśṇava society. This group that he introduced formed a meaningful society within the bigger society which moved along the current of life adjusting itself according to circumstances which was called the Samasārika way of life. The importance of the temples and the introduction of scholars and servants, the inclusion of members belonging to different castes and sexes, the organised way in which co-operation of every member was assured and the keen interest in meeting the genuine want of every member of society and the facilities to achieve all these were made possible under the direction of Rāmānuja. The Tiruvāimōli—the tamil version of Vedic Wisdom in its essence—was of considerable value to Rāmānuja. He particularly rejoiced when he
observed the social life under the administration of the Pāṇḍyan King with the assistance of his great councillor Selvanambi, referred to in the preceding chapter.

Social interest suffered a set-back when self-interest and short sightedness take possession of the leaders who offer to lead mankind along the path of prosperity. Rāmānuja, therefore, laid special stress on this point that the ambitious master must first be a true servant if he has to succeed in life as a master\(^\text{19}\).

"Ennaiyum en—Uḍāmaiyaιiyum
Un Sakkara—p—pori orikkondu
Nin aruḷe puriṇdu irundin"

Having received your enlightening message, I seek your grace for fulfilling the purpose of life.

"Niennai Kai—K—Koṇḍapin piravi enrum
Kaḍalum Vāṭi Pirum Pādam agiṇṭadu"

My Lord, when you accepted me, the drifting nature of my mind towards Samśāra became dry and I have occupied the position of plenty.

This maxim guided Rāmānuja in maintaining the theory that caste consideration as determined by nature does not count for much. Normally it leads to a sense of inequality among members, leading to disruption and disaster.

The Sanctity of the Social Servant

The term service to society is not confined to any section or stage of life. It is relative to the stand that a person takes for himself in relation to society. Rāmānuja, being a thinker belonging to the most lofty category, thought of himself as a member of society quite different from what others thought about themselves. The organic structure of society which he repeatedly emphasised made him realize that his function was determined by two points of view. The first was that he considered himself a privileged person standing apart to serve society with all his equipments and resources and thus pave the way for social progress and prosperity. This attitude implies that he had to determine and abide by a way of life which would take the form of service to society. If the will is not there he would not cease to be, but he would be deprived of his function to serve society which is the aim in life.

There is another stand which Rāmānuja appreciated to the utmost.
As a member of society and its inseparable part, by nature the individual is a functionary engaged in social service. It is the normal structure, it is the privilege of habit from the time of birth, the factor of will and determination to serve. In this case it would only imply that service-mindedness is an adjunct and not a habit, that would go against the very constitution of the individual as a member of the social organism. To cease to think in this way is to deny the very existence of the individual. This is the common feature of all individuals constituting society. The difference varies according to the degree of awareness of this truth. Hence as part of the social unit, if the individual is not to be a dead cell, he has to continue his normal habit which, in that normal form, is service. Man has only to pray that this privilege of his may not be denied in life. This idea is emphasised in the expression.

"Vālu-v-ilā-adimai\textsuperscript{13}
Seyya Vēndum nām

We are to do acts of service without a break. It may look as if the water used for purposes of drinking and the clothes used for wearing by persons leading an aimless life have committed sins.

It is our coveted privilege to be engaged in service without a break. Accordingly service being the aim and function of life the individual has neither time nor mind to think of measures of self-protection. For society that has allowed him existence does not fail to feed him even though he may be lethargic and undeserving. This idea may appear strange to the modern mind which recognises that labour and reward, work and benefit are interlinked.

On this point Rāmānuja draws the inspiration from the doctrine of Nīskāmakarma which does not connect duty with promise.\textsuperscript{14} Commenting on the verse 41, Adhyaya II of the Bhagavad-gītā, Rāmānuja says.

"Sarvasmin Karmāṇī
Vyavasāyātmike buddhiḥ śca
Mumkṣuṇa anuṣṭheyḥ Karmāṇi buddhiḥ
Vyavasāyātmika Vyavaśāyaḥ ni scayah
Sāṁ buddhiḥ ātma yātmāmya-niścaya
pūrvikā"

In every form of act the unwavering state is one and the same. The seeker after release engages himself in an act.
His mind develops the stage of vyavasaya. Vyavasāya means firmness. That mind reveals the true nature of the ātman and therefore unwavering.

The underlying idea is that the main aim of an effort should not be the passing attractions in life. Service is not a medium for gain, but service is for the sake of service. The link is there, but it is not the inter link. The example of the Āsvathā tree mentioned in the Bhagavad-gītā spurred Rāmānuja to another thought which is quite familiar to mankind. The seed sown in the earth becomes a root primarily and later grows into a mighty tree putting forth fine flowers and yielding juicy fruits besides providing huge shade. The gardener who waters the tree confines his attention to the root in the soil, but he does not spray the water over the branches or flowers or fruits. The root feeds the entire tree inclusive of its branches and it is the turn of the branches to offer fruits and flowers to the needy. Upon this analogy Rāmānuja has adopted the interpretation of the Bhagavad-gītā that the deed and the result of it, karma and karma phala are not interlinked. This is considered the highest form of service with no concern for the consequences of the act for the agent. Naturally it would be a behaviour with full delight, because it is the normally constituted style of functioning. In another context, in the kingdom of the Pāṇḍyan King, the observation of the wise has been recorded thus.

"Māṇida Šādiyar
Parugum nīrum udūkkum Kūraiyum
Pāvam Šeydanadaām"15

The purport of the expression is that the dress and the drink have been put to waste actually because their worth and value could not be appreciated by the users.

"Svadharme nidhanam Šreyah
Paradharma bhayāvah"16

Devoted to one’s duty, if one dies without achievement that condition is much better than encroaching upon alien duty in the hope of quick success, for that is beset with dangers.

Finally service, according to Rāmānuja, is not an act of grace and condescension. The social servant has, therefore, no right to expect any appreciation in return. The greatest reward would be to appreciate the significance of the act of service by the recipient and his
willingness to be take along the path which leads him to the goal of ambition, namely, service to society as part of his life.

According to Rāmānuja, service is a reflection of the aim and attitude of man in society. Normally personal aim and protection are the guiding factors in human activity. This being common to all men, clash is inevitable and disorder is unavoidable. Human virtue gets transformed into vice. True service is to fix the mind on the welfare of the neighbour to utmost satisfaction. Service gains in value if it is offered in all zeal and enthusiasm. Service is real service if it is not tainted with any thought of personal benefit accruing from service. Service is the proud privilege of persons who accept strict discipline for themselves. Subjective asceticism and objective generosity are the two aspects of service. Such service put into practise has the indirect purpose of educating and elevating the recipients to be eligible to enter the field of service. Service becomes aborative if people who are benefitted by service continue to be mere passive recipients without permitting themselves to be worthy of being admitted to service. It is here Rāmānuja laid special emphasis on the competence of his chosen successors who came to be known as the ācāryapurūsas to put themselves to give a helping hand to the willing section of society to move towards the heights of polished culture which otherwise would remain a more utopia.

The Impact of Rāmānuja’s doctrine of Social Services

This section is devoted to an assessment of the doctrine of social service as enunciated by Rāmānuja. So far the different types of social service were considered as a necessary step to determine the distinguishing features of Rāmānuja’s doctrine of service.

Socialism is evolved on the axiom that each and every individual belonging to society shall be provided with necessities of existence comfort. Any discrimination involves disservice and that leads to clamour and conflict.

Life is a process of experience in which exists an unending battle against inequality. To survive is to keep under check inequality. But it has not been possible at any time to wipe out this inequality because of factors which emerge now and then in society, to disturb the smooth sailing.

Nature is the granary of human life. Provision is there in plenty. Man ceaselessly toils to reap the harvest to the utmost extent to keep himself happy and contented. The brain power spreads out in different scientific forms to analyse the contributory power of nature and
to utilise that power to his taste. Scientific talent, in the name of
discovery and invention, is readjustment of the types of gift con-
tained in nature. Scientific advancement also is a possible scheme
to encourage what may be termed exploitation of culture. This is
one of the steps to keep man ever ambitions and discontented, ever
helpful and confident, always engaged in readjustment of the natural
apparatus of comfort.

A stage arises where men enter into conflict among themselves not
on the basis of production from nature, but on the consideration of
distribution of the spoils. A situation develope in which, in the
presence of plenty, man clashes with man over the share due to him.
The presence of plenty may also be the source of discontentment and
disorder. To express the idea in another way, poverty mounts as
plenty shows itself. This situation leads man to a consideration to
replace greed and conflict. It may be termed the training of the
mind to subject itself to some kind of self-imposed restriction. The
neighbour tends to be regarded as the alter-ego. This is the conven-
tional order permitted to operate in society so that the plenty reped
from nature may not be improperly and adversely used.

Another stage arises in which man regards himself not as a privi-
leged entrant, but as a normal part of society. At this stage he is
tempted to think of himself in the social setup. He realizes that he
is constitutionally bound to function like nature and provide for the
best interest of society as a unit. His attention is no longer on the
individual as an individual. He now views himself as well as others
as inseparable members of an organism destined to function as such
without any other motive in view.

This stand, perhaps the highest, is in thorough contrast with the
other stand where the guiding principle in exploitation of others for
self-protection. The conventional stand referred to above appears
to be a golden mean, but it loses sight of the fundamental fact that
society is an organism existing in its own right and not evolved or
instituted by the members who form part of it claiming a privilege
to dismantle it, if it should not prove suitable and satisfactory.

The concept of service is described in various stages. Man can
never afford to be inactive. The significance of activity must be
brought to light. That could be only in stages. This procedure of
treating Karma from the savage level to the saintly level is adopted
in the Bhagavad-gītā. It may be remembered that Arjuna refused
to act in the beginning, but finally resolved to act. The stand of
Arjuna in the battle-ground before and after receiving enlightenment from Krishna deserves our attention. At the end of the first chapter Arjuna flatly refused to engage himself in war. In the concluding portion of the XVIII chapter (Bhagavad-gītā), the self-same Arjuna took a resolve that he would participate in the battle as desired by Krishna on being enlightened.

Rāmānuja was inspired by the law of Śarūṭāmabhāya which he discovered in the Vedic texts. Harmony could exist according to this law, only when the principle is recognised that the aggregates are dependent upon the unit which maintains them by virtue of it being primordial. He was further impressed by the law of protection and maintenance from the concept of the tree.

From this point of view Rāmānuja developed his system of social life. As is commonly understood and believed, the immediate aim in social service is to make adequate provisions for existence and exultation. But that would not be enough, because the receiving side continues without refinement. It is, therefore, necessary to introduce the habit of regulation in utilising the provisions available. It may appear at first as unwarranted. Excess without regulation is the cause of unhealthy habits and consequences. The human organism preserves the law of harmony and any excess anywhere in the organism is controlled or thrown away.

This regulation is the awareness that anything beyond limits and in disregard of a regular order is not only injurious but dangerous too. This principle of awareness Rāmānuja has understood as the Yoga way which is defined at Karma Śu Kau salam* (Skilful handling) This skill is a necessity for everyone, it is of utmost importance.

The pride and satisfaction of Rāmānuja is that he is aware of this skill and that he is anxious to acquaint every member of society with this, so that interdependence may not be a weapon against ignorance but an assembly to move about in joy and estosy. The term Yoga which Rāmānuja has borrowed from the Bhagavad-gītā is the enduring awareness that all the individuals belonging to the society, owe their existence and prosperity to that Source—the one element which keeps every one delighted in lasting affection for all times.

It would, therefore, be not improper to admit that with this basic understanding ruling mankind, the world would be a home of peace and prosperity for all times to come. Any disturbance to this order can be overcome without much strain and effort if the principle is kept in mind. It may not be too much to say that the type of social life envisaged by Rāmānuja deserves universal adoption.
Ramanauja regarded the entire universe as the field of operation. The impact of his social system did not suffer a set-back, even though the philosophy and religion which he built were outside the concern of persons who confined their attention to conditions of peaceful living in this world.

The survival value of the doctrine of service as formulated by Ramanauja has to be determined not with reference to the people who adopt the doctrine in life. It is not the fault of the açārya. The pity is his followers who have not imbibed his spirit in its entirety which alone would hold them together.

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CHAPTER X

Rāmānuja’s Legacy


The Legacy that Rāmānuja Left Behind

The legacy that Rāmānuja left behind him deserves close scrutiny if one has to determine what he contributed to the progress of the world on a permanent basis. Like everyone of the saintly personalities that India produced, Rāmānuja subjected himself to a discipline of mind and spirit in a way that could be considered unusual. There was nothing mystic or magical about the way in which Rāmānuja developed his personality and influenced the society around him. But he was very alert and appreciative of the type of understanding and evaluation of experience at the sublime level. By instinct he was intolerant of any one being considered with contempt and in difference.

The two principles that ever guided his life and mind were an objective attitude and a synthetic vision. Error or injustice, according to him, was a result of the shortcomings of the agent of experience. In error, according to Rāmānuja, the minor element would appear as the major, the dependent as the independent and the ordinary as the extraordinary, the fleeting as the permanent. That way the more man gets puffed up, the greater is his grief in perdition. Humility is not an accomplishment, but it is inborn nature not to be missed. With this attitude Rāmānuja felt a burning love for all and entertained a strong desire that no one should be denied the chance of enlightenment, elevation and happiness which he could realise in his own way. Rāmānuja, therefore, tried to vitalise the basic spiritual instinct in everyone and to develop it through mind and body. The inner attitude was of paramount importance to him,
for that would allow the intellect and the physical body to keep fresh
with the sanctifying power of the spiritual pulse. That way caste,
colour, creed and all other extrinsic difference appeared to him as
several distinctions to the exclusion of the doctrine of inequality in
society.

The Caste System enjoined in the Vedas including the Varnadharma

_Dharma_ is a disciplinary measure to elevate the struggling self
from slumber to wakefulness that it is a spark of the Divine Abos-
lute. This discipline carries with it in most cases a sense of satis-
faction and vanity that a stage of achievement has been reached.
This has been considered a disqualification for one in the journey
towards perfection in life. The _Katha Upaniṣad_ is very clear that
human effort, however heroic and glorious it may be, is abortive.
The mind that is helpless and entirely dependent cannot play the
part of a conqueror under any circumstances. True education in
philosophy is to help one to shed this wrong notion and vanity and
realise that only the Absolute can halt or help the progress of life.
This is the import of the doctrine of surrender.

This doctrine of surrender or _Parapatti_ which forbids self-effort
to progress does not accommodate the doctrine of inaction and
lethargy. All activity appears in a new colour and glow and gains
in full vigour in the form of service that is the spontaneous behaviour
of the body in relation to its possessing Spirit. This is _Kāṅkṣa
_ya_ now under free will and with all enthusiasm with the hope that the
service would not fail to be in accord with the purpose of the Abos-
lute of which it is the body. Therefore, Rāmānuja's insistence on
the doctrine of service is that man is the beloved object of attention
and care of the Supreme Lord.

In this light the caste discipline appears in a new light. Inequality
being banished, the question of like and dislike does not arise, and
therefore the need for choice and selection does not arise. In the
language of Śrī Krishna—

``Sva dharma nidadhanam Śreyah
Paradharmo bhayā vahāḥ''

Native habits are preferable even in the face of extinction.
Alien attractions lead to fear.

``Svēnaiva upādātam yogyatāṁ
Svadharmo-bhūte Karmayoge
Vartamānasya''
Ekaśmin Jahnani
aprāpta phalatayā
nishānavapi śreyah”.

Being able to utilise normally without exertion adhering to
the Karmayoga which is one’s native feature, in the birth
in which the duty is undertaken, if death occurs before the
discharge of duty in full even than it leads to progress.

The purport is that a person engages himself in an activity natural
to his temperament. Even if he fails to reap the result, it is better
that he perishes engaged in that particular activity than divert his
attention to an activity alien to his nature. According to Rāmānuja,
temptation from outside should not be allowed as a substitute for
the natural healthy habit. In yet another verse the significance of
coopération is emphasised.

“Dvān bhaṭavaya anena
Tevāh bhaṭavayantu vaḥ
Parasparam bhaṭavayantaḥ
Śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha”

Through the sacrifice worship the Gods, and those Gods
will come to your help, thus attain to prosperity by obliging
mutually.

Rāmānuja explains as follows—

“Parasparam bhaṭavayantaḥ
Param śreyaḥ
Mokṣakhayam avāpsyata”

Helping each other with respect and love you will reach the
Supreme Summit of Light known as Mokṣa.

The purport is—abore the Gods, may they adore you also. Thus
with mutual respect may you together reach prosperity. This
verse recognises the inherent dignity of every act and aspect and
warns against assuming that whatever is fresh and foreign is good
and great.

This conclusion of status uniformity of members in society was
realised by Rāmānuja through the influence of the Drāviḍa Vedānta
which emphasised the power and value of the spiritual bond between
man and his Creator in a world where man loses his real vision and
acts under the force of impulse and habits under the influence of the
material frame and environment. Rāmānuja is not bothered about
when man gets *mukti* or liberation. According to him, *mukti* is the birthright of man who enters the world. It may be any time from the time of birth to eternity. The doctrine of *Karma* cannot be denied, nor the doctrine that man passes from birth through death till he achieves *mukti*. True *mukti* is the conviction that he is the body of the Supreme Spirit in function to behave as directed and never to permit the play of habit and instinct including conscience to over-rule the spiritual growth, for these habits are the forces of the material world, the result of inter connection which is short-lived and which detracts man from his two-fold purpose of keeping awake and happy always.

This attitude is common to one and all in the world of creation. The corollary is that the enlightened world recognises only cooperation and affection and esteem for every other member of society without the least touch of the ego, because philosophically man is neither free nor independent.

This outlook on life and discipline in life and attitude towards society Rāmānuja derives from the deep study of the *Praṇava* the *Āstākāsaṛi* the *Upaniṣads* and the *Drāvida Vedānta*. All the other branches of knowledge dealing with the prescribed and prescribed activities recognise only one principle according to Rāmānuja and that is pure, un tarnished behaviour and activity performed with zest and devotion within the limits of the frame in which the human mind is lodged. Rāmānuja, therefore, insists upon this discipline of the spirit. Normally discipline is regarded as a fetter on freedom, but according to Rāmānuja, discipline and freedom are convertible terms and what we generally regard as freedom is the power of material pressure against disciplined life which alone can secure for men peace and happiness. This is the tradition of India. Prior to Rāmānuja the social benefits do not appear to have been quite extensive and pronounced, because men concentrated mostly on the *Varnāśramadharma* and culture was the responsibility of the individual concerned. But with the spread of the *Drāvida Vedānta*, the emphasis on society came to be felt, not that the *Drāvida Vedānta* emerged then as the historians maintained, but the significance was felt during the period when the Dravida-Vedānta which contained the *Vedic* message began to spread.

**The Response to the Initiative of Rāmānuja**

The style that Rāmānuja adopted to get enlightened and his behaviour towards people after enlightenment brought out the
uniqueness of Rāmānuja’s personality in respect of acquiring knowledge and applying it in a useful way. He would never quietly submit to a thought, however great may be the source of information, if the source would not provide adequately for the synthetic, objective and elevating background. This was manifestly clear in his attitude towards his former teacher Yādavaprakāśa who dealt with the problem of Advaita, and with one of his five gurus who gave him an interpretation of the Drāvida Vedānta according to which God permitted devotion to the Lord at an early stage in life and yet hurled him to be tossed about in the suffocating Sāmañña. When people of eminence, his equals and superiors with different convictions, moved towards him vowing allegiance to his way of outlook, Rāmānuja never permitted to himself the feeling that he was in any way, superior, or that they were now to be blessed by him. He merely treated them as his intimate companions belonging to the team dedicated to the service of the Lord.

This uniqueness attracted a number of great scholars from various communities. The communities included brahmins and non-brahmins, men and women alike. It is said by Amudanār in Tamil.⁵

“Palkalaiyor tām manna vanda Irāmānuṇan”

Experts in various fields of knowledge preferred, close and lasting association with Rāmānuja.

“How na dharmīgal, Dāsa yṛṣṭīgal”⁶.

The Dāsa (servant) category ignores the privilege of the Varna (caste) category for recognition of claim and merit.

Their desire was not denied. The second point throwing light on the attitude of Rāmānuja is not based on the consideration of caste, sex or even āśrama, though they were not totally abjured as they were the Vedic prescription to preserve a certain social order among people struggling to lift themselves above ignorance and indiscipline. Amudanar observed—that Rāmānuja considered as his close kith and kin those persons—irrespective of caste or āśrama or sex.⁷

“Araṅgan malar aḍikku āḷ urravārē tankku urravar”.

Not considering any other ambition, persons firmly devoted to serve at the feet of the Lord of Sriranga are taken as his inseparable associates.
The people banished from their mind and heart all thoughts and notions except being engaged whole-heartedly in service to the Supreme Lord whose Lordship is visible to the naked eye in the from of the presiding deity in Śrīraṅgam.

The main purpose of Rāmānuja was not mere service, but service with a particular attitude, an attitude in tune with the nature of the finite self in respect of the Supreme Self, whose sway over the finite self is in every way absolute. The large following that voluntarily came to Rāmānuja was struck by the vitality and nobility in life and daily practice of the philosophy which he inherited from the Vedas through the sources which were freely transmitting the message of true life as it intrinsically was without pollution or modification. That was the idea that Rāmānuja had in his mind whenever he thought in terms of tradition or Sampradāya. The kernel of knowledge contained in what is known as the Rahasya or the Upaniṣad of the Upaniṣad was taught to people who approached him for enlightenment and leading a pure life. This he did after what may be called Pañcasaṁskāra. With the knowledge of the structure of Reality and the purpose of life made known through this Rahasya, people had no mind to be led away by stray tempting thoughts. In a spirit of service they voluntarily made available all that they could for utilization under the doctrine of tadyārādhana (Social Worship)—service with veneration for the tadiyās, those who feel the pulse of life as Rāmānuja has shown. This in a way started a system of social service economically. The temple became the centre of worship and feeding, and the gatherings in the temple were viewed as kinsmen in spiritual life. This combination to stay, must be repeated. The festivals and rituals arranged in the temples went a long way to stabilise the structure. It should however be remembered that the ritual and festive organizations in the temple were not the result of mere secular inspiration. Some specific pious act of an individual which could develop into a healthy principle to be kept in view was also an occasion for celebration. Thus it is that the Tirunakṣatras or the birth days of the Supreme seers and sages came to be observed to rouse gathering to a higher spirit in life. In the same way, treating of the avatāras of the Lord, some significant action of the Lord emphasising His protective disposition is celebrated too. In the same way there is a type of ritualistic festival in the temple known as Brahmostava which is a performance of the divine initiation, in protecting the created world which could be observed with naked eye. This
Rāmānuja's Legacy

is common in all the major temples. It is an annual occurrence. It is not of recent origin, nor a product of the prayer of a soul seeking salvation. This aspect of experience is contained in the text called Āgamāśātra which consists of two parts, namely, the Vaikhānasa and the Pañcarātra.

Thus the sole intention of Rāmānuja with regard to the society in which he found himself was not to teach his fellow beings the abstract philosophy, move them to meditation, seclusion and prefer detachment with an ulterior aim. He rather wanted people to live a full life by recognising the importance of the Ultimate Spirit, the individual spirit entirely dependent upon the Ultimate, the material body serving the finite mind and the atmosphere around to help and not to thwart true progress in life. Rāmānuja in his attempt proved himself to be an optimist and he did not believe in pessimism as others had before him. Pessimism is the result of disappointment with the world, because the world cannot be commanded to conform to our wishes. Rāmānuja emphasised that the Aham (Ego) in Aham must be scuttled. This is looking upon oneself as just like an other. There is only one ‘Aham’ and that is the ruling Aham which is God. With this feeling, passion and fellings cease to hold away over the mind and the variety around appears as something precious and unpolluting. He understood the doctrine of Karma prescribed in the Gīta this way⁹

"Karmāṇi eva adhikārahe
Mā phaleṣu Kadācana
Mā Karma phale hetuḥ bhuh
Māte sangostu Akarmāṇi"

You are entitled only to perform karma you have no right to think of its result in any case. Don't perform an act with a motive and never keep yourself aloof from karma.

Rāmānuja's role an Educationalist

Scholars gathered in good number and they were engaged in expounding the fundamental philosophy and in carrying on research ceaselessly to meet the evergrowing objections and novel constructions from the purely empirical point of view without taking into consideration the entire material furnished in the Veda. Thus the philosophy of Rāmānuja opposed all systems that failed to recognise the Śeṣatve of the ultimate 'Reality'. That was the burden of the Bhāsyakāra.¹⁰
"Sarvasya Vastunaḥ
Iśvara śarīratvena
tat prakāra tayā eva
Svarūpa—Śedbhāvaḥ
Iti tat—prakāri
Iśvarah eva
tat—tat Sabdena abhidhiyate"

Every created object mental or material has a right to existence only as the attribute of Iśvara—the source. Even the attributive expressions denote the substantive factor.

Scholars were posted at various centres of worship where people would frequently meet. Popular education and higher technical education were also provided for the benefit of people who preferred to know more and more. In a like way Rāmānuja engaged the services of seventy-four Simhasanādipatis (Sanctified nominees) called ācāryapurushas¹¹ and entrusted them with the duty of imparting the Rahasya of the Vedāntic thought conforming to prescription. They were also proficient in conducting discourses, discussions and disputations.

Donations and Contributions

Under the inspiration of Rāmānuja was formulated an administration perhaps initiated by Vishnuvardhana himself. With the efforts of the Sthānikas of the Mēlukote temple and the ācāryapurushas associated with the temple at Mēlukote the chieftains, the well-to-do nobles, the common man came forward with rich offerings of villages, lands, jewellery and whatever could be spared by them to be pooled together for the maintenance of temple. The management was mostly with the temple sthānikas.

The mode of utilising the contribution was in strict conformity with the tradition of the ritual in the temple. To feed the visiting devotees and the resident devotees engaged themselves in various services not on a contract basis. No compulsion was recognised which would interfere with the freedom of the spirit of service in worship.

Even in the absence of the sthanikas and the ācāryapurushas on spiritual and administrative mission, their right to share was neither questioned nor denied. Inscriptional evidences are available in plenty from various source over a long period of time. Even during the regime of the Mahārājas of Mysore we find several
Inscriptions and gifts, in addition to service strictly in conformity with the tradition that was obtaining in the temple. Even in the present day, devotees in possession of affluence are engaged in following the lead given by the ācāryas. If only the gifts and leases had been preserved intact over the centuries, the Mēlukōṭe temple would have been one of the richest temples of India which unfortunately it is not, because of circumstances beyond administrative control.

The Mite of the Ācāryapurushas

Natives of Mēlukōṭe who belonged to the ācāryapurusha branches also contributed their mites in this direction by gathering a large body of śisyas from all communities in the state of Mysore. It may be mentioned in this connection that one Keśavācārya Swami celebrated for his connection with the Tiruvāimoli—the Drāvidave-dānita had a son by name Śrīnivasa. The boy, in his teens, under the inspiration of lord Narasimha of Ahobilam now in the Āndhra state, moved to Ahobilam. He was, to his surprise, led to the āśrama of sanyāsa under the name of Ādivaṅsaṭhakopā Swamin Under him influence Śrī Krishnadevarāya the king of Vijayanagara wrote a book in Telugu under the name Āmukta-Mālāyada in which he particularly celebrated his guru, the Mēlukōṭe ascetic, and offered many gifts to the deity at Mēlukōṭe.18

Subsequently the śisyas of the various acharaya purushas united to create institutions of their ācāryas for purposes of arranging temple worship and feeding the devotees on special occasions. The sthanikas also moved about and enlisted people belonging to the lay groups to make contributions to run the temple along the lines indicated by Rāmānuja.

Benefits

Rāmānuja struggled hard throughout the best part of his life to obtain a proper perspective of progressive life in the world. He included in his view the spiritual aspect of experience also. The spiritual aspect is the basic aspect which refers to the source of life. As a representative of traditional system of approach in solving the problems of the world, he relied mainly on the Vedas, the earliest cultural contribution to the problem of life. He also utilized the wisdom contained in the Tamil version of the Vedic treatment of life in its integrity. He adhered to the view that the fountain-source of knowledge was the true basis of development in thought and life.
Any violation or deviation would amount to mutilation and ultimately to the extinction of culture.

His belief was firm that the culture that he discovered helped in an equal measure all grades and sections of society. Most of the people may not be aware personally of the value of Vedic culture, but the course prescribed always helped a person to develop his personality to higher heights and refinement, indirectly compelling him to move from the narrow pursuit in life to a broader one. The process involved is one of merging in society as an integral part, instead of clinging to the individualistic aim and approach. It is here, according to Rāmānuja, that the message of the Vedānta assumes absolute importance.

The Doctrine of One Aim

The ground the goal of life are one and the same. They breathe the spirit of universalism. But the process or life from the ground to the goal displays a variety in which unity is seldom grasped. It is this lack of knowledge pertaining to unity as a homogenous body in which various parts co-operate without disturbing the unity, that marks the downfall of man. This unity, realized or understood, elevates a person to the status of the truly wise and saintly.

It is not given to every one to realize this truth. In society we find people with differing tastes and temperaments, ambitions and approaches, stressing the importance of one section as against another. We are taken from one condition to another ever dissatisfied with the existing condition.

Rāmānuja felt that the kind of life visualised by the wise may be followed by the ordinary people who in course of time may reap the advantage of becoming aware of the key to a healthy, happy, progressive and prosperous life. The struggle would be only to experience the gift in greater richness without disturbing the structure of society or interfering with the inherent individual capacity to make the necessary contribution.

The benefit to society, according to Rāmānuja, is of two kinds—first of all, Rāmānuja felt the need to remove distress and dependency members of the society. Secondly, he felt the need to give an educative bias to the system so that the people would not rest contented with the benefit they received, but would indulge in active habits which would help them to earn for themselves that they had formerly received as gifts. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja there is this classification into a bṛgya (servant) and bhokta (enjoyer),
which he has borrowed from the Tamil section of the Veda (Britya is Aдиyār)—responsible agent engaged in service and (Tirivar—the lazy vagrant keen on personal benefits).

The real intention of Rāmānuja in this field of consideration is to educate and elevate the Tirivar to the level of Aдиyār—This is true democracy. This is the primary task of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja’s determination in life in all its aspects has been, in an expression of his, dedication of Kaiṅkarya—service throughout life out of free will and with the greatest pleasure.\(^{13}\)

"Anubhava—Janita—priye—Karita
Aśeṣa—avastha—ucita
aśeṣa śeṣataika—rati—rupa
Nitya—kinkaro bhavāni"

May I be the servant eternal which is ever enduring joy in the form of only śesatva, service in all forms suited to all conditions, brought about by the desire preceded by personal experience. Service itself is joy, not halted that is Kaiṅ-Karya.

The person at the second strata we come across is the normal human being who is uneducated. His intelligence is utilized to lead a happy life, employing the principle of give and take. It is cooperation based on the doctrine of selfishness not only in the person concerned but also in the neighbour. This selfishness operates in the field of co-operative enterprise. The need of the neighbour is as important as our own need. No one person produces all he wants. Therefore, exchange of goods that are needed and that can be spared was recognised to keep society undisturbed.

The doctrine of division of labour in a co-operative mood is the explanation of the caste system recognised in the Bhagavad-gītā.\(^{14}\)

"Cātur Varnyam maya śṛṣṭam
Guṇa—karma—vibhāgaśaḥ."

The four-fold caste system is evolved by me the Supreme Lord, conforming to the distinct quality and work involved.

(The Karma theory is in its origin assignment of duty accompanied by suitable capacity to run society. It is, therefore, division of labour to maintain social unity undisturbed). To claim to deny the privileges attached to the four varṇas amounts to disturbing the natural social order.
Interference with this system is treated as sāmkara which tampers with the healthy structure of an organised body. Keeping in view ‘gūṇa and Karma’ (attribute), ability and aptitude as the guiding factors, the emotional assessment of in-equality in the wings of society is the persisting pill of poison. In the language of Śrī Krishna, this sāmkara, admixture, leads towards perdition of the people who make such inroads and also the groups that permit such inroads.

“Kula—jhnānām kulasya ca”

This doctrine savours of religious and ritualistic touch in life. Whether the doctrines of Karma and Transmigration of Souls are admitted or not, society becomes an object of secular appreciation and the doctrine of division of labour on a co-operative basis holds good.

Decay

It would be improper to believe that the quality of the tradition introduced by Rāmānuja would remain unaffected under any circumstances. The role of the care-takers need not be over emphasised. After Rāmānuja, the scheme that was offered by him was followed with the best of intentions and ability by his disciples in the field of culture, administration and temple-worship. Vast offers and accumulations were made to implement the scheme of the ācārya, the founder of the Mēlukote temple, keeping ever in mind the sanctity of the doctrine of service and the danger of self-projection. They were genuinely trustees of the Rāmānuja institution of Vedāntic life in and around the region of Mēlukote.

As time passed, people were not strong enough to continue that tradition in its full fledged form in the field of administration. Then came the power of the rulers of Mysore and the temple administrators were actually under the guidance of the rulers, but free to perform their duties which they inherited from the time of Rāmānuja. About the second half of the eighteenth century, strangely the spirit of co-operation among the Śrīvaīṣṭavas to the forces of conflict and self-interest in the field of administration. This started in the region now known as Tamil Nadu. And the followers of Rāmānuja indulged in attempts at aggression against custom and resistance to aggression. Administrative power was the only controlling agent since the cultural power lost its grip. Therefore, the matter went up in respect of various temples and institutions to the Law-Courts which
would not entertain settlement of disputes except on the basis of custom and evidence. Charged with bias to secure victory in a partisan spirit, time, wealth and energy were mostly diverted towards settling this feud. It is indeed a social tragedy and cultural suicide that such occasions should have been welcomed and nourished. But in religion the fountain-head being pure the source came to be recognised, and upheld against forces of innovation and alteration. In proof of this, judgements of several high courts in Tamil Nadu and even the Judgements of the Privy Council prior to Indian Independence have upheld the sanctity of custom against variations urged by the impulse of aggression.  

Putting the problem in a simple way, the dispute is between the two schools—Tengalai Vs. Vadagalai in respect of Nāmam or purṇa or the mark on the forehead or the pātram or the laudatory hymn at the beginning and the end of worship, and the ācāryas projected to represent the two schools.

Following the scheme of Rāmānuja in Mēlukōṭe which he supervised personally during his stay, arrangements were made to add economic and other types of wealth to the temple. The management in the temple was shared by the fifty-two beloved followers of Rāmānuja. One of them appears to have taken sanyāsa and lived where Rāmānuja had lived. That probably explains the birth of Yatirāja Matha at Mēlukōṭe. It has been continuing as a Tengalai Math, with the subsects of the pūrva śikhis, the Kīnāṭṭass and the Mandayams representing the Matha. In a dispute between the present parakāla math at Mysore and Yatirāja Math at Mēlukōṭe in what has come to be known as the tirtha case, the authorised representatives of Yatirāj Math are reported to have observed that the Mandayam entry to the Yati rāj Math Gādi was from year 1850 and that prior to that the line belonged to the Kīnāṭṭan and the present stone image of the sanyāsin in the Yatirāj Math was the image of a pūrva śikhi, representative of the fifty-two followers of Rāmānuja.

In this connection, four ācāryapurushas have been recorded as having come from the time of Rāmānuja styled as Śthalaśācārya purushas to carry out the cultural mission of the ācārya in the region of Mysore. They were to direct the recitals of the sacred hymns in the temples as representatives of Rāmānuja who represented the three other superiors, namely Visvakṣena Parānkusa and the parakāla. At the time of Mangla or closing of morning worship, the said śthalaśācārya purushas were privileged to receive the paṇcamudra garland parivattā, three spoons of tirtha (holy water) and prasāde, soon after
the same were offered to the three iconic ācāryas daily. This was the spiritual bounty of the divine and that has been continuing even today. In money value in modern times they may count for nothing or the priority may not be respected and emphasised. But on the spiritual basis the sanctity of custom is completely destroyed by certain changes and modifications introduced in support of personal prestige under money power and political voice. If the doctrine of adjustment according to times is encouraged, the sacred value attached to the time-honoured custom based on tradition with a super secular basis is seriously affected. The behaviour of modern votaries under this section projects the picture of pollution of values, under the pressure of adjustment, which has introduced split and bickerings in the group.

The guiding principle in life is to guard against 'exclusion'. The human organism cannot afford to ignore the element which holds the parts together and keeps them functioning. On this analogy, it is apartheid to neglect the basic structure of society. Once the agent of apartheid one cannot avoid being its victim. With apartheid as a guiding principle, society cannot be said to exist and function.

Great men who appear on the scene of the world have left behind them impressions which would help mankind to prosper in life. The impressions are remembered and utilized from various points of view. The utility might not have been intended by the great men but their life does contain material worthy of attention in various walks of life.

We are indivisible members of society. To possess a calm and undisturbed mind is the fruit of the advice of the great leaders.

The glory of Rāmānuja is that he deeply thought of society and its welfare and remembered equally that he could not disconnect himself from society. It appeared to him that segregation meant abstraction which amounted to distortion of reality. For Rāmānuja service to society appeared paramount. What he wanted was to console society and to keep it in comfort, to promote its natural wants and aspirations, whatever they be. A great person would be truly great, respected and welcome if he could be assuredly instrumental to the fulfilment of the social craving as it arises at different times. This kind of social service, though it was necessary, did not appeal to Rāmānuja. He would be a disappointment to those who expected contribution from him to keep the current of complicated social life going.
The stream of society would be worth its name only when it moves in the direction of prosperity, eliminating the evil and developing the good of the entire social society. If the latter aspect becomes. The dominant note of social progress, the surest way and perhaps the most welcome thing is to find out the remedy for the evil and the healing herb to preserve the health of society. It would be, therefore, the principle of regulation in social life that would keep down the storm of discontent, disorder and deterioration. To put it in a language that may be paradoxical 'freedom' is elimination of 'licence'. Freedom implies self-restraint which is regulated life, a necessity for a person in society. Licence is ignorance of the dignity of freedom. It may be termed as idle activity which is the surest way towards disintegration and ultimately destruction of society.

Social unity and harmony can best be realised and preserved only when the mind is kept clear and when the members of society permit their free will to possess such a clear mind. This would be an again paradoxical. It would be competition among members in the co-operative effort to maintain social unity. In other words, narrow-minded selfishness is the permanent venom which would work against the health of society. To serve society to arrest the growth of decay from the human to the sub-human is service in the negative sense, far it is only helping the flow of life without harnessing it for better purpose, namely the super-human life.

It is from the point of view, the message of Rāmānuja to mankind becomes invaluable as it emphasised, on unity, anti-individulism called 'aprtahk-siddhi' objectivity, vathartha, persuasion, opening the eyes to reality, non-persecution and non-dictatorship, the policy of control through material might. The most important of all is sympathy for the suffering, anukampa or compassion, the sole motive of which is to elevate them to the highest level not by magic but by the normal process of development. Such a course would possibly help society to maintain itself against periodic disturbances, the root cause of which is the ignorance of social order and the uncontrolled operation of caprice. Therefore, Rāmānuja felt the best way was to help society to realize the solid fact that no man is inferior to another and equally no man is identical with another. Society is a complex of varying individuals, each controlled under the central direction of the unit which holds the individuals together.

The aim of social service is not limited to meet only the needs of bed and bread in life, but to regulate a habit of utilising the bread
and bed in a healthy way.

This aim calls for discretion and discipline which is regulated life. Regulation is not an imposition from outside, but a development from within involving education and enlightenment in place of threat at and punishment. A band of workers or ācāryapurushas is a necessity. They are the enlightened functionaries in the service to preserve regulation.

The climax of social service is to find a place in society which has reaped the full benefit of regulated life. That is the aim of Rāmānuja. Success or failure is not entirely in the hands of an individual. Success is possible only when full co-operation exists between the director, the administrator and the participant.

Rāmānuja might not be successful in meeting to the full the wish of every member according to his taste and temperament, but he does meet the need of every one unfailingly by instilling in his mind the concept of unity, the reality of variety and the need for a regulated way of life which would be regarded as a healthy, varied manifestation of one single unity, namely, society. His main ambition in life was to help mankind, to dive into the depths to lift mankind. This is his principle of not losing the personal self, while giving a helping hand to others to come out of the mire of misery and confusion. Rāmānuja’s conception of social philosophy was to form a happy, prosperous society and his conviction was that improvement was inherent in every individual constituting the society and the only way to prosperity was to develop that inherent power without any grafting, for grafting does not introduce a superior quality.

REFERENCES

2. Rāmānuja: Gitā Bhāṣya, Ill, verse 35.
5. Amudanār: Rāmānuja Mūrandādi, verse 1.
11. Note: Ācāryapurushas, Title holders in the service of cultural life.


CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

We have now come to the end of the study of "The Impact of Rāmānuja's Teaching on Life and Conditions in Society". The following conclusions emerge from our study.

1. The society of which human beings are members has for them different kinds of promise and opportunity. Variation in kind and quality could not be denied or brushed aside. But the one aim of all beings is to have the best in life. Socialism as a science is an attempt to help human beings to reach their Supreme goal by keeping under check the inequality which is responsible for strife and despair.

Among the great Vedāntins of the past in India, Rāmānuja evinced his interest in this field of experience. His ambition was the welfare of the masses. According to him, outside society man has no place to live and act. The benefit of the Vedānta teaching was made available to the masses and a 'World Within the World' was introduced in which men could live and function with joy and contentment. It is just a change of attitude towards life. The aim is not to run away from the world, but to plant paradise on earth.

His choice of the nomenclature, Śrīvaishnava, establishes the fraternity of one and all in society. He, therefore, regarded the caste structure as preliminary equipment to meet the needs of Śrīvaishnavism. This attitude gave Rāmānuja a status as a great social reformer. He evaluated all aspects of social life and evolved a system in which the prevailing principle was harmony and cooperation.

2. The life-carer of Rāmānuja describes his dissatisfaction with the predecessors in the field of the Vedānta who failed to present the world order in proper perspective. Exclusion of a relevant part in evaluating experience in its entirety seemed to him an act of butchery. Co-ordination could not be ignored. Rejection of any part could not be condoned. With this view Rāmānuja turned to the world phenomenon and presented the world as a home of
Conclusio

happiness, though not durable and unsullied. This outlook of Rāmānuja urged him to lift society from the condition of gloom to a state of charm and glow.

3. The view that society consists of varying types of men and customs does not deserve to be misunderstood. Generally the groups may be regarded as advanced or backward, giving rise to the feeling of inequality which cannot be overcome. According to Rāmānuja, in a co-operative attempt with the background of harmony as guiding factor, charity and sympathy are allowed to maintain unity and affection.

4. The conflict that emerges very often in society should be confined to a different field. Conflict ought not to be between different factions. The conflict must be between self-interest and social interest. The aim is social interest which provides for personal interest also as an integral part of society. The struggle should be against personal interest at the expense of social interest. In other words, an individual belonging to society shall not permit himself to think of personal interest and welfare as more important than the interest and welfare of society of which he forms a part. Man is expected to serve society not keeping aloof, but with the conviction that he is an inescapable member of society.

5. Strict vigil is essential to maintain the harmonious condition of society. Factors of greed and glamour often upset the normal order of society. They deserve to be kept under check by providing for education, and for prevention in the event of education proving ineffective.

6. The socialistic outlook attracted people who gathered around Rāmānuja. The caste system as practised by the rṣis of the Vedic times appeared with a larger content. It was no longer a means to preserve purity and efficiency for personal gain. It was looked upon as a vital equipment to serve society from different aspects of life. The service motive was emphasised by Rāmānuja.

7. Religious experience helps mankind to an awareness that man is but a small speck in the social organism. The ritual or the practice in life is a continuation of that view all through life. Aggression and arrogance will appear when the religious spirit and the ritualistic behaviour are ignored. Religious experience should not be built on fancies and possibilities. The experience must be realistic and objective.

In order to spread this point of view in life persistent attempts must be made to keep the truth shining and to refute whatever
experience, in the name of religion, obliterates the form and power of true religion. This task is assigned to great scholars. Their works reveal their attempt to preserve this sublime aspect of experience. Likewise, to feed the masses with the elixir of religious experience popular treatise are introduced providing for grasping the truth without much strain on the part of the masses. The rituals arranged in the temples reflect the practice of religion together in company, an event or an opportunity reminding mankind that society is a homogeneous organism. Humility, devotion, sympathy and affection are the main traits that mark the gathering in the temple. This is the social value of gathering in the temple for worship and rituals.

8. Administration is the method of enlisting members to function in a way to maintain the spirit and structure of society unhindered. Discipline is a necessary element in the field of cooperation. The discipline is limited to keep harmony undisturbed. No member who form part of society can afford to ignore discipline. Freedom is arrested when discipline is enforced. But if discipline is ignored, freedom loses its value. Therefore, discipline deserves to be enforced by practising self-restraint which is considered the best behaviour. The Sanskrit term Vinayya (Humility) is Viṣṭa-nava—the best behaviour. That is freedom, namely, not being controlled by abnormalities. The administrator is a successful guardian only when he personally observes Vinaya. The paradoxical expression—'restraint is freedom' deserves to be remembered particularly in the field of administration.

The administrative style that Rāmānuja visualized could be observed in the region of the Karnātaka. Rāmānuja resorted to Mēlukōte (Tirunārāyanapuram, Yādavagiri and Yatīsāila as the place is known) from Śrīrangam and stayed for twelve years. Under his influence the Hoysaḷa King Vishnuvardhana accepted the direction of the ācārya and stated a system of administration which is in vogue as far as the temple is concerned even to day.

The system introduced in Mēlukōte by Rāmānuja is markedly distinct. The Pañchamas and others are drawn into the group under the doctrine of co-operation with a single purpose in view. The gathering was based on the policy of persuasion and not persecution in the interest of solidarity.

To look after the welfare of the masses in the temple, which is society in a miniature form—Rāmānuja included worshippers and scholars, to preserve the religious and the ritual side of experience
and the wealthy to pool resources and the labourers to assist in the pooling. In brief, it was a combined effort to establish the storehouse of supply to meet the needs of the people.

9. The individual has a right to exist and reach to the heights of his ambition in life. Being a social member he expects the environment to be helpful and agreeable. This attitude introduces a distinction between the receiving party and the providing party. Service as the term loosely understood, is the help a person receives from other for his benefit. The structure of society never subjects any individual to utter neglect. That is the instinct of service towards an individual introduced by nature. This type of service springs out of sympathy. True service is a projection of this instinct with the knowledge that the individual has an inherent privilege to be wished well by other members of society in thought, word and deed without thinking of himself as the recipient of benefit. Expectations may not be realised, but service habit is innate and cannot be ignored. Service is an indication of the value of life to promote the interest of society as a whole. Behaviour in the larger interest is preferred to behaviour in selfish interest.

Service in its pure form is obligation, contribution of one's mite to the group out of free will and from the section a person occupies in the sphere of society.

10. Praiseworthy may be the system of social order propounded by Rāmānuja, it is hard to continue the tradition without allowing for lapses. The influence of the sprit of Kali, the power of disorder cannot be always halted. Values change upsetting the equilibrium of life and society. Ups and down there are in individuals as well as in society. Human instinct readily yields to temptations which affect the true value of life. Clouded ambitions corrupt man's conduct. It is natural that the truly normal suffers a setback and degenerates into the sub-normal.

When the regulated walk of life of the highest order cannot be maintained, it is desirable as well as necessary to be aware of the glory of enlightened life and to strive to regain and retain it. In such a set-up, the group becomes a minor part of society, trying to remind the masses of the need to revert to the standard way of running society. The group, therefore, becomes an advisory body hoping that its view would command the attention and respect so that life in the world would be an occasion for contentment and happiness for every one. Performance in times of unbridled adversity takes the form of prayer and pious wish.
In the post-Rāmānuja period, the custodians of Rāmānuja's culture feared that the system of Rāmānuja might be affected and toned down in vigour as time moved on. Therefore, they introduced a form of prayer at the conclusion of worship in the temple which contained the spirit with which Rāmānuja introduced the system and a burning desire that the system according to his command might continue, spread and cover the whole of society.

The prayer is condensed in the following verses—

"Sarva-deśā-daśā-kāleṣu
a-vyāhata-parākrama
Rāmānujārya-divyajñā
Varadhatām-abhi-varadhatām
Rāmānujārya-divyajñā
Prati-vasaram-ujjvala
Dignata-vyapint-bhūyāt
Sāki-loka-hitai-śīni".

In all regions, conditions and times the progressive nature not being hindered, the sacred mandate of Rāmānuja may keep its vigour and develop it every wise. The sacred mandate of Rāmānuja daily gathering fresh glow, may spread in all directions—that mandate undeniably is directed towards the well-being of the world. This prayer serves as a caution against lapses brought about by lethargy and indifferences.
Appendices

I

The selected epigraphical evidence pertaining to this work are included in the appendix to show that the intention and the direction of Rāmānuja, the propogator of the socialist Vedānta have been carried out in all devotion and sincerity during later times.

The inscriptive evidence also throws light on how the organisation has yielded in quality to the environmental pressures from time to time. Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. V, Pt. I, Bl. 58 of A.D. 1117; on the inner-wall of the treasury of the Chennakēsava temple. Obeisance to Kēśava and Śiva. Usual account, in verse, of the rise of the Yedukula and the Poysala (omitting mere laudations). The Konkanigas, saying his sword will destroy us all, scattered in every direction, when Vinayaditya set forth for war. The sons of the hill Kings, rubbing their heads, rose up, came and placed their heads at his lotus feet. His wife was Keleyabba. Their son was Eregaṅga, Dhora, the chief city of the powerful Mājava Kings, which Bhoja by victory over hostile kings had enlarged and made famous, he took as if the preliminary sip (aposana) before feasting on the world of his enemies. So that the smoke blinded the eyes of the regents at the points of the compass, caused the white regent elephants to appear black, and filled the whole sky with a dense cloud. Poysala burnt all Bhoja’s principal fortresses. The dust raised by his army, coming down on the hills mingled with the clouds, and as he marched on burning all the encountered, it was as if he were unfurling a banner of smoke from Bhoja’s destruction, such was the effect of Poysala’s victorious expedition, what heroes were equal to him? The burning of Baley—Paṭṭana on the sea-shore by the flames of king Eregangas anger, brought to mind the appearance of the waves of the sea when consumed by Rāma’s fiery arrow. His wife was Echaladēvi. They had three sons—Ballala, Vishnu and Udayāditya.

With their swords beating down without mercy the pride of Pāṇḍya, who in his pride withstood them, the princes Vishnu and Baḷḷāḷa seized the wealth of his kingdom;—were they ordinary men? In Dōrasamudra they defeated the army of Jagadeva, painted the Goddess of victory with the blood of his elephants for vermilion, and captured his treasury together with the central ornament of his
—who could deny the valour of those princes? Devoted to the worship of Mahesa, the Goddess of victory his wife, the earth, the group of his dependents, relations by marriage, his equals, his fame throughout the Brahmāṇḍa (pure as the milk in the cocoanut) his treasure—the king Bāḷīla was praised in all the earth for his greatness.

Victorious is Vishnu Deva, all the wold at his feet, delighting in the conversation of the clever and learned, fond in his heart of all dancing, favourite of the Goddess of fortune. Ever engaged in business, devoted to the worship of purushottama,—in government, in making, gifts in distributing rewards, the king’s hand was a wonder, his acts displaying both severity and gentleness. When he set out on an expedition of victory to the west, the enemy was covered up with the clust raised by his army, the sea was dried up, and the king of the waters came and offered him jewels as tribute. First taking into his arms the wealth of the Poyasa kingdom which was his inheritance, as his power increased, he brought all the points of the compass under his command, and capturing Talakāḍu, became the first to the Ganga kingdom,—this promoter of the Yaduvanśa, the king Viṣṇu. The Goddess of Fortune reposing unmoved in his arms, so that his fortune should increase, he burnt the chief city of the Gangas,—the mighty Vishnu, named Bhujabala—Ganga, behold in order that Rajendra-chola, disgusted at the water of the Kaveri, suddenly becoming polluted, should be driven to the use of water from wells in the vicinity Vishnu by the power of his arm threw all the corpses of his army into the stream of the river, and caused his valour to shineforth. Kubera, why is the south wind delayed? Why has it not set in yet? It has been stopped by filling the nostrils of the skulls of the enemies slain in king Vishnu’s expeditions of victory on the banks of the Kaveri. His fame spread abroad over the ocean says to (mount) Mainaka, ‘Do not, alas, remain fixed in the ocean like a water-bird; there is no longer any fear for Indra; my Lord will protect you, the victorious king Vishnu’s Java (Yama) was afraid to straighten his moustaches, the sign of his manhood; those who fell at his feet were afraid of dulling by their breath the brilliance of his toe nails, the proud were afraid to look on him for fear of being consumed in his brightness; —such was the glory of the valour of the king Vishnu.

When, (with) usual titles, and many other epithets, among which are), causing the earth to tremble with the tramp of his Kāmbhoja horse, Lord of Gandagiri, an untimely discuss in splitting the great
rock Pāṇḍya, bursting the hearts of the Tulu kings in the game of
war, a Bhairava in destroying the army of Jagaddēva, a powerful
lion in devouring the fierce elephant somesvara, displaying his
valour before Manikya-devi of the Chakrakūṭa throne, skilled with
his bow in reducing the pride of Adiyama, a gale in overturning the
tree Narasimha-brahma, gratifying the Yogins with draughts of
blood out of the skull of Kalapala (or king Kala), his sword a
royal kite to destroy the serpent chengiri, rāja of the Mala-rajas, a
mighty elephant in breaking through the plantain stems the spears
of Irungola, a vainya in shaking with his bow the mountain chengiri
—perumāla, having set up with his own army. Patti-perumāla,
having made his own Talakad, having taken the Kongu country,
having protected Nolambavadi, having expanded Nila-parvata,
having extended Kolala-Pura, having uprooted Kovatūr, having
Shaken Teriyūr, having crossed over Vallur, having made Kancipura tremble, champion over the hill-chiefs, an intoxicated royal
swan sporting in the woods on the banks of the Kaveri.—Śrīmat
Tribhuvanamalla, the strong armed Vīra—Ganga Vishnuvarddhana
—Poysalādēva was protecting by the Barakanurand other ghats of
Konkana, north by Savimala.

And when, united with the sharer in a thousand delights
(omitting mere laudations) a Kamala born in the milk-ocean of
Balipura, receiver of a boon from the God Dharmmesvara, having
erected the Rāmēśvara temple of Isapura, a jewelled lamp in the
house of the Bharatagama (or science of music), the cluster of the
nails of whose feet were reverenced by crowds of beautiful girls with
long hanging tresses, a head jewel in all manner of dancing, a
Saravsvati in singing, a rutting elephant to co-wives—the senior
queen, the crowned consort Śantaladēvi—Vishnuvardhana—Poysala-
dēva was in his residence in the great city of Velāpura, ruling the
kingdom in peace and wisdom—he set up with faith the God Vijaya-
Nārāyana, called Chenna (described) with an immense number of
opthers), and (on the date specified), to provide for the daily cere-
monies, the decorations, and the offerings at the three times, to the
Gods Vijaya-Nārāyana, Chenna-kēśava and Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa and
for the livelihood of the Srivaśnava Brahmanas, of the dancing girls,
the putters on the vestments, the learned men, the garland-makers,
the lighters of the lamps and all the attendants, he made grants of
villages (as specific). Whatever surplus income may accrue, to be
devoted to offerings to the faithful and to temple repairs. Thus
was it ordered by the eleventh incarnation, Vishnuvardhana Hoysala—Deva (Impercations).


On the Jagati of the Vahanamantapa in the Tonnur Temple.

“Be it well........the Mahâjanas of......rvedimangalam (assigned) land for 42 (as vritti)......of Râmânuja-matham at......kadappu......of the gali-gopuram......the holding gave......”.

(3) Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. VI, Melukote 137.

To the left of the new door-way set up in the northern Prakara well.

“May it be auspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Râmânuja. While the illustrious........Krishnadevamâharâya was ruling the Kingdom on earth, on........of Salivahana Saka year ............worshippers of the divine lotus feet of God Sampatkara Nârâyanadéva of (Tirunâ) râyânapura which is the abode of the eternal God, a Vaikuntha on earth, holy place which is an extension of Vaikuntha........establisher of.......a Grauda with no discomfiture, establisher of vedic religion, Râmânuja........the sale deed granted to Râmânujayyayangar is as follows :

As........to God Shelapilerâya, the details of the service are as follows :

For feeding daily the Śrâvânasas........we have sold from the treasury......to you. Hence these two plates of offered food........as we have received in full........to this two kulas of rice, two plates of offered food........in succession of the disciples for as long as moon and sun endure, the Râmânuja-kûta. To this effect is the writing of Râmânuja, the Senabova of the treasury”.

(4) Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. VI, Melukote 182.

Stone paved into the floor of the Yatirâja Matha

“Obeisance to the illustrious Râmânuja on Thursday, the 12th day of the bright fortnight of Margasira, in the year Nala, by the order of God Nârâyanadéva who has settled in the holy place which is the extension of Vaikuntha, the fifty-two and Ketiyappa-setti who is Ajâgiyamâlavâladâsa, son of Chenapaseṭṭi of Terakanâmbi granted for Râmânujakûta the villages........Vanahall and Kamarasana-pura—thus, two villages and 5 Kha. of wet land in Harahina Ketahali—all these........having obtained........four........Śrâvânasas will maintain amidursana-kaṭṭale before Bhâshyakâra. Thus is the stone charter got written”.

Stone set up to the North-West of the Garuda Temple in the Nāmadakatte Garden

"On Monday, the 1st day of the bright fortnight of Ashadha, in the year sidhārtha, Immadi-Ravuttarāya Madappa—dannāyaka, son of Immadi Ravuttarāya Perumāludēva—dannāyaka of Heḍātale, made over the title of land noticed by Emberumānar as *tirumānnu* (holy earth) to God Tirimanna-Perumāḷ as a charity good fortune”.

II

(1) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V, BL. 58 (See Appendix—I)


"May it be auspicious obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. While the illustrious mahārājādhirāja, rājaparamēśvra Lord of the east, south and western oceans, Vīrapratāpa Sadasīvadeva mahārāya was ruling the empire on earth, on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra, in the year Pramoduta, of the Śalīvāhana Śaka year 1492, the Fifty two (Aiyavattibbar) Ayyas, first disciples of Rāmānujacharya, worshipper of the celebrated lotus feet of God Sampatkumara Nārāyaṇa of Tirunārāyaṇapura which is Yādavagiri, the illustrious abode of the eternal God, a Vaikuntha on earth, an increasing holy place, a pavilion of knowledge, otherwise called the Southern Badarikāśrama, an uproar to the expander of Māyāvāda, a terror to conjurers, an adamantine cage to refugees, establisher of the six recognised systems of philosophy, a Garuḍa having no discomfiture, establisher of the Vedic religion, granted to the stone charter to Rayapa-nāyaka, son of Kondama-nāyaka, punisher of the army of elephants, rayagovala, founder of the Kakiva kingdom, a Sultan among Hindu rulers. Velugoḍa-chitra, as follows—previously, your ancestor Vasantaraya had granted the villages, Nailanahali, a hamlet of Mēlukōte and ......... Purada-grama and its hamlet, which he had purchased from the treasury (of the temple) the income of cash and grains of which was to be utilised as follows: half of it for feeding in Rāmānujakuta appear offering to the God and out of the other half, deducting 3/4 for the perpetual
lamp, the remaining 1/4 was for *Yajamānāmsa* (the share of the head of household) which belonged to Anantayya, the *dharmakarta* appointed by your (ancestor) Vasantarāya. He was also enjoying 2 Kha. of wet land below the tank of Bharatapura. While this was so, owing to invasion or natural calamity (rajika—caivika) only the *bidutaka* (services) was being continued. Hence you having ordered, though Jalela Rangapatrirajaiyya that the old practice should be continued, that old practice that we (now) maintain is as follows:

From the income of cash and grains from that village for..........after the offering to God..........after deducting 3/4 of the income of the Sthāna (Sthāna-prāpti) for perpetual lamp, the remaining 1/4 will be paid to Āḷvāru Singayya, your *dharmakarta* grandson of Anantayya whom Vasantarāya had appointed, in succession of sons and grandsons, for as long as moon and son endure..........and also we maintain (grant of) 2 Kha. of wet land below the tank of Vasantapura to him. Thus is granted the stone charta, on your own accord. All the wet and dry lands gardens, vegetable gardens, threshing—floor, house, farmers, dams, arable lands ......eight rights and powers of enjoyment including treasure on the surface or underground, water springs, minerals, imperishables, futures..........ready income and possibilities will be maintained to Āḷvāra Singayya.

If any one fails to maintain we shall set right. Whoever violates this charity is one who violates the feet of Rāmānujacharya Rāmānuja, the Senabova of the treasury wrote, signature of the fifty-two Ayyas. Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

(3) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 137 (See Appendix—I)

(4) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Bl. 58 (See Appendix—I)

(5) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Tonnūr 55, (See Appendix—I)

(6) *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Mēlukōṭe 213 on the top of the rock in Mudi-beṭṭa near the town.

"May it be auspicious, obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja. This is the service of the flower garden rendered by the illustrious mahāmandalēswara Rāmārājayadeva and Vabayamma to God Nārāyaṇa, on the 5th day of the dark fortnight of Vaisakha, in the year Viṣṇu".


"Be it well. While.........Pratāpa Chakravarti Hoysala Vīrabal-Jaladēva was ruling the kingdom on earth, the illustrious Mahāpra-
dhāna, champion over adulterers, conquerer of Nilagiri, a marito
Kongas, soatterer of Visalamudre, modakoley, Immadi Rahutarāya
of Eṭatale, Perumāḷe-dannāyaka’s son Madappa-dannāyaka and
Ketappa-dannāyaka granted one wet land of 10 kolagas below
Kulavanahala stream in their place to Lakshmaṇadāsa who enjoying
it, will supply 15 gula of eleyatti (cardomon ! to God Tirunārāyaṉa
of Mēlugote for as long as moon and sun endure. God fortune”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aprthak-Siddhi</td>
<td>Inseparable existence, Integral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ananyatva</td>
<td>Non co-ordinate status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antar-Jvara</td>
<td>The lurking fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ājvārs</td>
<td>Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ācāryas</td>
<td>The leading agent in life, seers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrahāras</td>
<td>Brahmana settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āśramas</td>
<td>Stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aham</td>
<td>Ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atithi</td>
<td>Guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-cetana</td>
<td>Non mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adītyān</td>
<td>An entity engaged in service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aksini</td>
<td>Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ātma-Śṭla</td>
<td>Power of character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ācāra</td>
<td>Habit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ādāmbhara</td>
<td>Self-aggrandisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatāras</td>
<td>Incarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ātman</td>
<td>Soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adīyār</td>
<td>Followers, the responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āgama</td>
<td>The treatise dealing with the ritual of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ānādi</td>
<td>Beginningless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āṇḍar</td>
<td>Men with material interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anukampa</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ācārya Purushas</td>
<td>Cultural Custodians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhyāpana</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asura</td>
<td>Who interferes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allum</td>
<td>Draw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arintyars</td>
<td>The chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akshara</td>
<td>Syllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aṣṭhakshari</td>
<td>Octo-syllabic term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archakas</td>
<td>Worshippers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhinaya</td>
<td>Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhayayana</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

Bhagavān : Source of life
Bhākta-Samāgama : Association with the wise
Bhakti : Devotion
Bhahīśkara : Excommunication
Bhṳnjītah : Utilize
Brahmotsava : Ritualistic festival in the temple
Brahmacārin : Bachelore
Bhrtya : Adiyar, Servant
Bhedā : Distinction
Bhāṣya : Treatise
Brahmamedha "Samskāra" : The method of disposing the earthly remains of the philosopher
Brahman : The biggest
Bhāgavata : Devotee
Bhokta : Enjoier
Chaturkshari : Quadro-syllabic term
Cetana : Soul
Chakra : Discus
Divyadāsas : Holy places
Dhik-labh-Dhā : Knowledge is obtained
Dharma-nāstah : Righteousness slipped out of reach
Dāna- : Gifts
Dravidā-Veda : The store house of knowledge recorded in the Tamil language
Drona : A measure used in measuring the food grains
Dharma : Righteousness
Divyacaksus : The divine eye
Dāsya : Service prompted by love
Dāsā : Servant
Dīva : Who co-operates
Dāsiputra : The son of a maid servant
Ekāntins : Persons who did not waver in their minds
Gadya : Prose
Gṛhastha : House-holder
Guru : Teacher, preceptor
Guṇa : Attribute, Virtue
Gṛīha : House
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giri</td>
<td>Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotra</td>
<td>Clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gāndapādi Uttasavam</td>
<td>Sandal powder festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jāti</td>
<td>Caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jīva</td>
<td>Soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jīvātma</td>
<td>Human mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jñānayoga</td>
<td>Pure meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jñāna</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koil</td>
<td>Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṅkarya</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kārunaika</td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karma</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kula</td>
<td>Clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāi</td>
<td>Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koilolugu</td>
<td>Record of the temple tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karambu</td>
<td>Sugar Cane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamugam</td>
<td>Nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kālakṣpam</td>
<td>Seminar or discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalpanṛksa</td>
<td>A tree that yields for all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali</td>
<td>Disturber of peace, perversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamalabandhu</td>
<td>Companion of the lotus (Sun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loka</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mleecha</td>
<td>Renegade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahājanas</td>
<td>The local citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukti</td>
<td>Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magrdhah</td>
<td>Do not grab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maṭha</td>
<td>Religious institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokṣa</td>
<td>Final release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meḥunad</td>
<td>Uplands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma</td>
<td>Mango fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maṇṭras</td>
<td>The formula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maṇtapas</td>
<td>Dwelling place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māla</td>
<td>Garland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahābūta</td>
<td>Men steeped in the knowledge of the Absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipravāla Language</td>
<td>Mixture of two different languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meḥunad</td>
<td>Upland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitya-grantha</td>
<td>A guide book of daily worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niskāma Karma</td>
<td>An activity untarnished by narrow motives and attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāsa</td>
<td>Destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nivṛttarāga</td>
<td>A person who does not succumb to passions and temptations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitya Karma</td>
<td>Daily duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanda Vanams</td>
<td>Flower gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pañcabhūtas</td>
<td>Five elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāpa</td>
<td>Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paṅgu</td>
<td>Lame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāṭhak</td>
<td>Reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavam Śaiddanadām</td>
<td>Committed sins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratigraha</td>
<td>Receiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phala</td>
<td>Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puṇya</td>
<td>Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parama yogin</td>
<td>The greatest associate capable of controlling the maladies pertaining society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pañcarātra</td>
<td>System of temple worship sponsored by Visnu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāda-Cchaya</td>
<td>Shadow of the feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pṛthak</td>
<td>Piece meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paṅca Samskāra</td>
<td>The five fold efficacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pātram</td>
<td>Laudatory hymn at the beginning and at the end of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchamas</td>
<td>The unspecified class as distinguished from the four specified classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parivaṭṭa</td>
<td>Turbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prapanna</td>
<td>One who does not work for a personal gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para Samydhī</td>
<td>Benefit to the neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parichāraka</td>
<td>Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prapattih</td>
<td>Surrender, Release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pundartika</td>
<td>The white lotus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punḍra</td>
<td>Two white lines on the fore-head, with a red line of powder suffer on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prakṛti</td>
<td>Nature, Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pala</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahasya</td>
<td>Inner thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritis</td>
<td>Seers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rña</td>
<td>Debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajas</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samasrayana</td>
<td>Branding ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanyásin</td>
<td>Ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sankara</td>
<td>Adulteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sátras</td>
<td>Aphossims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samanvaya</td>
<td>The Supreme pursuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śaritrātmabhāva</td>
<td>The body-mind-kinship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śīśya</td>
<td>Disciple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śāstraikatva-Siddhih</td>
<td>Unity of teaching to be maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seṣa</td>
<td>An entity meant only for service with no tinge of selfishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śeṣatva</td>
<td>Servitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śākha</td>
<td>Conch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seva</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satya</td>
<td>Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandhyā Performance</td>
<td>Ritual or prayer performed during dawn, mid-day and sundown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sātvika</td>
<td>Pure knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsāra</td>
<td>Cycle of birth and death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrī Vaiṣṇava</td>
<td>The followers of Śrī Viṣṇu, the Absolute of the merciful master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śattu</td>
<td>Wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śattya</td>
<td>Stamina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śattadār</td>
<td>Non-users (those who do not wear sacred thread)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śarira</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sādhana</td>
<td>Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šthira</td>
<td>A steady source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šêmnel</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strappu</td>
<td>Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sthānikas</td>
<td>Local officials, official retinua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampradāya</td>
<td>Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tīru-k-kulattār</td>
<td>A clan belonging to the family of Śrī the Consort of Lord (Goddess Lakshmi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolukku-Iniyan</td>
<td>The deity borne on the shoulder produces a sense of thrill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirumana</td>
<td>The holy clay paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamas</td>
<td>Lethargy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-Varnikas</td>
<td>Pertaining to three castes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahdiyārādhana</td>
<td>Social worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapas</td>
<td>Penance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talasi</td>
<td>Basil leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruvaimoli</td>
<td>The divine out burst in Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyāga</td>
<td>Sacrifice, renunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirivar</td>
<td>The straying or vagrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiru</td>
<td>Śrī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonḍanur</td>
<td>The city of devotees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonḍar</td>
<td>Devotee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenkalei</td>
<td>The obligation minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teṅgu</td>
<td>Coconut, a tropical palm tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirunakṣtra</td>
<td>Birth day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulām</td>
<td>Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchavrthi</td>
<td>Begging alms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upakaraṇa</td>
<td>Instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upasaka</td>
<td>Meditator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udbhayavedānta</td>
<td>The twin system of Vedantic thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upasana</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaru</td>
<td>A mental entity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāhana</td>
<td>Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varnadharma</td>
<td>Caste based obligation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhisodhaka Kinkara</td>
<td>A servant whose function it is to keep the path cleared of the accumulated garbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaidika</td>
<td>Pertaining to the vedas (also the follower of vedic style of living)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedas</td>
<td>The ritual delineation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedanta</td>
<td>The final phase of wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinaya</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vānapraṣṭha</td>
<td>The seeker after secluded resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaikhānasa</td>
<td>System of temple worship which owes its origin to the vedas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedāntin</td>
<td>Philosopher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vādakalai</td>
<td>Privilege minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visisthadvaita</td>
<td>Comprehensive Absolutism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vyavasāya</td>
<td>Firmness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Varna Dharma: Caste discipline
Vellals: Agricultural community
Vasundhara: The container of wealth in its common conception as food
Vālai: Plantain
Vatṭu: Bachelor
Vidyāmadha: A conceit intellectual arrogance or the competence to explain any and every aspect of experience
Vellai śattu-p-padi: Wearing the white robes
Yağas: Ritual
Yağıṇas: Ceremonies
Yañña: Observe the ritual
Yañjana: Direct the performance
Select Bibliography

Section A

PRIMARY SOURCE

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Index

A

Ācārya, function of the, 123-124
Ācārya Hṛdaya, 50, 128
Ācārya purushas, 89
mite of the 118-119
institution of, 178-179
Ācāryas, five, 29, 49, 133
Acetana and cetana, 40, 42, 85
Adi, 103
Adiyār, 102-103
Adikēśava perumāl, 16
Adiven, 42
Administration, 158-159
style of, 160-162
Agastya, sage, 29
Agriculture, 100-101
Agricultural labour, 113
Aims and ambitious, 75
Alvārs, 69-70
Ānanda, 85
Ananyatval, 1, 55
Āndan and Ācān, 185
Anti-social not, Asceticism, 51-52
Apthak-siddhi, 8-9, 93
Arjuna, 202-203
Art development, 139-140
Asceticism, 57, 61-62
Āśrams, 16-19, 51-52, 78
Aṣṭāsloki, 151
Asura, 102
Atiṣṭhi, 70
Atishidēvabhava, 25

B

Bargaining, 96
Barter system, 109, 189-190
Bhagavad gīta, 8, 33-34, 101, 133
message of, 52-54
principle of, 35
Bhakti, 88, 127
Bhāṣya, 152
Bhaṭṭ Govinda, 16
Bhaṭṭ, Kamalanayana, 16
Bhūdēvi, 16
Bhuṣijitaḥ, 14
Body-mind relationship, 154
Brahmacārya, 78, 179
Brahmadeha Sanskāra, 37
Brahman, 20-21, 81
Brahmin, 121-122
Buddha, 35

C

Caste and creed, 70
Caste and society, role of, 81-84
Caste discipline, 66-67
scope of, 36
Caste hierarchy
Caste system, 37, 124, 206-208
limitation of, 84-85
Cetana, 40, 85
Chennakeśava, 166
Chola king, 177
Cooperation, 76
Cooperative effect, 98-99
Corruption, fighting against, 164-165
Cosmic force, influence of, 35
Crime, social, 68
Cultural Custodians, 118-119

D

Dāsa, 93
Daśaratha, 31-32, 69, 159-160, 162-163
Daśarthi, 124
Dāsya, 41
Detachment, 20
Dēva, 102
Dēvarājamum, 150
Dhanurdāsa, 71-72
episode of, 128-129
Dharma, 71, 168
Dharma-ṣaṣṭā, 14
Vedic style of living, 2
Vidura, treatment of, 125
Village life, 113-114
Vishnu, Lord, 70-72
Visṇucitta, 102, 112, 151

Women folk, 115
Women, position and status of, 143

Yadāva, 21
Yadavaprapāśa, 19-20, 23, 149
Yāgas, 35, 76
Yagūnas, 35
Yāska, sage, 22
Yathākṛatu, 125
Yogivāha, 50
Yudhiṣṭhira, 125
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