The Rise and Development of Visistadvaita and Saiva-Siddhanta In The Cola Empire

Dr. Mary John Kattikatt (K. J. Mary)
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With a Foreword
Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan
R. I. A. S. Philosophy
University of Madras, Madras-5

Stella Maris Convent
Cathedral Road
Madras-600-086
1995
THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF VISISTADVAITA AND SAIVA SIDDHANTA
IN THE COLA EMPIRE

TIRUMALA THIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS

PUBLISHED WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF
TIRUMALA THIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
UNDER THEIR SCHEME
AID TO PUBLISH RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

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DEDICATION

This book is reverentially dedicated to the Loving Memory of Mary of the Passion Foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, And a Pioneer in initiating the Uplift of Women in South India.
FOREWORD

The Cola dynasty was known for preserving the Tamil Culture and patronising Hindu religious traditions. Since religions bring inner peace and harmony, there is no wonder in the attitude of the emperors in showing tolerance and treating all religions alike.

The present book by Sister Mary John, which formed her doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Madras contains valuable information regarding the overall contributions of the Cole Kings to Tamil Culture and particularly to religion and philosophy. They had realized that a society would become perfect when religion and philosophy are fused together, for religion without philosophical analysis will land in superstitions and blind observances; similarly, philosophy without any scope for religious practice will culminate in dogmatism and dry intellectualism.

Hence the Cola Kings, besides fostering Saiva and Vaishnava religions, encouraged the development of the philosophical side viz., Saiva Siddhantha and Visistadvaita respectively. The author has excellently elucidated the salient features of these two philosophical traditions and has portrayed, the significant contributions of the ācāryas to exemplify each concept. She has also remarkably pointed out the situations such as social, economic and political under which these two philosophical traditions survived and grew.

The readers of this book will really be benefitted by the vast information from a historical perspective about ancient Tamil Country, the dynasty, which ruled it, as well as the religio-philosophical traditions etc.,

R. GOPALAKRISHNAN
Reader
R.I A.S. in Philosophy
University of Madras.
PREFACE

I owe the theme of the present book to my long standing desire to learn the spiritual, the philosophical and the cultural heritage of India and especially of Tamil Nadu. As a student of Indian History and of Indian Philosophy, I was particularly interested in the inter-connections between philosophical trends and historical circumstances. The findings of my studies as given in the following pages show that certain developments in the two religious philosophies of Visistadvaita and Saiva Siddhanta can be interpreted and explained partly in terms of historical factors. The material of this book originally formed the dissertation for Ph. D. submitted to the University of Madras and I do not pretend that the limitations of a thesis have been totally eliminated in the book.

There is a host of intellectual benefactors and friends to whom I am indebted in shaping this book. Apart from the professors of the University who guided in writing the original work, I record my appreciation and gratitude to Prof. Dr. N. Subbu Reddiar, M.A., B.Sc., L.T., Vidvan Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Department of Tamil, Literature, University of Madras, who made the publication of this book possible by his invaluable assistance from the beginning to the end. I am thankful to Dr. Gopalakrishnan, Director-in-charge, the Dr Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, for enriching my work with his foreword. My sincere thanks to the management, the Principal and Staff of Stella Maris College for their constant support in both big and small ways. I acknowledge with gratitude the financial assistance received from the Tirumala - Tirupati Devasthanams under their scheme Aid to publish Religious Books.

I hope that this book will be of some value to those interested in inter-disciplinary studies.

Dr Sr. Mary John Kattikatt, fmm,
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the revised version of the original which was submitted in June 1982. The valuable comments and suggestions made by the examiners have been carefully incorporated into this present text.

In submitting this thesis I wish to express my gratitude first of all to Dr. R. Balasubramanian, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., the Director of the Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, my present Supervisor, for his readiness to help me even in the midst of his heavy schedule, enabling me to complete my work in time.

I thank Dr. S. Gopalan, M.A., M.Litt., Ph.D. (Madras) Ph.D. (Mc Master) D Litt., who was my former supervisor and who has now taken up a post in the Department of philosophy at the National University of Singapore. I am indebted to him for his comments and criticisms which helped me considerably in shaping the argument in the thesis.

My sincere thanks are due to Dr. V. A. Devasenapathi, M.A., Ph D., for accepting me into the Institute as a teacher fellow to work on an inter-disciplinary subject of History and Philosophy. His sustained interest in my work and his valuable suggestions have helped me much. I wish to thank Dr. V K. S. N. Raghavan M.A., Ph D., and all the other members of the Faculty of the Institute, for their encouragement and suggestions in the writing of this thesis. I thank Dr. A. Chandrasekaran, M.A., Ph.D., Lecturer in History, Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Madras for his help particularly in shaping the historical part.

My gratitude is due to the authorities of Stella Maris College, Madras, and the Principal for permitting me to take up research under the Faculty Improvement Programme.
I wish to thank the Librarians and the members of the non-teaching staff of the Radhakrishnan Institute for their assistance.

I am grateful to the authorities of the University of Madras and the University Grants Commission for granting me Fellowship under the Faculty Improvement Programme.

Mary John
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INTRODUCTION

Historical Dimensions of Philosophical Thought: Human thought can be analysed and interpreted in terms of its origin, development and the impact it leaves on society. The origin of a thought presupposes an individual, as well as the circumstances under which the thought germinated. In certain cases the individual ingenuity seems to be the chief factor that gave rise to a thought while in other cases historical circumstances seem to figure more prominently. Whatever may be the relative importance of the individual and the circumstances in given cases, neither factor can be overlooked in analysing the background of a thought system. Among the circumstances the political, economic and social factors often seem to play a major role.

It is fairly impossible to identify all the external factors that contribute to the development of a specific trend of thought. What can be attempted is to indicate in a broad way, that certain aspects of a given society have either retarded or facilitated the growth of certain philosophical ideas. It is also possible to identify certain guiding forces that gave direction to a trend of thought. The helpful factors can, therefore, be categorised as growth-facilitating and direction-pointing. It is somewhat perplexing to see that sometimes philosophical ideas germinate and flourish under stable conditions in society and other times under conditions of great instability. Therefore, there seems to be no general rule about the conditions of origin and growth of
philosophical ideas. Every case has to be analysed in terms of specific period of time and locale.

Interconnections between Religion and Philosophy: In India as elsewhere, the beginnings of philosophical thought are to be found in the religious aspirations of man. The primitive man was filled with awe, adoration and supplication before the 'mystery' with which he was surrounded. These sentiments, together with a spirit of inquiry, gradually led him to speculate on the origin of the world, the destiny of man etc. In this process of growth, in the West, religion and philosophy followed distinct paths; though they influenced each other, they never merged. In India also there was a tendency for religion and philosophy to become distinct, but the link was progressively re-established. However, closeness with religion did not in any way minimise the strong intellectuality of the Indian mind. The intellectual impulse continued to thrive and as a result every system made persistent effort at systematic thinking. However, the link has made philosophy intensely spiritual since each system incorporated in it strong theistic beliefs and well defined ethical codes.

The Social Dimensions of Religious Philosophies: The systems which arose as a result of the alliance between religion and philosophy had firm historical foundations since they were based on the authoritative texts of the land and on the experience of the saints and seers. At the same time, these religious philosophies were potentially relevant to the needs of the contemporary society because they were capable of accommodating the various segments of the society by retaining speculative thought on the one hand, and on the other presenting these thoughts in terms understandable to the common man. Though it is difficult to say to what extent the ācāryas of these systems intended them to be reform movements, yet looking back across the centuries, one sees that the circumstances leading to the formulation of these systems, especially of ViṣṇuAdvaita
and Saiva-Siddhānta as well as their doctrinal contents depict the struggles, the hopes and the aspirations of the contemporary society.

The Scope of the Study: This study deals with the theistic systems of Viśiṣṭādvaita and śaiva-siddhānta within the Cōla empire from the tenth to the thirteenth century. It also deals with the historical circumstances which have either directly or indirectly contributed to the rise of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Saiva-Siddhānta.

The period from the tenth to the thirteenth century witnessed the heyday of the Cōla empire. This was also the time when a concerted effort was made to synthesise the devotional and speculative aspects of the Hindu thought. It was under these favourable circumstances that the theistic systems evolved. This period also represents a time when the North and the South happened to depict contrasting situations both politically and culturally. A consideration of this contrasting picture is important because it shows that the political situation in the North hindered the growth of religion and philosophy, while in the South, the sympathetic attitude of kings helped the growth of the same.

The Purpose of the Study: Though it is accepted on principle that philosophical systems do not arise in a social vacuum, the general belief is that Indian Philosophy is far removed from the day to day life of the society, to be affected by outside forces. The assumption here seems to be that the philosophical systems arise through the efforts of certain philosophers, who are mostly engaged in speculations about the nature of Reality and pre-occupied with the liberation of souls from the shackles of samsāra. As such, the study of the various philosophical systems usually centres around an investigation of the way they reveal reality in its various aspects, for example, the relationship of Reality to the world and the individual souls, and the means of attaining final goal according to each system.
This approach is, of course, valid. However, a study situating the various systems in their many-sided historical circumstances can make the knowledge about the systems much deeper. This is precisely the aim of this study.

In particular, an attempt is made to establish the link between the economic and social factors on the one hand, and the theistic systems on the other. In one or two instances the link is established through an interpretation of the medieval situation from a twentieth century standpoint. Thus, for example, the group oriented set-up in the economic situation is viewed as a limitation on the possibilities of free choice on the part of the individuals. Similarly, stratification of society into the elite and non-elite groups has been interpreted as an antecedent for the alienation of masses. These interpretations have been employed since they provide a rationale for the alliance between speculative philosophy and popular devotions, seeking to unite the higher and the lower castes on the common forum of religious philosophies. At the same time, such interpretations relate to the pattern of thought development in the two systems: both recognised the individuality and permanency of the soul; both made philosophy intelligible to common man through their personalistic approach to Reality.

Sources: Inscriptions have been one of the most reliable, primary sources of this study, especially for the historical aspect. Though an abundance of information of all types is available from the inscriptions, considering the nature of the thesis, a judicious selection had to be made. Obviously, inscriptions pertaining to the religious activities, such as, endowments for religious studies and temple worship, were found valuable. From among the other categories, some of the inscriptions on the village set-up, trade, industry and social stratification, which either directly or indirectly, relate to the rise of religious philosophies, were also selected.
The author has tried to make a representative selection of other types of sources as well. Of these latter, mention must be made of two contemporary writings of the period which have proved to be of immense help. The first among these is Periya Purāṇam of Sēkkiḷār written in the twelfth century A.D. The book is an account of the lives of the bhakti saints who lived in the Tamil country between the sixth and ninth centuries A.D., and, as such, it contains detailed descriptions of the social and religious conditions of the period. The work is also important because Sēkkiḷār, being the minister of the Cōla Kingdom, was in a position to obtain all possible first hand information. For example, he travelled widely visiting the places where the saints lived and observed the contemporary practices of veneration given to them. These practices have found their way into the book, thus giving us glimpses of contemporary society. The second contemporary writing, Kōyilolugu gives information on Rāmānuja’s zeal in the cause of Vaiṣṇavism. It has some limitations as a historical chronicle, but the recordse contained in it are helpful particularly as primary sources for the happenings in one of the principal Vaiṣṇavite temples, i.e., the temple at Srīraṅgam. Concerning the philosophy of the time, the study was mainly based on Rāmānuja’s Sripaṭyāva, Meykaṇḍadevar’s Sivajñāna-bodham and Arunāndi Sivācārya’s Sivajñāna Siddiyār. The author has also consulted, as far as possible, other available sources about the topic, but particular attention has been paid to the works that are closely related.

Chapterisation: The theme of the thesis, the rise of Viṣṇu-dvaita and Saiva-Siddhānta, has been developed in six chapters. Chapter I establishes that the rulers of the Cōla empire facilitated the growth of the two religious systems. Chapter II discusses some aspects of the economic and social conditions which in an indirect and remote manner contributed towards the direction taken by philosophy during the period, namely, the realistic,
pluralistic, theistic turn. Chapter III shows that Rāmānuja combined the two already existing traditions, the Vedic and the Tamil devotional, in his personalistic approach to Reality as contrasted with the Advaita of Saṅkara. Chapter IV discusses the practical discipline of Viśiṣṭādvaita, bringing out its openness to the masses, especially the lower sections of the society. Chapter V studies Saiva-Siddhānta and shows that it adequately met the challenges from the siddhas and at the same time maintained the transcendental and immanent characteristics of the system. Chapter VI discusses the Saiva-Siddhānta ethics, highlighting its popular and positive aspects which made it meaningful to the common man. The last four chapters dealing with the doctrine of the two systems also pay equal attention to the historical circumstances which, either directly or indirectly, influenced the ācāryas in the formulation of the two systems.
CHAPTER I

The Cola Rulers as Promoters of Religion and Philosophy

FROM very early times religion undifferentiated from philosophy seeped into the very texture of Indian life. The Hindu dharma had laid down definite obligations and duties for each caste. The kings had the duty to rule the country according to the norms given in the Sāstras whose authority they did not question. By their consecration as kings, the rulers of India were made into servants and upholders of dharma. By and large they were noted for their devotion to dharma. In the service of dharma the Hindu kings often provided also material helps to religious activities and institutions, including those sects other than their own.

Period prior to the Tenth Century A.D.: Prior to the tenth century A.D. there were several rulers who showed marked interest in the development of religion and philosophy. Aśoka of the Mauryan Empire was an illustrious example. He practised and patronised religion to an extent not done until then by any other sovereign. He was determined to establish a commonwealth of dharma encompassing the whole world. This is the reason he tried to send missionaries throughout the world. The admonitions, regulations and pious
injunctions issued by him and engraved on rocks in different parts of the empire bear witness to his zeal in promoting dharma.  

Several rulers like Kaniṣka, Chandra-gupta II and Harṣa were also promoters of religion and culture. Under them both Hinduism and Buddhism flourished. A notable feature of the intellectual life of the times consisted of philosophical debates between the Buddhists and the Hindus. These debates centred round the six systems of philosophy: Nyāya-Vaiseṣika, Sāṅkhya-yoga, Purva-Mīmāmsā and Vedānta. The Buddhists later became weak but these debates contributed to the advancement in the theological and philosophical thinking.

From the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century: Contrasting Situations in the North and the South: India has also seen instances of set-back in religion and philosophy due to a lack of support from the rulers or due to their hostile attitude. This was the case of North India from the tenth to the thirteenth century. The experience of South India during the same period was exactly the opposite. There the attitudes of the rulers led to the flowering of theism. Even though this study is confined to the Cōla empire of the South the contrasting picture of the North is also important. It made the South the stronghold of the Hindu religion and the Cōlas its champions. The centre of Hindu religious activity shifted from the North to the South during this period.

Political Situation of North India in Relation to Intellectual Activities: Due to the political fragmentation that took place after the death of Harsa in 647 A. D., North

India was nothing more than a medley of principalities, a situation very different from the South where the imperial Cūlas reigned supreme for nearly one and a half centuries. The political fragmentation of the North had its repercussion on the intellectual life of the North. The sole preoccupation of the rulers was to preserve their territorial integrity. Their time and energy was, therefore, expended exclusively for planning political plots and forming confederacies against one another. Their incessant strife proved to be a heavy drain on their treasuries and resulted in demoralising the spirit of their peoples. Moreover, the political thinking of the period came to be centred around narrow interests and local happenings. As the obsession with local affairs increased, contact with outside world became minimal. The tendency was to be cloistered within the narrow limits of petty states. This tendency also reflected in the literary output of the time. There was an increase in the production of historical writings. Histories of comparatively smaller regions such as Kashmir (eg. Kalhana’s Rājatarāgini), and family histories of still lesser dynasties, like that of Nepal were written during this period. Even monarch with insignificant achievements were praised in high sounding words with great enthusiasm. This points to the lack of depth and creativity in the intellectual realm.

Commenting on the ordering of knowledge in North India at this time, Alberuni makes the following observation:

2. KHALIG AHMED NIZAMI: Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century, with a Foreword by C. Collins Davies (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961); p. 65.


4. Abu Raihan Alberuni, a native of khwarazm in central Asia and an accomplished scholar in Politics, Science and Literature, came to India during Sultan Mahmud’s invasion of India. He stayed for ten years here and
The Hindus had no men of this stamp (of Socrates) both capable and willing to bring sciences to a classical perfection. I can only compare their mathematical and astronomical literature, as far as I know it, to a mixture of pearls and dung, of costly crystals and common pebbles. Both kinds of things are equal in their eyes, since they cannot raise themselves to the method of a strictly scientific deduction.  

This situation was in direct contrast to the South where, towards the end of this period, philosophical systematisation was taking place under the leadership of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Meykanḍār, Umāpati Sivācārya, and others.

Muslim Invasion: Its Impact on Hindu Religion: A more important factor which made the South the stronghold of Indigenous culture and philosophy was the Muslim invasion and the establishment of muslim power in the North. Muslim and Hindu historians agree that the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni caused considerable cultural and economic destruction in north India. It also created a sense of social insecurity in the minds of the people. Mahmud’s raids have been described as raids of devastation which were looked upon by the Hindus of the time as acts of God, like plagues, before which they fled. Mahmud’s desire for wealth and his iconoclastic spirit are seen from the fact that most of his invasions were directed against prosperous towns and temple-cities such as Thaneswar, Kanauj, and Mathura, the last being a city sacred to Kṛṣṇa and unparalleled in artistic culture. The destruction which the temple at Somnāth sustained gives us an insight into the helpless situation of

moved freely with the Hindu Pandits (learned men) and mastered Sanskrit as well as the literary heritage or India. In the above passage he institutes a comparison between India and Greece.

6. PANIKKAR, p. 128,
the Hindus. An extract from al Kazwini's writings, which is a thirteenth century Arab account of the event, is as follows:

When the Sultan Yamin-ud-Daula Mahmud Bin Sabuktingin went to wage religious war against India, he made great efforts to capture and destroy Somnath, with the hope that the Hindus would then become Muhammadans.

The Indians made a desperate resistance. They would go weeping and crying into the temple and then issue forth to battle and fight till all were killed.\(^7\)

A more permanent Muslim impact on Indian culture came from the conquest and establishment of the Muslim empire by Mohammad Ghorı. As K. A. Nizami observes that the establishment of the Muslim empire resulted in the transplantation of the whole body of the Science and culture of 'Ajam\(^8\) into India by the first quarter of the thirteenth century.\(^9\) This culture in some form or the other began to pervade North India from then on.

Opinions differ in regard to how Muslim rulers treated the Hindus. Nizami is of the opinion that the Hindus continued with their religious practices uninterrupted, and that the Muslims tolerated them because they had to be tolerated.\(^10\) This does not mean that Hindu religion and culture were promoted. The very fact that the whole

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8. The Muslim empire under the Abbasid Khalifate which stretched from the shore of the Eastern Mediterranean to the frontiers of China was conveniently designed as 'Ajam'


10 Ibid., p.18.
culture of 'Ajam' was imported into India by the Muslim rulers goes to show that Muslim religion and philosophy were given preference. The Hindu population reacted in different ways to the impact of Islam. The poorer sections, attracted by the economic advantages that might accrue to them, became converted to Islam. Some of the richer families also took to service under the Muslim sovereigns and proved to be their trustworthy officials. Some sections of the population tried to continue with their own way life, fighting against all odds. Yet another section, realising that their cherished ideals and beliefs were at stake moved out into safer areas. In short conditions in North India from the tenth to the thirteenth century proved to be destructive to Hindu religion and philosophy. On the other hand Hindu religion and philosophy thrived in the South where conditions were favourable.\(^{11}\)

Tamil Culture: Its Local and Pan-Indian Character: Available evidences show that the Tamil country had a well-developed culture even at the dawn of Christian era. A substantial quantum of high class contemporary literature, composed in Tamil\(^{12}\) bears witness to this. The literature refers to the Vedas\(^{13}\) as well as to the Vedic rituals and sacrifices, thereby showing that the Vedic culture had already spread into the South to some extent. However, there is no doubt that the culture prominently depicted in this literature is indigenous or Dravidian\(^{14}\).

\(^{12}\) The literature that was produced during the early period of the Christian era is known as the Saìgam literature. It is believed that the Pàñiyâ kings of Madurai maintained an academy (a Saìgam) of scholars and poets and that the literature produced by the individuals/groups used to be presented before this Saìgam. Hence the name Soìgam literature.
\(^{13}\) Pn, nos.6, 15 and 166.
\(^{14}\) Cf. PANIKKAR, p.64.
It is difficult to say when the Aryan\textsuperscript{15} or the Vedic culture began to spread into South India. It must have happened in different waves and at different stages. The incoming culture came across a people who possessed a well-developed literary, religious and cultural tradition, but were on the whole receptive to new ideas and concepts\textsuperscript{16}. The penetration of Aryans gradually diminished the cultural differences between the South and the North.\textsuperscript{17} It took sometime before the South assimilated the super-imposed Aryan culture. However, by the fourth century A.D. South India had, by and large, become Aryanised in thought. The Pallava rulers of the sixth century has a Sanskrit civilisation and the Pandyas and Cholas had fully come into the composite structure of the Hindu civilisation. While local variations continued to exist, a pan-Indian outlook came to prevail in culture as denoted by the word Bh\text{\textasciitilde}r\text{\textasciitilde}t-var\text{\textasciitilde}a\textsuperscript{18}

The culture of the South had a double strand—the Dravidian and the Aryan. This is very much reflected in the religious and philosophical aspects of life from the tenth to the thirteenth century A.D. At the local level, the literary output had reached a marvellous growth by the tenth century A.D. Some of the outstanding achievements of the

\textsuperscript{15} The Aryans were an Indo-European race who had their original home in South Russia or Central Asia. From there they gradually spread into different directions, including India. Their penetration was of the nature of a great movement spread over several centuries. It effected the amalgamation of cultures in place where they settled. In South India the culture that emerged was partly Dravidian and partly Aryan.


\textsuperscript{17} PANIKKAR, p.66.

\textsuperscript{18} Literally Bh\text{\textasciitilde}r\text{\textasciitilde}t-var\text{\textasciitilde}a means the land ruled over by the descendents of king Bharata, a legendary figure. This term was postulated in the sacred writings of the Hindus to denote the unity of India, as the land stretching from the Indus to Brahmaputra and from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.
Tamils are to be found in works like the Tolkāppiyam, the Eṭṭutogai, the Pattuppāṭṭu, the Padinēnkanakkku, the two epics of Silappadhikāram and Manimekalai, the Tirukkural, and the devotional works of the Ālvārs and the Nāyānmars. The Āryan aspect is depicted in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, Bhagavadgītā, the Purāṇas, etc. Both the theistic systems of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Saiva-Siddhānta tried to combine the local and the national heritages in their formulations.

The Cōḷas as Inheritors of the Ancient Tradition: From the earliest days of the Saṅgam up to quite recent times there was an unbroken cultural tradition in the South. Changes in the dynasties did not result in drastic changes on the social and cultural levels. It is this cultural continuity that differentiated the South from the North. This difference was due to the fact that the North was subjected to a number of foreign invasions such as those of the Greeks, the Persians, the Huns, the Parthians, the Kūṣānas, and the Muslims. In varying degrees the invasions affected the social and cultural life of the times. As contrasted against this, the South had a continuous succession of indigenous rulers. South India up to the end of the thirteenth century was not subjected to any foreign invasions. The Cōḷas inherited this cumulative tradition.

Cōḷa Political Supremacy and Support to Religious Institutions: The Cōḷas who rose to prominence during the middle of the tenth century A.D. proved to be worthy trustees of Indian heritage by the excellence of their rule over a vast empire. The foundation laid by Vijayālaya in 846 A.D. reached its meridian under a series of capable rulers during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At the zenith of their power the authority of the Cōḷas prevailed practically over the whole of the South extending from sea to sea. Its sway was bound on the North from Mangalore along the Tūṅgabhadra and the Veṭīgi frontier. The empire
saw the rule of twenty-five kings in all, the last being Rajendra III (1246-1279 A.D.).

All the Cōla kings practised and patronised Saivism. With the exception of Kṛṣṇikāṇḍa (1135-50 A.D.), all Cōla rulers not merely tolerated other religions, but even subsidised them. The two most prominent among them, viz., Rajarāja I (985-1014 A.D.) and Rājendra I (1012-1044 A.D.), were largely responsible for extending the area and the prestige of the empire. They were also noted for their religious activities; Rājaraja I who was devoted to Śiva assumed the title of Sivapādasekhara. The great Rājesvarā temple was completed by him in 1010 A.D. His son Rājendra I was known as Paṇḍita Cōla. The inscription at Ennāyiram, issued in the year 1025 A.D. gives substance and reality to this title. It makes provision for the establishment of an extensive Vedic College. The Chidambaram temple was a special object of veneration to the Cōla sovereigns. Virarājendra I (1063-1070 A.D.) made an offering of a ruby to Śrī Natarāja of Cidambaram. In 1128 A.D. Vikrama Cōla gave large donations to the same temple. Similar benefactions were made by his successors like Kulottuṅga III (1133-1150 A.D.) and others, Ko-Perunjīṅga (1229-78 A.D.) who was an ardent devotee of Lord Natarāja built the eastern gopuram of the temple at Cidambaram.

The Cōla kings' interest in institutional religion was evident from their donations to religious institutions such as

22. Ibid, p. 444.
temples, mutts and brahmin communities. In addition to outright donations and moral encouragement, the rulers made also land grants to these institutions. Their grants were of two kinds-brahmadāya and dēvadāna. The brahmadāya was grant of the right to possession of the land or the village while devadāna was grant of the right to enjoyment of the revenue or tax from land of village. The number of grants made by the rulers to brahminds and temples was not very large. However, they were sufficient to cover the expenses of these institutions. Further, such grants express the concern of the kings for social morality and the spiritual welfare of the realm.

Some Aspects of Administrative Set-up: Their Role in Promoting Religion and Philosophy: The internal administration centred around the kings who as true devotees of Saivism followed the religious prescriptions proper to their function as kings. Like other sects, Saivism required its followers to obtain initiation from a guru. The Čōla kings followed this rule. Inscriptions mention Iśāna Siva and Sarva Siva as Rāja-gurus of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I, respectively. Rājadhirāja's inscription mentioned the name of a guru-devar. Rāja-gurus seem to have acted as advisors to the kings in the administration of religious institutions. Kulōttuṅga I followed the advice of rāja-guru in granting a brahmadāya to 108 caturvādibhaṭṭas, The advice of the guru carried weight as it sometimes caused the king to revise his policy. For example, Kulōttuṅga III, under the guidance of his rāja-guru altered his own orders regarding the appointment of priests in conducting worship in the temples at Tirukkaṇḍaiyūr. Appointment went to those...

priests who, according to the guru had better claims to the office.\textsuperscript{25}

The empire was divided into mandālams (provinces), valanāgus (districts) and these into further smaller units called differently kōttam’ nādu or kūttam. The unique feature of Cōla administration was the local government which was competent to manage all aspects of local life in a wide variety of ethnic and ecological contexts\textsuperscript{26} - a feature which helped the unbroken development of Tamil culture. The Uttaramērur inscriptions of Parāntaka I., issued in the year 921 A.D., gives the qualifications to be selected to the vāriyams (village committees). The qualifications were ownership of more than one-fourth vēli (about an acre and a half) of land, residence in a house built on one’s own site, age between thirty-five and seventy, and the knowledge of the Vedic mantra-brāhmaṇa. An alternative qualification was the ownership of one-eighth vēli of land and a knowledge of the Veda and a Bhāṣya.\textsuperscript{27} The inclusion of the knowledge of Vedic lore indicates the importance given to the religion and philosophy contained in them and the encouragement given to the dissemination of this knowledge.

**Imperial Politics and the Spread of Hindu Thought and Culture**: Acquisition and maintenance of an empire implied continuous military operations. It was paradoxical that persistent engagement in war and cultural activities went hand in hand during the Cōla period. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that during the medieval period in many countries belligerency was considered a sign of vigour.
and possession of martial qualities was deemed necessary for survival. From this point of view the ‘Cōla conquests’ need not be considered as a result of a war-mongering attitude, for the Cōlas took the viewpoint that the growth of religion and philosophy would be affected if they did not ensure political unity and stability by following such a course. The political instability and disunity that prevailed in the North and the consequent philosophical impoverishment seem to vindicate the Cōla view.

The fact that the overseas campaigns of the Cōlas paved the way for the propagation of Hindu culture in Ceylon and in South East Asia is significant in this context. For example, Rājarāja’s inscriptions are found in Ceylon. Probably Rājarāja also marked the Cōla occupation of Ceylon by the construction of a stone temple of Siva in Polonnaruwa. Its architectural form is very much the same as the Hindu temples of South India constructed from the tenth to the thirteenth century. That this temple has been instrumental in fostering the religious aspirations of the people is borne out by the fact that it is one of the few Hindu monuments of Ceylon which is still in a state of preservation.

The spread of Hindu culture into South East Asia occurred over a period of several centuries starting from the Maurya period. This ‘cultural colonisation’ intensified in the Guptha period. During the medieval period it was the trade activities which were carried out by the public corporations such as Mañigrāmam and Nānādēśis that

29. The name ‘Ceylon’ is preferred to Sri Lanka in this work, since the history books refer to the island by that name.
30 NILAKANTA SASTRI, 1975, p 173.
31. Mañigrāmam and Nānādēśis were the two trading corporations of the time. Mañigrāmam seemed to have
provided the basis for continued ‘cultural colonisation’ in this region. The monopoly rights for trade enjoyed by these corporations are clear from inscriptive evidences. Though the maritime policy of the Cōlas was perhaps aimed at protecting the commercial interests of South India in this region, spreading Hindu religion and culture was, to put it mildly, not considered unimportant. That the South East Asian Countries were in close contact with the Cōlas and the Pāṇḍyas of Southern India would vouch for the fact that the ‘cultural contacts’ were not an accidental by-product of military conquests. It is contextually relevant to note that scholars from South India often visited the Sailendra capital. The idea of close contact is evident from the fact that the Sailendra monarch sought permission from the Cōla emperors to establish a Buddhist vihāra (monastery) in Nāgapatnam.

Royal Patronage of Religion and Philosophy: That the patronage of Cōla king covered almost every area of the external expression of religion is borne out by literary, monumental and inscriptive evidences. They extended their patronage in the following ways:

(i) Support to Tamil and Sanskrit Literature: A tangible expression of their religious fervour is seen in the

traded with the whole of the then known world. Nānādāsis (men from all parts) are described as brave men born to wander over many countries. Such adventurous corporates as these guided the commerce and politics of ‘further India’ (Indian colonies abroad) fo: several centuries.

32. The Sailendras were originally the rulers of Sri Vijaya (Palampong in Sumātra). Later they conquered the neighbouring group of islands and established their hegemony over the Straits of Malacca. During the eighth century they extended their sway over Malaya, thus gaining mastery over both the seas, which they retained for over five hundred years. They were the major powers against whom the Cōlas had to fight pursuing their oceanic policies.

33. PANIKKAR, p. 107.
patronage of literary works especially that of Periya Purāṇam. Having become convinced of the worthiness of compiling the lives of the Saiva saints, king Kulottunga Il made every effort to bring this into a reality. Sēkkiḻar, the minister who undertook the compilation of the work, was given all the material he needed, and presents (நூறு வயதில் கரு கியாமேயரும் கடிக கொன்று விளையங்கள்) before he was sent to the most hallowed spot, Tillai, to compose the work in poetic form. The continued interest of the king was such that he followed every step of its progress through messengers, whom he sent frequently, till the work was completed.

The first presentation of the work to the public was arranged in a manner to suit the grandeur of the theme. It was made a great occasion. The king himself came to Tillai, listened carefully to the text, officially published it and invited the people to listen to the same. Further, we are told that arrangements were made for food and shelter

34. The story connected with the composition of Periya Purāṇam is as follows:

The Cōla king was greatly interested in the study of Jaina literature and especially the Jivakachintāmani, the greatest of the Jaina works in Tamil. Sīnsae the theme of Jivakachintāmani, based on worldly life and earthly pleasures, the king’s minister, Sēkkiḻar, a devout Saivite was much grieved at this. He suggested to the king that he, a Saivite, should devote his interest to his own religion and spend his time in a useful manner. Sēkkiḻar then narrated to the king the lives and deeds of the Saivite saints. The king was so much delighted to hear these inspiring stories that he persuaded Sēkkiḻar to write them down.


for those who came from far off places to listen to the exposition which was conducted everyday for one year.

The circumstances of its composition is a clear evidence of the desire of the king as well as the author to live and spread the Saivite religion. Although Kulottunga II became interested in the Saivite saints only as a result of the influence of his minister Sekkilär, after his conversion the king became extremely zealous about making the rich lore of the saints available to the whole world. This is seen in the command he gave to Sekkilär. He ordered him to write an anthology, giving all details such as the district and the village in which the saints were born, their ancestry, their services, etc. His own words are as follows:

Sekkilär, a staunch believer in ‘Saivism’ on his part, executed the king’s command with utmost diligence and piety. The choice of the most sacred place, the Kanaka Sabha at Tillai, his minute attention to the divine inspiration, etc. show that he considered the task a religious act. Though the book is a literary gem, its importance was primarily based on its religious value.

35. Scholars hold different opinions in identifying the king who patronised Sekkilär. He himself refers to the patron in ten different places as ‘Anapaya’, in one place as Kulottunga and on two occasions he pays tribute o the king as the one who gilded the roof of the Nataraja temple at Tillai. Based on these references some scholars have identified him as Kulottunga I, others as Kulottunga II and still others as Kulottunga III. Of the three, Kulottunga II seems to be the most plausible identification.

37. SUBRAMANIA MUDALIAR, p. 74.
A point to be noted is that formerly the king was interested in the Jaina work Jivakachintamani thereby showing that the king was not only tolerant of other religions but was also open to influences from them. But the minister was not happy about the king’s involvement in other religions. Probably, that is one of the reasons for highlighting in the book the conflicts between the Jains and the Saivites which existed at the time of the saints, even though the period of the composition of this work was one of religious harmony. Sêkkiâr was anxious that the king who was a Saivite should draw inspiration from that religion, an indication of the desire to maintain adherence to one’s own creed. The subtle way in which he weaned the interest of the king from the Jaina teachings to that of Saivism is a typical example of religious toleration where harmony was maintained in and through adherence of each to his own tradition.

It is also probable that Sêkkiâr adopted the Jaina precedent in writing Periya Purânam, Jaina tradition had a work entitled Triśatîlakṣaṇa Mahâpurâna composed by Chaundaraja. It was a purâna of sixty-three great personalities, twenty four Tirthâṅkaras, twelve Chakravartis, nine Bâlabhadras, nine Nârâyanas and nine Pratînârâyânpars. We know that Saivism and Vaikavism had to face rivalry for the non-Hindu sects like Buddhism and Jainism from about the fourth to the ninth century A.D. Probably, Sêkkiâr wanted to neutralise the influence of the Jains by popularising the account of sixty-three Nayanmars. This view is further strengthened by the fact that the Jains call the Triśatîlakṣaṇa Mahâpurâna as Sri Purâna. Similarly, the Saivites also used to refer to Periya Purânam as the Sri Purâna. This practice is attested to by inscriptions evidences. For example, an inscription issued in the ninth year of

38. NAMBIAROORAN, p. 17.
Rajadhiraja II refers to the hagiology as Sri Purana. The text reads thus:

While in the temple, Calturānana Pāṇḍita of the maṭha, Vāgīśvara, Pāṇḍita the propounder of the Śoma-Siddhānta, and others were listening to the Sri-Purāṇa of Aludaiya-nambi, they sold as Kāññi to Periya-Soman and his descendants some lands on which the irai was to be paid by the Sri Bhandāra.

Sri Purāṇam that is referred to in the above passage was definitely Periya Purāṇam because it is referred to as Sri Purāṇam of Aludaiya-nambi who is Sundaramurti and we know that Periya Purāṇam is based on Sundarār’s Tirutton dattogai and Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi’s Tiruttondar Tirivantādi. The difference is that Sundarār in his work gives the names of sixty-two (sic) individual Nāyanmars and nine groups of Nayanmars, thus giving the total as seventy-one. Sēkkilēr elaborates on both these works, but makes no reference to the number either of individuals or of groups. We may conclude that by following the Jaina model, Sēkkilēr wanted to convince the king and the society at large that Saivism had an equally rich or even richer religious heritage as Jainism, and therefore they should draw inspiration from their own saivite tradition.

That the sovereigns Rajaraja I and Rajendra I of the period had a say in the arrangement of the Saivite canon is


Reference given in the from of ‘371 of 1911’ = the number of inscriptions noted in the annual reports of the Epigraphical Department of the Archaeological Survey, Southern Circle.

Since this work has referred to two books by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, both entitled, The Cōḷas. here after they will be distinguished by the year of publication.

40. NAMBI AROORAN, p. 16.
seen from the fact that the king effected an expansion of the canon. Umāpati Sivācārya tells us that the Tirumarai originally included ten books. Subsequently the king requested Nambi-Anđār-Nambi to include one more book from the Padigam left over, including the pāṣuram uttered by Śiva himself and calculated to procure Siddhi. Accordingly the eleventh book of the canon was arranged. Still later the twelfth book, the Periya Purānām, was added. Royal interest in the compilation of the work would have certainly enhanced its popularity and what the book stood for, namely Śaivite religion and philosophy.

(ii) Endowments for Vedic Studies: The Cōla kings took a personal interest in the growth and spread of Sanskrit studies. A village of śivabrahmins who were learned in Sanskrit lore was established in the Cōla country by Kūllottunga I. Endowments were made for colleges where different branches of Vedic and philosophic study were made. Inscriptions attest to the popularity of Prabhākara-Mimāṃsā and Rāpañavatāra. An inscription issued in the eleventh year of Rājarāja I says that the land was granted to a brahmin for explaining Prabhākaram. Rājendra I, who was also called Pāṇiṭa Cōla, made provisions for the establishment of a Vedic college at a Vaisnavite centre with 340 students learning Vedas, Vyaṭāraṇa, Mimāṃsā and Nyāya under fourteen teachers. It is commendable that Rājendra I, a Śaivite, took interest in the development of Viśiṣṭādvaīta by providing for its study based on original sources. Three of the teachers taught Rgveda, four Yajur veda, two Śāmaṇḍa and one for each of the following subjects: the Śūtras, the Rāpañavatāra, Vyaṭāraṇa, the Mimāṃsā of Prabhākara and the Vedānta. Teachers and pupils received a daily allowance of paddy which was supplemented by a money payment. The highest salary was paid to the teacher of Vyaṭāraṇa, but the teacher of Vedānta

41. NILAKANTA SASTRI: Cōlas 1975, p. 678.
42. 397 of 1922.
received no money payment, probably, the reason was that
the spiritual experience which a Vedânta teacher imparted
was considered to be a service for service's sake and not for
monetary benefits. The Mahâsabha of Mudhussmtaka canton
was assigned land for opening around the temple a street
named Tirnventâ-kâttup perum-teruvu. The street was to
be occupied by Sivâbrahmîns, uvâccar, tapasvîns
(ascetics), devâratiyar (those who worship God) etc. These
persons were given privileges but at the same time certain
restrictions were also placed over them.43 There are several
inscriptions giving grants for the study of the Vedas, and
for the encouragement of Aryan culture.44 Study of Sanskrit
and Aryan culture were considered to be primarily a
study of the Vedic religion as can be seen from the subjects
mentioned in the inscriptions. Therefore, the royal patronage
was really meant for the promotion of Vedic religion and
culture.

(iii) Support to Temples: Temples are built as abodes
of the deity. The architecture of the temple symbolically
represents man's quest for the divine and his attempt to
dissolve the boundaries between him and gods. Temples are
places where gods make themselves visible. The sacred
image or symbol of god represents a means of union with the
divine. Precise laws of the Sâstras and the Agamas regulate
the construction of the temples and the production of the
images. The images are prepared for worship by elaborate
rituals of consecration and then ceremoniously enshrined.
They are the temporary abode of gods in the world of men.
The approach to the sanctuary of the temple is symbolic of
the quest for spiritual perfection which is likened to a long
journey of many stages, frequently visualised as a progression
upwards through various stages of consciousness. This
is especially seen in the inward penetration towards the
sanctuary through circumambulation around the sacred

43. 397 of 1922.
44. 241 of 1922, 553 of 1921.
person or image of object and even around the temple itself in a clock-wise direction. The interior spaces of temples are arranged in such a way as to promote the movement of the devotee from the outside towards the sanctuary through a series of enclosures which become increasingly sacred as the garbagtha is approached. At the final stages in the penetration, when the doorway is reached, the priest takes over and he conducts the offering to the image of the deity. The devotee waits outside and follows the movements of the priest accompanying his symbolic gestures mentally. In fact the temple architecture, in every minute detail, is an attempt to establish the link between gods and men through symbolisms. 

The fact that the temples were found in large numbers itself would attest to the sense of devotion and piety which characterised the Cōla empire. According to tradition, in the Cōla country, at the beginning of the ninth century, there were 295 śiva temples and 180 Vaiṣṇava temples. Most of these had been built by the Pallavas, the illustrious predecessors of the Cōlas. The Cōlas continued the precedent set by the Pallevas. Besides the kings, their relatives and officials also showed keen interest in that direction. Among the relatives of the kings, special mention should be made of Sembian Mahādevi, the queen of Gaṅgārāditya I and mother of Uttama Cōla. She built new temples, replaced the old brick ones and cast some of the finest specimens of the Cōla bronzes. Among the princesses, Kundayavai, the sister of Rājarāja I. was note-worthy for her contributions. Her activities are confined mainly to Toṇḍaimāṇḍalam, a region where her husband lived and ruled as a Cōla overlord. Next in importance comes Lokamahādevi, the principal queen of Rajaraja I, who independently and

jointly with her consort, contributed to temple building.\textsuperscript{47}

Scholars such as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and S. R. Balasubramaniyam have classified the Cōja temples into temples of early, middle and later periods, based on the evolution of architecture and the year of construction. They observe that even though numerous temples were constructed in each period, the temple building art reached its meridian in the middle period. The two outstanding structures of the period were the Rājarājēśvara temple at Tanjore which was begun in about 1003 A.D., and Gaṅgaikōṇḍa cōḷapuram built about two decades later.

That there were mixed motives for the construction of temples cannot be doubted. Eventually, all served to express devotion to the deity. However, there was also other considerations. For example, the Rājarājēśvarī temple at Gaṅgaikōṇḍacōḷapuram was built by Rājendra I in thanks giving for the success of his North Indian expedition. There was also the desire to immortalise the power and glory of the empire as well as of the sovereign.

The great temple at Tanjore or the Bṛhadēśvara temple was apparently the most ambitious undertaking of Tamil architecture quite in keeping with the vast power and the growing extent and resources of Cōja empire. Most of the structures of this temple are of one period that is the reigning periods of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I. It was the richest temple of the time. The king alone had, by the twenty ninth year of his reign, presented to it a vast amount of gold and treasure in the form of ornaments, jewels and vessels. The quantity of gold, of which account has been preserved, amounted to over 41,500 Kalaṇjus, that is, approximately over 500 lbs troy as estimated by Prof. Nilakanta Sastri and attested to

\textsuperscript{47} B. VENKATARAMAN: Temple Art under the Cōja Queens (Haryana: Thomson Press (India), Publication Division, 1976), p. xviii.
by the inscriptions. He also set apart lands in several villages throughout his dominion including Ceylon, yielding an annual income of 111,00 kālam of paddy. About 180 of such shares were set apart for the maintenance of temple servants. These statistics show the generosity of the kings as well as the control they had over the organisational and institutional aspects of religion.

The temples were held accountable for the lavish endowments they received. Periodical inquests were conducted by the highest officials of the central government and sometimes by the temple authorities themselves into the management and affairs of temples Köyilolugu, the chronicle of the Śrīraṅgam temple, gives us an insight into the measure taken by Rāmānuja, the then head of the temple to ensure the smooth and effective running of the same. Among the several measures the following are relevant in this context:

1. The appointment of Akāḷaṅga Nāṭṭalvaṉ, perhaps a Cōla feudatory who became his disciple, to inquire into the income from the temple lands;

2. Inquiry into the state of accounts and the exercise of authority under the seals of garuda, the discus and the conch.

3. A complete re-organisation of the temple servants and services, by expanding a five-fold group into a ten-fold one and by laying down the duties of each servant to the minutest details.

49. Ibid., vol. II, pt. III, no. 68.
(iv) Endowments for Religious Activities: Inscriptional evidences attest to the fact that the temples were a hub of religious activities. There were regular recitation of the bhakti hymns as well as the Vedas. Endowments were given for these. There were endowments also for the recital of Tiruppadiyam. Inscriptions of Kulōttuṅga I issued in 1085 A.D provide for the recitation of Tiruvāymoḷi-Tiruppaḷi-Yeḷucci in the Sriraṅgam temple. A choir of fifty-eight brahmins reciting Tiruvāymoḷi in Kāṇcī is mentioned in an inscription dated 1242 A.D. An inscription, probably of Kulōttuṅga III, mentions the creation at Kāṇcipuram of a bhāṣya vṛtti for the Rāmānuja bhāṣya being regularly expounded by a competent person. The recitation of the sacred hymns in Tamil in the temple emphasises the rank assigned to them by the side of the sanskritic Vedas.

That the Vedas were chanted daily in the temples at the time of worship by brahmins especially appointed for the purpose becomes clear from two factors. One, the custom which was very ancient. exists even now, indicating that it must have been carried on through centuries without any interruption. Two, the existence of a number of contemporary inscriptions of the Cōla period attests to this. In the fourteenth year of Rājakesari an endowment was created in Paṇḍaravāḍai for awarding prize once a year in a recitation contest to be held on the night of the Ardra festival. The competitors were to recite a prescribed portion of Jaiminīya Sāmaveda. On the occasion of the festival more men were appointed to recite the Vedas before the deity than on other days. There were also other

51. 423 of 1908, 181 of 1923.
52. 61 of 1892 quoted in Nilakanta Sastri, Cōla, 1937, p. 567.
53. 557 of 1919,
54. 493 of 1919.
55. 266 of 1923,
recitations meant for the instruction and edification of devotees. For example, Sri PURAṆA of ĀluaṆiya nambi, the siva-dharma and Soma-Siddhānta were recited and explained. There were numerous endowments for the feeding or for the maintenance of brahmins, the śivayogins and those who rendered services during the worship. In the third regnal year of KulōtuṆiga I the ür of Ennur set apart certain lands for midday services in the temple and for feeding a vaidik brahmin or śiva yogis.56

The Uttaramērūr inscription mentions that the assembly of Uttarmērūr assigned land for daily offerings to Rāghava deva in the temple of Veļḷai-Mūrti-Ālvār and for a flower garden with the stipulation that food offered at the services should be given away to the Sri VaiṆ̐ava reciting the Tiruppadiyam hymns. In the twelfth year of Rājarāja I, the assembly of Pullamaṅgalam met in the temple to the beat of the drums and made gifts of land: one velli wet land and 440 pārthi of garden land to some brahmins versed in Śāma and Rgveda.57 There are also records of numerous endowments for the burning of lights in the temple.58

(v) Religious Toleration: Religious toleration which characterised the Cōla rule provided a healthy atmosphere for the growth of religion and philosophy. The various religions were upheld and protected. A progressive expression of the openness of all sects is found in the great śiva temple of Tanjore. In this temple there were scenes from Vaiśnava and Buddhist legends. Such was the attitude of Rājarāja I. His sister Kundavai followed suit. She built three temples—one to Viśnu, another to Śiva and a third to Jina—all in the same place.59 Another harmonious situation was that there were several temples which contained shrines of both Jina and Viśnu side by side. A prominent one among these was the temple at Cidambaram.

56. 133 of 1912.
57. 553 of 1921.
58. 138 of 1923.
59. 18 of 1919.
Tirukkovaiyar speaks of the position of the icons of Nataraja and Govindaraja in this temple. Vishnu seems to be lying in front of Nataraja. He is in contemplation of the foot that is raised in dance and he pleads for the grace of seeing the other foot also. The position of Vishnu at the feet of Siva may be taken to imply the secondary position of Vaishnavism in a country where most of the rulers were Saivites. Though this does not go against the spirit of toleration that existed, all the same it may point to the unique and superior position which saivism held as the creed of the ruling class.

Kanchipuram one of the capitals of the Cola empire, was again another example of the harmonious co-existence of different sects. The city seems to have had three divisions, each of which was consecrated to one creed and the institutions belonging to it. The Saivaites had the biggest division and the Vaishnavites had a smaller division called little Kanchi. The third division belonged to the Jains. Some vestiges of a Buddhist centre are also found in Kanchi. The eclectic city of Kanchi is suggestive of a time when beliefs and practices were at their best in South India.

Again, the Leyden grant records the creation of Cudambani Vihara, the Buddhist temple. It was built in the twenty-first year of the reign of Rajaraja I, by king Sailendra of Sri Vijaya and Kaśāha in South East Asia. It evidences the missionary zeal of Sailendras for the cause of Buddhism and at the same time the spirit of religious toleration on the part of the Cōla sovereigns not only of the orthodox Hindu creeds but also of the unorthodox systems.

While all sects were allowed to flourish, the two Hindu sects of saivism and Vaishnavism received the lion's share of the royal bounty which resulted in the better development.

60. Cf. Tirukkovaiyār, 86.
62. Ibid., p. 685.
and popularity of these two sects compared to the others. The significance of their developments becomes more appreciable as the two devotional systems came to have a wider circle of followers in various parts of India in later years. For example, Vaiṣṇavism found its way through Karnātaka and Maharāshtra, to the North in the course of the next two centuries. Similarly Saivism in the course of centuries has become one of the most widespread creeds having followers all over India, though it is difficult to say exactly to what extent the developments in the Tamil country from the tenth to the thirteenth century are related to the development of this faith in the other parts to India.
CHAPTER—II

Some aspects of the Economic and Social factors

(As Supportive of and Direction-Pointing To Philosophical Development)

THE development of philosophical ideas in a particular period depends not only on the political currents of the age, but also on the socio-economic simmerings. The vitality and potentiality of philosophical ideas depend on the impetus it receives from the social and economic spheres. It may be said that these factors contribute to the permanent survival or to the untimely disappearance of these ideas.

Analysis of the Medieval Situation from the Twentieth Century Viewpoint: Its Justification: To-day the development of social sciences and the explosion of knowledge have given rise to a number of ideologies such as social justice, equality and equal opportunity for all, dignity of the individual, recognition of man as the artisan of his own progress etc. These ideologies and concepts have become articulate only in recent times. However, the situations which evoked the formulation of these concepts are not new. For example, the situation, where certain individuals and groups acquiring privileged positions and others being relegated to a subordinate position, is as old as civilisation itself. There have been reformers who tried to bridge the gulf between the elite and
the downtrodden, though they did not state their motives in modern terminology. As far as the Indian situation is concerned, vocalisation of such motives was conspicuous by their absence. The Indian reformers endeavoured to effect change through assimilation and evolution. Mahāvīra, Buddha, Rāmānuja, Meykanda, Arunandi are all examples of this approach. Some of them were not concerned about formulating their doctrine, most of them did not leave behind a record of the circumstances which led to the formulation of their doctrines. In the light of this background, the effort of the modern scholarship to situate their philosophies in the historical context will necessarily imply speculative linking of the doctrines to the historical circumstances. This process of linking may be done usefully in terms of modern ideologies and concepts provided that the mode of argument employed does not go against the internal logic of the hypothesis. Such an evaluation of the heritage from the present day standpoint will make the tradition to come alive and also lead to an in-depth understanding of the same.

In the spirit of the above observation, an attempt has been made to look at the socio-economic aspects of the Cola period and its relation to the rise of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Saiva-Siddhānta from the twentieth century standpoint. For example: (1) The predominantly group-oriented socio-economic set-up tended to overlook the importance of persons as individuals. Accordingly, the effort of the ācāryas to give reality to jīva (individual soul) has been interpreted as providing a corrective to the socio-economic situation through religion and philosophy. (2) A considerably large section of the society was relegated to a secondary position and was debarred from participating in the life of the society along with the others. This aspect of the social situation is linked to the rise of theism by considering the personalistic interpretation of Reality and the bhakti-prapatti oriented sādhana as attempts to make religion and philosophy available to the masses.
In this chapter, the socio-economic situation is reviewed highlighting those aspects which have a bearing on the rise of theistic philosophies, either directly or indirectly.

Period Prior to Tenth Century: Socio-Economic factors and the Rise of Buddhism: The economic situation of the North during the sixth century B.C. shows the formation of towns. Eastern India with its commercial centres of Rājagriha, Vaiśāli, Kāśi and others became significant region. Increased trade brought in wealth, wealth generated leisure. As such, the rise of Buddhism, though impregnated with the melancholic atheism of a disillusioned age, should be considered a religious reaction against the hedonistic creeds of the day.¹ From the social point of view in Magatha and the neighbouring regions the 'hinduizing' of population was incomplete and the caste distinction was clearly marked.² The kṣatriyas considered themselves better than the brahmins who were the traditional spiritual guides. The kṣatriyas began to question the right of the brahmins to the exclusive possession of superior knowledge and the key to the door of salvation.³ The religious situation showed that the Vedic religion was gradually losing its impact, due to the elaborate system of rituals and the intricate details considered necessary for their observance. There was a genuine need to minimise the tyranny of ritualism. Further, it was also a time when metaphysical subtleties and theological discussions were the main pre-occupation of the intellectuals of the day. The tempo of metaphysical discussion was such that the theories which were accepted one day were rejected the next day with the shifting wishes and emotions of the authors as well.

³. Ibid., p. 78.
as the followers. This sketchy outline of the historical factors shows that the society needed a reform. Buddhism provided a self-cleansing of the period.

Though Buddhism is considered a heterodox system, it did not completely break away from the brahminical tradition. It was in fact a re-statement of the upaniṣadic teaching to suit the needs of the times. The Buddha's contribution consisted precisely in the fact that his teaching shifted the attention of men from the ritualistic observances and metaphysical subtleties to the practical means of obtaining peace and happiness. The rejection of caste, the kindly attitude towards the downtrodden etc., mark the Buddha's concern to make the philosophy available to the masses.

By explaining some of the aspects of the upaniṣadic thought that were otherwise not so well-known, Buddhism added a new dimension to the development of Indian philosophic and religious thought.

The renaissance in Indian philosophy effected by the rise of Buddhism during the early period was the outcome of its interaction with the historical circumstances. However, Buddhism is not an isolated instance. The socio-economic circumstances of the Cōla empire from the tenth to the thirteenth century also had contributed towards the rise of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Gaiva-Siddhānta.

Economic Prosperity and the Need for a Realistic Pluralistic Philosophy: The Cōla empire during its period of ascendancy enjoyed a prosperous economy. The villages were self-sufficient cultivating various kinds of crops, raising live stocks etc., and having their own village


5. KRISHNA CHAITANYA: A Profile of Indian Culture (New Delhi: Indian Book Co., 1975), p. 81.
servants to meet the daily needs of the village. The economy of the town was tied up with the guilds which produced all kinds of articles and which were engaged in internal and external trade. The internal trade was organised through weekly and occasional fairs while the flourishing state of the foreign trade is evidenced by the activities of merchant guilds like Nāṇādēśis, Manigrāmam and Valaijiyār. However, the flow of wealth does not seem to have made the merchants slaves of riches. The Indian tradition requires the pursuit of the three ends of human life namely, dharma (gaining religious merit through following the sacred law), artha (gaining wealth through honest means) and kāma (seeking pleasure). Each of this end is justified in terms of a person's hereditary dharma or duty. Accordingly the hereditary dharma of merchants is to pursue trade. They could make a legitimate living by pursuing artha if they subordinated their action to the sacred law and observed its emphasis on the duty of each individual towards the welfare of the whole social system.

Evidences are available to show that the merchants of the period tried to pursue their profession in accordance with the dharma. They contributed towards the management of the local temples, sometimes the entire temple was constructed by the financial assistance of merchants. They also contributed to the development of the community's general prosperity by helping the construction of local irrigation system, by providing for the clearing and development of waste land and by making endowments for the temple images and rituals. Such activities have earned them the respect of the society. They are referred to in the twelfth century inscriptions as dharma cettis

6. THAPER, p. 209.
7. Hall, p. 82.
8. 37 of 1925.
9. 371 of 1914, 10. 23 of 1903. 11. 439 of 1904.
and their heroic qualities are highly praised in the inscriptions.

The image that emerges of Cōla merchants is that of persons who were fully involved in the mundane matters, who believed in the value of material things and who were concerned about the progress of the material aspect of life. At the same time they affirmed their belief in the life of the spirit, of the existence of the Reality that was beyond the visible realities of this world. This aspect of the socio-economic situation is reflected in Viṣistādvaita and Gaivā-siddhānta as both these systems accept the reality of the material world instead of dismissing it as an illusion.

Economic Scene: Its Relation to Individual’s Development: An economically healthy and progressive society may be visualized as one which takes care of the ‘growth’ of the individual by recognizing his freedom of choice within reasonable limits so that both individual initiative and social welfare are promoted. 12 An individual’s personal development in the economic sphere is bound to be at stake if his status is determined wholly by the already existing ‘mould’ and also when he is treated as an insignificant and static part of a system, a group or a caste to which he is bound by time-honoured customs and conventions. Similarly, the worth of persons as individuals is lost sight of when the society is predominantly group-oriented in its transactions. It may be argued that the individual growth can be ensured within the group. This may be true in some cases. However, often the individuals develop a herd instinct, accommodating and adapting themselves to the group expectations. Individual identity gets lost in the group identity. The situation becomes worse when these groups as groups or as individuals become caught-up in stagnating and repressive situations.

Some Aspects of the Economic and Social factors

During the Vedic times, the individual was accorded due recognition. C. A. Moore instances the case of women enjoying equality with men in the sphere of education and in regard to professional opportunities. However, down the ages, the ancient ideals were gradually lost sight of. The limitations suffered by individuals, as well as groups, were perhaps dictated by the stranglehold of customs and traditions and penetrated into the various aspects of life—economic, social, religious and the like.

The State of Economy from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century: A general survey of the economic system of the Cōlas reveals that the state of economy did looke ‘promising’, but it incorporated within it certain factors which were not conducive to the development of the individual. From the philosophic angle, this aspect of the economic situation seems far more important than the immediately evident and obviously striking feature of prosperity and self-sufficiency.

Village Set-up: Its Implications for Individual Development: The Tiruvāḷaṅgādu plates issued during the sixth year of the accession of Rājarāja Cōla I enumerates the various components of a typical village. It consisted of land for habitation, the cultivable land, barren land, pasture land, forests and lands occupying tanks and reservoirs. Not mentioned in the list, but specified elsewhere were sites of the temples and their appendages, the sites set apart as cremation grounds for various communities such as cultivators, pariahs etc. There is mention of separate quarters, called ceris for artisans and various other classes of people— the toddy drawers, the artisans, the untouchables, the washermen, the pariahs, etc^{13}. All the individuals belonging to a particular division were expected to live only in that area and nowhere else. The convention seems to have been well accepted that there are no instances of an attempt to pitch one’s dwelling in a locality other than

one's own group. Apparently only the bigger villages had all these ceris. Village was designed in such a way that undue expansion was not possible. Towards this end stone slabs were set up on the outskirts with outlines of a deity called 'Ellai Amman' or goddess of the boundary.  

Labour Needs of the Village: The village workers were broadly classified into three categories—the officers, the artisans and the servants. The last category included washermen, barbers, scavengers, watchmen, etc. In the brahmin villages, the brahmins were mainly engaged in temple duties. Since the right to serve was hereditary, servants become particularly tied down to the villages. In some instances, a specific provision was made against their taking up extra work elsewhere. In an inscription dated 1113 A.D., in the forty-third year of the accession of Kulottuṅga I, we are told that persons who are qualified to do service of bhāttavṛtti (services of learned brahmins), kīdai (working in cattle sheds), aḍaippu (fencing) kāṭtam (digging ponds and tanks) kaṇakku (accountancy), taccu (carpentry), etc., should take up such services in the village only. Those who took up the work elsewhere would be punished for disobeying the great assembly and would be considered as having been disloyal to the village.

Land Holding Pattern: The land distribution system that prevailed also perpetuated class interests. Legally, the land tenure system ensured a sense of security and ownership to the holder, giving him the right of alienation. Mitakṣara and Nyāyamāla, the two law books of the time, assured this right. Vijñāneswara in his Mitakṣara says, that a 'thing' can be called property only if the owner has the freedom to sell or transfer it.

16. 205 of 1919.  
Though theoretically the law was a boon to the individual and the right to alienation was respected, \(^{18}\) the lot of the common man was unenviable. For, in practice, the bulk of the land was concentrated in the hands of either the institutions like the temple or the groups which had joint ownership of the land.

The group interests were zealously safeguarded. Sometimes, an entire village was leased out to a group. The grant of Caturvādimaṅgalam\(^ {19}\) to the brahmin communities is a case in point. This perhaps benefited the community as a whole, but it also tended to kill the initiative and interest of the individual who wished to rise above the average holders. Such situations were prevalent more in the non-brahmin villages than in the brahmin villages. A study conducted by professor Noboru Karashima\(^ {20}\) on the land holding pattern in two villages, viz., Allur, a non-brahmin village, and Iṣanamaṅgalam, a brahmin village, showed that in the early Cōḷa period ownership of land was communal rather than individual. \(^ {21}\)

Towards the end of the Cōḷa period there were more individual ownership and a new agrarian order was

19. The term caturvādimaṅgalam signifies that the village was allotted to the brahmins who had learnt all the four Vedas and who were following the rules prescribed by the Vedas. Caturvādimaṅgalams were called variously as brahmadēya maṅgalam, agāram, agrahāra, brahmadēna, etc.
20. In recent years scholars like Noboru Karashima, Burton Stein, Kathleen Gough, Y. Subbarayalu and others have done commendable research into the Cōḷa history. Their findings are in some respects different from the traditionally accepted views. Some relevant points of these latter views have been incorporated into the thesis. However, by and large, this work is in agreement with the traditional authorities like K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, A. Appadorai, K. M Panikkar, Romila Thapar and others.
emerging, Dr. Y. Subbarayalu indentified as many as 260 land-sale deeds showing that the right of alienation was being exercised. However, all the lands that were sold through these transactions seem to have been donated or assigned to public purposes. They were not held by purchasers for private enjoyment. The individual interests were subordinated to group interests.

There was the custom of allotting land as remuneration for services called the service tenure system. Some of them were specified and long term services, like constructing canals and repairing tanks. Also, there were services of goldsmiths, potters, barbers, astrologers and the like, not to speak of the teachers of the Vedas. The allotment of land made to these various categories was sufficient for the upkeep of the individual according to his status, but it required that the beneficiaries live on the spot to do their duties. This definitely restricted their movements. Moreover, the system of leasing land for cultivation which was prevalent then, forbade the tenants to mortgage, sell, exchange or pledge the land they cultivated. The result was that the individual's sphere of mobility and self-growth were considerably affected.

Industry and Group Interests: Even when industry and trade registered rapid growth, group-interests rather than individual interests were accorded prime importance. The economic organisation of the urban areas centered around the caste-guild which embraced within it, not only the strictly technical but also the religious, the artistic and the economic activities, of the group. In theory the guild had no caste affiliations, but in practice most of its members belonged to one and the same caste and followed a traditional hereditary occupation. One of the other factors

24. Ibid., p. 15. 25. APPADORAI, p. 178.
26. Ibid., p. 357. 27. Ibid.
which welded the members of the guild was residence. Streets were marked out on the basis of specific professions. Tanjore presents a good example of this. There were, for example, Saliyateru (weavers quarters) Valligañ-teru (quarters of the bowmen) and gandharavar-teru (the quarters of the musicians). Sometimes the different sects of the same group, for example, the Saivites and the Vaiṣṇavites were allotted separate quarters. Sometimes these guilds made attempts to secure privileges for its members. An inscription of 1925 records a royal charter granted to the kaikolars (weavers) of the kingdom entitling them to the honour of Pallakku (palanquin) and conch-shell (bugle) in response to their representation at Kāñciipuram. Besides, certain castes were expected to take up only those professions which were allotted to them by the community. An Inscription dated in the forty-eighth year of Kulottuṅga I records the profession to be followed by the caste called Rāthakas. The professions mentioned are 1. architecture, 2. building coaches and chariots, 3. erecting gopurams of temples with images on them, 4. preparation of instruments like ladle needed for sacrificial ceremonies, 5. building mandapams (a pillared wall in front of the temple), 6 making jewels like diadems and bracelets for kings. Their dealings with the rest of the society, in this case, with the rulers were as a group.

The chief characteristic of trade was its institutionised nature. Internal trade concentrated around the regional commercial centres called nagarams, which existed in almost all traditional units of regional administration. Itinerant trade was also institutionised. The nagaram merchants, as well as the itinerant merchants, became members of a powerful supra-regional commercial organisation called the ‘five hundred merchants of the thousand direction. According to Kenneth R. Hall, commerce was

28. SII. vol. II, pt. IV, nos. 94 and 95.
29. 476 of 1908.
30. HALL, The front flap.
institutionalised in order to mitigate its more harmful effects.\textsuperscript{31} Further, membership to these organisations was not restricted by caste affiliations and the merchants seem to have enjoyed freedom regarding the contribution of shares.\textsuperscript{32} However, the highly organised nature of commerce, the commercial customs and traditions, the political and religious obligations of the merchants etc., show that the merchants had to operate within certain limits. Probably, the merchants welcomed the tight organisational set-up from the point of view of security and the success of collective actions. Still the subordination of the individual to the group cannot go unnoticed. The stress was more on group identity than individual identity.

It cannot be ascertained whether the religious philosophers like Rāmānuja, Meykandadeva and Arunandī Śivācārya identified the defective nature of the economic set-up as the subordination of the individual to the group and the supression of some of the groups themselves. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that the due recognition given to the individual in the philosophical formulation of the above mentioned ācāryas came as a corrective to the situation.

The Stratified Society: Its Relation to Religious philosophies: Social stratification was based on castes which were quite often hereditary occupational groups.\textsuperscript{33} The ordering of caste was a highly complex system which had resulted from an amalgamation of the Āryan and the Dravidian patterns of society. The complexity was such that among the numerous castes that existed only two could be marked off with a clear distinction - the brahmins who ranked high and the śūdras who occupied the lowest position in society. The śūdras were of two categories - the clean śūdras whose touch was not polluting, and the unclean śūdras who were debarred from entering the temples. Between the brahmins on the one hand and the śūdras on the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.  \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 147.  \textsuperscript{33} NILAKANTA SASTRI, Cōḷas, 1975, p.546
other, there were a number of intermediary castes among whom caste distinction was not so rigid.\textsuperscript{34}

The relation of this social situation to religious philosophies may be interpreted as follows: The fusion of the speculative philosophy and popular devotion into the theistic systems of Viśiṣṭādvaīta and Gaiva-Siddhānta seems to be the starting point of an attempt to lessen caste distinction. By this fusion, the speculative philosophy which was confined more to the higher strata of society, was made intelligible to the masses, and at the same time the devotional approach to religion, common among the masses, was given a philosophical basis. Thus the religious philosophies could accommodate all. A few details regarding the caste positions will be helpful to understand and appreciate better the wisdom behind the two formulations of theism as well as the potentials contained in the formulations, to lessen caste distinctions.

The Pre-Eminence of Brahmans: A Historical and Social Analysis: The pre-eminent position occupied by the brahmans is attested to by their priestly roles and by their being considered as men of learning. Their role as priests dates back to the Vedas. During the later Vedic period they emerged as religious leaders of society. Important rites associated with the coronation ceremonies and the horse-sacrifices required a number of trained priests, for the rituals were complex in nature.\textsuperscript{35} The sacred texts as well as the law books clearly point to this. The Rgveda refers to the greatness of brahmans by maintaining that they emerged from the purest part of Brahman.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} THAPER, T: p. 272.
'Law books of Manu' reiterate the importance of brahmins by considering them as heading the whole creation and as being intermediaries between man and God.

Closely related to the priestly function was the intellectual leadership of the brahmins. Vedic education involved the task of memorising the text, and learning the prescribed rituals. It required a long period of training which the busy kṣatriyas and vaiśyas could ill afford to take. Hence, historically speaking the brahmin caste must have been the first to emerge as a closed group, their membership being restricted to certain families. Therefore, the brahmin priests who had the responsibility of supervising the performance of sacrifices, had to attain proficiency in all the Vedas. This particular task involved their coming out with interpretations concerning the subtle but intricate procedural details.

Vedic learning in the above sense was, from time immemorial, considered as the highest type of learning. In this connection, it may be mentioned that in Indian tradition, religion and philosophy were closely interlinked. It was in the religious context that philosophical speculation took place. Learned men and seers came together by the bond of fellowship in learning, and as fellow-seekers of truth met on the occasion of sacrifices in learned assemblies and conferences where this knowledge was attained, mastered, collected and distributed. Such assemblies were agents for formulating and propagating the study of the sacred text of the Vedas, as well as the philosophies that sprang from them. Hence, in content also there is hardly any difference between religion and philosophy in India — a situation very different from the West where philosophy and religion pursued distinct paths. In India also there was a tendency

for philosophy and religion to become distinct, but the link was progressively re-established. The culmination of the interlinking of philosophy and religion is found in the two illustrations of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Gaiva-Siddhānta.

Since learning had a religious complexion brahmans were considered the ones most qualified to acquire it, though in theory it was open to the first three castes—the brahmans, the kṣatriyas and the vaiśyas who were called dvijas (twice-born). As the medium was Sanskrit, a language not used by the lower castes, and as the subject matter was mainly the Vedas, by being excluded from higher learning, the masses did not lose much from the utilitarian point of view. But they did lose the opportunity for broadening their vision which higher learning would have provided. Consequently, they lacked the necessary intellectual alertness to grasp the existence of oppressive forces and situations.

Position of Brahmins in the Tamil Country: In the Tamil country, brahmans were treated with deference by the kings and by the society at large because of their traditional position as priests, as religious leaders and as learned men. The brahmans of the Tamil country acquired learning first of all through the colleges of the day like Ennāyiram, Tribhuvani, Tirumukkādal and Tiruvāḍudurai. The methods adopted for imparting education and the subjects taught at these centres were well suited to the needs of the brahmans in those days. There were also numerous endowments for higher learning and research which sought to establish settlements of pious and scholarly brahmans in certain areas. One of the inscriptions speaks of an

40. The first three castes were called ‘twice-born’ because they had to go through the initiation ceremony symbolic of a ‘second birth’ which qualified them to take to religious observances. Cf. THAPER, 1 : pp. 253, 254.
41. NILAKANTA SASTRI, Cójas, 1975, p.548.
42. Ibid., pp. 628-633.
43. 277 of 1913. cf. MOOKERJI, p. 371.
endowment establishing a group of learned brahmin families with provision for all necessities of life, including a library.

The origin and development of brahmādāya villages should be understood in the context of certain special duties and responsibilities which were assigned to the brahmins. The king seems to have established at least one or two brahmādāya villages in each nāḍu (group of villages - Cōla administrative unit). These villages must have played an important role in spreading brahminical ideas among the residents of the non-brahmādāya villages. To enable them to carry out their religious functions and to facilitate the growth of religious and philosophical studies, these villages were created. Their assemblies called the sabhas and the mahāsabhas laid down high educational qualifications for its members so that taking part in debates and serving in the executive committees were not ordinarily possible for common people.

A deliberate attempt was made during the reigns of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I to maintain the homogeneity of the brahmādāya villages by excluding all other classes from owning land in them. When locally no agreement could be reached in excluding the others, Rājarāja I issued an order in the seventeenth year of his reign, i.e., in 1002. According to this, in brahmin villages, the kāṇi (estates) of all persons of castes other than brahmins were to be sold out, except that of the servants holding land under service tenure. The brahmins were expected to buy up the land and pay in cash. A similar order was issued by Rājendra I in the sixth year of his reign from Vaḷīccārī, a brahmādāya in Pullyūrkōṭṭam. Though this policy was not meant to keep up the pride of caste and exclusiveness of brahmins, as Nilakanta Sastri observes, nevertheless, it could have created a feeling of alienation in the minds of the other sections in society.

44. KARASHIMA, p. 40
45. NILAKANTA SASTRI: Cōlas, 1975, pp. 578, 579.
46. Ibid.
Intermediary Castes: Among the intermediary castes, i.e., castes other than the brahmins and the śūdras, caste distinction was not rigid. Their caste status was often modified by economic status and special privileges. For example, those who engraved on the copper plate charters of king Rājendra, the weavers of Kāncipuram who wove for the royal family, the stone masons working on temples, etc., were exempted from paying certain dues and hence, some of the members of the lower castes were treated with more respect than other members of the same caste.\(^{47}\) Inscriptions from Karuvār and Perūr record the privileges accorded to kañmāḷars (stone masons) of Vēṅgala-nādu and other artisans elsewhere. The privileges were: the blowing of the two conches, the beating of drums and so on at domestic occurrences, good and bad, the use of sandals when they went out of their homes, plastering the walls of their houses with lime plaster, the construction of houses with two storeys and double doors, and also the right to decorate the front of their houses with garlands of water lilies. The fact that these privileges had to be 'given' to them would suggest that the recipients were after all people who did not possess these privileges by right and that a condescending attitude might have been adopted by those who extended the privileges. Further, these privileges were given in recognition of certain services which the group or the person in question rendered, and hence the beneficiaries were required to serve continuously.

Consequently, among the intermediary castes some unrest and disputes regarding their caste status often arose. Certain sections who did respectable and useful jobs in society but not having good social standing in the caste hierarchy attempted to raise themselves. K. R. Hanumanthan gives the example of how kammaḷas tried to raise their caste status. They claimed to be the hereditary priests of the Cōḷas. According to them, Veda Vyāsa (the legendary

\(^{47}\) THAPER, 1: p. 212.
V—4
author of the four Vedas), became jealous of them, murdered the king and raised his illegitimate son to the throne. The new king announced that all who supported him should be called the valaṅkai and others the idaṅkai (see below) showing thereby that the kammālas once upon a time occupied a position similar to the brahmins. It is significant that these stories regarding their origin were connected with the Vedas, priests, sacrifices, etc., thereby indicating that they aspired to become equal to the brahmins and acquire equality with the latter at the religious and philosophical levels. The general alignment of the various castes into the two camps called valaṅkai and idaṅkai factions attests to the discontent of some of the sections of the society. This division as well as the sporadic clashes of interest that ensued are significant. The central issue of the division, at least at the beginning, seems to have been the subject of conformity (or non-conformity) to the religious and social habits of brahmins. The idaṅkai group consisting of the kammālas who claimed a superior position and the others who supported their claim were opposed by the valaṅkai group. The latter consisted of the king, the brahmins and the vellālers who wanted to maintain the superiority of the brahmin caste and the Vedic culture. At Kācipuram, the valaṅkai and the idaṅkai sects would not worship in the same temple or use the same māṇḍapa for religious purposes.

49. Literally the words valaṅkai and idaṅkai mean right hand and left hand respectively. It was during the reign of Kulōṭtuṅga III that this division became prominent. Among the explanations relating to their origin one is that two sects quarreled and appealed to Karikāla Cōla-Kulōṭtuṅga III for settlement of their disputes, one party standing on the right side and the other on the left. From that time onwards they came to be known as valaṅkai and idaṅkai.
50. Ibid., pp. 179, 180.
The Lowest Sections of the Society: The Periya Purāṇam gives us some insight into the life of the poorer classes on the outskirts of towns. Śākkiḷar opens his account of the life of the pariah saint Nandaṅ with a description of Adanur, the great city. He speaks of the prosperity of the city, and then of the outskirts of the town, where there were small hamlets of pulaiyās. These hamlets were studded with little huts under old thatches covered by surai creepers. These huts were inhabited by agrarian labourers engaged in menial occupations. On the thresholds of these huts there were strips of leather, for these were the quarters of leather makers, chicken were seen moving in groups, dark children carrying puppies whose yelps drowned by the tinkling bells worn by the children at their waists. There were marudu trees, and in the shade of one of these trees a female labourer (ulatti) had put her baby to sleep on a piece of leather. It was from such a surrounding that Nandaṅ, a true devotee of Śiva came. He was a pariah; for his livelihood he depended on his share of the communal land and he followed a profession that was his by birth i.e., to supply leather and leather straps for making drums for the temples.\footnote{52. \textit{Tiruttōṇdar Purāṇam}, ed., PATTUSAMY OTHUVAR (Tiruchirappalli: Tiruppanandai gree Kāśi Madam Publication, 1954), pp. 142-147.}

There were several instances of slavery and this was another limitation on the freedom of the lower castes. Free men and women fell into slavery for various reasons, and there seems to have been several grades of slaves. Most of the recorded instances are sales of persons to the temples. Probably, the rich and the powerful persons also indulged in owning slaves. A record of Rājarāja I from Chingleput dated in the seventeenth year of his reign, i.e., in 1002 A.D., speaks of the dedication of twelve families of fishermen to the temple of grī Varāha Deva. They were given to the temples by the two government officials who were serving in the locality as nādu-kaṅkātai and nādu-vagai. These
families had to pay to the temple a part of their income from weaving and fishing and they had to assist in the celebration of two of the annual festivals. Though the terms of the dedication are liberal, an element of compulsion seems to have been there. This is evidenced from the following: The sabha and the ār of Pūruvandāli, Chinglepul, undertook to hold the families and their descendants strictly to their obligations. The part played by the officials and the hereditary nature of the dedication also point to the compulsive element. This and the other instances of slavery, untouchability, etc., show that as individuals and as groups some sections suffered alienation.

Divergence between the Ideal Society and the Actual Social Scene: Its Consequences: It must be said that the caste grouping as it existed during the Cōla period was the result of a long evolutionary process during which it deviated considerably from the original ideal. This is evident from the fact that the vartā scheme as it was conceived by the ancient Hindu philosophers was an ideal social organisation. There are differences of opinion among the scholars about vartā and caste. According to S. Gopalan it was a blue print for ideal social organisation and was based on the principle of division of labour. Individuals belonging to the various classes were considered best-fitted to be in them and the four professional groups by their distinct contribution helped towards the harmonious working of the society. Obviously the social ideal envisaged through the vartā scheme was a difficult one to achieve. The ideal of vartā, when put into practice resulted in the much criticised caste system. The criteria of efficiency and professional competence seemed to have given way to the criterion of birth, which determined the type of work one was to perform. In the words of S. Gopalan, it

was based on the principle that ‘every individual must be afforded the opportunity to manifest the unique in him.’

Whether varṇa as a social ideal was ever practised in all its purity and grandeur, it is difficult to say. What one can be sure about is that the frailties of man became apparent when varṇa ideal failed to inspire society. The distinction between superior and inferior types of duty, which was perhaps not an aspect of the varṇa-ideal, was at some stage introduced and the distinction gained prominence in the caste system as it evolved. It may be surmised that when ethical considerations failed to have a sway over individuals and leaders of society, the idea of privileges and vested interests entered into and marred the Hindu society. The history of the caste system reveals the tendency of the privileged classes to preserve and to promote their vested interests. Consequently those who belonged to the less privileged sections suffered stagnation and alienation as testified by the position of caste during the period under study.

It is difficult to state with certainty whether the inequalities which certain sections experienced were deliberately created and perpetuated. Maybe the attitude of oppression itself came later on as a natural sequel to the advantageous position in which the elite found themselves. Once, however, the tendency of promoting vested interests developed, it could not be erased easily and led to various social ills. As a result of this the non-elite classes were barred from playing effective roles in the socio-economic scene.

There are very few documented evidences for the awareness of the need to bring the masses into the main stream of life in the society, except among the ācāryas, and especially Rāmānuja, who made the uplift of the down-

trodden their personal concern. However, the various aspects of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Gaṅgāva-Siddhānta show the possibilities of openness towards a wider circle of followers. The alienation would, perhaps, imperceptibly but progressively lessen as the two systems took the masses into consideration. In Viśiṣṭādvaita the division into Teṅkalai and Vaṭākalai and the subsequent developments in Teṅkalai are evidences to show that the doctrine had reached the masses. Gaṅga-Siddhānta would make for a mass-oriented approach through its specifically Tamil character.

The Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Historical Circumstances: The religious and philosophical aspects may be reviewed under two broad categories. The first category will include religions of non-Indian origin, for example, Christianity and Islam. The second refers to religions of Indian origin, that is, the heterodox and orthodox systems of the Hindu fold.

Regarding the first category, Islam was present in South India from the eighth century onwards. The Arab merchants were preaching and sometimes making conversions on the western and eastern coasts during the four centuries selected for this study. Christianity had a still earlier history in India dating back to the first century A.D. The coming of St. Thomas to India, his works of conversion especially on the Malabar coast, his martyrdom on the coromandel coast where his tomb is venerated even to-day, the presence of a few Christians around this area, etc., are reinforced by the authority of a long tradition. These two religions, having highly monotheistic beliefs, strong bhakti elements and the ideal of social equality, were in their initial stages of development. Of the two, Islam seems to have had a stronger presence in the Cōla empire. However, before

56 Ibid., pp. 108-112,
the twelfth century there is hardly any authentic evidence of either Christianity or Islam exerting any influence of a considerable nature on any of the ācāryas who were responsible for the formulation of the two systems. Therefore, it may be concluded that the rise and development of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Gaṇa-Siddhānta were primarily an outcome of the interactions between the already existing Indian religions and philosophical traditions.

Within the indigenous religious context the period prior to the tenth century saw the conflict of Hinduism with Buddhism and Jainism, leading to the triumph of Hinduism. Though the Tamil culture, eventually, rejected Buddhism and was not particularly under the sway of Jainism, the impact of both these religions is evident. It is seen in the devotional cult which in its social approach overlooked the social stratification based on caste differences and received its support from the lower castes.⁵⁷ The decline of Buddhism and Jainism is partially linked with the popularity of the Gaṇa and Vaiṣṇava devotional sects. Philosophically, the period preceding the tenth century was overshadowed by Gaṇkarācārya who gave a new interpretation to Vedānta His advaita theory provided numerous seeds for contemplation.⁵⁸ It was from this religious and philosophical background that the Vaiṣṇava and Gaṇa ācāryas took over. Gaṇkara's advaita acted as a catalyst in the shaping of Viśiṣṭādvaita while the challenge from the siddha movement was equally contributive towards the shaping of Gaṇa-Siddhānta. These and other religious aspects such as the upaniṣadic, the bhāgavata, the purānic and the āgamic traditions are so very intimately connected with the shaping of the two systems that their impact is highlighted in the course of the exposition of the doctrines themselves.

⁵⁷. THAPER, 1 p. 188.
CHAPTER III

Visishtadvaita and The Personalistic Approach to Reality

The two preceding Chapters constitute the historical background to the study of the two religious philosophies. In chapter I we have seen how the Cōla kings facilitated the growth of Visishtadvaīta and Gaiva-Siddhänta systems. In Chapter II our endeavours were to show how the economic and social realities of the time indicated a direction in which philosophy had to accommodate the needs of the various segments of the society. In Chapter III we shall discuss the Visishtadvaita approach to Reality as envisaged by Rämaänuja. His approach seems to follow the direction suggested by the historical circumstances. These directions as crystallised in Visishtadvaita during the tenth to the thirteenth centuries incorporated the following trends:

1) An effort to synthesise the devotional cult with metaphysical system building;

2) A desire to return to the sources of ancient Hindu tradition to seek sanction from the classical texts which were considered authoritative by all sections alike;

3) An attempt to make philosophy accessible to the masses.

Of these three, the attempt to make philosophy easily accessible to the masses was one of the important concerns.
It may be argued that, to consider the accessibility to the masses as the predominant trend, is to read too much of today's political concern into the medieval times. This is a valid observation. However, the logic of the internal development of the system substantiates this argument.

The Evolution of Theism: The history of Indian theism goes back to a very early period. Roughly before the fourth century A.D., the Vedas, the Bhagavadgītā and Purāṇas, show the prevalence of faith, devotion and worship centred on a personal God. For example, the Svetāsvetara Upaniṣad identifies the Absolute with Rudra or śiva and Kṛṣṇa. In Saivism the philosophers were influenced by the idea of God as Paśupati (Lord of the cows) who saves paśu (his creatures) from pāśa (fetters) through His grace anugraha, as Lord, śiva is omniscient and beginningless. Similarly, Vaiṣṇavism had synthesised the various theistic notions from the Bhagavadgītā. The following examples may be given: devotion to Hari, the Imperishable beyond the perishable, to Kṛṣṇa, as the re-establisher of dharma and as Puruṣottama, the Supreme Person (Bhagavān) not only of all good but also of love in reciprocal bhakti. As far as the theistic trend is concerned the period from the fourth to the tenth century A.D., was a transitional period for some of the darśanas. By the end of that period the monotheistic faith seems to have penetrated śaivism to a large extent and Vaiṣṇavism to a lesser degree in spite of the formidable objections raised by the atheists in both traditions. For example, Vātsyāyana commenting on the Nyāya Sūtra of Gautama which can be dated roughly to the fourth century A.D., observes that the Sūtra considers God as Ātman (Soul) who is endowed with special qualities. God is considered the father of all beings.¹ The Vaiṣeṣika adoption of God is found in Padārtha—dharma—saṅgraha. Its author Praśastapāda is a typical figure of this transitional period. He chose to be both a Vaiṣeṣika and a Paśupata gaiva. He

¹ Cf, SNVB. 4, 1, 21, p.422 ff.
simply super-imposed on Vaīṣeṣika the great Lord Gīva to whom he attributes the power of dissolution and restoration of the Universe, the formation of the primordial egg, the determination of the number of molecules formed from the primary atoms, etc. In Vedānta, Śaṅkara took his stand on śruti and stated boldly that two types of causality originated from the Brahmaṇa: one, the immutable and unaffected Absolute Intelligence, two, the Cosmic Lord.²

It is clear, then, that bhakti and monotheistic belief did exist from about the fourth century on, but not as systematically formulated religious philosophies. It was from the tenth century onwards that they became formulated into systems of thought. Of the three great theistic systems of the period viz., Viśisṭādwaita, Dvaita and Gaiva-Siddhānta, two appeared in the Tamil country.

Historical Foundations of the Viśisṭādwaita Tradition: Viśisṭādwaita philosophy has a long history which goes back to very remote times. In its religious aspect, it centres around the worship of Viṣṇu. This deity also bears the sectarian names Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, and Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla. These names indicate the four main streams which mingled into one over a period of several centuries to form the religion which Rāmānuja inherited.³ This characteristic views regarding God in this tradition are to be found in some of the typical Vaiṣṇava literature prior to Rāmānuja. The important literary works, mostly in Sanskrit in this connection consist of the Nārāyaṇiya and Anugītā sections of the Mahābhārata, the early Pāñcarātra Samhitas, the Viṣṇu


Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. This literature develops the nature of God in the light of the prevalent philosophies of the day, namely, the advaitism of some of the Upaniṣads and the Sāṅkhya-yoga.

On the one hand the Vaiṣṇava literature holds that the Supreme Being has a transcendent nature; therefore, it is declared incomprehensible and past human understanding. On the other the literature also believes that God may be known by his devotees. Behind the philosophical language, the God who is disclosed in the writings is a God characterised by knowledge, beauty, goodness and love. The love of God, according to these works, prompts him to assume finite forms for the sake of his worshippers. He actively seeks to save them from samsara. Moreover he unites the souls of the devotees to himself in their released state, with out destroying their individuality.

A more immediate and locally popular Vaiṣṇavite tradition into which Ramanuja was born and brought up was the Āḻvār tradition. This represents the Tamil inspiration and deserves some detailed consideration.

The Legacy of Devotion and Devotional Literature: An analysis of the bhakti literature bequeathed to posterity by the 'Āḻvārs' shows that the way of devotion (bhakti-mārga) was comprehensive in its significance. The basic underlying sentiment in all bhakti literature is the intense love of the devotees towards God and their desire for union with him. Their longing was such that they would consider everything else in this world as worthless. The only thing that would satisfy them was union with the Lord. This is amply expressed by Kulasēkhara Āḻvār:

No kinship with this world have I
Which takes for true the life that is not true
‘For thee alone my passion burns’ I cry,
Rangan, my Lord!

4. Ibid., p 98.
No kinship with this world have I
with thongs of maidsens slim of waist
with joy and love I rise for one alone and cry
Rangan, my Lord!

No kinship bave I with the devotees
of Maran *with the cruel bow!
But mad for Rangan's wreathed breasts am I
Narayanam, Eternal Hells' dread Foe!⁵

In Tirumāṅgai Āḻvār we have an example of how much an Āḻvār prized his newly found gift of friendship with God. After a life of sinfulness he was given the grace of conversion to God. Having found the one thing that really mattered, viz., the Lord, he would cling to him alone. He says:

Wearly saddened in my heart, I have been caught up in endless sorrow, numerous cycle of births and deaths. I have been in the company of women looking for pleasures. I was running and running in order to find release. I stepped into wisdom and looked into myself. Seeking and seeking I have discovered the saving name—Nārāyaṇa.⁶

In its many sided growth bhakti had come to accommodate a number of attitudes (bhāvas), any of which could be adopted by a devotee in his relationship to God. The servant-master relationship (dāṣya bhāva) considers man as the servant and God as the master. The devotee was trained to feel that every one of his action must be imbued with the spirit of service (kaṇṭhārṣya) to God. Nammāḻvār expressed the intensity of the longing for this type of relationship by stating that reaching the proximity of God was much more desirable than the attainment of emancipation. He spoke of the different steps involved in service such as uttering the Lord's name thinking of him constantly as one's master,

⁵* Maran-Kama. the God of Love - Cupid. Perumāl Tirumoli, trans J S M HOOPER, c3, p. 44
⁶ Opening hymn of Periya Tirumoli l. 1, trans. mine.
offering flowers at his feet, singing His praises and dancing in delight.\textsuperscript{7}

The parental attitude of bhakti was adopted by Pariyāḷvār. The devotee who adopts this attitude imagines himself to be the mother, and God as the child, and pours out affection in abundance on God. Pariyāḷvār identifies himself with Yaśoda, Kṛṣṇa's foster mother. He called the moon to come to his infant Kṛṣṇa who wishes to play with it. He says:

My little one, precious to me nectar, my blessings, is calling thee, pointing, pointing with his little hands! O Big moon, if thou wishes to play with this little black one, hide not thyself in the clouds but come rejoicing. He calls thee in his baby speech, prattle unformed, sweetend with nectar from his pretty mouth. O Big Moon, if thou heedest him not, whose name is grīdhāran who is so friendly to all when he calls and calls, 'twere well for thee if thou went deaf.\textsuperscript{8}

Another type of attitude which dominated the works of a number of Āḻvārs was typified in the relationship between the beloved and the lover (nāyaka-nāyakbhhāva).* In this attitude God was looked upon as the bridegroom. The devotee considered God as his/her Lord. This enabled the individual to cultivate the attitude of complete dependence on God. T.M P. Mahadevan observes that they enact in their mystic life all the stages of love-play such as courting, engagement, marriage, temporary separation with its accompanying pains and reunion. Although in this love-game there is no distinction, for all are females in relation to the only male-God, yet it comes naturally to woman devotees than to men saints.\textsuperscript{9}


\textsuperscript{8} Periyāḷvār Tirumoli, I, IV, 2 & 5, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{*} In Tamil tradition it is Nāyaka Nāyakbhhāva.
Among the brides of God, Ān̄ḍāḷ was pre-eminent. She considered herself as one of the maids (gopis) and maintained with God a love relationship on terms similar to those holding good between a lover and his beloved. The Tiruppāvai says that she used to rise early morning call all her friends to go with her to make up the sleeping Kṛṣṇa. One of the stanzas reads as follows:

Like monarchs of the beautiful great world
Who come with broken pride up to thy couch,
In a great company, we crowd to thee!
Little by little will not thy red eyes
Open upon us like to lotus flowers
Fashioned on tinkling anklets?
If on us thou wilt but glance,
with both thy beauteous eyes
Like to the rising of the moon and sun,
The curse that rests upon us is removed
If thou but glance! Ah Elorembavay!

In Nammāḻvār this type of bridal love is deep and intense. In the Tiruvāyumoḷi, he expresses his experience of the pangs of separation from his Lord, the lover. In the following stanza we have an example of how the disciples of Āḻvār try to console the mistress, that is Āḻvār himself. She (Āḻvār) suffers much from the separation of her Lord. In a mood of utter confusion and distress she expresses her doubt whether her heart which is gone in search of the Lord, her lover, will ever return to her:

Will't stay or come again, may lonely heart
(Which has pursued the bird flame - angry, driven
by the Lord of tulasi arm'd with fatal wheel,
Whom gods, adore!) - The piping cowherds girl,
Bhudevi, ġī, his shadows it perceives! (sic)

The above attitudes were easily understandable and adaptable by the common man. By making concrete references to, and integrating the ideas found in the mystic outpourings of the Śīlāvārs, in his own philosophy of Visiṣṭādvaita, Rāmānuja paved the way for transforming the attitudes of the masses. However, the attitude of bhakti was shorn of much or its excesses in Rāmānuja. For example, he does not integrate the last type of love described above, that is, the bridal love. Probably, it was too anthropomorphic for his taste.

Rāmānuja was fully integrated into his Vaiṣṇavite family tradition. As mentioned already, there was regular teaching of the Vaiṣṇavite faith in the temple. It was customary that the teaching in the temple was based chiefly on the text of the four thousand hymns of the Śīlāvārs. The teachings and the frequent singing of the hymns made the doctrines contained in these hymns familiar to the faithful. Rāmānuja, undoubtedly, imbibed these teachings because he was an ardent devotee. The first time Yāmunācārya met Rāmānuja, the latter was on his way to the temple at Kāṇḍī. The religious background of Rāmānuja as well as the historical circumstances of the time paved the way towards the formulation of his theistic philosophy.

Rāmānuja's Synthesis: Its Deeper Significance: Considering the Visiṣṭādvaita system of Rāmānuja from the

12. RĀMĀNUJA'S biographer Swami Ramakrishnānda tells us that he was born of a pious Vaiṣṇavite couple, Keśavācārya and Kāntimati who performed yajña (sacrifice) suppling God Pārthasārathy to bless them with a child. In his boyhood Rāmānuja was closely associated with holy men of Vaiṣṇava sect like Kāṇcipurāṇa (his guru) and others whom he admired and followed as his models. SWAMI RAMAKRISHNĀNANDA: Life of Rāmānuja (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1965), p. 71.

13. See Supra, pp. 42, 43.

historical perspective, an analysis, and discussion of his use of the concept of synthesis becomes necessary. His treatment of the two sections of the Vedas, namely the jñāna-kāṇḍa and karma-kāṇḍa is such that he draws no distinction between those who are qualified to follow jñāna-kāṇḍa and those who can only rise up to the practice of karma-kāṇḍa. He believed that the entire teachings of the Vedas should be taken as applicable to all classes of people. The two parts of the Vedas complement each other. The ‘knowledge portion’ is concerned with God and the ‘ritualistic section’, with the mode of worshipping Him. He expresses this idea in his interpretation of the first sūtra, ‘athāto brahma-jīnāsā’ (Then therefore the enquiry of Brahman):

In this sūtra, the word ‘then’ expresses immediate sequence: the word ‘therefore’ intimates that what has taken place (viz. the study of the karma-kāṇḍa of the Vedas) constitutes the reason (of the enquiry into Brahman). For, the fact is that the enquiry into (lit. ‘the desire to know’) Brahman - the fruit of which enquiry is infinite in nature and permanent - follows immediately in the case of him who, having read the Veda together with its auxilliary discipline, has reached the knowledge that the fruit of mere works is limited and non-permanent, and hence has conceived the desire of final release.  

Here Rāmānuja does state that a devotee who gained knowledge through the reading of the Vedas realizes that the ‘fruit of mere works are limited’. All the same he shows that very realization was reached through exercises that began with works or karma. In other words karma-kāṇḍa leads to jñāna-kāṇḍa. This approach that stressed the importance of both kāṇḍas would have certainly helped to enlarge the circle of believers and ‘accommodated’ persons at various stages of their development within the Vaiṣṇavite fold.

Rāmānuja’s philosophy looked at purely from within the Vedāntic tradition may be considered as the result of his interpretation of the triple texts—the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtra and the Bhagavadgītā. The thesis he presents is that the passages when interpreted properly would go to show that Brahman has to be conceived not in purely non-dualistic but in qualified, non-dualistic (Viśīṣṭa-advaita) terms. The new dimension of analysis suggested in the present thesis is that Rāmānuja’s philosophy should also be looked at ‘from outside’, from the viewpoint of the history of Indian philosophy. Hence the question may be asked. Why did Rāmānuja emphasise the need for synthesising the two strands of thought found in the Upaniṣads? Why did Rāmānuja interpret them in this way? This thesis suggests that the historical circumstances provide us with a partial clue. The need for bringing philosophy to the masses must have made Rāmānuja reconsider the Upaniṣads. This meant that he had to synthesise the metaphysical-speculative aspect of Indian thought as found in the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahma-sūtra with the common religious aspirations current at that time. The strong basis for such a synthesis was provided by the Upaniṣadic tradition which has two currents of thought, viz., metaphysical and religious. Hence the possibility for a synthesis was recognised in the Upaniṣads themselves.

The two streams of thought that he combined are those of the transcendental absolute presented by the abheda (non-daulistic) texts and of pluralistic realism discernible in the bheda texts (texts emphasising difference). The latter refers to the Supreme Being as a repository of all virtues and considers the individual souls as infinite in number and real. Rāmānuja’s contention was that scriptural passages should not be interpreted as isolated and disconnected sentences. They should be considered within the context of the general
teaching of the scripture as a whole. The outcome of such reconciliation was that it enabled Rāmānuja to lay strong foundations for the following important concepts: (1) Reality as qualified, (2) Reality as a person, (3) Personalistic relationship between God and the individual soul. A synthesis of the findings of reason, scripture and religious experience was considered (by Rāmānuja to re-inforce the threefold foundations. Our analysis of the threefold foundational concepts in the following pages is aimed at showing how Rāmānuja, by welding speculative philosophy and popular religious beliefs into a system, made philosophy accessible to all sections of society.

1. Reality as Qualified: Rāmānuja's treatment of Reality is both theological and philosophical. Eminent scholars have viewed him from both angles. J.B. Carman has styled Rāmānuja "as orthodox theologian". R. Balasubramanian, commenting on Carman's reference to Rāmānuja as a theologian, reminds us that the philosophical dimensions of his thought should be equally appreciated. He writes: "Just as the theological and devotional aspects of Rāmānuja's thought should not be ignored, even so the philosophical side of his thought should not be ignored".

16. KUMARAPPA, p. 179.

In Sbh. I.I. I. Rāmānuja complains that the Advaitin makes wrong use of the principle. The scriptural passages should be interpreted in the light of the meaning gathered from the general teaching of the scriptures as a whole. His own words are. "You in this case make just the wrong use of the principle of all the sākhas containing the same doctrine. What this principle demands is that the qualities attributed in all sākhas to Brahman as cause should be taken over into the passage under discussion also".


We are in agreement with both the above views and would like to add that Rāmānuja brought in theological aspects while philosophising in order to make philosophy concrete and accessible to the masses.

Rāmānuja’s Views as Opposed to Gaṅkara’s: Rāmānuja’s criticism regarding Reality was directed mainly against the most powerful philosophy of the day, the absolute non-dualism of Gaṅkara. In the second chapter of the Grīhāṇaṣya, he has set forth his criticism of the current philosophical systems of the day such as Buddhism, Śaṅkhya, Yoga, etc. However, they were not the target of his explicit attack. His criticism was directed primarily against the acosmic monism of Gaṅkara which is considered as the “greatest formulation of idealistic monism in the history of human thought”.

According to Gaṅkara, Brahman is the only Reality and this Reality is without any attribute. If the Absolute were to have attributes, then these attributes will have an existence of their own. Consequently, Brahman will not be all in all. Gaṅkara substantiated his position by scriptural evidences. He interpreted the Upaniṣadic idea of Brahman as saṁ (existence) cit (knowledge) and ānanda (bliss) to mean that Brahman is pure Being, pure Knowledge and pure Bliss. Similarly, his interpretation of the expression neti, neti (not this, not this) found in many passages of the Upaniṣads was that Brahman is to be described in negative rather than positive terms. Gaṅkara maintains that Brahman does not possess any attribute. Reality is a pure, quality-less Being.

As contrasted with the above view, Ramanuja took the stand that Reality is qualified. By taking such a stand, Rāmānuja attempted to remove some of the abstract concepts (which were introduced earlier by Gaṅkara) in

characterising Reality. Contrary to īśkara’s stand that Reality is unqualified, a position which is too difficult for an average man to understand, Rāmānuja accepts the existence of the Absolute Self as well as of finite realities as an expression of the Absolute Self. He showed that the Absolute Self of philosophy can be visualised as the God of Vaiṣṇava religion.

Rāmānuja’s View Supported by His Epistemological Position: It is significant that Rāmānuja’s attempts at ‘concretisation’ are based upon his basic epistemological position. Rāmānuja refers to consciousness in general, and speech, perception and inference in particular, to show that Reality is qualified.²⁰ He maintains, through his analysis, that experience (of the knowing subject) always has a content that is qualified by differences. In the grībhāṣya he says that the witness-self points to a consciousness which implies differences. This is proved by the fact that in the case of a judgement like ‘I saw this’, the witness-self stands apart and communicates the experience to the self. Further, consciousness itself presupposes attributes. One such attribute is self-illuminatedness. Again in the grībhāṣya he says:

To thought, there at any rate belongs the quality of being thought and self-illuminatedness. for the knowing principle is observed to have for its essential nature the illumining (making to shine forth) of objects.²¹

An analysis of speech also reveals differences. For, speech can be broken up into sentences, words and sounds. Different words have different sounds, and different suffixes attached to one and the same words have different meanings. Various types of combination of similar-sounding words convey varied meanings. Even one and the same word, may convey different meanings depending upon the

contexts. Again, since each word has a meaning of its own, different modes of combination convey diverse meanings. Consequently, speech which consists of sounds, words and sentences can only testify to things with differences.  

It is interesting to note that Rāmānuja relies on personal experience to prove the validity of his philosophical convictions. Notwithstanding the criticisms that have been levelled against his position (with which we are not concerned here) the method of using the day-to-day experiences points to the painstaking efforts he took at reducing the abstractions inherent in speculative philosophy. Rāmānuja's point was that a thing which is experienced by ourselves is more easily understandable than anything else.

An analysis of perception also establishes Reality as qualified. Admitting both determinate (savikalpa) and indeterminate (nirvikalpa) types of perception, Rāmānuja points out that even at the stage of indeterminate perception (perception which may also be referred to as of an object seen for the first time) the object is 'seen' as possessing qualities. The difference between indeterminate and determinate perceptions consists in the fact that in the former case the 'object' becomes the 'subject of awareness' for the first time, and in the latter case the same object is seen for the second, the third, the fourth, etc., time and as a result increasingly clearly. Accordingly, in the first instance, a person is not aware that the characteristic features seen in a particular object extends to other objects, whereas in the 'subsequent instances' the relationship between the object in question and the other objects becomes more clear. But it is important to note that the object, both when seen for the first time and subsequently is 'perceived' with qualities. To quote from the Śrībhāṣya of Rāmānuja:

22. Ibid., p. 40.
23. Ibid., p. 41.
Perception, .. with its two sub-divisions of non-determinate (nirvikalpa) and determinate (savikalpa) perception - also cannot be a means of knowledge for things devoid of differences.  

Therefore the perceived reality is a reality with differences. It is these differences that cohere in the unity of the experienced real which is always emphasised by Rāmānuja.

Once it is accepted that perception reveals only what is characterised by differences, it follows that inference also ‘conveys’ differences. For, the basis of inference is the knowledge obtained through perception and it has already been shown that all knowledge received through the senses is marked with differences. Moreover, if inference tries to prove that differences are unreal it will be contradicting its own ground—its ground being ‘knowledge of differences’ revealed by perception. Therefore Rāmānuja says:

...a person who maintains the existence of a thing devoid of difference on the ground of differences affecting that very thing simply contradicts himself without knowing what he does.

Finally, there is the most authoritative of the pramāṇas, the scripture or verbal testimony (śabda). Just as every object of our knowledge is qualified by attributes, Reality or Brahman as revealed in the scriptures is also qualified by attributes (saguṇa) and is a differentiated being. (saviśeṣa). Rāmānuja established this position by considering the very same passages which gāṅkara interpreted to show that Brahman is nirguṇa. The text “Brahman is only one without a second” has been interpreted by gāṅkara to mean that Brahman is pure, undifferentiated substance. According to Rāmānuja (when the same passage is interpreted in a larger context) it does not mean that Brahman is without

24. Ibid., p. 41.
qualities, but that he is one like whom there is no other. The meaning of the expression ‘without a second’ should be understood as the affirmation of Brahman’s qualities by denying the existence of any other reality like Brahman. This interpretation seems to become even more plausible when the meaning of the preceding phrase is elucidated. The preceding phrase—‘Being only this was in the beginning, one only’—means that Brahman when “about to create, constitutes the substantial cause of the world” Such an explanation may be taken to imply the existence of some other power besides Brahman. In order to avoid such a misunderstanding, the phrase ‘without a second’ is immediately added.27

For Rāmānuja a second set of passages which speak of Brahman without qualities, when considered in the total context of scriptural teaching, yields the meaning that Brahman has no evil qualities.28 He further maintains that the terms like ‘real’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘infinite’ also when applied to Brahman show that Brahman is qualified by attributes. In the Ānubhāṣya he says: ...the text ‘true, knowledge’ etc., teaches Brahman as possessing attributes, for this passage has to be interpreted along with the texts referring to Brahman as a cause.”29

According to him the position taken by Gaṅgākara regarding the application of these terms to Brahman is unacceptable. Rāmānuja offers two arguments, the first is based on the concept of sāmānādhikarāya or grammatical rule of co-ordinate relation. According to this, words which are in co-ordinate relation denote one thing as qualified by several attributes. In this connection it needs to be noted that the three above mentioned words ‘real’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘infinite’ are not synonymous. Each of them has its own connotations and nuances. Therefore it

27. Ibid., p. 80. 28. Ibid., p. 79. 29. Ibid., p. 80.
must be admitted that they refer to the diverse qualities inherent in Brahman. The second argument which seems to follow logically from the first is that the three non-synonymous terms are not used to show the essential nature of Brahman. If they were meant to denote the essential nature of reality, one word would have sufficed. Since different words in co-ordination have been used for different reasons, Rāmānuja says that the text depicts Reality or Brahman as qualified (saguṇa). Therefore, Reality as experienced by consciousness and as indicated by perception, inference and scripture, is qualified.  

2. Reality as a Person: Rāmānuja was not content to stop with establishing Reality as qualified. That would not yet answer the religious need of the common man. To establish a meaningful relationship, Reality needs to be shown as possessing a nature similar to that of man. That would also bring with it the advantage of the idea of Reality becoming more easily comprehensible to common man. It was this need which Rāmānuja sensed in the average man, especially in the alienated sections of society, that prompted him to re-interpret Reality as a Person. To establish Reality as a Person. Rāmānuja draws upon the earlier view he argued for, viz., that the experienced Keal is always characterised by difference. Here again his argument is based on his analysis of consciousness. Consciousness presupposes a self on the one hand and an object on the other. If a self is presupposed, it is the self rather than consciousness which should be considered as the moral agent. This is so especially because consciousness gets its significance only when considered functionally and the functioning of consciousness implies a self which is at its base. If such a constant factor were not admitted ability to recall (memory power) would be impossible. Thus Brahman should not be considered as non-differentiated

consciousness, but as a self that is characterised by consciousness.

It was not enough to establish that Reality is a Person on rational grounds alone. Evidences from the scriptures which were held sacred and authoritative by all sections of people were to be adduced to provide weight and credibility to the findings of reason. Two of the passages quoted by him in this connection are: "He who is all knowing"32 "that divinity (i. e., Being) be thought itself".33

In this context the great concern of Rāmānuja for exegesis should be borne in mind. His references to scripture in general or to particular passages should not be thought of merely as attempts at 'reaching the masses' by playing on their psychology. Rāmānuja's concern with the scriptures was also due to the importance he attached to traditional ideas themselves. The spirit of the Hindu philosophical tradition, Rāmānuja believed, could be gathered by looking back to the hoary past and the classical texts. For him, philosophical texts were not merely scholarly treatises but they represented the distillation of the great ideals which had inspired the sages. The texts also reflected the aspirations of the people at large. Therefore, by careful study and interpretation of these texts, he hoped to bring them to the masses.

The passages which refer to the self as the basis of consciousness are to be carefully understood. The 'absolutistic tone' of the texts was not diluted by Rāmānuja. They were to be understood in relation to man himself, he seems to have pleaded. This means that the metaphysical underpinnings of his philosophy are as important as the ethical implications they possessed. The great metaphysical doctrines were thus analysed by him with a view to bring to surface the deeper significance of the ethical philosophy which were more easily comprehensible to the masses.

Naturally, therefore, the metaphysical aspects of his philosophy of the Absolute as a Person are not to be overlooked even when we try to explain them. Though we are not concerned with all the aspects of his metaphysics, references to those aspects which have a bearing on the ethical philosophy are to be made here.

If Brahman is a Personal Being, he can be visualised as possessing certain attributes which are in man and certain others which distinguish him from the rest of creation. The former may be referred to as immanent characteristics and the latter as transcendental. Both are significant. Vedic texts and the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas, according to Rāmānuja, present the Supreme Soul as the ultimate cause, as the Lord of all. He has infinite knowledge as he knows all things. He has infinite power since he is able to carry out every resolve. He is also present everywhere, being unlimited by space. The text: "He is without a second", means that there is no other cause for the creation of the world except Brahman - an indication of the power of Brahman. Closely related to this power are his glory, dominion, wisdom, energy, etc., which are stressed in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Pāñcarātra philosophy.

In view of his transcendental characteristics, God came to be looked upon as the lord and master of the universe, worthy of all praise and adoration. As an embodiment of all virtues He is visualised as being capable of compassion, understanding and sympathy. He is considered to be fully appreciative of the plight of the jīva who suffers from various types of limitations.

God's transcendental powers, coupled with His immanent nature, endear Him to the suffering humanity. For, enormous power to save them makes Him also an immanent companion and the indweller of souls. The following scriptural passages support the fact that Brahman is the indweller of souls:

(a) I am seated in the hearts of all and from Me are memory, knowledge as well as their loss. 35

(b) The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His Mayā, causes all things to revolve as though mounted on a machine. 36

In this context the attribute of compassion (kṛpā) that he possesses is especially stressed. Rāmānuja says that the act of creation itself is intended to enable the individuals to exhaust their karmas. Even though retribution or the opportunity to work out karma seems to be the immediate object of creation, the ultimate aim of Brahman is to increase the happiness of men to the highest degree. He wants them to enjoy the highest bliss, but the consequences of their deeds stand on the way. Therefore, He provided them with a world in which they can work out these consequences. In the grībhāśya he says:

What the Lord himself aims at is ever to increase happiness to the highest degree, and to this end it is instrumental that he should reprove and reject the infinite and intolerable mass of sin which accumulates in the course of beginning and endless aeons, and thus check the tendency on the part of individual being to transgress his laws 37

Rāmānuja quotes from the Bhagavadgītā to stress the love and mercy of the Lord who dispels ignorance and darkness:

To them, ever devout, worshipping Me with love,
I give the yoga of discrimination by which they come to Me. Out of pure compassion for them, dwelling in their hearts, I destroy the ignorance-

36. Ibid., XVIII. 61, p. 946.
born of darkness, by the luminous lamp of wisdom.\textsuperscript{38}

It is again God’s compassion (kṛpa) for humanity that prompts Him to appear in creaturely form and help to alleviate suffering. Commenting on the passage dealing with avatāra, Rāmānuja maintains that God grants the vision of his form and work to His faithful devotees.\textsuperscript{39} The avatāra would ‘converse’ with his devotees, participate in their concern and show them the way. Thus God’s assuming the human form is not the result of karma, but of His willingness to help men in their efforts at realising spiritual perfections.

Rāmānuja’s conception of Reality expressed in such terms had an appeal to the masses. For the people of the Tamil country, both high and low, were already acquainted with such ideas regarding God as a Person. Centuries of tradition built up by the Ālvārs helped the masses to conceive God in human terms.\textsuperscript{40} They illustrated these ‘characteristics’ by relating themselves to God as a master, a friend, a father, a mother, a lover, a child, etc., expressing their devotion in spiritualistic terms. This devotional cult of looking upon God as a Person was accepted and practised by the ordinary people. By giving a philosophical basis to such a practice, Rāmānuja was endorsing an already prevalent and popular practice of the ordinary people with an intellectual sanction, and re-assuring them that they could find God within their own tradition.

\textsuperscript{38} Bhg, X. 10 and 11. pp. 536, 538.

\textsuperscript{39} Rāmānuja’s own words about the Lord assuming various forms are:

‘This is essential form of His, the most compassionate Lord, by his mere will individualises as a shape, human or divine or otherwise, so as to render it suitable to the apprehension of the devotee and thus satisfy Him., Ālbh., l. 1. 2, p. 241.

\textsuperscript{40} See infra pp. 170, 171.
3. Reality and the God-Soul Relationship: An analysis of the relationship between God and individual soul inherent in Rāmānuja’s philosophy of Brahman is helpful in appreciating how he attempted to make philosophy more easily accessible to ordinary people. Rāmānuja maintains that the material universe and the finite souls form a realm of attributes qualifying Brahman.\(^\text{41}\) Brahman is the self-determining and all-determining Real. The other finite reals are utterly subordinate to this Supreme Rea, drawing substance and significance from it. This relationship of the Supreme Real to the finite reals constitute the theistic base for Rāmānuja’s philosophy.\(^\text{42}\)

In order to understand this theistic aspect we may use, with advantage, some of the modes which Rāmānuja uses since they all go to show that man is subordinate to and is dependent on God.

Various types of expressions like the ṣārīra-ṣārīrī bhāva (body-soul relation), prakāra-prakāri bhāva (substance-mode relation), sēṣa-seṣi bhāva (dependent and depended upon relation) amāṃśi-bhāva (part-whole relation) found in Rāmānuja’s writings have to be understood from this perspective. The idea underlying all these is that Brahman is conceived as cidacidviṣiṣṭa, i.e. as qualified by nature as a whole and by the individual selves as emanating from the Supreme.\(^\text{43}\) They bring out the theistic aspect of Rāmānuja’s philosophy in so far as the emphasis in them all is on the subordinate and dependent status of the individual.

Among the various relationships cited, the ṣārīra-ṣārīrībhāva forms the central concept because this analogy more than any other brings out directly and richly the meaning of the dependent relationship of finite souls (and the world) on

\(^{41}\) Cf. RAGHAVAGHAR, p. 36.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 42.
\(^{43}\) YAMUNĀCHĀRYA, p. 73.
God. 44 In this body-soul analogy Rāmānuja enters into a thorough analysis of what a body ought to mean in the context of śarīra-śaīry-bhāva. 45 After a lengthy consideration, Rāmānuja defines the body as: "...Any substance which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purpose, and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation." 46

Applying the above statement to the God-world relationship he says: "In this sense, then, all sentient and non-sentient being together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by Him". 47

The purport of the above passage is that God or Brahman is the fundamental Reality and the souls (and material universe) are inseparably related to Him in an adjectival capacity. 48 God is the core, the paramount one and the totality of beings cannot exist apart from Him. This type of dependent relationship translated into the day to day life calls for an attitude of surrender and total trust in God.

The sēṣa-sēṣi relationship conceives God as the owner and the individual souls as the owned. It calls for an attitude of giving oneself up completely to the Lord and of leaving it to the Lord to mould the individual. It also exhorts the individual to subject himself to the Lord's will and to live in holy obedience to Him. Metaphysically, the sēṣa-sēṣi relationship can also be described as the whole-part relation in as much as the limitations of the individual self can be overcome only when it subordinates itself to the Supreme Being. 49

45. YAMUNACHARYA, p. 73. 46. Sbh. II. 1 : 9, p. 424.
47. Ibid. 48. Cf. RAGAVACHAR. p. 6.
49. Cf. YAMUNACHARYA, p. 83.
The prakāra-prakāri bhāva or the substance-modē relationship represents the Divine Spirit as the central unity, and souls (and matter) as its attributes.⁵⁰ Every substance (dravya) gets modified by its essential attributes. At the same time the attribute inheres in the substance. Therefore the attribute may be called mode or prakāra. The mode is in a very intimate way related to the substance sharing its substantiality. This inseparability is termed aprthaksiddha-Visēṣana.⁵¹ The individual soul is a mode of the Lord sharing its substantiality.⁵² This concept has important ethical implications. It calls for a God-centred activity, so that the God-substance in jīva may become manifest gradually so as to lead to mukti (liberation) ultimately.

Brahman is sometimes described as whole and the individual as part. This relationship is termed the part-whole or the amśamāy relationship. The word ‘part’ should not be understood as part of the extension of something, say of Brahman, in this case. If this were to be accepted it would mean that all the imperfections of the part (i.e. of the individual) would belong to Brahman. This is not so. Brahman is beyond imperfections.⁵³ The soul cannot also be considered as a part of Brahman. If we take ‘part’ to mean a ‘piece’ (kaṇṇa) for, Brahman does not admit of being divided into pieces. Again, being part does not mean that Brahman and the individual soul possess the same nature. The highest Self is not of the same nature as the individual soul. According to Rāmānuja the part-whole relationship may be explained as follows:

⁵⁰. RADHAKRISHNAN : Indian Philosophy, 2, 686.
⁵³. See supra. p. 105.
That the world and Brahman stand to each other in the relation of part and whole, the former being like the light and the latter like the luminous body, or the former being like the power and the latter like that in which the power inheres, or the former being like the body and the latter like the soul, thus Parāśara and other Śrīti writers declare, 'as the light of a fire which abides in one place only spreads all around, thus this whole world is the power (sakti) of the highest Brahman.  

As in other modes of relationship, the stress here is on the inseparable and close relationship between the Lord and the individual soul. The explanation of such an ontological reality in terms of the day to day metaphorical language makes this reality understandable and appealing to all. Moreover, this intimacy of the individual to the Lord was experienced by the devotees and expressed in the outpourings of their devotional hymns.

From the brief review of the four metaphysical concepts it would have become obvious that they provide a firm foundation for the ethical philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita. The spiritual life of the individual in his relationship with God and to his fellowmen is well-grounded metaphysically as well. The norms of spiritual life are not just dictated by pious rulings but they arise out of meaningful metaphysical principles. Further, the entire understanding of the God-individual concept of Rāmānuja points to a 'transforming power' possessed by God. This power makes attitudinal changes in the devotee possible. This type of characterisation of God must have been helpful in initiating 'cures' for some of the social ills that prevailed during Rāmānuja's time. An uplift of the masses had to be attempted and Rāmānuja realised that it could be done, not so much by

improving their material amenities, but by introducing attitudinal changes which would lead to selflessness and the recognition of the right and dignity of others.\textsuperscript{56} He did this admirably by providing society with a sound metaphysical basis on which a whole pattern of healthy social behaviour could be built.

\textsuperscript{56} M. SIVARAM: \textit{Ananda and the Three Great Accaryas} (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), p 95.
CHAPTER IV

Visistadvaita and the Theistic Philosophic Perspective

This chapter deals with the ethico-religious concepts of Visistadvaita. Attempt has been made here to indicate that this phase of the development in Hindu philosophy had the effect of bringing philosophy to the masses.

Ramanuja’s stand that Reality is qualified and anthropomorphically describable and his view that the God-individual relationship is to be understood in terms of the transcendental-immanent characteristic of the Brahman, gave rise to an ethical scheme which reinforced the personalistic and the theistic dimensions of religious thought. The ethical discipline (sadhana) thus designed had at least three ‘components’ - the doctrines of devotion (bhakti), surrender (prapatti) and grace (anugraha). All these three presupposed a person to person relationship between the individual and God.

The Open-for-all Pathway: Disregard for the individual which resulted from the economic condition, as explained in Chapter III, was only one aspect of a broader attitude covering all areas of life including religion. In the same way, conditions brought about by social stratification also had their impact on the development of religion and philosophy.
Ramanuja and other religious reformers of the day recognised the need for broadening the outlook of the people so that the individual could get his rightful status in society. As religious men, their endeavour was in the direction of helping the affected sections to participate in religion. Ramanuja realised that it could be done first by designing the ethico-spiritual scheme in such a way that it was made less demanding and more easy for the masses.

Differences between the Views of Ramanuja and Gaṅkara: In keeping with his metaphysical stand Gaṅkara had maintained that knowledge (jñāna) alone was the means of release, though it meant not mere intellectual knowledge but also experiencing non-quality. It is on account of ignorance that the self appears to be conditioned. When the conditioning factors are removed, the pure self shines forth just as the sun shines when the cloud is dispelled.

Gaṅkara distinguished this saving knowledge (jñāna) from ordinary empirical knowledge (vṛtti-jñāna). He also distinguished this from meditation or upāsana because the latter is person-dependent while knowledge, according to the Advaitin, is object-dependent. Again it is different from bhakti which implies a continuous flow of ideas related to the object of adoration. According to Gaṅkara, bhakti disciplines the mind and therefore is a preparation for jñāna, but cannot be identified with it.¹ As regards karma, Gaṅkara is emphatic that it cannot bring about release. According to him, karma can result in origination, attainment, purification and modification. Release is not any of these. Therefore karma is not a means to it. What is required for release is not karma or bhakti but jñāna.

Advaita in its pure form seems to be far beyond the grasp of the ordinary people. Its sādhana seeks to go beyond theism; hence it may sometimes sound anti-theistic.

¹. NAARASIMHACHARI, DEVASENAPATHI and BALA SUBRAMANIAN, p. 63.
Since the supreme Reality is absolutely unconditioned, it is supra-personal. Even though gaṅkara’s system of metaphysics was a masterpiece of logic, it lacked the warmth of a theistic system. Consequently, it also lacked the idea of a personal encounter of man with the Deity. To understand and to follow this discipline a high intellectual calibre is needed. The practical discipline prescribed by Advaita must have been beyond the grasp of the masses.

gaṅkara does take into consideration the need of the ordinary man by including within his system the adoration of God or īśvara who is Brahman conditioned by māyā. To gaṅkara Reality is one. On account of the diversity of intellects it is spoken of in many ways like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Agni, Sūrya, Candra, Indra and others. To him the conception of personal Deity is not the highest. Therefore devotion to īśvara is either an irrelevance or a concern of the average man. He advocated devotion to īśvara as a step towards Advaitic-realisation and not as worship of a personal and highest Reality. In gaṅkara’s discipline access to God was much conditioned by one’s capacity.

On the other hand, Rāmānuja provided a doctrine both deep and concrete. To him Reality was a Person with many qualities and the devotee was urged to respond to this Person in a personal way as many saints had done. This doctrine grew partly out of the personal experience of Rāmānuja and partly out of the religious heritage of his family. Even as a youth Rāmānuja was ready to put up with difficulties in defence of his conviction, that God was the highest Person to whom we owe respect and love.

Rāmānuja, at first was a student of Yādavaprakāśa, a renowned teacher of non-dualism. Yādava was a śuddhādvaitin of the type that would not acknowledge a God with a form. He believed in the imperishable Reality which is existence, consciousness, bliss, absolute, beyond

2. MAHADEVAN : Ten Saints of India, p. 100.
time, space and causation. Rāmānuja who was full of devotion and feeling of tenderness towards God, found himself in conflict with the teacher. He tried to suppress his disagreement for sometime. Finally, he had to make a choice between being true to his own convictions about God and being loyal to his preceptor. With much grief and yet with courage, he opted to be true to his own convictions formed through his personal reflections on scriptures and through his experience as a true devotee.

Two incidents clearly showed Rāmānuja’s convictions and later led to his break with Yādavaprakāśa. One was the occasion when Yādava commented on the passage ‘satyam, jñānam, anantam brahma’ found in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad; his interpretation of this passage was not appealing to Rāmānuja. The teacher challenged him to give a better explanation. Rāmānuja argued that the passage meant not that Brahman is satyam, jñānam and anantam, but that Brahman has these qualities. These attributes co-exist in Brahman without mutual contradiction, just as redness, softness and smell can co-exist in a flower. To Rāmānuja, the Vedic passage in question showed Brahman as the highest Person with numerous qualities.

The other was the interpretation of the text tasya yathā kapyasam-pudārikamevam akṣiṇi of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Yādava took the word ‘kapyasam’ to mean the hindpart of a monkey and interpreted the passage as ‘Brahman had his eyes like the posteriors of a monkey’. Rāmānuja was grieved that a noble Vedic passage should be interpreted in such an unbecoming and awkward manner. His biographer tells us that the grief was such that Rāmānuja shed tears. On being asked to give his own interpretation

3. RAMAKRISHNANANDA, p. 79.
6. YĀMUNACHARYA, p. 4.
Rāmānuja explained the word ‘kapyāsam’ as follows: ‘ka’ means water, ‘pibati’ signifies drinking, ‘kapi’ stands for that which drinks water that is, the ‘sun’, ‘a’ is to open, to blossom. Thus the word ‘Kapyāsam’ comes to mean ‘blossomed by the sun’. The import of the entire passage would be that ‘God has eyes like the lotus which blossoms before the morning sun’.7

Rāmānuja incurred the displeasure of his preceptor on account of these two incidents and eventually had to take leave of him. Rāmānuja, thus, had to pay heavily, but he kept true to his convictions. He believed that the Absolute Reality is the Highest Person, having the plenitude of good qualities which are familiar to us humans and that the Supreme Person should be thought of and spoken of, with love and respect.

The Way of Devotion (Bhakti) vis-a-vis the Way of Work (Karma) and the Way of Knowledge (Jñāna): The ethical scheme designed by Rāmānuja had a deeply personalistic nature. It was aimed at developing an integrated personality in the devotee because the three aspects on which the scheme was based, related to the three fundamental constituents of human nature,8 namely the cognitive, the conative and the affective. These are expressed through knowledge, action and devotion. Following any one of these paths to the exclusion of the other two is considered to be ineffective. In an integrated spiritual life all three aspects would be there in varying degrees. However, in accordance with the orientation one had, one could choose an appropriate predominant path. Rāmānuja’s suggestion was that the path of devotion (bhakti-mārga) could be accorded a place of prime importance without ignoring the efficacy of the path of action (karma-mārga) or the path of knowledge (jñāna-

7. RAMAKRISHNANANDA, p. 80.
mārga). The path proposed by Rāmānuja may be referred to succinctly as the one which begins with karma, leads to jñāna and culminates in bhakti.9

It is significant to note that the tradition of bhakti was recognised in the authoritative Sanskrit texts as well. The gāndhārya-Sūtram for instance, refers to the gradation of ‘steps’ on the pathway to God-realisation and illustrates varieties of attitudes and capacities. From this viewpoint all human beings-irrespective of the caste in which they are born-may be ‘eligible’ and ‘competent’ to follow the path of devotion. The only requirement was that they should have a passion for transformation and a sincere aspiration for release from the painful cycle of birth and death. In short, intense longing for and an exclusive concentration on God was the prime requisite for the path of devotion. gāndhārya, in his seventy-eighth gūtram says ‘(the province of higher devotion) extends even to the lowest born, from one to another, like the universal knowledge’.10 Thus bhakti was a well accepted path of God-seekers in the sanskritic and the Tamil traditions.11

Bhakti as envisaged in the Viśiṣṭādvaita system was not entirely emotional in content and extent. To Rāmānuja bhakti is knowledge which definitely fixes the mind on the Supreme Person; and this secures God’s love towards him. This is to be distinguished from purely verbal and conceptual knowledge. The cognitive element in bhakti as envisaged by Rāmānuja consists in an intellectual understanding of scripture. no doubt, but it rises far above the level of conceptual understanding, in as much as it leads the devotee on to striving after an ultimate experience. It represents a deliberate attempt at developing deep and exclusive concentration born out of intense love of God.

9. RAGAVACHAR, p. 57.
10. gāN. S., trans. NANDA LAL SINHA, sūtra 78, p. 61.
11. See supra., pp. 87-94.
The reference to knowledge as the liberating force found in the Upaniṣads is understood by Rāmānuja to signify the exercise of intelligence by way of perceptual, ever-growing and imaginatively vivid meditation on God with intense love.

Rāmānuja identifies jñāna with dhyāna or upāsana. In his śrībhāṣya while discussing the scriptures as the source of knowledge of Brahman he says:

What we have to understand by knowledge in this connection has been repeatedly explained, viz., a mental energy different in character from the mere cognition of the sense of texts, and more specifically denoted by such terms as dhyāna or upāsana i.e. meditation, which is of the nature of remembrance (i.e., representative thought), but in intuitive clearness it is not inferior to the clearest representative thought (pratyakṣa) which, by constant daily practice, becomes ever more perfect.\(^\text{12}\)

Upāsana in Rāmānuja’s scheme is an effective means of attaining Brahman. It is a steady remembrance, uninterrupted like the flow of oil. It is expected to lead the devotee to a firm recollection of the object of meditation. Though its vividness can in no way be compared to the clarity that characterises the actual perception of the Ultimate, it is highly superior to ordinary recollection.

Remembrance has the same character as seeing (intuition). The passage quoted by Rāmānuja in this connection seems to equate remembrance with seeing:

The knot of the heart is loosened,
All doubts are cut off,
And one’s (karmaṇa) cease
When He is seen - both the higher and the lower.\(^\text{13}\)

In the above passage, the phrase, ‘when He is seen’, teaches that meditation has the character of seeing or

\(^\text{12}\) Śbh., III. 4: 26, p. 699.
\(^\text{13}\) Muṇḍ 2. 2: 8, p. 373.
intuition'. The passage means that when a devotee continu-
uously remembers the Lord, when he has intuition of the
Lord (when he is seen), then the knot of the heart is
loosened, etc. Rāmānuja describes it as "memory resembling
direct knowledge".\(^{14}\) He says: "Steady remembrance of
this kind is designated by the word 'devotion' (bhakti) for
this term has the same meaning as upāsana (meditation)".\(^{15}\)

Bhakti in this sense is a loving meditation of God and
the maturation of it in point of magnitude and depth brings
about the saving illumination.\(^{16}\) How does one acquire it?
Rāmānuja clarifies:

Such meditation is originated in the mind through
the grace of the Supreme Person who is pleased and
conciliated by the different kinds of sacrifice and
worship duly performed by the devotee day after
day.\(^{17}\)

Rāmānuja stresses the importance of upāsana when he
says that only in this type of "meditation bearing the
character of devotion, that an Intuition of Brahman can
take place, not in any other state".\(^{18}\) The pre-eminent
place given to bhakti signifies that it is the ultimate means
of self-realisation.

The paths of karma and jñāna were considered by
Rāmānuja as auxiliaries. All the same, their importance
ought not to be belittled.

Karma-yoga is necessary in order to purify the mind.
Without a purified mind the real bhakti cannot be cultivated.
Karma-yoga is the path of disinterested action (i.e. action
performed without any concern for the outcome). Relying
on the teachings of the Gītā, Rāmānuja develops the theory
of karma-yoga in which he recommends the renunciation of

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\(^{14}\) Ṣbh , I. I. : I, p. 16. \(^{15}\) RAGAVACHAR, p. 56.
\(^{16}\) RAGAVACHAR, p. 56.
\(^{17}\) Ṣbh, III. 4 : 26, p. 699.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., III 2. 23, p. 617.
the fruits of action and consecration of action - ritualistic' religious and secular-in its totality to God. Renunciation of the fruits of action is understood not as mere disinterestedness but as dedication of them to God. The transmutation of karma into yoga would take place when a task is performed with the basic conviction that it is God's task and as such all fruits are to be consecrated to Him.

Karma-yoga purifies the mind and makes it fit to seek knowledge (jñāna) which, in the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition, is knowledge of one's true self rather than knowledge of Viṣṇu. It is the knowledge of self in relation to Viṣṇu; it is knowledge about the supremacy of God and the dependent nature of the individual that makes the latter yearn for the vision of the former. However, before the vision is had, one has necessarily to reflect about what one has heard about the glory of God and continuously concentrate on the supreme object of devotion. It is thus that the path of bhakti enables the individual to attain a completely transforming outlook.

Thus the purport of Rāmānuja's emphasis on karma-yoga and jñāna-yoga as preparatory to bhakti-yoga, seems to be that they together prepare the individual in developing an attitude of disinterestedness towards action done and also enables him to recognise the need for dedicating it to God. Such a continuous attempt at developing the attitude of non-attachment and the performance of God-centred service are necessary preliminaries for becoming God-intoxicated and getting over self-centredness altogether. Considered thus, the emphasis laid on bhakti is aimed at attaining a transformed outlook and bringing about attitudinal changes in the people.

Rāmānuja's Attempts at Religious Equality: Rāmānuja had discovered that the nature of Reality was such that it was possible for all human beings to reach it even cognitively, irrespective of their occupation, status and mental capacity. If the basic attitudinal changes like
surrender, detachment, etc., were attained—and this was possible for all-salvation would become a reality for all.

By his own life and work, Rāmānuja showed that the ethical principles of the system would accommodate the masses. He treated all devotees with love and respect. He believed that caste and station in life should not mar the relationship among the devotees. These social barriers ought to be disregarded in the case of spiritually advanced souls. There are several anecdotes showing that Rāmānuja gave precedence to living his convictions and he broke connection with his friends and relatives when they did not share the same views.19

The Āḻvārs had already set a precedent in overlooking caste barriers in religious circles. They belonged to different castes. Nammāḻvār was a vellala by birth. He was venerated by all sections and was made an ācārya of the sect. The inclusion of Āṇḍāl, the woman saint, is an evidence of the non-discrimination of sex. The lived experience of the Āḻvārs showed that when the spirit of God takes possession of one, one does not care much about the convictions of the world.20 Rāmānuja followed up this principle further.

A concrete example of his desire to let many people know the secrets of religion is found in his proclamation of the ‘Sacred Mantra’ from the top of the temple tower. The Mantra had been entrusted to him after earnest supplication. It was the Mantra of the Astākṣara Upaniṣad, the eight-lettered and three-worded Prārava Namas Nārāyaṇa. It is used in prayer by the seekers of God. Yamunāchārya’s account of the event is as follows:

The next day (after receiving the mantra) he climbed up the gopuram of the temple and invited all to assemble there. His heart flowed out to them

in all its fulness and determined him to reveal the precious truths which he had learnt from Gosthipūrṇa under secrecy. The news reached and roused the indignation of Gosthipūrṇa.\footnote{YAMUNĀCHĀRYA, p. 19ff.}

Rāmānuja was reprimanded and threatened with punishment for the violation of secrecy. Commenting on the imminent punishment and explaining the situation Rāmānuja said:

But, holy sire, may I submit that it is but, in as much as it brings salvation to many. Moreover all the merits of the wholesale salvation goes to you, because of your great self... It was compassion for mankind that rendered me blind to thy injunctions.\footnote{Ibid.}

To the untouchables Rāmānuja gave the name ‘Tirukkūlattar’, meaning people of high and noble descent. As seen from the numerous references in the inscriptions, regular teachings of religion and philosophy in the temples must have enabled ordinary folk to become acquainted with the religious tenets of Vaiṣṇavism.\footnote{See supra, pp. 87-94.} The chronicles record several incidents in which Rāmānuja showed a preferential love for his disciples who belonged to the lower castes. He was often found returning from his bath in the river, leaning on the shoulders of Dhanurdāsa, a śūdra. Before bath he usually took the support of Dāsarathi, a brahmin. A brahmin is considered unclean before bath and clean after it. Accordingly, Dāsarathi should have supported Rāmānuja after bath and Dhanurdāsa before. Rāmānuja reversed this order, it caused much consternation among his brahmin disciples. When Rāmānuja was asked for an explanation he said:

O Vaishnavas, have ye not heard that learning, riches and high-birth swell a fool with pride, but
adorn a wise man? This Malla is utterly destitute of this three fold vice, but ye are not. Hence he is fit enough to be touched by me, and to prep on.24

On hearing this the disciples made no protest. They certainly realised that even a śādra would stand high in their master’s estimation, provided he was a true devotee. On another occasion Rāmānuja heard that a vaiṣṇava devotee of a low caste lived away from the sacred town of grīraṅgam and that he used to sing the praises of Lord Viṣṇu with full-throated voice. His hut was on the way to river Cauvery. Rāmānuja on his way back from bath visited him in the hut and spent some time with him showing that a true devotee, even though of a low caste, was dear to him.25 Rāmānuja was opposed to excluding the śādras from temple worship. Though he did not fully succeed in this, the deities worshipped by them and rituals they observed gradually crept into the temple.26

The Way of Surrender: Its Place in Viśiṣṭādvaīta:

The society of Rāmānuja’s own day was not ready to follow these ideas which would have had tremendous effect on its uplift. There are a number of instances where Rāmānuja refrained from enforcing his radical but wholesome reforms on account of the opposition from the orthodox people. One such example was the introduction of Pācarāträgama type of worship. This is an eye-catching ceremony and would have increased participation of the ordinary people as they loved to see a personal God worshipped in a methodical way. Rāmānuja refrained from introducing it in some of the temples like Puri Jagannātha and Anantaśayanam since the authorities were in favour of keeping to their traditions.27

27. SIVARAM, p. 97. Also cf. THAPER, 1: p. 218.
It was good to have considered bhakti as the most effective instrument of transformation; it is commendable that the 'great goal' of man was made easily intelligible and accessible to many. However, the ethical idea from karma-yoga through jñāna-yoga to bhakti-yoga was still rooted in the gātras. This meant that those who were not qualified to study the gātras and who did not have the means of studying them, were still debarred from entering into the bhakti stream. Rāmānuja had to work within the limits of orthodoxy set by the Vedic authority. For this reason he suggested that Brahman could be gained in another way also.

Rāmānuja seems to have realised that the only way to throw open the gates of spiritual life to the underprivileged classes (who were not considered eligible for the study of the Vedas and for adopting the path of meditation) was to suggest a more easy path which set forth no rigorous preliminary qualifications of eligibility. It is from this point of view that we must understand prapatti or the unconditional surrender to God as a path to salvation. As M. Sivaram observes, psychologically and sociologically prapatti was an appropriate sentiment for the masses. Only a negligible minority could have had the aptitude for deep thinking and ability to become decision-making leaders; the vast majority would have been of the emotional type suited for the practice of self-surrender. They would look for protection when faced with anguishing difficulties in life. As such, a large number of people have a bent towards self-surrendering attitude.28

Some critics believe that Rāmānuja did not intend prapatti to be a direct means to mukti. To solve this doubt we have to decide as to which are the authentic works of Rāmānuja. The grivaśīva traditions ascribe to him nine works: the grībhāṣya, the Gitābhāṣya, the Vedānta-dīpa, the Vedānta-sāra, the Vedārtha-saṅgraha,
the Āraṇāgatigadya, the Ārāṅgagadāya, the Vaikunṭha-
gadāya and the Nityagrantha. Of these nine, the authorship of
the first five is not doubted; the authorship of the last
four is questioned by some. The objections raised are: the
 teachings of the Gadyas are different in spirit because they
hold prapatti as a direct means to mukti; the Gadyas
contain many new concepts which are absent in other works;
the Gadyas contain imagery description, etc. On the
other hand, Rāmānuja’s authorship of these works has not
been disproved, the grivaśāna tradition has not doubted it.
Besides, there is a continuity in the thought of Rāmānuja as
represented in all his works; they do not show any doctrinal
differences. Moreover, just because prapatti as a direct
means to mukti is found only in the Gadyas, it cannot be
concluded that prapatti is alien to Rāmānuja’s thought.29

Besides bhakti, Rāmānuja also admits prapatti as a
direct means to God-realisation. The three Gadyas - the
Āraṇāgatigadya, the Ārāṅgagadāya, and the Vaikunṭha-
gadāya - are the outpourings of his love for God. The
Āraṇāgatigadya is in the form of a dialogue between
Rāmānuja and ‘ārī’ (Lakṣmī) at the beginning and then a
dialogue between Rāmānuja and Nārāyaṇa. This hymn of self-
surrender is an outpouring of Rāmānuja’s heart to the
Supreme Person on the occasion of a temple-festival. In it
he describes his own self-surrender which is complete and
unconditional. He says: ananyāāraṇaṁastvat pādaravinda
yugalam āraṇ-am-aham-prapadye’. I seek thy protection
and surrender myself unto Thy Lotus feet’. 30

In the above passage Rāmānuja calls himself as ananya
āraṇa, that is, a helpless person who has committed an
ocean of sins. At the same time he sees God as one who
possesses all the virtues and qualities and therefore the

29. N. S. ANANTHARANGACHAR: The Philosophy of
Śādhana in Viśistādvaita (Mysore: University of
30. Āgadāya., trans. Sri Śrūtapракasika Ṭachārya, no. 12;
p. 31.
person in whom one can take refuge. Realising his own helplessness and the exalted position of God, Rāmānuja surrenders himself completely to the Lord. God on His part is very pleased with the act of surrender. The Gādya ends on a note of assurance:

May there be no doubt in this, on your part.

This assurance is further specified by the Lord when He says:

sarvapāpebhoyo mokṣayiṣyāmi ma sukah 31
(I shall save you from all sins. Don’t grieve)

A person might be enmeshed in ignorance, overpowered by hindrances and not endowed with the true knowledge of Reality. Yet he would be blessed with eternal service of God and the infinite bliss of divine communion by uttering Dvaya Mantra* and surrendering at the feet of the Lord.

In the light of Rāmānuja’s writings and teachings the doctrine of prapatti was further explained, consolidated and established on solid grounds, by the later teachers of Vaiṣṇavism. Ģrī Vedānta Deśika deserves a special mention in this respect. Deśika expounded prapatti in all its aspects, on the authority of the sacred scriptures like the Āgamas, the Purāṇas, the Divya Prabandham, etc. Today both the southern and northern schools of grīvāṃśavism recognise prapatti as a separate means of salvation 32

An analysis of the attitude and disposition necessary for prapatti shows that this path sets no difficult pre-requisite. Therefore, it is well within the reach of even those suffering from various types of wants and disabilities. Prapatti means utter self-surrender to God. As T. M. P. Mahadevan observes: “What one has to do is to resolve to follow the will of God, not to cross his purpose, to believe that he will

31. Ibid., 18, 49, 50.

*Words of the Dvaya Mantra are: ġrīman-nārāyanacarānan śaraṇam-prapadye, ġrīmate nārāyanāya namah.

32. ANANTHARANGACHAR, p. 196.
save and seek help from Him and Him alone and to yield up one’s spirit to Him. to be meek”.  

It is obvious that the suggestion of such a path had a wide appeal since it made everyone ‘eligible’ for it. Prapatti as absolute surrender may be considered as a sacrifice of the inner being done with a deep love for the Divine Being. Accordingly, the renunciation of the dharmas enjoined upon the seeker by the Gītā:

Renounce all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone,
I shall liberate you from all sins, grieve not.

This exhortation is understood to mean the renunciation of self-centredness. When this is done, a spontaneous yearning for attaining the supreme spiritual condition emerges. When an individual’s being is filled with such a consciousness, he realises that God alone is the goal to be attained. It may not be an exaggeration to suggest that at this stage the devotee is no longer undergoing a scheme of discipline (sādhana) but has become disciplined (siddha). The injunction for total surrender found in the Gītā cited above may then be considered, in an ultimate sense, but an ‘excuse’ for God allowing His grace to ‘flood’ the individual and help him attain spiritual perfection.

One may still think that such a path is something vague and indefinite. This is not so. The five factors distinguished in prapatti may be summed up as follows: first, the acquisition of qualities which will make one a fitting offering to God; second, the avoidance of conduct not acceptable to God; third, awareness of one’s own nothingness; fourth, trust in God; and fifth, prayer that God should be one’s Saviour. In terms of these factors the path of surrender is made concrete and easy to follow. This

33. MAHADEVAN: Ten Saints of India, p. 117.
transfer of the devotee's responsibility in total surrender is the essence of prapatti.\textsuperscript{35}

It should be reiterated that the path of prapatti is universally adoptable. A devotee who finds it difficult to take to the path of bhakti due to certain impediments, may use prapatti as a remedy. Prapatti may also be used by a person who has advanced considerably and who feels inadequate to complete it. In both these cases prapatti is called antagrapatti since it is subsumed under bhakti. The point to be noted here is that prapatti is adoptable by a person belonging to any caste or creed, and that no restrictions are imposed on him. When a person surrenders completely, he appropriates the siddhopāya itself. Where siddhopāya takes over, the sādhypāya or the human endeavour ceases. As far as prapatti is concerned sādhypāya is only an unconditional surrender.\textsuperscript{36}

**The Need for Grace:** In his attempt at making philosophy and religion meaningful to the common man, Rāmānuja emphasised the importance of Grace. It is important because it evidences that man's efforts towards God-realisation are reciprocated by the Deity. It establishes

\textsuperscript{35} V. K. RĀMĀNUJACHARI observes that the process of prapatti may be explained by means of an analogy. A person who has decided to deposit a valuable article with another will resolve to be loyal to him. He will have full confidence that the other has the capacity and the willingness to accept this deposit. He will also make a request to the other to receive his deposit explaining his own inability to take care of it. Finally, after having deposited, he feels relieved and fully at ease. In the same way after handing over one's salvation to God the prapanna is fully at ease.


\textsuperscript{36} Visistadvaita system of Rāmānuja conceived sādhana as a two-way process, consisting both of God's movement towards man and man's movement towards God. Man's effort towards God is called sādhypāya and God's effort to reach man is called siddhopāya.
a mutually loving relationship between God and the devotee. One of the scriptural bases for Rāmānuja’s doctrine of Grace is found in the Bhagavadgītā IX, 29:

I am the same to all beings,
To me there is non hateful, none dear
But those who worship Me with devotion
They are in Me and I also am in them.

Rāmānuja takes this passage as a clear indication of God’s reciprocation to his bhakta’s loving devotion. In interpreting this passage Rāmānuja brings out clearly the idea that God reciprocates the loving devotion of the soul by making a gift of Himself to the devotee. Rāmānuja believes that this passage refers to the spontaneous and irresistible Grace of God which demands from the devotee nothing but a complete surrender. The reciprocation also points to an intimate personal relationship in which the individual is made to realise that he is mode of the divine Person.

The doctrine of Grace is closely associated with Rāmānuja’s understanding of God as an eminently loving Person. According to him, the specific name of the Supreme Being is ‘āṭīmān Nārāyaṇa’. The Absolute Brahman is identified with the dual self of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa. This concept of Godhead consisting of the dual self of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa is the self-expression of the inner redemptive necessity that flows from the divine nature of Dayā.37 In the garaṇāgamātigadāya Rāmānuja substantiates considerably the role of Grace in salvation. Referring to Cārama-sloka (sixty sixty verse in the eighteenth chapter of the Gītā) in his garaṇāgamātigadāya, Rāmānuja says that it is the pledged word of God to man that he will be saved if he surrenders himself to God completely. On God’s part the principle of intercession and mediation is introduced in the form of ‘āṭī’, the spouse of the Lord. She is the very embodiment of divine Grace and mediates between the

37. ANANTARANGĀCHAR, p. 74.
contrite soul on the one hand, and the perfect Supreme Being on the other. She pleads with the Lord that His justice may be tempered with mercy. She is an important Guru in the line of teachers (Guruparamparā). This grī concept marks out the Rāmānuja school of Vaiṣṇavism from the other forms of Vaiṣṇavism; hence it is called grī Vaiṣṇavism.\(^{38}\)

Philosophically, grī is represented as the ġaktī of the Supreme Being. It is she who is responsible for creation, maintenance and absorption of the universe. Her presence preserves the purity and unchanged nature of the Supreme Being in relation to the changing universe. In one aspect of her self she is the material as well as the instrumental cause of the universe. But she is always subordinate to the Supreme Being. The exact nature of her relation to the transcendent One is not clear. Though she is personified as Lakṣmī, spouse of Viṣṇu, she is only an aspect of the Deity, not a distinct Person. She is said to be related to the Supreme Being as a quality to its subject, as sunshine to the sun. And yet in order to preserve the transcendent character of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī is regarded as a principle eternally distinct from the Deity.\(^{39}\)

Rāmānuja's interpretation of Grace has been drawn partly from the scriptures and partly from the mystical experiences of the Āḻvārs. The latter as we have already seen in the preceding pages,\(^{40}\) spoke touchingly of divine Grace as instrumental in redeeming even the meanest and most unworthy. Rāmānuja's choicest Upaniṣadic passage in connection with God's saving Grace is as follows:

This Soul (Ātman is not to be obtained by instruction, nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by the one whom he chooses, to

\(^{38}\) YAMUNACHARYA, p. 129.
\(^{39}\) KUMARAPPA, p. 103. \(^{40}\) See Supra pp. 60-64.
such a one that Soul (Atman) reveals his own person (tanum svam)\textsuperscript{41}

The first part of this text states that mere learning, reflection and meditation are not enough to gain the Self. Then it says that the Self is gained by those whom the Self chooses. A chosen one means a person dear to Self and to whom the Self is dear.\textsuperscript{42} It is in such mutually loving relationship that Bhagavan (the Lord) reveals Himself, makes a gift of Himself.

Ramanuja sees Grace as a necessary and a reciprocatory factor. It is a necessary factor, because without God's Grace one cannot be saved and it is a reciprocatory factor since Grace works in response to the yearnings of the spiritual aspirant. In stressing these two aspects Ramanuja was able to highlight the qualities of God on the one hand and the need of man's unconditional surrender on the other. God's initiative and man's effort figure prominently in the process of salvation. If God's initiative alone were enough for salvation, then in view of His infinite power and compassion, there would have been no bondage at all. If Grace were to be considered a 'fulfilling factor' it should be complemented with man's effort.\textsuperscript{43}

What type of co-operation is required on the part of the individual for the operation of Grace? In other words, what are the conditions under which the saving Grace of God becomes effective in a person? The answer to this is derivable from the implications of Ramanuja's idea of God. According to him God is not only loving and compassionate and the seat of all good qualities, but He is also free from all evil qualities. Hence, he recommends that the soul who aspires for attaining God must also be free from all evil. From the conditions which Ramanuja lays down for Grace to

\textsuperscript{41} Ka. Up, 2 23, p. 350.
\textsuperscript{42} Cf. Sbh. I. 1 : 1, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{43} RAGHAVACHAR, p. 54.
be effective, it is understandable that in his theory the individuality of the soul is preserved even when liberation is attained. The operation of Grace signifies, thus, that the Lord does not compromise with evil, and that there is no loss of individuality for the devotees.

With the help of a parable Rāmānuja explains the various factors involved in the operation of Grace. A young prince who was intent on some boyish play left his father’s palace, lost his way and wandered around. The king thought that the son was lost. Fortunately, a good brahmin brought him up in a manner that was befitting to a prince. After the boy had reached sixteen years of age, some trustworthy person told him that he was the son of a great king and that his father was longing to see him. The king also came to know the whereabouts of the son and rejoiced that his son was accomplished in every way. The father took steps to recover the son and the two were reunited.44

The above parable points out two important factors. One, the boy had reached a certain maturity under the care of the brahmin before he developed a longing to be united with his father. In the context of release this would mean that the devotee has to prepare himself for release. This preparation would include, among other things, the attainment of maturity (freedom from evil qualities) for receiving instructions on the Vedas in a recognised, orthodox manner.45 Secondly, it also indicates that even

44. Sbh. l. i : 4, p. 199.
45. It must be said that in the final analysis in the grihya, Rāmānuja does take the stand that Vedic instructions are necessary preparations for release, that some are not eligible for it and also that Grace is not arbitrary. This position should be interpreted as an evidence of the limitations of orthodoxy, under which he had to work. But it was not his conviction that salvation was open only to the first three castes. This view is further strengthened by the interpretation he gives to the Gītā, IX. 29 ff.
after the son has prepared himself in the above mentioned manner, the 'final step' had to be taken by the king. This would imply that release is a gift of God, and that Grace is required for attaining spiritual perfection.

Although, the reference to the need for receiving Vedic instruction seems to be the strong stand in the grībhāṣya, the influence of the Ṛg-vārs over him seems to have led Rāmānuja in his Gitābhāṣya to assert that the Deity requires nothing from the soul except complete surrender and whole-hearted devotion. This was in keeping with some of the revolutionary steps he proposed for bringing religion and philosophy to the level of the common man. His association with the tradition of the Ṛg-vārs must have provided him with the necessary inspiration, for, as we have already seen, some of the Ṛg-vārs spoke of the gracious gesture of God who stooped to save them in spite of their lowliness. Accordingly, Rāmānuja interprets an important verse from the Gitā as follows:

In relation to all beings who exist as gods, animals, men and immovable things, and who remain differentiated as extremely high or low with reference to genus, essential nature and knowledge, I remain the same in respect of being one with whom they may seek protection... those who worship Me, having My worship as their sole objective... whether they are high or low, according to birth etc., they remain with Me at ease as if they were of qualities equal to Mine.

And again,

Women, Vaiśyas and śūdras, even those who are of sinful birth, reach the supreme goal, finding refuge in Me.

The positions taken by Rāmānuja in the Ārāmābhāsyā and the Gītābhāsyā offered scope for divergent interpretations of his theory. This, indeed, led to a controversy in the Vaiṣṇava fold later.  

The point that, according to Rāmānuja, grace does not destroy the individuality of the soul, deserves to be reiterated. Self-surrender on the part of the soul and God's reciprocation in extending His grace, no doubt lead to release or mokṣa, but even in the released state, the surrendered souls retain their individuality. They do not become merged into God.

Each soul that has reached its perfection is visualised as an ‘adjective’ to the Absolute. The souls have immense power to know and this power reaches its maximum in knowing Brahman as infinitely Real.

During the life-time of Rāmānuja itself, the ethical and religious aspects of the Viṣistadvaita system were spreading among the people and widening the circle of believers. The inscriptive evidences attest to its popularity as expressed

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50 The ambiguity of Rāmānuja's teachings on this point gave rise to a bitter controversy within the Vaiṣṇava fold and led to the formation of the Teṅgālai (southern) and Vadamalai (northern) schools. The southern school holds that no continued human effort is needed for the release of souls. The soul surrenders itself wholly and it is seized by one supreme act of God. Since the southern school takes the stand that the soul has only to submit passively to God and employs the analogy of the kitten, which remains passive while being carried to safety by its mother, this theory has been called 'the cat theory' (mārjāra-nyāya). The northern school on the other hand holds that an element of human effort is always involved in salvation, even after resorting to prapattī. Since it advocates that the soul cannot remain passive but has its own role to play in the matter of salvation, just as a young monkey is to exert and stick to its mother for safety, this school is said to uphold the 'monkey theory' (markaṭa-nyāya).

51. RAGAVACHAR, p. 49.
through worship and discourses.\textsuperscript{52} The sect was also spreading through the missionary endeavours of Rāmānuja. After listening to the teachings day after day the disciples themselves began to appeal to Rāmānuja to undertake missionary journeys. They said:

Holy master, your system is now perfect and it must be made known to the world at large. Let the true way you have discovered to us, be made accessible to all. Pray then undertake a true mission.\textsuperscript{53}

Rāmānuja secured a number of devoted and loyal members for his sect. Most important of these were Kureśa and Dāsarathī, the former was from a rich family. Under the inspiration of Rāmānuja he gave up his riches and took to a life of austerity as his disciple. Dāsarathī was his sister's son, the only relative whom he retained. Govinda was another of his disciples, a convert from āśrama. During his visits to all important places of pilgrimage he entered into discussions and debates making use of these occasions to spread the Viśistadvaita doctrine. His stay in the Hoysāla region was of special importance from the missionary point of view. The Köyiloḷuḍu tells us that Rāmānuja converted the Hoysāla king who was a Jain and the latter accepted Rāmānuja as his guru\textsuperscript{54}. There is no inscriptive evidence about the conversion of the Hoysāla king inūvārdhana, but his stay in Mysore and his reorganisation of the temple are attested to by the inscrip-

\textsuperscript{52} See Supra, pp. 24-30. \textsuperscript{53} YAMUNĀCHĀRYA, p. 31. \textsuperscript{54} According to the Vaiśṇava tradition Rāmānuja took refuge from the Cōla persecution in the Hoysāla country. He is said to have lived there for twelve years and returned to grāmam after the death of Kṛmikāntha the persecuting king. It is probable that the orthodox Vaiśṇava tradition exaggerated the Cōla persecution. The Cēla-monarchs of the period were, as a rule, tolerant and they extended their patronage to the āśrama and the Vaiśṇavite shrines. Therefore persecution conducted by Kṛmikānta is an isolated incident. Köl, p. 108 ff.
tions. Again, according to the Köyiloğugu, on his return from Hoysala country to grīraṅgam, Rāmānuja stopped at Tirumalai where he installed the image of Tillai Govindarāja at the foot of Tirumalai. He enlisted some of the Tillai Māvāyiravar (3000 devotees of Tillai) as his diśyas and assigned some temple services to them. It is highly disputed whether the installation of the image of Govindarāja took place on his way back from Mysore to grīraṅgam or on some other occasion. Rāmānuja returned from Mysore in 1123 A.D. The installation of Govindarāja is generally assigned to 1135 A.D. Besides, the Vaiṣṇava tradition makes reference to three visits of Rāmānuja to Tirumalai. In all probability the installation of the image must have taken place during one of the later visits of Rāmānuja and not during his return from Mysore as reported in the Köyiloğugn.55

In conclusion it may be said that Rāmānuja interpreted philosophical Vedic sources to make it meaningful to the people around him. A worthy cause that pre-occupied his attention was enabling the lower sections of the society also to participate in the religious and philosophical aspects of life. Rāmānuja thought this would be possible provided the heritage was understood in its pristine purity. It was for this reason that he endeavoured to interpret the ancient classics and impress upon the people that they could also participate in the highest form of religion and derive benefits from their philosophical heritage.

55. Köl., pp. 110 and 111.
CHAPTER V

Saiva-Siddhanta and the Concept of the Transcendent-Immanent Siva

IN āiva-Siddhānta we see another illustration of the theistic trend of the age. Like Viśiṣṭādvaita, āiva-Siddhānta was not merely a devotional school, it was also a tradition in which philosophy provided popular religious views with deep insights into human life. This was made possible by synthesising the devotional with the metaphysical approaches of life. Attempt here was on the one hand to emphasise philosophy, and on the other hand to make it more comprehensive to the ordinary people.

Chronologically, the Tiruvuntiyār of Uyyavanta Tevar and the Tirukkāḻṟupādīyar of Tirukkaṭavur Uyyavanta Teva Nayar were the first among the theological treatises of āiva-Siddhānta. However, the credit for visualising the possibility of developing a synthetic system within the āiva fold goes to Meykaṇḍadeva (also Meykaṇḍa, Meykaṇḍar), the first acārya of the system. His ġivajñāna-bodham was the first systematic exposition of the system.

Meykaṇḍadevar belonged to the early part of the thirteenth century. In forty lines of closely framed Tamil poetry Meykaṇḍar gives the essence of the Siddhānta
philosophy. It is a synthesis of the ideas contained in the four Vedas and the twenty-eight gaivāgamas. The next preceptor, Arunandi-givalcārya, who was once the family preceptor of Meykaṇḍār and subsequently his disciple, continued the work of the latter. He wrote the magnificent commentary, givajāna Siddhiyar, on his master's work, givajāna-bodham. The next two teachers were Marajāna-sambandhar and Umāpati givalcārya. These four teachers were together referred to as the Santānakkuṭavar (teachers by right of succession). What follows is a discussion of some of the main themes of gaiva Siddhānta traditions, with special focus on the teachings of the last two teachers who lived within the period of this study.

Metaphysical Philosophy: the Unique Feature of gaiva Siddhānta: Though ultimately the theistic trend on the gaiva side could also be attributed to historical circumstances referred to earlier in connection with the evolution of Vaishnavism, the conditions which gave rise to the religious philosophy of southern gaivism were somewhat different. In the case of gaiva-Siddhānta it was a challenge from the gaivaita fold itself that led to the theistic trend.

The challenging situation that the Siddhāntins faced was given rise to by the siddha movement. According to tradition, the siddhas were eighteen in number. Hardly any authentic historical works are available either about their lives or about their writings. Authorities differ in the dates that they assign to them. Therefore, the identification of the different siddhas and the centuries to which they belonged become extremely difficult. However, there are certain characteristics which marked off the siddhas as a distinct group that challenged the existing traditions and beliefs. The eighteen siddhas consisting mainly of people from south India are referred to as Mahāśvara siddhas of the siddha-mārga. The four Saivite saints-Mañikkavačagar, Appar, Jañanasambandar and Sundarar-as well as the othe
saints like Auvai, Tirumūlar, Aruṇagiri, Bhadragiriyār, ġivavākkiyar and others, belong to this group.¹

The siddhas accepted God as the creator, the protector and the destroyer of the universe. However, they did not subscribe to any sectarian beliefs. One noteworthy fact is that while all bhaktas have not been siddhas, all siddhas have been bhaktas, though of an unconventional type. The differences between the bhakti saints and siddhas are not to be found in regard to the fundamentals of theology but in regard to their emphasis, the methods of approach to God and the forms in which devotion to God should manifest itself. It is said that the siddha movement rose as a revolt against excessive ritualism and conventionalism in Brahmanism. It professed to preserve the indigenous religious tradition. Probably, that was why the siddhas were popular and were revered by the people even though the methods they advocated were impractical for the man-in-the-street, and the literature they produced remained ambiguous and mysterious to ordinary men. The mystical experiences of the siddhas provided a basis for the religious philosophy of ṣaivism to some extent. However, references to some of the mystical ‘experiences’ proved detrimental to religion and were also seen to go counter to the speculative meta-physics that provided depth to popular beliefs.

In so far as we can associate the siddhas with the period of our study, they were unsympathetic towards popular religious practices like temple worship, ritualism and the reading of the Vedas. Their aversion towards the Vedic lore becomes more understandable when we take note of the religious and social context in which the siddha movement developed. This movement gained some prominence a few centuries before the Christian era when

the culture of the North began to infiltrate into the South and was gradually beginning to shape the milieu. Isolated brahmin colonies were established in different parts of the South with the support of kings and nobles. These centres of brahminical thought and religion also brought with them the strict caste system and a body of ritualistic observances which were till then unfamiliar to the South. Even though the indigenous civilisation existed side by side, Brahminism was becoming a strong force after having successfully withstood the challenge from Jainism. Thus some of the aspects of Brahminism such as the caste system and the ritualistic worship became the target of attack by the siddhas.

The pronouncement of siddhas that the self-realisation must be gained from within (through self-analysis and meditation) was not easily understood by the common man. They did not consider religious institutions, festivals or rituals and conformity of any kind important. They advocated a complete renunciation of life and a full-time contemplation and devotion to God through Yoga. They believed that it would elevate a person to a condition of ineffable bliss. It would also call forth the occult psychic powers. This type of mysticism which they advocated was unaffected by any intellectual or social urge and, as such, it did not appeal to the masses. Ordinary people were in need of a religion in which ceremonial worship, thanksgiving, and petition formed an integral part. A certain amount of ritualism is, perhaps, necessary for religion and this might have been one reason for the 'siddha thought' becoming unpopular. Even though the 'siddha view' provided an idealistic inspiration for some, the majority of people were

2. See Supra, pp. 15-16.
4. The siddhas contributed much to Tamil culture. They were emphatic in denouncing the caste system. They
not able to find religious fulfilment in this approach to religion.

As a combination of matter and spirit, man needs a judicious use of the external and the internal ‘aids’ to attain Godhead. In the case of the ordinary folk the externals such as rituals and reading of scriptures may have a greater role than internal aids of concentration and meditation. This is where the siddhas failed to help the common folk. Further, the repudiation of the Vedas and other ancient traditions made the siddha movement incompatible with the siddha view which aimed at giving a meaningful rendering of the Tamil heritage within the pan-Indian context.

In ḍīvavaṭkiyar⁵ we have an outstanding example of the repudiation of popular practices. He was deeply religious and valued very much the ḍīva enshrined in the heart. However, he was generally iconoclastic. He had scant respect for rituals which, according to him, had become a substitute for love and service to God, and to fellow beings.⁶ The following revolutionary verse of his writings denounces idol worship in strong language.

\[
\text{இன்று கைமத் ஒல்லையுள் தலை சாதியும்}
\text{செட் எரிய எந்தவையும் சந்தை மீது வந்து}
\]

made substantial contributions to the fields of medicine and alchemy. The Tirumandiram of Tirumular has been included in the ḍaivie canon.

5. The date of ḍīvavaṭkiyar is uncertain. A. V. Subramania Iyer assigns him to the early medieval period. p. 62. M. Arunachalam is of the opinion that there were two persons by the name of ḍīvavaṭkiyar, one lived before the tenth century A.D., and the other towards the end of the fourteenth century A.D. The reference here is to the earlier one. M. Arunachalam. Tamizh Ilakkiya Varalaru, Padināngam Nurrāndu (Tiruchitrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1969), pp. 347. 348. Though ḍīvavaṭkiyar does not come strictly within the period of this thesis, he has been included in our study because his spirit is typical of the siddha movement.

The above passage may be translated as follows:

Why do people decorate a stone with flowers and go around it chanting mantras? When God is inside, will the stone speak? Just as the earthenware pot and the ladle which are used for cooking will not know the taste of food that is cooked.

Some of the beliefs and practices of the siddhas were enigmatic to the ordinary man. It was their belief that death be either put off or might be finally overcome by dematerialising and spiritualising the body according to a certain process. By following the prescribed yogic practices it was believed that the body disappeared in due time in a celestial form from the world of sense and found its permanent abode in the transcendental glory of God. In this type of teaching the ordinary folk parted company with the siddhas. Some of them assumed the names of the great men of antiquity like Agastyar, Kapilar and Tiruvalluvar and claimed extraordinary powers. On the supernatural powers of the siddhas one of them writes the following:

8. Trans. mine. 9. BHATTACHARYYA, ed. p. 300.
In the above passage the siddhas boast that they will lift the eight mountains and throw them like balls, they will drink up the waters of the seven seas, even the rough sands will be made smooth by their hands, they will bend the sky like bow, etc. Claiming unreasonable powers like the above would have created awe in the minds of the people.

An additional difficulty in understanding the siddha-view was due to the ambiguous language they used. It was characterised by brevity that was sometimes elliptic and also terse. They made use of symbolism that was enigmatic, if not totally obscure. Depth of thought and power of expression were typical of their poetry. Just the same due to the lack of a 'song-quality' it failed to make the emotional appeal of the great hymnal poets like the Nāyanmārs.

Further, the siddhas put up a formidable front against metaphysical speculations. The siddhas visualised a deity which was attributeless and without limitations and entitled 'śivan'. The term 'gīva' was used in a broad sense to mean virtues like 'perfection' and 'purity'. Even though the siddhas believed in abstractions like perfection, they were averse to metaphysical discussions on the account that they were not conducive to peaceful living.

It looked as if the metaphysical speculations of the ancient sages would be totally discarded. It must have caused anxiety to the religious leaders of the time that popular religion, as well as metaphysical speculations, were experiencing a challenge from within the gāiva fold. The siddhas posed a threat to the various forms and institutions in which religion was sought to be embodied in society, e.g., temple worship, priestly mediation, etc.

Hence, the ācāryae from the tenth century onwards tried to preserve, practise and propagate again the Saivite devotional tradition which once reigned supreme in the Tamil country. This indicates a tendency that the gāivite tradition shared with the Vaiṣṇavite. As far as gāivism was
concerned it meant a revival, a re-inter-pretation and a re-enforcement of the devotional ideas or the early āyivite tradition. The āyivite devotional tradition refers to a long line of bhaktas called the Nāyamars. They are considered to be sixty-three in number. Among them we find Appar, Jānasambandhar, Sundarar and Mannikkavācagar. Some of the other important āyivite saints are Tirumālar, Nakkarar and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār. The devotional works of the saints have been compiled by Nambi-Āndār Nambi into twelve Tirumurais. The importance of this collection in the āyivite Siddhānta tradition is seen from the fact that they are sometimes referred to as the Tamil Vedas.

The earlier Dravidian sources of theism are to be found in the Tolkāppiyam and the Saṅgam Literature. In the Tolkāppiyam God is referred to as Īraivan (he who resides in all beings), kāḻavul (he who transcends all things) kāntāḷi (that which exists without support), etc. The āyivāgamas are another important category of sources. The earliest āgama has been dated to the seventh century B.C. The sanskritic source in the development of the idea of Rudra-gīva as a god is to be found in the Īvetāsvatāra Upaniṣad. The following is one of the references to Rudra-gīva:

He who is the source and origin of the gods
The ruler of all, Rudra (the terrible) the great seer,
We beheld the Golden Germs (Hir anyagarbha when he was born,
May He endow us with clear intellect.\[11\]

Thus in formulating the religious philosophy of āyivite Siddhānta the teachers were attempting to revitalise the ancient tradition so that it would adequately meet the challenges of the day. They also tried to provide a philosophical basis for the devotional cult by relying on reason and drawing inspiration from classical scriptures. The metaphysical aspects of philosophising were not purged

out totally, but they were made more meaningful to the masses by introducing theistic elements into them.

The efforts of the gaiva-Siddhānta philosophers were to pierce through the mystical elements of the siddha thought on the one hand, and on the other, to affirm the need for metaphysical speculation. This resulted in a peculiar blending of the 'philosophical' and the 'popular' elements of religion. This was, perhaps, the way the gaiva-Siddhānta teachers tried to convey the meaning of the classical tradition to the masses. They inspired the masses by holding in awe some concepts of religion and made the difficult ideas acceptable by introducing categories which were simple, easy and concrete.

The Personalistic Perspective: While care was taken to prove the existence of God, the personalistic aspect of the deity was taken for granted in the gaiva-Siddhānta tradition, unlike in the Viṣistadvaita tradition. Such a tacit acceptance could be attributed to the fact that after the emergence of the system of theistic Vedānta, the anthropomorphic approach became part and parcel of all theistic formulations. It was, perhaps, also due to the influence of the Nāyanmārs for whom God's person was as real as their own.

Stotras (Devotional Hymns) as Preparatory to the Śāstras (Philosophical Treatises): The stotras (devotional hymns) of the saints prepared the ground for the śāstras (philosophical treatises) of the gaiva-Siddhānta. The philosophers who systematised the gaiva-Siddhānta philosophy declare their indebtedness to the saints and seers. Meykandadevar in his opening verse of āravajnaṇa-bodham says that his doctrine is based on the authority of the seers. Since exposition is considered to have been preceded by experience, gaiva-Siddhānta accepted the

authority of experience as expressed in the devotional hymns. These hymns show that the supreme Lord īśvara is a personal deity. The writings of the saints abound in their own experiences of the Lord. In her poems saint Kāraikkāl Ammaiyyār calls God ‘entai’ (my father). Her personal dedication to God and her concrete way of expressing love for īśvara is seen in the following verse:

Bowing, offering flowers at the Feet of the Lord
With matted hair and praising Him, loving always my
Father with total dedication, this is what makes his
devotees’ pride.¹⁴

Similarly the other saints also addressed God in familiar terms, fondly calling him father, mother, teacher, loving uncle and aunt, fair lady, rich treasure, family, relative, etc.

Taking his cue from the saints and seers, Arunāndi in the invocatory verse of īśvajāna Siddhiyar pays a glowing tribute to īśvara as the Supreme God, and infuses the devotees’ minds with confidence in the powers of the Lord.

Let me place on my head, the Feet of īśvara who stands as the goal of each of the six forms of Religion, who stands in the special forms conceived by the various internal schools of īśvara Religion, and yet stands beyond all conception as set forth in the Vedas and Āgamas..., and fills all intelligence with His love, and becomes my Heavenly Father and Mother and fills inseparably one and all.¹⁵


15. SS, trans. J. M. NALLASAMI PILLAI: Supakkan, invocatory verse 2, p. 114,
A comparison of the extracts from the devotional hymns with the extract from āgivajñāna-Siddhṇayār given above would show that the devotional hymns highlight the personalistic nature of God and the devotee’s relationship to Him, while āgivajñāna Siddhiyar adds a metaphysical dimension to this by pointing to the transcendent nature of God. āgiva is still the personal God of the devotees, but it is admitted that His nature was beyond all conceptualisation. However, this transcendent nature was also visualised as being capable of inspiring awe and adoration. Thus the concept of God in āgiva-Siddhānta is characterised by the personalistic approach without divesting it of the metaphysical dimensions. The harmonious blend of the metaphysical and popular religious dimensions constituted two equally necessary components of the āgiva-Siddhānta system.

āgiva as the Supreme God: God in āgiva-Siddhānta, as in other theistic systems, is the central Reality around which all entities revolve. Reference to Him as Pati or Lord is appropriate in this context because this designation marks Him off as the Lord of souls (Paṣu) and their Bonds (pāṣa). He is the independent Substance on Whom all other substances depend.

The conception of God as the only efficient cause of the world is an emphatic feature of āgiva-Siddhānta. The material cause is māya (illusion), and even on māya God does not act directly, but through his āgakṣti (power) which is the instrumental cause. In establishing this truth the Siddhānta, like all other theistic systems, depends on reason as well as on scripture. Thus the very first śūtra of āgivajñāna-bodham contains the cosmological argument:

Because the world, consisting of things, male, female and neuter, is subject to the three operations (production, maintenance and dissolution), it is an entity produced (by an agent). Having dissolved, it
comes into being again because of impurity. The end is the beginning, say the wise.\textsuperscript{16}

The significance of this argument in the words of A. S. Narayana Pillai is as follows: “It shows that this world calls out for its explanation and this explanation lies in an infinite, unlimited, final ground and that this is logically inescapable.”\textsuperscript{17}

Meykandadevar seeks to establish that the existence of God cannot be ignored because this complex world shows regularity and order. It comes into being (srîsti), stays for sometime (sthitî) and disappears (sahâra). Since the universe is subjected to regulated changes, it must be a product and not self-existent entity. Its producer cannot be a finite being or anything inert. It needs to be an infinite, omniscient and omnipotent Being, that is, God. And that is īśvara or Hara.\textsuperscript{18}

Supremacy of īśvara is one of the cardinal doctrines of īśava-Siddhānta. From the theistic point of view it might be argued that supremacy and power inspire confidence and trust in the devotee. All worship is directed towards īśvara precisely because of His pre-eminent position. He is considered the master of the universe, the Lord of Life and Death; everything happens under His direction. īśvara’s

\textsuperscript{16} Sb., trans. GORDON MATHEW S, I, p. 7.


\textsuperscript{18} T. M. P. MAHADEVAN : The Idea of God in īśava-Siddhānta (Annamalainagar, Annamalai University, 1955), pp. 11, 12.

The Siddhāntin’s uncompromising belief in monotheism led him to postulate that there is only one īśakti and one God. This one īśakti gets subdivided into various functions such as the creative, preservative and the redemptive. These various īśaktis perform the functions proper to them under the direction of the Supreme Lord, īśava,
supremacy is explained as consisting in his being above all the tattvas (entities) to which the minor gods are subjected. The Siddhântin holds that all the powers of all the minor gods are ultimately derived from Gîva, the Supreme. He is Supreme among the gods because they execute His will. Even the creation of the world by Brahma and the preservation of it by Viṣṇu are due to the power given to them by Gîva.19

Continuous and persistent references to the supremacy of God over the three malas (impurities) of ahaâva, mâyâ and karma, perhaps, have the effect of inspiring faith in the devotees towards God as their Saviour. It is obvious that Gîva is unaffected by the ‘impurities’. Mâyâ and karma are the ‘tools’ with which he works for the release of the souls from bondage.20 Though ahaâva is not considered a tool, it remains subject to his control. The Lord can affect it. Such a supremacy attributed to Gîva generates complete trust in the mind of his devotees. For such believers, nothing else than Gîva seems to deserve any consideration. They believe that once the Grace of the Supreme Lord is received no harm could be done to them. Such thoughts must have produced a soothing effect on the devotees.

Omnipotence is explained also as consisting of a peculiar blend of qualities normally considered to be opposites. The Vedas depict Gîva as incorporating within Himself destructive and fearful forces of nature such as storms of thunder and lightning. He was worshipped so that He may be tempered and propitiated and made to become benevolent. Such a picturisation of Gîva as a repository of opposite virtues is to be understood as signifying that God. Who has at heart the ultimate good of the devotees, uses both reward and punishment to educate them in spiritual ways. Viewed in this light the sufferings

20. Ibid., p. 77.
inflicted by God and the punishments imposed are meant for reformation and redemption. In this connection the two expressions found in the Tamil texts may be taken note of, arakkarunai and marakkarunai. They refer to the tender and tough aspects or God’s Grace. It is of topical relevance to note that, of the various names by which the Supreme Being is known in āivism, ‘Rudra, Sarva, Ugra’ (Bhima) and Aśāni are suggestive of the terrific aspects, whereas others such as ‘Bhava’, ‘Paśupati’, ‘Mahādeva’ and ‘Īśāna’, stand for milder aspects. In addition to these a mysterious aspect of āiva is also visualised because in a certain sense He is beyond all. He is mysterium tremendum et fascinans (tremendous and fascinating mystery) 21

To the Pūrva-Mimāmsakas who equate ‘time’ with God the Siddhāntins reply is that ‘time’ in itself is inert and non-intelligent. ‘Time’ produces change only because God as the efficient cause actuates ‘time’ which is the instrumental cause 22 A similar reply is addressed to the Naiyāyikas 23 and the Sāṅkhyaṇs. The Naiyāyikas believe that the primal atoms are responsible for the origination and sustenance of the universe. If they are destroyed, the universe which is the result of their aggregation is also destroyed. The Sāṅkhyaṇs attribute creation to the interaction between prakṛti and puruṣa. They believe that no prime mover is needed to bring about this interaction. Similarly there is no need of any agent to guide the souls to release which takes place automatically by the effort that the souls make in the process of attaining discriminatory knowledge. 24 However, the Siddhāntins accept neither time nor atoms nor prakṛti and puruṣa as the cause of the universe. They say that ‘time’, ‘atoms’, etc., are inert. They cannot by their joint

23. DEVASENAPATHI: āiva-Siddhānta, p. 80.
24. PARANJOTI, p. 121.
activity bring about creation etc., without an intelligent agent. The Siddhāntins maintain that māyā which is eternal and is filled with the presence of the divine energy is the first cause of the universe. Even māyā by itself cannot account for the world and its changes. God is necessary. Māyā cannot be the ultimate cause, because māyā as the cause of the inert universe, is not itself conscious. It is God Who causes māya to evolve into the world, body, etc. Therefore, God (Pati) is the creator of the Universe.

The Māyāvādī as a monist admits only one Reality. His position that the world and souls arise from Brahman and that jīva is not other than Brahman takes away from Brahman His supremacy. The essential point of difference between the gaiva-Siddhāntin and the Māyāvādī is with regard to the handling of the concept of māyā. The Siddhāntin, unlike the Māyāvādī believes māyā to be something external and dependent on God. In this way, he is able to avoid the difficulty of making the Absolute suffer limitations by the presence of the inherent māyā.

The Pāñcarātrin’s theory of parināma is also rejected because it accepts the transformation of God into the universe, in effect denying supremacy to the Lord by putting a slur on his immutability. It is the Siddhāntin’s endeavour to show that only God can produce the universe and that in the process of creation, God remains supreme and unaffected. The elements like kāla (time) anu (atom) māyā and finite souls are discounted as incapable of activity unless it be with the help of God.

The Siddhāntin’s effort at establishing the omnipotent and the supreme character of God meant that He necessarily

25. DEVASENAPATHI, Gaiva-Siddhānta, pp. 80-82.
27. PARANJOTI, p. 120.
28. Ibid., p. 122.
had to present the God-concept in abstract notions to a certain extent. It meant speculating on God as the immutable, the eternal and the self-existent Being. However, these unavoidable abstractions were harmoniously mingled with other facets of God's nature such as His immanence prompted by his love for souls.

Siva as the Transcendent and the Immanent: God, experienced by the devotees on the one hand and envisaged by the philosophers as a Supreme Entity on the other, is revealed in His immanent and transcendent aspects, yet these two aspects are inseparable. Siddhāntins also consider that even in these revelations God remains partly hidden.

As K. Sivaraman observes: "Even saintly consciousness which is sensitive to the personalistic presence of God is aware of the central 'hiddenness' in God's nature which defies all categorisation."

This could well be emphasised regarding the ādvaita saints because, in spite of the fact that they were full of vivid and personalistic images of God, they also alluded to the incomprehensible aspect of the Deity. For example, Māṇikkavācagar refers to God as the 'Transcendent Good'.

A God Who is considered transcendent in the above sense cannot be fully described with the help of categories which are all too common. He needs to be visualised as one who is beyond the grasp of human thought. One ādvaita Siddhānta scholar is of the opinion that even if he were an object of sense-perception or empirical knowledge, he would be unreal, i.e., perishable like the object of empirical knowledge. On the other hand if he were absolutely unknowable by any means he would be non-existent.

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31. DHAVAMONY, p. 206.
Meykandar avoids both the extremes of conceiving God in purely empirical terms and at the same time considering him to be utterly unknowable. He maintains that God is absolute spiritual Reality who cannot be known by empirical knowledge but knowable by divine knowledge.

If He is knowable, He is non-real, if He is unknowable He is non-existent. Therefore the truly wise say that He is neither, but is a spiritual Reality, knowable and unknowable.\textsuperscript{32}

In the above śūtra the phrase ‘knowable and unknowable’ is interpreted by Gordon Mathews as follows: ‘Knowable by the soul’s divine grace-given knowledge, unknowable by the soul’s knowledge through sense-organs and antahkaranas’\textsuperscript{33}.

Such a description of God encourages the devotee to embark on his spiritual journey with hopes that God could be attained, provided the prescribed means are followed diligently and with determination. The transcendent conception of God may, then, be considered as aimed at introducing an attitude of adoration in the devotees and not at making God an alien entity.

The similar interpretation may be given to the conception of Śiva as the destroyer-God.\textsuperscript{34} The Siddhāntin’s belief in a destroyer-God should not be considered as a mere

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32, Sb., VI. p. 17.
33. Ibid., trans. GORDON MATHEW, p. 17.
34. It is believed that the importance given by the Gaivites to God as the destroyer was a polemic against the Vaiṣṇavas’ stand that God is the preserver. The belief gains strength in the light of the later history of the two sects which reveals feelings of animosity that had arisen between them. However, the first centuries of their growth and the period under study, mark a cordial relationship leading to the growth of both systems because during these centuries their common foe was the unorthodox systems, especially Buddhism and Jainism.
polemic against the Viṣṇava conception of God as the supreme Preserver, for, basically, God is presented as an universal-transcendent Being. Since He is the Supreme Being, He is above destruction, whereas, all the rest of creation is destroyable (and) hence, meant to be destroyed ultimately. He is the first cause and gives origin to everything and hence, he is also the final goal to which the whole of creation returns. He is, in a true sense, the ‘alpha’ (ādi) and the ‘omega’ (anta).  

35. Representation of ṛiva as the God of destruction in the sense indicated above was not meant to make Him a source of great fear. It was rather aimed at making his omnipotence felt, and also meant to point to the limitations of man. It was this type of Godhead that the ordinary people could understand and they, perhaps, needed it to become infused with confidence in God as the true liberator.

God as a transcendent Reality is considered to be pure intelligence unsullied by ānava māla. He was considered to be operating in the universe, but himself undergoing no change. The immutability of God was necessary to show that the eternal God was above all change.  

36. Without drawing any distinction between Brahman and Īśvara, gaiva-Siddhānta argues for the transcendent and absolute characteristics of God by postulating that God acts through his ġakti or power.  

37. Ġakti is divine energy and is spiritual in nature. God’s relationship with His ġakti is expressed in the following words of Arunandi:

Just as the crystal appears as the various colours that are reflected on it, yet remains unchanged, so

35. Alpha’ and ‘Omega’ are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet meaning the ‘beginning’ and the ‘end’ respectively. They are used in Christian theology to refer to Christ as the beginning and the end.


37. PARANJOTI, p. 51.
God manifests Himself variously as His ākāti Forms and remains pure and one. And He cannot be perceived except when he manifests himself in his Āruḻ ākāti.

As such it is essentially different from unconscious matter. The idea of transcendence here is conceived in such a way that it does not make God an abstract entity. Nevertheless the question whether the īva-Sakti relationship is not an abstraction may be raised. By maintaining that the īva-ākāti relationship can be known to Jñānis of great merit, the system seems to ward off this criticism.

God as the Embodiment of Love: Even though the Siddāntin does accord importance to both the transcendent and the immanent aspects of God, he visualises God as getting 'involved' in human concerns without being affected in the process. He is considered to be in touch with souls and the world in various capacities as the originator, sustainer, etc. All His attributes and His activities spring from His being an inexhaustible source of love. The technical word used by Meykandar for love is 'āruḻ'. It literally means 'Grace' or favour. For example, āruḻ aptly expresses the love of a superior, showing compassion towards a subordinate who is in need. The word āruḻ is also considered equivalent to the Latin word caritas which epitomises God's nature as love in the New Testament.

The nature of God is love. Tirumāḷar says:

40. The casual argument for God's existence is briefly this: creation signifies that ultimately there is a cause which itself requires no other cause.
41. Cf. DHAVAMONY, p. 234.
42. Tirumanṭiram, 270,
This may be translated as:

‘Love and śīva are two’, say the ignorant.
That love itself is śīvam, people are not able to realise.
That love itself is śīvam, after anyone realises this,
Love itself as śīvam, they rest in contemplation.⁴³

Again in the invocatory verse of śīvājñāna Siddhiyār,
Supakkam, God is referred to as Infinite light and love and
in verse two He is said to fill all intelligence with his love ⁴⁴

God’s activities are directed towards the well being of
souls. The purpose of creation and dissolution, for
instance, is to provide an opportunity for the souls to aim at
and attain liberation from the impurity of ānava.

If you ask why the souls and worlds are reproduced
from Hara after resolution, this becomes necessary
owing to existence of ānava mala. The necessity
for its undergoing resolution is the destruction of
those that gave fatigue to the Soul. The effects are
destroyed and resolved into their cause. And Isa
reproduces these forms as before from their cause.⁴⁵

Out of love, God assigns to the souls their bodies and
makes them exhaust their karma so that they may gain
release and realise union with Him. The period of sthiti or
maintenance is a time of moral and spiritual education in the
sense that through their empirical experience the spiritual
aspirants get an insight into higher values. The destruction
of the world again is indicative of the love of God for
created beings as it is meant to give respite to souls. The
emotive power of God expresses itself as love of souls, and
through this, God knows the needs of souls and the means
by which these can be met. His conative power gives a
practical expression to his love.⁴⁶

⁴³. Trans. mine.
⁴⁴. Cf. SS, invocatory vs. 1 & 2.
⁴⁵. SS, l. 32, p. 113
⁴⁶. PARANJOTI, p. 42,
The social implications of considering God as love are too obvious to need any elaboration. The omnipresent God, Who is a god of love indwelling in the hearts of all men making no discrimination of caste and sex, is the solid foundation on which the concept of equality of all men rests.

\textit{gaiva-Siddhānta as 'the End of Ends': Its Comprehensive Significance}: A special feature of \textit{gaiva-Siddhānta} is the effort to establish the ascendancy of this system over others and to put forward a claim that \textit{gaiva-Siddhānta} is really final. This, again, should be understood within the historical context. In shaping the \textit{gaiva-Siddhantra} ideas of this period, the socio-economic factors, as well as the political factor!, had a considerably large role to play. The Cōla kings were the leaders and the torch-bearers of the Hindu culture in the South and also at an all-India level. Self-confidence arising out of such a situation was bound to seep into every stratum of society. These two religious sects of Vaiṣṇavism and \textit{gaivism} must have become conscious of their responsibility as the two major representatives of the Hindu religious systems.

To \textit{gaivism}, this new awakening came in a much more powerful way than to Vaiṣṇavism for the obvious reason that the rulers of this age were patrons and adherents of the \textit{gaivite} sect. Considering the fact that secularism was unknown in those days, one cannot deny that religious affiliations did influence political policies. When kings happened to be \textit{gaivites}, their rule had the stamp of the religion they patronised, in spite of the fact that they were tolerant of other faiths. In this connection, it should be remembered that the evolution and growth of \textit{gaivism} had a long history in the Tamil country.\footnote{The rise to power of the Pallava kings in the seventh century marks the formation and development of the two devotional schools of \textit{gaivism} and Vaiṣṇavism. The literature bearing upon these is almost entirely the}
The attempt of the ācāryas to establish the supremacy of their doctrine may be understood in various ways. In givajāna Siddhiyar we find one of the first comprehensive expositions of the Siddhānta doctrine. The first part of the Siddhiyar i.e., Supakkam states the Siddhānta and in establishing it, incidentally refers to the views of the other schools. It seeks to establish the existence of God, bonds and souls, after due consideration of objections brought forward by the followers of the rival schools. The Parapakkam, on the other hand, states the views of the other schools, starting with the cārvākas, and refutes them from the standpoint of the Siddhānta. Without compromising on fundamentals, the ācāryas sought to establish the intellectual respectability of the doctrine by stating their beliefs firmly and clearly. The ideas were put forward to strengthen the faith of the adherents and to clear the doubts entertained by the followers of other systems. The non-Siddhāntins may feel that the Siddhāntins are making a tall ‘claim’ in considering the Siddhānta philosophy as the ‘end of ends’. However, the spirit of the ‘claim’ is to remind the believer that his faith is an opportunity that the Lord gives him and that he should not miss it.

The strong points of gaiva-Siddhānta were sought to be established by pointing to the inadequacies, in the other systems. The Siddhāntin’s groupings of the alien systems in terms of their distance from gaiva-Siddhānta point to the systematic refutation that was intended. The distance was reckoned in terms of their acceptance of the Vedas and the gaivāgamas. Accordingly, they were classified as

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product of the age of the Pallavas. Two of the greatest of the gaiva saints, namely, Jnanasambanthar and Appar were contemporaries. Tradition says that the conversion of Mahendravarman I from Jainism to gaivism was due to Appar.

48. DEVASENAPATHI, Bondage and Grace, p. 4.
the outermost schools, the outer schools, the inner schools, the innermost schools. The outermost schools were taken up for criticism first, and then the other schools were considered in such a way that a prospective potential adherent would be taken step by step to the school of āvā- Siddhānta.

The Lokāyatins believe only in lōka, the visible world, because they accept only pratyakṣa (perception) as the instrument of knowledge. The world according to them explains itself. The objects of the world are nothing but by-products of the four elements. What cannot be seen does not exist; therefore, spiritual entities like God, do not exist. The Siddhāntin meets the Lōkāyatin on the latter's own ground. Though the Lōkāyatin professes not to believe in inference as a pramāṇa, yet he unknowingly makes use of it, in order to argue that God does not exist. Further, his argument that the elements by themselves come into existence and go out of it cannot be accepted because elements are inert; an intelligent director of the universe must be assumed to cause the elements to function.

49. The Lōkāyata system, Buddhism, and Jainism were classified as the outermost schools because of their non-acceptance of the Vedas and the āvā-gamas.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, Sāṅkhya-yoga and Pāñcarātra were considered outer schools since, they did not accept the authority of āvā-gamas.

Those who accepted the Vedas and the āvā-gamas as well as other works which were in keeping with the teachings of the āvā-gamas, were considered inner schools, e.g., Pāṣupatas, and Kāpālikas.

The various schools of āvism which agreed with āv Śidhānta in regard to the acceptance of the Vedas and the āvā-gamas but differed in their understanding of mokṣa and the state of soul in mokṣa were considered innermost schools.

See Chacko Valiaveetil, p. 87.

50, DEVASENAPATHI: āv Śidhānta, p. 74.
V—9
The Sautrāntika Buddhists say that everything arise in a chain of succession, caused by the existent of the previous moment and causing the existent of the following moment. If everything is caused by its predecessor and causes its successor, then there is no need for a god to explain how things appear. The Siddhāntin answers this by a counter question. What is it that appears? What is not, cannot appear, what already is, need not appear. According to the Mādhyāmika Buddhists, that which appears is indeterminable. This the Siddhāntin does not accept because the indeterminable does not exist. Those who hold this view will have to say either that it exists or that it does not. It exists, then why not say so? If it does not exist then it cannot appear. So we have to conclude that both cause and effect exist and that the effect is manifested from the cause through the instrumentality of God.51

The Jains believe that the salvation of souls is accomplished without the help of God; so also karma operates by itself. To the Jains, the Siddhāntin’s reply is that the soul cannot accomplish its own salvation just as a pot that is at the bottom of the well, cannot come up by itself. Likewise, karma cannot work by itself even as an arrow cannot shoot by itself.52

There is no evidence to indicate that the Lōkāyata system was still influential. Probably, it was discussed merely as a speculative system. But in the case of Buddhism and Jainism discussions by the acārya were not purely speculative. Though the influence of the Buddhists and the Jains was waning the havoc they caused was still lingering in the minds of acāryas. On the other hand the Buddhists and Jains were also aware of the great efforts of gāivism and Vaiṣṇavism in dislodging their systems from their supremacy and the concerted efforts of the Hindu sovereigns to put down the Kalabhras53 who patronised

51. Ibid., p. 76. 52. PARANJOTI, p. 118.
53. The Kalabhras were powerful rulers who overran the
them. Confrontation with the Jains and the Buddhists had its brighter side as well. At the doctrinal level their position was systematically examined and opposed. However, at the practical and social levels, challenges from the two heterodox religions caused a renewal within Saivism. Social orientation of the two systems as found in the organisation of religious institutions gave inspiration to develop similar institutions in the gaiva fold as well as to renew the already existing ones. The acaryas seem to have realised the importance of taking into account the social dimensions of religion and philosophy.

Through his own experience, the Siddhantin realised that progress towards God is a gradual process, a step by step advancement. Hence, it was not advisable to introduce suddenly into the mind of the unbeliever the idea of the supremacy of siva. The idea of God’s existence was to be conveyed to him gently at first, and only when the foundations became secure, complete faith in the principles enunciated in the gaiva-Siddhanta tradition could be infused into his mind. This was the subtle but significant way of introducing ideas progressively.

Systematic formulation of the doctrine, as well as the subtle and progressive introduction of the same into the minds of the people must have made the system more acceptable to the society. Gaivism, as a result, made great

Tamil country from the third to the sixth century A.D. This period saw the spread of the heterodox systems, especially Jainism. Tradition says that the Hindu religion and culture suffered a setback during this period. For this reason the Kalabhras are often referred to as evil rulers. Politically, their defeat was the result of the joint effort of the Pandyas, the Pallavas and the Calukyas. The religious ascendancy of the heterodox systems was checked by the Gaivite and the Vaishnavite saints on the one hand and by SaIkara on the other. The Kalabhras, as well as the religion they patronised, became the target of attack in the Tamil country. Periya Puranam of Hkkil by ampily illustrates this conflict of the final triumph of the devotional cult.
progress against rival systems. We have noted earlier that Aruṇāndi in the Subakkam of āvajāna Siddhiyār had to deal with some of the numerous other systems grouped into four types called the outermost, the outer, the inner and the innermost, the last including the various gaiva sects. Within fifty years when Umāpati came on the scene the situation had already changed. The first three types of schools were no longer the target of attack. Schools like Buddhism were not even mentioned. The only outer system examined was Māyāvāda. Umāpati's attention was directed mainly against the aberrations within the gaiva fold which had become enlarged. This shows that there must have been a ferment within gaivism enabling it to grow into a system with variety of thought patterns.

The particularly Tamil character of this system made even its speculative aspects more easily accessible to the masses. gaiva-Siddhānta marks the culminating stage of the growth of philosophical thought expressed in Tamil, the language of the common man.54 The numerous commentaries in Tamil expounding the original texts made even the abstract points in the doctrine easily comprehensible. Another factor which helped the gaivite system, as noted already, was the patronage extended to it by the Cōla sovereigns. The total effect of all this was the rise of gaiva-Siddhānta as the dominant form of religious system in the Tamil country.

54. The Tirumurais and the fourteen gāstras were written in Tamil unlike the basic texts of the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition which were written in Sanskrit.
CHAPTER VI
Saiva-Siddhanta Ethics:
Its Popular Appeal

IN PRACTICAL aspects formulation of the ethical values of gaiva-Siddhanta marks the culmination of the theistic trend of the system. There are also many similarities between the ethical aspects of Viśiṣṭādvaita and gaiva-Siddhanta because the orientation of both the systems is theistic. In the following pages, however, we intend to analyse the implications of a few dominant aspects of the ethical philosophy of gaiva-Siddhanta.

Siddhānta Realism: Its Popular Appeal: The realistic aspects of the Siddhānta philosophy (which again resemble the realism of theistic Vedānta) are such that the scheme of discipline appeals to the common man who is by nature inclined towards the hard, near-at-hand empirical realities. The Siddhānta realism accepts the transcendental absolutism of God and the reality of the world and souls. To the Siddhāntin the world is not false. Though God is a transcendent Reality, He is very much present to man. Out of his love and grace he creates the world in order that souls may attain liberation. This realistic attitude enables the Siddhāntin to consider life in this world as worthwhile and
deserving involvement. The Siddhānta philosophers must have worked on the assumption that philosophy, which seemed to deny empirical Reality to the world, might turn away men from philosophy itself and hence also from its transforming influence. What would appeal to them is a philosophy that would, without denying Reality of the world and empirical life, strongly suggest that they are ultimately pathways (however subtly or indirectly) to the higher life—the life of the spirit. The Siddhānta sādhana took into consideration those men who were concerned with secular activities and yet had a zest for the pursuit of spiritual perfection.

Positive Outlook on Human Condition: The Siddhāntin’s belief that to be born as a human being is to be equipped with the necessary instruments for the worship of the Lord, can be interpreted as suggesting a positive outlook on human life.

Was it not the purpose, when the souls were endowed with human birth, that they should, with their mind, speech and body, serve Hara....¹

The scheme of discipline enunciated by the Siddhānta philosophy shows how every human aspect—external and internal—can be adequately harnessed in the service of the Lord.² The idea sometimes suggested that even celestial beings take to human births in order to be able to worship the Lord is indeed a consoling thought to men who feel weary of the human condition. The emphasis laid on the great potential that human life holds for attaining spiritual perfection, and the symbolically expressed idea that man has already accomplished the feat of swimming across the vast ocean, is to be understood as reiterating a life-affirming and optimistic outlook.

Maṅikkavāsagar speaks of the endless transmigratory process through which he was yearning and longing to be united with the Lord. He says:

¹. SS, II. 92, p. 191.   ². See infra, pp. 209 ff.
Grass was I, shrub was I, worm, tree
Full many a kind of beast, bird, snake.
Stone, man and demon. 'Midst Thy hosts I served.
The form of mighty Asuras, ascetics, gods I bore.
Within these immobile forms of life,
In every species born, weary I've grown, great Lord:

Clearly, the suggestion is that only after being born as a human being can one become capable of following the spiritual discipline leading to liberation. Again, the idea of the soul having to pass through numerous stages before becoming a human being is expressed in ājñāna Siddhiyār.

When we consider the case of a jīva which, after passing through the eighty-four thousand kinds of yonis (embryo)... becomes human born, we can but compare it with an individual who has with his own hands swum the wide ocean.

The suggestion is also made that man is the crown of all creation and that he is certainly well ahead on the highway to the realisation of his true purpose in life. Hence man is exhorted to make the best use of the opportunity afforded by human birth and strive hard to tread the path designed by the seers.

Human beings have reached various levels of development ranging from the lower ones, like that of a savage, to the higher ones who are refined in many respects. Though the statement that the highest of human births is to be born as a Sādhanītānā sounds dogmatic, when examined closely

3. Tīrā, I. 26-30, p. 3.
4. SS, II. 89, pp. 190 & 191.
5. 'It is a great blessing to be born in a land where savages do not inhabit but the study of the four Vedas reign supreme. Escaping birth among the lower classes of the human race, rare is it that one should be fortunate to be born among the people privileged to perform religious austerities and to profess the Saiva-Siddhanta religion without falling into the ways of other creeds'. SS, II, 90, p. 191.
it reveals more a concern for developing a life-affirming and world-affirming attitude than an anxiety to denounce all other systems. Similarly, the assertions that to be born in the land of the Vedas and the Agamas is a rare grace, and that even more is the grace required to be born into the true religion (Gaiva Siddhanta), are not to be taken literally. The system exhorts man that rebirth cannot be taken as an excuse for postponing salvation. At the same time it also assures that there is no need to despair of salvation, all that is required is to surrender ourselves to the Lord. In Sivaj̄āna Siddhiyar the deep significance of Gaiva-Siddhanta is emphasised by stating that the supreme Giva has graciously revealed the Siddhanta, that he will, even in one birth, make His devotees jivanmuktas after removing their malas. That he will, by bathing them in the ocean of jāna and making them drink of bliss, free them of all future births and place them under His Feet of final mukti. The classic chastises man for not believing the holy words and falling into sin and perdition by unreflective utterances.6 Thus, the system exhorts man to avail of the opportunities provided by the Siddhanta-sādhana to be released from the cycle of birth and death in order to reach union with Giva.

The various sentiments and statements referred to above and understood in the sense indicated, point to the universalistic implications of Gaiva-siddhanta. That those who surrender themselves to the Lord can be sure of attaining mokṣa signifies concern for all. One's own fitness in contradistinction to the infinite power of God should be well appreciated, and that would certainly result in attitudinal changes towards all human beings, nay all beings.

Such a transformed attitude will lead to openness and will help one to avoid the idea of excluding others from aspiring to eligibility for spiritual perfection. This would not then be considered the prerogative of any particular

category of people. It would be open to all regardless of caste, class or sex. The list of the devotees given by ēkkilār contains the names of men and women belonging to all castes and conditions of life. For example, it includes the butcher-saint Tirunāppōvar, the fisher-man saint Adibatta Nayanar, the hunter-saint Kaṇṭappa Nāyanar and the potter-saint Tirunīlakānta Nāyanar. These devotees made no distinction between high and low on the basis of birth or material possessions.\(^7\) To whichever caste one belonged there was nothing to prevent him from attaining mokṣa, the highest goal of human endeavour. Even the ācāryas and the philosophers at whose hands the Siddhānta philosophy took shape belonged to various strata of society. Among the four ācāryas two were non-brahmins. The last of the ācārya, a brahmin, was ostracised because of his association with veḷḷāḷars. He was excommunicated by his fellow priests, but was taken back on discovering that he was favoured by God. Similarly, some of the institutions of the period, especially the maṭhas were headed by the non-brahmin gurus. An elaborate net work of such maṭhas emerged during the early part of the thirteenth century. Their main centre was Tanjore since it was here that sanskritisation of the non-brabmins was taking place.\(^8\)

The Scheme of Ethico-Spiritual Discipline: An outstanding characteristic of the course of discipline of the Siddhānta tradition was that it whole-heartedly accepted the various ‘paths to spirituality’ recognised by the generality of the Indian tradition, viz., the paths of karma bhakti and jñāna.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) It may be noted that the three-fold path of bhakti, karma, and jñāna was already propounded in the Upaniṣads. During the course of evolution of Hindu
The āiva-Siddhāntin considered knowledge as the final means while devotion and action were subordinate to it. These three were not treated as mutually exclusive. They were to accompany the four stages\(^\text{10}\) of spiritual development. Such a scheme of spiritual development helped to suit the needs of different types of persons.

In the scheme of liberation envisaged by āiva-Siddhānta, karma in its two-fold aspects, i.e., karma as ritual and karma as service, has its different roles to play. Though the Siddhāntin does not accept the stand that karma leads to the attainment of mukti, he admits the fact that ritualistic performance may be necessary as long as the human condition exists. It is to be remembered that rituals by themselves are meaningless, but can be made profitable by cultivating suitable internal dispositions. The Siddhāntin’s objection with regard to the ritualistic karma is directed against the advocates of dīkṣā (ritualistic initiation) who maintain that mala is a substance and as such its removal has to be worked through kriyā (ritual performance). The advocates of dīkṣā say that mala is removed by the act of dīkṣā associated with ārtha and not by jñāna. Dīkṣā itself is defined as that which imparts pure knowledge and wipes away the malas. Further, they maintain that mala is a reality, like the yellowness in a jaundiced person, which can be removed only by action.

The authentic Siddhānta view is that even though there is no metaphysical discontinuity and incompatibility between ritualistic action and knowledge, ritualistic action can only

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philosophy one or the other of them was considered the primary path to attain release. The other two were naturally envisaged as only secondary in importance. The Advaitin, for example, envisages jñāna as the means to release, while considering karma and bhakti as the preliminaries. On the other hand, in Rāmānuja’s system bhakti is considered as the ultimate means of release.

\(^{10}\) See infra, p. 209 ff.
be considered a prelude to the dawn of knowledge.\textsuperscript{11} Śaiva-Siddhāntin says that dikṣā alone is not adequate. Dikṣā does remove man's impurity, but light still needs to shine. This happens only with the dawn of jñāna. Therefore ritualistic initiation is not a substitute for jñāna dikṣā.

The Siddhāntin also accepts the purifying effect of karma as service. Performance of one's duty without looking for reward and without fear of punishment enables one to empty oneself of one's ego. This type of performance is a means to the dawn of knowledge and is also a means of remaining in the state of perfection after one has attained it. Duty to God as reckoned by the Siddhāntin consists in the observance of scriptural injunctions, and duties to men consists in love, sociability, generosity, etc.

The Siddhāntin gives due recognition to bhakti as a component element of the scheme of release and to him devotion itself includes knowledge as well. It is believed that the devotional acts are so meritorious that they would lead a man to the attainment of knowledge without having to submit to the tortuous pursuits of cāryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna. These four latter steps make no difference if the pursuant is gifted with that love which comes from utter selflessness. The \textit{Periya Purāṇam} attests to the splendour of the devotees who illustrate the truth that loving surrender to the abiding will of God can secure the height of perfection which no amount of learning and reflection can help to achieve.

To the Siddhāntin bhakti is not a mere discipline. In the words of K. Sivaraman: "It is not a path but the prize, standing at the end rather than at the beginning of spiritual life."\textsuperscript{12} In other words, bhakti itself is the very essence of mukti. Śivajñāna-bodham says that after attaining the Sacred Seat of Hara, the soul praises Him with devotion, never forgetting that its true being is in advaita union with

\textsuperscript{11} SIVARAMAN, p. 386. \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 387.
God. The lives of the saints given in the Periya Purāṇam exemplify devotion not so much a description of the nature of the released, as loving devotion, service and surrender leading to union with the Divine. Bhakti in this sense has a deep meaning in both the Sanskritic and the Tamil tradition and is synonymous with love. The Sanskrit word bhakti which has its root in ‘bhāj’ is often used to denote the idea of love. The word love is used generally in relation to a person, a thing or an action. However, the ultimate ground and origin of the idea of love is the relationship between persons. It can be between parents and children, lovers, master and servant, teacher and student. In the religious sense bhakti implies reverential devotion and intense love for God or for his manifestations. The Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word bhakti’ is ‘anbu’ which stands for sentiments like love, attachment, friendship, etc. In the secular sense ‘anbu’ means affection, love, etc. Within the religious context it emphasises the attitude of loving worship and service. The word anbu has other meanings like grace, benevolence and mercy. The term arul is also used to express these three latter meanings. Originally, anbu and arul seem to have had the meaning of tenderness but later they came to have different meanings, the tender feeling of affection of a person towards his relation was conveyed by the term anbu, whereas his compassion for the animate world was called arul. In Tamil literature, however, arul is used to mean divine grace, especially in the works of the Ālvārs and Nāyānmaṛs.

However, the above analysis should not lead to the conclusion that bhakti is a substitute for jñāna as a means to mokṣa in the Siddhānta tradition. This is clear from Arunandi’s reference to the merits of men pursuing the path of devotion. He says:

Even if very slight gifts are made to ġivajñānis, these will increase like the earth into mountains, and the

donors will be prevented from falling into the ocean of births, and will enjoy supreme happiness in the higher worlds, and losing their sin, they will get one more holy birth, and will, even without going through Chariyā, Kriyā and Yoga, attain supreme knowledge and the Lotus Feet of the Lord.\textsuperscript{15}

This reference brings out indirectly the supremacy of jñāna, because the merits of the devotees indicated in it arise out of devotion to the gīvajñānin. Further the statement that in this case the devotee would become a jñānin without going through the steps of caryā, kriyā, and bhakti should be understood to mean, not that bhakti would replace jñāna in their case, but that for the bhakta the pursuit of caryā, etc., is no longer difficult. This again is illustrated by the life of the saiva saints.\textsuperscript{16} They are considered to have been brought immediately into gīva-jñāna without having to go through the step by step initiation. Therefore, even though it is only jñāna that destroys the bonds (pāśa) and reveals the Lord (pati), the means of attaining self-realisation need not be considered exclusively as speculative knowledge. For some, intellectual method is the principal way of experiencing God, but to a fortunate few the inculcation of jñāna may take place through means other than the intellect. In the mystical way, for example, the devotee experiences the inability of the intellect to reach God. Thought and memory may have to be put away. Here union is reached through jñāna which is love. This idea is aptly summed up by the author of The Cloud of Unknowing a late medieval Christian sage from Europe, when he says:

\textsuperscript{15} SS, VIII. 26, p. 233.

\textsuperscript{16} Māṇikkavacagar was, perhaps, an exception to this. He, under instructions from his teacher seems to have conformed to the standards laid down in the texts and it is interesting to note that his name does not figure in the Periya Puranam.
By love he can be caught and held, but by thinking never.\textsuperscript{17}

As regards jāna, the Siddhāntin accepts this as the true path. All other means lead only to jāna. This is clear from the givajāna Siddhiyār which says that what is not knowledge is non-knowledge and the latter can only blind and not liberate. It is only jāna that can sever the knot of pāsa, dispel all darkness and lead the soul to mokṣa.\textsuperscript{18}

Further it is not any kind of knowledge, but it is the self's knowledge of gīva as revealed through gīva Himself that leads to liberation. This knowledge is termed as pati-jāna.

The Siddhāntin has explained the role of jāna by means of the classical picturesque story of the prince employed by the Vedānta tradition, but with due modification. From the time of his birth a prince was brought up by poor hunters. He grew up among them completely unaware of his royal lineage and of his being the heir to a kingdom. Similarly, he could not distinguish between the status of a hunter and a king. The king, however, was full of love for his son and patiently awaited the time when his son would be able to recognise him. When the time was ripe he reclaimed the prince after revealing to the boy his identity as the prince. The king then restored to him all honour and royal inheritance.

The point of comparison is clear. The self being in the company of pāsa is ignorant of its identity as cit (consciousness). Consequently, it suffers from all kinds of hardships. Then the Lord hastens its spiritual development and at the appropriate moment reveals the self's true identity by lifting it up from its sensory surroundings and transforming it into Himself under the shade of his flower-like Feet. It is


\textsuperscript{18} Cf. SS, VIII. 27, p. 233.
significant that jñāna is the direct means of expelling all evils and attaining mokṣa. It may also be noted that the revelatory source of such knowledge is ātman Himself. Accordingly, the knowledge that effects release is not that of pāśa or pāśu but of pati.

Comprehensive Significance of Love: The spiritual development of the soul after its initiation into the ātman faith takes place in the steps of caryā, kriya, yoga, and jñāna. The ascetic ideal that is presented by these steps is not negative. Asceticism here is functional and formal; its object is not to escape from the world but to render service, developing the attitude of self-surrender, and achieving self-effacement.

The first among this hierarchy of steps leading to God, is caryā which mainly deals with the external acts of worship. ātman Siddhiyār explains this in the following words:

Washing and cleaning God’s temple, culling flowers and making various garlands for the adornment of God, founding flower-gardens, and lighting temples, and praising God, obeying the commands of God’s devotees, after bowing and humbly receiving their orders, all these are the duties of the Dasmarga, and those who work in this path will surely reach Sivaloka. In this first step the devotee is much involved in ministration to idols in the temples.

19. The four ways of reaching God are sanmārga, sahamārga, satputramārga and dāsamārga. These four are also called jñāna, yoga, kriya and caryā pādas. They will respectively lead one to sāyujya, sarāpya, sāmīpya, and sāloka mukti. The first kind of mukti attained by jñāna is the final bliss, (parāmukti), the rest are called pada mukti”, SS, VIII. 18, p. 231.
20. Ibid., VIII 2. 19, p. 231.
The temple as a means of God-realisation was one of the first external aids to achieving growth in spirituality. Every day worship is offered at the Feet of the Lord for the benefit of the whole world. In addition to the daily ceremonies there are opportunities for private worship by individuals. They make offerings to the deity, recite prayers or perform suitable circumambulations. Private worship is undertaken out of devotion or for some particular reasons, for example, to secure divine assistance in time of trouble, danger, pain of sickness. Some forms of worship that take place is congregational in nature. It may be in the form of public performances of sacred song and dance to glorify the gods and goddesses, or the recital of ancient texts and the ezegesis by learned priests. Every important temple has regular festivals which mainly include processions folk dances, etc. The processions are significant for the community because the sacred image from the sanctuary of the temple or its substitute is brought outside to make visible to those who are not generally admitted into the temple. Devotees have the opportunity of directly presenting flowers, fruits and other offerings to the gods who are carried in procession. Sometimes the festivals are linked with the agricultural life of the locality. They often coincide with the planting or harvesting of a crop. In such cases the festivals provide opportunities for the mingling of mythology and folklore through music, dance and drama.  

In most of the activities listed in the caryā stage of spiritual life, the whole body is used for worship. In saint Appar we have an example of this path. In his ten-lined verses known as Tiruaṅgamālai he explains that the use of the various parts of one's body for sacred purposes loosens the hold of ānava-mala (spiritual impurity). The head is used to bow before the Lord, the eyes to behold His sacred form, the mouth and the gift of speech.

21. MICHELL, p. 65.
to praise and adore the Lord. These external activities are meant to bring about a corresponding internal attitude. The possibility is that when the whole body is harnessed in worship, the ground is prepared for the development of the spiritual attitude of dāsa or servant in relation to God. It may be likened to the service of a personal attendant to his master. This process supplies the soul with the necessary groundwork for concentration on, and faith in achieving the further stages of salvation. In addition to developing humility in the aspirant it enables him to acquire a theistic bent of mind and inculcate implicit faith in God.

The next step, viz., kriyā again pertains to the external aspect of the scheme of discipline. Arūpandi calls it the satputra-mārga. It consists of the following:

Taking fresh and fragrant flowers, dāpa (incence) and deepa (light), tirumāṇjana and food, and purifying in all the five different ways, and establishing God’s symbol (ईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईईई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई��ई�� испытаًštva-mārga. They who observe these duties daily will reach God’s presence.22

The above verse epitomises the spiritual strivings of the times. Attention is paid to the images, the enthronement of God’s symbol, like liṅga. The worship of the idols should be interpreted as a method of concretising the abstract. The encouragement given to image worship is seen in the production of the numerous sculptures during this period.23

22. SS, VIII. 20, p. 232.
23. The Cōla period saw the production of icons of Gods, goddesses and saints. These icons are popularly known as the south Indian bronzes. The best known among them is that of Natarāja which, in addition to possessing artistic value, conveys a whole world of philosophy of creation, sustenance and destruction in art form.
In this connection it is interesting to note the observation of T. P. Paran on idol worship. In his editorial introduction to 'The Art of God Symbolism of the Hindu Pantheon' he observes:

Through idol worship, he who seeks Gñana Yoga will realise that the ultimate he seeks-God or the Absolute-resides in himself. Through the idols, the abstract becomes concrete, and he visualises God in one form or the other. Hinduism declares that man is divine and this divine component awaits to be realised by spiritual practice-yoga-bhakti-yoga, karma-yoga or jñana.

The idol provides the means to this end.  

The three factors involved in idol-worship are: āsana, mārti and the mārtiman. Obeisance to the seat or the āsana and the mārti, the chosen form of the Lord must lead the devotee on to the Infinite, the Lord Himself, the mārtiman. Worship of the form with the right attitude will lead the devotee to the formless because it is the Lord Who has, in His infinite mercy, deigned to manifest Himself in response to the prayers of his devotees. This type of transition from the external and the material to the spiritual and the transcendental is possible by other means also. The offering of flowers, etc., have deep significance. The fragrant flowers may help the devotee to cultivate the virtues like purity symbolised by the whiteness of the lily and love symbolised by the redness of the rose. Thus offering flowers can help the devotee to develop these virtues in his own self. If properly channeled, these mundane activities will be a means of attaining spiritual discipline and thus prepare the stage for disciplining the mind. Sambandhar, the boy-saint, is an example of this path.

That the devotional activities like caryā and kriyā flourished during this period can be amply illustrated by the patronage extended by the Cōla sovereigns to the āva sect.25

In regard to sincere devotees it could be said that their actions and sentiments overflow with a powerful presence of God and an ardent devotion towards Him whether they are engaged in the external activities of the caryā type or kriyā type. Even though Appar sought God through external austerities like caryā, he testifies to the fact that in and through these externals, he was led to the discovery of God who resides in the mind of all being:

...the deceptive person that I am,
I wasted my time in feigned (pretended) service.
Coming to my senses, I sought and found Him
I was overcome by shame that He is in the mind of all,
Abiding with them and knowing all their thoughts.
Then I had to hold my sides in laughter
(at the thought that I was not deceiving Him,
but deceiving only myself).26

In the above passage Appar says that he thought that he was deceiving the Lord in seeking Him through feigned services and acts of piety, because in the beginning he did not find the Lord in these ministrations. However, later he was ashamed to discover that the Lord was to be found in the very place where he was searching for Him, that is, in the minds of all beings. This indicates that even though the Lord is not seen where He abides, He is nevertheless present in the very place where His presence is sought, provided a 'sincere seeking' is attempted. Through external and ordinary activities, charged with sincerity and devotion, the devotees are led to an inner experience of the Lord.

   Also cf. 502 of 1918, 54 of 1906, 333 of 1917.

26. Trans. V. A. DEVASENAPATHI.
   Also cf. Tirumurai, 753 and Thondaradipodi Ālvār, Tirumali, no. 34.
The third stage is union by contemplation or communion with God. In this stage referred to as yoga by the Siddhāntin, the devotee, in full control of his senses and breath, fixes his mind on to the object of worship, God. This type of meditation on God as light and intelligence cleanses the soul of all impurities. Then a feeling of love for creation and an attitude of universal brotherhood will result. Through the technique of yoga the soul is able to move with God. The devotee is able to comprehend the real nature of the three entities, pāśa, pāṣu and Pati. Realising the non-difference of knower, known and knowing, he becomes united with God. This union is called sārūpya, attaining the form of God. gīvajñāna Siddhiyar summarises this path in the following words:

In sahamārga one has to control his senses, stop his breath, fix his mind, and explore the secrets of the six ādharas and know their Gods, passing beyond into the regions of the bright Chandramadala, one has to drink deep of the nectar filling his every pore, and dwell fixedly on the supreme Light. If one performs this yoga of eight kinds, his sins will fall off and he will get the form of God Himself.27

Sundarar, the gāvite saint, is said to have followed this path. One of the panels in the temple at Tanjore illustrates the companionship which Sundaramurti enjoyed with Lord gīva. The scene is the journey of Sundarar and his friend Ceramān Perumal to Mount Kailāsa at the invitation of gīva. The youthful Sundarar is seated on the fast moving white elephant sent to him by gīva Himself. The picture is an illustration of the longing of the devotee to be united with his Lord.

The same scene is also described in the Periya purāṇam which is the hagiology of the saiva saints written during the period of study. Such accounts would have certainly

popularised the spiritual path which the saint trod in realising God.28

The three stages of cāryā, kriyā and yoga are considered as steps leading to the development of a state of equanimity of mind whereby the soul neither desires the good effects of good deeds nor fears the bad effects of bad deeds. This is referred to as iruvinaippu in Tamil.29 This tranquil state of mind paves the way for the descent of jñāna or knowledge. No matter what path is stressed, finally, jñāna alone leads to release. In this sense jñāna-mārga is inclusive of the other three and at the same time supersedes them, for even though sacrifices, penances, etc., have their value, they stop short of the goal. The importance of jñāna is stressed in ḍīvajñāna Siddhiyar.30

This fourth stage which is also called sanmārga is interpreted as ‘union’. This implies a total participation in and dedication to God as love. Saint Maṇikkavācagar is an example of having achieved union with God by following the path of Sanmārga. He says:

I'll wear the flow'ry 'cassia' wreath,  
and wearing join myself  
To ġivan's mighty arm : and joining,  
cling in rapture lost,  
Then shrinking shall I melt with love  
of His Coral lip,  
I'll seek Him, - seeking I'll ponder  
gressor's jewell'd Foot.31

29. Literally, iruvinaippu means treating both good and bad alike. The equanimity of mind that is implied here is important, since the development of such an attitude alone can help one in cutting the chain of births. Desires and aversions give rise to karma which in turn paves the way for taking endless births. Iruvinaippu is also considered to be an important condition for the descent of grace.
In the above poem, the love-relation provides a proper imagery and the language of love is again employed to describe the mystical union between God and soul. Māṇikkavācaṉar uses imagery and the ‘language of love’ to explain the play of the divine spirit with the embodied soul. The words ‘...seeking I'll ponder givan's jewell'd Foot’ are indicative of the devotion and love that lead to meditation of the jñāna type. This shows that even though the path that Māṇikkavācaṉar followed is jñāna-mārga, it is impregnated with love and devotion.

Jñāna as Love: The essence of jñāna consists in realising the presence of the Lord within one’s own self. Having been freed from impurities, the soul comes to realise its true nature and begins to experience its ‘identity-relationship’ with God (union). It enables the soul to be consciously united with God. The jñānin, however, does not leave behind his former ways of expressing his love and devotion towards the Lord. Even though terms like bhakti and love are not used in the context of jñāna-mārga, the description of this state given by Meykāndar clearly shows that loving devotion is very much at the culmination of jñāna. Phrases like ‘attachment to Hara’, ‘attachment to the thought of the eye of jñāna; etc., show the role of love in obtaining true knowledge.32

The fact that jñāna even in its fulness is a form of love points to the possibility of even this highest stage being available to the ordinary man. The jives of the saints as described in the Periya Purāṉam bear witness to this.33 In creating such a scheme the Siddhāntin did not minimise the deeper meaning of jñāna but only made his own school of thought more comprehensive. Thus he was able to accommodate the views of schools extolling ināna in his system.

33. See Supra, pp. 113, 114.
Importance of Grace: The various paths discussed above represent the human effort to reach out to God. However, like the other theistic systems, Gaiva-Siddhānta also maintains that human effort becomes fruitful only when it is supplemented by Divine Grace, as such, it is considered as the ultimate factor which makes the realisation of salvation possible. That the saving Grace of the Lord is always 'available' to the soul is attested to by Maṇikavācagar who says: 'Hail foot of Him who not for an instant quits my heart'.

But the self being egotistic seeks for things other than God. Under the fierce and irresistible allurement of the senses, the soul lives unaware of its real nature. Again, Maṇikkavācagar compares the state of the soul to a supportless hanging creeper and to the state of a fish that is fainting in a waterless pond. These imageries clearly indicate the need for God’s Grace in the effort of the soul towards the attainment of salvation. They also highlight the theistic aspects of Gaiva-Siddhānta.

Grace should be complemented with karma-sāmya, iruvinaioppu and malaparipāka. These enable the self to overcome the hold of mala (spiritual impurity). Karma or action generally presupposes the twin-attitudes of desire and aversion which motivate it. Karma-sāmya is a state of being in which the accumulated merits and demerits as well as their fruits make no difference to the affective reactions of man. Such a state is unsuitable for the germination of new karma. Further, this attitude of disinterestedness reflects the 'God-centredness' of the self. Karma-sāmya should be taken as an effective means of inculcating in the self the attitude of enlightened indifference to every event and situation. This state of living beyond good and evil leads iruvinaioppu, and to the ripening of mala. Just as a cataract cannot be operated upon until it is mature, mala

35. Ibid., VI. 20, 26. 36. See Supīa, p. 149.
cannot be removed unless it becomes ripe and fit for removal. The hold of mala becomes weak as a result of the careful observance of caryā kriyā, yoga, etc., as well as the repetition of and reflection on the five letters ġī-vā-ya-nā-ma. As the self frees itself from mala, it reaches a tranquil frame of mind which is disinclined alike towards merits and demerits. Perseverance in this state leads to the descent of Grace (śaktinipāta) at the appropriate moment flooding the soul with the awareness of God’s presence.

The Supreme desire of man to attain union with God is expressed in the following prayer of Māṇikkavācagar:

Thou Infinite, by men yet seen! Beyond eye’s ken
Thou Essence gleaming bright! Here like a fledgling, I
Would gladly leave this faulty frame, yet I know not-
Dweller in this sense-world-how I may Thee put no.

When man becomes God-centred, he automatically develops ‘other-oriented’ qualities like love and compassion, utter

38. The stage when the mala becomes fit for removal is called malaparipāka.

39. In śaiva Siddhānta, the expression, ġī-vā-ya nā-ma is held to be the most sacred of all the names of the Supreme, that is to be meditated upon. This is used as a succinct and all-embracing formula representing the grand synthesis of truth.

40. śaktinipāta is a process that takes place simultaneously with the dissappearance of mala. At this stage the tirodhāyi śakti, which so far had the role of concealment, now changes into arul śakti and reveals, the truth to the soul. However, it should not be concluded that Grace was not at work earlier. But only when the devotee advances spiritually Grace becomes manifest. It is believed that corresponding to the four spiritual paths, there are four types of descent of Grace distinguished as ‘more slow’, ‘slow’, ‘rapid’, and ‘more rapid’. When egoism becomes ripe ripe for removal, the tirodhāna śakti becomes anugraha śakti and this leads the soul to the state of jvanmukta.

41. Tiva, V. 44, p. 63.
fearlessness and unclouded intelligence. In this way the idea of transformation of a community is embedded in the Siddhānta-sādhanā 42

It is worth noting that the Siddhāntin differs from the Viśiṣṭādvaịtin of the Teṅgalai school which holds that after the initial surrender is made, no sustained effort is necessary on the part of the devotee. This signifies that the Siddhāntin does not dispense with human effort at any stage of spiritual development. Even after attaining release, man is to persevere in the practice of good works. One possible explanation of the difference in approach could be that the doctrine of prapatti43 in Viśiṣṭādvaita was specifically directed towards rendering the lower castes eligible for salvation. This was not the case with the Siddhāntin.

Liberation: A Positive Interpretation: The āiva-Siddhāntin recognises the possibility of release even in the embodied state (jīvanmukti 44. The idea is accepted in principle by many of the Indian philosophical systems. Some of these systems offer a negative interpretation of the state of spiritual perfection simply as a state of isolation, where the devotee attains freedom from all sufferings. The Siddhāntin gives a positive interpretation by maintaining that the jīvanmukta’s stage is the one in which genuine social and cosmic concern is developed fully. The suggestive assurance that it is possible to attain ‘release even while living’ must have been a smoothing and encouraging thought to the masses, and must have won them over to Siddhānta tradition. Recorded experiences of the āiva saints who reached this stage of perfection while they were still alive must have infused new life, meaning and realism

42. Cf. DEVASENAPATHI, Bondage and Grace, p. 113.
43. See Supra, p. 93 ff.
44. The person who has reached this stage is deemed to have gone beyond merit and demerit, and good and evil. His mind is steady and constant, unwavering and firm. Whether he is awake or asleep, or in conditions of prosperity or poverty, he is in the presence of the Lord.
into the concept of jīvanmukti. Outwardly the jīvanmukta remains the same as any other ordinary human, he has the experience of pleasure and pain like any other man. Also in the state of jīvanmukti, ontologically speaking, the self remains the same, though it is tremendously transformed due to its intimate union with Lord.  

The next and the final stage, viz., mukti (liberation after the casting away of the body) is also presented by the Siddhāntin in a positive way. This positive interpretation was born out of the fact that the Siddhāntin considered the body as instrumental to the removal of ānava. Positively in the state of mukti the soul was considered to become all-pervasive and omniscient, though not in the same way as īśvara.  

The nature of the union between the individual soul and God as conceived in the Siddhānta tradition differs from that of the other traditions in so far as it seeks to maintain union between God and soul without the destruction of either. The Intimacy of the union is such that they cannot be considered as two. At the same time they cannot be said to be one because the reality of neither is lost. This intimacy preserves the entitative difference between God and soul, but stresses the union. Therefore, it is said that in the state of release the ontological relationship between the soul and God is realised consciously and mystically. This union is so complete that the soul does not recognise God as a separate entity. This is succinctly referred to by īśvajñāna-bodham thus.

He is not (an object) other than (the soul) so that the soul might know Him.  

45. The jīvanmukta is able to be calm, peaceful and happy because of his intimate union with the Lord on Whom he relies for everything. Cf. Chacko Valiaveetil, p. 160.
47. Sb., Vi. 2, p. 18.
It is the case where God enters into the soul and becomes inseparably united with it when the latter lovingly meditates on Him as 'He is I'. The presentation of mukti in terms of an advaitic union as described above would have enabled the devotees to develop true devotion to Śiva Who is the source of all enlightenment and Grace.

The above analysis of Śaiva-Siddhānta has shown the alliance between speculative thought and devotional cults. In this alliance, the integrity of the speculative philosophy is maintained, but it is interpreted in terms which are meaningful to the common man. Such an interpretation also establishes the philosophical bases for devotional practices.
CONCLUSION

The Theistic trend in Relation to Historical Circumstances - A Review

In the foregoing study we have seen that the historical circumstances paved the way for certain changes in the direction of the development of Hindu philosophy. However, the historical circumstances are partially responsible for the appearance of the theistic trend. We shall conclude this study by a brief review of the relative roles of the various factors in shaping the two religious philosophies. As stated at the beginning, the historical factors which facilitated growth and pointed the direction of that growth include both the agents and the circumstances.

The Role of the Ācāryas: The work of the ācāryas namely Rāmānuja for the Viśiṣṭadvaita tradition, and Meykaṇḍār and Aruṇandī for āiva-Siddhānta tradition,1 was one of crystallising some of the already existing ideas and giving them a definite form and shape. The ācāryas of our

1. The first foure ācāryas were Meykaṇḍadeva, Aruṇandī īvācārya, Marajñāna Sambandhar and Umapati īvācārya. Among these, the first two are taken into consideration in this study since they philosophised during the period covered by this thesis and since they were first among the four who gave a firm foundation to the Saiva-Siddhānta philosophy.
period had their convictions in tune with the circumstances of the period. They were staunch believers in the supremacy of God īśvara/Viṣṇu. As such in formulating these systems they were exercising their spiritual leadership in a community of believers, giving expression to the spiritual hopes and aspirations of their people. As true representatives of that particular period, the ācāryas seem to have believed that the speculative thought and devotional cults should be integrated into the one and the same system.

Even though the ācāryas were influenced by the philosophical and devotional ideas of the age, they had their own individuality which enabled them to bring in their originality in formulating the theistic trend projected earlier. The fact that the ācāryas were able to utilise the current ideas to formulate well-defined systems, which became a source of inspiration for posterity, would attest to their wisdom and ingenuity. The personality of the ācāryas, obviously, provided significant dimensions to the systems founded by them.

(i) The Role of Rāmānuja: In spite of the fact that the Viśiṣṭādvaitic trends were current even before Rāmānuja, it was the latter who was responsible for shaping them into an influential system of thought. He not only gave a liberal interpretation to its tenets but had the courage of his conviction to make them transforming influences. Among other things a place of primacy should be given to his commentary on Brahma-sūtra in which he gave a theistic interpretation registering a sharp difference with Śaṅkara's views. Though the commentary was born out of an experiential knowledge of Reality that Rāmānuja had, it required, indeed, great courage to attempt an interpretation that was contrary to the one given by the most distinguished Śaṅkara whose authority had been accepted throughout the length and breadth of India.

2. See Supra, pp. 90-93.
It is true that in his grībhāṣya, Rāmānuja upholds the restrictions placed on the quest of Brahman by those not entitled to the study of the Vedas. However, he makes use of the text of the Gītā to extend spiritual franchise to all men and women. His interpretation of certain passages in the Gītā is noteworthy in this respect. He says that women, śūdras and even men of sinful birth could reach the supreme goal by finding refuge in grī ḍī Kṛṣṇa, and that the sinners who developed devotion to Him would become righteous before long. These are evidences of his skilful interpretation to re-inforce his predilection for the people of the lower strata of society.

The understanding that Rāmānuja had of the Gītā as affirming the availability of salvation for all and as re-iterating the equality of all in the eyes of God, was born out of his humanitarian outlook. The socio-economic conditions which were prevailing then, had perhaps driven home the need to reconsider the status of the individual, and the more important need to make philosophy available to the masses. Probably, such a need for alleviating the sufferings of the individual was not entirely absent during earlier periods of the Indian tradition. But the fact that from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries a concerted attempt was made in that direction in contradistinction to the most popular views of the day, points to the influential personality of the acārya who happened to be the central figure of the age in religious and philosophy.

(ii) The Roles of Meykandār and Arunandi: The roles of Meykandār and Arunandi with regard to grāva-Siddhānta was similar to that of Rāmānuja in relation to Visistādvaita. Their special contribution consists in this that

their respective works ġivajñāna-bodham and ġivajñāna Siddhiyār were foundational to the gaiva tradition of Tamil country Meykaṇḍar was the first to give a definitive formulation to the theology of Tamil ġaivism as is evident from his ġivajñāna-bodham. His skill is seen in his ability to adapt from and perfect upon the views of the preceptors who preceded him. He founded a new tradition which incorporated all the previous views and yet went beyond. The importance given to Meykaṇḍar is attested by the fact that the Siddhānta ġāstras (treatise on gaiva-Siddhānta) is popularly known as Meykaṇḍa ġāstra. The tribute paid to Meykaṇḍar by his disciple Arumandi, in his work ġivajñāna Siddhiyār, is a further evidence of the role of the first ācārya as seen by his own contemporaries and disciples. It reads:

He, Meikanda Deva who lived in Tiruvemnainallūr, surrounded by groves in full bloom. the great ġaivite teacher. His Golden Feet which out-rival the lotus, resting on my hand, I shall ever worship.

6. Though the belief that the ġivajñāna-bodham is a translation of the Raurava Ākama has been challenged, there is no conclusive evidence forthcoming as yet. However, Maria Susal Dhavamony points out that even if it were a translation, Meykaṇḍar's originality and creative interpretation are evident from his penetrating analysis and the commentary that he has written on the original Āgama. Cf. Dhavamony. p. 201.

7. The other two works which preceded Meykaṇḍar's ġivajñāna bodham are Tiruvunṭiyār by Uyyavanta Tēvar, and Tirukkāḷiṟṟuupatiyār by Tirukkaṭavur. Uyyavanta Devanayanar. These two were the early attempts at representing the theology of Tamil ġaivism as found in the ġaiva Āgamas and devotional literature. Later, these were surpassed by the excellence of Meykaṇḍar's ġivajñāna bodham.


9. SS. invocatory v. 6, p. 115.
Finally, the eulogy given to both Meykandar and the system he formulated in an oft repeated verse, attests to the place he occupies as the architect of the gaiva-Siddhanta philosophy:

The Vedas is a cow, its milk is the Agama the compositions of the four (Samayacaryas) in Tamil (i.e. Tevaram and Tiruvacakam) constitute the ghee extracted therefrom, the excellence of the greatly illuminating Tamil work, full of wisdom, by Meykandar of Tiruvennainallur is the fine taste of that ghee.  

Arunandi, the second acarya. was honoured as Sakalagame Pandita (one who is proficient in all the agamas). His role mainly consisted in giving a systematic exposition of ideas contained in the givajana-bodham. As he ably carried out this task we have the most authentic and faithful interpretation of the teachings of Meykandar. As the family preceptor and then as the disciple of Meykandar he had imbibed the true spirit of master and has given us a rendering of the bodham in keeping with the spirit of the times.

These three acaryas were instrumental in concretising the sublime thoughts inherent in our culture. They did so as individuals having their own characteristic personal traits, though co-operating with the circumstances in hastening and concretising the aspirations of the age into systematic formulations.

The Role of Circumstances

i. The Political Climate: The most striking single element in the political sphere was the religious-minded attitude of the rulers and specifically the patronage they extended to the devotional move-

ments. The support received by the theistic philosophies and the religious movements needs special mention for the reason that, whereas kings and emperors could have been either anti-religious or indifferent towards religion, this did not happen during the period under consideration. In fact, there are instances in Indian history of kings proving to be hostile to the practice and propagation of religions other than their own. The fact that the Cōla kings were religion-oriented and positively lent support to religious movements are to be considered significant while referring to the period of efflorescence in the history of Indian theism. It has been noted already that it was the gauvite and the Vaiṣṇavite systems that prospered more than the others, and among these the former received a preferential treatment. Accordingly, a more predominant development of the gauvite institutions took place.

There are several instances in the course of the history of India wherein we find religious thought flourishing under the patronage of rulers. In fact, almost all Indian rulers before the advent of the British belonged to one faith or another, and there were instances of rulers practising and patronising not only their own faith but other faiths as well. Hence, it could also be suggested that the potentiality for the development of theistic philosophy was always there in the Indian tradition and that during the Cōla period this became greatly manifest.

12. Indian history records sporadic instances of intolerant sovereigns like Pāṇḍya king Māra Varman persecuting the Jains in the 7th century A. D., and Aurangzeb persecuting the Hindus during the later half of the seventeenth century A. D.
13. S. R. BALASUBRAMANIYAM who has published his monumental volumes on the Cōla temples speaks of the beauty and the glory displayed by these temples as monuments of art and as places of worship. Also see Supra, p.
ii. The Economic Conditions. Our analysis of the economic conditions and their repercussions on the individual and on certain groups showed that the average man was at a disadvantage since he was treated mostly as part of a group. It must be conceded that this observation is reminiscent of the twentieth century sentiments like individualism and liberty. It cannot be ascertained whether the acaryas of the period referred to, saw the economic factors in the same way as we do now. Perhaps they did not, for in those days when free and individual enterprises were unheard of, belongingness to a group brought strength to the individual and the latter probably welcomed it even at the cost of some other benefits which might have occurred. Yet our observation of the economic factor as an indirect incentive to the development of the theistic trend cannot be dismissed as faulty, for the reason that theism helped to solve the problem of alienation of the individual.

If the economic scene during the tenth to the thirteenth centuries smothered the development of the individual (which alienated him from the group), religion not understood in the abstract and absolutistic terms but in concrete terms of the relationship between the individual and the deity, came in as a logical, natural and necessary corrective. Thus, without overstating the case, we have suggested that a plausible explanation for the appearance of the theistic trend could be offered in terms of the 'climate' provided by the economic set-up. This has been in keeping with the general principle that religion brings in benefits to the individual and society not directly and perceptibly but indirectly and imperceptibly.

iii. The Social Set-up: Our study of the period has shown that the disabilities experienced by certain sections of society pertained to the secular as well as the religious aspects of life. However, the remedial measures were

initiated by religious men, Therefore religion and philosophy became the starting point of social reform. The social movement picked up momentum from the well-springs of religious philosophy. No wonder that the problem or alienation did not give rise to a philosophical thought of a revolutionary character, pleading for the uprooting of the privileged classes. Perhaps, the valaśkai-idaśkai\textsuperscript{15} concepts indicate that the social changes were sought for, but the philosophical nature of the Indian tradition and more specifically the way in which it was permeating the Cōja period prevented the emergence of a revolutionary social thought. Here, the creative elements of philosophical development were along the theistic lines.

The view taken in the study is that Indian philosophy did not develop in a 'historical vacuum'. However, this view does not deny that there were other ways in which philosophy in India grew: for example, moving towards a philosophical position through a clash of ideas and through 'confrontation'. It is not denied that in the process of growth every worthwhile system of philosophy had to meet unexpected opponents and bring in its own answer to defend its position. In fact, this method was used profusely even by the two systems of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Gaiva-Siddhānta. However, the specific concern of our present study was to approach the two systems of the Hindu philosophy through Indian history.

\textsuperscript{15} See Supra, pp. 49 & 50.
APPENDIX - I

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sr. Mary John Kattikatt belongs to the order to Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. She has been working in Stella Maris College since 1972 in various capacities as Lecturer in History, Head of the Department of History, Dean of Students, Vice-Principal and Principal-in-charge. Interested in the inter-disciplinary topic of History and Philosophy, she made research in the fields of Visistadvaita and Saiva Siddhanta. The result of the study forms the content of the present book. Sr. Mary John has deep respect and love for the great spiritual traditions of India. A staunch Christian and an admirer of Indian spiritual traditions she firmly believes in and earnestly works towards inter-faith harmony. It is her desire that all that is good and beautiful in every tradition must be appreciated by all and must become accessible to all.