

**THE FOUR  
VAIṢṆAVA SAMPRADĀYAS  
PURUṢATRAYA SWĀMĪ**

SECOND EDITION  
(enlarged)

VAIṢṆAVA INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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## PREFACE

Śrīla Prabhupāda ends his introduction of the Śrīmad Bhagavatam with the following words: “The cult of Śrī Caitanya philosophy is richer than any other, and it is admitted to be the living religion of the day with the potency for spreading as *viśva-dharma* or universal religion.”

We, *gauḍīya vaiṣṇavas*, are convinced that the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya is the essence of all other Vaiṣṇava philosophies. It is the definite *sidhānta*, the most precise exposition of the words of Bhagavān Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and the last word in *Vedānta* philosophy. Actually the four Vaiṣṇava philosophies – *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *Dvaita*, *Suddhādvaita* and *Svabhāvika-bhedābheda* –, have paved the way for the manifestation of Śrī Caitanya's *Acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhakura in his *Navadvīpa-Mahātmyam (Parikrama-khaṇḍa)* revealed that all the founder acāryas of the Vaiṣṇava *samprādayas*, namely Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī and Śrī Nimbārkācārya performed some pastimes in Gauḍa-maṇḍala. He described a meeting Lord Caitanya had with Śrī Nimbārka, when He addressed him with these words:

*madhva haite sāradvaya kariba grahaṇa  
eka haya kevala-advaita nirasana  
kṛṣṇa-mūrti nitya jāni'tāmhāra sevana  
sei ta'dvitīya sāra jāna mahājana  
rāmānuja haite anni lai dvi sara  
ananya-bhakati, bhaktajana-seva āra  
viṣṇu haite dui sāra kariba svikāra  
tadīya sarvasva-bhāva, rāgamārga āra  
toma haite laba āmi dui mahāsāra  
ekānta rādhikāśraya gopī-bhāva āra*

“Later when I begin the *sankīrtana* movement I myself will preach using the essence of the philosophies of the four of you. From Madhva I will receive two items: his complete defeat of the *Māyāvādi* philosophy, and his service to the *mūrti* of Kṛṣṇa, accepting it as an eternal spiritual being. From Rāmānuja I will accept two teachings: the concept of *bhakti* unpolluted by *karma* or *jñāna* and service to the devotees. From Viṣṇusvāmī's teaching I will accept two elements: the sentiment of exclusive dependence on Kṛṣṇa and the path of *rāga-bhakti*. And from you I will receive two great principles: the necessity of taking shelter of Rādhā and the high esteem for the *gopīs* love of Kṛṣṇa.”

Our Gauḍīya *samprādaya* is therefore very much indebted to all these great acāryas. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī declares that he resorted to the commentaries of great vaiṣṇavas like Śrīdhāra Svāmī, Śrī Rāmānujācārya and Śrī Madhvācārya while composing his masterpiece *Ṣaḍ-Sandarbhā* which expresses the essence of Lord Caitanya's philosophy.

Another very significant act of recognition performed by the Gauḍīyas for the whole Vaiṣṇava community, and their revered acāryas, was offered by Śrīla Bhaktisidhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhakura. He installed the *mūrtis* of the four acāryas in the main temple for regular worship in the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, Śrī Mayapur *dhāma*.

This work was done mostly by direct compilation and adaptation from texts of some of the best books available in the English language on the subject. The idea is that a recognized representative of each samprādaya expose its own philosophy with its own words, concepts and terminology. In this way the information is more accurate and we are able to better appreciate the mood of each *samprādaya*. The following books were used in this work:

- 1- *A History of Indian Philosophy (5Vol), Surendranath Dasgupta*
- 2- *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Dr. Chandrahara Sharma*
- 3- *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, Dr. Satiscandra Chatterjee and Dr. Dhirendramohan Datta*
- 4- *Bhakti Schools of Vedānta, Svāmī Tapasyānanda*
- 5- *Conceptions of God in Vaiṣṇava Philosophical Systems, Dr. Manju Bube*
- 6- *Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya, O.B.L. Kapoor*
- 7- *The History & Literature of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and their Relation to other Medieval Vaiṣṇava Schools, Dr. Sambidānanda Das*
- 8- *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita, P.N. Śrīnivasachari*
- 9- *Fundamentals of Viśiṣṭādvaita, S.M. Śrīnivasa Chari*
- 10- *Vaiṣṇavism – Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline, S.M. Śrīnivasa Chari*
- 11- *The Holy lives of the Ālvārs, Alkondavili Govindacharya*
- 12- *Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya, B.N.K. Sharma*
- 13- *History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta & its Literature, B.N.K. Sharma*
- 14- *Śrī Madhvācārya and his Cardinal Doctrines, D.N. Shanbhag*
- 15- *Doctrines of Nimbārka and His Followers, Roma Bose*
- 16- *The Philosophy of Nimbārka, Madan Mohan Agrawal*
- 17- *A Life of Śrī Vallabhācārya and the Doctrines, Prof. G.H. Bhatt.*
- 18- *Śrī Vallabhācārya and His Doctrines, Prof. G.H. Bhatt.*
- 19- *Puṣṭi-mārga and Śrī Vallabhācārya, edited by C.M. Vaidya.*
- 20- *Vaiṣṇavism, edited by Steven J. Rosen.*

PURUṢATRAYA SVĀMĪ

Vṛndāvana, Karttika 1993

# INTRODUCTION

## I – Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkarācārya (788-820AD)

- \* Ultimate Reality, according to Śaṅkara, is *Brahman* or *Ātman*, which is *advaya*, one without a second; nothing at all exists besides *Brahman*, whether inside It, as Its part or attribute, or outside It. *Brahman* is *nirguṇa*, or devoid of all attributes, and *nirviśeṣa*, devoid of all categories of intellect. It is Pure Consciousness (*jñāna-svarūpa*), a pure unity, absolutely homogeneous. The *nirguṇa Brahman* is also called *Para-Brahman*, or Higher *Brahman*.  
*Brahman* or *Ātma* is the Unqualified Absolute. He is the only Reality. It is the Self which is Self-luminous and which transcends the subject-object duality and the trinity of ‘knower, known and knowledge’.
- \* Śaṅkara’s Advaita philosophy may be summarized in this sentence: *brahma satyam jagan mithyā jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥ* – ‘*Brahman* is the only Reality; the world is ultimately false; and the individual soul is non-different from *Brahman*’.
- \* But if nothing else besides *Brahman* exists, how to explain the appearance of this physical world and the individual beings like ourselves? To solve this question, Śaṅkara introduced in his philosophy the ‘theory of *māyā*’.
- \* *Brahman* associated with Its potency *māyā* appears as the qualified or *saguṇa Brahman*. This *saguṇa-Brahman* is *Īśvara* or God, Who is the creator, maintainer and annihilator of this world. To the *Advaita-vādis* God is the *apara-Brahman*, or Lower *Brahman*.
- \* This world does not have real existence. It is a mere appearance in *Brahman*, due to the *Brahman*’s magical creative power, *māyā*. In spite of being considered to be a product of *māyā*, *Īśvara* is the Master of *māyā*, the magician who produces illusory appearances of physical objects and living beings by his incomprehensible magical power.
- \* The theory that the world is taken as an illusory appearance in *Brahman* is called by Śaṅkara as *Vivarta-vāda*, the theory of illusion. The classical examples given are the ‘rope-snake’ and ‘conchshell-silver’.  
In a situation of half light, a rope on the ground may be mistaken by a snake, and all psychological and emotional reactions take place in the person as the snake were real. This analogy is meant to show that although this world is not real we, under the spell of *ajñāna*, think as if it were real.  
The other example says that under certain conditions of luminosity and in certain angle, the mother-of-pearl of the conchshell appears like an object of silver. It is explained that the silver, although non-existent, was superimposed in the conchshell. The conchshell is the ground on which the silver is superimposed. Similarly this world, although non-existent, is taken to be a superimposition or projection (*adhyāsa*) in *Brahman*. *Brahman* associated with its power *māyā* is the ground on which the phenomenal world is superimposed.  
The world is not a transformation (*pariṇāma*) of *Brahman*, but it is an appearance only (*vivarta*).

\* According to Śāṅkara, the relation between the cause and the effect is called *vivarta-vāda*, wherein the cause alone is real and the effect is illusory or a superimposition, and hence unreal. The *vivarta-vāda* reduces all effects to mere appearances without any reality of their own. Therefore when the substratum, base, or foundation of a superimposition comes to be known, all superimposed appearances are consequently sublated, and the truth is revealed that the substratum (*Brahman*) alone is real. Then, the *Advaita* philosophy states that when *Brahman* is known as it is, the world of appearances is automatically switched off and the underlying truth alone shines forth, as the one and only Reality.

\* But if *Brahman* is an indifferentiated entity and nothing else exists besides Him, how the appearance of the physical world and the individual beings are justified? To answer this question, Śāṅkara explains it with the ‘theory of *māyā*’ and the ‘concept of different states of existence’.

To him, there exist three states of existence: *pāramārthika*, *vyāvaharika* and *pratibhāsika*.

The Absolute Existence or Reality on the level of *Brahman* is called *pāramārthika*. In this state of pure existence there is no forms, no individuality, no activity and no sensation. It is a state of Pure Consciousness. The practical or empirical reality of this world is called *vyāvaharika*. From the phenomenal point of view, the world, which is mere appearance or superimposition in *Brahman*, due to *māyā*, is quite real. It is like a dream – things seen in a dream are quite true as long as the dream lasts; they are sublated only when we are awake. Similarly, the world is quite true so long as true knowledge does not dawn.

The *pratibhāsika* state of existence is an imaginary existence. It was called by some commentators as “the illusion of the illusion”. The identification of the self with the body is *pratibhāsika* existence, the identification of the self with the individual soul is *vyāvaharika* existence, while the identification of the self with *Brahman* is *pāramārthika* existence, the only real existence.

\* According to Śāṅkara, *māyā* or *avidyā* is not only absence of knowledge. It is also positive wrong knowledge or illusion, therefore it is a positive entity (*bhāva-rūpa*). But, at the same time, it is not existent because the only existent thing is *Brahman*. And it cannot be non-existent for *māyā* has the power to create the appearance of the world in *Brahman*.

In fact, according to Śāṅkara, *māyā* is ‘neither existent nor non-existent nor both’. It cannot be both existent and non-existent for this conception is self-contradictory. *māyā*, therefore, is neither real nor unreal (*sad-asad-vilakṣana*).

To solve this situation, Śāṅkara says that *māyā* is *anirvacanīya*, or indescribable.

*māyā* is also beginningless (*anādi*), but not endless (*ananta*), since it is cancelled in *mokṣa*, liberation.

*māyā* is removed by *brahma-jñāna*, the knowledge of the essential unity of the *jivātma* and *Brahman*. When *vidyā* dawns *avidyā* vanishes. When the rope is known, the ‘rope-snake’ vanishes.

\* All difference is due to ignorance. It is not ultimate. Names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*) are only figments of ignorance. They are neither real nor unreal.

- \* Advaita philosophy does not admit that the individual soul, *jīva*, is ultimately real. This philosophy states that *Brahman*, the True Self, is One, but It appears as many. The plurality of *jīvas*, which is apparent to our ordinary experience, is accounted for on the basis of the *upādhis* or limiting adjuncts. Basically, there are two theories which explain how *Brahman* has become many.

The One Self appears as many because of the *upādhis* (fiscal body, subtle body).

Thus, for example, *ākāśa* or space is all-pervasive and one; when this *ākāśa* is conditioned by various pots, we call them different *ākāśas*. In the same way there exists only One Self or *Ātma*, and the same when conditioned by different internal organs (*antaḥkaraṇa* or subtle body) appears as different *jīvas*. This theory is called *apaccheda-vāda*. It is ascribed to Vācaspati Miśra, the author of *Bhāmātī*.

The other theory is called *bimba-pratibimba-vāda* or reflection theory. This is explained on the analogy of the reflection of the single moon in the waves of the ocean. Just as the single moon appears as many being reflected in the waves, likewise the self also appears as many being reflected in numerous internal organs or *upādhis*. This theory was elaborated by Prakāśātman, author of *Vivaraṇa*.

- \* *Īśvara* has been a taxing problem for the followers of Śāṅkara. According to some, *Īśvara* is the reflection of *Brahman* in *avidyā*. According to others, *Brahman*, limited or conditioned by *māyā* is *Īśvara*, while *Brahman* limited by *avidyā* or the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa* or *upādhis* – which is a product of *avidyā*) is *jīva*.
- \* *Īśvara* is limited by His own power of nescience and appears as many phenomenal selves like the space appears as different “spaces” limited by the adjuncts of jars, pots, etc. The omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of *Īśvara* are all due to the adjuncts of ignorance; they are not ultimate. Where the essential unity of the *Ātma* is realized, they all vanish. Creation, therefore, is due to ignorance. It is not ultimately real.
- \* *Brahman* is the only Reality. It is absolutely indeterminate and non-dual. It is beyond speech and mind. It is indescribable because no description of it can be complete. The best description of it is through the negative formula of “neti neti”. Effects alone can be negated, for they are unreal. But the cause, the *Brahman*, cannot be negated, for It is the ultimate ground on which all effects are superposed.
- \* *Īśvara* becomes ‘unreal’ only for one who has realized his oneness with *Brahman* by rising above speech and mind. For us, conditioned souls, *Īśvara* is all in all. Finite thought can never grasp *Brahman*. And therefore all talks about *Brahman* are really talks about *Īśvara*. Even the words ‘unconditioned *Brahman*’ refer really to ‘conditioned *Īśvara*’, for the moment we speak of *Brahman*, He ceases to be *Brahman* and becomes *Īśvara*. *Brahman*, reflected in or conditioned by *māyā*, is called *Īśvara* or God. This is the ‘celebrated’ distinction between God and the Absolute which Śāṅkara makes. *Īśvara* is also known as *Apara-Brahman* or Lower *Brahman* as contrasted with the unconditioned *Brahman* which is called *Para-Brahman* or Higher *Brahman*.
- \* *Īśvara* or God is *sat-cit-ānanda*. He is the Perfect Personality. He is the Lord of *māyā*. He is immanent in the whole universe which He controls from within. He is the Soul of the souls as well as the Soul of Nature. He is also transcendental, for His own nature He transcends the universe. He is the source of everything, He is the final

haven of everything. He is the Concrete Universal, the Supreme Individual, the Whole, the Identity-in-difference. He is the inspirer of moral life. He is the object of devotion. He is all in all from the practical standpoint.

\* *Brahman* is realized exclusively by *jñāna*, not by *karma* or *bhakti*. The *sādhana* for *Brahman* realization or *mokṣa* is total *vairāgya*, renunciation, and meditation in the *mahā-vākya* 'tat tvam asi'.

## II—The Decline of Māyāvāda and the Theistic Reaction of Śrī Rāmānujācārya

- a) About the latter part of the twelfth century some signs of a growing discontent with the empty abstractions of *Māyāvāda* were beginning to be felt. Several versions of the *Advaita* doctrine, often in conflict with one another, on vital points, had been given, both by the contemporaries and successors of Śaṅkarācārya. The enunciations of Śaṅkara's own views on the *Vedānta* was not in many points convincingly clear. This gave rise to various schools of thought which claimed to be the proper interpretation of the monistic ideas of Śaṅkara; but which differed from one another sometimes in a very remarkable manner. Differences arose between master and disciples and among disciples themselves in the elucidation of general principles and doctrines. For over five centuries from the eight, Monism in some form or other, had had strong influence. But, after that, popular interest in and admiration for inevitably decreased.
- b) Around the twelfth century, philosophy fell into an dry exercise in definition and counter-definitions and unmitigated dialecticism. Philosophy had ceased to be an earnest quest of God and the eternal life.
- c) At that time, a wave of intense devotionism in religion and theism in philosophy was surging throughout the country. To the average man of the world, it appeared the *Māyāvādis* had perverted the goal of oneness supported in the *Upaniṣads*; while the one they offered instead was unrealisable. The denial of the Supreme will and knowledge of the Lord was something hard to swallow, as well as statements like 'God, after all, is unreal' or that 'even the *Puruṣottama* is imaginary'.
- d) When the devotionism of the southern vaiṣṇavas reached its height about the tenth century, there was bound to come a demand for a formal alliance with the *Vedānta*. The Theism of Vaiṣṇavas could no longer be content with a subordinate place. Śrī Yamunācārya had undertaken the task of reviving the labor of the previous Vaiṣṇavas, and had called the attention to the defects of *Māyāvāda*, in his *Siddhitraya*. But a systematic commentary on the *praṣṭhāna-traya* was a need. The ancient worker of Bodhāyana, Taṅka, etc, had evidently been lost, or had become completely out of date, in style or method and totally eclipsed by the famous commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. The task of writing a new commentary, on par with the best in the field, so as to push Vaiṣṇava Theism into the focus of contemporary philosophic thought was an urgent one. It was taken up by Śrī Rāmānujācārya, who wrote lengthy commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and thus established Vedāntic Realism on a firm basis, both logical and textual.

## PART I – ŚRĪ SAMPRĀDAYA

### A PRE-RĀMĀNUJA PERIOD

#### I. The Ālvārs

- a) It is believed that the verses in the Śrīmad Bhagavatam (11.5.38-40) are a prophecy for the appearance of the Ālvārs, the saints of South India. "My dear king, the inhabitants of Satya Yuga and other ages earnestly desire to take birth in this age of Kali, since in this age there will be many devotees of the Supreme Lord, *Nārāyaṇa*. These devotees will appear in various places but will be especially numerous in South India. O master of men, in the age of Kali those persons who drink the waters of the holy rivers of Dravida-deśa such as the Tāmraparṇi, Kṛtamāla, Payasvinī, the extremely pious Kaverī and the Pratiṅgī Mahārādī, will almost all be purehearted devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva".
- b) The word Ālvār means 'one who has a deep intuitive knowledge of God' or 'one who is immersed in the contemplation of God'.
- c) The Ālvārs are twelve in number and, according to modern historical research, they flourished in the period between the second century AD and the eighth century AD. But according to ancient Śrī-Vaiṣṇava literature some of them appeared in the end of the Dvāpara Yuga and others in the beginning of the Kali Yuga.
- d) They were all *Mahā-Bhāgavatas* who manifested devotional ecstasy of *Bhagavat-prema* in the highest degree. All of them had divine *darśana* of the Lord and they were continuously immersed in love of God. They expressed their mystic realizations in fine poetry.
- e) They were born into different castes and at different times, but basically they had the same devotional mood.
- f) The twelve Ālvārs are: 1) Poygai (incarnation of the Viṣṇu's *gadā*, the mace), 2) Bhūtam (Viṣṇu's *śanka*, conch), 3) Pey (Viṣṇu's *nandaka*, sword), 4) Tirumaliśai (Viṣṇu's *cakra*), 5) Nanmālvār (Viśvaksena), 6) Madhurakavi, 7) Kūlaśekhara (*kaustubha*), 8) Periy (Garuda), 9) Āṇḍāl (Bhū-devī), 10) Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi (*vanamāla*, Viṣṇu's garland), 11) Tiruppān and 12) Tirumaṅgai (*śārṅga*, Viṣṇu's bow).
- g) The most prominent of them is Nanmālvār, who composed the famous *Tiruvāymoli*, also called *Dramiḍopanīśad*, which is unsurpassed in mystic literature. He is the founder of the *prapatti* school.
- h) The poems composed by the Ālvārs were written in Tamil language and they altogether (four thousand verses) are called *Nālāyira-divya-prabhandam*. These hymns express the state of the soul completely dependent and surrendered to the Lord. Also they glorify the qualities of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, and the most important *arcana-mūrtis* of Lord *Viṣṇu* all around India, especially Lord Raṅganātha of Śrī Raṅgam. In many passages the Ālvārs address to Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in the mood of *vatsalya-bhāva* and even in the mood of the *gopīs*, aspiring conjugal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- i) This *Divya-prabhandam* has very much importance in the Śrī-samprādaya, and it is taken as equivalent to the *praśṭhāna-traya*, being also known as *Ubhaya-Vedānta*.

## II. The Ācāryas

- \* While the Āḷvārs were divers into divinity, the Acāryas who followed them became the expositors of the Āḷvār's experience and the apostles of Śrī-vaiṣṇavism as the system is now known.

The first pontiff of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism was Nāthamuni, descendent of the Bhāgavat immigrants from regions where the Ganges flows. He was born at Mannāguḍi in the South Arcot district in 824, and he became a *muni* even in his youth. Tradition ascribes to him the miraculous discovery of the lost *Tiruvāymoli* of Nanmālvār and then of the entire *Prabandha*. While at Kumbakonam, he happened to hear the recitals of the hymns of Nanmālvār. Nāthamuni then realized the sweetness of those divine songs and became eager to recover the whole work. He went to Tirunagari where the whole of the *Prabandha* was miraculously revealed to him by the Āḷvār himself after having recited twelve thousand times a verse composed by Madhurakavi Āḷvār in adoration of his guru Nanmālvār. Nāthamuni grouped the *Prabandha* on the Vedic model into four parts and its recitation was introduced as a part of the temple worship at Śrī Raṅgam and this practice is even now followed in all Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temples. Nāthamuni wrote two important works – *Nyāya-tattva* (the first treatise on Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy) and *Yoga-rahasya* – but not available nowadays. He passed away in samadhi in 920.

- \* The next important acārya was Ālavandār or Yamunācārya, the grandson of Nāthamuni (916-1036). Even as a boy, he showed his prodigious learning and skill when he accepted the challenge of the court *paṇḍita* of the Cola king made to his guru and easily vanquished him in the learned assembly of the king by a clever puzzle. He was at once greeted by the queen as Ālavandār for having conquered the proud *paṇḍita*, and was granted a portion of the kingdom according to the terms of the polemic duel. He lived a life of luxurious ease, when a sudden change came over him after an interview with the old teacher Rāma Miśra, Nāthamuni's disciple, who intimated to him the news of the patrimony bequeathed to him by his grandfather in the form of a valuable treasure hidden between two rivers. He eagerly followed the guru to take possession of the treasure, and when he was shown the shining shrine at Śrī Raṅgam, he became converted, was overjoyed and took *sannyasa*. His whole life was dedicated thereafter to spirituality and service, and he made Śrī Raṅgam a veritable Vaikuntha on earth. He wrote few important works, the most important of these is *Siddhitraya* consisting of three parts – *Ātmasiddhi*, *Īśvarasiddhi* and *Sarṁvitsiddhi* – each being devoted to one of the three fundamental doctrines of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. Yamunācārya's *Stotra-ratna*, a masterpiece of lyrical devotion, reveals his discerning faith in *Nārāyaṇa* and *Śrī* and the intense humility of the philosophic devotee who pours forth his heartfelt *bhakti* soul stirring verses to which there is no parallel in *Stotra* literature.

## B ŚRĪ RĀMĀNUJĀCĀRYA

### I. His Life

- \* Śrī Rāmānuja was born in Śrīperumbudur, near Kāñci, in 1017 as the son of Asuri Keśava Somāyājin and Kantimati, sister of Śrī Śailapūrṇa, the grandson of Yamunācārya. From his childhood he showed signs of Vedāntic genius and he was sent to Kāñci to have a course of studies in *Vedānta* under the great *Advaita* teacher Yādavaprakāṣa. It is said that his teachings did not satisfy the budding *Viśiṣṭādvaita*.
- \* One day, when Yādavaprakāṣa explained the Taittirīya text - *satyam jñānam anantam brahma* - in terms of absolute identity, the disciple felt that the identity was on explanation at all and reconstructed the text by saying that *Brahman* is and has *satya*, *jñāna* and *ānanda* as His essential ontological attributes. The guru's exposition at another time of the *Upaniṣadic* description - *kapyāsam* - of the lotus to which the beautiful eyes of Bhagavān were compared by translating that expression as 'the red posterior of the monkey' brought tears of grief to the eyes of Rāmānujācārya, and he immediately corrected the ugly analogy by giving the true meaning of that term as 'the well developed lotus that blossoms at day-dawn'.
- \* These reinterpretations aroused the anger and jealousy of the teacher who, in consultation with some trusted disciples, arranged for a pilgrimage to Benares with the evil idea of drowning Rāmānuja in the Ganga and attributing it to an accident. On the way, Rāmānuja was informed of the conspiracy and he escaped in the dead of night while they were passing through a wilderness.
- \* Weary and footsore, Rāmānuja wandered several days till a hunter and a huntress met him and offered to take him to Kāñci, which they said was their destination too. When they were very near Kāñci the couple suddenly disappeared after asking Rāmānuja for a little water and on his looking around, the lofty towers of Lord Varadarāja in Kāñci greeted his wondering eyes. Rāmānuja at once realized that Lord Varada and His consort had rescued him in that miraculous manner and as they had asked him for water he made it a point from that day onwards to fetch a potful of water every day from a well near the spot they disappeared, to be used in their daily puja.
- \* Yādavaprakāṣa later on became a disciple of Rāmānuja. At this time, saint Tirukkacci Nambi had daily contact and converse with the Lord, and Rāmānuja came under his spiritual influence.
- \* Rāmānuja never met Yamunācārya face to face though the latter had seen Rāmānuja and, unwilling to disturb his studies, had blessed him from a distance. Five of Yamunācārya's disciples imparted the teachings of Yamunācārya to young Rāmānuja who was to become the chief propagator of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*.
- \* To dedicate himself wholly to the cause of religion and the service of humanity, he joined the sannyasa order and became *yatirāja* or the prince of sannyasis on account of his austere and ascetic life. While he settled down at Śrī Raṅgam and prepared himself to carry out his mission, he had to meet an *Advaitic* controversialist called Yajñāmūrṭi, and seventeen days disputation on the opponent was defeated.
- \* He started on a pilgrimage round the country from Rameśvara to Badrinnāth by the West coast and returned via the East coast. With his ever faithful disciple Kureśa, he reached Śrī Nagar and secured a manuscript copy of the Bodhāyana *vr̥tti*, which Kureśa, with his prodigious memory, was able to learn by heart even at the very first reading. He was thus able to bring out his *Śrī-bhāṣya* by literally following tradition and is said to have earned the title of *Bhāṣya-kāra* in Kashmir from Sarasvatī herself.

- \* At this time occurred the persecution of the Vaiṣṇavas by the Cola king, Kolottunga Cola I, who, in his bigoted zeal for the spread of Śaivism, tried to repress the Vaiṣṇavas by capital punishment. As Kureśa and the venerable Mahāpūrṇa refused to change their faith, their eyes were plucked out. Rāmānuja's retirement to Melkote at this critical period was an epoch in its religious history, as it led to the conversion of a large number of Jains and also of Vitthaladeva, the king of the Kausalas, followed by the construction of the city of Melkote and the construction of a temple for Yādavadri-pati.
- \* His return to Śrī Raṅgam in 1118 after an absence of two decades was greeted with great joy by the whole Śrī-Vaiṣṇava community and the remaining years of his life were devoted to the consolidation of his missionary work by organizing temple worship and establishing seventy four spiritual centres in different parts of the country, presided over by his disciples, to popularize *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. Śrī Rāmānujācārya passed away in 1137 full of honours after a long span of 120 years.

## II. Śrī Rāmānuja's Works

Nine works are credited to Śrī Rāmānuja:

- 1) *Vedārtha-saṅgraha* - a concise statement of the philosophical doctrines of the *Vedas*, with special references to important passages in the *Upaniṣads*.
- 2) *Vedānta-sāra* – ('The essence of the Vedānta') a very brief commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra.
- 3) *Vedānta -dīpa* – ('Lamp of the Vedas') a longer commentary, but still brief, on the Vedānta-sūtra.
- 4) *Śrī-bhāṣya* – ('The beautiful commentary') a fairly comprehensive commentary on the Vedānta-sūtra which systematically refutes all schools of thought, heterodox as well as orthodox, other than *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, and constitutes the main philosophical treatise on this particular branch of *Vedānta*.
- 5) *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* – a prayer in poetic prose, based on unbounded faith in the Lord's grace and describing complete surrender to His will.
- 6) *Śrī-raṅga-gadya* – another prayer in poetic prose, describing the famous shrine at Śrī Raṅgam and the gracious presence of the Lord there as the deity.
- 7) *Śrī-Vaikuntha-gadya* – yet another prose poem, describing the glories of the Supreme abode and the beatitude of liberation.
- 8) *Gītā-bhāṣya* - a commentary on Bhagavad-gītā.
- 9) *Nitya-grantha* - a manual of everyday worship and devotion.

## C VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA VEDĀNTA PHILOSOPHY

### I. Meaning of the Term Viśiṣṭādvaita

The system of philosophy as expounded by Śrī Rāmānujācārya is called *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. The term *advaita* means non-dualism emphasising the oneness of the ultimate Reality. Though all schools of thought upholding monism agree that the ultimate Reality is one only, they differ widely from one another when it comes to determining the sense in which Reality is one. The fundamental problem with monism is to account for the world of plurality as well as the infinite number of souls. The issue with which a monism is confronted is how does the 'one' become 'many' and how is the one Reality related to the manifold universe of matter and spirit? There are two ways of resolving this important metaphysical problem. According to one view, which upholds absolute monism as propounded by Śaṅkarācārya, the universe is not ultimately real but a phenomenal appearance of Reality. The ultimate Reality is absolutely one in the sense that it does not admit any kind of differentiation, either internal or external. Such an absolute identity would imply denial of ultimate reality to individual souls and the universe. This type of monism advocated by Śaṅkarācārya is known as *Advaita Vedānta*.

According to the second view held by Rāmānujācārya, the ultimate Reality, though one, is not the Absolute without any differentiation since such a transcendental indifferentiated Being is inconceivable and also logically untenable. We have to admit the reality of the universe with which we are surrounded and also the individual souls which experience the external world. Accordingly, Rāmānuja acknowledges three fundamental real entities - matter (*acit*), soul (*cit*) and God (*Īśvara*) - and on the basis of the principle of organic relation, upholds that ultimate Reality is one as a unity. *Īśvara* as the creator of the universe is the immanent ground of existence and also the inner self of all things in the universe and as such He sustains and controls *cit* and *acit*. *Cit* and *acit* depend in *Īśvara* for their very existence and are organically related to *Īśvara* in the same way as the physical body is related to the soul within. The oneness of Reality is to be understood not in the sense of absolute identity but as an organic unity. *Brahman*, alone, as organically related to the entire *cit* and *acit*, is the one ultimate Reality. Though there is absolute difference between *Īśvara* and the other reals and also among the individual souls and matter, the ultimate Reality is considered one because as an organic unity it is one. In this sense, the system of *Vedānta* expounded by Śrī Rāmānujācārya is described as *Viśiṣṭādvaita* which means oneness of the organic unity.

### II. Fundamental Metaphysical Categories

#### a) Theory of Aprthak-siddhi

- \* According to this theory, the relation between substance and its attributes are inseparable. For instance, in blue lotus, the blueness which is a quality cannot be separated from the flower. When an object is perceived it is seen as inherently connected with the quality. Being inherent in substance, the attributes form an integral part of it. Substance, which is the basis for the attributes does not however depend on them for its existence, but nevertheless it needs attributes because the *svarūpa* of an entity is determinable only through its essential attributes.

- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, a *svarūpa* devoid of attributes is a non-entity. The relation of *apr̥thak-siddhi* is obtained not only between substance and attribute but also between two substances. In this way, the physical body (*śarīra*) and the soul within (*ātma*), though both are substances (*dravya*), are inseparable. The very concept of *śarīra* necessarily presupposes its relation to a soul. A body as a living organism cannot exist by itself without a soul to sustain it.

#### b) The Concept of Body-Soul Relation

- \* The physical body is necessarily dependant upon the soul for its existence; it ceases to be a body the moment the soul departs from it. It is wholly controlled by the soul. It exists wholly for the use of the self. Because there is an intimate or inseparable relation between the self and the body, it is possible that the latter can be supported, controlled and used for its purpose by the former.
- \* On the basis of this theory of body-soul relation the *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* maintains that the entire universe of *cit* and *acit* stands in relation of the body and soul. All sentient and nonsentient beings constitute the *śarīra* or body of *Īśvara* in the technical sense that the former are wholly dependent on the latter for their existence; they are completely controlled by *Īśvara* and they subserve the purpose of the Supreme Being. *Īśvara* is called the *ātma* or *sarīri* because He is the ground or support (*ādhāra*) for the universe,. He is the controller (*niyantā*) and uses it for His own purpose. The three concepts used to explain comprehensively the organic relationships that exists between *Brahman* and universe of *cit* and *acit* are: *ādhāra-ādheya* (the sustainer and sustained), *niyantā-niyāmya* (the controller and controlled) and *śeṣi-śeṣa* (the self subsistent and dependent).

#### c) The Concept of Cause and Effect

- \* The concept of cause and effect is the most fundamental metaphysical category. It assumes greater importance than other concepts as it provides the key to understanding of the knotty problem of how the 'one' becomes 'many'. The *Ṣad-vidyā* of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* asks: "What is that by knowing which everything else is known?" According one school of thought, cause and effect are not the same. The effect is a product of the cause but the former is not already existent in the cause. This is known as *asat-kārya-vāda*, attributed to the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* system. According to another school of thought, the effect exists in the cause in a potential form and it is only a manifestation of what already exists. This is the *sat-kārya-vāda* held by the *Sāṅkhya* System.
- \* There is another view which does not accept either of the above theories. The effect does not exist in the cause nor is it distinct from the cause. The two are different states of one and the same substance(entity). This is the theory of *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* which is regarded as a modified *sat-kārya-vāda*. As against these accepted views, we have other theories of casuality which question the very basic concept of cause and effect. Thus, according to the Carvaka school, there is no such thing as cause and effect. The Buddhists for whom everything is momentary also deny the very existence of cause and effect as enduring entities.
- \* The *Advaita* school, though they accept the concept of cause and effect, deny ultimate reality to it because causal relation is logically unintelligible. [The argument here is that two entities - *Brahman* and the universe - as real with different nature cannot be

identical. If one is real (*Brahman*) and the other illusory (the universe), then it is possible to regard them as non- distinct].

### III. Pramāṇas and their Validity

- \* *Pramāṇa* is defined as that which is the mean of *pramā* or valid knowledge. According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, a knowledge to be valid should fulfil two conditions. It should reveal things as they are and should also serve the practical interests of life. *Pramāṇa* therefore signifies the essential means of arriving at valid knowledge.
- \* The *Viśiṣṭādvaita* admits three *pramāṇas*; perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*) and verbal testimony (*śabda*). All the three *pramāṇas* reveal the truth and are therefore equally valid. Of the three, *pratyakṣa* is an important *pramāṇa* because it serves as the basis for the other two *pramāṇas*. Inference depends on perception for establishing the logical concomitance. Verbal testimony also depends on hearing of the sound of the words and the comprehension of their meaning.
- \* In view of this, *pratyakṣa* is regarded as *upajīvyā* or that which offers subsistence, and *anumāna* as well as *śabda* as *upajīvaka* or that which subsists on another. This means that inference and verbal testimony cannot contradict what is proved by perception.
- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, if the knowledge arises from *anumāna* and *śabda* is opposed to perceptual experience, the former cannot be taken as valid. It does not mean that scriptural statements which conflict with perceptual experience have to be rejected as invalid. But, on the contrary, they have to be accepted but interpreted in such a way as to overcome the conflict. Thus, the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* gives equal importance to all three *pramāṇas* through which we can get to know the reality.

### IV. Theory of Knowledge

#### a) Knowledge as an Attribute of *jīva*

- \* The *jīva*, which is a permanent spiritual entity, is of the nature of consciousness (*jñāna-svarūpa*). It means that knowledge or consciousness is his very essence (*svārūpa-jñāna*), or in other words, the *jīva* is a knowing subject. But besides this, according to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, the *jīva* has another type of knowledge by which the objects outside are revealed to him. That means - the *jīva* is knowledge, and also, the *jīva* has knowledge.
- \* This kind of knowledge which can reveal the objects outside is an attribute of the *jīva*, and it is called *dharmabhūta-jñāna*. There is a logical justification for maintaining *dharmabhūta-jñāna* as distinct from *svārūpa-jñāna*. According to the śāstras, the *jīva* is eternal and immutable, and as such he cannot undergo modification, whereas, knowledge is subject to constant modification, as it is confirmed by our experience. Knowledge manifests itself when it comes into contact with objects through mind and sense organs and it ceases to function whenever it is not in contact with any object. If *svārūpa-jñāna* alone is accepted, then the modifications that take place in respect of knowledge will have to be credited to the *jīva* and this would go against his immutable character. According to Rāmānuja, the relation of *jīva* to knowledge is comparable to the flame (of a lamp) and its luminosity.

#### b) Knowledge is Self-Luminous

- \* Knowledge reveals itself as well as the object. This is described as *svayam-prakāṣa*. It means, according to the *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, that *jñāna*, at the time of revealing an object, does not require to be manifested by another *jñāna*. It is like light which reveals the object around it but does not require another light for it to be revealed.

### c) Knowledge is Eternal

- \* Since the self is eternal (*nitya*), knowledge, which is its essential attribute (*dharma*), is also eternal. The view that knowledge is eternal has certain important implications. It signifies that knowledge persists in all states of our experience including the state of *susupti* (deep sleep).
- \* Another point is that *jñāna* endures as in the state of bondage of *jīva*, even in the state of *mokṣa*. During the state of bondage, *jñāna* is causally determined by the law of *karma* and as such its function is restricted. But in the state of *mukti*, it is infinite and all-pervasive (*vibhu*). The *jīva* then becomes omniscient (*sarvajña*).

## V. Knowledge and the External World

- \* As explained earlier, knowledge is relational, and therefore it necessarily implies a subject to which it belongs and an object to which it refers. This theory presupposes above all the reality of the external object and its existence independent of knowledge.
- \* It is the function of knowledge to reveal the external world to the knowing subject. *Jñāna* radiates from the *jīva*, comes into contact with the object through the *manas* and sense organs, and reveals it. The knowledge of the object thus arises when *jñāna* comes into contact with an object through the inner and outer senses. This is the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* theory of knowledge.
- \* A subject-object relation is called in this philosophy - *viśaya-viśayī-bhāva sambandha*. *Viśaya* means the object and *viśayī* means the subject or consciousness. By the fact that the two are related whenever cognition arises, the relationship is described as one of subject-object. It is a unique relation or *svarūpa-sambandha*. Although the individual self or *jīvātma* is the subject which cognises the object presented to it by knowledge, the self does not have direct relation to the external object. The direct contact or *saṁyoga* takes place between knowledge and the object outside it whenever knowledge is in contact with the object through *manas* or the internal cognitive organ and the senses. The cognitive relation is thus temporal and direct. A *saṁyoga* or external relation is possible, because in this system knowledge is also regarded as *dravya* or substance.

## VI. The Doctrine of Jīva

- \* The *jīva* or the individual self is an eternal spiritual entity and is distinct from the Supreme Self or *Brahman*. Even in the state of *mokṣa*, it does not lose its individuality. *Jīvas* are infinite in number and they are essentially of the nature of knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*).
- \* Some different theories of *jīva*: the Carvaka view that body itself is *jīva*; the *Nyāya* theory that *jīva* is not of the nature of consciousness; the *Advaita* view that *jīva*, which is pure consciousness, is identical with *Brahman*; the *Vaiśeṣika* view that the *jīva* is all pervasive (*vibhu*); the *Jaina* view that the *jīva* is of the size of the body which it occupies.

### a) Jīva as Different from Body and Mind

- \* When we say 'my hand', 'my leg', the hand, the leg, etc appear to be different from 'myself'. In the same way when we get the experience in the form 'my body', the body which is the aggregate of the various organs should be considered as distinct from the self.
- \* Then a question arises: How do we explain the expression 'myself' (*mama-ātma*)? Would it mean that *ātma* is different from the self? As self and *ātma* cannot be different, such an expression has to be understood in its secondary sense. That is, the *ātma* here means the mind and not the self. That the body and self are different is evident from various scriptural texts. For example, the *śruti* says that a person who has performed meritorious deeds will be reborn with merit. Similarly, a person who has done wicked deeds will be reborn into evil. Such scriptural statements would become meaningless if the self is not admitted to be different from the body.
- \* *Jīva* is also different from the mind (*manas*) because it is established by *pramāṇas* that *manas* serve as an instrument (*karaṇa*) for recollection of past experience by *jīva*. What is a *karaṇa* for an agent cannot itself be the agent *kartā*.

### b) Jīva as the Subject of Knowledge

- \* *Jīva* is not a non-sentient entity (*jada*) with knowledge as its accidental and external quality. Instead *jīva* is an eternal entity of the nature of knowledge (*jñāna-svarūpa*) and the subject of knowledge (*jñātā*). However, *jīva* is not merely *jñāna-svarūpa*, as *Advaita* says, but it also possesses knowledge as an essential attribute. It is the substrate for knowledge, which means that *jīva* is also the knowing subject.
- \* *Jñāna* is defined as that which manifests something (*artha-prakāśah*). This characteristic feature of *jñāna* is common to both the substrate (*ātma*) and its *dharma* (*jñāna*). The former reveals itself and the latter manifests objects. As both reveal something, the term *jñāna* is applicable to both. In this case, these two entities are of the same nature but one is acting as a substance and the other as attribute. As in the case of the flame of a lamp (*dīpa*) and its luminosity (*prabhā*) are the same character since the element of fire or brightness (*tejas*) is common to both.
- \* The *jīva* constituted of knowledge which is known as *dharmī-jñāna* or substantive-knowledge, reveals itself and not the external objects; it knows what it is revealed to it. On the other hand, knowledge as the essential attribute of the self known as *dharmabhūta-jñāna* or attributive knowledge reveals itself as well as the external objects to the self and does not know them.

### c) Jīva as Self-Luminous

- \* Self-luminosity or *svayam-prakāśatva* of *ātma* is not to be understood in the sense that *ātma* reveals itself as 'I' to all at all times. It reveals itself as 'I' to each individual, whereas for others it is known through their knowledge as 'he' or 'you'.
- \* If *ātma* which is *nitya* is self-luminous, it should manifest itself always. But, some say, in *susupti* or deep sleep we do not have the experience of anything, and it is not therefore possible to assert that *ātma* reveals itself in that state. Against this argument it is explained that even during the state of deep sleep *ātma* reveals itself as 'I'. This is evident from the experience which arises in the form 'I slept happily' soon after waking up. This experience cannot be generated by mind because in this state of deep

sleep it is inactive. Then, it is an experience of the self in the form of enjoying its own bliss (*sukha*).

d) Jīva is Eternal

- \* Are *jīvas* eternal? There is a theory which says that *Brahman* alone is eternal and all else including the *jīvas* originate from *Brahman* and dissolve in it. In support of this it is quoted the famous Chāndogya *Upaniṣad* text which says that in the beginning there was being, one only without a second. Accordingly, it is believed that *jīvas* come into existence or are produced at the time of evolution, in the same way as *acit* or matter is brought into existence. Against this view, there are numerous scriptural texts which speak of *ātma* as *nitya* and that it is not subject to any origin or distinction. Such texts that affirm the contrary have to be understood to mean that *jīva* are born in the sense that they become associated with the physical bodies. As it is made explicit in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the birth of *jīva* is only its association with a physical body and death is its disassociation from it.
- \* The Buddhists hold the view that at each moment *jīva* undergoes change. This would mean that *jīva* which is constantly in a state of flux cannot be a permanent entity. If such a theory is accepted, there would be no scope for human endeavour to achieve something at a latter period.
- \* It may be said that *jīvas* continue to exist till they achieve *mokṣa* and that thereafter they would cease to exist. The *Viśiṣṭādvaita* does not accept this view because the *jīvas* do exist in the state of *mokṣa* without losing their individuality. When the *jīvas* become free from the shackles of *karma*, they manifest themselves in their true nature in the state of *mokṣa*.

e) Jīva is Kartā and Bhokta

- \* We have already seen that *jīva* is a knowing subject (*jñātā*). The same *jīva* who is the knower is also the agent of action (*kartā*) and enjoyer of pleasure and pain (*bhokta*). This means the same *ātma* who performs *karma* also enjoys the fruit of action.
- \* The *Advaita* philosophy however does not admit that the true self which is pure undifferentiated conscious is the knower since as knowership involves change, while the self must be immutable. The functions such as knowing, feeling and willing are the characteristics of the empirical ego, the consciousness conditioned by the internal organ (*antahkaraṇa*). The cognisership (*jñātrtva*) actually belongs to the internal organ. The self appears to be the knower because of the superimposition of the internal organ on it.
- \* This theory does not have foundation because it is proved that superimposition of cognisership on the self is an impossibility since the self, according to *Advaita*, is an indifferential being. There are many other details for proving this point, but an important point should be considered whether or not the act of knowing involves change or some modification in respect of the individual self, which according to the *sāstras* is immutable (*nirvikāra*). For explaining this question, the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy affirms that whatever modification take place, these apply to attributive knowledge (*dharma-bhūta-jñāna*), which is distinct from the self and, in this way, the *ātma* remains unaffected by them.
- \* It may be noted that *jīva* is regarded as *jñātā* or knower in the sense that it is the *āśraya* or substrate for knowledge through which all experiences take place. By being *āśraya* for *jñāna* which is subject to modifications, *jīva* is not subjected to any change. In the

same way, *karṭṛtva* and *bhokṭṛtva* admitted in *jīva* do not involve change in it. *Jīva* is *kartā* or doer in the sense that it is the *āśraya* or substrate for *kṛti* or effort.

- \* The same explanation holds good for *jīva* being the *bhokta*. *Bhoga* is the experience in the form of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are different states (*avasthās*) of *jñāna*. Pleasure is an agreeable disposition of the mind (*anukūlatva-jñāna*) and pain is the disagreeable one (*pratikūlatva-jñāna*). As *jīva* is the *āśraya* for such states of experience, it is regarded as *bhokta* or enjoyer of pleasure or pain. The pain involved in such mental disposition applies to the attributive knowledge (*dharmabhūta-jñāna*) and not to *jīva*.

#### f) Theory of Free-Will and Determination

- \* If the action of *jīva* is controlled by *Paramātma*, does the *jīva* have any freedom at all to act? If *jīva* has no freedom to act, the scriptural injunctions enjoying duties to be performed by the individual can have no significance.
- \* A distinction is drawn between the initial action of the individual and the subsequent activity. In all human effort, the individual initially wills to do a thing. To this extent he is free to do what he desires. Based on this initial action, the subsequent action which follows it is approved by *Īśvara*. By according such an approval, *Īśvara* incites the individual to proceed further. *Īśvara* gives his approval to the activity initiated by an individual, he does not become the *kartā*, the doer. The real *kartā* is the individual.

#### g) Plurality of the Individual Selves

- \* The *jīvas* which are eternal spiritual entities are infinite in number. They are not only different from one individual to another but are also distinct from *Brahman*, the Supreme Self.

#### h) Jīva as Anu

- \* *Jīva* is described in the *śāstras* to be infinitesimal, or *anu*. The monadic character of *jīva* is its natural form. That is, it is not caused or conditioned by any physical limitation. *Īśvara* is *vibhu* or all-pervasive but He is described as infinitesimal in the inner recess of the heart. Here the *anutva* of *Paramātma* is not His natural character but is caused by physical limitation (*aupādhika*). No such limitation is mentioned in respect of *jīvātma*. Therefore *anutva* of *jīva* is its natural state.
- \* While describing *jīva* as infinitesimal, the *Upaniṣad* uses the expression that *jīva* is *ananta* or infinite. In another place, *jīva* is described as *nitya* and *sarvagataḥ*, that is, it is eternal and pervades everywhere. This gives the impression that *jīva* is *vibhu* or all-pervasive. But the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* points out that such description of *jīva* as pervading everywhere are to be understood to mean that *jīva* as a spiritual entity could enter into any material substance without obstruction.
- \* Even though *jīva* is not all-pervasive, its attributive *jñāna* is infinite and all-pervasive like the light of the sun. The infinite character (*anantya*) applies not to *jīva* but to its attributive knowledge. This means that *jīva* is *anu*, whereas its knowledge is capable of becoming infinite. In the state of *mukti*, when the *jīva* is totally free from *karma* it becomes omniscient.

## i) Jīva and Brahman

- \* *Īśvara* and *jīva* are two spiritual entities which are absolutely real and also distinct. The Śvetāśvatara Up. says: “There are two, the one knowing, the other not knowing, both unborn, the one a ruler, the other not a ruler”. The Muṇḍaka Up. describes *jīva* as one caught up in bondage, whereas *Īśvara* is free from it. The Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa of the Bṛhad-āranyaka Up. refers to *Brahman* as the indweller of *jīvātma*. The Vedānta-sūtra states categorically that *Brahman* is different from *jīva* which is subject to *karma*.
- \* The scriptural texts also speak of non-difference between *Brahman* and *jīva*. Thus says the Chāndogya Up.: “Thou art that” (*tat-tvam-asi*). The Bṛhad-āranyaka Up. equally asserts the identity: “This self is *Brahman*” (*ayam-ātma-brahma*). How do we account for such texts which emphasise non-difference or identity of *Brahman* and *jīva*?
- \* Rāmānuja does not accept the *bhedābheda* theory because, according to him, it would amount to the admission of the defects of *jīva* in *Brahman*. Nor does he subscribe either to the view of the dualist emphasising only difference or to that of monist upholding only non-difference, because in either case the validity of all the *Upaniṣadic* text cannot be maintained.
- \* Then, Rāmānuja resorts to a *sūtra* which acknowledges the two conflicting views about *jīva* and *Brahman* as different (*nānā*) and also non-different (*anyathā ca*), and uses the expression ‘*aṁśa*’ to explain the relation of *jīva* and *Brahman*. (Vedānta-sūtra II.3.42: *aṁśo nānāvyaपदेṣat anyathā ca...*) while commenting on this *sūtra*, Rāmānuja states that *jīva* is to be accepted as an integral part (*aṁśa*) of *Brahman* in order to account for its non-difference as well difference from *Brahman*.
- \* By adopting the metaphysical category of substance and attribute and the concept of *apṛthak-siddhi*, Rāmānuja explains the relation of *jīva* to *Brahman*. From ontological stand point Rāmānuja explains the relation of *jīva* to *Brahman* on the basis of the concept of body-soul relation (*śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*). *Brahman* as the material cause of the universe and ground of all existence is the *adhāra* and the *jīvas* are described as *ādheya*, that which depends on it for its existence. *Brahman* as the immanent spirit and the inner controller of the universe of *cit* and *acit* is the *niyantā* and *jīva* is the *niyāmya*, one which is controlled by *Īśvara*. From the ethical and religious stand point, *jīva* is described as *śeṣa*, as one who subserves God, and God as *śeṣin*, the Master of all. This threefold relationship is described as *śarīra-śarīri-sambandha*, or the relation of the body to the soul. Thus *jīva* is an integral part (*aṁśa*) or mode (*prakāra*) of *Brahman* and it is therefore distinct but inseparable from it.

## VII. The Doctrine of Īśvara.

- \* In this section we are going to deal with three very important philosophical issues. The foremost one is whether or not the Absolute of metaphysics or *Brahman* described in the *Upaniṣads* as the ultimate Reality is the same as *Īśvara* or the personal God of religion who is conceived as the creator and controller of the universe. The second important issue is whether *Brahman* which is regarded as the material cause of the universe (*upadāna-karaṇa*) by the *Upaniṣads* undergoes any transformation or does it appear itself as the phenomenal universe owing to cosmic ignorance (*avidyā*). The third issue is whether it is possible to prove the existence of God by means of logic arguments without resorting to scriptural testimony.
- \* The first issue is related to a crucial problem in *Vedānta* metaphysics which raises the question whether there are two realities, the one higher which is pure Being, the Absolute of metaphysics, and the other lower which is of lesser reality. This involves

the question whether *Brahman* is *nirguṇa*, the undifferentiated transcendental Being or *saguṇa*, a God endowed with attributes.

- \* The second issue is related to the major controversy in *Vedānta* as to whether *vivarta-vāda* or the theory of the illusory appearance of *Brahman* as the phenomenal universe is sound and tenable. This involves a critical examination of the doctrine of *avidyā* as formulated by the *Advaita Vedānta* in all its aspects including the issue whether the universe is illusory in character.
- \* The third issue refers to the controversy between *Naiyāyikas* and *Vedāntins* whether or not the existence of God can be proved by means of logical arguments. While *Naiyāyikas* hold that the existence of God can be proved by means of logic, *Vedāntins* maintain that revealed scripture (*śruti*) is the sole authority for understanding the nature and existence of God.

a) Proofs for the Existence of God

- \* Those who do not accept the existence of God argue that the concept of God as the creator of the universe is untenable, because God does not possess a body for the purpose of creating the universe. But such arguments are not valid because, as stated in the *śruti*, *Īśvara* can create the universe by his will (*saṅkalpa*) without the aid of a body. Neither inference (*anumāna*) nor the statements of the atheists can disprove the existence of God. *Śruti* or revealed scripture is the sole authority for knowing the existence of God.
- \* The *Advaitin* questions the view that *Brahman* is to be known through revealed scripture. According to him, *Brahman* as the transcendental reality is self established and is beyond all speech and thought. It cannot be grasped by the intellect. Thus the *Upaniṣadic* texts say – (Muṇḍ. Up. I.1.5 – *yat tad adreśyam agrāhyam*) – that reality is unperceivable and ungraspable. Another text states - (Tait. Up. II.9.11 – *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*) – “From whom speech and mind turn away, because they are unable to reach him”. *Brahman* is therefore *avedya* - beyond all empirical *pramāṇas* and cognition.
- \* The *Vaiṣṇavas* criticises this view. It is not correct to say *Brahman* cannot be know by means of scriptural texts. The very *Upaniṣads* say *Brahman* is only knowable by *śruti*. Thus the *Kaṭha Up.* (II-15) states: *sarve vedāḥ yat padam āmananti* - "All *Vedas* speak of this nature". There are several texts that say *Brahman* is describable by words and also knowable. (Chānd.Up. I.6.7.: *tasyoditi nāma*; Bṛhat.Up. 4.3.6.: *atha nāmadheyam satyasya satyam*). The *Upaniṣadic* text which speaks of *Brahman* as beyond words and thought can only mean that *Brahman* which is infinite cannot be adequately described by words, and cannot be also know in all its fullness by our finite mind. If this interpretation were not accepted, there would be conflict with both the earlier and later statements made in the same *Upaniṣadic* passage.
- \* Another impersonalist argument is that the terms *Brahman*, *ātma*, etc mentioned in the *Upaniṣads* do not have a primary import (*mukhyārtha*) in respect of *Brahman*, but they only have a secondary (*lakṣaṇa*). That is, these words do not refer directly to *Brahman* but indirectly. This is explained in the analogy of the moon seen through the branch of a tree (*śakhā-candra-nyāya*). The moon visible as if close to the tree branch is made use of to identify the real moon which is far distant in the sky. Though there is no connection between the bough and the moon, the former serves the purpose of identifying the moon in the sky. In the same way, the term *Brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* serves to convey the knowledge of *Brahman* without having direct reference to *Brahman*.

- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, there is no difficulty at all in accepting primary import in respect of *Parabrahman*, the higher reality postulated by the impersonalists. The word *Brahman*, *ātma* etc and all the *Upaniṣadic* texts related to the discussion on the nature of *Brahman* refer directly to the higher *Brahman*. If it is argued that direct reference is only to the lower *Brahman* (*apara-Brahman*), then the statements relating to the higher *Brahman* become invalid, and the very existence of such a *Brahman* would be questionable. It is impossible to maintain that *Brahman* is unknowable. Even if *Brahman* were the content of the indirect reference, it would become the object of knowledge to that extent. It is therefore more appropriate and logical to accept that *Brahman* is known through the scripture and that scripture is the sole authority for proving the existence.

#### b) The Nature of Ultimate Reality

- \* According to the *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*, the ultimate reality or *Brahman* referred to in the *Upaniṣads* is the personal God of religion. It rejects the theory of two *Brahmans* admitted by *Advaita Vedānta* – the higher *Brahman* (*Para*) which is the Absolute Being devoid of all attributes and a lower *Brahman* (*apara*) endowed with attributes which is of lesser reality. There is only one *Brahman* which, as the *Vedānta Sūtras* clearly point out, is the creator of the universe and which is qualified with infinite auspicious attributes. Such a reality is none other than the personal God of religion. Thus, Śrī Rāmānujācārya asserts that the term *Brahman* denotes *Puruṣottama*, the Supreme Person or self, who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses infinite auspicious attributes or unsurpassable excellence.
- \* The Mahopaniṣad I.1 says: *eko ha vai Nārāyaṇa āsīt* – “*Nārāyaṇa* alone existed in the beginning.” According to the grammatical principle formulated by Panini the term *Nārāyaṇa* is treated as a specific proper name (*saṁjñā-pada*) and is applicable to one specific Being only but not to any other entity like the general terms such as *Brahman*, *sat* and *ātma*. It is therefore concluded that *Brahman* referred to in the *Upaniṣads* as the cause of the universe is the same as *Nārāyaṇa*. Further the *Subāla Upaniṣad* describes *Nārāyaṇa* as *antarātma* the inner controller of all beings in the universe. Only that which is the creator of the universe could be the *antaryāmi* or inner controller of all beings. Several texts confirm this point. On the basis of the *śāstras* it is then asserted that *Nārāyaṇa* is the very *Brahman* described in the *Upaniṣads* as the creator of the universe. And *Viṣṇu* the Supreme God of religion as upheld in the *Vedas*, is used as synonymous.

#### c) The Theory Of *Nirguṇa Brahman*

- \* The *Advaita* advocates the theory of two *Brahmans* - *para* and *apara* - or the higher and lower. This theory is based primarily on the strength of a few scripual texts. There are *Upaniṣadic* statements which describe *Brahman* as devoid of qualities. There are also statements which speak of *Brahman* as qualified by numerous attributes. These two kinds of statements are known as *nirguṇa śrutis* and *saguṇa śrutis*.
- \* The impersonalists consider that the *nirguṇa śrutis* are of greater validity than the *saguṇa śrutis*. For proving this theory they use the Mimāṃśa principle of interpretation *apaccheda-nyāya*, the principle of the subsequent sublating the earlier.
- \* But, on the other side, the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* does not accept the theory of two *Brahmans*. Taking its firm stand on scriptural evidence, it asserts that the ultimate reality is *Brahman* as qualified by numerous attributes. It would not be appropriate to accept

the validity of a few scriptural texts which speak of *Brahman* as devoid of qualities and discard the large number of *saguna śrutis* as invalid in the basis of *apaccheda-nyāya*. Vedānta Deśika points out that instead of *apaccheda-nyāya* in this case, another principle of interpretation has to be applied –.

- \* According to the application of *utsargapavada nyāya*, if some texts affirm that *Brahman* possesses qualities, and others deny the same, the later should be understood to mean the denial of the qualities other than those mentioned in the former. In other words, the implication of the negative texts is that *Brahman* is devoid of such inauspicious attributes as changes, *karma*, etc but not that it is devoid of all characteristics. Such an interpretation, though it restricts the import of the negative texts to some extent, maintains the validity of both the *saguna* and *nirguna śrutis*. As the contents of the two texts apply to different aspects of reality, there is absolutely no conflict between them. Thus, on the basis of scriptural evidence it is not possible to establish that *Brahman* is *nirguna* and that it is higher than *saguna Brahman*.
- \* Śrī Rāmānujācārya has repeatedly stated in his Śrī-bhāṣya that the concept of *nirviśeṣa-vastu*, an entity totally devoid of all differentiation, whether it be a physical object or consciousness or even the Ultimate reality is untenable both on logical and metaphysical grounds. From the standpoint of logic and epistemology it is impossible to prove the existence of a *nirviśeṣa-vastu* by any of the accepted *pramāṇas*. All knowledge reveals an object only as qualified. Such an undifferentiated reality as being beyond all thought and speech is a metaphysical abstraction. Therefore *Viśiṣṭādvaita* rejects this concept of *nirguna Brahman* and upholds that the Ultimate Reality is only a *saviśeṣa Brahman* which is the same as the personal God of religion.

#### d) God and His Attributes

- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *Brahman* conceived as *saviśeṣa* implies that it also possesses a bodily form (*vigraha*) and is qualified by attributes (*guṇa*) and the properties (*vibhutis*) which comprise the transcendental realm as well as the cosmic universe of sentient souls and non-sentient matter. As far as the body of *Brahman* is concerned, it is not governed by *karma* as the bodies of the bound individual soul are, but is assumed by *Īśvara* out of His free will (*icchā*) for the benefit of His devotees to enable them to offer prayers and do meditation. The bodily form assumed by *Īśvara* in His eternal abode is *nitya*. It is constituted of pure *sattvika* stuff known as *śuddha-sattva*. There are several *pramāṇa* supporting the existence of a *nitya-vigraha* or unblemished and imperishable bodily form for *Īśvara*.
- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, every entity in the universe, both physical and ontological, consists of two aspects; the substantive aspect (*svarūpa*) which is *dharmi* and the attribute aspect (*svabhāva*) which is *dharma*. In the light of this statement, a question arises: what is the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*?
- \* Rāmānuja says that these five distinguishing characteristics determine the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*: 1) *satyam* (absolutely non-conditioned existence); 2) *jñāna* (eternal and non-contracted knowledge); 3) *anantam* (not limited by space or time), from the text (Tait.Up I.1) *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*; 4) *ānandam* (unsurpassable bliss), from the same text – *ānandam brahmaṇo vidvān* and; 5) *amalam* (free from all imperfections). That entity which is characterised by these five attributes is the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*. In other words, when we speak of the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*, we describe it as *satyam* or reality, *jñānam* or knowledge, *anantam* or infinitude, *ānandam* or bliss and *amalam* or purity. When we speak of the essential characteristics of *Brahman*, we describe them as *satyatva*, *jñānatva*, *anantatva* etc.

- \* The Taittirīya Up. (III.1) offers another important definition of *Brahman*: *yato vā imani bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti, yat prayanty abhisamviśanti tad vijijñāsasva tad brahmeti* “that form which all things are born, in which they live on being born, and unto which they enter when they perish; that is *Brahman*”. It refers to three fundamental functions of *Brahman* – creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. Also in *Vedānta Sūtra* it is stated: *janmādyasya yataḥ*. This characteristic of *Brahman* as the creator of the universe, though it is an important function of the Supreme Being, does not constitute the *svarūpa* unlike *satyata, jñānatra* etc, but the attributive or functional character of *Brahman*.
- \* Besides the five distinguishing characteristics, six other important attributes are also admitted in *Īśvara*; *jñāna* (knowledge, or more specifically, *dharma-bhūta-jñāna* of *Brahman*. He is omniscient, *sarvajña*); *bāla* (strength, or the quality by which *Īśvara* supports everything); *aiśvarya* (lordship, or the quality of being the creator and controller of the universe); *vīrya* (virility refers to that quality of *Īśvara* who, in spite of his being the material cause of the universe, remains unaffected by the changes, *vikāra*); *śakti* (power or that special quality through which *Īśvara* causes the evolution of the *prakṛti* into the manifold universe); and *tejas* (splendour, which means that *Īśvara* does not depend on any external aids for creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe).

#### e) The Five Manifestations of God

- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, God manifests Himself in five forms:
  - 1) *Para*, the transcendental form.
  - 2) *Vyūha* or the divine manifestation as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha for purposes of meditation and creation of the universe.
  - 3) *Vibhāva* or the several incarnations of God in the universal manifestations such as Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Rāma etc
  - 4) *Archā*, that is, entering into the substance chosen by devotees, as, for example, idols in the sacred temples.
  - 5) *Antaryāmi*, that is, residing within the inner recess of our hearts for purposes of meditation.
- \* *Īśvara* is the creator of the universe. He creates the universe in accordance with the *karma* of the individual soul. The purpose of creation is two fold: compassion towards the suffering humanity and divine sport. Creation of the universe is a divine sport from which *Īśvara* derives *ānanda*. It also serves the purpose of providing the individual soul caught up in the ocean of bondage and opportunity to escape from it and attain the final release.
- \* The question which is raised here is: if God is all compassionate and if the universe is his own creation, why should there be so much suffering in the universe and such wide disparities in the suffering and happiness of individuals? This is explained, as in all theistic Indian systems, as being the *karma* of each individual which varies from to another according to past deeds. God dispenses good to those who have done good deeds and evil to those who have done evil deeds.

f) Material Causality of *Brahman*.

\* One of the major problems of *Vedānta* is to provide a satisfactory explanation of the material causality of *Brahman*. The *Upaniṣads* indicate that *Brahman* is the material cause (*upadāna kāraṇa*) of the universe on the analogy of the lump of clay being the material cause of the pot. On the strength of the *Upaniṣadic* teaching all Vedāntists except Madhva accept that *Brahman* is the material cause of the universe. The *śruti* texts also categorically declare that *Brahman* is immutable, that is, not subject to any kind of change. The causality of *Brahman* thus needs to be accounted for without affecting the *svarūpa* of *Brahman*. How is this to be done? Each school of *Vedānta* attempts to offer an explanation in this regard. There are three important theories of material causality of *Brahman*:

- 1) *Brahman* itself transforms into the universe - a view held by Yādavaprakāṣa and Bhaskara. This is known as *Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda*.
- 2) *Brahman* associated with *cit* and *acit* in their subtle form is the material cause of the universe - this view is held by *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and it may be regarded as modified *Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda*.
- 3) *Brahman* as the basis of the illusory appearance of the universe is its material cause. This is the *Advaita* view known as *vivarta-vāda*.

## VIII. *Brahman* and Universe

a) Refutation of *Vivarta-vāda* theory

\* Śrī Rāmānujācārya in his Śrī-bhāṣya has levelled a seven-fold objection against this doctrine (*sapta-vidhānupapatti*):

- 1) *āśrayānupapatti*: What is the locus or support of *māyā*? Where does *avidyā* reside? If there is any such thing as *māyā* or *avidyā*, we are justified in asking for its seat or abode. Verily, it cannot exist in *Brahman*, for then the unqualified monism of *Brahman* would break down. Moreover, *Brahman* is said to be pure self-luminous consciousness or knowledge and *avidyā* means ignorance. Then how can ignorance exist in knowledge? Again, *avidyā* cannot reside in the individual self, for the individuality of the self is said to be the creation of *avidyā*. How can the cause depend on its affect? Hence *avidyā* cannot exist either in *Brahman* or the *jīva*. It is an illusory concept, a figment of the *māyāvādi*'s imagination. If it resides anywhere, it resides only in the mind of the *māyāvādi* who has imagined this wonderful pseudo-concept, this logic myth.
- 2) *tirodhānānupapatti*: How can *avidyā* conceal *Brahman*? If it does, then *Brahman* is not self-conscious and self-luminous subject. If *Brahman* is of the nature of self-luminosity and self proved knowledge, ignorance cannot cover or veil its essence. It is as absurd as to say that darkness can hide light or that night can act as a veil on day.
- 3) *svarūpānupapatti*: What is the nature of *avidyā*? Is it positive or negative or both or neither? If it is positive how can it be *avidyā*? *Avidyā* means ignorance and ignorance means absence of knowledge. To regard ignorance as positive is to accept self contradiction. Moreover, if ignorance is positive how can it be ever destroyed? No positive entity can be destroyed. As the *māyāvādi* admits that ignorance is

removed by knowledge, ignorance can never be positive. And if *avidyā* is negative, then how can it project this world illusion on *Brahman*? To say that *avidyā* is both positive and negative is to embrace self-contradiction. And to say that it is neither positive or negative is to give up all logic.

4) *anirvacanīyatvānupapatti*: *Avidyā* is defined by the *māyāvādi* as indefinable; it is described as indescribable. This is a clear self-contradiction. To avoid this the *māyāvādi* says that *avidyā* is not absolutely indescribable, that to call it 'indescribable' means that 'it cannot be described as either real or unreal'. But this is absurd. This shows that the *māyāvādi* is giving up all logic. How can a thing be neither real or unreal? This is merely verbal jugglery. Reality and unreality are both exhaustive and exclusive, They are contradictories not contraries. Between themselves they exhaust all possibilities of predication. A thing must be either real or unreal. There is no third alternative. All our cognitions relate to either entities or non-entities. To refute this is to refuse to think. To maintain a third alternative is to reject the well established canons of logic - the law of contradiction and the law of excluded middle.

5) *Pramāṇānupapatti*: By what *pramāṇa* or means of valid cognition is *avidyā* cognized? *Avidyā* cannot be perceived, for perception can give us either an entity or a non-entity. It cannot be inferred for inference proceeds through a valid mark or middle term which *avidyā* lacks. Nor can it be maintained on the authority of the scriptures for they declare *māyā* to be a real wonderful power of creating this wonderful world which really belongs to God.

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

7) *Nivṛty-anupapatti*: In the last point we were told that there is no remover of *avidyā*. This point tells us that there is no removal of *avidyā*. *Avidyā* is said to be positive (*bhāva-rūpa*) by the *māyāvādi*. How, then can a positive thing be removed? A thing which positively exists cannot possibly be removed from existence by knowledge. The bondage of the soul is due to *karma* which is a concrete reality and cannot be removed by abstract knowledge. It can be removed by *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *prasāda*. The ignorance of the soul is destroyed when the *karmas* are destroyed and when the soul flings itself on the absolute mercy of the Lord who, pleased by the souls constant devotion, extends His grace to him.

## IX. Sādhana and Mukti

### a) Eligibility of Jīva for Mokṣa

\* While considering the basic nature of *mokṣa*, two basic questions arise. First, is there scope at all for the soul to escape from the so-called bondage? Secondly, if there be, would all souls be eligible for *mokṣa*? The first question arises because of the accepted

fact that souls are caught up in the continuous cycle of birth and deaths. *Karma* which causes bondage to the soul is beginningless, and it flows continuously like the stream of a river. If *jīva* is caught up in such a constant stream of births and deaths, would there be any scope for its escape from it? There is a view, according to which *karma*, unless it is experienced, does not cease to have its influence on the individual even after millions of *kalpas*. How then can *jīva* escape from bondage?

- \* It is no doubt true that *jīva* is passing through the cycle of *karma-vidyā*. Nevertheless, a stage arises in this long march when good *karma* becomes ripe to provide an opportunity for the individual an escape from bondage. As a result of the meritorious deed performed in earlier births, the individual comes into contact with a man of spiritual wisdom. Through their influence, he earns further merit by doing good deeds and thereby becomes the object of grace of *Īśvara*. As a result of this he becomes an aspirant for *mokṣa* (*mumukṣu*) and thereafter he undertakes *Brahmopāsana* or the meditation on *Brahman* which is the means to *mokṣa*. The *upāsana* helps to get rid of the past *karma* as well as the *karma* of the future. Once the *jīva* becomes free from *karma*, it achieves *mokṣa*.
- \* It is interesting to note how the *jīva* becomes a *mumukṣu*, an aspirant for *mokṣa*. In the state of dissolution (*pralaya*) *jīva* is almost like a non-intelligent material entity. At the time of creation, *jīva* escapes from this condition and comes back to life being endowed with a physical body and consciousness through the compassion of *Īśvara*. Even as a living individual, the *jīva* has to pass through various states of waking, dream, dreamless sleep, death or half-death in the form of swoon.
- \* All these states involve some amount of suffering that the *jīva* has to suffer during its lifetime. What is considered to be happiness at this stage is a misnomer. According to men of philosophical wisdom, happiness is comparable to the firefly. It is highly transitory in character. If one realises through philosophic wisdom that life is nothing but suffering (*duḥkha*) and the so-called happiness is rooted only in suffering (*duḥkha- mūla*) one naturally looks forward to the permanent and real happiness. Only such individuals who develop a detachment towards worldly pleasures of evanescent character become the aspirant of *mokṣa*.
- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *jīvas* are classified as *baddhas*, those who are in bondage; *muktas*, those who are released from bondage, and *nityas*, those who are eternally free, that is, those who never had bondage.
- \* All *jīvas* are eligible for *mokṣa* but, however, only an individual who is desirous of attaining *mokṣa* has to endeavour for it by adopting the prescribed *sādhana* and he will no doubt achieve it with God's grace. God in order to shower this grace looks forward to a sincere desire for release on the part of an individual.

#### b) *Bhakti* as the Means to *Mokṣa*

- \* *Bhakti* as a means or *upāya* to *mokṣa* is defined as unceasing meditation done with love on the Supreme Being. It is thus regarded as knowledge (a mental activity) in the form of love of God. It is generated by scrupulous observance of religious duties as laid down by scripture in accordance with one's *varṇa* and *aśrama*, along with spiritual knowledge. The performance of one's duties and rituals (*karma*) will have to be observed, as explained in the *Gītā*, purely as a divine service for the pleasure of God (*bhagavat-prīti*) and not in any expectation of any rewards thereof. This in brief is the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* view of *sādhana* for *mokṣa*.
- \* The justification for introducing the concept of *Bhakti* is provided on the authority of a specific passage in the *Muṇḍ Up.* and three relevant verses in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The

Upanidadic text says (Muṇḍ Up. 3.2.3) *nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo, na medhayā na bahunā śrutena / yam evaiṣa vṛnute tena labhyaḥ, ātmā vivṛnute tanūm svam*. “This self (*Brahman*) cannot be attained by the study of the *Vedas*, nor by meditation nor through much hearing. He is to be attained only by one who the self chooses. To such a person, the self reveals the nature.”

- \* This verse and other in the *Gītā* (11.53-54) seem to contradict the statement in the *Bṛhad-āranyaka Up* (6.5.6): *ātma vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyaḥ*, which says that the process of self realization implies *śravana* (hearing) *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyāsana* (contemplation). The explanation is that what is negated in that particular verse in *Muṇḍ.Up* is that mere *śravana*, etc devoid of intense *bhakti* is of no use for God realization.
- \* Therefore it is only the unconditional deep-rooted love for God that serves as a means to know God in His true form, to have this vision and eventually to attain Him. This means that divine vision is possible only through God's grace and in order to earn it one has to be deeply devoted to God.
- \* Thus the terms such as *jñāna*, *upāsana*, *dhyāna*, *dhruvānuṣṛti*, etc which are used in the *Upaniṣads* as means of *mokṣa* are to be understood to mean the same thing. Otherwise it would amount to the admission of different means of *mokṣa*. If the means be different, the goal to be achieved would also be different. Actually, the goal is the same for all, and hence the means should all be the same. Therefore, it is concluded that all these terms, though they appear to have different meanings, should have the meaning of the specific term *bhakti*, according to the *Mīmāṃsā* principle of interpretation.
- \* If *jñāna* alone is considered as the sole means to *mokṣa*, as the impersonalists contend, all the *upaniṣadic* texts referring to *upāsana* become meaningless. *Bhakti* as a *upāya* for *mokṣa* is described in the *Gītā* as *bhakti-yoga*. It is a life-long rigorous discipline involving the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, development of certain ethical virtues and observance of religious duties as laid down by sacred texts.
- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, *bhakti-yoga* is to be preceded by the practice of *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* referred to in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. *Karma-yoga* emphasises the disinterested performance of action (*karma*), such as sacrifice (*yajñā*), charity (*dāna*) and austerity (*tapas*) as divine service without any expectation of rewards thereof. *Jñāna-yoga* signifies constant meditation upon *ātma*, the individual self with control of the mind and senses. The two are inter-related and the aim of both is self realization (*ātmāvalokana*). Both these subserve *bhakti*, and as such they are the subsidiary means to *bhakti-yoga*, which is the direct means to God realization.
- \* The four main requirements or *adhikāra* for *bhakti-yoga* are:
  - a) a clear philosophic knowledge of the realms of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*
  - b) the will to rigorously undergo the discipline in due order
  - c) the *śāstric* qualification of birth as an essential aid to *bhakti*, and
  - d) *sāttvic* patience to endure the *prārabdha-karma* till it is exhausted or expiated.
- \* According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, although *bhakti* is a desirable means to *mukti*, it is not easily practiced in this age of *Kali Yuga* owing to its ardousness. But *sāstra*, in its infinite mercy to the erring humanity, guarantees God to all *Jīvas* irrespective to their status and situation in life. It has provided for the weak and infirm an alternate path to *mukti* known as *prapatti*, or the absolute self-surrender to God.
- \* The only pre requisite for *prapatti* is the change of heart or contrition on the part of the *mumukṣu* and his absolute confidence in the saving grace of God. It is the essence of the religion of *prapatti* that the Lord of grace seeks the *prapanna* and draws him to himself. The act has a summary effect, as it destroys even *prārabdha-karma*.

- \* The supreme merit of *prapatti* lies in the universality of its appeal to all casts and classes, the guarantee of salvation to all *jīvas* who cannot follow the arduous path of *bhakti*.

### c) The Nature of *Mukti*

- \* In the state of *mokṣa*, *jīva* becomes totally free from the shackles of *karma* and as such its *jñāna* manifests itself in its fullness. *Jīva* becomes omniscient and is thus capable of comprehending *Brahman* in all its splendour. Once this state is reached by *jīva* there is never a return to the stage of bondage.
- \* On the strength of scriptural texts, it is admitted that *jīva* attains a status in *mokṣa* almost equal to *Brahman*. Thus, the *śruti* says that the *jīva* in the state of *mukti* enjoys supreme equality (*parama-sāmya*) with the Lord.
- \* The impersonalists take the text (Muṇḍ. Up. 3.2.9) *brahma veda brahmaiva bhāvati*, which literally means that “the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*”, and which implies the identity (*tadātmya*) of the individual self and the *Brahman*.
- \* But the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* points out that this text does not so much refer to identity as to equality (*sādharmya*), that means that the individual self attains the status of *Brahman* rather than that it becomes one with *Brahman*. The self becomes almost equal to *Brahman* in every respect except in the matter of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe which belong exclusively to the Lord.
- \* It is admitted that the individual soul in the state of *mokṣa* could assume a body out of its free will (*saṅkalpa*) for the purpose of enjoying bliss or for movement. Such a body assumed by the *jīva* is not a karmic body and as such no bondage is caused to it. The *jīva* could also remain without a body if he so desires.

\* \* \*

## D POST-RĀMĀNUJA PERIOD

- \* For nearly two centuries after the advent of Śrī Rāmānuja, there was no significant contribution to the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* system by way of major philosophic works. The acāryas who succeeded Rāmānuja, though some of them were eminent Vedāntists such as Parāśara Bhaṭṭa, Viṣṇucitta, Vātsya Varada, Sudarśana Sūri and Ātreya Rāmānuja confined their attention primarily to the dissemination of the philosophy of Rāmānuja. Some of the acāryas such as Pillān, Nanjīyar, Periavaccān Pillai, etc who were attracted by the devotional hymns of the Ālvārs in Tamil were preoccupied with writing elaborate commentaries on them, mainly Nanmālvār's Tiruvāymoli.
- \* It was at this time that the schism in Śrī-vaiṣṇavism became marked and gave rise to the schools of Tenkalai and Vaḍakalai. The first formulator of the Tenkalai school was Pillai Lokācārya and the head of the Vaḍakalai was the famous Vedānta Deśika, regarded as the most prominent successor of Śrī Rāmānujācārya. Till now the differences between these two schools persist and they even use different tilaks. However, philosophically speaking, there is no fundamental differences, but it refers basically to matters of opinion. In finding out the heart of Vaiṣṇavism, the works of the Tenkalai school which are mostly in Tamil language are complementary to those of the Vaḍakalai, and Vedānta Deśika is acclaimed by both the schools in their Vedāntic aspect as the defender of Vaiṣṇavism regarded as *Viśiṣṭādvaita-darśana*.

## I. Pillai Lokācārya (1264-1327)

- \* He was the older contemporary of Vedānta Deśika and is generally regarded as the first proponent of the Tenkalai school. His spiritual master is traced to Rāmānuja hierarchically through Periyavāccān Pillai, Nampillai, Nañjiyar, Parāsara Bhaṭṭa and Śrī Rāmānuja. When the muslims sacked Śrī Raṅgam and slaughtered the Vaiṣṇavas and committed sacrilege in the temple, he took a leading part in removing the deity to a place of safety. He composed the eighteen Rahasyas or sacred manuals of Tenkalaism, mostly in Maṇipravāla or sanskritized Tamil.
- \* Pillai Lokācārya was succeeded by Manavāla Mahāmuniḡal, who is revered by the Tenkalais as their greatest acārya. The chief contribution of Tenkalaism to the cause of Śrī-vaiṣṇavism consists in its democratic dissemination to all people, of the truths of the *darśana* confined till then to the higher castes.

## II. Vedānta Deśika (1268-1369)

- \* He was born at Tuppil in Kāñci and got the name Venkatanātha. His father was Ananta Sūri and his mother Totārambā, sister of Ātreya Rāmānuja. He studied with his uncle Ātreya Rāmānuja, and it is said that he accompanied him to Vātsya Varadācārya's place, when he was five years old. The story goes that even at such an early age he showed so much precocity that it was predicted by Vātsya Varada that he would become a great pillar of strength for the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school.
- \* Vedānta Deśika was an unrivalled example of *jñāna* and *vairagya*. It is said that he used to live by *uñcha-vṛtti*, receiving alms in the streets, and spent all his life in writing philosophical and religious works. While he lived in Kāñci and Śrī Raṅgam, he had to work in the midst of various rival sects, and Pillai Lokācārya, who was senior to him in age and was the supporter of the Tenkalai school, against which Vedānta Deśika fought, wrote a verse in praise of him. Though the leaders of these two schools were actuated by a spirit of sympathy with one another, their followers made much of the differences in their views and constantly quarrelled with one another, and it is a well known fact that these sectarian quarrells exist even today. During the general massacre at the temple of Śrī Raṅgam, Vedānta Deśika hid himself amongst the dead bodies and fled ultimately to Mysore.
- \* It is important to note that Vedānta Deśika had to accomplish two major tasks - the first was refutation of the *Māyāvādi* philosophy which undermined the fundamental tenants of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, and the second and greater task was to present a constructive exposition of the fundamental doctrines of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. The first task was fulfilled by writing an independent polemical work entitled *Śatadūṣani*. As the title suggests, one hundred philosophical issues were addressed for systematic criticism by adopting the dialectical method. Vedānta Deśika was a prolific writer and he wrote more than a hundred works not only in the realm of philosophy and religion but also in the field of poetry and drama. His chief works, besides *Śatadūṣani*, are *Tattva-muktā-kalāpa*, *Nyāya-pariśuddhi*, *Nyāya-siddhāñjana*, *Sarvārtha-siddhi*, *Tattra-ṭikā* (a commentary on Śrī-bhāṣya) and many others.

### III. Differences between Tenkalai and Vaḍakalai Schools.

- \* The split between these two schools widened in course of time and the *pātrams* or laudatory verses recited in the temple worship today in praise of leading acāryas are a signal for sectarian strife, though there is no actually intrinsic cause for such dissention.
- \* Some divergent points are:
  - a) Tenkalai school emphasizes the value of the Tamil Prabandha over all Sanskrit scriptures and regards the Āḷvārs as in higher levels in terms of religious authority. The Vedakalai gives emphasis to Sanskrit literature and gives equal value to the ṛṣis and Āḷvārs.
  - b) According to Vaḍakalai school, Śrī Lakṣmi Devi possesses the same spiritual status as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. They are One, although seperated. Yet the Tenkalai school stresses the logic of monotheism that only Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme. Śrī Lakṣmi would be a special category of *jīva* above all else.
  - c) While the Vaḍakalai school afirms that *bhakti-yoga* and *prapatti-yoga* as *sadhyopāya*, or the means to *mokṣa* which has to be affected by the aspirant, the Tenkalai school interprets *prapatti* not as a *yoga* or human endeavour, but a mere faith in the grace of God. The Vedakalai says that the Tenkalai denial of human initiative as requisite condition of redemption leads to the predication of arbitrariness and favouritism in the divine will.
  - d) The Tenkalai view is based on *nirhetuka-kaṭākṣa*, or grace not arising from any cause, and its position is compared to the *mārjara-nyāya* analogy -'the cat carrying the kitten in its mouth'. Yet the Vaḍakalai view is based on *sahetuka-kaṭākṣa*, or grace arising from a cause, and its position is compared to the *markaṭa-nyāya* analogy -'the young monkey clinging to the mother for protection'.

## **A INTRODUCTION**

### **I. Need for a New Darśana**

(Criticism of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta in the version of the followers of Śrī Madhvācārya)

- \* In spite of Rāmānujācārya having written lengthly commentaries on Vedānta-sūtra and Bhagavad Gītā, and other important books like Vedartha-Saṅgraha, still there was much that had been left undone or insufficiently done by him. Definitely the *Advaita* system of philosophy had not been dislodged from its pedestal on the *Upaniṣads*. A passing notice of a few passages from the principal *Upaniṣads*, such as was attempted by Rāmānuja in his writings, was not sufficient to inspire confidence.
- \* It seemed the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* had, to some extent, played into the hands of Monists in respect of some of its theological and metaphysical views. Not caring for the entire body of pre-Upaniṣadic literatures and perpetuating the distinction between the *karma* and *jñāna-kāṇḍas*, the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* system was unwittingly too indifferant to the *Vedas* and disproportionately exalted the *Upaniṣads* over the *Mantras*.
- \* The label and ideology of “*Viśiṣṭādvaita*” were alike distasteful and compromising to genuine theism. The majesty, transcendence and personal homogeneity of Godhead were on the brink of extinction on such a view. Say what one may, no genuine theist can, for a moment, consent to tie down his Deity (as does the *Viśiṣṭādvaita*) to an existence perpetually “qualified” by two attributes (*viśeṣas*) one of which is sentient (*cit*) and the other insentient (*acit*)! The Infinite cannot be a mere cross. The eternal, irrevocable apposition of the dual attributes of *cit* and *acit* with the Deity must perforce, mars its self completeness. The *Jīva* and *jaḍa*, which according to Rāmānuja’s own showing are essentially and eternally distinct from *Brahman*, cannot be treated as its “attributes” in the same sense in which, for instance, “*satyam*”, “*jñānam*”, “*anantam*” and “*ānanda*” are treated by the *Upaniṣads* as attributes of *Brahman*. The Viśiṣṭādvaitic conception of the relation between *Brahman* and its so-called attributes of *cit* and *acit* was, thus open to serious logical objections.
- \* The label of “*Viśiṣṭādvaita*” similarly indicates a weakness to try to press Theism into a monistic mould. A “*viśiṣṭaikya*” of One Substance and two attributes all externally related, is no “*aikya*” at all, except in a very loose and remote sense.
- \* In spite of their undoubted ardour for the cause of Vaiṣṇavism neither Rāmānuja nor his predecessors had given it a firm textual footing in the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and *Sūtras*. There originally were a few presumably Vaiṣṇava commentaries on the Vedānta-sūtra prior to Rāmānujācārya. But since for some centuries before and after Śaṅkarācārya attention had been totally engrossed on higher metaphysical issues of Monism versus Dualism, and latterly, with purely dialectical questions, the theological problems of the relative superiority of the Gods of the Vedāntic pantheon and their status, or even the theological identity of *Brahman* had no attraction for any commentator. But when the great Bhāgavata religion had come into philosophical proeminence, in the 10th

and 11th centuries, largely through the efforts of the Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints (*Ālvārs*), side by side with the speculative systems like those of Śaṅkarācārya, it was time to find a place for the highest God of the the Bhāgavata cult, namely *Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa* or *Vāsudeva*. Śrī Rāmānuja himself had, in his works, sounded a sufficiently ‘sectarian’ note and upheld *Śrī Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa* as the *Para-Brahman* of the *Vedānta*. Still, it could not be said that he had succeeded in securing for his God that paramount position (for which he had fought and suffered persecution in his own region), in the sacred literature as a whole, inclusive of the *Upaniṣads* and *Vedānta-sūtra*. As a matter of fact, he had never at all looked at the *Ṛg Veda*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads* from that point of view and with that object. Although Rāmānujācārya had explained about the personal God in his writings, it may be argued that his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* is not sufficiently “sectarian”. As a *Māyāvādi* writer commented: “The only sectarian feature of the Rāmānujācārya’s commentary is that he identifies *Brahman* with *Viṣṇu*, but this in no way affects the interpretations put on the *Sūtras* and the *Upaniṣads*. *Nārāyaṇa*, in fact, is but another name of *Brahman*.” But the time had come for a more positive, passionate and “sectarian” advocacy of the place of Lord *Viṣṇu* in Hindu religion and philosophy.

- \* For some inscrutable reason, Rāmānujācārya showed indifference to the great gospel of Vaiṣṇavism, the Śrīmad-Bhagavatam. And so had his predecessor Yamunācārya. This neglect, quite naturally, came, in *Advaitic* circles, to be interpreted as a tacit admission, on the part of the Vaiṣṇava realists, of the “unquestionable monistic tenor of that Purāṇa.” We learn from Jīva Gosvāmī’s *Sandharbhas* that there was at least two such early commentaries on Śrīmad Bhagavatam - one by Puṇyarānya and the other by the celebrated impersonalist dialectician Citsukha. As a result of the labours of these two eminent commentators, Vaiṣṇava Realism must have lost ground and much of its prestige and stood in imminent danger of losing its mainstay in the most popular Vaiṣṇava scripture, unless something was urgently done to rehabilitate it.
- \* Parallel to all this and during all these centuries, Śaivism had been growing into a power. From as early as the days of the Purāṇas, the cult of Śiva had been the main rival of Vaiṣṇavism. The period between the 6th and 12th centuries was the heyday of Śaivism in the South and was distinguished for its mighty literary activity of the Tamil Śaiva saints (*Nāyanmārs*). So great was the influence and ascendancy of Śaivism in the South that Śrī Rāmānuja had actually to flee Śrī Raṅgam and find more congenial haunts for his Vaiṣṇavism in distant Melkote in South Karnataka.
- \* The combined effects of all these forces must have driven Vaiṣṇava Theism completely to bay. It could not have held out much longer unless some one came forward to rehabilitate its fortune. And such a one was soon to appear on the scene as the champion of Vedāntic Theism and Vaiṣṇava Realism in the person of Śrī Madhvācārya.

## B ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA (1238-1317)

### D) His Life

- \* Śrī Madhva was born possibly in 1238 and lived 79 years (1317)
- \* His parents were Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and Vedavati, brāhmaṇas of humble status, in the village of Pājaka, eight miles SE of the town of Udupi. His original name was Vāsudeva.
- \* At seven he had his *Upāyana* and went through a course of Vedic and *Śāstra* studies. Probably at the age of sixteen he took sannyasi from Acyutaprekṣa and got the name Pūrṇaprajña.
- \* Some time after initiation was spent in the study of Vedāntic classics beginning with the *Istasiddhi* of Vimukātman. However frequent arguments between master and disciple terminated the studies before long.
- \* Pūrṇaprajña was then made head of the *maṭh* of Acyutaprekṣa, under the name of Ānandatīrtha.
- \* The name Madhva was assumed by him for certain esoteric reasons connected with his claim to be an *avatāra* of Vayu.
- \* He possessed an uncommon physique and extraordinary intellectual power.
- \* Śrī Madhva spent some time in Udupi teaching the other disciples of Acyutaprekṣa. These teachings and constant philosophical disputations developed his dialectic abilities and made him an adept in polemics that he shows himself to be in his works.
- \* Encouraged by these successes, he made up his mind to go on a South Indian tour to find a wider field for the propagation of his new ideas - Trivandrum, Kanyā Kumari, Śrī Raṅgam, Rameśvaram, etc. This tour took two or three years.
- \* Back to Udupi, Śrī Madhva was resolved to establish a new *sidhānta*, and he began his career as an author. His first literary work was the *Gītā-bhāṣya*. Then he started his first North Indian tour. At Badrināth, Madhvācārya left by himself for Mahābadarikāśrama, the abode of Vyāsadeva, in the upper regions of the Himalayas.
- \* He returned after some months and inspired by Vyāsadeva he wrote his *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*, which was transcribed to his dictation by his disciple Satyatīrtha.
- \* The returning trip to Udupi was through Bihar and Bengal, and to the banks of the Godavari, where Madhvācārya had a debate with a veteran scholar Śobhana Bhaṭṭa, who was defeated and became his important disciple under the name of Padmanābha Tīrtha. Another important conversion during this tour was of Narahari Tīrtha. The first North Indian tour was fruitful and caused considerable impression on the people.
- \* Till then Madhva's criticism of the *Advaita* and other prevailing schools had been merely destructive. He had not offered a new *bhāṣya* in place of those he had so ruthlessly criticized. But with the publication of his commentaries on *Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras* no one could say he had no alternative system to offer in place of those he criticized.
- \* His first achievement after his return to Udupi was the conversion of his very guru Acyutaprekṣa, completely, to the new *sidhānta*. He was defeated not without a fierce resistance. Madhvācārya now had got many converts and adherents.
- \* In that time, he installed the beautiful deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa in his Maṭh. He introduced some changes in the ceremonial codes and the rigorous fasting on Ekadaśī days.

- \* After that, Madhvācārya started on his second tour of North India and returning after visiting Delhi, Kurukṣetra, Benares and Goa. The subsequent tours were mostly within the Karnataka state.
- \* Many literary works had, in the meanwhile, been written by him such as the commentaries of the Ten *Upaniṣads*, Śrīmad Bhagavatam and Mahābhārata.
- \* The increasing popularity of the new faith naturally caused no small apprehension to the followers of the established faith - *Advaita*. Madhvācārya's only business was to dispel the mist of *Māyāvādi* philosophy, to which he was a veritable enemy all through his life. His library which contained a very valuable and rare collection of books was devastated in a raid done by *māyāvādīs*.
- \* This incident brought Madhvācārya into touch with Jayasīṃha, the ruler of Kumbha, and in this opportunity the great court *paṇḍita* Trivikrama Paṇḍitācārya was converted. Trivikrama's conversion was a turning point in the history of the faith. He wrote a commentary on Madhva's *Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya*, called *Tattva-pradīpa* and his son Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya was the author of the Madhva's biography "*Madhva-vijaya*".
- \* By this time, Madhva's fame spread far and wide, and many more joined to him.
- \* Then he composed his masterpiece – *Anuvyākhyāna* – based on the Vedānta-sūtra.
- \* The last years of Madhvācārya seem to have been spent in teaching and worship.
- \* He designated his younger brother *Viṣṇu* and seven other disciples to become the founders of the *Aṣṭa-Maṭhas* of Udupi. Three works were composed about this time: *Nyāya-vivarāṇa*, *Karma-nirṇaya* and *Kṛṣṇamṛta-mahārṇava*.
- \* Charging his disciples with his last message from his favorite *Upaniṣad*, *Aitareya* – “not sit still but go forth and preach” –, Śrī Madhvācārya left this world in 1318.

## II. Śrī Madhvācārya's Literary Works

- \* Śrī Madhvācārya wrote thirty seven works, collectively called *Sarva-mūla*. His writings are characterized by an extreme brevity of expression, and a rugged simplicity and directness, without any sophistication and literary ornament. The language of some of them are so terse and elliptical that their meaning could not be fully grasped without a good commentary. They may be classified under four heads:
  - a) Commentaries on the *Praṣṭhāna-traya*:
    - 1) *Gītā-bhāṣya*, 2) *Gītā-tātparyā*, 3) *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, 4) *Anubhāṣya*, 5) *Anuvyākhyāna*, 6) *Nyāya-vivarāṇa*, 7-16) ten *Upaniṣads bhāṣya*, 17) *R̥g-veda-bhāṣya*
  - b) Ten short monographs *Daśa-prakāraṇa*, some elucidating the basic principles of his system, its logic, ontology, epistemology, etc:
    - 8) *Pramāṇa-lakṣaṇa*, 19) *Kathā-lakṣaṇa*, 20) *Upādhi-khaṇḍana*, 21) *Māyāvāda-khaṇḍana*, 22) *Prapañca-mithyātvānumāna-khaṇḍana*, 23) *Tattva-sāṅkhyāna*, 24) *Tattva-viveka*, 25) *Tattvoddyota*, 26) *Viṣṇu-tattva-nirṇaya* and 27) *Karma-nirṇaya*.
  - c) Commentaries on *Smṛti-praṣṭhana*:
    - 28) *Bhagavata-tātparyā* and 29) *Mahābhārata-tātparyā-nirṇaya*.
  - d) Poems, *stotras*:
    - 30) *Yamaka-bhārata*, 31) *Narasīṃha-nakha-stuti*, 32) *Dvādaśa-stotra*, and some works on worship: 34) *Tantra-sāra-saṅgraha*, 35) *Sadācāra-smṛti*, 36) *Yati-praṇava-kalpa*, 37) *Kṛṣṇa-jayanti-nirṇaya*.

## C DVAITA PHILOSOPHY OF ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

\* The cardinal doctrines of Śrī Madhvācārya' Dvaita Vedānta have been summed up as nine in a verse attributed to Vyāsātīrtha (1478-1539):

- 1) *hariḥ paratarah* – In all respects Lord Viṣṇu alone is supreme and the highest; 2) *satyaṁ jagat* – This entire universe is truly and ultimately real; 3) *tattvato bhedaḥ* – The five-fold difference is fundamental; 4) *jīva-gaṇāḥ harer anucarāḥ* – The manifold embodied souls are all dependent on Lord Viṣṇu; 5) (*jīva-gaṇāḥ*) *nīca-ucca-bhāvam gatāḥ* – The embodied souls are inherently graded as higher and lower (mainly three-fold); 6) *muktir naija-sukhānubhūtiḥ* – Liberation is enjoying the bliss befitting to one's original form; 7) *amalā bhaktiś ca tat-sādhanam* – The means to secure Liberation is pure devotion to Lord Viṣṇu; 8) *akṣādi tritayaṁ pramāṇam* – The means of valid knowledge are only three, viz., perception, inference and verbal testimony; 9) *akhilām nāyaika vedyo hariḥ* – Lord Viṣṇu alone is made known by the entire mass of scriptures.

### I. Ontology

#### 1) Madhva's Ontological Theory

- a) Madhva's ontology is characterized by two principal ideas of being - reality and independence. Reality is related to this material world and souls; while independence is characteristic of the Lord alone.
- b) Śāṅkara says that the real must necessarily be eternal. On the other hand, the Buddhists affirm that it has to be necessarily momentary (*kṣanika*). The Madhva conception of Reality is in between these two concepts. Existence, then is a test of reality. For him, *satyaṁ* may be the existence at some place and time, and not necessarily for all time and throughout space. Actual existence at some time and place is sufficient to distinguish the real from the unreal. The second test of reality is “practical efficiency”.
- c) Unlike the classical definition of Dualism by *Sāṅkhya* philosophy – “a theory which admits two independent and mutually irreducible substances”–, the Dualism of Madhva, while admitting two mutually irreducible principles as constituting Reality as a whole, regards only one of them, viz. God, as the One and only independent principle (*svatantra*) and the other, viz. all finite reality comprising the *prakṛti*, *puruṣas*, *kāla*, *karma*, *svabhāva*, etc, as dependent (*paratantra*). This concept of two orders of reality (*tattvas*), viz. *svatantra* and *paratantra*, is the key note of Madhva's philosophy.

#### 2) Madhva's Ontological Scheme

- a) *Tattva* or reality is of two categories:
  - a<sup>1</sup>) *Svatantra* or independent (Lord Viṣṇu alone)
  - a<sup>2</sup>) *Paratantra* or dependent
- b) *Paratantra* is of two kinds:
  - b<sup>1</sup>) *Bhāva* or existent

- b<sup>2</sup>) *Abhāva* or non-existent:  
(The three types of *abhāva* are: *prag-abhāva* or anterior, *pradhvaṁsābhāva* or posterior, and *sadābhāva* or absolute negation).
- c) *Bhāva* or existent entities are of two broad types:  
c<sup>1</sup>) *Cetana* or conscious  
c<sup>2</sup>) *Acetana* or not conscious
- d) *Acetana* or unconscious entities are three fold:  
d<sup>1</sup>) *Nitya* or eternal ( the *Vedas* alone)  
d<sup>2</sup>) *Nityānitya* or partly eternal and partly non-eternal  
(the *Purānas*, *prakṛti*, *kāla*)  
d<sup>3</sup>) *Anitya* or non-eternal entities, which is divided into:  
i) *Samśṛṣṭa* or created (The world and everything else).  
ii) *Asamśṛṣṭa* or uncreated  
(*mahā-tattva*, *ahaṅkāra*, *buddhi*, *manas*, ten *indriyas*,  
*the tanmātras* and the *pañca-bhūtas*).
- e) *Cetana* or conscious entities can be:  
e<sup>1</sup>) *Duḥkha-sprṣṭa* or those associated with sorrows  
e<sup>2</sup>) *Duḥkhāsprṣṭa* or those who are not so (Lakṣmī Devī)
- f) The *Duḥkha-sprṣṭas* are divided in:  
f<sup>1</sup>) *Vimuktas* or released - (*devas*, *ṛṣis*, *pitṛs*, *naras*)  
f<sup>2</sup>) *Duḥkha-saṁsthā* or those abiding with sorrows, which are of two types:  
i) *Mukti-yogyā* or salvable  
ii) *Mukti-ayogyā* or unfit for *mukti*
- g) The *Mukti-ayogyas* can be:  
g<sup>1</sup>) *Nitya-saṁsarin* or ever-transmigrating  
g<sup>2</sup>) *Tamoyogyā* or damnable:  
(*martyādhāmas*, the worst men; *daityas*, the demons; *rākṣasas* and *piśacās*).  
Each one of these *tamoyogyas* can be:  
i) *Prāptāndhatamas* or those who are already damned in hell.  
ii) *Śṛtisaṁstha* or those who are in *saṁsara* but are doomed to hell.

### 3) The Concept Of Viśeṣas

- a) A special feature of Madhva's philosophy is the category of *viśeṣa*, which he introduces to explain the appearance of *bheda*, where there is none. The category distinguishes a quality from a substance and apart from the whole. Between a substance and its quality or between a whole and its parts there is no difference. The difference appears on account of *viśeṣa*. We do not perceive any difference between the cloth and its whiteness, but we perceive the *viśeṣa* (particularity) of the cloth. In the case of God, the principle of *viśeṣa* is employed to reconcile his unity with the plurality of his qualities and powers, and the plurality of His divine body , divine dress, divine abode, and the like.

- b) The concept of *viśeṣa* is used to accommodate the two conflicting types of texts in the *Upaniṣads* - those which speak of *Brahman* as *nirviśeṣa* and the *saviśeṣa* texts - by which Madhvācārya tries to reconcile the concept of monism with that of plurality.
- c) The concept of *viśeṣa* seems to be akin to the concept of *acintya-bhedābheda*. This view gains further support from the fact that Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* reverts to Madhva's doctrine of *viśeṣa* in reconciling monism and pluralism, and characterizes it as being identical with the concept of *acintya*. He says that *Brahman* is spoken of as possessing the qualities of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, although these qualities constitute the essence of *Brahman*. This is due to the supralogical functions of *viśeṣa*, because *viśeṣa* does not imply that *Brahman* is, from another point of view, identical with its qualities, and from another point of view, different. Nevertheless, we cannot take the concept of Madhvācārya as totally identical to Śrī Caitanya's because "Madhvācārya's concept of *acintya* is not so *acintya*, or inconceivable, as the *acintya* of Śrī Caitanya. Madhva's '*acintya*' is related to *viśeṣa*, which reconciles the *appearance* of difference and identity, while Śrī Caitanya's *acintya* reconciles *real* difference with *real* identity."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(O.B.L. Kapoor)

#### 4) Madhva's Doctrine of "Difference"

- a) According to Madhvācārya, the uniqueness of a particular be it a person or thing, is to be understood in terms of difference from all else. Difference is not merely a component part of a reality, related from outside, but constitutes the very essence (*dharmī-svarūpa*) of an object.
- b) There are three types of differences:
- b<sup>1</sup>) *sajātīya* or difference of things of same category
- b<sup>2</sup>) *vi-jātīya* or difference of things of different categories.
- b<sup>3</sup>) *svagata* or internal distinctions within an organic whole (this type is not admitted by Madhva in its absolute sense).
- c) Śrī Madhvācārya insists on five absolute and eternal distinctions between *Brahman* (*Īśvara*), *jīva* and *jaḍa*, or the inanimate world. He quotes from *Parama-śruti*:

*jīveśvara-bhidā caiva jaḍeśvara-bhidā tathā  
jīva-bhedo mithaś caiva jaḍa-jīva-bhidā tathā  
mithaś ca jaḍa-bhedo 'yaṁ prapañco bheda-pañcakaḥ  
so 'yaṁ satyo hy anādiś ca sādiś cen nāsamāpnuyāt  
na ca nāsaṁ prayātyeṣa na cāsau bhrānti kalpitaḥ  
kalpitaś cen nivartate na cāsau vinivartate  
daitaṁ na vidyata iti tasmād ajñānināṁ matam  
mataṁ hi jñānināṁ etan mitaṁ trātaṁ ca viṣṇunā  
yasmāt satyam iti proktaṁ paramo harir eva tu*

‘The universe consists of five-fold differences): Difference between 1) God and sentient soul; 2) God and the insentient matter; 3) one soul and another; 4) soul and matter; and 5) between one material object and another. This difference is real and beginningless. If it had the origin it would have perished. But it does not perish, not is it imagined through illusion. If it had been imagined it would have terminated. but it does not terminate.

Therefore, the contention that there is no duality or difference is the opinion of the ignorant. the enlightened hold that it is known and protected by Viṣṇu and that, as such, it is asserted to be real. But Viṣṇu alone is Supreme.'

## II. Epistemology

(From Madhva's Viṣṇu-tattva-vinirṇaya)

### 1) The Proofs about God

- \* The existence of God cannot be proved by any inference; for inference of equal force can be adduced against the existence of God. If it is urged that the world, being an effect, must have a creator or maker just as a jug has a potter for its maker, then it may also be urged on the contrary that the world is without any maker, like the self; if it is urged that the self is not an effect and that therefore the counter argument does not stand, then it may also be urged that all makers have bodies, and since God has no body, God cannot be the creator.
- \* Thus the existence of God can only be proved on the testimony of the scriptures, and they hold that God is different from the individual selves. If any scriptural text seem to indicate the identity of God and self or of God and the world, this will be contradicted by perceptual experience and inference, and consequently the monistic interpretations of these texts would be invalid.
- \* Now the scriptures cannot suggest anything which is directly contradicted by experience; for, if experience be invalid, then the experience of the validity of the scriptures will also become invalid. The teaching of the scriptures gains additional strength by its consonance with what is perceived by other *pramāṇas*; and since all the *pramāṇas* point to the reality of diversity, the monistic interpretation of scriptural texts cannot be accepted as true. When any particular experience is contradicted by a number of other *pramāṇas*, that experience is thereby rendered invalid.

### 2) Concept of *Upajīvaka* and *Upajīva*

- \* There are two classes of qualitative proofs, viz, that which is relative or dependent (*upajīvaka*) and that which is independent (*upajīva*); of these the latter must be regarded as stronger. Perception and inference are independent sources of evidence, and may therefore be regarded as *upajīva*, while the scriptural texts are dependent on perception and inference, and are therefore regarded as *upajīvaka*. Valid perception precedes inference and is superior to it, for the inference has to depend on perception; thus if there is a flat contradiction between the scriptural texts and what is universally perceived by all, the scriptural texts have to be so explained that there may not be any such contradiction. By its own nature as a support of all evidence, perception or direct experience, being the *upajīva*, has a stronger claim of validity. Of the two classes of texts, viz, those which are monistic and those which are dualistic, the latter is supported by perceptual evidence. So the superiority of the dualistic texts cannot be denied.

## III. The World of Experience

### 1) Doctrine of *Saksi-Pramāna*

- a) Belief in the reality of the world and its values is, naturally, one of the fundamental tenants of theism. The reality of the world can be proved especially by *pratyakṣa*, direct experience, and by many scriptural texts. Besides these *pramāṇas*, Madhvācārya resorts to a special type of *pratyakṣa* called *sākṣī*, the intuitive perception by the self, based on our *sākṣin* or the inner sense-organ of the embodied self (*svarūpendriya*).

- b) The *sākṣī* is the ultimate criterion of all knowledge and its validation. This *sākṣī* is competent enough to test and judge the data of our experience, gathered from sense-perception, inference and *śāstras*. Even the statements of the *śāstras* which support impersonalistic views of the unreality of this world or the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*, have to be brought before the bar of *sākṣī* before they can be accepted without question. When texts like '*tat tvam asi*' and '*neha nānāsti*' appear to teach the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman* and the unreality of the world, such teaching (or interpretation of these texts) has to be unhesitatingly rejected as invalid because it goes against the *upajīvyā-pramāṇa* (that *pramāṇa* which offers subsistence) which, in present case, is the tested *sākṣī-anubhāva* of the difference between the individual self and *Brahman* and of the reality of the world of experience.
- c) Some quotations from Madhvācārya:  
*anubhūti virodhena mā na kācana* – Nothing is valid which goes against one's intuitive knowledge.  
*na ca anubhava virodhe āgamasya prāmāṇyam* – The scripture can have no validity if it contradicts experience.

#### IV. Doctrine of Ātman

##### 1) Essence of Selfhood

###### a) (From Viṣṇu-tattva-vinirṇāya):

Who is a *jīva* or the soul? And how is he known? – To this question the reply is: the soul is known as 'I'. Whenever anyone utters the word 'I' it should be understood that he is meaning thereby his *jīva* or soul. Further, he is subject to happiness or misery. That is, whenever one becomes happy or miserable, the concerned happiness or misery is experienced by the soul. It is the soul who enjoys the happiness and suffers the misery. Moreover, it is the soul who is subjected to this *saṁsāra-bandhana* and it is the soul who gets release from this bondage and enjoys the bliss of the *mokṣa* or final liberation.

The *jīvas* are the reflected counterparts (*pratibimba-amśa*) of Viṣṇu. The bodies of the *jīvas*, eternally present in Vaikuntha are transcendental (*aprākṛta*). Hence, they are called unconditioned-reflected counterparts (*nir-upādhika-pratibimba-amśa*). The bodies of the *jīvas* of the material world are material; therefore, they are called conditioned-reflected-counterparts (*sa-upādhika-pratibimba-amśa*).

A question then arises: "What functions like a mirror (*upādhi*) in the *bimba-pratibimba-vāda*?" Verily, without a mirror there cannot be any reflection. If the *jīva* is a reflection of *Brahman* there must be something to act the role of the mirror. What is that *upādhi*?

Madhvācārya explains that the *svarūpa* or the inherent nature of the *jīva* itself functions as the *upādhi*.

- b) The state of the souls in *mokṣa* - They are not formless beings or colorless points but atomic individuals with their own specific forms and characteristics. They have spiritual bodies of their own with appropriate organs, and have names and forms which are beyond the knowledge of those still in bondage.

## 2) Metaphysical Dependence of Souls

- a) In spite of their intrinsic nature of consciousness and bliss, the souls, as finite beings, are in state of absolute dependence and limitation at all times – in bondage and release.
- b) The beginningless involvement of the soul in this world – Though essentially uncreated, they are, nevertheless associated from eternity with a series of material factors known as *avarāṇas* (concealment), which are:
  - b<sup>1</sup>) *liṅga-śarīra* or a subtle body
  - b<sup>2</sup>) *prārabdha-karma* or *karma* which has begun to bear fruit.
  - b<sup>3</sup>) *kāma* or desire which is the seed of activity.
  - b<sup>4</sup>) *avidyā* or ignorance, which is real and destructible.
- c) The source of bondage is also in the same way to be put down ultimately to the will of God. There is no other explanation of the beginningless association of ignorance obscuring the selves except the mysterious will of *Brahman*.
- d) It is the will of the Lord that the souls shall know Him and realize their respective selfhood only by cleansing themselves of the impurities of *prakṛti* and the distractions of *avidyā*, after a long and arduous process of physical, intellectual and moral effort and spiritual discipline. The seed must be planted in the earth before it can sprout and develop into a fruit tree. The accessories at *liṅga-deha*, *prārabdha-karma*, etc are just the material environment provided by God to help the *jīvas* to unfold themselves. This is indeed the purpose of creation.
- e) There is, thus no problem at all of the first 'fall of man', in Madhva's philosophy. The question is only of the 'ascent of man' by degrees, after he has qualified himself through sincere effort. Not having possessed the freedom and purity of the Supreme at any time of their lives, or having been 'in any way shares in the divine nature', the question does not arise for Madhva, of how the souls came to lose these and transfer themselves to the rule of *karma*. Rāmānuja holds that neither reason nor śāstra can tell us how *karma* got the souls into its power because the cosmic process is beginningless.

## 3) Madhva's Theory of Bondage

- a) According to Madhvācārya, souls exist from eternity in the chaos of a material environment under the supervision of God. At the conclusion of each *mahā-pralaya*, He brings them to the forefront of creation. He has no purpose in doing so, save that of helping the souls to exhaust through enjoyment (*bhoga*) the heavy load of *karmas* and *vāsanās*. Creation is, thus, an indispensable requisite for the ripening of individual *karma* and the full development of each soul.
- b) Creation is beginningless in time, but in all the same subject to the Lord's pleasure. He is the ultimate cause of their bondage – not in the sense that He threw them into it at certain point of their history, but that its continuous association with them is, in every way, subject to Him and its freedom will depend on His grace and co-operation. The termination of this entanglement can only be achieved by God's grace earned through *sādhanas*. Such is the essence of Madhva's view of the reality and terminability of bondage.
- c) It may, no doubt, appear to be a despotic thing for God to envelop the souls in beginningless *māyā*, but it is a necessary evil in the scheme of the universe. The association with material nature is a necessary step in the spiritual evolution of souls and is, therefore permitted by God. It is a painful experience through which everyone

of them has to pass before attaining his or her full stature – whatever that might be. It is the desire of the Almighty that the souls shall fulfil themselves only in this way and in no other. And there is no questioning His will, as He is *satya-saṅkalpa*.

- d) It is only true knowledge of the soul's relation to God that can redeem it from this bondage. The true and final explanation of bondage is, thus, the 'will of the Lord', and not merely *karma*, *ajñāna*, *kāla*, *guṇas*, etc. Madhva has gone beyond Rāmānuja in tracing the origin of bondage ultimately to Divine will.
- e) Madhvacarya calls his theory of the origin of bondage *svabhāva-ajñāna-vāda* or the theory of the soul's ignorance of their own true nature and of their dependence on the Supreme *Brahman*.

4) Theory of Svarūpa-Bheda

(Plurality and difference of nature among souls)

- a) Madhva's doctrine of the souls insists not only upon the distinctiveness of each soul but also upon an intrinsic gradation among them based on varying degrees of knowledge, power and bliss. This is known as *tāratamya*, which comes out more clearly in the release state where the souls realize their true status. This position is peculiar to Madhva and is not found in any other school of Indian philosophy.

b) (From Madhva's Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya):

There are broadly three groups of souls: gods, men and demons. Among them gods and superior men are fit to get liberation. The mediocre men are fit only to live in this world being victims to the cycle of birth and death. The worst men go to hell; demons too go to dark regions. Both liberation or reaching higher and brighter regions as well as downfall or sinking into dark nether regions are permanent. There is no return from those regions, whether brighter and darker.

Human beings can be classified as superior or inferior by considering their *hari-bhakti* or *hari-dveṣa*. The inferior possess *hari-dveṣa* even though in a lesser degree than what is possessed by demons. Therefore they are destined to reach dark regions. The superior souls possess *hari-bhakti* even though in a lesser degree than what is possessed by gods and therefore they are fit for *mokṣa*. The mediocre possess both *hari-bhakti* and *hari-dveṣa* and therefore they do not rise high nor they fall down. They remain for ever in this amterial world.

c) Doctrine of *jīva-traividhya* or tripartite classification of souls in this world:

- 1) *muktiyogya* (salvable)
- 2) *nitya-saṁsārin* (ever-transmigrating)
- 3) *tamoyogya* (damnable)

The doctrine of *jīva-traividhya* intends to justify and reconcile the presence of evil with divine perfection, in the only rational way in which it could be done, - by fixing the responsibility for goodness or evil upon the moral freedom born of diversity of nature of souls who are themselves eternal and uncreated in time.

- d) An intrinsic divergence of nature and faith into *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa* which is rooted in the core of individual nature as stated in the Bhagavad-gītā (17.2-3), is the ultimate base of this theory, according to Madhvācārya. What is thus ultimately traced to the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of the selves must indeed be unalterable. Other verses from Bhagavad-gītā supporting his theory are: BG (14.18), BG (16.5,6,20).



## V. Doctrine of Brahman

\* Jayathīrtha, in his *Nyāya-sudha*, gives classical expression to the metaphysical ideology of the *Upaniṣads*, as conceived by Madhvācārya:

“All texts of the *Vedānta* declare, indeed, the majesty of the Supreme *Brahman* as a storehouse of numberless auspicious attributes and free from all imperfections. Of these,

1) some represent It as endowed with such attributes as omniscience, lordship of all, control of beings from within, beauty, magnanimity and other excellences;

2) some describe It negatively as free from sin, devoid of grief, having no material body, and so on;

3) yet others speak of It as being beyond the reach of mind and words, in order to teach us the extreme difficulty of understanding It;

4) many others depict It as the One without a second, so as to make it clear that man must seek It to the exclusion of all else;

5) still others proclaim It as the Self of all, so that it may be realized as conferring on all else their existence, knowability and activity.

Thus do scriptures depict the *Brahman* in diverse ways and from different standpoints all converging towards the one purpose of expounding the transcendental and immanent majesty of God in Himself, in the *Ātma*, and in the world.”

## VI. Sādhana-Vicāra

### 1) Freedom and Free Will

a) The question of human freedom and divine control assumes great importance in philosophy and ethics. Madhvācārya says that it is man himself and not God who is responsible for the evil and suffering in the world. This is the corollary of his theory of *svarūpa-bheda* (intrinsic difference of nature among souls).

b) Madhvācārya maintains that the human soul is a real agent in all its actions. If the soul is not the *kartā*, the injunctions of the śāstras with reference to the obtainment of specific results and the moral law will lose all significance.

c) The acceptance of real agency (*kartṛtva*) to the soul does not, however, make the *jīva* and absolutely independent agent.

d) The *jīva* pursues of his free will a course of action which is determined mostly by his own deep-rooted nature, inclinations and past *karmas*. But even this is possible because God has given him the power to do things in conformity with his own innate goodness or its opposites. He is not, therefore, a mere puppet in the hands of God. The right to choose between right and wrong is his own, made on his own responsibility and at his own risk (BG 18.63: *yathecchasi tathā kuru*). This explains why some are *Muktiyogyas*, some remain in bondage and others qualify for *tamas*.

e) Most Indian commentators would take shelter under the inexorable law of *karma* to reconcile the presence of evil and inequalities in this world with the goodness of God. But even a chain of beginningless *karma* could not explain why all souls are not equally good or bad, as all of them are equally eternal and their *karmas* too were equally beginningless and they start simultaneously. The explanation given by Madhva is that *karma* itself is the result of the distinctive nature of each soul (called *hatha*) which is intrinsic to it.

f) Questions like: "The *jīva* was not created out of a void at a particular time. But he is none the less an expression of the nature of God. How then does he happen to be so

imperfect while his archetype is also the type of perfection?" Madhvācārya says that it is because the intrinsic diversity of human nature, *anādi-svarūpa-yogyatā*.

## 2) General Scheme of Sādhanas

- a) The aim of metaphysical inquiring is the attainment of release through Divine Grace. One has naturally to think of the means of earning it. The śāstras describe them as leading to one another, in the following order: 1) freedom from worldly attachment (*vairāgya*) 2) devotion to God (*bhakti*) 3) study of the śāstras (*śravaṇa*) 4) reflection (*manana*) 5) meditation (*nididhyāsana*), and 6) direct realization (*sākṣāt-kāra*).
- b) Madhva emphasises the point that instruction and guidance of a competent guru and his grace (*prasāda*) are absolutely necessary for *śravaṇa* and *manana* to bear fruit.
- c) A seeker is allowed to change his guru if he secures another with a superior spiritual illumination, provided the latter is able and inclined to impart the full measure of grace and illumination that may be required for the self realization of the disciple. Where both the gurus happen to be of equal merit and disposition to grant the full measure of their grace, qualifying for illumination to the aspirant, the permission of the earlier guru shall have to be obtained before securing instruction from the other one.
- d) *Bhakti*, according to Madhvācārya, is the steady and continuous flow of deep attachment to God, transcending the love of our own selves, our friends and relations, cherished belongings, etc, and fortified by the firm conviction of the transcending majesty and greatness of God as the abode of all perfections and free from all blemish, and by an unshakable conviction of the complete metaphysical dependence of everything else upon Him.
- e) *Tāratamya* or a gradational approach in the practice of Bhakti is a necessary element of the doctrine of Bhakti as propounded by Madhva. The devotional homage to the gods and the sages in spiritual hierarchy is not a matter of courtesy. It is a must. The devas occupy a special position in the government of God's universe with special cosmic jurisdiction delegated to them. They are the greatest devotees of the Lord, the highest order of *jñāna-yogīs* and our direct superiors, protectors, guides and gurus. We cannot even think of God without their grace. It is they who inspire our minds along the right lines and turn them Godward and enable us to know and worship Him by their presiding activity over the sense organs, mind, buddhi, etc, and bring our *Sādhanas* to fruition.
- f) From Madhva's *Gītā-tātparya* - "Pleased with the initial *bhakti* of the *jīvas* the Lord bestows on them firm knowledge of His nature and attributes. He then reveals Himself. Thereafter He inspires them with still more intensive devotion and after showing Himself to the *bhaktas* He cuts the knot of their *prakṛtic* bondage. In the released state also, the *jīvas* remain under the Lord's control imbued with unalloyed devotion to Him".
- g) It is said that Madhvācārya was the first Vaiṣṇava philosopher who has categorically held that the goddess Śrī who holds the unique position of being *nitya-mukta* and *samanā* (having semi-parity with the Lord), remains the most ardent devotee of the Lord from eternity. He also refers to the existence of *ekānta-bhaktas*, who prefer to be *bhaktas* instead of *sāyujya-muktas*.
- h) Jayatīrtha refers to three stages of *bhakti* in the ascending order:
  - 1) *pakva-bhakti* or ripe devotion - the means to acquiring knowledge of God. *Śravaṇa* and *manana* just pave the way for it.
  - 2) *paripakva-bhakti* or riper devotion - the means of direct vision of the Lord.

*Dhyāna* is the means.

- 3) *ati-paripakva-bhakti* or mellowed devotion - the spiritual joy of communion with the Lord. Here the direct realization of the Lord (*aparokṣa-jñāna*) is achieved and the *bhakta* wins the absolute grace (*athyartha-prasāda*)
- i) The two major ingredients of *bhakti*, according to Madhva:
  - 1) a profound awareness of the Lord's majesty (*mahātmya-jñāna*)
  - 2) an inborn magnetic attraction to the Lord (*sneha*)
- j) Conflict between *jñāna* and *bhakti* as the ultimate means of *mokṣa* (from Jayatīrtha's *Nyāya-sūdhā*):

“In the *śāstras*, wherever it is stated that *jñāna* is the means of *mokṣa*, it must be understood that *bhakti* is also conveyed by it through secondary significatory power of the word. This is because the intimate relationship which exists between them, insofar as *jñāna* is a constituent factor of *bhakti* which has been defined as a blend of knowledge of the Lord's majesty coupled with an absorbing love (*sneha*) for Him.”
- k) The steps of spiritual discipline taught by Yoga-śāstra - *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇayāma*, *pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇa* are to be treated as accessories to *dhyāna*, which is virtually the same as the state of *samādhi* or introspection.
- l) Madhvācārya distinguishes carefully between *dhyāna* and *aparokṣa*. The former is defined as a continuous flow of mediate knowledge while the latter is a direct vision of the Supreme Being, in Its "*bimba*" form. The form revealed in *dhyāna* is, therefore, regarded as just a mental picture, an image constructed by the impressions of the mind, just a substitute and not the original form of God. But the one visualized in *aparokṣa* is the actual revelation of God - the *yogi* or *sādhaka* is face to face with the object of his meditation and intuitively perceives the Divine form, which is His archetype (*bimba*). Such direct perception of God is attainable only when the mind is specially attuned to the Supreme by full discipline of *śrāvana*, *manana* and *dhyāna*, in absolute self-surrendering devotion to God. Ultimately, it is He that must choose to reveal Himself, pleased by the hungering love of the soul.

## VII. Doctrine of Mukti

- a) Madhvācārya's theory of *ānanda-tāratmya* (different levels of bliss) in *mokṣa* is a logical conclusion from the hypothesis of *svarūpa-bheda* (differences in nature) and *tāratmya* (gradation) among the souls. The main argument of this theory is that since *mokṣa* is only the discovery of enjoyment of one's own selfhood, in its pristine purity and bliss, there is no possibility of exchanging one's experiences of bliss with another's, or of its transference to another, whether wholly or in part. Each soul rests fully satiated and immersed in the enjoyment of its *svarūpānanda* to saturation point, so to say. All souls could not have put forth the same quality or quantity of effort of the same intensity or duration. It thus stands to reason that there must be a proportionate difference in the nature of the reward reaped by them. This is one other ground of *tāratmya* (gradation) of *ānanda* (bliss) in *mokṣa*. There are highly evolved souls like *Brahmā* and the other gods whose spiritual perfection must surely be greater than that of us mortals. The evidence of *śāstras* tell us of super-human *sādhanas* practiced by some of the gods and the wide difference in their quality, duration, etc, which are beyond human conception.
- b) Madhvācārya accepts an ascending order of *mukti*: *sālokya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya* and *sāyujya*, in which each succeeding stage includes the joy of the preceding step. He says

that as *sāyujā* carries with it an element of *sārūpyā* also, it cannot be equated with *aikyam* or monistic liberation.

## D COMPARISON WITH OTHER SYSTEMS

### I. Dvaita versus Viśiṣṭādvaita

- 1) Madhva is a rank dualist and does not believe in qualified absolutism. According to Rāmānuja differences have no separate existence and belong to identity which they qualify. Identity, therefore, is the last word. But for Madhva differences have separate existences and constitute the unique nature of things. They are not mere qualifications of identity.
- 2) Madhva rejects the relation of inseparability (*aprthaksiddhi*) and the distinctions between substance (*dravya*) and non-substance (*adravya*). He explains the relation of identity and difference by means of unique particulars (*viśeṣa*) in the attributes of the substance. The attributes are also absolutely real. Hence, Madhva does not regard the universe of matter and souls as the body of God. They do not qualify God because they are substantive existence themselves. Though God is the immanent ruler of the souls and though the souls as well as matter depend on God, yet they are absolutely different from God and cannot form His body.
- 3) Rāmānuja advocates qualitative monism and qualitative pluralism of the souls, believing as he does that all souls are essentially alike. But Madhva advocates both quantitative and qualitative pluralism of the souls. No two souls are alike. Each has, besides its individuality, its peculiarity also.
- 4) Madhva, therefore, believes that even in liberation the souls differ in degrees regarding their possession of knowledge and enjoyment of bliss (*ānanda-tāratamya*). Rāmānuja rejects this.
- 5) Madhva regards God as only the efficient cause of the world and not its material cause which is *Prakṛti*. God creates the world out of the stuff of *Prakṛti*. Rāmānuja regards God as both the efficient and material cause of the world.
- 6) While Rāmānuja makes the liberated soul similar to God in all respects except in some special respects like the possession of the power of creation, preservation and dissolution of this world, and the power of being the inner ruler of the universe, Madhva emphasizes the difference of the liberated soul and God. The soul becomes similar to God in some respects when it is liberated, yet even in these respects it is much inferior to God. It does not enjoy the full bliss of God. The bliss enjoyed by the redeemed souls is fourfold: *sālokya* or residence in the same place with God, *sāmīpya* or nearness to God, *svārūpya* or having the external form like that of God and *sāyujya* entering into the body of God and partially sharing His bliss with Him. Thus, though according to Rāmānuja the liberated souls enjoys the full bliss of the realization of *Brahman* which is homogeneous, ubiquitous (being everywhere) and Supreme, according to Madhva even the most qualified soul which is entitled to *sāyujya* form of liberation can share only partial bliss of *Brahman* and cannot become similar to *Brahman* (*Brahma-prakāra*) in the strict sense of the term.
- 7) Madhva believes that certain souls like demons, ghosts and some men are eternally doomed and damned. They can never hope to get liberation. Rāmānuja rejects this.

The doctrine of eternal damnation is peculiar to Madhvācārya and Jainism in the whole field of Indian Philosophy.

## II. Some Flashes of the Madhva's Dialectic

### a) Refutation of Advaita's Theory of Eka-jīva-vāda: (from Viṣṇu-tattva-vinirnāya)

The *eka-jīva-vāda* according to which this entire universe is a figment imagined by one embodied soul is quite unreasonable.

For the enlightenment of that one embodied soul, it should be decided whether he is a preceptor or a pupil and then establish the required pupil-preceptor relation. If X is that soul who is conscious of the fact that everything is his imaginery creation, then he, as a preceptor, will not engage himself in giving instructions to others treating as his pupils. Because all others except himself are unreal and no purpose will be served by giving them any instructions. Obviously, nobody worries about his duties towards persons seen in a dream, e.g. if one obtains a son in one's dream one never tries for his upbringing and education.

Moreover suppose somehow that one soul is discovered – the difficult does not then and there end. As pointed out above, he cannot function as a preceptor to establish the required pupil-preceptor relation. He cannot also function as a pupil, because that would make him receive instruction from a preceptor who is none but the product of his own imagination and thus unfit to serve any useful purpose like imparting true knowledge.

What is the purpose of learning? It should elevate the pupil on the path of liberation. When we consider the pupil to be that one soul, what does happen when he gets learning? He becomes a preceptor. Is it an elevation or a fall? As it is believed that the preceptor is the illusory product imagined by the pupil, learned pupil when occupies the position of the preceptor will himself become reduced from reality to unreality. Thus the learning instead of elevating him, will degrade him. None will dare to undertake such a downgrading learning!

### b) The Nature of the Upādhi: (from Upādhi-khaṇana)

The monist introduces the concept of *upādhi* to explain that the Omniscient *Brahman* becomes the ignorant *jīva* due to *upādhi*, or the *upādhi* causes ignorance in *Brahman*.

Śrī Madhvācārya reply: All those who believe in the existence of *Brahman* as described in the scriptures agree that *Brahman* is *sarva-jñā* or Omniscient. Now, how can anybody attribute ignorance to Him to become the ignorant *jīva*? There cannot exist any ignorance in *Brahman* and that He cannot get contaminated by ignorance.

The monist say: 'The individual soul is in contact with body, sense-organs etc., which constitute the limiting adjuncts of the soul and on account of this limitation ignorance becomes possible.' An example is given: There is a mirror which reflects the face. When there is dirt on the mirror, the reflection appears dirty, but the face is clean. Similarly, the individual soul, under the influence of the body, the sense-organs, etc., which constitute the *upādhi*, can very well be ignorant even though the *Brahman* is omniscient.

The question then arises: How does the *upādhi* come in contact with *Brahman*? Two alternatives are possible: Either it must be due to the *svabhāva* or the inherent nature of *Brahman* or it must come in contact with *Brahman* due to *ajñāna* or ignorance. The first alternative can not be accepted by the monists because they will have to agree for dualism, that means, the reality of to ultimate realities – *Brahman* and *upādhi*. If it is

accepted that the *upādhi* is caused by ignorance, the question arises: what is the cause of the ignorance? One cannot say that the ignorance is caused by another previous *upādhi*, because one has to explain what is the cause of that previous *upādhi*. Therefore this is an example of the fallacy of *anvsthā* or regress to infinite.

c) *Brahman and the Plurality of Jīvas:*

According to the *Advaita-vādis*, *Brahman*, the only Reality, gets contaminated by infinite number of the *upādhis* and appears as many souls. If this is accepted to explain the pluralidade of the *jīvas*, then it will imply necessarily that as long as these souls are in *saṁsāra-bandhana*, even *Brahman* will get entangled in the same bondage, because, it is only *Brahman*, Who, due to the influence of the *upādhis*, is transmigrating in the form of the souls. Are the monists ready to enchain their *Brahman* in this manner?

Secondly, it is a fact that all souls cannot get the benefit of liberation whereas many will remain stuck in the worldly bondage. What will then be the position of *Brahman*? Will It be bound or liberated? It is not possible to believe that It is liberated, because It is there in the worldly bondage in the form of conditioned souls.

The monist cannot contend that the *upādhi* does not contaminate his Pure *Brahman*. Because in that case, he will have to admit two *Brahmans*, one Pure and not having any contact with *upādhis* and another *sa-upadhika-brahman*, who gets contact of *upādhis* and becomes bound in *saṁsāra* as *jīvas*.

d) *Ajñāna and Upādhi:*

Now there are two concepts believed by the monist, viz. *ajñāna* and *upādhi*. But can he explain satisfactorily their existence since both are false? When the *advaita-vādin* attributes falsity to the *upādhis*, he must depend upon a prior *ajñāna*, because *ajñāna* happens to be the cause of *mīthyātva* or falsity. Now can he agree to the prior existence of *ajñāna* as the cause of *mīthyātva*? That is also not possible because the *ajñāna* must subsist in something as its support. But *ajñāna* cannot subsist in *Brahman*, the only One Reality. Therefore they say that the *ajñāna* which affects the *jīva*, resides in him as the support. But it gives rise to the question: “What is the status of he *jīva*? Is he real or unreal?” If real there will result dualism. To avoid this, the monist will have to state that the *jīva* is none other than *Brahman* Itself but contaminated by *ajñāna*. That means that the ignorance has its abode in the ‘ignorance-affected’ *Brahman*. But how can there be the ‘ignorance-affected’ *Brahman* before coming into existence of the ignorance itself?

e) *The Āśraya of Ajñāna:*

According to the *Advaita-vādin*, there are three entities: *ajñāna*, *jīva* and *mīthya-upādhi*. Then the question is: “What is the *āśraya* or abode of *ajñāna*?” The monist’s reply is: “the *jīva* is the *āśraya* of *ajñāna*.” The next question then is: “What is the status of this *jīva*?” And the reply is ready-made: “The *jīva* is *Brahman* only affected by *mīthya-upādhi*.” Then, “What about the cause of the *mīthya-upādhi*?”, is the further question. “The cause of the *mīthya-upādhi* is the *ajñāna*”, is the ready reply. Śrī Madhvācārya asks: “Do all these questions and answers solve the basic problem of the exact *āśraya* of *ajñāna*?” Not at all. Because the existence of the *mīthya-upādhi* depends upon the prior establishment of the *ajñāna*; the existence of the *jīva* depends upon the prior existence of he *mīthya-upādhi*; and the establishment of the *ajñāna* depends upon the prior existence of the *jīva* as its abode. There results the fallacy of *cakraka* or arguing in a vicious circle.



## E POST-MADHVA PERIOD

### I. Life and Works of Jayatīrtha (1345-88)

- \* After Madhva, the next great acārya of the *Samprādaya* is Jayatīrtha. He raised the Dvaita philosophy to a position of *śāstraic* equality with the *Advaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, by his remarkable industry, depth of scholarship and masterly exposition.
- \* For beauty of language and brilliance of style, for proportion, keenness of argument and fairness in reasoning, for refreshing boldness, originality of treatment and fairness of critical acumen, Sanskrit philosophical literature has few equals to place beside him.
- \* He stands supremely inimitable and belongs to the class of the great makers of style, especially Sanskrit philosophical prose - like Śabara (commentator on Jaimini's works), Śaṅkarācārya, and his commentator Vācaspati Miśra.
- \* If Madhva's works were not commented by Jayatīrtha, they would never have had prominence in the philosophical world.
- \* He was honored with the title of Ṭikācārya. Even Vyāsatīrtha, the other great name in the Madhva line, recognized his position.
- \* So complete has been the domination of Jayatīrtha's works in Dvaita literature of the post-Madhva period that, except for a few cases, the entire course of its subsequent history has been one of commentaries and sub-commentaries on the *ṭikās* of Jayatīrtha. Because of his brilliance, he has eclipsed the works of his predecessors, as Trivikrama Paṇḍita, Padmanābha Tīrtha, Narahari and others.
- \* Jayatīrtha's father was a nobleman of military rank. He, Jayatīrtha, was a keen sportsman, a good rider and athlete. Early in his life he was married to two wives. At the age of twenty he was in the course of one of his riding excursions to the bank of the Candrabhāga river to quench his thirst. He did not even take the trouble to dismount, but rode into the river and bending down from on horseback, put his mouth to the water and drank. On the other side of the river sat an ascetic watching the sight. It was Akṣobhya Tīrtha. He called Jayatīrtha to his side and put him certain strange questions which "at once flashed before the youth's mental eye a vision of his past life". He was strangely affected and sought to be taken as a disciple. His father tried to change his decision but failed. Then he was allowed to go back to his guru. He was soon ordained a monk under the name Jayatīrtha, and started learning the śāstras under Akṣobhya Tīrtha.
- \* Jayatīrtha's main literary works are:
  - a) *Nyāya-śudhā* - commentary on Madhva's *Anuvyakhyana*; b) *Tattva-prakāśikā* - commentary on Madhva's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*; c) *Pramāṇa-paddhati*; d) *Vādāvalī*;
  - e) and more seventeen works, most of them as commentary on Madhva's works.

### II. Life and Works of Vyāsatīrtha (1460-1539)

- \* About a century after Jayatīrtha came Vyāsatīrtha, the prince of dialecticians in the Dvaita system.
- \* He became a *sannyasi* while still in his teens. (it is said that his father had no sons, but by the blessings of Brahmaṇya Tīrtha, he got three – a girl and two boys. He had promised to give a second son to Brahmaṇya Tīrtha. This son was Vyāsatīrtha). Not long after his guru Brahmaṇya Tīrtha passed away, and he was sent to study *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and *Mīmāṃsā* systems at Kanchipuram. After this he studied logic and Madhva *śāstras* under the celebrated Śrīpādarāja.

- \* Then Vyāsātīrtha was sent by Śrīpadaraja to the court of Vijayanagar, where he was very successful in debating with many leading scholars. After some time he was honored as the Guardian Saint of the Kingdom. He became the guru of the famous king Kṛṣṇadevarāya.
- \* Vyāsātīrtha was almost the second founder of system of Madhva. In him, the secular and philosophical prestige of the system of Madhva reached its highest point of recognition. The strength which he infused into it through his labours and personality has contributed, in no small measure, to its being even today a living and flourishing faith in South India as a whole.
- \* He passed away in 1539 at Vidyānagar and his samadhi, as well as that of Jayatīrtha, is in Nava-Vr̄ndavana, an island on the Tuṅgabhadrā river near Ānegondī.
- \* The historian Dasgupta stated: "The logical skill and depth of acute dialectical thinking shown by Vyāsātīrtha stands almost unrivalled in the whole of Indian thought".
- \* Vyāsātīrtha wrote ten works in all. The most famous of these are: a) *Nyāyāmṛta*, b) *Tarkatāṇḍava* and c) *Tātparya-candrikā*.
- \* The work '*Nyāyāmṛta*' was the starting point of a series of brilliant dialectical classics. The challenge thrown out by Vyāsātīrtha in his book was taken up by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, in his '*Advaitasidhi*'. This was, in its turn, criticized by Rāmācārya his *Taraṅgiṇī* (beginning of the 17th century); which was again criticized by Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, who was, in his turn, refuted by Vanamāli Mīśra.

### III. Madhva School and its Institutions

- \* Towards the close of his life, Śrī Madhvācārya had ordained eight monks (Hṛṣikeśa Tīrtha, Narasimha, Janārdana, Upendra, Vāmana, Viṣṇu (Madhva's brother), Rāma and Adhokṣaja Tīrtha for the conduct of worship of Śrī Krishna at his *maṭha* in Udupi. These eight became the founder of the *aṣṭa-maṭhas*: 1) Palimār, 2) Adamār, 3) Kṛṣṇāpūr, 4) Puttige, 5) Sirūr, 6) Sode, 7) Kāṅūr, and 8) Pejāvar *maṭha*.
- \* The *svāmīs* of the eight *maṭhas* hold office as high priests of the Śrī Kṛṣṇa *Maṭha*, by turns, for two years each. This biennial change of office is known as '*Paryya*'. This unique and well organized system of religious worship and administration is generally believed to have been introduced by Vadirāja Svāmī, in the 16th century.
- \* There are also two other *maṭhs* - Bhaṇḍārkee and Bhīmanakatte - descending from Acyutaprajña with Satyatīrtha at their head.
- \* Besides these, a group of four itinerant disciples of Śrī Madhvācārya - Padmanābha, Narahari, Mādhava and Akṣobhya - founded separate *maṭhs*. These four *maṭhs* were descending together. But after Jayatīrtha it branched of into two and some years later one of these split again. Then these three *maṭhs* are going on now by the names of: 1) Vyāsarāja *maṭha*, 2) Rāghavendra Svāmī *maṭha*, and 3) Uttarādi *maṭha*. These three *maṭhs* now enjoy the status of "*Maṭha-traya*" or the three premier Madhva *maṭhs* descended from Jayatīrtha.
- \* Although many *svāmīs* of the Udupi *Maṭhs* have made important contributions to *Dvaita* literature, actually most of the makers of the *Dvaita Vedānta* and its literature comes from the *Maṭha-traya*, in the line descended from Jayatīrtha.

## **A ŚRĪ NIMBARKĀCĀRYA**

### **I. His Life**

- \* Nothing much for certain is known about the life of Śrī Nimbārka. Some say that he was born in a Telugo brāhmaṇa family somewhere on the banks of the Godāvāri. According to a different account, however, he was born in Nimbagrāma near Govardhana, and his parents were Aruṇa and Jayantī, or from another source, Jagannātha and Sarasvatī.
- \* Nimbārka is also called Nimbāditya or Niyamānanda. The name Nimbārka means "the sun of the Nimba tree". It is said that when he was five years old and ascetic came to his house. They were engaged in philosophical discussion till sunset. Then it was offered some food to the ascetic who declined because the sun had already set. But by his mystic power Nimbārka showed him that the sun was still over a Nimba tree nearby, and the guest took his meal.
- \* The date of his birth is also uncertain. The most probable is that he flourished in the period after Rāmānuja and before Madhvācārya.
- \* Nimbārka was a *naiṣṭhika brahmacāi* through his lifetime. He is said to have practiced a severe penance under a Nimba tree, living on the juice of its fruit only. Afterwards, he visited all the holy places and travelled all around preaching the Vaiṣṇava religion wherever he went. Later on he stayed for some years in Naimiṣarānya.
- \* The tradition says that the Supreme Lord as Hamśāvatāra taught transcendental knowledge to the four Kumāras, who imparted to Nārada Muni who, in his turn, personally instructed Nimbārka. In his writings, Nimbārka refers to Nārada Muni as his guru.

### **II. Nimbārka's Literary Work and Others**

- \* Nimbārka wrote a short commentary on *Vedānta Sūtra* called *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha*. He composed also a small work containing ten stanzas called *Daśa-sloki*. In these verses Nimbārka affirms that *Brahman* is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and He is to be meditated upon at all times. Devotion to him is the highest *sādhana*, and the object of meditation is not Kṛṣṇa alone, rather Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Nimbarkācārya also wrote some other compositions as *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-stava-rāja* and *Madhva-mukha-mardana*.
- \* Nimbārka's immediate disciple Śrīnivāsa wrote a commentary on *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha* called *Vedānta-kaustubha*, on which Keśava Kāśmīri (31st in his disciplic succession) wrote his *Kaustubha-prabhā*. Puruṣottamācārya (3rd after Nimbārka) commented on the *Daśa-sloki* in his *Vedānta-ratna-mañjusā*.

## B NIMBĀRKA'S SVABHĀVIKA-BHEDĀBHEDA-VĀDA

### I. General Aspects

#### 1) Different Types of Bhedābheda:

\* Some other philosophers presented previously to Nimbārka different conceptions of *bhedābheda* as Auḍulomi, Yādavaprakāśa and Bhāskara (996-1061).

Bhāskara's *bhedābheda*, for example, is called '*aupādhika-bhedābheda*' because, to him, *abheda*, non-difference, is real and eternal, while *bheda*, difference, is unreal and accidental due to the *upādhis* ('accidental predicates' or 'limiting adjuncts' like body and the senses), which disappear on the attainment of *mokṣa*.

#### 2) Nirguna Versus Saguna Texts:

a) In the *śrutis* there are some passages which appear to declare the there is identity between *Brahman* and the *jīva*. For example, there are passages like *tat tvam asi* and *aham brahmāsmi* which appear to declare the said identity. Certainly there are also passages which proclaim the distinction between the two; e.g. *nityo nityānam cetanaś cetanānām; dvā suparṇā sakhāyā* and so on. What is the truth, whether identity or distinction? And how to reconcile the two-fold passages to assert the truth?

b) Nimbārka considers the *bheda* and *abheda* statements from the *śrutis* equally real. He takes both literally. He reconciles both the points of view, apparently contradictory statements, which sometimes seem to support identity and sometimes difference. He does not do any interpretation, trying to adjust to the particular philosophy, as we have seen in Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva and Vallabha's works. It is free from any effort to distort their real meaning.

### II. Philosophical Points

#### 1) Relation between Brahman, cit and acit

\* According to Nimbārka, there exists three equally real and co-eternal realities - *Brahman*, *cit* and *acit*. *Brahman* is the controller (*niyantr*), the *cit* is the enjoyer *jīva* (*bhoktr*) and *acit* is the enjoyable matter (*bhogyā*). The question then is what is the relation between these three?

In the first place, there is one essential difference of nature (*svarūpa-bheda*) between *Brahman* on the one hand, the soul and the world on the other. *Brahman* is the cause and the soul His effect, and there is evidently a difference between the cause and its effect, as between the sea and the waves, or the sun and its rays. Also *Brahman* is the whole and the soul His part, and the part and the whole cannot be identical. Again, *Brahman* is the object to be worshiped, the object to be known, the object to be attained, while the soul is the knower, the worshiper and the attainer. Further, *Brahman*, as the inner Controller, dwells within the soul and controls him, therefore the Dweller and the place dwelt in, the controller and the controlled must be different. Other essential differences between *Brahman* and the soul are that while the former is never subject to *avidyā*, absolute and always free from sins, capable of realizing all His wishes at once. Also He is all pervading and possessed of the power of creation, maintenance and destruction.

Obviously the *jīva* does not possess these qualities and even the freed soul, who is similar to *Brahman* in many aspects, differs from Him in these last two points (all-pervasiveness and power of creation).

In the very same manner, there is an essential difference between *Brahman* and the universe. *Brahman* is the cause and the universe is the effect. *Brahman* is sentient, non-gross, non-material, ever pure, but the universe is quite the reverse. One is the Ruler and the other is ruled. Therefore, the difference between *Brahman* and the souls or the universe is evident - it is eternal, natural and undeniable.

Nevertheless, the non-difference, on the other hand, is no less true. The souls and the universe as effects and parts of *Brahman* are completely dependent on Him for its very being and existence. In this sense they are non-different.

Therefore the relation between them is neither absolutely distinct nor absolutely non-distinct. It is a relation of natural difference-non-difference (*svabhāvika-bhedābheda*), just like that between a snake and its coil, or between the sun and its rays.

The conclusion is that the difference (*bheda*) and non-difference (*abheda*) between *Brahman* and the souls or the universe are both equally real, natural and eternal.

## 2) Kinds of Souls:

- \* The souls are broadly of two kinds – souls in bondage (*baddhas*) and those that are free (*muktas*).

The *baddhas* are of two kinds: *mumukṣus* or those who, after having undergone all sorts of pains and miseries in the world, have lost all attachment for it, but wish to get rid of their earthly existence and attain salvation; and *bubhukṣus*, or those who hanker after earthly enjoyment.

The *mumukṣus* are of two kinds: *bhagavata-bhāvāpatti*, or those who desire to attain the nature of the Lord; and *nija-svarūpāpatti*, or those who desire to attain their real nature.

The *bubhukṣus* also are of two kinds: *bhāviśreyaskah*, or those who hanker after future happiness (going to heaven); and *nitya-saṁsārī*, or those who hanker after ordinary earthly enjoyments only.

The *muktas* are of two kinds: *nitya-muktas*, or those who are ever-free; and *baddha-muktas*, or those who were in bondage previously, but are now free.

The *nitya-muktas* are of two types: *ānantaryya*, the paraphernalia of the Lord, for example, the flute, dresses, crown, etc, which are considered as living beings; and *pārṣada*, or the eternal associates of the Lord.

In its turn the *baddha-muktas* are also of two types: *bhagavata-bhāvāpatti*, those who have attained supreme bliss consequent on their attaining the very nature of the Lord; and *nija-svarūpāpatti*, those who are content with the bliss consequent on their attaining their own nature.

## 3) Process of Attaining Moksa:

- \* A man desirous of salvation approaches a guru, and follow the *sādhanas* as directed by him; this has the effect of pleasing the Lord, Who Himself frees him the shackles of *avidyā* – all *karmas*, good or bad, which are the causes of bondage. However he has to wait till he has completely exhausted the effects of works which have already begun to bear fruit (*prārabdha-karmas*). After that, when he is completely freed from them and has no more birth to undergo, his soul leaves the body through the vein which passes

out of the crown of the head, follow the ‘path of Gods’ (*deva-yāna* – described in the Upaniṣads) and attains the world of *Brahman*.

Then, through the grace of the Lord, he can have a direct vision of the Lord, and attains the nature and qualities of the Lord – and this is salvation.

#### 4) Sādhanas:

- \* There are five types of *sādhanas*, according to Nimbārka. Although *bhakti* is not included, it accompanies each of these.
  - a) *karma*, which purifies the mind, and makes it fit for knowledge and meditation.
  - b) *jñāna*, or knowledge about God.
  - c) meditation on the Lord.
  - d) *prpatti*, self-surrender to the Lord
  - e) *gurūpasatti*, self-surrender to the guru.

#### 5) Theology:

- \* The eternal relation between God and men, according to Nimbārka, is a relation between the worshiped and the worshipper. But this relation is not out of awe, but a most intimate relation of love and spontaneous devotion.  
The personal God worshiped by Nimbārka is Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa – the cowerd Kṛṣṇa, brought up in the house of Nandagopa, engaged in playful pastimes with the *gopīs*, and attended by Śrī Rādhā. Therefore the object of worship in Nimbārka *sampradāya* is Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

### III. Some Comparisons to Śrī Caitanya’s philosophy

- a) *Gauḍīya* philosophy agrees with Nimbārka in many points. Both give equal importance to identity and difference. The concept of “*svabhāvikā*” is acceptable in the sense that both difference and identity are real. Also Nimbārka, for his side, in his commentary on Vedānta-sūtra, suggests that the simultaneous presence of identity and difference is due to the *acintya-śakti* of *Brahman*.
- b) If there is *svabhāvikā-bhedābheda* between *Brahman* and *jīva*, the impurities and imperfections of the *jīva* must also belong to *Brahman*. But *Brahman* is by nature pure and perfect. Similarly, the qualities of omniscience and omnipotence found in *Brahman* must be shared by the *jīvas*, who are by nature limited in their knowledge and power. But *Brahman* is not affected at all by the impurities and imperfections of the *jīvas*, therefore this relation is not only *svabhāvikā* but *acintya*.
- c) Nimbārka-cārya considers *acit*, the insentient potency of *Brahman*, of three types: 1) *prakṛta* (product of *prakṛti*), 2) *aprakṛta* (not a product of *prakṛti*) and 3) *kāla* (time). This *acit-aprakṛta* refers to the material cause of everything that exists in the spiritual world – the Supreme *dhāma* of the Lord, including the bodies, dresses, ornaments, etc. of the Lord and his associates. But for the *Gauḍīyas*, the Lord is not different from His body, paraphernalia, and everything else in the *dhāma*.

#### IV *Viśiṣṭādvaita* Versus *Svabhāvika* -*Bhedābheda*

##### 1) Points of Dissimilarity:

<b>Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita</b>	<b>Nimbārka's Svabhāvika-Bhedābheda</b>
a) The highest reality is <i>Viṣṇu</i> . No mention of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.	The highest reality is Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Rādhā.
b) The sentient souls and non-sentient substance are attributes or modes of the Lord.	They are power of the Lord, and not His attributes.
c) Difference qualifies non-difference and is as such subordinate to it. More emphasis on the principle of identity.	Difference and non-difference are precisely on the same level, none being subordinate to the other. Equal emphasis on both the principles.
d) Bhakti means continuous meditation.	It means intense love.
e) The relation between God and man is a distant relation of reverence.	The relation between them is an intimate relation of love.
f) More intellectual.	More religious.

##### 2) Points of Similarity:

- a) *Brahman* is a personal God, endowed with infinite auspicious attributes and prowess and free from all defects, the One identical material and efficient cause of the universe.
- b) The souls are knowledge by nature, knowers, doers, enjoyers, atomic, innumerable, dependent and real in bondage as well as in release.
- c) The non-sentient substance is of three kinds – matter, pure matter and time; and is real and dependent on the Lord.
- d) Difference and non-difference are both real.
- e) Meditation, based on knowledge and accompanied by proper actions, is the means of salvation.
- f) Salvation is the full development of the nature of the individual soul, and its attaining similarity with the Lord. There is no *jīvan-mukti*.
- g) The grace of the Lord is an essential condition of salvation.

## PART IV – RUDRA SAMPRĀDAYA

### A EARLY PERIOD

#### I. Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī

- \* Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī is the founder acārya of the Rudra *Samprādaya* which is supposed to be the oldest of the four recognized Vaiṣṇava *samprādayas*. Biographical data concerning to him are too few to enable one to reconstruct any history of his life and career. He does not seem to have written many books except his commentary on Vedānta-sūtra, *Sarvajña-sukta*, quoted by Śrīdhāra Svāmī in his commentaries on Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Śrīmad- Bhagavatam.
- \* An important consideration is that Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhakura who was a younger contemporary of Śaṅkarācārya belonged to the *Viṣṇusvāmī samprādaya* after his conversion to Vaiṣṇavism. So for this we conclude that Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī was the earliest of all Vaiṣṇava acāryas.
- \* Although technically Vallabhācārya religion belongs to Viṣṇusvāmī line, we hardly find reference about the acārya in the main books of that sect
- \* The worshipable deity of in this line is Lord Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva.

#### 1) The Three Viṣṇusvāmīs:

- \* Śrīla Bhaktisidhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhakura give us some more information. There were three acāryas bearing the same name of Viṣṇusvāmī in that line, he says. The first one was Adi Viṣṇusvāmī and he is said to born about the 3rd century BC. His father was a minister in the Paṇḍya country. The Paṇḍyam king along with him went to Puri and they rediscovered the deities of Jagannātha, Bāladeva and Subhadra who were in the Buddhist's hands. They removed the deities back to the main temple and this is said to be the origin of Rathayatra. Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī was the first Vaiṣṇava to adopt *Tridaṇḍa Sannyasa* and he had seven hundred *sannyasi* disciples. It was he who introduced the *aṣṭottara-śata-nāmi sannyāsa* (108 designations of *sannyasi*), including the *daśa-nāmis* which was adopted by Śaṅkarācārya. After some time this line became practically extinct.
- Then, Raja Gopāla Viṣṇusvāmī revived the old Viṣṇusvāmī sect in the beginning of the 9th century, Śrīla Bhaktisidhānta says. He began an active propaganda with renewed enthusiasm. He installed the Varadarāja temple in Kāñci, the famous Ranchorlal in Dvārakā, and some other deities in different *tirthas*. The *Śuddhādvaita* system of Viṣṇusvāmī again came to prominence, and the leader was this Viṣṇusvāmī king. This revival of the Vaiṣṇavism took place just after the demise of Śaṅkarācārya.
- \* The third and last revival of this line came under Andhra Viṣṇusvāmī in the 14th century and Vallabhācārya would possibly be an effect or consequence of this phase.
- \* It is said that after the disappearance of Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, the *śaivite* community tried to misappropriate Viṣṇusvāmī's *Sarvajña-sukta* which they modified to a great extent to suit their concepts.



## II. Śrīdhāra Svāmī

- \* One of the most important names in the Viṣṇusvāmī line is the famous Śrīdhāra Svāmī. On account of his commentary on Śrīmad Bhagavatam, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted it as the most authentic, and introduced it as such in His school. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī not only mentions Śrīdhāra Svāmī among those whose writings influenced him in forming the *Gauḍīya* system of philosophy, but called him ‘the defender of *bhakti*’ in the beginning of his *Krama-sandarba*, which is the further elaboration of Śrīdhāra Svāmī's commentary. Another authentic writer of the *Gauḍīya* system, Śrīla Visvanātha Cakravati, offers allegiance to Śrīdhāra Svāmī in the beginning of his commentary *Sarārtha-darśinī* on Śrīmad-Bhagavatam. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī also quotes several *slokas* from him and his godbrother Lakṣmidhāra in his *Padyavali*. It is therefore quite obvious that Śrīdhāra Svāmī's writings greatly influenced the *Gauḍīya* thought.
- \* There are some controversies about Śrīdhāra Svāmī's affiliation. Some take him as an impersonalist, as the Madhva's followers, but this view is unjustified, since he criticizes the *Māyāvādi* philosophy throughout his writings, such as his *Bhavarta-dipika*, commentary on Śrīmad Bhagavatam, *Subodhini*, commentary on Bhagavad-gītā, and *Ātma-prakāṣa*, on Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Śrīdhāra Svāmī accepted the *Pañcaratras* literature while Śaṅkarācārya was hostile to it.
- \* The proofs that Śrīdhāra Svāmī belongs to Viṣṇusvāmī *samprādāya* is that he accepts Rudra as the original founder of his system and Śrī Narasimhadeva, the official Deity. He also wrote a poem called *Vraja-vihara* dealing with the love of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, which had some verses included in Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyavali*. The same theme was the subject of the Bilvamangala's *Kṛṣṇa Karnāmṛta*, which belongs to the same line.
- \* There is nevertheless some difficulty in establishing Śrīdhāra Svāmī's position. Vallabhācārya and his followers although theoretically identified with Viṣṇusvāmī line do not accept him. Vallabhācārya flourished in the 16th century whereas Śrīdhāra Svāmī lived in the 14th century, and Viṣṇusvāmī was established long before. The Vallabhācārya sect is not a direct continuation of Viṣṇusvāmī's line but a branch of it, so that it might differ from Śrīdhāra Svāmī or from the main line.

## B ŚRĪ VALLABHĀCĀRYA (1481-1533)

### I. His Life

- \* Vallabhācārya was born in a family of brāhmaṇas from South India in a village near Benares. His forefathers are said to have performed one hundred *soma-yajñās*. He was delivered from the womb in the seventh month underneath a tree, when Lakṣmana Bhaṭṭa, his father was fleeing from Benares on hearing about the invasion of that city by Muslims.
- \* He received initiation from his father in his eighth year, and was handed over to Viṣṇucitta, with whom he began his early studies. His studies of the *Vedas* were carried on under several teachers, all of them belonging to the Madhva line.
- \* After the death of his father, Vallabhācārya started on his first pilgrimage and also started initiating disciples. Hearing of a disputation in the court of the king of Vidyānagara he proceeded to the place along with some of his disciples, carrying the Śrīmad Bhagavatam and a *Śalagrāma sila* with him.

- \* The debate at Vidyānagara was about the nature of *Brahman - nirviśeṣa* or *saviśeṣa*. There Vallabhācārya defeated the great *māyāvādi* Vidyātīrtha after a discussion which lasted for many days. In that discussion was also present the great acārya from Madhva *sampradāya*, Vyāsatīrtha, who was the *paṇḍita* and guru of the court.
- \* From Vidyānagara, he moved towards many places in the south like Kāñci, Cidambaram, Rameśvaram, etc. Then he went northwards visiting many tīrthas and towns.
- \* In many occasions he was received with the great respect by the local kings. He visited Udupi, Gokarṇa, Pandharpur, Nasik, Maṭhurā, Vṛndāvana and then proceeded to the extreme West to Dvārakā. From there he went to Badrināth via Kurukṣetra and Haridwar. Then downwards to Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and finally Puri, where he met Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then he proceeded again to Dvārakā, then to Puskar, Vṛndāvana and again to Badrināth. Returning to Benares he married Mahā-Lakṣmī. Afterwards he did another trip to Dvārakā, Badrināth and Vṛndāvana, and when he returned again to Benares he performed a great *soma-yajñā*.
- \* Vallabhācārya had two sons Gopīnātha and Viṭṭhalanātha. In the last phase of his life he renounced the world and became a *sannyasi*.
- \* He passed away in 1533 on the banks of the Ganges in Benares.
- \* Gopīnātha, who was very young at that time was appointed his successor but it happened that he died soon. Then Viṭṭhalanātha was the actual successor of his father.

## II. Vallabhācārya's Works

- \* Śrī Vallabha is said to have eighty five main disciples and to have written eighty four literary works. Out of these works, only thirty one are available presently. The main ones are the following:
  - 1) *Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha* – it contains three parts: The first explains Bhagavad-gītā, the second gives a comparative study of other philosophies, and the third explains Śrīmad-Bhagavatam.
  - 2) *Aṅu-bhāṣya* – commentary on Vedānta-sūtra, but incomplete. The remaining portion was supplied by his son Viṭṭhalavatha.
  - 3) *Purva-Mīmāṃsā-bhāṣya* – commentary on the Jaimini-sūtras.
  - 4) *Subodhini* – commentary on Śrīmad-Bhagavatam (also incomplete).
  - 5) *Ṣoḍaśa Granthas* – groups of sixteen books containing the essence of Vallabha's teachings.

## C ŚUDDHĀDVAITA PHILOSOPHY

### I. Basic Philosophical Points

- a) According to Śrī Vallabhācārya's doctrine of *Śuddhādvaita* (Pure Non-Dualism), *Brahman* is a pure unity, free from *Māyā*. It is also free from the three kinds of differences known as *svajātiya-bheda*, *viajātiya-bheda* and *svagata-bheda*. It is omniscient and omnipotent and possesses an infinite number of attributes. It has marvellous powers (*aiśvarya*) by virtue of which it can even hold together things or attributes which are mutually opposed. Thus, it is both qualified (*saguṇa*) and unqualified (*nirguṇa*).
- b) Vallabhācārya accepts four works as authority: 1) The *Vedas*, 2) *Bhagavad-gītā*, 3) *Vedānta-sūtra*, 4) *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*. The order of these works is based on the fact that the doubts in each preceding work are removed by the one that follows. The doubts in the *Vedas* are to be removed by the light of the *Gītā*; those in the *Gītā* in the light of the *Vedānta-sūtra*; those in the *Vedānta-sūtra* in the *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*. *Vedānta-sūtra* is a commentary on the *Upaniṣads*, and *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* is considered a commentary on *Gītā*, but also *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* explains and develops all the points of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* enjoys the most important position in the *Śuddhādvaita* system.

### II. Two Types of *Brahman*

- a) *Parabrahman* - the highest entity is *Brahman*, Who is *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda* and *rasa*, and is identified with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is devoid of worldly qualities; the negation of qualities in *Brahman*, mentioned in the *Upaniṣads*, refer to the absence of material qualities in Him. He possesses a spiritual body made up of *ānanda*, and He is infinite. He creates the universe out of Himself, and He is thus both the efficient and material cause of the universe. Although the world is full of people both happy and unhappy, *Brahman* cannot be charged with practicing cruelty or partiality, simply because He has created the world out of Himself in *līlā*. Again, He does not undergo any change even when He transforms Himself in this world.
- b) *Akṣara-Brahman* - Next to and lower than *Parabrahman* is *Akṣara* (immutable) *Brahman*. He possesses *sat*, *cit* and limited *ānanda*. He is the *dhāma* or abode of *Parabrahman*. He appears in this world as *antaryāmi* and *avatāras*. He appears in the forms of *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (soul); and this *prakṛti* develops through different stages into the universe, and is therefore called 'the cause of all causes'.

### III. *Jīvas* and the World

#### 1) *Tirobhāva* and *Āvirbhāva*:

- a) *Jīvas* and the world are identical with *Brahman*. *Jīva* is *Brahman* with the quality of bliss obscured, and the physical world is *Brahman* with the qualities of bliss and intelligence obscured. Creation and destruction in their case mean the appearance (*āvirbhāva*) and disappearance (*tirobhāva*) of *Brahman* in these forms.

b) *Brahman* is both the material and the efficient cause of *jīva* and the world, manifesting itself in these forms simply for the purpose of *līlā*. In doing so, It does not undergo any change in essence. It is just like snake forming itself into coil.

## 2) The Jīvas:

a) The Lord was alone, without a second, in the beginning of a cycle. He desired to be many for the sake of pleasure and as he desired millions of souls came instantaneously out of *Aksara Brahman* like sparks from fire. In special cases the souls may emanate from the Lord Himself. The soul is thus an *amśa* (part) of *Brahman* and is eternal.

b) With a view to enjoining *līlā*, the Lord suppressed the element *ānanda* in the soul, who consequently became subject to bondage and wrong knowledge. The Lord, in order to bring about variety which is essential for the sake of pleasure, makes the soul varied in nature.

c) There are three categories of *jīvas*:

c<sup>1</sup>) *śuddha* (pure) – those which its divine qualities, such as *aiśvarya*, are not obscured by *avidyā*.

c<sup>2</sup>) *saṁsārin* – those which its divine qualities are obscured by the will of the Lord, and come in contact with *avidyā*, identifying themselves with the gross and subtle bodies.

c<sup>3</sup>) *mukta* – those who, by the will of the Lord, are freed from bondage by *vidyā* and *bhakti*.

d) The *saṁsārin* souls can be grouped into three classes:

d<sup>1</sup>) *pravāha* - those that are busy with worldly matters.

d<sup>2</sup>) *maryāda* - those that follow the Vedic path according to the letter of the *Vedas*

d<sup>3</sup>) *puṣṭi* - those that worship the Lord out of pure love engendered only through divine grace.

## 3) The Universe:

a) The universe is the effect of *Brahman* and is real and non-different from Him. He represents the *adhibhautika* (material) form of *Brahman*.

b) The element *sat* is manifest in it, while *cit* and *ānanda* are latent.

c) The Lord has created the universe out of His own self for the sake of *līlā* without suffering any change whatsoever and is related to it as the spider is to its web. For the sake of diversity, the Lord makes the souls subject to His power of *avidyā* which is the root cause of the ideas of "I" and "mine".

d) *Saṁsāra*, which is solely made up of *ahantā* (I-ness or egoism) and *mamatā* (my-ness or the idea of pleasure), has to be destroyed by means of knowledge, devotion, etc.

## IV. *Mokṣa*

### 1) Concept of *Sarvātma-bhāva*:

a) He who attains the knowledge of *Brahman* and realizes that everything in this world is *Brahman*, after attaining *mokṣa*, he is absorbed in *Akṣara Brahman*, and not in *Parabrahman* or *Pūrṇa Puruṣottama*. But if the knowledge of *Brahman* is associated with devotion, the knowing devotee is absorbed in *Pūrṇa Puruṣottama*.

b) The doctrine of regarding the Lord as everything is called *sarvātma-bhāva* (all-in-oneness), which is different from the *sarvātma-bhāva* of the monists (*jñānis*) which is 'one-in-allness' or seeing *Brahman* in all things. Yet the devotees see everything in Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* possessed this attitude in highest degree, and Lord Kṛṣṇa had therefore to remain quite obedient to them. The experience of *svarūpānanda* which is definitely superior to that of *brahmānanda* is, therefore, the highest conception of *mokṣa*.

## 2) Concept of Pusti:

\* There is, again, another stage which may be described as the highest. When the Lord desires to favour a particular soul and be it remembered that in showing His favour He is not guided by any other consideration than His own will He brings out the soul from Himself, gives him a divine body like His own and plays with him for all time. In this play, which is called *nitya-līlā*, the Lord, remaining subordinate to the devotee, gives him the pleasure of His company. The divine bliss is purely a gift of the Lord and cannot be attained by any human effort. This gift of divine grace is called *puṣṭi*. The best example of *puṣṭi* is found in the case of the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana. Those who enjoy this divine grace automatically begin to love the Lord and look upon Him not only as their Lord, but as everything.

## 3) Pusti and maryāda:

a) In *maryāda-mārga*, one follows the dictates of the *Vedas* (*yajñās*, etc) and practices different types of *bhakti*, such as *śravana*, etc, until he begins to love the Lord, who, taking his efforts into consideration, grants him *sāyujya mukti*, or merging into the body of the Lord.

In *puṣṭi-mārga*, however, through the operation of divine grace only, one starts with loving the Lord and then he practices *śravana*, etc out of that love, and not with a view to generating it.

b) The *maryāda-mārga* is open only to the males of the first three classes - *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*; while *puṣṭi-mārga* is open to all without consideration. The followers of the *puṣṭi-mārga* worship the Lord, not because He is the Paramātmā but because they ardently love Him. The Lord is called Gopī-jana-vallabha, a term which is very significant in this system. The *gopīs* are the pioneers in this line, and others who follow them enjoy the same divine bliss. One who follows the *puṣṭi-mārga* aspires to be a *gopī* and worships the Lord with that attitude. In fact, all souls represent the feminine principle, and have the Lord as their spiritual husband.

## 4) Iniciation:

a) The initiation in this system is called *Brahma-sambhanda*. The devotee receives the *śarana-mantra* - *Śrī Kṛṣṇa śaranam mama*, and repeats another mantra (which is said to be given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Vallabhācārya) in front of the deity. The *guru* normally is an descendent of Vallabhācārya. The mantra says that everyone entering in the *puṣṭi-mārga* is required to dedicate themselves and their belongings to Kṛṣṇa and declare himself to be the most loyal servant of the Lord.

b) The initiate devotee has to pass his time in worshipping the deity of Kṛṣṇa like the *gopīs* worshipping Kṛṣṇa, and in reading or hearing stories about Kṛṣṇa. The worship of God

is of three kinds - with body, with wealth and with the mind. The last is considered the highest form of worship and it accomplishes the realization of God.

- c) Those who are connected with the Lord through love enjoy the privilege of participating in the *nitya-līlā* of the Lord and of enjoying *bhajana-līlā*, while others simply get *sāyujya*.
- d) If for any reason this kind of *seva* is not possible, one should not be disappointed. Śrī Vallabhācārya tells us that such a man should throw himself at the feet of the Lord and remain at His mercy. This method is called *prapatti* or self-surrender.

5) Deity Worship:

- a) The form of the Lord that is generally worshiped in this system is Śrī Nāthajī, whose shrine is situated in Nāthadwara, Rajasthan. Śrī Nāthajī is the embodiment of the twelve skandhas of Bhagavatam. The tenth *skandha* is identified with the head. Śrī Nāthajī represents the highest form of the Lord known as Pūrṇa Puruṣottama. All other Deities represent the *vibhūtis* (powers) and the *vyūhas* (manifestations), and not the highest form.
- b) Although Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is worshipped in the company of Kṛṣṇa in this *sampradāya*, She does not enjoy as much proeminence as She does in the Gauḍīya's.

## **A DOCTRINE OF ACINTYA-BHEDĀBHEDA**

### **I. Some Characteristic Features**

- a) The relation infinite-finite, God-man, Absolute - this world is a fundamental philosophical problem. Some emphasize the transcendent aspect of the infinite, while others its immanent aspect. Some emphasize difference, whereas others emphasize its identity.
- b) Śankara tries to solve the problem of the relation between the infinite and the finite, or the Absolute and this world, by cancelling one of the terms in the relation. To him, the finite is a result of *upādhis*. Since the *upādhis* are of the nature of illusion and don't exist at all, there can be no problem of relation between that which exists and which does not exist. But, even considering the finite as non-existent, it persists in the form of its appearance, which cannot be denied. Then the problem of the relation finite-infinite reappears in the form of the relation appearance-Reality.
- c) Exclusive emphasis on the concept of identity and immanence cannot solve the problem of relation between God and the world because leads to a virtual denial of the world as illusion. Similarly the problem is not solved by applying the concept of exclusive difference and transcendence because this bifurcates the reality in two and creates an unbridgeable gulf between God and the world.
- d) An ideal synthesis of identity and difference must be the cherished goal of philosophy. But such synthesis is not possible or conceivable through human logic.
- e) The clue to the solution of the problem, according to the school of Śrī Caitanya, therefore, lies in the inconceivable power (*acintya-śakti*) of God, by which the concepts of identity and difference are transcended and reconciled in a higher synthesis.
- f) As *Paramātmā* He is the immanent regulator and observer of the actions of the finite souls, and the unifier of all existing things; as *Bhagavān* He is the blissful Supreme Personality of Godhead, beyond and above this material world. (Bg 9.4-5 support this view).
- g) Not impossible for *Brahman* on account of His *acintya-śakti*. It is possible to Him to be both different from the world and identical with it, to create the world out of Himself and remain out of it.
- h) *acintya bhedābheda* is implied also to the concept of śakti which is a basic concept in Śrī Caitanya's philosophy. *śakti* is different from the object in which it inheres, because it cannot be conceived as identical with it; but simultaneously, it is identical

with the object, because it cannot be conceived as different from it. Therefore the relationship between *Brahman* and Its *śaktis* is *acintya bhedābheda*, ‘inconceivable simultaneous identity and difference’.

- i) If there was absolute identity between *Brahman* and the *jīvas*, and *Brahman* and the world, the faults and imperfections of the *jīvas* and the world would be the faults and imperfections of *Brahman*.  
(To keep *Brahman* free from these faults, it would be necessary to regard the *jīvas* and the world as illusory, as Śankara did. But, in the absence of any other real thing, *Brahman* will have to be regarded as the seat of illusion. Thus, *Brahman* would still not be faultless. Besides, the belief in absolute identity will falsify the *śruti* texts which clearly distinguish the *jīvas* and the world from *Brahman*.)
- j) If *Brahman* and Its *śaktis* are regarded absolutely different, as Madhva did, that would give rise to dualism and would contradict the principle of oneness stressed in the *śāstras* (*tattvaṃ yad jñānam advayam*).
- k) The relation between God and His *śaktis* is said to be inconceivable because cannot be adequately described in terms of the relation between ‘the part and the whole’, or ‘substance and attribute’, or even in terms of the relation between an ordinary object and its *śakti*. For, in the case of God, the part is not merely a part and the *śakti* is not merely a *śakti*. The part and the whole, the *śakti* and the *śaktimān* (the possessor of *śakti*), interpenetrate and form an undivided whole.
- l) God is essentially *advaya jñāna-tattva*, though not a ‘pure identity’. He appears in many forms and yet He is One; His *līlā*, name and form are at once different and non-different. Even the different parts of His body are different and non-different, for each part can perform the functions of the other parts and of the whole. The part is, thus, actually identical with the whole, though still a part, and as such different from the whole.
- m) The concept of ‘acintya’ (inconceivable) in the Śrī Caitanya school is distinct from the concept of ‘anirvacanīya’ (indescribable) in the Advaita-vedānta of Śankara. ‘Anirvacanīya’ is applicable to *māyā* and its products, which can neither be described as real nor as unreal; it does not apply to *Brahman*, Who is described as real. But the category of ‘acintya’ applies to the relation between *śakti* and *śaktimān* either in the transcendental realm or even in this world. It applies to *Brahman*, His associates (*parikaras*), and abodes (*dhāmas*), as well as to *jīva-śakti* and *māyā-śakti*.
- n) ‘Anirvacanīya’ is a negative concept, while ‘acintya’ is a positive concept. ‘Anirvacanīya’ signifies the coming together of the opposite concepts of ‘reality’ and ‘unreality’ which cancel each other to produce illusion. ‘Acintya’ signifies the marriage of the opposite concepts of ‘difference’ and ‘non-difference’ leading to a higher and a fuller unity.

## II. Distinguishing Factors of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>From ‘Vaiṣṇavism’ (Steven J. Rosen) – *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, by A.N. Chatterjee

- \* There are basically two distinguishing factors that separate the *Gauḍīya* school from other Vaiṣṇava schools. Firstly, you have the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda* – the inconceivable difference and non-difference between God and His energies. This was, according to the *Gauḍīyas*, the original Vedic doctrine.
- \* After being distorted by Buddha and then Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, it was reinstated, at least partially, by Rāmānuja, who taught *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. Śaṅkara had claimed oneness, that the living energy – God’s energy – was one with God. But Rāmānuja detected that there was a difference as well. He agreed with the oneness aspect, but he added a special clause – ‘the living being is obviously different as well.’
- \* Then came Madhvācārya, who preached pure *Dvaita*, or ‘dualism.’ This school teaches that there is absolute difference between God and his energies. But this teaching did not account for the similarities. God and His energies both *exist*, for example, so *in their quality of existence* they are indeed similar. It cannot, therefore, be said that they are absolutely different.
- \* Śaṅkara preached one extreme. Madhva preached the other. Śrī Caitanya appeared with the perfect balance.
- \* But the most distinctive feature of *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇava philosophy, especially as opposed to other Vaiṣṇava schools, is the very developed conception of *madhura-rati*, or relationship with God in the conjugal mood. This includes laying stress on *bhakti*, or ‘devotion’, more so than one can detect it in other Vaiṣṇava schools. And *bhakti* is most developed when understood in terms of *bhakti-rasa*, or relationship with God in a personal and loving way. There are five basic relationships *śanta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*, and also there are seven secondary relationships.
- \* In all of the world’s religious literature, one will not find such an elaborate explanation of God and His relationship with the living beings. Therefore, to go further, the special contribution of the *Gauḍīyas* is this very developed conception of *madhūrya-rasa* – how one can emulate the highest devotee in the spiritual world, the maidservant, the *gopī*, and attain the most intimate position in the kingdom of God. It is a developed theological science.
- \* In the beginning there is *vaidhi-bhakti* – following the rules and regulations. Then, while continuing to follow the rules and regulations, one learns from the guru how to model one’s life after an inhabitant of Vraja. The inner meditation. This is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*, or ‘spontaneous devotion’, or, rather, it is ‘following an eternal associate who has spontaneous devotion’.
- \* In any case, it is quite an advanced theological system. One can read all of the *Gauḍīya* literature on the subject: Govinda-līlāmṛta, Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, Ujjvala-nīlamanī, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu. There are so many. After a thorough study of these books, one can conclude: In order to best understand *mādhurya-rasa*, the ideal of Rādā and her love for Kṛṣṇa must be introduced.
- \* The culmination of the *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇava experience is the service of Śrī Rādhā. Exactly how this is done is revealed in the esoterica of the tradition. Śrī Caitanya has stated that as a young man yearns for his sweetheart, in the same manner, the human soul must yearn for Kṛṣṇa. Rādhārāṇī’s position is the highest and the devotee seeks to follow in her *mādhurya-bhāva*.
- \* First, one must approach an accomplished master, rendering service and learning the science of spirituality. Then, very gradually, one can advance to these other levels. On the highest level one must love God in intimate union, which is called *sambhoga*, and, on an even higher level, one must learn to love God in separation, which is called *vipralambha* – this allows one to truly appreciate union.

- \* Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī experiences both. She is the example – the very emblem – of these two ultimate experiences in God realization. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, too, in the mood of Rādhārāṇī, was experiencing these exalted states of spiritual attainment. The scientific procedure with which to accomplish this ultimate goal of life is the great secret of *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇavism.

### III. Some Particular Points of the Gauḍīya Philosophy and Religion not Found in Other Vaiṣṇava Sects:

- 1) Śrīmad-Bhagavatam is the natural commentary on Vedānta-sūtra, and it is the Supreme *pramāṇa*. Because the principal *Upaniṣads* and Vedānta-sūtra do not deal explicitly with the Bhagavān aspect of the Absolute truth, and particularly with Lord Kṛṣṇa, they are not given so much importance.
- 2) ‘*Kṛṣṇas tu Bhagavān svayam*’ is the definite axiom for the *Gauḍīyas*.
- 3) The Supreme *Brahman* is the supreme *śaktiman* and possesses three *śaktis*: *antarāṅgā*, *bahiraṅgā* and *taṭasthā*. The *antarāṅgā-śakti* has three divisions in it: *sandhinī*, *saṁvit* and *hlādinī śaktis*.
- 4) The inter-relationship between *Para-Brahman*, individual souls and this world is explained solely in terms of the *acintya-śakti* of the Lord. *Para-Brahman* is inconceivably and simultaneously one and different from His *śakti*. This concept is extended and applied to many different aspects of this system. Therefore, the *Gauḍīya* philosophy is known as *acintya-bhedābheda-vāda*.
- 5) For the *Gauḍīyas*, *bhakti* is the *bhajana* or *seva* – loving service to the Lord, not merely *upāsana* or meditation. In fact no *sādhana* can achieve its perfection (*mokṣa*) without *bhakti* to the Supreme Lord.
- 6) Complete self surrender is not a separate process from *bhakti*; rather it is its basic principle.
- 7) *Prema* and not *mokṣa* is the supreme *puruṣārtha*.
- 8) A Vaiṣṇava has a status superior to any *varṇa* or *āśrama*.
- 9) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is directly the combined forms of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He is the Kali-yuga *avatāra* and the bestower of *Kṛṣṇa-prema* in the form of *gopī-bhāva* or *madhurya-rasa*.
- 10) Worship of the Lord in His *aīśvarya* aspect according to the principles of *vaidhi-bhakti*, leads the devotee to liberation in Vaikuntha, Dvarka or Maṭhurā. But the Lord in His *madhurya* aspect in Goloka is attained only by those following *rāga-mārga*.
- 11) *Ekātmya* or *sāyujya-mukti* cannot be achieved by only *jñāna*, or meditation, or else. *Mokṣa* is attainable only through *bhakti*, by surrendering to the Supreme Lord, not otherwise.
- 12) There exists twelve *rasas* or mellows in relationship with the Lord, seven are secondary and five principal. Out of these five, *sakhya*, *vatsalya* and *madhurya-rasa* are found, in their pure and complete manifestation, only in Goloka Vṛndāvana. In Maṭhurā, Dvārakā and Ayodhyā-*dhāma* these three *rasas* are also found but in a mixed state, not pure.
- 13) No incarnation other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives liberation to the demons when He kills them.
- 14) Only the *Gauḍīyas* affirm the superexcellence of the loving sentiment in the mood of separation (*viraha* or *vipralamba*).
- 15) *Parakīya-rasa* is the special feature in the dealings between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*.

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# APPENDIX I – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VAIṢṆAVA SCHOOLS<sup>2</sup>

## I. Relation Among God, World and the Souls

- 1) Differences between Vallabha's Pure-Monism and Rāmānuja's Qualified Monism regarding the relation between God, souls and the world:
  - a) Rāmānuja has accepted the individual soul and the world as forming the attributes or modes of God.
  - b) Vallabha says that the relation of individual self and the world to God is that of part to the whole. He does not regard individual soul and the world as inseparable from God in the sense of substance and attributes.
- 2) Differences between Vallabha's Pure Monism and Madhva's Dualism:

While Vallabha regards the world and the souls as non-different from Brahman, to Madhva they are totally different.
- 3) Nimbārka's view of *bhedābheda* is different from the *viśiṣṭādvaita* of Rāmānuja. The main point of distinction between them is that while according to Rāmānuja difference is an attribute of unity, for Nimbārka both identity and difference have equal status in reality. Difference is not secondary in his view.
- 4) Nimbārka's view is clearly different from Vallabha's and there is no point of agreement between them. Vallabha is the advocate of pure-monism and difference is not real according to him.
- 5) Nimbārka's assertion of two realities (independent and dependent) is not acceptable to Jīva Gosvāmī. He has rejected this distinction and accepted God as the non-dual Reality. He does not accept souls and world as dependent realities but as *śaktis* of God. He realizes the difficulty of reconciling the relation of both identity and difference between śakti and possessor of śakti but (instead of calling one independent and other dependent), He calls this relation '*acintya*'.
- 6) Madhva accepted three eternal and real entities – God, soul and matter. God is independent and soul and matter are dependent on Him. But if the souls and matter are eternal like God then how could Madhva say that God is the only Independent Reality? Dualism makes supremacy of God impossible.
- 7) Vallabha's system of Pure-Monism also accepts the souls and matter as real and as the manifestations of God's attributes. He has accepted God as the abode of contradictory attributes. This doctrine is established on the basis of *śrutis* but it is not conceivable by the limited human reason.
- 8) Nimbārka has accepted both identity and difference among the three entities. The soul and matter are dependent on God Who is the only Independent Reality. They are non-different from God since they are in the nature of God. They are different from Him because while God is independent, the world and souls are dependent on Him. He is the support of their dependent existence. The concept of dependence necessarily involves some difference.
- 9) Śrī Caitanya and His followers recognize the supralogical and inconceivable nature of the relation of *bhedābheda* by positing the category of '*acintya*' which shows their sincerity and frankness. They have supported it on the basis of scriptural passages.

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<sup>2</sup>From 'Conceptions of God in Vaiṣṇava Philosophical Systems' – Dr. Manju Dube



## II. Efficient and Material Cause of the World

- a) All Vaiṣṇava thinkers except Madhva have accepted God as both the efficient and material cause of the world. Madhva considers the idea of Rāmānuja (the world form the body of God and God is the material cause of the world) as injurious to the independent majesty of God. He has interpreted the *sāstras* in accordance with his view which deny the material causality of God. God is the efficient cause and *prakṛti* is the material cause of the world.
- b) To Rāmānuja God is both the efficient and material cause of the world. Matter exists in God in an unmanifest form in the state of dissolution and becomes manifest when creation take place. God Himself is transformed into the world as far as matter as an inseparable attribute of Him is concerned.  
Rāmānuja admitted that the questions as to how unconscious matter can be part of God who is essentially non-material and how a real transformation of God (either of whole or part) can leave His integrality and immutability unaffected, are not answerable by human logic.
- c) Madhva strongly rejected the notion of material causality of God and the world as His real transformation. To him the idea of material causation necessarily involves transformation or modifications which implies change and it is not consistent with the Immutable nature of God. Material world cannot come out of God.
- d) Vallabha accepts God both as material and efficient causes of the world. To him world is not a transformation of God but a manifestation of His “being” aspect. World has a separate existence even though it is manifested from God. It is neither an appearance nor an actual transformation but a limited manifestation of God.
- e) Nimbārka holds that world is a transformation of God’s *śakti* and not of His essence. The relation between God and the world is not that of substance and attribute but a relation between independent and dependent.
- f) Śrī Caitanya holds that the world is a modification of God’s *māyā-śakti* which is an external power of God. Its transformation does not affect God’s essential nature. It stands in relation of unthinkable difference in non-difference to God. Although world is an effect of God through His *māyā-śakti* essentially He remains transcendent and immutable.

### 1) Some inconsistencies and logical difficulties of the material causality of the world:

- a) Rāmānuja holds that the world is a real manifestation of God but somehow the immutable nature of God remains unaffected. But it is logically unintelligible to hold that mat. cause remains unchanged while giving rise to effect. And how can immutable and partless God transform Himself into the world? If it is the whole God that transforms then there is no God apart from the world, and if it is only a part, then it means that God is capable of being partitioned.  
The notion of material causality necessarily implies some change. Either the attributes of God are transformed into the effect or His substance is transformed. None of the two is consistent with God’s immutable nature. Moreover the material cause and its effect must have some similarity but God and world have entirely different characteristics. Thus the view of creation as a transformation of God is not consistent with His immutability.
- b) Vallabha tries to meet the problem by rejecting Rāmānuja’s view of creation as a transformation of God. He holds that the world is not a transformation of God but a manifestation or expression of God’s ‘being’ aspect. But this does not improve the

situation. The origination of the world without any type of modification is beyond comprehension. If there is modification then how do we distinguish cause from effect. The effect coming out of cause without any change or modification is unintelligible. What does Vallabha mean by saying that there is no modification and the world shoots out of God's *sat* aspect. Does he mean that there is some internal division among the three attributes of God? But this is against the impartite nature of God which is the basic principle of Pure Monism. Vallabha has not been very successful in his attempt to reconcile the unchangeability of God with the notion of His material causality.

- c) Nimbārka tries to solve the difficulty by holding that God's *śakti* is transformed into the world. The creation of the world involves a real transformation of its material cause, but this transformation relates to God's *śākti* and not His essence.
- d) Madhva tries to meet the above difficulties by holding absolute difference between matter and God and considers God as the efficient cause alone and *prakṛti* as the material cause. Madhva's theory is consistent with the concept of an immutable God but his position regarding *prakṛti* as the material cause has its own difficulties.

While other Vaiṣṇava thinkers have regarded matter as attribute or part of God, Madhva maintains absolute difference between God and matter. This view is deficient from a religious point of view which holds the supremacy of God. Religious consciousness demands the dependence of everything on God also for its being. If God is Supreme then there must be no other real entity to limit Him from without. Dualism harms the idea of God's supremacy.

- e) Śrī Caitanya's view seems to make a definite improvement on the views of other Vaiṣṇava thinkers. He regards the world as a real transformation of God's *māyā-śakti* which is an external power of God and God's essence is not affected by this. Śrī Caitanya has realized the logical inconceivability of the doctrine that Deity escapes change when His *śakti* undergoes transformation. He frankly admitted the unthinkability of the relation of God to the world. Reasoning cannot prove as to how God remains immutable, though the world is an effect of God through His *māyā-śakti*. This relation can be realized only in one's own intuitive experience. Although the whole philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism is rooted in faith other thinkers try to seek logical justifications for their doctrine in some way or other. But reasoning does not provide any final answer.

Śrī Caitanya had the whole tradition behind Him and His doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda* can be regarded as superior to others since He realized the limitations of logical thinking in the realization of religious truths which have to be accepted on faith. Śrī Caitanya is more sincere to His religious consciousness in confessing the inability of logic to solve the mystery of the relation of God to the world.

### III. Dependence of the souls and the world to God

- a) While for Rāmānuja the souls and the world are *viśeṣana* or attribute of God, Śrī Caitanya takes them as *śaktis* of God. Secondly while Rāmānuja regards souls and the world as two different things, the *Gauḍīyas* put them under the single category of *śaktis*.
- b) Madhva, as a firm advocate of Dualism, holds that although soul is dependent on God, it is quite different from God and has being outside Him. But the *Gauḍīyas* say that the soul is the *śakti* of Brahman and they are inseparable from Him.
- c) As Vallabha it is accepted that the souls are monadic fragments of God, but absolute non-difference existing between them is not acceptable. The souls as *śaktis* cannot be absolutely identical with Him even in liberation.

- d) Jīva Gosvāmī says that the relation of identity-in-difference between *Brahman* and the world, or between *Brahman* and *jīva*, cannot be proved by means of the relation of cause and effect, for the cause and the effect can never be one. The cause does not appear as effect in the state of cause and the effect does not appear as effect in the state of effect. Also the relation of part and the whole does not fit well. In the case of *Brahman*, the part actually is the whole and has the same qualities and powers as the whole.
- e) Rāmānuja holds that the relation of soul to God is that of ‘body to the soul’ or ‘attribute to substance’. The soul is inseparable from God in a causal as well as in an effect state.  
Madhva rejects this relation of body and soul, and to him souls are different from God.
- f) To Vallabha, the relation of soul to God is that of part to the whole.  
Unlike Rāmānuja he does not say that souls are inseparable from God. He holds that though the souls are manifestations of God, they have separate existences.  
To Vallabha the atomic nature of the soul becomes pervasive when God’s bliss becomes manifest in it. Both Rāmānuja and Madhva reject this view and they hold that *anṛtva* of soul remains unaltered in both states.
- g) Nimbārka and Śrī Caitanya both accept *bedhābheda* but while Nimbārka puts the soul under the category of ‘dependent’ reality, Śrī Caitanya explains it as the manifestation of God’s *śakti*. Both of them reject Rāmānuja’s view of modification, Vallabha’s view of essential identity, and Madhva’s view of pure dualism between soul and God.

#### IV. Some difficulties

- a) Rāmānuja has employed the analogy of body and soul to explain the relation between soul and God. He says that just as the soul is not affected by the defects of body in the same way God is not affected by the defects of individual soul. But we find that the soul which is the only conscious principle in the body suffers when the body is hurt. Rāmānuja has regarded souls as an attribute of God, and a substance in itself. But it is not conceivable as to how one and same thing can be both attribute and substance. These difficulties were bound to come in Rāmānuja’s system because while on the one hand he maintains difference between God and soul on the other hand he calls the soul inseparable from God to show its dependence on God.
- b) Madhva being Realist denounced Rāmānuja’s attempt to reconcile Absolutism and Pluralism and maintained the absolute difference between God and souls. But he too has to face some difficulties.  
It might be urged that if soul is eternal like God Himself and entirely different from Him, how can we say that God alone is supreme and soul is dependent on Him. The notion of God’s supremacy is logically inconsistent if there is some second entity which is existentially independent and real as God Himself.
- c) Vallabha tried to avoid the difficulties of Rāmānuja and Madhva in his system of Pure-Monism. He holds that the souls are essentially the same as God, and holds the relation of whole and part between the two. In ordinary sense the parts make the whole, and whole is dependent on parts.  
But in Vallabha’s system, the souls which are regarded as parts, depend on God who is the whole. He says that just as the sparks are part of fire and depend on fire in the same way souls are parts of God and are dependent on Him.  
Vallabha says that God is not affected by the defects of the soul just as light is not affected by the objects it illuminates. But this analogy does not carry sense because objects are not parts of light.

It cannot be said that soul and God are not only with the bliss aspect obscured: though the two are similar, some difference must be maintained between them. If they are essentially the same then there is no problem of relation between them.

- d) Nimbārka classifies Reality into two, Independent and dependent. He maintains the relation of both *bheda* and *abheda* between God and souls. But the view of *bhedābheda* sounds contradictory to our logical understanding.
- e) Śrī Caitanya made an improvement on the views of other thinkers by holding that souls and matter are the *śaktis* of God and are inseparable from Him. He realized the practical unthinkability of the doctrine of *bhedābheda* and did not indulge in reasoning to show that one and the same thing can be both different and non-different from the identical thing and considering this difficulty He regards the relation as *acintya*.

## V. God, *karma*

- a) Madhva holds that God cannot be regarded to be guilty of partiality or cruelty in His treatment of persons because He rewards or punishes them according to the moral law of *śruti*. The chains of *karma* has no recognizable beginning and the present of the persons is determined by the *karmas* of early stage. The question of inequality at the first stage does not arise, the chain of *karma* is *anādi*.
- b) Vallabha has attributed the presence of evil to God's will. It is a part of Divine *Līlā*; an expression of His joyous activity. Both good and evil are necessary in the world play to suit His purpose. Thus unlike other vaiṣṇavas who attribute evil to *karma*, etc. Vallabha regards it an integral part of His divine *līlā*.

## VI. *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*

- a) Vallabha and Rāmānuja also hold that although *bhakti* is the most effective means of *mukti*, the usefulness of knowledge cannot be denounced. Madhva says that devotion which involves love for God is the result of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the inanimate and animate things. But the *Gauḍīyas* say that *bhakti* is not in need of *jñāna* and *karma*.
- b) Thus *bhakti* is said to be the direct pathway to perfection and *karma* and *jñāna* are regarded as auxiliaries to *bhakti*. But the degree of importance attached to *karma* and *jñāna* is different according to each thinker. Rāmānuja has regarded *karma* and *jñāna* as equally important. To him the two are independent. Desinterested performance of duty is a necessary precondition for the realization of *ātma*. But Madhva regarded *karma* as less important than *jñāna*. To him, although it is necessary for human beings to work through *karma*, it should be regarded only as an accessory to spiritual realization.
- c) Vallabha regards both *karma* and *jñāna* as necessary for spiritual progression and as auxiliary to each other.
- d) Nimbarka holds that *karma* is subordinate to *jñāna* – for the attainment of *jñāna* one must perform actions. The effects of *karmas* are destroyed through knowledge.
- e) Śrī Caitanya's views is different. He holds that *bhakti* is independent to *karma* and *jñāna*. Unlike *karma* and *jñāna*, *bhakti* is capable of leading to the right goal independently.
- f) Vallabha and Śrī Caitanya have considered *bhakti* both a means and an end in itself.

### **I. Poygai, Bhūtam and Pey Ālvār**

Poygai, Bhūtam and Pey were contemporaneous. They are the most ancient of the Ālvārs.

Poygai Ālvār, otherwise known as Saro-Muni, took birth from a golden lotus-flower in a tank situated within the holy Viṣṇu temple of Kañcipuram. Born in the Dvāpara Age, Siddārtha year, he as actually a partial manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu's conchshell, the Pañcajanya.

Bhūtam Ālvār was born the following day in Mallāpura, out of a Mādhavi blossom. He manifested from Lord Viṣṇu's club, the Kaumodaki.

Pey Ālvār took birth from a red lotus-flower growing in the holy well of the Ādi-Keśava-Perumāl temple, in Mayura-puri. People called him Bhrāntha-yogi because his love for God made him appear demented. He was empowered by Mahā-Viṣṇu's sword, the Nandaka, and his birth was one day after Bhūtam's. Thus, Poygai was born on Tuesday, Bhūtam on Wednesday, and Pey on Thursday.

All three were blessed with the qualities of goodness; the lower modes of passion and ignorance could not touch them. They knew what bondage was and what release meant – thus, they refrained from mundane activities and became whole-hearted slaves of God. “God is our property and we are His,” they believe, and by that they lived their lives. All were perfect in the three features of ripe spirituality, namely knowledge, detachment and love for God. They strictly avoided the company of the world-minded. Roaming the countryside, each unknown to the other, they spent a day here, a night there, simply to benefit those who were willing to listen to them.

Poygai came one night to an open plain. A tempest brewed up unexpectedly. Rain began pelting down; howling winds rushed across the plain. To shelter himself, he found a narrow crevice close by, with a small shutter.

Bhūtam Ālvār chance to come to that same place. Finding the crevice, its shutter firmly closed, he cried out, “Anyone in? Open pray.”

“There is just enough room for one person to spend the night,” Poygai replied from inside.

“If one can sleep there, two can sit there. Open pray.”

“Whatever said this,” Poygai thought, “cannot be an ordinary man.” He admitted him inside.

A third person came and knocked. It was Pey.

“No space can be spared for a third, for we have just enough room to sit together,” the two sheltered Ālvārs chimed.

“If two can sit, three can stand,” rejoined Pey.

Poygai and Bhūtam liked the answer; they allowed him in. The three of them were now shoulder to shoulder in the dark crevice, happily conversing about the Supreme Lord in perfect amity.

“Now I have My devotees!” God thought to Himself. “Let Me relish their company. “At that moment, all three Ālvārs felt an invisible body squeeze between them. It seemed to be a ghost.

“What shall we do?” Poygai broke out at last. He fumbled about for his oil-lamp. Upon lighting it, the Supreme Charmer of hearts, Lord Nārāyaṇa, Who cannot bear being separated from His devotees even for a moment, appeared to them. The Ālvārs were

dazzled by His majesty and splendour. In great ecstasy, Poygai compose his *Tiruvandādi*, by defining God as represented in the manifested universe. Bhūtam sang the second *Tiruvandādi*, which describes the Lord as Nārāyaṇa; Pey sang the third, adding ‘Śrī’ to Nārāyaṇa. These three hymns overflow with knowledge of God, love for Him, and sight of Him. In each, however, one of these three aspects predominates. These stages of love of God are realizable to their fullest only in the spiritual world – yet by the Lord’s grace, the Ālvārs realized them all, even while tarrying on Earth.

## II. Tirumaliśai-Ālvār

According to some scriptures, Tirumaliśai lived in Dvāpara Yuga. He is also known as Bhakti-sāra, “the essence of love of God”.

His birth was quite unusual. Bhārgava ṛṣi, his father, was a very advanced devotee of Lord Nārāyaṇa. After twelve months of pregnancy his wife gave birth to a ‘child’ which was a formless lump of flesh. Not knowing how to deal with such an aberration they deposited the lump of flesh in the shade of a bamboo-clump.

However the shapeless being was nurtured by mother Earth. Gradually the lump of flesh developed into a human form with all bodily features, and started breathing. Then out of hunger, the baby gave his first wail. But who could answer his desolate cry from such a remote place? Thus Lord Viṣṇu personally came to save His devotee. Touching the baby’s head, the Lord blessed him not be subject to hunger nor thirst. For the first time the eyes of the baby opened just so that he could see the wonderful form of the Lord. After a moment the Lord vanished from his view. The baby again started crying, not due to hunger, but rather out of separation from the Lord.

The cry fell on the ears of a woodsman. He brought the baby to his house, and his wife who was childless, became very happy. Milk start flowing from her breasts. But the child could not be fed by anything from this world. His only food was the blissful grace of God. He wouldn’t eat anything. But he still was mysteriously growing very healthy.

The news of the divine child spread and people from everywhere came to see him. In particular, one childless couple brought some milk for him. Understanding their intention, the child Tirumaliśai drank a little. Then, he gave them back the milk that remained and requested them to drink it. Soon the couple gave birth to a son who was named Kani-kannar. Kani-kannar would later on become Tirumaliśai’s faithful disciple and companion.

At the age of 7 years old, Tirumaiśai was studying all scriptures and systems of philosophy. While studying the Mahābhārata, he came across one verse which says: “The final conclusion is that Nārāyaṇa alone is to be worshiped”. This statement caused such an intense impression within him; that he decided to dedicate his whole self towards this goal. He then sat down and engaged in deep meditation for seven years.

During his meditation, Rudra appeared and requested him to ask for a boon. “What can I gain from you?” asked the Ālvār, “Can you grant me *mokṣa*?” “No, only Nārāyaṇa can do it”, replied Lord Śiva. “Can you prolong for one day the life of a person who is destined to die?”, asked the saint. “That depends on the person’s *karma*”, replied Śiva. Then Tirumaiśai said: “So if you really want to give me a boon, then help me to pass this thread thru the eye of this needle”. Then Rudra became angry and opened his third eye. Fire issued from the eye, erupting forth in streams and as if the whole world was going to be consumed in flames. But nothing happened to the Ālvār, and Lord Śiva left the place in shame.

One day the three Ālvārs – Poygai, Pey and Bhūtam – in the course of their pilgrimage they came near the location where Tirumaliśai resided. Here they had a vision of a

spiritual sign, and they decided to follow it towards the direction it came from. Eventually they found someone sitting in meditation. They concluded that he was no other than Tirumaliśai. The Ālvārs said “Prabhu, are you well?” . Immediately Tirumaliśai replied: “Poygai! Pey! Bhūtam! You are here! Are you well?” They then greeted each other. This event brought tears of joy to all of them. They began talks about God and His infinite glories and drank the nectar from it. After some time the three Ālvārs left for another pilgrimage.

Tirumaliśai went to visit Lord Varada-rāja, the famous Deity of Kañcipuram. Hearing that the Ālvār was there, Kani-kannan, who was born by the Ālvār’s grace, came to see him. He fell at the feet of the saint and surrendered to him.

At that time an old woman from the town also approached Tirumaliśai and resolved to engage herself in the service of the saint. After some time, he became very pleased with her service. Thus he requested her to choose a boon from him. She requested him to return her youth. And it so happened. Not only did she become young , but also extremely beautiful. She was so beautiful that the King Pallava-Rāya fell in love with her and asked her to marry him.

As the years passed the King began to get old, but his partner remained always youthful. The King was struck with this miracle. She explained to him that if he wanted the same boon he should approach Kani-kannan, the Ālvār’s disciple, who come everyday to beg alms in the palace.

The King awaited Kani-kannan’s coming and then begged him to invite his master to his palace. “Impossible, sir”, replied the devotee, “my master doesn’t go to any man’s door nor he even cares for kings like you”. The king then said “ as you are a beggar at my door, so sing a verse in my praise”. Kani-kannan composed a verse saying that the only objects worthy of praise is God and saintly people and not a worldly man like him.

The king became extremely angry and banished both the master and the disciple from his kingdom. Kani-kannan ran to his master and related the incident. Tirumaliśai said that he could not leave this place and leave his Lord Varada-rāja behind. Therefore, he decided to invite the Deity to come with them. So he did, and the Lord agreed.

As the Lord, the Ālvār and his disciple left King Pallava-rāja’s country, all the yogīs, devas and others minor deities also departed with them. The kingdom became godless, deprived of saintly people and all prosperity. Realizing the circumstances, the king ran after them and fell at the feet of Tirumaliśai and Kani-kannan. Then the king begged them to pardon him and asking them to come back to his kingdom. The trio then returned to Kañci.

After some time, the Ālvār decided to visit Lord Arāvamudan at Kumbhakonan. On the way he passed through different towns. As the saint proceeded towards Kumbhakonan, he passed through one particular town where the local Deity, while on the altar, turned His face toward the direction that Tirumaliśai was travelling, and remained in that position. Arriving at his destination, the Ālvār went at once to see Lord Arāvamudan. In ecstasy he composed two poems called *Tiruvandādi* and *Tirucchandaviruttam*. In one of the verses he says: “Let me see You rise and speak”. Arāvamudan, Who is Lord Viṣṇu lying down on Śeṣa, then began rising up. Then the Ālvār immediately stopped the rising of the Lord by saying: “Oh My Lord, pardon me. I pray to You to stretch Yourself on Your Śeṣa couch as before”. However the Deity remained in that position half lying and half risen. Even to this day this Deity can be seen like that.

Tirumaliśai remained immersed in yoga meditation for 2300 years, subsisting solely on a little milk. He is said to have lived for 4700 years.

### **III. Nammālvār and Madhurakavi-Ālvār**

In Śrīmad-Bhagavatam, canto XI, chapter 5, verses 38-40, Nārada prophesizes the birth of holy saints in Kali Yuga along the banks of the holy rivers of Draviḍa-deśa (South India). These included the Ālvārs, among which Nammālvār became the most prominent for his devotional writings.

Nammālvār was born in a line of rulers in BC 3102, only 43 days after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa from this world. His parents had prayed at the holy shrine of Tiruk-Kurungudi, desirous of a son. The Lord had, by His own sweet will, decided to personally manifest as their child. The tulasi garland around the Lord's neck had fallen as a divine sign, and the pujari had presented it to the couple.

From Nammālvār's birth, he never cried, but simply smiled a heavenly smile and remained wonderfully silent and severe. He would not suck his mother's milk either. Sixteen years passed but the child would neither open his eyes nor his mouth. Inwardly, the boy mused to himself: "Except for You, My Lord, I shall not see anyone. And what is there for me to tell others, except for Your glories."

Though distressed, the boy's parents humbly resigned themselves to the will of God. All the sacraments such as the *upanayama* were duly administered to him by his brāhmaṇa parents.

Madhurakavi Ālvār had already taken his birth before the advent of Nammālvār. He is said to be an incarnation of Ganeśa who came to herald the appearance of Nammālvār.

One day, Madhurakavi left his home and went on pilgrimage to the north of India, seeking liberation. Upon returning, one night in the southern direction he saw a strange supernatural light in the sky. He understood this to be a divine sign. Sleeping during the day, he followed it by night. After some days it led him to a tree, under which Nammālvār sat in deep meditation.

Seated in *padmāsana*, Nammālvār was as still as a statue. Madhurakavi wondered whether he was alive. As a test, he dropped a stone and the figure opened his eyes. But was he dumb? Madhurakavi then put a question to him: "If in the womb of what is dead, a subtle thing is born, what of what is dead, a subtle thing is born, what does it eat and where does it abide?"

The saint answered, "It eats that; it abides there."

Upon hearing this, Madhurakavi at once surrendered to the Ālvār. He had found his eternal guide who would lead him to salvation. At that moment, Lord Viṣṇu also revealed Himself to Nammālvār in all His divinity, riding on Garuda with Lakṣmi at His side. Overwhelmed with ecstasy, the Ālvār's deep uncontrollable love for his Lord poured from his heart in the form of four divine songs. These are *Tiruviruttam*, *Tivaśiriyam*, *Periya-Tiruvandādi* and *Tiruvāymoli*, which are considered to be the very essence of the Rg, Yajur, Athārva and Sāma Vedas respectively.

Nammālvār had never tasted the so-called sweets of this earthly world. From birth he had always relished Lord Kṛṣṇa as his only food, as his only drink, as his only means of comfort.

In the *Tiruvāymoli* he clearly formulated the essentially five-fold Truth of the Vedas and the sublime doctrine of Trust, Faith and Grace as taught in the holy Dvaya Mantra, the essence of the Vedas. He showed to the world, by precept as well as by practice the nature of love of God, which he ascertained to be three-fold.

Many miracles occurred by his presence. He resided on the southern bank of the Tamraparni River, while one yogī lived on the northern bank. This yogī owned a dog which would daily cross the river at about midday and roam the streets of holy Tirunagani. Once the dog did not return on time. The yogī walked down to the river-side to ascertain the cause. Mid-way across the river, he could see the dog swimming towards

him. Suddenly, to his horror, a huge flood-wave came down upon the animal and drowned it. The yogī could see the dead dog floating dowastream; yet as he gazed, the dog's head burst open and its soul emerged, and like a shooting star flew heavenwards. On that same day the dog had eaten the remnants of Nammālvār.

When Nammālvār left this world for the spiritual kingdom, his first disciple constructed temples and installed Deities to commemorate his spiritual master. He also established, on a royal scale, daily, monthly and annual ceremonies in memory of Nammālvār's glory and his works. At the same time, he proclaimed far and wide the eternal truths embodied in the four Draviḍa Vedas.

During this time, no one could be declared a poet without having first passed before a council of three-hundred of the King's paṇḍitas. Some of these erudite paṇḍitas came to hear Nammālvār's growing fame. They challenged Madhurakavi to defend his master before the council. The latter agreed and soundly defeated them all, firmly establishing Nammālvār as a great personality and popularizing his teachings. Of the many spiritual truths which he had revealed, the fundamental truth, or the basis, is the concept that God is one.

#### **IV. Kulaśekhara Ālvār**

Kulaśekhara Ālvār was a royal saint and the crown-gem in the lineage of the rulers of Travancore. In the modern times, Travancore is known as Trivandrum, Kerala. By tradition, the kings of Travancore do not own the kingdom. The actual owner of the kingdom is Śrī Ananta Padmanābha, Lord Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the main Deity of Trivandrum. The king is simply God's vassal and minister. Invariably twice a day the king used to go before the Deity to present a report of his daily administration of the country. Such is the ancient line of the vedic kings among whom Kulaśekhara appeared.

King Kulaśekhara was born in Kali 27. His father, for long time King Dṛdha-vrata was childless. And after intense worship and prayers, Lord Nārāyaṇa sent him a saintly son. His son, Kulaśekhara-Ālvār, is recognized to be the incarnation of the Kaustubha gem of Lord Viṣṇu.

As a kṣatriya of great prowess, he conquered all his enemies and neighbouring kingdoms in all directions. His internal administration was characterized by virtue, justice, peace and happiness. He was endowed with many exalted material qualities, however he was devoid of virtues which leads to liberation. In fact, he was worldly wise, but spiritually blind.

But Kulaśekhara was to become a saint and savior for uplifting humanity. He was transformed by God's grace, which started operating through him. The Lord commanded Viṣvaksena to administer to the King the five-fold sacraments called Pañca-samskāra. Thus his vision of the world and of himself changed. He became detached from the world and the symptoms of *prema-bhakti* manifested within him.

He invited many wise men to his capital and he engaged in hearing and reciting from all *śāstras*. This inspired him to compose his master piece, Mukunda-māla-stotra, by extracting the nectar from all scriptures.

His worshipable God was Lord Rāmacandra, and therefore he selected the Rāmayana for daily recitation. One day there came the passage where Lord Rāma fought alone against 14,000 rakṣasas. Upon hearing this, King Kulaśekhara, out of devotional ecstacy, became mad with worry thinking that Lord Rāma was fighting alone. Then he commanded his army to immediately proceed with him to help Lord Rāmacandra. To save the king from this predicament, the ministers expeditiously dispatched a secret army to approach from the other direction and inform the King that Lord Rāma, single

handed, had already killed all the rakṣasas. Upon hearing this, the king's joy was inexpressible.

The daily recitation of the Rāmāyana went on as usual. Every important event of Lord Rāmacandra' *līlā* was celebrated with a great festival. The speaker purposefully avoided some distressfull passages in the text which would disturb the mood of the king. One day, however, the official speaker could not attend the daily recitation and thus sent his son. The new speaker, unaware about the mood of the King, read the passage of Rāvana's kidnapping of Sita-devī. At once the King's emotions blazed like fire. His wrath rouse to an uncontrollable state. He commanded his complete army to follow him in order to save mother Sita. At this time, the ministers could not do anything because the king had mobilized all his army ultimately. King Kulaśekhara and his army reached the seashore along the southernmost part of India, which faced Rāvana's kingdom, the island of Śrī Laṅka. Although hundreds of miles of ocean separated the continent to the island, King Kulaśekhara, in trance, entered into the ocean along with his army in order to try to cross over it. He was neck deep in the sea when Lord Rāmacandra and Sita-devī came to save him and ensured that everything was under control.

After this episode the ministers were especulating as to the cause for this God-intoxicated behavior of the king. The only reason the ministers could ascertain was his association with the pure devotees the king had invited to live in his palace. These pure vaiṣṇavas had free access to any part of the palace.

So the ministers conspired against these vaiṣṇavas. Some jewellery was stolen from the King's Deities and the vaiṣṇavas were accused of the theft.

But King Kulaśekhara's reaction was free from any suspicion: "No! Never! The lovers of God are incapable of stealing. It's impossible that even a slight notion of vice can enter into their thought, what to speak of them acting improperly. I can prove my word. Let a venomous cobra be placed into a vessel and I shall put my hand into it." As soon said as done. "If they are innocent nothing will happen. But if they are guilty let it bite me and kill me".

The ministers were thus put into shame. They confessed their trick and begged for the King's pardon. The King pardoned them.

For a long time King Kulaśekhara had the desire to give up his kingdom and go to Śrī Raṅgam and simply engage in devotional service unto the Lord. This desire eventually became unbearable. Hence he entrusted the kingdom to his son Dṛdha Vrata and left for Raṅgakṣetra. There he experienced always increasing devotional emotions and composed the poem *Perumāl Tirumozhi*. *Perumāl* is a title with which Kulaśekhara-Ālvār is distinguished, by feeling sorrow when God is in sorrow and happiness when God is happy.

## V. Peryi - Ālvār

Peryi-Ālvār, also known as Viṣṇu Chittar, was born in a high line of brāhmaṇas in Śrī Villiputur, in the year Kali 16. From early childhood he intuitively was a pure devotee of Lord Viṣṇu.

When meditating on the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he was inspired by Sudāmā, the *mālā-kāra*, who offered garlands and worshiped Kṛṣṇa and Bālarāma when They entered Mathurā, on this way to the arena of Kamsa. The Ālvār then resolved to devote himself to supplying flowers for the daily worship of Lord Viṣṇu in His *arcā* form of Vata-sayin in his town, Śrī Villiputur.

At that time king Vallabhadeva of Madhurai, met a brahmaṇa who spoke a few words to him and awoke the desire for attaining *mokṣa*. After that, the king was very eager to

know the genuine process of self-realization. He consulted his minister who suggested he summon a council of the wisest men in the kingdom. Each one would give his opinion on the subject.

Meanwhile, in Śrī Villiputur, the Ālvār had a wonderful dream. His beloved Deity Śrī Vata-sayin appeared before him and commanded him to attend the king's court. "What?", the astonished Ālvār exclaimed. "Look at my hands! They are scarred from constant labour in the garden. I am poor and illiterate and yet You want me to go and speak to the king in the midst of great scholars!"

The Lord softly replied: "Do not fear. Simply do as I say and I will arrange everything."

\* Arriving in Madhurai, he was welcomed by the king's minister and invited to speak before the council. The Ālvār became like Dhruva, who was touched by the transcendental conch of Lord Viṣṇu and empowered to utter wonderful prayers. Quoting many evidences from the *sāstras* he proved that one who aspires for liberation should meditate upon and surrender unto the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu, Who alone can grant *mukti*. In fact he simply opened his mouth and the Lord spoke through him.

Peryi-Ālvār's discourse was unparalleled and the glories of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead was established definitively, leaving no room for impersonal concept. No one dared even breathe a word in protest.

The king and all his ministers were very much enlivened and began to glorify the Ālvār, saying: "He has revealed to mankind the light that shines on the very summit of the Vedānta." They led him through the streets of the capital in a grand procession.

As parents like to witness the glory of their son, so the Lord likes to witness the glories of His devotees. Then Lord Viṣṇu, along with His entourage, descended personally to that spot to see His devotee being glorified. Upon beholding His beloved Lord, Peryi-Ālvār was filled with ecstatic joy. However, he never allowed his heart to swell with pride.

The Ālvār started praying: "Here is my God! That Supreme Person Who is so worthy of the adoration of even the most exalted demigods. At this very moment I am not feeling ecstatic love for You – love that makes me forget myself and strikes me down senseless. I am feeling fear instead. Fear for Your safety in this unworthy place. What moves me now is not the love of a lover, but the protective love a mother feels for her child."

Then Peryi-Ālvār composed a devotional poem called *Tiruppāllandu*.

After blessing the king, Peryi-Ālvār returned home to his devotional service as gardener of Śrī Vata-sayin. He wrote many devotional poems, such as *Tirumozhi*, which were manifestation of his love for the Lord in the mood of separation. Such intense feelings of separation burned his heart so much, causing him to leave this world.

## VI. Āṇḍāl-Ālvār

Āṇḍāl is the only woman among the twelve Ālvārs. Peryi-Ālvār was digging his garden one day when he discovered a child covered in earth, just as King Jānaka had found Sītadevī. He named her Āṇḍāl. The year was Kali 97.

Peryi-Ālvār's sole occupation was daily to present a flower garland to his deity Śrī Vata-Sāyin. As time passed, Āṇḍāl blossomed into an attractive maiden. In her father's absence, she would take up the garland he had intended for the Lord and wear it in her hair. Placing herself before a mirror, she would admire herself for hour, saying, "Don't I match Him (God) in beauty?" When her father discovered this he chastized her severely for her offence and decided not to offer the garland to the deity that day.

At night Peryi-Ālvār dreamt of Vata-Sāyin who questioned him why he had failed to bring his daily garland. The Ālvāra explained the reason.

“Desecration?” the Lord replied, “You mean consecration, rather. We consider your fragrant garlands to smell even sweeter after your daughter has worn them. We want no others, but those.” Peryi-Ālvār woke up in amazement.

As Āṇḍāl grew, her love for God also grew. It became so furious in intensity it could no longer be kept in secret. Her father remained very anxious. Āṇḍāl was in the full bloom of youth and yearned more and more for a husband with divine nature. One day her father said to her, “Pardon my suggestion, but surely you should marry a God. But Who among Them?” Āṇḍāl asked her father to describe the different manifestations of the Lord. At this he began to name and glorify each of the 108 main deities of Lord Viṣṇu. Upon hearing the name of Śrī Raṅganātha her heart at once melted, revealing Who was holding her heart captive.

Peryi-Ālvār was perplex. That night, however, Śrī Raṅganātha appeared in his dream and announced He would propose for his daughter’s hand and heart Himself. In Śrī Raṅgan the Lord manifested His desire to the head priest, commanding him to journey to Śrī Viliputtur and bring His fiancée to Him. The priest arranged for Āṇḍāl to be brought over great pomp and made very opulent preparations for the wedding ceremony. This was conducted, and Āṇḍāl embraced her Lord and, before the eyes of everyone present, merged into the body of Lord Raṅganātha.

Śrī Āṇḍāl is today worshipped in her *arcā-vigraha* in numerous temples of Viṣṇu in South India. The poetry she has written about her passionate feelings for the Lord remains as well.

## VII. Tondaradippodi-Ālvār

Tondaradippodi was born in a South Indian brāhmaṇa family in the year Kali 288. He was named Vipra-Nārāyaṇa. Later he became known as Tondaradippodi-Ālvār, which means ‘the foot-dust of the slaves of the Lord’.

By nature Vipra-Nārāyaṇa was a saint, completely detached from this world. As a result he remained free from natural entanglements such as marriage. Having been blessed by Lord Raṅganātha, he resolved to devote his life to cultivating and suppling tulasi leaves for the Lord’s pleasure.

One day a very captivating but mundane woman named Deva-devī, who was a frequent visitor to the court of King Chola, passed through the beautiful garden of Vipra-Nārāyaṇa and decided to stop and rest for some time. She noticed how Vipra-Nārāyaṇa, his mind being fully absorbed in his service and on thoughts of his Deity, did not pay her the slightest attention although she was very close to him.

Deva-devī’s sister had told her he was a devotee, a saint, and for fun she had made a wager: “If you are able to deviate his heart from God to you, I will become your slave for six months”. Deva-devī had accepted. Approaching Vipra-Nārāyaṇa and falling at his feet she told him destiny had made her a prostitute but that she now repented for her sinful life. Begging for shelter at his feet she offered to assist him with any menial service in his garden. Out of innocence, Vipra-Nārāyaṇa consented.

Deva-devī was determined. For six months she worked with complete dedication and devotion. Then one day during the rainy season, she was out gardening in the rain, completely wet and shivering. Vipra-Nārāyaṇa felt sorry for her and called her into his cottage. This was the moment for which she had been wait for so long. Taking advantage of the situation, she suggest she would massage his weary limbs. Again a victim of his innocence, Vipra-nārāyaṇa allowed her to do so.

Deva-devī was a mistress of the art of seduction. She easily captured the brāhmaṇa’s heart so he could no longer concentrate his mind in his Deity. Having won the wager,

there was no reason for Deva-devī to remain in that place any longer and she returned to her house. Mad with lust, Vipra-Nārāyaṇa ran after her, sat outside her front door and submitted himself to all kinds of injuries and indignities.

One day, Lord Raṅganātha and His consort Śrī passed by that street in a procession. When Lakṣmī-devī saw Vipra-Nārāyaṇa in that condition She asked Her Lord what had happened to his faithful and dedicated servant. After Lord Raṅganātha narrated the story, Śrī demanded that He help Vipra-Nārāyaṇ and once again engage him in His service. But the Lord simply smiled and said He had a plan.

That same day someone knocked at Deva-devī's door, claiming to be Vipra-Nārāyaṇa's servant. He delivered a golden cup to her which she happily received. The following morning Śrī Raṅganātha's pujari discovered that the Lord's golden cup was missing from the altar. The king immediately had the pujari and other attendants arrested.

One of Deva-devī's maids, whose lover was one of attendants, had witness the whole scene in the house of her mistress. She at once informed the king that Vipra-Nārāyaṇa had given the cup to Deva-devī and that it now lay hidden under the pillow.

The cup was retrieved and Vipra-Nārāyaṇa and Deva-devī were brought before the king. They naturally denied their participation in the theft, but on the weight of the evidence against them, Deva-devī was fined and Vipra-Nārāyaṇa was detained for further investigation.

Once again Lakṣmī intervened, requesting Her Lord to stop playing with His devotee.

That night Lord Raṅganātha appeared to the king in a dream and said to him:

“Dear king, know My servant Vipra-Nārāyaṇa to be innocent, so far as his present life is concerned; but in past lives he has committed acts for which he must now pay retribution. This is why I have devised a measure which allows ends of justice to be satisfied. He has been made to suffer, though only slightly.”

The next morning the king had Vipra-Nārāyaṇa released and Deva-devī's money returned to her. Vipra-Nārāyaṇa was saved by the special grace of His Lord. Old recollections of his worshippable Deity now flooded his mind and he regained his saintly nature. He came to value the danger of women's association. Thinking of how to purify himself of his sin, he discovered the only remedy was to drink the water which had washed the lotus feet of the vaiṣṇavas. From this he received the name *Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi*, and he served Lord Raṅganātha until his final breath.

## **VIII. Tiruppān-Ālvār**

Tiruppān-Ālvār appeared in a candala family in the year Kali 342, in Tamil Nadu, South India. Actually, he was not born in the normal way – he was found in a paddy field. The stalks of green and yellow paddy around him were glowing at that time.

Due to belonging a low class family, he was not allowed to dwell with people from higher castes. In spite of that, in the childhood his parents protected him from eating indiscriminated food and other things which could pollute him. He was fed pure cow's milk.

Since his childhood, Tiruppān had no attraction for things of this world. His natural tendencies were directed towards God. He used to absorb himself for hours singing songs in glorification of the Lord. He would close his eyes and become utterly senseless and oblivious to the external world. He would enjoy visions of God and experiencing His closeness.

Following the traditions of his family and his caste, Tiruppān adopted the profession of musician, a lyre-player.

One day, Tiruppān was seated on the banks of the Kaveri, in Śrī Raṅgam, near the temple of Lord Raṅganātha. He was immersed in such deep meditation on the Lord that he looked like a lifeless statue. At that time, the head pujari of Lord Raṅganātha, Loka Saraṅga, happen to come to the river side to fetch water from the river for the daily *abhisheka* of the Deities. Tiruppān was seated on the path where the pujaris would pass carrying vessels full of water. Loka Saraṅga demanded that he move from there, but Tiruppān did not respond to his request. He was in devotional trance and unaware of the situation. Being a brāhmaṇa, Loka Saraṅga thought that this candala was provoking him with indifference, and therefore became very upset. He grabbed a pebble and flung it at him. It hit him in the face and drew blood.

Tiruppān came out from his trance, opened his eyes and at seeing the enraged brāhmaṇa at once realized the whole situation. He then immediately moved away from the place expressing his grief and repentance at the offense which he had committed, though unwittingly.

Back at temple, Loka Saraṅga felt something strange. Normally Lord Raṅganātha used to reciprocate with the service of his faithful devotee but this time was different. The countenance of the Lord was not as blissful as usual, and the brāhmaṇa had the clear impression that his service was not being accepted by the Lord. At the same time he was mentally regretting the incident. He was morose, feeling remorse and anguish.

While lamenting, Lord Raṅganātha along with His eternal consort appeared to him and said: “How dare you hurt My faithful Tiruppān? We are sorely offended by you.” Then Śrī inquired from the Lord why He delayed bringing Tiruppān nearer to Him. The Lord then said: “I have often tried to, but as I advance he recedes, because he is sensitive of his humble birth and he thinks that any contact with Me would contaminate My nature. The time has come for settling the matter, and you will have your wish soon fulfilled.” So the Lord spoke to Loka Saraṅga: “You shouldn’t think Tiruppān a low person – he is My very soul and My intimate friend. I want you to go to him and, with all reverence and humility, lift him up upon your shoulders and triumphantly enter Our shrine. Let the world witness this spectacle. This is My command.”

Loka Saraṅga immediately went to the spot and found Tiruppān absorbed in meditation. He fell at his feet and begged forgiveness for injuries both physical and moral. Then he submitted the wish of Lord Raṅganātha.

The Ālvār retreated to a distance and said: “Don’t touch me. I’m low born and it’s inadmissible for me to step in the Lord Raṅganātha’s land.” “But sir”, said Loka Saraṅga, “Don’t fear. I will carry you on my shoulders. This is the desire of the Lord. Further resistance will be disobedience.” Then Tiruppān gave up: “As the Lord wishes”, he said.

Loka Saraṅga without delay carried the Tiruppān into the Lord’s shrine. When he was about to deposit the Ālvār in one of the holy yards of the temple, the Lord along with all His entourage, appeared before him. His devotional ecstasy then surpassed all limits and he started praising the Lord with a song *Amalam-Adipirān*, he composed at that time.

While gazing and staring in astonishment, Tiruppān Ālvār tarried not on the Earth to see any other sight, but melted and passed into the Lord’s substance, in his 50th year of age.

## **IX. Tirumangai-Ālvār**

Śrī Tirumangai is the last of the Ālvārs of the Śrī Sampradāya. He was born in Kali 397 in a śudra class family. His name at birth was Nila (blue) because of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s color. He is said to be the incarnation of the bow called Śarṅga.

His father was the military commander in the army of King Chola. Nila learnt from him the use of different weapons and other military arts. Soon he became distinguished for his martial qualities and for his conquests of kings who were in opposition to the supremacy of King Chola.

Being unmarried, he used to behave like a libertine. He was what is known as 'a gratifier of the senses'. He was also known by the name Kalyan.

During this period of his life, a group of very young apsaras from Svarga-loka descended onto the kingdom. There they found a wonderful place with a lake containing many lotus flowers. One of the apsaras was attentively engaged in plucking flowers when the other apsaras departed leaving her behind. Verily she did not know what to do. By chance, a vaiṣṇava physician appeared on the site. Out of curiosity he asked her what such a lovely girl was doing alone in such a remote place. After hearing her story, the vaiṣṇava brought her to his house and treated her as she were his own daughter. She was named Kumuda-Valli, because the lotus flowers were the cause of her being left behind. She grew up and bloomed into a beautiful maiden. Hence, the parents were worried because they were unable to find a suitable match in marriage for her.

In the meanwhile, one of Kalyan's spies noticed this girl of such exquisite beauty and reported back to Kalyan; how she would be the perfect wife for him. He became excited and without delay he rushed to Kumuda-Valli's house. As soon as he saw her, his heart burnt with love and passion. Then Kalyan approached to her parents and requested her hand in marriage. They replied that the decision would be exclusively hers.

Kumuda-Valli vehemently denied to marry a non-vaiṣṇava man, who was not initiated with the five-fold sacraments. However Kalyan was determined to get her hand in marriage by any means.

He at once went to the presiding Deity of the kingdom, Śrī Nambi, and prayed fervently that He bestow him the requisite sacraments which his beloved lady had demanded. He prayed with such faith that the Deity personally administered the cakra and the conch imprinted on his arms, along with twelve marks of tilak over his body. He then rushed back to Kumuda-Valli who said: "There is another condition. You have to sumptuously feed 1000 vaiṣṇavas daily and eat only their remnants after sipping the holy water obtained from washing their feet."

Kalyan out of love for Kumuda-Valli accepted this condition, and thus they got married.

He strictly followed his promise. All money in his possession was used for a daily banquet. However, after a couple of months had passed he was out of money. He even spent the taxes he was to pay the king. After having a confrontation with the king, Kalyan was finally arrested and put in the king's prison in Kañci. There Lord Varada-rāja appeared to him in a dream and revealed to him a treasure hidden on the bank of the Vegavatti river. Kalyan told the king about the dream and was allowed to go there accompanied by palace guards. He indeed found the treasure. He paid the amount owed to the king and still had enough money to continue feeding the vaiṣṇavas. The Lord saved His devotee in the same way that He saved Draupadi. His promise to his wife was kept.

However, after some time, he again ran out of money. At that time he had to take to robbery by plundering travellers on the road. Such activity is morally perverse, but the fact is that God was pleased by Kalyan's sincerity and once more acted in his favor. By feeding the vaiṣṇavas and taking their remnants, Kalyan was pleasing the Lord.

While Kalyan and his gang were waiting for their next victim, the Lord appeared on the road in the disguise of a brāhmaṇa and his wedding procession; accompanied by His wife and entourage. The brāhmaṇa was carrying a bundle full of priceless jewelry. Kalyan directed the attack and without difficulty took all the belongings of the group. When the

dacoits tried to lift all the product of the robbery, they could not even move it one inch. The bundle was stuck to the ground as if by magic. Kalyan then said: “Who are you? You look like a wizard.” The Lord in disguise replied: “I will teach you a mantra by which you will be able to move the bundle. Now you come here and bend your head and put your ear near my mouth.” “What?” vociferated the chief of the dacoits, “Either you give me the mantra now or I will cut your head off with my sword.” “Come on...”, said the Lord, “don’t be nervous”. Then the brahmaṇa asked Kalyan to repeat the eight syllable mantra: *om namo nārāyaṇāya*. Kalyan tested the mantra and to the surprise of all the bundle could be lifted. He was about to leave when the Lord said to him: “I have some more to give you.” Kalyan curiously replied “What more?.” The Lord then explained the spiritual potency of the mantra.

Kalyan was struck with wonder. Then the ‘brāhmaṇa’ revealed Himself as Lord Nārāyaṇa with His eternal consort, mounted in Garuda.

Kalyan immediately composed six songs glorifying the Lord. Thus he became the Tirumangai Ālvār. From this point on his life transformed radically. His wild nature was now used integrally in the service of God. Accordingly, that many saintly qualities manifested in his heart.

After this incident he went on pilgrimage in the North – Haridwar, Badrināth, Naimiśarāṇya, etc. He gained respect and was praised by all.

The Ālvār came to visit Lord Rāṅganātha in Śrī Raṅgam. There he composed many songs glorifying the Deity. The Deity appeared to him and requested him to stay in the temple and expand the constructed area of the temple. Of course, Tirumangai-Ālvār accepted the service but now he needed a large amount of money for doing that. To obtain the money, Tirumangai involved himself in a very exciting series of adventures.

Tirumangai’s brother-in-law told him of a temple that possessed a valuable golden murti of Buddha. They planned to steal it. But the altar was protected by an intricate mechanical system which made it impossible to enter and touch the Deity. The only person who knew the secret was the architect who had constructed it. They found that the man lived on an island in the Bay of Bengal. Arriving on the island they indirectly approached the architect. Taking advantage of his slyness, the group obtained the secret of the altar’s protecting scheme. Returning to the temple they were able to take the murti off. However his brother-in-law happened to fall into a trap. He then said to Tirumangai: “You have to flee from here at once. But don’t leave me here alive. Please cut my head off. It would be better”. And Tirumangai did so.

Leaving that place, the group carried the murti as if it were a dead body in a funeral, with the head of the Ālvār’s brother-in-law on the top.

This time Śrī Lakṣmī-devī interfered and requested the Lord to save His devotee. Lord Viṣṇu sent Garuda with the mission to rescue the body, join it with the head and give him life.

Returning to Śrī Raṅgam Tirumangai melted the murti and paid for the construction. Again he had more problems when the money was exhausted, he still had to pay a substantial amount in wages to the workers. “What to do?”, thought the Ālvār. Therefore he put all the workers on a boat used for crossing the river. Half way across the river he made the boat sink and the workers died. Again there were more problems. Now the wives, children and relatives of the workers were demanding compensation. Again, “What to do now?”, thought the Ālvār. Then a new miracle happened. The workers who had died appeared before their families and requested them not to struggle for money, because now, they are in the heaven and are better than before.

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